

Life Opportunities Survey, Interim Results, 2009/10

Background

The Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) is a new large-scale longitudinal survey of disability in Great Britain. It is the first major Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey in Great Britain to explore disability in terms of the social barriers to participation that people experience, rather than only measuring disability in terms of impairments or health conditions – this is known as the social model definition of disability. To meet this definition of disability, LOS requires someone to have experienced barriers to participation and have an impairment.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defined someone as disabled if 'he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. The DDA has been the starting point for several government sponsored surveys that assess outcomes for people with rights under the legislation. To allow comparison with other surveys LOS also includes a number of questions based on the DDA definition.

LOS is a longitudinal survey which means that respondents are interviewed more than once to assess how their status/experiences change over time. This *Update* presents the headline results from the first wave of interviews carried out between June 2009 and March 2010 and looks at the prevalence of impairments, the Participation Restriction Index and the prevalence of disability according to the DDA definition. ONS will be making the full dataset available via the UK Data Archive in February 2011. For more information on this, please see the end of this *Update*.

Results

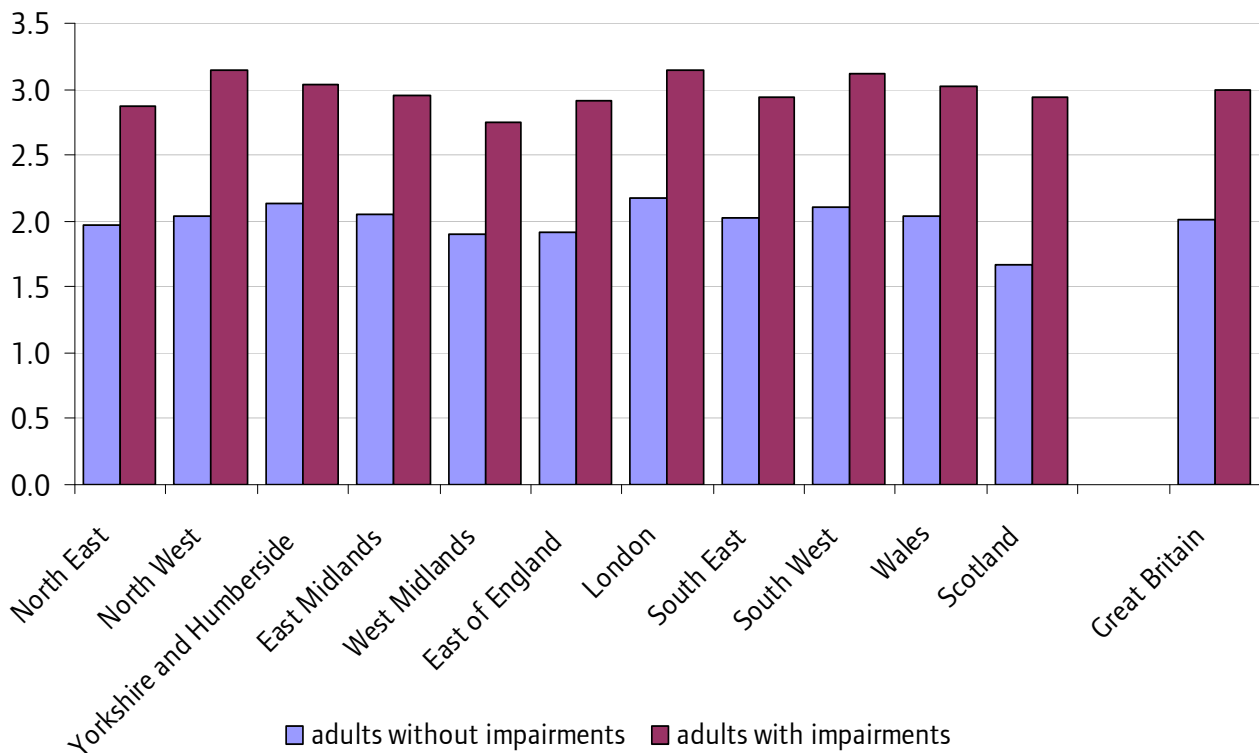
Participation Restriction Index

The Participation Restriction Index (PRI) is a score of between zero and eight that is calculated for each respondent as the sum of their participation restrictions across the eight life areas below. For example, if an individual was restricted in the work that they could do and in the learning opportunities they could take part in, their PRI score would be two.

- Education and training
- Economic life and living standards
- Leisure, social and cultural activities
- Accessibility of housing
- Employment
- Transport
- Social contact
- Accessibility outside the home

Across all regions, adults with at least one impairment had a higher mean PRI score than those without. Those adults with impairments in London had a score of 3.1, joint highest regionally along with the North West and South West. Londoners also had the highest PRI score for those without impairments of 2.2 (See Figure 1). The differential between those with impairments and those without was 0.9 points, consistent with the Great Britain mean.

