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Sweden

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European Disability Expertise (EDE) provides independent scientific support to the Commission's policy Unit responsible for disability issues. It aims to mainstream disability equality in EU policy processes, including implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This country report has been prepared as input for the European Semester in 2022.¹

¹ For an introduction to the Semester process, see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/how-european-semester-works/>.

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1 Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Key points and main challenges for Sweden in 2022

Disability and the labour market

National statistics show a disability gap of 10 percentage points in employment rate between persons with disabilities and population in total. The disability gap is larger, 19 percentage points, concerning persons with reduced work capacity, a gap that has widened since last year. The EU-SILC data indicates an employment gap of 24 points. The measures taken to improve the labour market situation for persons with disabilities are mainly aimed at quality improvements at the Public employment services (e.g., more effective routines to identify disability and methods for people with disabilities and immigrant background) or sheltered employment via Samhall. There are also relatively large gender differences where women with disabilities are at a disadvantage concerning subsidized employment, and this inequality is targeted in the 2021 Public employment services 'business plan.

Disability, social policies and healthcare

Overall, statistics and reports on poverty and social exclusion show that people with disabilities are disadvantaged regarding their financial situation and there are gender differences as well as health differences, where people with several disabilities have a significantly worse situation. The disposable income is lower for people with disabilities and financial support more common. The number of persons with disabilities on activity allowances (disability pension for age 18-29) have been stable for the last years, but the numbers on sickness allowances (age 30-65) has decreased the last five years. The number who are entitled to personal assistance allowances has decreased, as a result of stricter praxis, but the Government proposes a strengthening of the right to personal assistance. People with disabilities in general have worse health than the population in general and access to healthcare is not equal.

Disability, education and skills

A disability gap in education is still evident although the situation has improved over time. Youth with disabilities tend to leave school significantly more than peers without disabilities and reports point to a non-accessible school situation as a widespread phenomenon for students with disabilities. However, it is difficult to pinpoint students with disabilities and their needs because schools are not allowed to keep records of disability or health, only of those who are given special support in teaching, regardless of the reason. The number of students in 'särskola', a special unit for persons with intellectual disabilities, has increased and one of the proposals from the government within the education area focuses in improving the quality of education within the 'särskolan'.

Investment priorities for inclusion and accessibility

The investments that are planned are related to experiences that the COVID-19-pandemic has brought attention to. With an exception for the investments in sports, people with disabilities are not mentioned nor accessibility in the investment priorities.

1.2 Recommendations for Sweden

These recommendations are based on the evidence and analysis presented in the following chapters of our report.

Recommendation: Use evidence-based methods, such as Supported employment, that have been shown to have an effect on open labour market employment rates to support people with disabilities who participate in measures at the Public employment services.

Rationale: The RRF describes that the unequal situation for people with disabilities in employment will be combat with Public employment services initiatives, such as more resources to sheltered employment. None of the initiatives proposed to strengthen the position for people with disabilities in the labour market can be expected to have a direct effect on employment figures on the open labour market. The focus on developing quality in the methods used in the Public employment services is positive, but the concept of quality needs to have a clear target on employment in the open labour market, and the efforts need to be evaluated to see effects in the short and long term.

Recommendation: Evaluate the financial situation for people with disabilities from an intersectional and multi-dimensional perspective, and design transfer systems that counteract inequality.

Rationale: Everyday functioning concerning individual health and demographics as well as contextual factors differs for people with disabilities and thus produce different barriers to a stable financial situation. These intersectional differences in barriers, must be taken into account and counteracted by equality in the transfer systems. The financial situations for people with disabilities are not addressed in the RRF.

Recommendation: Counteract the digital divide for people with disabilities by financial as well as digital accessibility and set clear and timely requirements for the public sector to comply with these requirements.

Rationale: The digital solutions that the pandemic has brought to fore have led to a greater digital divide for people with disabilities in relation to, for example, health care and contact with authorities. The barriers are both financial, as people with disabilities have a worse financial situation and thus may not afford equipment for the technical solutions needed, and related to digital accessibility, as not all programs and applications needed for digital inclusion are adapted to different needs. The digital divide for people with disabilities is not addressed in the RRF.

Recommendation: Collect and publish statistics on students with disabilities in the mainstream school system, to monitor their situation from an equality perspective.

Rationale: The RRF addresses the educational gap for people with disabilities. The schools are not allowed to collect statistics on health or disability and the situation for students with disabilities cannot be followed up or evaluated, on equality indicators. Therefore, it is a lack of knowledge whether Sweden meets any of the goals described in the European Disability Strategy or the requirements set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child or People with disabilities.

Recommendation: Adopt and use indicators for disability accessibility in follow-ups and evaluations of initiatives and measures in the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and the education area.

Rationale: Accessibility is most often treated as a general concept in the above-mentioned areas but not specified or operationalised in relation to disability in that specific area. This makes follow-up and evaluation of accessibility difficult.

2 Mainstreaming disability equality in the Semester documents

Country Reports and Country Specific Recommendation of direct relevance to disability policy were not published in this exceptional policy cycle. For a commentary on the last published documents please see our country fiche for the previous Semester 2020-21.

2.1 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Sweden (RRP)

The following key points highlight where the situation of persons with disabilities or disability policies was considered in these plans. We address the most relevant of these and other issues arising from the RRP/NRP in the next chapters.

- In relation to the labor market, people with disabilities are mentioned mainly as part of a larger group of persons who have an insecure or vulnerable position in the labor market, where various measures to facilitate entry into the labor market are presented. Whether these measures are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities is not addressed. The recovery plan includes reforms and investments that increase the opportunities for adjustment in the labor market, in general and for people who become unemployed. The investment that is specifically described as being aimed at people with disabilities is that Samhall (sheltered work) has been provided with increased additional cost compensation from 2021 (RRP, page). Other proposals for increased resources to measures designed for a specific group, are most often designed to facilitate the entry of non-European migrants into the labor market, but there are no corresponding measures aimed at people with disabilities as a priority group.
- Regarding social policies or healthcare, disability is only addressed in relation to investments in the housing market, where more housing is needed for various reasons, including adapted housing for the elderly and people with disabilities (RRP, page). In the project 'Bostadsförsöket', the accessibility of housing for the elderly with disabilities will be investigated in 2021'. (Page 83)
- Disability is addressed in relation to education and skills in general terms, for example about various support measures for students with disabilities who are in need of extra support or adaptations. Yrkeshögskolan, as example, can apply for extra government grants for costs for special educational support for students with disabilities (RRP, page 87) or use the established support system for students with disabilities where there is various support to apply for primary and upper secondary schools as well as universities. (RRP, page 131)
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities, is addressed in the RRP for some of the investment's plans, such as education investment plans. Regarding the availability of the specific investments, this is mainly described in the form of rights and access to support, which the interested parties need to take into account or can apply for from different parties. (see for example RRP, page 131)

2.2 Semester links to CRPD and national disability action plans

Relevant recommendations and issues arising from participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are highlighted in each chapter.

It is also important that Semester plans align with national disability strategy too. In Sweden, this refers to the National Goal and Focus on Disability Policy.² A national strategy for disability policy was adopted in 2016, taking the UN CRPD as its starting point and with sectoral actions identified broadly for the period 2017-2020.³ An inquiry established to review the governance of disability policy reported in 2019 (proposing that it become an integral part of human rights work).⁴

² The Swedish Government. The National disability strategy. <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2021/09/okad-jamlikhet-och-delaktighet-med-ny-funktionshindersstrategi/>.

³ The Swedish Government. The National disability strategy. <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/proposition/2017/05/prop.-201617188/>.

⁴ The Swedish Government. Inquiry about governance of disability policy https://www.regeringen.se/4adaaa/contentassets/83bb46df544f497baf34fa7efacd5b64/styrkraft-i-funktionshinderspolitiken-sou-2019_23.pdf.

3 Disability and the labour market - analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2014, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Sweden:

[Article 27 UN CRPD](#) addresses Work and Employment.

'50. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities to obtain work on the basis of the report presented by the FunkA Inquiry (FunkA-utredning). It further suggests that the State party increase measures of support, including, inter alia, personal assistance in employment, technical assistance in performing in the workplace, reduced social fees, financial support to employers, rehabilitation and vocational training, and that it put in place measures to narrow the employment and pay gender gap. The Committee recommends that the State party assess the impact of the use in the labour market of the term 'people with reduced capacities or limitations' to refer to persons with disabilities, and revise it in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination.'

More recently the 2018 List of Issues requested the following:

'20. Please provide information about: (a) Progress made in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, in the public and private sector, including as a result of the measures taken in the Budget Bill 2016 aimed at assisting persons with disabilities in obtaining work; (b) The rate of employment of persons with disabilities compared with that of persons without disabilities, disaggregated by occupation; (c) Targeted measures to reduce the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to unemployment, including temporary special measures and the strengthening of financial incentives for employers, such as tax incentives; (d) Measures taken to reduce the unemployment rate of and gender pay gap faced by women with disabilities; (e) Steps taken to support persons with disabilities in exercising their right to freely choose or accept employment in work environments that are open, inclusive and accessible to them, particularly the right to freely chosen work in the labour market; (f) Measures taken to review the use in the labour market of the term 'persons with reduced capacities or limitations'.'

3.1 Summary of the labour market situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Sweden of 58.4 % in 2019, compared to 82.4 % for other persons against a national employment target of 80 % and approximately 7.1 points above the EU27 average. This results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 24 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 2-4) or an employment chances ratio of 0.7.

The same data indicate unemployment rates of 16.6 % and 5.0 %, respectively in 2019 (see Tables 5-7) and the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Sweden was 70.1 %, compared to 86.7 % for other persons (see Tables 8-10). These indications are broken down by gender and age in the respective tables in annex.

Employment data is also available from an annual survey on the labour market situation of persons with disabilities in Sweden.⁵ This data indicates an activity rate (employed + unemployed jobseekers)⁶ among persons with disabilities of 74 % and 63 % for people with reduced work capacity in 2020, compared with 84 % of the population, a difference of 10 and 19 percent points, respectively. The gap has decreased over time, from 15 and 20 percent points in 2013. In 2019, the figures decreased to a disability gap of 10 13 percentage points, respectively. This seems to be following the same pattern for people with disabilities without reduced work capacity in 2020 as well, but for people with disabilities and reduced work capacity the disability gap widened in the last year to 19 percentage points.

According to this data, the proportion employed (including some unemployed enrolled in programs at the Swedish Public Employment Service)⁷ is 67 % compared to 78 % in the general population in 2020, a difference of 12 percent points, but 2 points higher than in 2019. Since 2013, the disability employment rate increased from 62 % to 67 % but there is a smaller proportion of people with disabilities who work full time compared to the population as a whole.

In 2020,⁸ approximately 164 000 people participated in subsidized employment programs at the Public Employment Services (PES), of which just over 110 000 people in programs that target people with disabilities and reduced work capacity exclusively. Approximately 85 000 participated in other types of active labour market measures at the PES.⁹ These participants constitute a significant part of the approximately 429 000 with disabilities and reduced work capacity in the population (16-64 years).¹⁰ It can therefore be assumed that active labour market measures, and not only employment, form the basis for Sweden's relatively narrow disability employment gap.

In 2020, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 9.1 % compared to 8.7 % in the total population. Among people with disabilities with reduced work capacity, unemployment is 16.7 %, an increase by 6.7 points since 2019. Since 2013, unemployment has decreased in the population, a trend that is not visible among people with disabilities, except between 2018-2019 when unemployment decreased from 11 % to 7.8 %, but these trends have reversed with the COVID-pandemic.

⁵ Statistics Sweden
https://www.scb.se/contentassets/cc3fe0436677446aae7b1ba19729c6a2/am0503_2021a01_br_a_m78br2101.pdf.

⁶ Activity rate = employed + unemployed.

⁷ In addition to employees and entrepreneurs, those who have worked or participated in certain labor market policy programs during a special reference week are also considered employed.

⁸ Statistics from the PES, report on active labour market measures in 2020.
<https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/styrning-och-resultat/aterrapportering/arbetsmarknadspolitiska-program>.

⁹ Some of these participants could have participated in both an active labour market measure and a subsidized employment during 2020, so the total number of participants may not sum up.

