

# **NDA Factsheet I: Disability Statistics**

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**Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais  
National Disability Authority**

## Introduction

This is the first of a series of factsheets that will look at different aspects of the lives of people with disabilities in Ireland. This factsheet looks at the number of people with a disability and some of their characteristics. In Ireland, the most common source of data on disability comes from the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The CSO carries out many surveys and is the most authoritative source for lots of information.

In many of their surveys, the CSO asks respondents if they have 'any long-lasting conditions or difficulties'. These are usually chosen from a list of common illnesses and disabilities. Next, they ask the person if they have any difficulty in doing certain activities. In this way, the respondents report whether or not they have a disability. This is known as self-reporting.

There are many other sources of data on people with disabilities and sometimes these sources define disability in different ways. The way that disability is defined can affect how researchers count the number of people with a disability.<sup>1</sup> For example, surveys by the National Disability Authority or the Health Research Board sometimes measure different aspects of disability.

The information in this data brief comes from the CSO 2016 Census<sup>2</sup> and work done as part of the Department of Health and HSE's Transforming Lives programme to consider the future of disability services.<sup>3</sup>

## How many people have a disability?

The 2016 Census tells us that 643,131 people had a disability. That is 13.5 per cent, or 1 in 7 of the population in Ireland has a disability. This was a small increase on 2011, where 13 per cent of the population self-reported as having a disability.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about how disability is defined see [the National Disability Authority website](#).

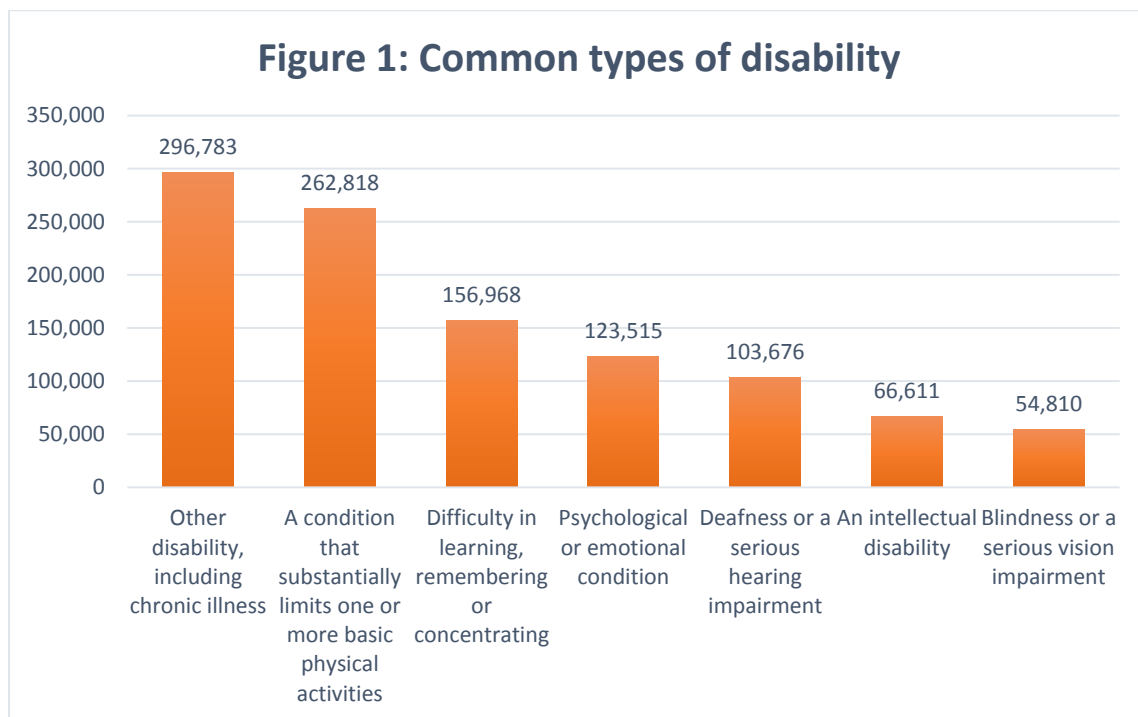
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile9-healthdisabilityandcarers/>

<sup>3</sup> The information in this factsheet is taken from the CSO 2016 Census and relies on the CSOs definition of disability. Calculations of the increased disability population come from Transforming Lives and the HSE working group on the future of disability services.

