

## Bristol Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Community Wellness Survey

The Bristol Health Equity Zone (BHEZ), envisions a community where all residents have equal access to opportunities that promote health and wellness. We partner with existing organizations and stakeholders towards a common goal of equal access to healthy lifestyles through all stages of life for the community. One of our main working groups focuses on personal health and wellness with suicide prevention as one of its many initiatives. In January 2019, a variety of community partners, including Matthew Patton Foundation and the Rhode Island Department of Health worked together with residents to complete a wellness survey so we could understand how the HEZ could support wellness activities in Bristol. This survey provides important insights into the needs of the Bristol community that we will use to strengthen our work in serving our community.

Any Bristol resident or worker who was 18 years or older was eligible to complete the survey and anyone who completed the survey by January 31<sup>st</sup> was entered into a drawing for one of three local restaurant gift cards. The survey was promoted using social media, specifically Facebook, our website, and word-of-mouth. Survey responses were collected and pulled from the website and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Most of the questions used a Likert scales for responses, which is a rating scale that measures how people feel about a certain topic. Survey questions also provided open ended responses for qualitative analysis.

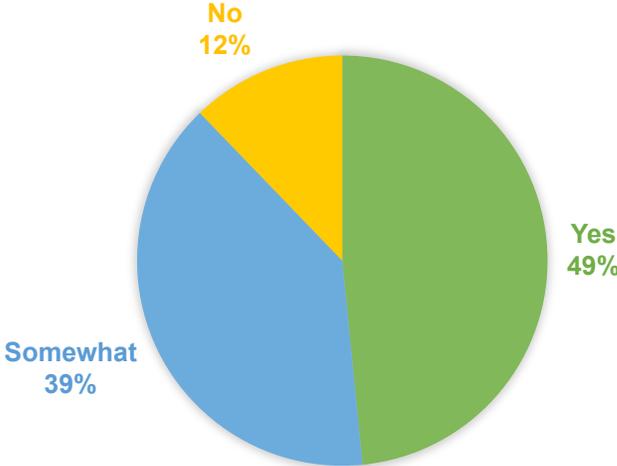
We received responses from community members who were age 18 to 65 or older with 178 reporting as Bristol residents, 4 who work in Bristol, 60 who work and live in Bristol, and 12 who neither work nor live in Bristol. Most of the respondents were female (72%), less than one-quarter were male (23%), 1% were transgender, and 4%

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preferred not to answer. Most responders reported no affiliation with the military with only 1 in the National Guard, 3 Military Reserve members, and 9 Veterans.

Notable responses included references to interest in resource knowledge, community building tools, stress reduction methods, and support groups. Resource knowledge was about knowing where to go for help with a mental illness and/or knowing where to refer someone in need. 49% reported Yes, 39% reported they have a general idea that mental health resources are available, but cannot name resources, and 12% said they do not know where to go. Community building tools was about asking what the community perceives as good community building tools. 233 responders expressed public spaces are a good community building tool like parks and other open spaces, 229 expressed they like safe spaces such as sidewalks and police presence, 221 enjoy regular community events like farmers markets and book clubs, and 204 enjoy volunteering like Earth Day cleanups, blood drives, and food/clothing drives. Other feedback includes satisfaction with the local community events, community recreation center, and the local library. Stress reduction methods involved a list of possible stress reduction methods and asked the responders to rate each on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 meaning not effective and 5 meaning extremely effective. Respondents expressed satisfaction with the following stress reduction methods: music (16%), reading (14%), water activities (14%), and time with family and friends (14%), yoga/meditation (10%), crafts (10%), support groups (8%), games (6%), restaurants (4%), local events (4%). Lastly, supports groups that the community would like involve support for mental illness (29%), substance abuse/addiction (24%), chronic illness (18%), suicide (14%), remaining responses expressed no need in support groups.

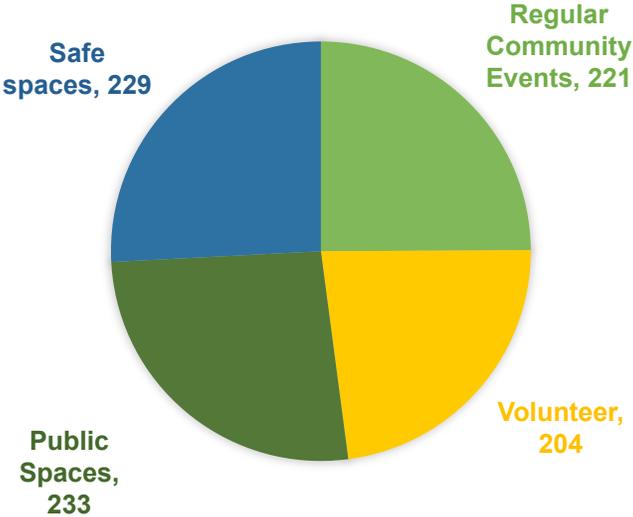
**Chart 1: Resources Knowledge**



**Table 1: Community Building Tools**

Rec Center	8
Reading	1
Shopping	2
Library	4
Activities with Seniors	4
Local Events	12
Support Groups	3
Environment	2
Newspaper	1
Transportation	1

