

# BRFSS Brief

Number 2021-23

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, 2019

### Introduction and Key Findings

In the United States, one in four adults has some type of disability.<sup>1</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>2</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: cognitive limitations, independent living disability, self-care disability, mobility limitations, vision impairment, and hearing impairment.<sup>3</sup>

Adults living with disability have a higher rate of chronic conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.<sup>4</sup> To reduce health disparities between people with and without disability, the New York State Department of Health works to improve inclusion and accessibility of health promotion programs; increase awareness of health-related disability policy initiatives; and improve sustainability of policy, system, and environmental changes that benefit the health of people with disability.

#### Key Findings

In New York State, approximately 3.7 million adults live with a disability (26.1%). Adults with disability are more likely to be female, 65 years and older, and have an annual household income of less than \$15,000. Disability prevalence is significantly higher among Hispanic (33.9%) and Black non-Hispanic (30.2%) adults compared to adults who are White non-Hispanic (23.4%).

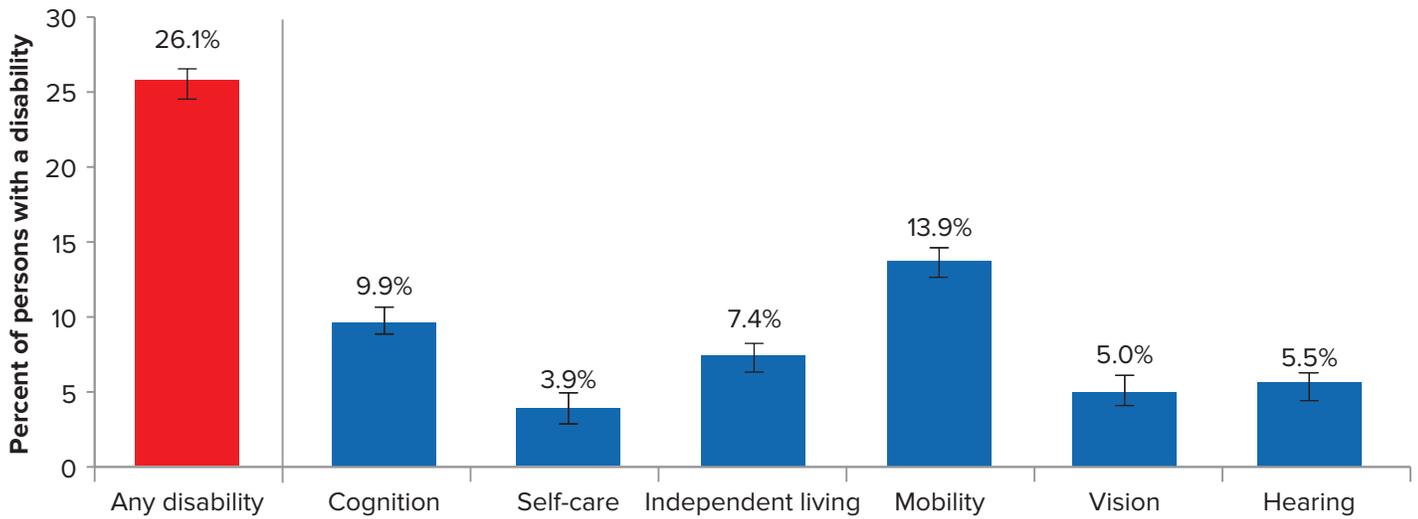
Adults 65 years and older are more than two times as likely to have a disability than adults age 18 to 44 (44.2% versus 18.0%). Adults with a household income of less than \$15,000 are almost four times as likely to have a disability than adults with a household income of \$75,000 and over (54.4% versus 13.0%).

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 behaviors. Approximately one in three adults with obesity (36.0%) and more than one in three reporting no leisure-time physical activity (38.5%) have a disability. Forty (40.3%) percent of adults who report having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and who currently smoke have some type of disability. The analysis of selected chronic conditions indicates that more than half of adults with diabetes (53.2%) and adults with cardiovascular disease (59.6%) report having some type of disability.

