Disability in Brazil

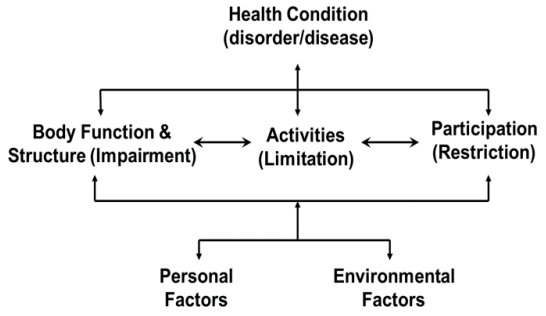
The Importance of Disability

Disability is both a multidimensional concept and experience. Disability can affect anyone at any time – from birth through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Worldwide, many people with disabilities do not have equal access to education, employment, and health care. In addition, those with disability may experience barriers to participating in civic and social life activities.

Defining Disability

No single definition of disability exists. Definitions vary depending on the purpose for measurement. Moreover, the nature and severity of disabilities can vary greatly depending on cultural contexts[1]. Yet, data on the size and characteristics of the population with disability, which also allow for cross-cultural comparisons, require standardization in both the conceptualization and the measurement of disability.

The ICF Model of Disability



The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), developed by the World Health Organization[2], provides the necessary and consistent definition of disability. According to the ICF model, disability arises from the interaction between an individual and that individual's contextual (personal and environmental) circumstances. Thus, the degree to which participation in life activities is restricted depends on the interaction between the individual's functioning (ability to perform basic functional activities) and the environment.

The Washington Group

The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG), a city group established under the United Nations Statistical Commission, was formed to address the need for population-based measures of disability by promoting and coordinating international co-operation in the area of health statistics, focusing on disability data collection tools suitable for censuses and national surveys.

The WG has developed, tested and adopted the Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) to collect such data. The questions use the ICF as a conceptual framework. The WG-SS is comprised of 6 questions measuring difficulty functioning in basic actions, with response categories that capture the full spectrum of difficulty functioning, from mild to severe. Disability is defined as having "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one WG-SS question.

The WG Short Set on Functioning

1. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
2. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
4. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
5. Do you have difficulty with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing?
6. Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

Response categories: No difficulty / Some difficulty / A lot of difficulty / Cannot do at all

The Continuous National Household Sample Survey of 2022 (PNADC 2022)

The PNADC 2022 provides continuous data on labor market integration, demographics, education, and socioeconomic development. It produces annual results on key themes and investigates additional aspects. Selected households are visited five times across five quarters. Every quarter, around 211,000 households in 16,000 census sectors are surveyed. The PNAD covers the entire country, except special areas like indigenous villages, military bases, and orphanages. For more information about Continuous PNAD, visit: https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/17270-pnad-continua.html?edicao=37280&t=o-que-e.

In the third quarter of 2022, a new module focused on people with disabilities was added, in partnership with the National Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This was the first time disability data was included, making historical comparisons impossible. The survey analyzes sociodemographic data (sex, age, race, education) and labor market indicators (employment, earnings, unemployment, informality). The data can be broken down to various geographic levels, including capital city municipalities.

To construct the indicators in this report, specific adjustments were made considering the complex sampling design obtained from SAS SUDAAN, and the analyses were conducted using tests for differences in proportions with a 5% significance level. In the annex, it is possible to consult the values of the T-test statistics. Some of the estimates reported here are age-adjusted using the 2020 world population3 to facilitate cross-country comparisons.

