

Final internal evaluation report Le Refuge Genève



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Introduction

The internal evaluation of Le Refuge Genève follows a request from the Oak Foundation, co-donor and partner of Dialogai. Beyond providing better readability of our work, it aims to improve service delivery, as well as generate knowledge for project management and for the external communication of our organization.

In Switzerland, data on the LGBTIQ+ population, and in particular on the social work supporting it, remains weak and poorly documented. Identifying the effective levers involved in the well-being of young people would make it possible to establish scientifically valid practices to improve their support and accompaniment.

1. The object of the evaluation and its context

The evaluation is aimed at Le Refuge Genève service with a focus on certain benefits such as individual interviews, working with relatives and family and free reception. These services aim, among other things, for self-assertiveness and socialization by peers.

1.1. Le Refuge Genève (RGe)

Le Refuge Genève is a professional social service which aims to help LGBTIQ+¹ young people (up to 30 years old) to come out of isolation. Le Refuge Genève's approach is systemic: it supports people in all their individual, relational, and collective dimensions. Socio-educational work includes the young person and those around him/her with a holistic approach. This is based on knowledge and positioning favorable to LGBTIQ+ youth. In this sense, Le Refuge Genève is a unique social service in Europe. It is also the only structure of this type in Switzerland. In addition, support is based on self-determination and free adhesion: young people define themselves, define their needs and are supported according to their requests.

We exclude situations of violence (self/hetero inflicted) even if membership is highly wanted in this process.

Young people turn to Le Refuge Genève mainly because of the rejection generated by society, those around them or institutions (school, health, public space). They can also suffer from an internal rejection, as impactful as an external rejection, generally induced by the negative representations carried by various channels (media, relatives, social networks, professionals with little information, etc.).

This situation can have serious consequences on their mental and psychological health, with suicidal behaviors 2 to 5 times higher than the general population for LGB people

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Intersex, Queer. The + defining all minority sexual/affective orientations and gender identities.

and 20 times higher for trans^{*2} people. Thus, helping LGBTIQ+ young people represents a real public health issue.

To fight against this distress, Le Refuge Genève supports young people in solving their problems, both on an individual and family level, in particular by developing empathy, active listening and discussion and by promoting a common and favorable journey with their relatives.

The RGe team consists of three educators for 2.2 FTE and is supported by volunteers who work on the following services:

- Individual support in the form of socio-educational interviews.
- Free reception.
- The collective (groups and activities).
- Support for relatives.
- Sensitization sessions for professionals (health, social, etc.).
- The module for supporting perpetrators of LGBTIQ+phobic acts.

1.2. Resources

A total of 150 hours (10%) was dedicated to Le Refuge Genève's coordinator for the internal evaluation. These hours were divided into 4 hours per week between September 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021.

This represented a significant cost for the service given the growing number of beneficiaries in 2020 and then 2021, without the possibility of adjusting the salary mass accordingly. The diversity of issues regarding which requests are received at the RGe, the notable increase in requests from minors and requests in general, would require, at a minimum, an additional 0.6 FTE (HETS graduate). This resource is not currently available in the funding presented below, although it is actively sought.

1.3. Phases of evolution of the RGe

2015: The RGe is created, and two pilot years are funded by several private and public actors to measure the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people in the region and evaluate the relevance of its services.

2017: At the end of the pilot phase, an external evaluation is carried out by *Evaluanda*. The report confirms the relevance of the project as well as the development needs, without providing clear objectives.

As most private foundations do not fund projects beyond the pilot phases, the RGe remains in the process of achieving long-term sustainability, moving from private funding

² Trans* includes all persons who are not exclusively cisgender.

to mainly public funding. However, the project was able to continue thanks to regular funding from the City of Geneva as well as private donors.

2018-2020: The RGe continues to evolve, both in terms of the number of young people received and of its services; the team is strengthened.

2020: The RGe formalizes its Theory of Change (TOC).

2020-2021: The RGe carries out its internal evaluation.

2021: The subsidy from the State of Geneva is secured, which now provides an amount corresponding to half of the 2018 operating budget of the RGe.

1.4. The outline of the report

The modeling of the activity of the RGe using the Theory of Change has highlighted several key areas of intervention that we wished to evidence in this evaluation.

This report focuses on 4 important services:

- Individual support for young people (2.1)

Does the individual interview at the RGe help develop the empowerment of young people?

- Work with the entourage (2.2)

Does working with relatives allow young people to be better supported by those close to them?

- Free reception (2.3)

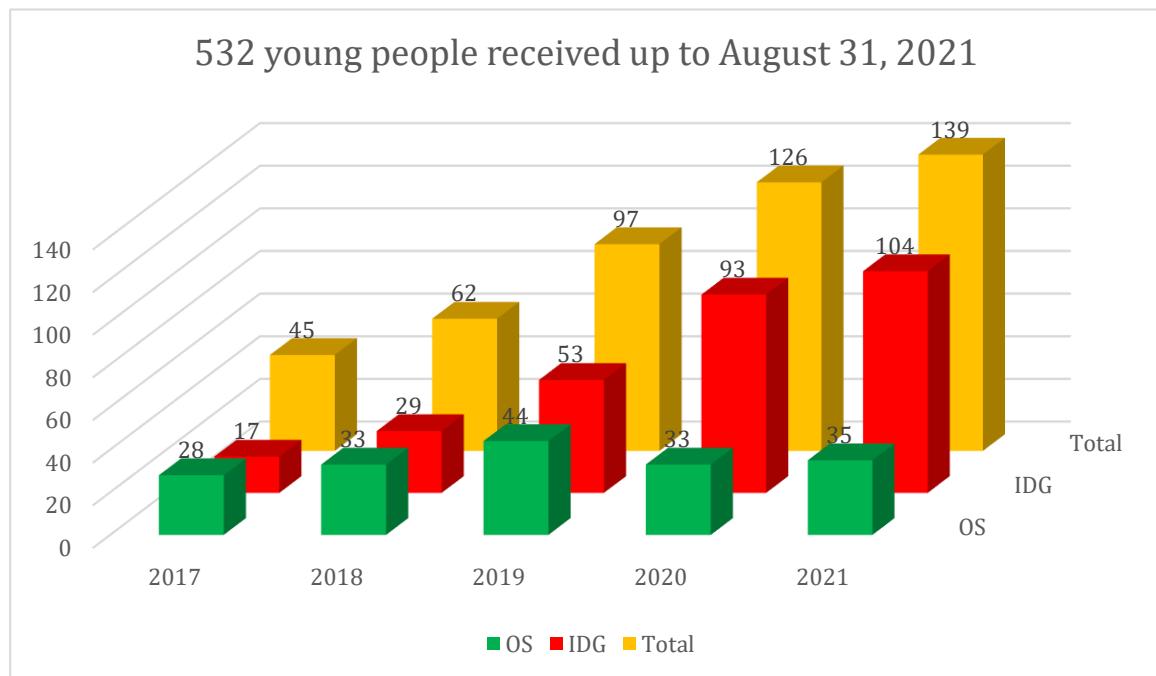
What needs does free reception address? Does it help reduce the isolation of LGBTQ+ youth?

- Sensitization for professionals (2.4)

Do sensitizations in schools help reduce the number of school dropouts?

2. Research questions and methodology

2.1 The number of young people received at the RGe since 2017



The above graph does not include the years 2015 and 2016 to facilitate readability and because they show the same progression as the other years.

Questions and/or difficulties around gender identity (GI) have substantially increased to represent 4 times the questions and/or difficulties around sexual and emotional orientation (SO). This can be explained by the increased visibility of the thematic around gender identity, facilitating the identification of young people and the understanding of their own feelings. It should be added that support for trans* people is denser, multidimensional and requires more time (health, social, family, administrative and legal).

2.2 The opinion of young people on individual interviews

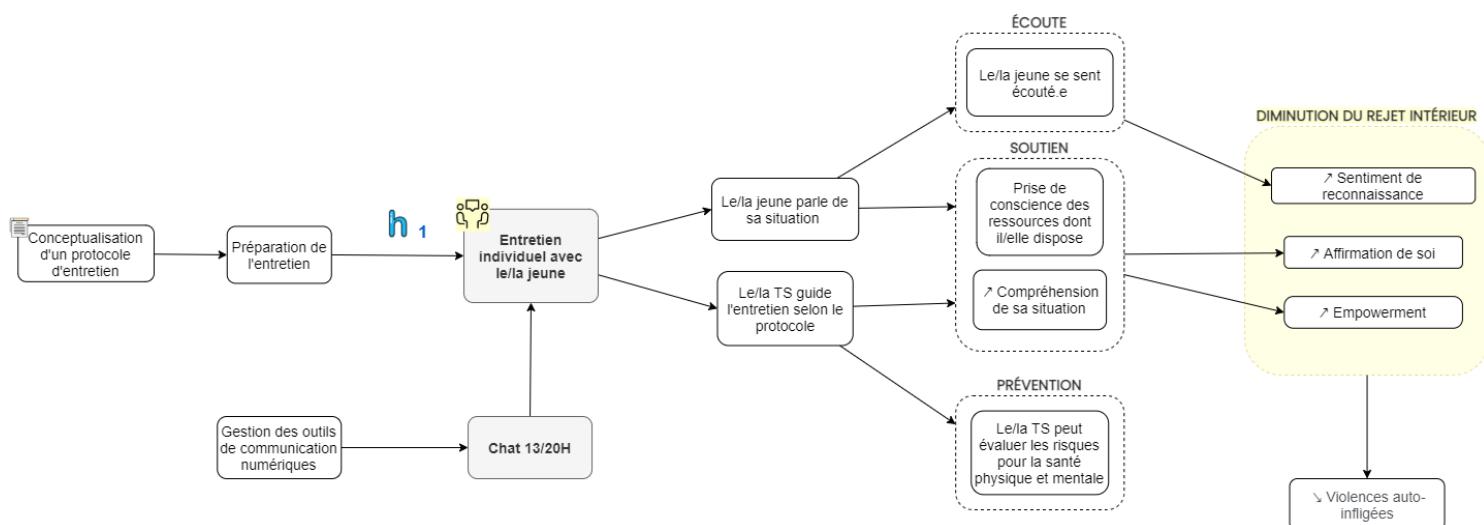
2.2.1 Individual interviews at the RGe

590 individual interviews took place at the RGe in 2020, including 508 follow-up interviews, 29 concerning administrative procedures, 28 changes of civil status and 25 external supports. A follow-up consists in supporting the young person, for a more or less long term, through individual interviews. The aim of the individual interviews is to promote self-affirmation of gender identity and/or emotional and sexual orientation and to strengthen self-esteem. The individual interview is carried out with the aim of allowing the people received to talk about their situation regarding their emotional and sexual

orientation and/or gender identity. It is carried out according to a precise protocol of Rogerian³ and systemic⁴ inspiration which aims to free speech, understand one's situation and become aware of one's resources. It allows the team to assess the emotional and psychological state of the person to prevent and/or reduce the risks surrounding the violence endured⁵ or self-inflicted⁶.

We understand the situation of the person, as a whole, to improve or stabilize his/her situation on a global level (access to health, access to housing, administrative management, violence, etc.). In this sense, health and safety are the bases of our action to be able to work on elements more specific to the LGBTIQ+ thematic.

By receiving young people for interviews, the RGe hopes to help increase the feeling of recognition, self-confidence and empowerment of young people and thus reduce self-inflicted violence.



TS : Social workers

³ Carl Rogers: Carl Ransom Rogers, born on January 8, 1902 in Oak Park and died on February 4, 1987 in La Jolla, was an American humanistic psychologist. He worked mainly in the fields of clinical psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, mediation, and education.

⁴ Systemic: Systems thinking is a way of defining, studying or explaining any type of phenomenon, which consists above all in considering this phenomenon as a system: a complex set of interactions, often between sub-systems, all within a larger system. It differs from traditional approaches that focus on breaking down a system into parts without considering the functioning and activity of the whole, i.e. the overall system itself.

⁵ COQ : Inflicted violence assessment tool

⁶ RUD : Suicidal risk assessment tool

2.2.2 The target population and the sample of respondents

➤ The method and the number of respondents

The population most represented among the respondents benefited from social support as of 2020. We will take, as a reference, more particularly that year.

All the research questions that follow were submitted via an online form (Google Form) to all the young people of the RGe whose contact details had been collected since the opening of the service. Respondents were given the opportunity to remain anonymous.

256 young people were contacted by telephone text messages and 94 on the group of a social network dedicated to trans* and non-binary young people (NTH group), 11 on the group dedicated to cisgender young people, knowing that some intersect (group 6). 116 young people responded to the survey.

We can estimate at 50% the response rate in relation to the people contacted, and a response rate of more than 25% in relation to the almost 400 young people received and followed since 2015 at the time of the survey (March 2021).

