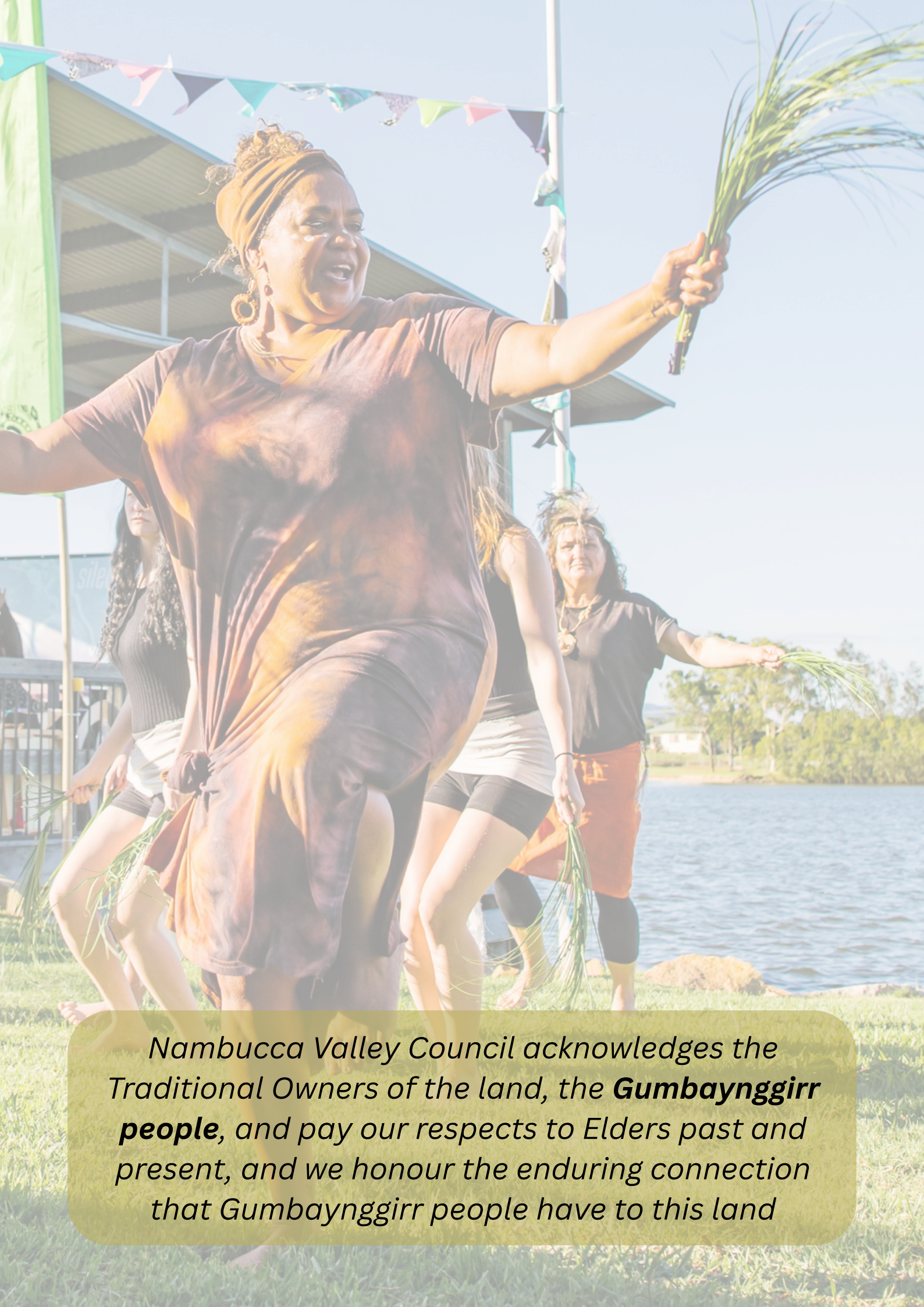




Nambucca Valley
**Disability Access &
Inclusion Committee**

**Disability Inclusion Community Survey
2025**



*Nambucca Valley Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the **Gumbaynggirr people**, and pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we honour the enduring connection that Gumbaynggirr people have to this land*

The Survey

Nambucca Valley council and their Disability Access & Inclusion Committee launched the Disability Inclusion community survey for the month of April, closing on 4 May 2025.

The community had a choice to complete a shorter form survey, or a long form where they have more opportunities to give their own thoughts.

The survey was promoted across social media, including Facebook Community Pages across the Valley, circulated to disability and community services, advertised in the New of The Area, and encouraged through a pop-up stall at Nambucca Heads Plaza.

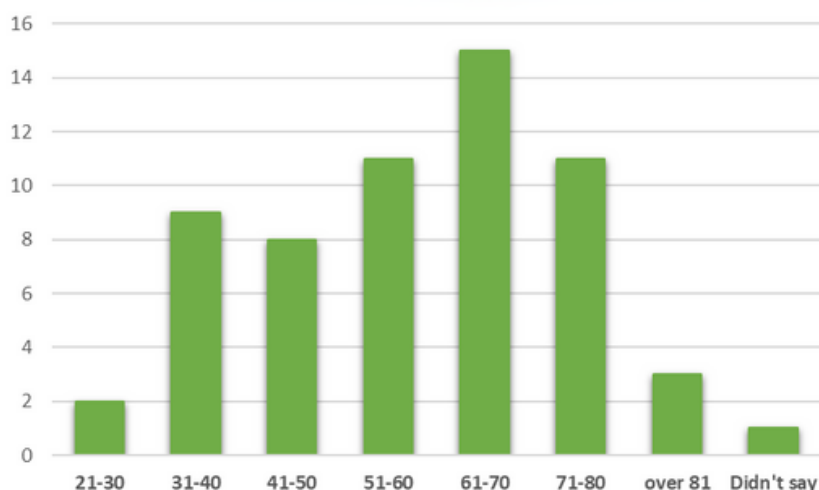
In total, 60 responses were received.

The survey asks questions that allows Council to develop actions in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The DIAP focusses on 4 main areas:



Demographics

Age group



Disability is a club the majority of us eventually join.

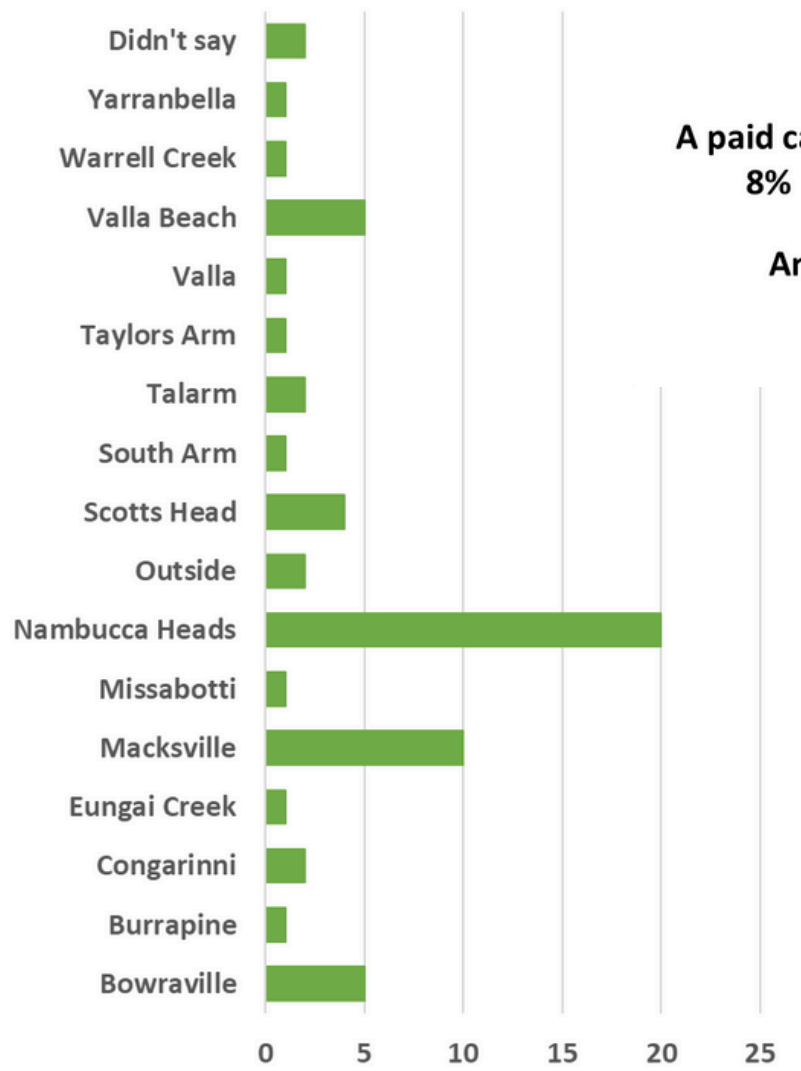
As we age, we experience challenges and become more aware of additional needs to live independently.

