



SPARK SNAPSHOT

Independent Autistic Adults

UPDATED | Data from Dec 2015 - Apr 2022



Simons Powering Autism Research



Welcome to the SPARK Snapshot

— a window into the autism journey of SPARK participants

The findings in this report were gathered from information provided by independent autistic adults participating in SPARK. This information is self-reported.

In this report, an “independent autistic adult” is defined as an individual with autism who is at least 18 years old and who does not have a legal guardian.

.....

SPARK uses both person-first and identity-first language. This means that we alternate between the use of the phrase "person with autism" and "autistic person." SPARK's language choices are determined by our community's preferences. We learned that most autistic adults enrolled in SPARK prefer identity-first language, while some prefer person-first language. As such, we primarily use identity-first language throughout this report. We also appreciate that there are different perspectives on this topic and respect that each individual has the right to refer to themselves as they choose.

.....

General information

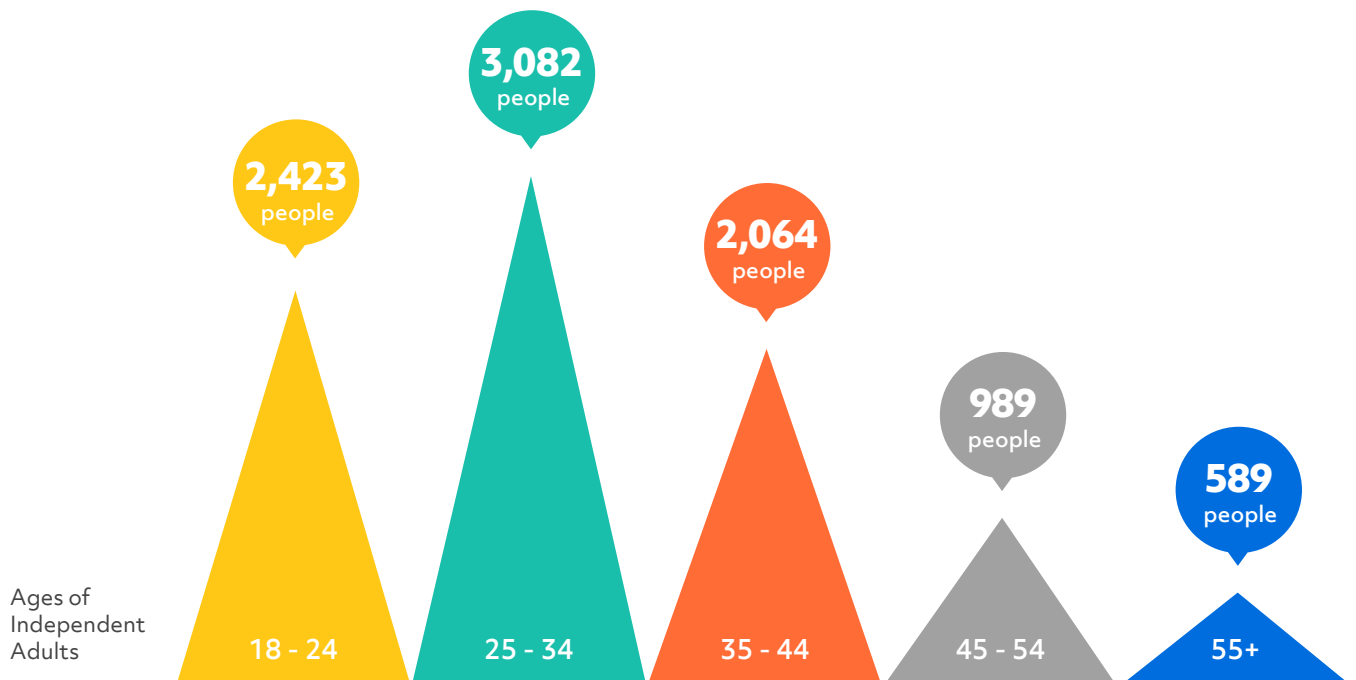
9,147

Number of independent autistic adults

The number of independent autistic adults participating in SPARK is larger than most other autism research studies in the United States.

