

Healthcare Access and Quality in Middle Age and Older Autistic Adults



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Background

Autistic individuals have **heightened risk** for numerous medical and psychiatric co-occurring conditions such as seizures, sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, and gastrointestinal (GI) disorders and **lower healthcare outcomes** leading to higher healthcare utilization rates and high healthcare costs.

Autistic adults report significant barriers in accessing healthcare resources including **communication** challenges with healthcare providers, **sensory sensitivities**, and a general lack of **autism awareness** among healthcare practitioners

Objective

Aim 1: Assess the **current health status** of middle-aged and older autistic adults and compare their **health trends** to those observed nine years ago.

Aim 2: Examine the relationship between **healthcare access, healthcare quality and quality of life (QoL)** in middle-aged and older autistic adults.

Aim 3: Compare the current **healthcare access and quality** of middle-aged and older autistic adults to that of the **general aging population and disability** population.

Methods

Caregiver reports (n=40) through electronic surveys and phone interviews.

Measures:

TEACCH Autism in Adulthood Survey-Revised: Demographics and current health status

	n	Percent (%)
Sex		
Male	32	80.0
Female	8	20.0

Healthcare Access and Quality: Adapted from National Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Adult and Child Health Plan Survey

	n	Percent (%)
Race		
White	31	77.5
Black	8	20.0
Other	1	2.5

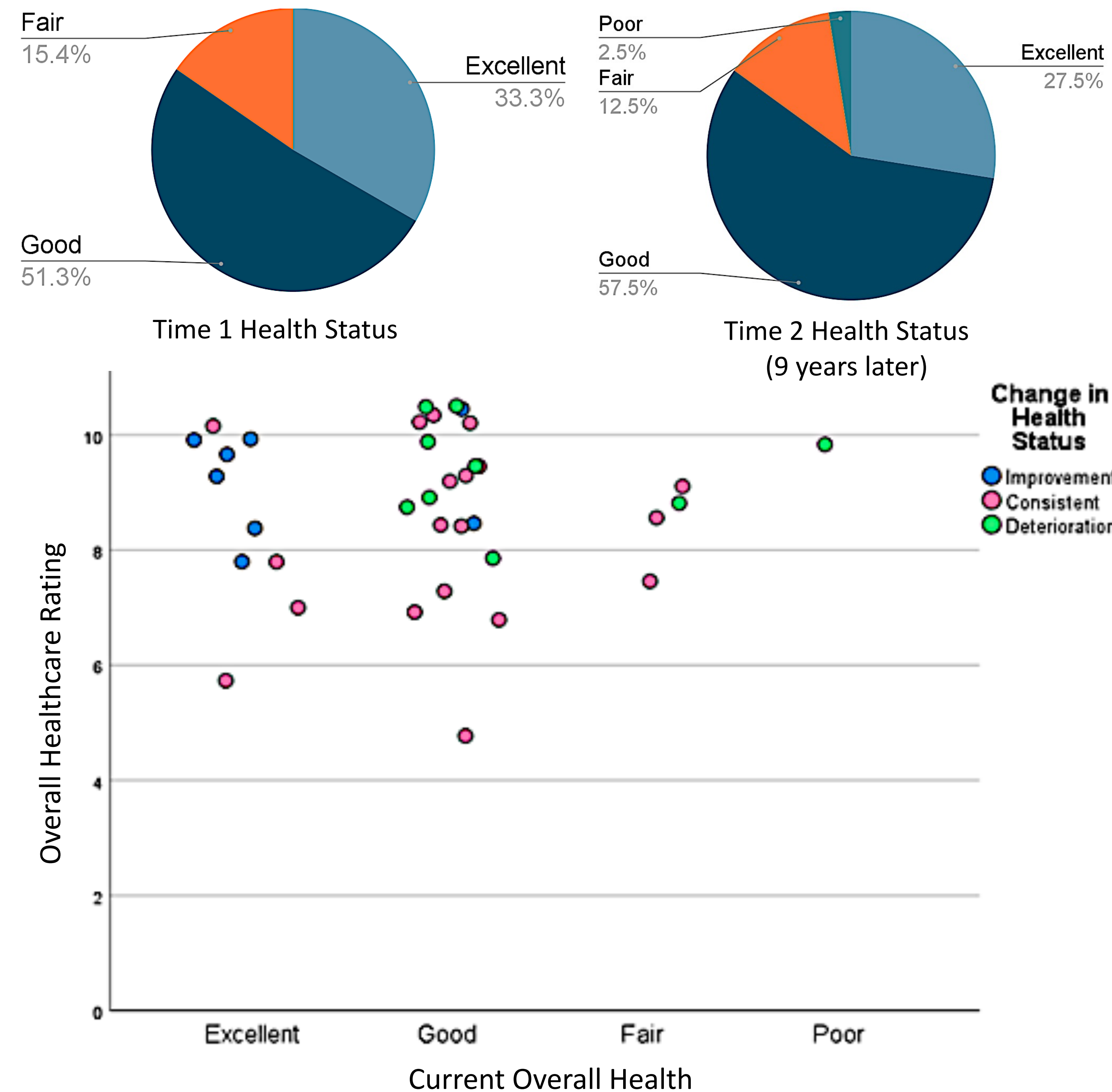
World Health Organization Quality-of-Life-BREF (WHOQoL-BREF)

