

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission Survey 2022 Full Report

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Abstract

This project was done by Humboldt County Human Rights Commission (HCHRC). The project's purpose was to assess the awareness and understanding of human rights using a survey. The survey questions were both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative questions primarily measured demographics. Questions addressed understanding human rights in Humboldt County as a specific contextual social system using a critical ethnographic approach. A hermeneutic analysis was conducted to describe a shared meaning of awareness and understanding of human rights based on lived experiences. A near-proportional representation of county demographics was represented despite only collecting 364 surveys. When addressing human rights as a concept, community members primarily defined human rights as freedom from or a right often correlated to written laws or declarations. A significant portion referenced equity and/or equality related to basic human needs, and a smaller amount mentioned the innate quality of human rights. The most common example of human rights violations was around homelessness, followed by lack of medical and behavioral health resources, and the third most common focused on law enforcement. The survey also addressed issues specific to cannabis cultivation, Cal Poly Humboldt, and new

industries such as fiber optics and aquaculture; community members showed a variety of opinions on these subjects. The Commission intends to use survey results to help guide policy recommendations to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors. Finally, a concluding assessment was that the HCHRC needs to be more visible in the community.

Background

The survey started in December 2021 and ended on March 15, 2022. A total of 366 residents responded to survey questions from all over the county. Both adults and teens were included. The broad question we asked was, what is the awareness and understanding of human rights among residents of Humboldt County.? The Commission aims to better understand residents' lived experiences to make policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Policy recommendations will likely increase diversity, inclusivity, and equity. The evaluation method was an 18 questions survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions. Thirty-four teens and 332 adults consented to complete the survey. With a population of 109,803 adults, this is just 0.33 %, so it is likely not generalizable for the county (World Population Review, n.d). However, based on demographic information collected during the survey, participation was roughly representative of county demographics regarding gender and housed

status, as reported. For example, almost 5% of participants identified as Indigenous versus 6%, calculated by the Census Bureau.

Additionally, about 83% of our population identifies as White, and 76% identified as such in our survey. Self-identified females represented a plurality of participants, with 45% making up just over 50 % of the adult population. Regarding housing status, 2.5% of people who completed the survey reported that they were houseless, about twice the % reported with the point-in-time count in 2019. However, this percentage is argued by some to be an undercount of total unhoused individuals.

This survey was conducted on Google Forms. Some surveys were on paper. The qualitative approach to inquiry was phenomenological in that it examined residents' experiences of living in Humboldt County, or culture-sharing group, and our intent to advance human rights.

Where do adult respondents live?

Zip code breakdown of survey participants for Humboldt County. The five most frequently entered zip codes for the 308 total that responded to this question were 95501(Eureka), 95521(Arcata), 95503 (Eureka), 95519 (McKinleyville), and 95540 (Fortuna), respectively; these are major population centers for the county.

Figure 1

Number of respondents from each zip code

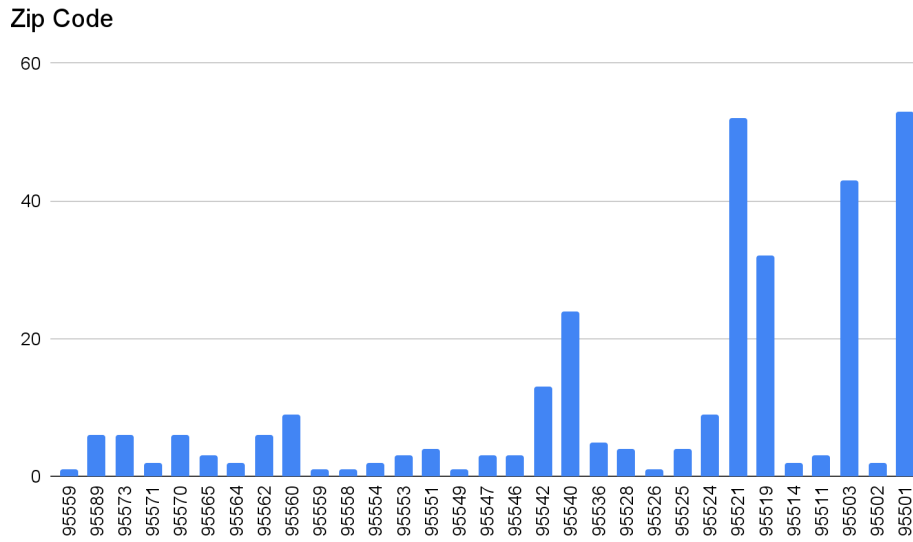
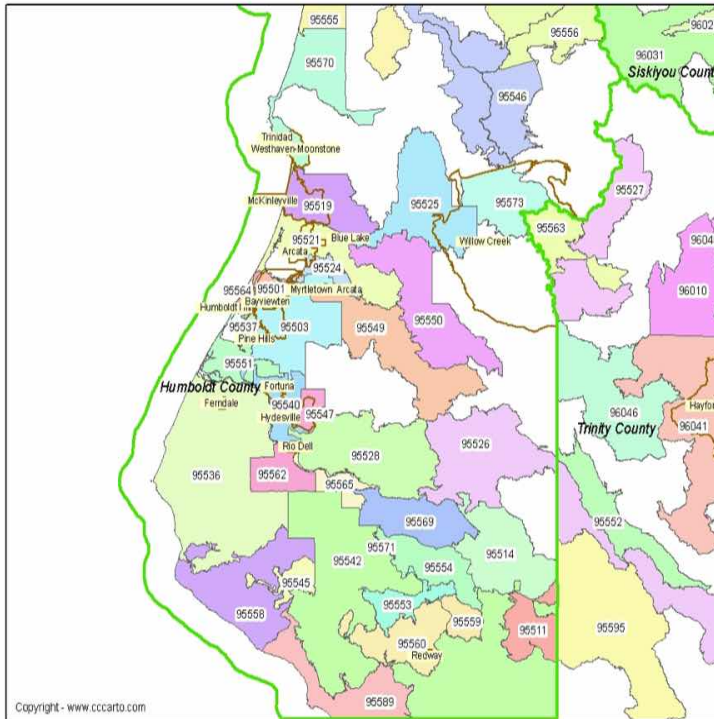


