

Recruiting a diverse community-based cohort of older adults



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Introduction and Background

Increasing Black and African American participation in aging research is essential to studying health inequities in dementia and Alzheimer's Disease¹.

Successful recruitment of Black older adults requires intensive community engagement, building trust and partnerships with local leaders, businesses, and community members¹⁻³.

The **15104 Seniors Project (SP15104)** was established to enroll a diverse sample of older adults aged 65+ for a longitudinal healthy aging study from a predominantly Black and African American community using an **intensive community engagement approach** for our recruitment methods.

Methods

Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment activities were recorded and categorized into three groups:

1. Networking

- Build and foster relationships with local leaders, businesses, organizations.
- Utilize a community advisory board (CAB) for insights on community engagement and effective recruitment strategies.
- Establish a visible physical presence in the community. Welcome passersby into the study office; share community resources.

2. Events

- Participate in community-based and organize project-sponsored events. Arrange project information tables at places with ongoing activities (e.g., library, community center).
- Provide study information, offer free blood pressure measurements, give away study-branded promotional items.

3. Information dissemination

- Advertisements in various formats: study flyers, mailed postcards, *Pitt+Me*, yard signs, newspaper, radio.
- Referral program. Study participants are encouraged to refer eligible people to the study. A modest cash referral incentive is paid.
- Name recognition, study-branded gifts and giveaways.

Outcomes

"Contacts" who provide personal information to be contacted about the study were asked how they heard about the study and for their age, sex, and race.

Contacts were analyzed to describe the cohort characteristics and to identify referral source(s) which were more successful for recruitment overall and for recruiting Black adults.



Results

312 recorded recruitment efforts took place since June 2019 through 2023.

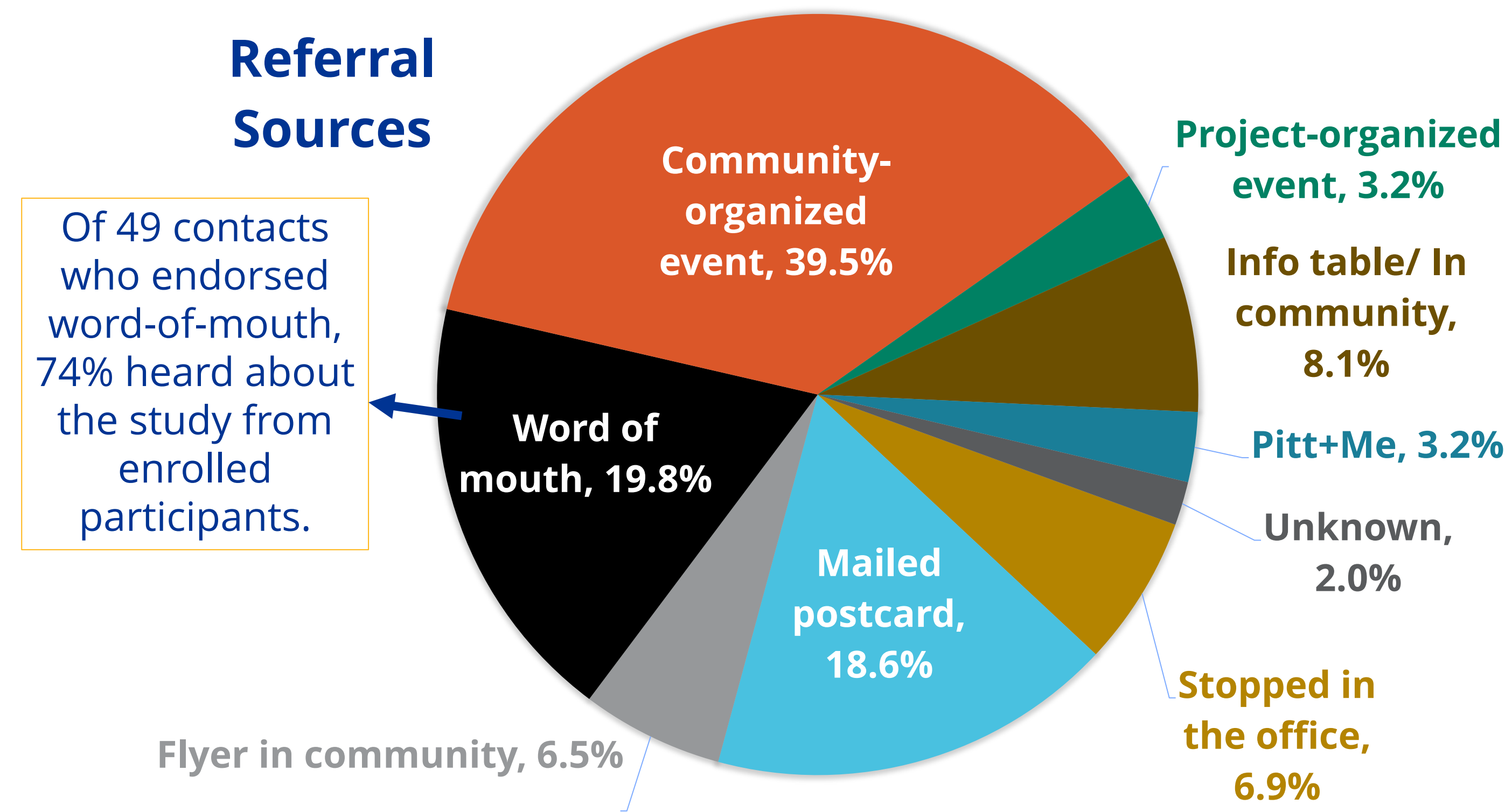
- 130 (41.8%): Information dissemination
- 92 (29.5%): Networking efforts
- 90 (28.9%): Events

