

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS  
UNDERSERVED CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (UsCC) UNIT**

**LGBTQI2-S Story Collective Project  
Fiscal Year 18-19 Capacity Building Project**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Wall-Las Memorias Project (TWLMP) enlisted members of the LGBTQI2-S community into an innovative advocacy model project called, The Story Collective. Participants were to engage in a community activism model as a strategy to improve mental health issues prevalent in the LGBTQI2-S community.

The objective of the project was to recruit 25 LGBTQI2-S community members to participate in The Story Collective, at least 10 of those members needed to identify as having experienced mental health personally or as a family members/caregiver for some with a mental health condition, and who have accessed public mental health services. The program was to include a mental health stigma reduction educational program training and art session breakouts. These sessions were to be done in 3 days, 4-5 hours per day. The art sessions were to be facilitated by professionals in art, photography, poetry and sculpting.

At the end of The Story Collective training program, all participants were to participate in a 1 - day, 4-hour community art exhibition to showcase their work and share their mental health story through art. At least 100 individuals were to attend the story collective art exhibit.

The project was done in four phases. The first phase began in September of 2019 with the creation of the promotional materials and the pre/post and community surveys. Phase two, was the development of the mental health stigma reduction curriculum by Mastaneh Moghadam, LCSW. TWLMP then identified the professionals that would facilitate the art sessions: Franki Elliot (a writer and poet facilitated the poetry session), Fenyx the God (facilitated the art painting session), Levon Tangyan (facilitated the sculpting session), and Alyssa Garcia (from Las Fotos Project facilitated the photography session). TWLMP secured the location of USC Village to host the training and art sessions. The last portion of phase two was to recruit 25 participants.

Phase three was to conduct the training and art sessions. On February 29<sup>th</sup> the first training session was conducted. This 4-hour session was attended by the 26 LGBTQI2-S participants where they learned about mental health stigma reduction. At this session, participants were asked to choose two art workshops they wanted to attend.

The first two art sessions were held on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The first session was on Sculpting, which was led by Lev Tangyan. Lev taught the participants how to work with clay and create a 3D sculpture and he was open with the participants about how he used this art form as an outlet for his mental health. The participants were encouraged to create a sculpture that they would want to display at the exhibit. Some participants expressed how relaxing it is to work with clay and they could see how this method can be helpful for a person's mental health.

The second session was on photography. The session was led by Alyssa Garcia from Las Fotos Project. Alyssa taught the participants different photography methods and how photography can help someone express themselves. The participants mentioned that they like the idea of using photography as a way to express their mental health.

The last two art sessions were held March 7<sup>th</sup>. The first session was on poetry writing with Franki Elliot. Franki spoke about her mental health struggles growing up and how writing poetry helped her along the way. Frankie brought in typewriters for participants to use while writing their poetry.

The second session was painting with artist Fenyx the God. She guided the participants on painting and taught them certain techniques regarding painting and brushes. Participants talked about how painting has helped them to express how they are feeling in an artistic way and convey how they are feeling rather than talking about it.

Phase four was to have a 1-day, 4-hour art exhibit, but due to Covid-19, changes had to be made to this phase. The art exhibit was turned into a virtual online art exhibit. The virtual art exhibit was hosted on Oct.6<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. In the exhibit we showed paintings, sculptures, poems and photographs done by the participants. Live and pre-recorded testimonies were shared from both the instructors of the art sessions and the participants. They spoke about how art has helped them deal/cope with their mental health. DJ Lancia played music during the art exhibit as well to entertain the attendees. The exhibit was recorded and edited for future viewing. 60 people attended the virtual exhibit, and it received 13 views on YouTube and 16 views on Facebook.

