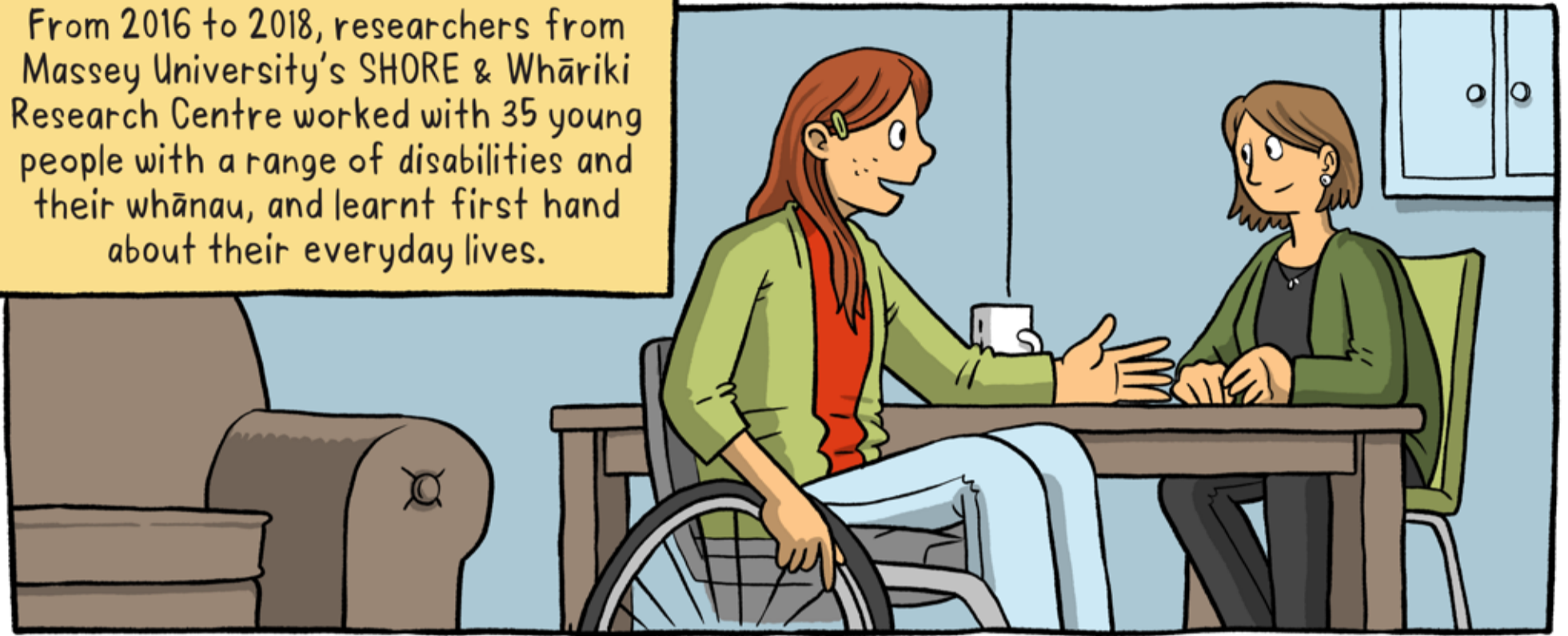


# ENABLING PARTICIPATION

## RESEARCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON ABLEISM

From 2016 to 2018, researchers from Massey University's SHORE & Whāriki Research Centre worked with 35 young people with a range of disabilities and their whānau, and learnt first hand about their everyday lives.



And what they found was that the biggest barriers to living a good life were discrimination and ableist attitudes.





# KEY FINDING 1: UNDERSTANDING

People stare. People judge.  
People offer unsolicited advice.

