

Disability Perceptions and Experiences in the State of Florida

Disability in Florida:

Adult disability is a common experience. As the population continues to age and older Americans move full time or seasonally to the State of Florida, the number of adults affected by disability in the state will likely rise. Based on data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), about 22% of people in the United States live with a disability, representing approximately 48 million people ⁽¹⁾.

The mission of the Florida Office on Disability and Health (FODH) is to maximize the health, well-being, participation and quality of life of all Floridians and their families living with a disability throughout the lifespan. During a strategic planning session, state partners recommended collecting data on disability perceptions and experiences in Florida for future public awareness campaigns. During this session, state partners provided recommendations on data that could be used to guide programmatic efforts and increase participation of persons with disabilities within their communities. It was of particular interest to stakeholders to determine differences in attitudes toward people with disabilities between people without a disability (PWOD) and people with a disability (PWD).

Methods:

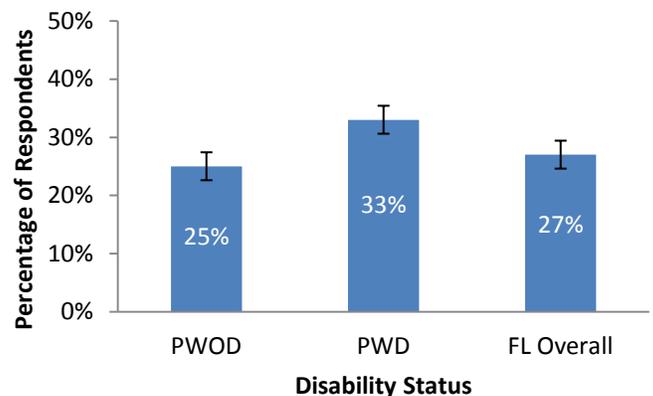
The BRFSS is a random-digit-dialed telephone survey conducted by each state's health department in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It captures data for all community dwelling, non-institutional, civilian adults aged 18 years or older that are eligible to participate. Every year the standard BRFSS includes two questions that measure the prevalence of disability. In 2010, six questions were added to the Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to measure perceptions of disability.

Added 2010 BRFSS Questions

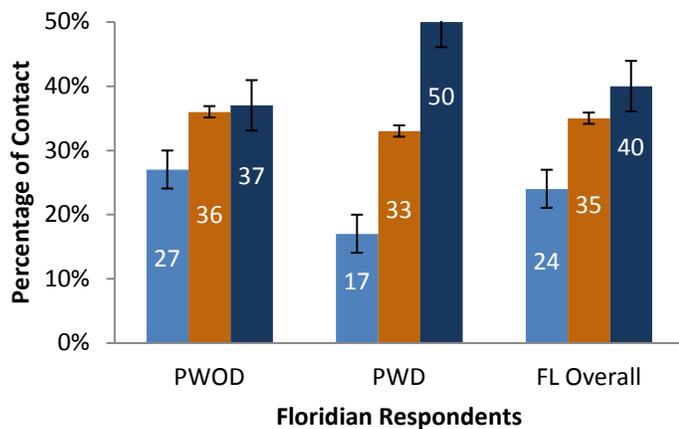
1. In the past 12 months, how often have other people's attitudes toward you been a problem at home?
2. In the past 12 months, how often have other people's attitudes toward you been a problem outside of the home, such as during social activities like shopping or at school or work?
3. In the past 12 months, how often did you experience prejudice or discrimination?
4. If you are talking to a blind person, is it alright to use words such as "see" or "look" in a conversation? (Respondent indicates level of agreement)
5. You should avoid asking people who have disabilities questions about their disabilities. (Respondent indicates level of agreement)
6. Overall, how much contact would you say you have had with people who have disabilities?

The following graphs depict results from select questions added to the 2010 BRFSS.

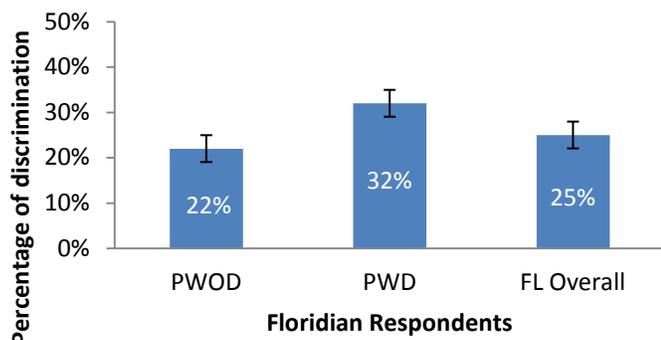
Percent of Floridians who experienced a problem with other people's attitudes at home on one or more days during the previous year



Reported Amount of Contact Respondents have with PWD



Percent of Floridians who experienced prejudice or discrimination on one or more days during the previous year



Health implications of discrimination:

In addition to the legal and ethical implications of prejudice and discrimination toward people with disabilities, there is evidence to support the potential for serious negative health impacts as well. Studies have found that members of discriminated groups report greater life-time and day-to-day stress than those with who are not traditionally discriminated against ⁽²⁾. Discrimination-based stress has been associated with self-reported poorer health, chronic health conditions, high blood pressure, and various psychological disorders ⁽²⁾. Given that the health of people with disability is already compromised, any action that can be taken to limit stress in this group is of great public health importance ⁽³⁾.

Conversational Considerations:

Floridians who agree that it is all right to use words such as "see" or "look" during a conversation with a person who is blind:

- The response amongst persons with and without disabilities agree (67.8% and 66.1%) that it is okay to use conversational words even if it reflects that person's disability.
- It is interesting to note that persons with disability had a slightly higher rate (1.7%) of acceptance using common conversational words that reflect their disability.

Discussion:

- Broader discussion of the Americans with Disabilities Act should be engaged to end disability discrimination.
- Persons with disabilities still experience more discrimination and prejudice inside and outside of the home even though the ADA has been in force for over 20 years.
- As further evidence of the national importance of ending disability discrimination, one of the objectives of the US Public Health document, *Healthy People 2020*, is to reduce the proportion of people with disabilities who encounter barriers to participating in home, school, work, or community activities.
- These results also suggest the need for public education that sensitizes the population to disability experience and to PWD.
- Public education was recommended by the Partners of FODH, and continues to be a goal supported by the results of this report ⁽⁴⁾.

References

1. Brault MW, Hootman J, Helmick CG, Theis KA, Armour BS. Prevalence and most common causes of disability among adults, United States, 2005. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2009 May 1; 58(16):421-426.
2. Thoits PA. Stress and health: major findings and policy implications. *J Health Soc Behav.* 2010;51 Suppl:S41-53.
3. Bouldin ED, Cannell MB, Hall AG, Andresen EM. Disability and access to health care in Florida: Results from the 2009 Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. February 23, 2011. Available from: <http://fodh.pphp.ufl.edu/files/2011/05/Disability-and-Access-to-Care-in-Florida-2009-BRFSS.pdf>.
4. Cannell MB, Bouldin ED, Andresen EM, Brumback B, Tamayo C, Schumacher JR, Hall AG. Disability Perceptions and Experiences in the State of Florida: Results from the 2010 Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). October 2011. Available from: http://fodh.pphp.ufl.edu/files/2011/05/Attitudes_and_perceptions_draft_11_8FINAL.pdf