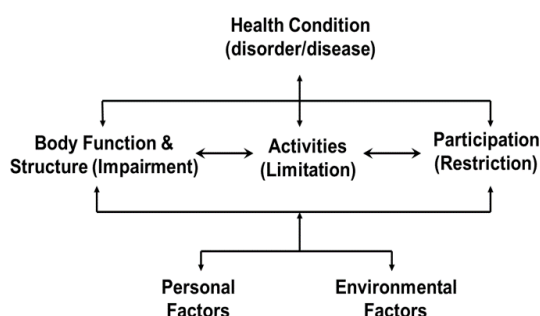# Disability in Kenya

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
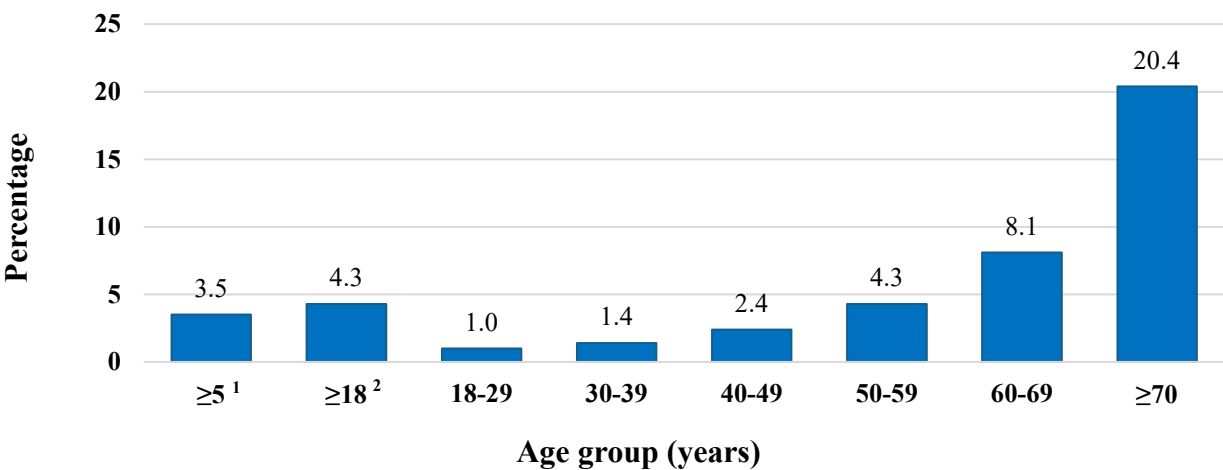
Kenya Data on Disability and Methods

The Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC) gathers data on the size, composition, distribution, and socio-economic characteristics of the population to determine aspects such as population size, composition, spatial distribution, fertility levels, mortality rates, migration patterns, educational attainment, household composition, urbanization rate and patterns, labor force size and deployment, and the distribution of persons with disabilities, among other factors. The 2019 census was conducted on the night of 24th/25th to 31st August 2019. For more information about the 2019 KPHC visit [2019 Population and Housing Census - Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (knbs.or.ke)](knbs.or.ke).

Kenya has a total population of 47.6 million, with 25,365,003 adults aged 18 and above. The Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) was included in the census and continues to be integrated into surveys conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). Some of the estimates reported here are age-adjusted using the 2020 world population to facilitate cross-country comparisons[3].

Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted percentage of persons with disabilities aged 5 years and over is 3.5% while that of those aged 18 years and over is 4.3%.

- Disability prevalence increases with age, from 1.0% among those 18-29 years to 20.4% among those aged 70 and over.

Figure 1. Prevalence of disability: age-adjusted and age-specific percentage of the population 5 years and over and by age group, Kenya, 2019

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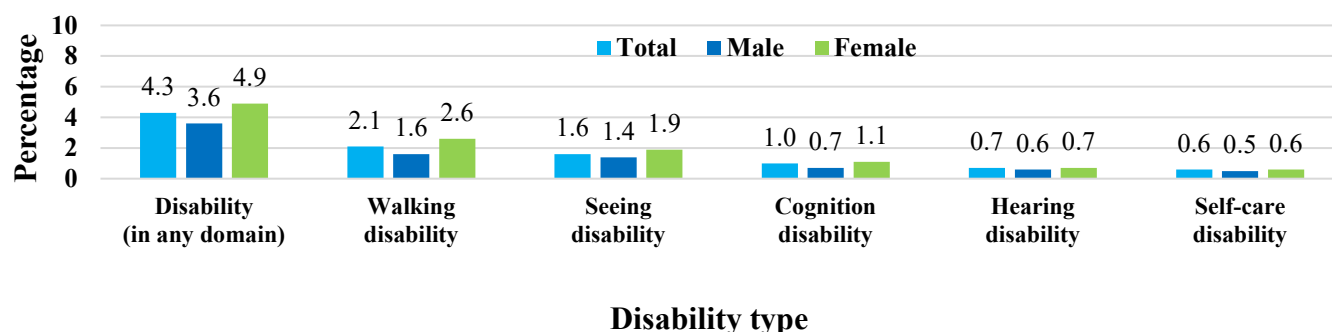
[2]Total for 18 years and over is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations) using the following age groups: 18–29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and ≥70 years.

