



IRELAND'S **AUTISM** CHARITY

# *Same Chance*

Report 2025

## Contents

4	A Message from our CEO
5	Methodology   Our Vision
6	Profile of Respondents
7	Life Stage
9	Language
10	Executive Summary
12	Barriers to Inclusion and Participation
12	Inclusion and Acceptance
14	Barriers to Understanding and their Impact on Autistic People's Wellbeing
15	Access to Information
17	Life in the Community
19	Access to Recreation
21	Media Coverage and Portrayal of Autism and Autistic People
23	Access to an Inclusive Education
26	Codes of Behaviour
28	Restraint and Restrictive Practices
31	Access to Healthcare
34	Access to Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT)
35	Adult Day Services
36	Consent and Access to Sexual Health and Wellbeing
39	Access to Mental Health Supports
40	Access to Public Transport
41	Access to Social Protection and Securing an Adequate Income
43	Social Protection Payments
45	Employment
46	Housing and Independent Living
47	Conclusion
48	Attitudes to Autism   Appendix 1



# A Message from our CEO

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to present this year's Same Chance Report on behalf of AslAm, Ireland's Autism Charity. This annual "state-of-the-community" report highlights the issues and systemic barriers that impact the autism community in Ireland. These systemic barriers range from inadequate employment opportunities, educational barriers, inaccessible disability and healthcare services. Each year this report provides us with powerful insights and testimonies of everyday life for Autistic people and families.

The experiences reflected in this report, align with the issues raised by community members with our organisation every day and speak to areas of significant concern in terms of public policy. Over the course of the last year, we have seen the rights of Autistic people breached in terms of access to timely assessment and appropriate school places, a failure to adequately address the inexcusable link between Autism and poverty and the publication of long-awaited guidelines on seclusion and restraint in Irish schools, which fall far short of the rights-based, child-centred and robust regulation that is so urgently needed.

Since our last Same Chance Report, it is also important to acknowledge several positive steps have been taken in advancing the call for greater supports for Autistic people and families. In August 2024, the Government published the Autism Innovation Strategy which makes over 80 recommendations to support Autistic people and families across a variety of government departments and agencies. In November 2024, the Government ratified the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a long overdue step in protecting and safeguarding the rights of Autistic people and families. The Programme for Government makes several key commitments which we welcomed, such as the commitment to legislating for a National Autism Strategy to build on the work of the Autism Innovation Strategy. If implemented, the next Autism Strategy will support with the roll-out of key supports for the Autistic community and families.

Autistic people face barriers not only in relation to public policy and the provision of timely support services but also in wider social, cultural and community life. Whilst we acknowledge the much-needed growth in public awareness of Autism in recent years, the Attitudes to Autism poll shows that the public often lack confidence, knowledge and true acceptance of Autistic people's often invisible differences in day-to-day life. Autistic people adapt every day to communities not built with our needs in mind, it is critical the public acknowledge this reality and make reasonable accommodations in daily interactions and public spaces. It is welcome that there is broad public support for doing better and an acknowledgement that the changes that are essential for Autistic people can, in fact, make for a better society for all. As is so often the case, the Irish public are ahead of government and statutory institutions in their thinking on Autism and public policy. As a minority community, it is essential that we harness this support to bring about lasting change.

As an organisation representing Ireland's Autism Community, we are in a privileged position by receiving the trust of our community to advocate on their behalf in ensuring positive policy change occurs in removing these systemic barriers that are aptly highlighted in this report. We hope that by increasing the number of services we offer as an organisation and our continued calls for positive policy change in removing key barriers, we can offer as a society each of our community members the SAME CHANCE. We look forward to working with you and on your family's behalf in the months and years ahead.

Yours sincerely,

**Adam Harris**

CEO of AslAm





IRELAND'S  
**AUTISM**  
CHARITY

## Methodology

This year's Same Chance Report is based on findings from a recent survey which AsI Am conducted between Friday 31st January to Sunday 16th February 2025. As with 2024, Autistic people and families were invited to complete the survey. This survey was shared widely across the following platforms:

- » Social Media channels [Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X]
- » AsI Am Newsletters
- » Website
- » External organisations
- » The survey was completed by Autistic adults and by families with one or more Autistic members. The survey included 107 questions. Respondents answered questions about their own experiences and those of their families of Autistic life in Ireland.

### Our Vision

AsI Am is Ireland's Autism Charity. Our vision is to create a society in which every Autistic person is accepted "as they are" – equal, valued, and respected. Our purpose is to advocate for an inclusive society for Autistic people that is accessible, accepting and affirming. We work to support Autistic people, our families and our wider community to fully engage in Irish life and build the capacity of our society to facilitate true inclusion.



## Profile of Respondents

1454 people responded to this year's Same Chance Survey. Respondents were asked to share their views on Autistic life in Ireland. Families with more than one Autistic person in their household had the opportunity to fill in the survey for each family member to ensure every experience within each household was captured.

Like in previous years, 51% of survey respondents were caregivers of Autistic individuals, such as parents or guardians. 32% of responses came from Autistic adults, whilst 17% were family members and or a partner of an Autistic person. (see Figure 1)

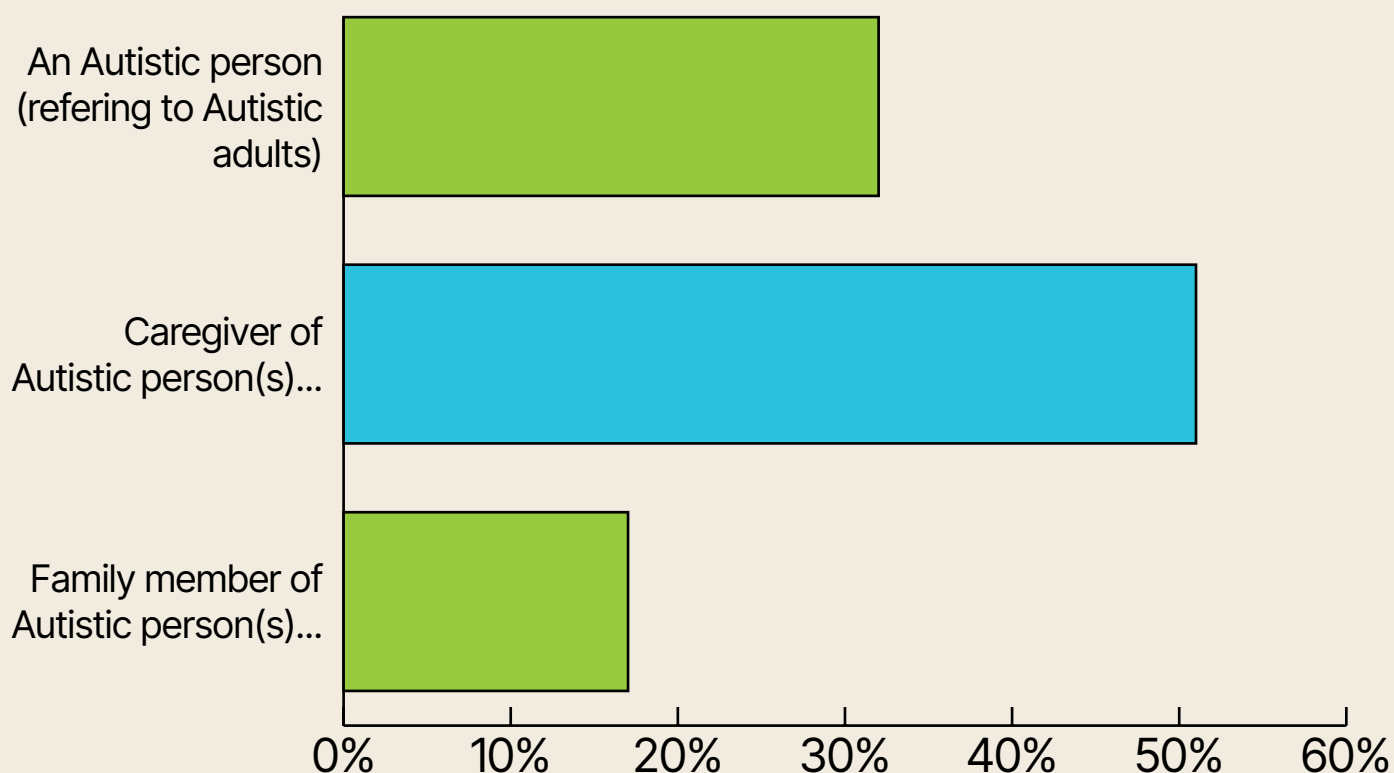
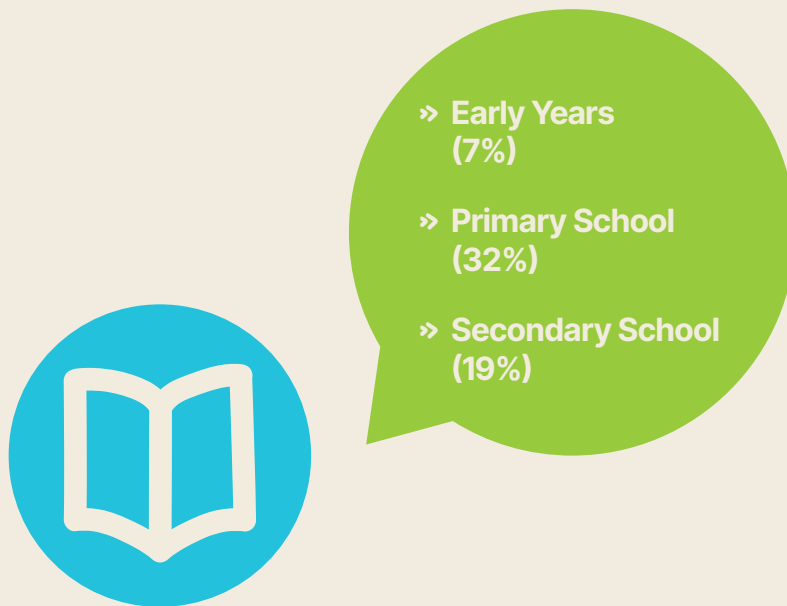


Figure 1 - Profile of Respondents



## Life stage

Of those represented in the report, a majority of community members are currently in education of some form, such as:



Autistic adults represented in this report are engaged in a variety of activities including:



"Other" (7%) shared their own responses to the question, referring to both themselves and Autistic children. Among these responses, community members said they are retired or family carers. Respondents also said that they have children attending special school.

38% of respondents replied that they received an autism diagnosis through the public healthcare system, whereas 53% said that they received a diagnosis privately through a clinical professional. Of those, 9% responded 'Other' to this question, and shared individual responses, including self-identifying as Autistic.

69% of respondents had an identified co-occurring difference, diagnosis or disability. (see Figure 2) The report also highlights respondents came from across all regions and most counties in Ireland. (see Figure 3)

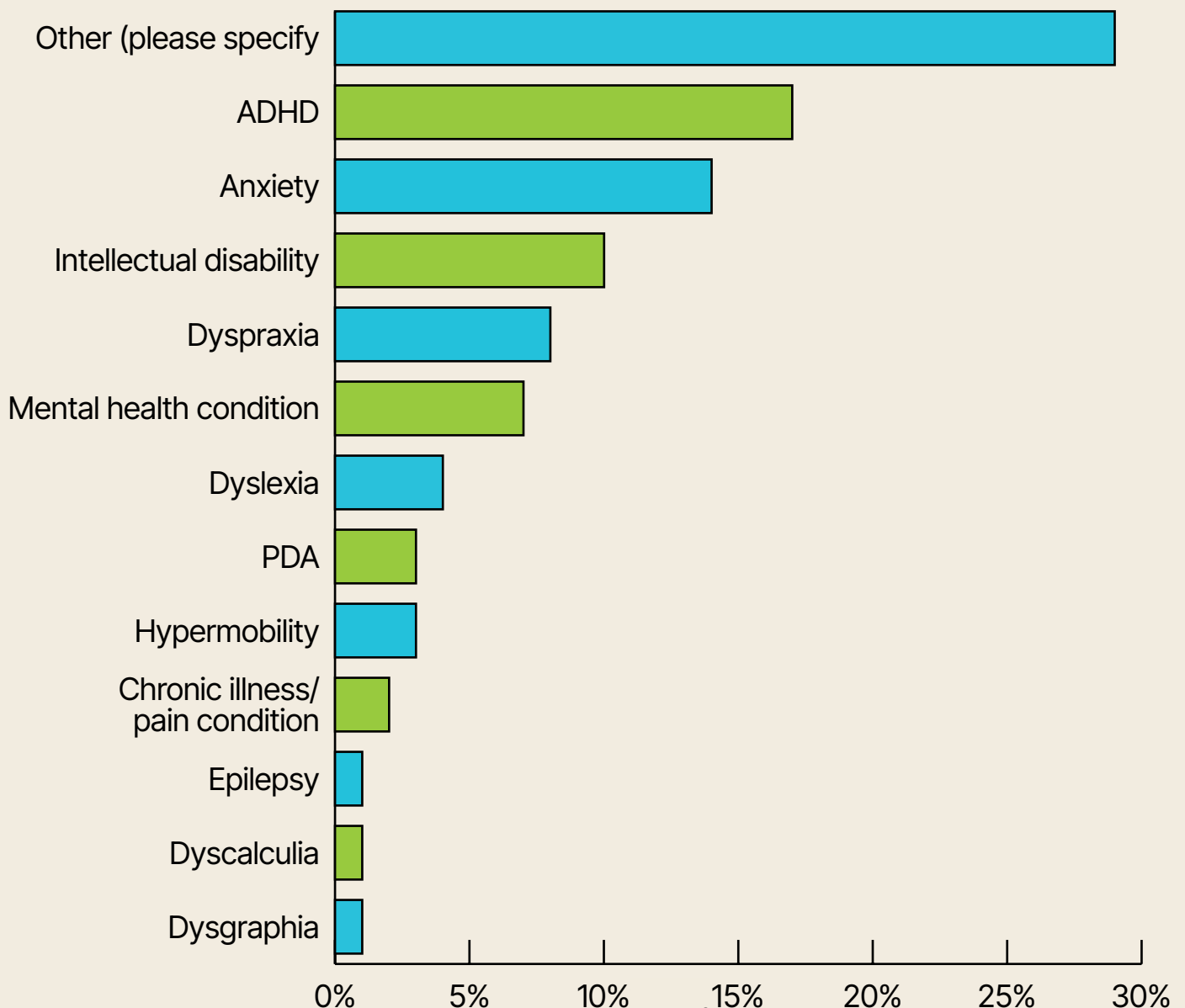


Figure 2 - Co-occurring Differences/Disabilities

The report found that many Autistic people also had a range of differences including ADHD (17%), Anxiety (14%), Intellectual disability (9%), Dyspraxia (7%), Mental Health Condition (6%), Dyslexia (4%), PDA (3%), Hypermobility (2%) and Chronic illness/pain condition (2%). Other co-occurring differences/disabilities people shared included Epilepsy, differences like Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, as well as naming specific mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, and developmental differences.

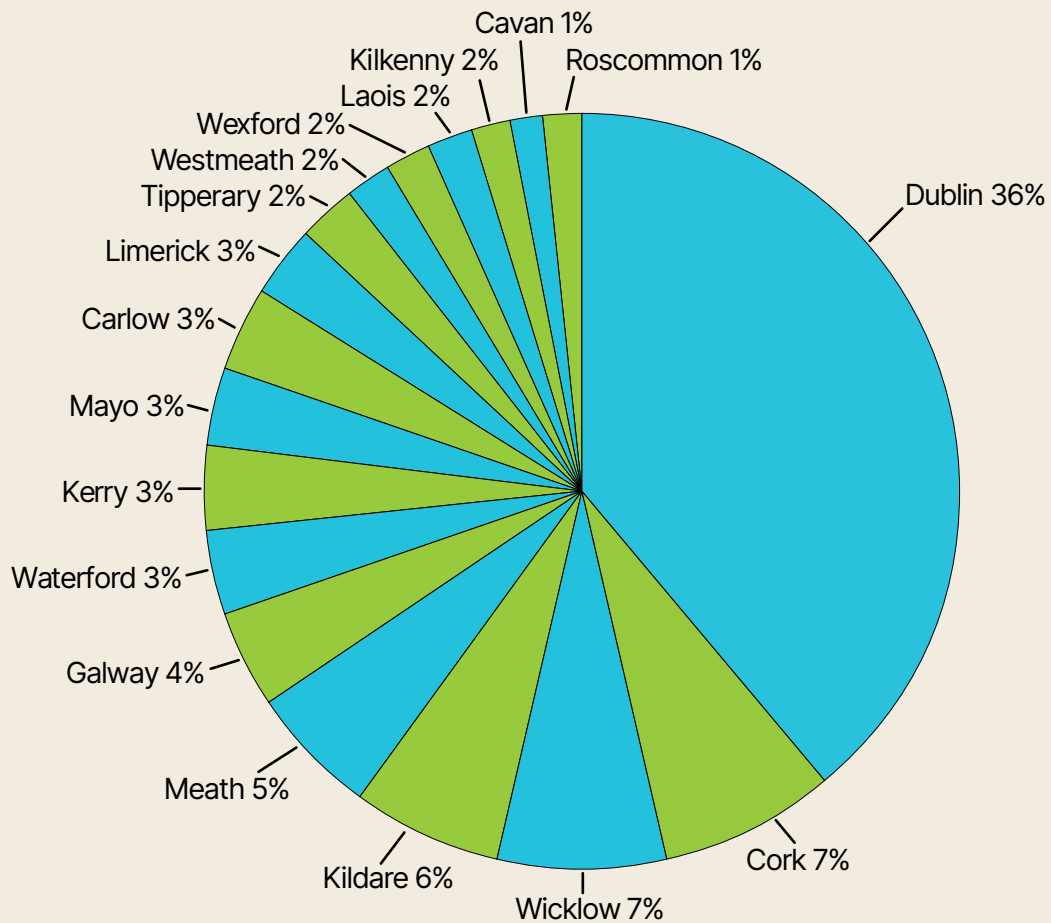


Figure 3 - Geographical Location

## Language

For the first time in this year's report, we asked respondents to identify their preferred use of description for themselves or that of their Autistic child. Respondents were given the opportunity to capture all identities that applied to them. Respondents shared the following identities:

- » 82% wished to identify as "Autistic"
- » 45% wished to identify as "Neurodivergent"
- » 21% wished to identify as "Person with Additional Needs"
- » 18% wished to identify as "AuDHD" (both Autistic and ADHD)



# Executive Summary

Across the areas explored in the Same Chance Report, several findings emerge which reflect how Autistic people and families experience life and living in Irish society in 2025.

These findings include:

- » 91% believe that being Autistic is a barrier to being accepted by and making friends with others
- » 48% do not feel safe and protected in their community
- » 44% believe they have experienced discrimination in the last 12 month on the grounds of being Autistic
- » 33% believe that the public's lack of understanding of communication differences is the most significant barrier to inclusion
- » 32% believe that the judgement and attitude of others is a significant barrier to inclusion
- » 70% do not believe the education system is inclusive of Autistic people
- » 71% do not believe our public healthcare system is inclusive of Autistic people
- » 64% do not believe the social protection system is inclusive of Autistic people
- » 55% experience barriers to accessing mental health services on the grounds of being Autistic
- » 69% of children represented in the report are not currently receiving supports from their local HSE Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT)
- » 84% are waiting for more than 1 year to access support through their CDNT
- » 85% of children represented in the report are not currently receiving supports from their local HSE Primary Care team
- » 33% report that their family's current housing situation does not meet their needs
- » 98% believe that schools should ask for consent from families before using practices like restraint



- » 74% do not think that it should be possible to expel a child from a Special School
- » 99% believe that an independent body should have the power to monitor and investigate schools who use practices like seclusion and restraint
- » 87% do not think that the current Guidelines on Codes of Behaviour are inclusive of Autistic students
- » 79% of Autistic adults do not believe that conversations about consent reflect their experiences
- » 69% do not believe that sex education is accessible to Autistic people
- » 92% believe that misinformation about Autism and Autistic people has increased over the past 12 months
- » 81% have additional costs on the grounds of being Autistic or raising an Autistic person
- » 92% believe that a Cost of Disability payment should be introduced
- » 80% want to see means testing abolished for disability welfare payments
- » 99% believe that any changes to the Disability Act should keep the right for Autistic people and families to get timely access to Autism assessments and supports
- » 98% believe the Government should legislate for a right to access therapies

**86% said**

**they did not believe they have the same chance as**

**non-Autistic people in Irish society**



# Barriers to Inclusion and Participation

## Inclusion and Acceptance

The Executive Summary within this report highlights a snapshot of the barriers and exclusion Autistic people and families experience in daily life. These barriers exist because of society's failing to provide for accessible services and public amenities. Such failings are in direct contravention of the basic principles of universal design and more importantly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Article 9 of the UNCRPD highlights and vindicates the rights of disabled people to have access to better services and supports in areas such as housing, transport, information, housing etc.

Autistic people in this year's report highlighted their biggest barriers to inclusion and participation, these included:

- » The public's lack of understanding of communication differences (33%)
- » Judgement and attitude of others (32%)
- » Inaccessible environments (16%)
- » Financial barriers (6%)



Other barriers community members highlighted include cultural barriers, needing to travel long distances to access activities or amenities from their community, discrimination, and not having specific supports to meet their individual needs.

To highlight these issues as they currently exist, respondents were asked what one thing others in society could do to make an Autistic person feel more accepted and involved in their community. Respondents noted that they would like the following:

**"Give me a chance and try to get to know me. When given a chance, I can hold my own in a conversation, and I am more than willing to try everyday activities that non-Autistics in my age group would do."**

**"By informing me that it's okay to be Autistic and they'll still be friends with me regardless."**

**"Lower demands and be patient."**

**"More kindness, dropping the judgement, allowing for difference."**

**"Care about accessibility and giving the same opportunities to be part of the community."**

**"Learn about communication differences and understand that not all Autistic people are the same, and that autism doesn't have a look."**

**"Not to judge me. Not to compare me to other Autistic people they have met. Not make me feel weird."**

**"I would like to be believed, first of all. As a late diagnosed high masking adult, I feel there is very poor general understanding of what autism is."**

**"Not to pressure her [daughter] if she's getting very anxious, give her safe space and time to calm herself."**

These testimonies highlight small steps that could be taken by the general population in supporting Autistic people and families within our society. A theme which emanates from the above testimonies highlight's the pervasive judgement that can be felt by Autistic people and families because of the general public's understanding of Autism.



# Barriers to Understanding and their Impact on Autistic People's Wellbeing

Along with attitudinal barriers and judgement that exists within society, community members also highlighted similar barriers within family life. 51% surveyed said they did not feel understood and accepted by their broader family. Such experiences have a significant impact on how Autistic people see themselves, their own sense of living in society, and their overall wellbeing.

This judgment and lack of understanding can at times require Autistic people to 'mask' their identity to fit into society and their wider family and community. Masking can harm an Autistic person's mental and physical health - some Autistic people report feelings of burnout, stress, anxiety, and exhaustion. This often happens when Autistic people try to fit in and meet society's expectations for long periods. This can feel very isolating and overwhelming for some Autistic people. The report found that 86% of people experienced barriers to forming friendships with others. (See Figure 4)

86% said  
they experienced barriers  
to forming friendships with others

Is being Autistic a barrier to being accepted by, and to forming friendships with others?

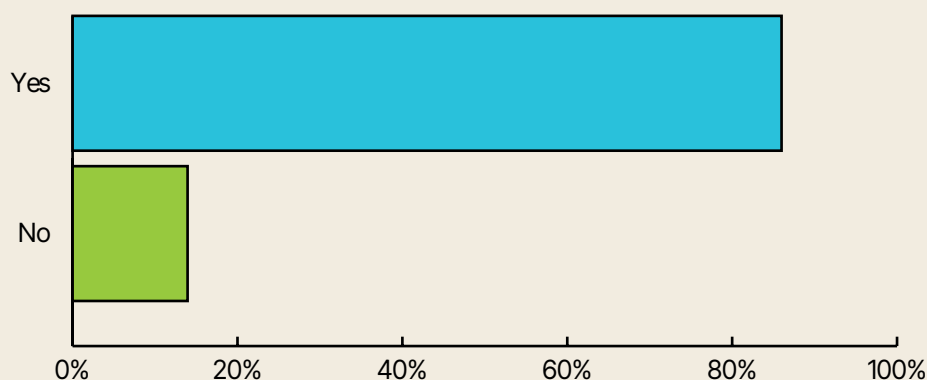


Figure 4

A key barrier to inclusion for Autistic people and families is the judgement they can experience from society. Community members often share that a lack of training and professional development is a major barrier to access and participation. Some staff may not fully understand the experiences of Autistic people or receive training on how to support our community effectively. Members of the public may not also know how to approach having deeper conversations about these access issues, so that Autistic people's needs and concerns are understood and validated. Current levels of public knowledge and understanding are explored in the Public Attitudes to Autism section of this report.

# Access to Information

The barriers highlighted previously are often compounded by the inaccessibility of how information is presented to Autistic people. Often information is presented in a manner that is suitable and designed for non-Autistic people without factoring the different communication preferences and differences of the Autistic community. This can lead to missed opportunities and inaccessible environments for Autistic people. The UNCRPD under Article 21 highlights the importance of having information intended for the general public to disabled people in a way that is presented in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different types of disabilities, including for Autistic people.

This section of the report highlights a number of these barriers with a particular focus on information and communication. In Figure 5 below, 79% of respondents stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the public was supportive of an Autistic person's communication needs and preferences. This correlates with the additional sentiment captured in Figure 6, which highlights 67% of the Autistic community disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that access to information for day-to-day activities in the community was easy to access. The above sentiment and findings show how the state is failing in its duty to ensure information is accessible for the disabled community. In addition, inaccessible information ultimately impacts on community's overall experience on life within the community.