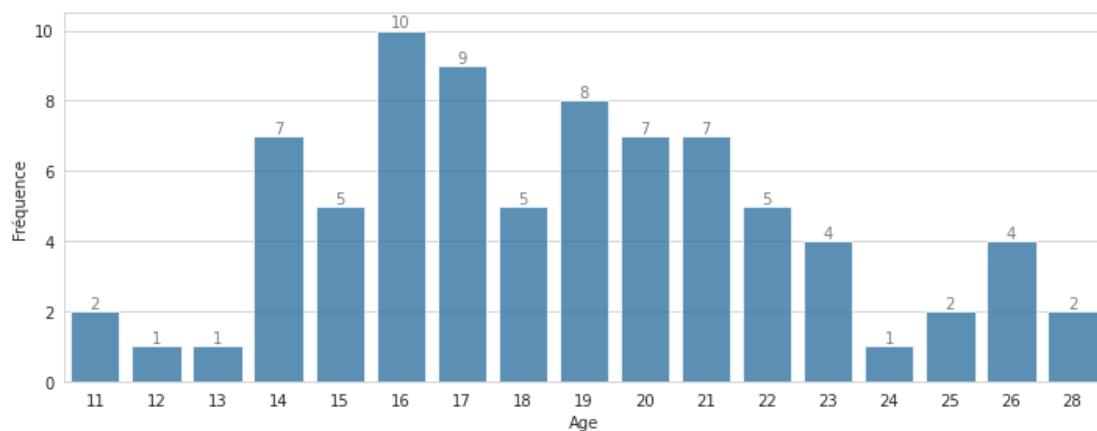
Most of the respondents arrived at Le Refuge Genève in 2020. There was one dispatch and two reminders within a month.

➤ The origin of respondents

The young respondents come mainly from the canton of Geneva (75.9%). We do not yet know the municipal allocation, but data collection is underway and should be usable from 2022.

➤ The age of respondents

80 people gave their age, ranging between 11 and 28 years old. This represents a broad spectrum.



➤ The SOGI⁷ of respondents

Respondents could express a wider range of categories with the desire to self-determine themselves, and sometimes with the refusal to categorize themselves. We had provided the possibility to not define oneself (undefined), but this was not always understood or remembered as such.

We chose to group some responses into categories that had already been edited: for example, a trans* boy who likes girls in the hetero category, a transgender woman attracted to boys in the hetero category, a person who does not want to define themself in the undefined.

5 young people wished to separate the affective and sexual dimension in their sexual and affective orientation, this is quite right if we consider sexuality with all its emotional, relational and sexual components constituted by the desire, the behaviors and the identity it represents (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, Michaels, 1994), and this with regard to another who would not stimulate all these dimensions together, it being possible that the attraction be directed towards different individuals representing these dimensions separately.

Of these 5 people, 3 defined themselves as aromantic and asexual, 2 defined themselves as panromantic and asexual, one person defined themself as homoromantic and pansexual. We categorized them in "others". 2 people considered themselves omnisexual, which is like pansexuality with the difference of considering the gender of the other. So, this is a category that can be added in "others".

103 people out of 116 confirmed having benefited from an individual interview at the RGe and were able to answer the questions below.

2.2.3 Does the individual interview at the RGe help develop empowerment of young people?

Nina Wallerstein (2006) produced a report on empowerment for the WHO, which defines empowerment as « *le résultat d'une interaction dynamique entre deux niveaux: le développement de compétences individuelles (internes) et le dépassement de barrières structurelles (externes), afin d'améliorer les conditions de vie des plus défavorisés* » (the result of a dynamic interaction between two levels: the development of individual (internal) skills and the overcoming of structural barriers (external), in order to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged).

About twenty experts, researchers in the human sciences and actors in the field, agreed to provide contributions on the beneficial impact of empowerment on health and inequalities and on the development of the psychosocial skills of young people in

⁷ SOGI: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

disruption. This report also highlights the link between power to act and improved overall health.

This study supports our hypothesis and emphasizes the need to put young people at the center of their support and to give them back the power to act by making them actors in their lives.

If we make the link between empowerment and LGBT youth, an article produced by UNIGE (Markarian, Miranda, 2017) reports on the obstacles to the empowerment of young people - « *le coming out, l'hétérosexisme et les difficultés d'identification à une communauté. Ces trois sujets sont depuis longtemps identifiés comme des obstacles sociaux au développement personnel des individus questionnant leur identité de genre et/ou leur orientation sexuelle [GARNETS et D'AUGELLI, 1994]* » (coming out, heterosexism and difficulties in identifying to a community. These three subjects have long been identified as social obstacles to the personal development of individuals questioning their gender identity and/or their sexual orientation) - and highlights the facilitators, including LGBTIQ+ associative action.

Empowerment is a difficult word to translate directly from English into French. We retain several dimensions in this concept around the power to act on one's life, the process of empowerment and the use of potentials and resources already existing in each individual. We could speak of agentivity: the capacity to act for oneself and according to one's own conceptions-convictions.

We have built our method of intervention around this conceptualization. It was formalized through an interview protocol (Annex 1).

To make sure that the RGe team members refer to this method, we asked the following question:

2.2.4 Do RGe professionals apply the interview protocol?

To answer this question, a team survey was conducted through a questionnaire. Obviously, of the three team members only two were able to respond, the third having set up the same survey.

This aims to measure the accessibility of the document (Where is it? Is it easily searchable?) and its understanding (quiz regarding knowledge of ethical values, theoretical trends, typology, and stages of the interviews named in the document) as well as its application (Do people feel they are applying the protocol?).

Analysis: the results show that the accessibility and application of the document is satisfactory. The difference between the two respondents is, however, notable and can be explained by their differentiated practices. One being devoted entirely to individual follow-ups and the other to facilitating free reception. The difference between the number

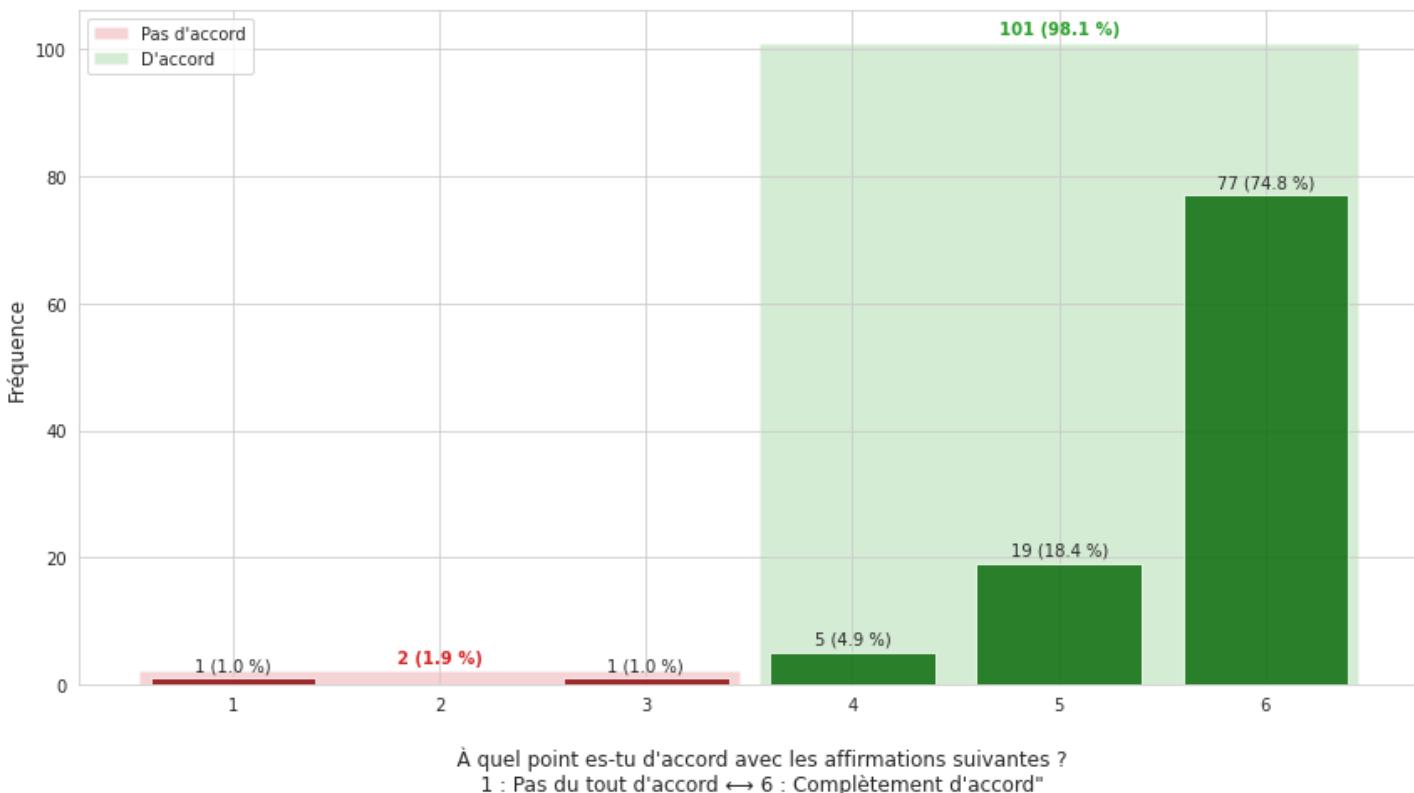
of interviews carried out on both sides partly explains these results (not all the answers to the theoretical questions are correct).

Simply reading the interview protocol does not seem sufficient for its application and understanding. A working session or external supervision around the revision of this document would be welcome on a regular basis and, in particular, in the event of a new arrival in the team. The objectives would be to define the obstacles to the appropriation of the power to act among young people, for example, and to find out if other organizations have a comparable tool. This question could be investigated during the next evaluation.

2.2.4.1 Does the interview allow young people to talk about their situation?

We understand "situation" as a context around emotional and sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This implies the family, school, health, and personal dimension regarding SOGI⁸. How does the entourage react? Is it supportive or not? How do people experience their SOGI?

« L'entretien individuel au RG me permet de parler de ma situation concernant mon OSIG. »



⁸ SOGI: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

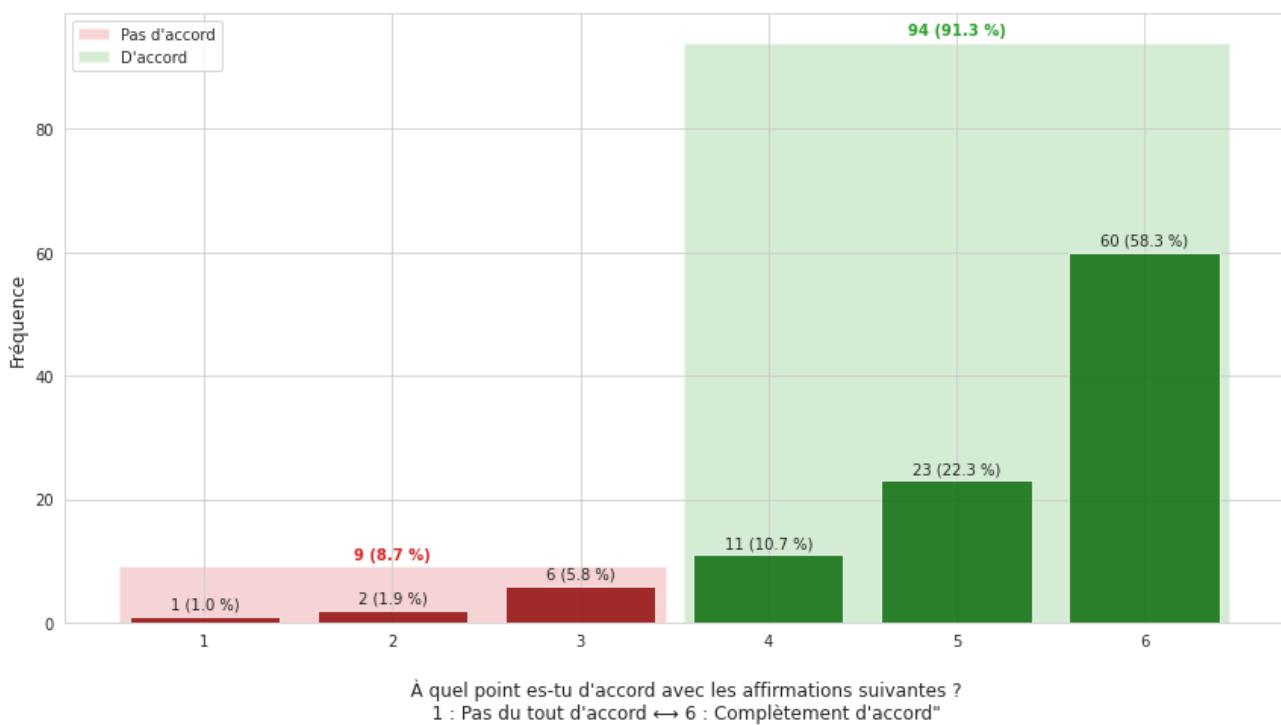
Analysis: Out of 103 responses, most respondents felt that they could talk about their situation regarding their SOGI during the interview sessions they were offered. These results are encouraging and support the idea that this service - as well as the protocol that guides it - most often offers an environment conducive to dialogue with the young person. There are still a few cases where sharing could not take place (so few that the data can be considered exceptional).

