

# Health Status and Healthcare Access for People with Disabilities in Florida

Individuals living with disabilities account for approximately 20% of the population in Florida. In this brief, we assess demographics, access to health care, health status, and chronic illness for persons with disabilities (PWD).<sup>1</sup>

## Health Care Access

Lack of health insurance constitutes a significant barrier to consistent access to quality care and preventive services.

19.3% of persons with disabilities have no health insurance.

Persons with disabilities have increased difficulty accessing healthcare services compared to persons without disabilities. Access barriers for persons with disabilities include:

- Transportation to healthcare appointments
- Design of healthcare provider’s office
- Unfriendly or unhelpful attitudes toward persons with disabilities
- Finding a doctor who understands the complicated nature of their health condition

Healthcare costs represent a significant barrier to care for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities were more likely to report that they needed to see a doctor in the past 12 months, but were unable to because of cost.

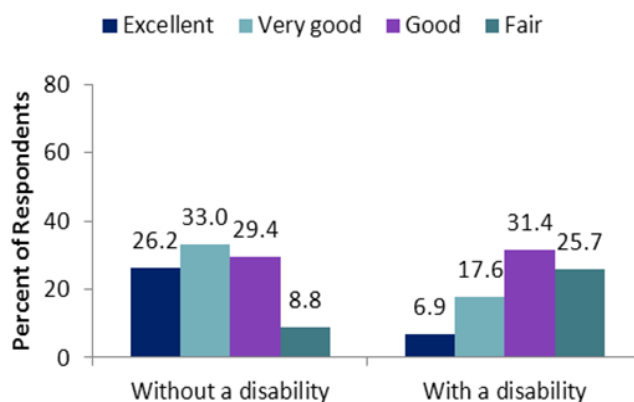
1/3 of persons with disabilities reported cost as a barrier to care.

## Health Status & Behaviors

Persons with disabilities rated their general health significantly lower than persons without disabilities (Figure 1).

- 25.7% of persons with disabilities rated their health as fair, compared to only 8.8% of persons without disabilities.

**General Health by Disability Status in Florida**



**Figure 1**

Persons with disabilities report twice the prevalence of daily smoking compared to persons without disabilities. Additionally, a greater proportion of persons with disabilities report a history of smoking.

- 19.1% of persons with disabilities smoke every day compared to 11.5% of persons without disabilities.

Among current smokers, a higher proportion of persons with disabilities tried to quit smoking for one day or more during the past year.

- 68.7% of persons with disabilities stopped smoking for one day or longer in the past year, compared to 58.6% of persons without disabilities.

A lower proportion of persons with disabilities reported engaging in physical activity compared to persons without disabilities.

- 38.6% of persons with disabilities reported “inactive” as their physical activity level compared to 19.6% of persons without disabilities.

A higher proportion of persons with disabilities reported being overweight or obese compared to persons without disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> Data from the 2008, 2009 and 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

- 65.8% of persons with disabilities are overweight or obese compared to 55.7% of persons without disabilities.

## Chronic Illness

Persons with disabilities suffer from higher rates of chronic illness, such as diabetes and cancer (Figure 2).

- 19.6% of persons with disabilities have diabetes compared to 7.0% of persons without disabilities.
- 13.5% of persons with disabilities have cancer compared to 5.7% of persons without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities also have higher rates of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

- Over half of persons with disabilities have high blood pressure and high cholesterol compared to 27.4% and 37.0% of persons without disabilities.

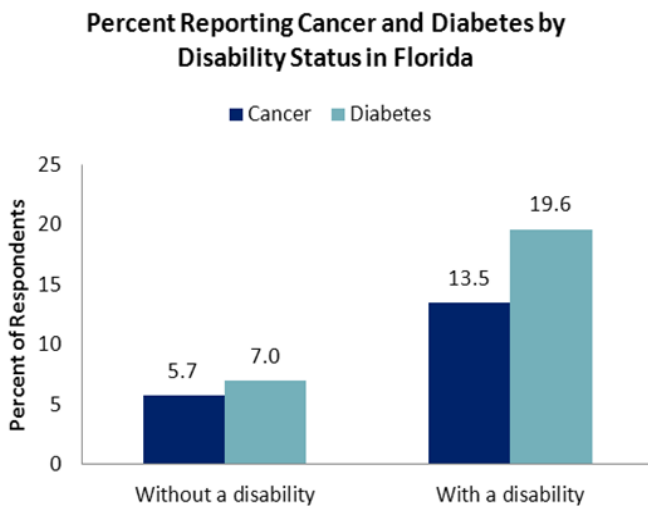


Figure 2

## Caregivers of PWD

Caregivers provide thousands of hours of unpaid care to adults who have a disability or another health issue, serving an important role in the U.S. health care system.

- The majority (58%) of caregivers are women.
- The mean age of caregivers is 48 years.
- 59% of caregivers are employed.
- Caregivers are more likely to have a disability than non-caregivers (27% compared to 20%).
- Caregivers reported more days of poor mental health in the past month (5.7 days) than non-caregivers (3.3 days).
- 21% of caregivers needed to see a doctor but could not because of cost.

Providing care for an older adult has been linked to mental, physical, financial and work-related problems for caregivers (Figure 3).

## Greatest Difficulty Faced by Caregivers in Florida

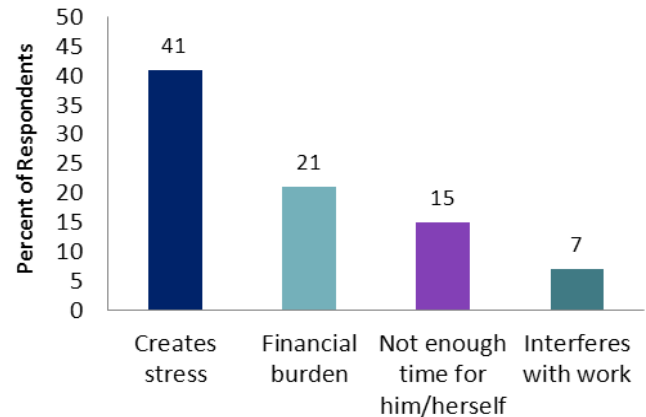


Figure 3

## Demographics

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately older. One-fourth of persons with disabilities are between the ages of 55 and 64. Nearly one-third of persons with disabilities are over the age of 65. Among those with a disability, 57.5% are female and 42.5% are male. 73.3% of persons with disabilities are White, 12.6% Hispanic, 8.2% African American, and 5.8% other or multiracial. Persons with disabilities have disproportionately lower levels of income and education. 20.6% of persons with disabilities make less than \$15,000 a year, compared to 11% of persons without disabilities. 11.8% of persons with disabilities did not graduate high school compared to 8.2% of persons without disabilities. 29.1% of persons with disabilities report graduating from college or technical school compared to 35.9% of persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed, unable to work, or retired compared to persons without disabilities. Nearly 20.0% of persons with disabilities are unable to work compared to only 1.1% of persons without disabilities.

## Key Recommendations

- Include disability education in medical, nursing and other healthcare professions training
- Develop ways to engage persons with disabilities in all state and local health promotion activities
- Provide incentives to encourage healthcare providers to create physically accessible offices
- Educate the public about programs, services and training programs available to persons with disabilities and their caregivers
- Implement a fluid transition of care with increased education for providers, payers and caregivers.
- Expand family-centered supports and services