



2026 Disability Community Needs Assessment

Ocean County, NJ





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About Us

The Ocean County Department of Human Services was established by the Ocean County Board of Commissioners to initiate and support program development addressing human services needs in Ocean County.

The Department aims to facilitate and oversee, through effective partnerships, a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of at risk individuals and families.

The Ocean County Office for Individuals with Disabilities works as an information and referral resource for the residents of Ocean County, and strives to provide assistance to individuals with disabilities, as well as their friends and family.

www.oceandhs.org

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Introduction

On Monday, May 18, 2026, as part of an ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive community, the Ocean County Department of Human Services' Office for Individuals with Disabilities conducted its second biannual survey intended to gather insights regarding Ocean County residents with disabilities.

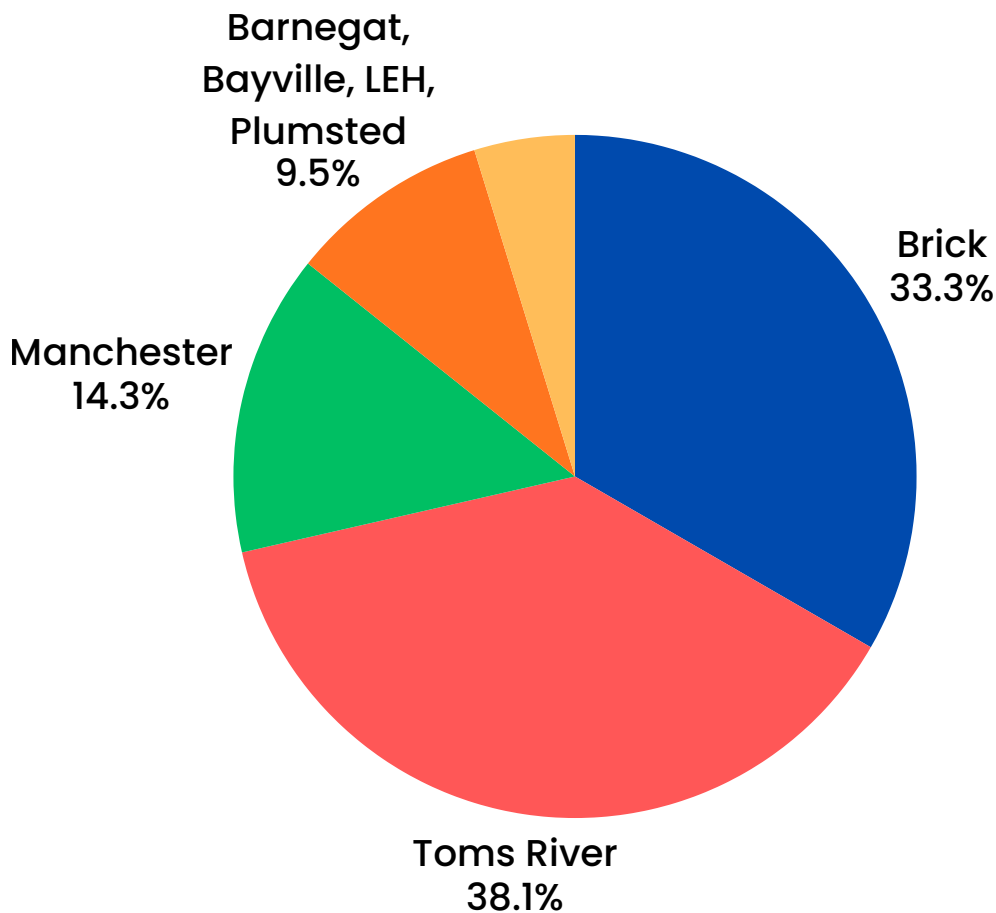
The objective of the survey was to understand and address the unique needs of the disability community and those with access and functional needs.

Data received from the results of survey will contribute to fostering a more inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of ability, can thrive, and will also guide efforts in improving accessibility, services, and support systems throughout Ocean County.