However, these situations can occur from time to time and, according to the experience of educators, there are no general solutions to overcome them. Cases of breach of trust generally arise from the individual and/or contextual particularities of the two parties. No data informs us more precisely because the negative comments are anonymous.

Note that the questionnaire is based on the goodwill of the respondents and that a self-selection bias remains possible. For example, the respondents wishing to respond to our call are those who have had a positive experience at Le Refuge Genève. It might be expected that the questionnaire would attract more negative reviews, but their low number across all questions does not seem to indicate this.

2.2.4.2 Does the individual interview allow young people to better understand their resources?

« L'entretien individuel au RGe me permet de mieux comprendre mes ressources. »



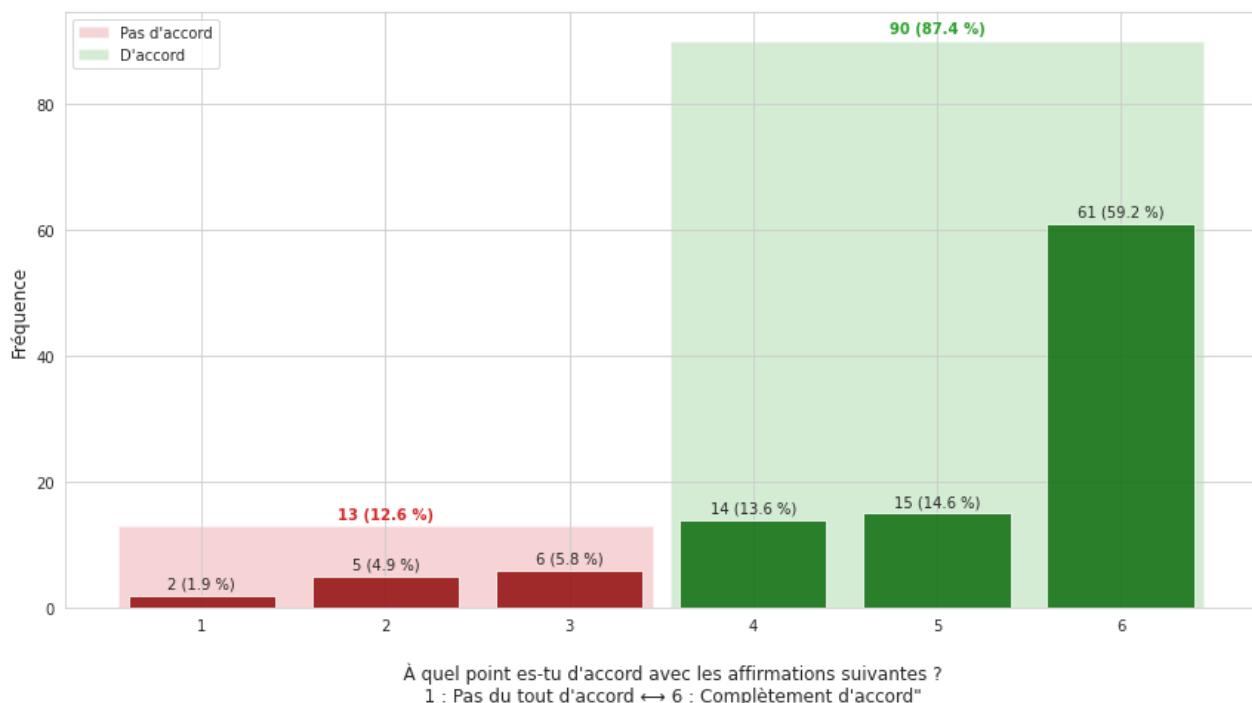
Analysis: talking about their situation allows a large majority to become aware of their resources.

The resources in the questionnaire are defined this way: material, social, family, and personal. "Being aware of your resources means that you can name the people who can help you in your situation. You get to know how to solve certain difficulties, you know your strengths better".

From the perspective of young people, 81% think it helps them understand their resources. This implies that work on a change of perspective regarding a situation experienced as problematic, as well as a holistic view of the situation, allows awareness of internal and external aids and resources. A small percentage of 7.8% say they were unable to discover resources following an interview. Despite this low percentage, it would be highly interesting to learn more about this phenomenon through qualitative interviews. However, as this questionnaire is confidential, we cannot complete this process. It is likely that various factors (mental health, abusive relationship with those around them, refusal to request shelter, etc.) explain slightly less categorical responses. We can also consider the more subjective or abstract character of this question, which is no less essential.

2.2.4.3 By understanding their situation and being aware of their resources, do young people gain power to act?

« En comprenant ma situation et en ayant conscience de mes ressources, je gagne en pouvoir d'agir. »



The results of this question are highly encouraging, as most of the young people claim they have gained power to act, at 87.4%, following the same trend as the awareness of their resources. This suggests to us that just talking about their situation is not enough to gain power to act but requires different steps towards realizing their skills and resources.

Comment from the questionnaire about the individual interview: "It reassured me a lot to be able to talk about it freely".

2.3 What young people think about working with their relatives

We define the entourage/relatives as any person close to the person concerned, likely to improve or worsen their situation (parents, siblings, extended family, and close friends).

Working with families and those around them in general is a priority objective at the RGe. It is motivated by the professional experience of the team and is supported by scientific data relating in particular to young trans*. These studies show, for example, that when there is support from the family, mental health progresses positively, with a 93% drop in suicides and self-harm (Travers et al., 2012).

This data is correlated with that of the gay community (Family Acceptance Project, n.d.). Research from the Family Acceptance Project has shown that « *l'acceptation parentale, et même la neutralité, en ce qui concerne l'orientation sexuelle de l'enfant peut faire baisser le risque d'une tentative de suicide* » (parental acceptance, and even neutrality, regarding a child's sexual orientation can lower the risk of a suicide attempt.) Based on this premise, the challenge of building and rebuilding with relatives is essential.

This objective is not, however, guaranteed because it is based on young people agreeing to this process. However, young people received at the RGe are very often in a negative anticipation of working with their family. They have a strong fear of rejection and the feeling that their parents will not be able to understand their situation or accept a dialogue, or feel that a breakup, even temporary, would be impossible and would place them in a situation of great distress (emotional, financial, social, etc.).

Mediation work is therefore, above all, upstream work to walk with young people and encourage adherence to possible work with parents. This does not always work or may take a long time. However, it is rare that we fail to bond with a family, to create a relationship of trust and then be able to put the needs of the young person first.

In 2020, out of **82** (including 47 new) families approached by the team, almost all responded favorably to the dialogue. The number of breaks in the family mediation process does not reach ten. We have no data to explain these ruptures. It is important to note that the families concerned have sometimes moved forward on their own and with other resources and that, for a small part, the inability to accept and support their child has often led them to various forms of expression, sometimes even public (AMQG⁹ Association), which could be described as mistreating their children.

⁹ Approche Mesurée des Questions de Genre

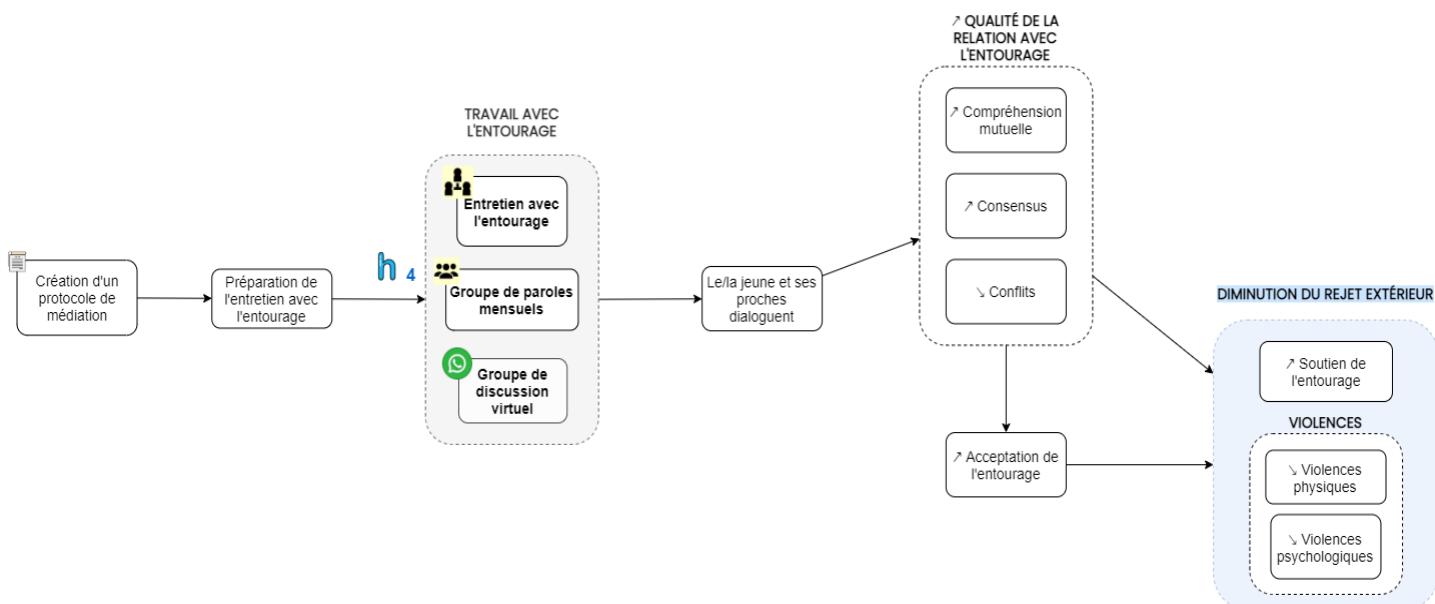
In our opinion, dialogue increases the likelihood of an improvement in the situation, as we will see in the section on entourage. For that reason, we put all our energy into preserving the dialogue.

Our approach consists in creating an empathetic ground between the various members of the family, to restore the communication, to clarify the misunderstandings and to appease the conflicts. Family rejection most often finds its roots in ignorance, prejudice, and representations regarding the LGBTIQ+ theme. It is not a question, then, of judging but of explaining, of deconstructing and of accompanying the parents, often loving, towards knowledge so that a raising of awareness takes place. This involves meetings, often without the young people at first, where everyone has the space and time to express themselves.

We use adapted and customizable tools (mediation protocol) to discuss the situation, reach out to relatives at the stage where they are and help them gain a better understanding of the situation. When trust is born, these mediations very often turn into support for parenthood. It should be noted that there are many supporting parenthood at the RGe, although they are often helpless (not always knowing how to react to their loved one) at the beginning of the process.

Much like the individual interview, we followed the causal chain of TOC to verify whether our services were achieving their goals by asking related questions. The basic question is: **do interviews with relatives promote better support for the young person?** This complex question has been broken down below into simple questions.

Out of 116 respondents, 64 said they had benefited from an interview with relatives. The percentages which follow are to be qualified in relation to a lower rate of respondents in this section.

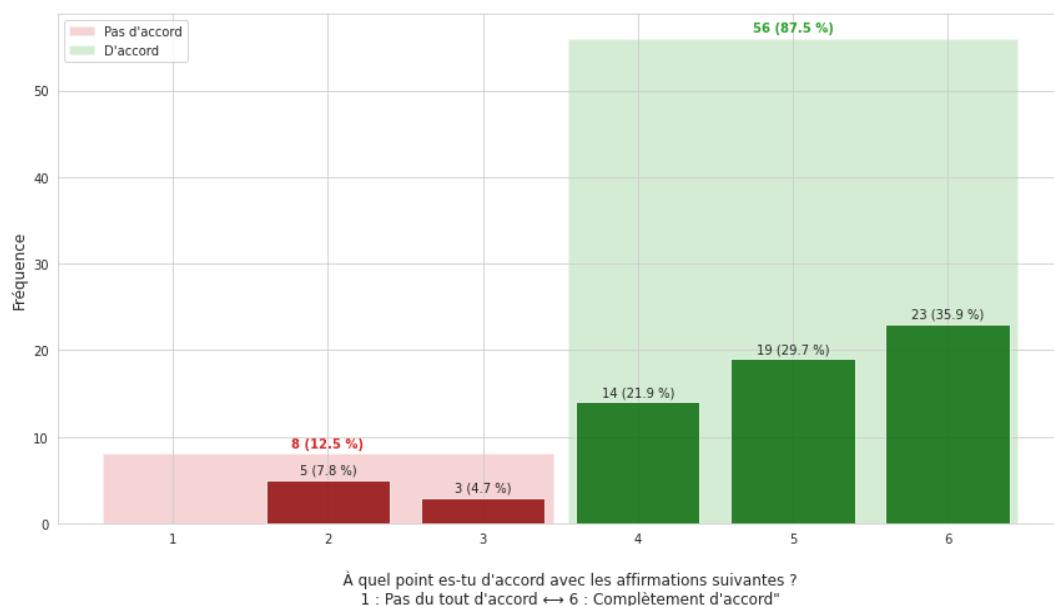


2.3.1 Do the RGe interviews with the entourage allow a dialogue between the young person and his/her relatives?

« Les entretiens avec mon entourage me permettent de mieux dialoguer avec mes proches. »

If we consider the positive responses between 4 and 6, they represent 87.5%, with full agreement for 35.9%. We can deduce that most young people consider that the RGe's interventions with relatives facilitate dialogue between them.

