

Evidence-Based ADHD Facts

The Anti-Ableist ADHD Media Coalition

1. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is not a new medical condition, the first clinical report of ADHD was published in 1775¹.
2. Analysis from multiple studies has suggested that 2.5% of adults have ADHD². ADHD is a highly genetic condition³, which usually requires environmental triggers such as extreme deprivation⁴ to cause altered brain development.
3. When made by an appropriate clinician, a diagnosis of ADHD is well-defined and valid at all ages⁵.
4. It is *not* proven that ADHD is over-diagnosed in adults in the UK.
 - Studies in other countries, in children and adolescents⁶, are not a useful comparator to adult ADHD diagnoses in the UK.
 - The increases in diagnosis rate are not a useful tool to measure ADHD prevalence. The impact of lockdown during the pandemic⁷, increased public awareness (partly due to the development of social media platforms such as TikTok^{8,9}) and the large population of undiagnosed ADHD adults are the main drivers.
5. It is not 'easy' to obtain a diagnosis of ADHD. It has been established that there are cultural and structural barriers in the NHS¹⁰ to obtaining an ADHD diagnosis, and that better education and understanding of ADHD at the level of primary care¹¹ is needed.
6. Whilst there currently are no available objective tests for ADHD, this does not mean that there is no scientific evidence for detectable differences in the brain of people with ADHD compared to the general population.
 - Psychological tests have reported that people with ADHD have moderate impairments in multiple areas of psychological testing, including working memory, reaction time variability, response inhibition, planning and organisation¹² and small to moderate difficulties with abstract problem solving, focused attention, sustained attention and verbal memory¹³.
 - Studies using scans of the brain have identified that multiple brain areas in ADHD have altered anatomy^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20}, function^{21, 22, 23, 24} and connectivity^{25, 26} compared to the general population:
7. ADHD medication is effective in around 80%²⁷ of people with ADHD, and has been shown to make ADHD brains function in a way that is more like a non-ADHD brain²⁸.
8. ADHD is a condition that is associated with significant stigma, both societal^{29, 30} and internal³¹.
9. The burden of ADHD is significant. ADHD is associated with learning difficulties, school dropout and underachievement at work²⁹, chronic fatigue³⁰, relationship difficulties and intimate partner violence³¹, increased risk of a variety of addictions^{32, 33, 34}, financial problems³⁵, increased traffic accidents³⁶, an increased number of suicide attempts and self-harm^{37, 38}, and increased criminality^{39, 40}.
10. Research estimated that the economic burden to society of ADHD was approximately £18,000-20,000 per person, per year^{41, 42}.