



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

How-to Guide

Audience Segmentation for Nutrition Social and Behavior Change



About USAID Advancing Nutrition

USAID Advancing Nutrition is the Agency's flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project, led by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI), and a diverse group of experienced partners. Launched in September 2018, USAID Advancing Nutrition implements nutrition interventions across sectors and disciplines for USAID and its partners. The project's multi-sectoral approach draws together global nutrition experience to design, implement and evaluate programs that address the root causes of malnutrition. Committed to using a systems approach, USAID Advancing Nutrition strives to sustain positive outcomes by building local capacity, supporting behavior change and strengthening the enabling environment to save lives, improve health, build resilience, increase economic productivity and advance development.

Disclaimer

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Recommended Citation

USAID Advancing Nutrition. 2023. *How-to Guide: Audience Segmentation for Nutrition Social and Behavior Change*. Arlington, VA: USAID Advancing Nutrition

Cover photo: © Valerie Caldas/USAID Suaahara project

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Photo: Nevil Jackson, Feed the Future

Introduction

Audience segmentation is an important step in designing quality nutrition social and behavior change (SBC) programs. Segmentation helps programs customize activities to the needs and preferences of specific audiences or program participant groups to maximize impact and use funds more effectively. Segmentation divides a population into subgroups that have similar characteristics and significant differences from other subgroups by demographic, attributional, psychographic, behavioral, or other characteristics. Segmentation recognizes that problems and solutions often vary by population group and the usual “one size fits all” approach misses many people’s needs.

Have you noticed that the same food product, such as butter or soda, has a different taste in different places? Have you seen the same food product available in a variety of sizes and prices, such as a big size and high price in supermarkets but a tiny package for one “coin” in neighborhood markets? Private sector companies use segmentation to target exactly the types of consumers who will purchase a product or use a service.

The Coca-Cola Company, for example, offers variations on their product line for different types of consumers—regular Coke for their primary segment (young people from about 15-25 years who want

strong flavors) and Diet Coke for consumers who want “healthier” lifestyles. To appeal to men who also want “healthier” lifestyles, but see Diet Coke as a product for women, the company developed Coke Zero.

There are different sizes with different prices for segments with different incomes. Each product is carefully developed, distributed, and placed for the specific segment—this is how companies offer the right product, in the right place, and at the right price for each group of customers. Promotion is similarly tailored to the beliefs, values, and lifestyles of segments. While the concept of happiness is often core, the specific images, words, and emotions are customized to the segment. For example, one promotion encouraged bored female consumers to drink Coke to makes life joyful again.¹

Beech-Nut, a company that makes food products for young children, offers variations on their product line for different segments. Market research identified five segments of mothers who purchase baby food and decided to focus on the two most likely to purchase their products. One was termed “child pleasers” and characterized by the value, “I feed my child whatever he/she likes and I’m not that concerned about nutrition.” The other was called mothers with “picky eaters” and characterized by the value, “Balance is important, I try for good nutrition; I also have to make sure my child will eat it.” Insights on these segments, including where they shop and how much they pay, guide decisions on product lines, distribution, and prices.

Segmentation is increasingly used by health and nutrition programs to understand how to improve nutrition behaviors and better use limited resources.²

This how-to guide walks you through the essential, basic process of audience segmentation necessary for all nutrition programs and services. This guide also introduces a specialized technique called “advanced audience segmentation” to use with quantitative and qualitative research data. Incorporating considerations for use in nutrition programs or services, this guide builds on The Compass for SBC’s “How to Do Audience Segmentation” guide.



