

# Social support for LGBTQIA+ youth in care - Social work with LGBTQIA+ children & youth: points of views of professionals in France and Italy.

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# Plan

- Scientific and policy contexts
- Research objective and phases
- Methodology
- Some funding (quantitative and qualitative data)
- To conclude – Involving young people in the community.

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# Scientific and policy contexts :

- According to international research, LGBTQIA+ youth are over-represented in the child protection system (complex relationships, greater risk of violence, stigmatisation and suicide (Feild, 2018; Harrison et al., 2016).
- According to the French Children Rights Defender, there is an over-representation of domestic violence against LGBTQIA+ youth in the families.
- A lack of scientific research, in France, about LGBTQIA+ youth in care or receiving home-based support.



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In Europe, LGBTI young people aged 15 to 17 experience more harassment in the schools / universities/ public spaces than their elders. However, almost half of them (48%) say that someone has supported, defended or protected them and their rights as LGBTI people at school. This percentage drops to 33% for people aged 18 to 24 and to 7% for people aged 40 and over (FRA, 2020)

For many reasons the LGBTQIA+ children and youth are more likely to have negative experiences in the child welfare system (Mallon, Aledort, & Ferrera, 2002, Shpiegel & Simmel, 2016; Mitchell, Panzarello, Gryniewicz, & Galupo, 2015).



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# French context of Child Protection and LGBTQIA+ issues

- National action plan for equal rights and against anti-LGBT+ hate and discrimination 2020-2023.
- Evolution of the legal framework concerning the LGBTQIA+ rights of children and young people.
- Organisation of child protection system:
  - Residential placement: more than half of child protection interventions.
  - Judicial measures predominate
  - Foster care (40.9%) and Residential care (39.3%)
- Only one care structure accredited by the judge to host « protected children » who declare themselves LGBTQIA+

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# Research Objective

The objective of the first stage of the research was to analyze the questions and challenges the professionals face in ethical, political, legal, scientific terms and the professional practices deployed or impeded to meet the needs and rights of LGBTQIA+ youth.



# Research phases :

1. Exploring professionals' representations, practices and questions
2. Through the co-production of a film with the young people concerned by the issue, exploring the experiences, needs and resilient attitudes of the young people
3. Design a European training module



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# Methodology:

The research methodology of the exploratory phase (presented here) consisted of administering a Web survey over a seven-month period (from July 2022 to January 2023). **This questionnaire had been circulated among French and Italian professionals, questioning child welfare professionals' knowledge about the LGBTQIA+ public in general and the issues that arise from practice with LGBT youth in child protection services (home-based and out-of-home interventions).** The data obtained through the survey was discussed with service professionals (frontline workers, managers and directors) located in diversified territories (urban, semi-urban, rural).

354 respondents : Italian language (20%) and French language (80%)



