

introduction

Americans are increasingly at-risk for diabetes, with pre-diabetes affecting nearly 16 million, and diabetes affecting another 18.2 million. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a 61% increase in diabetes among Americans since 1990, projecting the number of diagnosed diabetes cases to double by the year 2050. While diabetes is receiving greater attention, the challenges in addressing the problem remain large and formidable. Social and cultural norms about food, industry marketing, time demands on working families, and the safety level of neighborhoods to allow for exercise and outdoor activities are just a few factors that have contributed to this major public health problem. It is a crisis affecting those of younger and younger ages, and a problem disproportionately impacting minority populations, including Asian Americans.

Over the past five years, the National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO) has worked in close partnership with CDC and the National Diabetes Education Program to educate Asian Americans about diabetes prevention and management through community grant-making, culturally appropriate education programs, and Asian-language media campaigns. Recognizing the growing problem of type II diabetes among children, NAWHO administered a questionnaire in December 2004 to look at Asian American attitudes toward this emerging issue and identify strategies to promote the health of Asian American children. The questionnaire asked 1,410 Americans about perceptions of diabetes and related lifestyle issues, providing a basis for understanding how Asian Americans, in comparison to other racial groups, perceive the diabetes epidemic and the relationship to nutrition, exercise, and their children's health.

The findings of the questionnaire showed that Americans are aware of the growing problem of diabetes and the linkages to obesity, our food culture, and other lifestyle issues, much due to aggressive efforts to educate the public about these health issues. However, Asian Americans are much less aware of these risk factors, and of the growing risk of obesity and diabetes for their children. A 2003 study by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality found that 20% of Asian American children were overweight, and this is likely to increase given the national trend in obesity among American children. In addition, while obesity is a contributing factor to diabetes, common perceptions of what is overweight cannot be applied easily to Asian Americans due to their lower body mass index (BMI). A 2004 study in *Diabetes Care* found that prevalence of diabetes is 60% higher among Asian Americans than Caucasians, particularly when adjusting for the lower BMI of Asians. Awareness of racial differences in BMIs is a newly recognized factor that will be key to diabetes prevention education for this community.

These findings point to the need to inform Asian Americans about the growing problem of diabetes among children, in order to establish a better understanding of the issue and build support for public health and policy initiatives that will address the many contributors to the crisis of diabetes in the United States.

key findings

+ FEWER ASIAN AMERICAN ADULTS HAVE CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT DIABETES

When respondents were asked if they had seen or heard any information about diabetes in the past year, 60% of Asian Americans said yes compared to 83% of Whites. 84% of African Americans and 74% of Latinos also reported having seen or heard information about diabetes in the past year, with 15% of Latinos reporting they had never received any information.

+ ASIAN AMERICANS ARE LESS CONVINCED ABOUT DIABETES AND OBESITY BEING SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN

Table 1: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Strongly Agreed that **DIABETES is a Serious Problem Affecting Children Today.**

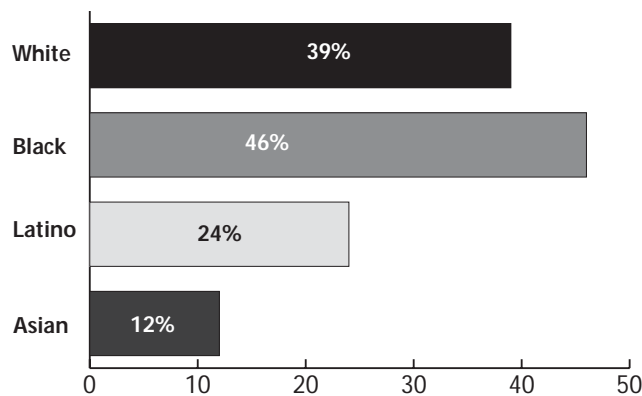
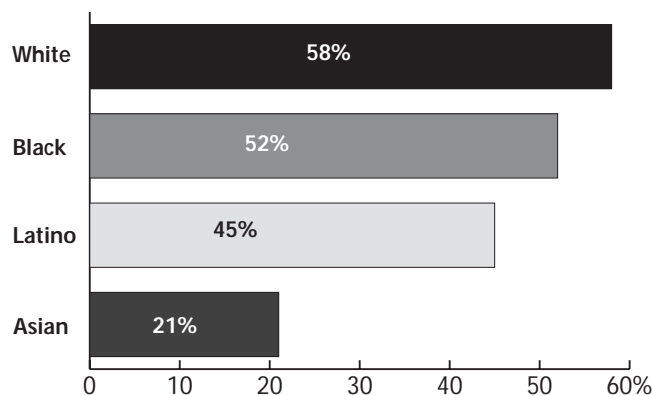
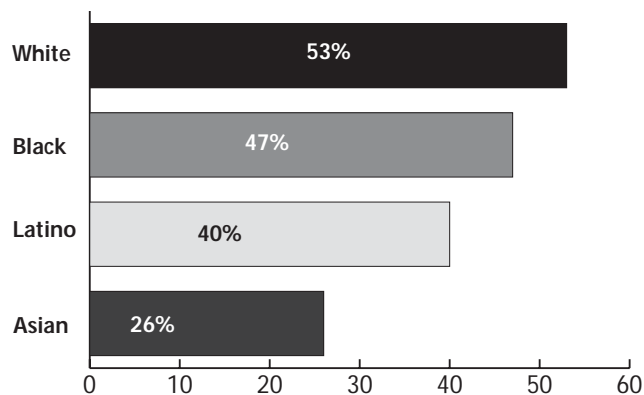


Table 2: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Strongly Agreed that **OBESITY is a Serious Problem Affecting Children Today.**



+ ASIAN AMERICANS ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT OBESITY CAN INCREASE A CHILD'S RISK FOR DIABETES

Table 3: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Strongly Agreed that Obesity Can Increase a Child's Risk of Getting Diabetes.



