



Ireland's National Autism Charity

**SAME
CHANGE
REPORT 2023**



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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

On behalf of AsIAM, Ireland's National Autism Charity, I am delighted to present our Same Chance Report 2023. This report provides a unique insight into the state of Ireland's Autistic community and the barriers which all too often deprive us of the same opportunities as others.

This is the first year in which our report has brought together responses from both our AsIAM Autism ID Cardholders and broader community members meaning that we have been able to draw from the experiences of over 1600 Autistic people, parents, family members and carers.

The picture they have helped us to compile is in many ways a stark one. From making friends and participating in community activities to accessing public services and dealing with challenges such as the cost-of-living, our community faces barriers that others don't even see. These barriers are not inevitable or an intrinsic part of being Autistic, they are the consequence of a lack of investment, joint up thinking and rights-based approaches by the State. These barriers can be removed but only by the active participation of each one of us, across Irish society, and through a comprehensive response by government.

In a broader sense, the strength of our community shines clearly through this report, telling a story of resilience, talent and pride. Depriving Autistic people of the same chance does not just have devastating consequences on the at least 3.3% of people in Ireland who are Autistic, or our families, but rather represents a loss of diversity, talent, insight and perspective for Irish society as a whole.

The publication of this report comes at a critical time for Autistic people. In the coming months we expect to see the publication of both Government's Autism Innovation Strategy and the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism. Both initiatives are most welcome and come at a time when, as documented throughout this report, there are pervasive barriers to accessing the full range of supports which our community needs from assessment and therapeutic supports to health, education and adult services. It is essential that both pieces of work present costed, measurable and neuro-affirmative proposals that are ambitious about ensuring Autistic people enjoy the same chance in every aspect of Irish society.

Finally, the publication of this report comes in time for World Autism Month. Autistic people will only enjoy equality in Irish life if we live in communities which are informed, accepting, and affirming of our community. Across these pages, Autistic people have shared generously and have been clear that all too often our community does not have the same chance. Please do what you can to learn about, to listen to and to be an ally to Autistic people in your life and community.

Best wishes,

*Adam
Harris*
Founder-CEO



INTRODUCTION

AsIAM is Ireland's National Autism Charity. Our vision is 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 and our families to fully engage in Irish life and build the capacity of our society to facilitate true inclusion.

The now annual Same Chance Report provides a unique opportunity to present a snapshot of Autistic life in Ireland. The report is focused on identifying the barriers Autistic people face to accessing the same opportunities as others in a wide range of areas. The report brings together two data sets:

1. Survey responses from AsIAM ID Cardholders
2. Broader responses from the Autism Community through a public survey

The broad range of perspectives captured, from right across Ireland, presents an insight into the state of our community as we head in to World Autism Month 2023 but also provides invaluable data to inform the work of AsIAM throughout the year, identifying priorities for our advocacy, support and training activities. The survey also provides useful data for all who are working to make our society more inclusive of Autistic people and our families.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected across two sister survey between the 3rd March 2023 and the 16th March 2023. A survey for Cardholders, which included additional questions on their experiences using the AsIAM Autism ID Card, was emailed to all who had indicated that they wished to participate in an annual survey when applying for their card. A survey for the broader community was distributed through our newsletter and social media channels. Included within both surveys (referred to throughout this report as "the survey") was a specific cohort of questions, relating to employment which were specifically for Autistic adults to answer. This data has been published separately as part of our Autism in the Workplace Report 2023 in partnership with IrishJobs.

Being a broad and diverse community, not every question we have asked was relevant to everyone we surveyed. Where appropriate, the results presented are based on the data provided by those with a direct experience of the issue in question (i.e. excluding the don't know / no experience responses).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the range of areas explored in the report several striking results emerge:

- ▶ **90%** do not think the Irish public understand enough about Autism
- ▶ **91%** believe that being Autistic is a barrier to being accepted by and making friends with others
- ▶ **39%** do not feel safe and protected in their community
- ▶ **38%** believe they have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months on the grounds of being Autistic
- ▶ **30%** believe that a lack of supports and services are the most significant barrier to inclusion
- ▶ **61%** did not believe the education system is inclusive of Autistic people based on their experiences
- ▶ **75%** did not believe the health system is inclusive of Autistic people based on their experiences
- ▶ **78%** did not believe the social protection system is inclusive of Autistic people based on their experiences
- ▶ **61%** have experienced barriers to accessing mental health services on the grounds of being Autistic
- ▶ **70%** of children represented in the report are not presently receiving supports from their HSE Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT)
- ▶ **68%** are on waiting lists to access services
- ▶ **26%** report that their present housing situation does not meet their needs
- ▶ **81%** report that the realities of being Autistic in Ireland have made the cost of living crisis more challenging for them personally
- ▶ **96%** believe that the government should legislate for a National Autism Strategy
- ▶ **86%** do not believe they have the same chance in Irish society

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 1603 people participated in the survey informing this report. As in previous years, the majority of respondents were the parents of Autistic people (72%) but it is worth noting that for the second year in a row the number of Autistic adults answering the survey independently has increased (22%). There were a small number of responses from other family members (3%) and primary carers (3%). Respondents were asked to complete the survey from the perspective of the Autistic person and, where more than one family member was Autistic, it was possible to complete a survey for each Autistic person in the household. This approach is an effort to be as inclusive as possible in order to ensure the diversity of experiences within the Autistic community is fully captured within our dataset.



The survey responses relate to a majority of Autistic males (59%) with females accounting for the second largest cohort (36%). Answers were also provided from the perspective of non-binary (3%) people with small cohorts preferring not to say (1%) or identifying as Other (1%).

The age of those represented in the responses ranges right across the lifespan from under 5 years of age to the 55-64 age range. The largest single cohort was 5-10 year olds (30%). A majority of responses related to children (70%) with adults also significantly represented (30%).

