



Profile and Correlates of Persons Living with Disability (CR5I)

An Analysis Brief from The DHS Program

Why study characteristics of persons living with disability?

WHO estimates that approximately 15% of the global population live with a disability and this can vary greatly by country and population subgroups. It is important for countries to identify persons living with disabilities in order to provide them with the services and support they need.

Which countries were included in the study?

This report uses data from DHS surveys in Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Timor-Leste, and Uganda to describe the characteristics of persons with disabilities.

What methods were used to conduct this analysis?

The disability module in these surveys used the Washington Group Short Set of six questions on functioning to assess disability among household members age 5 and above. The questions in the module ask whether household members have *no difficulty*, *some difficulty*, *a lot of difficulty*, or *cannot do at all* in six domains of disability: seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, remembering or concentrating, washing all over or dressing, and communicating. This analysis explores three disability variables:



- 1) Having at least one disability: The household member has least *some difficulty* in any of the six domains
- 2) Having any severe disability: The household member has *a lot of difficulty* or *cannot do at all* in any of the six domains
- 3) Having two or more disabilities: The household member has two or more disabilities with any level of difficulty

Cross tabulations were performed for the three disability measures by background variables for each population group: age 5 years and above, and separately for men and women age 15 years and above. Chi-square tests of association were performed to test for the independence between each of the three disability measures and the background variables.

What are some key results?

Overall disability levels among population age 5 and above: Having at least one disability was more than three times higher in Uganda (26%) than in Nigeria (8%) (See Figure 1). Following Uganda, approximately 20% of the household population in four countries—Haiti, South Africa, Rwanda, and Pakistan—reported having at least one disability. Having at least one severe disability was highest in Uganda (7%) and lowest in Nigeria (1%). Further, having two or more disabilities was highest in Uganda (11%) and lowest in Nigeria (2%). In all countries, seeing was the most prevalent type of disability, regardless of severity.

Disability by background characteristics among population age 5 and above:

The highest percentage of persons living with disabilities was found in females, in those age 50 and above, and in rural areas of most countries. The percentage of persons with disability increases significantly with increasing age in all countries included in this analysis.

Disability by background variables among adults age 15 and above:

For women and men age 15 and above, disability was found to be higher in those with no education, those formally in a union, those who have four or more children, and for those who are currently working. Where education was significantly associated with disability, disability decreased with increasing education, except for women in Nigeria. Disparities in disability status were also found by religion in a few countries.

Disability and domestic violence. All surveys except Nigeria had data on women’s experience of domestic violence. This analysis examined the variables ever experienced violence, experience of violence in the last 12 months, and violence by a partner and found very few significant associations between the domestic violence indicators and disability, except for Uganda. In Uganda, all domestic violence indicators were found to be significantly associated with the three disability measures; one exception was no significance was found between experiencing physical violence in the last 12 months and having a severe disability. In Pakistan and Rwanda, women who have ever experienced physical violence since the age of 15 have a higher percentage of any disability compared with women who have not experienced this violence. In all cases where it was significant, disability was higher among women who experienced these forms of violence compared to women who have not.

How should these results be used?

Availability of rehabilitation, affordable health care, caregiving services, and social protections is essential for improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and ensuring their social inclusion. The results of this report will help to highlight subpopulations and regions of greatest need for these interventions.

Figure 1. Levels of Disability
Percent of household population age 5+ with:

