

Stigma to Seeking Substance Use Treatment

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Background

- In 2023, a national survey found that less than 1% of adults with substance use disorder sought treatment (SAMHSA, 2024).
- Past research highlights stigma as a potential barrier to treatment-seeking behavior (Picco et al., 2016).
- Understanding how sociodemographic factors shape stigma is crucial for designing targeted interventions.

Aims

- The purpose of this study is to examine how sociodemographic factors influence stigma perceptions regarding substance use treatment in a community setting.

Method

Sample

- Participants were recruited ($N = 77$) at bus stops, community centers, and public parks in Tarrant County and asked to complete a paper survey (see **Table 1** for demographic information).

Measures

- To measure perceived stigma of receiving help for substance use, a modified version of the Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help (SSRPH; Komiya et al., 2000) was used.
- The scale contains five items on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly agree*) with total scores ranging from 4-20.
- The scale was modified to replace the term “mental problems” with “substance use problems”

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	39	52%
	Female	36	48%
Race	American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	1.3%
	Asian	2	2.6%
	Bi-racial or Multiracial	6	7.8%
	Black or African American	23	29.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1.3%
	White	36	48.8%
	Other	5	6.5%
Ethnicity	Not Hispanic/Latino	53	79.1%
	Hispanic/Latino	14	20.9%
Education	Less than a high school degree	4	5.4%
	High school degree or GED	16	23.0%
	Some college	22	31.1%
	Associate's degree	3	4.1%
	Bachelor's degree	17	24.3%
	Graduate degree or higher	9	12.2%
Age	M(SD)	44.18(15.16)	

