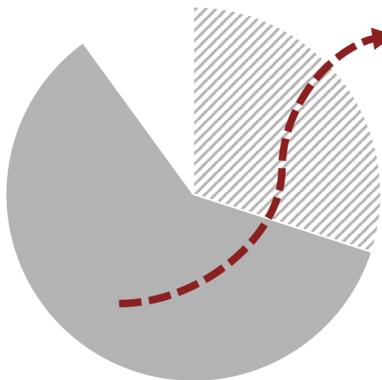


# Sensory reactivity symptoms & anxiety in autistic children

Keren MacLennan | Lauren Roach | Teresa Tavassoli



**60 – 90 %** of autistic people experience sensory reactivity symptoms<sup>1</sup>

Hyperreactivity has been found to link to anxiety<sup>2,3</sup>

Sensory hyporeactivity and seeking behaviour is not commonly researched

## Sensory reactivity subtypes<sup>4</sup>



**Hyperreactivity** → sensory sensitive. May be overly sensitive to sounds or touch

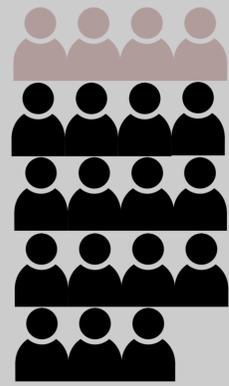


**Hyporeactivity** → sensory under or un-responsive. May not notice name being called or fail to tell if an object is hot



**Seeking behaviour** → sensory fascination. May stare at flashing lights or want to touch certain textures

## OUR STUDY AIMED TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SENSORY REACTIVITY SUBTYPES & ANXIETY IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN



We recruited **19** autistic children:

4 females | 15 males

Average age: **8.5** (range: 3 – 13 years)

Average IQ: **107.4** (range: 77 – 126)

We assessed sensory reactivity and anxiety using:

Parent report



Observation

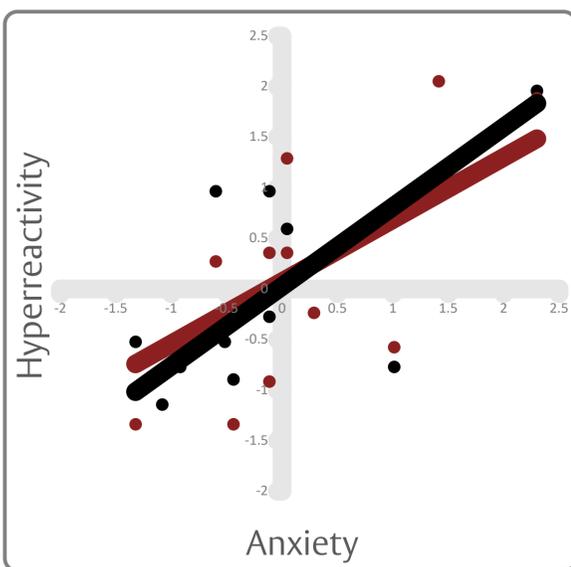


Self report

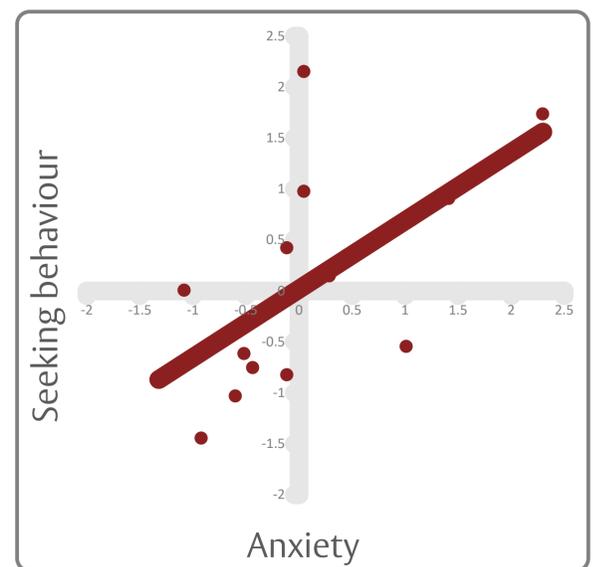


## RESULTS

1. Greater anxiety related to greater sensory hyperreactivity as reported by caregivers



2. Greater anxiety related to greater sensory seeking behaviour as reported by caregivers



3. Greater self reported social anxiety related to lower observed sensory hyporeactivity

4. Greater anxiety was related to a greater number of autistic traits

## The results suggest:

Sensory hyperactivity and seeking behaviour are associated with anxiety, and sensory hyporeactivity may have a relationship with social anxiety in autistic children

Further research should explore the role of sensory reactivity subtypes in the development of specific anxiety disorders

Want to participate in future research? Get in touch →

With thanks to the families who participated & Autism Berkshire for help in recruitment

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