	M(SD)	Range
Guardianship		
Independent	10 (25.0)	
Dependent	30 (75.0)	
Age	48.67(5.72)	40.45-61.47

Results

AIM 1

Autistic adults reported **mostly stable health statuses** over time, with some experiencing improvements and deteriorations



Even when **health status ratings were low**, autistic adults had **high healthcare ratings**

AIM 2

↑ **Health Status** was associated with:

↑ Overall QoL ($r=.63, p<.001$)

↑ Psychological QoL ($r=.50, p=.002$)

↑ Total QoL ($r=.38, p=.060$)

↑ **Healthcare Quality** was associated with:

↑ Physical Health QoL ($r=.37, p=.037$)

↑ Total QoL ($r=.42, p=.050$)

↑ Social Relationships QoL ($r=.37, p=.083$)

↑ **Access to Appointments** was associated with:

↑ Total QoL ($r=.67, p=.002$)

↑ Overall QoL ($r=.62, p=.001$)

↑ Physical Health QoL ($r=.52, p=.01$)

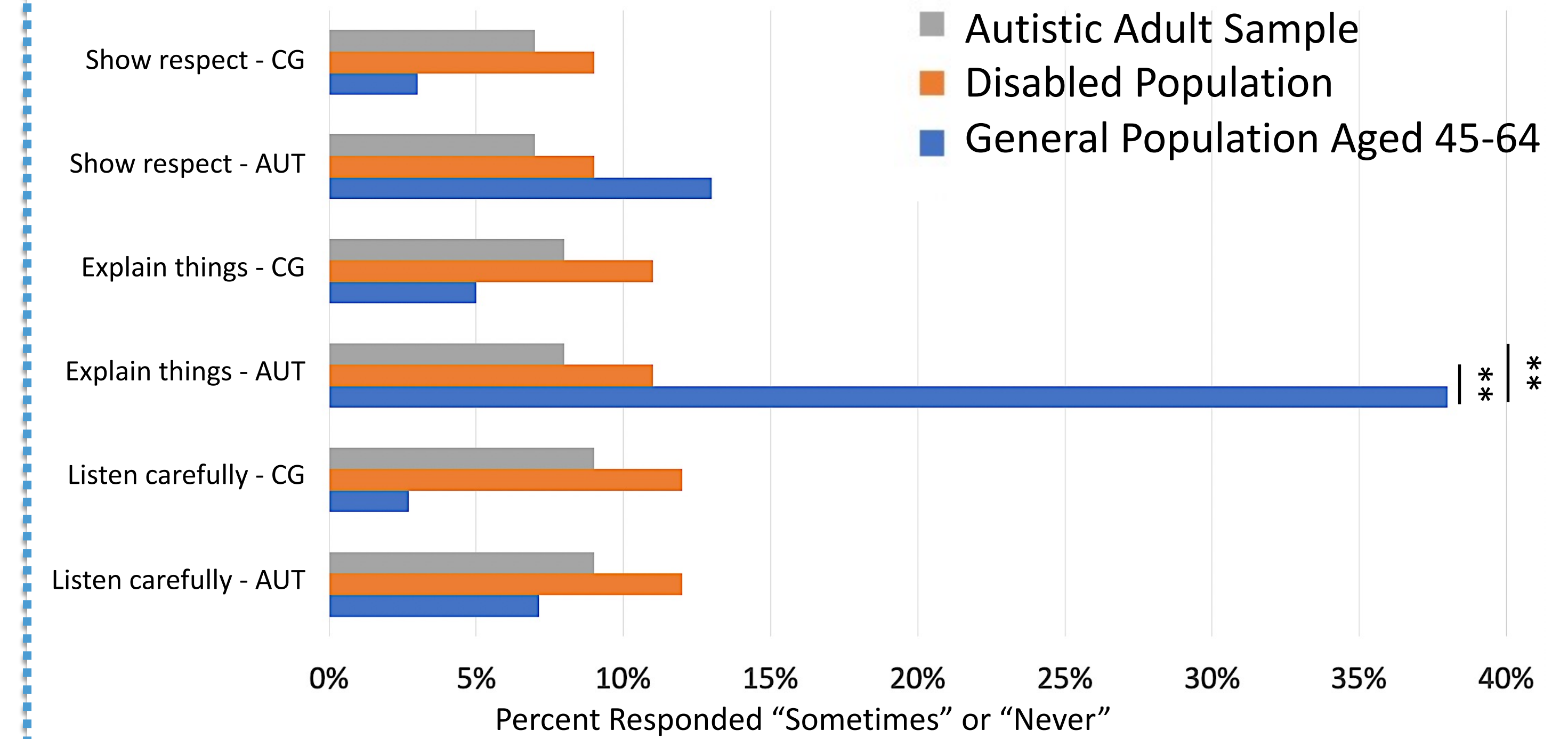
↑ **Established Healthcare** was **NOT** associated with any QoL Domain

