

# Settlement Services during COVID-19: IRCC's early data on the pivot of service providers to virtual service delivery

Metropolis Canada Conference  
March 23, 2021



## Today we will be talking about...

1. Setting the scene
2. Building the evidence base on virtual service delivery
3. What we know about **access** to settlement services
4. What we know about **delivery** of settlement services
5. What's next?

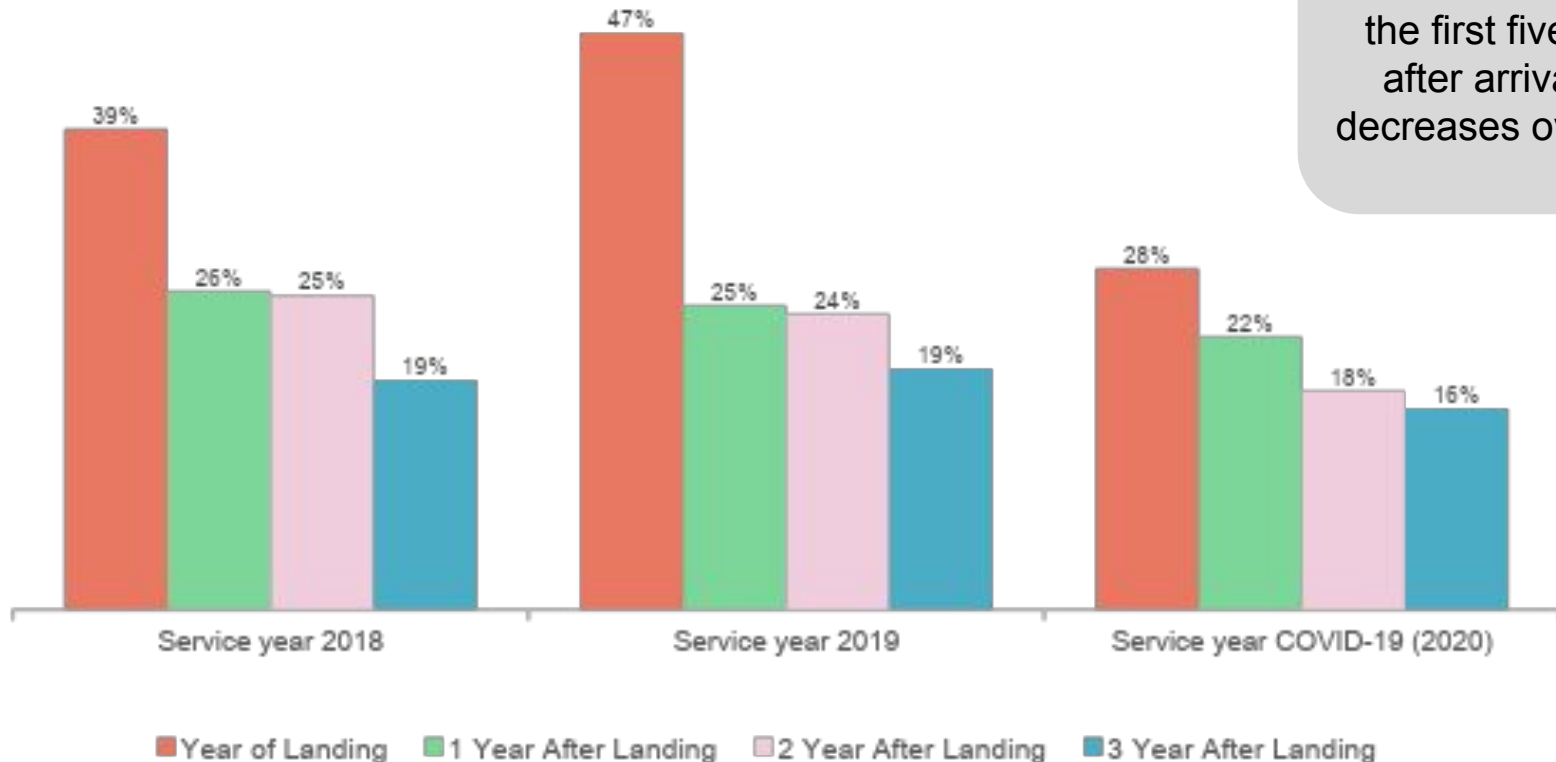
## COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge that saw Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) rise to the occasion

- COVID-19 has been a major disruptor
- SPOs have showcased their innovation and resilience as evidenced by minimal impacts on **service continuity**
- IRCC engaged early with SPOs to support them in this transition by:
  - Flexible **amendments** to help SPOs procure hardware, software and personal protective equipment to continue serving newcomers safely
  - **Reaching out** to stakeholders to hear what they have to say
  - Setting up a dedicated **mailbox for SPO questions**
- The sector has been busy collecting best practices, learning from each other and continuing to adapt to the quickly changing environment

# Service uptake rates for Permanent Residences

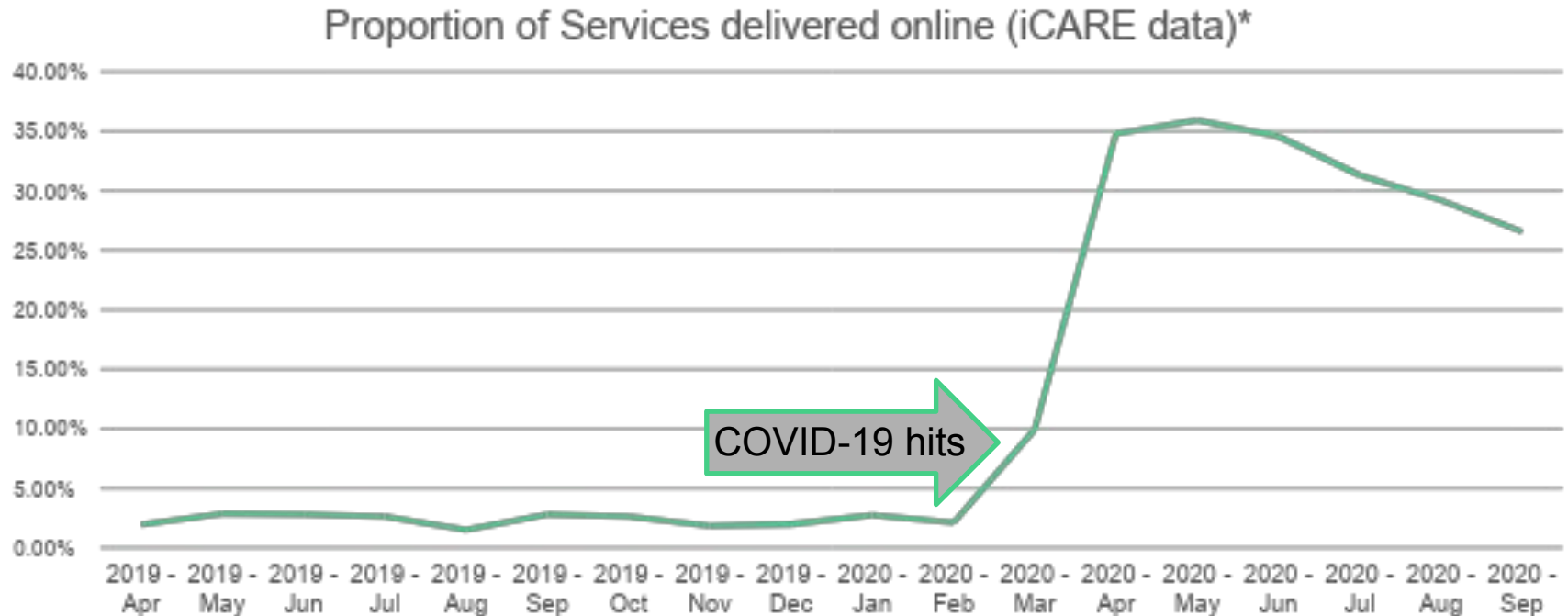
Settlement Service Uptake Comparison (iCARE Data)

