

# “FOR AN EASIER EVERYDAY LIFE”

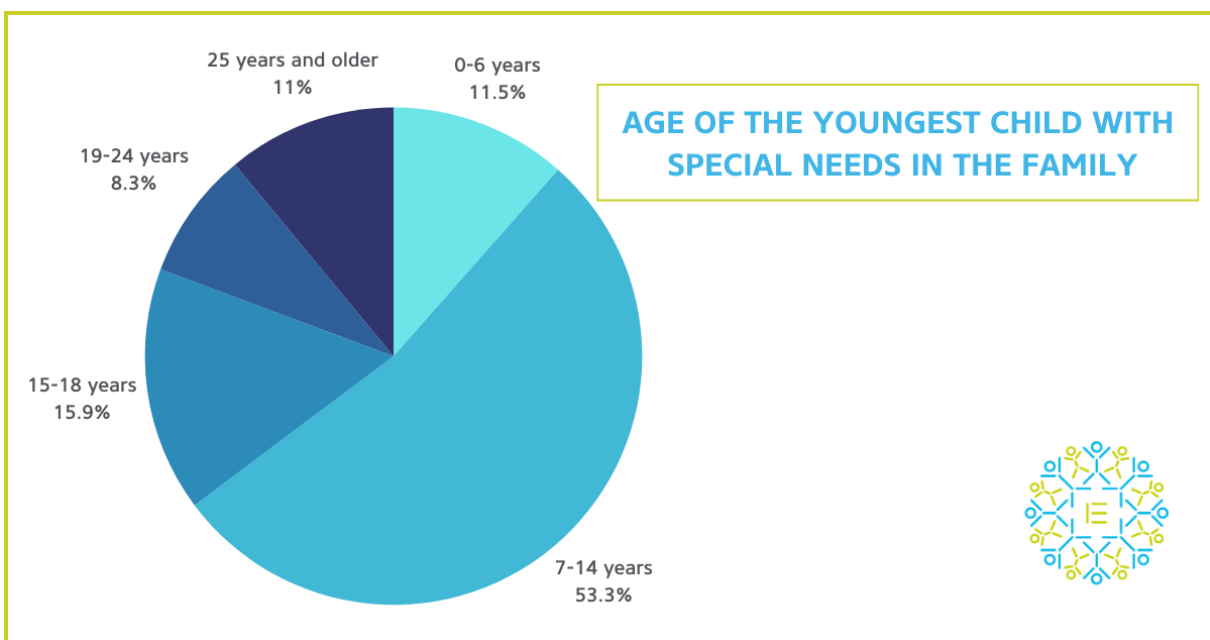
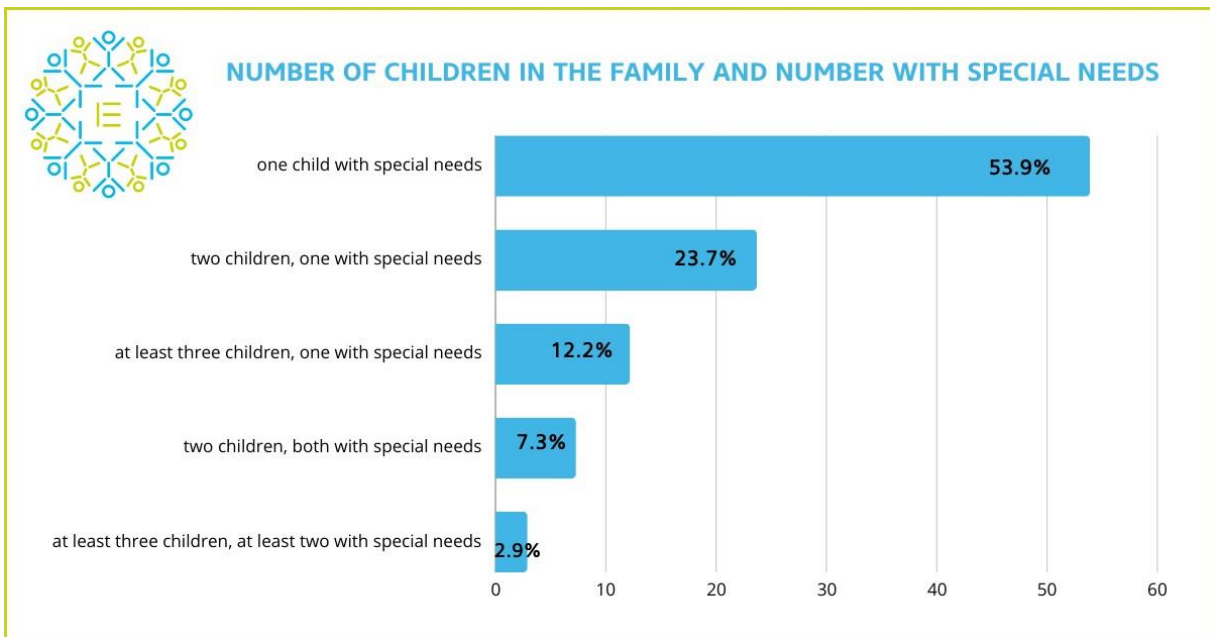
survey of single parent families and children with special needs

