

# 2024 Medicaid & CHIP Beneficiaries at a Glance: Autism



## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Approximately 5 percent of children ages 3 to 17 with public insurance have autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as reported by parents. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provides states with several options under the federal Medicaid program for providing services to eligible individuals with autism or ASD, including access to therapy services, preventive services and other licensed practitioner services. The Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit requires that all children enrolled in Medicaid, and at state option children enrolled in the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), receive screenings designed to identify health and developmental issues, including ASD, as early as possible. EPSDT also requires that Medicaid programs provide medically necessary diagnostic and treatment services to covered children.



**ASD** is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. A diagnosis of ASD includes several conditions: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, and Asperger syndrome.<sup>1</sup> All data presented in this infographic are based on parent responses to the 2021–2022 National Survey on Children’s Health. The survey identifies children ages 3 to 17 with autism or ASD by asking parents whether a doctor or other health care provider has told them that their child has “autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), including diagnoses of Asperger’s disorder or pervasive developmental disorder (PDD).”

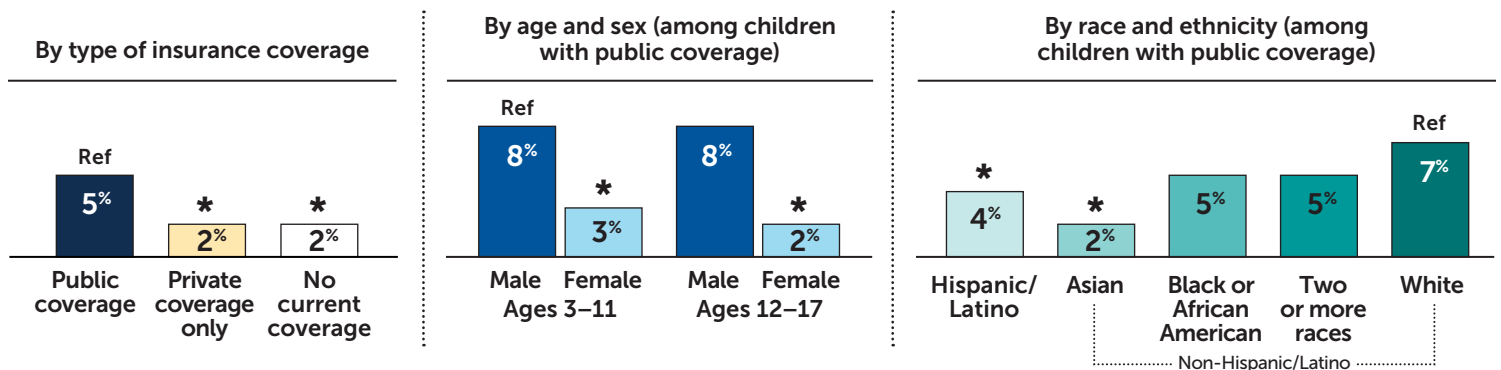
## PARENT-REPORTED PREVALENCE OF AUTISM OR ASD AMONG CHILDREN



### Key Findings

- Children with public coverage were reported to have significantly higher rates of autism or ASD than children with private or no current coverage.<sup>2</sup>
- Half of children with public coverage who were reported to have autism or ASD were diagnosed by age 4.<sup>2</sup>

## Percentage of Children in the U.S. Reported to Currently Have Autism or ASD, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>



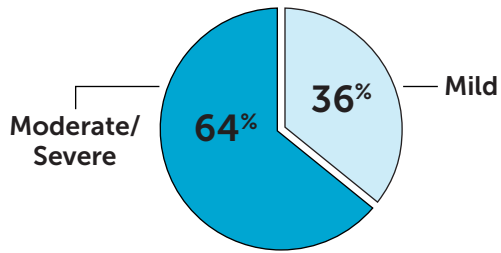
### Methods Notes

- Statistical significance testing of stratified analyses was conducted using a two-sided t-test (p < 0.05). Significance for each measure is affected by survey design, sample size, and other factors. For each exhibit, a reference group was identified (indicated by “Ref” in the exhibit). The rate for each additional subgroup shown in the exhibit was compared to the rate for the reference group. \* indicates that the subgroup rate was significantly different from the rate for the reference group. If the subgroup rate was not significantly different from the rate for the reference group, no symbol is included.
- Public insurance is defined in this infographic as coverage through “Medicaid, Medical Assistance, or any kind of government-assistance plan for those with low incomes or a disability” at the time of the survey.

