



# NYC Vital Signs

## Disability in New York City

**D**isability among adults, defined as a limitation in daily activities due to an impairment or health problem, can have both medical and social consequences. Medical spending is four times higher among those with disabilities than those without, and family members often face the financial and social burden of caring for people with disabilities.

Prevention of co-morbidities such as obesity, which can lead to musculoskeletal problems, is key to maintaining health among those with disabilities, just as it is among those without a disability. This report presents new information about disability among New York City adults.

### Elderly, divorced and poor adults are more likely to have a disability

- Nearly 1 in 5 New York City adults (approximately 1,058,000 people) report having a disability (18%).
- New Yorkers with less than a high school education are more likely to report a disability than college graduates (26% vs. 14%).
- Divorced New Yorkers are more likely to have a disability than those who are married or living with a partner (26% vs. 15%).
- Disability among New Yorkers is similar across racial/ethnic groups: Hispanics (21%), whites (18%), blacks (17%) and Asians (13%).
- Poor New Yorkers who live on incomes 200% below the federal poverty level are more than twice as likely to have a disability as those living on 400% or more of the federal poverty level (27% vs. 12%).
- Foreign-born New Yorkers are less likely to have a disability than US-born New Yorkers (14% vs. 21%).

Percent of NYC adults reporting a disability

	percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Age group</b>	
18-64	15
65 and older	33
<b>Education (25+ years old)</b>	
Less than high school	26
High school degree	19
Some college	23
College degree	14
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married/partnered	15
Divorced	26
Widowed	18
Separated	21
Never married	19
<b>Nativity</b>	
US-born*	21
Foreign-born	14

Results presented in this report are based on data from the citywide versions of the NYC Community Health Survey (CHS) in fall and spring 2003. For full details, see: [nyc.gov/health/survey](http://nyc.gov/health/survey). Total sample for this report was 2,425, and the question analyzed was: "Are you limited in any way in any activities because of any impairment or health problem?"

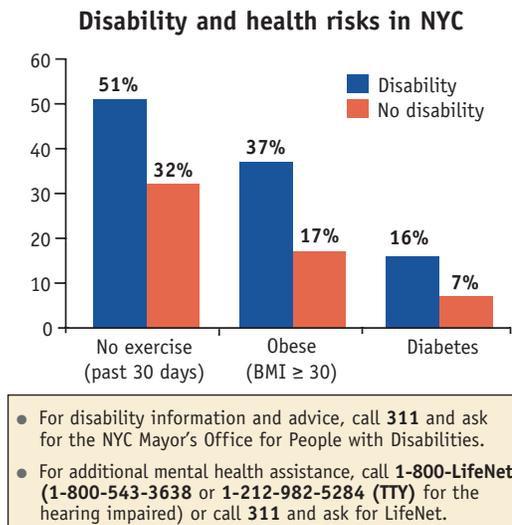
\* Includes Puerto Rico and other US territories

### More than one third of New Yorkers with a disability need some form of assistance

- Most NYC adults with a disability have a personal doctor. Nearly 9 in 10 New Yorkers with a disability have one or more personal health care providers (87%) and say they have had a physical exam in the past year (88%), compared to 8 in 10 New Yorkers without a disability (77% and 80%).
- More than one third of New Yorkers with a disability (37%) report needing the help of other people or special equipment to perform daily activities, such as walking, eating or bathing. More than half of those who need help (61%) are unmarried or without a partner.

## Disability is associated with other health risks and conditions

- One in 4 New Yorkers with a disability (25%) reports that poor physical or mental health kept them from performing basic activities, such as self-care, work or recreation, on 14 or more days during the past 30 days, compared to just 1 in 50 New Yorkers without a disability (2%).
- One half of New Yorkers with a disability (51%) report not exercising in the past 30 days, compared to one third of New Yorkers without a disability (32%).
- Obesity (37% vs. 17%) and diabetes (16% vs. 7%) are twice as common among New Yorkers with a disability as among those without a disability.
- Among New Yorkers aged 18-44, diabetes is 5 times more common among those with disabilities compared to those without a disability (10% vs. 2%).



## Recommendations

**Health care providers should address the multiple health care needs of their patients with disabilities.**

- Encourage patients with disabilities to focus on all aspects of their health, including maintaining a healthy weight through physical activity within their limitations and a healthy diet.
- Screen for depression, substance abuse and other mental health conditions and refer patients to appropriate mental health care providers.
- Address the diverse needs of patients with disabilities by implementing innovative programs and using equipment designed for universal use.

**Community-based organizations should provide supportive services for New Yorkers with disabilities.**

- Continue to develop and implement programs to support independent living and community integration for New Yorkers living with a disability.

New York Citywide Survey

**NYC Health**  
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