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 the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.
Data Source: Analytical Report on Disability Volume XV, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019

- Females (4.9%) are more likely than males (3.6%) to report having disability (in any domain).

- Females are more likely to experience disabilities across all domains, with the largest difference observed in walking disability, with 2.6% females versus 1.6% males.

- 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, Kenya, 2019

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, and ≥70 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 the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.

Data Source: Analytical Report on Disability Volume XV, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019.
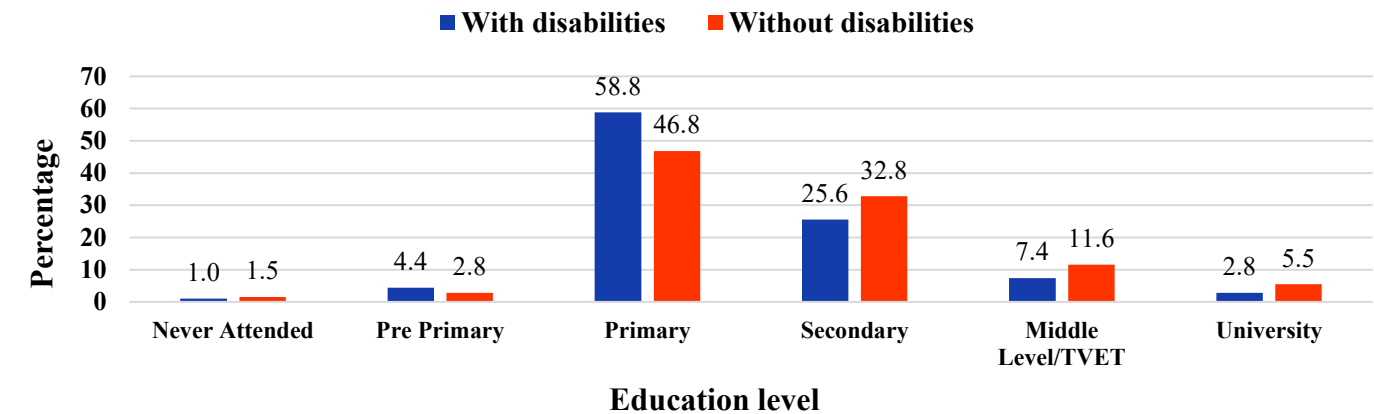
Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

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, employment status, and type of employment are disaggregated by disability status.

Educational Attainment

- Among adults aged 18 years and over, 1.0% of those with disabilities had never attended school, compared to 1.5% of those without disabilities.

- Adults aged 18 years with disabilities were more likely to have attended at most pre-primary (4.4%) and primary (58.8%) school levels compared to those without disabilities.

- Adults without disabilities were more likely to have attended beyond primary school level, namely, secondary (32.8%), middle level (11.6%) and university (5.5%) levels of education, than adults with disabilities.

Figure 3. Education level by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Kenya, 2019

■ With disabilities   ■ Without disabilities

Education level	With disabilities	Without disabilities
Never Attended	1.0	1.5
Pre Primary	4.4	2.8
Primary	58.8	46.8
Secondary	25.6	32.8
Middle Level/TVET	7.4	11.6
University	2.8	5.5