48% of respondents to our survey were over the age of 60.

This over-representation compared to the general population (38.4% of residents are over 60, 2021 Census), highlights the benefits of creating a more inclusive community to enable more and more people to maintain their independence.

Survey respondents ranged from people with disability, their carers, and general community members. The larger group were family members or friends of people with disability, who are often the strongest advocates for not only people with disability, but carers as well. Maintaining the health and wellbeing of carers of people with disability is extremely important and issues of access and inclusion impact carers as well.

Where do you live?

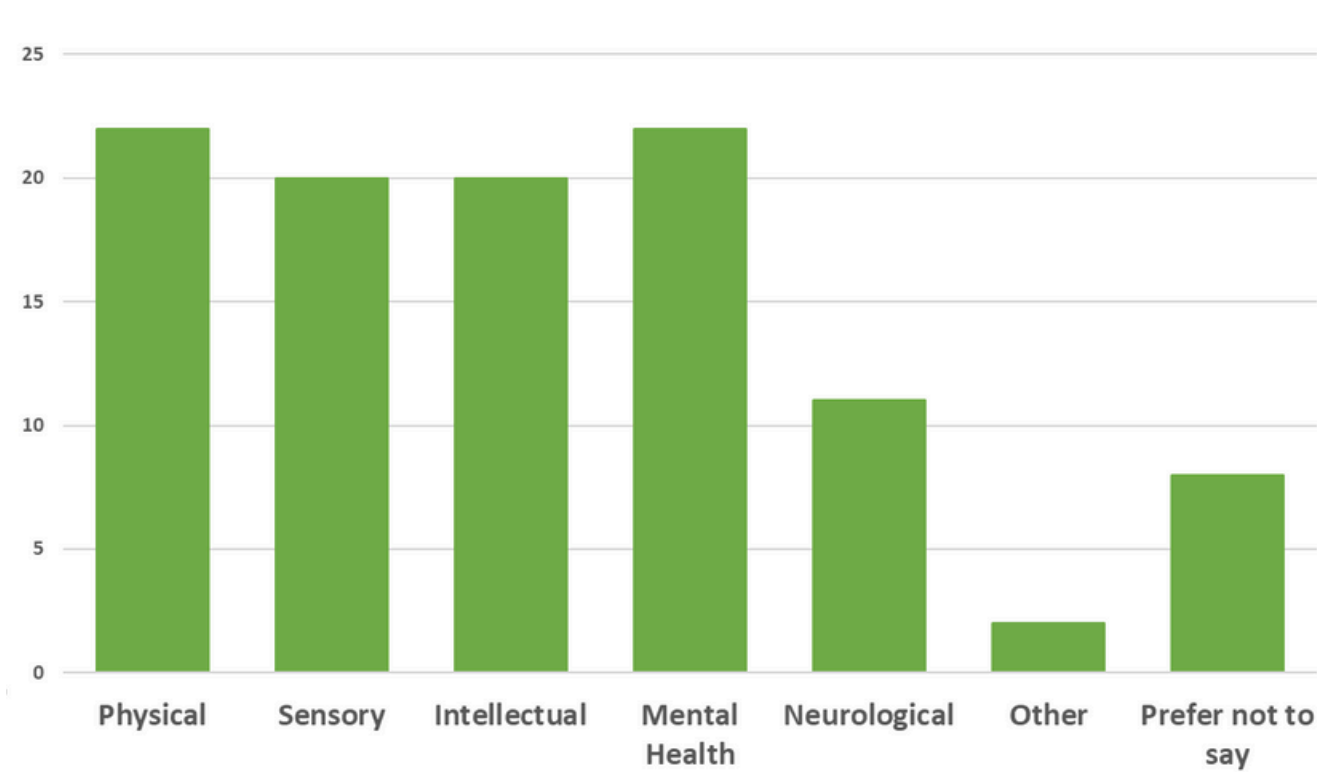


Gathering information on where respondents live helps to understand the level of access and inclusion in each different community. A higher number of respondents for Nambucca is a result of the pop-up stall engagement, demonstrating its an effective method for future community consultation

What type of disability do you or the person you care for have?

This question was important in helping us understand the diversity of disability in Nambucca Valley and assess where we need to improve. It was an optional question, however 87% of respondents chose to disclose their disability.

Over 38% of those respondents reported more than one disability.

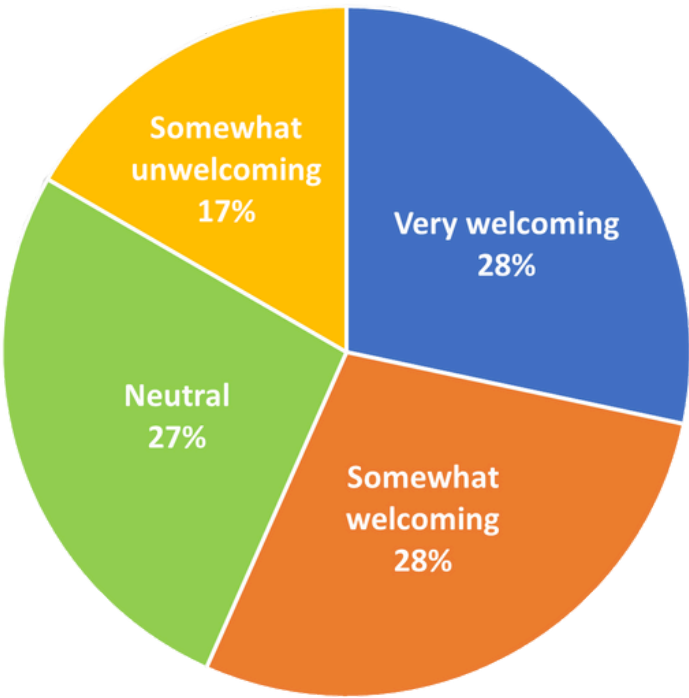


Sensory disabilities can refer to sight or hearing impairment, neurological disabilities can include stroke or other traumatic brain injury. Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD are classified as Mental Health challenges.

Community attitudes

To understand where our community is at the moment, we asked about the attitudes and behaviours people with disability and their carers have experienced.

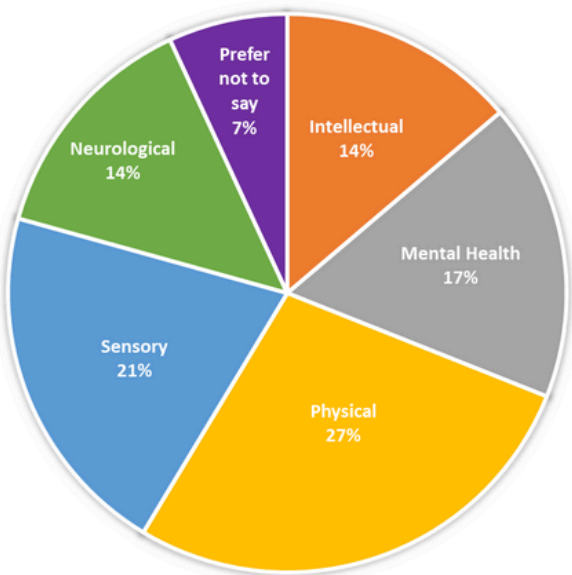
How welcoming do you feel the Nambucca Valley community is toward people with disabilities?



