

Table: Definitions of key types of evidence synthesis

Type of evidence synthesis	Definition
Inventory	An inventory only lists the evidence that is available on a given topic. There is no attempt to appraise, summarize or synthesize the evidence for further use, nor is there an attempt to present conclusions or recommendations to the knowledge user.
Non systematic scoping review of the literature	A non-systematic scoping review is undertaken with the objective of providing a preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature.
Systematic scoping review / Systematic map of the literature	A systematic scoping review or systematic map describes what has and not been studied about a research question. It uses systematic reproducible and transparent methods to identify, code and report this literature.
Systematic review	A systematic review aims to answer a clearly formulated research question using the findings of already completed research. It uses systematic, reproducible and transparent methods to identify, select and appraise the relevant studies, and analyze their findings. It can address different types of questions – effects of prevention or treatment strategies, diagnostic test accuracy, prognosis, risk factors, etc. Depending on the question, it may utilize different forms of evidence, including qualitative data and may evaluate simple and complex interventions.
Rapid response brief	A rapid response brief presents a summary of the best available evidence in a synthesized and contextualized manner, in direct response to a decision-maker’s question. It is a knowledge translation product created through formal methods to synthesize and appraise the evidence. It does not generate new knowledge but uses findings that are already available, especially from existing systematic reviews.
Rapid review	A rapid review accelerates the process of conducting a systematic review through streamlining or omitting specific methods to produce evidence for stakeholders in a timely manner. It is increasingly feasible to conduct a systematic review rapidly utilising technology advancements or crowd-sourcing but the term rapid review is usually used when there is some compromise in scope or rigour of method of the review (which may limit the evidence claims that can be made).
Living systematic review	A living systematic review is a review that is continually updated, incorporating relevant new evidence as it becomes available. Living reviews have become possible with the use of information technology to provide automated searching for newly published studies. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic designating a systematic reviews as ‘living’ may indicate that the researchers: a) anticipate that new evidence is likely to emerge that will influence the results of the review, and b) that they aim to incorporate such new data as it become available (‘in real time’). ‘Living’ attributes can also be applied to other forms of evidence synthesis.
Mixed methods and multi-component review	A mixed methods review includes a number of different forms of research evidence (such as for example quantitative and qualitative studies) in the review. In some cases, these different forms of evidence are considered together. In other cases, the review question is divided into sub questions that are addressed in different sub-components of the review.