Figure 2

Map of Humboldt County Zip Codes

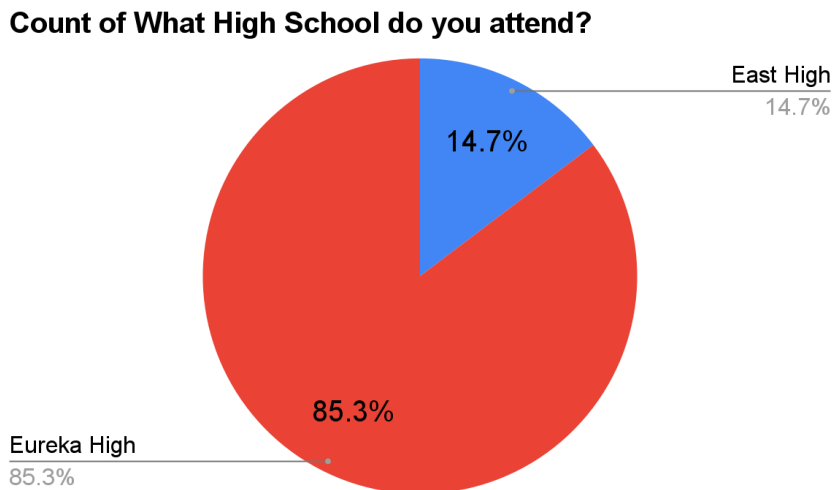


High Schools

Two high schools responded to the survey, Eureka High School and East High in Fortuna. A total of 34 students accented to the survey, five from East High and 29 from Eureka High School. In the future, we hope to solicit more student responses.

Figure 3

From Teen survey



Gender

Adult and teen residents resonate to the question of their self-identified gender. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 50.4% of the population is female, and 45.2% of adult respondents identified as female, as this helps to establish validity, showing a representative sample. Further

analysis could include correlations between gender and how respondents respond to other survey questions.

Figure 4

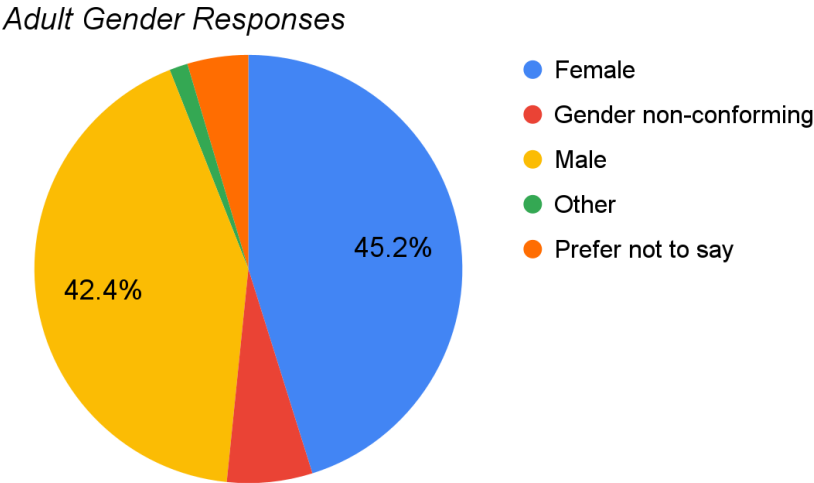
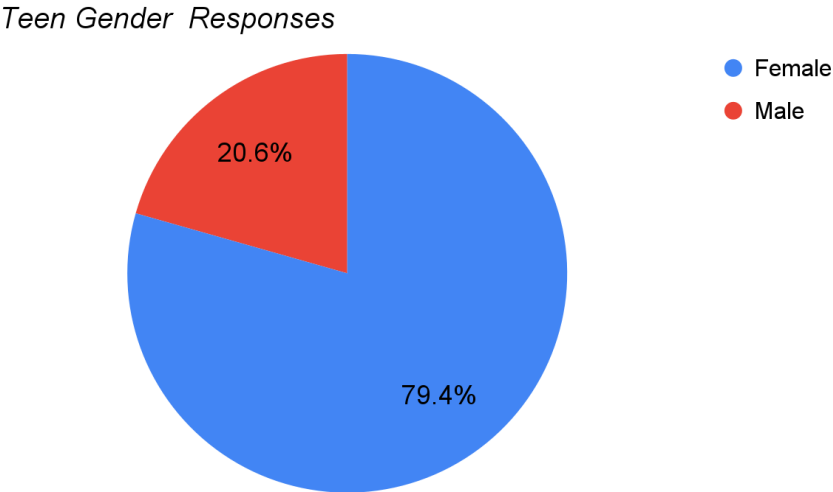


Figure 5



Race

Adult and teen residents resonate to the question of their self-identified race. Note that I made a mistake at the beginning of the survey, as I only allowed one option to be chosen. This was an oversight on my part and should be avoided in future surveys. Where the results below are valuable, I also created a simplified version as the original format needs to present better in a presentation format. I adjusted to answer that valuable information did not apply to the format. Since race is a social construct, this topic is complex and multi-layered. The primary function of this question helped direct what populations should be targeted for survey outreach and helped ensure resonance represented the population of the county as a whole.