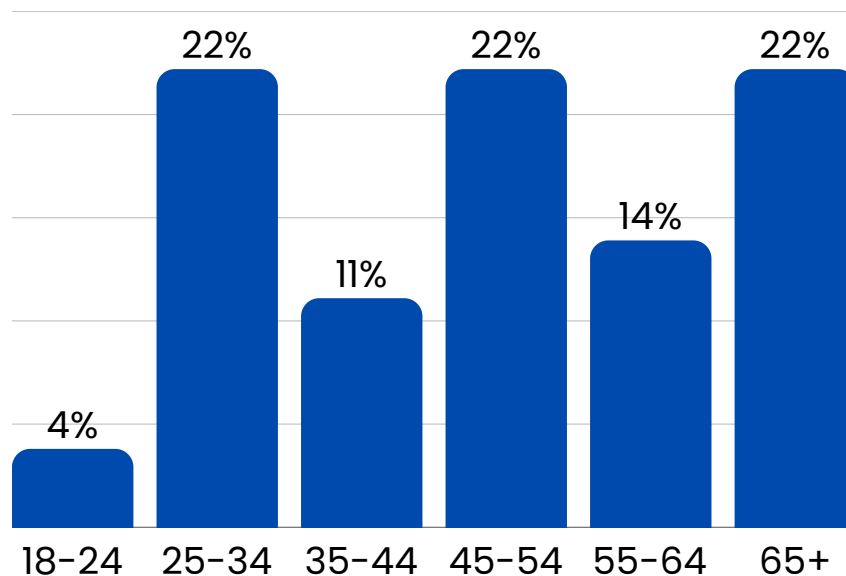
The survey was distributed through various means such as, but not limited to, social media, county government offices, email distribution lists, and partnered agencies and organizations.

Location

- The top three towns that saw the most responses to the survey were from Brick (33.3%), Toms River (38.1%), and Manchester (14.3%).
- The remaining towns were as follows:
 - Barnegat, Bayville, Little Egg Harbor, Plumsted (9.5%)
 - Beachwood, Lacey, Lakehurst, Lakewood, Pt. Pleasant Boro, Seaside, South Toms River, Stafford, Tuckerton, and West Creek (4.8%)



Age Demographics



As the Ocean County Office for Individuals with Disabilities primarily focuses on adults with disabilities, captured data regarding the age of recipients ranges from eighteen years of age to sixty-five years of age and older.

Of those surveyed, the majority were aged 25-34, 45-54, and 65 or older. The second-highest number of responses came from those aged 55-64, while the least responses were from the 18-24 age group.

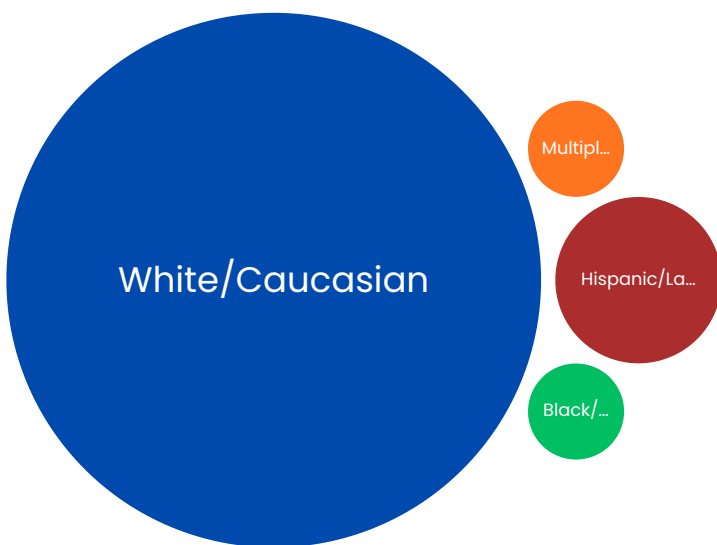
One of the largest group of responses aligns with the overall senior population in Ocean County. Of the total disabled population in Ocean County, which is 78,870. 45,804 are seniors aged 65 and older with disabilities, making up 58.08% of the county's disabled population. (New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, 2024)

The 18-24 age group may struggle to engage with a disability needs survey due to factors like dependence on parents for healthcare decisions, limited understanding of their needs, or a lack of time, awareness, or interest in completing surveys. A more focused effort may be needed to outreach this population in the future.

