



Disability Awareness: State-by-State Prevalence Rates of Disability Categories

Est. Time: 30-45 Minutes

Learning Objective

- 1) To understand that identification rates for individual disability categories vary widely by state,
- 2) to understand that this variability is, in part, dependent upon the state's definition of each disability.

Overview

Though the percentage of students with disabilities as part of the overall student population has fluctuated somewhat, it has nevertheless tended to remain within the 10–11% range. As the overall numbers of students with disabilities has increased, so, too, has the number of students in America. IDEA '04 enumerates thirteen special education categories (plus “developmental delay,” for which data are also collected) through which individualized services and supports can be provided¹:

Autism	Deaf-blindness	Deafness
Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Intellectual disability
Multiple disabilities	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment
Specific learning disability	Speech or language impairment	Traumatic brain injury
Visual impairment	Developmental delay	

Interestingly, the percentages of the overall student population who receive services under each disability category vary greatly from state to state. In this activity, students will examine the prevalence rates of each disability category using data from the 2012–2013 school year².

Activity

Put your students into small groups and ask them to review the attached table. Have students:

1. Pick a disability category, and compare its prevalence across states. Make sure to note the average across all fifty states and the District of Columbia.
2. Choose several states and compare the prevalence of all disabilities across those states
3. Search several state Websites to locate and analyze the definitions of the disabilities that they use to qualify students for services.



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Questions/Discussion Topics

1. What do you notice when you compare prevalence rates across states?
2. Use the attached chart to document the variability across disability categories. Which category has the greatest variability among the states? The least?
3. Why do you think there is such variability?
4. What did you find when you compared several states' disability definitions?
5. How might the differences in definitions impact the prevalence rates?



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**Highest and lowest percentages, by state, of the IDEA '04 disability categories:
2012-2013 school year**

Disability	Highest Percent-age	State	Lowest Percentage	State	Range
Total number of students with disabilities	15.87%	Maine	7.91%	Texas	7.96%
Specific learning disabilities					
Speech or language impairments					
Intellectual disabilities					
Emotional disturbance					
Multiple disabilities					
Hearing impairments					
Orthopedic impairments					
Other health impairments					
Visual impairments					
Autism					
Traumatic brain injury					
Deaf-blindness					
Developmental delay					

