

## **Developing inclusive institutions, ensuring inclusive decision-making and reducing bribery and corruption (targets 16.5, 16.6 and 16.7)**

Target 16.6 calls for effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and target 16.7 aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Target 16.5 calls for substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms.

Inclusive decision-making is one of the calls of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), whose Preamble acknowledges that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them. In addition, article 4 specifically requires States Parties to closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in decision-making processes relating to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, article 29 stipulates that States should ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, and should protect their right to vote, to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

In 2021, the United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/154 reiterated that persons with disabilities should be actively involved in all aspects of public and political life, including in decision-making processes about policies and programmes and in national and international development programmes. The resolution also called upon United Nations Member States and other stakeholders to include persons with disabilities in all stages of policymaking and decision-making related to COVID-19 response and recovery. In 2022, United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/9 encouraged Governments to address inequalities that exist within the public sector workforce and to take steps to address social inequities in the design and delivery of public services (paragraph 12).

This section discusses the implementation of targets 16.6 and 16.7 for persons with disabilities and the remaining barriers to disability-inclusive institutions and decision-making. It presents good practices and recommendations for realizing these two targets for persons with disabilities. The section also presents an illustrative analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis target 16.5.

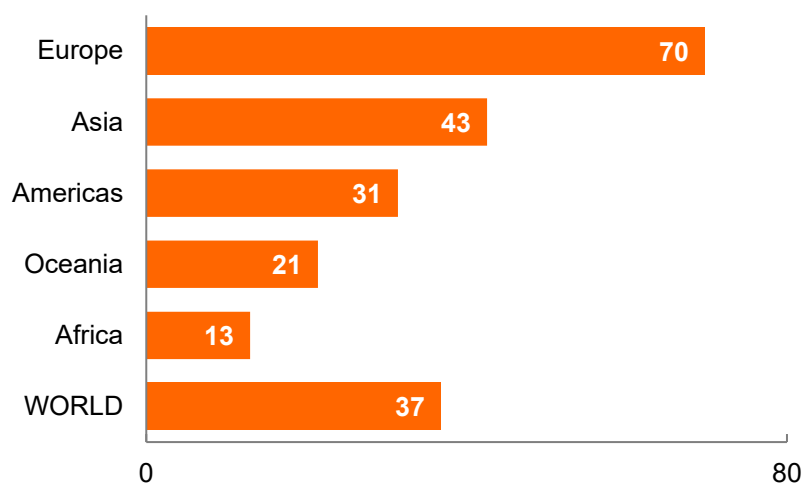
### **Current situation and progress so far**

#### **Inclusive institutions (target 16.6)**

Target 16.6 calls for effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Barriers in access to public institutions and public services remain for persons with disabilities due to lack of accessibility, discrimination, stigma and negative attitudes, including barriers to accessing public buildings as well as

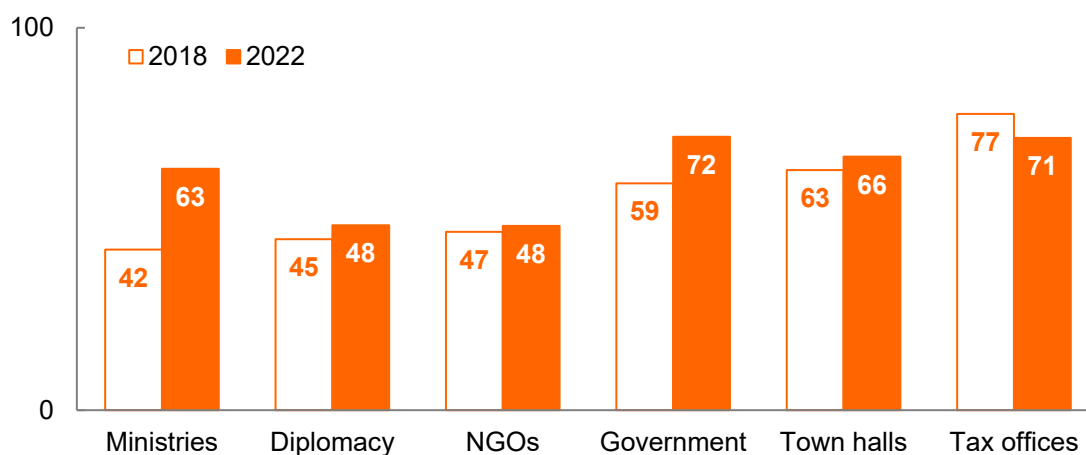
digital and in-person services.

**Figure 214. Percentage of countries with a national portal that is accessible for persons with disabilities according to W3C guidelines, in the world and by region, among 193 countries, in 2020.**



Source: 2020 United Nations E-Government Survey (UNDESA).

**Figure 215. Percentage of ministries, diplomacy-related premises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government premises, town halls and tax offices that are accessible for wheelchair users, worldwide, in 2018 and 2022.**

