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National Disability Survey 2006

First Results

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Introduction

In 2004, the Irish Government decided that the Central Statistics Office (CSO) would conduct a National Disability Survey (NDS) after the 2006 Census of Population. The main purpose of the NDS was to establish the severity and impact of disability.

The National Disability Authority (NDA) had commissioned research in 2003 to develop and pilot an appropriate research instrument to establish the prevalence and impact of disability in Ireland. This pilot study formed the basis for the Government decision for the CSO to conduct a National Disability Survey.

Two questions on disability had been included in the Irish Census of Population for the first time in 2002. In 2006 two slightly more detailed questions on disability were included on the Census form. The NDS sample was selected based on responses to these questions.

The NDS questionnaires were based on the *social model of disability* which defines disability as the outcome of the interaction between a person with an impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers s/he may face. The questionnaires were broadly divided into two parts. Section 1 of the questionnaire collected a range of data on nine specific disability types including: level of severity, age of onset of disability, aids used or needed to assist with daily life, cause of the disability and in some cases frequency of occurrence. The rest of the questionnaire dealt with topics related to activity and participation such as education, employment, transport and the built environment as well as collecting some basic demographic information.

This first set of results from the NDS focuses on the nine disability types examined in the NDS. Chapter 1 discusses the overall estimated prevalence of disability arising from this analysis. Chapter 2 profiles the different disability types by severity and by demographic variables such as age, sex and region. Chapter 3 gives an overview of each of the nine disability types with more detailed breakdowns by age and sex, and analyses of disability specific variables such as aids for particular disability types and causes of disabilities.

A subsequent report will present data on education, work, transport, the built environment and social participation for people with disabilities.

Executive Summary

This report presents the first results from the National Disability Survey which mainly address the topics of: prevalence and type of disability; level of difficulty experienced in everyday activities due to disability; use of and need for disability specific aids; age of onset of disability; and causes of disability.

The Census of Population, 2006 found that 9.3% of the population or 393,800 persons reported a disability. The NDS included a broader range of disabilities but also introduced a threshold of severity for classifying someone as having a disability. The main NDS sample, which was drawn from persons who reported a disability in the Census, resulted in an estimate of disability prevalence of 8.1% of the population which was lower than the Census rate due to a small number of persons who indicated that they had a disability in the Census not reporting a disability in the NDS or their disability being below the threshold set in the NDS. As part of the NDS a second sample was taken of the general population without a disability in the Census. The inclusion of this General population sample raised the overall disability prevalence estimate to 18.5% although given the small sample size this should be regarded as only an indicative prevalence rate. This issue is examined in Chapter 1 of the report.

The profiles of persons with a disability presented in Chapters 2 and 3 and the detailed tables have been restricted to the Census disability sample only. The main findings are highlighted here and presented in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

- ◆ People with a Mobility and dexterity disability represented 56% of all persons with a disability. Pain (47%) Remembering and concentrating (35%) and Emotional, psychological and mental health (34%) were the next most commonly occurring disability types.
- ◆ Of all persons reporting a disability, 24% reported the highest level of severity which meant that their disability prevented them from doing everyday activities. A further 43% reported a lot of difficulty, and 31% reported having a moderate level of difficulty with everyday activities.
- ◆ Overall 48% of those reporting a disability were males and 52% females. Intellectual and learning and Speech disabilities were the only categories where the proportion of males, at 61%, and 54% respectively, exceeded that of females. Seeing had the highest proportion of females at 58%.
- ◆ The 75 and over age group accounted for 22% of all persons with a disability, and the 65-74 age group for a further 14%. In Speech and Intellectual and learning disabilities the 0-17 age group represented the largest proportions of persons with these disability types, at 29% and 38% respectively. Persons in the age groups 18-64 accounted for 68% of those reporting an Emotional, psychological and mental health disability.
- ◆ Persons living in a nursing home, hospital or children's home represented 8% of persons with a disability. They were more concentrated in the older age groups with 62% aged 75 and over compared with 19% in private households.
- ◆ Persons with an Emotional, psychological and mental health disability reported the highest usage of aids for their disability with 90% using at least one aid, followed by persons with a Mobility and dexterity disability, of whom 72% used at least one aid. Persons with a Hearing disability reported the highest level of need for aids with 45% needing at least one aid, followed closely by persons with a Mobility and dexterity disability at 43%.

