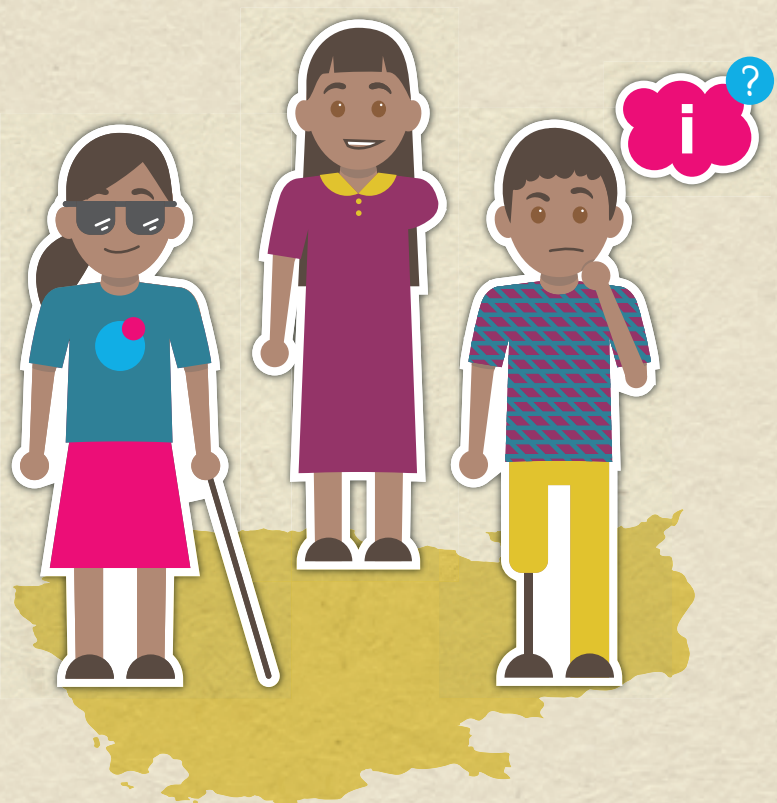


information matters!

How people with disabilities access information in Cambodia



information matters!



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Introduction

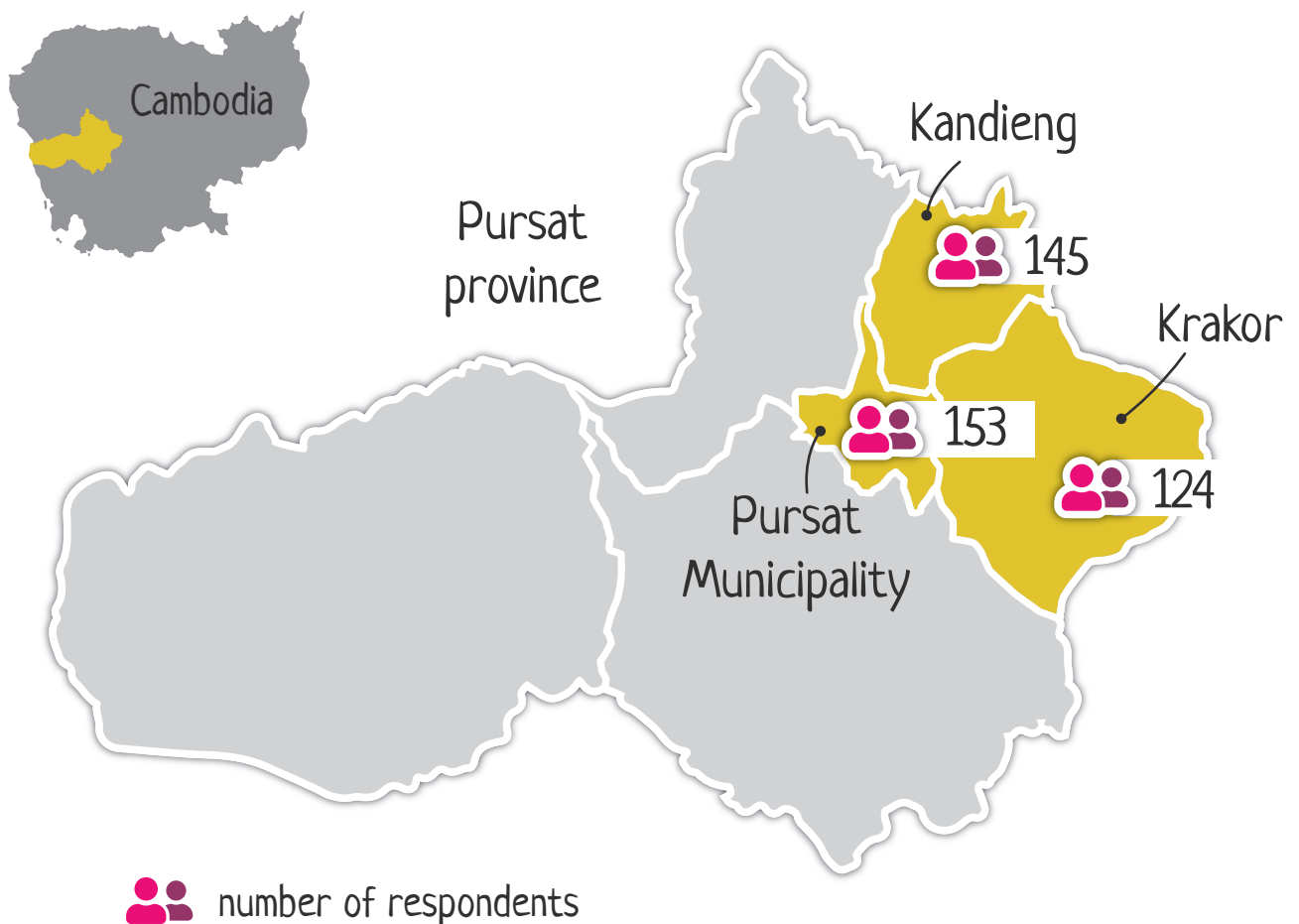
In Cambodia, there are different ways for citizens to gain information on activities and events happening in their community and to provide their opinion. In 2018, we published a study called Communication Matters. This study confirmed that people with disabilities are often not able to engage with local authorities and inform them about their needs.

We wanted to learn more. How are people with disabilities getting information? What works and does not work for them to get the information they need? Knowing this will help us understand what needs to be done to improve access to information for people with disabilities. This is important as people with disabilities have the right to access information, and will be able to better participate in society if they have the information they need.

Why and how did the study take place?

We did this study to understand how people with disabilities are getting information, and how this helps them to participate in their community. This study took place in the province of Pursat in late 2018 and early 2019. Pursat is a poor province in the north-western part of Cambodia. The province has 6 districts, 49 communes and 505 villages¹. The first study took place in the districts of Bakan, Veal Veng and Krorvanh.

This study took place in 121 villages in the districts of Kandieng, Krakor and Pursat Municipality. We tried to interview the same number of people in each district.



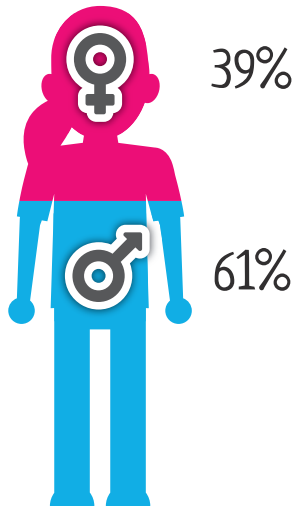
¹ As of 2020, the Royal Government of Cambodia has expanded the province to 7 districts and 511 villages.

Number of respondents



The study included 422 respondents, of which 166 women and 256 men.

Division by sex



Type of Disability

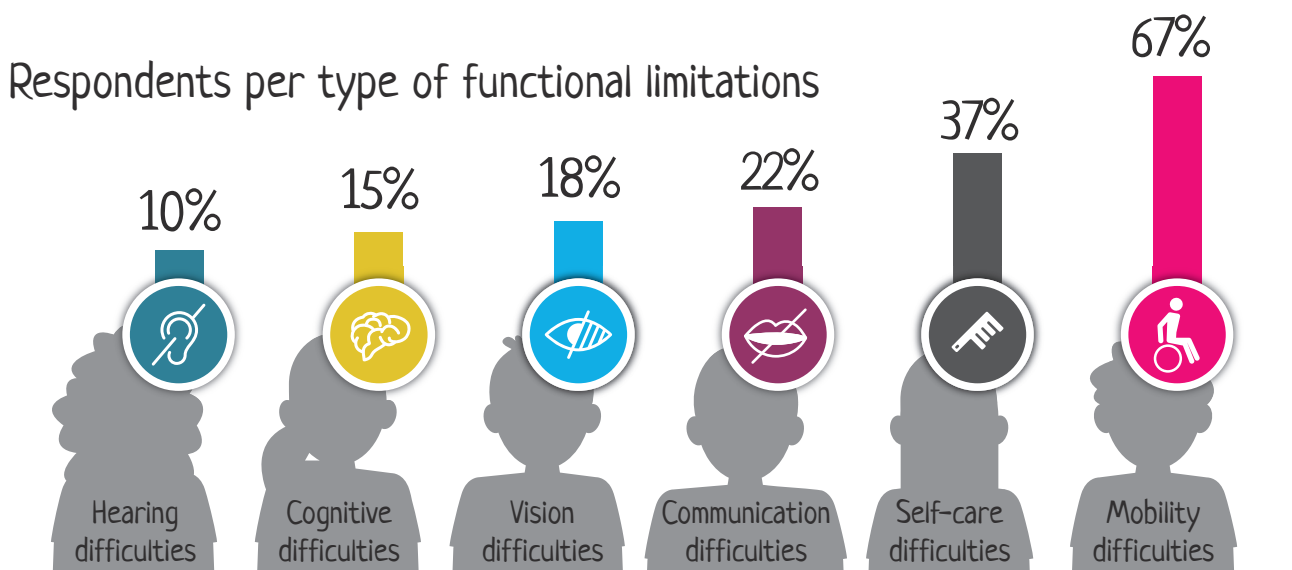
To measure disability, we used the Washington Group Short Set of questions². Respondents were asked whether they have difficulty doing a certain activity, such as seeing or hearing.

The questions were:

1. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?
2. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?
4. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
5. Do you have difficulty with self-care such as washing all over or dressing?
6. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?

