

An approach to assessing data richness in primary qualitative studies

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The problem

In a qualitative evidence synthesis, too much data due to a large number of studies can undermine a thorough analysis and sampling of included studies may be needed.

Our solution

To help guide purposive sampling, we developed a five-step scale for assessing the data richness of included primary studies.



Assessment guidance	Examples of data of different richness	Data richness score
Very little qualitative data presented that relate to the synthesis objective. Those findings that are presented are fairly descriptive.	A mixed methods study using open ended survey questions or a more detailed qualitative study where only part of the data relates to the synthesis objective	1
Some qualitative data presented that relate to the synthesis objective	A limited number of qualitative findings from a mixed methods or qualitative study	2
A reasonable amount of qualitative data that relate to the synthesis objective	A typical qualitative research article in a journal with a smaller word limit and often using simple thematic analysis	3
A good amount and depth of qualitative data that relate to the synthesis objective	A qualitative research article in a journal with a larger word count that includes more context and setting descriptions and a more in-depth presentation of the findings	4
A large amount and depth of qualitative data that relate in depth to the synthesis objective.	A detailed ethnography or a published qualitative article with the same objectives as the synthesis	5



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Ames H, Glenton C, Lewin S. Purposive sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis: a worked example from a synthesis on parental perceptions of vaccination communication. BMC Medical Research Methodology. 2019;19(1):26.



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