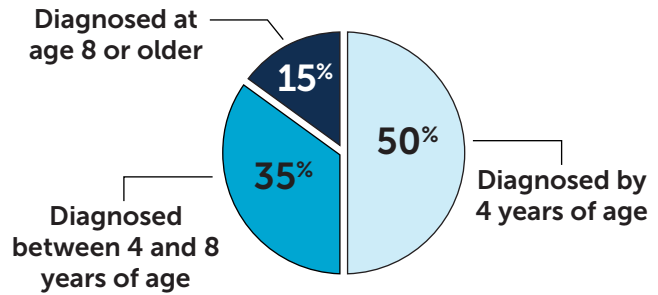
If you would like more information about the Medicaid and CHIP programs and their beneficiaries, please see the following additional resources:

- The **Medicaid and CHIP Beneficiary Profile and Infographic** provides an overview of the characteristics, health status, access, utilization, expenditures, and experience of the beneficiaries served by Medicaid and CHIP. It is available at: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/quality-of-care/index.html>
- CMS developed the **Medicaid and CHIP Scorecard** to increase public transparency and accountability about the programs’ administration and outcomes. It is available at: <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/scorecard/index.html>
- The **Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Infographic** provides information regarding the behavioral health status, access to care, and service utilization of child and adolescent Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries. It is available at: <https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/child-and-adolescent-behavioral-health-infographic.pdf>
- The **Autism Services** section of the Medicaid.gov website provides information regarding CMS’s efforts to improve access to and quality of care for beneficiaries with autism or ASD. It is available at: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/autism-services/index.html>


Parent-Rated Severity of Condition, Among Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>



Age of Child When Parent Was First Told They Had Autism or ASD, Among Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>



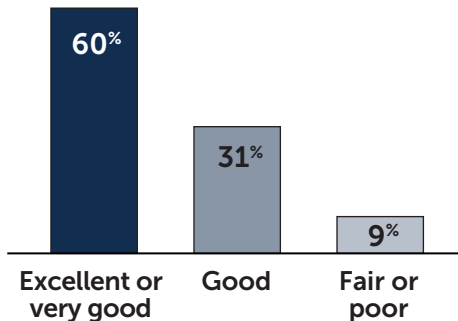
Early diagnosis of autism or ASD helps individuals with the condition and their families access appropriate services, and can reduce stress. It can lead to more targeted interventions, better social outcomes, and increased independence in adulthood.<sup>3</sup>



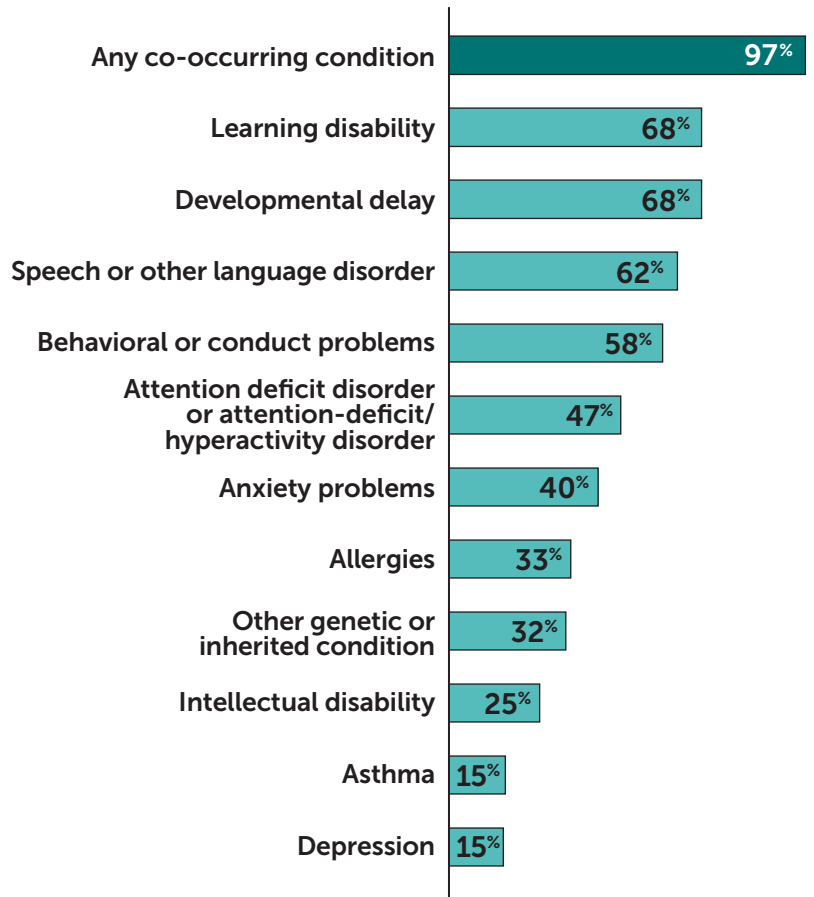
**Key Findings**

97% of children with public coverage and autism or ASD were reported to have at least one co-occurring health condition. Learning disability, developmental delay, speech or language disorder, behavioral or conduct problems, and ADD or ADHD are the most commonly reported co-occurring conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Parent-Rated General Health Status for Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>



Percentage of Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage with at Least One Co-Occurring Condition, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>



Notes: This exhibit shows the most common co-occurring conditions among children with autism or ASD and public coverage. Children can have more than one co-occurring condition.