Figure 6

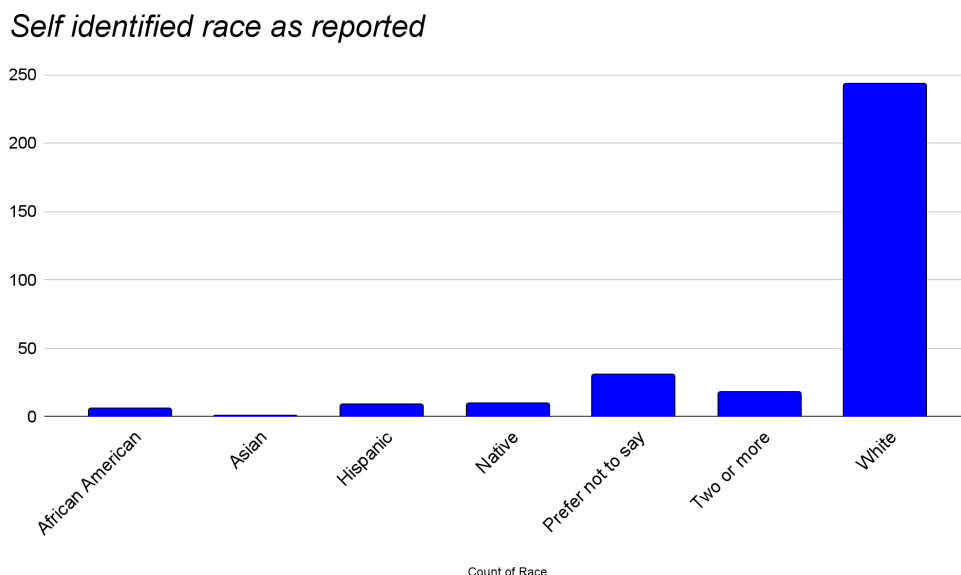


Figure 7

Adult - Race as self identified

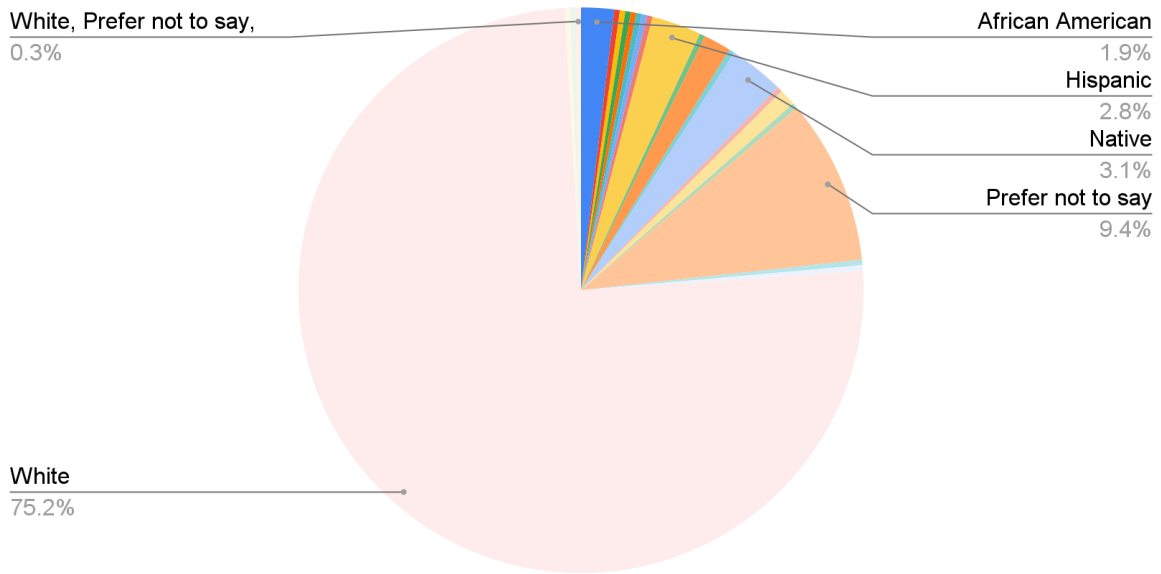
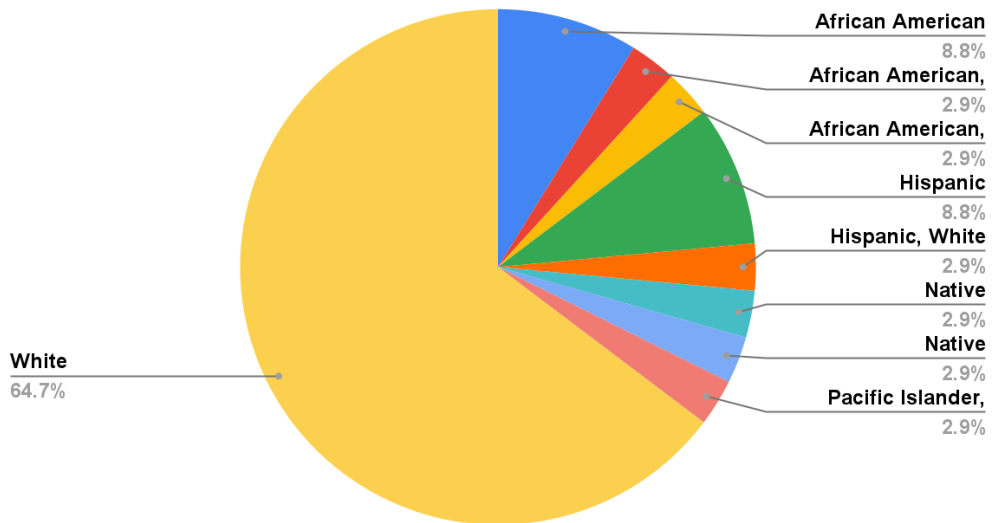


Figure 8

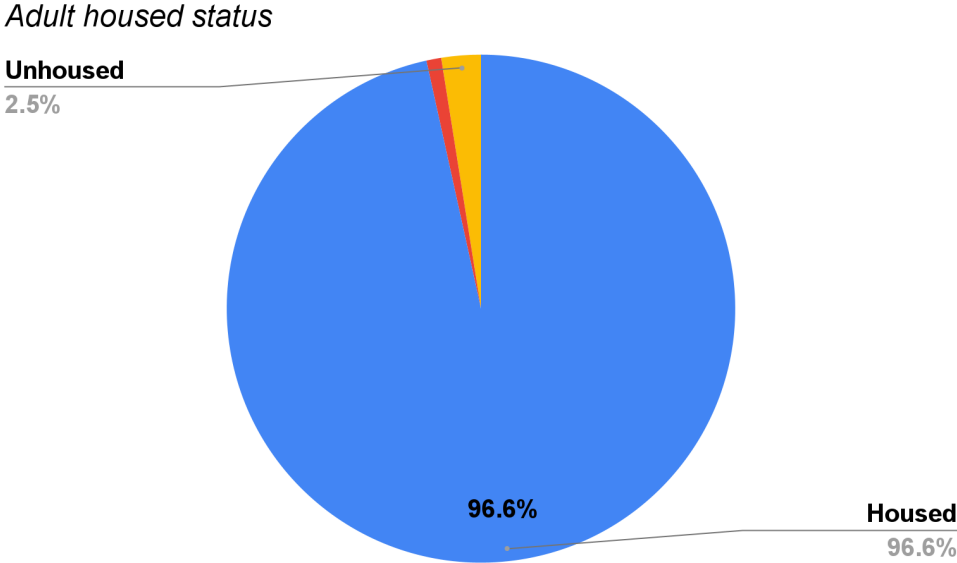
Teen as self identified race



Housed status

Housed status of residence of adults. All students surveyed indicated that they were housed upon completion of the survey. Houselessness was numerically the most commonly mentioned concern regarding perceptions of human rights. A point-in-time count in 2019 indicated that 1,473 people were houseless, about 1.8%. However, this percentage is argued to be an undercount of total unhoused individuals (Guilfoil, *Humboldt County delays point in time count until 2023* 2021).

Figure 9



Definition of Human Rights

When addressing a definition of human rights, community members primarily defined human rights as freedom from or a right often correlated to written laws or declarations, frequently mentioning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, a significant portion referenced equity and/or equality, often referring to basic human needs, such as housing, healthcare, and education. A smaller number of participants mentioned the innate quality of human rights by making comments like "I consider the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations as my guidepost," "Anything that is a basic human need inherently belongs to humans," and "The safety, wellness, and dignity we all deserve while living in this world together."

