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Article

Trends in the Prevalence of Developmental Disabilities in US Children, 1997–2008

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Abstract

Objective: To fill gaps in crucial data needed for health and educational planning, we determined the prevalence of developmental disabilities in US children and in selected populations for a recent 12-year period.

Participants and Methods: We used data on children aged 3 to 17 years from the 1997–2008 National Health Interview Surveys, which are ongoing nationally representative samples of US households. Parent-reported diagnoses of the following were included: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; intellectual disability; cerebral palsy; autism; seizures; stuttering or stammering; moderate to profound hearing loss; blindness; learning disorders; and/or other developmental delays.

Results: Boys had a higher prevalence overall and for a number of select disabilities compared with girls. Hispanic children had the lowest prevalence for a number of disabilities compared with non-Hispanic white and black children. Low income and public health insurance were associated with a higher prevalence of many disabilities. Prevalence of any developmental disability increased from 12.84% to 15.04% over 12 years. Autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other developmental delays increased, whereas hearing loss showed a significant decline. These trends were found in all of the sociodemographic subgroups, except for autism in non-Hispanic black children.

Conclusions: Developmental disabilities are common and were reported in ~1 in 6 children in the United States in 2006–2008. The number of children with select developmental disabilities (autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other developmental delays) has increased, requiring more health and education services. Additional study of the influence of risk-factor shifts, changes in acceptance, and benefits of early services is needed.

[developmental disabilities](#) [prevalence](#) [autism](#) [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#)

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