

Myths and facts about Autism

(courtesy of the National Autism Society)

Although over 700,000 people in the UK are autistic (more than 1 in 100 people), false and often negative perceptions about the condition are commonplace.

This lack of understanding can make it difficult for people on the autism spectrum to have their condition recognised and to access the support they need. Misconceptions can lead to some individuals with autism feeling isolated and alone. Here are a list of popular beliefs around ASD:

- Autism affects more than 1 in 100 people – **FACT**. Over 700,000 people in UK live with ASD, which means that 2.8m people have a relative on the autism spectrum.
- People tend to 'grow out' of autism in adulthood – **MYTH**. It's a lifelong condition –children with autism become adults with autism.
- Autism affects both boys and girls – **FACT**. There is a popular misconception that autism is simply a male condition. This is false.
- Some individuals with autism don't speak – **FACT**. Some individuals with autism are non-verbal and communicate through other means. However, autism is a spectrum condition, so everyone's autism is different.
- Autism is a mental health problem – **MYTH**. Autism is a developmental disability. It's a difference in how your brain works. Individuals with autism can have good mental health, or experience mental health problems, just like anyone else.
- All individuals with autism are geniuses – **MYTH**. Just under half of all people with an autism diagnosis also have a learning disability. Others have an IQ in the average to above average range. 'Savant' abilities like extraordinary memory are rare.
- Everyone is a bit autistic – **MYTH**. While everyone might recognise some autistic traits or behaviours in people they know, to be diagnosed with autism, a person must consistently display behaviours across all the different areas of the condition. Just having a fondness for routines, a good memory or being shy doesn't make a person 'a bit autistic'.