

INTRODUCTION

Children part of racial and ethnic minority groups have a higher prevalence of intellectual, developmental, and mental health disorders. Of these, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is one of the most common in children.

- A multitude of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities exist among children diagnosed with ASD, which affect their overall health outcomes.
- There is a need for further investigation of these disparities in order to improve the landscape of mental health care access for children with ASD who identify as part of racial and ethnic minority groups.

PURPOSE

To analyze racial disparities in accessing mental health care services among children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

METHODS

- **Design:** Cross-sectional
- **Sample:** 3427 children, ages 0-17, with an active diagnosis of ASD
- **Setting:** 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) database
- **Variables:** NSCH database survey responses using 3-item Likert scale measurements to determine ease of accessibility in accessing mental health care
- **Analysis:** Descriptive statistics to determine the magnitude of difficulty of mental health care access for children with ASD and their caregivers/families. Chi square tests were used to identify differences in mental healthcare access difficulties across different racial and ethnic subgroups represented in the NSCH data set

RESULTS

Figure 1: Racial and Ethnic Distribution of Children Diagnosed with ASD (NSCH, 2021)

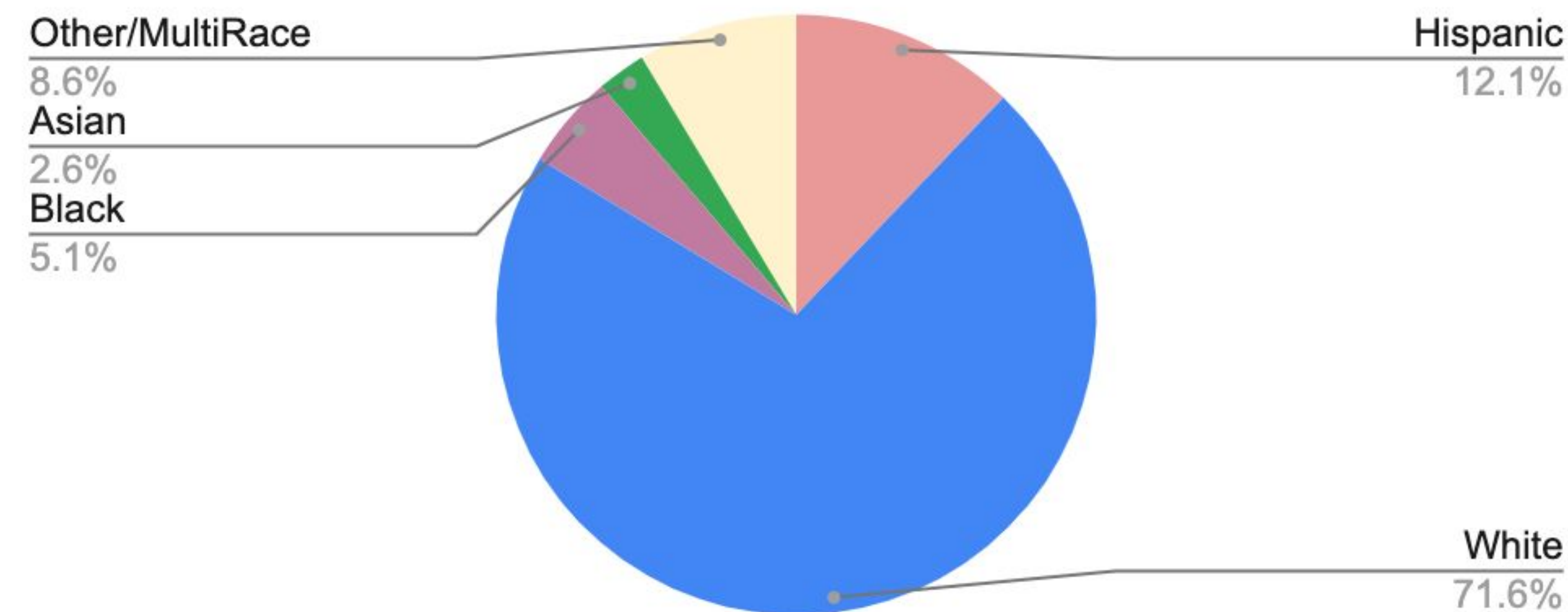