Use of settlement services is highest in the first five years after arrival and decreases over time.



While uptake rates were lower for those who landed in 2020, newcomers who arrived before COVID-19 continue to use services close to the **same rate as previously**.

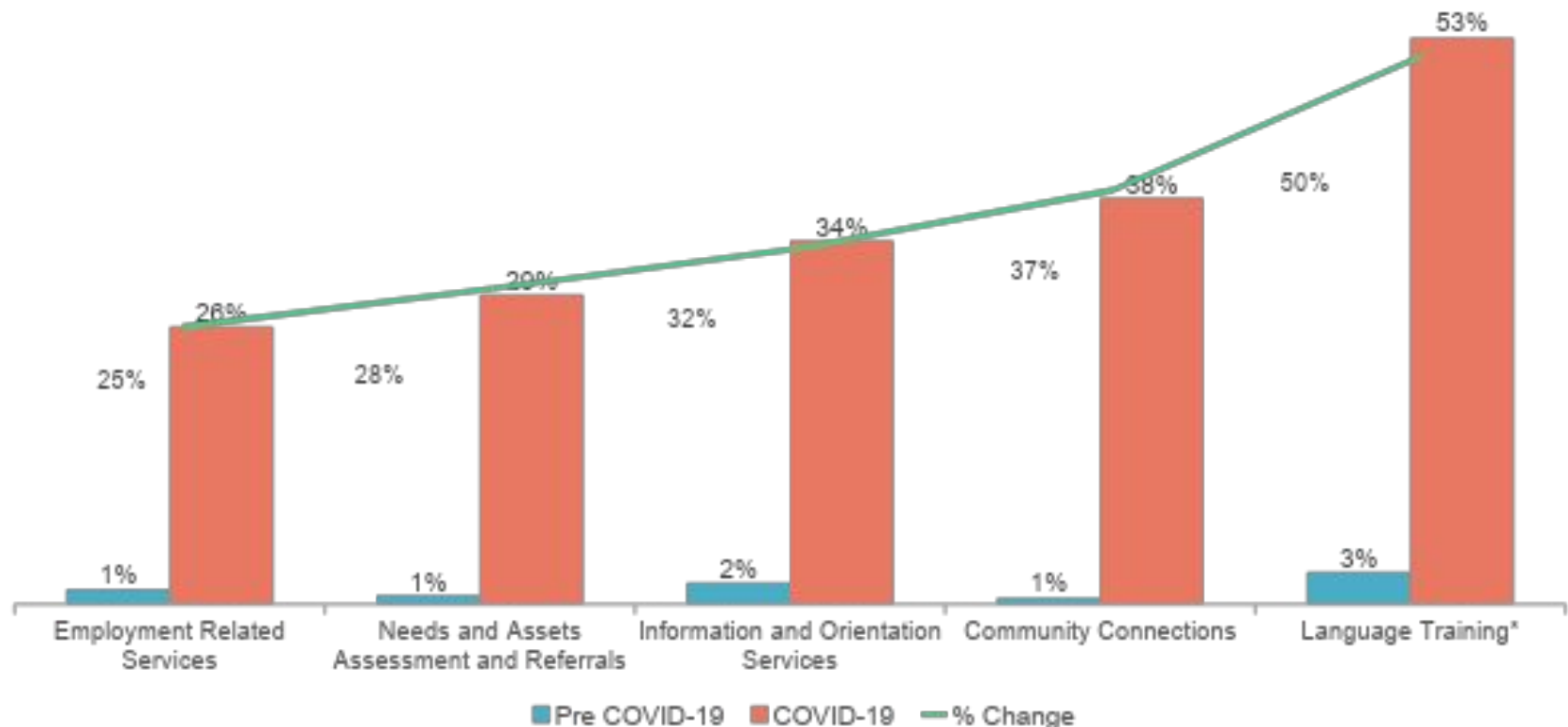
# The pandemic has changed the way settlement services are delivered



In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, SPOs began to provide non-critical services **virtually**.

