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Readiness of Social Environment for Inclusion of "Atypical" Children in Regional Society of the Euro-Arctic Territories of Russia

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Abstract. The relevance of studying the state of the social environment of a regional society is determined by the development of inclusive processes that involve the integration of people with disabilities into public life as full members of society. In this regard, it is important to understand the level of readiness of society to include disabled children due to the large-scale disability of the child population and the existing need to create special conditions for the positive socialization of children in this category. The issues of creating inclusive environmental conditions are particularly relevant in Euro-Arctic territories, which are characterized by significant risks to health and quality of life of the population. In order to identify the level of readiness of the social environment of regional society, the article undertakes theoretical and empirical research, including an analysis of the characteristics of the social environment and approaches to determining its accessibility in domestic and foreign studies, the author's typology of private social environments, as well as an assessment of the state of infrastructural and socio-psychological barriers for children with disabilities based on the results of the author's online questionnaire survey of the population of the Arctic territories of the Northwestern Federal District conducted in 2022 (n=861, the sample is proportional to the number of residents of the Arctic territories). The survey revealed the existing barriers to inclusion in the studied territories, which is important in the implementation of social policy measures to create a barrier-free environment for the younger generation with persistent health disorders.
Keywords: *disabled children, atypicality, "atypical" child, social inclusion, social environment, accessible environment, barrier-free environment, Euro-Arctic region*

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Introduction

In modern society, the development of inclusive processes aimed at the involvement of people with disabilities in all spheres of life on an equal basis with other citizens has identified a number of social tasks that need to be solved as a matter of priority. We single out the creation of an accessible environment among them, which is insufficiently formed in the regional society today [1, Zhigunova G.V., Afonkina Yu.A., p. 012035].

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It should be emphasized that genuine, and not formal, social inclusion of people with disabilities requires not only infrastructural accessibility, but also the possibility of social environment resources use on the basis of maximum possible subjective activity to meet their needs, their involvement in cultural and other benefits of society, social practices [2, Afonkina Yu.A., p. 8–9].

The study of the accessibility of the environment in terms of regional specificity is the focus of many modern studies, the results of which reflect the state of accessibility of both different spheres of life for people with disabilities, and territories in general, taking into account the characteristics of the regions [3, Usova L.V., p. 29–30, etc.]. The significance of regional studies is determined by the fact that the role of sociological knowledge increases in the study of global, regional (national) social space due to the change of civilizational values [4, Dregalo A.A., Ulyanovsky V.I., p. 56].

It can be argued that the inclusion of people with disabilities today sets a new meaning and new tools for the social development of regions. The study of the regional environment in terms of its accessibility for the inclusion of people with disabilities is important for understanding the specifics of the processes taking place in modern society from heuristic, prognostic and applied points of view. In the first case, it is about obtaining new sociological knowledge about the interaction and relationship between the individual and the environment in the development of inclusive processes; in the second case, it is about identifying directions and trends of social inclusion in modern Russian society, and in the third one, it is about developing mechanisms and ways of social management of community processes to ensure independent living of people with disabilities.

Children with disabilities should be singled out as a special social group, whose socialization takes place in significantly difficult conditions. Its methods and forms are recognized by society as “abnormal”, and a child is endowed with “atypicality” [5, Skvortsova V.O., p. 168].

The specificity of inclusion of an “atypical” child in the society is determined, on the one hand, by its dependence on the social environment, which does not always take into account the needs of a growing person for inclusion and creates the necessary conditions for it, and, on the other hand, by maximum sensitivity to social influences.

We believe that children with disabilities (taking into account their irregular/non-standard/unusual ways of inclusion in social processes) need to transform the social environment, which can be reasonably provided only on the basis of a modern scientific base. At the same time, it should be emphasized that today there is no systematic understanding of the accessibility of the modern social environment for the “atypical” child, which makes it difficult to design conditions and use resources for inclusion in various social environments of regional societies.

It should be noted that from the standpoint of the analysis of regional specifics in the context of accessibility of the social environment, the Euro-Arctic territories are of particular interest as they are characterized by significant environmental and climatic risks that have a negative impact on public health, including the child population [6, Revich B.A., p. 395–396, etc.].

Thus, the study of the state of the social environment of the regional society for an "atypical" child in the Euro-Arctic territories is an urgent scientific task, the solution of which is of theoretical significance for the development of the sociology of the social environment and of practical importance in terms of managing the development of inclusive processes in modern society.

Materials and methods

At the theoretical level, the study used general scientific and particular scientific methods, such as analytical-synthetic and system methods, methods of induction, deduction and comparative analysis, structural-functional method; at the empirical level — online questionnaires and the method of statistical data processing using the IBM SPSS Statistics software.

The materials of the research are sociological theories, concepts and approaches that made it possible to compile a methodological platform for studying the readiness of the social environment for an "atypical" child in a regional society in the Euro-Arctic territories, namely:

1. Theory of atypicality of E.R. Yarskaya-Smirnova, which considers the atypicality of the individual as a result of social construction. From the perspective of socio-cultural analysis of atypicality, overcoming the isolation of people with disabilities in society requires the elimination of not only physical, but also symbolic barriers, which imply social assessment of disability as a restriction, anomaly and unsuitability, as well as attributing the marginal nature of the social life of a child with a disability and his family [7, p. 26].

2. The concepts of accessible and barrier-free environment that have emerged in Russian sociology. First of all, we note the concept of E.K. Naberushkina, who analyzes these concepts through the prism of universal design as an idea of social equality and, consequently, strict requirements for the organization of Russian social environment [8, p. 206]. The elimination of barriers in the social environment is considered by scientists as the most important condition for the independent life of people with disabilities [9, Romanov P.V., Yarskaya-Smirnova E.R., p. 67]. At the same time, the formation of a barrier-free environment, according to Nikonova A.A., is impossible without the transformation of public relations, values, norms and practices [10, p. 176].

3. The theory of institutional organization of juvenile disability of G.V. Zhigunova, according to which the social construction of the phenomenon of disability as a collective fact of public consciousness is carried out by institutional means and in institutional forms of social reality. The specificity of the problems of juvenile disability is determined by the fact that any deviation in the physical and/or mental sphere of a child, disrupting the formation of his psychosocial functions, negatively affects his social identity. In turn, the identification and self-identification of a person with a disability as an inferior subject hinders his social adaptation and self-realization, leading to social exclusion [11, Zhigunova G.V., p. 68–70].

4. The author's interpretation of the environmental approach to the analysis of inclusive processes, which reveals the trends in the development of an accessible environment based on the analysis of complex and non-linear relationships between a person with a disability and envi-

ronmental resources in the course of his interactions and relationships with the environment as a metasystem that implies the unity of legal, sociocultural, material-technical, socio-psychological and other systems.

