Data collection during COVID-19:

Technical guide on data collection for community-led monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Purpose

This tool is designed for representatives of communities most affected by HIV in different corners of the world that have an intention to engage in community led monitoring (CLM) of HIV prevention, care and treatment services.

This tool is not a comprehensive guide but a starting point that gives an overview and practical hands-on advice to approaching data collection as a crucial step of CLM.

Most CLM materials focusedon implementation deal with the nature of the data and thematic areas or are focused on advocacy as a natural follow-up step of the analysis. However, the first and critically important step of any CLM intervention is the collection of the data. In this tool, we focus on this aspect of the process to provide the community activists and organisations representatives with a resource to guide them through this process.

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# Introduction

Communities hold a central position in effective health systems and have long since been active in ensuring access to quality health services. Implementing CLM mechanisms has been shown to improve service delivery at the facility level, health system-wide infrastructure and health outcomes among care recipients(1). Transparency and accountability are at the core of CLM models.

Efforts to improve data disaggregation for most at risk or key populations have increased in recent years.CLM can fill in information gaps for key populations not captured by prevention or treatment services or when they dropped out of services. The role of CLM became even more critical when COVID-19 restrictions challenged access to services. However, restrictions on data access due to COVID-19 restrictions pose a challenge to the implementation of CLM. This tool describes how to collect and use data when COVID-19 restrictions limit the access to available and potential data sources . It aims to provide communities with ways to design, implement and carry out monitoring of and research on the accessibility, quality, effectiveness, and impact of health programs and services during the COVID-19 pandemic or any other time when mobility and access to services are limited.

This stool is intended as a reference guide. The reader can select one chapter of interest in planning their work or use it holistically to give an overall picture of the types and stages of data collection approaches to choose the most appropriate combination for their objectives. This tool gives an overview of the most frequently used methods, which have proven helpful for CLM.

## Quantitative and qualitative research

This tool is divided into sections on different types of the data collection, both for quantitative and qualitative research. Each section provides a basic overview, practical tips and examples related to the particular topic.

The broad difference between quantitative and qualitative research becomes clear, when comparing the paradigms of each:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Quantitative** | **Qualitative** |
| Numbers as data | Words as data |
| Hypotheses | Research question(s), aims and objectives |
| Seeks relationships between variables, to  explain or predict | Seeks to understand and interpret; recognises data as gathered in a context |
| Aims to generalise findings | X |
| Generates ‘shallow’ but broad data | Generates ‘narrow’ but rich data (depth about a specific issue – ‘thick descriptions’) |
| Seeks consensus, norms or general patterns | Seeks patterns, but accommodates and explores difference and divergence; good for working with ‘contradictory’ data |
| Tends to be theory-testing and deductive | Tends to be theory generating and inductive  (working up from the data) |
| Values detachment and impartiality  (objectivity) | Values personal involvements and partiality  (subjectivity) |
| Has a fixed method (harder to change focus once data collection has begun) | Method is less fixed (can accommodate a shift in focus in the same study) |
| Can be completed quickly | Tends to take longer to complete |
| Large numbers of participants needed (for statistical power and generalisability) | Smaller numbers of participants expected |

(2)

## Conducting quantitative research online

According to the definition - quantitative research is a type of research with the use of methods emphasising objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires or surveys, or by using pre-existing data that was collected by other researchers. (3)

The main idea of quantitative research is to determine the relationship between one thing and another within a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive [subjects usually measured once] or experimental [subjects measured before and after a treatment]. Quantitative research deals in numbers, logic, and an objective stance. (4)

What are the main characteristics?

* The data is collected by structured tools or instruments
* The results are based on larger samples that represent the population
* The study can be replicated or repeated
* The researcher already has a clear idea and definition of the research question

Several steps need to be considered to conduct quantitative research. In his book “Social research methods,” Bryman (5) distinguishes eleven stages of conducting quantitative research.

Stage 1: Theory.

All quantitative research starts with a theory based on previous knowledge or experience. The fact that quantitative research begins with theory signifies this tradition's broadly deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research.

Stage 2: Hypothesis

It is common outlines of the main steps of quantitative research to suggest that a **hypothesis** is deduced from the theory and is tested. However, a great deal of quantitative research does not entail the specification of a hypothesis, and instead, theory acts loosely as a set of concerns in relation to which social researcher collects data. The specification of hypotheses to be tested is particularly likely to be found in experimental research but is often found as well in survey research, which is based on a cross-sectional design.

Stage 3: Study design

After developing a theory and research question, the next step is to select the most suitable study design to answer your questions. Many study designs apply to CLM or conducting community-based research. Examples include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Systematic review and meta-analysis | Collects all previous studies on the topic and statistically combines their results. The findings under this type of research are the most “trusting”, because it is based on the huge amount of data from different regions and countries. |
| Randomised-controlled trials | Randomly selects a group of participants to receive a treatment or any intervention. It is not the most common type of a study among community based organisations mainly due to lack of resources. |
| Quasi-experiment | Non-randomly assigns groups of participants to get an access to a treatment or intervention method. |
| Cohort study | Follows the same group of participants over time in order to track their behaviour/economical/health-related changes. |
| Case-control | Compares histories of a group of people with a condition to a group of people without it. |
| Cross-sectional | Studies the prevalence of an outcome within a big group of people |
| Case-report | Detailed histories of a small number of individuals |

(6)

Stage 4: Operationalizing concepts

Operationalization means creating your abstract research question into something that can be easily assessed. As a result, you need to translate the conceptual definition of what you would like to investigate into the operational definition of what you will measure. This guide will discuss operationalization in detail in the chapter “Online surveys” chapter.

Stage 5: Select a site and a place where you will collect data

After conceptualizing your research idea, you must identify the best place to find your participants. As always, there are several options for conducting your research. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic the preferred site to conduct studies and collect data is online.

Stage 6: Select participants

Stage six involves choosing a sample of participants to participate in the study – this can include any number of sampling techniques, depending on the hypothesis and practical and ethical factors. One of the best tools to help understand the necessary number of participants for your study is the G\*Power tool. G\*Power is free software that calculates statistical power and estimates the size of the population. (7)

The app can be downloaded at: **<https://www.psychologie.hhu.de/arbeitsgruppen/allgemeine-psychologie-und-arbeitspsychologie/gpower>**

Stage 7: Data collection

Planning the data collection procedure carefully is critical to avoid wasting time and resources. The relevant chapter will discuss the data collection procedure in greater detail.

Stage 8: Processing data

Processing data implies transforming collected information into data. In some cases, this is a straightforward process (e.g., variables such as age or income are already numeric). Other information might need to be coded or transformed into numbers to be analyzed. Codes act as tags placed on data, allowing the information to be processed by a computer.