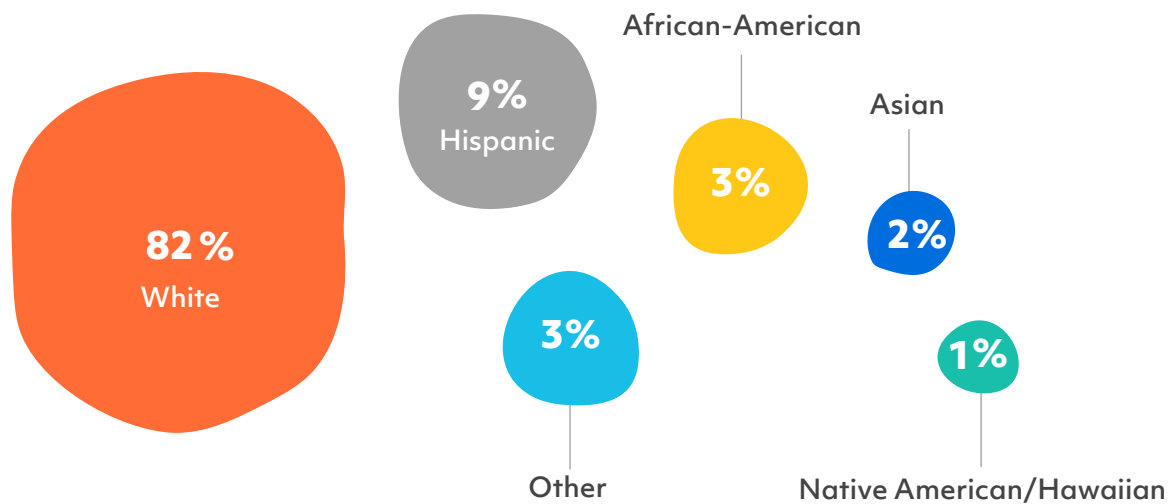
Age of independent adults

The majority of independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK are between the ages of 18 and 44. This is similar to the composition of other large studies of independent autistic adults.



General information

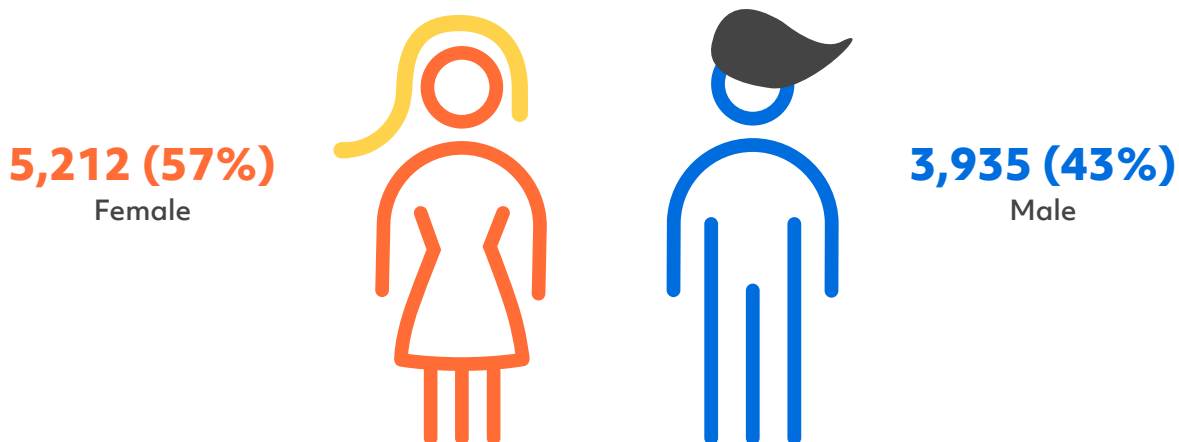
Race and ethnicity



Nine percent percent of independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK reported more than one race.

Sex (at birth)

The male to female ratio of independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK is nearly one to one.

