

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF OHIOANS WITH DISABILITIES

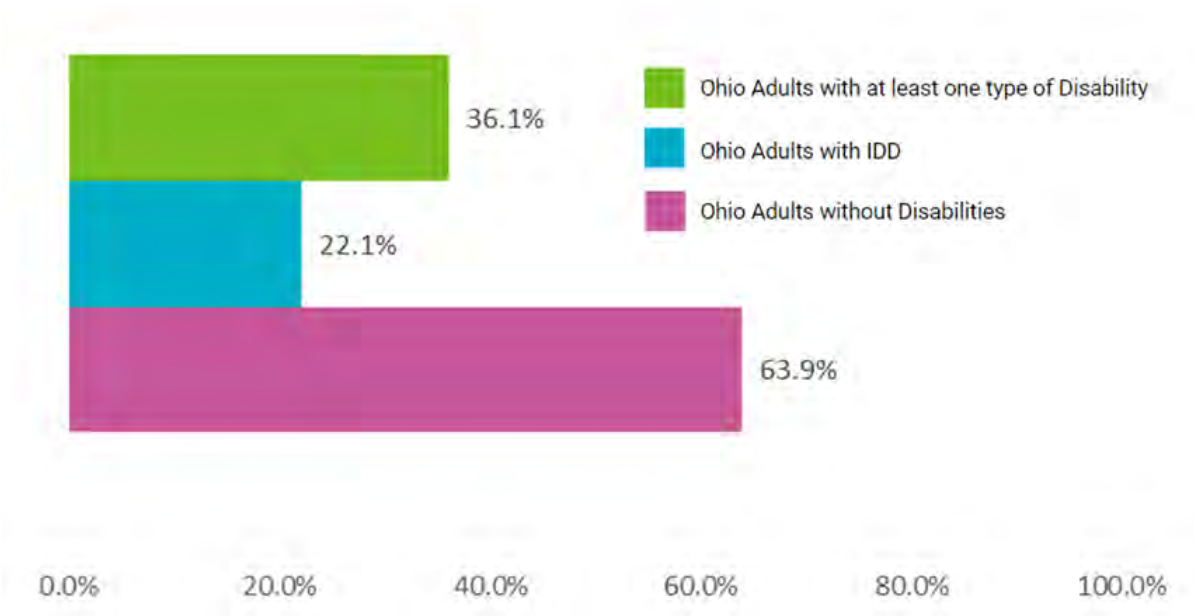


Ohio children with disabilities are almost 1.5 times more likely than children without disabilities to live in poverty. Among Ohio children with disabilities, 44.9% fall below the Federal Poverty Line (138% FPL and below) cutoff for Medicaid benefits compared to 30.3% of children without disabilities.⁷ Children with IDD and CSHCN also have a higher prevalence of falling below the Federal Poverty Line cutoff for Medicaid benefits than children without disabilities in Ohio.⁸

Population of Adults with Disabilities in Ohio

It is estimated that between 26.9%¹⁰-36.1%⁸ of adults in Ohio have at least one type of disability, which is slightly greater than the national average of 25.6%¹⁰ and 22.1% of Ohio adults have an IDD specifically (figure 9).⁸ This represents between an estimated 2.4 to 3.2 million Ohio adults with a disability.

Figure 9. Prevalence of Disability among Ohio Adults

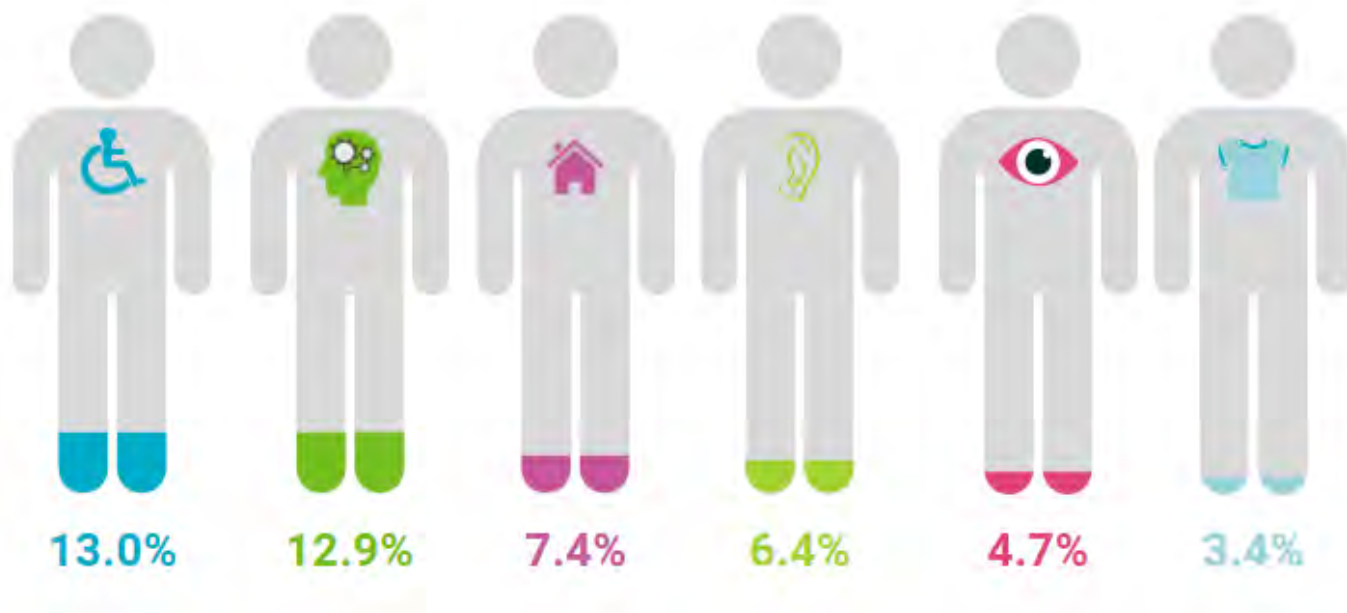


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By disability type, approximately 13% of all Ohio adults have a mobility disability, 12.9% have a cognitive disability, 7.4% have an independent living disability, 6.4% have a hearing disability, 4.7% have a vision disability, and 3.4% have a self-care disability (figure 10).¹¹

