

# Researching with policymakers: pleasures and pitfalls

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# Aim of the session

Present insights into the pitfalls and pleasures of interviewing policy-makers in public health policy research

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# Why research with policy makers

Better communication, interaction and partnerships between policymakers and researchers will positively influence the impact of research on policy and maximise policy capacity in general

# Why research with policy makers

Access to specialist knowledge of the policy process

Test the political feasibility for policy options

Access to other information such as grey literature

Triangulation with other data sources

Identify beliefs, relationships and interactions

Access to institutional knowledge

Create opportunity for knowledge transfer

# Why research with policy makers

Information would not have been discovered by other methods

Confidentiality enabled free expression

Researchers were able to probe, elaborate and clarify responses, and identify the attitudes, values and barriers to the policy process

# Who do we include as policy-makers

Policy makers includes bureaucracy, elected politicians, academics, and those focused on both implementation and formal policy decision making

# What research projects have used policy- maker interviews?

WRMHD has been conducting research with Māori policy makers over the past four years focusing on three distinctive research areas; Healthy Eating Healthy Action, Working for Families Policy and Smoke free Environments

# Research Design: Recruitment

## Purposive and Snowball

Initial list:

- Personal networks
- Identifying organisations through documentation
- Advice from key players

# Research Design: Recruitment Purposive and Snowball

Final list:

- Ethnicity of interviewee
- Knowledge, closeness to policy process
- Potential ability to affect policy
- Balance between positive and negative attitudes
- Ability to fill gaps in information
- Ability to speak freely on the issue

# Research Design: Recruitment and initial approaches

Cold calling.

Calling within the researchers personal network

letter s posted and/or emailed

Follow up phone calls and/or emails

# Research Design: Qualitative In-Depth Interviews

Open ended interview schedule

Mix of face to face and telephone interviews

Average length of interview 45mins

Audio recorded

Transcribed



# Research Challenges

Power relationships

Gaining and maintaining access

Seniority and knowledge of researcher

Policy-maker time pressures.

Maintaining confidentiality

# What worked best

Phone as opposed to email approaches

Using personal networks

Persistence

Flexibility

If topic was understood and valued by policymaker

Sending material in advance

Interviewer had seniority/knowledge of the context