

## **Social Participation Patterns among Persons with and without Disabilities in Israel**

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In 1998 the Israeli Knesset enacted the “Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law”, intended to protect the dignity and freedom of persons with disabilities, and to ensure their equal and active participation in society. Today, a decade later, there is a crucial need to evaluate whether this legislation contributed to “closing the gaps” in social participation between people with and without disabilities.

The article presents a national comparative survey examining the social and community participation patterns of people with and without disabilities. It explores the differences in scope and nature of social participation patterns, as well as barriers and facilitators within and between the two sub-populations.

The main findings indicate significant gaps in the social participation of people with and without disabilities. In addition, the results demonstrate the core contribution of education and employment to people's sense of belonging and involvement in society. The article concludes that that Equal Rights legislation alone is not sufficient to close the gap in social participation, and that the government has to play an active role in promoting education and employment for people with disabilities, as well as adopting other measures.

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