



South Africans with disabilities’ experience of COVID-19

30 March 2022, SAMRC, Durban,
RSA

Forgotten Agenda: What we
know about People with
Disabilities under the COVID-19
Pandemic in South Africa

By

Tim Hart, Mary Wickenden, Yul
Derek Davids, Stephen Thompson,
Mercy Ngungu, Yamkela Majikijela,
Tinashe Rubaba, Nthabi Molongoana



Introduction

- The research specifically looked at the socio-economic, wellbeing and human rights related experiences
- Data collected through an online voluntary survey with nearly 2,000 respondents
- Possibly one of the largest datasets on people with disabilities' Covid-19 experiences in a single country

Study Motivation

- Between 12%-20% of the SA population over 5yrs have some form of functional impairment that can be disabling in certain environments
- COVID-19 – What is impact on persons with disabilities in South Africa?
 - Overlooked generally by disaster relief
 - Ignored by pandemic directives
 - Impacted negatively by regulations aimed at virus control
 - Neither DM Act (2002) or the DMF (2005) acknowledge people with disabilities or that they have diverse needs different to other vulnerable groups in the country
 - Stipulations of Section 3.5 of WPRPD Disaster implementation framework far from complete

Methodology

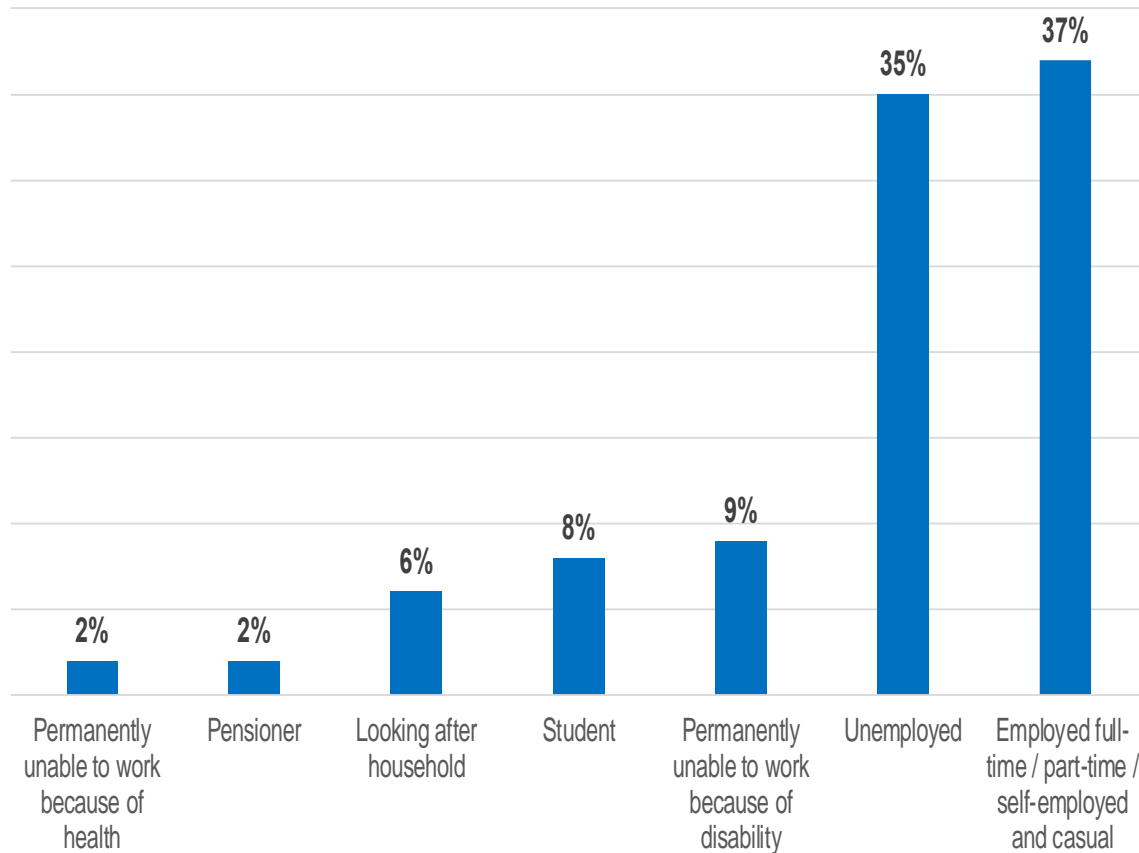
- Desire to explore further evidence but constrained by Covid-19 regulations relating to fieldwork – online self-administered survey with associated weaknesses.
- Strong collaboration between national DPO, national research council and international research institute.
- Research process very collaborative and knowledge exchange encouraged and respected
- Roles of 3 partners: IDS funder liaison, and overall leadership, HSRC local project management and research design, and NCPD access to people with disabilities and DPO networks.
- Instrument designed by persons with disabilities with both research and developmental service provision background
- NCPD instrumental in survey distribution and high response rate
- 1857 final valid responses

High Level Key Findings 1

- Communication challenges experienced by many
- Very little government intervention – reliance on DPO sector and other NGOs
- Communication about Coronavirus and monthly meetings inadequate for certain types of disabilities as most rely on Television – captions not existent, SASL interpreters not always visible, language challenges
- Resulted in confusion about intervention services available
- Perception that interventions far from disability inclusive

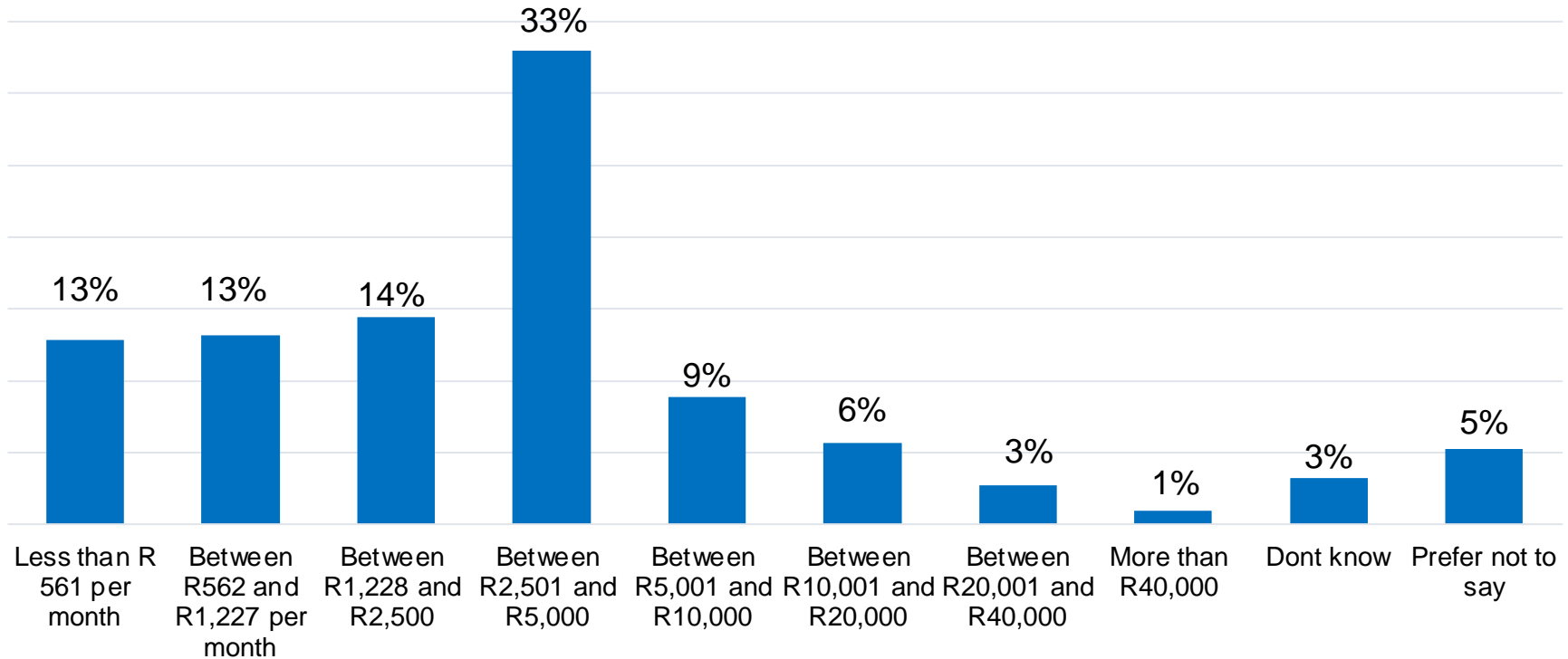
High Level Key Findings 2

- Negative economic impact of regulations 35% unemployed at start of Lockdown
- 13% Job losses, 11% reduced pay, 6% compulsory leave, negative impact on own business
- 31% receiving disability grant but 33% receiving the (paltry) SRD grant – SAR 350/m.
- 10% elderly persons grant

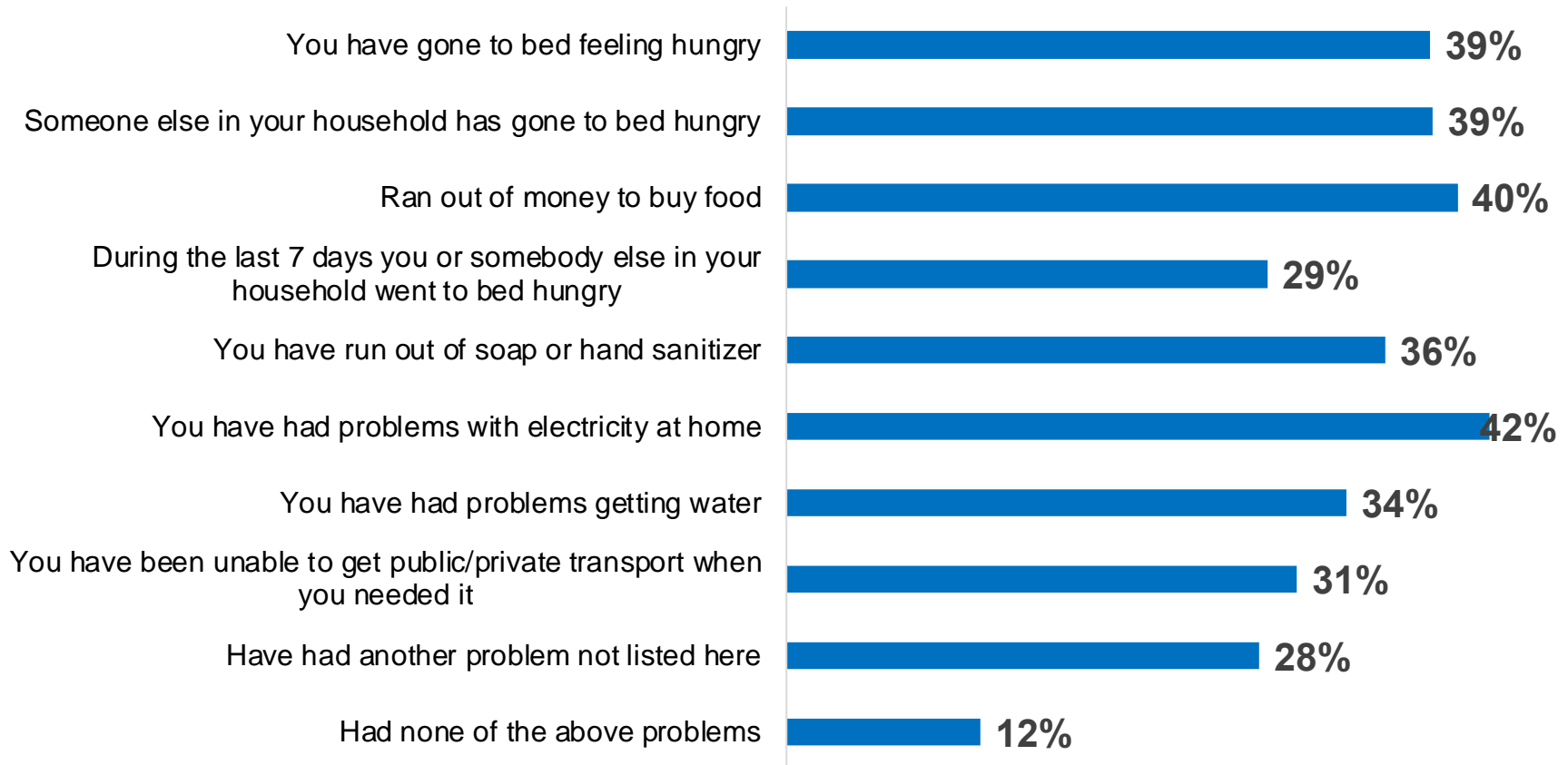


High Level Key Findings 3

– Thus most are poor (63%) – Income less than ZAR 5000 per month



Unfamiliar Experiences 1



Unfamiliar Experiences 2

- 76% difficulty in paying for basic living expenses and noticed increases in disability expenditure (hygiene, sanitation, medication)
- 60% reliant on daily carer services and 73% interrupted
- Rehabilitative services interrupted for long period – medical, counselling, physical therapy
- Disability specific services also interrupted – repairs to assistive devices delayed
- Psychosocial experiences – 60% Stressed, 54% Depressed, 52% Scared/Anxious, 42% Lonely – limited social interaction as many live alone
- Most government and other providers considered by 48% to be doing a poor job
- 37% rely on state but greater movement to DPOs - 51% for COVID-19 specific support

Conclusions

- Disability Rights Disaster Framework far from complete – must be completed urgently
- Overlooked by many interventions – lack of disability-inclusive approach
- Mitigation and control regulations had negative consequences on rehabilitative and other services
- Diversity of people within sector ignored
- Information and interventions more accessible to those on the system – existing grant recipients
- Little interaction/collaboration across departments and with DPOs
- Data driven response but lack of disability data!
- 83% feel that government should monitor circumstances during pandemics – ensure continuity of services and monitor rights protection

Thank You

Many thanks to partners and to funders

For more info
thart@hsrc.ac.za