



# Unboxing Neurodivergent Talent

The undervalued strengths in workplace performance  
and how to create change together

A research paper by Lumina Learning

[luminalearning.com](https://luminalearning.com)

# Researchers



## Dr Stewart Desson

PhD, FCIPD

Stewart is an experienced Business Psychologist, the CEO and founder of Lumina Learning, and the author of the innovative Lumina Spark psychometric. He has a PhD in Business Psychology and is a Chartered Fellow with the CIPD. His PhD has shown that 'adaptive' and 'maladaptive' traits can be measured at both ends of the Big Five's polarities. He created the hugely successful Lumina Spark psychometric which is used with clients across the globe.

Stewart has a passion for building a community of like-minded professionals innovatively applying Lumina Learning's suite of Products and Solutions. He is particularly focused on looking at how personality can help and hinder people's application and effectiveness in terms of personal and professional development, innovation, leadership, engagement and dealing with pressure.



## Julie Ensor

MSc, MSc, BA (Hons), MBPsS, CBP

Julie is a Business Psychologist and Product Development Lead at Lumina Learning. She is passionate about applying evidence-based rigour to the creation of development and assessment solutions that are valid yet also highly engaging and accessible.

In her role at Lumina Learning, she drives the research and development of Innovative 'next generation' psychometric and learning resources including the Lumina Emotion, Lumina Select and Lumina Spark Coach products, as well as bespoke assessment solutions.



## Jonathan Cannon

MSc, BSc (Hons), MBPsS, CBP

Jonathan is a Business Psychologist at Lumina Learning. His main interests lie in the rigorous validation of Lumina Learning's suite of innovative development and assessment solutions.

Jonathan's research focuses both on ensuring robust psychometric properties of Lumina Learning's assessments, and also on industry-relevant topics, including how Covid has affected our personality and performance at work, the relationship between personality and performance at work, and how psychometrics can help organisations reduce bias and promote diversity.

# Talking the talk. But not walking the walk

In today's evolving professional landscape, the conversation surrounding neurodivergence is gaining momentum. But despite the growing conversation around neurodiversity, change in workplaces seem to be moving much more slowly. This guide focuses primarily on the implications for those with ADHD, autism and a renewed perspective for their employers.

We've found a whole range of potential strengths associated with both these neurodivergent ways of being in our research. Strengths that could be stereotyped as weaknesses, even when used effectively. Of course, if those strengths are overextended, often during challenges, they can be too much of a typically good thing. It can derail performance, relationships and wellbeing.

But how often are those overextensions due to organisations not adapting workplaces and team cultures to consider purposeful ADHD and autism adjustments? And how often are qualities totally opposite to those commonly associated strengths being overlooked too?

## Understanding the challenge

### The reality right now

According to a 2024 report by CIPD, a fifth of neurodivergent employees have experienced harassment or discrimination at work due to their neurodivergence. Only 27% say there is training for line managers in what neurodiversity is and its value to a business. Just 51% of managers in organisations appreciate the value of neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuro-inclusive environment.

### The challenge

Navigating the behaviour norms, trends and expectations, the workplace can be challenging for anyone. But for individuals with ADHD and autism, these challenges can be particularly overwhelming. In fact, a staggering 78% of neurodivergent workers report feeling overwhelmed at work, according to research conducted by Birkbeck, University of London, and Neurodiversity in Business (NiB). This overwhelming feeling can stem from various sources - whether it's managing workloads, adapting to social interactions, or dealing with sensory sensitivities. The workplace can be an overstimulating environment, especially for those who process information differently or struggle with executive functioning, which affects planning, attention, and organisation.

## For those with autism

People with autism may face a different set of obstacles, often when it comes to communication and social interactions. Office culture often revolves around informal chats, quick meetings, and unspoken social rules, which can be confusing or stressful for those on the autism spectrum. Interpreting tone of voice or body language during a meeting may require extra effort that can impact energy and confidence.

## For those with ADHD

For many individuals with ADHD, maintaining focus and staying organised in a busy office setting can be incredibly difficult. The constant noise, distractions, and the need to switch between tasks can make it harder for someone with ADHD to stay on track. Deadlines and multitasking, which are often part and parcel of today's fast-paced work environments, can further add to the stress. Then there's the challenge of sensory sensitivities - bright lights, loud noises, or even certain textures can create an environment that feels overwhelming or distracting, making it hard to focus on tasks.

## The impact on performance and wellbeing

These factors, among others, contribute to why one in five (21%) workers surveyed, said that their work environment directly hindered their ability to do their job effectively. When the conditions aren't right, neurodivergent individuals can struggle, not because of a lack of talent or skill, but because the work environment doesn't support their needs. Even worse, a third (33%) of neurodivergent workers said that their work experience had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing. When the workplace feels like a constant source of stress, it's no surprise that mental wellbeing is commonly affected.



**21%**

**Work environment directly hindered their ability to do their job effectively**

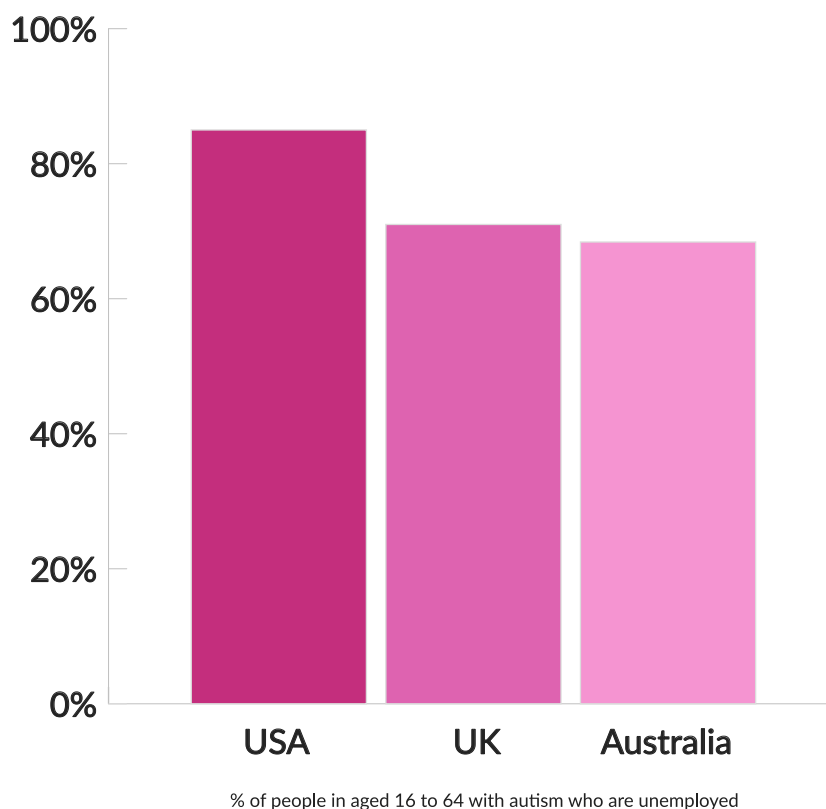


**33%**

**Of neurodivergent workers said that their work experience had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing**

## The impact on recruitment

The numbers also tell us something important about employment for people on the autism spectrum. According to the Office for National Statistics, 71% of people in the UK aged 16 to 64 with autism are unemployed. In the US, 85% of people with autism are unemployed (SR Hong 2024). And in Australia, 68.4% of people with autism are unemployed (Australian Bureau of Statistics). That's alarmingly low statistics across the board and highlights how much untapped potential is out there. It also suggests that many individuals with autism face barriers when trying to enter or stay in the workforce - whether due to lack of understanding, accessible job opportunities, or support.