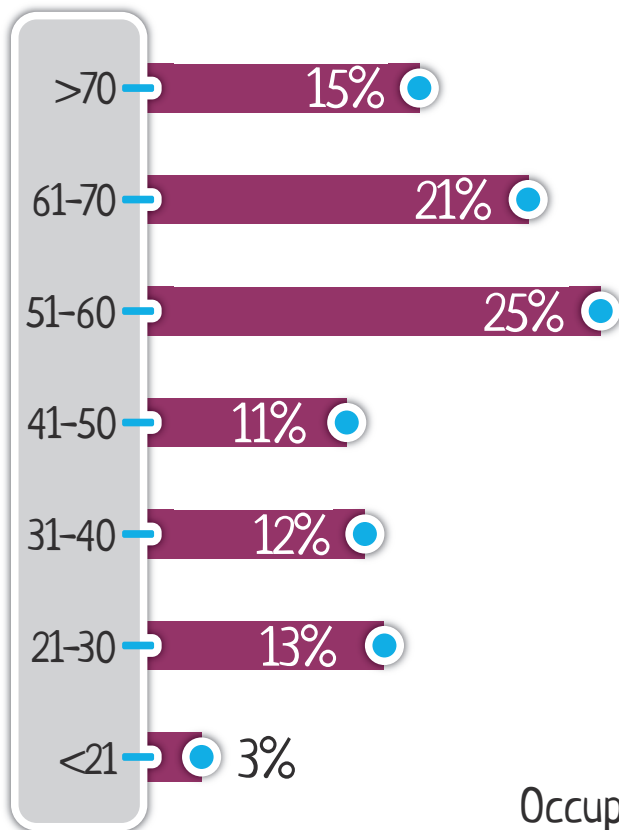
All people who said they had a lot of difficulty doing the activity, or could not do it at all, were counted as disabled for that category. They could have difficulty in more than one category (for example cannot hear at all and has a lot of difficulty communicating.)

Respondents per type of functional limitations

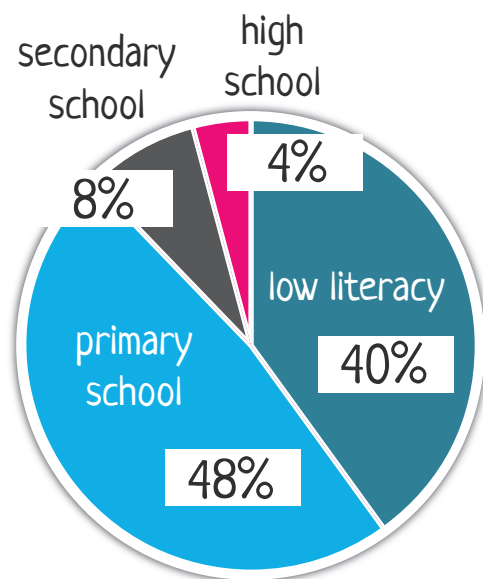


² The Washington Group Short Set focuses on functional limitations (that is, whether someone has difficulty doing an activity) rather than whether someone identifies themselves as a person with a disability. Respondents can choose of four options when answering the questions: No Difficulty, Some Difficulty, A lot of Difficulties, or Cannot Do At All.

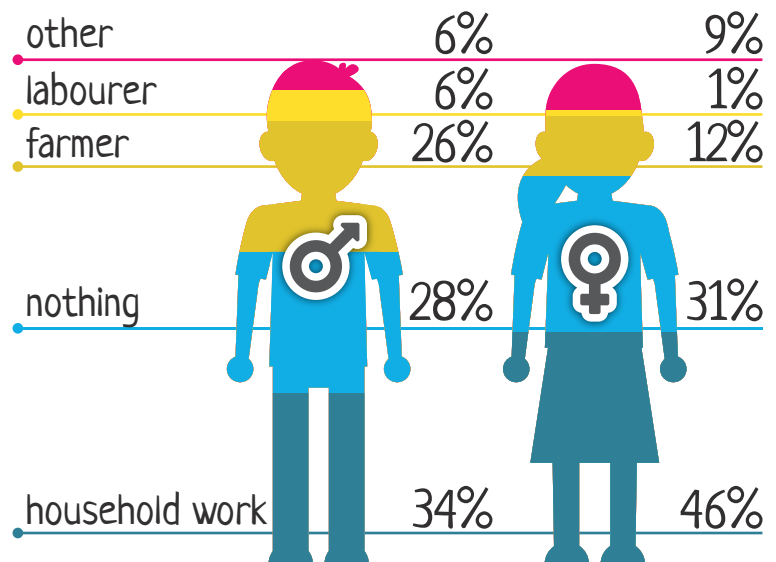
Age range



Level of education/literacy



Occupation



How did we find all these persons with disabilities?

Respondents were identified by asking the village chief, commune chief and other villagers about where people with disabilities lived in the community. People with disabilities were then interviewed at home.

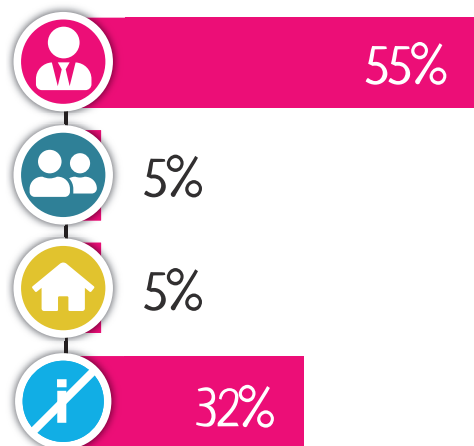
How do people with disabilities usually get information...

This section looks at how people with disabilities get information about different topics.

We were interested in understanding how people with disabilities were informed about different activities happening in their community. We asked them how they usually get information on meetings, elections, health, entertainment, official meetings, emergencies, employment, disability and human rights.

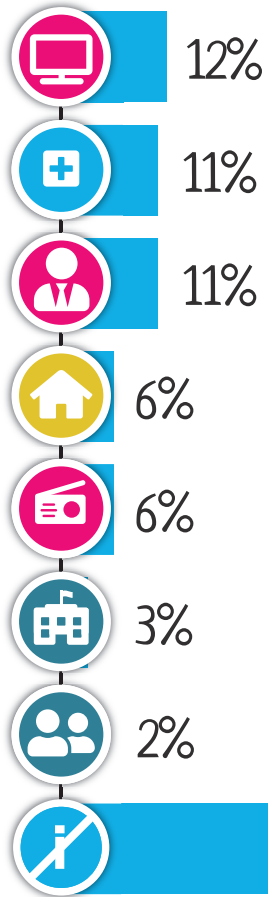
In many cases, people with disabilities stated that they do not get information on these topics. Local authorities are regarded as the key figures to provide information. The village signboard, announcements via loudspeakers, or media such as Facebook or mobile phones were almost never mentioned as key sources of information.

Meetings

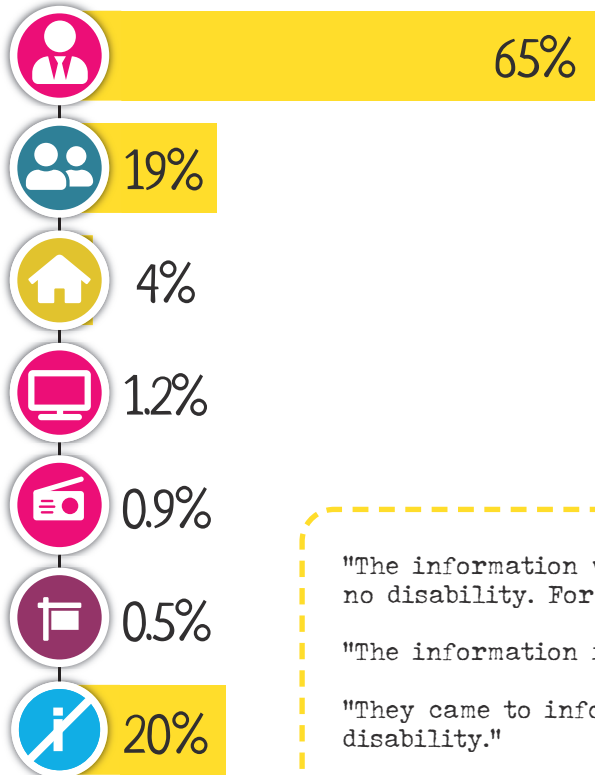


-  Family
-  Loudspeakers
-  TV
-  Village signboard
-  Mobile phone
-  Health Centre Staff
-  Radio
-  NGO
-  Community members
-  Facebook
-  Local authority
-  I never got information

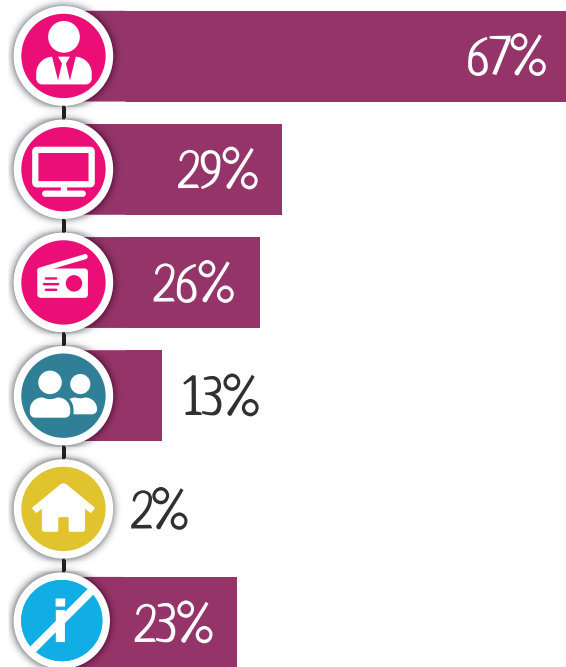
Health



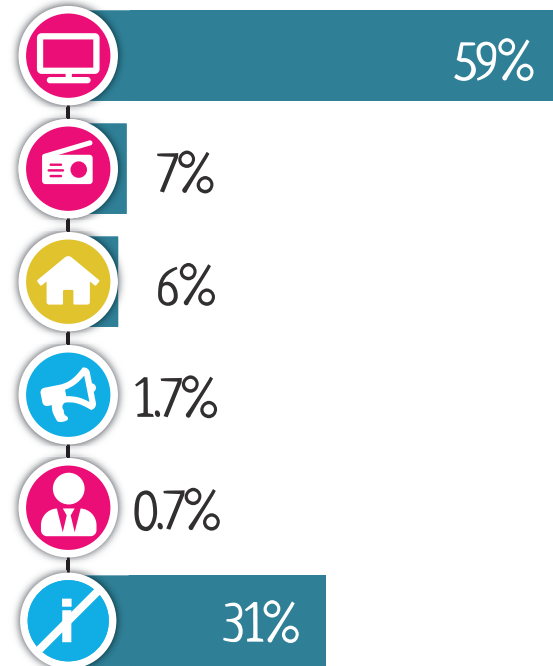
Official documents



Elections



Entertainment or Sports

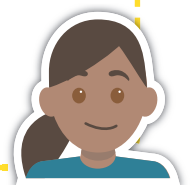


"The information was intended for members of the family with no disability. For people with a disability it is not relevant."

