Thematic Report on Persons With Disabilities

Summary



This summary presents key findings from the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Thematic Report, which is based on the 2022 Population and Housing Census. It analyses the demographic, social, and economic conditions of PWDs[1] in Zimbabwe.

The analysis primarily employs proportional comparisons, including percentages and cross-tabulations, to examine the socio-economic conditions of PWDs in Zimbabwe in comparison to individuals without disabilities.

Demographic profile

Prevalence: **1.6%** **(206,447)**

of Zimbabweans age 5 and above were identified as PWDs.

Rural vs. Urban:

Disability prevalence is twice as high in rural areas **(2.0%)** than in urban areas **(0.9%)**

Age and sex: Disability rates are strongly correlated with age, remaining low until middle age, and then rising dramatically.

- **Age 5-29:** Prevalence remains below **1%**
- **Age 55-59:** Prevalence reaches **3.1%**
- **Age 65+:** Prevalence soars to **13%**

Provincial variation:

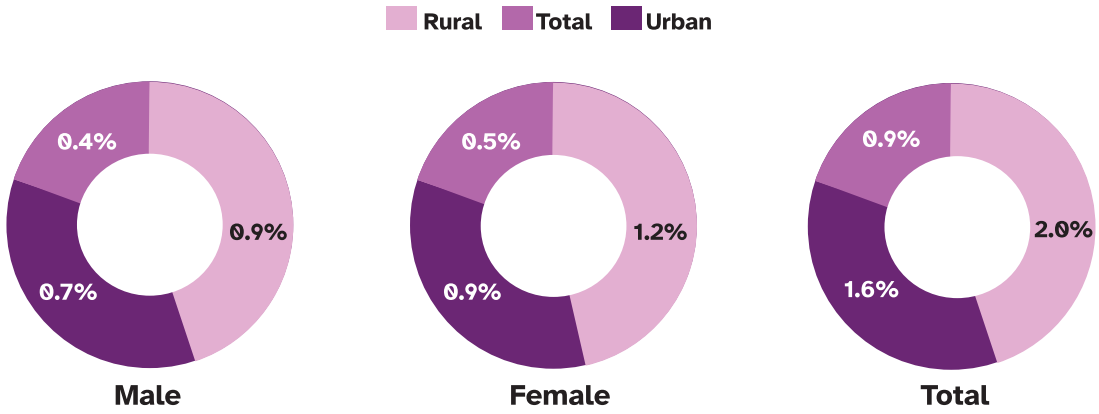
Highest in Matabeleland North **(2.3%)**
Matabeleland South **(2.2%)**
Midlands **(2.1%)**
Lowest in Harare **(0.8%)**

District variation:

Highest in Zvishavane Rural **(4.0%)**
Mangwe **(3.2%)**
Chirumanzu **(3.5 %)**

[1] The report's methodology defines disability as the condition of individuals who experience significant difficulty or complete inability in one or more of six functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating, self-care, and communication.

Distribution of PWDs by sex and place of residence



Education

The education gap: PWDs face significant barriers to accessing education at all levels, resulting in a pronounced gap compared to persons without disabilities.

Comparison of education indicators by PWD status

Indicator	PWD(%)	Non PWDs(%)	Disparity
Ever Attended School	**74%**	**92%**	PWDs are more likely to have never attended.
Currently Enrolled in School	**62%**	**72%**	Children and young people with disabilities face greater barriers to staying in school.
Completed Secondary Education	**44%**	**56%**	PWDs have Limited access to higher education.

- **Gender disaparities:** Males with disabilities **(79%)** are more likely to have attended school than females with disabilities **(71%).**
- **Provincial low:** Mashonaland Central has the lowest school attendance rate for PWDs at **67%**.

Out-of-School Children:

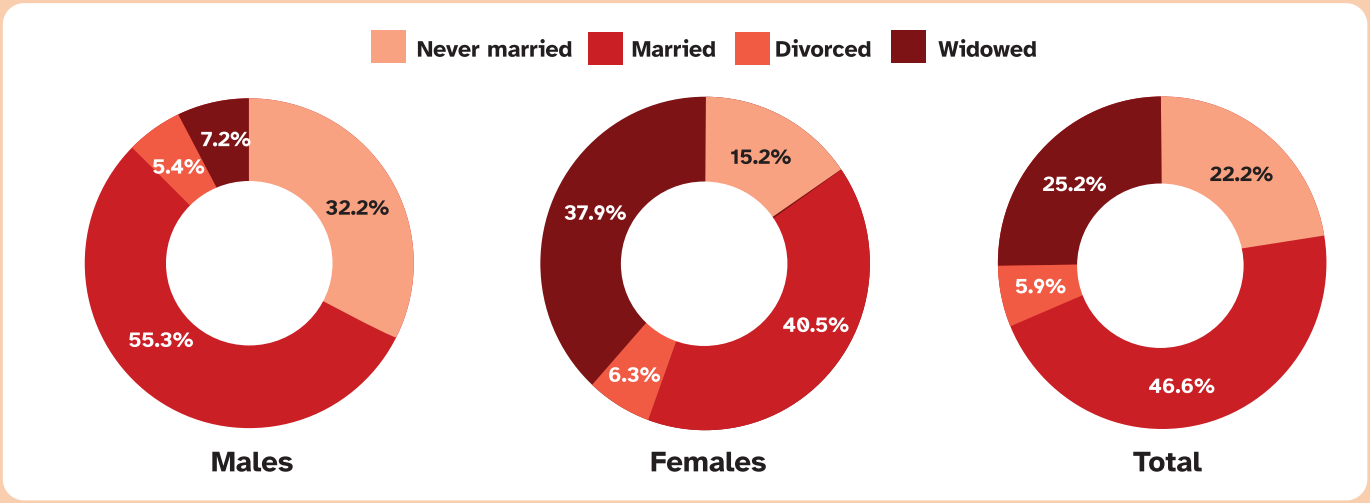
- **Primary school age:** **16%** of children with disabilities of primary school age were not enrolled.
- **Lower secondary level:** 22.1% of children with disabilities were out of school, peaking at **32.2%** in Matabeleland North.

Marital status (age 15+)

Disability is associated with lower marriage rates and higher rates of marital dissolution.

Comparison of marital status by PWDs status

Marital Status	PWD(%)	Non PWDs(%)	Observation
Never married	**37%**	**22%**	Higher among PWDs
Currently married	**47%**	**53%**	Lower rate for PWDs
Widowed	**25%**	**5%**	More common among PWDs



Labour force participation (age 15+)

PWDs experience lower labour force participation (LFP) compared to their non-disabled counterparts, reflecting substantial employment barriers.

Comparison of Labour force participation by PWDs Status

Employment Group	PWDs	Without Disability
Employed (Male)	**53%**	**64%**
Employed (Female)	**46%**	**37%**

Gender Note: While PWDs generally have lower LFP, females with disabilities **(46%)** are more likely to report being employed than females without disabilities **(37%)**

Internal migration trends (2012–2022)

Intercensal migration patterns show that PWDs tend to migrate more than individuals without disabilities, likely in search of better services or opportunities.

- **Higher mobility:** PWDs reported higher intercensal migration rates than non-PWDs across most provinces, except for the metropolitan provinces of Harare and Bulawayo.

- **Provincial migration for PWDs in 2022:**

Highest: Manicaland **(20%)** | Harare **(13%)** | Midlands **(13%)**

Fertility patterns

- Women with disabilities exhibit **lower fertility** than those without disabilities.
- **Provincial fertility:** Ranges from **1.8 in Bulawayo** to **3.7 in Mashonaland Central**.
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) by functional domain:** Fertility also varies significantly depending on the type of disability, highlighting the need for targeted SRH services and information. (Hearing **3.6%**, cognition **3.6%**, walking **3.2%** and communication **1.7%**)
- **Fertility declines steadily with age:** women age 45–49 with disabilities show almost zero fertility.

Key policy implications

1. **Targeted service delivery:** The vast differences in prevalence, education access, and employment between rural and urban areas necessitate a shift towards decentralised and context-specific programming to reach PWDs in underserved rural and hotspot districts.
2. **Inclusive education investment:** Urgent investment is needed in inclusive schools, teacher training, and accessible infrastructure to close the substantial 20% school attendance gap. This should prioritize provinces with the lowest enrollment rates such as Matabeleland North.
3. **Economic empowerment:** Policy must address disability-related constraints, which are a major barrier to economic activity. Focus should be placed on creating accessible formal employment opportunities and supporting entrepreneurial efforts, particularly in sectors beyond subsistence agriculture.
4. **Marital and social support:** The five-fold higher rate of widowhood among PWDs requires specific social protection, financial support, and community engagement to prevent poverty and social isolation.
5. **Data disaggregation:** Continued use of data disaggregated by disability type (functional domain), age, and geography is essential to tailor future interventions for maximum impact.