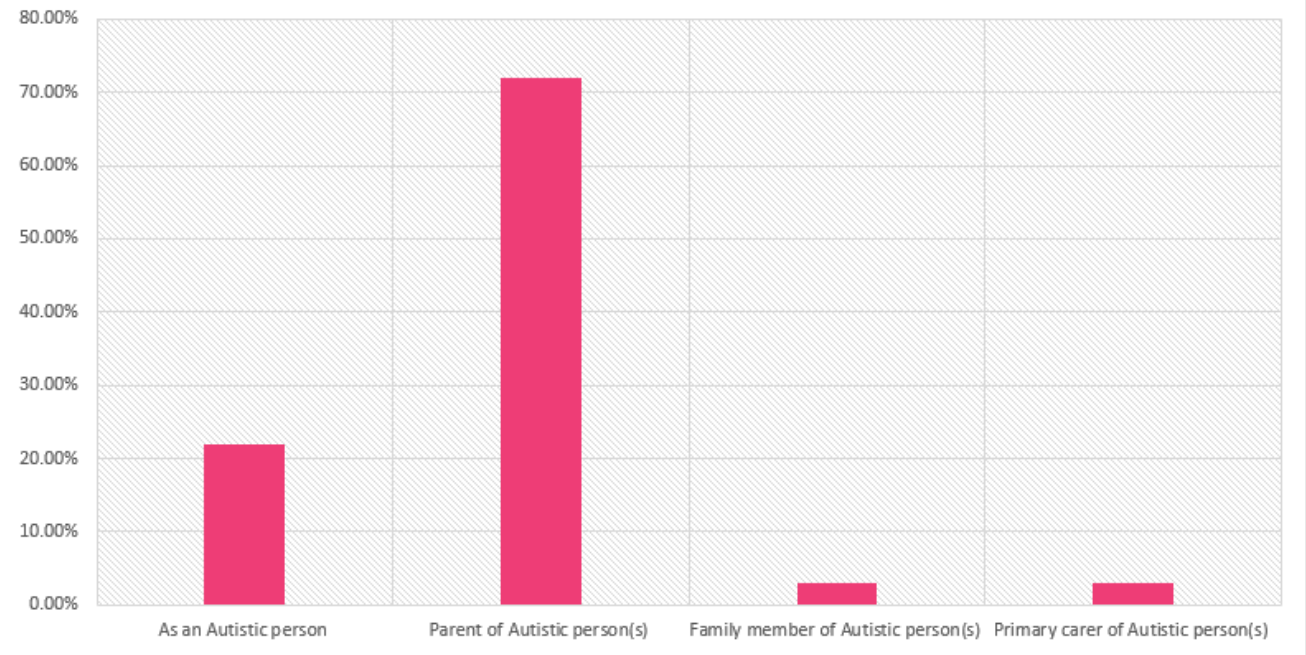
A majority of those represented were in pre-school /school-based education (65%), with some of this age group but presently not attending (6%). Adults represented in our findings are engaged in a variety of activities including further/higher education (4%), employment (9%) and adult services (3%).

Responses were recorded from every country in the Republic of Ireland, with small numbers of responses from most counties in Northern Ireland. As is to be expected, Dublin accounted for the largest percentage of responses (32.37%) followed by Cork (11.54%). The lowest response rate from a county in the Republic of Ireland was Monaghan (0.37%).

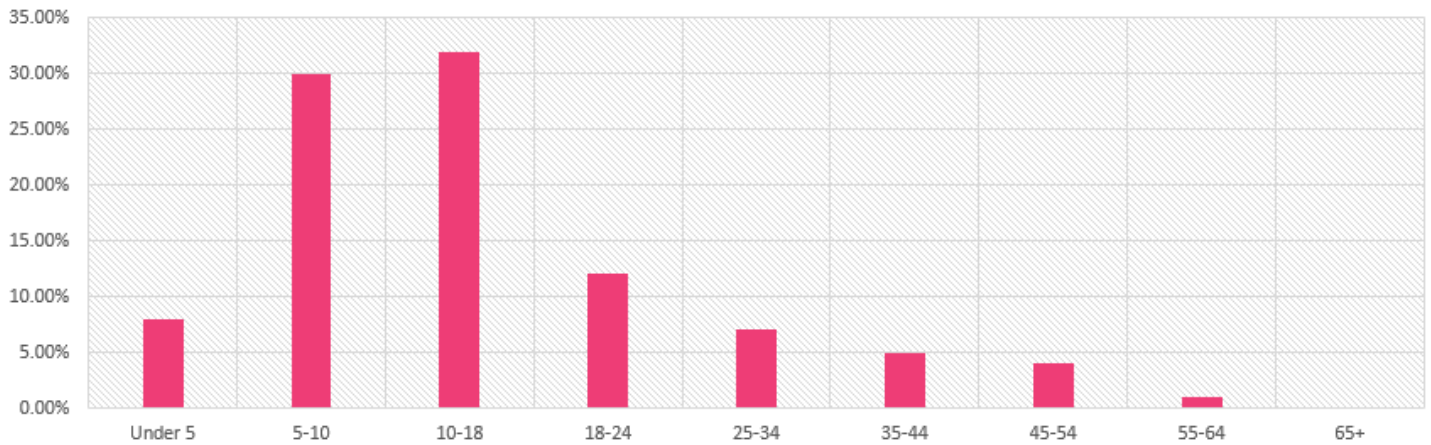
In terms of the age those represented in the findings received their diagnosis, a notable percentage (18%) only received clinical confirmation as adults. The largest cohort represented were diagnosed under the age of 5 (39%). The failure of the public system to provide timely diagnosis to children or any pathway to diagnosis for adults is clearly reflected in the fact that most of those represented accessed their diagnosis privately (54%).

The profile of people represented in the findings also speaks to the diversity of the Autism community as a whole. Half of those represented (50%) had an identified co-occurring difference, diagnosis or condition with a further cohort having a non-identified additional difference, diagnosis or condition (9%). The report includes the experiences of a significant cohort of members of people who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community (11%) but also shows the clear barriers to both assessment and involvement in the Autism community for other minority groups with only a very small number of Travellers (0.4%), Migrants (1%) or other ethnic minorities (1%) represented.

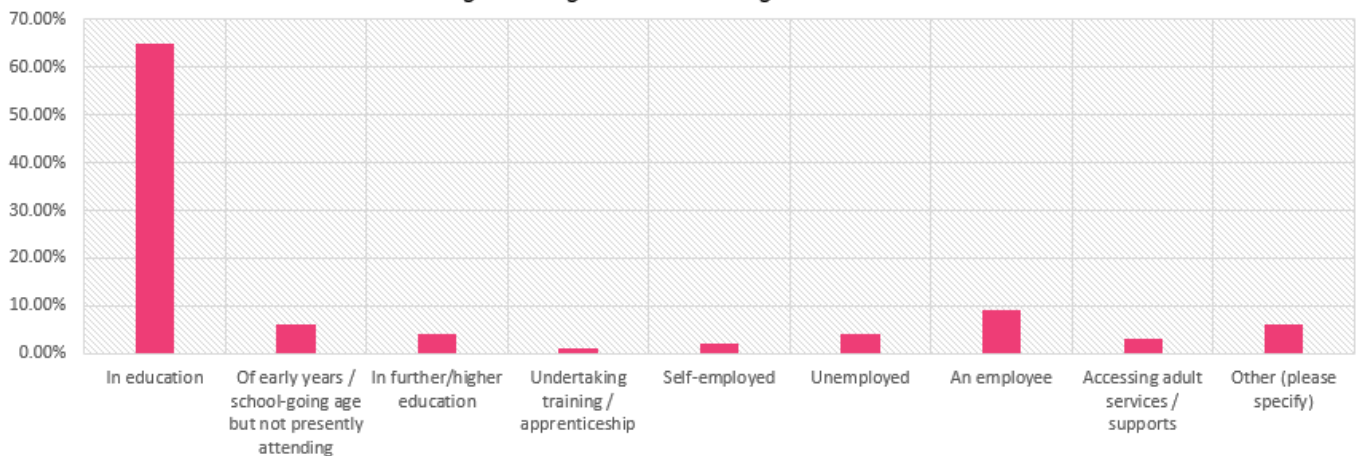
I am...



