



## Disability in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China

### The Importance of Disability

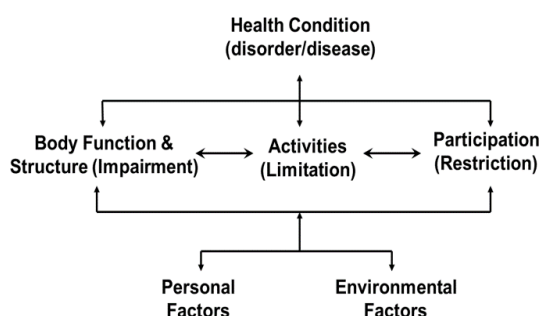
Disability is both a multidimensional concept and experience. Disability can affect anyone at any time – from birth through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

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<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup>, 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

# Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Data on Disability and Methods

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) conducted four rounds of territory-wide survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases starting from 2000 to collect, among others, information on the basic profiles of persons with disabilities.

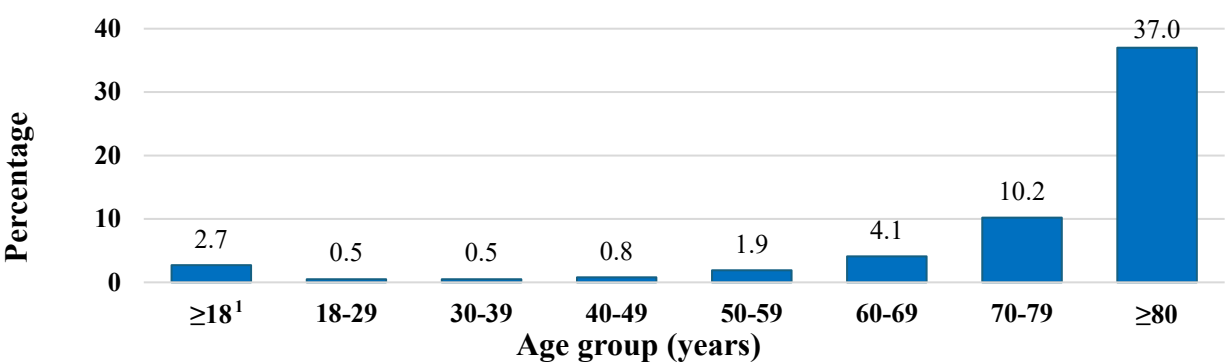
The latest round of the survey conducted from November 2019 to December 2020 successfully enumerated some 40 600 households and some 130 institutions, collecting data from persons with disabilities who resided in households and institutions, respectively. In compiling the results for the latest round of the survey, statistical adjustment was applied to relevant figures to reflect the situation in 2020. Details and statistical results of the latest round of the survey can be found at the Special Topics Report No. 63 published by the C&SD (<https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=C0000055&scode=380>).

It should be noted that the coverage of disability in HKSAR is different from that adopted by the WG. As a result, the survey findings from 2020 that are reported in the Special Topics Report No. 63 are not comparable to WG estimates of disability. However, to disseminate basic and comparable disability statistics as initiated by the WG, age-adjusted estimates using the 2020 world population<sup>3</sup>, coupled with standardised definitions of six disability types under the WG-SS (as opposed to those adopted in C&SD’s survey reports), are presented in the current report. Unlike the estimates in the Special Topics Report No. 63, these estimates can be used for cross-country/territory comparisons.

## Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted percentage of persons aged 18 and over with disabilities is 2.7%.
- The prevalence of disability increases with age, from 0.5% among those 18-29 years to 37.0% 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, HKSAR, 2020**



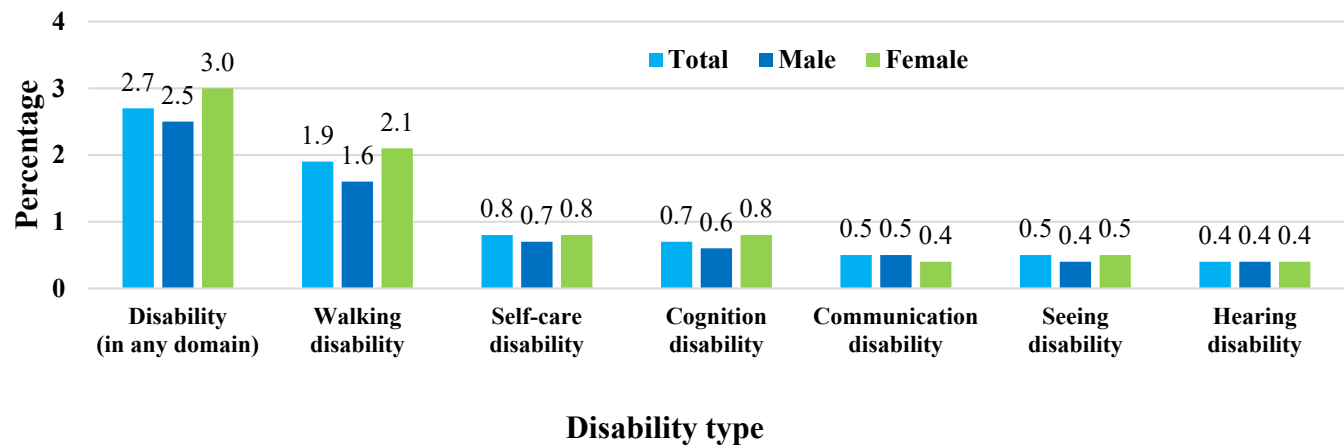
<sup>1</sup>Total for ≥18 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/)) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, 70–79, and ≥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 and institutional interviews of a sample of the land-based HKSAR population.  
Data source: C&SD of the Government of the HKSAR, Survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, 2020.

