

Seeking feedback to develop a population-representative sexual health survey instrument:

An open call from the WHO

Are you a sexual/reproductive health researcher or advocate? Passionate about sexual health in practice or research? The WHO and partners need your feedback on a survey instrument assessing sexual practices, behaviours, and outcomes worldwide.

Background

To date, there is no standard, globally-recognized instrument to measure sexual practices, behaviours and sexual health-related outcomes. Instead, many population-representative surveys use their own items and domains, making comparisons and collaboration difficult. To encourage the inclusion of transparent and comparable sexual health-related measures on population-representative surveys, and in response to calls from leading sexual health researchers, **the WHO seeks to develop a standard instrument for assessing sexual practices, behaviours, and sexual health-related outcomes worldwide.** This instrument could then serve as a 'module' for use in national and sub-national data collection, as well as allow for needed comparative research.

The purpose of this open call is to solicit examples of existing survey instruments, domains related to sexual health, implementation considerations, and creative ideas for related measures or analyses. People with high-scoring submissions will be supported to join an in-person hackathon (72-hour event with expert faculty) to finalize a standardized sexual health survey instrument in January 2020. More details on how submissions will be assessed can be found in the frequently asked questions section below.

Who can participate?

This call is open to anyone with professional interest, experience and/or expertise in sexual practices/behaviours and sexual health-related outcomes. This experience can be related to certain populations or the general population.

Why should I submit?

Your submission will help to develop this standard instrument for assessing sexual health practices, behaviours, and outcomes, and also encourage transparent and comparable sexual health items on population-representative surveys across the globe.

Format and guidelines for submission

All submissions should be related to sexual and reproductive health.



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We are interested in both quantitative and qualitative measures that can be used in a broad range of settings, especially in low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

All measures and any comments can be provided in any of the six official WHO languages (these are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish): where possible, English is preferred.

Submission categories include the following:

1. Feedback on which domains to include, exclude, or modify in the standardized survey instrument (see initial list [here](#)).
2. Feedback on which implementation considerations related to doing population-representative surveys to include, exclude, or modify (see initial list [here](#)).
3. Examples of existing survey instruments. Please provide as much information as possible on any instrument provided and our current list of submitted instruments [here](#). Note that full instruments should be either focused on sexual/reproductive health or have an entire module focused on sexual and reproductive health.
4. Creative ideas. This could be a new measure or analysis method that has been or has not been published.

Files can be uploaded as Word documents or PDFs. All entries should be submitted via the website [submission portal](#) by **11:59 GMT on October 24th, 2019**

More details about the call and who is involved, as well as answers to some frequently asked questions can be found below.

Got a question? Send an email to Lianne Gonsalves at gonsalvesl@who.int and use the subject line: 'Sexual Health Survey Open Call'.

Follow up

People who submit eligible submissions will be given a commendation certificate from the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) to recognise participation. A selected group of 10-20 people whose overall contributions receive the highest scores from judges will be invited to join the hackathon. People who submit any idea or measure(s) that is used in the final standardized instrument will be recognized in the publication as an instrument co-developer.

For this reason, we ask you to *please ensure that your personal details (including contact information) on the first page of your [submission](#) are accurate.*

The submissions will be reviewed by at least three independent individuals. Criteria for judging will include the following: contributed useful domains, implementation considerations, survey instruments, and/or creative ideas related to sexual and reproductive health as described above; personal experience developing or implementing the domains, considerations, instruments, or ideas.

Timelines

- **October 24th 2019:** Deadline for submissions
- **Mid November:** Notification of submissions under consideration for hackathon participation.
- **November-December 2019:** Steering Committee review input and comments, determine relevance

- **January 2020:** In-person hackathon, hosted by an HRP Alliance hub (see below partners), providing experts from around the world 3 days to 'hack' together the final draft of the instrument
- **February 2020:** WHO review and finalize instrument

Submitting entries

All entries should be submitted via the website [submission portal](#) by 11:59 GMT on October 24th, 2019

Steering Committee Members

This global call is coordinated by a steering committee consisting of a global and multidisciplinary group of experts in sexual health:

Lianne Gonsalves (Co-Chair)- World Health Organization(WHO); Joseph Tucker (Co-Chair) - Social Entrepreneurship to Spur Health (SESH)Global; Lale Say – WHO; Megan Srinivas – University of North Carolina (UNC); Nathalie Bajos – French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM); Emma Slaymaker – London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM); Annette Sohn – TREAT Asia/The Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR); Laura Lindberg - Guttmacher Institute; Pedro Nobre - World Association for Sexual Health; Linda-Gail Bekker – University of Cape Town/International Aids Society; Cesar Carcamo – Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia; Eneyi Kpokiri -SESH Global; Kaye Wellings – LSHTM; Boniface Ushie – African Population Health Research Center

Partner Organisations

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

The LSHTM team has implemented 42 crowdsourcing events, including six global ones. Five randomized controlled trials from their team suggest that crowdsourcing can effectively engage communities and solicit effective entries. The LSHTM team was previously commissioned by the WHO HIV Department and the WHO Global Hepatitis Programme to write systematic reviews focused on diagnostics. LSHTM helped to launch the Social Innovation in Health Initiative (SIHI) in partnership with the WHO-hosted Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). In addition, they contributed to the [2018 guide to crowdsourcing in health and health research](#).