Figure 10. Categories of Functional Impairments among Ohio Adults with Disabilities



Among the estimated 36.1% of adults with a disability from the Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey, the majority of Ohio adults with disabilities have an intellectual or developmental disability (61.4%), followed by 52.6% with a mobility disability, and 35.2% with a sensory disability.⁸

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The average age of Ohio adults with IDD is estimated to be 52 years old.⁸ As Ohio adults age, there is an increasing proportion of adults with disabilities represented in each age group. In the 18-44 age group, there are 20.7% with disabilities and 79.3% without disabilities. In the 45-64 age group, the proportion of people with disabilities increases to 30.1% compared to 69.9% without disabilities. Finally, the greatest proportion is observed in older adults (age 65+) where 44.7% have a disability and 55.3% do not.¹¹

In terms of gender, about 50% of Ohio adults without disabilities are women and about 50% are men.¹² However, women are more likely than men to have a disability.¹² Among Ohio adults with a disability, 53.4% are women and 46.6% are men.⁸ Additionally, among all Ohio adults, 28.7% of all adult women have a disability (71.3% do not have a disability) versus 26.6% of all adult men who have a disability (73.4% do not have a disability).¹¹ This gender difference is more pronounced when looking at adults with IDD and with mobility disabilities. There is about a 17% difference between women and men with IDD, where 58.1% of Ohio adults with IDD are women and 41% are men, and about a 19% difference between women and men with mobility disabilities (59.1% are women and 40.2% are men).⁸ For sensory disabilities there is a more even split of women and men as is observed with Ohio adults without disabilities.⁸ See figure 11 for a depiction of these gender differences.

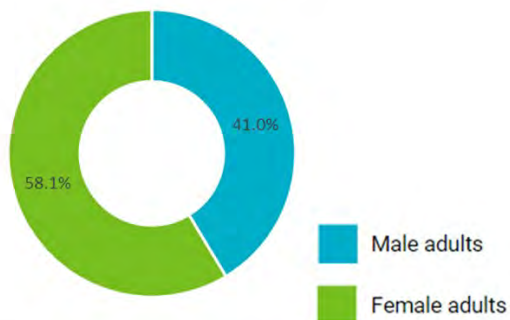
As with the overall population of adults in Ohio, a majority of adults with disabilities are white (81.2%), followed by Black (13.6%), Hispanic (3.8%), and Asian (1.4%).¹² There is a disproportionately higher number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) with disabilities compared to both white adults with disabilities in Ohio and to the overall racial/ethnic demographics of Ohio adults without disabilities (figure 12). Among all white adults in Ohio, it is estimated that 26.1% have a disability.¹¹ This is in contrast to the higher prevalence of disability among Ohio adults who are BIPOC

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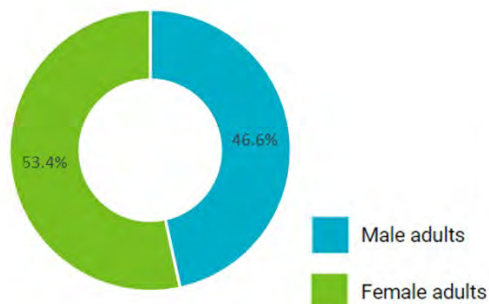