¹⁰ Statistics from Statistics Sweden
https://www.scb.se/contentassets/cc3fe0436677446aae7b1ba19729c6a2/am0503_2021a01_br_a_m78br2101.pdf. The total number of people in the population self-reporting disabilities have increased with 200 000 from 2019 to 2020, while the total number of people reporting reduced work capacity have decreased with approximately 120 000 people. However, these numbers have fluctuated over the years.

Differences between men and women with disabilities

According to the Statistics Sweden survey,¹¹ 56 % of women with disabilities in employment work full-time compared to 84 % among men with disabilities. Among people with disabilities and reduced work capacity 42 % of women work full-time compared to 78 % of men. In the general population (16-64 years) 68 % of women and 86 % of men work full-time.

Another report, from the Gender Equality Authority and the Swedish Participation Authority reports a number of challenges when it comes to both finances and participation in society,¹² such as deficiencies within the education system that delay and limit the labour market establishment of young women with disabilities as well as opportunities to take advantage of support initiatives at the Swedish Public Employment Service. For example, the number of women who are employed in subsidized employment programs (targeting people with disabilities) is significantly lower than the number of men. The survey, on which this report is based, shows that women with disabilities have worse conditions than men with disabilities in terms of both participation in the labour market and working conditions and therefore have lower incomes and less opportunities for financial independence. This leads to many women with disabilities living in financial insecurity and vulnerability. The poor anchoring in the labour market affects the financial levels for a future pension or when using other welfare systems. The survey also shows that the interplay between part-time paid work and support from the transfer systems does not work satisfactorily.¹³

3.2 Analysis of labour market policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Sweden and the National Goal and Focus on Disability Policy, as well as the National Reform Programme 2021, which mentions 'Increased resources for employment preparation activities' for unemployed people with disabilities (p. 10).

In the regulation letter for 2021, the PES received several assignments to strengthen the position of people with disabilities in the labour market.¹⁴

- The PES is assigned to employ long-term unemployed persons with disabilities at Samhall (sheltered employment). For 2021, the scope estimates at least 2,000 employees on average. Young adults under the age of 30 should be given priority. The employment service must follow up the instructions for sheltered work at Samhall and identify and implement methods and collaborations that enable the initiative to be used for the intended target group. This includes

¹¹ Statistics Sweden
https://www.scb.se/contentassets/cc3fe0436677446aae7b1ba19729c6a2/am0503_2021a01_br_a_m78br2101.pdf.

¹² Jämställdhetsmyndigheten 2019 Ekonomisk jämställdhet för kvinnor med funktionsnedsättning.
<https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/ekonomisk-jamstalldhet-for-kvinnor-med-funktionsnedsattning-20195>.

¹³ <https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/files/2019/04/2019-8-ekonomisk-jamstalldhet-for-kvinnor-med-funktionsnedsattning.pdf>.

¹⁴ Regulation letter from the Government to the Public Employment Services, for 2021
<https://www.esv.se/statsliggaren/regleringsbrev/?rbid=21193>.

reviewing methods to identify jobseekers with disabilities and greatest need for support.

- The PES was also commissioned to analyse the process of identifying disabilities that affect work capacity and their coding. The assignment includes analysing the conditions for early assessment in the event of unemployment, the data required and how well internal routines are complied with. The authority must also take measures to remedy identified obstacles in this process.
- Another assignment given to the PES is to investigate how initiatives for people with disabilities with reduced work capacity can be used, adapted, or supplemented to meet the dual needs of those with a mother tongue other than Swedish and who lack knowledge of the Swedish language. The PES shall review the authority's methods and processes so that appropriate efforts are given to these jobseekers.
- Regarding people on sick leave and people with activity compensation ('disability pension' for people aged 19-29), the PES and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency shall, in collaboration, ensure that more beneficiaries, as early as possible, have access to collaborations between the authorities and reinforced efforts. The authorities will develop their work to ensure that beneficiaries are given individually adapted conditions in the transition from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency to PES. The authorities must also develop their collaboration to prevent individuals from losing sickness benefit qualifying income in transition between the authorities.

The PES' business plan 2021¹⁵ includes targets that at least 4.6 % (of people with disabilities enrolled at the PES) get employed or start studies and that the proportion of new decisions on wage support should be gender equal. Other issues include:

- Early identification and improved support for people with disabilities. To achieve this, the possibilities of technology are to be used.
- Structured and standardized methods and processes to meet the individual's need.
- Efficient information transfer between external actors and the PES to communicate which measures have been successful and whether there are support needs that can be met through special initiatives for people with disabilities.
- Increase the possibility of obtaining customized employment via work aids, wage subsidies or Samhall (sheltered employment).
- In collaboration with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, create conditions for more people with disabilities to return to work through active measures.
- Ensure that working methods and processes within vocational rehabilitation also meet intersectional needs, i.e. migrant jobseekers, and gender equality.

Initiatives and measures targeting people with disabilities

Subsidized employment includes employment with support in the form of financial contributions or tax credit to employers for all or part of the wage costs. The number

¹⁵ The PES' business plan 2021.

<https://arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.7887697f1763d9e80967548/1611916926613/verksamhetsplan-2021.pdf>.

of wage subsidized jobs has increased slightly from 2013 to 2019, but this came to a halt in 2020 when the total number of people with disabilities that participated in a 'wage subsidy program' at least once during the year, decreased with 34 000 persons (17 %).¹⁶ The total number of people who started a subsidized employment also decreased, by around 4 000 compared with the previous year.¹⁷ In total about 40 000 people started some subsidized employment in 2020 (2019; 44 000). PES offers just over 10 different 'wage subsidy programs'. The number of people participating in these programs has decreased for all programs except employment at Samhall (sheltered employment), which in practice means a transfer from employment programs aiming at the open labour market to the sheltered employment.

PES's analysis of labour market trends¹⁸ shows that even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, transitions to subsidized employment had begun to decline due to the slowdown in labour market. With the outbreak, the labour market situation deteriorated strongly, and employers show an unwillingness to hire new employees, especially those in need of an adapted workplace. In addition, competition for jobs increased as there were more applicants with skills and experience.

There are gender differences in access to wage subsidy programs.¹⁹ Over time, men have more often wage subsidies than women and the pattern is the same in all forms of wage subsidies. Men also find a job with a wage subsidy faster than women. Compared with other labour market measures, subsidized employment has shown the greatest effects of all programs in terms of improving opportunities to get a job.

One change for 2021 that PES announces for the assessment of need for subsidized employment, is the assessment to show a connection between a person's disability and the reduction in working capacity that the efforts aim to compensate for.²⁰

Young people with disabilities

In previous regulation letters, PES has been commissioned to ensure that young people with disabilities have a sustainable connection in the labour market. A follow-up on the situation²¹ shows that of the young people who were studied, as many as 94 % had left as jobseekers from the PES sometime within four years. Over half of these had started work or studies. The results also show that people with a longer enrolment period to a greater extent left for unsubsidized work compared to people with shorter enrolment time. Of the quarter that de-enrolled last, almost one went twice as large share for unsubsidized work compared to the quarter who de-enrolled first.

¹⁶ PES: Statistics on Labour market programs 2020 <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/styrning-och-resultat/aterrapportering/arbetsmarknadspolitiska-program>.

¹⁷ PES analysis: "One year with pandemia" <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/statistik/analyser-och-prognoser/analys-och-utvardering/ett-ar-med-pandemin>.

¹⁸ PES: Statistics on Labour market programs 2020 <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/styrning-och-resultat/aterrapportering/arbetsmarknadspolitiska-program>.

¹⁹ PES: Statistics on Labour market programs 2020 <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/styrning-och-resultat/aterrapportering/arbetsmarknadspolitiska-program>.

²⁰ PES: Statistics on Labour market programs 2020 <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/styrning-och-resultat/aterrapportering/arbetsmarknadspolitiska-program>.

²¹ PES statistics: Analysis of young persons with disabilities at PES <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/statistik/analyserochprognoser/analysochutvardering/ungamedfunkti-onsnedsattningpaarbetsformedlingen.4.3563c7d6172c13113cb10b8.html>.

There are differences between women and men, where men had a shorter time to get a subsidized work than women, but a longer time to get a non-subsidized work.

There was also a lower proportion of women who received a subsidized employment compared with men. For the unsubsidized work, the opposite was true, it went faster for women to get an unsubsidized job and that was a larger proportion of the women who received them, compared to men. An upper secondary education had a positive effect on the results of work and studies, regardless of disability.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the labour market situation, for people with disabilities enrolled at the PES, worse and their chances of finding jobs have deteriorated strongly as employers seem to show an unwillingness to hire new employees with reduced work capacity

To combat labour market exclusion of people with disabilities, different employment measures are used. It is foremost a focus on supply-side measures (aimed at strengthening the individual and his/her chances of a job) and demand-side initiatives (i.e., wage subsidies to motivate employers to hire) while the structural perspective (e.g., accessibility and universal design) is absent, and thus not reflected in the efforts made. Combating exclusion from an individual, rather than a structural, perspective may change the situation for some persons with disabilities when barriers are lowered for that person, but it would not change the exclusionary structure of the labour market. Hence, it will not lower the structural barriers to equal opportunities and equal access to participate in society and economy that are expressed in the European Disability strategy,²² but may influence the labour market participation on individual level.

The proposed initiatives are foremost on individual level (to access and strengthen individual capacity), about sheltered work (Samhall) or focusing smother collaboration between authorities and vocational rehabilitation methods. These initiatives may increase the employment rate on the open labour market in the long run but in the short run, it is very uncertain in what way these efforts can to any great extent reduce the employment gap that is expressed as a concern in the 2021 RRP and the National disability policy. The measures presented by the FunkA Inquiry are not addressed in the proposed initiatives, apart from the gender gap.

²² European Disability Strategy
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

4 Disability, social policies and healthcare – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2014, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Sweden:

[Article 28 UN CRPD](#) addresses Adequate standard of living and social protection.

No observations were made on Article 28 but the 2018 List of Issues requested:

‘21. Please provide information about: (a) The extent to which the “guaranty benefit” adequately covers the living costs of persons with disabilities, including for food, accommodation, transport, rehabilitation and medical care, and any existing differences among municipalities; (b) How recent reforms in the national insurance system have improved the living conditions of persons with disabilities; (c) Measures taken to reduce poverty among persons with disabilities.’

[Article 19 UN CRPD](#) addresses Living independently in the community.

‘44. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that personal assistance programmes provide sufficient and fair financial assistance to ensure that a person can live independently in the community.’

The 2018 List of Issues requested the following:

‘13. Please provide information about: (a) Measures taken to ensure that personal assistance programmes provide persons with disabilities with sufficient financial assistance to allow them to live independently in the community, and the criteria to be eligible for personal assistance; (b) Measures taken to provide persons with disabilities with the opportunity to choose their place of residence, and where and with whom they want to live, on an equal basis with non-disabled persons; (c) Measures taken to ensure that decisions granting individual support are implemented promptly by the municipalities; (d) The number and percentage of persons with disabilities who have received personal assistance benefits since 2014, disaggregated by year, sex, age, type of impairment and municipality of residence.’

[Article 25 UN CRPD](#) addresses Health.

No observation was made but the 2018 List of Issues requested the following:

18. Please provide information about:
(a) The availability of psychiatric services, including outpatient treatment, and of specialized psychiatric personnel throughout the territory of the State party, disaggregated by municipality;
(b) Measures taken to promote access to health-care services for women and girls with disabilities, including sexual and reproductive health services, and information on HIV/AIDS, on an equal basis with others.
19. Please provide information about:
(a) The suicide rate of persons with disabilities compared with that of others since 2014, disaggregated by age, sex and type of impairment, and measures taken to

prevent, identify and address situations of risk of suicide in persons with disabilities, especially children;
 (b) Measures taken to address and prevent mental health issues among children aged between 10 and 17 years.

4.1 Summary of the social situation of persons with disabilities

Data from EU-SILC 2019 indicate the poverty risk rate for working age persons with disabilities in Sweden was 24.8 % in 2019, compared to 15.4 % for other persons of similar age - an estimated disability poverty gap of approximately 9 percentage points (see Table 14). For people aged over 65, the disability poverty gap was 8.1 points (21.4 % for older persons with disabilities and 13.3 % for other persons of similar age). The tables in annex also indicate the respective rates of risk of poverty or social exclusion and break these down by gender as well age.

