

COMMUNITY-LED NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF BLACK AND BROWN GENDER DIVERSE RESIDENTS OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Black Trans Leadership of Austin x Out Youth
August 2022



TRANSGENDER
WELLNESS

a program of **OutYouth**

Acknowledgments

This Community-Led Needs Assessment was completed due to work and collaboration between: **Black Trans Leadership of Austin** (<https://btla.squarespace.com/>) and **Out Youth** (<https://www.outyouth.org/>). For their work and support on this project, we would like to thank:

Black Trans Leadership of Austin – Naomi Wilson, Tabitha Hamilton, Queen Austin, Rocky Lane, Zuri Richardson, Laïs Milburn, and Sha’Nyia Baltimore.

Out Youth – Cece Flores, Sam Clubb, Danisha Baro, Sarah Kapostasy, and Amy Haley.

The University of Texas at Austin – Dr. Stephen Russell, Dr. Phillip W. Schnarrs, Lexie Wille, Sheridan Aguilar, and Riya Chaudhry.

This report was compiled and written by **Lexie Wille, M.A., Counseling Psychology Ph.D.** student at the University of Texas at Austin, with writing and editing contributions from the above team members.

This project also would not have been possible without the following support:

Translation services – Linda Herrera, Odyamar Cuesta, Oli Prendes

Marketing photos – Fiona Frazell of Fifi Mar Photography

Data consultation – MEASURE (<https://wemeasure.org/>)

This project was supported by grants awarded by the **St. David’s Foundation**, **CenterLink**, and the **Johnson Family Foundation**. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the views of these funders.

Table of Contents

PROJECT BACKGROUND	4
WHO IS A STAKEHOLDER?	5
PARTICIPANTS	6
HEALTHCARE AND HEALTHCARE ACCESS	7
MENTAL HEALTHCARE	8
GENDER AFFIRMING CARE	9
COMMUNITY CONNECTION	10
HOUSING AND GENTRIFICATION	11
TRANSPORTATION	12
COMMUNITY SAFETY	13
PUBLIC SAFETY	14
FINANCES	15
EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION	16
LEGAL ASSISTANCE	17
TAKEAWAYS FROM RESULTS	18
CALL TO ACTION – HOUSING FIRST	19
CALL TO ACTION – EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES	20
CALL TO ACTION – REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY	21
CALL TO ACTION – CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE	22
CALL TO ACTION – QTBIPOC SPACES & PEER SUPPORT	23

Project Background

The inspiration for this project was the lack of available data focused on the needs of queer and trans people of color (QTBIPOC) in the United States. Instead of a traditional research approach, we sought to create a community-led survey, where members of the community of interest (in this case, QTBIPOC) drive and design the research project, and locate researchers to assist in fulfilling their research goals. Black Trans Leadership of Austin (BTLA) worked with Out Youth to create the survey questions over the course of several months. We leaned on the project team's collective experiences to generate the major topics of the survey. We found that people in the QTBIPOC community face housing, transportation, employment, safety, and belonging disparities and thus focused on these areas in the survey.

Both BTLA and Out Youth felt the need to make the survey as comprehensive as possible – the final survey was quite long and time-consuming to complete. The team felt it was very important to compensate survey participants for their time and perspectives – we chose to distribute \$60 gift cards as compensation. We designed the questions to give us both quantitative and qualitative data; we felt that it was important to create a space for people to fully voice their concerns. We also thought it would be important to hold focus groups in order to gain a more nuanced, conversational understanding of community members' perspectives. BTLA facilitated the focus groups and again offered compensation for each participant. We recruited focus group participants by reaching out to survey participants and offering them the opportunity to join a focus group. Focus group participants were compensated with a \$75 gift card.

Initially, we focused our advertising efforts on social media. When we checked survey responses in Qualtrics however, we saw some suspicious response patterns. Suspicious responses were identifiable due to similarly formatted email addresses and IP addresses located outside of the US. These suspicious responses appeared to be from individuals who were providing fraudulent data in order to receive financial compensation. The team then decided that we could not rely on online advertisement to distribute our survey.

We quickly changed our approach to word-of-mouth and in-person recruitment efforts. We targeted our social groups and various events that catered to LGBTQIA+ people. Overall, we advertised at medical events, social venues (socials, bars and clubs), local shops, and other community events. After several months of recruitment efforts, we gathered survey responses from 50 QTBIPOC living in Austin. We also conducted one input session with 12 participants, one informational interview with a Spanish-speaking participant, and one informational interview with a Black trans woman who had been displaced from Austin. The results of the survey, input session, and informational interviews are reviewed in this report, with recommendations and calls to action for stakeholders who are invested in supporting QTBIPOC in the Greater Austin area.

Who is a stakeholder?

If you have found or have been sent this report, you're probably a stakeholder!

A stakeholder, for the purposes of this report, could be:

- 1. Someone who is QTBIPOC or non-POC LGBTQ+ person themselves**
- 2. Someone who has decision-making power at a place of employment**
- 3. Someone who has a relative or loved one who is queer or BIPOC**
- 4. Someone who considers themselves an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community**
- 5. Someone who would like to learn more about or take action regarding privilege**

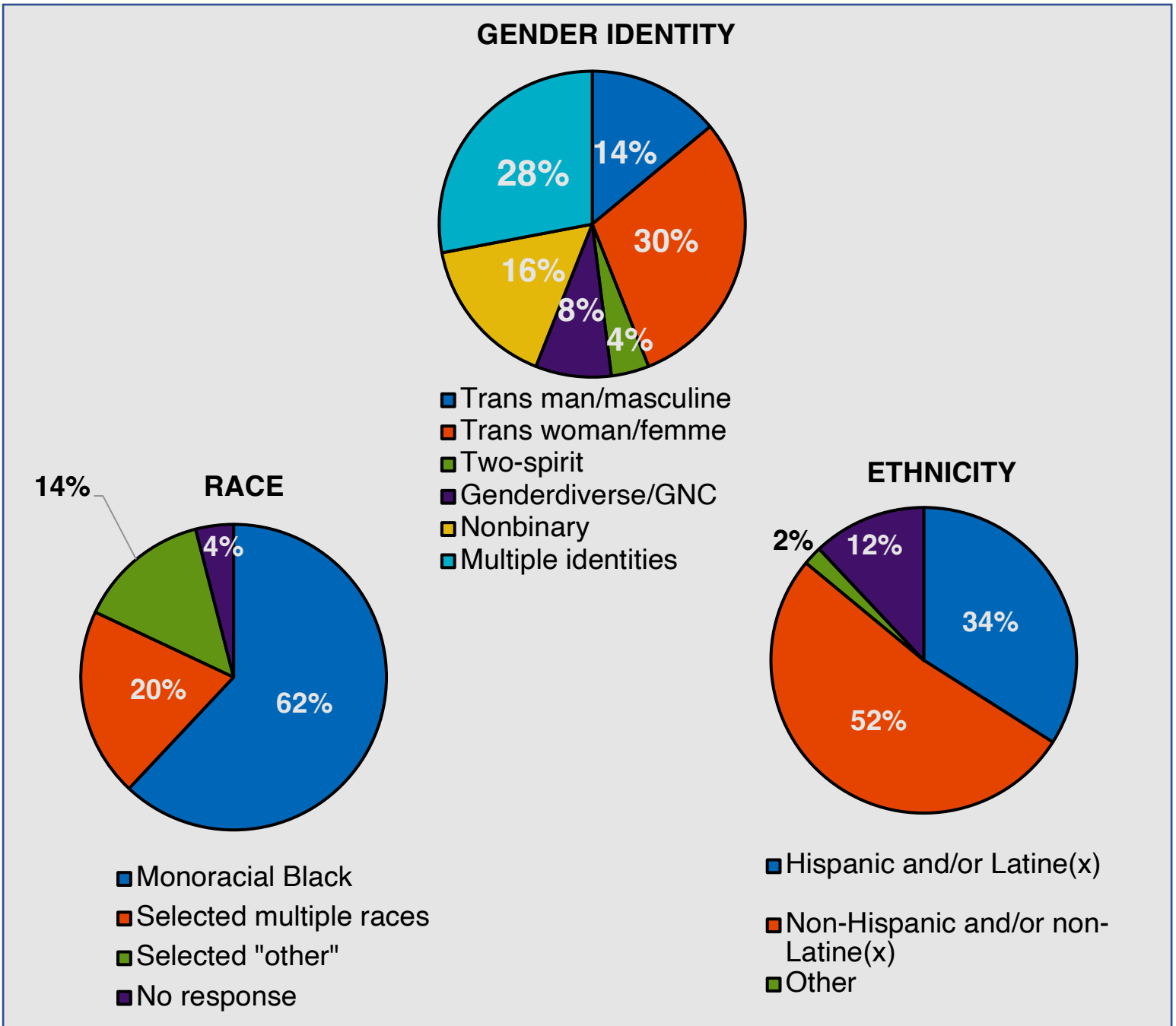
Broadly, a stakeholder is any individual who is invested in supporting and bettering the lives of QTBIPOC people.

