Ruthless Research

Final report:

Current use of equalities, diversity and inclusion data in the youth theatre sector

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Submitted by:
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About Ruthless Research

Ruthless Research is an Edinburgh-based independent research consultancy, through which Ruth Stevenson provides a range of qualitative and quantitative research solutions to organisations who work for the benefit of the community.

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Background and context

Background

YTAS believes that every young person in Scotland should be able to enjoy a quality youth theatre experience and should not encounter barriers to access, and to enable that it can be useful to understand who the sector is already reaching.

YTAS therefore wanted to understand more about the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) characteristics of the young people participating in youth theatre in Scotland to help them to better support and develop the sector, and to provide a sector-wide overview to funders and partners such as Creative Scotland.

Methodology

Independent researcher Ruth Stevenson of Ruthless Research was commissioned to undertake this piece of work.

As part of a wider sector survey, questions were asked to gauge the type and range of demographic information (if any) collected by the youth theatre sector in Scotland during the last financial year (April 2019 to March 2020).

This survey was conducted online by representatives of youth theatres in Scotland, and the second half of the survey comprised this section on equalities, diversity and inclusion. The survey was online between 8th September and 6th October 2020.

In total, this section of the survey received responses from 78 separate youth theatres.

The survey asked the following about each of several pre-determined characteristics of interest:

- In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to [characteristic]? [yes/no/don't know]

IF YES…
- What methods do you use to gather information about [characteristic]? What do you ask, and how do you ask it? [free text]
- If your organisation is able to share any [characteristic] statistics about your participants as a group for the last financial year (Apr 2019 to Mar 20), please provide this in the box below. [free text]
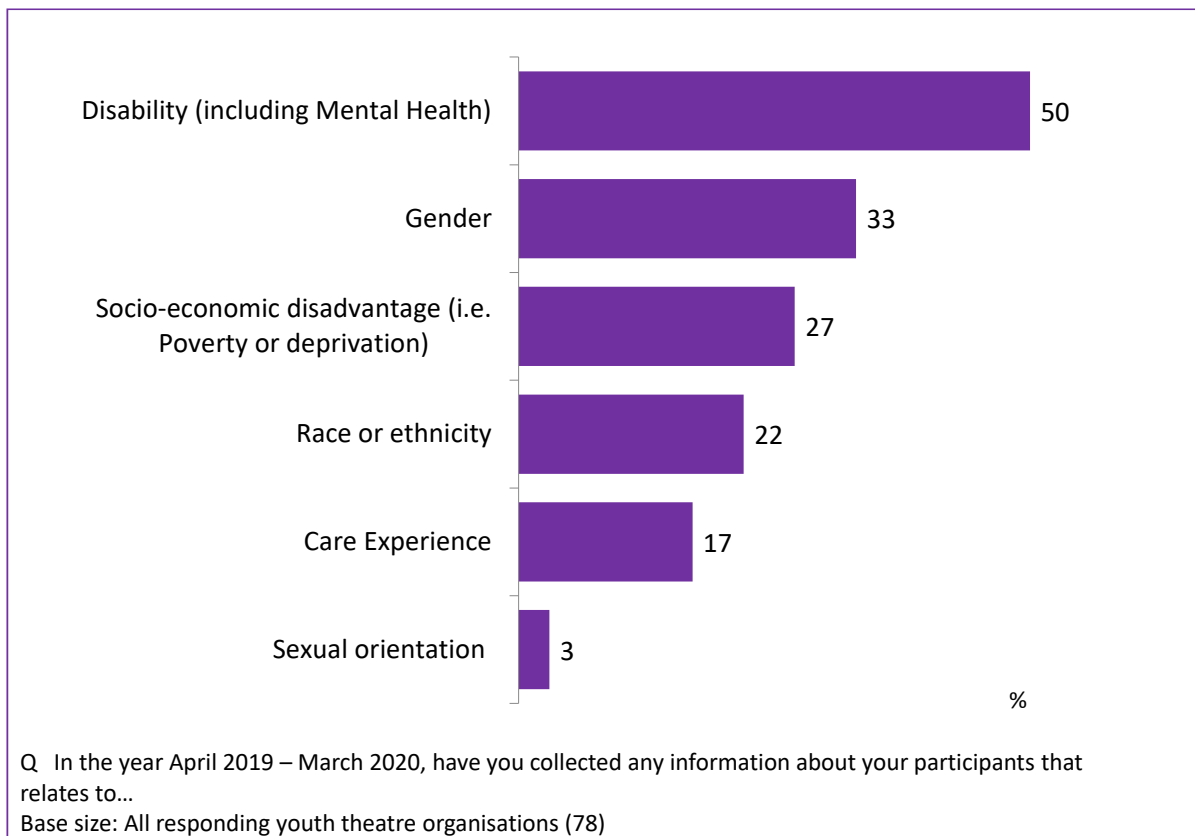
Throughout this report the 'free text' answers have been coded up into recurring themes to give an indication of the content and breadth of response. This information should be considered indicative rather than absolute, as all respondents did not provide the same depth of information.