Slightly more females (13.8 per cent) than males (13.2 per cent) had a disability. This is probably accounted for by the fact that, on average, women live longer than men.

## Common types of disability

The most common type of disability is 'other disability, including chronic illness'. This might include, for example, asthma, diabetes or heart disease. The next most common is 'a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities', like arthritis or a spinal injury. However, people can have more than one disability (So the numbers in Figure 1 do not add up to the 643,131 reported above).



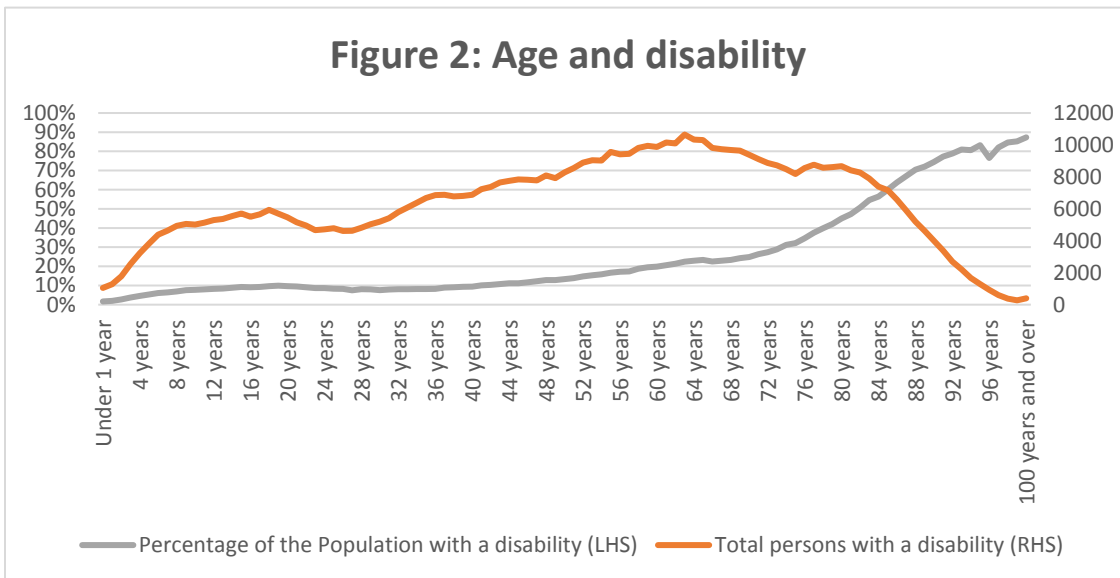
Source: Census 2016

## Age and disability

Most people who have a disability were not born with that disability, as most disability is acquired. Acquired disability, is a disability that has developed during the person's lifetime – that is as a result of an accident or illness rather than a

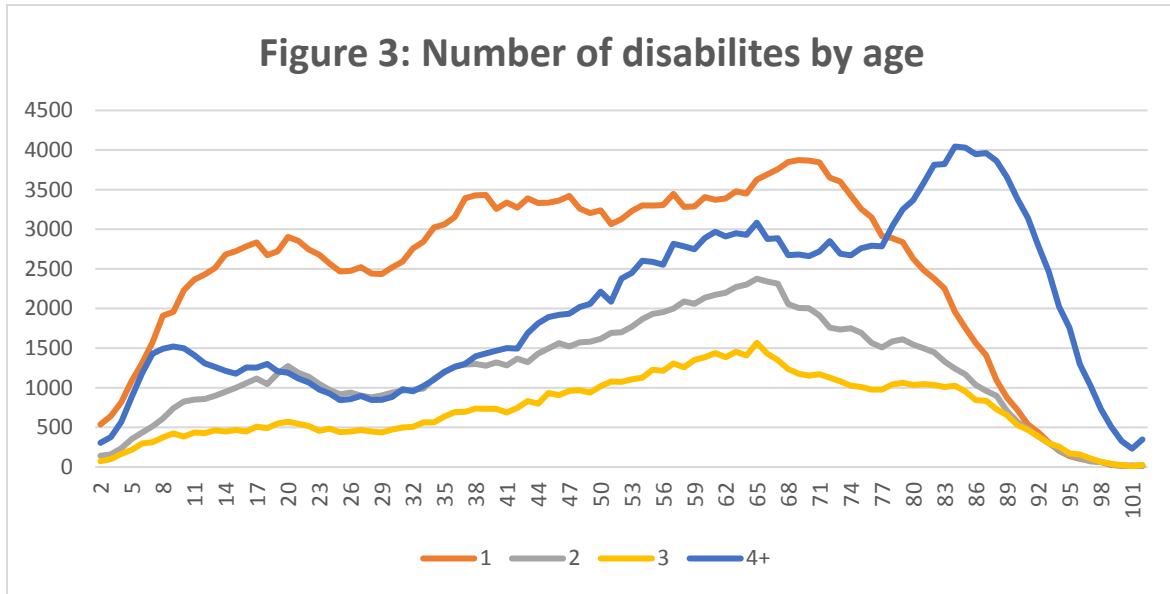
disability the person was born with; so the rate of disability increases with age. The majority of people aged over 80 have a disability (figure 2).

