



# THRIVING On Campus

## Study Overview & Participants' Demographics

*"To achieve equity on campuses for diverse 2SLGBTQ+ students, we have to understand their experiences and strengths, and what campuses can do to make a difference!"*

– Michael Woodford (he/him), *Principal Investigator*

*Thriving On Campus* is an Ontario-wide campus climate study conducted with 2SLGBTQ+ university students. The study aims to:

- Examine 2SLGBTQ+ students' experiences, wellbeing, and academic engagement and development.
- Inform the development of services, programs, and policies to promote 2SLGBTQ+ students' inclusion, wellbeing, and academic success.

Study Activities:

- Scan of 2SLGBTQ+ policies, resources, and facilities available on campuses;
- Online survey conducted Winter 2019 with 3856 2SLGBTQ+ students;
- Qualitative interviews conducted from October 2019 to June 2020 with 50 students who participated in the survey.

**This report provides details about the demographics of the survey and interview participants and gives an overview of our research methods.**

# Our Terminology

## 2SLGBTQ+

When *Thriving On Campus* began, we used the acronym LGBTQ2S+ to reflect the sexual and gender diversities of students throughout the province. We included “2S” to make visible the identities of Indigenous Two-Spirit students in relation to their sexuality and/or gender identity. Now, in recognition of the importance of the lands we live, study, work, and play on, and to support decolonization, we use 2SLGBTQ+.

## trans

An umbrella term referring to students who identify as genderqueer, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, trans, trans feminine, trans women, trans men, trans masculine, and other diverse gender identities.

## cisgender

Students whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth.

## BIPOC

Students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour. See “The Experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ Students” for information about how we asked about race in the survey and identified students as BIPOC for our analyses, as well as findings specific to BIPOC students.

## disabled students

Students who identify as a person with a disability or a disabled person. See “The Role of Disability in 2SLGBTQ+ Students’ Campus Experiences” for information about how we asked about disability in the survey and findings specific to disabled students.

## campus climate

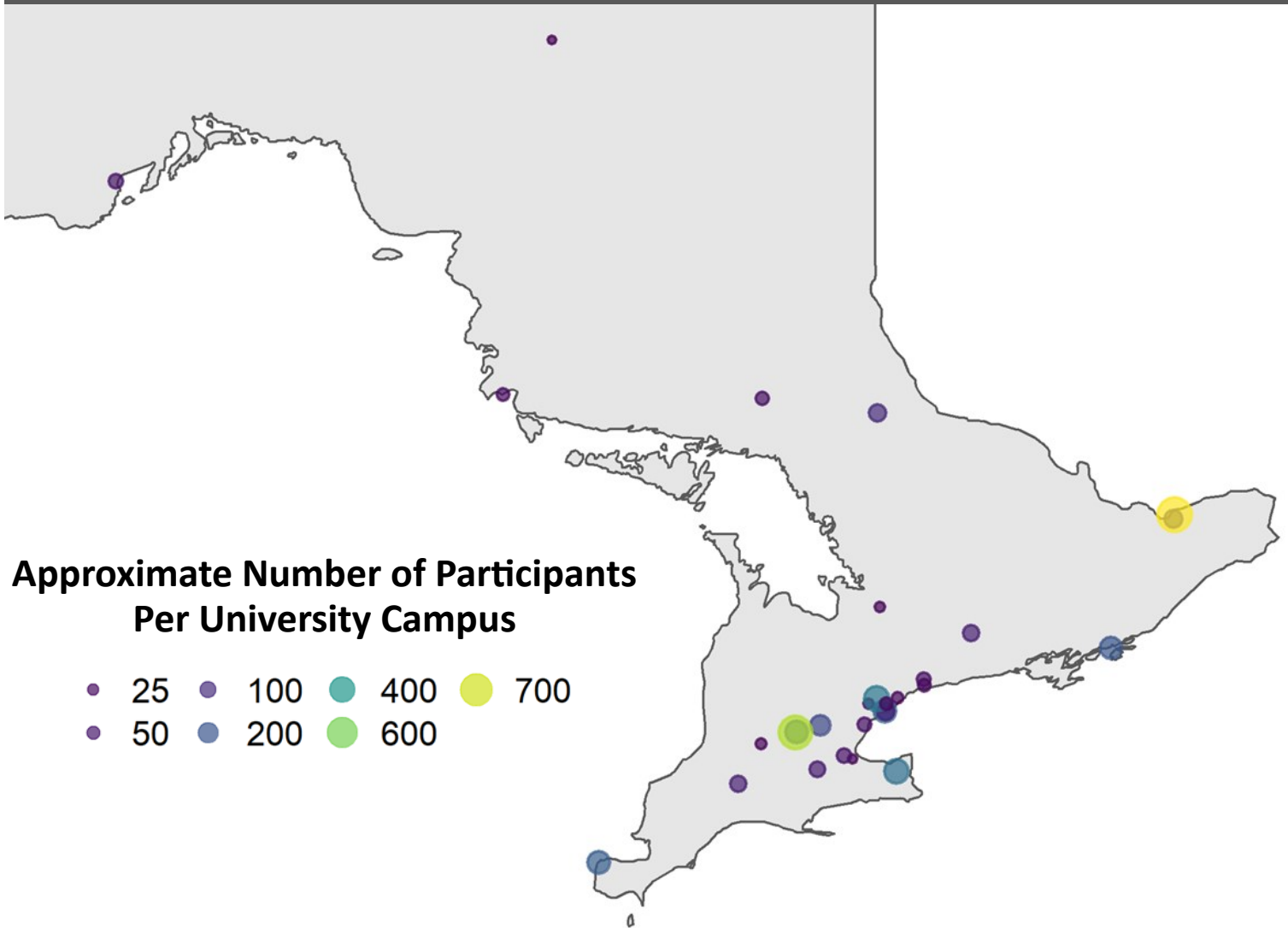
The experiences and treatment of marginalized students on campus. Campus climate includes experiential aspects (such as discriminatory actions from others and systems) and psychological aspects (for example, perceptions of belonging and university inclusion policies and practices).