## SURVEY RESULTS

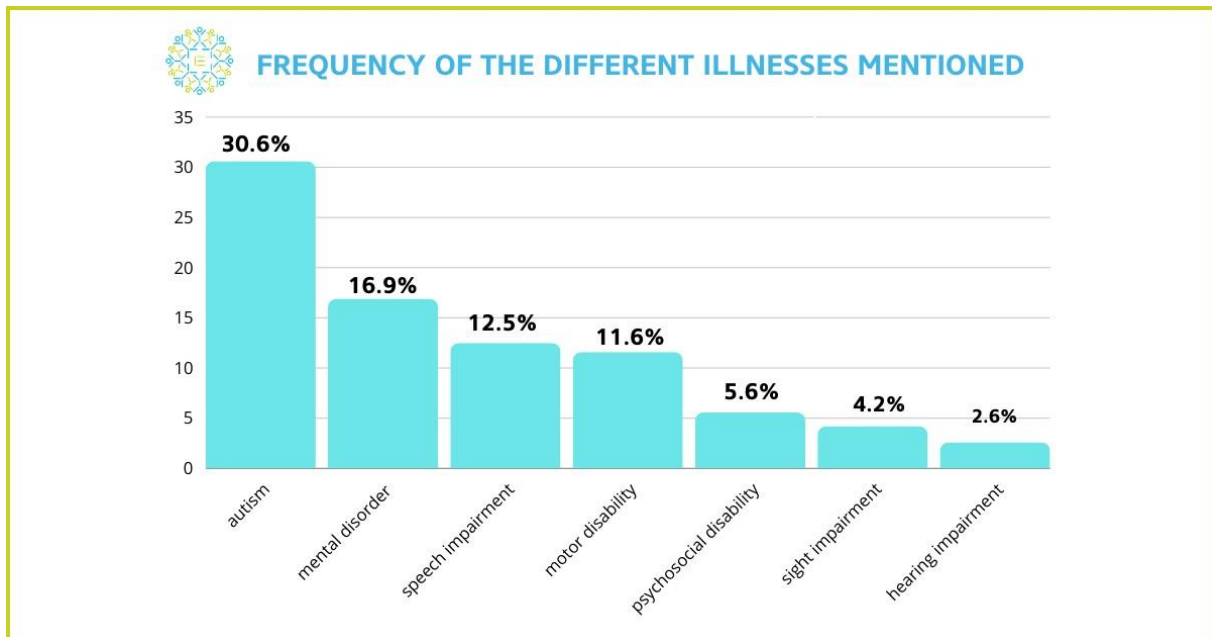
### 1. Characteristics of families having children with special needs

A total of 252 single parents with at least one child with special needs responded to the research questionnaire. 87% had one such child, 11% had two and one parent had three.