5. The concept revealing sociological potential of studying the social space of the northern regions of A.A. Dregalo and V.I. Ulyanovsky [4, p. 60]. Based on the multidimensional understanding of the object of sociological analysis of local social community by the mentioned scientists, we consider regional society as an integral subsystem of society, and therefore reflecting global social trends. In addition, we consider regional society both as a system of social actions through specific cases of consciousness and behavior in relation to people with disabilities, and also as a sphere of communication and solidarity of the population, manifested in relation to representatives of regional societies to this category of people. When defining the subject of research within the framework of this concept, we proceeded from the consideration of social factors of accessibility in the regional society as a result of the activity of agents of social institutions and social actions/interactions, structures of the regional society; system elements of the local social environment, the analysis of which reveals the provision of accessibility at the microsocial level, makes it possible to identify the changing social reality of the local environment and determine the state of the processes taking place in the regional society.

6. The results of the author's empirical study of 2022 among residents of the Arctic territories of the Republics of Karelia and Komi, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (hereinafter referred to as NAO), Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts (excluding NAO) using an online questionnaire on the problems of social functioning of children with disabilities in the context of the development of an inclusive social environment in the regions of the Euro-Arctic territories with a proportional representative sample of 861 people.

Discussion

The theoretical and empirical analysis of inclusive processes inevitably draws attention to the category of the social environment, which is widely reflected in classical and modern sociological approaches. Thus, even E. Durkheim associated social progress with changes in the environment [12, p. 18]. T. Parsons explained the environment as an integral attribute of the action system [13, p. 6–7], when interaction with the environment, regulation of access to material resources characterizes the self-sufficiency of society.

The social environment in a number of foreign sociological studies is considered not as a space, but as a system of places. For example, in the work of R. Barker, the category of "place of behavior" is discussed, which combines the physical properties of a place and the pattern of people's behavior inherent in it [14, Barker R.G.].

Interpretation of the social environment within the sociology of the city from the point of view of its physical structure as a factor in the distribution of social roles of citizens and their discrimination [15, R. Park; 16, Wirth L., p. 1–24] is of particular interest.

Among modern foreign researchers, we note works that consider the specifics of the influence of barriers on the promotion of the independence of people with different needs [17, Mooney F., Rafique N., Tilly L., p. 241–246; 18, Sandjojo J., Gebhardt W.A., Zedlitz A., Hoekman J., p. 37–52; 19, Sandjojo J., Gebhardt W.A., Zedlitz A., Hoekman J., p. 111–122]. The importance of the needs of persons with disabilities in the organization of the social environment is reflected in the study by E.P. Tudzi, J.T., Bugri, A.K. Danso, who used the example of students with disabilities to show the lack of proper society's understanding of the inclusive needs of people with disabilities, which is reflected in the problems of communication, accessibility of transport and the physical environment [20, p. 275–294].

In domestic sociological approaches, the social environment is considered as the focus of the relationship between a person and society, mediated by a combination of certain conditions, individual and social ones [21, Khannanov Sh.K., p. 74–77]. J.T. Toshchenko includes the category of environment in the concept of the sociology of life, which considers the consciousness, behavior and attitude of a person to a change in the social status of individuals, as well as the social environment of a person's social life at different levels of social reality [22, p. 7].

The social environment is revealed as a set of social relations, prevailing ideas and values, products and results of human labor, creativity, scientific research. For an individual, it acts as the closest living space, the space of everyday life. However, it is important to emphasize that in both cases, a person is an element of the environment as well as a social actor creating it, establishing a dynamic balance with the social environment based on interactions and relationships.

Studies, reflecting the essence of influence of environment on a person, deserve special attention. The dependence of man on the artificial and natural environment, the importance of the commonality of personality and environment is emphasized in the works of A.A. Dregalo and V.I. Ulyanovskiy [4, p. 57], Sh.Kh. Khannanov, indicating that it is in relation to the environment that a person manifests himself, adapts to it or changes it [21, p. 72].

In modern foreign studies, along with the fact that the influence of the environment on the development of mental health disorders has been proven [23, Mandy W., Lai M., p. 271–229], the dependence of the quality of life of people with disabilities and the success of their rehabilitation on providing access to basic urban and social resources in the environment is shown [24, Sze N.N., Christensen K.M., p. 66–73], as well as their inclusion in labor activity [25, Laditka J.N., Laditka S.B., p. 126–134].

Thus, inclusion in the social environment can both aggravate a person's health disorders and make up for his limited health opportunities and return him to society.

In general, our theoretical analysis of approaches to the category of the social environment allows us to define it as a set of social conditions that facilitate or hinder a certain type of activity of a person, in which his needs are satisfied. Accordingly, we define an inclusive environment as a set of social conditions that contribute to the unhindered implementation of social interactions of individuals in the process of meeting their social needs. In terms of accessibility, the social envi-

ronment is revealed through resources and barriers that form the conditions for the inclusion or exclusion of people with disabilities.

Taking into account the understanding of a barrier-free environment that has developed in Russian sociology, it should be considered not only in terms of equipping infrastructure facilities with elements of accessibility, but primarily in the context of creating conditions for social interaction between different categories of citizens and communities, which is achieved by overcoming various kinds of barriers, material and non-material ones. Moreover, as E.K. Naberushkina notes, in the process of creating elements of accessibility for people with disabilities today, on the contrary, we fix discrimination against them, focusing on their specific status. This appears in the creation of special urban spaces for the disabled, the equipment of separate entrances to buildings and verified logistics routes, beyond which many social barriers remain [8, p. 207–208].

As noted in the Report of the UN Secretary-General (2012), accessibility is not an act or a state, but a freedom of choice that makes it possible to enter some other environment and participate in its processes [1]. Therefore, accessibility must be considered not only as presence, but also as participation. However, the problem of accessibility in Russia has not been solved yet. A person with disabilities still faces numerous barriers to social inclusion that prevent him from actualizing and developing human potential, exercising freedom of choice and developing his own life strategy. These barriers cannot be fully eliminated only by improving the activities of social services. Broad public efforts are needed to improve the accessibility of social environments, which will allow people with disabilities to lead an independent life.

The notion of universal or inclusive design is related to the category of accessibility, which means that the design of objects, settings, programs and services is usable for all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or special design [2], which, of course, does not exclude the use of special devices for specific individuals if necessary. Inclusive design expands human capabilities, focusing not on a specific hypothetical user, but on the widest possible range of consumers. The main criterion for inclusive design, in our opinion, is the ability for people with different needs, including special ones, to use the same objects, and therefore to interact. In this way, inclusive design differs from assistive technologies that are used only by people with disabilities, which excludes them from interacting with or makes them dependent on other people.

