

Summary of Research Findings

Participation of children on the autism spectrum in home, school and community.

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Overview

- Parents of children (5 years) and children (9-10 years) completed a questionnaire on their child's participation.
- We found children in both groups reported overall similar patterns of participation.
- Parents generally desired an increase in their child's participation in home, school and community activities.
- To better support children's participation it is important to understand how children on the autism spectrum view their participation and factors which may support and hinder their participation.

Why did we do this study?

Participation in life activities is viewed as an important element of well-being. Research has found children on the autism spectrum participate in activities less than their peers. Little is known about participation across different age groups and caregiver views on their child's participation. Identifying children's participation in activities provides information about areas which may require further support.

What did we do?

- We asked caregivers of children on the autism spectrum (aged 5 and 9 – 10 years) to complete the Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth. This questionnaire reports on how frequent children do activities and their involvement in activities in the home, school, and community. Caregivers also indicated whether they desired a change in these behaviours.
- The questionnaire was completed by 218 caregivers who were part of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Students with Autism.

What did we find?

- Overall, caregivers desired an increase in their child's participation in activities in the home except for screen-based activities.
- Caregivers in both groups would like to see their child participating more in school activities and getting together with peers outside class. Older children were more likely to participate in school teams, clubs and organisations than younger children. Children in both groups rarely participated in special roles at school.
- In the community, children in both groups were reported to participate most in neighbourhood outings and unstructured physical activities. However, nearly half the parents desired an increase in their child's physical activity.

What does this mean?

- Parents generally desired an increase in their child's participation.
- We need to gather information from the children themselves about how they view their participation in activities and where/if they desire change.
- We need to explore factors which may be supporting or hindering children's participation at home, school and the community.

Where are we sharing this study?

This research has been published in the *Child: Care, Health and Development* and is available by putting "<https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12483>" into google.