

Autism Fast Facts: Employment

‘Community Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Autism’ & ‘Experiences of Autistic People and their Families’.



When it comes to autism and employment, Australia has a lot of work to do.

The first step in creating more autism inclusive workplaces is to understand the current environment. Amaze has conducted compelling Australian-first research to explore what Australians know about autism and work – and how that compares to the lived experiences of autistic people and their families.

“There are a lot of autistic people who could give an awful lot to workplaces, but the environment around them makes it difficult – not them.”



**Shaping the future
for Autism.**

8 things you can do to create autism friendly workplaces.

Autistic people offer many unique strengths, skills and talents to the workforce. They can be change-makers, bringing diverse thinking and perspectives to our communities and workplaces.

“The world needs all the talent it can get... different perspectives are desperately needed if we are to innovate our way through today’s global challenges.” – Thorkil Sonne, founder of Specialisterne

Making these 8 simple changes can transform your workplace culture, drive innovation and empower autistic employees to thrive. Together, we can shape a more inclusive and engaged workforce.



Get management on board with inclusion

Inclusion is a culture – and culture building starts at the top. Autism training is vital for all managers to ensure they understand the practicalities and mindset of inclusion, and are invested in making it work long-term. Through this training, you can identify a sponsor or champion who will drive inclusion practices in your organisation, from changing up recruitment processes to implementing environmental changes.



Be open to change

Being autism inclusive means being adaptive. You can start by changing up processes that may be deeply-embedded, such as recruitment. Give your managers time and space to get to know and understand their employees. Be flexible with the individual needs of your team members. Ask your autistic employees what they think needs to change and be prepared to take action. Keep the conversation going through regular, structured discussions with autistic employees.



Innovate the recruitment process

The traditional interview often only tells you about someone’s capacity to communicate, be likeable and build rapport in a very stressful environment. Make your recruitment practices more inclusive by removing these barriers; work trials and practical assessments are great examples of different ways to assess autistic applicants.



Find the right partner

Don’t expect that you’ll become autism experts overnight. Engage with an autism partner who can offer your organisation the expertise to be more inclusive, from recruitment to providing post placement support. Specialisterne Australia is an example of an autism specialist who works with organisations to identify and fill roles with the untapped talent pool of autistic people.



Make adjustments

Adjustments to create a more autism inclusive workplace often don't cost anything to implement. The most common adjustments include flexible hours, sensory considerations, providing clarity around roles and expectations, offering direct but sensitive feedback and providing routine.



Create support structures

Having an internal support structure will mean long-term success for the employees and managers. Simple ways you can support new autistic staff are to set them up with a 'buddy' within their team and a mentor from outside of their team; and provide regular feedback and reassurance to reduce anxiety and ensure they feel valued.



Don't make assumptions

Each autistic individual has different skills, perspectives and support needs, just as every human being does. Employers should get to know each individual as an individual. It's important to understand autism - but it's even more important to understand the person. When your employee feels understood and supported, they can thrive.



Believe in the value of autistic employees

While every autistic person is different, autistic individuals often have a strong work ethic, high attention to detail, innovative problem solving and low error rates in their work. Look at each autistic individuals' strengths first - understand how those strengths can benefit your organisation, and what you need to change within your workplace to empower an autistic employee to achieve.

For more information on these adjustments and how you can make workplaces autism-friendly, visit onethingforautism.com.au

Amaze is proud to partner with Specialisterne Australia to develop this list of practical adjustments. Find out more, including how Specialisterne Australia can help your workplace become more autism inclusive, by visiting au.specialisterne.com

Understanding autism and work

For autistic people, the most significant barrier to employment is employer attitudes – perceived myths, misconceptions and stigma around autism.

To better understand this challenge and what needs to

change, we asked neurotypical Australians what they know about autistic people and work, and autistic people about their employment experiences.

What did we find?

84%

of Australians agree that **autistic people are discriminated against**



75%

of Australians believe **autistic people struggle to gain employment**



70%

of Australians believe **employers should make adjustments for autistic employees**



21%

of people would be **more likely to shop at a supermarket with a proactive policy of employing autistic people**



1 in 5

Australians would be **concerned if an autistic person was appointed as their boss**



24%

of Australians would **expect to receive training about autism if one of their colleagues was autistic**



“When people think of disability discrimination, they think of physical or intellectual capacity... It's hard to tell someone that they're discriminating against you on the basis of your social abilities.”

“I worry that people will google autism and see things like ‘communication deficit’... then they’ll see me through those symptoms”

“I was bullied more in the workplace than I ever was at school... people haven’t understood or liked my way of being”

The unemployment rate for autistic people is

6x

higher than people without disability



45%

of employed autistic people **have been in their current roles for five years or more**



More than half of unemployed autistic people who had previously held a paid job **have been out of employment for 3 or more years**



Of those employed less than full-time, **more than half (53.9%) would like to be working more hours than they currently do**



45%

of autistic people report that **their skills are higher than those required to perform their current job**



20%

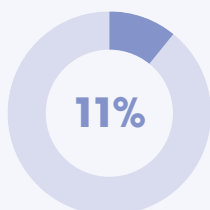
of autistic people report that **they have lost a job due to their autism**



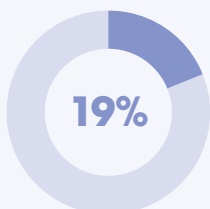
“A big challenge is feeling like I need to mask my autism to be able to keep my job. That’s a lot of pressure”

Support for autistic employees: How Australia's workplaces are doing

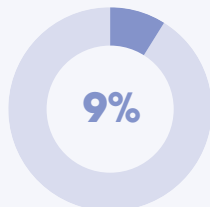
We asked employed autistic people what adjustments their employers were making to support them >



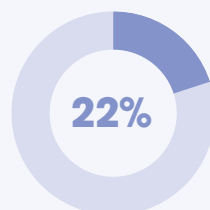
Provided a quiet room



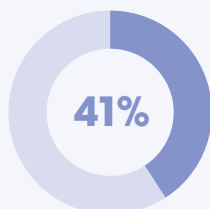
Allowed autistic employees to work flexible hours



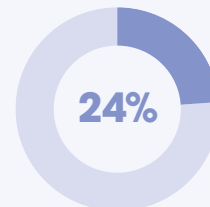
Adjusted lighting and/or sound levels and/or other sensory (smells, textures)



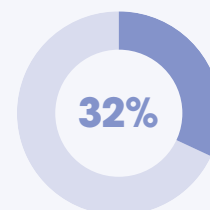
Provided information and/or training to others in the workplace on how to support autistic colleagues



Made NO adjustments



Identified a support person in the organisation



Provided a set work routine and avoided changes

Check out the 8 simple things workplaces can do to be more autism inclusive >

“My autistic way of thinking about things has given me an edge at work... it's not the same as everybody else's”

“Sit down and ask them what they need... and keep asking. It's really important”

Source: 'Community Attitudes & Behaviours towards Autism; and Experience of Autistic People and their Families': Research report prepared by Centre for Health and Social Research, Australian Catholic University, Social Research Centre for AMAZE 12 December 2017 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016. Autism in Australia. Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings

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