

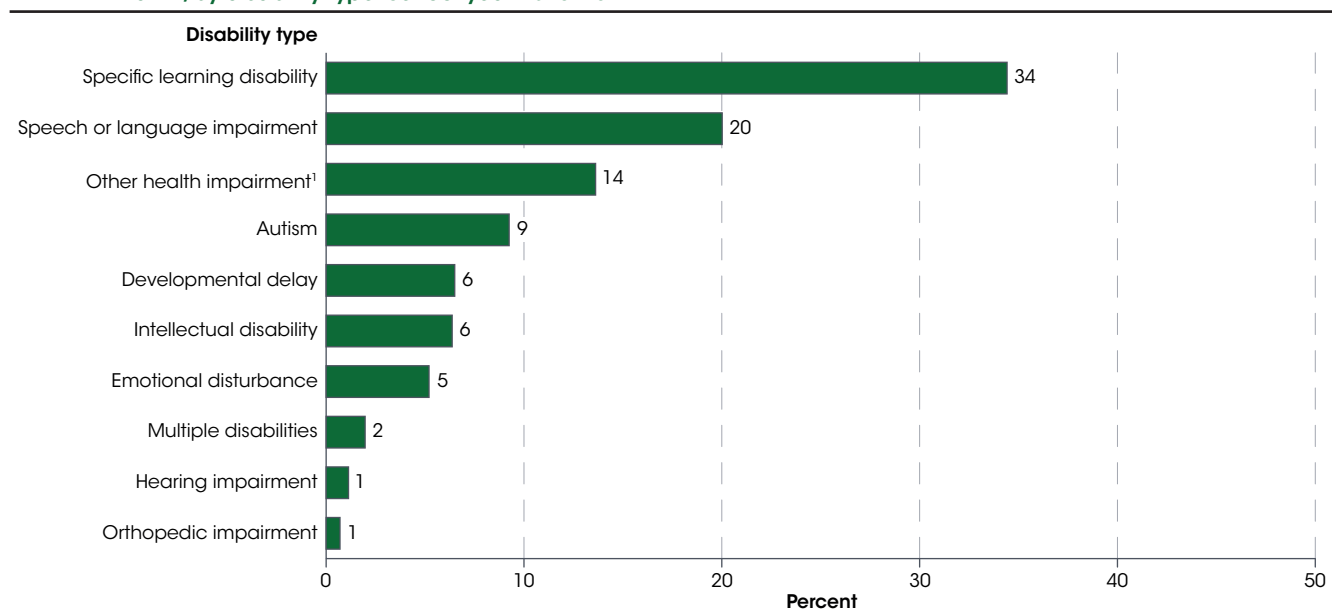
Children and Youth With Disabilities

In 2015–16, the number of students ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.7 million, or 13 percent of all public school students. Among students receiving special education services, 34 percent had specific learning disabilities.

Enacted in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public school education for eligible students ages 3–21. Eligible students 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 year 2000–01 through 2004–05, the number of students ages 3–21 who received special education services increased from 6.3 million, or 13 percent of total public school enrollment, to 6.7 million, or 14 percent of total public school enrollment.¹ Both the number and percentage of students served under IDEA declined from 2004–05 through 2011–12. Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the number of students served increased from 6.4 million to 6.7 million, while the percentage served remained at 13 percent of total public school enrollment.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by disability type: School year 2015–16