Do you agree with the following statement:

**"I find the general public supportive of my communication needs and preferences of that of my family member"**

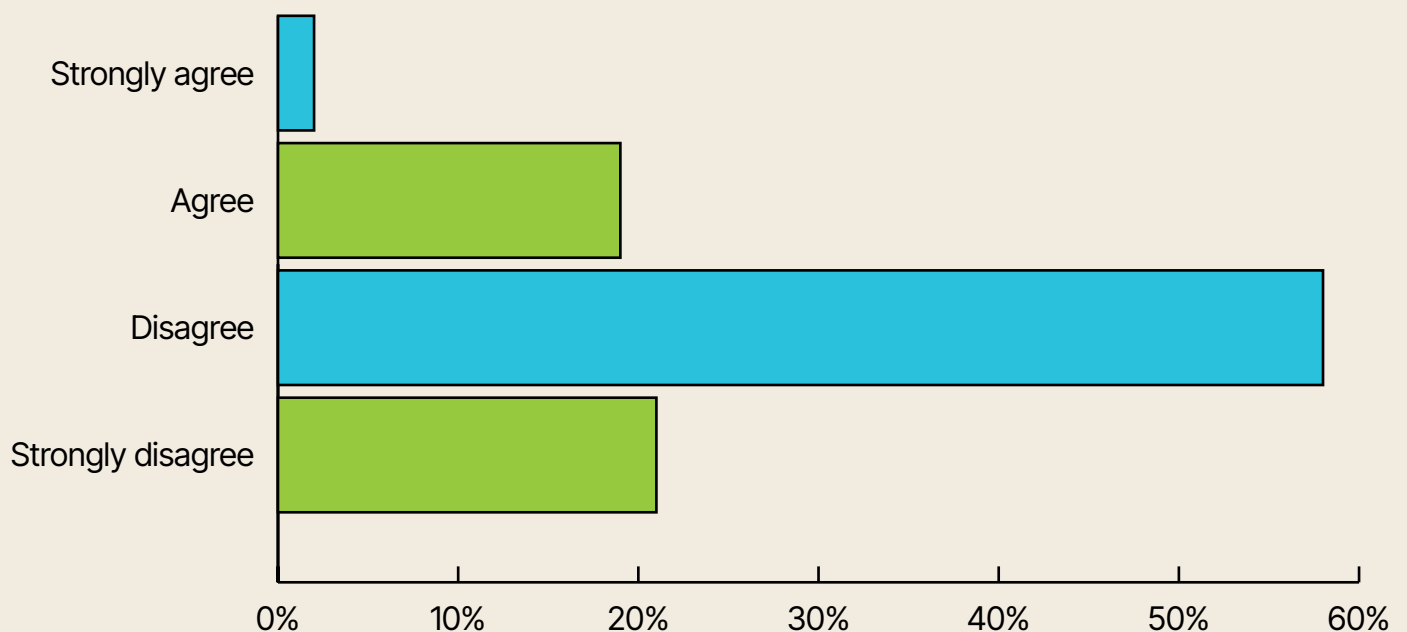


Figure 5

Do you agree with the following statement:

"I find it easy to get access to the information I need to prepare to engage in day-to-day activities in the community" (i.e. going somewhere new / accessing a public service / engaging in a community activity)

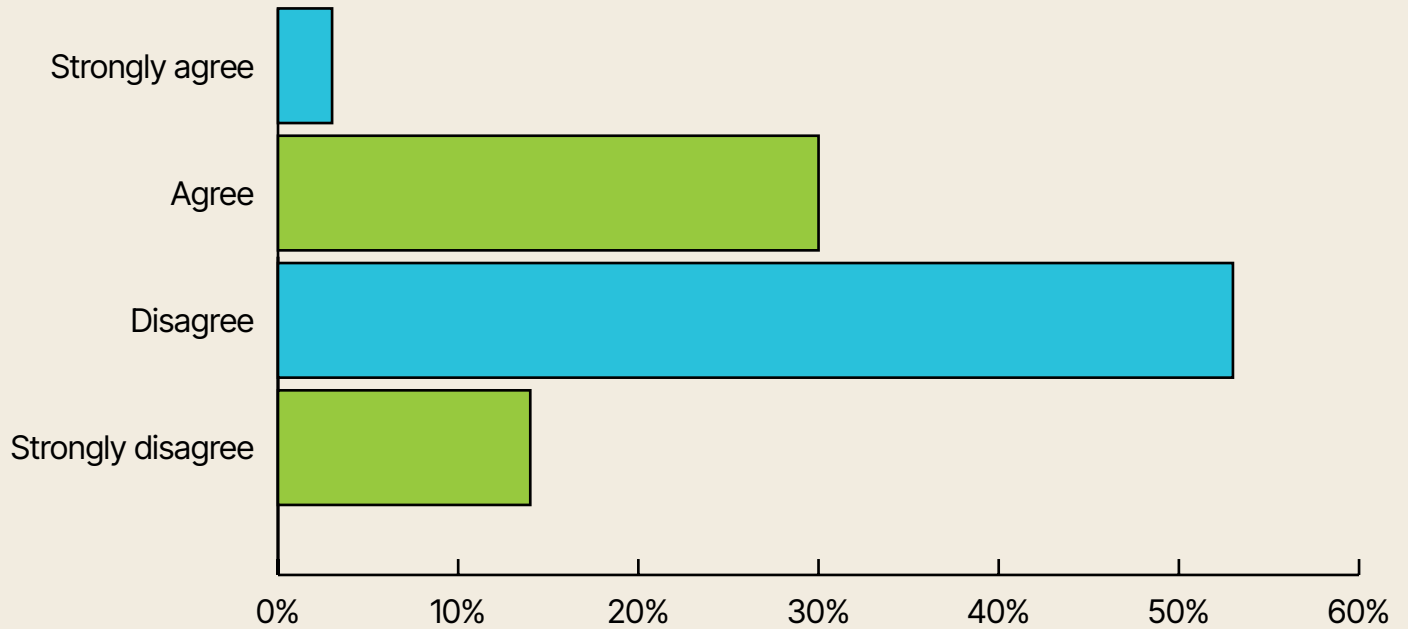


Figure 6



## Life in the Community

91% of Autistic people feel that the Irish public do not understand Autism. This statistic is in line with last year's report which stood at 90%. This consistently high Figure year on year reflects the need for greater initiatives to take place to increase society's understanding of Autism. The general public's lack of understanding directly impacts on the Autistic person's experience of society. When asked to rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, how supported and accepted they felt while participating in their local community, the weighted average rating was 2.7.

Another important aspect of participation in community life is feeling safe and protected. 48% of Autistic people and families did not feel safe within their community. This was an increase of 9% on our 2024 Report. Many reasons explain why Autistic people and their families feel unsafe in their communities. Research shows that Autistic individuals are often victims or witnesses of violence, and can be targeted for being themselves, being perceived as vulnerable, or for needing more time to process decisions.

There was also an increase in the past 12 months of Autistic people's experience of discrimination on the grounds of being Autistic. 44% of community members shared that they had experienced discrimination because they were Autistic, an increase of 8% on 2024. Respondents highlighted some of these experiences, in how they were excluded from school, work, social events or when using services in the community. One community member said:

**"My daughter was bullied out of her school by the principal, we faced resistance to reasonable accommodations in healthcare, my son attends a school outside the community (a special school)".**

**44%**

**of community members shared that they  
had experienced discrimination because  
they were Autistic**





As a result of these experiences of exclusion Autistic people can experience a reluctance in disclosing their diagnosis.

Some of the experiences of discrimination from community members included:

"No primary school place. Not allowed to progress as normal in pre-school."

"In school not getting the correct supports."

"In the workplace I have faced over criticism on communication. It has never been rude but somehow never social enough. It's a nuance I can't seem to fit to."

"Having to over explain and justify my child's needs rather than just doing what I requested."

"It's a subtle change of attitude; people become condescending or appear more wary. Alternatively, people simply don't believe me and/or tell me I seem well able to just get on with it."

"Not Autistic enough, late diagnosed so very few people know as the reaction I get is as if I'm faking it, sure you are grand etc."

"Summer camps/afterschool activities - really hard to find truly inclusive options. I find there's always a caveat that services would not be suitable or that an adult supervision would need to be provided by family etc regardless of the child's ability but just because of diagnosis."

# Access to Recreation

Under the UNCRPD Autistic people and disabled generally have a right to access and joy the pursuit of recreational activities. Article 30 of the UNCRPD identifies the right of disabled people to enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats; enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance. Under this convention the state is obligated to take appropriate measures to uphold these rights provisions. Yet in this report, 54% of respondents reported that they do not have the same chance to take part in recreational activities as Autistic or disabled people. (see Figure 7)

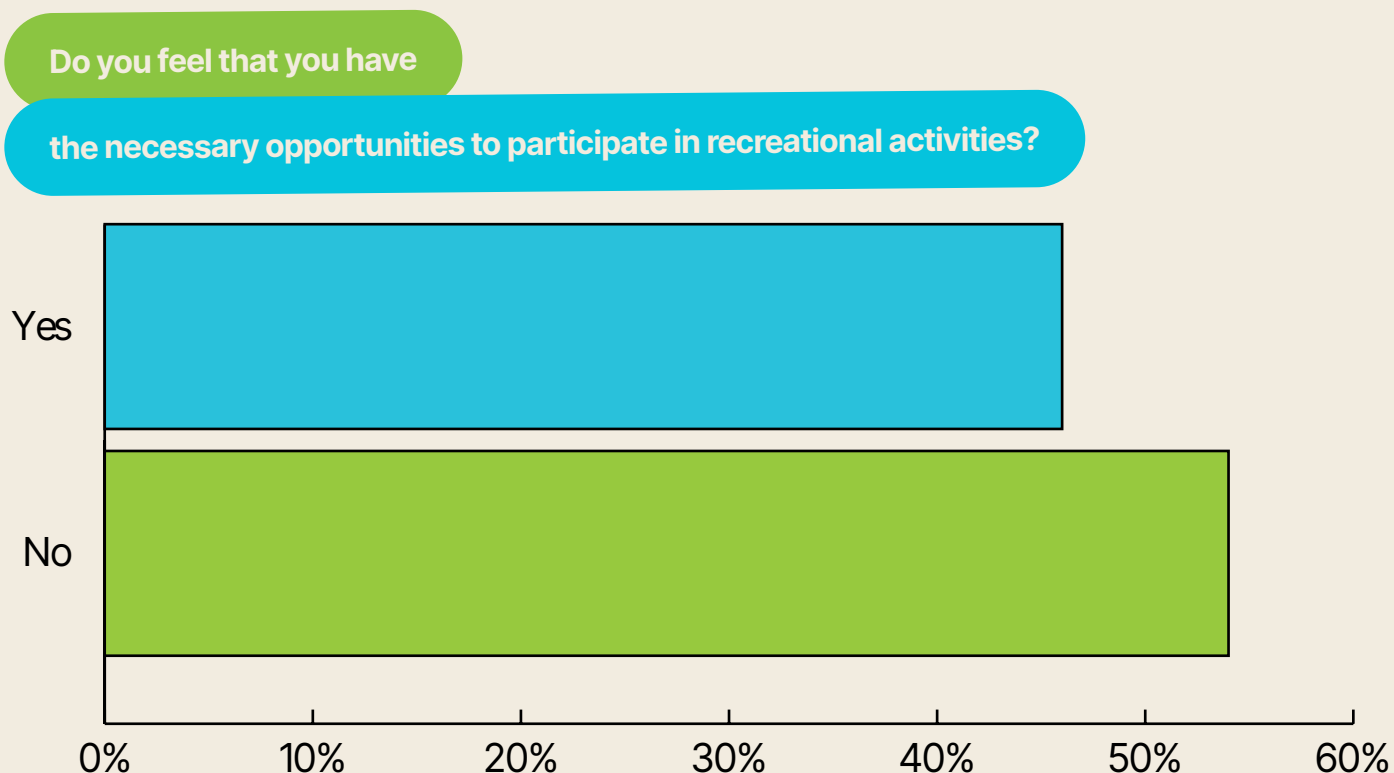


Figure 7

Some respondents said that there was not enough support and awareness from organisers and participants of clubs, leisure facilities and recreational activities. Many shared experiences where staff and other participants did not understand their or their child's access needs which can affect their access and participation in these activities. One community member noted:

**"I found it really hard to find inclusive opportunities to join general mainstream type recreational activities - sports/summer camps etc, really hard to find info for activities that are available in our area (city) - it's feels like it's preferred if Autistic families stick to the specialist groups to find these types of activities- it's definitely feels like mainstream run recreational activities don't want the perceived hassle of accommodating Autistic people".**

Another challenge that respondents noted was the lack of Autism-friendly spaces or activities in their local area. A general theme running through these comments noted Autistic people often feel they must “mask” their true selves when going to play or take part in recreational activities. One community member noted:

**“I don’t know where to find them [activities], also I heavily mask so I just pretend to not be Autistic. I feel as though if people know I’m Autistic that’s where I’d face barriers, which is a barrier in itself”.**

These stories show how hard it can be for Autistic people to take part in everyday activities. These challenges can be compounded by the way Autistic people are portrayed in the media and online, which influences how others perceive autism and interact with Autistic people.



# Media Coverage and Portrayal of Autism and Autistic People

Media organisations have significant power to influence public opinion and to show how Autistic people are represented in news stories, film and television programmes, books and online. These portrayals can shape society's attitudes on autism and Autistic people. Our report this year highlights 85% (see Figure 8) of community members felt that the media's portrayal of Autistic people was neither accurate nor respectful. The media can often highlight stories which show the Autistic community in a negative light which objectify or stigmatise Autistic people. Such a situation highlights the need for media organisations to involve more Autistic people in their productions.

The Autism Innovation Strategy has key actions which can support this participation, including:

- » for Coimisiún na Meán, Ireland's Media Commission, to ensure that Autistic people are authentically portrayed and represented in the media,
- » for more Autistic people to pursue careers in media organisations,
- » for a national awareness campaign to support Autistic people.

Do you / your family member

feel that the media's portrayal of Autism is accurate and respectful?

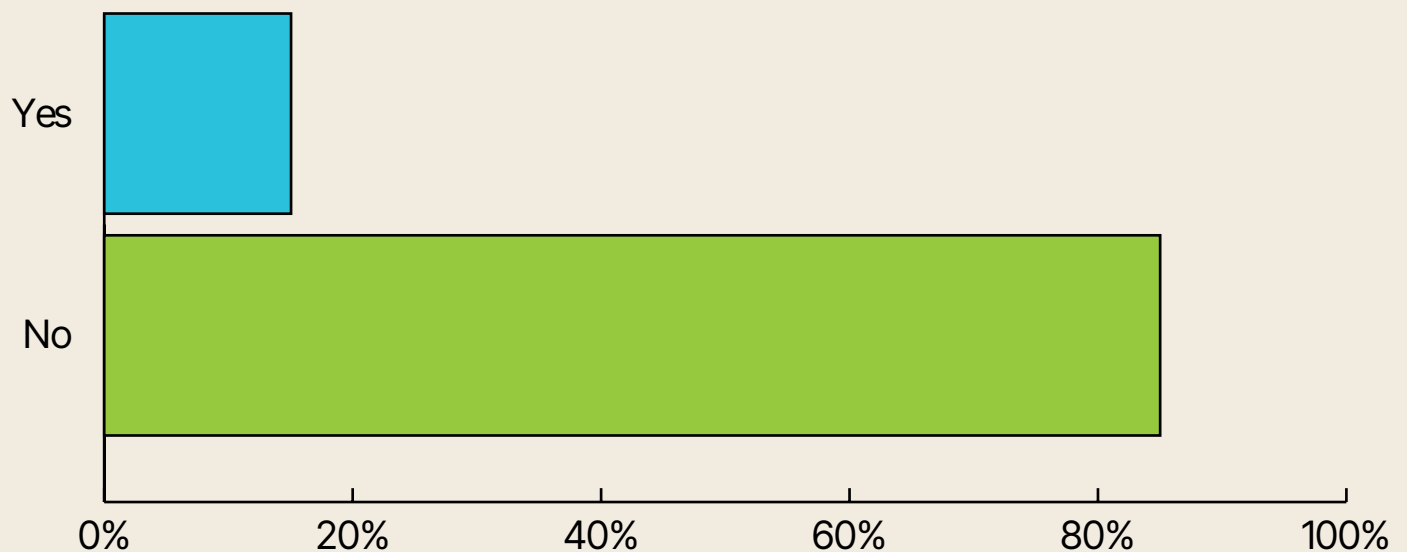


Figure 8





Community members also felt that misinformation about autism and Autistic people has grown over the past year. Specifically 42% agreed with this statement. However, a combined 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed that misinformation about autism has increased.

Several reasons were given for this perceived rise in misinformation. These included:

**The shifting political landscape and rise of conspiracy theories about autism after the 2024 US Presidential Election.**

**An increase in social media ads claiming to “treat” or “cure” autism.**

**A lack of representation or visibility of Autistic people in media and public spaces.**

Some Autistic people face pressure when others accuse them of “faking” their autism. This often happens if they don’t meet certain societal expectations or ideals of what autism should look like.

Considering the growing concerns around misinformation and the negative stereotypes associated with autism, it is crucial that Autistic voices help guide how the media covers stories about Autistic people in the future.



## Access to an Inclusive Education

Through our work in supporting Autistic people and our wider community across Ireland, it is clear Autistic people and families often face barriers accessing an inclusive and accessible education. AslAm supports a “twin-track” approach to transitioning towards a more inclusive education system. To achieve this, the Department of Education and Youth must ensure that every Autistic child has an appropriate school place which supports and meets their needs, in their local community.

Our data shows 70% of community members believe that the education system is not inclusive nor accessible for Autistic people. (see Figure 9) This is a 14% increase on last year’s report. These barriers to inclusion include a lack of Special Educational Teaching (SET) hours, non-inclusive school policies and procedures such as codes of behaviour, a lack of understanding of Autism from educational professionals and Autistic children being disproportionately excluded compared to the non-Autistic school going age.

70%

**of community members believed that  
the education system is not inclusive  
nor accessible for Autistic people**



### Is the education system inclusive of Autistic people?

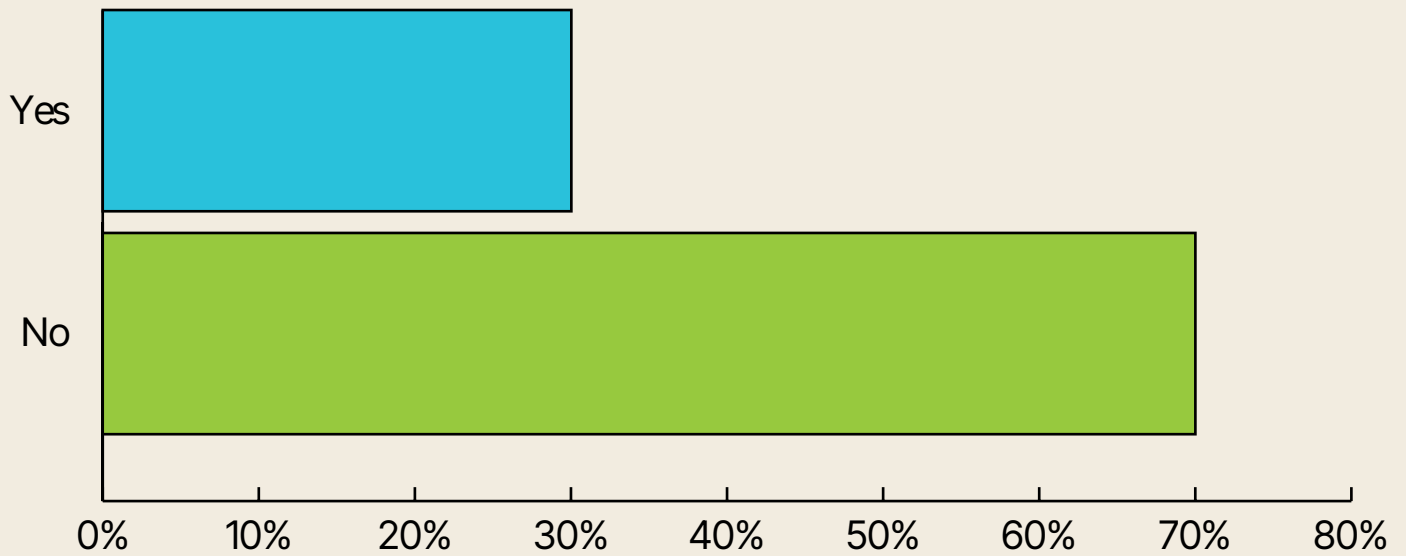


Figure 9

We asked community members to share barriers they currently experience within the education system. These included:

- » Lack of resources in schools
- » Shortage of school places
- » Lack of access to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs),
- » Lack of inclusive school cultures or policies
- » Schools or staff are not always willing to accommodate or support Autistic students.
- » Inappropriate use of Codes of Behaviour
- » Use of Special Education Teaching (SET) hours
- » Use of seclusion and restraint practices

The experiences match previous Same Chance Reports, which highlighted that many Autistic children are in places which do not match the recommendations of their assessment report. An example of this was around Special Education Teaching Hours (SET) highlight below:

- » 25% were happy with the hours they receive in their school,
- » 24% received SET hours, but did not think their current allocation of SET hours meets their needs
- » 13% were not sure / the school has not communicated with us about this
- » 12% were not receiving hours but feel their child would benefit from having SET hours
- » 8% were not receiving hours, as their child did not require access
- » 17% said 'Other' – respondents said their child goes to special schools or Autism classes. Some said their child has resource teachers, while others noted barriers in accessing these supports

The inappropriate use or lack of use of these resources can disadvantage Autistic children in many ways, first by impacting their ability to access the curriculum and secondly and potentially more damaging leading to situations whereby a school use other potential sanctions on a child such as a reduced timetable or the use of the Codes of Behaviour.





# Codes of Behaviour

In a recently commissioned piece of independent research by AsIAM ["What We Wish You knew: A rights-based analysis of school codes of behaviour"](#), a report which highlighted the inequalities in some aspects of our school system, particularly on school rules and disciplinary policies. In this report, conducted by independent researcher Dr. Amy Hanna, none of the 40 analysed Schools' Codes of Behaviour were fully rights compliant with international human rights standards on inclusive education. This independent report also found that the rewards and sanctions approach reflected in school policies perpetuated an ableist attitude towards autism, and did not adequately reflect Autistic children's experiences. This independent report was timely as Tusla's Education Support Services (TESS) is currently reviewing the framework on the use of Codes of Behaviour in our schools. AsIAM has provided considerable feedback linked to this independent report to TESS and it is hoped the feedback and recommendations in our report **"What We Wish You Knew: A rights-based analysis of schools codes of behaviour"** features in this framework.

In this year's Same Chance Report community members were asked if they thought the current national Guidelines on Codes of Behaviour in Irish schools were inclusive of Autistic students. (see Figure 10)

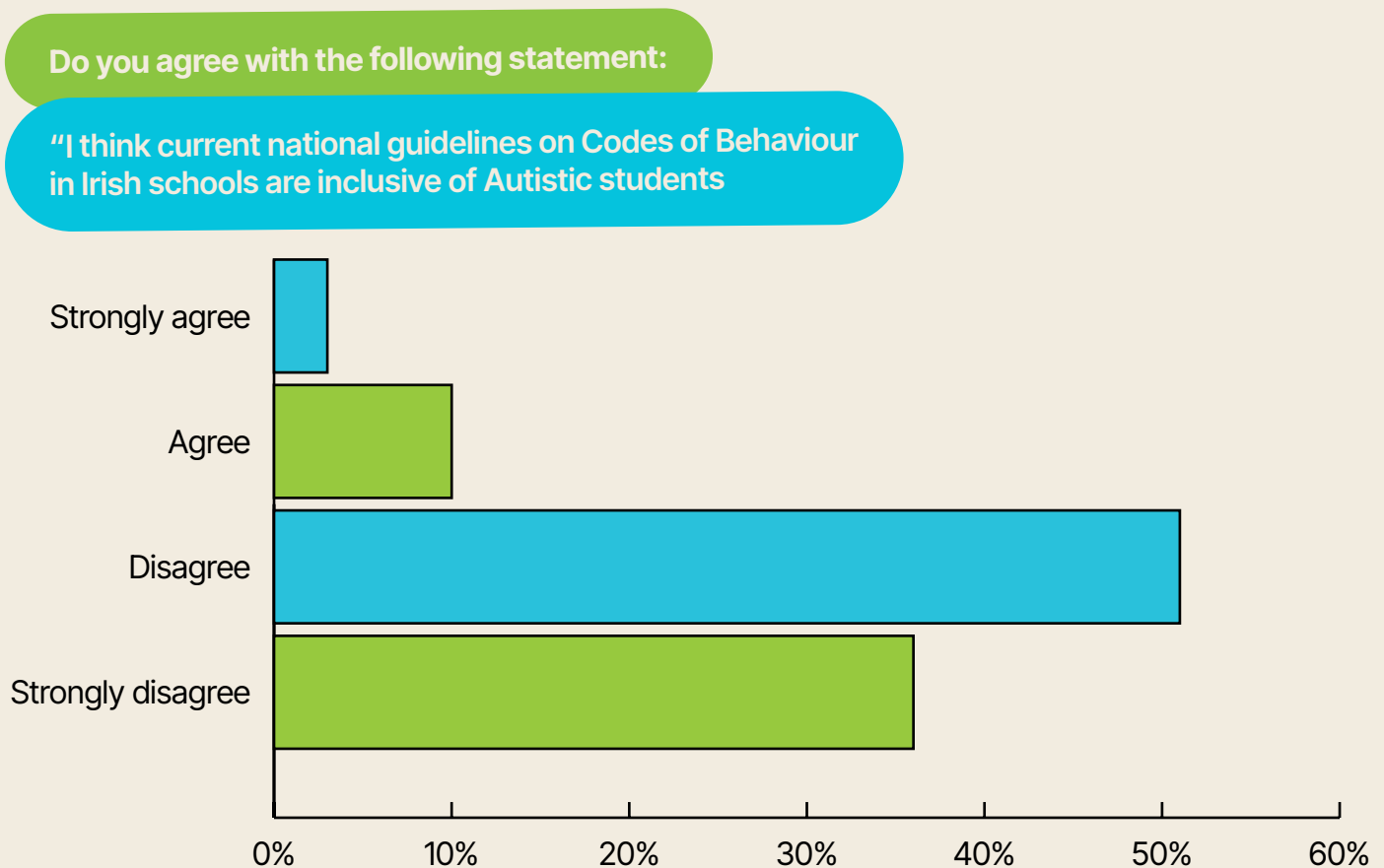
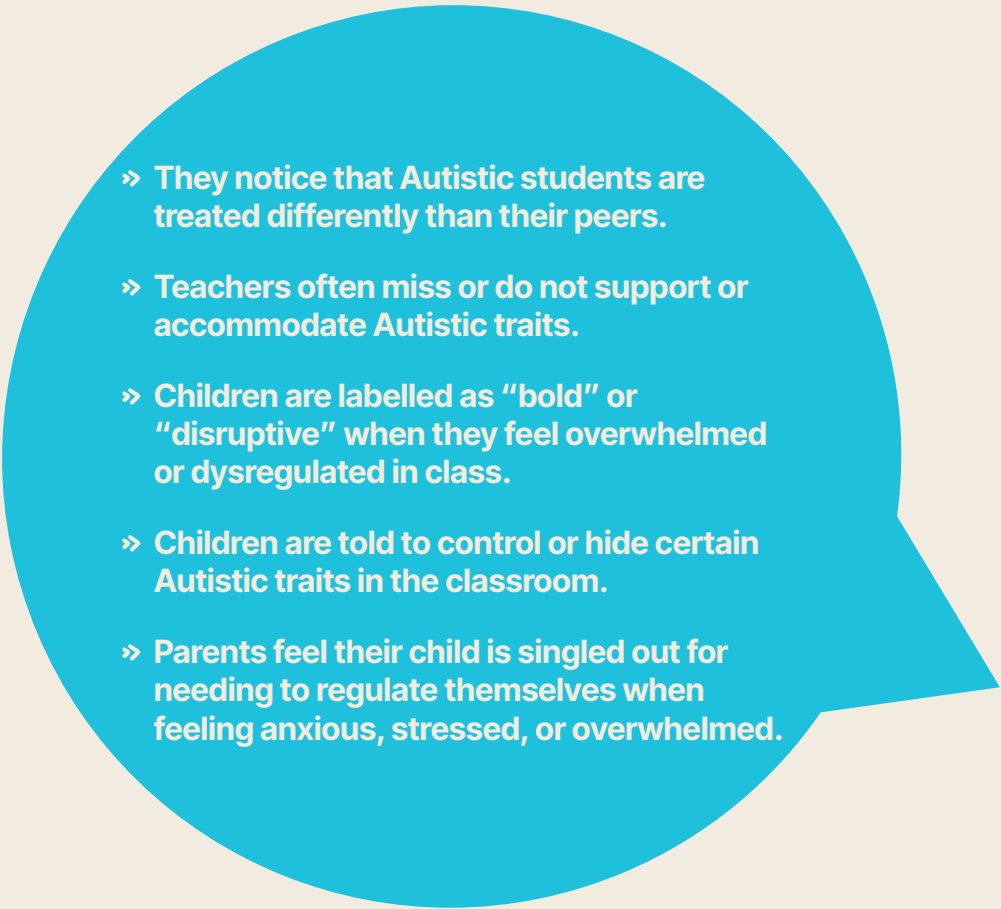


Figure 10

In addition, community members were asked if they felt that Autistic students were punished more at school than non-Autistic peers. **42% agreed that Autistic students were punished more, whilst 37% strongly agreed that Autistic students were punished more – 79% in total.**

Community members shared several reasons why they felt Autistic children were punished more:

- 
- » They notice that Autistic students are treated differently than their peers.
  - » Teachers often miss or do not support or accommodate Autistic traits.
  - » Children are labelled as “bold” or “disruptive” when they feel overwhelmed or dysregulated in class.
  - » Children are told to control or hide certain Autistic traits in the classroom.
  - » Parents feel their child is singled out for needing to regulate themselves when feeling anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed.

Speaking to these experiences, it was found that community members at school experienced the following:

- 
- » 8% experienced suspension,
  - » 2% experienced expulsion,
  - » 9% were on reduced timetables,
  - » 16% experienced seclusion and
  - » 12% experienced physical restraint that they did not consent to or were otherwise concerned about.

The use of inappropriate restraint in schools towards Autistic children is one that AsIAM has been actively raising concerns about, particularly in light of the recently published 'Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students' (thereafter Guidelines).



## Restraint and Restrictive Practices

The recently published Guidelines by the Department of Education in December 2024 on the use of restraint and seclusion in our schools presents a number of concerning shortfalls on child protection that AsIAM and other advocacy and human rights bodies have concerns on. These Guidelines as they currently stand are in breach of a child's right to an inclusive education under the UNCRPD. These Guidelines which will come into effect in September 2025 fall well short of ensuring that children are safe and protected at school. We also found that many in our community share similar concerns over how schools use restraint - 71% of respondents were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the recently published Guidelines. (see Figure 11)

The Department of Education recently published Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines

Are you satisfied that these Guidelines will do enough to protect the rights of Autistic students who may experience restraint?