Figure 1. Sex and Stigma Levels

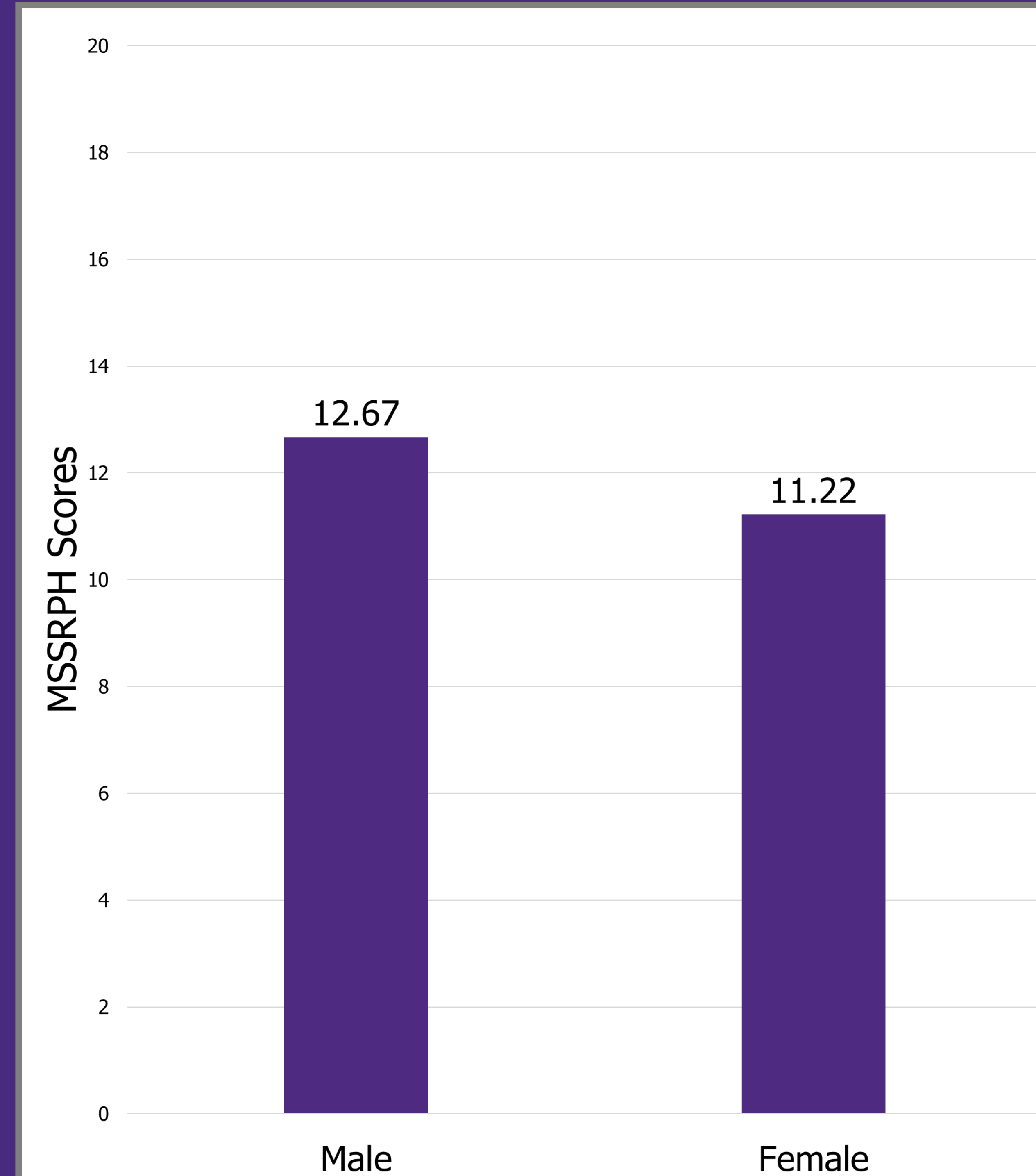


Figure 2. Ethnicity