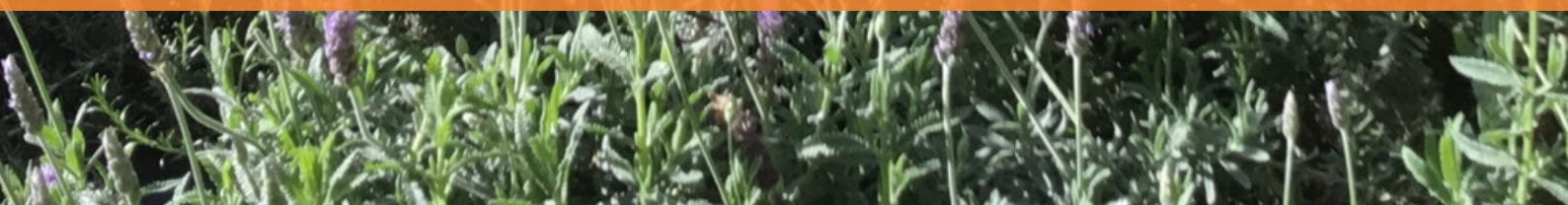




Cultivating Community Social Connectedness Report

2nd Annual Survey conducted across Cultivating
Community programs
April 2024



Social Connectedness Survey Report 2024



About this report

There is a broad-based agreement in the Public Health sector that social connectiveness protects and promotes mental and physical health and decreases all-cause mortality. Beyond individual health, social connectedness can also help create trust and resilience within communities.

This survey gives us some insight into the role that our different programs play in bringing people together, giving our participants a sense of connection and community. This is the second Social Connectedness Survey conducted across Cultivating Community's programs.

Overview

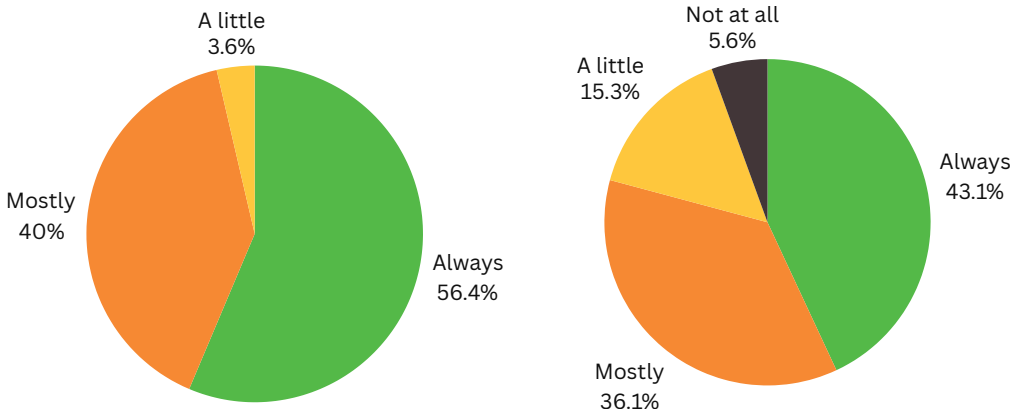
- 60 participants from 11 programs took part in this survey which was collected between the 14th of March 2024 and the 13th of April 2024. 10 children also took part in the social connectedness survey, however these results were not included in the analysis as the survey was only open to people over 18 years old last year.
- The survey was conducted in person by Jess, our Social Connection Research Manager, with the occasional assistance of staff members from partner organisations when necessary (MSIR baking program). As attendance rates were lower than usual in March/April when Jess visited the different venues, the survey was also sent by email to some of the participants.
- We have asked participants, volunteers and staff from partnering organisations to participate in the survey, giving us a full picture of the impact our programs at different levels of participations.
- A statistical test called a Chi square test was used to test if the variations we observed between the 2024 and 2023 results were significantly different or just due to normal fluctuations as a result of our sampling method.