PREVALENCE* OF STUDENTS AGES 6 THROUGH 21 SERVED IN 2012 UNDER IDEA '04, PART B, BY DISABILITY CATEGORY AND STATE

State Name	Total number of students enrolled in public schools	All Disabilities	Autism	Deaf-blindness	Developmental delay	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Intellectual disability	Multiple disabilities	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Specific learning disability	Speech or language impairment	Traumatic brain injury	Visual impairment
ALABAMA	731,725	9.89%	0.67%	0.00%	0.38%	0.18%	0.12%	0.81%	0.17%	0.08%	1.20%	4.39%	1.79%	0.03%	0.06%
ALASKA	131,166	12.08%	0.71%	0.00%	0.78%	0.51%	0.12%	0.44%	0.31%	0.05%	1.82%	5.48%	1.80%	0.03%	0.03%
ARIZONA	1,078,180	10.47%	0.80%	0.01%	0.37%	0.71%	0.14%	0.67%	0.20%	0.06%	0.85%	4.83%	1.75%	0.03%	0.04%
ARKANSAS	483,114	10.74%	0.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.09%	1.13%	0.28%	0.04%	1.93%	3.75%	2.62%	0.03%	0.04%
CALIFORNIA	6,202,862	9.88%	1.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0.40%	0.17%	0.62%	0.08%	0.18%	1.01%	4.49%	1.82%	0.03%	0.06%
COLORADO	853,669	8.96%	0.53%	0.00%	0.00%	0.76%	0.15%	0.33%	0.40%	1.17%	0.00%	4.02%	1.51%	0.06%	0.04%
CONNECTICUT	553,925	11.14%	1.19%	0.00%	0.00%	0.94%	0.10%	0.42%	0.49%	0.01%	2.31%	3.91%	1.72%	0.02%	0.03%
DELAWARE	128,946	13.12%	0.79%	0.04%	0.56%	0.58%	0.17%	1.19%	0.00%	0.18%	1.61%	6.73%	1.18%	0.05%	0.04%
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	73,844	14.94%	0.76%	0.00%	0.60%	1.80%	0.05%	1.13%	1.83%	0.02%	1.75%	5.83%	1.12%	0.04%	0.02%
FLORIDA	2,668,113	11.88%	0.82%	0.00%	0.00%	0.73%	0.14%	0.99%	0.00%	0.11%	1.01%	5.11%	2.90%	0.02%	0.04%
GEORGIA	1,685,016	9.95%	0.76%	0.00%	0.70%	0.81%	0.10%	1.00%	0.00%	0.05%	1.58%	3.48%	1.40%	0.02%	0.04%
HAWAII	182,705	9.38%	0.66%	0.00%	0.58%	0.58%	0.16%	0.61%	0.28%	0.04%	1.44%	4.66%	0.30%	0.03%	0.03%
IDAHO	279,494	8.52%	0.75%	0.00%	0.58%	0.50%	0.10%	0.70%	0.18%	0.04%	1.41%	2.36%	1.83%	0.04%	0.03%
ILLINOIS	2,073,721	12.31%	0.83%	0.00%	0.67%	0.97%	0.16%	0.89%	0.10%	0.07%	1.38%	5.06%	2.08%	0.03%	0.05%
INDIANA	1,037,779	14.49%	1.22%	0.00%	0.00%	1.26%	0.21%	1.49%	0.19%	0.14%	1.60%	5.20%	3.05%	0.04%	0.09%
IOWA	485,358	12.11%	0.14%	0.00%	0.00%	1.18%	0.08%	2.09%	0.07%	0.14%	0.02%	7.31%	1.04%	0.03%	0.02%
KANSAS	481,519	11.74%	0.61%	0.00%	0.97%	0.51%	0.11%	0.70%	0.53%	0.05%	1.48%	4.89%	1.81%	0.03%	0.04%
KENTUCKY	681,643	11.75%	0.63%	0.00%	0.89%	0.69%	0.09%	2.05%	0.32%	0.06%	1.97%	2.08%	2.85%	0.03%	0.07%
LOUISIANA	702,301	9.97%	0.52%	0.00%	0.83%	0.25%	0.16%	1.02%	0.13%	0.15%	1.36%	3.30%	2.13%	0.03%	0.07%
MAINE	178,989	15.87%	1.43%	0.00%	0.02%	1.30%	0.09%	0.38%	1.59%	0.03%	3.27%	5.13%	2.56%	0.03%	0.03%