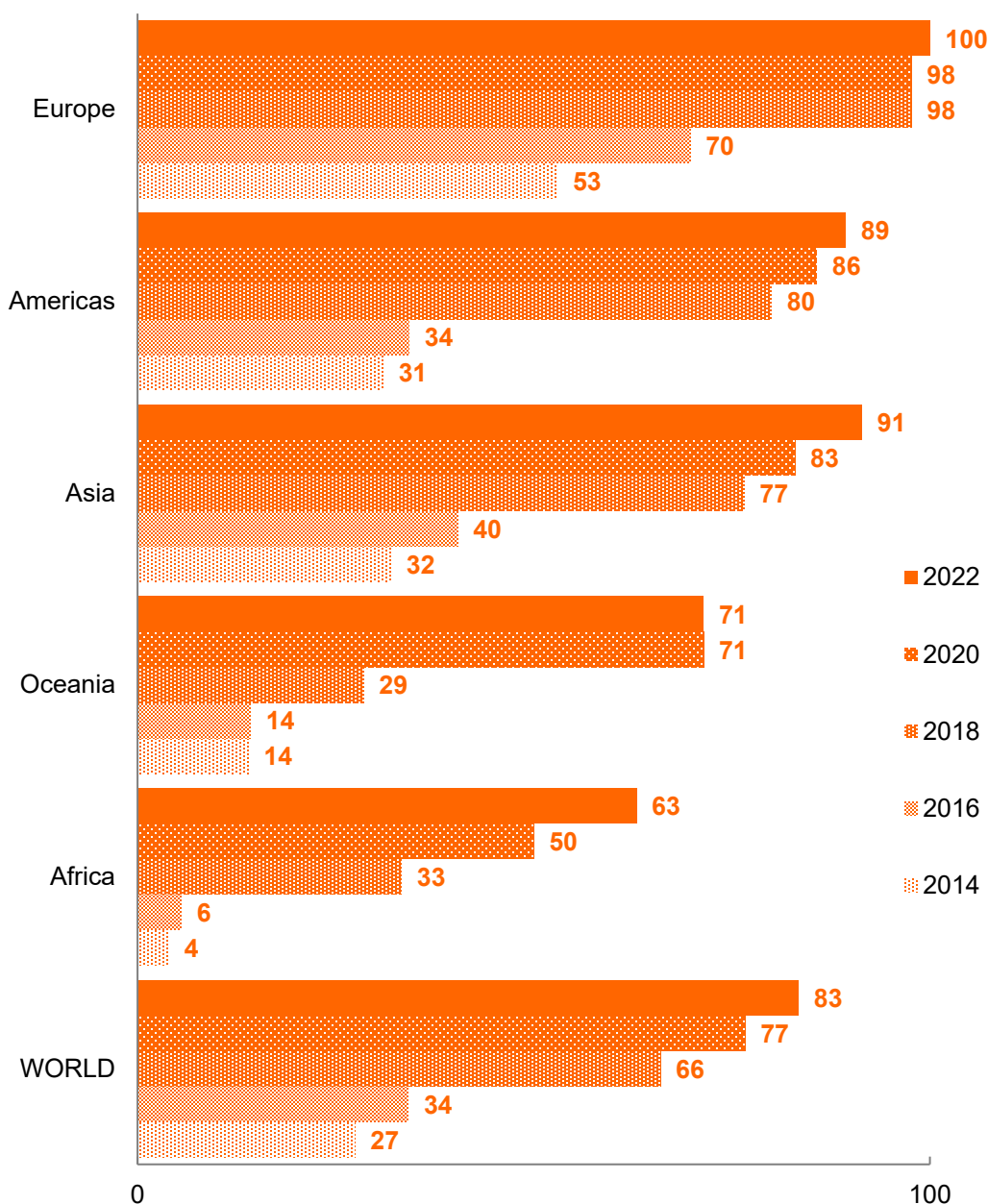


Source: UNDESA (on the basis of data from Sozialhelden<sup>10</sup>).

National online governmental portals are often not accessible to persons with disabilities (Figure 214). In 2020, only 37 per cent of countries offered a national website portal that was accessible for persons with

disabilities according to W3C guidelines, though the percentages vary according to region. Europe had the highest percentage of countries with accessible national portals (70 per cent), while Africa had the lowest (13 per cent). In between, 43 per cent of countries in Asia had accessible national portals, as did 31 per cent of countries in the Americas and 21 per cent of countries in Oceania.

**Figure 216. Percentage of countries with online government services for persons with disabilities, in the world and by region, among 193 countries, in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022.**



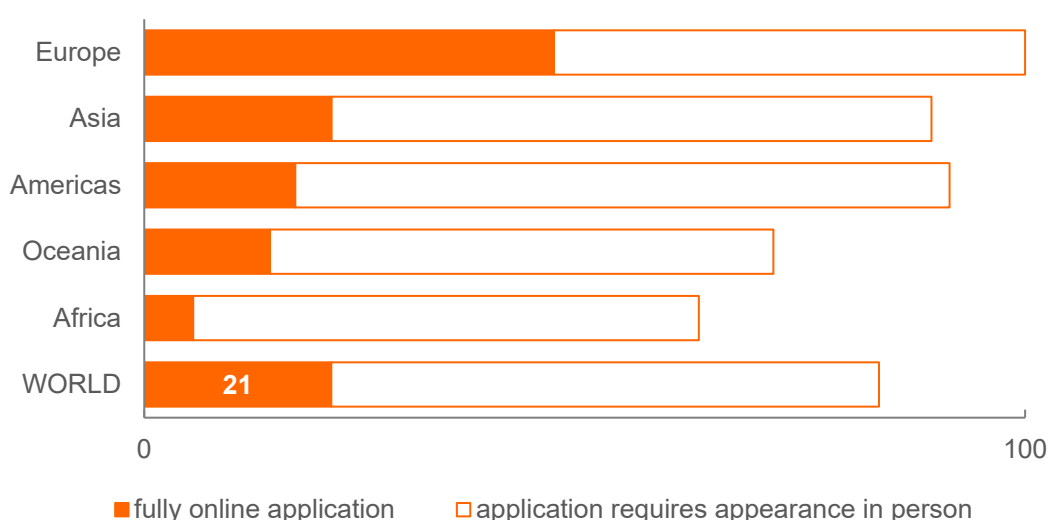
Source: 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022 United Nations E-Government Surveys (UNDESA).

Apart from national portals, other public institutions and services lack inclusion and remain inaccessible for persons with disabilities. In 2022, among 43 countries, 56 per cent of libraries did not have an official policy on access for persons with disabilities. In addition, 22 per cent were not accessible for persons with physical disabilities; 51 per cent were not accessible for persons with sensory impairments; and 55 per cent were not accessible for persons with cognitive disabilities. Furthermore, 27 per cent of libraries indicated that their websites were not accessible for persons with disabilities. Human and financial resources to make libraries accessible and inclusive of persons with disabilities remained scarce. Only 29 per cent of libraries had a person responsible for accessibility in the library; only 11 per cent of libraries had all their staff trained in accessibility; and merely 16 per cent had a budget for accessibility.<sup>562</sup>

Crowdsourced data, mostly from developed countries, indicates that in 2022, 72 per cent of government premises, 71 per cent of tax offices, 66 per cent of town halls, 63 per cent of governmental ministries and 48 per cent of diplomacy-related premises and non-governmental organizations were accessible for wheelchair users, with little or no improvement in accessibility since 2018 for all these premises except for governmental ministries and government premises (Figure 215).

Countries have increasingly been investing in the provision of online governmental services for persons with disabilities (Figure 216). In 2022, 83 per cent of countries had these services, up from 27 per cent in 2014 – a threefold increase. In 2022, online services for persons with disabilities were highest in Europe (100 per cent) and lowest in Africa (63 per cent), though every region had made significant improvements since 2014.