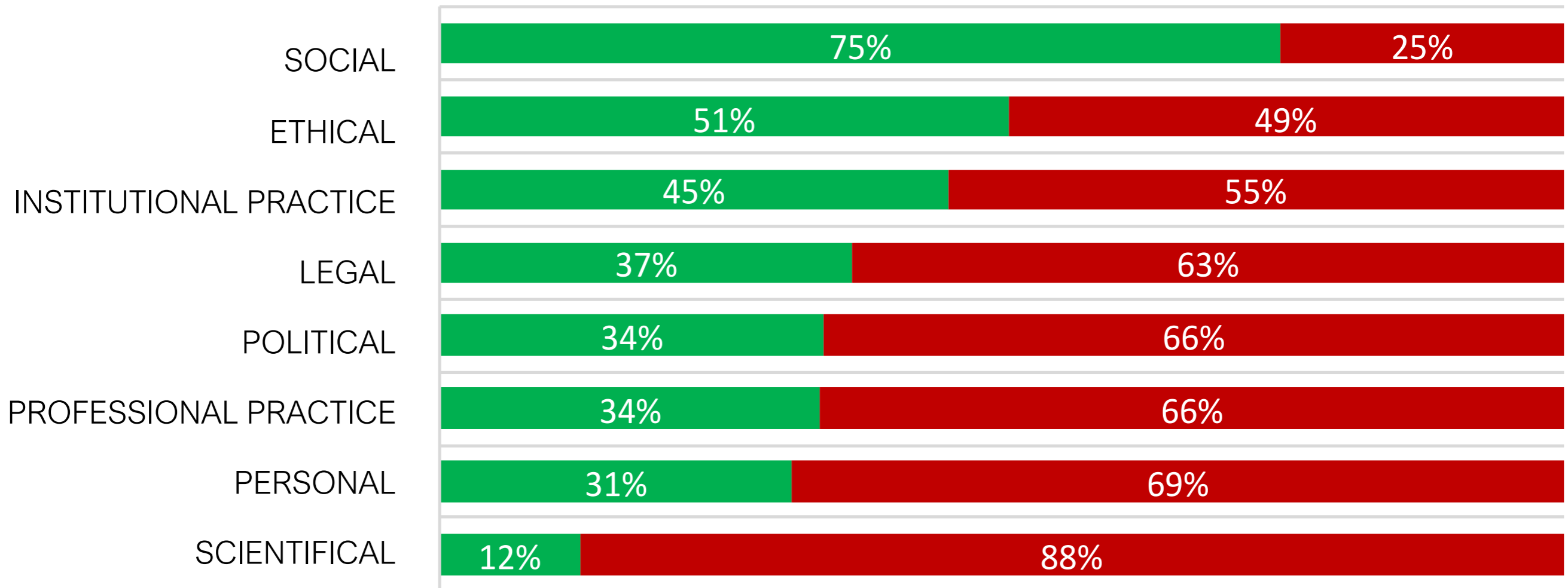
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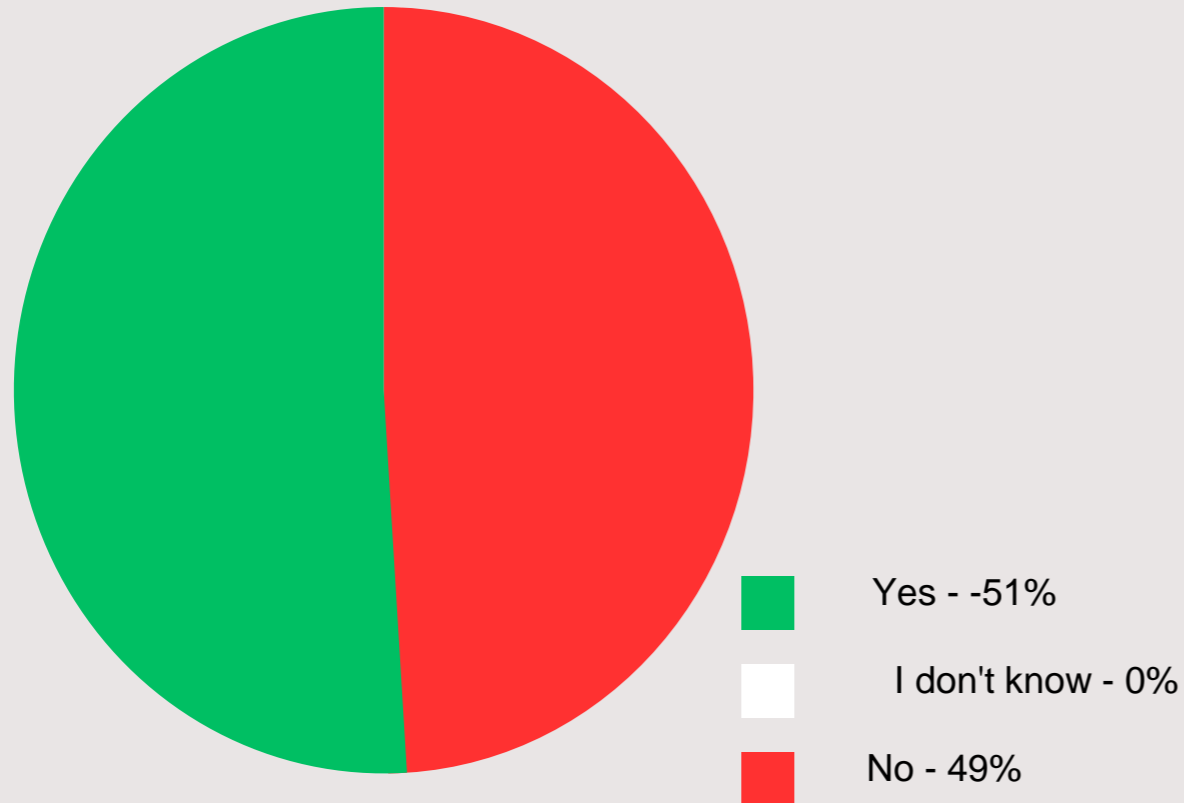
# FOR YOU, SUPPORT FOR LGBTIQIA+ PEOPLE IN CHILD PROTECTION IS A MATTER OF PARTICULAR CONCERN?