You / your family member's age



Are you / your family member...



ATTITUDES TO AUTISM

Alongside this report, AslAm will also publish an Attitudes to Autism Poll which will show the attitudes towards and knowledge of Autism and Autistic people by a representative sample of 1,000 Irish adults. Whilst we know that the public report increased awareness of Autism than in times gone by, there remains significant gaps in terms of confidence and understanding. This is echoed by the Autism Community with only a very small minority (5%) believing that the Irish public understand enough about Autism. This lack of understanding can make day to day experiences, from going shopping to making friends, significantly more challenging. It also has a knock-on effect on the experiences of Autistic people accessing supports such as education or healthcare as a lack of mandatory training often means that even employees working in such settings do not have the knowledge that is required.

Attitudes can also inform the experiences Autistic people have engaging in interpersonal relationships. A huge majority of those represented (91%) had experienced barriers to acceptance by and forming friendships with others. A majority also identified similar barriers in forming romantic relationships as an Autistic person (85%)

Popular culture and the media have an important role in representing the diversity of society, facilitating discourse and educating the public. In recent years we have seen an increase in the representation of Autistic people in television programmes, movies and literature and also a greater focus on Autism by the news media. Whilst this presents huge opportunities it is of significant concern that only a small minority of the community members represented in our survey felt the portrayal of Autistic people was accurate and respectful (12%).