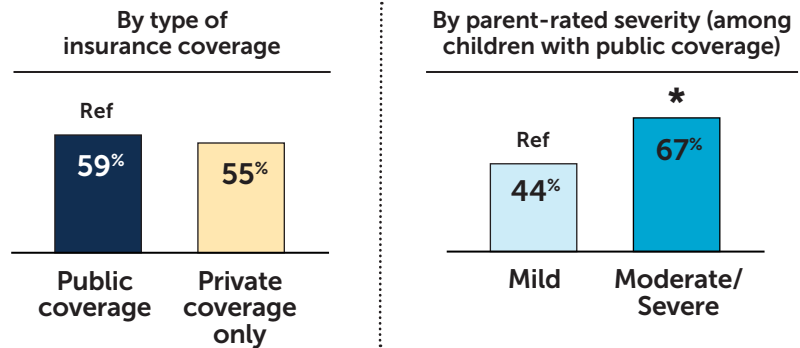
**Key Findings**

- There are no significant differences in parent-reported receipt of behavioral health treatment between children with public coverage and children with private coverage only.<sup>2</sup>
- Among children with public coverage, a significantly higher percentage of children with moderate or severe autism or ASD were reported to have received behavioral treatment compared to children with mild autism or ASD.<sup>2</sup>

**Percentage of Children with Autism or ASD in the U.S. Reported to Have Received Behavioral Treatment for Autism or ASD During the Past 12 Months, 2021–2022.<sup>2</sup>**

Behavioral treatment for autism, ASD, Asperger’s disorder or PDD is defined as training or an intervention that the parent or child received to help with their behavior.

Educational and behavioral approaches are often a main feature of the overall treatment plan for children with autism or ASD as there are no FDA-approved medications for the core symptoms of autism or ASD.<sup>4</sup>



**DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY NOTES**

1. <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/autism-services/index.htm>
2. Data are based on parent responses to the 2021–2022 National Survey on Children’s Health (NSCH). NSCH is sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration. It is a nationally representative survey of all noninstitutionalized children ages 0 to 17 years in the U.S. (50 states and DC) who live in housing units. All exhibits in this infographic include children and adolescents ages 3 to 17. Questions are answered by an adult familiar with the child’s health. Private insurance is defined in the survey as coverage through a current or former employer or union, insurance purchased directly from an insurance company, TRICARE or other military health care, or coverage through the Affordable Care Act at the time of the survey. Respondents can report more than one type of current insurance coverage. Where the term “public coverage” is used in this infographic, this refers to children with public insurance coverage alone or in combination with private insurance.

In the survey, parents were asked if a doctor or other health care provider had ever told them that their child had “autism or autism spectrum disorder, including diagnoses of Asperger’s disorder or pervasive developmental disorder.” Parents who responded “Yes” were subsequently asked if their child currently has the condition. For this analysis, children identified as having ASD were those with a parent report of (1) ever told by a doctor and/or other health care provider that their child had ASD and (2) child currently has ASD.

All data presented in the infographic come from Mathematica’s primary analysis of the 2021 and 2022 NSCH Topical Data public use files, which are available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/nsch/data.html>. For additional information on NSCH, including an interactive data query tool, visit the Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health website at <https://www.childhealthdata.org/learn-about-the-nsch/NSCH>.

- Exhibit note for *Age of Child When Parent Was First Told they had Autism or ASD, Among Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage*: This variable was created using the continuous variable “age first told child ever had autism or ASD” (in years). “Diagnosed by 4 years of age” includes children diagnosed at ages 0, 1, 2, or 3. “Diagnosed between 4 and 8 years of age” includes children diagnosed at ages 4, 5, 6, or 7. “Diagnosed at age 8 or older” includes children diagnosed between 8–17 years of age.
- Exhibit note for *Percentage of Children with Autism or ASD and Public Coverage with at Least One Co-Occurring Condition*: Only conditions that were included in the survey in both 2021 and 2022 were included. Arthritis, diabetes, and cerebral palsy were excluded due to changes in the survey questions between 2021 and 2022. Other genetic or inherited condition refers to any genetic or inherited condition besides the 21 specific conditions listed in the survey.

3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10491411/>
4. <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Common-with-Mental-Illness/Autism/Treatment>

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