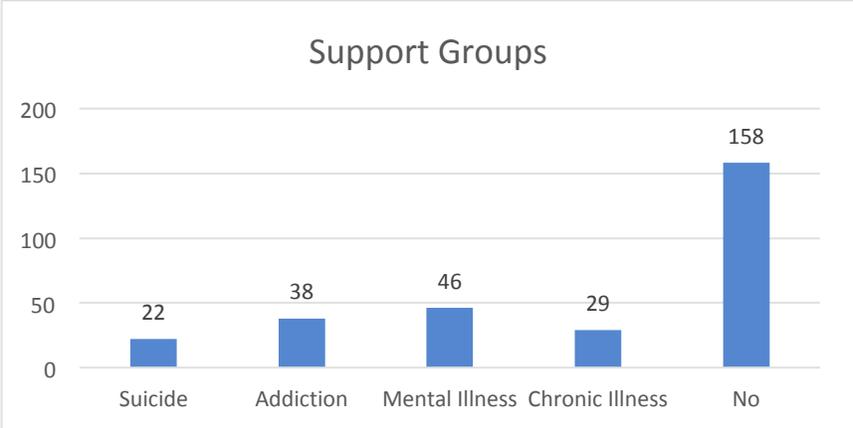
**Chart 2: Community Building Tools**



**Table 2: Stress Reduction Methods**

Water Activities	14%
Reading	14%
Crafts	10%
Restaurants	4%
Local Events	4%
Support Groups	8%
Music	16%
Games	6%
Yoga/Meditation	10%
Time w/Family & Friends	14%

**Chart 3: Support Groups**



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From these results we can see there is a need for mental health resources and using this data the Bristol Health Equity Zone will work with existing organizations, partners, and stakeholders to improve access to the necessary mental health resources for our community. In response to these survey results and feedback from the community, the BHEZ created a new landing page in September 2019. One can go to [helpisherebristol.com](http://helpisherebristol.com) to find a list of local resources to connect with to help one overcome some of life's most challenging obstacles. The list will be updated on an on-going basis, so as we connect with more resources, residents can too.

Additional free, community building events that resulted from this survey were all the Mental Health Matters events that took place this past September. At the beginning of the month, a Talk Saves Lives breakfast was offered at the Rogers Free Library, which was facilitated by the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. That event promoted suicide awareness. Following that event was the Rally4Recovery that brought the community together to celebrate anyone in recovery and hosted approximately 30 local organizations to promote their mental health and substance abuse resources, in addition to family friendly entertainment opportunities. Later in the month a Mental Health Matters: Community Conversation that brought the community together for a lively, open discussion about mental health and why having open discussions and promoting awareness is important. The final offering was the first annual Bristol Day of Caring that brought 50 volunteers to 12 different sites throughout Bristol to help people who are unable to do their own yard and housework. This was great community builder because community members of all ages were able to interact with other Bristol residents to enjoy a day of caring for one

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another. The feedback was so positive about this event that plans are in the works for a future Day of Caring in the Spring or the Fall. We will continue to strengthen our bond with the community to get to a point where all residents have equal access to opportunities that promote health and wellness.

One limitation of this survey was that mostly females responded, which does not result in a good representation of other genders within our community. From this survey, the Bristol Health Equity Zone and the community have learned that the work to providing equal access to healthy lifestyles must be ongoing. Through each initiative and program, the BHEZ assesses the success of the program and makes refinements as necessary to better serve the community. Two additional take-aways that we learned from survey respondents was the desire for education about protecting our environment and more safe walking spaces. We are working on creating more safe walking spaces, so we will have more details in the future about that. Regarding education about protecting our environment, we can take this into consideration for future programs at HEZ, as this is an initiative that HEZs are exploring statewide.

We would like to thank the Matthew Patton Foundation for hosting the survey on their website and the members of the Suicide Prevention working group for their collaboration on creating the community wellness survey.