


SURVEY RESULTS: HOW ARE SPECIAL OLYMPICS FAMILIES EXPERIENCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ADVOCACY?

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Before you read

— PART 0: A FEW THINGS
TO KEEP IN MIND



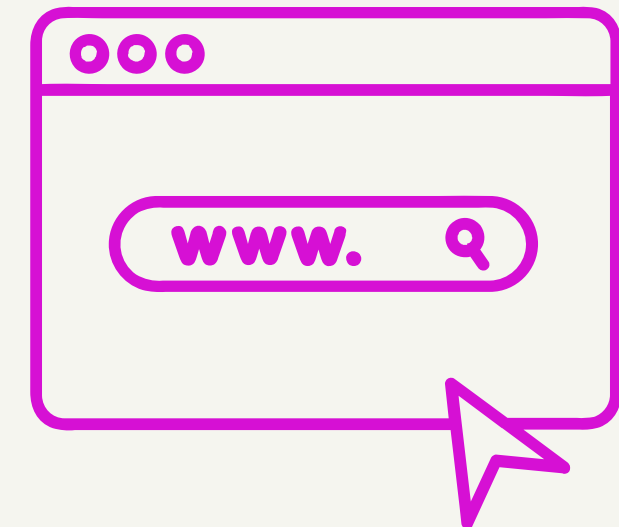
ABOUT THIS REPORT



This document is quite long.
You don't need to read it all at once.



This document has some
difficult words.
You can find the definitions at
the end, and on our website.



This document is one part of a
research project.
That means there are more
documents like this one that can
give you more information.
You can read them on our website
here.

TWO WORDS TO KEEP IN MIND



ADVOCACY

Advocacy is acting to support a specific person or cause. A person can advocate for something that affects them (self-advocacy) or that affects others (advocating for others).

There are many types of advocacy, like awareness campaigns, talking to politicians or starting legal cases.

In this research, we are focusing on advocacy at the school level; not at the government level



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A type of education that includes people with and without disabilities in the same schools.

People with disabilities can have access to learning support assistants - which are called different names in different countries - but they are in the same classrooms as other students.

WHY DO WE NEED ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES ARE

49%

MORE LIKELY TO
NEVER GO TO
SCHOOL



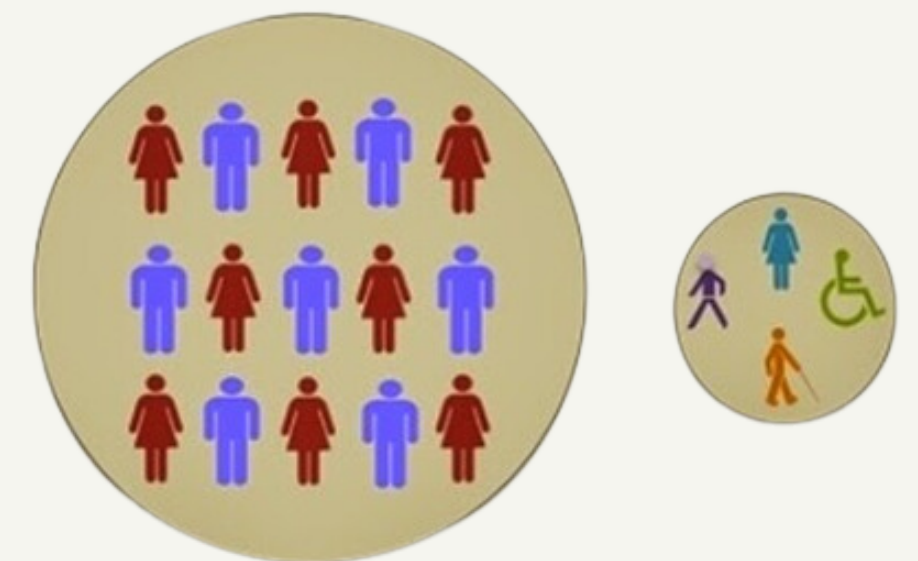
**ONLY
17%**

OF COUNTRIES HAVE
LAWS THAT ORDER
INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION



**WHILE
25%**

OF COUNTRIES HAVE
LAWS THAT ALLOW
SEPARATED
EDUCATION



WHAT DID WE WANT TO LEARN?

We wanted to understand how Special Olympics families have experienced education, and when they have had to fight for it.

We also wanted to understand if Special Olympics know what advocacy is, and if they have done it before.

