



**CRE-DH**

Centre of Research  
Excellence in  
Disability and Health

# ATTITUDES MATTER

Findings from a national survey  
of community attitudes toward  
people with disability in Australia

in partnership with





### Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the many representatives from across the Australian disability advocacy sector who provided input into the survey design. We would particularly like to acknowledge and extend our thanks to AMAZE for sharing their experiences on their survey 'Australia's Attitudes and Behaviours towards Autism'<sup>[1]</sup>. We also thank the Life in Australia members for sharing their thoughts with us.

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### Contact information

Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health (CRE-DH), Disability and Health Unit  
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health  
The University of Melbourne  
Parkville VIC 3001  
Telephone +61 3 8344 0717  
Email [cre-dh@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:cre-dh@unimelb.edu.au)  
Website <https://crehd.org.au>  
Twitter @DisabilityHlth



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# Executive Summary

## Why Attitudes Matter

Attitudes can have a significant impact on the lives of people with disability. Attitudes are related to disability-based discrimination and social exclusion, which in turn impact the health and wellbeing of people with disability. Disability advocates in Australia have pushed for action to improve community attitudes for years, with the aim of achieving a more equitable and inclusive society for people with disability.

## The survey

This study is the first national survey on attitudes toward people with disability in Australia. Over 2,000 people from across Australia participated in the Community Attitudes Survey in 2018. The survey asked respondents about their individual or personally held attitudes, as well as society or community perceptions about people with disability.

## Summary of findings

### Negative and positive attitudes

Most respondents reported positive attitudes toward people with disability. Only a minority reported overtly

negative attitudes. For example, 86% agreed that adults with disability should get to have a say about who they live with (positive), while 20% agreed that employers should be allowed to refuse to hire people with disability (negative).

### Mistreatment and social exclusion

Many respondents were aware of the harmful and exclusionary ways that people in the community treat people with disability. For example, 42% agreed that people with disability are ignored, 63% agreed that people tend to become impatient with people with disability, and fewer than half (42%) thought workplaces were accepting of people with disability.

### Seeing people with disability as exploitable

Sixty-three percent of respondents agreed that people with disability are easier to exploit than people without disability. This view may reflect deeply ingrained stereotypes about vulnerability, incapacity and/or weakness. While it may sound protective, stereotypical perceptions of people with disability as exploitable could be used to limit opportunities for choice and self-determination.

## Uncertainty around people with disability

Seventy-eight percent of respondents agreed that people without disability are unsure how to act toward people with disability. While some actions toward people with disability are overtly discriminatory, other types of harm—such as asking inappropriate questions or ‘helping’ without being asked—may stem from a lack of understanding, which in turn leads to discomfort or uncertainty in interactions with people with disability. Regardless of a person’s intentions, acting based on uncertainty can have adverse impacts for people with disability.

## Neutral responses

Across the survey it was common for respondents to choose the neutral response option—that is, selecting ‘neither agree nor disagree’ in response to statements about attitudes. For example, 34% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement ‘people with disability should not raise children.’

Neutral attitudes are important to understand in greater depth. While we do not know why some people responding to this survey chose neutral responses, it is possible that those who give neutral responses hold negative attitudes but were reluctant to report their true opinion because they do not believe it is socially acceptable (in research, this is referred to as ‘social

desirability bias’). At a population level, understanding shared characteristics of those who hold neutral attitudes may help identify this group for the purpose of targeted action to shift their attitudes in a positive direction<sup>[2]</sup>.

## Recommendations

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) declares full and active participation in society as a fundamental right of people with disability<sup>[3]</sup>. With negative attitudes and consequent discriminatory behaviors known to be a key limiting factor to full participation, the results of this survey indicate that Australia still has a long way to go in meeting its obligations. Investing in strategies to improve community attitudes towards people with disability is also critical for realising the aspirations of the new National Disability Strategy<sup>[4]</sup>.

We recommend, therefore, an ambitious agenda for all levels of government to invest in co-designed interventions that are targeted to those sectors and life domains that are identified by people with disability as impacting on participation and inclusion (e.g. work, education, community). Consideration should be given to multi-level interventions (structural, organisational and individual) and should draw on currently available evidence regarding the effectiveness of interventions and rigorously evaluated so they can be monitored and improved upon.

