



Shelter Sector Pipeline Project: From Homelessness to Equitable Work

Project Update and Preliminary Report of Surveys

April 2021



Agenda

Time	Item	Speaker
1:00	Welcome and Introductions	Sonja Nerad, TSN
1:05	Land Recognition	Sonja Nerad, TSN
1:10	Metcalf Foundation	Adriana Beemans, Metcalf Foundation
1:15	Pipeline Project – Preliminary Survey Findings	Gabriela Russek, TSN
1:45	Peer specialist's perspective: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Benefits of hiring staff WLE■ Equity and inclusion	Mardi Daley, Peer Specialist and Engagement Advisor, Founder of Lived Experience Lab
1:55	Q&A	Gabriela and Mardi
2:05	Breakout Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Best Practices Guidelines Visioning Groups■ Pilot Project: Vaccination Promotion Peer Champions	Facilitators from Pipeline research team and Advisory Committee
2:45	Report-back, Wrap Up and Closing	Sonja Nerad, TSN



Land Acknowledgement



I acknowledge the land I am standing on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. I also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

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MY TORONTO LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
#TKARONTOFORALL

Tkaronto is built on sacred land that is part of an agreement between Indigenous peoples and then extended to allied nations to peacefully and respectfully care for it. By personally making a land acknowledgement you are taking part in an act of reconciliation, honouring the land and indigenous heritage, which dates back over 10,000 years.

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Introduction

The Shelter Sector Pipeline Project: from Homelessness to Equitable Work is a 2-year research and action project funded by the Metcalf Foundation

Purpose



To support the Toronto's homelessness serving sector in a collective effort to hire, retain, and promote people with lived experience of homelessness (PWLE)



To develop evidence-based tools, resources and strategies that will help the sector to provide good quality employment opportunities and experiences to people with lived experience



To develop and move forward policy and practice recommendations so that they are collectively adopted by the homelessness sector with the support of the City of Toronto



Longer-Term Project Results

Benefits for PWLE interested in working in the sector:

More people who have lived experience with homelessness and related lived experiences:

- Are employed in shelter sector
- Feel supported by their employers in the workplace
- Are able to hold on to employment
- Move on to better work
- Get employment that matches their employment goals
- Have good incomes
- Have better access to the broader determinants of health and well-being (i.e., housing, food security, social connections, etc.).



Longer-Term Project Results

Benefits for clients and shelter organizations:

- Helps to build strong, skilled shelter workforce
- Address chronic staffing shortages
- Clients supported by staff with similar lived experience have
 - » Improved experiences in shelter
 - » Improved outcomes
- Staff with lived experience contribute insights, skills, and knowledge that help the shelter system to operate more effectively



Who are PWLE?

People who have stayed in a shelter or experienced homelessness of any kind including people who have used other homelessness services;

- stayed in encampments;
- lived outside without being in an encampment;
- had to stay with other people in a temporary or precarious situation due to not having anywhere or else to live (e.g., “couch surfing”)

AND/OR

Had other types of life experiences that many shelter clients and people experiencing homelessness also have experienced, and that are common among people experiencing homelessness, such as:

- refugee experiences
- mental health challenges
- substance use or addictions
- youth homelessness
- street sex work or trafficking experiences or history of trauma or abuse



Project activities

Year One

1. Advisory Committees

Two tables

- Homelessness service providers, employment agencies, training and education and organizations with expertise in peer programming
- PWLE who are interested in shelter work

2. Research

- Best Practice Review - Interviews and literature review to document best practices and available evidence regarding employment policy frameworks and models that are effective for equitably employing PWLE
- PWLE interested in working in the homelessness and supportive housing sector
- Survey - shelter service providers, to document barriers, facilitators, and current practices around employing, retaining, and promoting PWLE

Year Two

Convene Working Groups to move forward initiatives that align with research findings

- Develop good practices (i.e., standards, guidelines)
- Advance pilot projects (i.e., training, peer programs)



Notes on analysis methods

This is a preliminary analysis of survey data for key quantitative and qualitative questions

The second stage analysis may include reporting on:

- Differences in response patterns among different groups (e.g. racial/ethnic groups; staff with vs without LE)
- The number of shelters that follow certain practices or have certain challenges around staff WLE



Notes on sampling methods

We used voluntary response sampling; participants self-selected

Staff surveys were sent to TSN member shelters

- Samples likely include disproportionate number of staff WLE, and staff who support hiring of staff WLE

Survey of PWLE interested in shelter work was distributed through schools, employment services, peer worker organizations, etc

- Sample likely includes disproportionate number of PWLE who are already connected to support and/or training

Survey Results



Participating during the presentation

During the presentation, feel free to put comments and questions in the chat, especially

- 1.** Point out a finding from the survey that you think is especially interesting and important for us to pay attention to
- 2.** What questions do the findings raise – what do we need to learn more about?



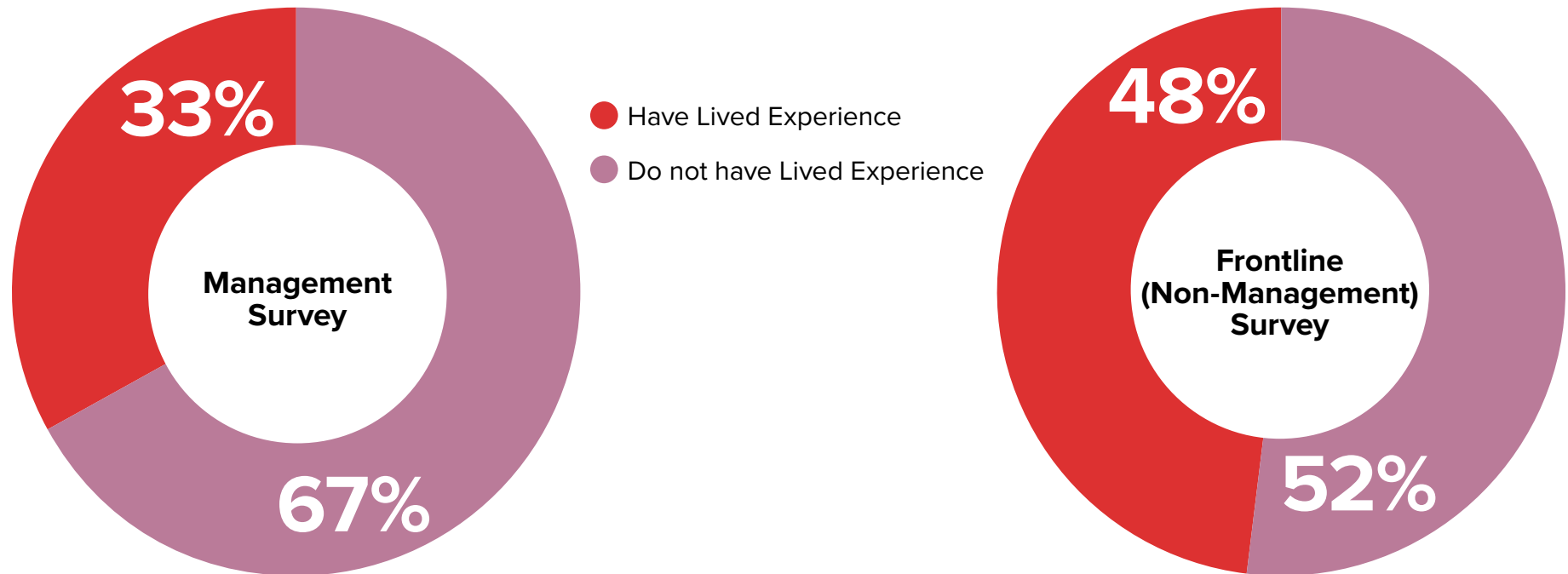
Who took the survey?

