

Validity and Reliability

The results of a needs assessment or community assessment are only as good as the data that are used to gain the results. Planners and evaluators must pay attention to:

- Reliability
- Validity
- Bias
- Cultural Appropriateness

Reliability	Consistency in the measurement process. Gives the same (or nearly the same) result every time, even if measured or collected by two different people.
Validity	Measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Measuring instrument correctly measures the concepts under investigation.
Bias	While data collectors and users may not be able to completely eliminate bias, they can take steps to limit, control and manage bias. Steps to take to limit bias: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If data are being collected via observation, observation should be as unobtrusive as possible. • If sensitive questions are being asked, then those collecting such data need to ensure that the data are being collected in a confidential way. • Consider collecting data via anonymous means (for example, provide a link to a survey on-line and ask that respondents not give their name). • Do not select a biased sample from the target population (for example, if you are conducting focus groups to collect data on perceptions of alcohol use you wouldn't just invite treatment providers).
Cultural Appropriateness	People from different cultures are likely to possess different values, beliefs, traditions, and perceptions that affect nearly all activities of individuals, including their health-related behavior and responding to questions related to health. Make sure the data you use are from a representative sample of the population of interest. Also, make sure that data collection tools were culturally appropriate in terms of language, word choices, and format.

Adapted from the Minnesota Department of Health's Community Health Promotion Guide website at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/hpkit/index.htm