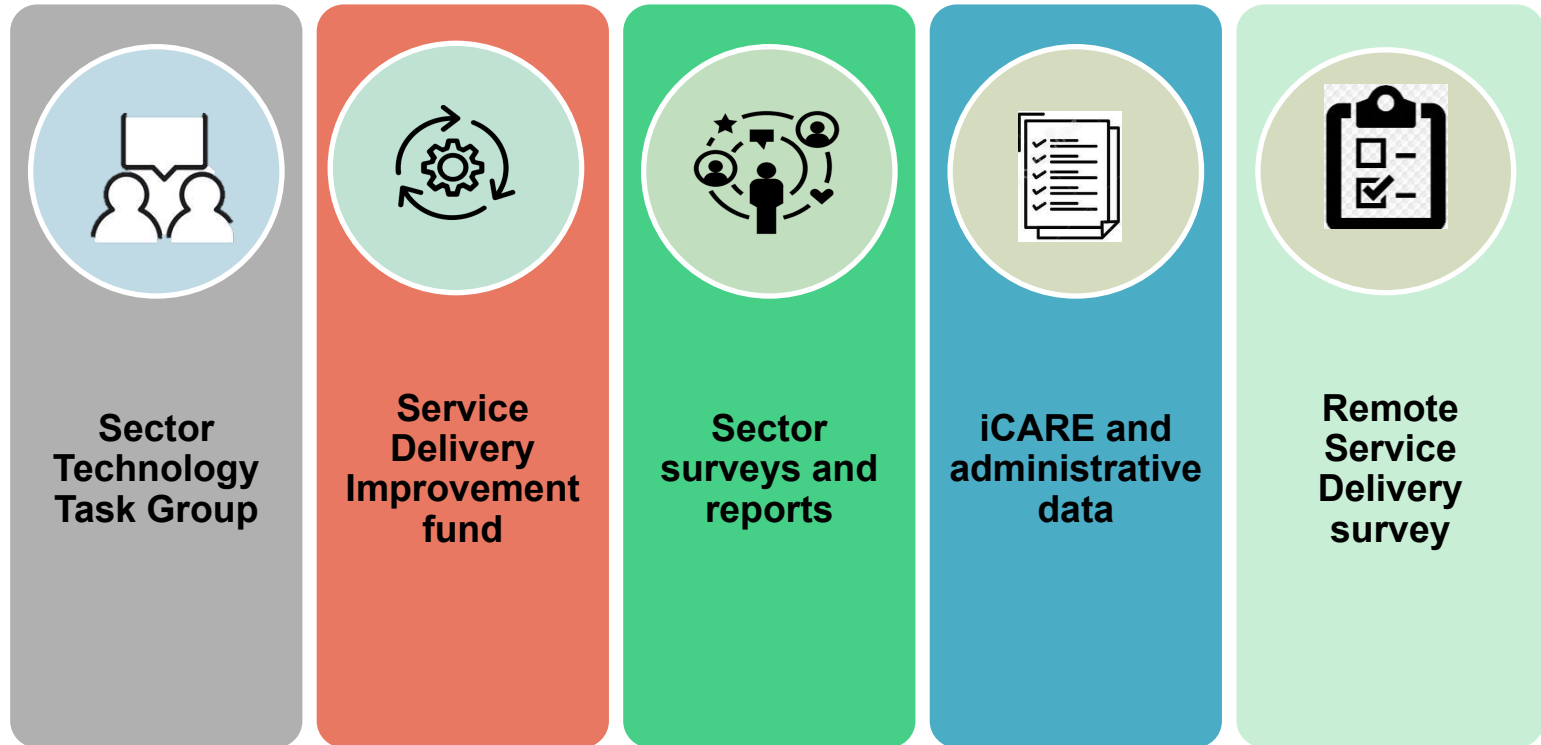
# The shift toward virtual delivery was seen consistently across program components

Proportion of clients receiving online services by component



Some components saw a bigger shift toward online service delivery than others.

# IRCC is building an evidence base on the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery from the following sources:



In fall 2020 IRCC conducted a national **Remote Service Delivery (RSD) survey** to:

- understand the impact of the pivot to virtual service delivery
- better support SPOs in this new context
- **inform future policy and programming**

# Methodology

Questionnaire was developed with feedback from the **Sector Technology Task Group**

- Target audience: all direct settlement service providers
- Survey administered online and separated by contribution agreement
  - Total sample size – 637 CAs
- Survey responses have been linked to administrative data
  - iCARE linkage is possible for further analysis

## Who took the survey?



**Total response rate** **54%**  
(342 CAs)



**Francophone SPOs response rate** **44%**  
(40 CAs)

## Response rate by region\*

Atlantic 43% (21 CAs)

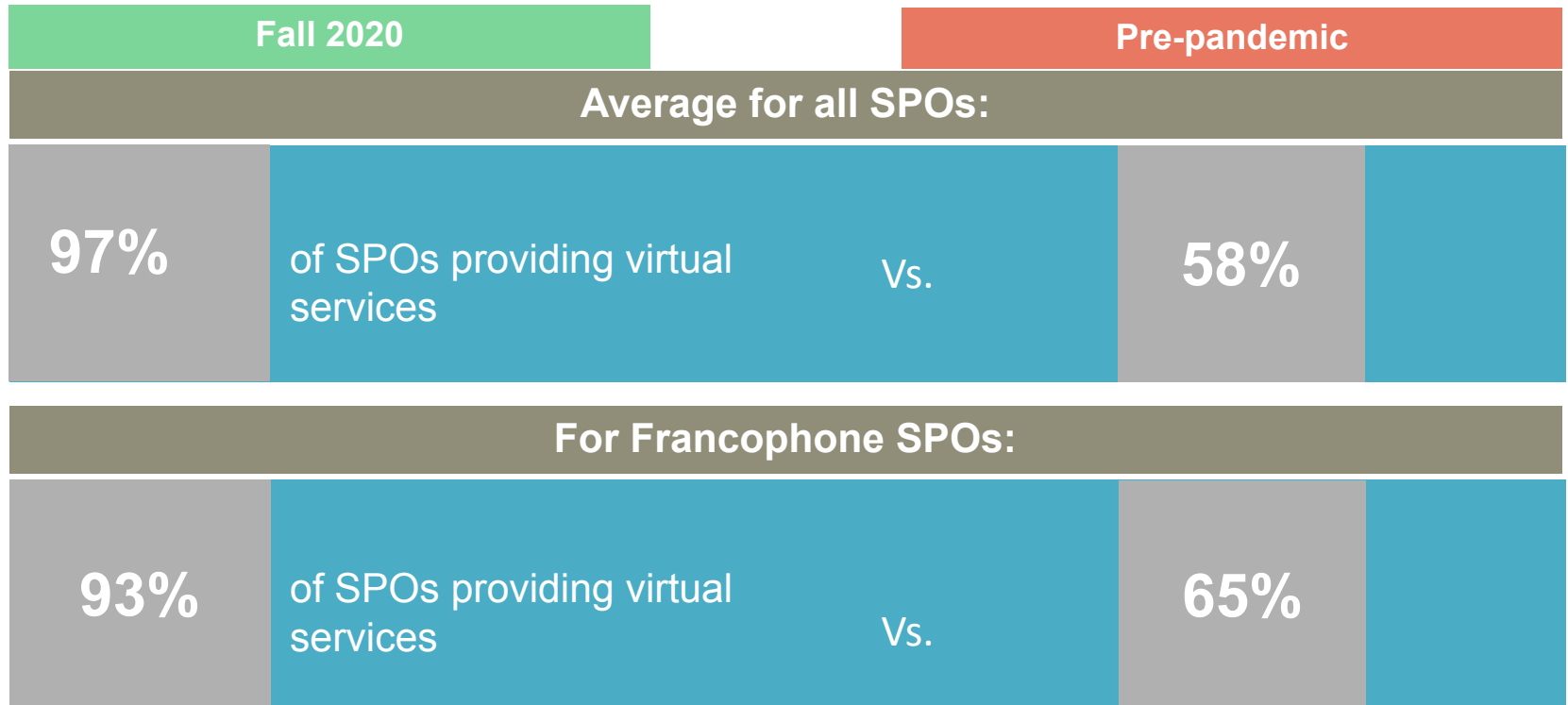
Ontario 54% (151 CAs)

