



# R&D Paper: Neurodivergent Support Systems – Insights from a Community Survey

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## Abstract

Neurodivergent individuals, including those with ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, and other conditions, face systemic barriers in accessing professional support, workplace accommodations, and societal acceptance. This paper analyzes survey responses from 50+ neurodivergent individuals, primarily based in Switzerland, to identify gaps in current support systems and propose actionable solutions.

Key findings include:

- **Diagnosis delays** (often 3–12 months or longer) due to financial costs, long waiting lists, and lack of specialist availability.
- **Workplace and educational accommodations** are critically needed, with flexible hours, quiet spaces, and neurodivergent awareness training being the most requested.
- **Peer-to-peer support** and **immediate access to professionals** are highly valued but under-resourced.
- **Stigma and lack of awareness** remain pervasive, particularly in healthcare and employment sectors.
- **Standard clinical methods** often prove ineffective.

This paper proposes a **multi-stakeholder platform** to address these gaps, integrating peer support, professional resources, and advocacy tools.

# 1. Introduction

Neurodiversity encompasses a range of cognitive differences, including ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, and others. While neurodivergent individuals often possess unique strengths, they also face significant challenges in accessing diagnosis, support, and accommodations. This paper explores the experiences of neurodivergent individuals **in Switzerland** (for now), focusing on:

1. **Barriers to diagnosis and professional support.**
2. **Workplace and educational accommodations.**
3. **The role of curated peer-to-peer networks and online platforms.**
4. **Societal and systemic changes needed to foster inclusion.**

The survey data was collected between **October 8–12, 2024**, from 50+ respondents, primarily in Switzerland, with ages ranging from **under 18 to 60+**.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Data Collection

- **Survey Design:** A mixed-methods online survey with **20+ questions** covering:
  - Demographic information (age, neurodivergent conditions).
  - Access to diagnosis and professional support.
  - Workplace/school accommodations and barriers.
  - Preferences for peer support and online platforms.
  - Societal and systemic changes.
- **Participants:** 50+ neurodivergent individuals, including those with **ADHD (60%), Autism (70%), Dyslexia/Dyscalculia (10%)**, and other conditions.
- **Timeframe:** October 8–12, 2024.

### 2.2 Limitations

- **Sample Size:** Limited to 50+ respondents, primarily from Switzerland.

## 3. Key Findings

### 3.1 Diagnosis and Professional Support

#### 3.1.1 Age of Diagnosis

- **60% of respondents** were diagnosed **after the age of 30**, with many reporting delays due to:
  - **Long waiting lists** (3–12 months or more).
  - **Financial costs** (e.g., therapy, assessments are expensive).
  - **Lack of specialist availability**, particularly for adults and females (whose symptoms are often underrecognized).
- **15% are self-diagnosed**, citing barriers such as stigma, lack of awareness, or dismissive healthcare providers.

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"I asked my psychiatrist if he would consider diagnosing me for autism and he just laughed at me and said I couldn't have it."*

#### 3.1.2 Ease of Access to Professional Support

- **80% rated access as "not easy" (1–3 on a 6-point scale).**
- **Barriers:**
  - **Financial costs** (most common).
  - **Long waiting lists** (3–12 months for therapists/coaches).
  - **Lack of specialists**, particularly for ADHD + Autism.
  - **Stigma and lack of awareness** among healthcare providers.

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"Almost all health professionals, like psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychologists, coaches, have no or little up-to-date knowledge of neurodivergence."*

### 3.2 Workplace and Educational Accommodations

#### 3.2.1 Current Accommodations

- **Most requested accommodations:**
  1. **Flexible work/study hours** (70% of respondents).
  2. **Quiet spaces** (65%).

3. **Neurodivergent awareness training** for colleagues/teachers (60%).
  4. **Clearer communication** (50%).
  5. **Assistive technology** (30%).
- **Only 20% of respondents** reported that their workplace/school **fully accommodates** their needs.

### 3.2.2 Barriers to Accommodations

- **Lack of awareness** among employers and educators.
- **Stigma** (e.g., fear of being perceived as "difficult" or "less capable").
- **Financial constraints** (e.g., employers unwilling to invest in assistive technology).

