

Navigating the Healthcare System: A National Survey of Healthcare Access Among Young Adults

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Overview

- Young adults face a challenging transition as they move from pediatric to adult healthcare. During this transition, many of them will lose pediatric support, experience changes in insurance coverage, and are expected to navigate the healthcare system by themselves with little to no experience.
- There are barriers such as cost and transportation that reduce access to healthcare, and there is also gaps in the knowledge of healthcare literacy, making it difficult to make correct medical decisions.
- Both healthcare barriers and healthcare literacy are not often viewed and examined together. This study investigates these factors together through a national survey of adults aged 18-25.

Aims

- This study aims to evaluate healthcare access and healthcare literacy among young adults aged 18-25 in the United States.
- It examined common barriers to accessing healthcare, such as transportation and cost, while also testing the participants' confidence in understanding health information and their healthcare literacy.
- By testing both healthcare access and literacy together, this study is determined to find whether these issues are connected or if they need to be approached independently to figure out how to support the young adults.

Methods

- A cross-sectional survey was conducted using an anonymous online questionnaire distributed to adults aged 18-25 across the United States.
- A national survey was conducted to improve the generalizability of the results to a larger population of young adults across the United States. The survey included questions on healthcare access, healthcare literacy, health insurance, and confidence in navigating the system.
- Responses were collected electronically and statistics and percentages were calculated to identify trends in healthcare access and healthcare literacy among participants.

Results

Weighted results from n=100 young adults (aged 18-25)