PNT 57% (92 CAs)

BCY 50% (54 CAs)

\*24 CAs had an unspecified region

# The pivot to virtual delivery: very few SPOs are not providing any virtual services

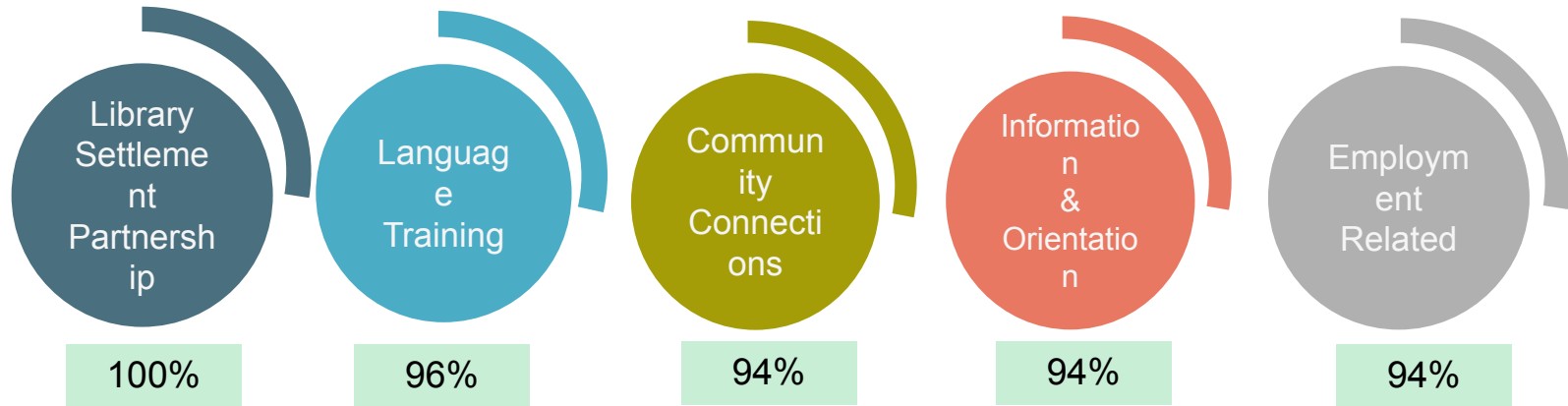


Of the 10 SPOs who were **not** providing virtual services, only 20% of them deemed it 'too difficult', including:

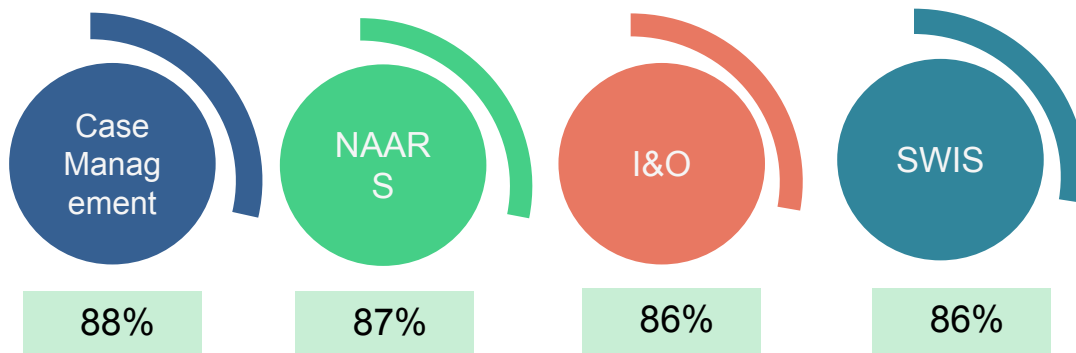
- A SPO serving newcomers with disability
- Clients of Francophone Settlement Workers in Schools program requested in-person services

# High-level results

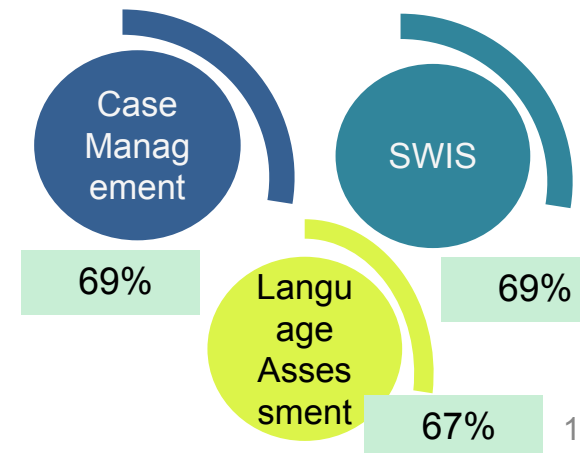
## Top components being delivered by SPOs online:



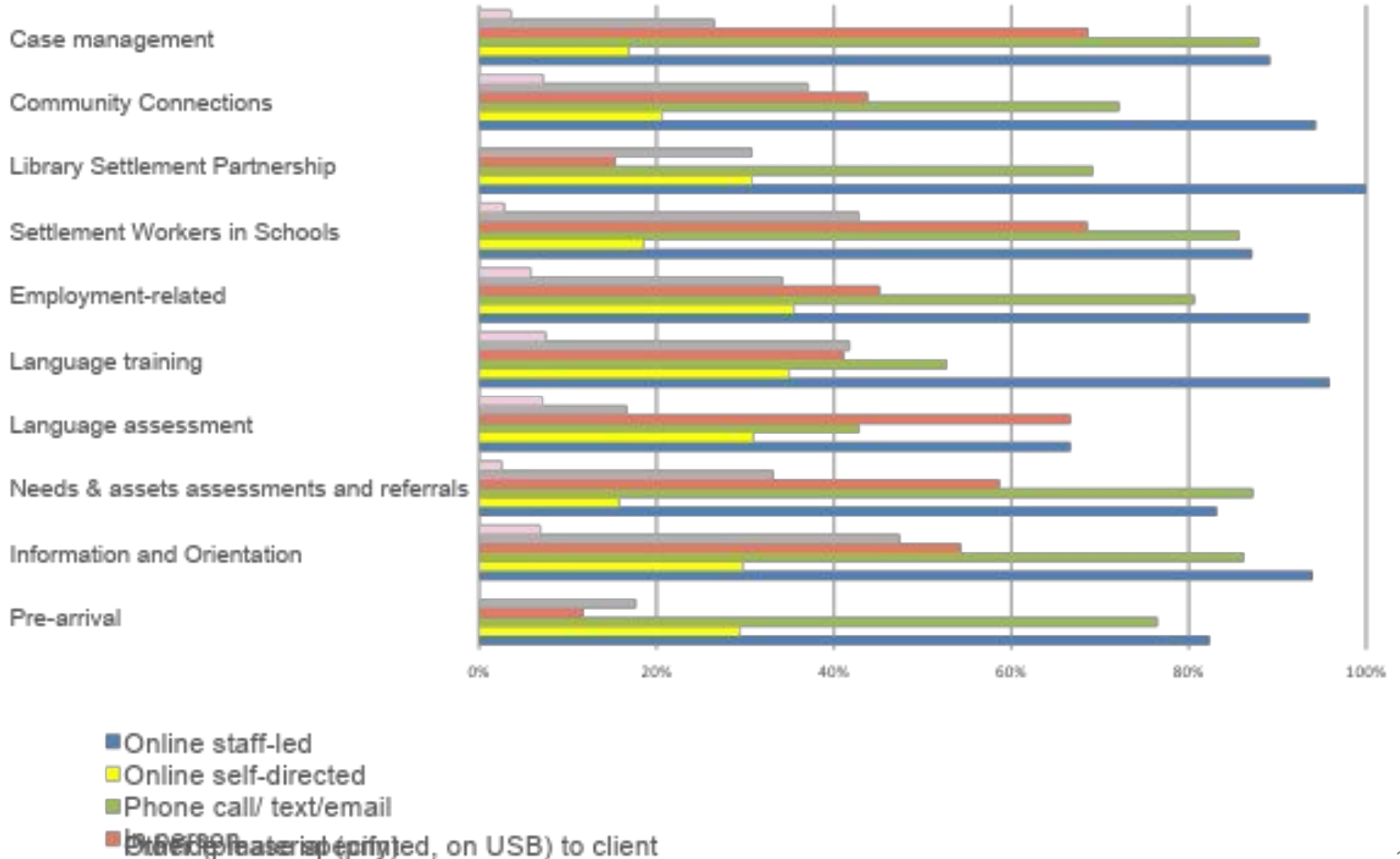
## Top components being delivered via phone/email:



## Top components delivered in-person:

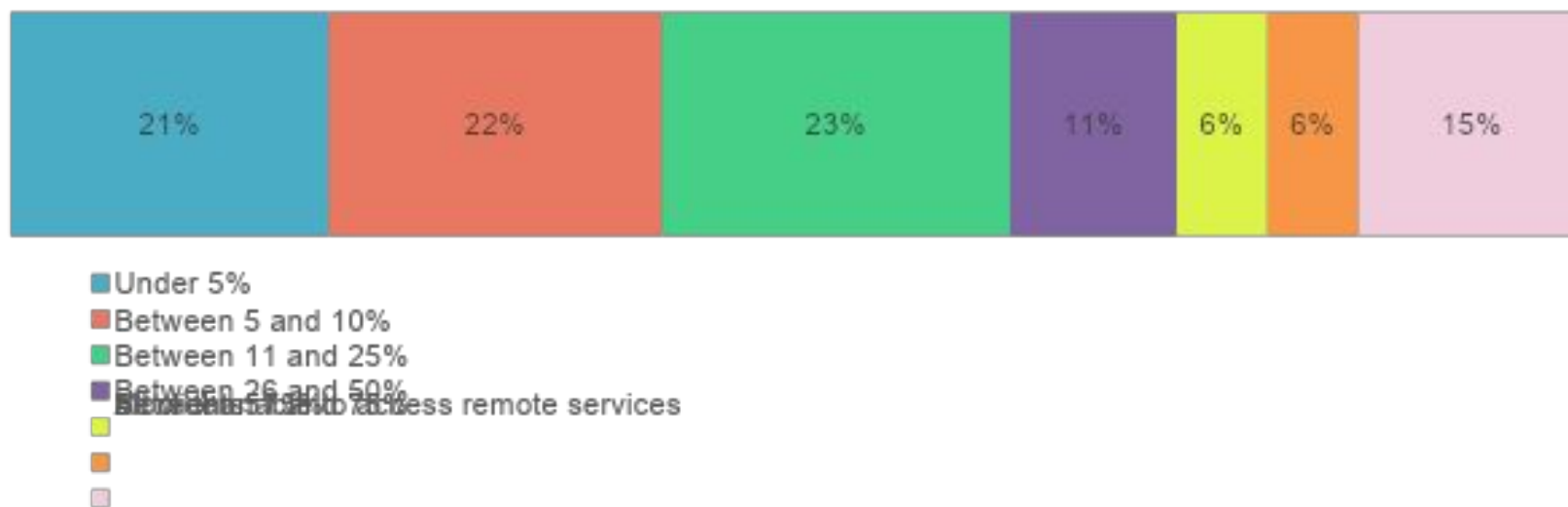


# Most SPOs are delivering most services through a mixed virtual approach



# Most clients are able to access virtual services

When asked, “What percentage of your clients is unable to access virtual services?” ...

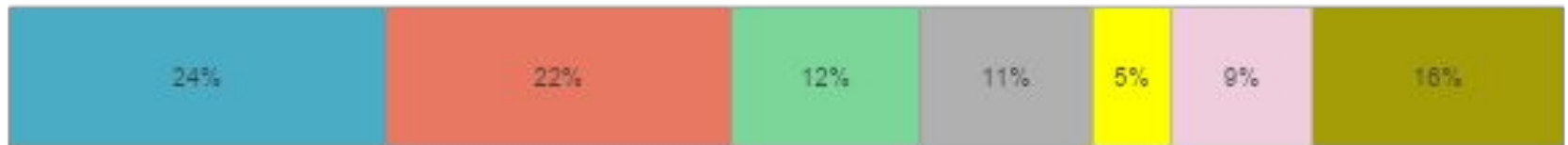


## **Takeaways:**

- For 66% of respondents, the share of their clients unable to access virtual services is under 25%
- For 15% of respondents all of their clients are able to access virtual services

## ...and for some it is easier to access services virtually

When asked, "what client groups (based on immigration categories) have you been able to serve more easily through remote delivery?" ...



