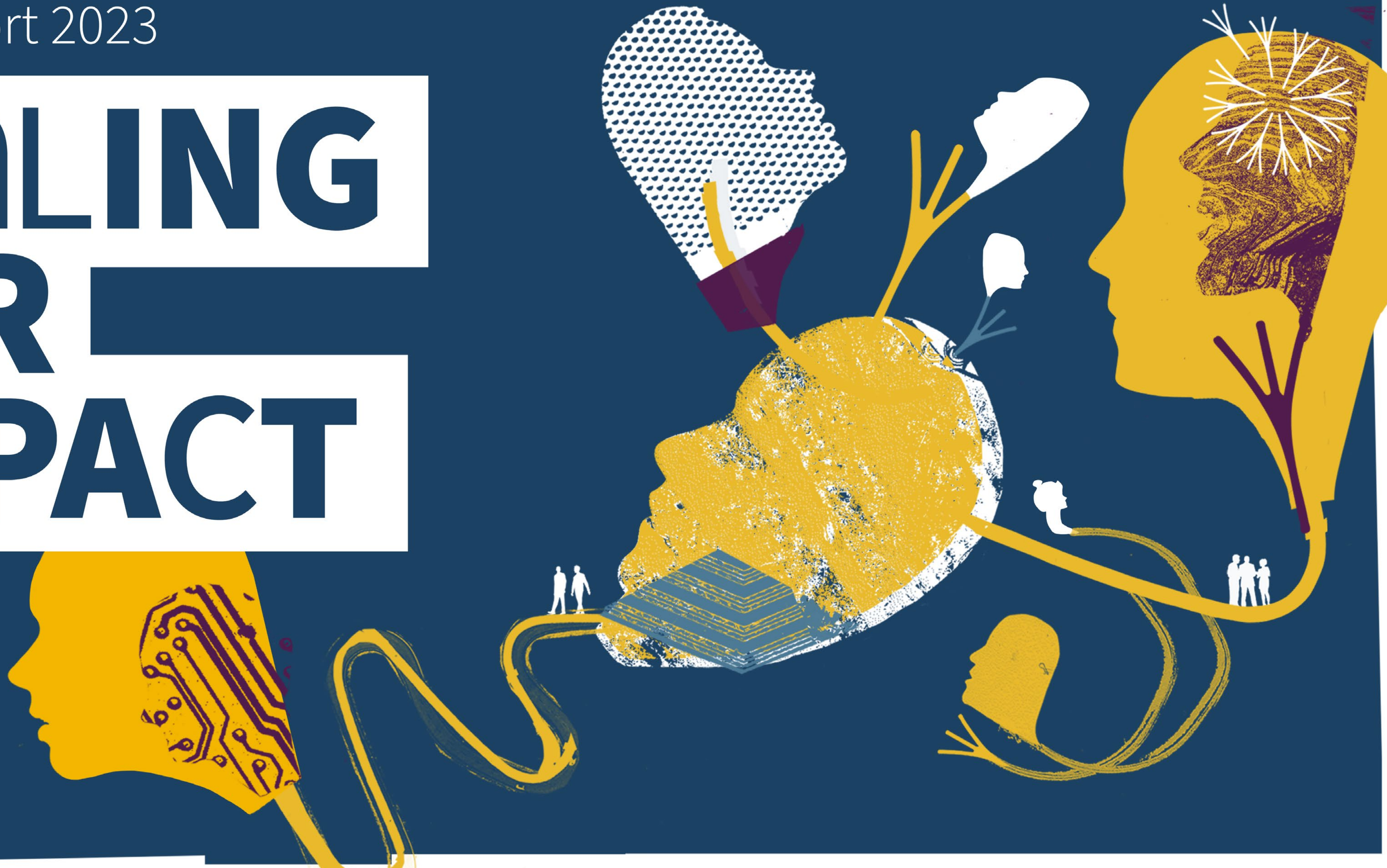


auticon | unicus
Impact Report 2023

SCALING OUR IMPACT



Contents

Amplifying our Impact **3**

auticon Vision & Mission **4**

auticon Values **5**

auticon Neurodiversity at Work Report **6**

auticon Impact 2023 **12**

Building Accountability for Change **13**

auticon Impact Framework **14**

Individual Impact **15**

Organisational Impact **18**

Societal Impact **20**



Amplifying our Impact

Welcome to the Impact Report for what has been a truly pivotal year for auticon. Joining forces with the neurodiversity services market leader in the Nordics — Unicus — we have together become the largest autistic-majority company in the world. We are proud of this achievement not just as a company, but as a neurodiversity community too. Our success and growth are testament to the power of diversity. We are determined to continue to lead by example and set new benchmarks for workplace diversity and inclusion.

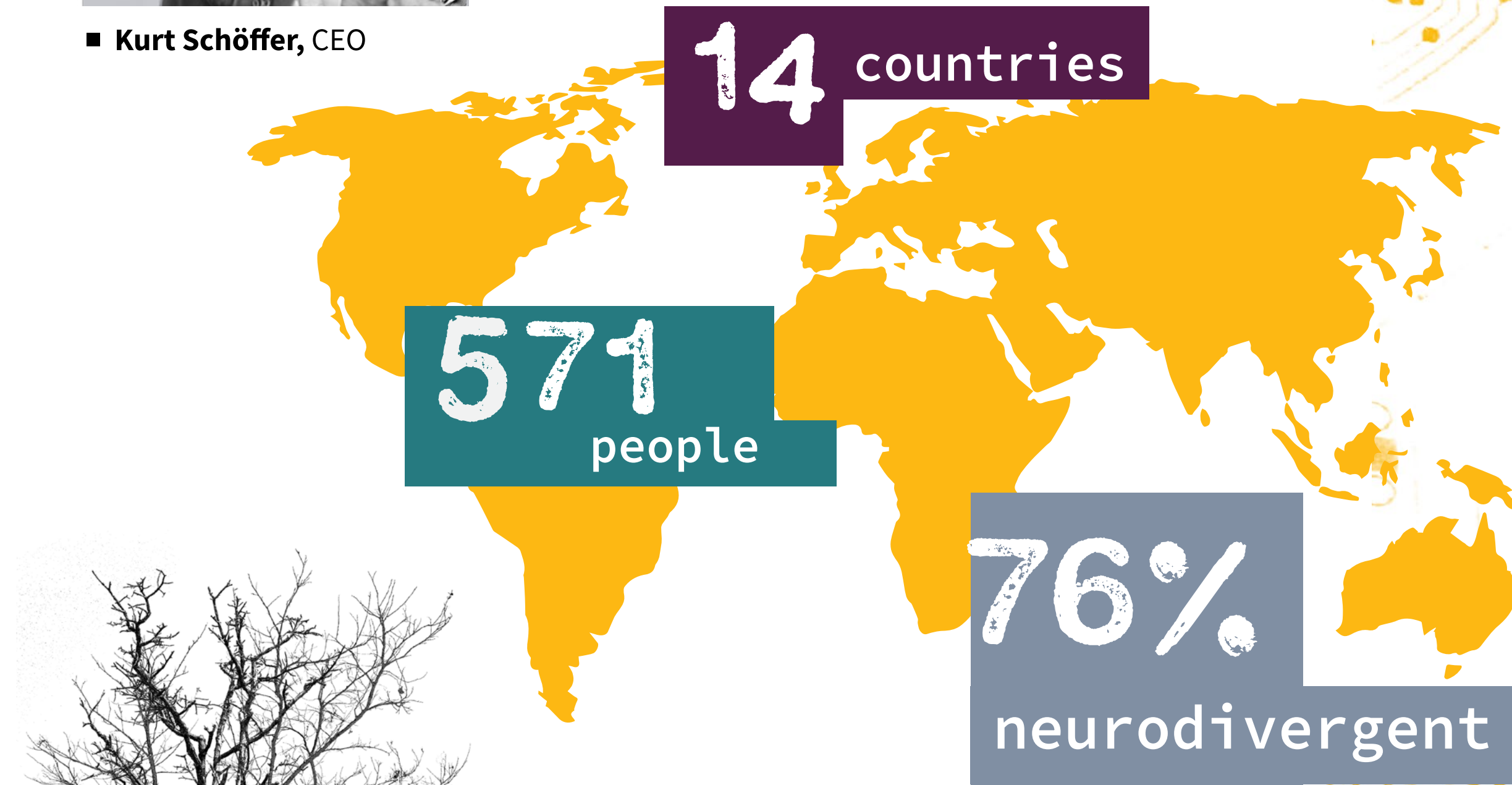
We now operate in 14 countries across 3 continents. Our team of people with wide-ranging skills and professional backgrounds are all challenging outdated assumptions on who can and can't contribute to a workplace. The varied social and cultural settings that auticon operates in today has further served to lend us a richer understanding of diversity and inclusion. We will continue to share this understanding with the world, and now at an accelerated pace. auticon Neuroinclusion Services and ñima — our first ever proprietary tool developed at auticon Labs by a neurodivergent team — enable us to touch more lives and amplify our impact.

