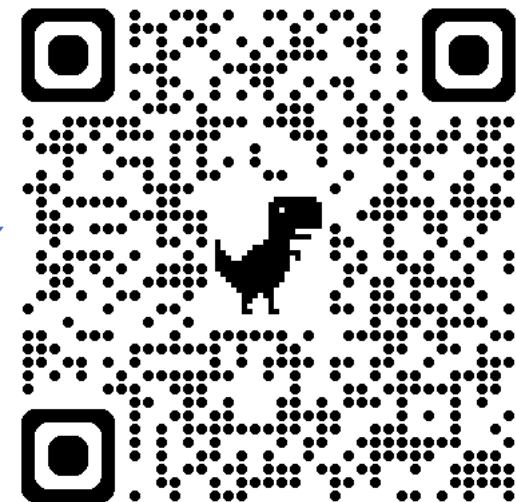


# Supporting students with disability transitioning to high school: What is the research evidence?

Professor Iva Strnadová, UNSW Sydney

Email: [i.strnadova@unsw.edu.au](mailto:i.strnadova@unsw.edu.au)

Please scan to read more about  
Prof Iva Strnadová's work





# What Is Transition?

The process of moving from one stage or status to the next

This term has many applications for students with disabilities, as they experience many transitions throughout their lives

# Transitions as Lifelong and Complex Experience

- Home to Early Childhood programs and/or primary school
- Primary school to secondary school
- From secondary school to post-school environments
- From and to special education settings
- From and to juvenile justice schools
- From and to online learning

## **BUT ALSO**

- Between activities, places, and people

# The Research Team



IVA Strnadová  
UNSW Sydney



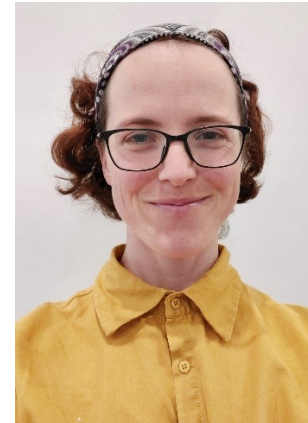
LEANNE Dowse  
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KEVIN Lowe  
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JOANNE Danker  
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SIERRA ANGELINA  
Willow  
UNSW



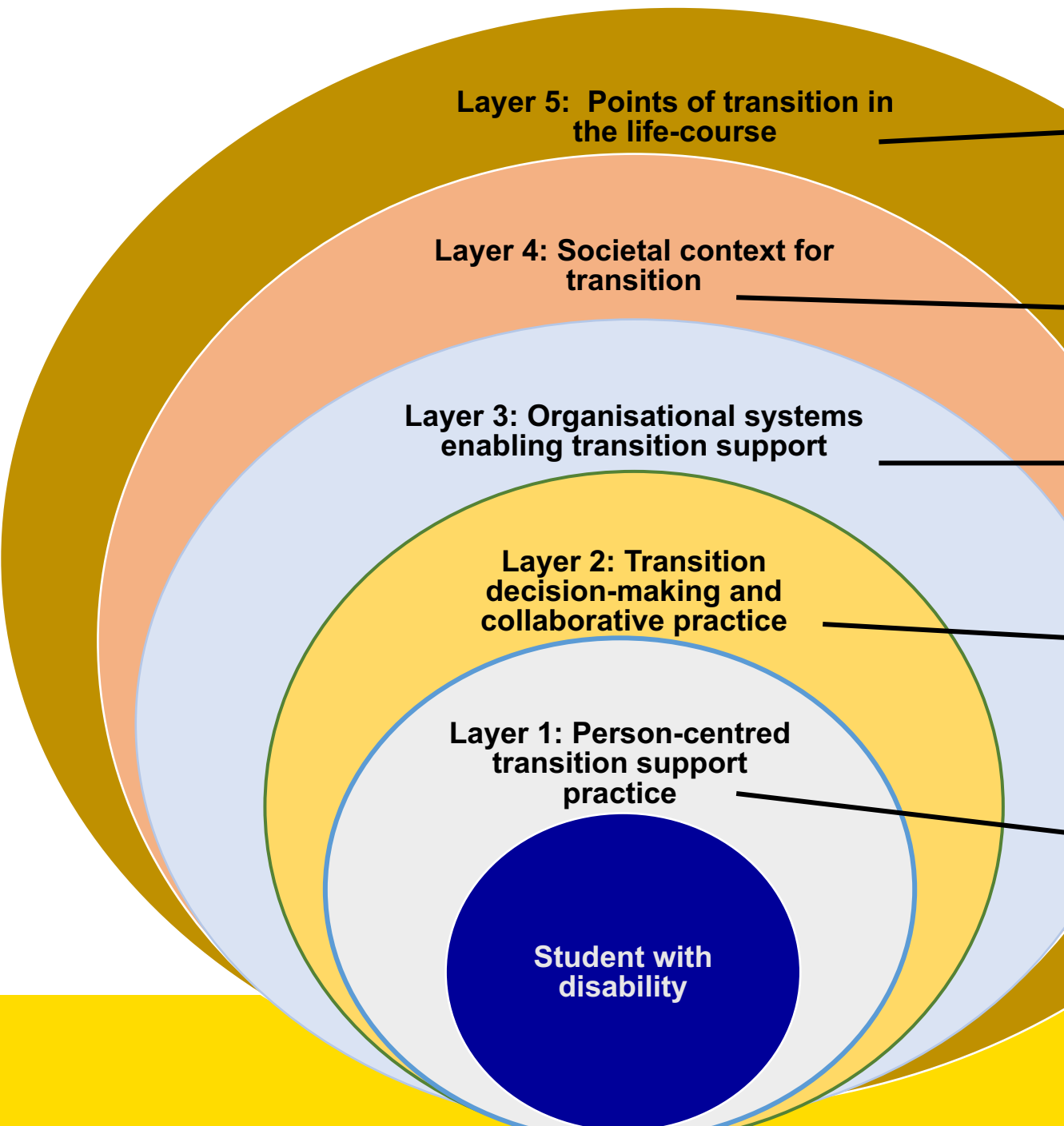
MICHELLE Tso  
UNSW



ANNA Xavier  
UNSW

**Funded by the NSW Department of Education**





Stage of life course; stages of education (i.e., events over the course of a lifetime that influence the experiences of the student); educational supports provided throughout schooling (e.g., during diverse schooling transitions).

Overarching values, beliefs, attitudes and culture about schooling transitions experienced by students with disability, including societal views and scholarly theories.

Government laws and standards regarding educational transitions, social policy and community; social systems.  
Taxonomy: Program structure

Interactions between the various education-related stakeholders relevant to the student's transition. This includes interactions between family and school, parents and teachers, teachers and SLSOs.  
Taxonomy: Interagency collaboration, Family engagement

