



NCHS Data on Developmental Disabilities

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Developmental Disabilities

Developmental disabilities comprise a diverse group of physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory, and communication disorders that are identified during childhood. Summarized below is information about three types of developmental disorders of school-aged children with estimates of the prevalence of these conditions by sex, race/ethnicity, and poverty status.

Developmental disabilities are an important category of chronic conditions for school-aged children. The consequences of developmental disabilities for children, their families, and society are considerable. Previous studies have shown that children 6-11 years of age with ADHD have a higher percentage of annual health care visits, contact with a mental health professional, and use of prescription medication, than children without ADHD. Over half of young school-aged children with LD receive special education services.

Key Findings

Data from the 1999-2000 National Health Interview Survey show:

Mental Retardation/Other Developmental Delays

- Approximately 4 percent of children 6-17 years of age were reported to have ever been diagnosed with MR/ODD. Among boys, the percent with MR/ODD was 4.8, 1.5 times the percent among girls.
- The percent of non-Hispanic white children with diagnosed MR/ODD was 4.4 percent, compared with 4.2 percent for non-Hispanic black children and 2.4 percent for Hispanic children.
- Among poor children, the percent with MR/ODD was nearly twice that of non-poor children (those in families with incomes at 200 percent or more of the poverty level).

Learning Disabilities

- Nearly 9 percent of children 6-17 years of age were reported to have ever been diagnosed with LD. Among boys, the percent with LD was 11.6, nearly twice the percent among girls.
- The percent of children with diagnosed LD was 9.3 percent for non-Hispanic white children, and 9.7 percent for non-Hispanic black children as compared with 7.0 percent for Hispanic children.
- Among poor children, the percent with LD was 1.6 times that of non-poor children (those in families with incomes at 200 percent or more of the poverty level).

Key Findings continued

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- Slightly over 7 percent of children 6-17 years of age were reported to have ever been diagnosed with ADHD. Among boys, the percent with ADHD was 2.8 times the percent among girls.
- The percent of non-Hispanic white children with diagnosed ADHD was 8.8 percent, as compared with 5.3 percent for non-Hispanic black children, and 3.9 percent for Hispanic children.
- In contrast to MR/ODD and LD, the percent of children with ADHD did not differ significantly by poverty status.

Developmental Disabilities Data Source

The **National Health Interview Survey** (NHIS) obtains information on the nation's health status through confidential household interviews that measure: health status and disability, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations (child), health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>

NCHS obtains data on Developmental Disabilities through the sample child questionnaire of the NHIS. The questionnaire obtains information from an adult (usually a parent) knowledgeable about the health of the child. The adult was asked:

- 1) "Has a doctor or health care professional every told you that {your child} had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)? Mental Retardation? Any other development delay?"
- 2) "Has a representative from a school or health professional ever told you that {your child} had a learning disability?"

Reports of diagnosed MR/ODD, LD, and ADHD were not validated with information from the child's medical or school records.