

NDIS UTILISATION PROJECT

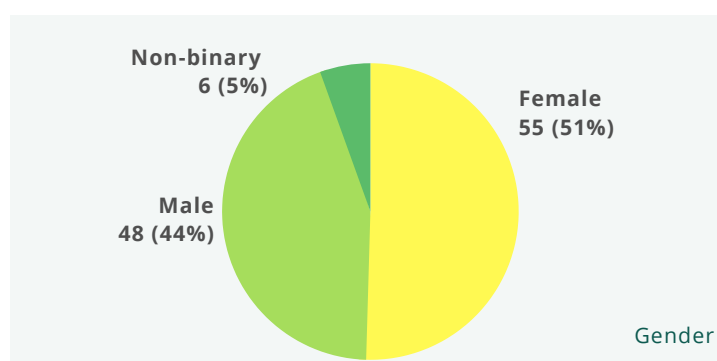
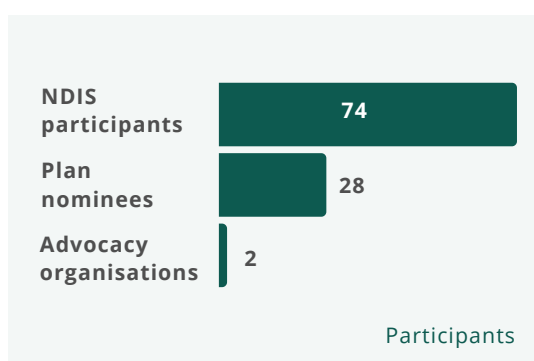
UNDERSTANDING PLAN UTILISATION OF VICTORIAN NDIS PARTICIPANTS

This project aimed to understand what helps, and, what makes it hard for NDIS participants to use their plans in a way that meets their needs and aspirations. This summary presents the key factors shared by participants.

"You need people with disabilities during the discussions, throughout the process of change and of policy making. And they need to have the respect, equal respect, and they need to be heard equally".

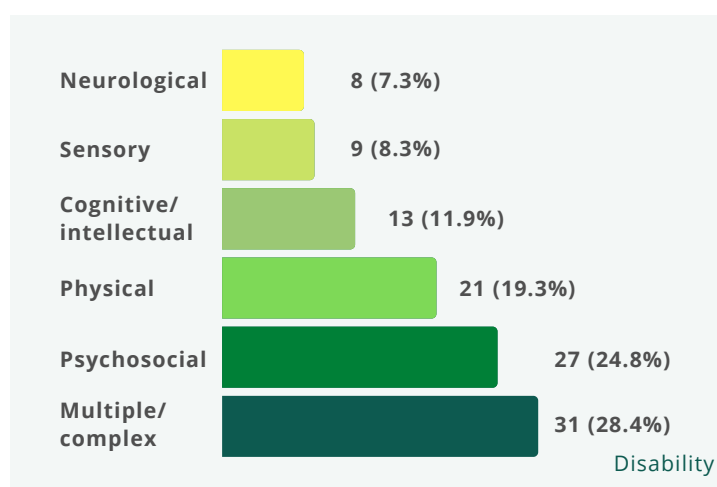
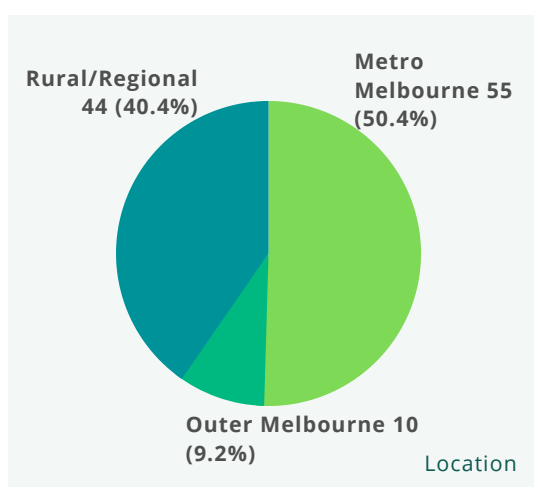
Study participant

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY?



