

# How Do Interior Environments of Youth Centers Promote Wellbeing?

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study aims to understand what amenities and interior features can be implemented into a youth center that can support the wellbeing of teenagers ages twelve to eighteen. In today's world, teens are being exposed to outdated learning tactics, little to no education on how to handle emotions/feelings, and little means of self-expression. An online survey was conducted anonymously, and participants were given as much time as needed to complete each question. Survey questions were based on the participants' opinions towards amenities and interior features that focus on teen wellbeing. Although the study was limited to a specific community in the area, the results gave precise and accurate representation for the youth in local communities today.

## METHODOLOGY

To develop a deeper understanding of what features are viewed of in a higher demand to promote wellbeing in interior environments, we conducted an online survey that was distributed to mental health counselors in the area. Any participant eighteen years of age or older that has worked with teens and youth in mental health services & parents/guardians were eligible to participate in the survey. Through a variety of multiple choice and short answer questions, the participants were able to give a precise idea of features and amenities to include in a space designed for teen wellbeing. The data collected will help us guide a design solution for an interior environment that is inclusive and considers the wants and needs of all.

## PARTICIPANTS

Mental health service providers and parents/guardians engaged with youth that were 18 years of age or older participated in the study.



Majority of participants were between the age range of 30-35 (23%); participant age range was 24-70 years old.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### CONSIDERING MENTAL WELLBEING OF TEENS IN AN INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT

"Natural elements (such as greenery, savannah-like landscapes, and clear running water) have an automatic calming effect on physiological arousal" (An, et al, 2016, p. 2).

"The results showed that dim lighting yielded more pleasant and relaxed feelings, more favorable impressions of the interviewer, and more self-disclosure than did the bright lighting" (Miwa & Hanyu, 2006, p. 484).

Provide a space for teens to learn how to transition to adulthood while improving their mental wellbeing during the challenging stage of adolescence (Owens, 1997).

Include spaces for art, physical activity, cooking, homework help, quiet reading, group activities, etc. (Owens, 1997).