For me, Human rights include freedom, security, particularly from state powers, and access to basic human needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and other aspects related to the quality of life. Human rights are innately held by all individuals and communities and are not granted but are self-evident. Additionally, rights implicate an inherent shared responsibility to one's community. Human rights can be understood as collective, emphasizing the importance of relationships between individuals, communities, and the environment. For example, Indigenous

Human rights violations

The pie graphs below were generated for the survey question; Have you experienced a violation of your human rights? The comparison between adults and teens is notable. The teen responses indicate perhaps an amount of unawareness or lack of education about what human rights are and are not based on the plurality of responses in the "not sure" category. This also shows that human rights violations have more opportunities to occur given greater time, which seems logical. Further analysis could include a correlation between gender, race, and houselessness with the survey question about the experience of violation of one's human rights.

Figure 12

Adult response to have you experienced a violation of your human rights?

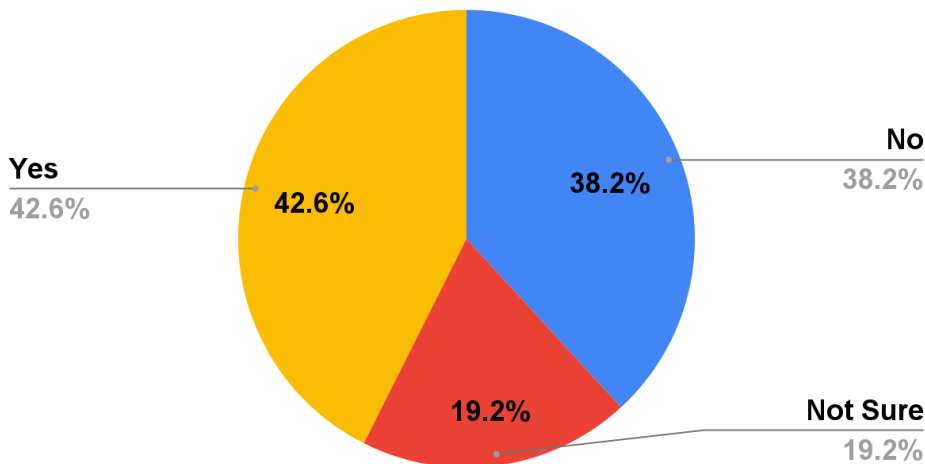
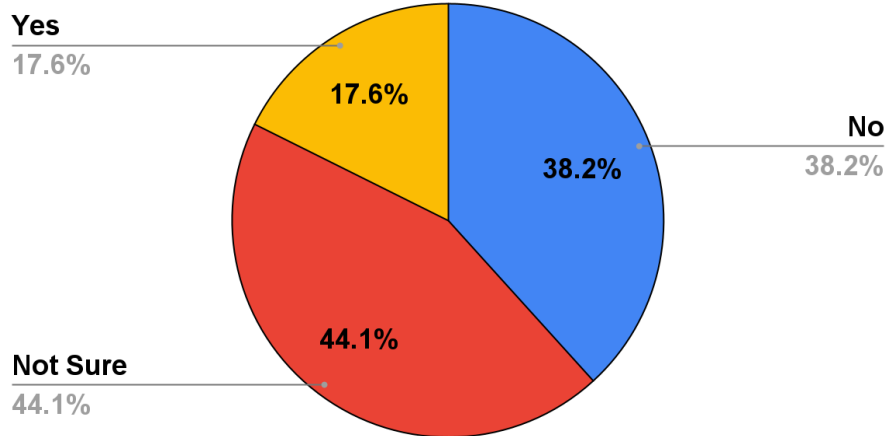


Figure 13

Teen survey response to response to have you experienced a violation of your human rights?



The pie graph below shows results from the question; Do you think human rights are adequately protected in Humboldt County? Interestingly, nearly the same percentage of adults and teens believed that human rights were adequately protected. For example, it would be useful to ask follow-up questions to the survey question in the following focus group. Speculation as to why community members answered the way they did is difficult. Still, considering the high number of people that answered "not sure," one would speculate further explanation is needed either in how the question is worded or respondent's confidence in their understanding of human rights. However, over 50% of adults did not feel that human rights were protected, indicating significant concern for our community. Interestingly, more community members thought human rights were not protected than had

experienced human rights violations. This indicated witnessing human rights violations and concern for fellow community members.

Figure 14

Adult survey response to do you think human rights are adequately protected in Humboldt County?

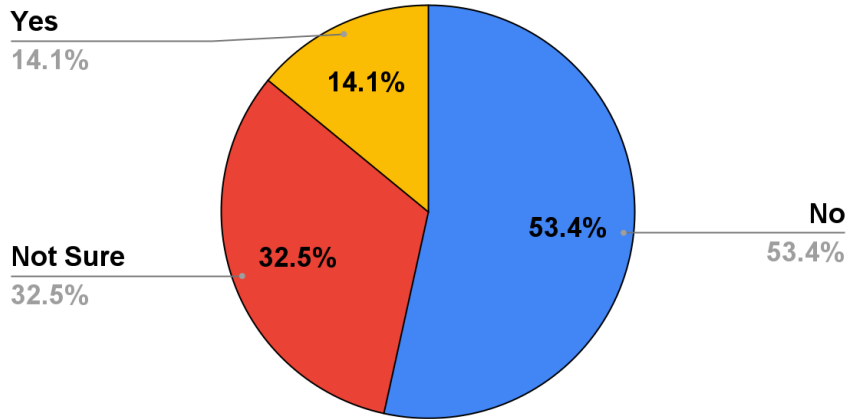
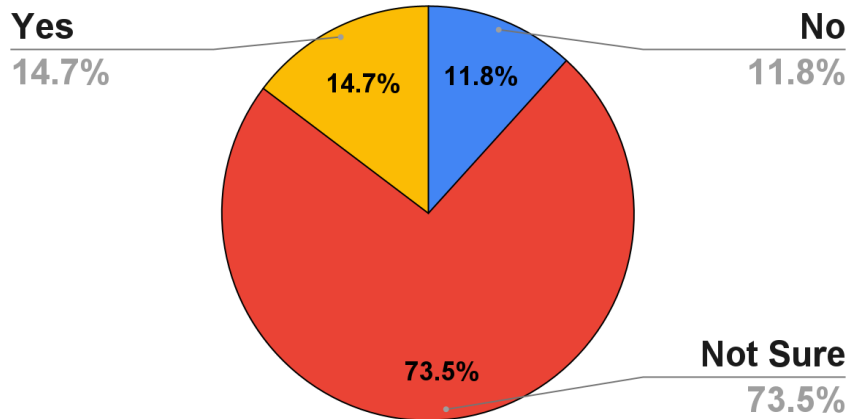


Figure 15

Teen survey response to do you think human rights are adequately protected in Humboldt County?



