

Children and Youth With Disabilities

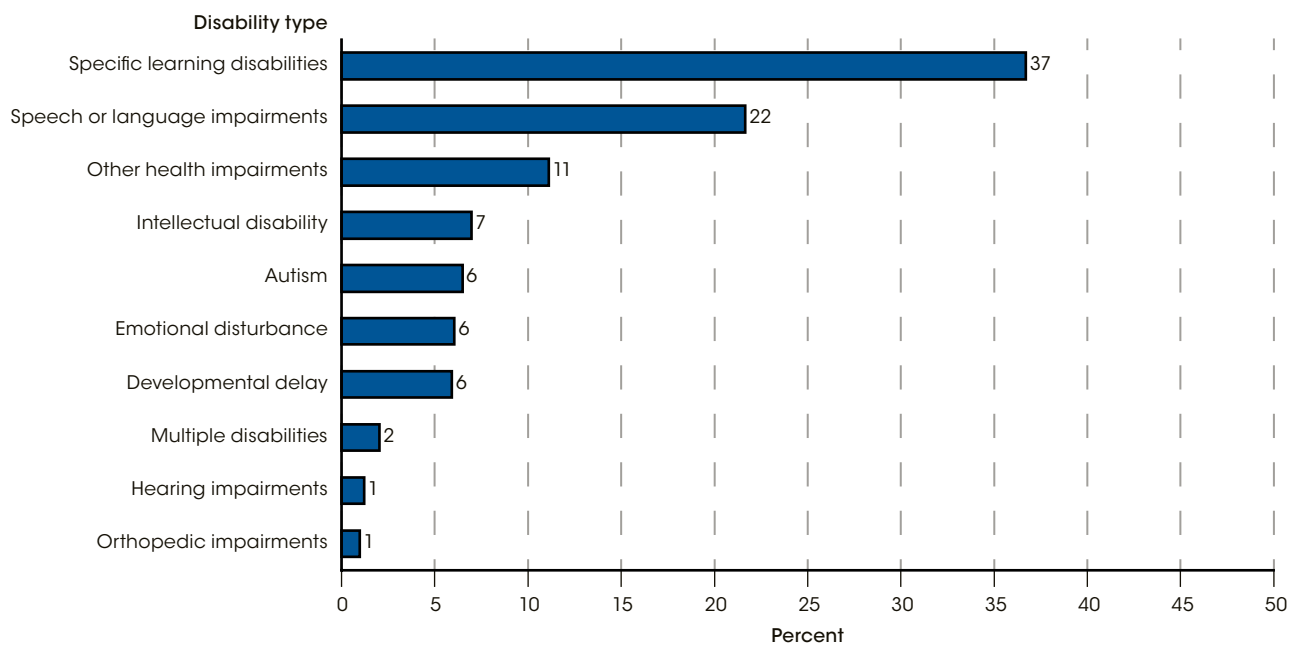
The number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.4 million in 2010–11, or about 13 percent of all public school students. Some 37 percent of the students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities.

Enacted in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public school education for eligible children and youth ages 3–21. Eligible children and youth are those identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and as being in need of special education and related services. Data collection activities to monitor compliance with IDEA began in 1976. From school years 1980–81 through 2004–05, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 who received special education services increased, as did their percentage of total public school students. The number and percentage of children and youth served under IDEA have declined each year from 2005–06 through 2010–11. In 1980–81, some 4.1 million children and youth ages 3–21 received special education services. The number of

children and youth served under IDEA increased to 6.7 million in 2004–05, or about 14 percent of total public school enrollment. By 2010–11, the number of children and youth receiving services declined to 6.4 million, corresponding to 13 percent of total public school enrollment.

A greater percentage of children and youth ages 3–21 received special education services under IDEA for specific learning disabilities than for any other type of disability in 2010–11. A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. In 2010–11, some 37 percent of all children and youth receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities, 22

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by disability type: School year 2010–11



NOTE: Deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairments are not shown because they each account for less than 1 percent of children served under IDEA. Due to categories not shown, detail does not sum to total.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved from https://www.ideadata.org/DACAnalyticTool/Intro_2.asp. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 48.

