



PROVINCIAL REPORT

A vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of five diverse young people. In the center, a woman with long brown hair, a green sweater, and a large orange hoop earring smiles with her eyes closed. To her right, a man with dark skin, a grey shirt, and a thick yellow fur collar looks towards the viewer. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair, a red shirt, and a purple jacket gestures with her hand. To the left, a man with curly brown hair and a blue hoodie smiles. In the bottom left, a woman wearing a blue hijab with a yellow floral pattern and a blue top looks towards the group. The background is a dark, stylized wall with graffiti, including the word 'DIVERSITY' and the number '77'.

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PREAMBLE

The role of Ontario's child welfare system is to work with families and communities to protect the province's most vulnerable children from abuse and neglect. Like many other provincial institutions, child welfare agencies operate under the historical context of white supremacy, colonialism and heteronormative ideals of family rearing. Current legacies of these historical contexts result in disproportionalities and disparities of African Canadian and Indigenous families involved in child welfare and inequitable outcomes for marginalized families. As we look to an intersectional approach to equity in the Ontario child welfare system, there are further inequitable outcomes experienced by the LGBT2SQ+ community. It is through the advocacy of LGBT2SQ+ staff and allies in the Ontario child welfare sector that a provincial project emerged with results detailed in this report.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) is a provincial member association which represents fifty child welfare and Indigenous Child Wellbeing agencies in Ontario. Within its structure, the OACAS has many strategic councils, committees and working groups, including the longstanding Anti-Oppression Round Table for Child Welfare (AOR). The OACAS Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, and Questioning (LGBT2SQ+) Committee was formed under the auspices of the AOR. The committee, with support from OACAS, initiated a project to develop an online organizational self-assessment tool, which would evaluate the readiness and capacity of agencies and the child welfare sector, to provide effective, affirming and equitable services to gender and sexually diverse children, youth and families. The purpose of the project was to better understand the sector's areas of strengths and needs related to service provision, and to provide participating agencies with an individualized report card. The project was also intended to build awareness and knowledge by providing a sector-wide assessment, data analysis and recommendations for moving forward.

With the support and approval of the AOR, the LGBT2SQ+ Committee submitted a proposal to the then OACAS Provincial Project Management Committee (PPMC) to secure funding for a consultant to assist in the development of the online tool. Oversight and guidance for the project was also provided by the Equity of Outcomes Strategic Council (EOSC) of the OACAS, along with support and sector communications from OACAS staff.

The OACAS is particularly grateful to the LGBT2SQ+ youth who bravely shared their voice and recommendations through focus groups that occurred throughout the project. It is our hope that the shared insights of their lived experiences will help inform the child welfare sector to provide equitable service and delivery to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. The OACAS acknowledges the unanimous and positive support expressed by all the child welfare agencies interviewed for the development of a LGBT2SQ+ assessment tool. The OACAS is thankful to the many staff and placement students in the child welfare sector who remain committed to this work and demonstrated patience and leadership throughout.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings from this organizational self-assessment project help us better understand the lived realities of LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families, the experiences of the LGBT2SQ+ community when involved in the Ontario child welfare system, and the landscape of child welfare services available to the LGBT2SQ+ community. The work ahead for the child welfare sector will be to integrate existing sector-based equity strategies such as One Vision One Voice and the sector's Indigenous Commitments towards Truth and Reconciliation into the recommendations of this report. The work will also need to integrate an intersectional lens to include race, gender, disability, newcomer status, age, income/class, etc., as the majority of LGBT2SQ+ people served by the sector experience intersecting barriers based on more than one identity dimension.

The report identifies three overarching categories made up of ten priorities that require systemic and organizational change to provide equitable services for LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families:

1. Governance and Leadership

- 1.1 Professional Development
- 1.2 Human Resources: Hiring, Recruitment, Retention
- 1.3 Policy, Oversight, Planning

2. Environment and Climate

- 2.1 Intersectionality
- 2.2 Evaluation and Research
- 2.3 Agency Forms, Language, Data

3. Service Delivery

- 3.1 Intake, Assessment
- 3.2 Family Services
- 3.3 Children's Services
- 3.4 Resources: Out-of-Home Care, Placement, Foster and Adoption Services

There are nine recommendations to guide the sector in systemic change efforts, and to guide agencies on developing action plans:

A. Governance and Leadership

1. Sector Support
2. Intersectional SOGIE¹ lens
3. Policy Framework
4. Professional Development

B. Environment and Climate

1. Diverse Representation and Belonging
2. Data and Evaluation
3. Community Partnerships and Communications

C. Service Delivery

1. Competency-based SOGIE Service Framework
2. Out-of-Home Placements, Resource Families

The overall findings of the organizational self-assessment further identify the ways in which child welfare agencies contribute to the disproportionalities that negatively impact LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

The results of the assessment, along with the recommendations in this report, can be used to support the development of an organization-wide workplan to address areas of growth and build upon strengths.

These findings will hopefully compel the Ontario child welfare sector to better understand the issues facing LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families and to develop strategic goals and practices moving forward.

DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

The following definitions reflect key terms and concepts used throughout this report. Some of these terms have been adapted from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) resource guide titled *Serving LGBTQ2S Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System: A Resource Guide*. Other terms have been adapted from EGALÉ's comprehensive glossary of terms.

Asexual

An individual who may not experience sexual attraction or desire to engage in sexual activity.

Assigned sex

Assigned sex refers to the classification of a person based on their biological characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia. Sex is often assigned at birth by medical professionals based on a visual assessment of genitalia. Female, male, and intersex are examples of assigned sex.

Bisexual

This term has been used to refer to individuals who are attracted to both men and women, however its use has evolved over time and, like pansexual, is also used to refer to an individual who experiences attraction towards more than one gender.

Biphobia

Oppression and discrimination directed towards bisexual people.

Cisgender or cis

An individual who has a gender identity that is aligned with the gender identity associated with their assigned sex, for example, a man who was assigned male at birth.

Cisnormativity

The belief that gender is biologically determined and always in alignment with one's assigned sex. Cisnormativity is very closely connected to cissexism.

Cissexism

The system of oppression that privileges and gives power to cis people while also working to disadvantage and oppress trans people. Cissexism reinforces the gender binary and forms the basis of transphobia.

Fluidity

Fluidity refers to the potential for individual movement along the spectrums of gender and sexual identities. Bisexuals, pansexuals, and genderfluid folks experience their identities as fluid.

Gay

An individual who experiences attraction towards individuals of the same gender. This term is sometimes used just to refer to men who are attracted to men.

Gender binary

The social construct and belief that people can only be one of two genders: man/male or woman/female. The gender binary system does not recognize those who experience gender as fluid or those who have non-binary gender identities such as bigender, pangender, and agender individuals.

Gender dysphoria

Gender dysphoria refers to the distress that individuals experience when their gender identity or expression does not align with their sense of self. Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria, however in Ontario a diagnosis of gender dysphoria is often part of the eligibility criteria for access to and insurance coverage of transition-related care including hormones and gender affirming surgery.

Gender expression

How an individual outwardly presents their gender, for example, through clothing, hair style, voice, body language, and other characteristics or behaviours. Gender expression is typically associated with social understandings of masculinity and femininity, however a range of gender expressions fall between or outside of masculine and feminine.

Genderfluid

An individual who experiences their gender as fluid or changeable, for example, an individual who at times identifies as a woman and at times identifies as non-binary.

Gender identity

An individual's internal sense of and experience of gender. An individual's gender identity may or may not correspond with social expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Genderfluid, bigender, pangender, agender, woman, and man are all gender identities. The term Two-Spirit can also be considered a gender identity.

Gender independent

Gender independent and other terms like gender diverse and gender creative refer to individuals who do not conform to gender norms and stereotypes and/or who express their gender in ways that differ from cultural or societal expectations (such as a feminine boy or a masculine girl).

Heteronormativity

The belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual and that heterosexuality is the only legitimate form of sexual orientation.

Heterosexism

The system of oppression that privileges and gives power to straight or heterosexual people while also working to disadvantage and oppress non-heterosexual people. Heterosexism forms the basis of homophobia, biphobia, and panphobia. It can include the presumption that other people are heterosexual or that different gender/sex attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior to other identities or relationships.

Homophobia

Oppression and discrimination directed towards gay and lesbian people.

Intersectionality

A concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw that describes how people are shaped by their identities and the ways in which their identities intersect with one another. Examples of intersecting identities include a Black trans youth or a gay cisgender woman with a disability.

Intersex

An individual whose chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female.

Lesbian

A woman who experiences attraction towards other women.

LGBT2SQ+

LGBT2SQ+ is the acronym used in the SOGIE course. LGBT2SQ+ is an abbreviated acronym; the plus sign is used to indicate that it does not fully represent all gender and sexual identities or the diversity of queer communities. The letters of the acronym refer to the following identities: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-spirit, Queer, and Questioning.

Non-binary

An umbrella term that refers to individuals who have a gender identity that falls outside of or between the binary of man/male and woman/female. Non-binary gender identities include bigender, pangender, and agender.

Panphobia

Oppression and discrimination directed towards pansexual people.

Pansexual

An individual who experiences attraction towards more than one gender. This term is considered by some to be more inclusive than bisexual (which can imply binary conceptualizations and that there are only two genders). However, the term is newer and not as widely recognized.

Queer

An umbrella term that can be used broadly to refer to all individuals who identify as part of the LGBT2SQ+ community, including individuals who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual, as well as those who are, such as gender independent individuals and queerspawn. Queer is also used by individuals who wish to identify with a broad term that allows more fluidity and/or who are not comfortable identifying with other terms. While the term was historically used as a slur or insult, it has been reclaimed and is used by some individuals within the LGBT2SQ+ community.

Queerspawn

A term that is sometimes used by individuals who have one or more LGBT2SQ+ parents.

Questioning

Questioning refers to a period or periods of time when individuals are unsure of their gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression and are trying to figure out how to identify. Questioning can also refer to someone who is exploring their gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression.

Sexual orientation

An individual's emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction towards others, often described in relation to the gender(s) to which they are attracted. Straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pan-sexual are all sexual orientations.

Survival Sex

This is a term that references sexual acts that are exchanged for money or goods required to meet life's basic needs.

Trans feminine

Trans feminine is a term used to describe trans people who identify with femininity to a greater extent than masculinity and/or present as more feminine than masculine.

Transgender or trans

An individual who has a gender identity that is different than the gender identity associated with their assigned sex, for example, a woman who was assigned male at birth or a non-binary individual who was assigned female at birth.

Transphobia

Negative attitudes, feelings, and/or actions towards, and fear or hatred of trans people and communities. Like other forms of oppression, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment, and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be trans. An example of transphobia is refusing to use the correct name or pronouns for a trans person.

Trans man

An individual who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a man.

Trans masculine

Transmasculine is a term used to describe trans people who identify with masculinity to a greater extent than femininity and/or present as more masculine than feminine.

Transmisogyny

A form of intersectional oppression and discrimination directed towards trans women and trans feminine people.

Transphobia

Oppression and discrimination directed towards trans people.

Trans woman

An individual who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman.

Two-Spirit

While there are some who use the term Two-Spirit to refer broadly to all queer Indigenous people, the term is more commonly used for First Nations identities that originate in traditional understandings of gender and sexuality, rather than Western colonial binaries. Because these traditions and understandings are culturally and spiritually specific, it's important to recognize that Two-Spiritness is not an identity universal to all Indigenous communities or something that is a part of all Indigenous worldviews.

PROJECT RATIONALE

The goal of this project is to provide agencies with direction and planning to help support their work towards equitable outcomes for members of the LGBT2SQ+ community interacting with child welfare (both agency staff, and those receiving service). This report will highlight specific areas relating to service delivery, governance/leadership, and environment and climate.

As demonstrated in the literature review below, there is a gap in research on how LGBT2SQ+ families are experiencing child welfare services. Overall, this report gives agencies clear guidance on areas such as HR and governance practices which they can implement to better support their LGBT2SQ+ staff and equip their staff to better serve LGBT2SQ+ families.

Literature Review

Due to absent or insufficient data collection related to LGBT2SQ+ children and youth, it is unclear how many young people involved in Ontario child welfare identify as LGBT2SQ+. The data in the child welfare sector relies on self-identification, which unfortunately, for many LGBT2SQ+ young people results in not disclosing their sexual or gender identity as it could result in a risk to their safety.

However, data from other jurisdictions indicates that LGBT2SQ+ young people are over-represented in child welfare systems, and experience disparity in treatment and outcomes.

LGBT2SQ+ Representation in Child Welfare

The US-based Human Rights Campaign Foundation states that “LGBTQ youth are over-represented in foster care and face increased risk of both negative experiences and outcomes:

- Up to 30% of youth in foster care are LGBTQ;
- LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to report being treated poorly as their non-LGBTQ peers while in care;
- LGBTQ youth have a greater average number of placements than their non-LGBTQ peers.

LGBTQ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to be placed in congregate care, including group homes.”²

The 2014 Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey³ found that 19% of youth in out-of-home care identified as LGBTQ, with 13% identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning; 6% identifying as transgender; 11% identifying as gender non-conforming; and an unspecified majority identified as racialized. 19% represented as much as twice that of the population of LGBTQ youth not in care;

- ▶ The 2008 British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey⁴ found that 12% of youth (15% of females and 9% of males) with experience in government care identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and that they were also more likely to experience government care than heterosexual youth.

Most of the available data focuses only on sexual orientation and does not include gender diversity or intersectionality. These numbers are also likely under-reported as many LGBT2SQ+ youth hide or do not disclose their identity due to stigma, shame, and fear of rejection or discriminatory treatment.⁵

Experiences of LGBT2SQ+ Children and Youth

LGBT2SQ+ youth are particularly at risk of becoming involved in child welfare as their identities and needs may clash with homophobic and/or oppressive family values and expectations. The presenting risks are also linked to stress from rejection, stigma, victimization, marginalization, invisibility of identities, and oppression. Biases, disparity and discriminatory practices are still prevalent in most areas of society and within the child welfare system.

LGBT2SQ+ youth experience specific challenges directly related to the stigma and oppression they typically experience:

- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ youth face higher rates of abuse, violence, physical abuse/assault and sexual abuse/assault, including higher rates from families, than non-LGBT2SQ+ youth.** Almost half (48%) of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in Canada reported having experienced physical and/or sexual abuse as a child, compared to 30% of heterosexual people.⁶ In a national study of Canadian trans youth, 70% reported sexual harassment, and 36% had been threatened or injured in the past year.⁷
- ▶ Within the child welfare system itself, **LGBT2SQ+ youth may be placed in non-affirming placements and/or face rejection from caregivers in foster care.** They may experience discrimination, hostility, and harassment from staff or peers in group care settings.⁸ Some studies indicate that LGBT2SQ+ youth involved in child welfare experience disparities in service and outcomes compared to their non LGBT2SQ+ counterparts,⁹ such as a higher average number of placements and a higher likelihood of being placed in a group care setting.

- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ youth in the child welfare system who are also racialized face poorer outcomes** due to intersecting identities such as racism, sexism, poverty, experiences of child abuse/victimization, systemic barriers (e.g. longer placements), negative in-care experiences and psychiatric challenges.¹⁰

It is paramount that LGBT2SQ+ youth in the child welfare system are served **by workers, foster parents and staff within Outside Paid Resources (OPRs)¹¹ who have awareness and implement positive approaches around intersectional LGBT2SQ+ identities.** If the child welfare sector is not prepared with training, resources, appropriate intervention, awareness and inclusive approaches in their work with youth, the sector further exacerbates the disparate service and inequitable outcomes LGBT2SQ+ children and youth experience in mainstream society.

Outcomes for LGBT2SQ+ Children and Youth

Both Canadian and American research demonstrates that LGBT2SQ+ demonstrate poorer outcomes when compared to their non-LGBT2SQ+ peers.

- ▶ In Canadian schools, **LGBT2SQ+ students face stigma, harassment and violence.** Based on their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation, 68% of trans students, 55% of LB students and 42% of GB students experienced verbal harassment; and 20% of LGBTQ students experienced physical harassment or assault. 49% of trans students, 33% of lesbian students and 40% of gay male students experienced sexual harassment in school in the past year. Two-thirds of LGBT2SQ+ students feel unsafe in their schools, compared to 15% of non-LGBT2SQ+ students.¹²
- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ people have higher rates of mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, self-harm, and substance use. Half of LGBT2SQ+ youth have considered suicide, and they are two to four times more likely to attempt it than their non-LGBTQ peers.**¹³ In Ontario, 47% of trans young people aged 16 to 24 had seriously considered suicide in the past year and 19% had attempted it.¹⁴ Family acceptance and being connected to the LGBT2SQ+ community dramatically reduces these numbers.
- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ teens who are highly rejected by their parents and caregivers face very high risks for health and mental health problems.** Highly rejected young people are over eight (8) times more likely to attempt suicide, six (6) times more likely to report high levels of depression, and three (3) times more likely to use illegal drugs.¹⁵ Trans youth in Ontario who do not have very supportive parents are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide within one year.¹⁶
- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ youth experience increased risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation** due to factors that make them vulnerable including higher rates of family rejection,

discrimination, violence, and economic instability. Studies also indicate that LGBT2SQ+ youth are more likely to engage in survival sex and are over-represented in detention for sex work-related offenses.¹⁷

- ▶ **LGBT2SQ+ youth are more likely to face family rejection, run away, and/or experience homelessness,**¹⁸ with almost a third (30%) of all Canadian homeless youth identifying as LGBT2SQ+.¹⁹ According to the National Youth Homelessness Survey, the majority of the LGBT2SQ+ homeless youth population (63%) also had histories of child welfare involvement; this rate was even higher (71%) among transgender and gender non-binary youth.²⁰

How to Improve Service to LGBT2SQ+ Children, Youth and Families

Identified risk factors can be mitigated by these protective factors:

- ▶ **1. family acceptance and support;**
- ▶ **2. access to gender-affirming health care (if desired by the youth);**
- ▶ **3. supportive adults; and**
- ▶ **4. engagement with the LGBT2SQ+ community.**

A recent document analysis from New Jersey's child welfare agency (CWA) identified the need for LGBTQ-related policy reforms, in particular "leveraging the authority of state sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) based anti-discrimination legislation; establishing a Safe Space Initiative program and integrating SOGIE-based anti-discrimination policy and procedural changes" to all aspects of service delivery. For New Jersey's CWA this represented some movement towards a more "equitable and inclusive system of care for the LGBTQ foster youth population."²¹

RECENT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19 Pandemic

Recent global events emerged in 2020 that require commentary about specific impacts on the LGBT2SQ+ community. While the global pandemic of COVID-19 revealed many structural and systemic inequities as well as disproportionate rates of COVID-19 transmission in marginalized communities around the world, the LGBT2SQ+ community continues to face unique challenges from the pandemic. LGBT2SQ+ children and youth face increased social isolation and marginality during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we must ensure that attention is paid to decreasing social isolation, marginality and risk for LGBT2SQ+ youth and families during these uncertain times. In an April 2020 study, Egale reported that **53% of LGBT2SQ+ households have experienced lay-offs and reduced hours as a result of the pandemic.**²² This is in comparison to 39% of Canadian households overall. **Respondents to the study are nearly two times more likely to be living with a chronic illness or disability** and therefore more worried they could be diagnosed with COVID-19 and transmit the virus to a vulnerable friend or family member.

LGBT2SQ+ youth may have no refuge from stressful or even toxic home or living environments, and have no safe spaces to express their identity during the social isolation and physical distancing experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they may have previously had school, peers or programming in which they could be themselves or experience relief. Many gender-affirming surgeries have been placed on hold, which can be disheartening for people who have struggled to access surgery and may have already been on long waitlists. This continues to emerge as a barrier in the second wave of the pandemic. Denied or delayed access to gender-affirming health care significantly impacts mental health and increases suicidality as this is the highest risk period for suicide among trans populations.²³

LGBT2SQ+ youth who are Black, Indigenous or have other intersectional identities are higher risk when accessing services such as shelter and housing supports, mental health and police systems than their non LGBT2SQ+ peers. Homelessness and congregate living situations, such as shelters, detention and incarceration, where LGBT2SQ+ youth are over-represented, all carry high risks of contracting COVID-19, which can leave a youth very ill. LGBT2SQ+ children and youth living in these situations may lack the family support needed to self-isolate and seek proper medical attention.²⁴

Anti-Black Racism and Intersectional Oppression

Anti-Black racism is defined by the Black Legal Action Centre as prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, and discrimination directed at people of African descent.²⁵ Deeply entrenched,

anti-Black racism leads to poor outcomes for Black communities. As Black LGBTQ youth hold intersectional marginalized identities there is an increased risk for experiencing discrimination and victimization. As noted by Nicole Bonnie, CEO of OACAS:

“ *The current child welfare system was not designed for the most marginalized people we serve, and so we must recommit ourselves to fixing it. We need to re-examine our policies, practices, workplace cultures, and the very structures within which we work to ensure better outcomes for Black and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families. We also need to look inward, as individuals, and build our capacity and competencies to unpack our own racist and oppressive views. We must lead difficult conversations with our colleagues and the families we serve. We must effectively engage community members about the ways we can address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in all areas of our lives. And as we begin Pride month, we must also remember the intersectional impact of oppression and the additional violence and fear it brings that leads to further isolation and marginalization.*

Anti-Blackness and the intersectional impact of oppression is founded on the ideology of White supremacy. White supremacy persists within the LGBT2SQ+ community, however there is little research that quantifies the outcomes for Black LGBTQ youth. U.S.-based non-profit The Trevor Project released a report in October 2020 arguing research has “largely failed to capture racial, sexual and gender identities as they co-occur and intersect to produce either risk or protective factors for Black LGBTQ youth.”²⁶

The current findings of The Trevor Project’s report demonstrate that Black LGBTQ youth are at risk for similar or worse outcomes than other LGBTQ youth. For example, 63% of Black LGBTQ youth report major symptoms of depression. This was a higher reported rate than the overall LGBTQ youth population (55%). As well, Black transgender and nonbinary youth reported higher rates of depression (71%) as compared to cisgender Black LGBTQ youth (59%).

There is a disproportionate impact of violence against Black transgender people in the U.S., and The Trevor project writes that mental health services geared towards youth ought to integrate anti-racism policies and programs. Mental health organizations in Ontario would also benefit from this recommendation rather than using a “one-size-fits-all” approach to mental health services and crisis supports for youth. In the first quantitative all-ages data on racialized trans and non-binary people in Canada, Trans PULSE Canada, reports that Trans Canadians face more violence if they are Black, Indigenous or racialized.²⁷ Racialized respondents were more likely to rate their health as poor and identify that they live with chronic pain and/or a disability. The intersection of racial discrimination and transphobia is also clear as 72% of racialized trans and non-binary respondents had experienced verbal harassment in the past five years and 45% had experienced harassment at school or their place of employment.

RECENT CHILD WELFARE DEVELOPMENTS

Work on the organizational self-assessment began in late 2017. Since then, there have been several changes to legislation, policy and service delivery, as well as new research that may affect service delivery to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

- ▶ The age of protection in Ontario was increased on January 1, 2018 from 16 to 18 years old. While comprehensive data has not yet been shared about the impact of this change, we know from sector meetings held by the OACAS that 16- and 17-year-olds with LGBT2SQ+ identities are among the new population receiving services. In a 2018 focus group tracking services to youth aged 16 and 17, some agencies reported demographic information for 15 youth out of a total of 2361. Of these 15 youth, 3 were identified as transgender. Little can be inferred from such a small sample size where information was collected from workers rather than directly from the Child Protection Information Network (otherwise known as CPIN). That this is the only data available on this population demonstrates the importance of collecting identity-based data so the sector can better understand the services needed for this age group.²⁸
- ▶ As of February 2018, Children's Aid Societies began collecting identity-based data directly from the children and youth they serve. As the identity-based data standard includes questions on assigned sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, it is especially important that child welfare professionals build awareness and competency to support this type of data collection and the conversations it will inevitably bring about with service users.
- ▶ In September 2018, the Chief Coroner's Expert Panel Report "Safe with Intervention" was released. This report examines the deaths of twelve (12) young people who were in the care of an Ontario Children's Aid Society or Indigenous Well-Being agency during the period of January 1, 2014 to July 31, 2017. Notably, many of the young people identified as LGBT2SQ+, the majority of whom were also First Nations, one identified as Black, and all struggled with mental health issues. Following a review of case materials, the report determined there was no evidence of affirming services or supportive discussion around sexual and gender identities provided to the LGBT2SQ+ young people involved.²⁹
- ▶ In 2018, the Ten Oaks Project hosted the first Camp Lifting Leaves for LGBT2SQ+ young people involved with Ontario child welfare agencies and OACAS hosted the first Power Up! Symposium for Black/African Canadian youth in care.³⁰ Initial demographic data from these programs and initiatives underlines the importance of recognizing and affirming intersecting identities in service delivery:
 - ▶ According to the 2018 Camp Lifting Leaves feedback report, 50% of LGBT2SQ+ campers identified as Black, Indigenous, or racialized.³¹

- ▶ According to the Power Up! post-event wrap report, approximately 37% of Black/African Canadian youth attending identified with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.³²
- ▶ Of the 44 campers who attended the first virtual Camp Lifting Leaves event in 2020, 39% identified as Black, Indigenous or Person of Colour.³³
- ▶ At the 2020 virtual Camp Lifting Leaves event, organizers created a space for neurodivergent/disability centered participants. Attendees shared positive feedback about the inclusion of this intersectional community.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

This section describes how the organizational self-assessment tool was created and distributed. It also describes the response size, analysis and how to interpret the results. The Provincial Project Management Committee (PPMC) provided funding to develop an online organizational self-assessment tool for Ontario child welfare agencies and Indigenous child wellbeing agencies. The online tool was distributed to all agencies across the province on October 18, 2018 with an initial deadline for completion of December 17, 2018. Given the comprehensive nature of the assessment and resources required to complete the tool, the deadline was extended to facilitate greater sector participation. All self-assessments were received by March 31, 2019. Upon completion of the online survey, each agency was encouraged to download an individualized automated report highlighting their results, and to develop a LGBT2SQ+ work plan to address areas for improvement.

