SPECIAL OLYMPICS
GLOBAL CENTER
FOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Attitudes towards Education and AI

The Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education canvassed parents' and teachers' attitudes toward the role of AI in education.

ONLINE SURVEY WITH PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- Fielded by Stratalys Research

- Online survey of:

  - 500 parents of school-aged children diagnosed with an IDD

  - 200 K-12 teachers
    - Including 168 who teach children with an IDD now – or have in the past

  - Margin of error for parent sample:+/- 4.4%

 - Margin of error for teacher sample: +/-6.9%

  - June 3-10, 2024

This survey was informed by qualitative interviews with principals, special education teachers, education consultants, and Special Olympics Youth Ambassadors, conducted June 2-13, 2024.
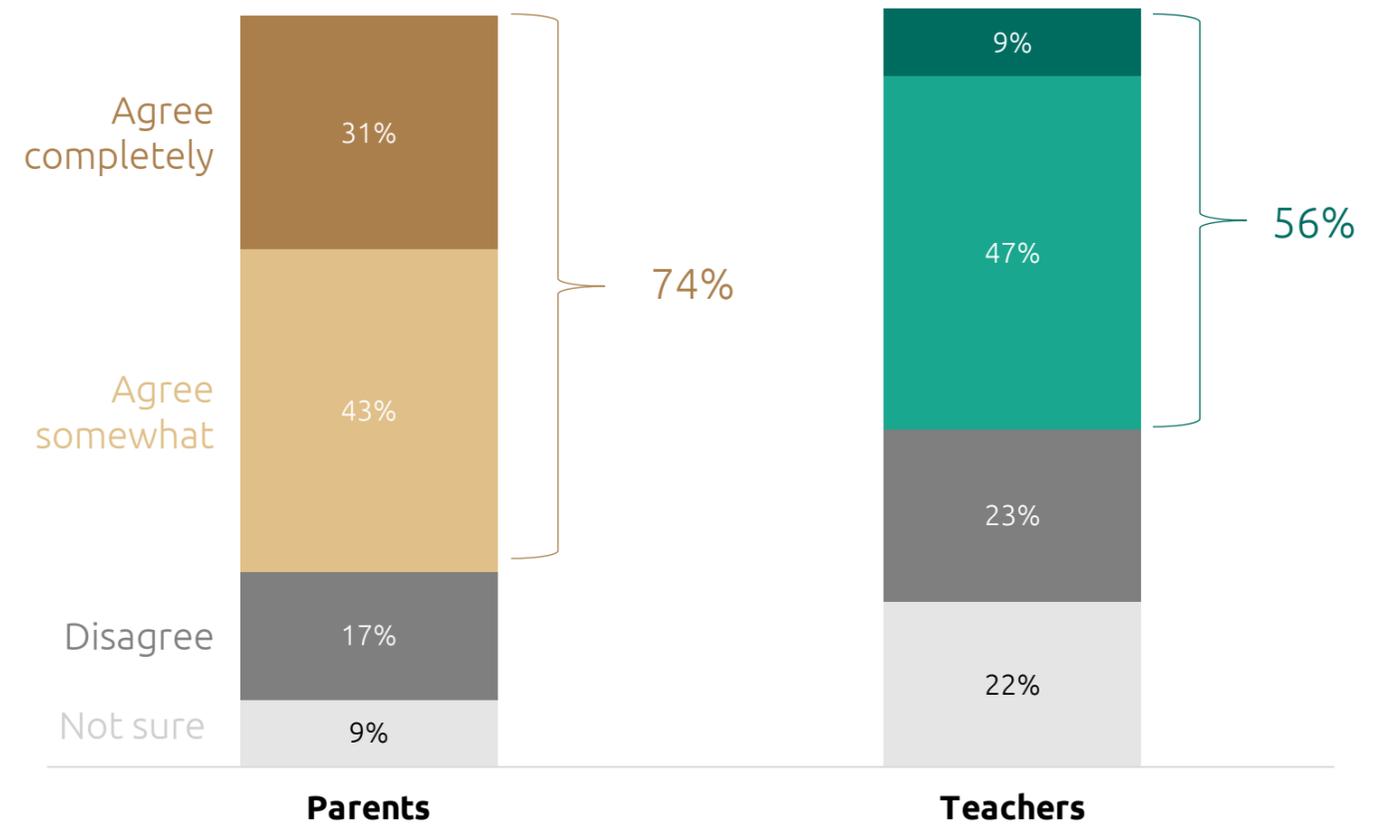
Summary of findings.

✓ AI is seen as a potentially powerful way to promote **more inclusive classrooms** and **close educational gaps** between students with and without IDD.

✓ Parents and educators are optimistic that AI can be used to **help students learn and grow** – and are even more optimistic when it comes to students with IDD.

✓ Parents and teachers see AI's potential to improve educational outcomes for young people with IDD through **adaptive, personalized learning**, and by **making information more accessible** for students with IDD by summarizing and simplifying it.

✓ Parents and educators are also optimistic that AI can be used to help students – and their coaches – in their **extracurricular or sports activities**.

✓ A significant majority of parents (84%) and teachers (79%) believe it is **important for young people with IDD to develop AI skills for their future**.

✓ However, only one-third of educators – and two-thirds of parents – believe that **developers of AI currently account for the needs and priorities of students with IDD**.

