

Trend of disability prevalence in Iran: An evidence to improve disability data

Sir,

Disability is a part of human life. Almost all people temporarily or permanently will be impaired at some point in their life. Disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors).^[1] According to global population estimates, around a billion people (15% of the world's population) live with some form of disability.^[2] The world health survey results show that 785 million (15.6%) persons, 15 years and older live with a disability. Of these, the report estimates that 110 million people (2.2%) have very significant difficulties in functioning.^[2]

In this study, data were extracted from Statistical Center of Iran.^[3] According to census results in 2011, disability prevalence is around 1.3% in Iran. The report shows that disability prevalence is more among men and increasing at older ages. In Figure 1, trend of disability prevalence have decreased from 4.09% in 1977 to 1.3% in 2011 whereas varied studies indicate that prevalence of disability is increasing globally. Because the population is aging, health services have promoted, disability definitions and categorization have changed and rate of chronic diseases and injuries resulted from accidents, natural disasters, substance abuse and conflict have increased.^[4-9] Thus, the number of persons with disability has not decreased in Iran and varied definitions of disability and different methods

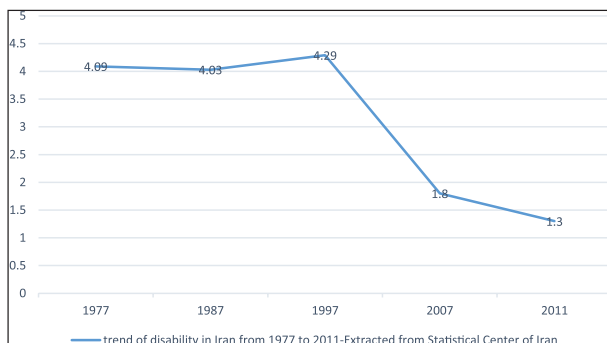


Figure 1: Trend of disability in Iran from 1977 to 2011 extracted from statistical center of Iran

of data collection during the time can be most common causes of the decreasing trend.

Accurate, comparable, and accessible health care data play an important role in the planning, policy making, development and maintenance of health care services.^[10,11] Internationally, methodologies for collecting data on people with disabilities need to be developed, tested cross-culturally and applied consistently. Data need to be standardized and internationally comparable to benchmark and monitor progress on disability policies and on the implementation of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities nationally and internationally.^[12] Considerable, collaborative, and responsibly efforts must be done in Iran to improve disability data. We not only need information about number of disability in Iran but also need information about their needs and required services.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of disability is increasing in the country. Therefore, the plan for the control and prevention of disability must be a high priority for health policy makers.

**Shahin Soltani^{1,2}, Abdollah Mohammadian Hafshejani³,
Hamid Salehiniya^{4,5}**

¹Department of Health Management and Economics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, ²School of Public Health, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences, Sanandaj, ³Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, ⁴Minimally Invasive Surgery Research Center, Iran University of Medical Sciences, ⁵Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Address for correspondence: Mr. Hamid Salehiniya, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.
E-mail: alesaleh70@yahoo.com

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Children & Youth Version: ICF-CY. Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2007.
2. World Health Organization, World Bank 2011. World Report on Disability. Malta: World Health Organization; 2012.
3. Statistical Centre of Iran. Iran Statistical Yearbook. Tehran, Iran: Statistical Centre of Iran; 2012.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Prevalence and most common causes of disability among adults — United States, 2005. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2009;58:421-6.
5. Mitra S, Sambamoorthi U. Disability prevalence among adults: Estimates for 54 countries and progress toward a global estimate. *Disabil Rehabil* 2014;36:940-7.

6. Freedman VA, Martin LG, Schoeni RF. Recent trends in disability and functioning among older adults in the United States: A systematic review. *JAMA* 2002;288:3137-46.
7. Sagardui-Villamor J, Guallar-Castillón P, García-Ferruelo M, Banegas JR, Rodríguez-Artalejo F. Trends in disability and disability-free life expectancy among elderly people in Spain: 1986-1999. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 2005;60:1028-34.
8. Cambois E, Robine JM. An international comparison of trends in disability-free life expectancy. *Developments in health economics and public policy* 1996;5:11-23.
9. Martin LG, Freedman VA, Schoeni RF, Andreski PM. Trends in disability and related chronic conditions among people ages fifty to sixty-four. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 2010;29:725-31.
10. Bowling A. *Research Methods in Health*. UK: McGraw-Hill Education; 2014.
11. Halbesleben JR, Whitman MV. Evaluating survey quality in health services research: A decision framework for assessing nonresponse bias. *Health Serv Res* 2013;48:913-30.
12. World Health Organization. *Improving data quality: A guide for developing countries*. Philippines: World Health Organization; 2003.