Additional Demographics

- All individuals responded that English was their primary language.
- 6% of individuals responded that they are a veteran, while 94% responded that they are not a veteran.
- To be considered an inclusive survey, individuals were asked which of the following best represents their gender identity: Man, Non-Binary, Woman, or Prefer to Self-Describe. 36% responded that they identified as a man, 23% responded that they identified as a woman.

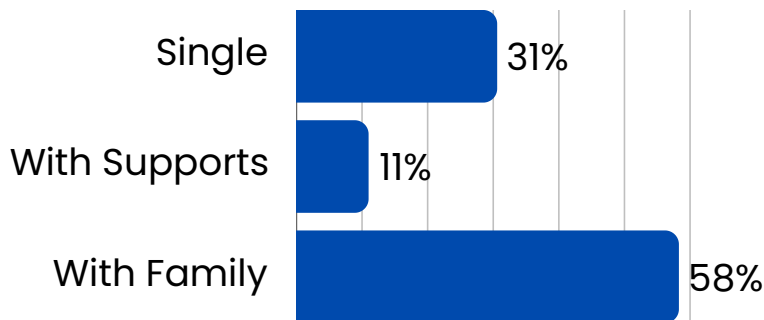
Race/Ethnicity



- 86% of individuals responded that their race/ethnicity would be best described as Caucasian.
- 8% of individuals responded that their race/ethnicity would be best described as Hispanic/Latino.
- 3% of individuals responded that their race/ethnicity would be best described as Black/African American or Two or More Races.

Additional Demographics

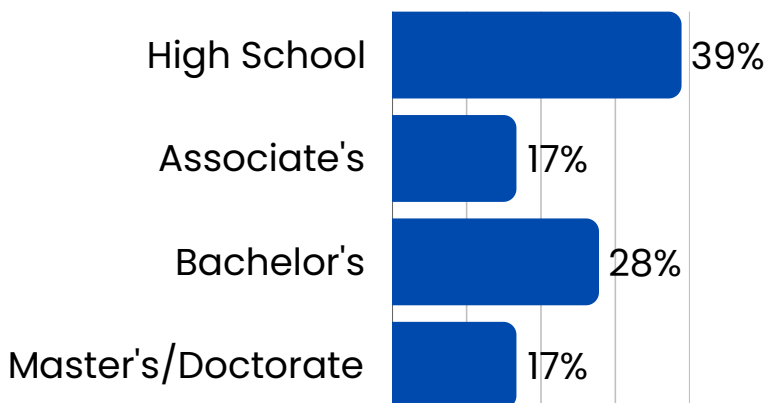
Home Life



- Nearly 60% of the respondents live with family.
- 30.6% live on their own.
- 11% live on their own with supports.

Education

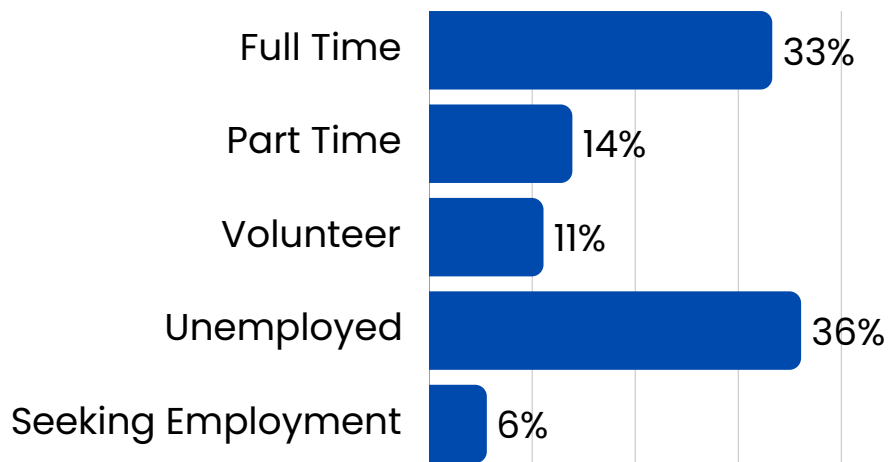
The educational background of respondents varied.



