

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES IN 2002

Disability touches many lives—not just the lives of the individuals with disabilities, but also the lives of their families, friends, and coworkers. Information on people with disabilities is sought by health care providers, manufacturers of assistive devices, and policy makers, among others. In 2002, 51.2 million people living in the United States had some level of disability, and 32.5 million had a severe disability, according to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).¹ See Figure 1.

In 2002, disability came in many forms:

- About 10.7 million people aged 6 and older needed personal assistance with one or more activities of daily living (ADLs) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).²
- Among the population 15 and older, 2.7 million used a wheelchair and 9.1 million used an ambulatory aid such as a cane, crutches, or a walker.
- Approximately 7.9 million people had difficulty seeing words and letters in ordinary newsprint, including 1.8 million who reported being unable to see.
- Another 7.8 million people had difficulty hearing ordinary conversation, and 1 million of these people were unable to hear.

Disability by Age, Sex, and Race and Hispanic Origin

The disability rate for each age group was successively higher than for the next younger group. With a disability rate of 19 percent, people aged 45 to 54 were more than twice as likely as children under 15 (8 percent) to have a disability and half as likely as people 65 to 69 (38 percent) to have a disability. Among

¹ The data from this report were collected from June through September 2002 in the fifth wave (interview) of the 2001 SIPP. The population represented is the civilian noninstitutionalized population. Disability among the institutionalized population, such as people living in nursing homes, is not included in this report. The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

² People needing personal assistance are considered to have a severe disability.

Words That Count

Figure 1 contains definitions of **disability** and **severe disability** by age, including functional limitations, **Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)**, and **Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)**.

people aged 80 and older, the disability rate was 72 percent. This relationship between age and disability holds for both people with severe disabilities and those needing personal assistance (see Figure 2).

Overall, the majority of people with disabilities were female. In 2002, 28 million women and girls were disabled, compared with 23 million men and boys. Even so, the disability rate for the population younger than 15 was lower for girls (6 percent) than for boys (11 percent). Additionally, women aged 15 to 24 had a lower disability rate (10 percent) than men the same age (11 percent). Among the older population, this situation reversed.³ For people aged 45 to 54, the disability rate was 22 percent for women and 17 percent for men. Among people aged 65 and older, 56 percent of women and 47 percent of men had a disability. Within this older age group, 40 percent of women and 32 percent of men had a severe disability.

Among all ages, the disability rate was 19 percent for non-Hispanic Whites, 20 percent for Blacks, and 11 percent for Asians and Pacific Islanders.⁴ The rate for Hispanics, who may be any race, was 14 percent.⁵ While Asians and Pacific Islanders had the lowest rates for both severe disability and people needing special assistance, Blacks had the highest rates for both measures.⁶

³ The percentage of women aged 75 to 79 with a disability was not statistically different from the percentage of men that age with a disability.

⁴ The disability rates for non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks are not statistically different.

⁵ Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for racial groups. Data users should exercise caution when interpreting aggregate results for these groups because they consist of many distinct subgroups that differ in socioeconomic characteristics, culture, and recency of immigration. Data for American Indians and Alaska Natives are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the SIPP.

⁶ The percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders who needed personal assistance was not statistically different from the rate for Hispanics who needed personal assistance.

Figure 1.

Disability, Functional Limitations, Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)

Age and type of disability	
Under 6	
Developmental delay	X
Difficulty moving arms and legs (under age 3) or difficulty, walking, running, or playing (aged 3 to 5)	X
6 to 14	
Used a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker	✓
Had difficulty with one or more ADLs	X
Unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more ADLs	✓
Had one or more specified conditions: a learning disability or some other type of mental or emotional conditions	X
Had one or more specific conditions: autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, or another developmental disability	✓
Had difficulty performing one or more functional activities	X
Unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more of the functional activities	✓
15 and Older	
Used a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker	✓
Had difficulty performing one or more functional activities	X
Unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more of the functional activities	✓
Had difficulty with one or more activities of daily life	X
Unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more ADLs	✓
Had difficulty with one or more IADL	X
Unable to perform or needed help to perform one or more IADLs	✓
Had one or more specified conditions: a learning disability or some other type of mental or emotional conditions	X
Had one or more specific conditions: mental retardation or another developmental disability, or Alzheimer's disease	✓
Had any other mental or emotional condition that seriously interfered with every day activities	✓
Had a condition that limited the ability to work around the house or made it difficult to remain employed	✓

