

“1,000 insights”: Views from the autistic and autism communities on the problems experienced by autistic people in education, physical health, mental health and the justice system

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Objective

1. To identify the key problems experienced by autistic people in Australia when accessing physical or mental health services, or the education or justice system.
2. To identify possible ways to prevent or reduce these problems.

Method

Members of the autistic and autism community were invited to participate in an online survey, co-designed with autistic people. Participants could select which service or system domain(s) they would like to focus upon, including the areas of education, physical health, mental health and the justice system.

Within each domain, people were asked four questions. The two that are relevant here are:

- (1) What are three problems that autistic people experience within <chosen domain e.g. education>?
- (2) What do you think could prevent or reduce these problems?

There were 1,018 responses to the survey. Almost half (42%) of the respondents were autistic; over half (56%) were parents, family members, or caregivers of autistic people. The answers within each domain were coded separately, and then results compared across domains.

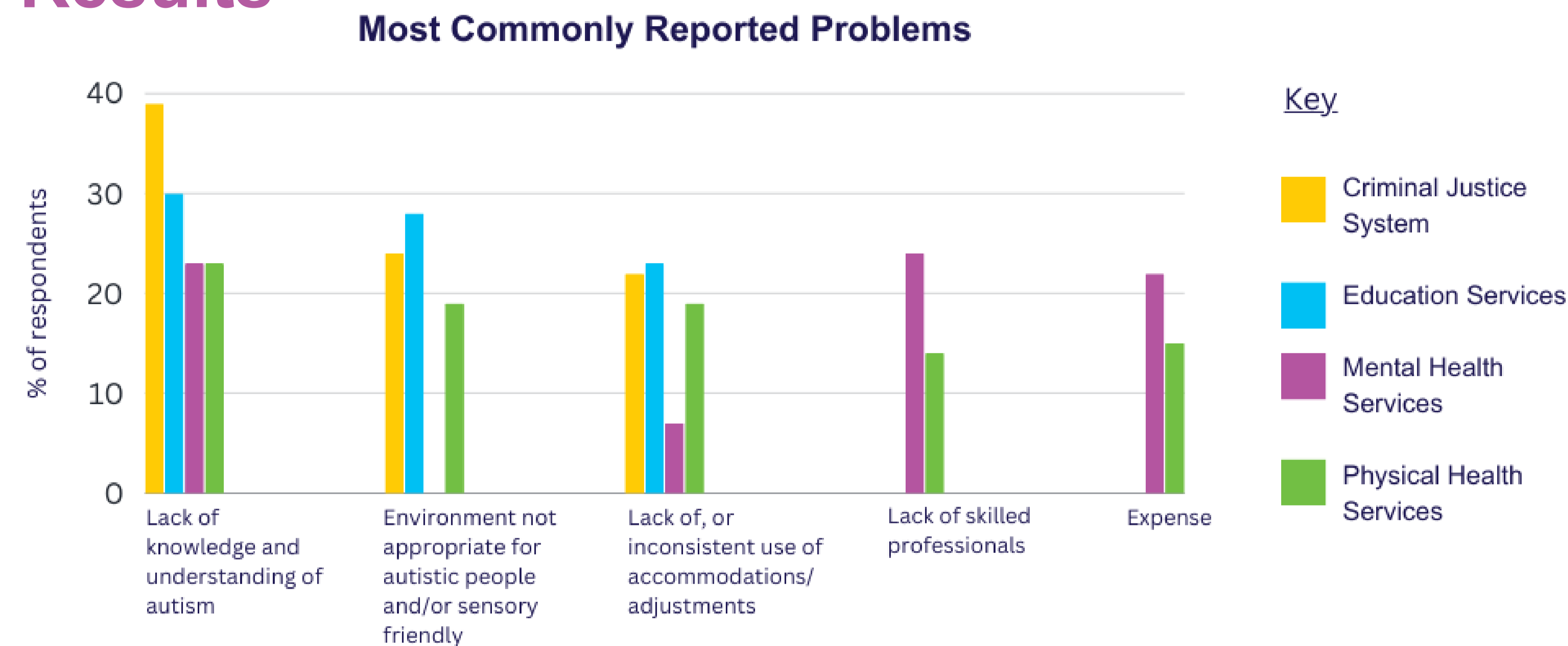
Community Participation

Autistic and other neurodivergent people, and members of the autism community, were on the authorship and review team of this project. They were involved in the survey development, data coding, and results synthesis and interpretation.

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Results



While each domain had unique responses, there were some key problems identified across education, physical health, mental health and the justice system – depicted in the graph above.

Problems occurring across services

A **lack of knowledge or understanding of autism** was in the top two most frequently reported problems experienced by autistic people when accessing education (reported by 30% of respondents), mental health services (23%), physical health services (23%) and the justice system (39%).

The **sensory environment** of educational (28%), physical health settings (19%) and justice settings (24%) were also frequently reported problems as were the **lack of, or inconsistent use of, accommodations** and adjustments in education (23%) physical health services (19%) and the justice system (22%).

Additionally, a **lack of skilled professionals** and **high cost** of services were also commonly reported problems, but only in physical (14% and 15% respectively) and mental health (24% and 22% respectively) services.

Ways to prevent or reduce the problems across services

In all domains, respondents frequently identified **autism knowledge/training** of professionals and **additional funding** to support autistic people as potential solutions to these problems. Overlap in the solutions for each domain are shown below:

What might prevent or reduce these problems for autistic people?



Conclusion

This work identified a number of pervasive issues and challenges experienced by autistic people when accessing education, health or mental health services and the criminal justice system across Australia. However, it has also identified some clear pathways to improving outcomes within and across these systems and services. This work can guide priorities for research, policy, and practice into the future.

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autismcrc.com.au/INSAR/landscape-mapping