

# How to Do Audience Segmentation

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**Audience segmentation** is a key activity within an audience analysis. It is the process of dividing a large audience into smaller groups of people - or **segments** - who have similar needs, values or characteristics. Segmentation recognizes that different groups will respond differently to social and behavior change communication (SBCC) messages and interventions.

## Why Segment an Audience?

Segmenting audiences enables a program to focus on those audience members who are most critical to reach and also to design the most effective and efficient strategy for helping each audience adopt new behaviors. Audience segmentation enables programs to match audiences, messages, media, products and services based on the specific needs and preferences of the audience. Tailoring an SBCC strategy to the characteristics, needs and values of important audience segments improves the chances for desired behavior change.

## Who Should Conduct an Audience Segmentation?

A small, focused team should conduct the **audience segmentation**. Members should include communication staff, health/social service staff and, when available, research staff. Typically, the same team conducting the audience analysis will also conduct the **audience segmentation**.

## When Should an Audience Segmentation Take Place?

Audience segmentation takes place during audience analysis. To gain stakeholder input, the **audience segmentation** can also be part of the **stakeholders' workshop**.

## Estimated Time Needed

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Within audience analysis, **audience segmentation** can be completed in a few hours.

## Learning Objectives

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After completing the activities in the **audience segmentation** guide, the team will:

- Define the **audience segments** for a particular health issue.
- Select an appropriate **audience segment** for the intervention.

## Prerequisites

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- [Situation Analysis](#)
- [Audience Analysis](#)

## Steps

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### Step 1: Review Audience Information

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Review the information collected on the primary audience(s) during the [situation analysis](#) and [audience analysis](#). This information will help the team understand whether and how best to segment the audience(s). The team should review:

- How each audience is affected by the problem
- Demographics
- Size (number of people in the audience)
- Knowledge and behaviors
- Psychographics
- Other information as appropriate.

### Step 2: Decide Whether to Segment

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Based on the audience(s) identified and their characteristics, first determine whether segmentation is necessary. Segmentation is recommended if:

The audience cannot be reached effectively with the same messages, interventions and channels. The audience (i.e. sexually active youth) may require different messages, interventions, or channels if:

1. Certain segments are more heavily impacted by the problem (e.g. orphan girls are more likely to contract HIV)
2. Certain segments have significantly different worldviews, needs or concerns (e.g. sexually active, urban boys view sex as a power symbol while sexually active young girls view sex as a means to receiving gifts)
3. Certain segments are more difficult to reach (e.g. homeless sexually active youth do not have access to TV and need to be reached through community workers)

The program has a budget that allows for multiple approaches. Segmentation requires extra effort and resources (e.g. time to properly segment audiences, funds and staff time to design separate messages and materials, funds to use additional channels). If the budget does not allow for multiple approaches, identify the most important audience segment to reach and focus on that segment.

### Step 3: Determine Segmentation Criteria

If it makes sense to segment, then the team needs to decide what criteria to use to segment the audience(s). First, look at the primary audience(s) and identify traits that make a subgroup significantly different from other audience members. A significant difference is one that requires a different messages or approach. These differences are typically based on socio-demographic, geographic, behavioral or psychographic differences among members of the primary audience.

Socio-demographic	Geographic	Behavioral	Psychographic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Occupation</li> <li>• Income</li> <li>• Marital status</li> <li>• Family size</li> <li>• Ethnicity/language</li> <li>• Religion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban, rural, peri-urban</li> <li>• Region, district, community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant behavior</li> <li>• Stage of change/readiness to change</li> <li>• Frequency of behavior</li> <li>• Consistency of behavior</li> <li>• Duration of behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits sought</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Activities</li> <li>• Interests</li> <li>• Attitudes, opinions</li> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Preferences</li> </ul>

**Example:**

The desk review revealed that *family size* influences a couple's decision to use contraceptive methods:

- Couples with no children rarely used contraception because of the desire to prove fertility.
- Couples with one or more children were more likely to use a contraceptive method.