[1] Problemy i novye tendentsii v oblasti uluchsheniya polozheniya invalidov: doklad General'nogo sekretarya OON/Spetsial'nyy komitet po vseob"emlyushchey edinoy Mezhdunarodnoy konventsii o zashchite i pooshchrenii prav i dostoinstv invalidov [Challenges and New Trends in the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities: Report of the UN Secretary-General/Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities]. New York, June 16–27, 2003, p. 5. URL: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/documents/ahcdocs03/issueadv-ru.pdf (accessed 03 July 2022).

[2] Konventsiya o pravakh invalidov [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities]. URL: https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/disability.shtml (accessed 03 July 2022).

Let us also note the promising approach of A.A. Nikonova, who considers the creation of an inclusive environment through the organization of an inclusive city as a new type of urban environment accessible to every person [10, p. 177].

Thus, the readiness of the social environment to include people with disabilities is revealed only when people can not only be in it, but also fully use its resources, which requires the removal of barriers and the adaptation of social standards to meet the needs of people in universal comfortable ways. Such environmental transformations in the narrow sense expand the spheres and forms of activity of people with disabilities in different social environments, providing them with access to employment, leisure, education, recreation, etc., and, in a broader sense, help to establish the equal value for society of the needs of all individuals without exception.

The creation of a barrier-free environment is especially important for the younger generation, when values, directions of life self-determination and personal identity are formed. Analysis of the problem of readiness of the regional social environment for an “atypical” child is of particular scientific interest and has significant practical relevance due to the fact that, on the one hand, in modern society, the scale of child disability increases every year, and on the other hand, the conditions and mechanisms of inclusion of children with disabilities in society remain understudied.

Let us also dwell on the phenomenon of “atypical” in relation to children with disabilities. Due to the perception of atypicality as a deviation of something or someone from social norms and rules fixed in the public consciousness and the institutional structure of society, stereotypes of perception are formed in society, which are reproduced in the practices of distancing from the “other”. As Skvortsova O.V. notes, everything beyond the normativity is perceived by society as an abnormality, being reflected in public perception through social symbols and social practices [5, p. 168]. Considering the above, the attitude of society towards a child as an atypical individual depends on how much his appearance, actions and behavior correspond to social standards and expectations existing in society.

The perception of children with disabilities as being atypical distorts their interaction with the social environment, which, in turn, narrows their opportunities and pushes them to the periphery of the micro-social space. This situation can be overcome by using the available resources of the social environment and enriching them to meet the needs of a developing personality, which requires the activity of both the child and other actors of social inclusion.

It should be emphasized that a significant characteristic of “atypical” children is their extreme vulnerability as a social group: both because of their socio-age characteristics (lack of independence and dependence on adults in organizing their life, combined with limited expression of will), and due to the fact that a significant part of them is extremely insufficiently included in social environments, the reasons for which require a detailed study.

Results

The results of the author's empirical sociological research conducted in 2022 by online questionnaires among the population of the Euro-Arctic region of the Russian Federation revealed the state of readiness of the social environment of the regional society to include “atypical” children into it. The sample is representative (n=861 persons aged 18 to 78), proportional to the number of inhabitants of the subjects of the European part of the Russian Arctic, including: representatives of the Arctic territories of the Republic of Karelia — 6% (52 people), Komi Republic — 4.5% (39 people), Nenets Autonomous Okrug — 3.9% (34 people), Arkhangelsk Oblast — 37.9% (326 people), Murmansk Oblast — 47.6% (410 people). Most of the respondents (61.8%) had a higher education, 15.4% had a specialized secondary education, 13.2% had a secondary vocational education, 2.9% had a general complete education, and 1.3% had an incomplete higher education.

It should be noted that the survey, when identifying attitudes towards children with disabilities, used differentiation by types of persistent disorders based on the classification adopted in the Russian legislation [3], from which the disorders that cause the need to create a barrier-free environment at the material and technical or socio-psychological levels — musculoskeletal (hereinafter referred to as MSD) disorders, mental disorders, visual and hearing disorders and disorders caused by physical deformity were highlighted.

The vast majority of the surveyed residents of the Euro-Arctic territories (99.4%) meet children and adolescents with disabilities in public places of their regions with different frequency, that is, they have direct experience of perceiving an “atypical” child.

Most of the respondents believe that children with disabilities, with the exception of those with mental disabilities, should be in public places. Specifically, the presence of children with MSD disorders is generally supported by 83.5%, children with hearing impairments — by 79.8%, with visual ones — by 76.2%, with physical disabilities — by 72.4%. About half of the respondents (48.2%) expressed support for the presence of children with mental disabilities in public places, while 36.9% said that this category should only be present under certain conditions (Fig. 1).

[3] Prikaz Ministerstva truda i sotsial'noy zashchity Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 27 avgusta 2019 goda N 585n «O klassifikatsiyakh i kriteriyakh, ispol'zuemykh pri osushchestvlenii mediko-sotsial'noy ekspertizy grazhdan federal'nymi gosudarstvennymi uchrezhdeniyami mediko-sotsial'noy ekspertizy» [Order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation of August 27, 2019 N 585n "On the classifications and criteria used in the implementation of medical and social examination of citizens by federal state institutions of medical and social examination"]. URL: https://docs.cntd.ru/document/561183607 (accessed 05 July 2022).

