

# Children with autistic traits remain undiagnosed

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There has been a major increase in the incidence of autism over the last twenty years. While people have differing opinions as to why this is (environment, vaccines, mother's age, better diagnostic practice, more awareness etc.) there are still many children who have autistic traits that are never diagnosed clinically. Therefore, they do not receive the support they need through educational or health services.

In recent studies these undiagnosed [children](#) have been included in estimates of how many children have [autism spectrum disorder](#), or an ASD (which includes both autism and Asperger's syndrome). Such studies have estimated that one in every hundred children has an ASD.

A study published in a recent issue of the [Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry](#) found that a large number of undiagnosed children displayed autistic traits: repetitive behaviors, impairments in [social interaction](#), and difficulties with communication. These traits were at levels comparable to the traits displayed by children who held a clinical diagnosis (all diagnosed between years one and twelve). However, the undiagnosed children were not deemed eligible for extra support at school or by specialized health services.

The lead researcher of the study, Ginny Russell, asks, "ASD diagnosis currently holds the key to unlocking intervention from school systems and health programs. Perhaps these resources should be extended and available for children who show autistic impairments but remain undiagnosed" Russell points out that the study also shows that there is a gender bias in diagnosing children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders - boys are more likely to receive a diagnosis than girls, even when they display equally severe symptoms.

**More information:** "Identification of children with the same level of impairment as children on the autistic spectrum, and analysis of their service

use." Ginny Russell, et. al. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry (JCPP); Published Online: March 22, 2010; [DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02233.x](#)

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