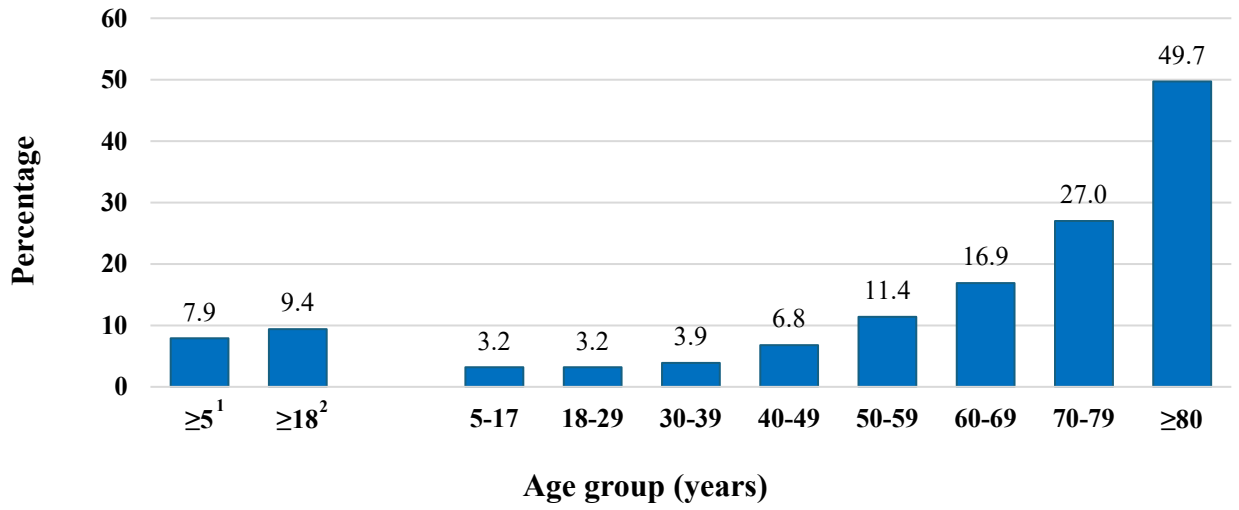
The Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) was used, excluding questions on upper limb limitations to standardize results with other countries using PNADC 2022 data. The age cut-off was set at 18 years or older with 10-year age groups.

Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted percentage of people aged 5 years or older with disabilities in Brazil was 7.9%, while for those aged 18 years or older, it was 9.4%.

- The prevalence of disability increases with age, starting at 3.2% among individuals aged 5 to 17 and reaching nearly half of the population (49.7%) among those aged 80 or older.

Figure 1. Prevalence of disability: age-adjusted and age-specific percentage of the population 18 years and over and by age group, Brazil, 2022



[1] Total for ≥5 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 5-17, 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years.

[2]Total for ≥18 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years.

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

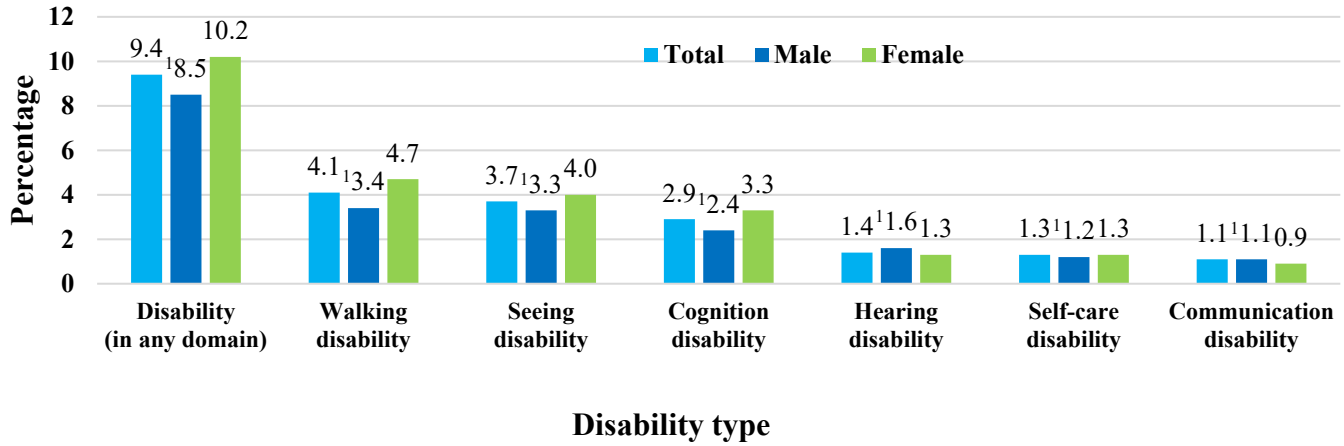
Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

