

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Did high frequency phone surveys during the COVID-19 pandemic include disability questions? An assessment of COVID-19 surveys from March 2020 to December 2022
AUTHORS	Nascimento Dial, Amanda; Vicente, David; Mitra, Sophie; Teodoro, Douglas; Rivas Velarde, Minervaa

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Puli , Louise World Health Organization
REVIEW RETURNED	23-Oct-2023

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thank you for submission of this interesting piece. I have provided some feedback below that I trust you will find useful in your review of the manuscript.</p> <p>General feedback: Language Sensitivity: Ensure that language used throughout the article respects persons with disabilities. Phrases like "persons with disabilities" should be used instead of "the disabled" to promote person-first language Abbreviations: Ensure that abbreviations like WG-SS are introduced the first time they're mentioned, and then consistently used thereafter.</p> <p>- In the introduction, you mention the SDGs, which state “no person—regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status—is denied universal human rights. Did you check the data for any other parameters? If so, why, if not, why not?</p> <p>Increased intext referencing would benefit the following lines, presented by Section, Page and Lines: - Introduction, page 3, lines: 51, 56 - The coronavirus pandemic and data collection: page 4, lines: 16, 24-29, 36 - Promoting inclusive data collection: Washington Group Short Set, page 4 lines: 46-52 - Collecting data on Functional Difficulties and Disability: COVID 19 High Frequency Phone Survey, page 5, 13-19, 38-47</p> <p>Method: Improvements to the methods section are required, and are listed below: - Additional detail about the documents/datasets should be included: for example: Language, format, publicly available etc. In the limitations it says that researchers understood English, Portuguese, French and Spanish- but the search being conducted</p>
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	<p>across these languages was not explained in the method or results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How and why the platforms searched were chosen - were any excluded, and why? Is there a centralised list of datasets of this kind? How was this made reliable? - Was the review log in excel? or paper based? - Hyperlinks within the method in the Sensitivity analysis section to the questionnaire tool are not active- I get a "page not found" error upon clicking them. - Is it possible to include the list of 43 countries? -Define "dataset-waves". Without context, readers might not understand what this term means <p>Suggestions but not mandatory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I appreciate the inclusion of the Washington Group questions surrounding disability, in combination with the UNSC. Given the mention of the "developing world" in the conclusion, and the intersection between poverty, gender and low and low-middle income settings with disability, it would have been interesting to see the data stratified per country income status as categorised by the World Bank. <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please report the yield of datasets per language, and by country. - Once you clarify the inclusion languages, please present the results as per countries that use those languages. It would not be accurate to report global proportion that does or doesn't collect this information, when it was not searched for in the main language. - the presentation of the results via a map may be misleading that many countries do not collect this information, however it may be because it wasn't searched for in the main language. I think a list of the countries included organised by region (rather than as an appendix) and by income status would be more interesting. <p>Recommendations: Your conclusions note the missed opportunity and relative invisibility of persons with disabilities. Enhance this by suggesting specific steps or best practices for future surveys to ensure more inclusive data collection.</p> <p>Consider highlighting areas that future research could delve into, such as an exploration of the reasons behind the lack of inclusivity or methods to improve phone survey techniques for better inclusivity for persons with disability.</p> <p>I look forward to a review of this article, as it provides a timely exploration of a real-world issue.</p>
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REVIEWER	Allgood, Kristi Texas A&M University, Epidemiology & Biostatistics
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Nov-2023

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The paper titled "Inclusive Data in an Emergency Context: Disability in High Frequency Phone Surveys During the COVID-19 Pandemic" was well written and concise. It also focuses on a critical issue of data collection during the pandemic. I don't have a lot of comments but will include the few I have below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. page 4 of the submitted PDF line 26/27. The sentence containing "disaggregated data" needs a citation, as do the sentences that follow at lines 26-29.
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	<p>2. Page 4, line 32, can the authors elaborate on what they mean by "political tension"? Is this referring to a worldwide issue, a regional issue, or country specific? and what tensions might have resulted in delays in data collection? Also a citation for this is likely needed as well.</p> <p>3. The reviewers could not see the supplementary tables. But if this is included then please disregard it, but is there a table that includes the exact wording of the recommended/ideal disability status questions?</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS

General Feedback

*Language Sensitivity: Ensure that language used throughout the article respects persons with disabilities. Phrases like "persons with disabilities" should be used instead of "the disabled" to promote person-first language

Reply: Conventions on respectful language do vary across the world. We agree with the reviewer that person-first language is appropriate for an international audience.

* Abbreviations: Ensure that abbreviations like WG-SS are introduced the first time they're mentioned, and then consistently used thereafter.

Reply: We included and defined all relevant abbreviations on first use.

* In the introduction, you mention the SDGs, which state “no person—regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status—is denied universal human rights. Did you check the data for any other parameters? If so, why, if not, why not?

Reply: We did not consider if HFPS also included information on these other sociodemographic characteristics. Some of them are commonly found in surveys (subnational geography, rural/urban residence), while others are more context specific (race, ethnicity) or lack internationally agreed upon guidelines for data collection (there is no guideline yet on data collection on gender beyond the male/female binary).

