

## Disability among Senior Citizens in India

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### Abstract

In this paper, an attempt is made to understand the disability condition of senior citizens in India using the Census of India 2011. The levels and patterns of disability rate, and the distribution of disabled population by the type of disability were examined across states as well as gender. Results indicate that irrespective of the age, a considerable proportion of senior citizens have multiple disability, and the levels significantly varies across states. Even though females live longer, males reported relatively higher levels of disability rate.

**Keywords:** Disability Rate; Senior Citizens; India.

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### Introduction

In India, disability among senior citizen is a significant problem both in terms of its larger magnitude and complexity. As per the Census of India 2011, the disabled population aged 60+ years in India is around 53 million. Of this disabled, 27 million are males and the remaining 26 million are females (Census of India 2011).

Even though several studies are available on disability, none of them exclusively devoted to the conditions of senior citizens using the data of latest Census of India (Nidhiya Menon, Parish, and Rose 2011; Agrawal, Keshri, and Gaur 2009; Addlakha and Mandal 2009; Gupta 2018; Singh 2008; Mishra and Mohanty 2018; Reddy and PavaniSree 2015; Mitra and Sambamoorthi 2008; Pandey 2012; Sengupta and Emily 2002). Again, the spatial and gender dimension of disability conditions among senior citizens were scientifically unexplored in the previous studies.

Senior citizens in the country are vulnerable to multiple risks (Chermak 1990; Addlakha and Mandal 2009; Mehrotra 2011; Hiranandani and Sonpal 2010; Barnes and Sheldon 2010; Patel, Rodrigues, and DeSouza 2002; Pandey 2012; Patel et. al. 1998; N Menon, Parish, and Rose 2014). Their well-beings are an outcome of the absence of disability, and proper health care. Since the country has insufficient social security measures, due care must be given to reduce their risk of disabilities as much as possible. Proper planning of social and health interventions for them requires a vivid understanding of the levels and patterns of disability both at macro and micro level.

The main objectives of this paper is to examine the levels and patterns of disability rates among senior citizens in India, and its variation across states and gender. Also, to understand the distribution of disabled population by type of disability, gender and place of residence.

## Materials and Methods

The data used for the analysis is taken from Census of India 2011 (Census of India 2011). Census is the most reliable data source on disability. The members of the household were asked whether they suffered from physical or mental disability. If suffered, the type of disability was enquired. These two information was used to analyze conditions of disability of senior citizens.

In this paper, the term 'disability' means a person with restrictions or lack of abilities to perform an activity in the manner or with a range considered normal for a human being. Disability rate is defined

as the number of disabled population per every 100 old aged persons.

## Results

Before understanding the levels of disability rates, it is necessary to understand the absolute magnitude of disabled senior citizens across states and its fractions in relation to the total disabled population in India. Table 1 shows number of senior citizens with disability and its share to disabled population in India and major states by sex. Around 20 percent of the disabled persons are senior citizen. In other words, one in every five disabled persons is a senior citizen.

**Table 1.:** Number of senior persons with disability and its share to disabled population in the major states of India by Sex, 2011.

Major states	Senior Persons with Disability*			Share to disabled population		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Andhra Pradesh	491816	247027	244789	21.7	20.2	23.5
Assam	107682	51868	55814	22.4	20.2	25.1
Bihar	327172	187924	139248	14.0	14.0	14.1
Chhattisgarh	174926	79991	94935	28.0	23.9	32.6
Gujarat	191513	91616	99897	17.5	15.0	20.8
Haryana	124185	62735	61450	22.7	19.9	26.6
Himachal Pradesh	48776	24148	24628	31.4	28.0	35.7
Jharkhand	147684	75865	71819	19.2	17.8	20.9
Karnataka	219668	111087	108581	16.6	15.3	18.2
Kerala	224855	101198	123657	29.5	25.6	33.7
Madhya Pradesh	333712	165753	167959	21.5	18.7	25.3
Maharashtra	513756	271468	242288	17.3	16.0	19.1
Punjab	121552	66229	55323	18.6	17.4	20.2
Rajasthan	558192	244632	313560	35.7	28.8	43.8
Sikkim	4527	2475	2052	24.9	25.3	24.4
Tamil Nadu	190254	103840	86414	16.1	15.8	16.5
Uttar Pradesh	660245	351486	308759	15.9	14.9	17.2
Uttarakhand	44373	21409	22964	24.0	20.8	27.8
West Bengal	365892	187136	178756	18.1	16.6	20.1
India	5376205	2713757	2662448	20.1	18.1	22.5

Note: \*senior persons aged 60+ years

Source of Data: Census of India 2011

The share of disabled senior citizens in disability population varies across states. The lowest share was found in Bihar with 14 percent, and the highest share in Rajasthan with 35.7 percent. Compared to the national level, around 10 states have a higher share. After the Rajasthan, the highest disability

shares are found in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Chhattisgarh.

In comparison to men, the proportion of aged disabled women is relatively high in Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan.