More than 100 people participated in interviews between April & December 2020

This represents 109 NDIS participants, of whom 14 identified as First Nations peoples, and 20 identified as CALD.



Where people live

Primary disability

WHAT HELPED PEOPLE UTILISE THEIR PLANS?

Participants were more likely to be happy with their plan and how they used it when their plan accurately reflected their needs and aspirations, and, had enough funding to access all the supports they needed.

Participants were more likely to get better plans and be able to use them when they had:

- Experience with pre-existing programs that helped them know how to navigate the NDIS.
- Access to accurate, timely and consistent information.
- Good self-advocacy skills and/or access to advocacy supports.
- Access to the same (skilled) frontline NDIS worker that respected the expertise and priorities of participants (and their informal supports).
- Trusted and skilled (formal and informal) supports to understand, implement and manage plans, alongside support to recognise and report issues of risk and exploitation.
- More time to identify and access appropriate services, as well as time to develop capabilities for ongoing utilisation.

"We are really trying to create something for ourselves because the services are just not out there. Because I'm not spending it for the sake of spending it. Why are we using disability services all the time? Why are we not using the mainstream stuff out there? I think there is a huge untapped market in every area of society".

Study participant

WHAT MADE IT HARD FOR PEOPLE TO USE THEIR PLANS?

The limited availability of disability and mainstream services, skilled therapists and support workers that meet diverse needs and aspirations was the biggest barrier to participants using their plans, particularly for people living outside of Metro Melbourne.

Other key challenges included when participants experienced:

- Delays in spending in one area of their plan (e.g. cannot access an OT to help get equipment or home modifications), it makes it hard to use other components of their plans (e.g. capacity building for independent living).

WHAT MADE IT HARD FOR PEOPLE TO USE THEIR PLANS?

Other key challenges (continued):

- Delays and challenges in accessing the NDIS, planning, review and approval processes can lead to deteriorations in conditions and difficulties getting started with using plans.
- Not enough support to understand plans or how to use them.
- Negative treatment in their engagement with the NDIS (e.g. workers that did not have a good understanding of disability) or service providers (e.g. poor quality of service, lack of transparency in how funds were being used).
- Increased cost of services and/or loss of valued services and programs since the NDIS was introduced.
- Discrimination, exclusion and challenges in key areas of life (e.g. education, employment, social participation, housing) which undermined capacity and opportunities to use plans.
- Limited support for plan nominees was also a key concern raised in the project.

"It's going to change my life very positively, once it's all settled down and is working".

Study participant



WHAT COULD GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS DO TO HELP PARTICIPANTS BETTER USE THEIR PLANS?

Build the supply and capacity of the disability workforce to better meet the diverse disability, mental health and cultural needs and aspirations of participants.

Improve the capacity of NDIS frontline workers through training, to understand and work with people with disability and their families.

Provide more resources to advocacy, community and peer-led organisations so they can continue to support people with disability, families and their communities to understand and navigate the NDIS and services and supports.

Promote more opportunities for participants to be able to access mainstream programs and activities through their NDIS plans.

Promote more efficient access to equipment, assistive technology and home modifications.

Improve how the NDIS and other systems (e.g. mental health) work together to provide more streamlined support to NDIS participants and their families.

Work with people with disability and their representative organisations to co-design strategies to address specific barriers experienced by people with psychosocial disability, First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities in their access and engagement with the NDIS.

Enhance the prevention and monitoring of risks and exploitation experienced by NDIS participants, including providing more support for participants to report negative experiences.

Continue to develop and support state and national level policies and programs that enable the inclusion and active participation of all Australians with disability and their families across all life domains and systems.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This research was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and implemented by researchers from the University of Melbourne's Melbourne Disability Institute and the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, and Ms Jody Barney, Independent Indigenous Research Consultant.

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