Table 1. Description of included studies

Study	Characteristics		Diagnostics		Study design	Risk of bias
Setting		**Population**	**Index test**	**Reference test (cut-off)**		
Childhood autism rating scale (CARS)						
Systematic review: Randall (2018)						
Chlebowski (2010)	Setting: University psychological service clinic, children who failed the M-CHAT Country: US	Mean age (range): 26 months (21-30 months) Female (%): 23% Sample size: 354 Prevalence: 0.67	CARS (cut-off: 32) *	DSM-IV TR criteria diagnosis by one psychologist/developmental paediatrician using ADOS, ADI-R and MSEL, parent interview and child-observations.	Prospective cohort study	High
Russell (2010)	Setting: Autism clinic/child and adolescent unit of tertiary care/teaching hospital, children suspected of ASD Country: Southern India	Mean age (range): 61 months (range NR) Female (%): NR Sample size: 100 Prevalence: 0.86	CARS (cut-off: 30)	ICD-10 criteria diagnosis by multi-disciplinary team	Cohort study (secondary analysis on CARS-scores)	Low
Ventola (2006)	Setting: Psychological service clinic at University of Connecticut, children who failed the M-CHAT Country: US	Mean age (range): 26 months (16-31 months) Female (%): 18% Sample size: 45 Prevalence: 0.8	CARS (cut-off: assumed 30)	DSM-IV criteria best estimate diagnosis (consensus based)	Prospective cohort study	High
Wiggins (2008)	Setting: University of Connecticut/Georgia state University, children who failed the M-CHAT Country: US	Mean age (range): 26 months (16 to 37 months) Female (%): 21% Sample size: 142 Prevalence: 0.51	CARS (cut-off: assumed 30)	DSM-IV criteria diagnosis combined with clinical judgement	Prospective cohort study	Unclear
Individual studies						

Chu (2022)	Setting: Outpatient children for ASD-unit suspected of ASD Country: China	Mean age: 4.1 years (18 months to 14 years) Female (%): 0.14 Sample size: 474 Prevalence: 0.84	CARS Multiple cut-offs were used. Diagnostic accuracy in this guideline reported for scores >30	DSM-5 confirmed diagnosis by more than two attending physicians, based on parents' description, child's development history, observations and DSM-5 criteria	Prospective cohort study	Low?
Dawkins (2016)	Setting: Children referred for clinical evaluation for ASD Country: US	Mean age: 4.9 years (SD 2.8 years) Female (%): 25% Sample size: 98 Prevalence: 0.85	CARS	DSM-5 criteria diagnosis	Prospective cohort study	High
Ji (2023)	Setting: Child and adolescent psychiatry outpatient clinic (tested 2019-2020) Country: South Korea	Mean age: 48.94 months (SD 17.79 months) Female (%): 20.7% Sample size: 220 Prevalence: 0.97	CARS	ADOS-2 module 1 and 2 criteria diagnosis	Retrospective chart review	High
Park (2018)	Setting: child adolescent psychiatry outpatient clinic (tested 2013-2014) Country: South Korea	Mean age: 49 months Female (%): 12.8% Sample size: 78 Prevalence: 0.94	CARS	ADOS-2 module 1 and 2 criteria diagnosis (DSM-IV)	Retrospective chart review	High
Social communication questionnaire (SCQ)						
Ung (2016)	Setting: Youth presenting for neurodevelopmental testing at outpatient pediatric ASD specialty clinic Country: US	Mean age: 7.06 (SD 1.85) n=33 6.42 (SD 1.84) n=43 Female (%): 13% Sample size: 76 Prevalence: 0.43	SCQ, parent reported (cut-off 15)	Assessment, including a physical exam by a pediatrician, a parent interview with the same doctor, and evaluation using the ADOS and CARS. Additional data provided by parents (e.g., social, cognitive, and motor skills, behavioral issues) were reviewed, and a multidisciplinary team discussed each child's case.	Retrospective chart review	Low?
Charman (2016)	Setting: Referrals to child health	Mean age: 35 months (SD 8.3, range 18-56 months)	SCQ, parent reported (cut-off 15)	In depth assessment, including consensus ICD-10 diagnosis by ADI-	Retrospective chart	High

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	services/speech and language therapy services. Country: UK	Female (%): 28% Sample size: 120 Prevalence: 0.46		R and ADOS combined with assessments of IQ, language and adaptive behavior.		

Abbreviations; NR: not reported; SD: standard deviation; M-CHAT; modified checklist for autism in toddlers

* Cut-off not consistent with clinical use of the tool, based on a publication by Lord (1995)