



Autism
Awareness
Australia

Understanding the Barriers: The Educational Experiences of Children with Autism

A summary report of the 2024
National Autism Education Survey



In February 2024, Autism Awareness Australia launched a National Parent Autism Education Survey to gather insights from parents and carers of children with autism and their experiences within their state's education systems.

A recent review of the NDIS recommended that the scheme should not be the 'only lifeboat in the ocean' and that states must step up and improve their support of young people with disabilities. One area likely to be targeted in that effort will be the state education systems. We wanted to get a clearer picture from parents and carers about the experiences of young children with autism in Australia's schools so that we can understand the barriers they face and effectively advocate for the needs of autism families.

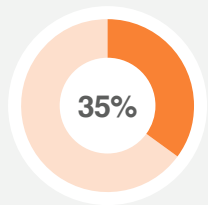
We are delighted that parents and carers from all eight states and territories in Australia took part in our survey. Many of them expanded upon their answers with heartfelt, candid comments in the free text sections. We have read and reflected upon every single response, and some are highlighted in this report.

The National Parent Autism Education survey report, along with some key findings and themes, will be delivered to each Education Minister across Australia.

We are grateful to all of the families who participated and shared their experiences.

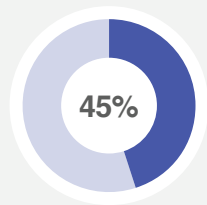
Understanding the Barriers: The Educational Needs of Children with Autism

In this report, we present insights from parents and carers about their autistic children's educational experiences and some key insights stand out.

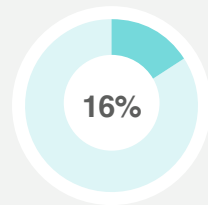


35% of families experienced being discouraged or refused enrolment for their child

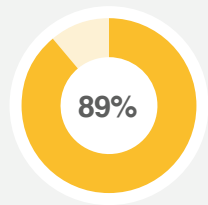
50% of those parents experienced this in the public school system



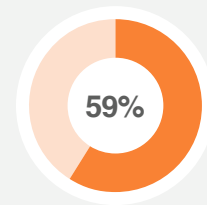
45% of families report that their child's school is either reluctant to use accommodations or unwelcoming



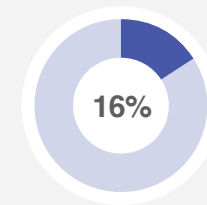
16% of autistic children are reportedly 'very unhappy' at school



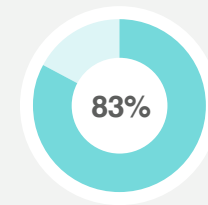
89% of parents believe they should be able to choose the most appropriate schooling option (eg: mainstream, special education) for their child



59% of parents have considered or used alternatives to school (homeschooling and/or online distance learning)



Only **16%** of parents are happy with how their schools manage the funding to support their child at school

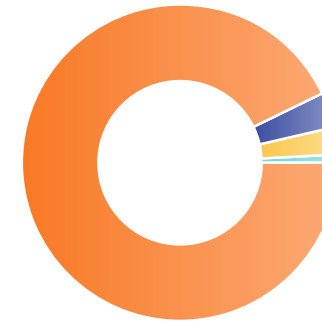


83% of children included in this report received some kind of support from the NDIS

About the participants in our survey

“ Please don't exclude our children just because they are different. Help them!

Who answered our questions?

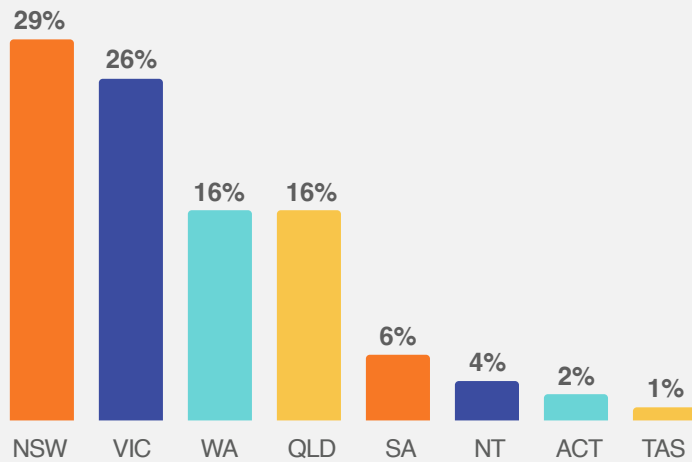


93%
Parents

4%
Grandparents

2%
Carers

1%
Others



Where do they live?



