Evaluation of the Gender and Mental Health Literacy Pilot Workshop

On 4 October 2023, the WHISE Gender and Mental Wellbeing portfolio ran our inaugural face-to-face event – a pilot workshop exploring gender and mental health literacy. We invited a small group of professionals across the region – including Council Health Planners, Social Workers and Health Promotion Practitioners. The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- To explain how gender is related to mental health literacy
- To discuss the five pillars of mental wellbeing, and how gender relates to these
- To discuss how gender relates to recognising changes in mental health and help-seeking behaviours
- To apply a gendered approach to improving mental health and wellbeing

We had 11 attendees attend in total, eight being non-WHISE staff. 100% of the non-WHISE staff completed the post-workshop survey.

Feedback on the workshop

Did you find this workshop engaging?

Nine people responded to this question, and all felt the workshop was engaging. Many people found it to be informative and covered "a good breath of content and good mix of learning strategies." For instance, one person commented:

> *The workshop was engaging and helpful in broadening my understanding of how women from different walks of life may experience mental health and wellbeing and interact with the systems around them.*

The facilitation of the workshop was also praised but several people who found Charlotte Barber, the facilitator, to be excellent, clear, engaging, compassionate, insightful, and provided well thought out, organised and helpful examples to encourage participation.

A couple of people found the face-to-face format increased engagement as it was "effective in building trust and therefore encouraging participation of all members." One person also said, "it was interactive and conversational."

Was the workshop accessible?

Some prompts were provided to clarify the question. For instance, was the language easily understood, were the slides easy to read, could you hear the presenter.

Nine people responded to this question, and again, all said the workshop was accessible. Some people just wrote, "yes" and others provided examples. For instance,

Was the workshop inclusive?

Of the nine people who responded to this question, eight felt the workshop was inclusive. One person responded that it "could have included pronouns in intros." However, they also commented that. "it was really good to identify and name the systems of power and privilege."

Of the eight people who said the workshop was inclusive, one further stated that they "liked how at each point of the presentation, gender was explained in great detail and any gaps were acknowledged." Another person appreciated that all attendees had equal time to participate. Two people provided suggestions for making the workshop more inclusive.

I wonder if it would have been helpful to hear/discuss male experiences without taking away from the discussion on women's experiences. It might have been interesting to unpack some of the gender norms and balance the conversation a little bit more.

It would be great to see greater diversity in the members attending.

Suggested additions to the content

1. More lived experience.
2. Using a strengths-based approach.

   "I think being careful to frame the conversations around women's mental health in a way that doesn't assume an inherent sense of burden or disempowerment. Taking a strengths-based approach in these kinds of topics can go a long way, particularly when working in spaces that are still maturing in their understanding of this work."

3. Including "brief case studies."
4. An opportunity to "workshop an example of our current work."

   "I think this would be very valuable in transcending the concepts into practice."

5. How to translate learnings into advocacy.

   "I think an important part of this work is advocacy, as we operate in these systems we have more power than clients or community, so it could be good to include something of how we can use this workshop knowledge in our spheres of influence."

Suggestions for content to remove

1. Pillars of mental health.

   "I would consider removing or placing in its proper context, the discussion about 'pillars' of mental health, as they seemed to reflect an incongruous focus upon personal health, amid a discussion about so many structural factors."

2. The last couple of sections.

"I got a bit lost in the last couple of sections they didn't seem as purposeful."

Which delivery mode would be best for this workshop?

Seven people said that in-person is best suited to this workshop. Two people said that either online or in-person would work but that in-person is better.

Who do you think this workshop is best pitched to?

Of the nine people who answered this question, several people felt that this workshop would be useful for anyone providing a service and/or working with local communities. This included:

- Educational institutes
- Employment agencies
- Employers
- Community and social organisations
- Everyone who works in local communities
- Local councils
- People who deliver mental health programs
- Everyday workers
- Practitioners

A couple of people felt there should be both women and men in the workshops. For instance, one person said, "it would be nice to see mixed genders in the room so men can also learn new information in a way that women may not be able to articulate."

One person commented, "I think this will work well in organisations undertaking any kind of strategic planning around health and wellbeing, and mental health. This would be applicable for both an internal and external context."

Additional feedback

Seven people provided additional feedback. Many people provided complementary feedback which expressed their enjoyment and positive perceptions of the workshop. Two suggestions were also provided.

1. "Linking to the broad community sectors needs some working plan. Thank you for organising educational content and professional skills to deliver the session."
2. "Like many in the MH promotion space I am eager to see the new Well-being plan and how it might shape influence work in this space. It may also provide some further context to help shape this session further such as the pillar model used etc."

Changes in knowledge and confidence

While the purpose of the pilot session was to receive feedback on the workshop, the attendees were also asked questions about knowledge and confidence to determine the potential effectiveness of the workshop.

Changes in knowledge

Attendees were asked to rate their understanding of the following:

- How gender is related to mental health literacy.
- How gender relates to the five pillars of mental wellbeing.
- The gender differences in mental health help-seeking behaviours.

As can be seen in Figure 1, there was a clear increase in understanding how gender is related to mental health literacy. Before the workshop, about two-thirds of people had an average level of understanding, however following the workshop, everyone had a *high* or *very high* level of understanding.

Understanding how gender relates to the five pillars of mental wellbeing also increased (see Figure 2). However, a couple of people felt their understanding was *neither low nor high* following the workshop. This is not unexpected as comments above suggested that there was some confusion about how the pillars related to the rest of the workshop's content.