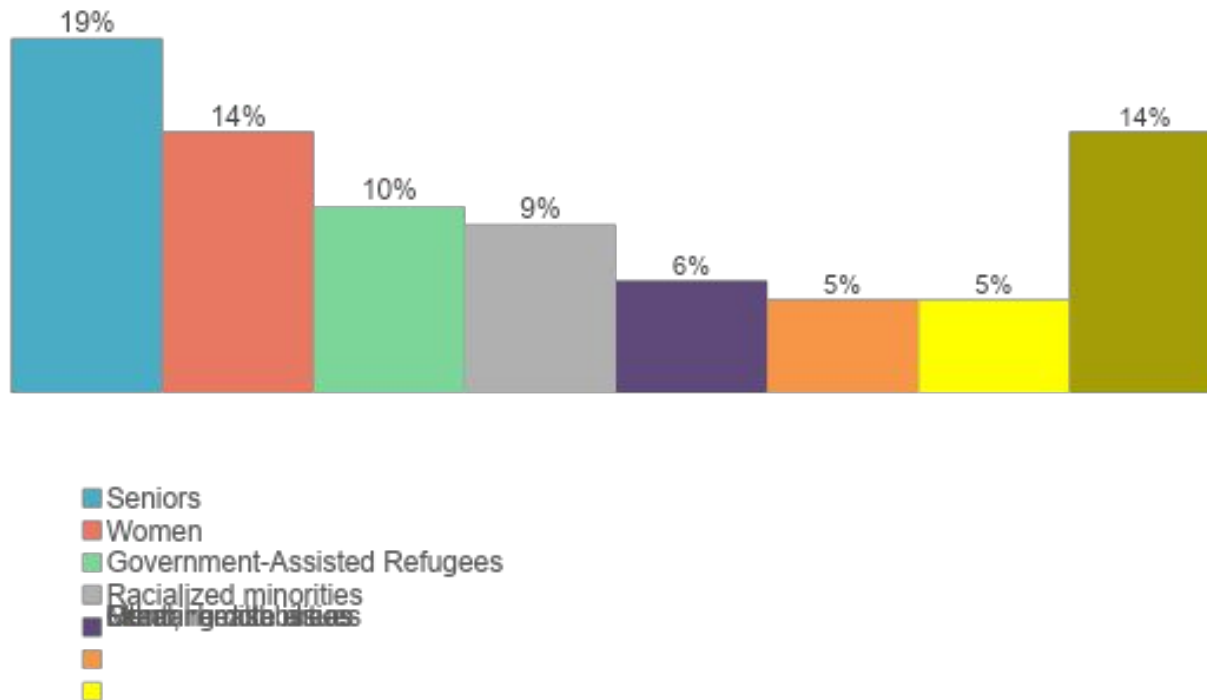
- Economic Principal Applicants
- Economic Spouses/dependants
- Sponsored family
- Refugees
- Basic Health Services
- Other

### Takeaways:

- Digital and official language literacy has allowed Eco PAs and their spouses and dependents to **access virtual services with ease**
- Virtual delivery also brings **advantages for other groups** i.e. refugees, who don't have the obstacles of transportation and childcare

# COVID-19 has exacerbated existing barriers for groups with low official language and/or digital literacy

% of respondents who reported client groups with barriers to virtual services



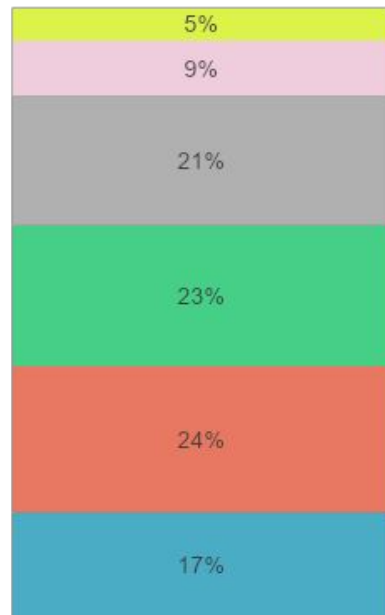
Other client groups with barriers:

- Men (4%)
- Youth (4%)
- Francophones (3%)
- Deaf/hard of hearing (2%)
- Blind/partially sighted (2%)
- LGBTQ+ (1%)
- Physical mobility (1%)

**Takeaway:** Seniors and women with low digital literacy need for appropriate supports and in-person services, including digital skills training.

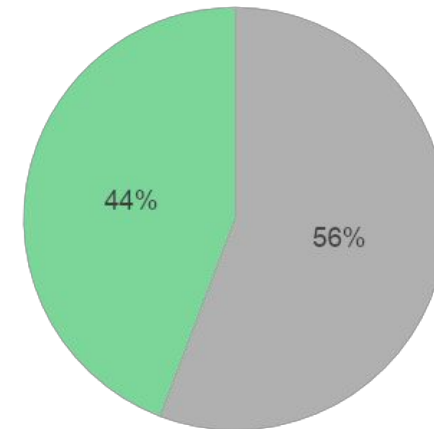
# What iCARE tells us: putting the survey results into perspective...

Proportion of clients by Immigration Category in 2019-20



- Economic Principal Applicant
- Economic Spouses/dependants
- Sponsored Family
- Resettled Refugee
- Protected Person
- All Other Immigration

Services usage by Gender in 2019-20



- Female
- Male

**Takeaway:** *Although access is easier for some client groups, large proportions of the Settlement Program's clients are facing existing or new barriers.*