## **PROJECT RESULTS**

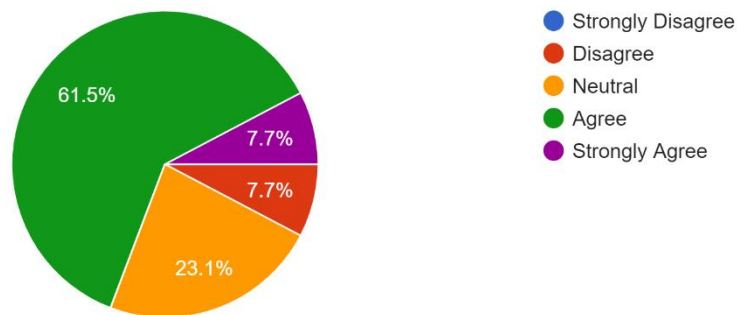
Participants completed a pre-survey the first day the program began, these were the findings: 61.5% of the participants said that they know what to do and who to talk to when they have a concern or problem, 23.1% were neutral, 7.7% strongly agreed, and 7.7% disagreed. As far as feeling comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, 50% agreed that they feel comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed, 29.9% strongly agree, 15.4% were neutral, 3.8% disagree and 3.8% strongly disagree. When asked if they know how to take the necessary steps to arrange an appointment with a mental health professional, 30.8% disagreed, 26.9% strongly agreed, 19.2% were neutral, 15.4% agreed and 7.7% strongly disagreed. When it came to safety in accessing mental health, 38.5% felt neutral, 26.9% agreed, 26.9% strongly agreed and 7.7% disagreed. As for advocating for their own mental health, 40% agreed, 28% were neutral, 28% strongly agreed and 4% disagreed. Participants were asked how comfortable they were to talk about mental

health issues with those in their community, 50% said they were somewhat comfortable, 19.2% were comfortable, 11.5% extremely comfortable, 11.5% slightly comfortable and 7.7% not at all. When asked if they are able to distinguish positive and negative coping mechanisms, 57.7% agreed, 23.1% strongly agreed and 19.2% were neutral. Another similar question asked was if they practiced healthy coping mechanisms while in distress, 50% agreed, 19.2% were neutral, 15.4% strongly agreed, 11.5% disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed. When asked if they know how to use art as a healing process, 42% agreed, 26.9% strongly agreed, 15.4% were neutral and 11.5% disagreed.

### Story Collective Pre-Survey Data

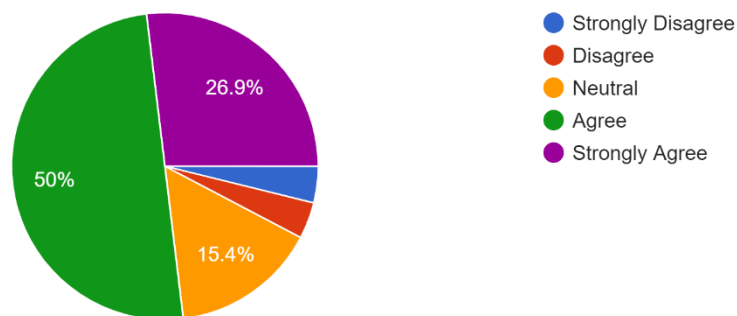
If I have a concern or problem, I know what to do and who to talk to.

26 responses



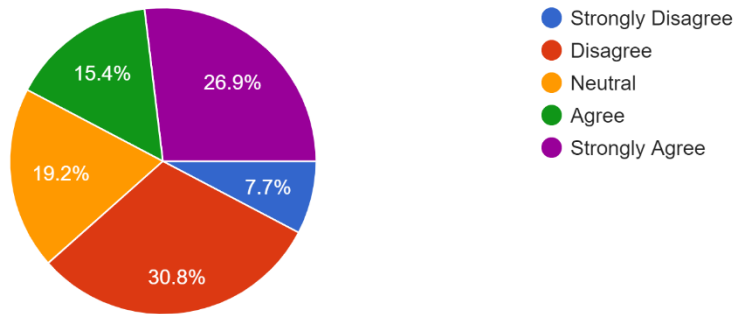
I am comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed, regardless of my sexual orientation or gender identity.

