

Main guidelines for coding qualitative feedback data

Based on the Textual Data Analysis Codebook

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Africa region,
COVID-19 Outbreak

Categories and codes

For all types of statements, the categories are summary codes. However these usually have multiple sub-codes for more granular analysis and these are what will appear in the coding sheet.

When looking at a statement/story, it's helpful to think of the code that best fits first, then the category will follow. Categories were made to hold the best grouping of codes that we could, the more important one is the code itself. In Excel the structure will be reversed (category selected before code).

Double-coding

A single comment can be coded into more than one code within its category or belief/observation/rumor, question or suggestion, or it may not fit in these codes and be coded as "other". This is important to consider if counting codes, since there are likely to be more codes than comments. When a statement has more than one main idea, or when it mentions both a highly specific factor, that also fits into a more general category, the statement should be coded the more specific code only. When a comment has two distinct and prominent ideas, it should be coded using two codes. For example, the following comment has two ideas:

COVID-19 does not exist, it is used to make money.

The two ideas are : Belief that disease does not exist or is not real AND Belief that some people/institutions are making money because of the disease.

General coding tips

There is a hierarchy of codes – for example all statements that mention vaccines should be placed in a vaccine-related code, not in a broader category such as preparedness and response activities.

When coding as "Other" or

"Observations_or_beliefs_preparedness_or_response_activities_pertaining_to_the_disease", you may want to make a comment in the free text (in the column "observations") for further analysis if the comment seems important or might generate new codes. Statements that are incomprehensible or irrelevant may also go in "Other" but don't need to be described.

In general, try not to infer what the person means, rather code based on the literal meaning of their statement.

Reviewing comment TYPE provided by volunteers

Types

- Rumor, belief or observation (these are all in one TYPE)
- Question
- Suggestion or request
- Refused to participate or have a conversation
- Appreciation and encouragement
- Sensitive_or_violent_comment

Why we group rumor, belief or observation all in one TYPE - We group rumors, beliefs and observations as one TYPE because it is often impossible to differentiate between them. A rumor, by definition, is something that is not true. A belief is something that the speaker thinks is true, but we don't know if it is true or not. An observation is something seen or experienced firsthand, and we believe it to be true. With the comments from the field, we do not know what is, or is not true, and we do not want to make any judgements about whether it is true or not.

Here is an example: « In centers where patients are treated free of charge, the patients are poorly treated by the nurses; it's better to go to private centers. »

Coders review the choice of code to make sure it is consistent with these rules for TYPE

- **Rumor, belief or observation (these are all in one TYPE)** – This is a statement about what one has seen, heard, experienced, or about what a person believes to be true. In this context, these statements often begin with « People are saying... ». This ends with a period. Basically, these are pieces of information, positive or negative, that are passed around in the community.
- **Question** – Any statement that ends with a question mark (or should have one there). This includes rhetorical questions, questions that are really suggestions, like “why don't we....” This can be frustrating, but we can easily group “why don't we...” type questions with suggestions later, using key word analysis. If we don't do this, we will have two questions that are exactly the same put in different places by different coders. Questions will tell us what people would like to know.
- **Suggestion or request** – This includes any statement about what should be or could be done, and any requests (“we need...”); these are ideas about how things could be improved
- **Appreciation and encouragement** – These are any statements expressing appreciation for what has satisfied people, or encouragement.
- **Sensitive or violent comments/complaints/allegations** - could indicate a threat or violence, sexual exploitation or abuse, or a complaint or allegation (expression of dissatisfaction) against the conduct of a member of the response, which requires investigation and follow-up

We only change TYPE if there is clearly an error. We want to defer to the volunteers, because they were there in person when the statement was made.

In the very rare occasion when a comment is made that could fit into more than one TYPE using the rules above, we go with the way it was coded by the volunteer.