## Mission for change

These statistics underline the real and urgent need for workplaces to evolve. Too often, the unique strengths and talents of people with ADHD and autism are overshadowed by the challenges they face in environments that aren't set up to help them succeed. But what often gets lost in the conversation is that neurodivergent individuals bring incredible strengths to the table - strengths that are frequently overlooked.

# Applying workplace psychology

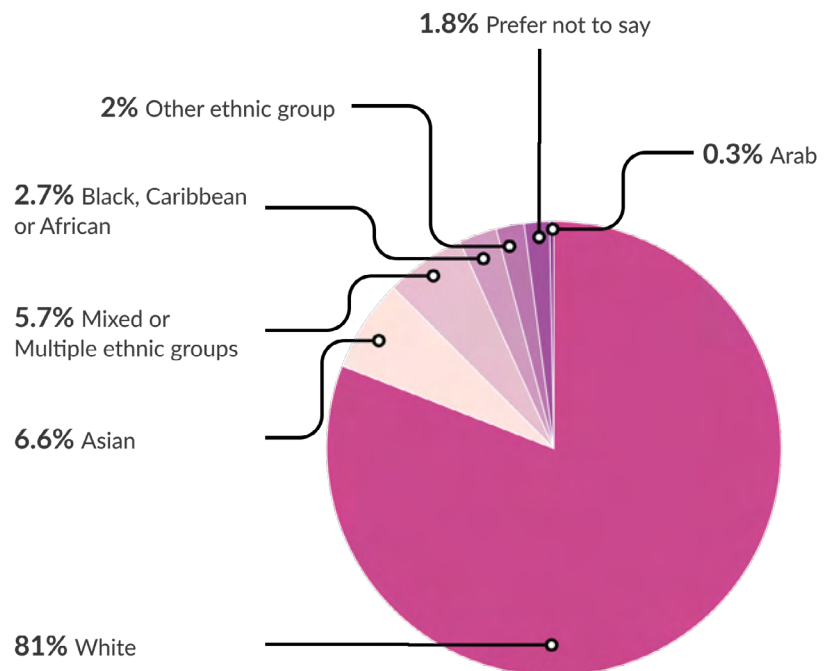
## How our research data supports a mission for change

Our research aims to take a closer look at the undervalued abilities that neurodivergent people bring to the table and explores how organisations can create an inclusive environment that benefits everyone. By viewing neurodivergence through the lens of personality and competency potential, this research aims to better understand how traits commonly identified in people with ADHD and autism, contribute to workplace performance, while also addressing common misconceptions and challenges they may face.

- Drive a shift in perspective towards how we view neurodivergence at work
- Move towards a strengths-based view on neurodivergence
- Investigate how personality is affected by neurodivergence
- Highlight the strengths associated with typical behavioural indicators of neurodivergence
- Examine neurodivergent individuals' experiences of camouflaging behaviours

## Research Population

- 717 adults globally
- Data Collected between March 2022 and November 2023
- 64% female; 35% male; 1% other
- 75% have a degree
- 87% in employment



## Measures

- Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ-10)
- Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRSv1.1)
- Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q)
- Lumina Spark and Emotion

# Prevalence of Neurodivergence

Global estimates highlighted in Doyle (2020)

5%

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

1-1.6%

Autism

6%

Dyspraxia (DCS)

10%

Dyslexia

Global estimates regarding the prevalence of neurodivergence can vary significantly, largely due to differences in diagnostic methods, accessibility to services, and the troubling reality of high non-disclosure rates. These factors can lead to significant challenges; individuals may find themselves struggling to access the support and adjustments they need due to unclear diagnoses, inconsistent standards, and a lack of awareness.

The concept of neurodiversity is still relatively new, having been introduced by Singer in 1999. So, for many people who navigated the education system before this shift in understanding, the journey to finding appropriate support and resources has often been fraught with obstacles. The result? A considerable gap in access to vital provisions for neurodivergent individuals.

## How can we circumvent this problem?

- Recognise the potential barriers to diagnosis or self-identification of neurodivergence
- Respect neurodivergence as a spectrum, rather than binary
- Utilise clinically-validated behavioural indicator scales for autism and ADHD as proxy indicators of individuals displaying behaviours associated with each
  - AQ-10
  - ASRSv1.1

## Prevalence in our research population

12%

Formal diagnoses

44%

Self-Identification

8%

Met AQ-10 threshold

24%

Met ASRS threshold

# The relationship between autism, ADHD and personality

This research primarily focuses on autism and ADHD, looking at how these forms of neurodivergence relate to various personality traits using tools such as the AQ-10, ASRS, Lumina Spark, and Lumina Emotion.

- Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders (autism) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Analysis of the relationship between scores on the AQ-10 (autism), ASRS (ADHD), and Lumina Spark and Emotion Qualities

## The unseen strengths associated with ADHD or autism

In the mandalas on the next pages, we'll show you the qualities that are the most commonly seen behaviours of those with ADHD or autism, compared to other qualities that we measured for personal performance and relationships at work.

We'll also show you the qualities that those with ADHD or autism tend to score lower on. Low qualities indicate underutilised qualities or simply less preferred. They highlight areas for personal development or where adjustments could be made by employers to support in those gaps.



It's important to note that these are qualities associated with the behavioural indicators of autism and ADHD. This is not to say that someone with autism or ADHD will always show a preference or disinclination to the qualities shown.

