



EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with
European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

Findings and results of the survey, which was completed by representatives from the National Association of the Deaf, on the available data related to deaf people at national level.

Introduction

Data collection represents a crucial tool to ensure the meaningful and progressive implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that is inclusive of deaf people. Article 31 CRPD highlights the importance of data collection disaggregated by disabilities by imposing this obligation on States Parties to the Convention. Data disaggregated by disabilities means that distinct and accurate data reflecting the number of each disability constituency is collected by State Parties. Data on the number of deaf people is practically non-existent within the European Union (EU) and this must be changed.

Accurate and comprehensive data is crucial for identifying the requirements, experiences, and disparities faced by deaf communities across the EU. With the use of data on deaf people, policymakers, researchers, and civil society organisations (CSOs) can gain an overview of the social, educational, and economic barriers faced by deaf people, enabling the development of targeted policies and measures to address these. Collecting data disaggregated by disabilities would also support the realisation of Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights¹ (EPSR) which fosters the importance of income support for the full social and economic inclusion and participation of deaf people in their societies. Furthermore, accurate and reliable data on the number of deaf people would constitute an invaluable tool for EUD member organisations - National Associations of the Deaf (NADs) - to back-up their advocacy efforts in working towards the realisation of their social and human rights in the EU.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of data on the number of deaf people at the national level. Additionally, all data that is collected should consist of indicators pertaining to the educational, social and economic situation of deaf people. Moreover, any national level data that does exist on deaf people does not consider the intersecting identities. Indeed, both at national and EU level, there is a lack of disaggregated data on deaf people representing their intersecting identities such as disabilities,

¹ European Pillar of Social Rights, Principle 17, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en>

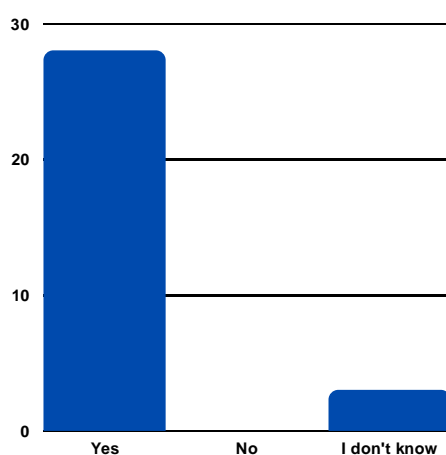
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gender, age, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour). In addition, any data that is collected is often characterised by a medical approach which, contrary to the human rights approach, reflects the percentage of hearing loss without establishing the full picture of their barriers and challenges in society.

Consequently, EUD has developed a survey exploring the degree to which data collection on deaf people is taking place at the national level and, when it is, whether this data is disaggregated. EUD disseminated this survey on data collection among its members – 31 National Associations of the Deaf (NADs) – during the months of April and May 2023. The questions in the survey aimed to exploring the national government engagement with NADs, the disaggregation of data, as well as the awareness of NADs on the importance of undertaking data collection. This report includes all the questions from the survey and provides a summary and an analysis of the findings.

Do you know of any data on deaf persons in your country?

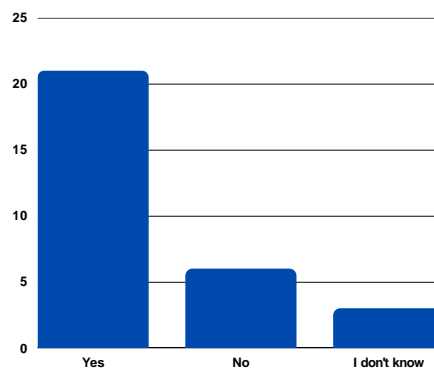
The findings of this question reveal important insights into the awareness and availability of data on deaf people in the countries of the EUD member organisations. In this survey, NADs were asked if they had knowledge of any data concerning deaf persons in their respective countries. Out of the respondents, 28 answered “yes”, indicating that they are aware of data on deaf individuals within their countries. Interestingly, none of the NADs responded with “no”, suggesting that there is at least some level of data available or known about the deaf population across the surveyed countries. However, three NADs responded with “I don’t know,” indicating a lack of awareness or uncertainty regarding this. These findings highlight both the awareness of data collection efforts within many of the member organisations’ countries as well as the need for improved awareness and information gathering to ensure NADs know how and where to find out about data being collected on deaf people in their countries.



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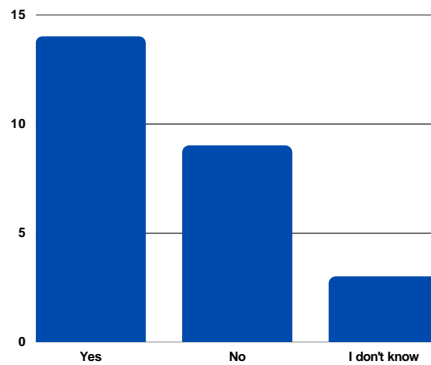
Is there any data on persons with disabilities in your country?

