

KRETANJE PREVALENCIJE I UZROČNOSTI INVALIDITETA U REPUBLICI HRVATSKOJ U PERIODU 2014.-2024.

TRENDS IN THE PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY AND ITS CAUSATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA FROM 2014 TO 2024

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Sažetak: U Republici Hrvatskoj se podaci o osobama s invaliditetom prate u Registru osoba s invaliditetom. U ovom je radu učinjena komparativna analiza prevalencije invaliditeta od 2014. do 2024. godine u Republici Hrvatskoj, kao i distribucija invaliditeta prema dobi, spolu i vrsti oštećenja u istom razdoblju. Uzeti su zbirni statistički pokazatelji iz godišnjih Izvješća o osobama s invaliditetom i Hrvatskog zdravstveno-statističkog ljetopisa. Uočen je statistički značajan porast prevalencije invaliditeta (s 12 % na 17 %). Distribucija se invaliditeta po spolu mijenjala: do 2020. godine omjer muškaraca i žena bio je konstantan (6 naprema 4), no nakon te godine uočena je sve veća zastupljenost žena. U prvim promatranim godinama (do 2019. godine) najveći je postotak osoba s invaliditetom bio u radno-aktivnoj dobi (od 20 do 64 godine), no od 2022. godine prevladavaju osobe s invaliditetom u dobnoj skupini stariji od 65 godina. Invaliditet među djecom (od 0 do 19 godina) također bilježi porast. Prema vrsti oštećenja kao najučestaliji uzroci invaliditeta bila su Oštećenja lokomotornog sustava, a slijedila ih je skupina Oštećenja drugih organa i organskih sustava, kromosomopatije, prirođene anomalije i rijetke bolesti te Mentalna oštećenja. Autori smatraju kako je razlog povišenja prevalencije invaliditeta u Republici Hrvatskoj dostavljanje svih podataka vještačenja pomoću digitalizacije u Registar, što je omogućilo potpun obuhvat podataka osoba s invaliditetom. Također, u Republici Hrvatskoj došlo je do depopulacije, ali i starenja stanovništva, čime se povećavao

Abstract: In the Republic of Croatia, data on individuals with disabilities are monitored within the Registry of Persons with Disabilities. This paper provides findings from a comparative analysis of the prevalence of disability in Croatia between 2014 and 2024, as well as the demographic distribution of disability by age, gender, and type of impairment in the same period. Aggregated statistical indicators from the annual reports on persons with disabilities and the Croatian Health Statistics Yearbook were used for further analysis. A statistically significant increase was observed in the prevalence of disability (from 12% to 17%). The gender-based distribution of disability has changed: the ratio of men to women remained constant (6 to 4) until 2020, after which, there has been an increasing representation of women. In the first years of observation (until 2019), the highest percentage of persons with disabilities was correlated with the working age (20 to 64 years), but, since 2022, there has been an increase in persons with disabilities in the 65+ years age group. Child disability (0 to 19 years) has also seen an increase. Considering the type of impairment, the most common causes of disability were impairments of the locomotor system, followed by impairments of other organs and organ systems, chromosomopathies, congenital anomalies and rare diseases, and, lastly, mental impairments. We believe that the reason behind the observed increase in the prevalence of disability in Croatia is the digitalisation of the Registry of Persons with Disabilities, thus facilitating the submission of data collected from expert evaluations and allowing for

broj vještačenih osoba radi ostvarivanja invalidskih prava. Porast prevalencije invaliditeta u skladu je sa svjetskim trendovima. U svijetu još nije u potpunosti ratificirana Konvencija o pravima osoba s invaliditetom, a nije ni uspostavljena jedinstvena metoda utvrđivanja invaliditeta, što otežava razvoj epidemiologije i međunarodne usporedbe prevalencija. U skladu s navedenim potrebno je razvijanje metoda bilježenja usporedive i pouzdane statistike kojom bi se omogućila kvalitetna međunarodna usporedivost te posljedično unaprijedilo razumijevanje invaliditeta, no i poboljšalo planiranje politika, skrbi i prava za osobe s invaliditetom.

Ključne riječi: osobe s invaliditetom, prevalencija invaliditeta, Registar osoba s invaliditetom, javne politike, demografski trendovi

1. UVOD

Prema Konvenciji Ujedinjenih naroda o pravima osoba s invaliditetom, koju je Hrvatska ratificirala 2007. godine Zakonom o potvrđivanju Konvencije o pravima osoba s invaliditetom (Narodne novine, 2007.), osobe s invaliditetom one su osobe koje imaju dugotrajna tjelesna, mentalna, intelektualna ili osjetilna oštećenja, koja u međudjelovanju s različitim preprekama mogu sprječavati njihovo potpuno i učinkovito sudjelovanje u društvu na ravnopravnoj osnovi s drugima, što je ujedno i definicija koju upotrebljavaju Ujedinjeni Narodi (United Nations, 2006.).