The program team would need to provide different messages and materials to couples with no children. The criteria for **segmentation** would be *family size*.



### Step 4: Segment Audiences

Segment the audience by using the criteria identified in Step 3. There are various methods teams can use to segment audiences.

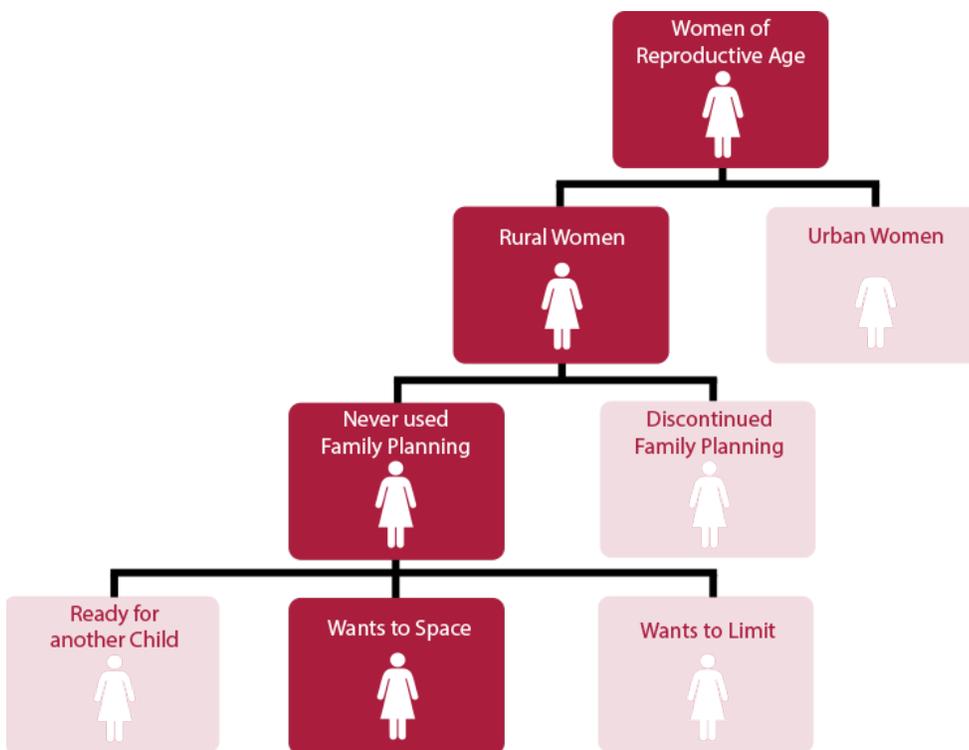
One option is to use a segmentation table. In Column 1, list the primary audience(s) chosen

during the audience analysis. For each audience, identify potential segments based on the criteria from Step 3.

Potential Audience(s)	Possible Segment by:			
	Socio-Demographic Differences	Geographic Differences	Behavioral Differences	Psychographic Differences
<b>Women of Reproductive Age</b> 	18-24, Unmarried  Married women with no children  Catholic	Rural  Urban  Zed Town	Currently using a FP method  In the Preparation stage of behavior change  Recently discontinued use of a FP method	Value convenience  Believe FP is inconsistent with religious practice  Desire to be a role model (benefit sought)

Adapted from *A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy*

Another option is to create a segmentation tree, starting with a potential audience and dividing it by differences thought to be important. Stop when the need or ability to target differences ends. The example below presents one line of a segmentation tree for women of reproductive age.



A complete segmentation table or tree highlights potential audience segments. In the examples above, many segments are identified, including: current FP users, urban dwellers, women who value convenience, and women who want to space children. The program team

now needs to determine which segments it should prioritize.