The findings are summarised in the following report.

Summary of findings

Overview of EDI data collected

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about various characteristics of their participants, in the past financial year.

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

For each of these characteristics, at least half of the youth theatres <u>did not</u> collect any data.

Data collection was highest for disability (including mental health) for which half (50%) of the youth theatres collected information. The next highest level of data collection was for gender, where a third (33%) of the youth theatres collected information.

By far the lowest level of data collection was for sexual orientation, where 3% of youth theatres collected information.

Patterns in data collection for each of these characteristics is discussed in more detail in the following section of the report.

Collection of data about disability (including mental health)

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to disability (including mental health) in the past financial year.

<u>**Disability (including Mental Health)**</u>

→ 50% of youth theatres collected this data

| ■ Yes | ■ No | □ Don't Know / No response |

| 50 | 46 | 4 |

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 50% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about disability (including mental health) in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (50)	%
Participant registration form	66
Via supportive conversation	6
Feedback survey	4
Meeting with parents	4
Info held on file that is regularly updated	2
Referral information	2

The youth theatres most often collected data about disability (including mental health) through participant registration forms (66%).

In practice these forms generally used either tick boxes or open-ended questions to collect this data, and the provider of this information might be the participant or parent or another supportive adult.

Having been asked to tell us about 'disability (including mental health)', the youth theatres broadly defined this to include various aspects of health and wellbeing.

The youth theatres told us that in the past financial year they had asked for information about the following aspects of health and wellbeing:
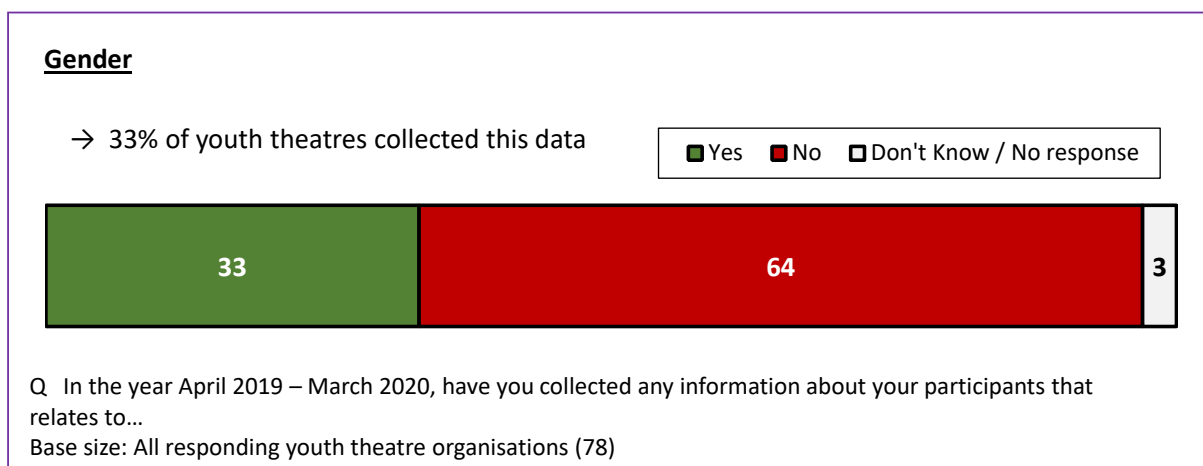
Base: Those that collect this information (50)	%
Access or support needs	32
Health or medical conditions	30
Disability	18
Mental health	12
Allergies	8
Learning difficulties	6

Many of the youth theatres framed their questions about health and wellbeing around providing bespoke support, as one youth theatre illustrates:

"As part of the application form to be a member of the club (and therefore participate in its activities). We ask a question around if the participant has any medical conditions (including allergies etc.) or other information that we may need to be aware of so that what they are expected to do during a rehearsal or performance is suited to their needs, with adaptations as necessary."

