

# BRFSS Brief

Number 1716

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 Status

New York State Adults, 2015

### Introduction and Key Findings

In the United States, one out of five adults have some type of disability.<sup>1,2</sup> Disability encompasses three dimensions: Impairment to body structure or mental functioning; activity limitation, such as difficulty hearing, moving, or problem solving; and participation restrictions in daily activities, such as working, engaging in social/recreational activities or obtaining health care or preventive services.<sup>3</sup> Since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, data collection and reporting systems such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), capture these dimensions through a series of six questions including: vision and hearing impairment, mobility and cognitive limitations, and difficulty with independent living or caring for oneself.<sup>4</sup> In 2015 the BRFSS included five of these questions; hearing impairment was added starting in 2016.

New York State's Prevention Agenda identifies persons with any disability as a distinct demographic group. Developing targeted and inclusive public health interventions can reduce disparities between persons with and without disability. Specifically, within the Chronic Disease Action Plan, targeted strategies are recommended to reduce obesity and increase physical activity by 10 percent among persons with any disability.<sup>5</sup>

#### Key Findings

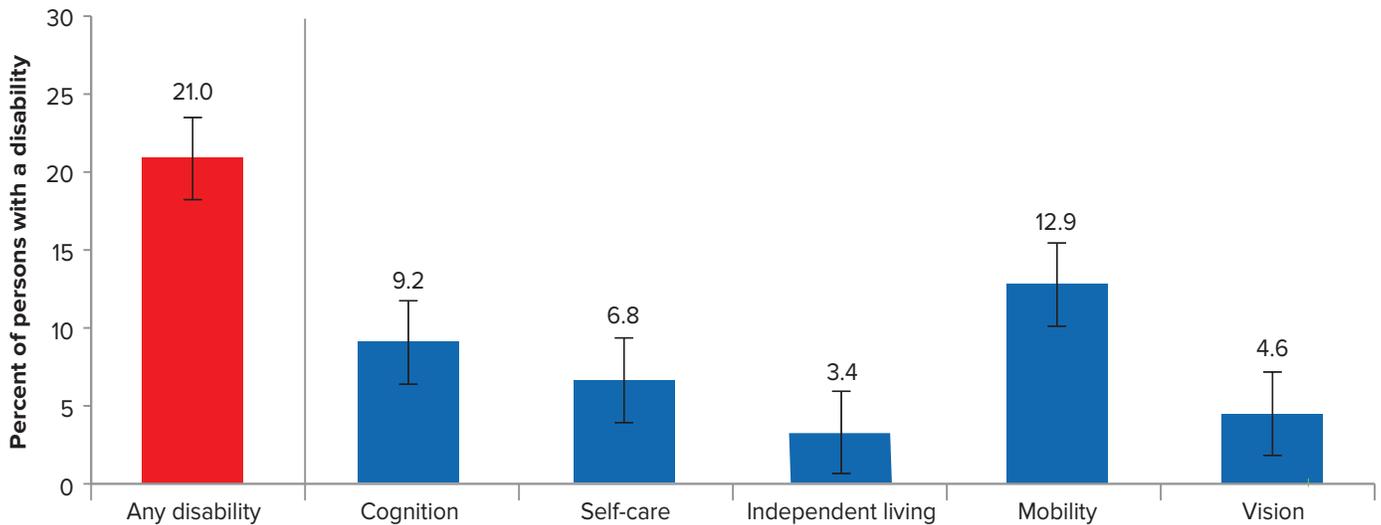
Disability is common in New York State as approximately 3.1 million (21.0%) of adults experience some type of disability, but its prevalence varies across segments of the population. The prevalence of any disability is higher among females (23.0 %), adults 65 years and older (34.0 %), persons with annual household income less than \$25,000 (36.8%), black non-Hispanic adults (24.9%), Hispanic adults (25.8%), and adults with less than high school education (38.9%).

