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**PERCEPTIONS OF NUDITY IN VISUAL ARTS PRACTICE AMONGST
STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES ST. AUGUSTINE
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ABSTRACT

Nudity in the Visual Arts has garnered different perceptions over the centuries that it has existed. It has been greatly noted that nude art, and specifically the nude female body have had numerous misconceptions created around them. This study evaluates perceptions of nudity in Visual Arts practice amongst students at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus. To examine how these perceptions of nudity influence its acceptance in the Visual Arts, convenience sampling was utilized to select participants from the student body of the U.W.I. Their responses were analyzed, based on their demographic backgrounds, knowledge of culture, art, nudity in art, and their usage of social media. The results showed that males and females interpreted nudity and nudity in art differently, as females create their perceptions based on misinformed ideals of beauty, whilst males create theirs based on entitlement, as male nudity was always socially more accepted than female nudity. Results also displayed that there is a lack of understanding when it comes to purpose and acceptance of all forms of Visual Arts.

Therefore, the results suggest that these perceptions ultimately have affected the acceptance of the Visual Arts and nudity in art, as persons are misinformed about the fundamentals of both. It is recommended that the local population be educated about regional Visual Art practices, and its artists be given nationwide exposure from governmental forces, for the general disposition of the local population to positively change. This will play a significant role in the acceptance of Visual Arts and may one day assist in changing known perceptions about nudity in art.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of human beings is astonishing whether for artistic purposes, medical study or just admiration. As such, human beings and their bodies have been the focus of many artistic recreations from time immemorial, explicitly in a nude manner. Depictions of the human body can be used to celebrate broader themes such as love, life, male and female beauty and sex (Art pills). Similarly, Tavis Leaf Glover commented on the multi-faceted nature of nude art as he posited that, “Pointing out the physical as well as the metaphorical meanings, fine art nudes evoke a complexity of emotions and personalities as individuals and as species, mirroring the many layers of our being.”

Albeit nudity and nudity in art specifically, has always been an unmentionable or forbidden discussion in most societies, but it has also evolved in the contemporary era (Art pills). It challenges the viewers of nude artwork, to identify what they constitute art to be. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Art is described as:

The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power (Oxford).

While the term nude art can be coined as ambiguous with no standard meaning for it, Claire, Gregory and Kristine in the article “Naked vs. Nude” tried to develop a definition by showing the differentiation between the two words naked and nude. In this article, it was stated

that nudity deals with the positioning of the unclothed body whilst nakedness has to do with the state of being vulnerable while unclothed (Claire, et al). In this context, nude art can be described as the use of the body positioned in a particular way to create work that displays emotional expression. Based on the research that exists on the topic of nudity and general nakedness, there is a very fine line between the two and not an overlap. That is, nakedness and nudity both depict the human body unclothed, whilst others may see a stark distinction with reference to the way in which the human body is portrayed without clothes.

Nonetheless, viewers of nude art create their own definitions and perceptions for what they interpret it to represent. Nudity in art has been described as immoral, purposefully provocative, titillating and impacting to the mind in negative ways, making the viewers addicted to sex (Glover; Yoder). However, it is recognized that these perceptions of nudity in art are subjective and can be influenced by several factors including a person's gender, religious beliefs and cultural influences (Yoder, Brasseur and Cummins, Glover).

Rationale

Generally, the practice of art has changed over hundreds of years. Nude art has evolved and has become a more favored topic and form of artistic expression as different body types are represented (Acacia). Ever since the earliest works describing human nudity were discovered over 35,000 years ago, in the case of the Venus of Willendorf statuette, numerous perceptions have been formed around the subject matter (Fackrell).

However, there has been inconsistencies in its acceptance across the globe as many of the perceptions or interpretations of nude art are centered around the female body. For example,

according to Fackrell, the female nude is heavily sexualized whilst the male nude is viewed with little to no objectification as male nudity is associated with power. Neiley highlighted that,

Ideas of what a female body should look like were exceedingly determined by men who simply defined women by their sexuality. This ultimately resulted in women being seen as sexual objects within artistic recreations rather than persons to be understood (Neiley).

This view was supported by Brasseur and Cummins where the focus on the female nude has been predominant with some devaluation of the female form. Additionally, in many countries, the display of nudity is an occurrence that coincides with certain cultural practices and traditions. For example, in most countries of the Caribbean, nudity is portrayed as part of cultural practices such as Carnival. However, acceptance and perceptions of nudity in art are still not widely discussed or explored.

Internationally, while the literature on perceptions of nudity in visual arts is vast, it is lacking in the Caribbean context. Specifically, interpretations and perceptions of the nude body as a form of artistic expression have not been explored. According to Zavala, the art of nudity “has been seen differently throughout cultures and generations”. With the emergence and growth of nude art in the Visual arts practice it becomes important to understand how this market works and its influences. Nude figures offer an important expressive tool for artists, as a form of personal identity and even cultural history. Ultimately it provides the basis for undertaking this research and essentially informs the rationale of the study.

Objectives

As such, the primary objective of the study is to evaluate perceptions of nudity in visual arts practice amongst students at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus. In so doing, the subsidiary objectives are:

1. To identify the common perceptions of nudity in visual arts practice.
2. To understand the influences and views on the representation of the naked body.
3. To examine how these perceptions can influence the acceptance of this art form.

This research paper will add to the existing literature by providing a perspective of perceptions of nude art in the Caribbean, by examining a sub-group within the population of Trinidad and Tobago. The expression of Nudity through Visual Arts, in Trinidad and Tobago is consumed by ambiguity as it is perceived in several ways and has the potential to be accepted within the practice of artists and Trinbagonian society.

Chapters Outline

This research contains four chapters in addition to the introduction. Chapter one provides an overview of the literature on nudity in art. It also provides historical context and addresses definitions of perceptions, nudity and nude art. This chapter will also explore some general and common perceptions or stigmas that revolve around nudity in art and their influences. Chapter two outlines the methodological approach of this study; the specific data collection procedures and techniques used to collect and analyze the information gathered from qualitative and quantitative sources. Chapter three will highlight some of the key findings and a discussion on

the implications of these findings on acceptance of the art form. Finally, chapter four provides conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Nudity is an unavoidable state of being within the human condition, as all humans are born naked and return to that state multiple times throughout their lives. Also, whether it be semi-nude photographs or materials that depict complete nudity, it can be easily accessed directly or indirectly via social media. Regardless of how an image depicting nudity reaches its viewer, a perception of this image may be formed. According to Dave Force in his article “Perception Vs. Opinion”, a perception occurs after viewing something and the assessment and interpretation that follows (Force). Similarly, within the scientific study of Psychological Zoology a perception is defined as, “The neurophysiological processes, including memory, by which an organism becomes aware of and interprets external stimuli” (Oxford). Fundamentally each of these definitions can be condensed and linked to the overarching theme of Nudity in Art as there are countless perceptions formed around it.

Gary W. Lewandowski Jr in his study “How nudity affects perceptions” writes about the effect nudity may have on the way a person is regarded as in how highly they may be thought of by others. He presented the reader with the hypothetical situation of a first encounter, stating that when meeting someone for the first time your impression of them may be different if you had met them in a different setting. This is so because at each event the person may have worn different clothing, which may or may not have shown a bit more skin than the previous setting. The point being made was that depending on how or when you met someone, the type of clothes they wear or how they may carry themselves will ultimately have left an opinion of the person within you. Next, Lewandowski highlighted “We often assume that focusing too much on a person's body and physical characteristics objectifies and dehumanizes that person”. Which

means a person is judged firstly by their outward appearance because it is of course the first thing inferred about them; their individual phenotype or clothing choices. However, he does admit that it is unknown what really happens within a person's mind when they are stimulated by bodily appearances and the perceptions that proceed.

Next, Lewandowski analyzed a study that was carried out by Paul Bloom of Yale University. The study examined whether focusing on a person's body would change one's perception of them, leading the viewers thoughts to be centered around the premise that these perceptions can be beneficial. Lewandowski states that the first investigation that took place examined whether focusing on a person's face or body influenced perceived capabilities related to agency. The researcher Paul Bloom did this by first asking over 500 participants internationally if a person's outward appearance affected their agency. To clarify what human agency is Dr. Nicki Cole states that "agency is the power people have to think for themselves and act in ways that shape their experiences and life trajectories" (Cole Ph.D.). Therefore, Paul Bloom's aim was to see how people were influenced to make the perceptions they do about nudity based on factors like self-control, acting morally, planning and a person's ability to have experiences such as pain, pleasure, hunger and desire.

To conclude, Lewandowski was essentially able to summarize from the study that the more a person exposed their skin the number of positive perceptions increased. However, he also noted that even though exposed skin gains some positive perceptions, being "body-focused" is not completely a positive. Therefore, from gaining insight on how a random test population reacts when stimulated by nudity, this article is better able to inform the thesis research being

carried out. Being able to have a little insight into what informs one's agency will help to clarify some of the perceptions of nudity.

As such, Nicole Brasseur and Allie Cummins' research paper "Perceptions of the Nude Body in Art" gave insight into what may go on inside a person's head when they see nude figure paintings. In this study, the perceptions of the representation of the naked body as artistic or sexual and whether the genders of either the subject of the artwork and its viewer along with religious beliefs were explored. Most importantly, they probed their subjects about their experience and knowledge of the artworld to gauge how much those individuals were aware of when it came to art. This would ultimately influence how they looked at and understood a piece of art specifically nude work. Their aim was to investigate the average person who may have an unbiased view of art and allow them to have a creative introspection. The methodology employed included a survey which attracted fifty-two respondents, using nine paintings, to investigate whether their hypothesis of how human beings viewed nude paintings was true.

Creating this paper Brasseur and Cummins' hypothesized that human beings are sexual by nature and that sexual feelings are aroused by visual stimuli. Their aim was to evaluate whether nude paintings were viewed as sexual or if human beings can see nude paintings as artistic recreations. Brasseur and Cummins collectively state that nude paintings combine the themes of sexuality and creativity as both art and sex play major roles in society. This comparison between the two themes is factual as art imitates life and sex creates it. The authors discovered, through their research, that there are in fact numerous factors such as: race, gender, age and social standing etcetera, that may cause one person to view artwork as sexual whilst another sees it as artistic. To understand some of the ways humans view art they explored

psychological, sociological, anthropological, biological, and artistic disciplines along with the philosophical and historical role of how images of the body are interpreted. Aside from understanding of what causes perceptions of the nude body in art, they hoped to also understand human sexuality and the role that it plays in art, culture, and the human experience. They eventually concluded that the construct of culture creates the level of nudity human beings regard as appropriate. In cultures that accept nudity, for example in Africa, nudity is not about lust or the sexualization of the body but rather about reproduction, whilst in cultures like the Caribbean it may be viewed differently.

The study by (Brasseur and Cummins) eventually concludes that their earlier hypothesis of art being rated higher sexually than artistically was incorrect and that it is in fact trained behavior via cultural views of the body that influence how nude art is perceived by the layman. Therefore, based off the authors' extrospection on the topic, it may be safe to say that nudity in art will receive different perceptions. However, one thing that remains the same across multiple cultures is how overly sexualized a woman's body is even when she is fully clothed.

This is so because women have been seen as sex symbols in relation to nude art for hundreds of years, whilst male nudity has always been seen as a sign of power. This is one of the major issues that takes place within many of our societies today and in the article "The fine line between art and pornography" by Lizzie Enfield, this issue is explored a bit further. She highlights Sarah Williamson's alter ego, ArtActivistBarbie (A.A.B) and her protest artwork that challenges the patriarchy of the male dominated art society and world. Enfield emphasizes the importance of two key questions within her article; she asks the reader if all they see when looking at nude artwork is pornography or something more. She also contemplates why one

representation of the body is defined as art and the other pornography. Ultimately, she concludes that answering the question of whether nude art is pornography or genuinely art is a tough to have conversation as the comparison between the two is not as “black and white” as it seems.

As such, the distinction between art and pornography within the realm of nude art is truly an unclear one at times. Lastly, with reference to the second question of the acceptance of one form of nudity over another, the author referred to multiple factors. The first being how the female body was and still is overly sexualized and seen as pornographic, whilst the male body is not. She also explores the question of why nude paintings and sculptures for example are more accepted over a photographic or digital representation. However, one begs to differ what if the purpose of the painting or photograph was to be pornographic or to be an image of sexual representation? Then the question here would be what is the issue with sex or the sexualization of the human body? Enfield also probes the point of stating that some feminists find issue with the sexualization of the female body as it muddies the progress women are making in being seen as more than just objects to men. However, some women, feel empowered expressing themselves and taking back control of their bodies via the usage of nude art.

Bordering the views expressed above Brian Yoder firstly states, “Nude art is a fundamental part of teaching someone how to draw the human anatomy” (Yoder). This is a factual statement because as the saying goes “before you can learn to run you must learn to walk”. This saying can also be applied to art because, before a person can learn to draw a fully clothed human body, they should first learn to draw a nude one. The benefits of this generally helps the person to better capture the proportions and positionings of the human body and its appendages, in the most accurate rendering possible. Similarly, to the views expressed by the

Oxford dictionary the author also states that nude figures can be an expressive tool to artists seeing that there can be numerous benefits from practicing nude work.

Yoder goes on to outline some the ways human bodies have been represented throughout the history of human figure artwork. He returns to his previous point of saying, artists who create work centered around the human body should first learn to draw it in its simplest form “the nude”. Within his assessment of past techniques, he makes a comparison between nude versus fully clothed figures in trench coats covered in a way that does not show any distinct bodily feature. Yoder highlighted “Put any kind of clothing on a person in a painting or a sculpture and you tie them down to a time when that kind of clothing was common or popular and apart from times when it wasn't.” He makes this comparison to show the distinction between two ways in which the human body can be represented. His next point is something that is a strikingly new addition to the conversation; the flexibility that working with nude figures provides the artists. This simply means that an artist who uses nude figures in their work can mold the narrative in a way that removes their subject from the context of a set time.

