

BRFSS Brief

Number 1601

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

Limitation and Disability Status

New York State Adults, 2013

Introduction and Key Findings

Persons with disability experience significant limitations in hearing, vision, mobility, or cognition that may impede their ability to participate in major life roles or activities of daily living. These limitations may also influence their participation in health promoting behaviors and access to health care. Public health is focused on improving population health through changing the environment in which we live, work and play. Societal and environmental barriers need to be identified and eliminated if persons with disability are to participate in public health programs that prevent disease and promote health.¹

Beginning with the 2013 BRFSS, disability status by type was added to the demographic section of the survey to meet Federal data collection standards issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to Section 4302 of the Affordable Care Act. Prior to 2013, disability status was defined by activity limitation and special equipment use and is now referred to as “limitation status.” The new Federal data standards, drawn from the American Community Survey, capture disability status among persons who report at least one functional type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, self-care, or independent living). These new data improve our ability to understand this population and their needs to better inform efforts to reduce health disparities.

To advance the recognition of persons with disability as a demographic group experiencing health disparities, persons with disability are identified as a population of focus throughout the New York State (NYS) *Prevention Agenda*. Specifically, within the Chronic Disease Action Plan, targeted strategies are recommended to reduce obesity and increase physical activity by 10 percent among persons with disability. To achieve these goals, public health professionals must ensure that the design and implementation of health improvement programs are relevant and inclusive of those living with a disability.

Key Findings

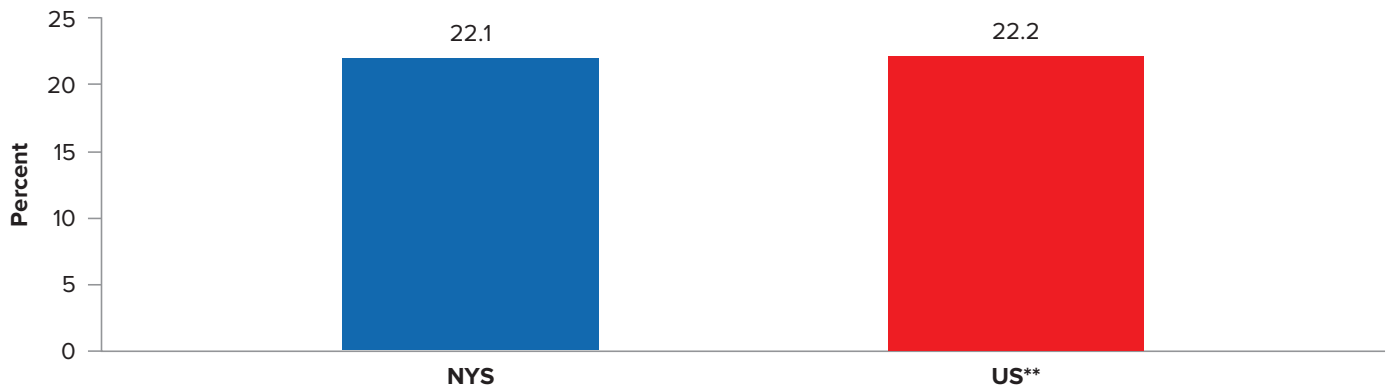
Persons with limitations or a disability represent a significant proportion of the NYS adult population. Approximately 3.27 million or 21.8 percent of NYS adults report having a limitation, and 3.41 million or 22.9 percent report having a disability. The prevalence of limitations is significantly higher among females (23.7%), adults 65 years and older (35.0%), adults with annual incomes less than \$15,000 (36.7%), adults with less than a high school education (34.4%), adults who are obese (32.8%), adults with no leisure-time physical activity in the past month (LTPA; 34.1%), and adults who have Medicare (41.8%) or Medicaid (36.8%). The prevalence of disability is significantly higher among many of the same populations [females (25.6%), adults 65 years and older (35.0%), adults with annual incomes less than \$15,000 (44.4%), adults with less than a high school education (42.2%), adults who are obese (35.4%), adults with no LTPA in the past month (35.9%), and adults who have Medicare (39.4%) or Medicaid (41.6%)], but is also significantly higher in adults who identified as Hispanic (30.6%) or black (29.1%). Overall, the data suggest that the new disability status definition captures a different subset of NYS adults that includes more ethnic/racial minorities, who may have distinct health needs.

BRFSS questions

Disability Status is defined as a “yes” response to one of the following five questions:

1. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
2. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?
3. Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?
4. Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
5. Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?

