

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

Query title	Available data on access to higher education for students with disabilities in Africa, South and South-East Asia and MENA regions
Authors	Katy Chadwick, Faraz Hassan
Date	8th March 2024
Query	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What information or statistics are available on students with disabilities in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, South/South-East Asia, and MENA?• What data is available on the proportion of students with disabilities accessing higher education in these regions that are women?• What are the gaps in data and how should these be considered?
Enquirer	Scholarships, Tertiary Education and Partnerships (STEP) Department, Education, Gender and Equality (EdGE) Division.

Commented [GU1]: Faraz, I have suggested this but it's a bit long! Maybe you can think of something a bit catchier?

Contents

- > Introduction
- > Methodology
- > Limitations
- > Students with disabilities in higher education
- > Women with disabilities in higher education
- > Data gaps and considerations
- > References

1. Introduction

a. Query introduction

This query relates to the number of students with disabilities in higher education across different geographies (Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South East Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa). The questions for this query are:

1. What information or statistics are available on students with disabilities in higher education in

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia/Somaliland, Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zambia, DRC, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and South Africa), South/South-East Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, The Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar), and MENA (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria)?

2. What data is available on the proportion of students with disabilities accessing higher education in these regions that are women?
3. What are the gaps in data and how should these be considered?

Section 2 below overviews methodology used in this review along with limitations. Section 3 provides a regional breakdown overviewing what data was found on students with disabilities in higher education in the countries of focus. As almost no disaggregated data was found on women with disabilities in higher education in individual geographies, section 4 looks at general data available on women with disabilities in higher education. Lastly, section 5 discusses the gaps in data and how this should be interpreted.

2. Methodology & Limitations

Methodology

This query is based on a rapid desk review of available data in relation to the above questions. This rapid desk review was undertaken using web searches for each country listed in the query, and the search included any journal articles, data sets, research reports or grey literature that referenced each individual country, higher or tertiary education, and numbers of, rates or proportions of people with disabilities accessing higher or tertiary education.

Broad search criteria was initially used, including 'Students with disabilities in higher education (country name).' Where limited or no data was available, search criteria was expanded to include numbers of, rates or proportions of children with disabilities accessing any type of education. Additionally, some global and regional reports were consulted to provide further context. The desk review used only free to access and open source materials.

Due to a relative lack of data in general, data was used wherever available from a very broad date range (approximately 2005-2024).

This study focused on quantitative data. There was qualitative data found which focused on the reasons and barriers to access to higher education for people with disabilities, but this level of detail was beyond the scope and time limitations of this query.

Limitations

A number of limitations should be noted when reviewing the data below.

Firstly, this review could only focus on materials available and accessible online.

Qualitative data also exists for some countries, including general reports of low levels of participation in higher education of people with disabilities, the barriers that exist, and other anecdotal evidence or analysis. However, due to the number of countries covered in this review, only quantitative data was gathered.

Commented [co2]: Can you put in the search criteria if it's brief enough? How things were included / excluded?

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

It should be noted that the sources data was gathered from utilised varying definitions. This paper defines people with disabilities as: ‘...those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’ (Article 1, [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)) Impairments (e.g. physical, cognitive or sensory) become disabling when they interact with prevailing attitudes, behaviours and policies or physical spaces to effectively bar the individual(s) from participating fully and on an equal basis in society.

However, in the data gathered as part of this paper, different regions and countries employed different definitions of disability and impairment – in some countries the scope was quite narrow, and mainly considered physical disabilities. In particular, intellectual and learning disabilities were often excluded, particularly in contexts where there are high levels of stigma associated with these disabilities, and where mobility disabilities are more easily accepted than intellectual and learning disabilities by families and communities¹. In a small number of contexts disability was also considered as just one aspect within a broader category of ‘vulnerability’, rather than disaggregated.

Additionally, the definition of higher education also varied across different contexts – some data looks primarily at university education, whilst others included all types of further tertiary education including apprenticeships, technical and vocational training. Lastly, data was reported in varying formats and definitions. For example, where data was available, it often looks at the number of students with disabilities in higher education, rather than reporting the proportion of students with disabilities as an overall ratio of enrollment rates. Additionally, whilst most data focused on enrolment, there was some data that looked at completion rates or the highest level of education achieved by people with disabilities. These varying definitions makes comparisons of data between countries difficult.