Additionally, he stated that there is importance within the choice to create figures that may be fully clothed. He states that “sometimes clothes are needed depending on the nature of what is being portrayed "as this will also help to give context to the work. He acknowledges the importance of this as not to discredit persons who choose to work with fully clothed figures. Lastly, he reverts to his initial point, that working with completely nude figures provides the artist with the opportunity to put greater focus on their subjects. They can subtract all the other “distracting” elements in a work of art like the clothes, accessories and surroundings.

However, the overarching theme that is seen throughout most of the sources cited in this literature review is that no matter how highly each author rates and admires nude artwork, they each come across individuals that have their own perspectives on it. Whether it be a negative, positive or a completely unbothered review of the work. Yoder concludes his article by listing some of the major comments received in response to the nude materials he has written about on the website that publishes his articles. Some of these views have described the works as being negatively impactful to the mind, one viewer stated that they could not allow their children to view his commentary because of the nude content that he posts. Another person also stated that they have religious objections against nudity and lastly one person even went as far as saying “nudity means sex which is bad/dirty and to be avoided”. He substantially ends his article with this quote:

“The idea is that sexual imagery is so powerful that it needs to be locked away and/or psychologically repressed to avoid turning us all into sex-crazed beasts. This view then requires that we lock away any images that might stimulate sexual thoughts, including all nudity”.

He is saying that if nudity expressed in the form of art is a bother to some people, then all forms of nudity should also be problematic similarly to Brasseur and Cummins.

When working with nudity as a topic of investigation many questions may arise from the viewers of the work or from general naysayers. Therefore, it is safe to assume that different interpretations of a person’s work may be formed and, in the article, ‘Nudity in Art: Acceptable vs. Pornographic,’ written by Tavis Leaf Glover, a few of these perceptions are considered. Similarly, to Lizzie Enfield in her article “The fine line between art and pornography” Glover

asks the readers if they think that nudity can be handled in a responsible way only to eventually conclude that it is more complex than it seems. Essentially, the author's rationale for the research was to firstly state that nude art should only be viewed by a certain age group; "If we take nude paintings and put them in a book that children might read, it might create an impression on them that was premature" (Glover). This point is understandable as certain topics are indeed not for everyone or for every age group. Upon further investigation, the article goes on to talk about the issue of temptation and how it may be one of the main reasons why, some viewers of nude art may have a problem with it.

In comparison, whether it may be from a recovering sex or porn addict's interaction with nude art or an alcohol abuser's interaction with an add about alcohol Glover states "Temptation is everywhere regardless of what we do" (Glover). He then states that it may not necessarily be the fact that nude art tempts or arouses us but rather it may be how each person interprets it. He makes a realization that maybe what makes nude art pornographic or inappropriate for some viewers are the feelings they get when looking at it. Therefore, simply classing the feelings created when viewing a nude piece as just pornographic or arousing is a complicated inquiry to make as different people may be aroused or stimulated by varying things and even that point is predominantly influenced by multiple factors as humans are desensitized as they get older. Also, cultural stigmas change with time, for instance in the case of marijuana, a stigmatized herb, it is steadily being accepted within numerous societies around the world for medicinal and religious purposes. Therefore, further introspection into what exactly makes nude art reminiscent of a pornographic recreation should be carried out. Whether it may be the elements of a nude piece that stimulates the viewer causing different perceptions to be formed, the lighting within it or the pose of the subject, or the gender of both the subject in work and the viewer.

Glover highlights that whilst male artists are to be recognized for their contribution to creating female nude artwork, it is in fact women who are changing the perception and objectification of the female body which helps to revamp the composition of nude art that often only focusses on objectifying women. Glover goes on to state that nudes or nude art may have a specific purpose whether therapeutic or for viewing pleasure. The author lastly discusses the inspiration or theme of some key contemporary artists that have helped to introduce new styles to the way in which the nude body is rendered. Upon continuous investigation into the fine art nudes, something that has been observed is that no matter what style a nude painting, sculpture etcetera is created in, the viewers always find a way to demonize the work.

As such this literature review's purpose was to highlight some of the known perceptions of nudity from its conception to now, and what may influence these perceptions. This review was carried out to have a better understanding of the practice of nudity in art, and the different elements that it comprises. From the research gathered no matter what type of nudity is being displayed or how a person accesses it, a perception of the image is automatically formed. Sometimes, what a person concludes about nude artwork may be exactly what the artist was aiming for. An example of this is a nude piece of artwork that is perceived to be sexual may be precisely the theme behind the artist's work. However, it is not clear what exactly happens when a person's mind is stimulated by another person's outward appearance, whether they are fully clothed or not. Therefore, getting to know what informs a person's agency will help to clarify some of the perceptions that may be made about nudity in art here in Trinidad and Tobago. What if there is a percentage of nude artists or nude muses that feel empowered by using their bodies for nude expression? Therefore, the different elements of nude pieces would need to be analyzed

to determine what exactly within these works causes the viewer to formulate a perception about it within the Caribbean space.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

To better understand the perceptions of nudity, a series of investigations were carried out and quantitative and qualitative data collection was utilized. Primary and secondary data collection took place via the use of a questionnaire, Key informant interviews and a literature review. Since this thesis is being completed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, preferred methods of data collection such as probability sampling methods, that reduced the risk of bias and the quality of responses were not used.

Quantitative data collection in the form of a survey was mobilized because:

- Results from this type of data collection were easy to be compared throughout cultures and over several years.
- Analyzing a large sample size, the quantitative method proved itself to be one of the most effective.

However, within the quantitative approach there were also some limitations:

- In using this approach, the analyzation of results became time consuming and strenuous at times.
- Like numerous other methods this one posed a risk of becoming structurally biased.

Qualitative data collection in the form of Key Informant interviews and a literature review was utilized because:

- It was flexible to use these approaches as it was innovated and applied to any new ideas or patterns that arose.
- Data collection with this technique came naturally as it was collected from real-life conditions.
- The approach of Key Informant interviews allowed for meaningful insights to be gained as it allowed respondents to be truthfully expressive with their responses.
- Using both Key Informant interviews and a literature review allowed the generation of new ideas to be uncovered.
- Utilizing Key informant interviews assisted in giving context and “backing up” some of the data gathered from the survey.

Unfortunately, like most things, there were also some limitations to the technique:

- At times qualitative data collection was unreliable because of the real-world circumstances like COVID-19 pandemic which caused uncontrolled factors that affected the data.
- The qualitative data could not be replicated as such it made analyzing the data highly subjective.
- The latter point ultimately caused the data to become biased and as such there was limited generalizability when presenting conclusions because the data was unrepresentative of the wider population.
- Documenting and analyzing the data was a meticulous process because of the amount of manual labor involved where transcribing recorded interviews was concerned and the analyzation of the numerous responses from the survey.

Data Collection

For this dissertation, the survey was conducted using the non-probability sampling method of Convenience sampling, and responses were gathered from 35 students from the local student population of the University of the West Indies (Appendix A) and 5 Key informants (Appendix B). It was used because it was an inexpensive and uncomplicated way to collect data. It was circulated virtually via the means of distribution through email and social media applications, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, and was made accessible for three weeks. The survey questions were designed, using the aims of the thesis as a prompt and a combination of multiple-choice questions, short answer responses, and the use of Likert scale type questions, were employed. Along with a survey, the use of key Informant interviews assisted in acquiring qualitative data to accumulate in-depth perceptions from practicing and well-read artists (Appendix B).

There were five sections in the survey, each of which aimed to gather information to specifically answer the aims of the thesis. The first section of the survey aimed to gather demographic statistics from respondents., whilst the second section of the survey aimed to gather information on the level of knowledge each respondent had when it came to art in Trinidad and Tobago. The third section of the survey targeted what the student knew about the culture of Carnival and Art in Trinidad and Tobago. The fourth section aimed to acquire knowledge on how the use of social media may affect the participants' perceptions about nudity. The fifth section aimed to find out what respondents thought about the use of nudity in art.

Additionally, the use of existing data on the topic was gathered from majorly international online resources, as there was little to no data on nudity regionally. Some of this data was also

collected from authors who were intrigued or inspired enough by nudity to write about it.

Overall, the existing data used was selected from different authors throughout the 20th to 21st century, to acquire the most contemporarily available information.

Sampling techniques

The sampling techniques used was the non-probability sampling method of convenience sampling which involved utilizing individuals that were most conveniently accessible. The population of interest was students at the University of the West Indies. Similarly, to quantitative and qualitative data, convenience sampling also had its positives and negatives, its advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of utilizing the convenience sampling method were:

- This method was a simple one to utilize as the processes for going about it and selecting participants was very straightforward.
- It was helpful when it came to hypothesis generation.
- Data collection using this method was facilitated in a short period.
- Using convenience sampling was inexpensive which allowed more samples to be acquired.
- Since this method involved using participants that were easily accessible this allowed samples to be more readily available than an alternative method.
- Within this sampling method, there were fewer rules to follow as participants did not have to be filtered through a checklist essentially making the data collection process uncomplicated.

Regrettably, some limitations proved themselves to be a detriment to the use of the convenience sampling method.

- This sampling method was a highly vulnerable one as it was open to selection bias because of unforeseen influences.
- A high level of sampling error had a higher opportunity of occurring whilst using this sampling method.
- In using this sampling method, it was observed that it may not have been as credible as an alternative method.
- This sampling method did not allow the benefit of surveying the population as a whole as the survey participants were fittingly selected from the University's population.
- Ideally it would have been more fitting if samples came from those in the general population of Trinidad and Tobago but because of health restrictions placed on the country during COVID-19 this was impossible to do.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were generated, and the data collected was first reviewed and cleaned. Since Google Forms was used, the data was able to be easily transformed into a Microsoft Excel sheet, which allowed for the data to be converted. After the data was "cleaned up" the data gathered from each question was transferred into graphs and tables. Finally, each of the five sections of the survey was analyzed consecutively, and the results were summarized to highlight the most popular trends in the data.

For the Key informant interviews, each was recorded, and their responses were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document in which the data was further analyzed, and the thematic similarities

and differences were identified. Each of the similarities or differences noticed were examined to obtain an appreciation for the perceptions and thought processes behind each participant's response.

Limitations of the Study

Listed below are a few of the limitations that affected the study.

1. As stated previously the current pandemic of COVID- 19 has greatly affected the effectiveness of being able to gather a larger and more random sample population as the survey was only able to be distributed via Social Media Platforms.
2. The number of open-ended questions asked gathered varying responses from the over 30 respondents and as such the “cleaning up of the data” became a bit more difficult to accomplish.
3. The time limit in which the thesis had to be completed within limited the effectiveness of the amount of time spent on gathering data to gain the most accurate perceptions of nudity .

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey garnered responses from 35 participants whilst there were 5 respondents for the Key Informant Interviews.

Profile of Respondents

Most of the respondents were female (69%), aged 18-25 consisting of mainly Roman Catholic (31%) and Christian beliefs (30%). Predominantly, the respondents were in their final year and

most from the Faculty of Humanities and Education (46%) majoring in Visual Arts and most from the Social Sciences (46%) majoring in Economics (See Appendix C. Demographics).

Knowledge of Art

Most of the respondents recorded that they had high levels of knowledge in Visual Arts, as 60% of them were moderate to extremely involved in it (*Figure 3.1.*) as (43%) participated in Visual Arts predominantly, for recreational and income purposes.

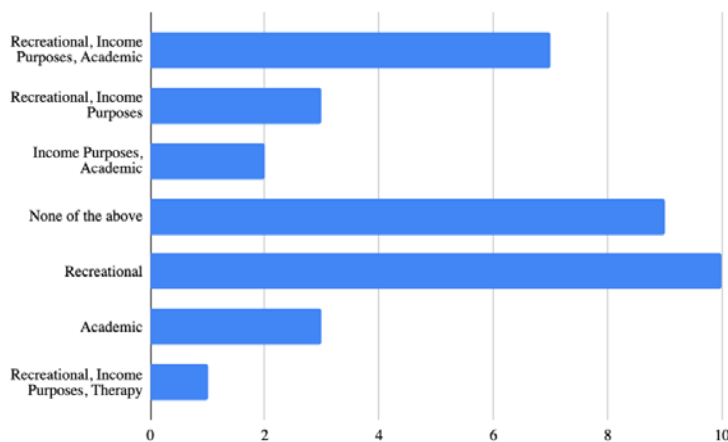


Figure 3. 1. Visual Arts involvement

As seen in *Figure 3. 2*, below, most of the respondents (74%) stated that they believed that Visual artists were not taken seriously and as expected all of the respondents that participated in Visual arts, also stated that Visual artists were in fact, not taken seriously. Similarly, each Key Informant stated that within Trinidad and Tobago Visual artists are in fact not taken seriously, by persons outside of the Visual Arts community, but were taken seriously by their peers (Key Informants 1-5).