60%
In capital cities



25%
In regional cities



13%
In rural or country towns



0.5%
In remote locations

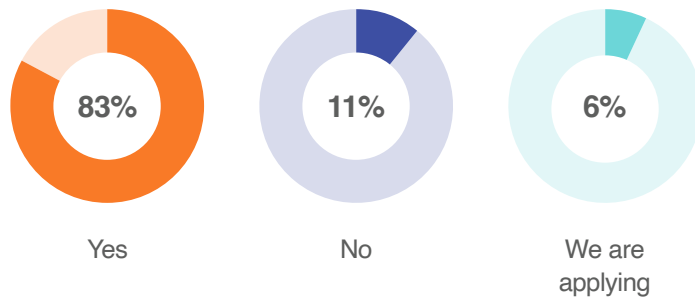


1.5%
In other locations

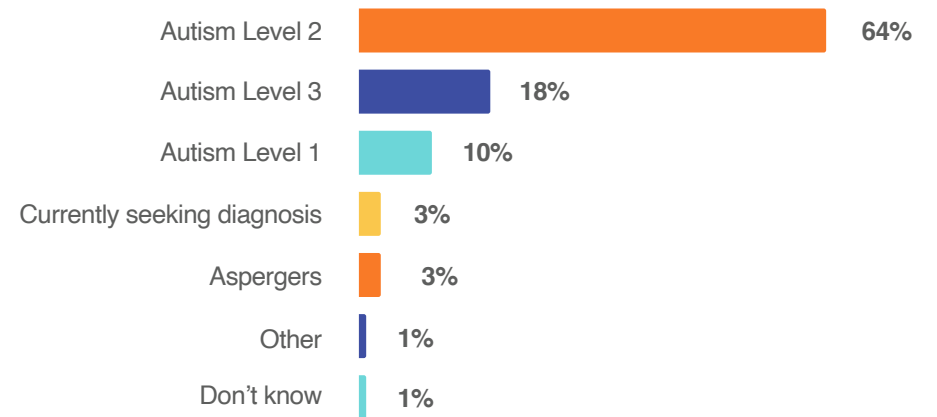
About the children in our survey

“ I would want them to know not every child learns the same.

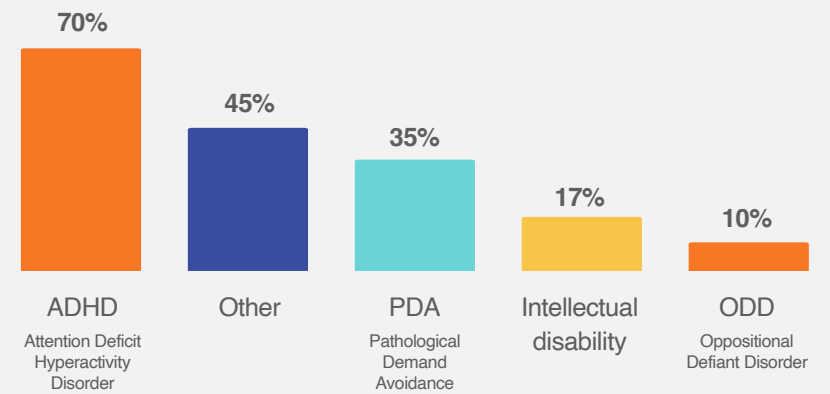
Is your child currently an NDIS participant?



What is your child's diagnosis?