We do not know if in the case of the 12.5% of negative responses our interventions worsened or did not change the situation.

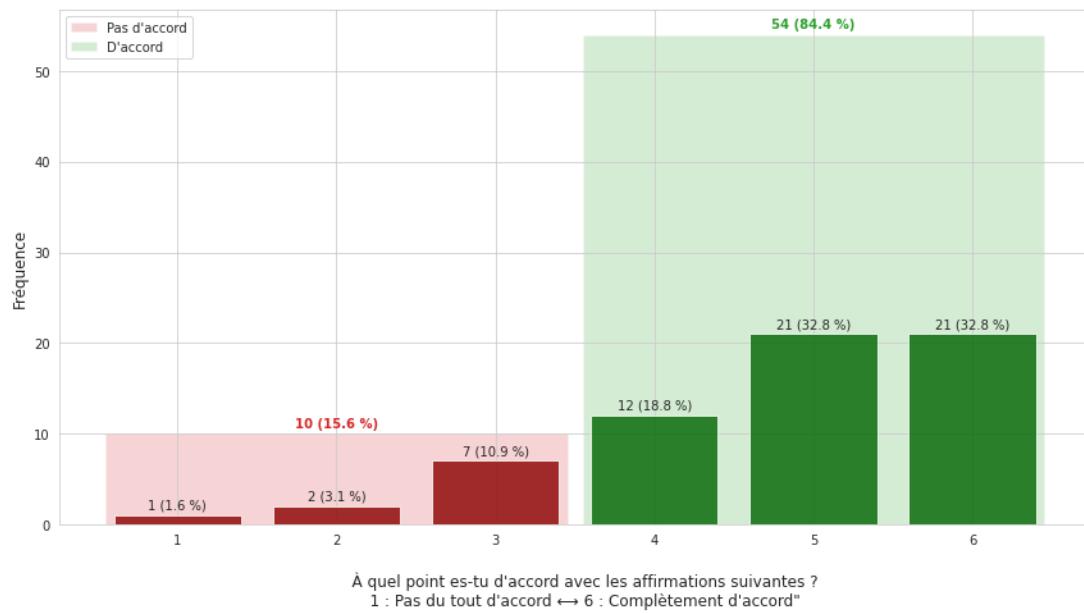


2.3.2 Does the support of the relatives by the RGe promote mutual understanding?

« L'accompagnement de mon entourage par le RGe favorise notre compréhension mutuelle. »

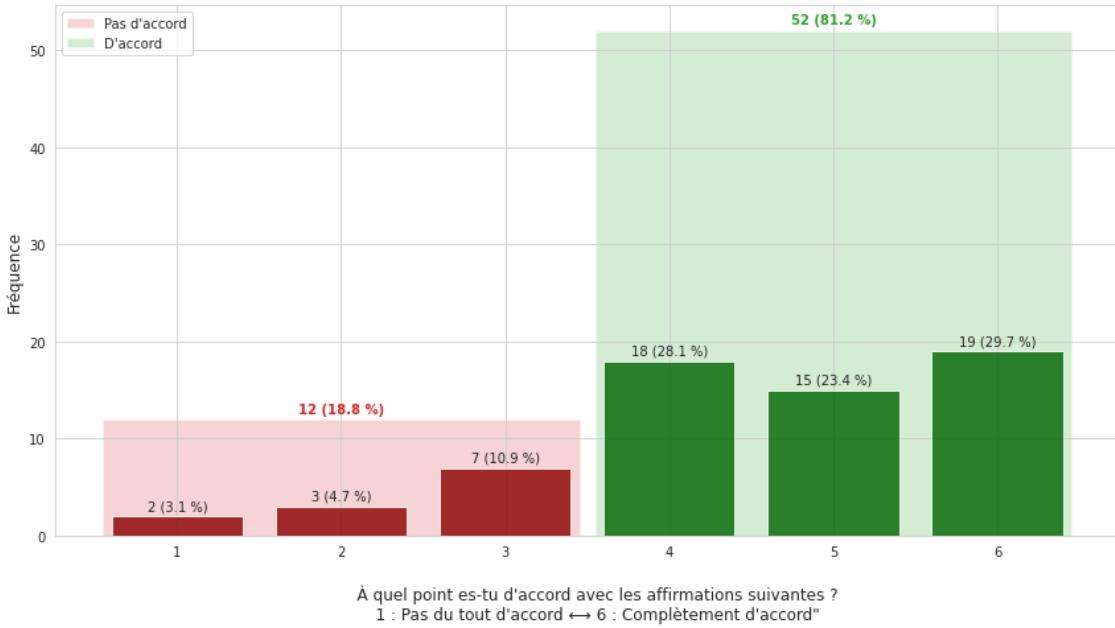
Positive responses represent 84.4%. This confirms the positive impact of the RGe's intervention on families.

For the 15% of negative responses, the question does not allow us to say whether the intervention was detrimental to communication or whether it did not change the situation. They could be attributed to the breakdowns in dialogue mentioned above but which are nevertheless a minority of cases.



2.3.3 Does the support of the relatives make it possible to find a greater consensus between the parties?

« L'accompagnement de mon entourage permet de trouver un plus grand consensus entre nous »



On this part, the positive responses remain the majority for 81.2% but are more nuanced with a majority distributed between 3 and 6.

More mutual understanding does not necessarily mean that young people are ready for more consensus. The dialogue may not be enough to come to a complete agreement or certainly not in the same time frame. With many respondents in 2020, the impact of

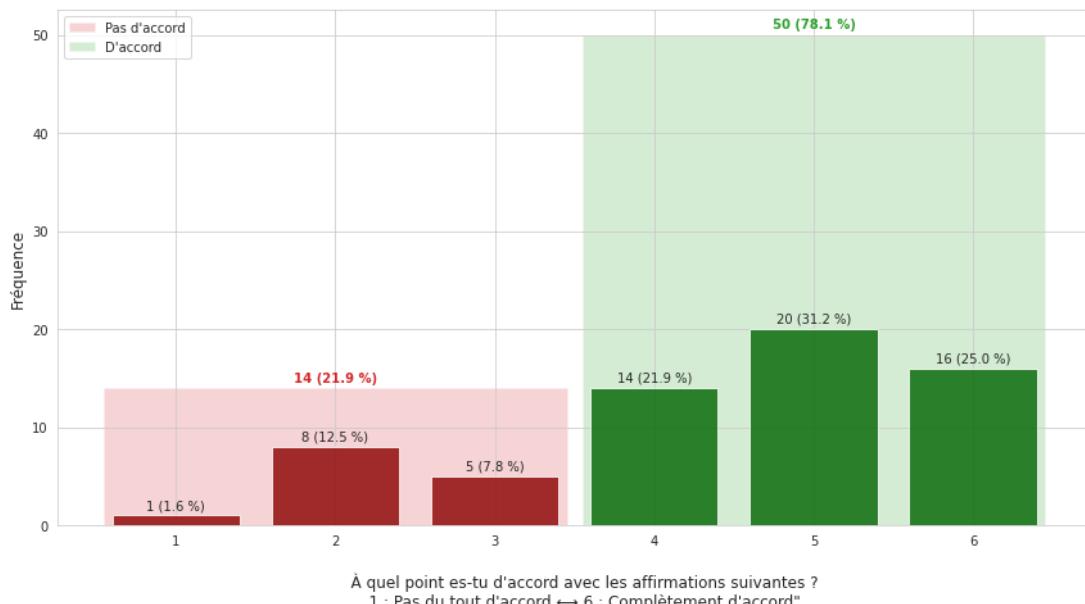
support could be correlated with its duration. That is to say that the development of families over several years has been poorly represented.

Resubmitting this questionnaire next year could be an interesting prospect, with some space for the relatives to express themselves, to promote a qualitative reflection on their quantitative data.

2.3.4 Does support for the relatives reduce conflicts?

«L'accompagnement de mon entourage permet de réduire les conflits entre nous»

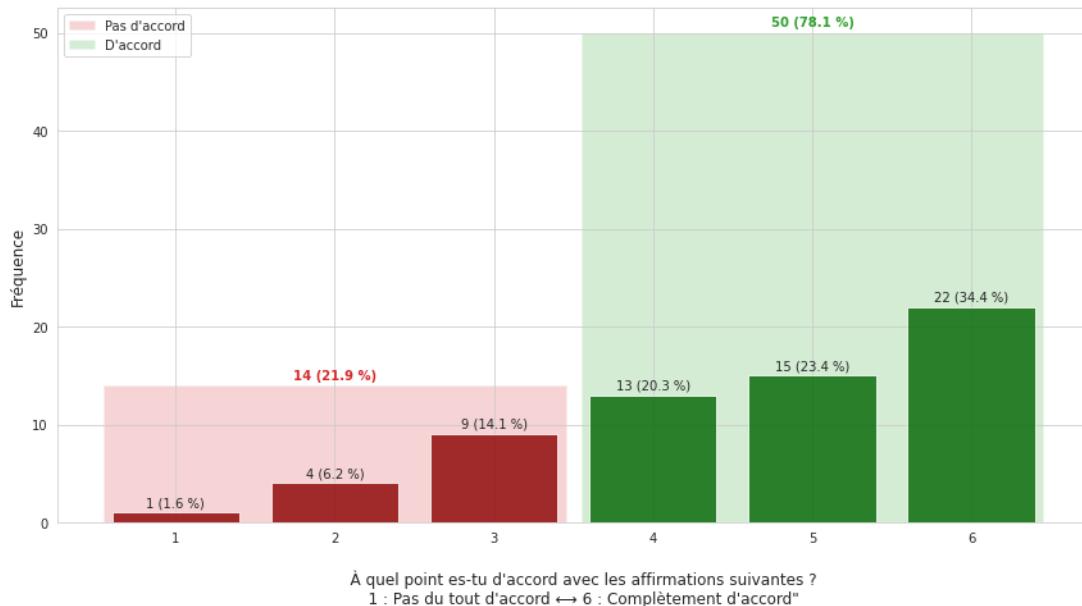
Most respondents confirm that our support reduces conflicts with their relatives, for 78.1%, with, however, less categorical responses. Is conflict reduction a more advanced stage in the causal chain, which would make the intervention less efficient compared to that made upstream of conflicts? This would reinforce the assumption that we have made at the RGe, namely, that coming out must be accompanied and prepared to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to a crisis or even to a rupture.



2.3.5 Does support for relatives increase the quality of relationships with loved ones?

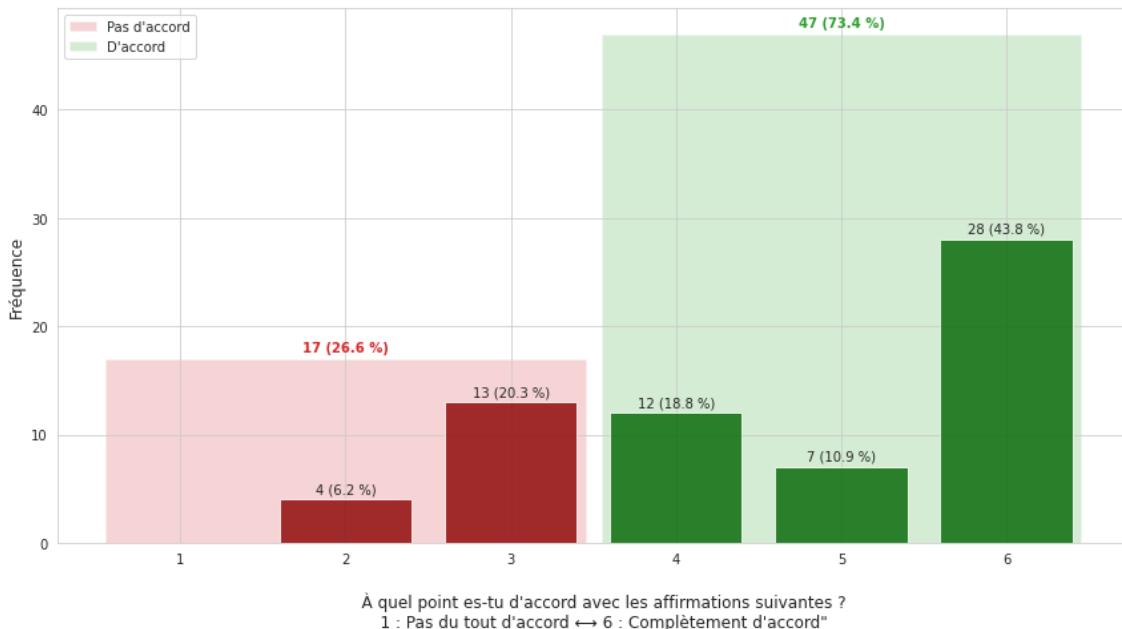
« L'accompagnement de mon entourage nous permet d'augmenter la qualité de nos relations. »

The answers are mostly positive (78.1%) with a decreasing evolution and a peak around 6. The answers are almost the same as for the previous question. Reducing conflict is arguably associated with improving relationships.



