DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CITY OF JOBURG

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Contents

- Background and Context
- Demographic profile of PwD in SA
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability in SA, by gender 2012–2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability by gender and province, 2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability by access to medical aid, by race, 2019
- Demographic profile of PwD in Joburg
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability in Joburg by gender, 2015–2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability by race and age, 2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years with some form of disability, 2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability with access to medical aid by race, 2019
  - Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability receiving social grants, 2018
  - Level of education by individuals aged 15-64 with disability, 2019
  - Mode of transport PwD use to get to work, 2019
  - Individuals with disability who own a mobile telephone, 2015-2018
- Summary

Data source: StatsSA’s General Household Survey (GHS), various years unless specified otherwise
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

• The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) 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. This is similar to the Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) definition of disability which classifies PwDs as those who have a physical or mental handicap that has lasted for six months or more, or is expected to last at least six months, and which prevents the person from carrying out daily activities independently or from participating fully in educational, economic or social activities.

• Disabilities can be mental, physical or impairment of the senses (hearing, seeing, walking, smelling, touching). The disability can be the result of a defect at birth, a chronic illness or an accident.

• In South Africa, official disability data is collected by StatsSA from individuals aged 5 years and older as children below the age of five years may often be mistakenly categorized as being unable to walk, remember, communicate or care for themselves when it may be due to their level of development rather than any innate disabilities they might have.

• There is a serious lack of reliable information on the nature and prevalence of disability in South Africa. Furthermore, negative innuendos and stereotypes act as barriers to understanding the reality of PwDs. Building a body of accurate data on PwDs will thus help the City of Joburg to respond to and support evidence-based policy making adequately.

• The City is currently in the process of finalizing its policy for PwD which seeks to address the needs and challenges of PwDs.
There are currently 3.5 million PwD in SA, making up 6.6% of the total population.

The proportion of PwD as a % of the total SA population has been fluctuating over the past 8 years with 5.1% of the population classified as disabled in 2015, down to 4.2% in 2017.

Disability in SA is more prevalent among females compared to males. This has been relatively consistent over time.

In 2019, 79.7% of PwD in SA were Black, followed by Whites (9.1%), Coloureds (8.5%) and lastly, Indians (2.6%).

The majority of PwD do not receive permanent financial support from government. As of March 2021, only 946 000 PwD received permanent disability grants from South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).
In 2019, 6.6% of South Africans aged 5 years and older were classified as disabled:

- Higher prevalence in the Northern Cape (12.8%), Eastern Cape (8.8%), Free State (8.7%), North-West (8.4%), & Limpopo (7.6%).
- There is a lower prevalence of PwD in the Western Cape (4.7%) & Gauteng (5%) as these provinces have a large youthful population.
- Older populations are more likely to have a higher prevalence of disability.
In 2019, only 14% of PwD in the country were covered by a medical aid or any form of private health insurance.

Although White people only make up 9% of the total disabled population, they are the biggest contributors to medical aid schemes. In 2019, 68% of Whites living with a disability had access to medical aid compared with only 7% of their Black counterparts.
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PWD IN JOBURG

Individuals aged 5 years and older with disability in Joburg by gender, 2015-2019

- PwD make up 5% of the total CoJ population.
- On average, there are more females with disabilities than males in Johannesburg. This mirrors the SA picture.
- The number of males with disabilities has however increased in the last five years. In 2019, 46% of PwD in Joburg were males vs 40% in 2015
- In 2015, 60% of PwD in Joburg were female compared to 54% in 2019.
The majority of PwD in Joburg are: **Africans (74%)**; between the ages of **5 and 9 years (30%)** and those over the age of **75 years (16.1%)**.

- Only 1% of PwD are between the ages of **25-29 years**.
- In 2019, **Whites** made up 18% of PwD in Joburg followed by **Coloureds (5%)** and **Indians (2%)**.
In the GHS, disabilities are classified as follows:

- a = Seeing (even with glasses if an individual wears them)
- b = Hearing (even with a hearing aid, if an individual wears one)
- c = Walking a kilometer or climbing a flight of steps
- d = Remembering and concentrating
- e = With self-care, such as washing or dressing
- f = In communicating in own usual language including sign language (understanding others and being understood by others)

Based on the above classification:

- In 2019, most people in Joburg had difficulty seeing (7%)
- 3% of people in Joburg had difficulty with either walking, looking after themselves or remembering or concentrating
- 2% had difficulty hearing or communicating
Although White people only make up 18% of the disabled population in Joburg, the majority have access to medical aid (87%).

Interestingly, Indians who make up only 2% of PwD in the city have higher medical aid coverage (79%) compared to their Black counterparts who make up the majority of PwD in Joburg.
As is the case in SA, the majority of PwD in Joburg do not receive permanent financial support from SASSA.

In 2018, only 4% of PwD received disability grants, while 38% of PwD did not receive any disability grant.
In 2019, 24% of PwD in Joburg have completed matric and 20% had a qualification from a higher education institution. 46% had not completed secondary education, with 19% of them having not completed Primary school in 2019.
A large percentage of PwD use their own private vehicles or company cars to go to work (30%), followed by those that walk or use taxi’s i.e., 24% and 22% respectively.

A very small percentage of the disabled population rely on buses (4%) and trains (3%) to get to work.
The number of PwD that have access to mobile telephones has been decreasing since 2015.

In 2018, 47% of PwD in Joburg owned mobile phones, down from 57% in 2015.

The City is constantly looking at ways to better connect and engage with all its residents through various online/social media platforms, therefore access to mobile telephones is essential. The data shows that there is quite a large number of PwDs in Joburg who do not own a mobile telephone (49% in 2018).
SUMMARY

Key to addressing the needs and challenges of PwDs is having access to reliable data and information on PwD. This statistical brief collated data on PwD from the GHS aimed at understanding the demographic profile of this vulnerable group. Below are some of the high-level findings:

- PwDs made up 6.6% of the South African population and 5% of the Joburg population in 2019.
- On average, there are more females with disabilities than males in both Joburg and in SA.
- The majority of PwDs do not receive any form of social assistance from government.
- PwD usually require specialized care for their specific type of disability and may have additional medical conditions that require attention. Thus, the ability for PwD to have access to reliable and affordable health care is imperative. In SA, having medical insurance is key to accessing quality healthcare services, however, the majority of PwD are not members of any medical aid scheme.
- Only 20% of PwDs in Joburg have a tertiary qualification. The high level of functional illiteracy amongst adults with disabilities is a direct result of the lack of educational opportunities for children with disabilities (https://www.independentliving.org/docs5/SANatlDisStrat1.html)
- Very few PwDs in Joburg rely on public buses (4%) and trains (3%) to get to their place of work. The majority use their own private vehicles or company cars (30%). The City therefore needs to find better ways to make public transport more accessible and user friendly for PwD.
- Given that universal access is not yet a common feature of all City facilities and a large number of PwDs in Joburg do not own a mobile telephone, the City should explore innovative measures to connect with and support our PwD citizens to ensure no one is left behind.