# How does this show up as a Lumina Splash?

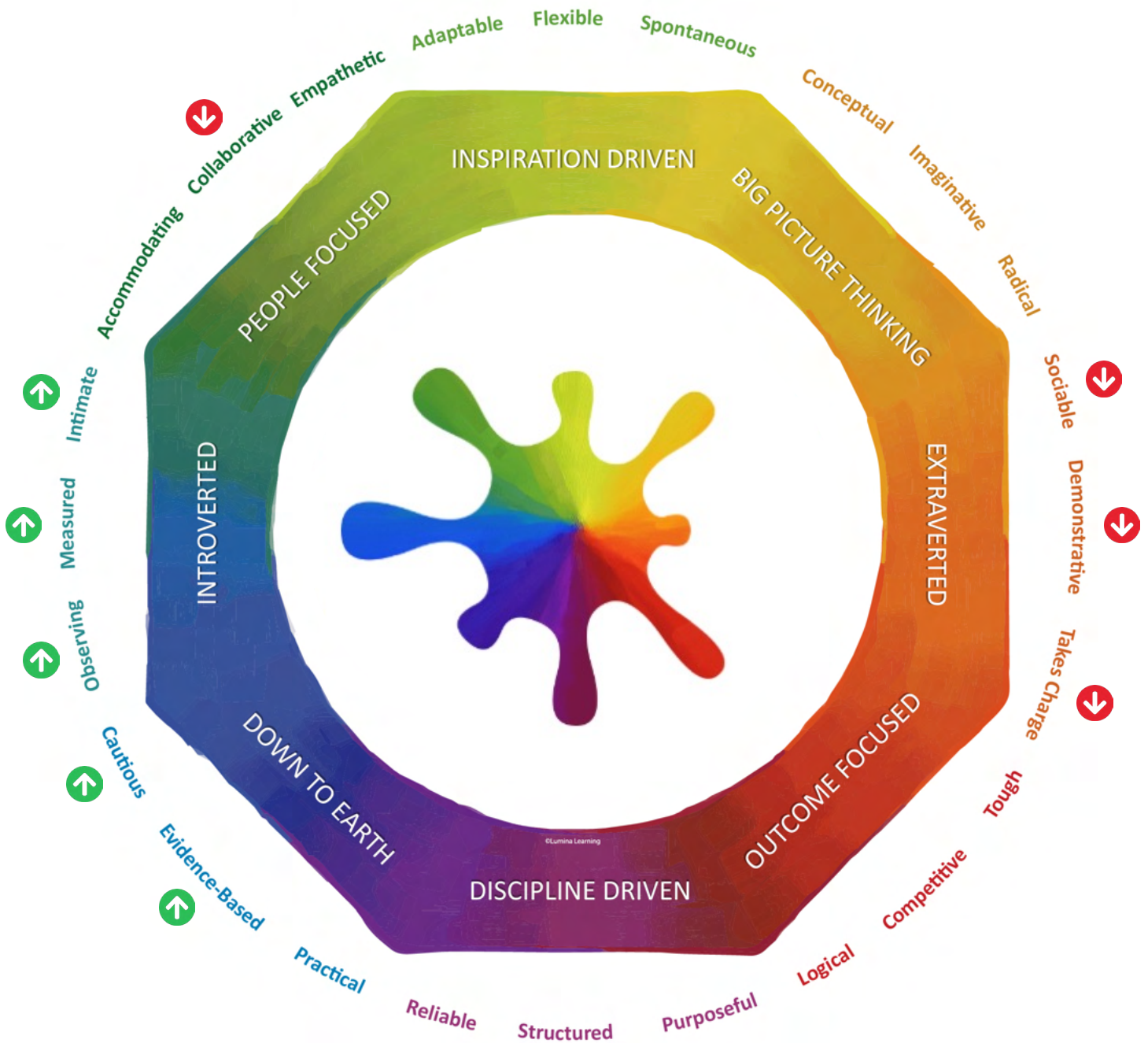
Typical splash associated with behavioural indicators of autism



Highest Qualities



Lowest Qualities



# How does this show up as a Lumina Splash?

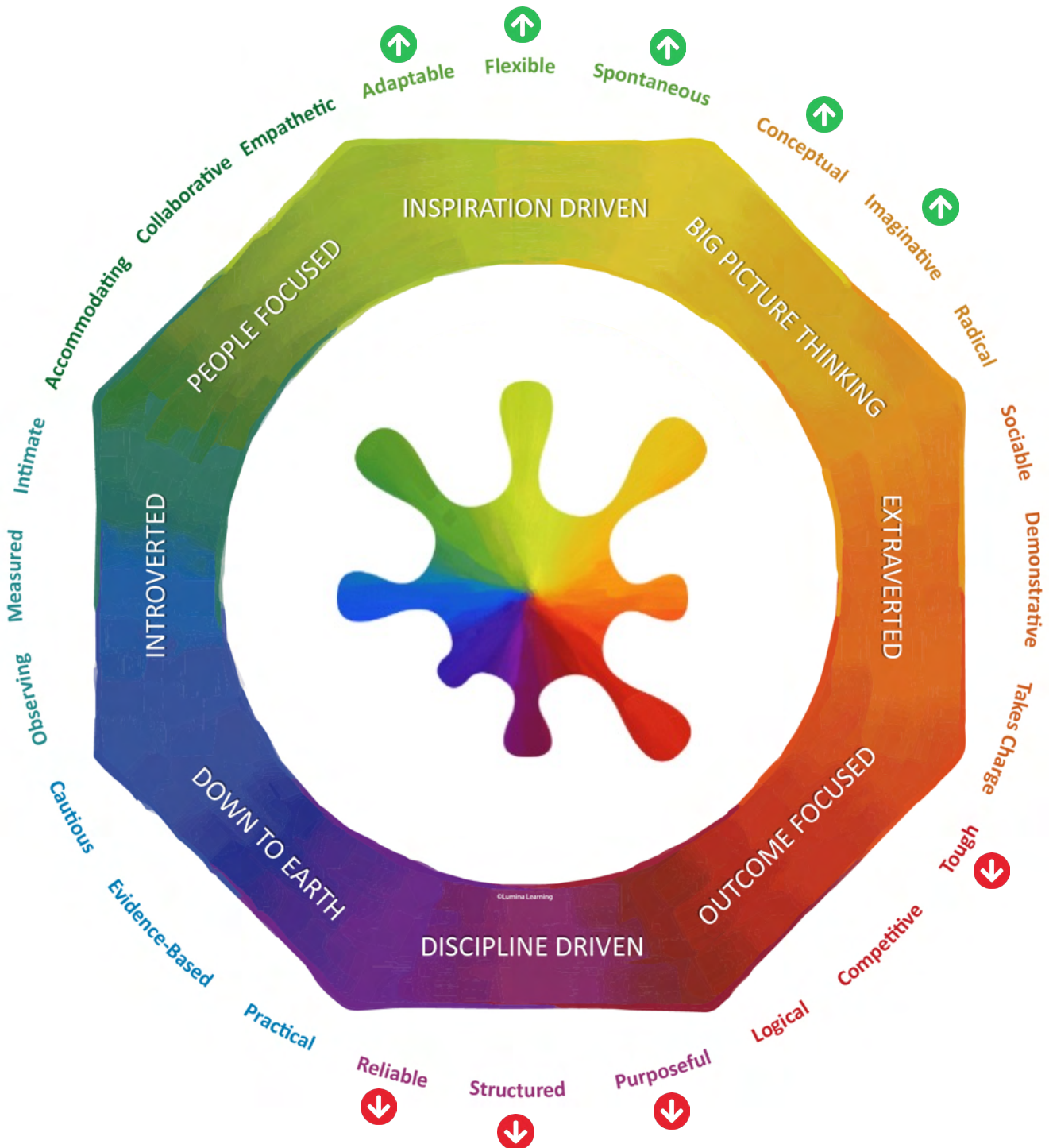
Typical splash associated with behavioural indicators of ADHD



Highest Qualities



Lowest Qualities



# So what do these Qualities mean?

For those with autism

## Evidence-Based

Focused on observable facts and attentive to details

- Needs information
- Values precision
- Fact-finder

## Cautious

Prefers to stick with tried-and-tested methods

- Risk averse
- Plays it safe
- Reluctant to change

## Observing

Private and likes to think before they speak

- Prefers small groups
- Takes time making connections
- Reserved

## Measured

Serious-minded and contains positive emotions

- Serious
- Prefers written communication
- Controls emotions

## Intimate

Listens first and gravitates towards one-on-one conversations

- Good listener
- Prefers one-to-one
- Low-key

## For those with ADHD

### Adaptable

Works towards an overall vision with emerging goals

- Easy-going
- Goal-evolving
- Goes with the flow

### Flexible

Easy-going and informal

- Minimises bureaucracy
- Relaxed about order
- Loose planner

### Spontaneous

Makes gut-feel decisions

- Carefree with commitments
- Needs to be inspired
- Acts on impulse

### Conceptual

An abstract thinker comfortable with complexity and ambiguity

- Learns by theory
- Likes complexity
- Sees trends and patterns

### Imaginative

A source of new ideas

- Creative
- Appreciates aesthetics
- Sees possibilities

# How do these qualities play out as competencies in people's roles?

## A shift in perspective

Historically, research has focused heavily on the challenges and deficits associated with neurodivergence. While this helped in terms of understanding what support was needed, it also created a narrow and often negative view of neurodivergent people, overshadowing the strengths that neurodivergent people can offer.