SESH

SESH, Social Entrepreneurship to Spur Health, is a partnership between universities focused on using crowdsourcing methods to improve health. SESH was founded in 2012 and has organized over 50 crowdsourcing challenge contests. SESH partnered with TDR to organize the Women Leaders in Global Health Challenge in 2018.

HRP Alliance Hub

The HRP Alliance for Research Capacity Strengthening is an initiative that brings together institutions conducting research in sexual and reproductive health and rights in collaboration with WHO regional and country offices. The HRP Alliance fulfils a mandate of supporting research capacity strengthening in low- and lower-middle income countries. An [HRP Alliance Hub](#) will host and co-lead the hackathon.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is sexual health?

WHO's [working definition of sexual health](#) indicates that sexual health is *a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships (WHO, 2006)*

Why develop a standard instrument to measure sexual practices, behaviours and health-related outcomes?

One central tenet of providing quality information and relevant services in any area of health is to understand the existing related practices and behaviours of the population in question. However, we don't have a lot of this information for sexual and reproductive health-related practices and behaviours. Therefore, despite decades-worth of programming (and substantial funding) related to HIV, contraception, maternal health, as well as clear demonstration of the impact of sexual and reproductive 'ill-health' on global morbidity/mortality, we still do not understand the practices/behaviours behind these outcomes.

We are particularly interested in entire survey instruments, feedback on domains, feedback on implementation considerations, and creative ideas.

Improving the general understanding of SRH-related practices/behaviours in this area also has important implications for:

- identifying and challenging gender and social norms (e.g. understanding what constitute accepted sexual and intimate partner (mis)behaviours and expressions);
- decoupling specific sexual practices from certain populations (e.g. the perception that anal sex is a sexual practice only among men who have sex with men results in human rights-violating forced anal examinations in certain countries where same-sex activity is criminalized); and
- providing relevant comprehensive sexuality education and information which are responsive to actual practices (e.g. provision of sex/sexuality-related information to older persons may be limited due to assumptions that they do not engage in sexual behaviour).

Why should I submit?

To date, there is no standard globally-agreed upon instrument for assessing these kinds of practices and outcomes. Leading sexual health researchers from around the world have called on WHO to develop this standard survey instrument. This could serve as a 'module' for use in national and sub-national data collection, as well as research.

Your submission will help to develop this standard instrument for assessing sexual health practices, behaviours, and outcomes and also encourage transparent and comparable sexual health items on population-representative surveys across the globe. You will also have a chance to receive a commendation, acknowledgement, or opportunity to join the hackathon.

Is this call limited to a particular field in sexual health?

No. Submissions addressing any area of sexual health practices and related outcomes are welcome.

What should be the focus of my submission?

Your submission should be directly related to sexual and reproductive health-related practices, behaviours and outcomes. Domains to consider include: socio-demographics, life events, first sex, sexual partners, sexual practices, last sexual partner(s), sexual satisfaction, non-consensual sex, reproductive history/preferences, sexual health-related knowledge, and sex/sexuality-related social norms.

We are particularly interested in items that can be used in a broad range of settings and for the general population.

What is the target audience for the measures/survey instrument I will submit?

The resulting survey instrument is intended to be something which could be applied to the general population. However, instruments or measures proposed can be those which have traditionally been used on either general or specific populations. If you do choose to provide feedback or comments with an intended audience in mind, please indicate this when submitting your entry.

How can I encourage my peers to join?

You can also increase participation in this open call by sharing the details with colleagues and friends in-person and online using social media channels. In-person events include meetings, lectures, information sessions, and other community events. In addition to email, text messages and listservs, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, can help raise awareness of the open call by resharing engaging posts, media announcements, related videos and images.

Do I need to be a qualified medical physician or sexual health expert to participate?

No—A sexual health advocate/researcher or anyone with an interest in sexual health practice or research are all encouraged to participate in this open call.

Can I make more than one submission?

Yes—you can submit as many entries as possible. For the survey instrument category, please review which instruments have already been uploaded [here](#).

How will the survey instruments, domains, and measures be assessed?

Survey instruments, domains, and measures will be assessed with the following criteria in mind: validity (has this been assessed to see if it produces valid information), reliability (has this been repeated to see if information is consistent), piloting and review (has this been piloted and reviewed based on results from a pilot), translation and context-linked (can this be translated and to what extent is it dependent on context), versatility (can it be used to create or estimate new items), parsimony (how efficiently does this survey gather information needed to undertake analyses), data management (how hard is it to use the data), acceptability (respondent and interviewer burden).

How will the steering committee score my contributions to the challenge contest?

On the submission page, you will be asked about how you have developed or implements parts of the survey instrument, domain, or measure that you submitted. We will provide an opportunity for you to explain your role in developing or implementing other sexual and reproductive survey research.