This would help us learn:

- If Special Olympics families are going through the same things that other organizations have reported
- How Special Olympics can be most helpful to families

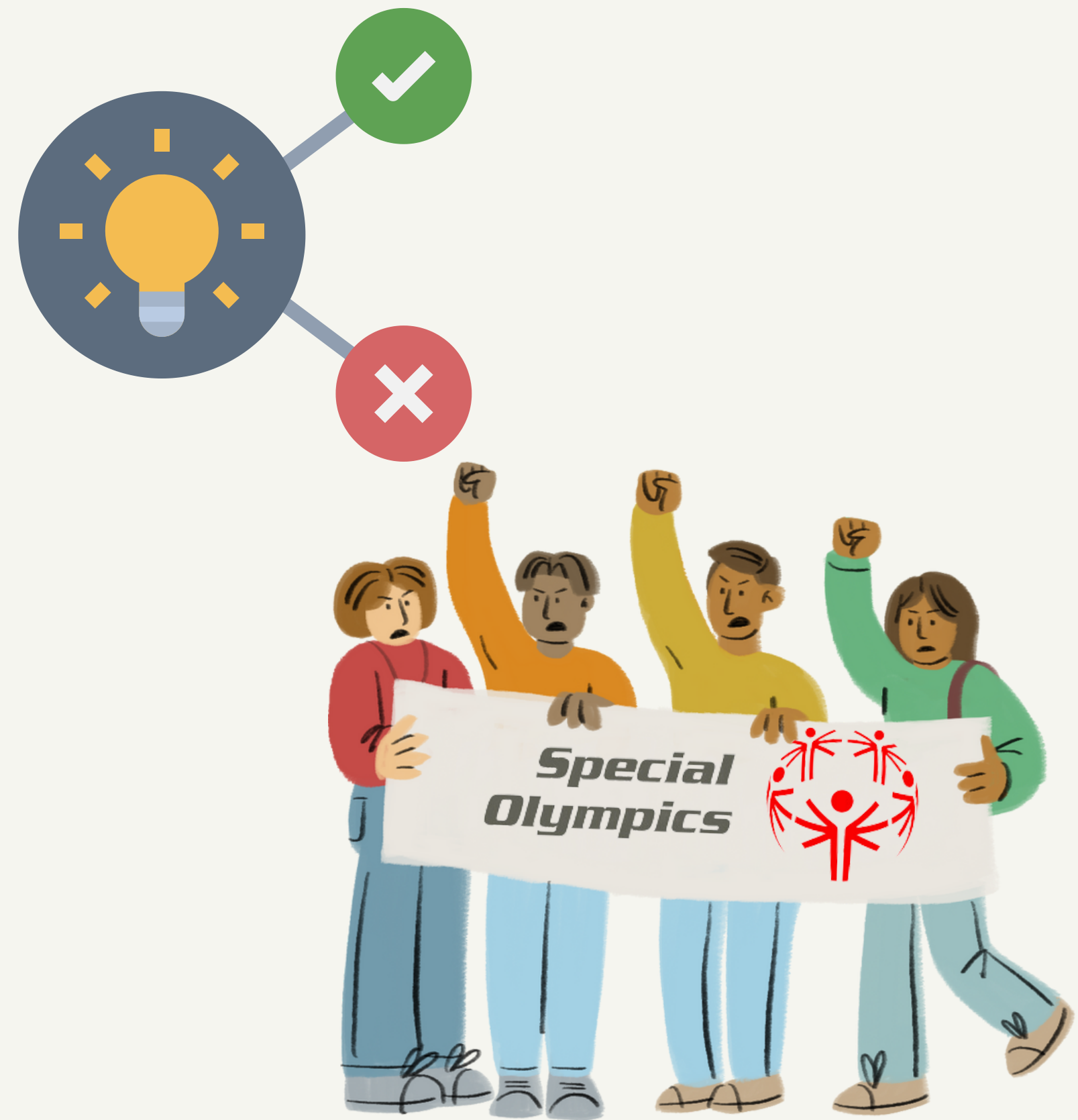


Hypothesis

WHAT WE THOUGHT WE WOULD FIND

Based on what we had already studied, we thought we would find that:

- Special Olympics families are already doing advocacy, but they do not know this word.
- Special Olympics families are advocating to get their children into inclusive schools.
- Special Olympics families are advocating for their children to get the best possible education in schools.
- Special Olympics families are not participating in systems advocacy.



HOW DID WE FIND OUR INFORMATION?