For persons with disabilities of working age in Sweden (age 16-64) the risk of poverty before social transfers was 55.3 % and 24.8 % after transfers. The in-work poverty rate for persons with disabilities aged under 60 was 11.2 %.

Of interest to health policy are the data on self-reported unmet needs for medical examination (too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list). Disability equality gaps are evident here too and, on this basis, the rate for persons with disabilities in Sweden was 4.1 %, compared to 1.0 % for other persons, which is above the EU27 average of 1.7 %.

A report from the Gender Equality Authority²³ shows that women with disabilities are over-represented among those whose disposable income is below 60 % of the median income in Sweden, which is the relative poverty line. Of women with disabilities above age 30 approximately 30 % have a low disposable income, compared to 16 % of men with disabilities above age 30.

National data shows that the economic conditions between people with disabilities and others in the population differ. Statistics Sweden's annual survey of living conditions²⁴ shows that 4.4 % of people with disabilities have financial problems, compared with 2.9 % of the rest of the population. Of people with at least two disabilities, 8.9 % have financial problems. There are more men with disabilities than women who have financial problems, as well as more among younger than older people and among people with disabilities with a foreign background.

A similar pattern is found among people lacking cash margin, where 24.9 % among people with disabilities are lacking this in comparison with 17.1 % among the rest of the population. When it comes to lacking a cash margin, however, it is more common among women with disabilities than among men with disabilities. People with

²³ Report from the Gender Equality Authority
<https://www.jamstalldhetismyndigheten.se/files/2021/06/Va%CC%88rdensmestja%CC%88msta%CC%88ldaland.pdf>.

²⁴ Statistics Sweden Living conditions for people with disabilities 2020. <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/levnadsforhallanden/levnadsforhallanden/undersokningarna-av-levnadsforhallanden-ulf-silc/pong/tabell-och-diagram/statistik-om-personer-med-funktionsnedsattning/tabeller-20182019/>.

disabilities also have an increased risk of poverty compared with the rest of the population, 17.1 % vs 14.4 %. Among people with at least two disabilities, the risk is greater, 25 %. Unlike others in the population where men have a slightly higher risk of poverty, more women with disabilities than men with disabilities are at risk of poverty. The risk of poverty has increased somewhat in the population since 2016-2017 but decreased by 2 % among people with disabilities. There is no significant difference between people with disabilities with a Swedish or foreign background when it comes to the risk of poverty.

The disposable income is lower for people with disabilities compared with the rest of the population, SEK 238 000 vs SEK 278 000 in median income per year. There is also a difference between men and women with a disability, SEK 251 000 compared to SEK 224 000. For people with at least two disabilities, the disposable income is on average even lower, SEK 201 000 (just under EUR 20 000).

Financial assistance has become more common among people who receive personal assistance services according to The Act concerning Support and Service to Persons with Certain Functional Disabilities (LSS), compared to ten years ago.²⁵ The level is now at the same level as for the rest of the population, 5 %. Long-term financial assistance has in turn become somewhat more common among people with services according to the LSS-legislation, about 2 % compared with 1 % in the rest of the population. The incidence of financial assistance for people with services according to Social Services Act (SoL) is as high as 10 years ago. In 2018, 10 % had long-term financial assistance. It is four times as common with financial assistance among people with services according to SoL compared to the rest of the population, and 10 times as common with long-term financial assistance. Within this group, people with mental disabilities are overrepresented, and the National Board of Health and Welfare has previously raised the financial vulnerability of this group.

The National Board of Health and Welfare reports that financial vulnerability is increasing among people with disabilities and indicates financial exclusion, which is further reinforced by the need for both long-term financial assistance and housing supplement.²⁶ The user's organisation FUB, for persons with intellectual disabilities, publishes annually the report *Caught in Poverty? Economic mapping income and expenditure for adults with intellectual disabilities*.²⁷ The report shows that the risk of poverty among people with disabilities, who have interventions according to LSS, has accelerated in recent years. Reasons for this are described to be that activity and sickness compensation has a low level of compensation and high tax, high rents for group housing combined with housing supplement that is not adapted to the level. The government itself draws attention to this in an investigation of accommodation with

²⁵ National Board of Health and Welfare. Support and Service to people with disabilities 2020 <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2020-3-6686.pdf>.

²⁶ The National Board of Health and Welfare. Support and services to people with disabilities 2020. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2020-3-6686.pdf>.

²⁷ FUB report *Caught in Poverty? Economic mapping income and expenditure for adults with intellectual disabilities* <https://www.fub.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/fangad-i-fattigdom-2021-1.pdf>.

special services according to the LSS:²⁸ 'The average disposable income for people with disabilities is lower than for the rest of the population. For people with accommodation with special service according to LSS, the financial situation is probably particularly difficult. Typical case calculations show that the income in these households often does not cover the expenses. A normal rent level for such LSS housing in 2014 was approx. SEK 8 000 for a room and kitchenette. The average disposable income for persons with intellectual disabilities with LSS housing in the same year was approximately SEK 10 000 per month. Reasonable living costs were estimated by the Swedish Consumer Agency at approximately SEK 6 650 per month. This means that the individual has SEK 4 650 minus per month (page 3).

Statistics from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency²⁹ show that in August 2021 approximately 27 400 people received activity allowances. The number of young people with activity allowances has decreased over time but has been relatively stable for the past two years. The number of recipients of sickness allowances has decreased over time, and in August 2021 was around 226 000 people compared to approximately 238 000 in August 2020 and 251 000 in August 2019. Receiving activity or sickness allowances risks creating long-term financial challenges as many recipients have not had the opportunity to build up additional insurance cover through employment and being on long-term allowances the poor financial conditions thus risk following through life. There has not yet been an in-depth analysis of the cause of these changes. However, the Inspectorate for Social Insurance has examined how the government's and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency's changed governance during the years 2012–2017 has had an impact on the handling of sickness benefits.³⁰

Health

The health of people with disabilities has, as for the rest of the population, been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Board of Health and Welfare has examined support and initiatives for people with disabilities, and reports that:³¹

- In 2020, the proportion infected with COVID-19 was lower among people with interventions according to Law on Support to people with certain disabilities (Swedish acronym, LSS) and the Social Services Act (Swedish acronym, SoL) than in the total population. However, the proportion infected is higher among people with Down syndrome or with intellectual disability than in the rest of the population.

²⁸ The Government. Committee-directive 2020:28. <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/kommittedirektiv/2020/03/dir.-202028/>

²⁹ Social Insurance Agency. Statistics on sick- and activity compensation https://www.forsakringskassan.se/statistik/statistikdatabas/!ut/p/z1/04_Sj9CPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM_Afljo8ziLQI8TDy8Dlx8Ddy8jQwCfZ3dLUxDPY1dnE30w8EKDHAARwP9KGL041EQhd_4cP0osBITDxdnQ3dnA293L083A8eQID9TTyNfQ4NgY6gCPGYU5IZGGGQ6KglAcdXorg!!/#!/sjuk.

³⁰ The inspectorate for Social Insurance, 2018. Changed control of and in The Social Insurance Agency. <https://isf.se/download/18.6e75aae16a591304896ba4/1565330431186/Fo%CC%88ra%CC%88ndrad%20styrning%20av%20och%20i%20Fo%CC%88rsa%CC%88kringskassan-ISF-Rapport%202018-16.pdf>.

³¹ The National Board of Health and Welfare. Support and services to people with disabilities 2021. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2021-3-7327.pdf>.

- The proportion of deaths with COVID-19 is relatively high among people with interventions according to LSS but is slightly lower among people with interventions according to SoL. In 2020, mortality among people with interventions according to LSS and SoL has been basically unchanged compared with previous years.
- The pandemic has affected the quality of life of people with intellectual disabilities. Many state that loneliness has increased and that they do things outside the home to a lesser extent than before. Mental illness is already higher among people with intellectual disabilities or autism than in the rest of the population. The National Board of Health and Welfare's analyses show a slightly increased prescription of sedatives and sleeping pills for people with interventions according to LSS in 2020 compared with previous years. At the same time, the prescribing of sedatives has decreased in the rest of the population, which may indicate that people with interventions according to LSS have had greater access to care than others during the pandemic.
- The digital divide has widened with the pandemic. This is partly due to a lack of access to information and services that are directly linked to COVID-19, but also to the fact that an increasing part of society has been digitized during the pandemic. This applies to social interactions as well as contacts with actors in various sectors of society.

A growing share of the health and care sector uses various digital solutions (e-health), and surveys show a large digital exclusion for people with disabilities³² The digital gap is established at an early age and lasts a lifetime. The law on web accessibility does not cover all accessibility problems. It has become more common to have to identify oneself digitally, but surveys show that about a third of people with disabilities have no way to identify themselves digitally. Therefore, it is not possible for them to take part in socially important functions such as e-care and e-government functions.

4.2 Analysis of social policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Sweden and the National Goal and Focus on Disability Policy.

Within social policies the RRP points out five reforms, and two of them may have implications for the economic and living conditions for people with disabilities: 'Äldreomsorgslyftet' (Elderly care) and 'an extended working life - adjusted age limits in the social insurance and tax systems'. The reform 'an extended working life' introduces a new concept of age to the Social Insurance Code, a target age for pension. The target age is linked to the development of life expectancy and should in the long run govern all pension-related age limits. An increase in certain age limits in the tax and social security system will follow the gradual adjustments of the 65-year age limit in the pension system and in adjacent security systems. When the pension-related age limits for e.g. unemployment and sickness benefits are changed, and the right to benefit from these social security systems is extended by one year, the rules for financing social security systems must also be changed. The target age was set for the first time in 2020 at 67 years and will be applied from 2026.

³² http://www.begripsam.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SMFOI_rapport_200616.pdf.

The reforms planned for care for the elderly are aimed at increasing the competence of care staff. From 2021, in addition to training as a nurse or care assistant, staff will be given the opportunity to further their education through other skills-enhancing training in care for old people. In addition, the target group has been expanded to also include first-line managers who work in care for old people. The National Board of Health and Welfare has been commissioned to pay state subsidies to municipalities as compensation for employees in municipally funded care if they train during working hours within the framework of the initiative. They must also inform the municipalities about how the 'Äldreomsorgslyftet' will be implemented. Following the Government's proposal in the Budget Bill for 2021, the municipalities also have received a substantial increase in funds to increase the quality of care for old people and improve their lives. There are no references to old people with disabilities in this reform.

Government proposes an increased guarantee level in sickness compensation and activity compensation from 1 January 2022.³³ The proposal means that people with full sickness compensation and activity compensation in the form of guarantee compensation receive just over SEK 1 000 more in guarantee compensation per month, an increase of approximately 10 %. The government is also proposing an increased housing supplement for people with sickness benefits and activity benefits.³⁴ The housing cost ceiling is raised to SEK 7 500 for unmarried and SEK 3 750 for married and cohabiting couples.

Another reform proposed by the Government is an instruction to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning to evaluate the law on housing adaptation grants and to analyze how the law has affected the development of the housing adaptation grant.³⁵ If the evaluation finds obstacles to people with disabilities having access to the necessary adaptations in the home, the authority shall submit proposals for measures.

The government has also decided on a Bill to prevent personal assistance compensation from being paid to assistance companies without a valid permit.³⁶ The amendments regarding this are proposed to enter into force on 1 November 2021.

In May, the inquiry 'Strengthened the right to personal assistance. Increased legal security for children, more basic needs and safer health care interventions' (SOU 2021: 37) was submitted to the Ministry of Social Affairs.³⁷ The inquiry aims to strengthen the right to assistance for supervision and self-care as well as increased legal certainty for children and submits proposals in three areas. It proposes a strengthening of the right to personal assistance for people who, as a result of the changes in practice in recent years, do not receive assistance. It also proposes

³³ The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-foreslar-atgarder-for-ett-starkare-samhalle-for-alla/>.

³⁴ The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-foreslar-atgarder-for-ett-starkare-samhalle-for-alla/>.

³⁵ The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringsuppdrag/2021/08/uppdrag-om-bostadsanpassningsbidrag/>.

³⁶ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/06/utbetalning-av-ersattning-for-personlig-assistans-ska-krava-tillstand/>.

