

3.1 Steps in deciding whether and how to take action

People can decide whether and how to take action on impulse (often as part of a habit-driven, non-conscious process) or after reflection (as part of a deliberative, conscious process that can include finding and using evidence).(1) For the latter, approaching decision-making as a series of steps can help to make explicit the questions that may be asked and the nature of the decisions, even if many people don't follow steps at all or don't follow them in order. Here we introduce two of the four types of decision-makers who are the focus of this chapter (government policymakers and citizens, in this case those acting as community leaders), and we foreshadow the types of questions that can be answered with the evidence that is the focus of the next chapter (see **sections 4.2** and **4.3**). For decision-makers like government policymakers, **section 2.4** can also help in step 1.



**or ensuring the chosen option makes an optimal impact at acceptable cost*

Steps	Related questions	Decisions for a government policymaker	Decisions for a citizen or community leader
1	How big is the problem? Is the problem getting worse or is it bigger here than elsewhere? How do different people describe or experience the problem and its causes?	Should we pay attention to this problem given all the others we face as a government?	Should I pay attention to this problem given all the others that the people and community I care about face?
2	What good might come of it? What could go wrong? Does one option achieve more for the same investment? Can we adapt something that worked elsewhere while still getting the benefits? Which groups support which option?	Should we take any action to address this problem and, if yes, which option should we select?	Should I take any action to address this problem and, if yes, what action (e.g., talk to others about changing their behaviour, work with fellow community members on local solutions, or contact elected officials)?
3	What will get in the way or help us in reaching and achieving desired impacts among the right people? What strategies should we use to reach and achieve desired impacts among the right people?	Should we take any additional steps to increase the chance that the selected option does what we intend it to do?	Should I work with fellow community members and encourage elected officials to take steps to ensure the selected option reaches the people and community I care about?
4	Is the chosen option reaching those who can benefit from it? Is the chosen option achieving desired impacts?	Should we take any additional steps to give us the numbers we need to tell a success story or to correct our course if need be?	[As above]... to ensure we have the numbers we need to know whether we're succeeding or failing?