

## Chapter 2

### Overview of Statistical Evidences on Disability

#### 2.1 Size of Disabled Population

At the turn of the new millennium about 21 million people in India were found to have disability as per official estimate obtained from the Population Census 2001. These included persons with visual, hearing speech, locomotor or mental disabilities, who constituted about 2 percent of the population. On the other hand, NSSO survey on Disability (July – December 2002) estimated the disabled population in the country as 18.5 million, who formed about 1.8 percent of the population. Population Census and NSS surveys are the major two sources of official statistics. But the two differ substantially especially in respect of overall estimates of persons with various types of disability and their age distribution, mainly due to differences in the concepts and definitions as also the data collection methodologies.

#### 2.2 Prevalence of Disability:

- a) As per **Population Census 2001**, of the persons with disability (PWD), about 75% belonged to rural areas and only 25% were from urban areas. For the population of the country as a whole, 2.13% were found to have one type of disability or the other. In rural India, the prevalence of disability was much higher (2.21%) as compared to that in its urban counterpart (1.93%). Among males, the prevalence of disability (2.37%) was significantly higher than that among females (1.87%). The prevalence rate among SC population (2.23%) was marginally higher as compared to the general population; while among ST population, it was noticeably lower (1.92%). Among the major states of India the prevalence of disability (percentage of disabled in total population) was relatively much higher in J & K (3%), Orissa (2.8%), Kerala (2.7%), Tamil Nadu and H.P. (2.6% each) while it was quite low in Maharashtra (1.6%), Jharkhand, Punjab and Delhi (1.7% each), Karnataka & Andhra Pr.(1.8% each) etc.
- b) **In the NSSO Survey (2002)** 8.4% of rural households and 6.1% of urban household reported disability of one or more of their members in the survey. More than 90% of these households reported disability of only one member, 6 to 8% in the rural areas and nearly 10% of households in the urban areas reported to have two disabled members. Only in 1% or less of the households, three or more disabled members could be found in both the sectors. For the population of the country as a whole, 1.8% was found to have at least one type of disability. Again out of them 10.63 per cent suffered from more than one type of the disabilities. In rural India, the prevalence of disability was more (1.85%) as compared to its urban counterpart (1.5%). Further, among males, the proportion of disabled (2%) was significantly higher than that among females (1.5%). Among the disabled persons, 7% were ST, 22% were SC, 41% belonged to OBC and 30% were categorized as 'others'. The proportion of disabled persons in the population was found to be relatively high (more than 2%) in H.P (2.6%), Orissa (2.5%) Kerala (2.2%), and Punjab (2%) and significantly low in Delhi (0.6%), Assam (1.0%),

Jharkhand (1.2%), Rajasthan (1.5%) etc. In almost half of the states the prevalence was in the range of 1.7% to 1.8%.

The proportion of persons with any disability was found to be increasing steadily with age from about 0.5% for age less than 5 to more than 1.7% till age 20. It remains more or less same almost till the age 50. Thereafter, it increases rapidly with age to about 3% for age-group 55-59 and more than 6% after age 60 years.

### **2.3 Composition of Disabled Population:**

- a) As per Census (2001) findings, where not more than one type of disability was recorded for each PWD, about half of them were found to have visual disability, more than a-fourth had movement disability, about 10% were having mental disability, 7% had speech disability and 6% were with hearing disability. The proportions vary marginally across different sets of population categories. More than half of the disabled were of age less than 30 and only one-fourth of disabled persons were of age 50 or more.
- b) In the NSSO (2002) survey 'a person with restrictions or lack of abilities to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being was considered disabled' and information on one or more types of disability were collected from each person reported to have disability. The survey found out Loco motor Disability to be the most prevalent type with more than 1% of population suffering from it. This was followed by hearing disability, then visual disability and lastly speech and mental disability, prevalence of each of which was relatively low (with less than 0.3% of population suffering from each of these disabilities).