**People with disability report experiencing discrimination and prejudice in their day-to-day life which excludes them from many domains of life including work, school, accessing services and the community.**

# Background

## Understanding disability

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) describes disability as ‘long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interactions with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’<sup>[3]</sup>. In other words, it is not simply having an impairment or impairments that is disabling, but the interaction of impairment(s) with barriers to participation in society. For example, in workplaces, many people with disability find it difficult to access buildings, travel on public transport or ask for adjustable workstations due to a lack of accessible equipment and infrastructure.

## Attitudes and ableism

Attitudes can act as a barrier to social participation for people with disability. Fundamentally, attitudes are assessments or evaluations of people, places, things or ideas, particularly those that persist over time—whether at the individual or societal level<sup>[2, 5]</sup>.

Attitudes are closely related to disability-based prejudice and

discrimination, also known as ableism. Ableism can be directed toward anyone who is considered to have a disability, no matter what type of condition or impairment they have<sup>[2]</sup>.

Attitudes toward people with disability take a range of forms. For example, they can be:

- Limiting and devaluing
- Paternalistic and protective
- Hostile and demonising
- Benevolent and glorifying
- Neutral, or a mix of positive and negative attitudes (ambivalent)

All these types of attitudes influence how people act toward people with disability. However, positive attitudes do not necessarily bring about inclusive behaviours, practices or policies. While it is difficult to tease out exactly how attitudes translate to social inclusion of people with disability—or, conversely, to discrimination against people with disability—it is clear that attitudes play an important role.

Previous research suggests that, despite considerable diversity among people with disability, there is a set of global attitudes and stereotypes that



are commonly applied to people with disability regardless of the type of impairment they have. These global attitudes contribute to our understanding of the collective oppression of people with disability in society<sup>[2]</sup>.

It is for this reason that this Community Attitudes Survey sought to examine global attitudes toward people with disability, rather than attitudes related to people with specific types of impairments.

## A human rights perspective

Australia is a signatory to the UNCPRD. Article 1 of the UNCPRD states ‘The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity’<sup>[3]</sup>. Negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices create barriers to the full participation of people with disability in society. Changing attitudes is critical to Australia achieving its obligations

under the UNCPRD.

## Why do we need a national survey on attitudes to disability?

Research on attitudes to disability is not new; studies go back many decades. In addition, community members with disability and their advocates have shared stories on how attitudes have impacted their lives<sup>[6]</sup>. Until now, no study has collected data on community attitudes towards disability from a nationally representative sample in Australia. The **Community Attitudes Survey** represents a key step in documenting current attitudes towards people with disability in Australia, providing information about where policy efforts might be targeted for greatest effect. These data can also be used as a baseline from which to track progress towards a more inclusive society.

# About the Survey

The **Attitudes Matter Survey** builds on previous research and reports on attitudes toward people with disability in Australia<sup>[7, 8]</sup>. It makes two important and new contributions to research on attitudes:

1. It is the first population-level representative survey, which means that the findings can be applied to the general Australian population
2. The survey was developed by people with disability who were employed as co-researchers on the project team; questions thus tap into attitudes that are salient in the lives of people with disability in Australia.

The survey examines both personally held and societal attitudes toward people with disability. This includes personal feelings and behaviours toward people with disability, as well as perceptions of how people with disability are treated by others in the community.

## An inclusive approach to survey development

This survey was developed through collaboration between academic researchers at the University of

Melbourne and three co-researchers with disability. Co-researchers helped design a survey that was relevant to the lives of people with disability in Australia. The team worked across all aspects of the research, including:

- Reviewing existing instruments and previous surveys on attitudes to disability to identify potential survey questions
- Identifying attitudes that were most relevant to measure in the Australian context
- Conducting stakeholder interviews with leading disability advocates to guide survey development
- Drafting and finalising the survey
- Interpreting and disseminating survey findings

The co-researchers conducted ten stakeholder interviews face-to-face or by online video or audio. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Stakeholders' contributions helped ensure the survey was useful to the disability advocacy sector. Advocates suggested ideas that we had not considered and helped us refine questions to be more understandable

or relevant. Many also commented on their own experiences of attitudes. Where relevant, we have interspersed their comments with the survey results presented in this report.