Our hope is that, after reading this report, stakeholders will be able to:

- 1. Better understand the challenges faced by QTBIPOC people in the Austin area.**
- 2. Use the results of this survey to better direct resources to underserved communities.**
- 3. Have a data source that supports the testimony of QTBIPOC regarding the adversity and difficulties faced by their community.**

Participants

Participants consisted of 50 transgender and gender diverse people of color who live in the greater Austin, Texas metropolitan area. Participants ranged in age from 21-39 years old with an average age of 28.1 years. Survey participants reside in Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop counties in Central Texas. 44 participants completed the survey in English, and 6 participants completed the survey in Spanish.

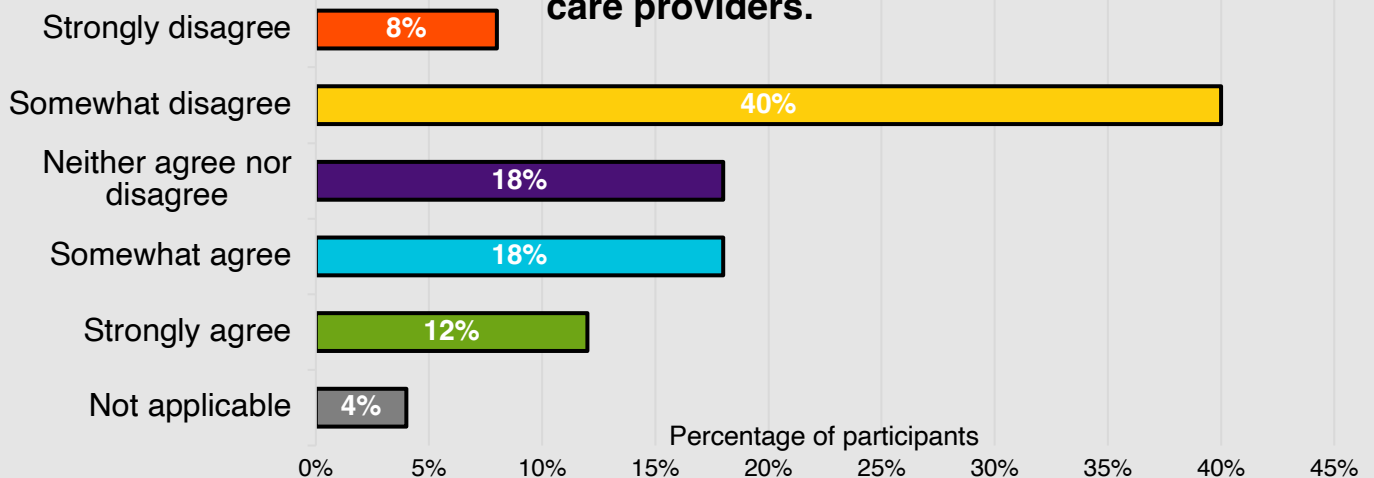


Healthcare and Healthcare Access

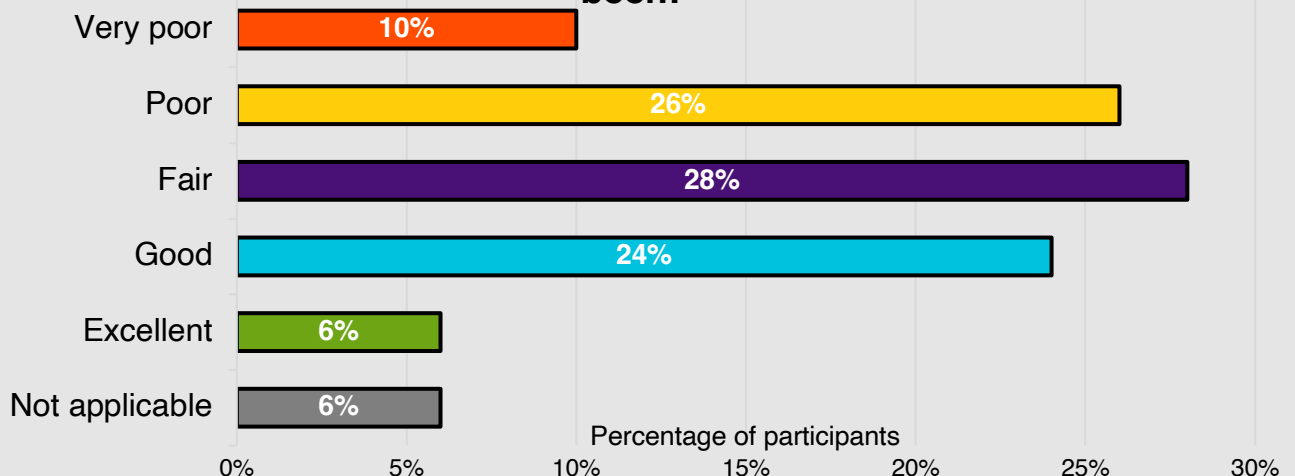
Only 50% of participants reported having health insurance. Participants who did not have health insurance were asked why they couldn't get health insurance, and the most commonly reported reason (20 respondents) was **“I think it will cost too much/I can't afford it.”**

Participants were also asked about the quality of their healthcare experiences. Nearly half (48%) of participants reported that they **do not believe their LGBTQIA2S+ identity is respected by their healthcare providers** overall, and 36% had **poor or very poor healthcare experiences** overall.

Overall, I believe my LGBTQIA2S+ identity is respected by health care providers.



Overall, my experience of getting medical care in Central Texas has been:



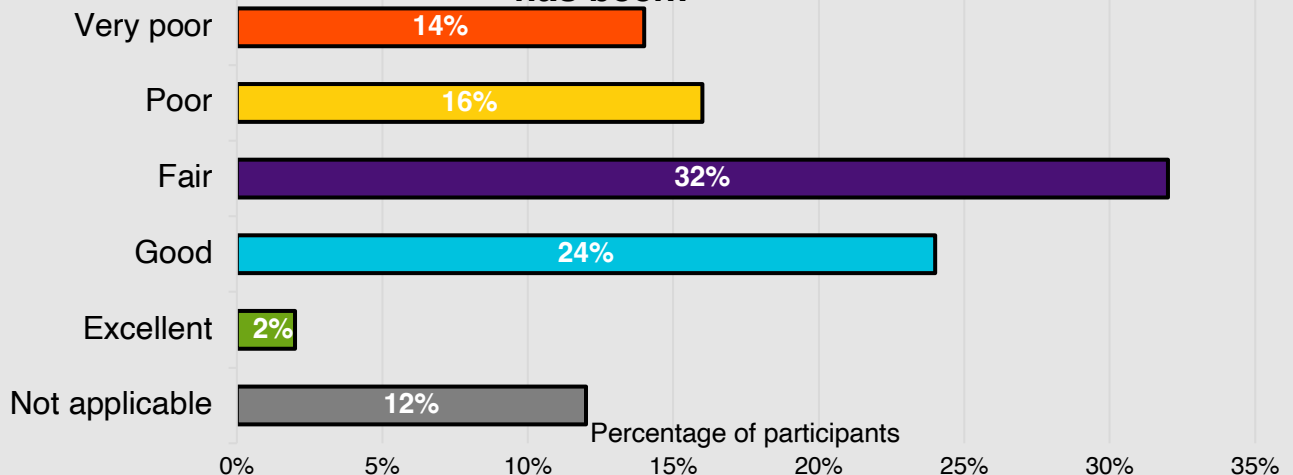
Mental Healthcare

62% of participants reported that they have had **difficulty accessing mental healthcare in Texas**. The most frequently reported mental health care needs for participants in the last 6 months were “**getting an individual counselor**” (25 participants) and “**getting an individual counselor I can afford**” (20 participants). When asked what participants look for in a mental health provider, the mostly commonly reported characteristic was “**someone who has specific experience with the LGBTQIA2S+ community**” (42 participants). The second most commonly reported characteristic was “**someone who is a person of color**” (28 participants).

