

Glossary for MN Epidemiological Profile Training Fall 2007

Attributable Fractions: The proportion of deaths from a certain cause that is attributable to a particular substance (Alcohol, Tobacco, etc.).

Causal Inference: The thought process that tests whether a relation of cause to effect exists.

Census: A survey of an entire population. For example, the Minnesota Student Survey is a type of census.

Consequence: A phenomenon that follows and is caused by some previous phenomenon. Examples in the profile include traffic fatalities (caused by alcohol consumption) and lung cancer.

Consumption: The use of a substance. In the profile, also may include behavioral consumption, such as impaired driving.

Denominator: In a fraction, the number on the bottom. This is the number you are dividing by (see numerator).

Descriptor: Something (as a word or characteristic feature) that serves to describe or identify.

Epidemiology: The statistical study of the distribution and determinants of disease in populations.

Frequency: The number, proportion, or percentage of items in a particular category in a set of data.

Generalization: How well, based on a specific set of observations conducted in a given setting at a particular time, one can draw more general conclusions.

Incidence: The rate at which new cases of disease arise in a population.

Magnitude: A term that describes how “big” the problem is.

Morbidity: State of ill-health produced by a disease.

Mortality Rate: The ratio of deaths to number of individuals in a population; usually expressed as number of deaths per hundred or per thousand population for a given time.

Needs Assessment: Uses data to define the nature and extent of substance abuse problems, identifies affected populations, identifies underlying causal factors that lead to consumption patterns, and uses findings to select appropriate strategies.

Numerator: In a fraction, the number on top. This is the being divided (see denominator).

Percentage: A part of a whole expressed in hundredths. A percentage is a type of rate.

Population: A group of individual persons, objects, or items from which samples are taken for statistical measurement.

Prevalence: The proportion of the host population with a disease (or with some marker of past or present infection) at a particular time

Random Selection or Random Sampling: Each unit of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

Rate: A quantity, amount, or degree of something measured per unit of something else. For example, X number of suicides per 10,000 people

Ratio: A systematic and consistent way of reporting the relationship between two factors or rates.

Readiness Assessment: Assesses a community's awareness of, interest in, and ability and willingness to support substance abuse prevention initiatives.

Resource Assessment: Assesses organizational capacity and resources to implement and monitor the strategies selected to address the substance abuse related problems identified by the needs assessment.

Risk Factors: Something which increases risk or susceptibility.

Sample: A sample is a subset of the population considered representative of groups of people to whom results can be generalized.

Severity: A way of interpreting how “bad” or “serious” the problem is; can be assessed by the ratio of one rate to another.

Survey: A questioning or canvassing of persons selected at random or by quota to obtain information or opinions to be analyzed.

Time Trend: To show a tendency over time; to extend in a general direction or follow a general course.