³⁷ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/05/utredningen-om-starkt-assistans-overlamnade-betankande/>.

increased legal certainty for children when assessing the right to personal assistance. In addition, rules are proposed for health and medical care that clarify the responsibility for the care of people with extensive disabilities. Through the proposals, these people have the opportunity for cohesive support without violating their personal assistance.

Adequate standard of living and social protection

With regard to competence in the area of disability, the National Board of Health and Welfare has mapped the knowledge and competence of staff and managers in housing with special services according to LSS.³⁸ The survey shows that the majority of the permanently employed staff have attended the care and nursing program at upper secondary school or municipal adult education. On most residents state almost all permanent employees knowledge in the areas that the National Board of Health and Welfare recommends in their general advice on knowledge of staff who provide support, service or care according to SoL and LSS to people with disabilities (SOSFS 2014:2).³⁹ The proportion who have this knowledge is significantly lower among the fixed-term employees and some residents state that few or no fixed-term employees have acquired knowledge of basic values (10 %), attitude (10 %) or communication (16 %). The National Board of Health and Welfare believes that this can affect support for individuals in a negative direction. This is especially true during periods when many fixed-term employees work at the same time, such as holiday periods. Another example is the COVID-19 pandemic, then several businesses have indicated difficulties in establishing staffing. The National Board of Health and Welfare assesses that there are several needs and challenges related to staffing in housing for adults according to LSS. It concerns, for example, education in alternative communication and treatment. The needs are reinforced by challenges in recruiting staff in recent years. The National Board of Health and Welfare has not made a corresponding survey related to elderly people with disabilities who live in housing with special support, but it is likely that the same needs and challenges exist with their staff and is something that needs to be addressed in a competence investment in care for the elderly.

Personal assistance

In December 2020 personal assistance was provided to approximately 19 000 people, of which approximately 13 867 have had personal assistance allowance (LASS) from the Social Insurance Agency⁴⁰ and the rest from the municipalities. The average number of assistance hours in LASS was 130 hours per week. The number of people with LASS increased steadily until 2009 and then stabilized for a few years. Since 2015, the number of people with assistance compensation has decreased. More men than women receive assistance compensation. The Social Insurance Agency highlights those changes in legislation and case law has affected the number of recipients.⁴¹ It has resulted in fewer people being entitled to assistance compensation

³⁸ National Board of Health and Welfare. Support and services to people with disabilities 2021. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2021-3-7327.pdf>.

³⁹ National Board of Health and Welfare SOSFS 2014:2 <https://lagen.nu/sosfs/2014:2>.

⁴⁰ Statistics from the Social Insurance Agency <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/statistik/funktions%C2%ADnedsattning/assistansersattning>.

⁴¹ The Social Insurance Agency Report - Indicators to monitor the development of

than before. The Social Insurance Agency has made a review and analysis of changes in legislation, case law and governance since 2015, and their effects on the number of recipients of assistance allowance.⁴² The review shows that the main drivers behind the changes in the number of recipients are based on the following:

- judgments from the Supreme Administrative Court (HFD) regarding definitions of need for assistance
- changes in legislation and application regarding reconsideration of
- the right to assistance compensation
- the interpretation of the basic need for personal hygiene.

Personal assistance, given by the municipality to assistant users in need of assistance less than 20 hours a week, has increased by 44% between 2010 and 2020, from 3 600 to 5,300 people.⁴³ The gender distribution has also shifted slightly over time, in 2010 it received 52 % men and 48 % women personal assistance according to LSS compared to 2019 when the distribution was 55 % men and 45 % women.

Conclusion

The economic situation for people with disabilities is worse than for the rest of the population, regarding all parameters that are measured. Seen from an intersectional perspective, there are also differences within the group, where the financial situation differs between women and men with disabilities as well as between people with disabilities with or without an immigrant background. The fact that the situation differs depending on the immigrant background may be explained by marginalization in the labour market and that as an immigrant to Sweden you have not qualified for certain benefits from the social security systems. The difference between men and women can also probably be explained by differences in labour market participation, where women are employed to a somewhat lesser extent and work part-time to a greater extent. There are also wage differences, where women's wages are lower in percentage terms than men's, on average. All in all, this affects benefits from the social security transfer systems, which are often based on income. These differences in economic conditions are something that needs to be addressed if Sweden is to meet the priorities on having a decent quality of life and social protection that are highlighted in the European Disability Strategy.⁴⁴

Health and access to care is also an area where people with disabilities have disadvantages. Access to care has been affected during the pandemic, based on an

the assistance allowance 2020 <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/7231178b-4d51-4eb3-83d2-4efeaf71947e/indikatorer-for-att-folja-utvecklingen-av-assistansersattningen-svar-pa-regeringsuppdrag-dnr-001380-2020.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>.

⁴² The Social Insurance Agency Report - Analysis of reduced number of recipients of assistance allowance <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/f766dad4-ffd7-4c72-ae9b-6f420a2603f9/analys-av-minskat-antal-mottagare-av-assistansersattning-svar-pa-regeringsuppdrag-dnr-001381-2020.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>.

⁴³ National Board of Health and Welfare. Statistics on LSS 2019. <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/statistik/2020-3-6668.pdf>.

⁴⁴ European Disability Strategy. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM%3A2010%3A0636%3AFIN%3Aen%3APDF>.

increased use of digital solutions, which has been shown to lead to large digital exclusion for people with disabilities. The law on web accessibility does not cover all accessibility problems, but in this area, more needs to be done for people with disabilities to have equal access to health services, as expressed in the European Disability Strategy.⁴⁵

Proposed measures partly address the financial, or health-related challenges that the statistics and reports presented highlight for people with disabilities. To some extent they address independent living, as the Government proposes a strengthening of the right to personal assistance for people who, as a result of the changes in practice in recent years, do not receive assistance, as well as increased legal certainty for children when assessing the right to personal assistance. This is in line with the European Disability Strategy⁴⁶ and the goals of able to decide where, how and with whom one want to live.

Financially, the proposal on an increased guaranteed level in sickness compensation and activity compensation from January 2022 is a necessary step in the right direction, to reduce the risks of relative poverty for this target group. Although this change is a step in the right direction, it cannot be considered sufficient as there are still many shortcomings in the transfer system. This is a concern both to those who are partly employed and partly receiving compensation, and to those who have not had an opportunity for earning an income, as the transfer systems often are based on income.

Socio-economic status affects health, both on the basis that low incomes provide poorer opportunities for participation in society, but also because it affects opportunities for good diet and exercise / sports. Despite this, the financial situation of people with disabilities is seldom highlighted in different reports on opportunities for independent living, and health for people with disabilities.

⁴⁵ European Disability Strategy
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

⁴⁶ European Disability Strategy
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

5 Disability, education and skills – analysis of the situation and the effectiveness of policies

In 2014, the UN CRPD Committee made the following recommendations to Sweden:

[Article 24 UN CRPD](#) addresses Education.

‘48. The Committee urges the State party to guarantee the inclusion of all children with disabilities in the mainstream education system and ensure that they have the required support.’

The most recent development is the 2018 List of Issues requesting the following:

‘17. Please provide information about: (a) Measures taken to include all children with disabilities in their nearest mainstream education school and ensure the availability of the necessary support; (b) Steps taken to abolish the provision of the Education Act allowing schools to deny a place to pupils with disabilities when taking them would involve significant organizational or financial difficulties, and to allocate sufficient human, technical and financial support to schools; (c) The number and percentage of children with disabilities with access to education, disaggregated by age and sex, type of impairment, type of school, and municipality..’

5.1 Summary of the educational situation of persons with disabilities

The EU-SILC 2019 estimates concerning educational attainment should be treated with additional caution due to relatively wide confidence intervals, but they consistently indicate disability equality gaps (an average of 2-3 years provides a more stable indication). Table 16 indicates early school leaving rates disaggregated by disability status in Sweden. Youth with disabilities (aged 18-24) tend to leave school significantly more than peers without disabilities of the same age groups (and this is reinforced by widening the sample size to age 18-29). Table 17 shows completion rate of tertiary education disaggregated by disability and age group. Persons with disabilities (age 30-34) are less likely to complete tertiary education than their peers (and this is reinforced in the wider age range 30-39).

Children with disabilities have the right to preschool and the Education Act states that support should be given to children in need of special support in education.⁴⁷ Children who are unable to attend the mainstream schools can be admitted to specialized schools. There are nine specialized compulsory and upper secondary schools run by the Special education school authority which also run pre-school classes. In the academic year 2020/21 approximately 660 students go to a specialized school. Students with intellectual disabilities can read a special curriculum in a specialized unit within the mainstream schools, ‘särskola’, designed for students with intellectual disabilities. Just over 13 400 students go to primary ‘särskola’ and just over 6 500 to upper secondary ‘särskola’ in the academic year 2020/21, which corresponds to approximately 1 % of all students in mainstream compulsory education, and to 1.7 %

⁴⁷ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800.

of all students in mainstream upper secondary education.⁴⁸ There has been an increase in students at primary level in 'särskolan' since the academic year 2019/20, with approximately 1,200 students, and from the 2018/19 with almost 3,000 students.

There are no statistics available of the proportion of other students with disabilities in the mainstream educational system, as the schools are not allowed to collect statistics on health status or disability, only on students in need of special support. If a student is in need of special support, the school must develop an action program. The program must state what the needs are, how they are to be met and when the school is to follow up and evaluate the measures. About 5 % of primary school students have an action program.⁴⁹ It is significantly more common among boys than among girls, where the total difference is 3.2 percentage points.

Reports from Statistics Sweden show that the level of education of people with disabilities is shorter than in the population as a whole.⁵⁰ In the population aged 16–64, 14 % have compulsory school as the highest completed education, compared with 16 % among people with disabilities. Among people with disabilities, 47 % have upper secondary education as their highest completed education, compared with 39 % among the population as a whole. It is more common for young people with disabilities to drop out of upper secondary school. Within the group of people with disabilities aged 20–36, nine per cent have dropped out of upper secondary school. The corresponding proportion in the rest of the population is three per cent.

Among 30–64-year-olds with disabilities, 33 % have tertiary education. In the rest of the population, the corresponding proportion is 47 %.⁵¹ People with reduced work capacity show a similar distribution as people with disabilities in general.⁵² A larger proportion of women than men with disabilities have tertiary education, 40 % compared with 29 %. This also applies to those with reduced work capacity. Of those, the proportion of women with tertiary education is 38 %, compared with 29 % of men.

5.2 Analysis of education policies relevant to the Semester

For reference, see also the 2021 [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) for Sweden and the National Goal and Focus on Disability Policy.

In 2018, a government grant was introduced for increased equality and knowledge development in schools, in order to reduce the differences in school results, between

⁴⁸ Swedish National Agency for Education, statistics 2021 <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning?sok=SokB>.

⁴⁹ Swedish National Agency for Education, statistics 2020 <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.289d0776170c4f425761865/1587130154792/pdf6604.pdf>.

⁵⁰ https://www.scb.se/contentassets/14e47b5fde424ca188ad70f4acbd7620/am0503_2019a01_br_a_m78br2002.pdf.

⁵¹ Swedish Agency for Participation, results and analysis. <https://www.mfd.se/resultat-och-uppfoljning/kunskapsunderlag/utbildning/>.

⁵² Statistics Sweden. The situation on the labour market for people with disabilities, 2019. https://www.scb.se/contentassets/14e47b5fde424ca188ad70f4acbd7620/am0503_2019a01_br_a_m78br2002.pdf.

socio-economic groups and between the sexes.⁵³ The grant, which is distributed on the basis of the number of students and the students' socio-economic background, shall be used to expand ongoing initiatives or implement new initiatives that strengthen equality and knowledge development. The reinforcement amounts to SEK 1 billion in 2021. Funds will be distributed proportionally based on the number of children and youth aged 6–19 in the municipality, who in turn distribute funds to both municipal and private activities with the greatest need.

The government proposes the school system to be strengthened by SEK 1 billion for 2022.⁵⁴ The purpose is to contribute to good conditions for the municipalities to ensure that all students receive the education they are entitled to. Among other things, the funds can be used to provide more support for the students who need it.

