

## Disability in the Commonwealth, 2013-2017

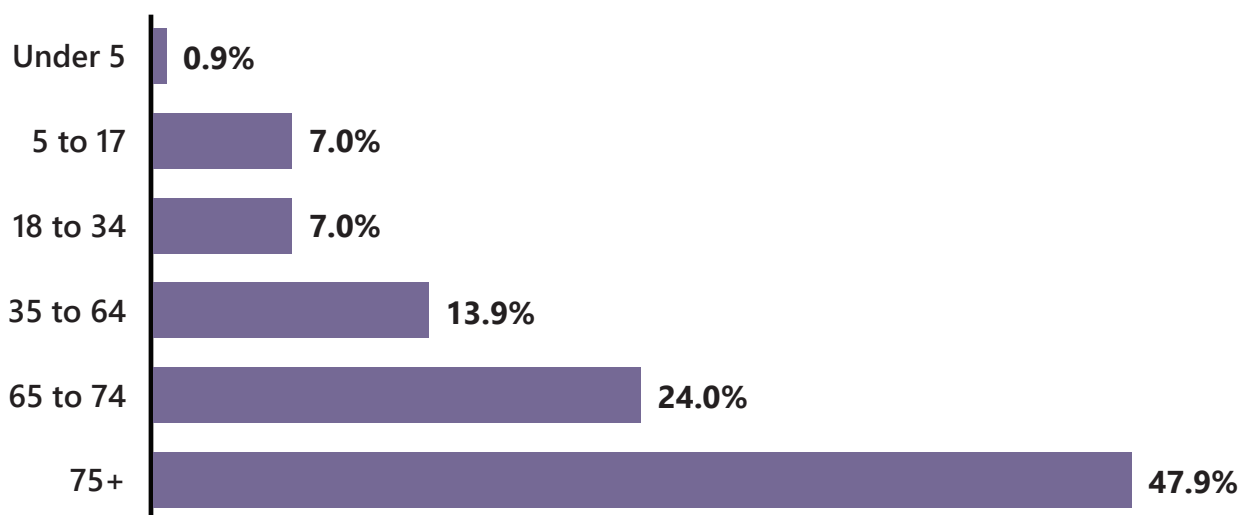
HARRISBURG – There were approximately 1 in 7 Pennsylvanians with at least one disability from 2013 to 2017 totaling just over 1.73 million according to the 2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. The rate of persons with disabilities in Pennsylvania is 13.7 percent of the population, exceeding the national rate of 12.6 percent. Pennsylvania had the fifth largest population of persons with disabilities and ranked 16<sup>th</sup> for its percent of the population with disabilities in the nation (tied with Michigan).

### Key trends in comparison of 2013-2017 and 2008-2012 estimates:

- A larger number and percentage of females had disabilities than males
- Ambulatory, or movement-based, disabilities were most common
- Persons with disabilities had lower educational attainment and earnings

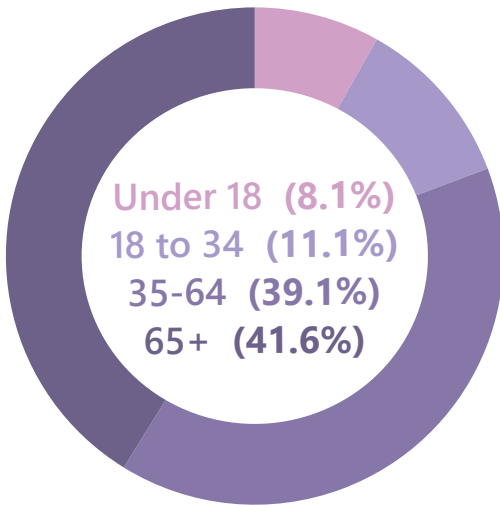
### Trends by Age, Sex, Race & Ethnicity

Older populations had the highest rates of persons with disabilities. Those 75 years and over had the highest rates of any age cohort (47.7%) [Figure 1]. Together, those over 65 years account for 16.7 percent of the civilian, non-institutionalized population, but 41.6 percent of those with disabilities [Figure 2].

