



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE PILOT STUDY

DON'T ASK, LGBTQ INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA DON'T TELL?

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PRONOUNS: SHE, HER, HERS

PROJECT BACKGROUND

- ▶ Increased awareness in recent years of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and evidence of how one's sexuality and gender identity and expression affect one's experiences in and of society:
 - ▶ Presumed heterosexual and that gender corresponds with sex
 - ▶ Bias, discrimination, marginalisation, abuse
 - ▶ Impact on health, wellbeing, life choices and outcomes
- ▶ *What about in international education?*

LET'S ASK!

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LGBT STUDENTS?



WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW?

- ▶ Does being LGBTQ impact on the experiences of international students in Australia?
- ▶ How does being LGBTQ impact on international students' experiences?
- ▶ How can LGBTQ international students be better supported?



DATA COLLECTION

- ▶ Survey
 - ▶ Online and anonymous
 - ▶ Age 18+, identifying as LGBTQ & international student
 - ▶ 66 questions
 - ▶ "Do not wish to answer" option for most questions
 - ▶ Add own answer & additional comment option for most questions
 - ▶ Publicised via Twitter and email networks
- ▶ Supplemented with semi-structured interviews with current & past international students
- ▶ Ethics approval from Deakin Human Research Ethics Committee (ref. 2016-227)
- ▶ Research grant from IEAA to support data collection
- ▶ To be published as an IERN Research Report (December 2016)



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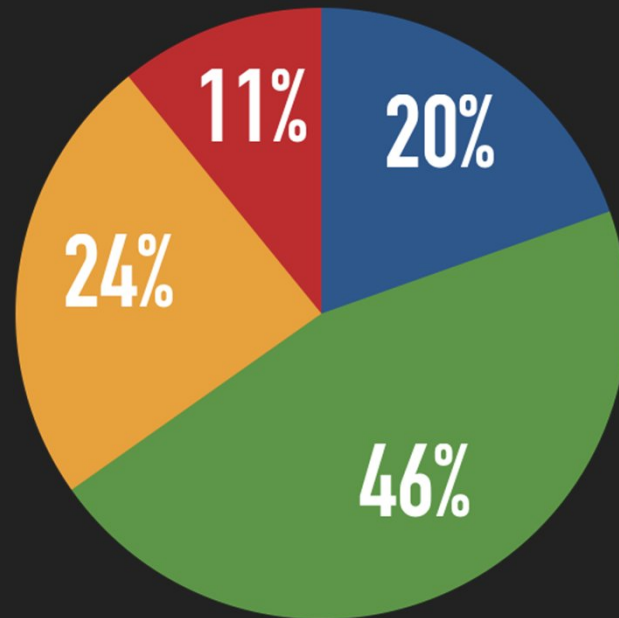
Are you an [#LGBTQ](#) international student in Australia? Take a survey about your experiences at surveymonkey.com/r/SOGIE-intl-s... [@IEAAustralia](#) [@AIEC](#)

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6 RETWEETS 3 LIKES

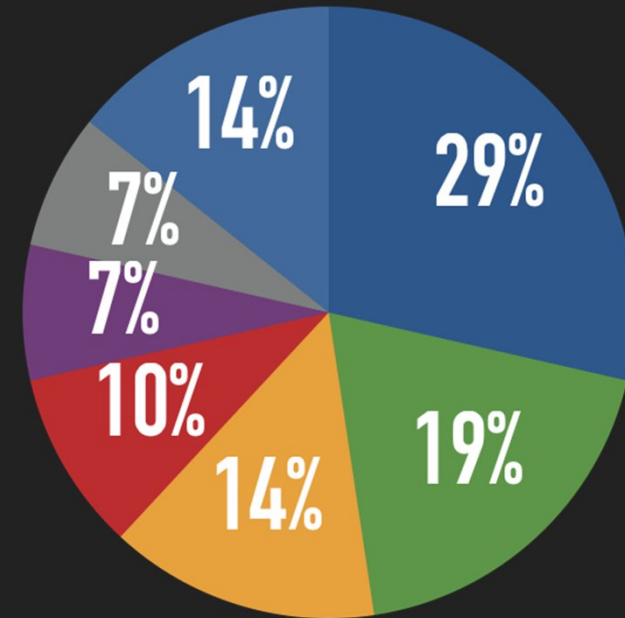
WHO TO ASK? (N=46)

