The Washington Group on Disability Statistics

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The Challenge

How to measure the broad experience of disability through:

- a limited number of questions,
- a consistent manner,
- a cross-culturally comparable way,
- that can be incorporated into ongoing data collections.
The Washington Group

- City Group established by UN Statistical Commission in 2001
- Countries have ownership
  - national statistical offices of 133 countries and territories, 7 international organizations, 6 organizations that represent persons with disabilities
- Emphasis on evidence and transparency – with extensive testing of data collection tools in multiple countries
Washington Group Approach

Identifying people who,

- because of a health condition,
- have difficulties with basic, universal activities
- that make them at greater risk than the general population
- for limitations in participation in an unaccommodating environment.

Builds on the ICF framework

- Framework is complex and needs to be deconstructed for data collection
- ICF codes do not translate into data collection tools
Disaggregation by Disability Status

- Seeks to identify all those at greater risk than the general population for limitations in participation.
- Disability used as a disaggregation variable.
WG Data Collection Tools

- Short set on functioning: adopted in 2006
  - measures difficulty functioning in 6 universal, basic activities
- Extended set on functioning for adults: adopted 2010
- WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning: adopted 2016
- WG/UNICEF Module on Inclusive Education: in testing
- WG/ILO Disability module for inclusion on labor force surveys: in testing
- Module on Mental Health/Psychosocial Functioning: under development
- Modules on environment & participation: under development
WG Short Set
Short Set Questions

Because of a health problem:

1. Do you have difficulty seeing even if wearing glasses?
2. Do you have difficulty hearing even if using a hearing aid?
3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
4. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
5. Do you have difficulty with (self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?
6. Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating (for example understanding or being understood by others)?

Response categories:

No - no difficulty
Yes - some difficulty
Yes - a lot of difficulty
Cannot do at all
What can the WG SS produce?

- Collect *internationally comparable* data based on the ICF model
- Fulfill the monitoring requirements established by the UNCRPD and the SDGs
- Provide *domain specific* distributions of functioning for each of the 6 domains
- Provide an *overall disability indicator* (based on different cut-offs) suitable for disaggregation
# Prevalence by domain and degree of difficulty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Domain</th>
<th>Some difficulty</th>
<th>A lot of difficulty</th>
<th>Unable To do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. National Health Interview Survey, Age 18 years and older; Weighted %
Monitoring the UN CRPD and SDGs through data disaggregation

WG questions fulfil two specific data needs:

• to describe disability data as a *continuum* of functioning based on graded responses to questions in the functional domains, and

• to define a *cut-off* (or a set of cut-offs) that can be agreed upon internationally in order to disaggregate outcome indicators (e.g. access to education, employment) by disability status

This allows for the calculation of prevalence rates and disaggregation.
WG Recommendation

For purposes of reporting and generating internationally comparable data, the WG has recommended the following cutoff be used to define the population of persons with disabilities:

Those with *at least one domain* that is coded as *a lot of difficulty* or *cannot do it at all*. 
## Disability Prevalence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person with disability has:</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at least 1 Domain is ‘some difficulty’</td>
<td>7511</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at least 2 Domains are ‘some difficulty’</td>
<td>3672</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at least 1 Domain is ‘a lot of difficulty’</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at least 1 Domain is ‘unable to do it’</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. National Health Interview Survey, Age 18 years and older; Weighted %
## Disability by Employment

**NHIS 2013: 18-64 years of age**

Weighted %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person with disability has at least:</th>
<th>Overall prevalence</th>
<th>Without disability</th>
<th>With disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Domain ‘some difficulty’</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Domains ‘some difficulty’</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Domain ‘a lot of difficulty’</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Domain ‘unable to do it’</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disaggregation in US NHIS Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability status:</th>
<th>Without disability</th>
<th>With Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability status:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disability status:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disability status:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With disability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Without disability</strong></td>
<td><strong>With Disability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status Last Week=Working</strong></td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current every day smoker</strong></td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covered by health insurance? (Yes)</strong></td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing the WG SS -- From available FAQs and Blogs

DO NOT:
Add screeners
Use negative language, terms and phrases
Change the response options

DO:
Careful translation
Test the questions
Thoroughly train interviewers
WG Extended Set on Functioning
WG Extended Set

• is comprised of about 35 questions relating to 11 different core domains of functioning that were selected based on their universality and commonality across cultures and countries at various stages of economic development.