With so much ongoing strife in the world, it is ever more important to foster appreciation for our differences. It's humbling to hear from our customers how working with our autistic technologists has positively impacted their projects, cultivated greater empathy, and teamwork, and changed perceptions about autism. We know that the positive shift in perspectives at workplaces ripples out to families, communities and societies. That's our path to changing the world for the better.

I hope this impact report provides insights and inspiration to those who share our vision to build a more inclusive world.



■ Kurt Schöffer, CEO



Largest autistic-majority company in the world

auticon Vision & Mission

OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

To build a more inclusive world.

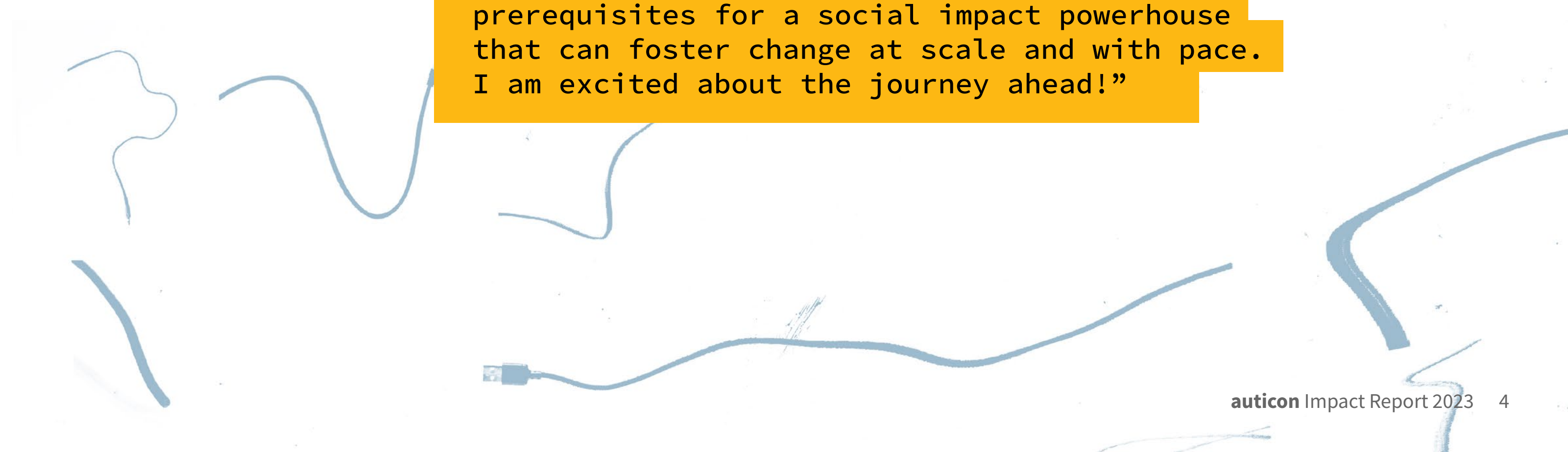
OUR MISSION

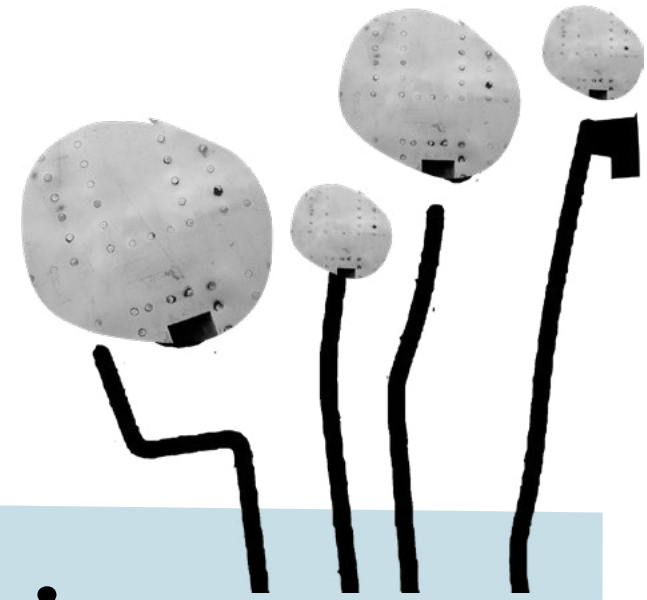
To address the inequalities in employment for neurodivergent adults and showcase the strengths of neurodiversity in society.



■ Lars Johansson-Kjellerød, Founder, Unicus

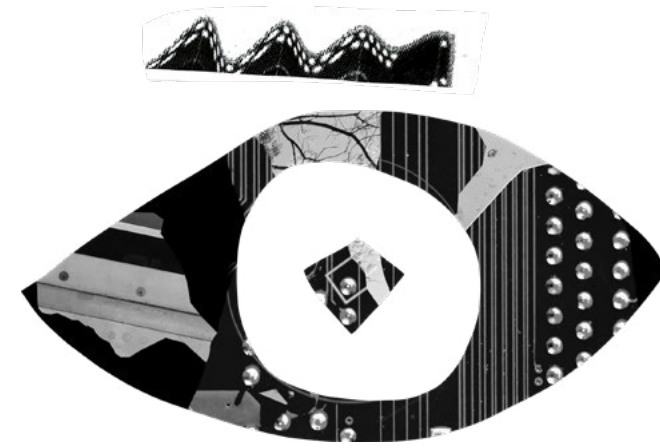
“auticon and Unicus have the same DNA and vision to create a more inclusive world. By combining Unicus and auticon’s experience, geographical reach and understanding of diverse cultural contexts, we have the prerequisites for a social impact powerhouse that can foster change at scale and with pace. I am excited about the journey ahead!”





Inclusive

We are changing the world for and with the neurodivergent, with the spirit 'nothing about us, without us'. We challenge ourselves to raise the bar on inclusion in everything we do.



Human-focussed

We operate with a human focus to create an improved quality of life for our employees. We value individual differences and put people first.