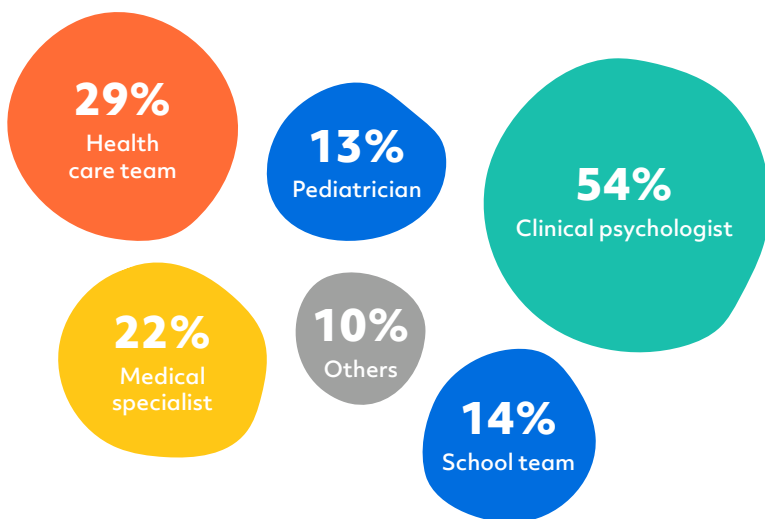
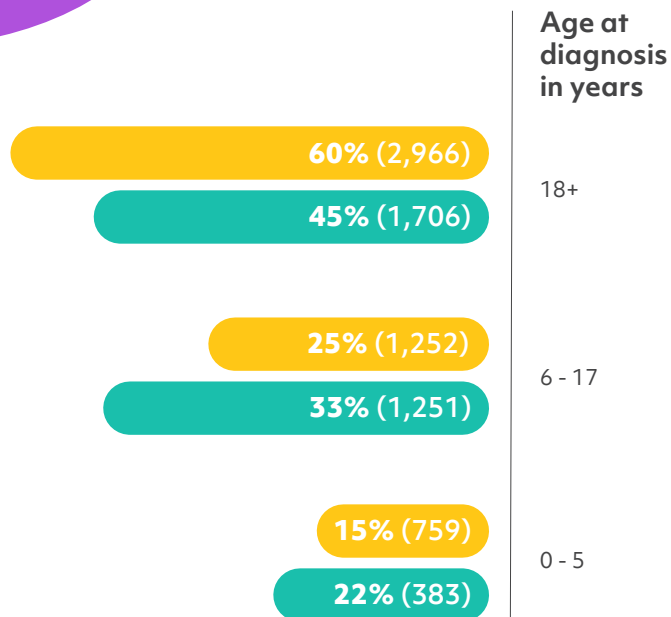


Diagnosis information

Age at diagnosis

Most females in SPARK were diagnosed in adulthood, whereas a little over half of males were diagnosed in childhood. The median age at diagnosis was 17 years - that is, half the people enrolled were diagnosed prior to 17 years, and half were diagnosed after 17 years.

● Female ● Male



Who made the diagnosis?

These percentages do not add up to 100 because participants were able to select more than one.

Relatives with autism

Over half the independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK reported that they have one or more relatives who also have a diagnosis of autism.

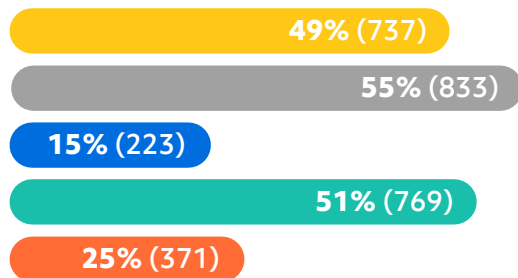


Mental health

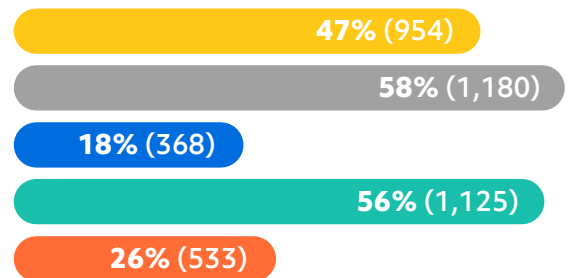
Anxiety and depression were the most common concerns reported by independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK. Age does not make a significant difference in the occurrence of mental health conditions. However, there are lower rates of diagnosis overall in older adults.

