

Windshield and Walking Surveys in Community Health Nursing

Namita Batra Guin

Associate Professor, Department of Community Health Nursing, Rama University, Kanpur, U.P., India
Email: namitabatra86[at]gmail.com

Abstract: *Nurses must be equipped to plan services for individuals, families, and the community. In order to effectively plan, it is essential that they are aware of the resources specific to the community, a client resides in, to allow for the identification of health-related resources, and to understand gaps in services. The windshield and walking surveys in community health nursing are used as tools to provide a visual overview of a community, to give a better understanding of the available resources in the community. The data provides background and context for working with individuals and families in their community. Information gathered from the survey is utilized in the effective planning of the nursing interventions for the community.*

Keywords: Windshield, Walking Survey, Community, Health, Nursing

1. Introduction

Community need assessment is first and most essential step in planning interventions or effective projects in community. The community need assessment not only helps in understanding the dynamics of the community but also allows beneficiaries to make informed decisions.

Windshield and walking surveys are the observation tools used in community assessment. A community health nurse uses windshield and walking surveys to assess potential needs in his or her community. This is completed by driving through the community and evaluating the current condition of housing, physical set up, people and environment. Data collected from this type of survey enables the community health nurse to determine existing needs and areas of collaboration with local officials in order to develop goals, objectives and interventions to address the needs of the community.

Windshield and walking surveys

The systematic observation about a community made from a moving vehicle is called as windshield survey. The systematic observation about a community made on foot is called as walking survey. Both methods are useful in understanding community in general as well as for specific condition or aspect.

Windshield surveys are generally helpful in areas which are large in size and hence harder to observe through walking surveys. On the other hand, a walking survey is a better choice to understand things that are harder to see from a moving vehicle. The surveys allow for the observation of boundaries, housing conditions, use of open spaces, shopping areas, schools, religious facilities, human services (such as hospitals and physician offices), modes of transportation, protective services (such as fire stations), and overall life within the community.

Both types of survey help to assess general needs of the community and examine more specific facets of the community's physical, social, or economic character. Following are some of the possibilities studied by these surveys.

- Housing structure and condition of the community.
- Infrastructure needs – roads, streetlights, etc.
- The presence or absence of functioning of businesses and industrial facilities
- The amount of activity on the streets at various times of the day, week, or year
- The noise level in various parts of the community
- The amount and movement of traffic at various times of day
- The location and condition of public buildings.

Nature of the windshield and walking survey

The windshield and walking surveys should be realistic in nature. They are planned in advance and are structured to gather the information in logical manner. The information about the community is always collected on the basis of the objectives set prior to the surveys. These surveys collect more physical and sociological information about the community. They provide direct observation of the community, hence provide first-hand information about the community. They are inexpensive, time-efficient method of assessing the social environment of the community. This survey help in better understanding of the community and provides insight about the resources available and their utilization by the community members.

Importance and significance

The survey helps in encouraging community participation. It is one of the quickest ways to get an overview of the entire community. The survey also helps in comparing different parts of the community. They enable a community health nurse to focus nursing care for the people residing in the community. It helps community health nurse to understand specific aspects of the community like: community relationship, surrounding environment, resources, social structure of the community etc.

2. Process of Conducting Survey

- 1) Determine the person to conduct survey. It should preferably be a team, where each member has been assigned to observe a particular aspect and make recording of it. This helps in making the surveys more effective. It is always required that team has their route

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mapped out prior to the conduction of survey. It is also desired that team should have all supplies readily available which are necessary for conducting survey.

- 2) Decide on the types of observations or questions to be answered in the survey. Survey should include both primary and secondary questions. The team should decide prior on the type of observations and questions to be answered during the survey.
- 3) Decide on the areas to be included in the survey. Surveyor should choose the area that best reflect the aspects of the community under survey. Also which location is best for the health related work, one wants to provide. E.g. Immunization camps, meeting places, panchayat ghar, anganwadi centers etc.
- 4) Decide the date and time of the survey. Consider that time of the day, week or weekend or season may affect the survey. Survey may be repeated more than once in order to capture differences between community conditions or activities at different times.
- 5) Training people for conducting survey. Train the person to cover all the aspects to be studied under the survey. He/she should be unobtrusive, should make notes of the observations, discuss findings before moving forward. It is also advisable to always pay attention to the safety, while conducting survey.
- 6) Conducting Survey: Once the team reaches on the route, the members should immediately start making observations. As per their responsibilities the team can make written observations and can also take videography wherever necessary. If a larger team is available for the purpose, photographs and navigation (in windshield survey) can also be added to provide comprehensive view of the community.

In case of walking surveys, it is always essential to have larger team to cover the community area in all its aspects. The team members can focus on particular tasks to enrich survey with variety of perspectives.

It is always good to have meeting, after the team has finished the survey, to discuss the individual findings or difficulties encountered during the survey. The longer the team delays the meeting, less vivid be the member's memories of their observations.

3. Guidelines

Windshield Survey

- Use a map and navigation
- Use a team of at least two as it's difficult to observe closely and drive safely at the same time.
- Drive at a moderate speed, and avoid unexpected actions
- Drive both on major and minor streets, particularly in residential neighbourhoods.
- Pull over at regular intervals to make and compare notes
- Try to be inconspicuous.

