



Disability in Finland

The Importance of Disability

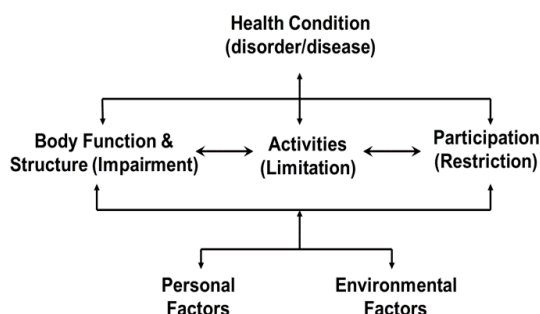
Disability is both a multidimensional concept and experience. Disability can affect anyone at any time – from birth through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

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 contexts¹. 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 Organization², 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

Finnish Data on Disability and Methods

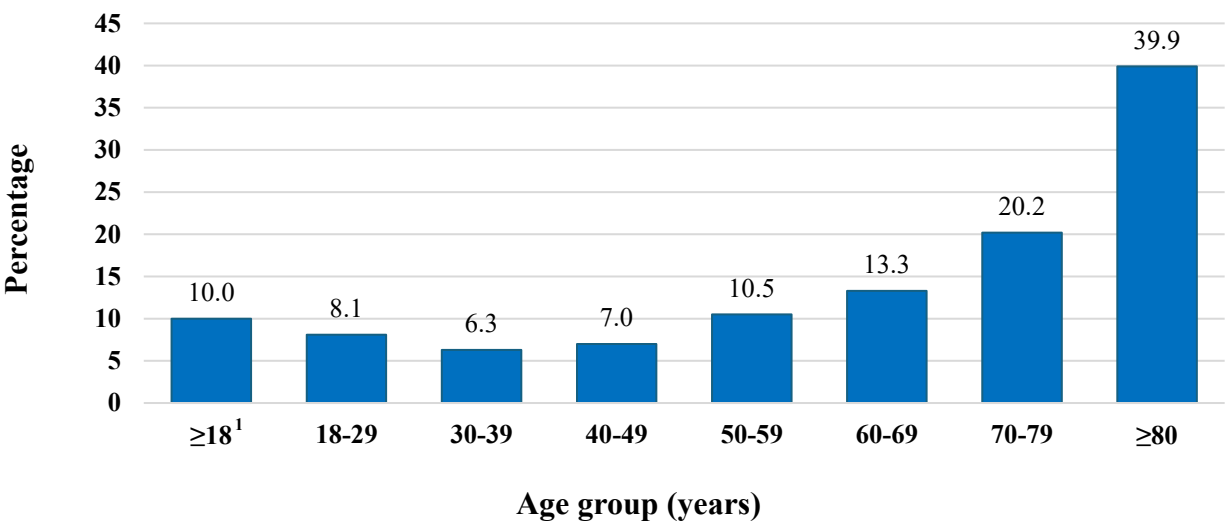
EU-SILC is a nationally representative household survey of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population coordinated by the European Commission’s statistical office Eurostat. The data for EU-SILC are collected by national statistical offices of each state. This report uses 2022 EU-SILC data for Finland (FI-SILC) collected by Statistics Finland as part of the survey on Income and Living Conditions. FI-SILC combines self-reported survey data with administrative data (direct matching) for producing data on income, education and basic demographic characteristics. The final cross-sectional sample for 2022 FI-SILC included 8,900 adults aged 18 and over. The WG-SS questions were included in the EU-SILC for the first time. For more information about EU-SILC, visit [Eurostat’s website: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions).

Point estimates were calculated accounting for the complex sample design of FI-SILC. All the estimates reported here, except for the age group specific estimates in Figure 1, are age-adjusted using the 2020 world population³ to facilitate cross-country comparisons.

Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted percentage of persons aged 18 and over with disabilities is 10.0%.
- The prevalence of disability is rather stable in age groups between ages 18-49 years (varying between 6.3-8.1%) and then increases with age, being highest, 39.9%, among those aged 80 and over.