2.3.6 Does a better-quality relationship increase support from relatives?

« Une meilleure qualité de relation avec mes proches leur permet de mieux me soutenir. »



73.5% answer rather yes, with a tendency to a strong approval.

Based on this data, the RGe beneficiaries who responded believe that the service they received was a positive element in improving their situation.

2.4 The opinion of the entourage on the services of the RGe

Under point 2.3 you will find a summary of the importance of working with relatives of LGBTQI+ young people. We wanted to hear from their relatives and verify, once again, that our services achieved the ultimate objective, the improvement of the well-being of young people.

Le Refuge Genève considers the family as a privileged partner. We wanted to ask the families about their experiences and collect their opinion on the services offered.

Most families contacted are relatives of trans* and non-binary youth and collaborate with us. They wished to contribute to this evaluation. We regret that we were unable to further extend our panel to families affected by their child's homosexuality or bisexuality. In addition, the support group questions are intended only for parents of transgender and/or non-binary children.

There is currently no support group for parents of children who are not exclusively heterosexual. This can be explained in different ways. A parent's association already exists "Parents d'homo". It is not a matter of professional social support but an initiative of parents of homosexual children. In addition, parents of children who are not exclusively heterosexual can likely maintain a greater form of denial. They probably do not have to face the challenges of an apparent social or medical transition confronting them with the eyes of others and with the necessary recurrent explanations. They can remain silent and ignore the situation. This requires personal work that is sometimes deeper and, in any case, more voluntary. We find that the membership of these families is more complex and subtle. They are therefore under-represented in the panel of respondents.

2.4.1 Respondents

There have been 124 families approached since 2015. This remains approximate. Indeed, the RGe has only had a statistical tool since 2020. The survey was shared with 69 families, either by email or through the WhatsApp group, or both, with a follow-up 15 days later. 29 families responded, which represents almost half of those contacted. The families mainly come from the canton of Geneva.

The year of first contact with the RGe is not just 2020, unlike youth data. All years since 2015 are represented. We can consider that the answers were given with a more

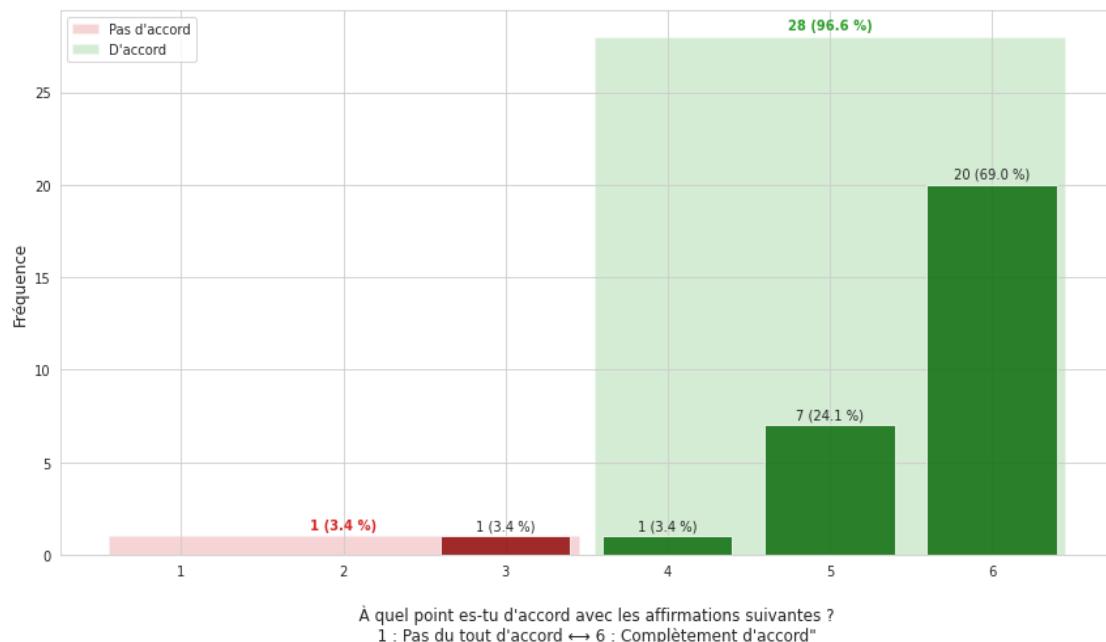
important perspective. More than 72% of the families have, however, been in contact with the RGe in 2020 (new and old families included).

2.4.2 The research question

Do interviews with relatives promote the support given to their child/loved one?

The question is similar to the one asked of young people and broken down into sub-questions. We conducted **93** interviews with the relatives in 2020 and **121** in mid-2021.

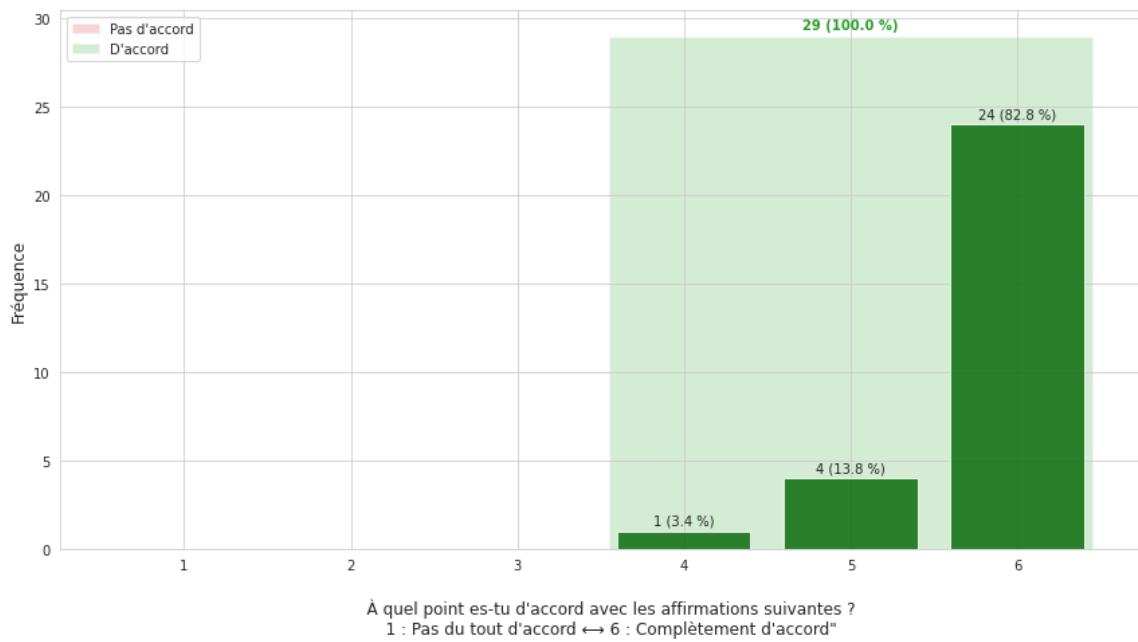
2.4.2.1 *Following the interviews with the RGe, I have a better dialogue with my child/LGBTIQ+ loved one.*



Analysis: 96.6% of relatives claim to have a better dialogue with their loved one following interviews with the RGe. The relatives who responded seem to reflect a very positive opinion of the services of the RGe.

The self-selection bias mentioned for young people under point 2.1.3.2 remains possible for relatives, however. The respondents willing to respond to our call are perhaps again those who have had a positive experience at Le Refuge Genève.

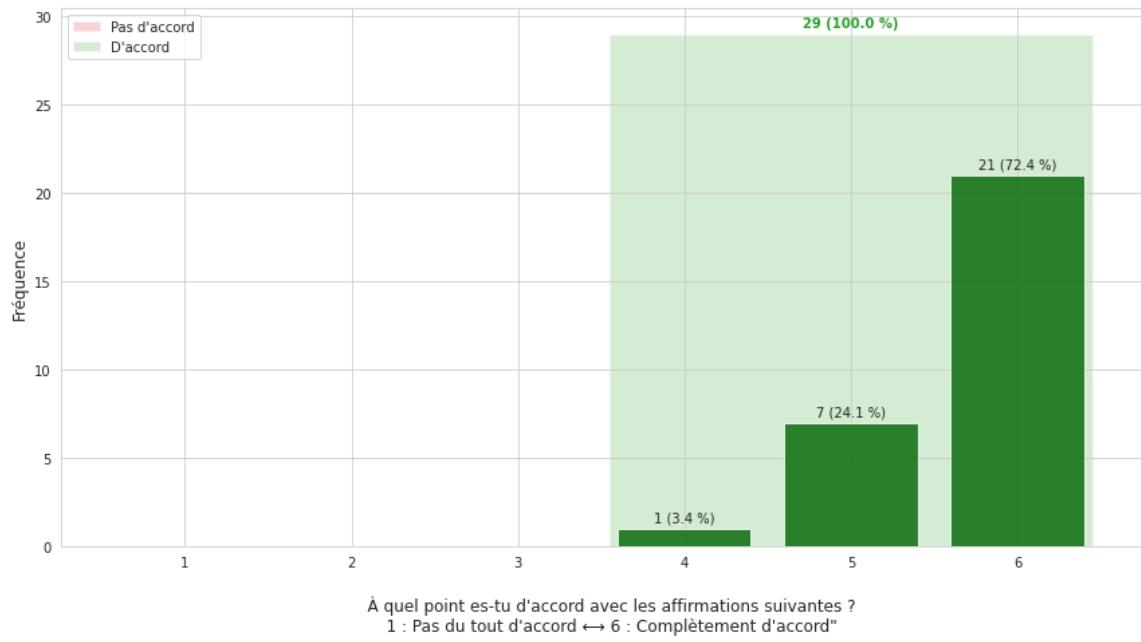
2.4.2.2 Following the interviews with Le Refuge Genève, I have a better understanding of my child's situation regarding emotional and sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



Responses from relatives clearly indicate that the interviews produce, in their eyes, a better understanding of the situation of their loved one.

2.4.2.3 The individual interviews give me support in my situation

Once again, the responses are very positive. The relatives feel that they are supported in their situation following the RGe interviews.



2.4.2.4 Following the interviews with the RGe, did the conflicts decrease with my relative/child?

Before this questioning, we asked whether the relatives had conflicts with their child/loved one before contacting the RGe. Only 5 families answered yes. They also all estimated that there was a decrease in conflicts following the RGe's interviews.

2.4.2.5 The enTourage group

89.7% of respondents said they had participated in this group and only one family was not satisfied with this participation, with a response of 3 out of 6.

The reasons for participating in the group were not added in the "other" box, which suggests that those proposed by the questionnaire were sufficiently exhaustive. Sharing their experiences, supporting their loved one/child and feeling less alone in the situation are the most important reasons reported by relatives, both for the families who participated and for those who did not.

Each proposition having obtained a high score, we can hypothesize that the relatives have multiple benefits from these groups.

The enTourage group allows you to:	N
Feel less alone in your situation regarding your trans* or non-binary child/loved one	24 (92,3%)
Better support your trans* or non-binary child/loved one	22 (84,6%)
Share your experience	21 (80,8%)
Obtain information on gender identity issues	20 (76,9%)
Improve the quality of the relationship with your trans* or non-binary child/loved one	19 (73,1%)
See the positive aspects of the situation	19 (73,1%)
Obtain peer-to-peer support	14 (53,8%)
Bring lightness	1 (3,8%)

2.4.3 Conclusion

We note that several stages are necessary in the development of support for relatives and that the question could not have been asked directly without a notable bias. Data for relatives is consistent with that for young people (although much more favorable).

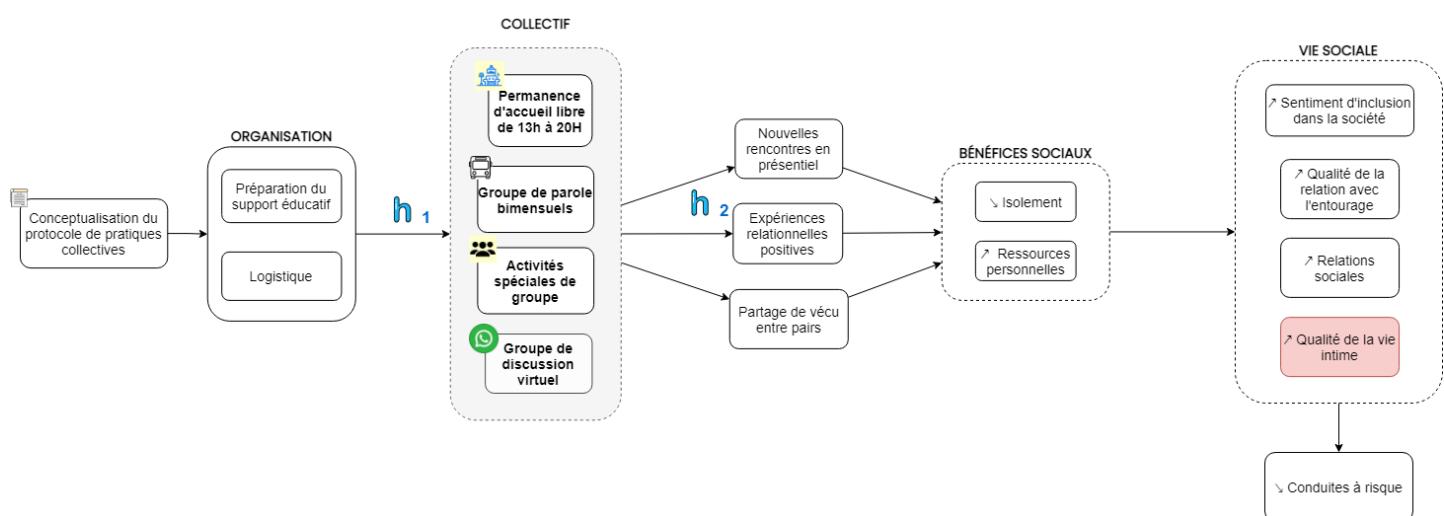
It should also be noted that the families encountered are progressing positively, in most cases (according to their assessment and that of their children).

