



Nebraska Brain Injury Needs Assessment – 2024 Report Executive Summary

The Nebraska 2024 Brain Injury Needs Assessment was conducted to understand the landscape of services, supports, and unmet needs for individuals affected by brain injuries across the state. Led by Partners for Insightful Evaluation (PIE) in collaboration with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC), the needs assessment drew from multiple data sources. This included three statewide surveys, programmatic data from Nebraska VR and the Brain Injury Association of Nebraska (BIA-NE), secondary data such as the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Registry, and administrative records. The findings are meant to inform Nebraska's Brain Injury State Plan and help identify opportunities to enhance the coordination and delivery of services for those who have experienced and/or care for those with a brain injury.

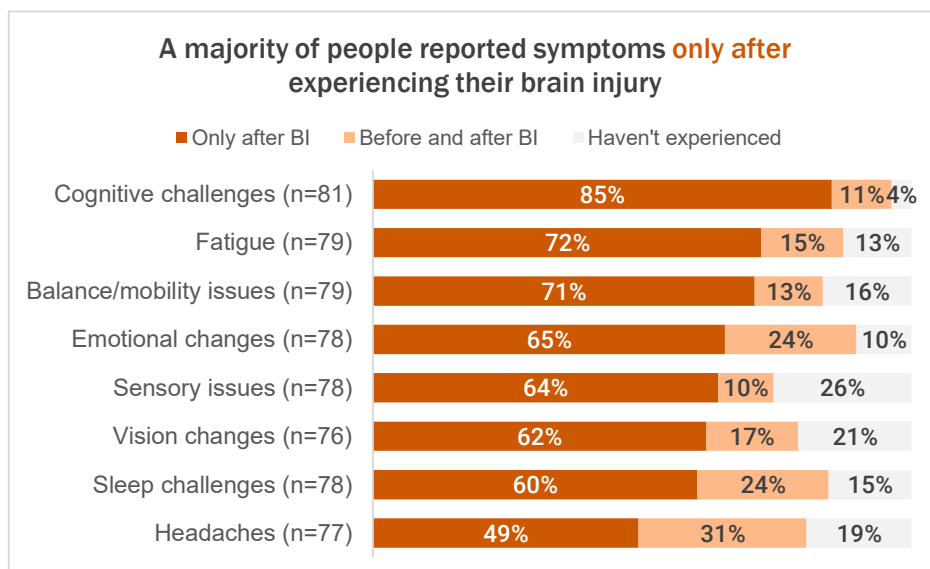
Findings about Brain Injury

Brain Injury in Nebraska

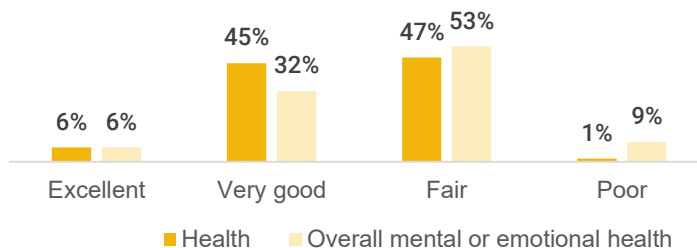
- Between 2017 and 2022, over 75,000 traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) were reported in Nebraska, with a **29% increase** over that period.
- Falls** remain the leading cause, followed by being struck by/against and **motor vehicle accidents**. Other data sources also indicate that motor vehicle accidents are a common cause.
- Individuals with brain injuries span all age groups, but **older adults** (particularly women 85+) **and teenagers** (especially males 15–19) had the highest rates of TBI-related hospitalizations and emergency department visits.
- Across the data, **employment and independent living vary significantly**, with many individuals struggling with long-term impacts.

Symptoms & Impacts

Cognitive, emotional, and sensory symptoms are common. Many report multiple daily living challenges, including difficulty maintaining employment and emotional well-being.