- ADHD
- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- OCD

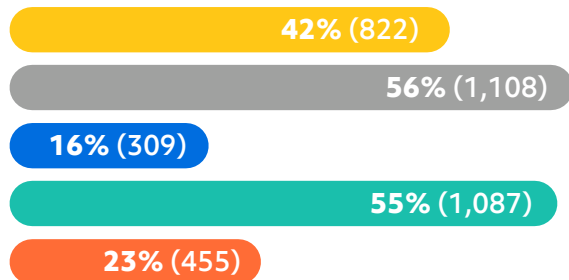
Age 18 - 24 (n=1,501)



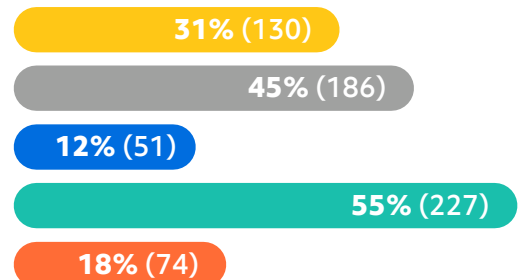
Age 25 - 34 (n=2,026)



Age 35 - 54 (n=1,972)



Age 55+ (n=413)



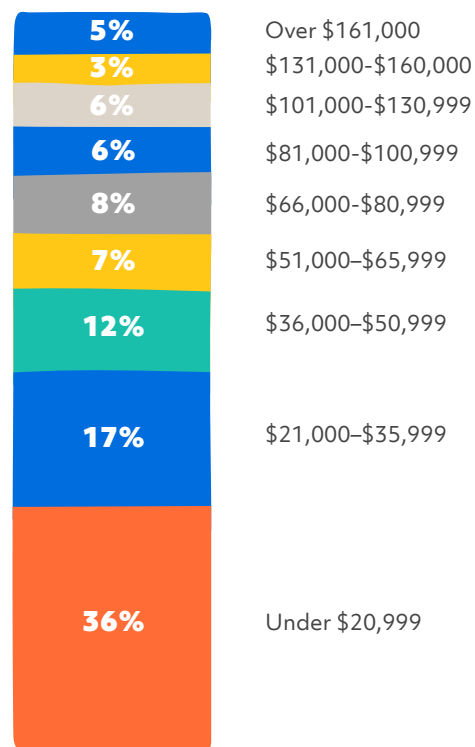
These percentages do not add up to 100 because participants were able to select more than one of these conditions.

The previous version of this report had an error in the percentages for the 35-54 age group.

Lifestyle

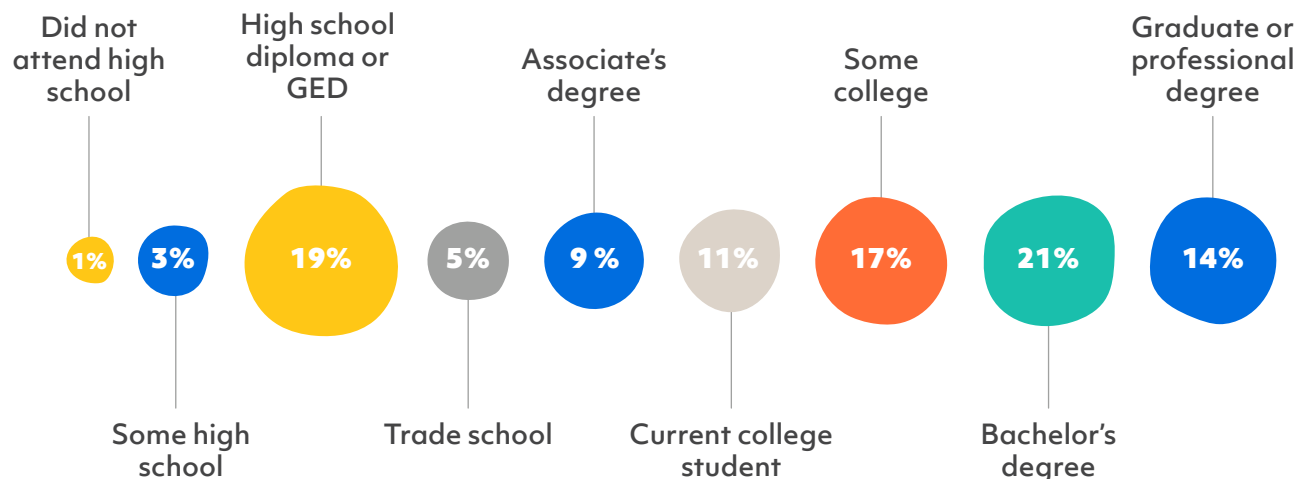
Household income

Employment income (e.g., salaries, wages, etc.) reported by independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK is lower than the national average for employed people. Other autism studies have found this as well.