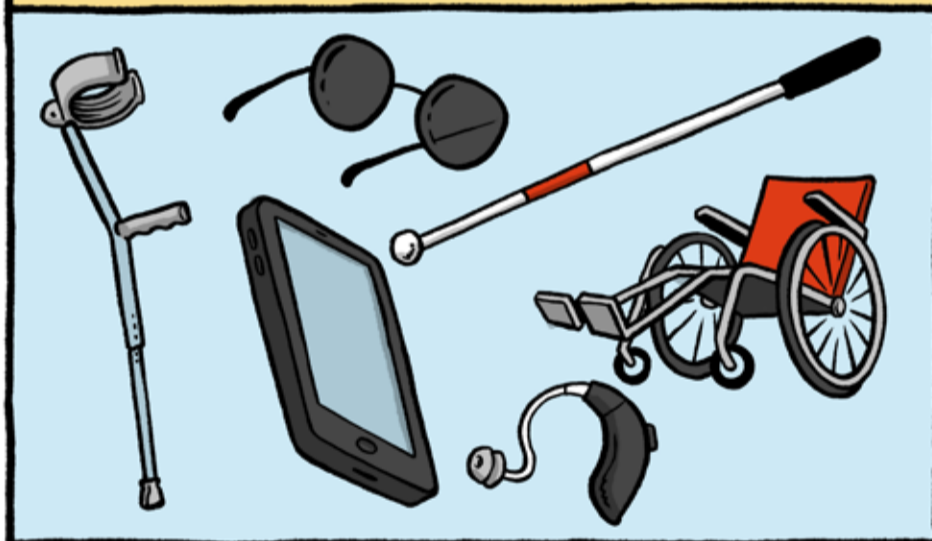
Many participants talked about being stared at and judged, and asked "what's wrong with you" by complete strangers.

Greer spoke about uninvited strangers pushing her across the road in her wheelchair, and being asked out of the blue "can you have children?"



Tane spoke about strangers grabbing his wrist and 'guiding him' down the street without asking - or knowing how to do it.

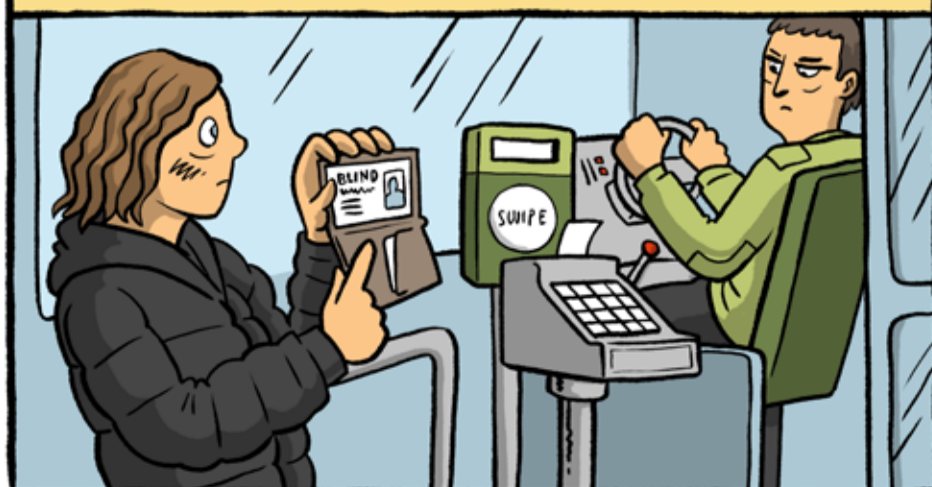
Disability is too often misunderstood as a clear cut binary: Non-disabled, or disabled. In fact, it's a spectrum everyone negotiates across the life course in different ways.



Ableist thinking about disability diminishes people, and suggests that living with a disability is some kind of personal tragedy.



This constant public judgement meant that those with visible disabilities felt stereotyped and underestimated, while those with less visible disabilities had to explain and justify themselves.



Either way, people's perception of disability impinged on the everyday lives of these young people.