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, and ≥70 years.
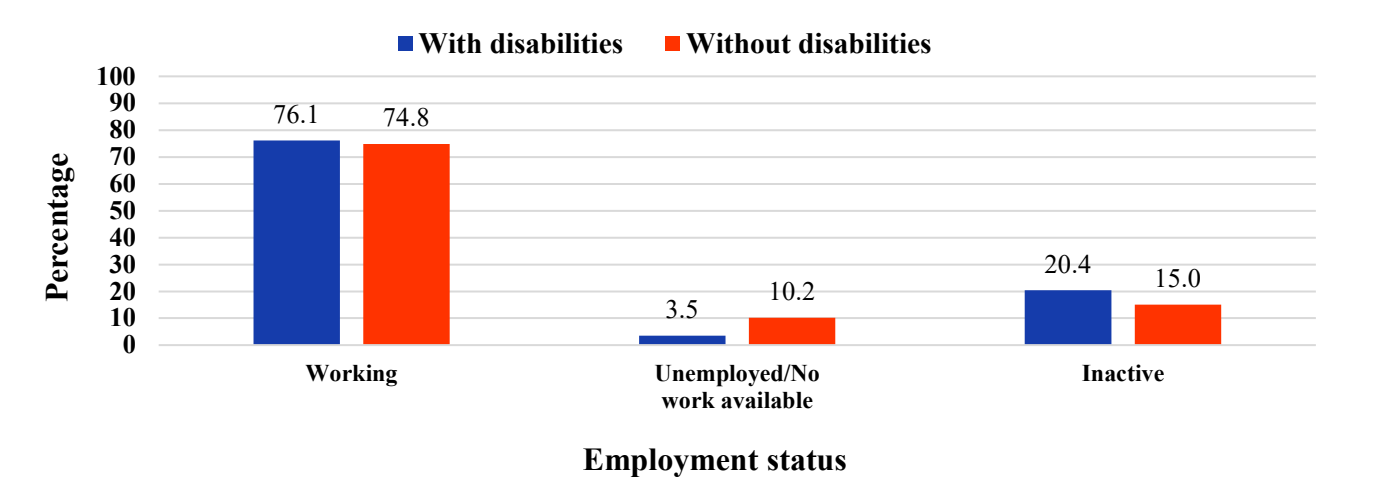
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

Estimates are based on the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.
Data Source: Analytical Report on Disability Volume XV, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

Employment Status

- In 2019, 76.1% of adults above 18 years with disabilities were working compared with 74.8% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 4. Employment status by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Kenya, 2019

■ With disabilities   ■ Without disabilities

Employment status	With disabilities	Without disabilities
Working	76.1	74.8
Unemployed/No work available	3.5	10.2
Inactive	20.4	15.0

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, and ≥70 years.
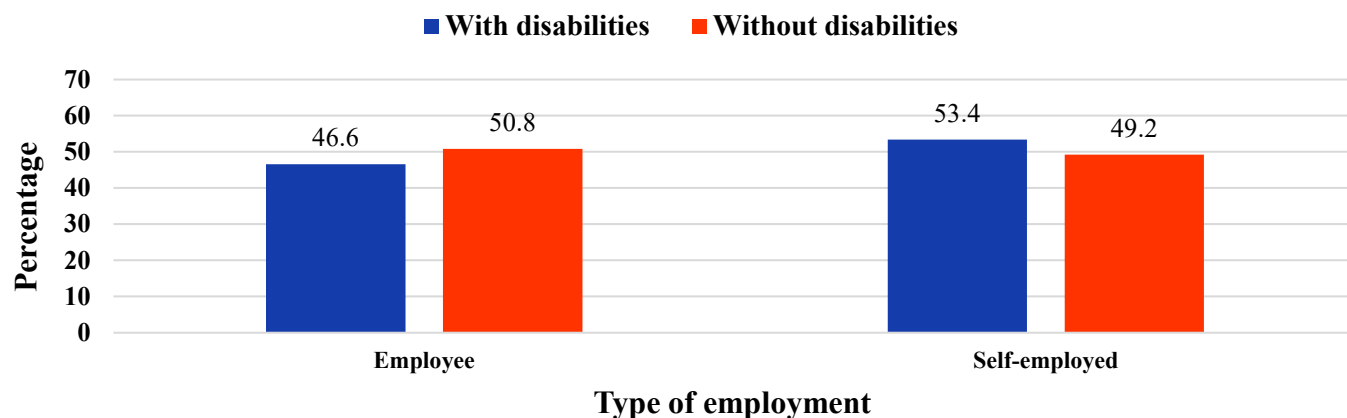
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot do at all" to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities.

Estimates are based on the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.
Data Source: Analytical Report on Disability Volume XV, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

Type of Employment

- The majority of adults with disabilities who were working were self-employed (53.4%) compared to those without disabilities, where the majority were employed by someone else (50.8%).

Figure 5. Distribution of working adult population by disability status and type of employment: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Kenya, 2019

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, and ≥70 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 the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census.
Data Source: Analytical Report on Disability Volume XV, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

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