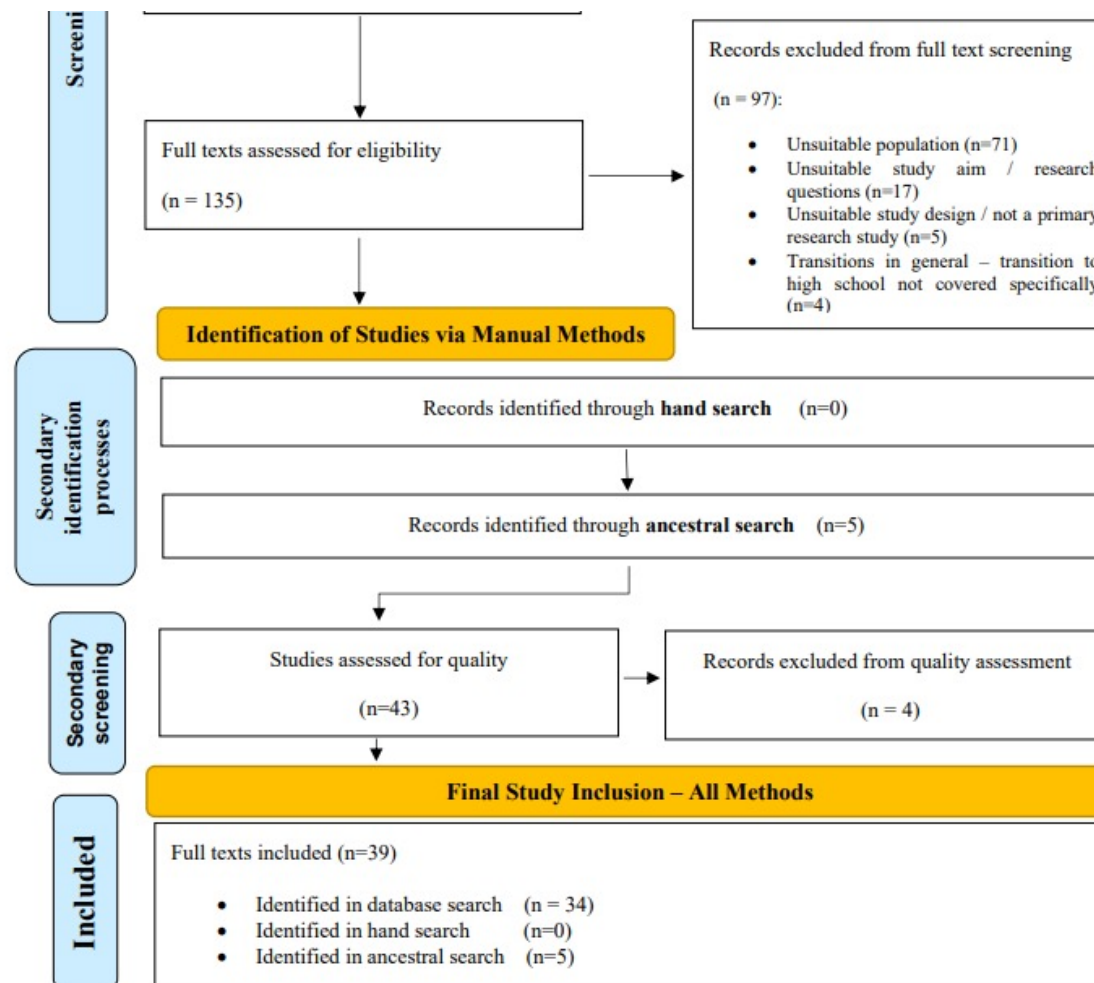
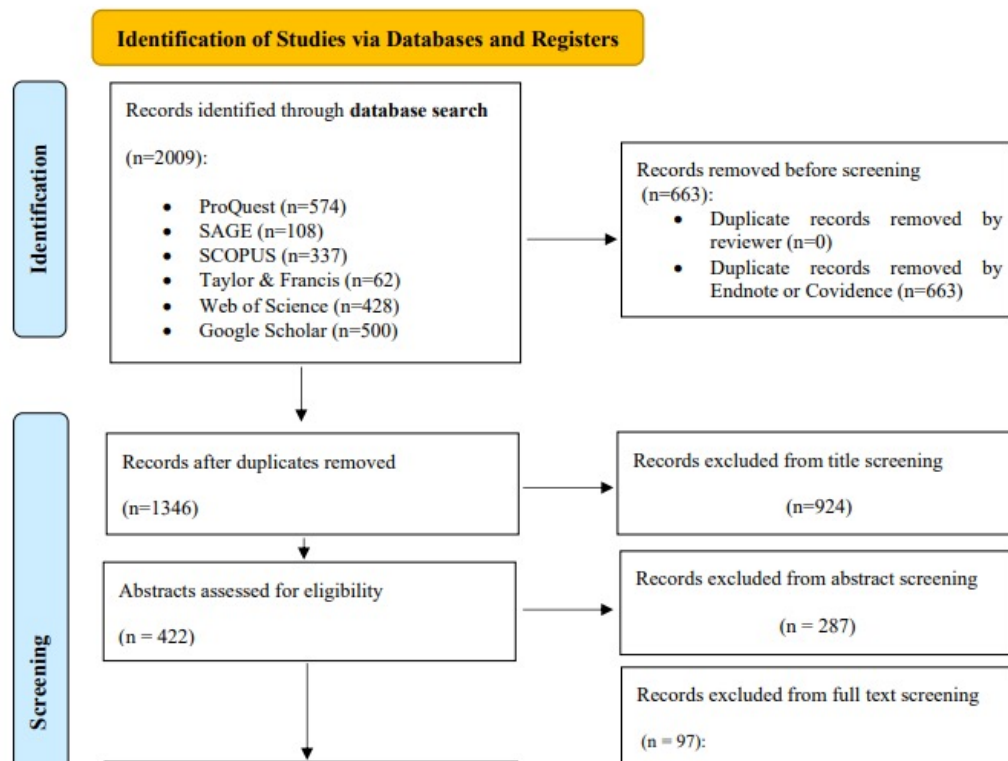
Closest to the student. Direct interactions in class/school, learning tasks, and learning environment.  
Taxonomy: Student-focused planning, Student development

# Transition from Primary to High School for Students With Disability



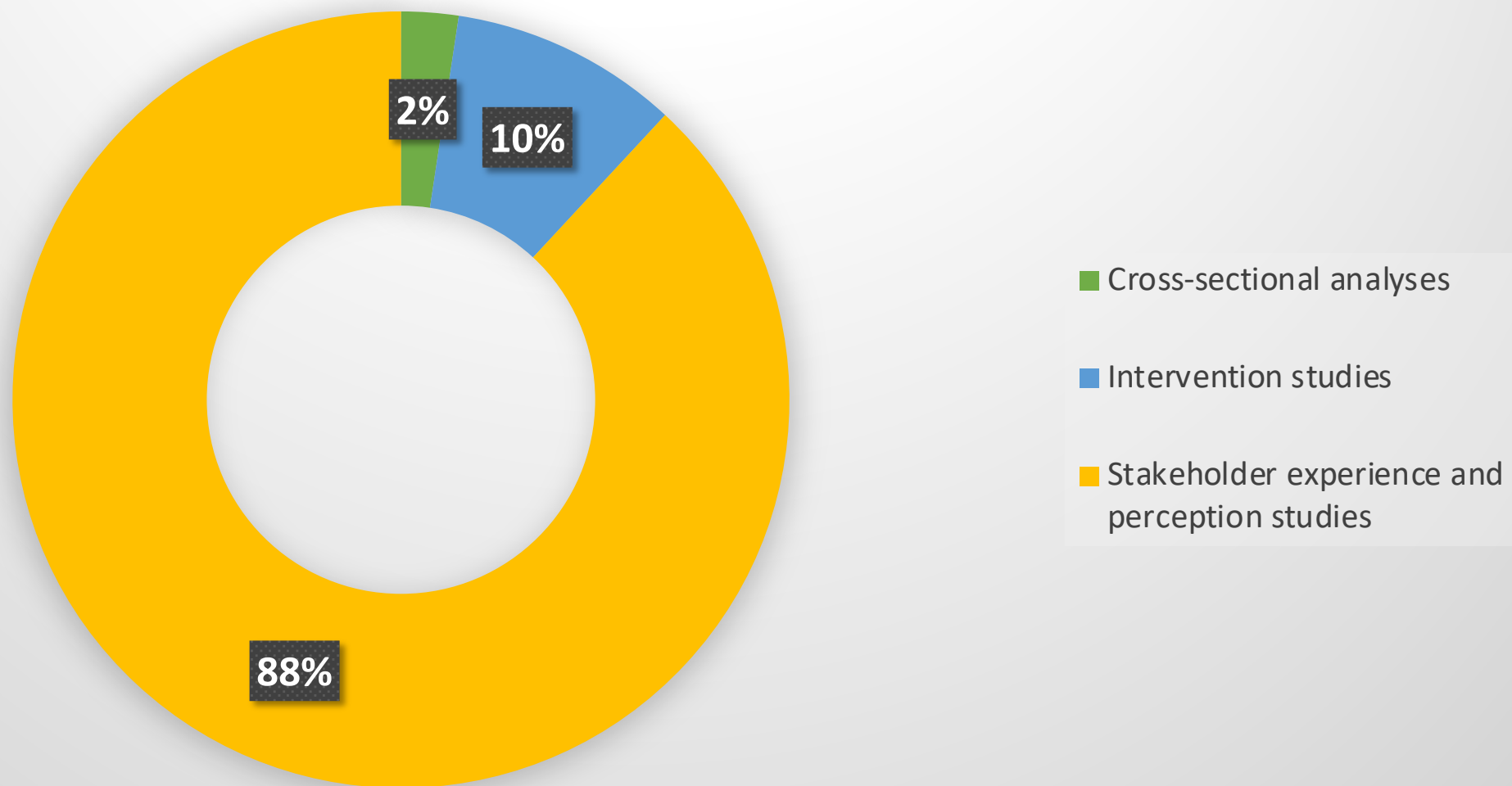
# Primary to High School Transition for Students With Disability