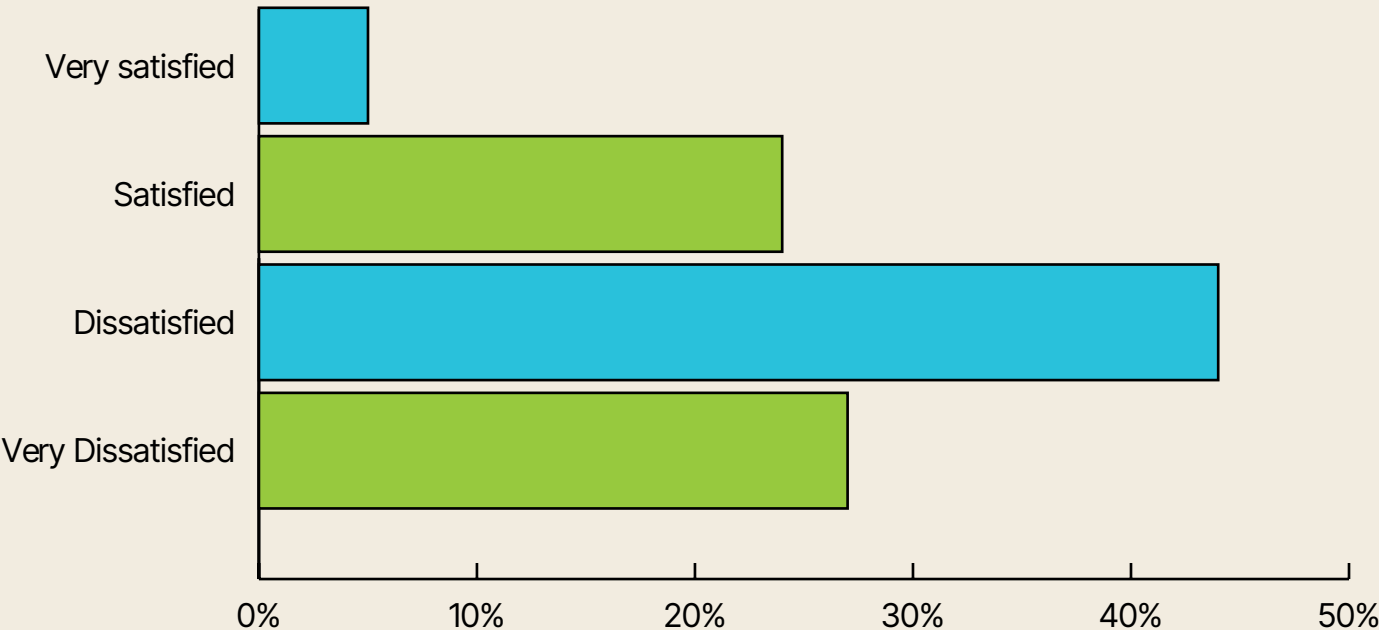


Figure 11

98% of respondents agreed that schools should ask for families' permission before using restrictive practices like physical restraint. On par with this, **98% of community members also agreed that teachers and SNAs should receive training before they can use physical restraint in an emergency situation.** (see Figure 12)

Do you agree with the following statement:

**"I think that any teacher / Special Needs Assistant should have to receive training before they are allowed to use restraint in an emergency situation"**

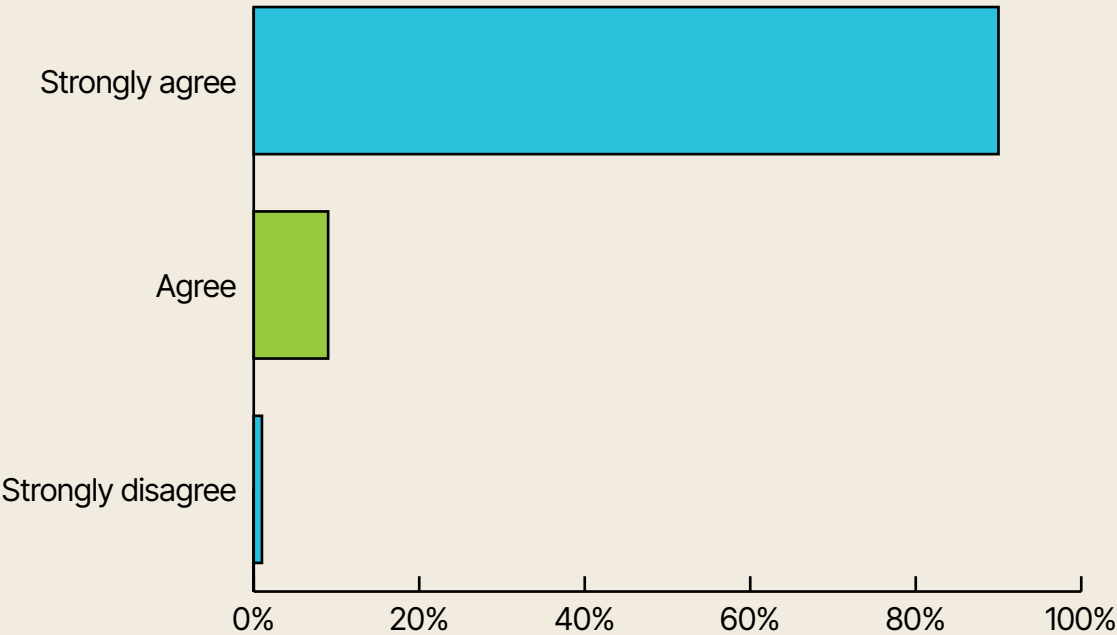


Figure 12

99% of respondents agreed that an independent body should regulate schools who use seclusion and restraint, including having powers to monitor and investigate schools.



Finally, **37% of community members disagreed that Special Schools should suspend or expel a child from a Special School, and 37% strongly disagreed that Special Schools can suspend or expel students from a Special School – 74% in total.** This shows that our community feel very strongly on Autistic children in Special Schools being suspended or expelled from the highest level of support available to them in the education system. (see Figure 13)

Do you agree with the following statement:

“I think it should be possible to suspend or expel a child from a Special School”

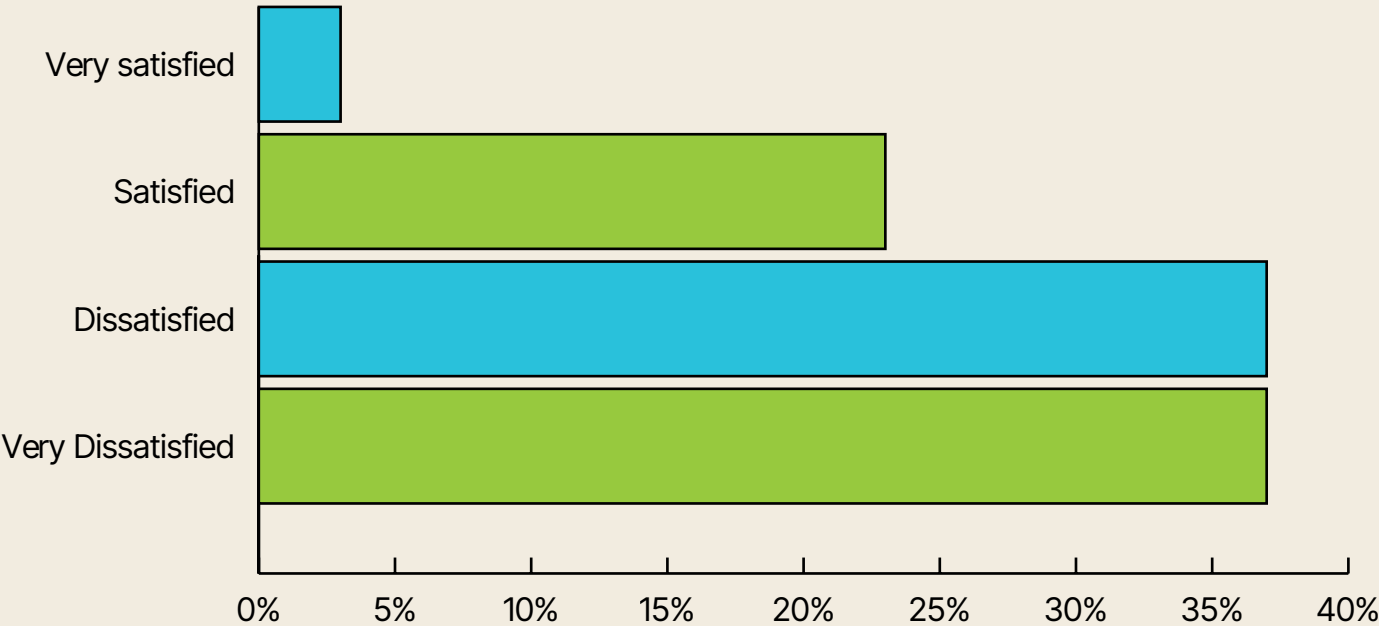


Figure 13



## Access to Healthcare

As with previous Same Chance Reports, access to healthcare remains a major barrier for our community. 71% of people surveyed felt that the healthcare system was not inclusive or accessible for Autistic people. This is a 13% increase on last year's report. Access to appropriate healthcare is a key issue for our community members. Autistic children, adults and their families face unique barriers to accessing healthcare in Ireland which can significantly impede an individual as they journey through life. This is the case for both disability services and healthcare services generally.

**71%**  
**of people surveyed felt  
that the healthcare system  
was not inclusive or  
accessible for Autistic people**

Community members shared some of the issues they experience with the healthcare system, including:

- » lack of access to qualified clinicians and therapists.
- » navigating long waiting lists (sometimes up to 3 years or more for an assessment and support).
- » lack of understanding from healthcare professionals when accessing hospitals or day patient services.
- » Inaccessible buildings and appointment systems.
- » Long waiting lists for vital supports, for occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, play therapy within Primary Care teams etc.



53% of respondents surveyed this year said that they accessed their autism assessment through the private system, whereas 38% got their assessments through the public system. (see Figure 14)

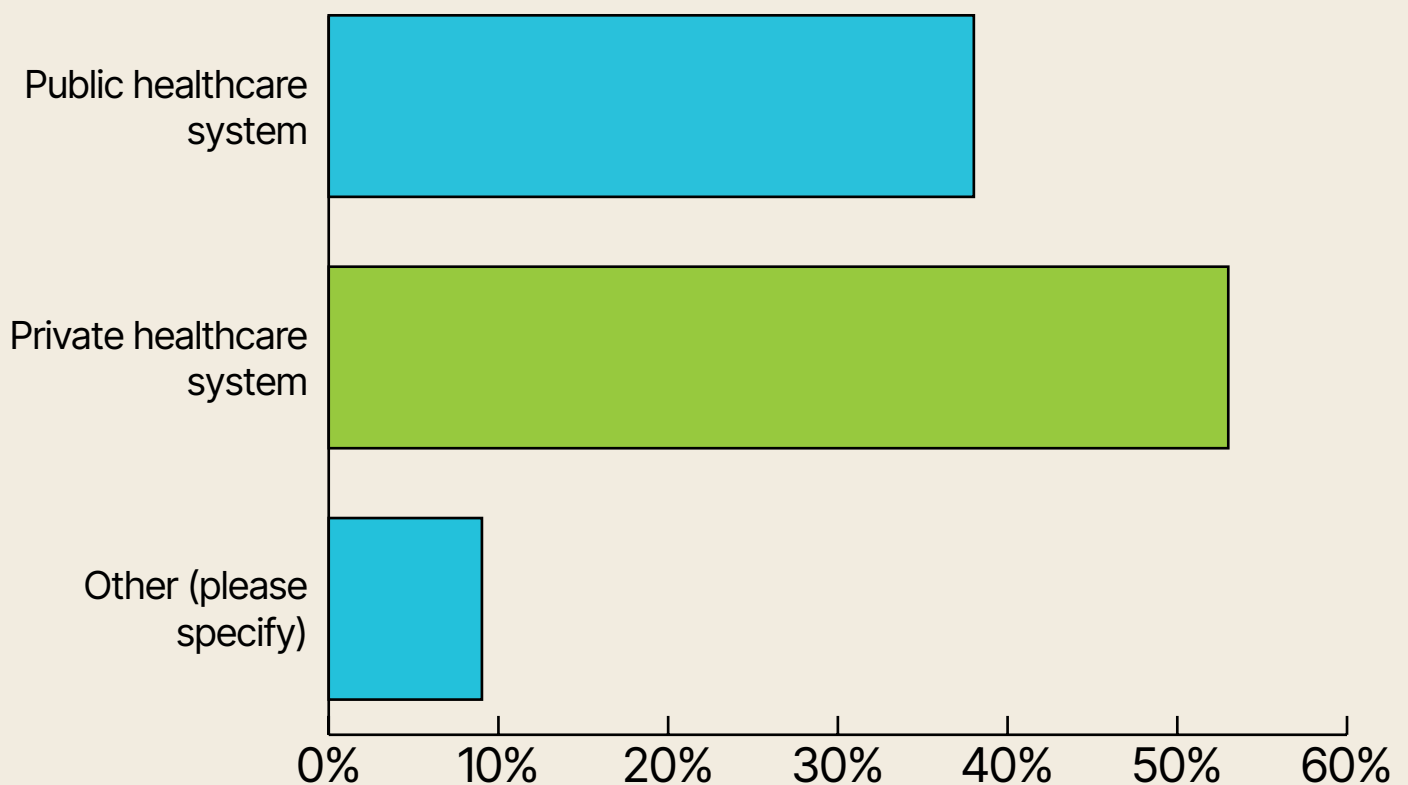


Figure 14 - Access to an Autism Diagnosis

These findings show that as waiting lists for assessments grow, the State seems to be pushing families to seek private assessments and support. This focus on private options overlooks the need to fix systemic problems in the public system. This also leaves clinicians working privately under pressure to make up for shortfalls in addressing these waiting lists as well as managing their own workload. Outsourcing to the private system is a quick fix that perpetuate current barriers in the system. It doesn't really tackle the stress and hardship families face when seeking assessments and support, nor reduce waiting lists for services. This experience often leaves Autistic people and families having to navigate significant hurdles to getting supports.

To further compound this experience of Autistic people in accessing healthcare, given psychology currently remains unregulated in Ireland, a lot of uncertainty on which disciplines have the necessary expertise to assess people for autism remains a concern. Community members highlighted some State services may question the validity of some autism reports and diagnoses provided by psychologists. Most psychologists act ethically and with clinical integrity and use their professional experience to support our community. We are concerned to see State services calling into question the professional judgement of psychologists carrying out assessments. We raised this issue in our recent submission to CORU, the agency that regulates health and social care professions in Ireland. In this submission AsIAM called on CORU to legally protect the term "psychologist" and to introduce rights-based, neuro-affirmative regulations that support our community.

This will promote high standards of safety and public trust in the diagnosis and assessment processes, support both professionals who work tirelessly to support Autistic people and families and provide confidence that Autistic people and families that Assessment Reports will support them and validate their experiences.

The Programme for Government makes a commitment to review the Disability Act. For this year's report, it was found that 99% of respondents believe that it is important for any new Disability Act to ensure Autistic people and families have the right to get timely access to Autism assessments and healthcare provision. (see Figures 15 and 16). Access to such services is inextricably linked to a quality service within our Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).

**The Programme for Government has made a commitment to review the Disability Act.**

**Do you believe that it is important for any new Act to keep the provision for families and individuals to have the right to get timely access to Autism assessments?**

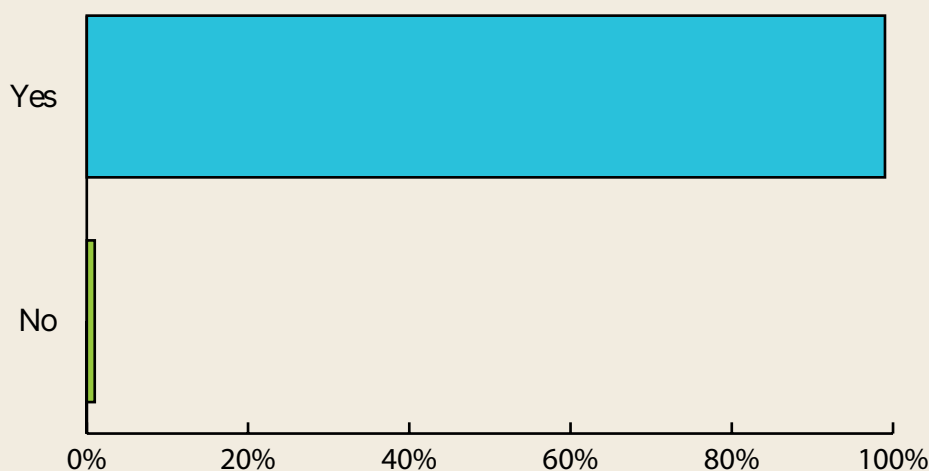


Figure 15

**Do you believe the Government should**

**legislate for a right to access therapeutic supports?  
[i.e. Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, etc]**

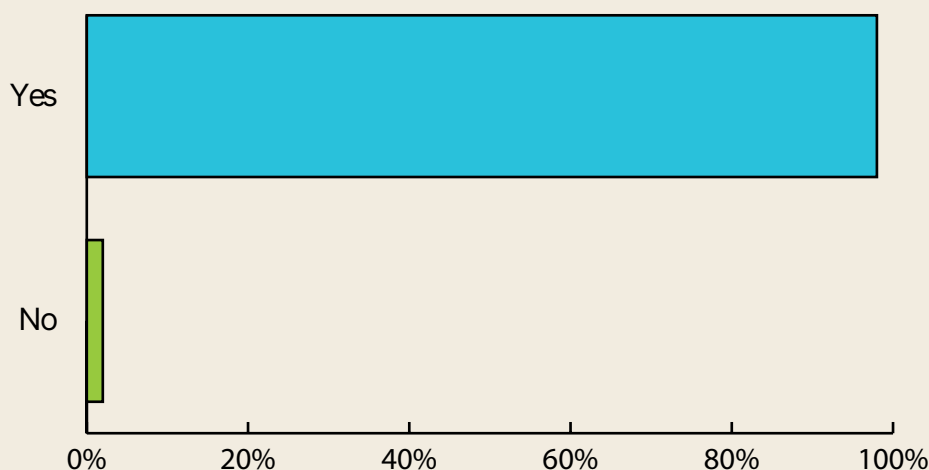


Figure 16



# Access to Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT)

The report also examines how community members access support from their local Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT), and their experiences. Of the survey respondents representing their Autistic children, just 31% were currently receiving support from their local CDNT, with **69% not receiving any supports**. This is an increase of 9% on last year. Of those who are not currently receiving support from a CDNT, 60% are on a waiting list for supports. Concerningly, 31% have been waiting for longer than 4 years on services, 31% have been waiting for between 2-3 years, 22% have been waiting for between 1-2 years, 16% have been waiting for less than 1 year (see figure 17). In addition to the delays in accessing disability teams, community members experience of Adult Day Services is also negative.

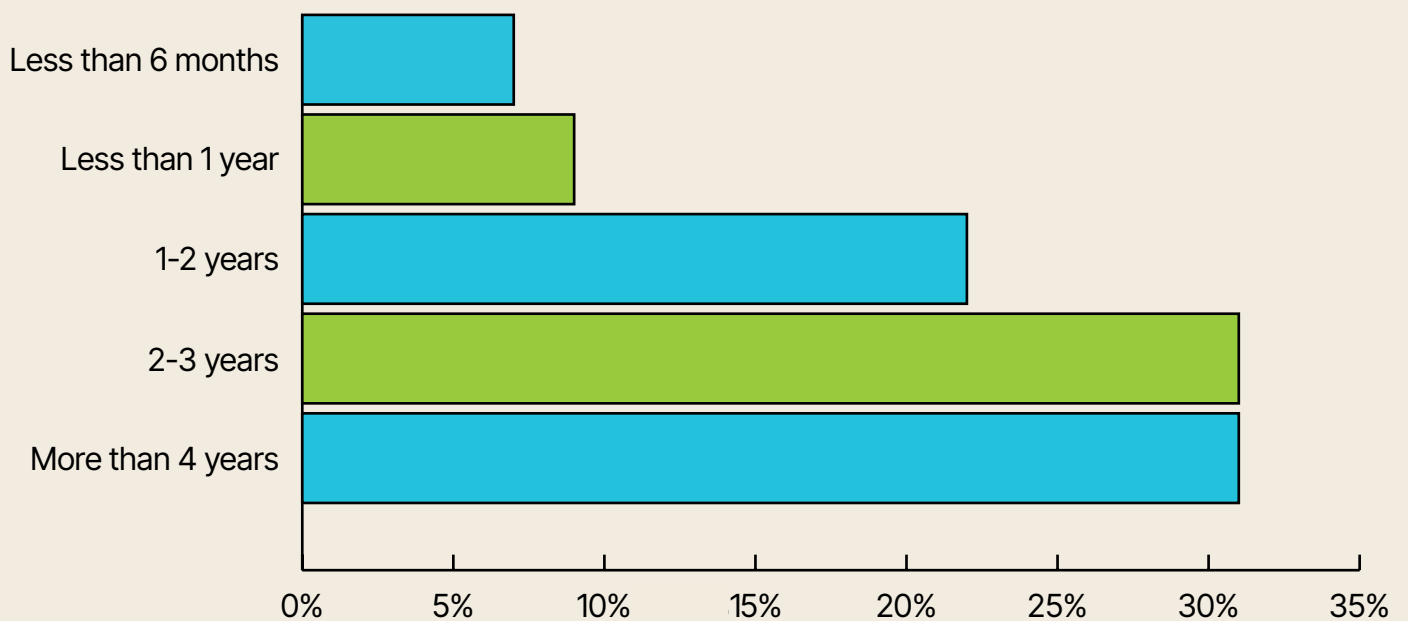


Figure 17 - Wait times for CDNT access



# Adult Day Services

This year, Autistic community members shared insights on their experiences with accessing Adult Day Services. Community members highlighted what issues they experience, and how such services can better support Autistic people. Community members were asked if they found Adult Day Services accessible to Autistic people. 9% strongly agreed that Day Services were accessible to Autistic people, 22% strongly agreed that Day Services were accessible, 36% disagreed that Day Services were accessible, and 33% strongly disagreed that Adult Day Services were accessible. 12% of community members said that Adult Day services very effectively accommodate Autistic peoples' sensory and communication needs, 37% said that they were somewhat effective, 30% said that they were not so effective, and 21% said that they were not at all effective.

In exploring the area of Adult Day Services, community members highlight a number of solutions they would like to see in this area. Community members said they want more options for education pathways and day programmes for Adult Day Services. They also want better support for Autistic adults without intellectual disabilities. Additionally, they seek greater access to respite services, independent living options, personalised budgets. The below testimonies capture some of these experiences and recommendations:

**"Chat areas or groupings coming together. Opportunity for general public to engage and learn more about Neurodiversity challenges and equally how wonderful the neurodiversity population are."**

**"I feel very strongly that the day services in my area and in the surrounding counties are very poor, the buildings we went to visit were generally not up to the standards and many were in industrial estates totally unsuitable for our young school leavers with very little in the form of extra courses being offered. It was actually quite shocking when my husband and I went to see the service providers that were being offered to our family member when she finished up her secondary education and hence, we went down the personalised budget route. I feel strongly that Autistic adults need more access to third level courses and apprentices, and jobs with the right supports"**

**"Adults in my age group who live independently would be best serviced by additional financial support which then can use to better their ability to engage in activities outside the home that satisfy their special interests."**



# Consent and Access to Sexual Health and Wellbeing

For the first time in our Same Chance Report, we have included a section on “Consent and Access to Sexual Health and Wellbeing”. Of the respondents 31% agreed that sex education in school was adapted to be accessible to an Autistic child, whereas 69% said that the school’s sex education programme was not accessible to Autistic children. Given the importance of this subject content, it is vitally important Autistic children and young people have access to reliable and understandable information on this topic. The importance of this reverts to Article 21 of the UNCRPD which again highlights the importance of having access to accessible information. Community members in this year’s report was asked to highlight their experiences on this topic:

- » materials were not adapted to meet Autistic ways of thinking and understanding
- » children did not feel comfortable or confident to explore their sexuality in a safe environment,
- » sex education modules missed key aspects of Autistic person’s lived experiences navigating relationships

Community members shared the following experiences navigating sex education at school:

“I would have learned sex education during the early to mid 2010s. I believe I missed out on a lot of SPHE classes because I attended resources classes in their stead. There were a lot of sexual terms, very commonly used amongst my non-Autistic peers that I didn’t discover until my early 20s. This made me very self-conscious about my lack of knowledge in the area. To this day, as a woman in her mid 20s, I still struggle with intimate activities. I believe this is a combination of sensory issues and a lack of education in the area. Exclusion from non-Autistic peers has also contributed to my lack of sexual knowledge. I feel had I been more included, I would be a lot more comfortable”

“In the last couple of years, they had lessons such as ‘inappropriate touches’ and the importance of not keeping this a secret. Then when I hugged my child, he said this was a touch and he shouldn’t keep it a secret. I straighten his clothes as usual and had the same comments. He completely missed the concept of ‘inappropriate’. Other kids could probably read between lines, but I dread these lessons as they go on, it takes me a lot of work to ‘fix what he picks up poorly in school.”

“Sex education in Ireland is incredibly limited. Minorities are barely mentioned. Many still believe that consenting disabled adults are too innocent to have intercourse. Perceptions need to change.”

45% community members who were parents of Autistic children said they had access to sufficient resources to help teach their child about consent, while **55% said they did not have access to adequate resources to teach about consent.** (see Figure 18)

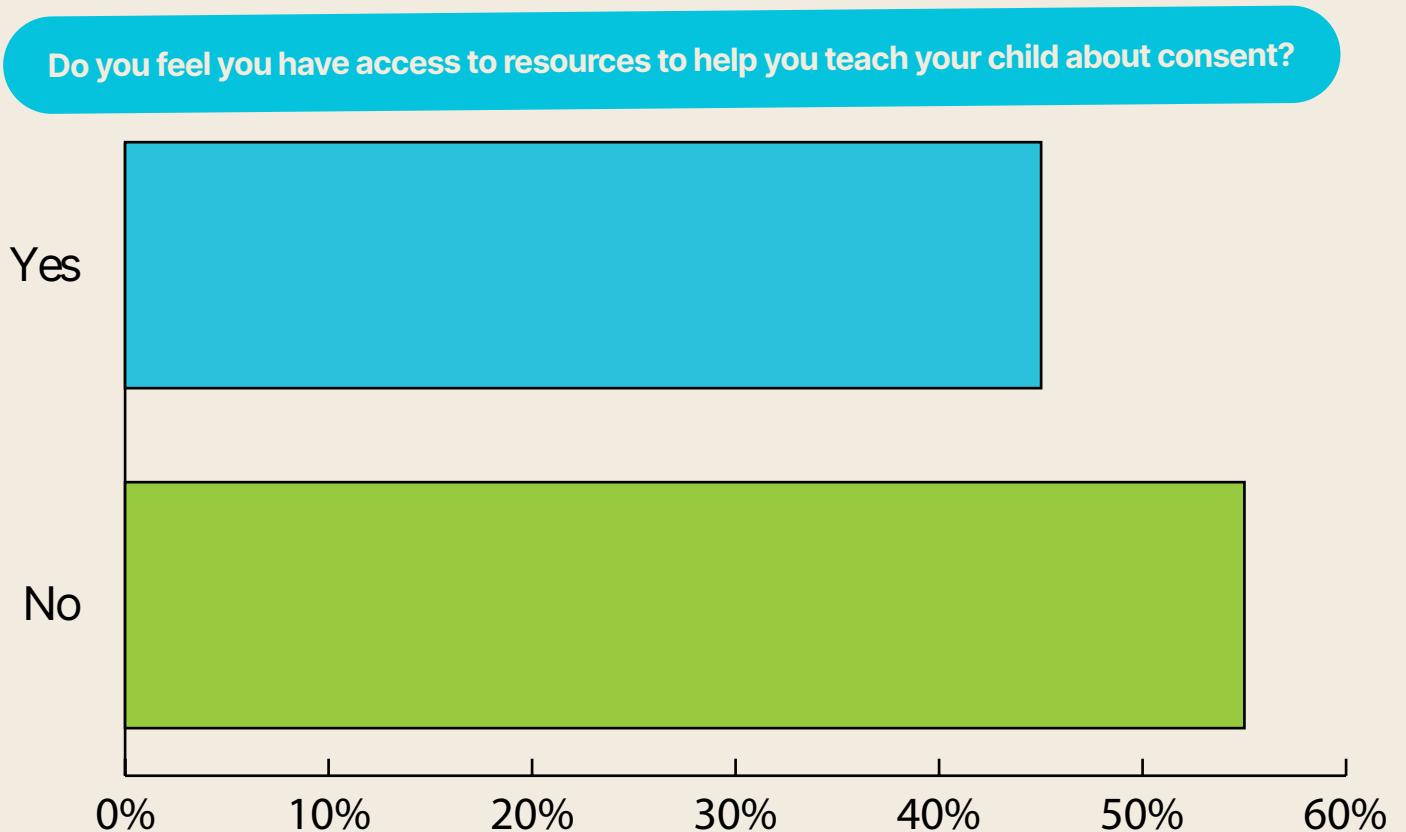


Figure 18

Parents were asked what resources they felt would help to educate their child, these responses included:

"Access to parent workshops on adapting the language so that my Autistic child will understand consent. Written resources and maybe social stories on consent"

"Work sheets and situational exercises would be helpful to comfortably recognise situations where consent is required and the form it needs to take. That to include when they are the consent givers as well consent seekers."