26 responses



I know the necessary steps it takes to arrange an appointment for myself with a mental health professional when needed,

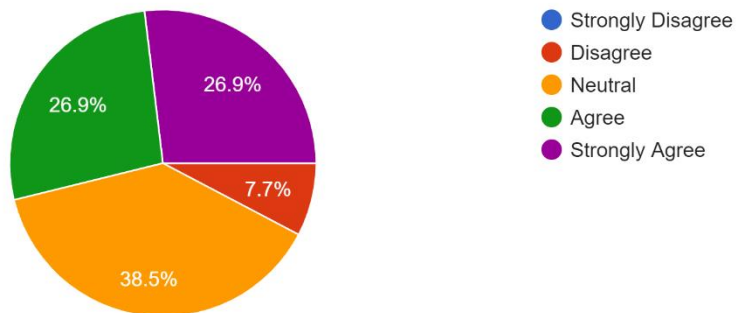
26 responses



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I feel safe accessing mental health services.

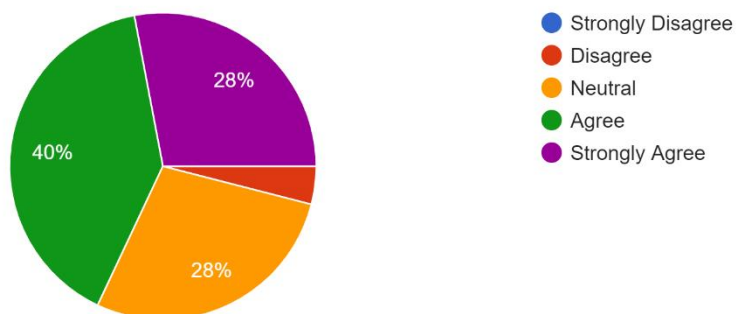
26 responses



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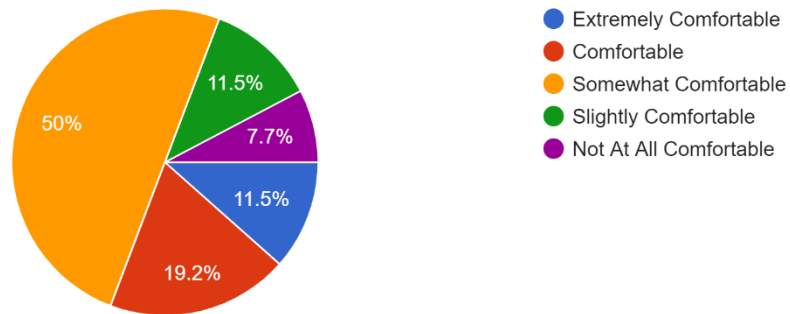
I know ways to advocate for mental health.

25 responses



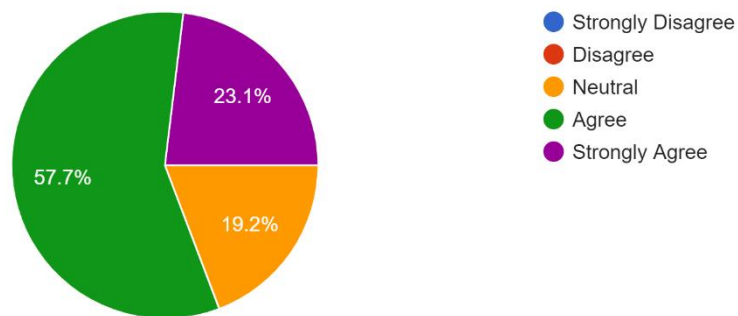
How comfortable are you talking about mental health issues with those in your community?

26 responses



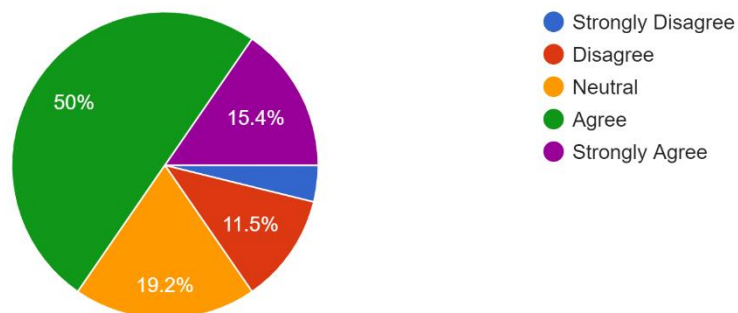
I am able to distinguish positive and negative coping mechanisms.

