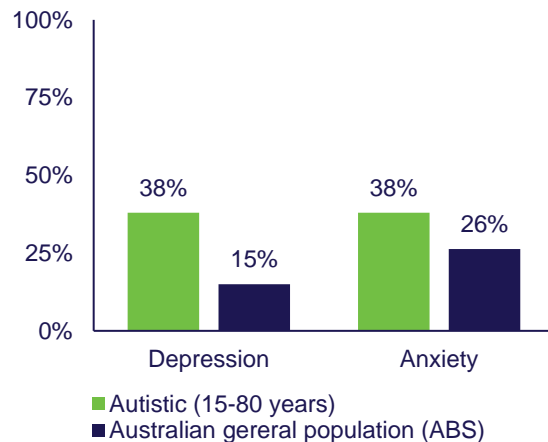


## Prevalence of anxiety and depression in autistic Australians



- Autistic adults are more likely to experience clinical levels of depression and anxiety.
- 53% of autistic SASLA youth without a co-occurring intellectual disability, reported a current anxiety diagnosis.
- Clinical anxiety and depression commonly occur at the same time.
- 19.7% of autistic adults experienced suicidal ideation in the last 2 weeks (2.4% in general population).
- 64% of autistic adults experience poor sleep which is linked to the presence of a mental health condition.

**SASLA** is a survey-based study following following autistic ( $n = 115$ ) and non-autistic ( $n = 218$ ) adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 25 years over 2 years (baseline, 1- and 2-years). A full cross-sectional profile of the Australian sample, and further information and resources are available on the Autism CRC website:

<https://www.autismcrc.com.au/our-programs/adulthood/study-australian-school-leavers-autism-sasla-15-25-years>



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# Depression, Anxiety and Autistic Adults



LA TROBE  
UNIVERSITY



Olga Tennison  
Autism Research Centre

## Predictors of anxiety and depression

Lack of satisfaction with social supports

Poor sleep quality

Loneliness

Being female

Living alone

Greater extent of autism traits

Not liking change/insistence on sameness

Being able to identify when you need help is one of the most important skills you can develop when managing your mental health.

### What supports are available?

**Your doctor** (GP) is a good place to start for most mental health conditions. Doctors can provide support or refer you to other services for mental health. You can use this question builder to prepare for your appointment –

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder>

**Mental health helplines** are helpful if you want to talk or text chat with someone. You can find a full list of services available in Australia here –

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines>

### What can I do?

#### Develop strategies and skills to:

Manage **when** and **how** you **express** emotions by:

- Changing the impact emotions have on you by re-evaluating situations that cause an emotional response. E.g., consider whether and how much the problem will matter to you five years from now.
- Practicing mindfulness - approaching life moment to moment with an open mind and without judgment can reduce stress and anxiety. For more information visit: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/mindfulness>

#### Explore flexibility:

- When can being inflexible be helpful? E.g., following strict routines at work can make you a great employee if you are a lab technician.
- When can it be unhelpful? E.g., When you are running late for an appointment but have to have your morning coffee (because you **never** leave the house without one), but making and drinking your coffee at home means you will be late.

#### Social supports:

- Quality of social supports is more critical than the number of supports you have. E.g., someone who is able to meet with you regularly, listens, understands you, your interests and your needs, and can provide useful/practical advice is more helpful than knowing a large number of people but feeling like you can't connect with them.

#### Sleep as well as possible:

- Sleep is so important for mental health and wellbeing. For more information download our pamphlet here ([https://www.autismcrc.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/3-016RC\\_Sleep-Brochure-Young%20Adults\\_2020.pdf](https://www.autismcrc.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/3-016RC_Sleep-Brochure-Young%20Adults_2020.pdf) 729KB) or check out the Sleep Health Foundation <https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets.html>