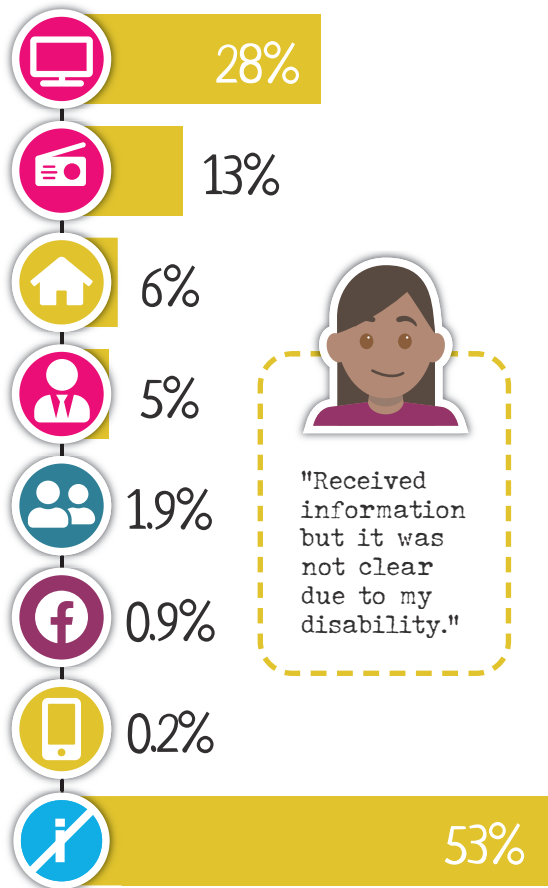
"The information is not relevant to people with disabilities."

"They came to inform members of the family with no disability."

"Police officers came to inform personally."

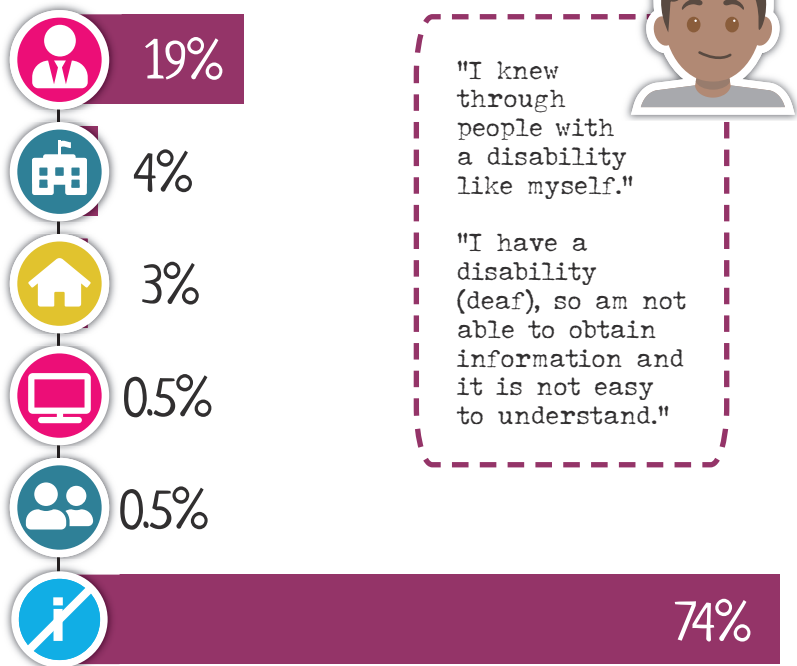


Emergencies and disasters



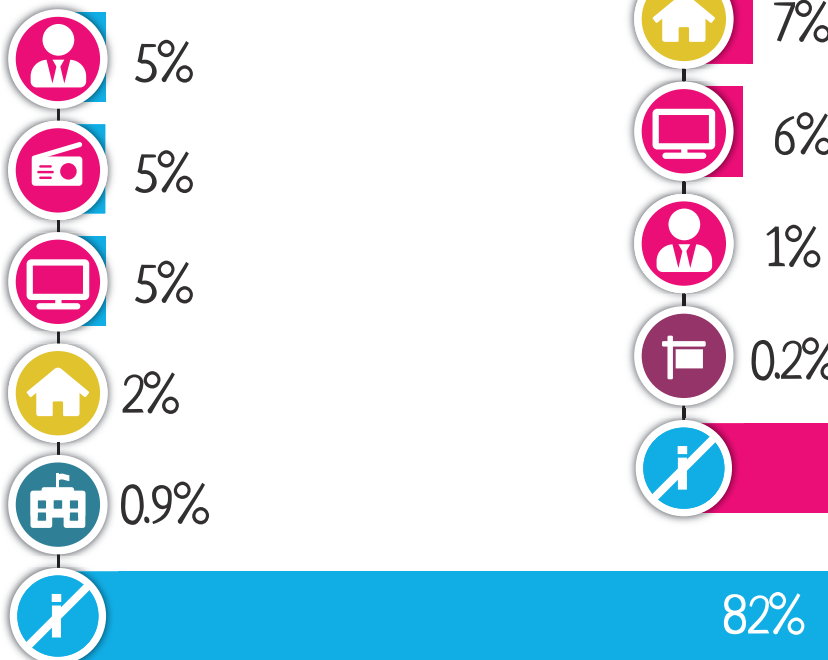
"Received information but it was not clear due to my disability."

Disability

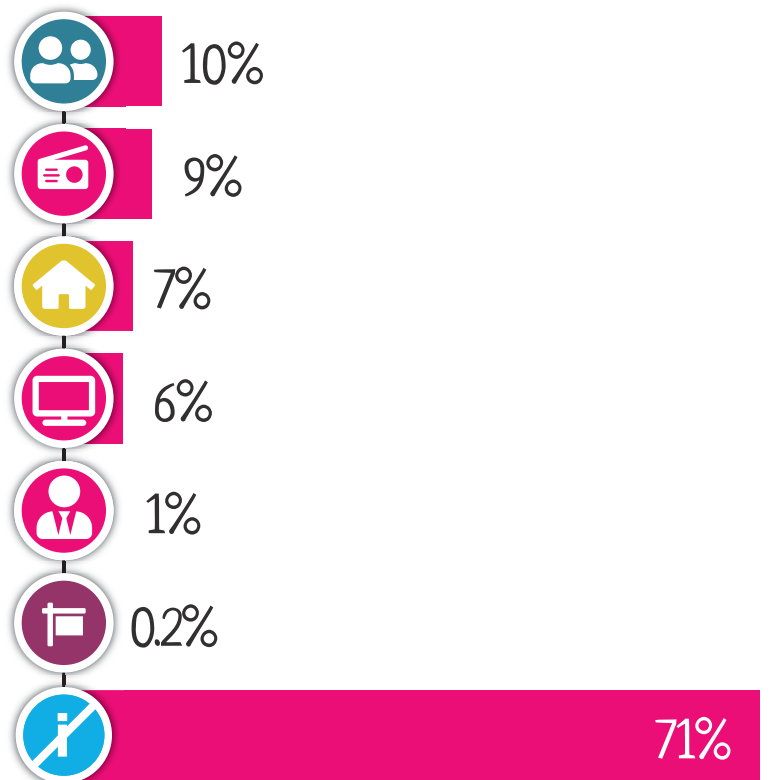


"I knew through people with a disability like myself."
 "I have a disability (deaf), so am not able to obtain information and it is not easy to understand."

Human rights



Employment



Why are certain sources of information useful?

This section looks at why some common sources of information are useful or not useful for people with disabilities.



easy way to access information

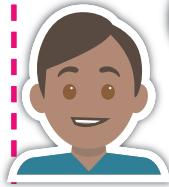


not suitable for my needs

We asked people with disabilities why certain information sources were useful or not useful ways for them to access information.

TV

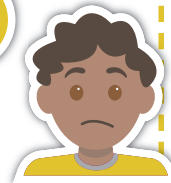
“The TV is available at home; broadcasts are clearly scheduled. The information is there upon demand. This is easy to access from home. TV is a clear source of information. I can watch it directly.”



“I don’t watch TV all the time or regularly, and therefore miss broadcasts. Sometimes I don’t know when to watch to get the information I need, or I come into the programme halfway. Sometimes the broadcast is too quick and I don’t catch all the relevant information. I see the information on TV but don’t always understand it. The information goes too fast. I am deaf so it is difficult to understand.”

Radio

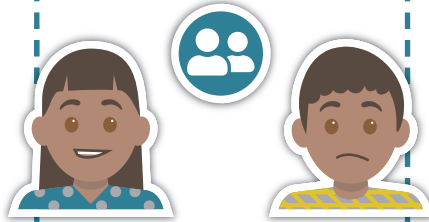
“The information is announced on the radio clearly. I have a radio at home and can thus access the information from home. It is easy because I can turn on the radio and listen by myself.”



“I don’t listen to the radio all the time and am thus not aware of all the information shared there. I could not hear it properly. The information is shared too fast, or I don’t understand it, and sometimes only broadcast once a day so easy to miss. Sometimes the airwaves aren’t clear.”

Family

“The information is not difficult because my mother/children/family member explained it to me. I was told what to do directly and could have a conversation with them. I know I can trust them.”



“My family doesn’t always know the information themselves. Members of family can only tell what they know, and what they know is not clear or reliable. It is difficult for my family members to communicate with me because I use sign language / have an intellectual impairment. The information is not certain because it is heard by word of mouth.”

Local Authorities

“I am personally invited, by phone or at home. The village chief comes at home to clearly inform us about time and place. He/she comes on time and confirms the information clearly. The chief provides precise instructions. The village chief came to inform using appropriate language or body language. Everything was explained to me personally in detail. The information was publicly announced.”



“Sometimes nobody comes to inform me at home. The information is sometimes incomplete, as they don’t tell all information. They only come to inform me once in a while. Information is given verbally, and sometimes they forget to tell information or it gets lost as it goes from person to person. I am not able to communicate with them because I am deaf/ intellectually disabled /blind and thus cannot see my informants. The village chief’s knowledge isn’t always very deep, for example their knowledge and understanding of disability is very limited so they find it difficult to inform me about services for people with disabilities.”

How could you get information in an easier way?

- The easy way is to share widely and more often, get the information ready two or three days beforehand with clear time and place, or having the invitation letter is the best.
- People with disabilities (deaf), they should get informed personally and using sign language.
- Come to inform verbally and not too rushed.
- Should prioritize people with disability to receive the information.
- The easy way to inform deaf people is to inform them through their parents who know sign language.
- Come to inform people with disability at home clearly about related information.