- 38.9% hold a high school diploma.
- 16.7% hold an associate degree.
- 27.8% possess a bachelor's degree.
- 16.7% have a master's or doctorate degrees.

Additional Demographics

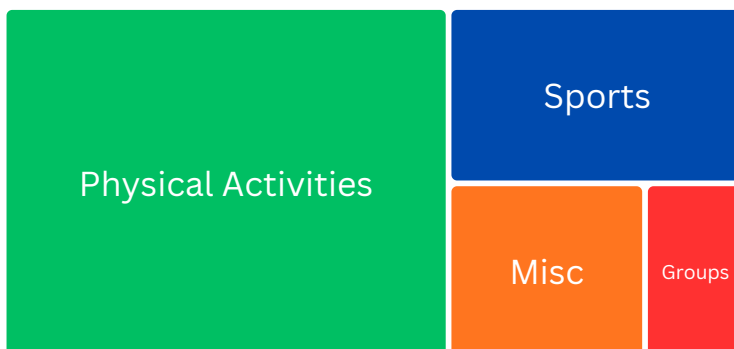
Employment



- 33% of respondents currently work full time.
- 13.9% working part time.
- 11% work volunteer jobs.
- 36% of respondents are unemployed.
- 5.6% are seeking employment at the present time.

Recreation

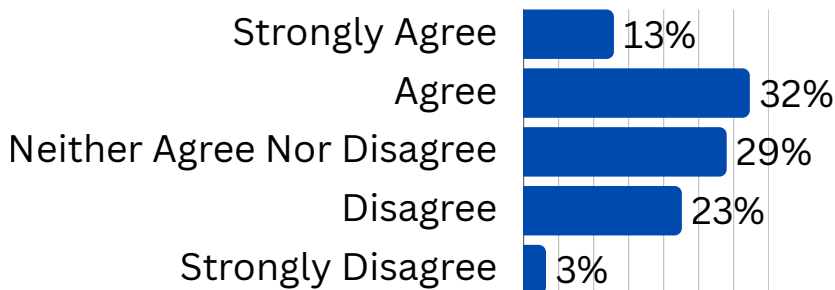
When respondents were asked if they participated in any type of recreational activities, those who answered yes were asked to identify the type of recreational activity. The types were broken down into five categories.



- Physical Activities - 60%
- Sports - 20%
- Miscellaneous - 13.3%
- Groups - 6.7%

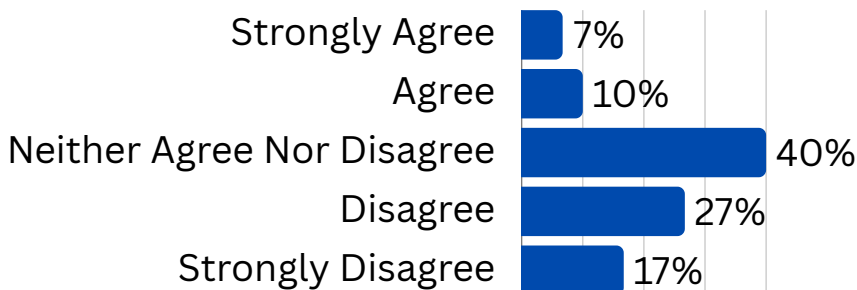
Accessibility Questions

County Accessibility



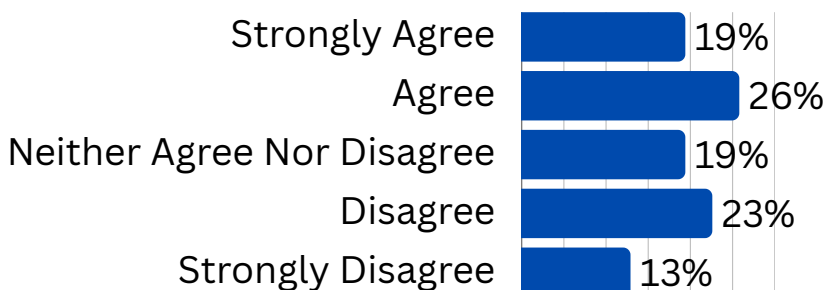
- When asked whether Ocean County is accessible to individuals with disabilities, 45% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while nearly 23% disagreed.

