

**Country Profile on  
Disability**

**KINGDOM OF THAILAND**

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Japan International Cooperation Agency  
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# Country Profile on Disabilities Kingdom of Thailand

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## Abbreviations

CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CBR	Community-based Rehabilitation
DPHO	District Public Health Offices
DPI	Disabled Peoples' International
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations
FESPIC	Far East and South Pacific Games Federation for the Disabled
FHC	Foundation for Handicapped Children
HI	Handicap International
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRC	Industrial Rehabilitation Centre
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
OCRDP	Office of the Committee for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
OPV	Oral Polio Vaccine
OT	Occupational Therapist
PPHO	Provincial Public Health Office
PPWO	Provincial Public Welfare Office
PT	Physiotherapist
RI	Rehabilitation International
SED	Special Education Division, Department of General Education
SNMRC	Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Center
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHV	Village Health Volunteers
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
WBU	World Blind Union

## 1. Basic Profile

### 1-1. Basic Indicators

#### Public Sector Expenditure<sup>1</sup>

Health	1.7%	1996-98
Education	4.8%	1997
Social welfare	38.3%	1998
Defense	2.3%	1997

#### Population<sup>1</sup>

Population (total)	60.7 million	2000
% of women	50.0%	2000
% of urban population	21%	1999
Life Expectancy <sup>2</sup> (total)	69.9	1999
Male	67.0	1999
Female	72.9	1999

#### Medical Care

Medical care personnel <sup>2</sup>		
Population/Doctor	4,167	1990-99
Population/Nurse & midwife	1,010	1992-95

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. World Development Report 2000-2001

<sup>2</sup> UNDP. Human Development Report 2001

**Education**

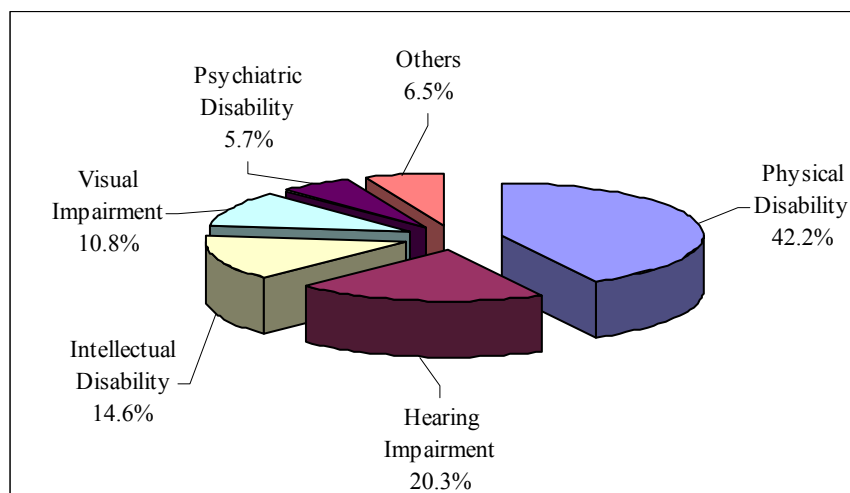
Education system <sup>3</sup>		
Primary education	6 year	
Compulsory education	6 year	
Adult literacy rate <sup>1</sup>		
Male	97%	1998
Female	93%	1998
Enrollment ratio <sup>3</sup>		
Primary education (Net enrollment ratio)		
Total	88%	1997
Male	82%	1995-99
Female	79%	1995-99
Primary education <sup>4</sup> (Gross enrollment ratio)		
Total	87%	1996
Male	98%	1992
Female	96%	1992
Secondary education (Net enrollment ratio)		
Total	48%	1997
Male	N/A	
Female	N/A	
Higher education <sup>4</sup> (Gross enrollment ratio)		
Total	22%	1996
Male	17%	1992
Female	20%	1992

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. Statistical Yearbook 1999<sup>4</sup> USAID ESDS. GED2000 Retrieved February 21, 2002, from <http://quesdb.cdie.org/ged/index.html>