Participant quote: “I have had the best experience with therapists who are people of color & have experience with LGBTQ+ individuals. They understand the unique dynamics/difficulties that come with intersectionality.”

30% of participants reported poor or very poor experiences of receiving mental healthcare in Texas:

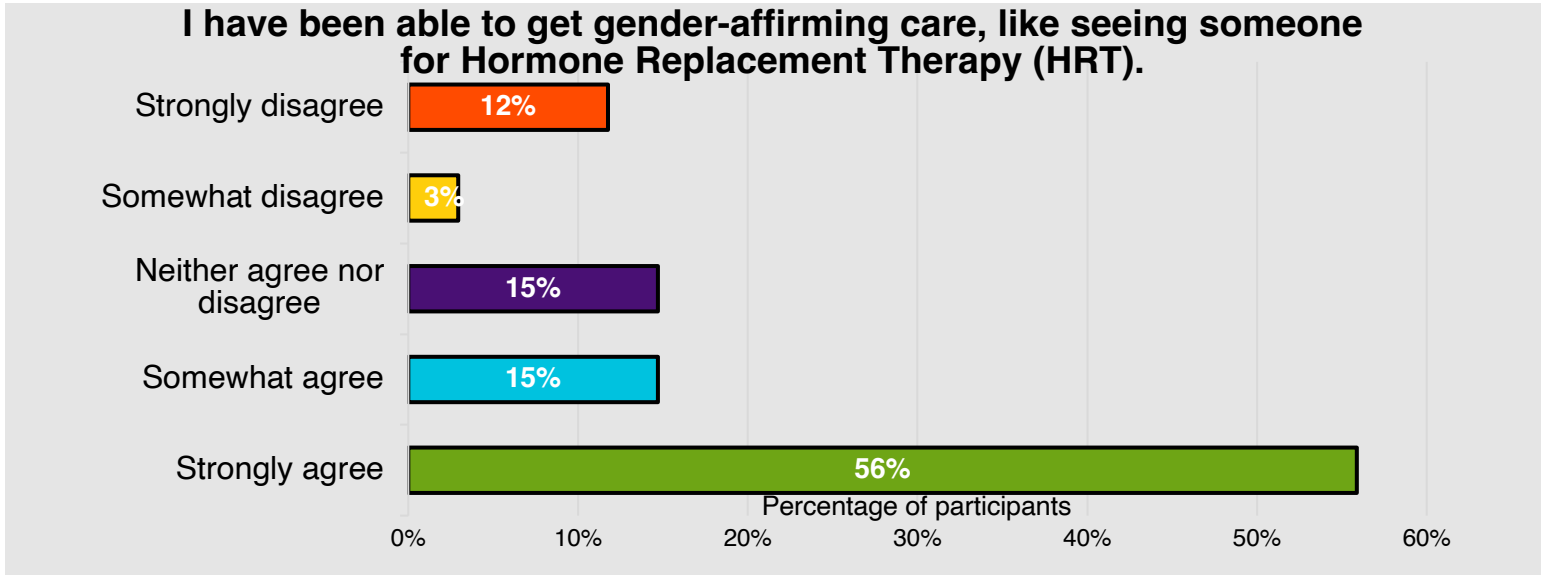
Overall, my experience getting mental healthcare in Central Texas has been:



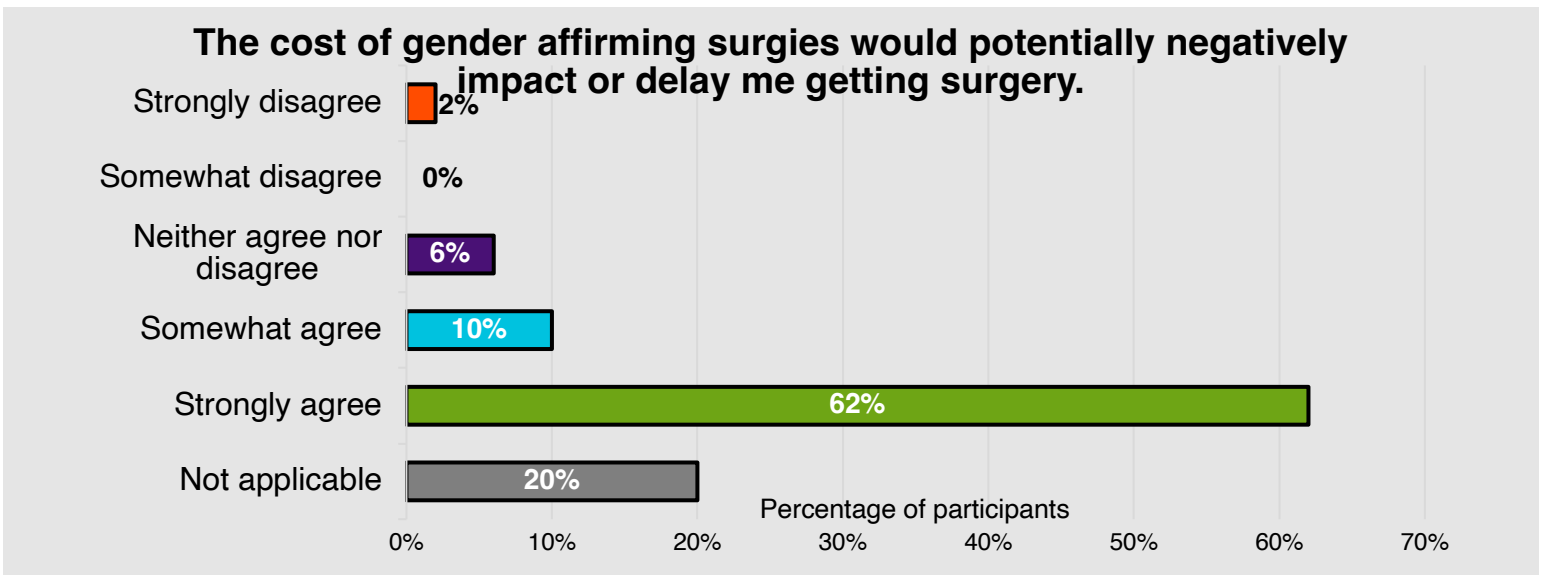
Participant quote: “Specifically whenever I am hospitalized for my mental health issues, I’m often misgendered by staff, harassed by staff/ other patients, and on a few occasions have had my identity questioned and been denied my hormones.”

Gender Affirming Care

Of the 34 participants who reported that gender affirming care access was applicable to them, over half (56%) strongly agreed that they were able to access it when needed.



34% of participants reported that they have relied on credit cards to cover gender affirming expenses because they did not have any other means. Also importantly, a significant 62% of participants strongly agreed that the cost of gender affirming surgeries would affect or delay surgery access.