People with disability who provided input into this survey spoke about attitudes as interconnected to the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of society. They described attitudes toward people with disability as inextricably linked to issues such as accessibility in public spaces, discrimination in the workplace, and abuse and neglect. The variety of questions in the survey, focusing not just on personal attitudes but on behavioural and structural/institutional manifestations, reflects some of these interconnections.

## Survey content

Based on what people with disability have said about experiences of discrimination in previous research, and on the lived experiences of co-researchers and stakeholders we interviewed, questions were developed to target different attitudes or behaviours (e.g. paternalistic, benevolent, devaluing) across a range of domains (e.g. personal life, work, education, community). Where possible, we used existing instruments such as the Attitudes to Disability Scale, developed by the World Health Organization Quality of Life - Disabilities (WHOQOL-DIS) Group<sup>[9]</sup>.

## Survey methods

Survey respondents were members of the Life in Australia panel, a probability-based panel managed by the Social Research Centre (SRC) based in Melbourne. The

Life in Australia panel was originally recruited in October-November 2016 through random sampling to maximise representativeness of the Australian population (see: <https://www.srcentre.com.au/our-research#life-in-aus>).

In April 2018, all 2,908 active panel members were invited to take part in this survey and of these, 2,069 (71%) participated. Most respondents completed the survey online (87%), with the remaining completing by telephone (13%). Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Appendix A.

## Approach to analysis<sup>1</sup>

We generated descriptive statistics of survey responses. Findings for each survey question are reported as percentages out of 100, which represent the proportion of total respondents. Only a small number of people did not respond to questions; these individuals were excluded from the analytic sample.

All survey questions were worded as agree-disagree statements with 5 response options; strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree. For this report we recategorised these into three groups; (1) disagree (strongly disagree and disagree), (2) neutral (neither agree nor disagree), and (3) agree (strongly agree or agree).

To ensure the survey sample was representative of the Australian population we applied survey weights developed by the SRC.

<sup>1</sup>Previously, our group reported on research for the Victorian government using the same survey questionnaire with a sample of Victorian residents<sup>[10]</sup>. The current report uses data from that same project, but this sample included respondents from all Australian States and Territories. Unlike the Victorian report, these results represent attitudes of people across Australia.



# Results

In this section we highlight key findings. Results are organised into four sections:

## A. Common beliefs

## B. Attitudes about personal lives

## C. Behaviours toward people with disability

## D. Inclusion of people with disability

A table of complete survey results and question sources is included in the Appendix.

## A guide to interpreting results

This survey captured community attitudes through different lenses. Sometimes we asked respondents about their own attitudes. Other times, we asked them about their perceptions of broader community attitudes or behaviours.

Survey statements designed to capture personally held attitudes are indicated with a thought bubble and binoculars for community perceptions, for example:



**“People with disability are a burden on society.”**

This statement reflects respondents’ own attitudes.



**“People are unsure how to act toward people with disability.”**

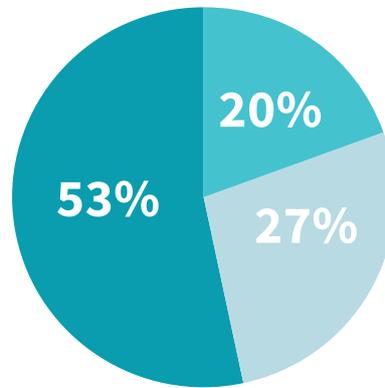
This statement reflects a perception of other people.

# A. Common beliefs

## Low expectations

20%

agreed that people should not expect too much from people with disability



Disagreed Agreed  
Neither

## Perceived exploitability

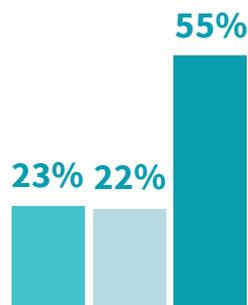
63%

agreed that people with disability are easier to take advantage of, exploit or treat badly