Figure 1: Mean PRI scores by impairments, regions, 2009/10



Source: Life Opportunities Survey: Interim Results, 2009/10, Office for National Statistics

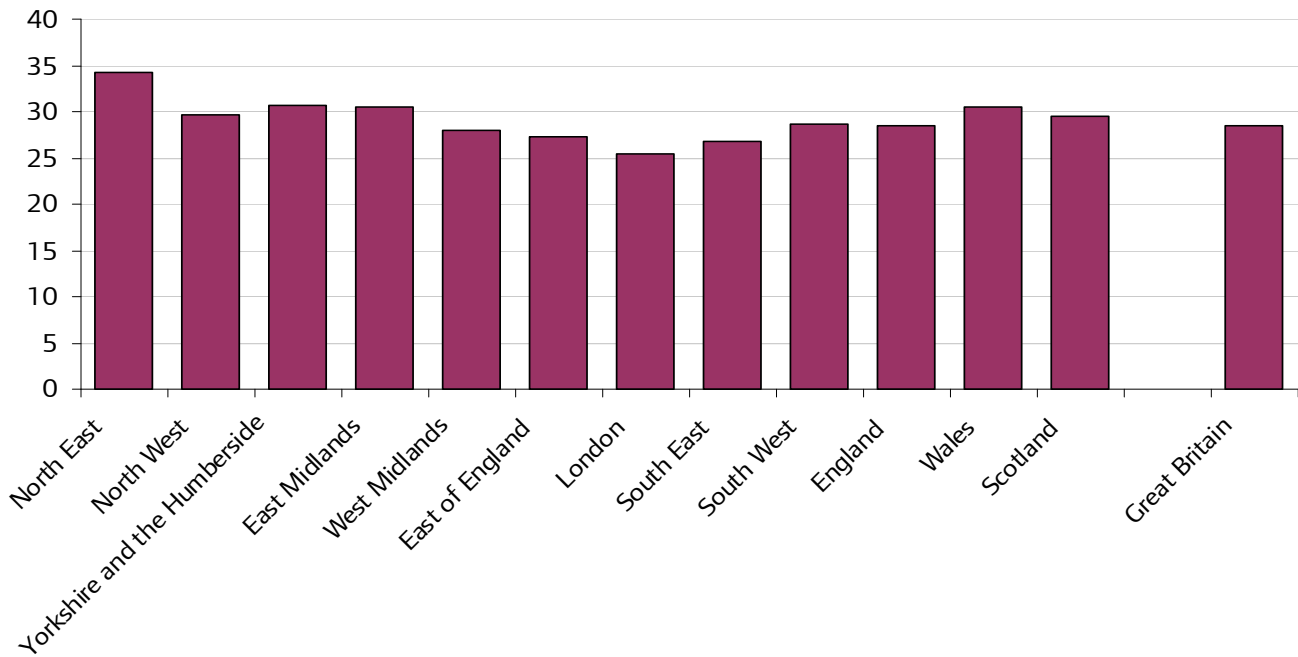
Prevalence of Impairments

LOS does not solely equate having an impairment with being disabled. A person may have some form of impairment without having any activity limitation and may not be considered or consider themselves as disabled. A respondent is defined as having an impairment if they indicated the following within the impairments and health conditions section of the questionnaire:

- They experience either moderate, severe or complete difficulty within at least one area of physical or mental functioning, **and**
- Certain activities are limited in anyway as a result. 'Activities' refer to different areas of physical or mental functioning, such as walking, climbing stairs or reading a newspaper.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of adults with at least one impairment by region. London has the lowest percentage with impairments at 25 per cent, nine percentage points lower than the highest rate in the North East at 34 per cent and four percentage points lower than the national rate. The East and South East regions had the lowest rates after London at just 27 per cent. The low rates in London may reflect the younger age structure in the capital relative to other regions. It is also interesting to note that whilst London has the lowest percentage of adults with atleast one impairment, those with impairments face more restrictions to participation than in any other region.

Figure 2: Percentage of adults with at least one impairment, by region, 2009/10



Source: Life Opportunities Survey: Interim Results, 2009/10, Office for National Statistics

DDA Prevalence Rates

The results presented here refer to disabled adults, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). From October 2010, provisions in the Equality Act 2010 replaced the majority of provisions in the DDA, however in general the definition is very similar to that used in the DDA. A suite of questions have been included in LOS to allow comparisons with other government surveys which use the DDA definition to measure disability prevalence.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of adults who are disabled according to the DDA definition of disability by region. London has the lowest percentage of all regions at 21 per cent, 12 percentage points lower than the North East – the highest rate regionally. The London rate is also five percentage points lower than the rate for Great Britain of 26 per cent.