- The frontline staff survey was only for non-management staff
- Managers and supervisors took the management staff survey, even if their jobs involve some client contact

	Management Staff	Non-management Staff	PWLE Interested in Shelter Work
With Lived Experience	21	103	150
Without Lived Experience / Did not answer	42	112	N/A
Total	63	215	150



% of Survey Participants Who Have Lived Experience



Note: staff in any type of management or supervisory role took the Management Staff Survey, even if they have some client contact.

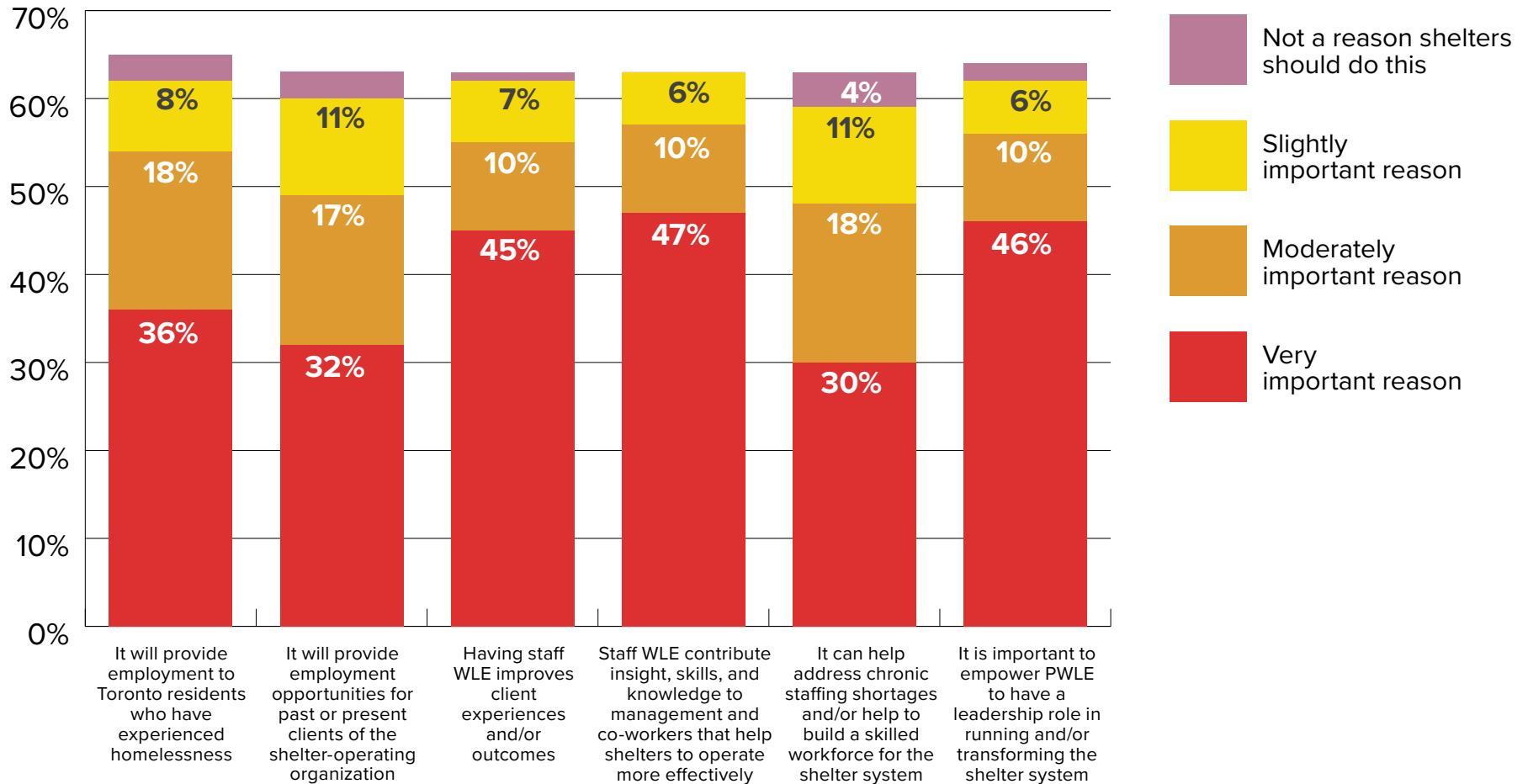
Attitudes Regarding the Employing of PWLE

Preliminary Findings



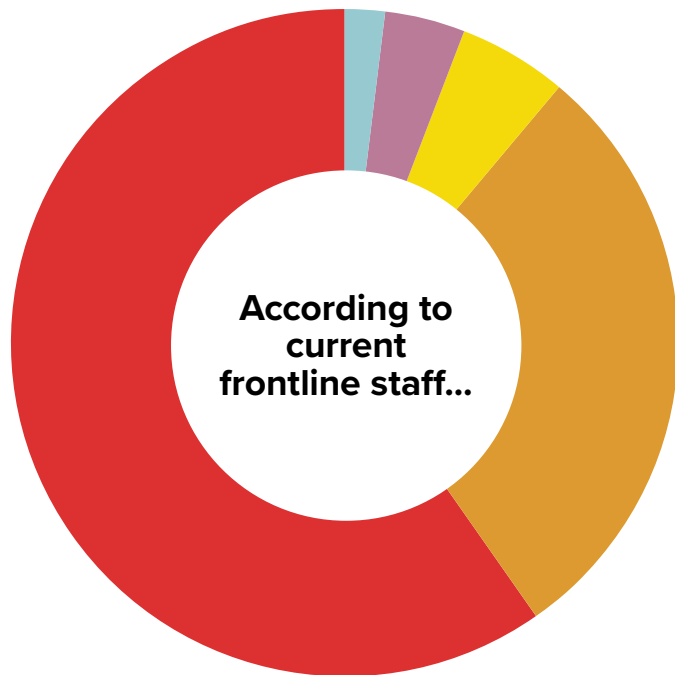
Why should shelters hire PWLE?