✓ Parents and teacher raise **concerns about AI and its impact on students with IDD**, including a decrease in human interaction and Sophisticated AI tools only being available for more well-resourced schools, leaving lower-resourced schools behind.

AI is seen as a potentially powerful way to promote more inclusive classrooms and close educational gaps between students with and without IDD.

Will AI will make education more/less inclusive?
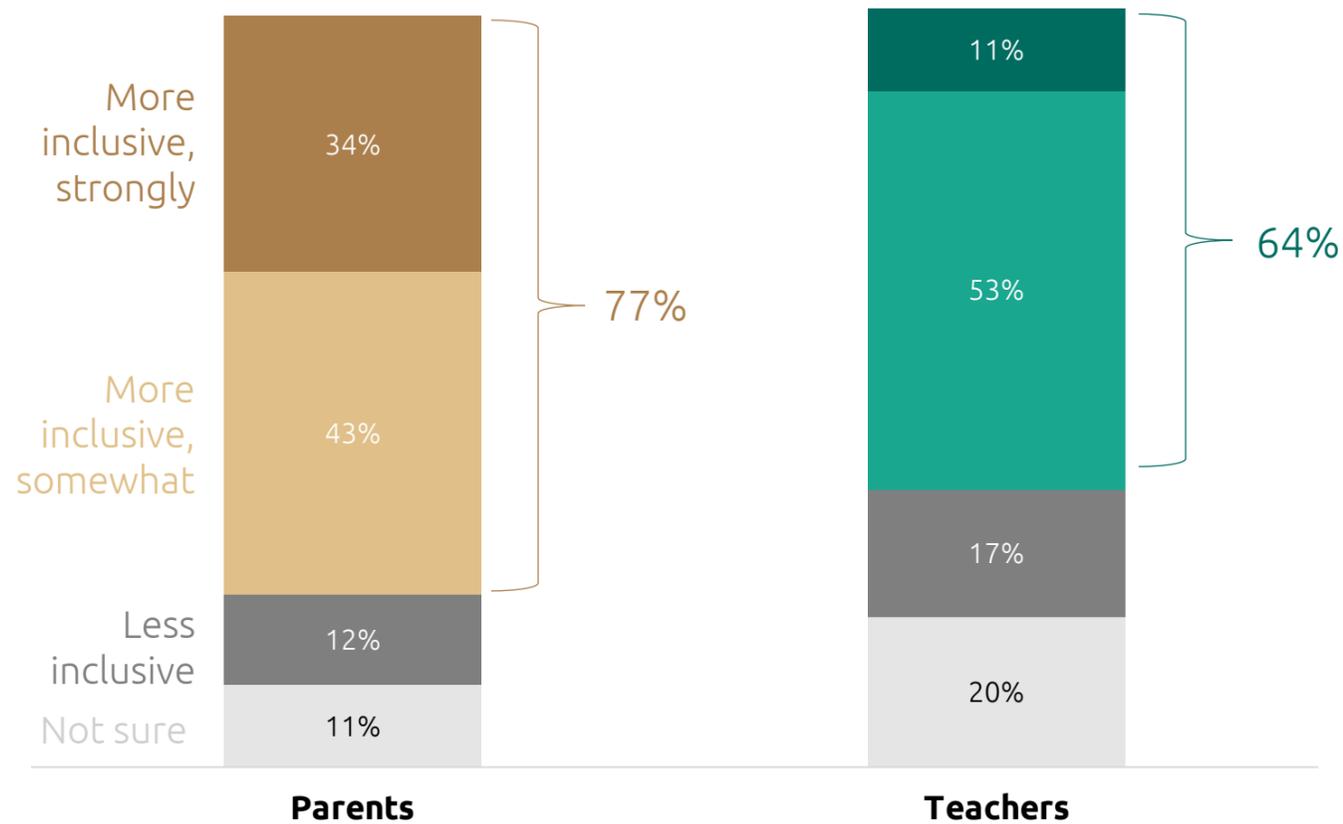
Agree or Disagree: *AI has the potential to close educational gaps between students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.*

Parents

More inclusive, strongly — 34%
More inclusive, somewhat — 43%
Less inclusive — 12%
Not sure — 11%

77%

Teachers

11%
53%
17%
20%

64%

Parents

Agree completely — 31%
Agree somewhat — 43%
Disagree — 17%
Not sure — 9%

74%

Teachers

9%
47%
23%
22%

56%

Q. Do you believe that the use of AI technology is likely to make education more inclusive, where students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities learn and grow together, or less inclusive where students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities learn and grow separately?

Teachers who have used AI are more likely to think AI can make education more inclusive (69%) than those who haven't (50%)

Q. "AI has the potential to close educational gaps between students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome, Williams syndrome, Fetal alcohol syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, or Autism."

Teachers who have used AI are more likely to agree (62%) than those who haven't (39%)

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Parents and educators are optimistic that AI can be used to help students with IDD learn and grow.