Walking survey

- Study a map beforehand, or do a drive-through
- Try to work in teams. Teams should probably not be larger than two or three, unless you're splitting up.
- To experience community take part in everyday activities.

- Go inside public buildings and cultural institutions
- Sit down in a quiet place to take notes

Advantages and Disadvantages of Windshield and walking surveys

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of windshield and walking surveys

Survey	Advantages	Disadvantages
Windshield Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large quantity of data can be collected • Data can be collected at traffic speed. • Multiple type of data can be collected at one go. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require more team of people. • Requires map and navigation • Can only be used on motorable pathways.
Walking Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed information can be collected. • No capital expenditure required • Easy to Conduct • Can be used for smaller areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Potential for high variability in the data • Can be tiring experience for surveyors • Not suitable for larger areas.

Components of windshield and walking surveys

The survey should include the following components:

- 1) **Boundaries:** Geographical boundaries, political and administrative boundaries, neighbourhood.
- 2) **Housing structure and zones:** Structure of houses, the type of dwellings, zones in the community.
- 3) **Parks or recreational area:** Playing area for children or recreational areas for adults, its maintenance and adequacy, safety, availability of community centres and its usage.
- 4) **Common areas:** areas for social gathering, its maintenance and usage by the people.
- 5) **Stores, shops or market:** Common market to buy goods and food products, its distance from residential places, types of stores or shops, means of transport used by people to reach stores/shops.
- 6) **Transportation:** Private and public vehicle usage by the people in community, kind of transportation used, type of people using transportation, conditions of roads, streets or nearby highways.
- 7) **Communication:** Newspaper or magazine stands in the community, informational posters on streets, wall painted messages, other types of communication channels.
- 8) **Service centers:** Health care services, social services, schools, colleges, employment, offices etc.
- 9) **Industries:** Any major industries located in the area, type of industry, type of occupation evident.
- 10) **Protective services:** Fire and police stations located its distance, evidence of police and fire services in the area.
- 11) **Signs of decaying:** maintenance of area, garbage condition, abandoned vehicles, places for rodents or other wildlife to hide, vacant plots, condition of roads, vacant houses or buildings.
- 12) **People in community:** People available during daytime, evidence of particular classes or caste of people, general lifestyle of people.

- 13) **Ethnicity and religion:** predominant ethnic groups in the area, evidence of variety of ethnic groups in area, religious places in the community area, evidence of people with different faith or religion.
- 14) **Politics:** Evidence of political activities, signs and posters of different political parties or leaders in the community.
- 15) **Sample: windshield/walking survey:** Indian Village (Example)

<p>Housing and zoning The houses are 30-50 years old and are in moderately good condition with mostly joint family homes with animal shelters in majority houses. Homes have space both in the front and back. The architectural designs vary due to preferences and economic conditions.</p>	<p>Transportation People in the neighbourhood ride bicycles or drive vehicles: bikes or tractors for their main transportation. You may also see people walking during day time. There is no public transportation in the neighbourhood. This may affect the health of the community as people may not be able to go to hospitals, health departments or clinics. This could also cause a potential issue for those working farther distances.</p>	<p>Ethnicity, language and religion Belong to common ethnic and racial group. Speaks Hindi language Majority practice Hindu religion, however, few minority groups can also be seen in the community.</p>
<p>Open space Most open spaces are farm land or greenhouses. There is no specific area for playing for children. Adults have their social gathering at panchayat ghar or at chaupal.</p>	<p>Service centres There is a health centre which is roughly 5kms away from the community. A dental clinic which is 2km from the area. There is an elementary school about a kilometer and middle and high school 3-5 km away from the community area.</p>	<p>Politics The community has evidence of political parties visiting the area as evident by few posters. Community mostly follows one political party as evidence by the signs in the community.</p>
<p>Boundaries It is near to the highway, with non-marked neighbourhood. The area can be seen from highway have a turn near 8th milestone, which leads to the community area.</p>	<p>Stores and market There are several stores within the community, but main market is 10 kms away where every items of daily use can be found. The market is visited by these people quite often.</p>	<p>Signs of decay There are no signs of decay in the community. There is no trash in the streets. The community is well maintained. There are no signs of abandonment. The community appears to be flourishing.</p>
<p>Industries and employment There is one sugar mill at 7km of distance, where few people from community are also employed, as many men could be seen walking in the mill in the working hours with their lunch boxes. Apart from this agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the community area</p>	<p>Protective services There is one police chowki 5km away from the area, however fire station could not be located near to the community.</p>	<p>Communication Many people have cable television, the cell phones can also be seen with people. Magazine stand can be seen, few people visit in early hours of the day. Mostly people read Hindi newspapers and magazines</p>

4. Conclusion

The combination of both types of surveys can be best way to gather the comprehensive data about the needs of the community. Motorable areas can be covered through windshield surveys while more in depth information can be gathered by walking survey. Before conducting such surveys, surveyors should be aware of their own prejudices and opinions. An in-house training can be conducted to avoid the human factors affecting the conduction of the survey.

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