What we heard from managers

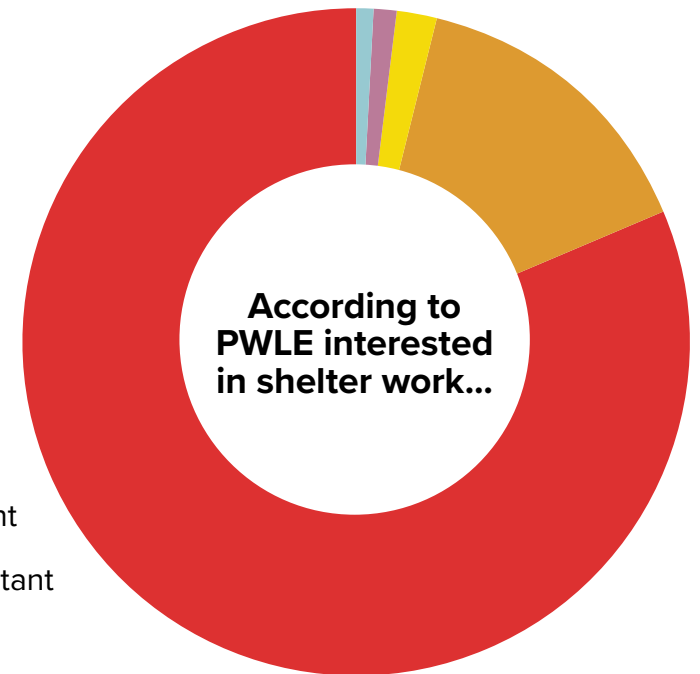




How important is it for shelter operators to employ people with lived experience?



- 2% I'm not sure
- 4% Not important
- 5% A little bit important
- 29% Moderately important
- 59% Very important



- 1% I'm not sure
- 1% Not important
- 2% A little bit important
- 15% Moderately important
- 82% Very important



Some common attitudes about staff WLE

Staff WLE

- Understand and empathize with clients/ residents and build trust and supportive relationships
- Provide support with navigating service systems that the staff WLE have used for themselves
- Are stronger advocates for people experiencing homelessness
- Have a deep desire to give back



Less-common frontline staff opinions about having shelter staff WLE

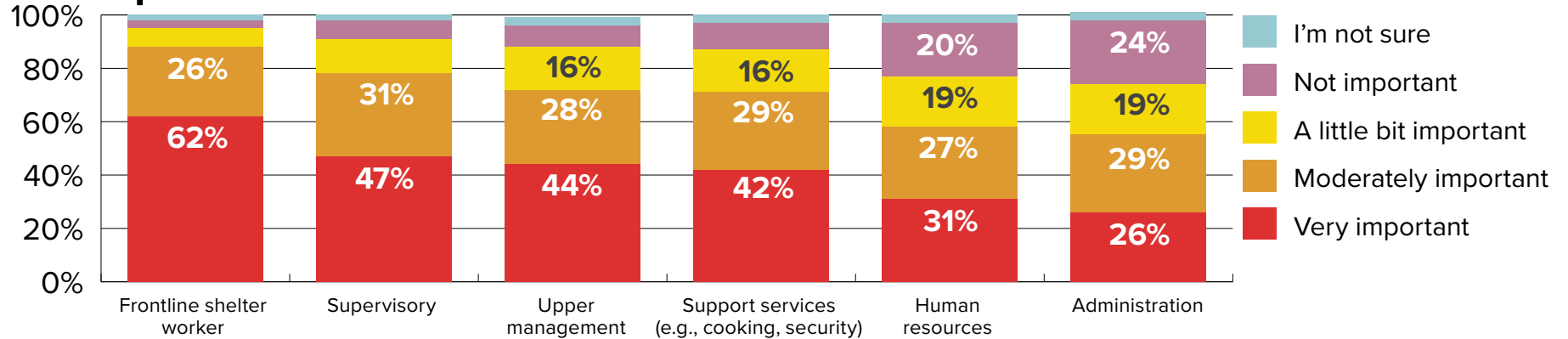
- Having lived experience is not very important - having relevant education and work experience matters more
- A combination of lived experience with relevant training is particularly valuable
- Lived experience is valuable but not necessary; staff without lived experience who have emotional intelligence can still be understanding/caring
- Sometimes workers with lived experience may give advice based on their own experiences/biases/traumas, which may not meet the client's needs.

—Frontline Staff Short Form survey (Jan-Feb 2021)



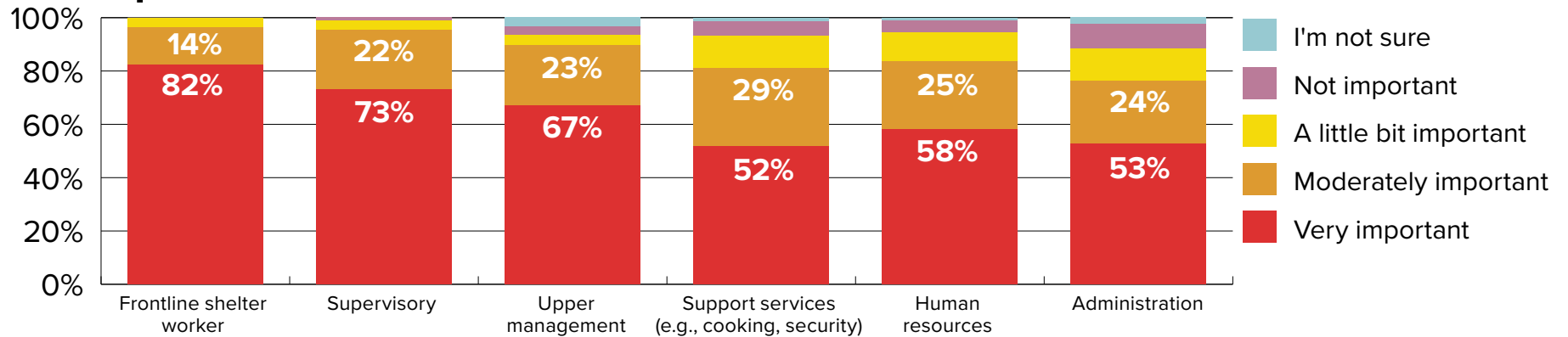
For which roles is having staff WLE important?

Opinions of Current Frontline Staff



From Survey of Frontline Staff; results were similar on management survey.