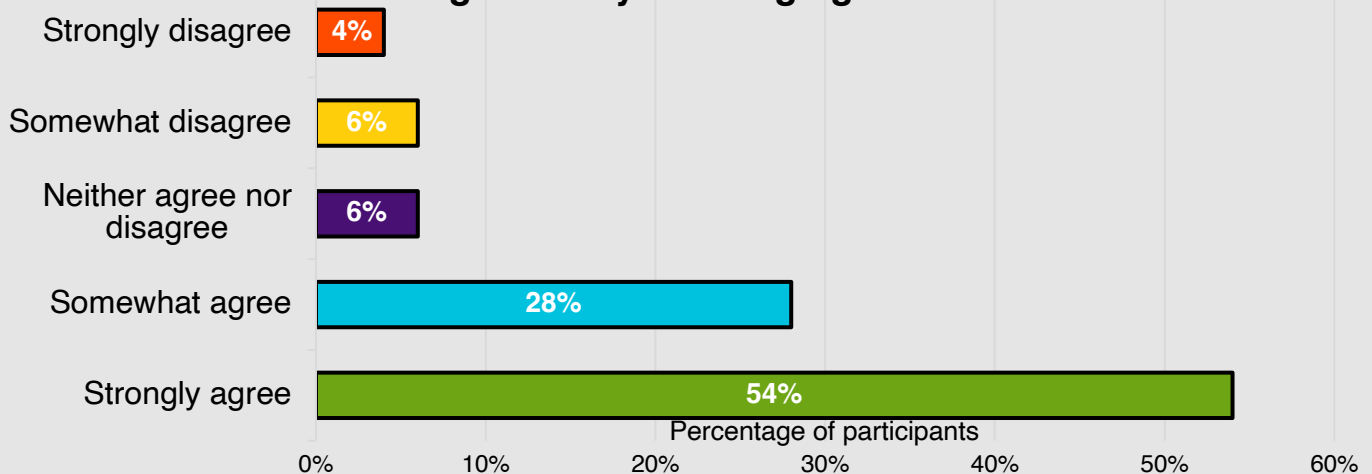
Community Connection

We sought to understand participants' sense of community in the Greater Austin area. The most common method participants used to feel connected was **“relationships with local friends in the community”** (32 participants), **“local LGBTQIA2S+ groups”** (30 participants), **“locally-based social media resources”** (28 participants), and **“local groups for BIPOC folks”** (25 participants).

Participant quote: “I feel like it is hard to find a setting where being Trans and Black is okay. Most BIPOC groups have issues with LGBTQ People. Most LGBTQ groups have deep seated systemic racism/ biases when it comes to people of color. So it is difficult to find a place or people to let your guard down with.”

The lack of belonging the participant above mentions may have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as more than half (54%) of participants strongly agreed that the pandemic made connecting to LGBTQIA2S+ communities much more difficult.

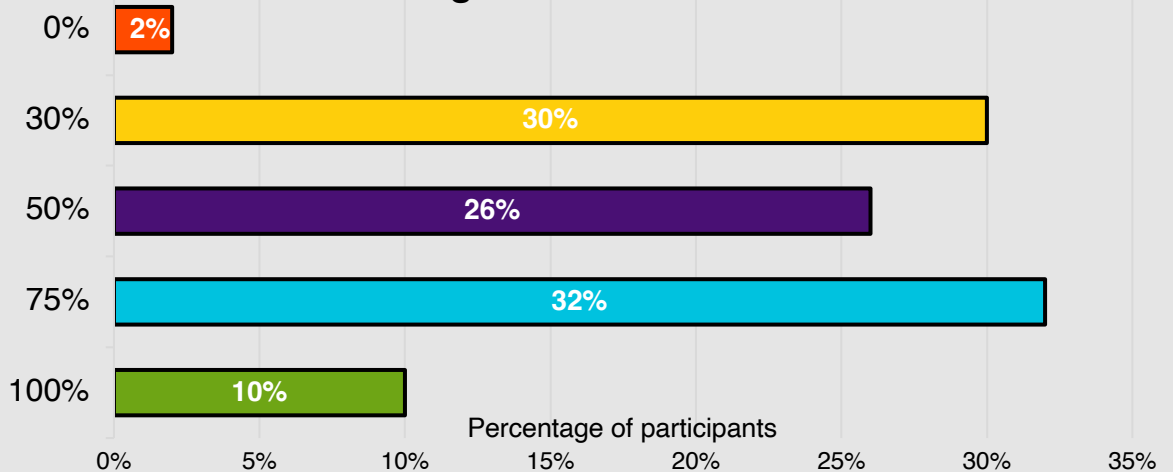
COVID has made connecting to Trans and Queer communities significantly challenging.



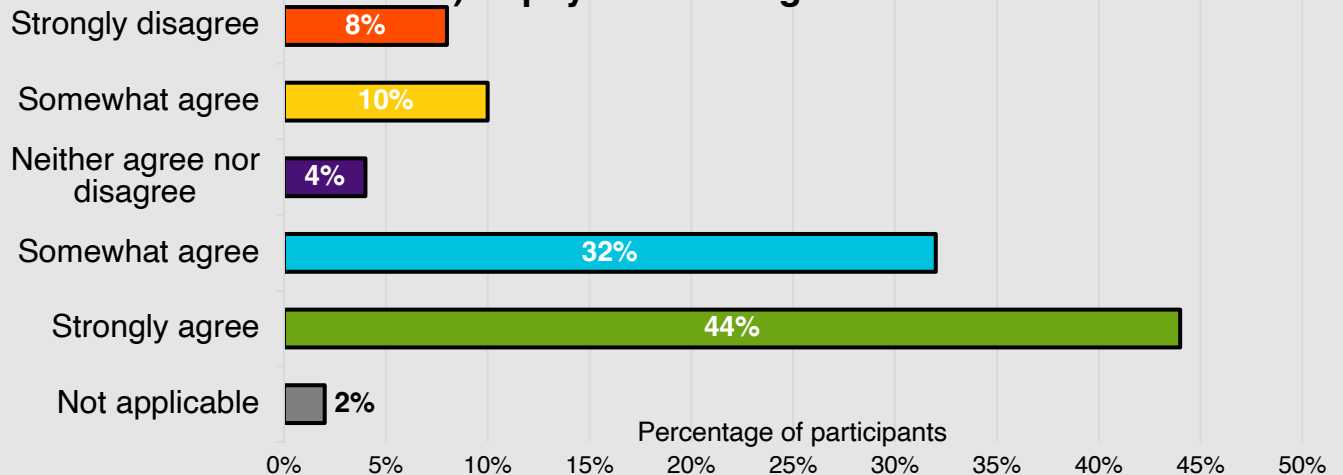
Housing and Gentrification

Our survey showed that housing and gentrification were some of the most important problems faced by Black and Brown transgender residents of Austin. Just **18% of participants were homeowners**, and 12% had utilized housing shelters in Central Texas. While 46% of participants strongly agreed that they currently had stable housing, this result is complicated by the fact that **many participants are paying a significant portion of their income towards housing costs**, and **many report having to sacrifice other basic needs to cover housing costs**.

On average, the following percentage of my income goes toward housing costs:



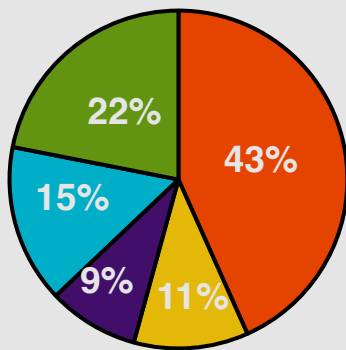
I have had to sacrifice other basic needs (food, utilities, medical care) to pay for housing costs.



Transportation

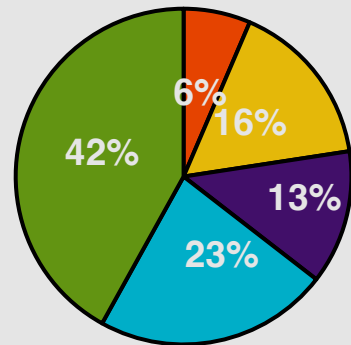
Participants reported frequent use of public transportation – 37% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that public transportation is their main source of transportation. This finding has implications for employment, as 42% of respondents strongly agreed that they felt limited to jobs that were accessible from a bus route when seeking employment.

Public transportation is my main source of transportation.



- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

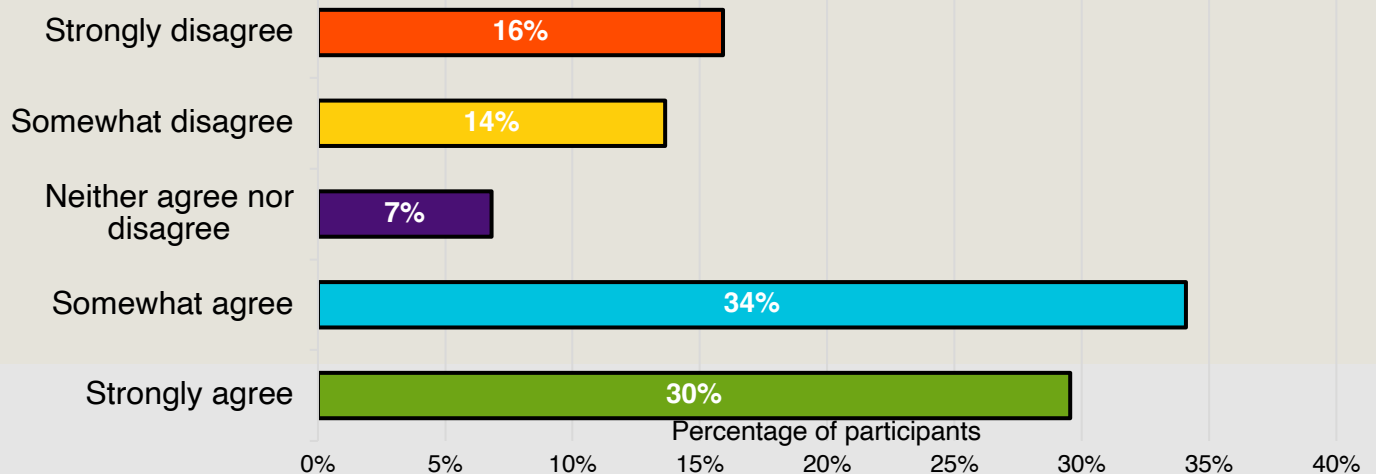
When I'm seeking employment I feel limited to options that are on a bus route.



- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

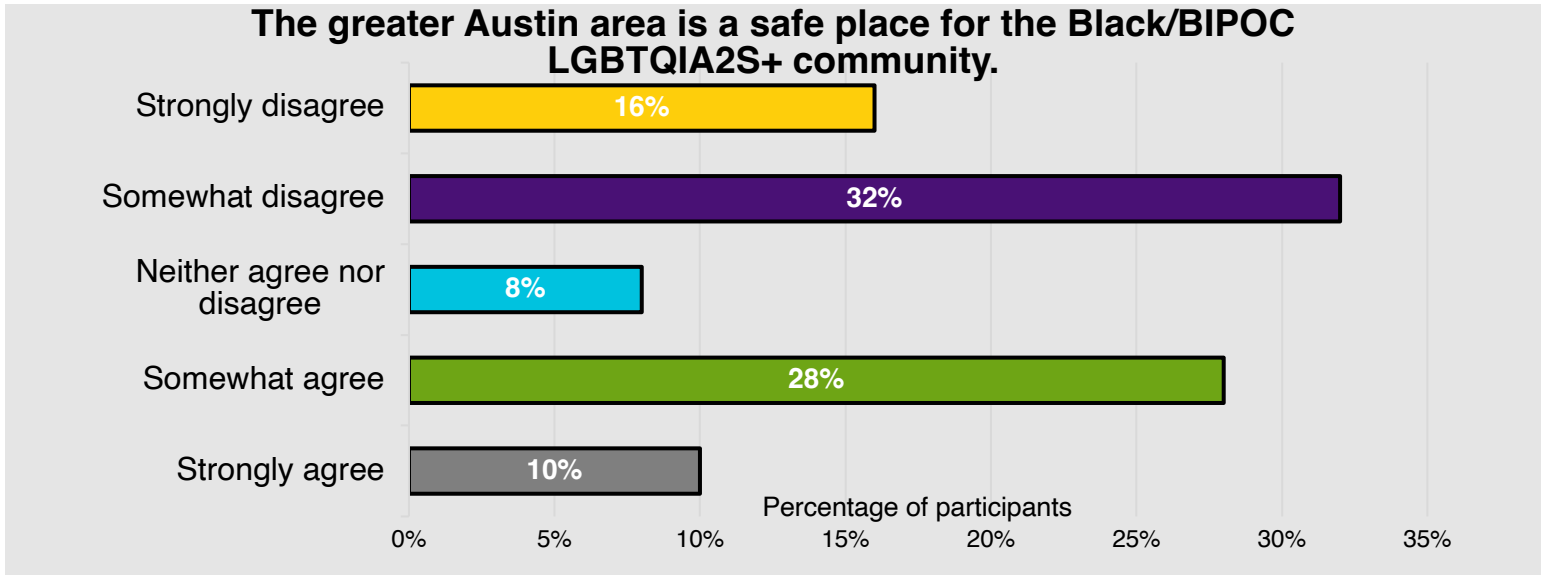
Importantly, participants reported good proximity to bus stops:

I live in an area where bus stops are easily accessible.

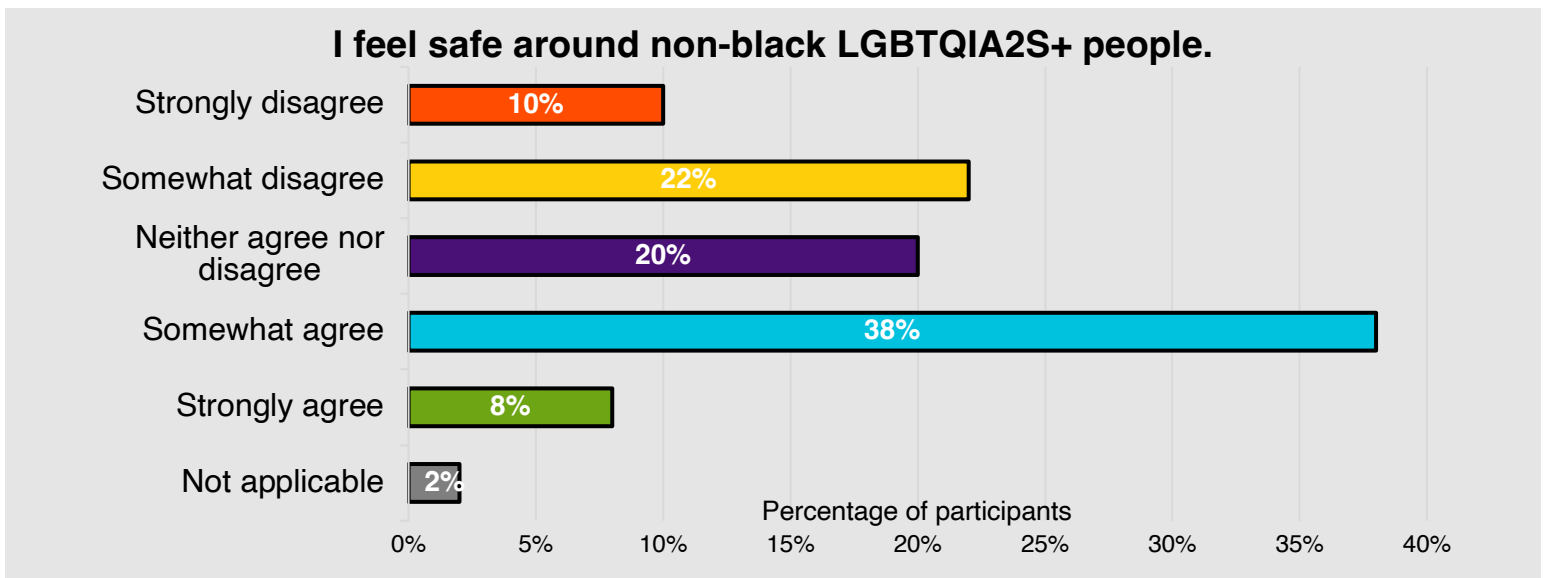


Community Safety

Participants were split in terms of whether or not they agreed that the greater Austin area feels safe for Black/BIPOC LGBTQIA2S+ people:



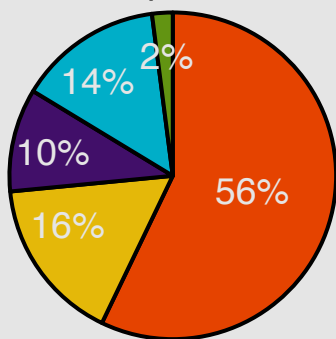
Participants also had mixed feelings about their safety around non-black LGBTQIA2S+ people:



Public Safety

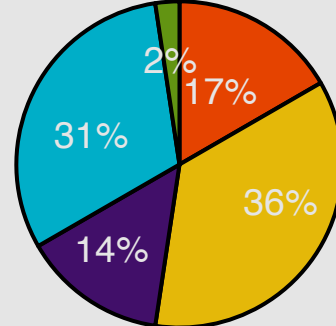
We also sought to understand participants' sense of safety in public and safety services. **Strikingly, 56% of participants strongly disagreed that they felt safe calling 911 or police.** Additionally, 53% of participants reported **feeling somewhat or significantly unsafe using public transportation in Central Texas.**

I feel safe calling 911 or police.



- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

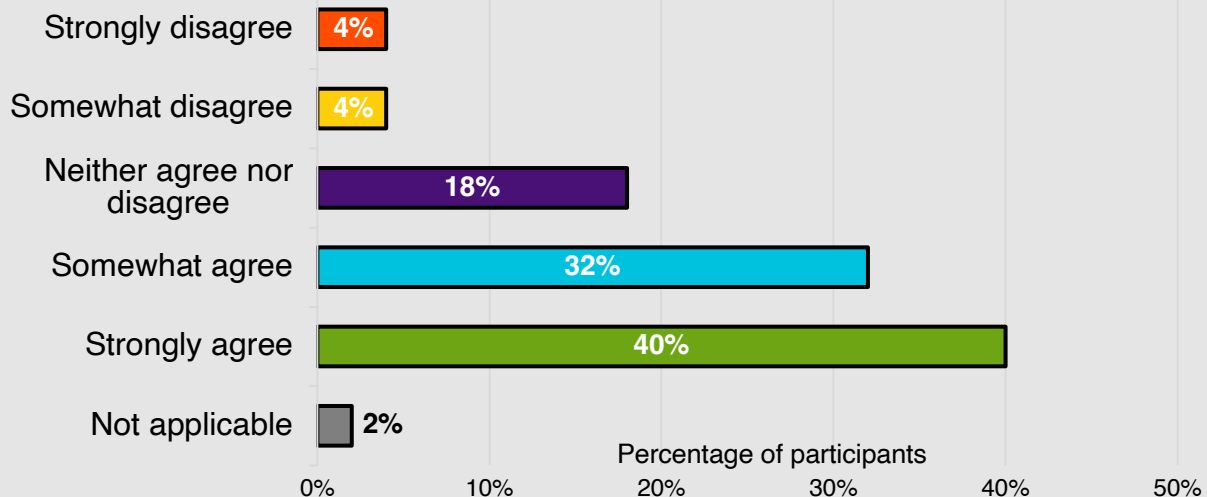
I feel safe using public transportation in Central Texas.



- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Additionally, 72% of participants reported they have felt targeted by police:

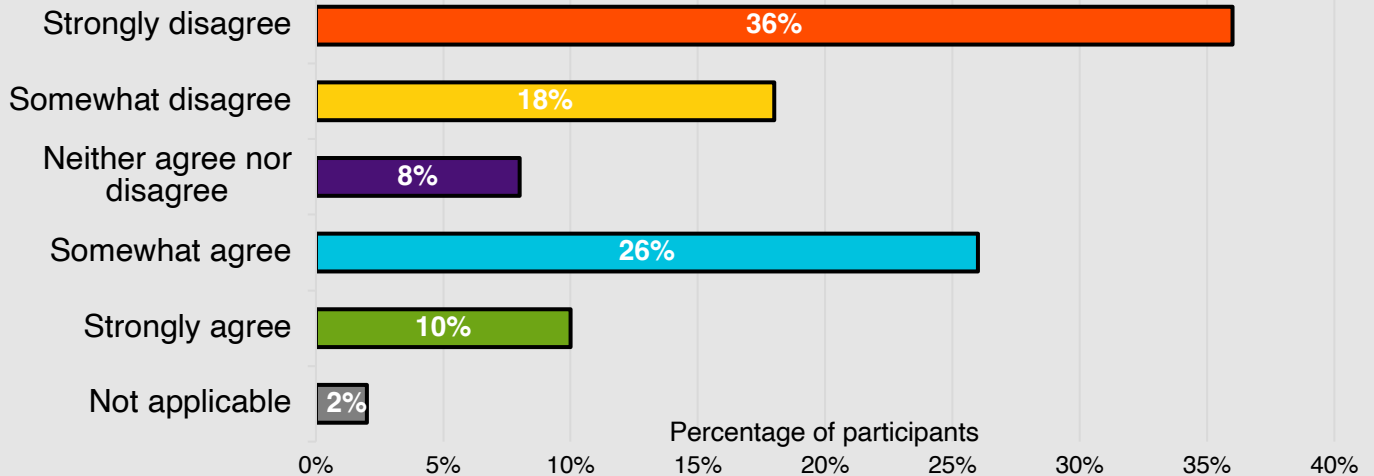
I have felt targeted by police.



Finances

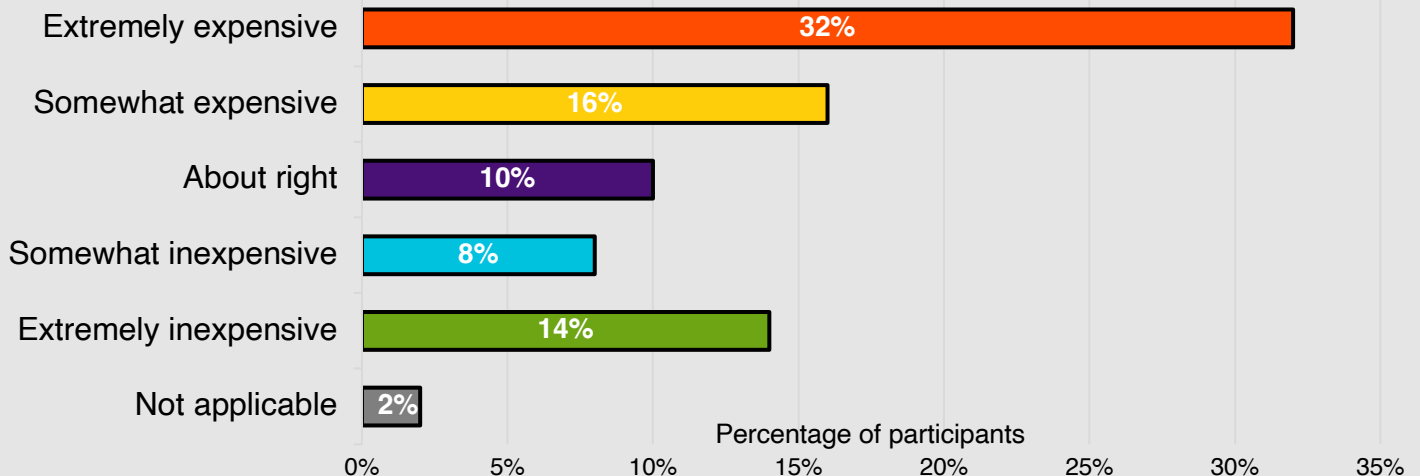
Participants reported significant financial discomfort – more than half of participants (54%) reported some degree of instability in their current financial situation.

I feel stable in my current financial situation.



Additionally, 32% of participants reported that a rent payment of \$1,200 is extremely expensive. This is alarming given that at the time of this writing, the average apartment rent in Austin Texas is \$1,777.

