

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

School Year 2011-2012

Istat releases the results of the survey on students with disabilities in primary and lower secondary schools (public and private) for the 2011-2012 school year.

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 was 88%, 23,222 schools have filled the questionnaire.

Main results

During 2011-2012 school year about 145 thousand disabled students were enrolled in compulsory education: about 81 thousand in primary school and 63 thousand in lower secondary school.

About 5.3% of the disabled students in primary school had vision-related disabilities, about 6% had hearing difficulties and about 13.0% had problems related to mobility. Regional differences were clearly evident with respect to learning and attention-deficit problems, which affected 20.1% and 27% of disabled students. National values range from 14.7% with learning difficulties and 21.9% with attention-deficit issues in the North to 26.7% and 33.0% in the South and Island, 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 9.8% 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 and Island area.

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 assistant¹, the communications facilitator², the communicator for the deaf³ and the scholastic aide⁴ with the specific assignment of assisting disabled students.

¹ 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.

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

³ 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.

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

In 2011-2012 school year, the Miur data indicate a total of about 65 thousand learning-support teachers for both scholastic orders of public schools combined. 80% of student with disability was supported in the learning activity by the learning support teacher while 7.8% of students were supported in the activity of daily living by the teacher in place of others professional figures such as the cultural education assistant (CEA) and the personal assistant.

Table 1. Disabled students categorized by problem type, division and scholastic order. School year 2011-2012 (percentage values)

Problem type	North	Center	South and Island	Italy
Primary school				
Blindness	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.3
Partial blindness	3.6	4.0	4.4	4.0
Acute deafness	1.3	1.9	2.7	1.9
Partial deafness	3.1	5.0	3.3	3.6
Problems related to mobility	12.6	11.2	14.6	13.0
Learning-specific disorder	14.7	20.8	26.7	20.1
Language-specific disorder	23.9	23.8	26.4	24.7
Generalized developmental disturbance	16.5	17.7	18.0	17.3
Mental retardation	37.6	30.0	38.3	36.3
Attention deficit disorder	21.9	28.2	33.0	27.0
Emotional-relational disturbances	18.8	17.1	19.8	18.8
Behavioral disorders	16.1	17.8	23.2	18.9
Early psychiatric disorder	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.7
Other	15.4	14.9	10.8	13.7
Lower secondary school				
Blindness	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6
Partial blindness	3.4	3.9	3.2	3.4
Acute deafness	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.7
Partial deafness	2.8	2.7	3.3	3.0
Problems related to mobility	8.4	10.1	11.5	9.8
Learning-specific disorder	21.0	26.9	29.0	24.9
Language-specific disorder	12.5	11.7	15.6	13.4
Generalized developmental disturbance	10.6	11.7	13.4	11.8
Mental retardation	42.3	37.8	46.4	42.9
Attention deficit disorder	20.2	22.4	27.9	23.3
Emotional-relational disturbances	18.4	18.3	18.0	18.2
Behavioral disorders	14.1	12.9	19.5	15.8
Early psychiatric disorder	1.4	0.7	0.5	1.0
Other	15.0	16.0	11.5	14.0

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.

Table 2. Schools with regulation architectural features by school year, architectural feature, scholastic order and region. School year 2011-2012 (for 100 schools in the same region)

Regions	Accessible stairs	Accessible hygienic services	Accessible internal access routes	Accessible external access routes
Primary school				
Piemonte	84.5	77.8	51.8	46.8
Valle d'Aosta	96.0	93.3	41.3	46.7
Lombardia	86.0	88.3	57.2	55.7
Trentino Alto Adige	92.0	82.9	68.6	63.2
<i>P. A. Bolzano</i>	<i>90.8</i>	<i>77.1</i>	<i>76.8-</i>	<i>68.9</i>
<i>P. A. Trento</i>	<i>94.0</i>	<i>92.3</i>	<i>55.5</i>	<i>53.9</i>
Veneto	83.0	83.5	52.7	53.5
Friuli Venezia Giulia	81.8	79.8	55.1	55.1
Liguria	82.6	68.0	48.2	46.4
Emilia Romagna	84.6	87.9	56.0	56.0
Toscana	77.3	81.9	51.1	49.6
Umbria	75.3	79.9	53.7	53.0
Marche	85.2	70.10	53.9	51.4
Lazio	79.8	76.9	42.7	41.6
Abruzzo	74.1	67.4	49.1	43.8
Molise	63.7	61.5	37.0	31.9
Campania	77.4	63.8	45.1	44.0
Puglia	85.0	73.5	52.5	52.0
Basilicata	85.3	61.4	48.7	47.2
Calabria	58.6	55.7	35.6	31.6
Sicilia	72.2	71.3	49.7	48.0
Sardegna	71.8	80.7	51.2	46.6
Italy	79.8	76.4	50.7	48.9
Lower secondary school				
Piemonte	92.0	87.3	57.5	54.5
Valle d'Aosta	100.0	100.0	57.9	47.4
Lombardia	92.0	90.3	59.0	54.5
Trentino Alto Adige	93.2	89.8	67.3	60.5
<i>P. A. Bolzano</i>	<i>90.7</i>	<i>85.3</i>	<i>76.0</i>	<i>64.0-</i>
<i>P. A. Trento</i>	<i>95.8</i>	<i>94.4</i>	<i>58.3</i>	<i>56.9</i>
Veneto	92.2	87.0	58.8	55.7
Friuli Venezia Giulia	90.1	88.1	55.0	54.3
Liguria	89.7	72.1	57.0	45.5
Emilia Romagna	91.6	88.0	56.3	56.8
Toscana	90.1	83.2	53.8	49.4
Umbria	93.0	85.1	58.8	56.1
Marche	89.1	74.9	55.0	49.8
Lazio	87.1	79.2	46.4	48.6
Abruzzo	90.2	76.9	49.8	43.8
Molise	78.7	72.0	41.3	37.3
Campania	84.3	68.6	46.3	44.4
Puglia	91.3	80.2	51.6	51.9
Basilicata	86.6	67.9	47.0	49.3
Calabria	80.4	64.9	36.1	32.3
Sicilia	85.7	78.3	52.4	52.3
Sardegna	81.0	84.7	50.7	47.8
Italy	88.7	81.1	52.9	50.4

Source: ISTAT

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