## Future prospects

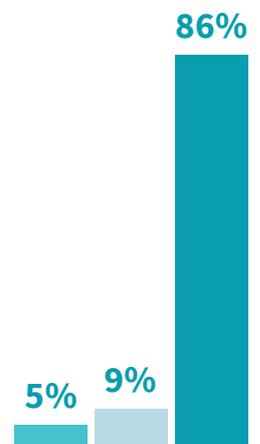
23%

agreed that people with disability have less to look forward to than others



5%

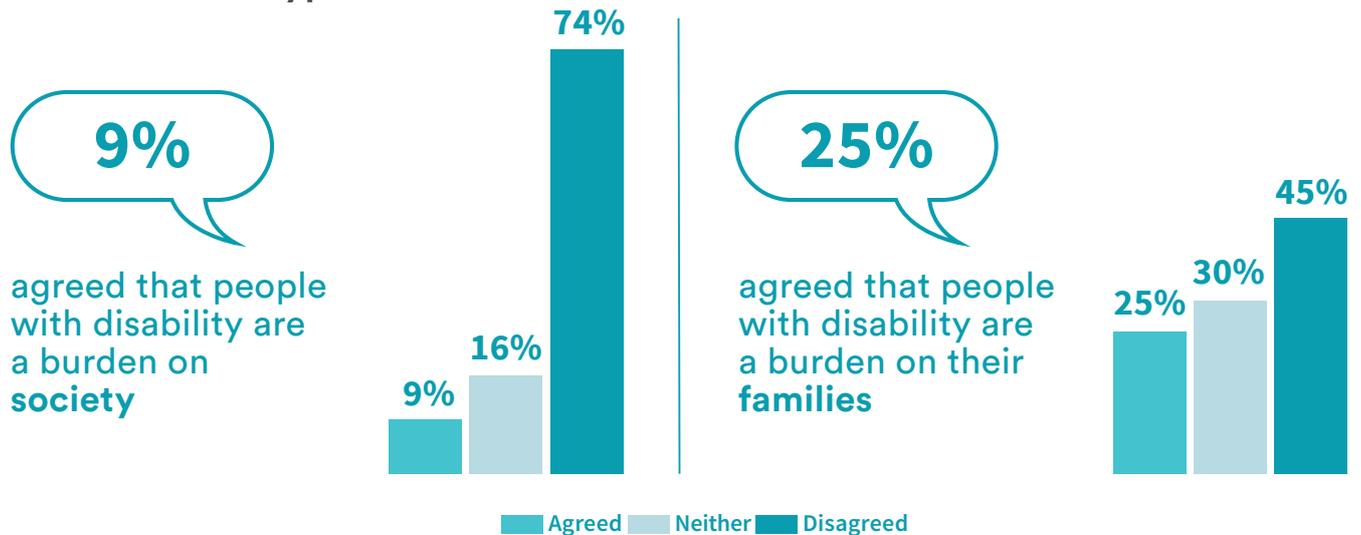
agreed that people with disability should not be optimistic about their future



Agreed Neither Disagreed

“We’re portrayed as victims or charity cases or we’re portrayed as heroes or inspirational. And those two extremes really reinforce the current negative and limiting attitudes towards people with disabilities.”

### ‘Burden’ stereotypes



“My partner’s non-disabled and people always think that she must be a fabulous, wonderful person—and she is—but she must be a fabulous, wonderful person for being with me, and she must do the majority of the domestic tasks and I must be some burden. And one day she’ll wake up and realise that I’m a wheelchair user and leave. I’ve had people say that to me. She hasn’t ‘realised’ yet. So somewhere down the track she’s going to wake up and go, “Oh, she doesn’t stand up. Okay, I’ve got to get out of here.”

### The ‘hero’ narrative



**63%**  
agreed that people are inspired by people with disability

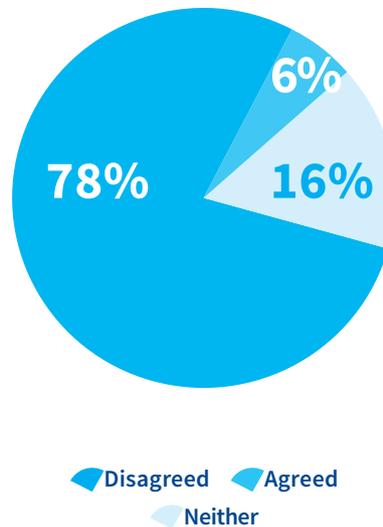
“The idea that we push our impairments down or away and try and overcome them, so almost like a Paralympian sporting stereotype, ... People think that we’re trying to inspire them, but we’re also trying to minimise whatever ways we might look or be.”