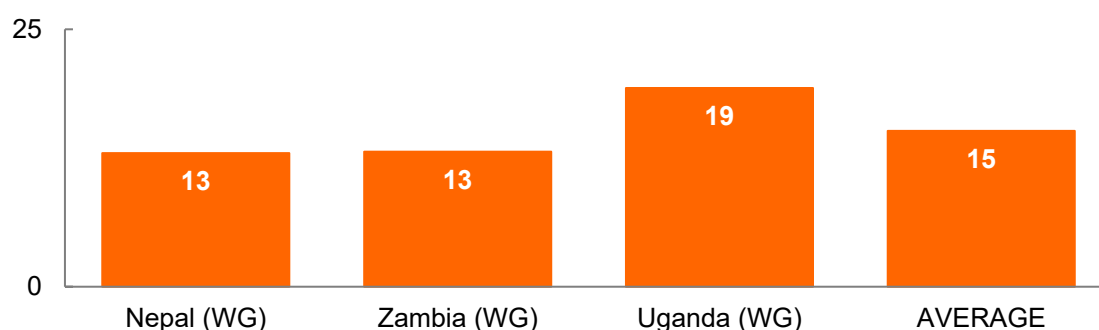
**Figure 217. Percentage of countries in which persons with disabilities can apply fully online for services versus those which require appearance in person to benefit from the service, among 193 countries, in 2022.**



Source: 2022 United Nations E-Government Survey (UNDESA).

A requirement to appear in person to access public services can be a barrier for persons with disabilities, particularly persons with mobility-related disabilities. Online access to public services therefore enhances much-needed access to persons with disabilities. However, 62 per cent of countries, despite offering information about the services online, still require that the individual with disabilities appear in person to benefit from the service (Figure 217). Only 21 per cent of countries in the world offer both online information about services for persons with disabilities and online access to these services without requiring an appearance in person – such as applying for a disability benefit. Europe has the highest percentage of countries that do so (47 per cent) and Africa has the lowest percentage (6 per cent).

**Figure 218. Persons with disabilities who report being discriminated against in public services, in 3 countries, in 2018 or latest year available.**



*Note: (WG) identifies data produced using the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.*  
*Source: UNDESA (on the basis of data from SINTEF<sup>9</sup>).*

Discriminatory attitudes within many public institutions remain a major barrier for persons with disabilities. In three developing countries, on average, 13 per cent to 19 per cent of persons with disabilities reported being discriminated against in public services (Figure 218).

The extent to which disability-inclusion projects and programs are prioritized in public budgeting and government expenditures is reflective of the commitment of governments and political leadership to promote an inclusive society and a governance system in which persons with disabilities can fully participate. These government expenditures may include spending to make public buildings and spaces accessible, education inclusive or to provide disability benefits.

Among 56 countries, public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities corresponds on average to 1 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP), with remarkable variations across countries (Figure 219). Denmark spends the most on disability benefits – about 5 per cent of its total GDP. India and Indonesia spend the least – about 0.001 per cent of their total GDP.

Among 37 countries, on average, public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities as a percentage of GDP has slightly decreased since 2014 from 2.08 to 2.04 per cent of the GDP (Figure

220). This decrease was seen in 19 countries, though in 18 countries this percentage has increased. Germany, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway increased disability benefit spending (as a percentage of total GDP) anywhere from 0.22 percentage points to 0.56 percentage points.

The international development community has been funding projects to further the inclusion of persons with disabilities in government and civil society decision-making. In 2020, bilateral aid to support projects to further the inclusion of persons with disabilities in government and civil society totalled 993 million US dollars.<sup>563</sup> The largest commitments of bilateral aid went to countries in East Africa, including Ethiopia and Uganda, as well as in South Asia, such as Iraq and Pakistan.<sup>563</sup>

**Box 10. Reducing the exposure of persons with disabilities to corruption and bribery in all their forms (target 16.5)**

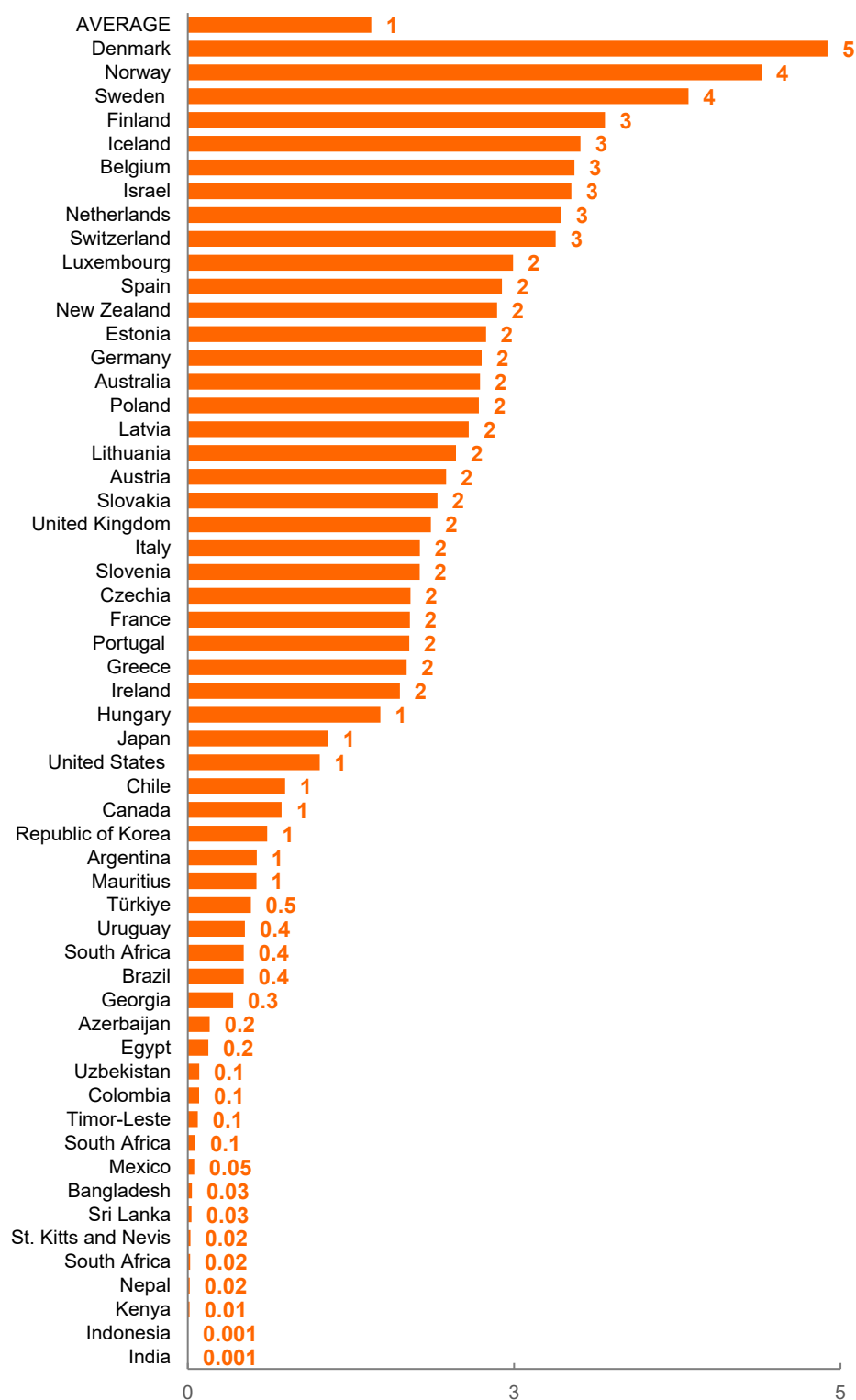
Target 16.5 calls for substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms, and indicator 16.5.1 monitors the proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official or were asked for a bribe by public officials, during the previous 12 months.

