

# Diversity in Social Intelligence



## Thank you for taking part in our research!

The Diversity in Social Intelligence project explores how autistic people share information and learn from each other.

We compared three types of learning contexts: (1) when autistic people learned from other autistic people, (2) when non-autistic people learned from other non-autistic people, and (3) when non-autistic and autistic people learned from each other.

We asked people to do different tasks like building a tall tower, making a shape from a Rubik's twist, and sharing a story, to help us understand how information is shared between different people. We also asked people to tell us a bit about the interactions and how successfully they felt they interacted with their learning partner

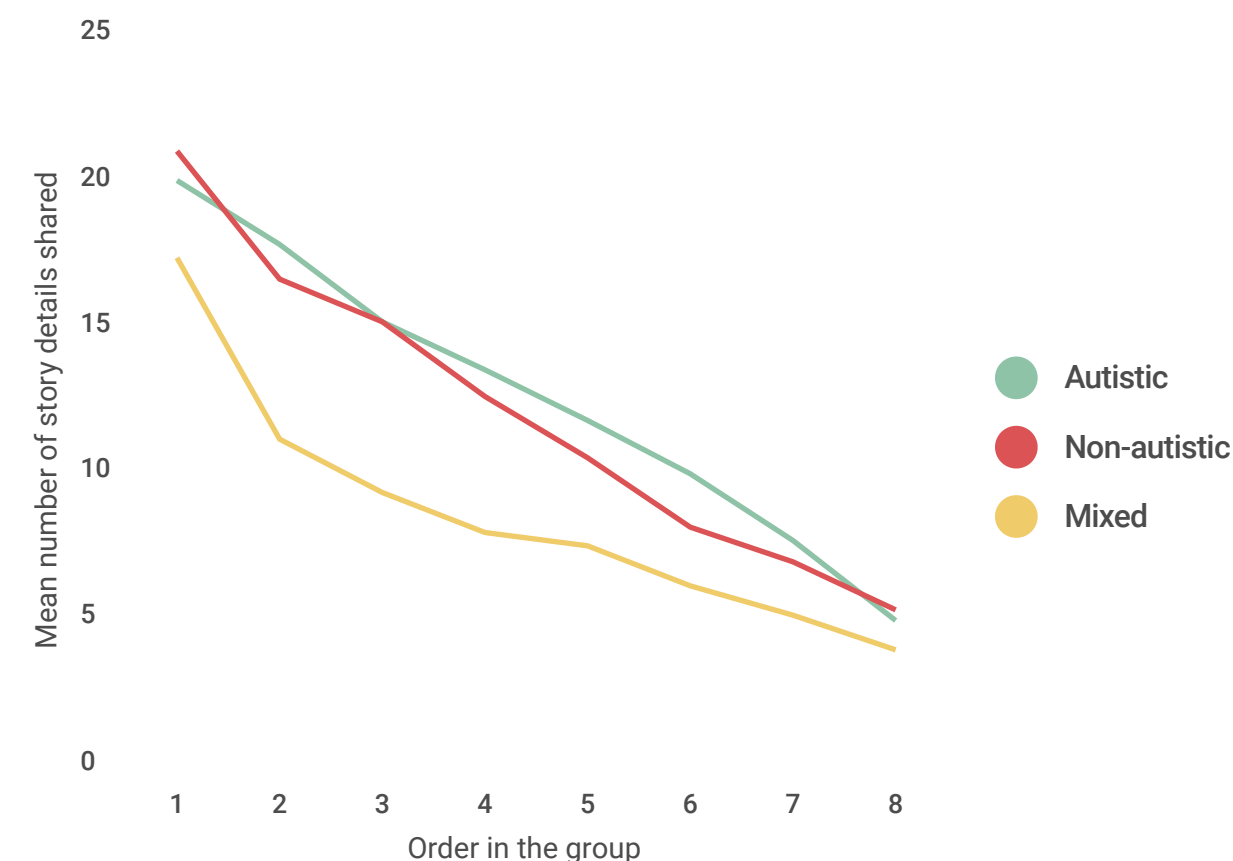
We then asked people to either (1) do an interview about the time they spend with other people; (2) have a short chat with another participant that we recorded, or (3) watch a video of two participants having a chat and answer some questions about it.

During 2018, 72 people took part in this study over nine research days.

While we're still working hard looking at all of the data, we wanted to share some of our early findings with you!

## Sharing information

We asked people to play a game of "Telephone" where a story about a bear was told to the first person, and then passed through every member of the group. As the story went through the group, fewer details were remembered and passed along to the next person.