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



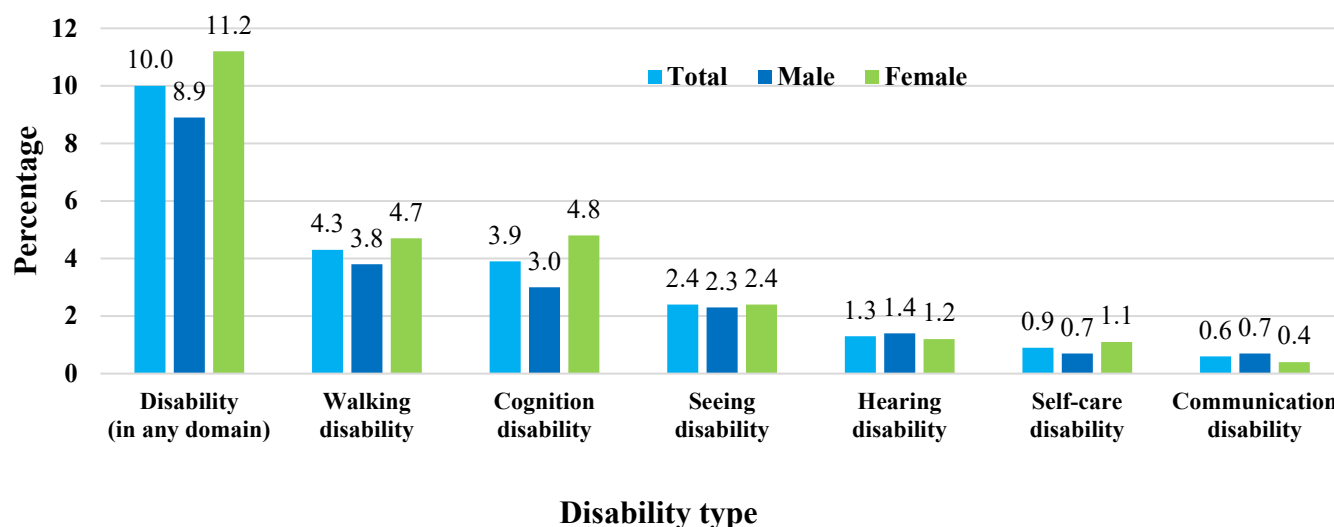
¹Total for ≥18 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/)) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, 70–79, and ≥80 years.

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.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

- Females (11.2%) are more likely than males (8.9%) to have disability (in any domain).
- Females are more likely than males to have walking (4.7% and 3.8%, respectively), cognition (4.8% and 3.0%, respectively), and self-care (1.1% and 0.7%, respectively) disabilities.
- The most common type of disability reported is walking.

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, Finland, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/)) 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 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.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

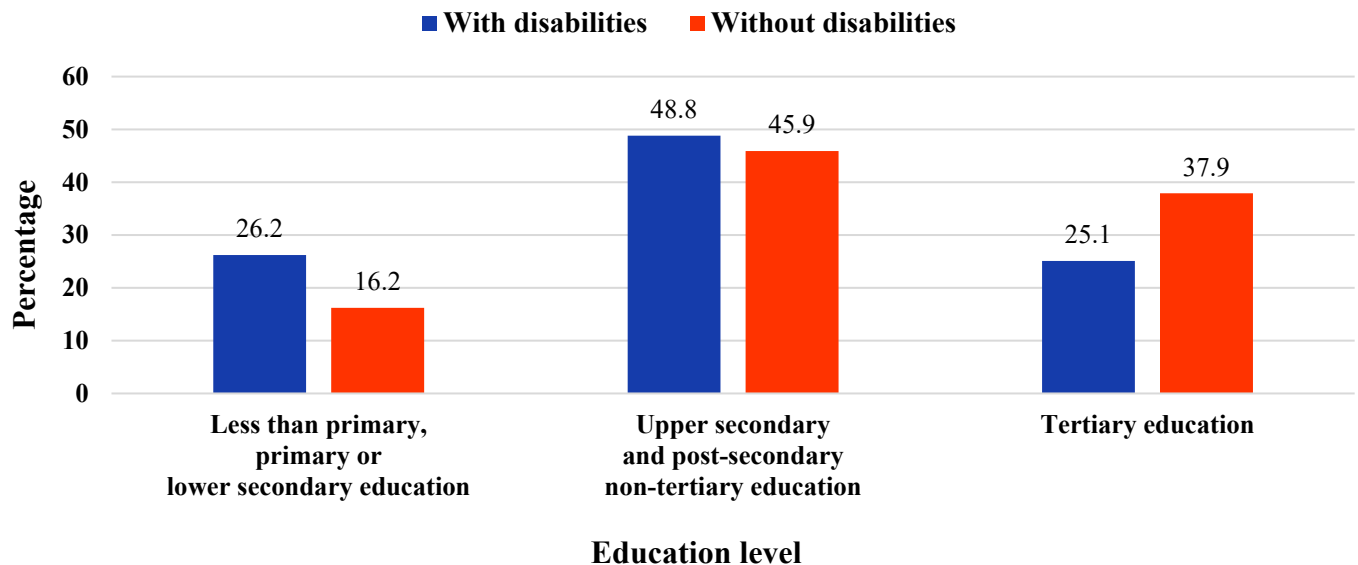
Disaggregating data by disability status allows for the comparison of outcomes for people with and without disabilities and is a necessary first step towards addressing disparities. Outcome indicators, such as educational attainment and employment, any of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals⁴, 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 as well as unmet need and financial burden of medical and dental care, participation in leisure activities and feeling left out are disaggregated by disability status.

