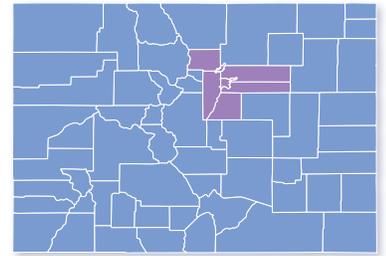# A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Colorado

Findings from the Colorado Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (CO-ADDM) Project help us understand more about the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the characteristics of those children, and the age at which they are first evaluated and diagnosed. Read on to learn more about ASD in Colorado and how this important information can be useful to you.

About 1 in 92 or 1.1% of 8-year-old children were identified with ASD by the CO-ADDM Project in 2012. This percentage is lower than the average percentage identified with ASD (1.5%) in all communities in the United States where CDC tracked ASD in 2012.

1 IN 92
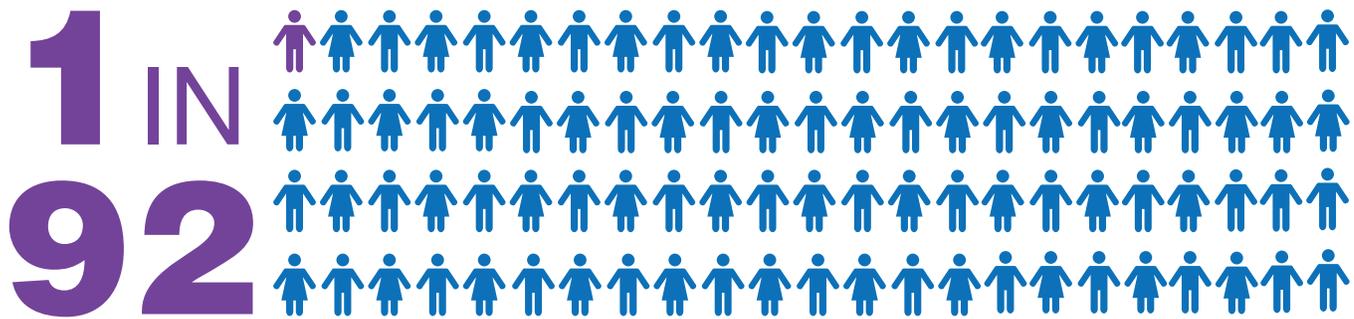
Boys were more likely to be identified with ASD than girls. White and black children were more likely to be identified with ASD than Hispanic children.

4.1x MORE LIKELY among boys vs girls

1.9x MORE LIKELY among white vs Hispanic children

1.6x MORE LIKELY among black vs Hispanic children

* No significant differences between white and black children

Among children identified with ASD who had IQ scores available, about a quarter also had intellectual disability.

Average or above average intellectual ability **51%**

Intellectual disability **24%**

Borderline range **25%**
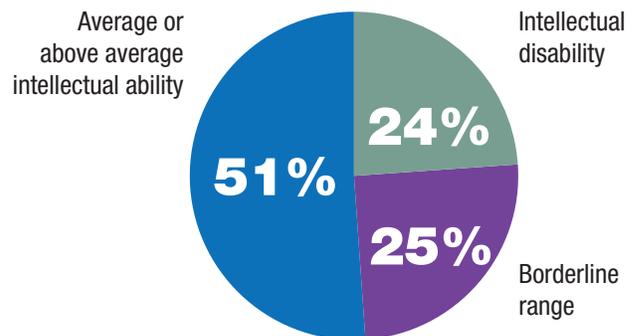
* Intelligence quotient (IQ) scores available for at least 70% of children identified with ASD by the CO-ADDM Project. Intellectual disability defined as IQ score ≤ 70.

About 86% of children identified with ASD had concerns about their development noted in their health and/or education records by age 3 years.

About 41% of children identified with ASD received a comprehensive developmental evaluation by age 3 years.

Even though ASD can be diagnosed as early as age 2 years, about half of children were not diagnosed with ASD by a community provider until after age 4 years and 7 months.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key take-away messages?

- Many children are living with ASD who need services and support, now and as they grow into adolescence and adulthood.

- Hispanic children are less likely to be identified with ASD than white or black children. Research does not show that being Hispanic makes a child less likely to develop ASD. This difference in identification may reflect cultural and/or socioeconomic differences, such as delayed or lack of access to services, as compared to other groups.

- Despite the developmental concerns noted in many of the children's records by age 3 years, less than half of children identified with ASD received a comprehensive developmental evaluation by this same age. The lag between first concern and first developmental evaluation may affect when children are being diagnosed and connected to the services they need.

How can this information be useful?

The CO-ADDM Project's latest findings can be used to promote early identification of ASD, plan for ASD services and training, guide future ASD research, and inform policies promoting improved outcomes in health care and education for individuals with ASD. Stakeholders in Colorado might consider different ways to

1. Lower the age of first evaluation by community providers.

2. Increase awareness of ASD among Hispanic families, and identify and address barriers in order to decrease the age at which Hispanic children are evaluated and diagnosed.

How and where was this information collected?

This information is based on the analysis of data collected from the health and some special education records of children who were 8 years old and living in one of 7 counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson) in Colorado in 2012. Overall, the tracking area included 40,538 8-year-olds (55% white, 6% black, 33% Hispanic, 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, less than 1% American Indian or Alaska Native).

What else does the CO-ADDM Project do besides tracking ASD among 8-year-olds?

The CO-ADDM Project is a collaboration between the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and JFK Partners at the University of Colorado-Denver to track the number and characteristics of 4-year-olds and 8-year-olds with ASD and/or intellectual disability. The CO-ADDM Project offers tailored presentations on the number and characteristics of children with ASD and links families and community partners with resources to improve collaboration across the ASD community.

"We are learning more about autism and how to be a better community for those affected because we are getting better data. We aren't there yet; we need to scale up the services and supports to meet the demand, but we also understand that is the next step. Knowing is half the task, and that comes from having good data."

- Kathryn Dran, PMP
Colorado Parent

Get Resources and Connect Families to Services and Support in Colorado

Autism Society of Colorado
720-214-0794
www.autismcolorado.org

Department of Education's Office of Special Education
www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped

Early Intervention Colorado
1-888-777-4041
www.eicolorado.org/

JFK Partners/Developmental Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine
720-777-6630 (clinical line)
303-724-5266 (general line)
www.jfkpartners.org

The Arc of Colorado
303-864-9334
www.thearcofco.org

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