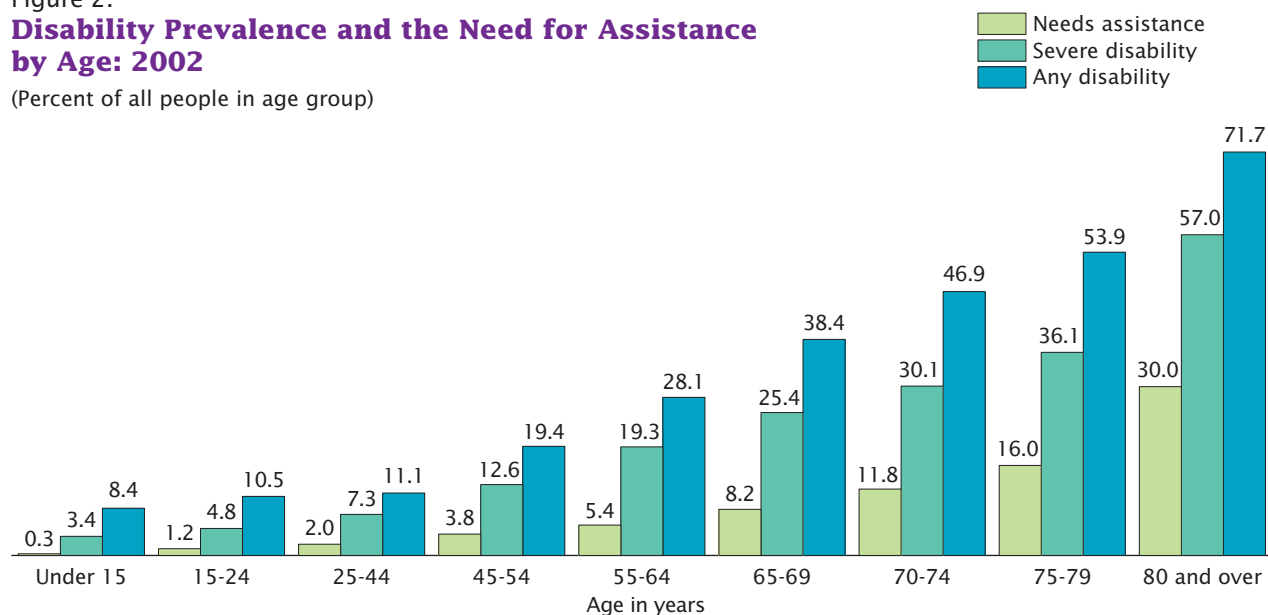
- X = Person is defined as having a nonsevere disability.
- ✓ = Person is defined as having a severe disability.
- Functional activities for people aged 6 to 14 include seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, running, or taking part in sports and for people aged 15 and older include seeing, hearing, speaking, lifting/carrying, using stairs, walking, or grasping small objects.
- ADLs (activities of daily life) included getting around inside the home, getting in and out of bed or a chair, bathing, dressing, eating, and toileting.
- IADLs (instrumental activities of daily living) included going outside the home, keeping track of money and bills, preparing meals, doing light housework, taking prescription medicines in the right amount at the right time, and using the telephone.

Note: The concepts and methods used to define "disability," ADLs, or IADLs are not unique to this report. The definition for ADLs and IADLs are consistent with those used by other agencies, including Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey and the National Health Interview Survey. See the full report listed at the end of this chapter for more information. Activities of daily living were not asked of children under 6.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, June–September 2002.

Figure 2.
**Disability Prevalence and the Need for Assistance
 by Age: 2002**

(Percent of all people in age group)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, June–September 2002.

Work Limitations

For each month of the 2001 panel of the SIPP, the survey recorded whether working-age people (aged 16 to 64) had a physical, mental, or other health condition that prevented or limited the work they could do. Within this working-age population, 17.4 million people or 9 percent of the total reported a work limitation.⁷

Among people aged 25 to 64 with no disability, 2 percent reported a work limitation due to a long-lasting condition and 1 percent reported that they were prevented from working. About 20 percent of people this age with a nonsevere disability reported a work limitation and 6 percent were prevented from working. More than half of those with a severe disability were prevented from working, as shown in Figure 3.

Among people aged 21 to 64 with any disability, more than half (56 percent) had some type of employment in the 12 months prior to the interview. People with a nonsevere disability were less likely to report employment than those with no disability, 82 percent compared with 88 percent. Among those with a severe disability, 42 percent reported that they were employed. The median earnings for those with no disability was \$25,000, compared with \$22,000 for people with a

⁷ Having a work limitation does not automatically count as having a disability since the answer to this question was not part of the definition of disability.

nonsevere disability and \$12,800 for those with a severe disability.