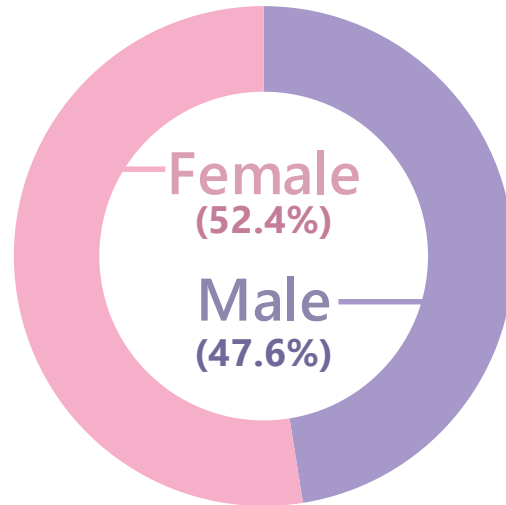


**Figure 1.** Percent of population with disabilities by age cohort.

A larger percentage of females (14.0%) had at least one disability than males (13.5%). Females were slightly more represented in the population of persons with a disability (52.4%) than in the civilian, non-institutionalized population of Pennsylvania (51.3%) [Figure 3].

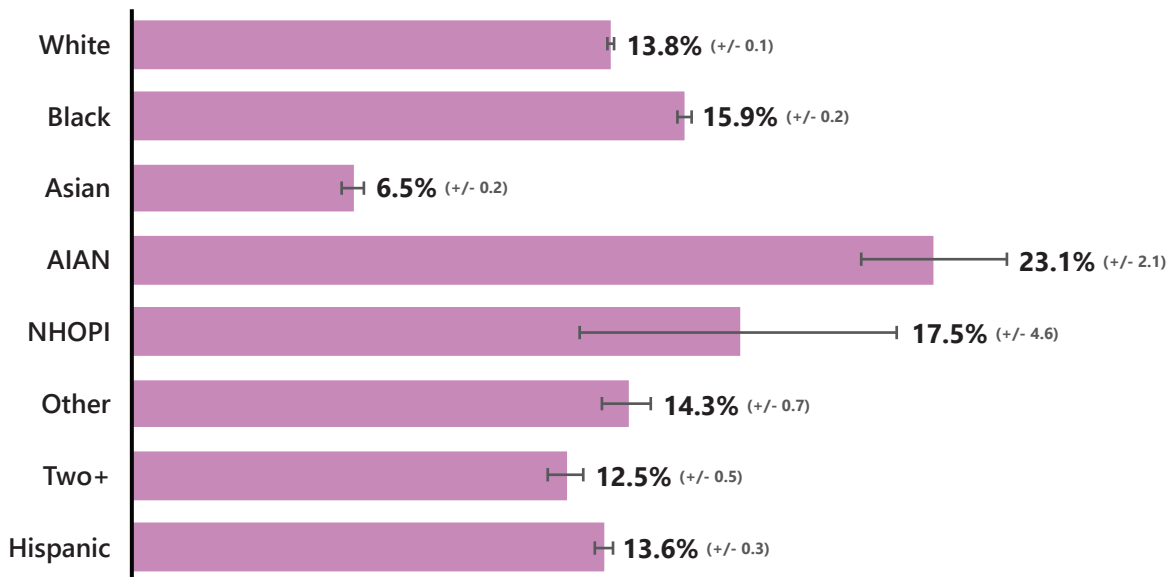


**Figure 2.** Age breakdown of population with disabilities.



**Figure 3.** Sex breakdown of population with disabilities.

The American Indian and Alaska Native population had the highest percent of persons with disabilities (23.1%), though this estimate was inflated due to low sample sizes [Figure 4]. Black or African Americans, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders, and individuals of some other race alone all had disability rates higher than the civilian, non-institutionalized (13.7%). Asian residents had the lowest percent of persons with disabilities (6.5%) at less than half of the general population and other racial groups.