## 1-2. Indicators on Disability

### Disability-specific Data

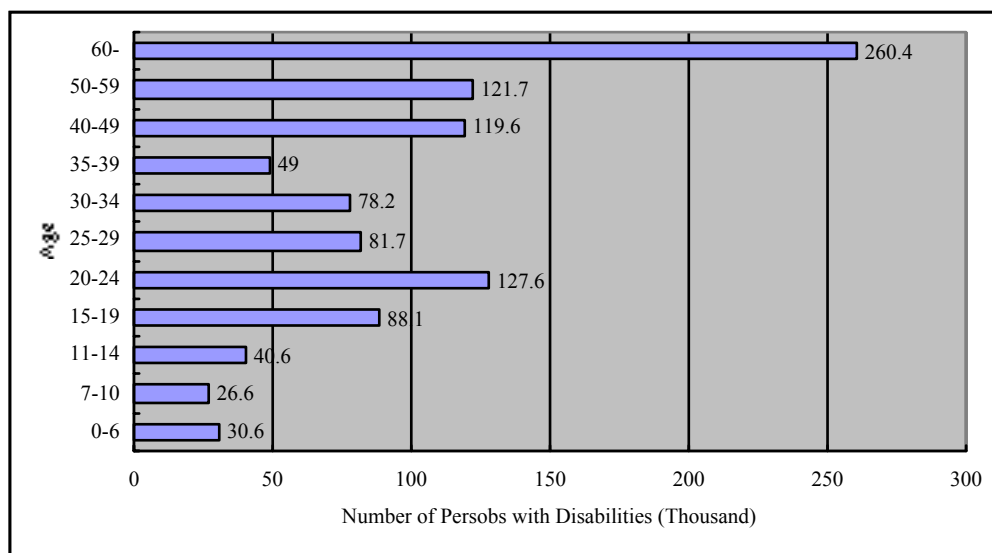
Figure 1: Types of Disability in Thailand (1996)



Source: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister. *Report of Health and Welfare Survey*. 1996.

### Age-specific Data

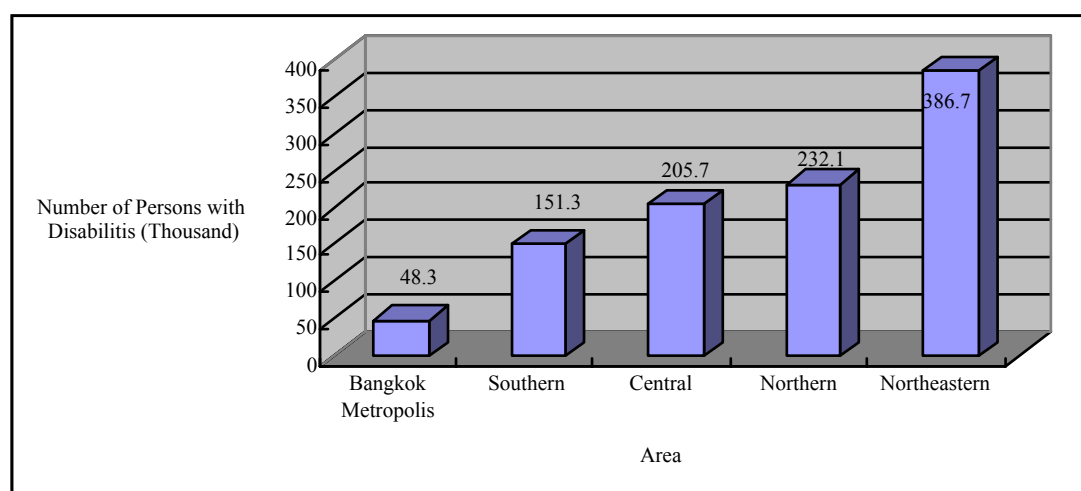
Figure 2: Number of Persons with Disabilities in Each Age Group



Source: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister. *Report of Health and Welfare Survey*. 1996.