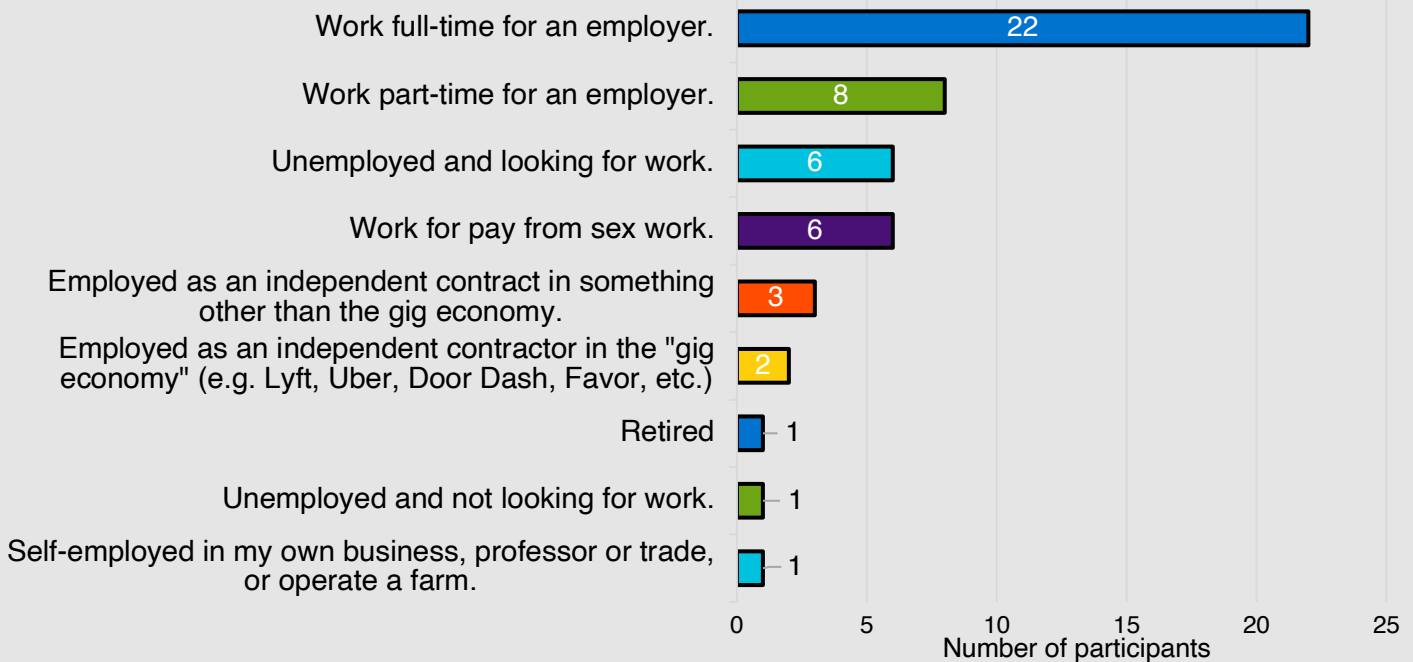
A rent payment of \$1,200 is ...



Employment and Workplace Discrimination

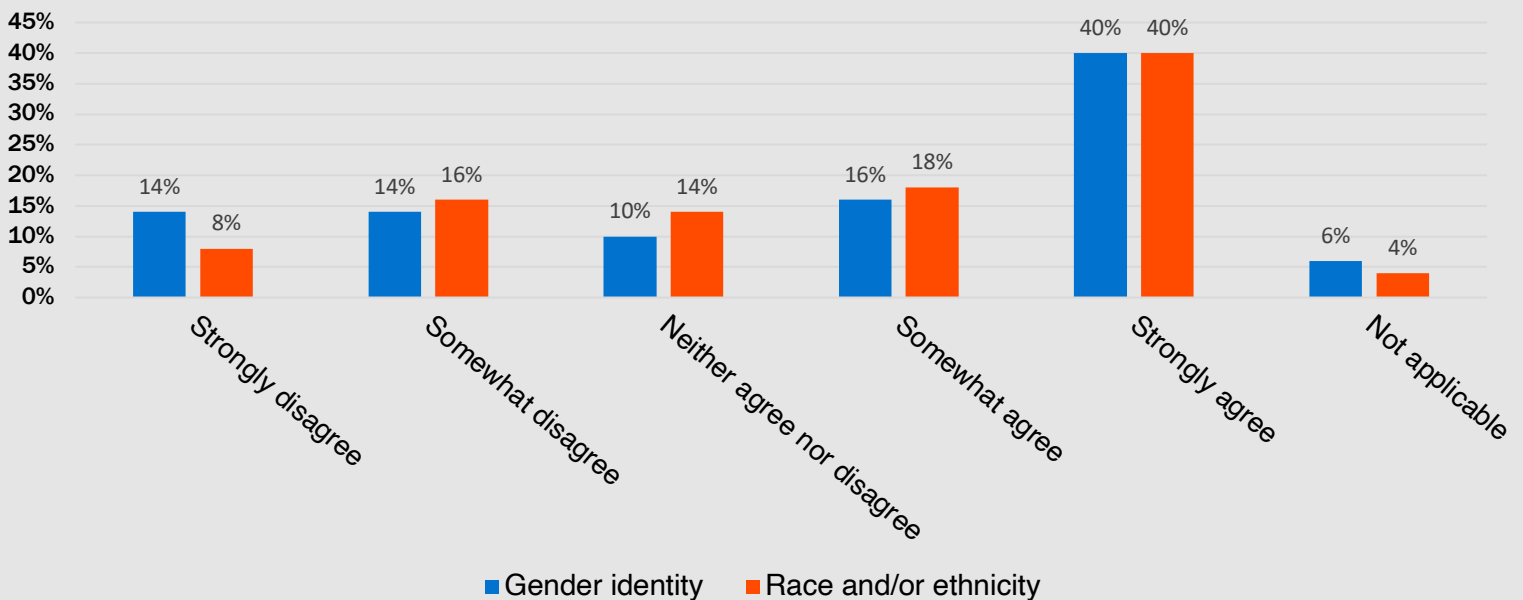
The most common employment status was working full-time (22 participants).

Current Employment Status



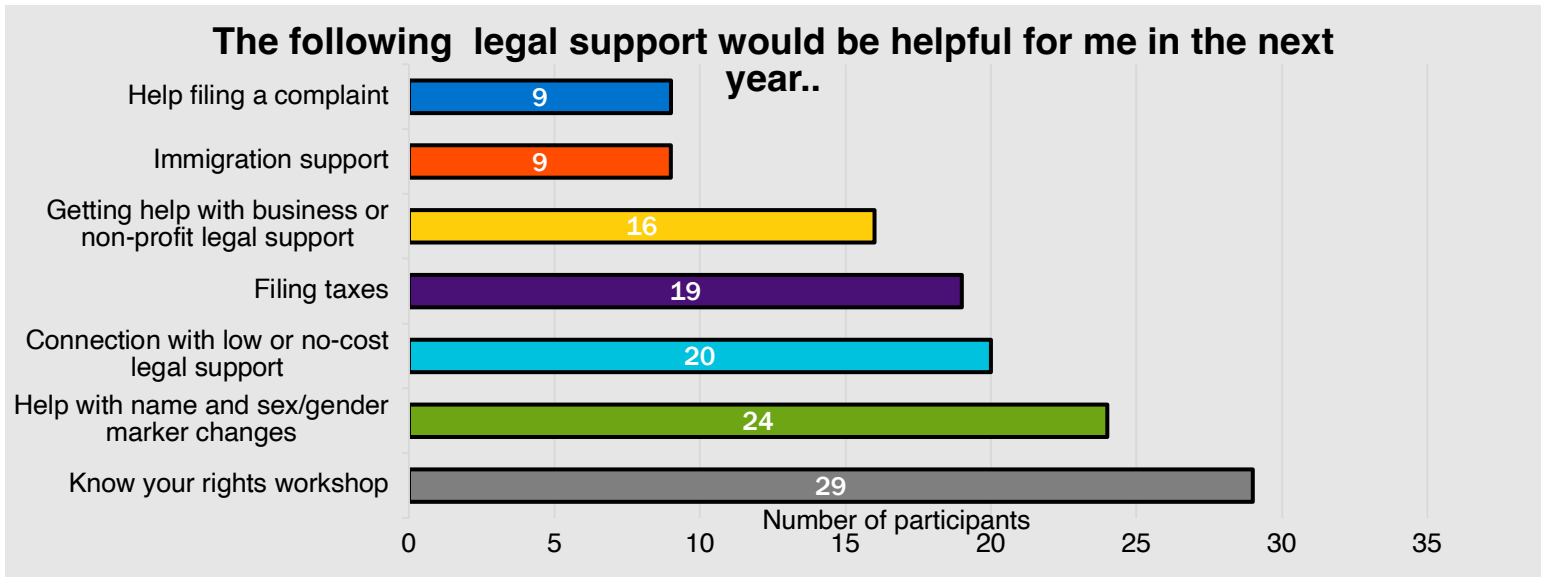
40% of participants strongly agreed that they had experienced discrimination at their workplace due to their gender identity and race/ethnicity.

I have experienced discrimination because of my _____ at my workplace.

