



Unfortunately, this is a difficult question to answer. No definitive source accurately counts people with developmental disabilities in Arizona—or even in the United States for that matter. However, several sources provide narrow insight into the number of Arizonans with developmental disabilities.

Arizona defines *developmental disability* as a disability in which the severity of it affects at least three areas of a person's life (see *What is a developmental disability?* policy brief for a broader discussion). The disability also has to be identified before the age of 18. Applying this definition to several sources will show the difficulty in arriving at a reliable estimate of the number of people with developmental disabilities in Arizona.

In the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey, **754,413** Arizonans (or 11.6 percent of the total population) indicate they have at least one disability.¹ This number does not indicate whether or



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not the disability is developmental, or the age at which the disability was identified—or even if the disability has been identified or diagnosed by a professional.

Parents completing the 2009 American Community survey indicate that **61,713** children under 18 (or 5.5 percent of Arizona's children) reported having at least one disability. We can assume that the majority of these children have a developmental disability.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) provides formal services to those with a developmental disability and produces statistics on numbers served. According to DES, **31,320** people of all ages with developmental disabilities are currently being served by its Developmental Disability program.² This figure, however, underestimates the number of people with a developmental disability in Arizona since it excludes those who unaware of and those who choose not to access DES services.

¹http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-context=st&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S1810&-ds_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_-CONTEXT=st&-tree_id=308&-redoLog=false&-geo_id=04000US04&-format=&-_lang=en

²DES Division of Developmental Disabilities, Family Support Annual Report, July 2010 – July 2011.



In light of these complications in arriving at a reliable estimate, a range of different prevalence rates have been developed by respected research institutions. The Councils on Developmental Disabilities suggests using a prevalence rate of 1.8 percent, which would indicate that **102,724** Arizonans have developmental disabilities.³

Based upon the best data and research available, we can estimate that approximately 60,000 children and 100,000 Arizonans of all ages have a developmental disability. Future advocacy efforts should include collecting accurate numbers of people with developmental disabilities.

By understanding the prevalence, Arizona governments, non-profits, and communities can better plan for and respond to this population, for they would actually count.



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¹http://www.itacchelp.org/uploads/2011_State_Plan_Development_Resource_Updated_2_2011.pdf