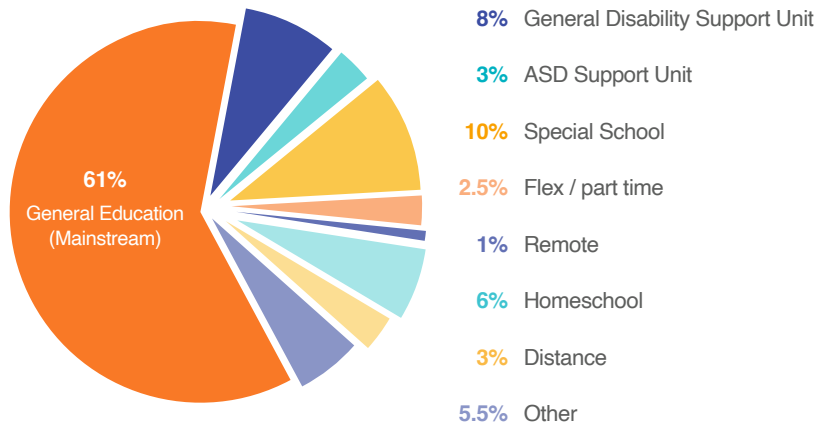
Any co-occurring conditions?



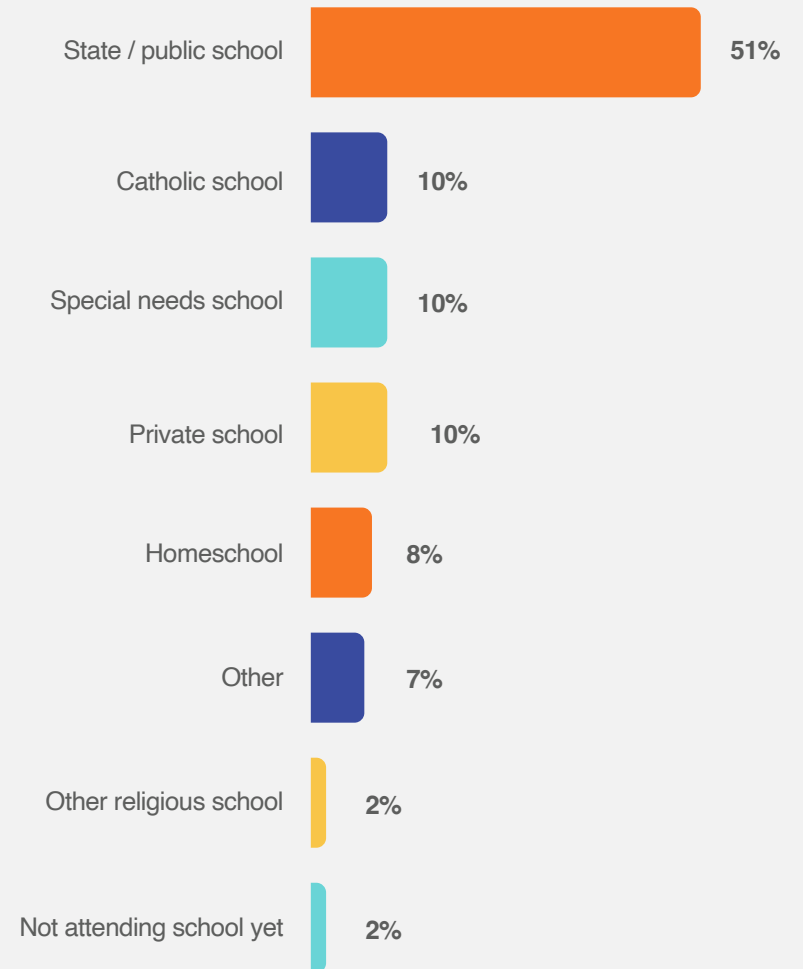
About the schools these children attend

“ Patchy supports, untrained teachers, lack of peer understanding.”

