Using Comparative Data

January 2018

What is comparative analysis?

The comparison of two or more sets of data for the purpose of finding similarities or differences in outcomes.
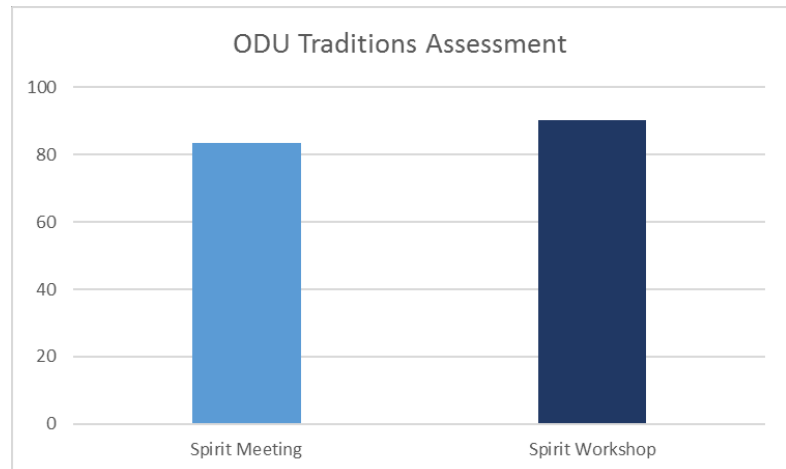
How does comparative data help me?

Comparing data from two or more groups allows you to understand what interventions work best over time. You may not find a practical or statistically significant difference between groups and that is okay. Perhaps the intervention doesn't produce the results you hoped and now you have evidence that supports trying a new method.

Assessment for Relevance

January Brief

Using **comparative data** analyses can help increase confidence in your findings. Comparative data analysis allows you to review two or more data sets and provides evidence that certain strategies produce different results.

Not based on an actual data set. Example only.

In the above graph, the *Office of Spirit Initiatives* is tracking two different methods for teaching students ODU's traditions.

At the beginning of the year, one group of students participated in a "*spirit workshop*" and another set of students participated in a one-on-one "*spirit meeting*" with a peer.

This method allows the spirit coaches to better understand how well their methods are working. *Do students seem to retain more information about ODU traditions with the "spirit workshop" method? Or the "spirit meeting" method?*

Translating your findings into graphics makes it easier to find trends and see the differences between intervention methods. For this example, we can see that students in the "spirit workshop" scored better on the ODU Traditions Assessment than the students who had "spirit meetings." Thus, we have evidence to support use of the "spirit workshop" method over the "spirit meeting" method.

We can also conduct inferential statistical tests (such as simple t-tests) to look for statistical significance if we are trying to infer these results to the entire population of students from the above sample.