### Area-specific Data

Figure 3: Number of Persons with Disabilities in Each Area



Notes: Numbers are given in thousands. Central area excludes Bangkok metropolis. Number of provinces in each area is; 25 in central (excluding Bangkok metropolis), 17 in northern, 19 in northeastern, and 14 in southern area.

Source: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister. *Report of Health and Welfare Survey*. 1996.

### Grade-specific Data

**Table 1: Number of Persons with Disabilities in Each Grade of Disability**

: total (men/women)

Grade	Physical Disability	Visual Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Intellectual Disability	Psychiatric Disability	Overlapping
1	n.a.	972 (727/445)	344 (172/172)	n.a.	309 (211/98)	1488 (879/609)
2	n.a.	744 (404/340)	1049 (559/490)	n.a.	576 (323/253)	1898 (1094/804)
3	6877 (1326/5551)	1854 (978/876)	3595 (2034/1561)	3958 (2167/1791)	n.a.	5397 (3050/2347)
4	9577 (6127/3450)	2575 (1425/1150)	3720 (2028/1692)	4577 (2474/2103)	n.a.	4397 (2531/1866)
5	3738 (2440/1298)	6049 (3158/2891)	7756 (4022/3734)	5070 (2878/2192)	n.a.	6732 (3904/2828)

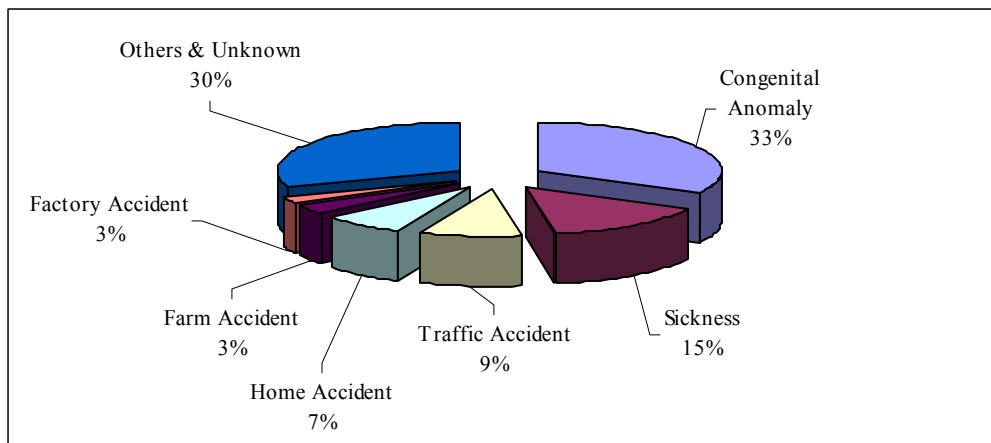
Notes: Data is only for Person with Disabilities registered from 1 January 1994 till 30 March 2000. Person with Disabilities registered till 30 March 2000 is 200,874 persons in total, but grades of disabilities are unknown about half of them. There are 5 grades to classify level of disability and grade 5 is the severest disability except psychiatric disability (grade 1 is the severest for psychiatric disability). As for physical and intellectual disability, only Person with Disabilities of grade 3-5 are supposed to register while those who of grade 1 and 2 do not have rights to register. And for persons with psychiatric disability, those who of grade 3-5 do not have the right to register.



Source: Office of the Committee for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, Department of Public Welfare