Prema Konvenciji o pravima osoba s invaliditetom sve države potpisnice, među kojima je i Republika Hrvatska, imaju obvezu prikupljanja i statističkog praćenja podataka o osobama s invaliditetom radi formuliranja i provedbe politika koje će Konvenciju učiniti djelotvornom. Prikupljanje i statistička obrada tih podataka mora biti u skladu sa zakonodavstvom o zaštiti podataka, ljudskih prava i temeljnih sloboda, a razvrstani će se podaci upotrebljavati kao pomoć u procjeni provedbe obveza Republike Hrvatske te za identifikaciju i otklanjanje prepreka s kojima se osobe s invaliditetom suočavaju u ostvarivanju svojih prava, što je definirano Zakonom o potvrđivanju Konvencije o pravima osoba s invaliditetom (Narodne novine, 2007). U Hrvatskoj se podaci o osobama s invaliditetom prate u Registru osoba s invaliditetom (u daljnjem tekstu: Registar) na temelju Zakona o registru osoba s invaliditetom (Narodne novine,

complete coverage of data on these individuals. Additionally, the Republic of Croatia has recorded a depopulation rate, as well as population aging, which has increased the number of individuals subject to mandatory expert evaluation for the purpose of claiming disability rights. This increase in prevalence of disability is consistent with global trends. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has not yet been fully ratified across the world, nor has a uniform method for establishing disability been defined: this makes it difficult to develop epidemiological studies and compare prevalence rates at an international scale. In light of the above, it is necessary to develop efficient methods that can be used to record reliable statistics that would enable high-end international comparability studies and, consequently, improve the current level of understanding of disability. This will also enhance the planning of policies related to the care and rights guaranteed for persons with disabilities.

Keywords: persons with disabilities, disability prevalence, Registry of Persons with Disabilities, public policies, demographic trends

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter: the Convention), which was ratified by the Republic of Croatia in 2007 under the Act on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette, 2007), persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The same definition has been used by the United Nations (United Nations, 2006).

According to the Convention, all States Parties, including Croatia, have the obligation to collect and statistically monitor data on persons with disabilities in order to formulate and implement policies that will make the Convention more effective. The collection and statistical processing of this data must comply with the legislation on data protection, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The disaggregated data will be used to help assess the implementation of the obligations of the Republic of Croatia, as well as to identify and remove obstacles faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights as defined by the Act on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of

2022.) te se tako ispunjavaju odredbe Konvencije o pravima osoba s invaliditetom koje se odnose na statističke pokazatelje. U Registar se unose osobni te podaci o vrstama oštećenja kod osobe s invaliditetom. Vrste oštećenja podijeljene su na: oštećenja vida; oštećenja sluha; gluhošljepoću; oštećenja govorno-glasovne komunikacije; oštećenja lokomotornog sustava; oštećenja središnjeg živčanog sustava; oštećenja perifernog živčanog sustava; oštećenja drugih organa i organskih sustava / posljedice kroničnih bolesti, kromosomopatije, prirođene anomalije i rijetke bolesti; intelektualne teškoće, poremećaje iz spektra autizma i mentalna oštećenja (Narodne novine, 2022).

Tijekom 1980-ih godina Svjetska zdravstvena organizacija (u daljnjem tekstu: SZO) procijenila je kako će 2010. godine prevalencija osoba s invaliditetom na svjetskoj razini iznositi oko 10 % (World Health Organization, 1981.), no 2010. godine prevalencija osoba s invaliditetom, prema publikaciji World report on disability iz 2011. godine, iznosila je oko 15 % (World Health Organization, 2011.). Danas je, prema procjenama SZO-a, u svijetu oko 1,3 milijarde osoba s invaliditetom, odnosno 16 % ukupnog svjetskog stanovništva (World Health Organization, 2023.). Ovi podaci ukazuju na porast broja osoba s invaliditetom u cijelom svijetu iznad predviđanja i procjena te potrebu za kontinuiranim praćenjem kroz dulji period zbog mogućih promjena trendova i usklađivanja politika za osobe s invaliditetom u skladu s tim pokazateljima.

Pregledom znanstvene i stručne literature uočava se nedostatak istraživanja u Republici Hrvatskoj o pokazateljima invaliditeta, odnosno o prevalenciji i uzrocima invaliditeta kroz duži period stoga je cilj ovoga rada prikazati kretanje prevalencija invaliditeta u periodu od 2014. do 2024. godine, kao i usporediti prevalencije uzroka invaliditeta kroz navedeno razdoblje. S obzirom na to da se podaci Registra u Hrvatskoj upotrebljavaju za planiranja i unaprjeđenja politika za osobe s invaliditetom, potrebno je voditi računa i o mogućim promjenama trendova učestalosti pojedinih vrsta invaliditeta, a sve s ciljem što točnijeg i kvalitetnijeg planiranja skrbi, na nacionalnoj i regionalnoj razini za ovu posebice vulnerabilnu

Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette, 2007). In Croatia, data on persons with disabilities are monitored within the Registry of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter: the Registry) as per the Act on the Registry of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette, 2022). Therefore, this data meets the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in relation to statistical indicators. Personal data of persons with disabilities and type of impairment are recorded in the Registry. Impairments are categorised into the following types: visual impairment; hearing impairment; deaf-blindness; impairment of voice-to-voice communication; impairment of the locomotor system; impairment of the central nervous system; impairment of the peripheral nervous system; impairment of other organs and organ systems/ consequences of chronic diseases, chromosomopathies, congenital anomalies and rare diseases; intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and mental impairments (Official Gazette, 2022).

