

## Children and Youth with Disabilities

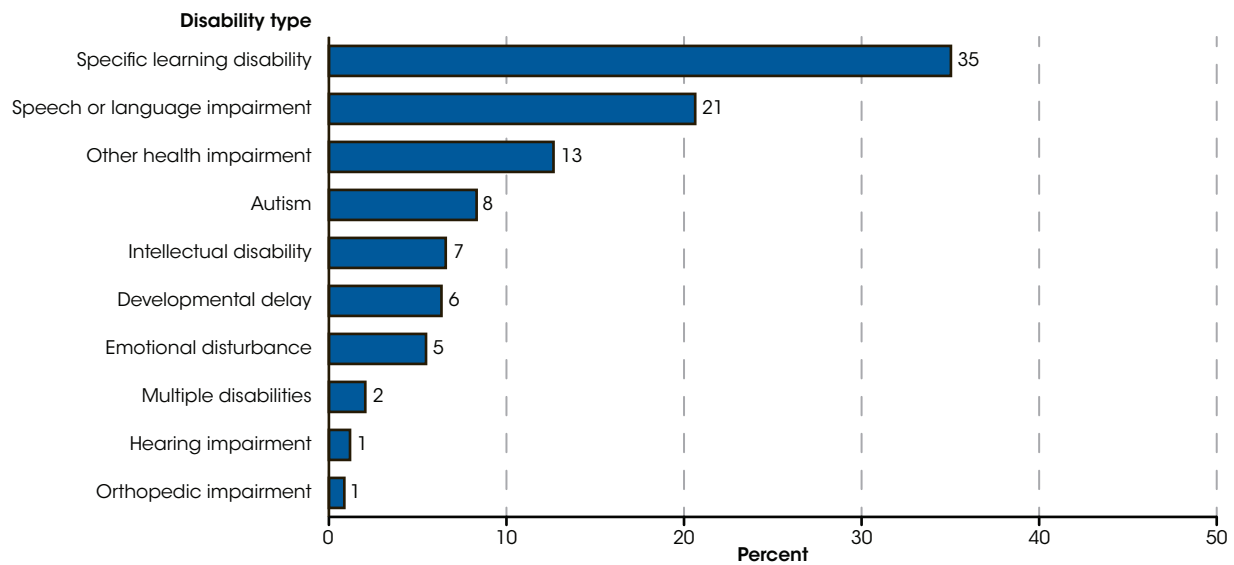
*In 2013–14, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million, or about 13 percent of all public school students. Among students receiving special education services, 35 percent had specific learning disabilities.*

Enacted in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), 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.

special education services increased from 4.7 million, or 11 percent of total public school enrollment, to 6.7 million, or 14 percent of total public school enrollment. Both the number and percentage of students served under IDEA declined from 2004–05 through 2011–12. There was evidence that the number and percentage of students served leveled off in 2012–13 and 2013–14. By 2013–14, the number of students served under IDEA was 6.5 million, or 13 percent of total public school enrollment.

From school years 1990–91 through 2004–05, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 who received

**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 2013–14**



NOTE: Deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment are not shown because they each account for less than 0.5 percent of children served under IDEA. Due to categories not shown, detail does not sum to total. 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 September 25, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.30.