■ yes ■ no

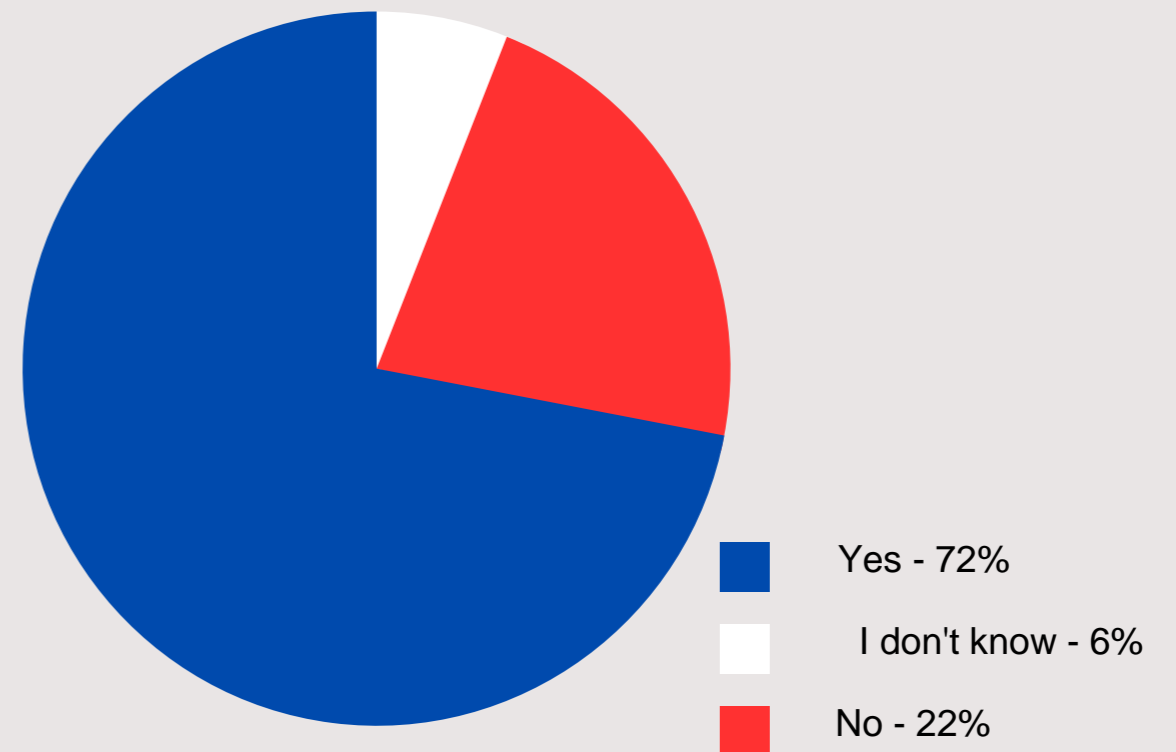


# During your professional practice, have you had to answer questions from young people who wondered about their sexual orientation?