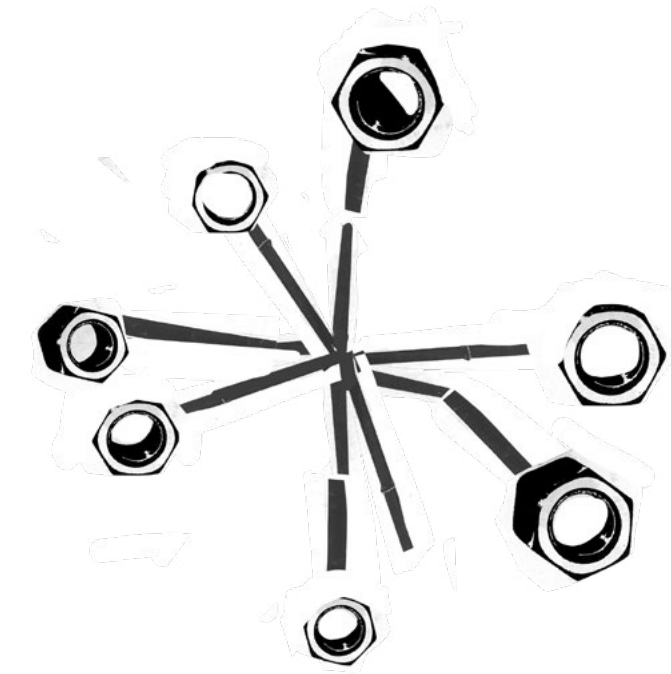
Inspiring

We strive to be inspiring for our customers, employees, stakeholders and the society in what we do and how we make it happen.



Solution-oriented

We are flexible and solution-oriented, open to new ideas and never afraid to try them out.



Value creating

We create social and financial value through operating a sustainable, commercial business with a strong social mission.





auticon



NEURODiversity at Work Report

Autism and career development

Neurodiversity at Work **by auticon**



Only **17%** of autistic professional in junior roles have an autistic role model.



while **45%** of those in senior roles have an autistic role model.



Autism and Career Development

The narratives on the autism employment gap are often centred around finding work and getting a job. But what happens once an autistic person is in employment? auticon's Neurodiversity at Work report 2023 explores the barriers and enablers for neurodivergent people to build a meaningful career path. Aleksander Oleszkiewicz, Director of auticon Labs shares his career journey and perspectives on thriving at work and developing a rewarding career as a neurodivergent professional.

An online survey was commissioned by auticon and conducted by market research company OnePoll. 985 employed autistic adults in the UK, US, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Australia and Switzerland were interviewed. Data was collected between 07/02/2023 and 23/02/2023.

34% of autistic professionals have never requested a reasonable adjustment.



**Aleksander
Oleszkiewicz**

Director, auticon Labs

Aleksander is part of auticon's senior leadership team, leading innovation and product development as Director of auticon Labs. With a career spanning over 26 years, he has held several business and technical leadership roles in global organisations including Acoustic and IBM. Alek received an autism diagnosis as an adult.

He is a passionate advocate for neurodiversity, has featured in several media publications, and is a regular speaker at forums to help build better awareness of autism and neurodiversity in society.

1 What factors have contributed to your successful career path?

Thinking about the most recurring theme in my career, I think it would be that I wasn't following the crowd. I don't mean that I was always going against the flow, but rather I was doing my own research and evaluations to select the best route. I like to learn, and I was always keen to explore opportunities that looked interesting and superior to others, even if, or maybe because, they were niche solutions and not mainstream. This often led me to situations of being the only one around who knew the technology, so I quickly became a go-to person for all related things and eventually became recognised as an expert.

I tried to align my learning with what I saw as possible future roles or interesting projects but there were a few shots that I missed and dozens of things that I learned, that didn't lead to any specific engagement. As much as I'd like to take all the credit for what I achieved, I recognise that there was also some luck of being in the right place at the right time. However, I actively supported my luck by preparing for the time when a chance materialised.

“so I quickly became a go-to person for all related things and eventually became recognised as an expert”.

2 How has being autistic contributed to your career?

As I always felt different, I put a lot of effort into self-discovery over the years, reading books on psychology, doing many personality assessments, and trying to analyse my strengths and weaknesses. Only later in my life I was diagnosed as autistic and learned that many of my traits, that I identified earlier were well aligned with the diagnosis.

Realising that there is nothing wrong with me was a major relief that gave me the courage to focus on my talents even more and become more open about how to work around my limitations.

Another part of my tactic of not following the pack was that I never considered my career as a one-way ladder – meaning that I didn't feel that I should only be going up, to a higher rank or bigger responsibility. **I was rather looking for places where I could make the best use of my talents, where I felt I could add the most value, learn something new, and gain insights and visibility into new areas of the business.** I was making many transitions that were upwards to management roles, but I was also making lateral moves, or even going “down the ladder” to again work as an individual contributor.

3 What can organisations do to ensure equitable career development for their neurodivergent employees?

In terms of what workplaces can do to support equitable career development... I think that one of the key aspects of supporting neurodivergent people is to help them identify their strengths and provide opportunities for non-standard career paths. In our research survey, 65% of autistic employees say they enjoy challenges at work, opportunities to learn, and the ability to innovate. Hence companies should enable people to explore different roles to grow their skills and find out what is best aligned with their natural talents. At the same time, it's important to have inclusive internal processes, provide accommodations, and support employees in finding ways around their weaker areas. **To ensure that the company is taking the right approach, relevant to their employees, it's essential to include neurodivergent employees in all decisions related to programs and initiatives geared towards neuroinclusion.**

“One of the key aspects of supporting neurodivergent people is to help them identify their strengths and provide opportunities for non-standard career paths”.

4 It is a common finding that autistic people are not well-represented in leadership positions. What, in your view, are the strengths of autistic people in leadership roles?

First, it's important to emphasize that being a leader doesn't mean the same as being a manager. While both are about influencing other people's work, I see technical leadership as having the drive to explore possible paths and inspiring others to follow the best course. Leadership is not based on coercion or power, but on merits (and sometimes negotiations) centred on in-depth assessment of the situation, analysis of data, recognition of patterns and analogies, evaluation of possible solutions, understanding of limitations and interdependencies as well as technical feasibility, anticipation, and mitigation of risks, estimation of benefits to stakeholders.

We can't generalise, but I think that in many of those areas, autistic people have a lot to offer with their unique skills, ways of thinking, and ability to see things that others tend to ignore.

5 How, in your view, do organisations benefit from neurodivergent leaders?

I see autistic managers as being very inclusive, not only in the space of neurodiversity but generally across all areas. I see them as very fact-driven, evaluating people purely on their performance and not taking into consideration any factors that are commonly connected with discrimination. They are fair to their team members, may sometimes be a bit harsh but they are honest, straightforward, and don't play games. They follow clear and written rules and are open to the individual needs of each person – which creates a great foundation for healthy and high-performing teams.

6 What would be your advice to neurodivergent professionals considering leadership roles?

Once you have success and are recognized as a leader, you will often have a choice. You may want to keep doing what you do, but maybe on a larger scale, **or you may explore if you can amplify your skills even more by passing your knowledge to others – helping them to grow and together building even bigger things.** This may lead to people management roles, which are often more challenging, but also very rewarding.

“Organisations must reflect deeply on the spoken and unspoken needs of their neurodivergent employees when considering how to build truly inclusive cultures”.

7 Given there is limited awareness and understanding of neurodivergence, what do you see as the risks and rewards of disclosing at work?

I was lucky enough to have many great and supportive managers in my career, who were open to my needs, so I was able to get the accommodations I needed to deliver good results. It was only once that I needed to formally share my diagnosis at work. My organisation at the time was going through a significant transformation, and so was my role. I knew that I could perform those new tasks, however they required many changes in the way I work, which would have made the situation very uncomfortable for me. I explained to my manager which parts of the new role were causing stress and why, and how that would impact my performance, making the role unsustainable for me in the long term. They appreciated my disclosure, and we were able to redefine my duties to better align with my strengths.

This was a positive outcome for me, but the benefits and risks of disclosing are very specific to each person's situation — the accommodations that the person needs and the organisation they are working for, their manager, their team, and even their customers.

