

CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER, SANITATION AND ENERGY INSECURITY: INVISIBILITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Purpose:

The purpose of this project was to explore the results of an exploratory survey designed to gauge participant perspectives on the impact climate change, water, and energy issues have on various marginalized populations. These groups included Disabled People, Industry, Women, Ethnic Minorities, Children, and Indigenous People, in both high and low income countries. In particular, responses pertaining to disabled populations were analyzed.

Background:

The world's climate is steadily changing— global temperatures are reaching new extremes and are impacting both the physical and social environment^{5,8}. The increasing problem of people experiencing water and energy insecurity coupled with the growing severity of natural disasters, have reshaped how humans are interacting with their environment⁷ and has put climate change at the forefront of both national and international policy agendas⁶. Many groups are impacted by water, energy and climate insecurity including disabled people². However, despite a growth in importance surrounding these issues, literature assessing their potential implications for disabled people remains scarce. The body of climate change, energy security, and water security literature assessing vulnerable populations and appropriate strategies continues to expand however the mentioning of disabled people is rare. The well-being of disabled people is threatened⁹ by this invisibility. Here we present the results of a survey which looked at various aspects of energy, water and climate issues including how women, children, disabled people, indigenous groups, ethnic groups and industry in both high and low income countries are perceived to be impacted and are currently seen to have climate change security, energy security, water and sanitation security issues.

Methods and Materials:

We generated an online survey, transmitted via convenience and snowball sampling that ascertains the views from various demographics on among others whether they think that disabled people face problems. The majority of respondents were Canadian's between the ages of 18-65. Respondents were asked to identify the population group they felt to be most negatively impacted by climate change, water access, and energy access issues. The following groups were listed with both a high-income (HI) country and low-income (LI) country option: Disabled People, Industry, Women, Ethnic Minorities, Children, and Indigenous People. The results were then cross-tabulated based on respondents' occupation (Student n=99, Academic n=44, Government n=11, Industry/Technical n=35) as well as area of work/study (Disability Related VS Non-Disability Related). Responses from participants with industrial and technical occupations were grouped together due to their similarity of their responses.