and Stigma Levels

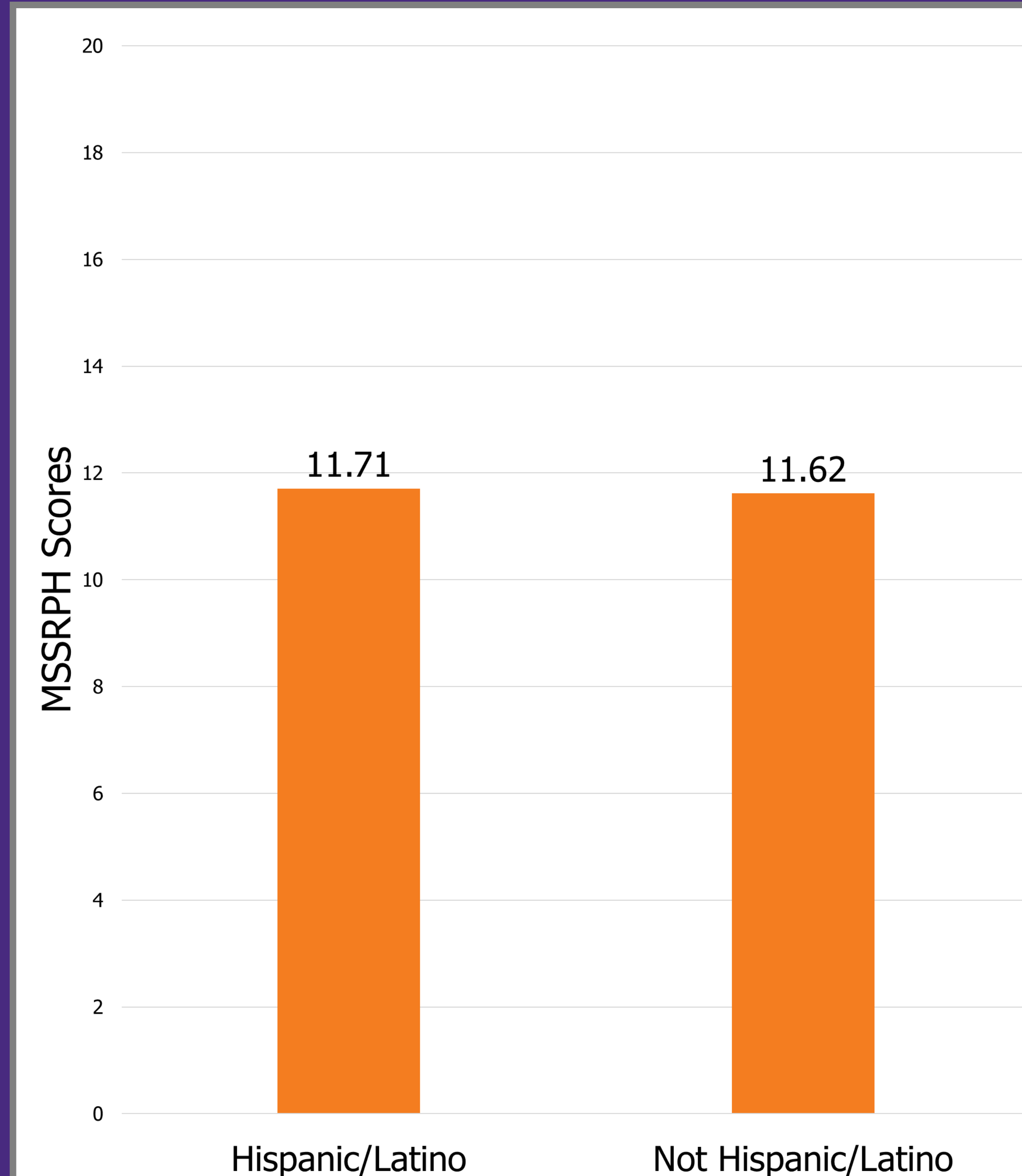


Figure 3. Race and Stigma Levels