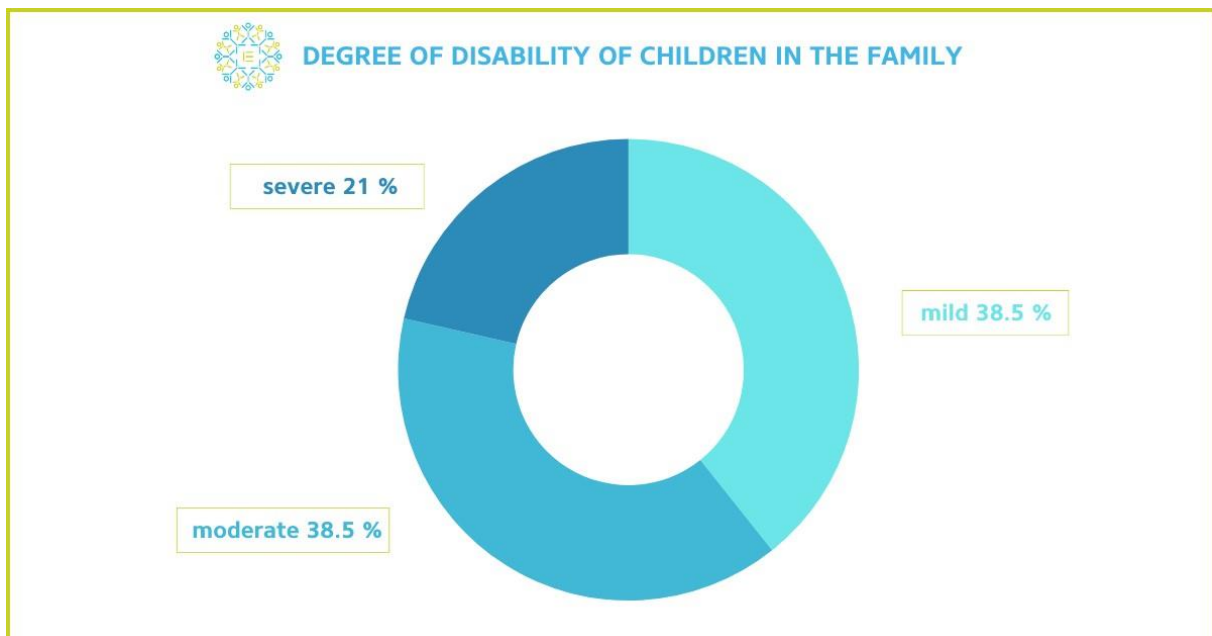
Of the parents who answered our questions, 98% were single mothers.



The most frequently cited impairment was autism, which occurred in almost one third of families. Also frequent were mental disorder (17%), speech impairment (13%) and motor disability (12%).



In one fifth of families (21%) there was at least one child whose disability or impairment was severe. Of children with the greatest need, 39% have a moderate disability, while a similar ratio accounts for those with a mild disability.