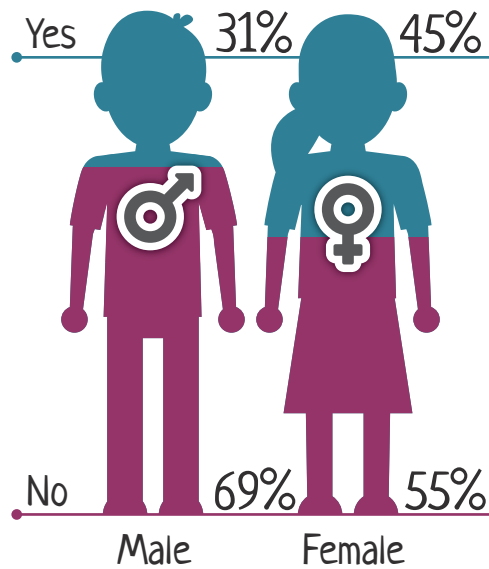


Accessing information shared by the government

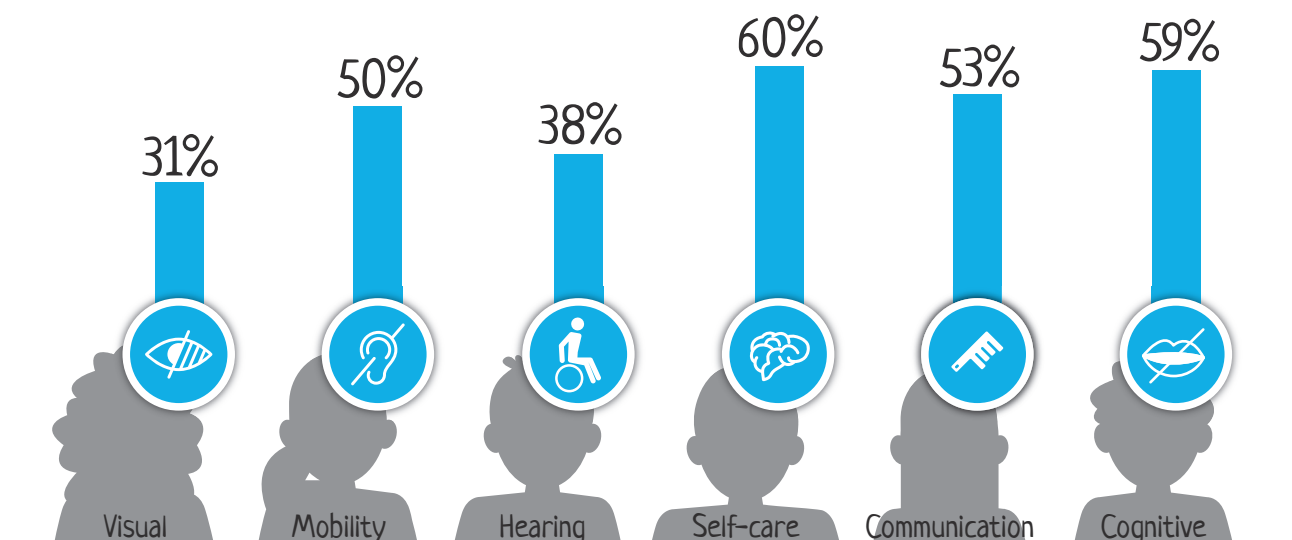
→ This section is about being able to get and understand information that is shared by the government.

Have you ever experienced any challenges to access information shared by the government?

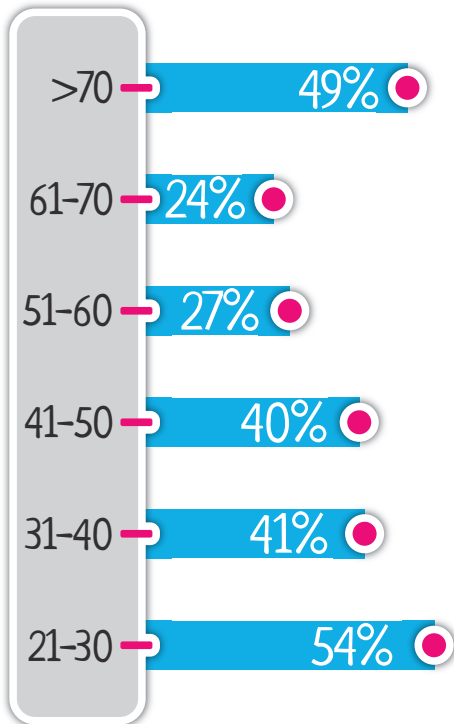
We asked people with disabilities whether they experienced any challenges in accessing government information. 154 of the 422 people with disabilities said, Yes they indeed experience challenges. Women experienced more difficulties than men. People with cognitive and communication difficulties experienced more challenges accessing information than people with visual and mobility difficulties. And very old and younger people also had more difficulties accessing information people than between 50 and 70 years old.



Challenges accessing information by disability



Challenges accessing information by age



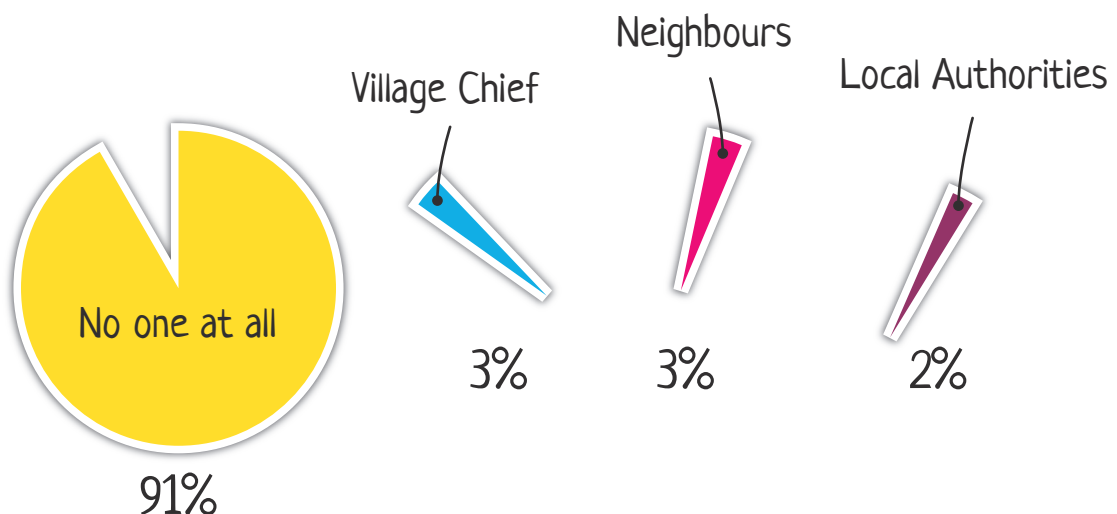
The respondents who said they had challenges accessing government information, were also asked *why* this was difficult for them.

Some of the answers include:

- Information provision by local authority was mostly made with people without disabilities.
- No information was provided to people with disabilities directly but mostly they communicate with family members instead.
- Mostly, information passing from one person to another, which is not clear.
- Sometimes, invitation for the meeting was made by verbally shouting from a distance, or through other people, so that it was difficult get the information.
- The information was communicated through others and the information was lost.
- Mostly, I was not invited because they think it would be difficult for people with a disability to travel.

Many people with disabilities said they had difficulties in accessing information shared by the government. In addition, those people that had difficulties also said that they would not address their issues with anyone.

Who would you approach to address these issues?



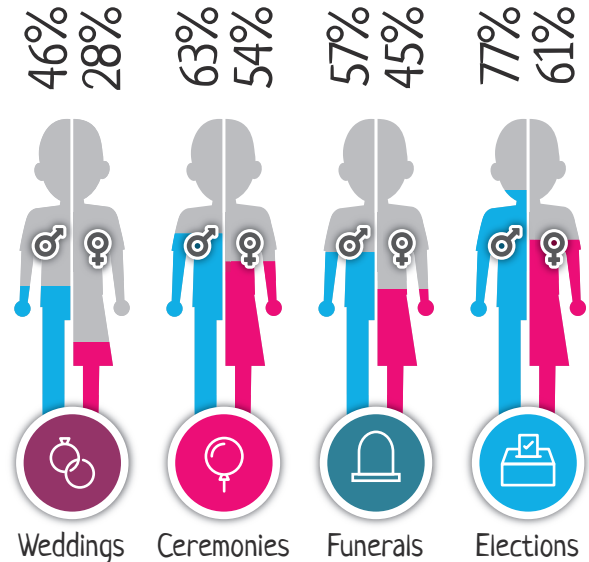
Participation in community events

This section is about whether people with disabilities are involved in activities and social life in their communities.

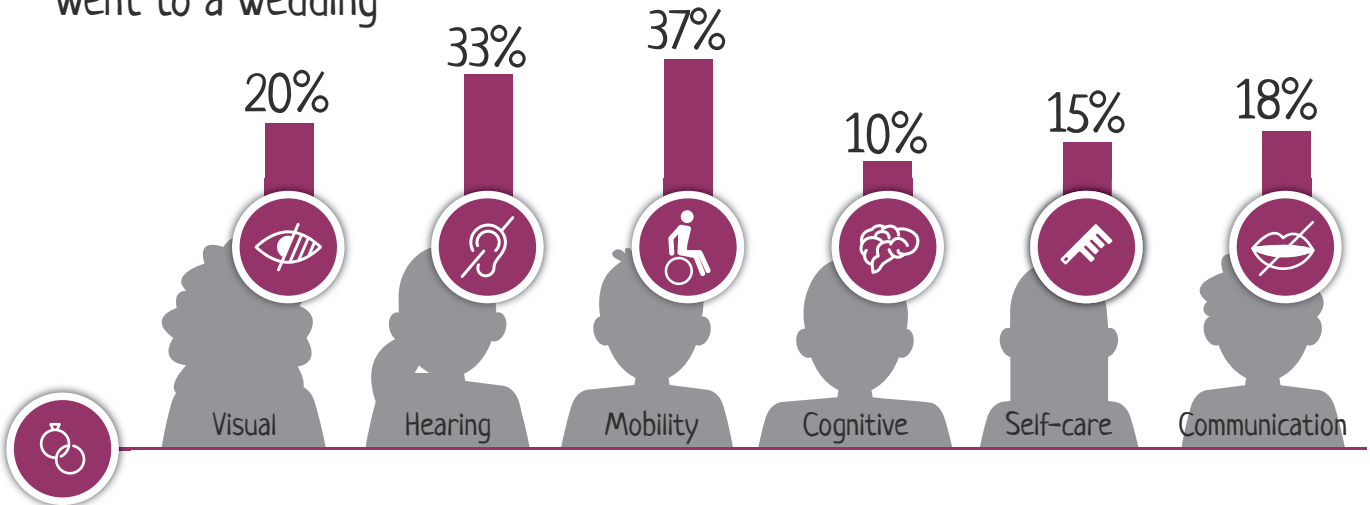
In which community events did people with disabilities participate in the past year?

Men with disabilities participated more than women with disabilities in community events such as weddings, ceremonies, funerals and elections.