## B. Attitudes about personal lives

### Talking about sex

6%

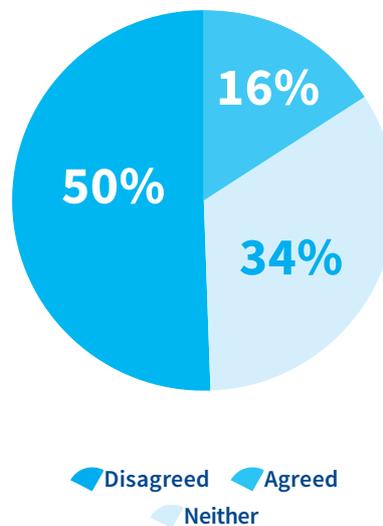
agreed that sex should not be discussed with people with disability



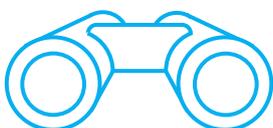
### The right to raise children

16%

agreed with the statement, 'People believe that people with disability should not raise children'



### Choice of housemates



86%

agreed that adults with disability should have a say about who they live with

## C. Behaviours toward people with disability

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### People are unsure how to act



**78%**

agreed that people are unsure how to act toward people with disability

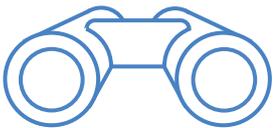
### Impatience with people with disability



**63%**

agreed that people tend to become impatient with people with disability

### Making fun of disability



**61%**

agreed that people often make fun of disabilities

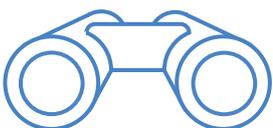
### Ignoring people with disability



**42%**

agreed that people ignore people with disability

### Mistreating people with disability



**41%**

agreed that people with disability are treated as if they have no feelings

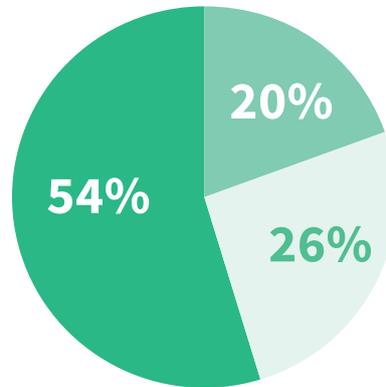
“I’ve had instances where if people find out that I’m [disabled] halfway through speaking to them, they’re like, “Okay, so, yeah, don’t worry about it. It’s okay, you don’t have to do anything like that. You don’t have to do what I’m asking you to do.” They let you off the hook way too easily or they don’t quite know what to do with themselves, so they try and back away. They don’t mean offence. They just mean, ‘I don’t know how to handle this situation, so I’m going to try and not offend you by just walking away and not worrying about it.”

# D. Inclusion of people with disability

## Employing people with disability

20%

agreed that employers should be allowed to refuse to hire people with disability



Disagreed Agreed  
Neither

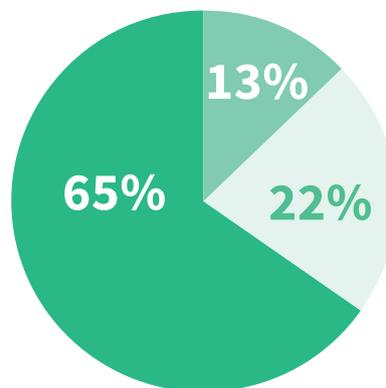
“What’s the reality? Is it that employers fear people with disability? Is it about absenteeism? Is it about the reaction that the rest of the office are going to have?”

“The people who are responsible for recruitment are usually the barrier for people with disability entering the workforce, and also when they’re in the workforce, other team members don’t always embrace them.”

## Segregation in education

13%

agreed with the statement, ‘Children with disability should only be educated in special schools’



Disagreed Agreed  
Neither

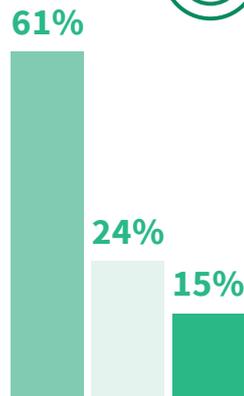
So it's not like coworkers have an attitude against me because I have a disability, but it's because 'your disability is your problem and you need to work around it. We'll accept you [in the workplace] but it's your problem.