Figure 1. Disability Status^b prevalence⁺ among New York State and U.S.^{} adults, BRFSS 2013**

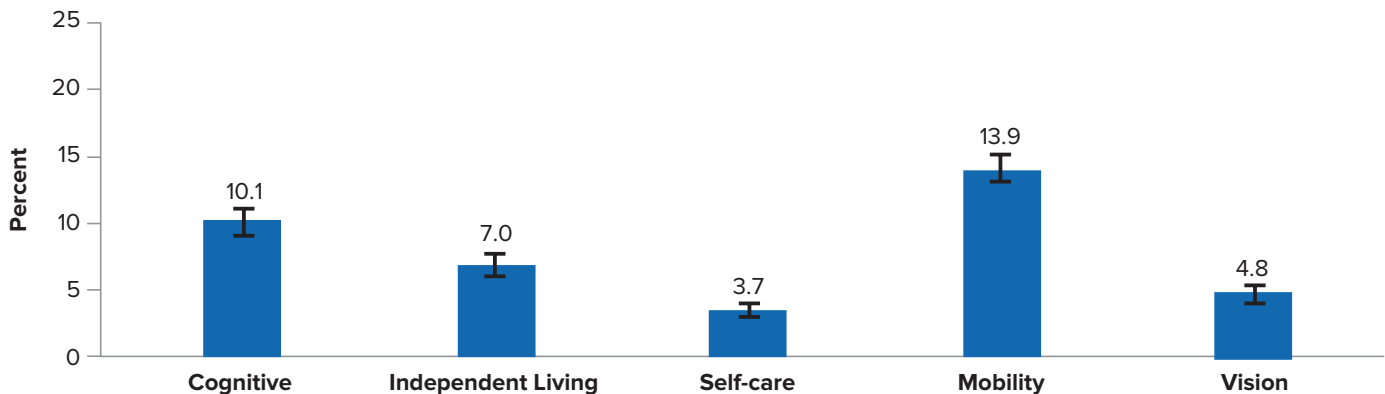


^bAll respondents who report at least one type of disability (cognitive, independent living, self-care, mobility, or vision).

⁺Age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.²

^{**}Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Figure 2. Disability types* among New York State adults, BRFSS 2013



***Cognitive disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?” **Independent living disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?” **Self-care disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?” **Mobility disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?” **Vision disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?”

Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Limitation Status^a and Disability Status^b among New York State Adults, 2013 BRFSS

	Limitation Status ^a [n=8,979]		Disability Status ^b [n=8,979]	
	% ^c	95% CI ^c	% ^c	95% CI ^c
New York State (NYS)	21.8	20.6-23.0	22.9	21.7-24.1
Sex				
Male	19.6	17.9-21.3	20.0	18.3-21.7
Female	23.7	22.1-25.3	25.6	23.9-27.2
Age (years)				
18-24	10.1	7.0-13.2	15.2	11.4-19.0
25-34	10.7	8.3-13.1	12.6	10.1-15.1
35-44	17.1	14.1-20.0	18.3	15.2-21.3
45-54	23.6	20.7-26.5	24.9	21.9-27.9
55-64	30.4	27.5-33.3	28.7	25.9-31.6
65+	35.0	32.4-37.6	35.0	32.4-37.6
Race/ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	22.2	20.8-23.6	19.9	18.5-21.3
Black, non-Hispanic	24.8	20.9-28.7	29.1	25.0-33.3
Hispanic	21.5	18.6-24.4	30.6	27.2-34.0
Other, non-Hispanic	16.3	11.8-20.9	18.7	14.4-22.9
Annual household income				
<\$15,000	36.7	32.7-40.8	44.4	40.1-48.6
\$15,000-\$24,999	31.4	27.9-35.0	34.9	31.3-38.5
\$25,000-\$34,999	22.3	18.3-26.3	23.4	19.3-27.6
\$35,000-\$49,999	19.4	16.0-22.7	19.0	15.8-22.2
\$50,000-\$74,999	16.1	13.4-18.9	15.3	12.4-18.2
\$75,000 +	12.0	10.4-13.6	8.9	7.5-10.3
Missing ^d	23.0	19.7-26.2	26.6	23.1-30.1
Educational attainment				
Less than HS	34.4	30.1-38.6	42.2	37.8-46.6
HS or GED	23.6	21.4-25.9	27.2	24.7-29.7
Some Post HS	21.5	19.3-23.7	20.2	18.1-22.4
College grad	13.9	12.5-15.2	11.5	10.3-12.8
Body Mass Index (BMI) category				
Neither overweight nor obese	17.1	15.3-18.9	17.5	15.7-19.4
Overweight	19.1	17.3-21.0	18.9	17.0-20.8
Obese ^e	32.8	30.1-35.5	35.4	32.6-38.2
Leisure-time physical activity^f				
Yes	17.6	16.3-18.9	17.7	16.3-19.1
No	34.1	31.4-36.7	35.9	33.2-38.6
Region				
NYS excluding NYC	22.7	21.2-24.2	21.6	20.1-23.1
NYC	20.5	18.6-22.4	24.6	22.7-26.6
Health care coverage				
Private	15.0	13.5-16.5	13.8	12.3-15.3
Medicare	41.8	38.6-45.1	39.4	36.2-42.7
Medicaid	36.8	31.8-41.8	41.6	36.5-46.7
Other Government Assistance Plans	23.0	16.7-29.4	25.3	18.7-31.9
Other Sources	27.8	21.9-33.6	31.7	25.6-37.8
Not insured	12.9	8.8-17.0	18.8	14.2-23.4

a All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

b All respondents who report at least one type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, self-care, or independent living).

c % = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval

d "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

e Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30.0 or higher

f Any leisure-time physical activity during the past month.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC Grand Rounds: Public Health Practices to Include Persons with Disabilities. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 62(34), 697-701.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevalence of Disability and Disability Type Among Adults – United States, 2013. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 64(29), 777-783.

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

Order Information

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