



**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

# Improving Age of Identification for Autism Spectrum Disorder: Asking Parents

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## Rationale and Purpose

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be reliably diagnosed at age two (Lord, 2006); however, the average age of diagnosis in the U.S is after four (Baio et al., 2018).
- Delay to identification can be substantially greater for children from underserved, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) communities (Mandell et al., 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2014).
- Delay to identification can mean delay to early intervention.
- Chaxiong, Shipchandler, & Hall-Lande (in prep) conducted a systematic literature review to identify parent-reported barriers and facilitators to obtaining a diagnosis of ASD.

This survey study extends on Chaxiong et al. (in prep) to identify barriers and facilitators for supporting parents in obtaining an earlier diagnosis of ASD for their child.

- What factors do parents report *hinder* their ability or willingness to obtain a diagnosis of ASD?
- What factors do parents report *promote* their ability or willingness to obtain a diagnosis of ASD?
- What sources do parents typically use to obtain information on ASD?
- Is there an association between “who” initiates push for an evaluation and age of diagnosis?

## Methods

**Eligibility:** Legal caregiver (age 18+) of a child with a clinical diagnosis and/or educational identification of ASD residing in the U.S.

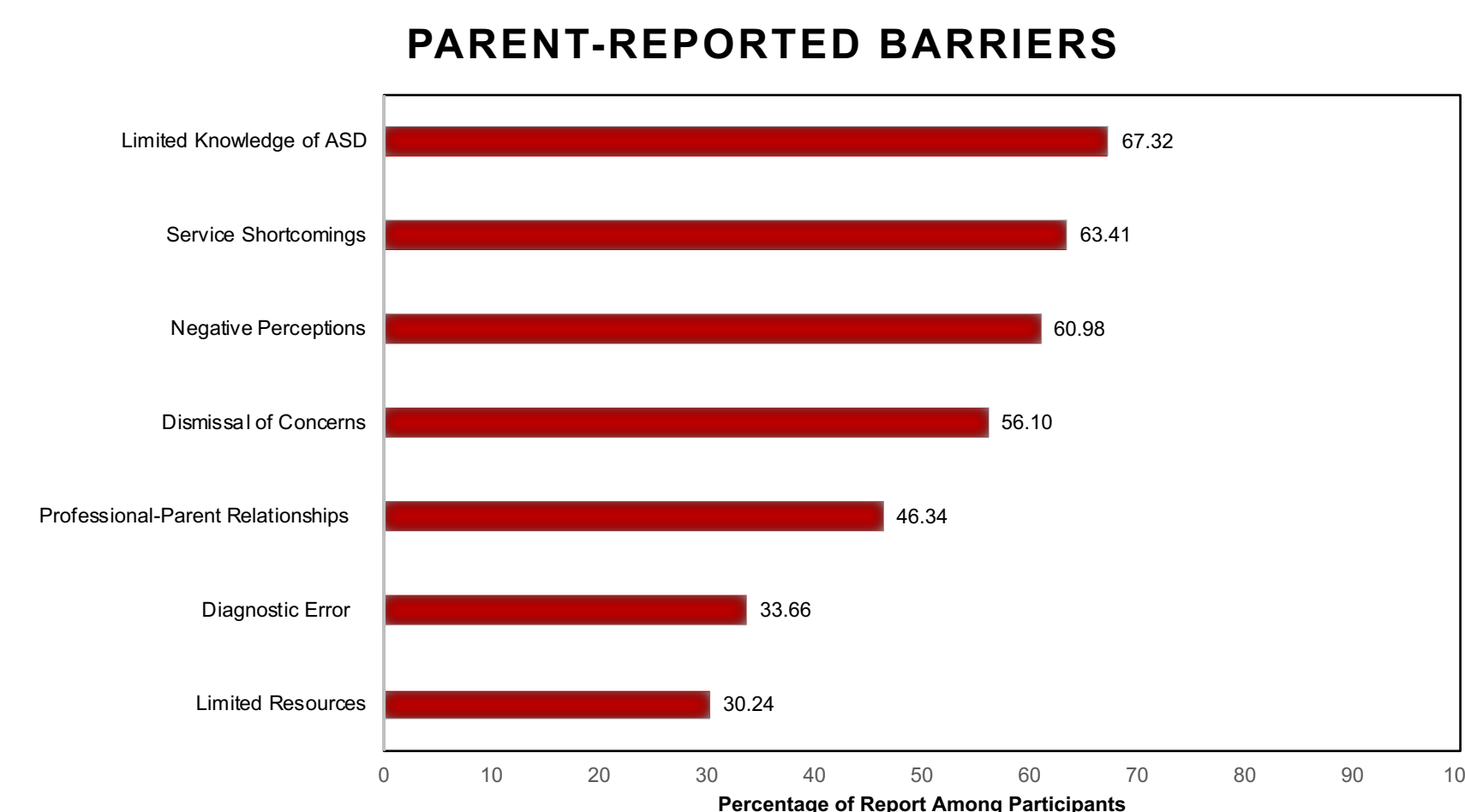
### Participant Demographics (N = 205)