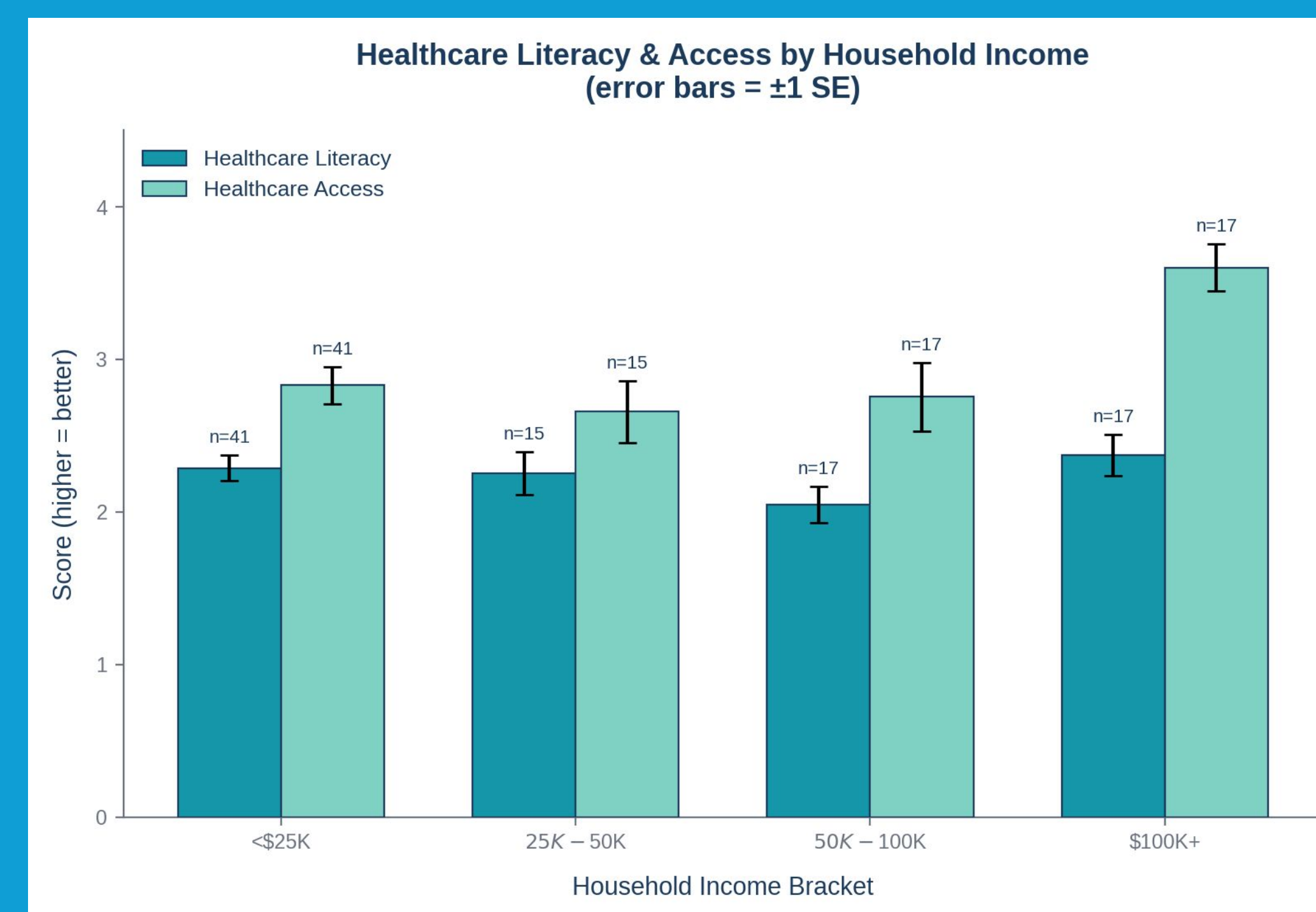


Figure 1. Healthcare Literacy & Access by Household Income

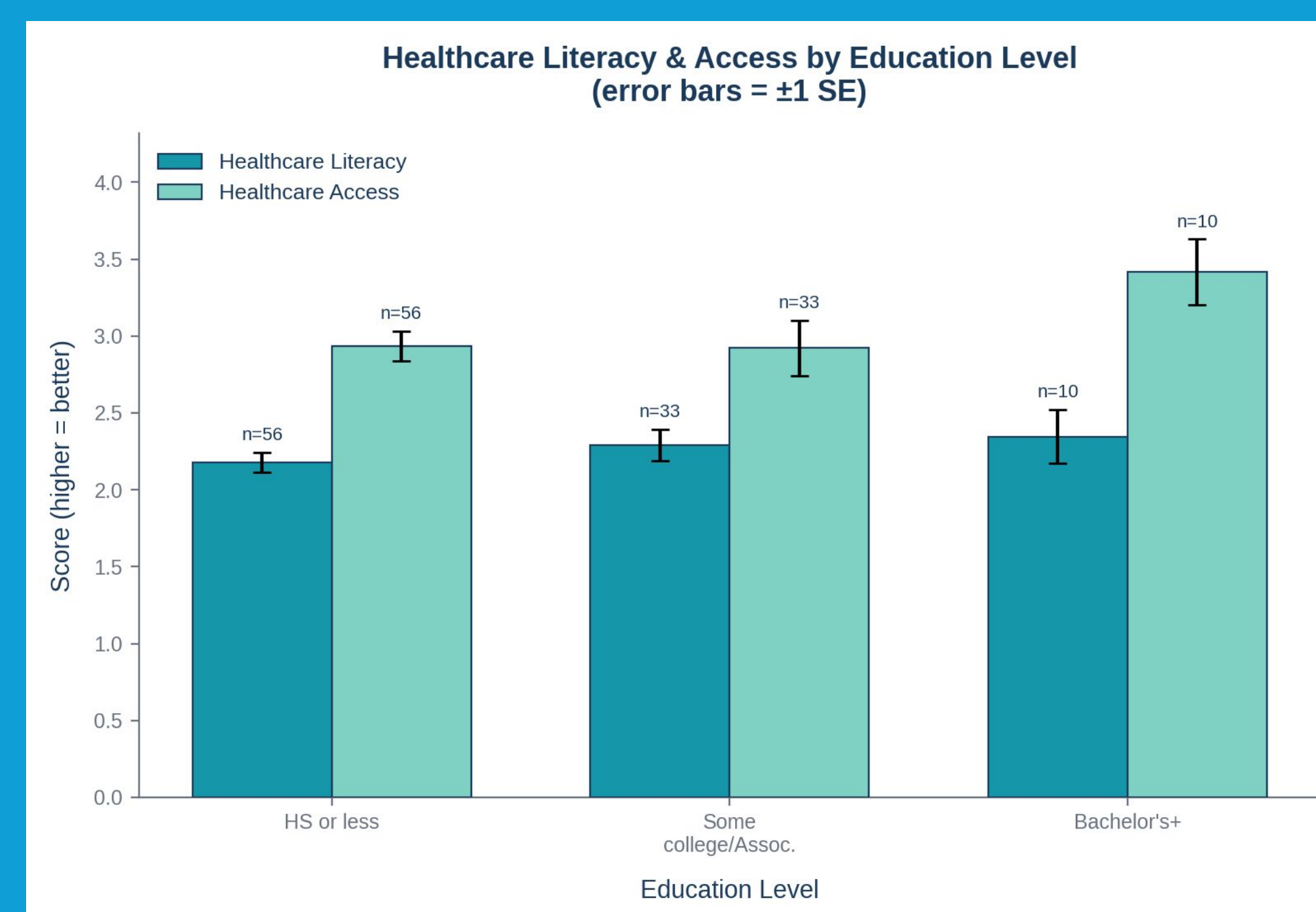