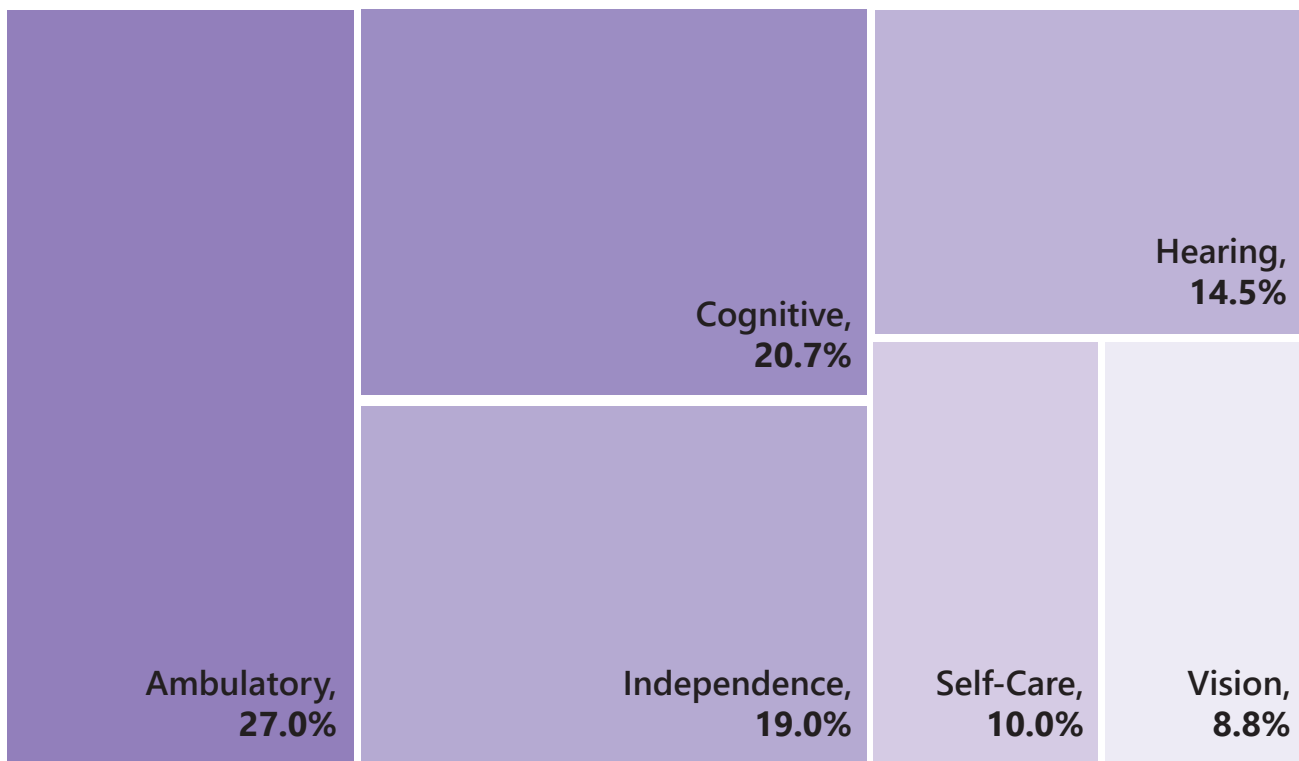


**Figure 4.** Percent of population with disabilities by race and Hispanic origin. Margins of error included due to high error in groups with small sample size.

## Detailed Disability Characteristics

Ambulatory disabilities - those affecting physical movement - were the most common type of disability, accounting for 27.0 percent of all disability types [Figure 5]. Cognitive (20.7%) and independent-living-based disabilities (19.0%) followed ambulatory disabilities as some of the more prevalent types of disability in Pennsylvania.

Approximately 7.4 percent of Pennsylvania's population from 2013 to 2017 had ambulatory-based disabilities, while 6.2 percent had independent-living-based disabilities, or those affecting the ability of the person to complete errands alone, and 5.7 percent had cognitive-based disabilities, disabilities that make concentrating, remembering, or making decisions more difficult.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of disabilities by disability type.  
A person may have several types of disabilities.

Just under half (47.1%) of the population with disabilities had two or more types of disabilities. The population under 18 years of age with disabilities had the lowest percentage of persons with two or more types of disabilities (25.6%). Of the population age 18 to 64 years with disabilities, 45.8 percent had two or more types of disabilities while a slight majority (52.8%) of persons age 65 years and over with disabilities had two or more types of disabilities.

## Trends in Education, Income, and Occupation

A smaller percentage of persons with disabilities attained high school diplomas or Bachelor's degrees than persons with no disabilities. The percentage of persons with disabilities who have less than a high school diploma or equivalent (20.3%) is nearly three times higher than the percentage of persons with no disabilities who have less than a high school education (7.6%). Furthermore, the percent of persons with disabilities who have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher (14.2%) is less than half of the percentage of persons with no disabilities who obtained at least a Bachelor's degree (34.0%).

Statewide, those with disabilities had lower median incomes, and a greater share of persons with disabilities had incomes below the poverty level than persons with no disabilities. Median earnings for those with no disabilities was \$34,607 while median earnings for those with disabilities were only \$21,696. Over a fifth (20.6%) of Pennsylvanians with disabilities had an income below the poverty level while only a tenth (10.1%) of those with no disabilities had incomes that fell below the poverty threshold.

A lower percentage of persons with disabilities held occupations related to Management, Business, Science and Arts (26.4%) than persons with no disabilities (38.4%). Persons with disabilities were also more concentrated in Service (18.6%) and Production, Transportation, Material Moving (18.6%) occupations than those with no disabilities (17.1% and 13.1%, respectively).

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

Questions? Contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center at 717.948.6336 or online at [pasdc.hbg.psu.edu](http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu).

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