# KEY FINDING 2: ACCESSIBILITY

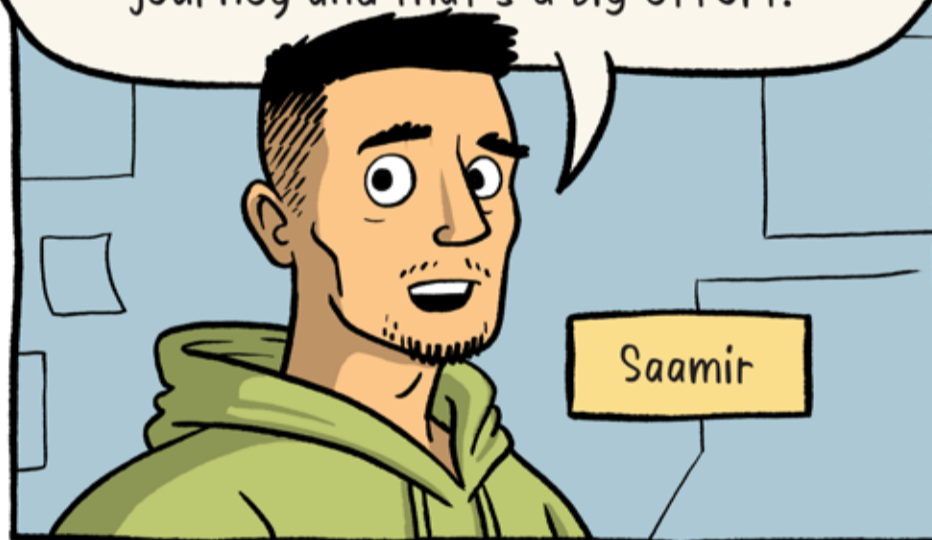
We often assume accessibility is about physical spaces but again, participants said it's about much more than the destination.



Travelling to an event can be complicated, unpredictable, expensive and time-consuming. It takes planning and mental energy.

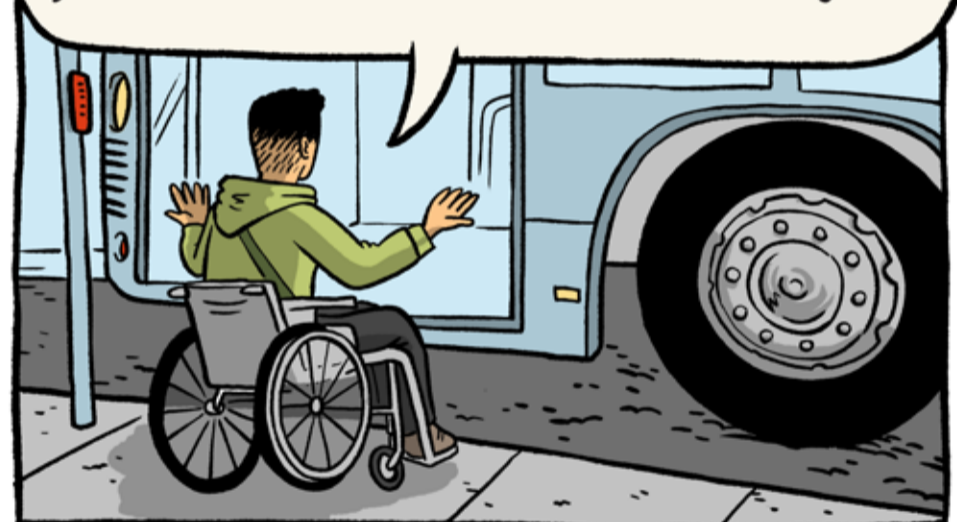


"Like, I'm thinking three steps ahead like oh, we're going to the cinema... how am I going to get on and off the bus? If I'm taking an Uber there who's going to put my wheelchair in the back? If I get there and there's steps...? Like, I'm thinking the whole journey and that's a big effort."