The findings of this question on data collection on people with disabilities showed the varying levels of engagement among EU Member States. When asked whether collected statistics on data pertaining to persons with disabilities were existing, 21 NADs responded affirmatively, which indicates a widespread commitment at the national level to gathering information in this area. On the other hand, 6 NADs responded negatively, suggesting a lack of data collection efforts in relation to persons with disabilities. Additionally, 3 NADs expressed uncertainty, stating that they were unsure about the data collection practices in this regard at the national level. These results highlight the diverse approaches and degree of awareness among EU Member States regarding the relevance of gathering statistics on people with disabilities.



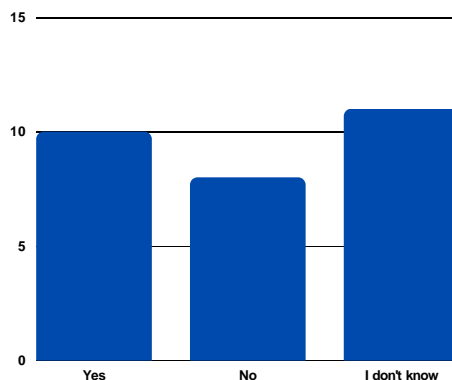
Are these data disaggregated by disability?

The findings of the question on disaggregated data by disability reveal important insights about the practices implemented at the local level regarding the collection of specific data on disabilities. When asked whether they are aware of statistics specifically disaggregated by disabilities, and therefore including deaf people, 14 NADs responded affirmatively, indicating efforts at the national level to capture information about deaf people specifically. Conversely, 9 NADs responded negatively, suggesting a lack of comprehensive data collection in terms of specific disabilities, and therefore, a lack of specific data on deaf people. Additionally, 3 NADs expressed uncertainty, indicating a potential gap in their knowledge or practices in this area. These results highlight the varying degrees of awareness at national level about the collection of detailed and disaggregated data on disability type, as well as the lack of data being collected at the national level on deaf people.



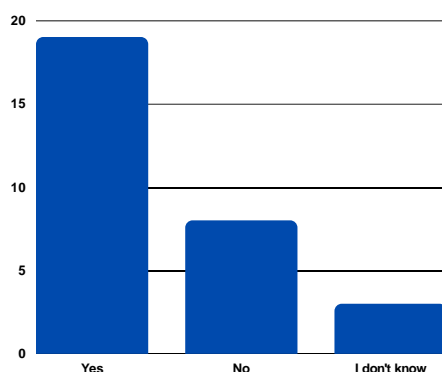
Are these data disaggregated by gender?

The findings of the question on data disaggregated by gender reflect the diverse approaches of Member States in collecting statistics on people with disabilities. When asked if the collected data had been disaggregated by taking into consideration the gender identity, 10 NADs responded positively, indicating a degree of national efforts to capture detailed information about the disability community, considering gender as a significant factor. However, 8 NADs responded negatively, suggesting a lack of understanding, at the national level, of the importance and relevance of collecting data on people with disabilities, disaggregated by their multiple and intersecting identities. Moreover, 11 NADs expressed uncertainty, indicating a potential gap in their knowledge or national practices in collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated disability data. Ultimately, however, due to the lack of data being disaggregated by disability group specifically, this means that any data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, etc. will not be deaf-specific but rather disability-specific.



Are these data from government, NADs, European Union, other?

The findings of this question on whether data collected have been gathered by government, NADs, the European Union (EU), or other sources reflect the varying practices and levels of engagement across EU countries in gathering data concerning persons with disabilities. When asked if the collected data had been provided by the national government, NADs, the EU, or other, 19 NADs responded affirmatively, indicating proactive efforts of certain actors to collect and analyse comprehensive statistics that consider disabilities as a relevant factor. This suggests a certain commitment to understanding a generalised overview of the barriers, requirements and experiences of persons with disabilities, however simply on a non-specific level. This means, that this data is likely to be vague, not reflecting the diverse range of disabilities as each relates to a specific set of requirements and barriers. On the other hand, 8 NADs responded negatively, indicating a lack of data collection efforts specifically focused on disabilities in these countries. Additionally, 3 NADs expressed uncertainty, suggesting a potential lack of knowledge or awareness about how and by whom data collection practices are undertaken in relation to disabilities. These results underscore the need for increased awareness and consistent efforts among national authorities, NGOs, the EU, and other parties in the collection of comprehensive data that is disaggregated by disabilities, enabling a more accurate understanding of how and by whom such data is gathered.