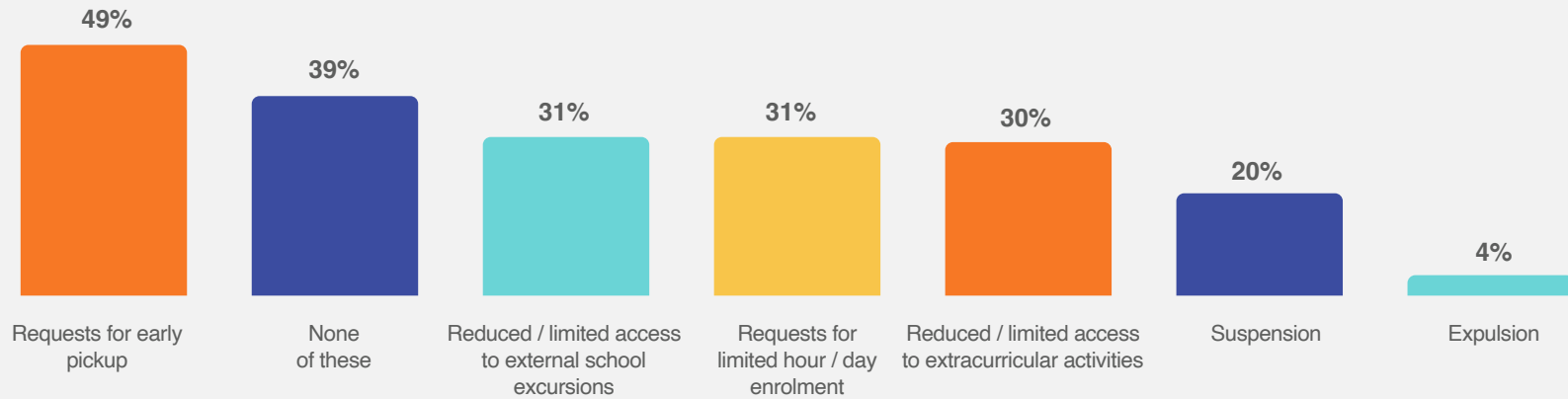
What type of setting is your child currently enrolled in?



What type of school does your child attend?



Has your child experienced any of the following:



How does your child feel about school?

The average in the 1 - 10 spectrum was 4.4



5%
Responded
"Loves it"



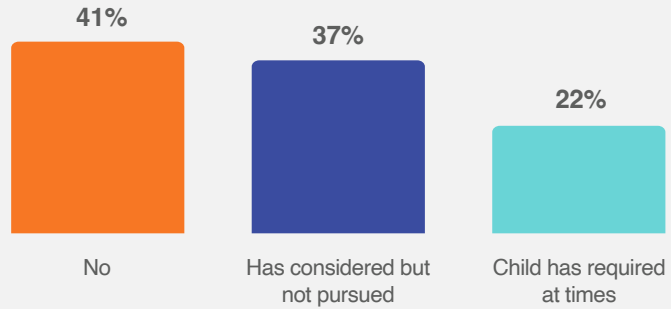
30%
Responded
"It varies"



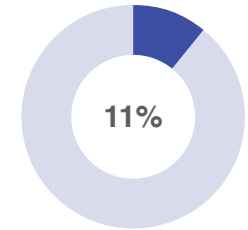
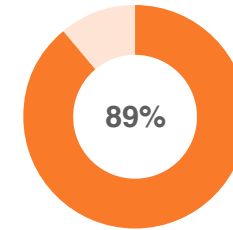
16%
Responded
"Very unhappy"

“ There is not enough support in schools to help children who learn differently. The system is outdated and it is holding students back.”

Have you considered alternative school options for your child?
(homeschooling or distance / online learning)



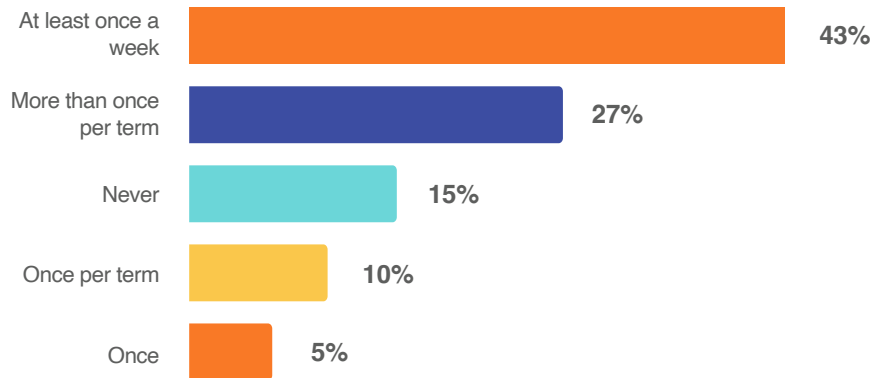
When thinking about school options I believe that:



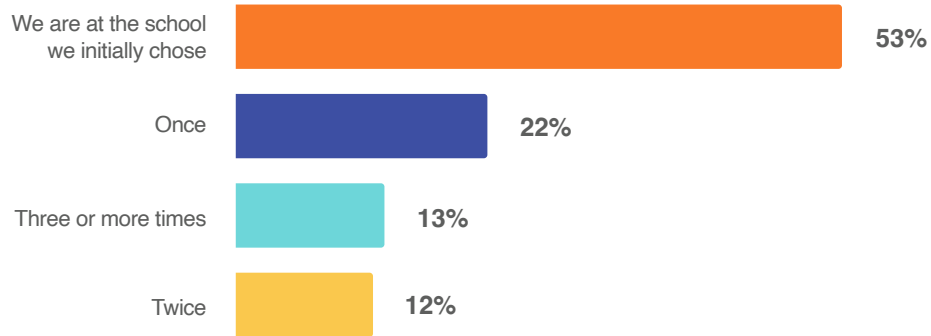
Parents should be able to choose the most appropriate schooling option (eg: main-stream, special education) for their child

All children should receive schooling in mainstream settings

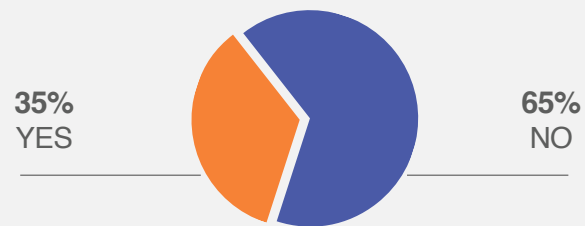
Have you experienced your child refusing to attend school?



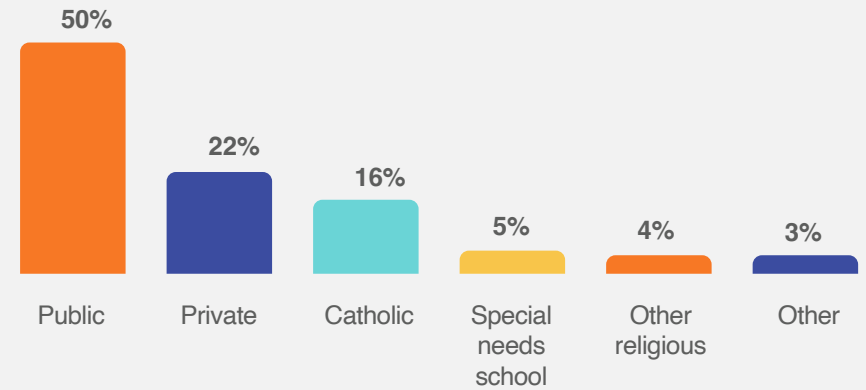
How many times have you needed to change schools for your child?



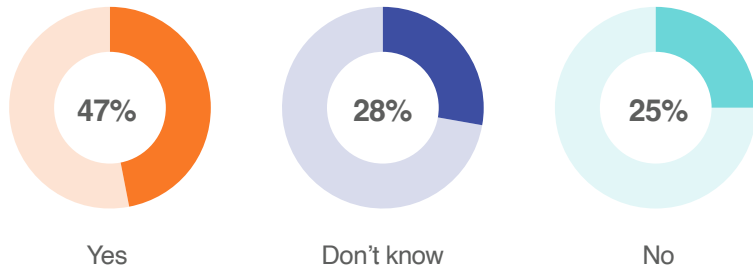
Has any school refused or discouraged you from enrolling your child in that school?