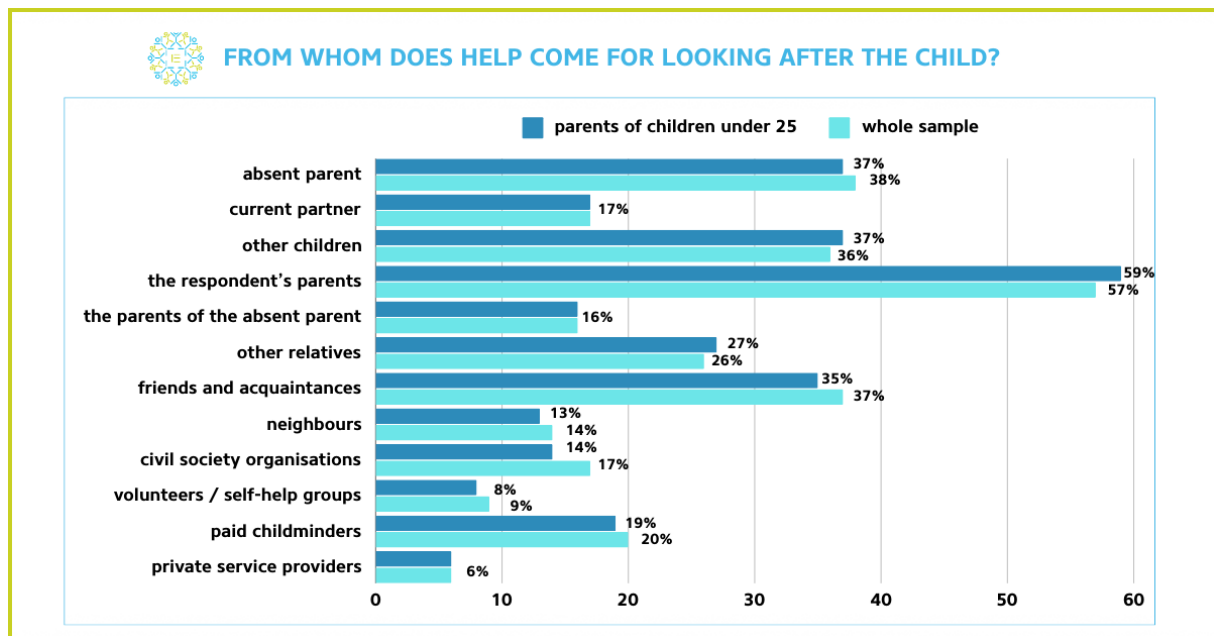


In 40% of families there is at least one child with multiple disabilities.

In 19% of families there is at least one child with special needs who is neither attending an institute nor working. Thus they spend their time at home. In these families the parent has a much lower chance of entering the labour market, given that the lack of childcare does not allow it. While 26% of parents in the group where the child is not at home all day but goes to some kind of institution do not work, the proportion of non-working parents in the group where the child is at home is 55%.

## 2. Who can parents of a child with special needs turn to for help?

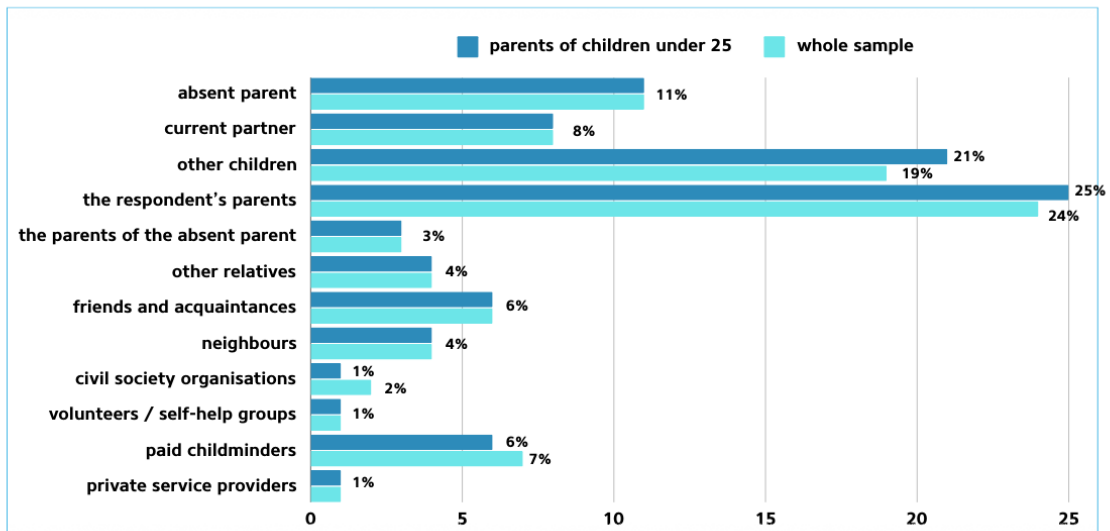
Parents of a child with special needs can rely mostly on the help of grandparents to support them in caring for their child(ren). Almost 60% of parents mentioned their own parents in such a supportive role. The next most frequently mentioned were the absent parent (37-38%), friends and acquaintances (35-37%) and the siblings of the disabled child (36-37%).



Certainly fewer people receive regular help (e.g. daily or several times a week), with respondents relying mainly on their parents and siblings in the family. Approximately one quarter of parents said that grandparents (the respondent's own parents) help them regularly, while a fifth of parents said that the siblings of the disabled child help them regularly. In contrast, regular support from the absent parent is missing in many families. Only one in ten absent parents provide regular support for former partners raising a child with special needs alone.