Education

Around 50% of independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK have a degree or training beyond high school, including the 11% of participants who are currently enrolled in college.

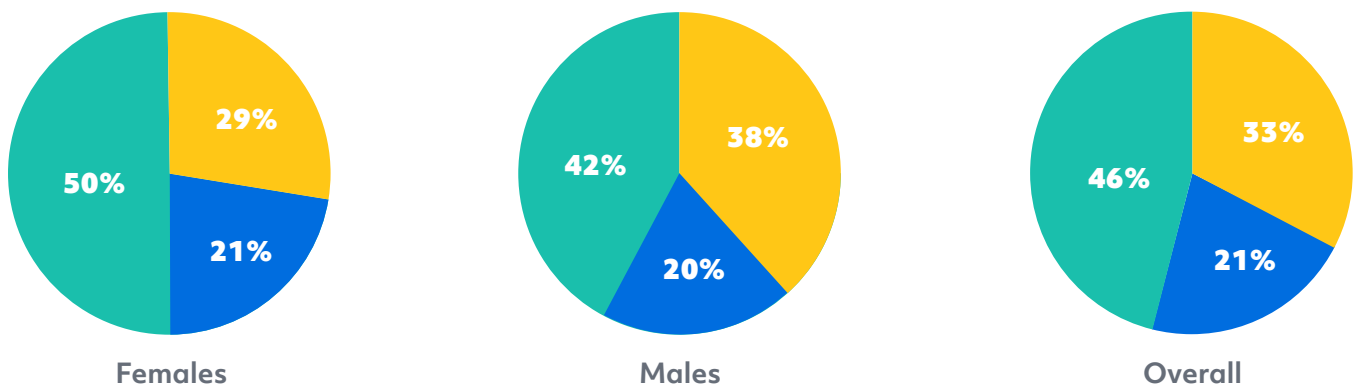


Employment

Over 50% of the independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK are employed either full time or part time.

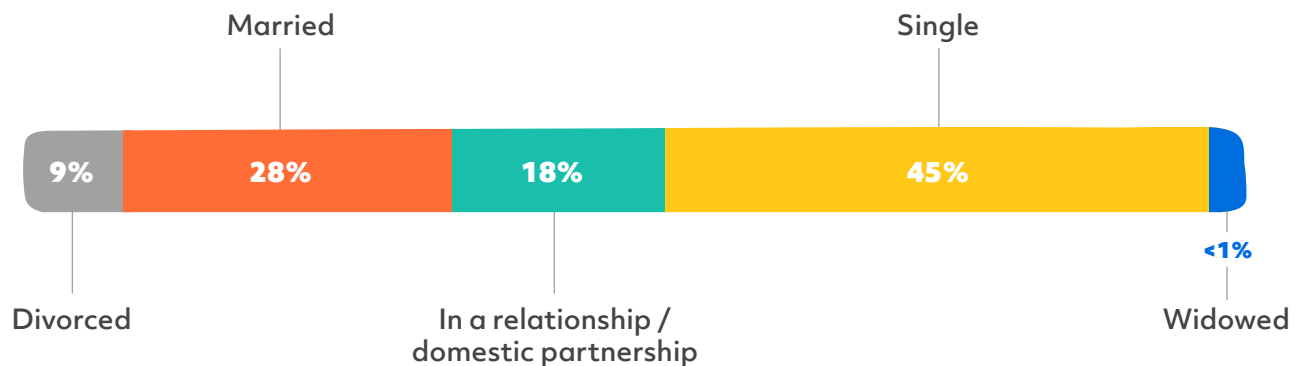
More female than male participants report being full-time caretakers.

- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Unable to work, unemployed, retired, or unpaid intern

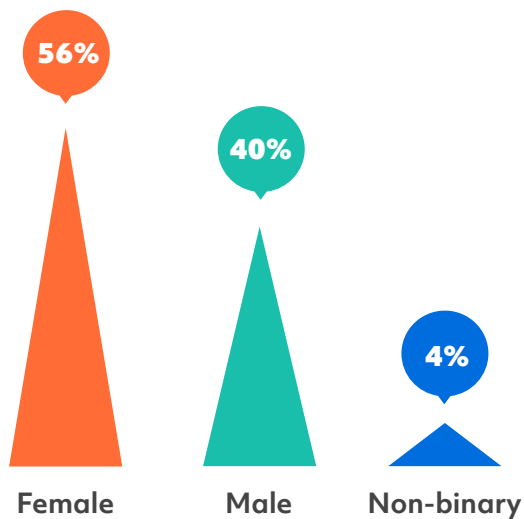


Marital status

A little less than half the independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK are single. Many are married or in a relationship.



Gender & sexuality

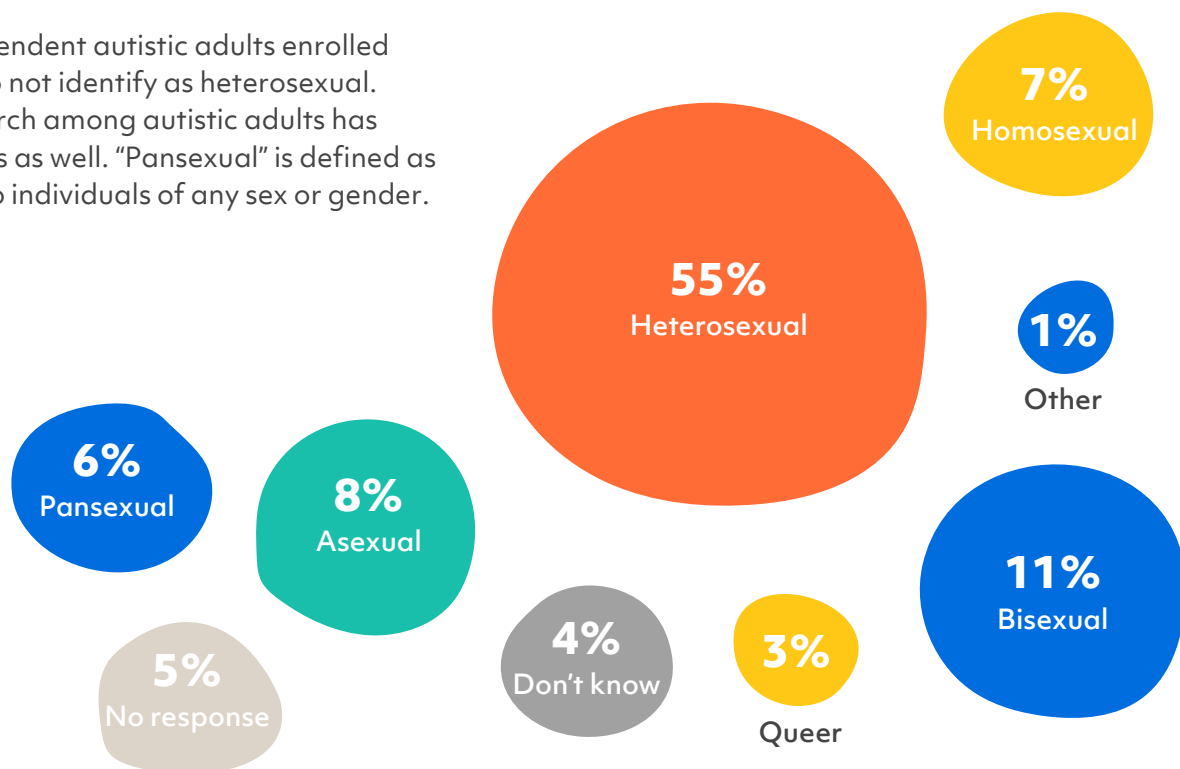


Gender identity

When asked about gender, 6% of independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK identified as a gender different than their sex at birth. This includes people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth (transgender) and/or whose gender is not strictly male or female (nonbinary).