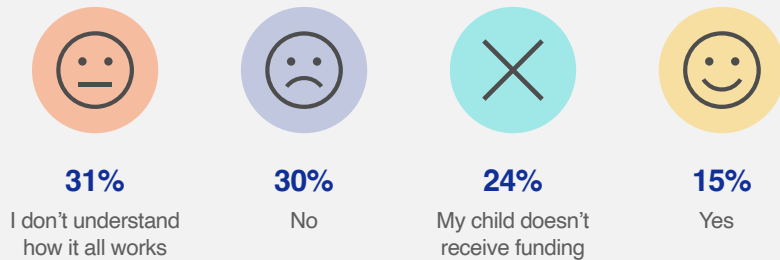
If yes, was the school:



Does your child's school receive state government funding to support your child at school?

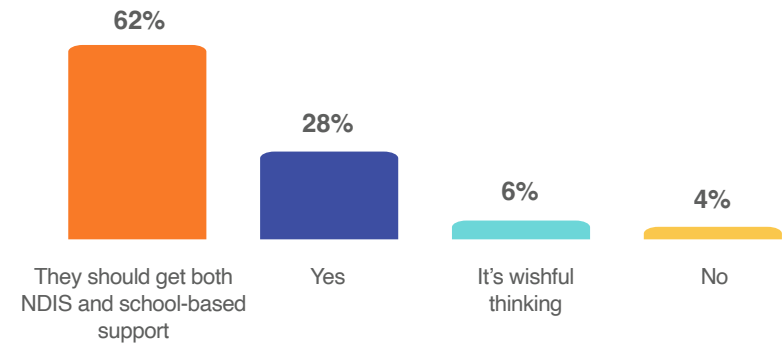


Are you satisfied with how this funding is used to support your child at school?

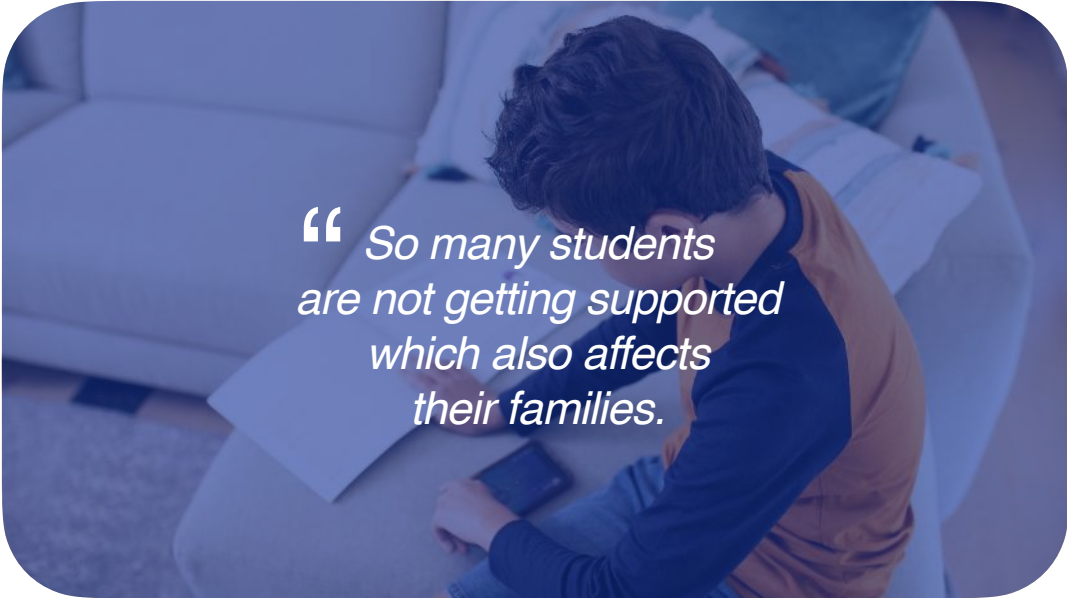


Do you agree with the following statement:

“The recent review of the NDIS suggests school-aged children should receive more support in schools rather than the current support they are getting under the NDIS.”