- For the population 18 and older, the age adjusted prevalence of disability (in any domain) was higher in females (10.2%) than in males (8.5%). Males are more likely to have hearing disabilities, while females are more likely to have disabilities related to walking, cognition and seeing.

- Percentages are similar for self-care and communication between males and females.

- Among the types of functional difficulties investigated, difficulty in walking was the most common (4.1%). In contrast, communication difficulties had the lowest prevalence (1.1%). This was the case for both males and females.

Figure 2. Prevalence of disability in any domain and disability in each domain: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, by sex, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years. [1]Significantly different from female ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as having disability (in any domain). Disability in each domain is defined by a response of "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" in that domain.

Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

Disaggregating data by disability status allows for the comparison of outcomes for people with and without disabilities and is a necessary first step towards addressing disparities. Outcome indicators, such as educational attainment and employment, any of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals[4], or specific programmatic objectives, can be monitored over time to determine if gaps exist between those with and without disabilities and whether those gaps are increasing or decreasing across time. In this section, data on educational attainment, household income, employment status, monthly income from regularly received earnings in all jobs, illiteracy and participation in the informal labor market are disaggregated by disability status.

Educational Attainment

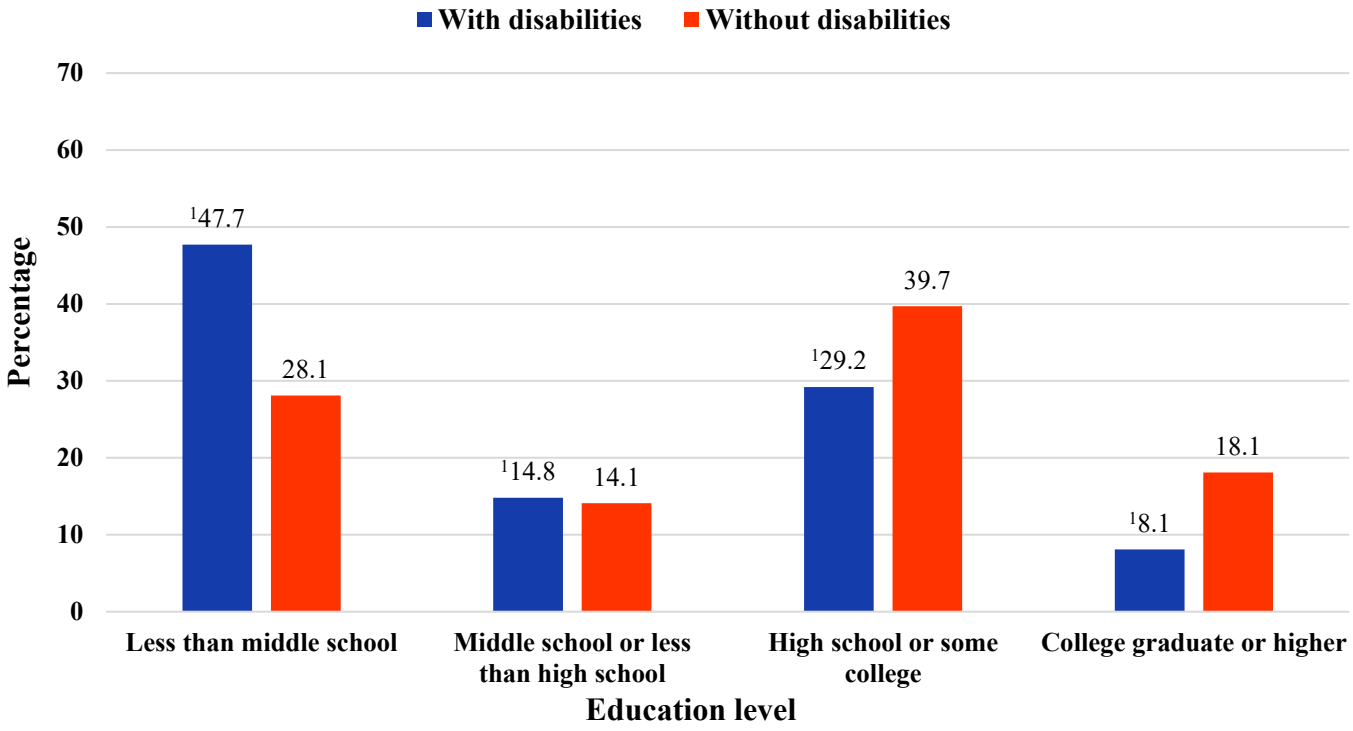
- Adults aged 18 and older with disabilities had higher percentages in groups that did not complete basic education within the Brazilian system: 47.7% belonged to the group that attended less than middle school (i.e., they did not complete Ensino Fundamental in Brazil) or who have never attended school, and 14.8% had completed middle school or had not yet completed high school.