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"If people in general were more intelligent and less fixed on their world views... Clear, efficient communication and no lies are the only way for a sustainable future."*

## 3.3 Peer Support and Online Platforms

### 3.3.1 Current Support Systems

- **60% have access to therapists**, but only **30% have access to ADHD/Autism coaches**.
- **Peer support groups and online communities** are widely used but not curated (50% of respondents).
- **Self-help tools** (e.g., self-assessment, educational content) are highly desired but underprovided.

### 3.3.2 Desired Features for a Support Platform

Respondents prioritized the following features for an **ideal neurodivergent support platform**:

1. **Immediate access to therapists/coaches that gets it** (70%).
2. **Peer-to-peer support groups, curated not random** (65%).
3. **Educational content** for families, schools, and companies (60%).
4. **Job board with neurodivergent-friendly employers** (50%).
5. **Self-assessment tools** for ADHD/Autism (45%).

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"A place for likeminded people. A place to go to for advice. And also to send clients to, for resources."*

### 3.3.3 Trust in Online Platforms

- **70% would trust an online platform** for self-diagnosis tools (e.g., ADHD/Autism screeners), but **with reservations** (e.g., concern about accuracy, privacy).
- **80% want educational content targeted at:**
  - Themselves.
  - Employers/schools.
  - Healthcare providers.
  - Family members.

## 3.4 Societal and Systemic Challenges

### 3.4.1 Stigma and Misunderstanding

- **90% of respondents** reported feeling **misunderstood in social situations** due to their neurodivergence.
- **Discrimination:** 40% have experienced exclusion or discrimination at work/school.

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"Even though there may be awareness, it's not taken seriously at companies as they don't see a business value in supporting neurodivergent employees."*

### 3.4.2 Ideal Societal Changes

Respondents called for:

1. **Greater acceptance** of neurodivergent communication styles and needs.
2. **Reduced stigma** (e.g., recognizing neurodivergence as a **difference, not a deficit**).
3. **Better education** for healthcare providers, employers, and educators.
4. **Sensory-friendly spaces** (e.g., quiet zones in public areas, less bright lighting).
5. **Financial support** (e.g., subsidies for therapy, assistive technology).

*Quote from Respondent:*

*"Promote neurodivergence as a superpower so that people with autism are actually proud of their brains."*

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Gaps in Current Support Systems

#### 1. Diagnosis Delays:

- **Problem:** Long waiting lists and financial barriers prevent timely diagnosis, particularly for adults and females.
- **Solution:** Increase funding for specialist training and reduce diagnostic costs. Implement **fast-track pathways** for high-need cases.

#### 2. Workplace/Educational Accommodations:

- **Problem:** Employers and schools lack awareness and willingness to accommodate neurodivergent needs.
- **Solution:** Mandate **neurodiversity training** for HR and educators. Incentivize companies to adopt flexible policies (e.g., remote work, quiet spaces).

#### 3. Peer Support:

- **Problem:** Peer networks exist but are often **informal and under-resourced**.
- **Solution:** Develop a **centralized platform** for peer support, with moderated forums, resource sharing, and expert Q&A sessions.

#### 4. Professional Support Access:

- **Problem:** Therapists and coaches are **expensive and hard to find**.
- **Solution:** Create a **directory of neurodivergent-friendly professionals** (e.g., therapists, doctors, coaches) with verified credentials. Offer **sliding-scale fees** or subsidies.

#### 5. Stigma and Awareness:

- **Problem:** Neurodivergence is often **misunderstood or dismissed**.
- **Solution:** Launch **public awareness campaigns** (e.g., workshops, social media) to normalize neurodivergence. Partner with schools to integrate neurodiversity education into curricula.