If the people around you don't understand neurodiversity, disclosing can create more confusion than understanding, as even with the best intentions and will, they may not know what to do with that information.

8 What's your advice to someone who may be considering disclosing their neurodivergence at work?

My approach is to focus on being specific when sharing my needs and asking for accommodations that will make me more productive at work. If the organisation has a supportive culture, this should be enough to get an accommodation, without a need to provide any special justification, not to mention the diagnosis. It's worth mentioning that getting an official diagnosis is often a lengthy process. There are still many instances of misdiagnosis especially among women, and some people simply can't afford it financially. So, a formal diagnosis should not be a prerequisite for getting reasonable accommodations.

Unfortunately, when the environment is not favourable, being different in any way can become a potential risk. Co-workers may perceive accommodations as preferential treatment and this can lead to misunderstanding, alienation, or even bullying and ostracism.

This lack of predictability of people's reactions is a major stress factor for many neurodivergent people; hence they may be reluctant to disclose, and unless they are turning into self-advocates, they may want to limit the number of people who are informed to the minimum.

Organisations must reflect deeply on the spoken and unspoken needs of their neurodivergent employees when considering how to build truly inclusive cultures. This can help create healthy workplace environments where everyone (not just the neurodivergent) has the psychological safety to thrive.

9 What is the importance of autistic role models for the autistic community and society as a whole?

I think we need way more media presence of autistic people and role models. Just as the 60% of autistic people surveyed by auticon reveal, I never had an autistic role model; prior to my diagnosis I wasn't even aware of any known people who were neurodivergent.

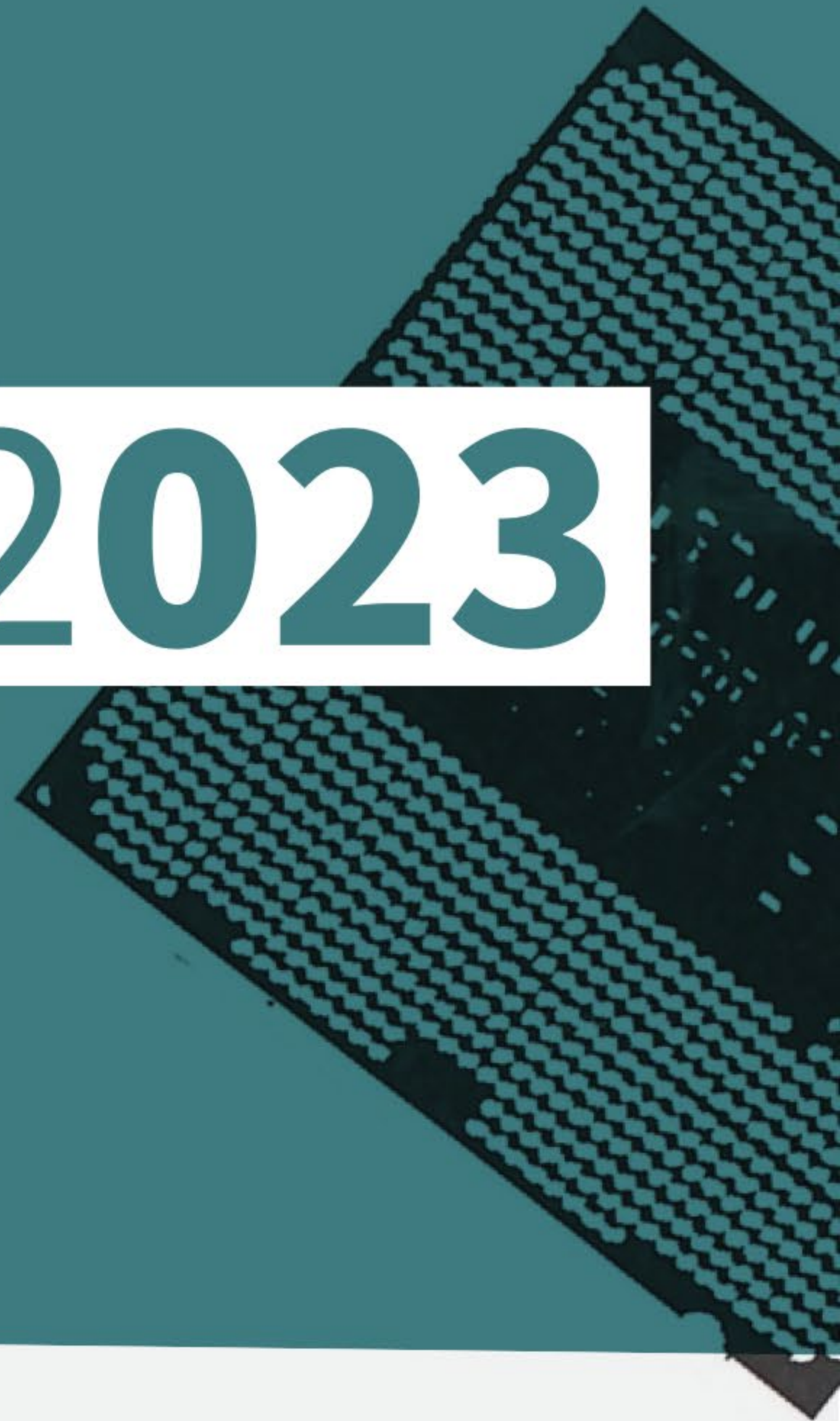
I was diagnosed as an adult. Despite having contact with autistic people before, I didn't have enough knowledge to realise I was one of them. It changed by a pure coincidence (or luck) that, driving in a car I was listening to an interview with an autistic person on the radio. I wasn't paying much attention until they mentioned that the autistic guest didn't feel any emotions or connection with the cheering crowd during a sports event. Then they mentioned some other autistic characteristics, and this was like being struck by lightning; it was all like me; it was like getting answers to all the questions I have had in my life. Before I even arrived home, I pulled over and ordered a book about autism to learn more.

This was a few years ago, however now I see more public discussion about neurodiversity and more interviews with autistic people, they are present in movies, television series, and shows. Still, I think a lot more should be done, as for many people the word autism still only relates to some stereotypes based on popular culture and outdated information. Neurodiversity is such a broad topic, so it can be difficult to find one person as a relatable role model. The more role models we have, the better!