Collection of data about gender

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to gender in the past financial year.

Gender

→ 33% of youth theatres collected this data

Yes ■ No □ Don't Know / No response

33	64	3

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 33% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about gender in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (26)	%
Participant registration form	81
Via supportive conversation	23
Feedback survey	4
Specific mention of preferred pronouns	23

The youth theatres most often collected data about gender through participant registration forms (81%) and this was typically asked using a tick box format. Again, the provider of this information varied, including the participant or parent or another supportive adult.

Some of the youth theatres provided information about the wording of the questions that they had used relating to gender:

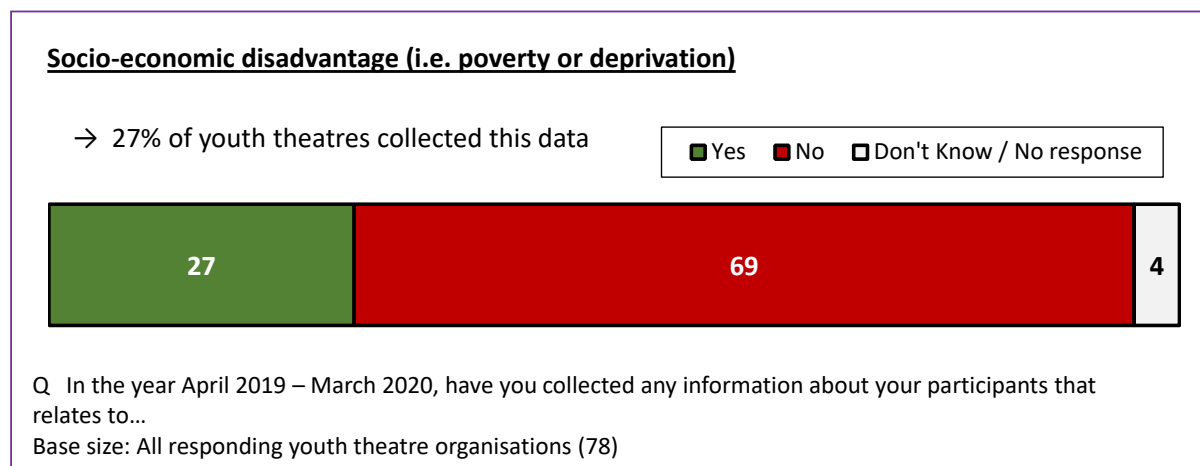| Base: Those that collect this information (26)	%
Male or female	9
Other or non-binary option	21
Write gender in own words	9
Ask for preferred pronouns	23

Around one in ten (9%) of the youth theatres told us that they asked whether participants are male or female. Other youth theatres used a broader definition of gender, with 21% providing an option to select 'other' or 'non-binary' genders, and 9% leaving a blank space where gender could be self-defined.

Around a quarter (23%) of the youth theatres mentioned that they ask participants to share their preferred pronouns either on their forms or during sessions, as one youth theatre illustrates:

> *"We have invited members to share their preferred pronouns, often in group situations at the outset of a session - particularly at the beginning of a term - responses are noted on our registers."*

Collection of data about socio economic disadvantage

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to socio economic disadvantage in the past financial year.