In the 1980s, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that the prevalence of people with disabilities worldwide will be about 10% in 2010 (WHO, 1981). In fact, according to the World Report on Disability 2011, the prevalence of people with disabilities in 2010 was about 15% (WHO, 2011). Today, according to WHO estimates, there are around 1.3 billion persons with disabilities in the world (i.e.), or 16% of the total world population (WHO, 2023). These data point to an increase in the number of persons with disabilities worldwide beyond predictions and estimates, and subsequently, to the need for continuous monitoring over a longer period of time due to possible changes in trends and the need for harmonisation of disability policies according to said indicators.

The review of scientific and professional literature shows a lack of research in Croatia on disability indicators, i.e., on the prevalence and causes of disability over a longer period of time. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the trends in the prevalence of disability in Croatia in the period from 2014 to 2024, as well as to compare the prevalence of certain causes of disability over the specified period. Given that the data in the Registry are used for planning and improving policies for

skupinu. Također, podaci mogu poslužiti i kao pokazatelji u evaluaciji provedenih mjera i programa za osobe s invaliditetom.

2. METODE RADA

Podaci koji su se upotrebljavali i analizirali u ovome radu zbirni su statistički pokazatelji koje Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo izdaje u redovitom godišnjem Izvješću o osobama s invaliditetom i Hrvatskom zdravstveno-statističkom ljetopisu (Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo, 2014., 2024.). Komparativnom analizom prevalencija invaliditeta, dobivenih iz podataka Registra, u ovom će se radu ukazati na promjenu broja osoba s invaliditetom tijekom navedenih godina, prema parametrima koji uključuju dob, spol i vrstu invaliditeta.

Značajnost promjene prevalencije invaliditeta u odnosu na prethodnu godinu testirana je pomoću hi-kvadrat testa. Za statističku obradu podataka upotrebljavao se program SPSS 20.0 (for Windows), a razina značajnosti određena je na $p < 0,01$.

3. REZULTATI

3.1. Prevalencija invaliditeta u Republici Hrvatskoj od 2014. do 2024. godine

Prema podacima iz Registra, prevalencija invaliditeta 2014. godine u Republici Hrvatskoj iznosila je 12,0 %, a zatim slijedi blagi pad do 2017. godine na 11,9 %. Od 2018. godine bilježi se rast s 12,1 % na 17,0 % u 2023. i 2024. godini. Od 2014. godine do 2024. godine zabilježen je porast ukupnog broja oštećenja za 39,4 %, a ukupnog broja osoba s invaliditetom za 28,1 %, dok je razlika u prevalenciji 5 %, što je statistički značajna promjena u smislu povećanja prevalencije (tablica 1).

persons with disabilities in Croatia, it is necessary to take into account the possible changes associated with trends in the prevalence of certain types of disabilities, all with the aim of being able to facilitate accurate and better health care planning at the national and regional level for this particularly vulnerable group. The data can also serve as indicators in the evaluation of implemented measures and programmes for persons with disabilities.

2. METHODS

The data used and analysed in this paper includes aggregated statistical indicators published by the Croatian Institute of Public Health in their regular annual Report on Persons with Disabilities, as well as the Croatian Health Statistics Yearbook (Benjak et al., 2015, Benjak et al. 2024). The results of the comparative analysis of the prevalence of disability, based on data obtained from the Registry, will point to changing trends in the number of persons with disabilities over the years, according to parameters such as age, gender, and type of disability.

The significance of the changes in the prevalence of disability compared to previous years was tested using a chi-square test. SPSS (Ver. 20.0, IBM) was used for statistical data processing, and the significance level was set at $p < 0.01$.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Prevalence of disability in the Republic of Croatia from 2014 to 2024

According to the data from the Registry, the prevalence of disability in Croatia in 2014 was 12.0%, and by 2017, there was a slight decrease in prevalence (11.9%). Since 2018, there has been an increase in prevalence from 12.1% to 17.0% recorded in 2023 and 2024. From 2014 to 2024, the total number of impairments increased by 39.4% and the total number of persons with disabilities increased by 28.1%. The overall difference in prevalence from 2014 to 2024 was 5%, which is a statistically significant change in terms of increased prevalence (Table 1).

Tablica 1. Prevalencija invaliditeta u Republici Hrvatskoj za razdoblje od 2014. do 2024. godine i značajnost promjene / **Table 1.** Prevalence of disability in Croatia from 2014 to 2024 and the significance of change across years