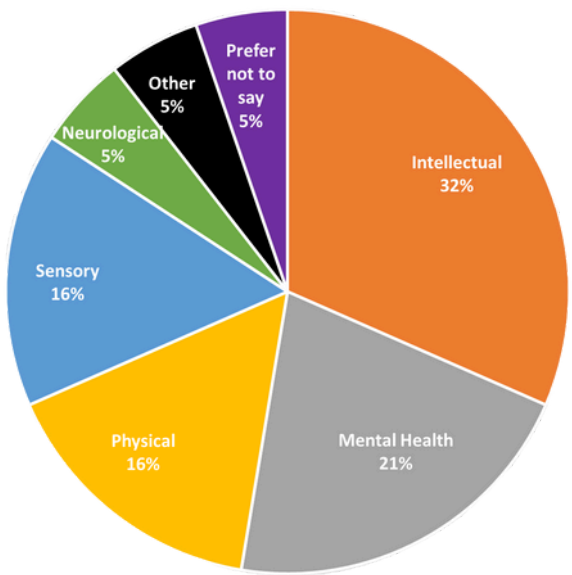
56% of respondents felt Nambucca Valley was a welcoming community. No respondents felt it was “very unwelcoming”.

We analysed disability type against feelings of welcome to see if there was a correlation that could be addressed. The results demonstrate more work in community awareness is needed in intellectual and mental health disability, and more resources to support access and inclusion for those residents could improve their experience

Very welcoming

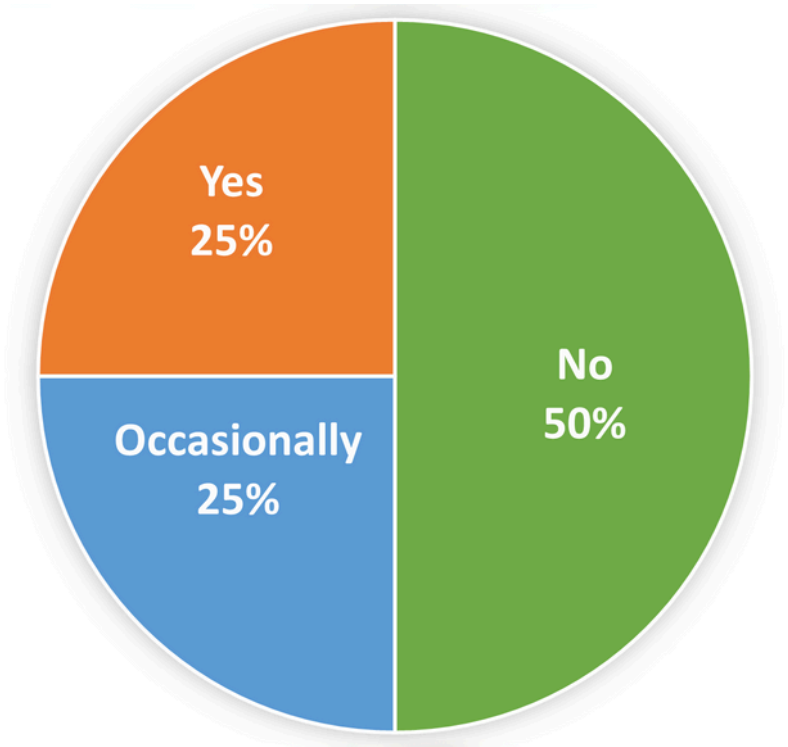


Somewhat unwelcoming



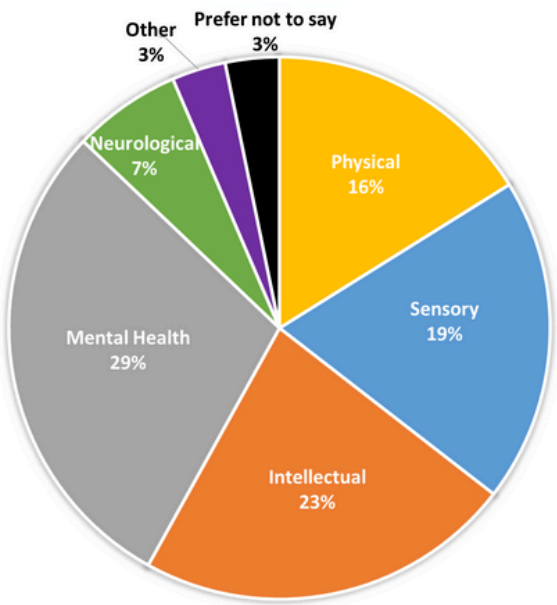
Have you or the person you care for ever experienced discrimination or negative attitudes in the community because of disability?

50% of respondents had experienced at least some discrimination or negative attitude in the community towards them due to their (or the person they car for) disability.

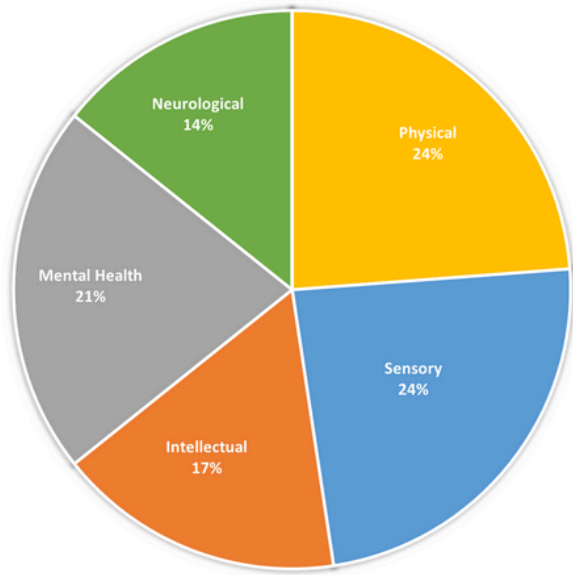


Again, analysis was conducted to see if there was a correlation between disability type and discrimination. There again appears to be some benefit in further addressing the needs and awareness of mental health and intellectual disabilities.

Yes



No



We asked the respondents in the long form: what positive actions or attitudes have you observed in Nambucca Valley that shows support and inclusion of people with disability?

“More disability accessible facilities are being provided”.

“Some people driving cars do stop at times at unmarked crossing to allow people with disability in scooter to cross. It would be better if these crossing were marked so ALL traffic would stop to allow crossing”.

“My son was included in sports and schooling when he went to school”

“Nearly everyone I have had contact with in the Valley are very supportive with my disability. Permanently on crutches, people help wherever they can.”

“Most are very welcoming. I find mainly the tourists are very judgmental”

“Friendliness and advice”

“Have had very positive actions and attitudes from therapists and positive attitudes from the community outside of school”

“My son has an intellectual disability and the attitudes of Nambucca Valley residents are friendly and caring. It's often highlighted by the attitude of people elsewhere.”

“Installation of the hoist for access to the pool and Council’s Disability Access & Inclusion Committee”

“People going out of their way to assist, including stopping their cars to let someone with a vision impairment cross the road. Have also had positive experience with Council, staff going above and beyond to trim trees along pathways that are at head level, a risk for visually impaired people”

“Patience and understanding during sensory overload. Allied health services once engaged are well informed.”

We also asked respondents: What do you think can be done to improve community attitudes towards people with disability in Nambucca Valley?

“Areas around shopping complexes, for example Woolworths, that would allow people with disability a **safer place to cross the road**. Crossings that would make cars stop to allow people to cross the road in safety. At present there is none at Woolworths. All areas should be looked at. Especially around the RSL, Bowling Club etc” - *Nambucca Heads resident*

“More Awareness”.

“**Education**, reaching outside the families affected. School programs that can engage parents (unaffected by disability)”.

“I don’t believe you can change someone’s attitude”.

“More exposure, eg: newspaper, Facebook. Better physical amenities. Signage in places where people congregate”.

“Social media campaigns, increased employment opportunities, increased **opportunities for participation** in community events & projects, **consultation** in the planning and design phase of significant projects in the area.”