Awareness of the Human Rights Commission

As a part of the survey, we asked residents if they knew the function of the human rights Commission, and the results were sobering. The percentage of people unaware of the Commission was a revelation to Commission members. Our results showed that over 80% of teens and almost 55% of adults surveyed said they did not know the Commission's function. Additionally, 18% and 12% were unsure, with only 3% of teens and almost 27% of adults aware of the Commission's function. In the interest of full disclosure, given that 332 adults consented to submit survey questions and the total adult population of Humboldt County is 109 803, we are talking about a small segment of the population, just 0.3% (*Humboldt County, California Population, 2022*). It is also important to recognize that the human rights Commissions often struggle with issues such as the lack of effective mechanisms for change and the inability to respond promptly (Pinheiro et al., 2017). Given the statistics from survey responses, it is clear that the Commission needs to continue increasing its presence in our community by prioritizing outreach. It should be noted that the Commission is aware of the need for improved outreach.

Figure 16

Adult survey response to awareness of the Human Rights Commission

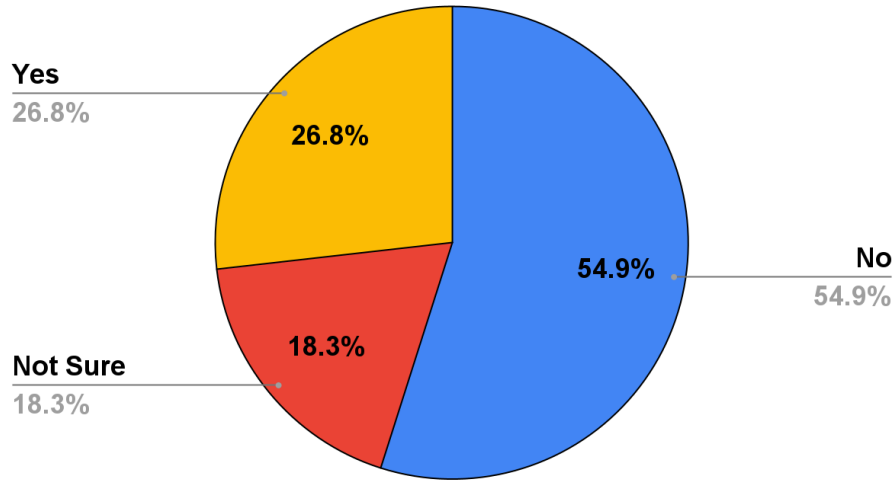
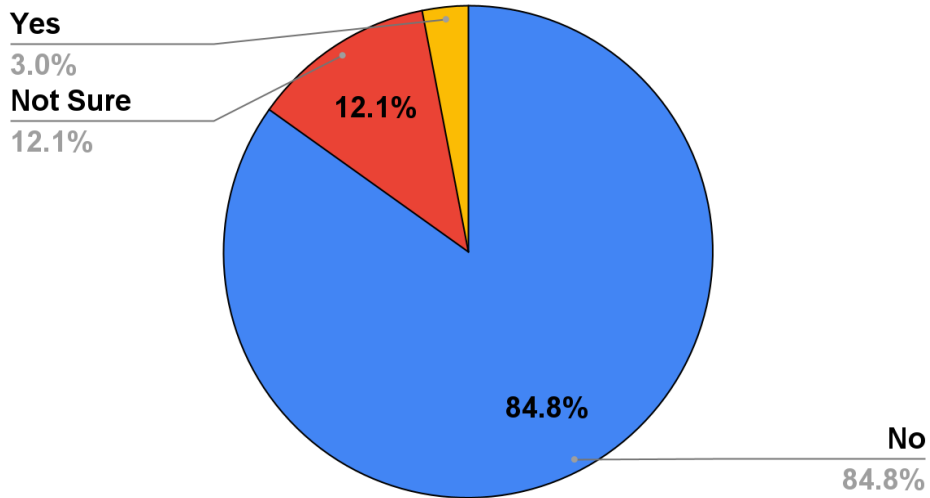


Figure 17

Teen survey response to awareness of the Human Rights Commission



Common examples of human rights violations

Most teens reported that they did not know when asked, "What do you think are the most common examples of human rights violations in Humboldt County? However, when asking adults, the most common example of human rights violations, as reported by resonance, was around houselessness, followed by lack of medical and behavioral health resources, and the third most common focused on law enforcement. With that said, most community members mentioned a combination of these factors in their responses. That is significant because these issues are interrelated.

Housing was the most commonly mentioned example of human rights violations in Humboldt County. Community members made comments about housing and human rights violations like; "Lack of housing for the homeless," "Access to housing," "Housing crisis, drug crisis fueling homelessness (), continued colonialism, and racist frameworks within our government, law enforcement, education, and other systems/institutions," "Inequity and inequality in the legal and housing process" and "Access to food, housing, and medical care."

Access to behavioral and medical health care was the second most commonly mentioned violation of human rights. Community members commented on what they saw as common violations like; "Lack of medical

and mental healthcare in our county." "lack of medical care that is readily available and affordable without expensive insurance," "Adequate health-care," "The way the houseless are treated. and those with addiction and mental health problems.", and "The lack of mental health care in Humboldt County."

Law enforcement was the third most common example of human rights violations among community members who participated in the survey. For example, people said things like; "Police Brutality, Racism," "Police/resident interactions," "ICE enforcement, Profiling by police of people of color," "unequal police treatment, unequal court treatment, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, trafficking," and "Harassment of homeless people by police."

Acceptance and contact among residents

A scaling question was asked about the openness of our community to accepting people from different cultures or backgrounds. Each graph roughly shows the normal social distribution in the form of a bell curve, perhaps supporting the validity of the results. However, these results also suggest room for improvement and hope for the future for community openness and perhaps a measure of comparison when future surveys are completed. In explaining answers to this question, respondents frequently

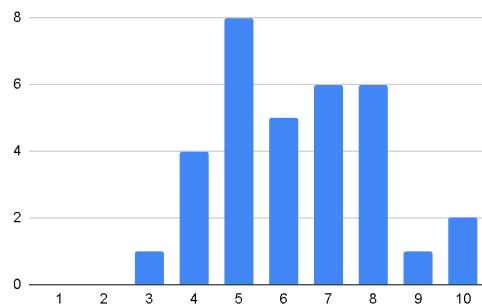
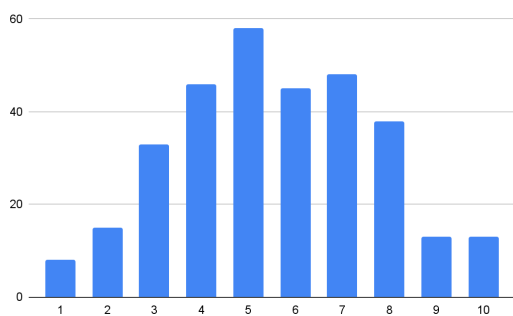
mentioned race as a significant factor in considerations of openness, specifically mentioning Witness, such as "In a predominantly white area it is easy to accept that identity as the dominant culture in Hum Co thus not accepting anything outside of it," "White people are accepting, but only if they get to keep their privilege" and "Humboldt County is rather rural and white but is also relatively liberal." In addition, the teen's made comments such as "I think overall people are accepting, but there are occasions where people are shut out because of the way they look, act, etc." and "Everyone should be treated fairly no matter the culture and beliefs."

