

American Indian Children with Special Health Care Needs: Prevalence and Functional Status

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Background

- American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children are socio-economically disadvantaged and have high rates of health problems
- **Children with special health care needs:** “those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally”

Research Question

How prevalent are special health care needs among AI/AN children?

Data

- 2005- 2006 National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Nationally representative telephone survey of households with a child age 0-17 with significant health problems.
- Examined data from 7 states where the AI/AN child population is over 5%.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Children with Special Health Care Needs

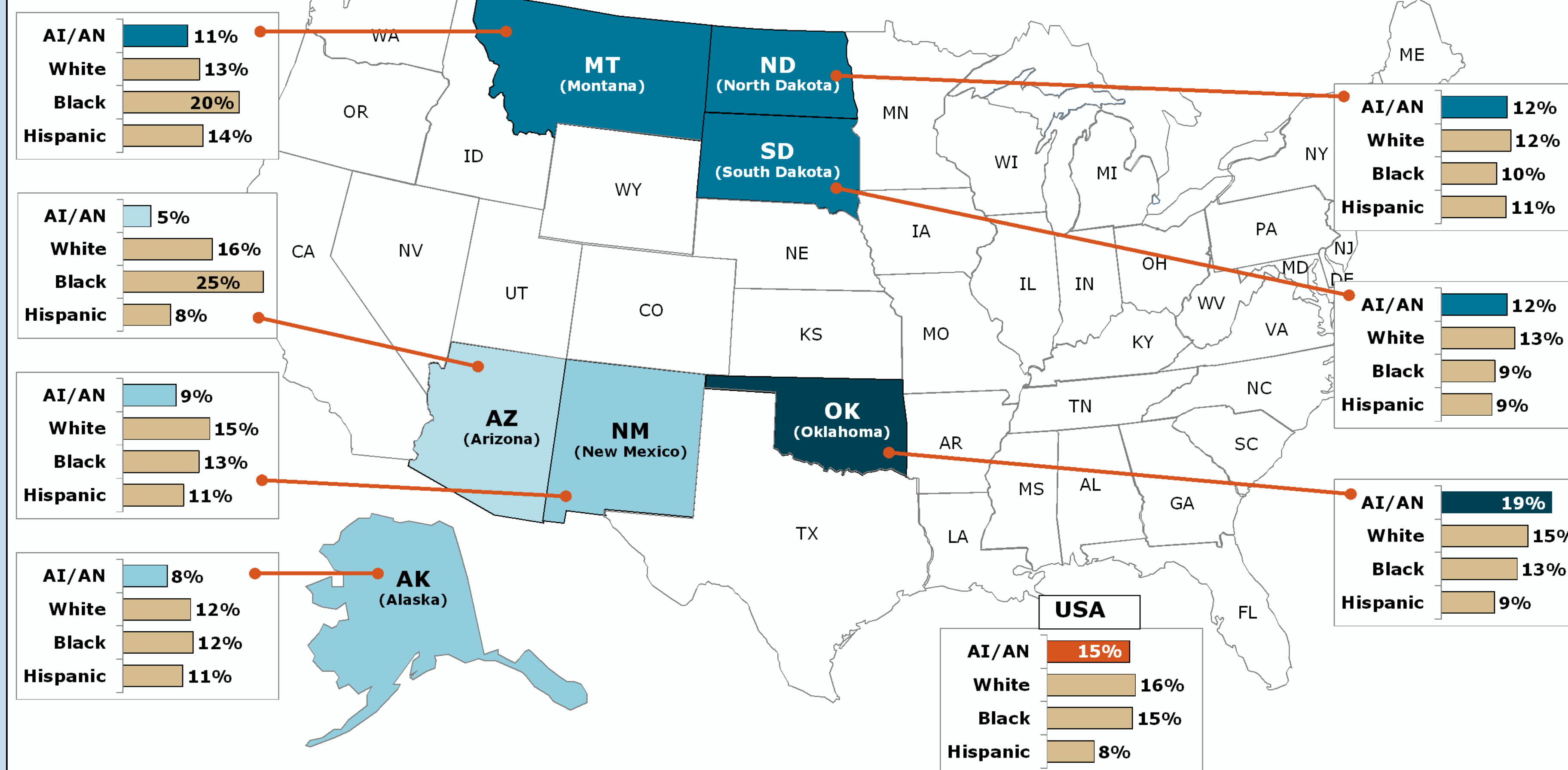
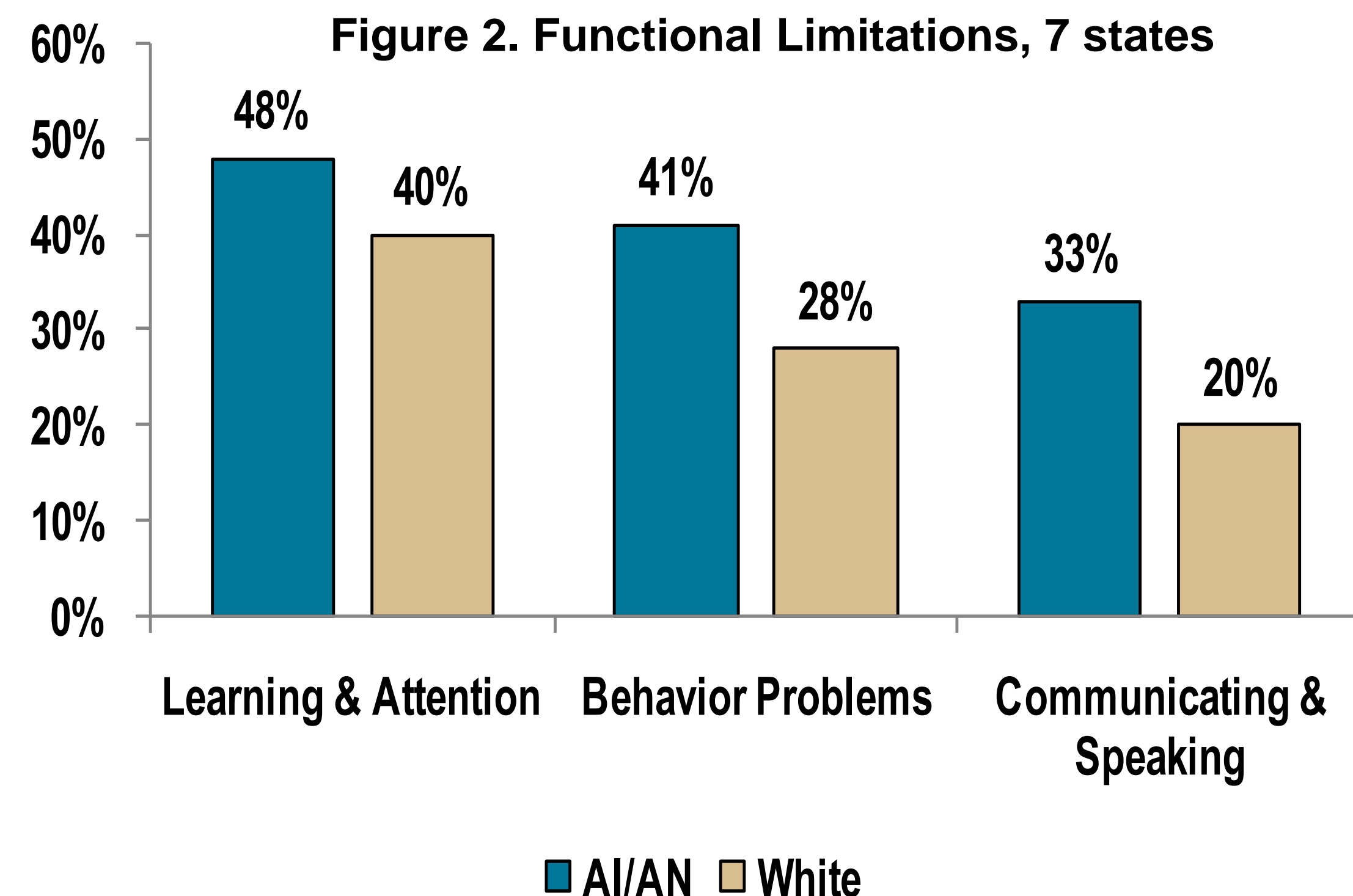


Figure 2. Functional Limitations, 7 states



Results

- Overall prevalence of special needs varies among states (Figure 1).
- Three functional limitations are especially prevalent among AI/AN children (Figure 2).
- These results are based on pooled data from these 7 states – they are not nationally representative estimates.
- There were no conditions where AI/AN CSHCN had a significantly lower prevalence compared to whites.

Conclusion

- Three health conditions are notably more prevalent among AI/AN CSHCN than among white CSHCN (no figure):
- Asthma affects 45% of AI/AN CSHCN, 8% more than whites.
- Migraine and other headaches affect 21% of AI/AN CSHCN, 5% more than whites.
- Mental Retardation affects 16% of AI/AN children with SHCN, 5% more than whites.

Implications for Policy and Practice

- High prevalence rates of problems with health and functioning indicate more resources need to be allocated to serve this population.
- Does the low prevalence among AI/AN children in some states indicate a true abundance of healthy children, or is it due to how the survey was conducted?
- Telephone surveys may miss reservation residents who are geographically isolated and in poverty.
- Examining the validity of AI/AN SHCN prevalence estimates in national household surveys is an important area for future research.

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