INCLUSIVE SPORT FOR EVERYONE · NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2024

Needs Assessment: Inclusive Sport for Every Child

In autumn 2024, we asked parents and caregivers across the Netherlands what their children need to play sport together with children of all abilities. This report presents every result, with notes on what each finding means for inclusive play.

41 respondents 7 provinces 17 Sept to 16 Oct 2024 Survey shared on Facebook

90%

say their child is interested in playing sport

100%

find it important their child plays sport with children of all abilities

90%

want coaches experienced with children with disabilities

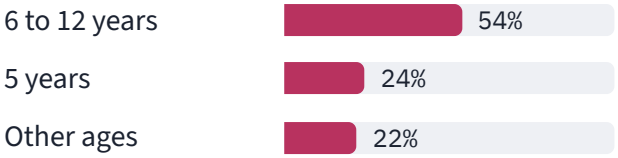
80%

are willing to volunteer or join community activities

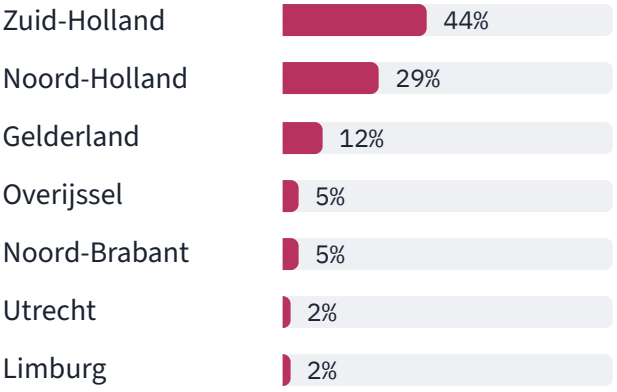
1 · RESPONDENTS

Who took part

Age of the child



Province



More than 40 parents and caregivers responded from seven provinces.

More than half of the children (54%) are of primary school age, between 6 and 12. A further quarter are 5 years old. "Other ages" includes children under 5 and over 12, and respondents who selected "other".

Responses came from both the Randstad and the east and south of the country, showing that the need extends well beyond the major cities.

2 · INTEREST

Children want to play sport

How interested would your child be in participating in sports activities?



Very interested **49%** Somewhat interested **41%** Not interested **10%**

Nine in ten parents say their child is interested in sport, and half say their child is very interested. The demand is there. What is missing is a setting where these children can take part.

3 · INCLUSION

Every parent values playing together

How important is it to you that your child participates in inclusive sports with children of all abilities?



Very important 68% Somewhat important 32%

Every single respondent considers inclusive sport important, and more than two thirds consider it very important. Parents want their children to play alongside other children, as part of the same team and the same club.

4 · BENEFITS

What parents hope sport will bring

Which benefits would you hope to see from your child's participation? (multiple answers possible)



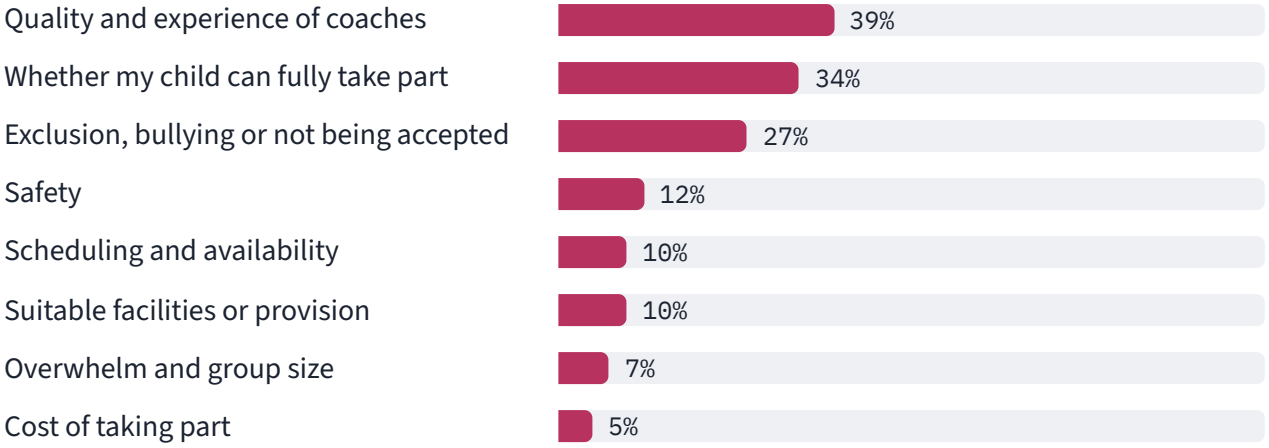
Parents see sport as far more than exercise. Social skills and physical activity are named equally often (88%), followed closely by confidence and teamwork (83%). Nearly three quarters hope their child will form friendships with children of different abilities.