- For individuals without disabilities, these same percentages were 28.1% and 14.1%, respectively.

- The most common level of education among adults with disabilities was less than middle school (47.7%), whereas adults without disabilities (39.7%) were most likely to complete at least high school or have some college education.

- Adults with disabilities (8.1%) were significantly less likely to have completed a college degree or higher compared to those without disabilities (18.1%).

Figure 3. Education level by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. The categories "high school" and "some college" were combined to improve the coefficient of variation of the indicator. Additionally, the group "less than high school" was divided into two parts: "Less than middle school" and "middle school or less than high school", to highlight the group with the lowest educational attainment, which still predominates in Brazil.

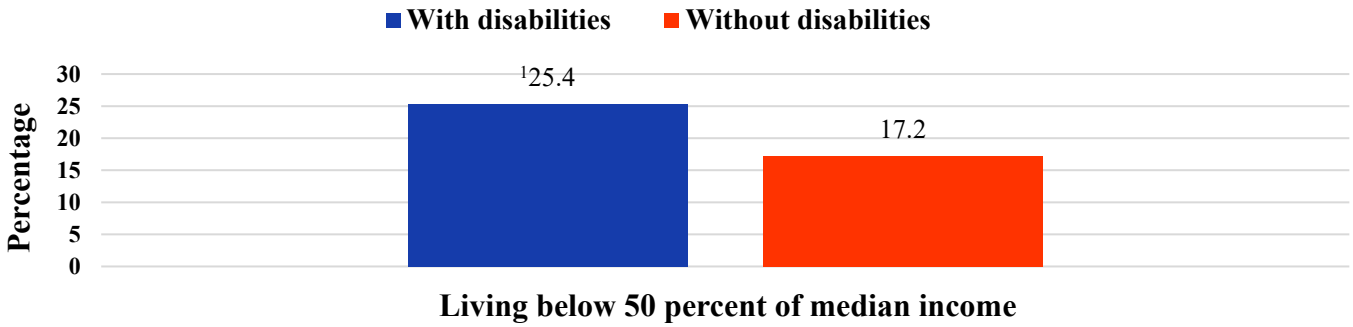
Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

Living Below 50 Percent of Median Income

The following indicator corresponds to SDG 10.2.1, which measures the proportion of people living in households with a net per capita income less than 50% of the median income.

- In 2022, this proportion was 25.4% among people aged 18 and over with disabilities, compared to 17.2% among those without disabilities. These figures highlight the presence of social and economic inequality across the entire population.

