

Counting Everyone: Evidence for Inclusive Measures of Disability in Federal Surveys

Summary

This study looked at how well questions used in the American Community Survey (ACS) count people with disabilities in the U.S. and if asking a simpler question could count more people.

Here's what we did:

1. We examined the current survey method used by the American Community Survey (ACS), which asks six specific questions (called ACS-6) to count people with disabilities. These questions ask about specific difficulties, like hearing, seeing, walking, remembering, dressing, or doing errands alone.
2. We tested a simpler question that directly asks if someone has any long-term health condition, mental health condition, or disability lasting six months or more. This question was meant to capture people who might be missed by the more specific ACS-6 questions.

Here's what we found:

1. The simpler question helped count an additional 11.2% of people with disabilities who were missed by the ACS-6 questions.
2. The simpler question was especially good at counting people with mental health conditions, who were often missed by the ACS-6 questions.

This study shows that including a simpler question in surveys will help count more people with disabilities, leading to better data and support for disability programs across the country.

Hall JP, Kurth NK, McCorkell L, and Goddard KS. (2024). Long COVID Among People with Preexisting Disabilities. *American Journal of Public Health*.
<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2024.307794>