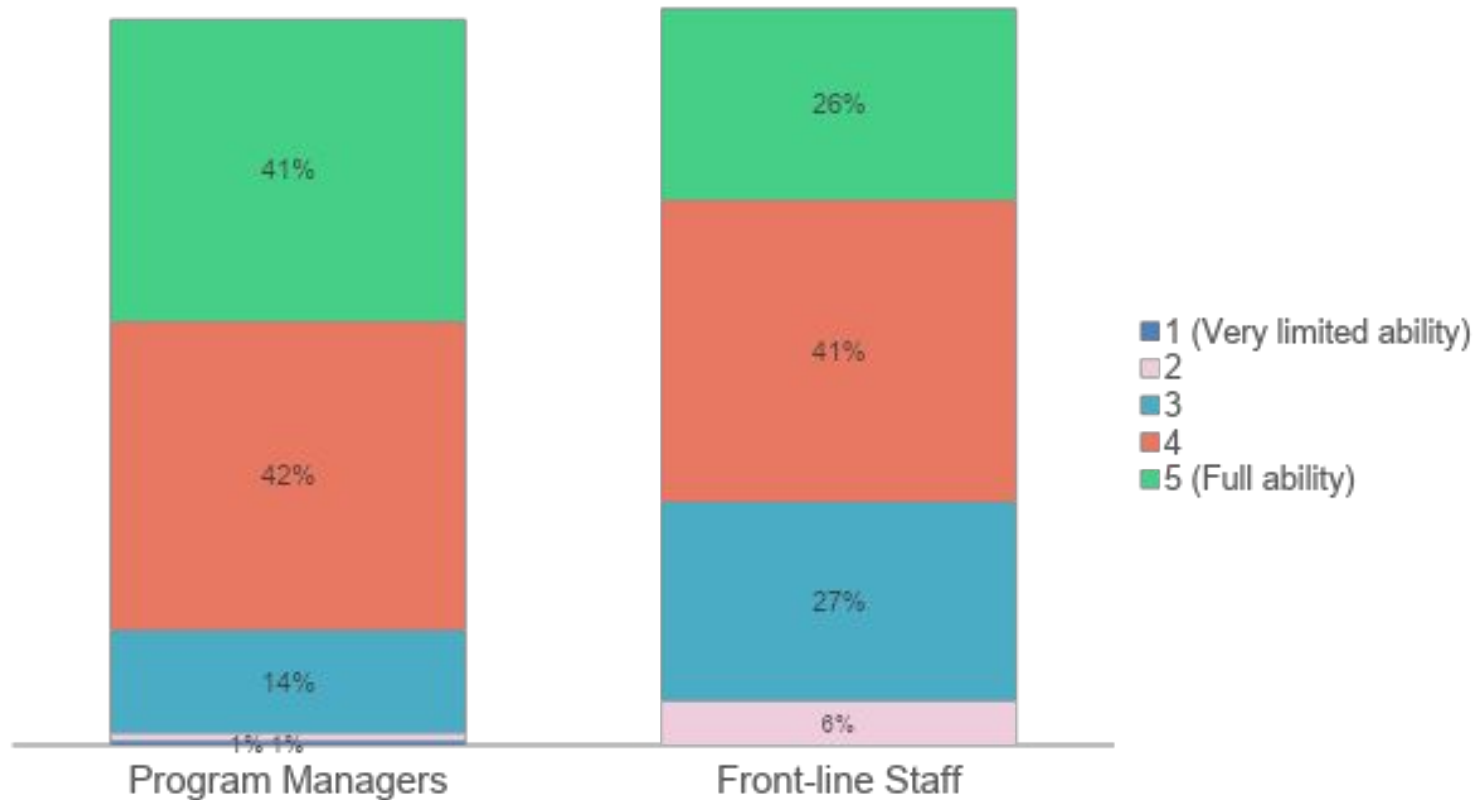
# Service usage by Age of clients

Service usage by Age (2019-20)



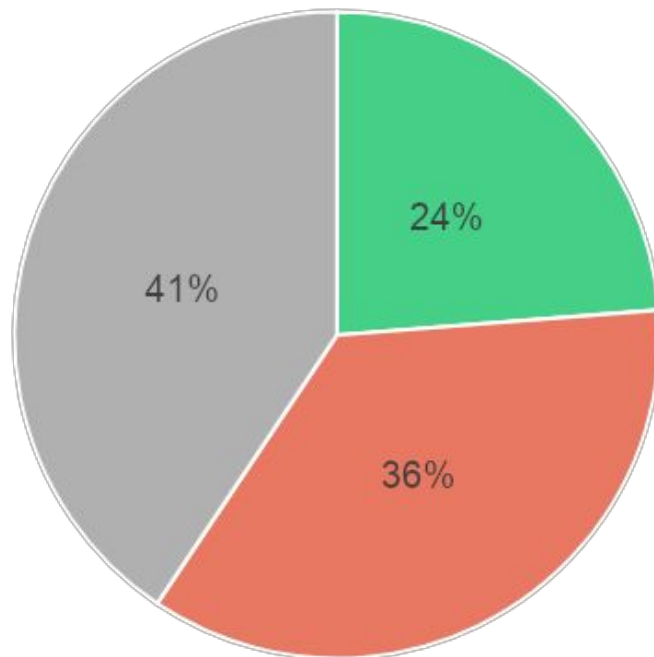
**Takeaway:** More work needs to be done to better understand how populations facing barriers may overlap (i.e. senior women).

## Digital literacy overall of SPO staff is high, but support needed for front-line staff



**Takeaway:** While some SPOs provided training to staff at the start of the pandemic, **75% feel their staff need more professional development to effectively serve clients virtually.**

## More than half of SPOs have established partnerships during the pandemic to better serve newcomers



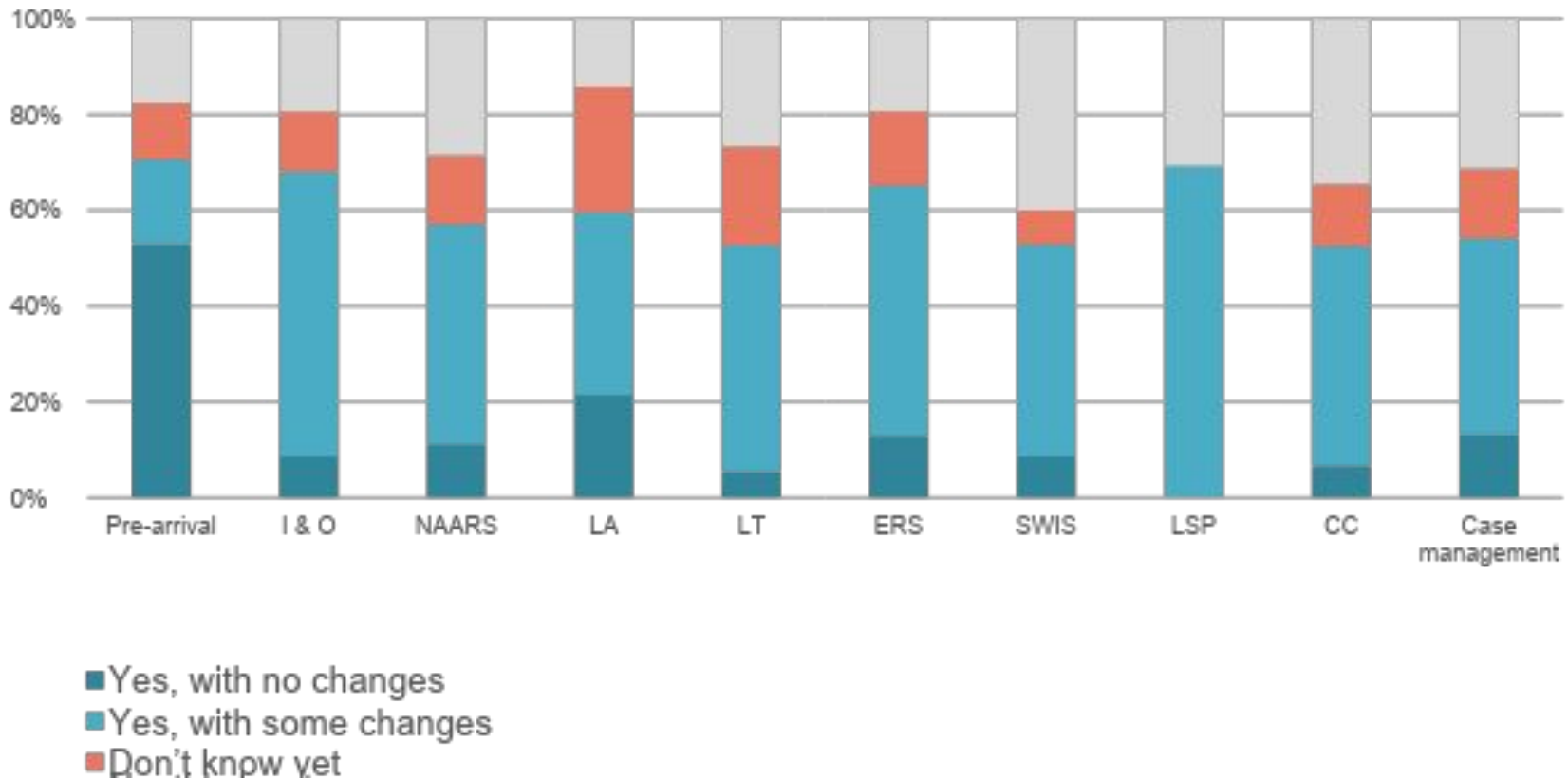
- Some formal partnerships
- Some informal partnerships
- None