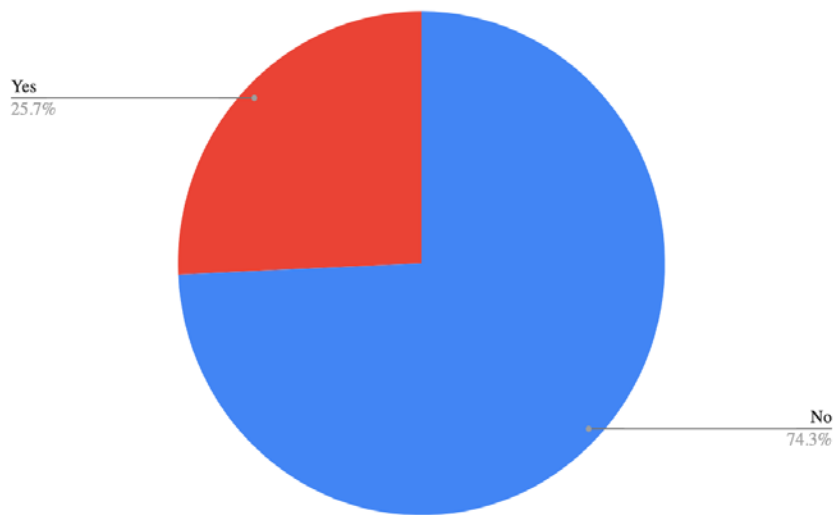


Figure 3. 2. Pie chart showing whether respondents believed Visual Artists were taken seriously

According to Unbound Visual Arts, the Visual Arts can be a combination of painting, drawing, sculpture, photography etcetera. However, perceptions of what is considered art may vary from person to person. In the following exhibits (Figures 3.3-3.6), different forms of art are displayed. 60% of respondents considered all the pieces displayed to be art. Noticeably, most of the respondents who saw the artworks below as art were the ones that participated in the Visual Arts regularly. However, it was substantially noticed that over 80% of the respondents found the traditional representations of artwork like painting and sculpture in *Figures 3.3* and *Figures 3.5 - 3.7*, to be art. This may be so because as Kristin Weis stated in her thesis about conceptual art, “Conceptual art’s rejection of the emphasis placed on the viewer’s experience, as that which gives a piece of art its value has contributed to its condemnation, especially by the public” (Weis). This gives context as to why the conceptual installation of art may not have been as accepted as the other pieces as its purpose may not have been understood.



Figure 3. 3. abstract painting



Figure 3. 4. conceptual installation



Figure 3. 5. conceptual sculpture

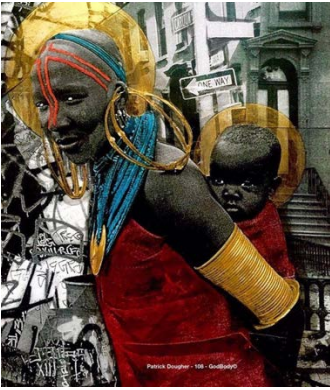


Figure 3. 6. mixed media painting



Figure 3. 7. mixed media painting

Culture and Art

In a Newsday segment entitled “Letters to The Editor”, one of the respondents discussed how the behavior of women, was worsening because of the nude display of their bodies in Carnival as they may not wear much clothing at this time. As such when it came to the number of people that participated in Carnival, just over half (51%) of the respondents participated in it (See Appendix C Figure 3.7). Even so, over 80% of respondents saw Carnival as being enjoyable and stated that

it was a form of artistic or personal expression. Moreover, respondents equally saw nudity at Carnival as acceptable, or were neutral towards it (See *Figure 3.8*).

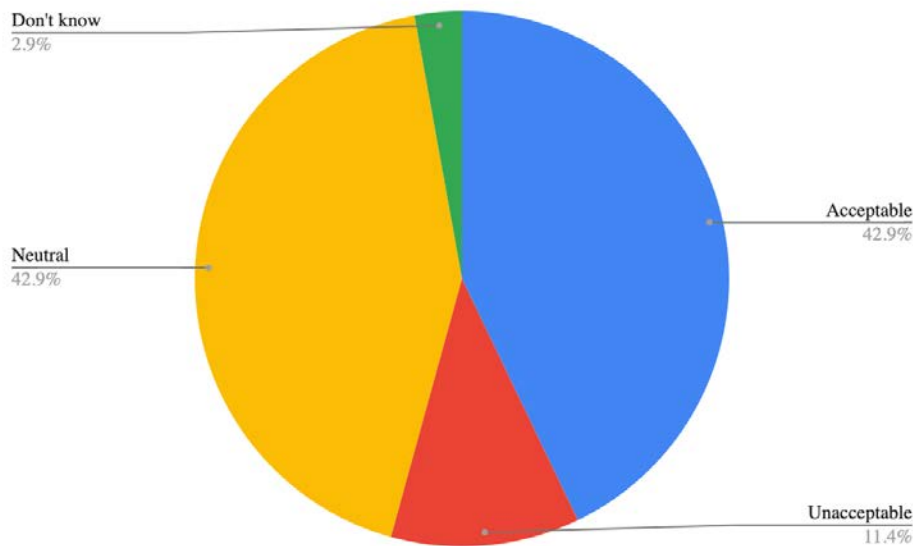


Figure 3.8. Pie chart depicting levels of acceptance of nudity at Carnival time.

Notably, each of the Key Informants stated that nudity was something of typical expectations in Trinidad and Tobago, as it is not something that Caribbean inhabitants “switch on and off” throughout the year (Key Informant 1-5). However, when it came to the wearing of Bikini mas in Carnival and Bodypainting at this time, the results were fascinating.

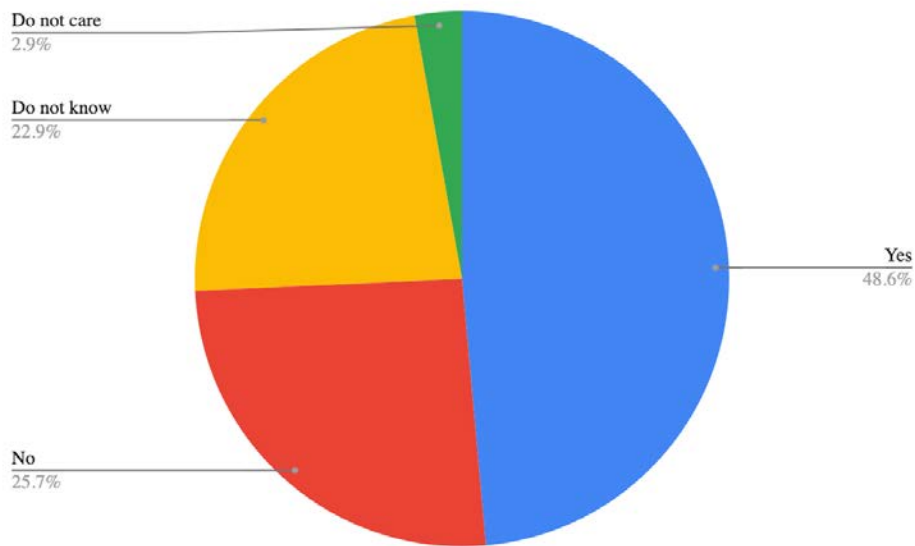


Figure 3. 9. Pie chart depicting the level of acceptance towards the trend of Bikini mas in Carnival.

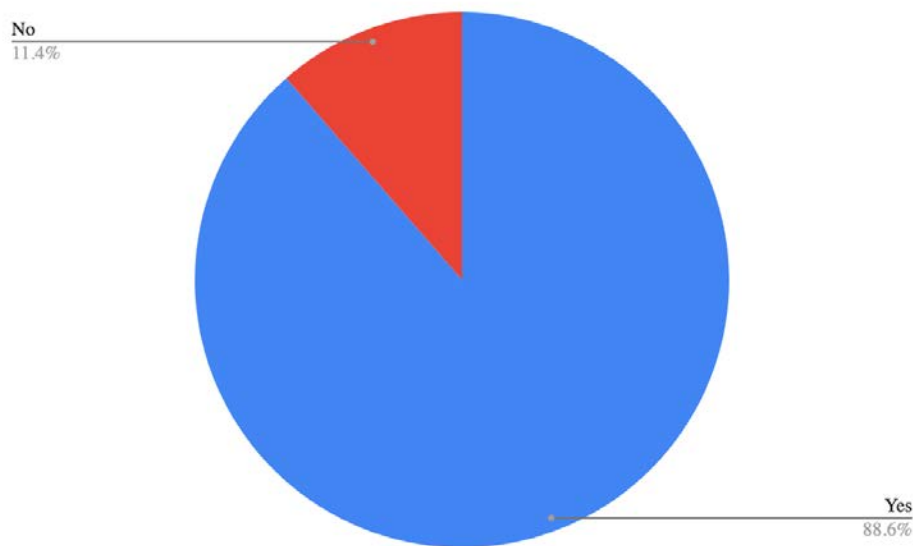


Figure 3. 10. Pie chart depicting the level of acceptance towards the trend of Bodypainting in Carnival.

As seen in *Figures 3.9. and Figure 3.10.* above, the trend towards Body painting during Carnival appears to be more accepted than the trend of wearing Bikini mas. This may be so because in an episode of *Seen at 11* on CBS New York, the organization, “Living Art America” stated “Body painting is less about being naked and more about the art being alive”. Therefore, Bodypainting may be more accepted as it is seen as more artistic than Bikini mas. Of the male and female respondents, 46% of males and 62% of females who were initially accepting of nudity at Carnival time saw no issue with either Bikini mas or Bodypainting. Whilst the 54% of males and 38% of females that were neutral about nudity in Carnival had varying responses when it came to Bikini mas and Bodypainting at this time. These results were quite intriguing, as one would think that since most people are more unclothed, under body paint than they are in bikini mas, that the latter would be more accepted.

Additionally, 94% of respondents stated that nudity at Carnival time was more accepted at that time of year over any other time and mostly male respondents (63%) found nudity at Carnival time to be both arousing and tempting.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

As expected, all respondents utilized social media frequently and it was observed that most persons used more than two forms of social media: Instagram and Facebook being the most

frequented social media applications. Over 90% of respondents admitted to having been exposed to different forms of nudity on social media platforms regularly. Interestingly, over 79% of the female respondents stated that social media influences their perception of nudity, whilst 63% of males also said it did. This may be so because Collins, et al. speculates, that based on psychological theory, “Creating sexual content may more directly influence self-perception or may influence how others perceive and interact with the content creator”. Additionally, as seen in *Figure 3.11*, 57% of the respondents, said that viewing nudity on social media has made them more accepting of it. Interestingly, Key Informants also stated that viewing nudity on the internet or even via social media has made them more accepting of it as well. This may be the same for both Key Informants and survey respondents as viewing nudity on these platforms over time may have acclimated them to it. However, over 75% of the female population stated that viewing nudity on social media has made them more unaccepting of it, whilst it did not affect the male populations acceptance levels (*Figure 3.12*).

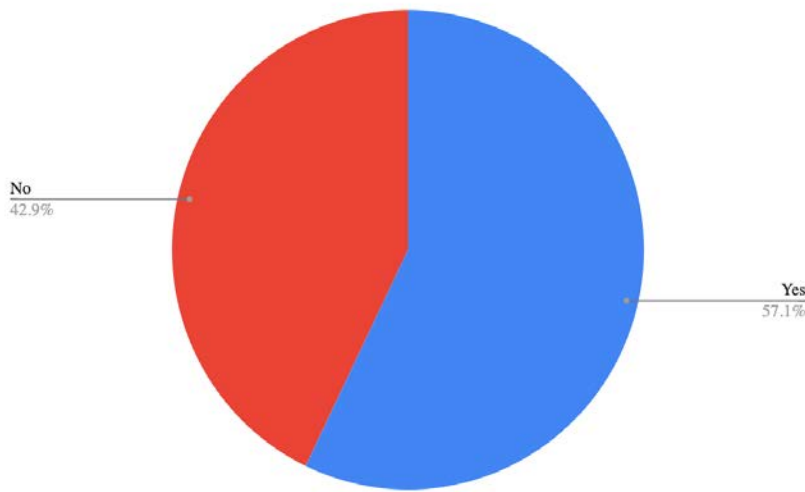


Figure 3. 11. Chart showing the acceptance of viewing nudity on Social Media.

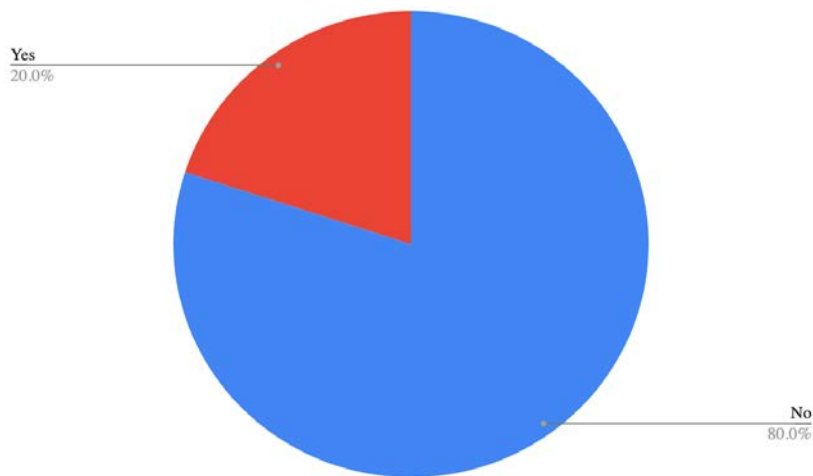


Figure 3. 12. Chart showing the unacceptance of viewing nudity on the internet.

These results are noteworthy, as one can hypothesize that most female respondents were influenced or affected by nudity on social media as 67% of the respondents (all female) said nudity on social media affected people's self-value.

Nudity in Art

Significantly, most respondents considered nudity in Visual Arts to be Art as 69% of them saw it as a form of expression whilst 31% of them were neutral or unbothered by it. Likewise, Key Informants 1-5, also saw nude artwork to be art because it has been a part of art history from time immemorial and without it, numerous artists may not have been as developed as they were today. Therefore, one can infer that the importance of the Visual Arts and its acceptance is unquestionable. Next, when it came to the similarities and differences between nakedness and nudity, most of the male respondents (64%), saw them as being similar, while 46% of the respondents saw them as being different.