Figure 11. Gender Differences among Ohio Adults

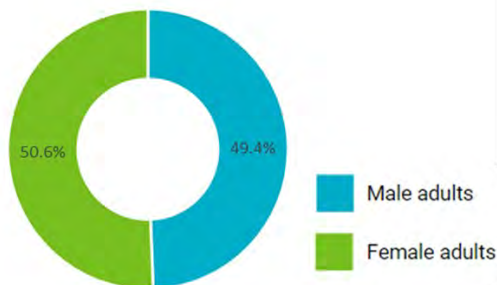
Ohio Adults with IDD by Gender



Ohio Adults With Disabilities by Gender



Ohio Adults Without Disabilities by Gender

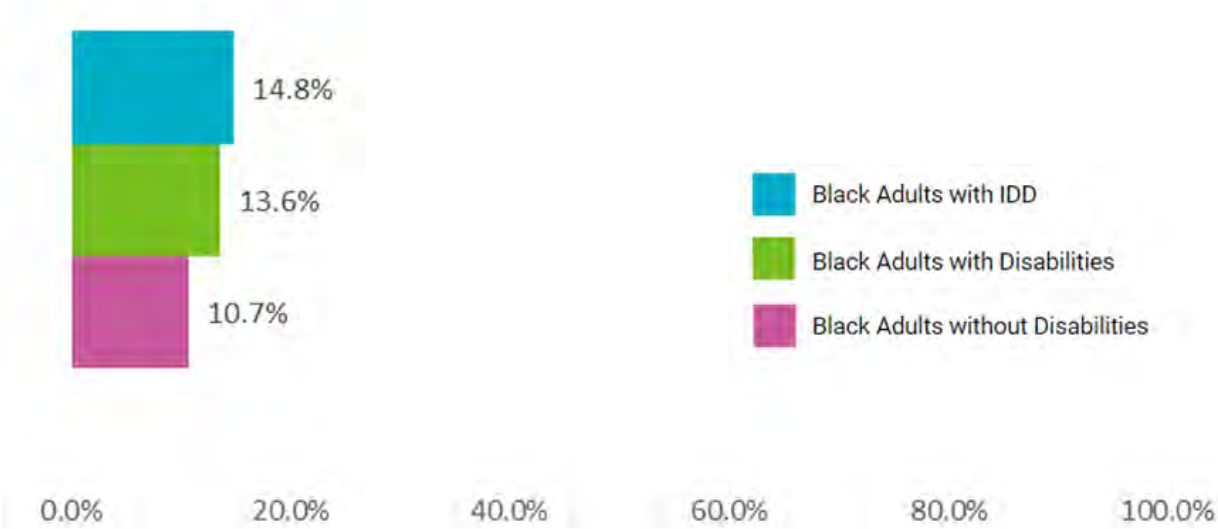


with an estimated 33.6% of all Black adults, 39.1% of all Hispanic adults, and 45% of all American Indian or Alaska Native adults with a disability.¹¹ To compare Ohio adults with and without disability, among all adults with a disability in Ohio, 13.6% are Black, which is higher than the 10.7% proportion of Black adults without a disability and 3.8% are Hispanic, which is, again, higher than the 2.8% proportion of Hispanic adults without a disability.¹²

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Figure 12. Prevalence among Black Adults in Ohio



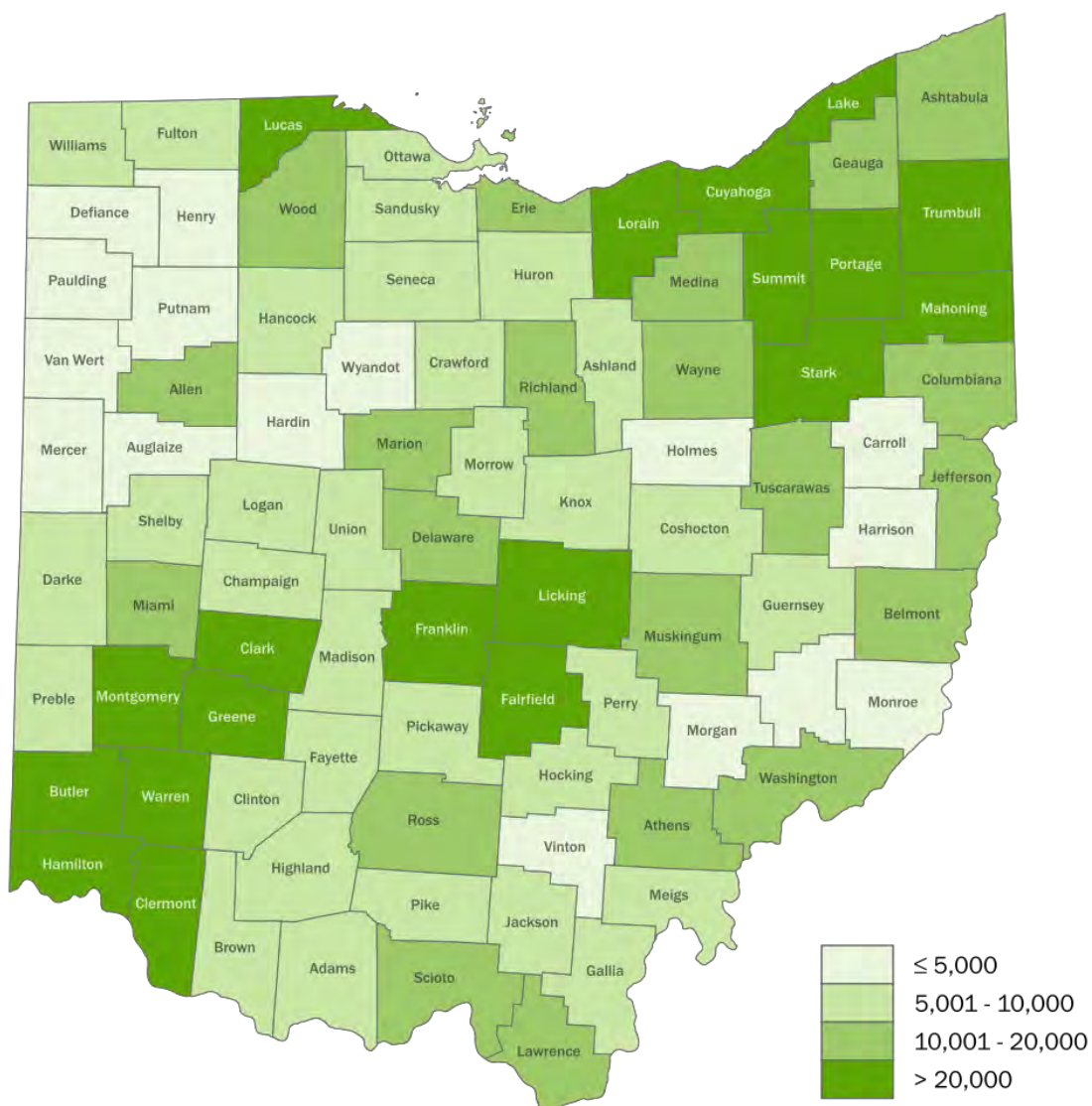
Breaking down the data further, Black adults are more represented than in the general Ohio population among adults with IDD (14.8%) and mobility disability (14.4%) compared to the 10.7% of Black adults without a disability.⁸ Asian adults are proportionately less represented among adults with disabilities (1.4%) compared to Ohio adults without disabilities (2.8%).¹²

Like children, adults with IDD most prevalently reside in metropolitan areas of Ohio (48.1%). The next most prevalent geographic region in Ohio where adults with IDD reside are rural Appalachian areas (22.6%), followed by rural non-Appalachian areas (14.9%) and suburban areas (14.4%).⁸ Figure 13 shows the total number of children and adults residing in each Ohio county according to data collected over a 5-year period and reflects that most Ohioans with disabilities reside in Ohio’s metropolitan areas (as depicted in figure 1) followed by rural Appalachian counties (as depicted in figure 3).¹³