### BRFSS questions

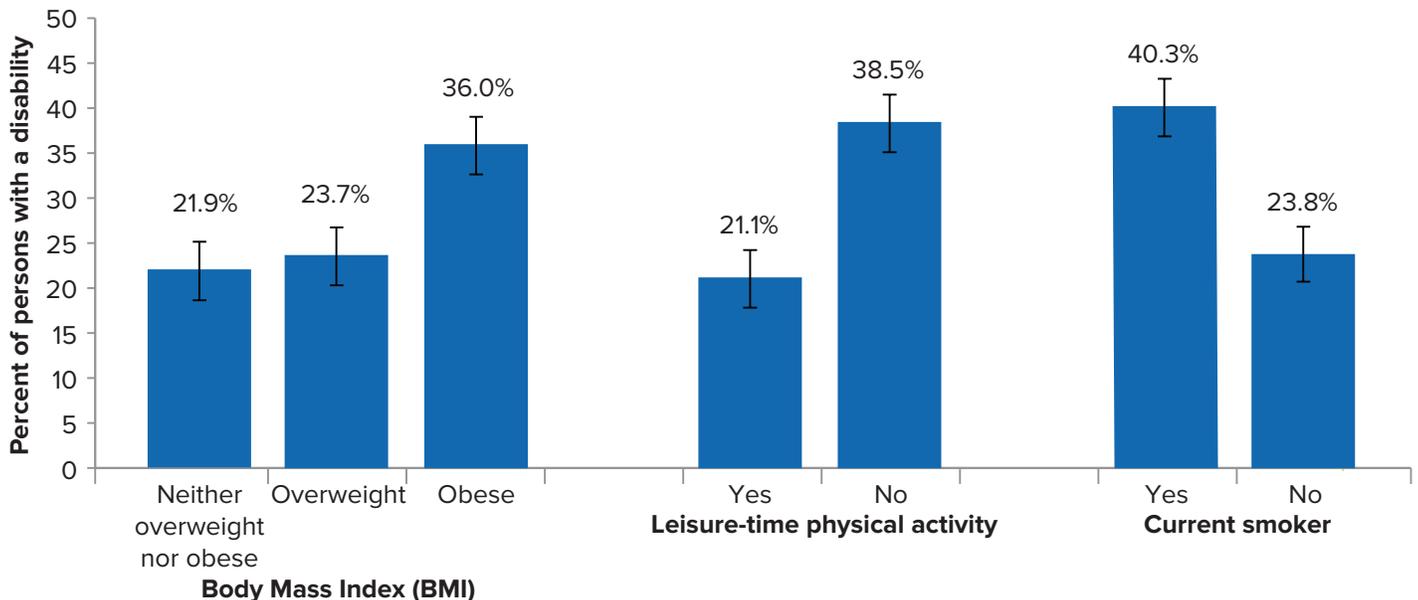
1. *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?*
2. *Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?*
3. *Do you 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?*
6. *Are you deaf or do you have serious difficulty hearing?*

**Figure 1. Disability status and disability types\* among New York State adults, BRFSS 2019**



\*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, hearing); **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?”; **Self-care disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question “Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?”; **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?”; **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?”; **Hearing disability** is defined as answering “yes” to the question “Are you deaf or do you have serious difficulty hearing?”; Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 2. Percent of adults living with a disability by Body Mass Index (BMI) category, physical activity and smoking status, New York State, BRFSS 2019**



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

## Disability<sup>a</sup> Status, New York State Adults , 2019 BRFSS

	Disability <sup>a</sup>	
	% <sup>b</sup>	95% CI <sup>c</sup>
<b>Total New York State</b> [N= 35,767]	26.1	25.0 - 27.2
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	23.8	22.3 – 25.3
Female	28.3	26.8 – 29.9
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Age 18-44	18.0	16.3 – 19.6
Age 45-64	27.3	25.5 - 29.2
Age 65 and older	42.2	40.0 – 44.5
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White not Hispanic	23.4	22.2 - 24.7
Black not Hispanic	30.2	26.8 - 33.7
Hispanic	33.9	30.9 - 36.9
Other not Hispanic	20.5	16.6 – 24.5
<b>Annual household income</b>		
<\$15,000	50.4	45.6 – 55.1
\$15,000-\$24,999	40.4	37.0 – 43.8
\$25,000-\$34,999	30.9	26.9 – 34.8
\$35,000-\$49,999	24.3	20.9 – 27.6
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.8	15.9 – 21.7
\$75,000 and greater	13.0	11.5 – 14.4
Missing <sup>d</sup>	31.7	29.1 - 34.4
<b>Region</b>		
NYS excluding NYC	25.5	24.2 – 26.7
NYC	27.1	25.2 – 29.0
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Did not graduate High School	46.4	42.3 – 50.6
Graduated High School	29.4	27.2 – 31.7
Attended College or Technical School	26.5	24.3 – 28.7
Graduated from College or Technical School	15.0	13.8 – 16.3
<b>Health coverage<sup>e</sup></b>		
Private	15.5	14.2 – 16.8
Medicare	46.1	43.6 – 48.6
Medicaid	39.1	35.6 – 42.7
Other insurance	41.2	31.6 – 50.8
Not insured	27.9	24.1 – 31.8
<b>Selected risk factors</b>		
<b>Body Mass Index (BMI) category</b>		
Neither overweight nor obese	21.9	20.1 – 23.7
Overweight	23.7	21.8 - 25.5
Obese <sup>f</sup>	36.0	33.7 - 38.2
<b>Leisure-time physical activity<sup>g</sup></b>		
Yes	21.1	19.9 - 22.3
No	38.5	36.2 – 40.9
<b>Current smoker<sup>h</sup></b>		
Yes	40.3	36.8 - 43.8
No	23.8	22.7 – 24.9
<b>Selected chronic conditions</b>		
<b>Heart disease<sup>i</sup></b>		
Yes	59.6	54.7 – 64.4
No	23.6	22.6 – 24.7
<b>Diabetes<sup>j</sup></b>		
Yes	53.2	49.5 – 57.0
No	22.8	21.7 – 23.9

### Notes:

- <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 collection and reporting (self-care, independent living, cognitive, mobility, vision, hearing);
- <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). Disability Impacts all of Us. Retrieved on December 16, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Disability Overview. Retrieved on December 16, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>
3. 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 December 16, 2020 from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/hhs-implementation-guidance-data-collection-standards-race-ethnicity-sex-primary-language-disability-0>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Disability and Health Promotion. Retrieved on August 26, 2021 from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/relatedconditions.html>

## 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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