Educational Attainment

- Adults aged 18 and over with disabilities (26.2%) were more likely to have less than a primary, primary or lower secondary education compared with those without disabilities (16.2%).

- Adults with disabilities (25.1%) were less likely to have tertiary education compared with those without disabilities (37.9%).
- There was not much difference in completing upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education between adults with and without disabilities.

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



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://population.un.org/wpp/)) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, 70–79, and ≥80 years.

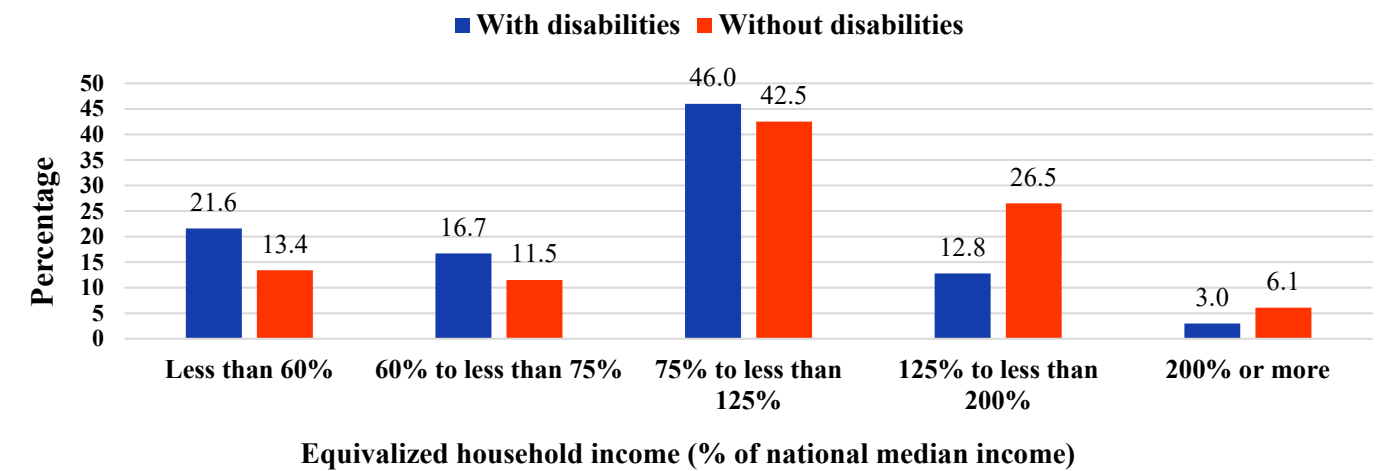
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Household Income

- In 2022, 21.6% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities had a household income level less than 60% of the national median income compared with 13.4% of those without disabilities.
- 12.8% of adults with disabilities had a household income level of 125% to less than 200% of the national median income level compared to 26.5% of those without disabilities.