AI can be used to help students learn and grow in classrooms
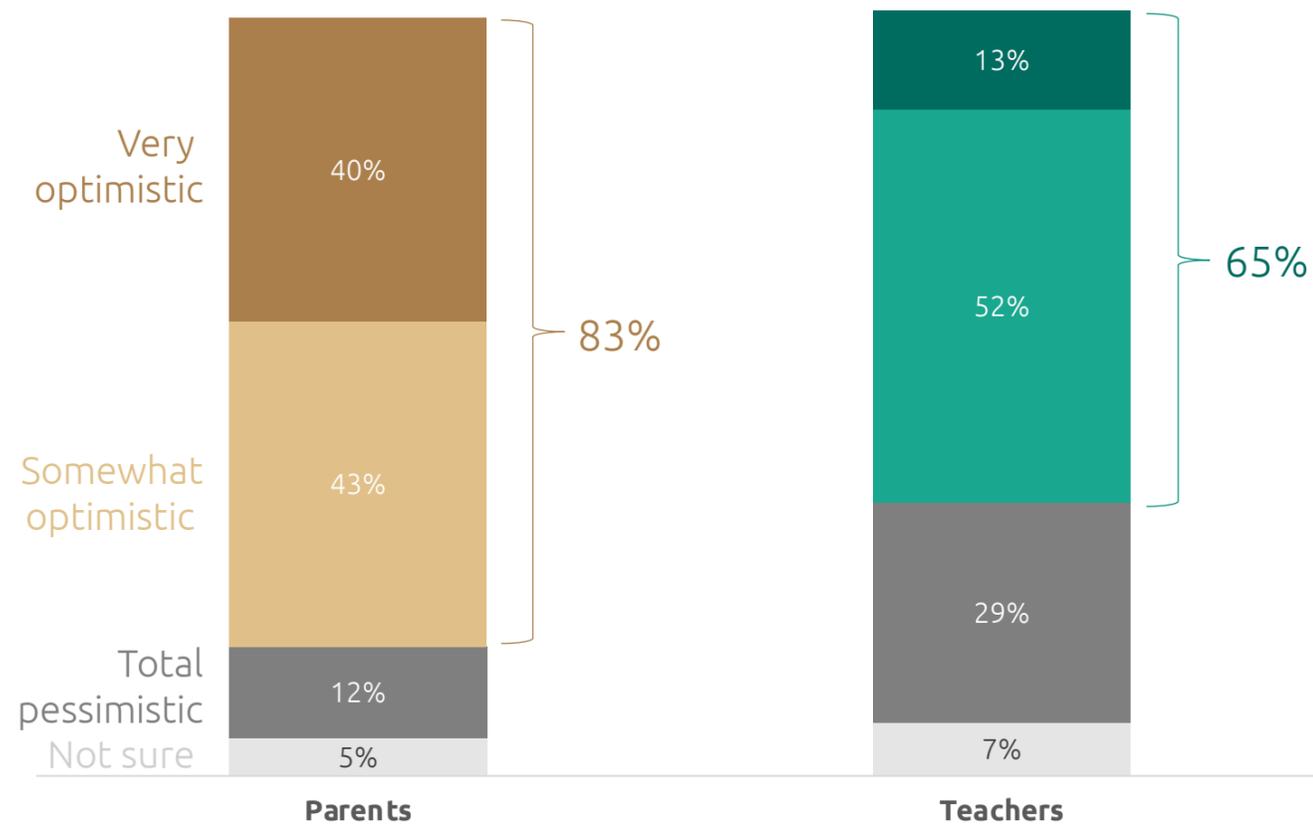
Parents:
- Very optimistic: 40%
- Somewhat optimistic: 43%
- Total pessimistic: 12%
- Not sure: 5%
- Bracket: 83%

Teachers:
- 13%
- 52%
- 29%
- 7%
- Bracket: 65%

Q. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic that AI can be used to help students learn and grow in classrooms?

Teachers are even more optimistic (72%) that AI can help them, as instructors

AI can be used to help students with an IDD learn and grow

Parents:
- Very optimistic: 36%
- Somewhat optimistic: 49%
- Total pessimistic: 12%
- Not sure: 3%
- Bracket: 85%