Disability is more prevalent among adults living with diabetes and cardiovascular disease and those at risk for chronic disease due to their smoking, diet, and physical activity status. Approximately one in three adults considered obese (31.5%) and one in three reporting no leisure-time physical activity (32.2%) have a disability. Thirty-one (31.0%) percent of adults who report having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smoke have some type of disability. The analysis of selected chronic conditions shows that 44.2% of persons with diabetes and more than half (51.7%) of persons with cardiovascular disease report having some type of disability.

### BRFSS questions

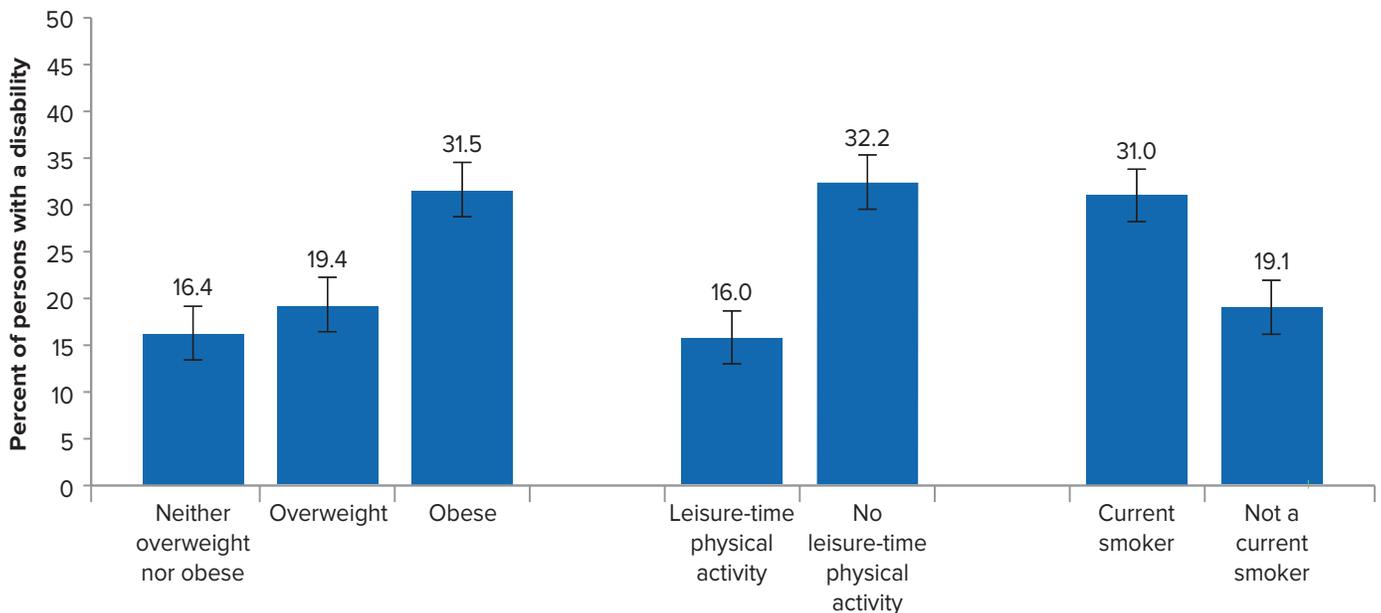
1. *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?*
2. *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?*
3. *Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?*
4. *Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?*
5. *Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?*

**Figure 1. Disability status and disability types\* among New York State adults, BRFSS 2015**



Notes. **Any disability.** All respondents who report having at least one type of disability based on Department of Health and Human Services definition for data reporting (self-care, independent living, cognitive, mobility, vision); **Cognitive disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?”; **Independent living disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping?”; **Self-care disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question “Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?”; **Mobility disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?” **Vision disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question, “Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?”; Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

**Figure 2. Prevalence of disability status by weight, physical activity and smoking status, New York State Adults, BRFSS 2015**



Note. Current smoker: Respondents who reported having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smoke; Physical activity: Any leisure-time physical activity during the past month; BMI category: Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30.0 or higher; Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## Disability<sup>a</sup> Status, New York State Adults , 2015 BRFSS