STEP 1

We created a survey with 18 questions.

The survey would show you different questions based on your answers.

For example, if you had never advocated, it would ask you why. If you had, it would ask you how.



STEP 2

We made two versions of the survey:

- 1 in Spanish for Latin America
- 1 in English for North America and Europe

The Special Olympics regional coordinators sent out the surveys by email.



STEP 3

Once we had the answers, we put them all together.

Then, we analyzed the results together. This means we looked at them carefully and compared them with what we already knew.



PEOPLE WHO ANSWERED OUR SURVEY

36 people answered our call to action.

30 were parents of people with disabilities, 1 was a niece.

25 people

only answered the survey



6 people

answered the
survey and wanted
to be interviewed



5

only wanted
to be
interviewed



WHAT WILL YOU FIND IN THESE SLIDES?

WHAT TYPES OF EDUCATION SPECIAL OLYMPICS FAMILY MEMBERS HAD ACCESS TO



THE PARTS THAT WERE DIFFICULT OR EASY ABOUT ACCESSING THAT EDUCATION, AND WHAT THEY DID



HOW SPECIAL OLYMPICS FAMILY MEMBERS INTERACTED WITH SUPPORTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS



HOW OUR FINDINGS COMPARE TO WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY





What we learned

— PART 1: INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION & ADVOCACY



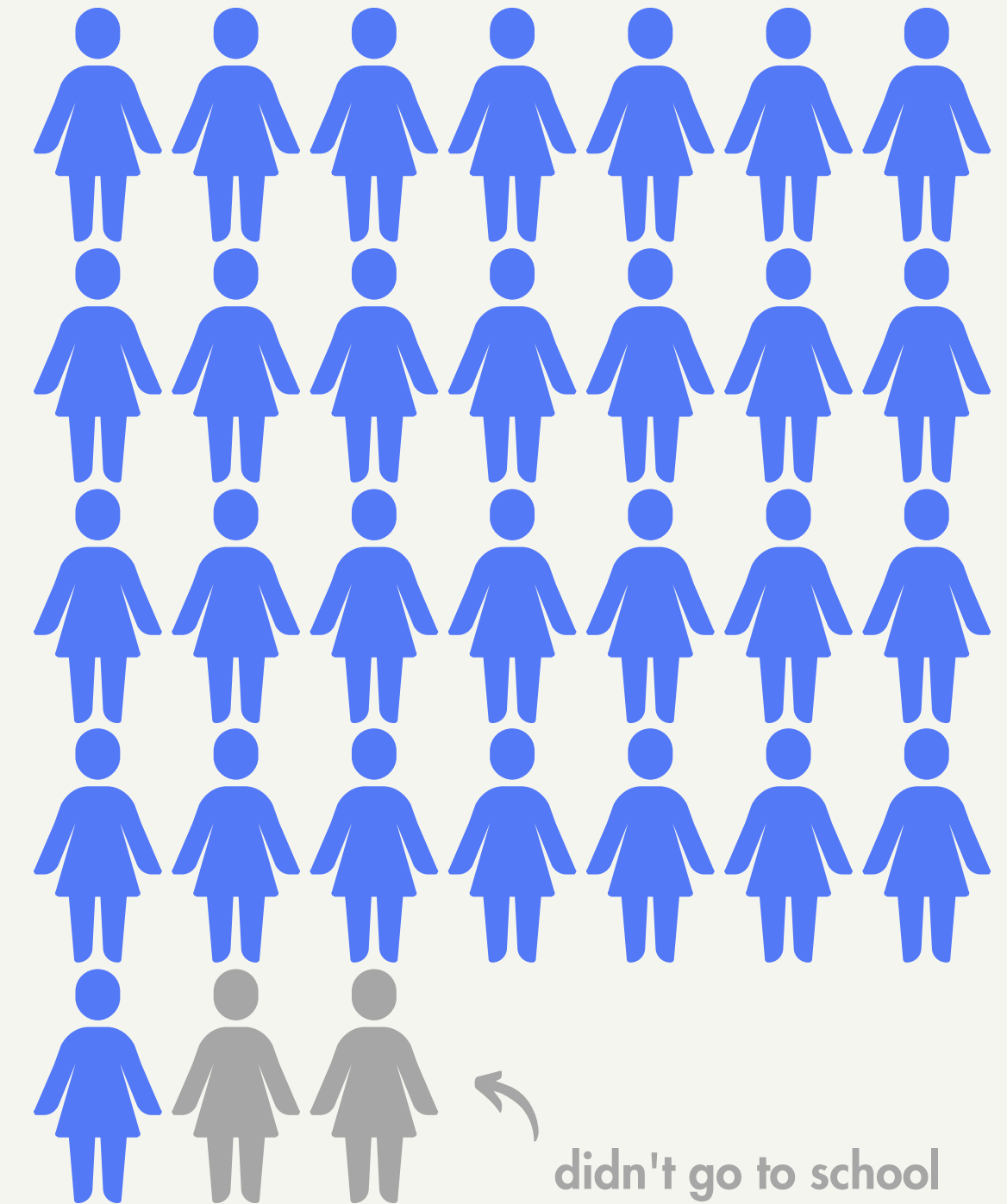
ACCESS TO EDUCATION

We asked: "Did your family member have access to formal education?"

- In this graph, we are showing that of the 31 people who answered our survey:
 - 29 have family members who did have formal education (green),
