



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

The geography of disability and economic disadvantage in Australian capital cities

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Summary

This report presents data from the 2006 Census on severe disability among Australians aged 0–64 years living in capital cities. It also uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Index of Economic Resources to rank local areas within the cities according to the relative socioeconomic status of their residents.

How common is severe disability in our capital cities?

- The proportion of people with severe disability ranged from 1.9% in Perth, Darwin and Canberra to 2.8% in Hobart.
- This means that people living in Hobart were about 50% more likely to have severe disability than those living in Perth, Darwin or Canberra.

Greater disadvantage, more disability

- Severe disability was more common in areas whose residents had relatively few economic resources than areas whose residents had more. This is referred to as 'the social gradient of disability'.
- 3.1% of people living in the most disadvantaged fifth of local areas within Australian capital cities had severe disability, compared to 1.3% in the most advantaged fifth

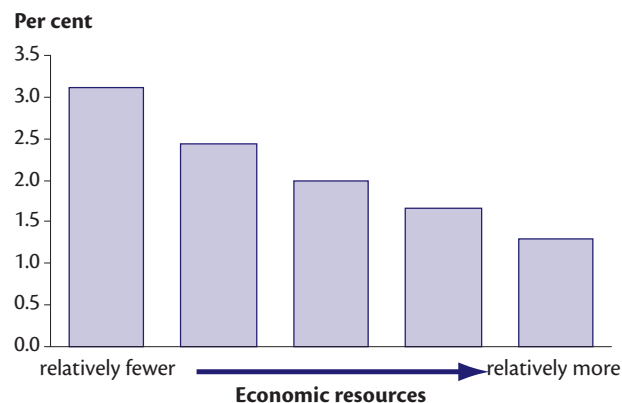


Figure 1: Percentage of people aged 0–64 years living in capital cities with severe disability, by quintile of disadvantage of area of usual residence, 2006

Disadvantage causes disability, or vice versa, or both?

- The relationship between economic disadvantage and disability may be due to a combination of different factors. For example:
 - on average, people with disability, and their carers, have lower income than people without disability
 - disability can impose extra costs on individuals and their families
 - a high proportion of public housing tenants have disability, and public housing in some cities is concentrated in disadvantaged areas
 - many risk factors for chronic disease and disability are higher among disadvantaged people
 - people working in lower status jobs can face greater occupational hazards that contribute to disability
 - physical and psychosocial hazards can be higher in more disadvantaged communities.