About half the respondents to the individual with brain injury survey noted their health and mental/emotional health were “fair” or “poor” (n=78)



Data from the 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System shows 15% of Nebraskans reported their overall health being “fair” or “poor”

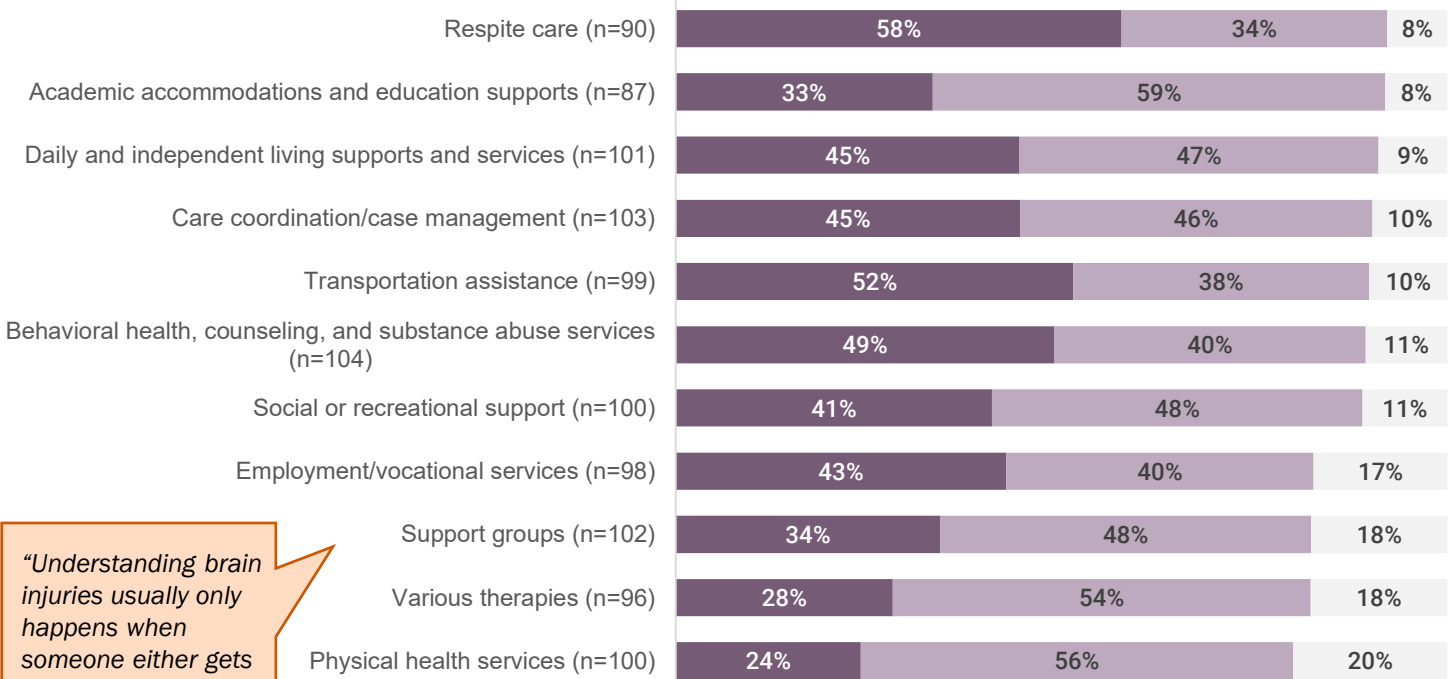
Findings about Services & Barriers

Service Needs & Gaps

In general, there were three key themes people felt needed to be addressed: gaps in services (particularly in rural areas), challenges with service coordination, and need for increased education and awareness:

There were three types of services where more than 90% of service providers and family members/caregivers felt there was a **gap**

■ Significant gap ■ Moderate gap ■ No gap



"Understanding brain injuries usually only happens when someone either gets one, or a person close to them sustains one."

"We need this information in different languages and targeting diverse communities so they also get the information in a culturally-relevant way."

Recommendations



Prioritize & Coordinate Trainings

Results from previous and the current needs assessments point to the need to educate a variety of service providers on brain injury. This includes information about brain injury identification as well as how to navigate life after brain injury, such as behavioral health challenges and appropriate services.



Improve Service Navigation

Increase outreach and centralize information regarding services available, eligibility requirements, and common resources for brain injury recovery – particularly for individuals in rural or underserved areas.



Invest in Public Awareness

Awareness continues to be a key need among individuals with brain injury to help reduce stigma and promote early intervention. There has also been a push to support prevention efforts around the common mechanisms that lead to TBI, including falls and motor vehicle accident prevention.



Strengthen Support Networks

This is not only for those with brain injury, but also family members/caregivers. This may include tailored resources, support groups, culturally responsive materials, and specialized services for high-need groups or those with co-occurring conditions.

A comprehensive list of recommendations are outlined in the full evaluation report.