

Washington Group Short Set: Question Specifications

The Washington Group Short Set comprises questions on six core functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care, and communication:

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: (1) No, no difficulty, (2) Yes, some difficulty, (3) Yes, a lot of difficulty and (4) Cannot do it at all. The response categories capture the full spectrum of functioning.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONS

It is recommended that the response options be read aloud as part of each of the six questions as follows:

Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps? Would you say:

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

If the 6 questions are asked of multiple persons in the household, the answer categories do not need to be repeated for each question once the respondent becomes familiar with them and responds using the appropriate terminology; however, it is generally useful to repeat the answer categories every 3 or 4 questions.

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

- The purpose of the introduction is to transition from questions in the census or survey that deal with other subject matter to a new area of inquiry, and get the respondent to focus on difficulties they may have that are the result of some physical or mental health problem.
- Included are difficulties that occur within a health context rather than those caused by a lack of resources.
- Health refers to the general condition of the body or mind with reference to soundness, vitality, and freedom from disease.
- Problem refers to the respondent's perception of a departure from physical, mental or emotional well-being. This includes specific health problems such as a disease or chronic condition, a missing limb or organ or any type of impairment or physical or psychological symptoms. It also includes more vague disorders not always thought of as health-related such as senility, depression, retardation, drug dependency, accidental injuries, etc.

Question 1: Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?

- The purpose of this question is to identify persons who have vision difficulties or problems seeing even when wearing glasses (if they wear glasses)
- Seeing refers to an individual using his/her eyes and visual capacity in order to perceive or observe what is happening around them.
- Even when wearing glasses refers to difficulty seeing with glasses if the respondent has, and uses, them – NOT how vision would be if glasses, or better glasses, were provided to one who needed them.
- Included are problems seeing things close up or far away.
- Included are problems seeing out of one eye or only seeing directly in front but not to the sides.
- Any problem with vision that the respondent considers a problem should be captured.

Question 2: Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?

- The purpose of this item is to identify persons who have some hearing limitation or problems of any kind with their hearing even when using a hearing aid (if they wear a hearing aid).
- Hearing refers to an individual using his/her ears and auditory (or hearing) capacity in order to know what is being said to them or the sounds of activity, including danger that is happening around them.
- Even if using a hearing aid refers to difficulty hearing with a hearing aid if the respondent has, and uses, that device – NOT how hearing would be if hearing aids, or better hearing aids, were provided to one who needed them.
- Included are problems hearing in a noisy or a quiet environment.
- Included are problems distinguishing sounds from different sources.
- Included are problems hearing hear in one ear or both ears.
- Any difficulty with hearing that is considered a problem should be captured.

Question 3: Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?

- The purpose of this item is to identify persons who have some limitation or problems of any kind getting around on foot.
- Walking refers to the use of lower limbs (legs) in such a way as to propel oneself over the ground to get from point A to point B. The capacity to walk should be without assistance of any device (wheelchair, crutches, walker etc.) or human. If such assistance is needed, the person has difficulty walking.
- Included are problems walking short (about 100 yards/meters) or long distances (about 500 yards/meters).
- Difficulty walking any distance without stopping to rest is included.
- Difficulties walking can include those resulting from impairments in balance, endurance, or other non-musculoskeletal systems.
- Included are problems walking up or down steps.
- Any difficulty with walking (whether it is on flat land or up or down steps) that is considered a problem should be captured.

Question 4: Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?

- The purpose of this item is to identify persons who have some problems with remembering or focusing attention that contribute to difficulty in doing their daily activities.
- Remembering refers to the use of memory to recall incidents or events. It means the individual can bring to mind or think again about something that has taken place in the past (either the recent past or further back). With younger people, remembering is often associated with storing facts learned in school and being able to retrieve them when needed.
- Remembering should NOT be equated with Memorizing.
- Concentrating refers to the use of mental ability to accomplish some task such as reading, calculating numbers, learning something. It is associated with focusing on the task at hand in order to complete the task.
- Included are problems finding one's way around, being unable to concentrate on an activity, or forgetting one's whereabouts or the date.
- Included are problems remembering what someone just said or becoming confused or frightened about most things.
- Any difficulty with remembering, concentrating or understanding what is going on around them that they or family members (if the family member is the respondent) consider a problem should be captured.
- Note: difficulties remembering or concentrating because of common everyday situations such as high workload or stress, or as a result of substance abuse are EXCLUDED.

Question 5: Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?

- The purpose of this item is to identify persons who have some problems with taking care of themselves independently.
- Washing all over refers to the process of cleaning one's entire body (usually with soap and water) in the usual manner for the culture.
- The washing activity includes cleaning hair and feet, as well as gathering any necessary items for bathing such as soap or shampoo, a wash cloth, or water.
- Dressing refers to all aspects of putting clothing or garments on the upper and lower body including the feet if culturally appropriate.
- Included are the acts of gathering clothing from storage areas (i.e. closet, dressers), securing buttons, tying knots, zipping, etc.
- Washing and dressing represent tasks that occur on a daily basis and are considered basic, universal activities.

Question 6: Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, (for example understanding or being understood by others)?

- The purpose of this item is to identify persons who have some problems with talking, listening or understanding speech such that it contributes to difficulty in making themselves understood to others or understanding others.
- Communicating refers to a person exchanging information or ideas with other people through the use of language.
- Communication difficulties can originate in numerous places in the exchange process. It may involve mechanical problems such as hearing impairment or speech impairment, or it may be related to the ability of the mind to interpret the sounds that the auditory system is gathering and to recognize the words that are being used.
- Included is the use of the voice for the exchange or using signs (including sign language) or writing the information to be conveyed.
- Included are problems making oneself understood, or problems understanding other people when they speak or try to communicate in other ways.
- NOTE: Difficulty understanding or being understood due to non-native or unfamiliar language is NOT included.