### School and workplaces



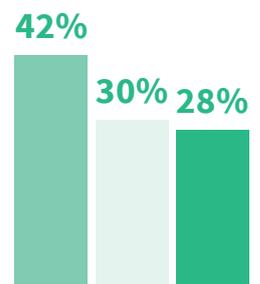
**61%**

agreed that schools are accepting of children with disability



**42%**

agreed that workplaces are accepting of people with disability



Agreed Neither Disagreed

### Making friends



### Getting involved in society

**55%**

agreed that people with disability find it harder than others to make new friends

**55%**

agreed that people with disability have problems getting involved in society

And there's this presumption that – the tragedy narrative – is something that everyone with an impairment has, and how you be a good member of the non-disabled public is you come up and say "hi" to that poor disabled person who must be sitting there feeling sad about themselves and how they must have no friends, and you've done a good thing by trying to elicit this story from this person.



# Discussion

## Main findings

### Personally held attitudes

Overtly negative attitudes were relatively uncommon with the majority of respondents reporting positive or inclusive attitudes. However, neutral or ambivalent responses (neither agree nor disagree) to statements were also common. For example, while 20% of respondents agreed that ‘people should not expect too much of people with disability,’ a further 27% reported they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Respondents generally supported the individual rights of people of disability including the right to: access mainstream schools and for inclusive education, have choices about where they live, and to participate in conversations around sex.

Personally held attitudes that could be interpreted as devaluing or patronising were more commonly reported than overtly negative attitudes or beliefs. For example, 63% of respondents agreed that people with disability are easy to exploit, and 55% of agreed that people with disability have problems getting involved in society. These statements

may reflect awareness of exclusion of people with disability from society, however they also position people with disability as vulnerable (‘easy to exploit’), flawed (‘have problems’) or in need of protection.

### Perceptions of societal attitudes

Responses to questions about other people’s attitudes indicate that many respondents were aware that people with disability experience various forms of social exclusion and discrimination in their daily lives. A large percentage of respondents agreed that people are awkward or uncertain in their interactions with people with disability. Many respondents disagreed that schools are inclusive of people with disability, and an even greater proportion disagreed that workplaces are inclusive of people with disability.

Neutral responses were common when reporting perceptions of other people’s attitudes and behaviours (15-39% responded ‘neither agree nor disagree’ to these items) and may reflect that respondents were unsure about how other people feel and behave.

## Strengths and limitations

This is the first national survey of community attitudes towards people with disability in Australia and provides a baseline on which future surveys can be based to monitor change and evaluate policy and/or programmatic interventions. Previous studies on attitudes toward people with disability in Australia have used smaller, non-representative samples. Participants in this survey came from the Life in Australia Panel, which was recruited using random sampling and is considered representative of the Australian population.

Another strength of this survey is our approach to its development that foregrounded the experiences of people with disability through co-design and inclusive processes. This is aligned with best practice recommendations from disability communities and ensures that the research is relevant and meaningful to people with disability. Participatory approaches are uncommon in quantitative research but add considerable value to the work. For example, co-researchers and stakeholders in this project helped ensure the survey covered salient, policy-relevant issues, such as workplace participation and self-determination.

Alongside the strengths of the survey there are several limitations. As highlighted above, neutral or ambivalent responses are challenging to interpret and common in surveys of this type. In terms of personally held attitudes, they could represent a

reluctance to report overtly negative attitudes, or they may indicate that respondents were 'on the fence'. One of the major challenges in measuring personally held attitudes is the tendency for respondents to choose socially acceptable responses rather than their true thoughts or feelings. This is referred to as social desirability bias, and it is one potential explanation for the high percentage of positive and neutral attitudes reported in this survey compared to negative attitudes.

Additionally, respondents may not have been aware of their own discriminatory attitudes, something that is referred to as implicit bias<sup>[2]</sup>. Although implicit bias is complex to measure, there have been a number of instruments developed to capture this type of bias, particularly in relation to racism and sexism (for example; <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/australia/takeatest.html>). Incorporating this type of measurement approach into the current survey was beyond the scope of this project.

Although we recognise the importance of intersectionality, it was not possible in this short survey to explore how different types of impairments and other identities and social positions such as gender, race and ethnicity, class and sexuality impact on attitudes and behaviour.