OACAS collected and analyzed aggregate data from all the surveys. The key findings are presented in this report. Agencies are not individually identified in purpose this report. The LGBT2SQ+ developed 30 benchmarks developed for the survey divided into three broad categories:

- ▶ **Governance and Leadership**
- ▶ **Environment and Climate**
- ▶ **Service Delivery**

Youth Voice

To ensure the voices of children and youth informed the content of the organizational-self assessment tool, 20 youth participated in two focus groups and 25 youth participated in one-one interviews. These were LGBT2SQ identified youth with experience in Ontario's child welfare system. In these youth focus groups, youth participants shared some positive experiences from their interactions with child welfare. For example, some youth participants spoke about having "supportive workers who helped them throughout their experience with the child welfare system" (Kerr and Pinder-Doede Consulting, 2018). Some youth also shared experiences of supportive foster parents. These appeared to be based on individual experiences and not necessarily a theme in the feedback from these focus groups. For example, youth also shared experiences about being placed in a home where the placement family did not accept their identity (2018). Many youth spoke about experiences where they felt they had to come out more than once throughout their involvement in the child welfare system. These focus groups provided authentic voices of LGBT2SQ+ youth who have direct experience in Ontario's child welfare system and shared insights and wisdom in their recommendations for systemic change.

LGBT2SQ+ Committee

The OACAS LGBT2SQ+ Committee worked with an independent consultant to design an online survey tool to assist individual Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child Wellbeing Agencies to assess their competencies to provide accessible, safe, appropriate and supportive services to children, youth and families in LGBT2SQ+ communities. The online survey tool was created through informed feedback from different stakeholder groups that included the OACAS LGBT2SQ+ committee, Ontario child welfare agencies, individual leaders in child welfare and/or LGBT2SQ+ organizational inclusion and two youth focus groups. The survey was confidential and included 160 questions to assess 30 benchmarks organized into three categories of:

- ▶ **Governance and Leadership**
- ▶ **Environment and Climate**
- ▶ **Service Delivery**

Definitions and links to other useful resources were embedded in the survey tool for terminology and access to supportive tools.

Agencies were encouraged to put together a diverse, cross-departmental and multi-level team to complete the survey, and to ensure there was extensive consultation and participation in the process.

Scoring and Ratings

The survey measured 30 benchmarks organized along three (3) domains of organizational functioning relating to the provision of services for LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. Results were weighted within each benchmark according to impact and importance. Agency ratings for each benchmark fell into one of four possible categories below. Note that level one is the highest rating and four is the lowest rating. Agencies are expected to achieve a minimum rating of “well on your way” level two for each category:

- 1. Affirming Practice (green)** – Agencies demonstrate competence. Agencies have made significant progress to establish structures and engage in practices that challenge heterosexism, cisgenderism and oppression, and that support affirmation and equity for LGBT2SQ+ communities.
- 2. Well on Your Way (blue)** – Agencies demonstrate minimum acceptable competence. There are some structures and practices in place that challenge heterosexism, cisgenderism, and oppression, and demonstrate some level of support and affirmation for LGBT2SQ+ communities. Some level of equity has been achieved but gaps remain that need to be addressed. Agencies may benefit from resources and direct support to continue to enhance their capacity.
- 3. Some Progress (orange)** – Agencies are at a beginning level, and do not yet demonstrate minimum acceptable competence, although they show signs of positive progress. While their efforts are appreciated and encouraged, significant gaps remain that require immediate attention. Agencies will benefit from resources and direct support to assist them to make needed changes.
- 4. Requires Attention (red)** – Agencies are at a lower level, and haven't yet demonstrated competence. Serious gaps require urgent attention and there are significant concerns that LGBT2SQ+ children, youth or families will not be supported, affirmed or provided with equitable service designed to encourage positive outcomes. Agencies require resources and direct support to assist them to make needed changes.

Results

The high participation rate from 39 of 50 OACAS member agencies indicates there is a desire to better understand the ways agencies can meet the needs of LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. Overall, results indicate there are many areas for growth. Over 50% of agencies scored poorly and below minimum acceptable competence levels in 26 out of 30 benchmarks. All three of the over-arching categories of **Governance and Leadership, Environment and Climate and Service Delivery** require further attention within the Ontario child welfare system, and many benchmarks require urgent attention.

Summary Results for 3 Main Areas

A. Governance and Leadership

1. Professional Development
2. Human Resources – hiring, recruitment, retention
3. Policy, Oversight, Planning

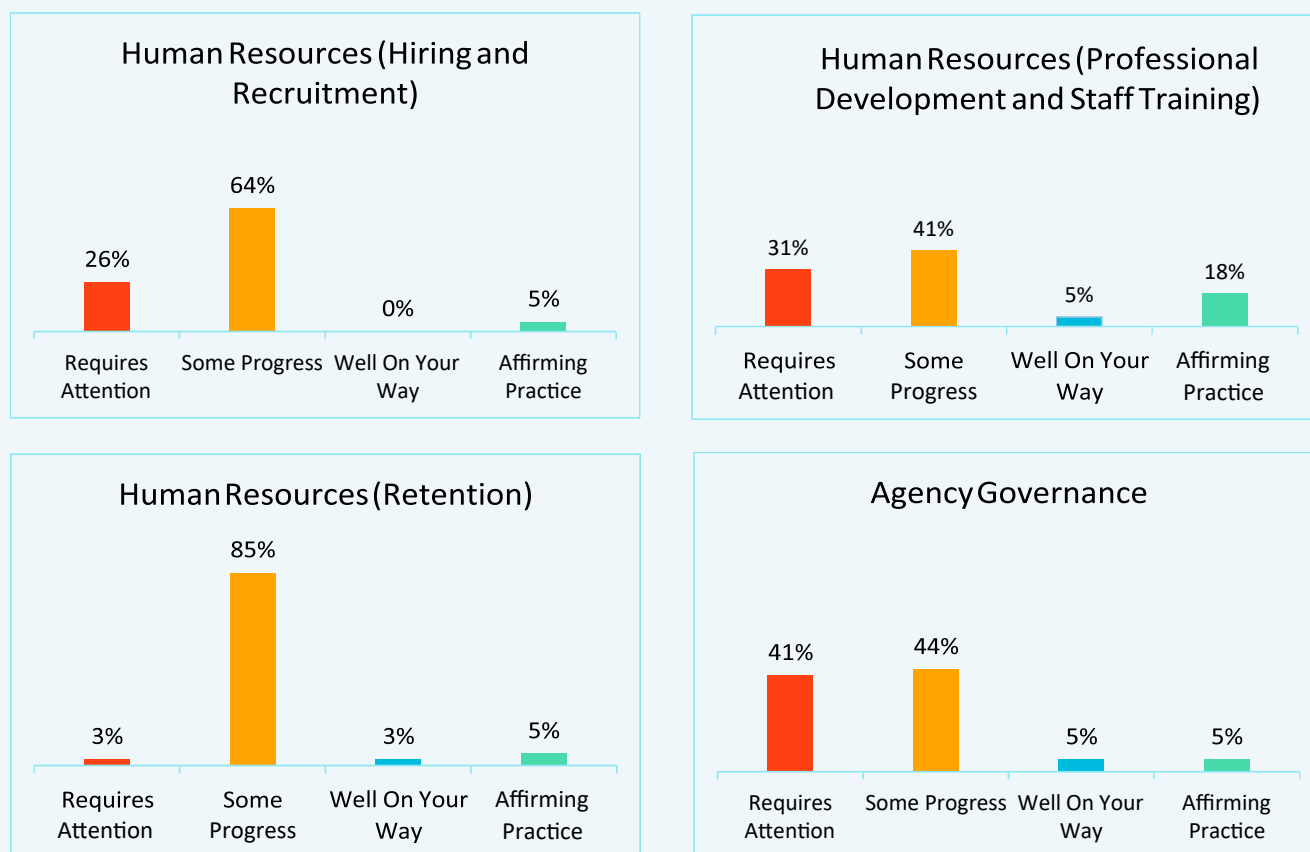
B. Environment and Climate

1. Intersectionality
2. Evaluation/Research
3. Agency forms, language, data

C. Service Delivery

1. Intake Assessment
2. Ongoing Service
3. Children's Services

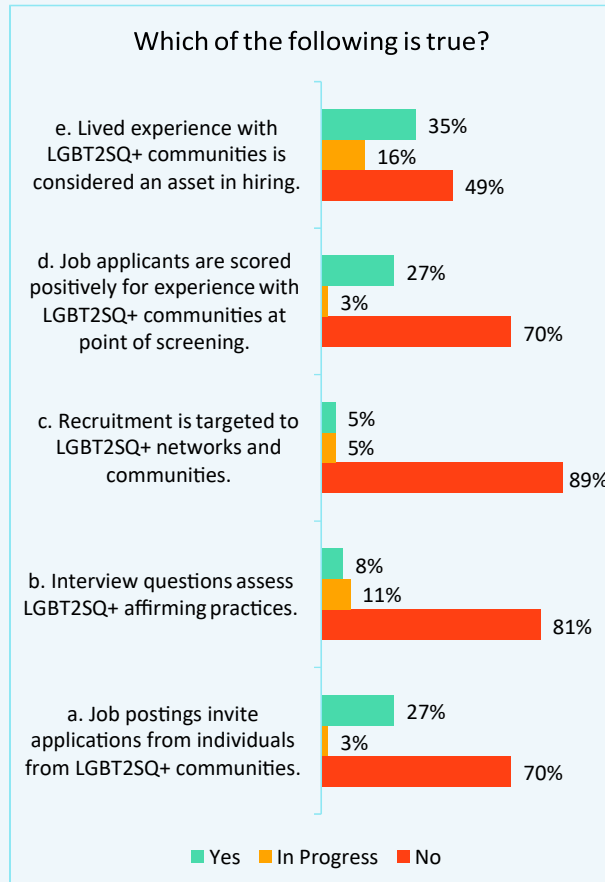
A. Governance and Leadership



The first section of the organizational self-assessment tool evaluated the ways in which agencies were developing competencies in aspects of governance and leadership such as policies, human resource practices and representation of LGBT2SQ+ staff, leadership and board of directors. This section also included questions about data collection. Thirty-nine agencies responded to this section, but two responses were incomplete which demonstrate a commitment from agencies to better understand where they are currently situated in this area of work. The sector scored well in Privacy and Confidentiality, as 64% of respondents scored "well on your way" or demonstrated "affirming practice." Overall, some agencies indicated progress in their work in human resources and governance benchmarks including in hiring and retention and whether agency boards of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into their governance. Some agencies indicate they currently engage in education and have access to resources and information related to LGBT2SQ+ topics and expertise with 33% of agencies scoring a rating of "affirming practice". However, this does not necessarily mean agencies are centering the integration of this expertise into all facets of planning. Overall, the results in this section indicate that most agencies scored below minimum levels at either "some progress" (orange) or "requires attention" (red) in 9 out of 10 benchmarks.

Agencies indicated some overall progress in questions evaluating LGBT2SQ+ inclusion in hiring and recruitment yet demonstrated very little targeted recruitment to LGBT2SQ+ networks and communities. Agencies were asked about whether they scored job applicants positively for experience with LGBT2SQ+ communities and only 27% of them indicated they did. Additionally, only a small percentage (8%) of agencies indicated they assessed candidates in interviews for LGBT2SQ+ affirming practices. This signals there is a lack of intentionality to include LGBT2SQ+ affirming practices as a core competency in potential employees and perhaps a lack of understanding of what these affirming practices would entail.

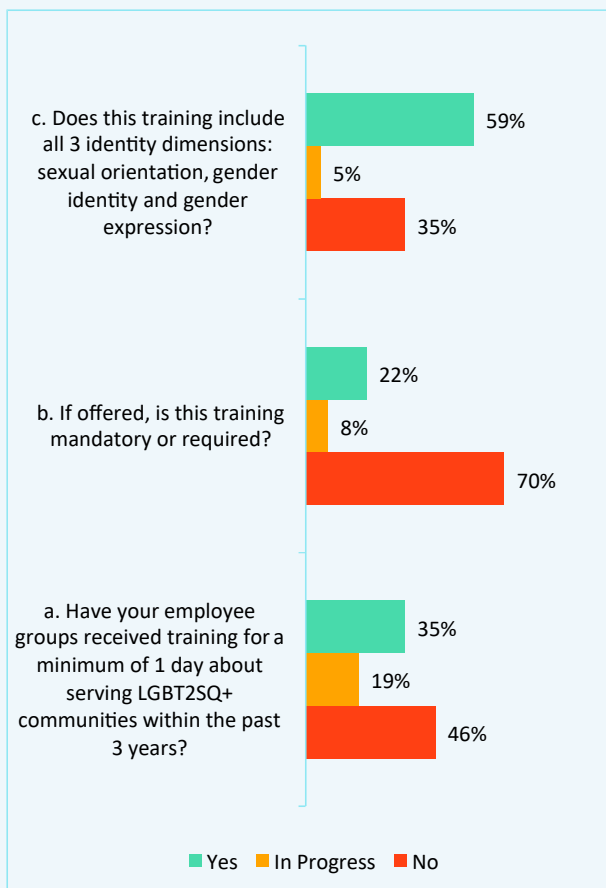
Do your human resource practices explicitly encourage LGBT2SQ+ inclusion?



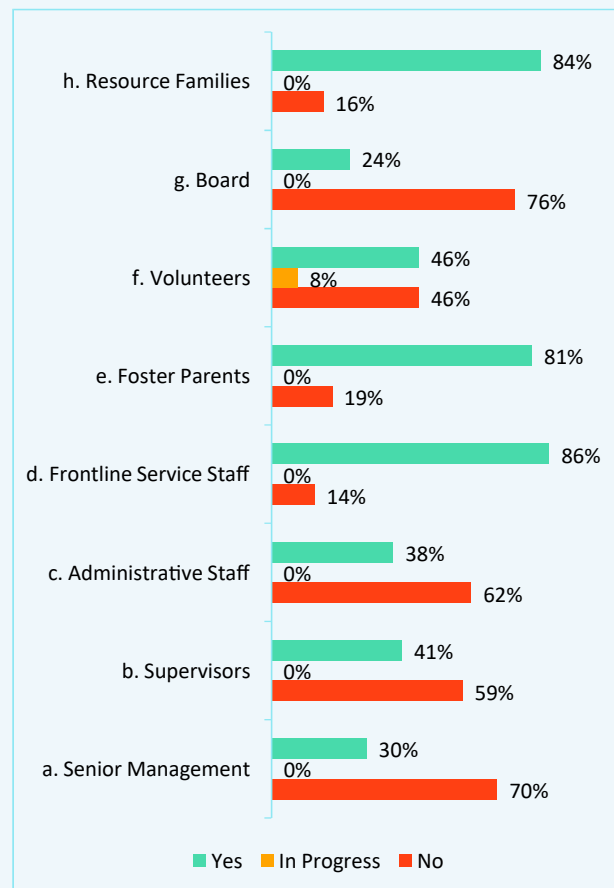
Agencies showed some progress and affirming practice in their inclusion of SOGIE in training offered to staff however most agencies did not make the training mandatory. While some agencies scored “yes” (35%) or “in progress” (19%) to whether employee groups have received one day of training that focused on serving LGBT2SQ+ communities, the timeframe is within a 3-year period. Questions arise about whether this is the only time that staff participate in focused SOGIE training at their agencies.

When agencies were asked about whether there are any openly “out” LGBT2SQ+ identified staff at their agencies, the scores are varied across different service areas and departments. Agencies scored high in the areas of Frontline Service Staff (86%), Resource Families (84%), and Foster Parents (81%) yet agencies reported much lower scores in leadership and Board roles. Clearly, there is a lack of representation of the LGBT2SQ+ community in roles that hold decision-making power and influence at agencies.

Have your employees received training about serving LGBT2SQ+ communities?



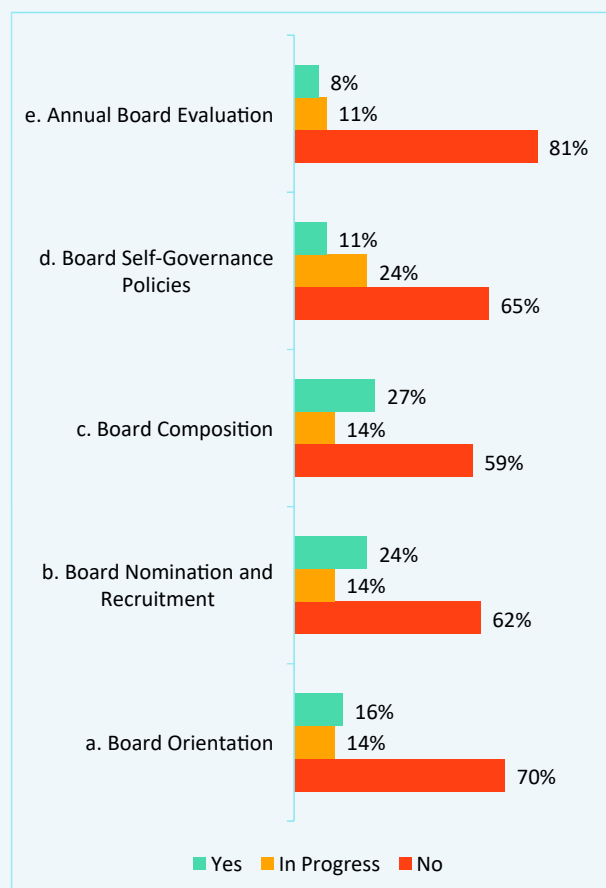
Do you have any openly “out” LGBT2SQ+ identified staff in the following staffing



Agencies have indicated there is work to be done in the area of agency governance. When asked if their board of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into every aspect of governance, it is clear there is a lack of integration. This is an area for growth in the sector as agencies need to work towards a more inclusive organization in every area and will need to focus on holding governors accountable for improving outcomes for LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

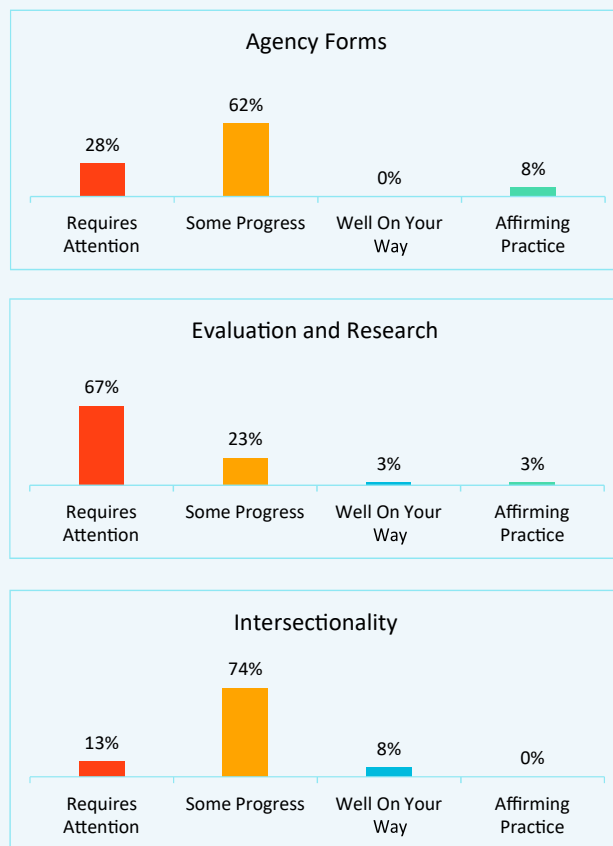
Representation of the LGBT2SQ+ community at all levels of an organization is vital if agencies wish to uphold their commitment to the families they serve, to better understand the diverse and intersectional needs within LGBT2SQ+ families and to experience services with those holding similar identities. While the concept of representation should not be expected to do all the work in achieving more equitable outcomes, it plays a critical role in reflecting and understanding the needs and realities of local communities. Representation of the LGBT2SQ+ community at leadership and decision-making positions is also important for LGBT2SQ+ staff to work in an environment with access to mentors and where they can see themselves as potential leaders at their agencies.

Does your board of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into the following?



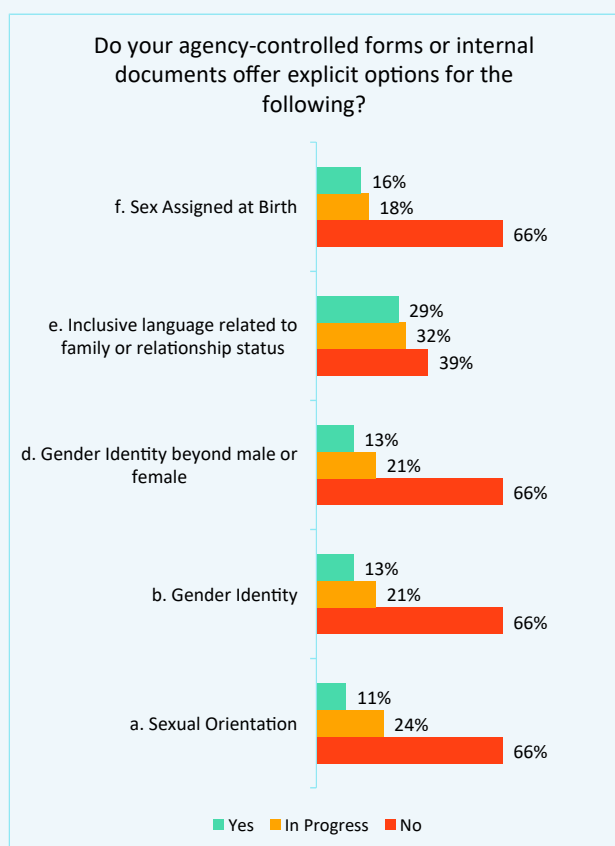
B. Environment and Climate

In this section, the tool assessed if agencies' environments and climates were affirming to the LGBT2SQ+ community (this includes families and the agency's internal stakeholders such as staff, volunteers and community partners). Topics such as intersectionality, resources, celebrations and outreach were included in the questions. The chart shows that agencies have scored "affirming practice" and "well on your way" in 2 benchmarks out of 13 in this area, particularly in [Inclusive] Language and Community Outreach. However, most agencies scored below minimum levels at either "some progress" or "requires attention" in 11 out of 13 benchmarks. More significantly, the Ontario child welfare sector scored at "requires attention" for several benchmarks, including: Evaluation and Research; Systems Advocacy; Allocation of Funds; Partnerships; and Public Relations. It is also significant that most of the sector scored only at "some progress" for critical benchmarks such as: Community Celebrations; Intersectionality; Physical Facility (e.g., All-gender washrooms); and Agency Forms (eg. LGBT2SQ+ inclusive language).

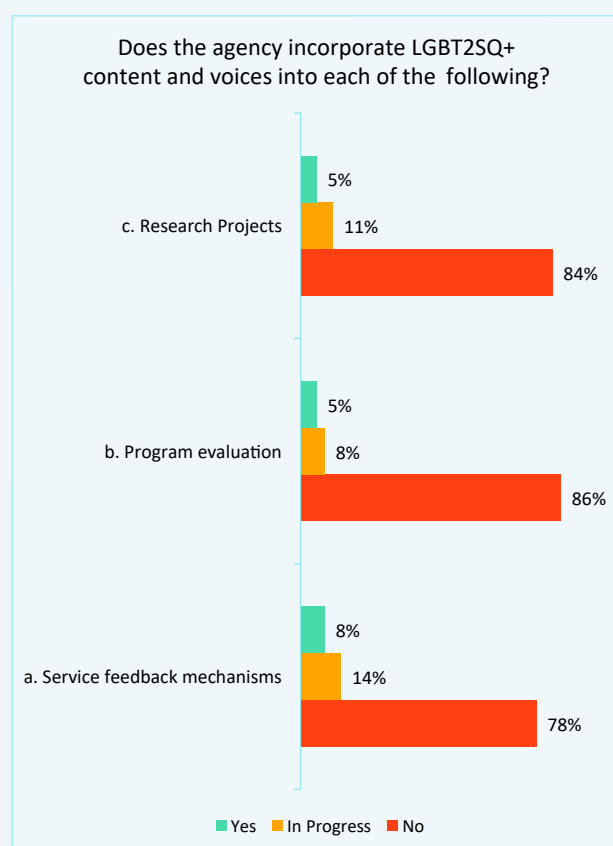


When asked about agency forms, agencies demonstrated some movement in the area of incorporating inclusive language related to family or relationship status, gender identity and gender identity beyond male or female, as well as sexual orientation however the largest scores for every area were in the “no” category. These indicators on agency forms are markers for inclusion and will require attention going forward from the sector in a consistent, thoughtful approach. Youth participants in the focus groups inferred this as well as they shared the lack of knowledge about their identity between staff when transferred to a different service.

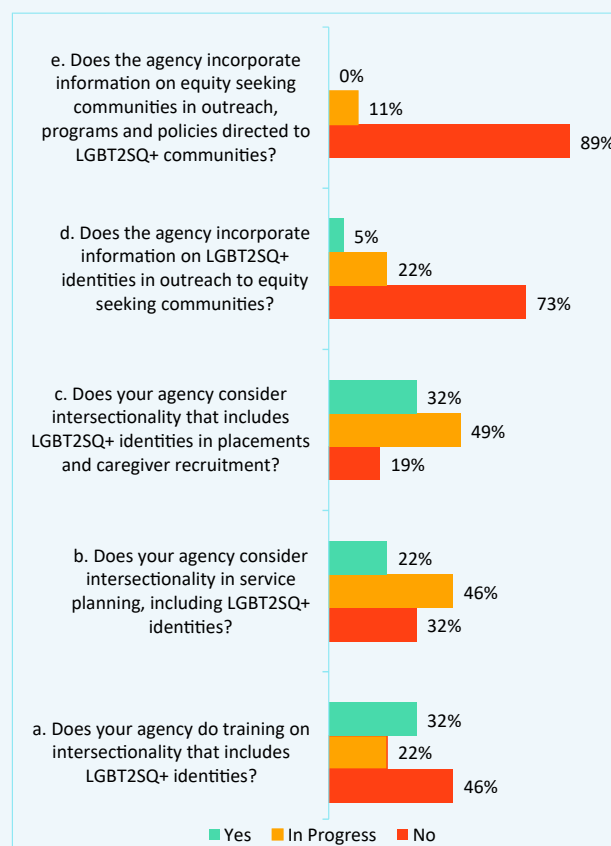
To understand whether agencies are including LGBT2SQ+ content and voices into evaluation and research, agencies were asked about research projects, program evaluation and service feedback mechanisms. In all three areas, agencies scored low and most respondents answered “no”. This demonstrates that there is a lack of integration of LGBT2SQ+ specific content and little to no understanding of voices from the LGBT2SQ+ that are asked to share feedback to the agencies that are serving their families.



n=38 agencies, 1 agency did not respond to the benchmark questions



The self- assessment included a section of questions related to intersectionality and respondents demonstrated some progress (74%) in this category. However, agencies scored better on some questions than others. Agencies indicated some progress (49%) in whether they consider intersectionality among LGBT2SQ+ identities in placement and caregiver recruitment and 32% of respondents answered “yes” to the question regarding training on intersectionality that includes LGBT2SQ+ identities. There is room for considerable growth in the other aspects of the questions about intersectionality. For example, when asked whether their agency incorporates information on equity-seeking communities in outreach, programs and policies directed to LGBT2SQ+ communities, not one agency indicated “yes”. Only 5% of respondents answered that they incorporated information on LGBT2SQ+ identities in their outreach to equity-seeking communities.