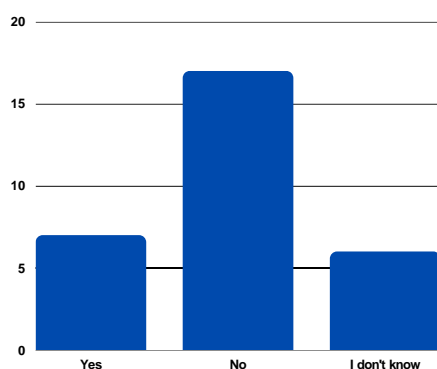


Does your NAD have any data on sign language users?

The importance of having data on both deaf people and sign language users is an important distinction to highlight. While data on deaf people allows for an understanding of the overall population and their diverse requirements, data specifically on sign language users provides specific insights into the linguistic and cultural aspects of the deaf community. National sign languages are rich languages that are central to the lives of deaf people. By collecting data on sign language users, policymakers, service providers and other stakeholders can gain a deeper understanding of the unique experiences, preferences, and barriers faced. This knowledge can inform the development of inclusive policies,

educational programmes that promote the use and teaching of national sign language, and accessibility measures that promote equal opportunities and full participation for sign language users within European society and beyond. Therefore, when collecting data on deaf people, making a distinction between deaf people and sign language users is important for gaining in-depth and comprehensive information on this community to develop appropriate and sufficient policies and legislations going forward.

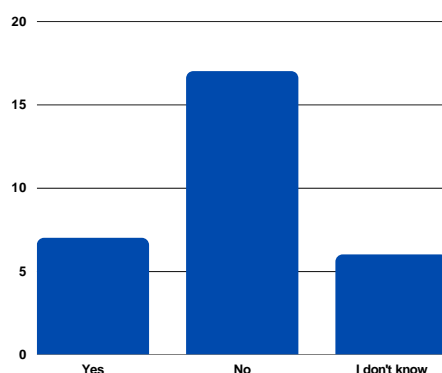
When asked if they have collected any data on sign language users, 13 NADs responded affirmatively, indicating their understanding of the importance of collecting data on this group specifically. However, 13 NADs responded negatively, reflecting a lack of data collection efforts specifically focused on sign language users. This highlights, perhaps, a lack of awareness about the importance of collecting data on sign language users as well as on deaf people as outlined above. Finally, 2 NADs expressed uncertainty, suggesting a lack of certainty or knowledge about the work of their association regarding data collection efforts.



Has your NAD been involved in or worked on data collection with your national government by designing the questionnaire or providing information?

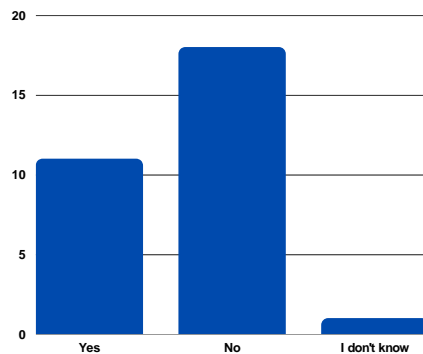
The findings of this question show that, out of the respondents, 7 NADs answered “yes”, indicating their participation in at least some of the national data collection efforts. However, a majority of 17 NADs responded with “no”, reflecting that they have not been involved in such initiatives. Finally, 6 NADs answered with "I don't know", indicating a lack of awareness or uncertainty regarding their involvement in data collection processes. These findings further highlight the lack of consultation by national governments of NADs when it comes to data collection on persons with disabilities, including deaf people in line with article 4.3 UNCRPD. It also speaks to the overly generalised approach being taken by national governments in terms of the lack of disability-disaggregated data being collected. Many NADs have not had contact from their national government in their initiative to collect data pertaining to persons with disabilities, further reflecting the over-generalisation of persons with disabilities as a singular, rather than diverse, category. Further, the fact that most of the surveyed NADs reported not being involved in data collection efforts at national level signifies a significant gap in communication and collaboration to meaningfully implement the UN CRPD at the national level.

The absence of comprehensive and detailed data prevents the understanding of the unique requirements and challenges faced by deaf people, making it difficult to develop targeted policies and interventions to address these.



Does your NAD have statistics on employment of deaf people?

