

Competitive Exams: Current Affairs 2011: Disability Statistics

Disability Statistics

- The proportion of disabled people is rising and now stands at one billion, or 15 per cent of the global population, according to the first official global report on disability.
- An ageing population and an increase in chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, mean the proportion has grown from an estimated 10 per cent in the 1970s.
- But, despite a robust disability rights movement and a shift towards inclusion, disabled people remain second-class citizens, according to the report by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank. One in five experience significant difficulties.
- In developed countries, disabled people are three times more likely to be denied healthcare than other people. Children with disabilities are less likely to start or stay in school than other children, while employment rates are at 44 per cent, compared with 75 per cent for people without disabilities in OECD countries, the report found.
- Barriers include stigma, discrimination, lack of adequate healthcare and rehabilitation services, and inaccessible transport, buildings and information. In developing countries the picture is even worse. The clear message from the report is that there is no country that has got it right. Italy is a world leader in terms of inclusive education and de-institutionalisation of people with mental health problems but in other areas it is not. In the US the access is phenomenal it is a civil rights issue. However, if you are looking at poverty and employment it is not good.
- The WHO report, which did not compare countries directly but highlighted best practice, singled out the UK's Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which places a duty on public bodies to promote equality and its direct payment policies for disabled people as an example of good practice.
- The UK has done very well, due to its direct payment mechanisms, and benefits like independent living allowance and access to work. It appears that many of these developments are under threat. The axing of the independent living fund and other changes to benefit appear to move away from what was a good situation. The UK has made some real progress and it's good to be reminded that there's something to celebrate, but the employment rate of disabled people has crept up by only six per cent in recent years to 47 per cent.
- But it is still only 47 per cent and many people are working below their potential.

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Courtesy: The Hindu and Times of India

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