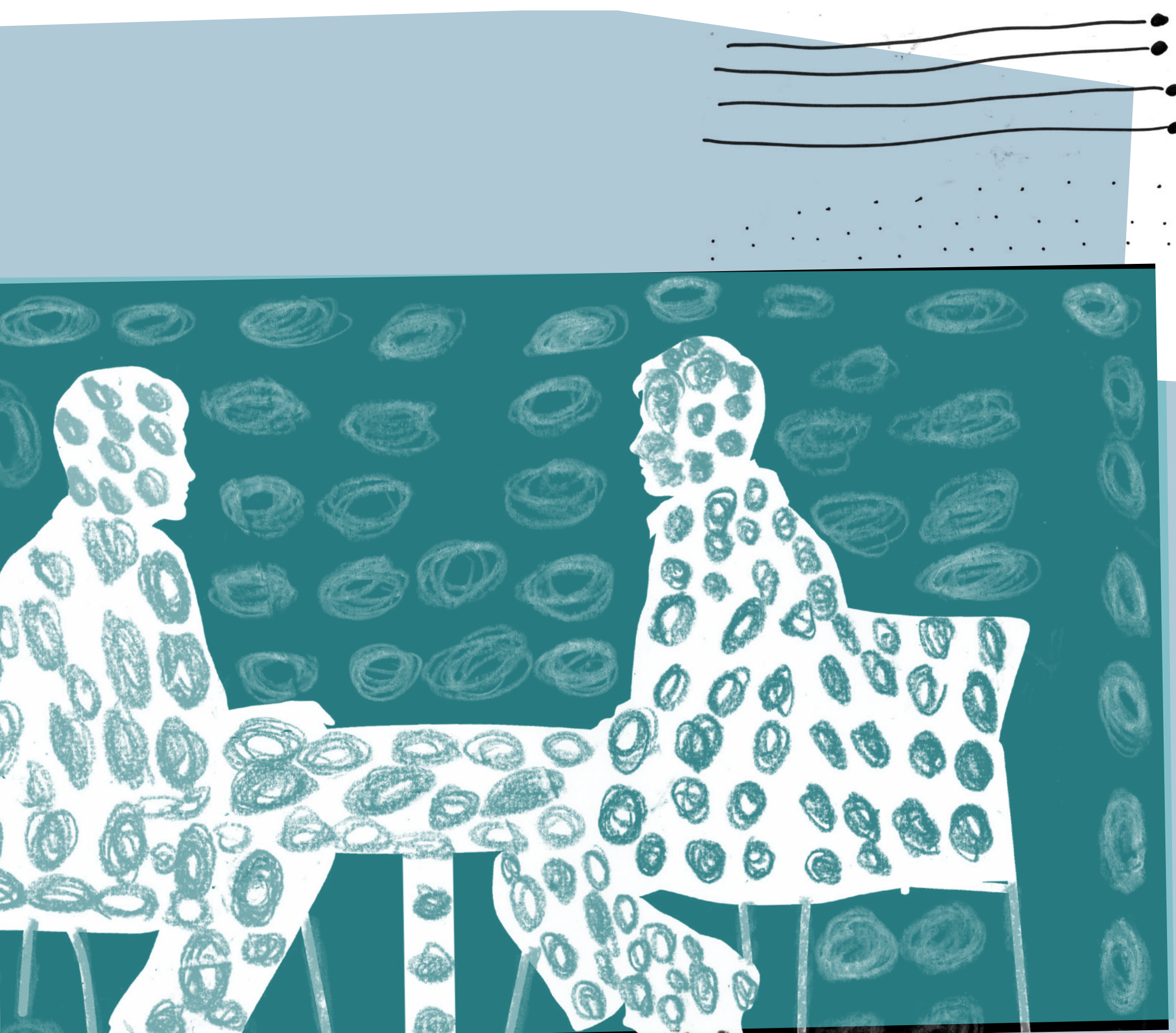


“it was like getting answers to all the questions I have had in my life. Before I even arrived home, I pulled over and ordered a book about autism to learn more”.

auticon iMPaCT 2023



Building **Accountability for Change**



■ **Meeta Thareja,**
Chief People & Social
Innovation Officer

2023 has been a pivotal year for the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda. We saw the EU’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) come into effect, mandating a new set of sustainability reporting requirements from over 50,000 companies operating in the region. Aside from the policy landscape, we are seeing an increasing number of organisations commit to greater social accountability and impact. Millions of us are choosing to prioritise people and the planet in our daily lives and work.

At auticon, we’ve seen first-hand the commitment of our customers to take a holistic approach to business, one that prioritises social and environmental responsibility and contributes to the greater good. It is exciting to witness and be part of this burgeoning movement of business-for-good.

ESG is finally on the Board and senior leadership agenda, and we see auticon as an integral part of the ‘social’ dimension of ESG. We are championing practices that will bring meaningful, systemic change in the employment landscape for the neurodivergent. There aren’t any clear playbooks yet on how to effectively benchmark social goals within organisations. This, in part, is why change has been slow, especially for neurodiversity in the workplace. In 2023, we launched our proprietary tool — “ñima” (Neuroinclusion maturity assessment) to help our customers take a data-based approach to neuroinclusion. Leveraging ñima and our own impact reporting experience, we are excited to be working with customers to develop social impact measurement practices that help build accountability for change.

While we work with our customers to bring neurodiversity front and centre in the ESG agenda, we will continue to hold ourselves accountable too and strive to make auticon an even more diverse and inclusive workplace. Our impact report commits us to evaluating our performance and social impact, and we hope also encourages others to do the same.




We believe affecting change in one life is the starting point for changing society. We therefore measure our social performance through the difference auticon makes to the lives of our autistic colleagues, the impact on our customer organisations, and the role we play in creating awareness of neurodiversity in society. The following sections report how we did in each of these areas.

Individual Impact

Between **15-20%** of the global population are neurodivergent. **2%** are estimated to be autistic¹. Despite many autistic people being talented, qualified and keen to work, **only 29%** of autistic people are in full time work². Within the autistic workforce, a vast majority are under-employed, working in jobs that they are over-qualified or over-skilled for.

On the other hand, there are enormous skill gaps and talent shortages in the tech sector that are increasingly difficult to fill. These shortages will only become more acute in the next decade. It is estimated that by 2030, the demand for skilled workers will outstrip supply, resulting in a global talent shortage of **85.2 million** people³. Yet employers today are unable to tap into this gifted talent pool of autistic professionals.



“I love that my skills and abilities are appreciated and that the main focus is on delivering good final results”.

auticon consultant

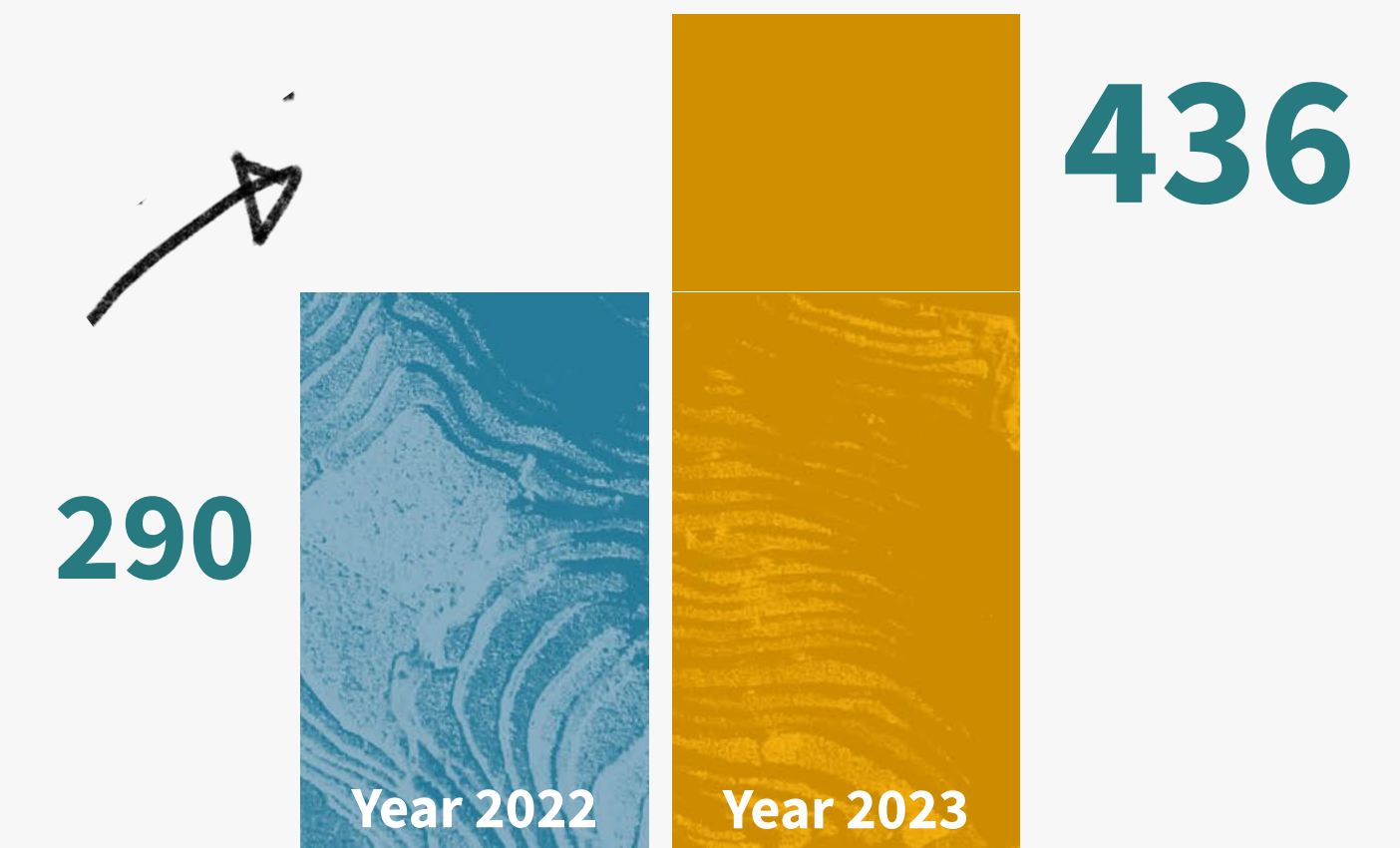
¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7732033/>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/adhocs/13197autismprevalenceuk2020>