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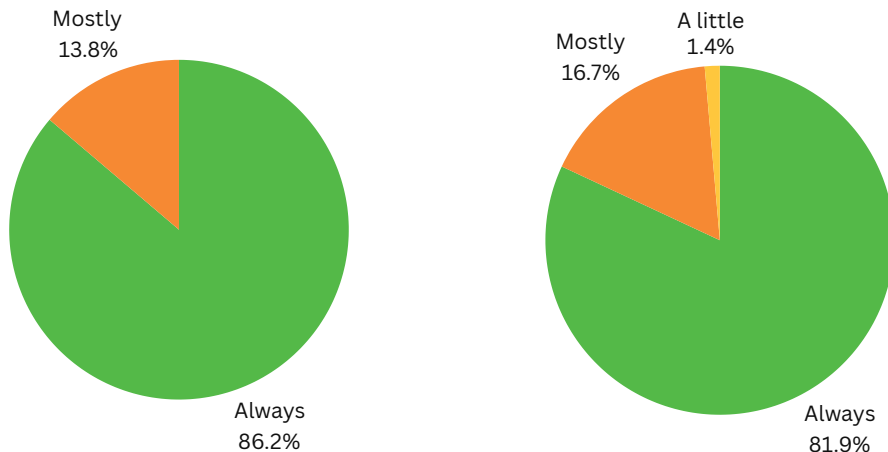
Overall survey insight : 2024 (left graph) vs 2023 (right graph)

Other group members or activity participants and I value the same thing...



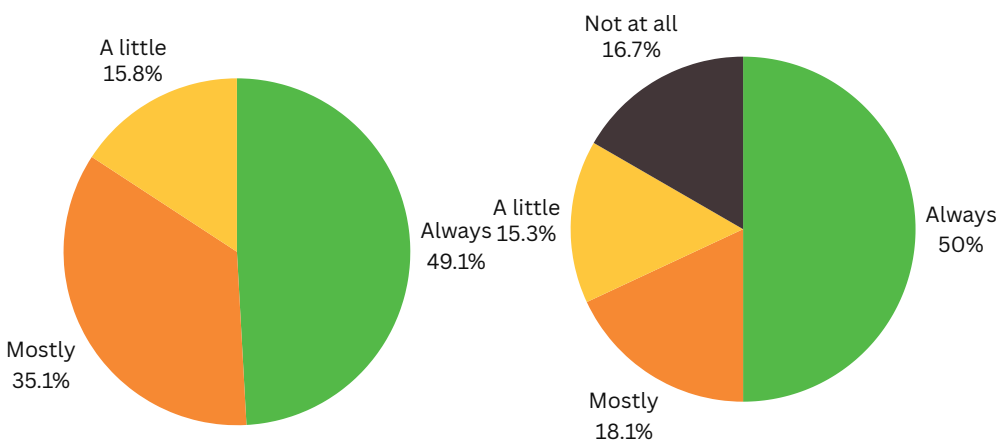
In 2024, 56.4% of participants think other group members and them value the same thing which is a 13.3% increase compared to last year. The distribution of results obtained in 2024 is significantly different from the one obtained in 2023.

Taking part in this group or activity makes me feel good...



86.2% of participants say that attending one of our programs makes them feel good. These results were consistent with results obtained last year and no significant changes were observed.

When I have a problem, I feel comfortable talking about it with others in this group or activity...