AGE



● 18-21 ● 22-25
● 26-30 ● 31+

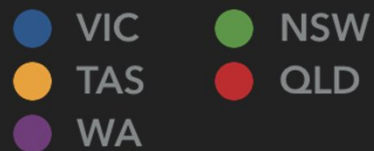
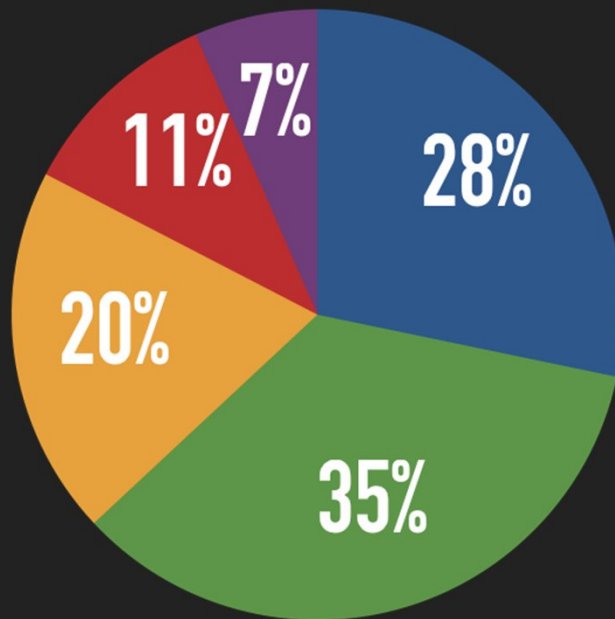
NATIONALITY



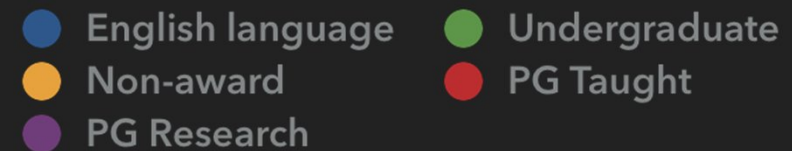
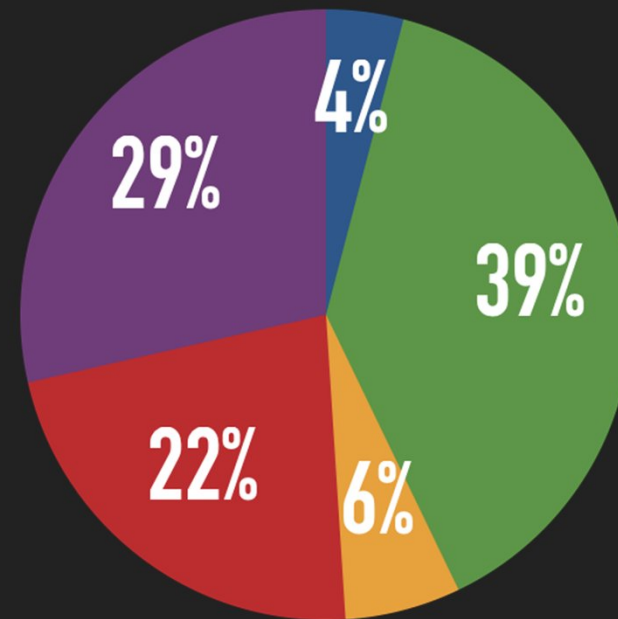
● China/Hong Kong ● EU
● Canada/US ● Vietnam
● Malaysia ● Brazil
● Other

WHO TO ASK? (N=46)

