

4.2 Definitions of forms in which evidence is typically encountered

We provide below simple definitions of each form of evidence. We have adapted many of these from others' definitions, with the goal of more clearly differentiating the eight forms of evidence while also showing how they interconnect. We also note how each form of evidence relates to any of the four steps in a decision-making process.



Together with [section 4.3](#), which describes how each step in a decision-making process relates to forms of evidence, this section builds on the list of decision-making questions first introduced in [section 3.1](#).

Forms of evidence	Definitions	Steps where it adds the greatest value			
Data analytics 	Systematic analysis of raw data to make conclusions about that information	1			4
Modeling 	Use of mathematical equations to simulate real-world scenarios (i.e., what is likely to happen if we don't intervene) and options (i.e., what happens if we intervene) in a virtual environment	1	2		
Evaluation 	Systematic assessment of the implementation (monitoring) and impacts (evaluation) of an initiative for the purposes of learning or decision-making				4
Behavioural/ implementation research 	Study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of effective approaches into routine practices at the personal, professional, organization and government levels (implementation research) Systematic examination of what people (citizens and professionals) do, what drives them to do it, and what can sustain or change what they do (behavioural research)			3	

<p>Qualitative insights</p> 	<p>Study of (typically non-numerical) data – obtained from interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, first-hand observation, participant-observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts – to understand how individuals and groups view and experience problems, options, implementation considerations (barriers, facilitators and strategies), and metrics</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>Evidence synthesis</p> 	<p>Systematic process of identifying, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the findings from all studies that have addressed the same question in order to arrive at an overall understanding of what is known, including how this may vary by groups (e.g., racialized communities) and contexts (e.g., low socio-economic neighbourhoods)</p>	1	2*	3	4
<p>Technology assessment/ cost-effectiveness analysis</p> 	<p>Assessment of all relevant aspects of a ‘technology’ (e.g., a product or service), including safety, effectiveness, and economic, social and ethical implications (technology assessment), with an evidence synthesis often contributing to the assessment of effectiveness</p> <p>Comparison of the relative outcomes (effectiveness) and costs of two or more options, again with an evidence synthesis often contributing to the assessment of effectiveness</p>		2*	3	4
<p>Guidelines</p> 	<p>Systematically developed statements that recommend a particular course of action, often for citizens and professionals and sometimes for organizations and governments, with one or more evidence syntheses contributing to the assessment of effectiveness, values and preferences, and other factors</p>		2		

**Adds the greatest value in this step but can add value in other steps*

Note that briefs, infographics, plain-language summaries and other documents derived from any form of evidence or any combination of forms of evidence can be used to package key information for a distinct type of decision-maker. Such ‘derivative evidence products’ can be used in dissemination and implementation initiatives targeting such decision-makers and add value in all steps.