Stage 9: Data analysis

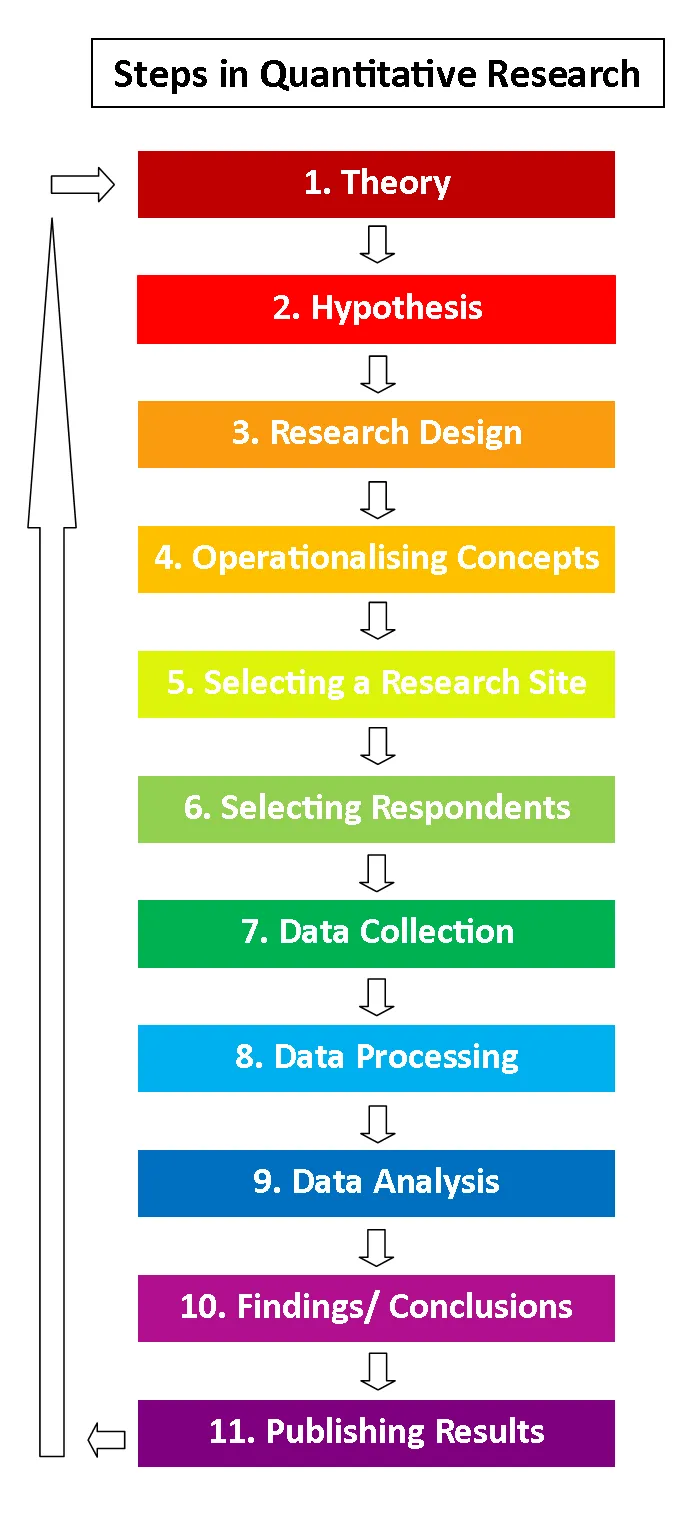
In this stage, a researcher uses several statistical techniques to look for significant correlations between variables to see if one affects another. This tool describes the data collection procedure in detail, not the data analysis.

Stage 10: Findings and conclusions.

databased on the data analysis, the researcher must interpret the results. At this stage, the findings emerge. If there is a hypothesis, is it supported? What are the implications of the findings for the theoretical ideas that formed the background of the research?

Stage 11: Writing the report

The final step is a report documenting the conducted research. The report is written for an academic audience or a client. The write-up must convince the audience that the research process has been robust, the data is as valid, reliable and representative as it needs to be for the research purposes, and that the findings are relevant in the context of existing research.



Taken from: Bryman (2016) Social Research Methods (5)

## Conducting qualitative research online

Salmons’ E-Research Framework offers a comprehensive, holistic systems approach to research design for studies conducted online or using information and communications technologies (8). It outlines eight categories that encourage critical reflection and highlight the need for best practices the research process. These categories are:

1. “Aligning Purpose and Design”, which covers the need for the appropriateness and alignment of the research’s theories, epistemological stance, methodologies and method
2. “Taking a Position as a Researcher”, encouraging the reflexion of the researcher’s insider or outsider positionality and it’s implications for conflicts of interest or biases
3. “Selecting Extant, Elicited, or Enacted Methods”, dealing with the appropriateness and fit of the selected methods with the study’s purpose, research problem, and population as well as the functions and limitations of the chosen information and communications technologies (ICT)
4. “Selecting ICT and Milieu”, challenging the rationale for the choice of ICT (including the type of data collected) and/or the choice of online milieu
5. “Handling Sampling and Recruiting”, which covers considerations regarding the sampling approach, the online recruitment, the choice of online data sets etc.
6. “Addressing Ethical Issues”, which encourages considerations regarding informed consent, participants’ safety, and permissions to access and use online data for research purposes
7. “Collecting the Data”, giving advice for the planning of online data collection, including familiarity with technology and the online environment
8. “Analysing the Data and Reporting”, dealing with data analysis including planning, organisation, and coding as well as obtaining permissions to use quotes or excerpts in publications

An additional tool by Roberts et al (9) supports researchers  conducting virtual qualitative research . Divided into the two areas of “Ensuring Methodological Rigor” and “Ethics and Equity,” it offers insightful and vital impulses for high-quality, rigorous, and ethical virtual qualitative research:

**Ensuring Methodological Rigor**

*Appropriateness of virtual format.*

* Is the safety of participants, communities, and/or researchers a concern?
* Do timelines, deadlines, funding, or personal responsibilities necessitate a transition?
* Does a virtual format necessitate any changes to the purpose of my study and/or research questions?
* What may be lost by a virtual format (e.g., richer under-standing of context; rapport with participants; access to marginalized populations)?
  + How can loss be mitigated? (e.g., collection of virtual data such as social media messages or taped meetings in lieu of observation and other in-person data collection approaches)
* What may be gained by a virtual format (e.g., reallocating travel funds; adhering to schedules/deadlines; access to marginalized populations)?