- Average age: 36 (range = 26 – 67)
- White: 76%
- Male participants: 42%
- College degree or higher: 60%
- Lived in the U.S. < 30 years: 14%
- Employed full-time: 65%

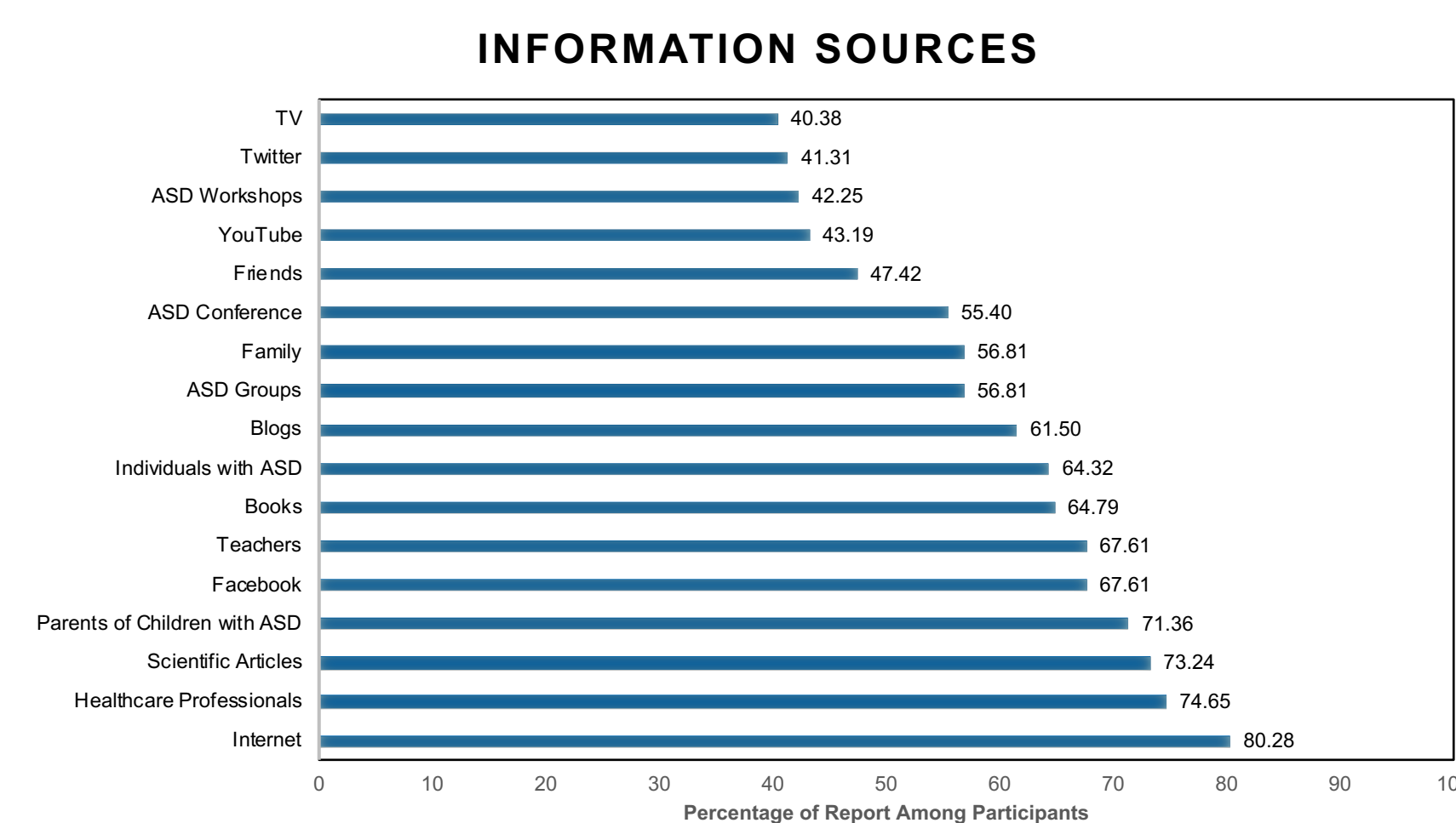
## Results

Type	Age (Years)	% of Children
Educational	6	29
Clinical	5	47
Both	3	23
Overall	5	Total: 205