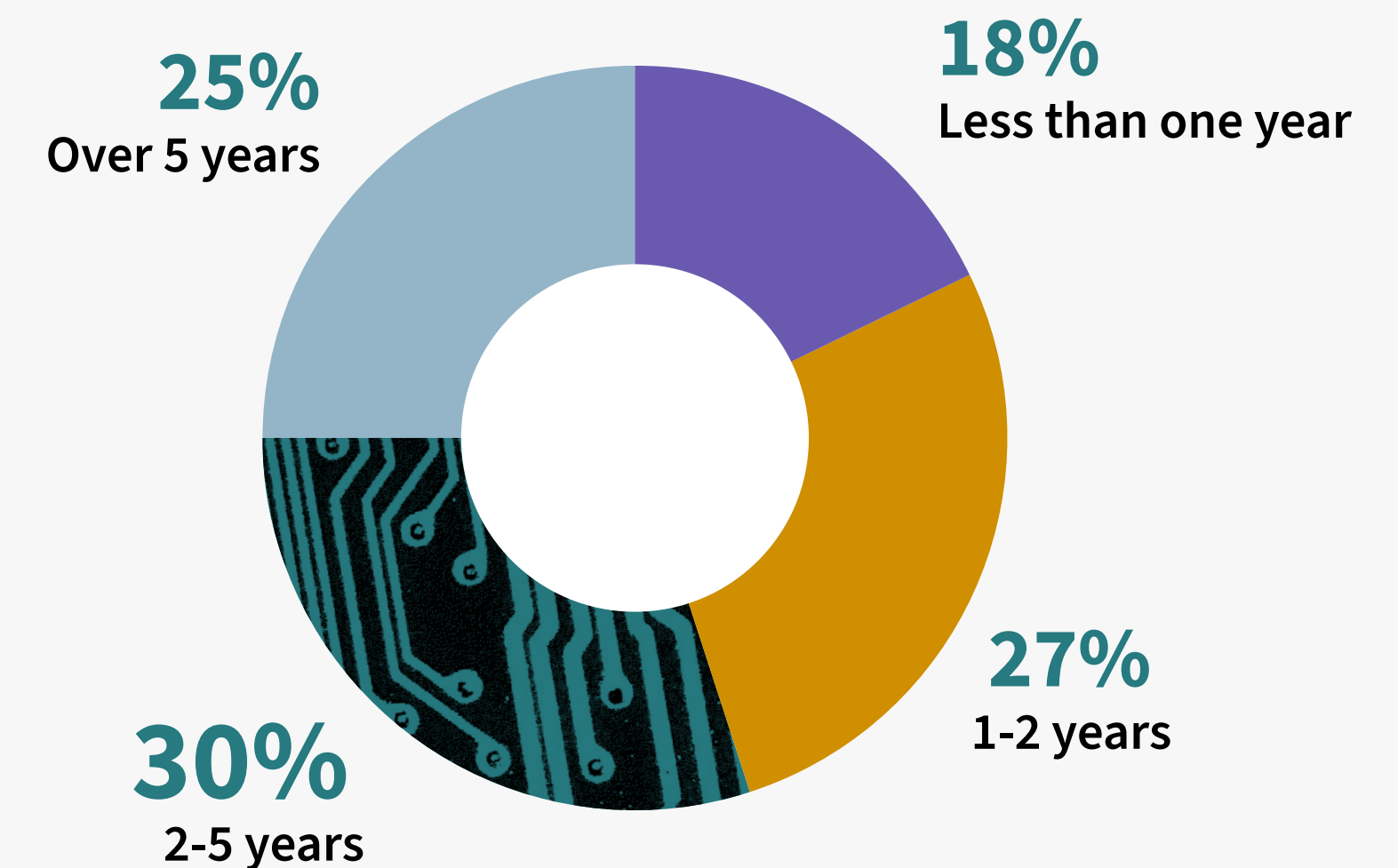
³ Source: Korn, 2018

OUR OUTPUTS

N° of autistic consultants:



Tenure with auticon:



Individual Impact

Level of education:

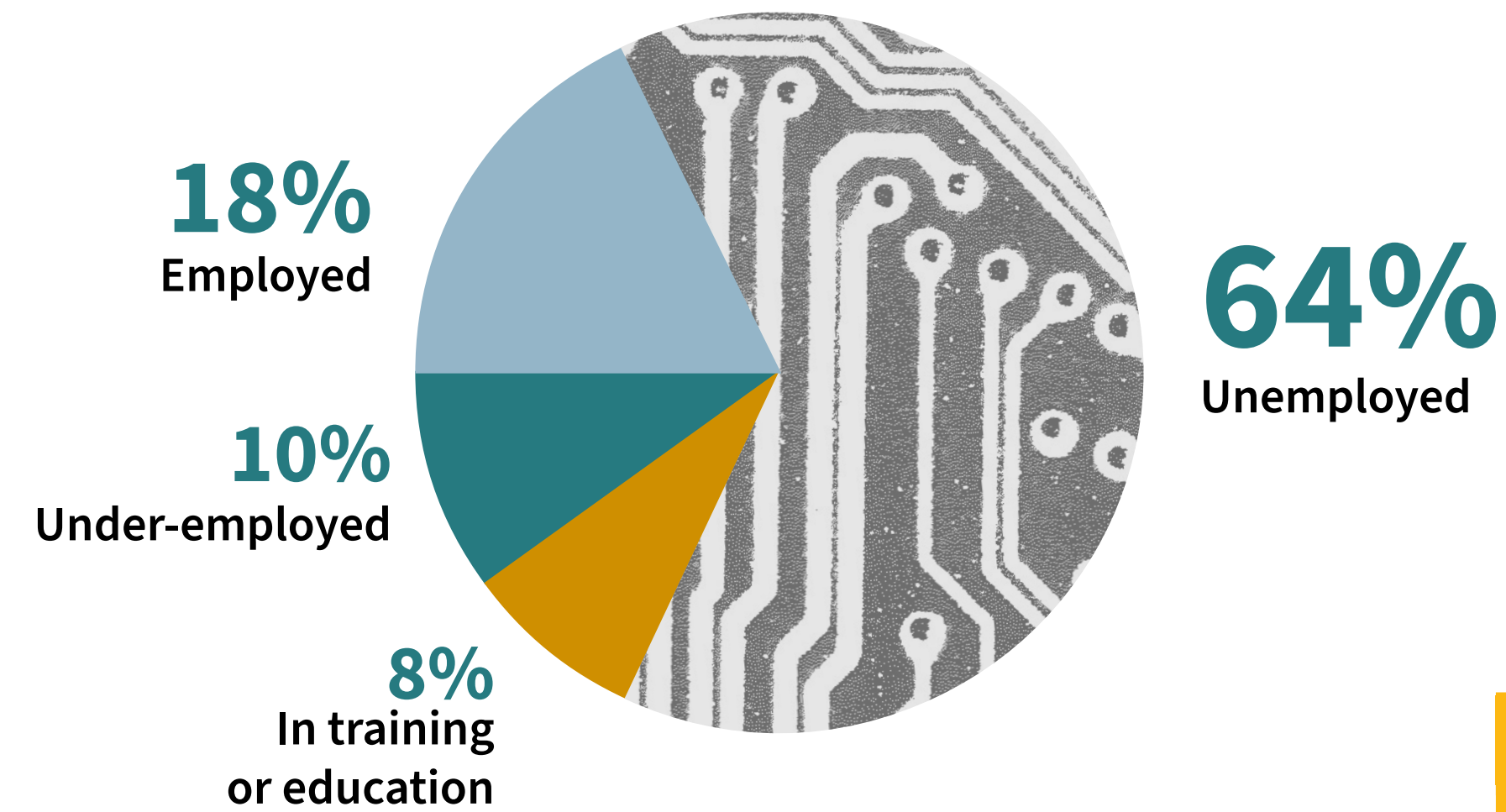
88%
of our autistic consultants
have a professional
qualification or a Bachelor's
degree or higher.