26 responses



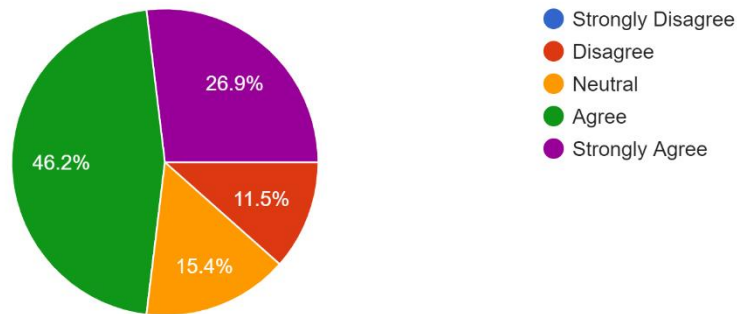
When I am in distress, I practice healthy coping mechanisms.

26 responses



I know how to use art as a healing process.

26 responses



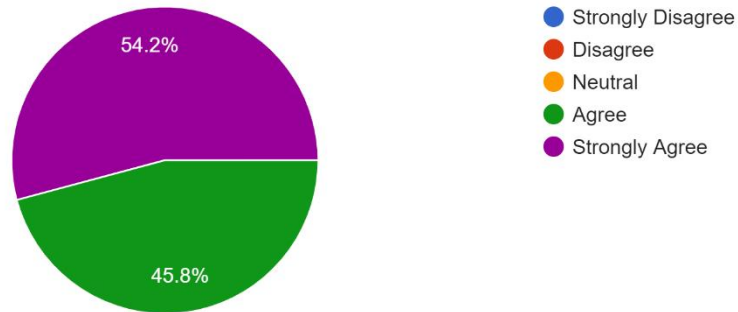
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At the last session, the 24 participants were given a post-survey. Results showed that 54.2% of the participants strongly agreed that they know what to do and who to talk to when they have a concern or problem, which is a huge increase from the 7.7% reported in the pre-survey and 45.8% agreed as well. As far as feeling comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, 54.2% strongly agreed that they feel comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed, 33.3% agreed, 4.2% were neutral, 4.2% disagree and 4.2% strongly disagree. When asked if they know how to take the necessary steps to arrange an appointment with a mental health professional, 50% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed and 8.3% were neutral, this is such a success, in the pre-survey there was a high number of participants that disagreed. When it came to safety in accessing mental health, 54.2% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed, 4.2% were neutral and 4.2% disagreed. As for advocating for their own mental health, 50% strongly agreed, 45.8% agreed and 4.2% were neutral. Participants were asked again how comfortable they were to talk about mental health issues with those in their community, 50% said they were comfortable, 20.8% were neutral, 20.8% were extremely comfortable and 8.3% slightly comfortable. This finding was incredible because in the pre-survey 7.7% of participants were not all comfortable. When asked if they are able to distinguish positive and negative coping mechanisms, 60.9% strongly agreed, 30.4% agreed, 4.3% disagreed and 4.3% were neutral. When asked if they practiced healthy coping mechanisms while in distress, 43.5% strongly agreed, 52.2% agreed and 4.3% were neutral. When asked if they know how to use art as a healing process, 70.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 4.2% were neutral. The participants mentioned that they learned a lot about mental health and enjoyed learning how art can help in coping with their mental health.

