

SCHOOLING STATUS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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ASER Pakistan has collected information on the prevalence of disability in Punjab for the second year running and for the first time in another large province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The disability module from the ASER survey covers six main aspects of functioning: the ability to see, hear, walk, self-care (such as feeding or dressing), being understood and being able to remember or memorise. These questions draw on the Short Set of Questions developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. All questions were asked of parents or primary caregivers of children aged 3-16 years and included an important precursor: “Compared with children of the same age does your child have difficulty”. The coded responses that parents or primary caregivers could choose from included the following: “no difficulty at all”, “some difficulty”, “a lot of difficulty” and “cannot function”. If the question was left without response it was taken as missing and therefore not included in the following analysis.

Based on the data collected on 100,912 children aged 3-16 years in the two provinces in 2016, Table 1 illustrates the prevalence of disability according to the six aspects of functioning. The indicator of 'difficulty' aggregates any difficulty reported by the parent or caregiver, whether this was some difficulty or a severe difficulty. This was done as the number of observations in each of the categories was relatively low to obtain insightful estimates of the prevalence of the degree of difficulties for each type. Overall, findings suggest a low prevalence of disability in all aspects of functioning, with the highest prevalence in Punjab being related to visual difficulties (1.38% incidence) whereas the highest incidence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is speech-related difficulties (1.10% incidence). In general, the prevalence of these difficulties is similar across the two provinces, with Punjab showing higher prevalence of children with visual difficulties whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shows higher prevalence in walking, self-care, speech and memory. Finally, parents or caregivers reported very similar prevalence of children with hearing difficulties in both provinces, around 0.23 to 0.26 percent prevalence.

Table 1: Prevalence of disability by type and province (ASER 2016), ages 3-16 years

	Punjab		Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	
	Total	%	Total	%
Seeing No Difficulty	57,088	98.62	39,234	99.16
Seeing Difficulty	800	1.38	331	0.84
Hearing No Difficulty	57,729	99.77	39,457	99.74
Hearing Difficulty	133	0.23	101	0.26
Walking No Difficulty	57,817	99.75	39,464	99.62
Walking Difficulty	144	0.25	150	0.38
Self-care No Difficulty	57,783	99.70	39,406	99.47
Self-care Difficulty	171	0.30	208	0.53
Speech No Difficulty	57,479	99.22	39,167	98.90
Speech Difficulty	453	0.78	437	1.10
Memorise No Difficulty	57,754	99.74	39,376	99.47
Memorise Difficulty	152	0.26	210	0.53
Total	58,482		39,786	

Notes: Totals by different types of disability/difficulty do not add to the overall total population of children included in ASER due to missing responses in some of these items.

By taking into account the degree of functioning or functionality affected by any of these difficulties, we further find that of all the children with difficulties in Punjab, 1,237 children (2.1%) reported mild difficulties and 616 (1.1%) reported moderate to severe difficulties (see Figure 1). For all children with difficulties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 1,137 children (2.9%) reported mild difficulties and 300 (0.7%) reported moderate to severe difficulties.

Figure 1: Prevalence of mild, moderate to severe difficulties by Province

