

Community participation

for children with disabilities and their families

2022 Family Survey findings on inclusion gaps, barriers and enablers in community activities, and future directions

Families want equal access and participation in community activities for their children: This is the overarching message we received from a 2022 national survey of Australian families of children with developmental delay or disability aged birth to 14 years.

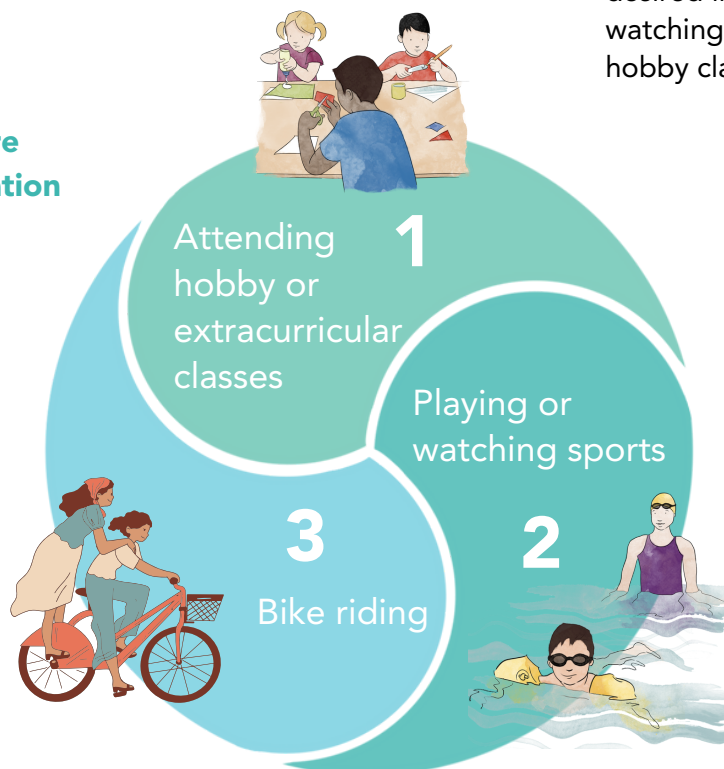
The survey was conducted to document and reflect their experiences of feeling included in community art, cultural, sport and recreation activities. It provides a snapshot of the barriers and enablers they encounter for meaningful participation.

Gaps in participation

Children thrive when they go out into the community. It provides opportunities to experience belonging, make friends, learn about the world and have fun. Although society is becoming more inclusive, the survey shows that families of children with disability and delay are not experiencing the level of participation that they expect.

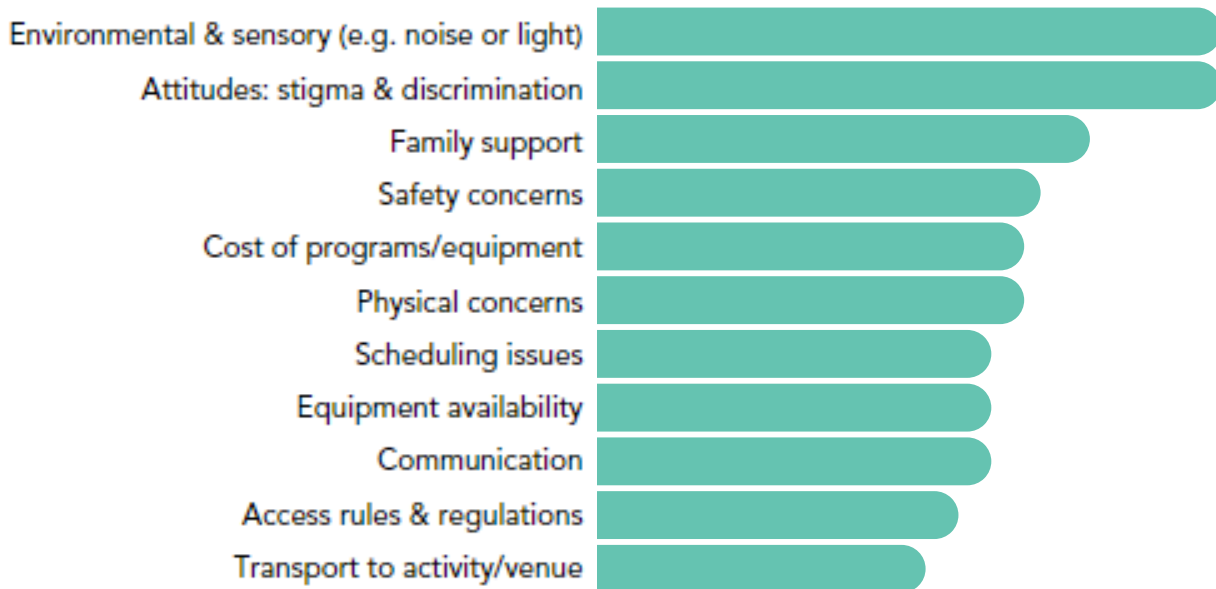
Across the activities measured 41% of families currently felt included. By comparison 91% of families desired more inclusive participation. The largest variation between current and desired inclusion is playing or watching sports, attending a hobby class and riding a bike.

Parents want more inclusive participation for their child in these activities.



Barriers to participation

Caregivers were asked to rate their experience of a range of barriers for their child in being able to participate and feel included in community activities. The greatest barriers to inclusion were environmental and sensory barriers along with attitudes, stigma and discrimination.



Parent comments on how community inclusion can be enabled:

- “Focus on what a person with a disability can do, rather than what they can’t do”
- “Reserve judgement—understand the child and how they behave, taking the whole picture into account before jumping to conclusions”
- “Don’t assume that participation and inclusion are not possible for children with disability”
- “Don’t believe that people with a disability can’t achieve or don’t want to be included because they don’t interact or communicate in the same way”
- “Teach children early about diversity”

Future directions

The survey information will inform the project’s next stage: developing an Inclusion Visioning Kit, a resource that guides organisations toward more inclusive practices. Our data can also provide direction for future inclusion plans that are implemented at individual, organisational and government policy levels.

Do you feel included?

Family surveys are planned for 2023 and 2024. We want to hear family and carer experiences to inform a more inclusive future. Visit our website to learn more about Community & Me, read forthcoming reports and participate in future surveys.