An initiative proposed by the National Agency for Education that could perhaps benefit students with disabilities is competence development to strengthen the special educational competence and develop student health, but there is no proposed initiative that is specifically aimed at students with disabilities.⁵⁵

The government also proposes that SEK 40 million be added in 2022 for initiatives aimed at students who need teaching in a small group for their educational development and to be safe and feel involved.⁵⁶ To meet these students' needs for this kind of adaptation to the learning environment, SEK 40 million is estimated annually in 2023–2024.

In order to give all students sufficient access to student health and provide better conditions for student health to conduct their preventive and health promotion work, the Government considers that efforts are needed to strengthen student health.⁵⁷ For this, the government proposes SEK 8 million in 2022, and estimates SEK 5 million in 2023 and SEK 3 million in 2024.

The Government also intends to improve the quality of compulsory special school and upper secondary special school.⁵⁸ Competence development efforts should therefore be developed for the staff as well as tools for assessing and following up the students' knowledge. All students with an intellectual disability who have the prerequisites to develop skills in reading, writing and arithmetic must be given the opportunity to do so.

⁵³ The Swedish Government. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-201849-om-statsbidrag-for-starkt_sfs-2018-49.

⁵⁴ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-satsar-pa-hogre-kunskapsresultat-fler-utbildade-larare-och-okad-jamlikhet-i-skolan--13-miljarder-tillfors-2022/>.

⁵⁵ National Agency for Education: Examples of initiatives at different levels

<https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statsbidrag/statsbidrag-for-likvardig-skola-2021>.

⁵⁶ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-satsar-pa-hogre-kunskapsresultat-fler-utbildade-larare-och-okad-jamlikhet-i-skolan--13-miljarder-tillfors-2022/>.

⁵⁷ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-satsar-pa-hogre-kunskapsresultat-fler-utbildade-larare-och-okad-jamlikhet-i-skolan--13-miljarder-tillfors-2022/>.

⁵⁸ The Government 2021. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-satsar-pa-hogre-kunskapsresultat-fler-utbildade-larare-och-okad-jamlikhet-i-skolan--13-miljarder-tillfors-2022/>.

The Government therefore wants to introduce a guarantee for early support measures in compulsory special schools. For these purposes, the government proposes SEK 85 million in 2022, and estimates SEK 163 million in 2023 and SEK 159.5 million in 2024.

The Swedish National Agency for Education's study of accessible learning environments shows that many mainstream schools, in reality, do not provide sufficient conditions for the learning environment, to be pedagogically, socially and physically accessible to students with disability.⁵⁹ The study also shows that the management and follow-up of how the school situation for students with disabilities is insufficient. The disability perspective is also not considered to be part of the systematic quality work, to a sufficient extent.

The Swedish National Agency for Education's survey shows several reasons for inaccessible school environments. Teachers often pay attention to some students' need of adaptations and special support, but that they themselves to a large extent lack the opportunity and competence to support and adapt in an appropriate way. Just over four out of ten principals and an equal proportion of special needs teachers state that the lack of special needs teachers who work directly with students is a major obstacle in the work to counteract the consequences of disabilities. Based on the shortage, there is a competitive situation between principals in recruiting and retaining special needs teachers and other professionals in student health. Teachers also do not see that their principals offer sufficient specialist competence in addition to what is available at the school. For example, there may be a lack of special educational guidance for teachers when they need help adapting their teaching to students. It can also be about that educators and other staff need skills development and support to educate students in need of support. Lack of adaptation of the learning environment and differences in the allocation of funds to schools for students with special needs are some of the challenges that *Funktionsrätt* Sweden (disability organisation) points out, when it comes to children and young people with disabilities.⁶⁰

The Swedish School Inspectorate has examined the quality of teaching in compulsory special schools (*grundskolan*), where the review has mainly been directed at how the schools work to promote students' knowledge development.⁶¹ In just over half of the schools inspected, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate has assessed that the design and level of teaching is well developed when it comes to offering structured teaching that is clearly anchored in the governing documents, that teaching is adapted to students' needs and that students are given the opportunity to participate and influence. In the majority of schools, however, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate has identified one or more areas that need to be developed to give all students the conditions to reach as far as possible within the framework of the education. For most schools, the approach to assessment needs to be developed. The review shows

⁵⁹ The Swedish National Agency for Education. Accessible learning environments. <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=3686>.

⁶⁰ Funktionsrätt 2019 Respekt för rättigheter: Rapport om hur Sverige lever upp till konventionen om rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning 2019, <https://funktionsratt.se/funktionsratt-ratten-att-fungera-i-samhall-et-pa-lika-villkor/manskliga-rattigheter/funktionsrattskonventionen/civilsamhallets-granskning/>.

⁶¹ The Swedish School Inspectorate. Education in primary special schools <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/beslut-rapporter-statistik/publikationer/kvalitetsgranskning/2020/undervisningen-i-grundskolan/>.

weaknesses in the opportunities for teachers to jointly analyse and discuss assessments. There are also weaknesses in the quality of the documentation of students' knowledge development.

The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, SPSM shows in its Child Panel report that students with disability to a greater extent experience insecurity, bullying and violations in school, regardless of the type of schooling they attend.⁶² Most students who experience insecurity mention vulnerability and their own or other students' conflicts as a cause of insecurity. The students state that the break is something that worries them, as they can lead to being left out or exposed to bullying.

Conclusion

Children and young people have a disadvantaged school situation, which is largely explained by a lack of support in school. It affects both their results in school and the length of schooling, which in turn affects their entry into the labour market and their lifelong financial situation. That the school is accessible and that students with disabilities get equal opportunities in education is thus a prerequisite for quality of life and equal opportunities, as highlighted in the European Disability Strategy.⁶³

The proposed measures for the mainstream schools do not specifically address the needs of students with disabilities, in need of support in school. Hence there is a risk that accessibility for students with disabilities will not be in focus since there are other issues which may seem to be more acute (e.g., the NEETS population and students with immigrant background), hence the focus on meeting the target for persons with disabilities will be jeopardized.

⁶² The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, SPSM Child Panel Report <https://webbutiken.spsm.se/barnpanelsrapport/>.

⁶³ European Disability Strategy <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>.

6 Investment priorities in relation to disability

6.1 Updates on use of existing EU funds (up to 2021)

The Swedish ESF projects in Target 2 are aimed at people who are far from the labour market; i.e. are long-term unemployed or on sick leave, immigrants' establishment in the labour market with a special focus on newly arrived immigrant women and / or people with disabilities. In most cases, the projects include several target groups; long-term unemployed, new arrivals and individuals with disabilities that lead to reduced working capacity. In total, almost 9 500 people with disabilities and reduced work capacity received support in the ESF project 2014-2020.⁶⁴

An impact evaluation of The Swedish Social Fund program period 2014–2020, shows that the objectives in goal area 2⁶⁵ have been difficult to achieve in their entirety.⁶⁶ Within all goals, the quantitative goals that have been set for transition to education as well as for transitions to labour market programs are achieved. Overall, however, the employment targets are not met in Objective 2.1 or 2.3. There are differences between the sexes, where a greater proportion of men than women have found employment, as between the participant's country of birth where a larger proportion of foreign-born than domestic-born have found employment. Project participants in goal 2.2 have on average a weak income development in comparison with one matched control group in the years after participation. The goal of the proportion who are to achieve an upper secondary school education level has also not been met. The evaluations shows that the programme's governance and follow-up has been characterized by a focus on individuals and financial outcomes, while goals and expected results at organizational and structural level are weakly operationalized and not systematically followed up.

The Swedish ESF Council had three overall goals and three project goals for the horizontal principles: equality, accessibility and anti-discrimination, during the programme period 2014-2020:⁶⁷

- Non-discrimination and equal conditions in relation to work
 - The goal is for the projects to promote the non-discrimination perspective in their activities through the use of knowledge about discrimination in design and implementation of the projects.
- Women and men with disabilities are involved in working life

⁶⁴ The Swedish ESF- council <https://www.esf.se/Documents/V%c3%a5ra%20fonder/Programinformation/Socialfonden%2020/Socialfondsrapport%202020-07-27.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Programme area 2: Increased transitions to work
 - Specific objective 2.1: Women and men who are far from the labour market should enter work, education or get closer to the labour market
 - Specific objective 2.2: Facilitate the establishment of working life and increase participation in education for young women and men (15–24 years)
 - Specific objective 2.3: Women and men who are particularly far from the labour market get into work, education or closer to the labour market.

⁶⁶ The Swedish ESF-council https://www.esf.se/app/uploads/2021/04/ESF_slutrapport_210326-TA.pdf.

⁶⁷ The Swedish ESF-council <https://www.esf.se/att-ansoka/horisontella-principer/>.

- The goal is for the projects to promote the accessibility perspective in their operations by identifying and removing barriers to accessibility, and thus enables women and men with various disabilities participate in the project's efforts.
- Equal conditions for women and men in the labour market
 - The goal is for the projects to promote the gender equality perspective in their operations by gaining knowledge of women's and men's different conditions in the labour market, to be used in analysis and in the implementation of projects.

An impact evaluation assesses that initially during the programme period there were ambitious plans on how the horizontal principles could be followed up through various analyses of indicators.⁶⁸ In part, this has been done in the Social Fund reports, for example in form of gender segregation index and gender-aggregated statistics for participants. Other analyses (of for example accessibility) have not been done.

The evaluation also shows that the horizontal principles have not been followed up by the ESF Council during the implementation of the projects, neither find examples of how the indicators have been used to strengthen goal fulfilment.

6.2 Priorities for future investment (after 2021)

The planned investments, in addition to those outlined in previous chapters, are partly related to the experiences that the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Government wants SEK 400 million to be provided to Swedish sports in 2022 to facilitate the start-up of sports after the pandemic and increased participation in sports for children, young people and people with disabilities.⁶⁹ Statistic from Statistics Sweden shows that every fifth young person with a disability between the ages of 16 and 29 never exercises. It is twice as high as for others of that age. One barrier that is close at hand to explain the difference is accessibility. Based on the fact that the government addresses people with disabilities specifically in this initiative, there is reason to believe that accessibility will be a guiding principle in the efforts to be made.

Men's violence against women is a priority issue for the government.⁷⁰ In the budget bill for 2022, the government proposes extensive resources to be able to realize a package of measures with 40 measures to intensify the work against men's violence against women. The package includes measures to prevent the use of violence, support and protection for victims and stricter legislation when it comes to prosecuting people who have exposed their partner or former partner to violence, as well as a reform for sheltered housing for abused adults and children. As women with disabilities are at higher risk of violence in close relationships than adults without disabilities,

⁶⁸ The Swedish ESF-council https://www.esf.se/app/uploads/2021/04/ESF_slutrapport_210326-TA.pdf.

⁶⁹ The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/400-miljoner-for-uppstart-av-idrott-efter-pandemin/>.

⁷⁰ The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/omfattande-satsningar-i-budgeten-for-att-forebygga-och-bekampa-mans-vald-mot-kvinnor/>.

especially when assessed over the course of their lives⁷¹ it is of great importance that the measures planned are accessible for women with disabilities. Accessibility is however not addressed in the writings. In Sweden, despite awareness of women with disabilities being a vulnerable group for violence there are no current assessment tools or methods used within the social services in detecting and assessing risk for violence that are adapted or validated for the needs of women with disabilities.

In the budget bill for 2022, the government proposes continued initiatives to strengthen the work with mental health and suicide prevention.⁷² For 2023 and 2024, the government proposes to continue to set aside SEK 1.5 billion per year for investments in developing and strengthening primary care for mental health and ill health. Accessibility is not mentioned in the presentation of the initiative.

⁷¹ Bowen, E. & Swift, C. (2019). The prevalence and correlates of partner violence used and experienced by adults with intellectual disabilities: a systematic review and call to action. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 20(5), 693-705.

⁷² The Swedish Government. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/09/regeringen-forlanger-satsningarna-pa-psykisk-halsa-till-2024/>.