#### Story Collective Post-Survey Data

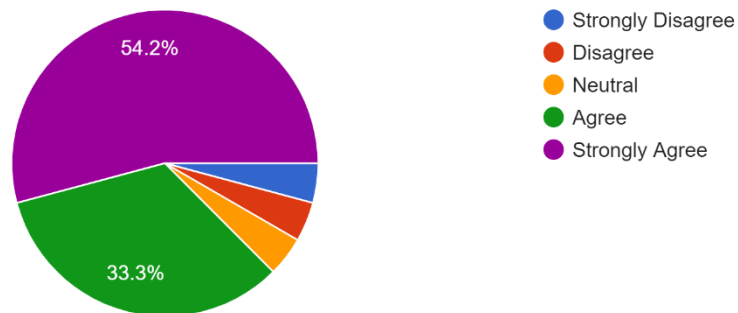
If I have a concern or problem, I know what to do and who to talk to.

24 responses



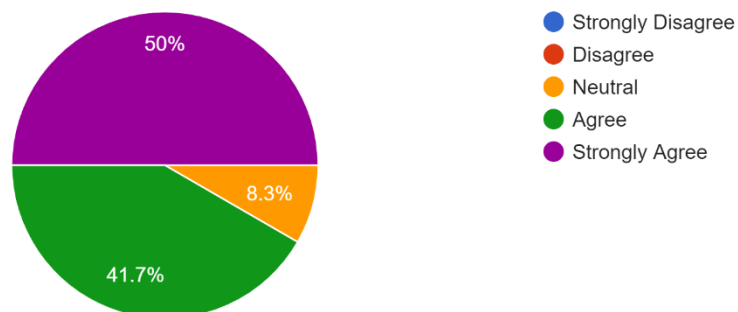
I am comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed, regardless of my sexual orientation or gender identity.

24 responses



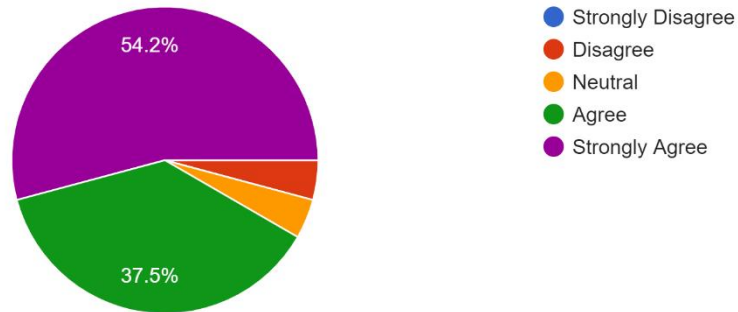
I know the necessary steps it takes to arrange an appointment for myself with a mental health professional when needed,

24 responses



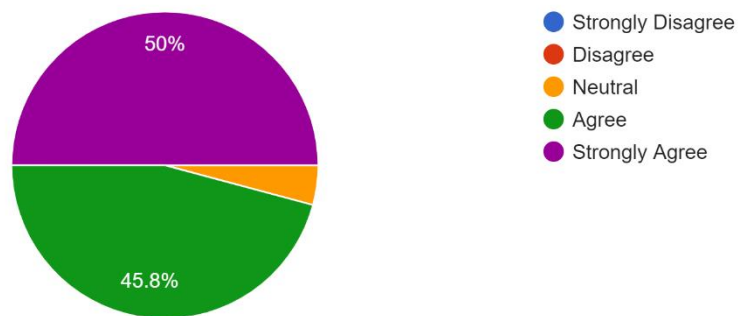
I feel safe accessing mental health services.

24 responses



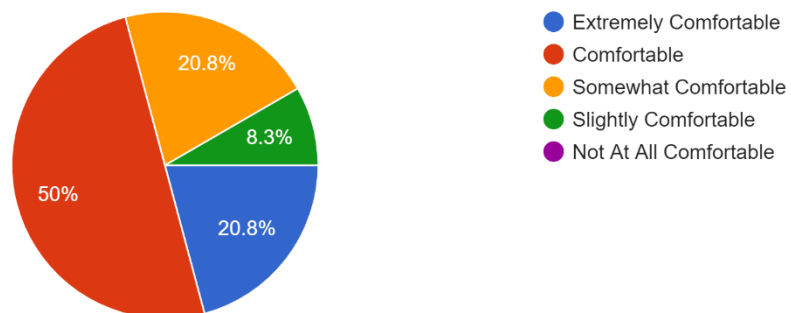
I know ways to advocate for mental health.