*Technological considerations.*

* What technology is appropriate for my study (i.e., video-conferencing platforms, survey software, recording tools, other)? Does it present any additional costs?
* Do I need assistance with technology before or during data collection?
  + Consider making a procedure document to delineate each researcher’s roles and responsibilities.
* What barriers might participants face in using my choice of technologies (e.g., digital literacy; special needs or(dis)abilities; lack of accounts/email, devices, connectivity, or private space)?
  + Consider donating phone cards or devices; offering multiple modes of communication, such as FaceTime for Apple users or video calling for Android users; employing assistive electronic devices or software; and utilizing built-in features of chosen technology, such as allowing participants to use virtual backgrounds.
* How will I record interviews (audio, video, both)?
* Should I use a back-up?

*Recruitment of participants.*

* How can I recruit participants with differing levels of technological proficiency?
  + Consider multiple mechanisms for recruitment, including email, telephone, and, if safe, physical recruitment materials such as flyers; provide information in recruitment materials regarding the technology that participants will be asked to use; if possible, provide low-tech option for participation such as conducting an interview by phone.
* How can I foster rapport with individuals and institutions virtually, to recruit study sites, build relationships with individuals, or aid in access to other participants?
  + Consider hosting events such as virtual coffees for recruitment and relationship building.

*Researcher positionality*.

* How can I develop a rich understanding of the context of my study without being physically present in my research site?
  + Consider exploring neighborhoods through GoogleEarth or similar tools; attending virtual lectures and public local meetings; setting alerts for local news media and social media; reading books and other resources; and conducting informational interviews.

**Ethics and Equity**

*Obtaining consent.*

* How can I obtain consent in a way that allows a two-way conversation between the researcher and participant?
  + Consider having participants provide consent via a secure survey tool such as Qualtrics on their computer or phone at the start of the virtual interview.

*Access and equity.*

* How does a virtual format constrain or expand access to individuals/subgroups of interest?
  + Do a lack of devices, connectivity, and/or limited digital literacy complicate access?
  + Does the opportunity to conduct research virtually permit access to participants that may have been inaccessible in person (e.g., rural or other remote populations, participants with limited mobility)?
* Consider whether funds saved via travel may be used to mitigate equity concerns (e.g., hiring a translator, spending funds on phone cards or other methods of increasing participant access, hiring graduate students).

*Risk.*

* How does a virtual format affect risks to participants?
  + Consider mitigating risks to participants’ anonymity, confidentiality or data privacy by obtaining digital signatures on consent forms, ensuring that participants are in a private space, allowing virtual backgrounds, requiring passwords to prevent “Zoom-bombing”, securely storing electronic participant data/audio files; only recording audio and referring to participant by participant-chosen pseudonym while recording.

*Timeliness.*

* How will adopting a virtual approach affect my study timeline?
  + Will I need to amend an existing IRB? Do I need to extend my timeline to allow for any in-person data collection that is not feasible virtually?
* Does the urgency of my topic suggest alternative path-ways for dissemination of my findings?
  + Consider disseminating findings continuously via emails, blog posts, coffees, virtual presentations, videos, and flyers.

# Review of the literature

The first step of any research project is always a review of the literature. Hart (10) identifies five reasons for conducting a literature review at the start of the research process:

A search of the literature:

1. will help you to identify work already done or in progress that is relevant to your work;
2. will prevent you from duplicating what has already been done;
3. will help you to avoid some of the pitfalls and errors of previous research;
4. will help you to design the methodology for your project by identifying the key issues and data collection techniques best suited to your topic;
5. will enable you to find gaps in existing research, thereby giving you a unique topic.

## Databases for conducting an online literature search

Academic research databases are useful for locating trusted resources like peer-reviewed research articles. Different fields in science have different academic resources. Some which might be helpful for your research are:

* Scopus is one of the two extensive commercial bibliographic databases covering the literature from almost any discipline. As a multidisciplinary bibliographic database, it covers 71+ million scholarly items.
* Web of Science is the second multidisciplinary bibliographic database that offers more than 100 million scientific articles.
* PubMed specializes in literature in medicine or biological sciences. It offers abstracts and bibliographic details of more than 30 million papers and provides full text links to the publisher sites or links to free PDFs.
* Eric (Education Resources Information Center) is the primary database for education sciences. It specifically hosts education-related literature, offering approximately 1.3 million items.
* Cochrane Library is a collection of databases that contain different types of high-quality, independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making. Resources include high quality systematic reviews on clinical topics and clinical trials.
* CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) is a database for nursing and allied health questions, including articles from 5.500+ journals.
* PsychINFO is the premier abstracting and indexing database covering the behavioural and social sciences. It helps to research psychology and psychiatry questions with over 5 million records.
* ScienceDirect is the gateway to multidisciplinary academic articles published by Elsevier. Offering the search of 2,500+ journals and 40,000+ eBooks, it covers approximately 16 million items.
* DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) offers approximately 4.3 million multidisciplinary open access items, meaning all items can be accessed free of charge.
* JSTOR offers approximately 12 million multidisciplinary items, with any article published in the United States, before 1924, available free of charge.

(11)

## How to search online databases

When conducting a literature search, you must first identify key words relevant to your research question. You might start your search broadly, with just a few keywords, and then add more once you see the scope of the literature. If the initial search does not produce many results, you can play with removing some keywords and adding more granular detail.

It is useful to apply some common search terms and symbols. The most frequently used are:

* AND is used to include both keywords to narrow the search
* OR expands the search to either keyword/concept or to combine synonyms and similar concepts
* "Double quotes" narrows the search to a specific word or phrase
* Wildcard\* includes any word ending variants, like infect\* = infection, infected, infectiology, infecting, etc.

Filters arehelpful to narrow your search. You can use filters to refine your search rather than adding additional keywords. Filters may include article and publication type, age, language, publication years, and species.

(12)

## How to read a paper?

Learning to read a paper efficiently is a critical but rarely taught skill. Some authors recommend using the “Three-pass” approach (13). This approach refers to reading the paper in three passes instead of once start to finish. Each pass accomplishes a specific goal and builds upon the previous.

Keshav (13) explains it as follows:

The first pass

The first pass is a quick scan to get a bird’s-eye view of the paper. You can also decide whether you need to do any more passes. This pass should take about five to ten minutes and consists of the following steps:

1. Carefully read the title, abstract, and introduction
2. Read the section and subsection headings, but ignore everything else
3. Read the conclusions

The second pass

In the second pass, read the paper with greater care, but ignore details such as proofs. It helps to jot down the key points, or to make comments in the margins, as you read. The second pass should take up to an hour. After this pass, you should be able to grasp the content of the paper. You should be able to summarise the main thrust of the paper, with supporting evidence, to someone else. This level of detail is appropriate for a paper in which you are interested, but does not lie in your research specialty.