Teachers:
- 13%
- 59%
- 18%
- 11%
- Bracket: 72%
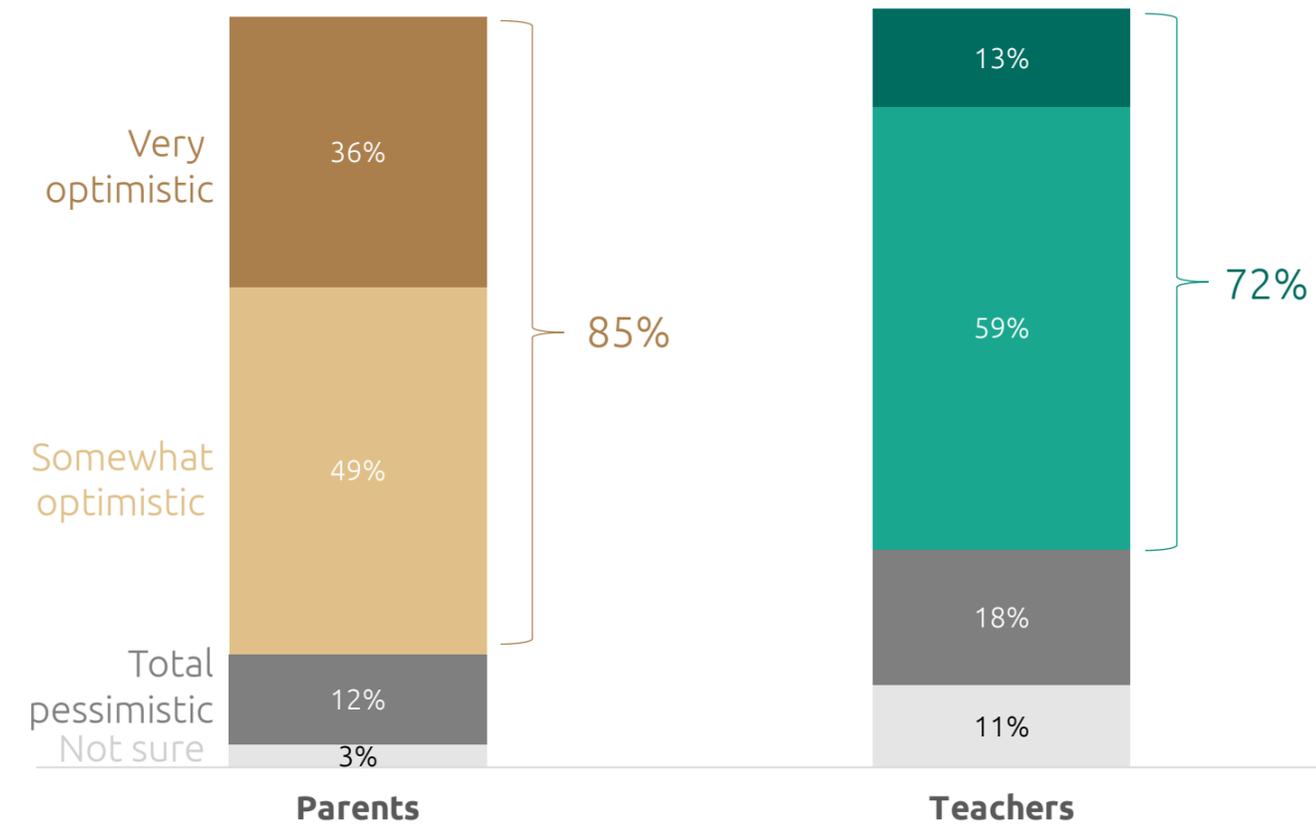
Q. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic that AI can be used to help teachers improve their students' learning?

Teachers who have used AI are more optimistic (76%) than those who haven't (61%)

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Parents and teachers see AI's potential to improve educational outcomes for young people with IDD through adaptive, personalized learning.

Major positive impact   **Minor positive impact**

AI will make information more accessible for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities by summarizing and simplifying it.
- PARENTS: 44% — 77%
- TEACHERS: 44% — 79%

AI will give teachers a way to create more tailored educational plans for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- 46% — 76%
- 46% — 79%

AI will provide students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with a tool to help them write and express themselves.
- 46% — 76%
- 47% — 78%

AI will help students with intellectual and developmental disabilities learn alongside their peers in the same classrooms and extracurricular activities.
- 39% — 75%
- 34% — 69%

AI will help students with IDD access information, communicate, learn, and participate in their classrooms and extracurricular activities.
- 44% — 73%
- 46% — 78%

AI tools will help students with intellectual and developmental disabilities set, achieve, and follow up on their goals.
- 41% — 73%
- 28% — 74%

AI can stand in as a one-on-one tutor for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, supplementing a teacher's efforts.
- 37% — 70%
- 26% — 60%

AI will ease the administrative burden of teachers and other instructors so they can spend more time engaging with students.
- 34% — 68%
- 26% — 65%

Q. Now you'll see a list of ways AI might help children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in classrooms and extracurricular activities. For each one, indicate what impact you think it will have on these students.

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Parents and educators are optimistic that AI can be used to help students in their extracurricular or sports activities.