Italy

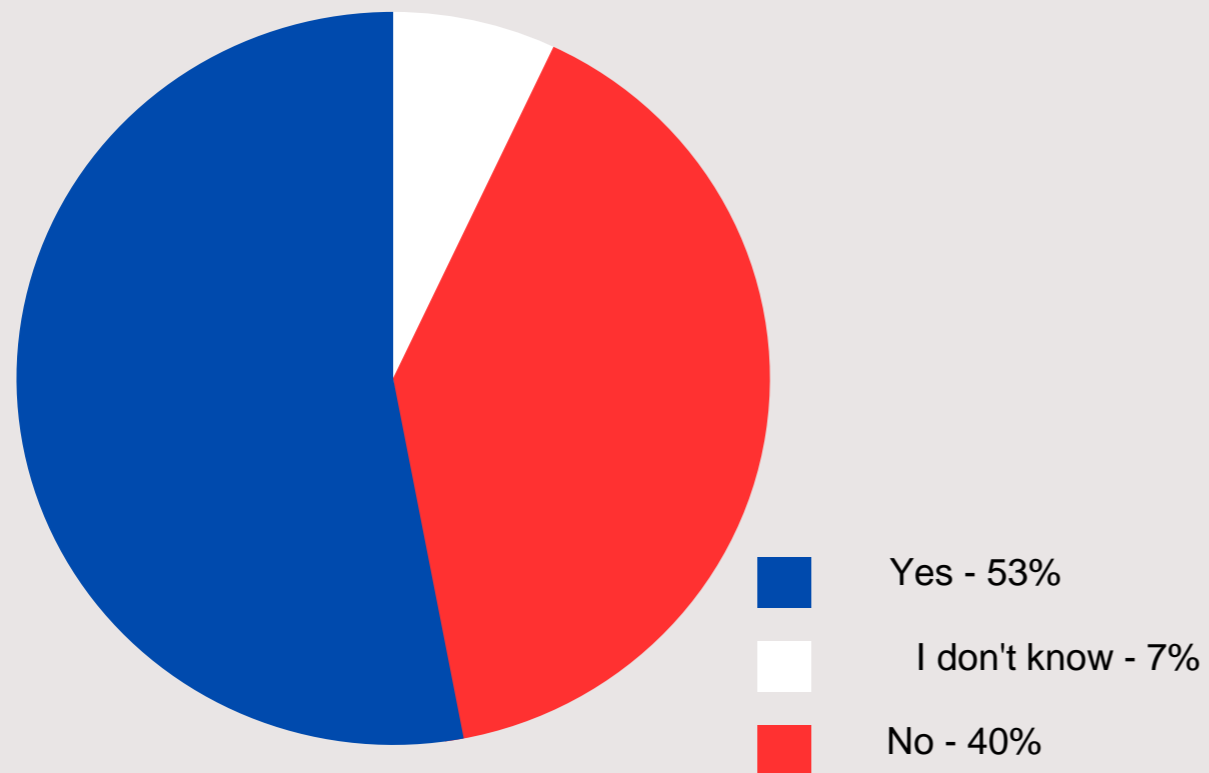


France

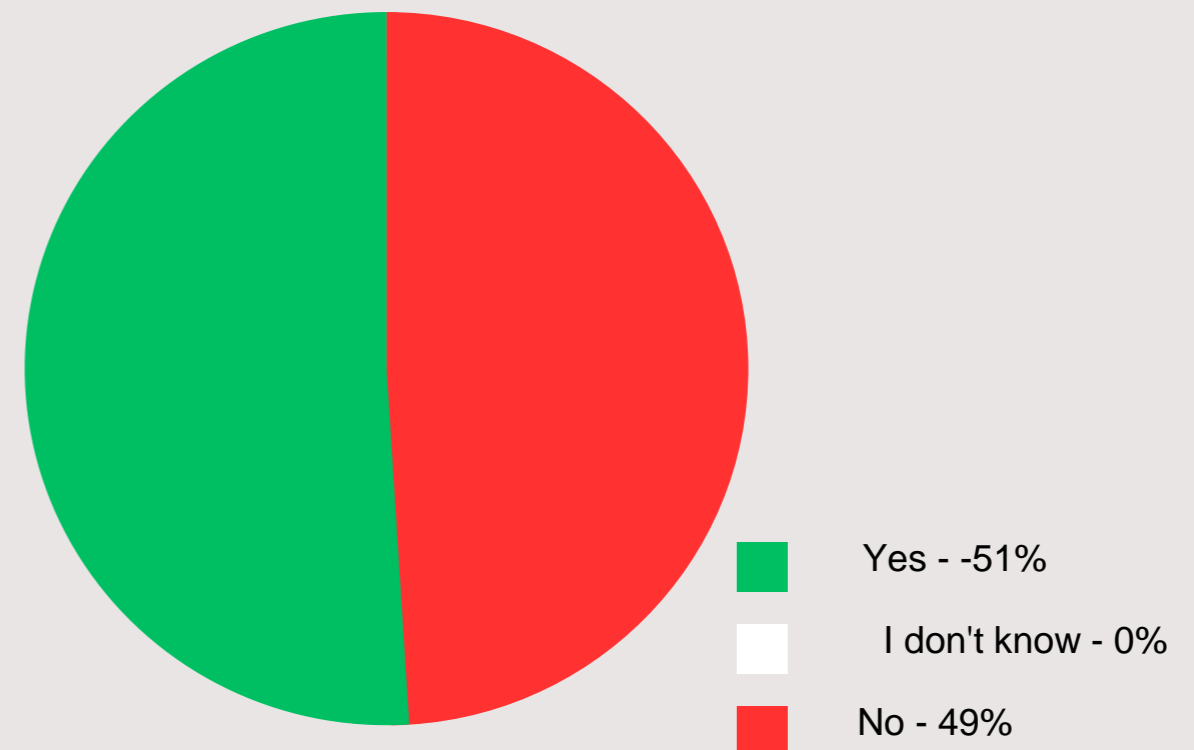


During your professional practice, have you had to answer questions from young people who wondered about their gender identity?