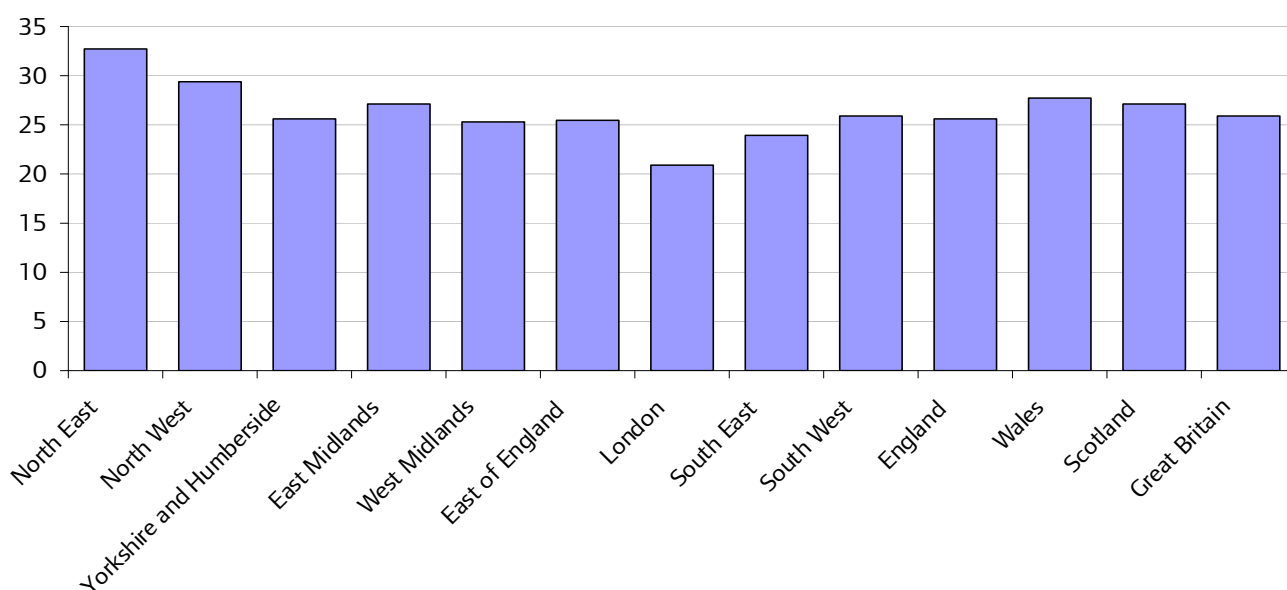
Table 1 compares estimates of disability under the DDA definition from LOS with estimates taken from the Annual Population Survey (APS). The APS is a combined survey of households in Great Britain. Its purpose is to provide information on key social and socio-economic variables between the ten-yearly censuses. It should be noted here that these are two entirely different surveys based on separate samples and with differing survey structures. However, it is useful to compare the estimates for the purposes of validation.

In all regions the estimates are lower when taken from the Annual Population Survey than the Life Opportunities Survey. In London, 16 per cent of adults are DDA disabled according to the APS estimates compared with 21 per cent in LOS. The London figure is the lowest regional proportion in both surveys. The largest difference in estimates between the two surveys occurred in the North East at 11 percentage points, five more than the average for Great Britain.

There are several possible reasons why estimates taken from LOS are higher than those taken from the APS. These include:

- The surveys were conducted in different periods – The Annual Population Survey data presented here is taken from the period January-December 2009. The first wave of Life Opportunities data was collected between June 2009 and March 2010.
- The order of questions varies between the two surveys. For example LOS asks questions about impairments before the DDA suite of questions are asked. Hence, respondents may think more carefully about whether their impairment restricts their ability to undertake routine daily tasks.
- Targeted measures were taken to ensure LOS was as accessible as possible to as wide an audience as possible. As such, the LOS sample was potentially more likely to pick up those with impairments which limited their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Figure 3: Percentage of adults disabled under the DDA definition of disability, by region 2009/10



Source: Life Opportunities Survey: Interim Results, 2009/10, Office for National Statistics

Table 1: Percentage of adults disabled under the DDA definition of disability according to LOS & APS estimates

	Life Opportunities Survey (2009/10)	Annual Population Survey (2009)	% point difference
North East	33	22	11
North West	29	21	8
Yorkshire and the Humber	26	22	4
East Midlands	27	21	6
West Midlands	25	20	5
East of England	26	20	6
London	21	16	5
South East	24	18	5
South West	26	19	7
England	26	20	6
Wales	28	20	7
Scotland	27	20	8
Great Britain	26	20	6

Source: Life Opportunities Survey: Interim Results, 2009/10, Office for National Statistics and Annual Population Survey

Further information

For a copy of the full report along with technical notes please visit the following website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15386>

The full dataset will be available via the UK Data Archive from February 2011 onwards. Details on access arrangements and associated costs can be found at <http://data-archive.ac.uk>.

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