

Emotion regulation supports: What do autistic people want?

Background

Emotion regulation is defined as "the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals" (Thompson, 1994, p. 27-28).

Autistic individuals regularly undertake emotion regulation supports to support their engagement. Despite this there is limited knowledge on the autistic community's perspective on supports, the acceptability of these supports and what should be included within a support.

Aim

This study sought to determine the crucial elements as defined by the autistic community. We sought to understand their preferred future practices and pinpoint crucial elements for incorporating into emotion regulation support.

Method

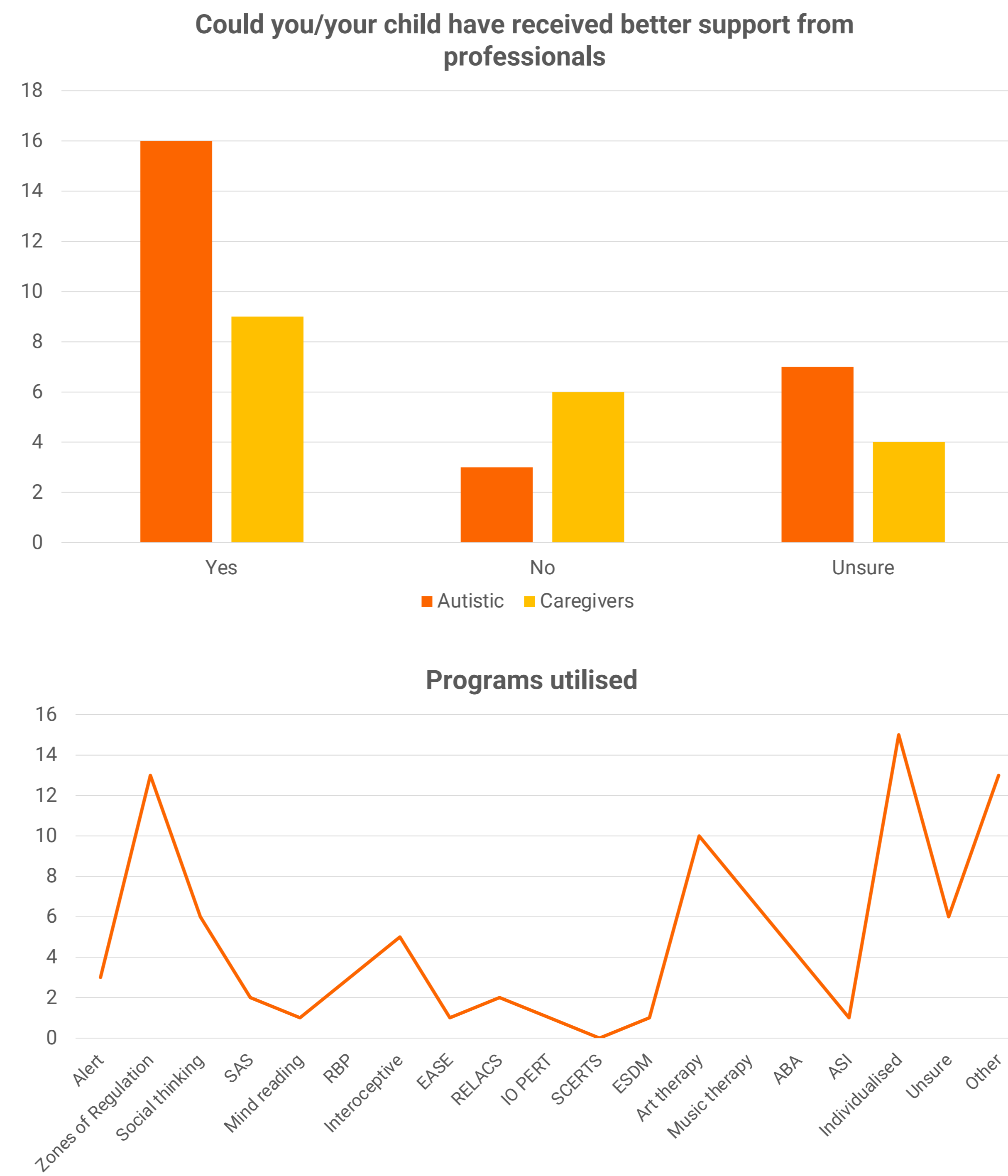
An online survey, co-developed with autistic people, featured questions on their experiences, accessing service providers, different programs available, emotion regulation supports, and common skills/strategies learnt in supports.