"Some literature about what will be taught in the year ahead in school would be great at the start of the summer break. That way i could start introducing the lessons to him and I would know how to get it across correctly based on the way my child interprets concepts."

21% of community members felt that media campaigns on consent reflected Autistic peoples' experiences, whereas 79% felt it did not reflect Autistic peoples' experiences of consent. Autistic adults were asked what they wanted the media and the public to do to ensure that conversations about consent reflect Autistic people's lived experiences. Some respondents felt that media narratives promoted negative stereotypes about Autistic people and sexuality;

**"There should be more campaigns that show personal experiences of Autistic people around consent such as in the news, as there isn't much awareness around how Autistic people could suffer from sexual abuse."**

**"Use direct words, not just body language. Educate neurotypicals on how neurodiverse people can become overstimulated due to sensory difference and withdraw consent suddenly at any time and that needs to be respected immediately with no judgement."**

**"Conversations around consent should include scenarios on creating and maintaining personal boundaries and remove the fear of refusal to do anything one feels uncomfortable with. For examples issues related to coercion, principles around personal moral decisions, derision and peer pressure, issues around privacy, personal relationships and sensory issues, different needs surrounding physical proximity, touch etc. The need to decide one's own rules relating to own wishes without being pressured due to being "abnormal".**

# Access to Mental Health Supports

In this report several barriers have been identified that Autistic people experience around accessing mental health supports, particularly for Autistic people experiencing crisis situations. Autistic people often face considerable structural barriers to accessing mental health supports. For Autistic adults, there is no public pathway for adult assessments and diagnoses, which results in many individuals struggling to find neuro-affirmative clinical professionals, such as Psychologists and Psychotherapists, who understand them and their access and support needs. There is also little to no follow-up support for recently diagnosed Autistic adults, who may need supports such as managing major life transitions. For Autistic children, we see that many children face significant barriers to accessing supports like Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) due to their Autism diagnosis. This leads to Autistic people being passed between CAMHS, Primary Care and Disability Services.

For Autistic children stuck between services, they run the risk of missed diagnosis, misdiagnosis or receiving care or support that does not address their individual support needs. We highlighted these issues in more detail in the aforementioned CORU submission. Reflecting these experiences, we found that as with 2024's report, 23% of respondents have experienced a barrier to accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.



Overall, 55% of community members experienced a barrier to accessing at least some form of mental health service such as Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS), Primary Care or Private Mental Health Services. A further 45% of community members surveyed did not have any experience of trying to access such services. The most significant barrier remains that those who are attempting to access CAMHS, due to a co-occurring mental health concern, are referred to their Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) or Primary Care teams due to their Autism diagnosis.

The report also explores community members experiences with getting support from their local Primary Care team. Respondents representing the voice of Autistic children, confirmed just 15% were currently receiving support from their local Primary Care team, with **85% not receiving any supports**. Of those who are not currently receiving support from a Primary Care team, 64% are on a waiting list for supports. We also see that of those who are on a waiting list, 28% have been waiting for longer than 4 years, 29% have been waiting for between 2-3 years, 25% have been waiting for between 1-2 years, 8% have been waiting for less than 1 year, and 9% have been waiting for less than 6 months.

These are deeply concerning statistics which show that Autistic people experience systemic barriers in accessing mental health services. These statistics also show that Autistic people still experience discrimination in mental health services, meaning that they don't get access to the support when they need it. An Autistic person's diagnosis is often used to justify moving them to different services, such as Primary Care and AMHS. This has a significant impact on their wellbeing and the types of support they receive. As many community members require support from both mental health and disability services, we need to see a "no wrong door" policy delivered in practice, in line with our national mental health policy [Sharing the Vision](#). This is so that those who require mental health support can access neuro-affirmative services, and services can better support Autistic people's wellbeing and mental health support needs.

# Access to Public Transport

Public transport is vital for many Autistic people and families. It supports them to take part in activities such as work, sport, clubs and recreational activities. It also supports them to be active members of their local community. However, many Autistic people and families face significant barriers to accessing bus and rail services. These transport links may not be available in their local community. It was found that 57% of community members do not believe our public transport system is inclusive and accessible for Autistic people, whilst 43% did. (see Figure 19)

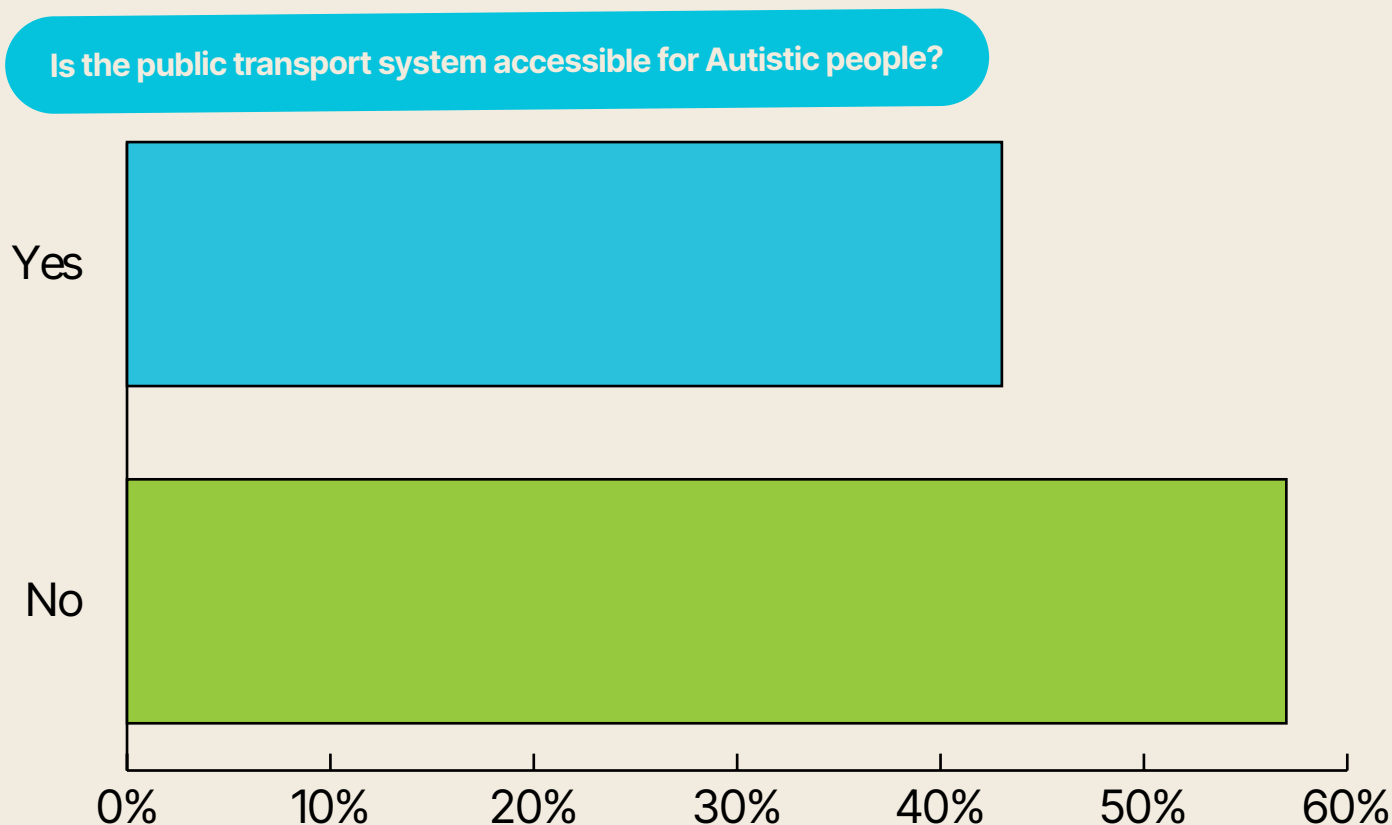


Figure 19

Whilst this contrasted with the figure in last year's report, where 67% of community members did not believe the public transport system was inclusive for Autistic people, it shows that our community shares many of the experiences and concerns expressed by the wider public when travelling on public transport. Community members told us about several barriers they face, including unreliable bus networks, lack of visual supports, sudden timetable changes and noisy buses and trains. Some have also experienced or witnessed violence, threats, or intimidation.

This also extends to accessing businesses in the community. We see businesses across Ireland working towards reaching our community and making their stores and facilities more accessible to customers. **51% of Autistic people and families did not find businesses in their community to be accessible and inclusive**, compared to 49% who did. These findings track with 2024's report, where 47% of respondents said businesses in their community are not accessible and inclusive of Autistic people's need.



# Access to Social Protection and Securing an Adequate Income

Autistic people and families were significantly impacted by rises in the cost of living and with inflation in recent years. Many community members say they are facing rising costs for everyday items like food, heating, electricity, and clothing. They also struggle with extra expenses for support and services. This often forces families to take on more caring duties or cut back on work hours to help an Autistic family member. Many in our community are more likely to experience poverty and financial hardship. This leaves Autistic people and families all-too-often having to count the cost of not having the same chance in society. As an organisation, we believe that living in poverty should not be an inevitable part of being Autistic or raising an Autistic child. Families raising an Autistic child should be recognised, supported, and fairly compensated by the State. Seeing that there is often an interconnected relationship between poverty and disability, 79% of those represented in the report have additional costs because of being Autistic or raising an Autistic person. These additional costs of living or raising an Autistic person can range between €10,000 and €14,000, and as much as €28,464.89 per year, according ATU Sligo researcher Dr Áine Roddy.

79%

of those represented in the report have  
additional costs because of being  
Autistic or raising an Autistic person





In this year's report community members were asked to share examples of these costs, which included access to therapies, sensory-friendly clothing, communication devices, safe foods, and sensory and mobility equipment, among other supports. Costs can also arise due to families losing income if they must reduce their working hours or leave work to support their Autistic child.

The report found that 11% felt better off financially than in 2024, 69% felt that they were about the same, 14% felt worse off financially, and 5% felt much worse off financially. (see Figure 20)

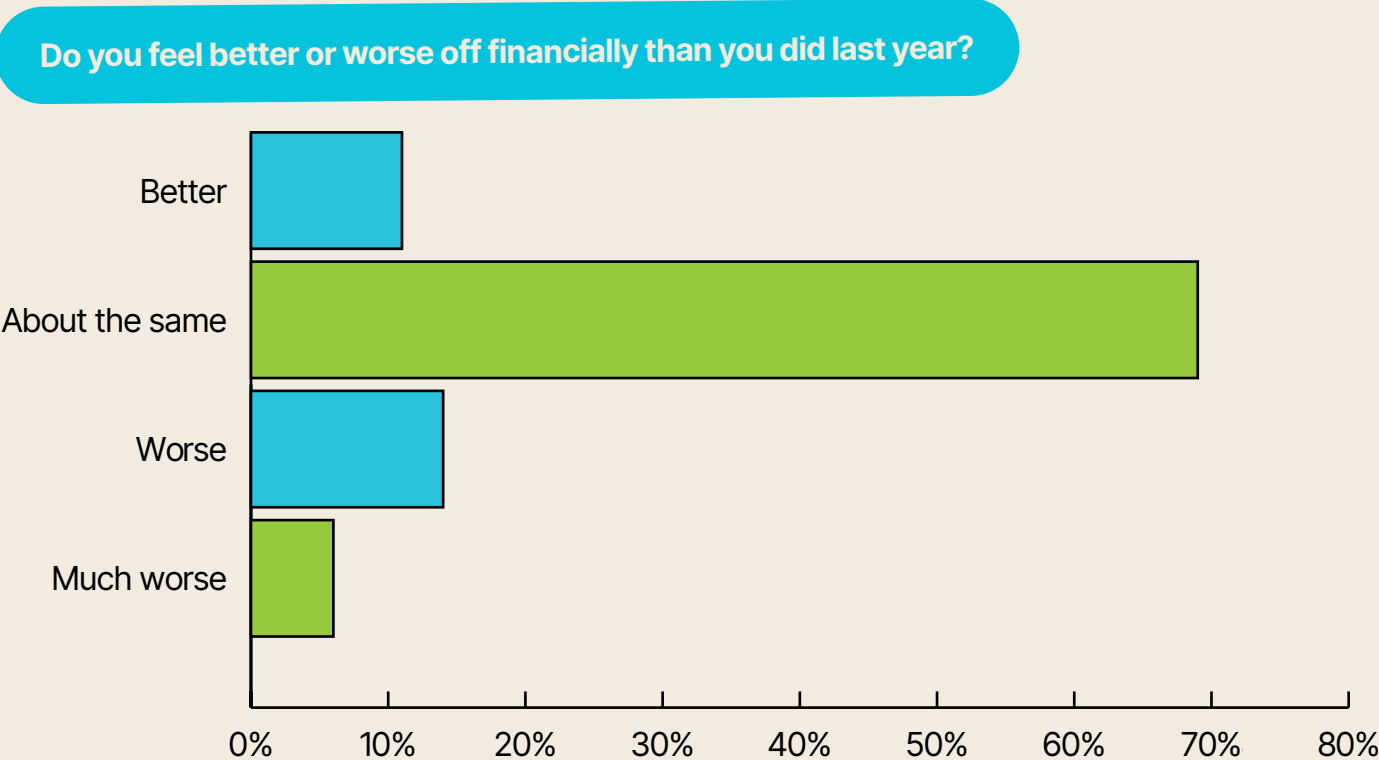


Figure 20

AslAm and many other disability organisations have consistently called on the Government to introduce a specific cost of disability payment. This payment would cover these additional costs and support our community with daily life. The report also found that 88% of community members believed that a dedicated Cost of Disability payment should be introduced to meet the additional living costs of living.

Some extra costs that community members want this payment to cover include:

- » Accessing therapies from private healthcare.
- » Getting dedicated support services.
- » Providing a safety net for families to take leave for care or respite.
- » Meeting housing needs.
- » Buying sensory-friendly clothing.
- » Finding accessible transport.
- » Paying for mental health support like counselling.
- » Getting personal support for daily tasks, like Personal Assistance.

## Social Protection Payments

Social protection remains a key social safety net for many Autistic people and families. It provides a vital source of income. Such sources of income help Autistic adults experiencing difficulties in finding work and families in meeting caring needs. Autistic people and families tell us that they struggle to access supports like Domiciliary Care Allowance, Disability Allowance and Carer's Allowance, and face significant hardship. These barriers include complex and often intrusive application processes, where people are expected to prove the extent of their or their child's difference or disability to get supports, often with little guidance of how to navigate this process of securing supports. Autistic peoples and families' experiences. Many Autistic people and their families find the application and appeals processes upsetting. Some feel humiliated and treated with suspicion at each step. They often feel that their stories are not believed. The need to disclose sensitive personal information or recount distressing events to prove eligibility for support can make the process even more difficult.

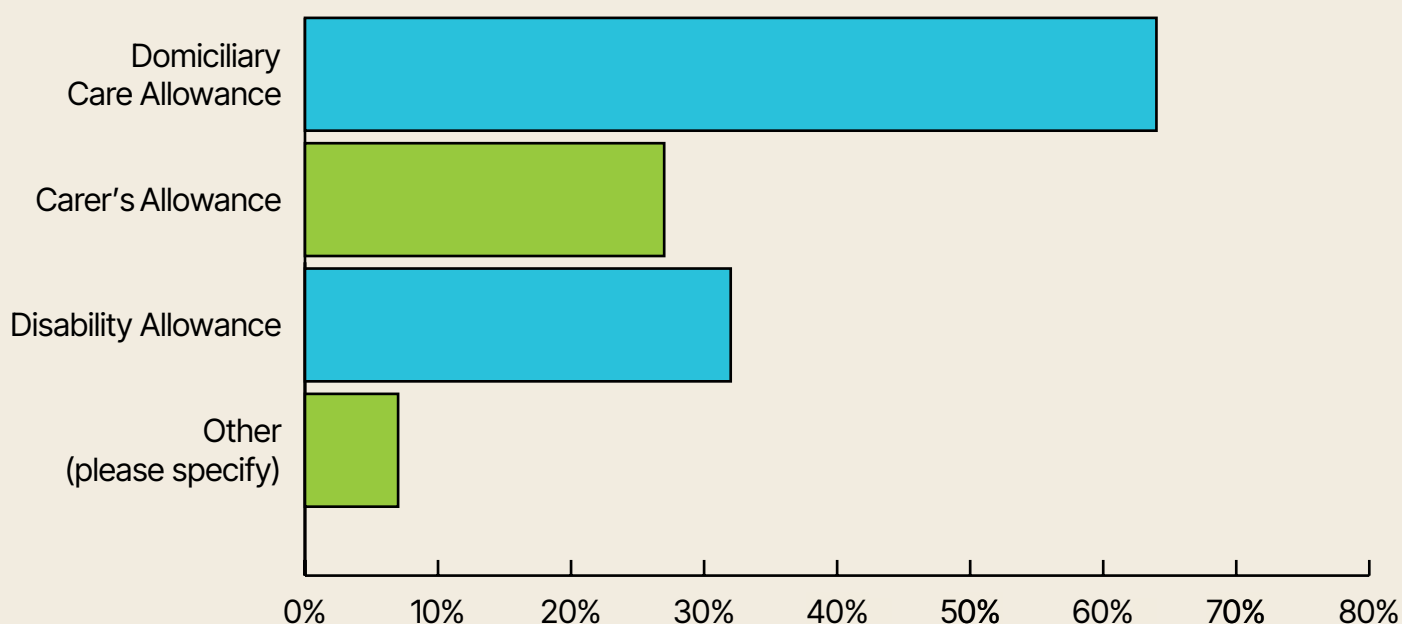


Figure 21 - Accessing Social Protection Payments

Reflecting these barriers, we found that 64% of people did not find the social protection system to be inclusive or accessible to Autistic people, whereas 36% of people did. Of the people who accessed social protection supports, 64% availed of Domiciliary Care Allowance, 27% availed of Carer's Allowance and 32% availed of Disability Allowance respectively. (see Figure 21)

15% of community members found current payment rates of disability social protection payments are enough to meet their/their family member(s) needs, whereas **45% disagreed that payments were enough to meet their needs, and 39% strongly disagreed that these payments currently met their needs, 84% in total.**

It was found that 80% of community members wanted to see the means test fully abolished for disability social protection payments over the next year, whereas 14% wanted to see means test disregards increase over the coming year. (see Figure 22)

In the recently announced Programme for Government, the Government made a commitment to abolish the means test for payments, such as Carer's Allowance

What do you want to see happen to the means test within the next year (i.e. Budget 2026)?

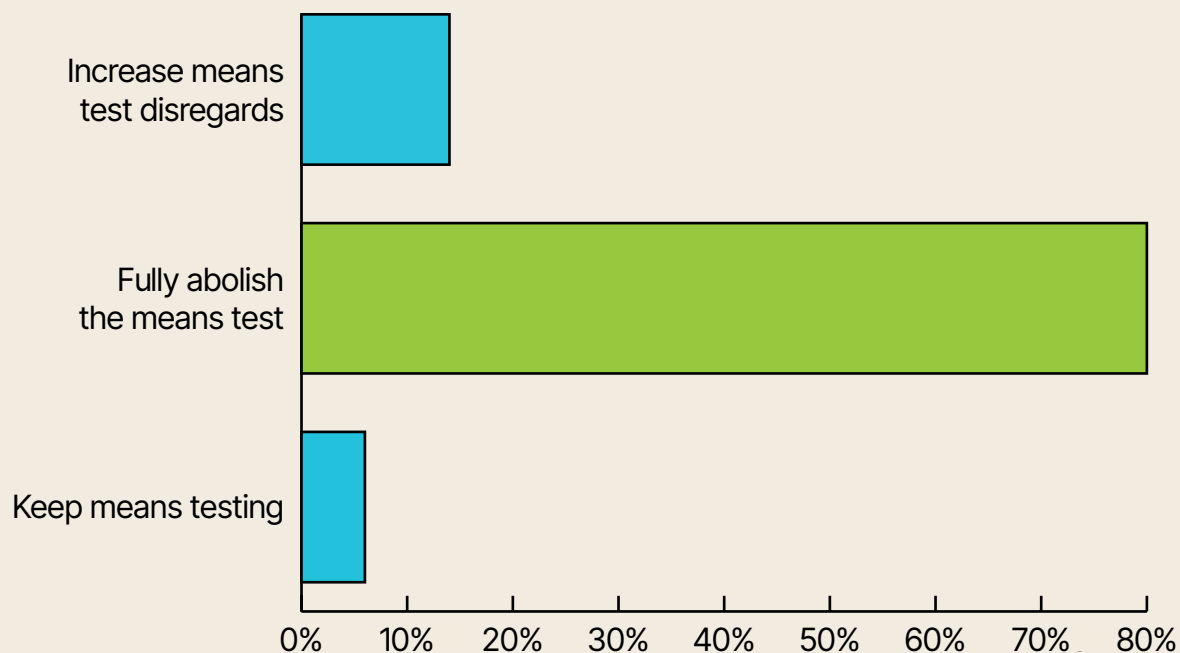


Figure 22

16% of community members had their application declined for a disability specific social welfare payment. Of these, 6% of respondents appealed and were awarded the payment upon appeal, 5% did not appeal.



# Employment

In our engagement with community members, it is evident Autistic adults want to work, particularly in roles which match their passions or interest. However, Autistic adults face barriers both in finding work and with their job.

When asked about employment status, we see a variety of experiences with some community members in education (23%), working part time (11%), working full time (22%), not working currently (17%) and looking for work (5%). Other responses include having full-time caring duties, being retired, being stay-at-home parents, taking career breaks, working freelance or volunteering. (see Figure 23) It was also found that 70% of people were accessing no supports or accommodations in the workplace, whereas 30% received reasonable accommodations at work.

39% of community members strongly agreed their current job matches their work experience or expertise, 35% agreed that these were enough, whereas 14% disagreed that their current role matches their experience, and 12% strongly disagreed that role matches their expertise and experience.

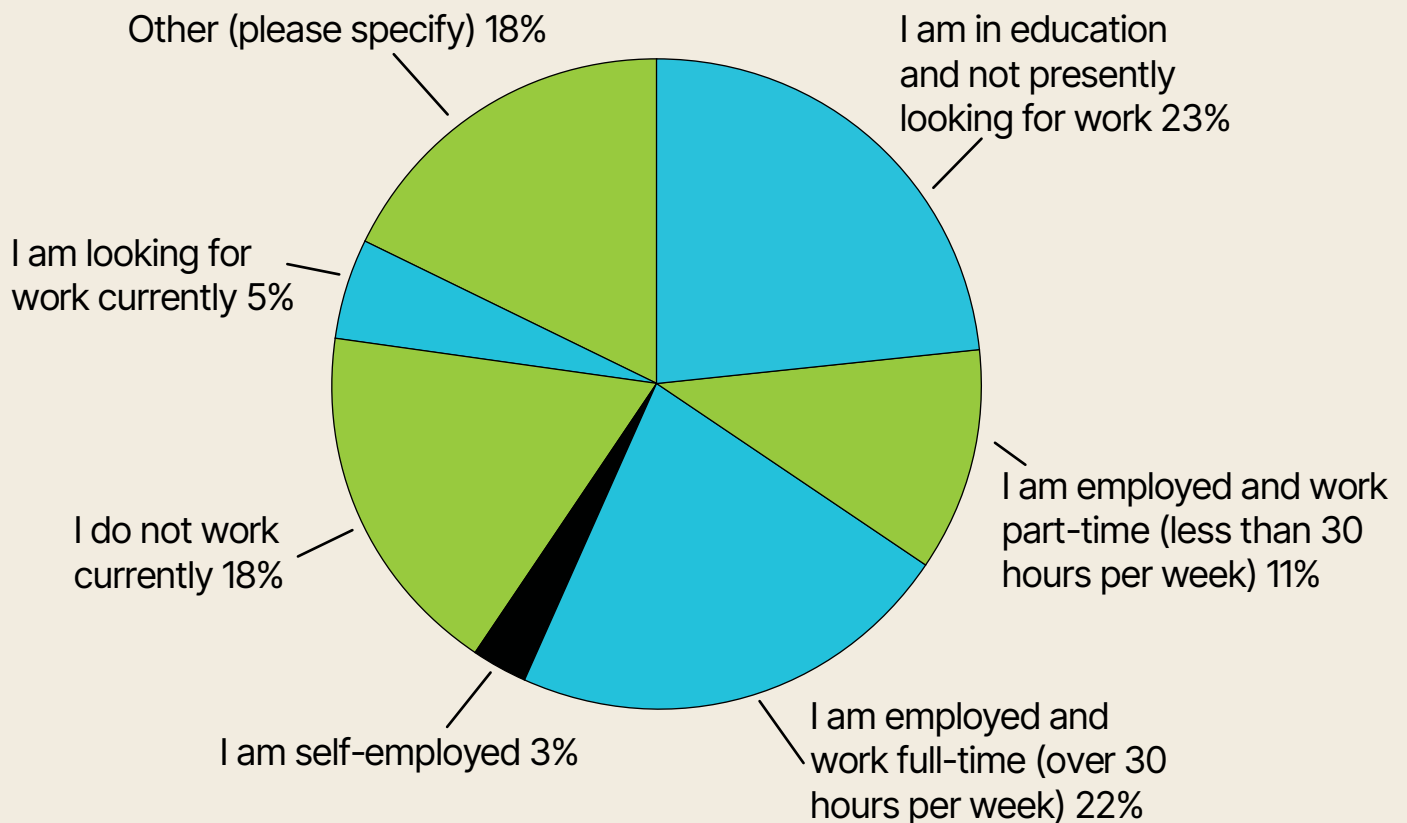


Figure 23 - Employment Status

# Housing and Independent Living

As members of the National Housing Disability Steering Group, AsIAM's Policy team highlight the importance of community members having access to appropriate and accessible housing. **Under Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Autistic adults should have the right to live independently in their own community, with any supports they need, and to have choice and control over how they wish to live.** This includes getting access to support like personalised budgets and Personal Assistance which can facilitate this right. However, our research shows that we are a long way off from that point with 71% of those surveyed noting they do not believe they have access to enough supports to live independently in the community. (see Figure 24)

In addition to this, 33% of respondents people surveyed said their current housing situation did not meet their needs. This is an increase of 6% on last year. Of those who responded to this section of the survey 67% have had no engagement with their Local Authority or Approved Housing Body regarding their housing needs. The increase in this year on year reflects the growing increase of calls to the AsIAM Autism Information Line.

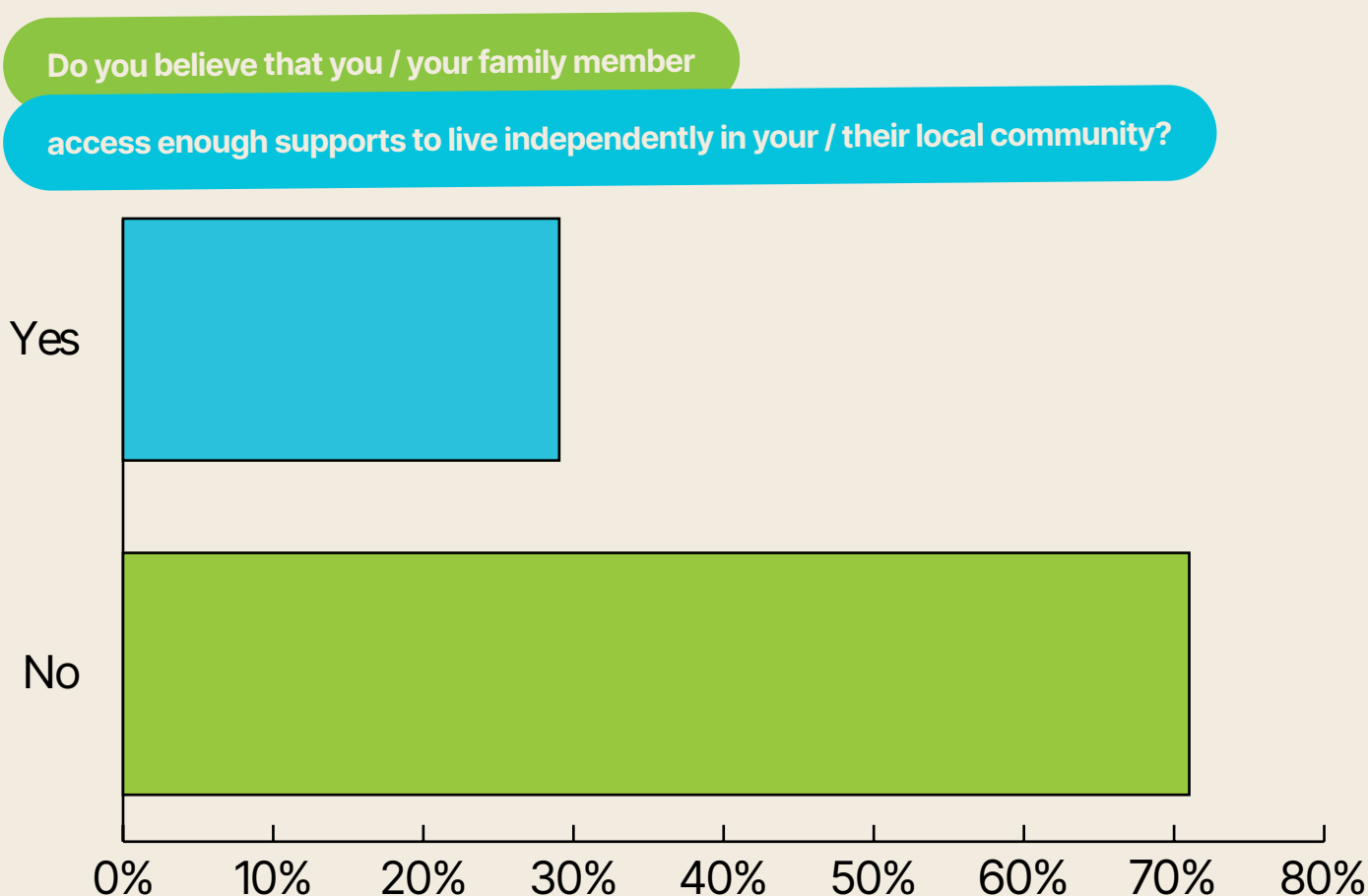



Figure 24

With the level of engagement that people receive on the ground varies greatly depending on their local authority they are living in with, even though the application process is meant to be the same for everyone. When asked if they or their family member had any engagement with their local authority regarding their housing needs, 33% said that they engaged with their local authority, whereas 67% had no engagement with their local authority. Of those who have engaged with their local authority on their housing needs, 49% said their engagement was negative.

