

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are approximately **160,000** autistic school children in the UK and each of them will have different strengths and passions, and face varying challenges.¹

Top 5 things everyone should know about autism

Autistic people and their families have told the National Autistic Society things they want the public to know about how being autistic affects them. These are that autistic people may:



feel anxiety about changes or unexpected events



be under- or over-sensitive to sound, smells, light, taste and touch (this is called sensory sensitivity)



need extra time to process information, like questions or instructions

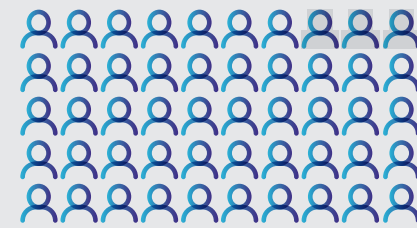


face high levels of anxiety in social situations



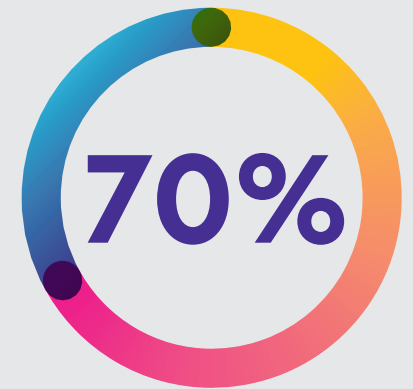
have difficulties communicating and interacting with others

Any of these five challenges could leave autistic people feeling on the edge of overload, and even lead to a meltdown or a shutdown.

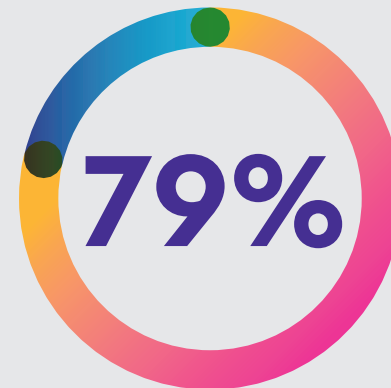


1 in 100

children are estimated to be autistic.²



of autistic children are in schools like yours.³



of autistic people report feeling isolated.⁴

Autistic children are
2 times
more likely to be excluded from schools like yours.⁵



Well-known autistic people



Chris Packham



Anne Hegerty



Greta Thunberg



Niall Aslam

Sources

1. Department for Education (June 2021). Academic year 2020/21. Special educational needs in England.
2. The NHS Information Centre, Community and Mental Health Team, Brugha, T. et al (2012). Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in adults: extending the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey. Leeds: NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care
3. DfE Special educational needs in England: January 2014
4. The National Autistic Society Survey (2015)
5. Department for Education (May 2021), Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2019 to 2020