The male-female differentials are relatively less in Bihar, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Sikkim.

Table 2 gives the disability rates among senior citizens in terms of place of residence, gender and

state. Here, the disability rate is the number of disabled elderly persons per 100 elderly persons. The disability rate of the elderly in India is 5.18. it means, for every 100 old persons, five are disabled.

**Table 2.:** Disability rate among aged (60+ years) in India, 2011 (%).

Union Territory	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	5.82	6.23	5.30	7.11	7.57	6.52	2.74	3.01	2.39
Andhra Pradesh	5.94	6.32	5.60	6.38	6.75	6.05	4.72	5.15	4.32
Arunachal Pradesh	7.61	7.26	8.01	8.10	7.74	8.48	3.89	3.71	4.10
Assam	5.18	4.92	5.45	5.47	5.20	5.74	3.67	3.43	3.93
Bihar	4.25	4.58	3.87	4.27	4.60	3.89	4.03	4.35	3.66
Chandigarh	3.58	3.63	3.54	3.46	3.93	2.87	3.58	3.62	3.55
Chhattisgarh	8.73	8.62	8.83	9.35	9.21	9.47	6.29	6.37	6.21
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3.10	3.24	2.97	3.64	3.68	3.60	2.21	2.61	1.81
Daman & Diu	3.52	3.51	3.53	3.91	4.51	3.49	3.34	3.08	3.55
Goa	5.65	5.56	5.72	6.68	6.72	6.65	4.95	4.81	5.07
Gujarat	4.00	4.08	3.93	3.94	4.01	3.89	4.09	4.19	4.00
Haryana	5.66	5.76	5.56	5.87	6.02	5.73	5.20	5.21	5.18
Himachal Pradesh	6.94	7.08	6.80	7.14	7.31	6.99	4.47	4.52	4.41
Jammu & Kashmir	9.09	9.13	9.05	10.07	10.20	9.93	6.73	6.52	6.96
Jharkhand	6.27	6.42	6.11	6.75	6.94	6.57	4.57	4.74	4.38
Karnataka	3.79	4.04	3.57	3.97	4.23	3.74	3.42	3.66	3.19
Kerala	5.36	5.37	5.35	5.67	5.72	5.62	5.03	4.98	5.06
Lakshadweep	6.03	5.72	6.36	9.46	9.06	9.92	5.13	4.79	5.48
Madhya Pradesh	5.84	5.98	5.71	6.30	6.37	6.22	4.58	4.92	4.27
Maharashtra	4.63	5.17	4.14	4.95	5.56	4.41	4.09	4.53	3.66
Manipur	4.30	4.54	4.06	4.35	4.57	4.12	4.21	4.47	3.96
Meghalaya	3.93	3.99	3.87	4.28	4.25	4.31	2.62	2.92	2.38
Mizoram	4.19	4.31	4.07	5.45	5.36	5.54	3.06	3.31	2.83
Nagaland	6.96	6.79	7.14	7.55	7.41	7.72	4.69	4.52	4.89
NCT of Delhi	4.36	4.34	4.39	5.32	5.38	5.26	4.34	4.31	4.37
Odisha	8.24	8.31	8.18	8.59	8.68	8.50	6.03	6.01	6.05
Puducherry	5.47	5.99	5.05	6.21	7.21	5.40	5.15	5.46	4.90
Punjab	4.24	4.59	3.89	4.52	4.87	4.16	3.65	3.97	3.31
Rajasthan	10.92	10.06	11.70	12.25	11.26	13.14	6.53	6.23	6.81
Sikkim	11.11	11.01	11.23	12.42	12.21	12.67	5.36	5.48	5.23
Tamil Nadu	2.53	2.84	2.25	2.71	3.01	2.42	2.33	2.63	2.05
Tripura	4.60	4.47	4.73	4.48	4.32	4.63	4.90	4.83	4.96
Uttar Pradesh	4.28	4.37	4.17	4.29	4.38	4.19	4.22	4.33	4.10
Uttarakhand	4.93	4.84	5.00	5.42	5.32	5.52	3.43	3.52	3.32
West Bengal	4.73	4.86	4.59	5.18	5.39	4.98	3.94	3.99	3.89
India	5.18	5.31	5.04	5.59	5.71	5.48	4.18	4.36	4.01

Source of Data: Census of India 2011

Around 14 states in India show a disability rate that is higher than that of the country. The highest disability rates were reported in Sikkim (11.1%), followed by Rajasthan (10.9%), Jammu and Kashmir (9.1%), Chhattisgarh (8.7%), Odisha (8.24%), and Arunachal Pradesh (7.6%). Among the states, the lowest disability rate was reported in Tamil Nadu (2.5%), followed by Karnataka (3.8%), Meghalaya (3.9%), Gujarat (4%), Mizoram (4.2%), Punjab (4.24%), Bihar (4.25%) and Uttar Pradesh (4.3%).

The disability rates of aged males and females in the country are 5.31 and 5.04, respectively.