# Conclusion

This year's Same Chance Report highlights the issues most pressing to the Autistic community in Ireland. The testimonies and stats presented in this report, highlight the needed for improved supports for Autistic people and families. Over the last year since our last publication, a regression has been identified in terms of Autistic people and families accessing supports and services. These gaps in services and supports need to be addressed urgently by the agencies of the state. Families and individuals should not be punished because of the state failing in its obligations. Whilst some change has happened in recent months with the publication of the Autism innovation Strategy more needs to be done. For the Autism Innovation Strategy to reach its full potential it requires appropriate resourcing and legislating to ensure its success, which is why we welcomed the commitment in the Programme for Government to legislate for this Strategy to ensure its existence moves beyond its current 18-month lifecycle. Echoing our sentiment from last year, it is incumbent on the Government to commit to its obligations under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in ensuring Autistic people have access to timely services to enable Autistic people and families to flourish and thrive in all aspects of society.



**By creating these  
opportunities Autistic  
people and families  
can be given the  
SAME CHANCE.**





# Attitudes to Autism

## Appendix 1



# AsI Am - Autism in Ireland

March 2025



# National Survey

## Who we Spoke to

Fieldwork dates:

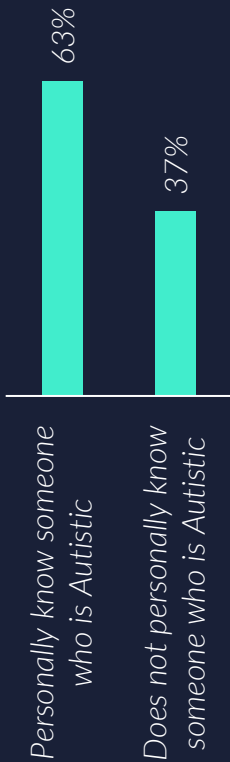
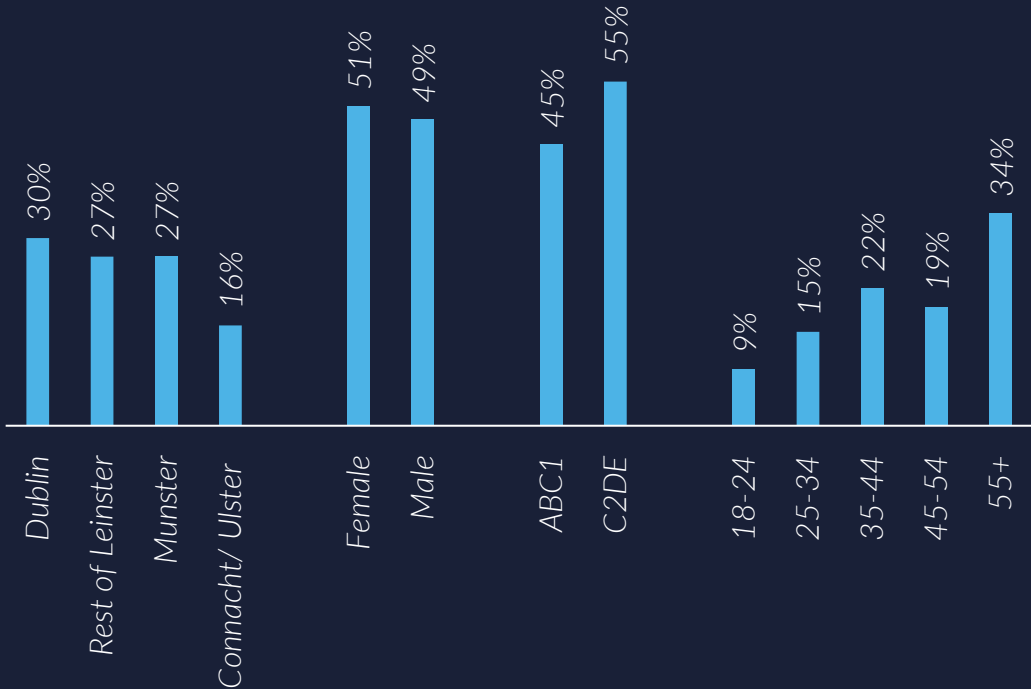
27<sup>th</sup> February – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Sample size:

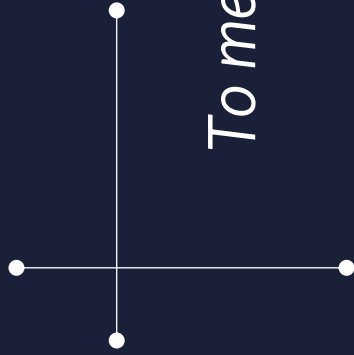
An online survey of 1,000 adults, aged 18+ yrs in the Republic of Ireland.

Nationally representative of the population based on age, gender, region, and social class.

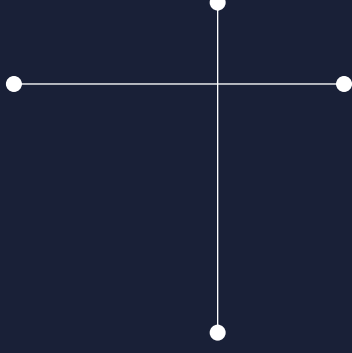
The sample has a margin of error of +/- 3% at a 95% confidence level.



# The Central Question



*To measure and track attitudes towards Autism and AsIAm's  
brand and communication awareness.*



# Key Headlines: Ireland's Autism Landscape:

## Strong Support, Ongoing Gaps

Public opinion strongly endorses improved Autism policy, services, and inclusion across multiple sectors.

Yet despite this support, perceptions of rising misinformation, uneven inclusion, and limited state provision point to ongoing gaps that require urgent attention and stronger action.

## Public Attitudes Towards Autism in Everyday Life

While support for Autism inclusion is growing, significant barriers remain. People are more accepting of Autistic individuals in structured roles,, but expectations for conformity persist.

Misunderstandings around communication differences, support needs and sensory differences highlight the importance of increased public education to bring about greater autism acceptance and a more inclusive society

# Key Learnings

## Ireland's Autism Landscape

### Autism policy & fiscal priorities

Public support is strong for mandatory Autism training for professionals and increased services highlighting a demand for better support.

Oversight of restraint incidents also reflects safeguarding concerns.

Calls for a cost of disability payment and a National Autism Strategy and abolishing means testing for carers allowance show recognition of systemic gaps. With only 26% agreeing that the State cannot afford Autism services, **the expectation is clear—greater investment is needed.**

### Inclusive education & school environment

Public support for inclusive education is strong—Autistic children should access local schools and have the right to mainstream education.

High agreement on restraint training and on parental consent reflects safeguarding concerns.

Most oppose suspension or expulsion based on support needs.

Only 24% express discomfort with neurotypical and Autistic children learning together, **showing broad acceptance of inclusive classrooms.**

### Community inclusion & social support

Support for community inclusion is strong, with 80% agree acceptance to Irish society shouldn't require change for the Autistic person, 76% backing priority in social housing and 75% recognising Autistic people's positive contributions to Irish society.

However, only 49% see sports and leisure as inclusive and 41% are uncertain about it. Notably, 32% believe voluntary groups should be able to exclude Autistic people, **highlighting ongoing inclusion challenges.**

### Health services, statutory rights, diagnosis & support

Support for better Autism services and statutory rights is strong—84% welcome increased access to assessment, and 83% back a statutory right to therapy.

Statutory right to timely assessment (81%) and access to mental health care (78%) are also widely supported.

However, only 4 in 10 believe the state provides adequate support, **highlighting significant support gaps.**

### Equality, Economic Impact & Public Perception

Most agree Autistic people face extra costs (75%), but only 56% believe they have equal access to public services.

Just 40% see equal opportunities in society, while 39% note rising misinformation.

# Public Attitudes Towards Autism in Everyday Life - Vignettes

Public attitudes toward Autism are improving, but social and workplace expectations still create barriers. While many support inclusion, real-world interactions show a gap in understanding and acceptance.



We explored public perceptions through three stories that highlight Autistic people in different social settings.

Vignette 1

Ben's Story on Employment

Vignette 2

Jane's story in a social setting

Vignette 3

Liam's story in a transportation setting

## Key Learnings: Public Attitudes Towards Autism in Everyday Life

### Attitudes Towards Social Inclusion

Public attitudes toward inclusion are mixed.

Workplace inclusion remains a challenge—only 1 in 3 would likely hire an Autistic person, while 2 in 5 say they would not.

In social settings, almost 2 in 3 agree that Autistic people should have equal access to cinemas, yet 42% believe Jane and her mother should leave if she is disruptive.

Similarly, only 39% feel safe around an Autistic person on the street, and just 34% would be comfortable attending college with an Autistic person.

### Building Empathy

There is growing recognition of the need for adjustments to support Autistic individuals.

Over half (52%) agree cinemas should reduce noise and smells for accessibility, and many (almost 2 in 5) view the requests of an Autistic person for email communication and adjusted work hours as reasonable.

However, older adults (45+) and those unfamiliar with Autism are less likely to support such accommodations. Public reactions to an Autistic individual's differences on the bus and street reveal a lack of understanding—many see him as anxious and overwhelmed, while others perceive him as simply energetic.

This divide highlights the need for greater awareness of neurodivergent communication differences.

### Community Response

Despite some positive shifts, expectations for Autistic individuals to conform remain strong.

Nearly half (45%) think it was reasonable for a cinema customer to ask the caregiver to keep her quiet or leave.

Similarly, the Autistic person was most frequently advised to improve eye contact, engagement, and communication skills, with mixed views on whether his job requests should be accommodated.

Transportation setting reflects similar biases—only 1 in 4 believe he took enough care when disembarking the bus, and many feel uncomfortable around his responses.

However, almost half disagree with a passerby shouting at him to slow down, showing some resistance to overt discrimination.

# Vignette 1

## Vignette 1 Ben's Story on Employment

Ben is a 24-year-old man and has a job interview for a cashier role in a local supermarket. Ben has completed a course in customer service and has done six months work experience in a newsagent.

Whilst waiting to be called into the interview room, Ben paces up and down the corridor repeatedly. During the interview itself, Ben doesn't make eye contact and lets the interviewer know when he thinks a question doesn't make sense.

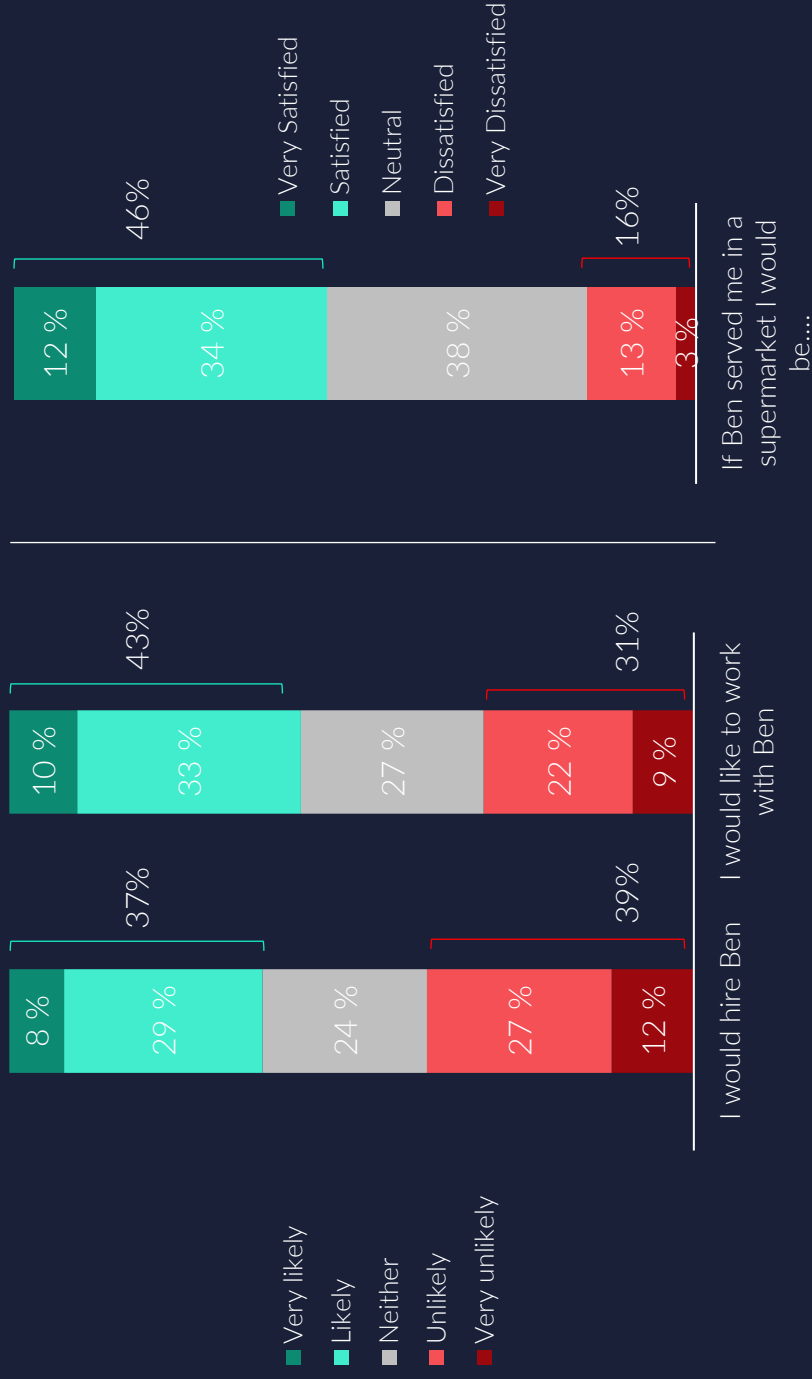
At the end of the interview, Ben asked if it would be possible for him to work 10am to 6pm to avoid the busiest times on the local bus service. Ben asked that he be emailed the outcome of the interview process as opposed to receive a telephone call.

# Attitudes toward inclusion is mixed.

When asked if they would hire someone like Ben, over a third said this was likely, whereas 2 in 5 mentioned they would be unlikely to hire him.

Likelihood to work with Ben was slightly more positive and almost 1 in 2 said they would be satisfied to be served by a person like Ben in a supermarket.

Attitudes towards inclusion - Employment





# Those who know an Autistic person and those aged 30-44yrs display higher levels of inclusion.

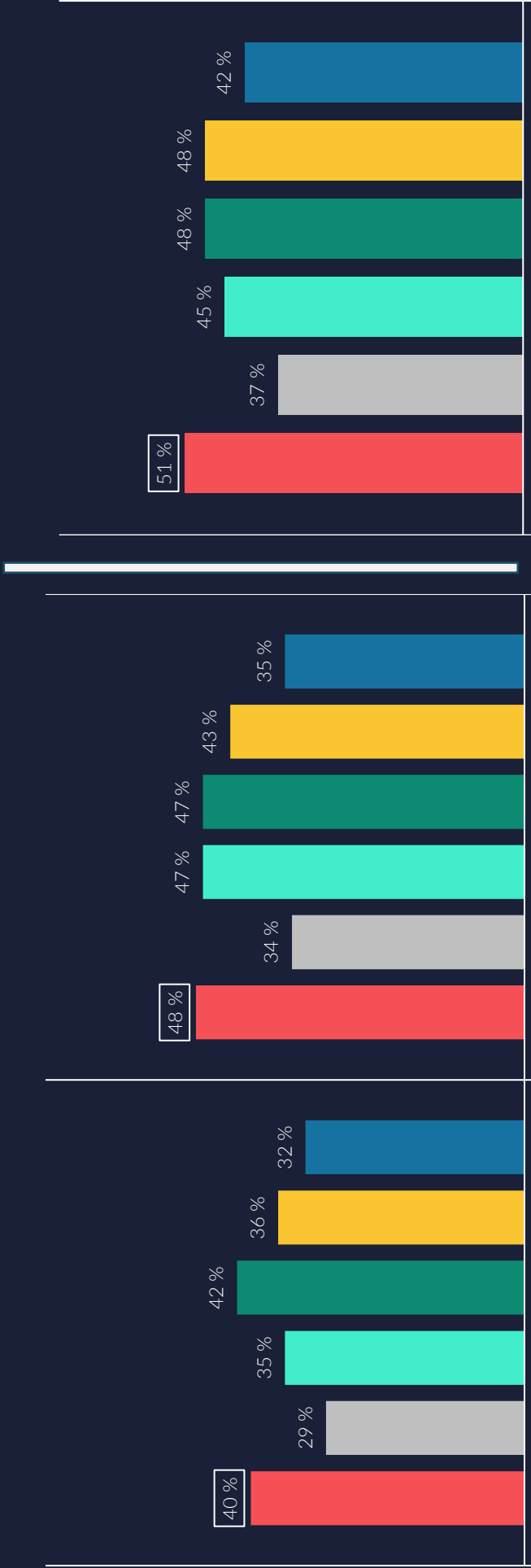
Ben's story

## Attitudes towards social inclusion - Employment

% Total Likelihood

% Total Satisfaction

■ Knows an Autistic person ■ Does not know an Autistic person ■ 18-29yrs ■ 30-44yrs ■ 45-59yrs ■ 60+yrs



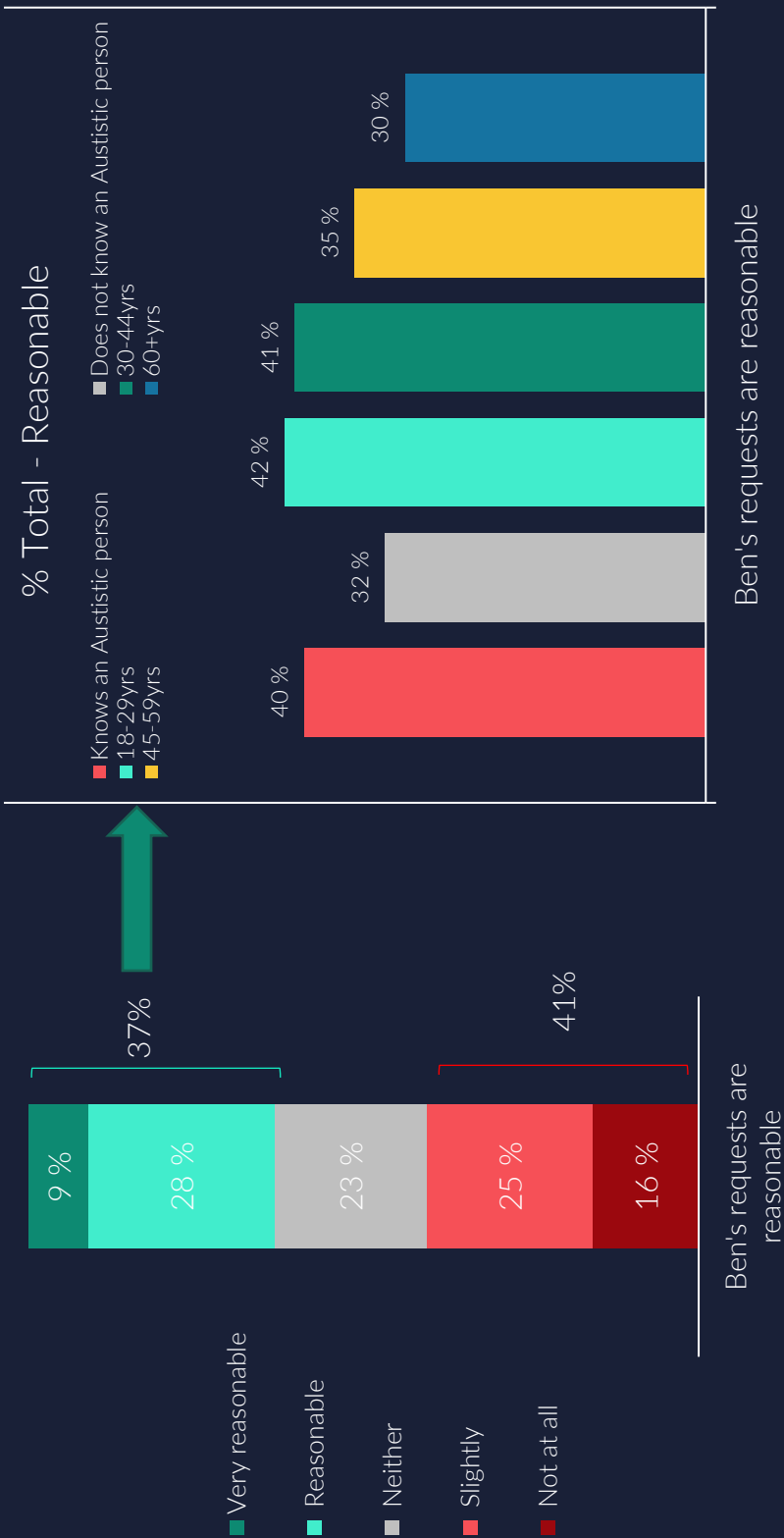
Q1. How likely or unlikely would you be to do the following? Base: 1,000  
Q2. How satisfied would you be if Ben served you in a supermarket? Base: 1,000

# 2 in 5 think that Ben's requests are unreasonable.

The proportion of people who find these requests reasonable drops among older age groups (45 and above) and those who do not know someone who is Autistic.

Ben's story

## Building Empathy - Employment



## Eye contact was the most frequently mentioned feedback for the interview panel to give Ben.



Overall, while Ben's honesty was appreciated, areas for improvement included eye contact, engagement, and flexibility, alongside the need for workplace adaptability to support diverse employees.

Eye contact was the most frequently mentioned issue, with many respondents believing it is essential for interviews and customer-facing roles. Communication skills and confidence were also highlighted, with suggestions for Ben to engage more and present himself as more approachable.

Work hours and flexibility sparked debate—some felt his request should be accommodated, while others believed he must adapt to business needs. Job suitability was another key theme, with mixed views on whether he should be given a chance or if a less customer-facing role would be a better fit.

Many respondents recognised signs of Autism or neurodivergence and emphasised the need for inclusive hiring and constructive feedback. Most supported emailing the interview outcome, as per his request.

# The feedback mostly focused on interview performance and job suitability.

## Ben's story



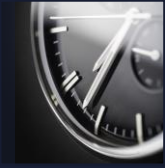
### Interview Performance & Personal Presentation

**Eye Contact:** Many respondents emphasized the importance of making eye contact during the interview and when interacting with customers.  
"Make eye contact, relax, and engage with the panel."  
"Needs to make eye contact with customers."

**Communication Skills:** Suggestions included being more engaging, making conversation, and showing interest in the job.  
"Try to engage more with the person you are speaking to."

**Confidence & Relaxation:** Several responses advised Ben to relax, be more confident, and present himself in a more open manner.  
"Be confident in who you are and don't feel pressured to do anything you're not comfortable with."  
"Try to be less nervous and embrace the challenge."

**Interview Etiquette:** Some mentioned that correcting the interviewer's questions may not have been appropriate.  
"Not to ask for things before he's been offered the job."  
"When you are participating in an interview, you do

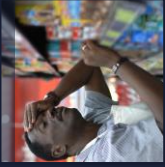


### Job Suitability & Work Environment

**Employer's Requirements First:** Some pointed out that an employee should work the hours needed by the business, not dictate them.  
"You can't choose your own hours."  
"The hours outlined would have to be accommodated."

**Balance & Compromise:** Some suggested that flexibility should go both ways, with the employer considering Ben's needs while ensuring operational requirements are met.  
"It may not be possible to always accommodate these working hours."  
"We will try to accommodate the timeframe you asked for."

**Accommodate His Needs:** Many responses supported his request for specific work hours, seeing it as a reasonable adjustment.  
"They should take his circumstances into account."  
"Ben should be given the shift he needs to function. A happy employee is a productive one."



### Work Hours & Flexibility

**Give Him a Chance:** Many believed Ben should be offered the job or at least a trial period.  
"They should hire Ben and give him a chance  
." "I think they should give him a trial period."

**Not a Fit:** Some felt a cashier role might not be the best match due to its customer-facing nature.  
"The job is not suitable for you."  
"He is not a people's person."  
"It wouldn't be good, I'm afraid."

**Alternative Roles:** A few suggested Ben might be better suited for a different role in the supermarket, such as stocking shelves.  
"He might be more comfortable in a role where there is less interaction with customers."  
"Supermarket might not be able to accommodate all of Ben's requests, but they could place him in another role."  
"A job not in the public eye would be more suitable."



### Employer's Responsibility & Inclusivity

**Awareness of Neurodiversity:** Some recognised Ben might be Autistic or neurodivergent and emphasized the importance of inclusive hiring practices.  
"Ben is Autistic and should get an appropriate job."

"It sounds pretty obvious that Ben has Autism, and I think feedback needs to take this into consideration."

**Clear & Kind Feedback:** Respondents encouraged the interviewers to give constructive, supportive feedback tailored to Ben's needs.  
"They should be helpful and encouraging."  
"That he did great."  
"Reassure and listen."

**Respect His Preferred Communication Method:** Many supported emailing the interview outcome as per his request.  
"Email him as requested."  
"We will respond to you by email."  
"They should consider hiring him and provide feedback via email as he requested."

Q3. What feedback do you think the interview panel should give to Ben? Base: 1,000

# Vignette 2

## Vignette 2 Jane's Story in a social setting

Jane is 9 years old and is in the cinema with her Mum. Jane is very excited to see the film which features her favourite cartoon character who she knows lots about.

Jane shouts out quotes and phrases from her favourite cartoon character during the trailers. During the film, Jane jumps up and down the aisle a number of times and stops to see what people are eating. Jane tells one customer that his hot dog is very smelly.

Halfway through the film, there are scenes with lots of noise and Jane begins to cry. Her Mum passes her ear defenders, but Jane drops them on the floor. Jane exits and re-enters the cinema a number of times with her Mum.

