

NEWS

Racial, economic disparities skew New Jersey data on autism, intellectual disability

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Black children are significantly more likely than white children to be identified as having autism with intellectual disability, according to data from New Jersey published today in *Pediatrics*. Autism with intellectual disability is also more commonly identified among children from poorer areas of the state than among those from wealthier areas, the **study** shows.

Racial and ethnic disparities in autism diagnoses have **declined across the United States** over the past 20 years. And prevalence gaps among white, Black and Hispanic children in New Jersey have historically been fairly small, according to data from **2014** and **2018**. But the new analysis, which looked at data collected there from 2000 to 2016, reveals that significant racial, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities persist in the identification of intellectual disability among autistic children.

“We didn’t expect the level of disparities that we saw,” says study investigator **Josephine Shenouda**, program manager and epidemiologist at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark.

Universal autism screening could go a long way toward bridging these gulfs, which likely reflect inequalities in access to a diagnosis rather than true differences in prevalence, Shenouda and others say.

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