

## The integration of disabled students in public and private primary and lower secondary schools

### School Years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010

*ISTAT has released the first results of the survey on students with disabilities in primary and lower secondary schools (public and private) for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years.*

*Conducted as part of a project financed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (Miur), the goal of the survey was to examine the resources and tools that have been adopted by single school centers to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities. The survey response rate for SY 2008-2009 was 77%, 20,426 schools have filled the questionnaire. The response rate for the subsequent year was 89%, for a total of 23,451 schools participating in the study.*

#### **Main results**

During SY 2009-2010, fewer than 130 thousand disabled students were enrolled in compulsory education: about 73 thousand in primary school and 59 thousand in lower secondary school.

About 5% of the disabled students in primary school had vision-related disabilities, about 5% had hearing difficulties and about 14.3% had problems related to mobility. Regional differences were clearly evident with respect to learning and attention-deficit problems, which affected 24.4% and 26% of disabled students. National values range from 18.3% with learning difficulties and 19.8% with attention-deficit issues in the North to 34.7% and 34.6% in the South, respectively (Table 1).

The difficulties that characterized disabled students in lower secondary school were similar to those found in primary school. Visual and hearing difficulties were experienced by approximately 4% of disabled students, while 11.2% were faced with mobility problems. Noteworthy geographical differences were found with respect to learning and attention-deficit difficulties, with higher values detected in the South.

The scholastic environment remained fairly inaccessible and the number of schools equipped to overcome architectural barriers appeared to be too low, although this area had shown some improvement. Lower secondary schools seemed to offer better access for disabled students in comparison to lower order schools. In general terms, the removal of architectural barriers for both scholastic orders seems to be improving from one year to the next (Table 2).

In terms of learning ability, the key professional figures are the curricular teacher and the learning-support teacher, who provide mutual support in the development of communications, relations and socialization. Other professional figures include the cultural education assistant (CEA) and the personal assistant<sup>1</sup>, the communications facilitator<sup>2</sup>, the communicator for the deaf<sup>3</sup> and the scholastic aide<sup>4</sup> with the specific assignment of assisting disabled students.

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural education assistants are employees of the Municipality or Cooperative and collaborate actively to promote the integration of dependent minors, supporting their integration with the class and helping them eat and use the restrooms.

<sup>2</sup> The main activities of communications facilitators are targeted at students with cognitive disabilities or autism.

<sup>3</sup> Communicators for Italian sign language (LIS) or deaf-mutes are operators that act as a communication bridge between deaf students, the class and the teachers. The purpose is to reduce communication barriers, offer equal opportunities and make it possible for deaf students to express their full scholastic potential.

<sup>4</sup> Scholastic aides are qualified to provide disabled students with material and hygienic assistance, and they receive a stipendium supplement for this reason.

In SY 2008-2009, the Miur data indicate a total of about 60,529 learning-support teachers for both scholastic orders of public schools combined. Of this population, 33,556 work in primary schools and 26,973 in lower secondary schools.

In addition to learning-support teachers in the public school system, the ISTAT survey registered approximately 13 thousand cultural education assistants, 700 communicators for the deaf, 1,500 communications facilitators and 20,289 scholastic aides with special qualification for assisting disabled students. The regional breakdown of these professional figures reveals substantial variations. The regional distribution of the percentage of schools with at least one disabled student enrolled reveals the greater presence of CEAs in the North, while scholastic aides are more prevalent in the South. This gradient is more marked in primary schools, while it is less apparent in lower secondary schools. In the North, the widespread diffusion of CEAs attests the greater commitment of these regions in terms of spending levels for people with disabilities<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 1. Disabled students categorized by problem type, division and scholastic order. School Year 2009-2010 (percentage values)**

<b>Problem type</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>Center</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Italy</b>
<b>Primary school</b>				
Blindness	0.2	1.2	1.0	0.7
Partial blindness	5.1	3.8	4.5	4.6
Acute deafness	2.0	1.3	1.9	1.8
Partial deafness	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.3
Problems related to mobility	13.9	11.6	16.4	14.3
Learning-specific disorder	18.3	29.1	34.7	26.4
Language-specific disorder	25.0	22.4	28.6	25.8
Generalized developmental disturbance	17.8	14.2	19.3	17.6
Mental retardation	43.1	33.0	40.3	40.1
Attention deficit disorder	19.8	24.0	34.6	26.0
Emotional-relational disturbances	17.5	22.8	32.1	23.9
Behavioral disorders	15.8	14.4	21.3	17.5
Early psychiatric disorder	1.0	0.2	0.4	0.6
Other	14.0	16.5	14.0	14.2
<b>Lower secondary school</b>				
Blindness	0.5	0.5	1.3	0.8
Partial blindness	3.8	4.6	2.8	3.6
Acute deafness	1.6	1.4	0.9	1.3
Partial deafness	3.4	2.7	4.5	3.7
Problems related to mobility	9.5	9.6	14.2	11.2
Learning-specific disorder	26.4	40.1	40.9	34.3
Language-specific disorder	15.0	16.3	22.3	17.9
Generalized developmental disturbance	10.2	12.5	13.8	12.0
Mental retardation	44.8	34.1	45.3	43.0
Attention deficit disorder	17.5	22.8	32.1	23.9
Emotional-relational disturbances	18.1	15.8	24.6	20.0
Behavioral disorders	13.7	14.3	23.4	17.4
Early psychiatric disorder	1.5	0.5	1.3	1.3
Other	16.4	15.4	14.3	15.4