Socio-economic disadvantage (i.e. poverty or deprivation)

→ 27% of youth theatres collected this data   ■ Yes ■ No □ Don't Know / No response

27	69	4

Q   In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 27% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about socio economic disadvantage in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (21)	%
As part of a bursary process	52
Participant registration form	14
Feedback survey	10
Referral information	10

The youth theatres most often collected data about socio economic disadvantage as part of a bursary process (52%) or through participant registration forms (14%), for example:

> *"We have a concession payment option. We also have a bursary scheme. We have stats on how many people accessed those payment options."*

The following information was collected about socio economic disadvantage:

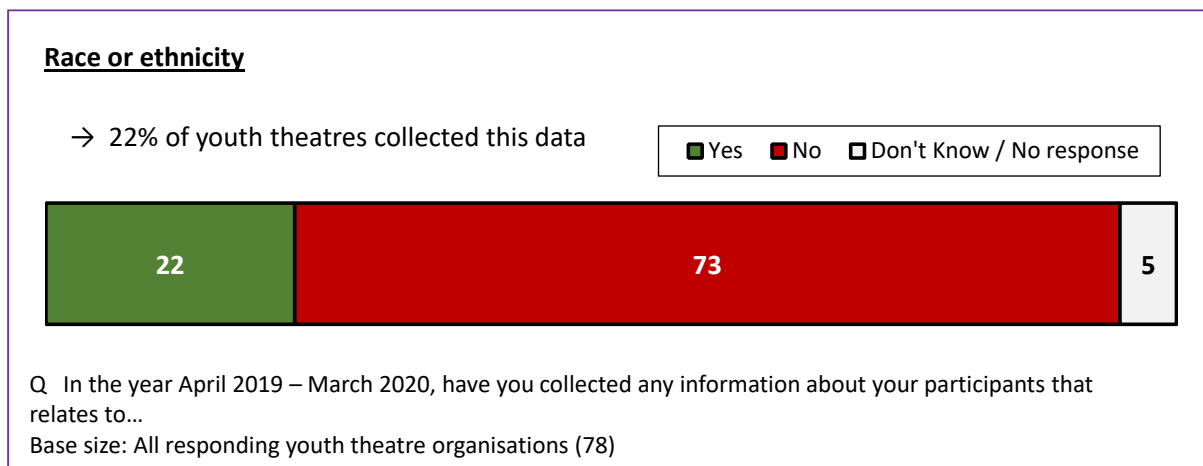| Base: Those that collect this information (21)	%
Stats about grants or bursaries provided	52
Postcodes	48
SIMD analysis	19
Information relating to household income	14
Eligibility for free school meals	5

Several youth theatres noted that they do not ask for any 'proof' of socio-economic disadvantage, for example:

> *"In terms of what we ask - we don't ask anything. We don't believe you should have to prove you are disadvantaged to take part."*

> *"If a participant would like a bursary all they need to do is email and request this. We don't ask for any more details, just a quick email about why this would be helpful for them."*

Collection of data about race or ethnicity

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to race or ethnicity in the past financial year.

Race or ethnicity

→ 22% of youth theatres collected this data

| Yes | No | Don't Know / No response |

| 22 | 73 | 5 |

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 22% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about race or ethnicity in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (17)	%
Participant registration form	53
Equal opportunities form	12
Feedback survey	12
Referral information	6
Casting form	6
Project evaluation	6
Via supportive conversation	6

The youth theatres most often collected data about race or ethnicity through participant registration forms (53%), or otherwise a range of approaches used in one or two settings.

This was the only section where use of an 'Equal Opportunities form' was mentioned by any youth theatres.

Where specified, wording and approach to collecting data about race or ethnicity varied substantially:

> *"It's a local authority stat collecting form which asks how individuals describe their own ethnicity."*
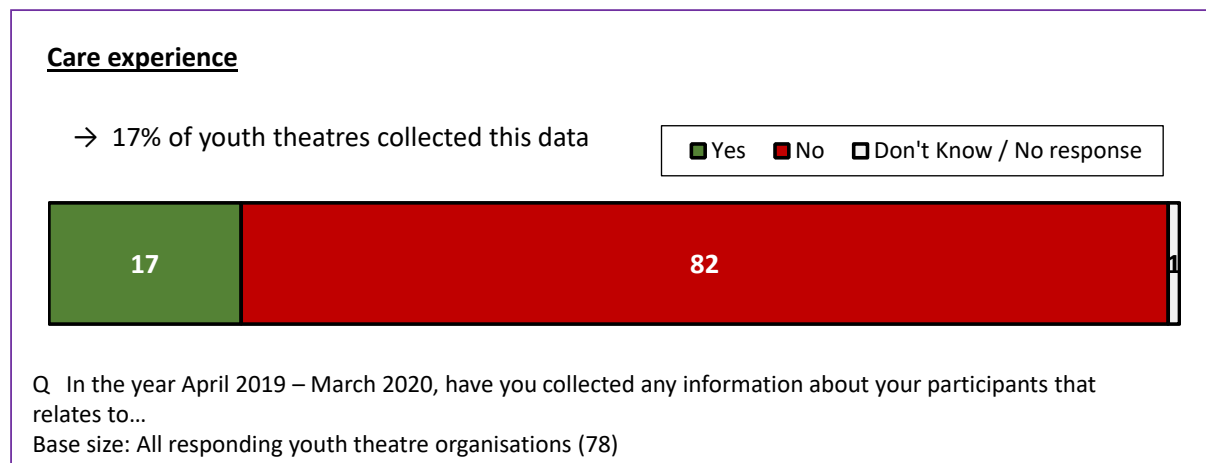
> *"We list the following options and ask participants to select an option: Mixed: White & Black Caribbean; White& Black African; White & Asian; Any Other. White: British; Irish; Polish; Any other. Asian or Asian British: Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other. Back or Black British; Caribbean; African; Any Other."*

> *"We ask students if they identify as BAME."*

> *"We were having discussion about renaming some of the ethnicity boxes to be more inclusive and we had a discussion around the use of "BAME" no longer been appropriate."*

Collection of data about care experience

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to care experience in the past financial year.

Care experience

→ 17% of youth theatres collected this data

■ Yes ■ No □ Don't Know / No response

| 17 | 82 | 1 |

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 17% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about care experience in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (13)	%
Referral information	54
Participant registration form	31
Feedback survey	8
Online suggestion box	8
Via supportive conversation	8

The youth theatres most often collected data about care experience through referral information (54%) or participant registration forms (31%).

Partner organisations played a key role in this process:

"The care organisation has been in touch with us and we discuss circumstances that we should be made aware of and collect the correct contact information."

"We work closely with the Transitions team who support those students from care experienced backgrounds."
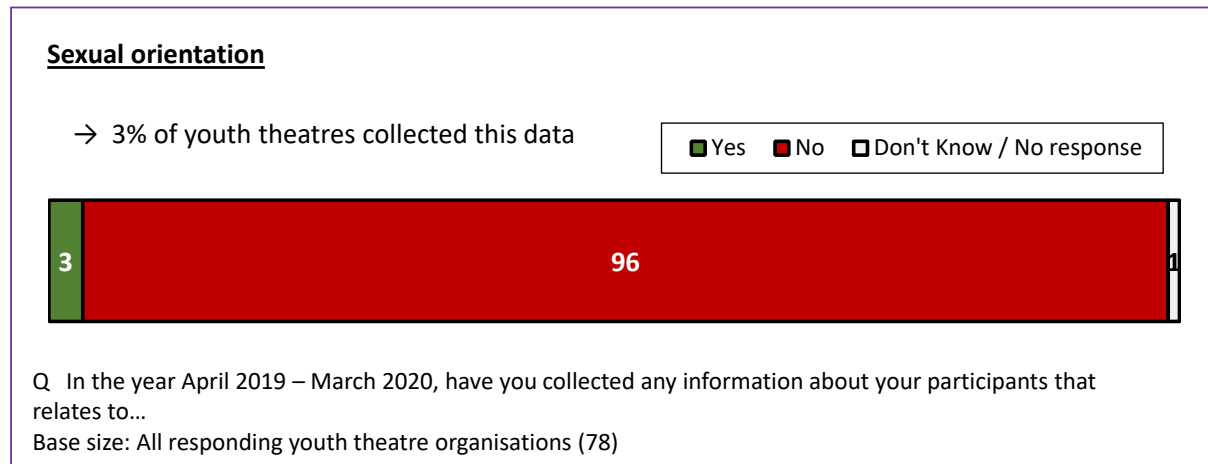
"Referrals from social work/units."

Where participant registration forms were used, specific wording and approach to collecting information about care experience varied:

"Question: 'Other background information for example experience as a looked after child?'"

"We have a tick box on our membership form to see whether someone is care experienced or not."

Collection of data about sexual orientation

The youth theatres were asked to tell us whether or not they had collected any information about their participants relating to sexual orientation in the past financial year.

