



## Glossary of Research Terminology

**Abstract:** a concise summary of a journal article or other report; provides readers with a quick overview of the research, including its purpose, methods, results, and conclusions, allowing them to decide if the full work is relevant to their interests

**Accessibility:** everyone has the same opportunity to take part in an activity fully, in the way that best suits them

**Active listening:** the listener focuses their full attention on the speaker, both verbally and nonverbally, to understand their message fully, not just the words being spoken, but also the underlying emotions and context

**Advisory board:** consists of experts from various sectors, including academics, practitioners, community leaders, and sometimes PWLE; provide guidance, feedback, and strategic direction, and ensure the research stays aligned with community needs, best practices, and evolving trends in the field

**Anonymity:** the information never had identifiers associated with it, and the risk of identification of individuals is low or very low

**Applied research:** focuses on using existing knowledge to solve practical problems or develop new technologies; goal-oriented

**Basic research:** aims to expand knowledge and understanding of fundamental principles; curiosity-driven

**Benefits:** impacts that positively affect the welfare of participants, their communities, or society through the advancement of knowledge for both present and future generations

**Bias:** a type of error that can distort measurements and/or affect investigations and their results

**Case study:** an in-depth, detailed examination of a specific subject, such as an individual, group, event, or organization, within a real-life context

**Causal research:** attempts to establish relationship between different variables of a concept by testing hypotheses; helpful in trying to establish the effectiveness of a treatment or intervention

**Causation:** one event directly influences another; a change in one variable directly causes a change in another variable

**CBPR:** community-based participatory research; starts with the identification of a research topic which is important to the community, it is action-focused & often used to address health inequalities

**CIHR:** Canadian Institutes of Health Research; a common funding body in Canadian health research

**Citation:** a reference to a source of information used in a written work, like a research paper; acknowledges the original source of ideas, information, or data, and allows readers to locate the original work

**Closed questions:** short and specific; usually require a one-word or brief response, e.g., "Did you attend that appointment?"

**Cluster sampling:** the population is divided into clusters (i.e., districts, schools) and then some of these clusters are randomly selected as the sample

**Co-design:** people come together to conceptually develop and create things that respond to certain matters of concern and create a (better) future reality

**Co-investigators:** fellow researchers and practitioners who support the PI, bring specific expertise to the study, help with data collection and analysis, and may lead particular components of the project

**Confidentiality:** the obligation of an individual or organization to safeguard entrusted information

**Conflict of interest:** occurs when a researcher's personal, financial, or other interests could potentially bias or influence their research objectivity or integrity; can arise from various sources, including financial relationships with sponsors, personal relationships, or professional affiliations

**Consent:** how individuals express their willingness to participate in research; must be voluntary, informed, and ongoing

**Control group:** serves as a baseline for comparison, allowing researchers to isolate the effects of a specific variable; does not receive the treatment or manipulation being tested

**Convenience sampling:** involves selecting participants who are easy to reach or readily available; units are selected in an arbitrary manner with little or no planning involved

**Correlation:** indicates that two variables change together, without necessarily implying a cause-and-effect relationship

**Data:** any information that has been collected, observed, generated or created to validate original research findings

**Data analysis:** the stage in research where collected data gets organized, examined, and interpreted

**Data collection:** the process of gathering information that helps answer a research question or evaluate a program; can be qualitative, quantitative, or both

**Database:** an organized, searchable collection of information, designed for efficient storage, retrieval, and management of data

**Dependent variable:** the variables that are measured or observed to see if they are affected by the changes in the independent variables

**Descriptive research:** describes a phenomenon or population with the aim of highlighting an issue or increasing knowledge about its nature; reliant on quantitative data and statistics

**Discussion:** the section of a research paper where the researcher interprets, analyzes, and explains the significance of their findings

**Dissemination:** sharing the findings of a research project with the public

**Diversity:** people from a range of different backgrounds

**End user:** the people or groups who may ultimately benefit from the research findings; may include policy makers, practitioners, educators, advocacy groups, or affected communities

**Ethnography:** the researcher immerses themselves in the lives of the people they are studying over an extended period; researchers can act as insiders (actively participating) or as outsiders (focusing on observing the setting)

