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CDC: Autism Rate is Now 1 in 88

By Lylah M. Alphonse, Senior Editor, Yahoo! Shine | Healthy Living - 11 hours ago

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New data from the CDC shows that 1 in 88 children have autism.

The number of U.S. children diagnosed with **autism** continues to rise, with **new data** announced today by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing that about 1 in 88 children have the disorder -- a **23 percent increase** in just two years, and a **78 percent increase** since 2000.

The rate among boys is alarmingly high: According to CDC, 1 in 54 boys were identified as having an autism spectrum disorder, while just 1 in 252 girls were diagnosed with it.

[Related: 5 ways to support a friend whose child has autism]

"One thing the data tells us with certainty - there are more children and families that need help," CDC Dr. Director Thomas Frieden **said in a statement**. "We must continue to track autism spectrum disorders because this is the information communities need to guide improvements in services to help children."

Since 2000, the CDC has used surveillance reports from its Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network to track the autism rate for kids in the United States. Every two years, researchers count the number of 8-year-olds with autism in anywhere from six to 14 communities (depending on funds available for research). This year's numbers come from data collected in 2008 from 14 communities.

The autism rates in Alabama were the lowest, just 1 in 210 children. In Utah, where the community with the highest rate was located, 1 in 47 children had autism, according to the **CDC report**. The largest increases were among Hispanic and African-American children.

The study looked at the number of children who showed behaviors consistent with autism, **Asperger's Syndrome**, and the catch-all spectrum diagnosis Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (**PPD-NOS**). Researchers pored over school and medical records to decide what data to include. Typical characteristics of autism spectrum disorders include verbal delays, repetitive behaviors, and problems involving socialization, though the symptoms can vary wildly from child to

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child.

In 2000, the CDC determined that the autism rate was 1 in 150 children. That rate jumped to 1 in 110 in 2006, and to 1 in 88 now -- an increase of 78 percent since 2000.

There are several possible reasons why the autism rate continues to rise. The study showed that more children are being diagnosed by age 3 -- an important change, given that early intervention can vastly improve treatment.

"Doctors are getting better at diagnosing autism; communities are getting much better at [providing] services to children with autism, and CDC scientists are getting much better at tracking which kids in the communities we're studying have autism," Frieden [told CNN.com](#).

"How much of that increase is a result of better tracking and how much of it is a result of an actual increase, we still don't know," he added. "We know more about autism today than we have ever known, but there is still so much we don't know and wish that we knew."

The criteria for diagnosing a child with autism can be found in American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). According to the current (fourth edition) version of the manual, a person qualifies if they show at least any six out of 12 specialized behaviors.

But in January, experts started working on the fifth edition of the DSM, and have proposed [changing the way autism is diagnosed](#). The changes include eliminating Asperger's Syndrome and PDD-NOS from the manual, instead consolidating them under a single "Autism Spectrum Disorder" category. The criteria for qualification in that category would also change: Instead of having to show six out of 12 behaviors, a person would have to show three specific problems with social interaction and communication and at least two repetitive behaviors. The change would mostly affect people who are on the "high-functioning" side of the autism spectrum.

The proposed change has many parents worrying that their children might not be eligible for services they need, but some experts say that current definition of autism has resulted in high rates that aren't necessarily accurate.

"It was an artificial inflation," Jennifer Pinto-Martin, director of the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities at the University of Pennsylvania, [told Time magazine](#) in January. "If you have a larger umbrella, more kids will fit under that umbrella." A study [published in January edition of the journal "Pediatrics"](#) seems to underscore the idea, indicating that some children who are on the autism spectrum may be there because other conditions -- like anxiety, developmental delays, or behavioral issues -- led to a false diagnosis.

No one knows what causes autism, though [many different studies](#) point to everything from environmental pollution to genetic triggers to the possibility of an immune-system overload. Dr. Andrew Wakefield's link between autism and the MMR vaccine [has been proven false](#) and was found to have been [based on fraudulent data](#).

Scientists are still searching for an answer. "To understand more, we need to keep accelerating our research into risk factors and causes of autism spectrum disorders," said Coleen Boyle, Ph.D., M.S.Hyg., director of CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

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Whitney • 8 hours ago

115 4

Autism doesn't necessarily mean retarded. It comes in many forms. I knew a girl who was autistic who graduated high school with honors. However she was perceived as cold, reserved, and almost always had a very grey perspective of the world compared to other people. But she wasn't stupid. This whole... [More](#)

▶ 18 Replies



Al A • Greenville, South Carolina • 1 hour 27 minutes ago

17 0

With this incredible increase in diagnosis I have to assume that there is money at hand.