« Je tiens à remercier l'équipe du Refuge pour tout le soutien qu'elle nous a apporté (...) nous avons trouvé non seulement un guide professionnel mais surtout un groupe de personnes aux qualités humaines exceptionnelles. Vous nous avez montré que le chemin hors des normes que parcourt nos enfants est profond, riche en émotions et par-dessus tout, dont il faut être fier. Merci !!! » (I would like to thank Le Refuge team for all the support they gave us (...) we found not only a professional guide but above all a group of people with exceptional human qualities. You have shown us that the path beyond the norms that our children take is deep, rich in emotions and above all, of which to be proud. Thank you !!!)

2.5 The opinion of young people on free reception

2.5.1 Free reception

We have chosen free reception as the object of study to answer the question posed by the TOC. We wanted to test the hypothesis that young people need a safe place where they can be who they are and come out of the isolation and feelings of inadequacy they may feel.



To support our hypotheses, we sought to define the concept of *free reception* through a review of the literature.

A study by the Fondation de France, published in 2017, reports the social isolation of young people (15-30 years old) in France. It analyzes the figures as well as the various factors conducive to a situation of isolation. The Fondation de France defines social isolation as the total absence of social networks: friends, family, colleagues or classmates, neighbors and people with whom one spends time within the framework of an associative activity. In 2017, the number of young people in this situation of total isolation represented 6% of 15-30 years old, or 700,000 French people. It is also considered that a person having contact with a single social network (for example only the family network) is in a vulnerable situation (Fondation de France, 2017).

The Fondation de France highlights several factors that activate social isolation, including family and/or school difficulties during youth, which would lead to a feeling of mistrust towards others, and therefore self-isolation. These are two issues that we often find in the profile of young people approaching Le Refuge Genève. Especially since the withdrawal into oneself that implies withdrawal into the home can be negatively affected by an unsupportive family climate.

While young LGBTIQ+ adolescents may find themselves in one (or more) of the above situations, regardless of their emotional and sexual orientation or gender identity, these last two factors can and often are an aggravating cause. Indeed, according to a study commissioned by the canton of Vaud, emotional and sexual orientation and/or gender identity is the second cause of bullying at school, while 1 to 2 students per class are concerned by the LGBT+ theme. Non-heterosexual or non-binary students are more likely to have repeated a year (27.5% versus 20%) or have only a weak attachment to school (34.9% versus 26.9%). The number of LGBT+ students who consider their classroom climate to be negative is twice as high as students who do not belong to this community (Lucia S, Stadelmann S, Amiguet M, Ribeaud D, Bize R., 2017).

These figures show the scholastic difficulties that LGBT+ youth face during their schooling. They are therefore more likely to have a bad relationship with school and more likely to drop out altogether, considering the bullying endured.

« *qu'elle s'exprime de façon physique, verbale, morale ou symbolique, et qu'elle soit subie de façon directe ou indirecte, l'homophobie amène bien souvent chez ceux qui en sont victimes un sentiment de culpabilité et de honte. [...] Le jeune en questionnement ou homosexuel.le en vient parfois consécutivement à se replier sur lui.elle-même, à s'isoler et à se retrouver en situation de rupture de lien avec ceux qui l'entourent (sa famille, ses pairs) ce qui va fréquemment de pair avec des situations d'échec scolaire et de précarisation sociale.* » (Delabarre & Genon, 2013). (Whether it is expressed physically, verbally, morally, or symbolically, and whether it is experienced directly or indirectly, homophobia very often makes those who suffer from it feel guilty and ashamed. [...] The young questioning or homosexual sometimes consecutively ends up withdrawing into him·herself, isolating him·herself and finding him·herself in a situation

of rupture of bond with those around him/her (his/her family, his/her peers), which frequently goes hand in hand with situations of school failure and social insecurity.)

By severing ties with one or more primary networks, school and/or social bullying is directly linked to the isolation of LGBTIQ+ youth.

Le Refuge Genève seeks to compensate this by offering its free reception. Free reception, in the literature in general, does not find a precise definition, although each place practicing free reception offers a similar definition.

According to the neighborhood center, MQ sous les étoiles, free reception: « *consiste à offrir un lieu d'expérimentation aux enfants dans un cadre basé essentiellement sur le respect et la confiance mutuelle. Un lieu dont l'équipe pratique l'accueil libre devient un espace de liberté accompagnée. L'enfant est libre d'agir selon ses envies et motivations dans le respect de l'autre.* » (MQ sous les étoiles, 2015) (consists in offering a place of experimentation to children in a framework based essentially on respect and mutual trust. A place where the team practices free reception becomes a space of accompanied freedom. The child is free to act according to his/her desires and motivations while respecting others.).

Two socio-cultural animators, Joëlle Libois and Patricia Heimgartner (2013), tried to give a generic definition of free reception, and several criteria emerged. The central notion of *reception*, where the social worker will « *donner l'hospitalité, articulant le passage du dehors au dedans, de l'espace public à l'intimité d'un espace privé. [...] accueillir « les bras ouverts » à contrario de recevoir « froidement ».* » (give hospitality, articulating the passage from the outside to the inside, from the public space to the intimacy of a private space. [...] To welcome "with open arms" on the contrary to receiving "coldly"). As for *free*, the authors define this term as responding to freedom, which is without constraint, without commitment, which disposes of its time.

From these definitions, we can conclude that the RGe offers a free reception service, because all the conditions (accompanied freedom, space for experimentation, place with a minimum commitment and constraint, etc.) are met. By freedom we mean the fact of being welcomed with respect for one's uniqueness, without judgment, without risk of discrimination. Free reception at Le Refuge Genève offers young people the opportunity to experience a way of being, as close as possible to themselves, regarding their gender identity or their emotional and sexual orientation.

It is a place where young people can come without being "summoned" or expected, both alone and with friends. The social workers of the RGe are attentive to the links that young people create among themselves at the free reception. Free reception therefore allows young people to build ties between peers and to create new "social networks" (Fondation de France, 2017) which reduce the social isolation of beneficiaries, i.e., LGBTIQ+ young people.

We could not find a place equivalent to the free reception of the RGe and, therefore, we were not able to compare and enrich our hypotheses on the impact of a specific place on LGBTIQ+ youth.

2.5.2 Free reception at the RGe

Free reception at Le Refuge Genève is open from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday. This space functions as a neighborhood center with a targeted population (LGBTIQ+ youth). It aims to bring young people out of isolation by offering them a place to meet their peers.

This space also allows young people to relax before and/or after individual interviews with the team, as the meetings can be emotionally charged. Free reception is designed, organized and animated with an educational aim to strengthen the self-esteem and assertiveness of young people. At least one team member is always present.

The statistics for 2020 are somewhat affected by the COVID period. Indeed, the free reception was closed for a month. In view of the deterioration of the state of mental health of young people and remote interviews no longer being sufficient, we have since kept the free reception open (by adopting the appropriate health measures and adapting the activity of all Dialogai services to promote and maintain the reception of young people).

The number of visits to the free reception, between the beginning of the year 2021 and August 31, 2021, amounts to **730**. The total number of visits for the year 2020 amounts to **424**. This year, and if the trend continues, the number of visits to the free reception will have increased by just over 60%.

2.5.3 The methodological approach

We wanted to compare two panels of respondents: young people coming to the RGe and whose characteristics are described above and a panel of LGBTIQ+ young people not coming to the RGe. This comparison allows us to understand if the needs differ between these two populations. We can then draw some conclusions about the efficiency of free reception from a specific and global point of view.

The panel of young people not attending the RGe (non-RGe) was solicited through a survey identical to that intended for young people coming to the RGe (RGe). This survey was promoted via paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram for 15 days. It was also transmitted to the coordination of Totem and Think Out (two Geneva entities intended for LGBTIQ+ young people).

We directly asked the questions on the intermediate effects sought and exposed in the TOC.

2.5.4 Respondents

The number of non-RGe respondents is **299**, which is very satisfactory given our 116 respondents from the RGe.

Place of residence: a large proportion of non-RGe live in the canton of Vaud, against a majority in the canton of Geneva for RGe.

Just like the young people of the RGe, the refusal to be categorized in their gender identity is significant among non-RGe. The "other" box was in fact ticked by around 10% of this population. Like for the young people of the RGe, some categories were not understood or identified as one might expect. For example, a "lesbian" box was added to the proposals when it could be expected in the "homosexual" category.

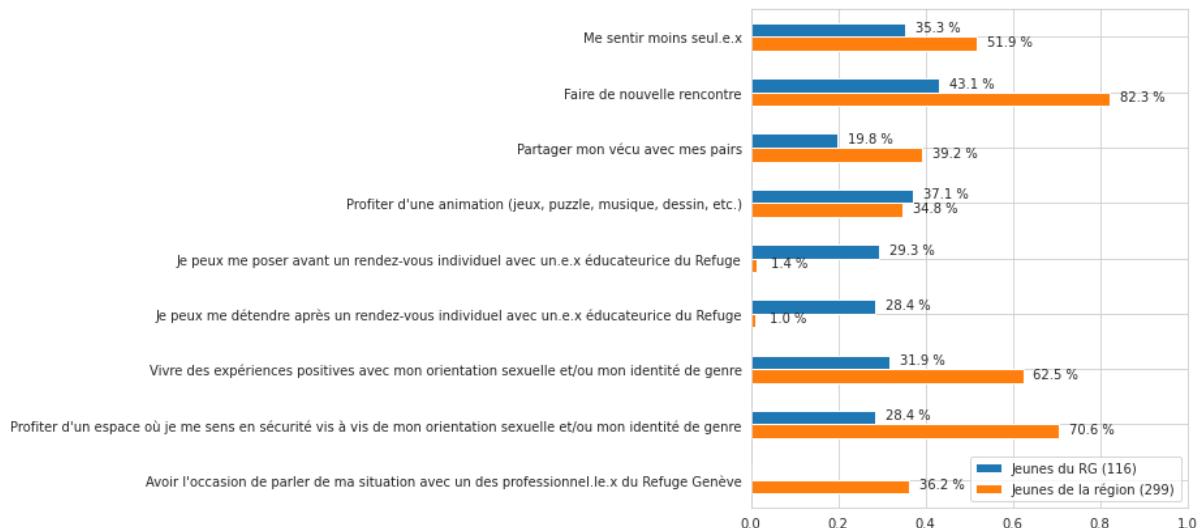
Among non-RGe, there is a significant proportion of **cisgender women (43.1%)**. At Le Refuge Genève, they are in minority (less than 10%). It would be interesting to understand why they frequent this place of assistance less, while they majoritarily express themselves in the questionnaire. **Cisgender men** are well represented (**15.1%**) among non-RGe respondents.

Identification around sexual and emotional orientation is prevalent in the data from the questionnaire sent to non-RGe. The RGe receives a large population concerned with issues of gender identity.

However, **the persons identifying themselves as non-binary** were 14%, 6% for **transgender boys** (overrepresented in the RGe) and only 2% for transgender women. Note that no one identified him-herself as both non-binary and trans*, which may be possible. The "other" box contains categories such as: agenre (without gender), demi-boy (half-boy) or demi-girl (half-girl), gender fluid, gender fae that we can attribute to the question of gender identity. Some may also combine two or three categorizations. 6% of respondents did not want to define themselves.

75.6% of respondents did not know about the existence of free reception. The question of the media coverage of Le Refuge Genève is raised. However, not all the respondents are necessarily in difficulty, they may not have needed Le Refuge Genève and therefore did not seek to find a structure of this type (orientation by a peer or professional in the assistance relationship).

2.5.5 The expressed needs



The “other” box was very rarely used by respondents who did not come to the RGe. Only 10 out of 299 people used it and only to comment, but few to suggest a need we had not named.

Indeed, among these 10 answers we find testimonies, wishes to contact us, or poorly understood sections (meeting other LGBTIQ+ young people that we could have included in the section "share my experience with my peers"). As for the young people of the RGe, only one person replied that the free reception did not meet any of their needs, the "other" box was not used by any respondent. We can conclude that the list of proposed needs is quite exhaustive.