Figure 4. Household income level by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

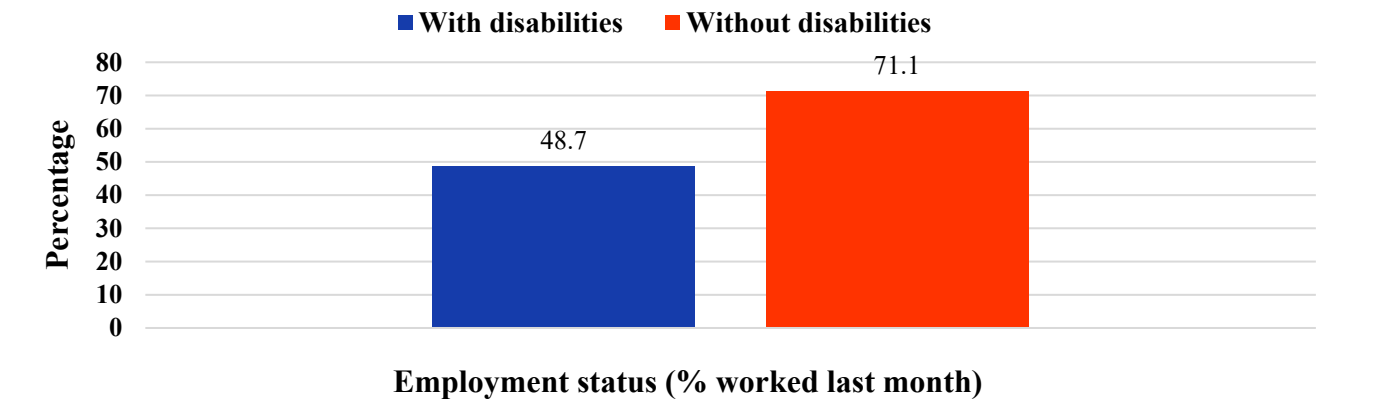
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Employment Status

- In 2022, 48.7% of adults aged 18-64 with disabilities were employed in the previous month compared with 71.1% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 5. Employment status by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-64 years, Finland, 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.

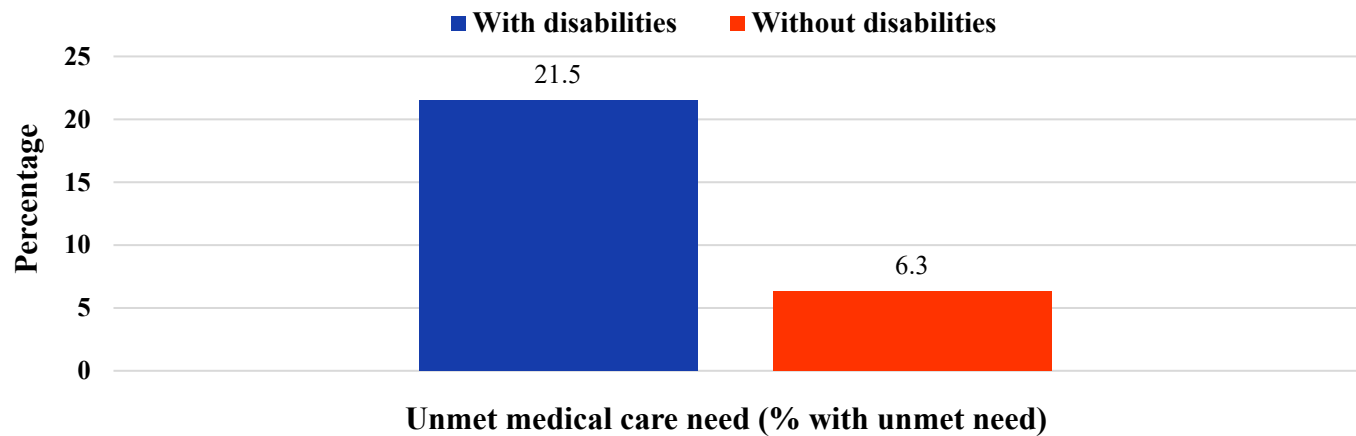
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Unmet Need of Medical Care

- In 2022, 21.5% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced unmet need of medical care compared with 6.3% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 6. Unmet need of medical care by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