Figure 2. Healthcare Literacy & Access by Education Level

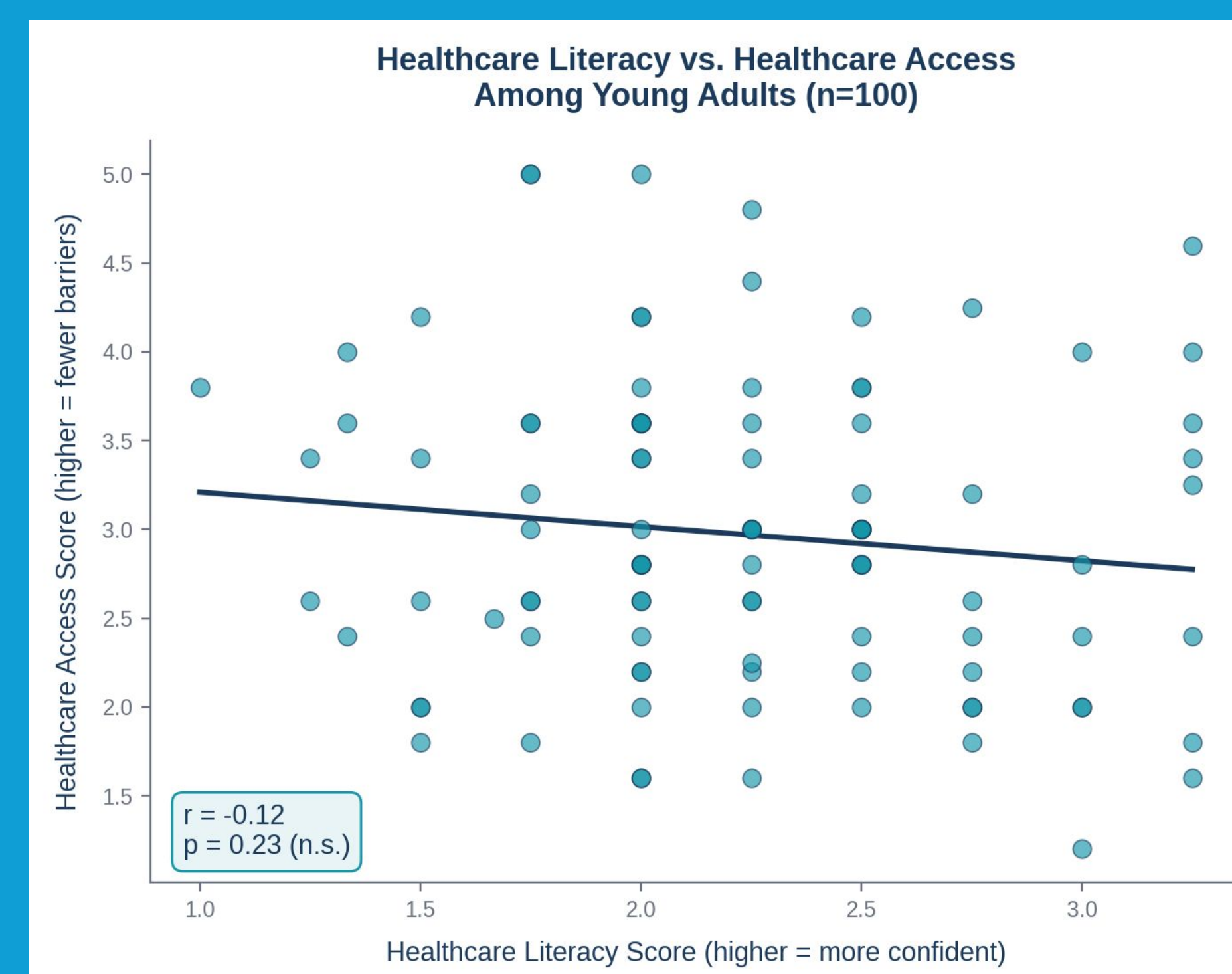
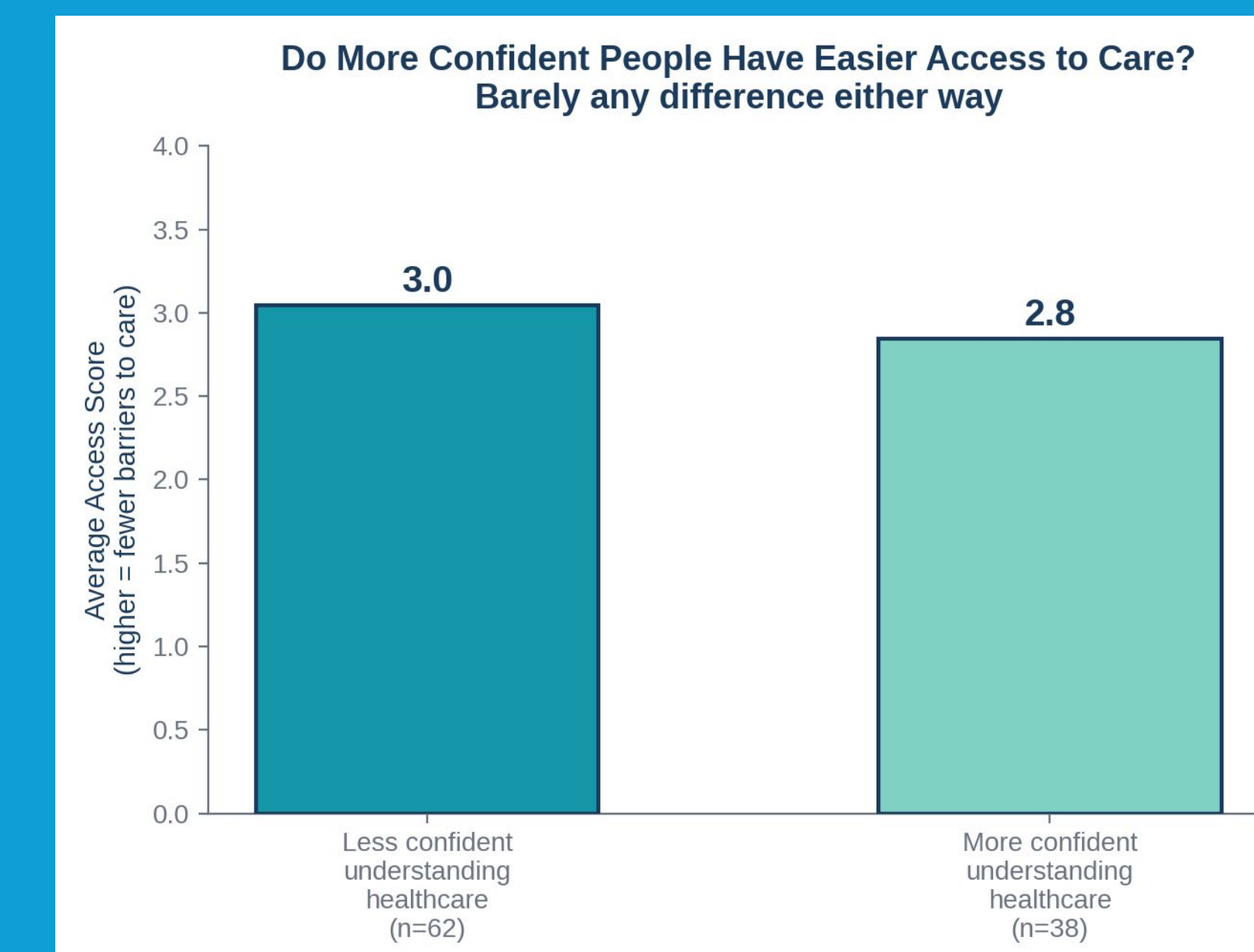