Figure 4. Living below 50 percent of median income by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

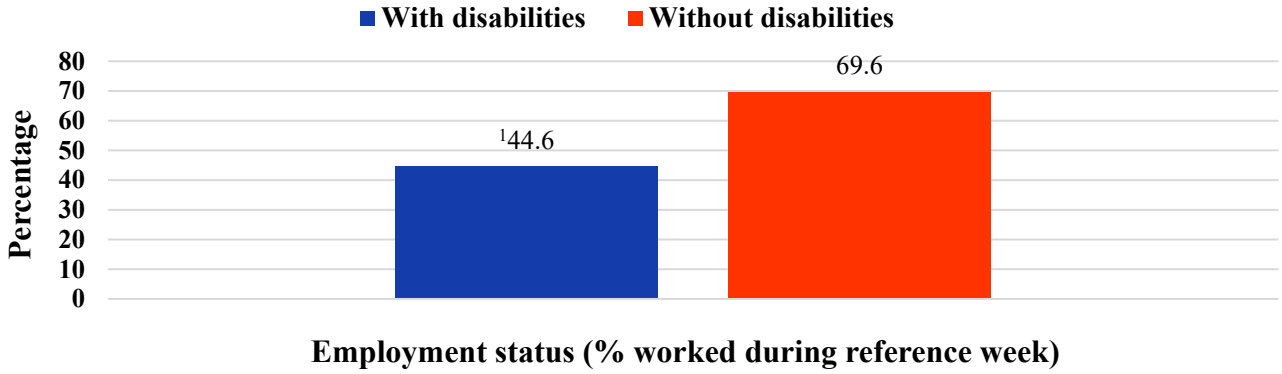
Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

Employment Status

Considered a basic employment indicator, the employment level corresponds to the percentage of the working-age population (including those outside the labor force) that was employed during the reference week. In this case, the age range considered was 18 to 64 years.

- In 2022, 44.6% of adults aged 18-64 with disabilities were employed during the reference week, compared to 69.6% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 5. Employment status, during the reference week by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-64 years, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-64 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

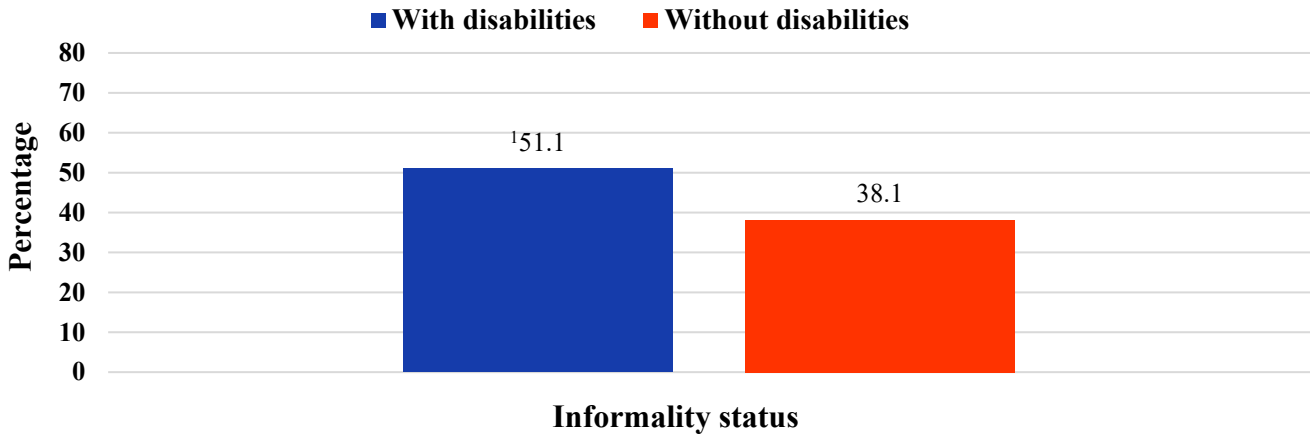
Informal Employment

A significant indicator reflecting the situation of people with disabilities in the Brazilian labor market is the informality rate, partly due to the persistently low educational attainment in the population. The lack of inclusion in formal occupations in the job market is a challenge, especially for people with disabilities, who have to contend with various adverse factors. Besides the lack of social protection, they also face inaccessible spaces.