• As with the WG-SS, the domains are intended to identify those at a greater risk than the general population of experiencing restrictions in participation in an unaccommodating environment.
WG Extended Set

- includes domains of functioning that were not in the Short Set (upper body functioning, affect, pain, and fatigue)
- includes additional information on the domains already covered by the short set;
- includes information on the use and impact of assistive devices, thereby beginning to establish a link between functioning and the environment.

The Short Set is embedded in the Extended Set.
WG-ES for prevalence estimates and disaggregation:

Composed of 25 questions over 11 domains:

WG-SS: Vision, Hearing, Mobility, Cognition, Self-care, Communication (6 questions)
- Hearing Indicator (2 questions)
- Mobility Indicator (3 questions)
- Cognition Indicator (3 questions)
- Upper body Indicator (2 questions)
- Anxiety Indicator (2 questions)
- Depression Indicator (2 questions)
- Pain Indicator (2 questions)
- Fatigue Indicator (3 questions)
WG-SS Enhanced - for prevalence estimates and disaggregation:

Composed of 12 questions over 9 domains:

WG-SS: Vision, Hearing, Mobility, Cognition, Self-care, Communication (6 questions)
- Upper body Indicator (2 questions)
- Anxiety Indicator (2 questions)
- Depression Indicator (2 questions)
WG/UNICEF Child Functioning Module
The Challenge

Several reasons why measuring disability among children is different than adults:

- Children are in a process of development and transition
  - not all of the 6 WG short set domains are applicable to young children
  - nor do they cover the full range of domains of particular interest in child development

- Child development does not follow a fixed schedule – there is natural variation in the attainment of functional skills

- Disability measurement often takes place through the filter of a parent or other adult.
Selected Domains

1. Seeing*
2. Hearing*
3. Mobility**
4. Self-care (5-17)*
5. Dexterity (2-4)
6. Communication*
7. Learning (and Remembering 5-17)*
8. Emotions (5-17)**
9. Behaviour
10. Attention (5-17)
11. Coping with change (5-17)
12. Relationships (5-17)
13. Playing (2-4)

* Comparable WG SS questions
** Comparable WG ES questions
Mainstreaming Disability Statistics
Mainstreaming Disability Statistics

- WG questions can be added to any on-going data collections;
  - Can be used in any national or subnational survey (health, labor force, income & expenditure, DHS, MICS etc.)

- Once the WG questions become integrated into core statistical systems – disaggregating outcomes (education, employment etc.) by disability status becomes routine
Mainstreaming Disability Statistics

- US AID: development of a disability module to include the WG Short Set in the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)
- UNICEF: deployment of the Module on Child Functioning in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
- World Bank: use of the WG-SS in the household survey program
The Washington Group Short Set

• has been used in censuses or surveys in over 78 countries
• has been promoted by international aid programs (DFID/UK and DFAT/Australia) as the means to collect disability data in all programs and projects
• has been introduced as the means for collecting disability data by the UN Statistical Division (UNSD) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe for the 2020 round of censuses.
Available Resources
The WG Website
For more information about the WG visit our new website: http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/

WASHINGTON GROUP ON DISABILITY STATISTICS

The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) is a UN inter-agency established under the United Nations Statistical Commission. The WG was established to address the urgent need for cross-nationally comparable population-based measures of disability. Its mandate is the promotion and co-ordination of international co-operation in the area of health statistics focusing on disability data collection tools suitable for exposure and prevalence surveys.

The WG has sought to foster international collaboration, and in particular, to ensure that its efforts are broad-based and inclusive of voices from developing countries from every region of the world. Representatives of National Statistical Offices around the world, as well as Disabled People’s Organizations (DPO), and other relevant organizations are encouraged to participate in the WG.

With funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) is launching this new website, with the support of the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre at University College London.

News

Training has taken place in Trinidad and Tobago and Mexico City for the Caribbean and South/Central American regions.

A new blog post from Daniel North is now available, “Training on How to Ask “Disability” Questions on Censuses and Surveys”.

“Disability Statistics in Humanitarian Action” – Handicap International has released a webpage detailing how they are using the WG Qs in their humanitarian work.

The Washington Group presented their first training for Non Government Organisations in London (March 16 2017) – the event is now available to watch online; webinar of the training is available.

Search the Washington Group Website

Methodology

Question Sets

Examples

Digital Training

Questions: WG_Secretariat@cdc.gov