Figure 3. Healthcare Literacy vs. Healthcare Access

Figure 4. Confidence Group Comparison



Discussion

- Healthcare literacy and healthcare access showed no meaningful relationship in this sample as the r was -0.12 and the p-value was high. Young adults who felt more confident understanding medical information and insurance were not more likely to have easier access to healthcare.
- This demonstrates that they should be treated independently rather than together because they do not have any correlation. Access to healthcare is shown to be unequal, as when education and income increase, so does access to healthcare. Healthcare literacy, on the other hand, does not depend on demographics such as income and education.
- As a result, individuals of lower socioeconomic status need support when it comes to healthcare access, but everyone needs support regardless of background when it comes to healthcare literacy.

Limitations

- n=100, which is a relatively low sample size
- The data was collected at one point of time, so it can not capture changes over time in relationships
- The survey was sent online, which may not represent the population accordingly because not all individuals have access to the internet and a device

Conclusion

- This survey found that healthcare literacy and healthcare access are unrelated among young adults, as being more confident in healthcare information does not lead to having easier access to healthcare.
- In reality, young adults of lower socioeconomic status have more barriers to accessing healthcare, despite similar literacy levels.
- This shows that gaps are structural and certain demographics need support for accessing healthcare. It also shows that healthcare access and healthcare literacy should be tackled independently rather than together.