### WHO HELPS REGULARLY WITH LOOKING AFTER THE CHILD?

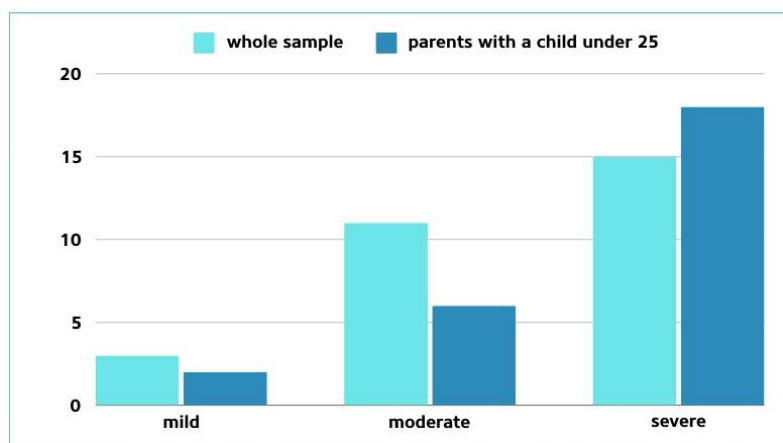


One in ten parents of a child with special needs can only rely on themselves to take care of the child, i.e. they receive no help at all, not even rarely.

The least likely to receive help from someone are those who are raising a child with a severe disability. 15% of parents (18% of those with children under 25) can rely only on themselves. This compares with 11% and 6% respectively for those caring for a child with a moderate disability and 2-3% for those raising a child with a mild disability.



### PROPORTION OF FAMILIES NOT RECEIVING ANY HELP WITH LOOKING AFTER THEIR CHILD

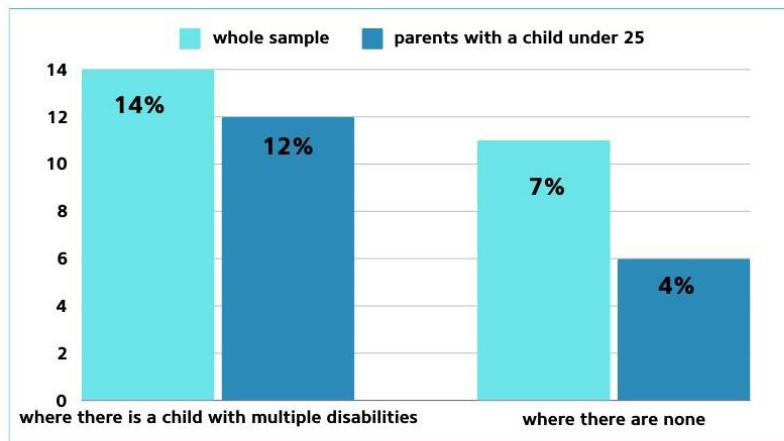


Among parents of children with multiple disabilities it is more common than average to rely only on themselves, receiving no help from anyone. 14% of parents of children with multiple disabilities (12% of parents of children under 25) said they could rely only on themselves, compared to 4-7% of parents of children without multiple disabilities.





### PROPORTION OF FAMILIES WHO RECEIVE NO HELP FOR LOOKING AFTER A CHILD

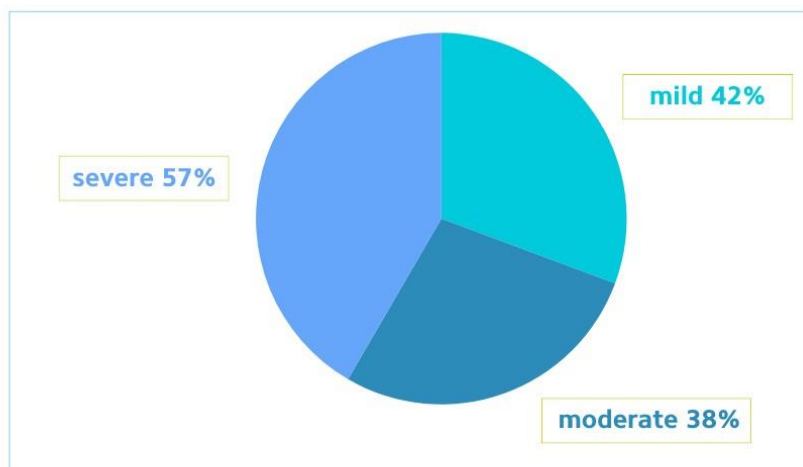


### 3. Can parents of a child with special needs count on the support of an absent partner?

In our research we also looked in more detail at the role of absent parents. 54% of families receive child maintenance from absent parents. The proportion of those paying child maintenance is highest where the child has a mild disability (59%). However, only half of families with a moderately or severely disabled child received child maintenance.

44% of children do not keep in touch with their absent parent. This is particularly the case for children with severe disabilities, where the proportion is 57%.