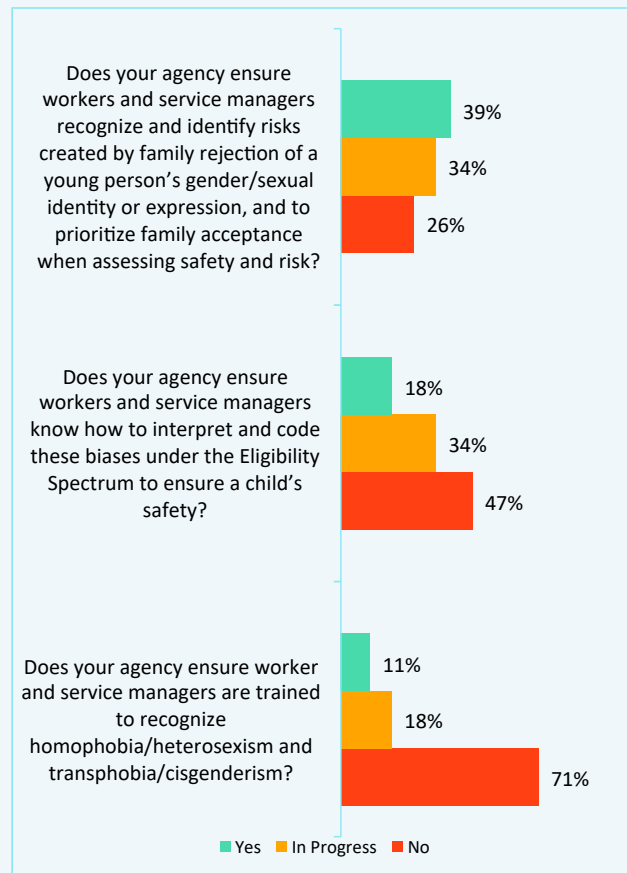


C. Service Delivery

This section evaluated how agencies scored in all aspects of service delivery – from intake and assessment to ongoing services, children’s services and out-of-home care. Most agencies scored well at “affirming practice” or “well on your way” for Service Training. Most agencies scored “requires attention” or “some progress” on all remaining 6 benchmarks in this area. Many agencies scored “requires attention” in several benchmarks, including Foster/Out-of-Home Care; Family Services; Intake and Assessment; and Service Training. Although there are only 7 benchmarks identified in the Service Delivery section, they form the crux of the critical work provided by child welfare agencies to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

Intake and Assessment

This area of the survey asked questions about the initial decisions made at the entry point of the child welfare system. Agencies demonstrated some work that is occurring about whether they ensure workers and service managers identify risks created by family rejection of a young person's gender/sexual identity or expression and whether they prioritize family acceptance when assessing safety and risk. 39% of respondents answered "yes" to this question and 34% answered "in progress" demonstrating some capacity in this area. However, there appears to be less capacity in whether an agency ensures workers and service managers know how to code these biases under the Eligibility Spectrum as only 18% answered "yes" and 34% answered "in progress. The area that requires significant attention is the question about whether an agency ensures workers and service managers are trained to recognize homophobia/heterosexism and transphobia/cisgenderism as 71% of respondents answered "no". It is clear there is a lack of understanding and analysis on how to recognize this area of oppression at the intake and assessment level of the system.

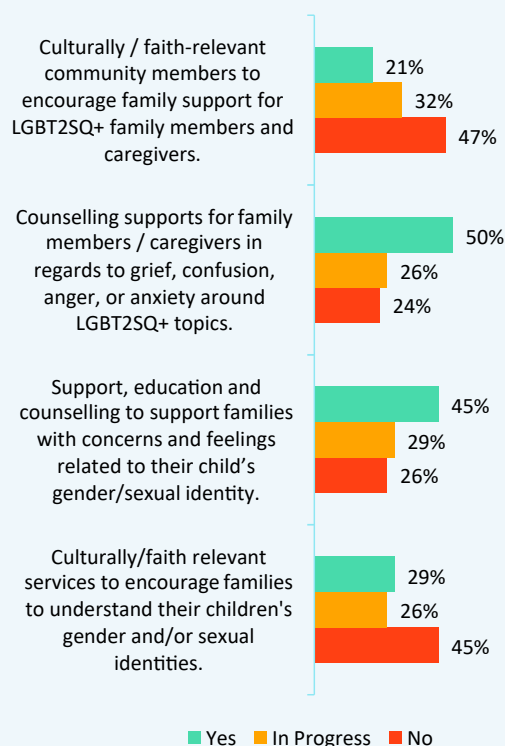


Family Services

This area provided some insight into the ways agencies are providing adequate support to families receiving ongoing services as it pertains to LGBT2SQ+ capacity and understanding. 50% of respondents answered "yes" and 26% answered "in progress" in response to a question asking whether agencies offer counselling supports for family members/caregivers in regard to grief, confusion, anger, or anxiety around LGBT2SQ+ topics. Another question about support, education, and counselling to support families with concerns and feelings related to their child's gender/sexual identity had similar scores with 50% of respondents answering "yes" and 26% of respondents answering "in progress." In other words, agencies appear to be developing capacity in connecting with community supports and potentially with community partners who can provide services to families in need of this support.

However, agencies had lower scores on questions about whether agencies connect with services that offer culturally/faith-relevant community support to families and culturally/faith-relevant services to encourage families to understand their child's gender or sexual identity.

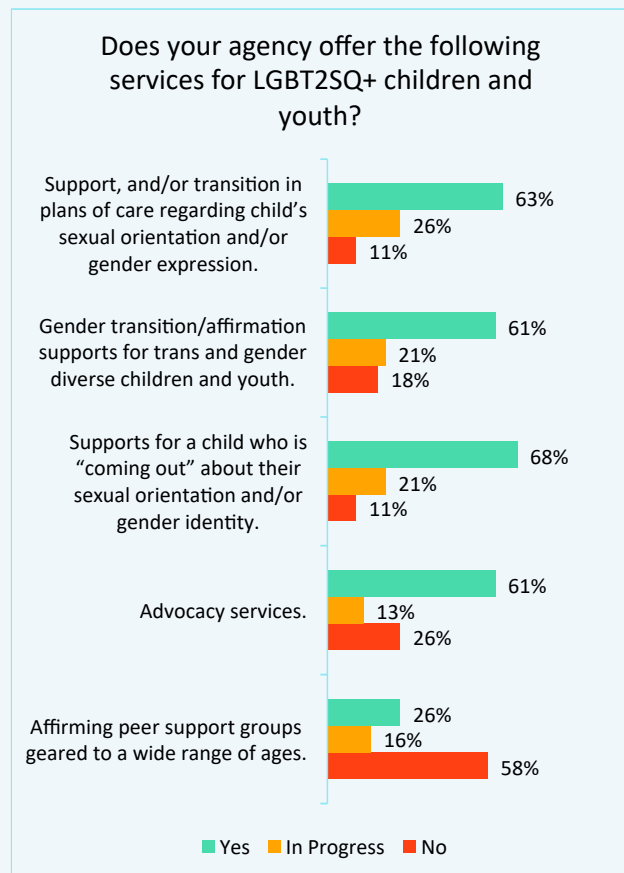
Does your agency provide the following as part of its services to families?



Children's Services

Questions in this category asked if agencies are offering supports for LGBT2SQ+ children and youth. Some agencies demonstrated some capacity in this area such as whether they offer support and/or transition in plans of care regarding a child's sexual orientation and/or gender expression. 63% of respondents indicated "yes" and 26% indicated "in progress" and there were similar scores in questions about gender transition/affirmation supports for trans and gender diverse children and youth (61% and 21% respectively). Agencies demonstrated some capacity, as well, in whether they offer supports for a child who is "coming out" about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity although it is unclear what the supports are and whether they have been offered throughout a child's experience in the child welfare system. As mentioned in the Youth Voice section (page 19), youth shared they felt that had to come out several times to different child welfare workers.

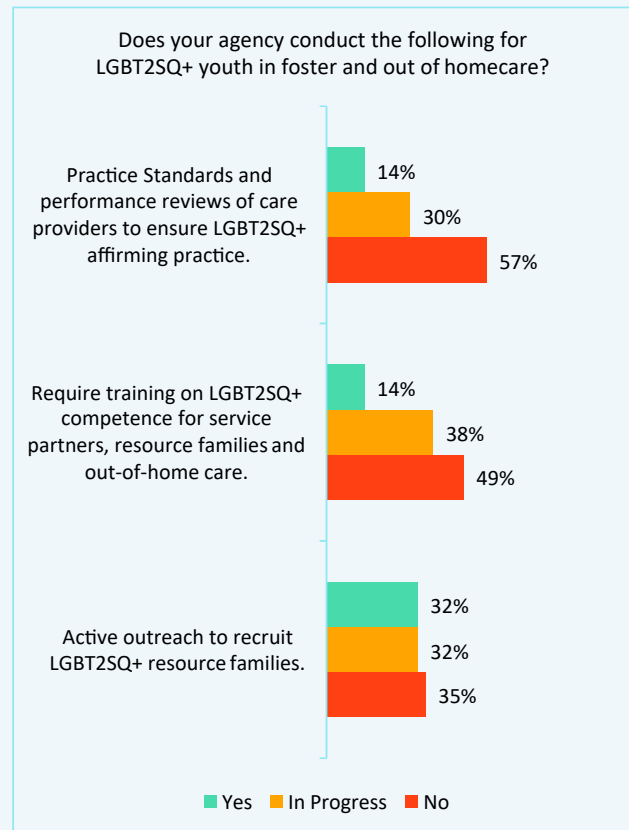
Agencies did not score well when asked about peer support groups geared to a wide range of ages as 58% of respondents answered "no" to this question. This is an area the sector will need to make progress on given the established need for peer support for this community.



Residential Services

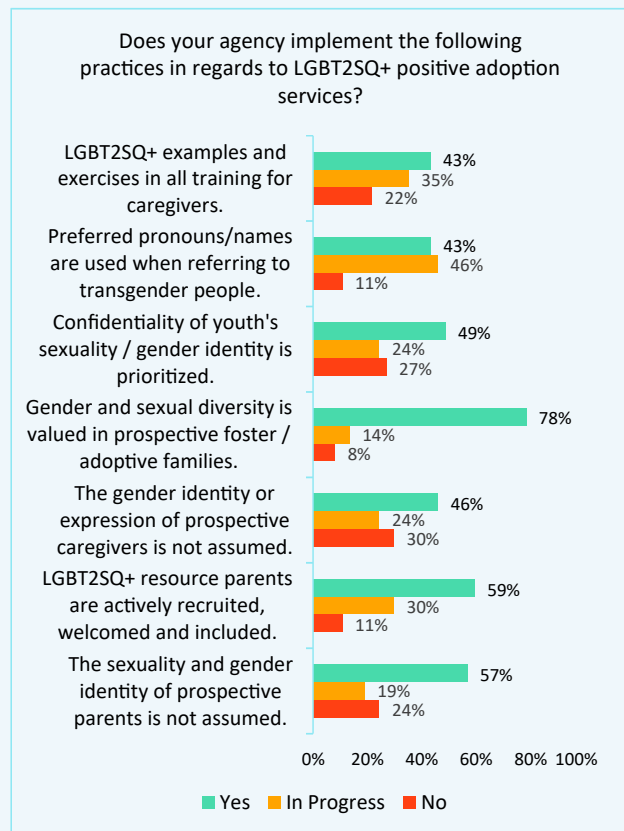
Foster and Out-of-Home Care

These questions evaluated foster and out-of-home care services. Overall, results show that agencies require further growth in this area. Questions were asked about whether agencies conduct practice standards and performance reviews of care providers to ensure LGBT2SQ+ affirming practice and only 14% of respondents indicated "yes." It is also noteworthy that 57% of respondents answered "no" to this question. Most agencies have also indicated that they do not require training (49%) on LGBT2SQ+ competence for service and partners, resource families and out-of-home care or the requirement is "in progress" (38%). This indicates there is growth needed in developing capacity and integrated this learning into this area of the child welfare system.



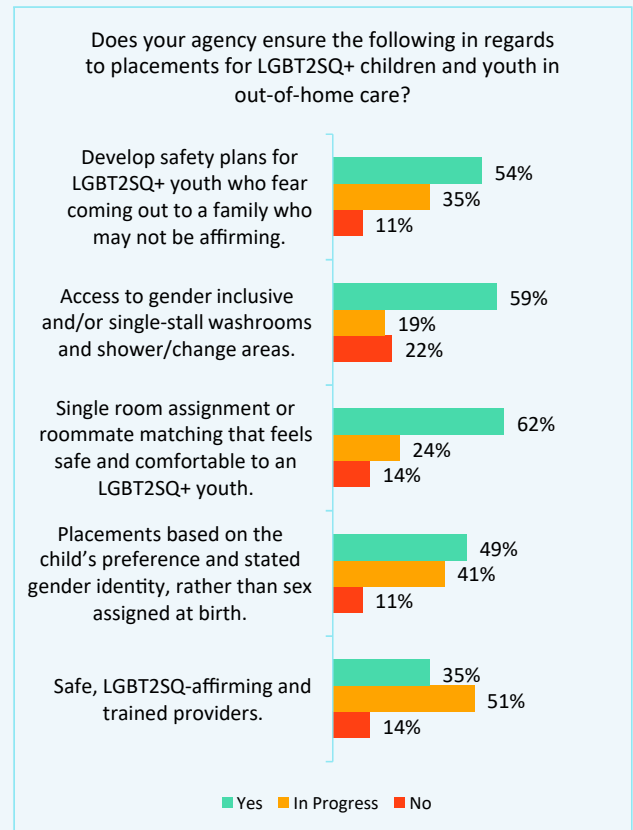
Foster and Adoption Services

Agencies scored well in the question asking if gender and sexual diversity is valued in prospective foster/adoptive families. 78% answered "yes" and 14% answered that this is "in progress." It inspires hope to see that agencies value prospective resources parents who have diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. It is also hopeful to read results where this is a value within this stakeholder group however it is unclear of ways this translates to daily practice. Agencies appear to be building capacity in not making assumptions about the sexuality and gender identity of prospective parents as 57% respondents answered "yes" and 19% answered "in progress" to the question on this topic. Agencies also scored well in the area of actively recruiting, welcoming and including LGBT2SQ+ resource parents with 69% answering "yes" and 30% answering "in progress." However, responses to the other questions in this section indicate that agencies require further capacity in the inclusion of LGBT2SQ+ examples in training for caregivers and including preferred pronouns/names when referring to transgender people.



Placement

Overall, agencies had a higher score in affirming practice (26%) for evaluating whether agencies ensure LGBT2SQ+ services and supports are offered to LGBT2SQ+ children and youth in care, although much work needs to be done in this area. When asked about single room assignments or roommate matching that feels safe and comfortable to LGBT2SQ+ youth, 62% of respondents answered “yes” and 59% of respondents answered “yes” to whether there is access to gender inclusive and/or single-stall washrooms and shower areas. However, even though most of the “no” answers to these questions had a low percentage, it still requires further reflection for the sector that placements still exist for children and youth that agencies acknowledge are not safe and affirming and/or do not include a safety plan for LGBT2SQ+ youth. Much work is required in order to ensure all placements are safe, affirming and welcoming for LGBT2SQ+ youth and to help contribute to a community of potential allies.



The following areas have been identified to support the sector to prioritize actions for systemic and organizational change regarding the provision of equitable services for LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

1. Governance and Leadership

- 1.1 Professional Development
- 1.2 Human Resources – hiring, recruitment, retention
- 1.3 Policy, Oversight, Planning

2. Environment and Climate

- 2.1 Intersectionality
- 2.2 Evaluation/research
- 2.3 Agency forms, language, data

3. Service Delivery

- 3.1 Intake, assessment
- 3.2 Family Services
- 3.3 Children's Services
- 3.4 Resources – out-of-home care, placement; foster/adopt services

These areas require further attention to reduce the disparities in child welfare service delivery to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. This report extends the understanding of the landscape of child welfare services with respect to LGBT2SQ+ services. The findings also provide insights into further research possibilities that will broaden the literature available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The OACAS recommends that the Ontario child welfare sector establish steps to improve the sector's capacity to provide inclusive, intersectional, decolonizing and equitable services that affirm and support LGBT2SQ+ communities and produce better outcomes. The illustrations on the following pages provide a visual representation of the recommendations.

The Ministry, the OACAS and individual agencies all have key roles to play in developing comprehensive work plans to implement sector-wide change to achieve better outcomes. This work ought to be integrated and embedded within other sector-wide equity-based change strategies, such as the race equity practices as outlined through the work of One Vision One Voice and the sector's Indigenous commitments towards Truth and Reconciliation. The work must also integrate lenses from other equity-seeking communities based on other identity dimensions, such as race, gender, disability, newcomer status, age, income/class, faith, etc., as the majority of LGBT2SQ+ people served by the sector will experience intersecting barriers based on more than one identity dimension.

These recommendations are integrated into a SOGIE lens and framework to improve outcomes for LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. It is recommended that all areas of this framework apply a focus on two-Spirit, trans, gender diverse and intersectional identities.

A. Governance and Leadership

1. Sector Support

- ▶ MCCSS and OACAS to support and guide equitable child welfare services alongside LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

2. Intersectional SOGIE lens

- ▶ Integrate an intersectional, decolonizing SOGIE lens at all areas of organizational functioning, including:
 - ▶ Governance and Leadership – policies and procedures, human resources, professional development, etc.;
 - ▶ Environment and Climate –evaluation/research, forms, visuals, branding, publications, etc.; and
 - ▶ Service Delivery - all levels of the organization (such as service, management, resource families, Board and volunteers) center experiences of LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. on two-spirit, trans, gender diverse and intersectional communities.

3. Policy Framework

- ▶ Agencies – Develop a robust, SOGIE policy framework with an intersectional, decolonizing LGBT2SQ+ lens to prevent discrimination, create a diverse and inclusive culture within organizations and ensure equitable service delivery.

4. Professional Development

- ▶ OACAS – Support the delivery of intersectional, knowledge-based SOGIE education for agency staff
- ▶ Agencies – Require, monitor and ensure that all members of their agency (staff, management, resource families, volunteers and Board) receive effective, intersectional, decolonizing knowledge-based SOGIE training

5. Diverse Representation and Belonging

- ▶ Agencies – Ensure that their agency and services provided are representative of trans, gender diverse, intersectional and Indigenous LGBT2SQ+ identities and SOGIE-affirming individuals to promote a sense of inclusion and belonging.



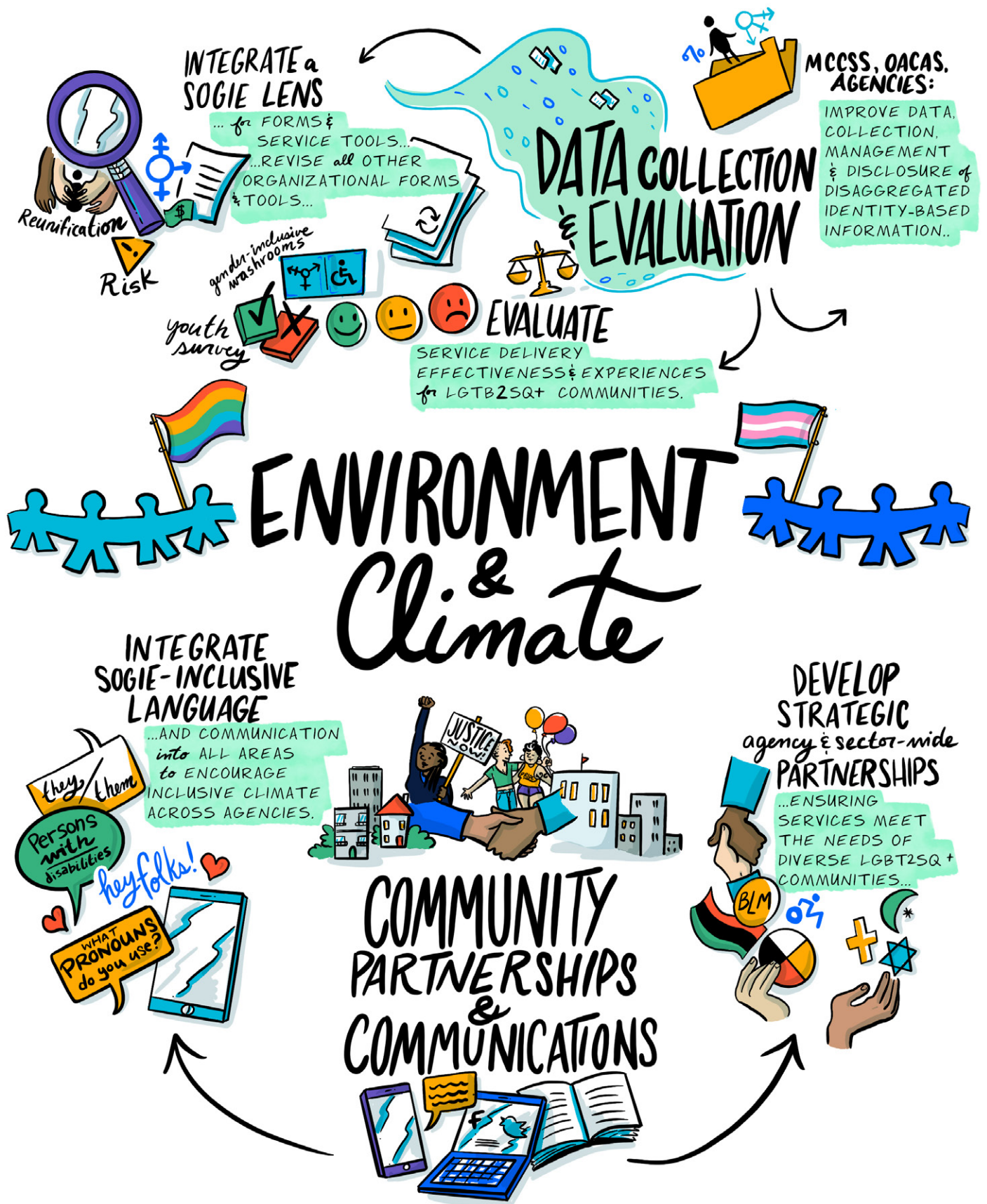
B. Environment and Climate

1. Data and Evaluation

- ▶ MCCSS, OACAS, Agencies – Improve data collection, management and disclosure of disaggregated identity-based information within CPIN related to LGBT2SQ+ identities.
- ▶ Integrate a SOGIE lens for service tools and forms to increase inclusion and improve SOGIE data collection, including risk, safety, and reunification assessment tools
- ▶ Revise all other organizational forms and tools with a SOGIE lens to increase inclusion and SOGIE data collection, including Human Resources, resource parent and volunteer forms.
- ▶ Evaluate service delivery effectiveness and experiences for LGBT2SQ+ communities, including a youth survey.

2. Community Partnerships and Communications

- ▶ Develop strategic agency and sector-wide partnerships to ensure services are equitable and meet the needs of LGBT2SQ+ communities. Develop these partnerships alongside LGBT2SQ+ specific communities; Indigenous (inclusive of all First Nation, Métis and Inuit), culturally-specific and faith-specific organizations; and intersecting systems, such as out-of-home care, youth justice, newcomer and mental health.
- ▶ Integrate SOGIE-inclusive and affirming language and communications into all areas to encourage an inclusive and welcoming climate across agencies.



C. Service Delivery

1. Knowledge-based SOGIE Service Framework

- ▶ Develop a knowledge-based, intersectional, decolonizing SOGIE equity service framework that will identify benchmarks, optimal practices, competencies and accountability measures for all roles and services within the child welfare and out-of-home care systems
- ▶ The service framework will focus on specific practices, as compared to a policy framework.
- ▶ Identify and integrate SOGIE-affirming practices and tools in intake/assessment, family service and children's service delivery, placement and out-of-home care.

2. Out-of-Home Placements, Resource Families

- ▶ Agencies – Assess all out-of-home placements [2] before and after placing children or youth in care to ensure placements are knowledgeable of SOGIE identities and lived experiences as well as inclusive and affirming to LGBT2SQ+ children and youth
- ▶ OACAS –Engage the child and youth residential sector to evaluate and improve SOGIE knowledge among Outside Paid Resources.
- ▶ Launch a targeted recruitment strategy seeking diverse LGBT2SQ+ and SOGIE-competent resource families, especially Indigenous, intersectional and trans identities.



Limitations

There are some limitations to the information collected in this project. Since the survey involved agencies self-assessing their capacity, we can expect a self-reporting bias, in that agencies may have responded in a more positive light than a neutral third party may have assessed them. However, as the first initiative undertaken in this topic by the sector, the aggregate survey results provide a snapshot of where the sector stands and what work needs to be done to build sector knowledge and capacity to serve LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families.