France

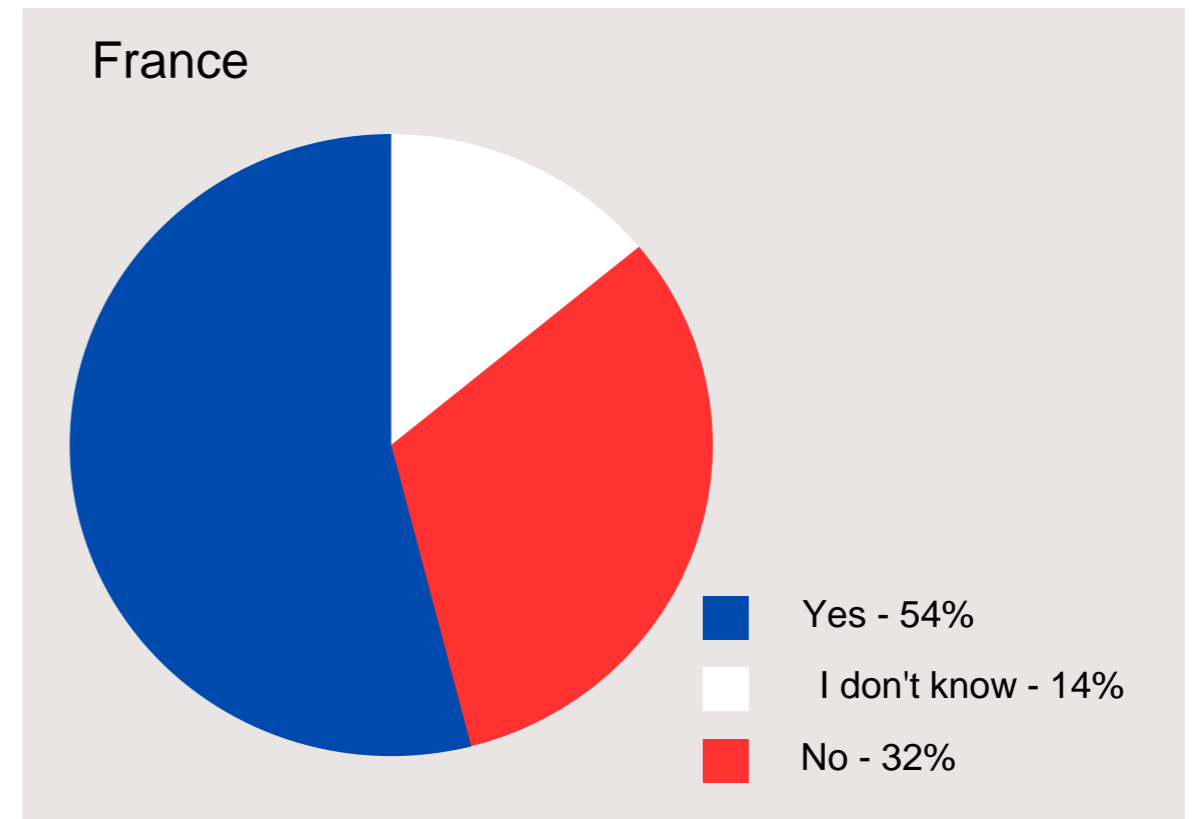
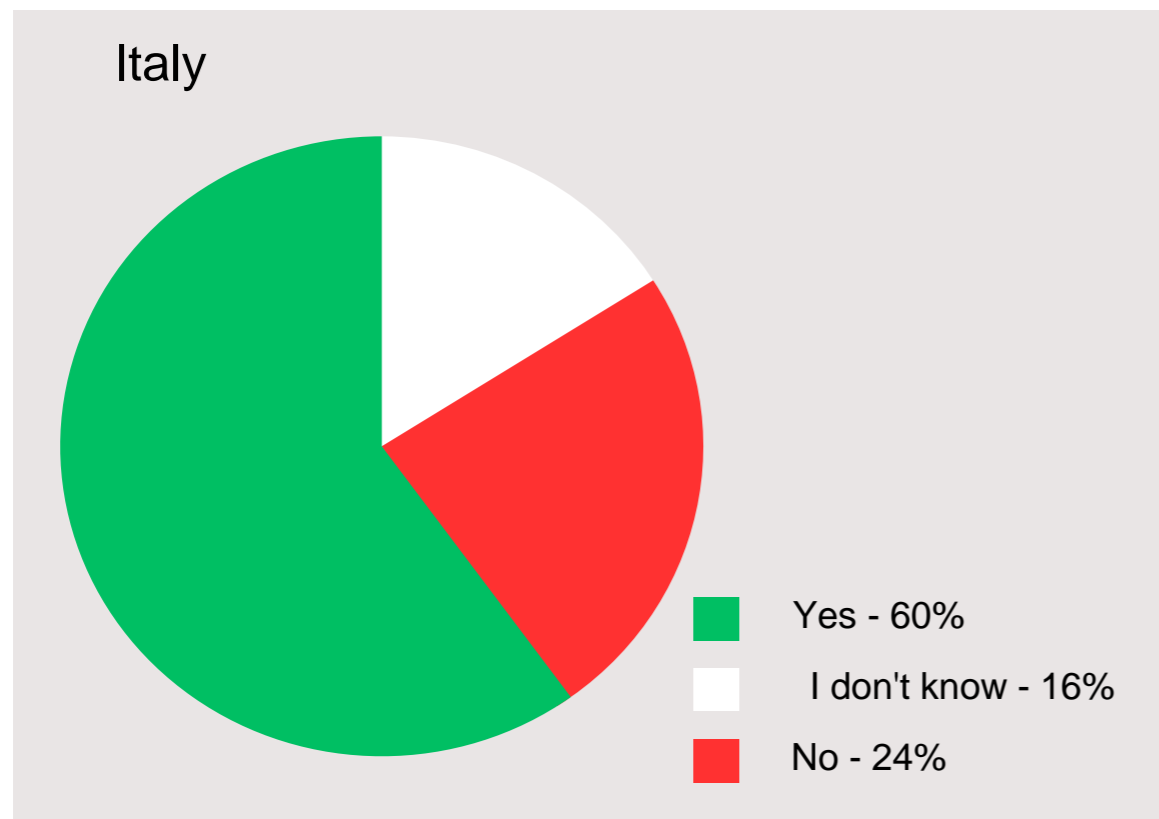


