

Postal Codes do Matter: Understanding the Barriers to Neurodevelopmental Assessments for Children, Youth and Families in Northern BC



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Children and youth living in remote/rural communities (n=226) are nearly 2 years older at time of referral for a neurodevelopmental assessment than their urban peers. This inequity stems largely from lack of access to primary and secondary healthcare.

Background

Timely and appropriate access to Neurodevelopmental assessments is paramount for the wellbeing of children, youth and families. However, in BC, wait times for publically funded assessments remain long, and access to timely referrals are inequitable.

Method

- 20% of all referrals within Northern Health Authority to the Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) and BC Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN) programs from each of the last 5 fiscal years were selected (n = 623), using random sampling.
- Each referral was then mapped to according to BC Government classifications as remote, rural, rural hub, small urban, urban or metropolitan.

Median age at Referral to either BCAAN or CDBC by Community Type

Remote/Rural



Urban

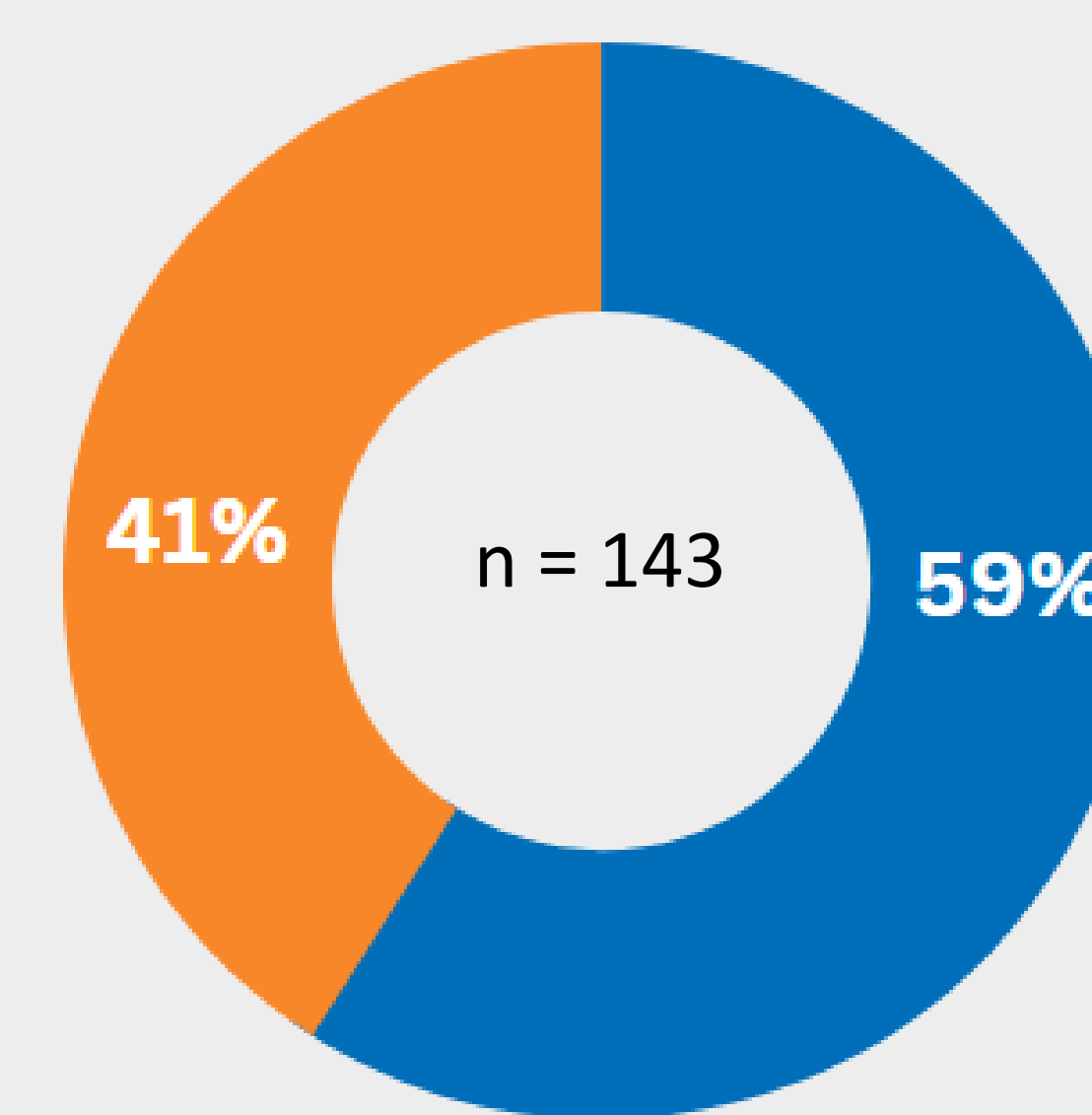


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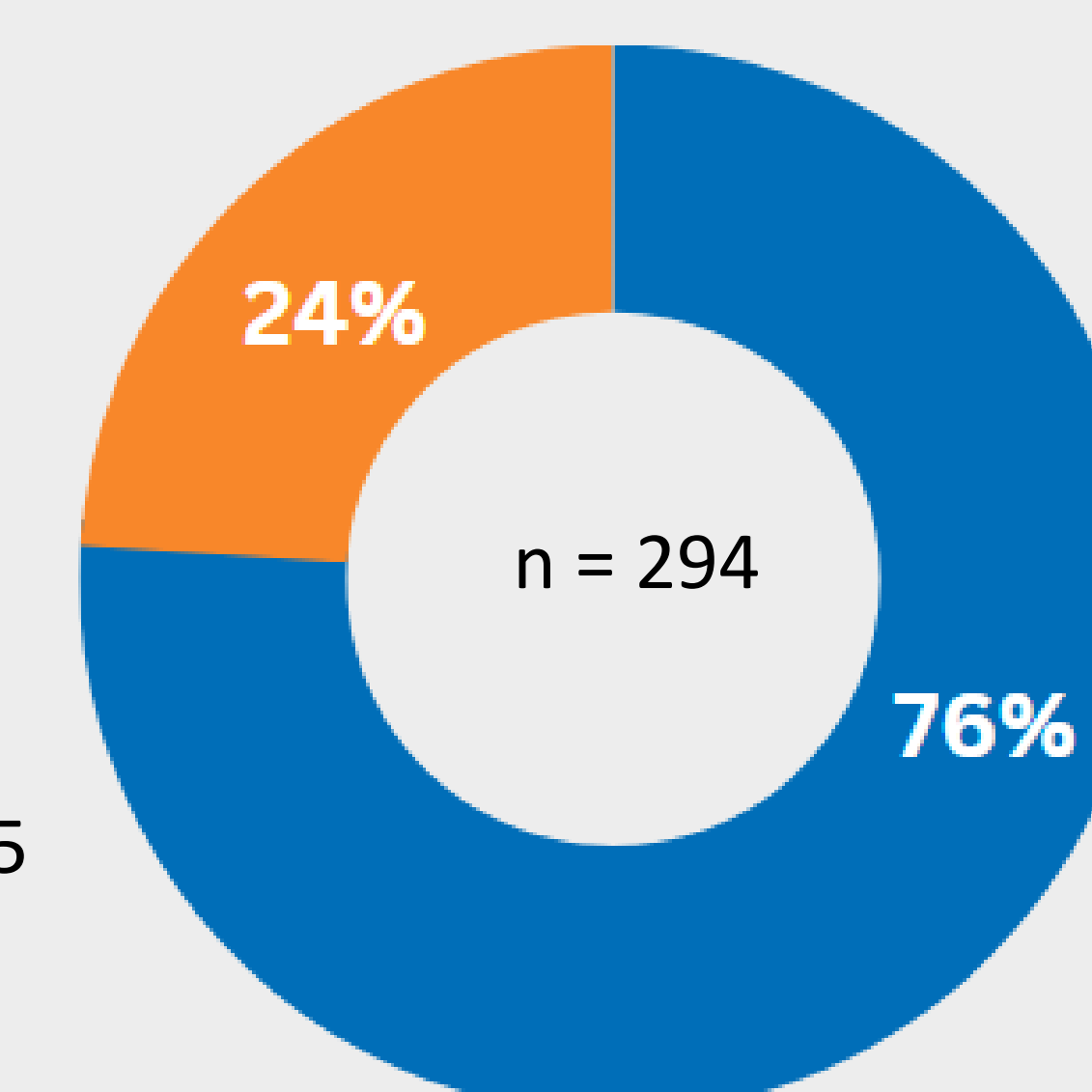
The median age of children referred from remote and rural communities (n=226) is 1y9m older than their urban (n=394) peers.

Proportion of Referrals to BCAAN received for children under 6

Remote/Rural



Urban



p < 0.05

■ = received at age 6+

■ = received before age 6

Proportionally less children from remote/rural communities receive a referral to BCAAN prior to age 6 when compared to their urban peers.

What we learned

- There is a clear difference in the median age at which a child is referred for a neurodevelopmental assessment, dependent on whether they live in a remote/rural or urban community. This difference may be due, in part, to equity of access to health care providers, such as pediatricians.
- All families in BC, regardless of where they live, should be able to access a timely neurodevelopmental assessment in order to guide appropriate interventions

Sunny Hill Health Centre



Learn more about Sunny Hill Health Centre at BC Children's Hospital