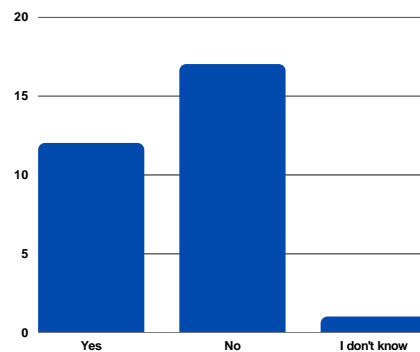
Responses varied when inquiring with the NADs about their statistics on the employment of deaf people in their respective countries. Out of the NADs, 11 responded with “yes”, indicating that they have, as an organisation, collected data on the employment of deaf people. Conversely, 18 associations responded with “no”, and, in fact, only 1 NAD expressed uncertainty, responding with "I don't know." These findings reflect the need for further understanding, amongst NADs, of the importance of collecting data on deaf people when working on various topics such as employment. Data collection is a powerful advocacy tool as it can show concrete evidence of the specific challenges faced by deaf people, in this case, when accessing the labour market, which can be drawn upon in discussion with national governments and in targeted campaigns to further the employment rights of deaf people. This points to a further need for NADs to engage, both internally and with their national governments, with collecting data on deaf people from an economic perspective. Currently, as this survey has highlighted, the only data being collected on this indicator is on people with disabilities in general, rather than deaf people specifically.



Does your NAD have statistics on education of deaf people?

The findings of this question, reflect a similar issue to that of the previous question on employment of deaf people. Out of the total respondents, 12 NADs confirmed that they have indeed gathered relevant data on the educational status of the deaf population. Conversely, 17 NADs responded negatively, and 1 NAD expressed uncertainty, responding with "I don't know." These results reflect a disparity in the approach and practices amongst the NADs regarding the collection of education-related statistics on deaf individuals. The findings of this survey question underscore the pressing need for comprehensive data collection on deaf people, specifically disaggregated by gender, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ representation, to shed light on the systemic issues prevalent in education systems. Such data collection would enable policymakers, educators, and advocates to identify disparities, address inequities, and develop targeted interventions to improve the educational opportunities for deaf people.

However, when surveying NADs for the purpose of this report, several NADs highlighted the fact that they collect data on the number of deaf people in tertiary education (university and colleges) but do not collect data on access of deaf people in primary and secondary education. Conversely, other NADs expressed that they collect data on the number of deaf people in primary education only, but not on secondary and tertiary education. This points to a further need for both NADs and national governments to collect data disaggregated on the access of deaf people to *all* levels of education by employing a holistic and cohesive approach to data collection. Furthermore, this reflects a further need for NADs to engage, both internally and with their national governments, with collecting data on deaf people, from an educational perspective. Currently, as this survey has highlighted, the only data being collected on this indicator is on people with disabilities in general, rather than deaf people specifically, or only on some stage of education (primary, secondary or tertiary).



Conclusion

EUD strongly believes in and advocates for the importance of collecting quality, accurate and reliable data on deaf people at the national level. The purpose of this data collection is twofold. Firstly, it helps both NADs and their governments to have an overview of the situation, challenges and opportunities faced by deaf people and national sign language users in accessing all areas of society, and specifically in economic, social and educational areas. Secondly, it serves as a tool for NADs to address the challenges their deaf communities face at the national by providing tailored evidence and guidance to their governments to design relevant, targeted policies.

Collecting data disaggregated by disabilities and national sign languages would also serve to meaningfully implement both the CRPD and the EPSR.

However, the findings of the report reflect a diverse level of engagement with data collection amongst NADs as well as, perhaps, a gap in understanding of its importance for furthering the rights of deaf people in line with the CRPD. Also, when existing, most of the data related to the number of deaf people and national sign language users; their participation in the labour market, and their access to education are collected by NADs themselves rather than by governmental statistical agencies. However, the ultimate approach would be collaborative – involving both NADs and their national governments.

Similarly, the collected data is not necessarily disaggregated by disability, gender, age, and BIPOC. This is evidenced by the fact that deaf communities are focusing on advocating for their national governments to collect quality and reliable data on the number of deaf people in the first place, whilst having this data disaggregated comes as an afterthought. However, EUD believes that advocating for the disaggregation of data on deaf people by disability, gender, age, and BIPOC would benefit both the government and NADs and, therefore, should not come as a secondary thought. Rather, all

data collection efforts on the number of deaf people should be disaggregated by such indicators and intersecting identities as a single step.

Furthermore, the survey highlighted that when data on deaf people is available, it refers only to a part of the area covered, such as having data on the access of deaf people to tertiary education only rather than including all levels of education. The disparities in NADs responses concerning their limited access to and knowledge of disaggregated data on deaf people at the national level showcases the necessity to make this topic a priority for both EUD and NADs going forward.

Accordingly, EUD encourages all NADs to increase their focus on and engagement with the data collection of deaf people and sign language users, with an emphasis on data disaggregated by disability, gender, age, and BIPOC. Accessible and comprehensive data would allow NADs to demonstrate the social, education and economic trends, challenges, and disparities faced by deaf communities, thereby strengthening their arguments for policy reforms and initiatives aimed at achieving the human and social rights of deaf people in line with the CRPD and the EPSR.

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