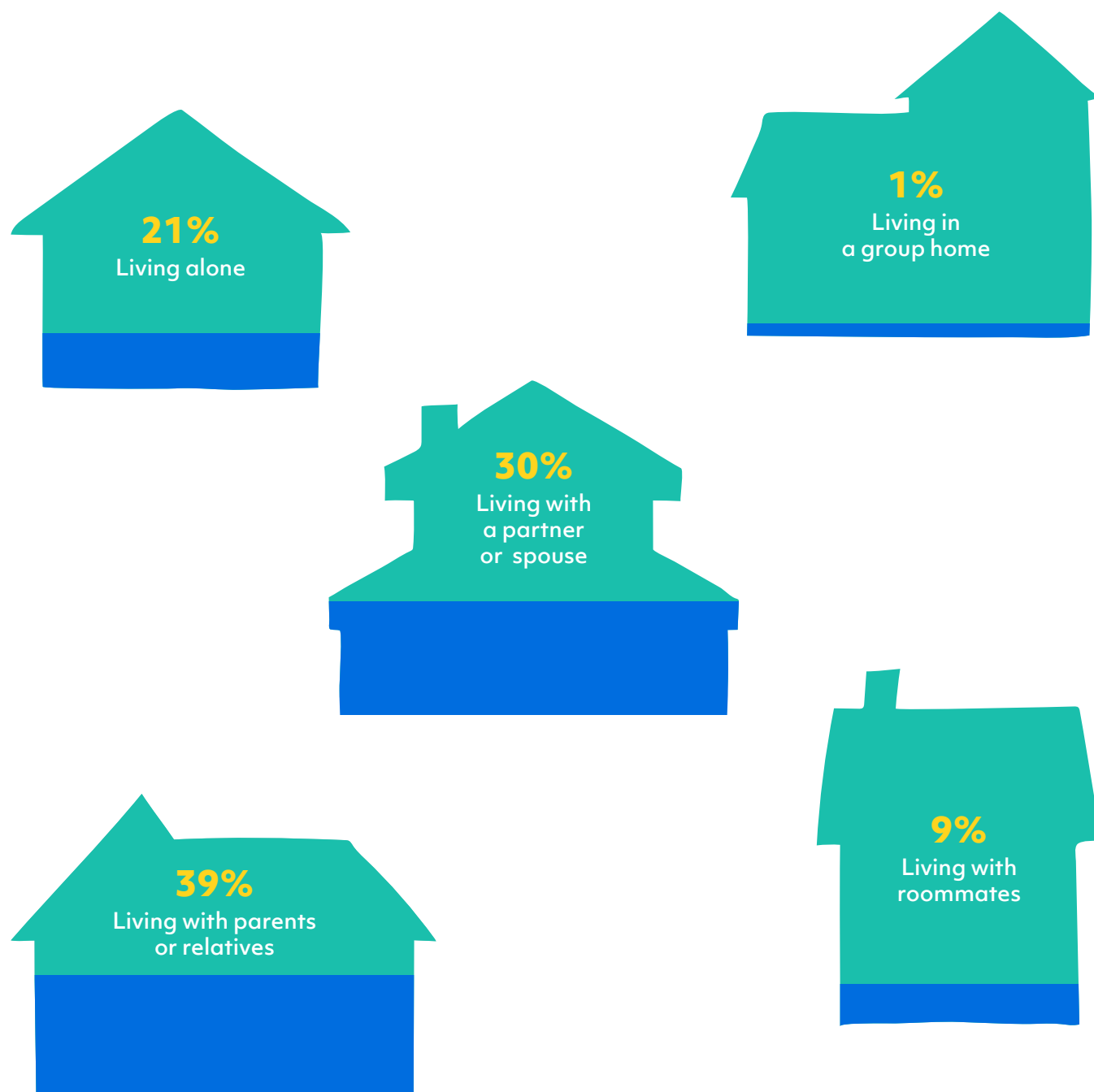
Sexual orientation

Many independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK do not identify as heterosexual. Other research among autistic adults has reported this as well. "Pansexual" is defined as attraction to individuals of any sex or gender.



