

Traumatic brain injury in those with pre-existing disability: Prevalence, characteristics, and psychosocial function

Summary

A traumatic brain injury happens when the brain is hurt by a hit or blow to the head. Common causes of traumatic brain injuries include road traffic accidents and falls. More severe injuries can cause a loss of consciousness – this means the person was ‘knocked out’. We wanted to learn how often people with disabilities experience a traumatic brain injury with loss of consciousness. We also wanted to know if the types of disabilities and age of disability onset could impact the chances of someone having a traumatic brain injury. Lastly, we looked at how having both disability and traumatic brain injury might affect important outcomes: physical health, mental health, loneliness, and employment.

Here’s what we did:

- We used data from 1,746 people who took part in the 2023–2024 National Survey on Health and Disability.

Here’s what we found:

- Traumatic brain injury was common in people with disabilities — 235 out of 1,746 people (13.5%) had one.
- People who had traumatic brain injury were more likely to have had their disability from a younger age.
- Traumatic brain injury was more common in people whose main disability was a developmental condition or a mental health condition.
- People with a traumatic brain injury were more likely to report poor physical and mental health, and to feel lonely.
- Having a traumatic brain injury did not make it more likely that someone was unemployed.

Hicks AJ, deSouza NL, Del Pozzo J, Kurth NK, Hall JP, Dams-O'Connor, K. (in press). Traumatic brain injury in those with pre-existing disability: Prevalence, characteristics, and psychosocial function. *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*.