

**AUTISM SNAPSHOT 2023**

Butterfly Foundation's second BodyKind Youth Survey was conducted in 2023 to continue to understand the body image experience of young Australians aged 12 to 18 years. In total, 2,942 young people responded.

### What do Autistic young people have to say?

#### Who are they?

**238 (8.1%) of survey respondents reported an autism diagnosis, which was a larger sample than in 2022 (n = 97).**

**The majority of those were aged 15-18 years (M = 16.00 years).**

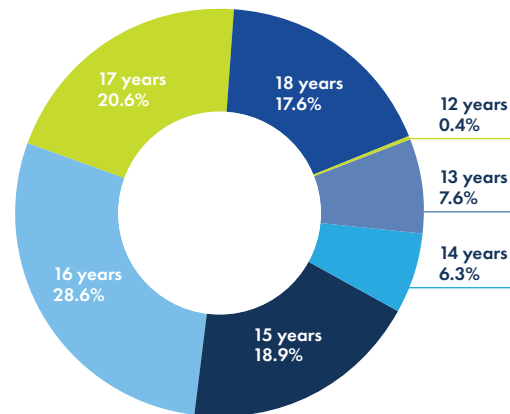


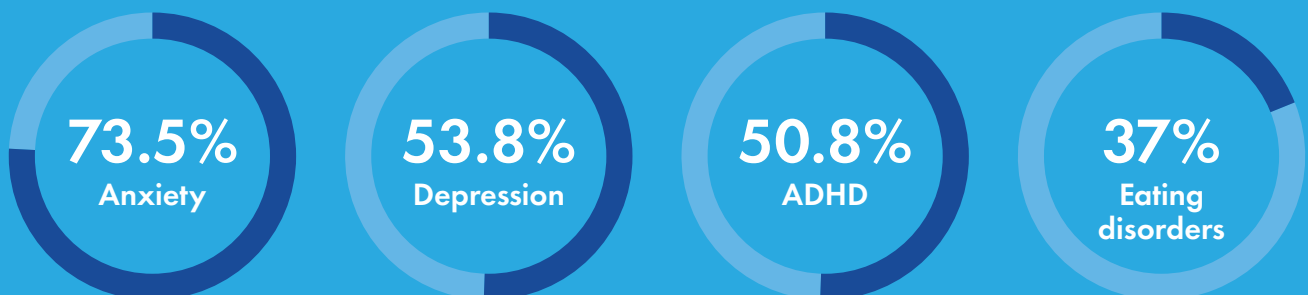
Figure 1. Age distribution of Autistic young people

The sample comprised 67.6% of young people who identified as female, 11.3% as male and 12.6% as non-binary.

#### Respondents most frequently identified as:



#### Respondents also reported rates of:



## Their body image

**Nearly 7 in 10** 

reported some level of body dissatisfaction.

**54.2%** 

reported a **high level of body dissatisfaction**.

The proportion of **high body dissatisfaction** in Autistic young people is greater than the total sample proportion (38.4%).

**54.2%** 

reported a **high level of concern** about their body image.

**COMPARISON TO 2022** This is a greater proportion than in 2022 (38.6%), however, sample differences were not statistically significant.

**80.8%** 

desired to be **thinner/leaner**, while 72.3% desired to be more **muscular** and 47.1% desired to be **taller**.

## How much do Autistic young people appreciate their body?

**39.6%**

**never or rarely respect their body.**

**54.4%**

**never or rarely feel good about their body.**

**60.6%**

**never or rarely are comfortable in their body.**

**27.7%**

**never or rarely feel their body has at least some good qualities.**

## Are they Body *Kind*?

**66.2%** **never or rarely** speak positively about their body.

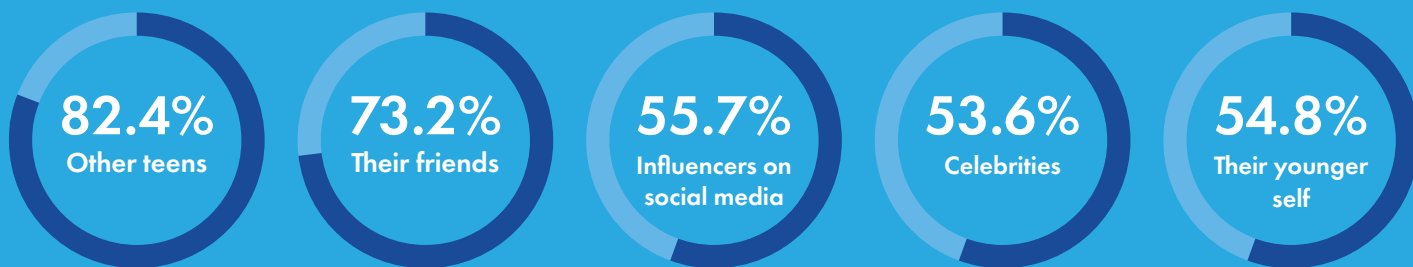
**54.1%** **never or rarely** feel grateful for what their body allows them to do.

**70.0%** **never or rarely** talk to someone if they're not feeling good about their body or appearance.

**78.1%** **often or always** try to value people for their personality and who they are rather than how they look, yet **54.1%** **never or rarely** spend less time focusing on their appearance to have more time for other things they enjoy.

\*Note: based on responses from 183 young people

## Autistic young people most frequently compare their bodies to



## Has body image ever stopped young people from doing certain activities?

Greater life disengagement was reported by Autistic young people compared with total sample proportions.



67%

reported a high level of disengagement from going to the beach.



45.1%

reported a high level of disengagement from going to a social event, party or gathering.



59.7%

reported a high level of disengagement from going clothes shopping.



57.4%

reported a high level of disengagement from doing a physical activity/sport.



48.4%

of young people reported a high level of disengagement from giving an opinion or standing up for themselves.



Nearly 2 in 5

reported a high level of disengagement from raising their hand in the classroom, focusing at school and going to school.

## Social media

Of the 210 who reported using social media,

**64.8%** described using social media more than they would like.

**67.6%** reported that social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body.



**COMPARISON TO 2022** 2023 respondents statistically reported greater dissatisfaction than 2022 respondents (48.3%), with a large effect size ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.76$ ).

### In relation to social media literacy strategies:

**66.2%**

never or rarely took a break because it was affecting how they felt about their body.

**41.4%**

never or rarely posted unfiltered images.

**43.3%**

never or rarely unfollowed pages that made them feel bad about their body.

**69%**

often or always comment kindly and honestly on a friend's post.

## What is their experience of appearance-related teasing?

**70.6%**

reported receiving negative comments or being teased about their appearance.

This happened most frequently at



**School**

**79.8%**



**Social Media**

**44%**



**Home**

**38.1%**



**Family events**

**35.1%**



**Group chats**

**33.3%**

No significant differences were found between 2022 and 2023 data for young people with Autism, aside from body dissatisfaction relating to social media use.