

About this map

How to cite

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Access the current living map via this link:

- [SWARs Living Map](#)

Overview

A Study Within A Review (SWAR) is a methods research study designed to produce evidence to inform decisions about how we plan, do or share the findings of future systematic reviews or other evidence syntheses [1]. Because these studies are 'embedded in the doing of reviews' – that is, all, or most, of the data collected and analysed for SWARs are generated by applying systematic review and evidence synthesis processes – they can offer an efficient means of helping to improve these processes. Many of the completed or ongoing studies that self-identify as SWARs are formally registered in the [SWAR Store](#) – an open access, online repository of structured records of registered SWARs that can be replicated, or adapted for replication, in future reviews.

The [SWARs Living Map](#) is an open access, interactive web database which contains structured records of SWARs that have been registered in the SWAR Store and also coded according to their key characteristics.

The SWARs Living Map aims to supplement the SWAR Store by:

- Making information about SWARs more findable, accessible and reusable – including to inform further replications of the studies in host reviews;
- Maintaining a continually updated overview of the evolving 'landscape' of registered SWARs in terms of their characteristics; and
- Helping to highlight areas, within the overall evidence base for evidence synthesis methods from SWARs, where there is more, or less, research activity – including gaps that could potentially be filled by new studies.

The SWARs Living Map was launched in April 2025 and it is continually updated with new records when new SWARs are registered in the SWAR Store, have been manually coded and added to the map. For example, ‘Version 1 – Up to March 2025’ contained 30 fully coded records of SWARs registered in the SWAR Store up to the end of December 2024; while ‘Version 2 – April to September 2025’ started out empty on 1st April 2025, with new records prospectively added, when ready, during the subsequent six-month period. Similarly, ‘Version 3 – October 2025 to March 2026’ will start out empty on 1st October 2025, with new records prospectively added, when ready, during the next six-month period; and so on.

The SWARs Living Map is maintained by members of the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Evidence Synthesis Groups Best Practice Working Group on SWARs (see ‘How to cite this map’, above for the list of current authors). The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. The living map is produced as an open access web database using [EPPI Reviewer](#) software [2] and its integrated [EPPI-Visualiser](#) tools, and it is published via a link hosted in the [SWAR Store](#) on the Queen’s University Belfast website. The authors’ work on the map is supported by their roles in their respective host NIHR Evidence Synthesis Groups, which are funded by grants awarded by the [NIHR Evidence Synthesis Programme](#).

For tips on ‘How to use the map’, please see the ‘Introduction’ pane of the current [living map \(web database\)](#). For details of the coding scheme that has been applied to each SWAR record in the living map, please see ‘How the records were coded’ – below in this document. For enquiries or feedback about the SWARs Living Map, please contact Ian Shemilt (EPPI Centre, UCL) via e-mail to: i.shemilt@ucl.ac.uk.

References

[1] Devane D, Burke NN, Treweek S, Clarke M, Thomas J, Booth A, Tricco AC, Saif-Ur-Rahman KM. Study within a review (SWAR). *Journal of Evidence Based Medicine* 2022; 15(4): 328-332. doi: 10.1111/jebm.12505.

[2] Thomas J, Graziosi S, Brunton J, Ghouze Z, O’Driscoll P, Bond M. (2024). *EPPI-Reviewer: advanced software for systematic reviews, maps and other evidence synthesis* [Software]. London: EPPI Centre. Available from: <https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/er>

How the records were coded

Map Version

- **All Versions**
- **Version 1 – Up to March 2025**
- **Version 2 – April to September 2025**

Manually assigned based on the registration form

The authors of the SWARs Living Map manually assigned these codes to each record (study) in the map based on information supplied in the SWAR registration form. This coding scheme was developed via three rounds of pilot coding using small samples of selected SWAR records.

Key study characteristics

- Does (will) the study help to inform decisions about how we plan, do and / or share the findings of future reviews?

Select the **single** applicable code:

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Unclear**

- Does (will) the study make a comparison between alternative systematic review / evidence synthesis methods / processes?

Select the **single** applicable code:

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Unclear**

- Is (will) the study (be) embedded in data collected from the doing of one or more reviews?

Select the **single** applicable code. Alternative question formulation: Were (will) most or all of the data (to be) collected and analysed for the study (be) generated by applying systematic review / evidence synthesis processes?

- **Yes**
- **Partly Yes**
- **No**
- **Unclear**

Could the study be done prospectively / retrospectively?

- Could the study conceivably¹ be done by analysing data that has yet to be collected in one or more future host reviews? If 'yes' (or 'probably yes') then select 'Prospective' at 'level 1'.

- Could the study (also) conceivably¹ be done by analysing data that has already been collected in one or more completed host reviews? If 'yes' (or 'probably yes') then (also) select 'Retrospective' at 'level 1'.

