

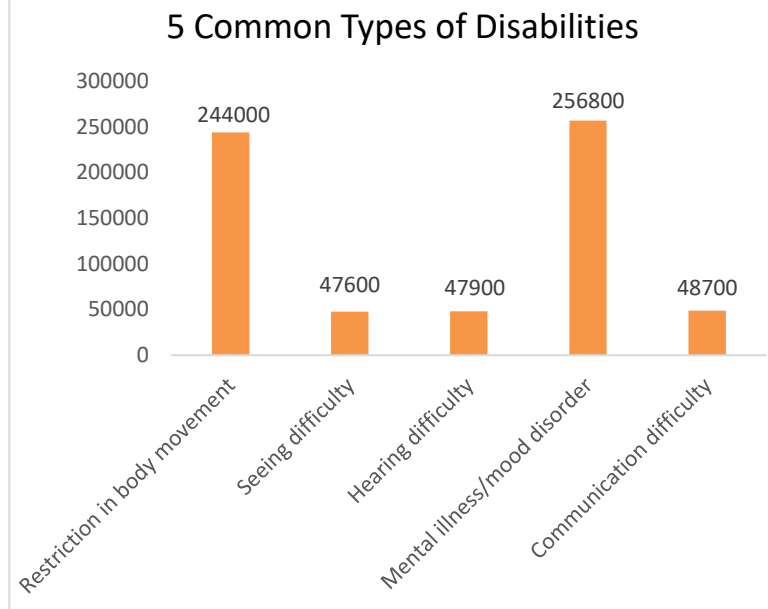
Overview

As population ages, the number of people with disabilities (PWDs) and chronic diseases in Hong Kong has increased substantially in recent years. Notwithstanding increased knowledge of disability in society, the general perception of PWDs among some individuals remains one-dimensional, as they dismiss the abilities and capabilities of this group. As a result, many PWDs are deprived of equal opportunities and even marginalised in society.

The Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) (Cap. 487) came into force in 1996, offering protection for PWDs from discrimination, harassment and vilification on the grounds of their disability in such domains as education, employment, and the provision of goods, services and facilities.

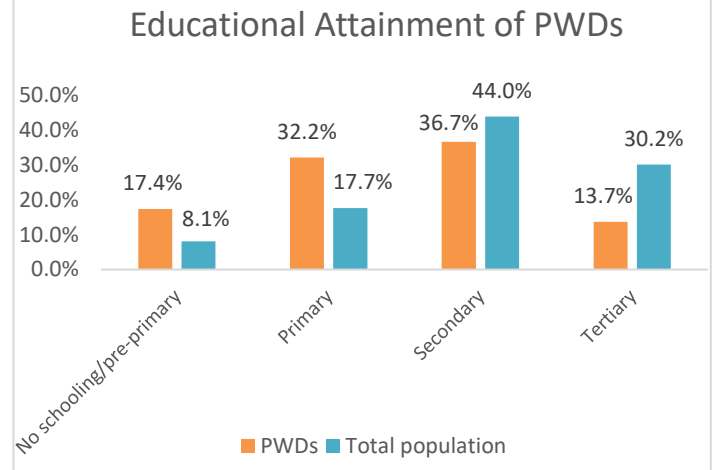
Demographics

- In 2020, there were about 534 200 PWDs in Hong Kong, representing 7.1% of the total population. The figure does not include the number of persons with intellectual disability, which was estimated to range from 77 000 to 90 000, or 1.0% to 1.2% of the total population in 2020.
- In addition, another 1 799 100 people required long-term (i.e. lasting at least 6 months) medical treatment, consultation or medication in certain type(s) of disease, representing 24.1% of the total population of Hong Kong and higher than the 1 375 200 (19.2%) in 2013.
- In 2020, there were 256 800 people with mental illness / mood disorder, 74.3% more than the figure in 2013 (147 300), reflecting the worsening mental health of Hong Kong people.
- The number of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (22 400), specific learning difficulties (35 400), attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder (38 200) also increased to 96 000, as compared to a total of 40 700 in 2013. This could be attributed to the Government's promotion of early detection and intervention for children with special educational needs in recent years.
- Almost 60% of the PWDs were aged 60 and above: with 44.5% aged 70 or above, and 14.4% aged between 60 and 69. The median age of PWDs stood at 65 in 2020, as compared to 45 for the total population.
- There were more women (58.5%) with disabilities than men (41.5%).



Education

- The educational attainment of PWDs was relatively lower than the total population.
- Excluding persons with intellectual disability, 49.6% of PWDs attained primary education and below, as against 25.8% of the total population.
- Only 13.7% of PWDs received post-secondary education, compared with 30.2% of the total population.