Then survey respondents were presented with four pictures that displayed unclothed men and women and were asked whether they saw the persons within them as naked or nude. According to John Berger, in his book “Ways of Seeing” he states that “Nakedness reveals itself whilst nudity is put on display”.



Figure 3. 13. group of unclothed people



Figure 3. 14. Unclothed man and woman.

In response to the first and second photograph, mostly female respondents (71%), found the first one to display nakedness whilst most of the male respondents (82%), found the second photograph to display nudity. These responses were accurate because if one were to acknowledge the explanations of what nakedness and nudity are, they would notice that in

Figure 3.13, the subjects are naked as they are unclothed for their benefit. Meanwhile, the subjects in *Figure 3.14*, are unclothed for their bodies to be seen by the viewer.



Figure 3. 15. Unclothed women



Figure 3. 16. Unclothed woman

For the third and fourth photos in which unclothed female bodies are displayed, most of the male respondents (71%) found *Figure 3.15*, to display nudity whilst mostly males (64%) also found *Figure 3.16*, to display nudity. Therefore, mostly males found the photographs to display nudity, as the photographs that displayed primarily unclothed female bodies were majorly seen as such. Also, 97% of respondents did not see pornography and nude art as being similar. Succeeding, most of the male respondents (90%) seemed to be more intrigued by nudity in art.



Figure 3. 17. Contemporary male nude painting

Once more, when respondents were again faced with unclothed male and female bodies, in the form of paintings, this time questioning whether the images were artistic or sexual, mainly the female respondents (58%) found the Contemporary male nude in *Figure 3.17*, to be artistic, and a significant 9% of male respondents, found it to be solely sexual.



Figure 3. 18. Contemporary female nude painting

In the contemporary female nude in *Figure 3.18*, mostly males (55%) found it to be artistic. Whilst the number of persons that found it to be both was higher, as mostly females (58%) confirmed this. These results may be due to the fact that the male painting is done more realistically compared to the female portrait which is rendered in an imaginative style and may be due to the way the subject in *Figure 3.18*, looks at the viewer and because the front of the blouse is open.



Figure 3. 19. Classical male nude

In the third painting in *Figure 3.19.*, the classical male nude, mostly male respondents (82%) found it to be artistic whilst 14% of respondents, solely females, found it to be both. Strikingly, 9% of males again were the ones to view another male painting as sexual.



Figure 3. 20. Classical female nude

In the classical female nude mainly female respondents (83%) saw it as being artistic and again, it was the male population that saw this painting as being solely sexual as 9% of them saw it this way. Therefore, it may be proposed that classical representations of male and female nudes are seen as more artistic as most of the respondents saw these as being so. Also, something that was interesting was that more males saw most of the artworks as being solely sexual and one might question why this was so.

72% of males saw the female nude as empowering and 70% of females saw male nudity as more accepted than female nudity. This was expected because as was previously stated in “The fine line between art and pornography” by Lizzie Enfield the author confirms that since the beginning of time the female body has been mainly seen as something to be sexualized whilst the

male body was the one to be praised. One Key Informant even went on to state that this may have been so because the female form had more interesting components to work with (Key Informant 2). However, Key informants 1-5, stated that a piece of art or specifically nude art being empowering has to do with the creator's rationale for creating the work and it is judged based on what it is attempting to communicate. Afterwards 69% of stated that their perception of nudity had changed whilst 31% of respondents said it did not.

FACTORS FOR IMPROVING THE VISUAL ARTS

According to the respondents and key informants improving the Visual Arts requires:

6. Education of the youth and promotion of art and artists.
7. Having governmental seminars about the different aspects of the Visual Arts.
8. Promotion of the art forms in the media and the evolution of society.
9. Diversity within the type of art being created.
10. Artists appreciating and respecting themselves more.
11. There should be community galleries within Trinidad and Tobago in which art from the local population can be viewed.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

As nudity in art becomes more evolved and as conversations surrounding it increase, it is important to understand the significance of the Visual Arts and specifically, the nude in art, to better comprehend why certain perceptions may exist regarding it. This study established that male and females respond to nudity in differing ways as most of the negative perceptions about nudity, originate from females who are heavily influenced by the artificial representations of the female body displayed on social media. It affects the value they place on themselves and their bodies, as they are often the subjects of objectification on these platforms. Whereas, male perceptions of nudity are the opposite, as they are intrigued by most forms of nudity creating more impartial views around it. This is so because as stated previously the unclothed male body was always seen as a sign of power whilst the female body was always susceptible to being sexualized. Fundamentally, all these perceptions stem from misconceptions about standards of beauty and the non-existence of proper education and awareness of the Visual Arts and its practices. This ultimately affects a person's agency in accepting all forms of art and specifically nude art as valid, further making it difficult for persons to form positive perceptions about it.

Recommendations

For there to be an evolution in the collective perceptions of nudity in the Visual Arts, the following are recommended in addressing these issues:

1. There must firstly be a change in how male and female nudity in general and in art is seen. This is best because, constructs of what the ideal body should look like need to be destroyed and the pressures that come with them released. This will allow persons to have a better appreciation for the subject of nudity, increasing levels of self-value and ultimately improving the appreciation of nude art.
2. A wider and more important investment of governmental resources and support, like funding and exposure, should be devoted to the development of the Visual Arts, as it is a sustainable source of income for the country's economy, and it will allow established and prospective artists to know that art is something that is taken seriously by the local authoritative bodies.
3. Community wide education of the population about local and regional artists, from as early as the level of preschool and beyond, will aid in familiarizing the general public about the practice of Visual Arts and play a crucial role in generating higher levels of acceptance and understanding of all forms of art.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

INFORMED CONSENT

Do you consent to participating in this survey?

Yes

No

SECTION A DEMOGRAPHICS:

1. What is your age?

18-25

26- 36

37- 57

58- 65

65 and over

Prefer not to say

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other:

Prefer not to disclose.

3. What faculty at the U.W.I do you belong to?

Humanities and Education

Engineering

Social Sciences

Law

Food and Agriculture

Medical Sciences

Science and Technology

4. What is your degree option?

5. Year of Study?

1

2

3

Other:

6. What is your religion?

- Christian
- Pentecostal
- Anglican
- Catholic
- Roman Catholic
- Baptist
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Other:
- Prefer not to disclose

SECTION B: KNOWLEDGE OF ART

DEFINITION OF VISUAL ARTS:

Unbound Visual Arts. Org states that the Visual Arts are art forms that create works; primarily visual in nature, such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, photography, video, film making and architecture.

7. What level would you describe your knowledge of visual art to be?

- (not knowledgeable----- little knowledge----- knowledgeable- moderately knowledgeable-----extremely knowledgeable)

8. How involved are you in Visual Arts practice?

● (uninvolved- rarely involved- sometimes involved –involved- very involved)

9. If engaged in Visual Arts, what is its purpose in your life? Select all that apply.

Recreational

For Income Purposes

Academic

Other:

None of the above

10. Which of the following do you consider to be art? Select all that apply

Option 1

Option 2

Option 3

Option 4

Option 5

None of the below



Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



Option 4



Option 5

CULTURE AND ART

11. Do you participate in Carnival?

- Yes
- No

12. What do you think about the practice of Carnival?

- Enjoyable
- Overrated
- unnecessary
- A form of artistic/personal expression
- Vulgar
- Other:

13. What do you think about nudity at carnival time?

- Acceptable
- Unacceptable
- Neutral
- Don't know

Justify _____

14. Do you consider the trend towards bikini mas at Carnival time to be a part of Visual Arts?

- Yes
- No
- Do not care
- Do not know

15. Do you think Body Painting in mas is considered to be a part of Visual Arts?

- Yes
- No

16. Do you think nudity at Carnival time is more acceptable at that time of the year compared to any other time?

- Yes
- No

Justify _____

17. Do you think nudity in carnival/mas can be tempting or arousing?

- Tempting

- Arousing
- Both
- Neither
- Other

Justify_____

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

18. Do you use social media?

- Yes
- No

19. If your answer to question 18 was yes, please state which applications you use. Select all that apply.

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- Tumblr
- Other
- None

20. How often do you use social media?

- (never- rarely- sometimes- often- always)

21. How often do you come across forms of nudity while using social media?

- (never-rarely-sometimes- often-always)

22. How much would you say that social media affects your perception of nudity?

- (never-rarely-occasionally- a moderate amount- a great deal)

23. Do you think that viewing nudity on the internet and/or social media has made you more accepting of it?

- Yes
- No

24. Do you think viewing nudity on the internet and/ or social media has made you more unaccepting of it?

- Yes
- No

25. Do you think nudity on social media has affected how much people value themselves and their bodies?

Yes

No

Justify _____

NUDITY IN ART

26. What are your views on nude artwork?

Vulgar

Disgusting

A form of expression

Neutral

Other:

27. Do you think nakedness and nudity are similar?

Similar

Different

Justify _____

28. For the following pictures, please indicate whether in your opinion they represent nudity or nakedness?



Nudity

Nakedness

Justify _____



Nudity

Nakedness

Justify _____



Nudity

Nakedness

Justify _____



Nudity

- Nakedness

Justify _____

29. Do you consider nudity in the Visual Arts to be art?

- Yes

- No

Justify _____

30. How do you feel when you see nude artwork?

- Disgusted

- Intrigued

- Embarrassed

- Excited

- Aroused

- Other:

31. Do you think nude art and pornography represent the same thing?

- Yes

- No

Justify _____

32. For each of the following paintings, indicate whether the representation of the naked body is artistic or sexual.



- Artistic
- Sexual
- Both
- Neither



- Artistic
- Sexual
- Both
- Neither



- Artistic
- Sexual
- Both
- Neither



- Artistic
- Sexual
- Both
- Neither

33. What are your views on artwork that depicts nude female bodies? Select all that apply.

- Sexual
- Empowering
- Tasteless
- Other:

34. What are your views on artworks that depict nude male bodies? Select all that apply.

- Sexual

Empowering

Tasteless

Other:

35. Do you think male nudity is more acceptable than female nudity?

Yes

No

Justify _____

36. Do you think that your perception of nudity in art has evolved?

Yes

No

Justify _____

37. If the answer to the above question is yes, has it evolved in a positive or negative way?

Positive

Negative

Justify _____

38. Do you think Visual Artists are taken seriously?

Yes

No

Justify _____

39. How can the Visual art forms be improved?

40. What factors can contribute to the Visual Art forms being more accepted?

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

1. In your opinion what constitutes Visual Arts?
2. How knowledgeable are you of Visual arts?
3. How do you feel about Visual Arts?
4. In the Caribbean would you say Visual Artists are taken seriously? Why/Why not?
5. How involved are you in Visual Arts practice? How often do you participate in it and in what capacity? For example: recreational use, Income Purposes, academic reasons etcetera.
6. Would you consider nude artwork to be a part of Visual Arts? Why or why not?
7. How do you feel when you see nude artwork?
8. In your experience what are some common reactions to nude artwork?
9. Do you think these reactions are misplaced?
10. Where, in your opinion, do you think these reactions stem from?
11. In the Caribbean, is our culture one in which nudity is considered to be a part of our socialization?
12. In your opinion, is carnival part of the Visual art form? Would you consider all aspects art? If so, which aspects?
13. In the Caribbean, would you say we are occasionally accepting of certain types of visual artforms, for example, during Carnival season? If so, why do you think this is?

14. In carnival, would you say that the trend towards bikini mas at this time contributes to Visual Arts?

15. In Carnival, would you say the trend towards body painting at this time contributes to Visual Arts?

16. Do you think that nude artworks predominantly display the female body?

17. Do you think nude art can be empowering? Why and How so?

18. How has nude art evolved? For example, historically has it changed and if so, how?

19. Is this a positive or negative evolution? Why do you think so?

20. Would you say that nudity viewed on the internet and/or social media has become more accepted?

21. Has nudity on social media affected the value people place on themselves and their bodies?

22. How can the Visual artform be improved?

22.b What factors can contribute to it being more accepted?

APPENDIX C: CHARTS AND GRAPHS

DEMOGRAPHICS

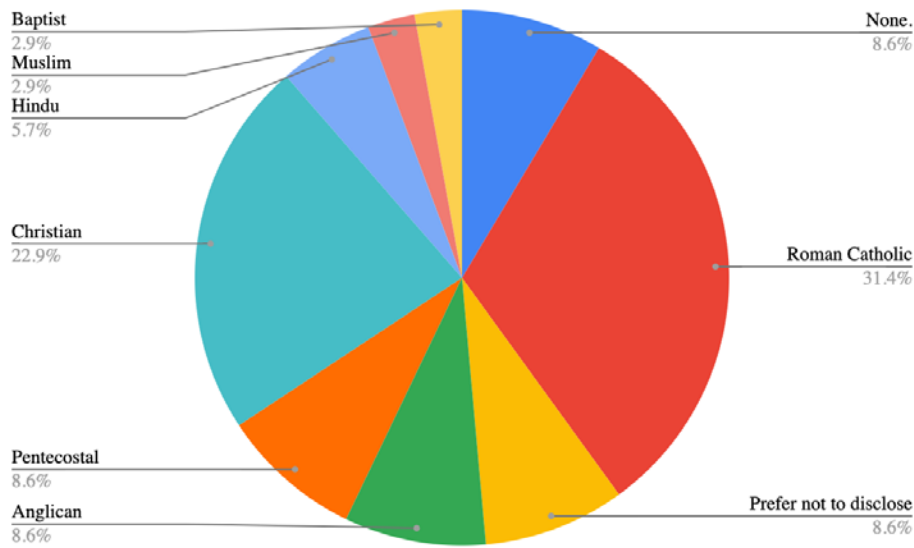


Figure 1. Pie chart displaying the religions of respondents.