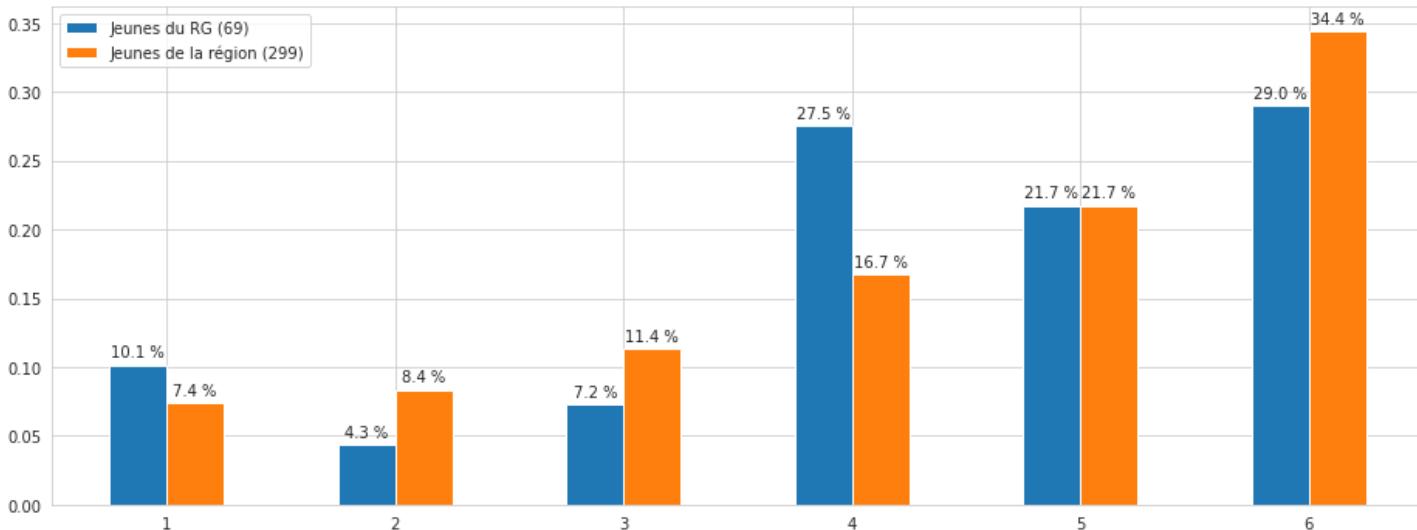
We note among young people coming to the RGe that all the proposed needs are almost equal. It seems that young people are aware of the multiple benefits of free reception.

The category obtaining the most votes, in both panels, is: “Meet new people”. With this answer, the theme of isolation may be underlying.

For the young people of the RGe, the opportunity to talk about their situation and to benefit from an animation is put forward. The fact of having experienced the services at the RGe seems to have an influence on the vision of their needs today. “Enjoying a space where I feel safe with my sexual/emotional orientation and/or my gender identity” is plebiscited by both panels equally, as is the fact of wanting to feel less alone.

2.5.6 The question of the specific place

“I don't know other places where I feel welcome with my SOGI”



The question was formulated in the survey so that young people can compare comparable places, namely a socio-educational service open daily to young people with social difficulties. In both panels, most young people express that they do not know other places where they would be well received with their SOGI: 78.3% (RGe) and 72.8% (non-RGe).

It would have been interesting to question the young people on what places offer them a benevolent welcoming: in the LGBTIQ+ environment or outside? What are the criteria, still according to them, for an adequate reception for LGBTIQ+ young people?

Note that in the first panel (RGe), the understanding of the place, both on the individual aspect and the collective aspect is better apprehended because experienced. This could explain the 6% difference between the two panels. Do young people compare the individual follow-up service or the free reception space? This question would have deserved more details to draw a clear analysis.

2.5.7 Conclusion

A large majority of young people feel that they cannot talk about their situation in other places of reception. We can assume that this thematic may not be dealt with in depth and/or exhaustively, or not dealt with at all. This emphasizes, on the one hand, the need for professionalized places and, on the other hand, thematic-specific places.

« Ce sanctuaire m'a permis de rencontrer beaucoup de jeunes qui ont une expérience similaire ou pas, et avec qui je peux apprendre et comprendre beaucoup de choses au sein de la communauté LGBTIQ+. Elle m'a aussi permis de rencontrer des paires avec qui je peux avoir une relation saine et durable ! Merci beaucoup !! » - Jeune du RGe. (This sanctuary has allowed me to meet a lot of young people who have had similar or different experiences, and with whom I can learn and understand a lot of things within the LGBTIQ+ community. It also

allowed me to meet peers with whom I can have a healthy and lasting relationship! Thank you so much !! – Young person of the RGe)

« *J'aurais tellement aimé connaître ce lieu quand j'étais dans mon questionnement, entouré d'amis/famille cis et hétérosexuel, quand j'habitais à Genève* » Jeunes inconnu·e·x du RGe. (I would have liked so much to know this place when I was in my questioning, surrounded by cis and heterosexual friends/family, when I lived in Geneva - Young person unknown from the RGe)

« *Si seulement chaque canton pouvait proposer ça* » Jeune inconnu·e·x du RGe. (If only each canton could offer that - Young person unknown from the RGe)

« *C'est une super idée d'avoir créé un lieu où les personnes lgbt+ se sentent en sécurité et peuvent faire connaissance avec d'autres* » Jeune inconnu·e·x du RGe. (It's a great idea to have created a place where lgbt+ people feel safe and can meet other people – Young person unknown from RGe).

2.6 Raising awareness in schools

2.6.1 Objectives and content of the awareness campaigns carried out by the RGe

Le Refuge Genève offers modules from 1h30 to 3h (depending on the needs and availability of the host) addressing themes affecting LGBTIQ+ young people. The interactive presentations allow one to acquire the keys of understanding and to develop knowledge promoting an inclusive position.

As part of the mandate contract between the Department of Public Instruction of Geneva (DIP) and the Geneva Federation of LGBT Associations, Le Refuge Genève works in schools with professionals and with students in the case of a gender transition or a climate of discrimination.

We wanted to measure the impact of these interventions on the student in question and collect the feelings after the intervention.

2.6.2 The opinion of young people on the impact of awareness raising in their establishment

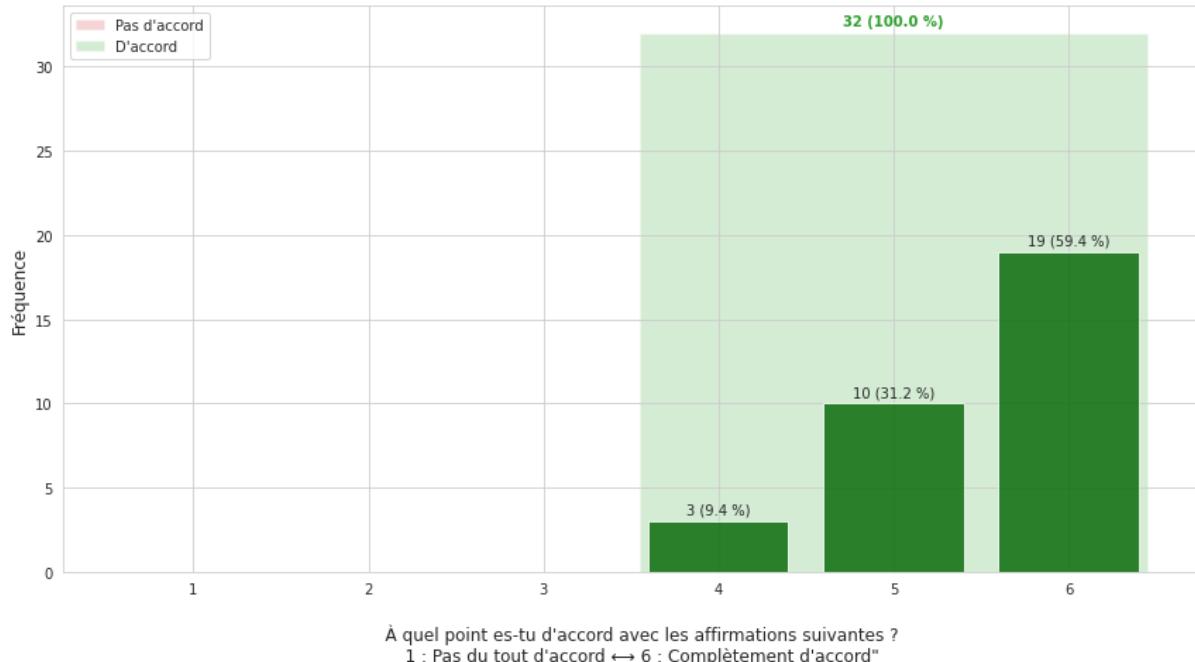
The respondents are the same as in section 2.1.2. Of these 116 respondents, 32 said they had benefited from awareness raising aimed at professionals in their school.

The primary objective was to measure the impact of awareness raising on school disruption. As the causal chain is long and complex, we therefore chose intermediate, simple, and measurable questions. We started from the hypothesis that the reminder of the legal framework, the challenges, and the development of knowledge around the

LGBTIQ+ theme fostered the empathy of professionals towards the students concerned. This empathy helps reduce violence and build support.

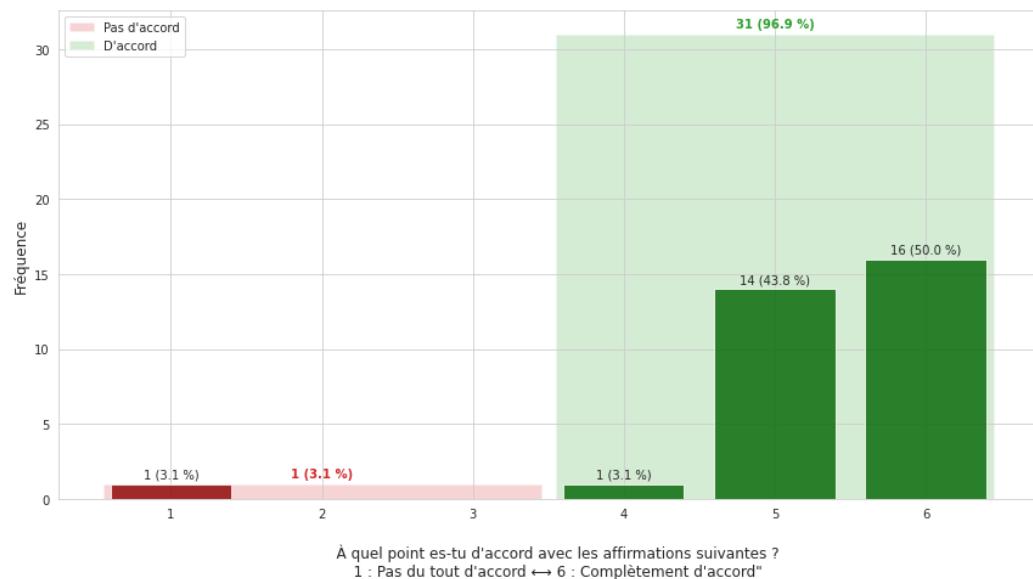
It should be noted that violence is not always generated by malice, or homo/transphobia, but can arise from clumsiness, error in language, lack of responsiveness in the event of discrimination and often ignorance.

2.6.2.1 Does understanding the legal framework and explaining the issues around the LGBTIQ+ theme reduce the external rejection of young people?



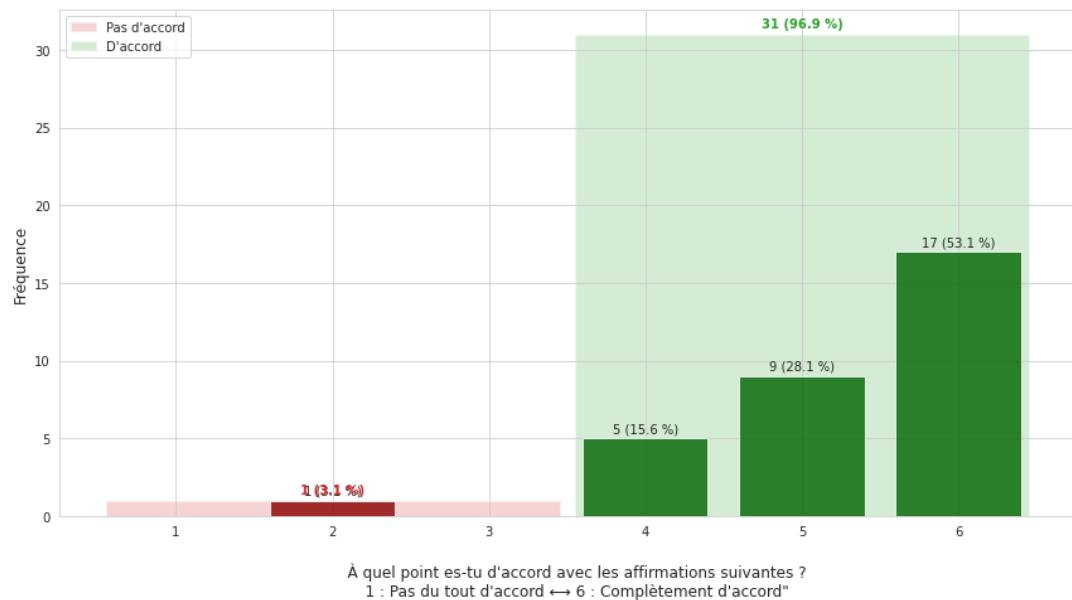
The results are entirely favorable, 100% of young people say they no longer experience rejection from the teaching staff after our awareness campaigns.