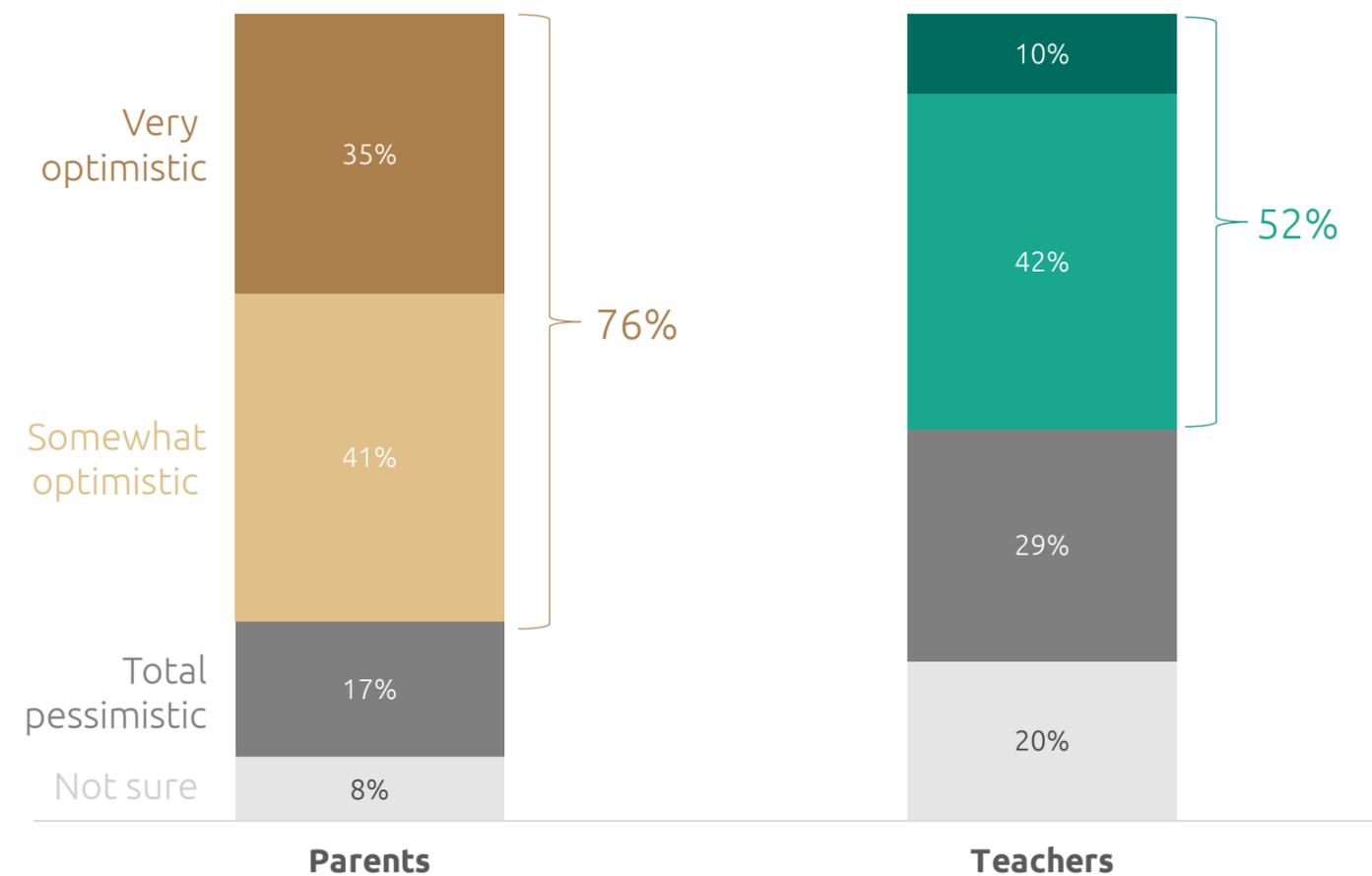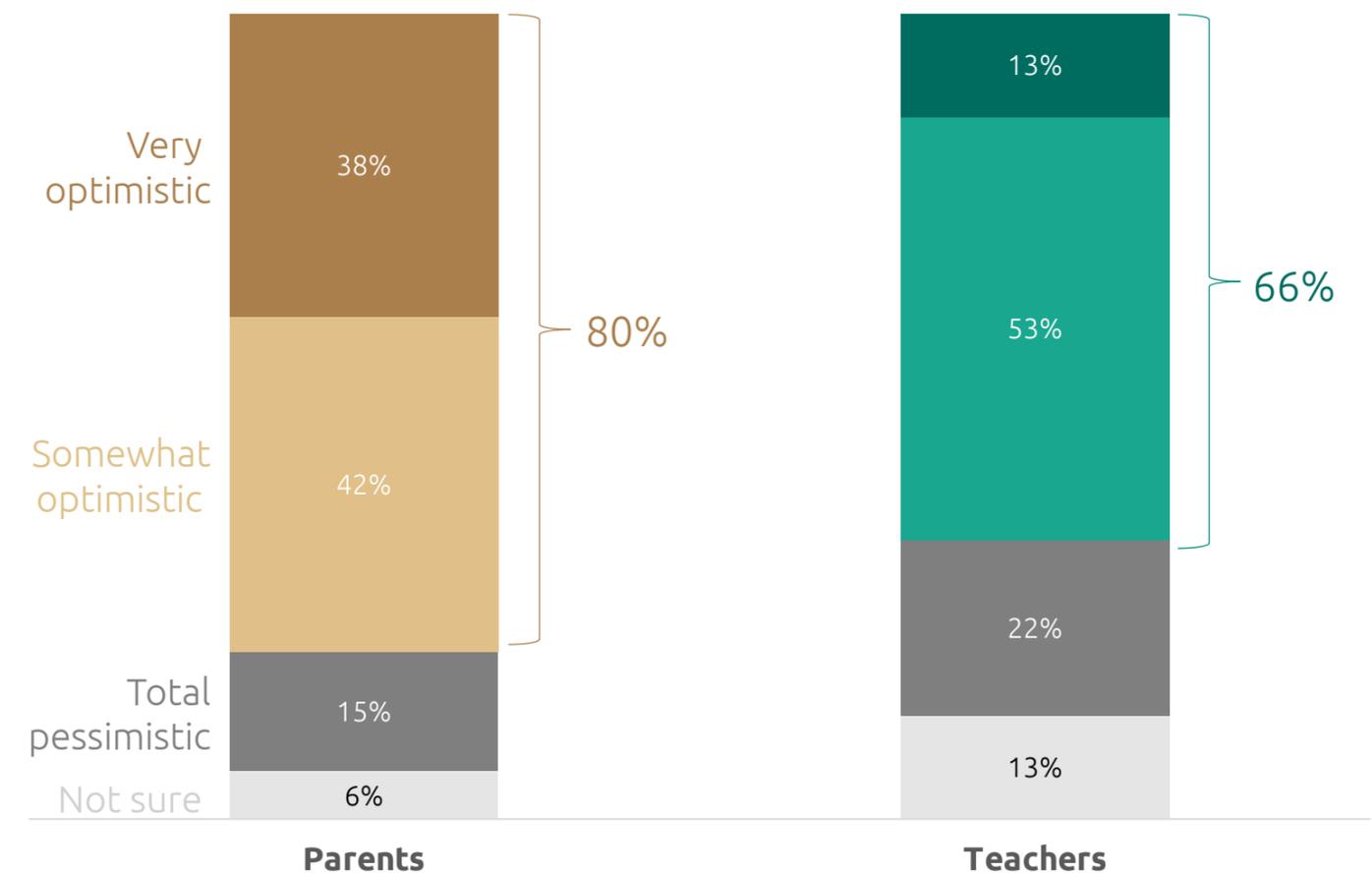**AI can be used to help students**
in their extracurricular or sports activities