248 contacts provided personal information to be contacted about the study.

- 181 (78%) provided informed consent to participate
- 26 (10.5%) were ineligible
- 22 (8.9%) were unreachable
- 19 (7.7%) declined to take part



Characteristics of contacts		Total contacts N=248
Sex, N (%)	Female	155 (62.50)
	Male	93 (37.50)
Self-Reported Race, N (%)	Black	147 (65.92)
	White	70 (31.39)
	Another race	6 (2.69)
	missing n=25	
Age, N (%)	<65 years	18 (7.47)
	65 – 74 years	156 (64.73)
	75 – 84 years	56 (23.24)
	≥ 85 years	11 (4.56)
missing n=7		



Referral source according to self-reported race	Total N=223 with race available	Black N=147 (65.92%)	White N=70 (31.39%)	Another race N=6 (2.69%)	P-value (based on Fisher exact tests)
N (column %)					
Stopped in the office	15 (6.73)	12 (8.16)	3 (4.29)	0	0.6043
Received a postcard in the mail	42 (18.83)	25 (17.01)	17 (24.29)	0	0.2579
Saw flyer in community, online	14 (6.28)	7 (4.76)	5 (7.14)	2 (33.33)	0.0452
Word of mouth	48 (21.52)	40 (27.21)	7 (10.00)	1 (16.67)	0.0097
Community-organized event	86 (38.57)	55 (37.41)	29 (41.43)	2 (33.33)	0.8890
Project-organized event	6 (2.73)	5 (3.40)	1 (1.43)	0	0.7175
In community/ Information table	19 (8.52)	14 (9.52)	4 (5.71)	1 (16.67)	0.3442
Pitt+Me	8 (3.59)	4 (2.72)	4 (5.71)	0	0.4193
Unknown	2 (0.90)	1 (0.68)	1 (1.43)	0	0.5665

Referral source according to self-reported race and sex	Total N=217	Black women N=93 (42.86%)	White women N=44 (20.28%)	Black men N=54 (24.88%)	White men N=26 (11.98%)	P value (based on Fisher exact tests)
N (Column %)						
Stopped in the office	15 (6.91)	6 (6.45)	2 (4.55)	6 (11.11)	1 (3.85)	0.6433
Received a postcard in the mail	42 (19.35)	14 (15.05)	11 (25.0)	11 (20.37)	6 (23.08)	0.4860
Saw flyer in community, online	12 (5.53)	6 (6.45)	2 (4.55)	1 (1.85)	3 (11.54)	0.2984
Word-of-mouth	47 (21.66)	20 (21.51)	6 (13.64)	20 (37.04)	1 (3.85)	0.0026
Community-organized event	84 (38.71)	43 (46.24)	18 (40.91)	12 (22.22)	11 (42.31)	0.0293
Project-organized event	6 (2.76)	5 (5.38)	1 (2.27)	0	0	0.2876
In community/ Information table	18 (8.29)	9 (9.68)	3 (6.82)	5 (9.26)	1 (3.85)	0.8493
Pitt+Me	8 (3.69)	2 (2.15)	1 (2.27)	2 (3.70)	3 (11.54)	0.1503
Unknown	2 (0.92)	0	1 (2.27)	1 (1.85)	0	0.3254

Conclusions

We have had success enrolling a diverse cohort of older adults from a low-income area with a sample of Black participants equal to their representation in the target community.

A combination of patience, immersion in the community, utilizing traditional advertisements, and encouraging study participants to recruit others has been critical to our successes.

Black individuals and Black men were more likely to endorse word-of-mouth as a referral source. Most people who referred contacts to the study were enrolled participants. Having trusted referral sources is critical for recruiting Black Americans to research studies.

References and Acknowledgements

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