By shifting our focus to highlighting the unique personality traits linked to autism and ADHD, this research aims to uncover the unique personality traits associated with autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), showcasing the incredible potential these individuals possess, particularly in terms of competency potential.

## Understanding competency potential

Competency potential refers to the behavioural characteristics that form the foundation for specific competencies.

High competency potential scores suggest that behaviours related to a specific competency will come easily to an individual.

## Competency potential and neurodivergence

The Lumina Select Competency Framework, which comprises 4 domains and 16 competencies, has been used to evaluate neurodivergent strengths. This framework ensures a fair and balanced approach, avoiding favouritism towards certain traits, which may inadvertently discriminate against neurodivergent individuals.

# The value of neurodivergence

Comparisons were made between individuals reporting higher and lower behavioural indicators of autism and ADHD, examining their average competency potential scores. The following competencies were associated with neurodivergent traits:

## Competencies associated with behavioural indicators of autism

### Pursuing and Achieving Goals

Being ambitious, persevering and focused in order to achieve targeted results

### Planning and Organising

Being an effective and prompt planner

### Ensuring Accountability

Being disciplined, maintaining a consistent work ethic and being responsible

### Gathering and Analysing Data

Being analytical and thorough when gathering and verifying information in order to solve problems effectively

## Competencies associated with behavioural indicators of ADHD

### Adapting to Change

Having a flexible approach and a willingness to evolve in changing work environments

### Agile Learning

Applying an exploratory and curious approach, underpinned by a willingness to experiment, take risks and try unconventional methods

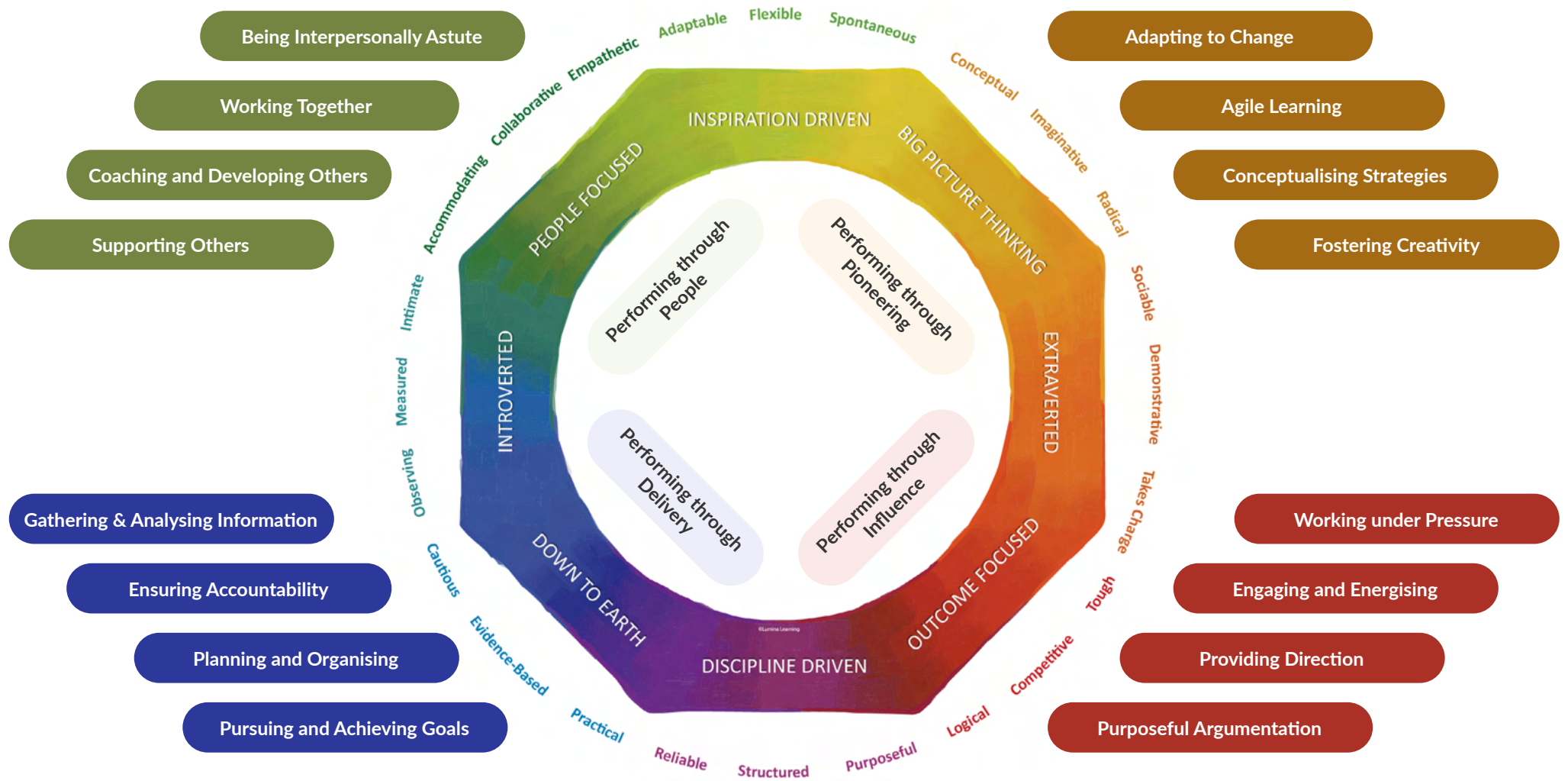
### Conceptualising Strategies

Having a broad vision aligned to a keen strategic mind. Being able to detect patterns and shifts in the market as well as having the capability to plan towards accomplishing long-term goals

### Fostering Creativity

Being imaginative, exploring new ideas, coming up with new ways of solving a problem and driving innovation

# The Lumina Select Competency Framework



# What does this mean?

The analysis on differential competency potential based on behavioural indicators of autism and ADHD shows a clear trend emerging in how we can reframe any preconceptions on what it means to be neurodivergent at work.

Moving away from a deficit-oriented view on neurodivergence, we can start to really highlight the strengths associated with these two forms of neurodivergence.

Individuals reporting more behavioural indicators of **ADHD** tended to score higher on the **Performing through Pioneering** competencies. These competencies largely consist of **Big Picture Thinking** and **Inspiration Driven** Qualities, and reflect an individual's increased propensity for being able to adapt easily to change, pursue self-development, form long-term views, and drive innovation.



Those reporting more behavioural indicators of autism tended to score higher on the **Performing through Delivery** competencies. Comprised of **Discipline Driven**, **Introverted**, and **Down to Earth** Qualities, these reflect those comfortable with showing tenacity in achieving results, planning effectively, maintaining a consistent work ethic, and showing a meticulous eye for detail.