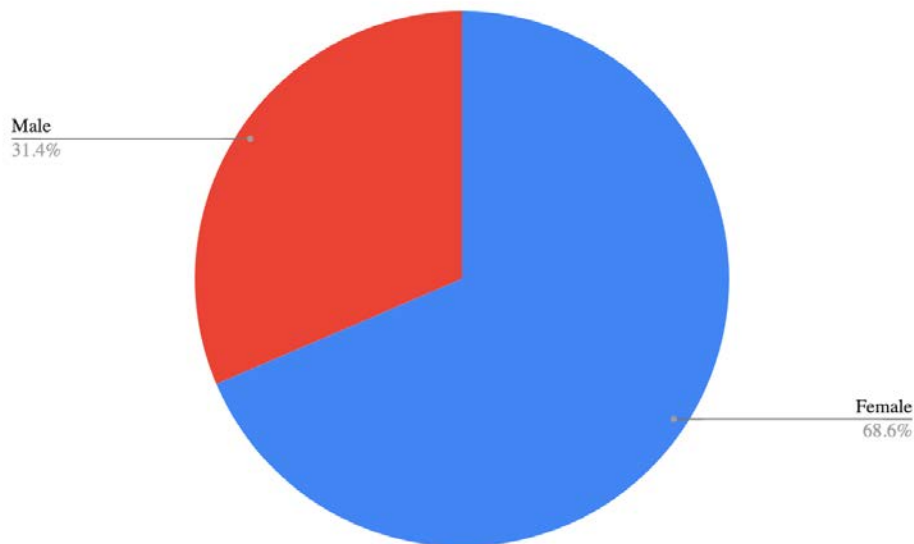


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the genders of the respondents.

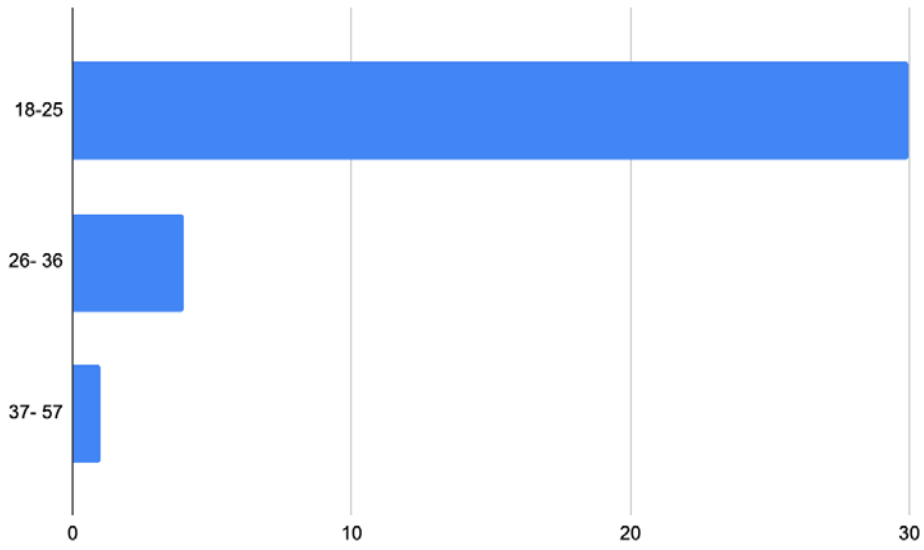


Figure 3. Pie chart displaying the ages of respondents.

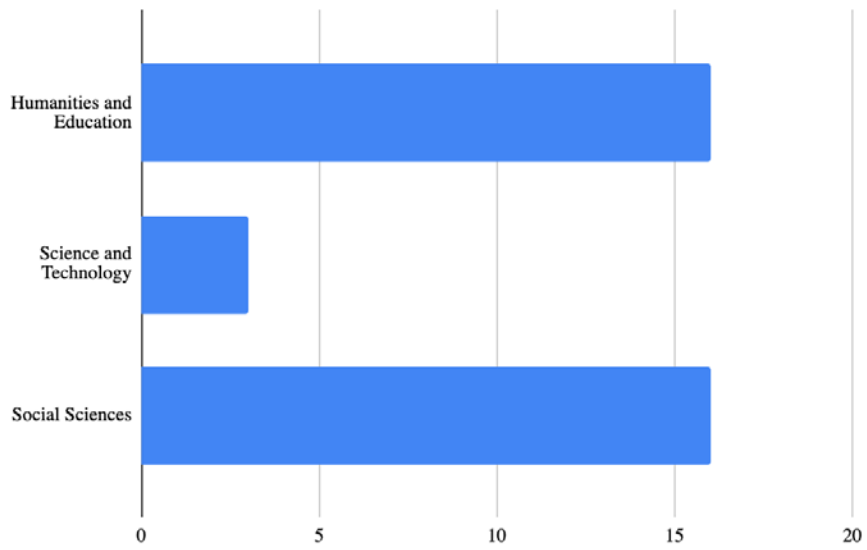


Figure 4. Chart showing the faculties that each respondent belonged to.

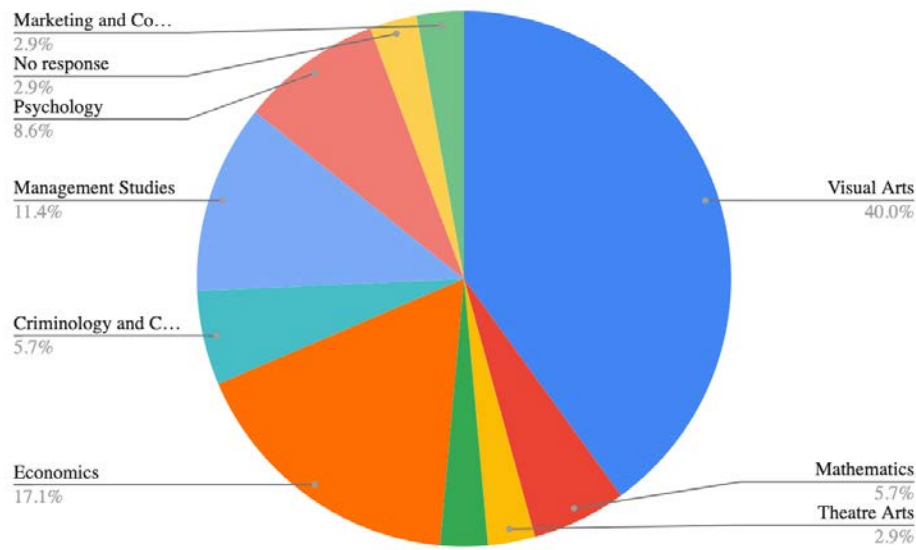


Figure 5. Pie chart showing the department that each respondent belonged to.

| Year of Study | Number of Responses |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 7 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 19 |
| 4 | 1 |
| Other | 1 |

Table 1. Table displaying the year of study of the respondents.

KNOWLEDGE OF ART

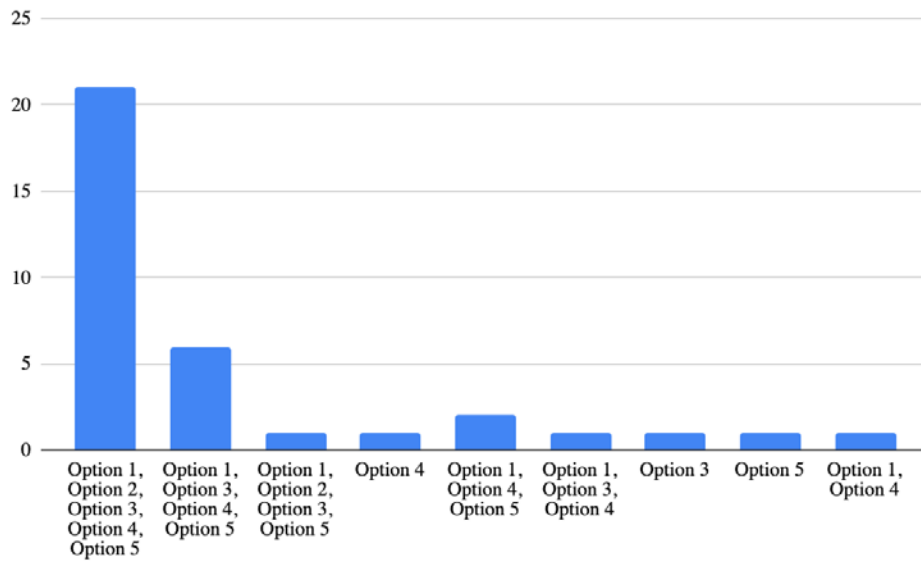


Figure 6. Chart displaying responses, for the options respondents considered to be art.

CULTURE AND ART

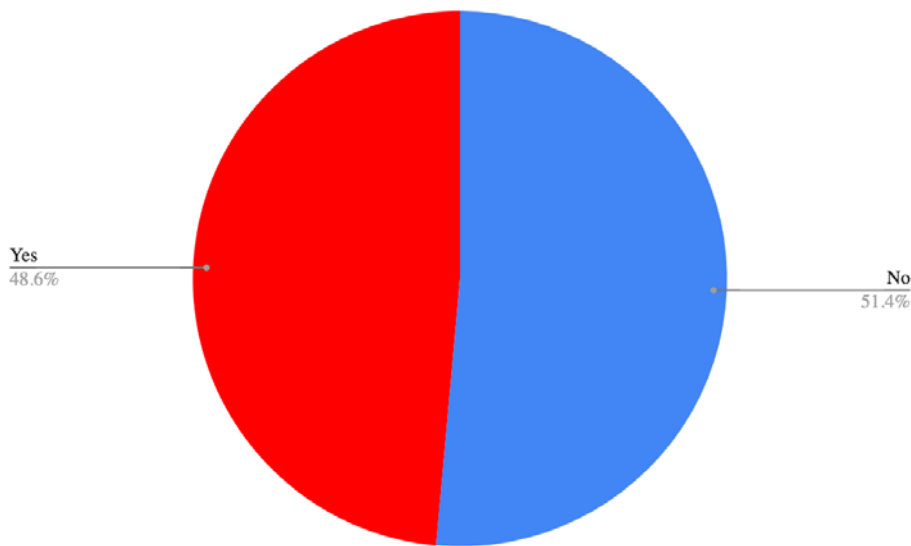


Figure 7. Chart displaying the number of respondents that participated in Carnival.

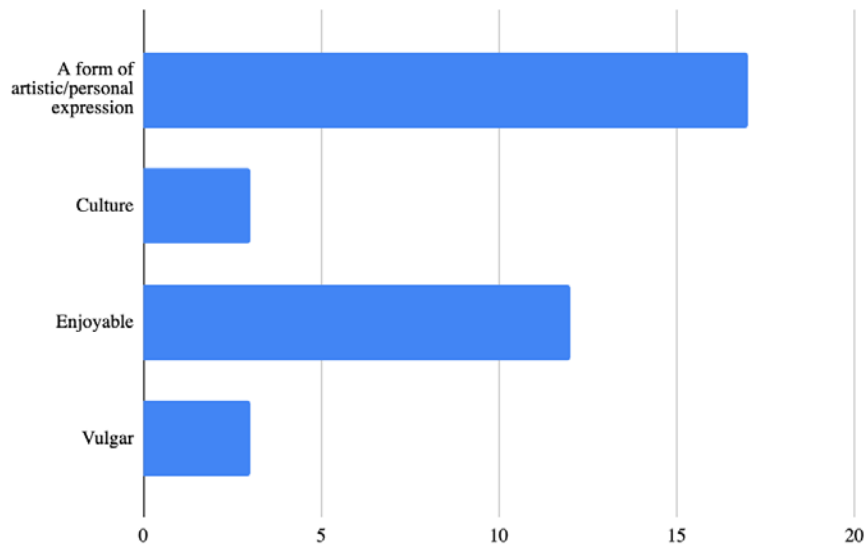


Figure 8. Chart displaying what respondents thought about the practice of Carnival.

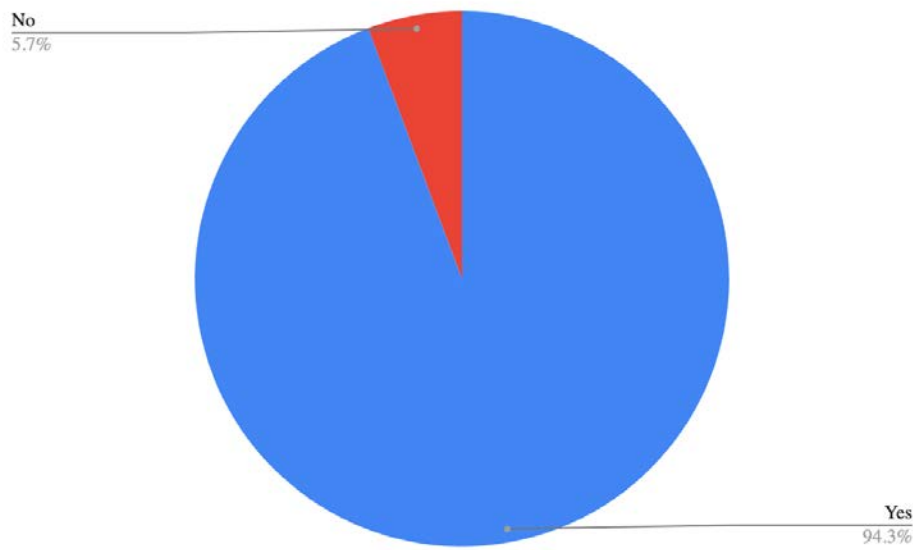


Figure 9. Pie chart displaying whether respondents saw nudity to be more acceptable around Carnival time.