3. What information or statistics are available on students with disabilities in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, South/South East Asia, and MENA?

a. Overview/Context

WHO estimates that around 1.3 billion people, 16% of the global population, currently experience significant disability, the world’s largest minority, and approximately 80% live in the majority world (WHO, 2021). In places where there have been long periods of conflict, instability, extreme poverty or consistent lack of access to healthcare, the total proportion of the population with disabilities is likely to be particularly high – for example one study in Somalia found 42% of households had at least one household member with disabilities (Rohwerder, 2018).

Lack of access to education is one of the most significant factors in exacerbating social and economic inequalities of minority groups, and a number of international agreements highlight the rights of people with disabilities to access inclusive education.

A number of states have also put in place legislation and policies to support the access of students with disabilities to education, and the numbers of states with some form of

Commented [co3]: This is a crucial issue actually - can you say up front how this report defines disability and how the term disability varied in the data? Its a key issue

Commented [GU4R3]: I've added a bit more - but Faraz, can you also check this and see if it matches with the data you looked at?

Commented [co5]: The wording here makes this sentence difficult to understand. I think what you are saying is that there is that the data is not comparable. That means the data doesn't specify what proportion of people with disabilities are in HE. Is that what you mean? Also I would assume it doesn't compare attendance rates between disabled and non disabled people?

Commented [GU6R5]: I'm also a bit confused by this sentence, I have made an amendment but it may not be what you were originally trying to say Faraz, so can you check?

¹ See for example https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a744dbded915d0e8bf188ec/Disability_in_Somalia.pdf

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

legislation or policy in place has steadily increased in recent years. The UNDESA (2018) Flagship report documents that out of 193 United Nations Member States, 34 guarantee the right to education for persons with disabilities or protect against discrimination on the basis of disability in education in their constitutions. In 2017, 88% of 102 countries surveyed had a law or policy mentioning the right of children with disabilities to receive education, (up from 62 per cent in 2013), and 57 countries also provided curricula inclusive of children with disabilities (ibid).

However, it should be noted that this does still leave 12% of states with no legal provision at all for disabled learners, and less than half with commitments to inclusive curricula, and rapid progress on increasing these rights and protections is urgent. And despite legislative and policy protections where they are in place, students with disabilities continue to be the most marginalised and excluded from academic participation (World Bank, 2018). Students with disabilities are accessing education at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) at much lower rates than their non-disabled peers. And whilst good progress has been made in many countries on collecting disability data through the education management information system (EMIS), there is still a lack of good quality, comparable data on access rates, especially at tertiary and higher education levels.

The UNDESA (2018) Flagship report notes that persons with disabilities are less likely to complete primary, secondary and tertiary education than people without disabilities. Data from 5 countries in the majority world showed an average primary school completion rate of 73% for children without disabilities, and 56% for children with disabilities. At secondary level (from 4 out of 5 countries with data available), the completion rate is 53% of adolescents without disabilities, and 36% for adolescents with disabilities. As a direct consequence of this, people with disabilities are much less likely to complete tertiary education – out of 41 countries where data was available, 24% of people without disabilities completed some form of tertiary education, compared to 12% of people with disabilities. There is also a large disparity between completion rates in different geographies and contexts – with only 1% of people with disabilities completing tertiary education in Cambodia, for example, compared to 29% in Finland (UNDESA, 2018).

These disparities widen further when gender is considered. Whilst the global completion rates are comparable between women and men (approximately 10% for both men and women), there are wide gaps in particular geographies – Cambodia has a 1% overall completion rate for women and men with disabilities, and a 0.2% completion rate for women only (ibid).

b. Sub-Saharan Africa

In general, participation in tertiary education remains lower in sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions, with a current tertiary enrolment ratio of 9.4% - well below the global average of 38% (World Bank, 2021a). Data on how many students with disabilities are accessing tertiary education varies quite significantly between countries. Whilst most countries have some data on children with disabilities accessing primary and secondary school, data on students who access tertiary or higher education is much more sparse

Commented [co7]: Just an observation from me - these numbers seem quite low really. Although things are improving there are still 12% of States that have no legal provision for disabled learners, whilst less than half have inclusive curricula. That will definitely affect how many can get to HE

Commented [GU8R7]: Agree! I've made a few edits to better emphasize this.