Example questions included:

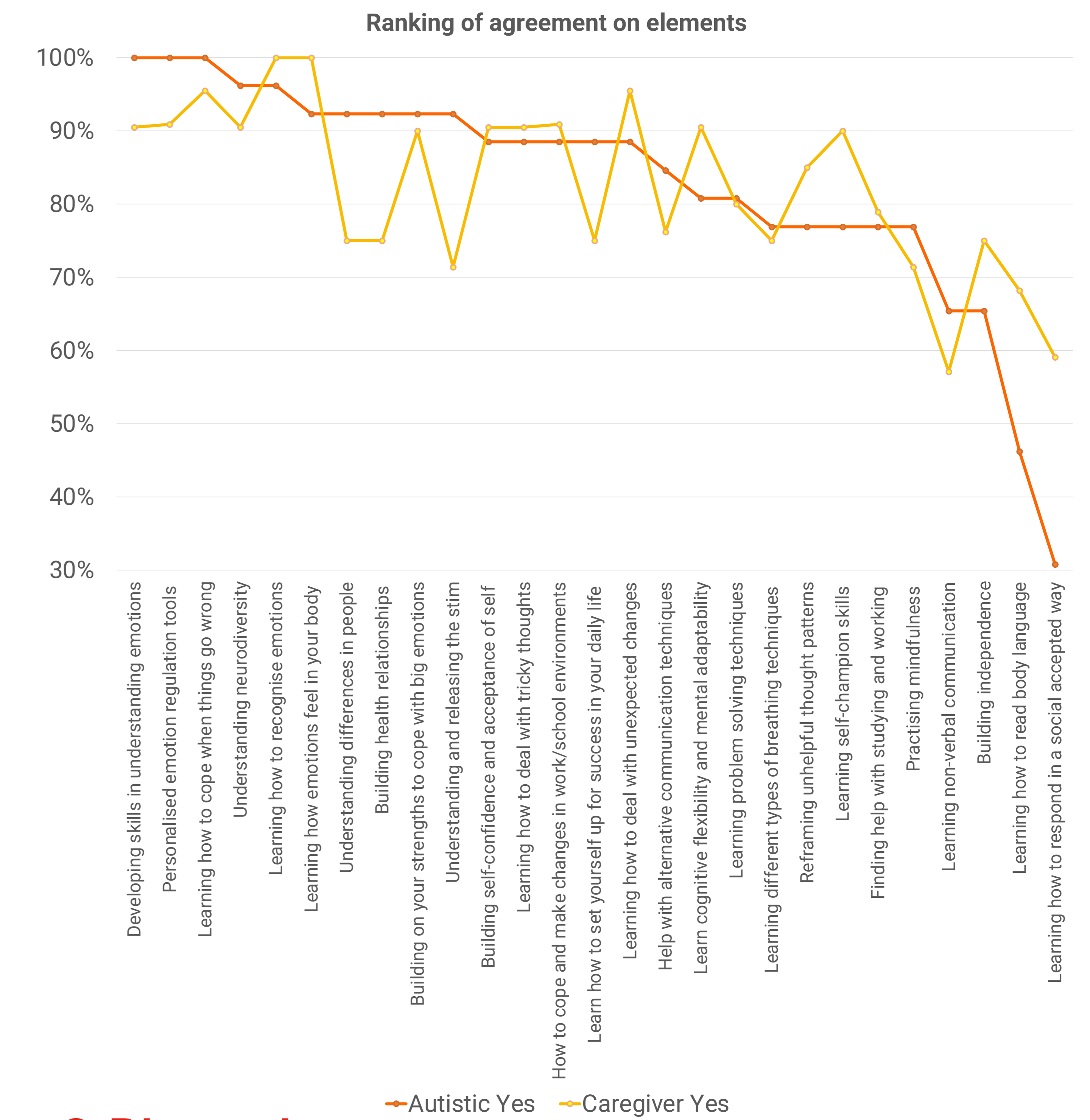
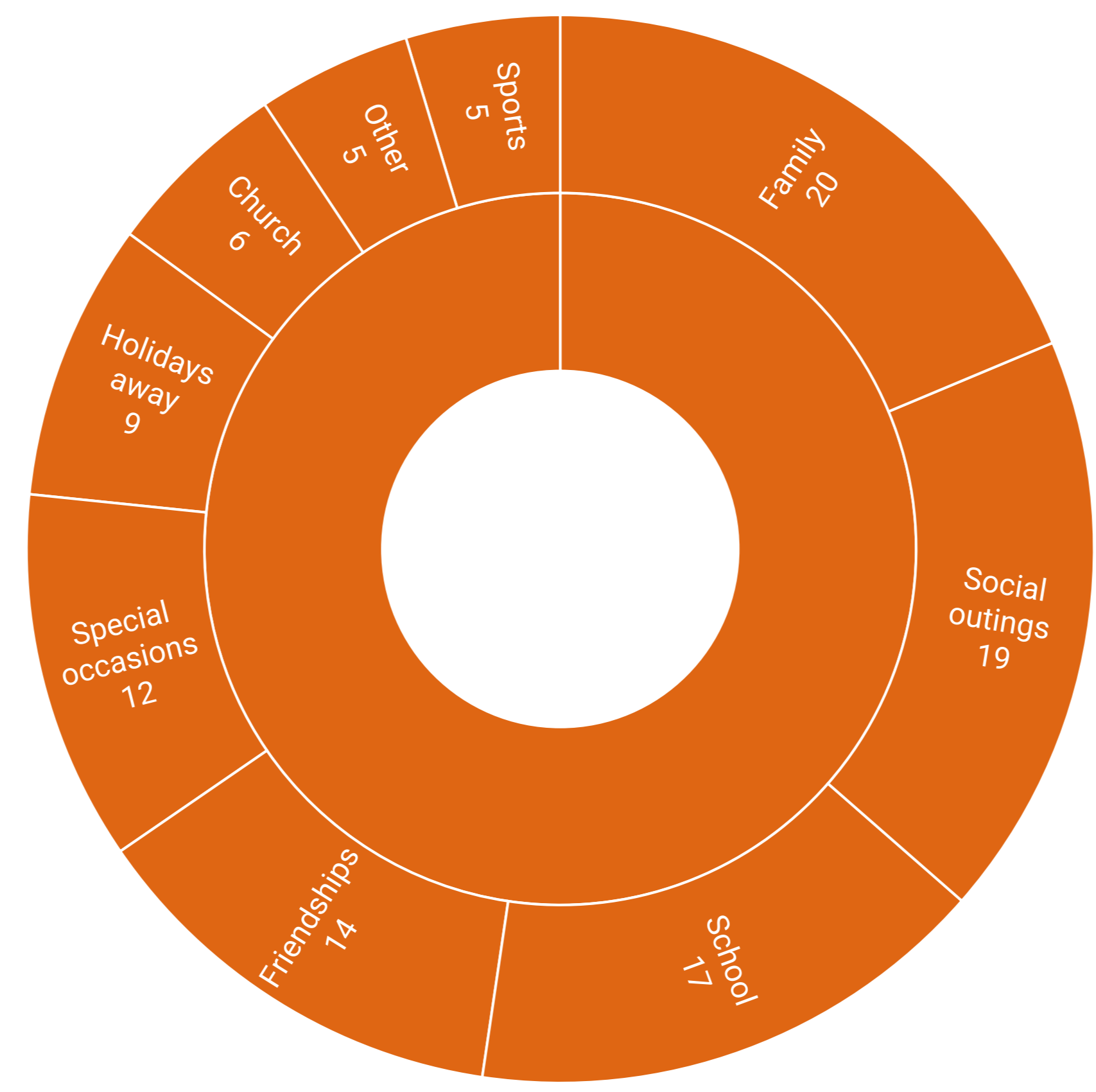
- what do you believe should or should not be included in supports;
- did the supports help you learn to manage your emotions and build on your strengths;
- did the support help you participate in activities you wanted to?

Results

- Forty-five (45) autistic individuals and caregivers participated in the online survey.
- 25 participants reported that professionals could have provided better support.
- Majority agreement (90%+) on 7 elements for inclusion by both groups
- Majority agreement (90%+) on 10 elements for inclusion by autistic participants
- Majority agreement (90%+) on 13 elements for inclusion by caregivers
- The most utilised emotion regulation program was individualised (15), Zones of regulation (13) and art therapy (10)
- Working on emotion regulation increased participation with the family by 41%, social outings by 39%, school by 35%.



Working on emotion regulation increased participation in the following areas?



Discussion

This study's findings offer a nuanced exploration into the perspectives of autistic people and their caregivers regarding emotion regulation supports. A key implication of this research is that it reveals the diverse viewpoints within the autistic community, adding complexity to the discourse on emotion regulation.

Our analysis underscores the need for tailored approaches in developing emotion regulation support practices. By identifying essential and undesired elements, our study provides practical guidance for refining existing strategies and informs the design of future interventions. This understanding is pivotal in enhancing the quality and relevance of emotion regulation support for autistic people.