Persons with disabilities may be exposed to corruption and bribery in a different way than the rest of the population. On one hand, because of the barriers persons with disabilities face, public officials may try to take advantage of them and request bribes from them more often than from persons without disabilities. On the other hand, public officials may target persons with disabilities less often than others because persons with disabilities often have less access to financial resources than others. A survey in Ghana in 2021 found that persons with disabilities (23 per cent) were slightly less likely than persons without disabilities (27 per cent) to pay or be asked to pay a bribe when interacting with public officials.<sup>564</sup>

During disasters, conflicts and other emergencies, persons with disabilities may also be at higher risk of being exposed to bribery. For example, in the protection of civilians site in Malakal (South Sudan), 0.3 per cent of internally displaced persons with disabilities encountered bribery when attempting to access services (Figure 207 of the chapter on targets 16.1 and 16.2).

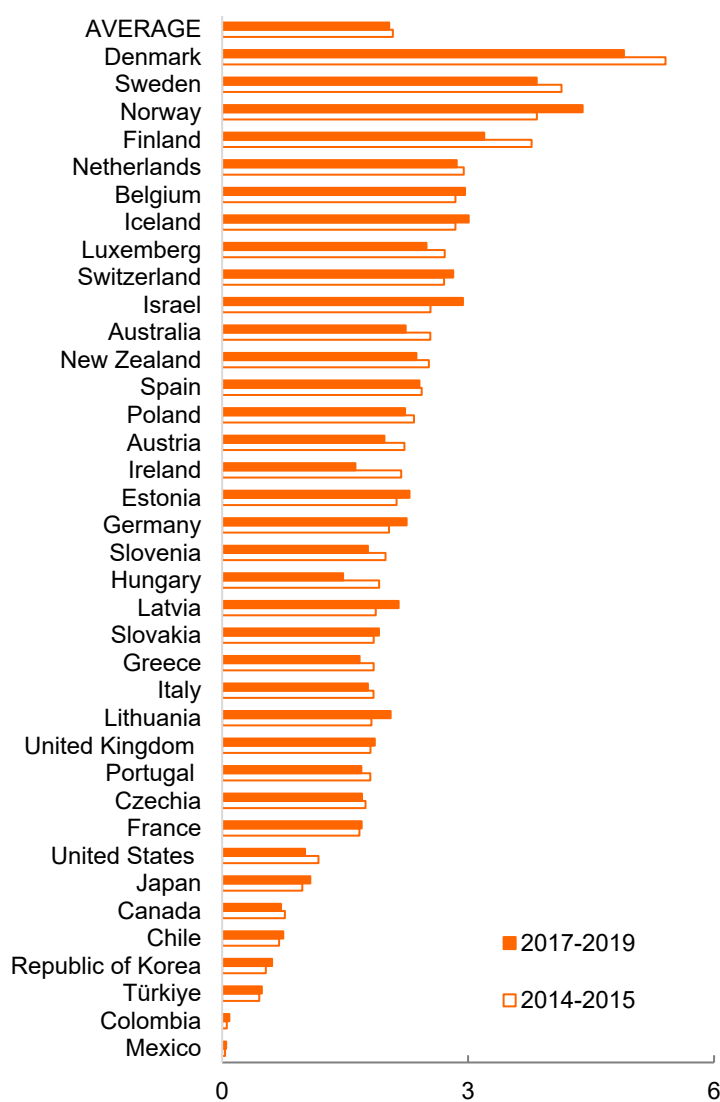
*Note: All data collected with the Washington Group Short Set of Questions.*

**Figure 219. Public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), in 56 countries, in 2020 or latest year available.**



Source: OECD<sup>565</sup> and Development Pathways.<sup>566</sup>

**Figure 220. Trend in public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) over time, in 37 countries, from 2014-2015 to 2017-2019.**



Source: OECD.<sup>565</sup>

### Inclusive decision-making (target 16.7)

SDG target 16.7 calls for ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels and specifically includes two indicators to be disaggregated by disability.