Measuring attitudes using quantitative methodologies only is challenging. Qualitative studies are needed to better understand what underpins these attitudes and stereotypes, as well as to explore issues around intersectionality in more depth.

## Implications of findings

Discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes are likely to result in behaviours, processes and policies that exclude people with disability from day-to-day life. Behaviours can be subtle (e.g. ignoring someone in a conversation) through to more overt acts such as violence, abuse and neglect.

People with disability report experiencing discrimination and prejudice in their day-to-day life which excludes them from many domains of life including work, school, accessing services and the community<sup>[11]</sup>. Peer-based bullying is commonly reported by Australian teenagers with disability, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>[12]</sup>. These discriminatory acts have real effects on the lives of people with disability. For example, recent research in Australia showed that the high-levels of bullying reported by teenagers with disability directly explained 46% of their poorer mental health relative to peers without disability<sup>[13]</sup>. Such findings demonstrate the need to improve attitudes towards people with disability to become more inclusive and empowering. It is encouraging that the new National Disability Strategy intends to focus on community attitudes by recognising it as critical factor in improving outcomes across education, employment, justice and health and wellbeing<sup>[14]</sup>.

This study provides baseline data on community attitudes and demonstrated the feasibility of such a survey. However, a community attitudes survey has several methodological challenges including social desirability bias and implicit bias. Therefore, it is critical that the experiences of people with disability are also collected and reported. Together this information would provide a barometer of attitudinal barriers and discrimination experienced by Australians with disability which will provide guidance for developing and evaluating policy and programs.

While we know the negative attitudes, misconceptions and lack of awareness present barriers to social inclusion for people with disability, surveys of this kind provide important pointers to where policy, practice or programmatic interventions may be targeted. For example, it may be valuable to explore, in more depth, people who respond neutrally to statements about attitudes towards people with disability. Does this group represent a 'movable middle,' whereby efforts to combat and/or debunk misconceptions and stereotypes about people with disability might be more effective than among those with entrenched negative attitudes?

**A large percentage of respondents agreed that people are awkward or uncertain in their interactions with people with disability.**



This survey also supports previous research about the need for interventions that target more than individual-level attitudes, but that seek to combat attitudes and outcomes across individuals, organisational and structural levels of society. While previous research has reviewed strategies that focus on individuals (e.g. awareness programs), organisations (e.g. inclusive education, health and community services) and structural factors (e.g. disability rights legislation) the evidence base on the way forward is limited<sup>[8]</sup>.

The **Community Attitudes Survey** is a rich data source which has been only partly explored in this report. Those who completed the survey responded to a range of other questions that will be examined in further reports and academic papers.

Additional information collected as part of the survey includes:

- whether respondents thought other people pitied or avoided people with different types of impairments (e.g. intellectual disability, depression)
- contact with people with disability (e.g. family member, boss) and its association with attitudes
- the experiences of people with disability regarding attitudes and discrimination across multiple domains of their life.

# Recommendations

With the new National Disability Strategy to be finalised in 2021, and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability extended until 2023, the findings and recommendations from this report are critical. We make a number of recommendations for a way forward with the aim of implementing and evaluating interventions and strategies to overcome attitudinal barriers to the participation of people with disability in everyday life. We strongly endorse inclusive and co-design practices, enabling collaboration between people with disability, policymakers and researchers.

We recommend the following for consideration by governments:

1

Develop an overarching framework and evidence-base to support investment in a suite of interventions by:

- Developing a conceptual framework that underpins multi-level, multi-sector interventions to address attitudinal barriers to people with disability full participation in society

- Conducting an environmental scan of the types of interventions that currently exist in Australia (and similar countries) and examples of best practice (e.g. employers, schools, community)
- Conducting a systematic review of the literature on interventions to improve community attitudes towards people with disability, updating and extending the scoping review conducted by Thompson et al.<sup>[7]</sup> The review should focus on personal, organisational and structural interventions across all domains of life

2

Design interventions by bringing the current evidence to bear, recognising the limitation of what is likely to be a nascent evidence-base, and co-design strategies with people with disability and their supporters across multiple levels and sectors to overcome attitudinal barriers

# Recommendations

3

Seek 'buy in' from government, the private sector, community organisations, and community more broadly for these interventions potentially identifying 'champions'

4

Pilot test a range of promising interventions to assess feasibility and to develop an evaluation framework