Photo: John Healey Photography

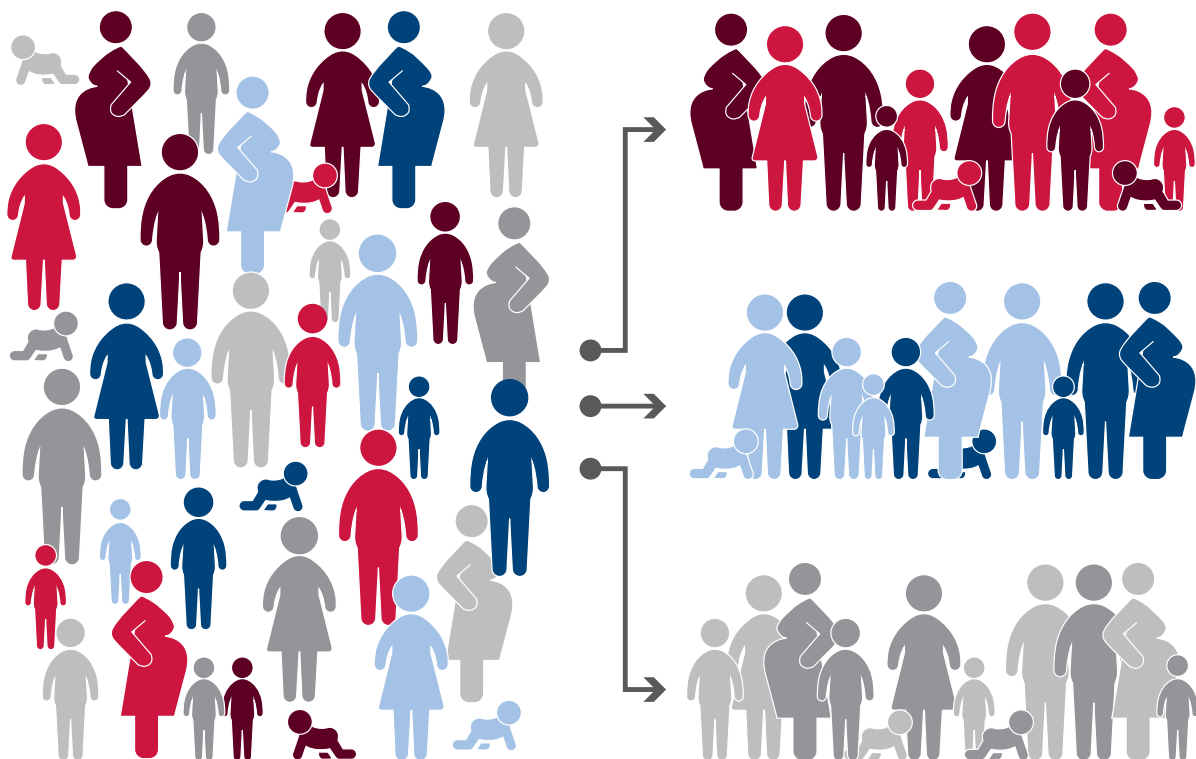
- 1 Wang, Jiaqi. “How Coca Cola and Pepsi Use Segmentation in Consumer Product Industry.” Proceedings of the 2021 International Conference on Public Relations and Social Sciences. Atlantis Press. <https://doi:10.2991/assehr.k.211020.271>
- 2 Jenkins, Eva L, Samara Legrand, Laura Brennan, Annika Molenaar, Mike Reid, and Tracy A. McCaffrey. “Psycho-Behavioural Segmentation in Food and Nutrition: A Systematic Scoping Review of the Literature.” *Nutrients*. 13(6):1795. <https://doi:10.3390/nu13061795>.

What Is Audience Segmentation?

Audience segmentation is the foundational SBC process of dividing a group of people or “audience” into smaller subgroups or “segments” of people who have similar needs, values, or characteristics. Segmentation recognizes that different groups will respond differently to SBC activities, including related communication media, materials, and messaging.³

Advanced audience segmentation builds on traditional segmentation approaches by using mixed methods of research to hypothesize and test audience segments. Advanced audience segmentation relies on a phased process of background research, in-depth qualitative research, quantitative research, and advanced statistical analysis to create a representative base of audience segments. It produces a framework to understand how certain beliefs, behaviors, or needs vary across a given population. This rigorous process offers greater nuance and insight into how to best identify and reach priority groups to drive behavior change.⁴

Figure 1. Audience Segmentation



3 Breakthrough ACTION. Updated 2021. “How-to-Guide: Advanced Audience Segmentation for Social and Behavior Change.” Washington, DC: Breakthrough ACTION/Camber Collective. <https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/advanced-audience-segmentation-social-and-behavior-change>.

4 ibid



Photo: Morgana Wingard / USAID

Why Use Audience Segmentation?

Audience segmentation is key to effective nutrition SBC because it allows you to **have a greater impact on priority nutrition behaviors** by focusing on specific or smaller groups of people. Audience segmentation also enables your program to—

- improve understanding of an audience segment's experiences, desires, concerns, needs, and nutrition behaviors
- tailor nutrition services, products, and activities to specific groups of people
- tailor communication to the segment's needs for better recall, participation, and mobilization
- identify, estimate, and prioritize the potential for change among a specific group
- predict the most promising opportunities for resource allocation.

When to Use Audience Segmentation

Audience segmentation is needed at multiple phases of the SBC process. Ideally, use audience segmentation for both formative research and data analysis. Then use the findings on segments to design the SBC strategy. It can also be used anytime for learning and adaptive management.

