

# Sociodemographic Characteristics Associated with Autism Evaluations and Identification: Data from the TXA-Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network (TXA-ADDM) Site

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## Background

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder comprised of social communication difficulties and restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. Studies continue to show that **sociodemographic characteristics influence how early children are referred for diagnostic services and receive an autism diagnosis** (Chavez et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2024; Vanegas, 2021).

**Objective:** Examine the role of **sociodemographic characteristics** of children with autism and their association with **autism evaluations and diagnosis**.

### Research Questions:

1. Is **home language** associated with the age of **first evaluation** or the age of **first identification**?
2. Are there differences in the age of **first evaluation** or the age of **first identification** based on the **child's health insurance**?

## Methods



Figure 1. Surveillance Area (Red)

### Data Sources

- Review and link health, service, and special education records
- All data available through December 2022 for children born in 2018 (4-year-olds) and 2014 (8-year-olds)



### Case Determinations:

- ASD special education eligibility
- ICD-9/10 codes of F84.0 or 299.0
- Qualitative diagnostic statements

### Variables of Interest:

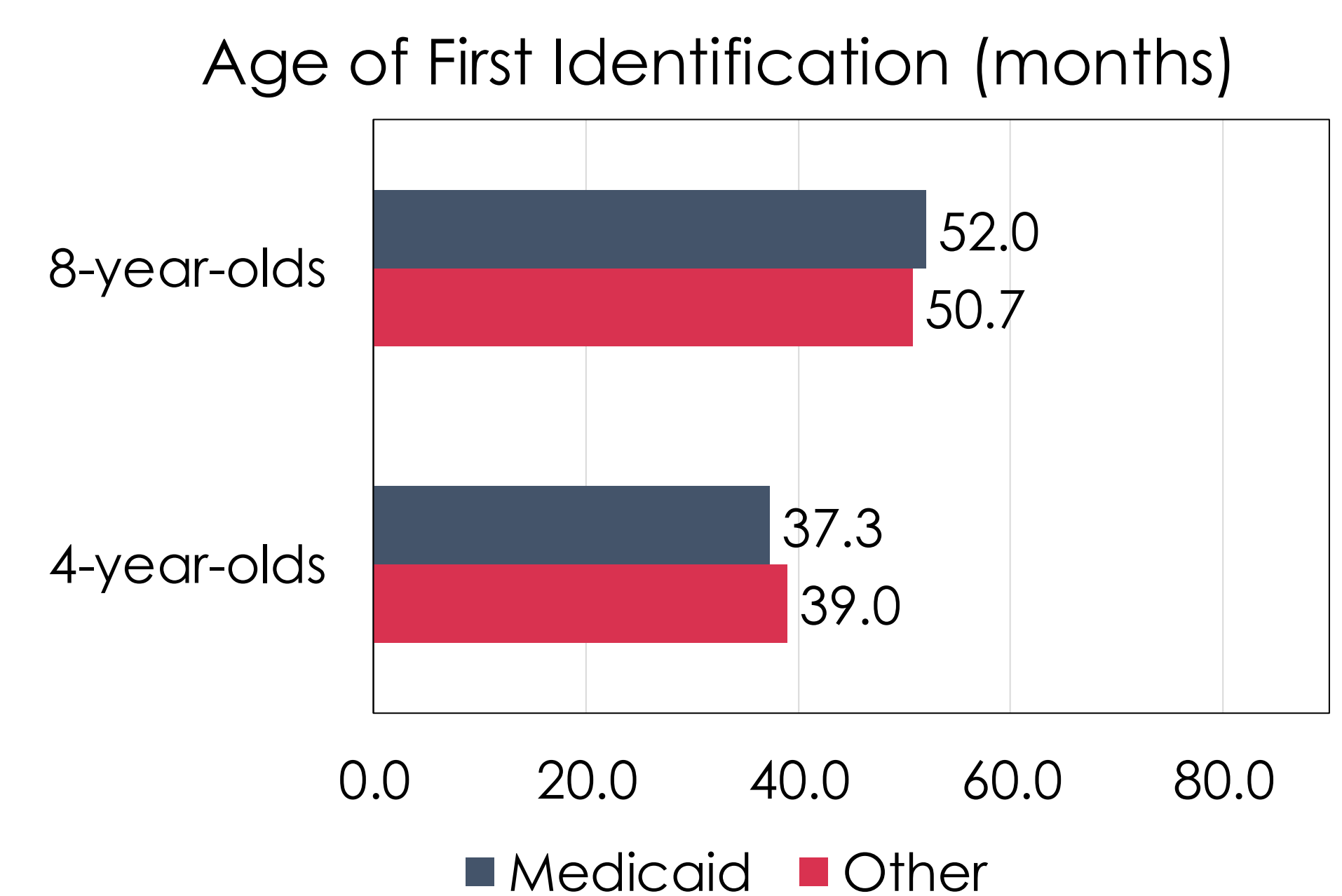
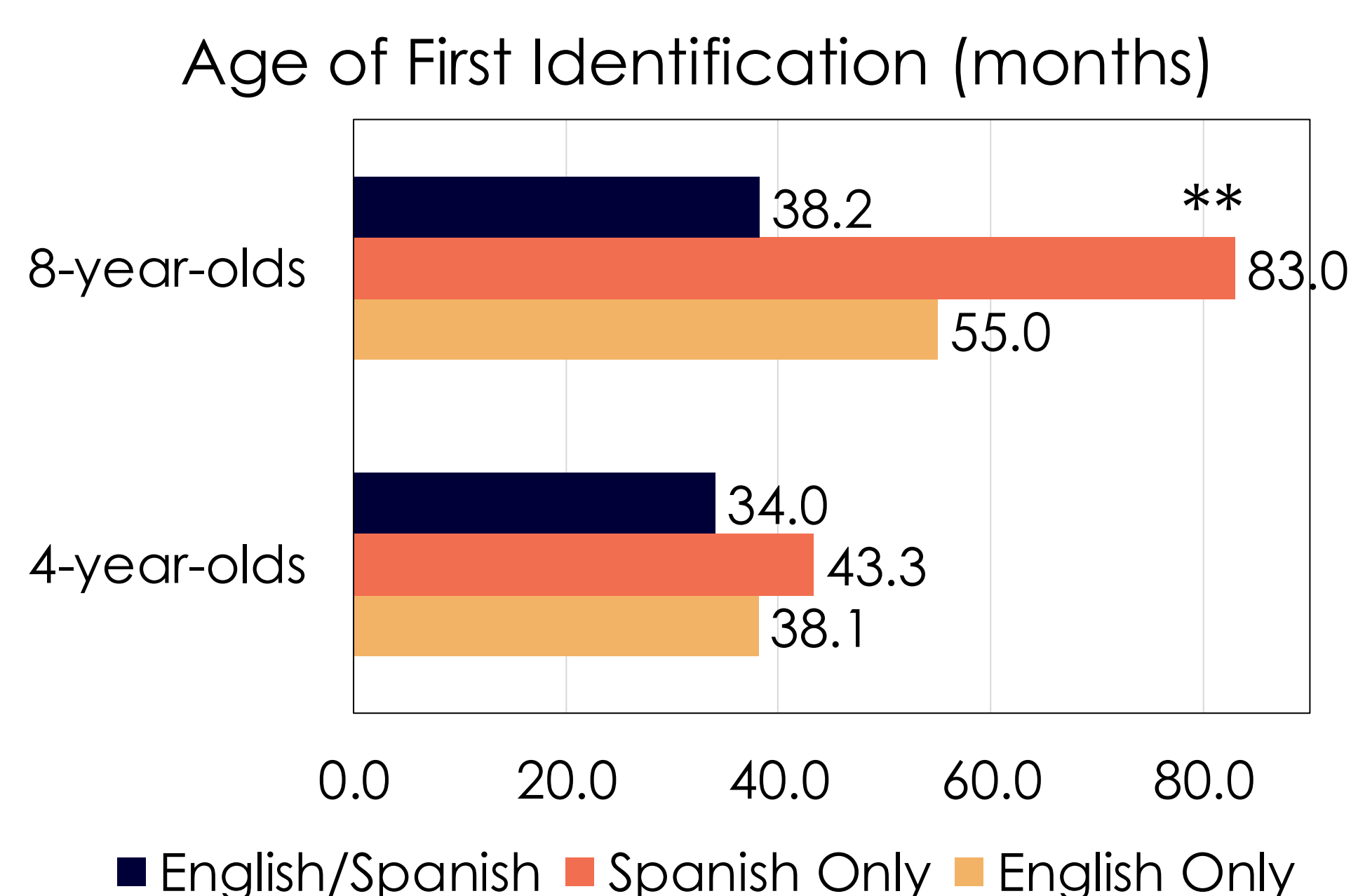
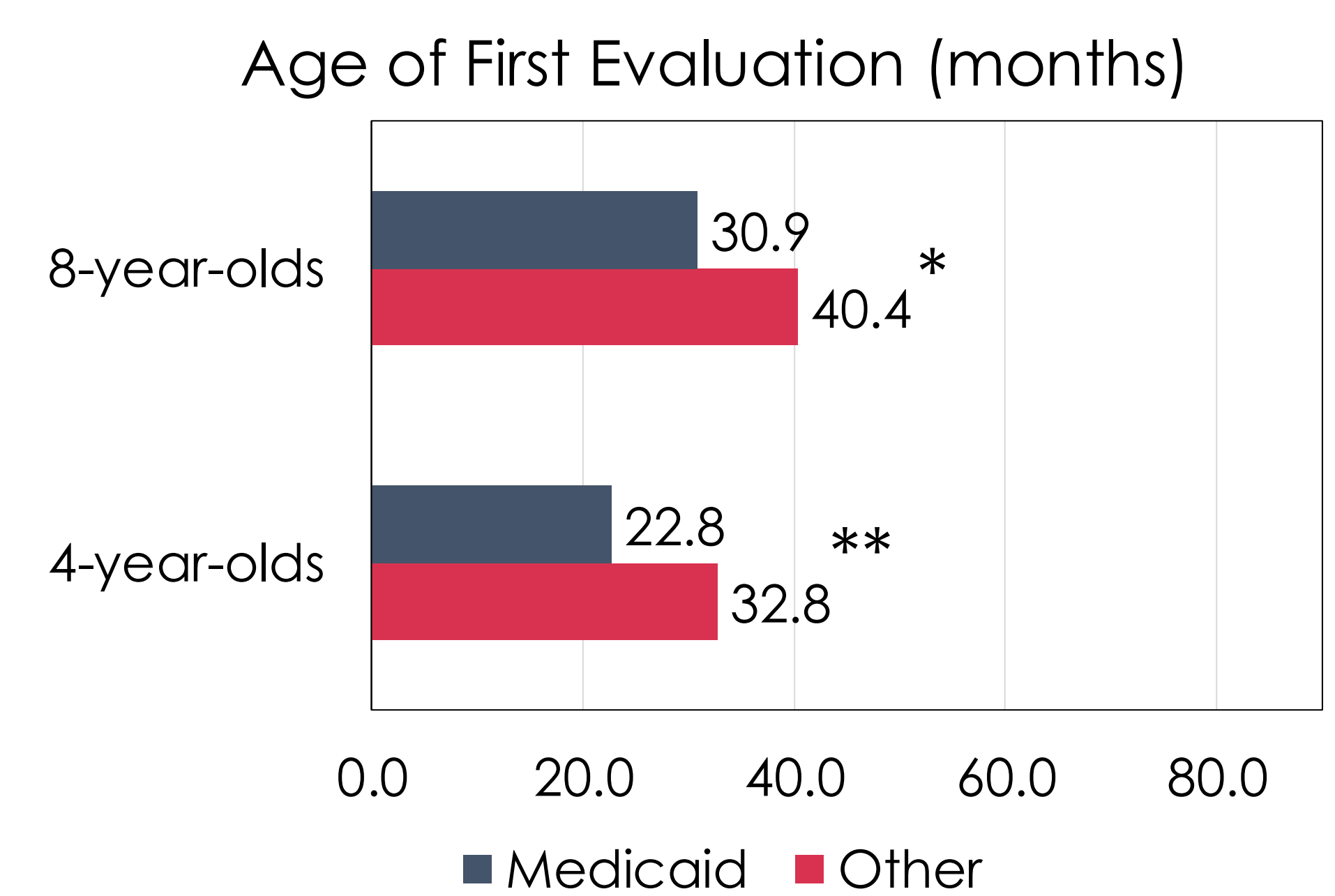
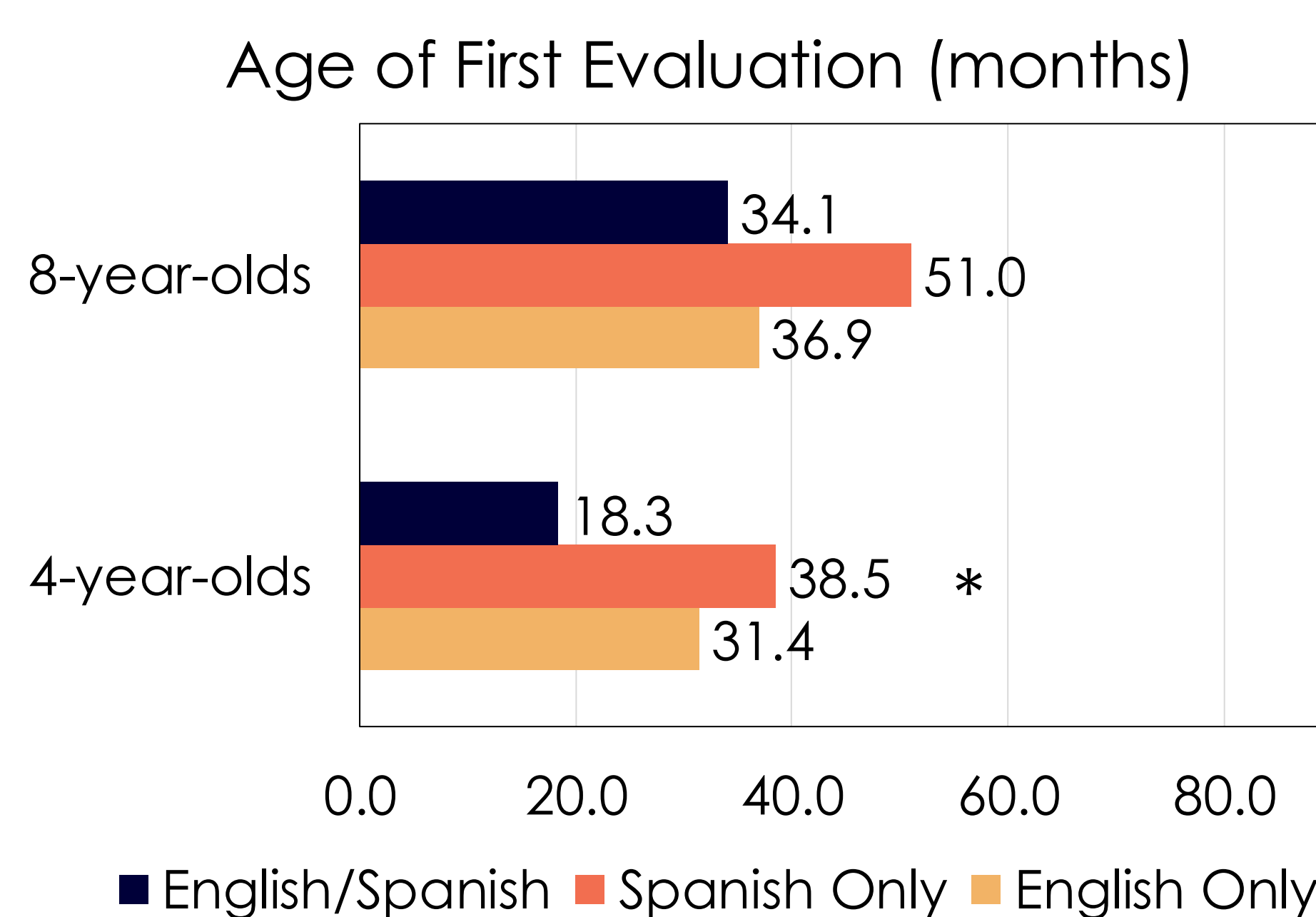
- Household language and children's health insurance were extracted from qualitative reports included in the child's records.

