

Interpreting Trends in the Prevalence of Developmental Disabilities in Children: Good News or Bad News?

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While you may think that the number of children being seen in your office with developmental disabilities is increasing, is there an increase in the overall prevalence?

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While you may think that the number of children being seen in your office with developmental disabilities is increasing, is there an increase in the overall prevalence? Zablotsky et al. ([10.1542/peds.2019-0811](#)) share with us a look at ten different developmental disabilities in children in the US (ages 3 to 17 years) using data compiled from the National Health Interview Survey. The authors assessed the prevalence of these disabilities by demographic as well as socioeconomic

characteristics.

This study confirms that the national prevalence is increasing. They show increases in ADHD, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disabilities (ID), and overall disabilities combined. The other 7 disabilities studied did show a significant decrease over time but not enough to change the overall trajectory of increased prevalence of disabilities overall. Rather than review the specific findings associated with the overall increase in those children with ADHD, ASD, and ID, please take the time to review the richness of the results in this well-done study for yourself.

So why the overall increase as well as the specific increases in ADHD, ASD and ID? Population health expert Dr. Maureen Durkin, from the University of Wisconsin to add her input in an accompanying commentary ([10.1542/peds.2019-2005](#)). She finds the study by Zablotsky et al. to be one to celebrate despite the overall increase in the prevalence of developmental disabilities as she interprets the findings as evidence that we are much more aware and better able to recognize and diagnose disabilities nowadays than we were a decade ago. Thanks to better screening tools for identification of the various developmental disabilities, we can recommend earlier referral to early intervention and other services. There is a lot more to learn from this study and commentary so see what develops by reading both to learn more.

- [Oral Health Care for Children With Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [A Collaborative Approach to Improving Health Care for Children With Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [The Association of Maternal Obesity and Diabetes With Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities](#)

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