

# Minnesota general public attitudes

Minnesotans' attitudes toward people with developmental disabilities were first surveyed in 1962. Forty-five years later in 2007, the survey was repeated for the first time and then again in 2012, fifty years after the original benchmark study. Some of the original questions were retained in each survey; new questions were added to the 2017 study to reflect modern issues and concerns. All surveys included questions designed to capture the Minnesota general public's perspectives regarding equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.

## Key findings from the Minnesota general public attitudes surveys

- Minnesotans seem equally familiar with developmental disabilities and people with such disabilities in 1962 and four decades later.
- Minnesotans generally hold positive attitudes regarding all aspects of independence, productivity, self-determination, integration, and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.
- Minnesotans' views on where people with developmental disabilities should live and be cared for have shifted dramatically between 1962 and 2007. Minnesotans are now much more likely to say that people with developmental disabilities should live with their families and not be placed in institutions.
- Minnesotans are near unanimous in having respect for companies that employ people with developmental disabilities, believing that they should be included in public places and social events, and that most of them can be very productive workers.
- Compared to 1962, Minnesotans are more likely to say people with disabilities should be allowed to vote or drink alcohol, but a sizable number of respondents disagree or are ambivalent.
- In 2017, over three-quarters of Minnesotans deemed it important for government to use taxpayer money on health care services, education services, protection services, and employment services for people with developmental disabilities.

## Detailed findings

### Familiarity with developmental disabilities has remained stable

In 1962, 2007, and 2012, about four out of five Minnesotans indicate they have known of a person who was thought to have a developmental disability (Figure 1). This number drops to about three out of four in 2017, although this might have been a result of question wording and question placement in the survey.<sup>1</sup>

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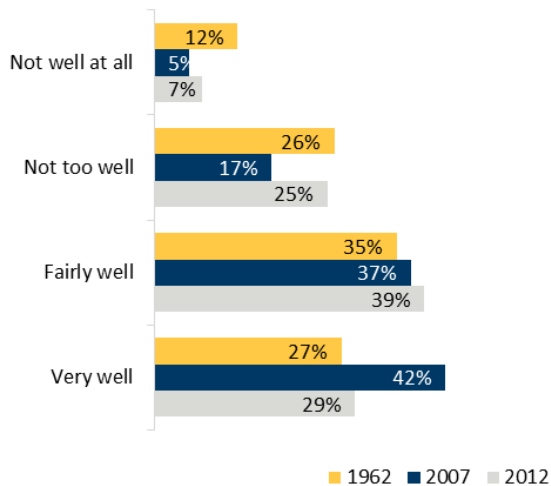
<sup>1</sup> Most notably, developmental disabilities were described differently in the 2017 survey than in the previous surveys. In 2017, no specific examples of developmental disabilities were provided, whereas in the previous surveys, respondents were provided examples such as cerebral palsy, autism, and epilepsy.

**Figure 1: Percentage of respondents indicating they have known of a person who was thought to have a developmental disability**



When asked how well respondents know the person, 62 to 79 percent indicate they know him or her fairly well or very well (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Familiarity with person with developmental disabilities (“How well would you say you know him/her?”)**