↑ Overall QoL ($r=.27, p=.10$)

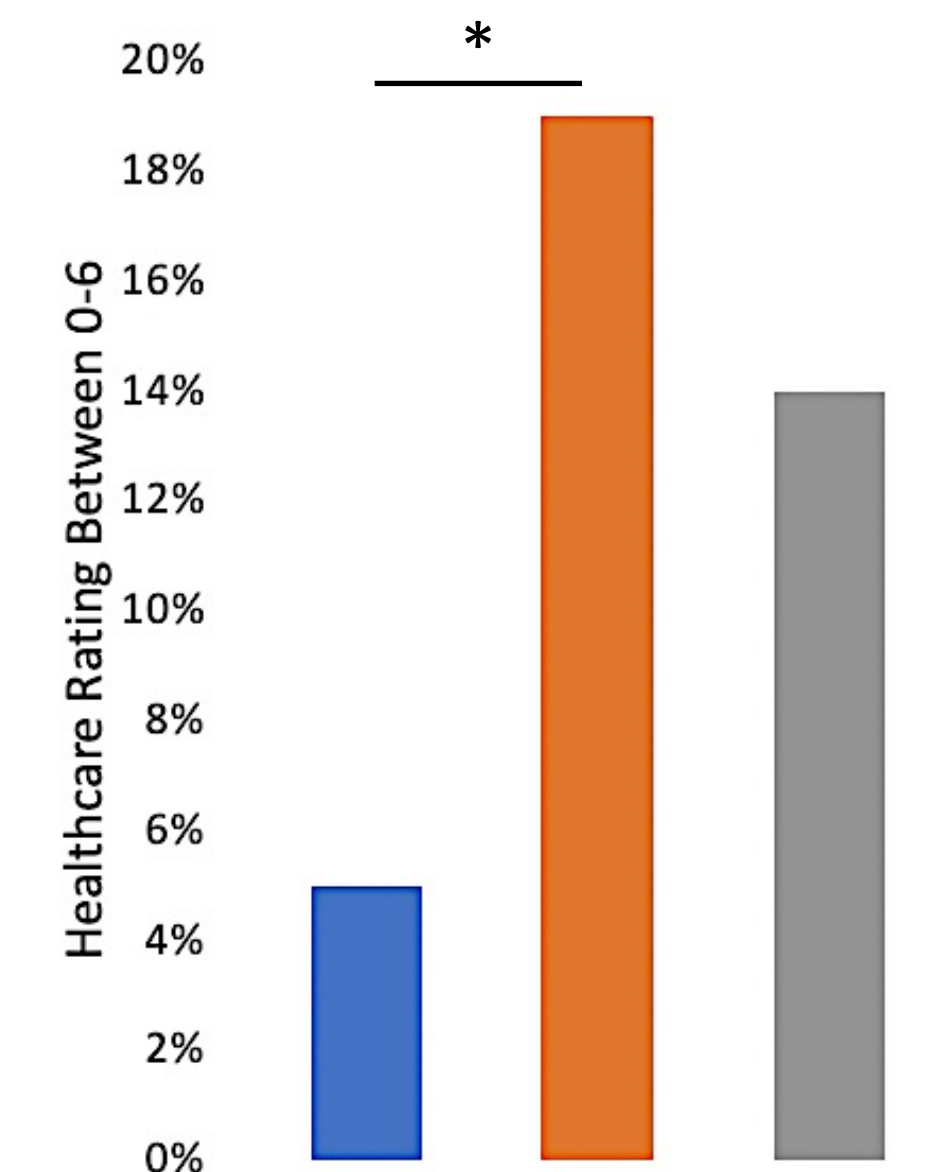
↑ Significant Association
 ↑ Trends approaching significance