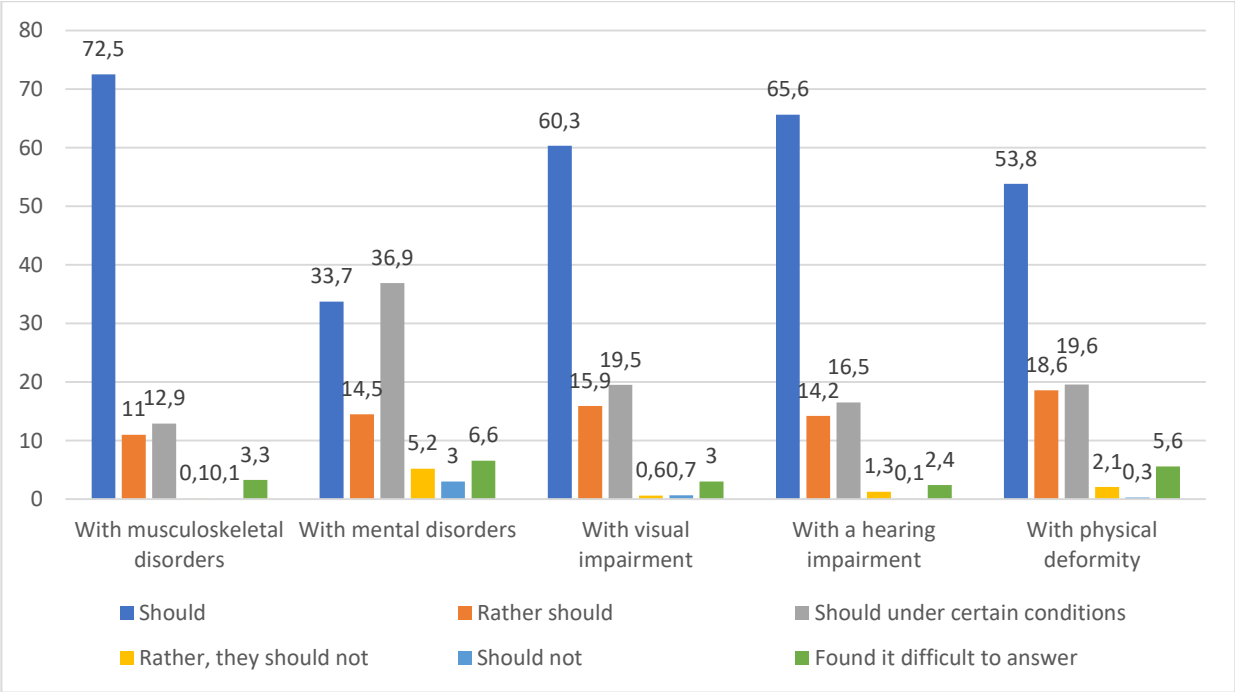

Fig. 1. Opinions of respondents on the necessity for children with disabilities to be in public places, %.

Depending on the region, opinions that children with disabilities rather should not and definitely should not be in public places prevail among the representatives of the Republic of Karelia. Moreover, this opinion is widespread in relation to children with all the identified types of disorders, except for MSD. Respondents from NAO have the least such opinions (2.9%).

Respondents from the Republic of Karelia (16.7%) are most negatively inclined towards children with physical disabilities, followed by the Republic of Komi (5.2%), the Arkhangelsk Oblast (1.8%) and the Murmansk Oblast (1.2%).

Regarding children with mental disorders, the answers “rather should not” and “definitely should not” were given in all the regions surveyed: 15.4% of the respondent from the Komi Republic, 10.4% from the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 7.0% from the Republic of Karelia, 6.6% from the Murmansk Oblast, 2.9% from the NAO.

12.5% of respondents from the Republic of Karelia, 1.2% from the Murmansk Oblast, 0.3% from the Arkhangelsk Oblast believe that children with hearing impairments rather should not and definitely should not be in public places. Negative answers regarding children with visual impairments were given by 2.3% of the respondent from the Republic of Karelia, 2.2% from the Murmansk Oblast, 0.3% from the Arkhangelsk Oblast. 2.5% of the representatives of the Republic of Komi and 0.2% of the Murmansk Oblast, respectively, believe that children with disabilities rather should not and definitely should not be in public places (Fig. 2).

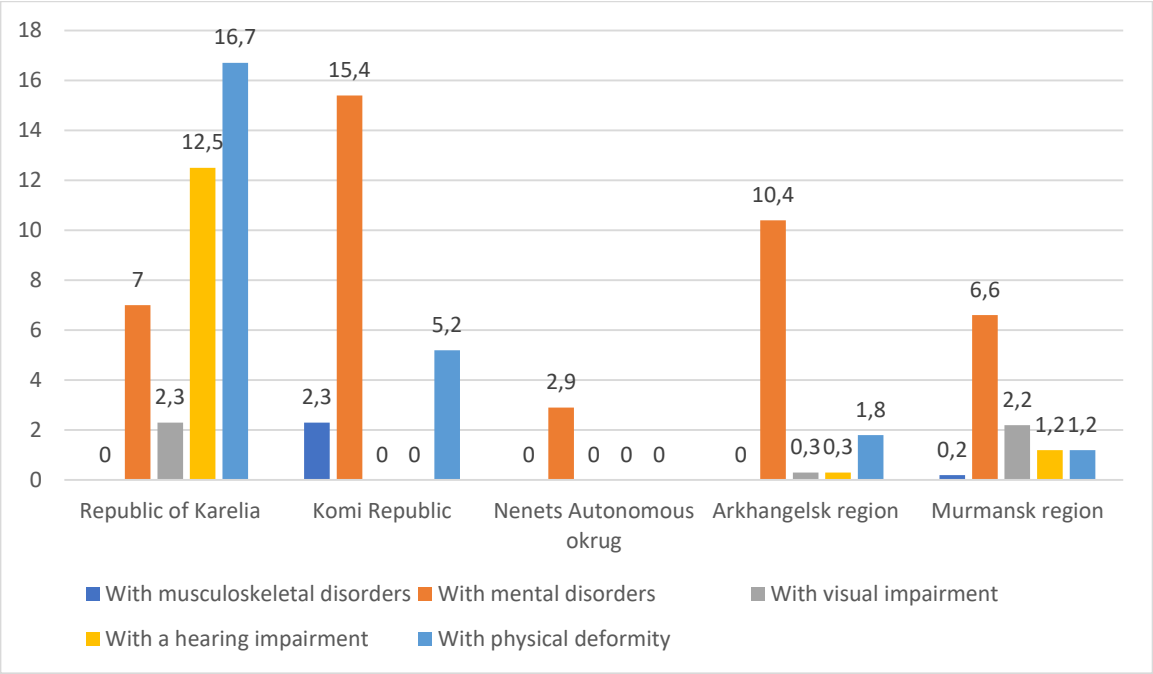

Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents' negative answers about the presence of children with disabilities in public places depending on the region of residence, %.

Revealing the respondents' ideas about the level of accessibility of social infrastructure of their "home" regions, it was found that more than a third of the respondents (37.5%) believe that the social infrastructure of their regions is less accessible to people with disabilities, almost the same number (34.3%) note that the infrastructure is only half available (Fig. 3).