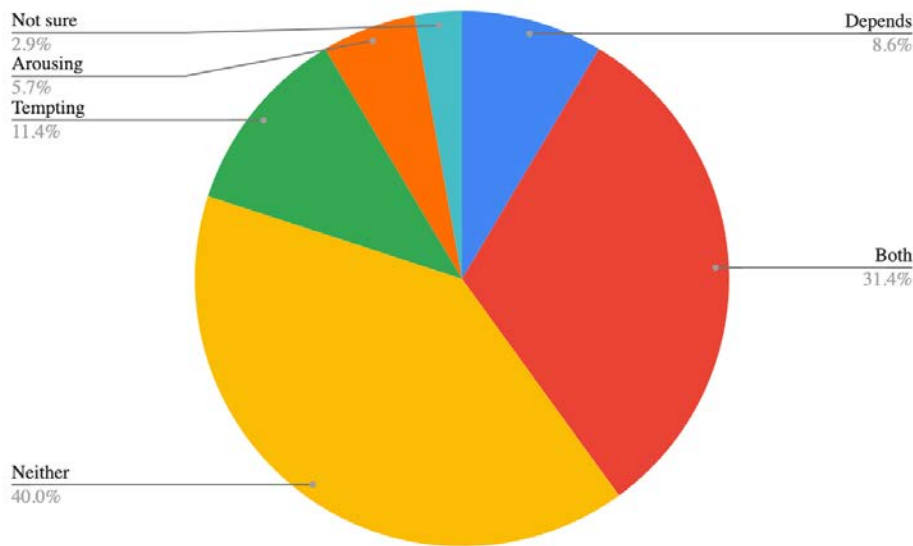


Figure 10. Pie chart showing whether nudity at Carnival time was seen as being tempting or arousing.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

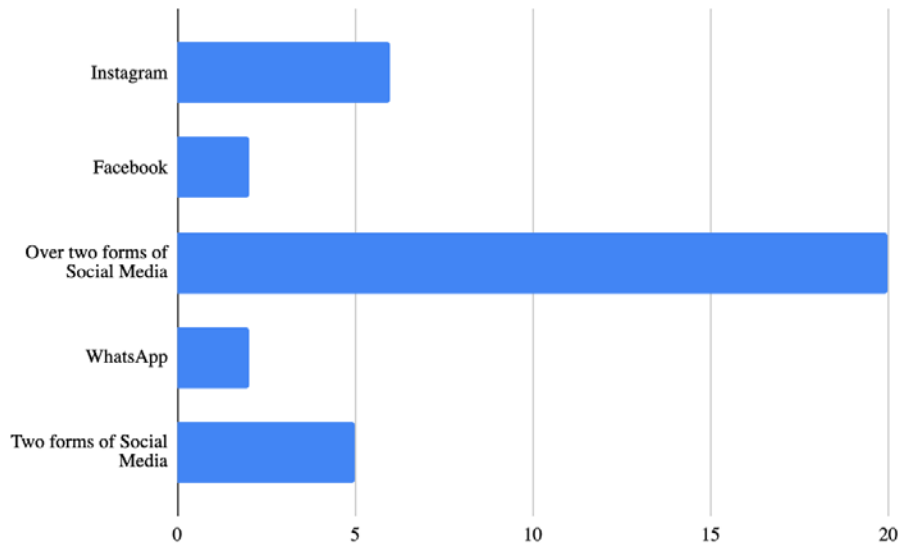


Figure 11. Chart displaying the forms of social media that respondents used.

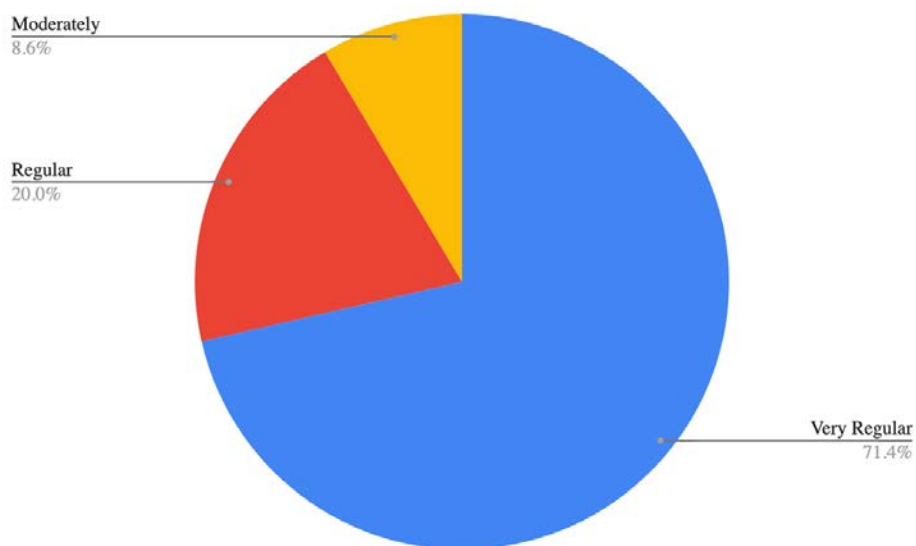


Figure 12. Pie chart showing how respondents utilised social media.

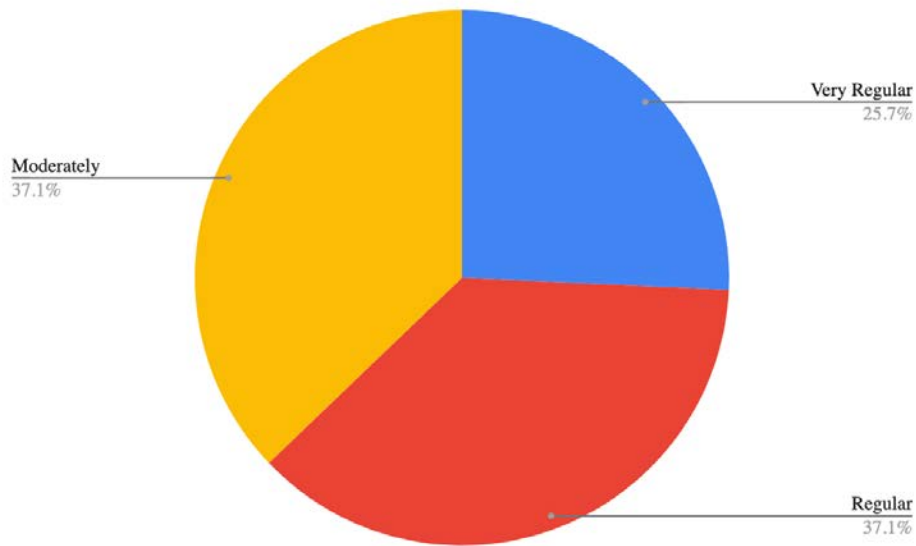


Figure 13. Pie Chart showing how often respondents came across forms of nudity while using social media.

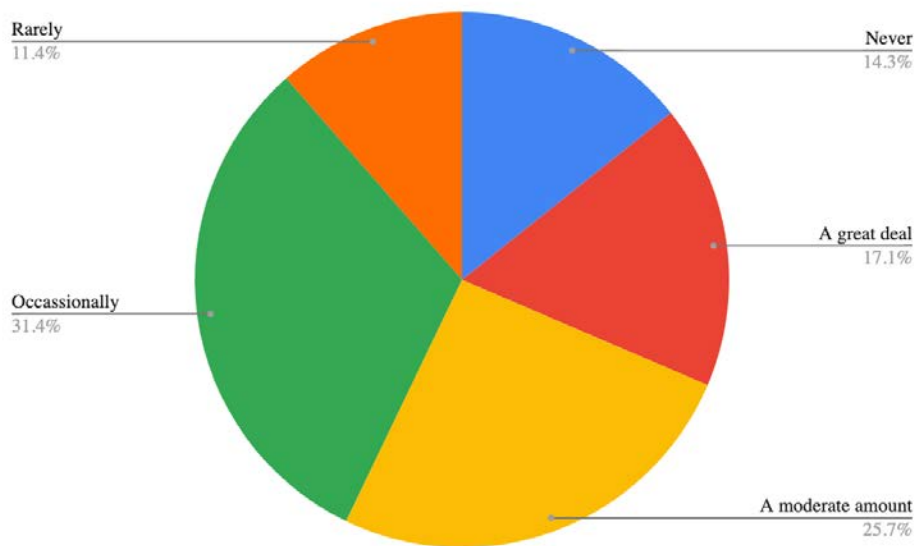


Figure 14. Pie chart showing how much social media affected respondents' perceptions of nudity.

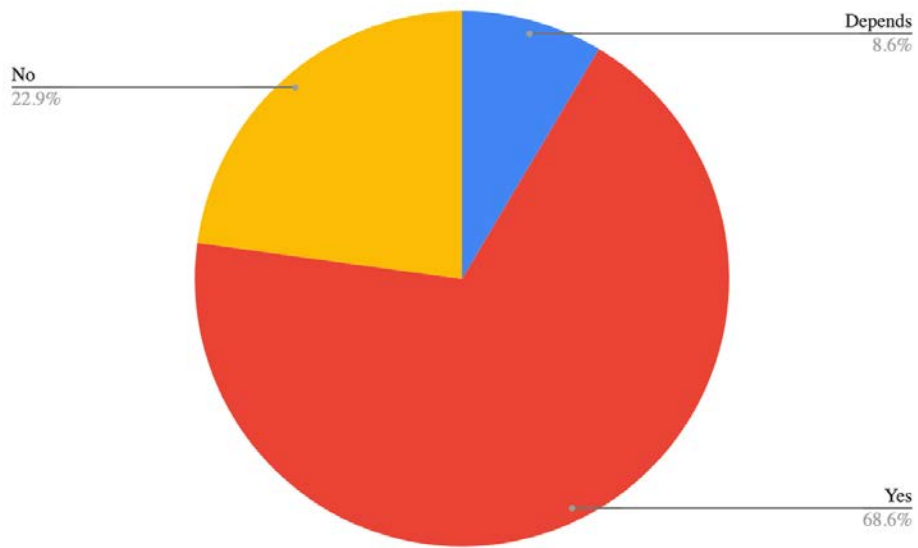


Figure 15. Pie chart displaying whether participants believed viewing nudity on the internet affected the value people place on themselves and their bodies.

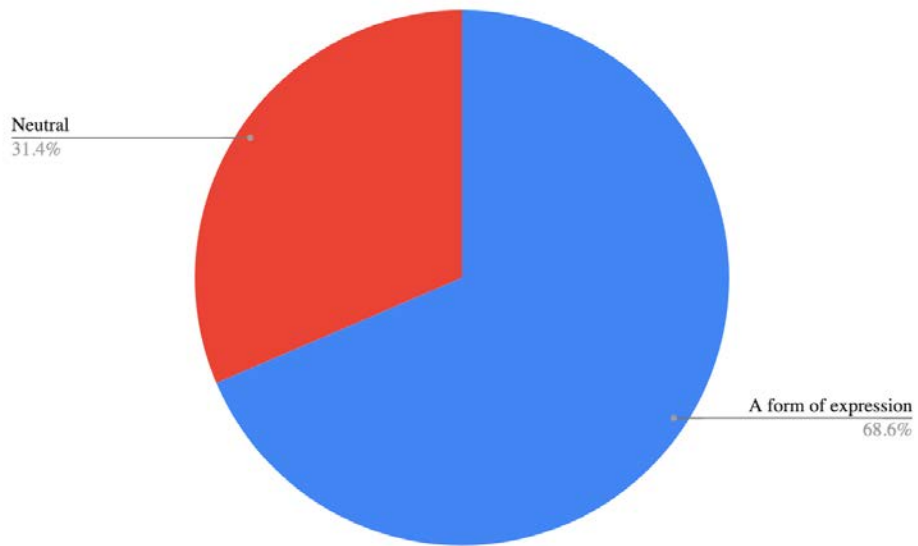


Figure 16. Pie chart showing participants views on nudity.

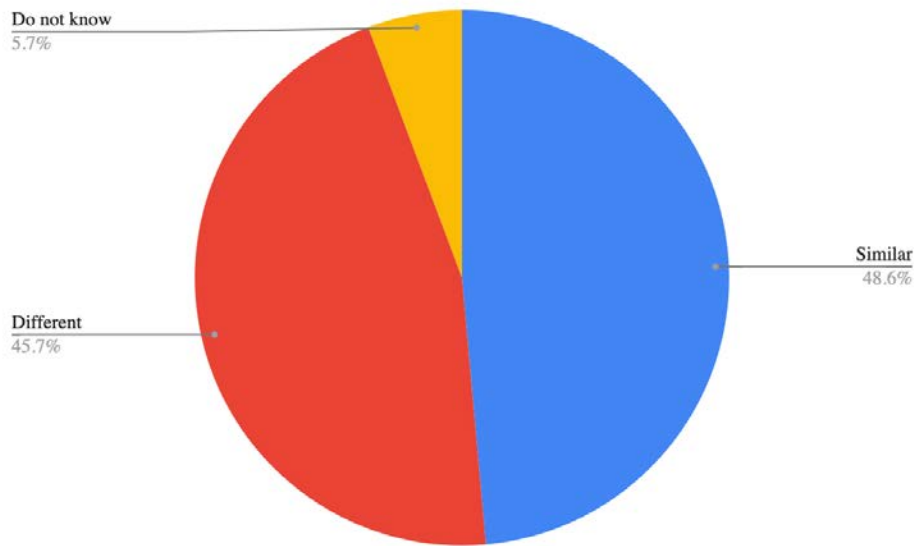


Figure 17. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nakedness and nudity as similar.