- The Brazilian labor market is already characterized by a substantial proportion of workers in informal employment. For people with disabilities, informal employment is even more pronounced.

- In 2022, the informality rate for people with disabilities aged 18 to 64 was 51.1%, compared to 38.1% for people without disabilities in the same age group.

Figure 6. Informality status, during the reference week, by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-64 years, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-64 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Informal occupations are those where individuals fall under categories such as "employee in the private sector, excluding domestic workers - without a signed work card," "domestic worker - without a signed work card," "employer without a CNPJ," "self-employed without a CNPJ," and "contributing family worker" in the main job.

Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

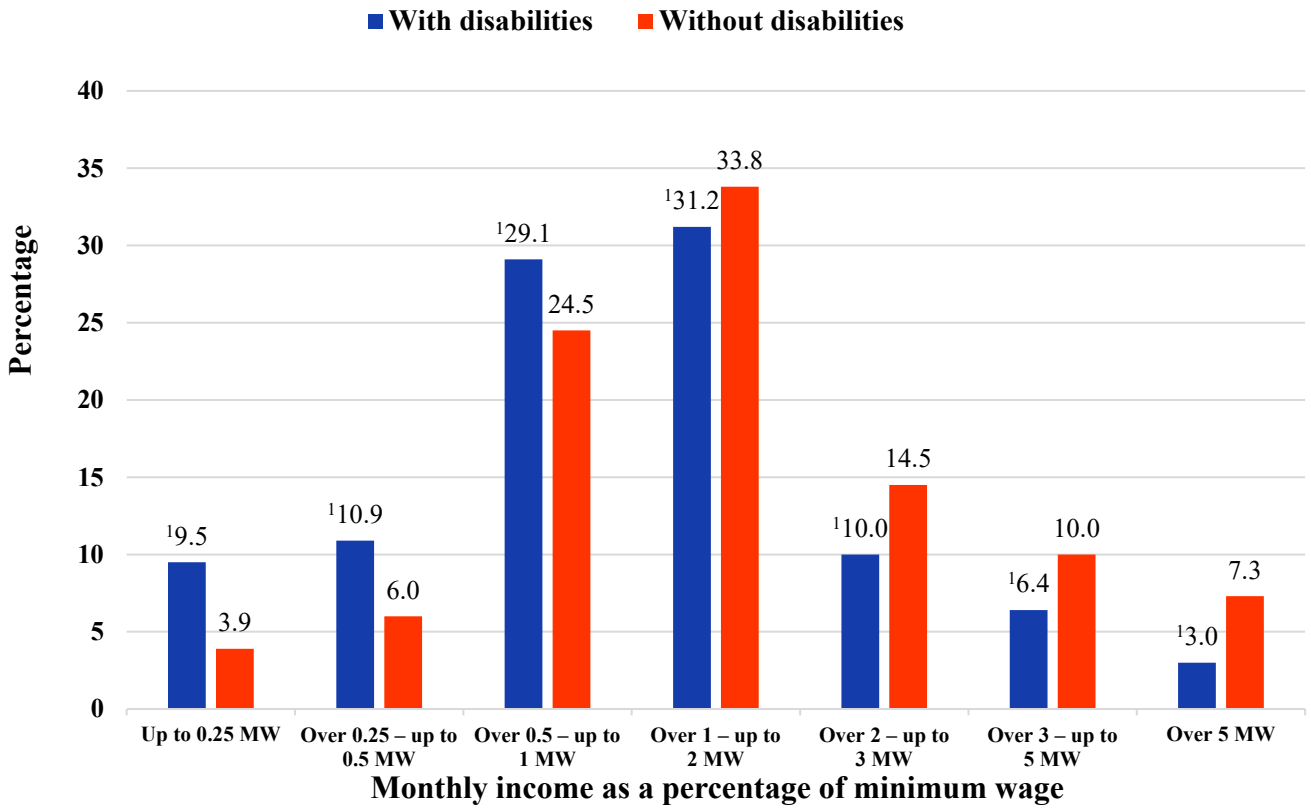
Employment Earnings

- Figure 7 reveals that people with disabilities employed during the reference week are more likely to be in lower income brackets, compared to those without disabilities in the same employment condition.