## Systematic Review

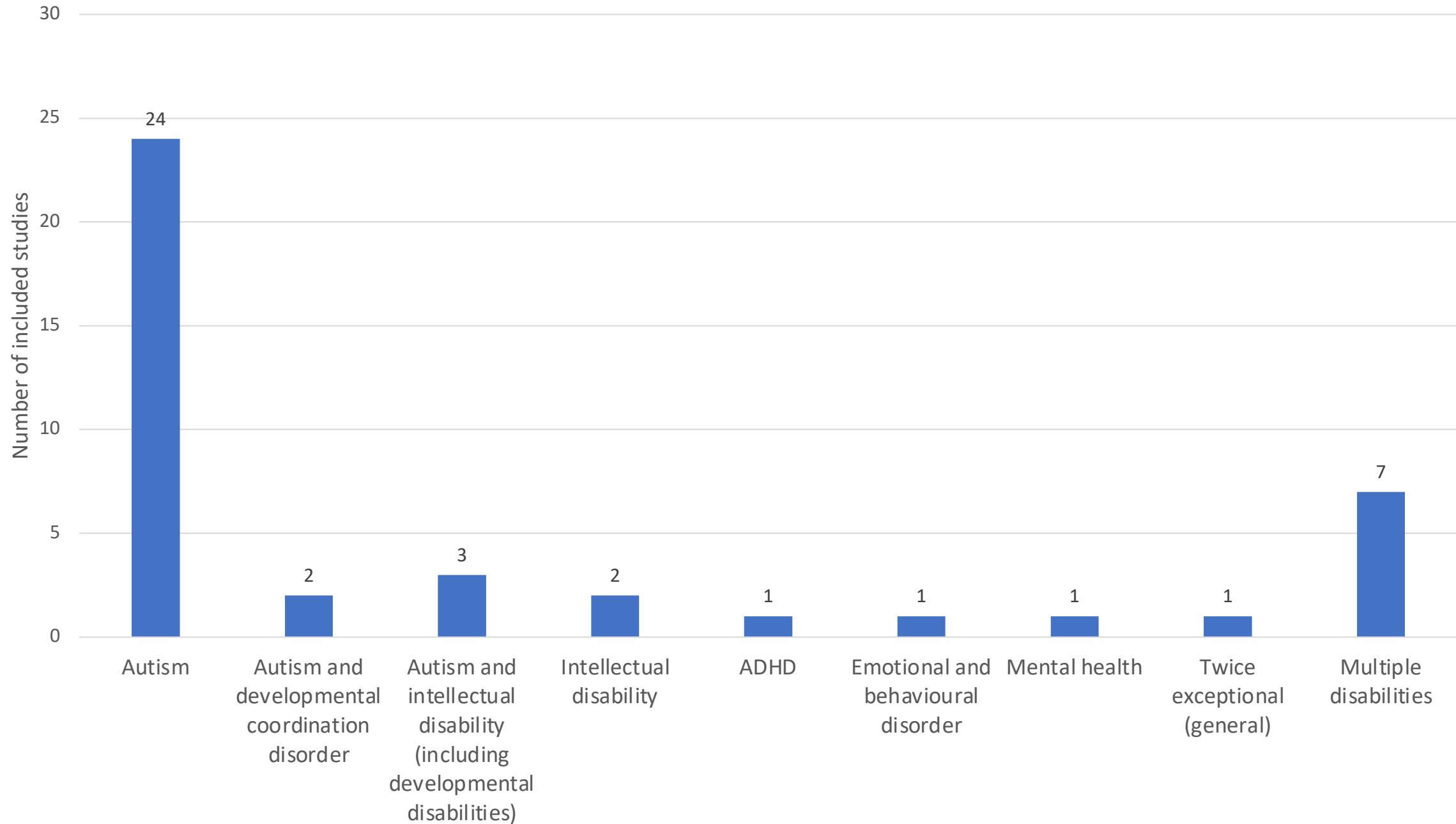




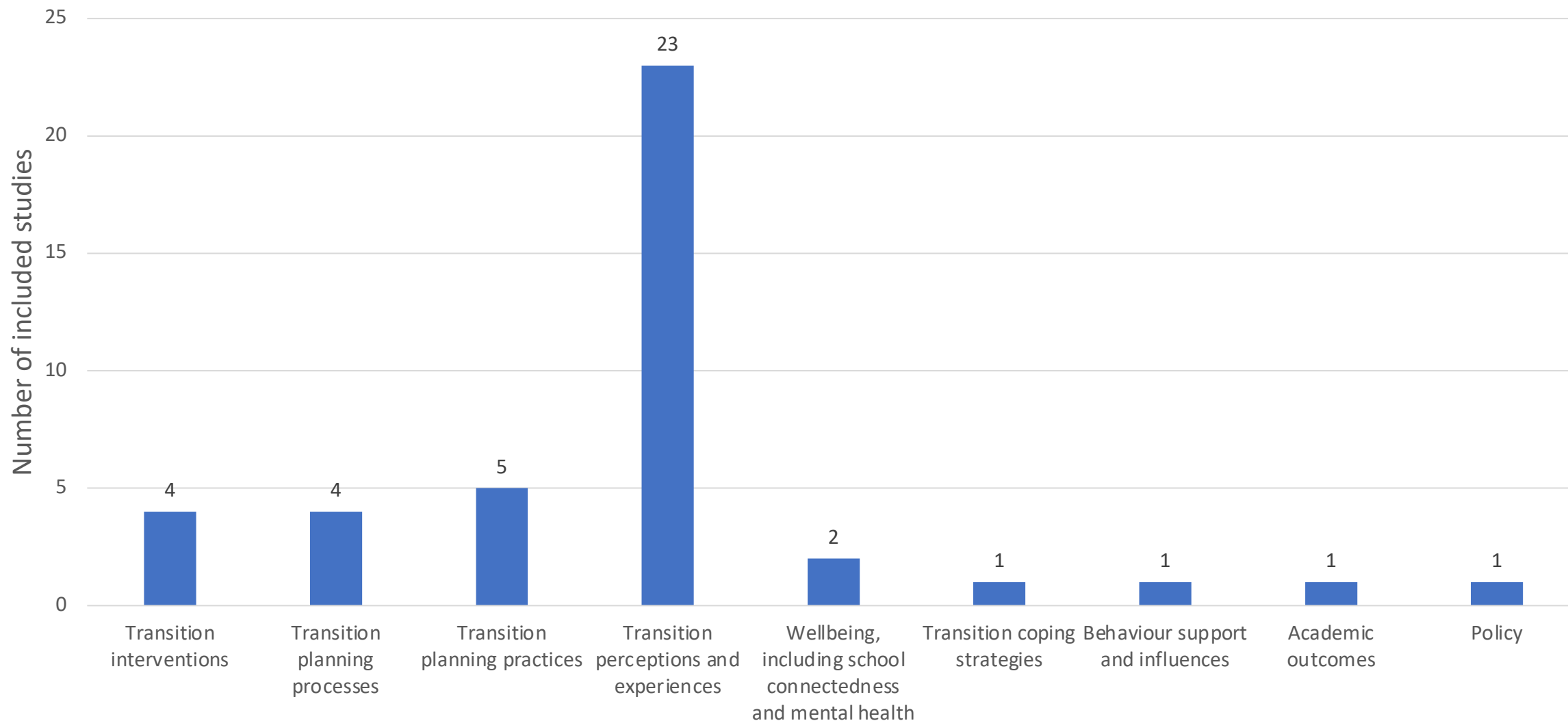
## Study categories included for primary to high school transition



