

Disability: Global and national statistics of disability.

NID Training Disability Diary

- Compiled by Dr Jean Mitchell



Introduction

It is generally believed that one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability. In high income countries the prevalence of disability in the population is about 11.8%, but in low-

income and developing countries it can be as high as 18.0%. It is thought that one-fifth of the estimated global population (between 110 million and 190 million people) experience significant disabilities (World Health Organization and The World Bank, 2011; World Bank, 2021). These figures are estimates that might not be reliable, because of challenges authorities face when trying to find out more about the occurrence through conducting a census. While the available data might not be scientifically accurate, it must be acknowledged that the estimates present a significant number of people. In addition, it seems as if the numbers of persons with disabilities is growing as the global population ages.

The World Health Organization estimates that in 2019, 1.3 billion people had a visual impairment; 466 million people were significantly hearing impaired; about 200 million people had intellectual disabilities; and 75 million people used wheelchairs every day (Wagner, nd).

Discussion

The figures of persons with disabilities in South Africa reflect global trends. Statistics gathered from a number of investigations provides a general idea of the prevalence of disability in South Africa. The 2001 census reported that 5% of the national population was disabled (Statistics South Africa, 2014). The 2010 Human Rights Report (Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labour, 2011) reported an incidence rate of 7.9%, while the 2010 General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2011) states that 6.3% of South Africans of five years and older could be said to be

disabled. While the statistics vary, an average of the figures indicates that 6.4% of South Africans had some degree of disability.

As in other parts of the world, the numbers seem to be increasing in South Africa. Results from the 2011 census found that 7.5% of South Africans were disabled in some way and there were more disabled females (8.3%) than males (6.5%). The report found that 11% of persons over the age of five had visual impairments, 3.6% were hearing impaired, 4.2% were cognitively impaired (had difficulty remembering and concentrating), while approximately 2% had difficulty communicating, caring for themselves and walking (South African Hearing Institute, 2011; Statistics South Africa, 2014).

The figure on page 2 provides an idea of the distribution of persons with disabilities in the Provinces of South Africa. The figure presents the prevalence according to the Census of 2011. In general, the percentages reflect the population numbers in each province. While Gauteng (GP) is not the largest province, it is one of the most densely populated, and yet the percentage of persons with disabilities is relatively low in comparison with that of the Northern Cape (NC) which is much larger with a smaller population. The North West Province (NW), Limpopo (LP), Mpumalanga (MP) and the Eastern Cape (EC) have predominantly rural populations. The percentages of their populations that are disabled are very close to the National Average.

Conclusion

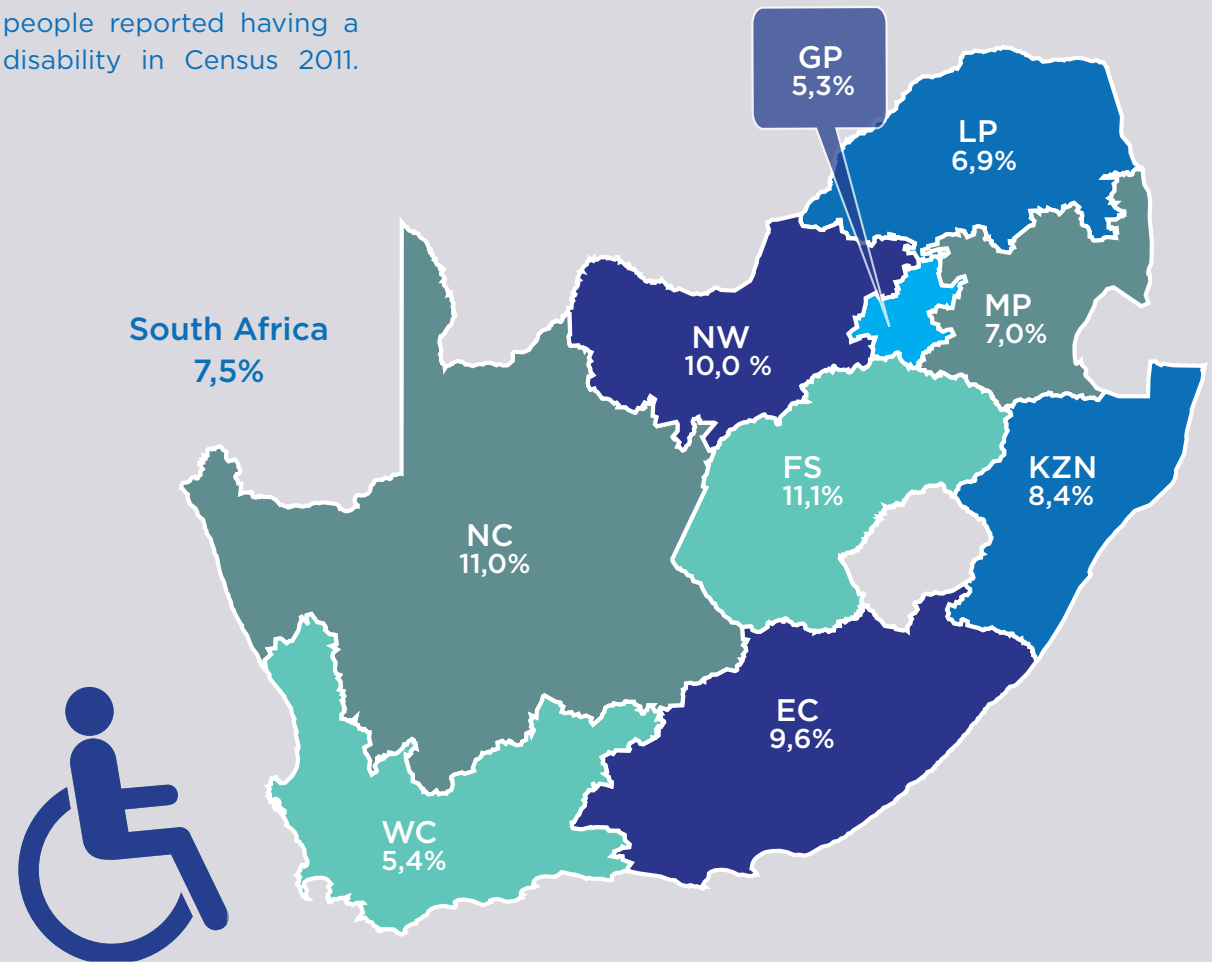
Disability can have an impact on people throughout their lives but tends to affect older people more frequently. There are many types of disability with variations of intensity. The fact that 7,5% of the population of South Africa is affected by some type of disability, emphasises the need for understanding of the challenges faced by people with disabilities, and for increased awareness of the contributions people with disabilities can make to society.

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2,9 million of the total population of 51,8 million people reported having a disability in Census 2011.



Adapted from: Statssa. (2014). Stats SA. Profiles persons with disabilities [<http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Disability-slider.png>]