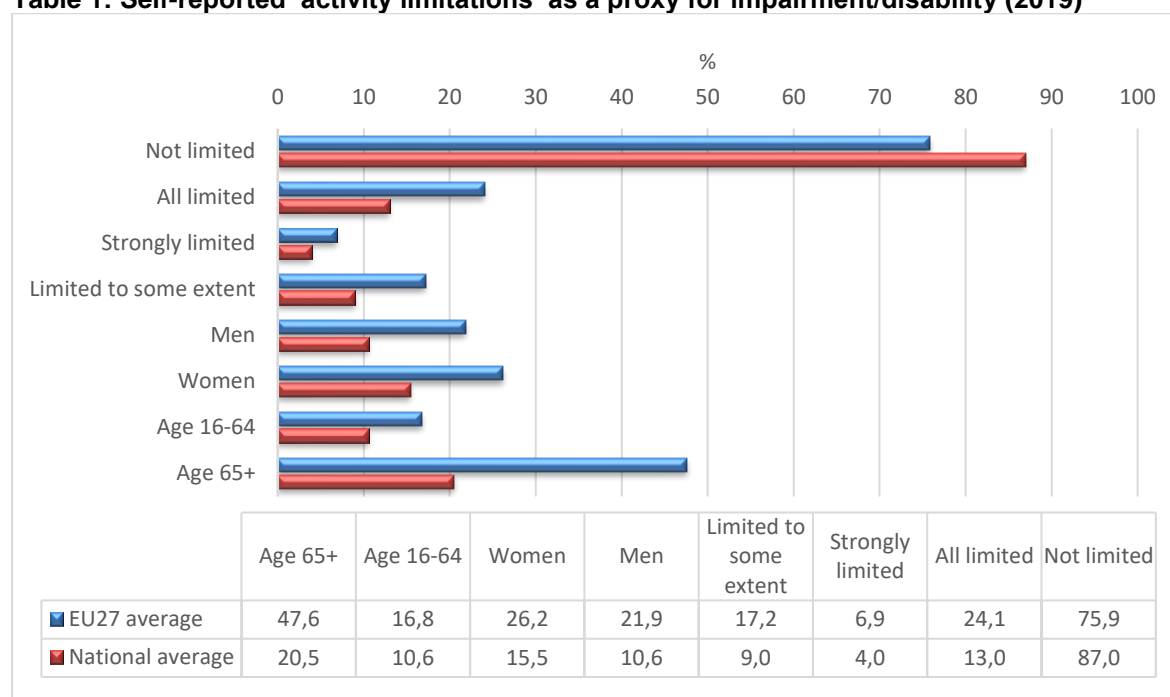
7 Annex: disability data relevant to the Semester

See also disability data published in the Eurostat database⁷³ and statistical reports.⁷⁴

Unless specified, the summary statistics are drawn from the most recent EU-SILC data available to researchers from Eurostat. The EU-SILC sample includes people living in private households and does not include people living in institutions (congregative households). The sampling methods vary somewhat in each country.

The proxy used to identify people with disabilities (impairments) is whether ‘for at least the past 6 months’ the respondent reports that they have been ‘limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do’.⁷⁵

Table 1: Self-reported ‘activity limitations’ as a proxy for impairment/disability (2019)



Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1.

In subsequent tables, these data are used to indicate ‘disability’ equality gaps and trends relevant to the analytical chapters – for the labour market, social policies and healthcare, and education – by comparing outcomes for persons who report and do not report ‘activity limitations’.⁷⁶ National estimates for Sweden are compared with

⁷³ Eurostat health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

⁷⁴ Eurostat (2019) *Disability Statistics* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics.

⁷⁵ The SILC survey questions are contained in the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_\(MEHM\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Glossary:Minimum_European_Health_Module_(MEHM)).

⁷⁶ This methodology was developed in the annual statistical reports of ANED, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/statistical-indicators>.

EU27 mean averages for the most recent year.⁷⁷ Fewer people reported limitations in Sweden than the EU average, especially among older people.

7.1 Data relevant to disability and the labour market

Table 2: EU and Sweden employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)

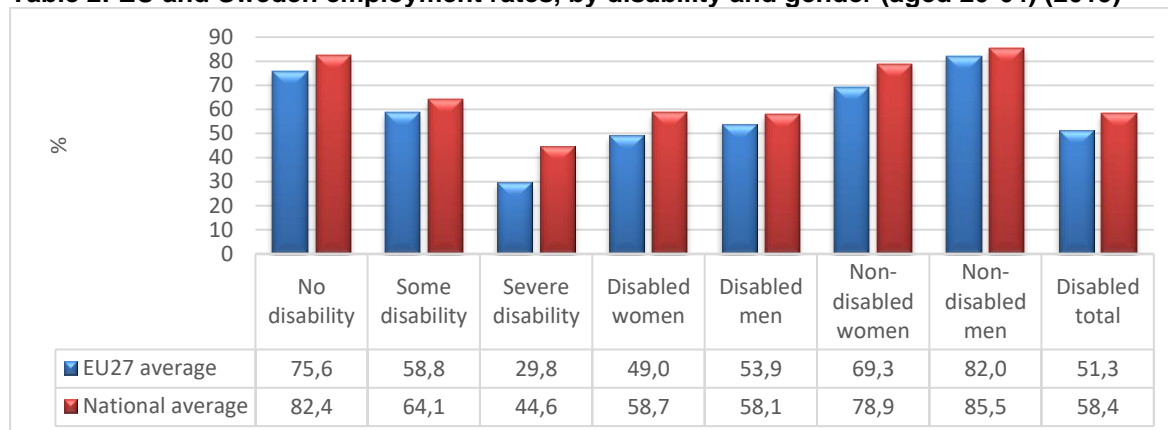
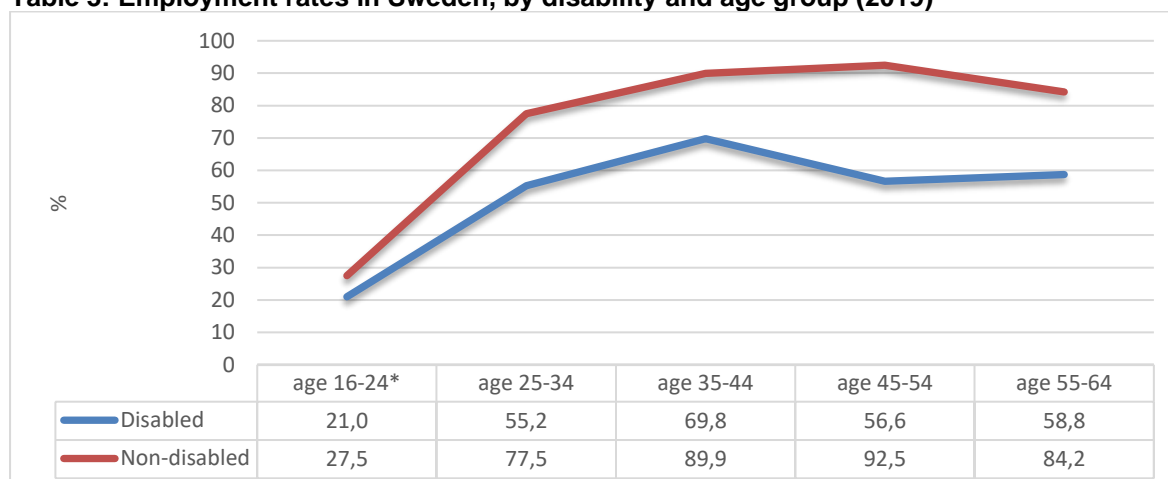
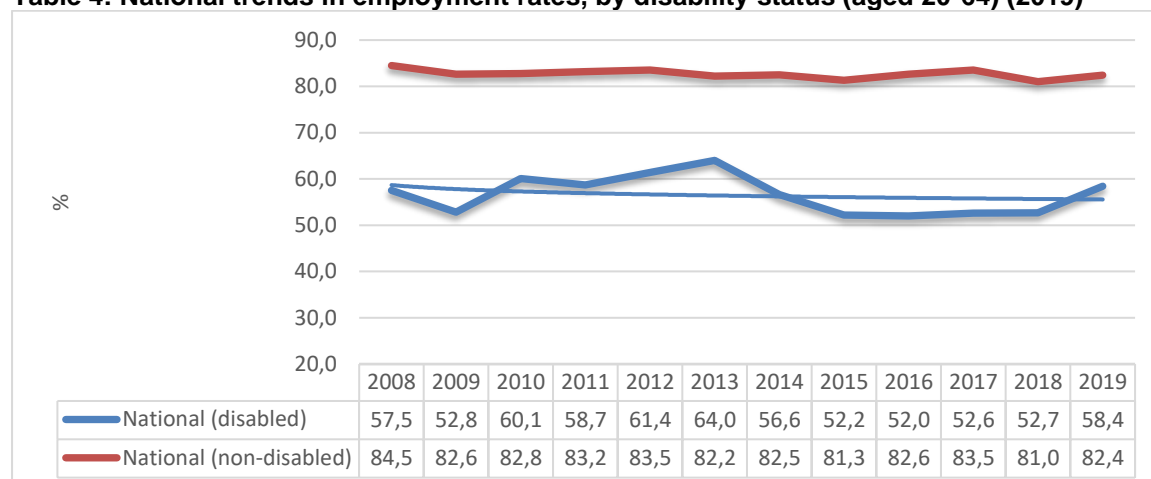


Table 3: Employment rates in Sweden, by disability and age group (2019)



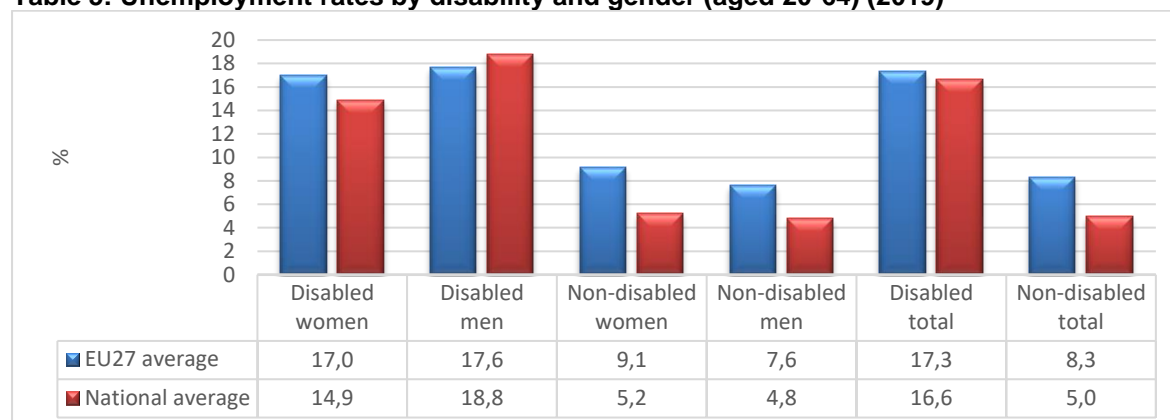
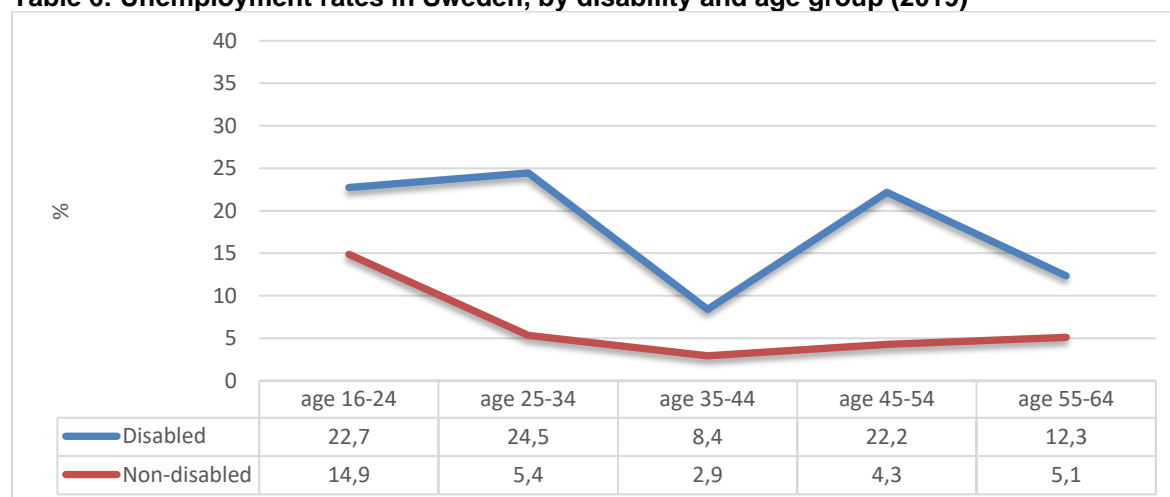
*There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group.