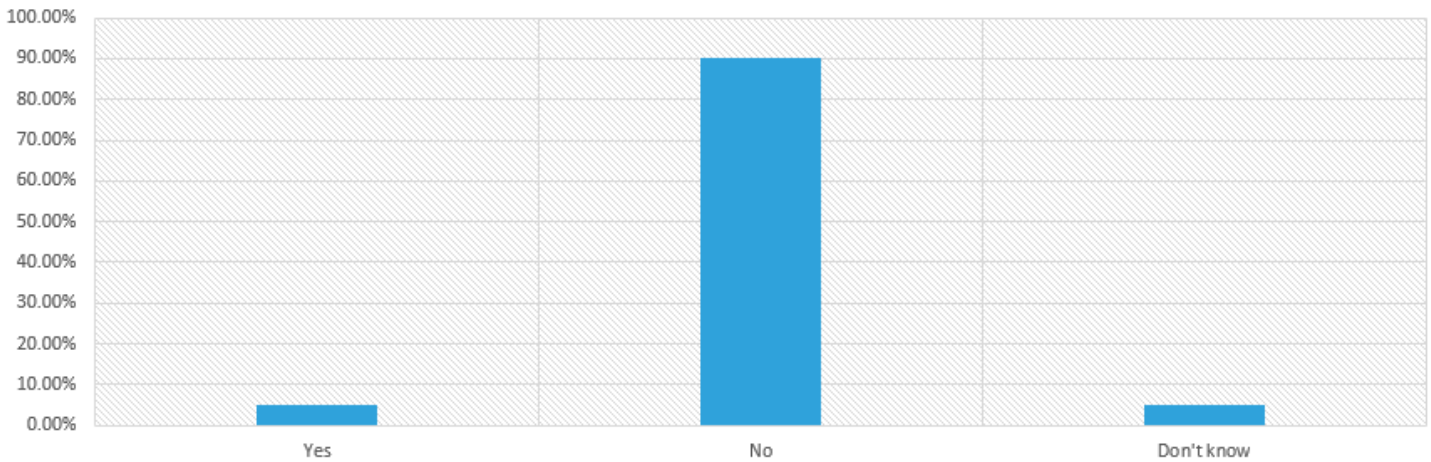
91%

**experienced
barriers to
forming
friendships**

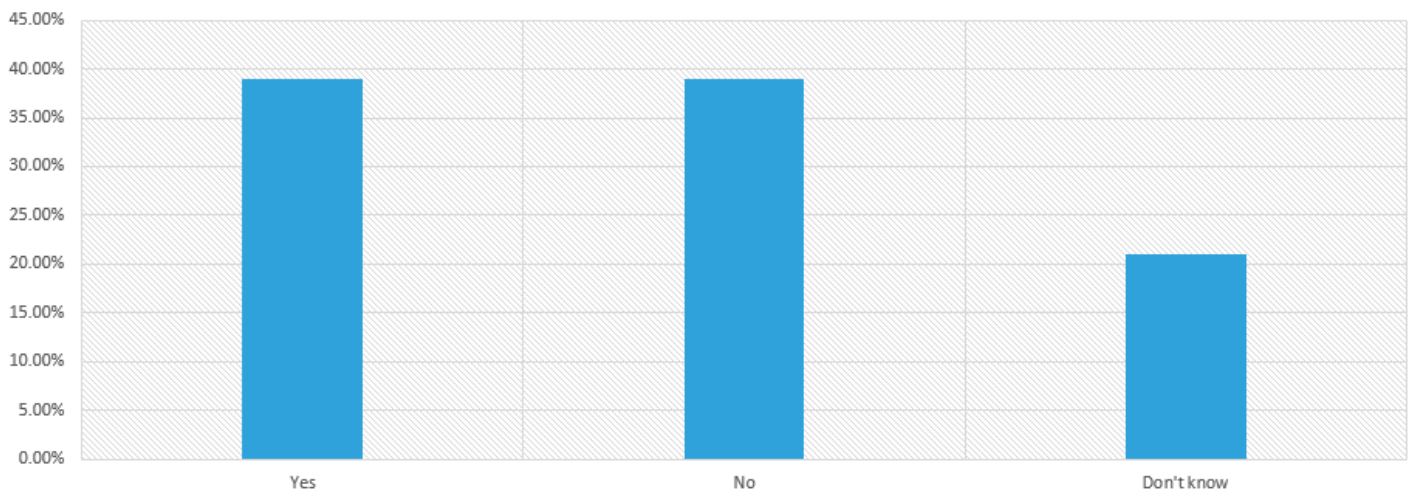
12%

**felt the portrayal of
Autistic people by the
media was accurate and
respectful**

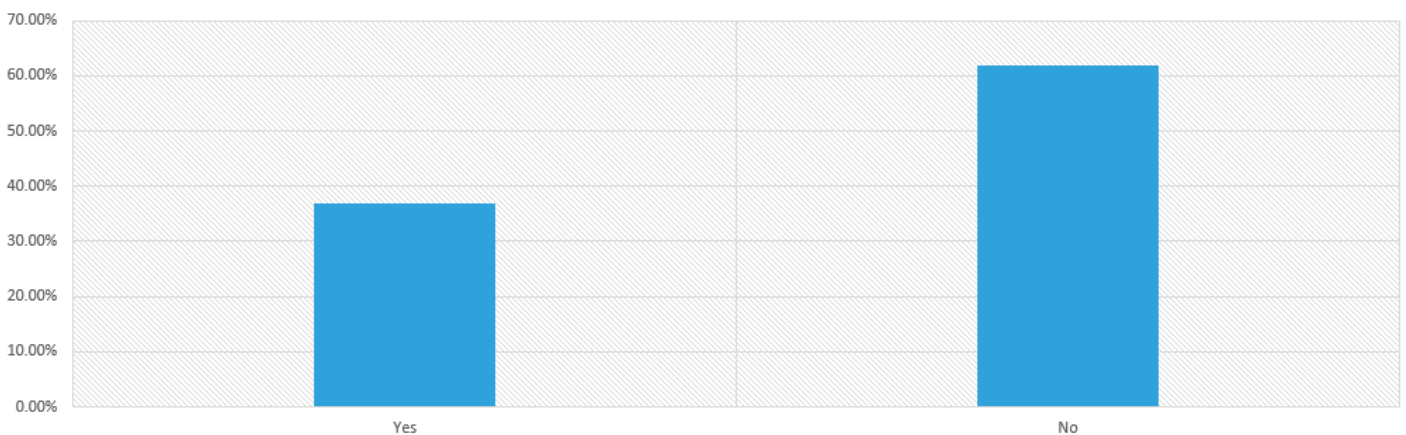
Do you / your family member think the Irish public understand enough about Autism?



Do you / your family member feel safe and protected in their community?



In the last 12 months, have you / your family member experienced discrimination on the grounds of being Autistic?



Autism is a complex subject but in order to achieve inclusion it is necessary for everyone to gain an insight and understanding into the experiences of Autistic people. When asked *“What is one thing that you wish everyone knew about Autism”* our community brought up a number of common themes, which are represented in the samples provided below:

“That it isn’t like the awful stereotypes on TV. That far from being unable to feel empathy, we’re often overly empathetic, to an extent that it can be overwhelming.”

“You are not being rude if you answer a straight or literal answer.”

“I wish they knew how difficult simple tasks are, like going to the shops, finding a school place, participating in community activities like sports”

“Just because I excel in work doesn’t mean I don’t need supports in other areas of my life”

“Every person is different”

“That the person is the same as everyone else they just think differently”

“Being autistic is different for everyone especially for women and girls. Also what masking is. I seem fine sometimes so they think that I’m like that all the time.”

“I wish everyone knew how hard I am trying every day to fit in, to be accepted, to have people like me and feel like I am valued as a member of the community. I feel people view a diagnosis, in particular an adult diagnosis of autism as ‘an excuse’ or ‘being lazy’.”

“That our expression, emotions and communication style is different and we shouldn’t have to conform to what people think is normal”

“It’s not something to be wary of, just allow us, be us.”

Inclusion starts within our family and home life. It can be a real challenge for Autistic people and their close family to gain the understanding and acceptance of the broader family unit who may not have the same depth of experience of Autism and its diversity. This is borne out in our survey results which show a small majority do not feel they have received that support from their broader family (57%). That Autistic people still experience stigma is captured in the fact that a small majority of those represented (52%) do not generally disclose their Autism diagnosis to other people even though a majority (58%) felt that it does make a positive difference for them personally if other people know they are Autistic. Despite the challenges in how others perceive Autistic people, a significant cohort of those represented reported feeling proud of their Autistic identify (38%), with a minority not sharing this feeling (19%) and the largest cohort remaining unsure (43%).

LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

For many Autistic people, engaging in day-to-day activities which others would not even have to think about, can pose significant challenges. It is important to recognise the role played by many local Autism groups and Autistic led groups in mediating those barriers for our community and providing opportunities to socialise, make friends and engage in a wide range of activities. Of those represented in the report, over a quarter (27%) were members of a local Autism support group and/or an Autistic adult led group (10%). These groups often operate with little to no formal support or recognition from government but frequently provide the only tangible supports which community members may receive on a regular basis.

Respondents gave a varied response when asked to rate from 1-5 how supported and accepted they / their family member felt when participating in their local community, with a weighted average of 2.8. It is important to recognise the positive work that is taking place across the country to make our communities more inclusive from the roll-out of sensory gardens and quiet times, to AsIAm's own Autism-Friendly Towns programme. However this report also clearly finds that such positive action and experiences are far from universal.

It is of great concern that a significant minority (37%) of those represented in the report have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months. Autistic people have an equal right to participate in every aspect of Irish society and there is a clear obligation on both public services and businesses to make reasonable accommodations to facilitate this participation. It is also a reality that addressing discrimination requires all of us within the community to be pro-active both in our own behaviour and in challenging others when it is required.

37%

**experienced
discrimination in
the past 12 months**

Those who reported experiencing discrimination gave a broad range of examples including::

“Left out of birthday parties and sports. In school they are in an Autism class but want to spend more time in a mainstream class but their school won't allow this. We are trying to get him into his mainstream class more by highlighting the environmental changes that are needed but this is ongoing. His sister is able to remain in mainstream with access to the autism class if and when she needs it so we know school can accommodate this.”

“I was getting a covid booster and the medical team would not ask/ give me the medical information, they'd only give it to my mam who was also getting a booster and would only ask her MY medical history. When I had been on the phone with them and they said I didn't qualify for a booster and I told them I was Autistic and then they got really patronising and condescending on the phone, despite having had a completely normal conversation up until I mentioned I was Autistic.”

“Bullying in school. Exclusion from social circles and teams”

“Securing a school place and the challenges we had to endure to get that place amounts to absolute discrimination. It was an appalling and upsetting process. I also feel there is discrimination in healthcare for autistic people - my sons gastro issues have been lumped under “autism” in the past and I’m having challenges getting proper healthcare for his gastro related issues as a result of him being autistic.”

“Rejected from creche and private primary school”

“Unable to play sports because there weren’t enough supports in place”

“Manager accused me of lying for not looking in her eyes and would not accept explanation. As a result, I no longer work at the company.”

“We were asked to take our daughter out of a Santa experience because of the noises she was making other parents were complaining. We are so used to her making these sounds as she does it when she is excited or happy so we were shocked when they asked us to remove her and too upset to say anything at the time.”

