Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q)

Client Name	Generic Client	*Date administered*	29 Nov 2024
Date of birth (age)	1 Jan 1990 (34)	*Time taken*	3 min 52s
Assessor	Dr Simon Baker		

CAT-Q Results

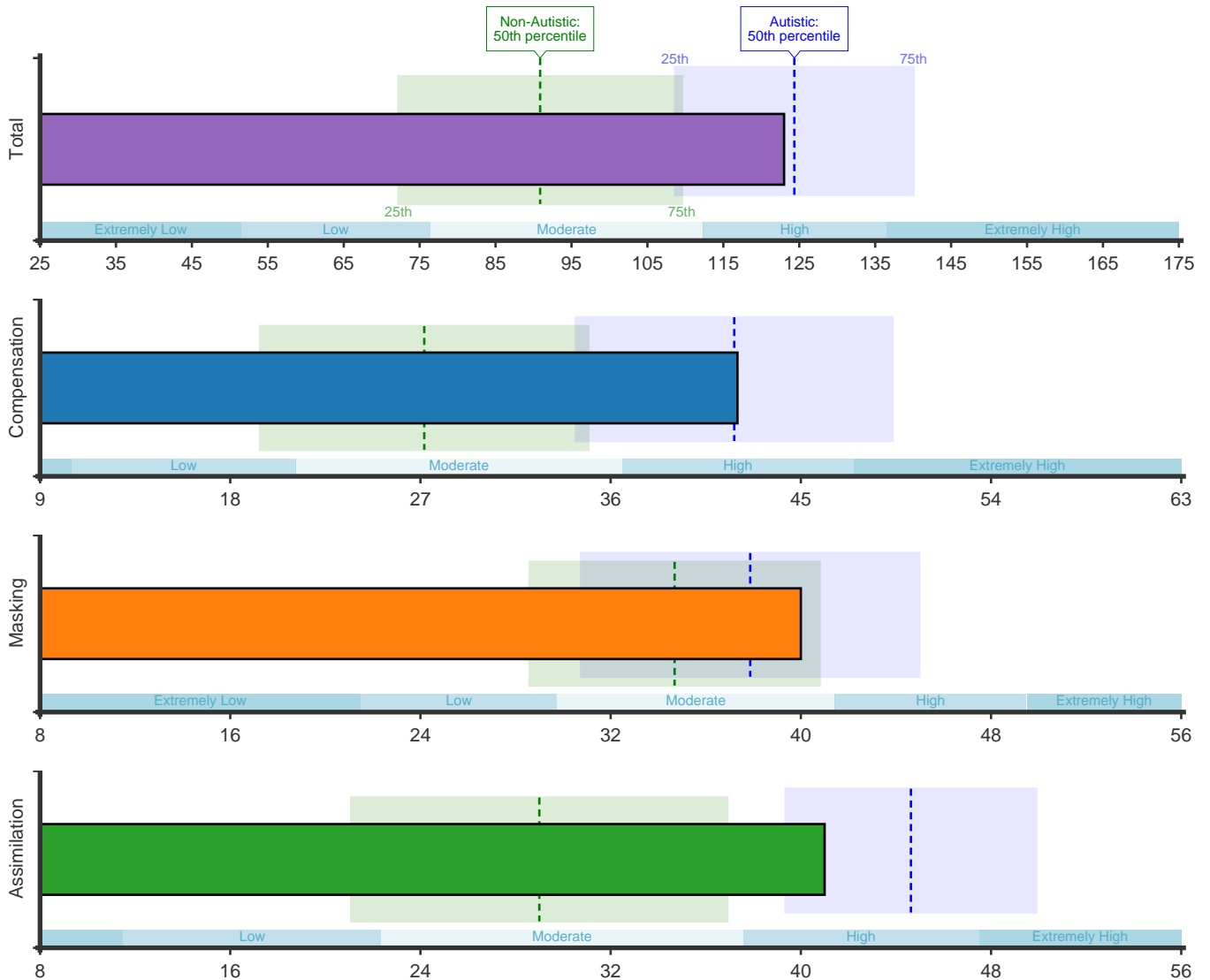|	Score	Percentile	Descriptor
Total (25-175)	123	88	High
Compensation (9-63)	42	90	High
Masking (8-56)	40	72	Moderate
Assimilation (8-56)	41	85	High