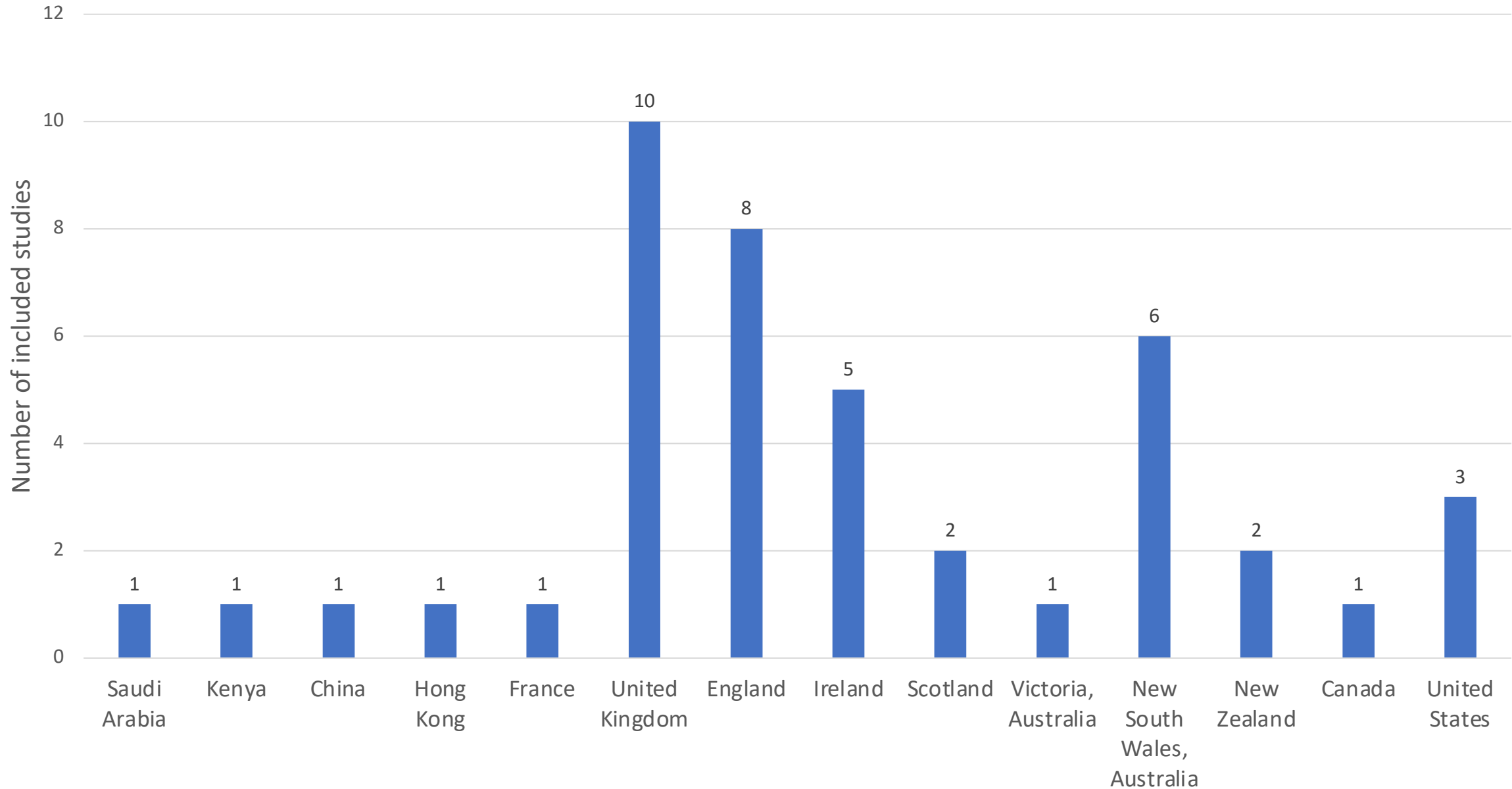
# Disability Focus of Included Studies



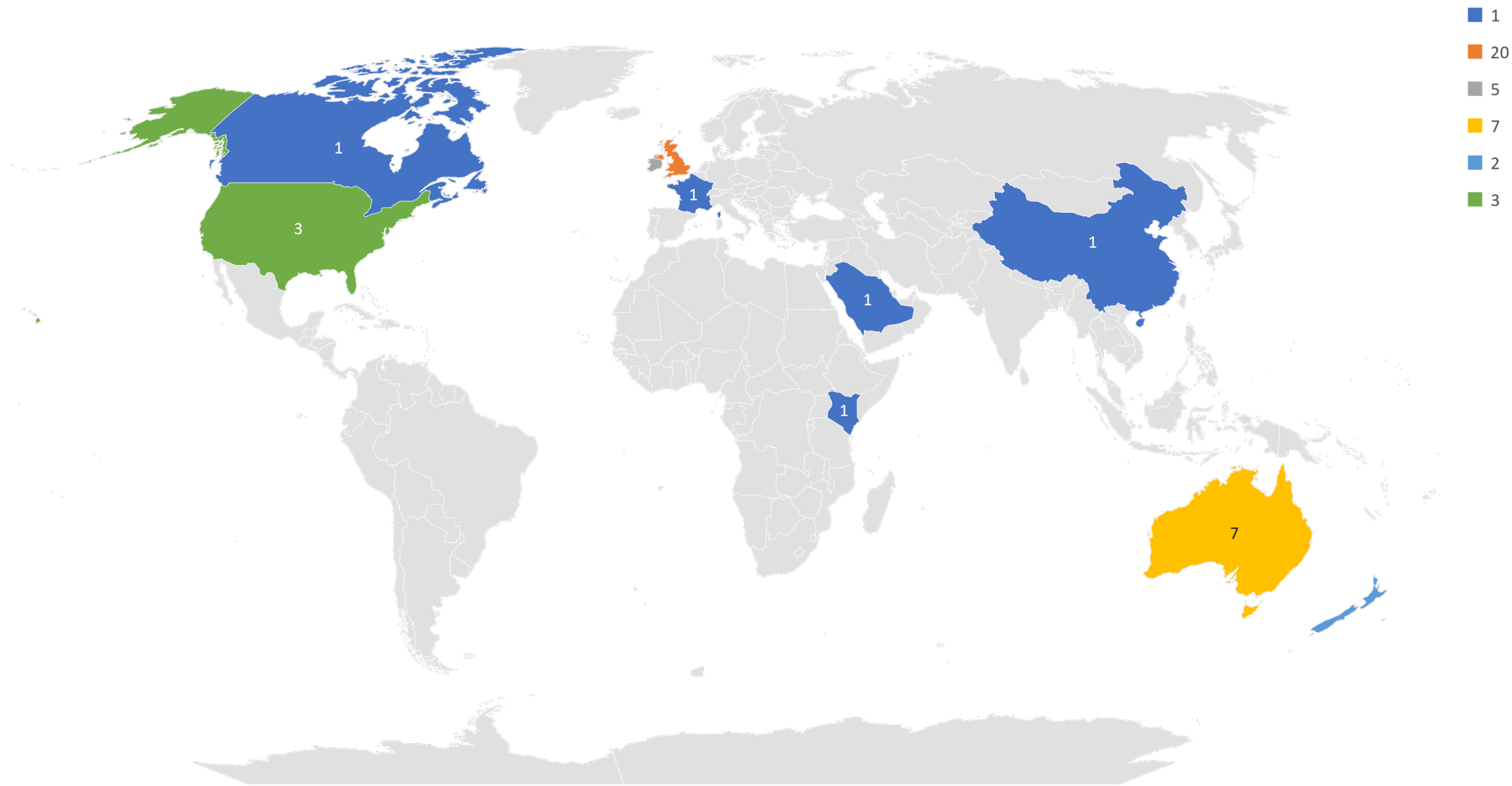
## Transition Focus of Included Studies



## Jurisdictions Where Included Research Studies Took Place

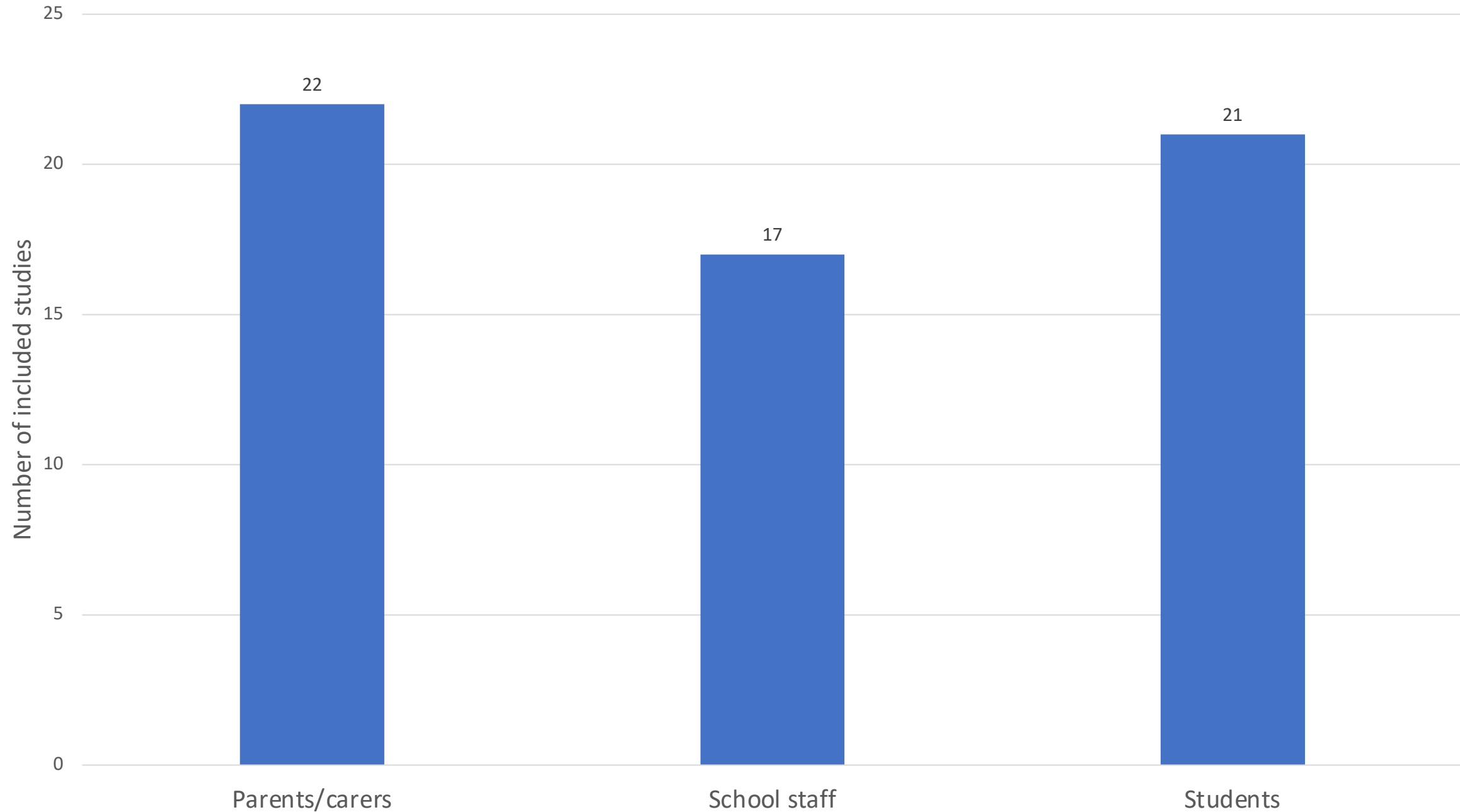


# Systematic Review Study Origins





# Categories of Stakeholder in Included Non-Intervention Studies



# Transition to high school – A challenging hurdle due to:



- The expectations of academic and socioemotional independence
- Increased spatial and social complexity of high school
- Increased number of teachers with diverse academic and behavioural expectations
- The puberty and social development impacts on students' relationship and communication complexity

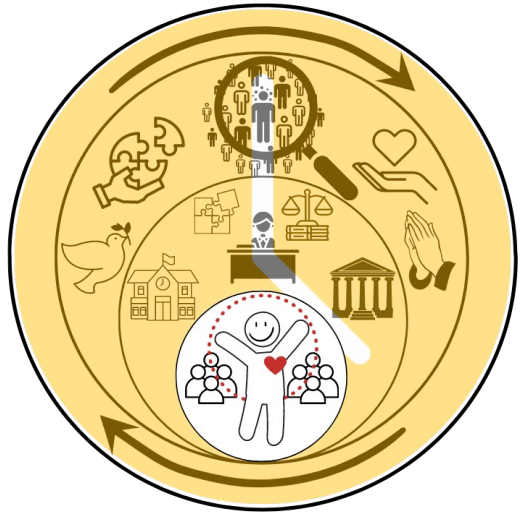