Transportation Accessibility



- When asked whether there is accessible transportation in Ocean County, 10% agreed, while, 43% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Service Accessibility



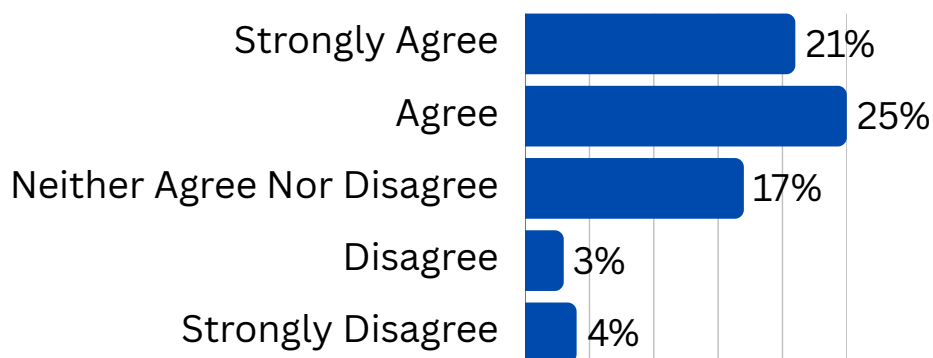
- When asked whether healthcare services are considered accessible in Ocean County, the results indicated that 45% agreed or strongly agreed, while nearly 23% disagreed.

In 2024, the majority stated that healthcare services were not considered accessible, reflecting improvements being made in the last two years to address the healthcare experience for individuals with disabilities in the region.

Support Questions

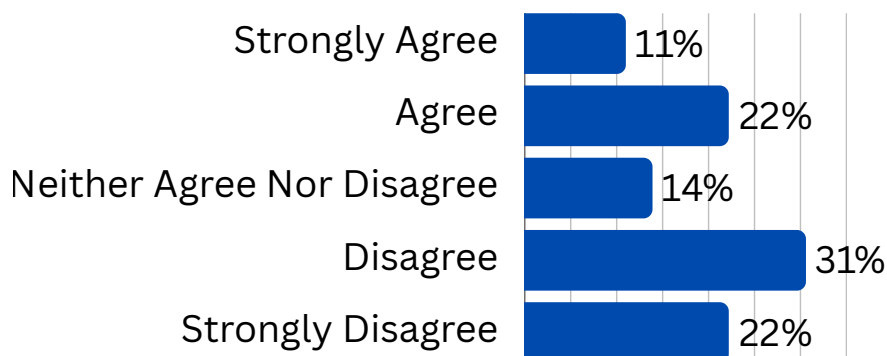
Community Supports (Family, Friends, Colleagues)

Respondents were asked whether they receive community support from friends, family, and/or colleagues in their lives.



- Nearly 46% either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Isolation (No Supports)