Commented [co9]: See my previous comment - I think there are still significant legislative and policy issues to overcome which is why they continue to be marginalised from academic progression (I guess less protection the higher you go although that's just me making an assumption!!)

Commented [co10]: Can you explain here if you mean men & women with disabilities or just in general?

Commented [GU11R10]: thanks, clarified.

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

and is often reliant on individual institutions collecting data on the number of students they have enrolled. Where there is national data, available this is often outdated, and there is little disaggregation of data (across gender, type of impairment etc). Additional sources of data also include in some cases NGO reports that focus on specific types of impairment and/or specific geographies (for example Sightsavers has collected data on the number of visually impaired people accessing higher education in Ethiopia), and specific pieces of research often undertaken as part of a PhD.

The table below summarises the available quantitative data identified during the rapid desk review.

Country	Data Identified	Source and year of data
DRC	The only data on students with disabilities identified for DRC was at primary school level – which remains inaccessible to the majority of children with disabilities - approximately 45 per cent of students with motor disabilities and 75 per cent of those with learning disabilities aged between 6 and 11 years old are out of school (compared with 28.7 per cent of their peers without disabilities) (UNESCO, 2021).	See UNESCO, 2021 (original source of data unknown)
Ethiopia	The SNE Program Strategy estimates that 1.5–3 million learners will need special attention due to disabilities, learning difficulties, or being gifted or talented. It also reports that an “insignificant” number of students with special educational needs are in vocational, secondary or higher education. World Vision (2007) indicates that there are around 250 visually impaired students in HE institutions in Ethiopia, and that Addis Ababa University has 183 visually impaired undergraduates and postgraduates.	Ministry of education, 2006, see UNESCO (2009) World Vision (2007)
Ghana	Ghana reports a national disability enrolment ratio of 6%. This comprises all persons with disability enrolled at all levels of post-secondary education such as universities, polytechnics, and all other degree, diploma, and certificate awarding professional and technical institutions. The population and housing census carried out in Ghana in 2010 identified that approximately 5% of persons with disability had some post-secondary education up to postgraduate level.	Ghana Statistical Service 2007, See UNESCO (2010) Ghana Population and housing census 2010, See UNESCO (2010)

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

Kenya	<p>Nairobi university has been keeping a database of disabled students since 2000. They currently have 80 registered students with disabilities (up from 20 when the database was first established)</p> <p>One thesis paper reports that 'the representation of students with disabilities in institutions of higher learning is a mere 0.175%.'</p>	<p>Nairobi University (n.d.) disability liaison services, up to date</p> <p>Original source unspecified, see Karanja (2013)</p>
Malawi	<p>Public and private tertiary institutions in Malawi enrolled a total of 117 learners with disabilities in the academic year 2018/2019, representing approximately a 1% enrolment ratio.</p>	<p>Ministry of education, 2020, and author's own research, see Mwale (2023).</p>
Nigeria	<p>No data on the enrolment of students with disabilities in higher education was identified for Nigeria.</p> <p>One journal article notes that there is an increasingly high demand for higher education places, and a static number of places, with students with disabilities being the most impacted - <i>In 2017, reports from Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) indicated that of the more than 1.8 million candidates who registered for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) only about 850, 0000 gained admission spaces, leaving the needs of another 850, 000 unmet. This number continues to increase yearly whilst the quota for admission remains static. Hence the legitimate aspirations of average Nigerians to university education has continued to suffer with PWDs affected the most.</i></p>	<p>Joint Admission and Matriculation Board 2017, see Ihuoma and Ebere Abaa (2022)</p>
Rwanda	<p>There are no official figures of persons with disabilities in higher education were identified from Rwanda, but a news report in 2020 notes that <i>the University of Rwanda, which is the biggest university, has about 500 people with disabilities in its six colleges.</i></p>	<p>See Mbonyinshuti (2020) , original source unspecified</p>
Sierra Leone	<p>No official data on students with disabilities enrolment in higher education was identified.</p> <p>One news article reported that <i>although a total number of students with disability around the country is yet to be arrived at, in the 2016/2017 academic year, 27 people with disability at the</i></p>	<p>From news article, original source unspecified. See Smalle</p>