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Figure 13. Total Number of Ohioans with Disabilities by County

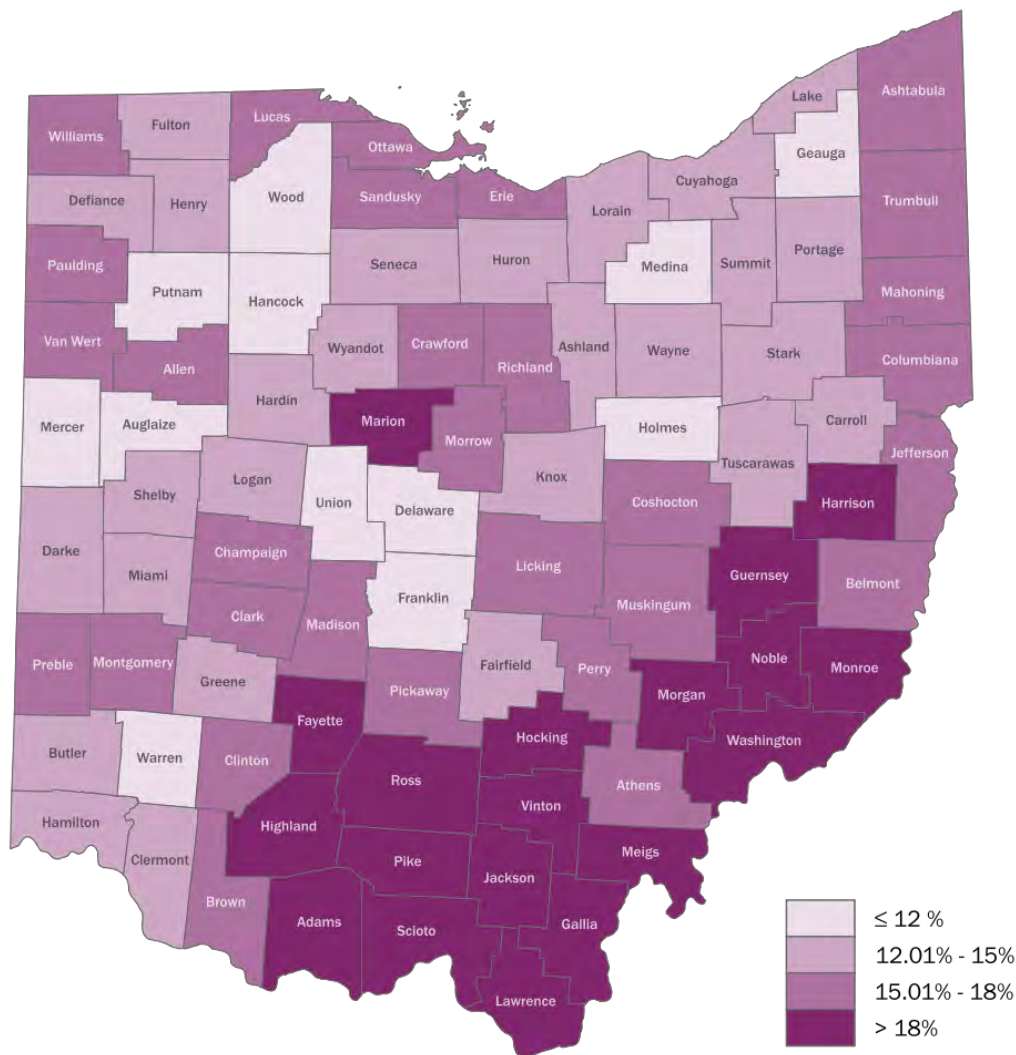


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However, when looking at the relative population size of each county, there is a larger proportion of Ohioans with disabilities in rural Appalachian counties (figure 14).¹³

Figure 14. Proportion of Ohioans with Disabilities by County



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Ohio adults with disabilities are more than twice as likely as adults without disabilities to be in poverty. Among Ohio adults with disabilities, 39.6% fall below the Federal Poverty Line (138% FPL and below) cutoff for Medicaid benefits compared to 18.1% of adults without disabilities.¹² Furthermore, adults with disabilities had more problems in paying their bills in the past year (36.5%) compared to adults without disabilities (18.7%) and this percentage is even higher among adults with IDD (38.6%).^{8,12} Additionally, Ohio adults with disabilities are about 4 times more likely to experience food insecurity (26%) than adults without disabilities (6.6%), with this figure again being higher for adults with IDD (30%).^{8,12}



Key Takeaways

- About 1 in 4 children and 1 in 3 adults have a disability in Ohio.
- Ohioans with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty than Ohioans without disabilities.
- There is a higher prevalence of disability among boys in childhood, which switches to a higher prevalence of disability among women in adulthood that may suggest in part the need for improved screening and identification of disability in young girls.
- Disability is more common in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color compared to white children and adults in Ohio.



EARLY INTERVENTION

Early Intervention (EI) programs are available in each state as established through a federal piece of legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In Ohio, EI services are managed by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). In 2020, DODD received 26,699 referrals for children between birth and 3 years old to receive EI services. Of these referrals, 23,349 cases resulted in the provision of services with an average of 11,828 children being served at any given time, an 87.5% rate of successful referrals.¹⁴ This is an increase from the 73.2% rate of successful referrals in 2019.¹⁵ This improvement is partly due to expanded eligibility criteria in 2020 that includes children diagnosed with neonatal abstinence syndrome and elevated blood lead levels.¹⁴ The largest number of referrals come from a family or caregiver, at 27% of all referrals processed in 2020. The next largest number comes from a Public Children Services Agency, at 20%, followed by hospitals (19%), physicians (15%), services coordinators via the EI 8045 form (11%), and all other sources (7%).¹⁶

