



Pennsylvania Population Series: Disability in the Commonwealth, 2012 to 2016

HARRISBURG - There were approximately 1 in 7 Pennsylvanians with a disability from 2012 to 2016 totaling just over 1.7 million according to the 2016 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 12.5 percent. Pennsylvania had the fifth largest population of persons with a disability and ranked 17th for its percent of the population with a disability in the nation (tied with North Carolina).

Other key findings include:

- 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

AGE, SEX, RACE & ETHNICITY

Older populations had the highest rates of persons with disabilities: 23.8 percent of those 65 to 74 years and 47.8 percent of those 75 years and over had a disability [Figure 1]. Together, those over 65 years account for 16.3 percent of the total population, but 41.2 percent of those with disabilities [Figure 2].

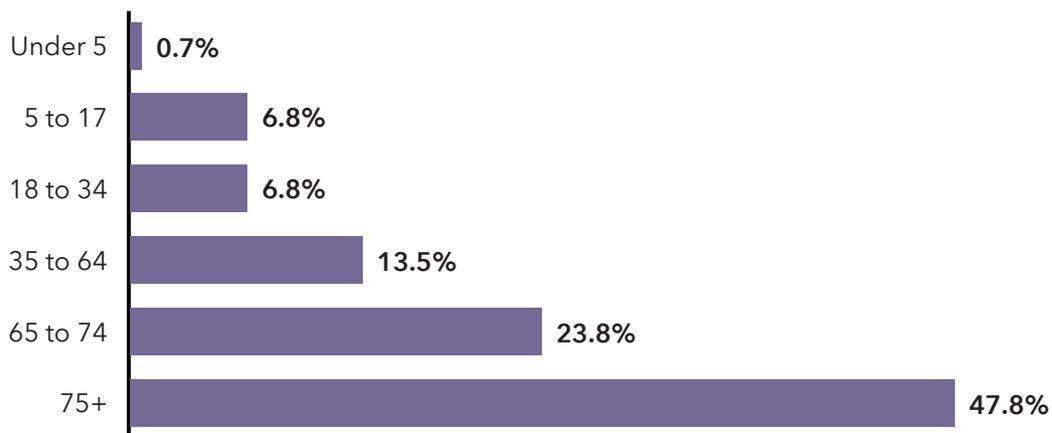


Figure 1. Percent of population by age cohort with a disability.

A larger percentage of females had at least one disability (14.0 percent) than males (13.3 percent). Females were slightly more represented in the population of persons with a disability (52.5 percent) than in the general population of Pennsylvania (51.3 percent) [Figure 3].

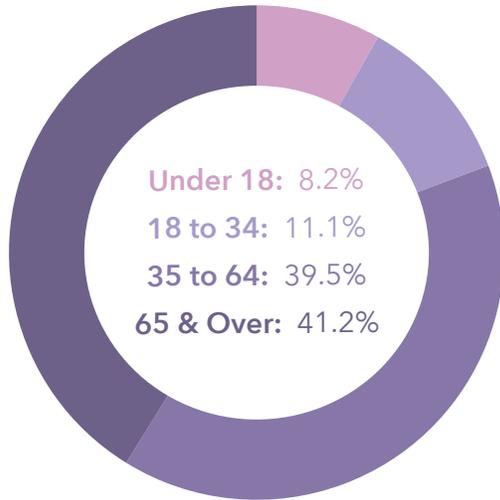


Figure 2. Age composition of population with disabilities.

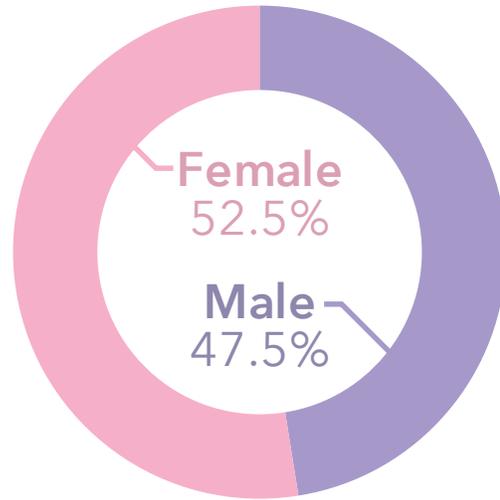


Figure 3. Sex composition of population with disabilities.

The American Indian and Alaska Native population had the highest percent of persons with disabilities at 23.2 percent [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 general population (13.7 percent). Asian residents had the lowest percent of persons with disabilities (6.4 percent) at less than half of the general population and other racial groups.



Figure 4. Percent of population with disabilities by race and ethnicity. Margin of error was included due to high error in groups with smaller populations.

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 percent) and independent-living-based disabilities (19.1 percent) followed ambulatory disabilities as some of the more prevalent types of disability in Pennsylvania.

Approximately 7.4 percent of Pennsylvania’s population from 2012 to 2016 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 5.6 percent had cognitive-based disabilities, disabilities that make concentrating, remembering, or making decisions more difficult.