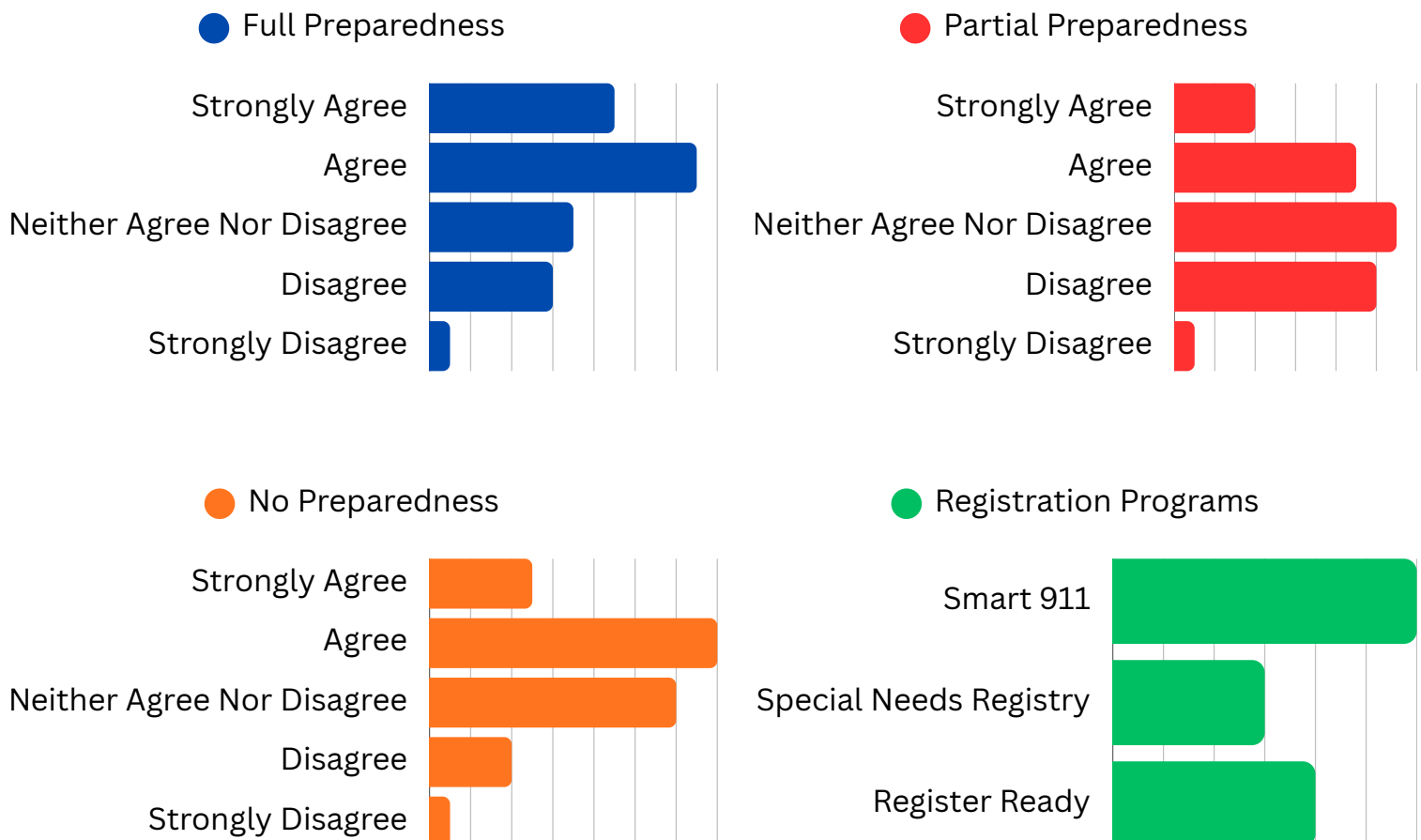


- When respondents were asked whether they felt isolated, 22% agreed that they did.
- In contrast, nearly 53% disagreed or strongly disagreed with feeling isolated.