Source: Census 2016



By the age of 85, 60 per cent of people have a disability. This rises to 80 per cent by the age of 93. At the same time because the number of people aged 80 and older is a very small part of the total Irish population, the majority of people with a disability are of working age (defined as aged between 18 and 65 years of age). These demographic effects can be seen in figure 2, which has two lines. The total number of people with a disability at each year of age (the labels for this are on the right hand side of the figure) and then the percentage of people with a disability at each year of age (who are labelled on the left hand side of the figure).

People can also acquire more than one disability as they age. At 18, about half of people who have a disability have more than one disability. By 85, 4 out of 5 people who have a disability have more than one disability and 55 per cent have four or more disabilities (figure 3).

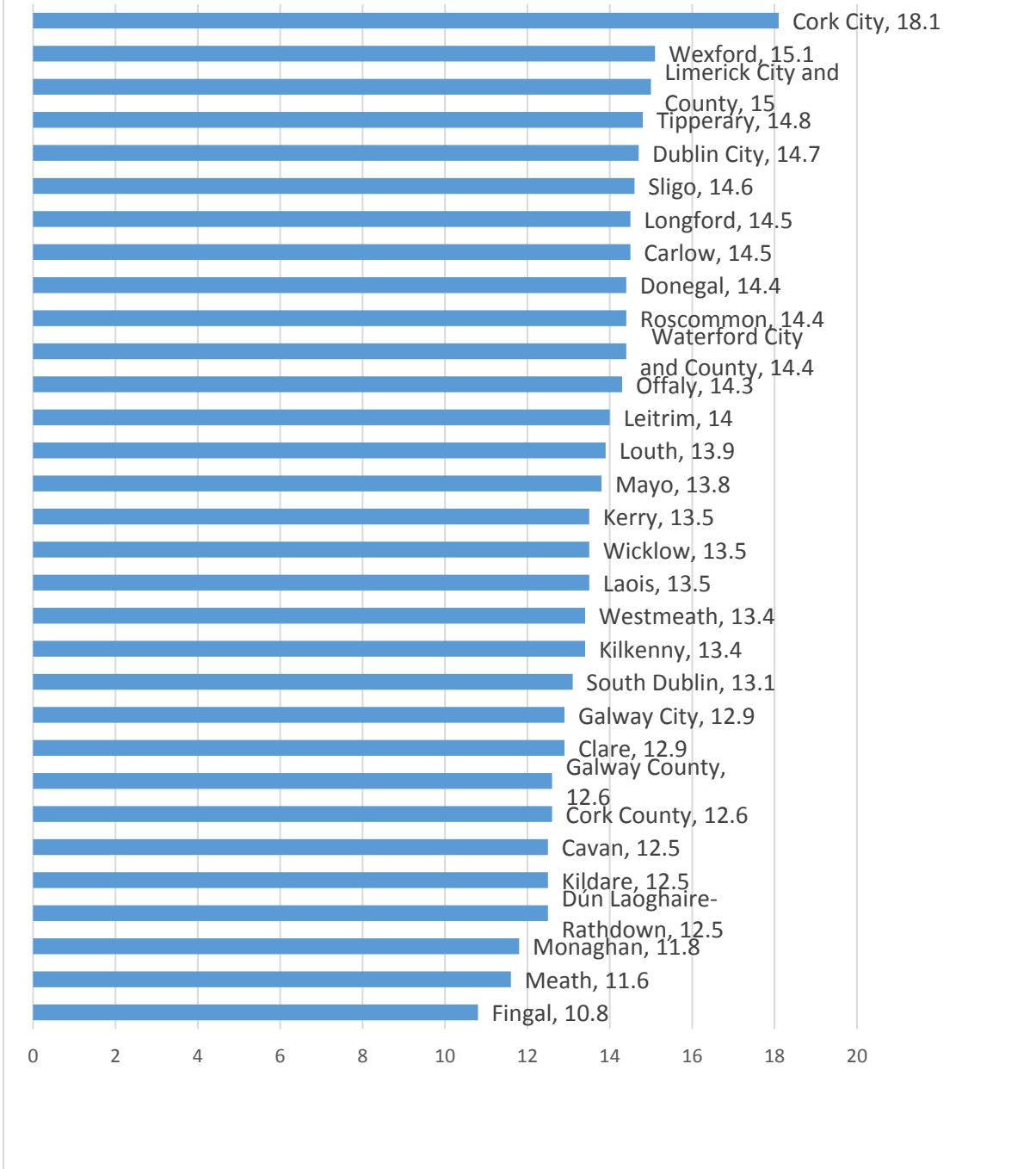


Source: Census 2016

### Disability rates by area

Because disability is so strongly related to age, this has a big knock-on effect on the percentage of people in an area with a disability. For instance, Cork City has relatively high rates of disability because it has relatively high numbers of older people. Fingal on the other hand has many young families so therefore fewer people with a disability (figure 4).

Figure 4: % of people with a disability by region



Source: Census 2016

## Disability and Employment

People with a disability are less likely to be working. Looking just at the population aged between 20 and 64, we see from the CSO 2016 Census that 73

per cent of people who do not have a disability are working. However, for people with a disability of the same age, only 36 per cent are working.

Looking at those at work – only 6.3 percent of all workers have a disability (that is 120,775 of the people at work have a disability).