# Findings



## *Person-centred transition support practice*

- Individualised transition planning, considering the student, their family and their context and circumstance
- Student needs to be actively involved and have a voice
- Transition planning needs to start before Year 6, ideally in Year 4 or 5
- Repeated individualised visits and orientation days at high schools
- Effective collaboration between primary and high schools



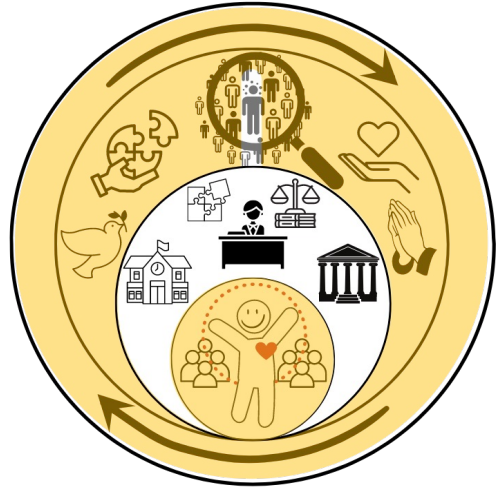
# Findings



*Organisational systems enabling transition support*

Teachers training in:

- disability awareness
- evidence-based practices
- transition planning

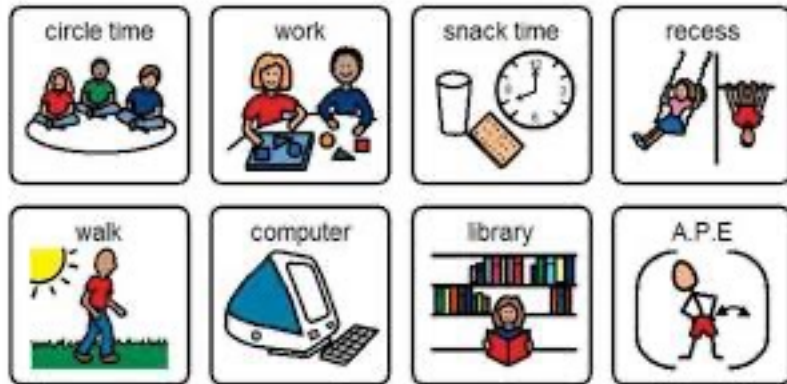


Further rigorous research is needed, especially about students other than those on the autism spectrum