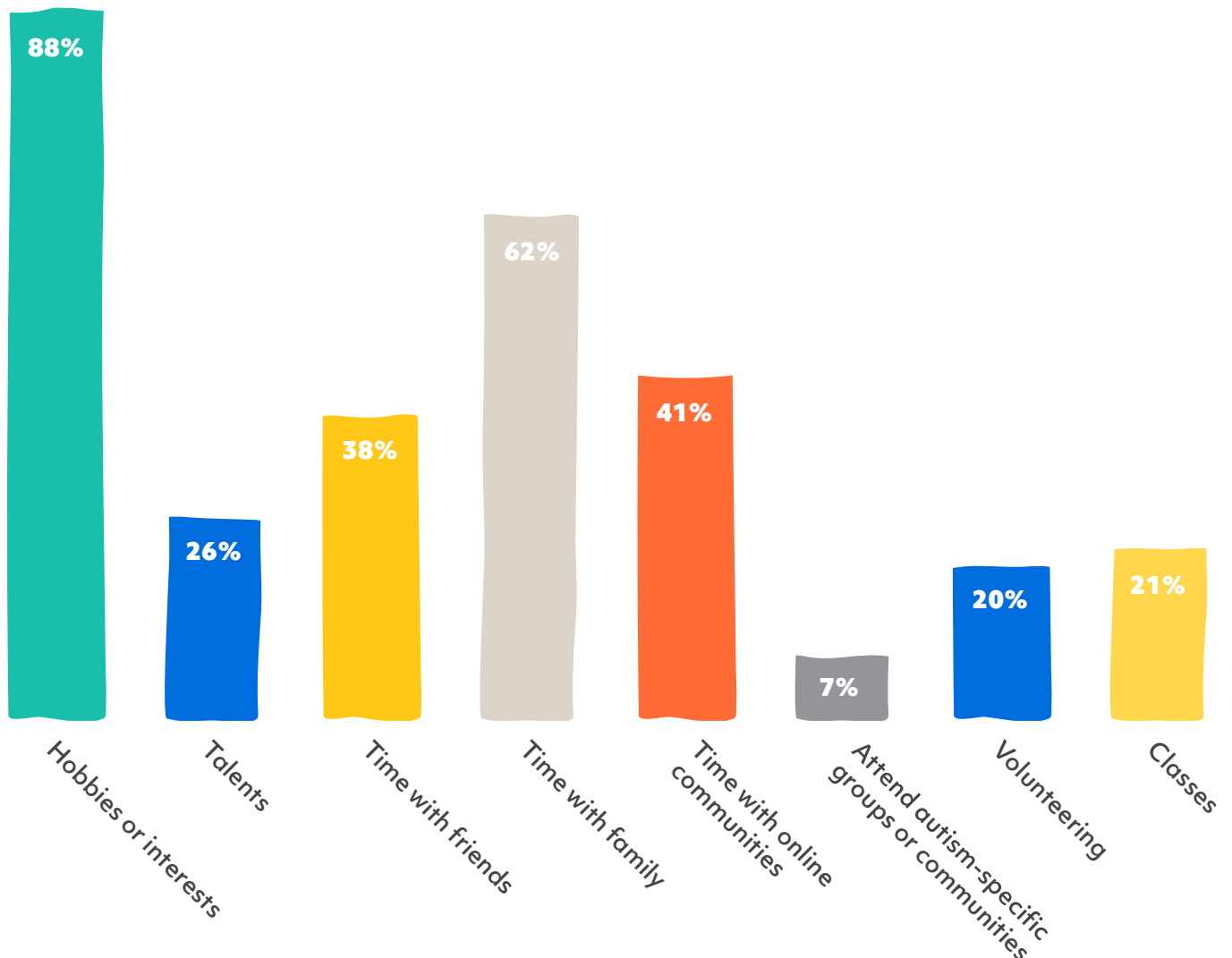
Housing

Most independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK live with a partner or spouse or a family member. A smaller number live alone, with roommates or in a group home.



What Independent Autistic Adults Enrolled in SPARK Do in Their Free Time

Most independent autistic adults enrolled in SPARK spend their free time engaging in their favorite hobbies or with their interests. Many also spend time with their family, friends, and online communities.



Did you know that as of April 2022,

113,890

people with autism are participating
in SPARK?

