



NCHS International Statistics Programs

Washington Group on Disability Statistics

About NCHS

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS uses a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective on the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

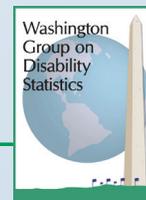
International activities at NCHS

NCHS collaborates with countries around the world and participates in a wide range of international initiatives. These programs consist of cooperative ventures on analytical and methodological issues, technical assistance, consultation, training, information exchange, and liaison with multinational agencies. Additionally, NCHS sponsors and hosts international meetings and symposia in order to foster the sharing of scientific information. Through these efforts, NCHS seeks to improve the availability and advance the quality and comparability of health data in the United States and other countries.

Three fact sheets describe international statistics activities at NCHS. In addition to this fact sheet on the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, fact sheets on "Collaborations with the United Nations and Other International Organizations" and "Bilateral and Multilateral Collaborations" are available from the NCHS website.



About the Washington Group on Disability Statistics



The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) was created as a "city group" by the United Nations (UN) Statistical Commission to address the need for population-based measures of disability, and to develop principles and standard forms for internationally comparable global indicators of disability.

NCHS hosted the first WG meeting in 2002 and serves as Secretariat for the group. NCHS has also chaired the WG Steering Committee since its launch. WG is a cooperative effort among national statistical offices of developed and developing countries, international statistical organizations, development agencies and organizations, and international and regional organizations representing persons with disabilities. The group works to develop internationally comparable disability measures for censuses and national surveys. Other goals include improving the collection and interpretation of information on disability, enhancing comparability with other national and international data collections, and providing the detailed information needed to fully understand the complexities of disability.

WG Question Sets

WG has developed the Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS), six questions covering six basic functioning domains (seeing, hearing, mobility, cognition, communication, and self-care), for inclusion on censuses and surveys. Data from these questions can be used to monitor progress in meeting the goals of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, and to separate outcome measures (e.g., employment and education) by disability status for monitoring the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). WG has also developed an Extended Set on Functioning (WG-ES), consisting of questions across a broader range of functioning domains (adding anxiety, depression, upper body functioning, pain, and fatigue) that can be used as a disability module on existing surveys (e.g., health, living standards, or labor force



surveys, among others) or as the core of a targeted disability survey. To meet the need for an intermediate-length question set, the WG–SS Enhanced was developed, which includes the six WG–SS questions plus an additional six questions drawn from the WG–ES (upper body functioning, anxiety, and depression). Both the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Economic Commission for Europe, in preparing for the 2020 round of censuses, have recommended using WG–SS for the collection of disability data cross-nationally. The questions have also been endorsed by a Disability Data Expert Group under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the method to disaggregate SDGs by disability status. Similarly, the Global Action on Disability Network has affirmed its support for the WG tools for disaggregating SDGs.

WG has provided training and technical support to national statistical offices, UN agencies, development ministries, nongovernmental organizations involved in disability and development, and organizations for persons with disability, guiding the measurement of disability and implementation of WG questions in projects and programs.

In addition to promoting use of the WG question sets to monitor inclusion of persons with disabilities in its programs, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, for example, has provided WG with financial support to conduct regional workshops and provide technical assistance and capacity building. These activities are leading to global standardization of disability measurement in routine data collections.

WG Collaborations

United Nations Children's Fund



In collaboration with WG, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recognized the need for a module to produce internationally comparable data on child functioning and disability. In response, UNICEF and WG developed and tested two survey Modules on Child Functioning (CFMs) for children aged 2–4 and 5–17 years, with questions in the domains of seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, dexterity, communication, learning, remembering, emotions, behavior, focusing attention, coping with change, relationships, and playing.

UNICEF and WG have also begun developing a survey module that will focus on environmental factors and measuring facilitators and barriers to school participation (i.e., inclusive education). The domains identified for further development include attitudes,

getting to school, accessibility (physical, informational, communication, and curricular), and affordability—with an additional subsection on the reasons that a child may be out of school. Cognitive testing in the United States and at several international sites has been conducted under the guidance of the Collaborating Center for Questionnaire Design and Evaluation Research (CCQDER) at NCHS, with field-testing to follow.

International Labor Organization



WG has also collaborated with the International Labor Organization to develop a Labor Force Survey Disability Module (LFS–DM). The module includes sections on barriers to participation in the labor force, workplace accommodations, social attitudes, and social protection. The module has been cognitively tested at CCQDER at NCHS and has undergone international field testing. The LFS–DM was endorsed for use at the annual WG meeting in 2019.

Use of WG Question Sets

The WG questions sets have been incorporated in many censuses and surveys around the globe. The U.S. Agency for International Development has developed a module on disability for its Demographic and Health Surveys that includes WG–SS. Similarly, the World Bank-sponsored Living Standards Measurement Survey will include WG–SS in more than 70 countries during the next round of data collections. UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) incorporate CFMs and WG–SS, with more than 70 countries in various stages of implementing the modules in their country-administered MICS programs.

Finally, building on growing country-specific interest in utilizing the WG tools, WG has begun to establish regional entities to collaborate on implementation activities and share best practices for the collection of disability data at the regional level. To date, the following regional groups have been established: Casablanca Group (for Arabic-speaking countries), Brazzaville Group (for French-speaking and West African countries), Moscow Group (for Russian-speaking and Commonwealth of Independent States countries), Kathmandu Group (for South Asian countries), Pacific Group on Disability Statistics (for countries in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia), Eastern/Southern Africa Group (for English-speaking African countries), and Buenos Aires Group (for Spanish-speaking Latin American and Caribbean countries). A second Latin American and Caribbean group is expected to be formed for English-speaking countries in the region.