CAT-Q Normative Percentiles (Females)
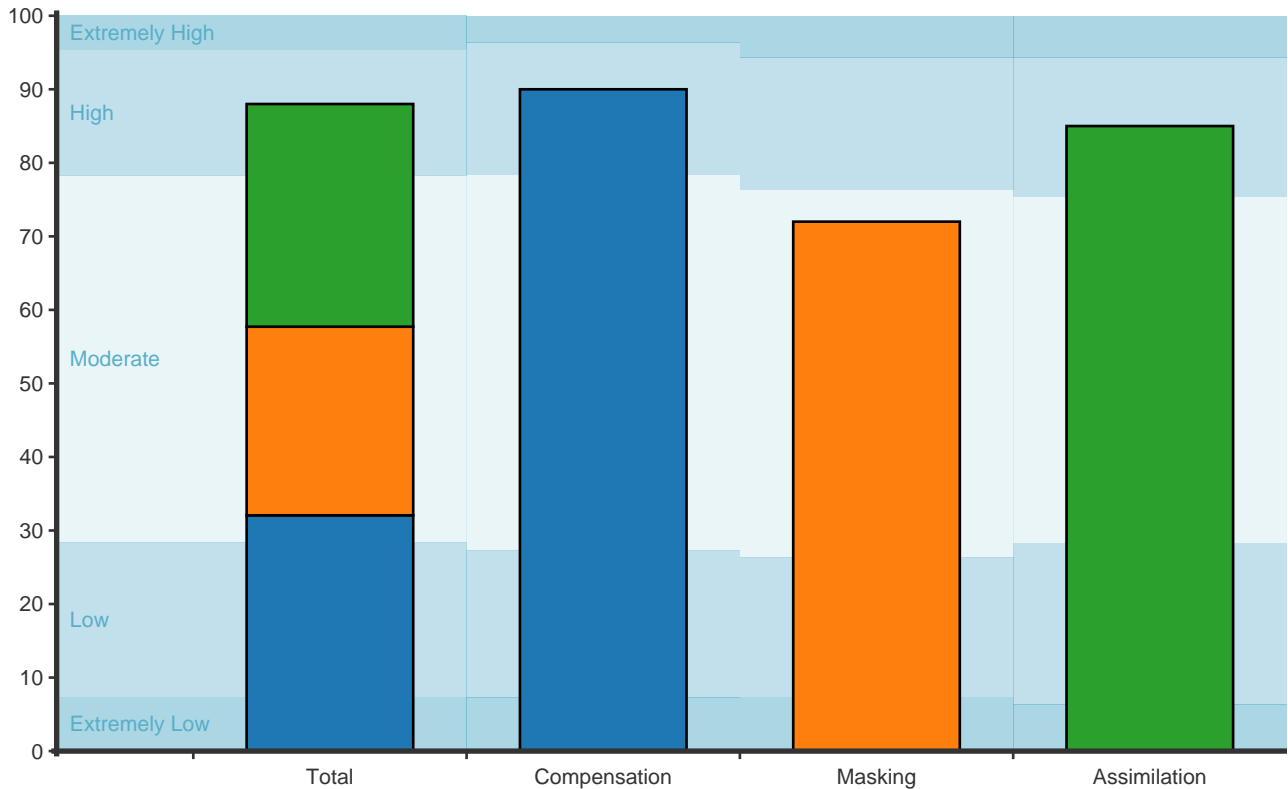
| **Client Name** | Generic Client |

CAT-Q Scores Compared to Non-Autistic and Autistic Distributions (Females)

Interpretation

The client's responses on the Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q) indicate that they engage in camouflaging strategies at a level that falls within the High range when compared to Non-Autistic adults. The respondent's score is on the 88th percentile when compared to Non-Autistic females and the 48th percentile when compared to Autistic females.

