





# POLICY BRIEF ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CAMBODIA: FINDINGS September 2023 FROM THE CAMBODIA **DEMOGRAPHIC AND** HEALTH SURVEY (ii) Persons with severe disabilities are those who 2021-22 experience at least a lot of difficulty (a lot or cannot do) in any of the six domains.

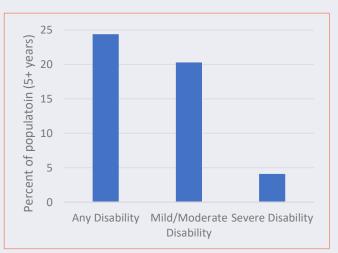
### (iii) Persons with non-severe disabilities are those who experience only some level of difficulty in any of the six domains.

(iv) Persons without disabilities are those who report no functional difficulties in all six domains.

# **Disability Prevalence**

Close to one-quarter (24.4%) of the Cambodian population aged 5 years and above, or 3.44 million people based on current census population estimates, reported to be living with some degree of disability. This fraction was made up of 20.3% of the population reporting a mild or moderate level of disability and 4.1% reporting a severe disability.

### Figure 1. Disability Prevalence in Cambodia, 2021-22



# Aim

This policy brief summarises the findings from an analysis of the well-being of persons with disabilities using the data from the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) fielded in 2021-2022 and 2014. The analysis aims to document the extent of inequalities across a broad range of well-being indicators for persons with disabilities compared to persons without disabilities ("disability gaps"). Policy recommendations are provided to support the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to meet its national, regional and international commitments with respect to persons with disabilities.

### **Disability Measurement**

Disability is measured using the Washington-Group Short-Set (WG-SS) questionnaire according to the degree of difficulty experienced in performing six basic domains (seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, remembering/concentrating, communication) across three degrees of difficulty (some, a lot, cannot do). A general disability measure as well as measures of severe/ non-severe disability for persons are defined as follows:

(i) Persons with disabilities are those who experience at least some level of difficulty (some, a lot or cannot do) in any of the six domains.

### **Disability Gaps**

Table 1 presents inequalities between persons with and without disabilities across a range of well-being indicators. These disability gaps are presented by the degree of disability and are expressed as a percentage of the mean indicator value for persons without disabilities ("unadjusted disability gap")<sup>1</sup>. Disability-gap estimates are also adjusted for differences in characteristics between persons with and without disabilities ("adjusted disability gap"). They can be viewed as the difference in well-being indicators when comparing people with and without disabilities that have similar characteristics (e.g. same age and area of residence).

As shown in the table, disability gaps exist across all dimensions of well-being. The gaps are substantially higher in magnitude for persons with severe disabilities and most of the gaps remain statistically significant after adjusting for differences in characteristics between persons with and without disabilities (shown in boldface). Some key disability gaps are as follows:

Children with severe disabilities aged 6-12 years are 55% less likely to attend school compared to equivalent-aged children without disabilities.

- Persons with severe disabilities aged 15 years and above are 19% less likely to be working, 22% less likely to be working in paid work, and 65% more likely to be working in unpaid work, compared to equivalent-aged persons without disabilities.
- Persons with severe disabilities are fifteen times (1500%) and persons with non-severe disabilities are 4 times (443%) more likely to report being in poor health (either bad or very bad self-reported health) compared to persons without disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are 14-21% less likely to live in quality housing compared to persons without disabilities, depending upon the degree of disability.
- Persons with disabilities are 7-25% less likely to report having free health insurance (Health Equity Fund or community-based health insurance) compared to persons without disabilities, with greater gaps among persons with non-severe disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are 20-28% less likely to use the internet compared to persons without disabilities, depending upon the degree of disability.

