

Executive Summary

Introduction

Findings from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network show that the estimated percentage of children identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is higher than in previous reports. About 1.7%, or 1 in 59, of 8-year-old children were identified with ASD, based on tracking within 11 communities in the United States. These findings indicate that there continue to be many children living with ASD who need services and support, now and as they grow into adolescence and adulthood. Knowing how many children have ASD is just part of the picture. Findings also show that, while we have made progress in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the identification of ASD in children, more can be done to ensure that children are evaluated as soon as possible after developmental concerns are identified. We urge those who work with or on behalf of children—from healthcare providers to educators to community advocates—to join forces to ensure that all children with ASD are identified and connected to the services they need as early as possible.

What is the purpose of this report?

For more than two decades, CDC's ADDM Network has been tracking the number and characteristics of children with ASD and other developmental disabilities in diverse communities throughout the United States. The purpose of this Community Report is to highlight the ADDM Network's most recent scientific findings on ASD in 8-year-old children and empower those working in the ADDM Network communities—from public health agencies to healthcare organizations to school systems and beyond—to use these data for action.

What are the key findings?

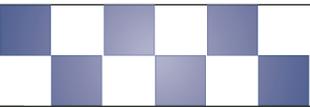
These findings are based on the analysis of information collected from the health and special education (if available) records of 8-year-old children who lived in areas of Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin in 2014.

- The estimated percentage of 8-year-old children identified with ASD is higher than previous estimates from the ADDM Network.

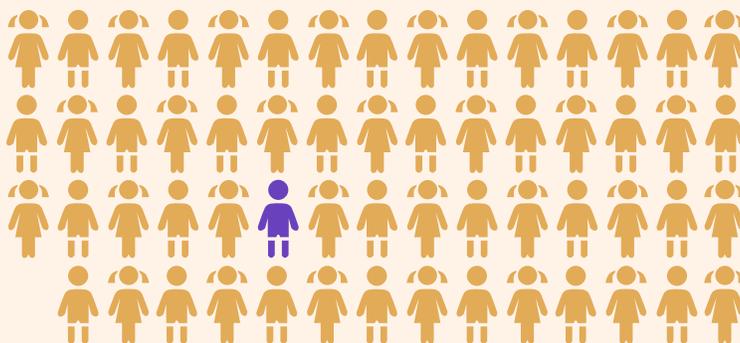


- While a higher percentage of white children were identified with autism compared to black children, and even more so compared to Hispanic children, these differences were smaller when compared with estimates from previous years.
- Children identified with ASD are still not receiving comprehensive developmental evaluations as early as they could be.
- Recent changes in the clinical definition of autism did not have much impact on the percentage of school-aged children identified as having ASD by the ADDM Network. Prevalence estimates based on the old and new ASD surveillance case definition were similar, due in part to the inclusion of children with a previous ASD diagnosis in the new surveillance definition. It may be too soon to determine the long-term impact of the recent changes in the clinical definition of autism and we will continue to monitor the impact on identification of children with ASD by the new surveillance case definition in our next surveillance report.

For a more in-depth look at the Key Findings, please go to page 6.



1 in 59
children living in
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Why is this information important and how can it be used?

For over a decade, CDC’s ADDM Network has been at the forefront of documenting the changing number and characteristics of children with ASD. Findings from the ADDM Network have laid the foundation for research into who is likely to develop ASD, why ASD develops, and how best to support individuals, families, and communities affected by ASD. Service providers (such as healthcare organizations and school systems), researchers, and policymakers can use ADDM Network findings to support service planning, guide research on the factors that put a child at risk for ASD and the interventions that can help children with ASD, and inform policies that promote improved outcomes in health care and education. In particular, targeted strategies are needed to

1. Lower the age of first evaluation by community providers; and
2. Increase awareness of ASD among black and Hispanic families, and identify and address barriers in order to ensure that all children with ASD are evaluated, diagnosed, and connected to services.

CDC will continue tracking the number and characteristics of children with ASD, researching what puts children at greater risk for ASD, and promoting early identification, the most powerful tool we have now for making a difference in the lives of children with ASD.



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