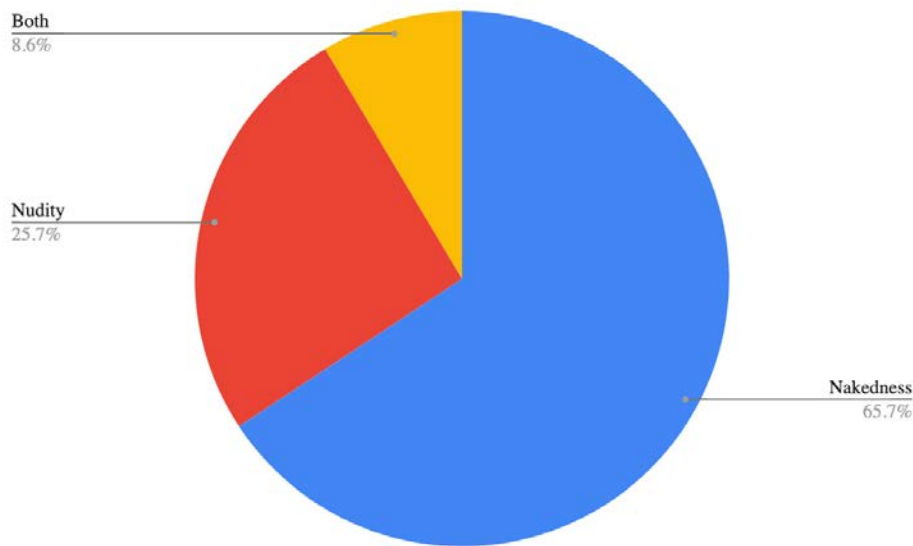


Figure 18. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nakedness or nudity amongst the group of unclothed persons.

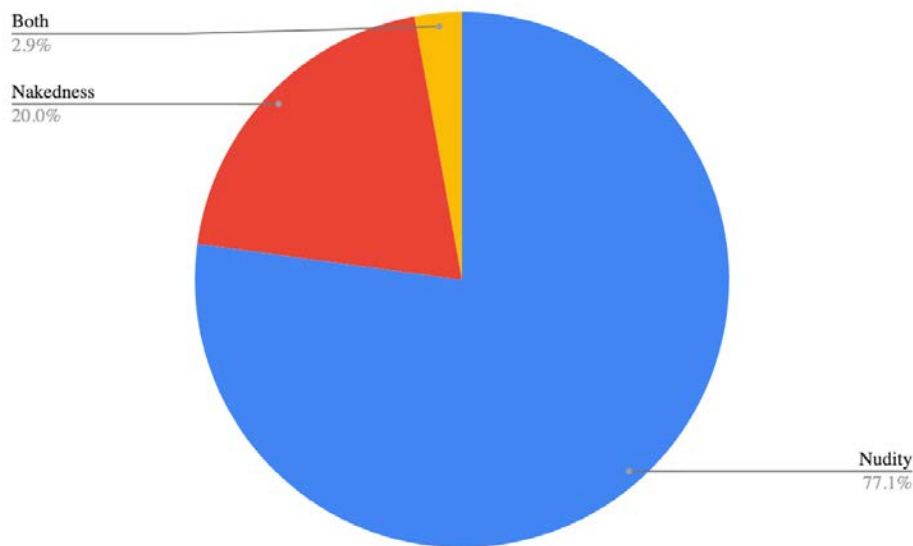


Figure 19. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nakedness or nudity amongst the unclothed woman and man.

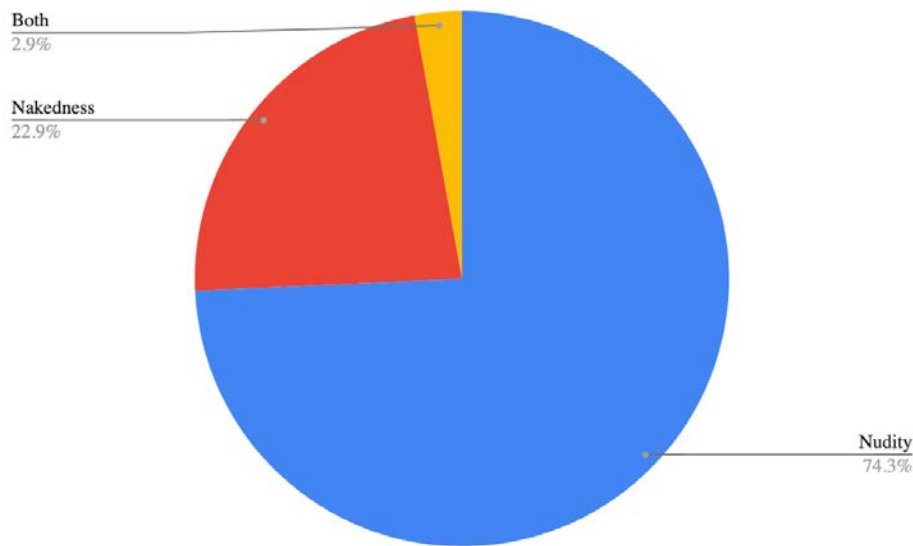


Figure 20. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nakedness and nudity amongst two unclothed females.

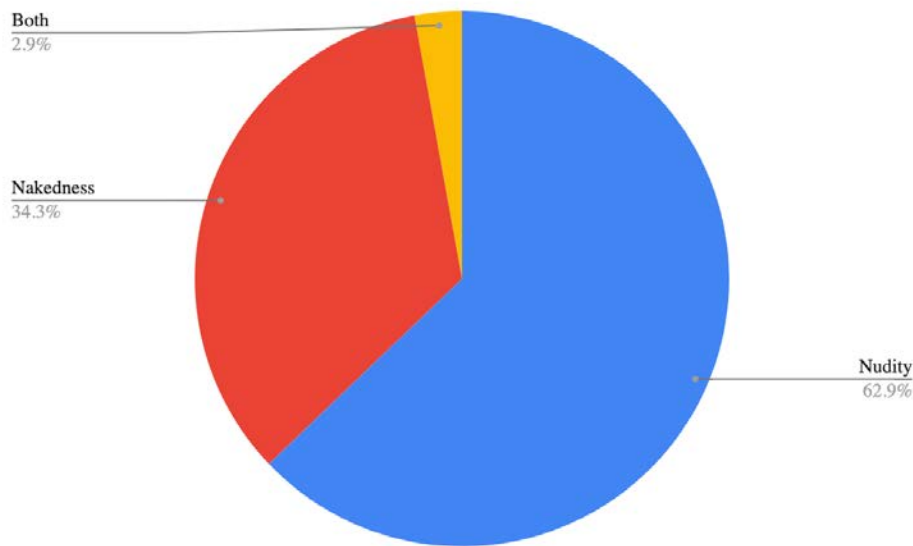


Figure 21. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nakedness or nudity amongst an unclothed female body.

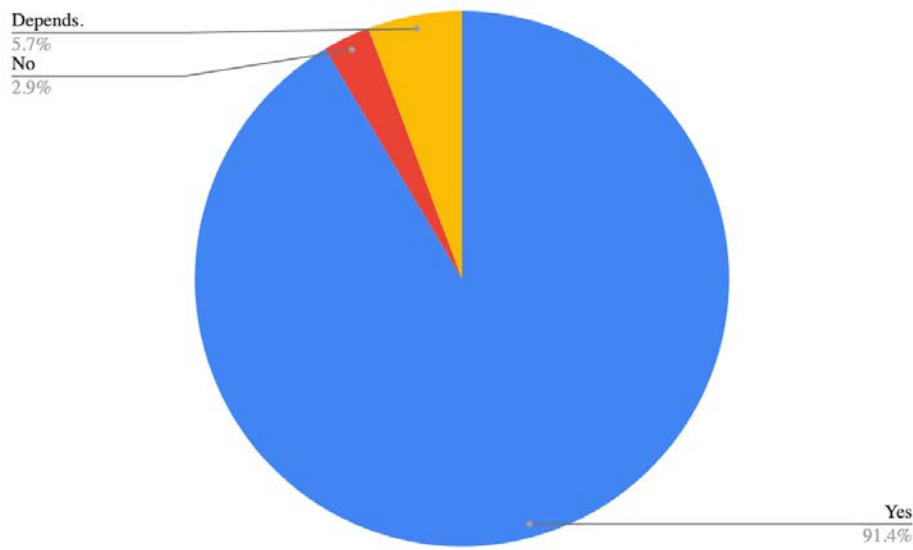


Figure 22. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw nudity in the Visual Arts to be art.

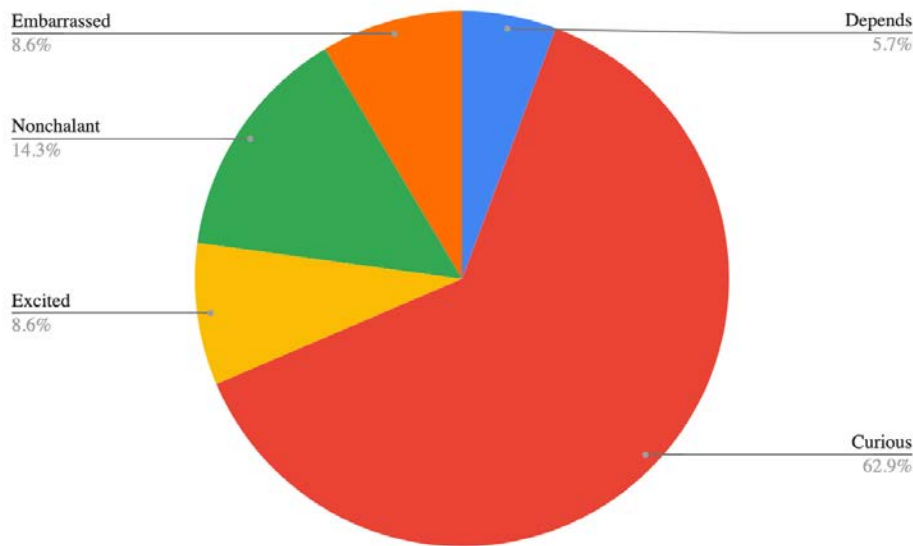


Figure 23. Pie chart showing how respondents felt when they viewed nude artwork.

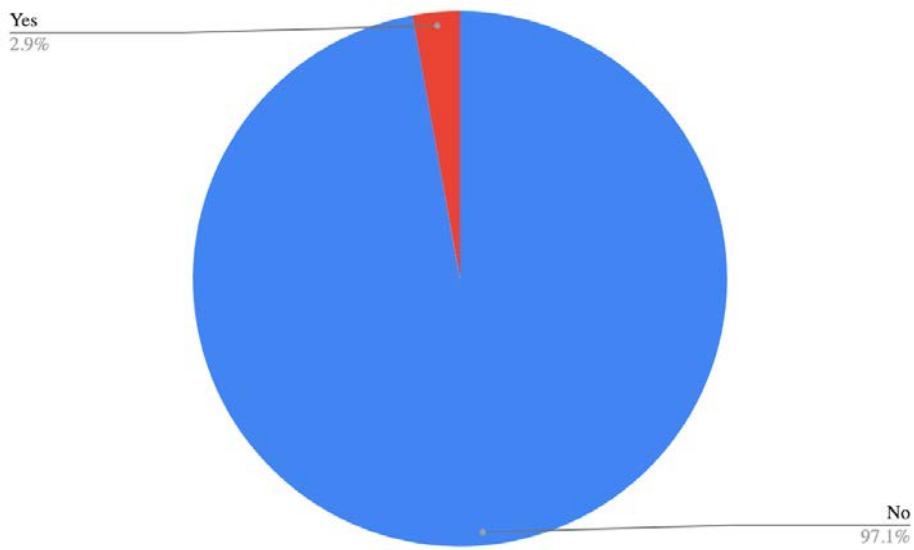


Figure 24. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw art and pornography as representing the same thing.

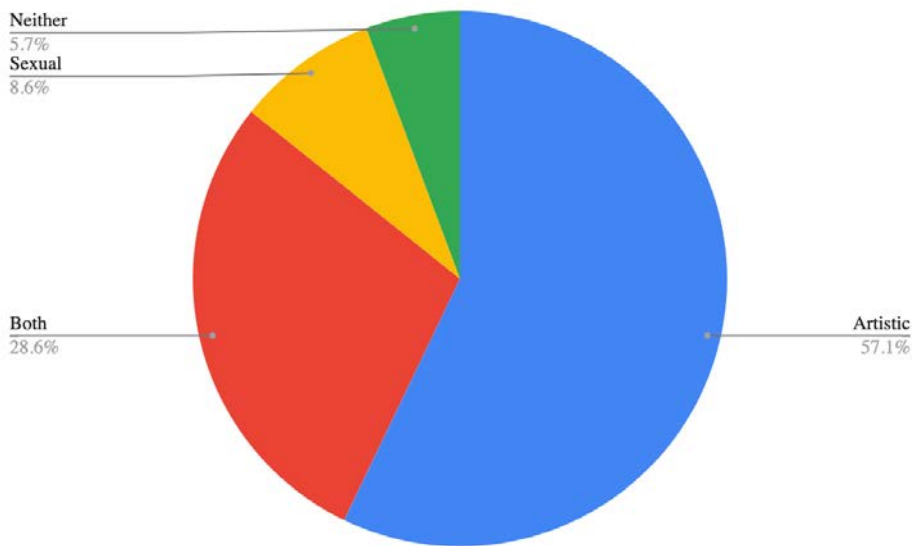


Figure 25. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw the contemporary male nude as being artistic or sexual.