Figure 18

How open is Humboldt County to accepting people from different cultures or backgrounds from themselves?

Adult

Teen,



The following eight pie graphs illustrate respondents' contact with people from various groups.

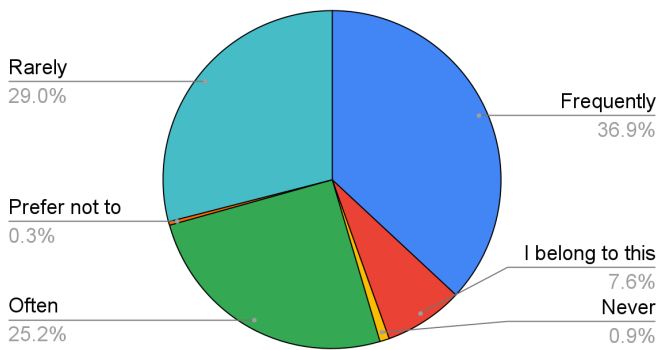
Figure 19

1-How often do you have personal contact with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)?

Adult

Teen

BIPOC



BIPOC

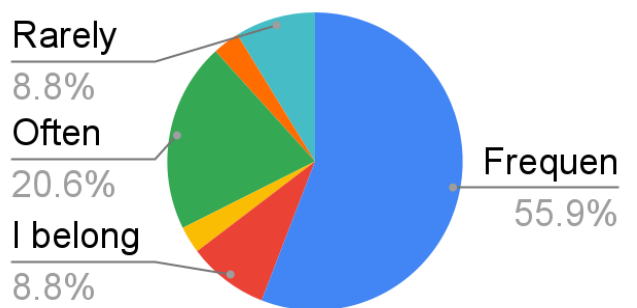


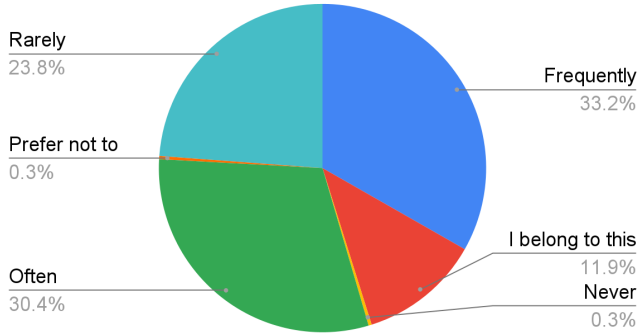
Figure 20

2 -How often do you have personal contact with people with disabilities?

Adult

Teen

Disabilities



Disabilities

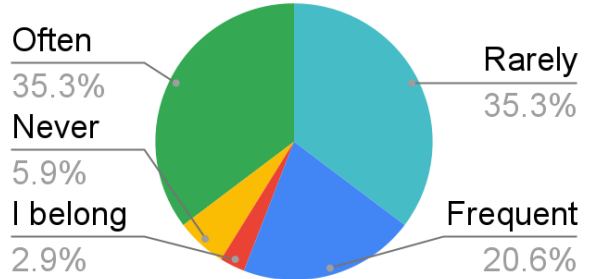


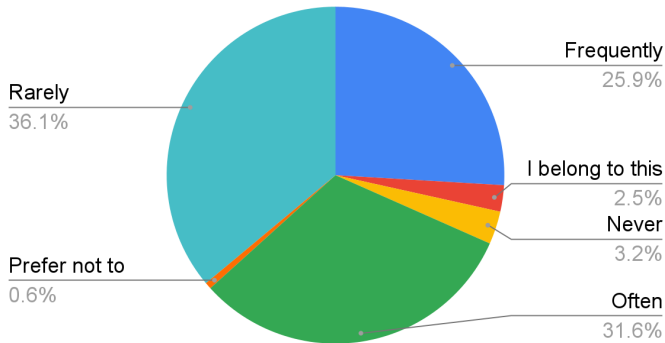
Figure 21

3 -How often do you have personal contact with people who are Immigrants?

Adults

Teens

Immigrants



Immigrants

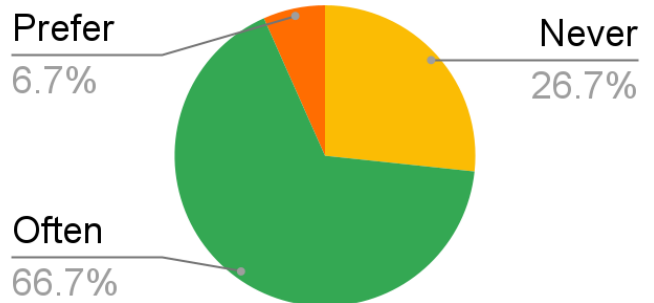


Figure 22

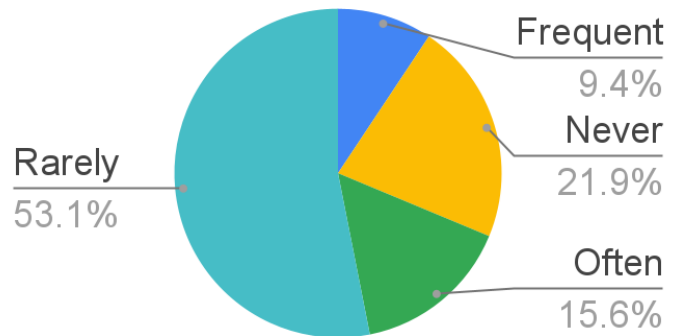
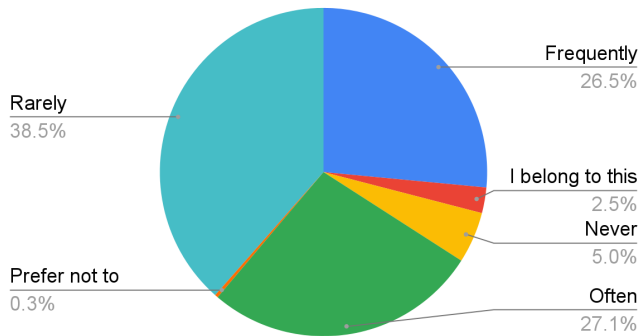
4- How often do you have personal contact with unhoused people? (Note that considering that the human rights violations of people that are unhouse was the most commonly cited example, but the percentage of frequent contact is almost the smallest as compared to other groups.)