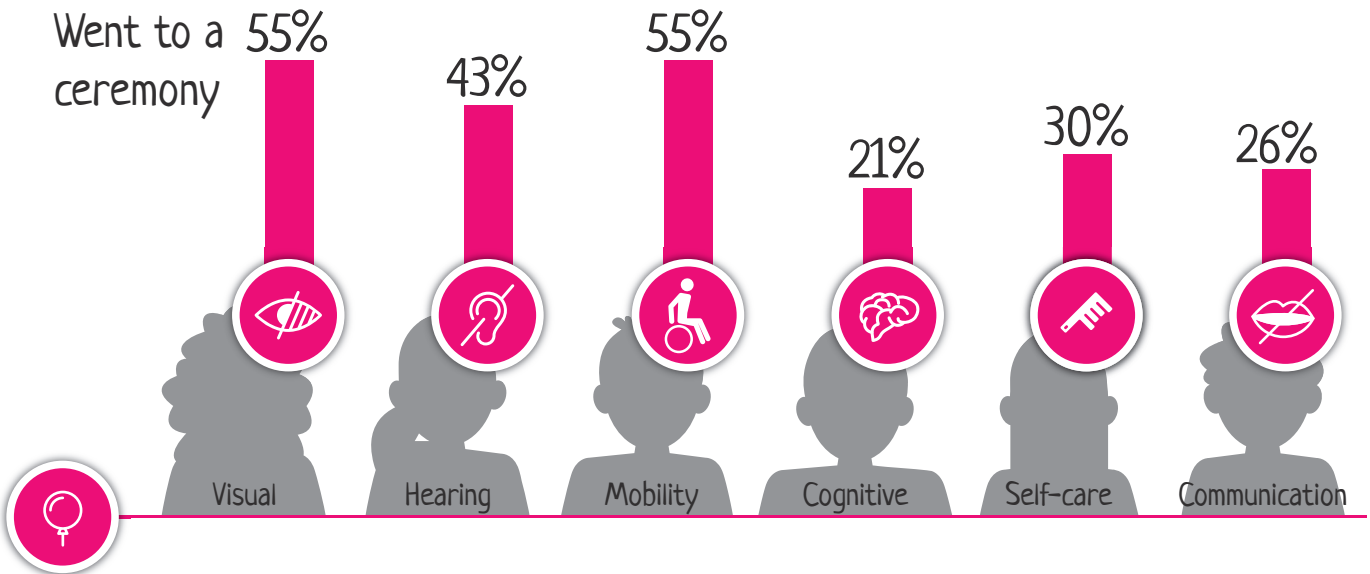
People with cognitive difficulties were the least likely to participate in community events. People with mobility or visual difficulties were more likely to participate compared to other people with disabilities.



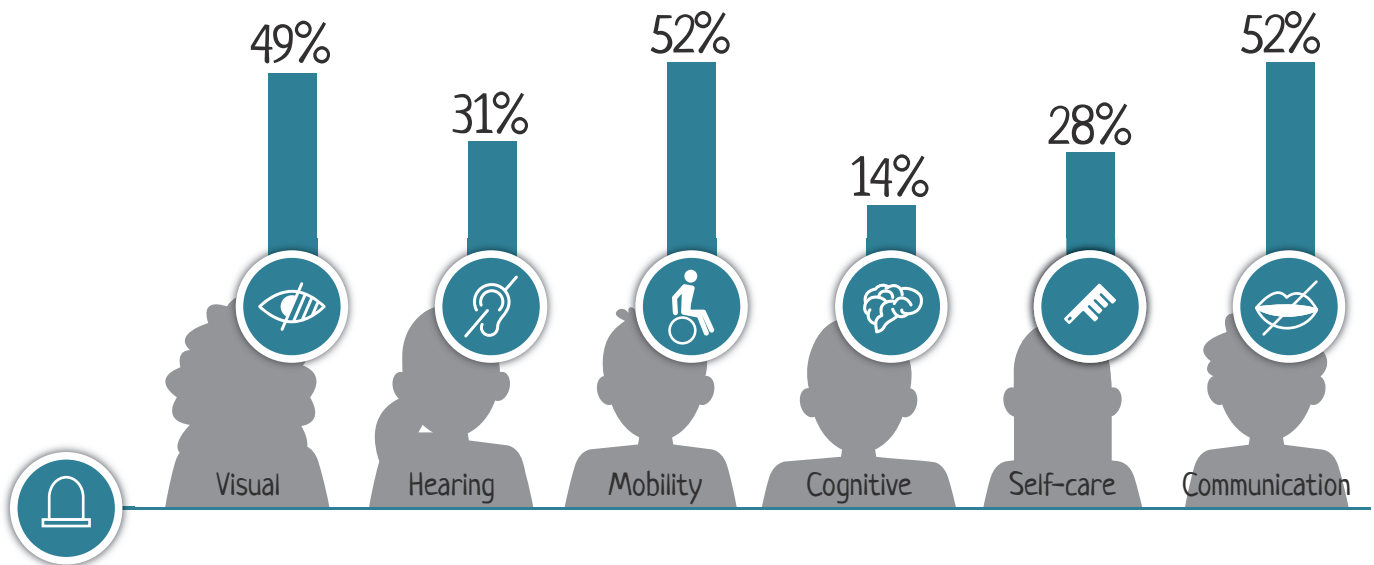
Went to a wedding



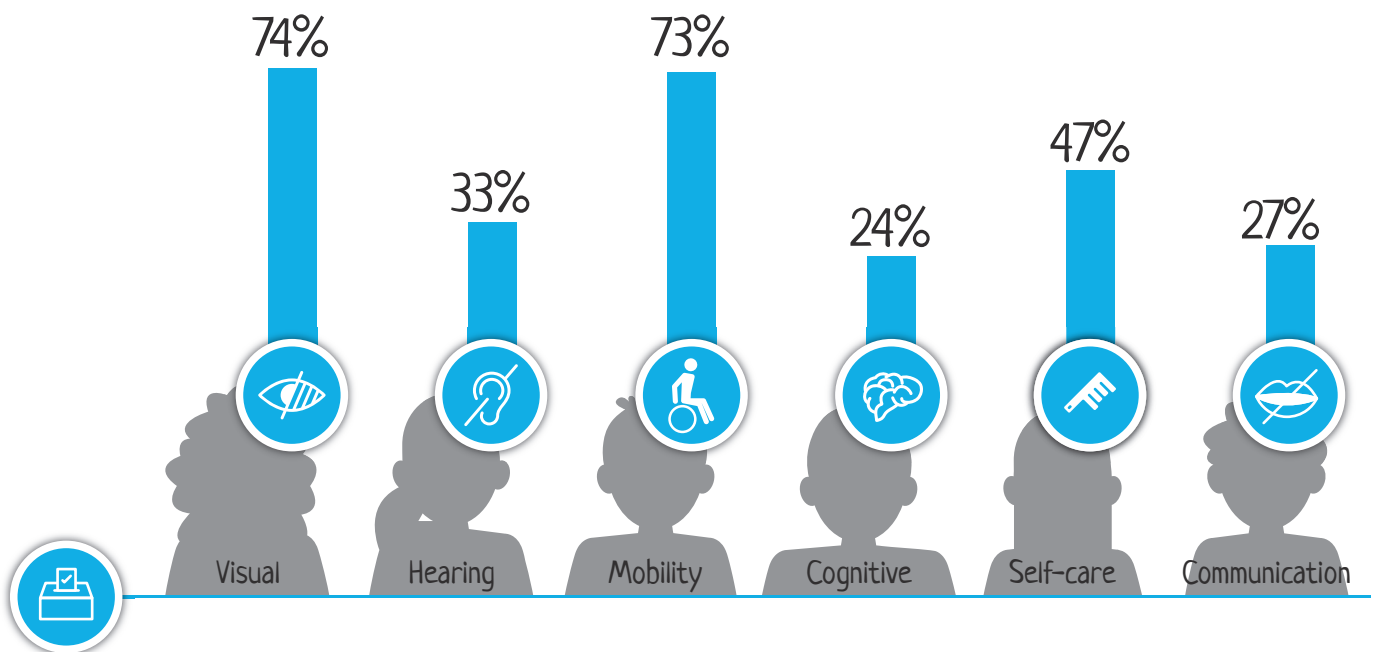
Went to a ceremony



Went to a funeral



Went to an election



3 out of 4 persons with mobility or visual difficulties participated in elections. But for persons with hearing, cognitive or communication difficulties this is only **1 out of 4!**

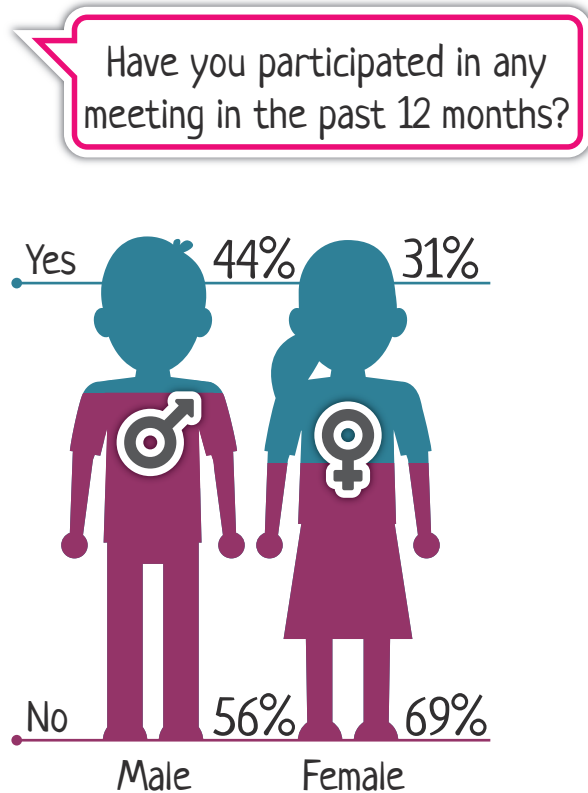
Participation in meetings



This section is about whether people with disabilities participate in meetings taking place in the community.

There are many meetings that take place in the community throughout the year. These can be commune meetings, where plans are discussed for community development, or meetings where new political leaders are elected. These meetings are for all people in the community, and are the spaces where citizens share about plans and challenges in their communities and make decisions about relevant development work in the community.

The majority of people with disabilities had not attended any community meeting in the past 12 months.



Meeting Venue

Did people with disabilities that attended a meeting have difficulty getting to or in the meeting venue? 3 out of 4 said Yes, because they had difficulty travelling to the meeting. Those that did not have any difficulty said it was because the meeting was near their house or because someone dropped them off.

Did you have difficulty getting to or in the meeting venue?

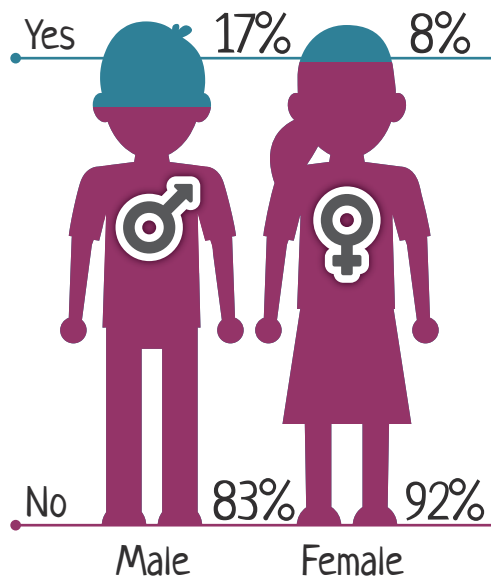


The majority of people who did not attend any meetings said they were not able to attend because of their disability. Other reasons given were:

'I wasn't invited because the organizers think it's hard to include people with disabilities in the meeting'

'I didn't receive the information (on time) so didn't know it was taking place'

Have you been included in a decision in a meeting?



