

BRFSS Brief

Number 1205

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

Disability

New York State Adults, 2010

Introduction

Disability due to physical, mental, or emotional problems is a major public health concern, often reducing or lowering quality of life and increasing utilization of the health-care system.¹ Over 33 million American adults are estimated to have a disability², which may affect their employment, education, income, and the ability to participate fully in society. Disability may result from an event at or prior to birth; it may occur as a result of acute onset of disease or injury; or, most likely, it is the result of chronic conditions that over time affect physical or cognitive function in mid to later life.³ The risk of disability increases with age, and disabilities are more prevalent among those with less education and lower income.³

The increased awareness of disability as a public health issue is evident in national and state initiatives. Healthy People 2020 lists 20 objectives specific to the stated goal of promoting the health and well-being of people with disabilities.⁴ In New York, the NYSDOH Center for Community Health implemented an inclusion policy in 2008 that requires prevention programs to be inclusive of persons living with disability. Ensuring that public health programs reach and accommodate adults and children living with disability should improve quality of life and access to care among this priority population and promote population health.

Key Findings

The prevalence of disability increased between 2001 and 2010. In 2010, women were more likely than men to report a disability requiring assistance from others and non-Hispanic black adults were more likely than non-Hispanic white and Hispanic adults to report a disability requiring assistance from others.

BRFSS Questions

The following questions are about health problems or impairments you may have.

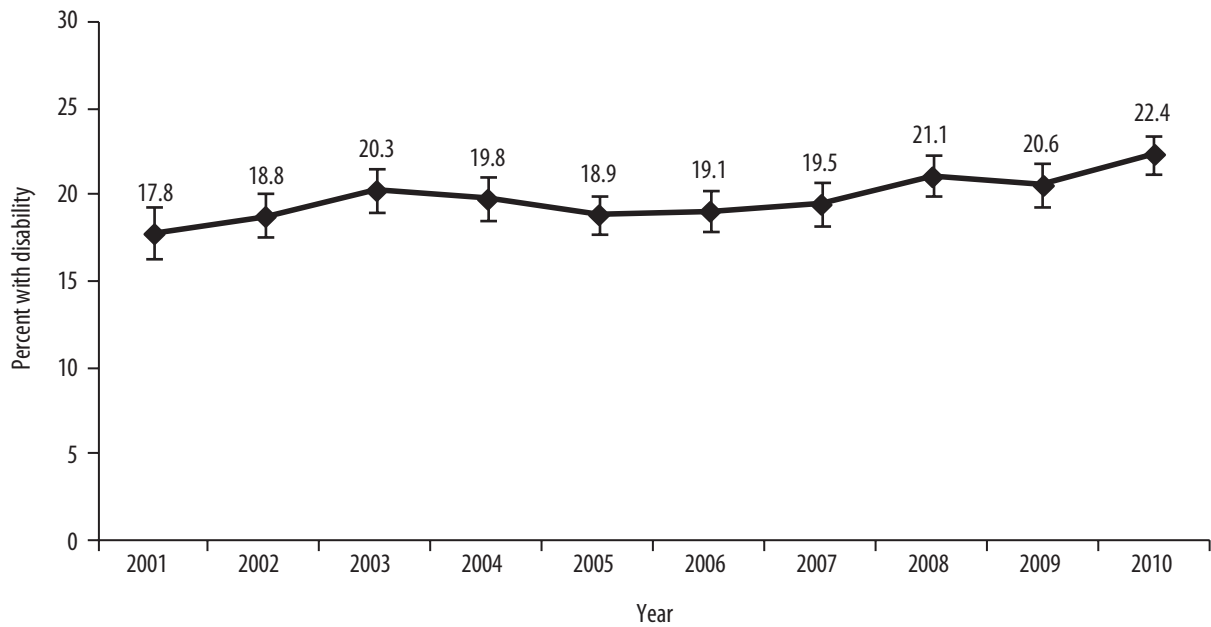
1. Are you limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems?
2. Do you now have any health problem that requires you to use special equipment, such as a cane, a wheelchair, a special bed, or a special telephone?

[If "yes" to either]

3. Because of any impairment or health problem, do you need the help of other persons with your personal care needs, such as eating, bathing, dressing, or getting around the house?
4. Because of any impairment or health problem, do you need the help of other persons in handling your routine needs, such as everyday household chores, doing necessary business, shopping, or getting around for other purposes?

[Disability is defined as a "yes" response to either question #1 or #2. Responses to questions #3 and #4 identify the degree of disability, i.e., whether the person with a disability needs assistance in performing activities of daily living.]