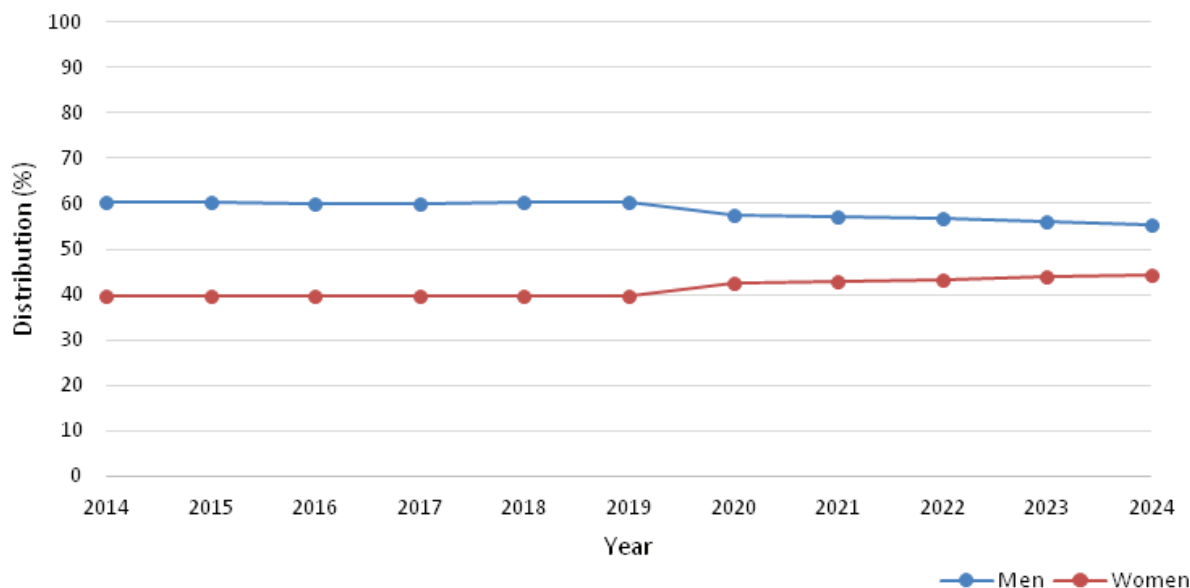
Year	Total No. of impairments	Total No. of persons with disabilities	Prevalence of disability (%)	Difference	Percentage change	Significance of change compared to previous year
2014	719,176	510,274	12.0	-	-	-
2015	715,155	508,350	12.0	0	0	-
2016	742,831	511,094	11.9	- 0.1	- 0.83	p < 0.01
2017	745,908	511,850	11.9	0	0	-
2018	835,277	500,724	12.1	0.2	1.68	p < 0.01
2019	617,020	511,281	12.4	0.3	2.48	p < 0.01
2020	961,538	582,428	14.4	2	16.13	p < 0.01
2021	846,737	586,153	14.4	0	0	-
2022	934,318	624,019	16.0	1.6	11.11	p < 0.01
2023	1,002,699	657,791	17.0	1.0	6.25	p < 0.01
2024	1,002,715	653,577	17.0	0	0	-

3.2. Distribucija invaliditeta u Republici Hrvatskoj prema spolu od 2014. do 2024. godine

Analizirajući distribuciju invaliditeta po spolu, uočava se konstantnost od 2014. do 2019. godine, gdje je udio muškaraca iznosio 60 %, a žena 40 %. Od 2020. godine ta se razlika smanjuje i 2024. godine iznosi 56 % muškaraca i 44 % žena (slika 1).

3.2. Distribution of disability by gender in the Republic of Croatia from 2014 to 2024

The analysis of the distribution of disability by gender was consistent from 2014 to 2019, where the proportion of men was 60% and that of women was 40%. Since 2020, this gap has been narrowing, reaching a proportion of 56% men and 44% women in 2024 (Fig. 1).

Slika 1. Udio invaliditeta prema spolu u Republici Hrvatskoj / **Figure 1.** Distribution of disability by gender in Croatia

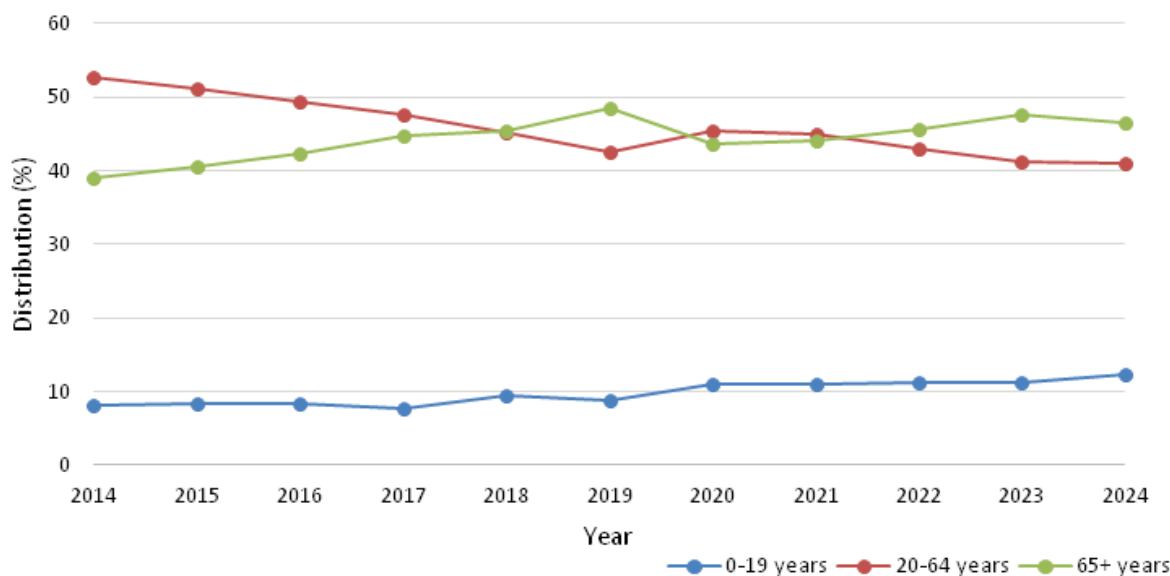
3.3. Distribucija invaliditeta prema dobi u Republici Hrvatskoj od 2014. do 2024. godine