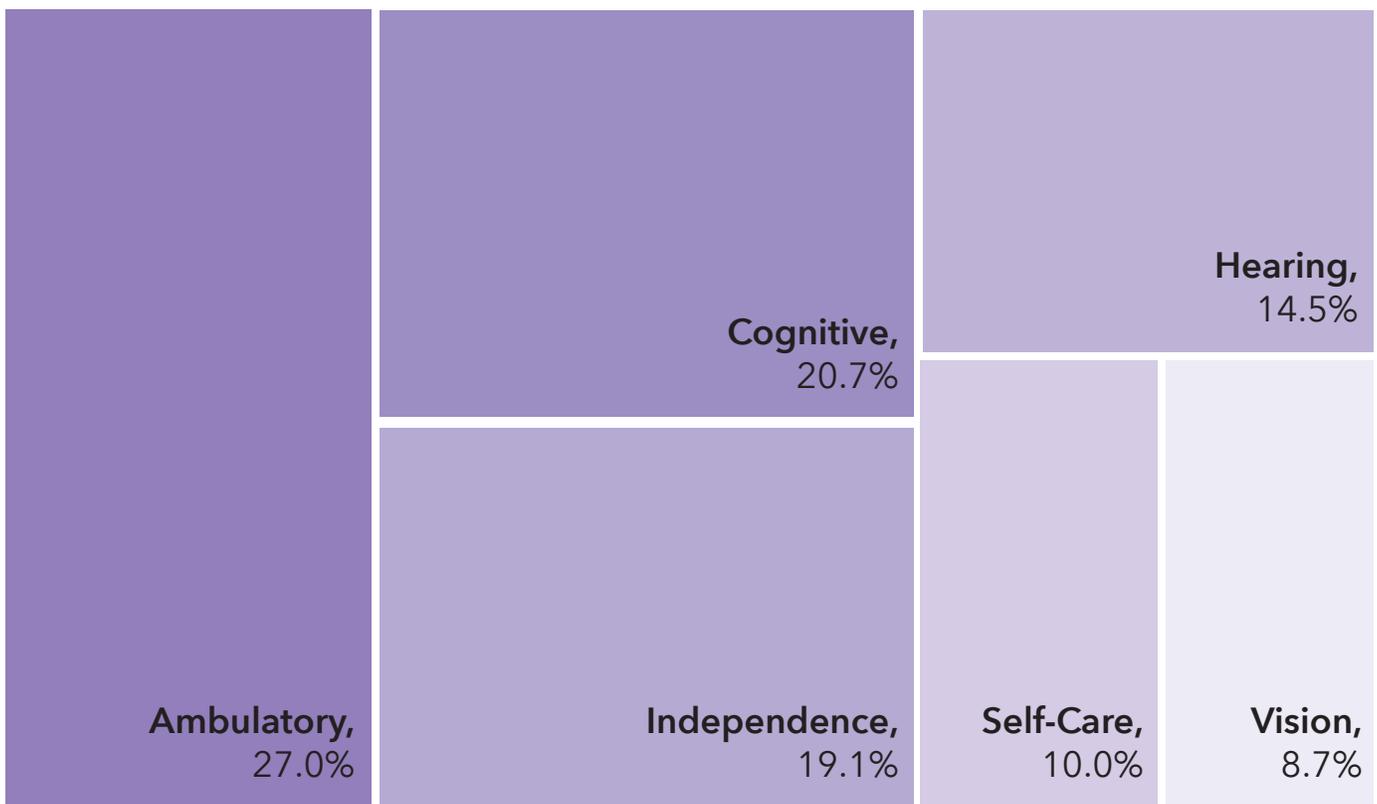


Figure 5. Distribution of disabilities by type.

Just under half (47.2 percent) 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 (24.9 percent). Of the population age 18 to 64 years with disabilities, 45.8 percent had two or more types of disabilities while a slight majority (53.3 percent) of persons age 65 years and over with disabilities had two or more types of disabilities.

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 (21.3 percent) is nearly three times higher than the percentage of persons with no disabilities who have less than a high school education (7.8 percent). Furthermore, the percent of persons with disabilities who have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher (13.5 percent) is less than half of the percentage of persons with no disabilities who obtained at least a Bachelor's degree (33.2 percent).

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 \$32,864 while median earnings for those with disabilities were only \$21,104. Over a fifth (20.8 percent) of Pennsylvanians with disabilities had an income below the poverty level while only a tenth (10.2 percent) 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 (25.9 percent) than persons with no disabilities (37.9 percent). Persons with disabilities were also more concentrated in Service (23.0 percent) and Production, Transportation, Material Moving (18.6 percent) occupations than those with no disabilities (17.3 percent and 13.0 percent, respectively).

Be sure to visit our newest dashboard,
[Disability Characteristics in Pennsylvania Counties: 2012 to 2016](#),
to see how Pennsylvania's counties compare to the state.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the Commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Questions? Contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center at **717.948.6336** or online at pasdc.hbg.psu.edu.