

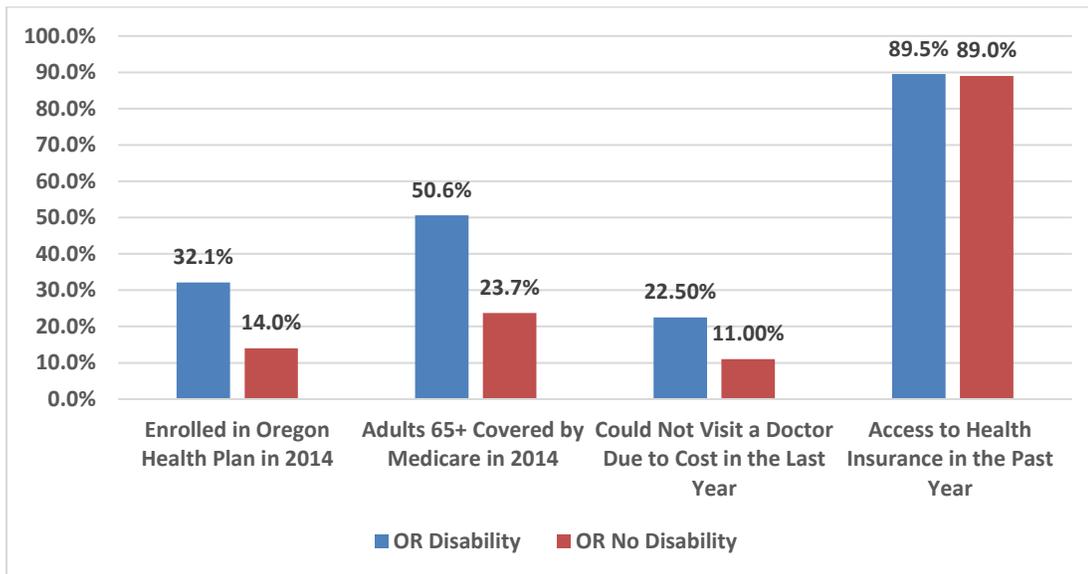


Access to Health Care among Oregonians with Disabilities

Oregon Office on Disability and Health

People with disabilities need health care and health programs to stay well, active, and a part of the community.¹ The following data from the 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) shows indicators of health care access among adults in Oregon. The BRFSS is a randomized state-based survey conducted over the phone annually in all 50 states.

Figure 1. Health Care Access in Oregon, BRFSS 2014



Key findings

- 89.5% of adults with disabilities had health insurance over the past year compared to 89% of adults without disabilities.
- 32.1% of adults with disabilities enrolled in Oregon Health Plan (OHP) in the last year compared to 14.0% of adults without disabilities.
- 50.6% of adults 65+ with disabilities have Medicare coverage in comparison to 23.7% of adults 65+ without disabilities.
- 22.5% of adults with disabilities could not visit a doctor due to cost in the year before the survey was conducted, whereas only 11% of adults without disabilities mentioned they could not visit a doctor due to cost.

Despite high rates of insurance coverage among people living with disabilities, the associated cost due to health services still remains a barrier for accessing health care among people with disabilities. Our data showed that even if people with disabilities have health care coverage, they were more likely to avoid seeking care when cost was an issue.

Barriers to health care include:^{2,3}

- Cost of care
- Limited availability of specialist services
- Physical barriers

- Inadequate training for health care providers on working with people with disabilities

These barriers lead to:²

- Unmet health care needs

- Delay in receiving appropriate care
- Inability to get preventive services
- Hospitalizations that could have been prevented

How can we improve access to health care?

- Improve access to and within health care facilities:
 - Advocate for accessible transportation that goes to health care facilities.
 - Ensure health care facilities comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - Provide accessible medical equipment, such as adjustable height examination tables and wheelchair-accessible scales.
- Ask patients in advance if they will require any assistance during the appointment.
- Provide disability awareness and etiquette training for clinicians and other health care workers.
- Increase the length of appointment to allow time for meeting the often complex needs of patients with disabilities.⁴

Timely health care helps people with disabilities by:²

- Preventing diseases and additional disabilities
- Detecting and treating health conditions
- Improving overall physical and mental health status and quality of life
- Reducing emergency room visits
- Increasing life expectancy

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). *Disability and Health- Healthy Living*. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/healthyliving.html>

² Healthy People 2020. (2016). *Access to Health Services*. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/Access-to-Health-Services>

³ World Health Organization. (2015). *Disability and health*. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs352/en/>

⁴ Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund. (2014). *Improving Access to Health Care for People with Disabilities*. <http://dredf.org/2014/11/28/improving-access-health-care-people-disabilities/>