In almost all cases people were informed about the meeting by the village chief: either directly or because details were shared at a previous meeting. Village chiefs are thus key players in ensuring access to information. It is crucial that they know who the people with disabilities are in their village, where they live, and how to reach out to them.

Even when people with disabilities did attend a meeting, most have not been involved in idea contribution and decision-making processes in the meeting.

Access to and ownership of official documents



This section is about whether people with disabilities own official documents.

Official documents, such as birth certificates, family books, land titles or ID Cards, are issued by the local authorities, and are needed in order for citizens to participate in public life. This study looked at whether there was a difference in document ownership for people with different types of disabilities.

ID Card

Almost all people with visual or mobility impairments have an ID Card. However, only one-third of people with cognitive difficulties have an ID.

20% of people with disabilities do not have an ID Card

Top reasons for not having an ID Card



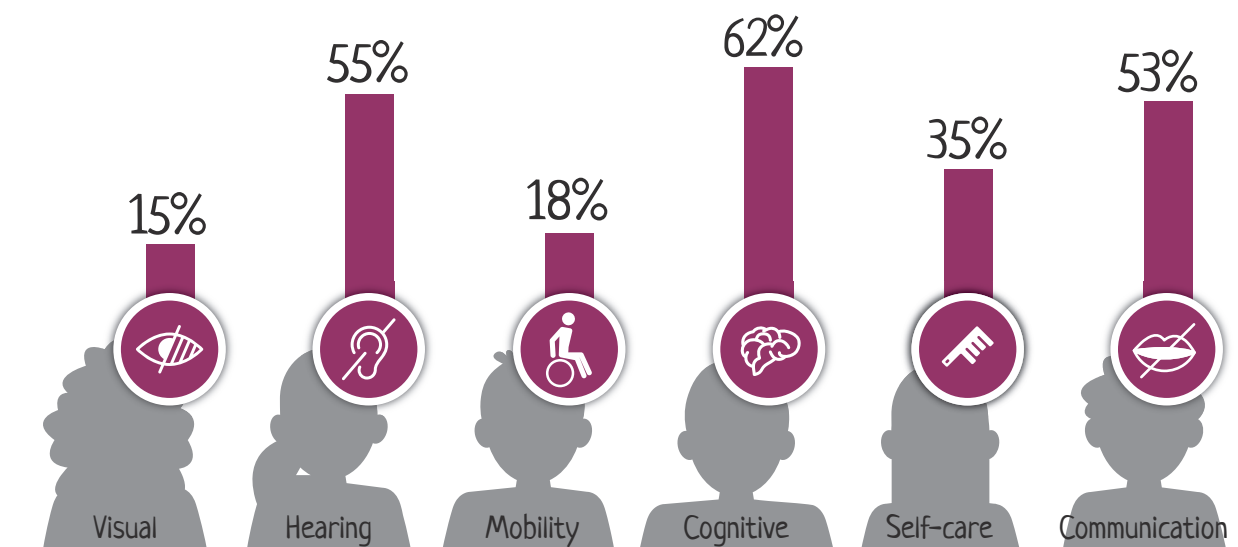
"They could not make an ID card for her because she has no thumbs to do thumbprint"

"Was not important because of being deaf"

"He thought because of having disability maybe nobody do it for him"

"Local authority did not do for him because he is blind"

Percentages not having an ID Card by type of disability



Equity Card for the IDPoor programme

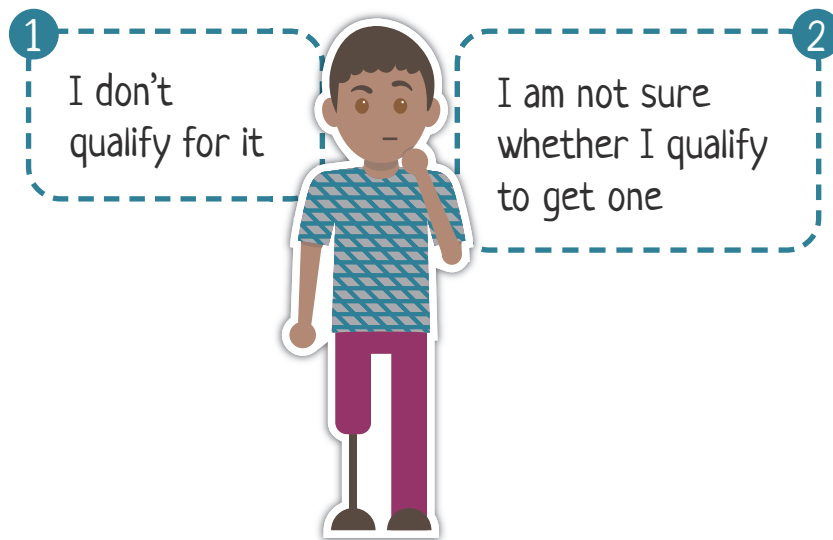
The IDPoor programme in Cambodia is a national poverty identification system. Households that are identified as poor are given an Equity Card, which enables them to receive free services and assistance, such as health care services.

Identification of households for Equity Cards is done by filling in a standard questionnaire.

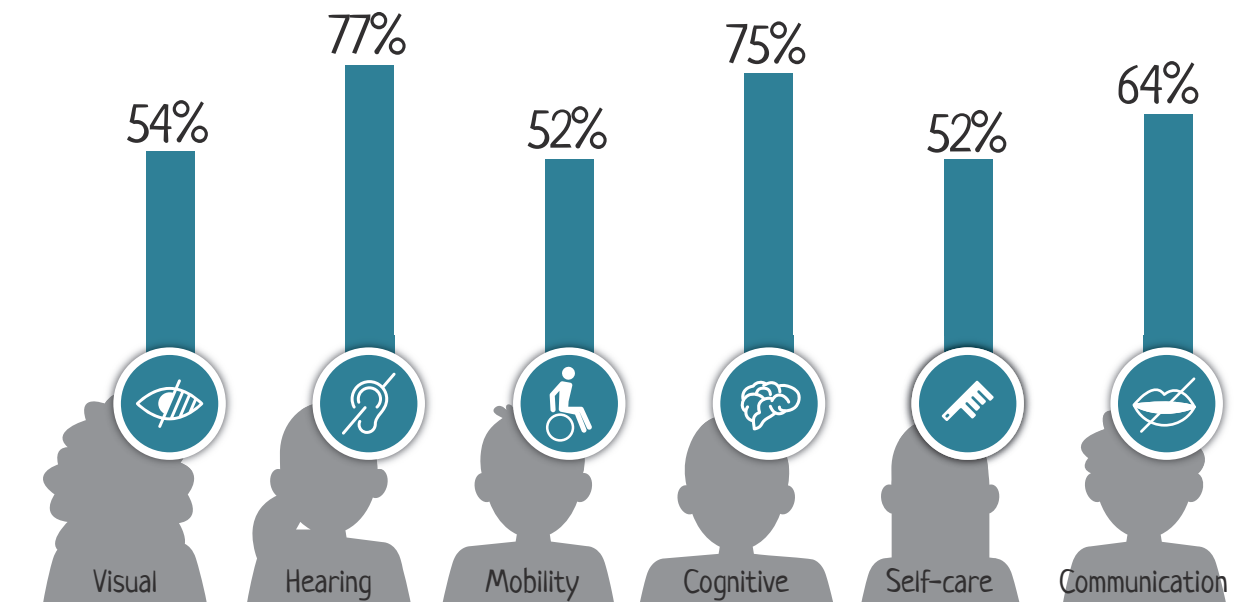
Less than half of all respondents have an Equity Card.

58% of people with disabilities do not have an Equity Card

Top reasons for not having an Equity Card

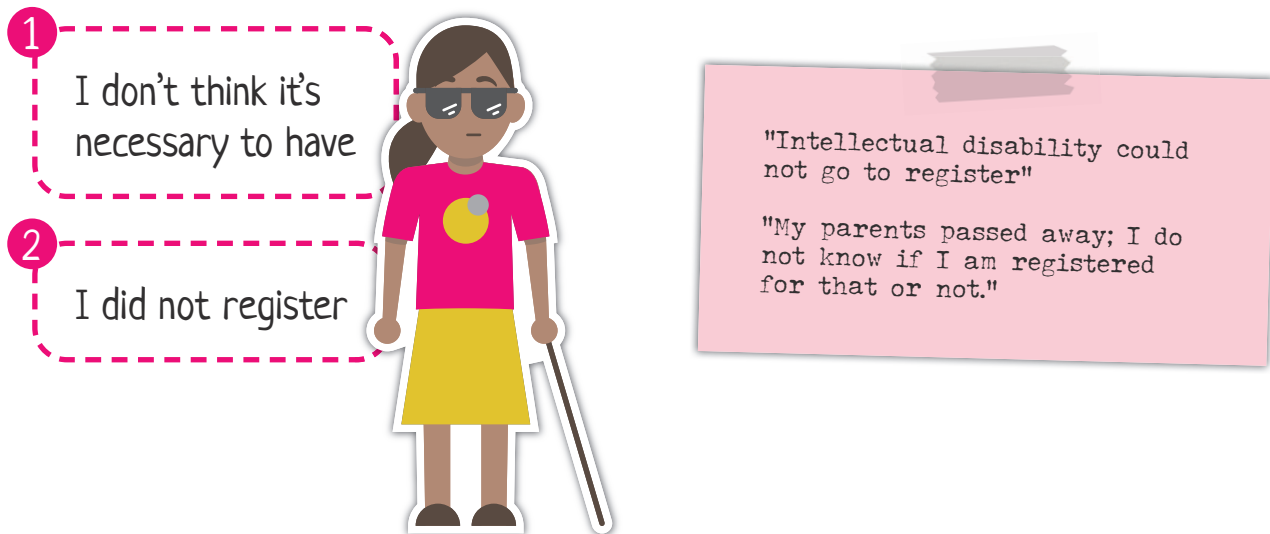


Percentages not having an Equity Card by type of disability



11% of people with disabilities do not have a Birth Certificate

Top reasons for not having a Birth Certificate



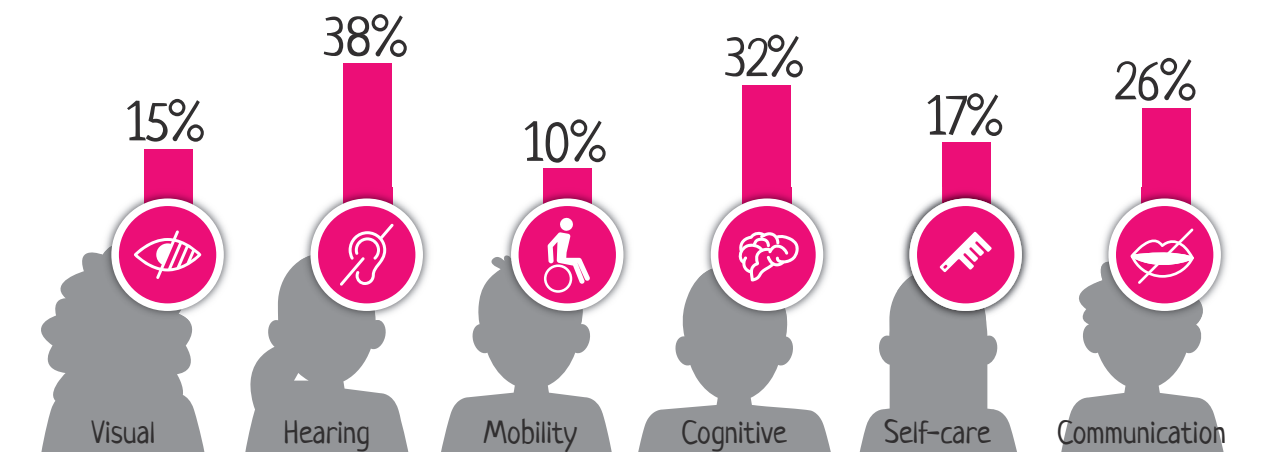
1 I don't think it's necessary to have

2 I did not register

"Intellectual disability could not go to register"