The third pass

The key to the third pass is to attempt to virtually re-implement the paper by making the same assumptions as the authors to re-create the work. By comparing this re-creation with the actual paper, you can easily identify a paper’s innovations and its hidden failings and assumptions. This pass can take about four or five hours for beginners, and about an hour for an experienced reader. At the end of this pass, you should be able to reconstruct the entire structure of the paper from memory and be able to identify its strengths and weaknesses. In particular, you should be able to pinpoint implicit assumptions, missing citations to relevant work, and potential issues with experimental or analytical techniques.

# Secondary data

Secondary data sources are information, in many cases, created or generated for purposes other than research. Information previously collected by other persons, agencies or organisations for their own purposes, can provide a valuable source for empirical researchers. These sources include quantitative as well as qualitative data. sources

## Quantitative secondary data

As we discussed, secondary data is the data that has already been collected through primary sources and made readily available for researchers to use for their own research (14, 15). The data was not collected to answer the researcher’s specific research questions but instead collected for another purpose. The same data set can be a primary data set for one researcher and a secondary data set for a different researcher.

### Where to find the right dataset?

Most research begins with an investigation to learn what is already known and what remains to be learned about a topic (16); including related and supporting literature, but one should also consider previously collected data on the topic (17, 18). Many public and easily accessible secondary data resources and data sets are available for SOGI and HIV research. Einclude

1. International organizations (WHO, UNAIDS, UNODC, Global Fund)
2. Governmental institutions (Minestry of Health, Epidemiological services, hospitals and clinics)
3. National organizations (CDC, ECDC, EMCDDA)
4. Research institutions (Harvard Dataverse, University of Oxford)
5. International NGOs (AFEW, ECOM)
6. Open access research databases (CORE, ScienceOpen, Social Science Research Network)

### Using quantitative secondary Data

Before using secondary data in an analysis, the researcher must become familiar with the data set and the data collection process. Since the researcher did not collect the data, they are usually unfamiliar with the data. It is important for the researcher to understand how the data was collected, what the response categories are for each question, whether or not weights need to be applied during the analysis, whether or not clusters or stratification needs to be accounted for, who the population of study was, etc.

## Qualitative secondary data

Qualitative secondary data includes printed materials, online and electronic materials, broadcast media and film. These include newspapers, magazines, public health information leaflets, textbooks, (billboard) advertisements, websites, blogs, political speeches, television talk shows, documentaries and comics (19). This kind of secondary data is well suited to answering construction-type research questions as well as research questions about representation. Many secondary data sources utilized in qualitative research are fragments of (popular) culture.

Example: Using newspaper articles

A study to determine how sex workers and the sex work industry were represented in news media in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 pandemic, informing public opinion, was conducted in 2020.

Qualitative secondary data was used and articles available online, and published between March and December 2020 in the “big three” UK broadsheet newspapers, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian, as well as the most widely read online newspaper Independent in the UK were screened. The search was conducted between September and December 2020.

The following search terms were used: “prostitut\*” , “sex work\*”, “dominatrix”, “brothel”. The first 100 results from each newspaper were screened, and articles with headlines indicating relevance to the research question were selected for further investigation.

After dismissing articles that did not prove relevant to answering the research question, 34 news articles (The Times: 3, The Daily Telegraph: 7, The Guardian: 18, Independent: 6) relating to sex work during the COVID-19 pandemic were identified. All of these were coded by two researchers, who then developed 3 main cross-sample themes through an inductive Thematic Analysis (19, 20).

## Advantages of using secondary data

One of the main advantages of using secondary data sources is that it saves time and costs when collecting information. If someone else has already collected the information needed, there is no need to replicate the work. Also, secondary data can provide much more information than an organisation is able to collect on its own. This would hold true for data sources like government health surveys in an area based on large population based samples.

## A word of caution about using secondary data

It is important to carefully assess data from secondary data sources to ensure that it meets the needs of the topic under investigation. It is tempting to use readily available data because it is convenient, which might not do justice to the proposed research. It is also vital, especially when using quantitative secondary data, to ensure that it is reliable and credible. This is straightforward if there is a clearly described methodology and methods section, or if you can access the raw data. If the secondary data you are using has already undergone a peer review process or other quality assurance processes, this is also a good indication of a high standard of quality of data. If important information like the methodology, the means of data collection or the method of analysis is omitted, be sure to be aware of these limitations. In some cases, it might be possible to ask for more details from the original author.

# Online surveys

Surveys are one of the most commonly used methods to collect data for studies and community assessments. Surveys use questions developed on a specific topic or theme and aim to collect the same information from all respondents. Researchers use them to collect information about gender, sexual orientation, health, well-being, economic, demographic aspects as well as access to HIV or other health services. (21)

Surveys are conducted through online platforms, email, telephone or face-to-face interviews. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online platforms became the preferred data collection resource for safety reasons. It eliminates any personal contact and the risk of infection. Aditionally, some participants feel more secure when they do not have direct contact with a data collector.

## Advantages and disadvantages

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pros** | **Cons** |
| Can be conducted in a huge number of participants | Answers may be dishonest |
| Relatively cost-effective | Participants may lose their interest midway |
| Can be used to assess the change in behaviour | Questions might be left unanswered |
| Easy to visualise and analyse | Questions could be unclear for participants |
| Respondent personal information is protected (unless you collect the personal data) |  |
| Surveys can cover a lot of different topics |  |

## Step by step guide to conducting online surveys

Holton (22) defines several steps to conduct quantitative data collection:

1.     Choose a research question

2.     Think who would be the best audience to answer

3.     Operationalization

4.     Create a survey and choose a platform

5.     Distribute the survey

Step 1: Choose a research question

This is the fundamental step in any research you conduct. The research question is a question, idea, or hypothesis you test or investigate within your community. Based on your research question, you select your research method. For example, you would like to conduct CLM in your community and assess the sexual behavior of PrEP users in your city.

Step 2Identify participants

Think who would be the best participants in your CLM. In our case, participants would be PrEP users that are involved in services in your cityIn some instances, you will need to thoroughly consider the best audience. In the worst case, you won’t collect relevant and essential information and lose time and other resources.

*Tip: If you don’t have much experience with certain communities, norms, and traditions, it would be helpful to invite some representatives from the community to participate in a survey design. Involving representatives from the communities, you aim to study leads to greater commitment and helps ensure the survey is relevant and uses the appropriate language.*

Step 3: Operationalization

Some variables (questions) can be measured directly: e.g., if you want to collect information about the number of sexual partners during the last week, thus you need to ask for a specific number. More abstract concepts such as service satisfaction or level of knowledge can’t be directly observed and are more challenging data to collect.

Therefore, you need to set up operationalization. Operationalization means creating your abstract research question into something that can be easily assessed. As a result, you need to translate the conceptual definition of what you would like to investigate into the operational definition of what you will measure.