**Cause-specific Data**

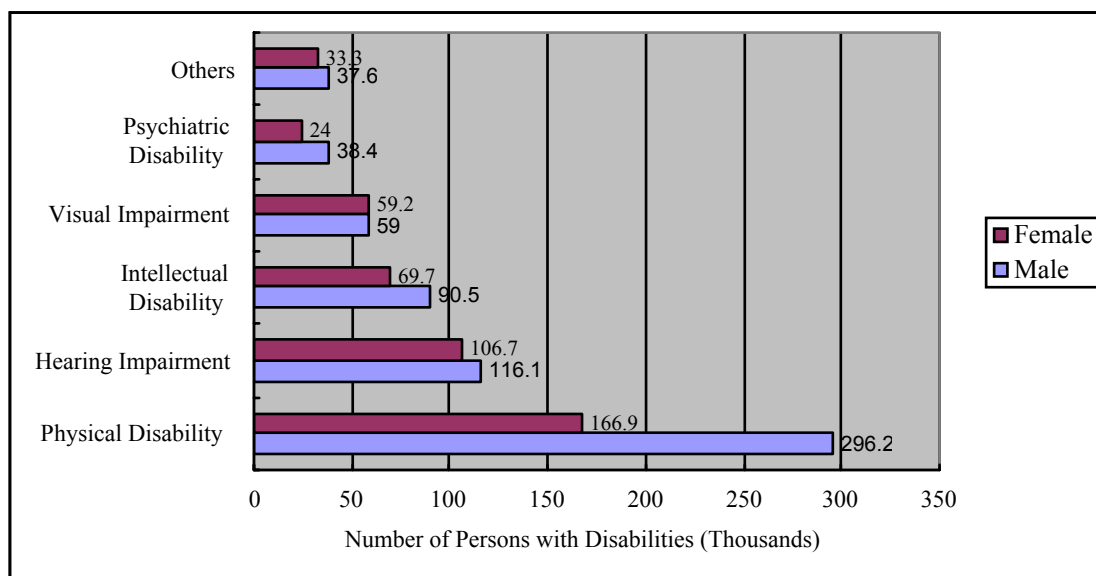
**Figure 4: Cause of Disability**



Source: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister. *Report of Health and Welfare Survey*. 1996.

**Gender-specific Data**

**Figure 5: Number of Persons with Disabilities in Each Gender**



Source: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister. *Report of Health and Welfare Survey*. 1996.

## 2. Issues on Disability

### 2-1. Definition of Disability in Thailand

According to the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act B.E.2534<sup>5</sup>, “a disabled person” means “ a person with physical, intellectual or mental abnormality or impairment, of which the type and criteria are designated in the ministerial regulation”.

In the description of Ministerial Regulation B.E.2537 No.2 pursuant to the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act B.E.2534, types of disability are classified as follows:

Impairment of vision

Impairment of hearing or communication

Impairment of physical ability or locomotion

Impairment of mental ability or behavior

Impairment of intellect or learning ability

Each type of disability is defined as follows:

Impairment of vision means:

the better eye, after using regular eyeglasses, is able to see less than 6/18 or 20/70 downward until unable to see any light, or

a visual field of less than 30°

Impairment of hearing or communication means:

a hearing frequency of 500,1000, or 2000 Hertz in the better ear under the average audibility as follows:

(1) over 40 decibels up to the point of not hearing at all for a child not older than 7 years of age

(2) over 55 decibels up to the point of not hearing at all for a general person, or abnormality or malfunctioning of the hearing system restricting comprehension or use of verbal language to communicate with others.

Impairment of physical or locomotion means:

obvious abnormality or malfunctioning of the physical condition which makes her/him unable to perform routine daily activities, or

loss of ability to move hands, arms, legs, or body as a result of amputation, paralysis or

weakness, rheumatic disease, arthritis or chronic pain including other chronic illness caused by body system dysfunction inhibiting her/him to perform routine daily activities or earn a living like an ordinary person.

Impairment of mental ability or behavior means psychological abnormality or malfunctioning of a certain part of the brain associated with perception, emotion and thought which causes inability to control behavior necessary for self-care or living with others.

Impairment of intellectual or learning ability means abnormality or malfunctioning of the brain or intelligence, which causes inability of a person to learn through a regular educational system.

## **2-2. Current Situation**

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### **1. Registration**

A registration system was set up in accordance with the legislation of the Rehabilitation Act in 1991. The actual system started in 1994. In spite of a 6-year promotional campaign by the Office of the Committee of Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (OCRDP), the number registered persons with disabilities is still quite low with only 200,874 registered persons with disabilities by March 2000, against a total National Statistics Office (NSO) estimate of 1.02 million. Obstacles preventing registration of persons with disabilities are poor accessibility to district public welfare offices and hospitals and lack of information about registration, especially in the rural areas. Furthermore, assessment standards of disability were not necessarily the same among doctors.

