

Engaging Older Adults with Disabilities from Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Research

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Introduction

The knowledge base about the support needs of older adults with long-term disabilities who experience challenges performing everyday activities is growing, but still limited.

There is a need for user needs research that engages diverse individuals to create inclusive and equitable supportive technology development, with a focus on older adults from minority populations.

Methods

We conducted background research to inform the design of a large-scale user needs study investigating everyday activity challenges among people aging with long-term vision, hearing, and mobility disabilities. This project is focused on expanding minority population outreach.

We identified prevalence statistics of minority older Americans with disabilities. Populations of interest included:

1. Hispanic Americans
2. African Americans
3. Asian Americans
4. Native Americans

We conducted a literature review of challenges and best practices for engaging specific minority populations in disability research.



Results

Key Challenges

Communication Issues

(e.g., language barriers, no funding for translating materials)

Trust

History of unethical research (e.g., Tuskegee Syphilis study) and mistrust of government (e.g., forced displacement among native people)

Barriers to engaging and retaining participants

(e.g., insufficient compensation and/or benefits; transportation barriers)

Lack of familiarity with culture and community

(i.e., ineffective marketing, not engaging community stakeholders)

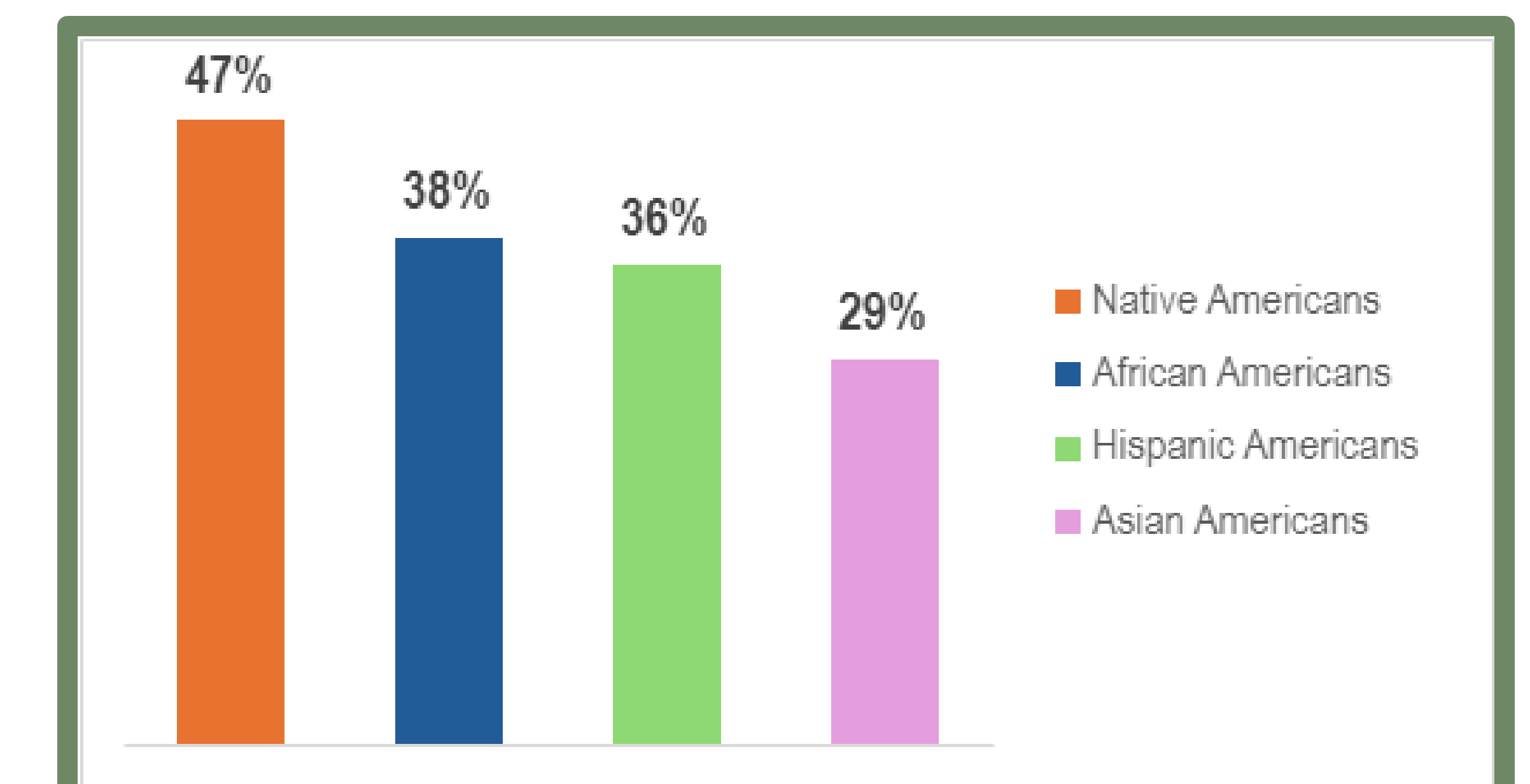
General Recommendations and Best Practices

- **Seek early and continuous input from community stakeholders**
- **Include staff with diverse backgrounds to foster a more inclusive environment for participants**
- **Provide culturally matched research staff that can relate to participants (e.g., from same community, speaks the same language)**
- **Recruit in-person to maximize word-of-mouth referrals**
- **Offer adequate remuneration and making potential benefits and outcomes of research clear**
- **Give back to the community (i.e., sharing research findings with recruitment partners and participants)**

Results according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey:

24% of older adults (+65) were part of racial/ethnic minorities

Figure 1. Disability Among Minority Older Adults (2020 U.S. Census Bureau)



Findings presented by the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau on older Americans (aged 65+) from minority populations with disabilities

Conclusion

Findings on effective strategies for minority engagement can ultimately foster more diverse and representative research samples. We offer general recommendations, but there are also important considerations for engaging specific minority groups (e.g., understanding unique tribal histories and dynamics when working with Native Americans).

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