

# POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF

## ACCESS AND UNMET NEEDS FOR TECHNOLOGY FOR PEOPLE WITH IDD: RESULTS FROM FINDS SURVEY

INSTITUTE on COMMUNITY INTEGRATION | UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### Research Issue

Assistive technology products assist people in their daily activities. Examples include text-to-speech software for communication, software used for transition planning, and virtual reality (VR) to learn job and interview skills.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can use technology to improve autonomy, independence, self-determination, and quality of life in education, employment, community inclusion, and self-determination (Friedman, 2023).

Some children with IDD use technology-based supports in school as part of their Individualized Education Plans. Upon graduation, they may have trouble funding the technology they learned to use in school. Adults with IDD may struggle to identify and pay for the technology they need. Government-funded assistance for technology can be difficult to qualify for and arrange. Lack of affordable technology can hinder access and limit the utility and impact of technology for individuals with IDD and their families (Khanlou et al., 2020).

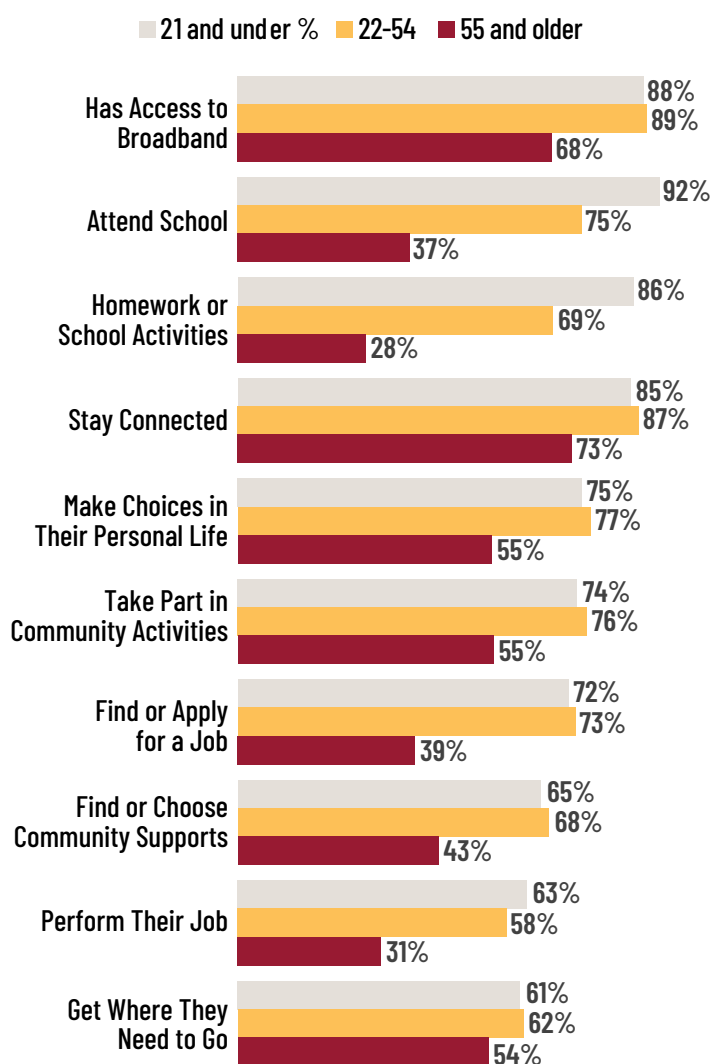
### Study Background

The Family & Individual Needs for Disability Supports (FINDS) 2023 survey asked about the experiences of 3,113 caregivers of individuals with IDD in the United States. The study was conducted by the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the Institute on Community Integration in collaboration with The Arc. We used 2023 FINDS data to examine technology access, utility, and unmet needs for people with IDD.

### Key Findings

**Older individuals with IDD (ages 55-65) had less technology access. People who were school age had greater access to technology.**

**Adults with IDD 55 years or older had and used technology for fewer activities than children through age 21 and adults 22 to 55 years.**

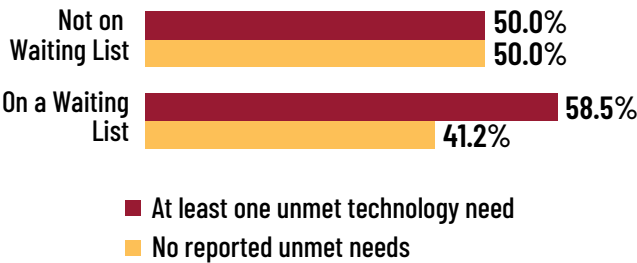


**Access:** extent to which technology-based support is available and easy to use.

**Unmet needs:** extent to which technology supports are not available.

People with IDD waiting for government funding for more than 10 years had less technology access and more unmet technology needs.

Participants with family members waiting for supports and services are more likely to report at least one unmet technology need.



People with IDD waiting for government funding were more likely to have at least one unmet technology need.

Policy Recommendations

- Help students transitioning from school to plan how they will meet their technology needs after graduation.
- Fund needed technology for people who are waiting for long-term supports and services.
- Share information about organizations that provide technology resources and support.
- Encourage states to invest in Technology First solutions for people with IDD.
- Ensure equitable access to technology resources for individuals from diverse cultural communities and those with fewer economic resources.



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Research cited:

Lahti Anderson, L., & Pettingell, S. (2023). *Family and individual needs for disability supports community report 2023*. University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration.

Friedman, C. (2023a). Assistive technology for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States in home- and community-based services. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2023.2272849>

Khanlou, N., Khan, A., Vazquez, L. M., & Zangeneh, M. (2021). Digital literacy, access to technology and inclusion for young adults with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 33(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-020-09738-w>

Policy Research Brief: [z.umn.edu/rtpcprb](https://z.umn.edu/rtpcprb)

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Ongoing oppression and discrimination in the United States has led to significant trauma for many people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and other oppressed persons. At ICI, we affirm our commitment to address systemic racism, ableism and all other inequalities and forms of oppression to ensure inclusive communities.