



Disability in Latvia

The Importance of Disability

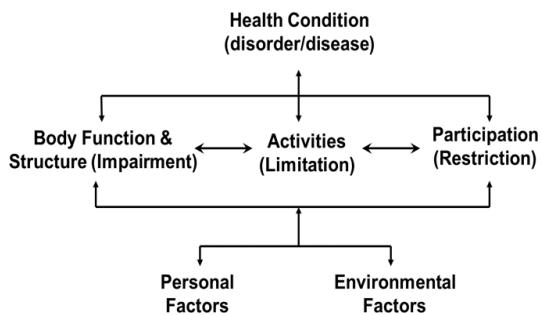
Disability is both a multidimensional concept and experience. Disability can affect anyone at any time – from birth through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

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

LV Data on Disability and Methods

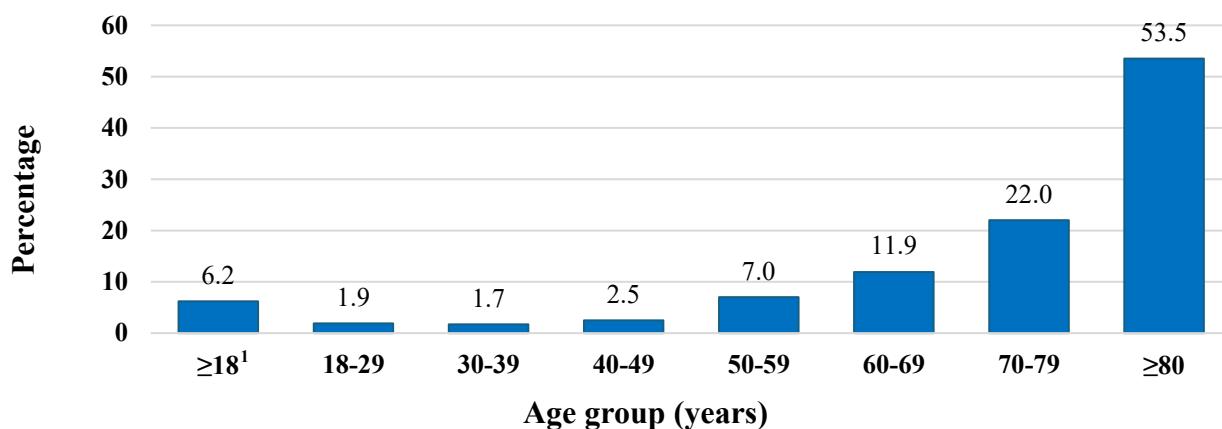
The European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions – (EU-SILC) survey monitors the health and other topics of the population through the annual collection. It contains extensive information about the residents' income and living conditions (household, employment, health, etc.), including indicators that characterize poverty, risk and social exclusion.

EU-SILC is a nationally-representative, cross-sectional interview survey of the Latvian population. The basic unit of EU-SILC is persons living in private households. The survey does not include collective households (old peoples' homes, boarding schools for disabled children, student hostels, hotels, barracks, hospitals, sanatoriums, prisons, etc.). During the survey, information was obtained on the whole household as well as on each household member aged 16 and over. EU-SILC is a sample survey; therefore, its estimates are generalized to the entire population and may differ from the results if a census were conducted. The sampling frame is designed with the aim of preparing the best possible coverage of the target population, minimizing non-sampling errors and their effects. The final sample for 2022 included 6 000 households and 11 000 adults aged 16 and over. The WG-SS questions are included in the EU-SILC. All estimates are based on self-report assessment and data on population groups starting from the age of 18 were used for this Country Report. Some of the estimates reported here are age-adjusted using the 2020 world population³ to facilitate cross-country comparisons. For more information about EU-SILC, visit <https://stat.gov.lv/en/metadata/4616-self-perceived-health-status-eu-silc-survey/det>.

Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted percentage of persons aged 18 and over with disabilities is 6.2%.
- The prevalence of disability increases with age, from 1.9% among those 18-29 years to 53.5% 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, Latvia, 2022

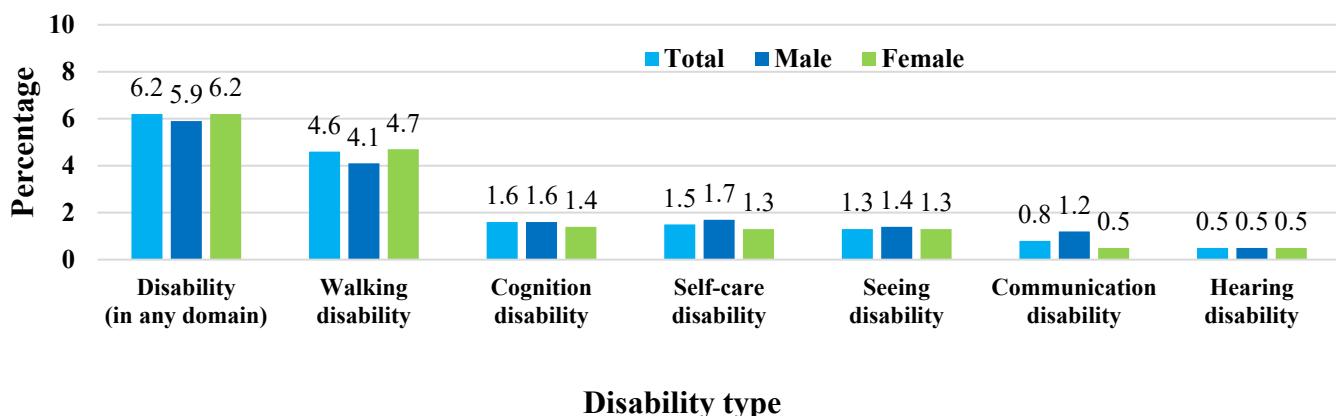


¹Total for ≥18 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/development/desa/population/prospects/)) using the following age groups: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years.

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.

- Females (6.2%) are more likely than males (5.9%) to report having disability (in any domain).
- The most common type of disability reported is walking (4.7% for females and 4.1% for males).

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, Latvia, 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 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: EU-SILC survey in Latvia, 2022.

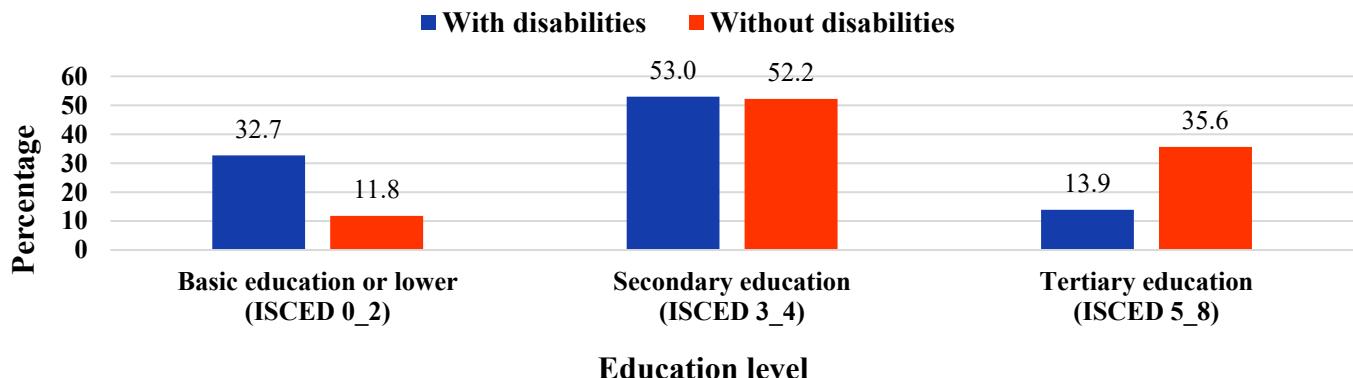
Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

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, family income and employment status are disaggregated by disability status.

Educational Attainment

- Adults aged 18 and over with disabilities (32.7%) were more likely to have basic education or less compared with those without disabilities (11.8%).
- Adults with disabilities (13.9%) were less likely to have completed a college degree or higher compared with those without disabilities (35.6%).
- The percentage of adults who completed secondary education does not differ much by disability status.