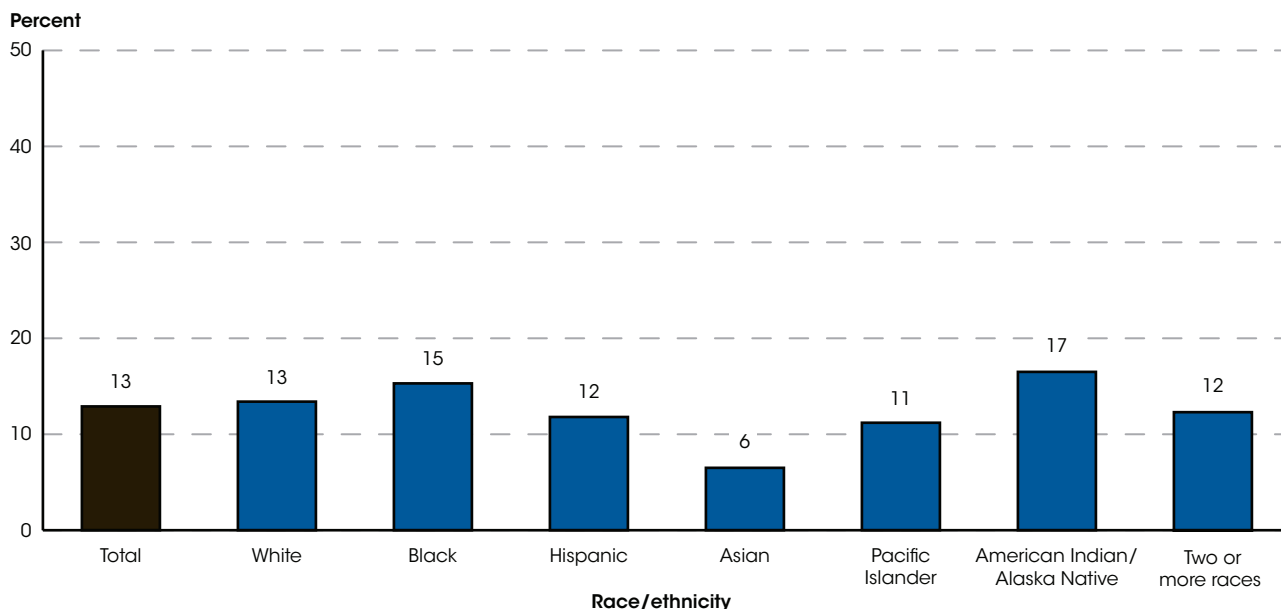
In school year 2013–14, a higher percentage of children and youth ages 3–21 received special education services under IDEA for specific learning disabilities than for any other type of disability. A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved 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 2013–14, some 35 percent of all students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities, 21 percent had speech or language impairments, and 13 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, or emotional disturbances each accounted for between 5 and

8 percent of students served under IDEA. Students with multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, traumatic brain injuries, or deaf-blindness each accounted for 2 percent or less of those served under IDEA.

**Figure 2. Percentage, of total enrollment, of children ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by race/ethnicity: School year 2013–14**



NOTE: 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 September 25, 2015, 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," 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 204.30 and 204.50.