As can be seen in Figure 3, understanding of the gender differences in mental health help-seeking behaviours also increased with almost everyone rating their understanding as *high* or *very high*. Only one person felt they had a moderate level of understanding following the workshop.
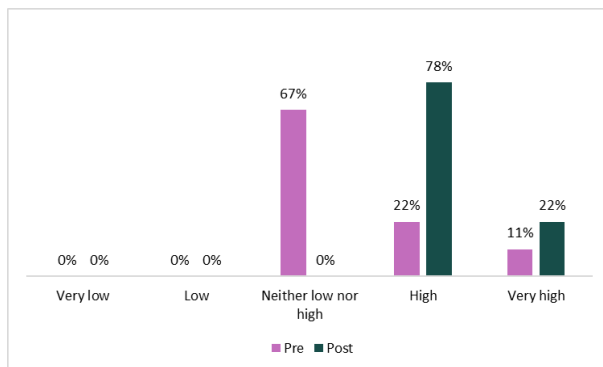
Figure 1. Pre- and post-workshop ratings of understanding how gender is related to mental health literacy.
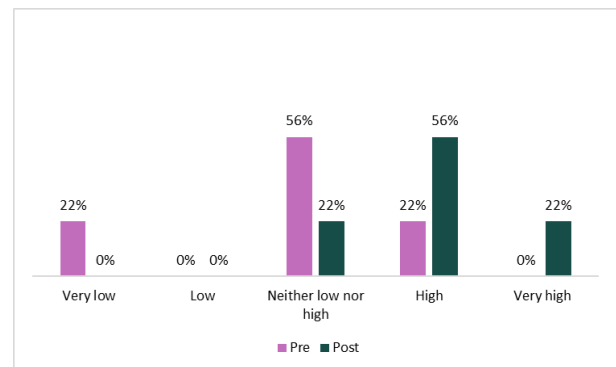
Figure 2. Pre- and post-workshop ratings of understanding how gender relates to the five pillars of mental wellbeing.
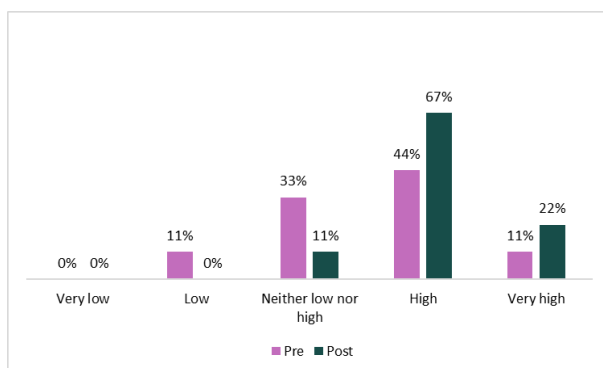
Figure 3. Pre- and post-workshop ratings of understanding the gender differences in mental health help-seeking behaviours.

Changes in confidence

People were asked to rate their confidence to apply knowledge of a gendered approach to improve mental health and wellbeing in their work. Figure 4 shows that there was a very small increase in confidence following the workshop. Of note is the reduction in people who felt *not so confident*.
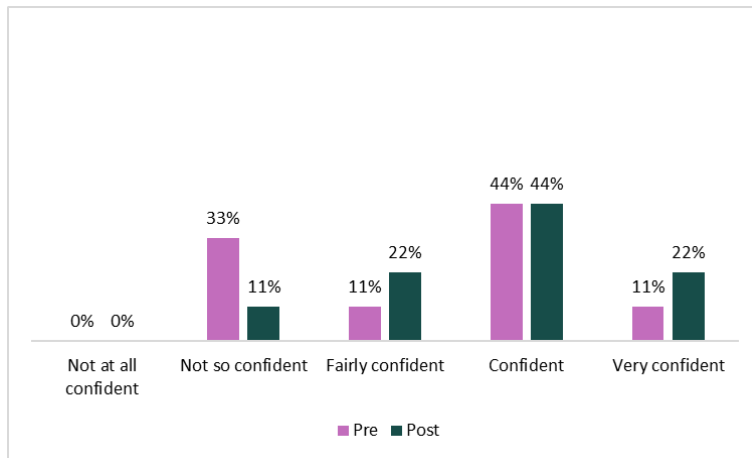

Figure 4. Pre- and post-workshop ratings of confidence to apply knowledge of a gendered approach to improve mental health and wellbeing in your work.

Key learning

Six people described a key learning from the workshop. The intersecting factors that influence mental health and wellbeing were discussed by a few people. For instance,

Consideration of social circumstances - roles, norms, status of women etc - exerts a substantial impact upon their mental health and wellbeing.

Acknowledging systemic and structural foundations relating to mental health.

The role of individual, interpersonal, professional and community in promoting mental health and well-being.

One person found it interesting to learn about mental health literacy through a gender lens and felt that, "More people should acknowledge gender based mental health and adopt a gendered lens when creating mental health initiatives."

Finally, although one person had suggested removing the pillars of mental wellbeing from the workshop, one person commented that as a result of the workshop, they had a "better understanding of the pillars that influence mental wellbeing and how to connect this to my personal and professional life."

Further support

People were asked what support they needed to continue to apply their learnings from the workshop. Six people responded to the question. The requests are as follows:

It would be helpful to understand what opportunities there are to embed this in practice and what the best practice examples look like.

More detailed information about these structural factors and how to apply this understanding in work. here, practical examples, briefly but clearly explained, would be helpful. This could all be supplied with accompanying notes.

More training on how to implement the project, such as planning, organising sessions and applying the mental health literacy training.

1-1 support for policy and program design (i.e,. social justice and equity policy development).

Maybe more WHISE training? Tell my management about this workshop and see if other colleagues could engage also.

Learning more from the voices of those with lived experience within the community.