LOCATION

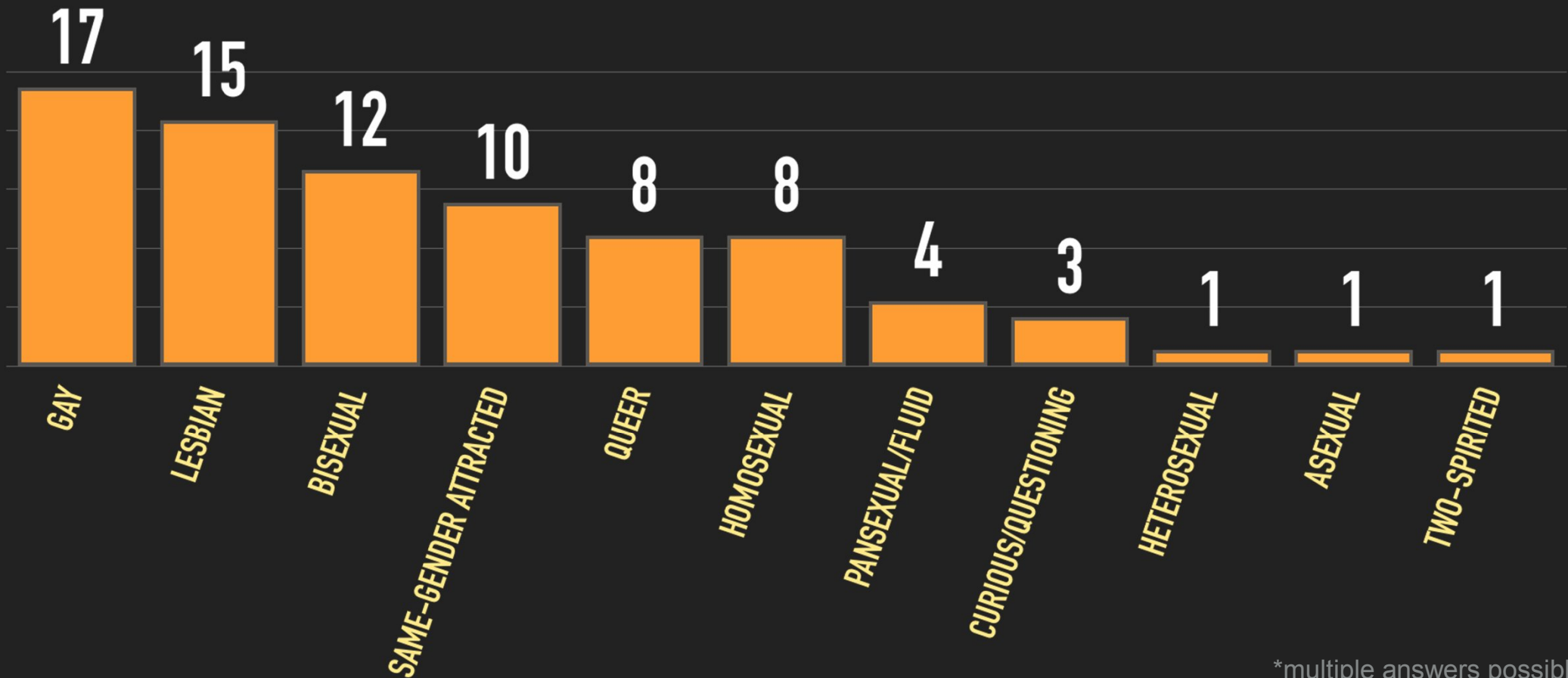


COURSE TYPE



WHO TO ASK? (N=45)