Commented [GU12]: Faraz/reviewers - I found this statistic in this thesis paper here: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/<https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/123456789/23523/Implementation%20of%20Inclusive%20...pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

but it seems unlikely that it is quite this low (as even the countries that are reported as having the very lowest enrollment rates are above 0.175%), and I'm struggling to find the original source of the data - the reference that the thesis gives (Wawire, 2008) isn't easy to locate! So it might be better to delete this stat?

Commented [GU13]: Faraz/reviewers - not a very reliable statistic - drawn from a news report and doesn't specify where the information came from! But this is the only stat I could find so maybe worth leaving in if it's clear that we're not sure of original source?

Commented [co14R13]: If you mean data on persons with disabilities in general, this is not true. There is data on disability in Rwanda although it is quite recent and its not specific to education
<https://disabilitydata.ace.fordham.edu/rwanda/>

Commented [GU15R13]: Sorry, I meant persons with disabilities in higher education - have edited!

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

	<i>Fourah Bay College applied for the government grant in aid 17 were successful.</i>	(2017)
Somalia	<p>No data on higher education was identified, and information available suggests that education for students with disabilities was a low priority in Somalia, with a majority of children with disabilities unable to access any level of schooling.</p> <p>A help-desk report from 2018 noted that <i>the education of people with disabilities has not been considered a priority in Somalia and children with disabilities have very limited access to any educational opportunities, and that an informal survey carried out Mogadishu of 10 schools concluded that less than one per cent of children with disabilities are enrolled in school.</i></p>	See Rohwerde (2018)
South Africa	Data from 22 of the 23 public universities shows that 5 807 students with disabilities were enrolled in higher education institutions in 2011, accounting for 1 per cent of the total enrolment.	Public university records, 2011, See University of South Africa (2013).
South Sudan	No data on higher education was identified, and information available suggests that education for students with disabilities is a low priority in South Sudan. The South Sudan national disability and inclusion policy notes that <i>school attendance of persons with disabilities varies from 21.9% to 24.3 % . The ratio drops to 17.6% for female in all surveyed locations, and to only 10.5% in Warrap state. It shows large discrepancies between male and female and between states.</i>	South Sudan National Disability and Inclusion policy (2013)
Tanzania	<p>In 2010, there were 49 HEIs in Tanzania, of which 32 are universities and university colleges and 17 non-university HEIs (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007). 45 participate in the national Central Admission System for students. In the academic year 2005-2006, the total number of students enrolled in HEIs in the country was 55,314 (17,803 females and 37,331 males), and of these, only 54 were students with disabilities, with UDSM having the most with 40 students</p> <p>A more recent report from The Tanzania Commission for Universities Vital Statistics in 2022 recorded 499,064 students registered with universities and other higher education institutions, and a total of 1,497 students with disabilities.</p>	<p>Central Admission System for students, Tanzania, see Nyigulila Mwaipopo et. al (2011)</p> <p>See Tanzania Commission for Universities (2022).</p>
Uganda	There is very limited data available on students with disabilities in higher education available. One journal article from 2016 reports that <i>as a result of improved education environment for learners with disabilities at primary and secondary levels of</i>	Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010, see Emong and

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

	<i>education, over 1000 students with disabilities are joining higher education annually</i> – however this number is based on the author’s estimates based on total number of disabled students enrolled in secondary S6, rather than records of enrolment at higher education institutions	Eron (2016)
Zambia	Very limited data available – a journal article references a book chapter by Zumba (2009) which quotes Zambian government figures suggesting that 3% of HE students are disabled.	Zambian Govt., See Morley and Croft (2011)
Zimbabwe	In a survey coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (2015) in Zimbabwe, among the respondents aged 3 – 60 years, school attendance percentage to those with disability is lower than those without, female attendance is lower than male, attendance is also higher in urban areas than in rural. To most people with disability their highest level of education was primary education, which is 19%, 18.5 % reach form 4, and less than 5% attain tertiary education. The same survey also indicated that of those less than 5% who attend tertiary education, 9.8% of them are male and 5.6% of them were female	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2015, see Muranda-Kaseke and Mbawuya Kudzai (2021).