## Step 5: Decide which Segments to Target

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Deciding which segments to target and how to approach them is critical. If the program team identified more audience segments than it can or needs to reach, narrow the list. Here are some suggestions on how to narrow the list:

- **Impact:** Look at the size of the segment and ask whether behavior change in this segment will have a significant impact on the problem. For example, will focusing on women with no children significantly increase contraceptive use and decrease maternal mortality? Are there enough women without children to make a difference?
- **Accessibility:** Determine whether the program team is able to reach the particular segment with the resources available. For example, does the program team have connections with the rural audience? Can it work with rural leaders to ensure its message is delivered?
- **Program priorities:** Programs often need to show impact early and quickly. In such cases, it may be necessary to choose audience segments whose behavior will be relatively easy to change. For example, the team may need to focus first on those who are already thinking about making a change (in the Preparation stage of behavior change) and then focus on harder-to-reach segments—requiring more time and effort—later in the program.

Using the suggestions above, finalize which segments the program will target. The number of segments will be based largely on the resources available and program goals.

## Step 6: Assess the Proposed Segments

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Once segments have been selected, ensure they are valid and usable. Use a checklist to ensure each segment meets the criteria for effective segmentation (*see [Audience Segmentation Checklist](#) in templates*). If a defined segment does not meet the criteria, it is best to drop it and consider other segments.

<b>Homogeneous</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> The members of the audience segment are similar in a relevant way.	<b>Why it is important:</b> This is the basis of audience segmentation – that the members of each segment are similar in terms of needs, values and/or characteristics.
<b>Heterogeneous</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> Each segment is relatively unique, as compared to the other segments that have been identified.	<b>Why it is important:</b> This demonstrates that the broader audience has been effectively divided into sets of differing communication needs.
<b>Measurable</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> Data from the situation analysis or other research should indicate the size of the audience segment.	<b>Why it is important:</b> Measurements allow programs to evaluate whether to focus on a particular segment.
<b>Substantial</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> The audience segment is large enough, in terms of potential impact on public health, to warrant the program's attention.	<b>Why it is important:</b> Programs should have a minimum expectation for the impact of their investment. Therefore, programs should only consider segments that are big enough or important enough to impact public health.
<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> The audience segment is reachable, particularly in terms of communication and access to products or services needed to address the problem.	<b>Why it is important:</b> Each segment needs to be able to be reached and communicated with efficiently.
<b>Actionable/ Practical</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> The program is able to implement a distinctive set of messages and interventions for each audience segment.	<b>Why it is important:</b> The program must have the resources and ability to address the segments identified.
<b>Responsive</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<b>What it means:</b> Each audience segment can be expected to respond better to a distinct mix of messages and interventions, rather than a generic offering.	<b>Why it is important:</b> If the segment will not be more responsive to a distinct approach, then the segment can probably be combined with another similar segment.

Adapted from *Criteria for Market Segmentation*

## Step 7: Develop Audience Profiles

The [audience analysis](#) guide outlines how to develop **audience profiles**. Profiles might need to be refined or added based on further audience segmentation. Write the [creative brief](#) with the profile for each segment in mind.

## Templates

[Audience Segmentation Checklist](#)

## Tips & Recommendations

- Ensure the program has resources to address multiple segments before engaging in the process of segmentation.

- Look for ways to leverage funds with other programs so that additional segments can be reached with tailored messages and interventions.

## Lessons Learned

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Ensure that the segments chosen are different enough to warrant different messages and interventions.

## Resources and References

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### Resources

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[A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy](#)

[Segmenting the Market to Reach the Targeted Population](#)

[Market Segmentation Study Guide](#)

[Audience Segmentation Guide](#)

### References

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- [CDCynergy](#)
  - [Market Segmentation Study Guide](#)
  - O’Sullivan, G.A., Yonkler, J.A., Morgan, W., and Merritt, A.P. [A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy](#), Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs, March 2003.
  - MailChimp. [Audience Segmentation](#). Retrieved August 7, 2019.
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