 - 2 did not access education (grey).
- When we say formal education we mean education in a school or day centre



went to school



- We think this many people might have to access to education because...

- People are going to private education because their parents are wealthy
- People have access to family support
- Parents highly value education



It is
important
to note two
things:

- Having an education is not the same as having quality education. It is not enough to just sit in class.
 - *"So the education system in Malta provides them with a place at the school. However, that is not having access to education, access to education means that they are given the tools to reach their full potential."*
(E15, Malta)
- At the same time not having formal education does not mean not learning any skills.
 - In Ireland, the National Learning Network, teaches skills like independent travel, washing clothes, personal hygiene, shopping and so on, can help promote independence and enhance the individuals quality of life.



We started this survey asking **36 people** if their family member had access to formal education.

Then, **29 people** told us that their family members did go to formal education.

So, we asked a few questions to **those 29 people**, because we want to know what the experience was like.



36 answers in total

**29 people had family
members with education
We asked them the next
questions**

TYPE OF EDUCATION

We asked: "What type of education did your family member receive?"

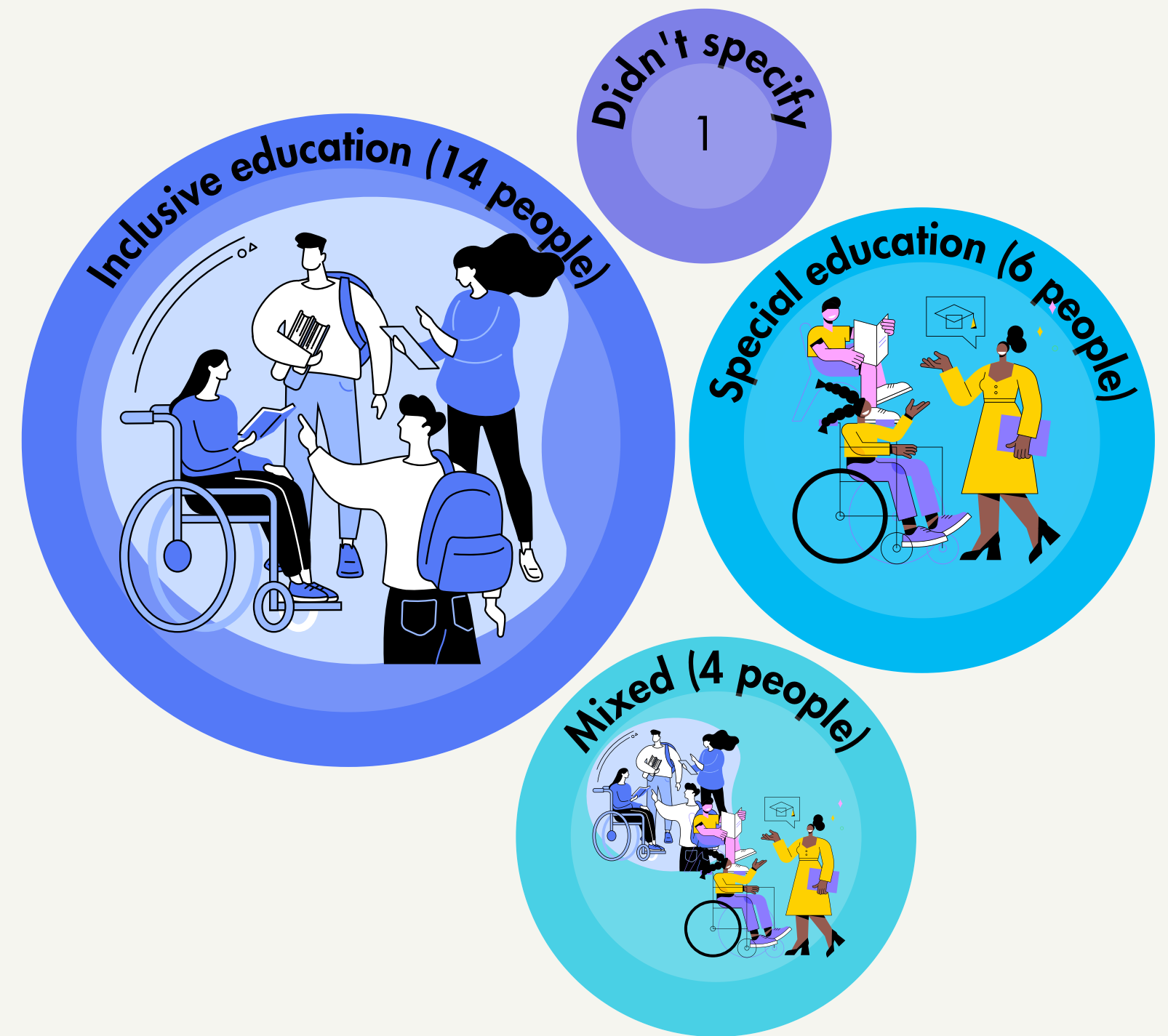
This graph shows that most of the people are in inclusive education.