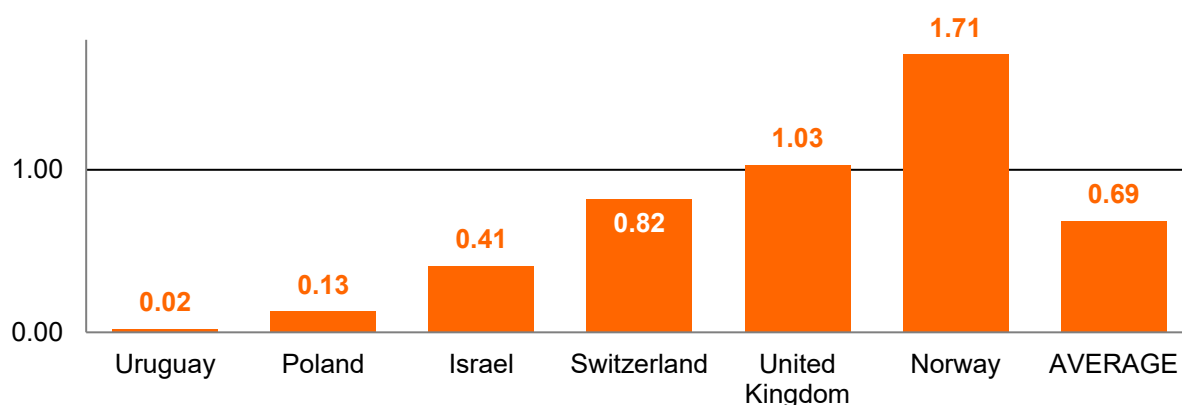
Indicator 16.7.1 monitors the proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, for inter alia



persons with disabilities. Data on this indicator show that the percentage of persons with disabilities in the national-level public service personnel remains low in various countries (Figure 221). Persons with disabilities are significantly underrepresented, relative to their share of national populations, in Israel, Poland and Uruguay, and slightly underrepresented in Switzerland. In the United Kingdom, their representation is about the same as in the national population and in Norway, their representation is above their proportion in the national population.

Lack of data does not allow assessing the extent to which decision-making in governments and the political system are inclusive and responsive. Available data from Tunisia allow a glimpse into a potentially larger trend. In Tunisia, a lower percentage of persons with disabilities (29 per cent) than persons without disabilities (37 per cent) believe that decision-making is inclusive; but a higher percentage of persons with disabilities (11 per cent) than persons without disabilities (7 per cent) believe that decision-making is responsive.<sup>285</sup>

**Figure 221. Ratio of the percentage of persons with disabilities in the national-level public service personnel (including police, education, health, front-desk administrative and all other public service personnel) to the percentage of persons with disabilities in the national population (indicator 16.7.1), in 6 countries, in 2020.**



Source: UN SDG Indicators Database.<sup>285</sup>

Persons with disabilities tend to be underrepresented in decision-making bodies, such as national legislative bodies. For instance, in 2018-2022, four out of ten countries or areas in the Asia and Pacific region had no parliamentarians with disabilities in their national parliaments, and in the others, the percentage of parliamentarians with disabilities ranged between 0.4 per cent and 6 per cent of all parliamentarians.<sup>14</sup> Some countries, however, are showing some signs of progress towards the inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies. Uganda, for example, reported about 47,000 representatives with disabilities serving in elected bodies – a result which was facilitated by

the adoption and implementation of accessibility requirements in public sector buildings and federal and local disability inclusion quotas (including gender-balanced quotas).<sup>567</sup>

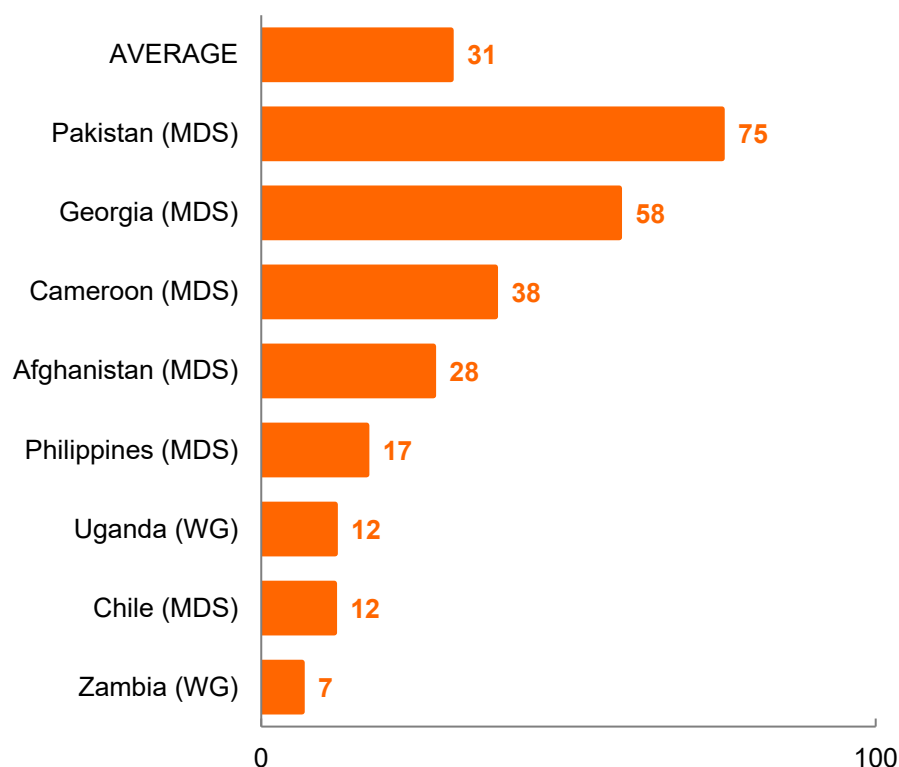
#### **Box 11. Government engaging with persons with disabilities in Malta**

The government of Malta has adopted a wide approach to engaging in consultations and dialogues with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. In 2014, the first National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disability was designed by the Committee for a Right Society. The committee is composed of persons with disabilities and their relatives, representatives of persons with disabilities and other experts. The government of Malta also promotes daily meetings with persons with disabilities, other civil society organizations and other stakeholders, and the Parliamentary Secretariat holds weekly meetings with the National Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability and other stakeholders, in which relevant governmental projects and policies are discussed. The Parliament of Malta passed the Sign Language Act (2015), which makes sign language an official language in Malta. Similarly, the Parliament of Malta has passed legislation that makes the inclusion of at least one person with disabilities within governmental boards mandatory.<sup>568</sup>

Persons with disabilities often remain alienated in decision-making on emergency and disaster risk reduction and response planning. Worldwide, in 2023, as few as 14 per cent of persons with disabilities had participated in disaster risk reduction decision-making in their communities, the same percentage as in 2013 (see the chapter on Goals 1, 11 and 13).