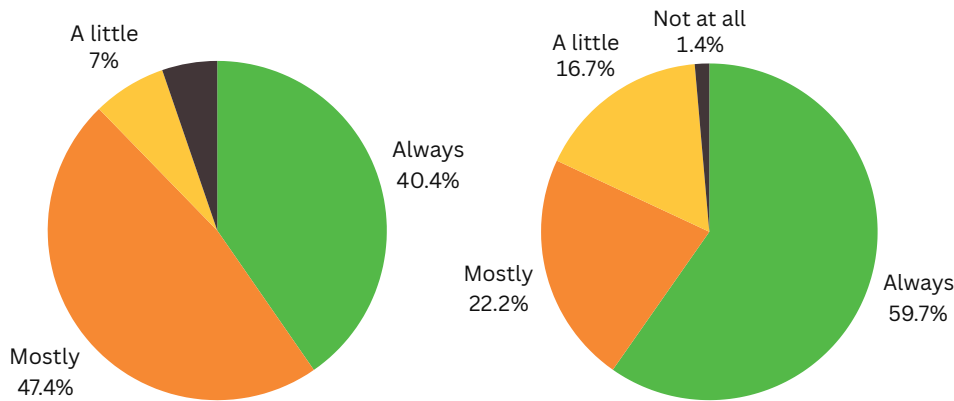


49.1% of participants feel comfortable talking about their problems with other participants or staff members. The results obtained in 2024 were significantly different from those obtained in 2023; the main change observed is the absence of respondents not feeling comfortable at all talking about their problems within their group.

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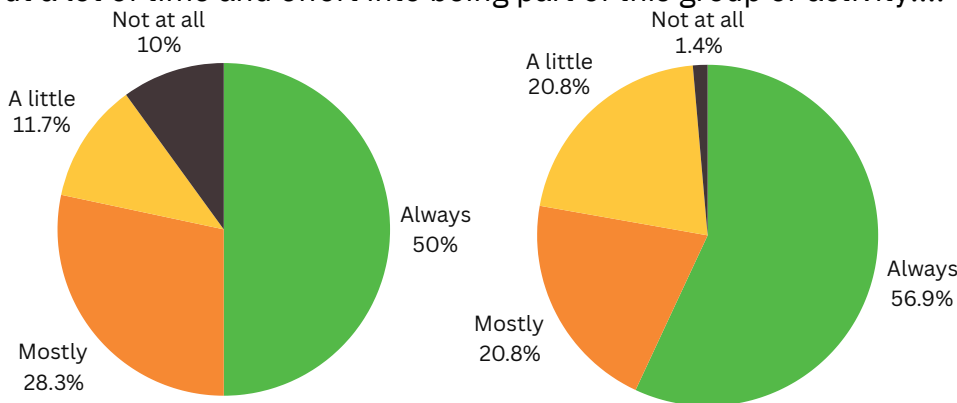


I can recognise most of the people in this group or activity...



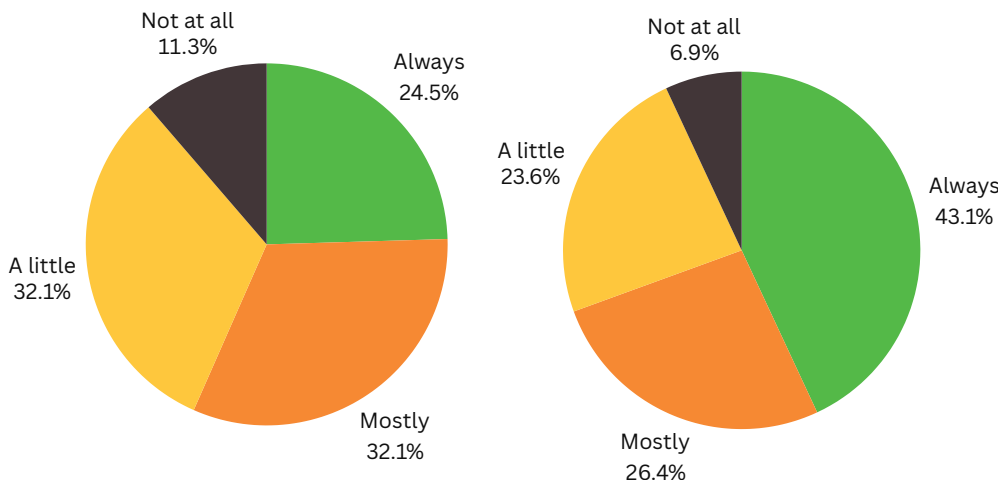
40.4% of respondents can recognise most of the people that attend their program which is 19.3% less than last year. The results obtained in 2024 were significantly different from those obtained in 2023 with a majority of respondents replying that they can mostly recognise other people in their group or activity.

I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this group or activity....



50% of respondents say that they invest a lot of time and effort being part of their group or activity in 2024. Results this year did not significantly differ from the results from 2023.

I have influence over what this group or activity is like....

