

Research Briefs provide easy-to-read summaries of our original research publications.

## Original Article

### **Consistency Between Parent Report and Direct Assessment of Development in Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Delays: Does Sex Assigned at Birth Matter?**

Published in the Peer-reviewed Journal  
**Autism Research**

The full article can be found here:  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2927>

## Key Terms

**Parent-diagnostician consistency:** The level of agreement between parent-report and diagnostic professionals' observations of child development

**Receptive language:** The ability to understand spoken language and gestures

**Expressive language:** The ability to communicate using sounds, spoken language, and/or gestures

**Fine motor skills:** The coordination of tasks that require use of the hands and fingers (for example, turning a page in a book; coloring)

## Why was this study conducted?

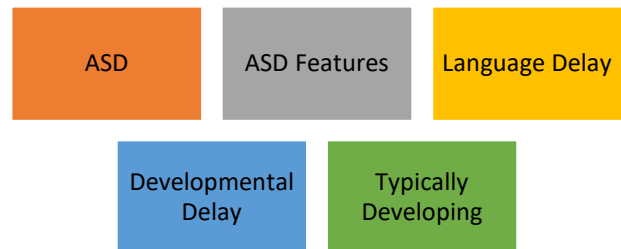
- Males are more likely than females to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with nearly 1 in 23 boys being diagnosed with ASD compared to only 1 in 88 girls. Recent research suggests that **characteristics associated with ASD may look different in males and females.**
- Previous research suggests that parents are reliable reporters of their child's development. However, research has not considered other variables that might affect parent report such as child age and sex assigned at birth (SAB).
- This study aimed to examine whether consistency between parent-report and direct observation from a professional diagnostician differed based on the child's sex assigned at birth.

## What did the study involve?

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Toddlers were evaluated as part of a universal early screening model.

Parents completed a standardized interview about their child's adaptive functioning. Diagnostic professionals completed a direct observation of child skills using a standardized measure.



- Toddlers were categorized by clinicians into 5 diagnostic categories.
- Parent-diagnostician consistency in measuring language and fine motor skills was examined.





## What were the main study findings?

- In the full sample, consistency between parent report and direct observation was high.
- When examined by diagnostic subgroups and controlling for child age, sex assigned at birth, and non-verbal IQ, the following patterns were observed:

Parent-reported skills lower than skills observed through direct testing



- **Fine motor skills** and **receptive language skills** in ASD, ASD Features, and Developmental Delay subgroups
- **Expressive language skills** in **females** diagnosed with ASD

Parent-reported skills higher than skills observed through direct testing



- **Expressive language skills** in **males** diagnosed with ASD

## What were the study's conclusions?

- Agreement between parent report and direct observation may differ depending on child diagnosis.
- Within children with ASD, parents of females were more likely to underreport expressive language relative to parents of males. This may reflect gender differences in ASD presentation or differing parental expectations for males and females.
- Potential disagreement between parent report and direct observation should be considered by clinicians and researchers working with individuals with ASD.

### Original Article Citation

James, S., Hallur, S., Anbar, J., Matthews, N., Pierce, K., & Smith, C. J. (2023). Consistency between parent report and direct assessment of development in toddlers with autism spectrum disorder and other delays: Does sex assigned at birth matter? *Autism Research*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2927>