### PROPORTION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE ABSENT PARENT ACCORDING TO DEGREE OF DISABILITY

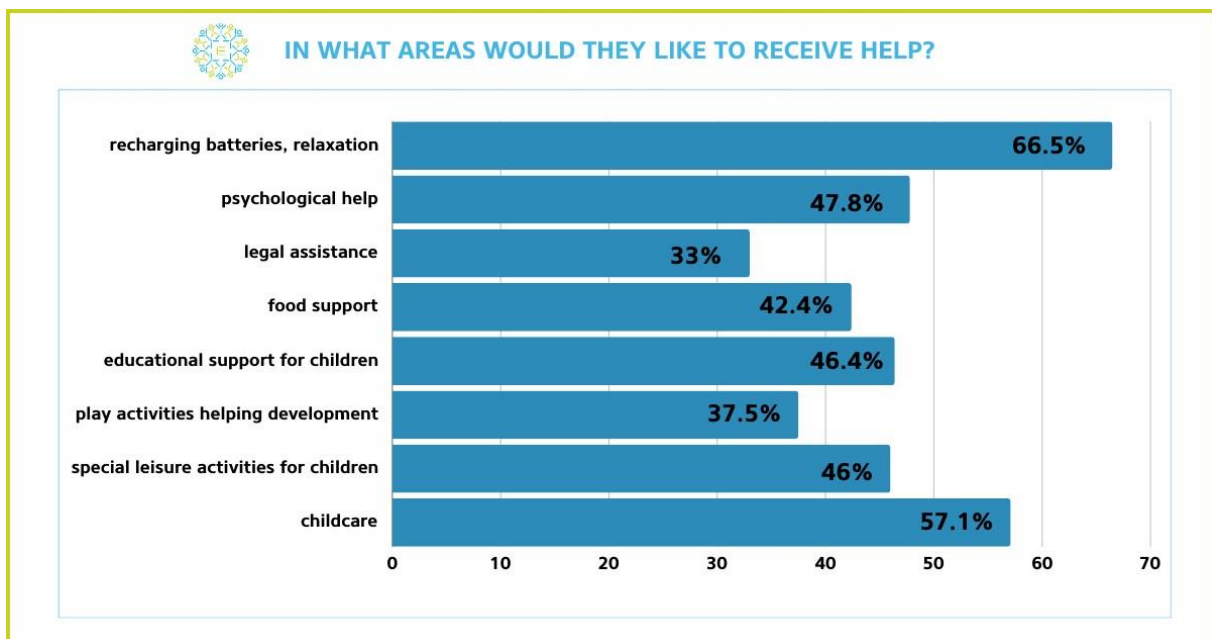


It is more common to find no contact with an absent parent where the child has multiple conditions. In 47% of such cases there is no contact with the absent parent.

Among families with a severely disabled child, we find the highest proportion of parents who believe that the child's condition played a role in their former partner leaving them alone with the child. Among parents of a child with a mild disability, 23% said that the child's condition was a factor in becoming a single parent. In contrast, 34% of those with a moderately disabled child and 47% of those with a child who was severely disabled felt that the child's condition certainly played a role in being left on their own.

#### 4. What kind of help do parents of children with special needs require? What are the main problems of everyday life?

As part of our survey, we also looked at the areas in which parents of a child with special needs might themselves need help. Most parents identified several areas at the same time. The majority (two-thirds) of parents would like help which would enable them to relax and recharge their batteries. The second most frequently highlighted area was childcare, followed by educational support for children and special leisure activities.



Many said that they needed help to transport their child. Others lacked the help of specialist physios and other therapists, and many also expressed fears about what would happen to their child if they were no longer around. They do not see security in relation to the accommodation of their disabled child, nor the possibility of a dignified life in an institution.

A frequent difficulty involved anxiety in relation to the future and the fear of what would happen to their child.

Many also indicated that those around them do not understand what it means to raise a child with special needs. Some people express excessive sympathy, albeit without real substance.



Others are impatient and do not understand the child’s reactions (for example, with regard to an autistic child). Still others fear for their own children mixing with a disabled child.

Loneliness, isolation, lack of time (in particular for oneself) are other issues that warn of the exclusion of these families from the fabric of society. This is where self-help groups and NGOs can be of great help for children with special needs, their parents and their extended families.