“I believe attitudes on the whole are improving and this may be because of exposure and the opportunity for people with a disability to be out and about more!”

“Have the schools practice and **support inclusion**”.

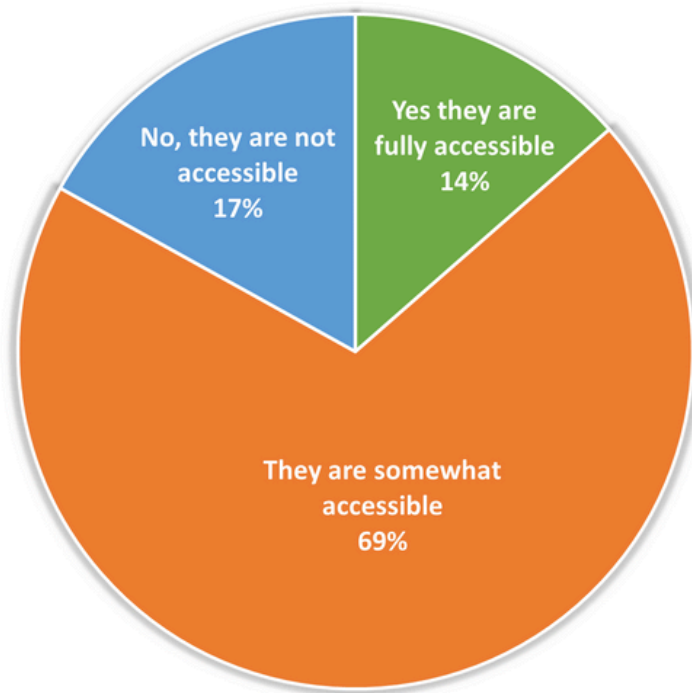
“Disability is a tremendously broad term encompassing "accepted" disabilities such as obvious physical impairment to less accepted disabilities such as invisible disabilities like autism, psychiatric problems and diabetes...Much of the foundation for acceptance lies in how well **people with disabilities are supported** and thus able to integrate and function adequately in society”.

“Much more education is needed for **people to be accepting and inclusive** of all people regardless of appearance or disability. Society on the whole has a very long way to go”.

“Do not judge what you cannot see”.

Creating liveable communities

Are public spaces (e.g., parks, public buildings, supermarkets) in Nambucca Valley accessible for people with disabilities?



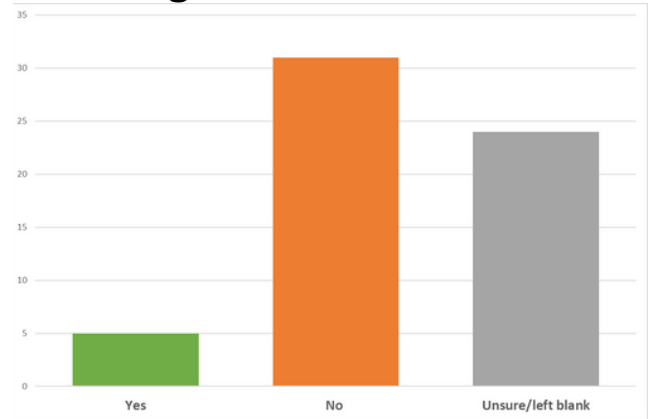
There was no correlation in disability type and thoughts on accessibility of these areas. It may be accessibility was interpreted purely as physical access to the building and not access to freely participate and enjoy these spaces in comfort (i.e., visual aids, hearing loops, quiet break-out spaces). More work is needed in explaining and educating community and businesses on what access and inclusion means across the spectrum of disability.

Digging a little deeper, we asked about more specific places, accessibility resources, and tools across Nambucca Valley and respondents' perception.

Do you or the person you care for think there are enough:

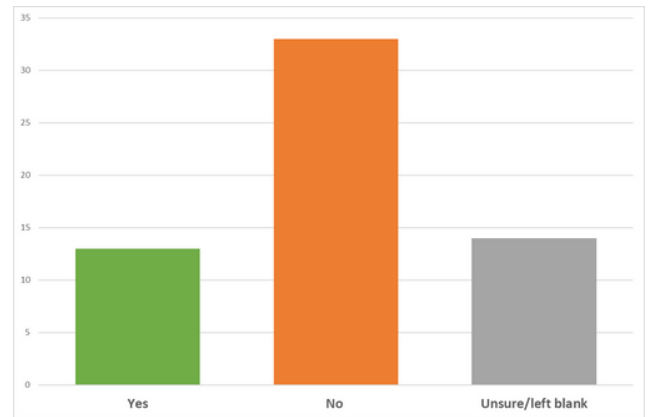
Sensory friendly places (e.g., quiet areas, low lighting spaces)?

48% of people who answered no cited Mental Health (particularly Autism Spectrum Disorder) as a disability they experience



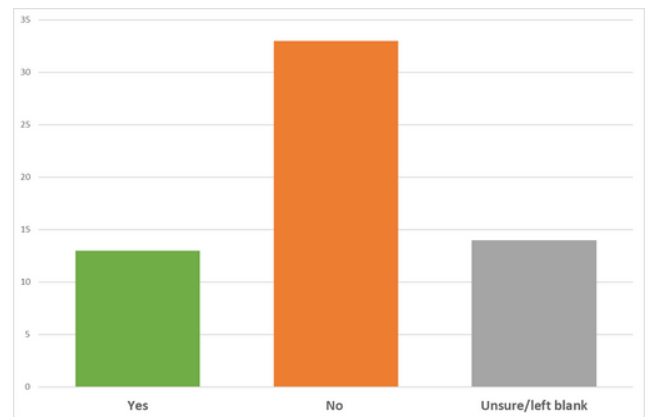
Tactile ground surface indicators (e.g., bumps to indicate steps or pedestrian crossing)?

27% of people who answered no cited sensory (vision or hearing impairment)



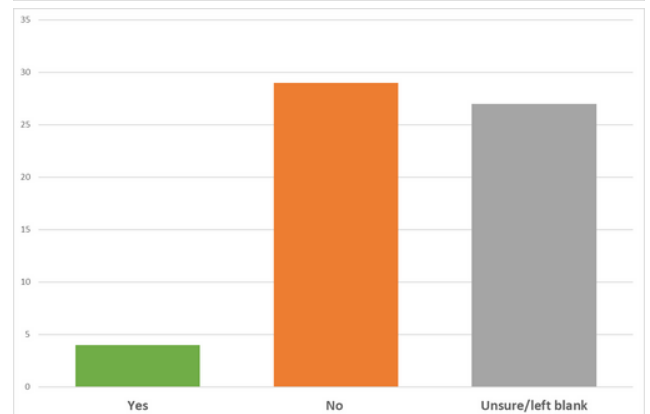
Braille and other visual supports in public buildings?

32% of people who answered no cited sensory (vision or hearing impairment as a disability they experience



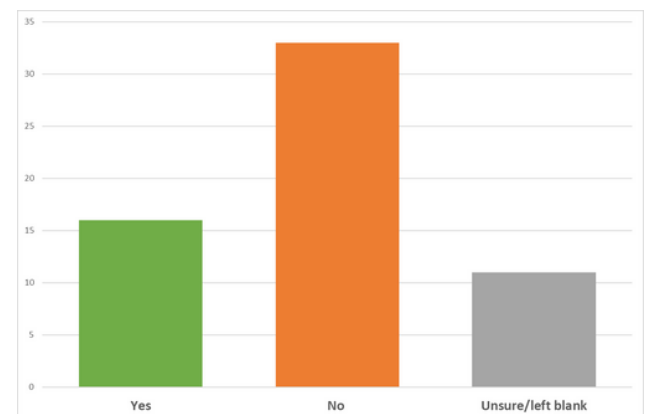
Hearing loops and captions/transcriptions in public buildings?

