

Case study: Campaign evaluation

TNS assists in evaluating the success of a government campaign in the UK

Background

In 2003 the '5 a day local community initiative' was set up to encourage people in 66 programme areas across the UK to eat at least five portions of fruit or vegetables a day. The Big Lottery Fund made £100,000 available over the course of 2 years to 66 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in each of the areas. Activities included home delivery services, improving transport to local markets, voucher schemes, media campaigns, growing and cookery skills and promoting networking among existing healthy food groups. In 2003, TNS were commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund (previously known as the New Opportunities Fund) to evaluate this initiative.

Objective

The aims of the research were to:

- Measure change in consumption (intake) of fruit and vegetables amongst representative samples of the adult private household population targeted for intervention in each of the participating programme areas both pre-intervention and post-intervention.
- Measure changes in access, awareness and knowledge relating to the benefits of increased fruit and vegetable consumption in representative samples of adults drawn from each of the participating 66 programme areas both pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Actions

There were four stages to the project which involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative research.

1. Pre-test survey – a pre-intervention survey to collect baseline quantitative data before commencement of the local activities. 150 areas acted as a control group.
2. Process review – a survey of the 66 funded PCTs designed to develop a detailed picture of the 5 a day activities and to assess lessons learned from the experience.
3. Case studies – using results from the Process Review, programme areas were selected to take part in qualitative research to better understand the activities and to observe and interview participants.
4. Post-test survey – a post-intervention survey to collect data after the conclusion of local activities. This 'repeat' survey provided results that measured change in consumption attitudes and knowledge about eating more fruit and vegetables.

Results

The results suggested there had been substantial improvements in the awareness of the recommended number of fruit and vegetable portions, the assessment of fruit and vegetable portion size and the health implications associated with fruit and vegetable consumption.

There was also evidence of an overall increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, which whilst extending beyond the programme areas, was particularly powerful amongst males, younger people and the more deprived programme areas.

Recommendations

The evaluation found that there have been greater levels of improvement in awareness and understanding of the issues and implications of eating fruit and vegetables than in overall consumption levels. This finding is common in the area of health evaluation – change in knowledge and attitudes often shows greater impact than change in behaviour.