▶ 2 Replies



BrianE • Bentonville, Arkansas • 8 hours ago

144 8

Have you ever listned to a RX comercial? When they start listing the symptoms. Make you think you have it to. Do you sleep 8 hrs a day. Do you sit behind a computer at work? Do you sometimes wish you were somewhere else? You have have this diesese. But hey thats ok we have a crue right here. The... [More](#)

▶ 12 Replies



Me • Fenton, Missouri • 8 hours ago

13 0

IDK years ago, parents tried to keep their children out of special education (and all were mostly lumped into one area) so many did not get counted or treated, especially in the rural areas. If your beginning numbers aren't accurate, your ratios and percentages will not be accurate. It was talked... [More](#)

▶ 1 Reply



Ouch • Corvallis, Oregon • 2 hours 58 minutes ago

10 0

I have a friend whom has an only child. He was told in kindergarten that his kid "has to be autistic" because he wouldn't talk at school and he had no social skills. When he told me this, and stated he was going to have him tested. My response was the school has no right to tell you what they... [More](#)

[▶ Reply](#)



DrMallard • West Palm Beach, Florida • 1 hour 13 minutes ago

8 0

I wonder how many of these 'autistics' are in fact just introverts? Then again, in a competitive shallow society like this one there are probably many so-called mental health 'professionals' who are so conformity-minded that they don't even know the difference. Pathetic.

[▶ 1 Reply](#)



Lou Stool • 8 hours ago

25 1

Why does every writer feel that "rate" and "alarming" MUST be used together?

[▶ 3 Replies](#)



Cal • 11 minutes ago

2 0

Since Autism is basically the fall back diagnosis of nearly every common mental disease, why is it so surprising it's a high percentage. If two people have, say, alzheimers, you'd expect them to have simillier symptoms. People with autism might have not a single symptom in common.

[▶ Reply](#)



Nick Frey • Green Bay, Wisconsin • 31 minutes ago

3 0

I was officially diagnosed with High Functioning Autism at 5 years old, I was at that the time really bad, my grandmother noticed it earlier when I was 2, why? cuz I wasn't talking by then. As I've grown up now I realize it's not that bad, it's very mild in fact, to the point where I give a lot of... [More](#)

[▶ Reply](#)



Jesus Was A Liberal • 38 minutes ago

1 0

I've read similar studies. The question is are there more cases of autism or do we understand it better, and that makes more cases of autism.

[▶ Reply](#)



Um • 1 hour 18 minutes ago

4 0

It's just an "in" diagnosis. "Oh you don't fit the picture to be completely what we would consider 'normal'? You're autistic then." The way it is used it really is so monolithically encompassing a diagnosis that it has almost no real meaning.

[▶ Reply](#)



J • Akron, Ohio • 8 hours ago

38 3

I suspect inflated data results for the sake of getting services. also, like ADD, almost everyone starts to fit the definition. Reading disorders are treated like ADD and now any singular problem may be the child in this spectrum. i find the entire thing troubling.

[▶ 4 Replies](#)



Cal • 7 minutes ago

0 0

The sad thing is there are probably some people here who still think vaccines are the cause of the spike. *shakes his head sadly*

[▶ Reply](#)



Julian • 18 minutes ago

2 0

the spike in diagnosed children is due to the definition. what do you expect to happen if you add more symptoms and what not? of course it would go up.

[▶ Reply](#)



Ernie A • Los Angeles, California • 23 minutes ago

2 0

Funny how the more you pay people to find stuff, the more stuff there will always be to find.

[▶ Reply](#)



The Dude • 1 hour 7 minutes ago

2 0

Golly, autism diagnostics is up, just like ADD and ADHD. Big surprise as this country continues its fight against boys being boys.

[▶ Reply](#)



Ddd P • 1 hour 43 minutes ago

2 0

we need more genetic modified food

[▶ Reply](#)



Joel • 5 hours ago

1 0

I'm sure they would have said that all the cancer rates around love canal were a misdiagnosis too....

[▶ Reply](#)



Boppity • 2 hours 50 minutes ago

15 1

Two MAJOR problems with this article: 1. Why do all articles about autism only mention autistic CHILDREN as if the problem vanishes with adulthood? Autistic adults are basically tossed aside by society. 2. The reason autism rates are skyrocketing is that EVERYONE who is the slightest bit withdrawn... [More](#)

[▶ Reply](#)



Peter • Yuma, Arizona • 6 hours ago

2 0

86.23% of all statistics are meaningless. Remember, a fact is anything you say it is. The truth is adifferent thing althoghther. At no point in this article regarding anxiety, developmental delays, and behavioral issues can and are probably a direct of less than ideal parenting and educational... [More](#)

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