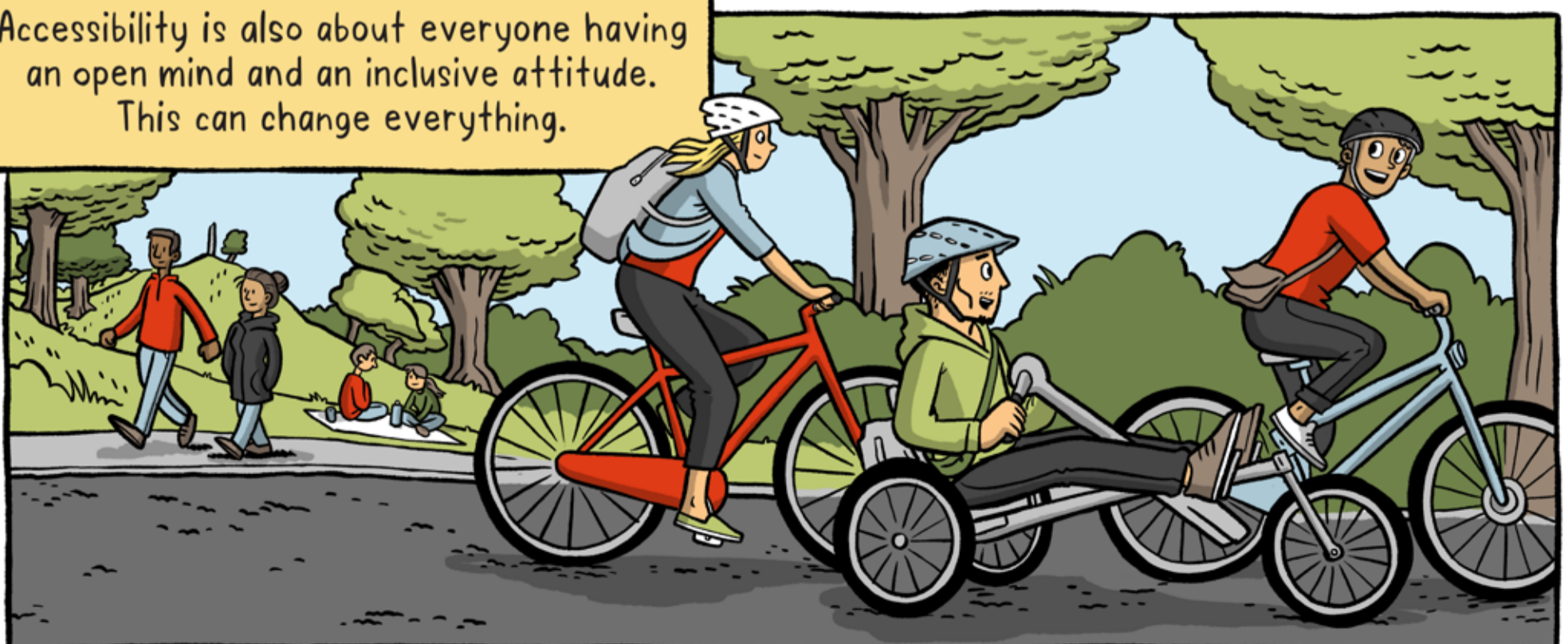


Attitudes of people along the way play a huge part too:

"I've had bus drivers... see me and just sigh. It's like, yeah, do it, please man, come on, do it, it's your job... Or I've had someone open the door and say, "Should you even be out at this time of the night?"



Accessibility is also about everyone having an open mind and an inclusive attitude. This can change everything.