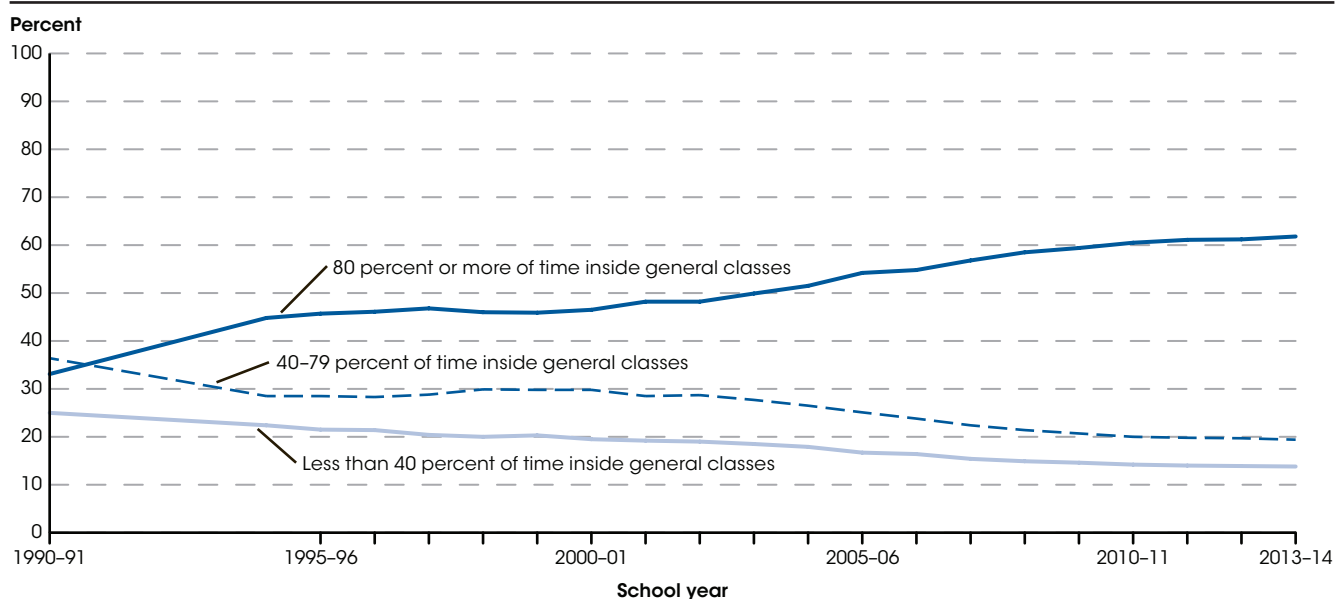
In school year 2013–14, children and youth ages 3–21 served under IDEA as a percentage of total enrollment in public schools differed by race/ethnicity. The percentage of students served under IDEA was highest for American Indian/Alaska Native students (17 percent), followed by Black students (15 percent), White students (13 percent), students of Two or more races (12 percent), Hispanic students (12 percent), Pacific Islander students (11 percent), and Asian students (6 percent). In most racial/ethnic groups, the percentage of children and youth receiving services for specific learning disabilities combined with the percentage receiving services for speech or language impairments accounted for over 50 percent of children and youth served under IDEA. The percentage distribution of various types of special education services received by students ages 3–21 in 2013–14 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 (22 percent) than among students overall (35 percent). However, the percentage of students with disabilities receiving services under IDEA for autism was higher among Asian students (19 percent) than among students overall (8 percent). Additionally, of students who were served under IDEA, 8 percent of Black students and 7 percent of students of Two or more races, compared to 5 percent of students served under IDEA overall, received services for emotional disturbances. Among children and youth who received services under IDEA, the percentages of American Indian/Alaska Native students (10 percent), Pacific Islander students (8 percent), and students of Two or more races (8 percent) who received services for developmental delays were higher than the percentage of students overall 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. Among those 6- to 21-year-olds enrolled in public schools in 2013–14, a higher percentage of males (16 percent) than females (9 percent) received special education services under IDEA. The percentage distribution of students ages 6–21 who received various types of special education services in 2013–14 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 (37 percent), while the percentage served under IDEA who received services for autism was higher among male students (11 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, placed in a regular public school environment, by amount of time spent inside general classes: Selected school years, 1990–91 through 2013–14**