## Results

	4-year-olds (n = 74)	8-year-olds (n = 85)
Child Sex (% males)	71.6% (53)	76.5%
Child Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	83.8% (62)	83.5% (71)
White	4.1% (3)	4.7% (4)
Black	4.1% (3)	5.9% (5)
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.0% (0)	3.5% (3)
Two or More Races	1.4% (1)	1.2% (1)
Unknown	6.8% (5)	1.2% (1)
Intellectual Disability	51.5% (17)	70.4% (38)
Social Vulnerability Index		
Low	4.1% (3)	1.2% (1)
Medium	16.2% (12)	24.7% (21)
High	73.0% (54)	70.6% (60)
Unknown	6.8% (5)	3.5% (3)

Overall, the prevalence of autism in our sample was 1 in 51 (2.0%) for 8 y/o children and 1 in 60 (1.7%) for 4 y/o children.

The median age of diagnosis ranged from 35 months (4 y/o) to 42 months (8 y/o).



## Conclusions

Findings suggest that **household language and health insurance may play a role in the diagnostic journey** families face in pursuing diagnostic clarity for their children. Children in **Spanish-only households** were **evaluated later** (4 y/o) and **identified later** (8 y/o) than their peers in English or English/Spanish households. Although children with **Medicaid received earlier evaluations**, this finding did not translate into earlier identification. This delay raises concerns about the timeliness of access to therapeutic services, as many depend on a diagnosis to qualify.

Limitations: Despite extensive surveillance efforts, data were not available for all children. This limited our ability to explore additional questions related to the age of first evaluation and first identification of autism.

Increased efforts are needed to improve access to linguistically appropriate autism diagnostic services for families from low-resource communities.