### Examples:

- Food banks
- Local/provincial health care hubs
- Mental health providers
- Orgs providing interpretation
- Orgs offering refurbished technology e.g. laptops
- Workplace health/safety inspection agencies
- Libraries

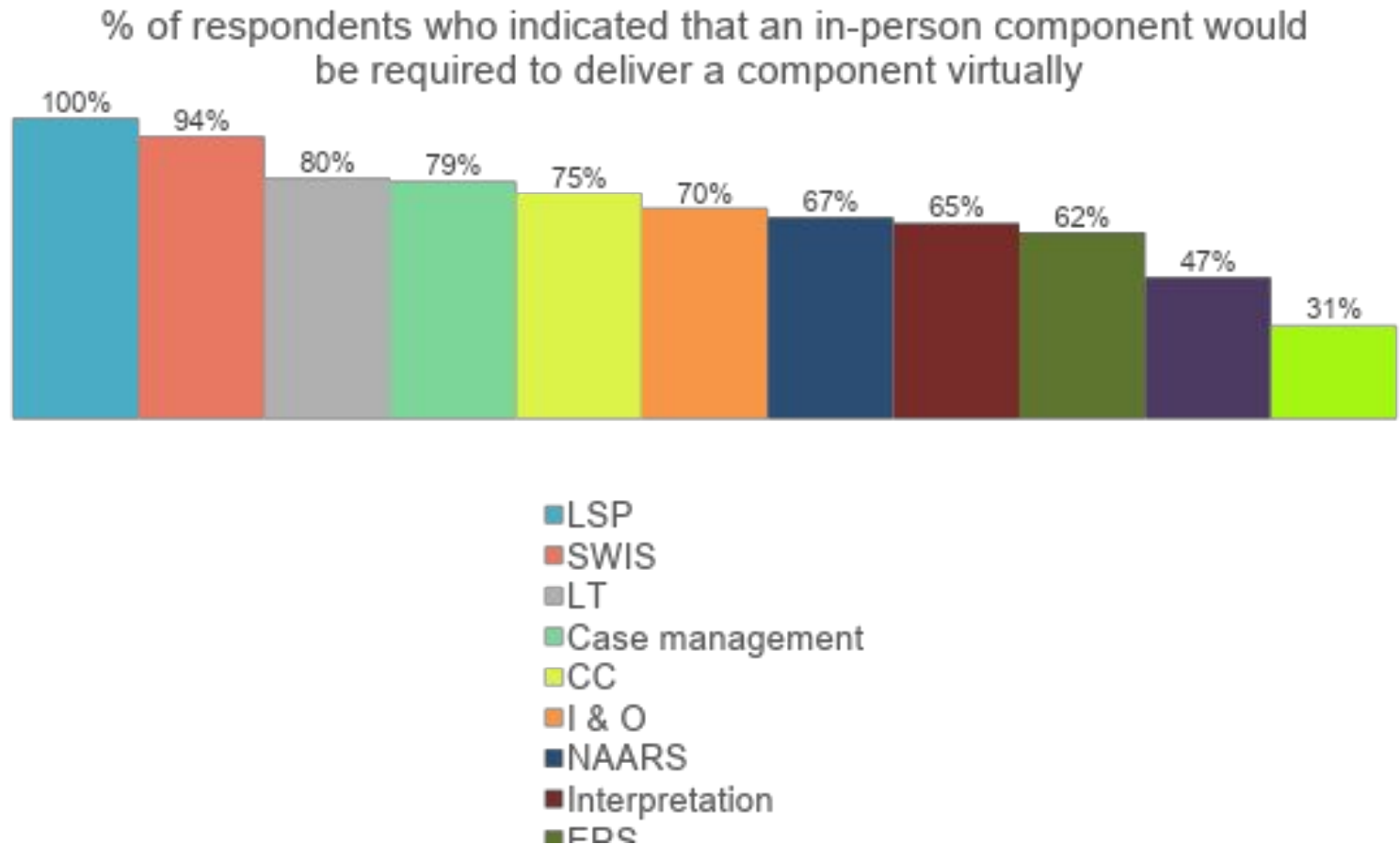
New opportunities to partner/ offer workshops to newcomers, which were once only available in-person.

# SPOs want to continue delivering some services virtually...



**Takeaway:** SPOs see an important role for virtual delivery post-pandemic for certain program components i.e. Library Settlement Partnership, Information & Orientation, Employment Related and Pre-arrival\* services.

# ...however future virtual delivery will need in-person components.



## **Takeaway:**

- *For some settlement services virtual delivery is an interim measure;*
- *For most settlement services an in-person complement will be required.*

## How does IRCC leverage survey results to continue to support the settlement sector?

### Further analysis is necessary:

- Linking survey results with **iCARE** service uptake by client groups etc.
- Comparing survey findings with the Sector Tehcnology Task Group's final report and ensuring alignment with recommendations on how to best support the sector in the new virtual environment
- Impact of virtual delivery on **client outcomes** is not known, new SDI projects could help advance this thinking

### *Please tell us ....*

- *How are new developments in the pandemic (i.e. vaccine rollout) impacting how your organization thinks about future service delivery?*
- *What other learnings, specifically with regards to vulnerable populations, need particular attention?*
- *Is there a need to engage with SPOs through another survey?*

**Thank you for your time.**

**Further questions or  
comments?**

Reach out to us at:

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