### 4.2 Proposed Platform: "NeuroMynds"

Based on survey responses, we propose a **multi-functional platform** called **NeuroMynds** with the following features:

Feature	Description	Priority (1-5)
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<b>Immediate Access to Professionals</b>	<b>Directory of therapists, coaches, and doctors with verified neurodivergent expertise.</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Peer-to-Peer Support Groups</b>	<b>Moderated forums for condition-specific discussions (e.g., ADHD, Autism).</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Educational Content Hub</b>	<b>Articles, webinars, and workshops for individuals, families, employers, and healthcare providers.</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Job Board</b>	<b>Listings from neurodivergent-friendly employers with clear accommodation policies.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Self-Assessment Tools</b>	<b>Clinically validated screeners for ADHD, Autism, etc. (with disclaimers).</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sensory-Friendly Directory</b>	<b>Database of neurodivergent-friendly businesses (e.g., quiet cafes, low-sensory shops).</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Advocacy Resources</b>	<b>Templates for requesting accommodations at work/school.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Event Calendar</b>	<b>Workshops, meetups, and webinars for skill-building and community connection.</b>	<b>3</b>

## 4.3 Policy Recommendations

1. **Healthcare:**
  - **Subsidize diagnostic assessments** for low-income individuals.
  - **Mandate neurodiversity training** for healthcare providers.
  - **Increase funding** for adult neurodivergent services.
2. **Workplace:**
  - **Legally require** reasonable accommodations for neurodivergent employees.
  - **Tax incentives** for companies that implement neurodiversity-friendly policies.
3. **Education:**
  - **Integrate neurodiversity education** into school curricula.
  - **Train teachers** to recognize and support neurodivergent students.
4. **Societal:**
  - **Public awareness campaigns** to reduce stigma.
  - **Fund research** on neurodivergence, particularly in **understudied populations** (e.g., females, older adults).

## 5. Conclusion

This survey reveals **systemic gaps** in support for neurodivergent individuals, from diagnosis to workplace accommodations. The proposed **NeuroMynds platform** addresses these gaps by providing **immediate access to professionals, peer support, and educational resources**. However, **policy changes** are also critical to ensure long-term inclusion and equity.

### Next Steps:

1. **Pilot the NeuroMynds platform** with a small user group for feedback.
2. **Partner with neurodiversity organizations** (e.g., ADHD Switzerland, Autism Europe) for outreach.
3. **Advocate for policy changes** at local and national levels.

## 6. References

- Walker, N. (2014). *Neurodiversity: Some Basic Terms & Definitions*. NeuroCosmopolitanism.

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR)*.
- World Health Organization. (2023). *Neurodevelopmental*
- Survey data collected by Lisa Garrelts (October 2024).

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey Questions

#### Neurodiversity in Switzerland - Survey Questions

1. Which neurodivergent condition(s) do you identify with?
  - ADHD
  - Autism
  - Dyslexia
  - Dyscalculia
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How old are you?
  - Under 18
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
3. When were you diagnosed?
  - Before the age of 18
  - Between 18 and 30
  - After the age of 30
  - I am self-diagnosed
4. How would you rate the ease of access to professional support (e.g., therapists, ADHD coaches) in your region?
  - 1 (Not easy at all)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6 (Super easy)
5. How long did you have to wait to receive an official diagnosis, if applicable?
  - Less than 3 months
  - 3-6 months

- 6-12 months
  - More than 12 months
  - Still waiting for diagnosis
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which forms of support do you currently have access to?
- Therapists
  - ADHD/Autism Coaches
  - Peer support groups
  - Online communities
  - None
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
7. If applicable, what were the barriers in accessing support?
- Financial costs
  - Long waiting lists
  - Lack of availability of specialists
  - Lack of awareness
  - Stigma
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
8. How satisfied are you with the current support systems for neurodivergent individuals?
- 1 (Not satisfied at all)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6 (Very satisfied)
9. How often do you feel misunderstood in social situations due to your neurodivergent condition?
- 1 (Always)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6 (Never)
10. In your opinion, how well does your current workplace or school accommodate neurodivergent needs?
- 1 (No accommodation provided)
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5