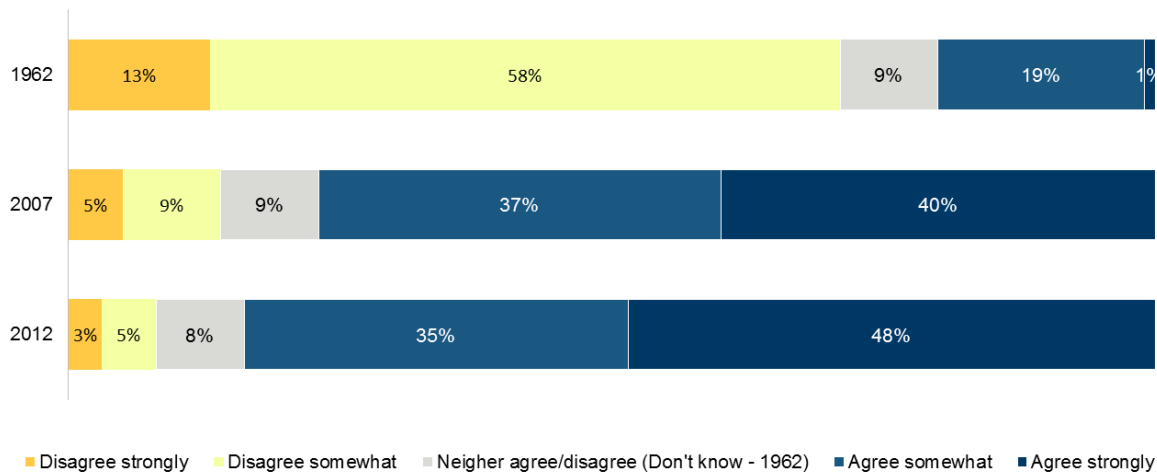


**Attitudes on where people with developmental disabilities should live and be cared for have changed dramatically**

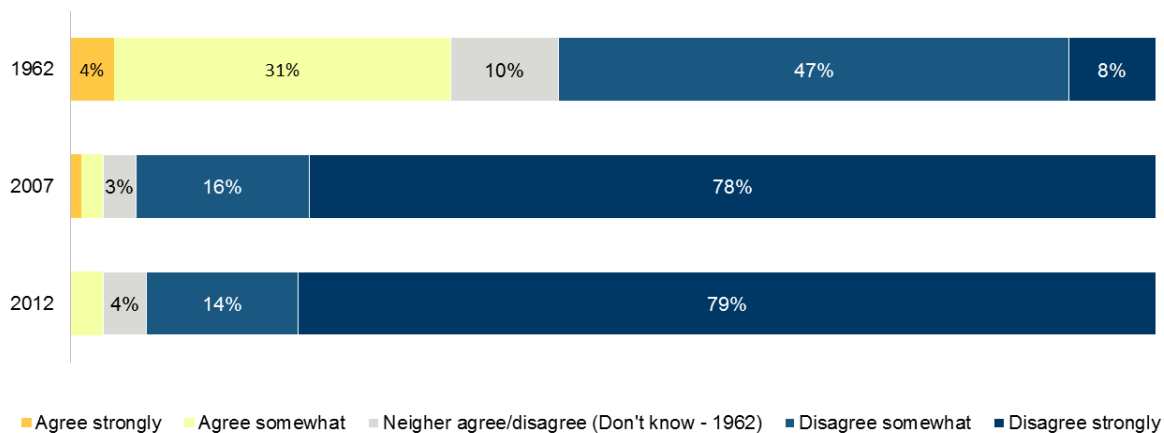
In comparison to Minnesotans’ attitudes in 1962, Minnesotans are now much more likely to say that people with developmental disabilities should be cared for by their immediate family as much as possible, and should not be kept in an institution (Figure 3 and Figure 4). This coincides with a change in Minnesota state policy in the

1990s to move people with disabilities out of state hospitals and into supported living homes and community-based services.

**Figure 3: Percentage of respondent who agree or disagree that people with developmental disabilities should be cared for “at home” (1962) or “by the immediate family, as much as possible” (2007 and 2012)**



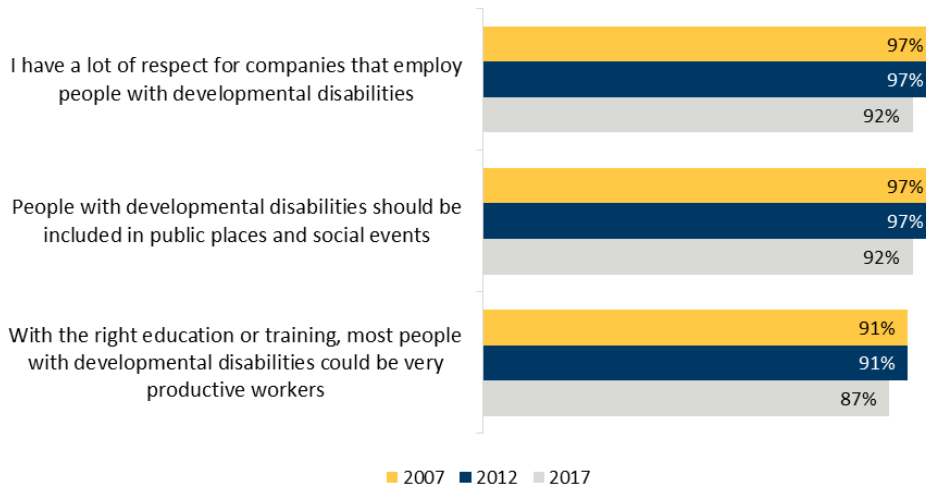
**Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that people with developmental disabilities should be kept in an institution**



