



Disability in Samoa

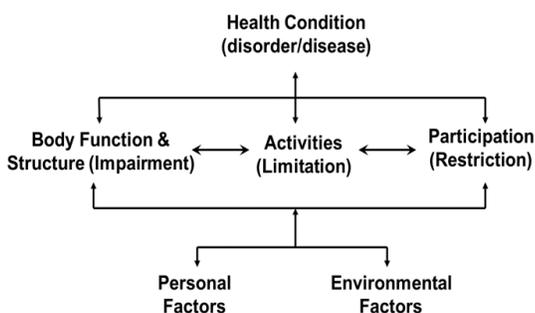
The Importance of Disability

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

Samoa Data on Disability and Methods

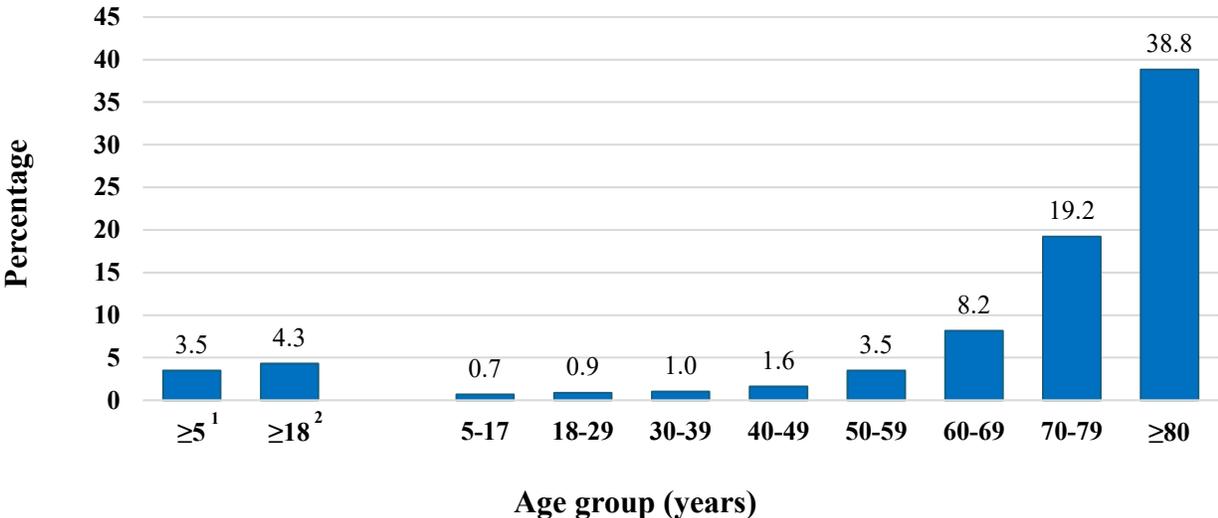
The Population and Housing Census (PHC) collects disability data every five years. This report uses 2021 PHC data. The total households enumerated in the PHC 2021 was 31,337 and it collected information on the population 5 years and over. The WG-SS questions have been included in the PHC since 2016. For more information about PHC, visit https://sbs.gov.ws/documents/census/2021/Census-2021-Final-Report_221122_051222.pdf.

Some of the estimates reported here are age-adjusted using the 2020 world population³ to facilitate cross-country comparisons.

Prevalence of Disability

- The age-adjusted prevalence of disability for persons aged 5 and over is 3.5%. The age-adjusted prevalence of disability for persons aged 18 and over is 4.3%
- The prevalence of disability increases with age, from 0.7% among those 5-17 years to 38.8 % among those aged 80 and over.

Figure 1. Prevalence of disability: age-adjusted and age-specific percentage of the population 5 years and over and by age group, Samoa, 2021



¹Total for 5 years and over 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: 5-17, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years.