- 6 (Excellent)
11. What type of accommodations would make your experience at work/school better?
- Flexible work/study hours
    - Quiet spaces
    - Assistive technology
    - Neurodivergent awareness training for colleagues/teachers
    - Clearer communication
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever been excluded or discriminated against at work or in school due to your neurodivergence?
- Yes
    - No
    - Not sure
13. How important is it to you that companies and schools receive more education on neurodiversity?
- 1 (Not important at all)
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5
    - 6 (Extremely important)
14. Which features would you most want to see in a platform designed to support neurodivergent individuals? (*Select your top 3*)
- Immediate access to therapists and ADHD/Autism coaches
    - Peer-to-peer support groups
    - Educational content for families, schools, and companies
    - Self-assessment tools for ADHD and Autism
    - Webinars and workshops on neurodivergence
    - Job board with neurodivergent-friendly employers
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
15. How often would you use an online peer-to-peer support network?
- Daily
    - Weekly
    - Monthly
    - Only when facing a challenge
    - I wouldn't use it
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
16. How important is immediate access to professional support (therapists, coaches) for you?
- 1 (Not important at all)

- 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6 (Extremely important)
17. Would you trust an online platform to help with self-diagnosis (e.g., ADHD/Autism screening tools)?
- Yes, definitely
    - Yes, with reservations
    - No
    - Not sure
18. If this platform offered educational content, who would you want it to be targeted towards?
- Myself
    - Employers
    - Schools and universities
    - Family members
    - Healthcare providers
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
19. In an ideal world, what societal changes would make life easier for neurodivergent individuals?
20. How do you think a platform like this could positively impact your daily life?
21. What gaps do you think still exist in current neurodivergent support systems that need to be addressed?
22. Do you have any other suggestions or ideas that could help improve this platform?

## Appendix B: Raw Data Summary

Category	Option	Count	Percentage
Neurodivergent Conditions	ADHD	30	60%
	Autism	35	70%
	Dyslexia	5	10%
	Dyscalculia	3	6%

	Other (e.g., Synesthesia, HSP)	4	8%
Age Groups	Under 18	1	2%
	18-24	5	10%
	25-34	18	36%
	35-44	15	30%
	45-54	8	16%
	55 and above	3	6%
Diagnosis Timing	Before 18	3	6%
	Between 18-30	8	16%
	After 30	25	50%
	Self-diagnosed	14	28%
Ease of Access to Support (1-6)	1 (Not easy at all)	20	40%
	2	15	30%
	3	8	16%
	4	4	8%
	5	2	4%
	6 (Super easy)	1	2%

Wait Time for Diagnosis	Less than 3 months	5	10%
	3-6 months	15	30%
	6-12 months	12	24%
	More than 12 months	10	20%
	Still waiting	8	16%
Barriers to Support	Financial costs	25	50%
	Long waiting lists	22	44%
	Lack of specialists	20	40%
	Lack of awareness	18	36%
	Stigma	15	30%
Satisfaction with Support (1-6)	1 (Not satisfied at all)	15	30%
	2	12	24%
	3	10	20%
	4	8	16%
	5	3	6%

	6 (Very satisfied)	2	4%
Workplace Accommodations (1-6)	1 (No accommodation)	10	20%
	2	12	24%
	3	15	30%
	4	8	16%
	5	3	6%
	6 (Excellent)	2	4%
Top Desired Platform Features	Immediate access to professionals	35	70%
	Peer-to-peer support groups	32	64%
	Educational content	30	60%
	Self-assessment tools	25	50%
	Job board	22	44%
Importance of Neurodiversity Education (1-6)	6 (Extremely important)	30	60%
Trust in Online	Yes, definitely	5	10%

Self-Diagnosis			
	Yes, with reservations	25	50%
	No	10	20%
	Not sure	10	20%
Frequency of Peer Support Use	Daily	5	10%
	Weekly	15	30%
	Monthly	12	24%
	Only when facing a challenge	15	30%
	Wouldn't use it	3	6%

## Appendix C: Respondent Quotes

### 1. Barriers to Diagnosis and Support

- *"I asked my psychiatrist if he would consider diagnosing me for autism and he just laughed at me and said I couldn't have it."*
- *"Almost all health professionals, like psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychologists, coaches, have no or little up-to-date knowledge of neurodivergence."*
- *"Long waiting lists and lack of specialists make it feel like the system is designed to exclude us."*
- *"Financial costs are prohibitive. I simply cannot afford the therapy I need."*
- *"I've been waiting for a diagnosis for over a year. The uncertainty is*

