

# Persons with disabilities: Labour market perceptions survey Lebanon



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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## Introduction

Persons with disabilities are employed at lower rates than the general population in Arab countries. Most Arab countries have made efforts to include persons with disabilities in their labour markets, however the gap persists and employers still have negative attitudes towards them. This cannot be explained by persons with disabilities being unable or unwilling to work. Rather, there are several barriers that prevent them from accessing employment opportunities. To study these barriers, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) conducted a survey, in 2021, of 77 public and private sector employers of varying sizes and from different sectors in Lebanon to identify their perceptions of the factors that hinder the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

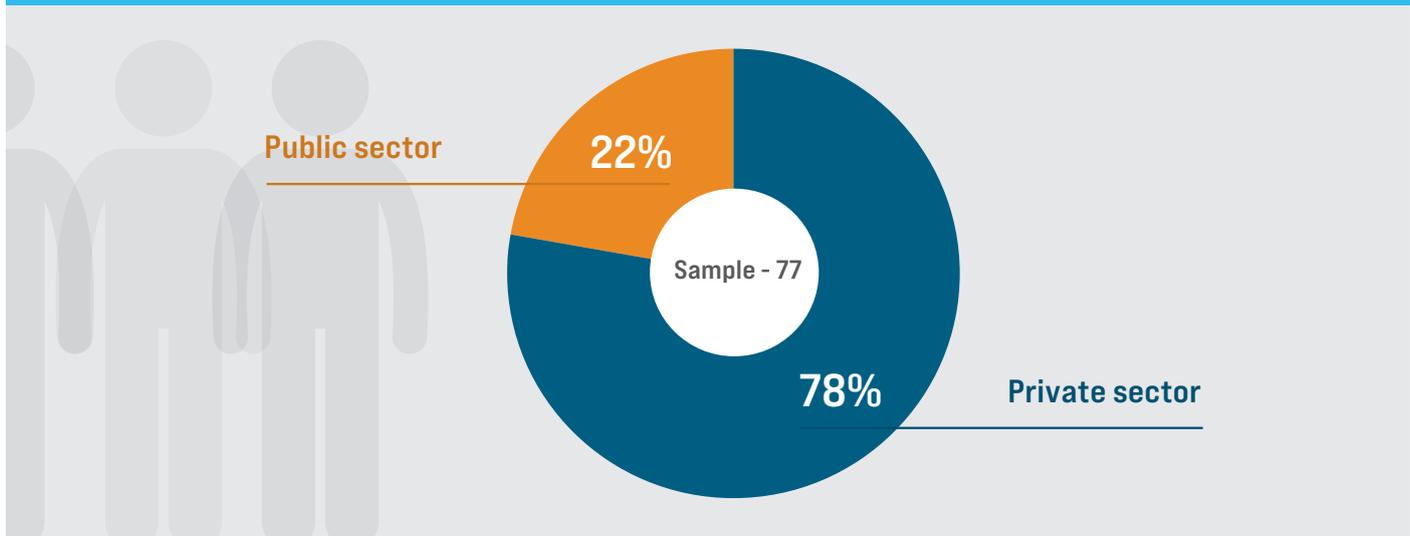
The present policy brief provides an outlook of employers' perceptions of employing persons with disabilities in Lebanon. It reveals that employers have attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder persons with disabilities from participating equally in the labour market.



**Attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder the employment of persons with disabilities**



Figure 1. Breakdown of respondents between the public and private sectors



## Employers' perceptions and misconceptions

Respondents expressed a number of concerns about employing persons with disabilities, including that persons with disabilities are less productive, reasonable accommodations are too expensive and persons with disabilities are more prone to have accidents and injuries. However, 75 per cent of respondents said that persons with disabilities are

not less productive than others, and 60 per cent of respondents that employ persons with disabilities reported that employing persons with disabilities has positive effects. Finally, 60 per cent of respondents that employ employees with disabilities said that none of their workers with disabilities needed accommodations in the workplace at all.