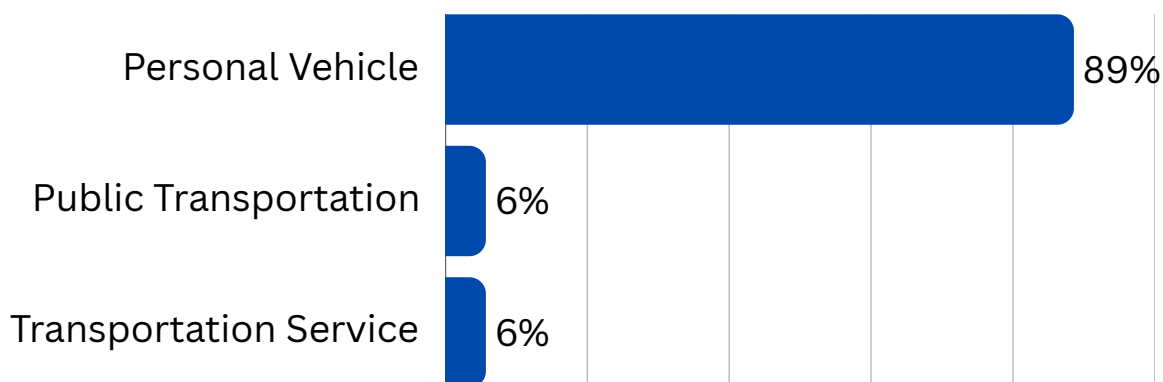
The data suggests that progress has been made in reducing isolation, but further efforts are needed.

Disaster Preparedness

- Respondents were asked about their level of disaster preparedness. 61.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they were fully prepared, 37.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they were partially prepared, and nearly 53% agreed or strongly agreed that they were not prepared but wanted to learn more about disaster preparedness.
- This suggests that there is a clear need for further education and resources to help the population become better equipped for potential disasters.
- Respondents were also asked about the programs they are registered with. 30.8% have signed up with Register Ready, 46.2% with Smart 911, and 23.1% with the Ocean County Special Needs Registry.



Transportation Services



The majority of individuals, 88.6%, rely on personal vehicles for transportation.

A smaller portion, 12%, utilizes transportation services or depend on public transportation.

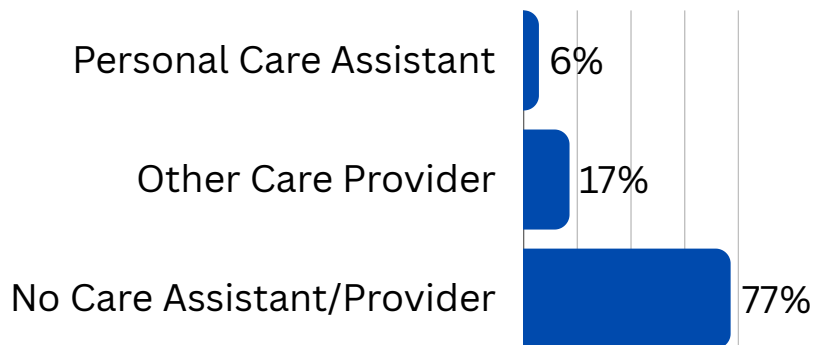
Respondents were asked to specify if their mode of transportation involves a service or otherwise. Responses received are as follows:

- Friend/Family Member
- Caregiver
- Uber
- NJ Transit

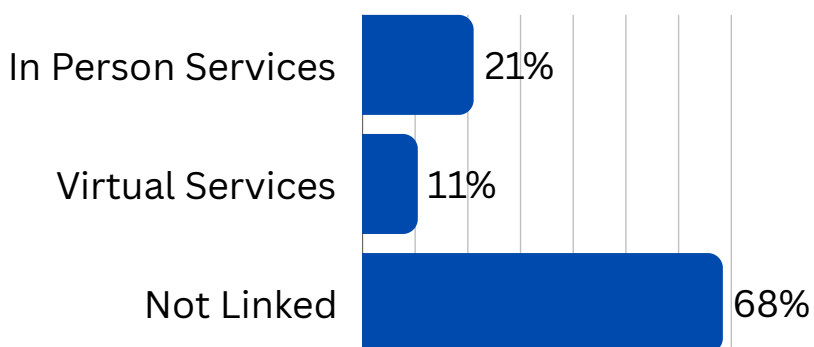
Disability Services

Community Supports

Respondents were asked about linkage to community supports and care providers to help identify services and supports individuals with disabilities may need to live independently and improve their quality of life.



- While 23% are linked to a personal care assistant or other care provider, approximately 77% are not.