16 family members went to inclusive education only.
6 people went to special education only.

Because inclusive education is relatively new in some countries, this makes sense.

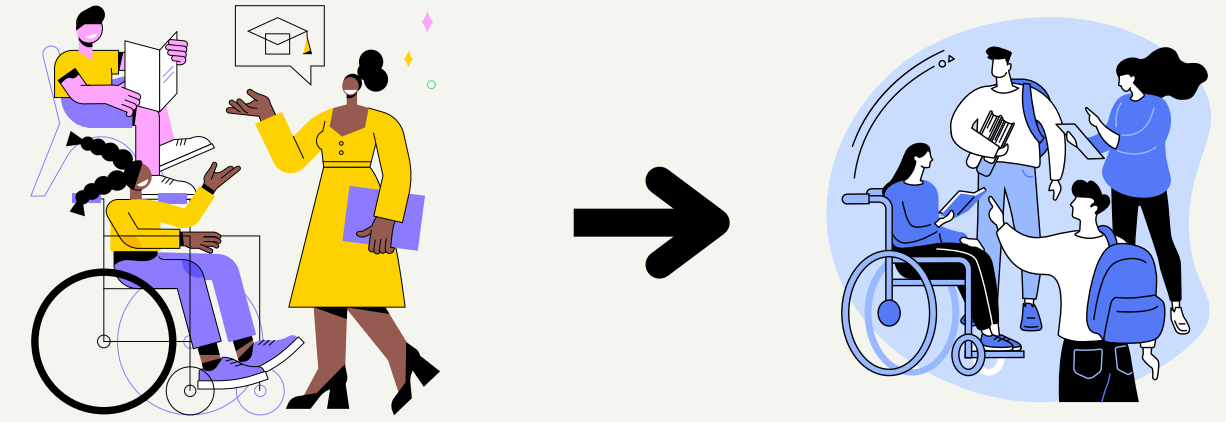
- UNESCO has found that only 17% have laws that order inclusive education for people with disabilities.

It's also important to think about how much support they received, which will look at in a later question.