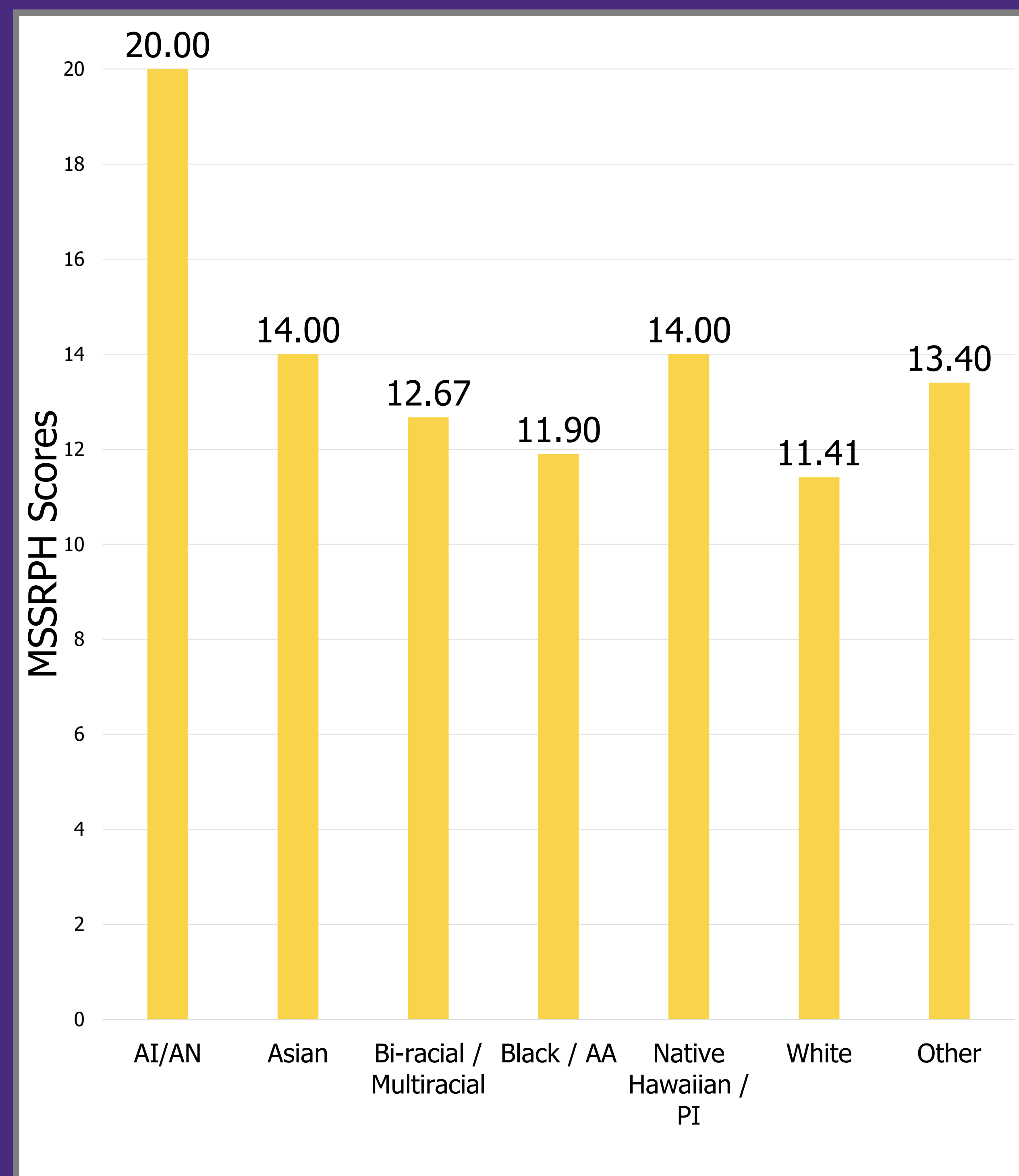
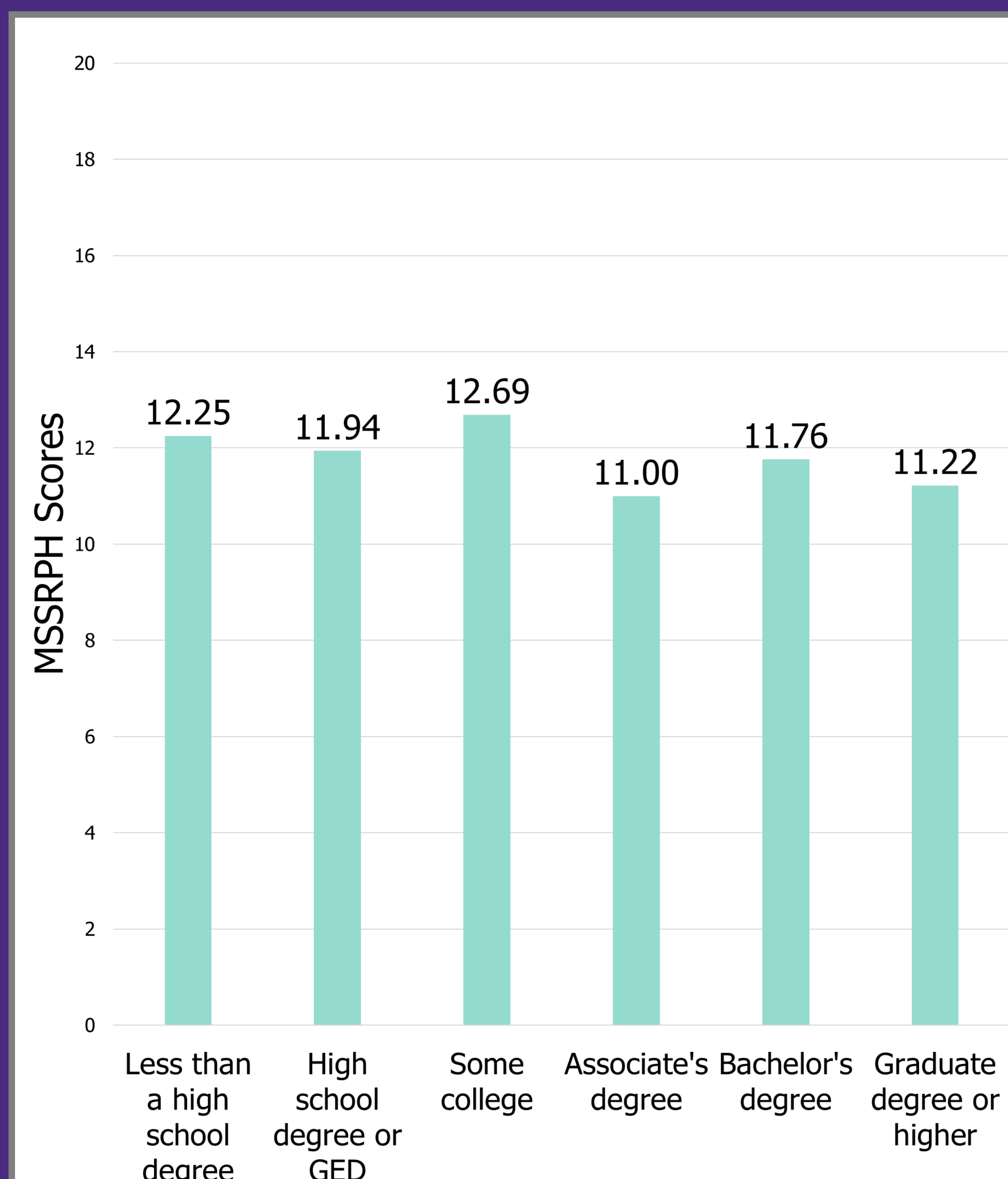