### **2. General conception towards Person with Disabilities**

More than 90% of Thais are Buddhist. In the teachings of Buddhism, disability is an outcome of a vice that a person had in his/her previous life. On the other hand, Buddhism teaches to have mercy on the weak. Because of this, Thais prefer to give money to disabled beggars or to make donations to charities. Though this might be regarded as a good social characteristic promoting the support of persons with disabilities. It can also be viewed as preventing persons with disabilities from joining society on an equal footing.

Recently, through sporting events like the games sponsored by the Far East and South Pacific Games Federation for the Disabled (FESPIC), Abilities of person with disabilities have been

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<sup>5</sup> B.E. in Thai Buddhist calendar is 543 years ahead of the Christian year. In other words, B.E.2534 is

increasingly recognized. Many kinds of PR activities by NGOs and government have also promoted this recognition.

### **3. Employment**

Thailand experienced a serious economic crisis in 1997. Large numbers of employees were laid off and persons with disabilities were no exception. Despite the 1994 Ministerial Regulation No.1, the number of companies employing persons with disabilities is still quite low. Based on 1998 OCRDP data, less than 8 % of companies, which were supposed to employ persons with disabilities, had actually employed any according to the fixed ratio. This is a serious problem for persons with disabilities who need a job to earn a living, just like anyone else. NGOs active on persons with disabilities employment issues have pointed out the need for penalties for such companies in order to create more job opportunities, while OCRDP continues to encourage companies to employ persons with disabilities.

### **4. Poverty**

OCRDP provides a living allowance for low-income persons with disabilities and for persons with very severe disabilities. 15,000 families received this allowance in 1999. This allowance is provided to enable persons with disabilities to live in the community with their family, and not in remote residential homes far from their communities. But the number of poor persons with disabilities is said to be much more than those receiving this allowance, especially in the rural areas where it is very difficult for persons with disabilities to receive education, find appropriate jobs, or even register.

### **5. Accessibility**

Skytrain, which runs through central Bangkok, began operation in December 1999, but among 23 stations, only 5 have elevators to platforms. Disability-related organizations have appealed to the government to set elevators in all stations, and succeeded in obtaining a government promise to do so within the next 5 years. This case implies that persons with disabilities and society are slowly becoming conscious of rights of persons with disabilities. However, most public transportation at present is inaccessible to persons with disabilities, which may be preventing them from leaving their homes for most of their lives.

## 6. Education

The Ministry of Education designated 1999 as the “year of education for disabled persons” and laid down several plans to enlarge educational opportunities for persons with disabilities through the promotion of integrated education in regular schools and the improvement of special education. An analysis of two surveys by the NSO and the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education found that only 7.3 % of children with disabilities of school age were receiving education in 1998. One of the reasons given for the low enrolment is the insufficient number of schools that can accept children with disabilities and the lack of facilities and skilled teachers.

### 2-3. Documentation and Survey on Disability

#### National Census

【Title】	National Census
【Last published】	2000 (every 10 years)
【Items on Disability】	This census does not contain items regarding disability nor statistical data about Person with Disabilities.

#### Other Surveys

【Title】	Survey on Health and Welfare by National Statistical Office
【Last published】	2001 (every 5 years)
【Items on Disability】	This is the only survey that contains data regarding disability. The Report of Health and Welfare Survey has been published each time. But criteria regarding disability used in this survey are different from that of the Rehabilitation Act 1991. However, NSO will not change the criteria for the next survey because they require data that is comparable with data in the past.

Additionally, the Ministry of Public Health is now organizing surveys to collect data and update information on disability, which will be completed in near future.

Although a number of statistical studies and surveys on persons with disabilities have been conducted in the past, the classification of disability adopted in these exercises has been limited and medically oriented. Hence, it remains questionable whether the samples collected represent an overall picture of persons with disabilities in Thailand.