Opinions of PWLE Interested in Shelter Work

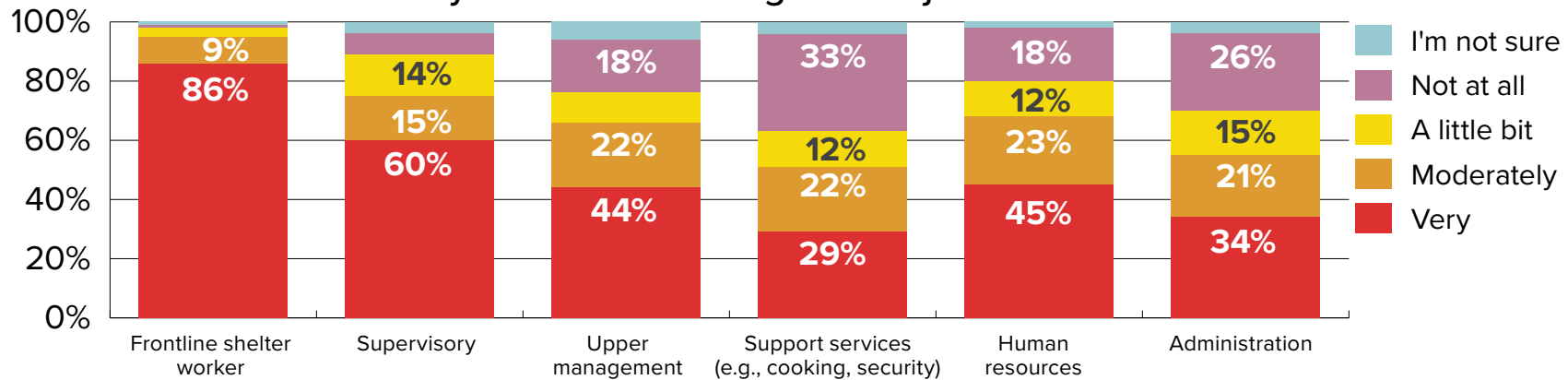




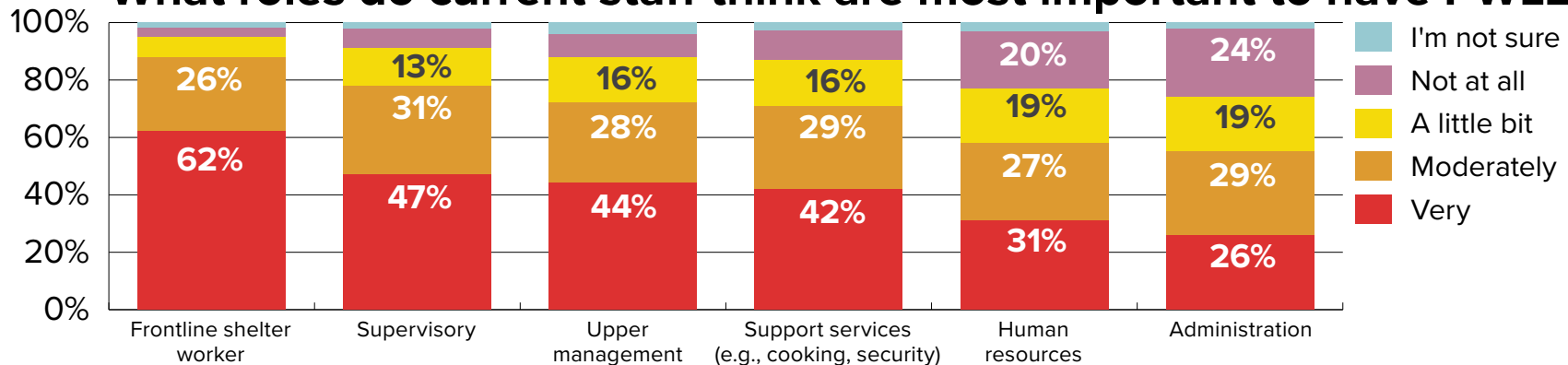
Roles for Staff WLE

For PWLE seeking shelter work:

How interested are you in the following shelter jobs?



What roles do current staff think are most important to have PWLE in?



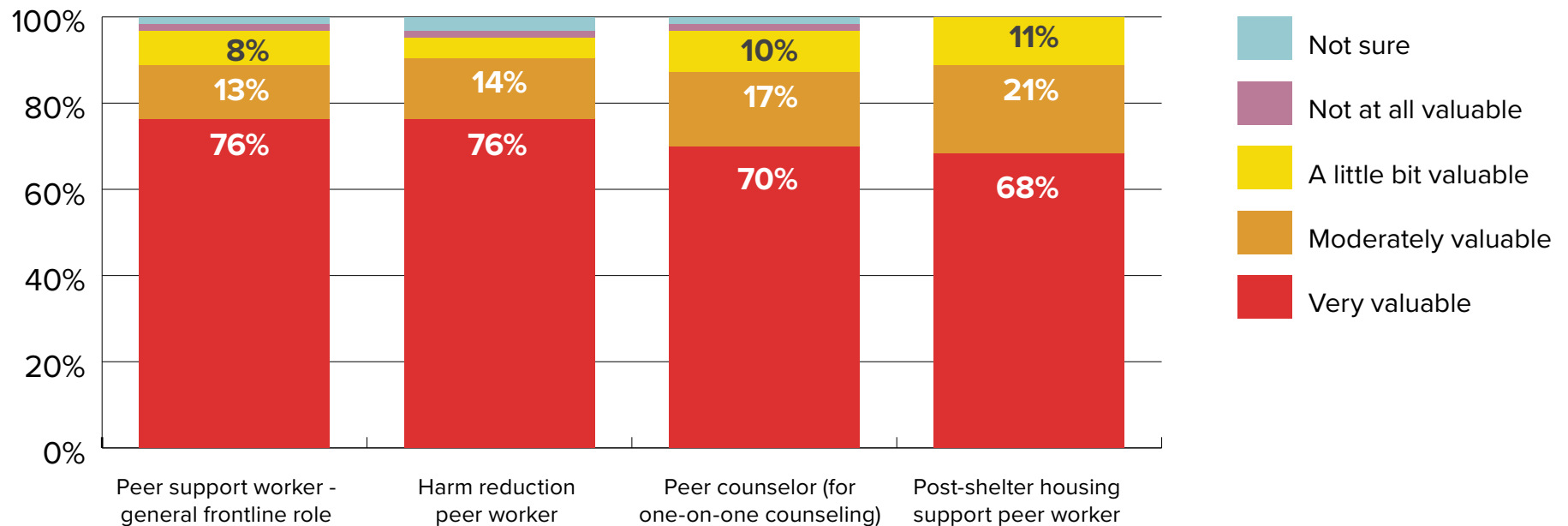
From Survey of Frontline Staff; results were similar on management survey.



A deeper dive: Peer workers in shelters

The survey included questions specific to “peer workers” – staff with lived experience who are required to disclose their lived experience to clients and draw on that lived experience to inform their work

How valuable is it for shelters to have the following types of peer workers?



From Survey of Shelter Management; results were similar on the other surveys.