34% of people who answered no cited sensory (vision or hearing impairment as a disability they experience



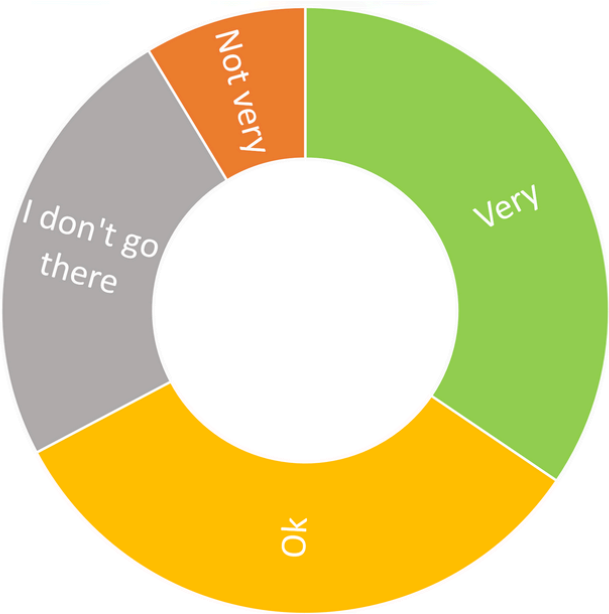
Accessible toilets and change room facilities?

39% of people who answered no cited they experience a physical disability.



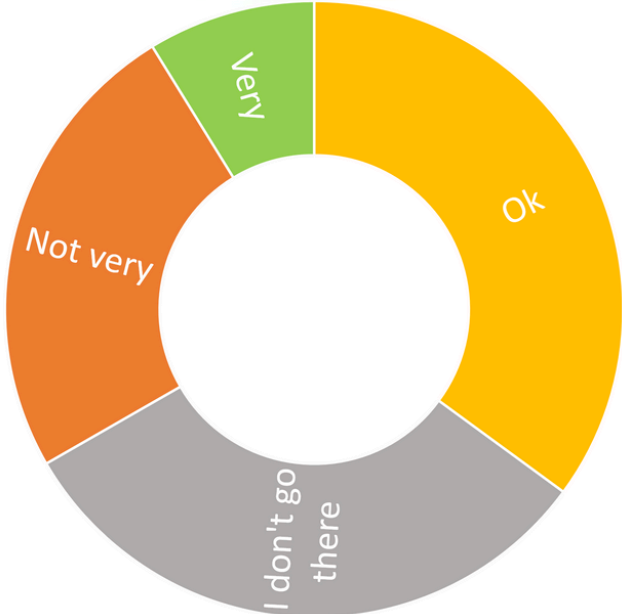
How welcoming and empowering is it for you to go to:

Libraries



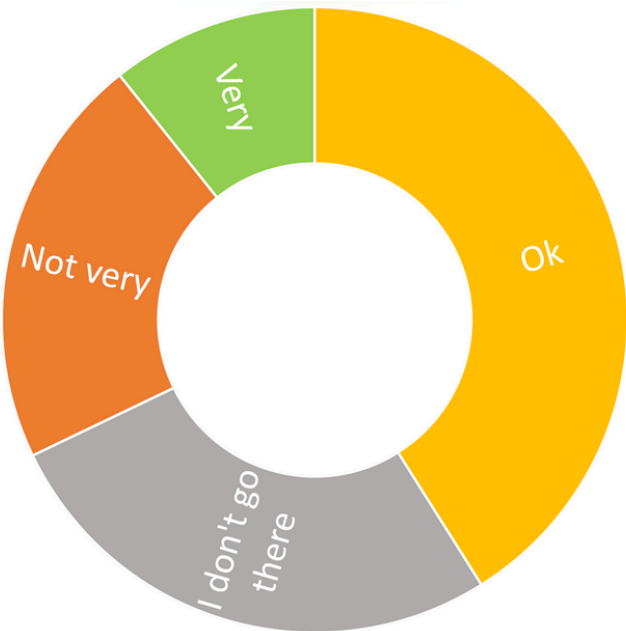
67% of respondents felt the Libraries are welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Sports facilities



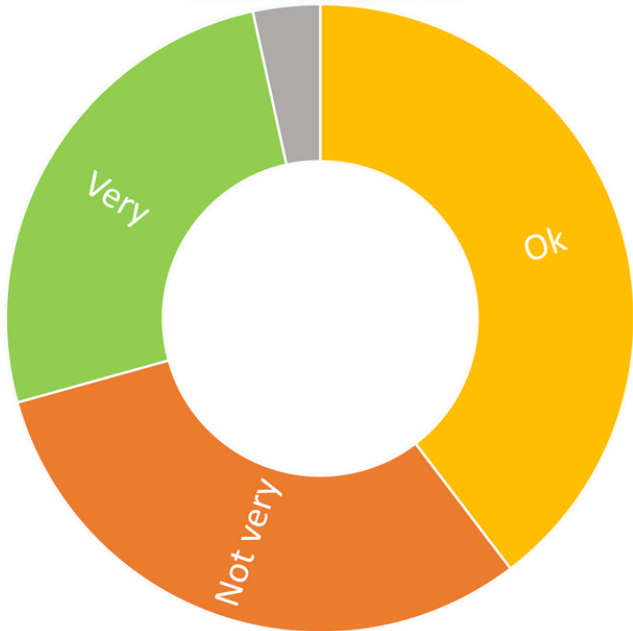
44% of respondents felt the Sporting fields are welcoming and empowering to some degree

Swimming pool



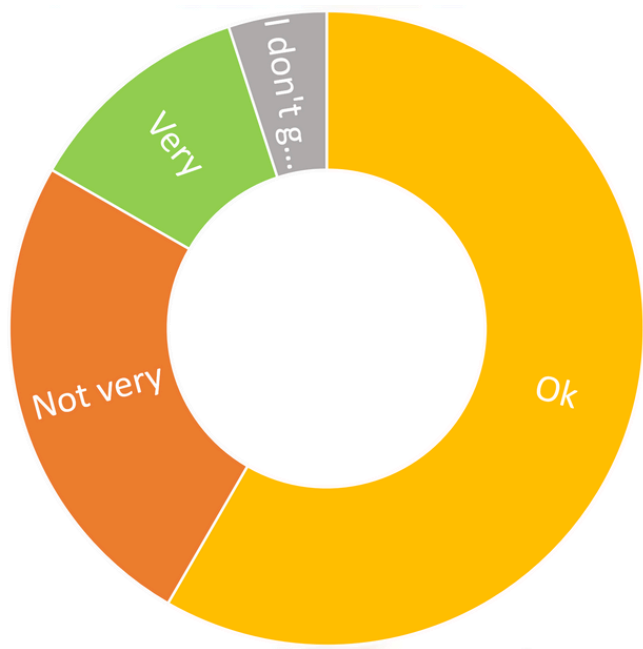
52% of respondents felt the swimming pool is welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Beaches or rivers



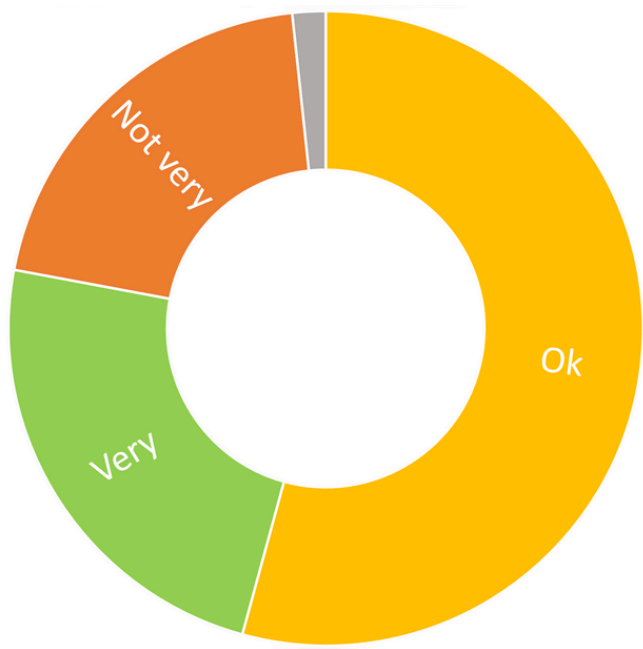
65% of respondents felt the beaches and rivers are welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Cafes and Restaurants