Commented [co16]: Hmm - you might want to correct this number!!!

Commented [GU17R16]: oops! Corrected!

c. South & South East Asia

Higher education enrolment in South Asia accounts for 18% of all tertiary education students globally (World Bank, 2021b). In South East Asia, the rate of tertiary school enrolment as a percent of all eligible children was reported to be 39.9% (Global Economy, 2021). In 2022, enrolment in tertiary education for women in South Asia was estimated to be 27% (World Bank, 2023a).

Beyond these general or regional trends, however, specific data on the participation of students with disabilities in higher education was not widely available. A report (Lefievre et al, 2022) on inclusive education in the ASEAN region, for example, points out that although students with disabilities have been identified as a priority group by nine ASEAN states, specific targets related to the access and success in higher education for such students were not identified.

More data on students with disabilities is available at primary and secondary education level than at higher education level. This data tends to come from national surveys or found in news reports and is not disaggregated by gender.

The table below summarises the available quantitative data identified during the rapid desk review.

Country	Data Identified	Year and Source of Data
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Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

Bangladesh	<p>According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, in 2015 approximately 2.72% of students with disabilities completed or were in higher education.</p> <p>In 2021, 9.51 percent of students with disabilities were in higher education.</p>	<p>Ministry of Planning, 2015. See Rahman & Akther (2021)</p> <p>Based on data from National Survey undertaken in 2021. See Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022)</p>
Pakistan	No data found.	n/a
Afghanistan	<p>There was no data on higher education found in Afghanistan. However, there are an estimated 200,000 children with disabilities in Afghanistan. According to a National Disability Survey, more than 72% of individuals with disabilities aged six and above have not received any formal education.</p>	<p>National Disability Survey (2005)</p> <p>See Sida (2021).</p>
Nepal	<p>There was no data on higher education found. However, data indicates that 40.5% of persons with disability attended school compared to 71.1% of those without disabilities. A separate survey of 400 people with disabilities in 2018 found that 54% had no qualifications.</p>	<p>National study on living conditions among people with disabilities carried out in Nepal (2014-2015). See Gaulee & Manandhar (2022)</p>
Malaysia	In 2018, 338,563 students enrolled in higher education, of which 1,874 (0.6%) were students with disabilities	Ministry of Education data, 2014-2018. See Jaafar et al. (2020)
Thailand	In 2020, there were 30 graduated students with disabilities. In 2022, it was reported that there were 500 students with disabilities at STOU university.	Anecdotal, based on a single institution. See Vilalert (2022).
Indonesia	<p>The lack of access to higher education resulted in only a little over 5% of the 10.8 million people with disabilities entering the workforce that have experienced college education.</p> <p>The latest data from the Indonesian Association of Visually Impaired People (Pertuni) also indicate that in 2017 there were only around 400 visually impaired university students in the country.</p>	Based on data on visually impaired people only. See Dzulfikar (2019)
Vietnam	Vietnam had about 6.1 million people with disabilities or 7.8 percent of the population. only 0.1 percent of Vietnamese with disabilities attended colleges or universities.	Based on a news article, see VNA (2017)
The Philippines	Around 6 percent persons with disabilities were able to finish college degree.	Original source of data unknown, from 2011. See Durian & Perena (2022)

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

Cambodia	According to an interview from 2022, there were 43 students with disabilities who are studying for undergraduate degrees, including 13 women. In the previous year, eight students with disabilities graduated.	Interview in a news article, see Nimol (2022).
Lao PDR	Attendance of persons with disabilities at university was marginal in absolute terms (about 3.34%) and comparatively with persons without disabilities (about 7.46%). This does indicate that the pursuit of higher education was still rather uncommon among youth in Lao PDR.	Population and Housing Census (2020). See Lao Statistics Bureau (2020)
Myanmar	No data found.	n/a

d. MENA

Higher Education enrolment in the countries reviewed as part of this paper within MENA was estimated to be around 45% in 2022, with the figure being around 50% for women (World Bank, 2023b). Generally, there was a lack of data on students with disabilities for the selected countries, with most data being found in secondary sources or reports. In one case (Algeria) there was some data available from a national survey in 2017. A study into disability inclusive education in MENA from 2022 reported a general lack of data regarding children with disabilities, and that interventions for disability inclusion at the higher education level are limited (USAID, 2022).