Benefits of being employed for staff WLE



Almost all the staff WLE have benefited from working at the shelter system in terms of self-development, networking, and camaraderie



Frontline staff WLE agree that working at the shelter system has impacted their personal recovery positively

Practices and Conditions Regarding the Employment of PWLE

Preliminary Findings



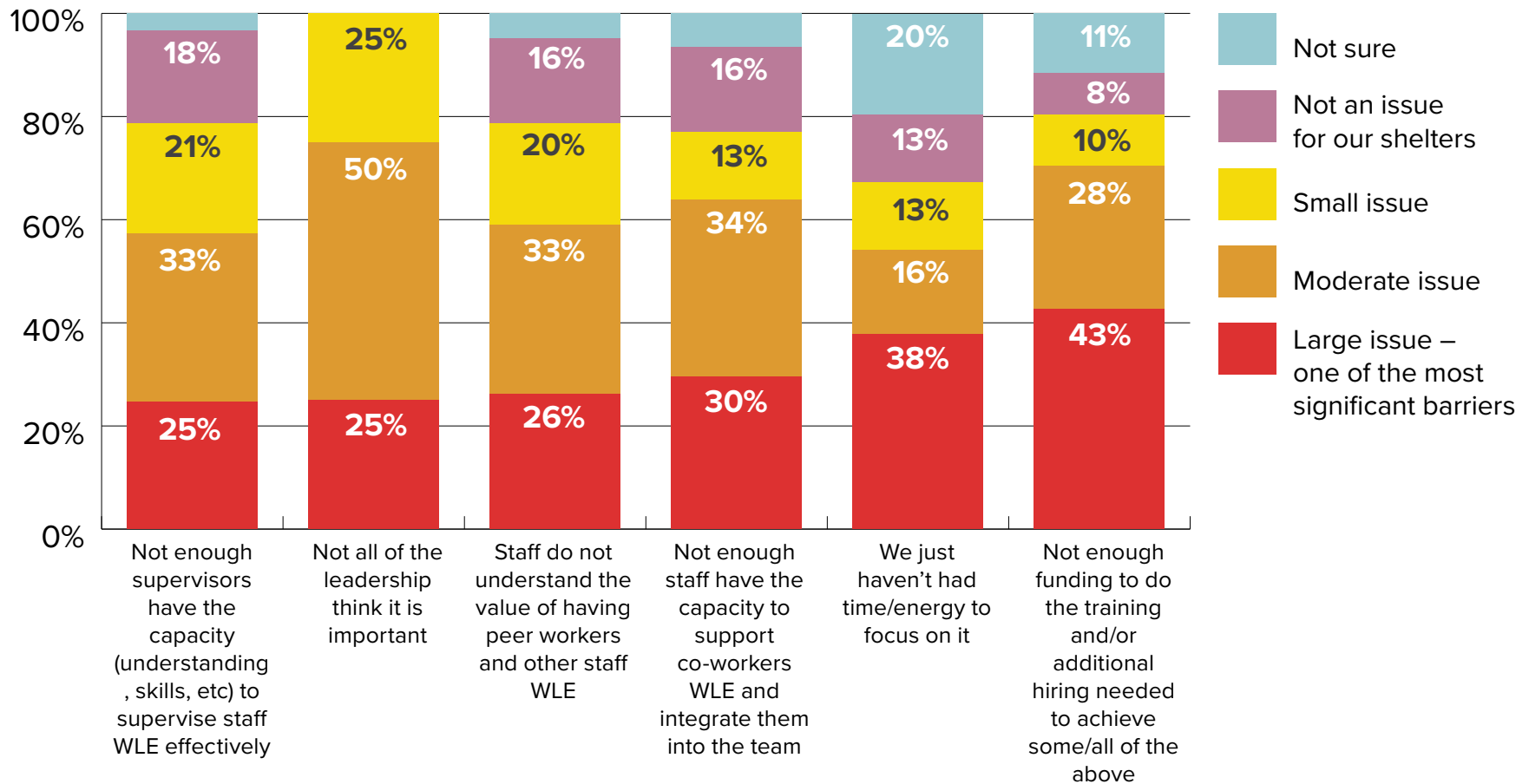
Employment pathway

This pathway was used to collect and analyze information regarding the employment experience for PWLE. The survey asked questions about each point in the pathway.





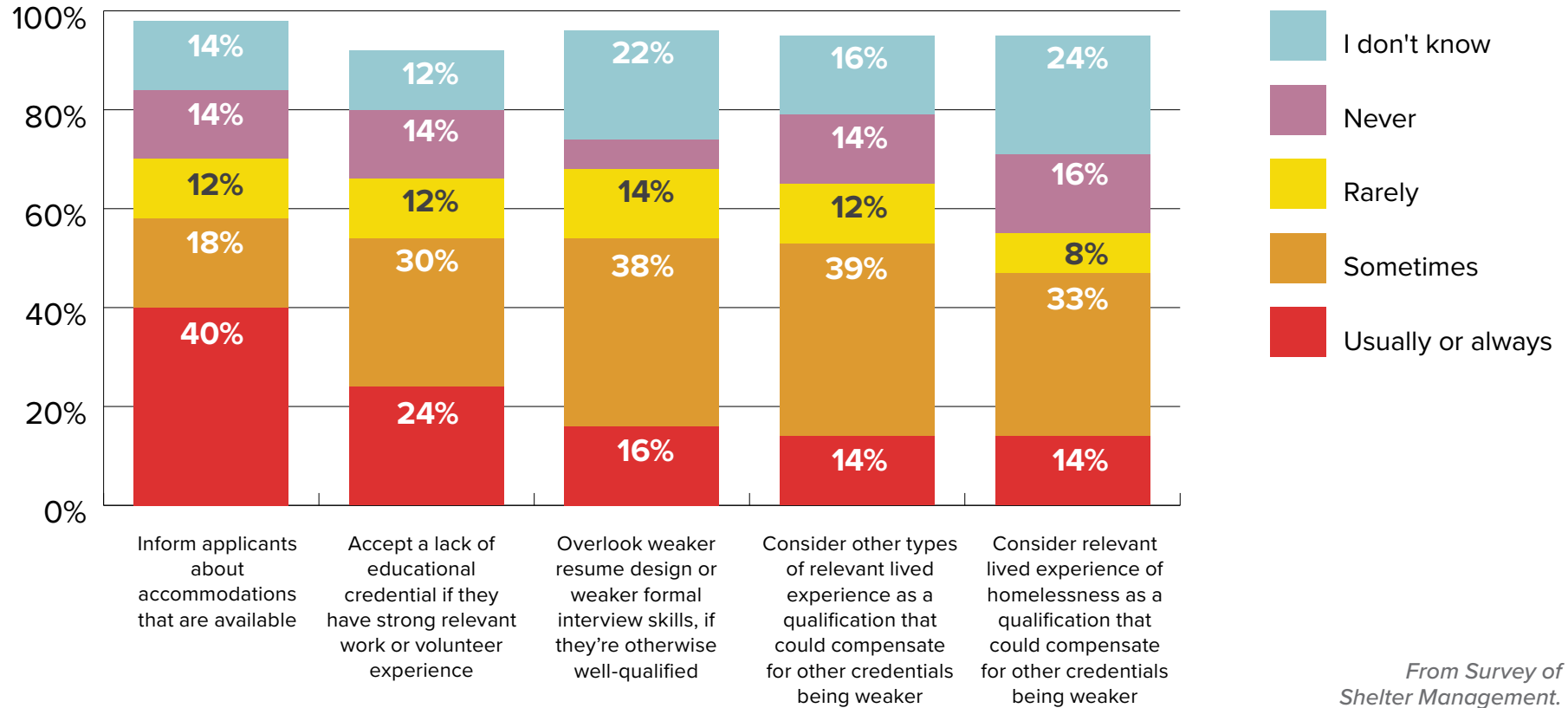
Key barriers to employing PWLE: management perspectives





Recruitment and hiring practices: application and interview process

How often does your organization do the following during the application and interview process?