2.6.2.2 Does developing empathy among school professionals increase support for their LGBTIQ+ students?



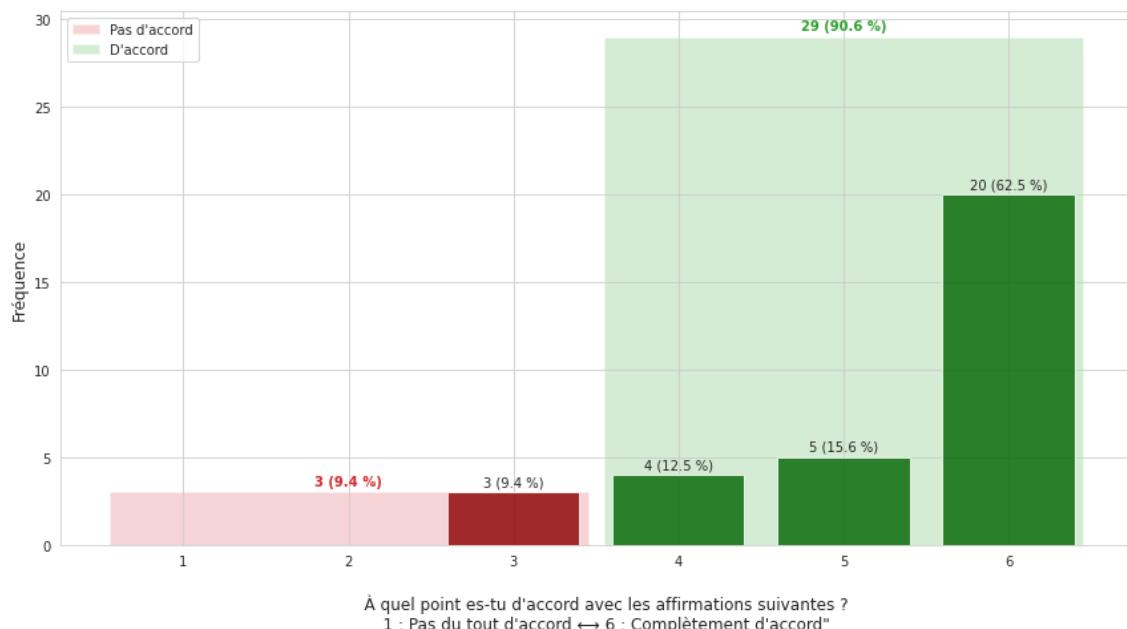
The results are once again very positive: only one person considers that, even if there is no longer any rejection, there is, however, no support from management school professionals.

2.6.2.3 Does developing empathy among school professionals reduce violence against LGBTIQ+ students?



The results are more nuanced on this question since the premise of the hypothesis is questioned. It seems that no longer living with rejection and obtaining support does not lead, for all persons, to feeling that there is more empathy towards young people. The impact remains however, on this issue as well, quite favorable.

2.6.2.4 Does awareness raising increase the sense of security of the student concerned regarding its classmates?



6 young people still consider that they do not feel safe with their classmates after the sensitization sessions. Note that sensitization sessions in the classroom are not systematic and are subject to the approval of the young people. Sensitizations with teachers are much more numerous than those given in class; the comparison is therefore not conclusive. Nevertheless, we can hypothesize that the sensitizations given to adults seem effective according to young people, but not sufficient.

An evaluation of the combination of the two interventions could tell us more.

2.6.2.5 Conclusion

We can conclude that the RGe's sensitizations have, according to the young people, a very positive impact on the school climate following the intervention.

We note in the point above a difference between the impact on professionals and students.

The efficiency of the two successive interventions should be investigated.

2.6.3 The opinion of professionals on the impact of awareness raising in their establishment

2.6.3.1 Initial process

To measure the impact of our interventions in schools, we wanted to measure the difference before and after our awareness campaigns. This gap seemed to us to be measurable from a knowledge standpoint. It would have been difficult to objectively measure the possible adjustment of the positioning of professionals through a survey that was certainly biased by the desire to display a good image.

We therefore chose a questionnaire in the form of a fun quiz (Appendix 2) with a score by points. The content of this questionnaire includes all the elements presented in our awareness raising (conceptual aspects, positioning, and recommendations).

We wanted to submit this text to all DIP teachers, of all degrees. We therefore approached the General Direction and the equality platform of the DIP. Our request was categorically refused, which was detrimental to this part of the assessment. This refusal was justified in this way by the DIP : « *les démarches consultatives sollicitées par des organismes externes auprès du personnel du département ne sont jamais autorisées, quelles qu'elles soient, et qui plus est à large échelle. Aucune exception ne peut être accordée* ». (Consultative approaches requested by external organizations from the staff of the department are never authorized, whatever they are, and what is more on a large scale. No exception can be granted.)

It was a great disappointment because the results gathered would have been precious and rich in information on the needs of the teaching staff regarding this theme.

2.6.3.2 Outlooks

The questionnaire intended for all the teachers of the DIP was nevertheless created. It was designed in a fun way and incorporated the essential elements contained in the awareness raising from a theoretical and practical point of view. To optimize this work, we suggested to all professionals (social, health and other) who had followed the awareness raising sessions, to answer this questionnaire before and after our intervention.

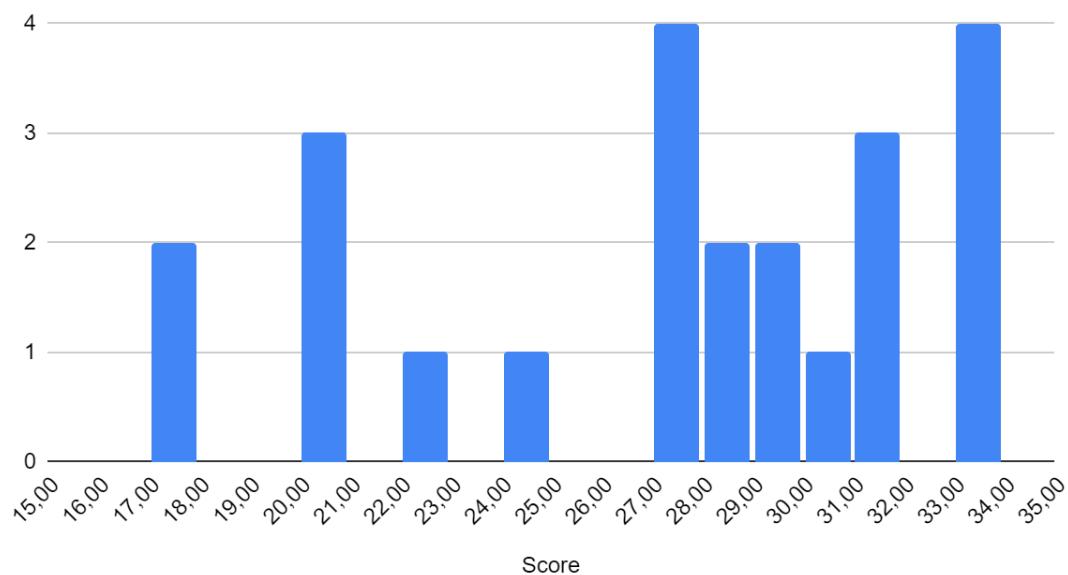
In the future, the aim is to compare the results between the "before and after" to measure the impact of our work. Nevertheless, the retrospective distribution of questionnaires to the professionals of each establishment visited is an important task. The comparison of the results and the analysis that we could draw from them, in terms of relevance and effectiveness of the presentations, requires additional human resources time that we do not currently have.

2.6.3.3 Respondents

19 people answered the MCQ. A majority responded before the intervention. Too few people were able to perform the exercise twice (before and after), so we cannot compare and draw conclusions.

2.6.3.4 Results and analysis

Histogramme de Score



23 people responded before the intervention, and few responded after. We can ask ourselves how to stimulate the filling out of the questionnaire afterwards. We also have doubts about the understanding among respondents of the "before/after", some who answered "after" indicate never having received awareness raising sessions. The questionnaire should be improved on this point.

The average score among respondents who did not receive awareness raising sessions is 26/43. This indicates largely insufficient knowledge given the importance of each question stated. We summed up the essential elements to remember, there is no unnecessary information in any of the questions. In addition, the question of the representativeness of the respondents arises. Aren't the people who take the trouble to answer those who are already sensitive to the thematic? For the rest, it would be necessary to compare the number of respondents to the number of people who received the link to the questionnaire.

3 Conclusion

This evaluation process, with its first modelization phase, allowed us to revisit the needs of young people and verify the relevance of our services. The second phase of research, with the collection of the opinions of our beneficiaries, was extremely rich and reassuring. We had never had the opportunity to question young people and their entourage about their level of satisfaction with our support.

Nonetheless, we encountered several obstacles in carrying out this assessment.

Since the opening of the RGe, we have been using various data collection media such as Excel tables which remain imperfect and insufficient. It is only since 2020 that we have been using DSI, a more suitable software that allows for more reliable, accessible reports and more precise data collection. We had to familiarize ourselves with this tool. The statistics which are extracted from it are completely representative of our activity but there is a margin of error to be considered.

The second major obstacle is the considerable lack of human resources and the limited time available for evaluation. 4 hours per week were planned but this was not always possible with the increasing number of new situations. This significantly impacted the ambitions we had for this project. Therefore, some benefits could not be evaluated- and others could not be studied- in depth.

In fact, since 2019, the team has been made up of 2.2 FTE (reinforcement of 0.3 FTE on 01.05.2019, commitment of 0.6 FTEs on 01.07.2019, devoted in particular to day free reception and the development of activities in this context). We welcomed respectively 97 young people in 2019, 126 in 2020 and we are at 139 young people for the period from January to the end of August 2021. We will undoubtedly reach more than 200 young people this year with an increase of 200% without the human resource evolving. The increase is the same for the number of sensitizations given (34 in 2020 and 41 in 2021 = + 180%). The number of free receptions increased from 439 in 2020 to 730 in 2021 at the end of August (1100 prorated), which gives us an increase of 250%.

This workload has weighed on the search for scientific literature supporting our hypotheses as much as our empirical results and weighs on daily activity.

Also, we did not evaluate our accommodation. This choice is explained by the few people accommodated compared to the number of people accompanied in a socio-educational way, excluding accommodation. We also considered that this service, in fact, had all its legitimacy given the number of accommodation requests per year (16 in 2020) and the few places offered (3 beds).

We did not evaluate the bi-monthly youth groups, considering that their benefits are, in large part, comparable to those of free reception. Finally, we were not able to carry out the evaluation of our awareness raising for professionals. Young people's very positive appreciation of their impacts, however, encouraged us to pursue them.

Indeed, the appreciation of young people and families is overall very positive. It reinforces us in our procedures and our practices put in place, which we indeed want to see perpetuated.

The individual interview, through its orientation around the empowerment of young people, seems to help them understand themselves, assert themselves and become aware of their resources to move forward in life as they are. We can bet that this development of the power to act will allow them to (re)find meaning in their life, new perspectives, and a feeling of existence favorable to better mental health.

The relatives interviewed were even more enthusiastic than the young people themselves. They felt that the interviews at the RGe had enabled them to have a better dialogue with their child/loved one, to foster their mutual understanding and to increase their capacity to support them. We can assume that there are few professional spaces dedicated to families concerned by the LGBTIQ+ theme; this is regularly reported to us by parents welcomed at the RGe. We could have imagined families being more critical toward us. Families who remain in a position of rejection or denial of the situation are in minority in the RGe. Their support remains essential to facilitate a positive path for young people.

We wanted to check whether **free reception** had its place in the RGe and whether it fulfilled the objectives we had set for ourselves in terms of breaking the isolation and providing a safe place for young people. The increase in the number of young people received, the needs confirmed by young people attending the RGe as well as those not attending it, encourage us to continue this service with the necessary supervision of young people.

To improve this research work, we would like to enrich the quantitative results gathered by a qualitative approach with the beneficiaries by proposing discussions around the results.

We want to continue offering our before and after questionnaires to youth professionals to measure the impact of our interventions.

To do this, increasing the human resource is essential. Beyond having more time to optimize our services, it is above all a matter of avoiding deterioration in the quality of our current support. Fundraising to increase the activity rate at Le Refuge Genève remains too low and difficult.

Summary of recommendations

**Adapt human resources to the growing number of beneficiaries and requests for awareness raising
(none of the following recommendations can be achieved without this point)**

Sustain individual interview practices

Evaluate and promote activities for young people that facilitate encounters between peers

Expand the accessibility of free reception to young people in the region to break their isolation

Cyclically ask for the opinion of beneficiaries

Look into the reasons for negative feedback with respondents

Evaluate the impact of awareness raising among professionals

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