A High score indicates that the respondent is likely engaging in substantial efforts to adapt to or mask autistic-like traits during social interactions. However, it is important to note that high scores may not only reflect camouflaging strategies used by Autistic people but could also reflect strategies related to adapting to social norms, social anxiety and other mental health challenges, or neurodivergence more broadly (e.g., ADHD).

In therapy, this individual may benefit from interventions that foster self-acceptance and provide

Interpretation (cont.)

coping strategies to mitigate the challenges associated with camouflaging.

The client's responses on the **Compensation** subscale indicate that they engage in compensation strategies at a level that falls within the High range when compared to Non-Autistic adults. Their score is on the 90th percentile when compared to Non-Autistic females and the 51st percentile when compared to Autistic females. This suggests that the respondent uses strategies to actively overcome social challenges, such as imitating neurotypical social behaviours or learning scripts for social interactions. These strategies may help them navigate social environments but could also be cognitively demanding and contribute to emotional exhaustion over time. The items with the highest ratings were:
- 1. When I am interacting with someone, I deliberately copy their body language or facial expressions. (Somewhat Agree)
- 5. I will repeat phrases that I have heard others say in the exact same way that I first heard them. (Somewhat Agree)
- 8. In my own social interactions, I use behaviours that I have learned from watching other people interacting. (Somewhat Agree)
- 11. I practice my facial expressions and body language to make sure they look natural. (Somewhat Agree)

The client's responses on the **Assimilation** subscale indicate that they engage in assimilation strategies at a level that falls within the High range when compared to Non-Autistic adults. Their score is on the 85th percentile when compared to Non-Autistic females and the 32nd percentile when compared to Autistic females. This likely reflects substantial efforts to fit into social situations, potentially by altering behaviours to align with those of others or suppressing aspects of individuality. While these strategies may foster social acceptance, they can also contribute to a reduced sense of personal authenticity and increased social fatigue. The items with the highest ratings were:
- 25. In social situations, I feel like I am pretending to be 'normal'. (Strongly Agree)
- 19. I feel free to be myself when I am with other people. (R) (Disagree)
- 22. When talking to other people, I feel like the conversation flows naturally. (R) (Disagree)
- 3. I rarely feel the need to put on an act in order to get through a social situation. (R) (Somewhat Disagree)

Scoring and Interpretation Information

For comprehensive information on the CAT-Q, see here.

The Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q) provides scores for overall camouflaging as well as three subscales, with higher scores indicating greater use of camouflaging strategies.

- Compensation (Items 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, and 23). Strategies for overcoming social challenges, such as using learned social scripts or imitating behaviours.

- Masking (Items 2, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, and 24). Efforts to hide or suppress Autistic traits to appear more neurotypical.

- Assimilation (Items 3, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, and 25). Attempts to fit into social situations, such as modifying behaviours to blend in.

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Scoring and Interpretation Information (cont.)

The respondent's total and subscale scores are expressed as percentiles based on normative data for Non-Autistic adults of the same gender (e.g., male, female, or non-binary) (Hull et al., 2020). The percentiles contextualise the respondent's scores relative to the typical scores of Non-Autistic adults. For example, the 50th percentile represents typical levels of camouflaging among Non-Autistic adults, while scores on the 90th percentile fall within the top 10% when compared to Non-Autistic adults.

The scoring approach uses qualitative descriptors to categorise CAT-Q scores. Each qualitative descriptor corresponds to a specific range of scores. The ranges for these descriptors were determined using percentiles derived from a Non-Autistic sample of 472 male, female, and non-binary adults obtained from a study by Hull and colleagues (2020). The ranges for the total CAT-Q score are as follows.