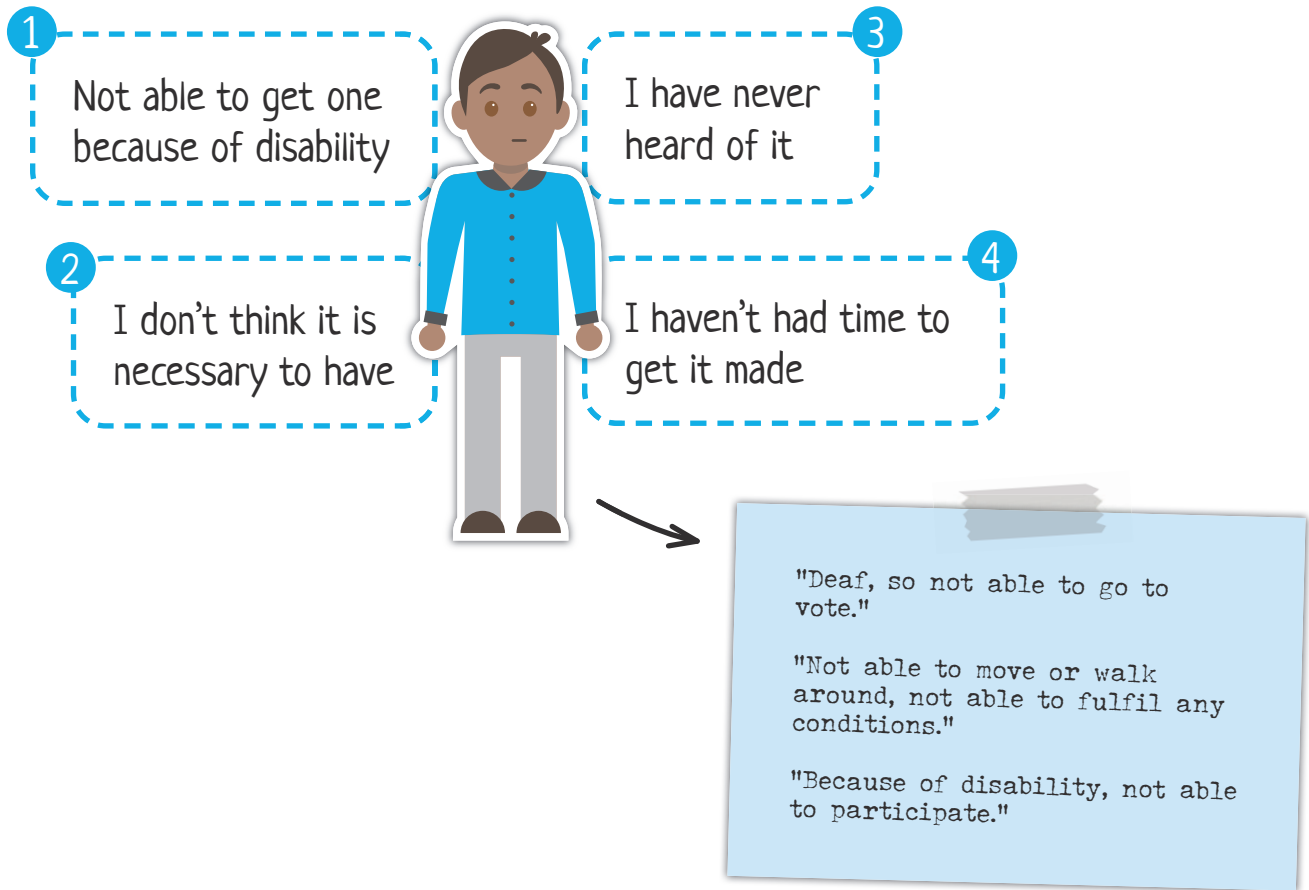
"My parents passed away; I do not know if I am registered for that or not."

Percentages not having a Birth Certificate by type of disability

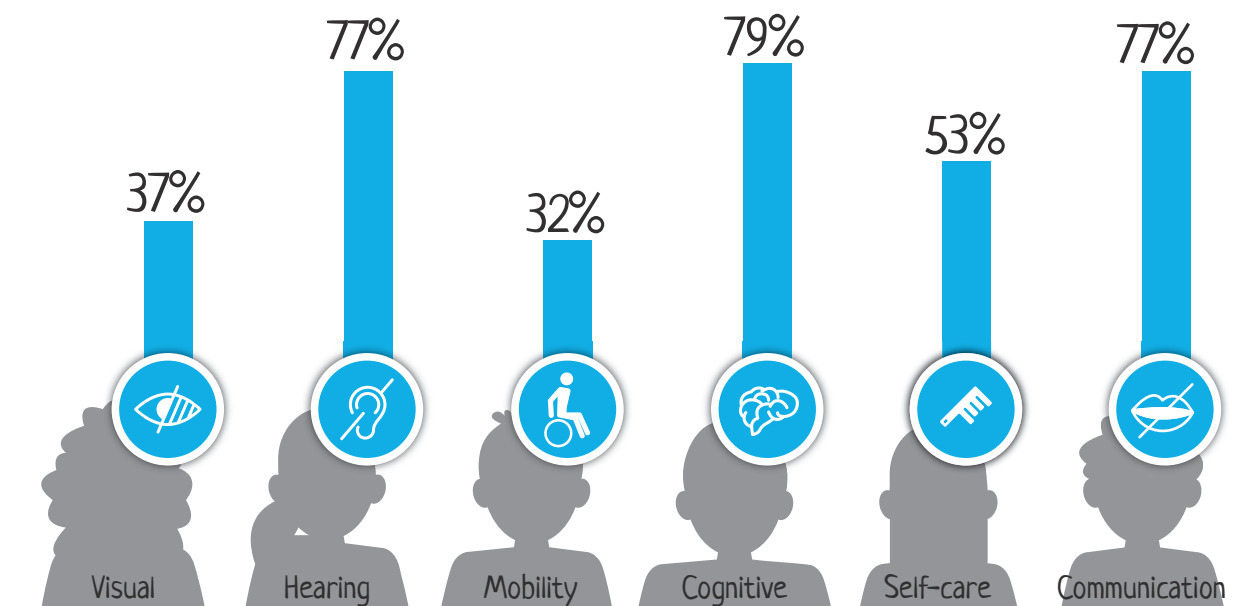


34% of people with disabilities do not have an Election Card

Top reasons for not having an Election Card



Percentages not having an Election Card by type of disability



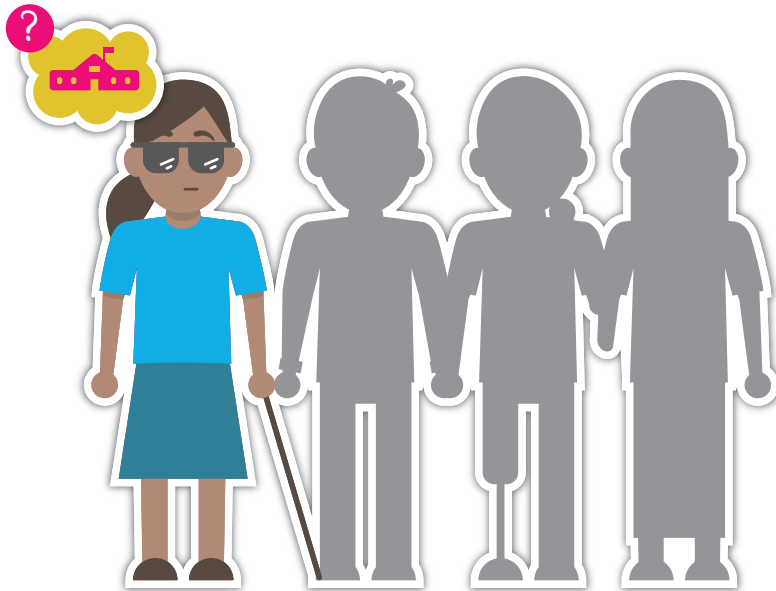
Challenges accessing public services



This section is about whether people with disabilities have difficulties accessing public services.

Public services are services that the government provides, such as health care, electricity, water, education or emergency services.

1 out of 4 people with disabilities said they experienced challenges accessing public services in the past 12 months.



Who would you approach to address this issue?

Several people said they would approach a parent, family member, the health staff or local authorities. However, most (94%) said they did not report their issues or inform anyone.