The survey was aimed primarily at non-Indigenous child welfare agencies. Since then, steps have been taken with the Indigenous child well-being sector in a new way to better understand Indigenous priorities and explore possible collaborations as may be desired by the Indigenous child well-being sector.

Conclusion

The provincial roll-up of the Ontario child welfare agency LGBT2SQ+ self- assessment surveys produced data that sheds light on the current landscape regarding service provision to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. The OACAS LGBT2SQ+ Committee recognizes that the child welfare system has demonstrated a few promising practices in the areas of Governance and Leadership, and Service Delivery. However, there is a substantial amount of work to do to achieve the goal of inclusive services and supports to LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families. Child welfare staff, leaders and governors can be compelled to effectively address the concerns related to the disparity of services and disparate outcomes for LGBT2SQ+ children and youth. There is hope that the findings of this report will be a call to action for us all in the child welfare sector to shift the experiences of LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families to equitable services and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

& WHAT WE'VE HEARD from YOUTH...

INTERSECTIONAL
SOCIE LENS



Agency should be knowledgeable about LGBTQ2SQ+ issues!



GOVERNANCE & Leadership

SECTOR & GRASSROOTS support

SOCIE POLICY FRAMEWORK



Involve us in training and in peer support.



Training child welfare workers better with ongoing training.



DIVERSE REPRESENTATION



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

knowledge-based
mandatory training

SOCIE SERVICE FRAMEWORK



SOCIE-inclusive & affirming
RESOURCE FAMILIES



supported by
SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

SERVICE DELIVERY

Gender neutral bathrooms in group homes!



We need more specific support around gender identity & non-binary issues.

Ensure foster families are screened to be supportive of us!



ENVIRONMENT & Climate



collection

management



BETTER data

SOCIE lens

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



More workshops and events for youth on LGBTQ2SQ+ issues!

ENDNOTES

1. SOGIE is an abbreviation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression.
2. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. 2019. *All Children All Families 2019 Report: Celebrating Everyday Changemakers in Child Welfare*.
3. Wilson, B. D. M., Cooper, K., Kastanis, A., & Nezhad, S., 2014
4. Smith, A., Stewart, D., Poon, C., Saewyc, E., & the McCreary Centre Society, 2011
5. Abramovich, 2012; Baiocco, et al., 2015; Elze, 2011; Steiglitiz, 2010
6. Burczycka, M. & Conroy, S., 2017
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OACAS Ontario Child Welfare LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment

LGBT2SQ+ Assessment Tool Questions

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) released the *Ontario Child Welfare LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment* in the fall of 2018. This is an online survey for all Ontario child welfare agencies to self-assess their organizational progress toward achieving gender and sexual equity, particularly in relation to LGBT2SQ communities. The survey assesses three main areas of organizational functioning: (a) governance, policies, human resources; (b) environment and climate; and (c) service delivery. The survey was developed by the OACAS LGBT2SQ Committee.

The following is a printer-friendly version of the LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment Tool questions. Questions require a response indicating "Yes," "No" or "In Progress." Each group of questions includes a space for responder "Notes" to assist each individual agency to develop an agency work plan. Although agency responses are confidential, aggregate data will be analyzed to provide a scan of the Ontario child welfare sector for equity planning purposes.

Benchmark	Title	Body
A. Governance, Policies and Human Resources		
1 Agency Policies (Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment, Inclusion, Grievance)	Do all of the following policies explicitly include all 3 of the following identity dimensions? – sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression? Do the organizational mission and values clearly reflect a commitment to inclusion and equity to all, including diverse sexual and gender identities? Does the agency have an Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression or Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Framework that incorporates sexual and gender diversities? Does the agency have a clear policy statement that encourages inclusive language, behaviors or practices related to sexual orientation and gender identity? Does the agency have grievance policies and procedures that include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression? Does the agency have a youth rights policy that includes sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression?	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression.
2 Human Resources (Hiring and Recruitment)	Do your human resource practices explicitly encourage LGBT2SQ+ inclusion? Which of the following is true. Job postings invite applications from individuals from LGBT2SQ+ communities. Interview questions assess LGBT2SQ+ affirming practices.	

Benchmark		Title	Body
		Recruitment is targeted to LGBT2SQ+ networks and communities.	
		Job applicants are scored positively for experience with LGBT2SQ+ communities at point of screening.	
		Lived experience with LGBT2SQ+ communities is considered an asset in hiring.	
3	Human Resources (Retention)	Do you have any openly “out” LGBT2SQ+ identified staff in the following staffing levels? Senior Management Supervisors Administrative Staff Frontline Service Staff Foster Parents Volunteers Board Resource Families	
4	Human Resources (Professional Development and Staff Training)	Have your employees received training about serving LGBT2SQ+ communities? Have your employee groups received training for a minimum of 1 day about serving LGBT2SQ+ communities within the past 3 years? If offered, is this training mandatory or required? Does this training include all 3 identity dimensions: sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression?	Employee groups include: senior management, supervisors, administrative staff, frontline service staff.
5	Agency Education, Resources and Information	Does the agency have access to information or access to resources and experts on any of the following topics or issues? Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression Two-spirit Topics & Teachings Black/African Canadian LGBT2SQ+ Topics Faith & LGBT2SQ+ Topics	
6	Staff Recognition	Does the agency recognize staff for LGBT2SQ+ competency? Does the agency recognize and acknowledge staff members who are actively demonstrating LGBT2SQ+ competence in their practice. (i.e. through award nominations, highlighting work in communications, etc.)	
7	Data Collection	Does the agency conduct any of the following practices - for each of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, Two-spirit, LGBT2SQ+ First Nations, Inuit and Métis topics? Regular data collection on LGBT2SQ+ service recipients? Survey of staff on LGBT2SQ+ awareness and sensitivity. Satisfaction surveys of LGBT2SQ+ children, youth and families	

Benchmark	Title	Body
8 Privacy and Confidentiality	Does the agency ensure privacy and confidentiality related to a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity?	Does the agency ensure privacy and confidentiality of all information related to a person's gender identity? (Including any data that could identify a person's assigned sex at birth such as past legal documentation or medical history, and including confidentiality from a youth's family, school etc. as desired.)
9 Agency Governance	Does your board of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into the following?	Board Orientation Board Nomination and Recruitment Board Composition Board Self-Governance Policies Annual Board Evaluation
10 Oversight and Planning Processes	Is LGBT2SQ+ content integrated into the following systems and practices?	Agency Planning Exercises Agency Committees LGBT2SQ+ or Equity Ombudsperson or Champion Anti-Oppression Framework or Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Framework Service Recipient Advisory Groups Practice Standards and performance reviews of service and care providers

B. Environment & Climate (including external relations)

1 Communications & Visibility	Are LGBT2SQ+-related images, flags, photos and symbols consistently included in the following?	Agency promotional material Agency website and social media Agency hallways and waiting areas
2 Language	Is gender affirming language used in the following?	Preferred pronouns and names are used when referring to any transgender individuals in all documentation and face-to-face and other interactions. Legal or former names of transgender children, youth or other individuals are only used in exceptional and official cases of which they are informed about, and are not shared or used in any way outside of that without the express permission of the transgender person in question.
3 Information Resources	Does your agency have the following resources for its staff and service recipients?	LGBT2SQ+ Terminology Resource List LGBT2SQ+ Community Resources Guide
4 Public Relations	Has the agency run a public relations or awareness campaign to help communities understand challenges faced by sexual and gender minority youth and children?	
5 Agency Forms	Do your agency-controlled forms or internal documents offer explicit options for the following?	Sexual Orientation

Questions List – Rev. Apr. 9, 2019

Benchmark		Title	Body
		Gender Identity Sex Assigned at Birth Gender Identity beyond male or female	i.e., Transgender, Trans man / Trans woman, gender non-conforming, etc. e.g. parent 1 and 2 rather than mother and father
		Inclusive language related to family or relationship status	
6	Physical Facility	Does your agency have the following? At least one all-gender washroom available for all service recipients and staff. Provide information on where people can find all-gender washrooms. Policy and signage on gender-segregated washrooms indicating that people may select the washroom most comfortable in relation to their lived gender identity.	
7	Community Outreach	Does your agency engage local LGBT2SQ+ subject matter experts in the development and delivery of training? Local or regional LGBT2SQ+ community events. Collaborations or networks with LGBT2SQ+ agencies.	
8	Partnerships	Does the agency employ its best efforts to require all its partners to meet its own LGBT2SQ+ inclusive standards?	
9	Intersectionality	Does your agency do training on intersectionality that includes LGBT2SQ+ identities? Does your agency consider intersectionality in service planning, including LGBT2SQ+ identities? Does your agency consider intersectionality that includes LGBT2SQ+ identities in placements and caregiver recruitment? Does the agency incorporate information on LGBT2SQ+ identities in its outreach to equity seeking communities, such as Indigenous, Black/African Canadian, Francophone, Cultural, Ethno-specific, Language or Faith Communities, Communities of Persons with Disabilities, etc.? Does the agency incorporate information on various communities as described above in its outreach, programs and policies directed to LGBT2SQ+ communities?	
10	Allocation of Funds	Does the agency allocate funds or have a budget line for LGBT2SQ+ inclusion efforts, such as training, hiring outside experts, events?	
11	Systems Advocacy	Has the agency taken advocacy stances related to LGBT2SQ+ public policies?	Independently or in partnership with other agencies.
12	Evaluation and Research	Does the agency incorporate LGBT2SQ+ content and voices into each of the following? Service feedback mechanisms Program evaluation Research projects	
13	Community Celebration	Does the agency recognize the following? LGBT2SQ+ Pride Day/Week/Month Trans Day of Visibility or Trans Day of Remembrance Other day(s) of LGBT2SQ+ significance	

Benchmark		Title	Body
C. Service Delivery			
1	Service Training		Are all service staff trained to conduct inclusive conversations with young people and families about gender/sexual diversity and to effectively engage a young person who may be LGBT2SQ+?
2	Intake and Assessment, including Eligibility Spectrum		Does your agency ensure worker and service managers are trained to recognize homophobia/heterosexism and transphobia/cisgenderism? Does your agency ensure workers and service managers know how to interpret and code these biases under the Eligibility Spectrum to ensure a child's safety? Does your agency ensure workers and service managers recognize and identify risks created by family rejection of a young person's gender/sexual identity or expression, and to prioritize family acceptance when assessing safety and risk?
3	Family Services		Does your agency provide the following as part of its services to families? Culturally/faith relevant services to encourage families to understand and support their children's gender and/or sexual identities and expression. LGBT2SQ+ support, education and counselling to support families with concerns and feelings related to their child's gender/sexual identity, where appropriate. Counselling supports for family members and caregivers in regards to grief, confusion, anger, or anxiety around LGBT2SQ+ topics. Culturally/faith-relevant community members or leaders to encourage family acceptance and support for LGBT2SQ+ family members and caregivers.
4	Children's Services		Does your agency offer the following services for LGBT2SQ+ children and youth? Affirming peer support groups geared to a wide range of ages. Advocacy services. Supports for a child who is "coming out" about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Gender transition/affirmation supports (socially, medically, and legally) for trans and gender diverse children and youth. Integration of affirmation, support, advocacy, and/or transition into plans of care regarding a child's sexual orientation and/or gender identity and/or gender expression, while adhering to privacy and confidentiality.
5	Placement		Does your agency ensure the following in regards to placements for LGBT2SQ+ children and youth in out-of-home care? Safe, LGBT2SQ+ affirming and trained providers. Placements based on the child's comfort, preference and stated gender identity, rather than sex assigned at birth Single room assignment or roommate matching that feels safe and comfortable to an LGBT2SQ+ youth. Access to gender inclusive and/or single-stall washrooms and shower/change areas. Develop safety plans for LGBT2SQ+ youth who come out or fear coming out to a family who may not be affirming.
6	Foster and Out of Home Care		Does your agency conduct the following for LGBT2SQ+ youth in foster and out of homecare? Active outreach to recruit LGBT2SQ+ resource families. Require training on LGBT2SQ+ competence for service partners, resource families and out-of-home care. Practice Standards and performance reviews of care providers to ensure LGBT2SQ+ affirming practice.

Benchmark	Title	Body
7 Foster and Adoption Services	Does your agency implement the following practices in regards to LGBT2SQ+ positive adoption services? The sexuality and gender identity/expression of prospective parents are not assumed in regards to foster and adoption recruitment, assessment and placement. LGBT2SQ+ resource parents are actively recruited, welcomed and included. The gender identity or expression of prospective foster/adoptive parents are not assumed and are requested in an affirming, polite manner during the intake process. Gender and sexual diversity is valued as strength in foster/adoption family recruitment, assessment, approvals and placement. Consent and confidentiality of the youth in regards to their sexuality and/or gender identity is prioritized when informing prospective resource parents about them. Preferred pronouns and names are used when referring to transgender prospective parents and youth in all documentation and face-to-face interactions. LGBT2SQ+ examples and exercises are provided in all training for adoptive and foster families (i.e. PRIDE Training).	

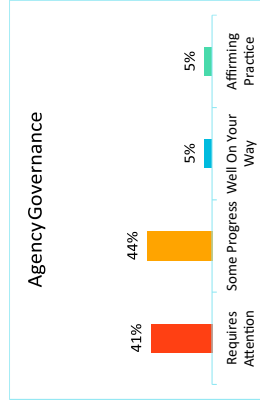
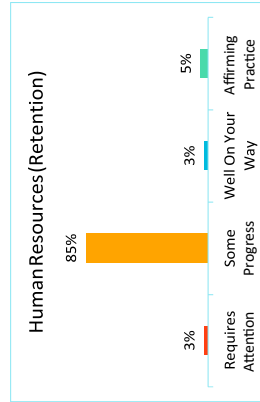
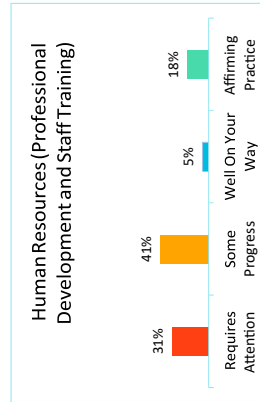
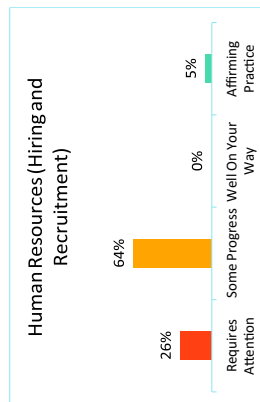
APPENDICES

- ▶ **Appendix A: OACAS – Results: Governance**
- ▶ **Appendix B: OACAS – Results: Environment**
- ▶ **Appendix C: OACAS – Results: Service**
- ▶ **Appendix D: Charts – All Results**
- ▶ **Appendix E: LGBT2SQ+ – All Charts**

LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

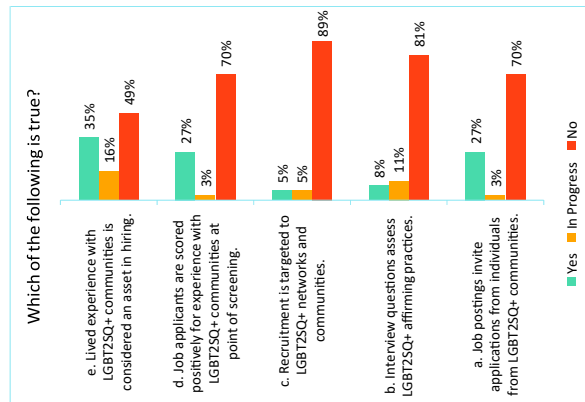
Governance, Policies and Human Resources

Summary Data

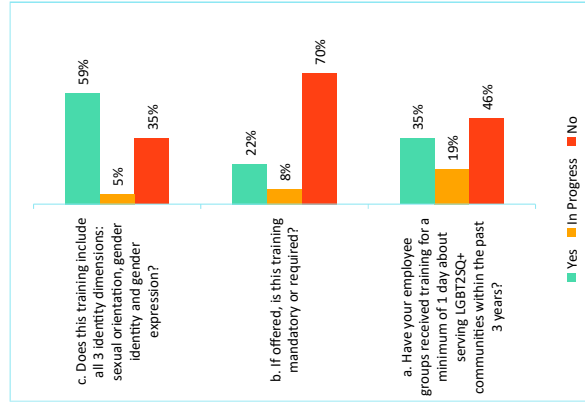


Detailed Data

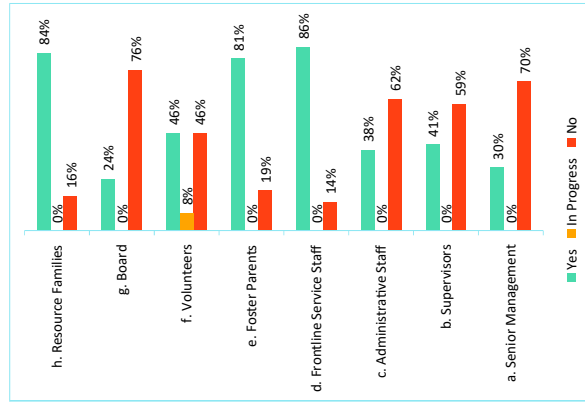
Do your human resource practices explicitly encourage LGBT2SQ+ inclusion?



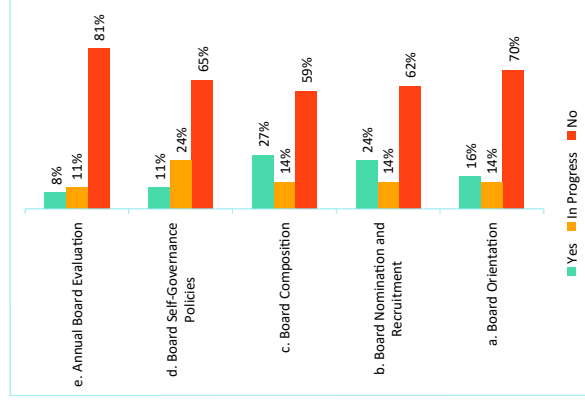
Have your employees received training about serving LGBT2SQ+ communities?



Do you have any openly "out" LGBT2SQ+ identified staff in the following staffing identified staff in the following staffing



Does your board of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into the following?



N=39, 2 agencies did not respond to the benchmark questions

LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

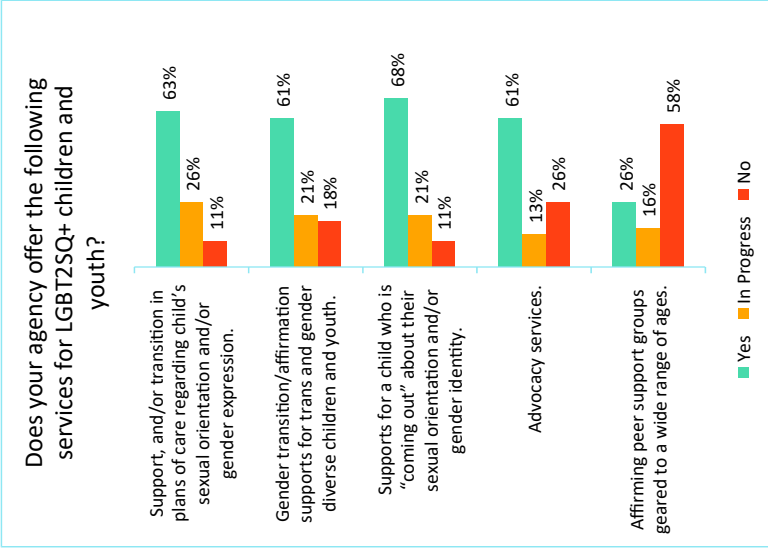
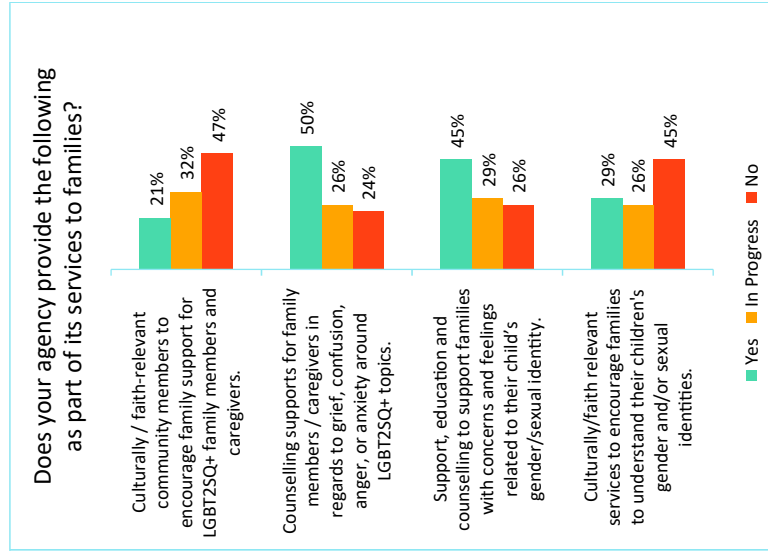
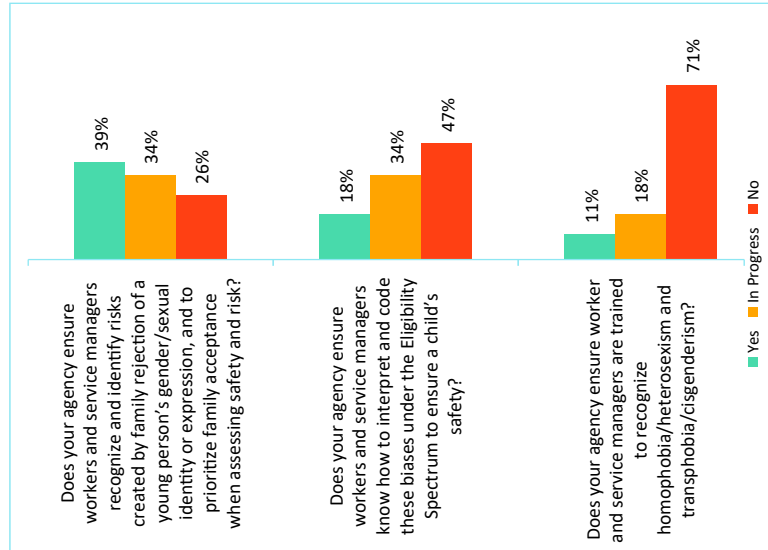
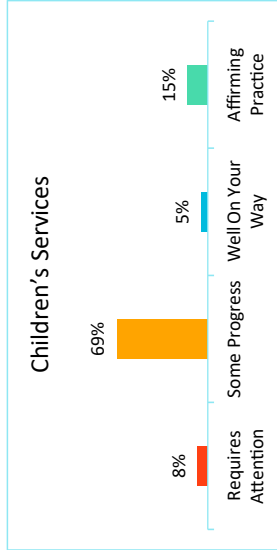
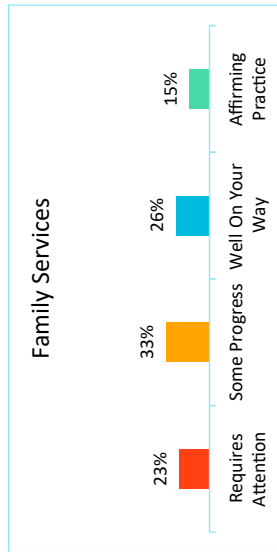
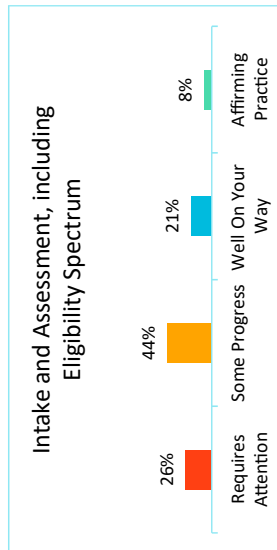
Environment & Climate (including external relations)