Among labor force participants, 53 percent of people with no disability worked full-time, year-round. Among those with a nonsevere disability, 44 percent were employed full-time, year-round and among those with a severe disability, 13 percent worked full-time, year-round.

Income and Disability Status

People with no disability were less likely than those with disabilities to have low levels of personal income and to live in households with lower income. Of people aged 25 to 64 with no disability, 39 percent had personal income of less than \$20,000. In comparison, 48 percent of people with nonsevere disabilities and 77 percent of those with severe disabilities had personal incomes in this category.

Among people with no disability, 12 percent lived in a household where the total household income was less than \$20,000. In contrast, 18 percent of people with nonsevere disabilities and 38 percent of people with severe disabilities lived in households with incomes at this level. Of those aged 25 to 64, 8 percent of people with no disability were in poverty, compared with 11 percent of people with a nonsevere disability and 26 percent of those with a severe disability.

Figure 3.
Work Limitations Among the Population Aged 25 to 64 by Disability Status: 2002

(In percent)



Note: Having a work limitation does not automatically count as having a disability since the answer to this question was not part of the definition of disability.

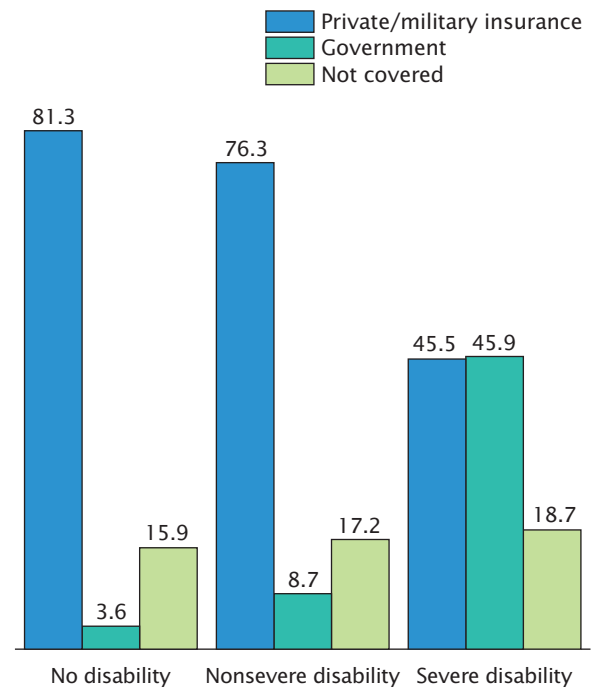
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, June–September 2002.

Health Insurance

Among people aged 25 to 64 with no disabilities, most were covered by private or military health insurance (81 percent). The percentage covered by private and military health insurance was somewhat lower for people with a nonsevere disability (76 percent). People with a severe disability were more likely to be covered by government-provided insurance (46 percent) than people with no disability (4 percent), as shown in Figure 4.⁸

⁸ For more information, see the chapter on insurance coverage.

Figure 4.
Percentage of People Aged 25 to 64 Covered by Health Insurance by Disability Status: 2002



Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because some people have more than one type of insurance. Government Insurance includes Medicare, Medicaid, and military insurance.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, June–September 2002.

Children With Disabilities

To determine the disability status of the 11.8 million children under 3, the SIPP asked two questions, as indicated in Figure 1. A developmental delay and/or difficulty moving their arms or legs was found among 2 percent of children in this age group.

The SIPP also asked two questions concerning the 11.6 million children aged 3 to 5. Within this group, 4 percent had one or both of the following conditions: a developmental delay or an activity limitation involving walking, running, or playing.

To determine disability status of children aged 6 to 14, a longer set of questions was asked. Of the 37.2 million children in this age group, 11 percent had some type of disability and 4 percent had a severe disability. These children were considered to have a severe disability if they had one or more of the following conditions:

- Mental retardation or some other developmental disability.
- Some other developmental condition for which they received therapy or diagnostic services.
- Used an ambulatory aid.
- Were limited in the ability to see, hear, or speak.
- Needed personal assistance for an activity of daily living.

Seven percent of children aged 6 to 14 had difficulty doing regular schoolwork and 2 percent had difficulty getting along with others.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Americans With Disabilities: 2002* (P70-107) by Erika Steinmetz.

For complete reports and detailed tables, go to the Census Bureau's Web site <www.census.gov>. Go to the top of the Census Bureau's home page and click on "Subjects A to Z." Click on "D" and select "Disability Data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636) or e-mail <hhes-info@census.gov>.

For information on the accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.