**Equality:** no single group or person is more important than any other group or person

**Exclusion criteria:** define the characteristics that disqualify an individual from participating in a study

**Experiment:** the researcher intervenes to change something (e.g., gives some patients a drug and others placed in a control group) and then observes what happens

**Exploratory research:** explores and tries to understand the issue to define it and suggest hypotheses

**Focus group:** interviews with a small group, typically 6 to 8 people; group dynamics play a big role in shaping the conversation, and observing these interactions is just as important as listening to what participants say

**Funder:** organizations or agencies that provide the financial support necessary for the research to take place, such as government bodies, foundations, or private institutions; often have specific requirements around how the project is managed, reported, and evaluated

**Generalizability:** refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to a broader population or context beyond the specific sample or setting studied

**Grant:** a sum of money or other resources provided by an external sponsor to support a researcher or institution in conducting a specific project or study

**Grey literature:** includes non-peer reviewed content such as internal reports, newsletters, conference reports, discussion papers, working papers, meeting notes, emails, blogs, etc.

**Hypothesis:** a proposed explanation for a phenomenon or a testable statement about the relationship between variables

**Inclusion criteria:** define the characteristics that make a participant eligible for a study

**Independent variable:** those that are manipulated or changed by the researcher to observe their effect on other variables

**Informed consent:** participants receive clear, comprehensive information about the study's purpose, what participation involves, any potential risks or benefits, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time

**Interview:** one-on-one conversations designed to gain an individual's interpretation of an issue; have a clear research purpose, follow a structured format, use methods to record responses, and include a systematic process for analyzing what is said

**Knowledge:** an awareness of something or someone and includes facts, numbers, views and opinions

**Leading questions:** questions that suggest an answer, e.g., You liked going there, didn't you?

**L.E.A.R.N. program:** Lived Experience Accelerating Research kNowledge program; a WE-SPARK Health Institute program offering resources, training, and research opportunities to individuals with lived experience, and providing researchers with opportunities to engage with individuals with lived experience in their work

**Limitations:** the constraints or weaknesses within a study that may impact the interpretation of findings or the generalizability of results

**Literature:** a collection of information and material on a particular focus area or topic; this can include books, journal articles, reports, etc.

**Literature review:** a comprehensive summary or overview of previous research on a topic

**Methodology:** encompasses the overall research design, including the theoretical framework, research questions, and the chosen approach

**Methods:** the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data

**Mixed methods research:** refers to a project that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches within the same study

**Narrative literature review:** a summary and/or critique of a body of literature about a topic; a comprehensive overview of data selected from relevant databases

**Non-probability sampling:** participants are chosen based on specific characteristics, availability, or relevance to the research

**Objectivity:** emphasizes facts and observable evidence; grounded in verifiable truth

**Observation:** a data collection method where a researcher watches and records events, behaviours, or characteristics in their natural setting or a controlled environment

**Ongoing consent:** consent is not a one-time event; participants should be reminded throughout the study that they can continue or withdraw their participation as they wish

**Open questions:** give participants the space to answer in their own words, in their own way, e.g., How did you feel when that happened?

**Participants:** the individuals who take part in the study itself, whether by completing surveys, participating in interviews, or engaging in interventions

**Personal biases:** our own beliefs, experiences, and assumptions; these can influence how we conduct research and interpret data

**Population:** the entire group of individuals, objects, or items that share a common characteristic and are of interest to the researcher

**Principal investigator:** the lead researcher responsible for overseeing the entire study, from designing the project to managing the team, ensuring deadlines are met, and making sure all ethical and funding requirements are followed

**Privacy:** an individual's right to be free from intrusion or interference by others

**Probability sampling:** everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected

**Probing questions:** follow-ups that encourage the participant to expand on something they've already said, e.g., Tell me more about that

**Purposive sampling:** researchers deliberately select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research question

**PWLE:** people with lived experience; team members who have personal experience with the issue being studied, such as health conditions, social challenges, or system involvement; offer insider perspectives that can improve the relevance, sensitivity, and quality of the research

**Qualitative analysis:** involves working with non-numerical data, like interview transcripts or written responses, to look for patterns, recurring ideas, and underlying meanings; the goal is to understand people's experiences and perspectives

**Qualitative research:** used when we want to understand how people experience the world around them; involves immersion in the everyday lives and situations of the people or communities being studied; includes interviews, focus groups, open-ended question formats, etc.