*Increased in-text referencing would benefit the following lines, presented by Section, Page and Lines: Introduction, page 3, lines: 51, 56; The coronavirus pandemic and data collection: page 4, lines: 16, 24-29, 36; Promoting inclusive data collection: Washington Group Short Set, page 4 lines: 46-52; Collecting data on Functional Difficulties and Disability: COVID 19 High Frequency Phone Survey, page 5, 13-19, 38-47

Reply: We added additional in-text citations for the referenced lines.

*Page 4 of the submitted PDF line 26/27. The sentence containing "disaggregated data" needs a citation, as do the sentences that follow at lines 26-29.

Reply: We added an additional in-text citation.

*Page 4, line 32, can the authors elaborate on what they mean by "political tension"? Is this referring to a worldwide issue, a regional issue, or country specific? and what tensions might have resulted in delays in data collection? Also, a citation for this is likely needed as well.

Reply: Thank you for this comment. We removed any mention of “political tension”. We note that emergency measures such as lockdowns were implemented in many countries. These are more pertinent to data collection than political tension.

*The reviewers could not see the supplementary tables. But if this is included then please disregard it, but is there a table that includes the exact wording of the recommended/ideal disability status questions?

Reply: We created a ‘Supplementary Materials’ PDF and included the Washington Group Short Set of questions in Appendix Table 6.

Methods

*Additional detail about the documents/datasets should be included: for example: Language, format, publicly available etc. In the limitations it says that researchers understood English, Portuguese, French and Spanish- but the search being conducted across these languages was not explained in the method or results.

Reply: Thank you for this important comment. We added more information on how the search was conducted across languages in the text and in Table 3 and Appendix Table 5.

*How and why the platforms searched were chosen - were any excluded, and why? Is there a centralized list of datasets of this kind? How was this made reliable?

Reply: We added more details to the main text on how platforms searched were chosen.

*Was the review log in Excel or paper based?

Reply: We clarified that the review log was in Excel.

*Hyperlinks within the method in the Sensitivity analysis section to the questionnaire tool are not active- I get a "page not found" error upon clicking them.

Reply: We updated the hyperlink for the tool.

*Is it possible to include the list of 43 countries?

Reply: We included the list of countries.

*Define “dataset-waves.” Without context, readers might not understand what this term means.

Reply: We included the definition of dataset-waves.

Results

*Please report the yield of datasets per language, and by country. Once you clarify the inclusion languages, please present the results as per countries that use those languages. It would not be accurate to report global proportion that does or doesn't collect this information, when it was not searched for in the main language.

Reply: We included the yield of datasets by language and country in the text as well as in Table 3 and

Appendix Table 5.

*The presentation of the results via a map may be misleading that many countries do not collect this information; however, it may be because it wasn't searched for in the main language. I think a list of the countries included organized by region (rather than as an appendix) and by income status would be more interesting.

Reply: The map provides an alternative way of presenting results that we think may be useful for some readers.

Recommendations

*Your conclusions note the missed opportunity and relative invisibility of persons with disabilities. Enhance this by suggesting specific steps or best practices for future surveys to ensure more inclusive data collection.

Reply: We have added more specifics for policy recommendations. In particular, we recommend the development of guidelines regarding the accessibility of phone surveys and the need for systematic commitments by national statistics offices and international organizations for the inclusion of functional difficulty questions in surveys.

*Consider highlighting areas that future research could delve into, such as an exploration of the reasons behind the lack of inclusivity or methods to improve phone survey techniques for better inclusivity for persons with disability.

Reply: We added suggestions for further research in the Discussion section after the limitations.

Non-Mandatory Suggestions

*I appreciate the inclusion of the Washington Group questions surrounding disability, in combination with the UNSC. Given the mention of the "developing world" in the conclusion, and the intersection between poverty, gender and low and low-middle income settings with disability, it would have been interesting to see the data stratified per country income status as categorized by the World Bank.

Reply: This is a very interesting idea to categorize results by country income status. The present analysis covered very few countries in the high-income group. We added a suggestion for further research that similar reviews be conducted in the future, including in more high-income countries.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Puli , Louise World Health Organization
REVIEW RETURNED	27-Feb-2024

GENERAL COMMENTS	Thank you for addressing previous comments- significant improvements in the manuscript have been achieved. There are still opportunities to improve the language in the manuscript. I have highlighted certain examples in the text for you to
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	consider in the attachment provided. Following a thorough language check, I would be happy to approve for publication.
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REVIEWER	Allgood, Kristi Texas A&M University, Epidemiology & Biostatistics
REVIEW RETURNED	04-Mar-2024

