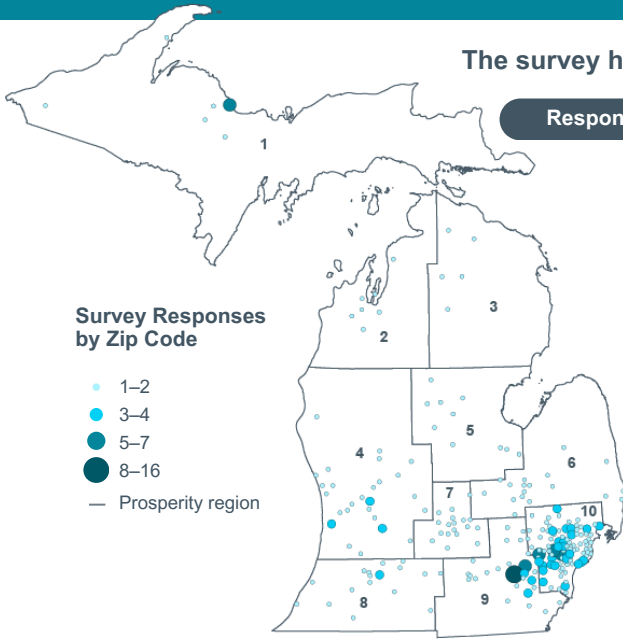
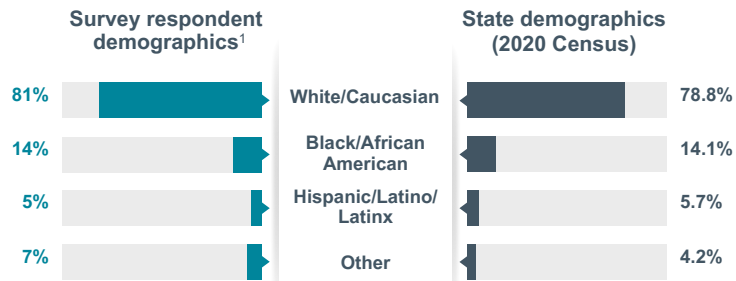


The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) was founded on the vision that people with autism will lead lives that meet their greatest potential. In 2023, AAoM fielded an unprecedented online survey to inform collective advocacy efforts to improve access and grow opportunities for students with disabilities across the state.

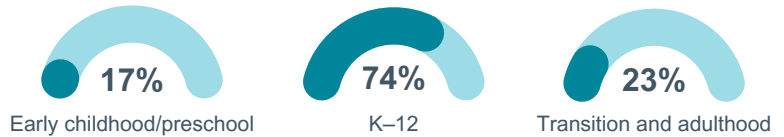
The survey had **890 responses** from across Michigan.



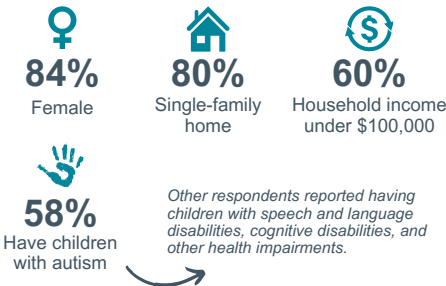
Respondents mirror Michigan's racial demographics:



Respondents included individuals with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities from various educational levels:



Respondent characteristics:



What Is Special Education?

The system we refer to as "special education" is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975 and last reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Under IDEA, schools are obligated to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students through an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP). IEPs and IFSPs are legal documents outlining the services and supports a student needs. With tools like these, IDEA helps prepare eligible children with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living.

Least Restrictive Environment

Under IDEA, the requirements for least restrictive environment (LRE) are a foundational principle in special education.² LRE specifies that students with disabilities are educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, alongside their nondisabled peers, while still meeting their unique educational needs. LRE must be considered for both academic and nonacademic settings and is not limited to the classroom environment.³

According to respondents, the settings in which students with disabilities are most likely to spend time with their nondisabled peers include:

Academic setting

60%

Classroom environment



The majority of respondents (57%) did not feel that their preschool student spends enough time with nondisabled peers.

Nonacademic setting

45%

Lunch

44%

Specials

36%

Recess



The majority of respondents (64%) did feel like their K-12 student spends the right amount of time with their nondisabled peers.

To learn more about Autism Alliance of Michigan or to get involved, go to: autismallianceofmichigan.org/education-initiatives/ or **SCAN THIS CODE FOR MORE INFO**



Student Placement⁴



85%

Of respondents or their children attended a school that served a wide variety of students



14%

Of respondents or their children attended a school for students with disabilities



21%

Of students with autism spend their time in a classroom with nondisabled peers



29%

Of students with other disabilities

compared to

N = 402



“When we are out in the community as a family, general education kids come up to him and say hi. That is what I wanted. I didn't want him to be a stranger in his own town.”

—Michigan parent

¹ Survey demographic questions were optional.

² Office of Special Education, Michigan Department of Education, October 2023. *Least Restrictive Environment: The Requirements Package*. Accessed January 30, 2024.

³ Office of Special Education, Michigan Department of Education, December 2023. *Least Restrictive Environment: Nonacademic Settings*. Accessed January 30, 2024

⁴ Respondents were asked to select all options that applied. Select options are shown here.