Most children served in 2020 were eligible due to one or more substantial delays. These children accounted for 61% of those served. Another 14% of children served were eligible due to one or more mild delay. This is followed by eligibility due to a physician's informed clinical opinion (11%), a specific diagnosis on the eligibility list (11%), or a diagnosis being cited on a referral form (3%).¹⁶ While enrollment in EI services has increased in recent years, Ohio still lags behind national averages in early detection and enrollment. The rate of enrolled infants and toddlers before age 1 as a percentage of the total infant population is 0.99% in Ohio, behind the national standard of 1.4%.¹⁷ However, children are being found for service enrollment later in their lives. Approximately 3% of Ohio children and their families receive Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) when the child is between 1 and 3 years old.¹⁷ This is higher than the national average rate of 2%.¹⁷

In Fiscal Year 2019, the timely provision of services following approval for toddlers and infants was on target, at 99.9% of cases.¹⁷ This is following a period of steady improvement starting in 2016 where 96.1% of approved services were provided in a timely manner.¹⁷ Service delivery is considered "timely" in Ohio when delivered within thirty days of being added to a signed IFSP.¹⁷



EARLY INTERVENTION

The most common services provided upon initial signing of IFSPs in Ohio were those relating to special instruction, accounting for 59% of these services.¹⁶ Speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy were also prevalent at 23%, 13%, and 12%, respectively, of the initial services planned.¹⁶

The EI services provided by the state of Ohio are planned for and delivered by a team comprised of the child's family, a service coordinator, and the providers of those services.¹⁸ Service plans are individualized in a manner that includes pre-existing supports with additional resources to enhance the child's education and development at an early age.¹⁸ Services are delivered to individuals enrolled not only at home, but also in other places where the family may spend significant amounts of time.¹⁸

EI services were found to be largely effective as evaluated through improved positive emotional skills like forming social relationships, the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and a child's use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.¹⁷ Approximately 59% of children were displaying positive emotional skills at a level expected for their age by the time they exited the program or turned 3 years old.¹⁷ The most common area of improvement was seen in the ability to utilize appropriate behaviors to meet a child's need, where 62.4% of children substantially increased their growth while enrolled in EI services.¹⁷

Family members have also demonstrated great benefits from EI services. Over 96% of enrollees reported that services have helped their family in all three areas of focus—knowing their rights, effectively communicating their child's needs, and helping their child develop and learn.¹⁷ Most enrollees (62%) do not exit the EI program until their child reaches age 3 when eligibility lapses.¹⁶ Approximately 14% of enrollees are no longer eligible prior to reaching age 3 due to significant improvement or alterations in qualifying diagnoses.¹⁶ Another 12% of enrolled children are withdrawn by their guardian prior to age 3, and 10% of enrollees exit the program due to the EI team's inability to contact the family after multiple attempts.¹⁶

State initiatives include improved services for the Deaf and hard of hearing and work with the Ohio School of the Blind to equitably deliver services across all Ohio counties.¹⁸ Early childhood mental health intervention is also being improved.



EARLY INTERVENTION

This is best exemplified through the state's partnership with Federally Qualified Health Centers in Southeast Ohio where additional trainings for the delivery of a robust set of related services have been conducted.¹⁸

Specific programs also exist in Ohio to support the needs of children with autism. For example, the Autism Diagnosis Evaluation Project (ADEP) allows for a multidisciplinary and comprehensive evaluation of a child suspected of having autism.¹⁸ This is accomplished through direct links between EI service providers and physicians.¹⁸ Intensive developmental interventions for children then diagnosed with autism are available in multiple counties through the CONNECTIONS program at Akron Children's Hospital.¹⁸ The PLAY project is another widely available program focused on improving the social engagement and emotional skills of children with autism.¹⁸ Both programs are based on a standard relationship-based, developmental framework to improve these children's social, behavioral, and educational outcomes.¹⁸

One community where early intervention for autism is of high importance is the large Amish community in Ohio.⁵ Considering the high rate of autism prevalence among the Amish, early diagnoses and treatment options focused on this population have created new answers for families that may have had none in the past due to cultural separation from much of the state.⁵ This early treatment can decrease the rate of acquired disabilities and increase quality of life for children and their families in these communities.⁵

Unfortunately, the rates of autism diagnosis for Black children remains disparately low across the state. Even following diagnosis, children with IDD from racial and ethnic groups are significantly less likely to receive adequate services from the state than white participants.¹⁹ This is reflected in the lower levels of resources and expenditures extended to these communities.¹⁹

Developmental challenges resulting from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are compounded by the 44% of Black Ohioans and 48% of non-white/non-Black Ohioans that report exposure to at least one ACE.²⁰ This is compared to a prevalence of 34% for white Ohioans who report exposure to at least one ACE.²⁰

EARLY INTERVENTION

ACEs have been proven to hinder positive social outcomes like educational attainment and income while potentially resulting in an intellectual/developmental disability, mental health disorder, or chronic illness.²⁰



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most children eligible for Early Intervention services in Ohio have one or more substantial developmental delays and most referrals for services come from family or caregivers.
- Early Intervention in Ohio is able to improve skills in children with disabilities such as forming social relationships.
- Families report that Early Intervention in Ohio helps their child develop and learn.