# Effective Evidence-Based Practices



- Peer mentoring
- Mobile technology
- Visual supports
- Social stories
- Social skills group
- Metacognitive strategies
- Inter-agency collaboration





# Similarities between students with and without disability



## Challenges

- Adjusting to the **physical** and **social** environment
- Coping with **academic** demands of high school
- **Getting lost**
- Making new **friendships**
- Adjusting to new dynamics in existing friendships



# Similarities between students with and without disability



## What works well:

- **Structured collaboration and communication** with stakeholders
- **Orientation visits** to the new high school
- Opportunities for students to **discuss their concerns** about the future
- **Social supports**
- Building **school connectedness** and belonging for new high school students



# Differences for students with and without disability

Students without disability:

- **Less** emphasis on **structured** and **individualised planning** processes
- A **lack** of discussion of **shared goal development** between stakeholders,
- Lack of regular **transition planning meetings** with students, school staff, and families
- **Gender** and **socio-economic status** may influence students' needs and outcomes



# Select Intersectional Groups

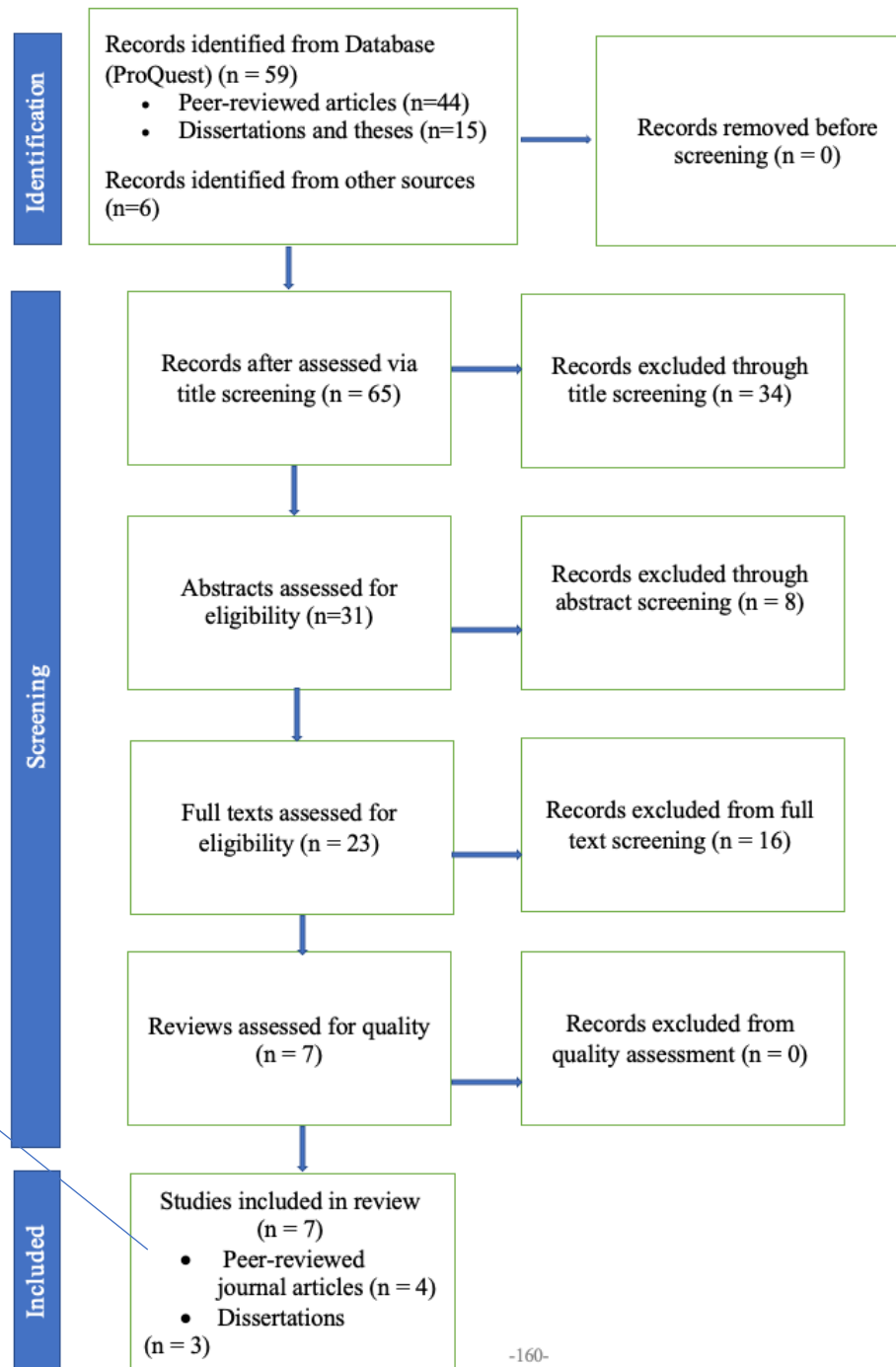


- First Nations Students With Disability
- Students With Disability who Have English as an Additional Language or Dialect
- Students with Disability Attending School in Rural and Remote Areas
- Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs



# First Nations Students With Disability

6 from the U.S.  
1 from New Zealand  
No Australian research





# Transition for First Nations Students With Disability



**No research in Australia**

## **Valuable aspects of transition planning:**

- Mentorship and meaningful collaboration with Elders and community
- Hands-on and problem-based learning
- Learning on Country
- Teacher-student relationships and culturally supportive mentoring



# Transition for First Nations Students With Disability

## Key barriers to transition planning and support:

- Cultural incongruence between home, educational systems and government
- Lack of recognition of students' and families' cultural capital
- Limited background knowledge and experiences to navigate post-school pathways
- Exclusion of students, often due to behaviour, means no transition planning
- Families' historical experiences of trauma