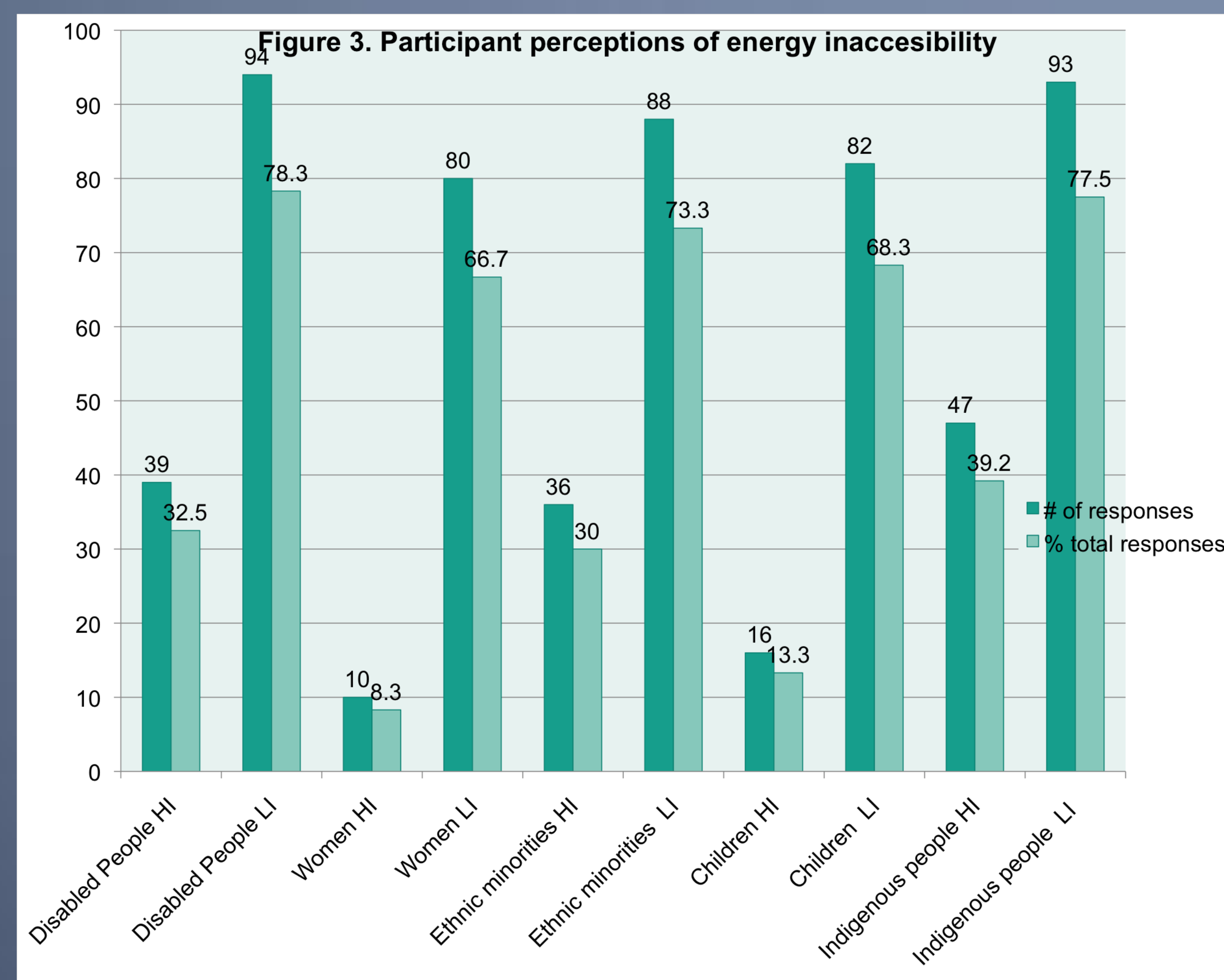
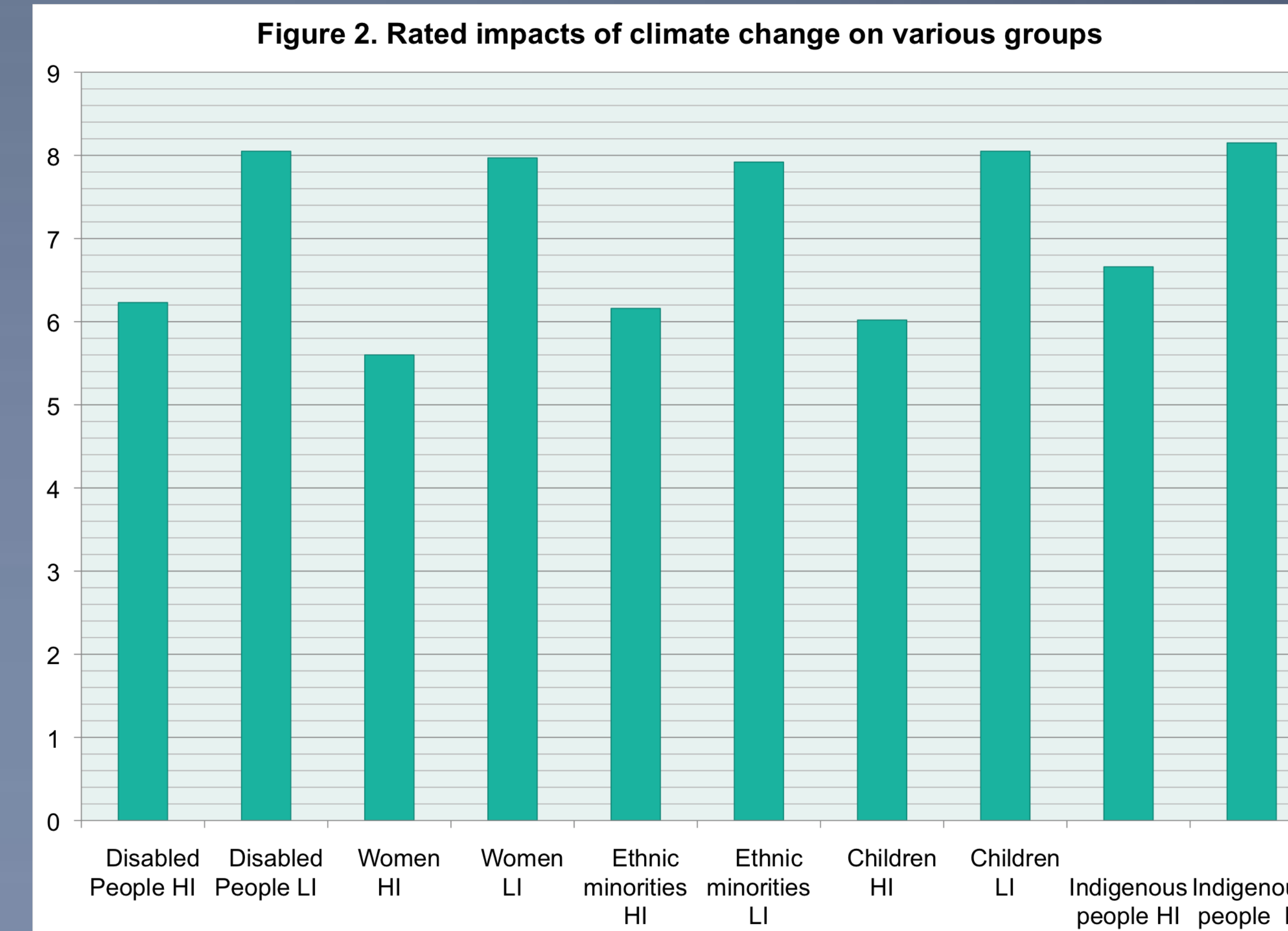