Yet, **64%** had been
unemployed at the time
of applying to auticon,

of which **55%**
had been unemployed
for over one year.

Employment status at the time of application to auticon:



**“I started living
again”.**
auticon consultant

**“I no longer go around
trying to fit in, I just
go around being myself
– it's pretty incredible
the difference it makes”.**
auticon consultant



Individual Impact

Neuroinclusive practice can be difficult to sustain if it's not embedded in the culture of an organisation. Often a lack of understanding and awareness of neurodiversity can lead managers to shy away from conversations that are critical to ensure successful recruitment, inclusion, retention and career progression for neurodivergent colleagues.

A vast majority (**85%**) of autistic people report that they enjoy the work they do yet only **44%** feel that they can be their authentic selves at work⁵. In workplaces where neurodiversity is not well understood or welcomed, neurodivergent people often struggle to sustain their jobs and suffer emotionally and mentally.

“Working with Unicus, I feel that autism has been de-dramatized for me. It is easy to work with autistic colleagues”.

Lars Olof Berg,
Produktchef, PictureMyLife

⁴ auticon Consultant Survey: The Impact Survey questionnaire was sent to all our 436 consultants (in auticon and Unicus), of which 281 participated, representing a 64.4% participation rate. The survey was carried out between August to October 2023.

⁵ Source: auticon Neurodiversity at Work Report 2022

OUR OUTCOMES⁴

25%

of our autistic consultants have been building a career with us for over 5 years

77%

say they can be their authentic self at work

84%

say that at auticon they feel valued for who they are

78%

report improved wellbeing

74%

feel more confident



Organisational Impact

Neurodiversity remains an equally underrepresented topic in the field of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) with very little said about it in workplaces. With an increasing prevalence of autism⁶, there is the opportunity and the responsibility to foster greater understanding of and inclusion of alternative thinkers in workplaces as well as in society more broadly.

Raising neurodiversity as an important aspect of DEIB enables organisations to build awareness, understanding and skills, enabling them to incorporate diversity of thought into their workforce. This enriches not only organisations but also society as a whole.

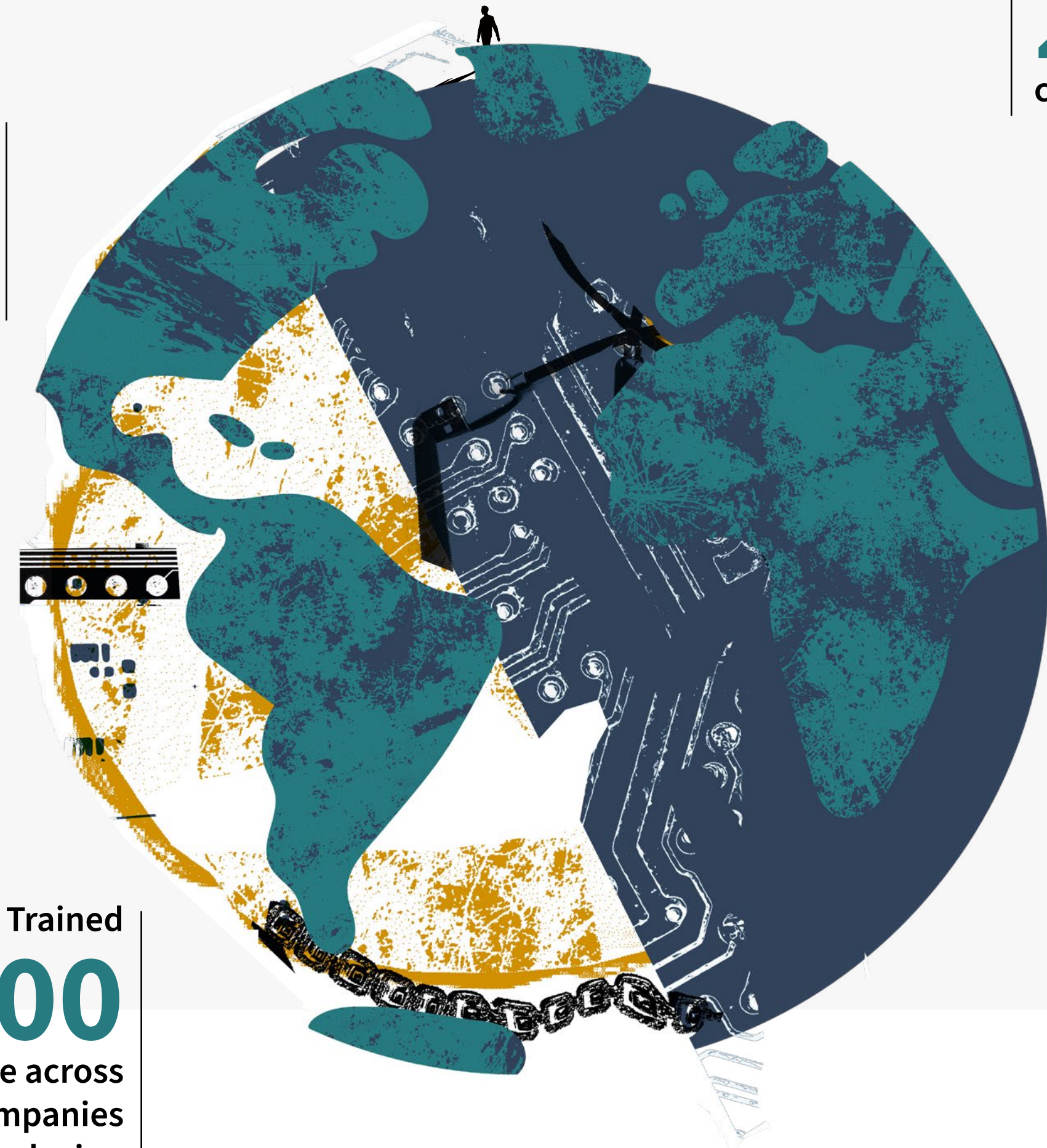
“My understanding of how to work with different people has greatly changed and it has also shown me how much value there is in having very diverse teams.”

Nick Byatt, Service Owner, PwC

⁶ Approximately 1 in 44 children has been identified with autism according to the Centre for Disease Control (Manner et al., 2021), up from 1 in 166 in 2005, over a 300% growth in 15 years.

