**US Autism Rate Edges Up in New CDC Report**

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BALTIMORE, Md -- April 27, 2018 -- The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) among 11 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveillance sites has increased by 15% from the most recent report 2 years ago, according to a study published in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*.

In 2014, 1 in 59 children aged 8 years were diagnosed with ASD. This is the highest prevalence since the CDC began tracking ASD in 2000.

Consistent with previous reports, boys were 4 times more likely to be identified with ASD than girls. The rate is 1 in 38 among boys (2.7%) and 1 in 152 among girls (0.7%).

Rates have been rising since the 1960s, but researchers do not know how much of this rise is due to an increase in actual cases. There are other factors that may be contributing, such as: increased awareness, screening, diagnostic services, treatment and intervention services, better documentation of ASD behaviours, and changes in diagnostic criteria.

For the current report, the CDC collected data at 11 regional monitoring sites that are part of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network in the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

This is the sixth report by the ADDM Network, which has used the same surveillance methods for more than a decade. Estimated prevalence rates of ASD in the US reported by previous data were:

“The estimated overall prevalence rates reported by ADDM at the monitoring sites have more than doubled since the report was first published in 2007,” said Li-Ching Lee, PhD, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland. “Although we continue to see disparities among racial and ethnic groups, the gap is closing.”

ASD prevalence was reported to be approximately 20% to 30% higher among white children as compared with black children in previous ADDM reports. In the current report, the difference has dropped to 7%. In addition, approximately 70% of children with ASD had borderline, average or above average intellectual ability, a proportion higher than that found in ADDM data prior to 2012.

Some trends in the latest CDC report remain similar, such as the greater likelihood of boys being diagnosed with ASD, the age of earliest comprehensive evaluation, and presence of a previous ASD diagnosis or classification. Specifically, non-white children with ASD are being identified and evaluated at a later age than white children. The majority of children identified with ASD by the ADDM Network (80%) had a previous ASD diagnosis or a special educational classification.

In Maryland, the prevalence of ASD was higher than in the network as a whole. An estimated 1 in 50 children (2%) was identified as having ASD -- 1 in 31 among boys and 1 in 139 among girls. The vast majority of children identified with ASD in Maryland had a developmental concern in their records by age 3 (92%), but only 56% of them received a comprehensive evaluation by that age.

“This lag may delay the timing for children with ASD to get diagnosed and to start receiving needed services,” said Dr. Lee.

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/ss/ss6706a1.htm?s_cid=ss6706a1_w>

SOURCE: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health