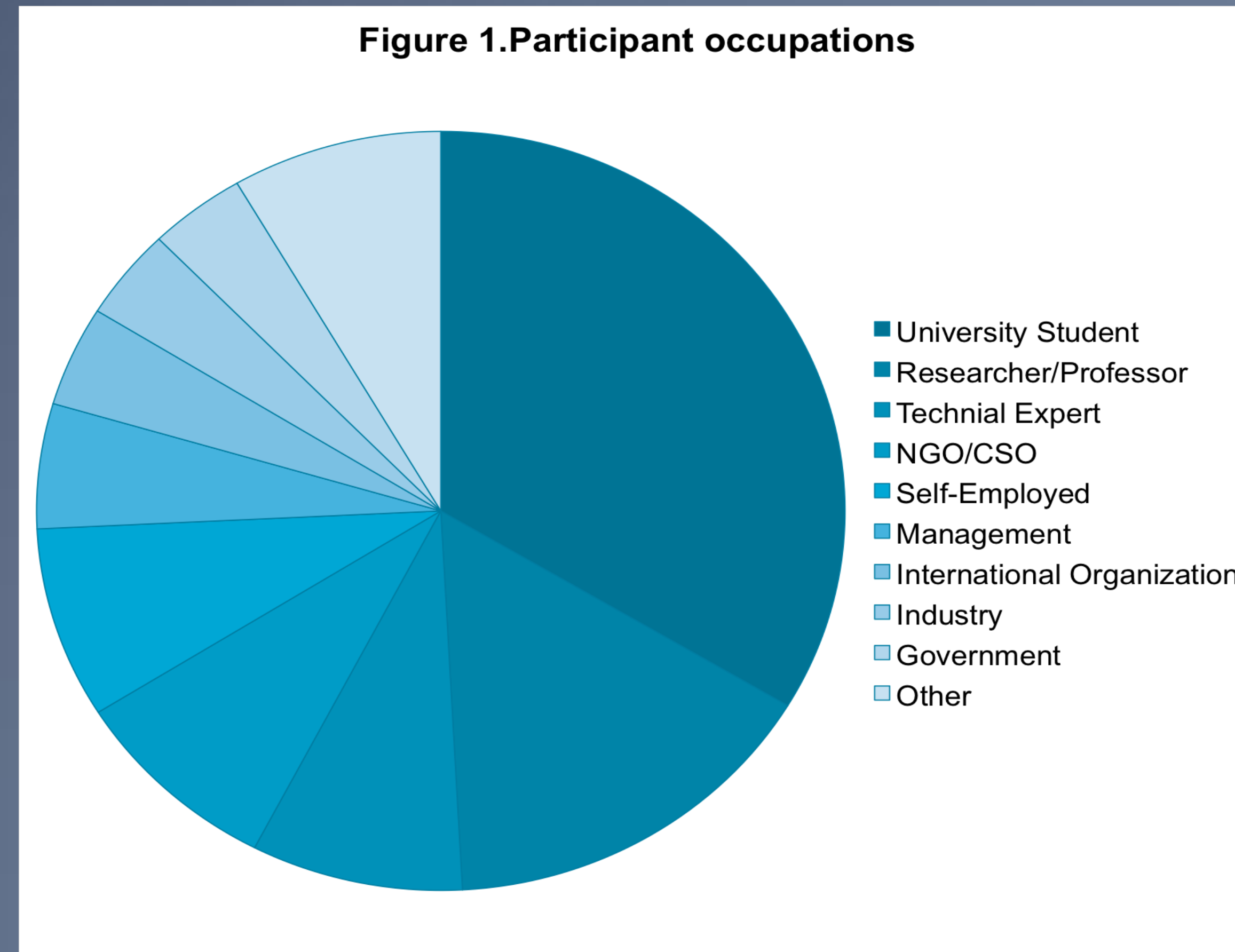