### **2.4 Literacy of the Disabled Persons:**

- a) In the Population Census (2001) majority of disabled persons were found to be not literate – only 37% of disabled females and 58% of disabled males were reported to be literate. Only 3% were of level graduate and above and another 10% were of level secondary or higher secondary. Wide gap in literacy among disabled existed in the states from 37% in Bihar to 67% in Kerala with almost half of the states having majority of their disabled persons not literate. Among disabled children, 58% of age 6-10 years and 63% of age 11-14 years of were found to be attending schools, as against 69% and 75% respectively in the general population.
- b) NSSO survey estimated that about 55% of the persons having any disability were not literate, 25% were literate up to primary level, 11% completed middle level and another 9% were of secondary level and above. 58% of disabled in the rural and 39% of disabled in urban (age 7 years and above) were not literate, another 35% in rural and 43% in urban were literate but below secondary and only 7% rural disabled and 18% urban disabled persons were of educational level secondary and above. Among the major States, the highest percentage of illiterates among disabled persons was found in Bihar (66%), Orissa and Andhra Pradesh (64% in both the states). The proportion of not-literate persons among the disabled of age 5 years and above was least in Kerala (33%).

The proportion of disabled children currently enrolled was found to be low (less than 50%) in general, and among mentally disabled and blind children in particular in both rural and urban sector. Proportion of disabled females (age 5-18 years) enrolled in either ordinary or special schools were invariably lower than that of their male counterpart. Regarding reason for non-enrolment in special school, 32% identified disability itself as the main reason, another 15% were not aware of special schools and for another 14% parents were not interested.

#### **2.4 Employment of the Disabled Persons:**

- a) In Population Census (2001) more than a-third (36%) of disabled males and more than two-third (68%) of disabled females of age 15 to 59 years were found to be non-workers (not economically active) vis-a-vis only 19% of males and 60% of females as non-workers among general population. Majority of persons with speech or movement disability and almost three-fourth of persons with mental deficiencies were non-workers. On the whole 55% of disabled males were main workers, 9% marginal workers and 36% non-workers. Among disabled females the respective percentages were 19% main worker, 13% marginal worker and remaining 68% non-workers. Out of the total disabled non-workers, about 50% of the non-workers were dependent, more than 20% were students, about 14% were engaged in household duties, 2% were pensioners, 1% of them were beggars, vagrants, etc and 5% were categorized as others.
- b) The NSSO Survey (2002) estimated only 25% of the disabled population as employed, 1% were unemployed and the rest were out of labour force. Among males, 36% were found to be employed while among females only 10% were employed and 89% were out of labour force. More than 90% of the disabled persons with mental retardation or blindness, 85% of persons with mental illness and about 80% of persons with low vision were out of labour force. Nearly 70% of the persons with speech or locomotor disability and about 65% of the persons with hearing disability were also out of labour force.

Out of the persons employed, about 13% were self-employed in agriculture, 10% were casual labourers, 5% were self-employed in non-agricultural activities and only 4% (5% for locomotor disability, 3% in case of speech disability and less than 1% for the other types of disability) were regular employees. Among the disabled persons who were out of labour force, 15% attended domestic duties and 5% attended educational institution. In general, nearly 55% of the disabled males working were involved in the primary sector, 17% in secondary sector and 28% in the tertiary sector. Out of the total disabled females, more than 60% were involved in the primary sector, 16% in the secondary sector and 22% in the tertiary sector.

#### **2.5 Marital Status of the Disabled Persons:**

- a) Population Census (2001) found out only 1% of the total disabled persons/males/females were married at age below 15 years. In the age-group 15-59 years, about 34% of the total disabled persons were reported to be never married, 60% were married, 5% were widowed and 1% were divorced or separated. About 50% of persons with disability in speech, mental

(most prominent) and movement were never married even after age 15. But in case of disability in seeing and hearing, majority of age 15-59 years were married.

- b) In NSS Survey, among the disabled males of all age, 47% were reported to be never married, 45% were married, 7% were widowed and 1% got divorced or separated. Among the disabled females, 39% were never married, 31% were married, 28% were widowed and 2% got divorced or separated. More than 90% of the persons with mental retardation never got married. More than 70% of the males faced with speech disability and nearly 70% of the females having disability in hearing were not married. Even in the marriageable age category (15 years and above), almost a-third of disabled males and 22% disabled females remained unmarried.