Reasons given for those challenges included:

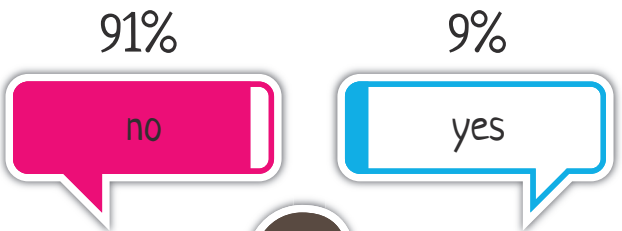
- People with disability receive less attention and care, for example during treatment by health staff
- Deaf, so difficult to communicate
- It is not easy to get the public service. When going to hospital, they asked for the Equity Card
- No attention from the service provider
- No information provision to people with disabilities
- No information about the service; do not know about service

Request to authorities

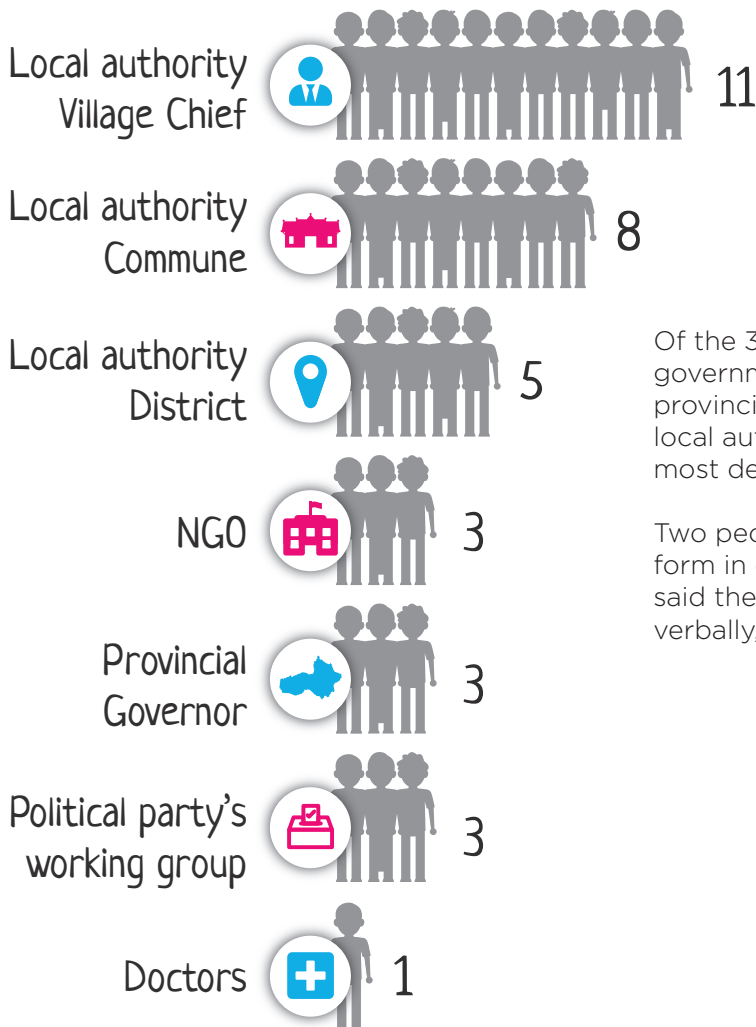
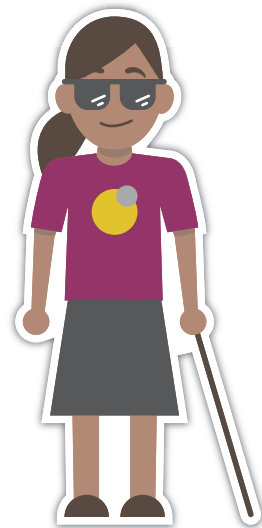
→ This section focuses on the requests that citizens can make to local authorities in Cambodia.

In Cambodia, citizens are encouraged to participate in local decision-making, and to discuss what their needs are with the government. Often the village chief is the first point of contact. Citizens can make requests to the government for their needs, such as for repairs, basic needs, referral services, business grants, etc. Citizens can engage with local government by making verbal requests.

In the last year, have you made a request or reported your issues to anyone?



36 out of 422 respondents said that they had made a request or reported an issue in the past year. Request were made to:



Of the 36 requests, 27 were made to government (village, commune, district and provincial level). Most requests were made to local authorities at village level, even though most decisions are made at provincial level.

Two people said that they filled in a request form in order to make their request. All others said they made a request to the authorities verbally, in person.

What types of things did respondents request from the government?

- ✓ Food
- ✓ Rice
- ✓ Cottage construction
- ✓ Workshop construction for bike maintenance
- ✓ Money for child's health emergency
- ✓ Piece of village land
- ✓ Wheelchair
- ✓ Road repair
- ✓ Assistive device like crutches
- ✓ Digging a canal or well

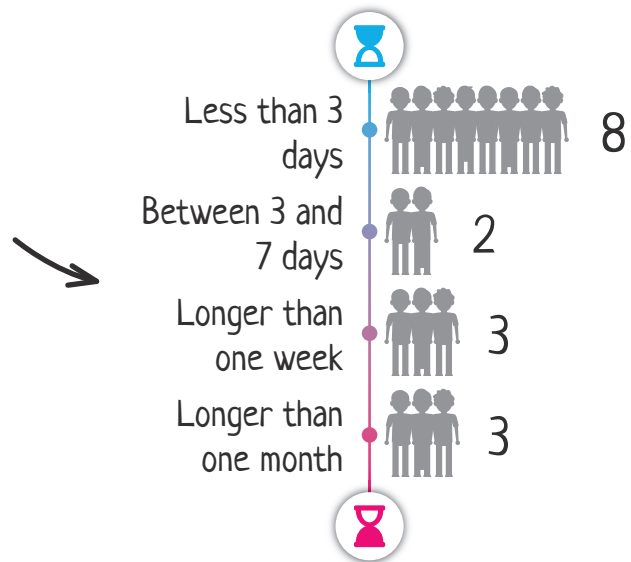
Of the 27 people that had made a request to the government, 16 received a response back. 11 people did not.

How long did it take to hear back from the government?

How long it takes to hear a response from the government depends on the type of request and the level of government. In some cases, such as when it comes to official documents, the government has a specified period of time within which they need to reply to citizens making a request.

Some of the respondents that made a request to the government said that they also had their requests granted.

Some said that they had been promised items but had not received anything yet. Others said that when they heard back, they were told their request was forwarded to a higher level.



"They said they would give but I did not get it till now."

"I got some foods, instant noodles and some utilities"

"[I asked for money for health emergency]. They confirmed to discount for treatment fee."

"[They] agreed to donate a wheelchair."

Conclusion

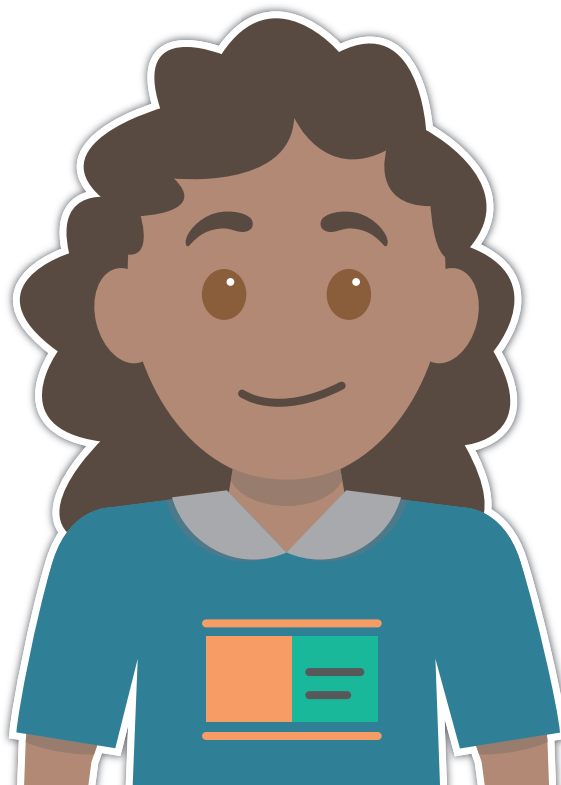
Having access to information is important for all citizens. The implication of not having access to information is that people then also cannot access other services and (development) programmes that they are entitled to.

We tried to study how people with disabilities get information and what works or does not work for them in this process. The study shows that many people with disabilities are not able to get the information they need, often because they are not informed, the information is not accessible to them, or the places where information is shared is not accessible to them. There are also large differences in access to information between men and women, and differences between persons with different types of impairments.

*What do **you** think? Please share your thoughts with Light for the World Cambodia.*

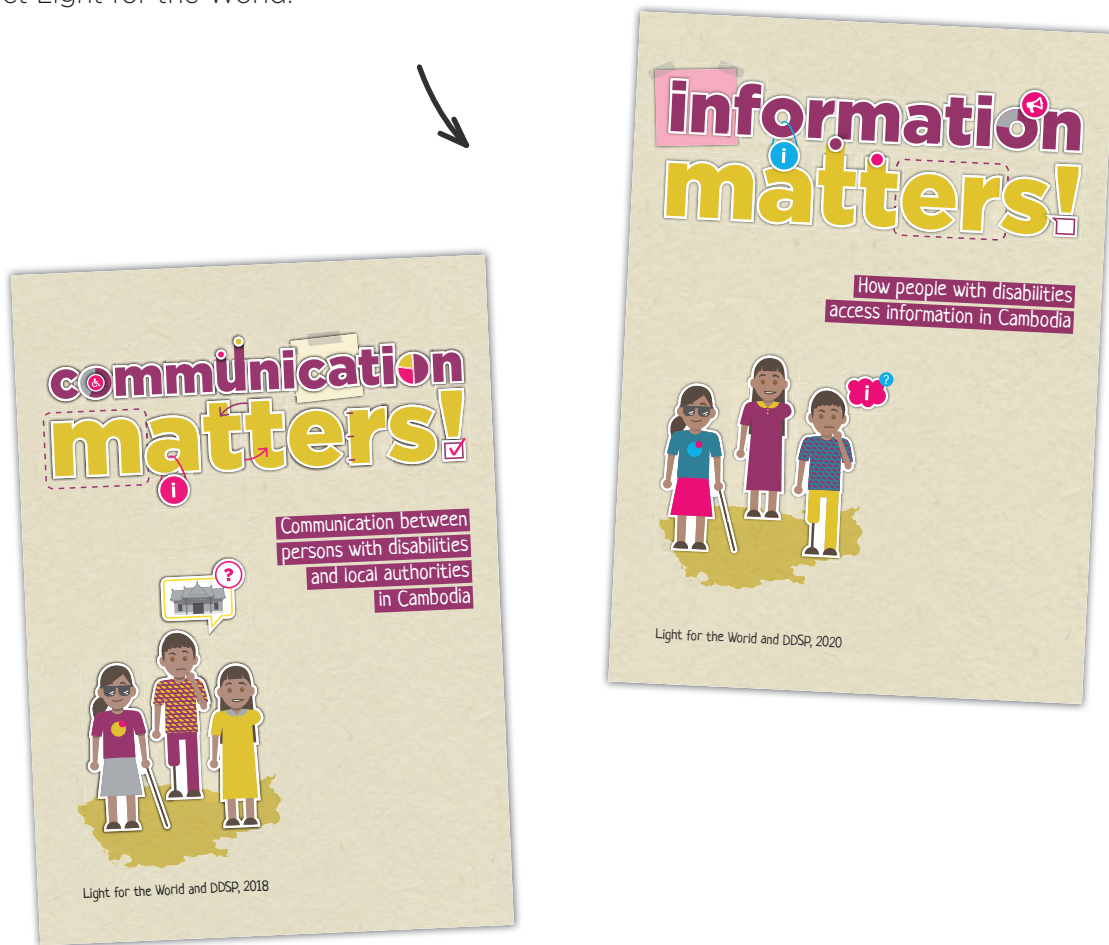
This study was carried out as part of the Advocacy and Communication for Change programme by Disability Development Services Program and Light for the World.

Research was carried out in two phases – each covering half of the province of Pursat. This document represents results from phase II. Results from phase I were published in Communication Matters in 2018.



The Advocacy and Communication for Change programme seeks to understand the communication and information barriers experienced by people with disabilities.

This easy-read series tries to make study results understandable for everyone. If you want more in-depth information, please contact Light for the World.



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