**Quality appraisal:** a process that carefully examines research to judge its trustworthiness, and its value and relevance in a specific context

**Quantitative analysis:** focuses on numbers, such as survey scores or clinical measurements; helps us test relationships between variables or see whether there's a measurable effect, such as changes before and after a program

**Quantitative research:** explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically-based methods; this is typically accomplished using surveys or experiments

**Questionnaire:** a set of several questions designed to gather standardized data on a topic of concern from a large group of people

**Quota sampling:** the researcher decides on a set number of participants from different subgroups; once the quota is filled, sampling stops

**Reciprocity:** ensuring people receive something back for putting something in

**Reliability:** determination of whether a measurement method is producing consistent results; would the same result be obtained over time or under different conditions?

**Research:** a process of asking questions and finding answers; a structured way of exploring something we're curious about, concerned with, or trying to improve

**Research ethics:** the moral principles that guide the design, conduct, and reporting of research

**Research ethics board:** an independent body that reviews and approves research proposals to ensure they meet ethical standards; help to protect participants from harm, ensure informed consent is properly obtained, and that the research is conducted responsibly and respectfully

**Research methods:** the tools and strategies researchers use to gather and make sense of information; how we collect data, how we analyze it, and how we answer our research questions

**Research partners:** individuals, groups, or organizations that collaborate on a research project, sharing responsibilities, resources, and potentially funding; in the case of WE-SPARK's L.E.A.R.N. Program, they are the individuals and groups who will be requesting the help of PWLE on their research projects

**Research question:** a clear, concise, and focused question that guides a research project, outlining what the researcher aims to discover or understand

**Results:** presents the findings of a study, reporting what the researcher found when analyzing the data

**Risk:** the possibility of the occurrence of harm (i.e., negative effects on individuals' welfare) to participants or other individuals

**Sample:** a subset of the population of interest

**Sampling:** the process of selecting a smaller group of people to participate in a research study to represent a larger population

**Simple random sampling:** gathering a representative sample from a population where each member in the population has an equal chance of being selected

**Snowball sampling:** new participants are recruited by existing participants to form part of the sample

**Statistics:** the science of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data using mathematical processes

**Stratified random sampling:** smaller groups within a sample are represented proportionally to the population

**Study:** a detailed examination or analysis of a specific subject, often undertaken to gain a deeper understanding or to gather information

**Subjectivity:** focuses on personal perspectives, feelings, and interpretations; influenced by individual viewpoints and biases

**Survey:** see 'Questionnaire'

**Systematic sampling:** every member in a given population is given a number; after the first member is chosen at random, the remaining members are chosen from a given interval.

**Systematic review:** an advanced, high-level overview of primary research on a particular research question using robust systematic methods to identify, select, evaluate, appraise, and synthesize research evidence relevant to the focus area in order to answer the research question

**TCPS-2 CORE-2022:** an introduction to the TCPS-2 for the research community; focuses on the TCPS 2 ethics guidance that is applicable to all research involving human participants, regardless of discipline or methodology

**Theory:** a well-substantiated explanation of an aspect of the natural or social world, based on a body of facts that have been repeatedly confirmed through observation and experiment

**Tokenism:** when individuals are included just to tick a box, not because their insight is truly valued

**Traditional literature review:** see 'Narrative literature review'

**Validity:** determination of whether the measurement method is measuring what it intends to measure; are the findings accurate and do they reflect the reality being studied?

**Variable:** any characteristic or attribute that can be measured or categorized and that can have different values

**Voluntary consent:** participants should never feel pressured or coerced into participating, they must choose freely

**Vulnerability:** where the research focuses on or includes persons who lack capacity (i.e., children, people with cognitive impairments), it may be necessary to include substitute decision-makers