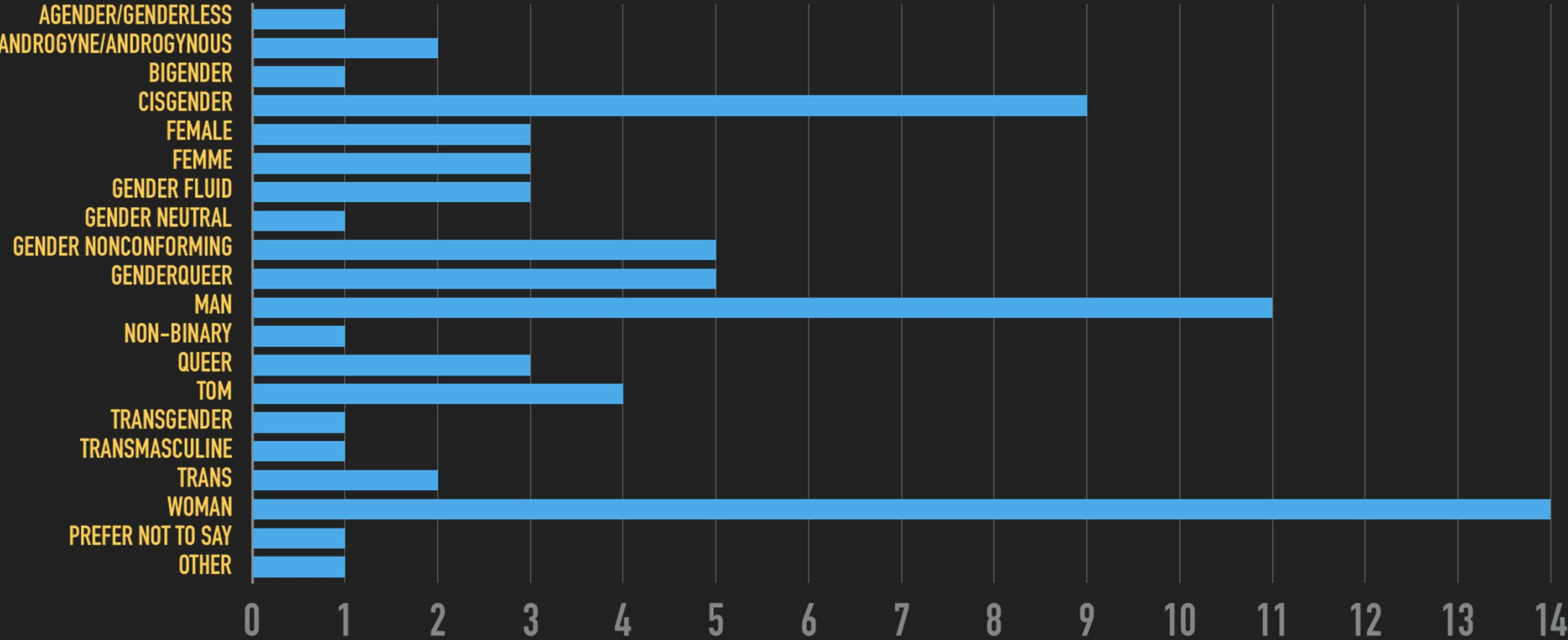
SEXUAL ORIENTATION*



*multiple answers possible

WHO TO ASK? (N=45)

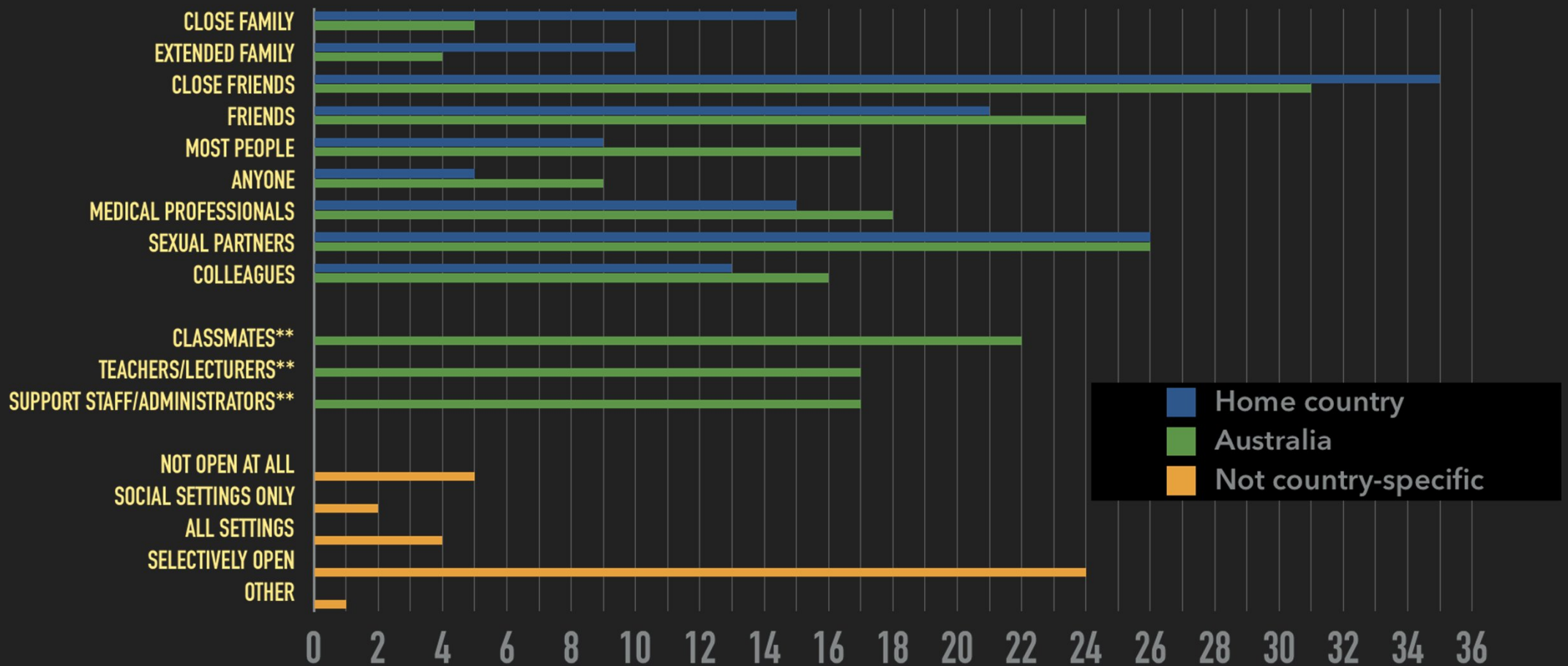
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR GENDER IDENTITY?*



