

Synthesise data across evaluations

These methods answer questions about a type of intervention rather than about a single case – questions such as “Do these types of interventions work?” or “For whom, in what ways and under what circumstances do they work?”

The task involves locating the evidence (often involving bibliographic searches of databases, with particular emphasis on finding unpublished studies), assessing its quality and relevance in order to decide whether or not to include it, extracting the relevant information, and synthesizing it. Different options use different strategies and have different definitions of what constitutes credible evidence.

Methods

- [Best evidence synthesis](#)

Best evidence synthesis is a synthesis that, like a realist synthesis, draws on a wide range of evidence (including single case studies) and explores the impact of context.

- [Lessons learnt](#)

Lessons learnt can take the form of describing what should or should not be done, or describing the outcome of different processes.

- [Meta-analysis](#)

Meta-analysis is a statistical method for combining numeric evidence from experimental (and sometimes quasi-experimental studies) to produce a weighted average effect size.

- [Meta-ethnography](#)

Meta-ethnography is a method for combining data from qualitative evaluation and research, especially ethnographic data, by translating concepts and metaphors across studies.

- [Rapid evidence assessment](#)

Rapid Evidence Assessment is a process that uses a combination of key informant interviews and targeted literature searches to produce a report in a few days or a few weeks.

- [Realist synthesis](#)

A realist synthesis is the synthesis of a wide range of evidence that seeks to identify underlying causal mechanisms and explore how they work under what conditions, answering the question "what works for whom under what circumstances?" rather than "what works?"

- [Systematic review](#)

A systematic review is an approach to synthesising evidence from multiple studies. Systematic reviews use methodical approaches and criteria to identify relevant studies for inclusion, assess their quality, extract data and synthesise evidence.

- [Textual narrative synthesis](#)

Dividing the studies into relatively homogenous groups, reporting study characteristics within each group, and articulating broader similarities and differences among the groups

- [Vote counting](#)

Vote counting is a simple but limited method for synthesizing evidence from multiple evaluations and involves comparing the number of positive studies (studies showing benefit) with the number of negative studies (studies showing harm).

Resources

Websites

- [Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre \(EPPI-Centre\)](#)