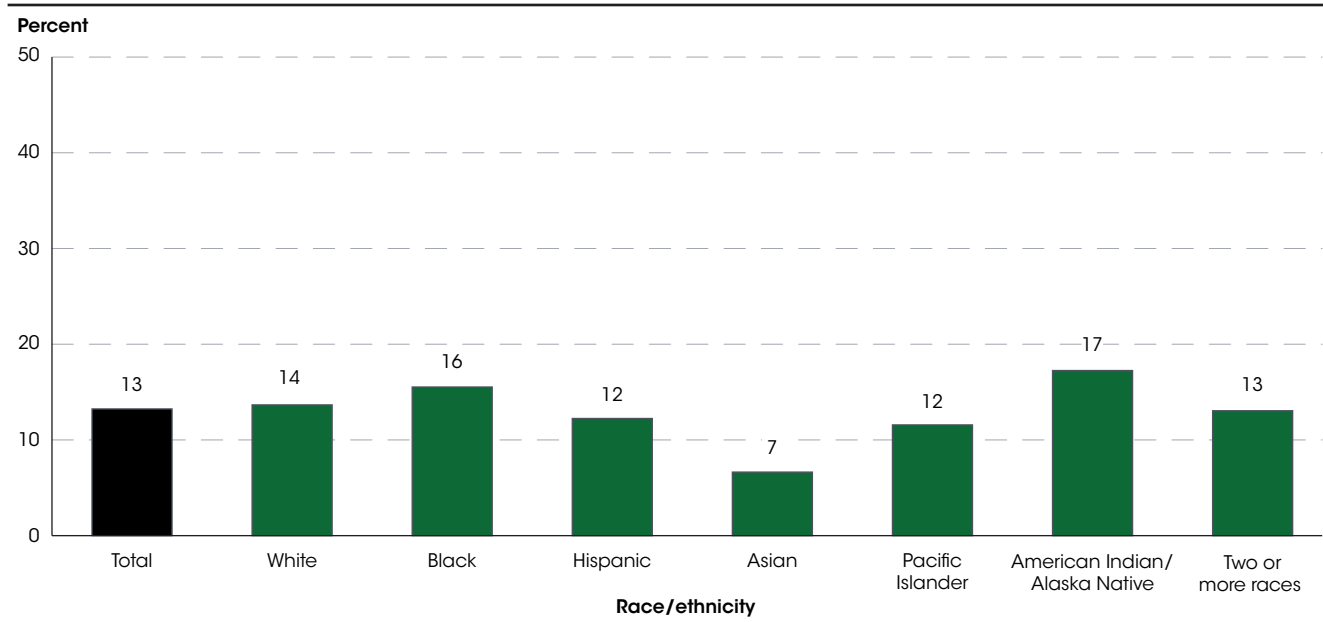
¹ Other health impairments include having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes.
 NOTE: Deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment are not shown because they each account for less than 0.5 percent of students served under IDEA. Due to categories not shown, detail does not sum to 100 percent. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved July 10, 2017, from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 204.30.

In school year 2015–16, a higher percentage of students ages 3–21 received special education services under IDEA for specific learning disabilities than for any other type of disability. 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 2015–16, some 34 percent of all students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities, 20 percent had speech or language impairments, and 14 percent had other health

impairments (including 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 autism, intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, and emotional disturbances each accounted for between 5 and 9 percent of students served under IDEA. Students with multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, traumatic brain injuries, and deaf-blindness each accounted for 2 percent or less of those served under IDEA.

Figure 2. Percentage of students ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by race/ethnicity: School year 2015–16



NOTE: Based on the total enrollment in public schools, prekindergarten through 12th grade. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved July 10, 2017, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>; and National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 204.50.

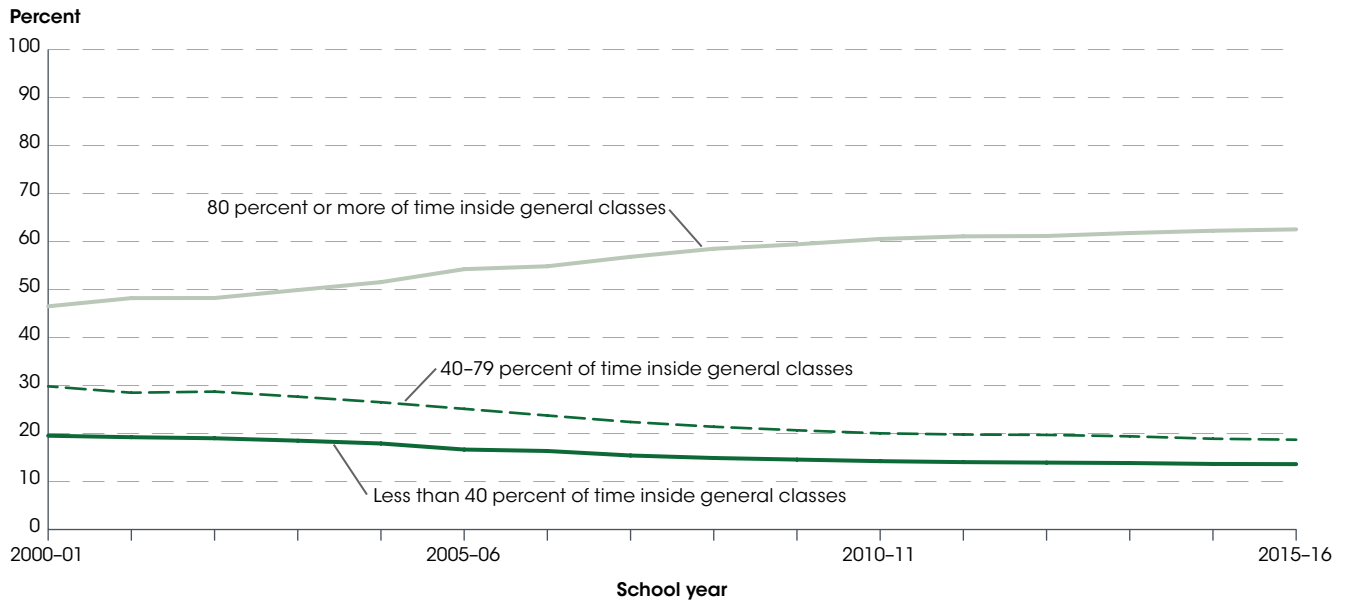
In school year 2015–16, the percentage (out of total public school enrollment) of students ages 3–21 served under IDEA differed by race/ethnicity. The percentage of students served under IDEA was highest for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native (17 percent), followed by those who were Black (16 percent), White (14 percent), of Two or more races (13 percent), Hispanic and Pacific Islander (both at 12 percent), and Asian (7 percent).