*multiple answers possible

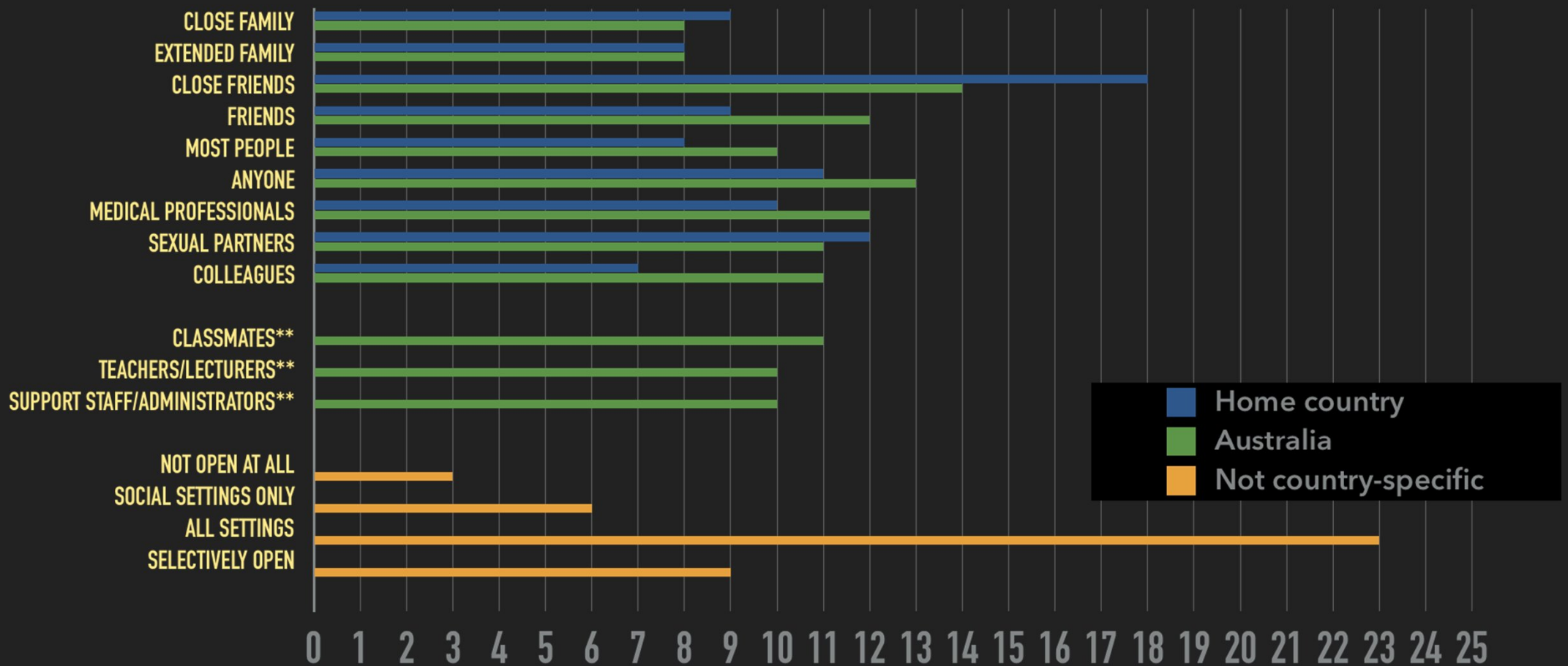
WHAT WAS TOLD? (N=45)

OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION WITH:



WHAT WAS TOLD? (N=45)

OPENNESS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY WITH:



WHAT WAS TOLD?

I am way more open in my home country than here!

I work on sexual health research, so most of the people I'm working with are very gay-friendly, so I don't mind being open.

I feel I am slightly more attracted to guys sexually, but I can experience romantic attraction only to girls or non-binary people.

I am still scared to let people know about my sexual preference.

I wasn't homosexual at all until I met my girlfriend.

I can't be identified as a lesbian due to my Country, Family and Friends. So I rather act straight.

Additional comments from respondents

EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

- ▶ 40% of respondents felt that their sexual orientation/gender identity made Australia more attractive as a study destination, but it only affected choice of education provider for 20% of respondents.
- ▶ Attitudes towards LGBT people "more positive than negative", but varies by location:
 - ▶ "I would say generally positive, but I know it depends on where you are. I live in Sydney and it is very liberal here."
 - ▶ "Wollongong is very gay :)"
 - ▶ "I was surprised to see so much homophobia/transphobia in Brisbane. The community itself was surprisingly small."
- ▶ Lack of marriage equality viewed as an indication of limited acceptance by several respondents:
 - ▶ "Marriage equality is still not accepted which means queer people are still second class citizens and Australia seems to be ok with it."

EXPERIENCES AT PLACE OF STUDY 1

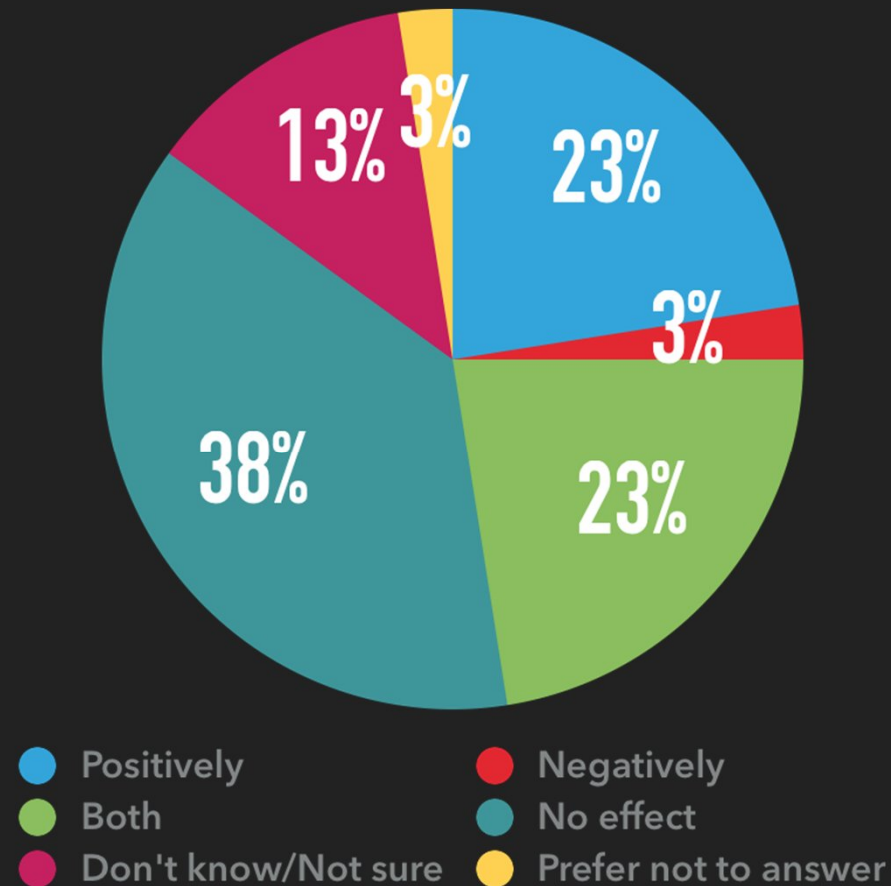
- ▶ Attitudes of institutions and professional staff towards LGBTQ people viewed as positive overall but possibly more passive than pro-active
 - ▶ "At least the school put up banners and posters which allow LGBT students to feel somehow protected by telling them they have somebody to approach if anything happens."
 - ▶ "Not that I've gone and discussed it with anyone, but I see the ALLY stickers everywhere"
 - ▶ "Support staff and administrators are generally accepting [of LGBTQ people] and encourage them to be who they are. However, the education providers have not endorsed marriage equality and are slow in responding to demands of LGBTQI/same-sex attracted/same-gender attracted/gender-diverse people on how to make university more friendly for them."

