

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN AMERICA

THE SHRIVER REPORT

SNAPSHOT

INSIGHT: How you can change the game.

1. Inclusion Works.

America is split almost directly down the middle when it comes to knowing someone with an intellectual disability. Exposure is the game-changing ingredient in gaging people's attitudes. Those who personally know someone with ID (56%) are two times more likely to understand what it means to have an intellectual disability and stunningly more comfortable employing (84%) or working with someone with an intellectual disability (87%), having their child in the same class as a child with intellectual disabilities (92%) and having their child date (53%) or marry (47%) someone with an intellectual disability. When we stop, smile and start a conversation with someone with an intellectual disability we become more informed, conscious and compassionate.

2. Isolation perpetuates fear, misunderstanding and old judgments

Long since the institutions that warehoused Americans with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) have closed, nearly half of America's adult population say they don't know a single person with ID and a stunning 1 in 5 have never heard of an intellectual disability. The 44% of Americans who don't have personal contact with ID are significantly less accepting and positive and opportunities to engage remain rare. Only 13% of Americans have a friend with ID and only 5% of Americans work with someone with ID. Of the people who do know someone with an ID, a majority of them are in their family. This suggests that, despite some gains in visibility, the estimated 3 to 9 million intellectually disabled people living in the United States remain largely invisible to many Americans.

3. "R-Word": Not acceptable when describing someone with a clear

intellectual disability but still OK to many when used with friends.

Yes, there was a time when the word “retard” could be found in legitimate text books, but the word has long since been retired by the medical community and declared a common, catch-all slur. Despite the effort to ban the “r-word”, Americans still have divergent feelings about use of the word. A vast majority (89%) agrees that calling someone with Down syndrome or autism a retard is offensive and find it offensive when directed at a stranger (76%) who does something foolish.

Nevertheless, a large numbers of Americans the word retard can be used inoffensively in other situations. 46% think it’s inoffensive to call a friend a retard or to describe oneself that way after making a mistake (56%). Young American men, ages 18-54, find the “r-word” the least offensive of any group when used in jest. Millennial women, find it the most offensive.

4. Millennial Women, Ages 18-34, are True Game Changers and Most Accepting.

Young women have shown that they will be the driving force in setting a new social agenda on intellectual disabilities. Millennial women ages 18-34 were the most compassionate, inclusive and progressive of any group surveyed. While Millennials shared a similar openness to having an intellectually disabled person as a co-worker, neighbor, or having their child share a classroom with someone with ID, they were almost twice as open as those ages 65+ to having a child date or marry someone with an intellectual disability. Millennial women in particular were progressive on this front, with 63 percent saying they would feel comfortable having their child date someone with an intellectual disability while only 37 percent of people (across both genders) over 65 felt comfortable.

5. Most Americans support financial assistance for people with ID and their families; Nation Split on Death Penalty

A significant majority of Americans (62%) believe that people with ID and their families should receive federal assistance from the federal

government. Most Americans no longer support the practice of institutionalizing the intellectually disabled, with an overwhelming majority of Americans (84%) saying that people with ID should be encouraged to live independently into adulthood. And yet, nearly 95 percent of adults with ID are unemployed, so financial assistance is an imperative part of remaining integrating in society.

When it comes to the criminal justice system, nearly half of Americans think that an intellectual disability should not be a factor when it comes to the ultimate penalty. Forty-four percent of Americans believe that a person with an intellectual disability who is facing a crime where the death penalty is a possibility should be treated no differently than someone without an intellectual disability.

6. Widespread fear persists about parenting a child with ID, even among Millennial women.

Nearly all Americans (91%) said they would expect at least some expectant parents to terminate a pregnancy or give the child up for adoption if an intellectual disability were discovered. Among them, nearly 1 in 5 (18%) said that most would abort or give up the child.