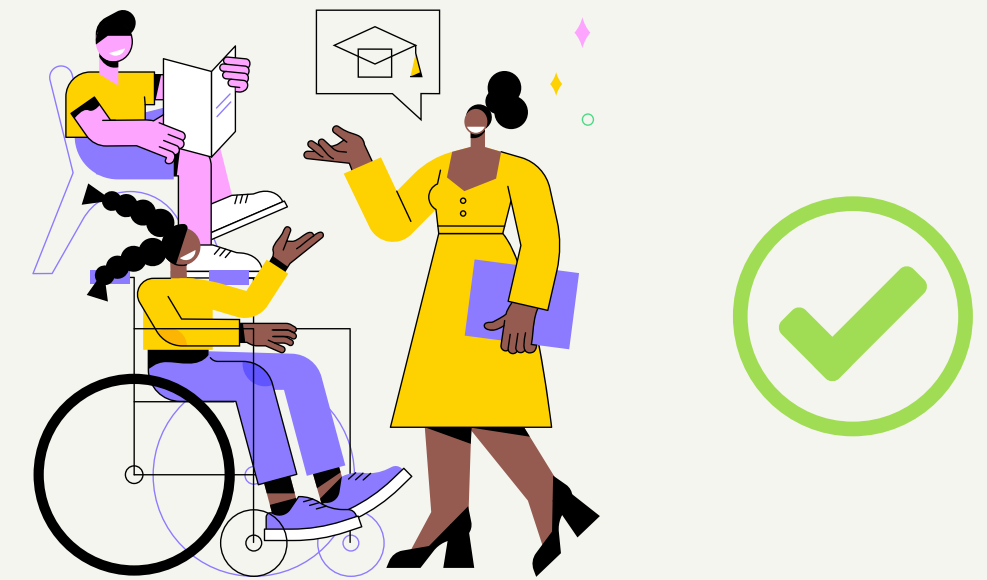
- It's important to keep in mind that that **education looks different for different people**. Sometimes, they will change schools depending on their needs and how they progress.

- **S3:** "My daughter with Down syndrome started in special education school and the last year of kindergarten (when she already controlled her sphincters) we moved her to regular school, where she is currently (she is in 5th grade)."
- **E5:** "My family member attended regular school and now attends learning centre."



- While some children can go to a mainstream school with a learning support assistant, **inclusive schools are not always prepared to educate children with more severe disabilities**.

- In those cases, parents often prefer special education as their children receive better attention
- More severely disabled children may benefit from specialized care such as that provided in Ireland by St Michael's House Schools group.



- However, **it does look like most people are changing towards inclusive education**.



GETTING INTO EDUCATION

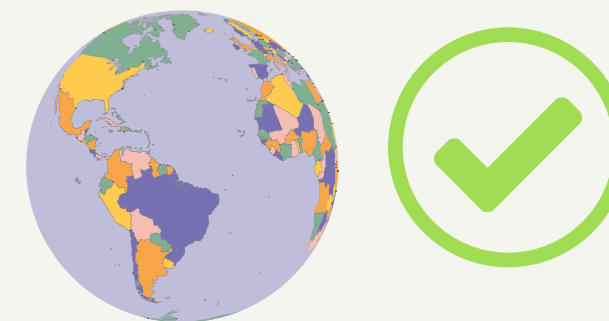
We asked: "Was it easy to access this education?"

This graph shows that the majority of people found it easy to access education.

Given that around the world, people with disabilities are **49%** less likely to go to school (according to UNICEF), this was positively surprising.

There are many possible explanations for this. Some are:

- The countries represented in the survey have stronger education systems
- Because the people who responded to this survey are linked to Special Olympics, they have the information and networks to advocate for education.



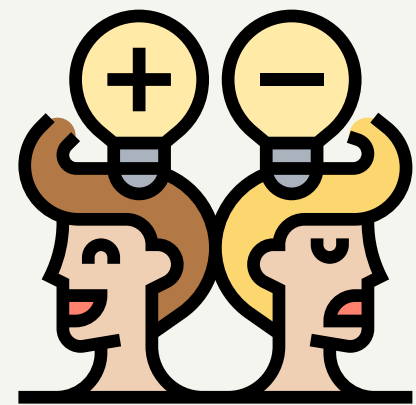
7
found it
hard

22
found it
easy

- However, for some people, it is still hard to have access to any type of education - inclusive or special.
- There are many reasons for this. Some of the reasons that affect how easy or difficult it is to access education are:



Factor	When it makes access easy	When it makes access hard
Location	<p>Families prefer schools that are centrally located and provide safe transport solutions</p> <p><i>E11: "In pre-school and primary both schools were local to where we lived."</i></p>	<p>While it did not show up in our survey, other studies have showed that some areas - especially rural - do not have inclusive or special education schools.</p>
Cost	<p>Some parents select a school based on the economic support available. This can come from the government or charities.</p> <p><i>S13: "A social venture covers the cost of this education, which is also important to be able to attend."</i></p>	<p>Inclusive education is very expensive and is often private. Family members are worried about the cost.</p> <p><i>S8: "Economic part (was difficult)"</i></p>



