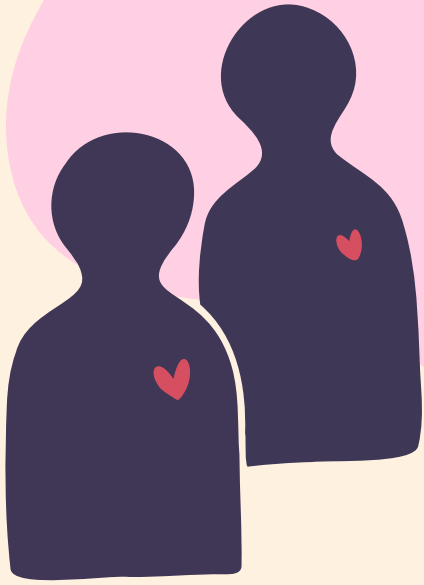


Autism and romantic relationships



A Deakin University study



We conducted a survey looking at romantic relationships among autistic people and partners of autistic people. We explored aspects of romantic relationship initiation (i.e., starting relationships) and long-term romantic relationships. The results from our studies, which are at various stages in the publication process, are summarised here.

We'd like to thank all participants, organisations, and service providers for contributing to our data collection and allowing us to conduct this important research. We hope you find these results interesting and useful.

Short-term romantic relationship experience

We surveyed autistic people who were currently in or were previously in a short-term (less than 12 months) romantic relationship. We found that participants found it difficult to start a romantic relationship, and they found their romantic relationships somewhat satisfying. The majority of participants were also interested in long-term relationships (instead of short-term relationships).



Participants without romantic relationship experience



We also surveyed participants who did not have any current or previous romantic relationship experience. About half of participants wished to be in a romantic relationship, particularly a long-term relationship. Participants found several aspects of starting a romantic relationship difficult, including meeting people they're interested in, finding common interests with people, talking to people, getting to know people, and getting people to like them.

Long-term romantic relationships

One group of our autistic participants had current or previous long-term (12 months or more) romantic relationship experience. We surveyed them on their relationship satisfaction and various characteristics. We also surveyed non-autistic people who were currently or previously in a long-term relationship with an autistic person.



We found that partner responsiveness, which is the amount of support, caring, and validation that a person receives from their partner, was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction for both autistic and non-autistic partners. We also found that several partner characteristics contributed to participants' relationship satisfaction, particularly the amount of love and care shown by their partner. Other important factors included how determined and hardworking, fun and spontaneous, physically attractive, and assertive their partner was.

If you would like further information about our study, you can contact us at the following email addresses:

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