Parents' hopes cover the full range of physical, mental and social benefits that children gain from playing together.

5 · BARRIERS

What holds children back

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child participating in inclusive sports activities?



The two biggest concerns are coaches who lack the experience or patience to support their child (39%), and doubts about whether their child can fully take part (34%).

More than a quarter of parents fear exclusion, bullying or their child not being accepted. Parents raised this in their own words, without being offered it as an option, which shows how strongly it weighs on families.

> *We tried a sports class aged 4 and the instructor called my child difficult to teach. He was made to sit out, which upset him deeply.*
>
> Parent, Noord-Holland

> *That people expect more than he can give. That his behaviour won't be accepted.*
>
> Parent, Amsterdam

> *Bullying from "regular" kids because they are unfamiliar with special needs kids.*
>
> Parent, Amsterdam

6 · COACHING

Experienced coaches matter

How important is it to you that the coaches have experience working with children with disabilities?



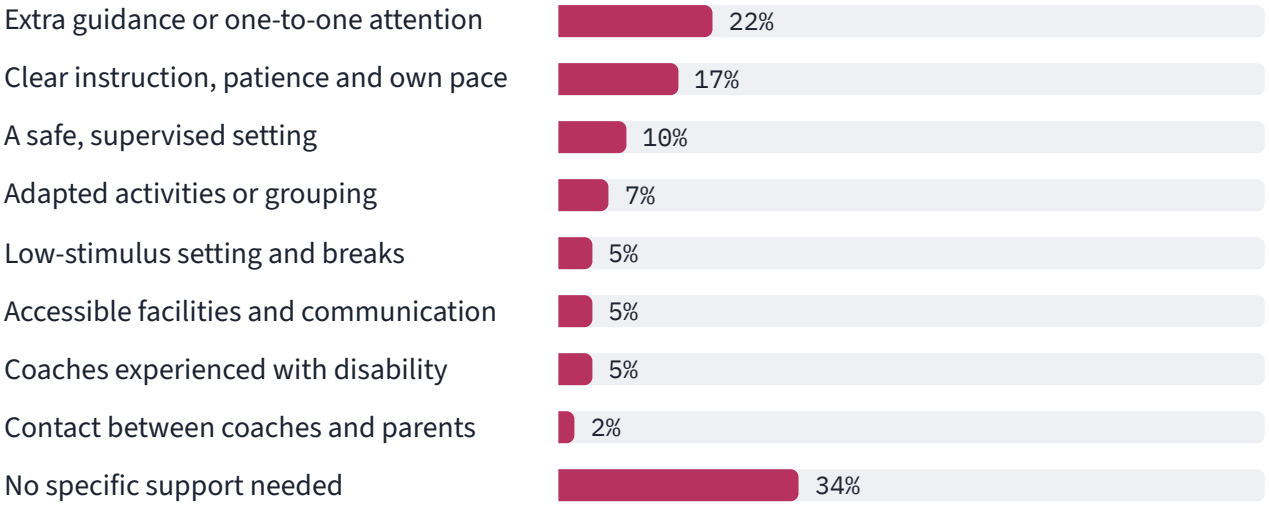
Very important **63%** Somewhat important **27%** Not important **10%**

Nine in ten parents want coaches with experience of working with children with disabilities, and close to two thirds call it very important. Together with the concerns above, this confirms that coaching support is the key to opening mainstream clubs to these children.