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

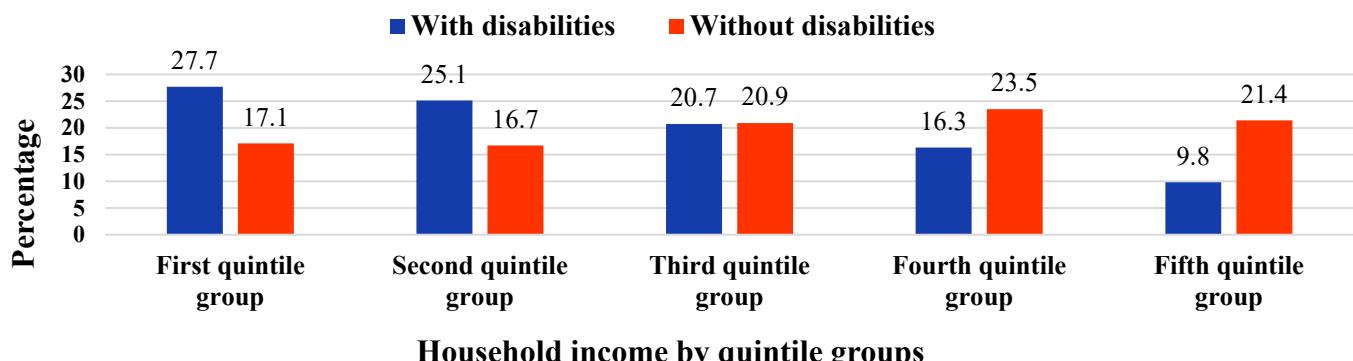
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Data source: EU-SILC survey in Latvia, 2022.

Family Income

- In 2022, 27.7% of adults aged 18 and over with disabilities had family incomes corresponding to the first quintile compared with 17.1% of those without disabilities.
- 9.8% of adults with disabilities had family incomes corresponding to the fifth quintile compared with 21.4% of those without disabilities.
- Adults with disabilities were more likely to have lower family incomes.

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

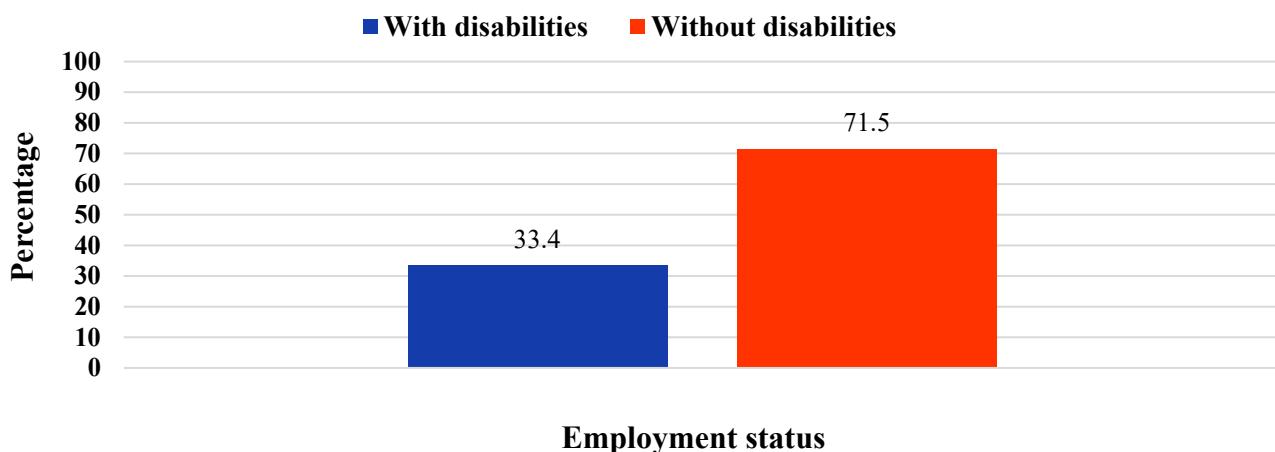
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. One fifth (20%) of the number of surveyed households grouped in increasing sequence according to the disposable income per one household member. The first quintile group includes households with the lowest income, while the fifth quintile group includes households with the highest income.

Data source: EU-SILC survey in Latvia, 2022.

Employment Status

- In 2022, 33.4% of adults aged 18-69 with disabilities were employed during the survey compared with 71.5% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 5. Employment status by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-69 years, Latvia, 2022



Age-adjusted percentages are based on the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/development/desa/population/prospects/)) using the following age groups: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69 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 status is the main current self-defined activity status during the survey and employment is defined as having worked for pay in the last week.

Data source: EU-SILC survey in Latvia, 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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4. United Nations General Assembly. (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html>.