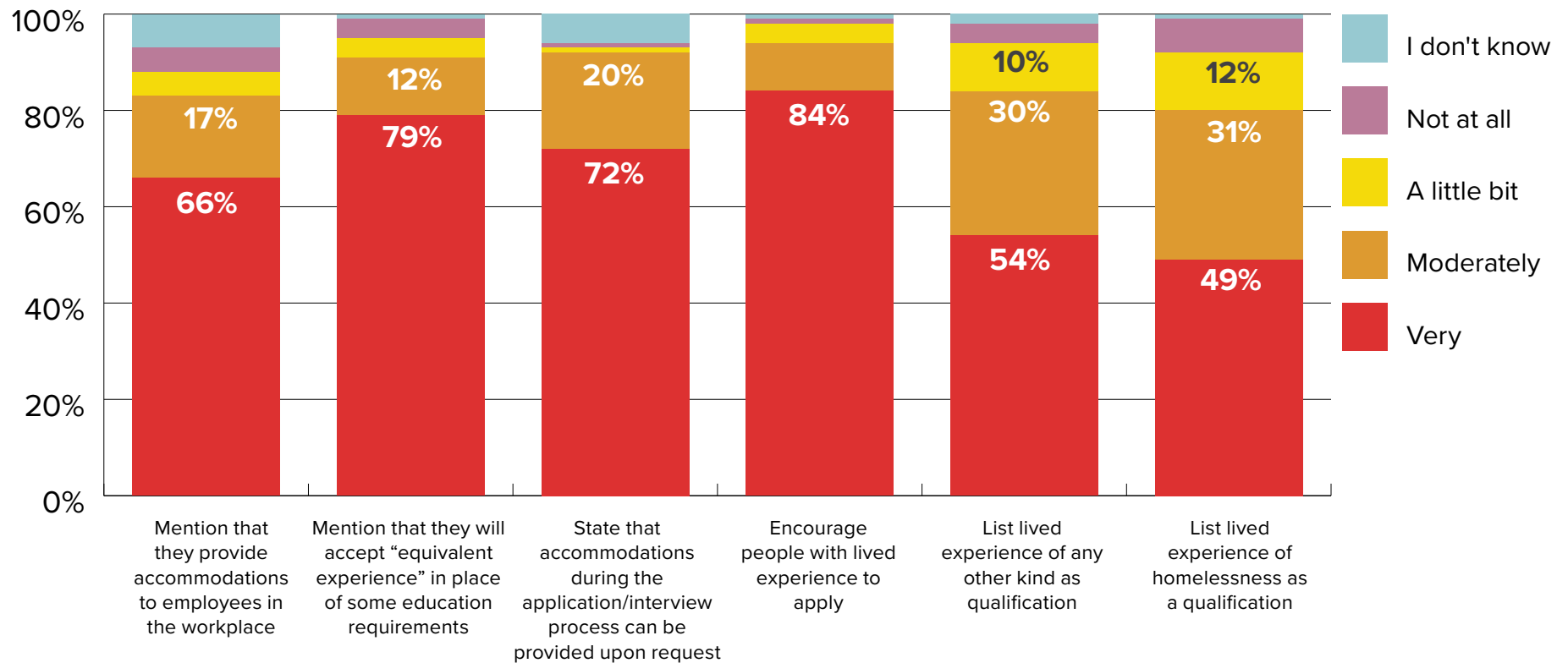


From Survey of Shelter Management.



Recruitment and hiring practices: Job Postings

How important is it for shelter operators to include each of the following in job postings?