Primary and Secondary Education

In Ohio, 15.2% of students have a disability.²¹ These students pass through the public educational system with unmet needs demonstrated by considerable gaps in outcomes compared to Ohio students without disabilities.²¹ While 243,000 children in Ohio have structured educational plans to meet their needs through Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), these students still show considerably worse outcomes than Ohio students without disabilities.²² For example, 25.4% of Ohio students with disabilities in grades K-12 were found to be “chronically absent” during the 2018-2019 school year compared to 16.7% of students without disabilities.²³ Further, children with disabilities are found to be less likely to enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to fully engage with and benefit from kindergarten-level instruction. While 40.9% of all Ohio children demonstrate readiness, only 14.4% of Ohio children with disabilities demonstrate readiness to enter kindergarten (figure 15).²³

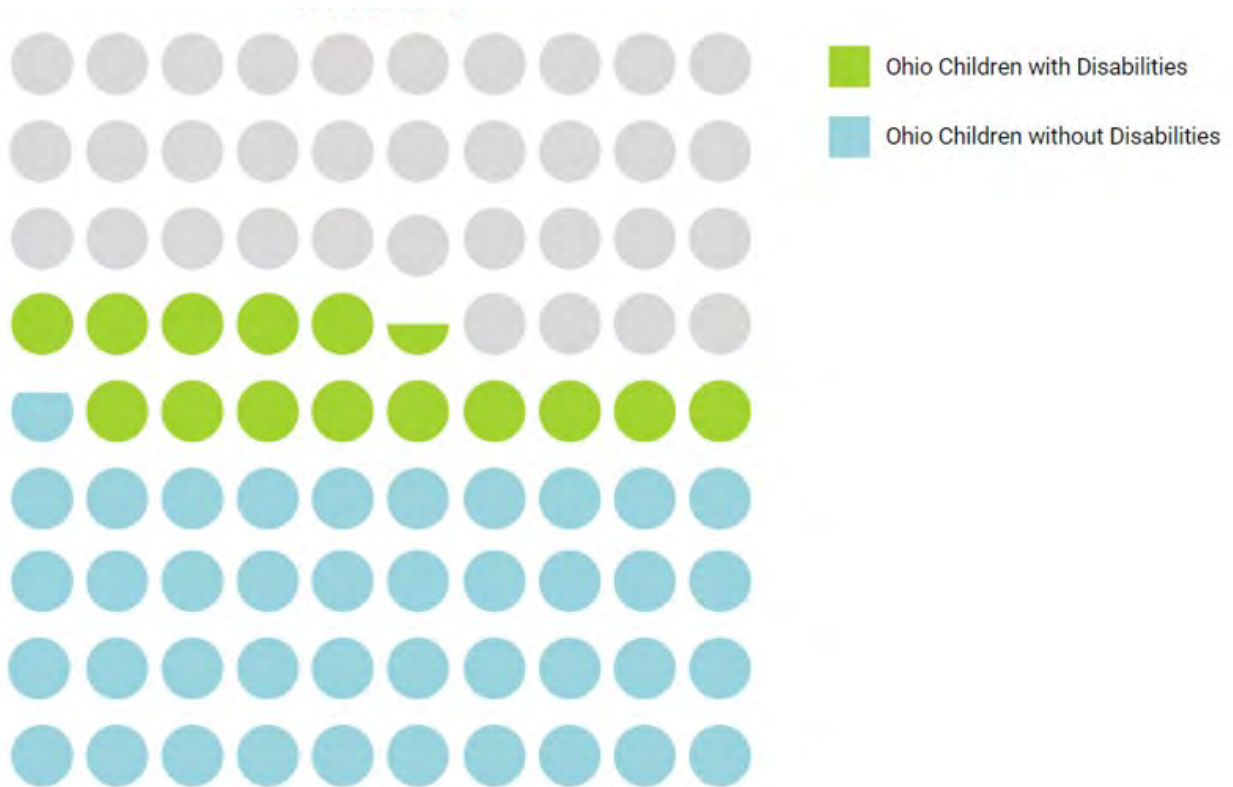
IEPs outlining service plans for students with disabilities are meant to ensure the delivery of thorough and effective supports to better educate these students. However, the plans themselves are often found by parents to be difficult to effectively agree to with a school and to be adequately carried out.⁵ This undercuts the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) on achieving educational equity and opportunity. Further, IDEA was intended to aid states with public funds to address the educational needs of students with disabilities. However, for Ohio students with disabilities, the funds provided by the federal government leaves a \$646.3 million funding gap to be covered by the state.²²

According to an analysis by Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), students with disabilities have a high incidence of segregation, where students with disabilities spend most of their day in separate classrooms from their peers without disabilities.²⁴ This disparity is particularly prevalent among high-poverty school districts in Ohio.

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Figure 15. Ohio Children Demonstrating Kindergarten Readiness



DRO found that only 38.5% of students with disabilities in 11 high-poverty school districts had students with disabilities learning in inclusive, integrated settings compared to 65.1% of students with disabilities integrated in the classroom in other Ohio school districts.²⁴ Furthermore, DRO found that students with disabilities who were able to learn in integrated classrooms do significantly better on state exams. Only 40% of students with disabilities in segregated classrooms passed their

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state exams compared to 80% of students with disabilities in integrated classrooms who passed their state exams.²⁴ In March 2020, a settlement was reached between the Ohio Department of Education and DRO in which the state commits to “improving the rates of integrating students with disabilities in general education settings and improving their academic achievement” as well as “emphasizing the use of assistive technology and universal design for learning.”²⁵

In terms of restraint and seclusion in Ohio schools, students with disabilities who have IEPs have more incidents overall of both restraint and seclusion than students without IEPs.²⁶ In the 2017-2018 school year, there were 4,785 restraint incidents for students with IEPs (47% of all restraints) and 2,042 incidents of seclusion for students with IEPs (56% of all seclusions).²⁶ In the 2018-2019 school year, there were 12,029 restraint incidents for students with IEPs (82% of all restraints) and 5,742 incidents of seclusion for students with IEPs (81% of all seclusions).²⁶ Finally, in the 2019-2020 school year, there were 10,944 restraint incidents for students with IEPs (78% of all restraints) and 6,037 incidents of seclusion for students with IEPs (80% of all seclusions).²⁶ It is believed that increased compliance with record-keeping and reporting in 2018-2019 in part explains the increase in restraints and seclusions observed from 2017-2018 and that the slight decrease observed in 2019-2020 is due to school closures beginning in March 2020 due to COVID-19.²⁶ In both 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years, students in the category of “Emotional Disturbance” had the highest percentage of restraint (20.2% and 25% respectively) and seclusion (9.5% and 13.6% respectively).²⁶ Students with autism had the next highest prevalence of both restraint (7.7% and 8.2%) and seclusion (4.7% and 5.3%) during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.²⁶