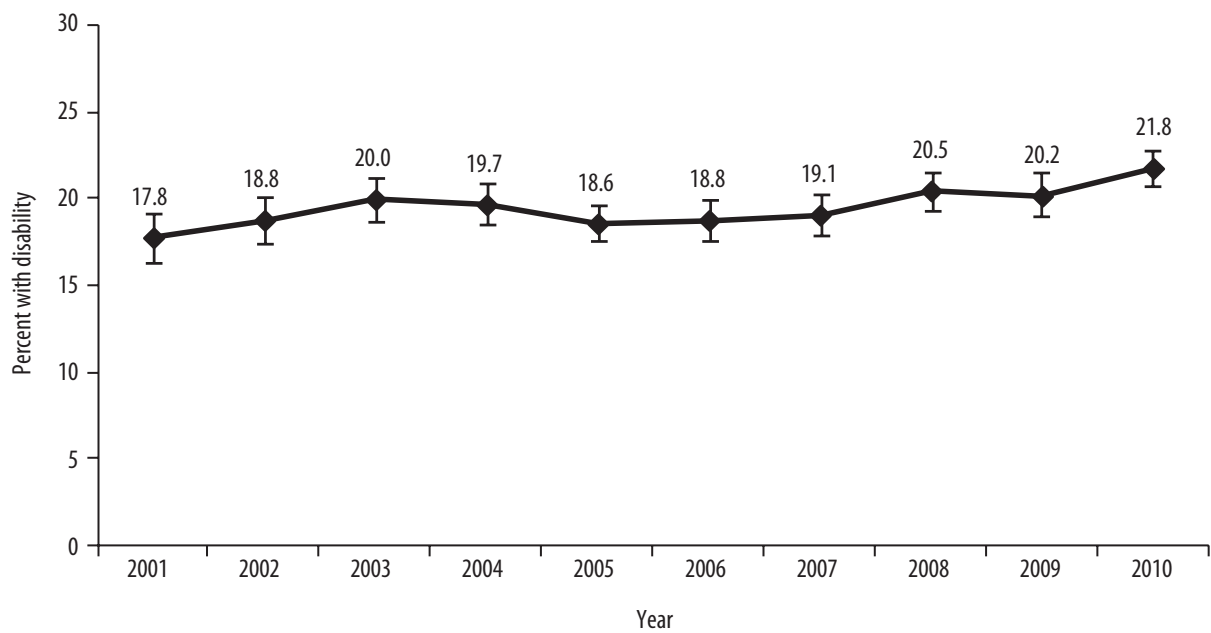
Crude Prevalence of Disability^a Among New York State Adults, by BRFSS Year



Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

^a All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

Age-Adjusted^a Prevalence of Disability^b Among New York State Adults, by BRFSS Year



Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

^a Age-adjusted to US 2000 population.

^b All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

Prevalence of Disability Among New York State Adults, by Selected Characteristics, 2010 BRFS

	Disability ^a [N=8,950]		Degree ^b of disability [N=2,468]			
	%	95% CI ^e	Need assistance ^c		Need no assistance ^d	
			%	95% CI	%	95% CI
New York State (NYS)	22.4	21.4-23.5	6.1	5.1-7.3	17.7	15.4-19.2
Sex						
Male	20.8	19.1-22.5	3.4	2.3-5.1	16.6	13.8-19.9
Female	23.9	22.6-25.3	8.6	7.1-10.4	17.8	15.6-20.3
Age (years)						
18-44	14.6	12.9-16.4	4.1	2.8-6.2	12.2	9.3-15.8
45-64	26.0	24.4-27.7	7.2	5.6-9.2	17.2	14.6-20.1
65-74	32.4	29.6-35.2	6.3	4.0-9.7	30.0	25.1-35.2
≥75	42.1	39.3-44.9	12.6	9.3-16-9	32.8	27.6-38.5
Race/ethnicity						
White non-Hispanic	23.6	22.4-24.8	5.9	4.8-7.2	18.3	16.2-20.7
Black non-Hispanic	22.0	18.8-25.7	11.7	7.5-17.8	15.6	11.0-21.7
Hispanic	20.8	17.2-24.8	4.1	2.2-7.6	15.8	9.4-25.2
Other non-Hispanic	15.3	11.6-19.8	5.4	1.8-15.1	8.6	4.9-14.7
Educational attainment						
Less than high school (HS)	31.3	26.6-36.3	10.6	6.6-16.7	20.9	13.2-31.3
High school or GED	25.0	22.9-27.3	9.0	6.5-12.2	17.7	14.1-22.0
Some post-high school	25.2	22.9-27.6	6.0	4.3-8.3	19.6	15.8-24.1
College graduate	17.7	16.3-19.2	3.6	2.6-4.9	15.0	12.6-17.7
Annual household income						
< \$15,000	44.0	39.3-48.8	18.3	12.9-25.2	21.6	15.7-29.1
\$15,000 - <\$25,000	28.6	25.6-31.9	10.9	7.5-15.6	19.3	14.7-25.0
\$25,000 - <\$50,000	23.4	20.9-26.2	7.5	5.1-11.0	20.1	15.8-25.3
\$50,000 - <\$75,000	18.0	15.6-20.6	1.9	0.9-4.1	16.5	12.2-21.8
≥ \$75,000	14.9	13.3-16.6	2.6	1.6-4.1	13.3	10.6-16.6
Missing ^f	25.3	22.4-28.6	6.2	3.7-10.4	19.6	13.8-27.0
Residence						
New York City (NYC)	19.3	17.8-20.9	5.3	3.9-7.1	13.7	11.4-16.4
NYS exclusive of NYC	24.7	23.3-26.2	6.5	5.2-8.1	18.9	16.4-21.6

a All respondents who reported activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

b Among respondents who reported a disability, status as needing help from others in activities of daily living.

c Because of impairment or health problem, needed help of other persons with personal care needs OR in handling routine needs.

d Needed no help of other persons either with personal care needs or in handling routine needs.

e % =Percentage; 95% CI =Confidence interval (at the 95 percent probability level). Percentages are weighted to population characteristics.

f "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

References

1. US Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's call to action to improve the health and wellness of persons with disabilities. US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2005.
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010. Available at: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/> (Accessed June 26, 2012.)
3. Lollar DJ, Crews JE. Redefining the role of public health in disability. Annual Reviews of Public Health 2003;24:195-208.
4. HealthyPeople.gov, 2020 Topics and Objectives: Disability and Health. Available at: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/> (Accessed June 26, 2012.)

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention
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Disability and Health Program
518-474-2018

Order Information

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