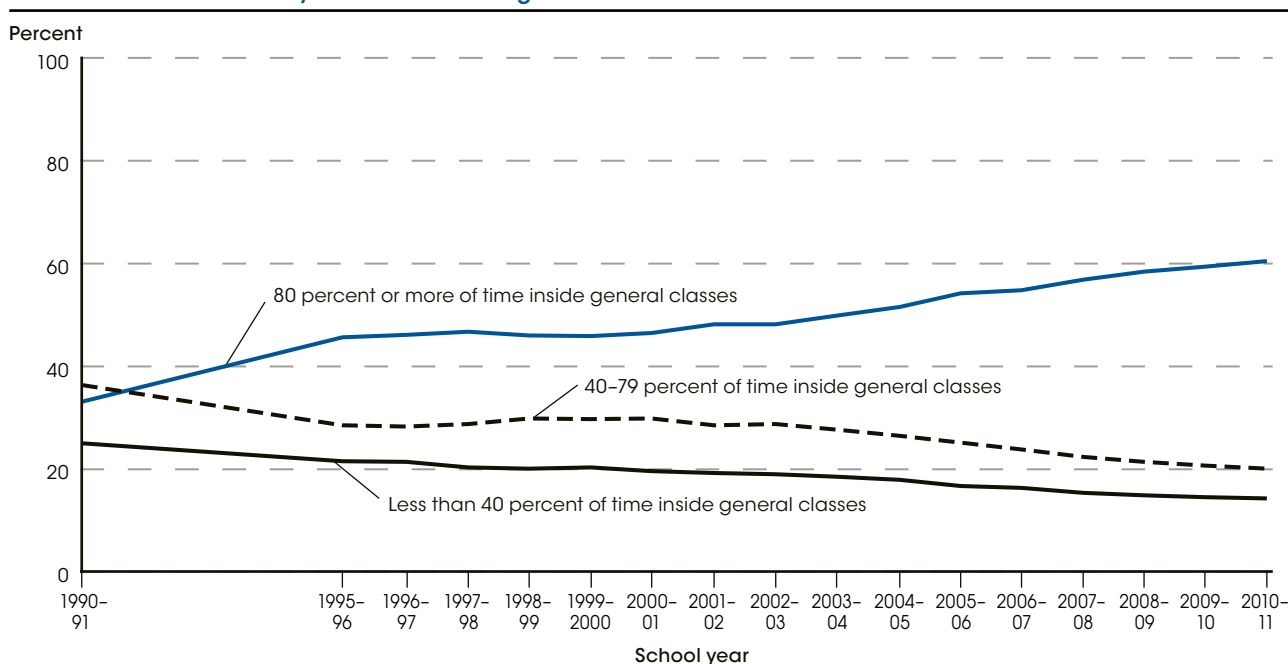
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had speech or language impairments, and 11 percent had other health impairments (includes having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes). Students with disabilities such as intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances, developmental delay, and autism each accounted for between 6 and 7 percent of children and youth served under IDEA. Children and youth with multiple disabilities; hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, and visual impairments;

traumatic brain injury; and deaf-blindness each accounted for 2 percent or less of children served under IDEA.

About 95 percent of school-age children and youth ages 6–21 who were served under IDEA in school year 2010–11 were enrolled in regular schools. Three percent of children and youth ages 6–21 who were served under IDEA were enrolled in separate schools (public or private) for students with disabilities; 1 percent were placed by their parents in regular private schools; and less than 1 percent each were in separate residential facilities (public and private), homebound or in hospitals, or in correctional facilities.

Figure 2. Percentage of students ages 6–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, placed in a regular public school environment, by amount of time spent inside general classes: Selected school years 1990–91 through 2010–11



NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), selected years, 1990–2009; and IDEA database, retrieved from <http://www.ideadata.org/PartBdata.asp>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 50.

Among all children and youth ages 6–21 who were served by IDEA and enrolled in regular schools, the percentage of children and youth who spent most of their school day in general classes (80 percent or more inside their general class) was highest in 2010–11. For example, in 2010–11, some 61 percent of these children and youth spent most of their school day in general class, compared to 46 percent in 1995–96 and 47 percent in 2000–01. In 2010–11, the percentage of students served under IDEA

who spent most of their school day in general classes was highest for students with speech or language impairments (86 percent). Sixty-five percent each of students with specific learning disabilities and 64 percent of students with visual impairments spent most of their school day in general classes. In contrast, 18 percent of students with intellectual disabilities and 13 percent of students with multiple disabilities spent most of the school day in general classes.

Reference table: *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 48, 50

Glossary: Disabilities, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Regular school