- Approximately half of the employed people with disabilities earned up to one minimum wage (MW), while this proportion was 34.4% among those without disabilities.

- In the higher income bracket (5 minimum wages or more), a contrast was observed: 3.0% for people with disabilities compared to 7.3% for people without disabilities.

Figure 7. Monthly income from regularly received earnings in all jobs as a percentage of minimum wage, by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-64 years, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-64 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. The monthly income was calculated by adding up all earnings regularly received across all jobs.

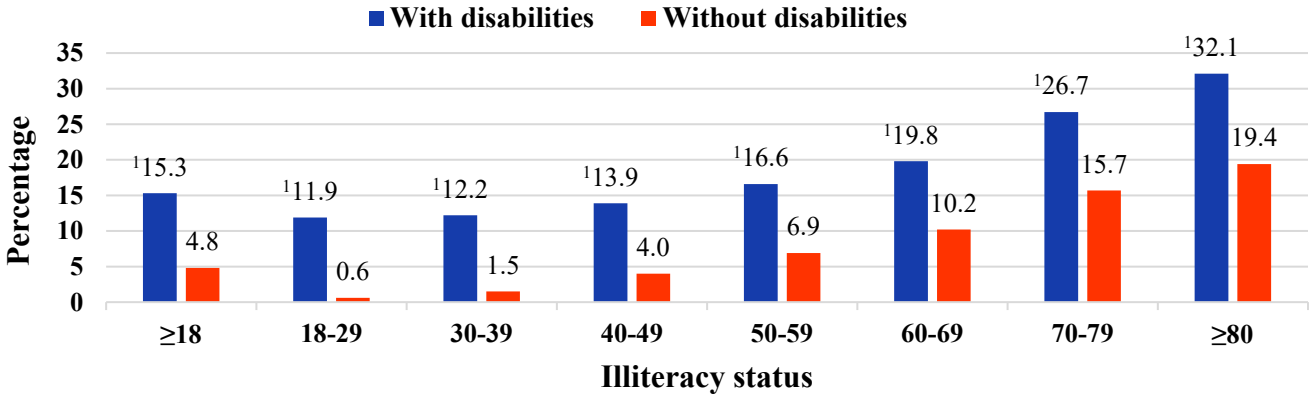
Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

Illiteracy Rate

- The illiteracy rate in Brazil for individuals aged 18 and over was 15.3% for those with disabilities, in contrast to 4.8% for those without disabilities.

- It was observed that the illiteracy rate increased with age, reflecting the higher levels of education among younger generations, but at all ages, the illiteracy rate is higher for those with disabilities.

Figure 8. Illiteracy rate by disability status: age-adjusted percentage and age-specific percentage of the population 18 years and over by age group, Brazil, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years. [1]Significantly different from adults without disabilities ($p < 0.05$).

Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

Data source: IBGE, Diretoria de Pesquisas, Coordenação de Pesquisas por Amostra de Domicílios, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua (PNADC) 2022.

References

1. Altman, B. (2001). "Definitions of Disability and their Operationalization, and Measurement in Survey Data: An Update." In Barnartt, S. and Altman, B. (Eds.) *Exploring Theories and Expanding Methodologies: Where We Are and Where We Need To Go* (Research in Social Science and Disability, Vol. 2, pp. 77-100). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

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ANNEX 1

The Importance of Disability in IBGE Household Surveys

The mission of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) is to depict Brazil through essential information that enhances understanding of its reality and promotes citizenship. Among its roles, IBGE produces and analyzes statistical data. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, IBGE conducts analyses to highlight living conditions, inequalities, and specific characteristics among various population groups, including people with disabilities. The aim is to provide data identifying contextual factors that influence the ability of individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society, thereby reducing social inequalities.