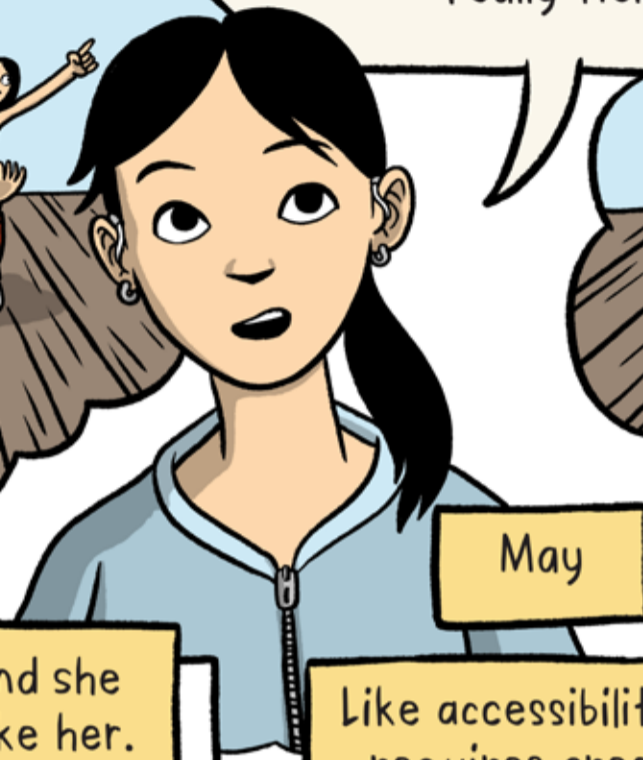




# KEY FINDING 3: PARTICIPATION

Inclusion enriches lives. May grew up in another country, where she took part in large scale deaf dance classes and competitions.

"It was probably 1000-2000 deaf people competing... there was a teacher who would stand there and sign 1-2-3-go because we couldn't hear the songs but they would also be there counting out the beats for us... it was really fierce competition."

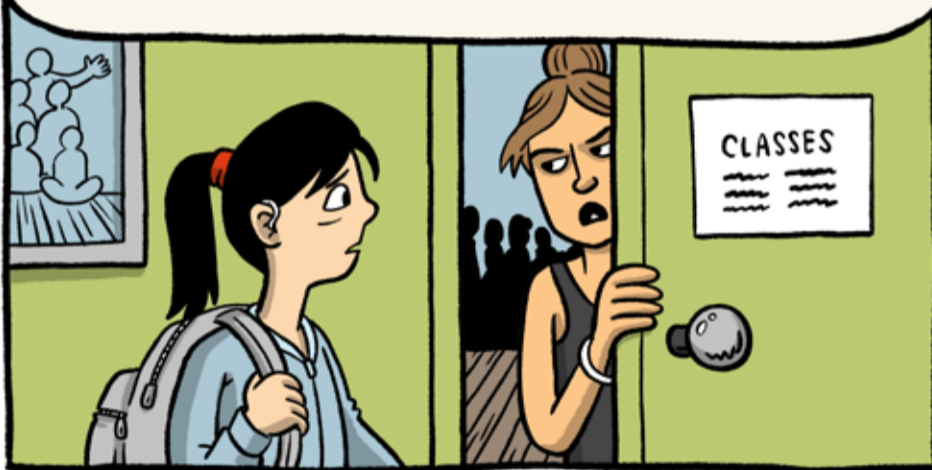


May

But when she moved to New Zealand she couldn't find classes that would take her.

Like accessibility, participation sometimes requires creativity and openness from teachers and decision makers - and depends on people being respected as experts in their own lives and experiences.

"In Auckland all you hear is you can't, you can't, you can't and I don't understand why people have that attitude because we can."



Sometimes that means knowing when to pull back. Rebecca, for example, talked about being singled out in class unnecessarily.

Economic privilege plays a part here too. For many the extra complexity involved in taking part requires extra time and extra money, and that can put a strain on resources.

"HERE'S REBECCA'S SPECIAL A3 HANDOUT"





# AND IN CONCLUSION...

One in four New Zealanders is living with a disability. So this affects a lot of people.



What we need is a shift in attitude. Currently, our dominant, ableist way of thinking suggests that the 'problem' is the body of the disabled person.



But we have to shift our thinking. The problem is the people that say "no", "what's wrong with you" and "you can't".



It's time to put a spotlight on ableism - and for those outside of the disabled community to take an honest look at our own attitudes.