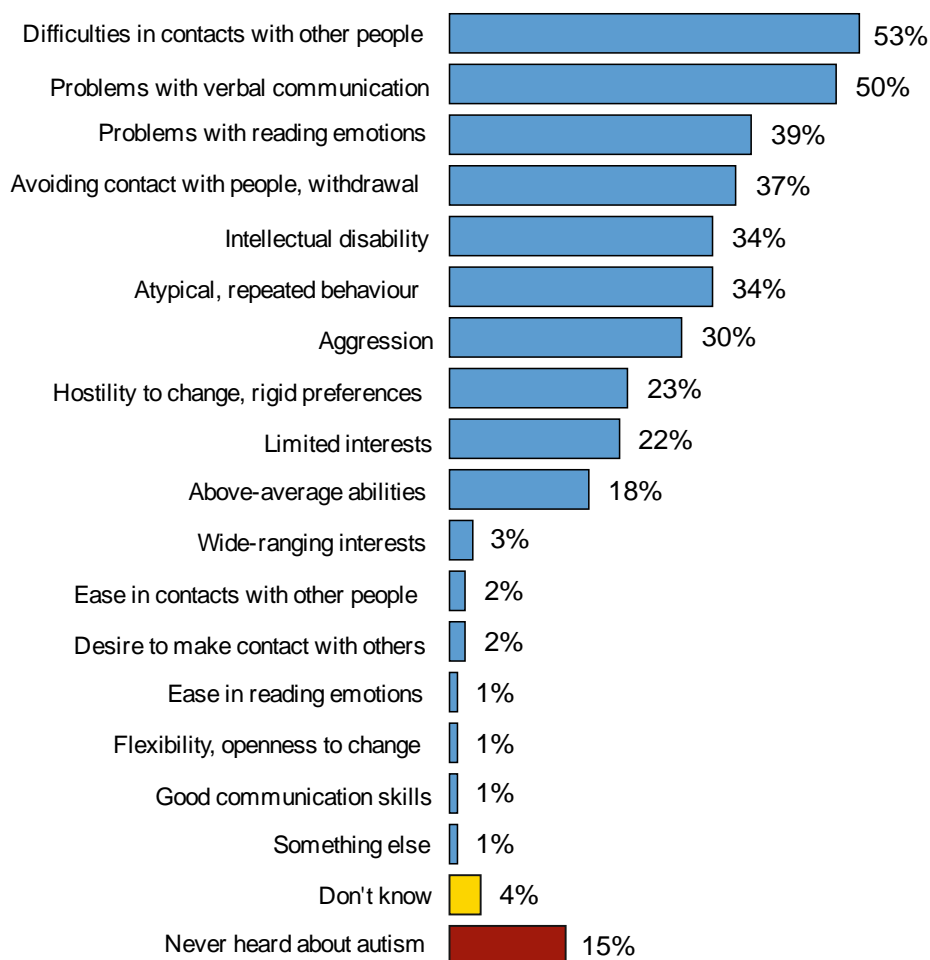


SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF AUTISM

Autism is a developmental dysfunction which is reflected in three spheres: impaired social relations, communication deficit and schematic pattern of behaviour. Strength of difficulties typical for autistic people and their level of functioning can vary, therefore the term “autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)” is used. Recently, the frequency of disorders of this kind has increased. Some research indicates that now they may affect one in 68 people.

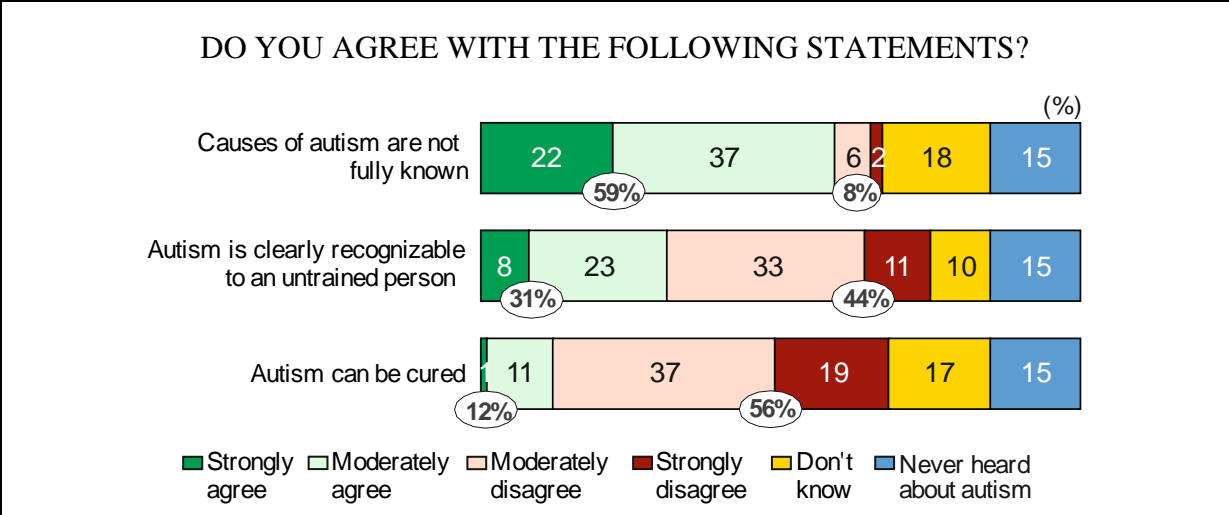
A vast majority of respondents (85%) have heard about autism. In total, 62% have had contact with an autistic person, usually via mass media, films or literature (47%) Less frequently, they know an autistic individual personally (35%).

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT AUTISM, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND? PLEASE SELECT ATTRIBUTES, BEHAVIOUR OR DISORDERS YOU ASSOCIATE WITH AUTISM



In public opinion, autism is associated primarily with difficulties in contact with others and with spoken communication problems. Less frequently, respondents associate this disorder with difficulties in reading emotions, refusal to make contact with other people or withdrawal. Almost a third think that autism involves atypical, repeated behaviour, mental disability and aggressive behaviour. Less frequently, such attributes as hostility to change, rigid preferences, limited interests and above-average capabilities are attributed to autistic people. Other patterns of behaviour, attributes or disorders were mentioned sporadically. It is worth mentioning that development of autistic people can sometimes be uneven: they are not able to perform some actions which are easy for their age group, but show above-average capabilities in other areas. People with special abilities are called savants and constitute from 5% to 15% of autistic people.

Diagnosing autism takes several steps and is complex. It is especially difficult among young children; their behaviour may be the same as that of children without this type of disorder. In spite of the generally correct associations, the plurality of respondents (44% v. 31%) think that autism is not obvious to an untrained person. The majority of respondents correctly believe that causes of autism are not fully known (59%) and that the disease is not curable (56%).



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Social perception of autism", March 2015. Fieldwork for national sample: March 2015, N=1062. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.