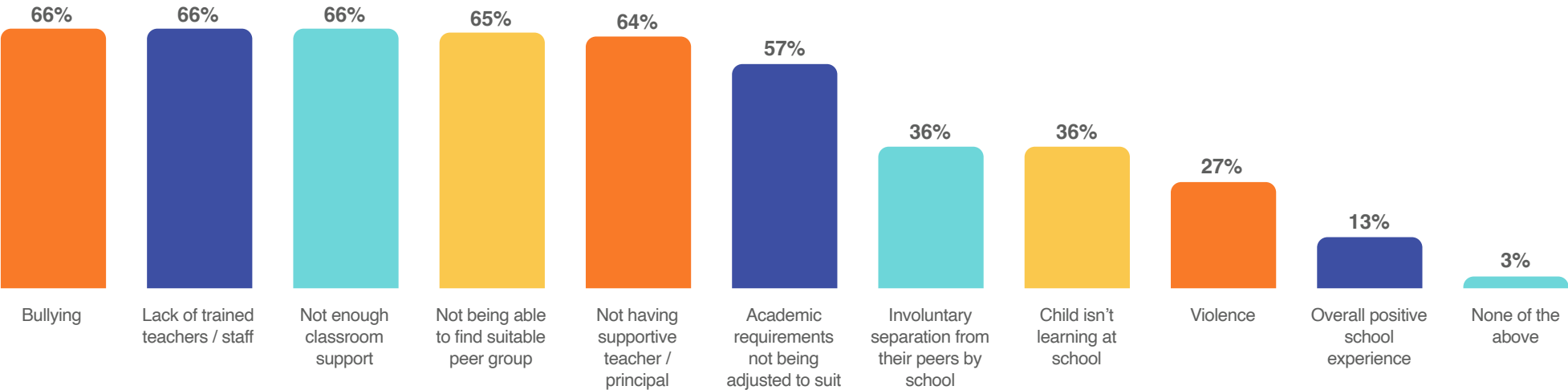


“ He experienced multiple instances of bullying by different students last year. When he could no longer cope and reacted physically, he was suspended twice.

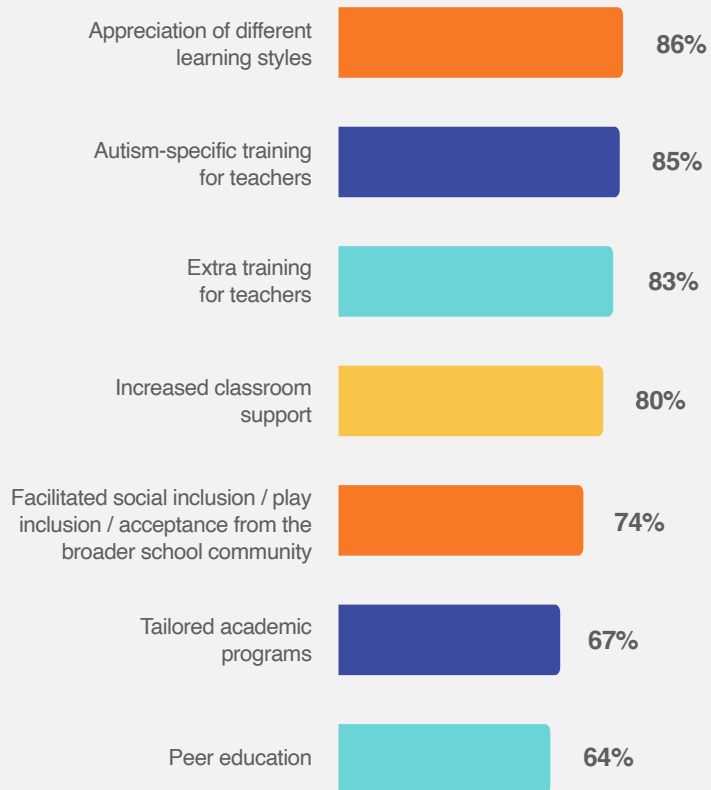


“ So many students are not getting supported which also affects their families.