An overwhelming majority of Americans (93%) said that fear would be the driving motivator to abort or give up a child in a pregnancy involving ID. This includes the fear of not being able to emotionally handle the situation (84%), the fear of not being able to physically handle the situation (74%) or simply the fear of what's ahead (80%). For others, financial concerns would be a factor (66%) or they impact having such a child would have on the relationship with their partner (31%).

Women of childbearing age are particularly susceptible to these fears, with women ages 18 to 34 nearly unanimously reporting (97%) that fear would cause someone to abort or give up a child with ID.

7. As compassion grows, Americans still have a "not in my backyard" mentality about the intellectually disabled.

There is a prominent divide in what Americans know to be right and what they are comfortable with when it comes to the intellectually disabled. By and large, Americans today demonstrate understanding that intellectually disabled people are capable of living fulfilling lives that include romantic relationships, employment, and other opportunities once denied them. Nevertheless, in practice, Americans' comfort level with the intellectually disabled lag noticeably behind their evolving beliefs.

An overwhelming majority of Americans (93%) believe that adults with intellectual disabilities should be encouraged to have jobs, and yet fewer say they would be comfortable employing someone with ID (80%) or working alongside them (83%). A similar slippage occurs in reaction to romantic relationships. Exactly half of Americans say they would be comfortable with their child dating someone with an intellectual disability, but the rate of acceptance drops when it comes to marriage (45%).

8. Doctors across the globe should be trained to treat people with intellectual disabilities.

Every individual deserves access to exceptional healthcare and healthcare providers who are informed about people with intellectual disabilities. The Special Olympics Healthy Athletes program has trained over 16,000 doctors on the nuances and importance of treating patients with intellectual disabilities. According to a survey conducted from 2013-2015, over 72% of doctors trained in the program say they would seek out more patients with intellectual disabilities when they returned to their communities. Over 90% of the volunteers involved in the programs said that the training improved their ability to communicate with people with ID and that it was useful and relevant to their daily work. Talk to your doctor about his or her willingness to treat patients with intellectual disabilities and encourage them to be effectively trained.

9. Reaching out makes all the difference.

Young Americans, who have grown up in classrooms and on playing fields with people with intellectual disabilities are driving the nation towards acceptance. According to a recent evaluation, students who played on a

Special Olympics Unified Sports team that integrates athletes with ID were significantly more likely to say hello to, eat lunch with, hang out after school and invite a student with an intellectual disability to socialize. In a poll of students who play on a Unified Sports team, 77% said they learn something from students with ID. Petition your state to mandate that all schools have Unified Sports Teams. Every middle school, high school, college and workplace should have a Best Buddies program to encourage one on one engagement with people with intellectual disabilities. Parents, teachers, students and employers should all contact a local Best Buddies chapter to move their school or organization forward.

10. Let's Change the Game.

You're invited to be a part of the movement to include, understand and value every American. **WATCH, the inspiring "30 for 30" film from ESPN on Eunice Kennedy Shriver, "Brave in the Attempt."** Then join the #LetsChangetheGameChallenge. If you can remember to P.L.A.Y. you can accelerate acceptance. Go to SpecialOlympics.org to join today!

P: Play teaches us sportsmanship, team building character and friendship. All athletes should be invited to play through Unified Sports Teams.

L: Learn to open your heart and mind and get informed by reading *The Shriver Report Snapshot: Insight into Intellectual Disabilities in the 21st Century*.

A: Accept that we are all much more alike than we are different. **True game changers value inclusion.** Use your voice and change your language to challenge hurtful stereotypes.

Y: Say "yes"! If you are an employer say "yes!" to hiring someone with an intellectual disability. If you are a coach say "yes!" to inviting players with intellectual disabilities to join your team. If you are a health care professional say "yes!" to treating people with intellectual disabilities. If you are a parent, say "yes!" to teaching your children about the importance of inclusion. If you're inspired, "say yes!" to joining the millions who volunteer.

#Letschangethegame. For more, read the full new, groundbreaking survey: ***The Shriver Report Snapshot: An Insight into Intellectual Disabilities in the 21st Century.***