Adults

Teens

Unhoused

Unhouse



Adults

Teens

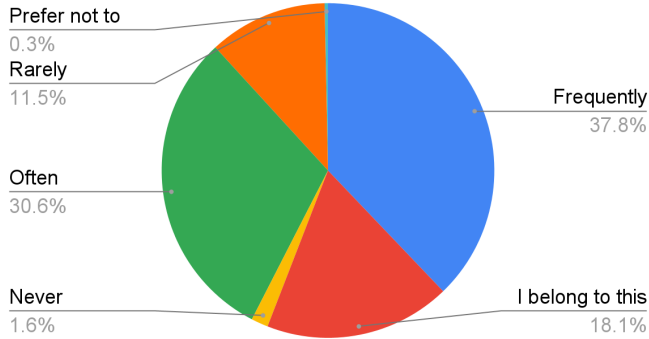
Figure 23

5- How often do you have personal contact with people with low income?

Adults

Teens

Low Income



Low Income

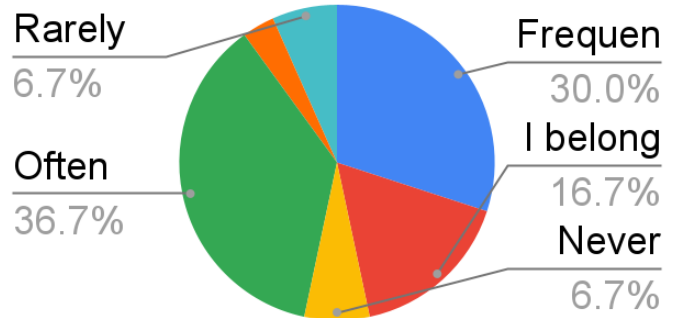


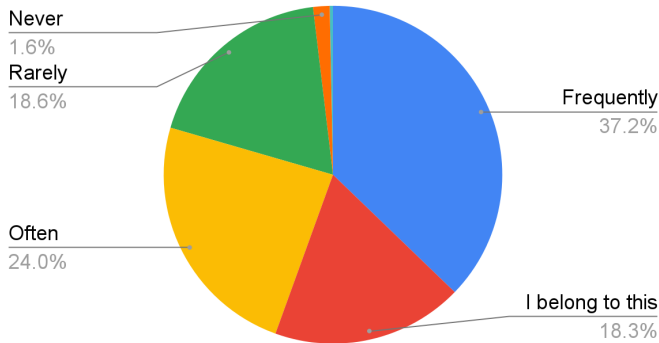
Figure 24

6- How often do you have personal contact with people with mental health issues?

Adults

Teens

Mental Health Issues]



Mental Health Issues

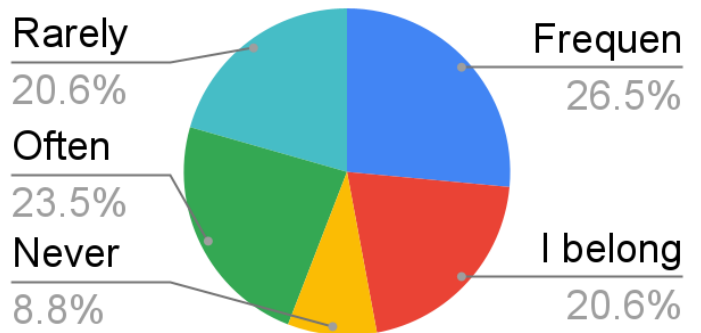


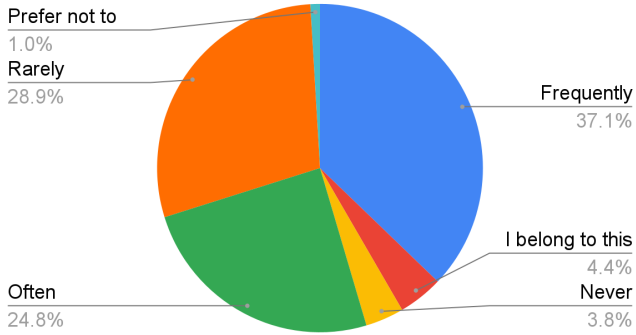
Figure 25

7-How often do you have personal contact with people with a substance use disorder?

Adults

Teens

Substance Use Disorder



Substance Use Disorder

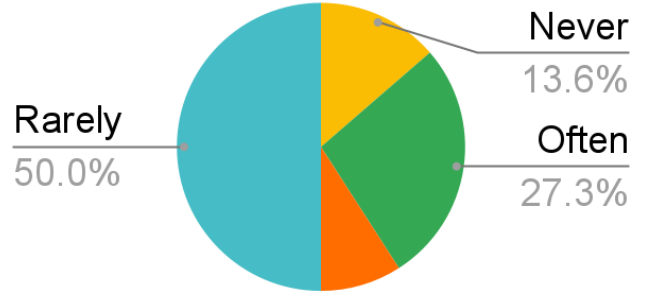


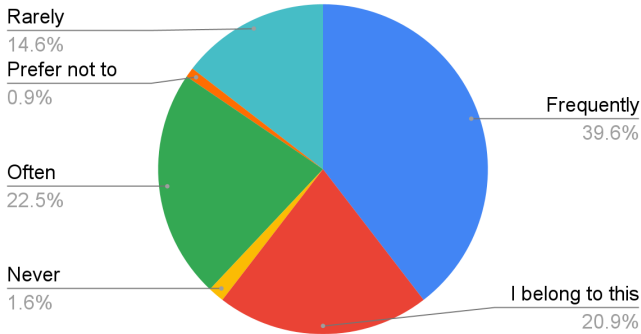
Figure 26

8- How often do you have personal contact with people who identify as LGBQTGIA2S+?

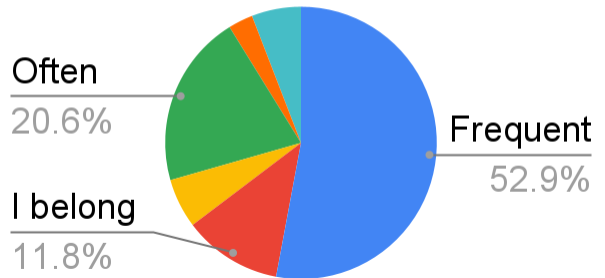
Adults

Teens

LGBQTGIA2S+



LGBTQIA2S



Negative factors that impact human rights

When asked what negative factors exist in Humboldt County that impacts human rights, community members most frequently mentioned lack of medical and behavioral care accessibility and homelessness, making comments like "Not enough mental health to accommodate the mentally ill all over our county. Especially Eureka," "Lack of affordable housing and healthcare," and "lack of and cost of housing, health care inaccessibility, widespread ableism." When asked about common examples of human rights violations, these same issues were mirrored. However, answers to this more general question also mentioned race and discrimination. Additionally, a significant proportion commented, "None. I am privileged and protected," and "Personally--none. My income, class, and social status make it very unlikely that I will be adversely affected by violations of my human rights."