Very optimistic

Somewhat optimistic

Total pessimistic

Not sure

Parents: 13%, 35%, 41%, 17%, 8% — 76%

Teachers: 10%, 42%, 29%, 20% — 52%

AI can be used to help coaches or other extracurricular instructors improve their students' experiences and growth

Very optimistic

Somewhat optimistic

Total pessimistic

Not sure

Parents: 38%, 42%, 15%, 6% — 80%
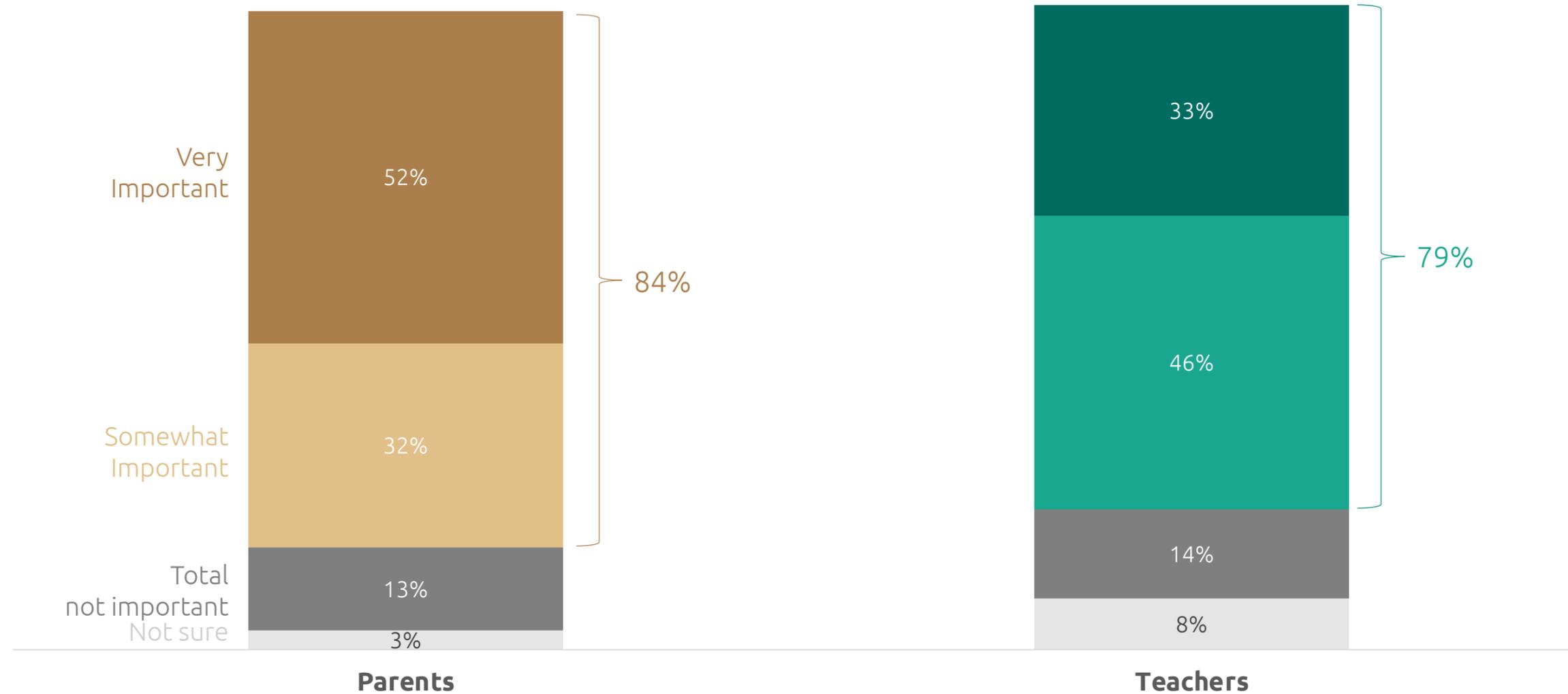
Teachers: 13%, 53%, 22%, 13% — 66%

Q. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic that AI can be used to help students in their extracurricular or sports activities?

Q. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic that AI can be used to help coaches or other extracurricular instructors improve their students' experiences and growth?

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A significant majority of parents and teachers believe it is important for young people with IDD to develop AI skills for their future.

Among parents and teachers: How important is it to develop or enhance skills in AI for their future personal and professional lives?

Very Important — 52%

Somewhat Important — 32%

Total not important — 13%

Not sure — 3%

84%

Parents

33%

46%

14%

8%

79%

Teachers

Q. When it comes to young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, how important is it to develop or enhance their skills in AI for their future personal and professional lives?

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However, only one-third of educators believe that developers of AI currently account for the needs and priorities of students with IDD.

Do developers of AI account for the needs and priorities of students with IDD?

