

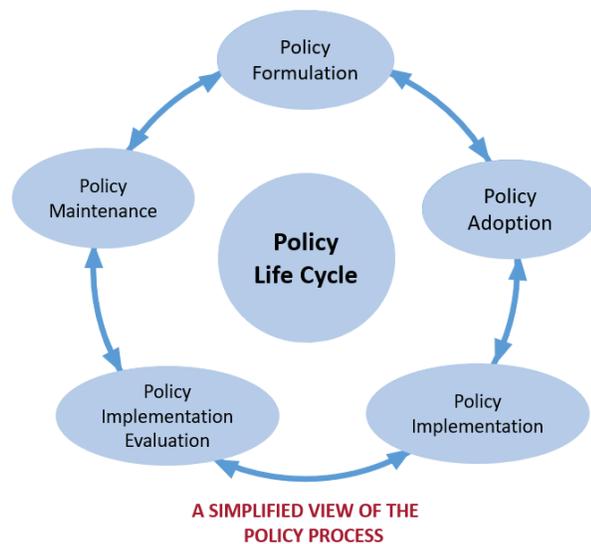


RESOURCES FOR POLICY RESEARCH

HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH aims to understand how policies, regulations, and practices may influence population health. Translating research into evidence-based policies is an important approach to improve population health and address health disparities.

The policy process, although complex and dynamic, provides an opportunity to ask different types of research questions and apply various methodologies – from public health law to health services research to cost-effectiveness to policy implementation and dissemination.

Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research can be conducted at different stages of the policy process. For example, researchers may be interested in understanding what evidence is available on the topic or how this evidence is used to formulate policy solutions. Research may also examine different factors that may influence the implementation of policies. Finally, assessing the health impacts or unintended consequences of a policy, as well as the factors that facilitate its sustainment, are important research topics.



HARVARD CATALYST POLICY ATLAS is a free, web-based, curated research platform that catalogues downloadable policy-relevant data, use cases, and instructional materials and tools to facilitate health policy research. The Policy Atlas includes data on various health topics and policies and may be used for research, evaluation, or a quick summary of state rankings or health trends. The topics vary from health laws and bills, to social and environmental determinants of health, to health disparities, and other topics.

RESEARCH CONSULTS

The Harvard Catalyst Community Engagement program offers consults with policy researchers to support your policy-relevant research project. This includes conceptualizing your study, providing support to identify policy data sources, advising on study design and analysis, and assisting with translation and dissemination of the research findings. Email community@catalyst.harvard.edu to set up your brief consultation.

Website: <https://catalyst.harvard.edu/programs/communityengagement/communityresources.html>

EXAMPLES OF POLICY RESEARCH

A study comprehensively reviewed existing state legislation on school physical education (PE) requirements to identify evidence-based policies. The authors found that despite frequent PE bill introduction, the number of evidence-based bills was relatively low.

This is an example of a policy adoption study.

Eyler AA, Brownson RC, Aytur SA, Craddock AL, Doescher M, Evenson KR, Kerr J, Maddock J, Pluto DL, Steinman L, O'Hara Tompkins N. Examination of trends and evidence-based elements in state physical education legislation: A content analysis. *Journal of School Health*. 2010 Jul;80(7):326-32.

To better understand factors that may affect the process and the success of policy implementation, a political analysis was conducted to identify stakeholder groups that are likely to play a critical role in the process. The results revealed that 6 groups impact the implementation process: interest groups, bureaucratic, budget, leadership, beneficiary, and external actors.

This is an example of a policy implementation study.

Campos PA, Reich MR. Political analysis for health policy implementation. *Health Systems & Reform*. 2019 Jul 3;5(3):224-35.

A study examined whether a policy ban on tobacco product sales near schools could reduce existing socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities in tobacco retailer density in Missouri and New York. The findings suggested that the policy ban would reduce or eliminate existing disparities in tobacco retailer density by income level and by proportion of African American residents.

This is an example of a policy impact evaluation.

Ribisl KM, Luke DA, Bohannon DL, Sorg AA, Moreland-Russell S. Reducing disparities in tobacco retailer density by banning tobacco product sales near schools. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. 2017 Feb 1;19(2):239-44.

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Health Policy Analysis and Evidence](#): CDC's resource on health policy analysis and evidence-driven policy to improve population health.
- [Health in All Policies \(American Public Health Association\)](#): a policy approach to address social and other factors that influence health and equity.
- [Four-part webinar series on policy evaluation \(National Collaboration on Childhood Obesity Research\)](#): seminar series aims to increase skills of researchers and practitioners in policy evaluation effectiveness.
- [Research Tools \(Center for Health Economics and Policy, Wash U\)](#): health economics and policy research tools, including cost effectiveness, policy analysis toolkit, and policy analysis web series.
- [Theory & Methods \(Center for Public Health Law Research\)](#): public law/ legal epidemiology methods for conducting research on the impact of laws and legislation on public health.
- [Introduction to Legal Mapping \(ChangeLab Solutions\)](#): an introduction to legal mapping, a method to determine what laws exist on a certain topic, collect and summarize policy data, and ultimately estimate the effects of these policies on health outcomes.
- [The Methods Centers at RAND](#): a resource on research methods for conducting policy research, including qualitative and mixed methods, decision making, causal inference, decision making and data science and gaming approaches.