# Province-Wide Survey

*“It is critical that diverse 2SLGBTQ+ students’ voices are integrated in the development of campus services and programs throughout the province in order to validate their lived experiences and provide holistic supports.”*

– Malika Dhanani (she/her), Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, Advisory Committee Member

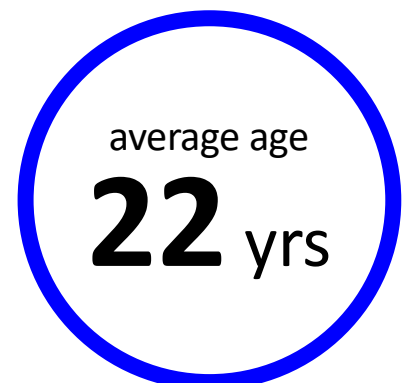
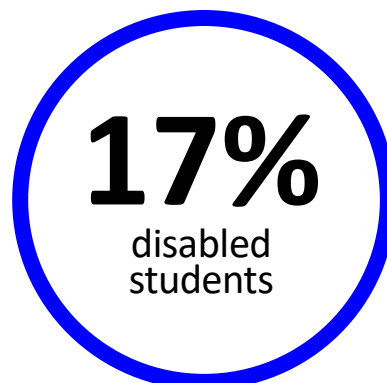
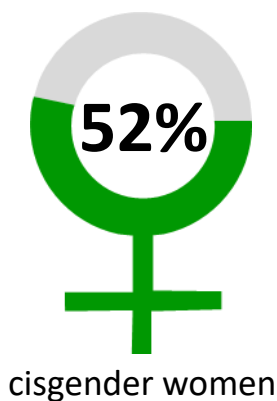
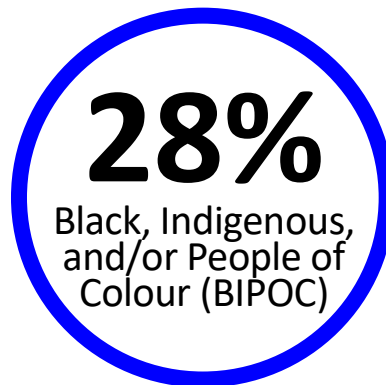
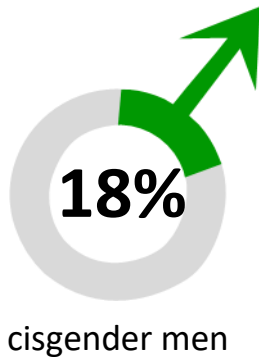
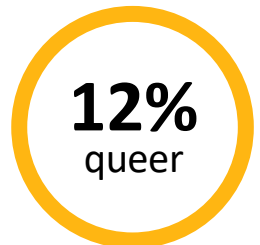
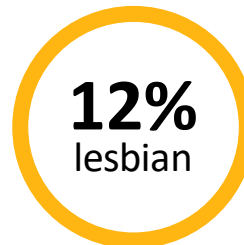
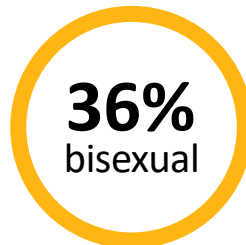
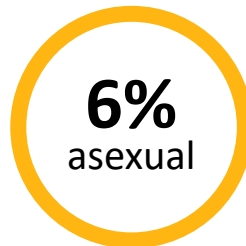
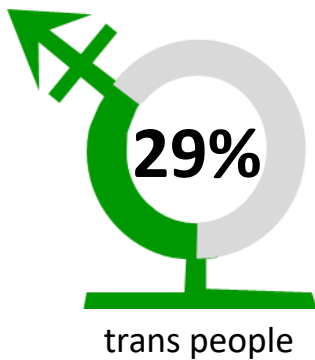