OUR OUTPUTS

Delivered
402
projects



Worked with
266
companies

Trained
6,000
people across
149 companies
in Neuroinclusion



auticon's survey⁸ of autistic professionals revealed that a majority of autistic people disclose their autism to a trusted colleague or their manager. Building the skills of people managers to talk with, support and manage neurodivergent team members equips them to not only manage and support but also effectively recruit and develop diverse talent.

Improvements to workplace practices aimed at optimising environments for neurodivergent individuals also impact every other employee equally positively. Neuroinclusive management supports success and inclusion for all employees and contributes to a work culture in which all employees can thrive. Common examples of such inclusive design include more supportive mental health and wellbeing practices, enhanced team communication, performance optimisation, and best practices in team management.

“The Unicus consultant added new knowledge and helped to develop trust and goodwill in the team”.

Jekaterina Arsalani,
Scrum Master, Alecta

⁷ auticon Customer Survey: The Customer Impact survey was carried out between August to September 2023. 113 individuals from 81 companies participated from both auticon and Unicus customer organisations.

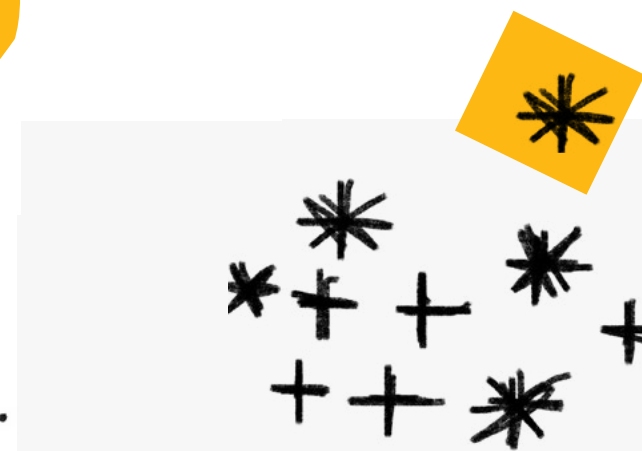
⁸ An online survey commissioned by auticon and conducted by market research company OnePoll, in accordance with the Market Research Society's code of conduct. Data was collected between 07/02/2023 and 23/02/2023. 985 employed adults in the UK, US, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Australia and Switzerland were interviewed. This survey was overseen and edited by the OnePoll research team. OnePoll are company partners of the MRS and has corporate membership to ESOMAR.

OUR OUTCOMES⁷



81%

people reported they now feel more confident working with an autistic colleague



73%

report positive cultural impact on their team

- Clearer communication
- Better teamwork
- Increased empathy
- Greater sense of purpose

96%

say that auticon consultant made valuable contributions to their projects

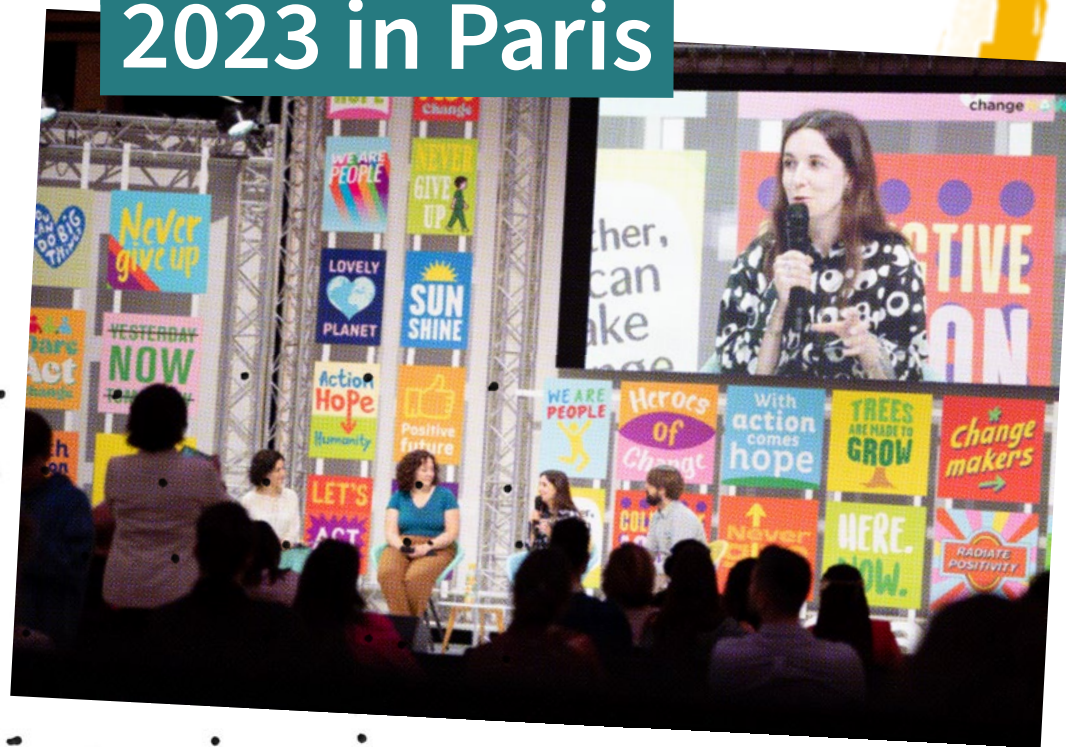
- Greater accuracy
- Alternative perspective / ideas
- Innovative approach
- Increased efficiency

Societal Impact

We constantly seek new ways to share our expertise, to demystify autism and showcase the benefits of neurodiversity. During 2023, we worked with our customers, local communities, partners in diversity-networks and the academia to encourage dialogue and action on neuroinclusion.

Our work and contributions have been recognised and celebrated, spurring us on to achieve our vision with even great enthusiasm.

auticon at
**ChangeNow
2023 in Paris**



274
Delivered 274
neurodiversity
awareness sessions
around the world

CELEBRATE

auticon US named
a 2023 **Leading Disability
Employer** by the National
Organization on Disability

NOD
2023
LEADING
DISABILITY
EMPLOYER
auticon US honoured as a
Small Business of the Year
(51-100 employees category)
by the Fort Worth Chamber
of Commerce



“Working with auticon, I have been able to know, rather than just read, about the tremendous value of neurodiversity in the workplace. I also learned about our own team members that have struggled without sharing their autism”.

Lisa Yelvington, Sr Director Global
Delivery Operations, Health Catalyst

Societal Impact

auticon UK named “Diversity in Tech Initiative of the Year 2023” at European Diversity Awards



“My perception in the working context has changed a lot. I now regard autism not as a handicap but rather an asset”.

Markus Alo, Senior Referent, KfW Bank

Unicus Finland named “The most influential company” by Arvoliitto



auticon UK ranks as the 14th most love workplace in the UK by Newsweek’s 100 Most Loved Workplaces

auticon Germany among top 3 finalists for the Impact of Diversity Awards 2023

TOP

“Jonathan (auticon technologist) has brought so much to our product development. We have a huge dependency on him and wouldn't have got to where we have without his invaluable contribution. His work ethic and quality of work has gained him a huge amount of respect within the team, he fits right in”.

Maeve O'Connell,

General Management – Senior Manager,
IRIS Software Group

Carlo has participated in the creation of this year's impact report. He is part of the team at **La Casa de Carlota** — the first design studio working with down syndrome and autistic creatives. The team's different perspectives open up fresh creative avenues, breaking free of the mainstream and resulting in something extraordinary and powerful. Our collaboration celebrates our joint belief in the strengths of neurodiversity to deliver exceptional results, whilst making an important impact on the lives of those working with us.





auticon

For more information, please visit auticon.com or connect with us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.



©auticon 2024