Irrespective of rural or urban areas, the disability rates have been higher among men than women.

Table 3 gives the distribution of disabled population by type of disability, gender and place of residence in India. It is clear from the table that issues related to sight, hearing, and movement were found to be relatively predominant among old people. The levels of these problems increases as the age progress in individuals. A considerable proportion of old aged persons have multiple disability. This is found true irrespective of the gender, age and place of residence.

**Table 3:** Distribution of disabled population by type of disability, gender and place of residence, India 2011.

Age Group	Type of disability							
	SE	HE	SP	MOV	MR	MI	AO	MD
India								
60-69	25.2	18.5	4.7	25.6	2.2	2.1	13.6	8.1
70-79	26.3	19.4	3.2	25.6	1.3	1.4	9.9	13.0
80-89	24.5	20.0	2.3	24.5	1.0	1.1	7.9	18.8
90+	21.1	19.2	2.6	21.5	1.3	1.0	8.7	24.6
Males								
60-69	22.9	17.6	5.0	28.6	2.2	2.0	14.1	7.6
70-79	24.7	19.4	3.5	27.5	1.3	1.3	10.6	11.8
80-89	23.6	20.8	2.5	25.3	1.0	1.0	8.5	17.2
90+	20.8	20.4	3.1	21.7	1.5	1.0	9.7	21.7
Females								
60-69	27.7	19.5	4.4	22.4	2.1	2.2	13.0	8.6
70-79	28.0	19.4	2.8	23.7	1.3	1.5	9.3	14.2
80-89	25.2	19.2	2.0	23.7	1.0	1.2	7.4	20.3
90+	21.3	18.2	2.2	21.4	1.1	1.0	8.0	26.8
Rural India								
60-69	26.1	18.4	4.1	26.0	2.0	2.0	12.8	8.6
70-79	27.3	18.9	2.7	25.6	1.2	1.3	9.2	13.8
80-89	25.4	19.1	1.9	24.5	0.8	0.9	7.3	20.0
90+	21.6	18.2	2.1	21.9	1.1	0.9	7.8	26.3
Urban India								
60-69	22.4	18.9	6.5	24.6	2.5	2.6	15.8	6.6
70-79	22.8	20.9	4.8	25.4	1.7	2.0	12.4	10.1
80-89	21.2	22.8	3.5	24.2	1.4	1.6	10.1	15.0
90+	19.4	22.4	4.3	20.1	1.9	1.3	11.9	18.7

Note: SE = in seeing, HE = Hearing, SP = in Speech, MOV = movement, MR = Mental Retardation, MI = Mental Illness, AO = Any Other, MD = Multiple Disability

Source of Data: Census of India 2011

## Discussion

In this paper, we examined the proportion of senior citizens in the disabled population in India and states. It has been found that the share of disabled senior citizens is considerable and the levels significantly varies across states. It implies considerable disability cases are taking place in old ages. It is a well establish fact that disability is associated with economic dependency and most of the old aged persons are highly dependent on their family members (Jain et al. 2015; Agrawal, Keshri, and Gaur 2009; Chermak 1990; Prakash 2003; Singh 2008; Mitra and Sambamoorthi 2008; Barnes and Sheldon 2010; Patel, Rodrigues, and DeSouza 2002; Das et al. 2007; Pandey 2012; Mishra and Mohanty 2018). The social security in the country is poor and the most of the poor find difficult to both ends meet. Consequently, poor people are less likely to seek health care on time (Narayanan, Ramachandran, and Krishnakumar 2019). This increases the vulnerability of disability among them.

It is worth to mention here that the states like Rajasthan, Orissa, Sikkim and Jammu & Kashmir, that showed higher levels of disability rates, also have higher levels of economic dependency. This does not mean that disability rate and economic dependency are positively related in all states of India. For instance, the southern states, particularly in Kerala, have a low level of disability rate and high level of economic dependency among the senior citizens. Perhaps, nutritional food and proper exercise be a good predictor of disability than the economic dependency.

Another notable aspect would be that the share of the disabled being greater than their population share indicates the extent of vulnerability to disability in old age. This phenomenon is consistently higher for elderly males when compared with their female counterparts. The substantial share of the disability among the elderly population raises multiple concerns regarding its burden and implications.

However, the disability conditions of the elderly discussed in this paper are completely based on the information available in the Census of India 2011. Census data does not account for the temporary disability conditions of senior persons. Therefore, the disability estimates may be interpreted with due consideration for this aspect.

## Conclusion

The social welfare programs must consider the state-level conditions of the disabled since the disability rates, and the distribution of disabled senior citizens by the type of disability significantly varies across states, and gender. Again, all such programs must be both disabled-friendly and old-age friendly. It is advisable to form state level policy for the disabled persons. Chhattisgarh already formulated a well disability policy. The disability policy must consider the aspects of social and technological interventions, disabled friendly sanitations and transport, subsidized medical drugs, use of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, and proper evaluations.

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