Analizirajući distribuciju invaliditeta po dobi, uočava se da je 2014. godine najveći postotak osoba s invaliditetom bio u radno-aktivnoj dobi (od 20 do 64 godine) i iznosio je 52,7 % te taj postotak kontinuirano pada, s najnižom vrijednosti od 42,6 % tijekom 2019. godine. Nakon toga slijedi rast udjela osoba s invaliditetom u radno-aktivnoj dobi te je ponovno bio najveći među dobnim skupinama s 45,4 % 2020., odnosno 45,0 % 2021. godine. U dobnj skupini stariji od 65 godina, taj je postotak rastao do 2019. godine, kada je bio najveći među dobnim skupinama (48,6 %), da bi 2020. i 2021. godine uslijedio blagi pad. Od 2022. godine ponovno je bio iznad postotka za radno-aktivnu dob i 2024. godine iznosio 46,6 % naprema 41,1 %. Invaliditet je prisutan i u dječjoj dobi (od 0 do 19 godina) te je rastao s 8,2 % 2014. na 12,3 % 2024. godine (slika 2).

3.3. Distribution of disability by age in the Republic of Croatia from 2014 to 2024

By analysing the distribution of disability by age, it was observed that, in 2014, the highest percentage of persons with disabilities (52.7%) was correlated with the working age (20-64 years), after which, this rate steadily decreased and the lowest percentage of persons with disabilities (42.6%) was recorded in 2019. This was followed by an increase in the proportion of persons with disabilities in the working population, which was again the highest among all age groups, with 45.4% recorded in 2020 and 45.0% in 2021. In the group with individuals aged 65 years and above, the prevalence of disability increased by 2019, at which point this age group had the highest rate of disability (48.6%) compared to other individual age groups. This was followed by a slight decrease in 2020 and 2021. As of 2022, the disability rate in the 65+ years age group surpassed that of the working population, amounting to 46.6% in 2024 as opposed to 41.1% for the working population. Disability was also recorded among children (0-19 years): there has been an increase from 8.2% in 2014 to 12.3% in 2024 (Fig. 2).

Slika 2. Distribucija invaliditeta prema dobi u Republici Hrvatskoj / **Figure 2.** Distribution of disability by age in Croatia



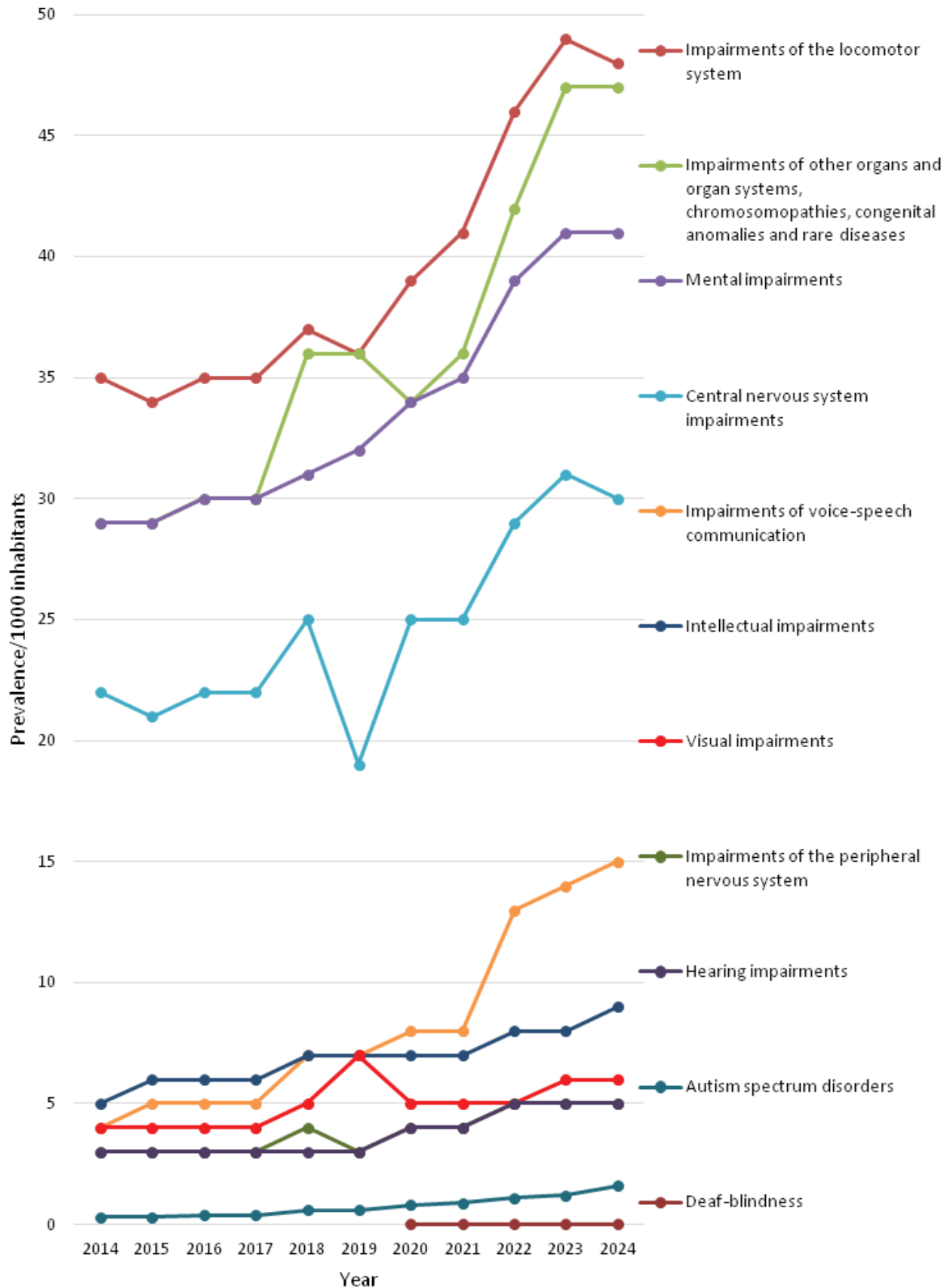
3.4. Usporedba prevalencija invaliditeta prema vrstama oštećenja u Republici Hrvatskoj od 2014. do 2024. godine