Figure 4. Participant ratings of water inaccessibility for various groups

	Clean Water	Drinkable Water	Water usable for other purposes	Water Sanitation	Response Count
Disabled People HI	50.0% (13)	42.3% (11)	42.3% (11)	38.5% (10)	26
Disabled People LI	78.8% (67)	80.0% (68)	58.8% (50)	69.4% (59)	85
Women HI	54.5% (12)	45.5% (10)	40.9% (9)	36.4% (8)	22
Women LI	84.6% (66)	85.9% (67)	62.8% (49)	67.9% (53)	78
Ethnic minorities HI	44.8% (13)	44.8% (13)	48.3% (14)	41.4% (12)	29
Ethnic LI	81.3% (65)	75.0% (60)	56.3% (45)	70.0% (56)	80
Children HI	63.6% (14)	45.5% (10)	40.9% (9)	31.8% (7)	22
Children LI	85.2% (69)	81.5% (66)	59.3% (48)	70.4% (57)	81
Indigenous people HI	59.5% (25)	54.8% (23)	59.5% (25)	50.0% (21)	42
Indigenous people LI	83.5% (71)	80.0% (68)	64.7% (55)	72.9% (62)	85

Results

Climate Change

- Disabled people in low income countries were seen as the second most impacted by climate change (n=98, weighted mean 8.05).
- Disabled people in high income countries received a weighted mean of 6.23 (n=90)

Energy

- 78% of participants responded that disabled people in low income countries do not have adequate access to energy (n=94).

Water

- In high income countries 50.0% of disabled people were seen as not having access to clean water, 42.3% to drinkable water, 42.3% to water for other purposes, and 38.5% to water sanitation.
- For disabled people in low income countries 78.8% were seen as not having access to clean water, 80.0% to drinkable water, 58.8% to water for other purposes, and 69.4% to water sanitation.

Conclusions:

•Despite being outlined as one of the most vulnerable groups¹, our survey is the first to ask questions pertaining to climate change, energy, and water access impacts on disabled people within a project covering a broad scope of groups and topics. It is important to note that our results are not generalizable and that the survey was exploratory in nature.

•Across all demographics disabled people were recognized as being impacted significantly by climate change, energy, and water access issues. However, disabled people still remain invisible within the discourses of these issues and policy-making decisions.

•the problems faced by disabled people in high-income nations were not acknowledged as often as they were for disabled people in low-income nations; it is important to emphasize that critical climate, water, and energy issues exist for disabled people in high-income nations as well

•Some disciplines were more likely to acknowledge the needs of disabled people than others. This discrepancy in acknowledgment may contribute to policy and emergency planning that fails to accommodate for the needs of disabled people¹³, as disability related fields are currently in a position with less influence on policy.



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