# If these behaviours can be strengths, why aren't they always recognised?

## Reason 1: Stereotypes, bias, and discrimination

Because of stereotypes and discrimination. For autism, those who do disclose usually do so after starting a job – highlighting a persistent fear of discrimination during the recruitment process. Unfortunately, only 4 in 10 participants who disclosed autism to their employer said this had a positive impact (Romualdez A.M., et al. 2021). Around 59% of working adults with ADHD or another neurodivergent condition worry that disclosing it will negatively impact them at work. 32% said their request was denied for accommodations. Even worse, nearly 23% said they lost their job or were demoted just for asking for accommodations at work (Understood.org, 2023).



**40%**

Who disclosed autism to their employer said this had a positive impact



**59%**

Of working adults with ADHD or another neurodivergent condition worry that disclosing it will negatively impact them at work



**32%**

Said their request was denied for accommodations



**23%**

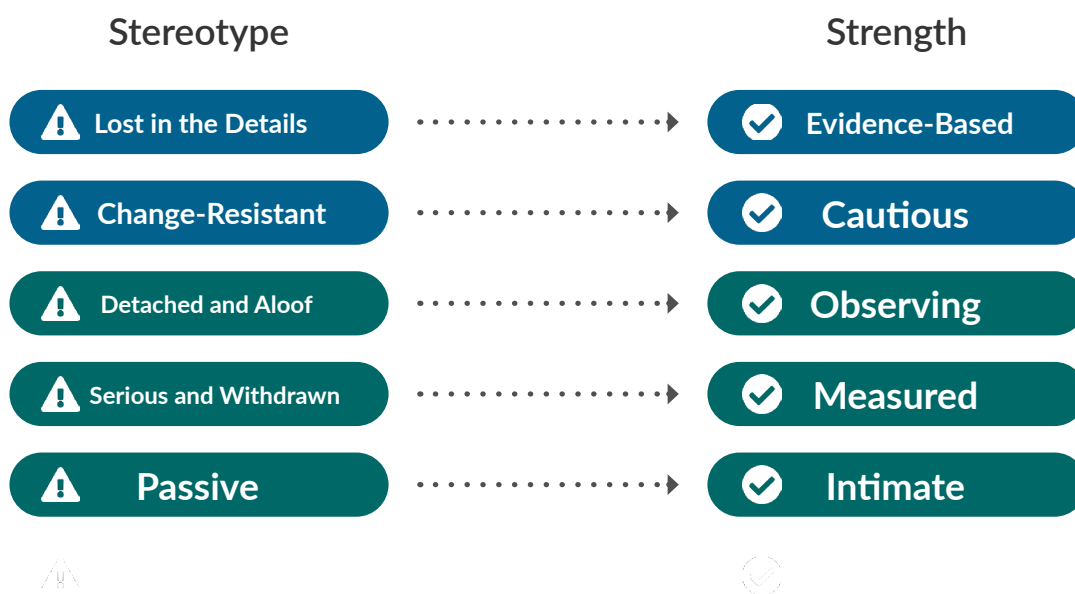
Said they lost their job or were demoted just for asking for accommodations at work

This is why building a shared, accurate understanding of behavioural strengths matters so much to an organisation's culture and strategy. When we can frame all types of behaviour positively and understand the line between what's Effective and what might be Overextended, it helps us value different ways of being. This approach helps us celebrate differences, spot potential, and avoid jumping to conclusions about personal style.

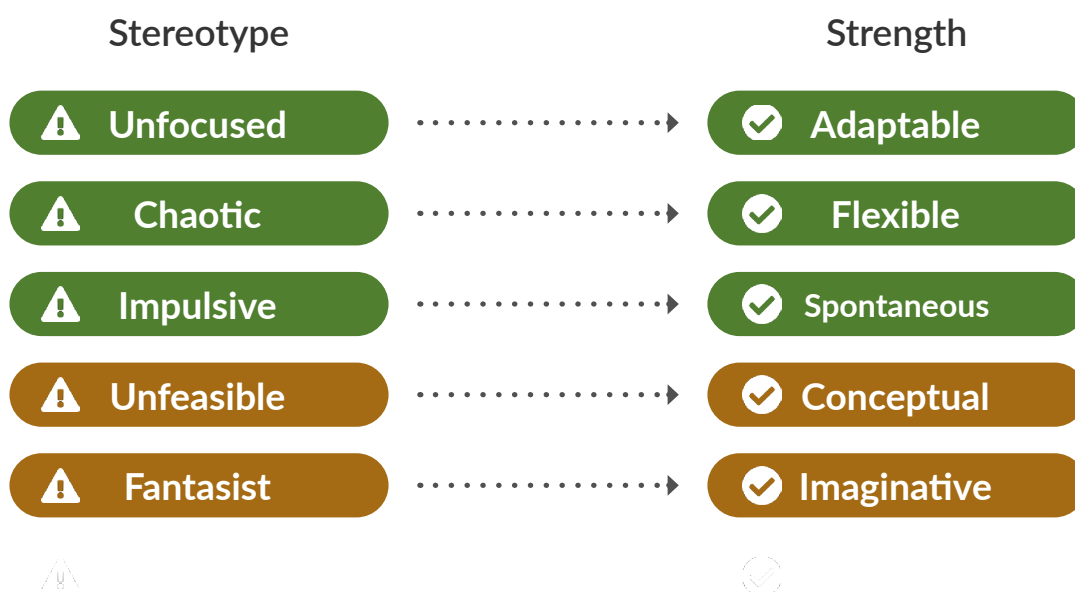
# Spotting the stereotypes

Below, we'll look at how those stereotypes might play out for both ADHD and autism, and how they might overshadow the valuable strengths that often go unrecognised.

## The most common strengths associated with autism



## The most common strengths associated with ADHD



# Camouflaging, also known as masking

The fear of being judged for showing up as their true selves - even at their most effective - often leads to people with ADHD or autism to camouflage their authentic personal style. This can happen to any of us. Yet it is that authentic style, when supported, that allows them to thrive in their performance, rather than trying to 'fit in with the crowd'. If those with ADHD and autism don't feel rewarded or supported for acting on their strengths, they might find ways to mute that real underlying talent related to their way of being.

Many neurodivergent people, particularly women with autism, often use "camouflaging" behaviours to blend in. This can involve mimicking social cues or forcing eye contact. The study identified three key types of camouflaging:

1. **Compensation** – Strategies to overcome social difficulties, such as mimicking body language
2. **Masking** – Hiding traits or creating a neurotypical persona
3. **Assimilation** – Adopting social personas or forcing interactions

The table below shows a summary of the correlations between behavioural traits of autism and ADHD, and the camouflaging subscales.

Correlations – Pearson's r	Camouflaging Total Score	Masking	Assimilation	Compensation
<b>ADHD Traits</b>	.48	.88	.45	.36
<b>Autism Traits</b>	.56	.15	.60	.47

All correlations are significant  $p < 0.001$ .

Both autism and ADHD traits are linked to camouflaging behaviours, though ADHD traits tend to be more associated with masking, while autism traits relate more to assimilation.

The findings suggest that neurodivergent individuals often suppress aspects of their personality, which can prevent them from receiving necessary support.

Some gender differences were found, with female participants with autism traits scoring higher than male participants, while no significant age differences were found.

## Explaining Camouflaging through the Lens of Personality

Our correlation analysis found that scores on the CAT-Q were strongly and positively correlated with the Introverted Qualities of **Observing** and **Measured**, and the Risk Reactor Qualities of **Vigilant** and **Modest**; whilst being strongly and negatively correlated with being **Sociable** and **Confident**.