The table below summarises the available quantitative data identified during the rapid desk review.

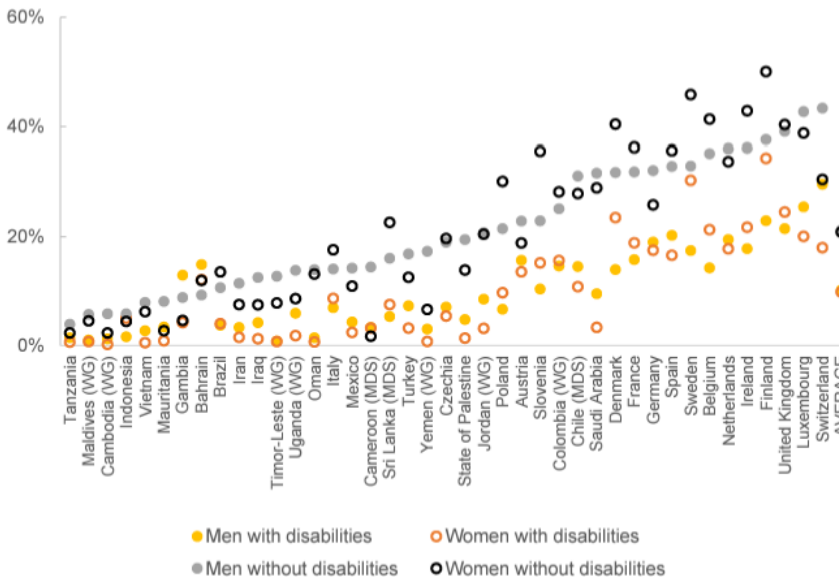
Country	Data Identified	Year and Source of Data
Egypt	No data found.	n/a
Tunisia	62% of Persons with Disabilities are illiterate and only 1.3% are enrolled in higher education.	See UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (n.d.)
Morocco	The Moroccan Observatory of Inclusive Education (OMEI) reported that the schooling rate of children with disabilities has reached 55.1%, whereas that of people with disabilities who attained higher education hardly exceeded 1.8%.	See Latrech (2021)
Algeria	According to the Algerian National Office of Statistics (2017), out of 1605160 persons with various types of disabilities, there are 'more than 34,000 disabled students enrolled in the course 2017/2018.' It is not clear from the source if this is referring to higher education courses or not.	National Office of Statistics, 2017. See Bouguerni (2020).
Jordan	3.7% of persons with disabilities have obtained an intermediate diploma, compared to a national rate of 8.9 per cent. Similarly, only 4.2% of persons with disabilities have access to university education in Jordan, compared to a national rate of 10.9% for the population overall.	See UNESCWA (2009)
Lebanon	No data found.	n/a
Syria	No data found.	n/a

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

4. What data is available on the proportion of students with disabilities accessing higher education in these regions that are women?

Data on the proportion of students with disabilities who are women and are accessing higher education is rarely available at a national level. However global reports on overall trends, and qualitative research, often note that whilst global completion rates are comparable between women and men (approximately 10% for both men and women), that for countries in the global majority, there is often a wide gender gap, and that women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged. The UNDESA Flagship report includes the following graphic which shows percentages of people who have completed tertiary education disaggregated by disability status and sex (UNDESA, 2018).

Figure II.50. Percentage of persons 25 years and older²⁶⁴ who completed tertiary education, by disability status and sex, in 41 countries, around 2012.