TEACHERS

Yes
35%

Not sure
46%

No
20%

PARENTS

Not sure
24%

No
11%

Yes
65%
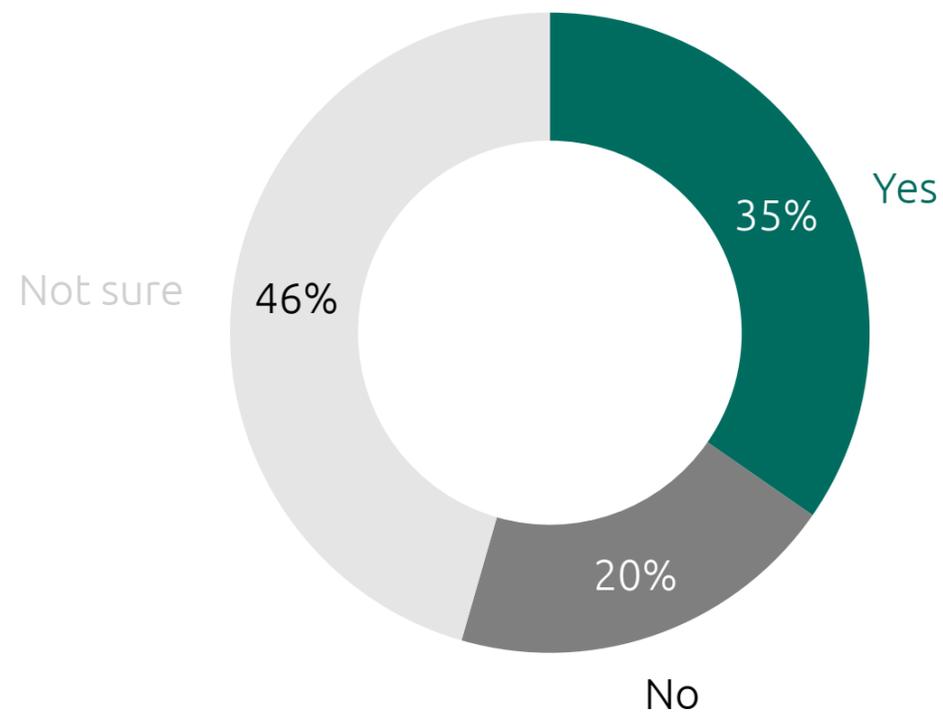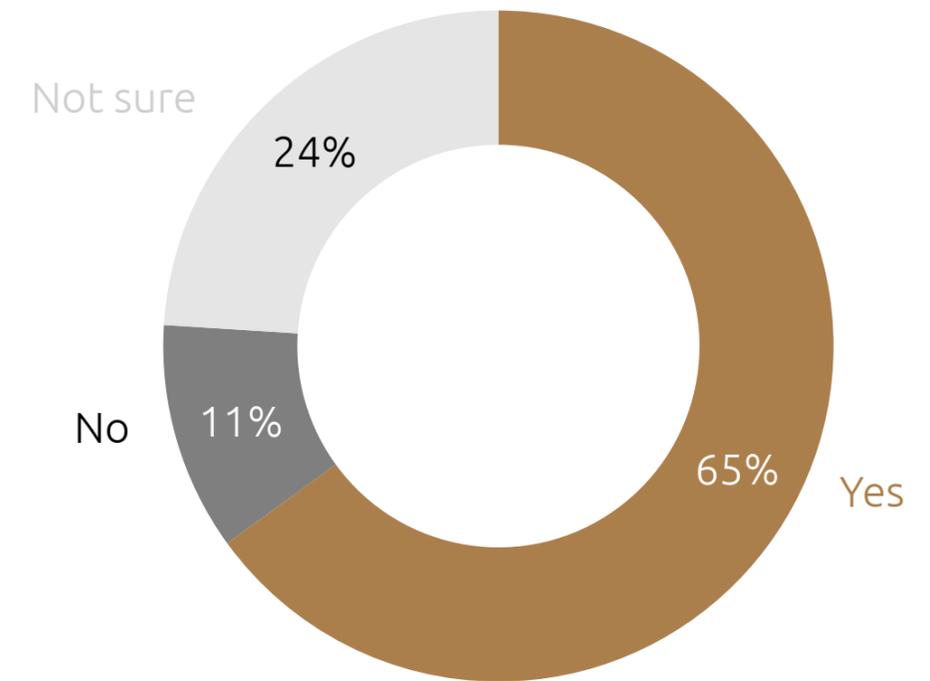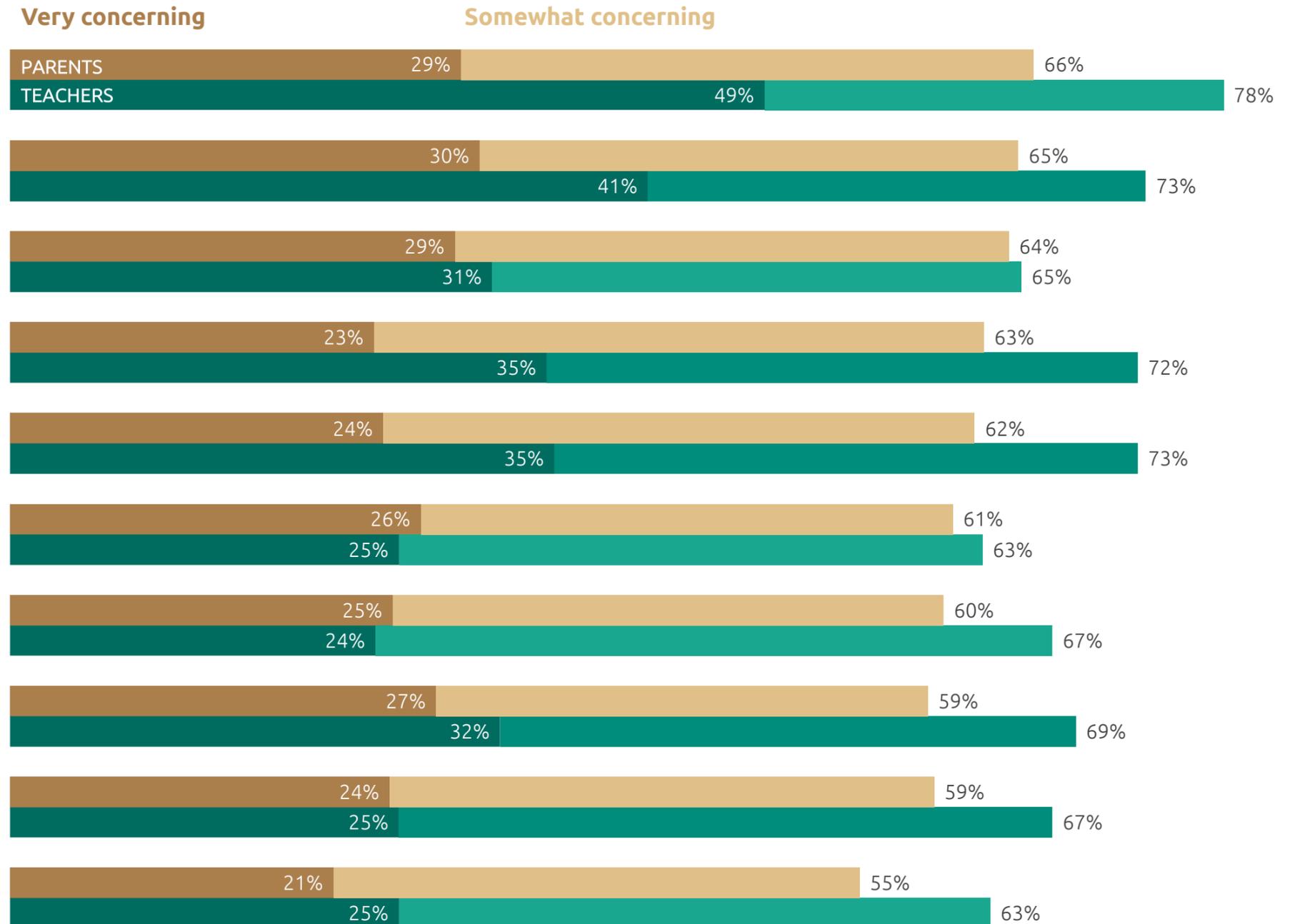
Q. In your view, do the developers of AI tools account for the needs and priorities of students with an intellectual and developmental disability when creating tools?