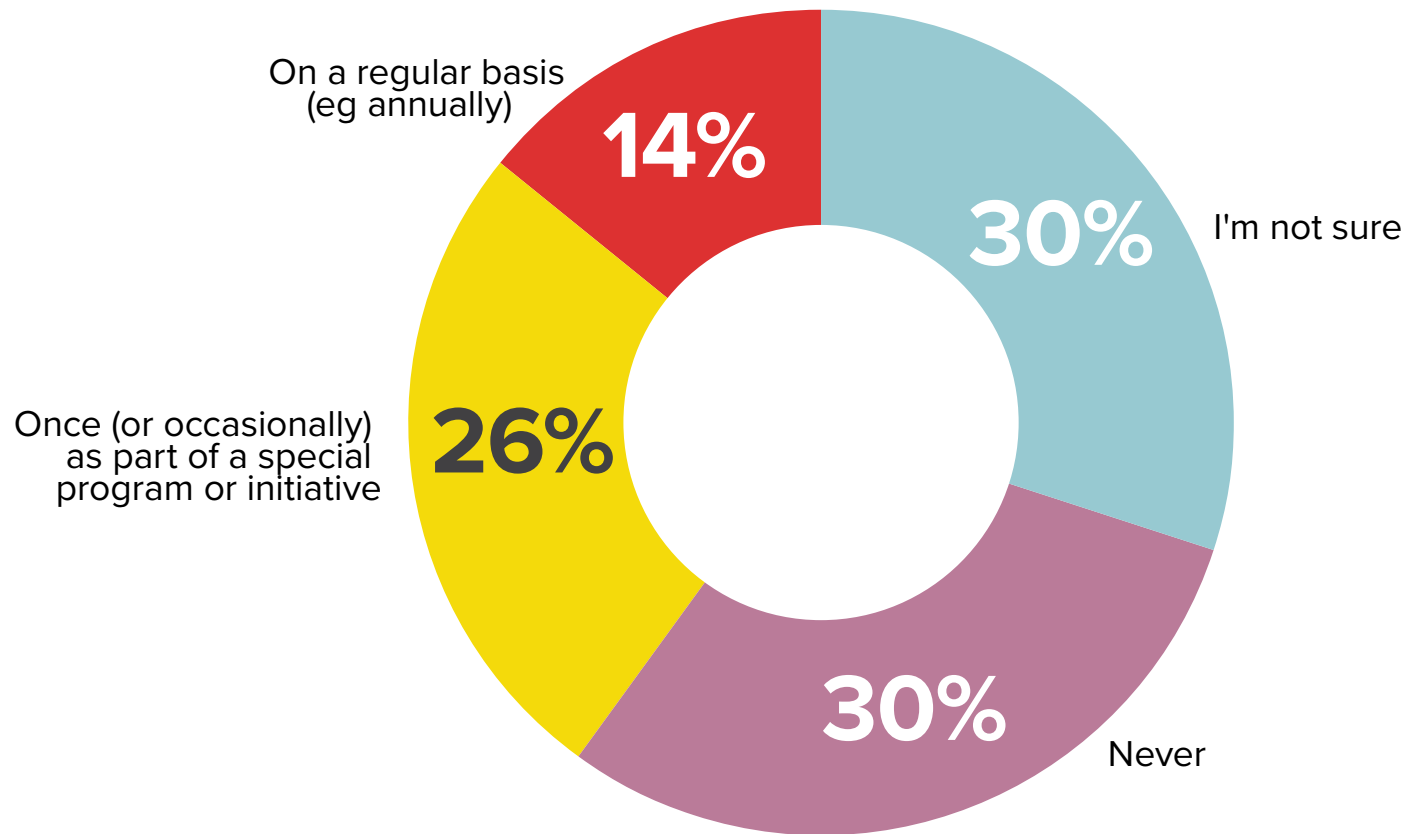


From Survey of PWLE Interested in Shelter Work (TSN, February 2021)



Preparing the organization

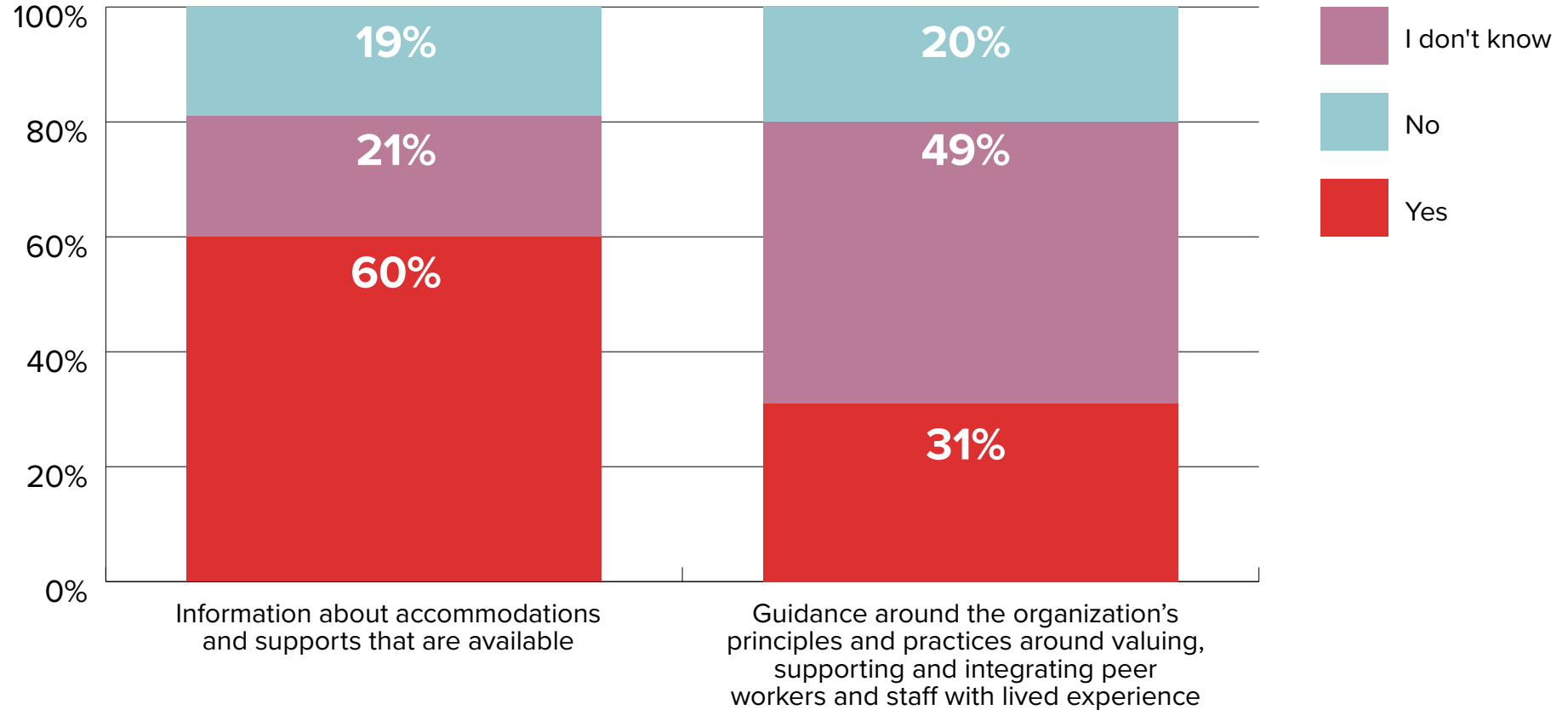
Has your shelter organization offered training to create a welcoming atmosphere that can make it easier for peer workers and other staff WLE to integrate and succeed?





