



# POLICY BRIEF ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CAMBODIA: FINDINGS FROM THE CAMBODIA DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY 2021-22

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## 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:

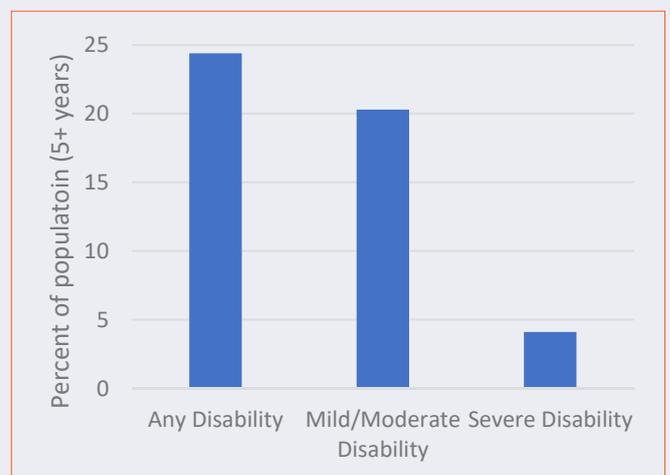
- (i) Persons with disabilities are those who experience at least some level of difficulty (some, a lot or cannot do) in any of the six domains.

- (ii) Persons with severe disabilities are those who 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





	<b>Non-severe disability gap</b>		<b>Severe disability gap</b>	
	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>
<b>Living standards/social protection</b>				
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
<b>Information</b>				
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%.
- 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.

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

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



	<b>Non-severe disability gap</b>		<b>Severe disability gap</b>	
	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>Unadjusted</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>
<b>Currently in school (6-12 years)</b>				
Male	5	8	57	55
Female	-1	3	52	60
<b>Currently in school (6-24 years)</b>				
Male	5	12	60	65
Female	17	14	70	64
<b>Employment</b>				
<b>Any work (past 7 days)</b>				
Male	7	3	16	21
Female	1	2	23	28
<b>Paid work (past 7 days)</b>				
Male	7	4	20	24
Female	2	4	25	30
<b>Unpaid work (past 7 days)</b>				
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.
- ❖ 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.