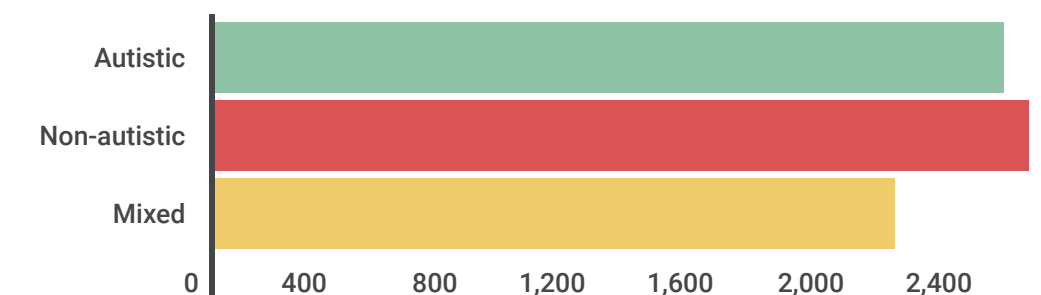


We found that groups of autistic people and groups of non-autistic people do the task similarly well, and pass on similar amounts of information, but that when alternating between autistic and non-autistic people, less information is shared and passed on.

## Interaction and rapport

After each task, we asked participants to rate how they got on with their partner based on the five dimensions of enjoyment, ease, success, friendliness, and awkwardness. Overall scores indicate that autistic people rate their interaction with other autistic people higher than they do with non-autistic people, and that non-autistic people rate their interactions with other non-autistic people as easier than with autistic people.

This analysis suggests that interaction is easier, successful, more enjoyable and friendlier when autistic people are with other autistic people, and non-autistic people are with other non-autistic people.



## Learning together and sharing skills

We asked people to build a tower out of spaghetti and plasticine, and to make a dog shape out of a Rubik's twist. Over the next few months, we will do a followup study to see whether when people are with others who are of the same neurotype (e.g. when autistic people are with autistic people; and when non-autistic people are with non-autistic people) if they create things that are more similar than when autistic and non-autistic people work together.



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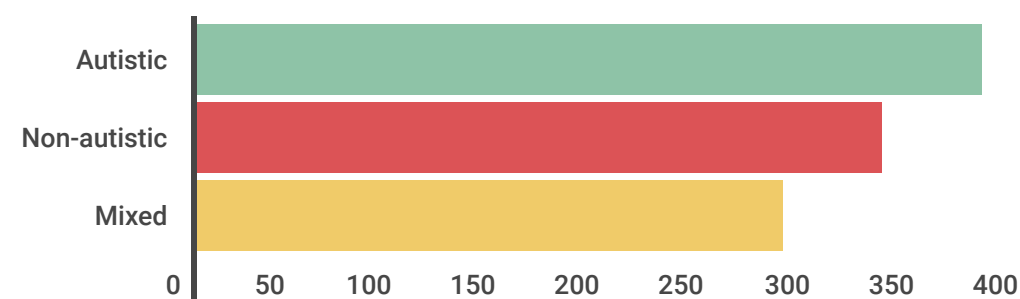
## 1:1 interviews

We asked a small group of autistic participants to do a 1:1 interview about the positive and negative aspects of time spent with autistic and non-autistic friends, family and colleagues, and feelings during and after spending time together.

We're currently analysing these interviews to explore what the key themes are. We've currently identified two themes: firstly, that for autistic people being around other autistic people can bring feelings of comfort, similarity, and empathy, and that interacting with other autistic people can be less demanding and fatiguing. A second theme is a lack of understanding of the autistic experience from non-autistic people, including non-autistic people not reading autistic people's emotions accurately, awkwardness or discomfort during interactions, and increased fatigue after spending time together.

## Short conversations

We asked some participants to have a videoed conversation with another participant for five minutes. These videos were then watched by other participants who rated how well the two people in the video got on with each other, and how comfortable they seemed. Raters thought that when two autistic people were together they got on well, more so than when non-autistic people were together or when the pair were autistic and non-autistic.



## So what does all this mean?

Our interim findings can be summarised as follows

- 1. Autistic people share information with other autistic people as effectively as non-autistic people do.*
- 2. Information sharing can break down when pairs are from different neurotypes - when there is an autistic and a non-autistic person.*
- 3. Feelings of rapport between people of the same neurotype accompany these information-sharing benefits - autistic people have higher rapport with other autistic people, and non-autistic people have higher rapport with non-autistic people.*
- 4. External observers can detect the lack of rapport apparent in mixed autistic/non-autistic interactions.*

In essence, what we are demonstrating for the first time is that autistic people's social behaviour includes effective communication and effective social interaction, in direct contradiction of the diagnostic criteria for autism. We have, for the first time, uncovered empirical evidence that there is a form of social intelligence that is specific to autistic people.

## What we're doing next

Over the coming 6 months we will be sharing our data in journal articles and conferences. We want to share our findings with practitioners, and policy makers, as well as thinking carefully about where we can go next with this research and how its findings can be applied.

We're holding a public lecture on Wednesday 5th June at 4pm about this project, at Kennedy Tower (where we held the research days) - all are welcome if you would like to hear more about our findings. We will hopefully record this lecture and put it online too.

We have been asked to make a video about the research by our Funders. We're looking for three participants to come and visit on May 22nd for about an hour to re-enact the tasks from the research days. If you're interested, please get in touch using the details below. We can pay for travel expenses and time.

## Feedback? Questions?

If you have any feedback for us, or any questions please get in touch  
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## Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in this research - we're really grateful for your time and energy



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