



Disability Measurement and Monitoring using the Washington Group Disability Questions

What data are needed to monitor adherence to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Inclusion is the guiding principle of the UNCRPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The routine collection of development indicators by disability status is required so that outcomes of people with and without disabilities can be compared. Including a succinct set of disability questions on existing data collection instruments allows for disaggregation by disability status for SDG indicators, and for other measures of participation, without the need for additional (and costly) surveys.

What tools are available that will produce the needed data?

Well-tested question sets suitable for this purpose exist, have been endorsed by UN agencies, development ministries and civil society, and have experienced growing acceptance. Known collectively as the Washington Group Disability Questions, these data collection tools are the result of global efforts to develop and test internationally comparable questions for identifying persons with disabilities in censuses and surveys. The measures were specifically constructed to be efficient, low cost, and easy to incorporate into the ongoing data collections of national statistical systems, making them highly sustainable and suitable for disaggregating the SDGs by disability status and monitoring progress in attaining the SDGs on an ongoing basis.

The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) is comprised of six questions (see box), identifies persons (5 years of age or older) with disabilities, and is the recommended tool for disaggregating the SDGs.

The WG/UNICEF Child Functioning Module (CFM) is recommended for identifying children with disabilities in surveys and for disaggregating the SDGs that apply to children. The CFM has two sub-modules: one for children 2-4 years of age and one for children 5-17 years of age.

The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS)

Introduction: The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities 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 steps?
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)?

Each question has four response categories, which are read after each question.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. No, no difficulty | 3. Yes, a lot of difficulty |
| 2. Yes, some difficulty | 4. Cannot do it at all |

Disability is determined, according to the WG-SS, as anyone having *at least 'a lot of difficulty'* on *at least one of the six questions*.

For countries wanting to collect more in-depth information on functional difficulties, the Washington Group Short Set Enhanced (WG-SSE) includes questions on upper body functioning, anxiety and depression; and the Washington Group Extended Set on Functioning (WG-ES) includes additional domains.

What do I need to know about using the questions?

Because not all people have the same understanding of what disability means, and due to the stigma that has been associated with disability, it is important that the questions used to obtain disability data are appropriately designed and implemented. The Washington Group has developed extensive documentation on how the questions should be asked and the resulting data analyzed. Some key guidelines for administering the WG data collection tools are presented here.

- DO:**
- Conduct careful translation following WG guidance
 - Cognitively test the translated questions
 - Thoroughly train interviewers to read the questions and response options as written
 - Use neutral language

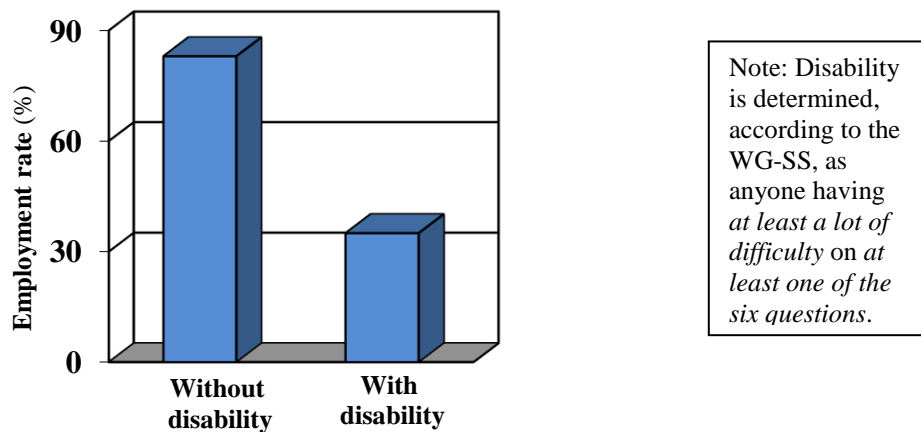
- DO NOT:**
- Use the word ‘disability’ or other negative terms and phrases
 - Add an initial screener question (e.g., “Do you have a disability?”)
 - Change the question or response options wording without consulting with the WG

How can the data be used?

The WG-SS provides information on prevalence of functional difficulties, at different levels of severity, for the total population *or* subgroups. For example:

- overall prevalence of disability as defined by the WG-SS,
- prevalence of functional difficulty in individual or different combinations of domains,
- disaggregated development outcomes by disability status using internationally comparable definitions, as shown below.

Figure 1: Percent of persons employed, by disability status, for the U.S. adult population 18-64 years of age.



About the Washington Group...

The WG, a city group established under the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2001, was constituted to address the urgent need for cross-nationally comparable population-based measures of disability. Its mandate is the promotion and coordination of international cooperation in the area of health statistics focusing on disability data collection tools suitable for censuses and national surveys. WG members are representatives from NSOs around the world. Over 130 countries have representatives. WG meetings are also regularly attended by a variety of UN and other international agencies and Disabled People Organizations.