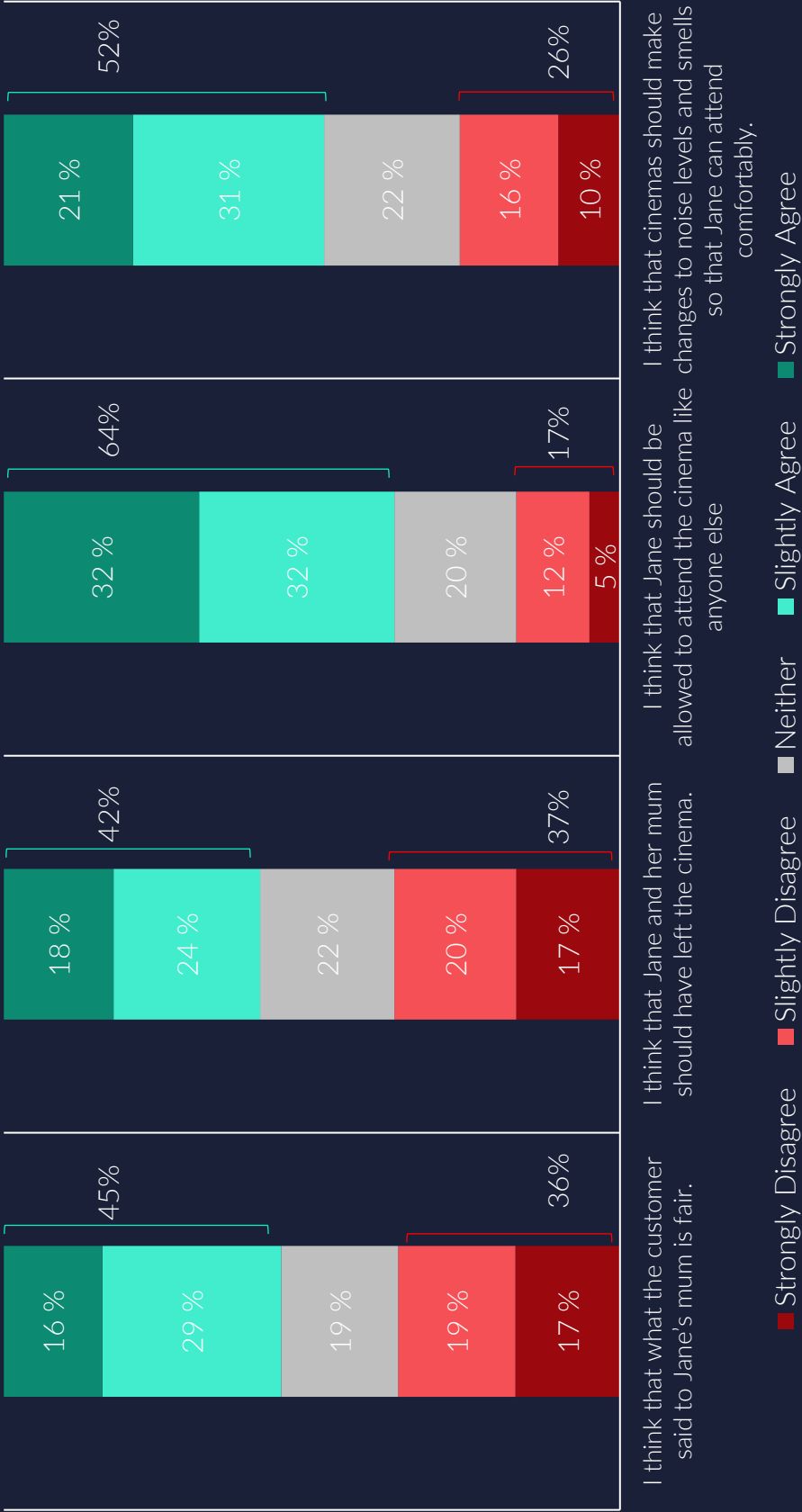
Another customer asks Jane's Mum to either leave with Jane or stay and make sure she remains quiet.

**Almost 2 in 3 agree that individuals like Jane, should have the same access to the cinema like anyone else.**

Over half agree that cinemas should adjust noise levels and smells to ensure individuals can attend comfortably.

However, almost half agree that the request for Jane to remain silent is fair. Additionally, a large proportion believe that Jane and her mum should have left the cinema.

Attitudes towards social inclusion & community response – Social Setting

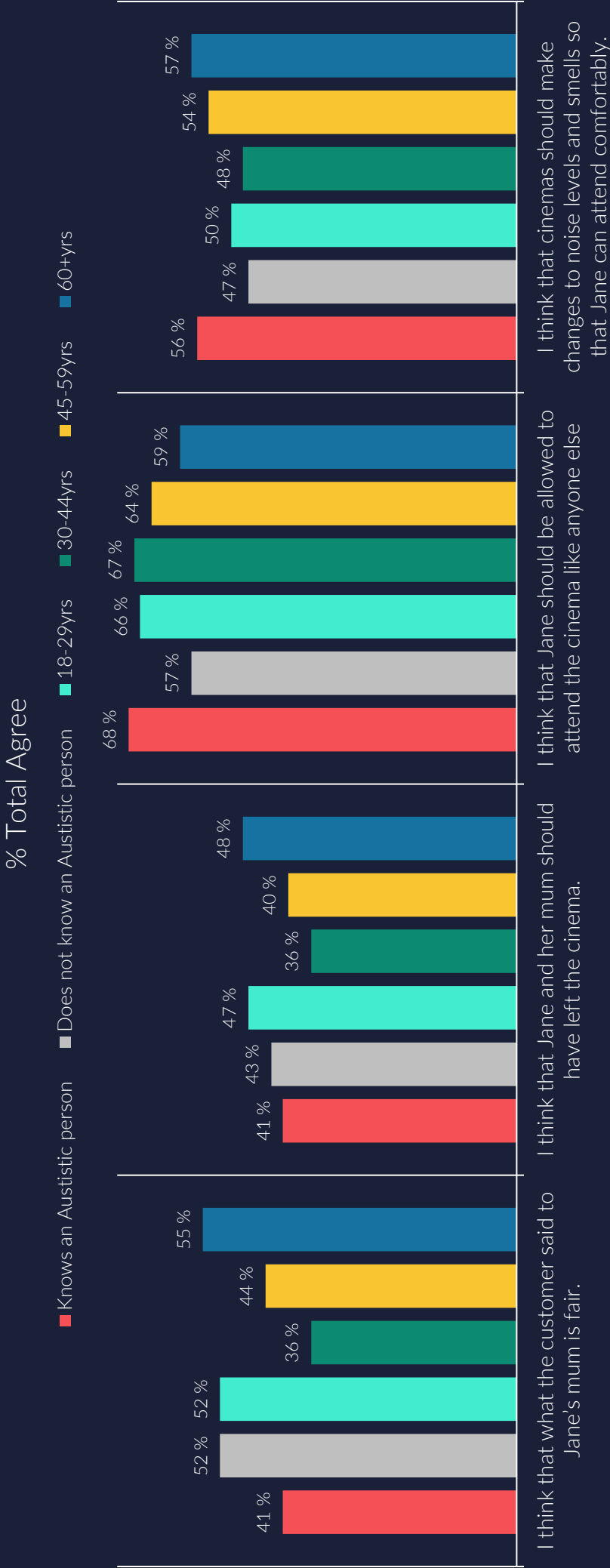




Those aged 30-44yrs and those who know an Autistic person are more sensitive to the needs of individuals and more aware of how to communicate with their parents/carers in social settings.

Jane's story

### Attitudes towards social inclusion & community response – Social Setting



Q5. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Base: 1,000

# Vignette 3

## Vignette 3 Liam's Story in a social setting

You are getting on the bus to work one morning. Liam an 18-year-old is also getting on the bus by himself to go to college in Dublin City Centre.

When the bus driver tells Liam he needs to give him his Leap card to look at it as Liam didn't tap correctly, Liam does not respond and stares at ground. A customer in the queue behind shouts for Liam to get a move on, and then Liam hands over his Leap card.

Liam is reading a book on the bus and occasionally seems to stop reading and begin to flap his arms repeatedly, only to then return to reading the book. Once or twice, he also begins to jump up and down in his seat and makes noises to himself. Liam disembarks the bus from the top floor and bumps into two other passengers whilst the bus is pulling into his stop, but he doesn't appear to notice.

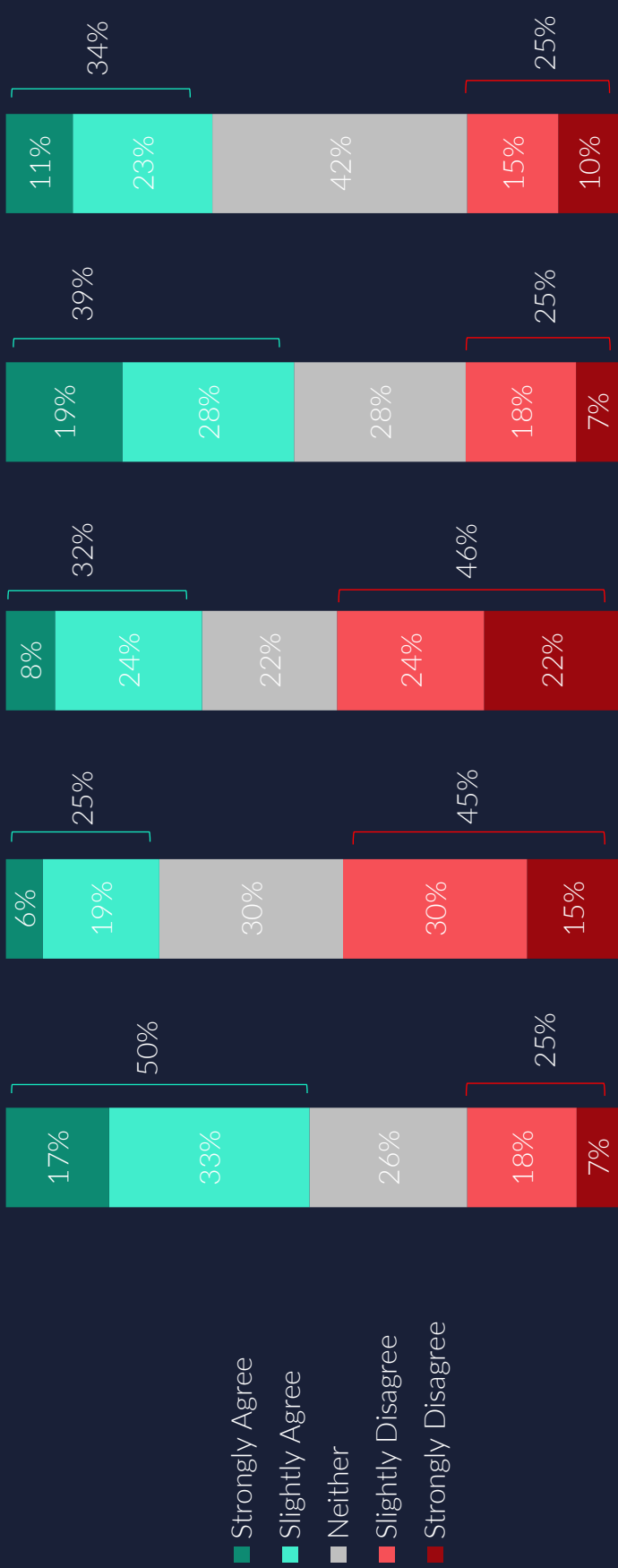
On the short walk to college, Liam appears visibly energised in the street, running in short spurts on his tip toes, from one side of the footpath to the other. One-man people move out of the way or pass comment when they see Liam coming. One-man shouts at him to slow down and watch where he is going.

Half agree that they would feel comfortable having a conversation with a person like Liam.

Almost half disagree with the man shouting at Liam to slow down.

However, when it comes to sharing the same environment (meet on the street / attend college) there is less confidence.

Social inclusion & Community response



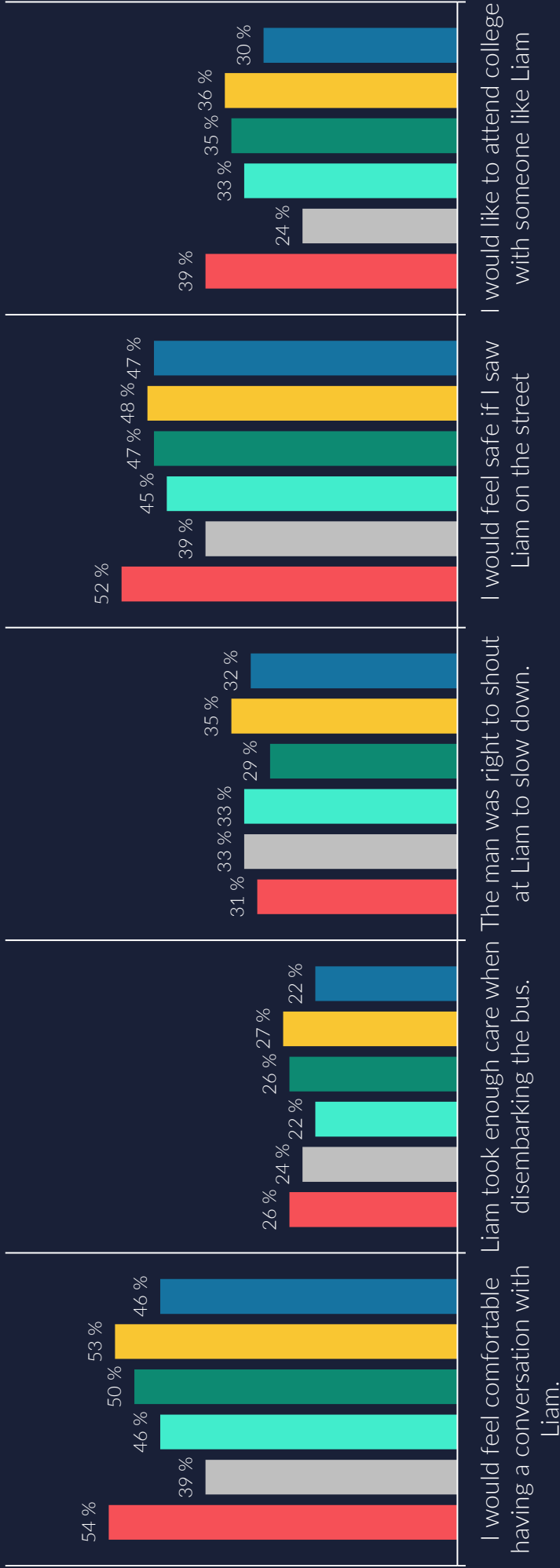
# Adults aged 45-59 and those who know an Autistic person are more likely to share the same environment and talk to a person like Liam.

Liam's story

## Social inclusion & community response

% Total Agree

■ Knows an Autistic person ■ Does not know an Autistic person ■ 18-29yrs ■ 30-44yrs ■ 45-59yrs ■ 60+yrs



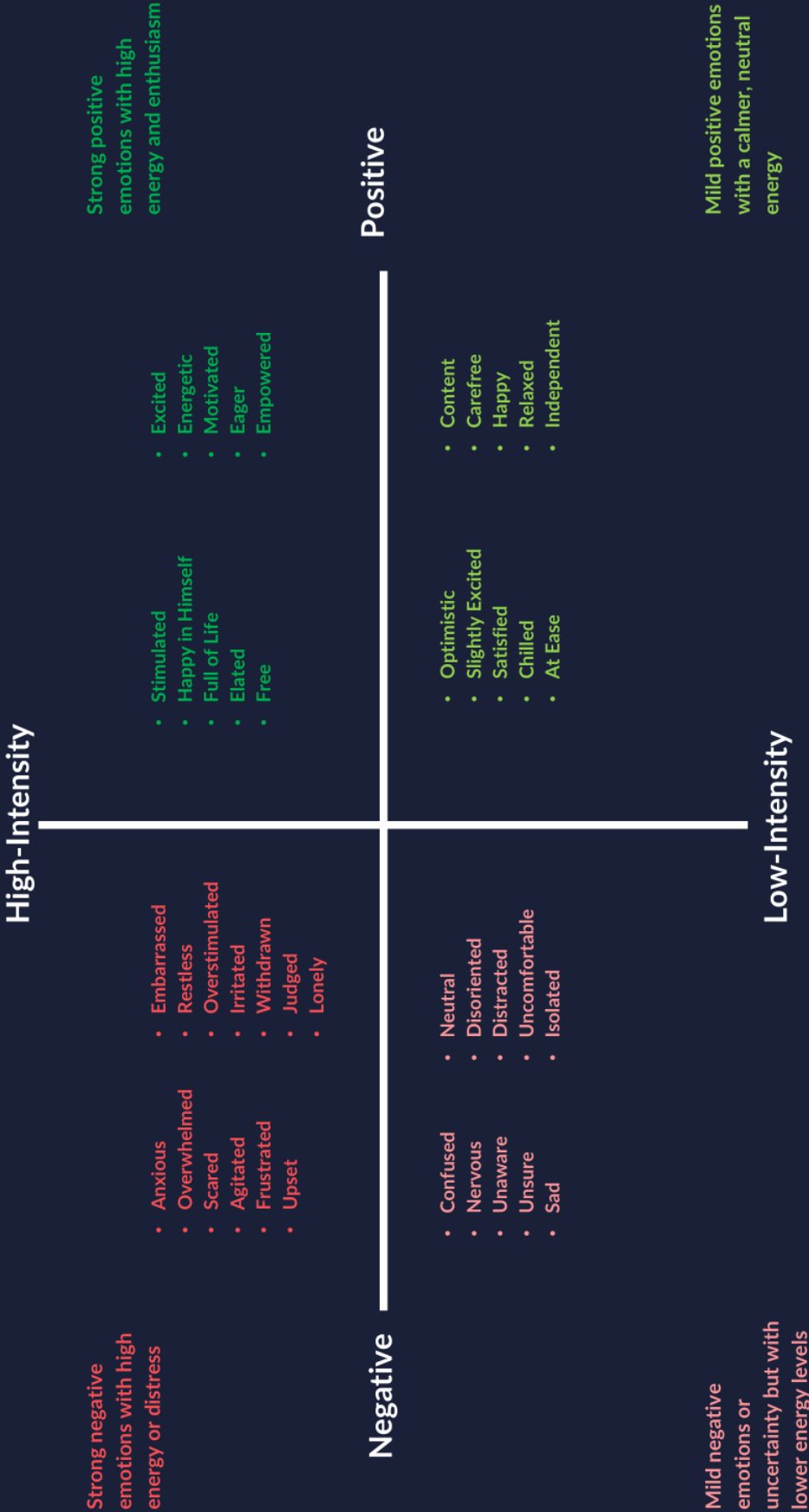
Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Base: 1,000

## Liam's Perceived Emotional State

Most responses saw Liam as anxious and overwhelmed, suggesting distress and sensory overload. Others viewed him as excited and energetic, indicating enthusiasm.

This divide highlights two contrasting interpretations: some see Liam as struggling, while others perceive him as engaged in his own world. The mix of high-intensity emotions—both negative and positive—suggests he may be experiencing both stimulation and distress simultaneously.

This contrast underscores the need for greater awareness of neurodivergent interaction differences to foster more inclusive and understanding perspectives.





# Knowledge of Autism

89% are aware of Autism as a diagnosis.



# Nearly 9 in 10 are aware of Autism as a diagnosis.

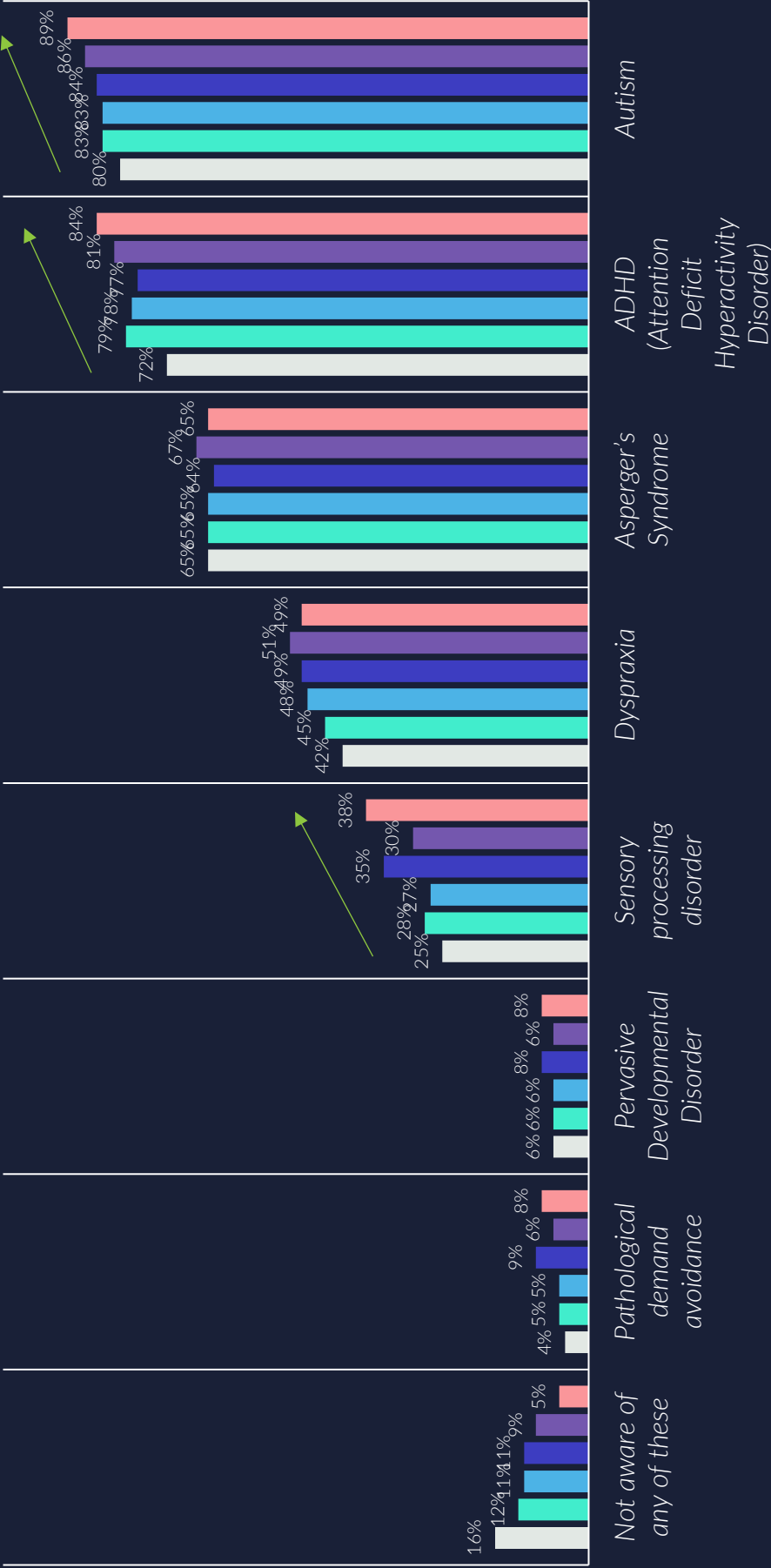
Autism awareness as a diagnosis is on the rise year on year.

Awareness of some neurodivergent diagnoses have also increased compared to the Nov 24 wave:

- ADHD by 3pp
- Sensory processing disorder by 8pp

Diagnoses Awareness

■ 2022 ■ 2023 (Mar) ■ 2023 (Nov) ■ 2024 (Mar) ■ 2024 (Nov) ■ 2025 (Mar)



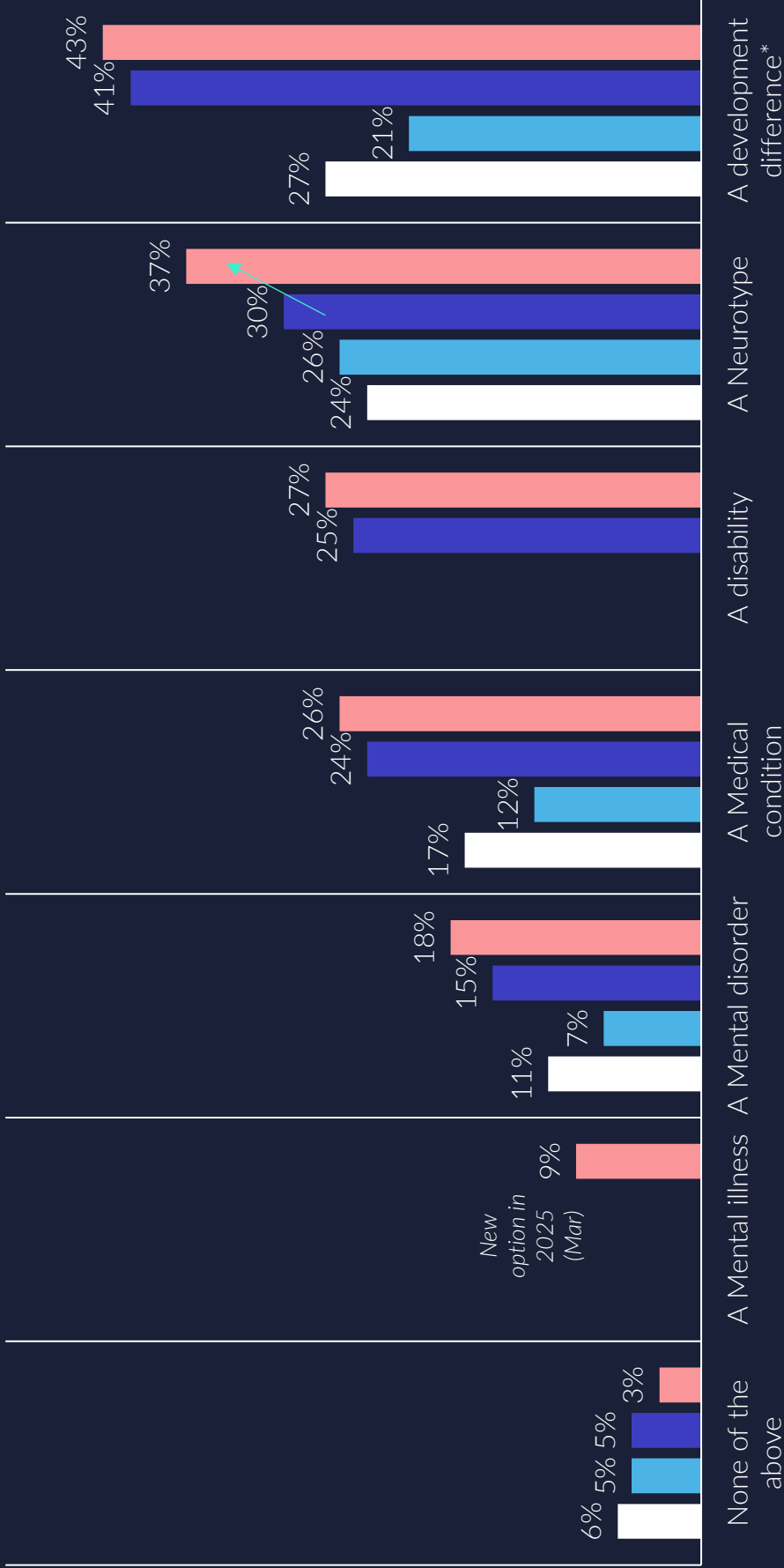
# The majority see Autism as a developmental difference.

Just under 2 in 5 see it as a neurotype and just over 1 in 4 as a disability or a medical condition.

There is an increase in association amongst the public of Autism as a neurotype.

Do you think Autism is ...

■ 2022 ■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025



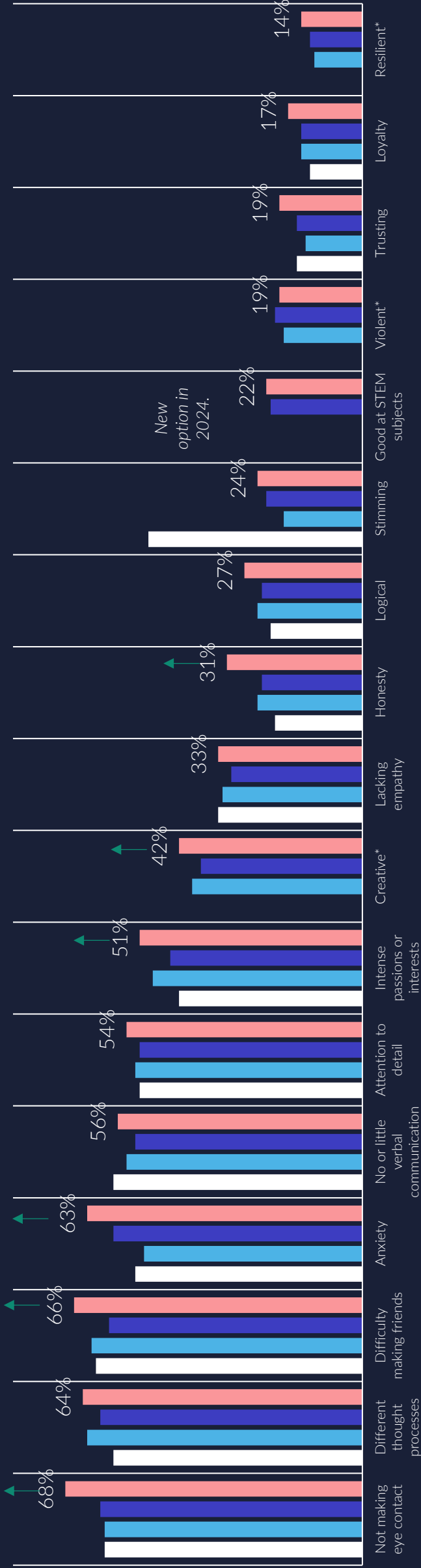
Q. Do you think Autism is.....  
Base: 1,000

\*Previously worded as a developmental condition pre-2024).

Avoiding eye contact and different thought processes are most closely associated with Autism. An increase in association with anxiety from 2022.