Additionally, Ohio students with disabilities were found to be twice as likely as students without disabilities to receive out-of-school suspensions.²⁷ Negative behaviors and developmental challenges are shown to require treatment in early school years to prevent resistance to treatment in later years and additional negative behaviors. However, due to high rates of absenteeism and suspensions, these behaviors are often reinforced and perpetuated.²⁷

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Students with disabilities in Ohio also have more suspensions than students with disabilities nationally. Among Ohio students ages 3 through 21 years with disabilities in the 2018-2019 school year, 14,105 had in-school suspensions of less than 10 days (national average: 8,559), 630 had in-school suspensions greater than 10 days (national average: 437), 26,366 had out of school suspensions less than 10 days (national average 10,243), and 2,969 had out of school suspensions greater than 10 days (national average: 1,039).²⁸ In terms of expulsions, there were 311 Ohio students ages 3 through 21 years with disabilities who were expelled in 2018-2019 while receiving educational services, which is higher than the national average of 112 students.²⁸ Furthermore, among Ohio students with disabilities ages 14 through 21 years, a total of 4,403 dropped out of school in the 2018-2019 school year.²⁹

While general education is important for students with disabilities, additional barriers exist when considering the educational needs that allow students with disabilities to best utilize the services offered to them in Ohio. These areas of education that are crucial for individuals with disabilities include financial literacy and self-advocacy training.⁵ Although Ohio high schools are making efforts to instruct students in economics and general finance, students with disabilities never learn how to use, maintain, and follow up with the complex systems surrounding federal and state disability benefits.⁵ Considering the lower prevalence of economic stability for Ohioans with disabilities compared to that of those without, this gap in financial literacy education needs to be addressed.⁵ The education provided is instrumental in both students with disabilities and their families to achieve economic advancement.⁵ Developing self-advocacy skills to achieve students' goals and be involved in important decisions in their lives is also a key element in achieving economic stability and fulfillment.⁵

There are large disparities in Ohio in terms of rates of high school diploma/ GED acquisition for students with disabilities in comparison to students without disabilities. Approximately 15.4% of Ohio students with disabilities and 13.6% of students with IDD specifically have received an education up to the high school level but have not received a diploma or GED.¹²

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This is compared to only 5.8% of Ohio students without disabilities who have not completed their high school education.¹² Among high school graduates, Ohio students with disabilities are about 8% less likely than students without disabilities to seek out further post-secondary education after earning their high school diploma or GED.¹²

Post-Secondary Education

Ohio students with disabilities show significant gaps in terminal levels of post-secondary education completed in comparison to students without disabilities. An estimated 64.1% of Ohio adults without disabilities have some level of post-secondary education, compared to 46.5% of Ohio adults with disabilities.¹² Specifically, for Ohio adults with disabilities, 18.8% have completed some college (compared to 30.1% of adults without disabilities), 12.9% have completed an associate degree (compared to 13.5%), 9% have completed a four-year undergraduate degree (compared to 20.7%), and 5.8% have completed an advanced degree such as a masters or doctoral degree (compared to 13.5%).¹² Ohio adults with IDD also overall have less post-secondary educational attainment than Ohio adults without disabilities but have a slightly higher rate than Ohio adults with disabilities as a whole at 49.5%.⁸ Specifically, 19.1% of Ohio adults with IDD have completed some college, 12.6% have completed an associate degree, 11.9% have completed, a four-year undergraduate degree, and 5.9% have completed an advanced degree.⁸

In Ohio there is a statewide consortium of post-secondary programs designed specifically for people with IDD. The goal of the Ohio Statewide Consortium is to “build, extend, enhance, and sustain programs that deliver inclusive postsecondary programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Ohio, including participation in college classes, internships, housing, and social experiences.”³⁰ The Think College National Coordinating Center developed eight national standards, 17 quality indicators, and 87 benchmarks which guide both the development and sustainability of inclusive higher education.³⁰ These inclusive programs focus across

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four transition areas for students with IDD which include academic access, career development, campus membership/independent living, and self-determination/student living.³⁰

There are currently nine institutions in Ohio that offer 10 post-secondary programs for students with IDD. These include: 1) The Ohio State University Transition Options in Postsecondary Settings (TOPs) Program, 2) University of Cincinnati Transition and Access Program (TAP), 3) Marietta College Pioneer Pipeline Program, 4) Youngstown State University Transition Options in Postsecondary Settings Program, 5) University of Toledo: Toledo Transition Program, 6) Kent State University Career & Community Studies Program, 7) Columbus State Community College Early Childhood Aide Certificate Program, 8) Columbus State Community College Human Services Assistant Program, 9) Edison State Community College EAGLE Program, and 10) Bowling Green State University Clark Inclusive Scholars Program.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Students with disabilities have unmet needs and gaps in educational outcomes in comparison to students without disabilities in Ohio's public education system.
- Ohio students with disabilities who are in segregated classrooms do worse on exams than students with disabilities who are included in classrooms with their peers without disabilities.
- Ohio students with disabilities have higher rates of school suspensions and expulsions than the national average for students with disabilities.
- Ohio students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school and not go to college compared to students without disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT



