

Gender differences in self-reported camouflaging in autistic and non-autistic adults

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Camouflaging involves using strategies to appear less autistic during social interactions, which can be deliberate or automatic. This study examined how much autistic and non-autistic men, women, and non-binary people (who have identities beyond the gender binary of male/female) reported camouflaging their autistic behaviours. We found that autistic women camouflage more than autistic men, but that there was no difference between how much non-autistic women and men use camouflaging strategies. This suggests that there is something about being autistic and female which increases camouflaging behaviours. There was no difference between camouflaging for non-binary autistic adults and autistic adults of other genders, although the number of autistic adults who took part in this research was very small. As camouflaging is associated with mental health problems, this suggests that autistic women are more at risk for these difficulties. It may also be harder for autistic women to receive an autism diagnosis and associated support than men. However, autistic men and non-binary people also camouflage at high levels, and so should also be considered at risk for these outcomes.