**Example:**

You have decided to use surveys to collect quantitative data about the level of competence of outreach workers in HIV-testing services in your city. You operationalize this idea in a way:

* You ask outreach workers to rate their skills and knowledge about HIV-testing on a 5-point scale assessing the awareness about HIV itself, pre-testing, and post-testing consultation.

Step 5: Create a survey and choose a platform

This is the most important and complicated step of quantitative data collection. The survey consists of a number of questions that the respondent answer in a set format. A distinction is made between open-ended and closed-ended questions. An open-ended question asks the respondent to formulate his/her own answer, whereas a closed-ended question has the respondent pick an answer from a given number of options. Here are several types of closed-ended questions:

1)    Binary: Would you like to participate in our survey? Yes/No

2)    Rating questions: How would you rate your knowledge of HIV post-testing procedure? Scale 1 to 5

3)    Likert scale questions: In the past week I felt depressed. Rarely/Often/All the time

4)    Multiple answers: What is your current gender identity? Female/Male/Trans\*male/Trans\*female/Other

5)    Demographic questions: How old are you?

6)    Continuous: How many sexual partners you had during the past week?

## Tips and tricks

Your survey should be logically constructed, and participants should feel the flow of your survey. In order to ensure a high response rate, put the least sensitive questions at the beginning and the most sensitive in the middle or close to the end of the survey.

*Tip: Try to use validated tools and questionnaires. The surveys and screening questionnaires have been tested to produce reliable, accurate results. Thus, you will avoid the complicated survey validation process among your potential participants. For example, you would like to measure discrimination in healthcare. To use validated tools, you can find them on the website of international organisations such as WHO, UNAIDS or national health authorities such as ECDC, CDC or EMCDDA.*

After you create a survey, you need to find the best way to publish and distribute it. During the COVID-19 pandemic, research groups moved from face-to-face interviews to the use of online platforms.

## Tools

There are many online platforms and tools that you can use to conduct research. Most often, pricing and the available features determine the selected platform. However, it is extremely important to consider where and how the data from these survey responses are stored and where the tool’s data centre is located. This is a small detail that could give a lot of problems and issues to your respondents depending on where they reside. In the ideal situation, your survey platform should operate within a legal area of countries with strict data privacy regulations, such as the European Union, Canada, the UK or the USA.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tool** | **Website** | **Free/Paid** | **Notes** |
| Qualtrics | <https://www.qualtrics.com> | Paid | Researchers have used it as a survey tool and combined it with [SPSS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SPSS)/R/Stata to analyse their survey data on employee experiences and many other types of survey data. |
| SoGoSurvey | <https://www.sogosurvey.com> | Free/Paid | SoGoSurvey is an end-to-end survey design, distribution, and analysis platform. |
| SurveyMonkey | <https://www.surveymonkey.com> | Free/Paid | SurveyMonkey offers cloud-based software in brand insights, market insights, product experience, employee experience, customer experience, online survey development, and a suite of paid back-end programs. |
| SoSci Survey | <https://www.soscisurvey.de> | Free/Paid | Exchange of questions between different survey projects. Sending individualised SMS directly from SoSci Survey. |

## Example

|  |
| --- |
| Example(s)  In the beginning of 2022, a study was conducted among PrEP users in Ukraine to examine partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.  It wasn’t a CLM study as such, but the method that was used is a good example of how communities can use online instruments to carry out an explicitly online study to collect and further analyse and work with data on a particular topic.  The study was conducted in the form of an online survey built using the qualtrics tool. The link to the survey was distributed among PrEP clients with the help of social workers that were providing PrEP as well as through social networks and personal communication channels of community members.  This approach allowed the research team to collect over 1000 responses in a month.  Similarly, in 2021 a study was carried out via an online survey built using the // platform to learn about the patterns of use of various types of drugs among the people who use drugs community in Ukraine (and in /// countries of the EU and Europe) as well as ways of obtaining them. The survey link was distributed with the help of members of the community and their personal communication channels, social networks and partially through paid advertising efforts (mostly in countries other than Ukraine).  The online survey approach has gained popularity over the recent years, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions to usual face-to-face data collection methods. It has already proven to be a convenient and reliable approach. |

# Online focus groups

Focus groups are a means of collecting data from several participants simultaneously. They offer the opportunity to gain insights into group members' social interaction and allow this to inform data analysis. Depending on the research topic and aims, this might offer advantages over the sometimes artificial and decontextualized data derived through other qualitative data collection methods.

Focus groups are a guided but relatively unstructured discussion about a (research) topic. As it is the aim to have the group members discuss the issue among themselves, the role of the moderator is to raise discussion points and to establish ground rules, like a respectful manner amongst the participants. (19)

## Synchronous online focus groups

Online and face-to-face focus-group research can be complementary, with online focus-group research opening new opportunities for gathering data (23). Online focus groups can be divided into synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous online focus groups usually happen through a virtual platform in realtime. Asynchronous focus groups are disucssions that utilize emails or online forums and occur over extended periods. This tool will concentrate on synchronous online focus groups, as these more closely resemble face-to-face focus groups. With respect to group interaction and the ability to obtain information, the disadvantages of online over face-to-face focus groups are becoming less of an issue as more modern and reliable technology provides ever increasing opportunities to create a social presence in an online environment.

Many of the advantages and disadvantages of conducting focus groups through video-conferencing platforms are similar to those for interviews, and many considerations for ethical and professional research hold true for both. We recommend you review the Interviews via video-conferencing platforms chapter for some important points to consider.

In addition to these considerations, there are some points that are unique to focus group research, which need to be considered when moving to an online environment.

### Sample size

Recommendations on sample size for face-to-face focus groups vary widely (19). While there might be advantages to smaller (e.g., when discussing sensitive topics) and larger (e.g. more diverse viewpoints) sample sizes, it makes more sense to have a smaller group of participants when conducting focus groups online. Online focus groups tend to be prone to technology issues, lagging, internet dropouts, and interruptions. Therefore it is recommended to cap the focus groups at approximately 6 participants (24).

### Group dynamics

It is important to set some ground rules for the focus group discussion. Encourage participants to treat the appointment as if it was happening in the real world, planning for enough time to get logged onto the video-conferencing platform without distractions and interruptions during the meeting. Discussions typically include interrupting or talking over one another, which can be difficult, when holding the a virtual discussion. Text chat or virtual hand-raising functions can make this easier and allow everyone to express themselves without interruption. Moderators should encourage respectful interactions between participants, including taking turns to speak, raising hands and waiting for others to finish their thoughts before adding or replying. To encourage participation from all participants, providing opportunities for everyone to speak and allowing time for reflection can be beneficial. To allow alternative and anonymous contributions, multiple user-friendly response modalities like Padlet, Etherpad and WordCloud can be utilized. These also give all the participants a chance to contribute simultaneously.

