

October 8, 2009

Disability Data in the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys

Martha McMurry
State Demographic Center

Disability data in the 2008 American Community Survey should not be compared to disability data in the 2007 ACS, earlier ACS years, or the 2000 census. The disability questions have been changed substantially. Future versions of the American Community Survey will use the 2008 questions.

The questions were changed because data users were not satisfied with the disability questions asked in the 2000 census and in earlier versions of the American Community Survey. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and other federal agencies were involved in reviewing the disability questions. They used the conceptual framework of disability described in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF). The goal was to include concepts from three domains of disability – communication, mental and physical – and to include Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL).

Here are the questions from the 2007 and 2008 American Community Surveys:

2007 Disability questions:

F Answer questions 15 and 16 ONLY IF this person is 5 years old or over. Otherwise, SKIP to the questions for PERSON 2 on page 10.

15 Does this person have any of the following long-lasting conditions:

	Yes	No
a. Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16 Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities:

	Yes	No
a. Learning, remembering, or concentrating?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G Answer question 17 ONLY IF this person is 15 years old or over. Otherwise, SKIP to the questions for PERSON 2 on page 10.

17 Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities:

	Yes	No
a. Going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Working at a job or business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2008 Disability Questions:

16 a. Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?

Yes
 No

b. Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

Yes
 No

F

Answer question 17a – c if this person is 5 years old or over. Otherwise, SKIP to the questions for Person 2 on page 12.

17

a. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?

Yes

No

b. Does this person have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?

Yes

No

c. Does this person have difficulty dressing or bathing?

Yes

No

Results of Change in Measurement

The number of Minnesotans with a disability in the 2008 American Community Survey was 496,458, down substantially from 591,886 in 2007. The biggest drop was among people ages 16 to 64. However, as noted above, these numbers should not be compared because of the change in measurement. We cannot say for certain what happened to the prevalence of disabilities between 2007 and 2008.

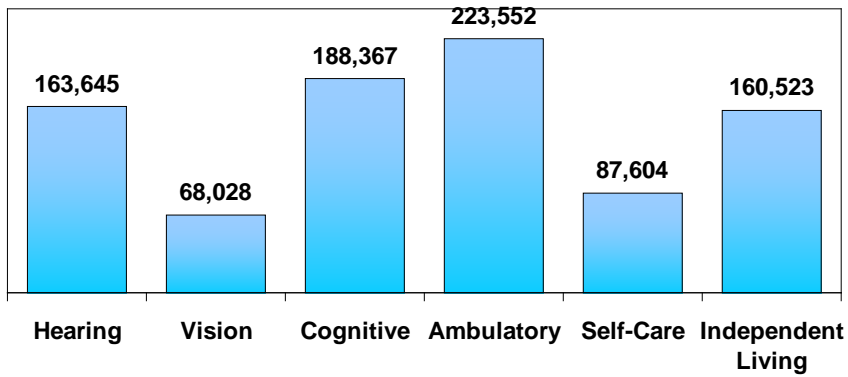
Persons with a disability in Minnesota
2006, 2007 and 2008 ACS

	Total	Under 18	18 to 64	65+
2006	592,448	46,160	342,254	204,034
2007	591,866	41,486	340,617	209,763
2008	496,458	44,316	253,800	198,342

Of the types of disability reported in the 2008 ACS, ambulatory disabilities are most common and vision disabilities least common. Older residents are much more likely to have a disability.

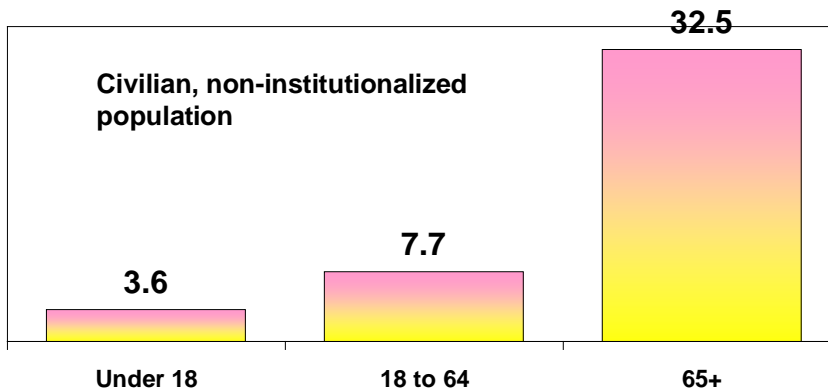
Minnesotans reporting various types of disability

2008 American Community Survey



% of Minnesotans reporting a disability, by age

2008 American Community Survey



Sources:

Matthew W. Brault, "Review of Changes to the Measurement of Disability in the 2008 American Community Survey," U.S. Census Bureau, September 22, 2009.

http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/disability/2008ACS_disability.pdf

American FactFinder

<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>