**People with a disability are less likely to be professionals or managerial workers.**

There are two ways to look at this; the percentage of each social class group that is disabled and compare this to the number of people with a disability in the total population; or look across all people with a disability and see what social class they belong to.

On the first method (Figure 5), overall we know that 13.5 per cent of the population has a disability but only 9 per cent of professionals and managers have a disability. On the other hand, 23 per cent of the unskilled/other and unknown group has a disability.

**Figure 5: % of each social class who have a disability**

	<b>All social classes</b>	<b>Professional and managerial</b>	<b>Non-manual</b>	<b>Skilled manual</b>	<b>Semi-skilled</b>	<b>Unskilled/other/unknown</b>
<b>% of social class with a disability</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>23.3</b>

Source: Census 2016 – note some categories are combined

Using the second method (Figure 6), we look at all people with a disability, see what social class they are in, and compare that to the social class of people without a disability. We can see in figure 6 that:

1. 38 per cent of people without a disability are classed as professional and managerial occupations;
2. 18 per cent are in non-manual occupations;
3. 14 per cent are in skilled occupations;
4. 10 per cent are semi skilled and 19 per cent are in unskilled, other or unknown occupations

For people with a disability, these numbers are

- 24 per cent of people are classed as professional and managerial occupations;
- 15 per cent are in non manual occupations;
- 14 per cent are in skilled occupations;
- 11 per cent are in semi skilled and
- 37 per cent are in unskilled, other or unknown occupations (figure 6).

**Figure 6: Social class by disability %**

	<b>Professional and managerial</b>	<b>Non-manual</b>	<b>Skilled manual</b>	<b>Semi-skilled</b>	<b>Unskilled/other/unknown</b>
<b>People without a disability</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>People with a disability</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>37</b>