### Tools

Many video-conferencing platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex or GoToMeeting allow numerous participants to join the meeting, making them suitable for online focus groups. Many platforms allow you to record sessions, which facilitates easy transcription of data. Participants will feel more comfortable with a platform they are already familiar with and might prefer a platform they can access without a registration or subscription.

# Remote interviews

There are various types of interview classification systems, unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews, standardized/closed and reflexive/open interviews. This tool will concentrate on semi-structured interviews as they are the most widely used form of interview.This tool will give some general information and guidance on what to consider and how to conduct interviews before going into the details of conducting remote interviews.

## Sample size

Your chosen sample size will mainly depend on analysis you plan to conduct. In Grounded theory, for example, the point of saturation (no new insights can be gained by conducting more interviews) is often reached at about 25 interviews (25). Braun and Clarke recommend 6 - 10 interviews for small projects, 10 - 20 for medium projects and 30+ interviews for large projects when doing thematic analysis (26). In Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the number of participants can be between 2 and 25 (27). Make sure you decide on your methodology and method of analysis before recruiting and selecting participants, so your selection and sample size fit the analysis.

## Interview guide

Preparation is the key to success when conducting interviews as a research method. The first step is to design an interview guide composed of questions that guides the discussion between the researcher and the participant. The goal of the interview guide is to build trust and establish rapport between the interviewer and the participant to generating detailed and rich data relevant to the research question. To develop a useful interview guide, you must have a certain amount of knowledge about the topic (see chapter on Review of the literature). After brainstorming questions related to the research, there are several points to reflect on to structure the questions and to design a coherent interview guide.

First, there needs to be an opening and a closing question. Beware that the research question is not an interview question, even if it might be tempting to use it as your opening question. Instead, start with a question to centre the conversation on the general topic under investigation. The question should be formulated openly so that the interviewee feels they have a “blank page” that they can fill with their own words and by their own creative means.

The closing question is often designed to allow participants to raise issues they have not yet discussed but find necessary. This can generate unexpected and very useful data! Examples of closing or clean-up questions include: “Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not yet talked about?” or “If you could make a wish for the future relating to what we talked about, what would that be?”.

After you’ve selected a strong beginning and closing question, the next step is to consider the sequence of questions. Begin by clustering questions into topics and eliminating redundancies. Subsequently, organise the questions to flow logically, paying attention to an order that ensures an increase of more probing and direct questions throughout the interview. Make sure not to start with sensitive and personal questions immediately.

Interview question wording is vital for effective data collection. Significant time should be spent drafting and redrafting your interview guide and constructing your questions.. Make sure your questions are not too direct, too closed or leading. Practice them on someone not involved in the research.

Consider which questions might need prompts and probes to elicit elaboration from the participant. While some questions might only need a small verbal cue or an expectant glance, others might need specific questions to request further detail. Having additional prompts and probes in your interview guide helps encourage more discussion.

Consider if any of your questions are phrased in a way that elicits socially desirable answers, which will influence your research. Think about rephrasing such questions and ways to increase trust and rapport.

Having compiled a polished draft of your interview guide, revisit it a little later to reflect. Do your questions withstand the scrutiny when you ask yourself, what exactly you want to find out with each of your questions and if they really help to answer the research question? Are there underlying assumptions, and will the questions be meaningful to persons from different backgrounds? How would you feel if asked these questions, and how might the various participants feel? (19)

*Tip: A pre-test is a good way to check the quality of your interview guide. You can adjust the interview guide during data collection, as it needs not be treated as fixed. Questions can be added, rephrased or dismissed throughout the research process to best answer the research question.*

## Conducting remote interviews

Interviews are the cornerstone of qualitative research, and conducting them in person has been considered the “gold standard.” However, there are various options for conducting interviews virtually, which are no longer considered to be a poor substitute for face-to-face interviews (19). These include telephone, email, and interviews via video-conferencing platformsAll of these types of interviews have their own advantages and disadvantages.

### Telephone interviews

As mentioned before, make sure to pre-test your interview guide or list of interview questions, ideally over the phone. Prepare your audio recording equipment well in advance and try it out a few times, to develop security in using it. There are several ways in which to audiotape the interview like using a portable tape recorder and putting the interview on speakerphone (in this case ensure that background noise is minimal to avoid unwanted distractions during the interview) or computer software programs recording the conversation through the computer's speakers.

When setting up interview appointments with the participants, be extremely organised. Keep a detailed daily log of who you have called, when and the phone call's result, e.g., left a message, set up an interview, rescheduled, etc.

Prepare a brief and positive script for the introduction emphasising the importance and usefulness of their participation. Be prepared for participants not to read the information and informed consent form thoroughly ahead of time. In your introduction, include who you are (including your organisation), the study’s sponsor, the study’s general topic and the estimated length of the interview. Reassure participants of their responses confidentiality, how the information will be used, and the data security measures that are in place. Inform your participant about the need for tape recording before starting the interview. (28)

The length of telephone interviews is typically shorter than the length of face-to-face interviews. Mainly due to a tendency for participants to provide less detail or elaboration in their answers. (29)

Be sure to include prompts in your interview guide and to encourage the flow of the conversation so no awkward pauses arise, which might happen more quickly on the phone than in a face-to-face setting.

Make sure to be friendly and courteous as tone and emphasis of voice are highlighted on the phone. Do not sound biased or react to the participants’ responses. This can influence their responses to follow-up questions due to social desirability.

Depending on your methodology, consider taking notes in addition to the tape recording of the conversation to capture any non-verbal thoughts. If you agree to share the results of your research with the participants, you need to obtain the interviewee's address, preferably at the end of the interview. Be sure to follow through on and share the research outcomes. (28)

### Email and online interviews

One of the main advantages of email and online interviews is the convenience for participants. Persons can participate at a time and place that is convenient to them and take as long as they need to think about their answers. This lends a greater sense of control, which adds the factor of empowerment to the process. Anonymity in online or email interviews and perceiving less social pressure and visual clues from the interviewer, might make participants more comfortable in sharing sensitive and personal information. This is of particular value, when researching sensitive topics. Advantages for the researcher lie in the need for fewer resources, as there is no need for transcription, no loss of raw data, and no costs for travel to interview locations. Therefore, larger sample sizes may be possible, than in the case of face-to-face interviews. There is also a potential for engaging more with the data during collection, as the extended time-frame offers member checking opportunities and for the formulation of prompts and follow-up questions tailored to the participants developing account.

Disadvantages to email and online interviews exist for both the participants and the researchers. Email and online interviews limit participation to those with access to computers and mobile phones and those with a certain level of literacy skills. Participants may find typing rather than speaking inconvenient. The researcher’s main disadvantages include having less control over the interviews and the potential loss of spontaneity, natural responses and nonverbal cues from their participants. The researcher's ability to respond to interviewees via email and online is limited.This might become problematic if the anonymous nature of the email or online interview leads participants to over-disclose sensitive information or if the researcher's ability to refer interviewees to local support is limited.