EXPERIENCES AT PLACE OF STUDY 2

- ▶ Attitudes of classmates and teachers/lecturers towards LGBTQ people viewed as positive on balance, but inevitably mixed experiences:
 - ▶ "I was really shocked by some of the homophobic/transphobic comments that were said by students in my classes. Even more horrifying was the lecturer's inability to act to correct it. One lecturer even instigated a debate on same-sex marriage in class that led to some vicious verbal attacks."
 - ▶ "I may be generalising a bit but I feel like the older generation lecturers that I've engaged with, including my PhD supervisors, are generally less comfortable with LGBTQI people, although they've never said anything."
 - ▶ "My lecturers and tutors fall into gender studies and sociology. Naturally, they are supportive and aware of the issues."
 - ▶ "Because I am doing a Bachelor of Commerce, I personally feel the need to 'hide my queerness' because of possible future negative repercussions. So I tend to be quite discreet about my sexuality and gender identity with my lecturers, tutors or anyone senior related to the discipline"

WHAT WAS TOLD?

HAS BEING LGBTQ AFFECTED RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING IN AUSTRALIA?



HOW HAS IT AFFECTED RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCES?

- ▶ "I think I have made some friends because they knew I was gay."
- ▶ "A new start allowed me to be more open. Even started my first health[y] queer relationship."
- ▶ "I had only discovered my gender identity while I was studying in Australia. It is liberating to wear & express myself the way I desire here than compared to in my home country."
- ▶ "I remember the first time I openly told people I was gay in Australia was in a workshop in the Uni. People did not raise their eyebrows and they were very natural towards my disclosure. Perhaps it was only me who thought it was a big deal."
- ▶ I had expectations that I would find friends in the community coming to Australia. So far I have not found any, due to my commitment to study.
- ▶ My plan is to finish my degree, get a job and be financially independent so that I could come out to my family. I know for sure that they are not going to accept it [...] So my sexual orientation and gender identity has affected me by providing me with a great motivation to do well at University and get involved so that I could enhance my career opportunities.
- ▶ Traveling here with my hormones was stressful, as I was not made aware that I required a permit to bring it into the country and did not know what I would do if it was confiscated.

WHAT NEXT? CONCLUDING COMMENTS FOR CONVERSATION CONTINUATION

- ▶ Need for further exploration of the data from this project & for further research into specific issues & groups
- ▶ Action required! LGBTQ issues affect everyone, not just those who identify as LGBTQ
 - ▶ "Well, for starters I think Australian unis could **acknowledge the existence of LGBTQI etc. people**. The medical centre at [my uni] has quite a bit of information and support, but other than that (and other than the Queer Collective, which is a student-run organisation) I've never really had much support nor seen information on where to find support etc."
 - ▶ "More information. My experience with international student orientation was that everyone was **presumed heterosexual and cisgender**. Absolutely nothing was done for queer international students. International students yes, queer students yes, but nothing overlapping."
 - ▶ Never thought of it as I never relied on any support and never joined any LGBTQI events, but the Queer Department at [my uni] has organised events such as discussions on "Racism in Queer Communities". I have not joined this event either because I thought I would feel out of place even there, but I think that this is a great way of **raising awareness about the diversity in the LGBTQI communities**.