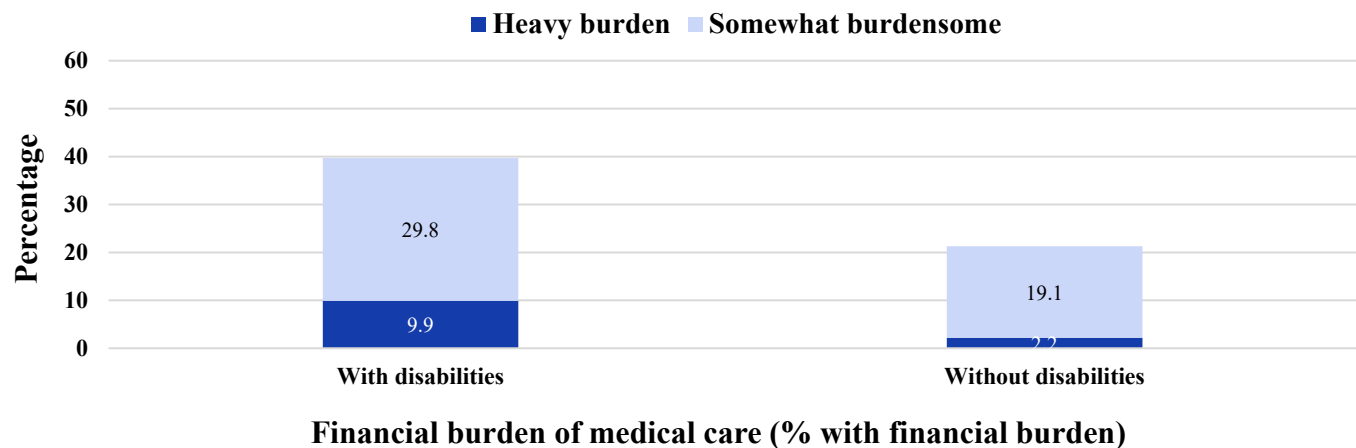
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Unmet need of medical care refers to those who declared in the survey that they had needed medical care in the past 12 months but did not receive care in the time of need at least once.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Financial Burden of Medical Care

- In 2022, 9.9% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced heavy financial burden of medical care compared with 2.2% of adults without disabilities.
- In 2022, 29.8% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced somewhat burdensome costs of medical care compared with 19.1% of adults without disabilities

Figure 7. Financial burden of medical care by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

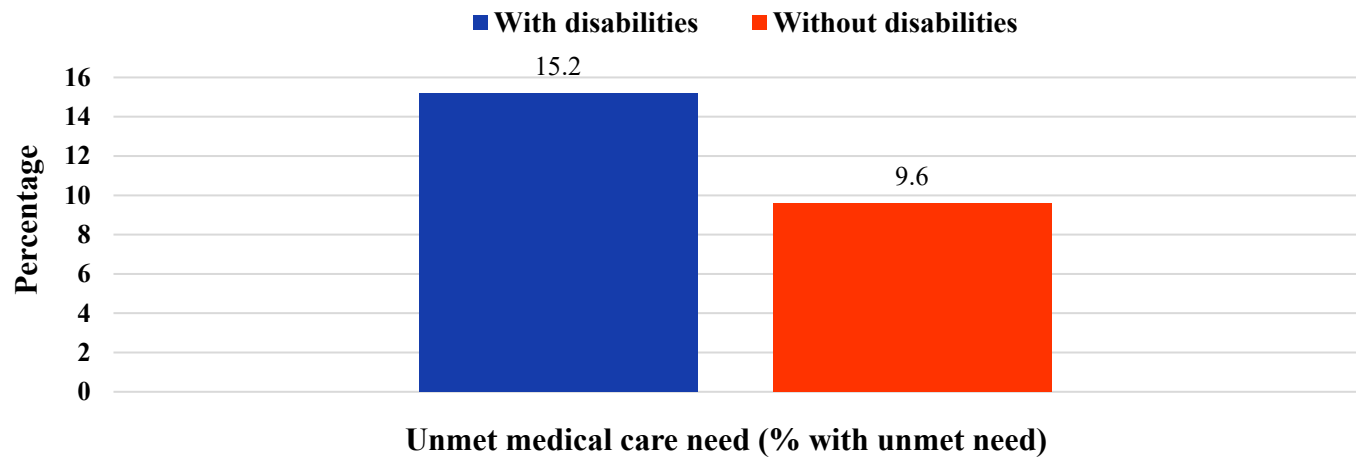
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Financial burden for the household in the past 12 months was assessed by the respondent as heavy burden, somewhat a burden, not a burden at all, or not needed such services, considering all costs related to public and private health care services, excluding medication and dental care.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Unmet Need of Dental Care