(19)

### Interviews via video-conferencing platforms

Research comparing face-to-face and online video-conferencing interviews found no difference in the quality of the interviews (30, 31). Many advantages and disadvantages are similar to those discussed in email and online interviews.

#### **Advantages and disadvantages**

Video-conferencing interviews can be done without compromising a meaningful connection with the interviewees. The most significant advantage of interviews via video-conferencing platforms is accessibility to participants, their low cost, convenience and health safety. Some participants express feeling more comfortable speaking about sensitive topics in their own space rather than in an unfamiliar environment.

Video-conferencing allows the researcher to observe the interviewees’ non-verbal communication and provides a glimpse into the participant’s life.

Over the past two years, many people have become familiar with video-conferencing platforms. With the increased familiarity with social media, reluctance to participate in an online interview is no longer a disadvantage.However, populations with limited internet access are disadvantaged in participating in interviews via video-conferencing platforms.. Additionally, participants may have distractions or a lack of privacy while participating in the interview.

For researchers, the disadvantages of using video-conferencing platforms include extra costs (hardware, software, fees, etc.) and possible technical difficulties setting up or conducting the interviews and uploading the recordings. Even though the interviewer and interviewee can hear and see each other, they do not occupy the same physical space making responding to emotional cues and body language more difficult

#### **Technical considerations**

With video-conferencing interviews, building and maintaining rapport with participants might differ from that in face-to-face interviews (31). As the researcher’s comfort level with the utilised technology can influence their ability to build rapport, it is crucial to familiarise yourself with the equipment well in advance.

To minimise distractions, the researcher and participant should choose a location that allows privacy and confidentiality. To provide additional privacy a headset with a microphone, rather than the computer's audio system, can be used by both parties.

(32)

Gray et al. give ten excellent pointers for the preparation and execution of interviews via video-conferencing platforms (32):

1) Test the video-conferencing platform ahead of the interview, including the audio volume before and during each interview as is best practice for any audio-recorded

research interview.

2) Provide the participants with technical information, like the type of device they can use and regarding the possibility to use a headset with a microphone.

3) Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties, which you communicate to the participants.

4) Plan for distractions and account for potential extra time to be needed.

5) If the video-conferencing platform allows it, provide a direct link to the meeting for your participants.

6) Consider storage needs, when planning for length of interviews and video resolution.

7) If possible, hardwire the computer to the Internet instead of using a Wi-Fi connection.

8) Secure an uninterrupted Internet connection by unhook other devices connected to the Internet during the interview, as using the same Internet connection can cause audio and video disturbances.

9) Create a visual reminder to press record at the start of the interview. Remember to confirm the participants consent to recording the interview.

10) Manage the consent processes by reviewing the participant information and consent form to invite the interviewees' questions and to make sure they understand the research processes.

When choosing your video-conferencing platform, it is recommended to prioritise those those that staff and researchers are most familiar and comfortable withto minimise technical issues.

Additionally, consider using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) software program like Otter.ai and Trint to transcribe audio recordings and turn audio conversation into smart notes. New technologies like these have the potential to aid the speed and efficiency of interview processes.

#### **Tools**

Many readily available video-conferencing platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex, GoToMeeting. All these software are sound options for conducting face-to-face interviews. Many of these platforms allow you to record sessions and easily transcribe of data.

# Remotely Managing Teams

Diverse remote teams utilise the huge potential of globalised organisations. Though this increases the distance between team leaders and other team members, team leaders can create meaningful relationships and collaborative teams by leveraging trust and focusing on the individual. While this has been well-known in business, with global corporations and businesses operating worldwide, other organisations have only recently started to gain experience remotely managing teams and working together without borders.

In the period of COVID-19 and related restrictions, it became urgently important to introduce necessary adaptations to usual working arrangements. During lockdowns, without the opportunity to meet with colleagues in person, work moved online.

In terms of data collection and research during COVID-19 for community led monitoring purposes, it is also important to update the operational manual of the organisation, or organise the work of the working group, team of activists, etc., involved in the process in a remote mode. This requires additional competencies from team leaders as well as all team members. In order to maximise effectiveness and efficiency, team leaders need to emphasise emotional competencies, put more effort into building rapport and show sensitivity to the individuals on the team. This will create a strong basis for establishing a shared identity, essential for productive collaboration.  Formal structures for shared understanding or mutual knowledge need to be implemented with transparent communication and information management at its heart. Team members will need to assume a greater extent of self-responsibility, self-control and self-organisation. Constructive working relationships are of the essence, as are interpersonal adaptability and an increased ambiguity tolerance. (33, 34)

There are a number of online tools to help communicate efficiently and transparently, depending on the need - from short phone calls with or without video to full scale remote offices with file storage and virtual meeting rooms, etc. The choice of the tool depends on the needs of the organisation or project. Below we provide an overview of some tools that may be useful, highlighting functionality and aims of usage.

## Communication tools

A wide variety of communication tools are used for external and internal communication.  These tools include mail, email, telephones, cell phones, smartphones, computers, video and web conferencing tools, social networking, as well as online collaboration and productivity platforms.

### Online meetings

To organize a call, using Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams or other similar platforms is best (stable internet connect is required).. If you are organising or joining a meeting from your mobile phone, installing the corresponding app, available on App Store and Google Play Market is best. When using these tools, you can turn both the video and the audio on and off, depending on your preference or the need to speak to the rest of the participants.

### Use of social media and messenger apps

For more accessible day-to-day communication that doesn’t require audio or video call, teams can use existing social media messengers for quick operational communication. These apps allow for creating group chats that can be named correspondingly based on the team involved or the topic of discussion. They also allow for group or individual calls, convenient for ad-hoc quick calls among people in different countries or time zones. These applications also allow for file exchange, though it's important to choose the right app if it is something you are looking for - only Telegram, for example, allows you to pin messages/files at the top of the chat for easy access, etc.

It is extremely important to use apps that ensure data protection and security. At the same time, due to security reasons, we do not suggest you use apps to share specific files or any information that might contain confidential information. Also, it is forbidden to discuss any personal details of participants of CLM in your organisation.

### Scheduling

Utilizing a calendar is key to a meeting schedule. Current calendars exist that synchronise with calendars accross multiple platforms using individual’s email addresses. Particiapnts receive an invitation to add the meeting to their calendar on their device. Before relying on this, it is good to read more on this topic and carry out a test.

### Task management apps and online tools

Task management tools address a general need to organise, prioritise and visualise work to get things done more effectively through analysis.