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Parents and teacher raise concerns about AI and its impact on students with IDD.

Very concerning   **Somewhat concerning**

Increasing the use of AI in schools might lead to a decrease in human interaction.
- PARENTS: 29% / 66%
- TEACHERS: 49% / 78%

Sophisticated AI tools may only be available for more well-resourced schools, leaving lower-resourced schools behind.
- 30% / 65%
- 41% / 73%

Using AI in schools might reduce students' ability to be empathetic.
- 29% / 64%
- 31% / 65%

AI models have not been trained on data provided by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- 23% / 63%
- 35% / 72%

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities might become too reliant on AI.
- 24% / 62%
- 35% / 73%

Using AI in schools might facilitate the collection of student data, threatening their privacy.
- 26% / 61%
- 25% / 63%

AI tools will be more difficult to use for students with an IDD, putting them at an additional disadvantage.
- 25% / 60%
- 24% / 67%

A reliance on AI might rob students with intellectual and developmental disabilities of their unique voice.
- 27% / 59%
- 32% / 69%

AI tools are not designed with much consideration for the needs or experiences of people with IDD.
- 24% / 59%
- 25% / 67%

Using AI to help create students' educational plans may reinforce biases that exist about how young people with IDD learn.
- 21% / 55%
- 25% / 63%

Q. And now you'll see some concerns people have expressed about using AI to help students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in schools. For each one, indicate how concerning you think it is.

About Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education.

The Global Center for Inclusion in Education serves as a hub for global thought leadership for inclusive education through research, policy, and programming. Its mission is dedicated to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in academic, sport, social, and community activities.

Mission

The Global Center for Inclusion in Education serves as a hub for global thought leadership for inclusive education through research, policy, and programming. Its mission is dedicated to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in academic, sport, social, and community activities. More information about the Center is below.

Hubs of Excellence

Argentina, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Romania, and Rwanda are supporting the expansion of UCS programming. Each region expands partnerships, reach, capacity, and involvement of local educators and youth. These expansion Programs include Australia, Bermuda, Dominican Republic, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Paraguay, Poland, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Slovakia, Trinidad and Tobago.

Research

Research is essential to learn how to foster inclusive mindsets and behaviors, and unlock the formula for spreading inclusion. Our research partnerships deepen our knowledge of the barriers and bridges to inclusion through evaluation of inclusive sport, education, and youth development programming worldwide.