

## Potential Sources of Bias

There are a variety of ways that research might be biased—in design, data analysis, and interpretation. This checklist is designed to help readers evaluate the risk of bias associated with any given product they are reviewing. It does not cast specific doubt on the quality of a research study; rather, it attempts to help the reader identify areas of concern. Every “yes” check should raise a flag and be addressed within the research. A large number of “yes” checks may cast serious doubt on the quality of the research.

Yes	No	Questions for evaluation
		<i>Sponsoring organization</i>
Yes	No	Was the funding source apparent?
Yes	No	Was the research funded by an organization that generally advocates a specific point of view?
Yes	No	Do the findings of the research parallel the organization’s point of view?
		<i>Potential bias of researcher</i>
Yes	No	Is the researcher affiliated with an organization that promotes a specific point of view?
Yes	No	Does the researcher produce studies that consistently generate the same conclusions?
		<i>Executive summary and forward</i>
Yes	No	Was there an executive summary or forward?
Yes	No	If so, were they written by others interpreting the researchers findings? Selective interpretation could change or cloak the actual research findings.
		<i>Selective quotations</i>
Yes	No	Were there boxed off or otherwise emphasized quotations from the text? Frequent use of references removed from the paper’s context can alter the larger meaning of the research and the intent of the researcher.
		<i>Graphic support</i>
Yes	No	Was there frequent use of distracting images? Selective use of charts, graphs, and images can overwhelm other findings. Alterations in scale on charts and graphs can affect the interpretations of data.
		<i>Literature review</i>
Yes	No	Were the findings significantly divergent with the existing body of research?
Yes	No	If so, were any discrepancies explained?
		<i>Data source</i>
Yes	No	Was the data source manipulated to produce analyzable data?
Yes	No	Was the data source selected using an unusual methodology?
Yes	No	Was the data source unusually small or narrow, or tightly controlled by the researcher?
Yes	No	Was the data source self-selected?
		<i>Methodology</i>
Yes	No	Were there significant gaps in the identified methodology?
Yes	No	Were there obvious research questions that were overlooked?
		<i>Data analysis</i>
Yes	No	Were any statistical methods used to manipulate the data during analysis (e.g., identification of control populations, stratified sampling procedures)?
Yes	No	Were claims of causality made when the analysis can only test for correlation?
Yes	No	Was an unusual level of significance used? (levels of significance typically run from .01-.05)
Yes	No	Were data unnecessarily lumped together during analysis?

**Potential Sources of Bias, continued**

		<i>Generalizability</i>
Yes	No	Were the conclusions based on data gathered at only one point in time?
Yes	No	Was the sample small or unique?
Yes	No	Was the population self-selected?
		<i>Conclusions</i>
Yes	No	Were only selected conclusions emphasized?
Yes	No	Were the conclusions overwhelmingly positive or negative?
Yes	No	Were policy recommendations strongly emphasized?
		<i>Peer review and evaluation</i>
Yes	No	Was the research released without review by an outside source (is this “policy by press release”)?