- Females (3.0%) are more likely than males (2.5%) to report having disability (in any domain).
- Females are more likely to have difficulty in walking.
- 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, HKSAR, 2020**



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 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 and institutional interviews of a sample of the land-based HKSAR population.  
Data source: C&SD of the Government of the HKSAR, Survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, 2020.

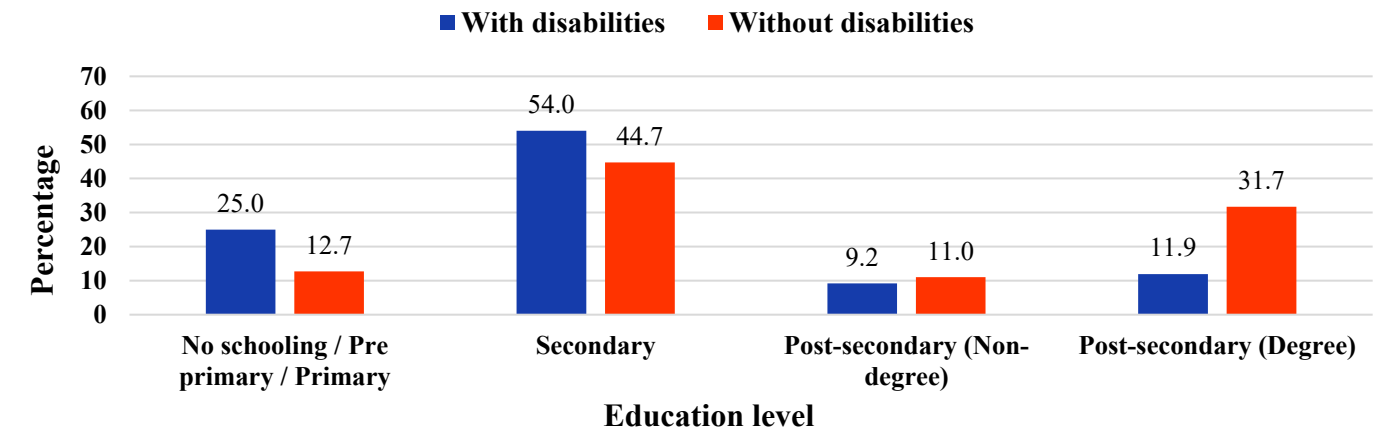
## Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

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<sup>4</sup>, 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 and employment status are disaggregated by disability status.

### *Educational Attainment*

- Adults aged 18 and over with disabilities (25.0%) were more likely to have attained no more than primary education compared with those without disabilities (12.7%).
- Adults with disabilities (11.9%) were less likely to have attained post-secondary (degree) education compared with those without disabilities (31.7%).

**Figure 3. Education level by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, HKSAR, 2020**



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.

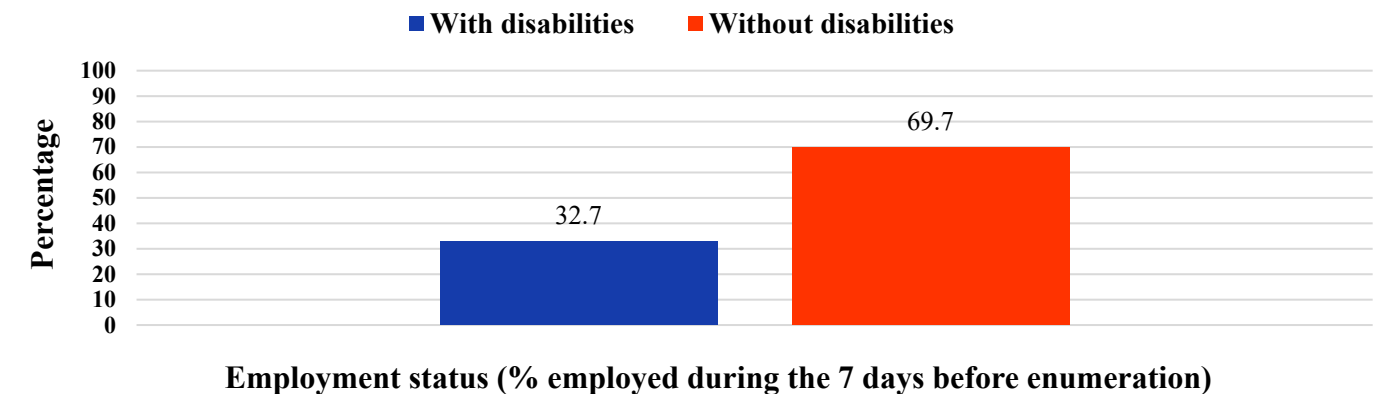
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Estimates are based on household and institutional interviews of a sample of the land-based HKSAR population.  
Data source: C&SD of the Government of the HKSAR, Survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, 2020.

**Employment Status**

- In 2020, 32.7% of adults aged 18–64 with disabilities were employed during the 7 days before enumeration, compared with 69.7% of adults without disabilities.

**Figure 4. Employment status by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 -64 years, HKSAR, 2020**



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 for pay or profit during the 7 days before enumeration or who have had formal job attachment. Unpaid family workers and employed persons who were on leave/holiday during the 7 days before enumeration are also included.

Estimates are based on household and institutional interviews of a sample of the land-based HKSAR population.  
Data source: C&SD of the Government of the HKSAR, Survey on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, 2020.

## 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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