	Disability <sup>a</sup>	
	% <sup>b</sup>	95% CI <sup>b</sup>
<b>Total New York State [N= 12,357]</b>	21.0	20.1 - 22.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	18.7	17.3 - 20.1
Female	23.0	21.7 - 24.4
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Age 18-44	13.5	12.0 - 15.0
Age 45-64	23.6	21.9 - 25.2
Age 65+	34.0	32.0 - 36.1
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White not Hispanic	18.5	17.4 - 19.6
Black not Hispanic	24.9	21.9 - 28.0
Hispanic	25.8	23.0 - 28.5
Other not Hispanic	19.2	15.4 - 23.0
<b>Annual household income</b>		
<25,000	36.8	34.4 - 39.2
25,000-50,000	22.1	19.7 - 24.5
>50,000	14.2	11.9 - 16.6
>75,000	8.8	7.6 - 10.0
Missing <sup>d</sup>	23.3	20.4 - 26.1
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Did not graduate High School	38.9	35.2 - 42.5
Graduated High School	24.5	22.5 - 26.6
Attended College or Technical School	20.5	18.6 - 22.4
Graduated from College or Technical School	9.9	8.9 - 10.9
<b>Region</b>		
New York State excluding NYC	19.1	18.0 - 20.2
NYC	23.4	21.7 - 25.1
<b>Health coverage</b>		
Private	11.8	10.7 - 13.0
Medicare	40.7	38.1-43.3
Medicaid	33.9	29.9-37.8
Other insurance <sup>e</sup>	19.6	14.8-24.4
Not insured	19.2	15.5-22.9
<b>Selected risk factors</b>		
<b>Body Mass Index (BMI) category</b>		
Neither overweight nor obese	16.4	14.9 - 17.9
Overweight	19.4	17.7 - 21.0
Obese <sup>f</sup>	31.5	29.3 - 33.8
<b>Leisure-time physical activity<sup>g</sup></b>		
Yes	16.0	14.9 - 17.1
No	32.2	30.0 - 34.4
<b>Current smoker<sup>h</sup></b>		
Yes	31.0	27.9 - 34.0
No	19.1	18.1 - 20.1
<b>Selected chronic conditions</b>		
<b>Cardiovascular disease<sup>i</sup></b>		
Yes	51.7	47.3 - 56.0
No	18.8	17.8 - 19.8
<b>Diabetes<sup>j</sup></b>		
Yes	44.2	40.6 - 47.8
No	18.4	17.4 - 19.4

<sup>a</sup> All respondents who report having at least one type of disability based on Department of Health and Human Services definition for data reporting (self-care, independent living, cognitive, mobility, vision);

<sup>b</sup> Weighted percentage;

<sup>c</sup> CI = confidence interval;

<sup>d</sup> "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income;

<sup>e</sup> TRICARE (formerly CHAMPUS) VA or Military, Alaska Native, Indian Health Service, Tribal Health Services or some other source;

<sup>f</sup> Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30.0 or higher;

<sup>g</sup> Any leisure-time physical activity during the past month;

<sup>h</sup> Respondents who reported having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smoke;

<sup>i</sup> Respondent who reported having angina or coronary heart disease, or heart attack;

<sup>j</sup> Includes physician diagnosed diabetes. Does not include reported gestational diabetes, prediabetes, or borderline diabetes.

## References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC: 53 million adults in the US live with a disability. Retrieved on September 7, 2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2015/p0730-us-disability.html>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Adults with One of More Funtional Disabilities – United States, 2011-2014, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Vol. 65 No. 38
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Disability Overview. Retrieved on September 7, 2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>
4. U.S Department of Health and Human Services HHS Implementation Guidance On Data Collection Standards For Race, Ethnicity, Sex, Primary Language, And Disability Status. Retrieved on September 7, 2017 from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/hhs-implementation-guidance-data-collection-standards-race-ethnicity-sex-primary-language-and-disability-status>
5. New York State Department of Health. Prevention Agenda 2013-2018: Preventing Chronic Diseases Action Plan. Retrieved on September 18, 2017 from [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic\\_diseases/index.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/index.htm)

## Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research  
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

## Order Information

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