

People with autism sometimes struggle to understand speech, especially when there is a lot of background noise. Researchers believe this is because individuals with autism have difficulty integrating information from different senses, such as seeing and hearing. In this study, researchers compared 496 adults with autism to 373 adults without autism. They conducted a test where participants heard a speech sound and saw a face saying something different (the McGurk effect). This effect demonstrates how what we see can influence what we hear. In contrast to previous studies with children, the researchers found no differences between the two groups of adults. Both people with and without autism were equally influenced by seeing the facial expression while hearing the speech sound. This suggests that adults with autism can handle integrating information from different senses as well as adults without autism. However, the researchers did find that older participants, both with and without autism, were more strongly influenced by seeing the face. This may be because older people have poorer hearing, making seeing the face more important for understanding speech. It appears that multisensory integration plays a compensatory role as people age. The results paint a positive picture of the development of individuals with autism. They show that the differences in multisensory processing found in children with autism are no longer present in adulthood. This is encouraging as it demonstrates that adults with autism can handle integrating information from different senses just as well. The researchers also emphasize the importance of further research among adults with autism, as many previous studies have primarily focused on children.