

This research is helping a large national retailer to improve the shoe shopping experience for autistic children and their families.



Shopping for shoes with an autistic child: facilitators for an autism-friendly experience.

BACKGROUND

A large Australian shoe retailer asked Aspect for guidance on how to provide a shopping experience that meet the needs of autistic children and their families.

Anecdotal reports from families of autistic children have indicated these children experience numerous difficulties wearing and shopping for shoes, however, **to date, no published research has examined these issues.**

AIMS

Investigate what are the issues experienced by autistic children and their families regarding wearing shoes and shopping for shoes.

METHODS

Online questionnaire by 106 parents of autistic children aged 3 to 21 years across Australia, about their child's experiences wearing shoes and shopping for shoes, and their perceived utility of a range of possible adaptations that could improve these experiences.

FINDINGS

The children commonly experienced issues with both wearing shoes and shopping for shoes that were related to their autism.

These issues are exacerbated by the range of discomforts experienced by the children when they visit a large shopping centre.

Parents reported that a range of adaptations would improve the shoe shopping experience for children with autism.

The key action that parents said would improve the shoe shopping experience was for store staff to having training so that they can understand the needs of autistic children and their parents, and know how to best help them.

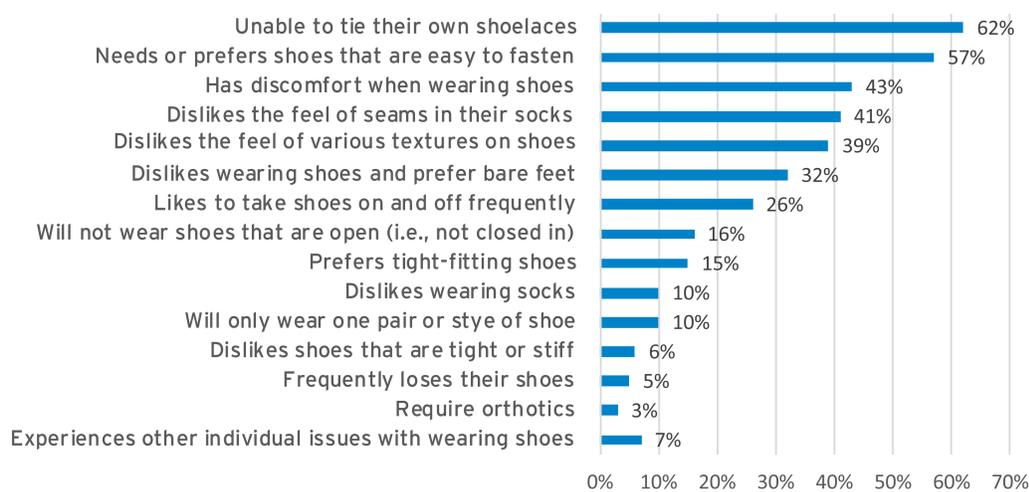
IMPLICATIONS

Provides empirical evidence for the anecdotal reports of difficulties experienced by autistic children with wearing shoes and shopping for shoes.

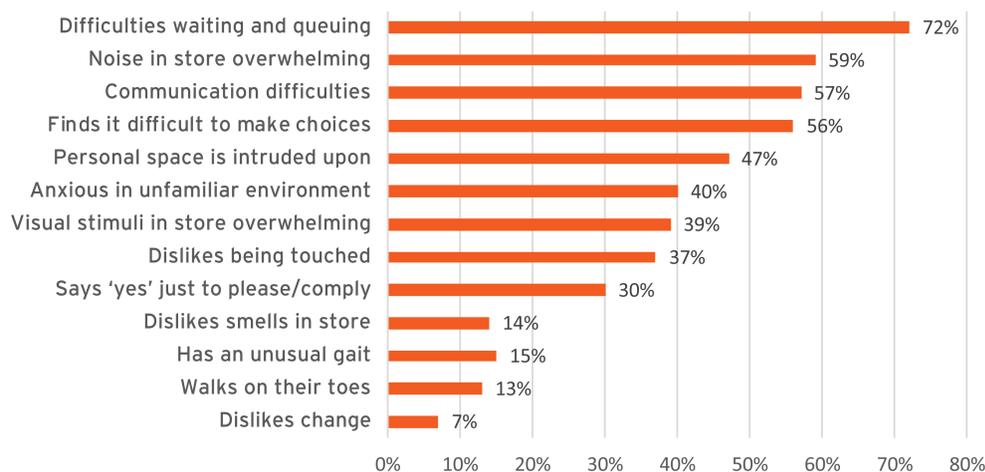
Indicates that an ongoing program of autism awareness training for in-store staff and a range of adaptations to in-store services could improve the in-store experience for children on the autism spectrum and their families.

Indicates that there is a significant market demand for shoes styles that could meet the particular needs of autistic children across all ages.

Parents told us about their children's experiences with wearing shoes & shopping for shoes
85% experienced autism-related issues with wearing shoes



92% experienced autism-related issues in a shopping centre
93% experienced autism-related issues in a shoe store



So we asked parents to rate some possible adaptations that could improve the shoe shopping experience



Making a difference
 Using this research, Aspect has developed a program of training and in-store adaptations, now implemented by the retailer across all stores, providing autistic children and their families with a more enjoyable and successful shoe-buying experience.

Project team

Lead researcher
Kaaren Haas
 Research Officer
 Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice

Dr. Tom Tutton
 National Manager
 Aspect Practice

Children's age & gender

3-4 years	11%	Female	26%
5-8 years	41%	Male	73%
9-11 years	24%	Other	1%
12-17 years	17%	Prefer not to specify	0%
18-21 years	7%		

Find out more www.autismspectrum.org.au/about-autism/our-research/