# Transition for First Nations Students With Disability

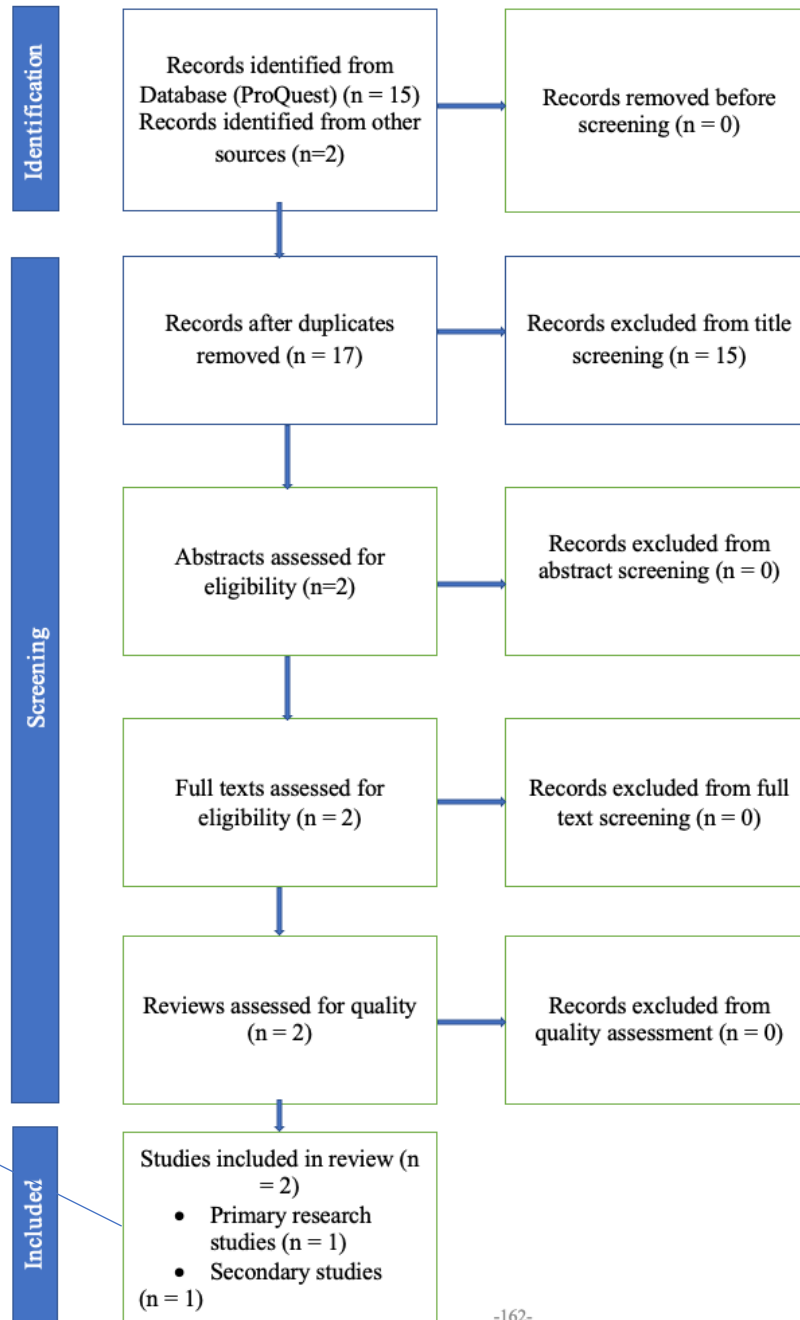


## Key barriers to transition planning and support:

- Teachers lack knowledge and awareness to support students with intersectional identities
- Teacher prejudice
- Inadequate individualised supports
- Prioritisation of basic academic skills to the exclusion of other supports

# Students With Disability who Have English as an Additional Language or Dialect

2 from the U.S.  
No Australian research



# Transition for Students With Disability who Have English as an Additional Language or Dialect

## Barriers to successful transitions:

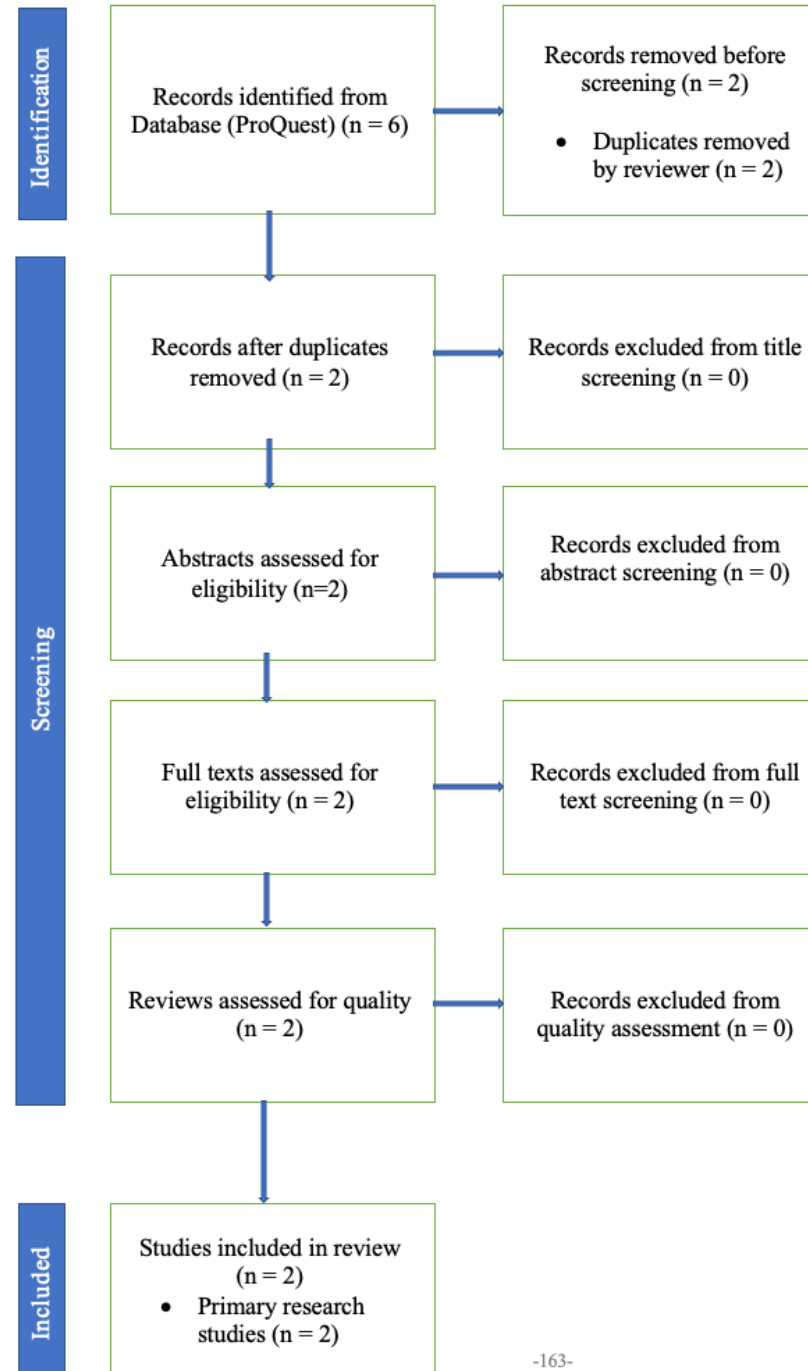
- Limited access to interpreting and translation services
- Lack of parental knowledge of transition planning systems, processes, and consequent reasonable expectations
- Parents' lack of confidence in supporting their child in transition skill acquisition and practice
- Lack of volunteering or work experience opportunities
- Limited availability of accessible materials about transition planning and supports





# Students with Disability Attending School in Rural and Remote Areas

2 from the U.S.  
No Australian research



# Transitions for Students with Disability Attending School in Rural and Remote Areas

## Key transition practices:

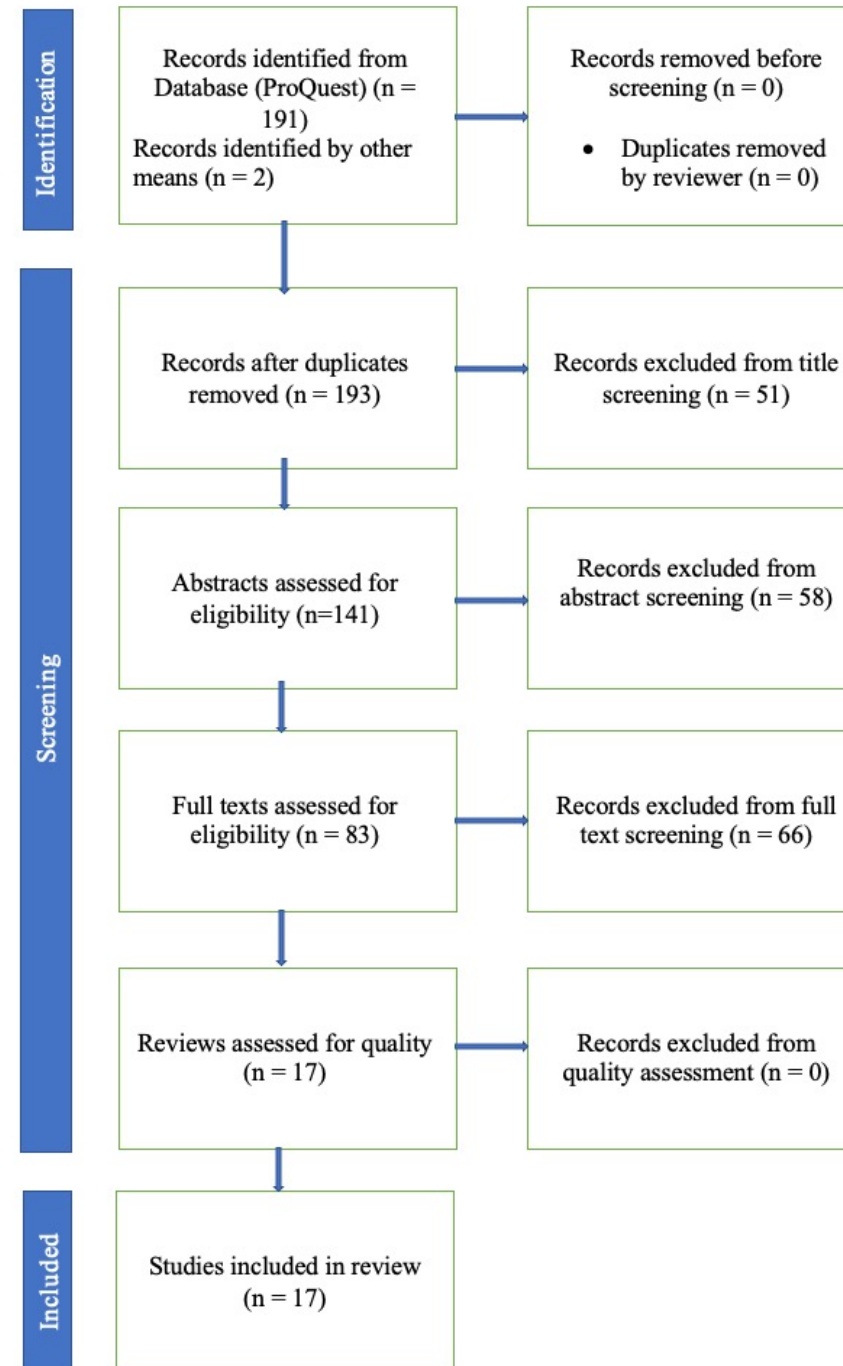
- Collaborations with families and external agencies
- Developing students' skills in social communication