Sexual orientation

→ 3% of youth theatres collected this data

■ Yes ■ No □ Don't Know / No response

| 3 | 96 | 1 |

Q In the year April 2019 – March 2020, have you collected any information about your participants that relates to…
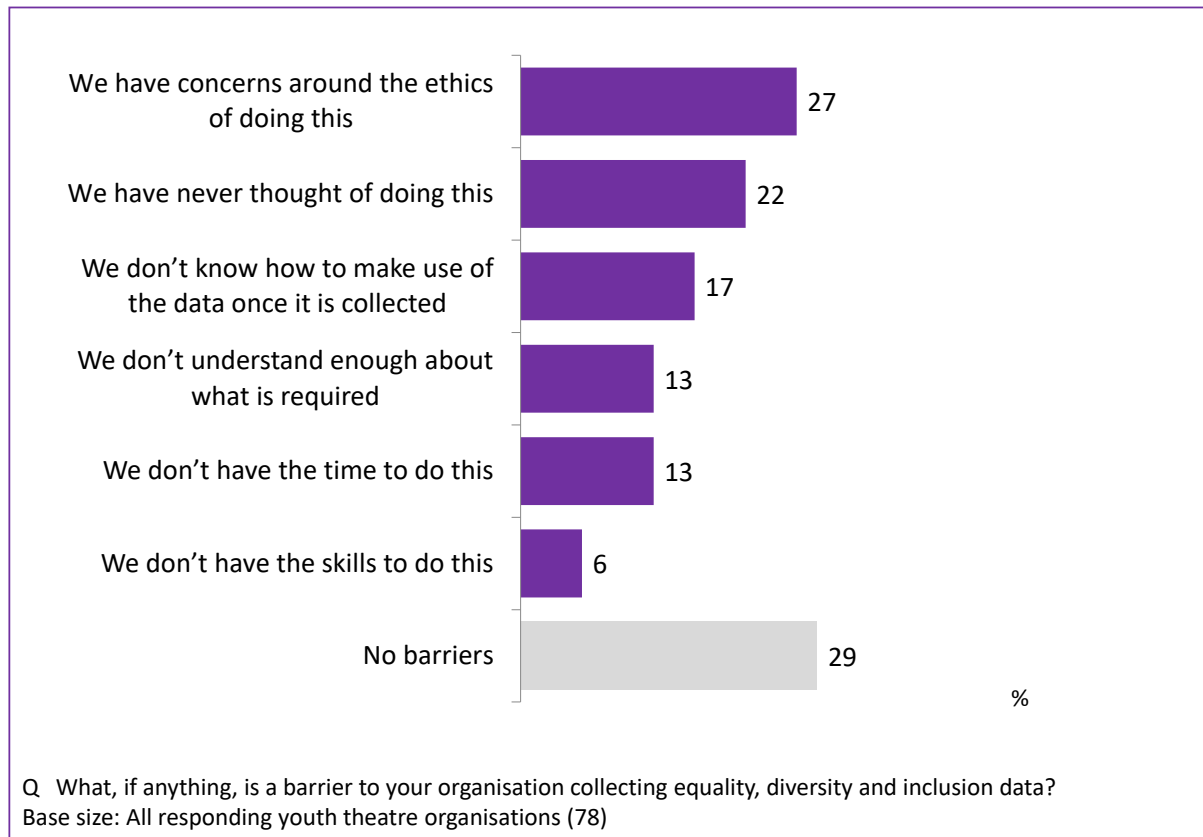Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

In total, 3% of the youth theatres said that they had collected information about sexual orientation in the past financial year.

Those that had collected this data used the following methods to gather the information:

Base: Those that collect this information (2)	%
Participant registration form	50
Feedback survey	50
Via supportive conversation	50

Barriers to collecting EDI data

The youth theatres were asked to tell us what, if anything, is a barrier to their organisation collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data.

We have concerns around the ethics of doing this — 27

We have never thought of doing this — 22

We don't know how to make use of the data once it is collected — 17

We don't understand enough about what is required — 13

We don't have the time to do this — 13

We don't have the skills to do this — 6

No barriers — 29

%

Q What, if anything, is a barrier to your organisation collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data?
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)

Around seven in ten (71%) of the youth theatres said that they experienced barriers when collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data.

