

# Executive Summary ● ● ● ● ● ●

Since 2000, CDC has been tracking the prevalence and characteristics of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in diverse communities throughout the United States through the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.

## Key Findings At-A-Glance

These findings are based on analysis of data collected from health and special education records (if available) of 8-year-old and 4-year-old children who lived in one of 11 different areas throughout the United States in 2018.

- The estimated percentage of 8-year-old children identified with ASD is higher than previous estimates from the ADDM Network.
- The ADDM Network found no overall difference in the percentage of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander 8-year-old children identified with ASD. However, at several sites, the percentage of Hispanic children identified with ASD was lower compared to White or Black children.
- Children born in 2014 were 50% more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis or ASD special education classification by 48 months of age compared to children born in 2010.

## 1 in 44

### 8-year-old children identified with ASD in 2018

\*Based on tracking within 11 communities in the United States

The 2021 Community Report on Autism highlights the ADDM Network's most recent findings on ASD in 8-year-old and 4-year-old children. Data reported on 8-year-old children give us a comprehensive picture of the number and characteristics of children identified with ASD, while data reported on 4-year-old children tell us more about progress in the early identification of ASD.

The ADDM Network found that 1 in 44 (2.3%) 8-year-old children were identified with ASD in 2018, based on tracking within 11 communities in the United States. The estimated percentage of children identified with ASD is higher than in previous reports, though participating communities have changed over time. These findings indicate there are many children with ASD who need services and support now and as they grow into adolescence and adulthood.

Knowing how many children have ASD is just part of the picture. While findings also show that significant progress has been made in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the identification of ASD in children, CDC and its partners continue efforts to:

- ensure that children are evaluated and diagnosed as soon as possible after developmental concerns are identified; and
- promote efforts for early and equitable identification of ASD and timely enrollment in services.

Service providers (such as healthcare organizations and school systems), researchers, and policymakers can use ADDM Network findings to:

- support service planning;
- inform policies that promote improved outcomes in health care and education; and
- guide research on risk and protective factors for ASD and the interventions that can help children with ASD succeed.

Together, those who work with or on behalf of children—from healthcare providers to educators to community advocates—can ensure that all children with ASD are identified and connected to the services they need as early as possible.

CDC will continue tracking the number and characteristics of children with ASD, and researching risk and protective factors for ASD. Through the [Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#) Program, CDC will continue to promote early identification—the most powerful tool we have now for making a difference in the lives of children with ASD.



## The ADDM Network's goals are to



Obtain as complete a count as possible (also known as prevalence) of the number of children identified with ASD in each ADDM Network area and track changes in prevalence over time;



Provide information on the characteristics of children with ASD, including sex, race/ethnicity, presence of intellectual disability, age of evaluation and diagnosis;



Determine whether ASD identification is more common in some groups of children than among others (for example, among boys versus girls), and if those differences are changing over time; and



Understand the impact of ASD and related conditions upon children, families, and communities in the United States.