

Political participation in Cameroon:

The effective participation of men and women with disabilities in political life

Since 2017, the Political Participation Project in Cameroon has been supporting the country to deliver its democratic priorities by promoting an inclusive societal and political environment. It's also been addressing the existing weak engagement and representation of women and men with disabilities.

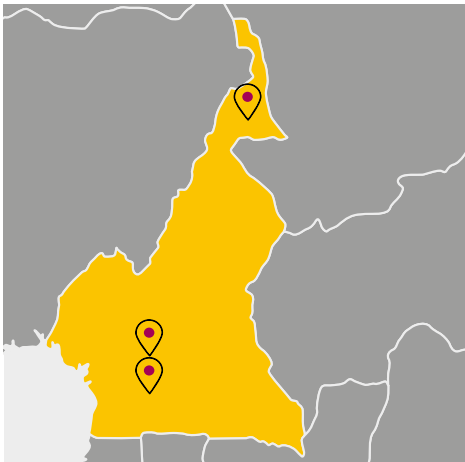
What did we do in this study?

We measured political participation among adults aged 20 years and above, with and without disabilities. We explored the relationship between disability and participation in elections, political parties and political discourse.

We did this to examine the impact of the Political Participation Project between 2017 and 2021 and to inform future work.

Where did we do it?

The project took place in three urban areas in two regions of Cameroon between 2015 and 2021 (Mbalmayo and Yaoundé in the Centre Region and Maroua in the Far-North Region).



How did we do it?

We conducted a cross-sectional population-based survey of adults aged 20 years and above and 4,297 people participated in the study: 57% of respondents were in Yaoundé, 35% in Maroua and 8% in Mbalmayo. The mean age of participants was 37 years and 58% of the respondents were female. The prevalence of disability was 10% and mobility difficulty was the most reported at 4%.

The survey's four sections included questions about:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics
2. Economic status of households
3. Disability, using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions
4. Political participation, looking at the following factors: possession of key documents (birth certificate, ID card and voter registration card), being registered to vote, having participated in past elections, ever having voted, being a member of a political party and regularly discussing politics

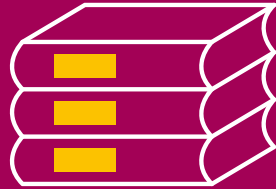
Our statistical analysis took the age, sex, education and location of respondents into account.

Key findings

Prevalence of disability

7% men

11% women



The prevalence of disability was higher among women (**11%**) than men (**7%**), and this also increased with age.

More people with disabilities had never been to school (**18%**) than people without disabilities (**12%**)

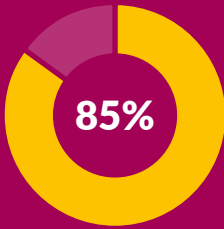


People with disabilities were slightly poorer than people without disabilities

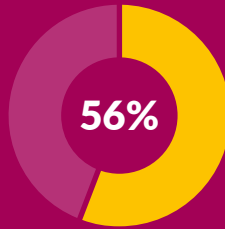
About **40%** of people with disabilities fall into the two poorest quintiles compared to **31%** for people without disability, and **37%** of people with disabilities fall in the two wealthiest quintiles, compared to **43%** among people without disabilities.

Political participation

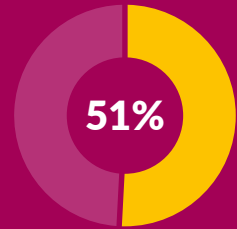
Possession of key documents for effective participation



Overall, **85%** of respondents had a birth certificate and a national ID card



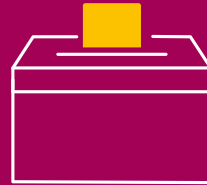
56% were registered to vote



and **51%** had a valid voter card



Looking at age, sex, education and location, we found that people with disabilities were around **1.5 times** more likely to not have a birth certificate and **two times** more likely to not have a national ID card.

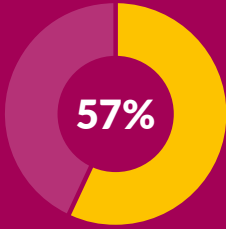


People with disabilities were also around **twice** as likely to not be registered to vote and **1.5 times** more likely to not have a voter card.

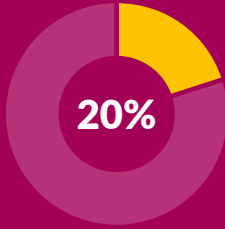


Our results showed **no statistically significant differences** in the possession of the key documents and being registered to vote between young people with disabilities and young people without disabilities.

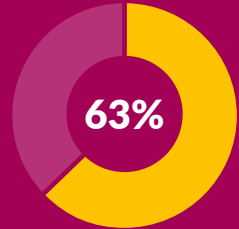
Participating in past elections



Overall, **57%** of respondents had ever voted



20% were registered members of a political party



and **63%** discussed politics



People with disabilities were around

1.5 times

more likely never to have voted in elections than people without disabilities

We found **no statistically significant differences** between people with and without disabilities being a registered member of a political party and discussing politics.



Implications for programmes



In our studies, people with disabilities reported being just as interested in discussing politics as people without disabilities. Yet they were less likely to have voted in an election. Our results show that people with disabilities were less likely to meet the basic administrative requirements to be able to vote, which is to have a birth certificate, a national ID card and a valid voter card. These findings suggest that our programmes should focus on supporting people with disabilities to address these administrative challenges.



Policymakers should take a **twin-track** approach to disability – ensuring that people with disabilities are systematically included in mainstream development policies and programmes. They should also develop distinct initiatives that respond to the specific needs of people with disabilities.



Organizations of people with disabilities can play a critical role in facilitating access of people with disabilities to essential documentation and thus increase their participation in election and other aspects of political life.

More Information

For more information visit: www.sightsavers.org or visit Sightsavers research centre at www.research.sightsavers.org



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