**3856 2SLGBTQ+ students**

Students from all 21 public universities in Ontario participated in the survey representing 31 campuses.

# Demographics of Survey Participants

Survey participants were diverse in many ways, including in terms of their gender, sexuality, race, disability status, and areas of study.



# Survey Participants: Academics

*“Evidence from the Thriving study makes clear that it is incumbent on us as educators and leaders to address barriers to student success that are embedded in postsecondary policies, programs, structures, and curricula. These barriers show up in campus climate and influence student wellbeing and success.”*

– Kristen Renn (she/her), Michigan State University, Research Team Member

**85%**

undergraduate students

**94%**

full-time students

**20%**

received learning accommodations

**28%**

STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) students

**23%**

social science students

**1 in 5**

first in their families to attend university

**1 in 5**

qualified for free tuition\*

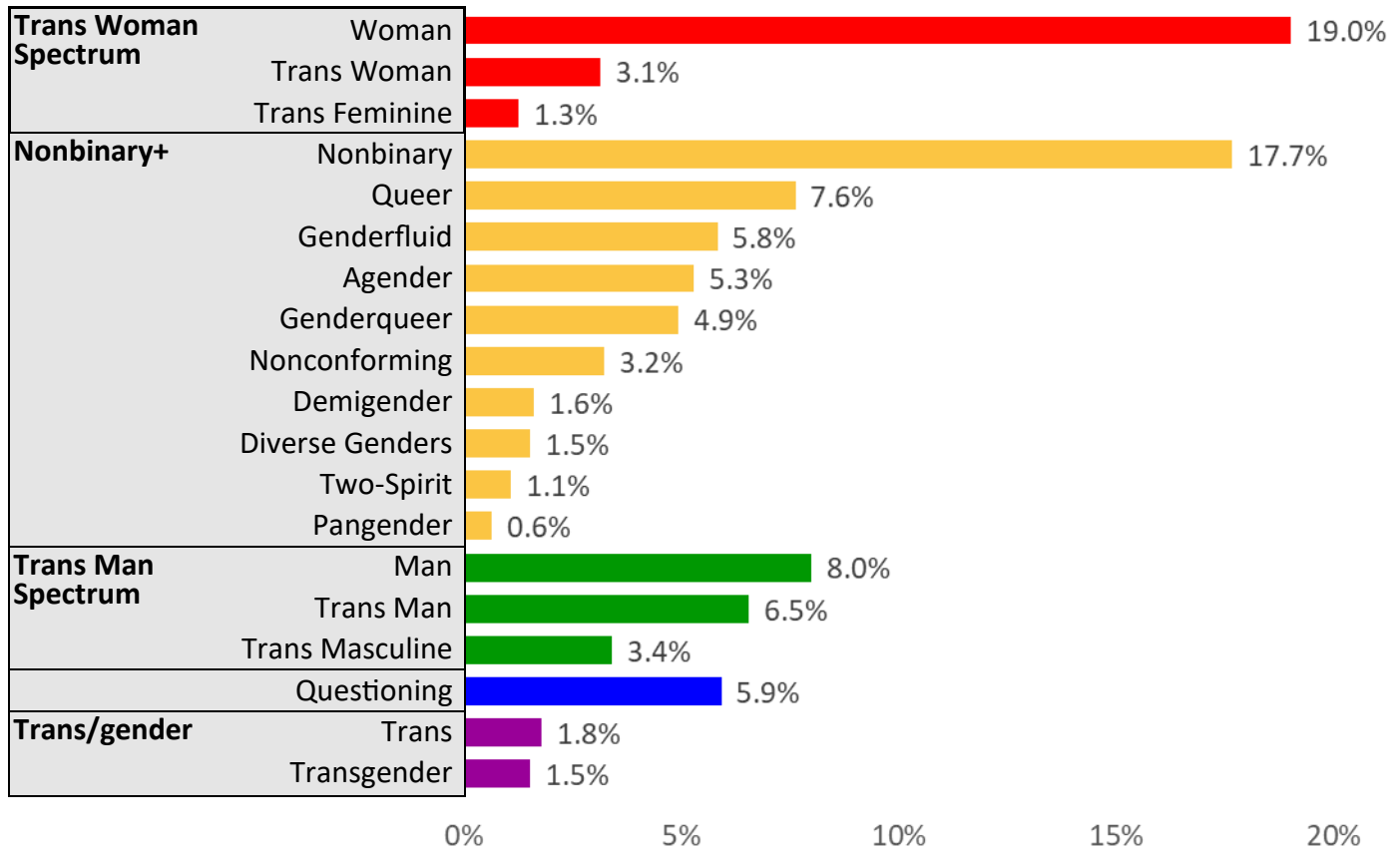
**1 in 6**

lived on-campus in university housing

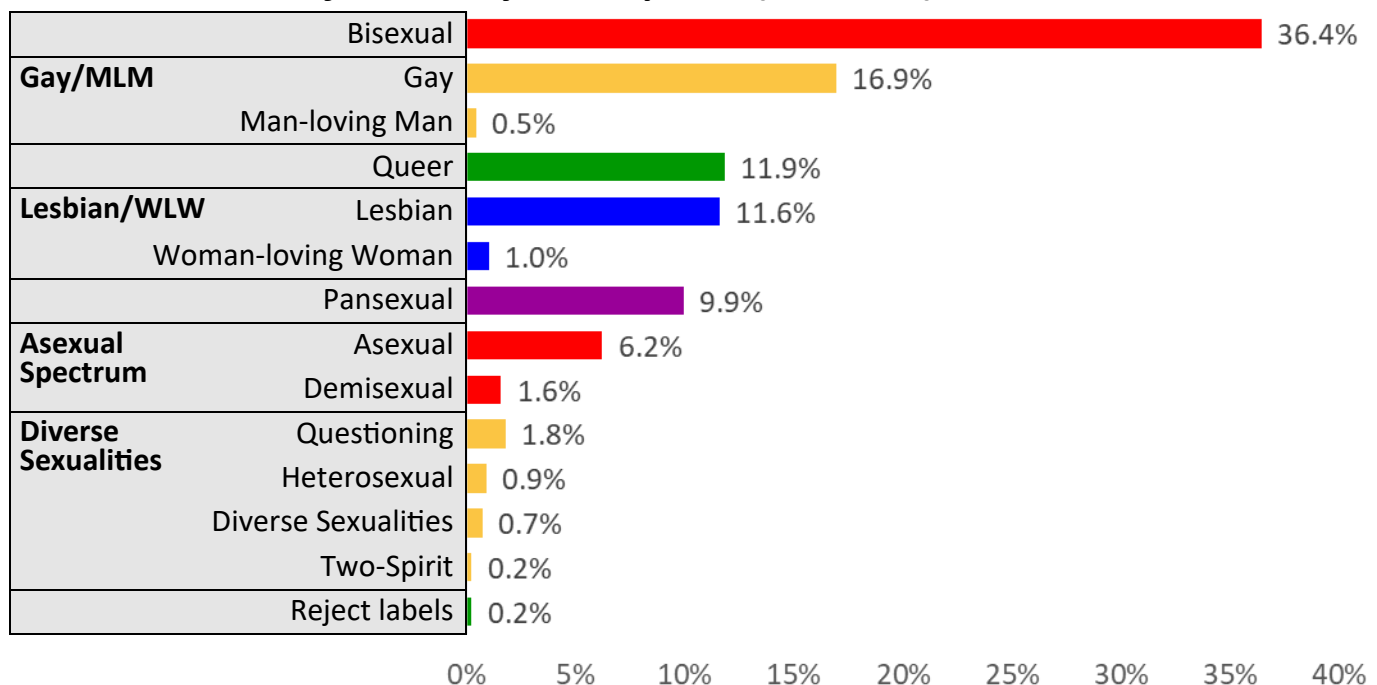
\*At the time of the study the provincial government's OSAP provided free tuition for students from low-income families.