- **When preparing formative research:** Use audience segmentation to prepare your sample for formative research and ask questions that will resonate with that specific segment.
- **When analyzing research data:** Apply advanced audience segmentation to quantitative and/or qualitative data analysis of baseline survey, formative, or implementation research.
- **When designing an SBC strategy:** Specify segments for priority behaviors (use the tool, [Using Research to Design a Social and Behavior Change Strategy for Nutrition](#)). Key segments could have their own behavior analysis and change pathways. Also use segments to define audience profiles by key segments by using this [audience analysis](#) guide. These profiles will be directly applied to SBC communication plans and creative briefs to design media, materials, and messaging.
- **When learning and adapting:** Use audience segmentation when adapting an activity to accelerate SBC outcomes.



EXAMPLE



A program aimed to increase pregnant women's dietary diversity.

Staff conducted a dietary analysis and a market food environment assessment to select foods to promote, such as fish, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. The program area covered rural and urban communities that the staff knew had differing levels of access to food purchased in markets and foods grown or collected around home.

But they did not know whether the pregnant women in the same areas had similar needs and wants to one another that would influence whether they would be able to eat more foods and, therefore, influence the SBC activities.

Read more of the example at each step to find out what they learned!

Photo: Morgana Wingard

Audience Segmentation Steps

Step 1: Review Your Priority Behaviors

Before you begin, ensure that your priority nutrition behaviors are clearly defined. Defining these priority behaviors will help you focus on which primary actors and supporting actors (which we refer to as “audiences” in this guide) to segment. It will also allow you to identify which opportunities you can address through segmentation.

If your time and resources are limited, **use this process for only one or two priority behaviors** to have maximum effect.



EXAMPLE



A program aimed to increase pregnant women’s dietary diversity.

The team started by identifying a priority behavior, based on its potential to impact diversity and change in the local context: “Pregnant women eat two snacks of dried meat and fruit between meals each day.”

Photo:: Mehzabin Rupa, World Vision

Step 2: Plan to Segment


The next step identifies relevant characteristics of the population in your program area. Conduct an initial brainstorm based on existing data and your team’s knowledge about the local context to identify characteristics that may influence whether (or to what extent) people can practice the priority behaviors. Discuss these ideas with partners and stakeholders.

This discussion can help to inform a desk review. Using literature, program reports, and local experiences, identify gaps in your understanding of the context for each priority behavior. Start by investigating existing information on [factors](#) (also called barriers and enablers) that prevent or support the behaviors. Consider interviewing key informants who can provide added perspective on society, religion, and culture, and how those characteristics might influence the priority behavior(s).

With the background information, identify the characteristics that appear to be most relevant for the people who practice the behavior. These may include rural and urban differences, age, religion, family size, and lifestyle variables.

You could also segment for those people who influence the main audience (i.e., supporting actors). For example, health workers and grandmothers may also benefit from segmentation, as characteristics that would influence their ability to address the factors influencing caregivers may differ considerably from each other.

Decide what criteria to use to segment the audience(s). Using Table 1 below, review the characteristics you have identified and determine which ones show a significant difference between sub-groups of the audience.


TIP

A “significant difference” is one that requires a different approach or communication messaging. For SBC, each significant difference or segment can be reflected in a separate behavior analysis.

Table 1: Segmentation Types for Nutrition

Geographic	Socio-Demographic	Behavioral	Psychographic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban/ rural • region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sex • age • number of children • type of work • household structure • income • religion • language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant behavior • willingness to try to the behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • values • activities • interests • preferences/taste • agency • adherence to traditional social norms

Source: Adapted from Breakthrough ACTION Compass

Segments may be formed from socio-demographic or geographic differences. These are most common in nutrition. Segments can also be formed from behavioral or psychographic characteristics. These deserve more attention as they tend to be more complex and rooted in social norms. Segmenting by behavioral or psychographic differences can lead to more nuanced and focused SBC activities and messages that accelerate behavior change.

Step 3: Segment Audiences in Research

Now that you have the criteria you need to segment audiences, use them to determine the sample for qualitative [formative research](#). The results will help you to formally identify your segments. Also use the criteria to analyze formative research, especially related to the factors (the barriers and motivators) that prevent audience segments from or support them to practice the priority behavior. Do the same for supporting actors or influencers, as relevant, as well.

The results of this qualitative research will help you hypothesize possible segments based on meaningful differences related to the priority behavior(s). These hypotheses may involve demographic, behavioral, and social factors associated with willingness to adopt the priority behaviors. These possible segments can inform and refine the sampling strategy for quantitative research to test the hypotheses. Include questions about the factors that may be different between segments in a baseline, market, or annual survey.

Also use advanced audience segmentation when designing and analyzing a survey when you have research expertise on your team. Test the hypotheses through statistical analysis. Analysis techniques typically used for segmentation include cluster analysis, latent class analysis, and perceptual mapping. For more details, access the Compass [“How to Do Audience Segmentation”](#) web guide.