A task management tool at its most basic level helps individuals, teams or organisations stay organised. Part of being organised includes setting priorities for tasks, visualising the progress as they pass through stages of completion and compiling analysis or reports to direct future tasks and workflows.

Online task management tool boards and project boards are especially useful for remote teams that take on many tasks with varying descriptions and priorities. They allow information, metrics, reporting, analytics and other files to be easily shared over an internet connection. Most online task management tools work through the Cloud, so users are able to allocate storage space and backup critical information without overloading their internal networks.

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Appendix 1.

Example: Interview Guide 1

# Information about sexual activities

* What do you understand by the term ‘have sex’?
  + What has to happen for it to ‘be’ sex?
* Do you think there is a ‘normal’ way for a couple to have sex?
  + If yes, where do you think you got this idea from?
* Does this differ for long/short term relationships?
* Stereotypes of sex – how do these relate to your personal experiences?
* How important do you think [the following] are in telling you about sex and what other people do, sexually?
  + Friends
  + Sexual partners
  + Media – Magazines, Films, Books, Television, Internet, Pornography etc
  + Sexual/health education materials
* How do you relate this information to your own ideas about sex?
* What about your sexual practices?

**Feelings about sex and sexuality**

* How do you feel about sex/sexuality generally?
* Is sex an important part of your life?
* Could you have a long-term relationship without sex? Why/why not?
* How have your ideas about sex changed across your life? Related to events/age?

**Your current relationship**

* How long have you been in the current relationship?
* Been having sex in it?
* Is the relationship monogamous?
* Are you still having sex?
* What sort of sex do you have?
* How frequently do you have it? Are you happy about it? Is your partner happy about this?
* Do you ever want sex more/less often than your partner? How is this resolved?
* How has the frequency of sex changed over the course of your relationship?
* Do you ever feel like you should be having sex but don’t desire it?
* Do you ever have sex when you don’t want it?
* Do you ever feel pressure to have sex? Where does this come from?
* Have you ever tried to get your partner to have sex with you when they don’t seem that interested? What happened? How did you go about it?
* How have the sorts of sex you have changed over the course of your sexual relationship?
* How important is orgasm when having sex? Your orgasm? Your partner’s orgasm? For you? For your partner?
* How is pleasure in sex linked to orgasm?
* Does sexual safety affect how you have sex? – In what ways? Safer-sex practices – are they important? Do you practice them? What sort?

# Close-up question

* Is there anything else you’d like to comment on/add?

Appendix 2.

Example: Interview Guide 2

1. **Opening questions**
2. What do you think of when I say “family”?
3. What do you think of when I say “community”?
4. What do you think of when I say “pleasure”?
5. **Men’s sexual history and current sexual behaviour**
6. How would you describe your sexuality to someone you trust?
7. At what age did you start having sex with men?
8. Could you share with me some more about your first sexual experiences? How did this first experience affect the rest of your sex life?
9. How important a part is sex in your life now?  
   **Probs:**Has it changed over time? What do you think is the reason?  
   How much of your time is spent having sex or looking for sex?
10. What do you think are the major barriers for you to having sex/dating other men ?
11. What risks do you identify that are associated with anal sex? (Not just sexual risks)
12. Do you experience negative emotions after you have sex with a man? If yes, what are they?  
    **Probs**:   
    How do you deal with these emotions?   
    What helps you to manage?
13. **Drug use and history of drug-taking;**
14. What does the term “drugs” mean for you?
15. If you have any experiences with drugs, how would you describe them?   
    **Probs**:   
    Age you were, where it happened, why you think it happened?   
    Was it a good or bad experience?  
    Can you share more about that experience?  
    What led you to take drugs?  
    How much did you know about drugs when you started taking them? Where did you get this information from?
16. Have you ever used drugs with a needle? If yes, what, where and which situation?   
    **Probs:**   
    How did you know who to do it?  
    Where did you get the equipment from?  
    After how long did you figure out how to use them?  
    What do you think about men who use drugs with a needle?
17. **Chemsex (if you are using chems during your sex life)**
18. When did you start chemsex? How did it happen?

Probs:  
What made you want to try chemsex? Why did you decide to continue?

What did you know about drugs at the time you tried them?

1. How do you describe your experience with chemsex?  
   **Probs**:   
   Who do you have sex with?   
   What kind of sex do you have?  
   How much sex do you have?  
   Where and in what environment do you have sex?
2. How is chemsex affecting your inner boundaries/ helping you to feel freer and allow yourself to do what you usually wouldn’t do?
3. How do you control the risk of HIV and other STI’s?  
   Probs:   
   Does drug use affect the use of condoms?
4. How much do you use dating apps when looking for chemsex partners/parties ? What role do these apps play in the rest of your sex life?
5. Could you tell me more about your experience with chemsex?  
   Probs:  
   How often do you have chemsex?

Where do you participate in chemsex?

How is it agreed upon with a sexual partner?

Who buys the drugs?

How do you agree on which drugs to use?

How are the drugs introduced into the sex you are having?

What substances are typically used?

1. What impact does chemsex have on the social relationships with your friends?
2. Is sex on drugs different from sex without drugs for you?   
   **Probs**:   
   If so, how?  
   If not, what does the drug do?
3. Do you think you will be having sex with chems for the foreseeable future?  
   **Probs:**   
   For how long? Do you see yourself still having chemsex in 10 years?   
   If yes, why?  
   If not, why?
4. Problematic drug use and harm reduction
5. Have you ever experienced any problems or had bad experiences using drugs?

Probs:  
If no: Have you experienced gay friends have problems with drugs?

If yes: Have you sought professional help/advice concerning your drug use?

1. Have you looked for information about drug use on the internet?
2. What kinds of services (action of helping) would you like to see available to support people who have chemsex to reduce the harm associated with their drug use?
3. What would such a service look like?
4. What services should it offer?
5. Closing questions
6. What motivated you to come and be interviewed today?
7. Do you have any questions or more you want to tell?
8. Do you think that there are some areas or issues that are important to you that you feel have been missed or not covered during the interview?

Appendix 3.

**Cover letter for the official institution to request the data**

Dear Dr./Ms./Mr. (Name of Recipient and Title if Applicable)

This letter is in regards to (Reason for Requesting Data). I am (Name of Person Requesting Data), and currently work in the (Name of Organisation). I am in charge of research and community-led monitoring, and am formerly requesting permission to access (Type of Data). We are currently collecting data for (Reason for Data), and were given your name from (How the person was identified).

We intend to use the data collected, to assist in creating a (Reason for Data), and will be sharing it with (Name of person or organization), in accordance with your organizations protocols.

On behalf of myself and my team, we heartily express our gratitude in examining our request for data. We assure you that all protocols will be followed, and privacy regulations adhered to. If you have any questions or concerns, my contact information is (Contact information).

Best regards

(Signed name)

(Printed name)