This may suggest that in order to hide their neurodivergence, individuals may choose to withdraw and avoid asserting themselves in groups, instead preferring to listen and let others do the talking; this can also be accompanied by a heightened awareness of risks around them, and a lack of confidence.

So, while fairly different behavioural profiles were associated with autism and ADHD, it is interesting to note a convergence in how camouflaging behaviours may manifest, in terms of personality.

These mechanisms are often adopted in order to overcome feelings of social inadequacy, lack of genuine connection, and to manage one's reputation in accordance with what is deemed desirable. However, when considering neurodivergent individuals who may require support, these strategies combined with a lack of disclosure often mean that the need for support goes unnoticed, meaning that these individuals are not best placed to showcase their talents, thus perpetuating a cycle of camouflaging.

## Helping everyone to be a part of the solution

It's when we create a space for people to show the best of who they are with an open mind that barriers are broken down. But teams need practical guidance to help them be more aware and sensitive of their neurodivergent colleagues. Regardless of ADHD and autism, these ideas below are actually great teamwork tips that everyone can benefit from giving and receiving.

### Adapting team behaviours for autism:

#### Evidence-Based

Be objective, precise, detailed and stay focused on what is evident, observable and irrefutable.

#### Cautious

Do not dismiss tried and tested solutions, and be patient with their aversion to change.

#### Observing

Realise that they may seem distant and detached. They are busy thinking, so do not take this personally. Give them time to process.

#### Measured

They may come across as overly serious, but don't mistake this for them being miserable. Give them space to choose when and where they express themselves.

### **Intimate**

They are not disengaged, they just prefer to listen. Engage with them one-on-one to realise their true potential.

## **Adapting team behaviours for ADHD:**

### **Adaptable**

Give them space for their goals to emerge naturally, and don't force concrete objectives on them

### **Flexible**

Allow them to work in their own organic way, and don't force a plan or structure onto them. Try not to let unnecessary bureaucracy get in their way.

### **Spontaneous**

They are at their best when acting on impulse, so try not to hold them to strict or unnecessary deadlines.

### **Conceptual**

They like to start with the big picture and work from there, so don't pressure them to start with practical ideas straight away.

### **Imaginative**

Give them the big picture and allow them time to dream and evolve to provide back many ideas and options.

## **Why else aren't these behaviours recognised as strengths even when used effectively?**

### **Reason 2: Overextended strengths due to a lack of workplace adjustments**

Overextensions refer to overplayed strengths, which could be the result of being overcome by a challenge, or simply could be "too much of a good thing", potentially manifesting into maladaptive, unhelpful behaviour. When under pressure, neurodivergent individuals might find themselves overusing their greatest behavioural assets. This can derail performance and relationships. From a wellbeing perspective, overextending can also be overwhelming and lead to high levels of stress.

Of course, we all overextend sometimes, and that's completely normal – it's a part of personal growth and we should all be encouraged to work on it.

But how often does that overextension happen because organisations aren't making the necessary adjustments in their workplaces and team cultures to support individuals with ADHD and autism?

# How do Overextensions play out compared to Effective Qualities?

Here is how those usually positive Qualities tend to look like in the workplace when they are Overextended.

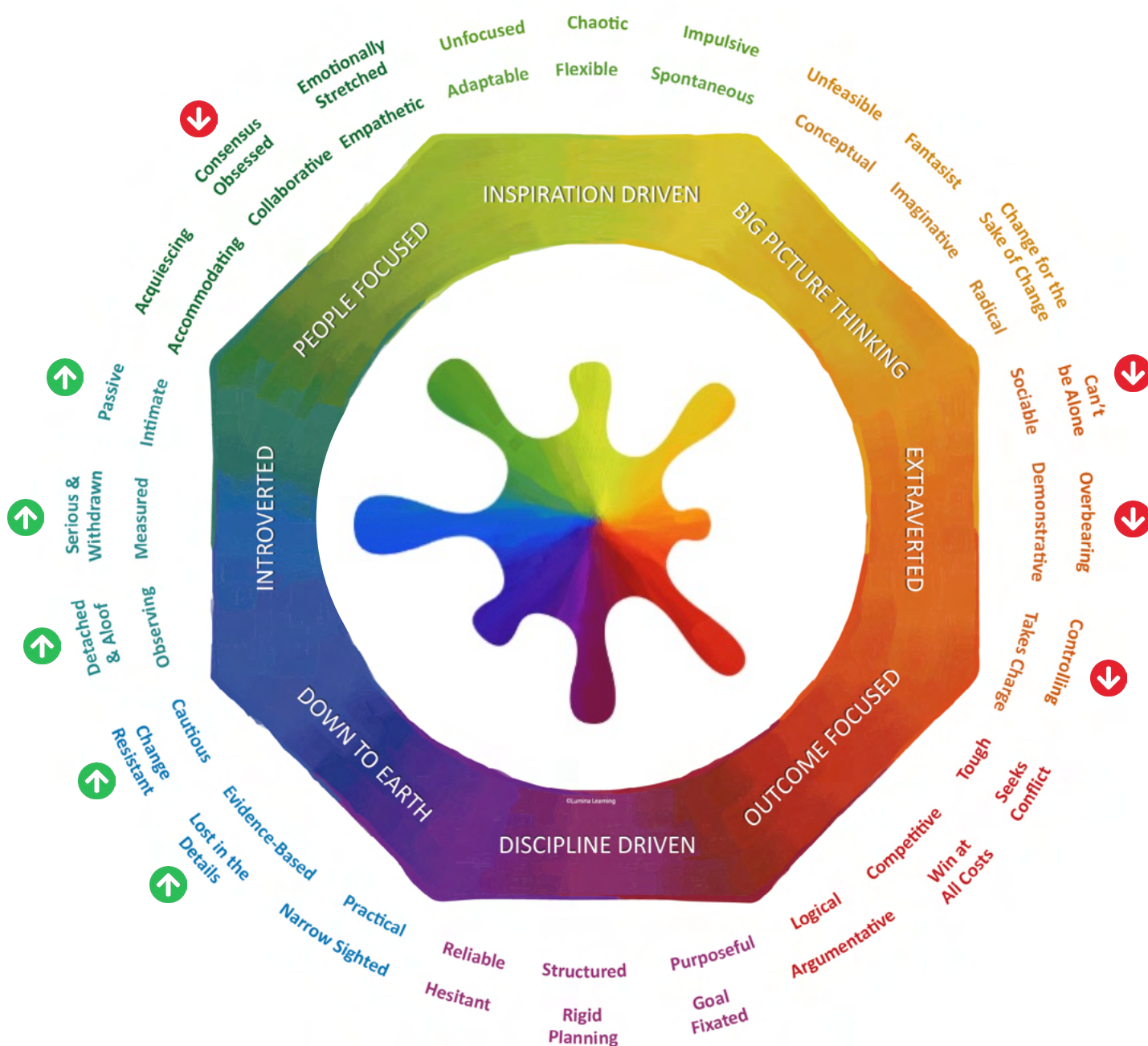
Typical splash associated with behavioural indicators of autism