Economic activity

- The proportion of PWDs who were economically active is far lower than that of the overall population. Of the 490 800 PWDs aged 15 and above, only 19.7% were economically active, while 80.3% or 393 900 were economically inactive. In contrast, the labour force participation rate (or those economically active) of the total population was 59.6% as at Q4, 2020.
- Of the economically active PWDs, about 86 300 (17.6%) were working at the time of enumeration, while the others were without employment, translating into an unemployment rate of 11.0%, almost double that (5.8%) of the total population.
- Of those PWDs who were working, 36.0% were managers and administrators, professionals and associate professionals, while 25.4% were employed in elementary occupations. This compared to 41.4% and 20.6% respectively in the total population.
- The median monthly employment earnings of PWDs in 2020 stood at HK\$14,000, as against \$17,700 of the total employed population. About one-third of the employed PWDs earned less than HK\$10,000 per month.

Carers

- Among those 462 400 persons with disabilities (excluding persons with intellectual disabilities) residing in households, 204 200 (44.2%) had another person taking care of their day-to-day living due to their disabilities and chronic diseases. Of these, 28.7% were taken care by their children/son-in-law/daughter-in-law, 28.2% by their domestic helpers, 20.7% by their spouses and 15.0% by their parents.
- The median usual hours of caring services provided by the carer per week to the PWD residing in households was 42 hours.
- Among the 150 800 PWDs residing in households who had a specific carer, 52.4% of their carers felt stressed due to the caring services during the 1 month before enumeration.

Protection under the Law – Disability Discrimination Ordinance

For years, complaints filed under the DDO continued to take up the largest share of complaints handled by the EOC. In 2021, the EOC handled 647 complaints under the DDO, the majority were related to employment.

The EOC included a number of recommendations under the Discrimination Law Review in 2016 to enhance the protection for PWDs. Among these are: making it a legal requirement to provide reasonable accommodation for PWDs in the areas covered by the legislation, and protecting individuals accompanied by an assistance animal from discrimination. The Government subsequently took forward 8 of the recommendations in the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2020, which came into effect in June 2020. Of those related to PWDs were protecting workplace participants in common workplaces from harassment on grounds of sex, disability and race, and protecting service providers from disability harassment by customers.

The EOC announced the results of the Equal Opportunities Awareness Survey 2021 in November 2021. On the importance level of the forthcoming work on equal opportunities, 92.5% of the respondents considered it very or quite important to urge the Government to introduce a distinct duty on providing reasonable accommodation for PWDs under the DDO, reflecting the strong consensus for the amendment.

According to the Special Topics Report No. 63 – Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases, “persons with disabilities” include:

Those with restriction or those who lacked ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. Specifically, “persons with disabilities” were defined as those who:

(i) had perceived themselves as having one or more of the following four conditions (the level of difficulty should fulfil “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all”) which had lasted, or were likely to last, for a period of 6 months or more at the time of enumeration:

- (A) restriction in body movement;
- (B) seeing difficulty;
- (C) hearing difficulty; and
- (D) communication difficulty

or

(ii) those had been diagnosed by related professionals (such as practitioners of Western medicine and Chinese medicine, clinical psychologists and educational psychologists) as having one or more of the following five conditions:

- (E) mental illness / mood disorder;
- (F) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (was named as Autism in the 2013 round of the survey);
- (G) Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD);
- (H) Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD); and
- (I) intellectual disability (ID).

For the four selected types of disability mentioned in items (A) - (D) above, updates of the definitions had been made with reference to the extended set of questions recommended by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. Corresponding “basic activity functioning domains” viz. body movement (including walking on level ground, using hands and fingers to grasp a small object, walking up or down a flight of stairs and carrying a heavy object), seeing, hearing and communication were used to define persons with disabilities. Each domain had four levels of difficulty:

- (1) no difficulty;
- (2) some difficulty;
- (3) a lot of difficulty; and
- (4) cannot do at all.

Persons with “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” in the above domains would be defined as “persons with disabilities” in the corresponding types.

In the original definition used in the Special Topics Report No. 62 in 2013, persons using specialised aids/tools, regardless of their level of difficulty, were defined as persons with disabilities.

Owing to the different definitions, the survey findings in the Special Topics Report No. 62 and 63 are not directly comparable. If the 2013 definition was adopted, then the number of PWDs in 2020 reached 866 500, 53% more than the figure in 2013 (578 600).

Definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance could include:

- total or partial loss of a person’s bodily or mental functions;
- total or partial loss of a part of the body;
- the presence of organisms causing disease or illness (such as HIV);
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour, and learning difficulties.

Sources of information:

- *Special Topics Report No. 63, Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases (December 2021), Census & Statistics Department*

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