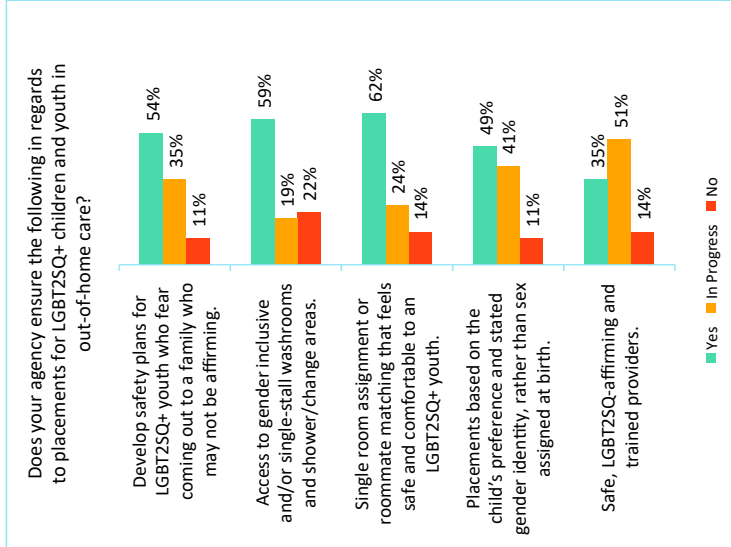
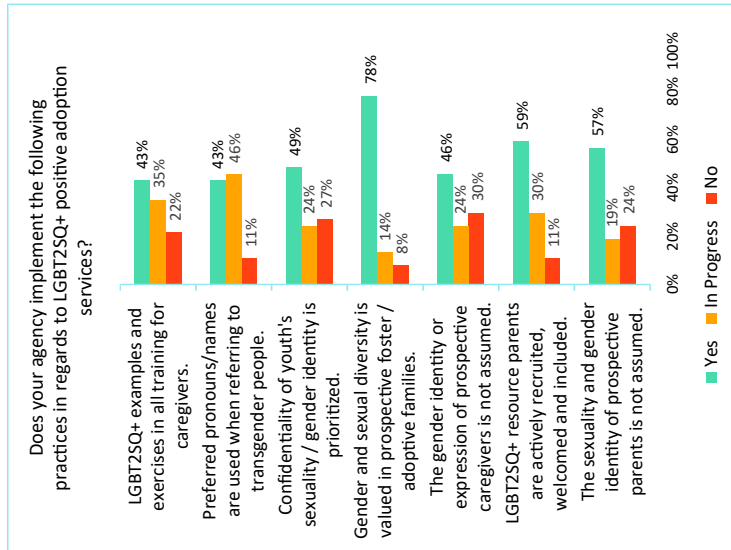
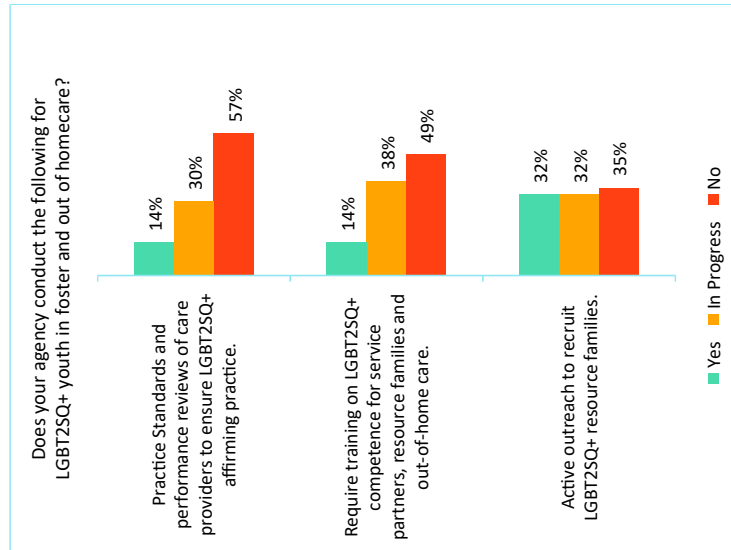
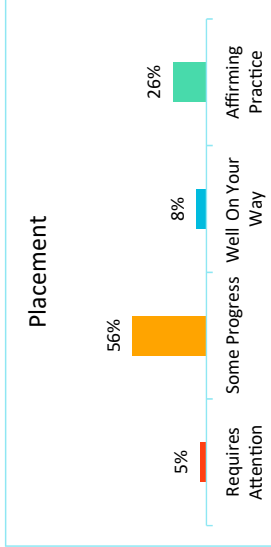
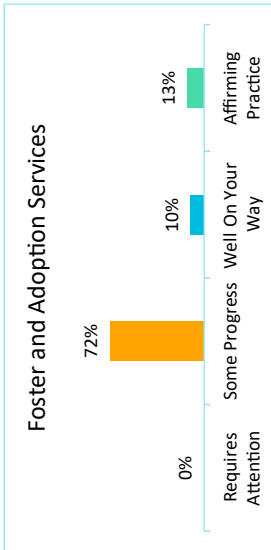
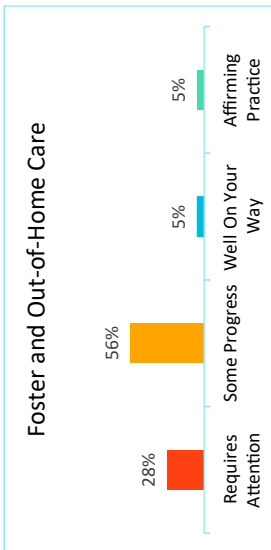
n=38 agencies, 1 agency did not respond to the benchmark questions

LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

Service Delivery (Page 1)

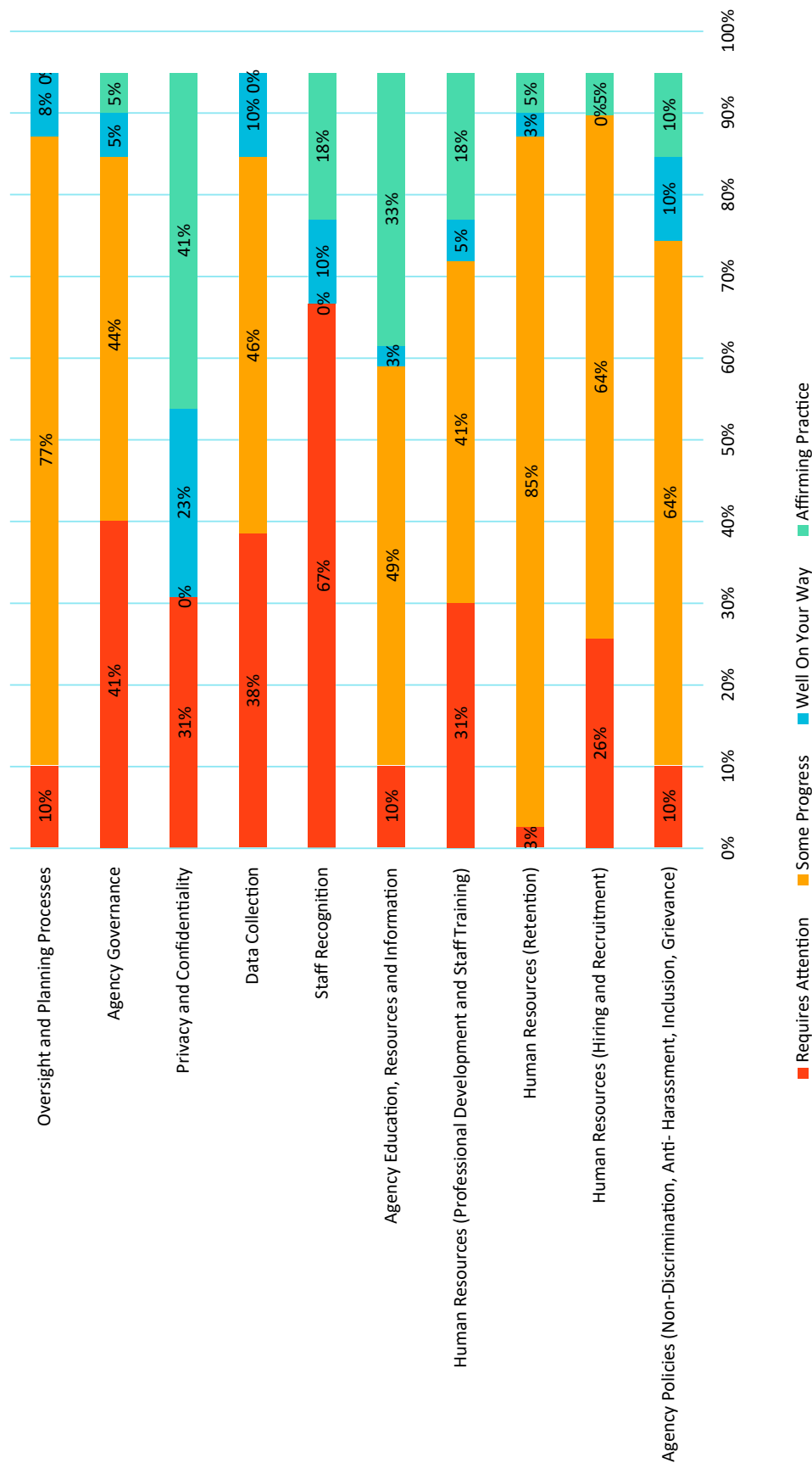


Service Delivery (Page 2 - Residential Services)

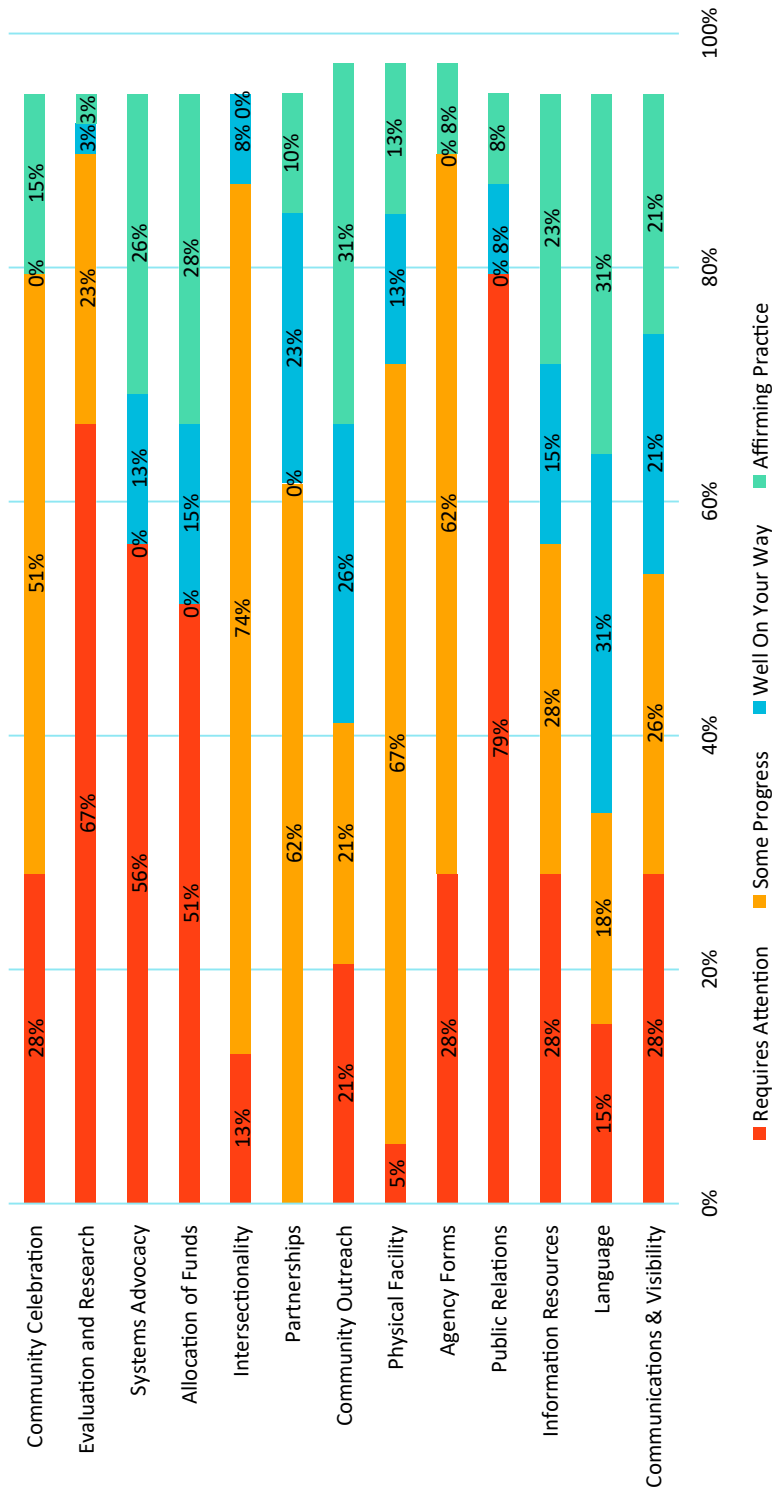


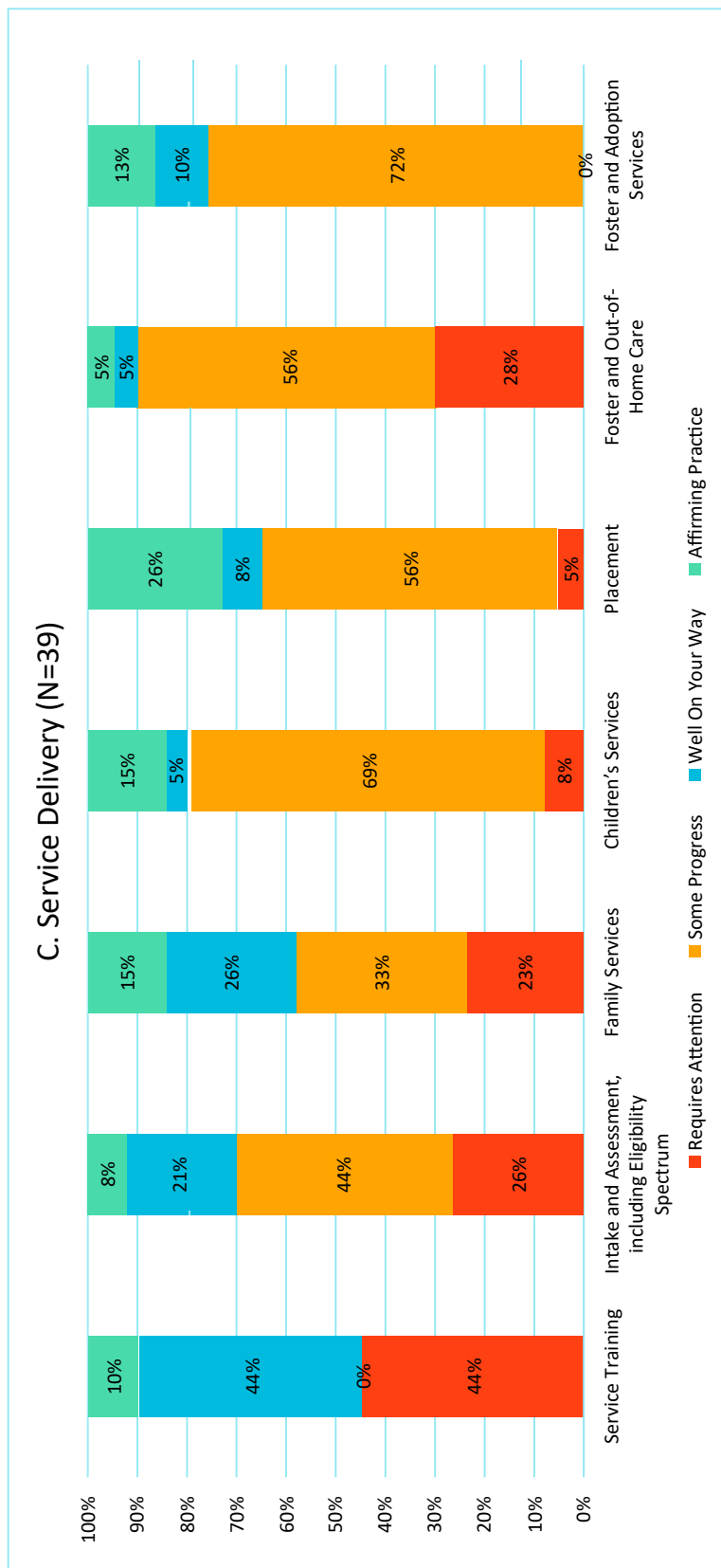
N=38, 2 agencies did not respond to the benchmark questions

A. Governance, Policies and Human Resources (N=39, Incomplete ≈ 2)

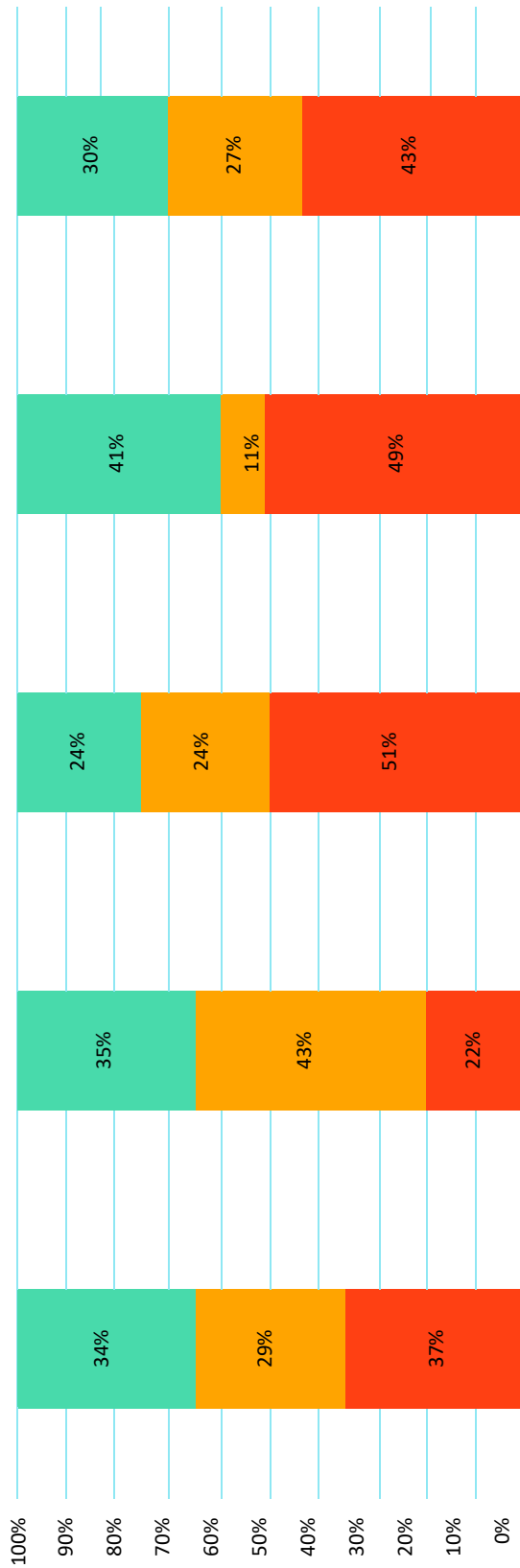


B. Environment & Climate (including external relations) (N=39, Incomplete ≈ 2)





1. Agency Policies (Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment, Inclusion, Grievance)



■ No ■ In Progress ■ Yes

2. Human Resources (Hiring and Recruitment) (N=37)

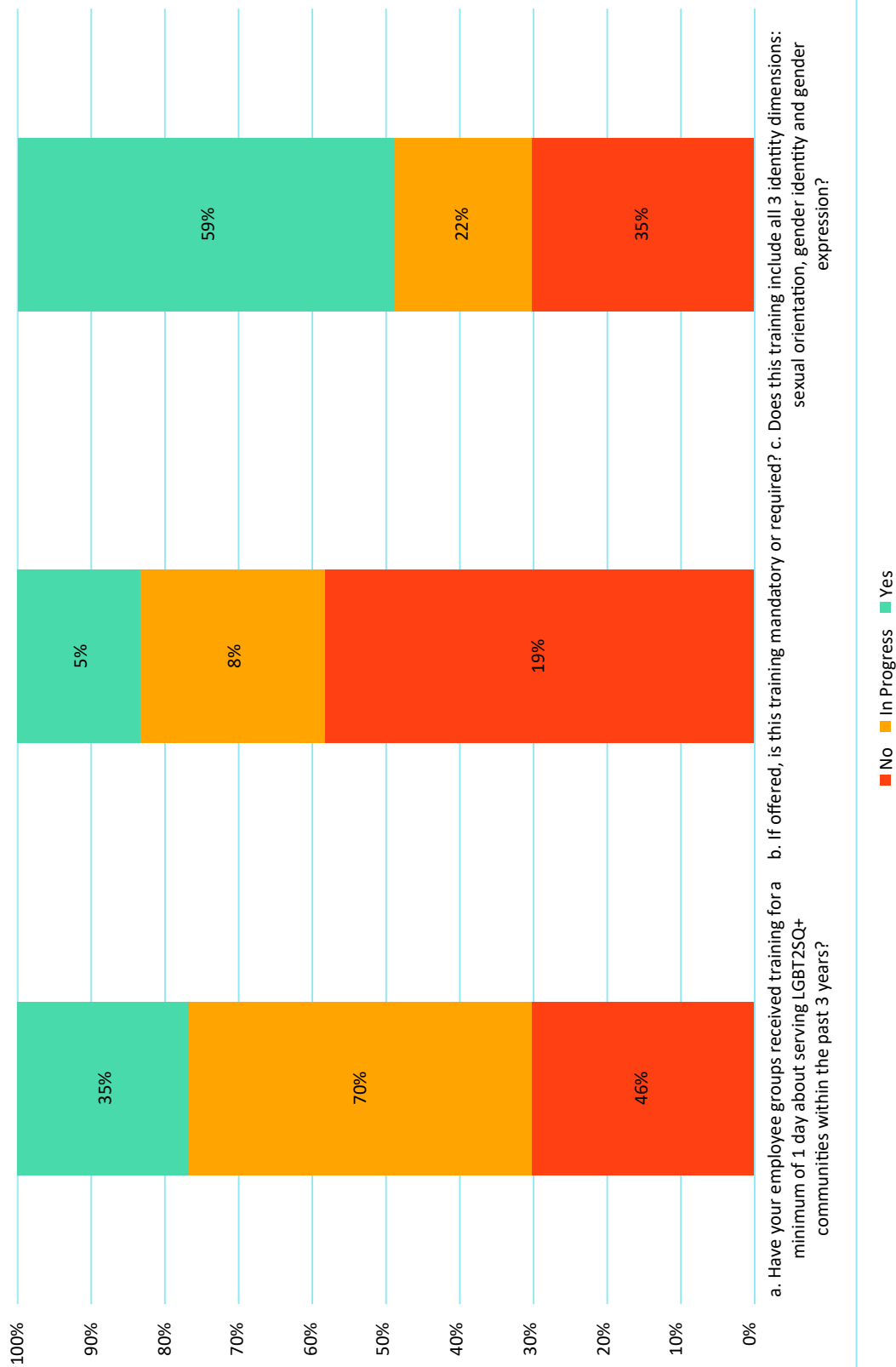


3. Human Resources (Retention) (N=37)

Do you have any openly “out” LGBTQ2S+ identified staff in the following staffing levels?



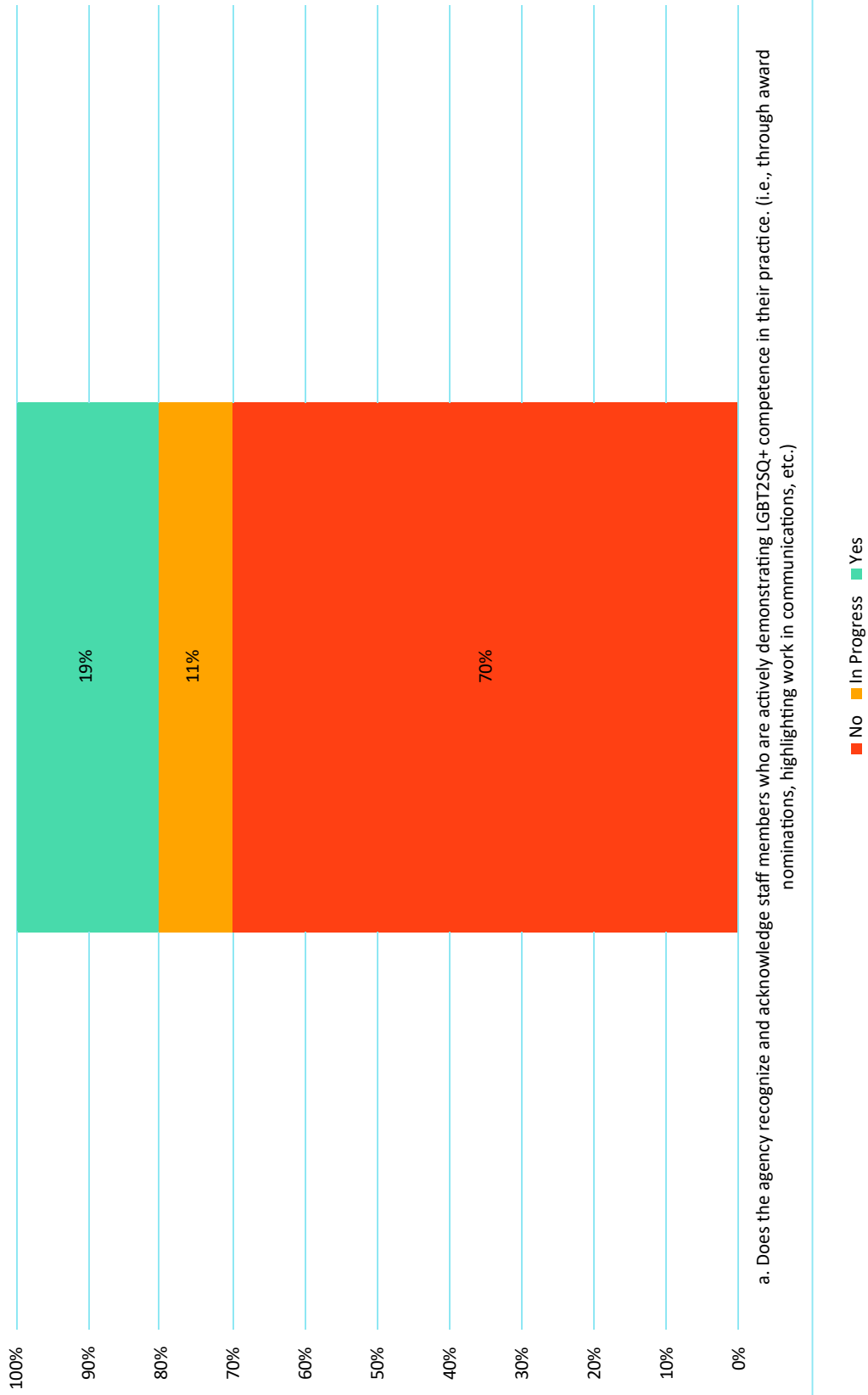
4. Human Resources (Professional Development and Staff Training) (N=37)



