TV Accessibility Report of China: Situation, Problems and Suggestion

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Abstract: Persons with visual and hearing impairments encounter barriers when trying to watch TV. The use of captions, sign language and video description can improve TV accessibility for such persons.

A study of visual and hearing impairments among the inhabitants of Zhejiang province, China (N=1,658) found that more than eighty percent of those with such impairments usually watch TV to get news, entertainment, and knowledge; more than sixty individuals with hearing impairments (3.7% of the sample) expressed a strong desire for sign language in TV programs; persons with visual impairments show a slightly higher evaluation of TV programs than the hearing impaired. The study documents the need to enhance TV accessibility for persons with hearing and visual impairments.

However the current provision of TV access services in China does not address all such needs. There is no video description service for the deaf television audience in China; news and sports programs have the lowest levels of captioning; and there are no captions in live TV shows. A lack of funding and technological solutions appear to be the main challenges facing TV accessibility provision. Potential solutions include the provision of access services and the involvement of social and disability organizations in media regulation and supervision.