Figure 4. Education and Stigma Levels



Results

Analysis:

- A series of t -tests and one way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were ran to determine differences in stigma to seeking substance use treatment within several sociodemographic variables.

Independent Samples t -Test:

- An independent samples t -test revealed no differences in stigma between males and females, $t(69) = 1.645$, $p = .105$ (see **Figure 1**).
- An independent samples t -test revealed no differences in stigma between ethnicities, $t(62) = -.087$, $p = .931$ (see **Figure 2**).

One-Way ANOVA:

- A one-way ANOVA found no differences in the level of stigma between the identified races, $F(6, 70) = 1.207$, $p = .315$ (see **Figure 3**).
- A one-way ANOVA found no differences in the level of stigma between the levels of education, $F(5, 71) = .270$, $p = .928$ (see **Figure 4**).

Discussion

Key Findings:

- There were no significant differences in stigma levels across sociodemographic groups in Tarrant County.
- These results suggest that stigma may be a widespread barrier rather than influenced by specific demographics.
- Societal attitudes toward substance use may be deeply ingrained, affecting all groups similarly.

Limitations:

- Survey design may not have fully captured stigma perceptions.
- Sampling method (public spaces) may not have included individuals actively seeking treatment.

Future Directions

- Use in-depth methods (e.g., interviews) for better understanding.
- Study additional barriers like internalized stigma and prior treatment experiences for individuals suffering from substance use problems.
- Explore interventions to reduce stigma and improve treatment access.

References

- Komiya, N., Good, G. E., & Sherrod, N. B. (2000). Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help (SSRPH) [Database record]. APA PsycTests.
- Picco, L., Abdin, E., Chong, S. A., Pang, S., Shafie, S., Chua, B. Y., Vaingankar, J. A., Ong, L. P., Tay, J., & Subramaniam, M. (2016). Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help: Factor Structure and Socio-Demographic Predictors. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 547. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00547>
- SAMHSA. (2024). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP24-07-021, NSDUH Series H-59). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2023-nsduh-annual-national-report>