



# Facts and figures about autism

Autism shapes a person's unique way of interacting and perceiving the world. While some may have to navigate schooling and employment challenges as well as experience additional conditions like mental health, the cornerstone of thriving is robust support and understanding. It's a lifelong journey, and is different for each individual. This factsheet offers some key facts and figures about autism.

## Our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging and celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum.

### Autism in Australia

- An estimated 1 in every 40 people in Australia is Autistic.<sup>1</sup>
- Boys are three to four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls.<sup>2</sup>

### Support and services

- One-third of NDIS participants are Autistic.<sup>3</sup>

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey<sup>4</sup> of 63,500 parents and carers found:

- Among all Autistic people, just over two-thirds reported needing help or supervision with communication, self-care and/or mobility.
- About half of Autistic people who required assistance needed more help with cognitive and emotional support, communication and/or mobility.

### Autism and mental health

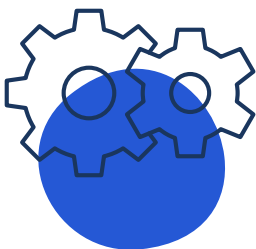
- Just over three-quarters of Autistic children have at least one mental health condition and nearly half have two or more mental health conditions.<sup>5</sup>
- About 45% of pre-school age Autistic children have one or more mental health conditions, in contrast to 14% of neurotypical youth (3–17 years) who have mental health conditions.<sup>5</sup>
- The most commonly reported co-occurring mental health diagnoses among Autistic people across the lifespan are anxiety (20%), sleep-wake disorders (13%), depressive disorders (11%), obsessive-compulsive disorder (9%), bipolar disorders (5%) and schizophrenia spectrum disorders (4%).<sup>6</sup>
- Autistic adults are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts than the general population.<sup>7</sup>



## Education

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey<sup>4</sup> of 63,500 parents and carers found:

- Over 90% of Autistic people (5–20 years) who attended school had some form of educational restriction.
- 40% of Autistic children attended a special class in a mainstream school or a special school.
- Just over three-quarters of Autistic students reported experiencing difficulty at their place of learning. The main problems were fitting in socially (60%), learning difficulties (55%) and communication difficulties (51%).
- 45% of Autistic students (5–20 years) indicated they needed more support or assistance at school than they were receiving.
- 8% of Autistic people have a bachelor degree or higher, compared with 16% of those with disability and 31% of those without disability.



## Employment

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey<sup>4</sup> of 63,500 parents and carers found:

- The labour force participation rate for Autistic people of working age was 38%, compared with 53% of all working age people with disability and 84% of people without disability.
- The unemployment rate for Autistic people was 34%, more than three times the rate of people with disability (10%) and almost eight times the rate of people without disability (5%).

## References

1. Aspect calculation based on prevalence studies conducted from 2019–23.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017), *Autism in Australia*.
3. National Disability Insurance Scheme (2022), *Autism*.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings*.
5. Kerns, C.M., et al. (2021), *Prevalence and Correlates of Caregiver – Reported Mental Health Conditions in Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United States*. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*.
6. Lai, M. C., Kassee, et al. (2019), *Prevalence of co-occurring mental health diagnoses in the autism population: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. *The Lancet, Psychiatry*.
7. Cassidy, S., et al. (2018), *Risk markers for suicidality in Autistic adults*. *Molecular Autism*.

### Remember:

No two Autistic people are alike. If you've met one Autistic person, you've met one Autistic person.

Aspect offers a comprehensive approach, based on the idea of a **different brilliant**<sup>®</sup>, that:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.