MARYLAND	854,060	10.58%	1.05%	0.00%	0.26%	0.81%	0.11%	0.61%	0.44%	0.03%	1.91%	3.66%	1.65%	0.03%	0.03%
MASSACHUSETTS	953,369	15.72%	1.29%	0.02%	1.15%	1.48%	0.11%	1.01%	0.46%	0.12%	1.74%	4.83%	2.57%	0.87%	0.06%
MICHIGAN	1,533,484	11.91%	0.96%	0.00%	0.11%	0.82%	0.16%	1.20%	0.18%	0.12%	1.33%	4.47%	2.48%	0.03%	0.04%
MINNESOTA	839,645	12.92%	1.72%	0.01%	0.31%	1.76%	0.24%	0.95%	0.15%	0.18%	2.03%	3.54%	1.94%	0.05%	0.04%
MISSISSIPPI	490,619	11.13%	0.61%	0.00%	0.91%	0.68%	0.13%	0.70%	0.21%	0.10%	1.67%	2.90%	3.12%	0.03%	0.07%
MISSOURI	916,300	11.74%	0.91%	0.00%	0.08%	0.68%	0.12%	1.07%	0.15%	0.06%	2.18%	3.37%	3.02%	0.05%	0.05%
MONTANA	142,349	10.36%	0.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.50%	0.04%	0.41%	2.29%	0.03%	1.27%	3.35%	2.08%	0.03%	0.03%
NEBRASKA	301,296	13.34%	0.78%	0.00%	0.47%	0.65%	0.20%	1.11%	0.13%	0.08%	1.88%	4.73%	3.18%	0.07%	0.07%
NEVADA	439,128	9.63%	0.87%	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	0.10%	0.43%	0.24%	0.06%	0.88%	5.07%	1.47%	0.04%	0.03%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	190,784	13.68%	1.01%	0.00%	0.80%	1.15%	0.11%	0.40%	0.19%	0.04%	2.66%	5.43%	1.81%	0.04%	0.05%
NEW JERSEY	1,352,571	15.85%	1.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.62%	0.11%	0.38%	1.36%	0.03%	2.82%	5.92%	3.44%	0.06%	0.03%
NEW MEXICO	335,236	12.53%	0.54%	0.00%	0.79%	0.61%	0.15%	0.57%	0.25%	0.07%	1.09%	5.62%	2.74%	0.05%	0.05%
NEW YORK	2,702,568	14.27%	0.90%	0.00%	0.00%	1.02%	0.16%	0.43%	0.63%	0.06%	2.21%	5.54%	3.24%	0.04%	0.05%
NORTH CAROLINA	1,499,541	11.43%	0.85%	0.00%	0.42%	0.39%	0.13%	1.17%	0.16%	0.05%	2.16%	4.60%	1.44%	0.03%	0.04%
NORTH DAKOTA	95,542	11.96%	0.74%	0.00%	0.82%	0.82%	0.11%	0.79%	0.00%	0.09%	1.78%	4.34%	2.36%	0.05%	0.05%
OHIO	1,738,642	13.38%	0.99%	0.00%	0.00%	0.90%	0.12%	1.30%	0.75%	0.09%	1.92%	5.59%	1.58%	0.08%	0.05%
OKLAHOMA	666,011	13.87%	0.59%	0.00%	1.66%	0.64%	0.16%	0.82%	0.23%	0.06%	2.00%	6.08%	1.52%	0.04%	0.08%
OREGON	553,232	13.04%	1.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.82%	0.15%	0.70%	0.00%	0.13%	1.98%	4.86%	2.88%	0.05%	0.05%
PENNSYLVANIA	1,747,825	15.02%	1.27%	0.01%	0.01%	1.31%	0.16%	1.08%	0.16%	0.04%	1.70%	6.96%	2.24%	0.04%	0.06%
RHODE ISLAND	141,564	15.01%	1.35%	0.00%	0.80%	1.43%	0.10%	0.56%	0.25%	0.05%	2.44%	5.86%	2.10%	0.04%	0.04%
SOUTH CAROLINA	726,003	12.25%	0.62%	0.00%	0.53%	0.41%	0.14%	0.99%	0.11%	0.08%	1.53%	5.71%	2.04%	0.03%	0.06%
SOUTH DAKOTA	128,016	12.23%	0.60%	0.00%	0.00%	0.88%	0.10%	1.17%	0.38%	0.05%	1.51%	4.96%	2.49%	0.05%	0.04%

TENNESSEE	987,830	11.57%	0.66%	0.00%	0.49%	0.33%	0.13%	0.75%	0.21%	0.07%	1.46%	4.76%	2.62%	0.03%	0.06%
TEXAS	5,000,193	7.91%	0.72%	0.00%	0.00%	0.51%	0.12%	0.70%	0.12%	0.07%	1.04%	3.33%	1.22%	0.02%	0.06%
UTAH	598,294	11.43%	0.76%	0.01%	0.31%	0.38%	0.09%	0.57%	0.27%	0.03%	0.97%	5.56%	2.41%	0.05%	0.04%
VERMONT	84,031	14.33%	1.07%	0.01%	1.00%	2.30%	0.11%	0.90%	0.24%	0.05%	2.42%	4.62%	1.53%	0.05%	0.03%
VIRGINIA	1,255,551	11.54%	1.06%	0.00%	0.17%	0.75%	0.10%	0.74%	0.26%	0.06%	2.39%	4.36%	1.59%	0.03%	0.04%
WASHINGTON	1,045,321	11.10%	0.89%	0.00%	0.72%	0.44%	0.11%	0.45%	0.25%	0.04%	2.23%	4.32%	1.60%	0.03%	0.03%
WEST VIRGINIA															
VIRGINIA	282,870	13.79%	0.54%	0.00%	0.00%	0.52%	0.14%	2.42%	0.00%	0.04%	1.96%	4.22%	3.81%	0.03%	0.09%
WISCONSIN	870,282	12.29%	1.01%	0.00%	0.01%	1.43%	0.17%	0.99%	0.00%	0.09%	2.20%	3.81%	2.49%	0.04%	0.05%
WYOMING	89,894	13.22%	0.79%	0.00%	0.26%	0.71%	0.15%	0.55%	0.24%	0.08%	2.10%	4.73%	3.49%	0.08%	0.05%

*Prevalence was calculated by dividing the number of students served under IDEA in each category, by the total number of students enrolled in public schools, multiplied by 100.

Source: Public *IDEA* Data - <https://inventory.data.gov/dataset/8715a3e8-bf48-4eef-9deb-fd9bb76a196e/resource/a68a23f3-3981-47db->