

## Primary Health Care Questions for Surveys

The Primary Health Care Questions for Surveys (PHCQS) project is a country-led global initiative to standardize the measurement of primary health care access and unmet needs in low- and middle-income countries. Modelled after Tobacco Questions for Surveys, which is used in more than 100 countries, it provides comparable and reliable data to inform health policies and strengthen health equity. Existing assessments often use facility-based data, which results in blind spots for unmet needs and foregone care, and vary in design across countries, undermining comparability. In contrast, PHCQS offers a small set of standard questions suitable across diverse contexts.

### Objectives

- Develop globally standardized core and optional survey tools to measure primary health care (PHC) availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability
- Enable within- and cross-country comparisons and support country-specific gap analysis
- Integrate PHC data into national and global monitoring frameworks
- Use data to advocate for improvements in primary health care

### Process

1. **Stakeholder engagement:** RTSL convened a technical working group composed of Ministries of Health and global experts in PHC and population surveys in September 2023
2. **Desktop review:** Analysis of existing surveys; mapping of indicators related to care seeking (i.e., usual source, barriers, quality, foregone care)
3. **Cognitive testing:** Focus groups in Bangladesh and Brazil to assess clarity and cross-cultural fit
4. **Pilot testing:** Surveys in Bangladesh (2,225 participants, phone-based) and Brazil (2,458 participants, web-based)
5. **Consolidation:** Triangulation of findings and partner input led to the final question set

### Current and planned surveys

The PHCQS module has been embedded into government, regional, and global population survey platforms, with more planned throughout 2026 (*indicated by \**):

- The Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection's annual health survey
- **WHO STEPS:** Ecuador; Guatemala\*, Belize\*
- **CDC HPCQS:** Philippines, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, Uganda, South Africa\*, Côte d'Ivoire\*, Georgia\*
- AfroBarometer Pan African survey

RTSL collaborates with ministries and partners to share findings and promote broader uptake.

**PHCQS helps countries address critical data gaps in PHC access and quality. Standardized measurement generates actionable evidence for stronger PHC systems.**

For more information, contact: [info@resolvetosavelives.org](mailto:info@resolvetosavelives.org) and visit <https://resolvetosavelives.org/resources/primary-health-care-questions-for-surveys>