# Survey Participants: Gender & Sexual Identities

## Gender Identities of Trans Participants (N = 1115)



## Sexual Identities of all Survey Participants (N = 3876)



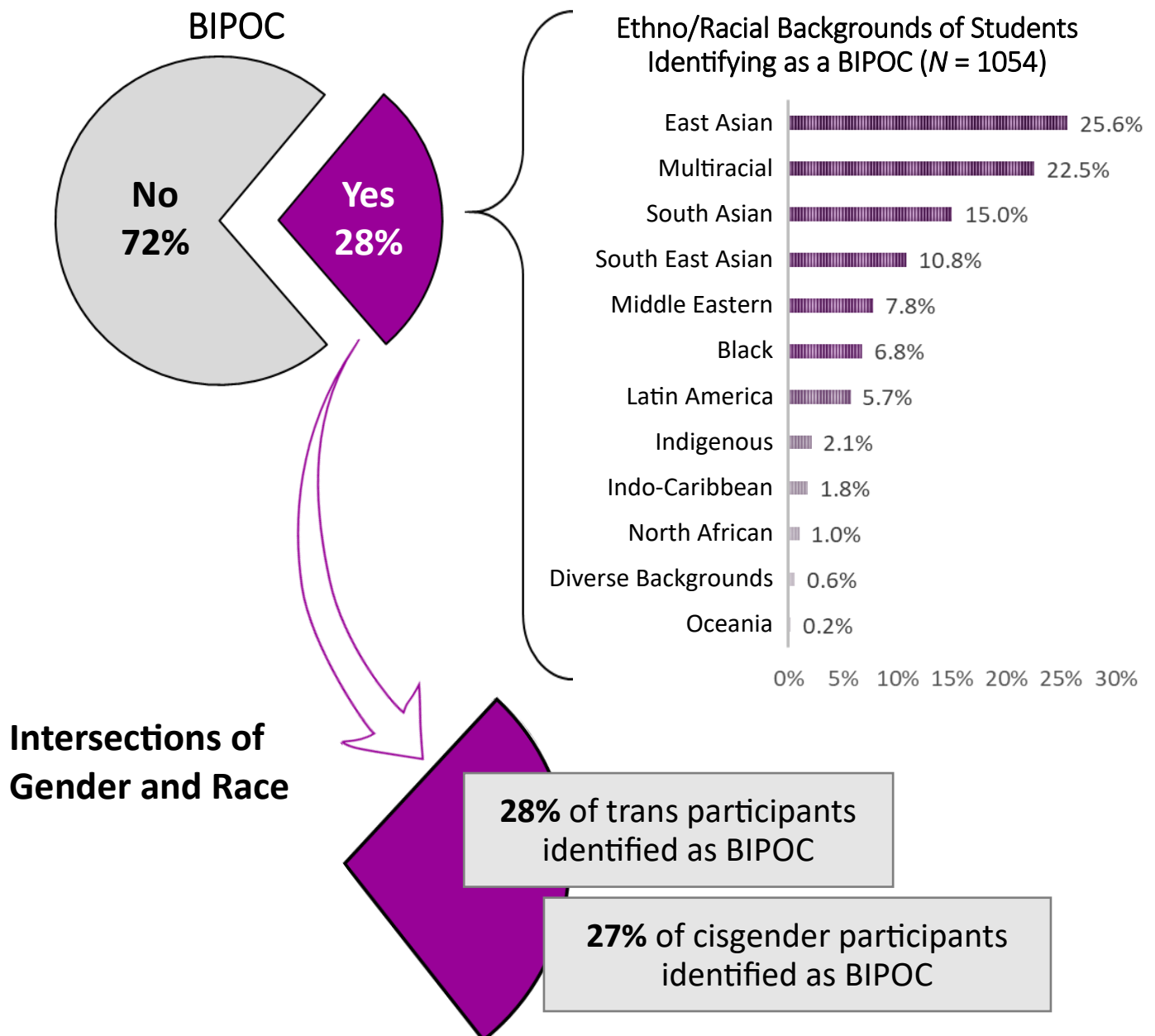
**Note:** Because some of the specific identity groups for gender and sexuality were small, we combined groups for our analyses.

