



## Data and Community Harm: Research Processes to Avoid

When data is used misused, it can cause harm to communities. The list below includes examples of research practices that can increase the risk of harm to communities.

### ✗ Conducting research that does not focus on maximizing benefit to communities

- Researchers should strive to engage in meaningful consultation and collaboration with the community they wish to study to ensure that the research is respectful, relevant, and aligned with the community's values and interests.

### ✗ Ignoring the history of the community

- Researchers should engage with communities learn about their history, listen to their members' stories, and incorporate historical context into the analysis. This approach is not only ethical but also enhances the quality and relevance of research, leading to better outcomes for communities.

### ✗ Focusing on individual risk factors and ignoring larger structural issues

- By concentrating on individual risk factors, researchers may overlook the broader context that creates these risk factors, which results in an incomplete understanding of the issue. Moreover, it also may lead to stigmatization and stereotyping of communities, reduce empathy for those at risk, and increase victim blaming.
- Researchers should take into account structural issues when analyzing data, such as discrimination, lack of access to quality education, employment, housing and health care. These tend to disproportionately affect marginalized communities, and ignoring these issues may perpetuate inequity and injustice.

### ✗ Ignoring interaction between variables

- Ignoring interactions between variables can lead to biased, incomplete, or misleading conclusions, so it is essential to consider them when conducting research and data analysis to gain a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the relationships between variables.

### ✗ Framing differences between one community and another negatively

- Researchers should adopt a balanced and respectful approach when framing differences between communities. This includes acknowledging challenges and disparities while also highlighting strengths, resilience, and the potential for positive change.

### ✗ Using categories that mask or exaggerate disparities

- It is crucial that researchers use meaningful categories to represent different communities. This requires using categories that capture the diversity and complexity of indigenous and other racialized groups, acknowledging intersectionality, and ensuring that recommendations address the unique needs and experiences of specific subgroups within a population.

### ✗ Making conclusions that are not supported by the data available

- Researchers should always be transparent about the limitations of their data. It is important to take time to assess the adequacy of the data available for the research questions at hand. This will help avoid making unfounded generalizations and conclusions.
- Researchers should always be transparent about the limitations of their data.

### ✗ Releasing data that may cause community harm without community permission

- To avoid community harm, researchers should prioritize community validation of results, especially when results are negative or could be used to support stereotypes. Working directly with the community the data is about aims to ensure that individual's lived experience, whether positive or negative, are reflected in research results. This strives to give communities the opportunity to use the results to advocate for themselves and advance their goals.