5. What are the gaps in data and how should these be considered?

- a. Data on disability inclusion in education is sparse, particularly at Higher Education level

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

This review found that data on disability inclusion in education is sparse and inconsistent – which is especially the case at higher education level. More data was available on disability inclusion at primary and secondary level education. Some countries do not even have data available at this level, making estimations of people with disabilities in higher education even more difficult.

In countries where data is available on the percentage of people with disabilities accessing higher education, it is not always clear what this proportion means in terms of the proportion of students in higher education with disabilities, how this compares to national rates of higher education access (where available, this has been included), and how many students with disabilities accessing higher education also completed and/or graduate.

b. Data available is often very outdated

Data found was not often very recent. Some available data was from as far back as 2005.

c. There is almost no data disaggregation

There was almost no disaggregation by sex of any data found. In addition, impairment types were also often not disaggregated. This makes the identification of intersecting discrimination of exclusion difficult to identify.

d. Where data is available, it is from different types of sources, and uses varying definitions, making comparison difficult.

Some data included is based on percentage of students with disabilities at different levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary) which is different to tracking the percentage of students enrolled in higher education with disabilities. Definitions of disability, and who is included when the enrolment of students with disabilities are tracked, is also a key issue – definitions of disability in certain contexts are quite narrowly defined as those with mobility disabilities. In other contexts, learning and intellectual disabilities are also included, but the scope of what fits within these categories can also vary widely. This lack of comparable data, and different criteria for inclusion makes it very difficult to make direct comparisons between countries. There is significant work needed to harmonise disability data collection, and in certain contexts to widen inclusion criteria.

In some cases, data is from individual institutions, interviews or news reports. In other cases, national level data reported by ministries or national surveys was found. In many cases, the data was from secondary sources or based on analysis by secondary sources.

e. The lack of data does not necessarily indicate that people with disabilities are not accessing higher education.

There could be several reasons for the lack of data found. Firstly, recording this data is extremely challenging and is not undertaken uniformly in the countries reviewed, as well as varying definitions of what kinds of impairments are considered. This means that in some cases, data may underestimate the number of people with disabilities present in higher education.

Secondly, since data is rarely disaggregated, it may obscure other factors that determine an individual's access to higher education, such as socio-economic background or gender

f. Qualitative data is important for understanding the systemic, institutional

Commented [co18]: Again I think the issue of a lack of comparable data is actually really problematic. Mostly this happens because of a lack of transparency over definitions or because the definitions are not comparable. Work needs to be done on harmonising disability data collection (I am pretty sure there must be a Helpdesk paper on this!)

Commented [GU19R18]: Absolutely. I have added a little bit more here to emphasize, and I have had a very quick scan of helpdesk resources but couldn't see anything immediately relevant - Faraz, maybe you have a better idea that me of what could be a useful reference here?

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

and individual barriers people with disabilities face to access, and then progress in completing, higher education

A more detailed review of the qualitative data available was beyond the scope of this query, however qualitative data suggests that there are numerous barriers to higher education for individuals with disabilities – including (but not limited to) physical inaccessibility (both on campus and getting to campus) and communication barriers: lack of inclusive curricula and pedagogy; lack of training for teaching and other staff on inclusive education practices; negative attitudes from teachers and other students, lack of assistive devices, resources and other equipment to facilitate participation of students with disabilities, lack of inclusive support services, poverty and lack of financial resources to pay for fees, books and other resources. These barriers need to be better understood – including how they differ for male and female students and going beyond access to consider the experience of persons with disabilities in completing higher education as well as entering it. |

Commented [FH20]: Katy, could you expand? I've put some ideas

g. There is a gap between commitments to collecting data and data being collected in practice

States that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; United Nations, 2006) undertake in Article 31 to collect statistics that help identify and address the barriers faced by disabled people in exercising their rights, including the right to access education on a par with their non-disabled peers (Morley & Croft, 2011). In practice however, these statistics are not being routinely collected. In order to better understand the current situation for people with disabilities, and the actions needed to support more equal access to higher education, the collection of data on people with disabilities enrolment in HEI should be prioritised, and integrated into existing national systems such as the EMIS, and more data on higher education and disability collected through global reports such as the [Global Education Monitoring Reports](#)

6. References

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Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 114

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