24 responses



How comfortable are you talking about mental health issues with those in your community?

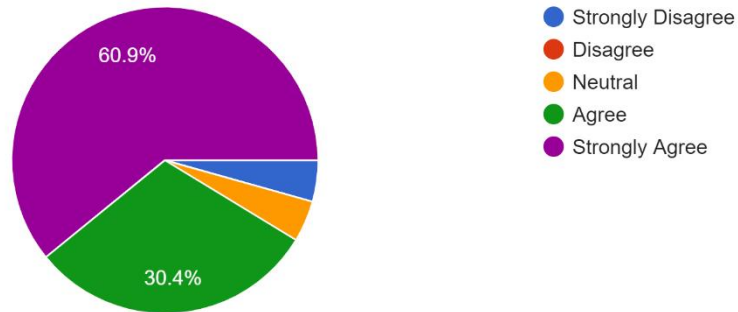
24 responses





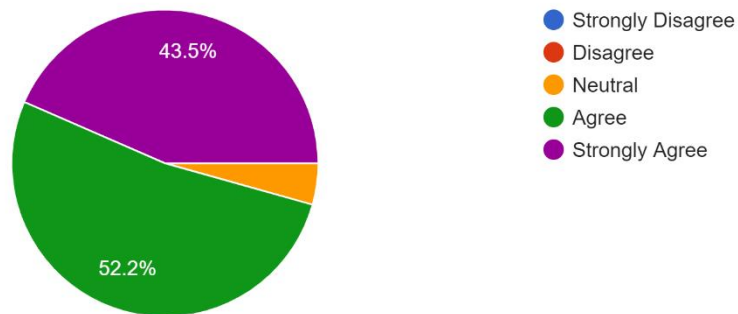
I am able to distinguish positive and negative coping mechanisms.

23 responses



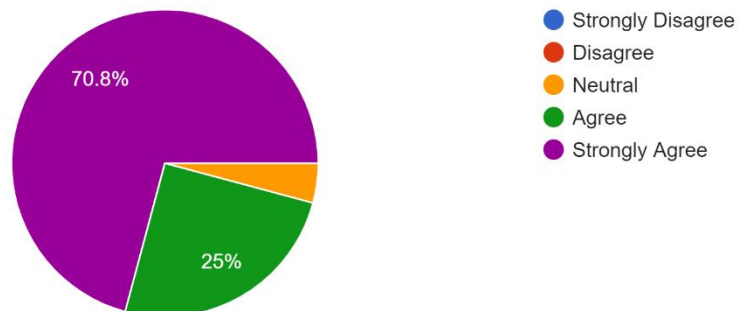
When I am in distress, I practice healthy coping mechanisms.

23 responses



I know how to use art as a healing process.

