



From the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT)

Recent press and media reporting has focused on the increasing prevalence of autism in the United States (US). Prevalence is the number of people in a group of people who have a disease, disorder, or diagnosis **(1)**. There are many ways to diagnose autism spectrum disorder (ASD). There are also many ways to figure out prevalence.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network gives us the ASD prevalence among children in the US. They base it on data from medical and education records of 4- and 8-year-old children. The ADDM Network includes 16 sites that it works with across the US **(2)**.

In 2025, the CDC reported new estimates of ASD prevalence based on data collected through 2022. The new numbers say that 1 in 31 children have an ASD diagnosis **(2)**. In 2018, 1 in 59 children had an ASD diagnosis. This increase in prevalence of ASD from 2018 to 2022 shows that more children are being identified and diagnosed with ASD now than in the past. In Pennsylvania, the numbers from 2022 are 1 in 21 children with an ASD diagnosis. Learn more about Pennsylvania's prevalence numbers [here](#) **(3)**.

Estimating prevalence is done through what scientists call surveillance. Surveillance means studying all of a population, or group of people, for a disorder or diagnosis. The CDC's ADDM Network is the largest surveillance program for ASD. The ADDM Network provides an estimate of ASD prevalence by using population surveillance and working with autism experts.

Estimating the prevalence of ASD is important for many reasons. One reason is to make sure that services, policies, and programs can be planned for people with an ASD diagnosis. Another reason is that having population-wide data of people with ASD helps us better understand and diagnose ASD. It also helps us provide appropriate services, supports, and programs for autistic people. All of this leads to a better quality of life for autistic people in the U.S.

1. CDC. (2023, June 26). *Prevalence - health, United States*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/sources-definitions/prevalence.htm>

2. CDC. (2026, June 10). *Autism and developmental disabilities monitoring (ADDM) network*. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

<https://www.cdc.gov/autism/addm-network/>

3. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (n.d.). *2025 reports - a snapshot of autism spectrum disorder in Pennsylvania*. Department of Human Services. <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/intellectual-disabilities-autism/autism-services/pasp/pasp-2025-reports>

Gilbert, R., & Cliffe, S. J. (2016). Public Health Surveillance. *Public Health Intelligence: Issues of Measure and Method*, 91–110.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28326-5_5