Select **all** 'level 1' codes that apply. If 'Prospective' and/or 'Retrospective' are selected at 'level 1', then (in each case) also select the **single** most applicable corresponding code at 'level 2':

- **Prospective**
 - **Prospective – without adaptation**
 - **Prospective – only with adaptation**
- **Retrospective**
 - **Retrospective – without adaptation**
 - **Retrospective – only with adaptation**
- **Unclear**

Has the study been done prospectively / retrospectively?

- Has the study (yet) been done by planning to analyse data that had yet to be collected in one or more host reviews? If 'yes' (or 'probably yes') then select 'Prospective' (at 'level 1').

¹ Encompasses both (i) 'what is/ was explicitly planned' and (ii) 'what is feasible in our judgement (including what has been done)' with and without adaptation (i.e. both i and ii to be coded based on the study design as described on the registration form).

- Has the study (yet) been done by analysing data that had already been collected in one or more completed host reviews? If 'yes' (or 'probably yes') then (also) select 'Retrospective' (at 'level 1').

Select **all** codes that apply:

- **Prospective.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews in which this SWAR was done by planning to analyse data that had yet to be collected, then select 'Prospective'.
- **Retrospective.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews in which this SWAR was done by analysing data that had already been collected, then select 'Retrospective'.
- **None Yet Completed.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this is empty, then select 'None Yet Completed'.
- **Unclear.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews, but it cannot reasonably be inferred whether they were done 'prospectively' or 'retrospectively' (as defined above), then select 'Unclear'.

Could the study be done in a single review, or in multiple reviews?

- Could the study be done in one (single) review only, or could it conceivably¹ be done in more than one (multiple) review?

Select the **single** most applicable 'level 1' code. If 'Multiple Reviews' is selected at 'level 1', then also select the **single** applicable 'level 2' code:

- **Single Review**
- **Multiple Reviews**
 - **Multiple reviews – without adaptation**
 - **Multiple reviews – only with adaptation**
- **Unclear**

Has the study been done in a single review, or in multiple reviews?

- Has the study (yet) been done in one (single) host review, or more than one (multiple) host review?

Select the **single** applicable code:

- **Single Review.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to a single host review, then select 'Single Review'.
- **Multiple Reviews.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to two or more host reviews, then select 'Multiple Reviews'.
- **None Yet Completed.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this is empty, then select 'None Yet Completed'.
- **Unclear.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews, but it cannot reasonably be inferred whether there is (has been) one, or more than one, host review(s), then select 'Unclear'.

Is the study about planning, conducting, or disseminating evidence synthesis?

- Is the study about planning evidence syntheses?
- Is the study about conducting evidence syntheses?
- Is the study about disseminating evidence syntheses?

Select **all** codes that apply:

- **Planning**
- **Conducting**
- **Disseminating**
- **Unclear**

If the study concerns relevant training of people / teams (see also 'Evidence Synthesis Stages' and 'Evidence Synthesis Methods Topic Areas', below), then consider the purpose of the training:

- Does the training concern how to plan one or more stages / tasks in a review / evidence synthesis?
- Does the training concern how to conduct one or more stages / tasks in a review / evidence synthesis?

- Does the training concern how to disseminate a review / evidence synthesis?

Which stages of the evidence synthesis process does the study relate to?

- Which stage(s) of the evidence synthesis process does the study relate to?

Select **all** codes that are explicitly referred to in the record.

For example, if the study is explicitly described as being about title-abstract screening, select only 'Selecting / screening eligible studies / reports' (and not also 'Identifying and removing duplicate reports').

For studies of de-duplication methods / processes / tools, select both 'Identifying and removing duplicate reports' and 'Selecting / screening studies / reports'. If training, then select only 'Training'.

- **All stages / any stage(s) of a review** (*e.g. a study of time used to complete activities / tasks in various stages (any stage) of the systematic review process*)
- **Training**
- **Priority setting**
- **Formulating research questions / objectives**
- **Specifying eligibility criteria and / or groupings for synthesis**
- **Searching for eligible studies / reports**
- **Identifying and removing duplicate reports**
- **Selecting / screening studies / reports**
- **Extracting / collecting data from / coding included studies / reports**
- **Assessing risk of bias / quality among / critically appraising included studies**
- **Analysing / synthesising quantitative data from included studies**
- **Analysing / synthesising qualitative data from included studies**
- **Mapping / visualising data from included studies / reports**
- **Interpreting results & drawing conclusions / implications for policy / practice**
- **Peer review**
- **Presentation of reviews**
- **Readability**
- **Other(s) – Specified**
- **Unclear**

Could the study be done in standard, living, or rapid reviews?

- Could the study conceivably¹ be done in standard reviews / maps etc?
- Could the study conceivably¹ be done in living reviews / maps etc?
- Could the study conceivably¹ be done in rapid reviews / maps etc?

Select **all** 'level 1' and 'level 2' codes that apply:

- **Standard**
 - **Standard – without adaptation**
 - **Standard – only with adaptation**
- **Living**
 - **Living – without adaptation**
 - **Living – only with adaptation**
- **Rapid**
 - **Rapid – without adaptation**
 - **Rapid – only with adaptation**
- **Unclear**

Has the study been done in standard, living, or rapid reviews?