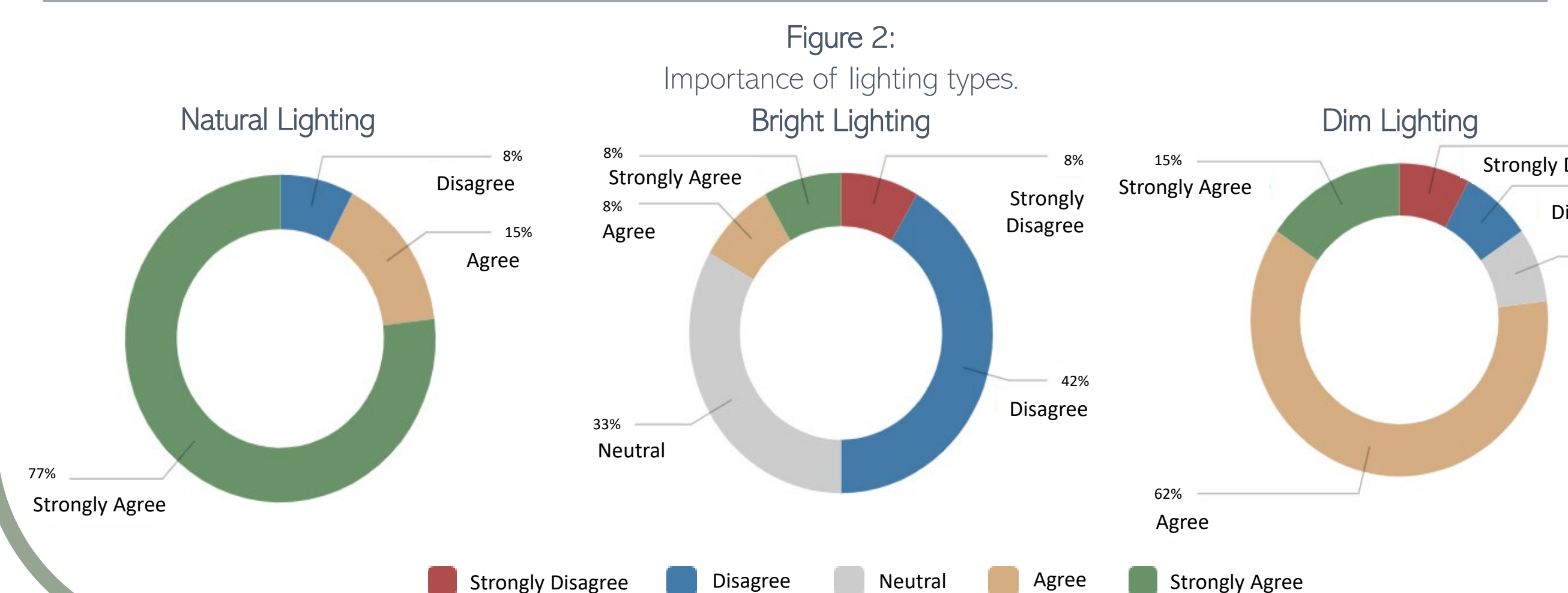
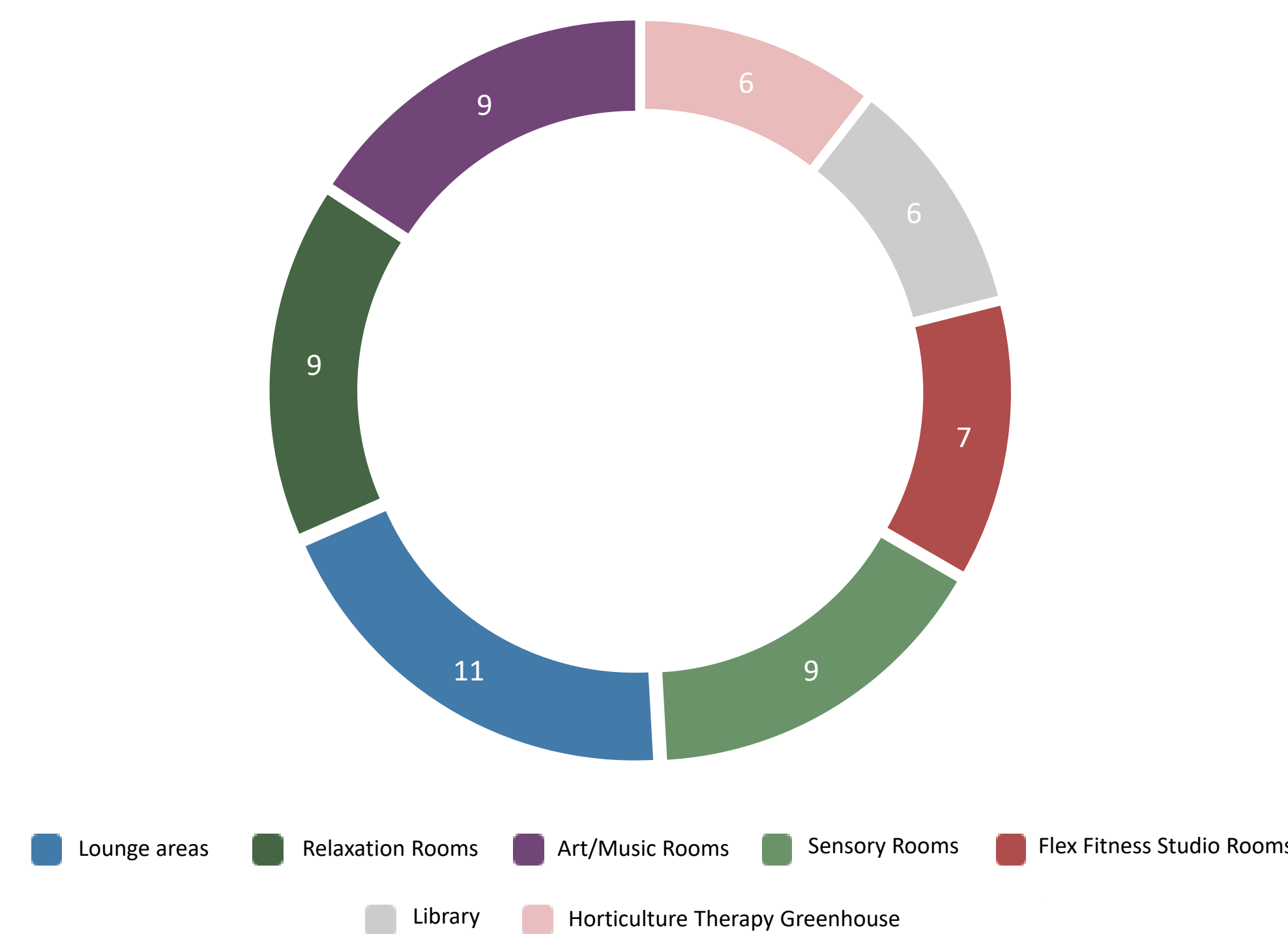
"Socially responsible interior architecture is an essential factor in providing the conditions for the wellbeing of individuals and communities" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 3).

## REFERENCES:

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## RESULTS

Figure 1:  
Spaces in a youth center that are beneficial to youth mental health.



## DISCUSSION

- Participants of the study agreed that quiet lounge areas (16%) would benefit teens along with art/music rooms (13%) and relaxation/sensory rooms (13%) tied as the second most important spaces to include in teen environments (Fig.1)
- Flexible and interchangeable furniture dependent on the youth's needs was recommended by most participants (43%) while others indicated neutral colors (27%) and plant life (24%) were important.
- With the lack of biophilic design in public schools, there was also a large demand for bringing nature into interior environments (44%). "(Incorporate) places that allow natural light and a connection to the outdoors" (Direct quote from participant).
- Participants found lighting to be one factor with the greatest impact on wellbeing, especially in the case of natural lighting (Fig. 2).

## FUTURE DIRECTION

Weather can impact the mental health of human beings. For future research, data collection, surveys, and focus groups could ask how interior environments can be designed to limit the possible mental health struggles that are impacted by weather. With participant numbers being lower for this study, in future studies, we would focus more time on gathering participants and distribute to a broader range of mental health professionals that work with youth.