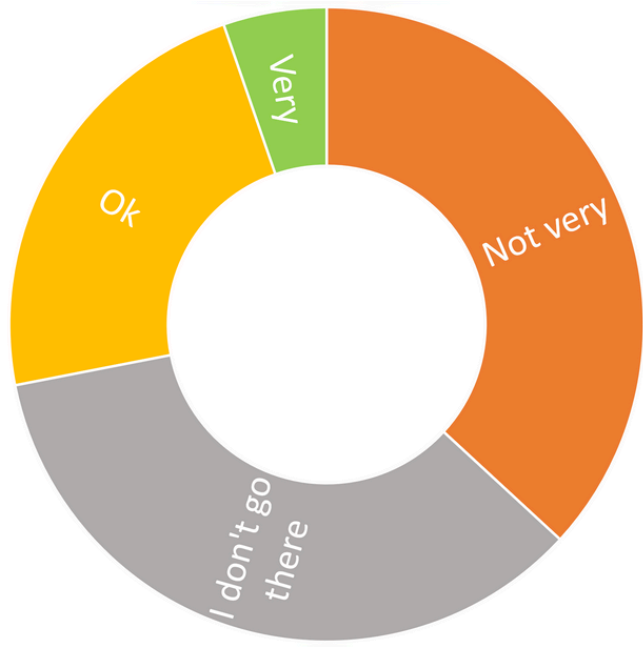
70% of respondents felt cafes and restaurants are welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Supermarkets and shops



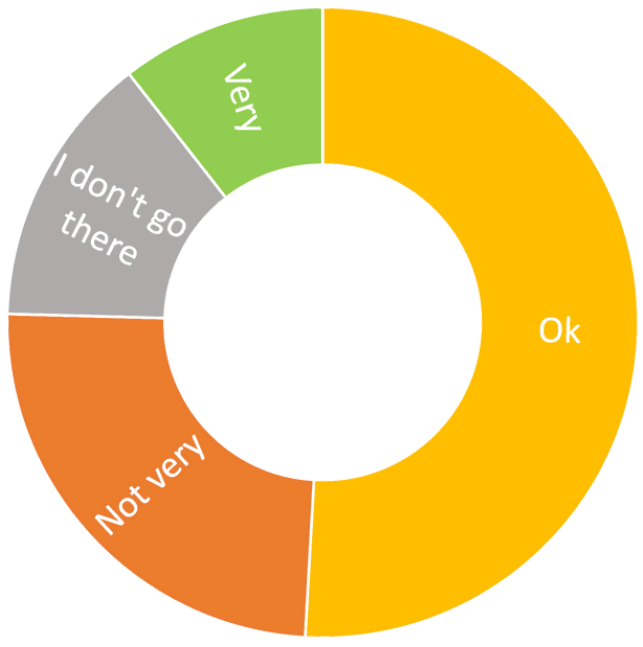
78% of respondents felt cafes and restaurants are welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Festivals and events



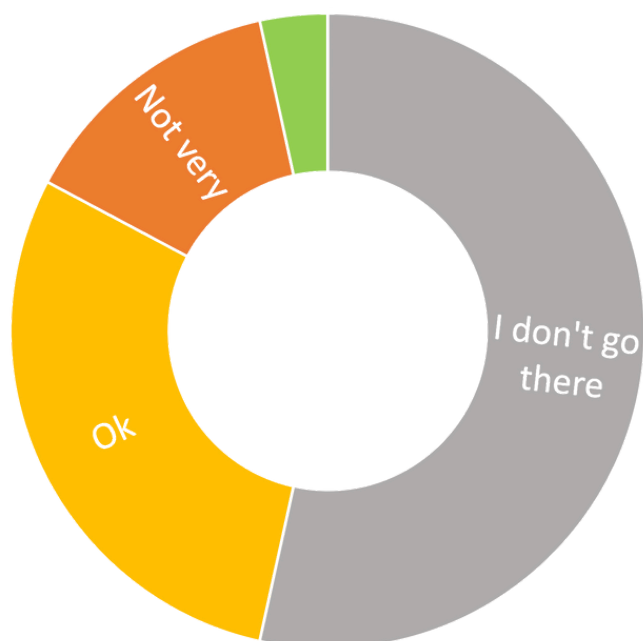
28% of respondents felt festivals and events were welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Parks and playgrounds



61% of respondents felt parks and playgrounds were welcoming and empowering to some degree.

Places of worship



33% of respondents felt places of worship were welcoming and empowering to some degree. The majority did not attend a place of worship.

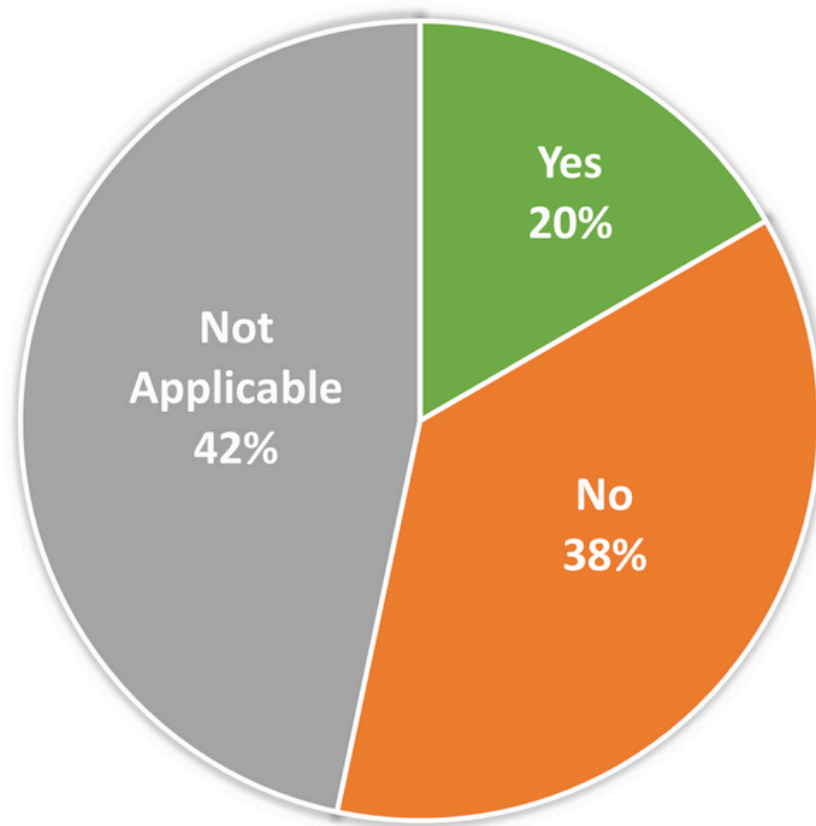
“Mainstreet shops all have steps into them in Nambucca. [Shopping centres] need more wheelchair only parking places” - Valla Beach resident.

Festivals and Events were rated not very accessible by 37% of respondents, the majority of whom identified as having a mental health disability, highlighting the need for initiatives at festivals such as chill out tents and quiet spaces.

Sporting fields are largely owned by Council and can be directly impacted. The largest group advising the sporting fields were not welcoming or empowering were people who identified as having mental health disability. The largest group who advised they do not go to sporting fields are those with physical and sensory disabilities such as vision and hearing impairment, raising the possibility this lack of attendance is due to a lack of local of disability-targeted or inclusive sporting groups in the Nambucca Valley.

Access to meaningful employment

Do you or the person you care for have access to meaningful employment or volunteer opportunities in Nambucca Valley?