## Barriers to successful transitions – limited:

- Access to services
- Work experience opportunities
- Access to professional learning for school staff

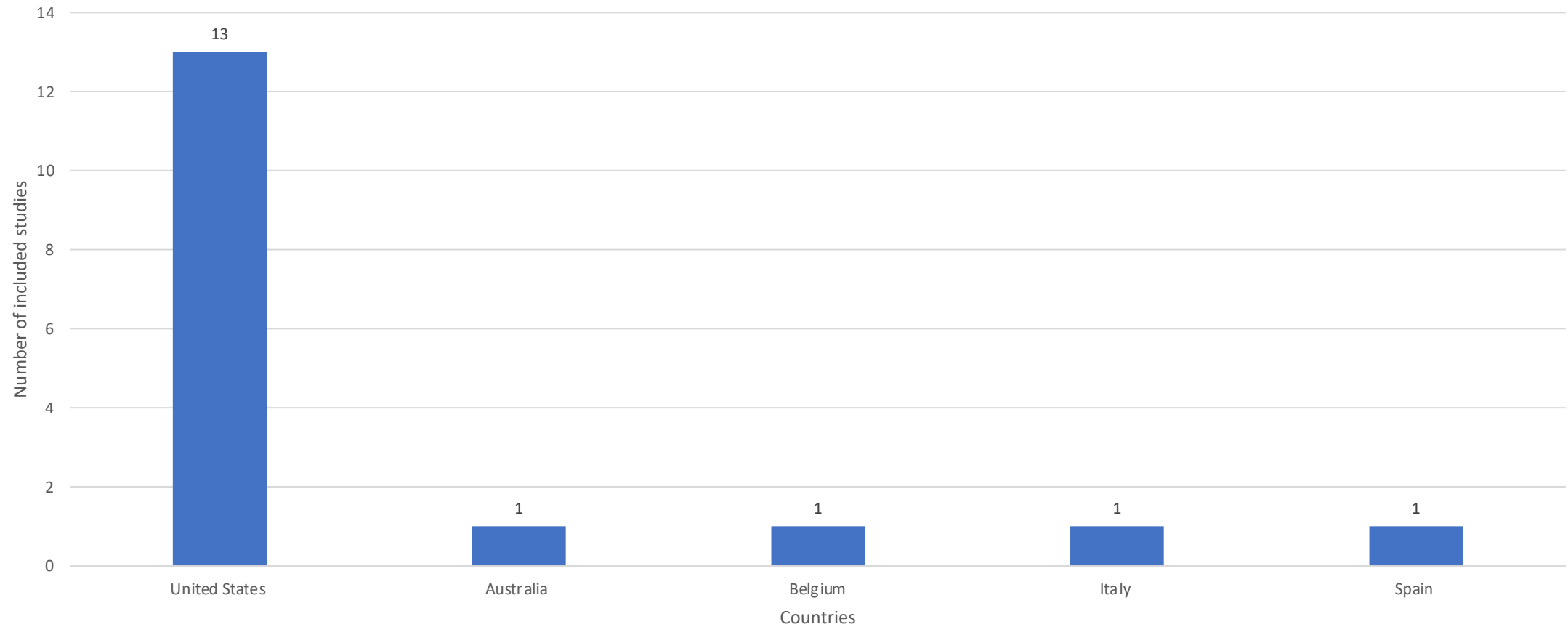


# Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs



# Transitions for Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs

Countries of transitions research: Students with complex support needs



# Transitions for Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs

## Facilitators:



- Students' active involvement in transition planning
- Early start to the transition planning processes
- Explicit attention to family engagement
- Interagency collaboration across multiple stakeholders

# Transitions for Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs

## Barriers to successful transitions:

- Teachers' low expectations
- Deficit thinking about students with complex support needs
- Teachers' negative attitudes
- Unequal access to external support services



# Transitions for Students With Disability who Have Complex Support Needs

## Barriers to successful transitions:

- A lack of available support and accommodations
- A lack of cooperation between schools and service providers and difficulties in sharing records
- A lack of family involvement by schools, youth justice facilities, or service providers





# Concluding Remarks

## Best practice aspects of transition supports:

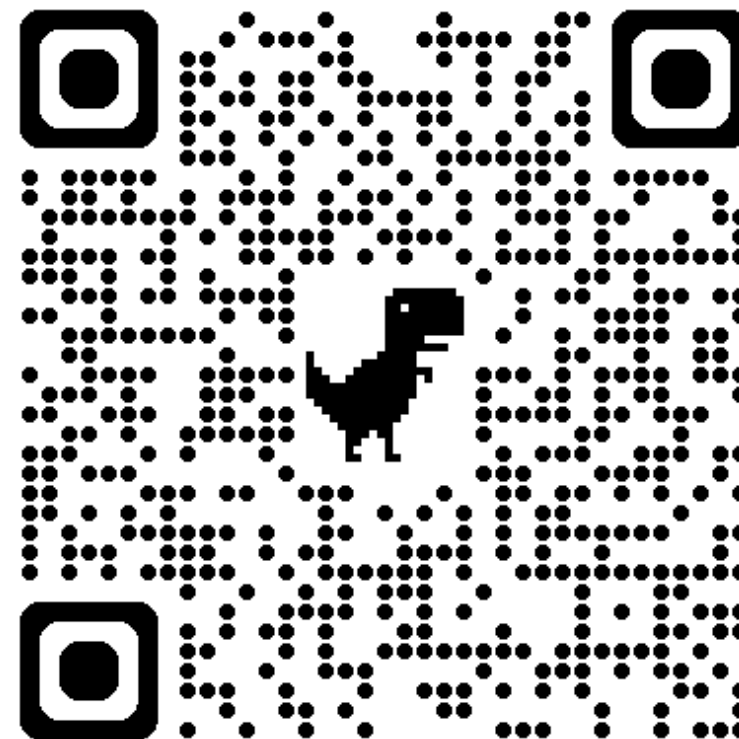
- Students are actively involved in transition process and have voice in decisions made
- Transition planning begins early
- Respectful and accessible family engagement processes
- All stakeholders in the transition process have clear roles and adequate training in transition planning



## More research is needed

- In specific settings
- With specific groups (e.g., beyond autism)





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