Factor	When it makes access easy	When it makes access hard
Knowledge of rights	<p>Respondents shared that they knew which rights and laws they should use to make sure their family member had access to education.</p> <p><i>S3: "Knowing the rights of people with disabilities and what the law says, they could not refuse to accept her [respondent's family member]."</i></p>	<p>Respondents shared that when school staff does not know the rights of people with disabilities, they deny entry into inclusive schools.</p> <p><i>S2: "When I enrolled my son (...) they wanted to deny the enrollment (...) the director also visited the counseling where they explained to her that they could not deny the enrollment for my son"</i></p>
Attitudes	<p>People shared that they found great teachers who were able to create the right learning environment.</p> <p><i>S13: "I was fortunate to have good teachers and professionals who helped me get into the right institution"</i></p>	<p>Others shared that teachers, therapists, heads of schools and even students were not prepared for inclusive education.</p> <p><i>S17: "The schools are not prepared at all, neither at the teaching level nor at the student level (ie the social aspect)"</i></p>

- When it's **hard** to access education, parents have to **advocate** to make sure their child does get access!



HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO ADVOCACY?

Around the world, children with disabilities have a hard time getting into education.

In 2021 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that children with disabilities are:

- 49% more likely to never go to school
- 47% more likely to be out of primary school
- 33% more likely to be out of lower secondary school

So, unfortunately, even making sure that a family member has access to an education is usually a result of advocacy to get them a spot in a school.

It also means advocating to make sure they get a quality education once they are there.



ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

We asked: "Did your family member have access to specialized assistance or support services during their education?"

Specialized assistants or supports help a person be included in mainstream education and extracurricular school activities.



In our study, **21 family members** had access to some kind of assistance during their education. This is very positive.

5 people did not. This can make advocacy harder, as the support also advocates for the student.

3 people did not know. Some people had family member's had studied a long time ago. That's probably why they didn't know.

**21
had
support**

5 did not

3 didn't know

Remember that we started this survey asking **31 people** if their family member had access to formal education.

Then, **29 people** told us that their family members did go to formal education. We asked them some questions, which you just read about.

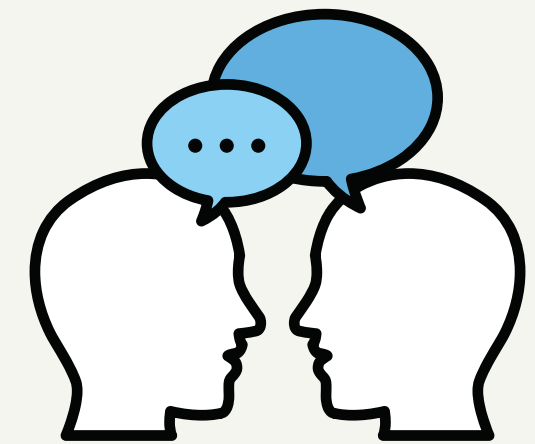
Then, **21 people** told us that their family member had access to support. A big part of family advocacy is working with supports to get the best education.

So we asked some questions to understand how families work with supports.



LEARNING SUPPORTS AND ADVOCACY

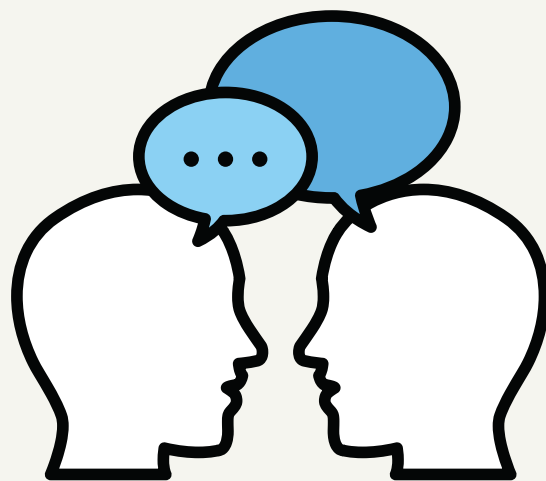
- Most parents do what is called **individual advocacy**: That is when you support someone to make sure their needs are met.
- In schools, this looks like making sure their child can learn well. This is something that you don't do once - you have to keep doing it over time.
- Usually parents will make sure their children are learning in a way that is right for them through a **learning support assistant**.
- In some places, parents talk to learning support assistants in meetings. The people we talked to said parents keep talking and working together even outside of these meetings.
- That is a type of **individual advocacy**.



WHAT DID WE WANT TO LEARN ABOUT SUPPORTS?

We wanted to learn if the support service had **good communication**.

Family members need to build a good relationship with the support to advocate for their child.