More than 90% of the disabled persons were not living alone, about 5% were living with their spouse and only 3% were living alone.

## 2.6 Extent of Disability:

This information was collected in NSS Survey where it was found that in the year 2002, of the PWD about 60% could take self-care without aid/appliance and another 17% could take self-care only with aid/appliance and 9% had not tried or aid/appliance or those were not available to them. But 13% of the disabled persons could not take self-care even with the help of aid/appliance.

## 2.7 Cause of Disability and Age at Onset:

Again in the NSS surveys only detail information on cause of disability, age at onset of disability etc. were collected and tabulated separately for each type of disability. In more than 50% cases, **mental retardation** has been reported to be caused by serious illness or head injury in the childhood. More than 85% of the persons with mental retardation were disabled since birth. The proportion was still higher in the rural areas (90%) as compared to the urban areas (about 70%) and again more for females (90%) than for males (85%). More than 85% of the mentally retarded persons showed a delay in the development of the combination of sitting, walking and talking. **Mental illness** is more of an old age problem. For nearly 40% cases, the age at onset was 45-49 years and more than 30% acquired mental illness after the age of 60 years

Out of the total **visually disabled persons**, more than 70% were blind (of which 35% had no light perception and more than 35% had light perception but could not count fingers from a distance of 1meter) and nearly 30% suffered from low vision. More than 60% of the persons with blindness and about 70% of persons with low vision acquired disability due to the following three reasons - old age, cataract and other eye diseases. Again, more than two-third of persons with blindness and more than 70% of persons with low vision acquired the disability after the age of 60 years.

Among the persons with **hearing disability**, in more than 30% cases the disability was reported to be profound, another 40% had severe disability, and only 30% had moderate hearing disability. The three major reasons for hearing disability was old age, other illnesses and

ear discharge. Nearly 60% of the persons with hearing disability acquired the disability after the age of 60 years and about 25% acquired it in the age-group 45-49 years.

Nearly 50% of the persons with **speech disability** could not speak and nearly 20% of the speech disabled spoke only in single words. Paralysis, mental illness or retardation and voice disorders were reported, among other common causes, as major causes of speech disability. For more than a-third of the speech disabled persons, the age at onset was after 60 years, about 20% acquired disability in the age-group 45-49 years and more than 35% of speech disabled persons were disabled since birth.

About 45% of the **locomotor disability** was attributed to deformity of limb, more than 20% to dysfunction of joints of limb, another 15% to paralysis, 10% to any other deformity of body and 8% to loss of limbs. Polio and injury other than burns were the two major causes of locomotor disability contributing more than 50% of cases. More than 50% of the persons with locomotor disability acquired it after the age of 60 years, 28% in the age-group 45-49 years and only 5% were disabled since birth. About a third of the persons with locomotor disability used crutches, 11% used callipers, nearly 8% acquired support from wheelchair or artificial limbs, 6% used tricycle, 5% had splint and only 1% had spinal brace.

### **2.7 Level of Living and Type of Assistances Received by the Disabled Persons:**

In the NSSO Survey information was collected on the average monthly consumer expenditure of the households reporting one or more cases of disability. In both rural and urban areas, about 25% of the households belonging to the lowest MPCE class reported disability although less than 3% of general households belonged to this poorest class. More than 50% of households reporting one or more disabled members were below poverty line in both rural and the urban sector. These households were put into disadvantage in respect of both disability and poor level of living. Also the proportion of households reporting disability decreased steadily as one moves up along the higher MPCE classes.

In general, about 12% of the disabled persons of age 5 years and above had received some govt. aid or help. The disabled in the urban areas had a higher RGAH (received any Govt. aid/ help) rate as compared to the rural. Out of the total percentage of disabled persons receiving aid from govt., more than 20% received help for aid/ appliance, nearly 10% obtained help for education and 5% for corrective surgery (more so in urban areas). The distribution of disabled males and females receiving any aid or help was nearly the same. Among the different types of disability, a higher proportion of persons with blindness (16%) and locomotor disability (13%) received any govt. aid or help, followed by low vision and speech disability (about 10% each), and finally mental and hearing disability (nearly 5%).