

Autism Fast Facts:

‘Community Attitudes & Behaviours Towards Autism’ & ‘Experiences of Autistic People & Their Families’.



As the peak body for autistic people and their families in Victoria, Amaze is committed to improving the quality of life for its community.

Amaze’s main goals are to increase community understanding, engagement and acceptance of autism.

Amaze will do this by ensuring people understand the facts and reject the myths about autism and by educating the community on how we can all better support autistic people.

“Better support starts with greater understanding, and if people took simple actions to support autistic people, the positive impact in the lives of those people will be huge”.



**Shaping the future
for Autism.**

How do we build better understanding of autism?

The first step is to find out what the Australian community knows, feels and thinks about autism and what autistic people and their families experience in the community. We've looked at autism from both sides - autism and non-autism communities - and the results are revealing and compelling.

These "Fast Facts" present the first highlights of two ground-breaking studies "Community Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Autistic People in Australia" and "Experiences of Autistic People and their Families in Society".

98%

of Australians
have heard
of autism



87%

of autistic people / families
agree Australians
have heard of autism



86% of Australians have
contact with an
autistic person



1 in 5 Australians have an
autistic friend



1 in 4 Australians have an
autistic relative

86%

of Australians agree
autistic people are
sensitive to light
and sound



But only
16%

of autistic people / families
agree most people know
how autism
affects people

Autism is a lifelong disability but 30-55% of Australians agree/are unsure autism can be cured and **22%** agree/are unsure that people grow out of autism.

There is no specific cause of autism but 12% of Australians agree/are unsure that vaccines (like MMR) cause autism.

Engaging with and supporting autistic people

Whilst awareness of autism and how it impacts people is high amongst Australians, their confidence in their ability to support an autistic person is much lower – only 29% of Australians agree.

The autism community rates people's ability to support them much lower with only 4% agreeing that they know how.

29%

of Australians believe they know how to **support an autistic person**



But only **4%**

of autistic people / families agreed people in the community **know how to support autistic people**

Members of the autism community report being treated harshly and judged unfairly by the public in the way they are described and how people react to them. The ways autism impacts people means they often need more time to process information and find some social situations and physical environments challenging, which results in them feeling overwhelmed and anxious and can lead to a meltdown. A meltdown is not deliberate or 'a tantrum' and is far worse to experience than to watch.



59% report being described as **weird**



53% report being described as **naughty**



70% report being described as **anxious**



61% report people **'tut' or shake their head**



64% report people **actively avoid them**



81% report **being stared at**

“My son may be on the “spectrum” and have other “disabilities”, but he is the most amazing kid. Sad how some people don’t see who they are on the inside, just how they do things differently on the outside. He is my life’s finest achievement.”

Autism acceptance and inclusion

Australians overwhelmingly agree that autistic people are **discriminated against** (84%) and that more should be done to support autistic people in schools (74%) and workplaces (70%).

Almost 8 in 10 Australians believe autistic people have difficulty making friends (78%).

Autistic people tell us that it isn't their autism that disables them. Rather it's the lack of understanding and support from the wider community, who need to have more knowledge and make adjustments to better support autistic people.



52%

report feeling **socially isolated**

48%

report being **avoided or shunned**

"I feel the experience has left me a little isolated. Even family have avoided us, or at least my autistic son. I feel there is stigma, so much stigma surrounding this diagnosis."

The lack of support and adjustments, and the negativity and judgement of others, results in autistic people experiencing significant social isolation.

40%

of autistic people sometimes are unable to leave their home due to...



35-40%

needing **support** / worry about **negativity** of others



68%

sensitivity to **light/sound**



80%

too **crowded**

f f The public need more education to better adapt to autistic people. The responsibility shouldn't all be on the autistic person."