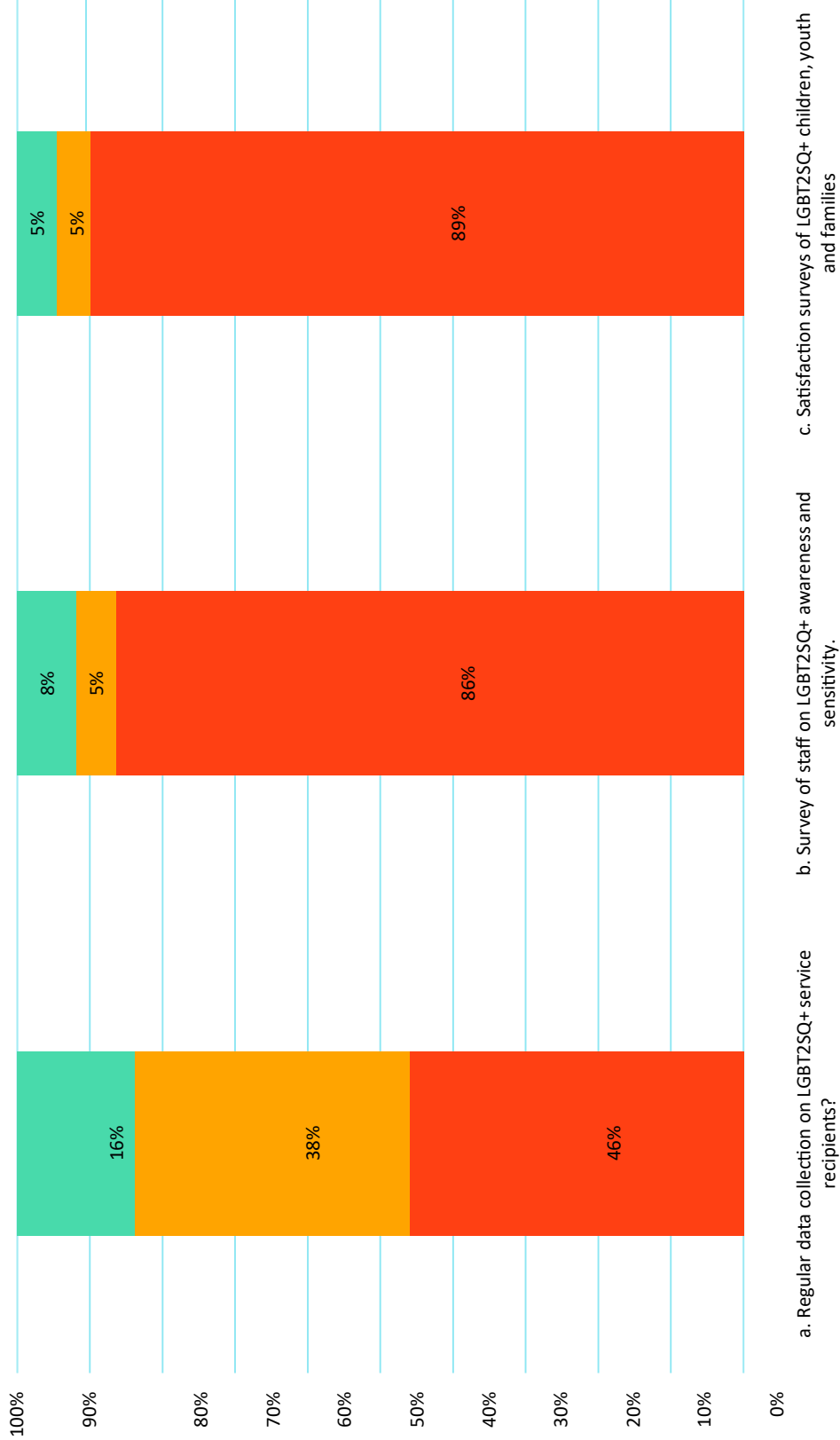
5. Agency Education, Resources and Information (N=37)



6. Staff Recognition (N=37)



7. Data Collection (N=37)



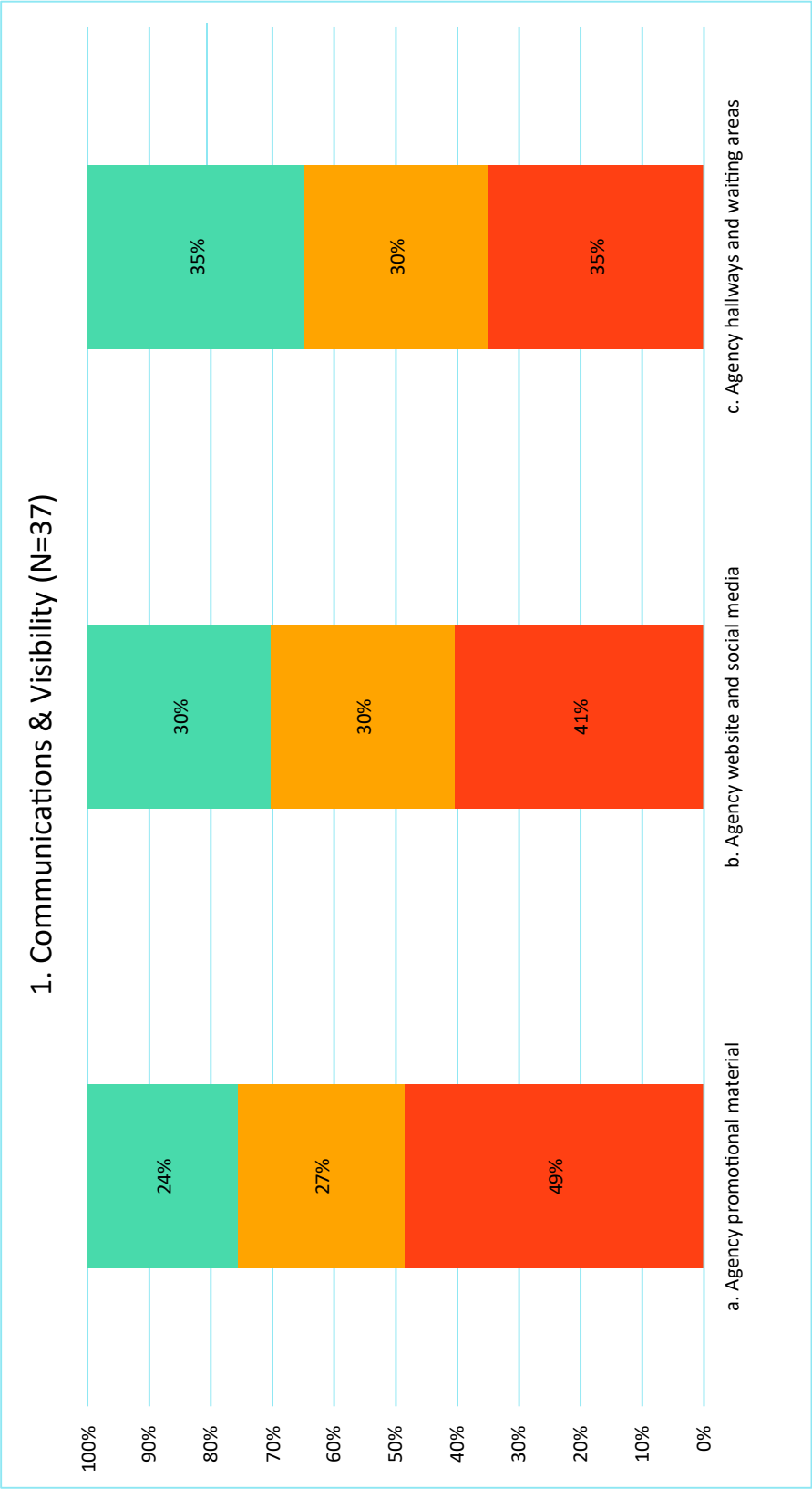
■ No ■ In Progress ■ Yes

9. Agency Governance (N=37)



10. Oversight and Planning Processes (N=37)

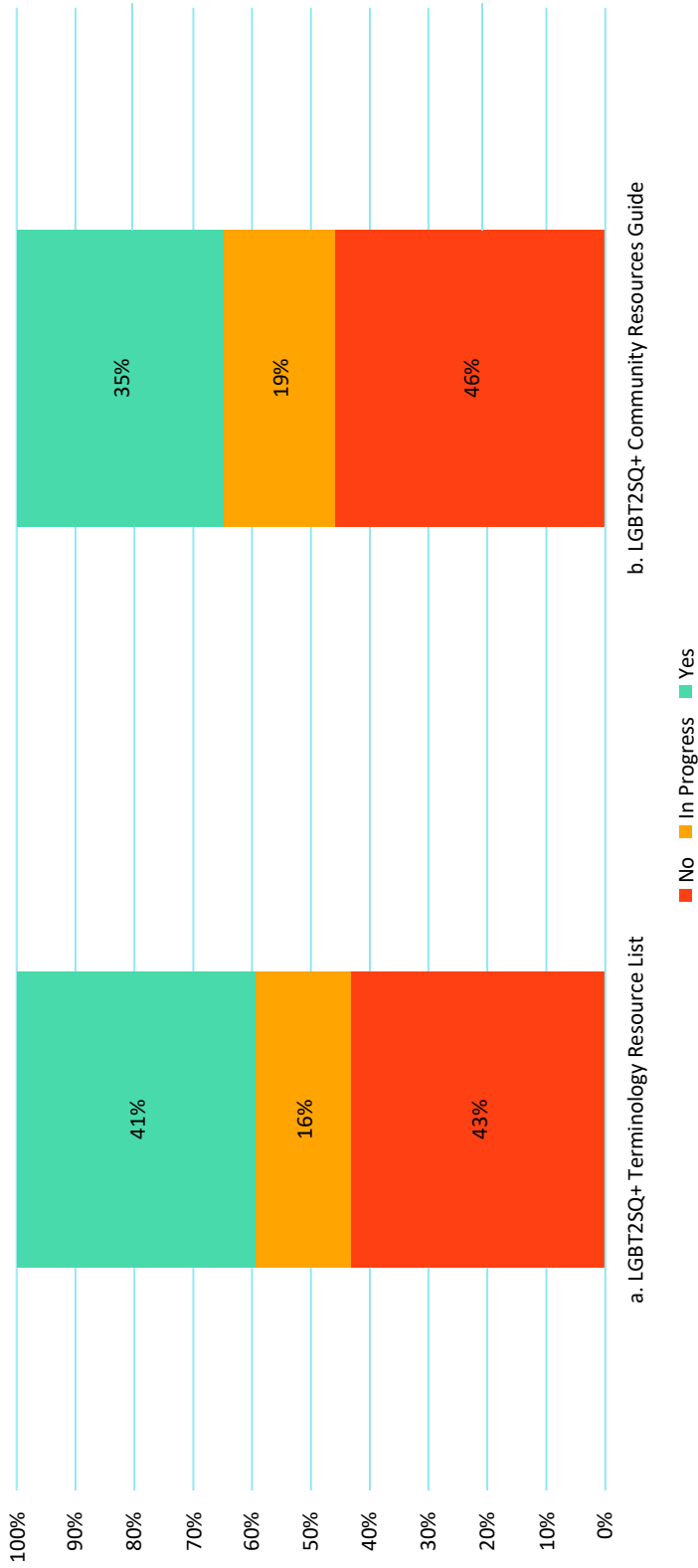


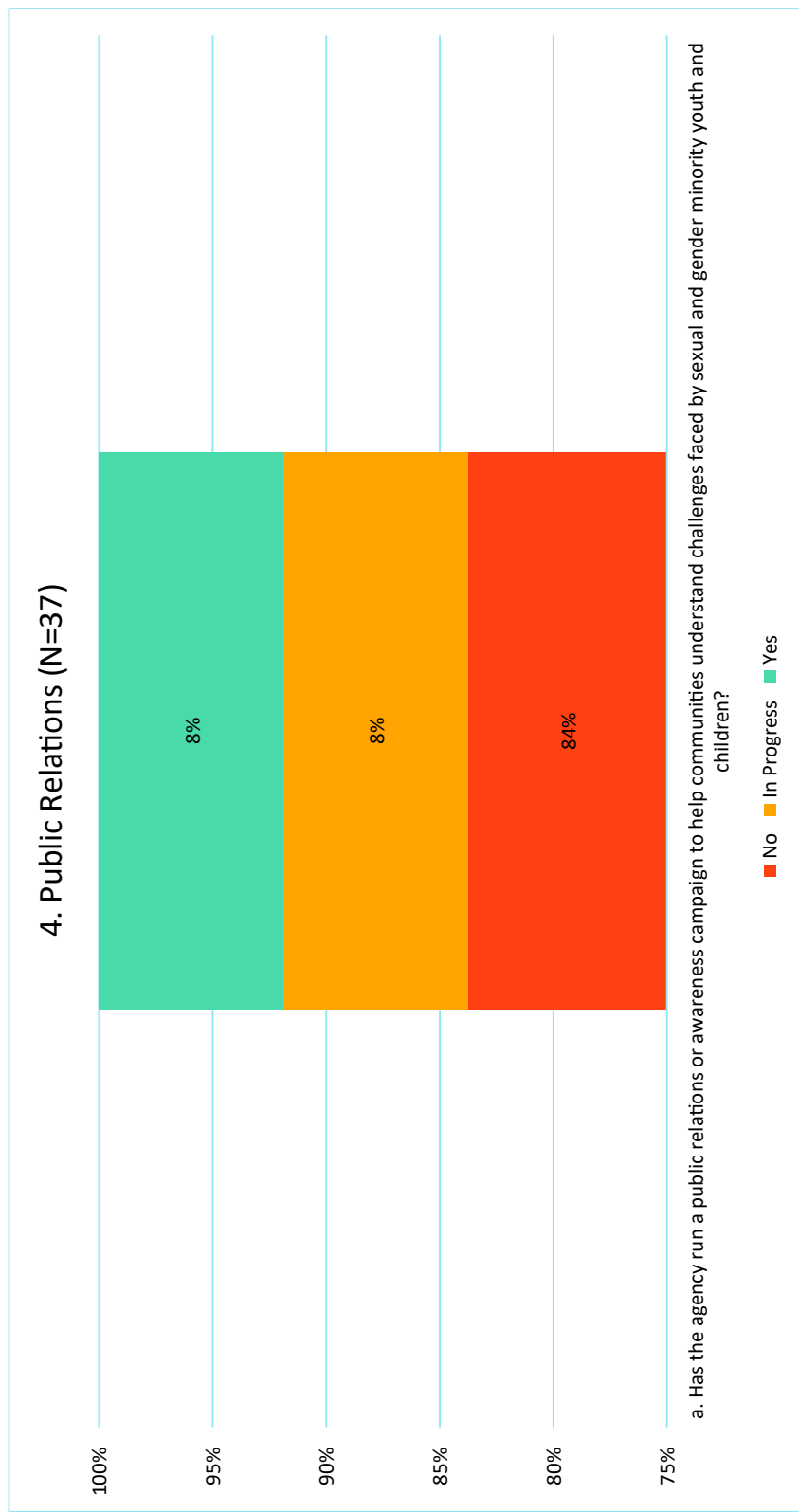


2. Language (N=37)

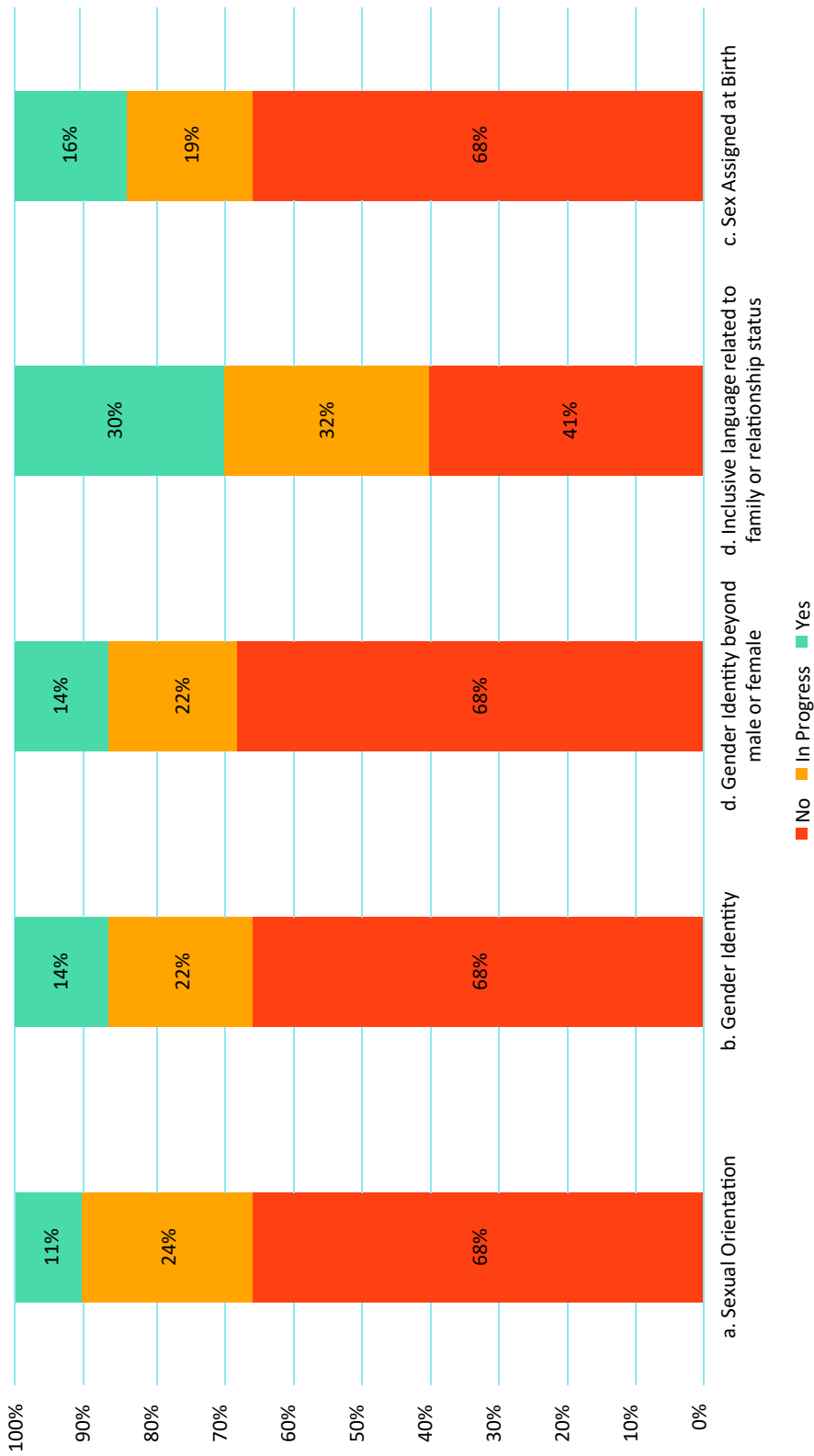


3. Information Resources (N=37)

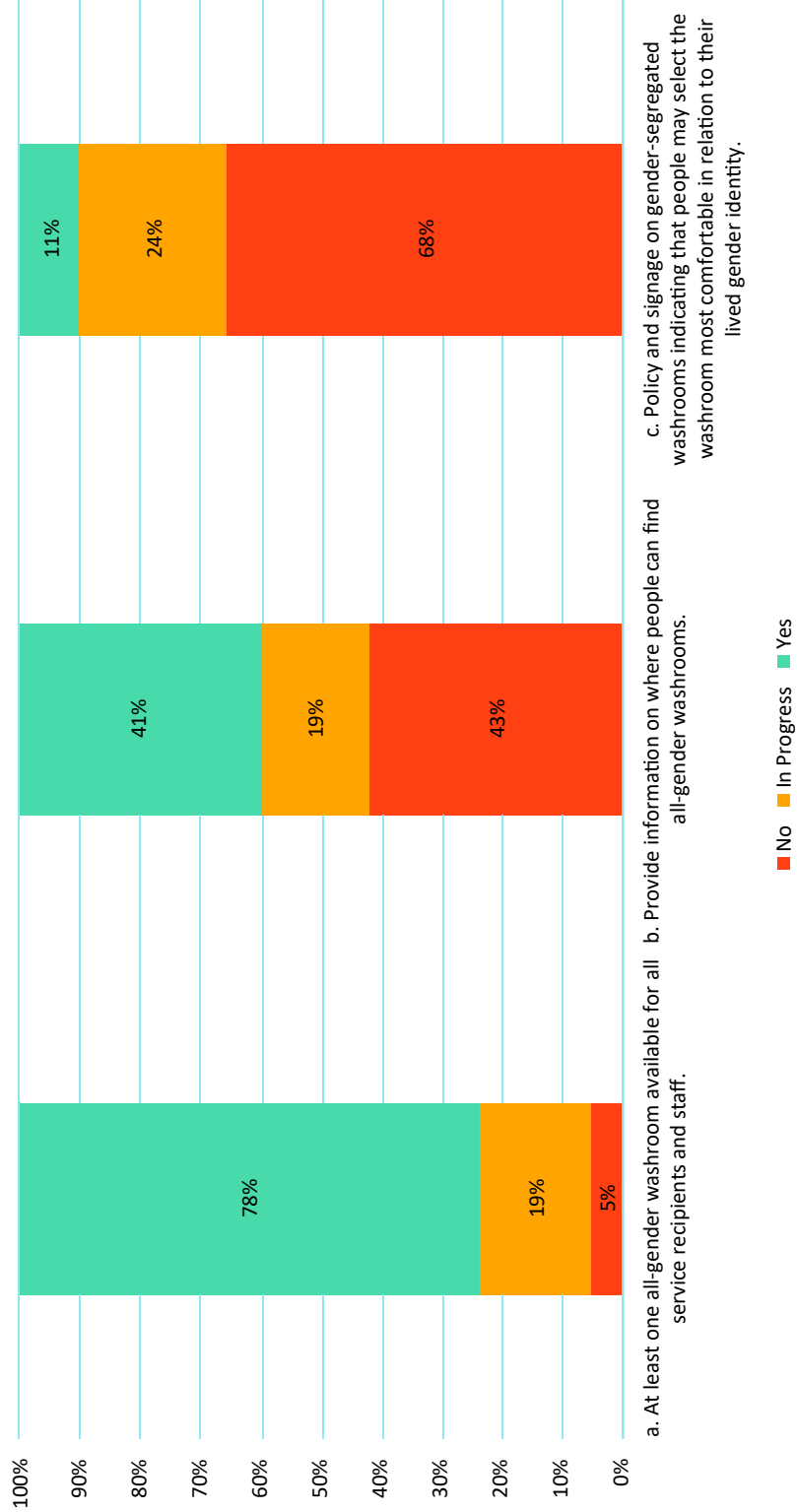




5. Agency Forms (N=38)



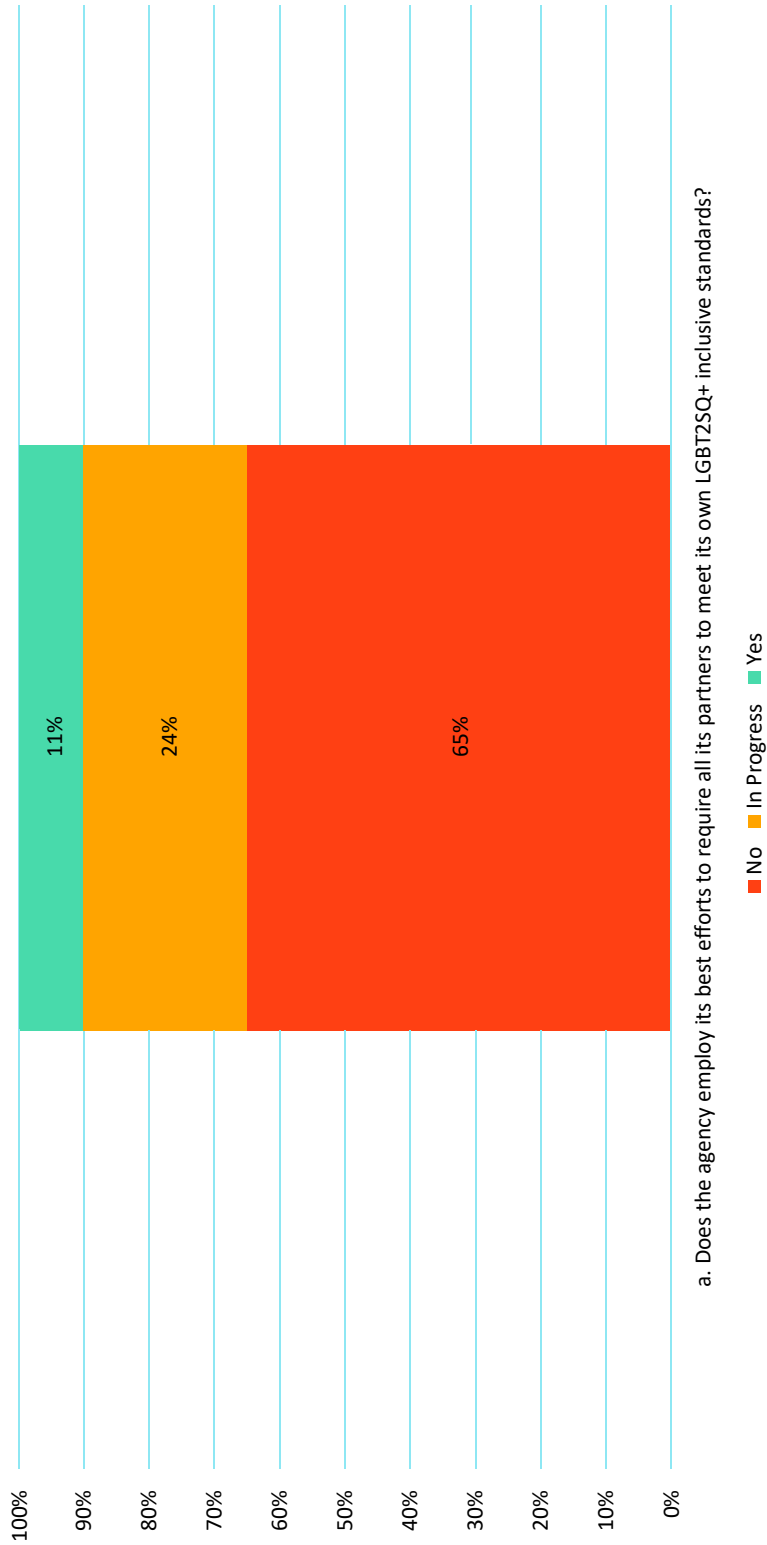
6. Physical Facility (N=38)