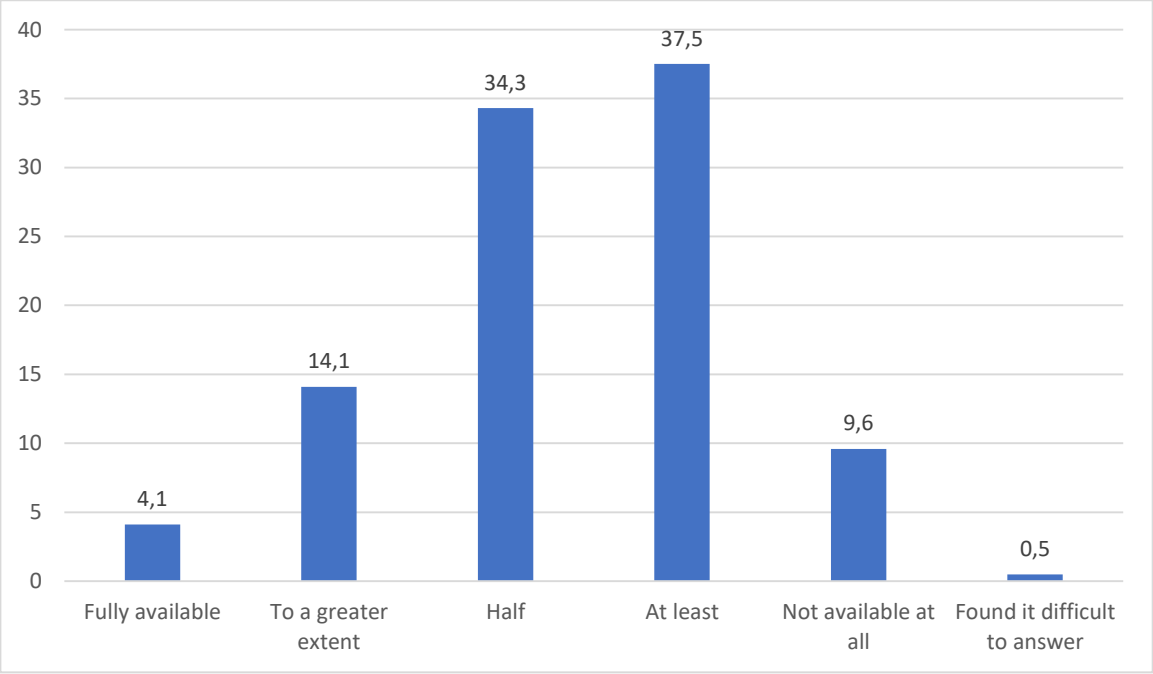

Fig. 3. Respondents' opinions on the level of accessibility of the social infrastructure of their regions for people with disabilities, %.

About a half of the surveyed respondents from the Komi Republic (48.7%) and NAO (44.1%) indicated that the infrastructure of their region is less accessible. In other regions, this assessment,

although somewhat dominant, is close to the “half ready” response. At the same time, the indicator “not ready at all” is higher in the Republic of Karelia (16.7%) and the Murmansk Oblast (11.5%) compared to other regions (Fig. 4).

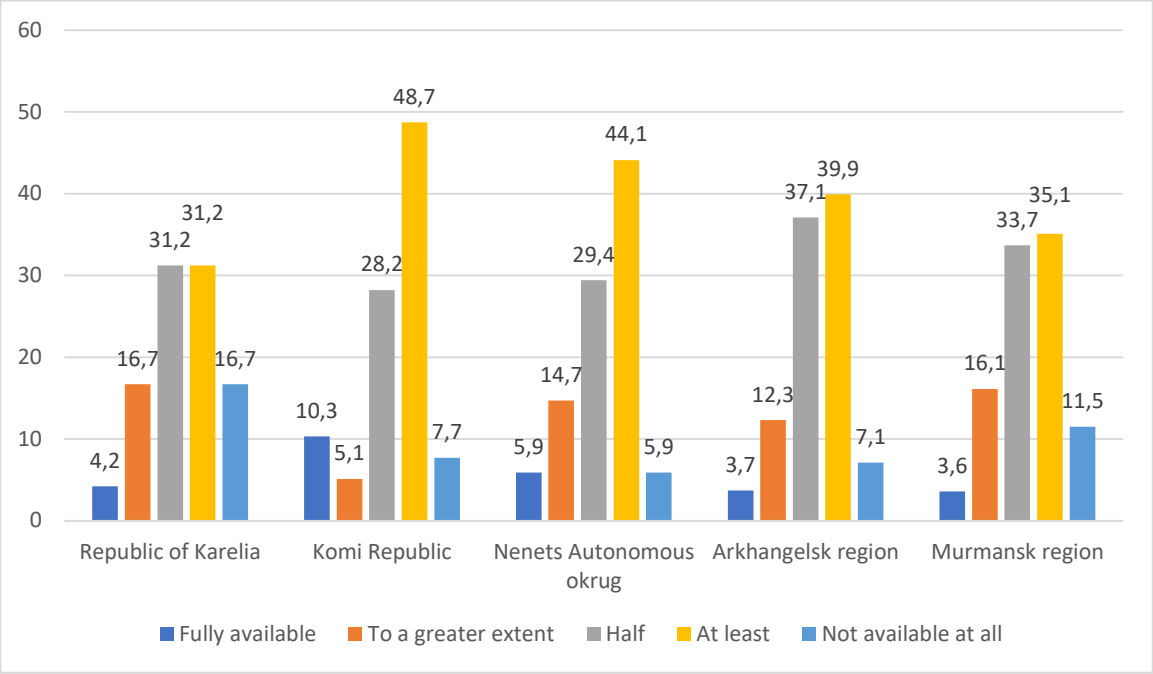

Fig. 4. Perceptions of accessibility of social infrastructure for people with disabilities depending on the regions of the respondents, %.

The index of accessibility of social infrastructure by region is as follows (1 is fully accessible, -1 is completely inaccessible): -0.52 in the Komi Republic, -0.31 in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, -0.29 in the NAO, -0.27 in the Republic of Karelia, -0.26 in the Murmansk Oblast. The cumulative index of accessibility of infrastructure facilities in the Euro-Arctic territories is -0.3.

Since education plays a crucial role in the inclusion of children with disabilities in the course of their socialization, the respondents were asked about the type of educational institution for teaching children with certain disabilities. The opinions of the respondents were slightly outweighed towards a regular institution only for children with MSD disorders, but at the same time they amounted to less than half (47.9%). The remaining categories, according to respondents, should be educated predominantly in specialized institutions — from 42.2% for those with physical deformity to 74.4% for children with mental disorders. In relation to children with these two types of disorders, a higher percentage of responses are “at home schooling”, which indicates that the public is not ready for joint education of children (Fig. 5).

