The data were derived from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, which is the most comprehensive worldwide observational epidemiological study to date. Led by the [Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation](http://www.healthdata.org/gbd) (IHME) at the University of Washington, Seattle (USA), the GBD study offers a powerful resource to understand health trends and prevalence of health conditions across the world. WHO joined forces with IHME to produce prevalence estimates for disability, using the latest set of GBD data for 2021.

The data is based on identifying multiple relevant data sources for each disease or impairment including censuses, household surveys, civil registration and vital statistics, disease registries, health service use, disease notifications, and other sources. Each of these types of data are identified from systematic review of published studies, searches of government and international organisation websites, published reports, primary data sources such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, and contributions of datasets by GBD collaborators. A consortium of more than 8,500 researchers in more than 156 countries and territories captured data on more than 350 health conditions and injuries in 204 countries and territories, by age and sex.

To estimate the most recent prevalence of disability, WHO and IHME selected only those health conditions and impairments that typically last longer than 6 months and are associated with significant (moderate or severe) levels of disability. To avoid double counting of people who have more than one underlying health condition or impairment, an adjustment for comorbidity was made that considers the probability of having multiple conditions. The data on underlying health conditions is presented in three levels as described in the data dictionary.