	Non-severe disability gap		Severe disability gap	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Education				
Ever attended school (5+ years)	15	7	38	17
Currently in school (6-12 years)	3	5	55	57
Currently in school (6-24 years)	11	13	65	64
Employment				
Any work (past 7 days)	-1	2	19	24
Paid work (past 7 days)	1	4	22	27
Unpaid work (past 7 days)	-37	-28	-65	-73
Health				
Safe water	0	0	3	2
Safe sanitation	2	2	4	5
Poor health	443	329	1507	1364

 Table 1. Disability gaps in well-being indicators (%)

1 For example, 53% of persons with severe disabilities reported to have ever attended school compared to 84% of persons with disabilities, representing a disability gap of 32 percentage points or 38% (32/84) when expressed as a percentage of the mean value for persons without disabilities.

	<u>Non-severe disability gap</u>		Severe disability gap	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Living standards/social protection				
Clean cooking fuel	20	2	28	5
Quality housing	14	3	21	6
Electricity	0	0	2	1
Asset ratio	3	3	9	9
Free health insurance	25	2	7	-22
Information				
Reads newspaper	23	5	31	19
Listens to the radio	13	7	3	7
Watches television	4	6	12	14
Uses the internet	20	5	28	12
Owns a mobile phone	9	2	18	9

Notes: Bold represents that the estimated regression-adjusted disability gap is statistically significant at conventional levels of significance. The regression adjusted disability-gaps adjust for differences in age, gender, marital status, rural or urban residence and province of residence.

# **Disability Gaps by Gender**

Table 2 presents disability gaps in education and employment indicators by gender. The disability gaps in education and employment indicators are generally higher for females compared to males. The education disability gaps become similar by gender when adjusting for differences in observable characteristics whereas the gender differences in employment disability gaps are robust.

Females with severe disabilities were 48% less likely to have ever attended school compared to females without disabilities. The analogous severe disability gap for males is 24%.

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- Among the school-aged population, the disability gaps are slightly larger for males aged 6-12 years yet become larger for females in the 6-24 years age group which suggests that females with disabilities are relatively more likely to drop out of schooling.
- Females with severe disabilities aged 15 years and above are 23% less likely to be working compared to equivalent-aged females without disabilities. The analogous severe disability gap for males is 16%.
- The difference in the disability gaps between males and females can be explained by relatively higher disability gaps in paid work for females versus males. Females with disabilities are also relatively more likely to engage in unpaid work compared to males with disabilities.

	Non-sev	Non-severe disability gap		<u>bility gap</u>
	Unadjust	ed Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Education				
Ever attended school (5+ years)				
Male	6	6	24	18
Female	21	7	48	16

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### Table 2. Disability gaps in education and employment by gender (%)

	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Currently in school (6-12 years)				
Male	5	8	57	55
Female	-1	3	52	60
Currently in school (6-24 years)				
Male	5	12	60	65
Female	17	14	70	64
Employment				
Any work (past 7 days)				
Male	7	3	16	21
Female	1	2	23	28
Paid work (past 7 days)				
Male	7	4	20	24
Female	2	4	25	30
Unpaid work (past 7 days)				
Male	-4	-25	-58	-62
Female	-46	-25	-73	-79

Notes: Bold represents that the estimated regression-adjusted disability gap is statistically significant at conventional levels of significance. The regression adjusted disability-gaps adjust for differences in age, gender, marital status, rural or urban residence and province of residence.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The RGC has made important strides in developing and reforming legal instruments to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and in developing policies and programs in accordance with these rights. The country has also made considerable efforts in disability data collection by including disability questions in national household surveys including the CDHS.

The above findings show that significant inequalities exist between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities in Cambodia across a range of well-being indicators including education, employment, health, living standards and social protection, and access to information. The following recommendations are proposed to equalize opportunities and living standards for persons with disabilities in Cambodia: Increase the school enrollment ratio and primary school completion rate of children and young persons with disabilities.

Non-severe disability gap Severe disability gap

- Develop vocational training opportunities and paid employment opportunities for adults with disabilities.
- Improve access to equitable health care and rehabilitation programs, assistive devices, and social health protection for persons with disabilities.
- Increase access to, and training in the use of information and communications technology (internet and mobile phone technology) for persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen interventions in areas of education and work targeted towards empowering women with disabilities.