### Attitudes towards people with developmental disabilities

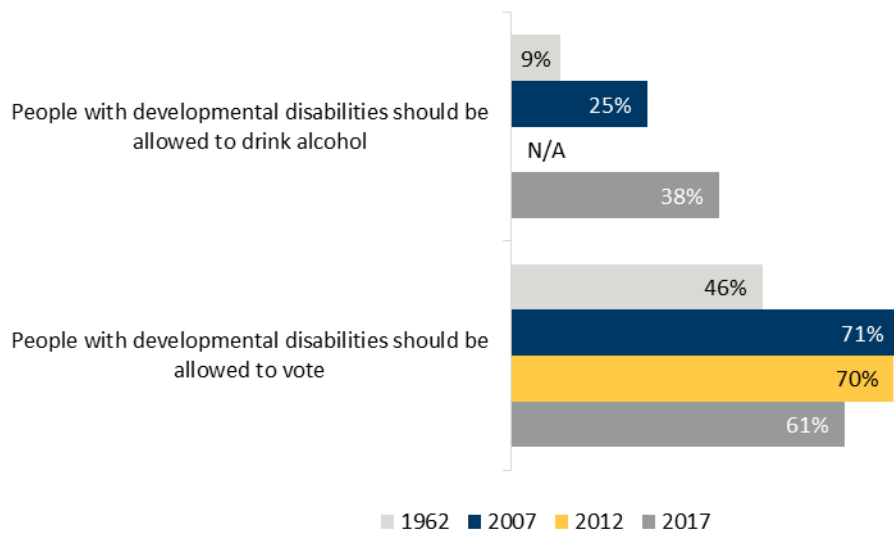
In general, respondents have very positive attitudes toward the role people with developmental disabilities can play in society. Most Minnesotans have a lot respect for companies that employ people with developmental disabilities, believe that they should be included in public places and social events, and agree that most of them can be very productive workers (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who agree somewhat or agree strongly with statements on the role of people with developmental disabilities in society**



The survey results show less agreement on whether people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to vote or drink alcohol (Figure 6). Compared to 1962, the number of respondents who believe they should has grown dramatically, but on both issues, a sizable number of respondents still disagree or are ambivalent.

**Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who agree somewhat or strongly that people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to drink alcohol or vote**



**Government services and taxpayer money**

In 2007, 2012, and 2017, respondents were also asked about the importance of spending taxpayers’ money on government services for people with developmental disabilities related to the areas of housing, education,

employment, and other services, such as health care. Each year, only about one out of 10 respondents agree that too much taxpayer money is spent on people with developmental disabilities. Overall, a majority of respondents believe it is more than somewhat important for government to use taxpayers' money to provide such government services. The top five services which over 75 percent of respondents deemed important in 2017 were:

1. Access to quality, coordinated **health care services**.
2. **Early childhood special education services** (pre-kindergarten, birth to age 5) to help children with developmental disabilities prepare for school.
3. **Special education services** for students with developmental disabilities.
4. **Protection services** to prevent abuse of people with developmental disabilities.
5. **Employment services** so that people with developmental disabilities can learn job skills.

The more familiar respondents are with developmental disabilities, the more likely they are to say that it is important for the government to use taxpayers' money to provide various services to people with developmental disabilities.

### About the respondents

Each survey included a random sample of Minnesotans with the sample profile closely matching the general population of Minnesota.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the 2017 survey was administered among larger sample sizes of racial and ethnic communities in Minnesota. Detailed findings from this oversampling strategy can be found [here](#).

**Table 1: Sample sizes of the 1962, 2007, 2012, and 2017 general public attitudes surveys**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
1962	900
2007	806
2012	285
2017	1,001

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<sup>2</sup> For more detail on the methodologies of each survey, refer to the complete survey reports for [1962](#), [2007](#), [2012](#), and [2017](#) as posted on the Council's website.