In each racial/ethnic group except for Asian, the percentage of students receiving services for specific learning disabilities combined with the percentage receiving services for speech or language impairments accounted for over 50 percent of students served under IDEA. The percentage distribution of various types of special education services received by students ages 3–21 in 2015–16 differed by race/ethnicity. For example, the percentage of students with disabilities receiving services under IDEA for specific learning disabilities was lower among Asian students (21 percent), students of Two or more races (30 percent), and White students (31 percent) than among students overall (34 percent). However, the percentage of students with disabilities receiving services under IDEA for autism was higher among Asian students (21 percent), students of Two or more races (10 percent), and White students (10 percent) than among students

overall (9 percent). Additionally, among students who were served under IDEA, 7 percent of Black students and 7 percent of students of Two or more races received services for emotional disturbances. In comparison, 5 percent of all students served under IDEA received services for emotional disturbances. Among students who received services under IDEA, each racial/ethnic group other than Hispanic (5 percent) had a higher percentage of students receiving services for developmental delays than the overall percentage of students receiving services for developmental delays (6 percent).

Separate data on special education services for males and females are available only for students ages 6–21, rather than ages 3–21. Among those 6- to 21-year-old students enrolled in public schools in 2015–16, a higher percentage of males (17 percent) than of females (9 percent) received special education services under IDEA. The percentage distribution of students who received various types of special education services in 2015–16 differed by sex. For example, the percentage of students served under IDEA who received services for specific learning disabilities was higher among female students (44 percent) than among male students (35 percent), while the percentage served under IDEA who received services for autism was higher among male students (12 percent) than among female students (4 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage of students ages 6–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by amount of time spent inside general classes: Selected school years, 2000–01 through 2015–16



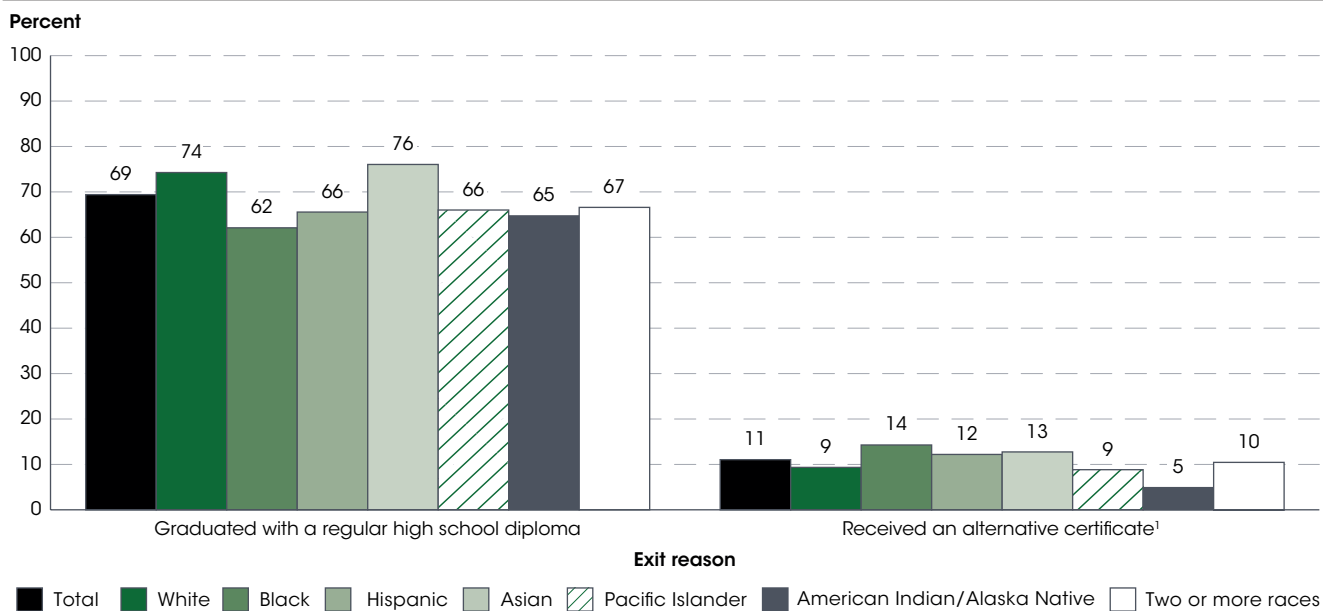
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved July 15, 2017, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 204.60.

