

## Prevalence of FASD compared with other congenital disabilities

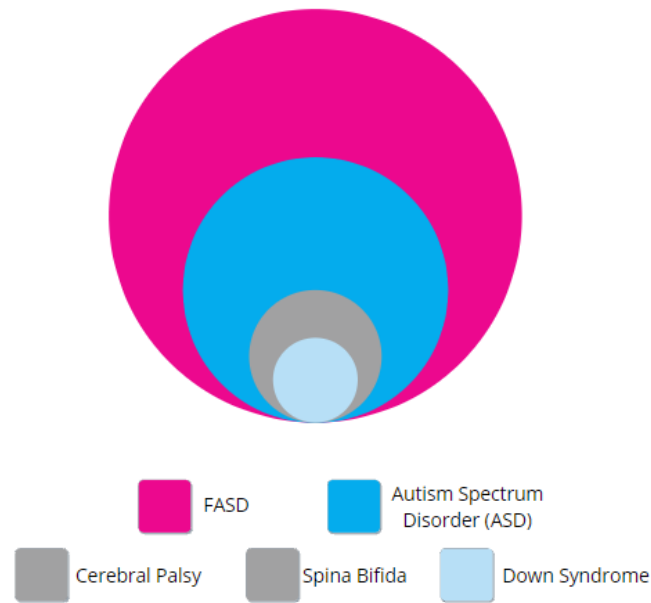
The prevalence of FASD in the general Australian population is, unfortunately, not yet known. Based on research from the United States and Canada, scientists believe that in Australia FASD is **twice as common** as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, and Down Syndrome combined.

The National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (NOFASD) completed a survey on the impacts of the frequency of missed or incomplete FASD diagnoses amongst stakeholders. 75% of respondents diagnosed with FASD had also received a diagnosis of ADHD prior to a diagnosis of FASD being confirmed – this aligns with data from the FASDAR Biannual data Summary Report, with 71.2% reporting a co-morbidity of ADHD. Whilst research suggests a diagnosis of FASD is associated with an increased risk for ADHD, the journey from an ADHD diagnosis to a later diagnosis of FASD, indicates that FASD may not have been screened for, and potentially misdiagnosed initially.

A systematic review and meta-analysis reported that Autism Spectrum Disorder appears to be present in 2.6% of children with FASD (Lange et al., 2018). Recent FASDAR data suggests 25.1% of the group have reported co-existing ASD.

Most individuals with FASD will live with at least one co-morbidity, as a recent Lancet review (Popova, et al., 2016), identified 428 comorbid conditions co-occurring in individuals with FASD, spanning across 18 of 22 chapters of the ICD-10. Mental health issues are reported in 50-90% (Pei et al., 2011), substance use issues 50-70% (Popova, et al., 2019), risk of suicidality; 25.9% (Flannigan et al., 2022), trauma; 58% (Price et al., 2017), and involvement with youth justice system; 36% (Bower et al., 2018).





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Flannigan, K., Pei, J., McLachlan, K., Harding, K., Mela, M., Cook, J., Badry, D., & McFarlane, A. (2022). Responding to the Unique Complexities of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *Frontiers in psychology*, *12*, 778471. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.778471>

Lange, S.; Rehm, J.; Anagnostou, E.; Popova, S. Prevalence of externalizing disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorders among children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Biochem. Cell Biol.* **2018**, *96*, 241–251.

Pei, J., Denys, K., Hughes, J., & Rasmussen, C. (2011). Mental health issues in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Mental Health*, *20*(5), 473–483. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638237.2011.577113>

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Australian prevalence statistics (approximate):

Disability/ Syndrome	Prevalence	Source
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)	2 – 5%	<p>The Australian Medical Association states:</p> <p>“Few accurate data on the prevalence of FASD in Australia is available but it is estimated that FASD affects roughly between 2% and 5% of the population in the United States”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="https://ama.com.au/position-statement/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd-2016">https://ama.com.au/position-statement/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd-2016</a></li> </ul> <p>“Based on the most current research, the estimated prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in the general Canadian population is 4%”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Prevalence-2-Issue-Paper-FINAL.pdf">https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Prevalence-2-Issue-Paper-FINAL.pdf</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/Prevalence-1-Issue-Paper-FINAL.pdf">https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/Prevalence-1-Issue-Paper-FINAL.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	1.5 – 2.5%	<p>Current research estimates 1 in 70 Australian individuals are on the autism spectrum. When comparing this to international trends and data, it is believed this could be closer to 1 in 40.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) 2024- <a href="https://www.aspect.org.au/news/at-least-1-in-40-australians-are-autistic">https://www.aspect.org.au/news/at-least-1-in-40-australians-are-autistic</a></li> <li>▪ Rasheed Z. Autism in Australia: Understanding, challenges, and support. Int J Health Sci (Qassim). 2023 Sep-Oct;17(5):1-4. PMID: 37692992; PMCID: PMC10484064.</li> <li>▪ Randall, M., Sciberras, E., Brignell, A., Ihsen, E., Efron, D., Dissanayake, C., &amp; Williams, K. (2016). Autism spectrum disorder: Presentation and prevalence in a nationally representative Australian sample. <i>Australian &amp; New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry</i>, 50(3), 243–253. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867415595287">https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867415595287</a></li> </ul>



Spina Bifida	0.15%	<p>Since the increase in folic acid supplements during pregnancy, Neural Tube Defects (NTD) such as Spina Bifida, have reduced to approximately 1.5 per 1000 births.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ D'Antoine H, Bower C. Folate Status and Neural Tube Defects in Aboriginal Australians: the Success of Mandatory Fortification in Reducing a Health Disparity. <i>Curr Dev Nutr.</i> 2019 Jun 18;3(8)</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/neural-tube-defects-australia/summary">https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/neural-tube-defects-australia/summary</a></li> </ul>
Cerebral Palsy	0.14%	<p>The Australian CP Register found 1 in 700 children in Australia are born with CP (2023).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="https://cpregister.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-ACPR-Report.pdf">https://cpregister.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-ACPR-Report.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Down Syndrome	0.05%	<p>It is estimated that 1 in every 1,158 individuals born in Australia will have Down syndrome. This means for every 10,000 people, there are 5.14 people with Down syndrome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ de Graaf G., Skladzien E., Buckley F., Skotko B. G. (2022). Estimation of the number of people with Down syndrome in Australia and New Zealand. <i>Genetics in Medicine</i>. Published online: October 03, 2022. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gim.2022.08.029">doi:10.1016/j.gim.2022.08.029</a></li> <li>▪ Down Syndrome Australia: <a href="https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/about-down-syndrome/statistics/population-statistics/">https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/about-down-syndrome/statistics/population-statistics/</a></li> </ul>

For more information visit [www.nofasd.org.au](http://www.nofasd.org.au)