7 · SUPPORT

What children need to take part

Are there specific accommodations or support your child would need to participate fully? (open answers, grouped by theme)



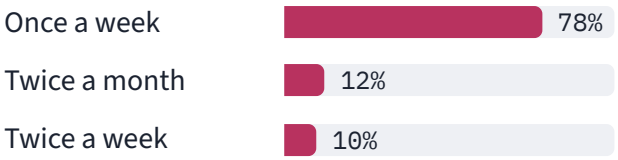
The support parents describe is practical and achievable within a regular club: someone to guide the child, patient and clear instruction, a safe setting and room to join at their own pace.

A third of parents say their child needs no specific support at all. With modest, well-targeted inclusion support, many more children can play in mainstream teams.

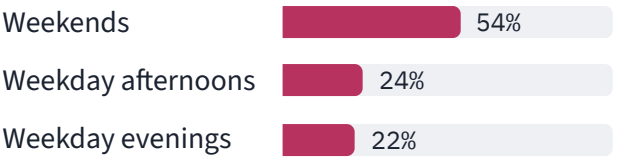
8 · PRACTICALITIES

How families want to play

Preferred frequency



Preferred time

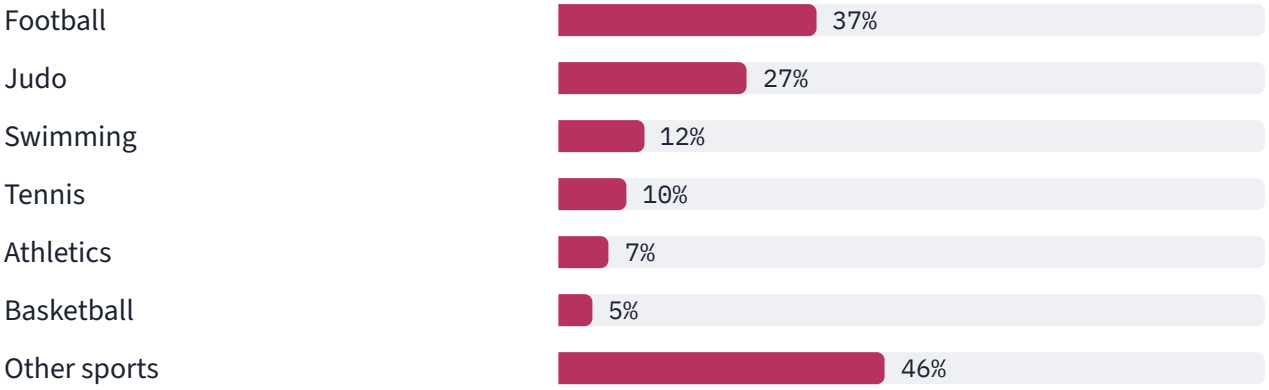


Most families want a regular weekly session (78%), and weekends suit more than half of them best. A weekly club team fits the rhythm families ask for, and fits around school days that are already demanding for many of these children.

9 · SPORTS

Which sports children want to play

Which sports would your child be most interested in? (multiple answers possible)



Football and judo are the most popular choices. Many parents also named other sports, including individual sports and games with simple rules. This points to offering inclusive play across several sports, so every child can find an activity that suits them.

10 · COMMUNITY

Parents ready to help

Would you be willing to participate in community events or volunteer during sports activities?



Four in five parents are willing to volunteer or take part in community activities. One parent offered to help as a certified golf coach. This willingness is a strong foundation for local ownership and for sustaining teams over time.

CONCLUSIONS

What this means for inclusive play

- **The demand is real.** Children want to play sport, and every parent wants them to play together with children of all abilities.
- **The barriers are known.** Parents fear exclusion and coaches without experience. Inclusion support on the field and coach guidance address both directly.
- **The support needed is achievable.** Guidance, patience, clear instruction and a safe setting can be built into regular club training.
- **The format fits.** Weekly sessions at neighbourhood clubs, with a choice of sports, match what families ask for.
- **Communities are ready.** With 80% willing to help, families can become partners in running and sustaining inclusive teams.

METHOD

About this assessment

The needs assessment was carried out through an online survey shared on Facebook between 17 September and 16 October 2024. It received 41 complete responses from parents and caregivers in seven provinces.

Percentages are calculated on all 41 respondents. For questions with multiple answers, totals exceed 100%. Concerns and support needs combine fixed answer options with parents' own descriptions, grouped into shared themes.