Prema vrsti oštećenja u Republici Hrvatskoj na prvom se mjestu uzroka invaliditeta ili komorbiditetnih dijagnoza koje pridonose funkcionalnom oštećenju osobe nalaze Oštećenja lokomotornog sustava (35 – 48 / 1000 stanovnika). Slijede skupine Oštećenja drugih organa i organskih sustava, kromosomopatije, prirođene anomalije i rijetke bolesti (29 – 47 / 1000 stanovnika) te Mentalna oštećenja (29 – 41 / 1000 stanovnika). Nakon njih najučestalija su Oštećenja središnjeg živčanog sustava (22 – 30 / 1000 stanovnika), a zatim 3 – 15 / 1000 stanovnika prevalencija koja je zabilježena u skupinama: Oštećenje glasovno-govorne komunikacije, Intelektualna oštećenja, Oštećenje vida, Oštećenje perifernog živčanog sustava te Oštećenje sluha. Najrjeđa je skupina Poremećaja iz spektra autizma s 0,3 – 1,6 / 1000 stanovnika te gluhoosljepoća s 0,03 / 1000 stanovnika (slika 3). Iz prikazanih podataka na slici 3 moguće je zaključiti da kod svih vrsti oštećenja postoji trend porasta prevalencije u promatranom razdoblju, uz određene manje varijacije tijekom tog perioda.

3.4. Comparison of prevalence of disability by type of impairment in the Republic of Croatia from 2014 to 2024

According to the data on type of impairment, the number one cause of disability or comorbidity diagnoses that contribute to the functional impairment of a person are impairments of the locomotor system (35-48/1000 inhabitants). Following this are impairments of other organs and organ systems, chromosomopathies, congenital anomalies and rare diseases (29-47/1000 inhabitants), mental impairments (29-41/1000 inhabitants), and central nervous system impairments (22-30/1000 inhabitants). The prevalence of disability among 3-15/1000 inhabitants was observed in groups of individuals with following impairments: impairments of voice-speech communication, intellectual impairments, visual impairments, impairments of the peripheral nervous system, and hearing impairments. The groups with the lowest rates of disability were those with autism spectrum disorders (0.3–1.6/1000 inhabitants) and deaf-blindness (0.03/1000 inhabitants; Fig. 3). From the data shown in Figure 3, we can conclude that all individual types of impairments have seen an increasing trend in terms of prevalence in the observed period, with some minor variations during that period.

Slika 3. Prevalencija invaliditeta prema vrstama oštećenja u Republici Hrvatskoj / **Figure 3.** Prevalence of disability by type of impairment in Croatia



4. RASPRAVA

Prikupljanje podataka o osobama s invaliditetom i izrada statističkih pokazatelja neke su od obveza potpisnica Konvencija o pravima osoba s invaliditetom Ujedinjenih naroda. Svrha tog prikupljanja unaprijeđenje je politika za osobe s invaliditetom, temeljenih na podacima. Hrvatska je šest godina prije potpisivanja te Konvencije, Zakonom o registru osoba s invaliditetom 2001. godine regulirala prikupljanje podataka i način njihove obrade. Registar se vodi u Hrvatskom zavodu za javno zdravstvo, a izvori su podataka tijela vještačenja invaliditeta. Iz navedenih podataka u ovom radu moguće je zaključiti da postoji statistički značajan porast prevalencije invaliditeta u Republici Hrvatskoj u periodu od 2014. do 2024. godine. U navedenom periodu učestalost invaliditeta rasla je od 12 % do 17 %, no porast nije bio linearan.