In addition to holding public office, voting is one of the most direct forms of political participation and a way for citizens to exercise their political rights. In many countries, persons with disabilities still face legal barriers to voting and to being elected for office: 67 per cent of countries have exceptions in their constitutions or laws that restrict the right to vote of persons with disabilities, of which 73 per cent have exclusions targeting persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities.<sup>32</sup> On the right of persons with disabilities to be elected for office, 91 per cent have exceptions, out of which 65 per cent include exclusions targeting persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities.<sup>32</sup> Electoral violence – including acts or threats to intimidate, physically harm, abuse or blackmail a political stakeholder to influence a political process – is another obstacle for persons with disabilities to exercise their political rights as many of them opt not to vote or stand for political office for fear of violence.<sup>569</sup> Recent research suggests that persons with disabilities are as likely as persons without disabilities to be targets of electoral violence, but experience more negative impacts in terms of mental health and social wellbeing.<sup>570</sup> There is a lack of research and data on electoral violence on women with disabilities and Indigenous persons with disabilities, but given the vulnerabilities of these groups and the higher levels of violence among women with disabilities than others (see the chapter on targets 16.1 and 16.2), it is likely that they are more impacted by electoral violence.

**Figure 222. Percentage of persons with disabilities who found voting problematic or not accessible, the last election, in 8 countries, in 2021 or latest year available.**



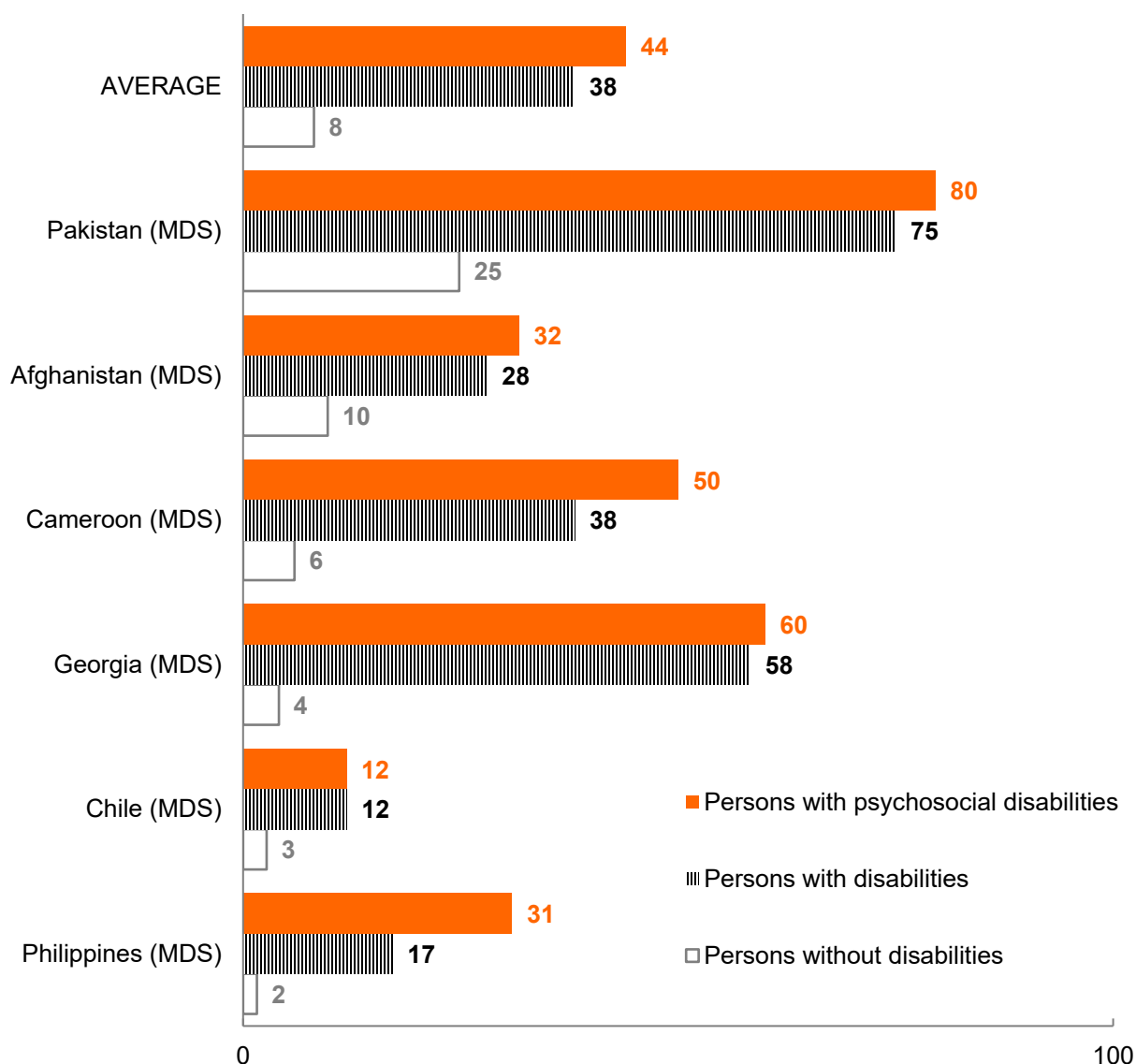
*Note: (MDS) identifies data produced using the Model Disability Survey; (WG) identifies data produced using the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.*

*Source: UNDESA (on the basis of data from SINTEF<sup>9</sup>) and WHO (on the basis of data from Model Disability Surveys).*

Lack of accessibility of many voting sites is another barrier to persons with disabilities. Ballots are often not provided in accessible formats, entrances to polling premises are often not accessible to wheelchair users, voting often has long lines without priority access for persons with disabilities who have difficulties waiting in line, signs to the polling premises are often not provided in accessible formats, and there are often no election officials communicating in sign language. For example, among eight countries, on average, 31 per cent of persons with disabilities found voting problematic or not accessible (Figure 222). In six countries, persons with psychosocial disabilities were more likely to report that voting in the last election was problematic or very problematic compared to all persons with disabilities, and persons with disabilities found it very problematic to vote in the last election compared to persons without disabilities. On average, for instance, 8 per cent of the population of persons without disabilities reported it was problematic or very problematic to vote in the last election whereas 38 per cent of persons with disabilities found it was very problematic to vote. Further, 44 per cent of persons with psychosocial disabilities found it was problematic or very problematic to vote in the last election (Figure 223). In six out of nine capital

cities in Asia and the Pacific, more than 80 per cent of polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities but in the remaining three capital cities, less than 10 per cent of polling stations are accessible.<sup>14</sup> Common voting obstacles reported by persons with disabilities include difficulties in reading the ballot, waiting in line, finding and entering the polling place, writing on the ballot and communicating with election officials.