# Survey Participants: Racial Diversity

See “The Experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ Students” for information about how we asked about race in the survey and identified students as BIPOC for our analyses, as well as findings specific to BIPOC students.

*“Racialized queer and trans students’ experiences are shaped by racism, whiteness, cisgenderism and heterosexism. It is essential that these experiences are examined using an intersectional lens that reveals how these oppressive systems come together to marginalize racialized queer and trans students. Intersectional approaches to policy are required to promote racialized students’ inclusion, academic success, and wellbeing.”*

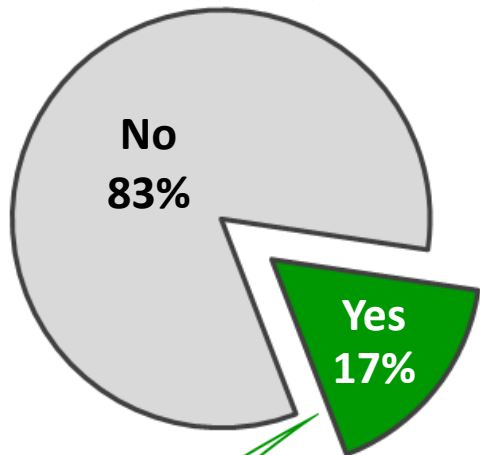
– Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah (she/her), *Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Advisory Committee Member*



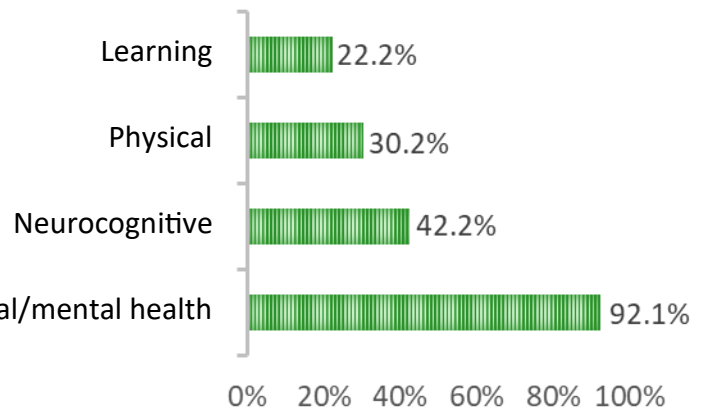
# Survey Participants: Disability

Nearly 70% of all survey participants reported having a disability or condition that affects their experiences as a student in terms of their learning, access on campus, and/or interactions with others. Of these students, 24% identified as disabled. For more information, see “The Role of Disability in 2SLGBTQ+ Students’ Campus Experiences.”