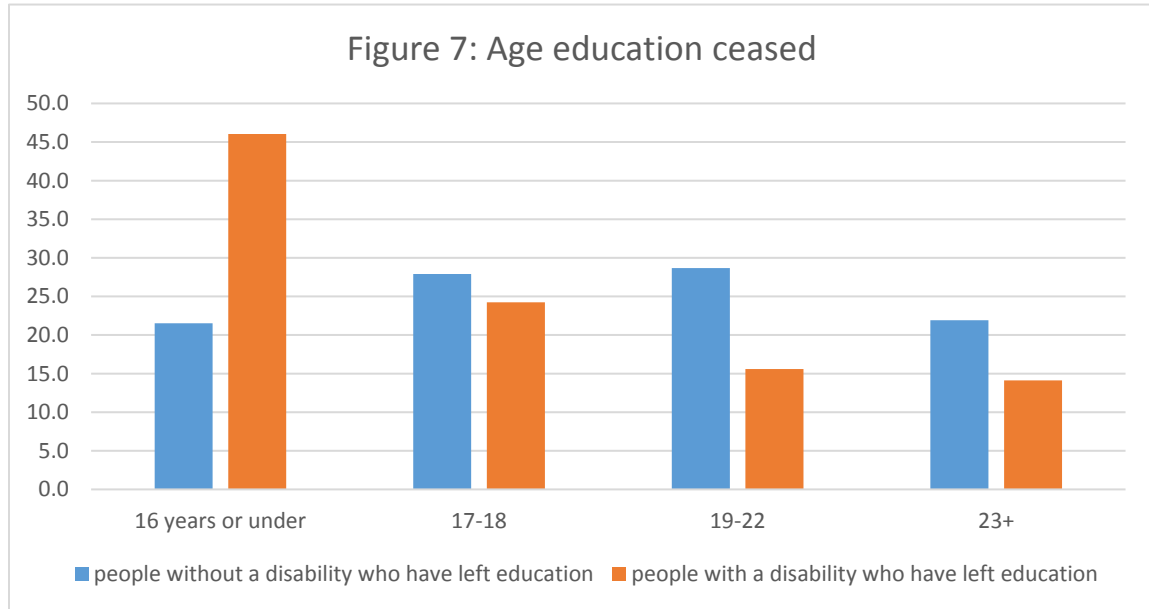
Source: Census 2016 – note some categories are combined

This means that people without a disability are 50 per cent more likely to be a professional or managerial worker than a person with a disability and half as likely to be unskilled/other/unknown as a person with a disability.



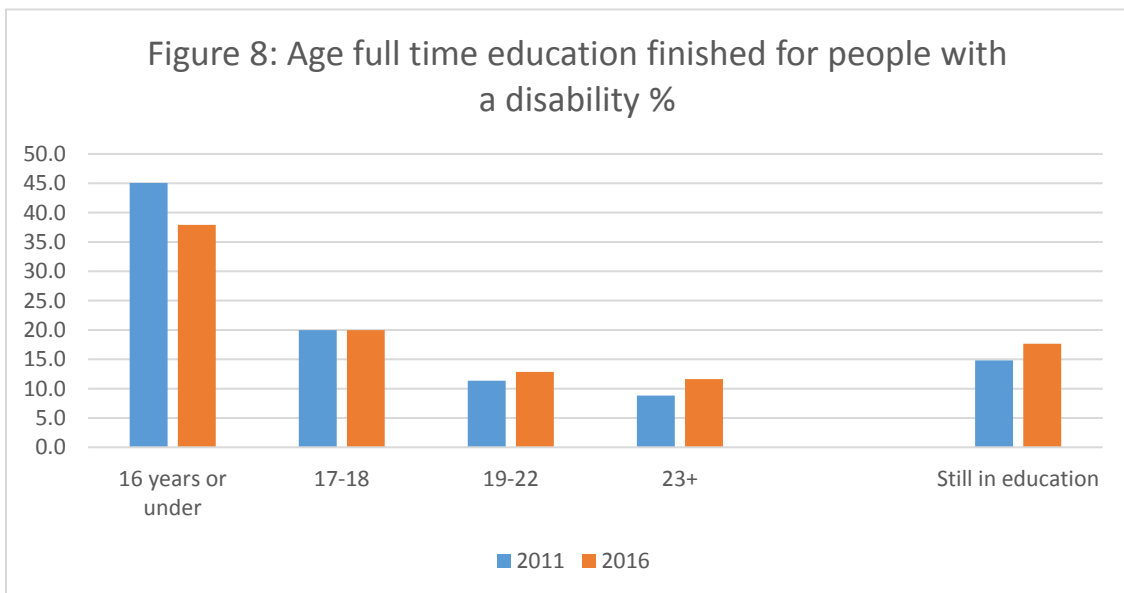
## Education

People with a disability finish school earlier than people without a disability finish school (figure 7).