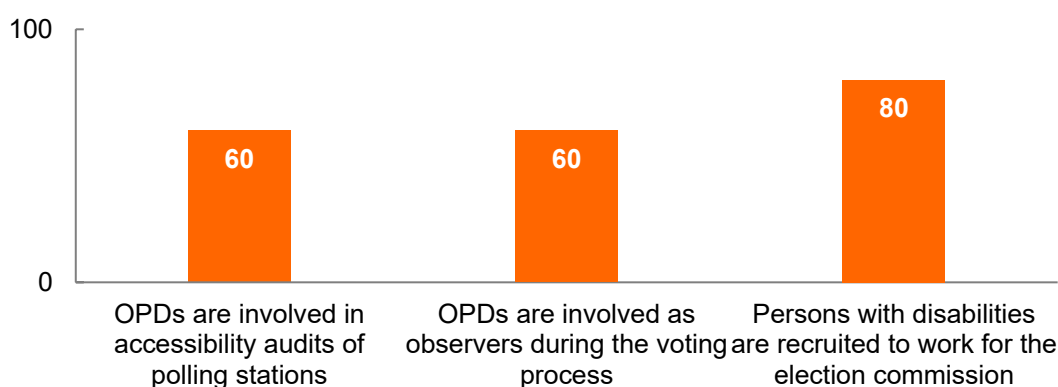
**Figure 223. Percentage of persons who found voting problematic in the last election, by psychosocial disability and disability statuses, in 6 countries, in 2021 or latest year available.**



*Note: (MDS) identifies data produced using the Model Disability Survey.  
Source: WHO (on the basis of data from Model Disability Surveys).*

To better address the needs of persons with disabilities, countries have been increasing their involvement in national voting and election processes. For example, in 80 per cent of countries or areas in Asia and the Pacific, the law requires that persons with disabilities are recruited to work for the election commission; and, in 60 per cent, the law requires that representative organizations of persons with disabilities are involved in accessibility audits of polling stations and are observers during the voting process (Figure 224).

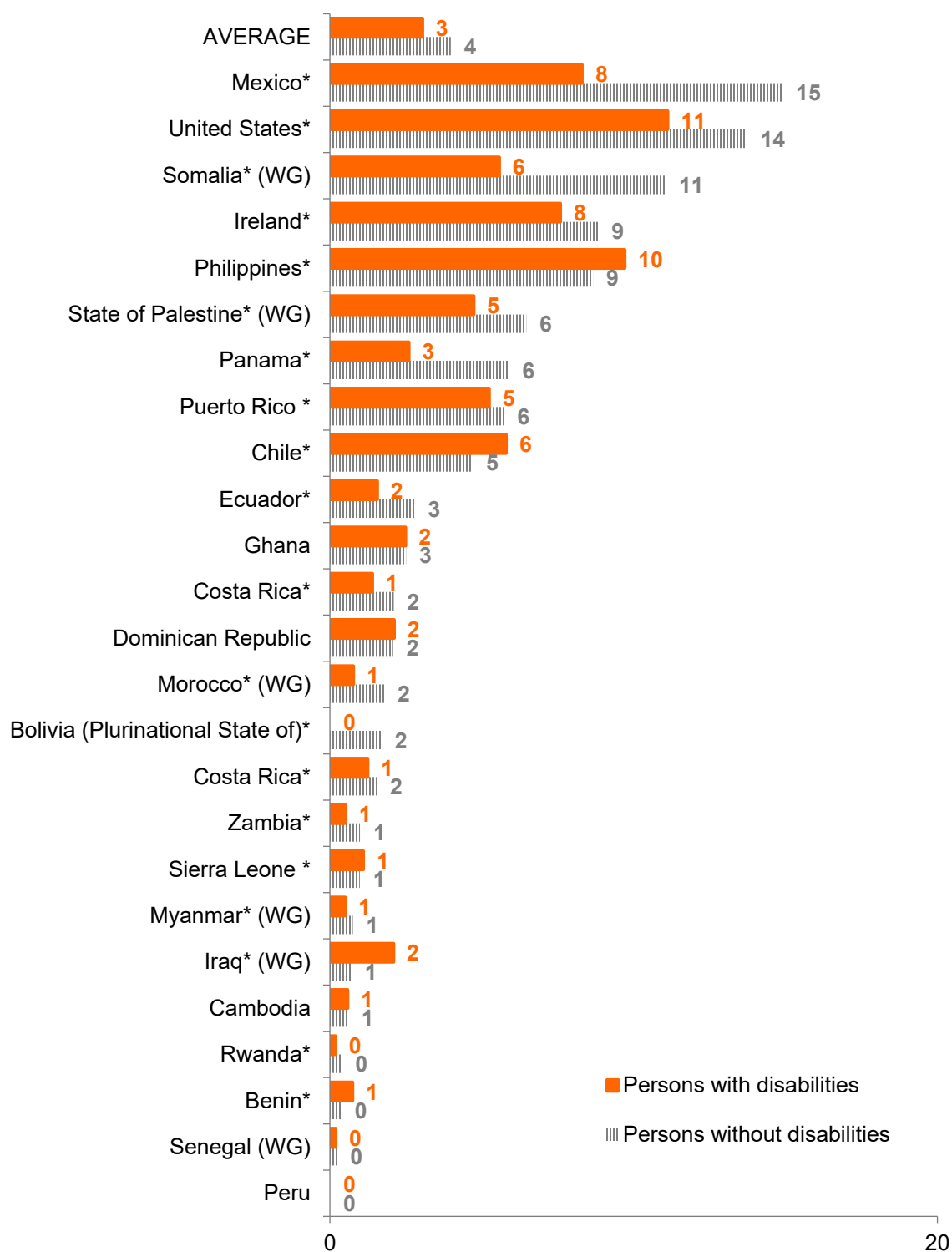
**Figure 224. Percentage of countries with legal requirements for the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (OPDs) in various processes relating to elections and voting, in 15 countries or areas in Asia and the Pacific, in 2022.**



Source: ESCAP.<sup>14</sup>

Many persons with disabilities face numerous obstacles to obtaining high-level decision-making roles. Among 25 countries or areas, persons with disabilities are less likely than persons without disabilities to hold a position as a legislator, a senior official or a manager in 18 of these countries or areas (Figure 225). The gaps between persons with and without disabilities are widest in Mexico, Panama and Somalia, where employed persons without disabilities are twice as likely as persons with disabilities to work as legislators, senior officials or managers.