24 responses

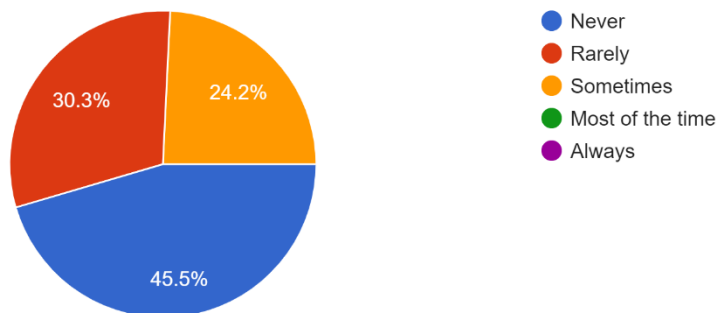


As far as the community survey that was shared with attendees of the virtual art exhibit, 45.5% of the 33 people that took the survey stated that they have never attended an exhibit that shows the expression of mental health, 30.3% stated rarely, and 24.2% stated sometimes. The attendees were also asked if they are aware of the determinants of health that affect the mental health of LGBTQI2-S individuals, and 51.1% stated somewhat aware, 27.3% very aware, 12.1% extremely aware, 6.1% slightly aware and 3% are not at all aware. When asked if these types of events contribute to stigma reduction around mental health, 54.5% strongly agreed, 39.4% agreed and 6.1% were neutral. We also wanted to know if the message was clearly portrayed throughout the exhibit, and 60.6% stated that it was extremely aware, 30.3% aware and 9.1% stated somewhat aware. Overall the event was rated 78.1% excellent, 15.6% very good and 6.3% good. 37.5% of the attendees stated that they would be interested in participating in this type of exhibit again, 34.4% are very interested, 18.8% somewhat interested, 6.3% not at all interested and 3.1% slightly interested. When it came to the space, 48.5% strongly agreed that it was appropriate for this type of exhibit, 48.5% agreed and 3% strongly disagreed. One attendee stated “Amazing exhibit, never quite attended something like this and I had a great time. Also I loved how all of these modes of art were connected to QTPOC/LGBT Mental Health.,” Another attendee said “I think this event is not just inspiring, but necessary for members of the LGBTQIA2-S community, esp. youth. The organizers did a great job from interviewing the guest speakers to having a bomb DJ. I was invested the whole time and it was a lot of fun.” Overall, the program was successful.

### Community Survey

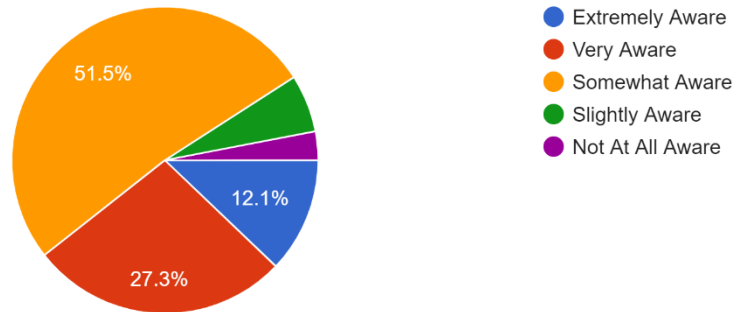
Have you ever attended an exhibit that shows the expressions of Mental Health?

33 responses



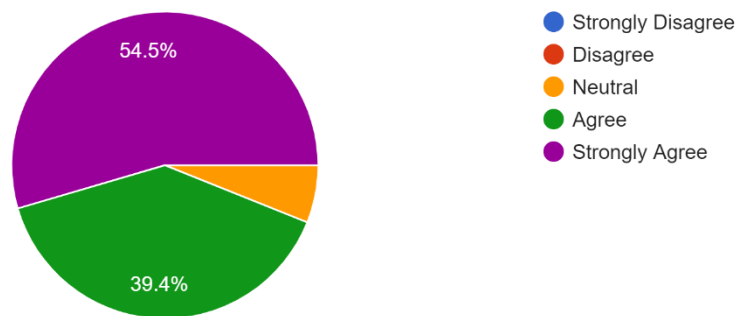
Are you aware of the determinants of health that affect the mental health LGBTQI2-S individuals?

33 responses



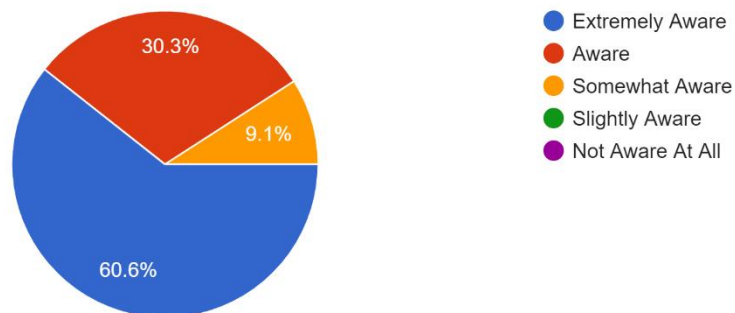
Do you think this event contributes to stigma reduction around mental health?

