

“Every life has value and every person has promise. The reality is that for too long we provided lesser care to people with disabilities.”¹

¹Richard H. Carmona, MD, MPH, FACS, Former US Surgeon General



DISABILITY IN CALIFORNIA ADULTS

The mission of the Living Healthy with a Disability Program at the California Department of Public Health is to promote the health and quality of life of people with disabilities and to prevent or lessen the effects of secondary conditions through collaboration, environmental, policy and system change, leadership, science and service.

Data from the 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS) is used here to characterize the population of California adults with disability and explore issues that challenge their ability to live healthy lives with a disability.

A PROFILE OF DISABILITY IN CALIFORNIA

The term disability is used here to describe a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition.²

- Nearly 5.7 million adults in California are people with a disability (PWD) (23%).

GENDER, AGE & RACE/ETHNICITY

- Twenty percent of men and 26% of women report having a disability.
- Disability in adults increases with age: 15% of those aged 18-44 years, 28% of those aged 45-64 years and 43% of those aged 65 years and older have a disability.
- Disability is highest among Black, Non-Hispanic (26%), White, Non-Hispanic (25%) and American Indian/Alaska native populations (24%). The rates are lower among Hispanics (22%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (17%) and Asian (16%) populations.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- Among those with a disability, 20% have not completed high school, compared to 14% of those with no disability.
- Among working-age adults with disability (18-64 years), 52% are employed for wages or self-employed, compared to 72% of those without disability.



SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

- Among adults with a disability, 24% live below the poverty line compared to 16% of those without disability.

A DESCRIPTION OF DISABILITY TYPE

	Estimated CA pop.	
	millions	%
Physical: (A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying)	3.2	13%
Mental: (Difficulty learning, remembering or concentrating due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more)	2.7	11%
Sensory: (Blind, deaf or a severe vision or hearing problem)	1.3	5%
Work: (Difficulty working at a job or business due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more)	1.5	7%
Going-outside: (Difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more)	1.0	4%
Self-care: (Difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more)	0.7	3%
A person may have more than one of these disability types, 23% of the population (nearly 5.7 million adults) has at least one.		

PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGE

Disability eventually affects everybody, directly or indirectly. Nearly one in four California adults



report a disability, and it is more likely in vulnerable groups such as the elderly and impoverished. PWD face more challenges to staying healthy than others: they are more likely to smoke, and to be overweight and sedentary. They often lack health insurance coverage and delay or forego regular medical care.

The numbers of PWD are growing as the population ages and PWD are surviving longer. It is important to provide appropriate services and accessible resources to this underserved and vulnerable population.

Here are some simple ways to include the disability population within public health programs:

- Ensure the language used in request for applications (RFAs) includes PWD along with other vulnerable populations
- include PWD in intervention strategies
- provide all materials in alternate formats (such as Braille, large type and audio)
- host accessible websites (such as those with clear and simple language, audio captioning, and line-by-line reading that can be used with screen readers)
- ensure PWD are included in strategic planning sessions, and
- include PWD on Advisory Committees and Councils

DISABILITY & HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE

- Adults with a disability are three times more likely to report fair or poor health status than adults without disability (34% compared to 10%).
- Among those with a disability, 58% reported that poor health restricted their usual activities (including self care, work or recreation) for 14 or more days a month, compared to 35% among people without disability.

DISABILITY & HEALTH BEHAVIORS

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & OBESITY

- Adults with a disability are more likely to be inactive. Among adults with disability, 30% do not engage in any physical activity (other than their job, if applicable), compared to 20% of adults without disability.
- Adults with a disability are more likely to be obese than those without a disability (30% compared to 20%).

SMOKING

- Adults with a disability are more likely to be smokers than those without a disability (19% compared to 14%).

DISABILITY & CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Among adults with a disability, 45% report having a chronic health condition, compared to 17% of those without disability. The following chronic conditions may be the cause of their disability, a result of their disability, or an unrelated health condition.

DIABETES

- Among adults with a disability, 13% report having diabetes, compared to 5% among those without disability.

ASTHMA

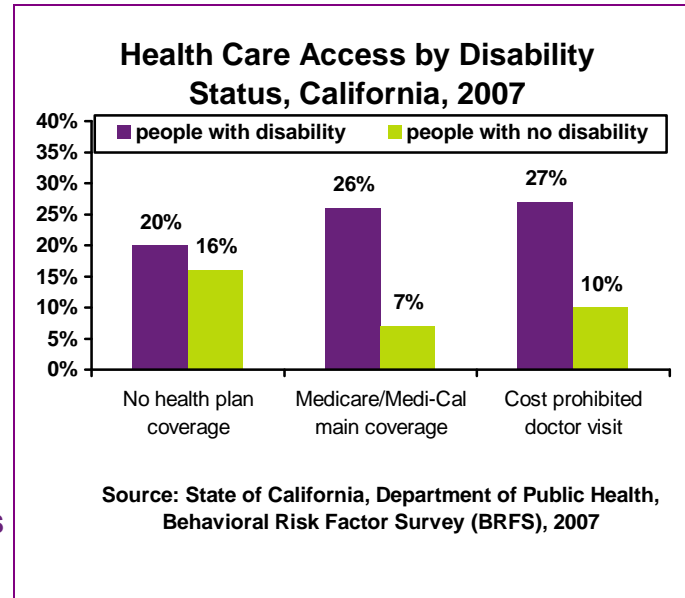
- Among adults with a disability, 17% report having asthma compared to 12% of adults without disability.

ARTHRITIS

- Among adults with a disability, 41% have been told they have some form of arthritis, compared to 13% of adults without disability.

HEART DISEASE

- Adults with a disability are more likely to have been told by a doctor that they have high blood pressure (40% of those with disability and 19% of those without) and high cholesterol (45% of those with disability and 30% of those without).



DISABILITY & HEALTH CARE ACCESS

INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Adults with a disability are less likely than those without a disability to be covered by a health plan. Among those 18-64 years of age, 20% of persons with disability have no coverage compared to 16% of those without disability.
- Among those that have health coverage, working-age adults with a disability are much more likely to use Medicare/Medi-Cal as their main coverage (26%) compared to working-age adults without disability (7%).

DELAY OF CARE

- When asked if they had needed to see a doctor in the past year but didn't because of cost, 21% of those with a disability said yes compared to only 10% of those without disability.



DATA SOURCE

The data presented here is from the 2007 California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), an annual survey of health-related behaviors in the adult population aged 18 years and older.³ Disability is defined using six questions² adapted from The American Community Survey produced by the US Census Bureau.⁴

REFERENCES & NOTES

¹ The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities, July 26, 2005
² The six specific questions used to identify disability were: 1) Are you blind or deaf, or do you have a severe vision or hearing problem? 2) Do you have a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying? 3) Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, do you have any of the following: Any difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating? 4) Any difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home? 5) Any difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office? 6) Any difficulty working at a job or business? Disability is defined as a positive response to at least one of these questions. A positive response to an individual question is referred to as: sensory disability, physical disability, mental disability, self-care disability, going-outside disability, and work disability, respectively.
³ State of California, Department of Public Health, California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), 2007.
⁴ United States Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, American Community Survey. More information is available at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/acs.html>.

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