

Disability

Around 16% of the world's population lives with intellectual disabilities, mental health impairments, and physical or sensory disabilities. One in six of us experience disability, this explains that the disability community is one of the largest minority groups in the world.

With the epidemiological transition from infectious to non-communicable diseases and people living longer, disability as a health outcome deserves more attention. As per WHO, disability is a universal human experience and need not be determined/predicated due to specific health conditions. It lies from no to complete disability on a continuum. People with disabilities have been overlooked by international development and global health efforts. This population is often without equal access to education, healthcare rehabilitation, and employment and is excluded from the religious and socioeconomic lives of their communities. Improved clinical care and public health initiatives have partly reduced the rate of disability ensuring millions who would have died now survive but live with disability for years and often decades. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities passed in 2006 has now been ratified by more than 170 countries. The disability was unmentioned in Millennium Development goals but has been mentioned throughout the Sustainable Development goals. With limited access to education and employment, people with disabilities and their households remain disproportionately poor. Globally, the gap between development and disability is increasing and this can't be addressed until global efforts take disability into the mainstream as this population is at even higher risk of being adversely affected during humanitarian crises.

The focus of public health and medical research is on the prevention and treatment of disabilities perpetuating inequities, stigma, and ableism. There is a crucial need for research to maximize health and inclusion of people with disabilities. There is a huge data gap historically within public health systems and healthcare settings and represents that data collection efforts were never towards this community which represents deep social injustice that perpetuates health inequities. The need for disability to be viewed through a health equity lens has magnified during COVID-19. There is a need for disability data to create inclusive evidence-based policies and strategies.

People with disabilities are four times more likely to be mistreated by healthcare providers, three times more likely to be denied care, and twice as likely to find equipment and healthcare providers' skills inadequate to meet their needs as per the World Report on Disability. There is a need for the inclusion of disability not only in terms of just access to care but also needs training of health professionals for their attitude towards disabled people and to fill in the gap of lack of knowledge that contributes significantly to health care disparities experienced by this population.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1936657420301217>

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