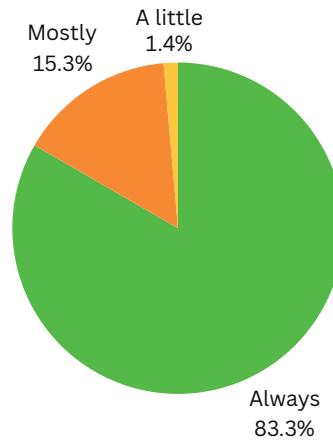
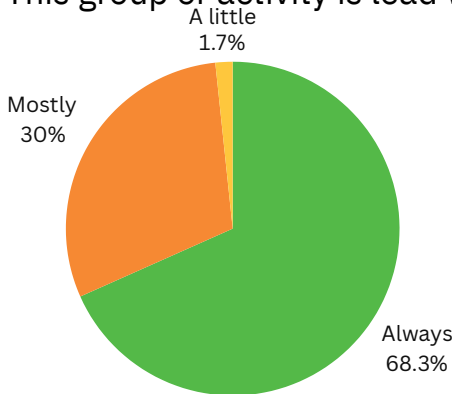


24.5% of respondents feel like their opinion matters when it comes to what the group or activity looks like. It is 18.6% less than last year's 43% but the results from this year were not significantly different from the results from the previous year.

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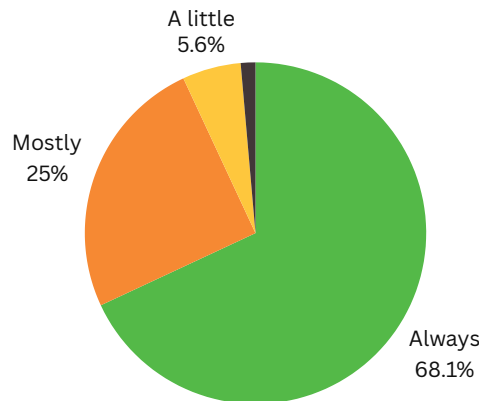
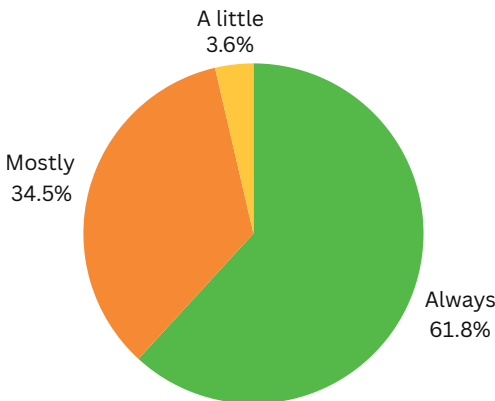


This group or activity is lead well....



68.3% of respondents say that the program they attend is lead well. Results this year did not significantly differ from the results from the previous year.

Members of this group or activity care about each other...



61.8% of respondents think that fellow participants and staff care about each other. Results this year did not significantly differ from the results from last year.



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Feedback from participants:

Gardening tends to be a personal thing but with the availability of this group, we get to learn from each other, share seeds and knowledge and get a lot of comfort in what's going well.

Yarra seed library member

It make me feel like they care about us.

MSIR participant

The Cultivating community staff are always friendly and welcoming.

Salvos participant

I love the cooking group. I love that the students represent the diversity of the North Richmond neighbourhood. I love that there is a cohort of local children that come every week because they want to be there and feel part of the group.

North Richmond After School
Cooking participant

*I love the tight-knit feeling of the volunteer team...
...I am grateful to be part of the program and participate in a wholesome and vibrant expression of community engagement.*

North Richmond After School
Cooking participant

*No other activity at MSIR has made me this happy and content :)
I set an alarm on my phone so I didn't miss it*

MSIR participant

I love sharing my experience with Carlton kitchen library with others.

CKL member

Whoever came up with this idea for pizza day is amazing

MSIR participant

People respect each other, we come and meet here, look after the garden, even when J. is not present.