- Has the study (yet) been done in standard reviews / maps etc?
- Has the study (yet) been done in living reviews / maps etc?
- Has the study (yet) been done in rapid reviews / maps etc?

Select **all** codes that apply:

- **Standard.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews not conducted in 'living' nor 'rapid' modes, then select 'Standard'.
- **Living.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews conducted in 'living' mode, then select 'Living'.
- **Rapid.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews conducted in 'rapid' mode, then select 'Rapid'.

- **None Yet Completed.** Check the ‘Examples of the implementation of this SWAR’ field of the SWAR registry record’. If this is empty, then select ‘None Yet Completed’.
- **Unclear.** Check the ‘Examples of the implementation of this SWAR’ field of the SWAR registry record’. If this refers to one or more host reviews, but it cannot reasonably be inferred whether they were conducted in ‘standard’, ‘living’ or ‘rapid’ modes, then select ‘Unclear’.

In which types of evidence synthesis could the study be done?

- In which type(s) of evidence synthesis could the study conceivably¹ be done?

Select **all** code(s) that apply.

- **Any type of evidence synthesis (generic)**
 - **Any scoping or map type**
 - **Scoping reviews**
 - **Mapping reviews**
 - **Evidence and gap maps**
 - **Unspecified / other scoping or map type(s)**
 - **Any quantitative review type**
 - **Reviews of interventions**
 - **Reviews of diagnostic test accuracy**
 - **Prognosis systematic reviews**
 - **Unspecified / other quantitative type(s)**
 - **Any / unspecified qualitative review type**
 - **Any / unspecified mixed methods review type**
 - **Any reviews of reviews type**
 - **Umbrella reviews**
 - **Overviews of reviews**
 - **Unspecified / other reviews of reviews type(s)**
- **Unclear**

In which types of evidence synthesis has the study been done?

- In which type(s) of evidence synthesis has the study (yet) been done?

Check the ‘Examples of the implementation of this SWAR’ field of the SWAR registry record’.

'Level 1' and some 'level 2' codes will not be selectable when they are not applicable.

Select **all** selectable 'level 2' codes or 'level 3' code(s) that apply:

- Type of evidence synthesis
 - Scoping or map type(s)
 - **Scoping reviews**
 - **Mapping reviews**
 - **Evidence and gap maps**
 - **Unspecified / other scoping or map type(s)**
 - Quantitative review type(s)
 - **Reviews of interventions**
 - **Reviews of diagnostic test accuracy**
 - **Prognosis systematic reviews**
 - **Unspecified / other quantitative type(s)**
 - **Qualitative review type(s)**
 - **Any / unspecified mixed methods review type**
 - Any reviews of reviews type
 - **Umbrella reviews**
 - **Overviews of reviews**
 - **Unspecified / other reviews of reviews type(s)**
- **None yet completed.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this is empty, then select 'None Yet Completed'.
- **Unclear.** Check the 'Examples of the implementation of this SWAR' field of the SWAR registry record'. If this refers to one or more host reviews, but it cannot reasonably be inferred which type(s) of review(s) they are, then select 'Unclear'.

Which methods topic areas does the study fall within?

- Which methods topic area(s) does the study fall within?

Select **all** codes that apply **up to a maximum of three**. **If more than three** codes apply, select the **three most applicable** codes.

For studies of de-duplication methods / processes / tools, select at least 'Study selection / eligibility screening' (and other codes if applicable, e.g. 'Automation tools').

If general training, then select only 'Training'; if training in specific topic areas, then select both 'Training' and up to 2 other topic area(s).

- **Automation tools**
- **Bias / critical appraisal**
- **Co-production / interest holder involvement**
- **Comparing multiple interventions**
- **Data collection / extraction**
- **Dissemination**
- **Equity / EDI**
- **Qualitative / implementation**
- **Searching**
- **Statistics**
- **Study selection / eligibility screening**
- **Training**
- **Use of findings**
- **Other(s) – Specified**
- **Unclear**

Pre-populated from the registration form

SWAR registrants selected these codes when submitting their SWAR registration forms. The information captured in these does is also reproduced in the SWAR records (see 'Abstract' field).

Study Areas

- **Dissemination**
- **Editorial Processes**
- **Statistical Analysis**
- **Editorial Processes**
- **Statistical Analysis**
- **Study Identification**
- **Other(s) – Specified**

Sample Types

- **Consumers**
- **Editors**

- **Practitioners**
- **Reviewers**
- **Study Authors**
- **Other – Specified**

Estimated Funding Level Needed

- **Unfunded**
- **Very Low**
- **Low**
- **Medium**
- **High**
- **Very High**
- **Unknown**

Intervention or Comparator Index Types

- **Dissemination**
- **Full Review**
- **Protocol**
- **Searching**
- **Title**
- **Other(s) – Specified**

Method for Allocating to Intervention or Comparator

- **Before and after study**
- **Cross Over**
- **Non-Random**
- **Randomisation**
- **Various**
- **Other – Specified**
- **N/A - No Comparison**