



How Many Parents with Disabilities Are in the United States?

Frank Li, Miriam Heyman, Ilhom Akobirshoev,
Zach Williams, & Monika Mitra · August 2022

The number of parents with disabilities in the United States is large and increasing. Many people with disabilities become parents. Our best guess of how many parents with disabilities are in the U.S. changes.

It is important to know how many disabled parents there are. That information should be correct and up to date. Having complete information helps create good policies for disabled parents and their families. It is important that we also know the type of disability that a parent has. This is important because there are different needs for different disabilities.

What We Did

To understand how many parents with disabilities are in the U.S. we used the American Community Survey (ACS). This survey has information from 2016 to 2020. The survey asks about how many people with disabilities there are and how many people are parents. From that information, we could calculate how many parents with disabilities there are. The survey also asks about the race and ethnicity of people with disabilities and their disability type. The ACS is a part of the U.S. Census Bureau. It is a survey that reaches about 3.5 million households every year. It is the largest survey of people in the U.S. The research team didn't look at people who lived in group settings. In total, they looked at responses from over 15 million people!

The research looked at parents. The parents had to be 18 or older. They also had to live with one or more people who are under 18 years of age. The researchers looked at disabled parents. This meant the people said they had one of the following:

- cognitive difficulty (they have a hard time remembering, concentrating, or making decisions)
- ambulatory difficulty (they have a hard time walking or climbing stairs)

- independent living difficulty (they have a hard time doing errands alone such as going to the doctors or shopping)
- self-care difficulty (they have a hard time bathing or getting dressed)
- vision difficulty (they are blind or have difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses)
- hearing difficulty (they are deaf or have difficulty hearing)

What We Found

There are about 65.9 million parents in the US. There are about 4.4 million parents that have a disability.

- About 600,000 parents with self-care disabilities (they have a hard time bathing or getting dressed)
- About 900,000 parents with vision disabilities (they are blind or have difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses)
- About 1 million parents with hearing disabilities (they are deaf or have difficulty hearing)
- About 1.2 million parents with independent living disabilities (they have a hard time doing errands alone such as going to the doctors or shopping)
- About 1.8 million with ambulatory disabilities (they have a hard time walking or climbing stairs)
- About 1.7 million parents with cognitive disabilities (they have a hard time remembering, concentrating, or making decisions)

Many parents with disabilities have more than one disability.

Figure 1 on the following page shows the race and ethnicity of parents who have disabilities in the United States.

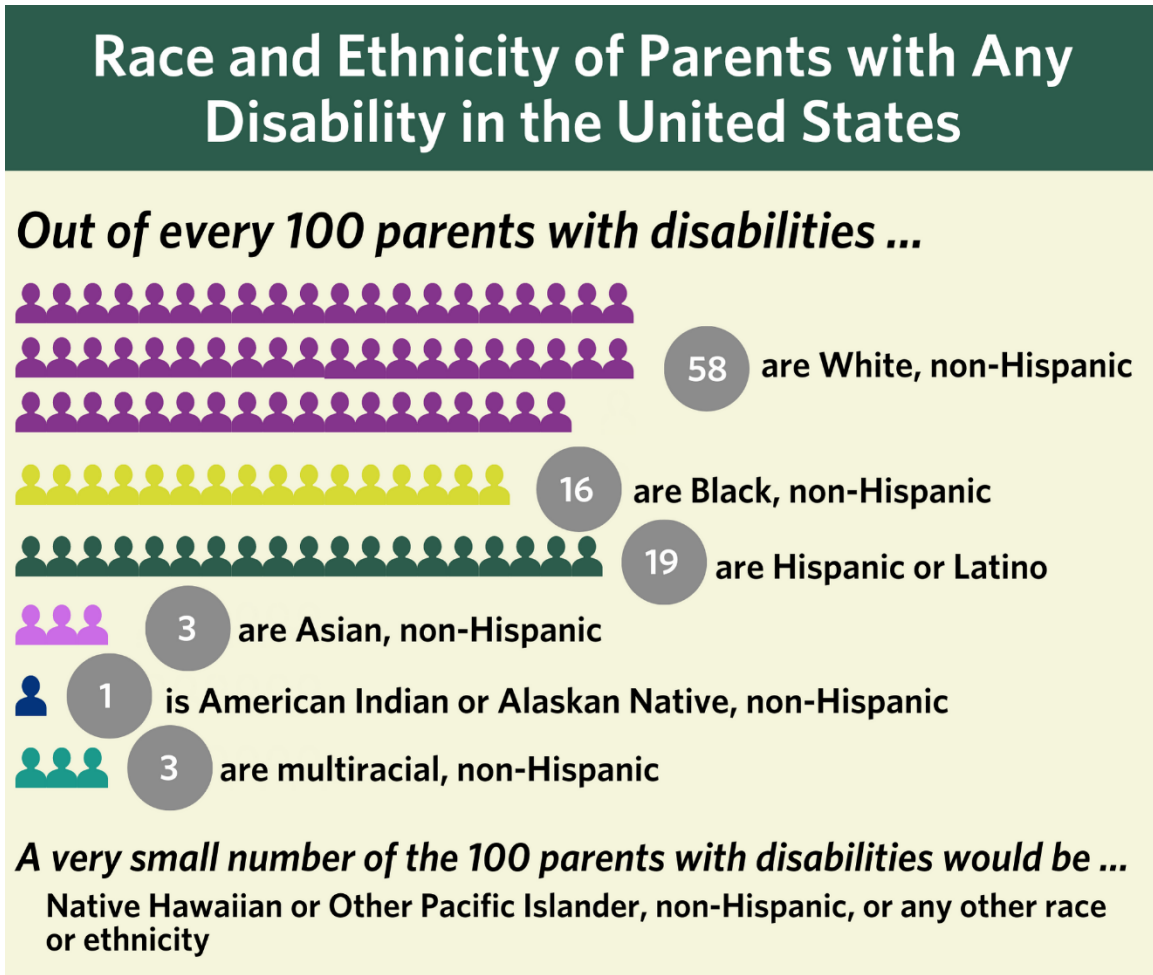


Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of Parents with Any Disability in the United States

Parents with disabilities are more likely to be poor than parents without disabilities.

Figure 2 on the following page shows how many parents with disabilities live in poverty and compares this to parents without a disability who live in poverty.



Figure 2. Poverty Rates of Parents with Disabilities and Parents without Disabilities in the United States

Information about the number of disabled parents is very important. This information will help improve the lives of disabled parents. Knowing the number of disabled parents can help make better policies. More data and information is available on the website of [The National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities](#).

Reference

Sonik, R. A., Parish, S. L., Mitra, M., & Nicholson, J. (2018). Parents with and without disabilities: Demographics, material hardship, and program participation. *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, 14(4), 1–20.

<https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/822>

How to Cite This Brief

National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities. (2022). How Many Parents with Disabilities Are in the United States? Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

Contact Us

 heller.brandeis.edu/parents-with-disabilities

 [@NatRCPD](https://twitter.com/NatRCPD)

 facebook.com/nrcpd

 centerforparents@brandeis.edu