

Neurodivergent kids need support, not stigma

Key findings from the Understood.org Neurodiversity and Stigma Study

Note: "Learning and thinking differences" are referred to throughout as LTDs.

90% of parents believe LTDs are real, but they still accept myths and stigmas.



74%

74% of parents of neurotypical children say they are somewhat or very in-the-know about LTDs, but only 38% personally know someone with LTDs (Understood and MarketCast Impact Study).

56%



Parents of neurodivergent kids believe some myths about LTDs, including 56% who incorrectly believe that neurodivergent children can outgrow learning differences (Understood and MarketCast Impact Study).



Two-thirds of all parents say that children are too easily diagnosed with LTDs these days. Parents are also influenced by other myths and false narratives around disabilities:

- About one-third of all parents believe that the school system contributes to children's LTDs.
- 17% of parents of children with LTDs and 19% of parents of neurotypical children believe parenting decisions contribute to LTDs.
- 3 in 5 of all parents agree that they've seen their child or another child with LTDs referred to as "lazy" or "not smart."

These stigmas hinder support of children with LTDs and can negatively impact their mental health.

Among parents of children with LTDs:

55%



- 55% are afraid to tell others about their child's LTDs because of the associated stigmas.

69%



- 69% say that the stigmas associated with LTDs negatively impact their child's mental health and well-being.



- 75% agree that others treat or judge their child unfairly based on their LTDs.



- 71% say their child has struggled more with anxiety about attending class compared to year one of the pandemic. Only 34% of parents of kids without LTDs agree.



- 69% say their child has struggled more with self-confidence or self-esteem compared to year one of the pandemic. Only 27% of parents of kids without LTDs agree.



- 64% say their child has had more difficulty socializing compared to year one of the pandemic. Only 22% of parents of kids without LTDs agree.

Support from their parents can improve children's mental health and confidence.



Many parents realize the importance of engaging in the challenges their child may be facing. Yet among those with kids with LTDs, 63% regret not seeking assistance sooner for their child.



Some parents are taking action and seeing improvements. Nearly half (44%) of parents of children with LTDs initiated a conversation with their child and with their child's school to understand these challenges, and 39% saw a pediatrician. Among parents of kids with LTDs who have taken action:

- 80% say their child's life has improved since taking action.
- 43% saw improvements with their child's behavior and mood.
- 39% saw an increase in overall self-confidence and mental health.



Additionally, among parents of kids without diagnosed LTDs, but who believe their child's challenges could be a sign of a learning difference, 95% feel their child has improved since support has been provided.

Source/Disclaimer: Unless otherwise noted, the data cited above is from Understood.org's Neurodiversity and Stigma Study, which surveyed 1,500 parents of both neurotypical children and those with LTDs across the U.S. in April 2022. Additional data pulls from Understood.org and MarketCast's Impact Study (2021), a multiwave study that surveyed ~1,000 U.S. parents of neurotypical kids, kids with LTDs whose parents did not know Understood.org, and kids with LTDs whose parents used Understood.org once or more in the last six months. Both studies are nationally representative. The full data can be found at mediacenter.understood.org/research-and-surveys.