ACTIVATE

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Child Trends & Chapin Hall

A Practical Tool for Building Data Collection and Data Use Capacity in Youth-Supporting Organizations

Module 5: Reporting Data Responsibly



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Comparing the sexual and reproductive health-related data youth-supporting organizations collect to sexual and reproductive health-related data from local, state, or national sources (see **Module 4**) can help youth-supporting organizations understand their data. It is important for youth-supporting organizations to report sexual and reproductive health data responsibly. These comparisons can lead to incomplete pictures, misleading interpretations, or oversimplified conclusions if they are presented without sufficient context. Context includes a range of social, geographic, and historical details that can shape young people's experiences (e.g., mistrust of health providers), affect their access to sexual and reproductive health care services (e.g., lack of services in rural areas), and contribute to gaps in sexual and reproductive health.[17]

Data can be framed and explained in ways that reinforce stigma or support a strengths-based understanding of young people's sexual and reproductive health.

Below are some tips related to *language, framing, and interpretation* that can help youth-supporting organizations report sexual and reproductive health data responsibly.

Use person-centered language.

Place the person rather than their condition first and foremost. For example, use *young people in foster care* instead of *foster youth.*

Be specific about whom you are referring to.

Avoid vague language when referring to groups. That makes it difficult to determine who is included and who is not — for example, "at-risk youth."

Do not center one type of person as the norm.

Avoid positioning one group as the default or "norm" and other groups as "different" or "non-normative" when making comparisons.

Take a strengths-based approach.

Do not minimize the challenges young people face but also highlight their accomplishments, resilience, and areas in which they are thriving.

Pair statistics with personal narratives.

When appropriate, humanize the data by pairing them with quotes or stories (keeping in mind **Module 3's** discussion of privacy and confidentiality) to help audiences understand young people's experiences.

Empower youth.

Whenever possible, involve young people in shaping how data about their sexual and reproductive health are framed and communicated.

Visualizing data can shape how people interpret and respond to data. Choices about what data are shown and how they are presented can influence what audiences take away from data visualizations. Thoughtful visual design can help audiences focus on the most important takeaways without misinterpretation.

Below are some tips for visualizing data.[18]

- **Be intentional about what you present.** Consider your intended audience, the questions they need answered, and how they will use the information.
- **Make the data clear and accessible.** Use descriptive titles, plain labels, short definitions, and explanatory notes where needed. Apply accessibility best practices, including readable color contrast and simple formatting.
- **Keep it simple.** Limit each visual to one key message, split up complex information across multiple visuals, and order them to tell a coherent story.
- **Use visuals to reinforce meaning.** Choose chart types and layouts that make patterns clear and data easy to interpret.

Table 5.1 includes a list of resources where youth-supporting professionals and their organizations can find practical guidance on data visualization and communication.

Table 5.1. Additional Resources on Data Visualization and Communication

Source	Description
Data Viz Project	Comprehensive, interactive library that can be used to explore different ways to visualize data (for example, charts, maps, diagrams) and select the right format based on the data type and communication goal
Census Data Visualization Gallery	Curated gallery of data visualizations created using U.S. Census data that demonstrate how complex datasets can be translated into clear, engaging visuals for broad audiences
The Sharing Survey Results Tip Sheet	Practical guidance on communicating survey findings effectively by tailoring messages, using clear visuals and plain language, and focusing on key takeaways
Communicating with Census Data: Data Visualization	Practical guidance on best practices for designing effective visuals, including how to choose formats (for example, tables, charts, maps) and improve clarity to make data accessible and help communicate key insights

Module Takeaways

- Data without context may be misunderstood or even stigmatize the young people you serve.
- Consider your framing and the language you use to discuss and interpret your data.
- Simple, accessible, and appealing data visualizations are a powerful tool for getting your message across.

Reflection Questions

- Think about a time when you encountered data about a group of young people. How were those data framed, and what impact did that framing have on your perception?
- What are some ways you can ensure that the data you share do not unintentionally reinforce stigma?
- What does a strengths-based narrative look like in practice when sharing data about young people?

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