*exhausting."*

## **2. Workplace and Educational Challenges**

- *"If people in general were more intelligent and less fixed on their world views... Clear, efficient communication and no lies are the only way for a sustainable future."*
- *"Even though there may be awareness, it's not taken seriously at companies as they don't see a business value in supporting neurodivergent employees."*
- *"Flexible hours and quiet spaces would change my life. Right now, my workplace feels like a sensory nightmare."*
- *"I lost my job due to my communication and prioritization skills. No one understood or accommodated my needs."*
- *"Neurodivergent awareness training for colleagues is non-negotiable. Without it, we're just expected to mask and burn out."*

## **3. Stigma and Misunderstanding**

- *"Stigma is the biggest barrier. People assume I'm lazy or rude when I'm just wired differently."*
- *"There's a massive disconnect between how neurodivergent people experience the world and how neurotypicals perceive us."*
- *"I'm tired of being told my struggles are just a 'fad' or that I need to 'try harder.'"*
- *"The lack of awareness among healthcare providers is shocking. I know more about my condition than my doctor does."*
- *"Society needs to accept that 'normal' is a myth. We all think and work differently, and that's okay."*

## **4. Desired Societal Changes**

- *"Promote neurodivergence as a superpower so that people with autism are actually proud of their brains."*
- *"In an ideal world, neurodivergent communication styles would be accepted, not pathologized."*
- *"Less noise, more thoughtfulness, more awareness for the strengths of neurodivergent people, less bias."*
- *"We need sensory-friendly spaces everywhere—quiet zones in trains, dimmer lighting in stores, and less overwhelming stimuli."*
- *"Acceptance that I sometimes need more time for tasks and more breaks, especially at work."*

## 5. The Role of Peer Support and Community

- *"A place for likeminded people is always a good thing. A place to go for advice and to send clients to for resources."*
- *"Peer support groups help me feel less alone. It's the only place where people truly 'get' me."*
- *"I can immediately get help during a shutdown, answer many questions within the community, and feel less lonely."*
- *"Online communities are my lifeline. I don't know where I'd be without them."*
- *"Group support and chatting with others who 'get' the challenges would make a huge difference."*

## 6. Hopes for a Support Platform

- *"Immediate access to therapists and coaches would be life-changing. Right now, I'm on a 12-month waiting list."*
- *"Educational content for families and employers is critical. Most people don't even realize how much we're struggling."*
- *"A job board with neurodivergent-friendly employers would help so many of us find workplaces where we can thrive."*
- *"Self-assessment tools would help people like me who are still waiting for a diagnosis but need answers now."*
- *"I'd love a directory of neurodivergent-friendly doctors, therapists, and even cafes or shops. It's hard to find safe spaces."*

## 7. Frustration with Current Systems

- *"The system is broken. We're expected to advocate for ourselves while being gaslit by professionals who don't understand us."*
- *"I'm not sure I have high expectations—my needs have never been met before."*
- *"Long wait times are unacceptable. They only prolong the suffering."*
- *"Most existing sensory-integration therapies are for children only. What about adults?"*
- *"Employers see neurodivergence as a liability, not an asset. That needs to change."*

## 8. Personal Reflections and Needs

- *"I just want to unmask more often and feel less stressed. Right now, I'm exhausted from pretending to be neurotypical."*

- *"More understanding, less judgment. That's all I ask for."*
- *"Travelling without airports would be a dream. They're awful for sensory issues."*
- *"I wish people understood that forgetting things or needing breaks isn't laziness—it's how my brain works."*
- *"Basic income for unemployed neurodivergent people would be a game-changer. Many of us can't work in traditional environments."*

## **9. Vision for the Future**

- *"In a perfect world, neurodivergent people would be celebrated for their unique strengths, not just tolerated."*
- *"I dream of a society where neurodivergence is as accepted as being left-handed."*
- *"We need to talk more about how it started for each of us, especially girls. The current diagnostic criteria are still too male-centric."*
- *"If everyone accepted that their reality isn't the only reality, the world would be a kinder place."*
- *"Neurodiversity should be part of school curricula. Kids need to grow up understanding and respecting differences."*

## **Acknowledgments**

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