

Trends of Disability Prevalence Rates of Korea

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1. Introduction

In adopting the spirit of the International Year of Disabled Persons(IYDP), the Korea Government promulgated the Welfare Law for Disabled Persons in 1981. Based on the Law, the Government established Division of Rehabilitation under the Ministry of Health and Welfare to promote effective measures for prevention of disability, rehabilitation and realization of the goals of equality and full participation of disabled persons in social life.

Since the Government recognized the importance of disability statistics, national survey on disabled persons were conducted every 5 years since 1980. Actually, the purpose of the first round of national survey conducted in 1980 was to find salient features of the disabled persons and to provide basic data for the enactment of the Welfare for the Disabled Persons Act. Since then, the national survey was conducted every 5 years to provide basic information to policy planning, monitoring, analysis and research, and evaluation of the policy.

In this paper, an attempt was made to evaluate the current situation of the national survey on disabled persons of Korea. Some statistics on disability rates was also discussed.

2. Issues and Approaches in the Collection and Analysis of Disability Statistics

1) Definitions of disability

The term disabled persons in Korea, which defined article 2 of the Welfare for the Disabled Persons Act amended in 1999, describes that any person unable to ensure by him/herself the necessities of a normal individual and/or social life as a result of physical or mental capabilities. Therefore, this definition focuses on the idea that a disabled person has some difficulty in activities in daily life and social life. However, there is some critics in Korea that definition of disability is more focus on physical abnormalities in real world in Korea.

2) General Features for the 2000 National Survey on the Disabled Persons

Based on the Article 14 and Article 15 of the Welfare for the Disable Persons Act, the National Survey on the Disabled persons were conducted every five years since 1980. The 2000 round of survey was the fifth survey which was conducted for the identification of the information on the number of disabled persons, their socio-economic characteristics, and needs for the welfare services to formulate and implement short- and long-term plan for the disabled persons.

There are three kinds of questionnaires in the survey were employed; such as questionnaires for household and screening disability, for the disabled persons living in community, and for the disabled persons living in institutions.

For the questionnaire for the household and screening disability, general information was gathered; for example, number of household members, relationship to household head, age, sex, level of educational attainment, marital status, occupation, monthly income, etc.

3) Survey Method

The 2000 National Survey on Disabled Persons adopted household interview survey technique with structured questionnaire and conducted by employing 60 trained interviewers and 20 supervisors. This is because that household surveys are the most effective and least costly way of collecting relatively detailed information not just on disabled person's own characteristics but also on the household and socio-economic circumstances.

The sample size of the survey was about 44,000 households in 200 survey enumeration areas where about 220 households in each area were interviewed to have national representative results. The 200 areas were sampled with stratified systematic cluster sampling technique, based on the 1995 population and housing census enumeration districts, where the census was conducted every five years by National Statistical Office,

The number of households completed were 39,411 from 44,128 households visited and the completion rate is 89.3 percent. The total number of persons interviewed in surveyed household was 123,721. Out of them, 4,125 persons were identified as disabled. Since the stratified systematic cluster sampling was employed, a weight was given to estimate the number of disabled persons in Korea.

Table 1. Sample Size of the National Surveys by Survey Year

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Household					
Whole Nation(A)	9,969,201	9,671,361	11,354,540	12,745,280	14,677,637
Sample(B)	29,300	31,905	45,512	39,078	39,411
B/A(%)	0.37	0.33	0.40	0.31	0.27
Individuals					
Whole Nation(C)	37,406,815	40,419,652	43,390,374	44,850,801	46,853,554
Sample(D)	136,595	130,360	163,522	130,556	123,721
D/C(%)	0.36	0.32	0.38	0.29	0.26

3. Disability Statistics

1) Disability Statistics

According to the sample survey conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs(KIHASA) in 2000, the total number of persons with disabilities in Korea was estimated at 1,449,000 with an appearance rate of 30.9 per 1,000 persons.

Table 2. Disability Rates by Age, 1995 and 2000

(Unit: %)

Age/Year	1995	2000
Total	2.37	3.09
-9	0.27	0.60
10-19	0.54	0.89
20-29	1.07	1.37
30-39	1.50	2.26
40-49	2.52	3.39
50-59	4.31	5.25
60-69	7.98	8.46

70+	16.13	12.61
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The number of persons with disabilities by each disability type is as follows; physical disability(41.8%), Brain disorder (15.4%), Vision disorder(12.6%), etc.

Table 3. The number of Disabled Persons by Type

Disability Type	Number(' 000)	Percentage
Total	1,449	100.0
Physical Disability	605	41.8
Brain Disorder	223	15.4
Vision Disorder	182	12.6
Hearing Disorder	149	10.3
Speech Disorder	27	1.9
Mental Retardation	109	7.5
Autism	13	0.9
Mental Disorder	72	5.0
Kidney Disorder	25	1.7
Heart Disorder	44	3.0

4. Conclusion

The national survey on disabled persons in Korea was conducted every 5 years based on the Welfare of the Disabled Persons Act to provide basic data to formulate policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the programmes for the disabled persons in Korea.

Though the survey itself can be generally accepted as a sole source to meet these objectives in Korea, it can be improved by increasing the sample size, employing the medical personnel during the interview process, and changing the year of the survey.

Finally, to exchange the information across the countries on survey methods, definition of disability, and other welfare services should be very useful to comparative analysis among countries and can also contribute to improve the quality of life of disabled persons in the region. International effort should be strengthened.

RESUME

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