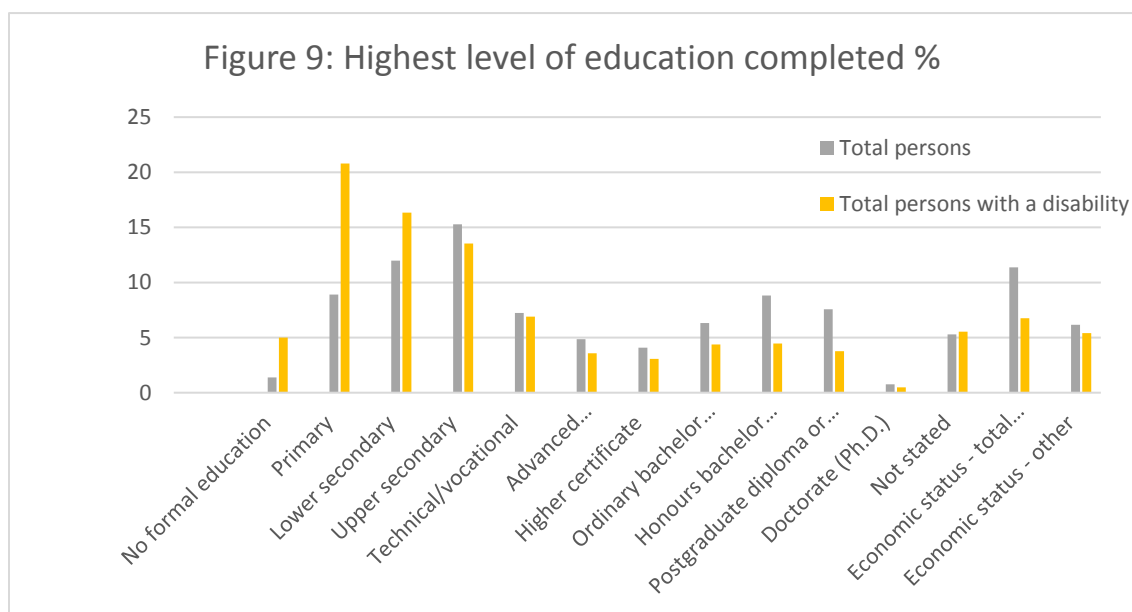
Source: Census 2016

However, this is changing. Comparing Census 2011 and Census 2016, people with a disability were more likely to be still in education in 2016 (figure 8) and the average age education finished has increased.



Source: Census 2016 and Census 2011

Because people with a disability have tended to leave school earlier, their qualifications are less than for people without a disability (figure 9).



Source: Census 2016

Again, this is changing and between 2011 and 2016 we can see an increase in the number of people with a disability who have higher qualifications (figure 10). For instance, the percentage of people with a disability with a postgraduate diploma or degree has gone from 3 per cent to 3.8 per cent between 2011 and 2016.

**Figure 10: Population Aged 15 Years and Over 2011 to 2016 (%) with a Disability by Highest Level of Education Completed and Census Year**

Highest level of education	2011	2016
No formal education	3.8	5
Primary	27.1	20.8
Lower secondary	17.1	16.3
Upper secondary	13.3	13.5
Technical/vocational	6.2	6.9
Advanced certificate/completed apprenticeship	3.2	3.6
Higher certificate	2.6	3.1
Ordinary bachelor degree/professional qualification or both	4	4.4
Honours bachelor degree/professional qualification or both	3.4	4.5

Postgraduate diploma or degree	3	3.8
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	0.4	0.5
Not stated	5.4	5.5
Economic status - total at school, university, etc.	5.8	6.8
Economic status - other	4.7	5.4

Source: Census 2011 and 2016?.

## What will happen in the future?

The Irish population was 4.7 million in 2016, but the CSO expects this to grow to 5.8 million by 2036.

By 2026, it is expected that the population with a disability will increase by roughly 20 per cent. One-third of this increase is due to the increased size of the population and two-thirds of the increase is due to the ageing of the population.

The HSE's budget for disability services in 2018 is 1.8 billion.<sup>4</sup>

Research by the NDA for the HSE estimates that by 2026 Ireland will need to increase the HSE health and social care budget by a third to cover the increased population living with a disability.<sup>5</sup>

### Note on statistics used

All Census statistics used in this factsheet can be found at [the Health, Disability and Carers profile of Census 2016, on the website of the Central Statistics Office](#). In particular, the link to the tables.

Future population projections are available under the [population projections](#) section at the CSO.

The future projection on the number of people with a disability in the future and the need for increasing disability spending were calculated as part of the Transforming Lives working group. In particular, working group 1 and [the report from this working group](#).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/serviceplans/national-service-plan-2018.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://nda.ie/Publications/Disability-Supports/Transforming-Lives.html>