## Identify as a Disabled Person (all survey participants)



## Reported Disabilities/Conditions of Students Identifying as a Person with a Disability



**28%** of trans students  
identified as disabled

**13%** of cisgender students  
identified as disabled

**13%** of BIPOC students  
identified as disabled

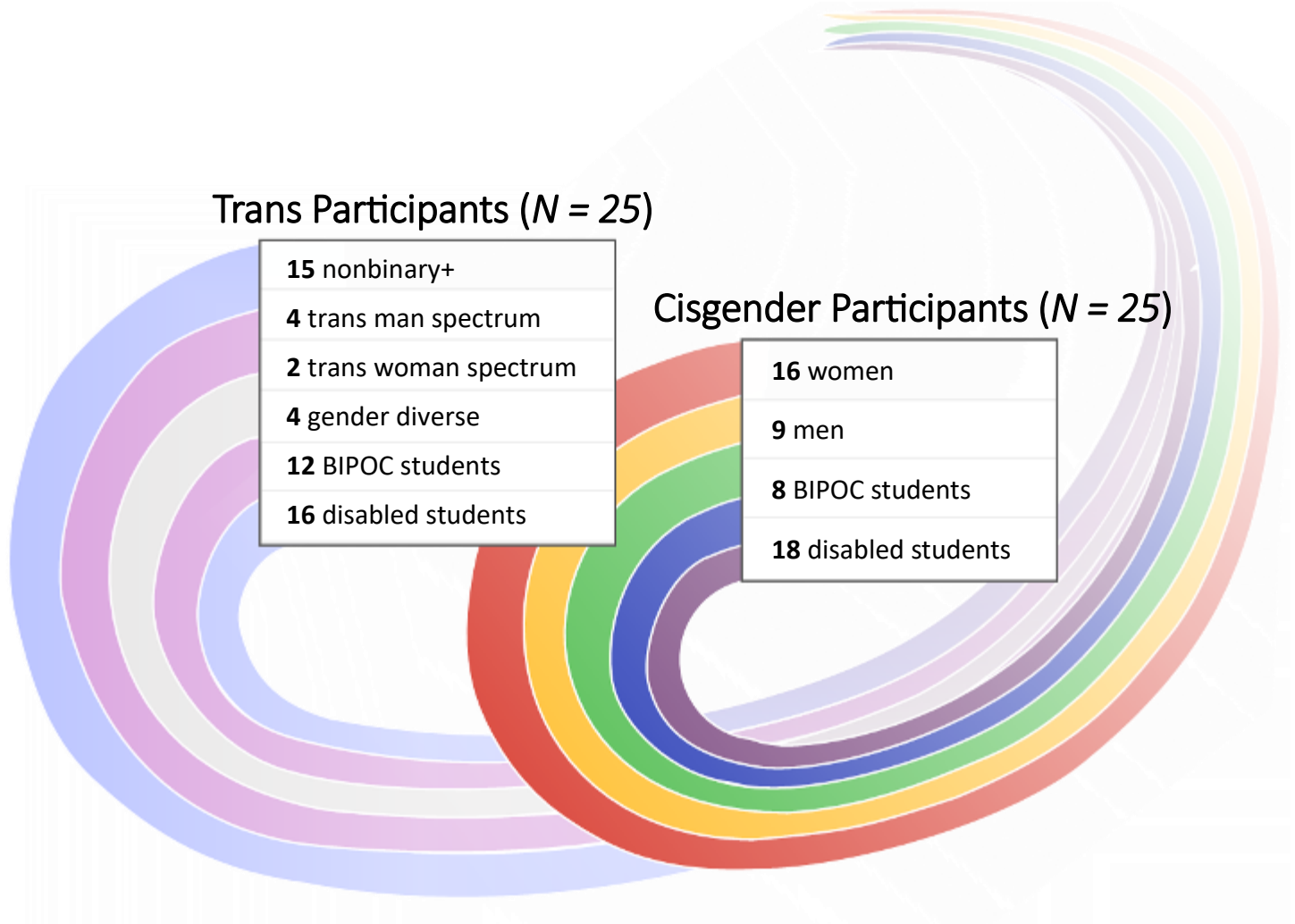
**N = 657**

*“Students living at the intersection of disability and 2SLGBTQ+ identities face multiple barriers, even within the disabled and queer communities. Listening to these students and understanding the compounding barriers they face is vital to creating equity for all 2SLGBTQ+ students.”*

– Kayla Weiler (she/her), Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario,  
Advisory Committee Member



# Demographics of Interview Participants



Participants held a range of sexual identities.

The largest groups were:

<b>8%</b> asexual	<b>26%</b> bisexual	<b>12%</b> gay
<b>16%</b> lesbian	<b>14%</b> pansexual	<b>20%</b> queer

**Across all interview participants:**

- 74% undergraduate students
- 86% full-time students
- 74% attended schools outside of the greater Toronto area
- 28% first in their family to attend university
- 40% eligible for free tuition

# Study Methods

## Advisory Committee

*Thriving On Campus* was supported by an [Advisory Committee](#) comprised of representatives from the Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity, the Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario), Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, LGBT YouthLine, the Ontario Committee on Student Affairs (Council of Ontario Universities), the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the Sexual & Gender Diversity Office at the University of Toronto, and the student experience offices at the University of Guelph and Western University.