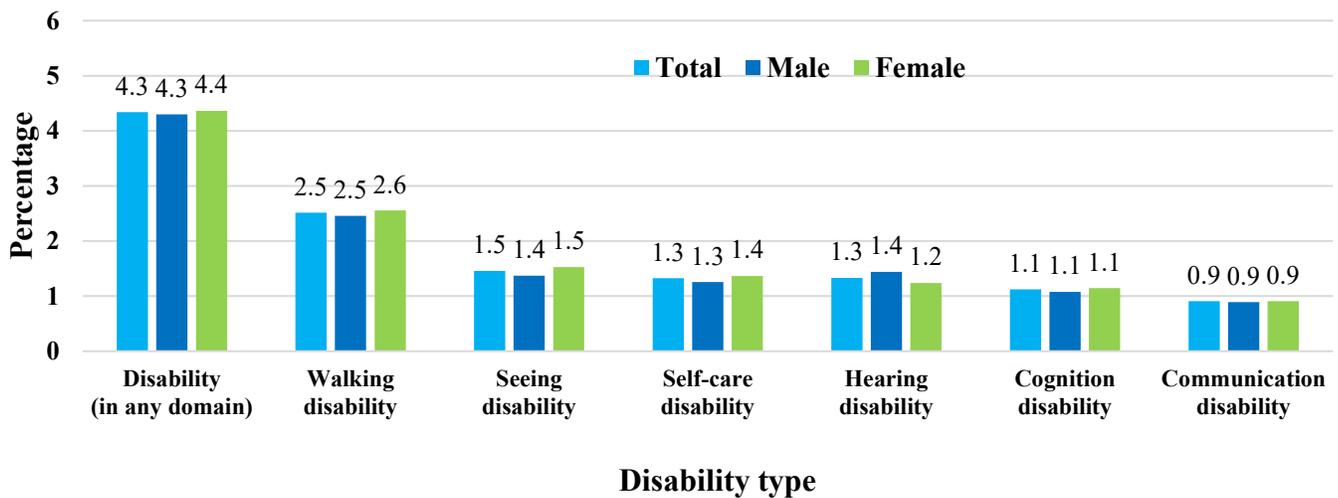
²Total for ≥18 is age-adjusted using the 2020 world population (available at: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/)) using the following age groups: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and ≥80 years.

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.

Data source: Population and Housing Census (PHC), Samoa 2021.

- Females (4.4%) are more likely than males (4.3 %) to have disability (in any domain).
- The most common type of disability reported is walking (2.5%).

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, Samoa, 2021



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: Population and Housing Census (PHC), Samoa 2021.

Outcomes Disaggregated by Disability

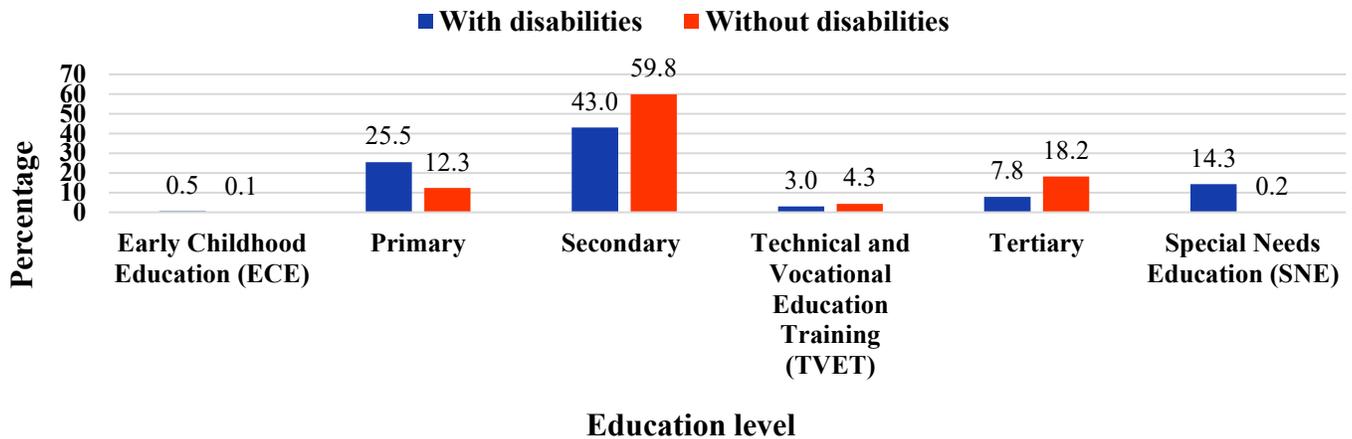
Disaggregating data by disability status allows for the comparison of outcomes for people with and without disabilities and is a necessary first step towards addressing disparities. Outcome indicators, such as educational attainment and employment, any of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals⁴, 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 and employment status are disaggregated by disability status.

Educational Attainment

- Adults 18 years and over with disabilities (25.5%) were more likely to have completed only primary level education compared with those without disabilities (12.3%).
- Adults with disabilities (43.0%) were less likely to have completed secondary level education compared with those without disabilities (59.8%).

- Adults with disabilities (7.8%) were also less likely to have completed tertiary level education compared with those without disabilities (18.2%).

Figure 3. Education level by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Samoa, 2021



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.