Highest Qualities



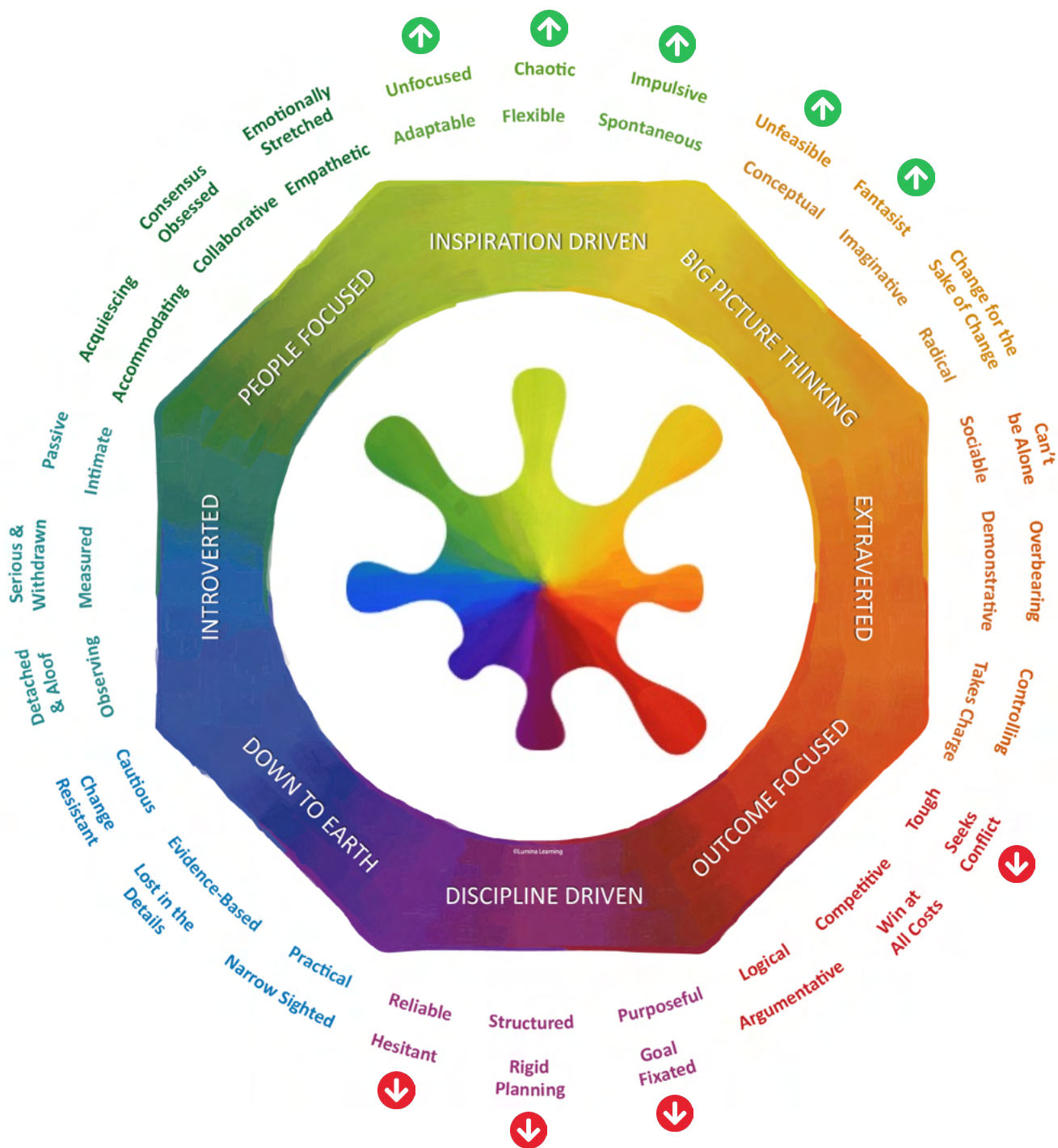
Lowest Qualities



# Typical splash associated with behavioural indicators of ADHD

↑ Highest Qualities

↓ Lowest Qualities



# So what do these Overextended Qualities mean?

## For those with autism

### **Evidence-Based to Lost in the Details**

Overly attentive to getting the facts right and lost in the data

### **Cautious to Change-Resistant**

Impervious to new ideas

### **Observing to Detached and Aloof**

Quiet and reclusive

### **Measured to Serious and Withdrawn**

Inexpressive and struggles to open up to others

### **Intimate to Passive**

Listens at the expense of sharing own opinions

## For those with ADHD

### **Adaptable to Unfocused**

Becomes distracted and lacks direction

### **Flexible to Chaotic**

Extreme flexibility that can create confusion/chaos

### **Spontaneous to Impulsive**

Rash, impulsive, and lacks self-discipline

## Conceptual to Unfeasible

Ideas so abstract, complex and ambiguous that they become unreasonable and impractical

## Imaginative to Fantasist

Constant new ideas that are divorced from reality

Learning to spot these overextensions and adapt yourself back to your more effective way of being is key to keeping performance steady.



Our research shows that anyone who manages their overextensions effectively see a 16% improvement in overall performance.

Earlier, we explored the unique challenges faced by individuals with ADHD and autism, challenges that can be amplified when workplace adjustments and team culture don't quite meet the mark. These shortcomings can lead to increased instances of overextension. However, it's important to recognise that not everyone experiences the same triggers. This realisation presents a valuable opportunity for teams, leaders, and organisations to create more inclusive environments. By thoughtfully adapting our approaches to project management and responsibilities, we can better support neurodivergent individuals and unbox their full potential.

Here's a few starting considerations that may be useful:

## For those with autism



### Structured communication

Establish clear communication protocols, providing agendas for meetings in advance. This can help people prepare for discussion and reduce anxiety about unexpected topics or changes.



### Structured environment

Implement structured routines and schedules to help people anticipate their day. Visual schedules or calendars can be useful for outlining tasks and deadlines, reducing anxiety associated with unpredictability.



## Sensory accommodations

Be mindful of sensory sensitivities. Excess noise, harsh lighting, or strong smells can be overwhelming. Consider allowing the use of noise-cancelling headphones, providing adjustable lighting, or creating a calm colour scheme in work areas.



## Quiet spaces for scheduled breaks

Designate quiet spaces where people can retreat when feeling overwhelmed. Scheduled breaks can provide a needed respite from sensory input and social interactions, helping to individuals to refresh their focus, and return to work recharged.



## Training and awareness initiatives

Conduct training for all staff on autism awareness and inclusion strategies. Educating coworkers on communication differences and social dynamics can create a culture of understanding, where everyone feels supported and appreciated for their unique strengths.

## For those with ADHD



### Flexible work schedules

Allowing people to set flexible work hours empowers them to work during their peak productivity times. This flexibility can help individuals with ADHD, manage focus and energy levels more effectively, leading to improved performance and engagement.



### Minimise distractions

Reducing distractions is crucial. A quiet workspace, noise-cancelling headphones, or allowing fidget tools can make it easier for employees with ADHD to stay on task. A thoughtfully arranged workspace can make a huge difference.



### Task management tools

Introduce project management software or tools that break tasks into smaller, manageable steps with clear deadlines. Visual reminders and to-do lists can help keep priorities in sight, maintain momentum, and help people meet their goals.



### Sensory-friendly adjustments

Modify lighting by using adjustable lamps or providing natural light where possible. Encourage people to personalise their workspaces with items that help them focus, such as stress balls or textured materials.



## Regular breaks

Short, frequent breaks can prevent burnout and improve focus during long tasks. By building in regular pauses, employees can recharge and return to work with renewed energy and attention.