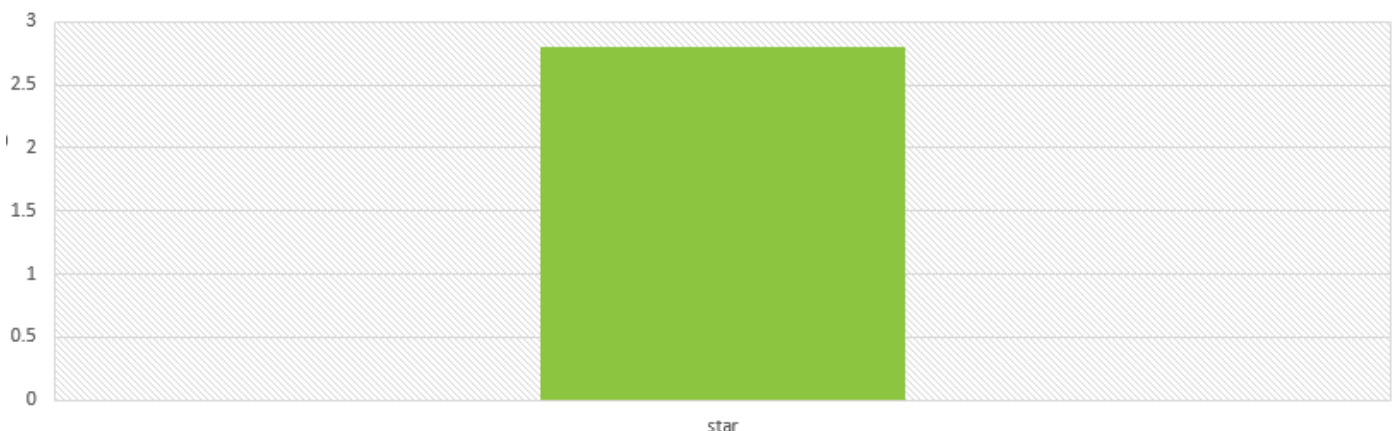
“Ask to leave places because of her stimming causing a distraction”

“I wasn’t allowed use a sensory room or allowed use accommodations as I seemed too ‘functioning’ to be autistic”

“Discrimination in work. Not allowed basic reasonable accommodations, given out to for stimming, being honest (not rude honesty, just telling the truth about something that was covered up), given out to for having monotone voice”

“The school trip to Germany none of the Autistic kids were successful in their application”

On a scale of 1-5, how supported and accepted do you / your family member feel when participating in their local community?



When asked to rank the most significant barrier to inclusion it is notable that a lack of supports and services (30%) represents the greatest barrier for the largest cohort however this is closely followed by judgement and attitude (26%) and accessibility barriers such as communication (18%) and sensory processing (16%)

The survey responses clearly demonstrate that small accommodations can make a positive difference. When asked *“What is one thing others could do remove barriers in your day-to-day life”* a range of insightful responses were provided including:

“Be our friend or partner. Do not walk through us like we don’t exist. Stop treating us like we are invisible.”

“Understand that non verbal does not mean that she cannot listen to and understand what people are saying.”

“Be open and non judgemental when speaking about autism.”

“Not stare during a meltdown”

“Just be nicer and kinder to everyone, even if you do not know if they are autistic or not. If everyone made some allowances and if I knew people were taking their time with me and not judging me it would relieve a lot of my anxieties.”

“Accept the need for the neurotypical person to adapt, in practical terms and in terms of acceptance, instead of always putting it on the autistic person to adapt.”

“Accept my autism without questioning it based on what they’ve seen on TV and film. Learn more about it and recognise autistic traits as being just that, and being patient.”

“Be more direct in what they say. Provide more sensory toys. Listen more”

“Invite us - include us”

“Allow me space, give me somewhere to de-stress in busy environments.”

“Accept communication differences. Do not force me to make phone calls when email would be possible”

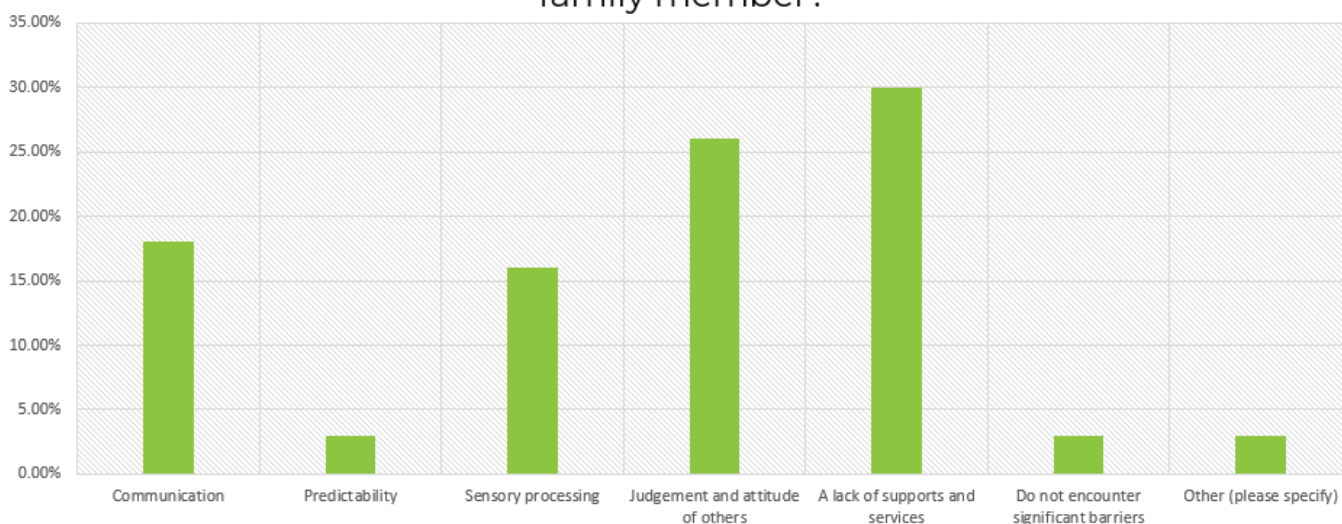
When we talk about inclusion and Autism it is important that we do not limit our understanding to services such as education or healthcare. Autistic people are people who, just like anyone else, have needs and wants to access a broad range of public services and businesses.

Public transport is a vital means of participating in activities such as employment, socialising or recreation and is particularly important for members of our community who may be unable to drive. The busy and unpredictable nature of public transport can make it challenging for many Autistic people with a majority (61%) of those who have experienced this challenge in accessing public transport many do not believe our public transport system is inclusive and accessible for Autistic people.

Many businesses have been making significant efforts to improve accessibility for Autistic customers from shopping centres and supermarket to fashion retailers and leisure services. More must be done to accelerate this work as a majority of those represented in the report (57%), based on their experiences, did not find businesses in their community to be accessible and inclusive.

As well as the organisations and services, families and circles of friends have their own part to play in making social gatherings and occasions inclusive with a very large percentage of respondents (84%) reporting that this was not currently the case.

What is the most significant barrier to inclusion for you / your family member?