⁷⁷ The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU changes the EU average. Averages were also affected in 2015 by a discontinuity in the German disability data due to a definitional change.

Table 4: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)


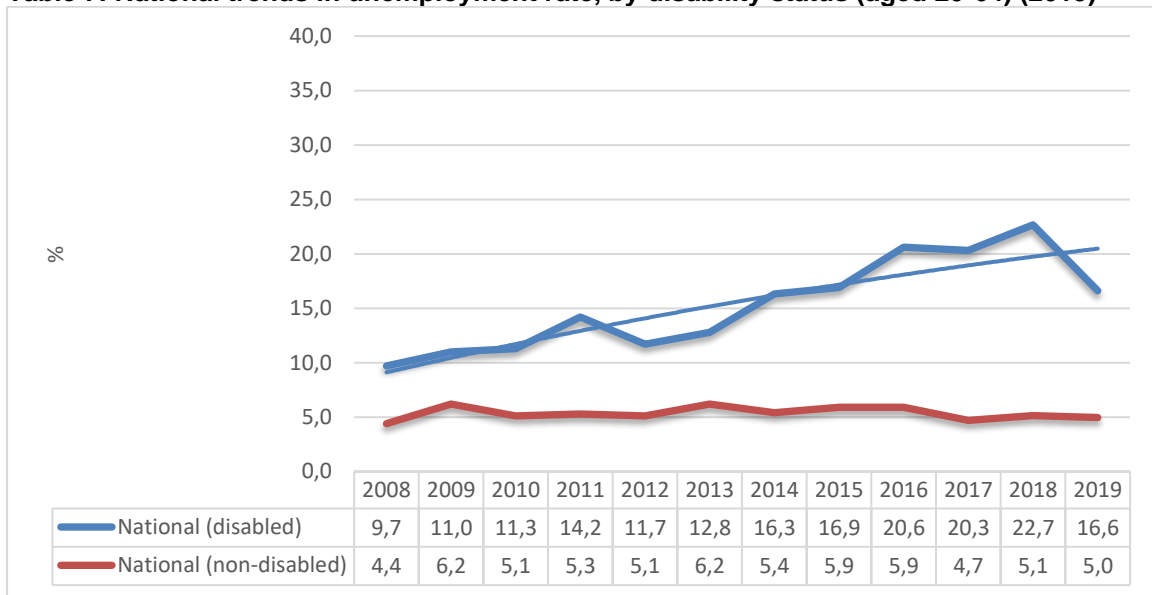
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

7.1.1 Unemployment

Table 5: Unemployment rates by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)

Table 6: Unemployment rates in Sweden, by disability and age group (2019)


*There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group.

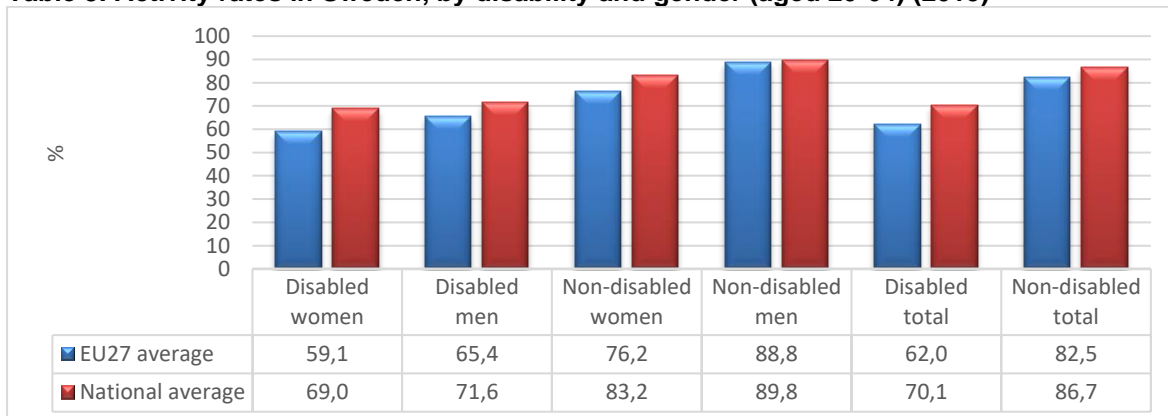
Table 7: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)



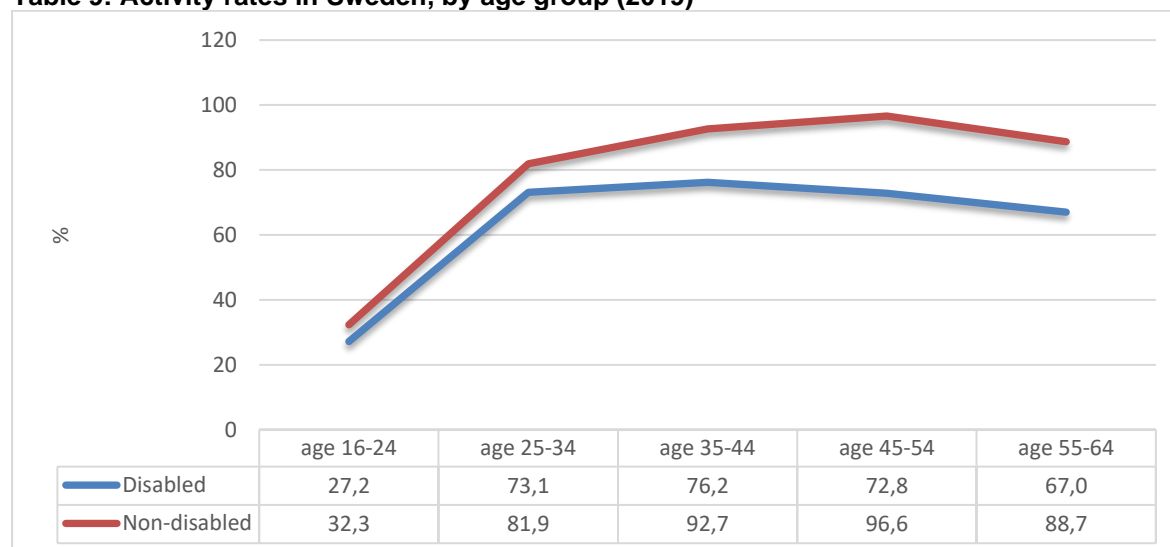
Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

7.1.2 Economic activity

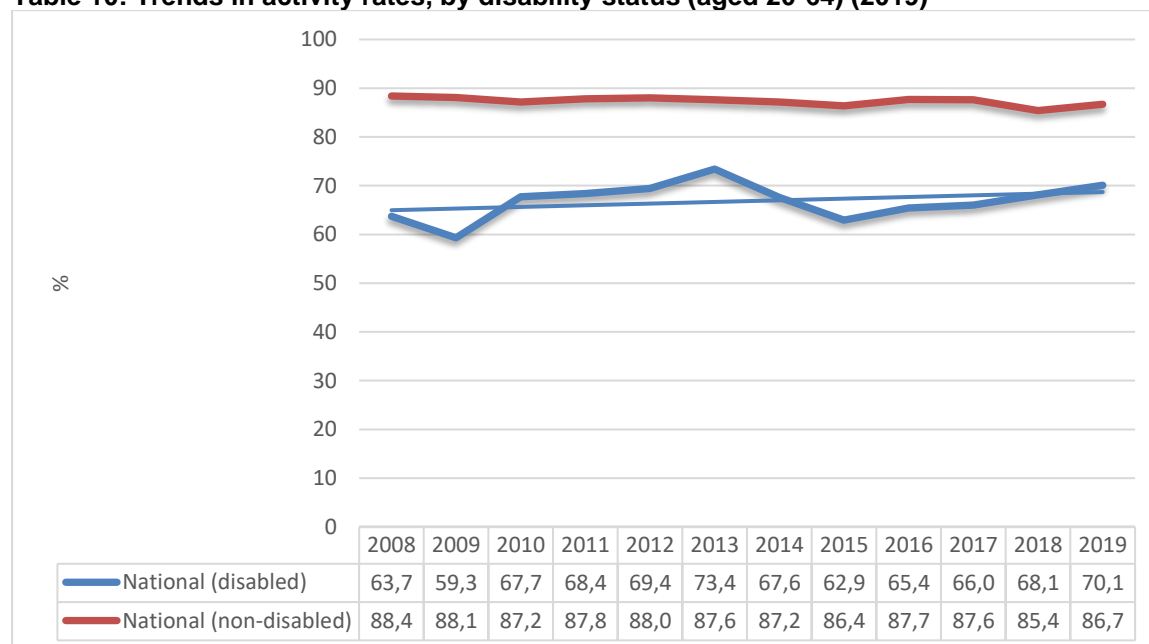
Table 8: Activity rates in Sweden, by disability and gender (aged 20-64) (2019)



*There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group.

Table 9: Activity rates in Sweden, by age group (2019)


*There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group.

Table 10: Trends in activity rates, by disability status (aged 20-64) (2019)


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs).

7.1.3 Alternative sources of labour market data in Sweden

Disability data is not yet available from the core European Labour Force Survey but labour market indicators for Sweden were disaggregated from ad modules conducted in 2001 and 2011. These can be found in the Eurostat disability database.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Eurostat Health Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

Employment data is also available from an annual survey on the labour market situation of persons with disabilities in Sweden.⁷⁹ Statistics for 2020 is shown in the figure below.

Table A: disability and labour force data from national statistics

	With disabilities (%) 2020	% men/women with disabilities	With reduced work capacity (%)	% of men/women with reduced work capacity	Rest of population (% of men/women)
Total population (16-64 years)	1 014 000 (16.0) (In 2013 987000 (16.4))	In the total population 15.7/16.3	429 000 (42.3 % ⁸⁰ of citizens with disabilities 16-64 years)	45.2/54.8	84.3/83.7
Employed (+ unemployed job seekers in Active labour market programmes) 16-64 years	681 000 (67.1) (In 2013, 612000 (62.0))	67.8/66.7	354 120 (52 % of citizens with disabilities 16-64 years)	50.7/53.7	78.4 % of pop, approx. 5 million) (81.0/75.7)
- Age 16-29 %	28.6		22.7		28.6
- Age 30-49 %	36.3		36.1		42.7
- Age 50-64 %	35.1		41.1		28.7
- Upper secondary education (highest education)	44.0		45.8		37.8
- Tertiary education	36.9		31.4		47.2
- Swedish born	83.1		79.1		74.9
- Migrant background	16.9		20.9		25.1

⁷⁹ Statistics Sweden

https://www.scb.se/contentassets/cc3fe0436677446aae7b1ba19729c6a2/am0503_2021a01_br_a_m78br2101.pdf.

⁸⁰ The method and survey questions has changed from last year which do not allow comparisons to last year's figures on people with disabilities and reduced work capacity.