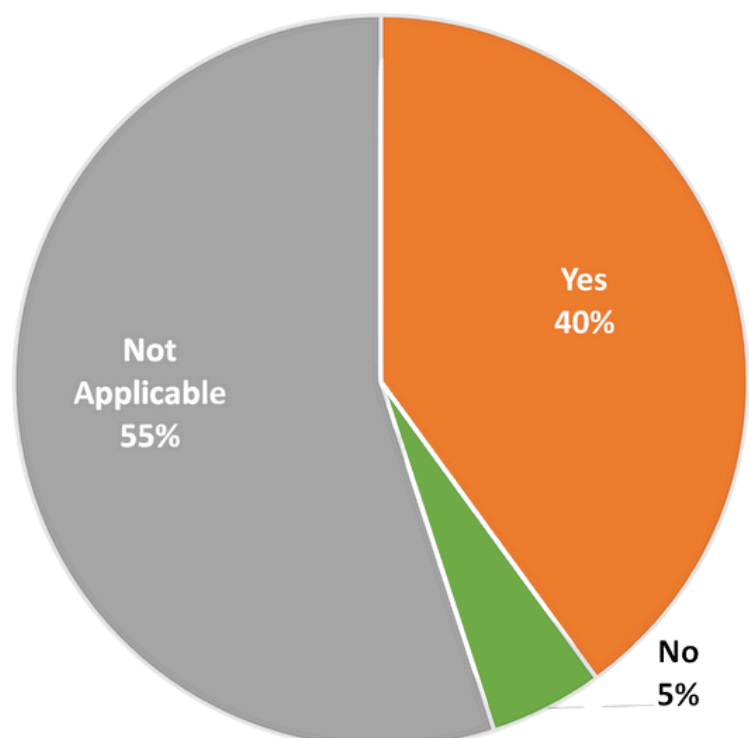
50% of “Not Applicable” respondents were 61 years of age or older and perhaps did not view the question as relevant to them.

The largest group that reported “No” to access to meaningful employment were those who identified with a mental health condition.

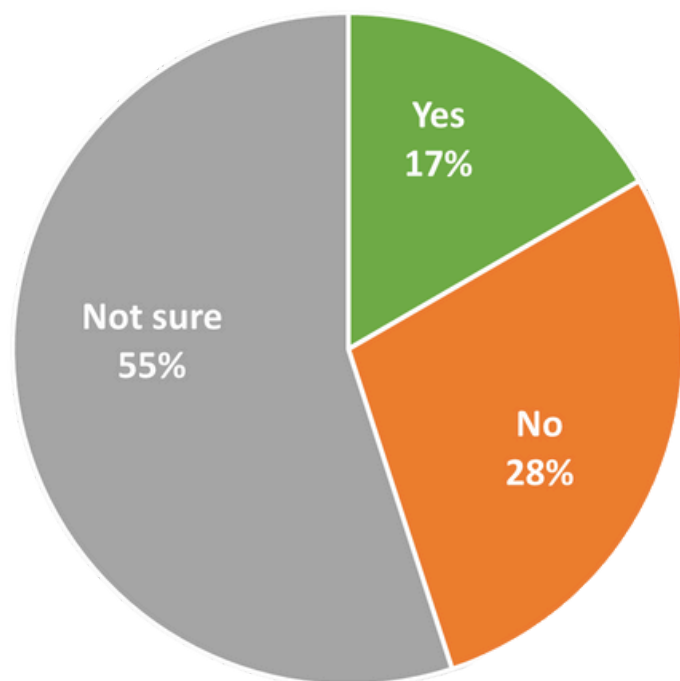
Have you or the person you care for had challenges finding and maintaining employment due to disability?

71% of “Not Applicable” respondents were 61 years of age or older.

People who reported an intellectual or mental health disability were the most common to report challenges finding and maintaining employment at 40% of respondents.



Do you think local employers are generally open to hiring people with disability?



Why do you think that?

“I think people have opinions and they don’t believe people with disabilities are capable”.

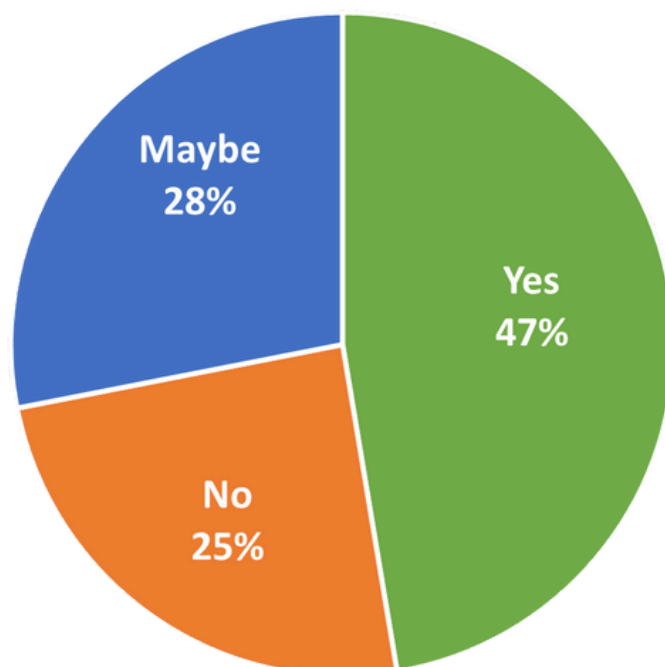
“Only from what I hear. Haven't experienced it yet but will next year with school leaver”.

“I have learnt about Woolworths, but unsure of other opportunities”
“Rural and regional communities tend to be slow to accept new paradigms and very set in their ways”.

Would you or the person you care for benefit from mentorship or employment programs specifically for people with disability?

Further analysis in future may dive deeper into understanding this response.

What is apparent in comments is a level of anxiety in parents about the transition from school to work for their young people with disability. More information sharing about the support available and engagement with schools could help address this concern

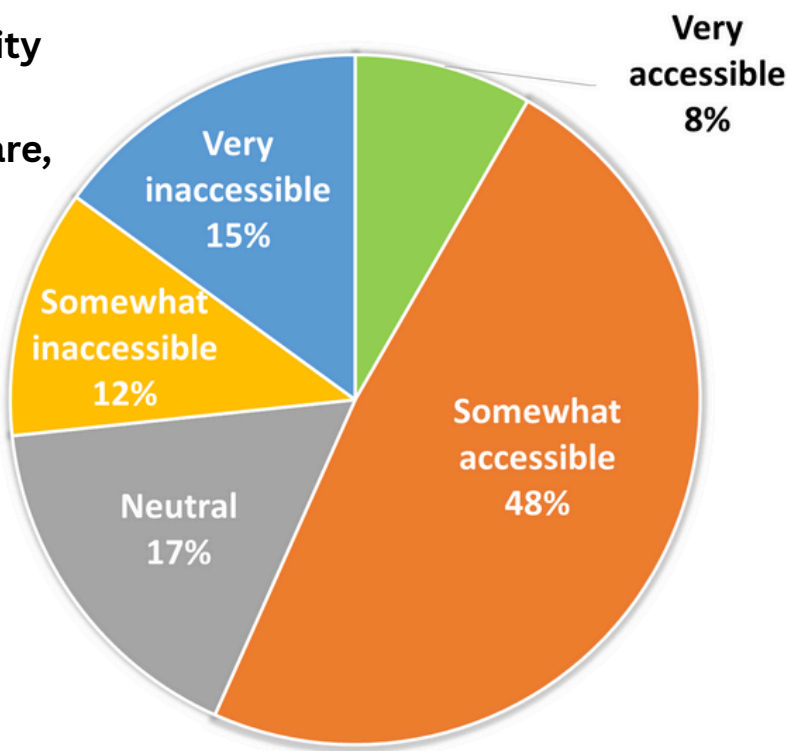


“Over the next year or two our situation will change greatly. School has offered a very supportive and caring environment and transitioning into the working world (if possible) feels very worrying, as so much more support is needed through NDIS funding!”