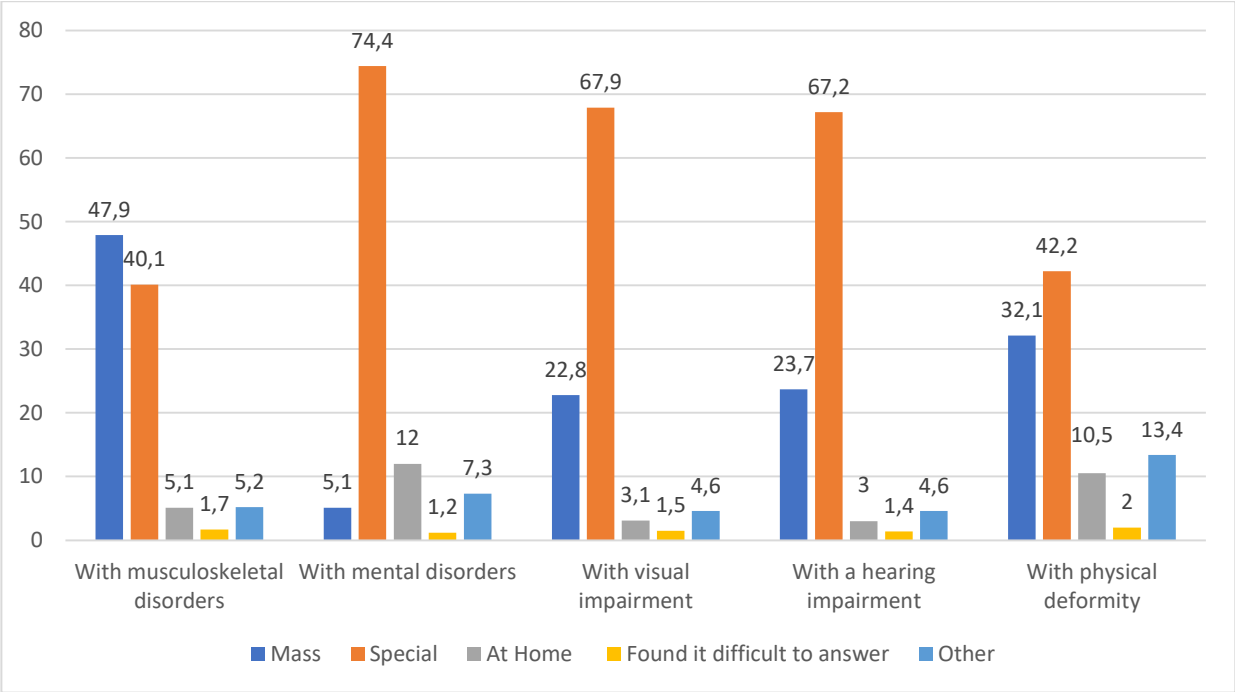

Fig. 5. Respondents' perceptions of places where children with various types of impairments should study, %.

Depending on the region of the respondents' residence, opinions about the education of children differ only in relation to children with MSD disorders and children with physical deformities; for children with other types of impairments, the distribution of answers corresponds to the given data as a whole.

With regard to children with disabilities, opinions were divided as follows: representatives of the Republic of Komi, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Murmansk Oblast are mostly for joint education of children, regardless of the state of health (56.4%, 67.6% and 52.7%, respectively); respondents from the Arkhangelsk Oblast give priority to specialized institutions (53.4%); 42.3% of respondents from the Republic of Karelia are also in favor of specialized institutions, and 15.4% supported home schooling. Representatives of the Republic of Karelia have the highest share of opinions about teaching children with disabilities at home; this indicator is insignificant among representatives of other regions (Table 1).

Table 1

Respondents' opinions about the types of institutions for the education of children with disabilities, depending on the region of residence and types of health disorders, %

Place of study	Types of health disorders	Region of residence				
		Republic of Karelia	Komi Republic	Nenets Autonomous Okrug	Arkhangelsk Oblast	Murmansk Oblast
In a regular educational institution	MSD	40.4	***56.4***	***67.6***	39.9	***52.7***
	Mental	5.8	0	8.8	0.9	8.5
	Vision	21.1	17.9	44.1	14.4	28.3
	Hearing	19.2	20.5	47.1	16.0	28.8
	Deformity	28.8	35.9	***50.0***	27.3	34.4
In a specialized educational institution	MSD	42.3	38.5	20.6	***53.4***	31.0
	Mental	***63.5***	***87.2***	***73.5***	***80.4***	***70.0***
	Vision	***65.4***	***82.1***	***52.9***	***78.5***	***59.7***
	Hearing	***67.3***	***79.5***	***50.0***	***77.3***	***59.5***
	Deformity	46.1	***51.3***	35.3	47.5	37.1

Place of study	Types of health disorders	Region of residence				
		Republic of Karelia	Komi Republic	Nenets Autonomous Okrug	Arkhangelsk Oblast	Murmansk Oblast
Homeschooling	MSD	15.4	2.6	2.9	2.4	6.3
	Mental	25.0	10.3	2.9	14.1	9.5
	Vision	11.5	0	0	2.8	2.9
	Hearing	11.5	0	0	2.8	2.7
	Deformity	9.6	5.1	0	11.7	11.0
Difficult to answer	MSD	1.9	2.6	8.8	4.3	10
	Mental	5.8	2.6	14.7	4.6	12.0
	Vision	0	0	2.9	1.8	1.5
	Hearing	1.9	0	2.9	4.0	9.0
	Deformity	15.4	7.7	14.7	13.5	17.6

In the context of identifying the level of readiness of the social environment for the inclusion of children with disabilities, we considered it important to ask the respondents about the areas of activity in which a child with a disability can be successful in order to consider an indirect indicator of the public assessment of the social potential of children and awareness of the need to create a barrier-free environment in each named area.

Residents of the Euro-Arctic region believe that children with physical deformity can achieve success in leisure and recreational activities to a greater extent — the average score is 3.32 points out of 5, where 5 is the maximum value; children with hearing impairments — 3.30 points, children with visual impairments — 3.24 points and children with MSD disorders — 3.15 points. Opinions about the possible success of children with mental disorders at the average level — 2.54 points.

In sports activities, according to the respondents, children with hearing impairments (3.80 points) and children with physical deformity (3.54 points) can achieve success to a greater extent. This is followed by children with mental disorders — 2.81 points, children with visual impairments — 2.87 points, children with MSD disorders — 2.80 points.

In creative and developmental activities, children with MSD disorders (4.09 points) and children with physical deformity (4.05 points) can succeed first, followed by children with hearing disorders (3.93 points); children with visual impairments (3.66 points) and children with mental disabilities (3.38 points).

In educational activities, children with MSD disorders (4.25 points) and children with physical deformity (4.05 points) received a higher score; followed by children with hearing impairment (3.94 points), children with visual impairment (3.81 points), children with mental disorders (2.66 points).

In everyday life activities, according to the respondents, children with hearing impairments (4.13 points) and children with physical deformity (4.07 points) can achieve success; followed by children with visual impairment (3.55 points), children with MSD disorders (3.49 points) and children with mental disorders (3.30 points).