EDUCATION

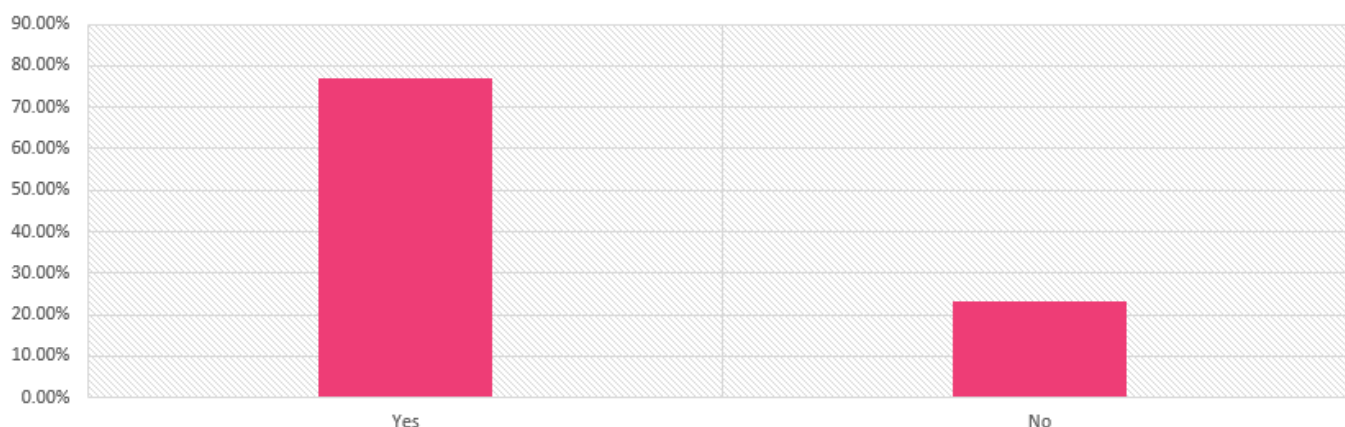
The majority of those represented in our report are of school-going age. Whilst 6% of this age-group were not presently attending a school or early years setting it is worth noting that a significant proportion (23%) report that they do not have a suitable school place that meets their needs. This aligns with previous reports from our organisation which have demonstrated that many Autistic children are in placements which do not align with the recommendations of their assessment report or which are located long distances from their community.

It is important to recognise that an inclusive education is not limited to the presence or absence of a school place. Inclusive education requires the appropriate culture, training, policies and practices to underpin the child's school experience. It should also not be necessary for families to have to apply to a large cohort of schools to simply receive an offer of a place. In this regard it is of concern that a majority of the children represented in the report (61%) did not find the education system to be inclusive of and accessible for Autistic people, based on their experiences.

61%

of the children represented in the report did not find the education system to be inclusive of and accessible for Autistic people

If of school-going age, do they have a suitable school placement?



HEALTHCARE

75%

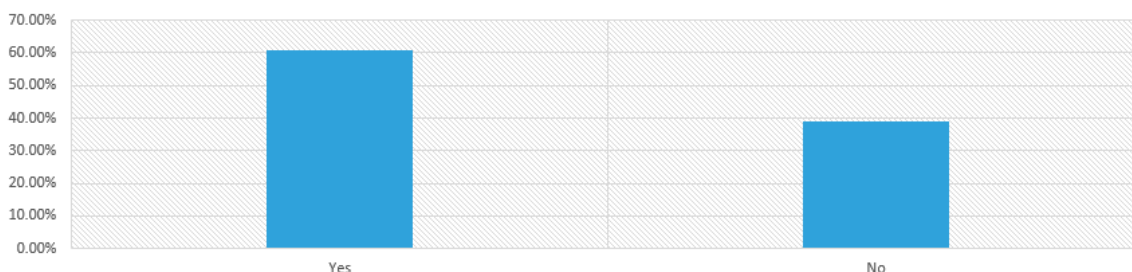
don't believe the healthcare system is inclusive and accessible for Autistic people.

As our profile of respondents demonstrates, access to healthcare is a significant barrier for many Autistic people, with even access to a diagnosis of Autism requiring a majority of those who are represented in this report to go privately. When we consider access to healthcare and Autism it is necessary to consider both the disability services which are delivered by the HSE and the broader healthcare services which everyone in society is entitled to access on a par. In terms of access to healthcare, we know many Autistic people face barriers to basic healthcare owing to a lack of appropriate staff training and accessibility measures and indeed a large majority of our respondents who have experienced the healthcare system do not believe it is inclusive and accessible for Autistic people (75%).

Autistic people often face structural discrimination when it comes to accessing non-Autistic specific care. There is perhaps no clearer example than access to mental health services. Despite a majority of Autistic people experiencing mental health conditions over the course of the lifecycle and a disproportionate rate of suicide within the community, Autistic people are frequently denied access to mental healthcare in both the public and private systems. Of those represented in the report, a majority (61%) of those who sought mental health care said they experienced barriers to access on the grounds of being Autistic.

To focus specifically on the therapeutic supports available to Autistic children, less than a third (30%) of those represented in the report were presently receiving supports from their local HSE Children's Disability Network Teams, the services charged with providing therapeutic supports to children with disabilities. Of those who were not receiving such support (70%) a large majority were on a waiting list (68%) whereas others were simply outside of the system (32%). The vast majority of those on waiting lists expected to have to wait in excess of 1 year for support, with over a quarter (26%) expecting to have waited over 4 years to access the services they need.

Have you / your family member ever experienced barriers to accessing mental health services (e.g CAMHS, Adult Mental Health Services or private mental health services) on the grounds of being Autistic?



Of those who were receiving supports, respondents were clear that support was often irregular or insufficient:

“Well they are on the books but services are lacking due to staff shortages. Only half the quota of staff are available and there are over 400 children on the books and another 271 waiting. Unfortunately you have to shout loudest to be heard, puts a terrible strain on families”

“Very limited since covid - invites to seminars and groups for parents nothing focusing on the child’s needs”

“Psychology support via primary care team, on waiting list for occupational therapy.”

“Very little only SLT few sessions per year (4 or 6)”

“We have just met them last month for the first time but have been offered a parenting course.”

”We receive little to no support, and if we didn’t chase or follow up with them, we’d get nothing. Maybe a couple of hours of support in the last 12 months”

“My son specifically is not getting 1:1 support. The supports we are getting is workshop’s being held for parents to learn strategies that are to be worked on at home.”

