What Type of Review Is Right for You?

**Do you want to gather all the evidence on a particular research topic?**

- **Yes**
  - **Do you have 3 or more people to work on the review?**
    - **Yes**
      - **Literal (Narrative) Review**
    - **No**
      - **More intensive reviews usually require a multi-person team for unbiased article screening.**
  - **No**
  - **Do you have 12–18 months to complete a review?**
    - **Yes**
      - **Rapid Review**
    - **No**
      - **Do you have a broad topic or multiple research questions?**
        - **Yes**
          - **Scoping Review**
        - **No**
          - **Do you want to review other published systematic reviews on your topic?**
            - **Yes**
              - **Umbrella Review**
            - **No**
            - **Do you have a well-formulated research question?**
              - **Yes**
                - **Systematic Review**
              - **No**
              - **Systematic reviews are conducted in an unbiased, reproducible way to provide evidence for practice and policy-making and to identify gaps in research. They require a well-formulated research question.**
  - **No**

**Will you use statistical methods to objectively evaluate, synthesize, and summarize results?**

- **Yes**
  - **Meta-Analysis**
- **No**
  - **A meta-analysis will not be needed.**
What Type of Review Is Right for You?

*Literature (Narrative) Review*

A broad term referring to reviews with a wide scope and non-standardized methodology.

- Search strategies, comprehensiveness, and time range covered vary and do not follow an established protocol.

*Rapid Review*

Applies systematic review methodology within a time-constrained setting.

- Employs methodological “shortcuts” (limiting search terms for example) at the risk of introducing bias.
- Useful for addressing issues needing quick decisions.
- See Evidence summaries: the evolution of a rapid review approach for methodological guidance.

*Scoping Review or Systematic Map*

Systematically and transparently collects and categorizes existing evidence on a broad topic or set of research questions.

- Seeks to identify research gaps and opportunities for evidence synthesis.
- May critically evaluate existing evidence, but does not attempt to synthesize the results in the way a systematic review would.
- May take longer than a systematic review.
- See Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework for methodological guidance.
- See Environmental Evidence Journal Systematic Maps and Guidance on Systematic Maps—CIFOR.

*Umbrella Review*

Reviews other systematic reviews on a topic.

- Often defines a broader question than is typical of a traditional systematic review.
- Most useful when there are competing interventions to consider.

*Systematic Review*

A methodical and comprehensive literature synthesis focused on a well-formulated research question.

- Aims to identify and synthesize all of the scholarly research on a particular topic, including both published and unpublished studies.
- Conducted in an unbiased, reproducible way to provide evidence for practice and policy-making and to identify gaps in research.
- May involve a meta-analysis.
- Much more time-intensive than traditional literature reviews.

*Meta-Analysis*

A statistical technique for combining the findings from disparate quantitative studies.

- Uses statistical methods to objectively evaluate, synthesize, and summarize results.
- May be conducted independently or as part of a systematic review.