7. Community Outreach (N=38)

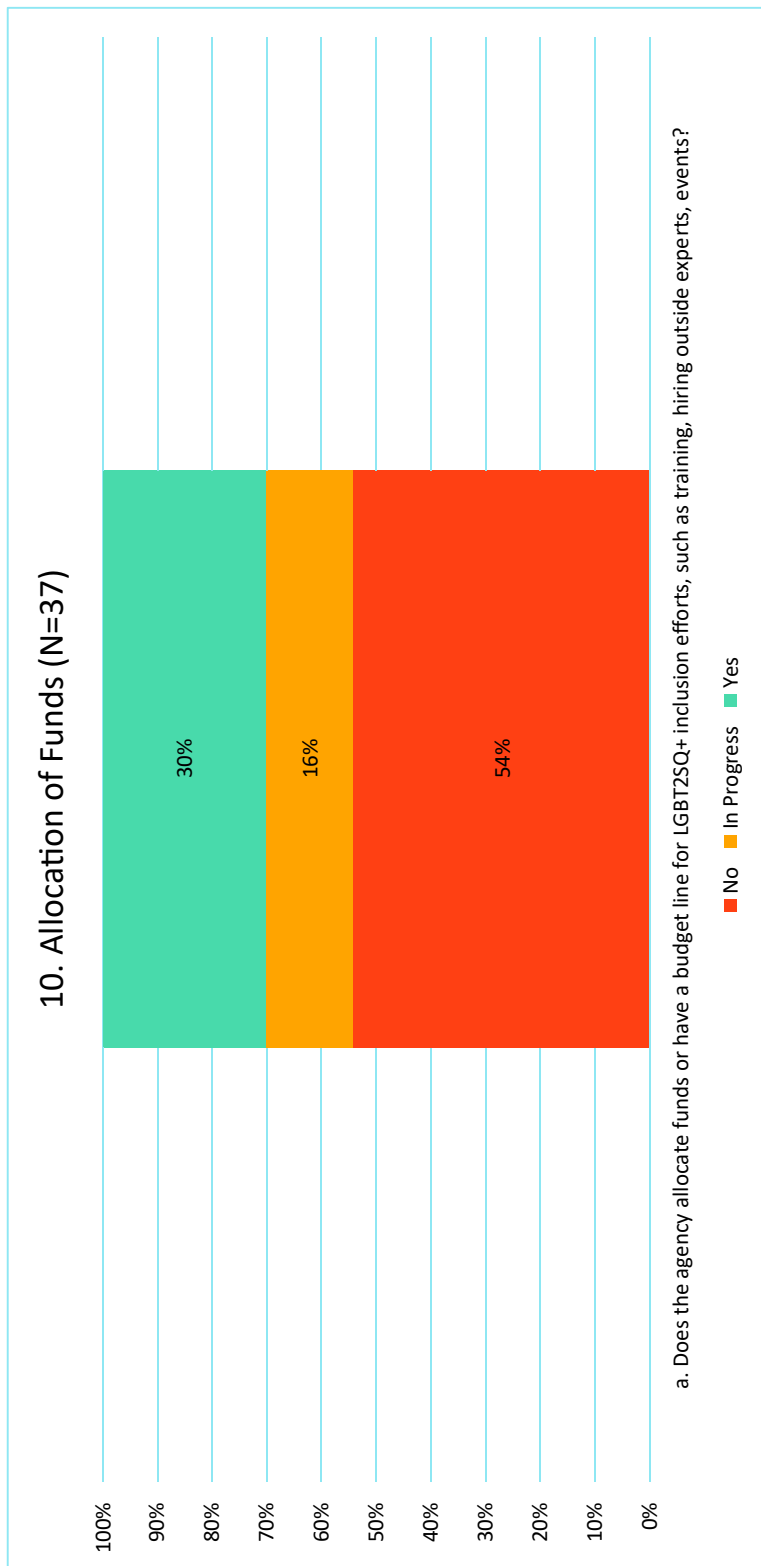


8. Partnerships (N=37)

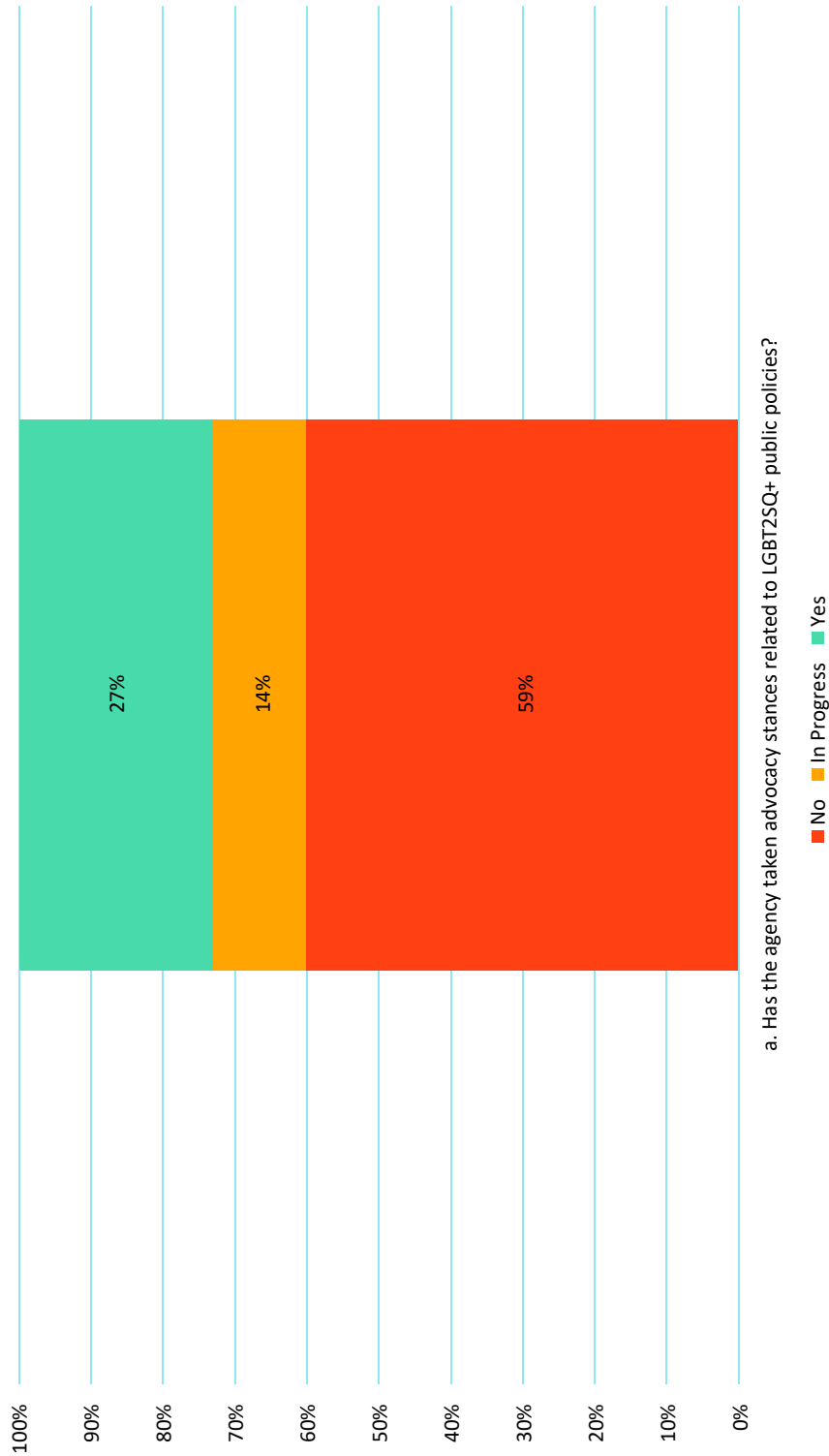


9. Intersectionality (N=37)





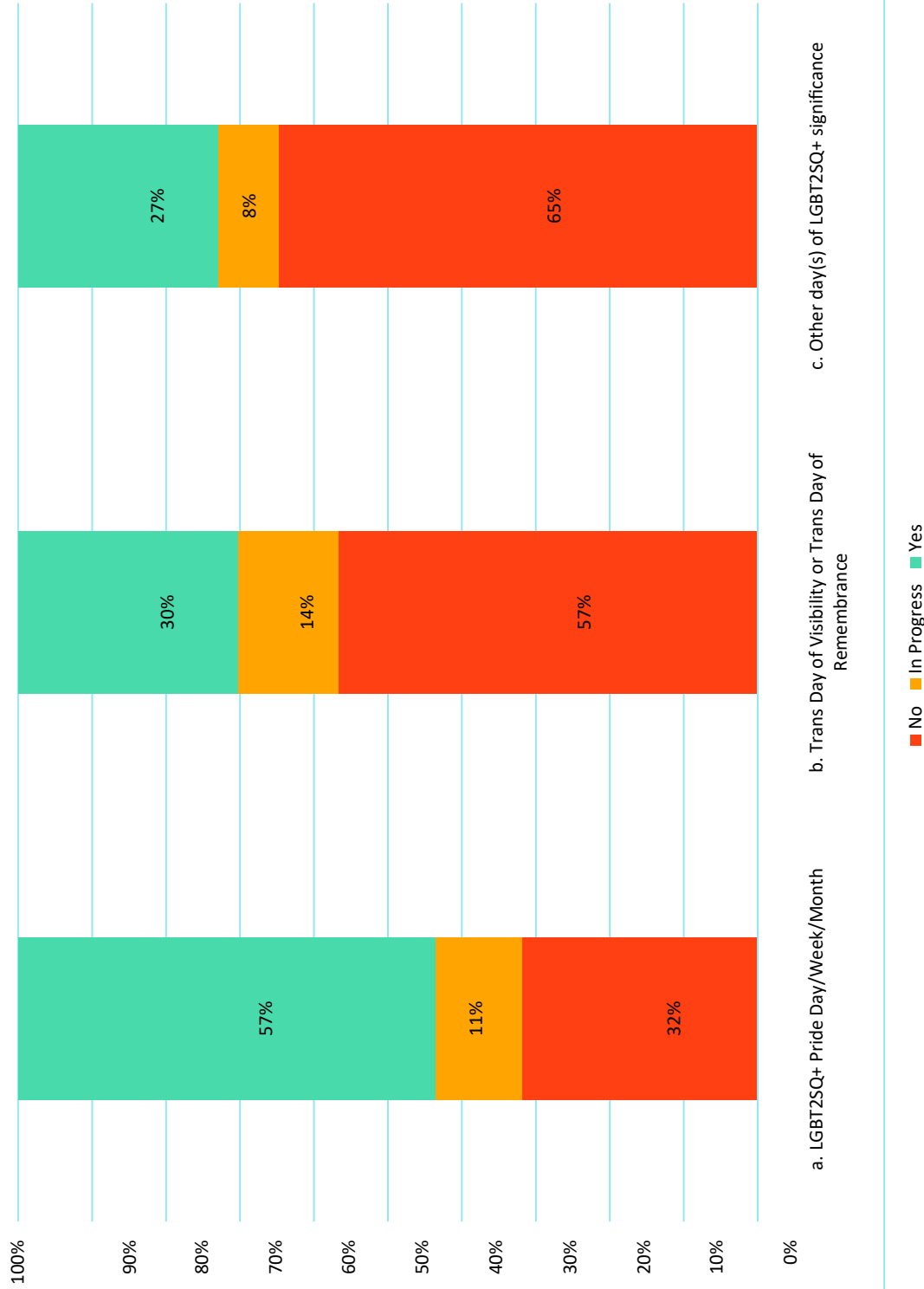
11. Systems Advocacy (N=37)



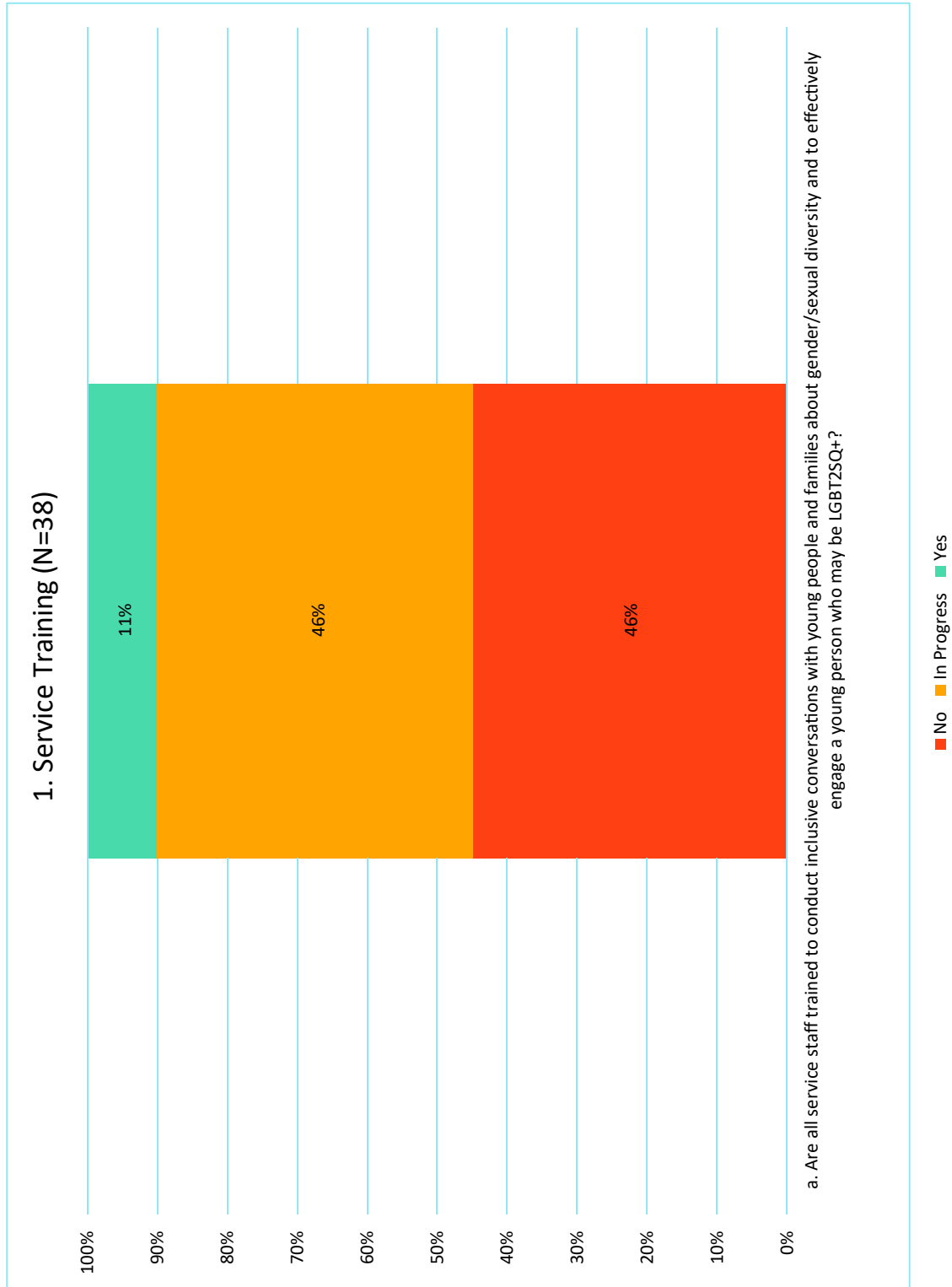
12. Evaluation and Research (N=37)



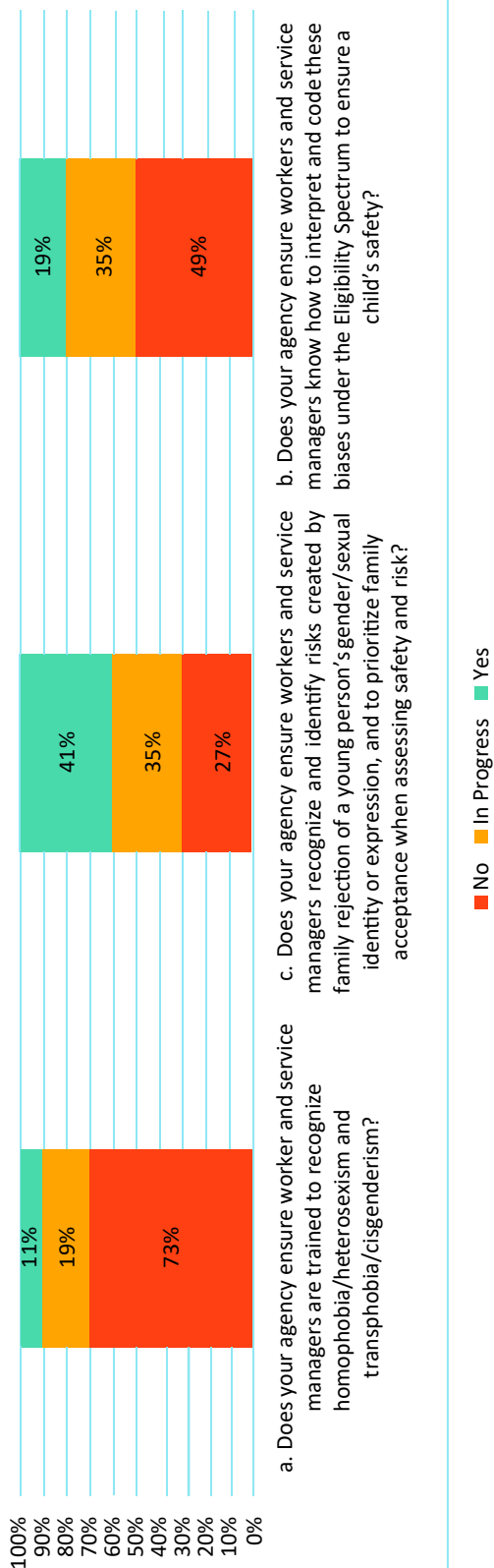
13. Community Celebration (N=37)



C. Service Delivery



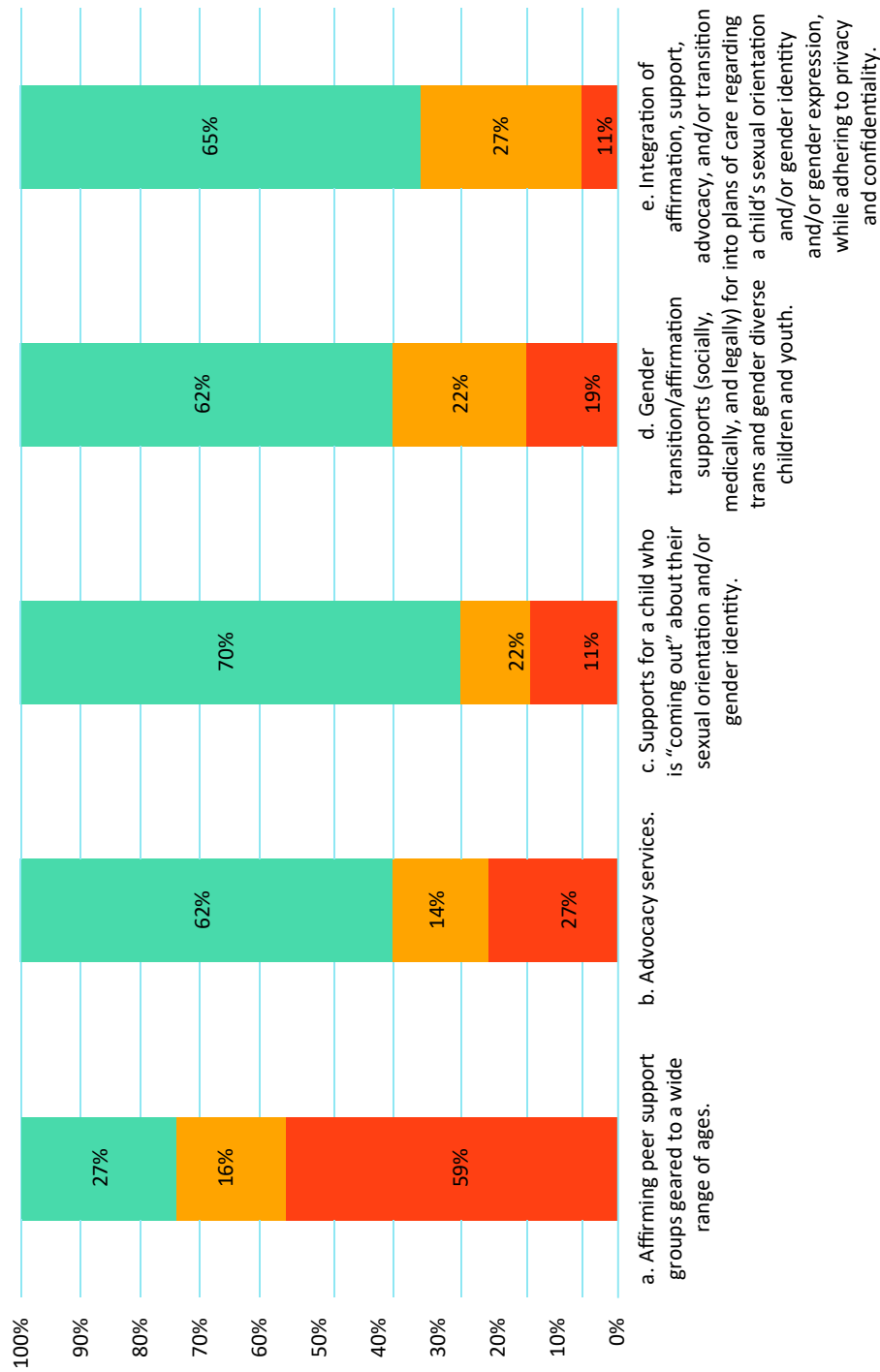
2. Intake and Assessment, including Eligibility Spectrum (N=38)



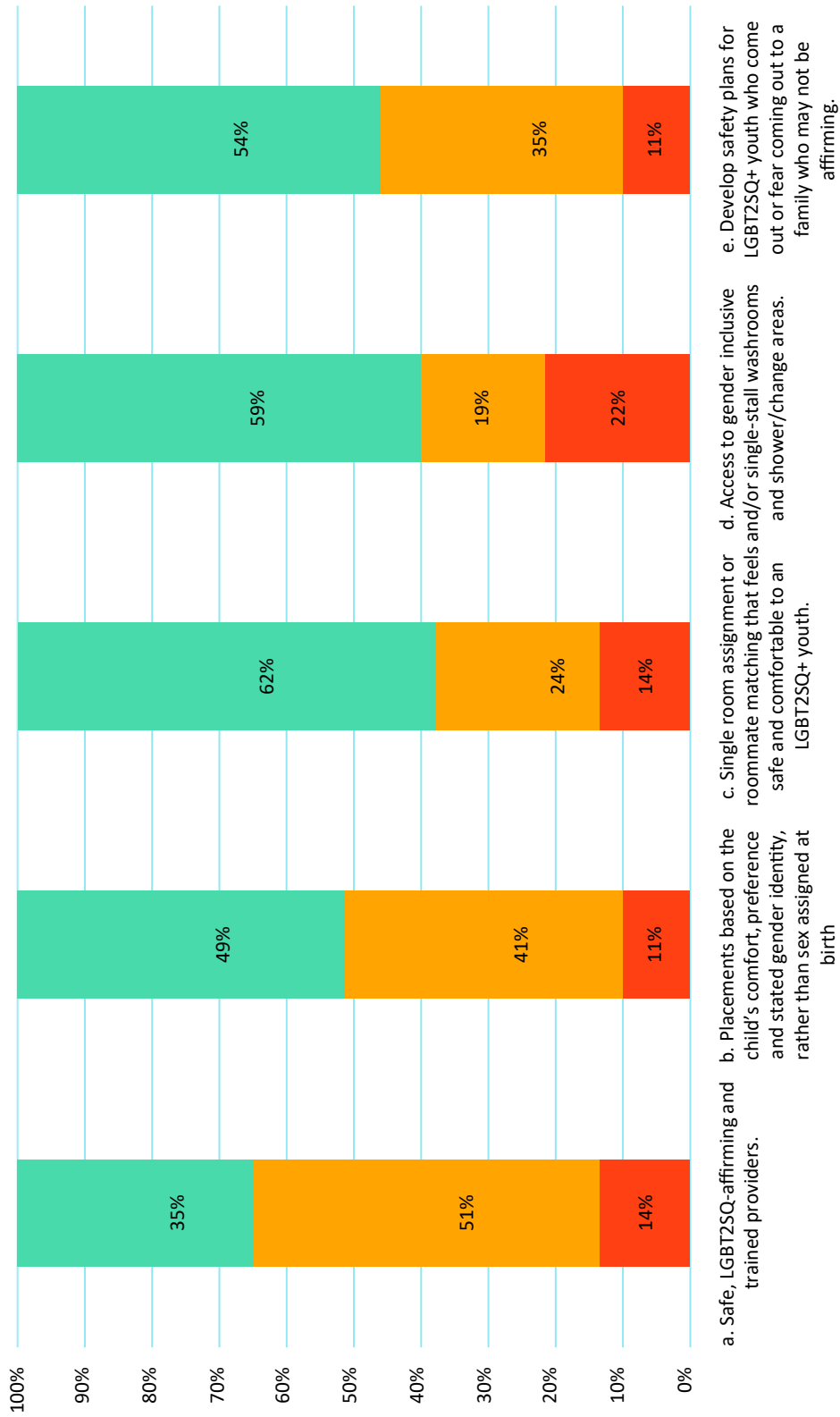
3. Family Services (N=38)