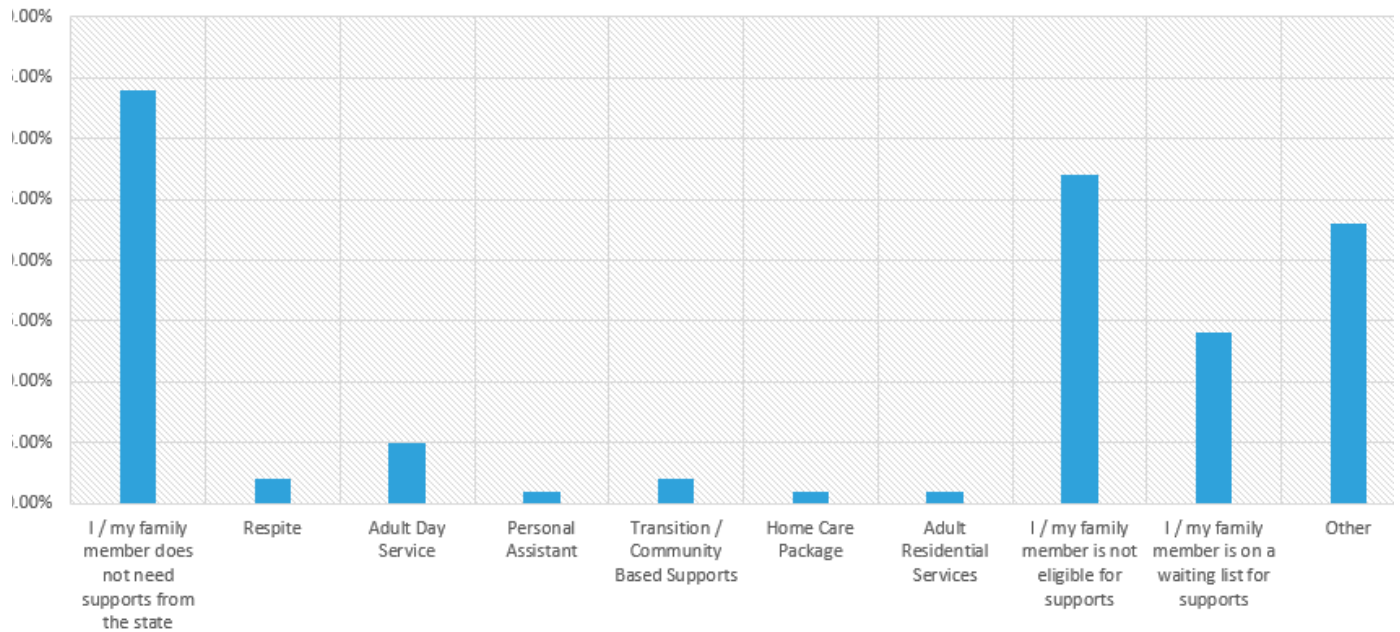
“No really receiving much. I was very hopeful of the last group for my son but he was lumped in with kids much younger than him. It felt like ‘offer them something’ rather than understanding his needs and giving him something appropriate that work actually help him”

“I had a phone call with a brilliant psychologist when we were at crisis point but nothing else.”

“After 51 month wait - he has had a gross and fine motor assessment and handwriting assessment from CDNT nothing else to date”

The services available for Autistic adults also vary greatly in terms of availability and level of support. Whilst over a third (34%) of the adults represented in this report felt they do not need supports from the State, a cohort reported being on waiting lists for supports (14%) and only small numbers of respondents reported receiving tangible benefits with nearly a quarter (23%) stating they weren’t eligible for support with those describing “other” supports largely referring to private supports or those outside of the remit of the Health Service Executive.

If you / your family member is an adult, what supports do they receive from the state? Please select all that apply



HOUSING

In recent years, AsIAM has experienced an increased in the number of queries we receive relating to appropriate housing. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the unsuitability of housing provision for many families, whilst shifting demographics within the community mean more Autistic adults are seeking opportunities to live independently or with support. These realities take place against a backdrop of a major housing crisis which disproportionately impacts a community of people who are often on reduced incomes, experience increased costs or rely on social protection supports on the grounds of disability. Over a quarter (26%) of those represented in this report say that their present housing situation does not meet their needs.

In our experience, families and individuals with specific housing requirements relating to an Autism diagnosis receive very different levels of support and prioritisation depending on the local authority or recognised housing body they are interacting with. Of those in unsuitable accommodation, 130 people represented in the report had interacted with a local authority or recognised housing body, a majority of whom (55%) would describe this engagement as negative.

55%

would describe engagements with a local authority or recognised housing body, as negative.

COST-OF-LIVING

Autistic people and families are often entitled to a range of social protection supports such as Domiciliary Care Allowance, Disability Allowance and Carer's Allowance. However in the experience of our organisation it is often a huge challenge to secure this support requiring extensive paperwork and numerous appeals, often without clarity as to why applications are rejected in the first instance. A major majority of those surveyed (78%) did not find the system to be inclusive or accessible in their experience. Over half (59%) of those represented in the report were in receipt of disability-specific social welfare payments however a large proportion (72%) did not feel the present rates provided were sufficient to meet their needs. This is an important point when it is considered how social welfare payments provided to people with disabilities are significantly less than the payments which were deemed necessary for families to be able to cope and manage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been recognised that there is an intrinsic cost to being disabled in Ireland and this is no different for Autistic people with many of our respondents (77%) reporting that they incur additional costs on the grounds of being Autistic with an even larger cohort (81%) stating that the realities of being Autistic in Ireland have made the current cost-of-living crisis more challenging.

A wide range of examples of the additional costs faced by community members were provided examples of which include:

- ▶ Private assessment
- ▶ Private therapies
- ▶ Extra-curricular/private social and activity groups
- ▶ Specific food preferences (e.g. branded foods)
- ▶ Equipment for car / adapted vehicles
- ▶ Sensory toys / tools
- ▶ Sensory-friendly clothing
- ▶ Frequent need for repairs to the home / household items
- ▶ Additional carers
- ▶ Loss of income
- ▶ Additional tuition
- ▶ Use of petrol / taxis (due to sensory challenges posed by public transport)
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ Increased utility bills due to increased need for washing / sensory differences

77%

reported they incur additional costs on the grounds of being Autistic

SAFETY

We all have a right to feel safe and protected in our community. A stark finding of this report is that less than half (39%) of those surveyed reported that they did not feel safe and protected with the same percentage reporting that they did not and with over a fifth (21%) being unsure. Autistic people can be victims of crime or public humiliation due to perceived vulnerability or being identified as acting differently in public spaces such as stimming in order to self-regulate.

It is critical that the criminal justice system is inclusive of and access to Autistic people who may interact with it for a wide variety of reasons including as a victim of crime, experiencing a meltdown in a public place or being misunderstood. Of those represented in the report who had experience in engaging with the criminal justice system a large majority (86%) did not believe it was inclusive or accessible.