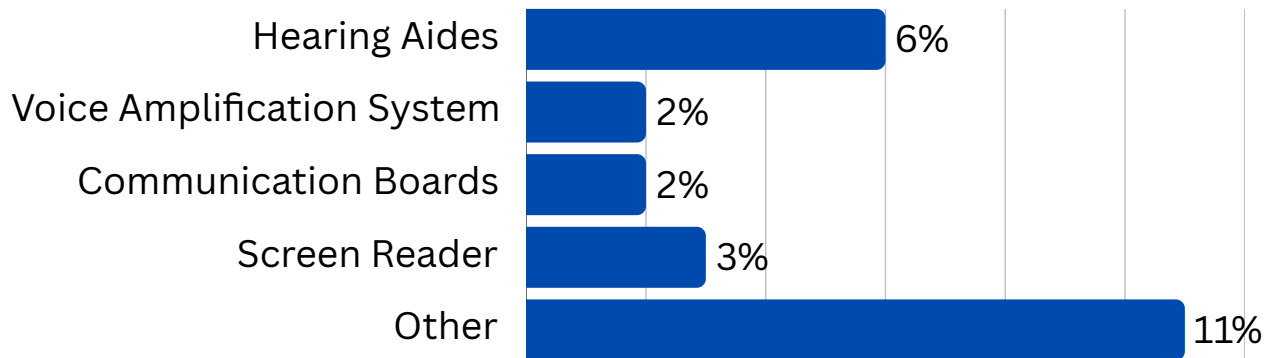


- A summary of the results regarding community support shows that a significant majority, 68%, reported not being linked to any services.
- 21.1% indicated they received in-person services.
- 10.5% reported receiving virtual services.

Disability Services

Assistive Device Usage

Respondents were asked what type of assistive device they use.



Those who selected other were asked to specify what type of communication accommodation/support they utilize. Results included:

- Closed Captioning/CART
- PECs
- AAC devices
- Magnifying glass
- Smart phone
- Cochlear Implants
- Low vision aids
- Large Print



- 28.6% indicated that they use an assistive device.
- 71.4% of respondents reported that they do not use an assistive device at all.



Areas of Need

Respondents were asked to identify areas of need and/or changes they would like to see occur regarding accessible services.

- Daytime activities for adults with disabilities.
- Each town and/or county have a website geared toward special needs events.
- Easier access to transportation, additional public transportation, and cost-effective transportation options.
- Housing processes be more understandable to those with disabilities.
- Better communication on how to request accommodations at public events.
- Social Media communication.
- Mental Health peer-run community service programs.
- Services (job coaching/training) to help individuals with disabilities navigate employment.
- Pedestrian safety/sidewalk enhancements



Conclusion

Ocean County has a disability population that exceeds the state average and the second-highest senior population in New Jersey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These factors underscore the critical need for enhanced disability services and resources to meet growing demand.

The Ocean County Disability Survey findings provide valuable insights into the County's demographic and accessibility needs. This survey, which included questions about age, residence, education, employment, recreational involvement, and accessibility, has highlighted several key areas that require attention to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in Ocean County. Moreover, respondents have also expressed a need for increased accessibility in public spaces, including parks, beaches, and businesses, areas that are often challenging for people with mobility impairments.

The survey also explored disaster preparedness, with participants expressing a desire for more information and resources on how to prepare for emergencies. This highlights a gap in education and preparedness for people with disabilities in Ocean County, which will continue to be addressed to ensure the safety and well-being of all residents in times of crisis.

In conclusion, the survey provides a comprehensive look at the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities in Ocean County. The findings call for significant changes in transportation, support services, and disaster preparedness. Furthermore, Ocean County's higher-than-average disability population and large senior demographic make it clear that ongoing services, surveys, and interventions are essential to address these needs and ensure a more inclusive community.

The continued gathering of data and feedback through surveys such as this one is essential to inform future policy decisions and resource allocation in Ocean County, aiming to create a more accessible and supportive environment for people with disabilities.

References:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2020. Disability Characteristics. <https://www.census.gov>
- New Jersey State Health Assessment Data, 2024. Disability Status by County, New Jersey, 2024.
https://www-doh.nj.gov/dohshad/indicator/view/Dem_Disability.County.html

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