On-boarding

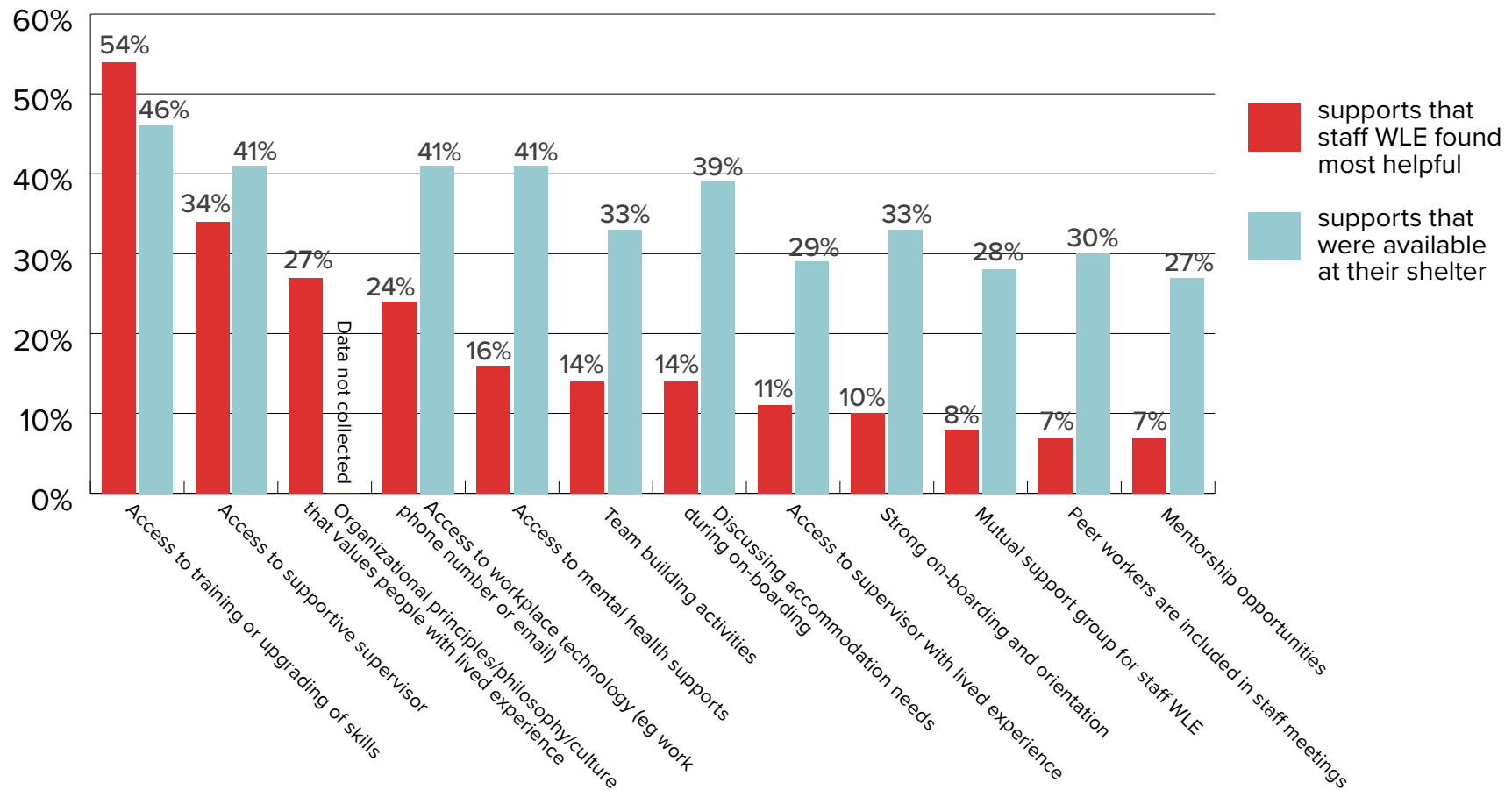
Is the following information in an employee handbook, policy book, or other documentation that new staff are directed to read?





Which employment supports are most helpful to PWLE?

This data is from the responses of current staff who self-identified as PWLE.



Improving Employment of PWLE in Toronto's Shelter System:

Preliminary Recommendations



Pre-employment training / on-boarding

Skills Training

- Crisis management
- Boundaries
- Triggers/coping skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-care

Job shadowing opportunities

These could happen as part of:

- Pre-employment training (eg, through employment services or shelter work training organization), and/or
- During on-boarding for new employees



Supports during employment

Mutual learning and power-sharing

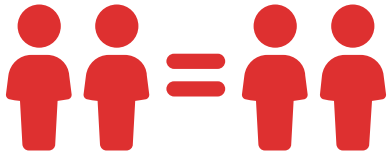
- Education for non-peer staff

Ongoing support for peer workers and other staff WLE

- Ongoing education and training opportunities
- Supervision with management where they can discuss their experiences (not evaluation)
- Allowing self-disclosure/open communication
- Mentorship/coaching
- Basic counseling



Guidelines for equality and equity



Equality

- Equal pay / use of pay scale
- Mobility options (within workforce)
- Same standards as non-PWLE staff
- Access employee benefits

Equity

- Specific job posts for PWLE/Recruitment and Hiring
- Setting targets for PWLE hiring
- Clearly defined roles
- Forthcoming accommodation practices



Peer workers in Toronto's shelter system

How many shelter organizations have peer workers?

- Staff from 15 out of 23 shelter organizations reported having peer workers
- Most organizations with peers had only 1-3 peers working with shelter clients in total, across all sites

What percentage of respondents work at shelters that have peer workers?

There may be multiple respondents from the same shelter

Does your shelter have peer workers?*

- Yes: 30 % (14 respondents)
- No: 46% (21 respondents – 4 of these used to have peers)
- Unsure: 24% (11 respondents)

** responses from frontline staff were similar – 39% worked at shelters with peer workers*



Breakout rooms: Best practices guidelines visioning

- 1. Room 1: Recruitment and Hiring Practices** to increase/improve hiring of staff WLE
- 2. Room 2: Organization culture-change:** creating an inclusive workplace for staff WLE and empowering PWLE
- 3. Room 3: Supports and accommodations** available to staff WLE during employment
- 4. Room 4: Staff Training and Career Advancement** - ensuring opportunities for current shelter employees WLE
- 5. Room 5: Peer workers: best practices** - around equity, integration into staff team, skills training, etc



Pilot Projects – Some possibilities

1. Shelter Work Training/Pre-employment Program for PWLE

- **Option A:** Program for PWLE interested in shelter work in general
- **Option B:** Peer worker training for shelter roles

2. Peer worker team coordinated /supervised through a single community organization who places them in positions in shelters system-wide

- **Option A:** General frontline peer workers
- **Option B:** Specialized team (eg, health promotion)

3. Test out best practices guidelines in pilot shelters



Breakout room 6: pilot project exploration Vaccination Promotion Peer Champions

Breakout Room 6:

Concept

- creating a roster of paid peers recruited and trained to help improve access to vaccines and address vaccine hesitancy among shelter clients

Visioning discussion to be facilitated by:

Sonja Nerad, Executive Director, TSN



Best practices discussion questions 1 & 2

Regarding the focus topic of your breakout room:

- 1. What are some best practices that are very important for shelters to implement?**
- 2. Which of these practices are both feasible and worth prioritizing for your shelter in particular?**
 1. over the next year?
 2. As a longer-term initiative (requires more time, funding, resources, major culture-shifts, etc)



Best practices discussion questions 3 & 4

Regarding the focus topic of your breakout room:

- 3. Which practices/guidelines should be adopted in common by the whole Toronto shelter system short-term? Long-term?**
- 4. From an anti-racism / anti-oppression lens, are any specialized guidelines or projects needed around this topic? For example –focused on specific groups (2SLGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, youth etc)?**



Next steps questions

1. Might you be like to participate in a working group to move forward with developing shelter sector guidelines around this topic?

If so, please put your name and email/phone in the chat or tell the notetaker to add you to the list

2. What do we need to learn more about in order to work on best practices guidelines for this topic successfully?



Next steps

- Collect ideas and additional input through small group discussions
- Identify range of guidelines, toolkits, best practices to start working on (i.e., that will help to improve the employment continuum)
- Form working groups to develop guidelines, toolkits, best practices, etc.
- Support other working groups or initiatives that emerge from this work

THANK
YOU!

Thank you to all of the people who participated in the surveys and interviews conducted to date for the Project.

Thank you to the Pipeline Project Team and the Project Advisory Committee for guidance, wisdom and support!



For more information, visit:
www.torontoshelternetwork.com