

Australian Autism Research Council 2019 Research Priorities



Aim

The Australian Autism Research Council (AARC) was established to review and define national priorities for autism research and identify areas of research needed for the autistic and autism communities.

The current AARC has considered domestic and international commitments, and existing global and Australian surveys and autism research priorities. AARC identified seven broad research priority areas and we asked the community what was important to them through an online survey and submission process which received more than 1,000 responses.

AARC considered the consultation outcomes, taking into account the mix of stakeholder views and has formed a list of 10 priority areas which will guide autism research into the future.

Find out more

Download the 2019 Autism Research Priorities report: autismcrc.com.au/aarc

Contact AARC for more information: aarc@autismcrc.com.au



Built environment

How can built environments be made more accessible to the autistic community?

Many autistic individuals have different sensory experiences, co-occurring medical conditions or disabilities that may impact their degree of accessibility. Inclusive spaces increase the ability for people on the autism spectrum to live comfortably, work, socialise and contribute to the community.



Choice in living and housing

How do we ensure that autistic people have choice and control over where they live and who they live with?

Many autistic people live with family or in situations where they have not chosen their home, supports or housemates. Autistic people should have the opportunity to make real choices and have access to inclusive models of housing.



Communication

How can we best support the communication skills of autistic Australians?

Individuals on the autism spectrum experience challenges with communication. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported in their 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that almost half (49%) of people on the spectrum need help with communication.



Education

How can we transition to an inclusive education system that meets the needs of students on the autism spectrum?

Autism may have an impact on a person's education. The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that 83.7% of children and young people reported difficulty in education.

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Employment

How can Australia transition to an inclusive workforce that provides opportunities for meaningful employment to all autistic people?

The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers reported that labour force participation was 40.8% for autistic Australians, compared to 53.4% for people with other disabilities and 83.2% for the general population.



Family and carer support

How can we best support families and carers of people on the spectrum?

Families and carers of autistic individuals need access to evidence-based, best practice models of support. This includes acknowledging that families and carers have diverse strengths, needs and circumstances, including carers who are autistic themselves.



Gender, diversity and inclusion

How do we ensure equity for autistic individuals regardless of gender, intersectional identity or cultural background?

Whilst research has traditionally focused on male presentations of autism, an estimated 20% of autistic individuals in Australia are female. The autistic population also includes individuals who are LGBTQIA+, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and those with intersectional identities.



Health and disability services delivery

How is the physical and mental health of autistic Australians affected by the availability and accessibility of health, disability and education services?

Access to diagnosis and support is often challenging in more regional and remote areas and for particular populations. Health service needs may vary among the autistic population. Differences in communication, sensory experience and executive functioning may impact people's ability to access services.



Health and wellbeing

How do we ensure optimal physical and mental health for all autistic Australians?

Individuals on the autism spectrum have an increased chance of additional chronic medical conditions than the general population. These include sleep disorders, gastro-intestinal problems, epilepsy, anxiety and other mental health issues.



Justice

What measures can be taken to prevent discrimination, exploitation, violence and abuse of autistic Australians, and ensure equity in accessing justice?

In 2019, Australia launched a Royal Commission into the violence and abuse against people with a disability. There are barriers to accessing and receiving justice for individuals on the autism spectrum.