AIM 3

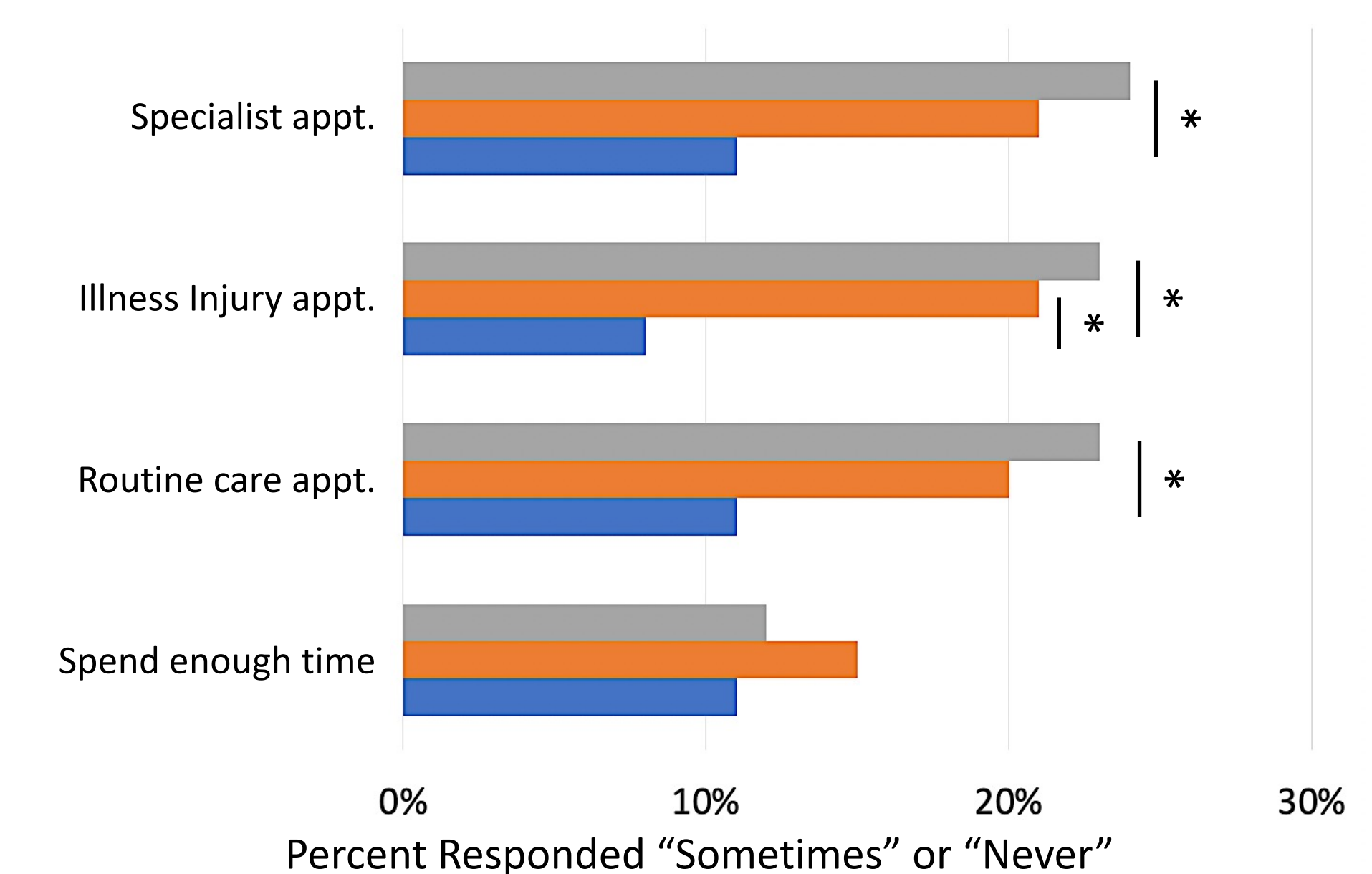
Provider Communication



Healthcare Satisfaction



Access to Appointments



Z-Score Analysis. Significant at * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Discussion

Quality of healthcare and **access to healthcare appointments** were found to be significantly associated with quality of life.

Caregivers of autistic adults reported **higher levels of healthcare satisfaction** and **better access to healthcare services** compared to their counterparts in the general and disability populations.

Autistic adults were **less likely to understand their own healthcare** compared to the general and disability population.

Acknowledgements:

