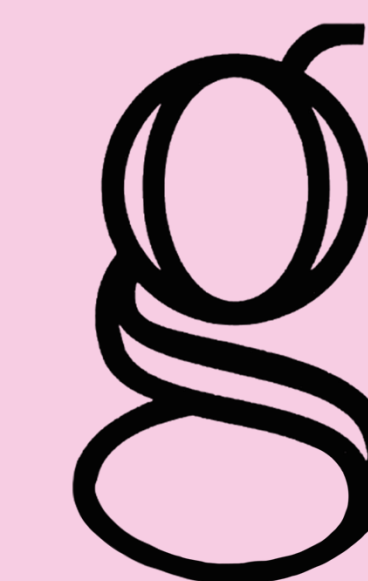
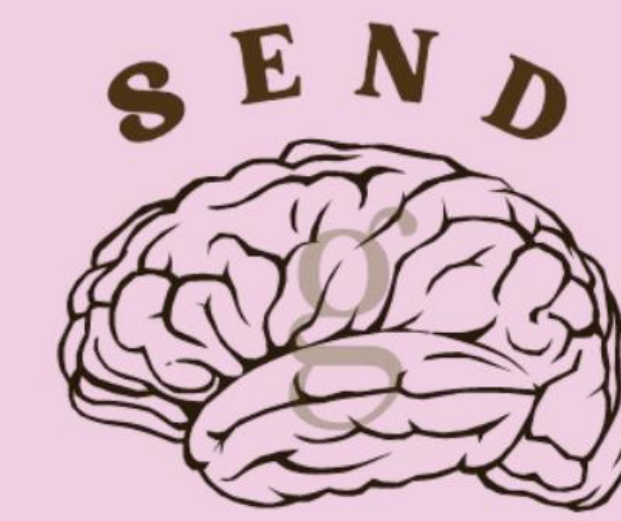




# Evaluating the Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Timing and Quality of Autism Diagnosis in Maryland



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## Research Problem

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) impacts ~**3 percent** of children in the United States<sup>1</sup> and ~**2 percent** of children in Maryland<sup>2</sup>.

**Late diagnosis** of ASD can lead to...

- Impaired development of social and communication skills<sup>3</sup>
- Greater emotional and behavioral problems and social difficulties<sup>4</sup>



**Early diagnosis** of ASD can improve...

- Necessary access to resources such as individualized education, programs, and specialized services such as speech, occupational, behavioral, developmental, or physical therapy<sup>5</sup>

## Research Questions

1. How do socioeconomic factors such as education level, income, and race play a role in receiving a delayed autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis in the state of Maryland?
  - a. Survey: What demographic factors are related to the timing of ASD diagnosis?
  - b. Interview: What are the existing facilitators or barriers to accessing diagnostic services for ASD?

## Methods

**Mixed-method study design** with surveys and interviews. Survey questions cover demographics, onset of symptoms, diagnostic process, and post-diagnostic support. Interview questions go further in-depth with survey content.

**Inclusionary Criteria:**

- Maryland resident
- English-speaking
- A parent or caregiver of a child who is currently under 18 and has an ASD diagnosis per parent report

## Sample Survey Questions

Were you offered practical help/support by health professionals during the process of seeking a diagnosis, or in follow-up appointments soon after diagnosis?

- Yes, offered directly (i.e., if assistance was provided by, for example, arranging appointments for you)
- Yes, signposted towards (i.e., if information was provided but it was left to you to arrange contact)
- No
- Not sure

Overall, how STRESSFUL did you find the diagnostic process?

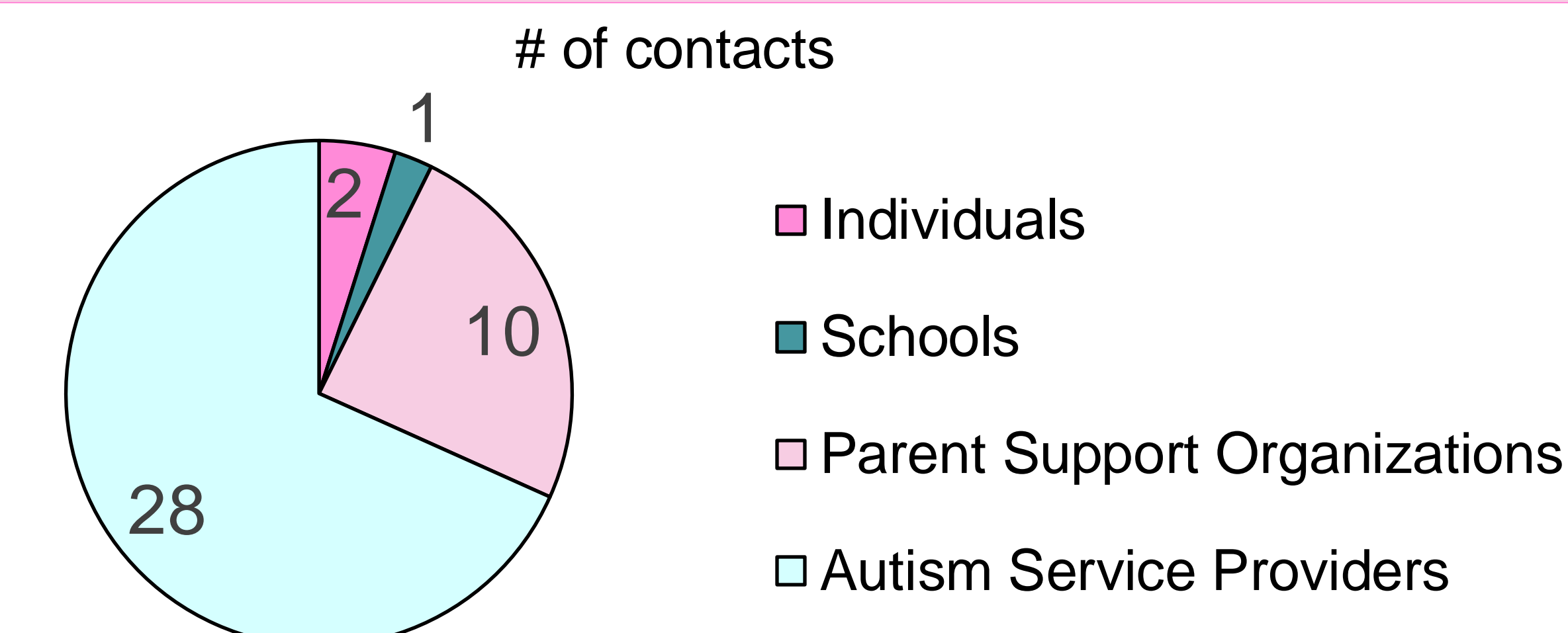
- Very stressful
- Somewhat stressful
- Not very stressful
- Not at all stressful
- OPTIONAL: (please explain why: )

## Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your family.
  - a. Follow up: Tell me more about (child with ASD diagnosis).
2. Please describe the initial concerns you had and/or symptoms you observed in your child.
3. Who did you raise your initial concerns to and how did they respond?
  - a. Follow up if they do not address this: Did it lead to a referral for autism diagnostic testing?

## Outreach

We are building a network of parents and services for autistic youth through emails, phone calls, social media posts, and flyer postings throughout the College Park community. Outreach is ongoing, but currently we have a response rate of **5%**.



## Cross-Case Analysis of Survey Responses

Data collection is ongoing, but included below is a cross-case analysis of our two preliminary survey responses (N=2). Interviews will begin in May 2025.

Participant A	Participant B
Location: Prince George's County	Location: Howard County
Annual Household Income: <b>\$55,000–65,000</b>	Annual Household Income: <b>&gt; \$150,000</b>
Education: <b>Some college</b>	Education: <b>Doctorate</b>
Sought Diagnosis: Child was <b>4 years old</b>	Sought Diagnosis: Child was <b>13 months old</b>
Initial Diagnosis: Developmental delay	Initial Diagnosis: Autism
Second Referral: Neurologist	Second Referral: Child Psychologist
Second Diagnosis: Autism	Post-Diagnosis Support: <b>Directly offered support</b>
Post-Diagnosis Support: <b>Signposted towards support</b>	Member of a Support Group: <b>Yes</b>
Member of a Support Group: <b>No</b>	

### Surveys

### Interviews

- Aim: 300 survey responses
- Contains 53 questions
- ~15-20 minutes long
- Adapted from Crane et al., 2016<sup>6</sup>

- Aim: 30 interviewees pulled from our survey participants
- Semi-structured
- 8 open-ended questions
- ~45 minutes long



Learn more about our project & see if you are eligible to participate here!

Scan to view select references



## Acknowledgements

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## Conclusion & Future Directions

Past research has shown that the prevalence of autism diagnosis among eight-year-olds globally was higher in families with a household income of >\$90,000<sup>7</sup>. Based on this research and our preliminary results, we presume that **socioeconomic factors do impact autism diagnosis in Maryland**. Beyond our project, we hope to see this research influence policies and resources.

Maryland Policies

Language Access Bill & access to **Developmental Disability Administration** services

Making ASD diagnosis & services more accessible