Educational environment data are also available for students ages 6–21 served under IDEA. About 95 percent of students ages 6–21 served under IDEA in fall 2015 were enrolled in regular schools. Some 3 percent of students 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 homebound or in hospitals, in separate residential facilities (public or private), or in correctional facilities. Among all students ages 6–21 served under IDEA, the percentage who spent most of the school day (i.e., 80 percent or more of their time) in general classes in regular schools increased from 47 percent in fall 2000 to 63 percent in fall 2015. In contrast, during the same period, the percentage of those who spent 40 to 79 percent of the school day in general classes declined from 30 to 19 percent, and the percentage of those who spent less than 40 percent of their time inside general classes also declined, from 20 to 14 percent. In fall 2015, the percentage of students served

under IDEA who spent most of the school day in general classes was highest for students with speech or language impairments (87 percent). Approximately two-thirds of students with specific learning disabilities (70 percent), visual impairments (67 percent), other health impairments (65 percent), and developmental delays (64 percent) spent most of the school day in general classes. In contrast, 16 percent of students with intellectual disabilities and 13 percent of students with multiple disabilities spent most of the school day in general classes.

Data are also available for students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who exited school during school year 2014–15, including exit reason.² Approximately 395,000 students ages 14–21 who received special education services under IDEA exited school in 2014–15: about two-thirds (69 percent) graduated with a regular high school diploma, 18 percent dropped out, 11 percent received an alternative certificate,³ 1 percent reached maximum age, and less than one-half of 1 percent died.

Figure 4. Percentage of students ages 14–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, who exited school, by selected exit reason and race/ethnicity: School year 2014–15



¹ Received a certificate of completion, modified diploma, or some similar document, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as those for students without disabilities.

NOTE: Data in this figure are for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Bureau of Indian Education, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Data for all other figures in this indicator are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia only. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files. Retrieved July 14, 2017, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 219.90.

Of the students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who exited school in 2014–15, the percentages who graduated with a regular high school diploma, received an alternative certificate, and dropped out differed by race/ethnicity. The percentage of exiting students who graduated with a regular high school diploma was highest among Asian students (76 percent) and lowest among Black students (62 percent). The percentage of exiting students who received an alternative certificate was highest among Black students (14 percent) and lowest among American Indian/Alaska Native students (5 percent). The percentage of exiting students who dropped out in 2014–15 was highest among American Indian/Alaska Native students (29 percent) and lowest among Asian students (7 percent).

Of the students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who exited school in 2014–15, the percentages who graduated

with a regular high school diploma, received an alternative certificate, and dropped out also differed by type of disability. The percentage of exiting students who graduated with a regular high school diploma was highest among students with visual impairments (82 percent) and lowest among those with intellectual disabilities (42 percent). The percentage of exiting students who received an alternative certificate was highest among students with intellectual disabilities (34 percent) and lowest among students with speech or language impairments (5 percent). The percentage of exiting students who dropped out in 2014–15 was highest among students with emotional disturbances (35 percent) and lowest among those with autism and visual impairments (both at 7 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ Data for students ages 3–21 and 6–21 served under IDEA are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia only.

² Data for students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who exited school are for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Bureau of Indian Education, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, the

Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

³ Received a certificate of completion, modified diploma, or some similar document, but did not meet the same standards for graduation as those for students without disabilities.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 204.30, 204.50, 204.60, and 219.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.30

Related indicators and resources: [Disability Rates and Employment Status by Educational Attainment](#) [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]; [English Language Learners in Public Schools](#); [Students with Disabilities](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]

Glossary: Disabilities, children with; Enrollment; High school completer; High school diploma; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Private school; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Regular school