One can draw two potential conclusions from these results: community members are concerned for their fellow residents, and that common themes of homelessness and access to medical and behavioral healthcare are primary concerns for Humboldt County residents. Where some residents do not believe their human rights are at risk of violation, many not only observe these violations but are subject to them. High school students also similarly answered this question, many indicating that they had not

experienced violations but that racism, houselessness, and lack of accessible health care were major factors.

Cultivation of cannabis

Adult and teen responses to whether or not they thought that the cultivation of cannabis affected their human rights of them or someone they knew about human rights. When asked to explain their answers, residents mentioned issues of violence such as human trafficking, legal and law enforcement issues, race, and water issues in their answers. For example, "Unsafe working conditions, human trafficking," "Created more crime, brought more drugs to the area, caused more cases of addiction and child abuse/neglect," and "Black and POC people are criminalized for cannabis where white people get to profit off of selling it," and "The water, the forest our homeland are being degraded by this product." It can be said that these issues result from the cultivation of cannabis, but that cannabis itself was not often mentioned as an issue of concern. With that being said, the high percentage of residents said cannabis cultivation affects their community's human rights warrants attention and further analysis.

Figure 27

Adult -Has the cultivation of cannabis in Humboldt County affected your human rights or those of someone you know?

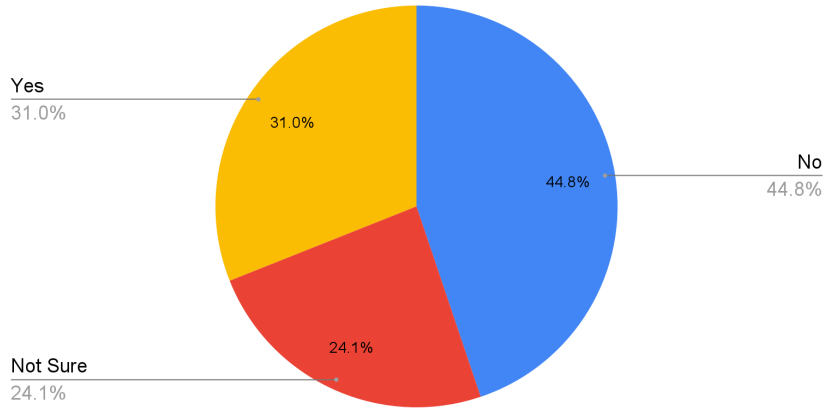
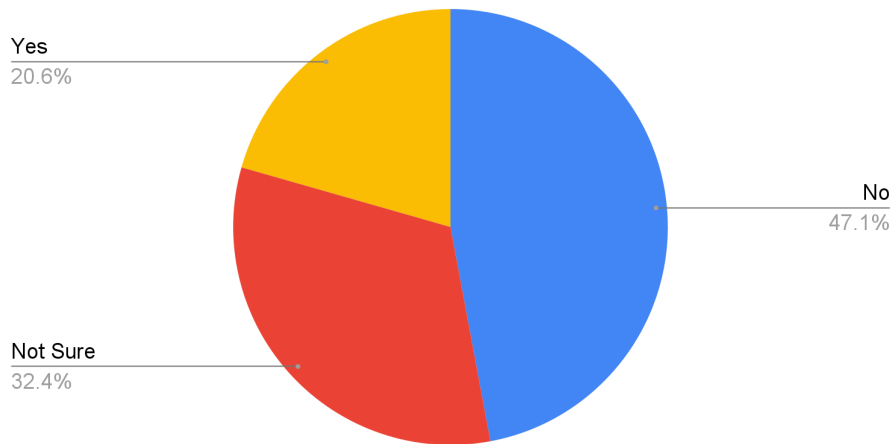


Figure 28

Teen- Has the cultivation of cannabis in Humboldt County affected your human rights or those of someone you know?



Concussion and Ideas on moving forward

We learned that many community members are concerned about their own human rights and the rights of their fellow community members. These concerns are primarily around housing, access to behavioral and medical healthcare, and law enforcement, and these issues are interconnected. We learned that over 50% of adults and 80% of teens that took the survey were unaware of the function of the human rights commission. This indicates that the Commission needs to do a better job at outreach. In addition, the Commission requires the support of all residents, including the support of community leaders, media representatives, people experiencing violations of their human rights, policymakers, activists, and opinion leaders in the community. The more public support the Commission has, the more credibility it will have and the better it can advocate for and with residents.

Lessons learned in terms of potential policy recommendations. The lived experiences of community members have shown that they are concerned with human rights regarding the fundamental values they wish to embody as a community. Human rights for community members entail freedoms correlated to written laws, are about equity and/or equality related to basic human needs, and human rights are innately held. The violations

observed and experienced are around housing, behavioral and medical healthcare, and law enforcement. These issues are not separate and are highly intertwined and interconnected; this fact should inform policy. These issues are not new to us and continue to cause harm.

The next steps for the Commission will entail continued efforts at outreach; this was a common request from community members. In terms of the next steps for the Commission, outreach needs to be of primary importance. Expanding the social media presence and considering focus groups that look at specific populations likely to experience violations of their human rights, such as unhoused people or incarcerated community members, could aid in an ongoing assessment of human rights.

Additionally, including the more rural areas of the county would add insights that have the potential to be missed. For the Board of Supervisors, we ask that issues of diversity, dignity, inclusivity, and equity be considered when making policy decisions, noting that any policy will likely affect other aspects of community members' lives. Namely policies around housing, access to behavioral and medical healthcare, and law enforcement.

To address issues of the lack of awareness and understanding of human rights among teens, create a Junior Human Rights Commission. A Junior Human Rights Commission allows teens to participate in advocacy

activities and educate our community on their concerns. It is also an opportunity for teens to learn leadership skills and how to impact our community positively. The Human Rights Commission would initially guide the Junior Commission, but the goal would be for the students to be empowered to guide its projects and objectives.

Humboldt County is a diverse rural community with a long history and many unique ways of living. Our community has many strengths that can be enhanced to build a more equitable and sustainable society. I will be posting an executive summary of the survey findings on the commission website for anyone to access. To conclude, we would like to thank you for listening to our report, and I welcome any questions or comments.

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