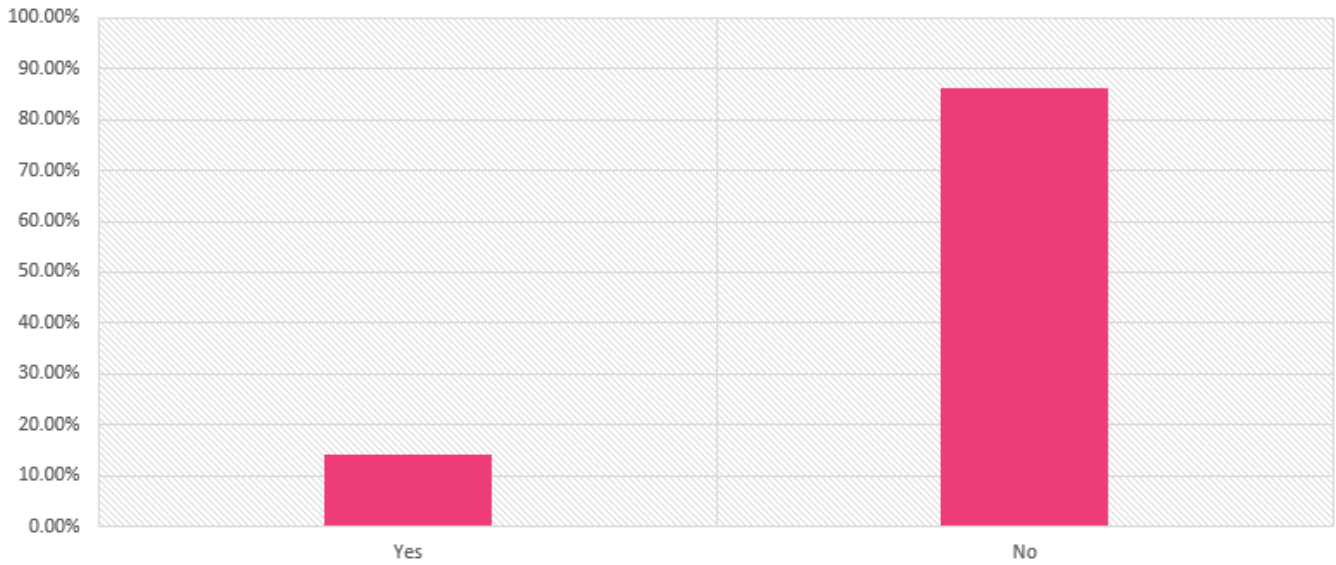
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Throughout this report, the community members who have participated in our survey have documented the many shortcomings of government policy and resourcing in terms of effective and timely supports and services. There is a clear need for a strong National Autism Strategy to address these failures and an overwhelming majority of those represented (96%) support the need to pass a law to place such a strategy on a statutory footing.

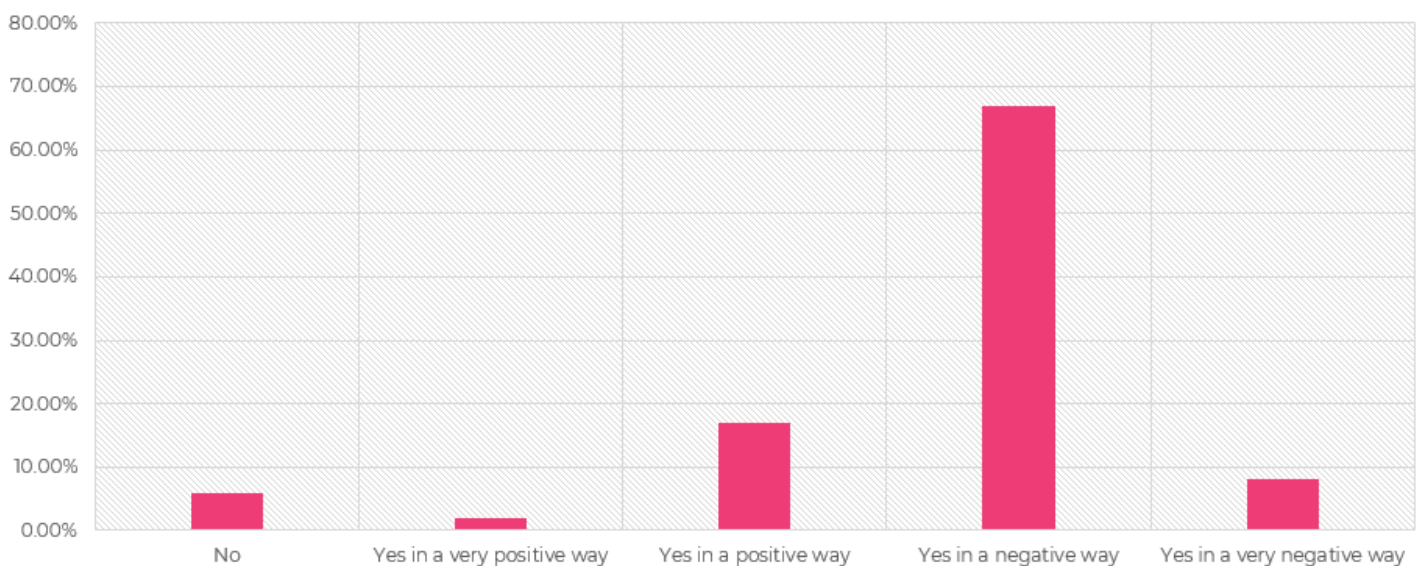
In terms of what a National Autism Strategy should address, AsIAM has previously consulted extensively with the community which formed the basis for our submission to both the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism and the consultation on the Autism Innovation Strategy. Respondents also had a wide range of suggestions covering themes right across the life cycle including:

- ▶ Timely access to assessment and therapeutic supports
- ▶ Post-diagnosis services and supports for families
- ▶ Funding for local Autism groups and initiatives
- ▶ Access to appropriate mental health services
- ▶ Mandatory training for all those working with Autistic people including teachers and healthcare staff
- ▶ Campaigns to educate the general public about Autism
- ▶ Sensory and accessibility accommodations in public spaces
- ▶ Supports for Autistic adults
- ▶ Employment supports
- ▶ Improved accessibility of businesses and public services
- ▶ Greater provision of Autism class placements
- ▶ Rights-based approaches to service delivery
- ▶ Accessible housing
- ▶ Social protection supports

Do you / your family member have the same chance in Irish society?



Do you / your family member feel that Autistic people are treated differently in society?



CONCLUSION

Whilst we have looked at a wide array of barriers to inclusion throughout this report perhaps the community sums it up best in how they responded to a number of overarching questions. When asked if Autistic people are treated differently in society an overwhelming percentage of people responded “yes, *in a negative way*” (68%) or “yes, *in a very negative way*” (8%). This contributes to the stigma which Autistic people experience daily with the vast majority (83%) reporting that they feel they have to mask or change who they are in order to receive the same chance to participate in day-to-day activities.

All that Autistic people want is the same chance and yet only (14%) of those represented believe that they enjoy this equality of opportunity. Autistic people have a huge amount to offer society and yet over three-quarters (76%) of those represented in the report do not feel they have the same chance to demonstrate and use their strengths in the community. Exclusion has devastating effects on Autistic people, families and society as a whole.

This World Autism Month presents an opportunity for us to reflect on how Ireland can become a society in which every Autistic person is accepted “as they are” – equal, valued and respected. What this report makes very clear is that we all have a role to play from politicians and service providers to friends and family members.

As Ireland’s National Autism Charity we invite you to engage with us this April, and beyond, to explore how you can help us remove the invisible barriers which Autistic people face and give our community the same chance.

83%

feel they have to mask or change who they are to receive the same chance to participate in day-to-day activities

**#SAME
CHANCE**



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