7.2 EU data relevant to disability, social policies and healthcare (2019)

Table 11: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and risk (aged 16-59)

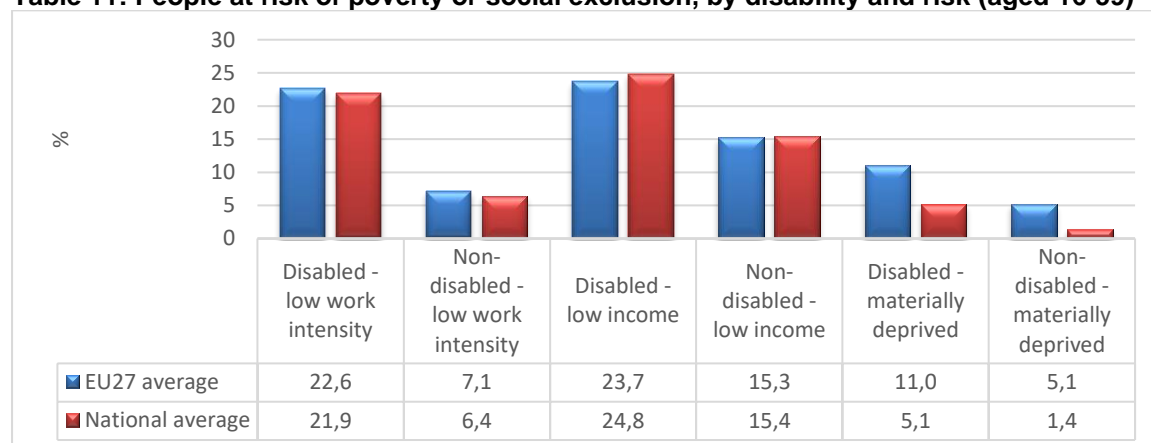


Table 12: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by disability and gender (aged 16+)

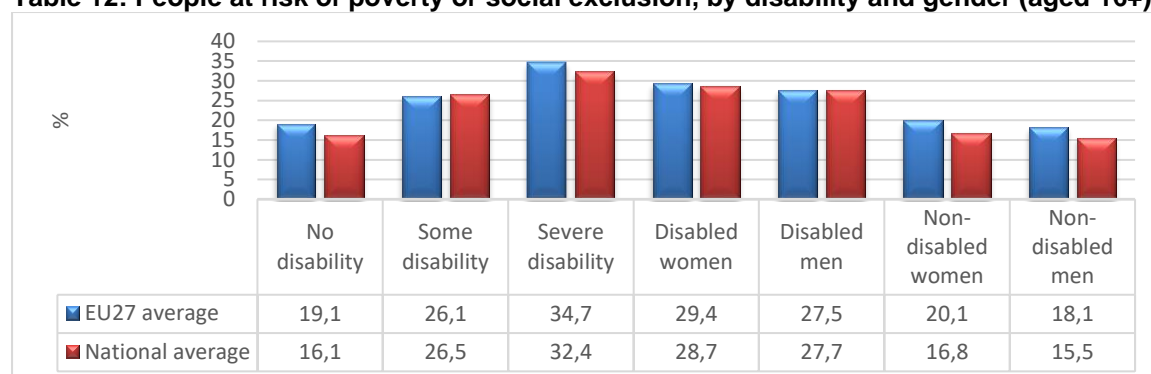
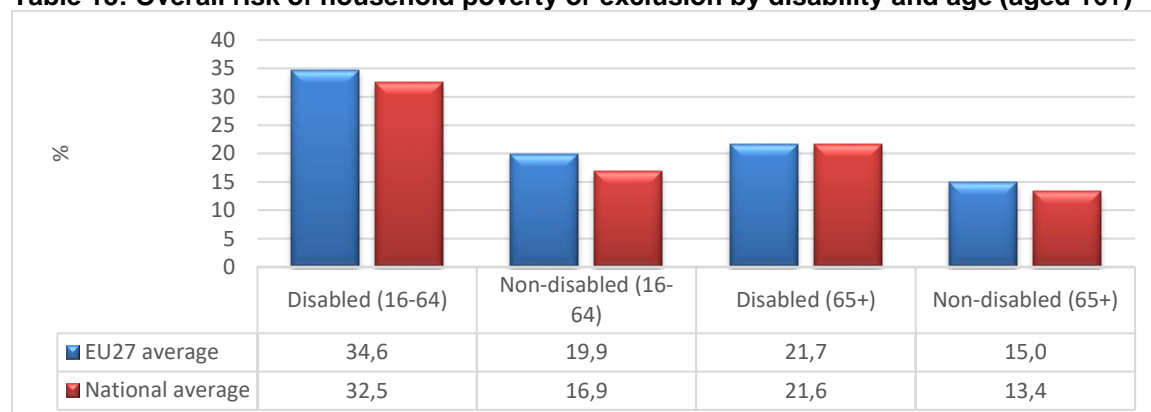
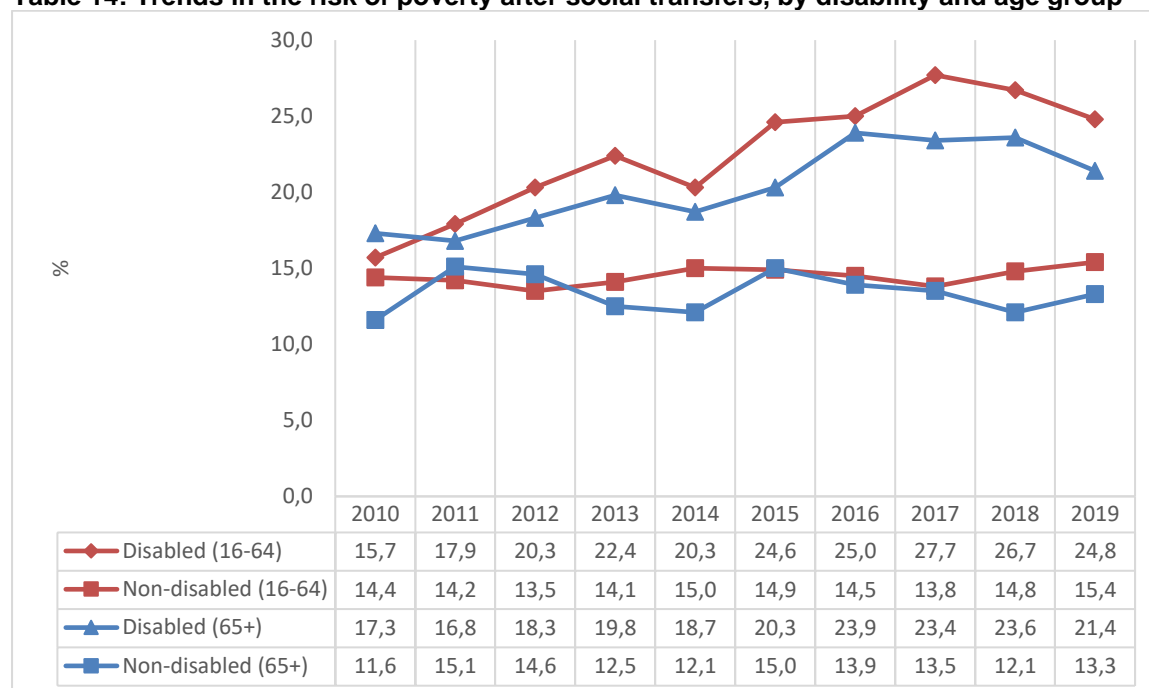


Table 13: Overall risk of household poverty or exclusion by disability and age (aged 16+)

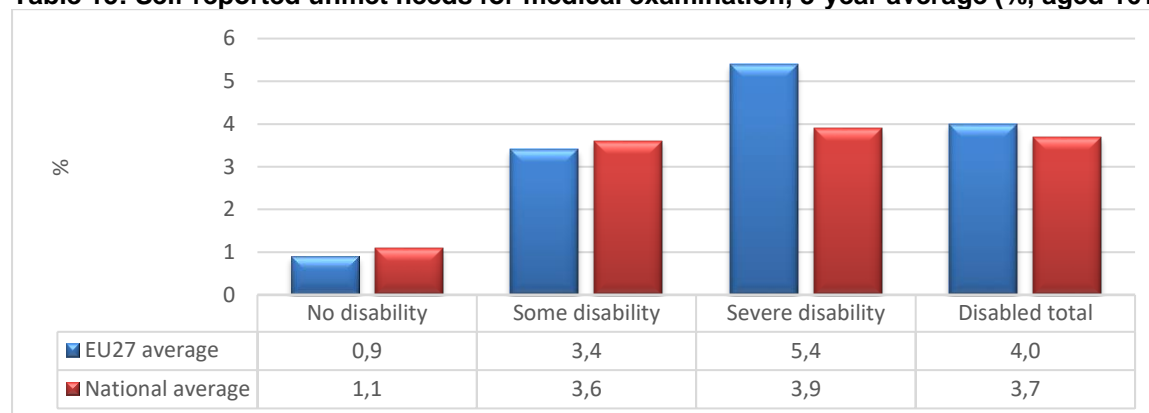


Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and previous UDB).

Table 14: Trends in the risk of poverty after social transfers, by disability and age group

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth_dpe020](#)] - People at risk of poverty.

Note: this table shows national trends in financial poverty risk, rather than the general AROPE indicator (which is not as comparable between age groups due to the effect of paid employment); the survey does not distinguish 'activity limitation' for children under 16.

Table 15: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination, 3-year average (% , aged 16+)

Source: Eurostat Health Database [[hlth_dh030](#)] - 'Too expensive or too far to travel or waiting list'.

Note: due to large variations an average of three years is indicated. EU mean averages are also skewed by high values in a minority of countries within disability groups but median averages for the total disability and no disability groups in 2019 are consistent with the 3-year mean values.

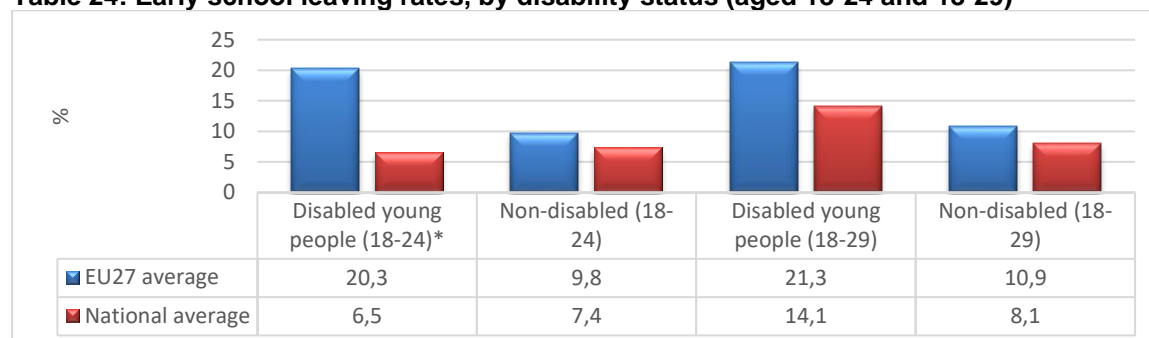
7.2.1 Alternative sources of poverty or health care data in Sweden

The EU-SILC data provides a comprehensive and reliable source concerning poverty or social exclusion rates. In addition to the summary tables presented so far, the Eurostat disability database also contains breakdowns concerning disability and poverty before and after social transfers, as well as in-work-poverty.⁸¹ National surveys or studies may offer additional information.

⁸¹ Eurostat Health Database, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

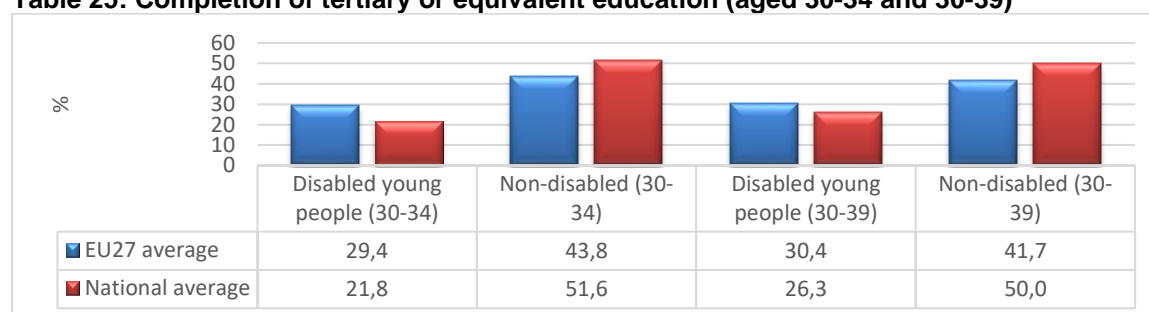
7.3 EU data relevant to disability and education

Table 24: Early school leaving rates, by disability status (aged 18-24 and 18-29)⁸²



*There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group

Table 25: Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (aged 30-34 and 30-39)



Source: EU-SILC 2019 Release 2021 version 1 (and preceding UDBs)

Note: *There were fewer than 50 observations in the youngest disability group. Confidence intervals for the disability group are large and reliability low (due to the small sample size in the target age group). An average of several years may be needed to establish trends or to compare breakdowns by gender.

7.3.1 Alternative sources of education data in Sweden

No alternative sources of education data in Sweden, other than mentioned in the previous sections.

⁸² There was a change from ISCED 1997 to ISCED 2011 qualification definitions in 2014 although some Member States continued to use the older definition after this time.

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