Asian American respondents were less likely to strongly agree that obesity can increase a child's risk of getting diabetes. However, Asian Americans (46%) were more likely to strongly agree that not getting enough exercise can increase a child's risk, compared to Latinos (30%), or Whites (38%) and Blacks (39%).

+ ASIAN AMERICANS ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO IDENTIFY JUNK FOOD, FAST FOOD MARKETING, AND SEDENTARY LIFESTYLES AS MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE DIABETES EPIDEMIC

Table 4: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Identified "Junk Food" as a Major Factor, a Minor Factor, or Not a Factor in Contributing to Diabetes Among Children.

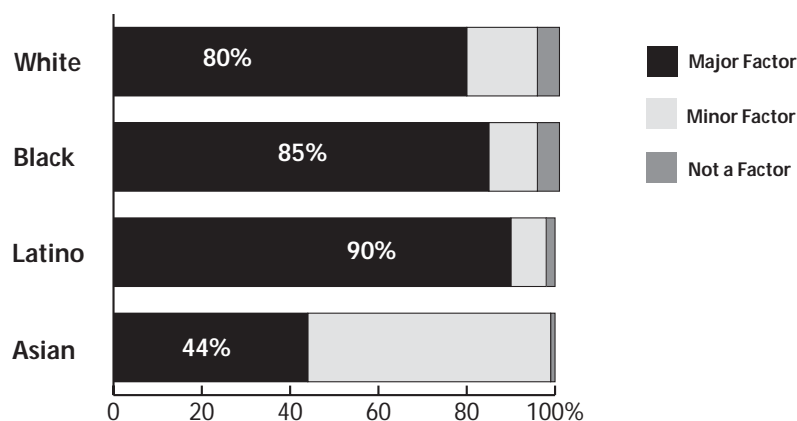


Table 5: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Identified "Marketing of Fast Food" as a Major Factor, a Minor Factor, or Not a Factor in Contributing to Diabetes Among Children.

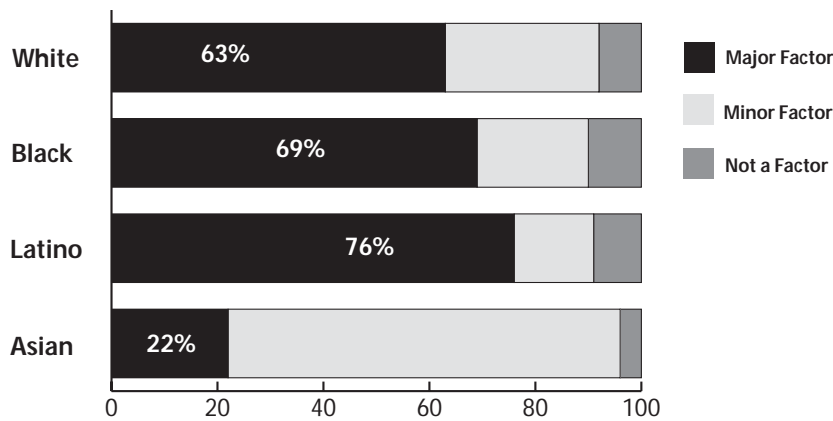
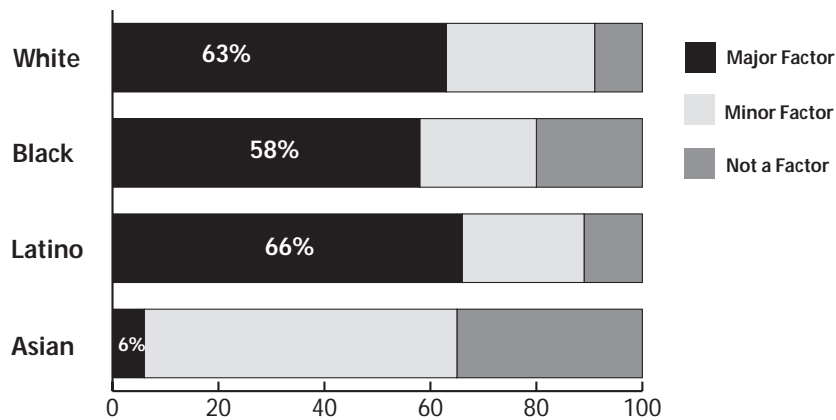


Table 6: Percent of Respondents By Race Who Identified "Indoor Activities" (i.e. watching too much tv or playing video games) as a Major Factor, a Minor Factor, or Not a Factor in Contributing to Diabetes Among Children.



methodology

NAWHO commissioned the Center for Applied Local Research to administer a questionnaire about American adults' awareness of the growing problem of diabetes among young people and links to obesity, exercise, and nutrition. The questionnaire was conducted by telephone to 1,410 adults nationwide. First, a sample of 1,000 adults representing the U.S. population by race was selected, with a theoretical sampling error of +/- 3.1%. There was an additional oversampling of Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latinos. Combined with those in the original sample, the racial breakdown includes: 237 Asians (sampling error: +/- 6.4%); 220 African Americans (sampling error: +/- 6.6%); 220 Latinos (sampling error: +/- 6.6%); and 733 Whites (sampling error: +/- 3.6%).



NAWHO was founded in 1993 to achieve health equity for Asian women and families. Over the past ten years, NAWHO has served as a committed and effective leader for Asian women and families, advancing Asian American health issues and developing new opportunities and strategies to overcome cultural, linguistic, and institutional barriers for this underserved population.

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