

SYSTEMATIC MAPS

Criteria

Systematic Maps are **methodical overviews of the quantity and quality of evidence** in relation to a broad (open) question of policy or management relevance. The process and rigour of the mapping exercise is the same as for systematic review except that **no evidence synthesis is attempted** to seek an answer to the question. A critical appraisal of the quality of the evidence is strongly encouraged but may be limited to a subset or sample of papers when the quantity of articles is very large (and even be absent in exceptional circumstances). Authors should note that all systematic maps published in Environmental Evidence will have been conducted according to the [CEE process](#). Please contact the Editors at an early stage of planning your review. More guidance can be found here: www.environmentalevidence.org/Authors.htm.

For systematic maps to be relevant to policy and practice they need to be as up-to-date as possible. Consequently, at the time of acceptance for publication, the search must be less than two years old. We therefore recommend that systematic maps should be submitted no later than 18 months after the search was conducted.

We will consider publication of updates of existing systematic maps, typically from three years since the original search, but earlier if the development of the evidence base justifies the update.

Specificities per section

Title page

This should list the title of the article. The title should include the review question, for example:

What is the effectiveness of intervention A in producing change in subject B?

What is the impact of factor X on subject Y?

The full names, institutional addresses, and email addresses for all authors must be included on the title page. The corresponding author should also be indicated.

Abstract

The Abstract of the manuscript should not exceed 500 words and must be structured into separate sections: **Background**, the context and purpose of the review, including the review question; **Methods**, how the review was performed and statistical tests used; **Results**, the main findings, including results of search and assessment of evidence base; **Conclusions**, brief summary and potential implications for policy/management and research.

Keywords

Three to ten keywords representing the main content of the article should be given.

Background

The Background section should be written in a way that is accessible to readers without specialist knowledge in that area and must clearly state - and, if helpful, illustrate - the background to the review and its aims. Reports should indicate why this study was necessary and what it aimed to contribute to the field. The role of commissioners and other stakeholders in the formulation of the question should be described and explained. The section should end with a brief statement of what is being reported in the article.

Objective of the Review

This section should describe the primary question and secondary questions when applicable. The primary question is the main question of the review. The secondary questions are usually linked to possible subgroup analyses. This section may also present definitions of the primary question components (e.g. the subject, intervention and outcome measure) but see 'study inclusion criteria' below.

Methods

This should include the design of the review, the setting, the type of participants or materials involved, a clear description of all review stages should typically follow the format;

Searches

Here the searches are described in sufficient detail so as to be repeatable. The following subsections are a guide to the detail required on what was searched and how the search was conducted.

- Search terms and languages
- Search strings and/or combinations of searches (*search strings refer to combinations of terms using Boolean characters, combinations are methods used to set-up and pool different searches run separately*).
- Estimating the comprehensiveness of the search
- Publication Databases searched (e.g. Web of Science)
- Internet searches conducted (e.g. Google Scholar)
- Specialist searches - Searches for grey literature: contacts, searches of organisational websites, use of specific search terms or strings, filtering or limitations.
- Supplementary searches such as Bibliographical searches and literature provided directly by stakeholders

Study inclusion criteria

Here provide explanation about the rationale followed to include/exclude articles based on the following aspects, so that this stage is transparent and replicable by any external reader.

- Relevant subject(s)
- Relevant intervention(s)
- Relevant comparator(s) (if appropriate)
- Relevant outcomes
- Relevant types of study design
- Kappa test(s) for consistency of decision regarding inclusion/exclusion, at title, abstract, full-text level, planning other tests (Egger...)

Study quality assessment

Describe how you attempted a preliminary assessment of the quality of included studies. This may be a report of the design of each study or an assessment of a representative sample.

Results

Results of each stage of the map (e.g. search statistics, inclusion, critical appraisal) should be clearly reported. A flow diagram reporting the inclusion/exclusion process should normally be presented. A narrative synthesis of included studies (usually in tabular form) may be presented (can be as additional material when appropriate). Subsections should follow the format:

Review descriptive statistics (sub-headings as applicable)

Report here the date of the search, number of articles found in the search and included at each inclusion/exclusion level.