5

Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions with outcomes including impact on community attitudes (potentially using questions from this survey) and the experiences of people with disability (e.g. self-report of discrimination and reduction in inequalities in areas such as employment and community participation). These evaluations should be at minimum before and after evaluations but more rigorous methods such as RCTs might be considered where possible (e.g. place-based interventions). Evaluation should include quantitative and qualitative methods as well as secondary data (e.g. ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers)

6

Refine and scale up interventions that are shown to be effective. This stage should also be informed by an updated review of other interventions in Australia and in other parts of the world that show promising outcomes

7

Long-term monitoring and evaluation of interventions to ensure that improvements are sustained

8

Ongoing investment in interventions to remove attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disability realising their human rights to fully participate in everyday life on an equal basis to others

**This is an ambitious program of work which will require significant investment from all levels of government however it is critical if Australia is to realise its obligations under the UNCPRD.**

# Further Information

Emerson E. How attitudes disable. Up Close Podcast, 28 June 2017

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# APPENDIX A.

## Sample characteristics (n=2,069)

VARIABLE	WEIGHTED %
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	49.2
Female	50.8
Other	<0.1
<b>Region</b>	
Capital city	66.1
Rest of state	32.3
Cannot determine	1.6
<b>Relative disadvantage (SEIFA quintile)</b>	
Most disadvantage	15.2
Q2	16.9
Q3	20.6
Q4	19.6
Least disadvantage	26
Cannot determine	1.8
<b>Age group</b>	
18-34	28.9
35-54	34.5
55-74	27
75+	9.6
<b>Country of birth</b>	
Australia	73.4
Non-English speaking	15.9
English speaking	10.4
<b>ATSI status</b>	
Aboriginal	2.8
Torres Strait Islander (TSI)	0.1
Both	0.2
Not Aboriginal or TSI	96.5
<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	32.5
No	67.2
Don't know	1.6



# APPENDIX B.

## Descriptive results (n=2,069) and sources of survey items

Survey item	Agree	Neither	Disagree
(Agree-disagree statement)	(weighted %)	(weighted %)	(weighted %)
People with disability find it harder than others to make new friends*	54.5	27.6	17.9
People with disability have problems getting involved in society*	54.5	24.5	21
People with disability are a burden on society*	9.3	16.2	74.5
People with disability are a burden on their families*	24.7	30.4	44.9
People often make fun of disabilities*	61.2	19.4	19.4
People with disability are easier to take advantage of (exploit or treat badly)*	62.5	23.1	14.3
People tend to become impatient with people with disability*	63	21.6	15.3
People tend to treat people with disability as if they have no feelings*	41.4	23.5	35.1
Sex should not be discussed with people with disability*	6.1	15.8	78.1
People should not expect too much from people with disability*	19.7	27.1	53.2
People with disability should not be optimistic about their future*	5.1	8.7	86.2
People with disability have less to look forward to than others*	22.6	21.9	55.5

Survey item	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
(Agree-disagree statement)	(weighted %)	(weighted %)	(weighted %)
People are unsure how to act toward people with disability.	78	15	7
People are inspired by people with disability.	62.8	27.2	10
People ignore people with disability.	42.1	28.9	29
People believe that people with disability have the right to sexual relationships.	73.7	19.2	7.2
People believe that people with disability should not raise children.	16.1	33.5	50.4
Adults with disability should get to have a say about who they live with.	85.9	10.8	3.3
Children with disability should only be educated in special schools.	12.8	22.2	65.1
Employers should be allowed to refuse to hire people with disability.	19.6	25.9	54.5
Workplaces are accepting of people with disability.	41.5	30.1	28.4
Schools are accepting of people with disability.	61.2	24.2	14.6

\*Source: Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS)<sup>[9]</sup>

**Notes:** Responses “agree” and “strongly agree” are combined into a single “agree” category; likewise, “disagree and strongly disagree” are combined into a single “disagree” category. Results are weighted to the Australian general population using survey weights provided by the Social Research Centre. Row totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding error.

**Asterisks (\*)** indicate survey items from the Attitudes to Disability Scale, developed by Power and Green (2010)<sup>[9]</sup>. All other survey items were either adapted from existing surveys such as the British Social Attitudes Survey (<https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/>) or developed by the research team using the approach described.



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