Accessible systems and processes

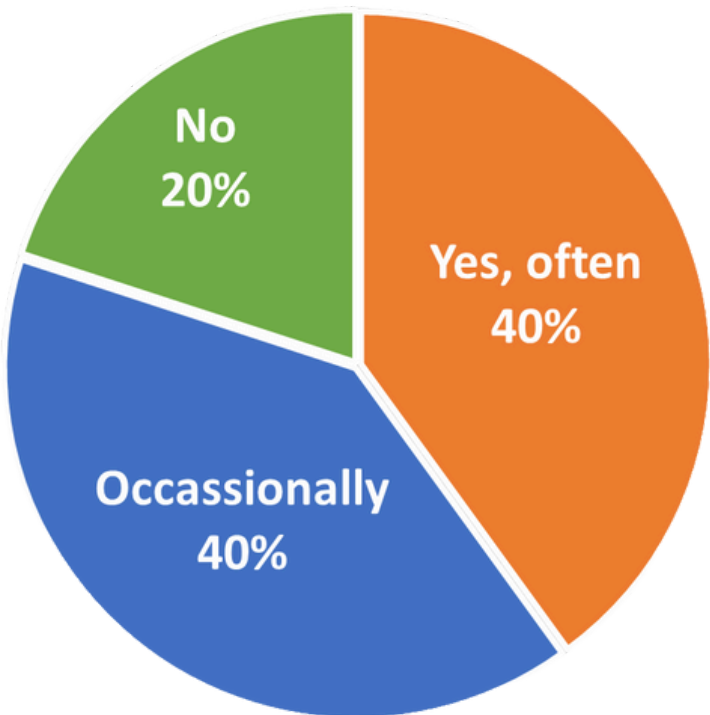
How would you rate the accessibility and inclusivity of government and community services (e.g., healthcare, transport, education, social services)?

Comments indicated there are areas for improvement in the government and services sector in terms of access to and provisions of services for people with disability in Nambucca Valley. Council’s role in this instance would be in advocacy for these needs.



Have you or the person you care for faced any challenges in accessing essential services (e.g., healthcare, education, public transport) due to disability?

Challenges accessing essential services impacted people across all disabilities, indicating in issues with access and provision of services in general, something that regional communities across the country experience.



“I found out that there is **NO access for a scooter** to the Nambucca Police Station. Only stairs without rails which were almost impossible for me to climb without difficulty. Scooter access should be made available ASAP”.

“**Minimal transport and community day programs** and employment are all very minimal”

“Not enough access to **occupational therapist**, same as paediatricians”.

“Hidden disabilities need more attention, especially for children...An OOSH that has specialised educators in this area so more parents can work. Many parents have had to drop work hours because **[care is unavailable] for neurodivergent kids.**”

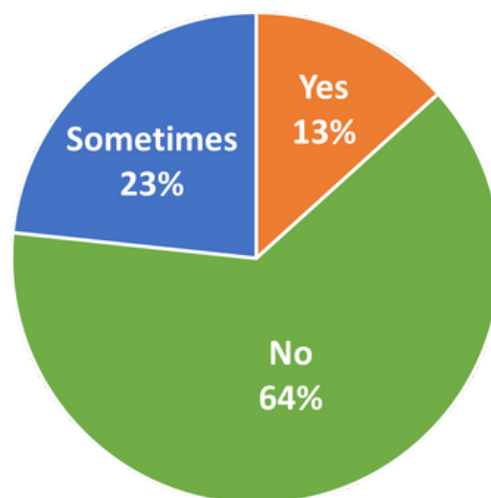
“Our local bus service also needs adjustments. Yr 3 children are expected to walk to school or pay a bus fee. This is dangerous for neurodivergent kids that are impulsive & unpredictable.”

“There are **not enough face to face services for children with disabilities & very much a lack of therapist and facilities**”.

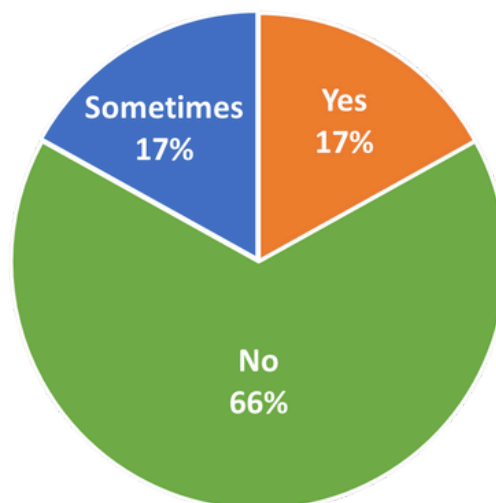
“Access DVA taxi for medical reasons. **There is no public transport here**”

In contrast, when respondents were asked about accessing local Council services and facilities, the response painted a different picture...

Have you experienced difficulties in accessing Council facilities (libraries, community halls, sporting facilities or Council administration building) due to your disability?

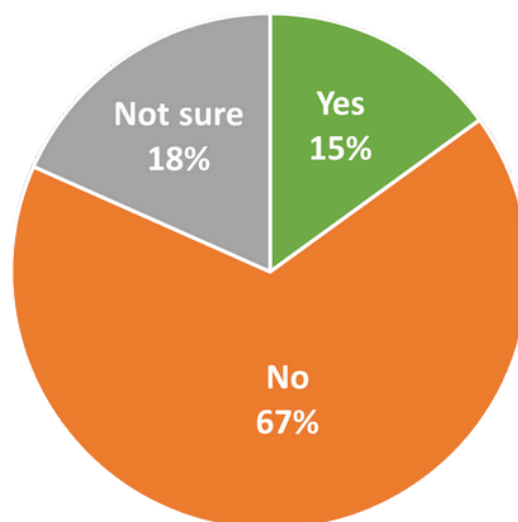


Have you experienced difficulties in engaging in Council (e.g., voting, Community Forums, Council meetings, paying a bill, getting assistance with a Council issue) due to disability?

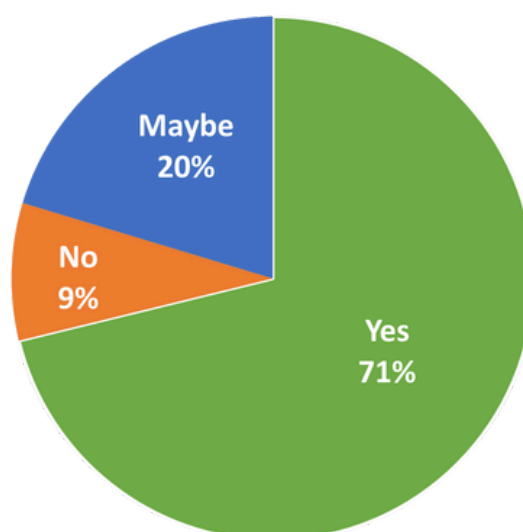


But there is still room for improvement to address the diversity of needs

Do you think there are enough clear, easy-to-understand resources available about services for people with disabilities in Nambucca Valley?



Would it be helpful if there were more visual or digital supports (e.g., easy-read formats, step-by-step guides) in Council to support people with disabilities?



We asked respondents for additional insight into changes Council could consider for accessibility and inclusion.

What improvements or changes would make it easier for people with disability to access Council services?

“When people with an intellectual disability can't read, they need a picture clue and there isn't always one.”

“Ramps that are easy to access and use”

“My eldest son detests the library because it's too noisy. This surprised me as one thinks of libraries as quiet places, but he's right. Less hard surfaces, more acoustic dampening?”

“I wish there was more inclusive things to do without having to use a support service”

“I worked in the care industry for 30+ years. Progress is slow. Physical access difficult for many. Service access poor due to increased population and lack of available services. Long distance travel needed to major centres.”

“Need more yellow lines and tactile on the footpaths around the valley for people with all kinds disabilities”

“Footpaths need to be made more easily accessible for wheelchair users”

“Parks have no fencing or enough equipment for kids [with disability]”.

“Public toilet seats are too low”

“More pavement visibility”

Respondents had a final opportunity in the survey to express any additional thought, perhaps on issues we had not considered or covered in the survey.

Any additional comments?

“Main beach needs some disability parking closer to the ramps”

“There needs to be more creative programs and exhibitions sharing the experience of people with a disability”

“There NEEDS to be things to do for the young troubled teens living with mental health and there is nowhere near enough support services for them and their parents/carers AT ALL!”

“My son is in his late 20s, his disability is very complex, not entirely visible. It has been quite impossible to access available supports. He just needs to make friends to build his confidence, imagine if young people had the insight to reach out to their peers and connect. Imagine a generation that really sees each other!”

Nambucca Valley Council and the Disability Access & Inclusion Committee would like to thank all respondents who gave their time and shared their stories to help us create a more inclusive Nambucca Valley