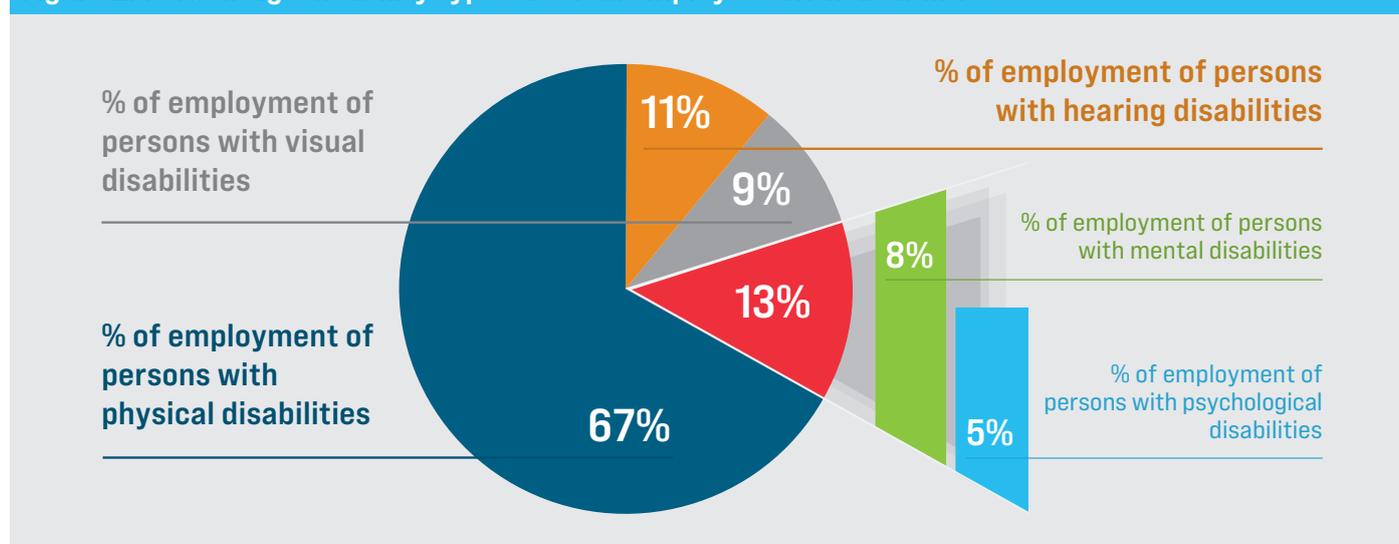
 <p><b>Workplace accommodations</b></p>	 <p><b>Risk of accidents</b></p>	 <p><b>Productivity</b></p>
<p><b>49.4 per cent</b> of respondents</p> <p>believed that it is costly to hire or employ persons with disabilities because of the accommodations they may need.</p>	<p><b>33.8 per cent</b> of respondents</p> <p>believed that persons with disabilities are more likely to have accidents and injuries.</p>	<p><b>24.7 per cent</b> of respondents</p> <p>believed that persons with disabilities are not as productive as others.</p>

## Employment rate per type of disability

There is a clear discrepancy between the employment rates of persons with disabilities according to the type of disability. Out of all employees with disabilities among the respondents, a full two thirds have physical disabilities, while only small percentages have hearing, visual, mental and psychological disabilities. This may indicate that

persons with these latter types face additional obstacles such as negative stereotypes and misconceptions that stop them from being offered employment. However, exploring the causes behind this discrepancy requires a more in-depth study that is beyond the scope of the present survey.

Figure 2. Percentage disability type out of all employees with disabilities



## Gender differences

A large discrepancy was recorded between the rate of employment of men with disabilities versus women with disabilities. Three quarters

of employees with disabilities were male and one quarter were female, an indication of the complex discrimination that women with disabilities face.

## Reasonable accommodations

Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls upon the State parties to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace, it remains one of the main barriers and challenges that limit the employment of persons with disabilities. The issue of providing accommodations and their cost is one of the concerns mentioned the most by respondents.

Two thirds of respondents believed that it is difficult and costly to provide accommodations for employees with disabilities.

**2/3**  of respondents believed that it is **difficult & costly** to provide **accommodations** for employees with disabilities 

## Policy recommendations

**Reform the legal and policy systems**, beginning with ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and continuing with review and amendment of national laws related to the right to work, including Law 220, to conform with the Convention. This should be complemented by regulations, decrees and budget allocations to facilitate implementation.

**Promote inclusive employment among public and private employers**. Employers should consider inclusion and diversity as part of their social and economic mission. They should also seek to eliminate barriers related to workplace and work conditions by providing necessary accommodations and ensure that their policies are not discriminatory against persons with disabilities. Furthermore, employers should develop training materials and guides to help build their knowledge regarding employing persons with disabilities. Matchmaking, recruitment and follow-up services should be provided for employers and persons with disabilities alike.

**Invest in raising awareness**. This will first entail improving persons with disabilities' knowledge of their rights and their capacity to demand them. Second, it will require raising awareness among the families of persons with disabilities to not be excessively protective and instead allow their family members with disabilities, especially women, to work. Third, it can involve gender mainstreaming and empowering women with disabilities with leadership skills to demand and defend their rights, especially the right to work. Fourth, it can include media campaigns for the employment of persons with disabilities, as part of a culture of inclusiveness that treats persons with disabilities as a core, indispensable element of society.

**Strengthen coordination mechanisms**. This includes partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), at the local and national levels. Joint projects should be supported between the National Employment Corporation and OPDs, and civil society more broadly, to establish inclusive pilot programmes within public and private institutions. Coordination should also extend to international organizations, which have access to global best practices and knowledge.



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