Italy



Even though many professionals claim to mobilise different resources (legal, medical, administrative, etc.), the responses and reactions of practitioners are based more on their convictions, beliefs and personal commitments than on data, scientific or legal knowledge.

**Has your work practice and the discussion with young people questioning sexual orientation and gender identity issues changed your perception of LGBTIQIA+ people's rights and needs regarding child protection in general?**





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# GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM QUALITATIVE ANALYSE OF THE GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONALS (FR context)

- Professional judgment depends to a large extent on personal convictions and cultural background (including religious beliefs).
- “Marriage for all” law changed the practices; however, lack of connection with international human rights laws.
- Sexuality in child protection is seen as a risk, not as a right.
- Professionals will seek to avoid responsibility for the potential risk, to the detriment of young people's right to sexuality and emotional life,
- The right to private life (art 8 ECHR) of children in need is a permanent issue
- To support the rights and needs of LGBTQIA+ youth in child protection (thinking about issues related to gender and sexual identities), will SW first have to think about and regulate the sexual practices of minors in residential care institutions?

# Factors influencing social support for LGBTQIA+ youth in care

- The area where the young person is being cared for  
Opening of the Drag cabaret in the town led to greater cultural and social openness. The territorial dimension is important, and the presence of these "LGBTQIA+ friendly" cultural spaces opens up possibilities and opportunities.

Less of homophobia for the guy and lesbian youth but also less tolerance for the transsexuality.

# Factors influencing social support for LGBTQIA+ youth in care

The perception of neighbours, friends and extended family will have an impact on parents' reactions.

In the home-based intervention, parents' position dominates; if young people agree, the professionals open up an exchange with the parents to allow the free expression.

In a residential setting, more adults are present, with varying positions and attitudes.

# To conclude – Involving young people in the community

Because social environment can be a source of stress or stigmatisation, it's important to open up services for young LGBT people to the local environment,

- to facilitate exchanges between young people and the outside world,
- to modify the often simplistic and erroneous representations of the LGBTQIA+ public

(Shared meals with neighbours, participation in various events organised by the city, integration into the activities of associations).