The average score for all the areas considered is 3.82 points for children with hearing impairments, 3.81 points for those with physical deformity, 3.43 points for visual impairments, 3.56 points for MSD disorders, and 2.94 points for mental disorders (Fig. 6).

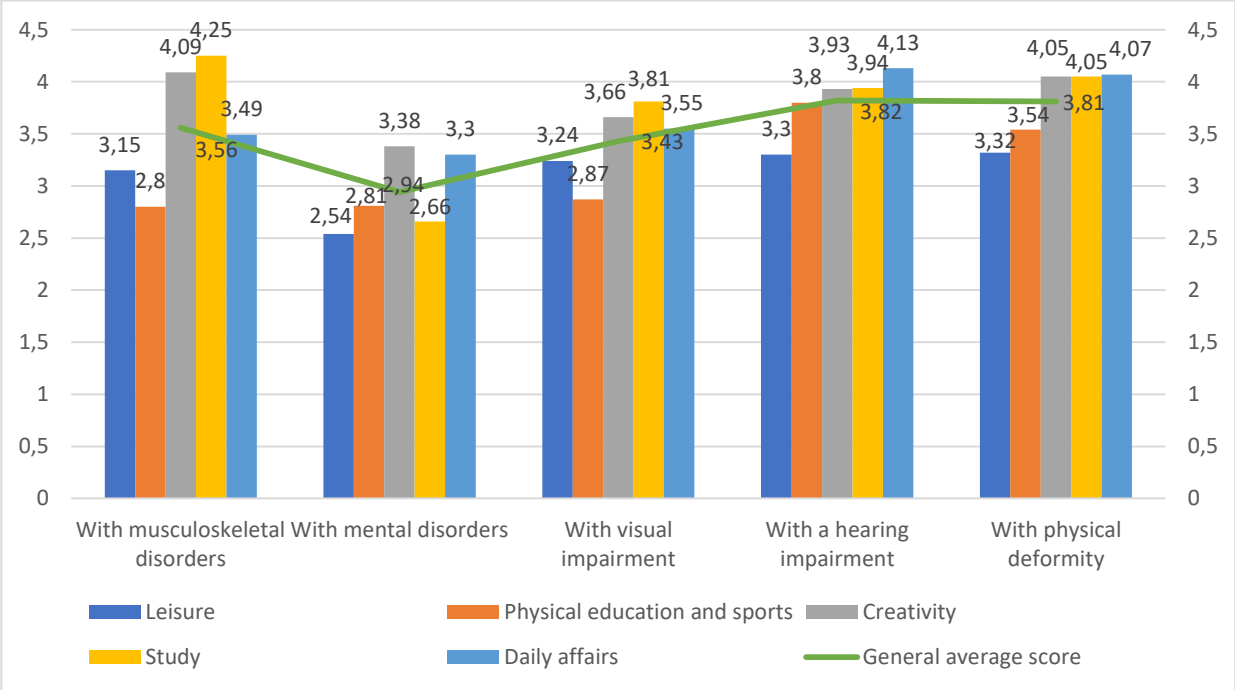

Fig. 6. Respondents' opinion about the success of children with disabilities in various activities, in points from 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum, 5 is the maximum value.

Respondents see great success for children with MSD in educational and creative activities, for children with hearing impairment — in everyday household activities, for children with physical deformity — in daily affairs, educational and creative activities. For these categories of children, scores above the average were obtained for the above spheres. As for children with visual impairments and mental disorders, respondents estimate their chances of success to be closer to average. Nevertheless, the respondents allocate slightly higher scores for the first category of children to learning activities and for the second one — to creative activities.

So, the correlation between the type of impairment of a child and his or her social success in the citizens' perceptions was revealed. Respondents assign the least chances for success to children with mental disorders, as compared to children with other diseases. In general, citizens of the studied regions believe that children with disabilities are more likely to succeed in creative, educational and everyday life activities.

When assessing the respondents' readiness to provide assistance to a child with a disability, which is an important activity aspect of inclusion, a high level of readiness was revealed. However, the respondents are willing to help children with not all types of disabilities: while respondents were willing to help children with MSD, vision, hearing and physical disabilities (from 72.4% to 80.3%), only just over half (53.8%) expressed willingness to help children with mental disabilities. With regard to children with mental disorders, the level of those who are not ready to help in

any cases is higher (28.9%). For the remaining categories, the level of unreadiness to help ranges from 15.8% to 18.6% (Fig. 7).

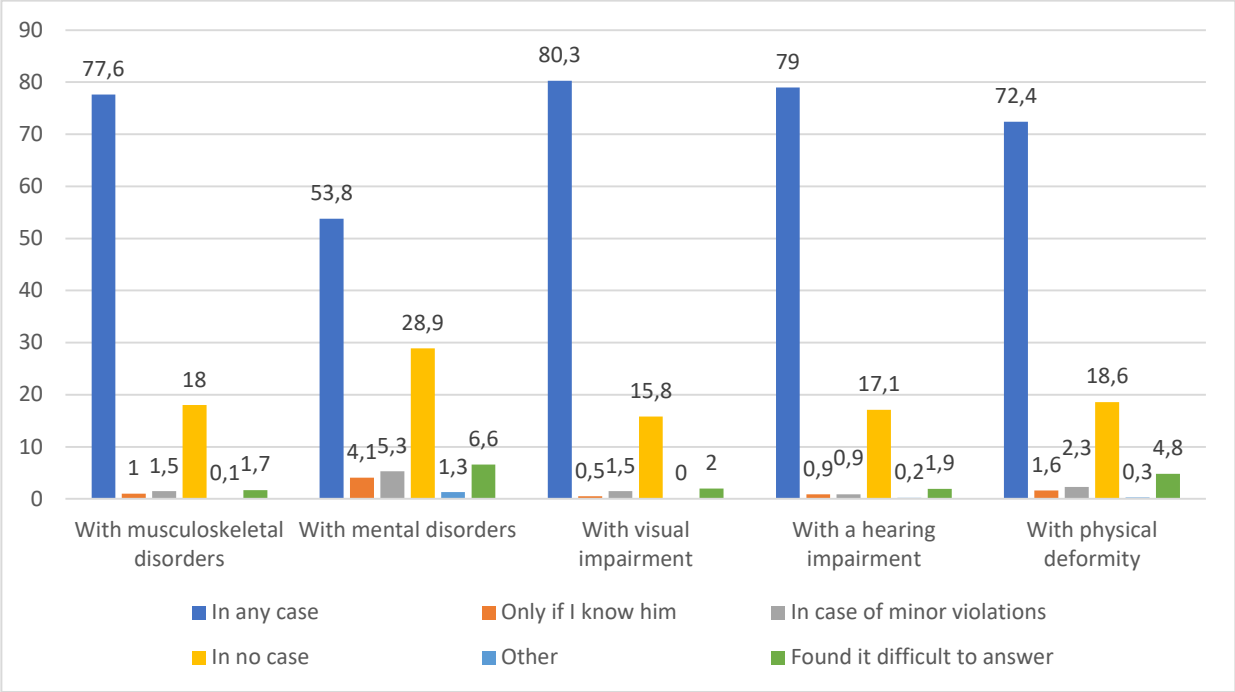

Fig. 7. Distribution of answers to the question “In what cases would you be able to help a disabled child, if necessary?”, %.