Autism Characteristics

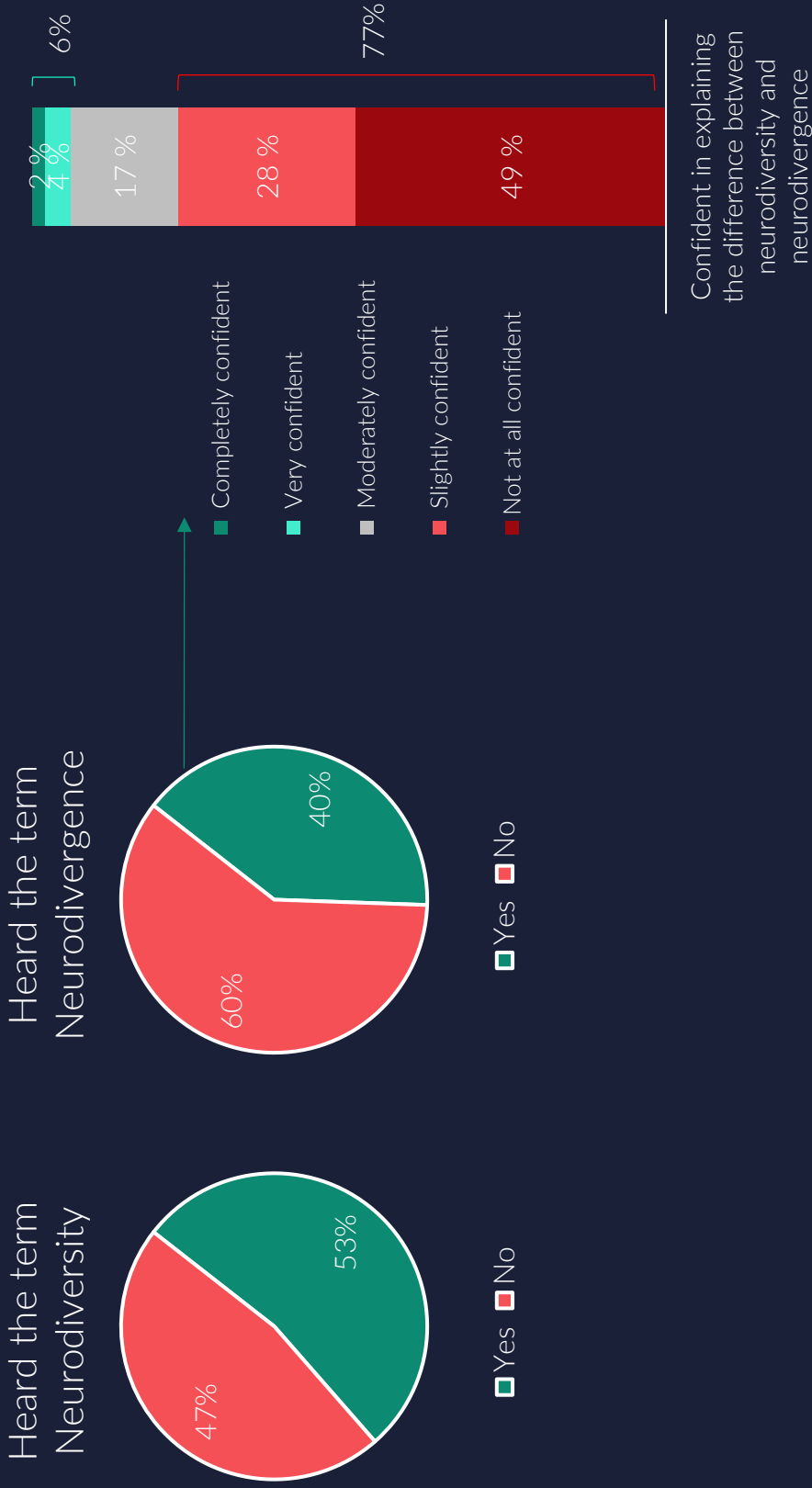
2022 2023 2024 2025



Q11. Which of the following characteristics, if any, would you associate with Autism? Please choose all that apply. Base: 1,000

# People are aware of the terms neurodiversity and neurodivergence, yet very few feel confident explaining them.

Of those who have heard the term neurodivergence, only 6% feel confident in explaining the difference between neurodiversity and neurodivergence.



Q12. Have you heard the term “neurodiversity”? Base: 1,000  
 Q14. Have you heard the term “neurodivergence”? Base: 1,000  
 Q15. How confident would you feel in explaining the difference between neurodiversity and neurodivergence? Base: 380 (Those who have heard the terms neurodiversity and neurodivergence)

# Explaining Neurodiversity: Mixed Awareness and Perceptions

core™ Research

Most respondents had a basic understanding of neurodiversity, often linking it to differences in brain function, Autism, or ADHD. Many saw it as a disorder, while others viewed it as part of a spectrum. A significant number were unsure, showing that awareness is still developing.



## Neurodiversity as Different Brain Functions

Many respondents recognised neurodiversity as the idea that people's brains function in unique ways, with no single "normal" way of thinking or processing information.

This perspective aligns with the modern understanding that cognitive differences are a natural part of human diversity rather than a deficit.



## Neurodiversity as a Spectrum or Condition

Many responses linked neurodiversity to conditions such as Autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, viewing it as an umbrella term for cognitive variations.

This reflects growing public awareness of neurodevelopmental conditions but also suggests a strong association between neurodiversity and medical diagnoses.



## Neurodiversity as a Disability or Disorder

Some responses framed neurodiversity as a disorder or dysfunction, emphasising struggles with communication, learning, and social interaction.

While this view acknowledges challenges neurodivergent individuals may face, it contrasts with the more inclusive perspective that neurodiversity is not inherently a deficit.



## Lack of Knowledge / Uncertainty

A significant portion of respondents admitted they were unfamiliar with the term or unsure of its meaning, often associating it vaguely with neurological conditions.

This suggests that while neurodiversity is becoming more recognized, there is still a gap in understanding its broader implications beyond medical labels.

Q. Could you please explain neurodiversity to the best of your knowledge?  
Base: 534 (Those who have heard the terms neurodiversity)

# Neurodiversity is...

1

## Neurodiversity as Different Brain Functions

- "Not all people process information the same. Neurodiverse people process signals differently."
- "Brains work in different ways; there is no single way the brain functions."
- "It's how people experience and interact with the world around them in different ways."
- "Everyone's minds work differently."
- "A different way of thinking, brain wired differently."

2

## Neurodiversity as a Spectrum or Condition

- "It encompasses lots of different conditions like Autism, Asperger's, ADHD, etc."
- "A spectrum where people have different thought processes."
- "It's an umbrella term for people who struggle with social skills and processing information."
- "Someone whose neural pathways work differently than the standard way."
- "I thought it was under the umbrella of ADHD and Autism."

3

## Neurodiversity as a Disability or Disorder

- "A disability."
- "A neurological disorder."
- "It's a mental problem like ADHD, Asperger's, Autism, etc."
- "A condition where people's brains work differently from others."
- "A brain that is wired in a different way than considered normal."

4

## Lack of Knowledge / Uncertainty

- "I'm not sure but I've heard of it."
- "I have no idea what it means."
- "I just heard the word."
- "Don't know how to explain."
- "Not a clue in the world, sorry."

Q13. Could you please explain neurodiversity to the best of your knowledge?  
Base: 534 (Those who have heard the terms neurodiversity)



While most respondents had a general understanding of neurodiversity and neurodivergence, many were unclear about the distinction between the two.

Most responses indicate a basic understanding that neurodiversity refers to the broad spectrum of different brain functions, including both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals.

Meanwhile, neurodivergence is seen as a specific deviation from the majority, often associated with conditions like Autism or ADHD.

However, many were unsure or used the terms interchangeably, suggesting a lack of widespread clarity on the distinction

# Autism is...

The most common themes highlight differences in communication, social interaction, and sensory sensitivities, followed by general awareness of Autism as a neurological difference and recognition of its spectrum nature. Other responses reflect varying levels of understanding, from misconceptions to associations with intelligence and unique abilities.

## Communication, Social Interaction & Sensory Sensitivities

"Autism is a condition where making connections with people is difficult."

"A person with Autism may not make eye contact and struggle to understand sarcasm or social cues."

"It's a developmental disorder where individuals find loud noises, bright lights, or crowded places overwhelming."

## Autism as a Neurological Difference

"Autism means your brain works in a different way from other people. It's something you're born with."

"The brain processes social interactions and communication differently, making some things harder for Autistic people."

"Autism is when the brain is wired differently, leading to unique strengths and challenges."

## Autism as a Spectrum & Individual Variation

"Autism is a spectrum disorder—some people are highly independent, while others need more support."

"There are different levels of Autism, from mild to severe, and each person is affected in their own way."

"You can have mild or severe Autism, and no two Autistic people are exactly alike."

## Autism as a Disability or Disorder

"Autism is a developmental disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world."

"It's a brain disorder that makes it difficult for people to function in a normal way."

"Autism is a medical condition that requires special attention and care."

## Stereotypes, Misunderstandings & Limited Awareness

"Autistic people are either geniuses like in movies or completely unable to function."

"Autism is a mental illness that makes people rude, violent, or unable to have emotions."

"It's just kids being spoiled or not disciplined properly—people grow out of it."

# Relationship with people who are Autistic

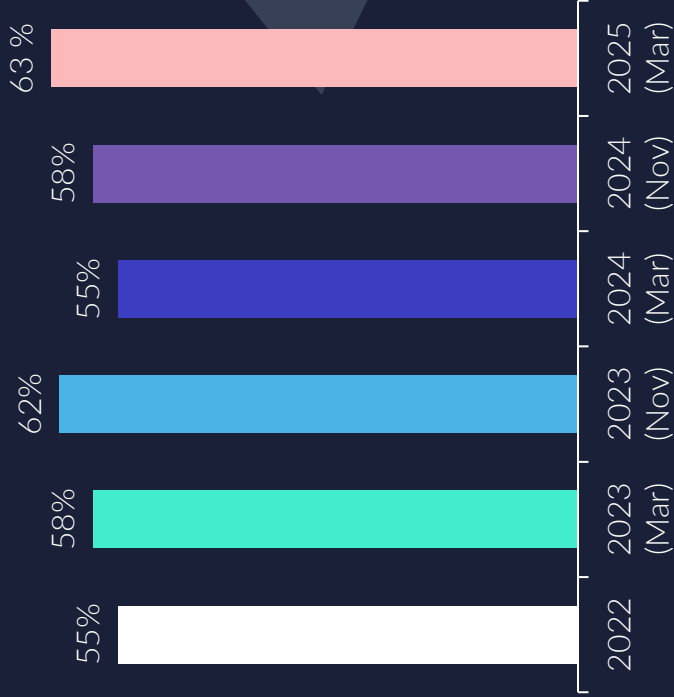
55% personally know someone who is Autistic.

# Almost 3 in 5 people personally know an Autistic person.

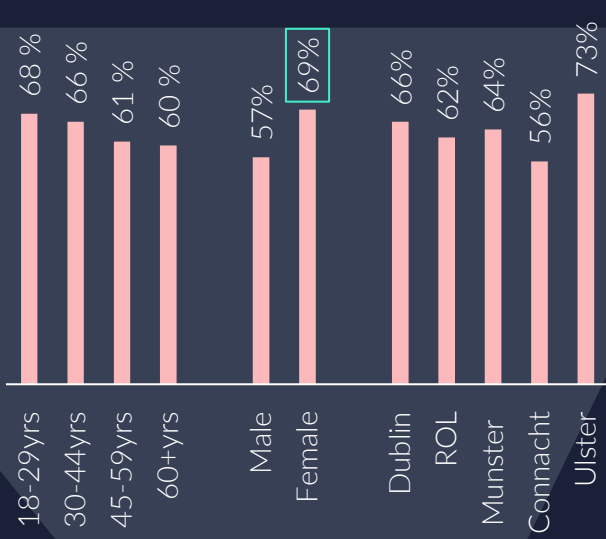
Adults in Ireland who claim to know  
someone Autistic have increased by 5pp  
compared to Nov'24.

Highest levels are among those aged 18-  
29yrs and females.

Know an Autistic Person

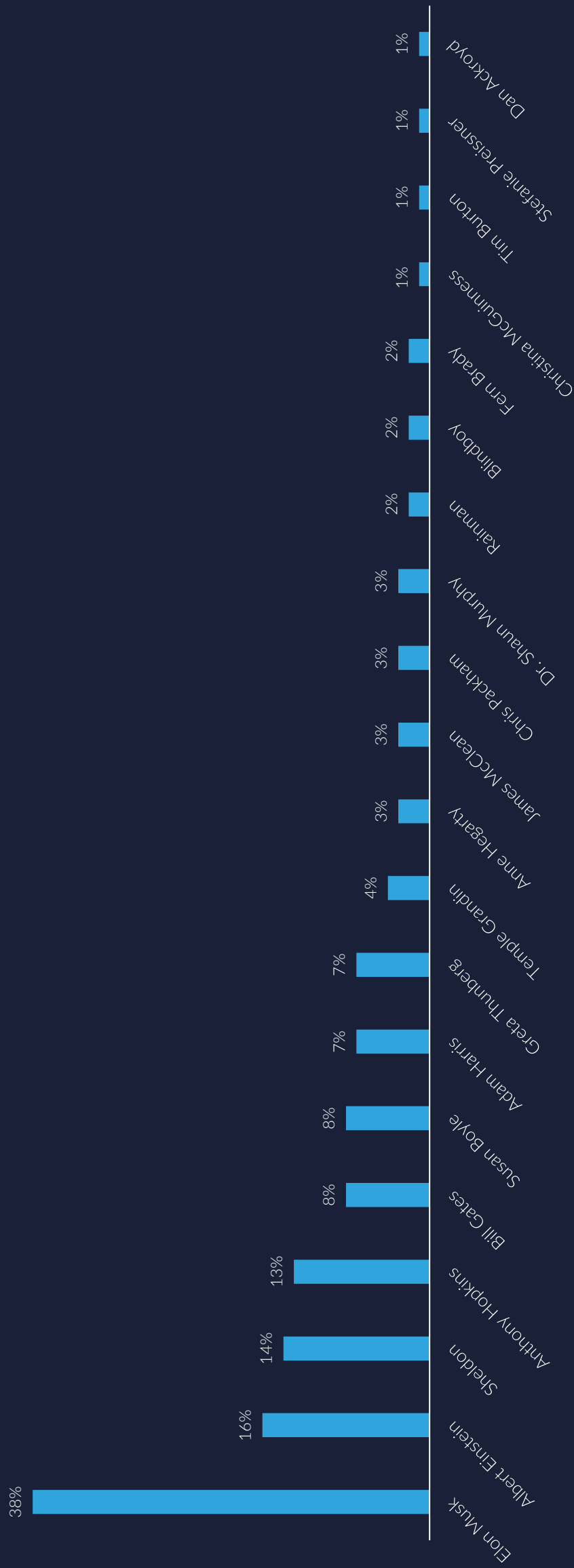


Yes know someone who is Autistic  
x Demographics



# Musk and Einstein are the most well-known Autistic personalities.

Well-known personalities or popular culture characters who are Autistic



Q20. Can you name any well-known personalities or popular culture characters who are Autistic? Base: 271

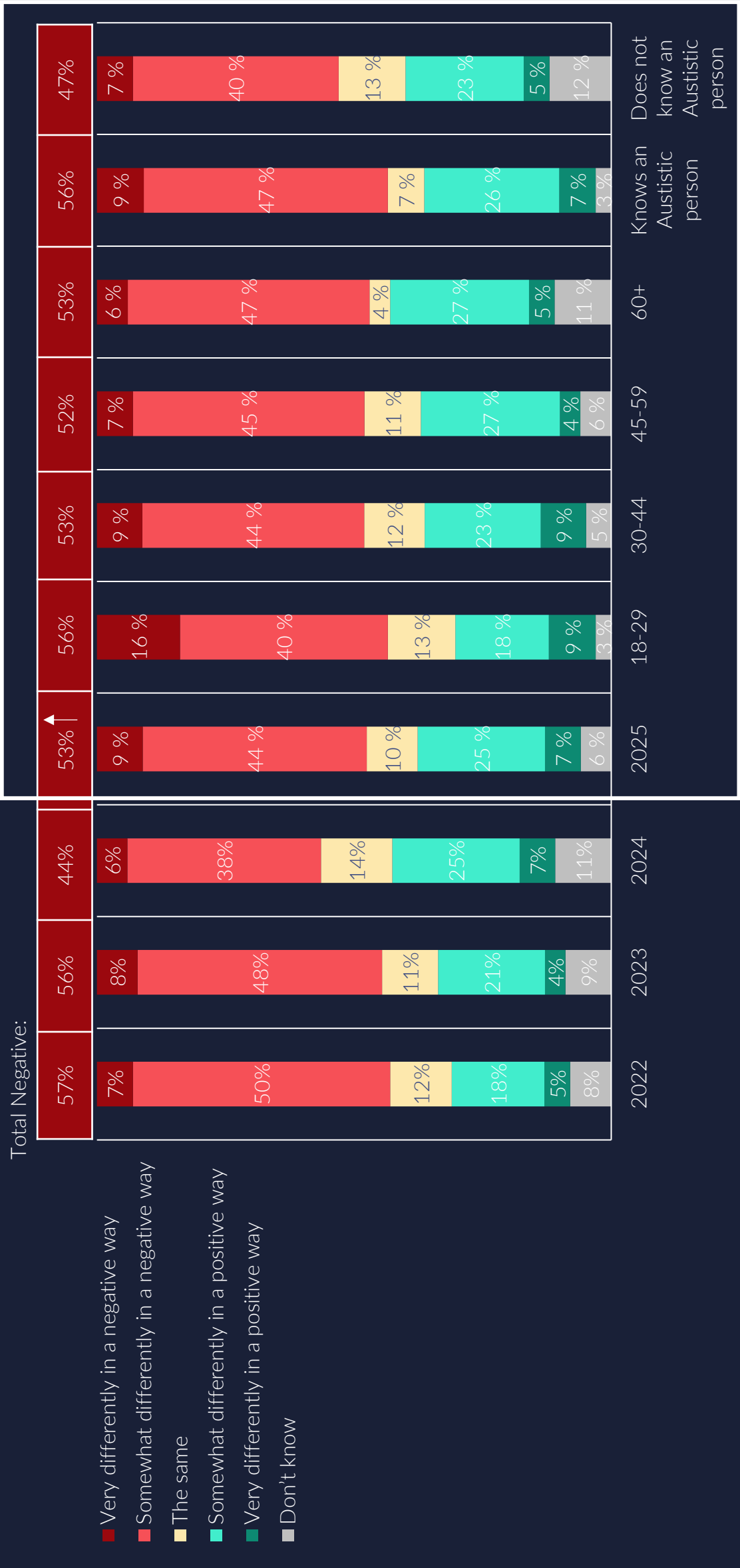


# Attitudes towards Autism

Over half of the population thinks that Autistic people are treated differently



There has been a significant increase in the number of people who think that Autistic people are treated differently in a negative way.

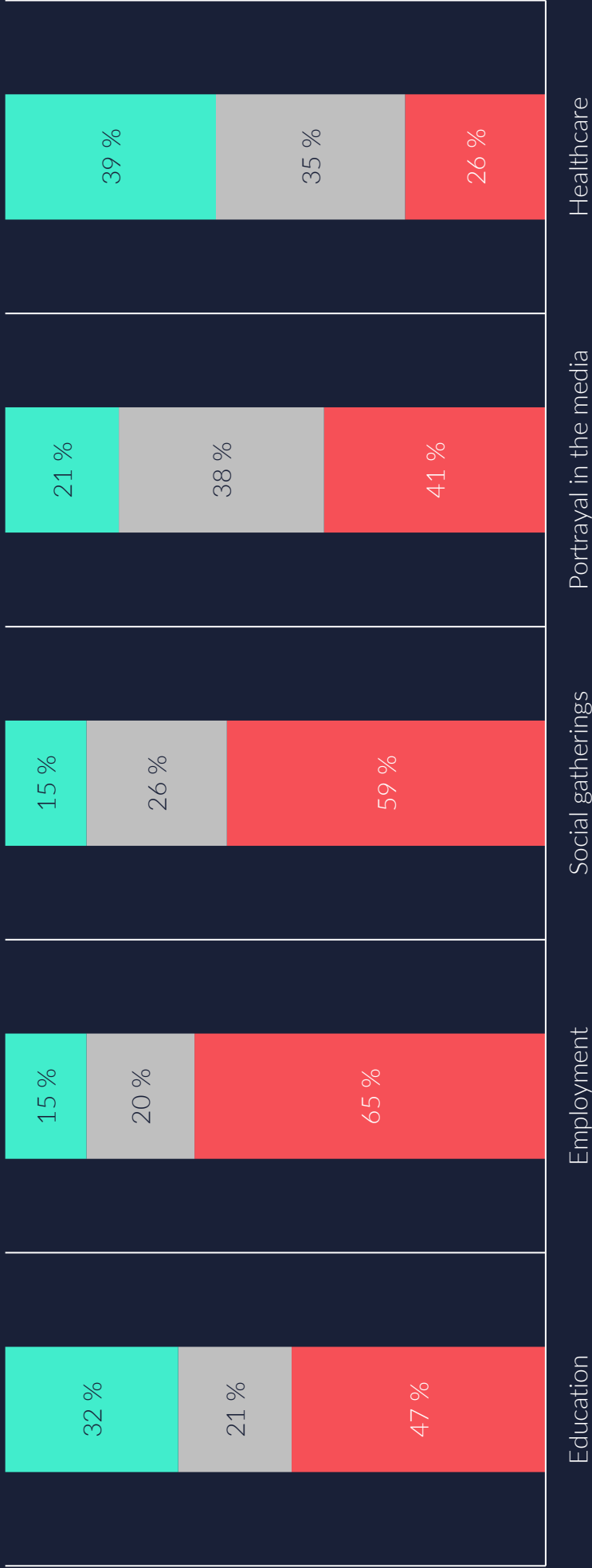


Q. In society, how do you feel Autistic people are treated compared to non-Autistic people? Base: 1,000

# Employment and social gatherings remain the areas where Autistic people are perceived to be treated most negatively.

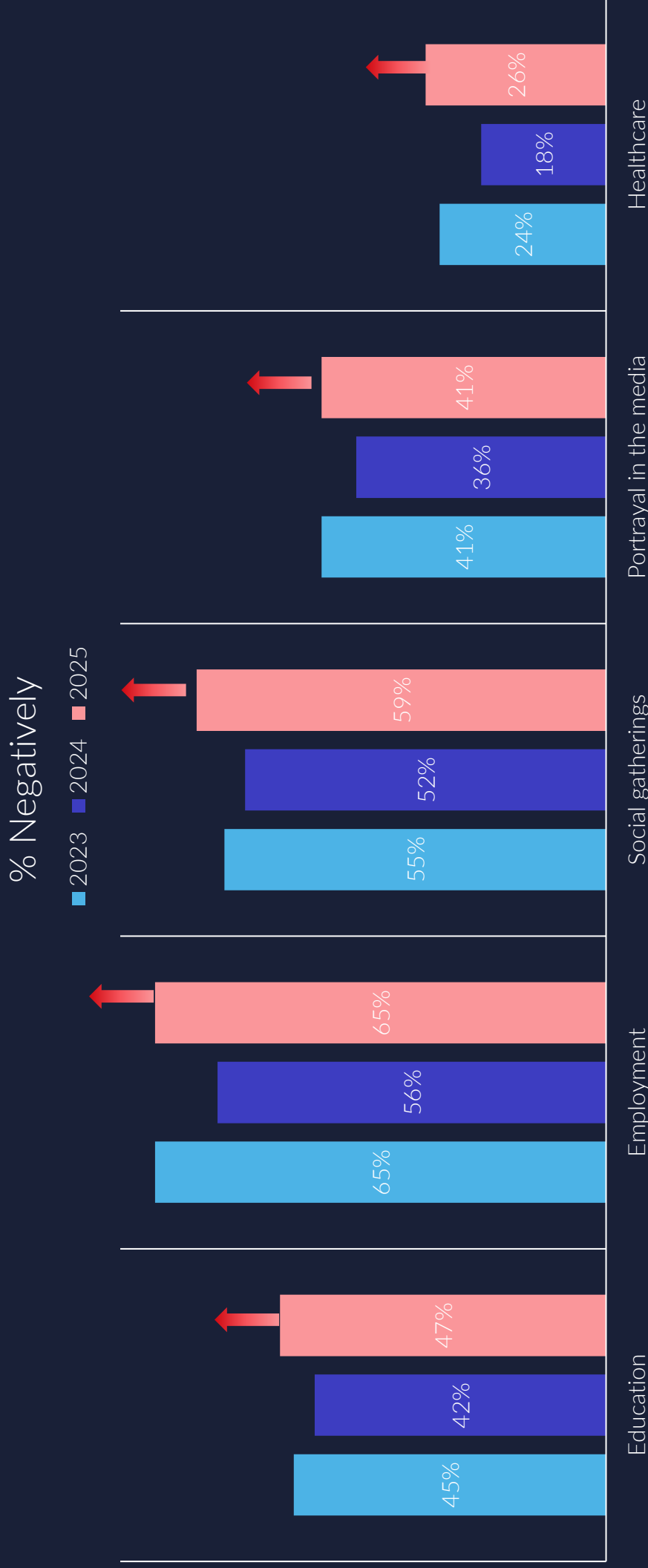
Treatment of Autistic people

■ Negatively   ■ No difference   ■ Positively



Q. In the following areas, how do you feel Autistic people are treated compared to non-Autistic people? Base: 1,000

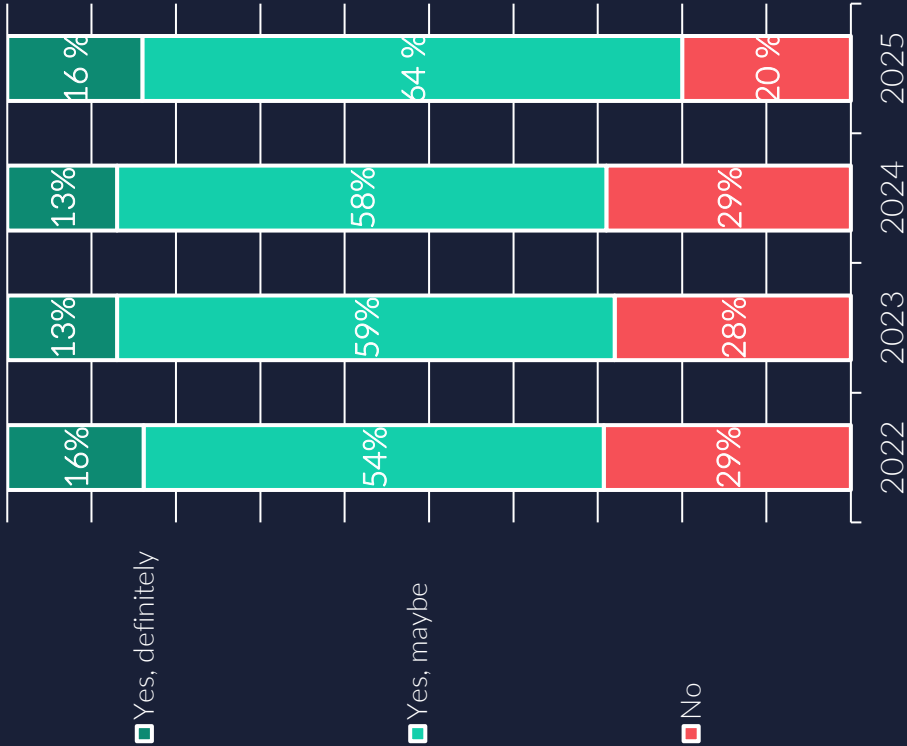
There has been an increase in perceptions of negative treatment of Autistic people across all areas, when compared to non-Autistic people.



