

Iran Autism Association (IAA)

UPR of United States of America (3rd Cycle - 36th Session)



Website: <https://irautism.org>

Email: ic@irautism.org

Contact Person: Raheleh Rezaee

Postal Address: No.8, Mojahed Kabir St,
East Laleh Blvd, South Sattari Highway, Tehran, Iran

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) remains a critical public health and human rights issue in the United States, with millions of individuals facing systemic barriers to healthcare, education, and social inclusion. Despite advancements in awareness, many autistic individuals continue to experience discrimination, inadequate support, and disparities in access to essential services. This report examines the current challenges faced by the autism community in the U.S.

Rising Prevalence and Healthcare Disparities

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), autism prevalence in the U.S. has increased significantly, with 1 in 36 children diagnosed with ASD in 2024, up from 1 in 54 in 2020 (CDC, 2024). This rise highlights the growing need for expanded healthcare services. However, many patients, particularly from low-income and minority communities, struggle to access timely diagnoses and interventions. A 2023 study by the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network found that Black and Hispanic children are diagnosed later than white children, delaying critical early interventions (ADDM, 2023).

Educational and Employment Discrimination

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), children with autism are entitled to free and appropriate education. Yet, a 2022 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that only 42% of school districts fully comply with federal special education requirements, leaving many autistic students without necessary accommodations (GAO, 2022). In adulthood, employment rates remain alarmingly low—a 2021 study by Drexel University found that only 21.7% of autistic adults were employed, compared to 65% of non-disabled peers (Drexel University, 2021).

Crisis in Mental Health and Housing

Autistic individuals are disproportionately affected by mental health crises. A 2023 study in *The Lancet Psychiatry* reported that 70% of autistic youth experience anxiety or depression, yet fewer than 30% receive adequate mental health care (The Lancet, 2023). Additionally, housing instability is a severe issue—a 2024 Autism Speaks survey found that 1 in 4 autistic adults experience homelessness or housing insecurity due to a lack of supportive living options (Autism Speaks, 2024).

Human Rights Violations and Advocacy

Although the U.S. has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it is still expected to uphold the core values of the Convention, such as ensuring equal access and protecting persons with disabilities from discrimination, by aligning its policies and practices with international human rights standards. Restrictive policies, such as Medicaid waivers with long waiting lists, leave thousands without essential services. Advocacy groups like the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) emphasize the need for policy reforms, including:

- Universal healthcare coverage for autism-related therapies.
- Anti-discrimination enforcement in schools and workplaces.

- Expansion of community-based housing to prevent institutionalization.

Recommendation

While awareness of autism has grown, systemic neglect persists, violating the rights of autistic individuals to health, education, and dignity. Without urgent policy interventions, the U.S. risks failing an entire generation of neurodiverse citizens.

References

- CDC (2024). Autism Prevalence Increases to 1 in 36 Children.
- ADDM Network (2023). Racial Disparities in Autism Diagnosis.
- GAO (2022). Special Education Compliance in U.S. Schools.
- Drexel University (2021). National Autism Indicators Report: Employment.
- *The Lancet Psychiatry(2023). Mental Health in Autistic Youth.
- Autism Speaks (2024). Housing Instability Among Autistic Adults.