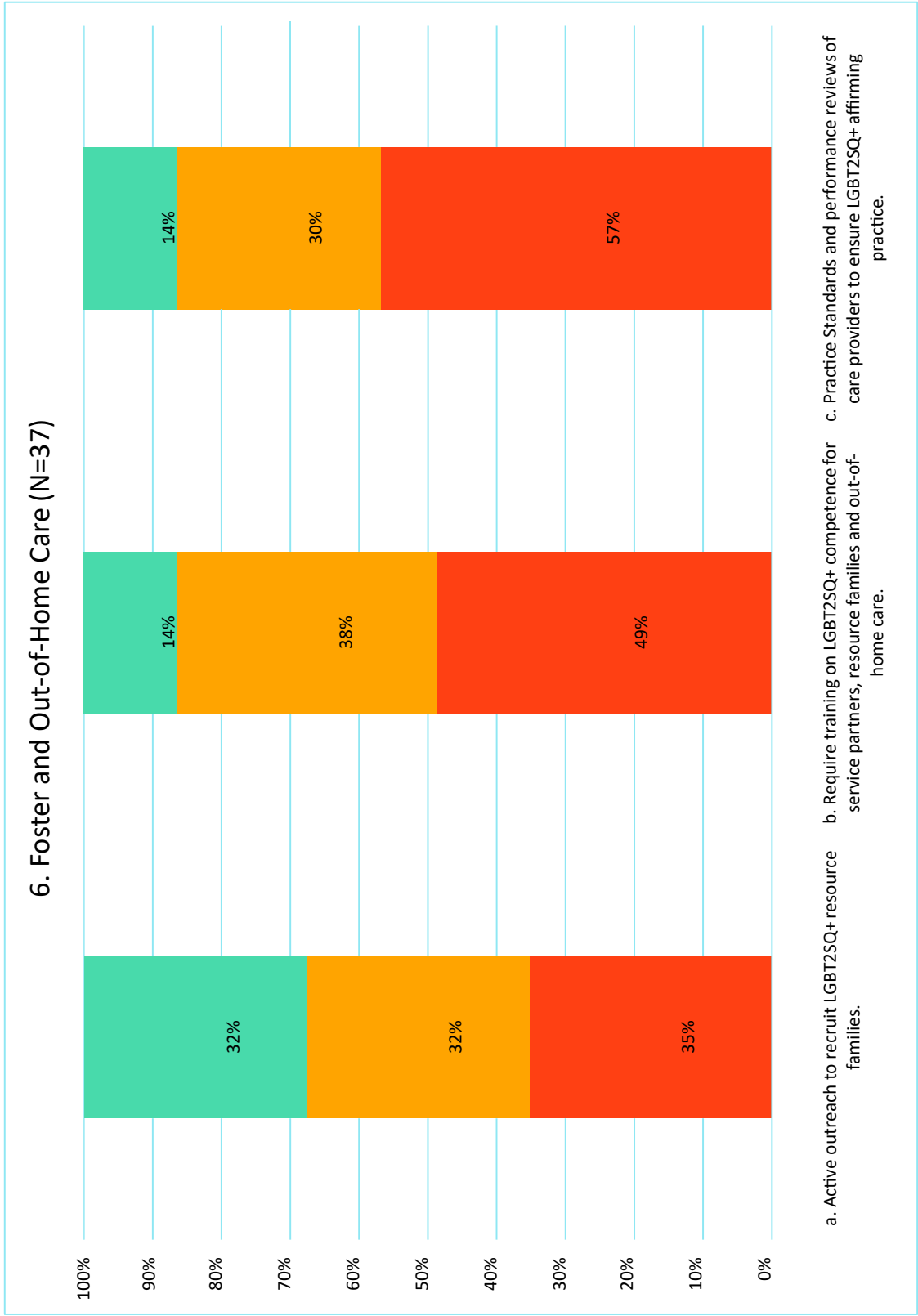
4. Children's Services (N=38)



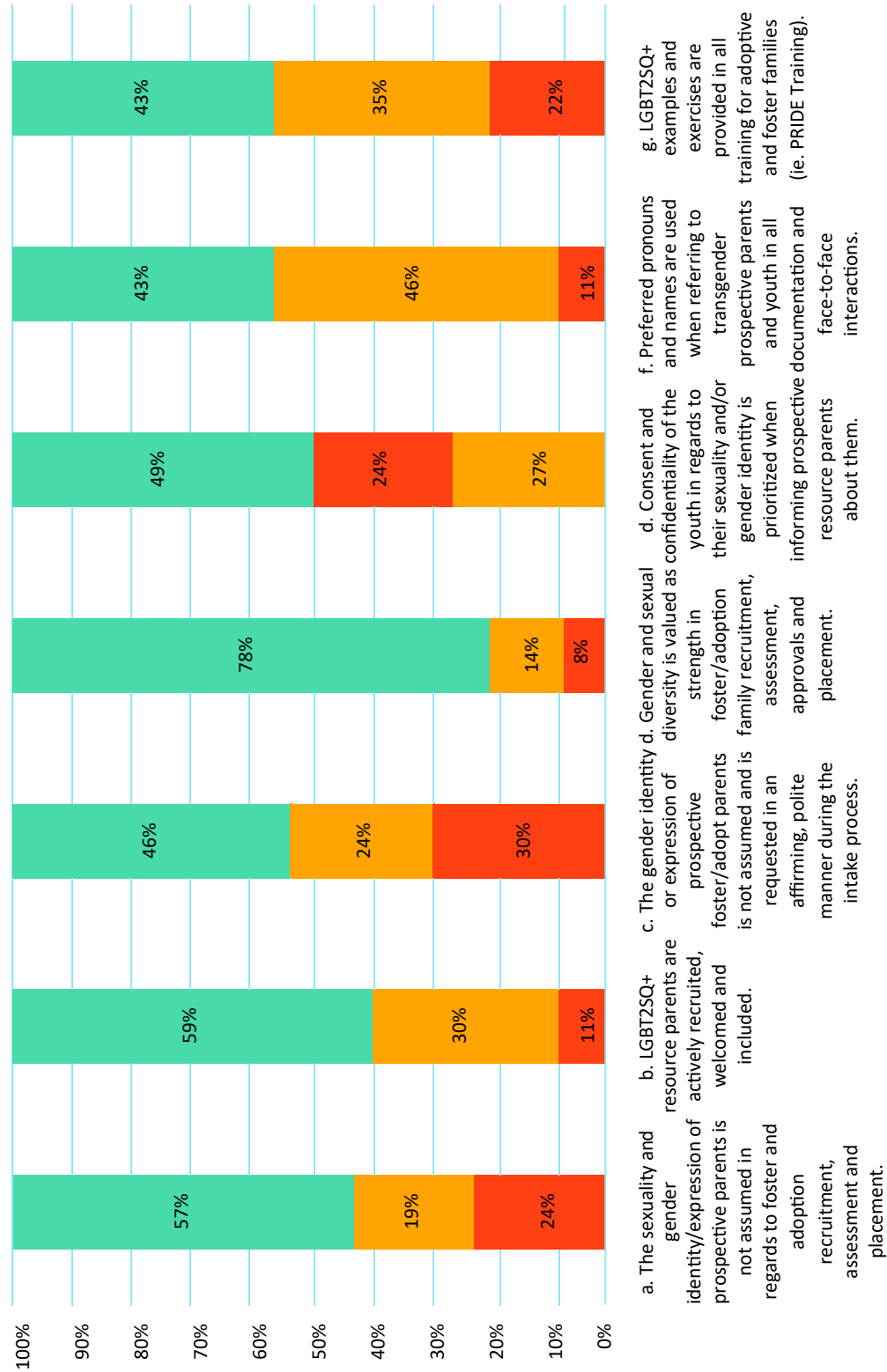
5. Placement (N=37)



■ No ■ In Progress ■ Yes



7. Foster and Adoption Services (N=37)

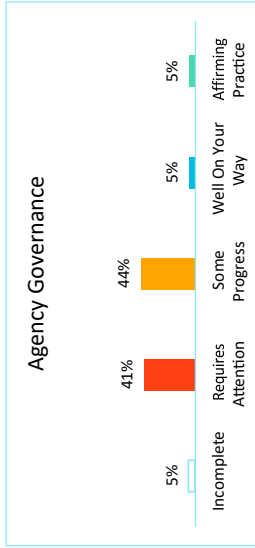
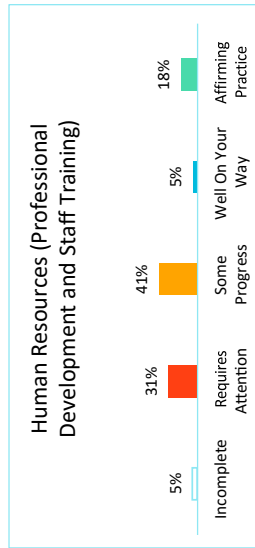
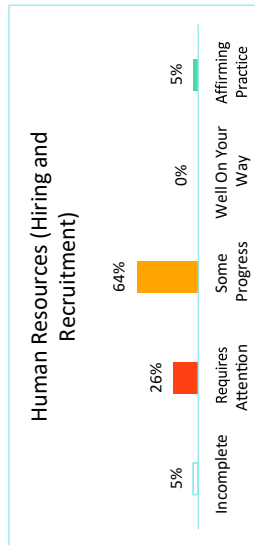


■ No ■ In Progress ■ Yes

LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

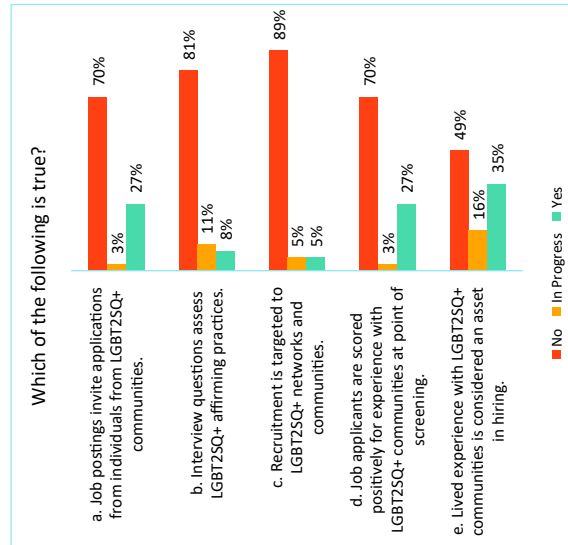
Governance, Policies and Human Resources

Summary Data

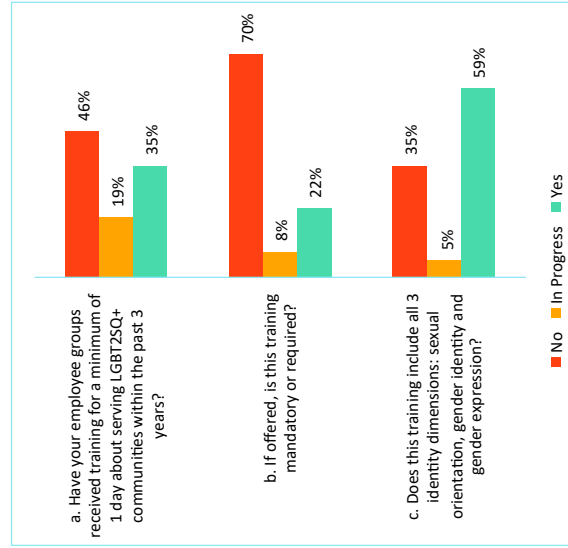


Detailed Data

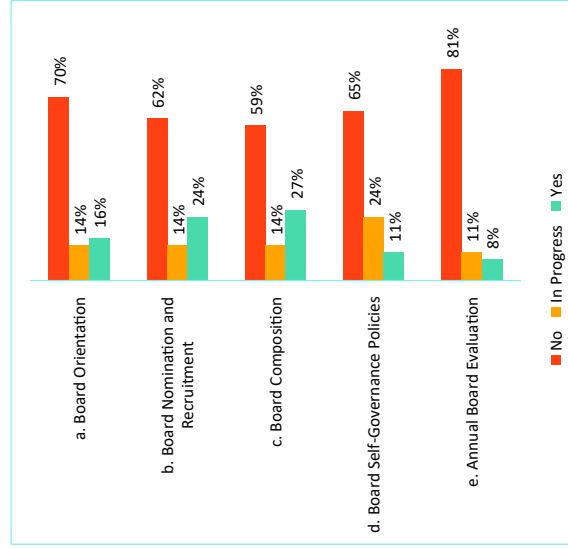
Do your human resource practices explicitly encourage LGBT2SQ+ inclusion?



Have your employees received training about serving LGBT2SQ+ communities?



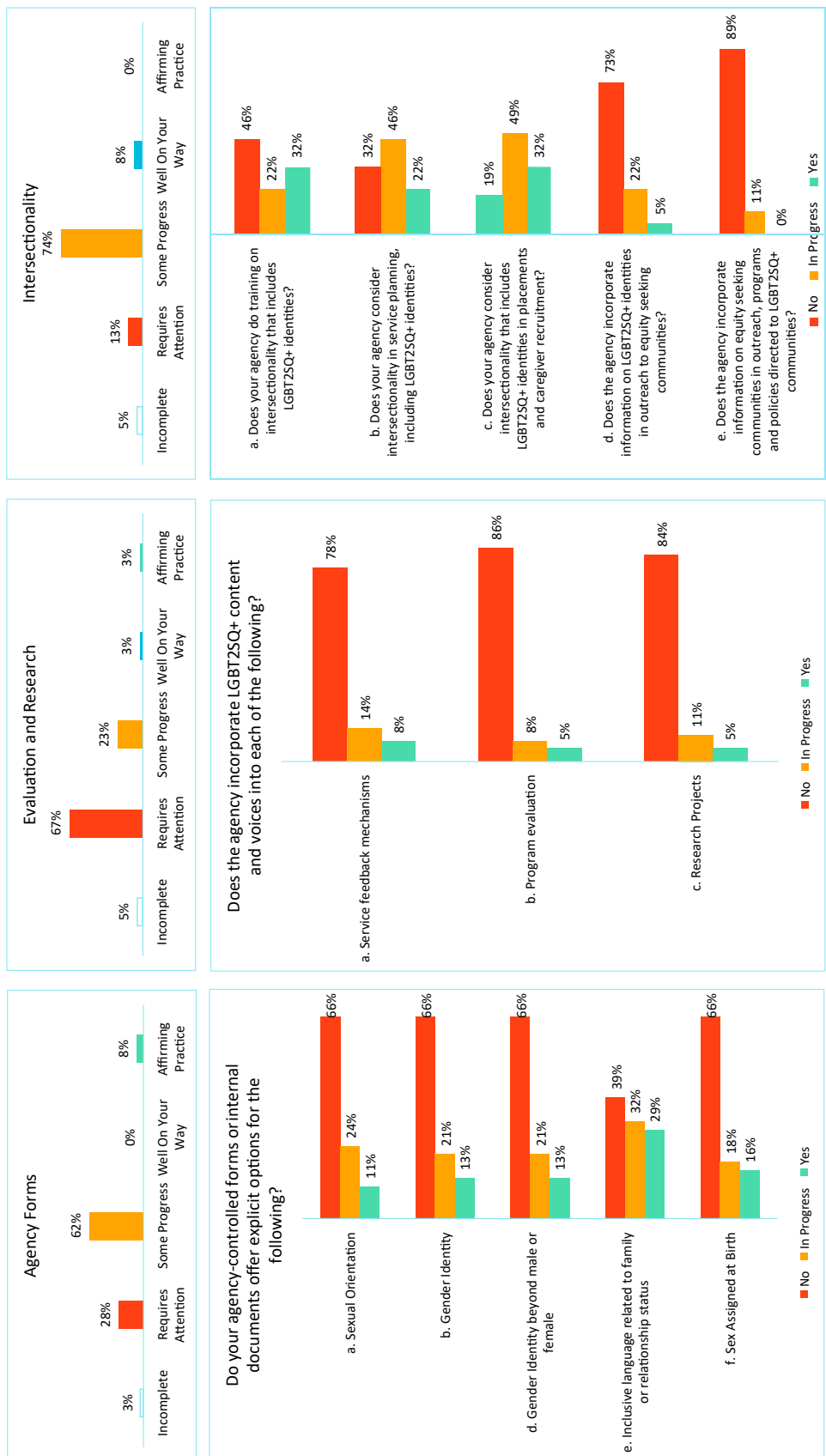
Does your board of directors integrate LGBT2SQ+ content into the following?



N=39, Incomplete = 2

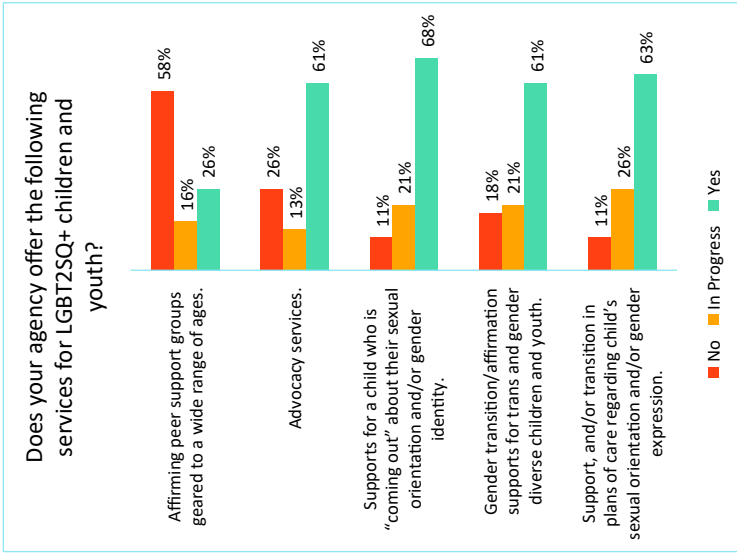
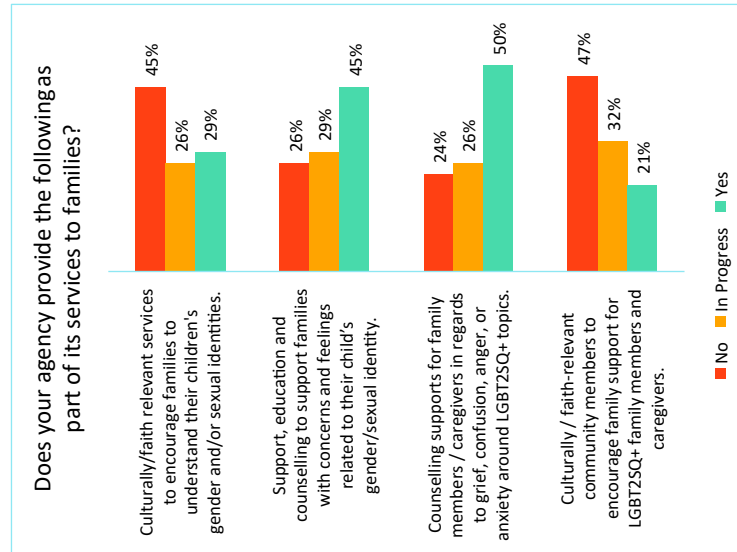
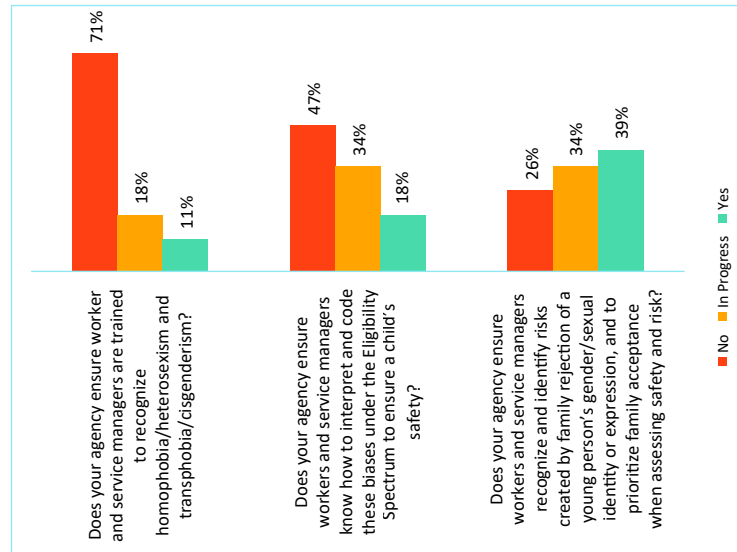
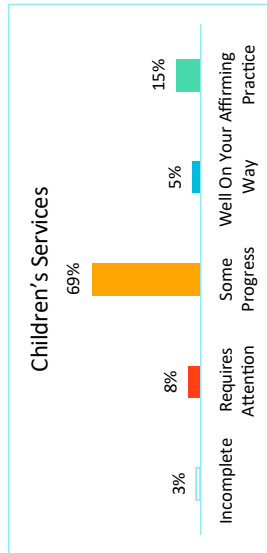
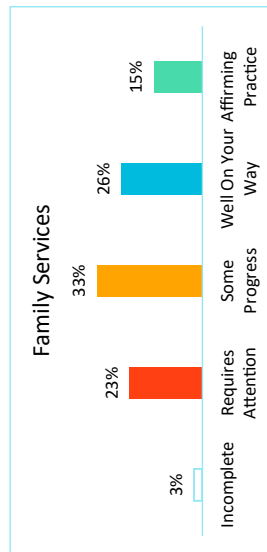
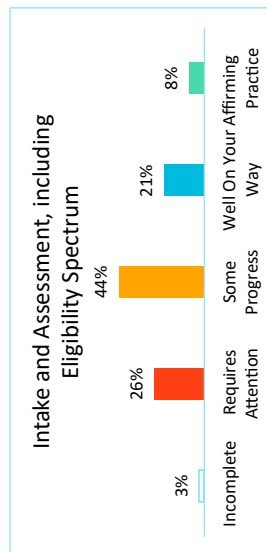
LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

Environment & Climate (including external relations)

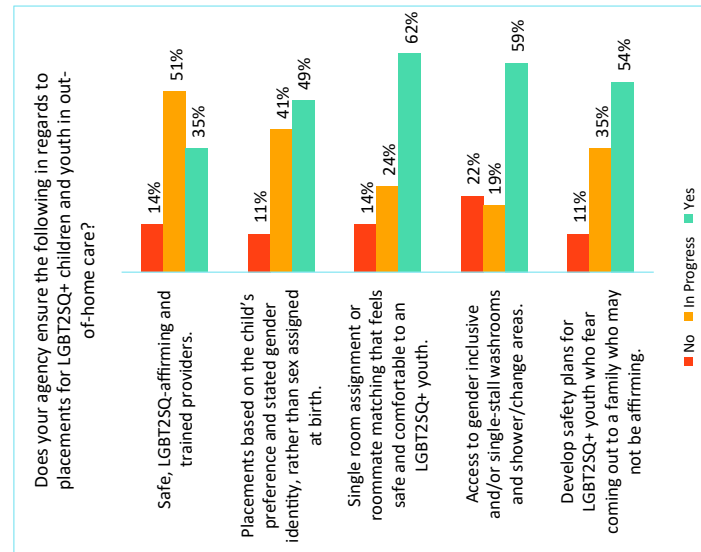
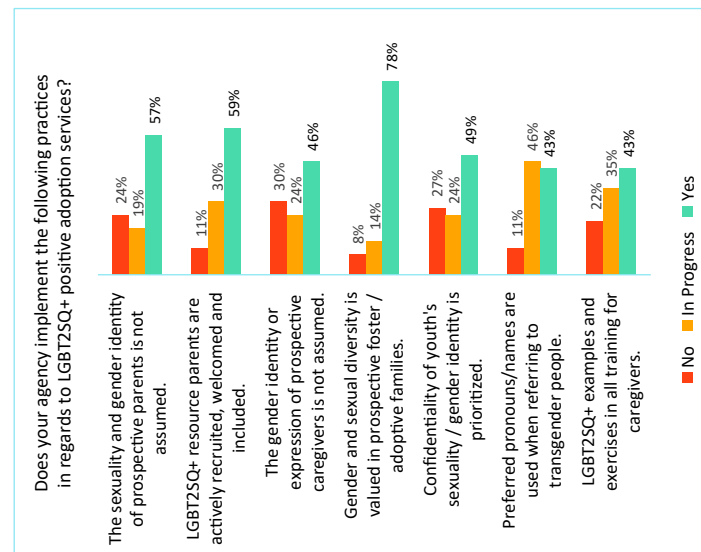
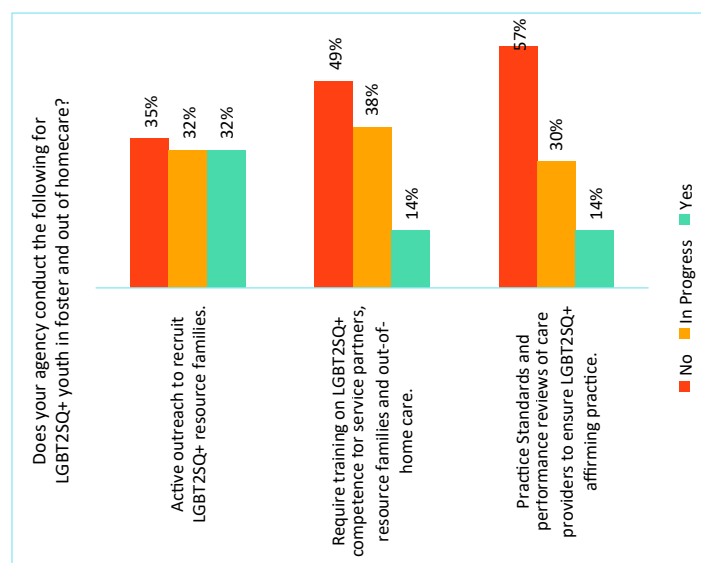
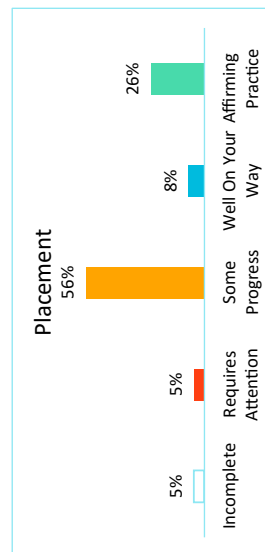
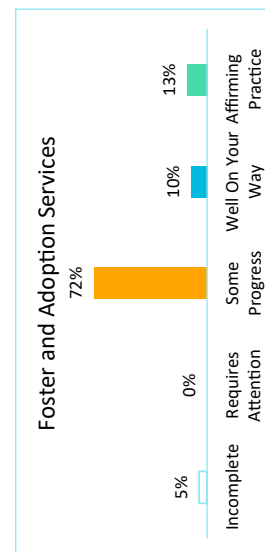
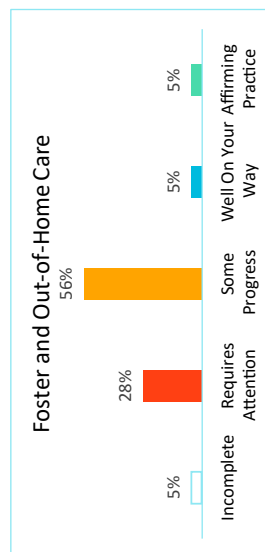


LGBT2SQ+ Agency Assessment Priority Area Data

Service Delivery (Page 1)



Service Delivery (Page 2 - Residential Services)



n=38



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

**Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies
(OACAS)**

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