

**SPOTTED**

# Spotted around the web: Diagnosing autism in a pandemic, clinical trial recruitment, Ph.D. pay gap

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## Research roundup

- Children who are later diagnosed with autism may show sharp declines in how often they gaze at adult faces between 6 and 36 months of age. *Child Development*
- Researchers designed a social-network platform for adolescents on the spectrum by engaging users and their parents. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*
- Nearly 80 percent of autistic children in the United States have an additional mental health diagnosis, according to a survey of caregivers. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*
- Some autistic adults describe hoarding and self-injurious behaviors as emotion self-regulation strategies. *Autism*
- Neuroscientists have a role in environmental conservation because the natural world is a source of a biological diversity and a place of respite, some experts argue. *eNeuro*
- The physiological function of the protein tau, linked to autism and Alzheimer's disease, is not known, which makes it difficult to treat its effects. *Science*
- Nonverbal communication patterns in infants with a family history of autism may help predict an autism diagnosis. *Autism Research*
- Children are difficult to recruit into clinical psychiatry trials because they may not meet inclusion criteria, be interested or want to alter their current therapy. *Trials*
- Levels of the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) appear to increase in the left parietal lobe of autistic children as they grow, whereas they start high and stay steady in non-autistic children. *Autism Research*
- Marmosets may be better animal models than rodents for brain and neurodevelopmental research. *ILAR Journal*

## Science and society

- The pay gap between men and women scientists who land a permanent job after their postdoctoral work stands at \$22,000, according to a survey of scientists in the U.S. and Canada who received their Ph.D. in the past three years. *Nature*
  - The isolation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has clouded parents' and doctors' ability to recognize social difficulties in young children that might normally lead to evaluation for autism. *The New York Times*
  - Two recent films feature different takes on autistic people and have aroused very different reactions from the autism community. *The Hollywood Reporter*
  - U.S. National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins has publicly apologized for the structural racism that persists in biomedical research. *Science*
  - The Autism Science Foundation plans to hold its annual Day of Learning virtually on 22 April at no cost. *Autism Science Foundation*
  - The judge in the criminal case against Alek Minassian, who drove his van into a crowd, killing 10 people in 2018 in Toronto, Canada, ruled that autism could not be used as a defense. *Toronto Star*
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