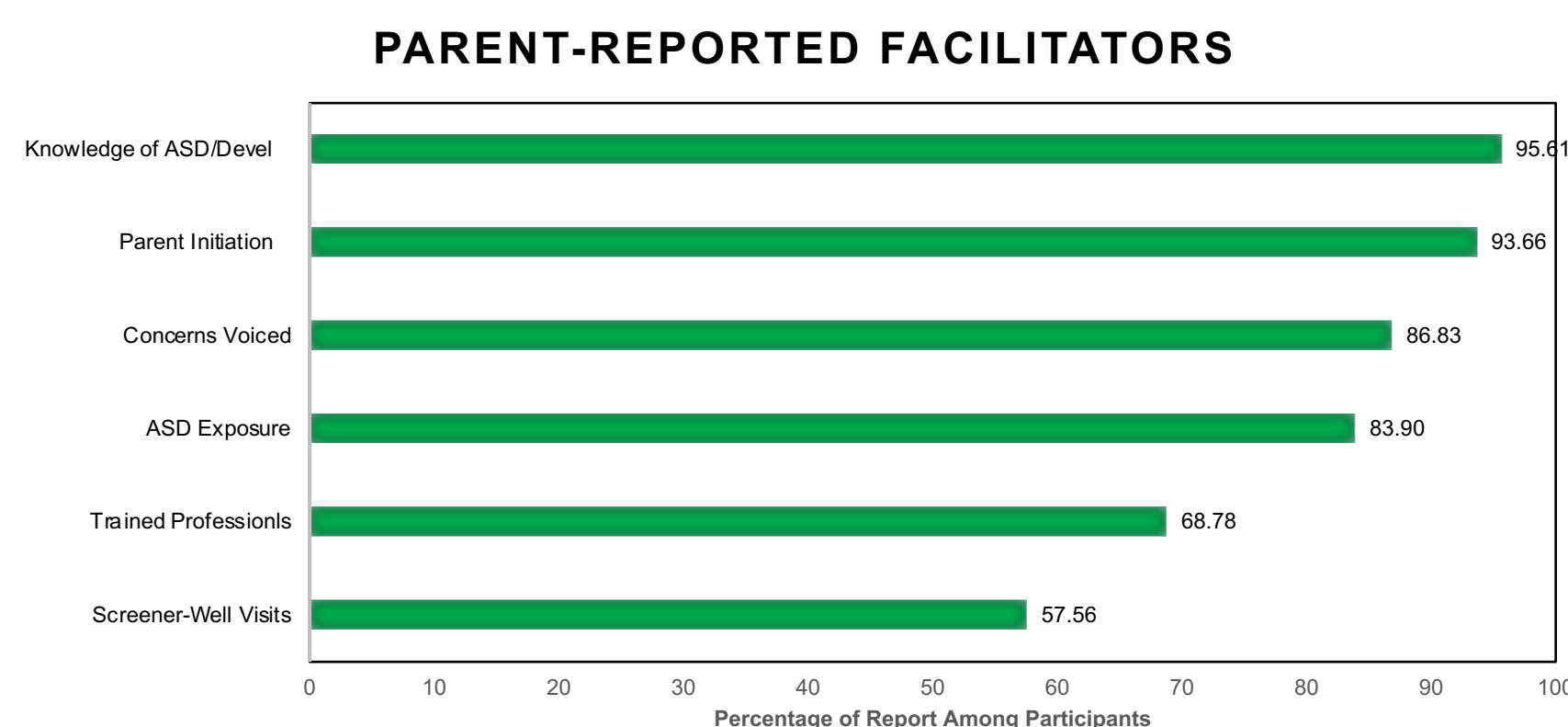
### 1. What factors do parents report *hinder* ability or willingness to obtain an identification of ASD?



### 3. What sources do parents typically use to obtain information on ASD?



### 2. What factors do parents report *promote* ability or willingness to obtain an identification of ASD?



### 4. Is there an association between “who” initiates push for an evaluation and age of identification?

	Age of Identification
(Intercept)	4.568***
Healthcare Professionals	2.044*** (0.645)
Family/Friends	0.432 (0.879)
Teachers	3.088***
Other	0.266

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Observations: 209  
R<sup>2</sup>: 0.125

## Discussion

### Barriers and Facilitators

- The barriers and facilitators reported point to the importance of knowledge of ASD.
- Children whose parents pushed for an identification were associated with an earlier age of identification than children whose teachers or healthcare professional pushed for an identification.
- These findings underscore the importance of--
  - the role parents play in identification and
  - identification programs (e.g., Learn the Signs Act Early) that equip parents with knowledge of child development and ASD.

### Information Sources

- Print material, parents of individuals with ASD, and health care professionals continue to be typically-used information sources (Mackintosh, Meyers & Goin-Kochel, 2005).
- Facebook may be a new, viable platform for reaching a wider range of parents.

## Limitations

- Homogenous sample limits generalizations.
- Low rate of participation from CLD communities suggests more intentional recruitment methods, as well as different methodology (e.g., focus groups, semi-structured interviews) are needed to capture the experiences of parents from communities less familiar with research.
- Geographic information was not collected.
- Survey instrument relies on retrospective parent report.