With these strategies, workplaces can create an environment where neurodiverse employees not only feel valued but can truly thrive. Embracing neurodiversity isn't just an accommodation, it's a commitment to building a workplace where every unique talent contributes to collective success.

## Checking in on both stereotypes and overextensions together

Is it stereotypes? Is it the environment? It's often the case that the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

- It's worth reflecting on the assumptions, intentionally or not, that may be floating within an organisation's culture around neurodivergent ways of being. Are leaders, teams and recruiters drawing an accurate line between effective strengths, and overextensions, or just assuming the latter?
- It's also worth taking a step back to look at the adjustments being made for this with ADHD and autism.

If overextensions are common, this not only reinforces negative assumptions about how neurodivergent traits impact performance, but it may also indicate that your workplace isn't fostering an inclusive environment. A truly inclusive space is one where everyone feels empowered to focus, thrive, and be accepted for who they are.

# Beyond valuing strengths, how we can support the development of lower scored qualities?

Previous analysis highlighted the top and bottom qualities most commonly associated with behavioural indicators of autism and ADHD.

Let's be clear. Having a lower score in a certain area doesn't mean someone is "bad" at something. It simply indicates a different approach to tasks. Having low qualities does not suggest any inherent deficit, it is a natural part of human personality. Low qualities simply mean that those traits might not come as naturally to someone, not that they can't leverage them.

“

You have all those 24 Qualities within you, how often we tend to use each of them depends individually on who we are.

Where do managers come in? Help people work on these qualities through training and coaching.

”

James Bishop – Koru Consulting

By understanding these differences, we can support neurodivergent employees to develop in those areas. Here are some tips to develop those qualities highlighted previously

## Embracing neurodiversity. It's not just beneficial, its essential

People with autism and ADHD often bring unique perspectives and innovative problem-solving skills. Their ability to think outside the box can drive breakthrough ideas and creative solutions that set your organisation apart.

By fostering a culture that values diverse thinking styles, organisations can encourage collaboration between neurodivergent and neurotypical employees. This cooperation can lead to richer discussions and more comprehensive solutions, enhancing overall team performance.

Creating a neuro-inclusive environment empowers everyone to contribute their best work and reach their full potential. When individuals feel valued for their unique contributions, they are more engaged and productive.

# Rethinking how personality can help organisations value neurodivergence

## Allow for paradoxes in personality

Human beings are not marionettes tied to a defined structure. We are complex, diverse and often paradoxical. Extraversion is not a lack of Introversion, being tough does not mean forgoing empathy. Research has shown that neurodivergence is commonly associated with paradoxical personality traits. By measuring both ends separately, we can allow for these paradoxes to be highlighted, and for associated strengths to be leveraged.

## Recognise societal biases in what a desirable personality looks like

All traits have positive sides, and by measuring all traits in a balanced way, we can start to value traits that may be more commonly associated with certain forms of neurodivergence.

## Humans are dynamic, and personality is context dependent

We need to start paying proper attention to context when considering personality. Who someone is underneath can be very different to what they portray day-to-day which can be very different to how they behave under pressure. This is particularly important when we consider how individuals may be camouflaging their true selves. By conceptualising these personas discretely, we can start to truly understand how individuals behave contextually, and recognise hidden strengths being masked, or conscious efforts to amplify certain behaviours.

## Keep it straightforward and transparent

Certain neurodivergent conditions are associated with difficulties in understanding unclear or vague contexts. By keeping it clear and to the point, we can start to allow individuals to showcase their true and best selves.

## Supporting neurodivergent employees

**Understanding and acceptance:** Foster a culture of understanding and acceptance, where neurodivergent employees feel valued and empowered.

**Accommodations:** Provide appropriate accommodations to help neurodivergent individuals thrive in the workplace.

**Reducing stigma:** Challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma associated with neurodivergence.

## The future of this research

While this research focuses primarily on autism and ADHD, there is much to learn about other forms of neurodivergence, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Tourette syndrome. Further research is needed to understand how neurodivergent individuals experience workplace assessments and the challenges they face. By moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach, this research aims to create tailored adjustments that accommodate the unique needs of neurodivergent individuals.

Ultimately, the goal is to foster more inclusive workplaces where neurodivergent individuals can thrive, challenging outdated preconceptions and embracing a strengths-based approach to neurodivergence

***This research is about creating more welcoming workplaces where neurodivergent people can thrive. It's a call to rethink how we view neurodivergence and embrace a strengths-based approach that highlights the value neurodivergent individuals bring to the table.***

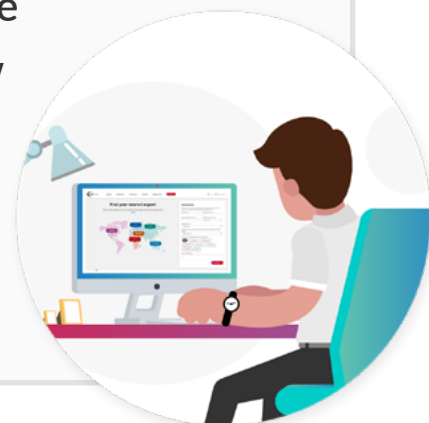


# Discover the psychometric revolution for working better together.



All your individuality. All your talent. All your potential. Creating more self-aware organisations who have the clarity and confidence to adapt their behaviour so they can perform at their best, is what our psychometrics are all about.

Get to know why organisations are switching to Lumina Spark for smarter, behavioural change with a precise and practical perspective on how their people, teams and leaders connect.



Just fancy exploring more of the trending behavioural challenges influencing outcomes right now? Take a look at what people are gathering for at our free community events.



# References

Allison, C., Auyeung, B., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2012). Toward brief “red flags” for autism screening: the short autism spectrum quotient and the short quantitative checklist in 1,000 cases and 3,000 controls. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 51(2), 202-212.

Schweitzer, J. B., Cummins, T. K., & Kant, C. A. (2001). The adult ADHD self-report scale (ASRSv1.1). *Medical Clinics of North America*, 85(3), 10-11.

Hull, L., Mandy, W., Lai, M. C., Baron-Cohen, S., Allison, C., Smith, P., & Petrides, K. V. (2019). Development and validation of the camouflaging autistic traits questionnaire (CAT-Q). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(3), 819-833.

Office for National Statistics . (2022, February 10). Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics. [Www.ons.gov.uk. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk/2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk/2021)

Sungsoo Ray Hong; Zampieri, Marcos; Hand, Brittany N.; Motti, Vivian; Chung, Dongjun; Uzuner, Ozlem (2024). “Collaborative Design for Job-Seekers with Autism: A Conceptual Framework for Future Research”

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). Autism in Australia. [Abs.gov.au; c=AU; o=Commonwealth of Australia; ou=Australian Bureau of Statistics. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0Main%20Features752015](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0Main%20Features752015)

Romualdez, A. M., Heasman, B., Walker, Z., Davies, J., & Remington, A. (2021). “People Might Understand Me Better”: Diagnostic Disclosure Experiences of Autistic Individuals in the Workplace. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0063>

New Survey by The Harris Poll Reveals Workplace Stigma for Neurodivergent Employees. (2023). [Understood.org. https://www.understood.org/en/press-releases/new-survey-by-the-harris-poll-reveals-workplace-stigma-for-neurodivergent](https://www.understood.org/en/press-releases/new-survey-by-the-harris-poll-reveals-workplace-stigma-for-neurodivergent)