- Extremely Low (total score of 25 to 51) (less than or equal to the 5th percentile)
- Low (total score of 52 to 75) (percentile between 6 and 24)
- Moderate (total score of 76 to 112) (percentile between 25 and 75)
- High (total score of 113 to 136) (percentile between 76 and 94)
- Extremely High (total score of 137 to 175) (greater than or equal to the 95th percentile)

Graphs comparing the respondent's total and subscale scores to the normative distribution of scores among Non-Autistic and Autistic individuals are presented, with shaded areas corresponding to scores between the 25th and 75th percentile. This graph contextualises the respondent's scores relative to typical levels of camouflaging among Non-Autistic and Autistic adults.

If administered more than once, a meaningful change in camouflaging is defined as a change of 13 or more points in the total score based on a Minimally Important Difference (MID) calculation.

It is recommended to interpret CAT-Q scores in light of the following considerations.
- Firstly, sex and gender differences exist in camouflaging, with Autistic females and non-binary and gender-diverse Autistic people typically scoring higher than Autistic males (Cook et al., 2021; Hull et al., 2020). Considering camouflaging is particularly important when assessing Autism in these groups, as greater use of camouflaging strategies may result in lower scores on measures of autistic traits (Cook et al., 2021, 2024).
- Secondly, while camouflaging strategies are often associated with Autism — particularly among females and non-binary and gender-diverse individuals — they are not an inherent feature of, or specific to, Autism (Lai et al., 2020). Camouflaging represents strategies used by both Autistic and Non-Autistic people to adapt to and navigate social environments. The CAT-Q does not fully differentiate camouflaging strategies used by Autistic people from similar strategies used by Non-Autistic people.
- Thirdly, some items on the CAT-Q may conflate autistic camouflaging with similar strategies arising from social anxiety or other mental health challenges (Fombonne, 2020). High scores may therefore reflect efforts to manage social anxiety or neurodivergence more broadly (e.g., ADHD).
- Lastly, greater use of camouflaging is associated with increased mental health challenges among Autistic adults (Cook et al., 2021). Although the direction of this relationship is not yet understood, it underscores the importance of considering mental health challenges when interpreting CAT-Q scores.

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Client Responses

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	When I am interacting with someone, I deliberately copy their body language or facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
2	I monitor my body language or facial expressions so that I appear relaxed.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
3	I rarely feel the need to put on an act in order to get through a social situation.	7	6	**5**	4	3	2	1
4	I have developed a script to follow in social situations.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
5	I will repeat phrases that I have heard others say in the exact same way that I first heard them.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
6	I adjust my body language or facial expressions so that I appear interested by the person I am interacting with.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
7	In social situations, I feel like I'm 'performing' rather than being myself.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
8	In my own social interactions, I use behaviours that I have learned from watching other people interacting.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
9	I always think about the impression I make on other people.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
10	I need the support of other people in order to socialise.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
11	I practice my facial expressions and body language to make sure they look natural.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
12	I don't feel the need to make eye contact with other people if I don't want to.	7	6	**5**	4	3	2	1
13	I have to force myself to interact with people when I am in social situations.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
14	I have tried to improve my understanding of social skills by watching other people.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
15	I monitor my body language or facial expressions so that I appear interested by the person I am interacting with.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
16	When in social situations, I try to find ways to avoid interacting with others.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
17	I have researched the rules of social interactions to improve my own social skills.	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7
18	I am always aware of the impression I make on other people.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
19	I feel free to be myself when I am with other people.	7	**6**	5	4	3	2	1

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Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
20	I learn how people use their bodies and faces to interact by watching television or films, or by reading fiction.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
21	I adjust my body language or facial expressions so that I appear relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7
22	When talking to other people, I feel like the conversation flows naturally.	7	**6**	5	4	3	2	1
23	I have spent time learning social skills from television shows and films, and try to use these in my interactions.	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7
24	In social interactions, I do not pay attention to what my face or body are doing.	7	**6**	5	4	3	2	1
25	In social situations, I feel like I am pretending to be 'normal'.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**