Moreover, if the respondents show less loyalty to children with mental disabilities in coming to their help, then they are somewhat more loyal to children with visual impairments compared to other categories disabilities, which is evident from the highest percentage of those who are ready to help (80 .3%) and the smallest percentage of those who are not ready.

Depending on the region of residence, the unwillingness to help a child with MSD was expressed to a greater extent by representatives of the Republic of Komi (20.5%) and the Murmansk Oblast (20.0%); representatives of the NAO — 17.6%, the Arkhangelsk Oblast — 17.2%, the Republic of Karelia — 5.8%.

Among those who are not ready to help children with mental disorders in any cases, several more than a quarter of the representatives of the Republic of Komi (25.6%) and the NAO (26.4%), about a third of the respondents of the Arkhangelsk region (30.9%) and the Murmansk region (29.7%). In the Republic of Karelia, 13.5% of respondents are not ready to help.

18.5% of respondents from the Murmansk Oblast, 17.6% from the NAO, 14.4% from the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 12.8% from the Republic of Komi, 1.9% from the Republic of Karelia are not ready to help children with visual impairment. Approximately the same distribution of answers about the unwillingness to help children with hearing impairment: 20.7% of respondents from the Murmansk Oblast, 17.6% from the NAO, 15.3% from the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 12.8% from the Komi Republic, 1.9% from the Republic of Karelia.

26.5% of respondents are not ready to help children with physical deformity in the NAO, 20.2% in the Murmansk Oblast, 18.7% in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 15.3% in the Republic of Komi, and 1.9% in the Republic of Karelia.

The given data indicate a greater willingness to provide assistance to children with disabilities among respondents from the Republic of Karelia.

When identifying perceptions of children with disabilities and their social position in society, the results of the survey show that the population of the Euro-Arctic territories is not ready to assess the situation of this category, resulting in a large number of those who found it difficult to answer. Nevertheless, we will present the received tendencies.

In general, a quarter of the respondents (26.9%) consider disabled children to be different from children with normal health in their human qualities, while 11.1% do not feel this way, 62% found it difficult to answer. At the same time, a third of the respondents living in the Arkhangelsk Oblast (35.3%), a quarter of the respondents from Murmansk (25.6%), a fifth of the respondents from the NAO (10.3%) and 10.3% of the inhabitants of the Komi Republic declared a difference.

Children with disabilities should not necessarily have access to all the same benefits as children with a normotypical health condition — almost a quarter of the respondents (24.8%) answered this way, while only 8.8% said that the same benefits should be available, and 66.4% found it difficult to answer. Among those who admit that benefits for children with disabilities are not available to the same extent as for normotypical children, representatives of the regions were distributed as follows: 38.5% — residents of the Republic of Karelia, 27.6% — the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 21.7% — the Murmansk Oblast, 20.5% — Republic of Komi, 17.6% — NAO.

Almost a quarter of respondents (22.6%) underestimated the role of creating an accessible environment in the self-realization of children with disabilities. Only 4.2% believe that an accessible environment will contribute to the self-realization of children, 63.2% found it difficult to answer. Among those regions that underestimate the importance of an accessible environment in the self-realization of children with disabilities, the regions are as follows: 51.9% — respondents of the Republic of Karelia, 39.3% — the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 38.2% — the NAO, 26.1% — the Murmansk Oblast, 15.4 % — Republic of Komi.

However, in terms of social adaptation, opinions are much more optimistic — more than half of the respondents (57.0%) believe that these children can easily adapt in a community of normotypical peers, and only 13.9% indicated the opposite, 29% found it difficult to answer.

Answering the question about the importance for a child with a disability to have a “normal” childhood, negative answers were received from about a fifth of the respondents (18.3%); only 3.6% gave a positive answer to this question, 78% found it difficult to answer. Of those who gave a negative answer, the regions were as follows: 36.5% of respondents in the Republic of Karelia, 19.6% in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, 16.8% in the Murmansk Oblast, 8.8% in the NAO, and 7.7% in the Komi Republic.

In general, the results of the empirical study showed that the majority of respondents are ready to see children with various types of disabilities in public places, but to a lesser extent — with mental disorders (only 48.2% are ready for this). However, in terms of educating children with disabilities, society is ready to educate only children with MSD impairments in mass institutions. The maximum rejection of being included in institutions is found for children with mental disorders, visual and hearing impairments. These categories of children should study, according to the majority of respondents, in specialized institutions (opinions from 74.4% to 67.2% of respondents). Moreover, this attitude is characteristic of respondents in all regions.

According to the respondents, the social infrastructure of the Euro-Arctic region is rather inaccessible for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the society. At the same time, the Komi Republic has the lowest accessibility index (-0.52), in other regions it also has negative values.

Respondents believe that children with disabilities are generally able to succeed in creative, educational and everyday activities. However, when assessing success, children with mental disorders are endowed with less potential, and only children with MSD disorders are given high potential.

The results of the study show the correlation between the level of readiness of the Euro-Arctic society to include children with disabilities in the regional society and the type of impairment, where children with mental health problems are at risk.

Conclusion

In general, the results of the study show insufficient logistical and socio-psychological readiness of the regional environment of the Euro-Arctic territories for the inclusion of children with disabilities. Thus, opinions were revealed about the unpreparedness of the regional infrastructure for the integration of people with disabilities, including children, into society. At the same time, an underestimation of the role of creating an accessible environment for the successful self-realization of “atypical” children was revealed. There is a lack of confidence in the ability of children with disabilities outside special educational institutions to succeed in regular schools. The study showed an underestimation of the potential of children with mental disorders compared to other categories of disabilities. In addition, the respondents would be less willing to see this category in public places, in mass educational institutions, and less willing to come to their aid. We can also say about the lack of formation among almost a fifth of the respondents (18.3%) of understanding the importance for an “atypical” child to have an “ordinary” childhood, with all its attributes and practices, typical for children in the process of growing up and socialization. The data obtained are typical to some extent for all territorial subjects of the Euro-Arctic region, which indicates their current unpreparedness to include children with disabilities and the existing barriers to the further development of inclusive processes.

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