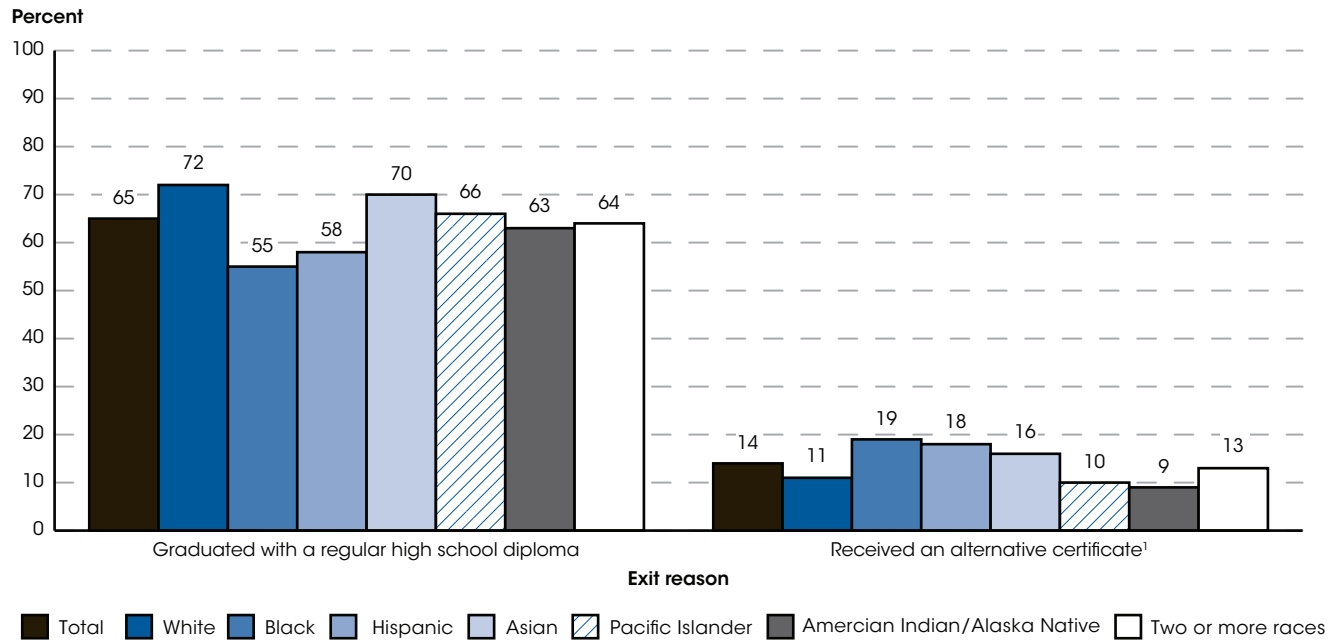
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved October 29, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.60.

Educational environment data are available for students ages 6–21 served under IDEA. About 95 percent of children and youth ages 6–21 who were served under IDEA in 2013–14 were enrolled in regular schools. Some 3 percent of students 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 or private), homebound or in hospitals, or in correctional facilities. Among all students ages 6–21 who were served under IDEA, the percentage who spent most of the school day (i.e., 80 percent or more of time) in general classes in regular schools increased from 33 percent in 1990–91 to 62 percent in 2013–14. 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 36 to 19 percent, and the percentage of those who spent less than 40 percent of time inside general classes also declined, from 25 to 14 percent. In 2013–14, 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 (68 percent), visual impairments (65 percent), other health impairments (64 percent), and developmental delays (63 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 2012–13, including exit reason. In 2012–13, approximately 396,000 students ages 14–21 who received special education services under IDEA exited school: almost two-thirds (65 percent) graduated with a regular high school diploma, 14 percent received an alternative certificate,<sup>1</sup> 19 percent dropped out, 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 exit reason and race/ethnicity: School year 2012–13



<sup>1</sup> 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: 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 November 30, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 219.90.

Of the students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who exited school, the percentage who graduated with a regular high school diploma was highest among White students (72 percent) and lowest among Black students (55 percent). The percentage of students served under IDEA who received an alternative certificate was highest among Black students (19 percent) and lowest among American Indian/Alaska Native students (9 percent). The percentage of students served under IDEA who exited special education due to dropping out in 2012–13 was highest among American Indian/Alaska Native students (27 percent) and lowest among Asian students (9 percent).

The percentage of students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who graduated with a regular high school diploma

in 2012–13 differed by type of disability. The percentage of students ages 14–21 served under IDEA who graduated with a regular high school diploma was highest among students with visual impairments (77 percent) and lowest among those with intellectual disabilities (43 percent). The percentage of students served under IDEA who received an alternative certificate was highest among students with intellectual disabilities (33 percent) and lowest among students with speech or language impairments (9 percent). The percentage of students served under IDEA who dropped out in 2012–13 was highest among students with emotional disturbance (35 percent) and lowest among students with autism (7 percent).

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> 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 2015*, tables 204.30, 204.50, 204.60, and 219.90

**Related indicators:** N/A

**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