- In 2022, 15.2% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced unmet need of dental care compared with 9.6% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 8. Unmet need of dental care by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

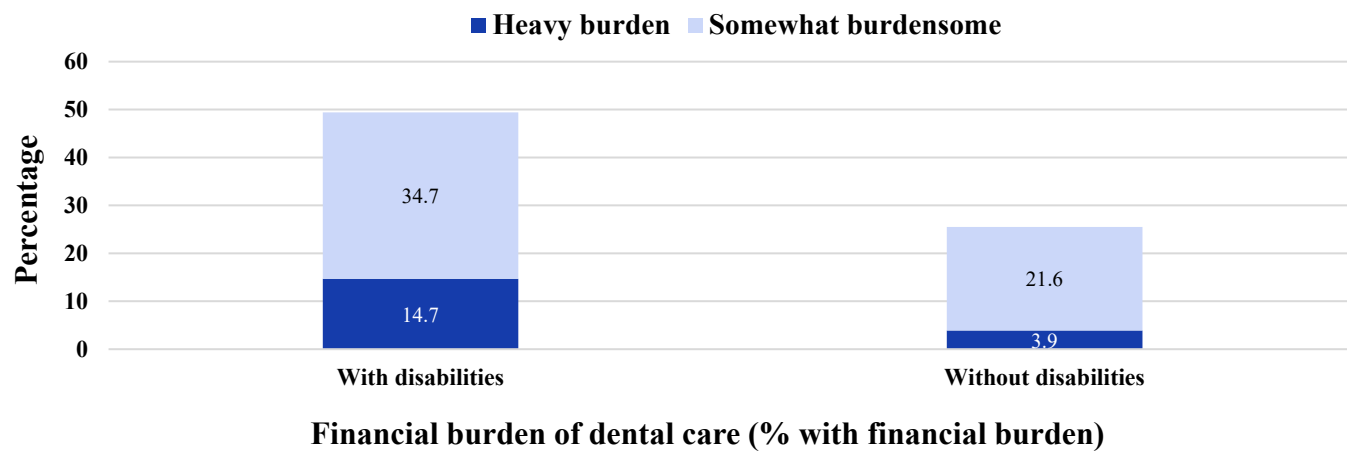
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Unmet need of dental care refers to those who declared in the survey that they had needed dental care in the past 12 months but did not receive care in the time of need.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Financial Burden of Dental Care

- In 2022, 14.7% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced heavy financial burden of dental care compared with 3.9% of adults without disabilities.
- In 2022, 34.7% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities experienced somewhat burdensome costs of dental care compared with 21.6% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 9. Financial burden of dental care by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

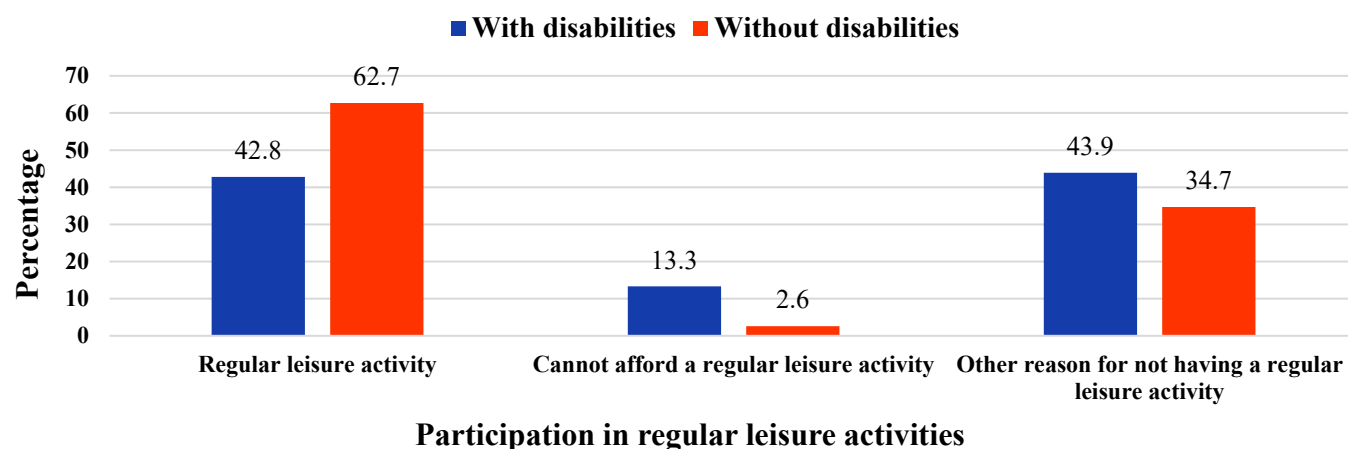
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Financial burden for the household in the past 12 months was assessed by the respondent as heavy burden, somewhat a burden, not a burden at all, or not needed such services, considering all costs related to public and private dental care services, like services provided by a dentist, dental nurse or oral hygienist.