The barriers were most often ethical concerns (27%) or that they had never thought of collecting this data (22%). Several of the youth theatres expanded on their answers, largely in relation to confidentiality:

> *"I would have no problem doing it if I had the time to survey the group privately. There's no privacy and it's far from ideal."*

> *"Most of our members see themselves as marginalised in one way or another and each is unique. We do not breach their trust and requests for confidentiality."*

> *"Parents are reluctant to answer certain questions."*

> *"It's none of our damn business."*

This also highlighted a learning need amongst some of the youth theatres, as 17% said that they did not know what to do with this type of data, 13% did not understand what was required to undertake this task, and 6% did not have the skills to undertake this task.

Usage of EDI data

In total around two thirds (65%) of the youth theatres said that they collect some sort of equality, diversity and inclusion data.

The youth theatres were asked to tell us what, if anything, they do with their equality, diversity and inclusion data.

Q   What, if anything, do you do with your equality, diversity and inclusion data?
Base size: All responding youth theatre organisations that collect data (51)

Of those youth theatres that collect EDI data, more than half have used this to understand participants (59%), to report to funders (57%) or to identify gaps in provision (53%).

Around a third (35%) of the youth theatres have used the information to inform strategic planning.

Other uses for equality, diversity and inclusion data were:

- Casting breakdowns
- Case studies
- Identifying access needs

One in ten (10%) youth theatres of the youth theatres that collect equality, diversity and inclusion data told us that they do not do anything with it.

How YTAS could help

The youth theatres were asked whether there was anything YTAS could do to support them in collecting or learning from this type of equality, diversity and inclusion information, and their 'free text' answers have been coded up into recurring themes.

The youth theatres told us that they would like YTAS to provide support in the following ways:

Base: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)	%
Training	15
Resources (e.g. templates, good practice examples)	13
Support and advice	4
Networking and discussions	3
Signposting to external expertise	1

Training (15%) and resources (13%) were most often mentioned as ways that YTAS could provide support around equality, diversity and inclusion data.

The youth theatres told us that they could benefit from support around the following topics:

Base: All responding youth theatre organisations (78)	%
Data collection methodologies	13
Use of collected data	9
The importance of collecting this data	8
How this data can help individual organisations	5
Current EDI terminology	5
Ethical concerns	5
Best practice	4
Encouraging response	4
Advice around specific characteristics	3
Frequency of collection	1
Data protection	1

The topics most often mentioned as requiring support were methodologies for collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data (13%), followed by ways of using data that had been collected (9%). For example:

> *"It would be great to see examples of best practice in collecting and collating this data"*

> *"I would love some training or conversations about how others in the sector and in other industries are using data for strategic planning and for fundraising."*

Several youth theatres also felt they could benefit from guidance around why undertaking this process could be important (8%), and what benefit it could have for their organisations (5%). For example:

> *"Would be useful to know how it can help me."*

> *"YTAS could support with info session on how important it is to be collecting this info and ways we can use this to develop our department."*

Other areas of need related to collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data ethically and sensitively. For example:

> *"Providing workshops/information booklets with more information on how to ethically go about this would be useful."*

> *"How to form the questions without offence."*

> *"Provide us with an example questions sheet that handles subject matter and questions carefully and respectfully."*

> *"Current terminology and phrasing is always very helpful."*

> *"Suggestions of language to reassure parents."*

> *"To receive advice on areas such as storing sensitive information and asking participants to share personal information."*

Conclusions

Levels of collection of information relating to equalities, diversity and inclusion are relatively low in the youth theatre sector in Scotland, with more than a third telling us that they don't collect any EDI data at all and only half or fewer collecting data about each individual EDI characteristic.

Around seven in ten of the youth theatres told us that they experienced barriers when collecting EDI data, and these barriers typically included ethical concerns, and limited understanding around how to undertake this task, what could be achieved by doing so, and why doing so might be important or useful.

The findings from this survey indicate a need and a demand for more education around the value of collecting EDI data (to youth theatres and funders, and ultimately to participants) along with guidance or training around collecting and using this data ethically and sensitively.

YTAS would be well placed to provide or champion this kind of support for the youth theatre sector in Scotland.