Ohio is an Employment First state, which means that Ohio is participating in the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) initiative which sets a framework for system level change around the premise that “all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life.”³¹ In addition, since 2018, Ohio became the first Technology First state under an executive order from Governor DeWine, which allows for the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) to “ensure technology is considered as part of all services and support plans for people with disabilities.”³² These initiatives were established to increase competitive employment and community living for Ohioans with disabilities. In Ohio, 71.3% of adults 19 years and older without disabilities are currently employed, while 28.7% of that population is estimated to be unemployed (this population includes retired individuals).¹² The employment rates of Ohio adults with disabilities falls far below the rate of Ohio adults without disabilities. An estimated 38.2% of Ohio adults ages 19 and older with a disability are currently employed, leaving 61.8% of this population unemployed, which is a 33.1% higher rate of unemployment in comparison to adults without disabilities.¹² This disparity is even more pronounced when looking at Ohio adults with IDD where only 32.3% of the population is estimated to be employed.⁸ When looking at the service plans of individuals receiving IDD supports across the country that desire a job, goals for employment were included in less than 40% of these individuals’ service plans.¹⁹ These national trends are consistent with reports from family members of individuals with disabilities in Ohio. An estimated 28% of families of Ohioans with disabilities report not feeling that their family member has the supports necessary to work or volunteer in the community.³³ Another barrier to individuals with disabilities working in the community is the nature of and education around receiving public benefits. In Ohio, the fear of losing these benefits has been reported as a top reason these individuals were not working in the community.⁵

EMPLOYMENT



DODD has put forth several initiatives aligning with their goal of encouraging community integration, participation, and employment for individuals receiving services for developmental disabilities. As of 2019, 14,437 individuals, or 50.5% of this population, were employed.³⁴ The largest portion of this population (57.6%) reported working in a position based within the facility through which they receive services.³⁴ However, 33.1% of this population reported holding a position in a competitive job within the community.³⁴ Additionally, 16.0% of these individuals worked in a group integrated job.³⁴ Of the individuals working in competitive individual jobs, 40.5% of these jobs were in the “Food Preparation and Servicing Related” job category and 23.8% were in “Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance.”³⁵ These categories are followed by 10.2% in “Production” and 4.4% in “Office and Administrative Support.”³⁵

As of 2021, the ability of Ohioans with a disability to live the life they want to live is most hindered by challenges related to finding gainful employment.⁵ DODD conducts programs to attempt to address these disparities. As of 2012, through DODD’s Employment First program, the state has seen a 46% increase in individuals participating in integrated employment services. This means that individuals work an average of 20 hours per week at an average of \$10.45 per hour. Over 3,200 individuals have been employed through this program.¹⁴ The state is also integrating their Technology First efforts with employment initiatives. The use of technology has been expanded to aid in effective employment and providing workplace accommodations.³⁶

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), which is Ohio’s Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired, is also working to bridge the gap in Ohio employment outcomes. Over 5,700 Ohioans with disabilities have achieved successful employment outcomes with OOD assistance.³⁷ Additionally, 31,204 cases have been filed with vocational rehabilitation services to help individuals find or retain meaningful work.³⁷ This increase in vocational rehabilitation services offered has resulted from a restructuring of eligibility between fiscal years 2014 and 2019.³⁷

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A total increase of 165% in positive employment outcomes have corresponded with OOD's expanded eligibility.³⁷ These services are supported through research underlining the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. An estimated 62% of employees with a disability have remained with the same company for three years or longer, exceeding the retention rate for employees without a disability.⁵ This trend reduces turnover costs incurred by employers. The public has also shown more favorable attitudes towards companies that hire individuals with disabilities when compared to those that do not. Additionally, an estimated 87% of the American public prefer to do business with companies that have inclusive hiring practices.⁵

Furthermore, the Governor DeWine administration in Ohio has prioritized the employment of Ohioans with disabilities in state government. As one of Governor DeWine's first executive orders in office he signed Executive Order 2019-03D, which establishes Ohio as a disability inclusion state and model employer of individuals with disabilities.³⁸ In this order, it is noted that there are an estimated 870,000 Ohioans with disabilities of working age and that the administration is "strongly committed to promoting diversity, ensuring fairness and non-discrimination in state government employment practices and to maintain a working environment free from discrimination...and it is the policy of this administration to encourage and support individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the social and economic life of Ohio and engage in competitive integrated employment."³⁸ This executive order directs in part the appointment of a State ADA Coordinator "who shall be responsible for advising all state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions within the executive branch on disability policy and compliance with state and federal disability rights laws" as well as directing all state agencies to annually review their hiring practices to identify any barriers to employment and work with the State ADA Coordinator to remedy any identified barriers.³⁸

Students transitioning from high school to the workforce or educational programs also present an opportunity for outcomes improvement in the state. Barriers to continued education or training after school has been cited as another key factor in unfavorable employment outcomes for Ohioans with disabilities.⁵

EMPLOYMENT



In Fiscal Year 2019, the Ohio Transition Support Partnership with the Ohio Department of Education assisted 469 students with disabilities in their successful acquisition of employment.³⁷ As the program was expanded, 270 more students in Ohio's three most populous counties were eligible to receive individualized high school transition services through the school year.³⁷ An additional 524 Ohio students participated in career exploration programs through OOD's Youth Work Experience Programming.³⁷ Also, 2,356 students participated in OOD's work-based learning experiences where they received job coaching and conducted paid work at sites based on their interests and abilities.³⁷ While OOD hopes to continue to improve services to close the employment gap between individuals with and without a disability in the state, the expansion of eligibility and individualization of services provided has shown promising trends in the pursuit of this goal.



Key Takeaways

- Most employed Ohioans with disabilities work in a position that is based in the facility through which they receive services.
- For Ohioans with disabilities who work in a job that is a competitive position within the community, most work in food preparation.
- The main reason reported by Ohioans with disabilities that they do not work in the community is due to fear of losing their benefits.
- There are also many barriers to accessing continuing education or training after school for Ohioans with disabilities, which results in poorer employment outcomes.