

Genes linked to autism also common in general population

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The same genes involved in predisposing people to autism appear to influence social skills in the wider population, suggesting that the autism spectrum has no clear cut-off point, scientists have discovered.

Researchers have previously shown that autism is linked not just to one or two powerful genes, but to the combined effect of many small genetic changes.

The latest findings, published in *Nature Genetics*, suggest that social charm, empathy and the ability to make friends is about more than just practice and upbringing, but is also affected by how many of these autism risk gene variants we possess.

Dr Elise Robinson, from Harvard University and a lead author on the paper, said: "This is the first study that specifically shows that ... factors that we have unambiguously associated with autism are also very clearly associated with social communication differences in the general population."

Rather than viewing a person as either having or not having such a disorder, Robinson believes our social skills are better viewed as sitting on a sliding scale across the whole population.

[Autism](#) spectrum disorders are linked with a range of behaviours, including difficulties in communicating with others, maintaining friendships and empathising.

"Across the genome, [around] 30% of the common inherited genetic influences on ASDs [autism spectrum disorders] are shared with the common inherited influences on social communication behaviour across the population," said Robinson.

Read full, original post: [Autism spectrum has no clear cut-off point, research suggests](#)