Mapping the quantity of papers relevant to the question

Present here a figure or a database (attached), showing how the relevant literature is organised (categories, coding...) according to transparent, replicable criteria. This map should be readily updatable.

Mapping the quality of papers relevant to the question

The map should provide some preliminary estimate of the quality of the available evidence. This may involve providing a description of the design of each study (or of a representative sample of studies).

Discussion

This might include observation on the distribution of articles and relative quantity and quality of available evidence with respect to the broad question and how the question might be broken down to enable full systematic review(s) to be conducted in future.

Limitations of the map

A discussion of the limitation of the map including limitations due to the search strategy and bias in pool of articles found.

Conclusions

This section should be divided into:

Implication for Policy/Management

This section summarises the state of the evidence base in terms of the quantity and quality of studies captured in the review. Potential for unpacking the broad question and enabling more detailed evidence synthesis should be highlighted. The intention is to inform and any form of advocacy should be excluded.

Implication for Research

This section summarises the shortcomings of the current evidence base in terms of knowledge gaps and the need for primary research. In this section some advocacy for research is permissible provided it is clearly justified by the review outcome. This should take the form of recommendations for future study designs that would improve the evidence base.

Competing interests

A competing interest exists when your interpretation of data or presentation of information may be influenced by your personal or financial relationship with other people or organizations. Authors must disclose any financial competing interests; they should also reveal any non-financial competing interests that may cause them embarrassment were they to become public after the publication of the manuscript.

Authors are required to complete a declaration of competing interests. All competing interests that are declared will be listed at the end of published articles. Where an author gives no competing interests, the listing will read 'The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests'.

When completing your declaration, please consider the following questions:

Financial competing interests

- In the past five years have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future? Is such an organization financing this manuscript (including the article-processing charge)? If so, please specify.
- Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future? If so, please specify.
- Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript? Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an

organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript? If so, please specify.

- Do you have any other financial competing interests? If so, please specify.

Non-financial competing interests

Are there any non-financial competing interests (political, personal, religious, ideological, academic, intellectual, commercial or any other) to declare in relation to this manuscript? If so, please specify.

If you are unsure as to whether you, or one your co-authors, has a competing interest please discuss it with the editorial office.

Acknowledgments

Please acknowledge anyone who contributed towards the article by making substantial contributions to conception, design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, or who was involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content, but who does not meet the criteria for authorship. Please also include the source(s) of funding for each author, and for the manuscript preparation. Authors must describe the role of the funding body, if any, in design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; and in the decision to submit the manuscript for publication. Please also acknowledge anyone who contributed materials essential for the study.

The role of a scientific writer must be included in the acknowledgements section, including their source(s) of funding. We suggest wording such as 'We thank Jane Doe who provided scientific writing services on behalf of XYZ Ltd.'

Authors should obtain permission to acknowledge from all those mentioned in the Acknowledgements section.

References

read [instructions here](#)

Additional files

Essential:

- List or file of studies included in the review (if not included in the main text/appendices)
- List or file of articles excluded at full text stage

Desirable:

- List or file (excel, access, Endnote, RefMan) of all articles captured from the search

Details regarding how to format these additional files are provided [here](#).

NOTA: a database or additional file which could not be submitted to Environmental Evidence because of its very large size could be made available on the CEE website with reference to it in the article.

Quick Links

Shortcuts to detailed instructions for each type of article:

- [Systematic Review](#)
- [Systematic Map](#)
- [Protocols](#)
- [Methodology article](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Letter to the Editor](#)

Shortcuts to

- [Main Instructions for Authors](#)
- [CEE Process](#)
- [CEE Guidelines](#)
- [CEE Peer-reviewer policy](#)
- [Publishing a scientific article](#)
- [Call for subject editors](#)