33 responses



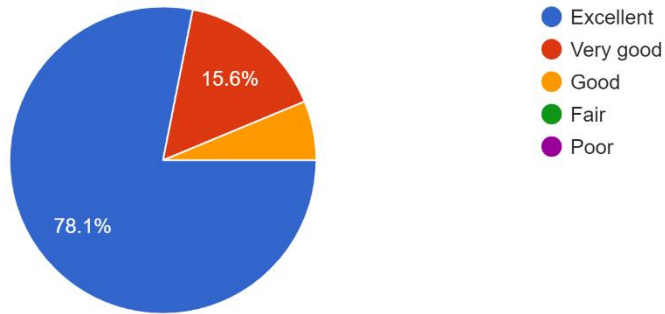
Was the message clearly portrayed throughout the art exhibition?

33 responses



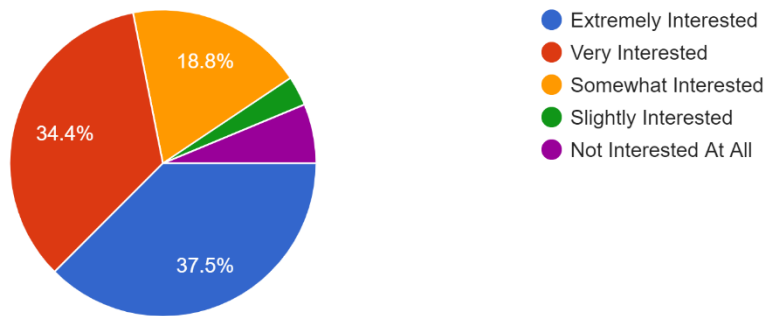
Overall how would you rate the event?

32 responses



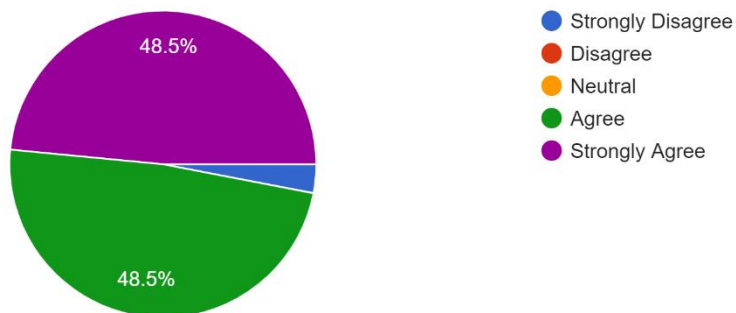
Would you be interested in participating in this type of exhibit?

32 responses



Was the space appropriate for this type of exhibit?

33 responses



## **OUTCOMES**

In total 24 people out of 26 people completed the workshop. Overall, there were three participant levels: First level: Completed the program, second level: Partially completed the program, third level: They signed up, but were no show.

Due to Covid-19 our Scope of work had to be modified from an in-person art exhibition to a virtual platform. Sixty people were in attendance at the virtual event, we had anticipated 100 people attending an in-person exhibition, but due to the pandemic, plans had to be changed and this caused us to adapt to new forms of providing the service.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Some of the barriers and challenges were having the participants attend all three art sessions. The time of commitment of 12-15 hours might have contributed to the rate of attendance. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the day of a scheduled workshop, it was a rainy day (heavy in some parts of LA County) and that also contributed to poor attendance that day.

Some participants were not able to complete their art projects at the session and asked if another session could be held to complete their art. TWLMP staff was working on planning an optional art session date for those participants who wanted to attend, but then Covid-19 shut us down and we were unable to do that additional session.

At the Art exhibit, people were encouraged to complete a community survey. Even though we announced that those who completed the survey would be entered in the raffle, only 33 attendees completed the survey out of the 60 people that attended the virtual exhibit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Participants expressed how they very much enjoyed expressing their mental health through art. Our recommendation is to continue having these types of projects virtually and eventually in person once the pandemic is under control. Art is a very powerful and important tool that can help communities with mental health stigma reduction.