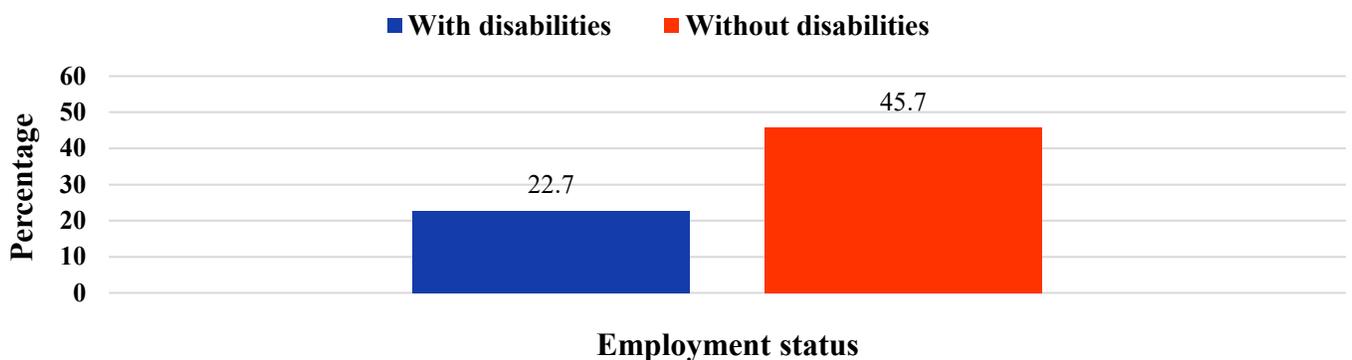
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” to at least one of the six functioning domains were classified as with disabilities. Education level is based on the highest level of education attained. Respondents who reported “do not know” for the education variable were included in analysis but estimates for this group are not shown in the figure.

Data source: Population and Housing Census (PHC), Samoa 2021.

Employment Status

- In 2021, 22.7% of adults aged 18-64 with disabilities were employed in the last 7 days compared to 45.7% of adults without disabilities.

Figure 4. Employment status by disability status: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18-64 years, Samoa, 2021



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.

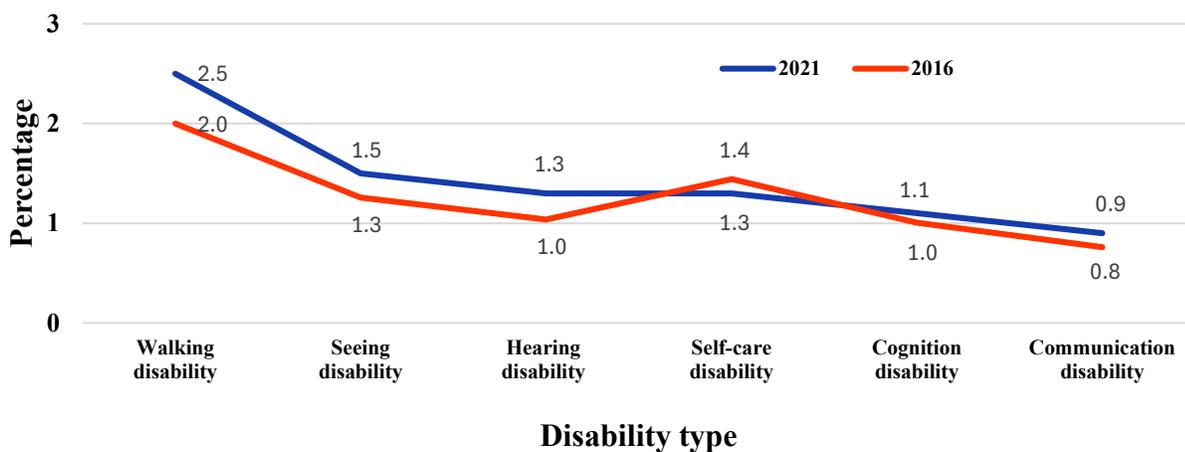
Disability is defined using the WG Short Set on Functioning, which asks about difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking or climbing steps, communicating, remembering or concentrating, and self-care, such as washing all over or dressing. Respondents who indicated “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”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

Data source: Population and Housing Census (PHC), Samoa 2021.

Trends in Disability

- In both 2016 and 2021, the most common type of disability reported was walking (2.0% in 2016 and 2.5% in 2021).
- The prevalence of disability increased from 2016 to 2021 for five of the six domains of functioning, with the exception of the self-care domain, which decreased in prevalence from 1.4% in 2016 to 1.3% in 2021.

Figure 5. Trends in disability in any domain and disability in each domain: age-adjusted percentage of the population 18 years and over, Samoa, 2016 and 2021



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/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 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: Population and Housing Census (PHC), Samoa 2016 & 2021.

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>.