Prema mišljenju autora ovog istraživanja, razlog tom povećanju nalazi se u činjenici da su uspostavom Jedinstvenog tijela vještačenja svi podaci vještačenja automatski direktnom elektronskom vezom dostavljani u Registar, što je dovelo do potpunog obuhvata podataka. Prije tog perioda podaci su dostavljani, iz tadašnjih izvora (Hrvatski zavod za mirovinsko osiguranje, Ministarstvo branitelja, sustav socijalne skrbi, sustav obrazovanja, Ratnih vojnih invalida Drugog svjetskog rata) u najvećem obimu u papirnatom formatu i putem pošte, što je pružalo mogućnost da neki podaci ne budu dostavljeni u Registar.

Drugi mogući razlog povećanja prevalencije invaliditeta nalazi se u demografskim promjenama populacije Republike Hrvatske, to jest smanjenju ukupnog broja stanovnika te starenju populacije i sve većem broju starijih osoba koje bivaju vještačene i tako ostvaruju svoja invalidska prava. Godine 2014. u Republici Hrvatskoj bilo je 4 238 000 stanovnika, dok je procjena stanovništva za 2023. godinu (koju je izdao Državni zavod za statistiku) iznosila 3.850.000 stanovnika. U 2014. broj osoba s invaliditetom je bio 510.274, a u 2024. je . godini porastao na 653.577 osoba. Uz istovremeno smanjenje ukupne populacije to je dovelo do značajnog porasta prevalencije invaliditeta u tom periodu.

4. DISCUSSION

The collection of data on persons with disabilities and the generation of statistical indicators are among the obligations of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of this collection is to improve data-driven policies for persons with disabilities. Six years before the Convention was signed, Croatia regulated the collection and processing of data by means of the Act on the Registry of Persons with Disabilities ratified in 2001. The Registry is run by the Croatian Institute of Public Health and the data sources include disability expert evaluation bodies. Based on a comparative analysis of the above-mentioned data, it can be concluded that there is a significant increase in the prevalence of disability in the Republic of Croatia in the period from 2014 to 2024. In this period, the incidence of disability increased from 12% to 17%, but the increase was not linear.

According to the findings of the present study, the reason for this increase lies in the fact that, by establishing a single authority, all expert data were automatically submitted to the Registry via direct electronic link, resulting in extensive data coverage. Prior to that period, data had been submitted by several sources (Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, the social welfare and education systems, and the system of monitoring data on World War II veterans with disabilities) in paper format and by mail, to a great extent, interfering with the transfer of certain data to the Registry.

Another possible reason for the observed increase in the prevalence of disability are demographic changes in the Croatian population, i.e., decrease in the total population, population ageing, as well as an increase in the number of elderly persons subject to mandatory expert evaluation for the purpose of claiming their disability rights. In 2014, there were 4,238,000 inhabitants in Croatia, while the population estimate for 2023 (issued by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics) was 3,850,000 inhabitants. In 2014, the number of persons with disabilities was 510,274, and this number has risen to 653,577 persons in 2024. This dramatic drop

Rezultati ovog istraživanja također ukazuju da se kod svih vrsti oštećenja koja uzrokuju invaliditet bilježi porast prevalencije u promatranom razdoblju. Razlog je ovom povećanju u porastu ukupne prevalencije invaliditeta koja proizlazi iz prije opisanog punog obuhvata podataka. Što se tiče distribucije po spolu i dobnim skupinama, bilježi se ujednačena distribucija uz manje promjene tijekom promatranog razdoblja (na primjer, određeno smanjenje udjela muških osoba s invaliditetom te manji porast udjela osoba s invaliditetom starijih od 65 godina). Porast udjela osoba s invaliditetom starijih od 65 godina posljedica je i starenja populacije, dok distribuciju po spolu treba promatrati u narednom periodu te hipoteze i zaključke moguće spolne inverzije donositi naknadno.

Prema dostupnim međunarodnim istraživanjima i procjenama, prevalencija invaliditeta i u svijetu bilježi porast, pa čak i znatniji od predviđanja. Tijekom 1980-ih godina SZO je procijenila kako će 2010. godine prevalencija osoba s invaliditetom na svjetskoj razini iznositi oko 10 % (World Health Organization, 1981.), no 2010. godine prevalencija je osoba s invaliditetom, prema publikaciji *World report on disability* iznosila oko 15 % (World Health Organization, 2011.). Kod usporedbi prevalencija invaliditeta među zemljama, potrebno je napomenuti kako značajan broj zemalja još nije ratificirao Konvenciju o pravima osoba s invaliditetom, pa samim time u svijetu ne postoji jedinstvena definicija invaliditeta, što je jedan od faktora koji otežava razvoj njegove epidemiologije. Podaci o broju osoba s invaliditetom prate se u velikom broju zemalja svijeta, no utvrđene prevalencije značajno variraju. Prema podacima Eurostata, 2023. godine kod 26,8 % stanovnika starijih od 16 godina u Europskoj uniji bio je utvrđen neki oblik invaliditeta uz vrlo izražene varijacije u prevalenciji invaliditeta među pojedinim zemljama članicama (Eurostat, 2024.). Tako je navedene godine prevalencija invaliditeta (u populaciji starijoj od 16 godina) u Luksemburgu iznosila 11,9 %, dok je u Latviji ista prevalencija iznosila 40,7 %.