Q25. In the following areas, how do you feel Autistic people are treated compared to non-Autistic people? Base: 1,000

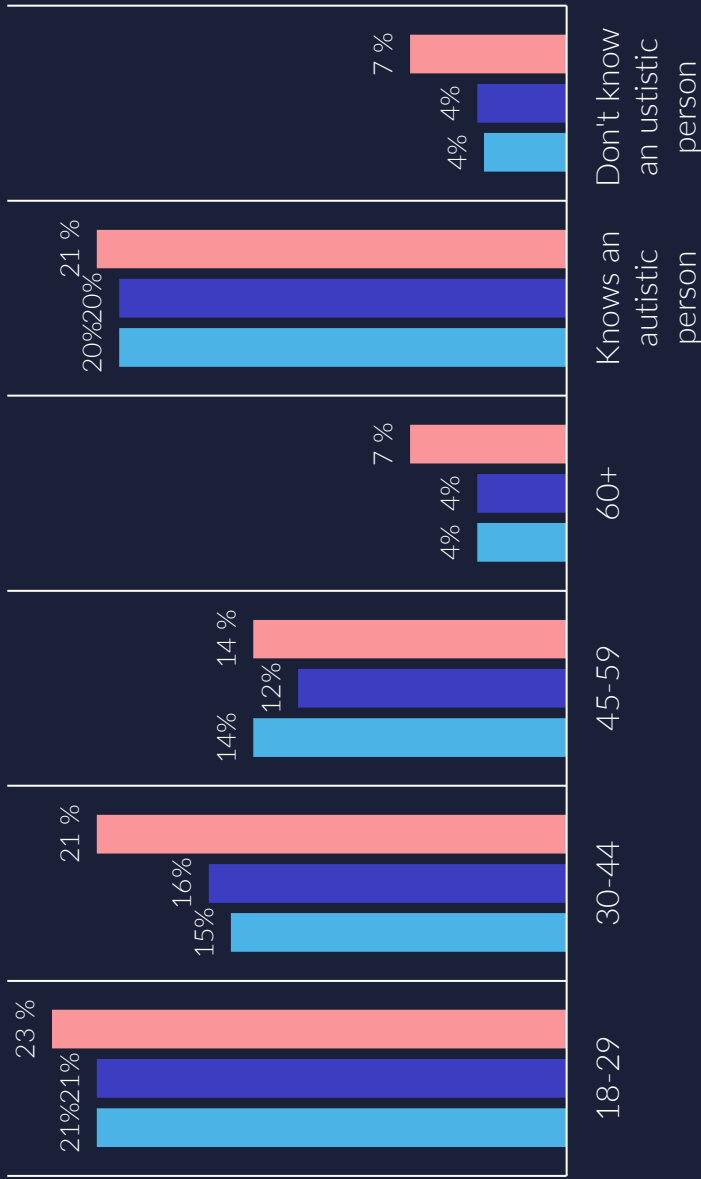
# Younger cohorts are more confident that they would know if a person was Autistic, having never met them before.

Would you know if a person is Autistic...



% Yes, definitely

2023 2024 2025

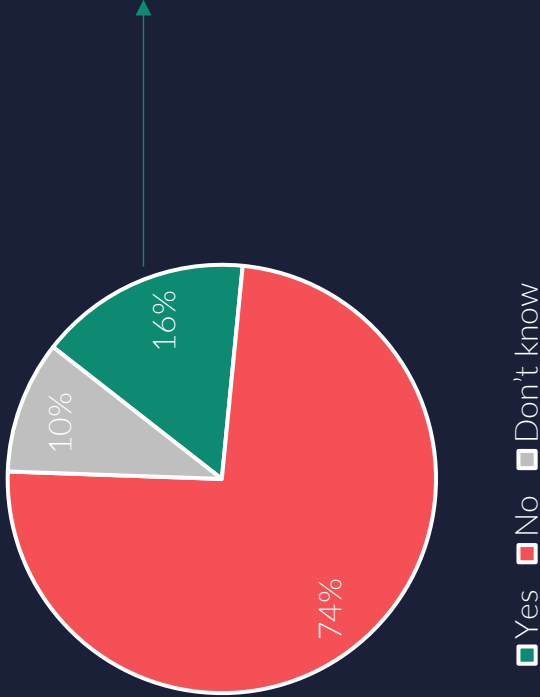


Don't know an autistic person

Q21. Do you think you would know if a person is Autistic, having never met them before? Please choose one answer. Base: 1,000

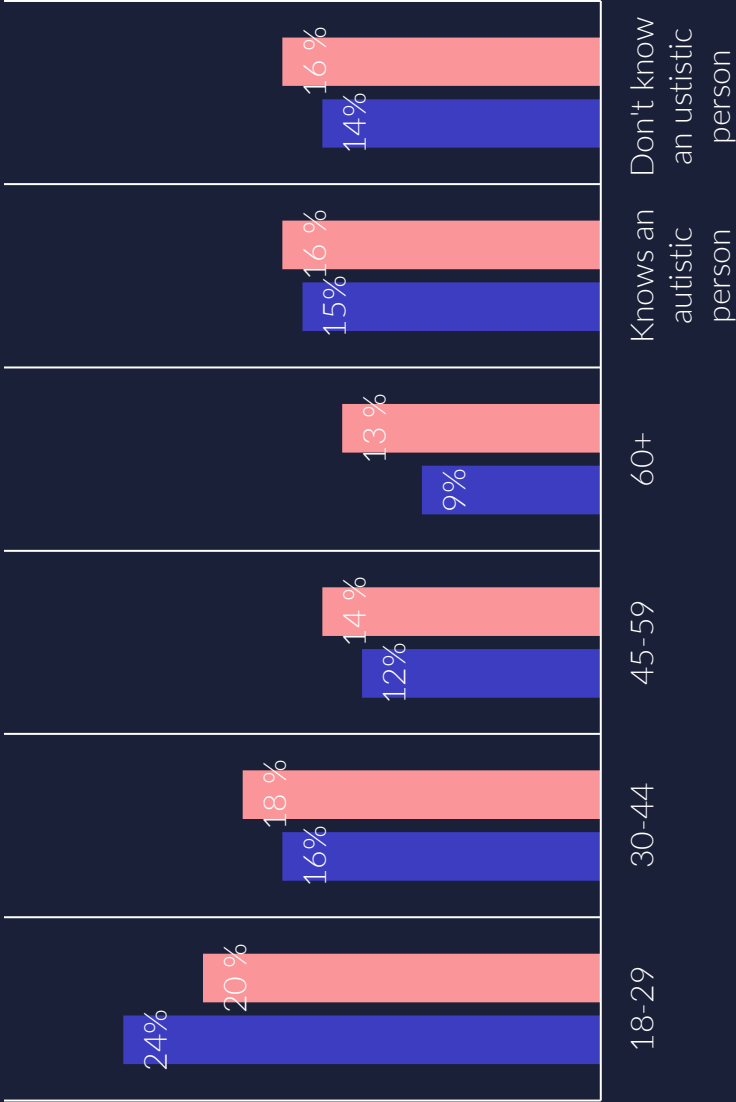
# Younger cohorts remain more likely compared to other age groups to think Autistic people look different.

Difference in appearance



% Yes

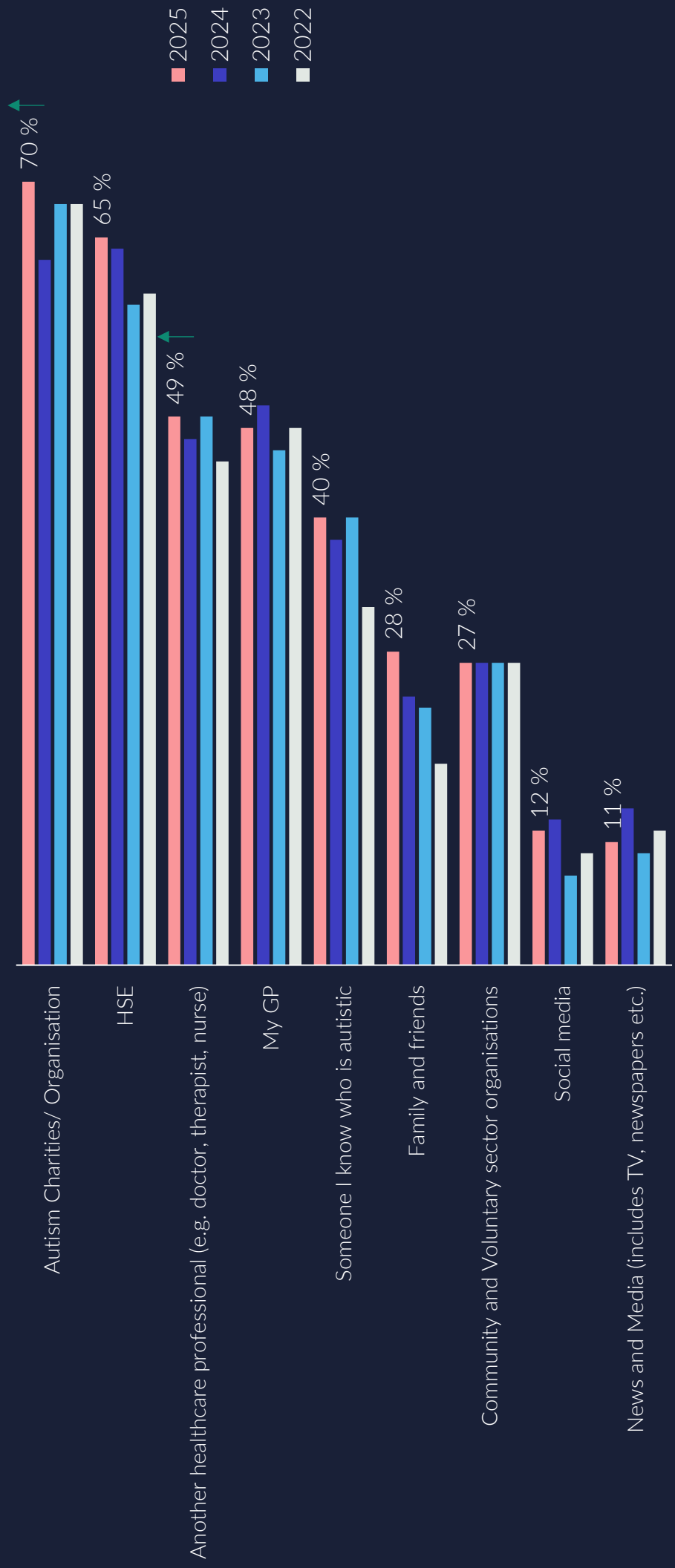
■ 2024 ■ 2025



Q. Do you think people who are Autistic look different to people who are not Autistic?  
Base: 1,000

# Top three most reliable sources for information on Autism remain to be Autism charities/organization, the HSE and another healthcare professional

Reliable Sources of Autism Information



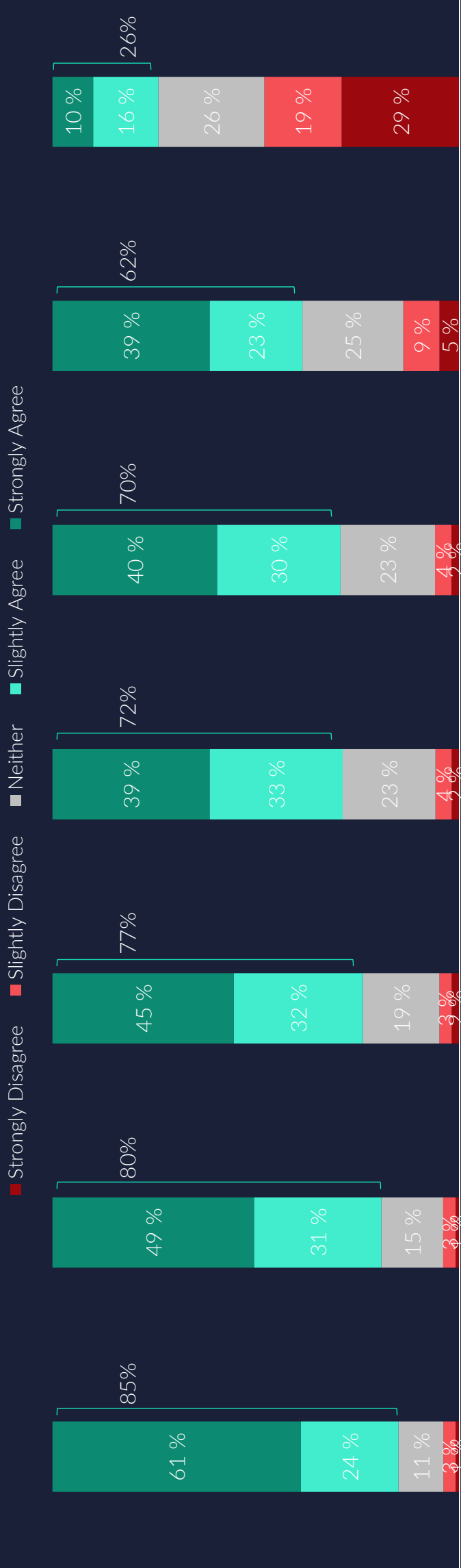
Q23. What do you think are reliable sources of information on Autism?  
Please choose all that apply. Base: 1,000



# Attitude towards Autism

Support for inclusion, education, and services is high, but major gaps remain in implementation, access, and societal attitudes.

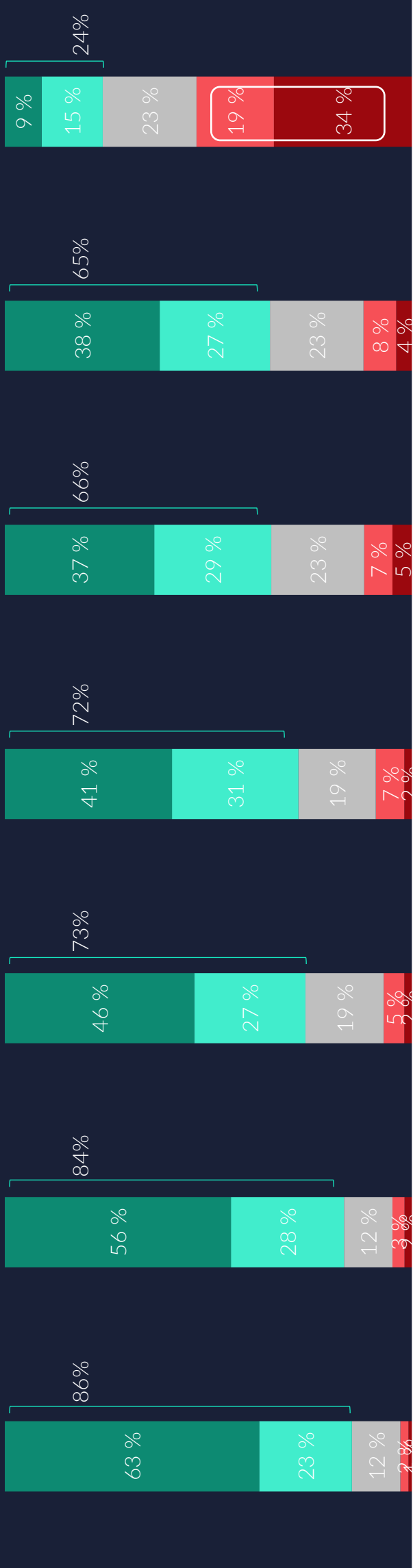
Public support is strong for mandatory Autism training to all professionals (85%) and increased services highlighting a demand for better support (80%). Oversight of restraint incidents (77%) also reflects safeguarding concerns. Calls for a cost of disability payment (72%) and a National Autism Strategy (70%) and abolishing means testing for carers allowance (62%) show recognition of systemic gaps. With only 26% agreeing that the State cannot afford Autism services, the expectation is clear—greater investment is needed.



# Inclusive education & school environment

Public support for inclusive education is strong—Autistic children should access local schools (86%) and have the right to mainstream education (84%). High agreement on restraint training (84%) and on parental consent (73%) reflects safeguarding concerns. Most oppose suspension or expulsion based on support needs (66 % and 65% respectively) . 24% express discomfort with neurotypical and Autistic children learning together.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Neither   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

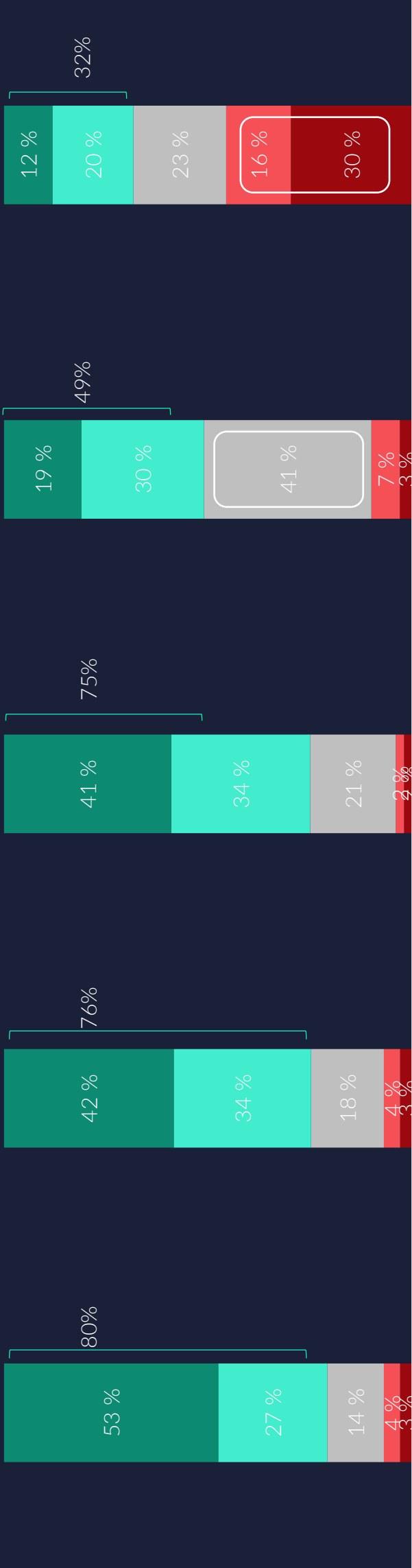


How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Base: 1,000

\*Parents base 641

Support for community inclusion is strong, with 80% agree acceptance to Irish society shouldn't require change for the Autistic person, 76% backing priority in social housing and 75% recognizing Autistic people's positive contributions to Irish society. However, only 49% see sports and leisure as inclusive and 41% are uncertain about it. Notably, 32% believe voluntary groups should be able to exclude Autistic people, highlighting ongoing inclusion challenges.

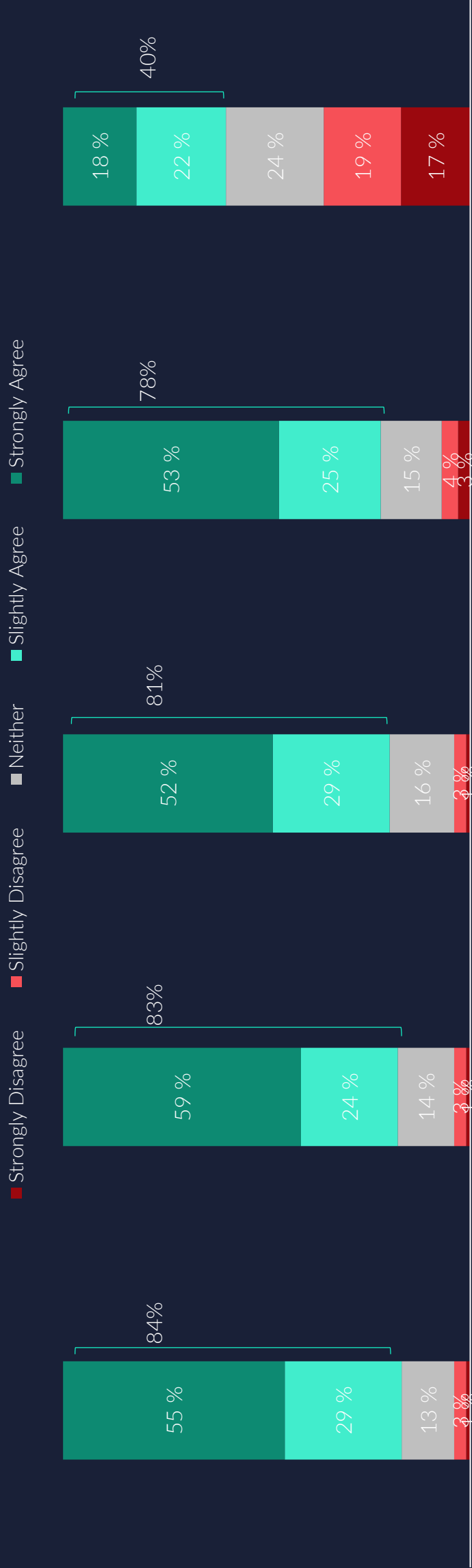
Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Neither   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree



How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Base: 1,000

# Health services, statutory rights, diagnosis & support

Support for better Autism services and statutory rights is strong—84% welcome increased access to assessment, and 83% back a statutory right to therapy. Statutory right to timely assessment (81%) and access to mental health care (78%) are also widely supported. However, only 40% believe the state provides adequate support, highlighting significant gaps.



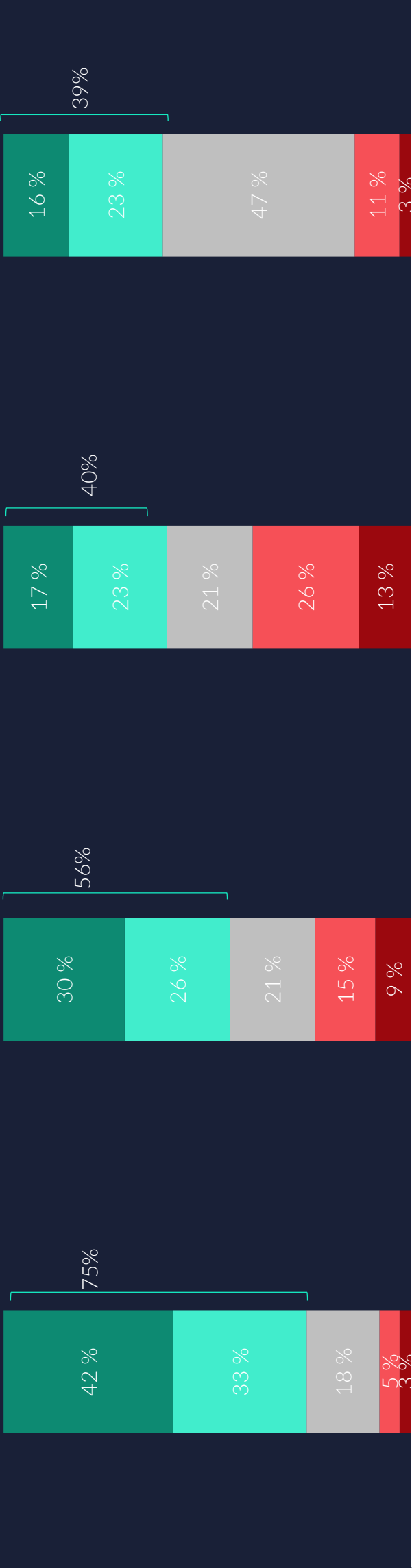
How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Base: 1,000



# Equality, Economic Impact & Public Perception

Most agree Autistic people face extra costs (75%), but only 56% believe they have equal access to public services. Just 40% see equal opportunities in society, while 39% note rising misinformation.

Strongly Disagree Slightly Disagree Neither Slightly Agree Strongly Agree



Autistic people and families face additional costs that others do not

Autistic people have the same access to public services that non-Autistic people do

Autistic people have the same chance in Irish society

There has been a rise on misinformation on Autism in the past year



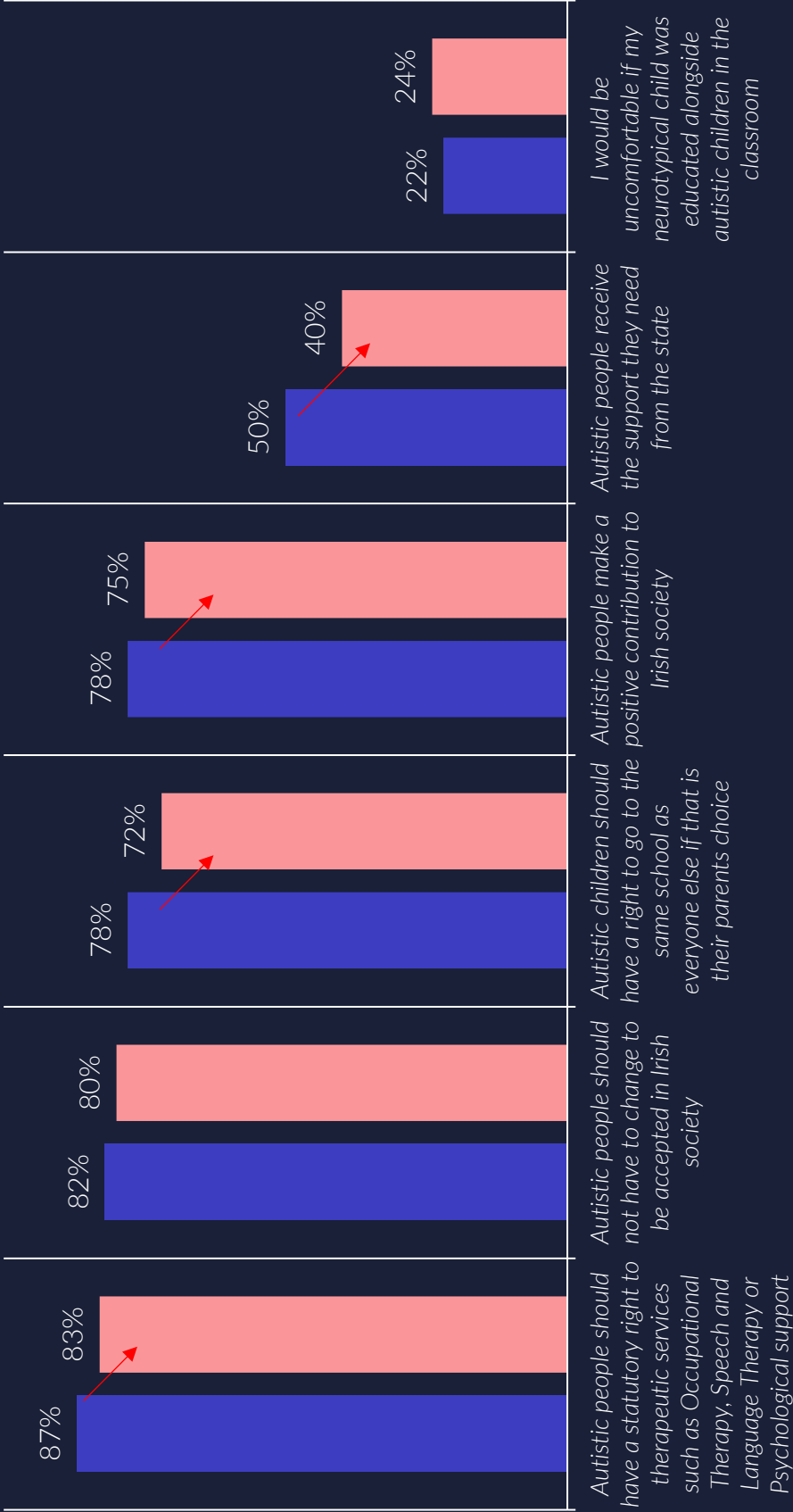
# There has been a decline in inclusivity compared to March 2024

There has been a significant 10 pp decline in agreement with the statement that Autistic people receive the support they need from the state.

Agreement with the statements that Autistic people should have statutory rights to therapeutic services and should have the same right to attend the same schools as everyone else has also declined by 5 and 6 pp, respectively.

Total Agree

■ 2024 ■ 2025



# Most of the attributes related to inclusivity have seen a slight decline compared to March 2024.

Except for 2 areas :

People are 2pp more likely to agree that all professionals who work with Autistic people should have a mandatory training and Autistic people have the same access to public services that non-Autistic people/

Total Agree

■ 2024 ■ 2025



# Key Outcomes : Public Attitudes Toward Autism in Ireland

Support for inclusion, education, and services is high, but major gaps remain in implementation, access, and societal attitudes. While progress is evident, further investment, policy changes, and cultural shifts are needed to achieve full inclusion.

**Strong Support for Inclusion:** Most agree Autistic people should access education in their communities (86%) and have the right to attend mainstream schools (72%). There is also strong backing (76%) for prioritizing Autistic people in social housing.

**Better Access to Diagnosis & Support:** The majority (84%) welcome increased Autism assessments, and 83% support a statutory right to therapies like Occupational Therapy and Speech & Language Therapy.

**Improved Safeguards:** High support exists for mandatory Autism training for professionals (85%) and restraint training for school staff (84%). Many (77%) want restraint incidents reviewed by an independent body.

**Economic Recognition:** Most (75%) acknowledge Autistic people face additional costs.

**Growing Awareness:** 75% recognize Autistic people's contributions to Irish society, and 78% believe mental health services should not deny care based on an Autism diagnosis.

**Gaps in Inclusion:** Only 49% believe sports and leisure facilities are inclusive, and just 40% feel Autistic people are fully accepted without needing to change.

**Service Shortfalls:** Only 40% believe the state provides adequate support, despite strong public demand for investment (80%).

**Limited Equal Access & Opportunities:** Just 56% think Autistic people have the same access to public services, and only 40% believe they have equal opportunities in society.

**Misinformation & Exclusion Concerns:** 39% report a rise in misinformation, and 32% think voluntary organizations should be allowed to exclude Autistic people.



**IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY**

Same Chance  
**As I Live, Work, Grow, Participate**

*Registered Charity Number: 20144838*