Source: ISTAT

Note: The sum of each percentage column is greater than 100 because a single disabled student can have more than one type of problem.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.istat.it/dati/dataset/20100903\\_00/](http://www.istat.it/dati/dataset/20100903_00/)

**Table 2. Schools with regulation architectural features by school year, architectural feature, scholastic order and region (for 100 schools in the same region)**

Regions	Accessible stairs	Accessible hygienic services	Accessible internal access routes	Accessible external access routes	Accessible stairs	Accessible hygienic services	Accessible internal access routes	Accessible external access route
	School year 2008/2009				School year 2009/2010			
<b>Primary School</b>								
Piemonte	78.58	71.38	52.47	47.70	85.00	75.02	61.97	55.36
Valle d'Aosta	68.35	83.54	49.37	44.30	87.50	90.28	54.17	59.72
Lombardia	84.60	85.51	60.93	58.30	86.63	87.21	73.48	68.48
P. A. Bolzano	-	-	-	-	89.72	70.57	83.33	78.72
P. A. Trento	92.82	84.53	68.51	70.17	95.78	84.34	75.90	68.67
Veneto	80.99	80.29	53.25	51.47	81.93	81.72	68.24	66.16
Friuli Venezia Giulia	75.47	76.09	57.76	57.14	82.91	79.83	68.07	60.78
Liguria	78.09	62.47	41.56	41.06	84.10	65.67	65.44	55.99
Emilia romagna	80.44	82.42	52.39	53.90	83.84	84.37	68.11	66.53
Toscana	75.08	74.41	50.51	51.42	77.79	79.28	61.42	57.81
Umbria	71.99	64.89	47.52	47.52	76.49	76.84	58.95	52.98
Marche	80.05	64.40	43.99	38.55	85.39	66.52	58.20	49.66
Lazio	76.22	69.82	52.70	51.35	80.02	73.36	59.86	58.56
Abruzzo	74.61	57.85	42.93	39.27	73.03	66.59	62.29	53.70
Molise	53.97	53.17	45.24	32.54	56.20	54.01	54.01	41.61
Campania	76.59	56.45	53.33	50.94	76.67	59.27	65.43	59.63
Puglia	78.84	66.92	57.97	56.33	81.10	68.37	70.08	67.85
Basilicata	73.01	51.53	44.17	36.81	80.95	59.79	64.55	52.91
Calabria	54.77	44.78	38.12	33.59	56.88	50.47	50.70	46.50
Sicilia	72.29	63.65	55.90	52.02	72.85	66.40	66.98	59.96
Sardegna	68.97	70.34	48.97	49.20	73.45	80.44	65.87	58.48
<b>Italy</b>	<b>76.82</b>	<b>70.39</b>	<b>52.77</b>	<b>50.52</b>	<b>79.52</b>	<b>73.33</b>	<b>65.56</b>	<b>60.59</b>
<b>Lower secondary school</b>								
Piemonte	82.56	78.15	58.72	52.54	90.13	87.10	70.97	63.76
Valle d'Aosta	80.95	95.24	38.1	38.1	100.00	100.00	50.00	55.00
Lombardia	88.48	86.78	64.68	59.49	91.48	88.04	77.28	71.34
P. A. Bolzano	-	-	-	-	89.04	84.93	82.19	72.60
P. A. Trento	90.63	89.06	67.19	67.19	96.77	85.48	74.19	69.35
Veneto	87.29	85.64	60.96	56.35	90.73	87.15	72.03	67.32
Friuli Venezia Giulia	88.49	80.58	53.24	56.83	91.84	84.35	74.83	68.03
Liguria	83.69	68.09	55.32	51.06	86.81	67.03	70.33	55.49
Emilia romagna	86.26	82.42	55.49	53.3	91.47	85.31	73.22	69.43
Toscana	80.12	78.29	55.05	56.27	88.21	83.59	69.74	61.79
Umbria	78.95	68.42	50.53	49.47	88.89	82.91	64.96	61.54
Marche	84.21	68.9	46.41	44.98	90.70	69.77	61.86	53.95
Lazio	83.44	73.71	53.62	51.55	85.02	78.52	62.64	60.11
Abruzzo	82.49	64.41	49.72	45.2	83.17	69.31	69.80	54.46
Molise	61.64	60.27	41.1	34.25	65.00	58.75	48.75	45.00
Campania	82.51	65.87	60.44	52.97	85.77	69.68	73.14	63.56
Puglia	81.31	69.44	61.72	62.31	92.58	76.32	74.40	73.92
Basilicata	78.9	57.8	55.96	51.38	82.79	66.39	74.59	59.84
Calabria	68.58	50.68	37.5	33.11	79.64	56.74	58.27	49.87
Sicilia	82.25	71.37	59.35	58.02	86.34	74.73	72.06	67.66
Sardegna	75.18	75.18	52.55	54.38	78.53	80.77	64.74	59.94
<b>Italy</b>	<b>82.97</b>	<b>75.15</b>	<b>57.03</b>	<b>53.82</b>	<b>87.75</b>	<b>78.75</b>	<b>70.63</b>	<b>64.33</b>

Source: ISTAT

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