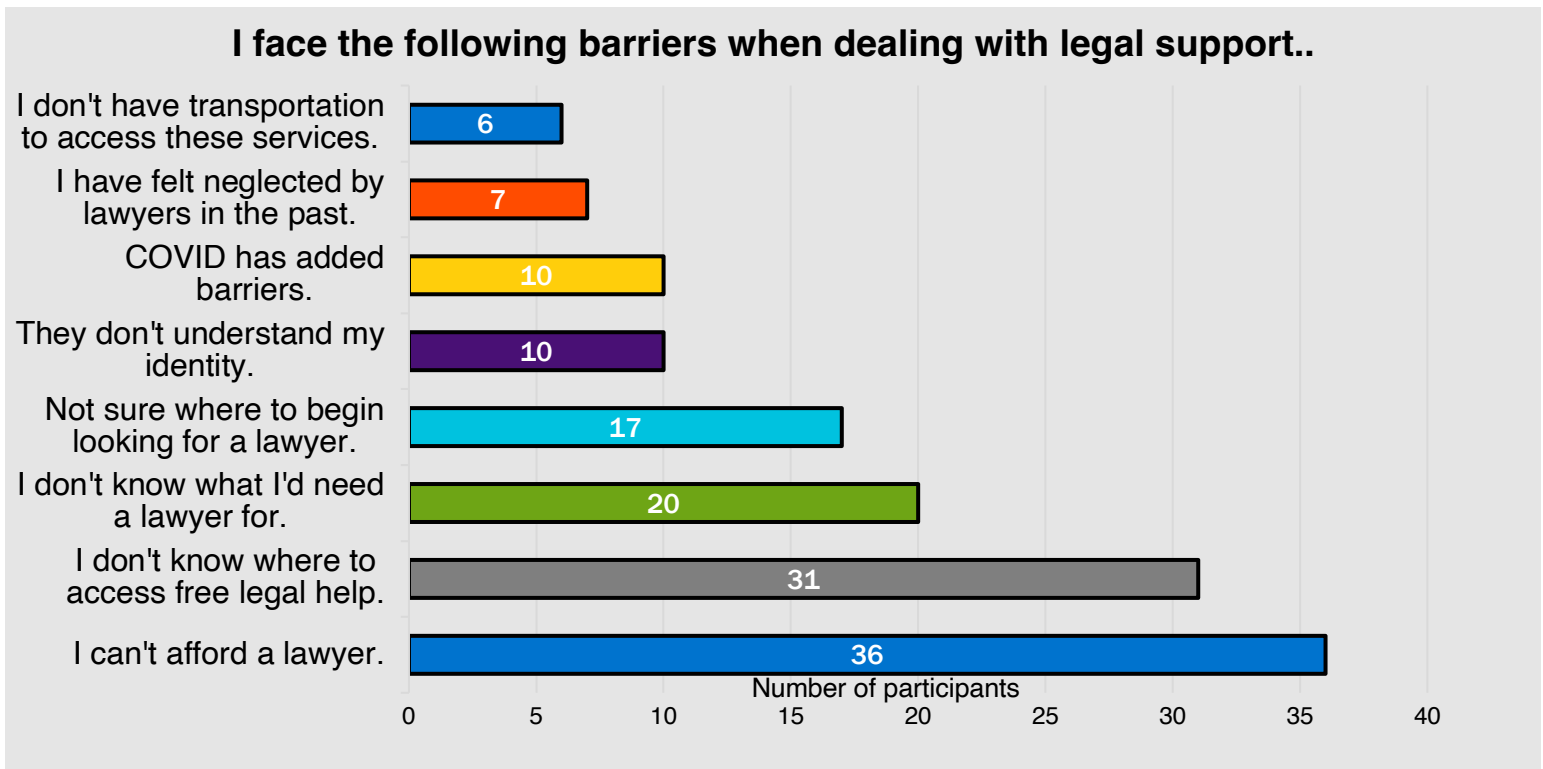


Legal Assistance

The most commonly requested legal support by participants in this sample was a **know your rights workshop** (29 participants), closely followed by **help with name and sex/gender marker changes** (24 participants.)



The most commonly reported barriers to legal support were cost and not knowing where to access free legal help.



Takeaways from Results

Financial adversity and housing instability.

Many of our QTBIPOC respondents reported feeling financially unstable, and many reported that a \$1200 rent payment was extremely expensive – this is alarming given that rents in the Greater Austin area are rising at a rapid rate. Even more concerning, 68% of the sample reported that 50% or more of their income goes towards housing costs each month.

Experiences of workplace discrimination.

40% of our sample reported experiencing discrimination in their workplace based on both their race/ethnicity and their gender identity.

Safety concerns.

72% of participants somewhat or strongly disagreed that they felt safe calling 911 or the police. Additionally, participants reported feeling unsafe using public transportation, and sometimes unsafe in the Greater Austin area in general.

Lack of culturally responsive care.

Participants reported significant difficulty in affording healthcare (especially mental healthcare) and finding providers that understand the intersectionality of their race/ethnicity and LGBTQIA+ identities.

Need for venues for support and connection.

Many participants noted that the pandemic made it very difficult to connect to their communities. Feeling connected to community is lacking and important for QTBIPOC in Central Texas.

Call to Action – Housing First

Rising rents and cost of living are one of the most pressing issues facing QTBIPOC living in the Greater Austin area. BTLA agrees with Housing First principles – that “people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues” (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016). Stakeholders should:

- 1. Center QTBIPOC who are at greatest risk of displacement when advocating for funding for housing assistance or innovate housing solutions.**
- 2. Support Housing First solutions.**
- 3. Advocate for zoning in the City of Austin and surrounding communities that support affordable housing options.**
- 4. Support community-led programs such as BTLA’s Community Land Trust plan (<https://btla.squarespace.com/star-housing-and-land-trust>).**

Call to Action – Employment and Social Services

Given the reality of employment discrimination and additional challenges with the current economy, more support is needed to ensure QTBIPOC safety in the workplace. Better and safer workplaces ensure stronger financial stability for QTBIPOC. Stakeholders should:

- 1. Advocate for and implement programs designed to help QTBIPOC get their basic needs met, including case management services, food and hygiene programs, and transportation support.**
- 2. Train employees and employers to respect QTBIPOC people and foster an inclusive workplace. Create an ombudsman, or anonymous line for people to report issues and discrimination.**
- 3. Donate to mutual aid funds which serve QTBIPOC.**
- 4. Advocate for direct financial assistance for communities through Universal Basic Income (UBI) models.**

Call to Action – Reimagining Public Safety

Just 16% of our respondents reported feeling comfortable calling 911 or the police for help, and 72% of our sample reported that they have felt targeted by the police. Given these alarming statistics, structural changes to public safety are required. Additionally, a lack of feeling safe on public transportation can impede employment and financial stability. Stakeholders should:

- 1. The City of Austin could remove police officers from mental health crisis intervention duty and replace those officers with mental health specialists. Stakeholders can advocate for this policy and other alternatives to policing to enhance public safety.**
- 2. Pressure Capital Metro to address QTBIPOC safety first and foremost, as they roll out new transportation initiatives such as Project Connect.**

Call to Action – Culturally Responsive Care

Access to quality medical and mental healthcare leads to a better quality of life. This care should be continuously affordable and accessible to QTBIPOC. Healthcare providers need more training in order to meet the intersectional needs of their clients and patients.

Stakeholders should:

- 1. Advocate for or provide more affordable and accessible care options, such as sliding scale therapy and tele-mental healthcare.**
- 2. Assist or refer individuals to any care options that might be available – Medicaid, MAP, or the health insurance marketplace.**
- 3. Make trainings for providing cultural literacy and humility MANDATORY for healthcare providers, regardless of specialty.**
- 4. Hire and promote staff and leaders who have lived experiences and identities that reflect the communities they are serving in medical, mental health, and social services settings.**

Call to Action – QTBIPOC Spaces & Peer Support

More QTBIPOC-specific events and venues are needed. These locations and events should be flexible and allow community to gather and connect. LGBTQIA+ gathering spaces that are predominately white or white-led must challenge deep-seated racism and biases in order to make these spaces more inclusive for QTBIPOC.

Stakeholders should:

- 1. Donate to QTBIPOC-specific organizations in Austin (Black Trans Leadership of Austin, allgo, SWEET ATX).**
- 2. Create peer support structures and community care teams to provide emotional and practical support for QTBIPOC. For example, surgery transportation and post-op care.**
- 3. Plan and fund new or expanded community spaces that center QTBIPOC in Central Texas.**
- 4. Advocate for and plan substance-free events to promote the health of our community members.**