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

Introduction

The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) was developed, tested and adopted by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG). The questions reflect advances in the conceptualization of disability and use the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) as a conceptual framework.

The WG-SS is intended for use in censuses and surveys. In many countries, the decennial census may be the sole or most reliable means of collecting population-based data; and because of the restrictions inherent in the census format, the module had to be short and parsimonious. The brevity of the module – six questions – makes it also well suited for inclusion in larger surveys, and for disaggregating outcome indicators by disability status.

To maximize international comparability, the WG-SS obtains information on difficulties a person may have in undertaking basic functioning activities that apply to people in all cultures and societies and of all nationalities and so are universally applicable. Given the need to keep the module short, a single question per functional domain is included. The final set of questions includes difficulties seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating, self-care, and communication (expressive and receptive).

The questions are designed to collect information on the population aged 5 years and above, with a knowledgeable proxy respondent providing information for children. The WG-SS was not specifically designed for use among children, as it does not include key aspects of child development important for identifying disability in children and the wording of certain domains may not be relevant (or suitable) for children and adolescents. The WG-UNICEF Module on Child Functioning (CFM) is designed to meet the needs of identifying and measuring disability in children.

The Washington Group website [http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/] contains supporting documentation, including information for translation, cognitive testing, question specifications and interview administration guidance, and analytic guidelines, including SPSS, SAS and STATA syntaxes.

It is important to note that each question has four response categories, which are to be read after each question.

Preamble to the WG-SS:

Interviewer read: "The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH PROBLEM."

VISION

VIS_SS   [Do/Does] [you/he/she] have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses? Would you say… [*Read response categories*]

1. No difficulty
2. Some difficulty
3. A lot of difficulty
4. Cannot do at all
7. Refused
9. Don't know

HEARING

HEAR_SS   [Do/Does] [you/he/she] have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid(s)? Would you say… [*Read response categories*]

1. No difficulty
2. Some difficulty
3. A lot of difficulty
4. Cannot do at all
7. Refused
9. Don't know

MOBILITY

MOB_SS   [Do/Does] [you/he/she] have difficulty walking or climbing steps? Would you say… [*Read response categories*]

1. No difficulty
2. Some difficulty
3. A lot of difficulty
4. Cannot do at all
7. Refused
9. Don't know

COGNITION (REMEMBERING)

COG_SS   [Do/does] [you/he/she] have difficulty remembering or concentrating? Would you say…
[*Read response categories*]

    1. No difficulty
    2. Some difficulty
    3. A lot of difficulty
    4. Cannot do at all
    7. Refused
    9. Don't know

SELF-CARE

SC_SS   [Do/does] [you/he/she] have difficulty with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing? Would you say… [*Read response categories*]

    1. No difficulty
    2. Some difficulty
    3. A lot of difficulty
    4. Cannot do at all
    7. Refused
    9. Don't know

COMMUNICATION

COM_SS   Using [your/his/her] usual language, [do/does] [you/he/she] have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood? Would you say…
[*Read response categories*]

    1. No difficulty
    2. Some difficulty
    3. A lot of difficulty
    4. Cannot do at all
    7. Refused
    9. Don't know