U svim zemljama Europske unije, kao i u većini svjetskih zemalja, prevalencija invaliditeta raste sa životnom dobi, a kod većine osoba invali-

in overall population has further intensified the significant increase in the prevalence of disability in the observed period.

The results of the present study also indicate that all types of impairments causing disability recorded an increase in prevalence in the observed period. This is due to said increase in overall disability prevalence, resulting from extensive data coverage, as described above. Considering distribution of disability by gender and age, a uniform distribution was observed, with minor changes over the period between 2014 and 2024 (e.g., a clear decrease in the proportion of men with disabilities and a smaller increase in the proportion of persons with disabilities aged 65+ years). An increase in the proportion of persons with disabilities who are older than 65 years is also a consequence of population ageing. Changes in gender-based distribution should continue to be observed in the future before making any conclusions about gender inversion hypotheses and other theories.

According to available international research and estimates, the global prevalence of disability has shown an increasing trend that is significantly higher than predicted. In the 1980s, the WHO estimated that, in 2010, the global prevalence of people with disabilities would reach about 10% (WHO, 1981), while, in fact, according to the World Report on Disability, the prevalence in 2010 was about 15% (WHO, 2011). When comparing the prevalence of disability among countries, it should be noted that a significant number of countries have not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, so there is no single definition of disability in the world, which is one of the factors that hinders the development of relevant epidemiology. Data on the number of persons with disabilities are monitored in a large number of countries around the world, but established prevalence rates vary significantly. According to Eurostat data, in 2023, 26.8% of the population older than 16 years in the European Union were found to have some form of disability, with very pronounced variations in disability prevalence among individual member states (Eurostat, 2023). For example, the prevalence of

ditet je uvjetovan kroničnim bolestima, urođenim bolestima i različitim ozljedama. Prema publikaciji *World report on disability* (World Health Organization, 2011.) procijenjena opća prevalencija svih oblika invaliditeta u populaciji dobi iznad 18 godina u svijetu bila je u rasponu od 15,6 % do 19,4 %, pri čemu je prevalencija invaliditeta prema dostupnim podacima bila viša u ekonomski slabije razvijenim zemljama.

Međutim, međunarodne usporedbe otežane su varijacijama u definicijama i metodologijama utvrđivanja invaliditeta među pojedinim zemljama. Način na koji se definira invaliditet predstavlja značajan izazov stručnjacima koji se bave metodologijom prikupljanja statističkih podataka o njemu. Razvijanje niza metoda za kreiranje usporedive, valjane i pouzdane statistike o invaliditetu trebala bi uvelike poboljšati međunarodnu usporedivost statističkih podataka o invaliditetu i unaprijediti razumijevanje invaliditeta u svijetu (McDermott, Turk, 2010.; Madans, Loeb, Altman, 2011.; Madans, Loeb, 2012.).

5. ZAKLJUČAK

U Hrvatskoj se podaci o osobama s invaliditetom prate u Registru te se tako ispunjavaju odredbe Konvencije o pravima osoba s invaliditetom koje se odnose na statističke pokazatelje. Udio osoba s invaliditetom u ukupnoj populaciji Republike Hrvatske, odnosno prevalencija osoba s invaliditetom bilježi porast zadnjih deset godina. U periodu od 2014. do 2024. godine prevalencija je u značajnom porastu (od 12 % 2014. do 17 % 2024. godine), što je posljedica smanjenja ukupnog broja stanovnika, starenja populacije i porasta potreba za pravima osoba s invaliditetom, ali i boljeg obuhvata podataka u Registru, s obzirom na to da od 2015. godine svi podaci iz tijela koje utvrđuje invaliditet, automatski elektronskim putem, pristižu u Registar.

disability (in the population of 16+ year olds) in Luxembourg was 11.9%, while in Latvia, it was 40.7%.

In all countries of the European Union, as well as in most countries of the world, the prevalence of disability increases with age, and in most people, disability is caused by chronic or congenital diseases and various injuries. According to the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011), the estimated overall prevalence of all forms of disability in the global population of individuals aged 18+ years ranged from 15.6% to 19.4%, with the prevalence of disability (according to available data) being higher in less economically developed countries.

However, international comparisons are hampered by variations in definitions and methodologies for determining disability among countries. The way in which disability is defined poses a significant challenge to professionals engaged in the methodology of collecting relevant statistics. Developing a set of methods for creating comparable, valid, and reliable disability statistics should greatly improve the international comparability of disability statistics and improve the understanding of disability worldwide (McDermott & Turk, 2011, Madans et al., 2011, Madans & Loeb, 2013).

5. CONCLUSION

In the Republic of Croatia, data on persons with disabilities are monitored in the Registry, thus fulfilling the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities relating to statistical indicators. The proportion of persons with disabilities in the overall Croatian population, i.e., the prevalence of persons with disabilities, has increased over the last decade. In the period from 2014 to 2024, the prevalence has increased significantly (from 12% in 2014 to 17% in 2024). We believe that this observed increase is the outcome of a decrease in the overall population, population ageing, and an increase in the demand for the rights of persons with disabilities, but also better data coverage in the Registry as of 2015, since all data issued by the disability expert evaluation authorities are automatically delivered electronically to the Registry.

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