Kensington Sensory Garden

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Conclusion:

This is our 2nd year collecting social connectedness surveys across our programs. This year we saw a decrease in the number of answers received (60 in 2024 vs 72 in 2023) which could be a direct reflection of the decrease in the number of programs that were active during the collection period (March-April 2024) compared to last year. The timing of the collection could also have played a part in the response rate as it coincided with Ramadan celebration and resulted in lower attendance than usual for some of our programs. March-April also coincided with the collection of feedback surveys from one of our partners which hindered our own collection process as the partner organisation was mindful that it could cause survey fatigue for their members.

Our programs have different concepts which leads to different degrees of social involvement from our participants. Being a member of Carlton Kitchen Library and Yarra Seed Library for example does not result in as much face to face interactions (and is not a requirement for being a member) than a weekly cooking program like the North Richmond After school cooking program or the BANH caravan food program.

This was reflected in the answers obtained from the survey and Carlton Kitchen Library was the program* that seemed to promote social connectedness the less *“I have used this service but rarely take advantage of the community aspect”, “... I don’t know anyone else who is a member of CKL”, “I’ve only used the CKL once, so not too sure about the community connections that may come from it”* or also *“I only give seeds so not really part of the group”* from a Yarra Seed Library member.

*Only programs with more than 7 respondents were included in this analysis : MSIR, BANH Caravan, Kensington Sensory Garden, Yarra Seed Library and Carlton Kitchen Library

Social Connectedness Survey Report 2024



Conclusion:

- Nevertheless, the results of our survey indicate that most of our programs promote social connectedness by providing a space where people with shared interests, values or goals can connect. Most respondents have stated that attending their program make them feel good and that they invest some time and energy into their respective activities. It creates a sense of belonging; people support and care about each other. This in turn leads to safer, healthier and more resilient communities. The program* that appears to have the most positive impact from a social connectedness aspect is BANH Caravan.
- We've observed some significant changes in the answers to certain questions confirming that a year later, participants feel more connected to each other and are feeling more comfortable talking about their problems with other participants or the program coordinator.
- Similar to last year, most participants think that Cultivating Community staff members are doing a good job leading their respective group or activity.

"I'm just used the service and dealt with the two people (P. and A.)... they've both been really helpful, welcoming and knowledgeable and I love the Carlton Kitchen Library concept"

CKL member

"E. is a capable and committed facilitator, and it is clear that the key students of the group gravitate to her as a type of mentor"

North Richmond After School Cooking participant

"The staff are amazing and everyone is grateful for this particular experience. Thank you greatly."

MSIR participant

*Only programs with more than 7 respondents were included in this analysis : MSIR, BANH Caravan, Kensington Sensory Garden, Yarra Seed Library and Carlton Kitchen Library

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Future Considerations:

Future survey recommendations:

- Coordinating our and our partners' survey collections would ensure that our participants do not experience survey fatigue, which would result in higher response rates and data accuracy. Running joint evaluation would also benefit both organisations by reducing the amount of human and financial resources needed to conduct these surveys.
- Ensuring that surveys are conducted during a time when attendance is usually high (celebrations and special events). These dates should be chosen after consultation with the program coordinator.
- Having the survey available in printed format as well as being accessible via QR code during each program visits. Leaving a poster with the QR code to access the survey at each venue or with the programme coordinator so participants can choose to take part at any time during the duration of the collection might also increase the participation rate.
- The survey questions were kept identical this year for consistency purposes. However in the future, surveys should be Co-designed with some of the participants to ensure that the wording for the questions is clear and the question are relevant for the participants.



Social Connectedness Survey Report 2024



Future Considerations:

Recommendations to promote social connectedness during our activities:

- Check with the participants of lowest scoring programs if there are any barriers or reasons preventing them from attending the social events (*“Carlton Kitchen Library is a great initiative, just needs a good polish.”* CKL member, *“I don’t attend any groups perse, with young children and work I don’t have time.”* CKL member) and put steps into place to lift these barriers.
- Encourage participants to wear a name tag and start each activity by doing a check in with all the participants where they can reiterate their name and share some news about anything that happened to them since the last session (*“I recognise most of the people but don't know their names”* Kensington Sensory Garden participant).