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Participation in Regular Leisure Activities

- In 2022, 42.8% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities had a regular leisure activity compared with 62.7% of adults without disabilities.
- 13.3% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities reported financial reason for not having a regular leisure activity compared with 2.6% of adults without disabilities, while other reasons were reported by 43.9% of adults with disabilities compared to 34.7% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 10. Participation in regular leisure activities by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

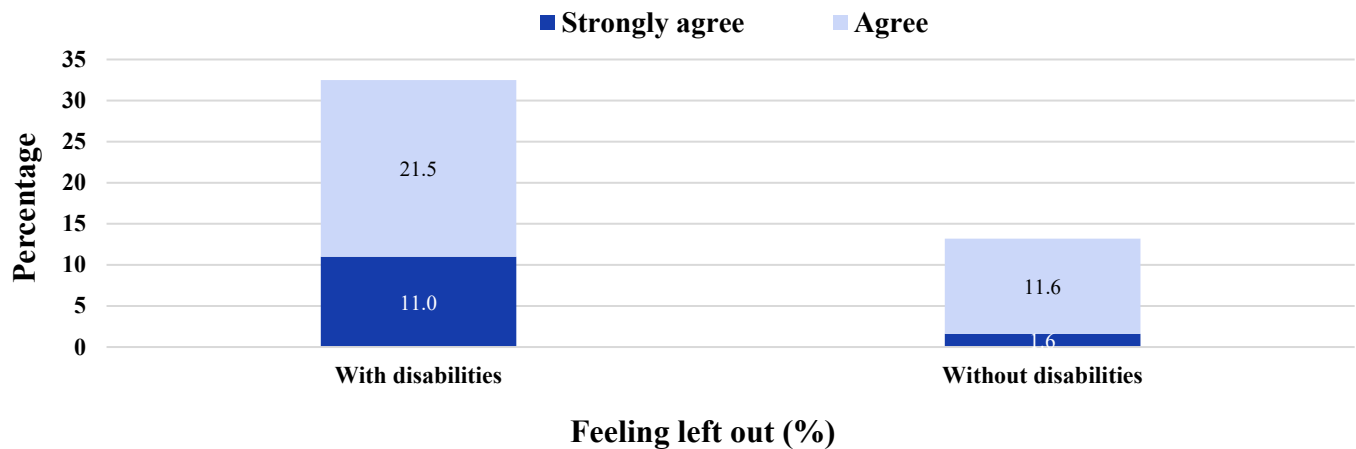
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. A regular leisure activity was defined as activities outside the home that generate at least some costs (for example, at a gym or other places dedicated to exercise, in the cinema, concerts, sports events or equivalent).

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

Feeling Left Out

- In 2022, a total of 32.5% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities agreed or strongly agreed that they feel left out compared with 13.2 % of adults without disabilities.

Figure 11. Share of persons feeling left out by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Finland, 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.

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. Indicator is based on a survey question: “Considering your feeling of being a member of society, your social relations, working life and access to public services, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: ‘I feel left out’. Do you strongly agree, more or less agree, neither agree nor disagree, more or less disagree, or strongly disagree?”

Estimates are based on household interviews and web survey responses of a sample of noninstitutionalised Finnish population.
Data source: Statistics Finland, micro data European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2022.

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