## 2SLGBTQ+ Policies, Facilities, Resources, & Services

Administrators at each university were surveyed about the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation in university policies such as gender-based violence. They also reported on policies related to students changing their gender and names on student records. Other aspects of the scan addressed the availability of gender-inclusive housing, bathrooms, and changerooms, as well as 2SLGBTQ+ centres/groups.

## Survey

We recruited 2SLGBTQ+ students for the online survey through social media and outreach to student organizations and groups, especially 2SLGBTQ+ student clubs and centres. Also, each university identified a staff member to assist with promoting the survey through ads, posters, emails, and outreach to 2SLGBTQ+ student groups. Advisory committee members also promoted the survey. The recruitment materials and survey were available in English and French. Survey participants could choose to enter a draw for over 100 e-gift cards.

In the survey, we explored students' experiences with discrimination on campus; perceptions of inclusion, school support for 2SLGBTQ+ equity, and belonging; mental health; and academic engagement and development. We also asked about connections with others on campus, involvement in 2SLGBTQ+ student groups and centres, social support, awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ facilities and policies, and experiences using campus-based services. We employed a number of tactics, such as attention checks, to ensure the integrity of survey responses.

## Interviews

From the pool of survey participants interested in being interviewed, we selected 50 students representing the diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ students. Because we aimed to explore some of the survey findings on campus climate and student outcomes, we intentionally recruited students reflecting a range of experiences and wellbeing and academic outcomes. Interview participants were provided with an honorarium.

Interviews explored students' identities, belonging on and off campus, and resilience. Drawing on findings from the survey, we asked about exclusion experiences and wellbeing and academic outcomes. Interviews concluded with questions inviting students to describe what thriving means to them and to offer recommendations about how universities can promote 2SLGBTQ+ students' belonging, wellbeing, and academic success.

*“2SLGBTQ+ students know what they need to thrive. It was important that we made space within the interviews for students to share their definitions of thriving, which we can then use to offer institutions opportunities to meaningfully support and collaborate with 2SLGBTQ+ students.”*

– Lauren Munro (she/her), Wilfrid Laurier University,  
Research Team Member

### **Methodological Notes Pertaining to all Reports:**

- Because it is not possible to conduct a random sample of 2SLGBTQ+ university students in Ontario, we cannot know with certainty if our findings represent the population of 2SLGBTQ+ students at Ontario universities. However, given the size and diversity of our survey and interview samples, our findings offer important insights to support policies and programs that are responsive to the needs, strengths, and experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ students.
- Reported percentages are based on those who responded to the specific survey question, which may not reflect the full sample when data are missing.
- Given the survey's cross-sectional design, reported statistical relationships between variables reflect correlation and do not meet the criteria of cause-and-effect.

# Acknowledgements

We express special gratitude to all the students who shared their experiences through the survey and interviews. We thank the [Advisory Committee](#) for their commitment and guidance in making the study a reality. We thank the over 30 [research staff](#) who contributed to the study as either research assistants, field placement students, or research associates; your help has been invaluable. In particular, thanks to Nicholas Schwabe and Alicia N. Rubel for their assistance with the survey and Emily Cox for coordinating the interviews; Dr. Katie Cook, Charlie Davis, and Dr. Harrison Oakes for their outstanding data analysis skills and overall commitment to the study; and Marinna Healey and Eric Van Giessen for assisting with coordinating the development

of the community reports. Considerable gratitude to the members of the BIPOC and Disability Community Report Working Groups for their insights and passion for advancing inclusion on campuses. Special thanks to Christina Arayata and Isabel Krakoff who, respectively, drafted the BIPOC and Disability Community Reports. Sincere appreciation to Jac Nobiss for sharing teachings on the importance of centering 2S identities considering the history of exclusion and invisibility within LGBTQ research and communities. Finally, we thank all those who supported and promoted the survey, especially staff at each university who acted as campus contacts, 2SLGBTQ+ student organizations and centres, and Advisory Committee members.

## Research Team

### *Principal Investigator*

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### *Co-Investigators*

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### *Collaborators*

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- Dr. Z Nicolazzo - Trans\* Studies in Education, Educational Policy Studies & Practice, College of Education, University of Arizona
- Lauren Munro - Community Psychology Program, Faculty of Science, Wilfrid Laurier University



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