We wanted to learn if the support service **took opinions into account**.

So that education plan can fit the real needs of the student.



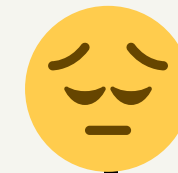
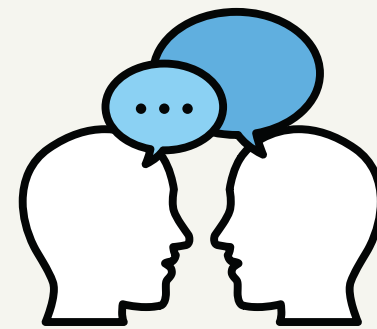
We wanted to learn if the support service respected the person with disabilities' **independence**.

Because people with disabilities' need to have a voice and choice in their education.



So we asked family members to rate on a scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree):

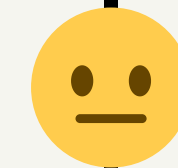
- Their communication with the support service
- If the support service took their opinions into account
- If the support service respected their family member's independence



1: TOTALLY DISAGREE



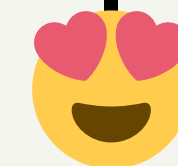
2: DISAGREE



3: NEUTRAL



4: AGREE



5: TOTALLY AGREE

COMMUNICATION

WITH PARENTS

We asked family members to rate: "I had really good communication with the education assistance service"



12 parents totally agreed
(they had really good communication)



5 parents agreed
(they had good communication)



3 parents were neutral
(they had communication)



1 parent disagreed
(they had bad communication)

WITH STUDENTS

We asked family members to rate: "My family member had really good communication with the education assistance service"



12 parents totally agreed
(their child had really good communication)



4 parents agreed
(their child had good communication)



4 parents were neutral
(their child had communication)



1 parent disagreed
(their child had bad communication)

TAKING OPINIONS INTO ACCOUNT

FROM PARENTS

We asked family members to rate: "I felt that the assistance service really took my opinions into account"



11 parents totally agreed
(their opinions were really taken into account)



5 parents agreed
(their opinions were taken into account)



3 parents were neutral



1 parent disagreed
(their opinions weren't considered)



1 parent totally disagreed
(their opinions really weren't considered)

FROM STUDENTS

We asked family members to rate: "I felt that the assistance service really took my family member's opinions into account"



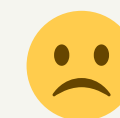
11 parents totally agreed
(their child's opinions were really taken into account)



4 parents agreed
(their child's opinions were taken into account)



4 parents were neutral



1 parent disagreed
(their child's opinions weren't considered)



1 parent totally disagreed
(their child's opinions really weren't considered)

RESPECTING INDEPENDENCE

OF STUDENTS

We asked family members to rate: "I felt that the assistance service respected my family member's independence"



13 parents totally agreed
(their child's independence was respected)



2 parents agreed
(their child's opinions independence was respected)



4 parents were neutral
(they didn't feel it was respected or disrespected)



1 parent disagreed
(their child's independence wasn't respected)



1 parent totally disagreed
(their child's independen wasn't respected)

"It's a complicated one, because some of them knew how to release their control, and to let him go and give him a lot of independence. Some just couldn't know how to do it"

"He's 17 and he has his own opinion (...) he just is trying to be more independent."

E1, Israel





OUR CONCLUSIONS

WHAT WE THOUGHT	WHAT WE FOUND
Special Olympics families are already doing advocacy, but they do not know this word.	True! In the second part of this research, a lot of families (13 families) told us they don't know what advocacy means. But they also told stories of how they had worked to get their child into a school - that's advocacy already!
Special Olympics families are advocating to get their children into inclusive schools.	True! Family members shared with us that they had advocated to get their children into schools by working with school teachers and headmasters, as well as with the local government.
Special Olympics families are advocating for their children to get the best possible education in schools.	True! Most family members are communicating a lot with learning support assistants. That is also a type of advocacy. And in our interviews, we talked a lot about how you have to keep asking the school to make changes to make sure everyone gets a good education.
Special Olympics families are not participating in systems advocacy.	We're not sure! Nobody talked about this in our interviews or survey. But we also did not ask them directly. So we don't have enough information to conclude.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- We asked 31 Special Olympics families about their experiences with advocacy for inclusive education. You can read what we found [here](#).
- You can learn more about how we connected with the community [here](#).
- We studied the right to inclusive education and wrote our findings in an accessible way [here](#).