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Thank you for allowing me to review this manuscript. The topic of consistently asking important questions on the burden and changing population due to COVID-19 with relation to ability limitations is an important topic in public health. We need to have a reliable capturing of this population in order to ensure we have adequate resources targeting this group of people who tend to be more isolated and not included in research.</p> <p>I have a few issues with the presentation of the findings as described below:</p> <p>The main tables (starting with Table 2) provided in the main text are confusing. For example, Table 2 shows that 72 countries were reviewed with a percentage of 3600. It is likely a typo or some conversion issue, but it is confusing nonetheless. Additionally, with 72 countries reviewed, I'd expect the bolded values to add up to 72, but they do not. It is not clear from the table why they do not add up to 72. Finally, footnotes are needed to clear these issues up, as well as explain the differences between the categories such as any disability question vs Other disability Questions. Every table should be able to stand alone, so if a reader picks it up, they should be able to understand the data contained within it without reading the text.</p> <p>Table 3 has similar issues as Table 2.</p> <p>Table 4 changes from decimals to commas. The formatting should be consistent across tables.</p> <p>Text: Minor issues: On the marked/tracked version of page 13, the authors state that 32 countries used the single functional difficulty question. Please include a percentage, as it is challenging to keep track of the number of countries included in the analysis.</p> <p>Page 17, in the 1st paragraph on the page beginning with "First, COVID-19...there is a typo in some text that was deleted.</p> <p>Broader issues: The Conclusions: There is a missed opportunity to discuss the possibility of measuring incident disability related to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in longitudinal studies with repeated measurements per individual. The designs of the studies using these questions are described early on in the paper, but then not discussed elsewhere.</p> <p>Additionally, there should be a clear statement/recommendation on which questions are ideal to use in such surveys. I would presume that the authors would endorse the use of the Washington Group Short Set of questions (WG-SS), but it is not explicitly stated in the conclusions.</p>
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

* The revised title does not address our requirements that the article title include the study design and setting. Please further revise. Please also use sentence case in the revised title, instead of capitalizing each word.

Reply: We revised the title to include the research question. It now reads as follows: “Did high frequency phone surveys during the COVID-19 pandemic include disability questions? An assessment of COVID-19 surveys from March 2020 to December 2022”

* Please update the 'Strengths and Limitations of this Study' section (after the abstract) to include

at least one bullet point covering a key methodological strength of the study. This should be placed before the bullet points covering the study limitations.

Reply: We added a strength to the 'Strengths and Limitations of this Study' section before the bullet points covering the study limitations.

* Please move the 'Contributors', 'Ethics Approval', 'Data availability statement', and 'Funding' statements from after the reference list to before the reference list, and please delete the duplicate

'Funding' statement (there is currently one before the reference list and one after). Please also change the heading 'Conflicts of Interest' to 'Competing interests'.

Reply: We moved the requested statements to before the reference list, deleted the duplicate 'Funding' statement, and changed the heading of 'Conflicts of Interest' to 'Competing Interests'.

* As per our previous comment, the figure (Figure 1) should NOT be included in the main manuscript Word file - it should be uploaded separately as a 'Figure' file in the submission system. Please revise accordingly.

Reply: We removed Figure 1 from the main manuscript Word file and included it as a separate 'Figure' pdf file.

* The appendix file uploaded is not suitable, as we do not publish tables in Excel format - please

instead create a single Word file or PDF containing all the appendix tables, ensuring that they are

presented in the correct order.

Reply: We created a single pdf file containing all the appendix tables in the correct order.

* Please work to improve the quality of the English throughout your manuscript. We recommend

asking a colleague who is proficient in written English to assist you or enlisting the help of a professional copy-editing service.

Reply: We made further edits to our manuscript to improve the quality of the English.

* The main tables (starting with Table 2) provided in the main text are confusing. For example, Table 2 shows that 72 countries were reviewed with a percentage of 3600. Additionally, with 72 countries reviewed, I'd expect the bolded values to add up to 72, but they do not. It is not clear from the table why they do not add up to 72. Finally, footnotes are needed to clear these issues

up, as well as explain the differences between the categories such as any disability question vs

Other disability Questions.

Reply: Thank you for bringing the typos in our tables to our attention. We corrected them and included additional footnotes that elaborate on the proper interpretation of our tables.

* On the marked/tracked version of page 13, the authors state that 32 countries used the single

functional difficulty question. Please include a percentage, as it is challenging to keep track of the number of countries included in the analysis.

Reply: We changed the number to a percentage.

* Page 17, in the 1st paragraph on the page beginning with "First, COVID-19...there is a typo in some text that was deleted.

Reply: We corrected the typo in the text.

* There is a missed opportunity to discuss the possibility of measuring incident disability related

to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in longitudinal studies with repeated measurements per individual. The designs of the studies using these questions are described early on in the paper,

but then not discussed elsewhere. Additionally, there should be a clear statement/recommendation on which questions are ideal to use in such surveys. I would presume

that the authors would endorse the use of the Washington Group Short Set of questions (WGSS), but it is not explicitly stated in the conclusions.

Reply: Thank you for these suggestions. We made additions accordingly to our conclusion.

VERSION 3 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Puli , Louise World Health Organization
REVIEW RETURNED	24-Apr-2024
GENERAL COMMENTS	Thank you for taking the time to implement previous suggested edits throughout this review process. Your changes have enhanced the clarity of the paper significantly.