EXAMPLE



A program aimed to increase pregnant women’s dietary diversity.

The research sampled pregnant women in urban and rural areas. In each area, the samples included pregnant women who live with extended families and those who do not, and women pregnant for the first time. The findings showed that pregnant women in urban and rural areas can eat different types of dried meat and fruit as snacks, seasonally. Other differences between pregnant women became apparent: pregnant women who let others make decisions about food, first-time pregnant women, and pregnant women who follow traditional social norms were less likely to say that they eat snacks between meals or be willing to try. Therefore, the team selected three potential segments to study in the quantitative survey: pregnant women who let others decide about food, first-time pregnant women, and pregnant women who follow social norms.

The team used the formative research findings to design a baseline survey. They included demographic questions as well as questions related to the potential segments, such as those on decision-making and social norms about what and when pregnant women are expected to eat.

The evaluation specialist analyzed the findings using statistical analysis. The results confirmed that two of the potential segments were significantly less likely to eat snacks between meals. The difference between first-time pregnant women and pregnant women who already had children was not significant.

Step 4: Decide on Audience Segments

Next, decide which segments of audiences to include in your SBC strategy. Considering resources and feasibility, it is likely that your program will be most impactful when you can focus on a few segments. Breakthrough ACTION finds that effective segmentations tend to produce between four and seven segments for one behavior.

Table 2. Questions to Ask when Determining Segments

Potential Impact?	Actionable?
<p>Is the size of the segment and the difference between segments large enough to make a significant impact?</p> <p><i>For example, will focusing on pregnant women who have never visited a health worker for nutrition counseling make a difference to diet diversity outcomes? Are there enough women like this to make a difference?</i></p>	<p>Do available resources, time, money, etc., enable the program to engage the audience segment in a meaningful way?</p> <p><i>For example, can the program provide extra home visits or group activities if needed?</i></p>

Source: Adapted from Breakthrough ACTION Compass

Compare the segments revealed with your initial hypotheses. In some cases, your final segments may or may not look similar. Check that the segments meet the criteria for segmentation and validate with partners and stakeholders.

Needs, attitudes, and behaviors often change with time, so segmentation should be an ongoing process where insights continuously feed into program strategy.



EXAMPLE



A program aimed to increase pregnant women's dietary diversity.

For the priority behavior, "Pregnant women eat two snacks of dried meat and fruit between meals each day," the team reviewed the survey results and determined two key segments:

- 1) Pregnant women who feel confident enough to make decisions about their food choices, including snacks between meals
- 2) Pregnant women who sacrifice for their families, following traditional expectations.

Photo: Morgana Wingard

“Segmentation is both an art and a science, requiring evidence and intuition.”

– Breakthrough ACTION, 2021

Step 5: Use Audience Segments

Audience segments are important design parameters for your SBC strategy and SBC communication plan.

For each priority behavior, a core element of the strategy will be the behavior analysis for each key segment. This will result in SBC pathways that specify factors that prevent or support each segment to practice the behavior. The pathways will also show the influencers or supporting actors who need to be engaged to address those factors. As a result, the activities may be distinct for each segment. This tool [Using Research to Design a Social and Behavior Change Strategy for Nutrition](#) can help with the development of these pathways.

Also in the SBC strategy, define audience profiles by key segments by using this [audience analysis](#) guide. These profiles will be directly applied to SBC communication plans and creative briefs to design media, materials, and messaging.

This tool can help you monitor changes in factors and behaviors for key segments: [Monitoring Social and Behavior Change for Multi-Sectoral Nutrition](#).



TIP

Remember, **less is more!**

Rather than trying to do everything for everyone, your program will have greater impact if it has greater focus.

EXAMPLE



A program aimed to increase pregnant women's dietary diversity.

Research identified two segments:

1. Pregnant women who feel confident to make decisions about their food choices, including snacks between meals
2. Pregnant women who sacrifice for their families, following traditional expectations.

To use these findings, when preparing the SBC strategy, the team analyzed the priority behaviors for each segment. They identified the factors that prevent and support the behavior for each segment, the influencers who need to be engaged to address the factors, and the corresponding activities.

Access to nutritious snacks is the key barrier for the first segment. To support this segment, counseling materials for health workers and home visitors include a question to assess confidence. If a pregnant woman feels confident to make decisions about snacks, the counseling guide quickly moves to solutions to access these foods.

Social norms prevent the second segment from eating between meals. To support this segment, counseling through home visitors engages family members to reflect on expectations and offer more support.

When behaviors improve in these segments of pregnant women, the most amenable to change, the activity can add in activities for other segments.



Photo: Morgana Wingard



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May 2023

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