IBGE regularly collects and provides official information on disabilities. Since Brazil's first demographic census in 1940, disability has been included, reappearing in the 1991 Census following legal mandates from Law No. 7.853 of October 24, 1989. Prior to IBGE's establishment, disability was surveyed in the General Census of the Empire of Brazil in 1872 and in subsequent years: 1890, 1900, and 1920. The topic was also part of the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) in 1981, 1998, 2003, and 2008, and the National Health Survey (PNS) in 2013 and 2019. The latest data come from the 2022 PNADC, used in this report, and the 2022 Demographic Census, with data expected in the first half of 2025.

Although IBGE has a long history of data collection, survey methodologies and conceptual approaches to disability have continually evolved. These changes impact comparability as questionnaires are modified. The identification of people with disabilities evolves with the reformulation of models for understanding disability, aligned with international recommendations from the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) and based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF). Additionally, IBGE aims to align its data collection on disability with definitions in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Brazilian Inclusion Law.

In the Disability Module of the Continuous PNAD, instruments developed by the WG were used as a basis for constructing the questionnaire. The questions, applied to all individuals aged 2 years or older, involve difficulties in functional domains such as seeing, hearing, walking, upper limb function, cognition, self-care, and communication. The questions are as follows:

1. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
2. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
4. Do you have difficulty raising a 2-liter bottle of water or soda from waist to eye level?
5. Do you have difficulty picking up small objects or opening or closing containers or bottles?
6. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
7. Do you have difficulty with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing?
8. Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

All eight questions in the questionnaire, based in part on the Short Set on Functioning – Enhanced (WG-SS Enhanced), share the same four response categories. These categories reflect the degree of difficulty the respondent reports in performing certain activities using one of their functions. The response options are: (1) cannot do at all, (2) has a lot of difficulty, (3) has some difficulty, and (4) has no difficulty. Additionally, for residents aged 2 to 4 years, the questions were adapted according to the recommendations of UNICEF's Child Functioning Module to better capture limitations due to the growth and development of their auditory, motor, and mental capacities.

Identification of people with disabilities is based on those who reported having a lot of difficulty or being unable to perform the activities in at least one of the investigated domains. According to the recommendations, these individuals are at a higher risk of exclusion from societal participation. Although those who reported having at least a lot of difficulty in performing one of their functions are considered persons with disabilities, there is a significant portion of the population that experiences some difficulty and has specific needs regarding access to devices, orthotics or prosthetics, therapies, and rehabilitation, as well as certain adaptations in the educational environment. For these cases, public policies requiring a more flexible conceptual framework can refer to the microdata made freely available by IBGE.

ANNEX 2

T-test statistics for difference between proportions

Figure	Indicators and/or variables		T-test statistics
Figure 2	Type of disability	Any disability	-11.90
		Walking	-16.76
		Cognition	-11.43
		Hearing	6.94
		Seeing	-7.46
		Self-care	-3.17
		Communication	5.24
Figure 3	Education level	Less than middle school	38.70
		Middle school or less than high school	2.01
		High school or some college	-21.41
		College graduate or higher	-25.62
Figure 4	People living below 50 percent of median income		15.50
Figure 5	Employment status		-40.30
Figure 6	Informal employment		13.74
Figure 7	Employment earnings	Up to 0.25 MW	11.49
		Over 0.25 and up to 0.5 MW	8.80
		Over 0.5 and up to 1 MW	5.55
		Over 1 and up to 2 MW	-2.88
		Over 2 and up to 3 MW	-8.47
		Over 3 and up to 5 MW	-7.32
		Over 5 MW	-13.59
Figure 8	Illiteracy rate		32.45