**Figure 225. Percentage of employed persons aged 15 and over who work as legislators, senior officials or managers, by disability status, in 25 countries or areas, in 2021 or latest year available.**



*Note: (WG) identifies data produced using the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning. An asterisk (\*) indicates that the difference is statistically significant at the level of 5 per cent or less. Source: ECLAC,<sup>13</sup> ESCWA and UNDESA (on the basis of data from IPUMS<sup>8</sup>).*

## Summary of findings and the way forward

Public institutions and public services remain largely inaccessible to persons with disabilities, due to lack of accessibility and discrimination. A majority of countries, 83 per cent, offers online government services for persons with disabilities, but only 37 per cent of online governmental portals are accessible for persons with disabilities. Moreover, even when services are offered online, in-person appearance is often required to benefit from the public service, which poses a barrier to many persons with mobility-related disabilities: 62 per cent of countries require an in-person appearance. Data from a limited number of countries suggests that about 15 per cent of persons with disabilities experience discrimination in public services. Public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities is on average 1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Significant progress has been made since 2014 on the provision of online government services for persons with disabilities (from 27 per cent of countries in 2014 to 83 per cent of countries in 2022) and this trend is on track to reach all countries by 2030. Trends since 2014 in public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities suggest that globally this spending is stagnant.

Barriers to inclusive decision-making for persons with disabilities persist. In various countries, persons with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in the national-level public service personnel, with levels of representation lower than half their share in the national population. About 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find voting problematic or not accessible for them. In various countries, employed persons without disabilities are twice as likely as persons with disabilities to work as legislators, senior officials or managers.

Inclusive institutions and inclusive decision-making require that persons with disabilities can access the premises of these institutions and the places where decisions at governmental and non-governmental levels are made. In 2022, 73 per cent of libraries, 71 per cent of tax offices, 66 per cent of town halls, 63 per cent of governmental ministries, 51 per cent of museums and 48 per cent of non-governmental organizations were accessible for wheelchair users. In the past five years, progress in increasing the accessibility of most of these premises has been slow or stagnant. Town halls would need to become accessible for persons using wheelchairs at a rate four times faster, libraries seven times faster, museums nine times faster and non-governmental organizations 19 times faster than current rates of progress to achieve full accessibility by 2030. The accessibility of tax offices has been deteriorating and this trend needs to be reversed. Significant progress has been made since 2018 in the accessibility of governmental ministries (from 42 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in 2022) and these premises are on track to achieve full accessibility for wheelchair users by 2030.

Data on the exposure of persons with disabilities to corruption and bribery are extremely scarce. The limited data available suggest that persons with disabilities are slightly less likely to pay or be asked to

pay a bribe when interacting with government officials. During disasters, conflicts and other emergencies, persons with disabilities encounter bribery when attempting to access services.

As essential steps towards effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels for persons with disabilities and for inclusive decision-making, the actions below are recommended:

**1. Eliminate discriminatory legislation that violates the right of persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, to vote and to participate in all aspects of political and public life.** Adopt legislative measures to ensure that all persons with disabilities can exercise their right to vote and participate in public life, on an equal basis with others. Remove restrictions that impact the political participation of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the process of adopting or revising these laws.

**2. Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in national public service.** Introduce and enforce quotas for persons with disabilities, and for women with disabilities. Improve recruitment and retention strategies, including the provision of mentorships and training. Remove discriminatory legislation and practices on eligibility for public service.

**3. Support persons with disabilities who stand for political office.** Mandate a certain number of representatives for persons with disabilities in legislatures and government organs. Ensure candidates with disabilities can campaign on an equal basis with others by providing additional support to overcome accessibility barriers or cover disability-related costs. Provide additional support and implement measures for the increased participation of women with disabilities as candidates.

**4. Strengthen the skills of persons with disabilities to defend their political rights, including voting and running for public office.** Offer civic education and training on legal rights and national constitutions – these trainings should be developed in consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities and be offered in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. Empower persons with psychosocial disabilities, who have been especially marginalized, to advocate for political rights.

**5. Ensure that public institutions and public services are fully accessible to all persons with disabilities.** Make ministries, town halls, other government offices and other public institutions accessible for persons with disabilities, including through the provision of reasonable accommodation upon request. Ensure that online governmental portals are accessible for persons with disabilities, by complying with the W3C guidelines. Make online application for public services possible. Ensure that the mechanisms for reporting discrimination in public institutions and public services are available and accessible to persons with disabilities.

**6. Make the voting process fully accessible for all persons with disabilities.** Make voting registration accessible. Make polling stations and public facilities physically accessible for persons with disabilities



and ensure that alternative methods of voting are available to accommodate the various needs of voters with disabilities. Make remote and virtual voting possible.

**7. Promote an enabling environment for the political participation of persons with disabilities.**

Engage with media and other stakeholders to show persons with disabilities taking part in political life alongside their peers. Hire persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, as poll workers and election observers. Make all information related to political participation available in accessible formats such as audio, braille, easy-to-understand, large print and sign language.

**8. Prevent, identify and respond to instances of electoral violence against persons with disabilities.**

Electoral violence hinders persons with disabilities from participating in electoral processes. Involve persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, and their representative organizations in the design and implementation of strategies to prevent electoral violence. Train election officials and law enforcement officers to identify and respond to electoral violence against persons with disabilities, particularly against Indigenous persons with disabilities and women with disabilities. Develop mechanisms to report and monitor electoral violence against persons with disabilities.

**9. Ensure the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development and implementation of anti-corruption programmes.**

Develop complaint mechanisms to report corruption and bribery in consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities and make these mechanisms accessible to all persons with disabilities. In particular, information on these mechanisms should be made available in accessible formats, such as Braille and easy-to-understand.

**10. Keep adequate levels of public spending and government expenditures for disability inclusion.**

Provide adequate funding to expand accessibility for persons with disabilities of public buildings, spaces and services, support the implementation of inclusive education for persons with disabilities (see the chapter on Goal 4) and cover disability benefits to support the independent living and inclusion of persons with disabilities (see the chapter on Goal 1).