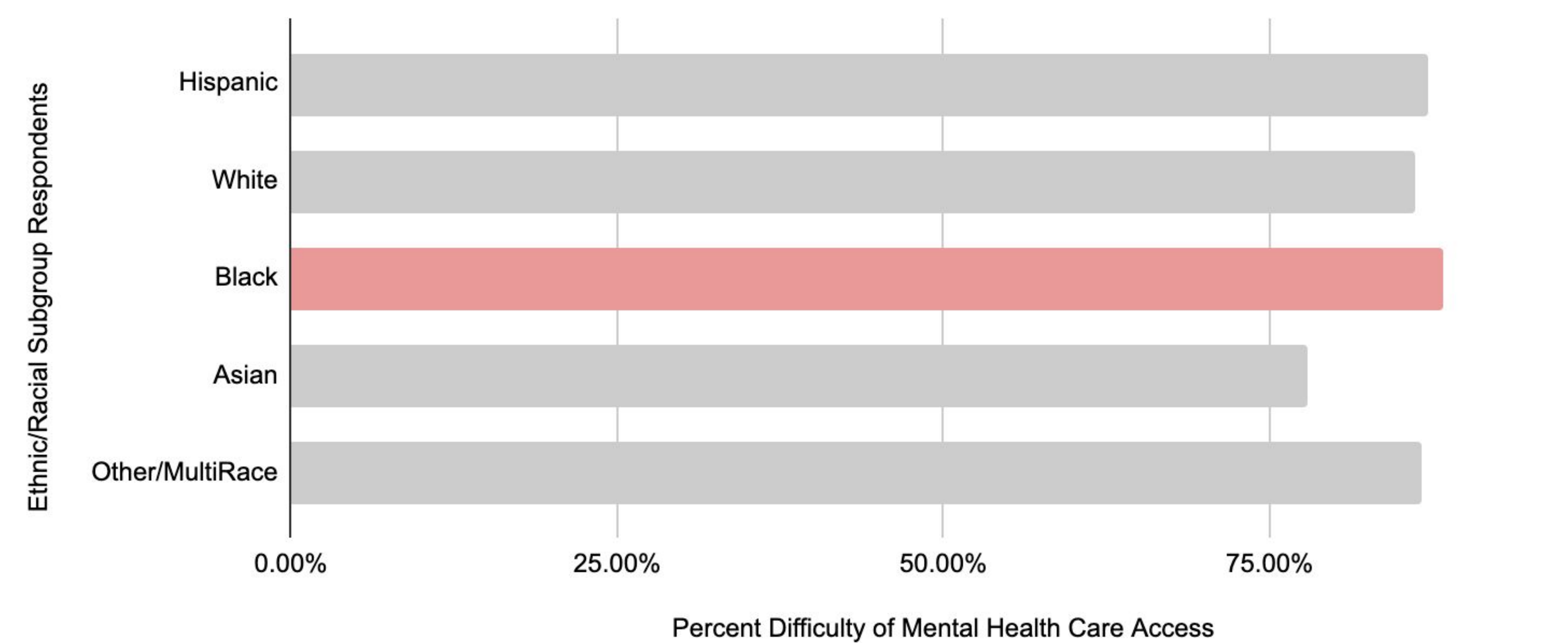


Figure 2: Ease of Access of Mental Health Care Among Children with ASD From Racial and Ethnic Subgroups (NSCH, 2021)



Within the sample, Black participants (n=308) had the highest report of inaccessibility to mental health care for their child diagnosed with ASD (88.31), which was confirmed to be statistically significant ($X^2 (1, n = 308) = 0.05, P < 0.1$).

DISCUSSION

- A significant relationship was found between children who have ASD being more likely than non-ASD children to have increased difficulty obtaining mental health care resources following a chi-squared analysis across all racial and ethnic subgroups in the sample ($X^2 (1, n = 3427) = 0.05, P < 0.1$).
- Non-Hispanic Black children with ASD were most likely to have difficulty accessing mental health care (88.31% of sample, n = 308).
- Further research is needed with minority populations, particularly Asian, Black, and Hispanic groups, to examine experiences in caring for a child with ASD.

CONCLUSION

Children diagnosed with ASD who also identified as being part of an ethnic/racial minority group were more likely to experience difficulty accessing mental health care compared to their White counterparts.

Qualitative research is needed to examine how cultural factors (i.e. beliefs, traditions, stigma) contribute to care provided for children with ASD, and the relationship between culture and perception of mental health care usage/access across racial and ethnic subgroups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

References available upon request.