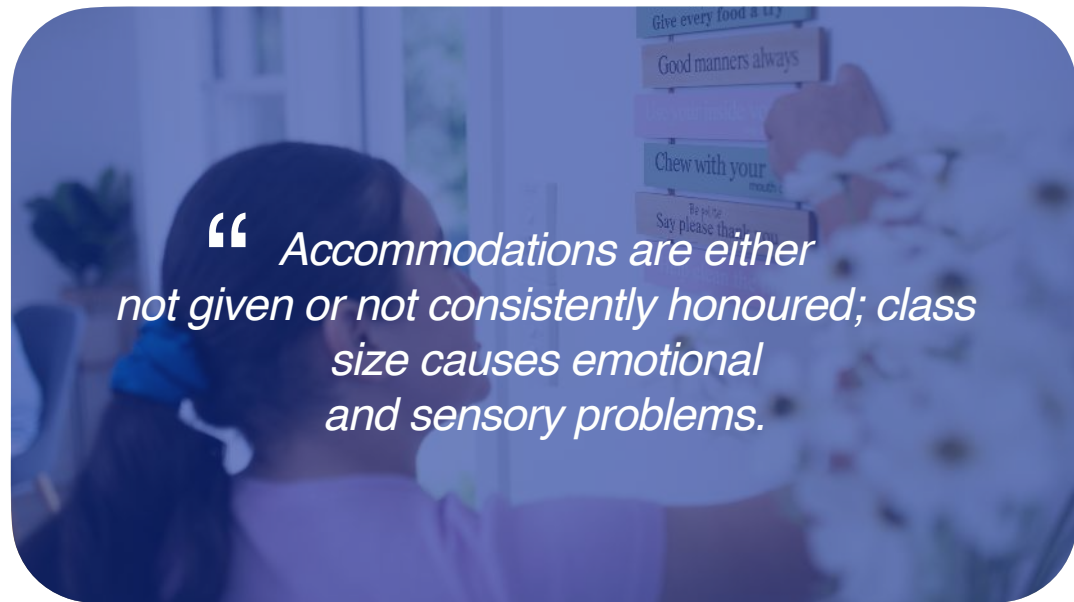
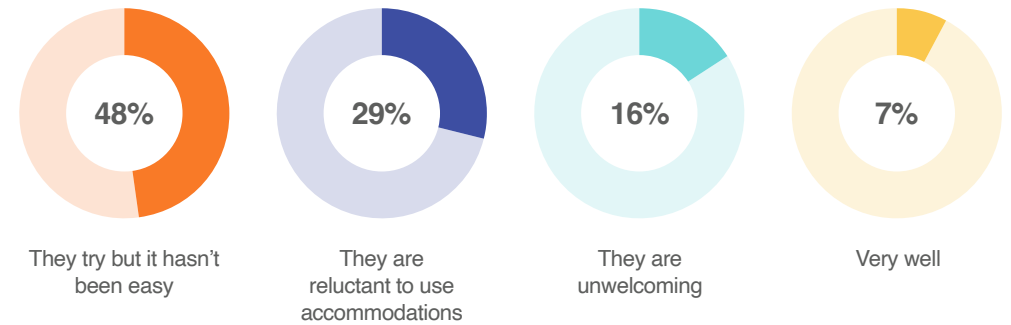
Has your child experienced any of the following?



What would you like to see improve at your child's school?



How well do you think your state's education system has supported your child?





While the results of this survey highlight an education system that under-delivers for the needs of autistic students across Australia, there are glimmers of what *meaningful support* and *best outcomes* look like. Amid the hundreds of free text comments, there are a few bright spots.

We firmly believe that these bright spots should be the norm, not the exception, across all schools in Australia.

We are currently a long way from realising and delivering these levels of support consistently across the country. It is our hope that the education systems across Australia deliver on the inclusive educational outcomes they support on paper. We stand ready to work with everyone within both the education systems and the broader autism community to fight for what our loved ones deserve.

Thank you for your support.

Explanatory notes:

- This report presents results from the 2024 National Parent Autism Education Survey conducted throughout Australia by Autism Awareness Australia.
- Where the response to the questions in the survey was more than 100%, in these instances, respondents had the option of choosing multiple answers to these questions.
- All data in this survey has been anonymised for analysis.





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