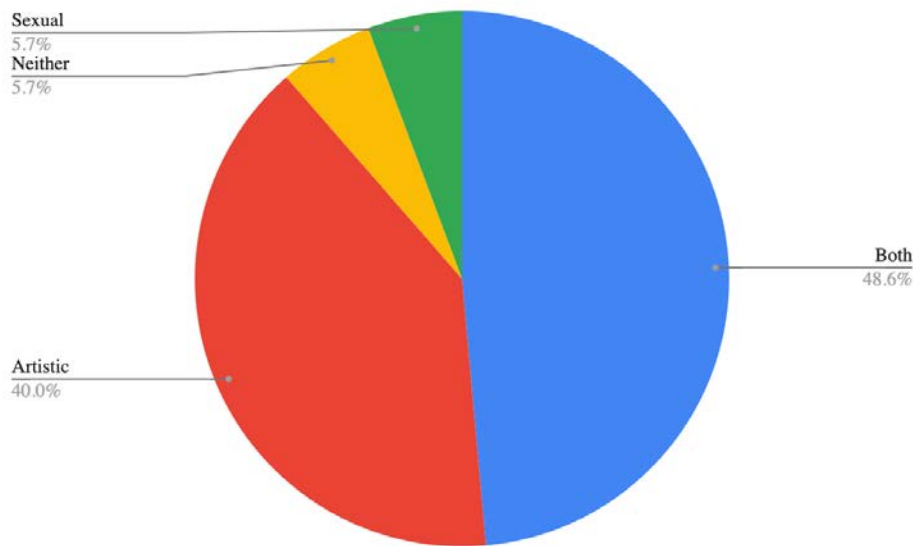


Figure 26. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw the contemporary female nude as being artistic or sexual.

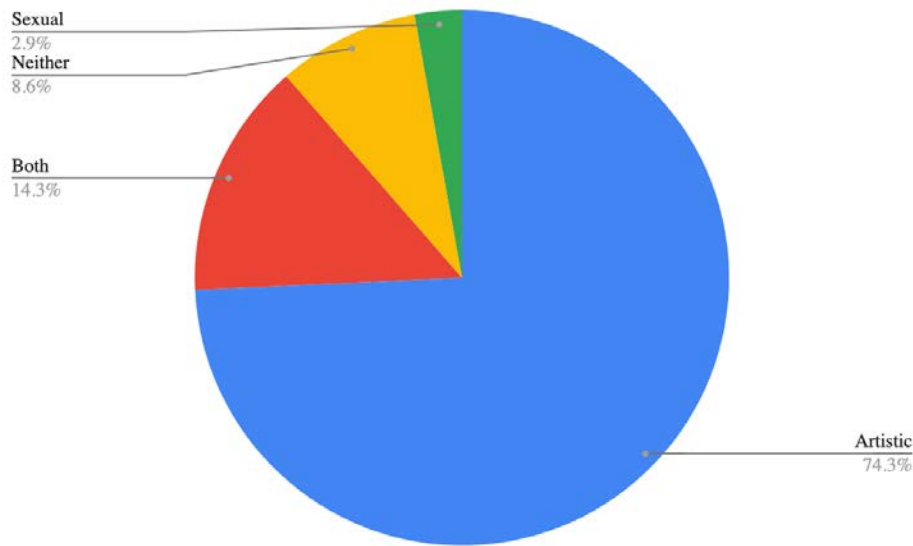


Figure 27. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw the classical male nude as being artistic or sexual.

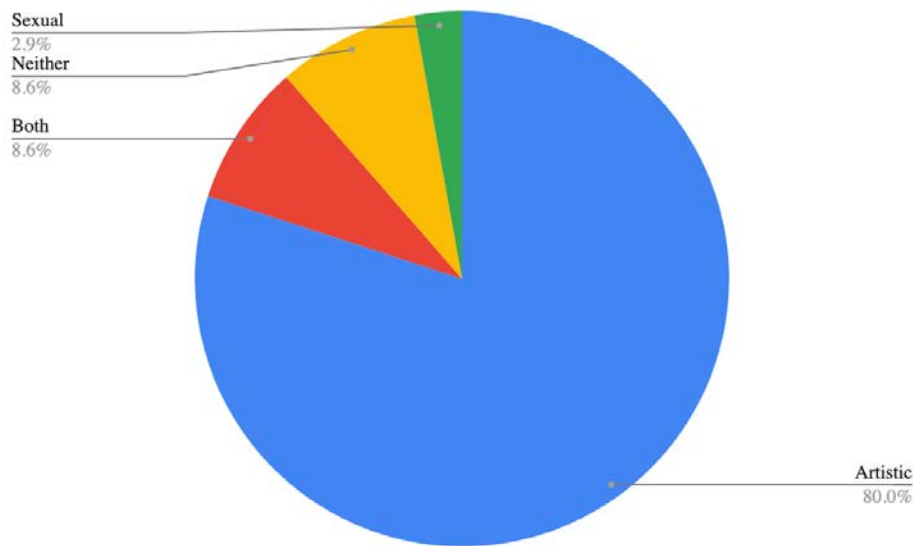


Figure 28. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw the classical female nude as being artistic or sexual.

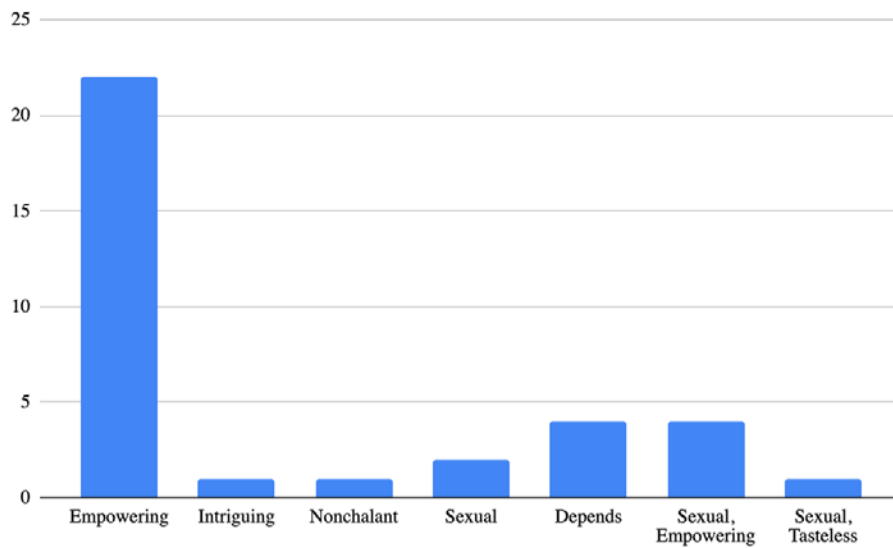


Figure 29. chart showing respondents' views on artworks that depict nude female bodies.

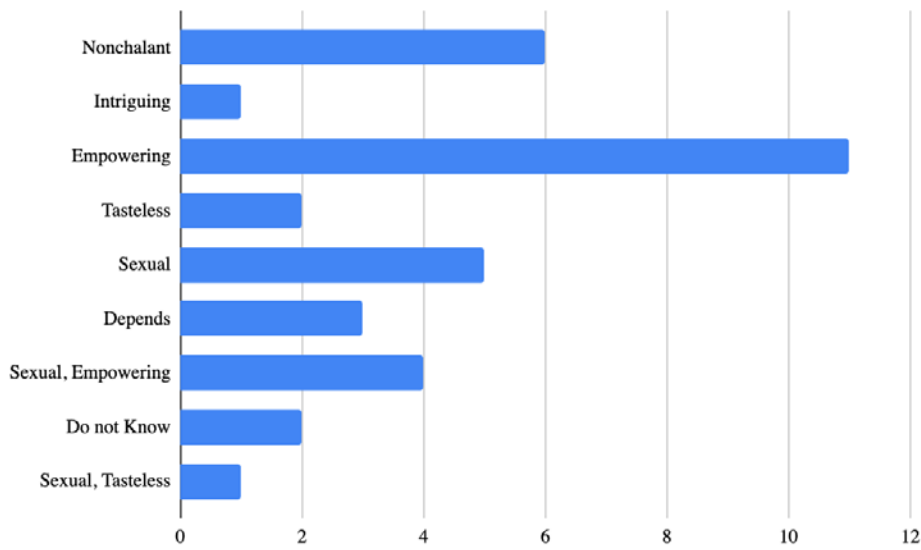


Figure 30. Chart showing respondents views on artworks that depict nude male bodies.

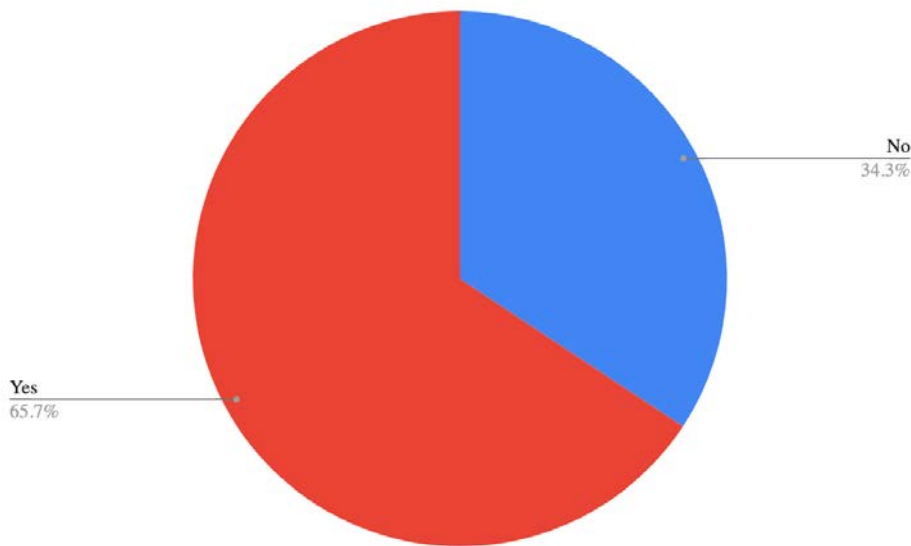


Figure 31. Pie chart showing whether respondents saw male nudity as being more acceptable than female nudity.

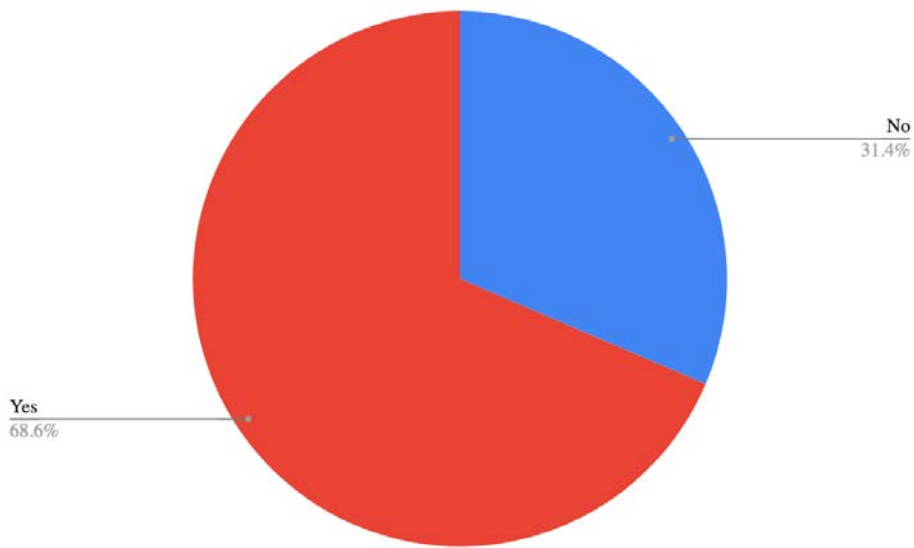


Figure 32. Pie chart showing whether respondents' perceptions of nudity had evolved.

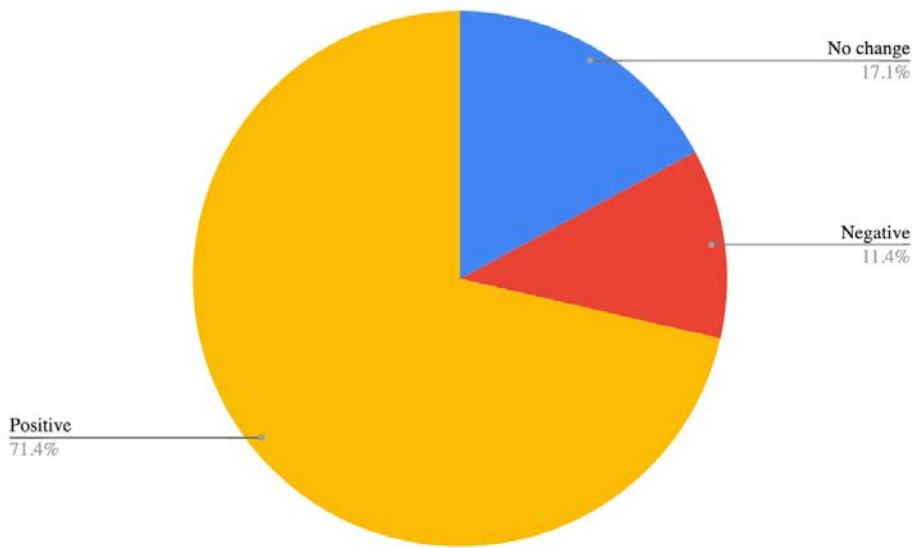


Figure 33. Pie chart showing whether participants' perceptions of nudity had evolved in a positive or negative way.

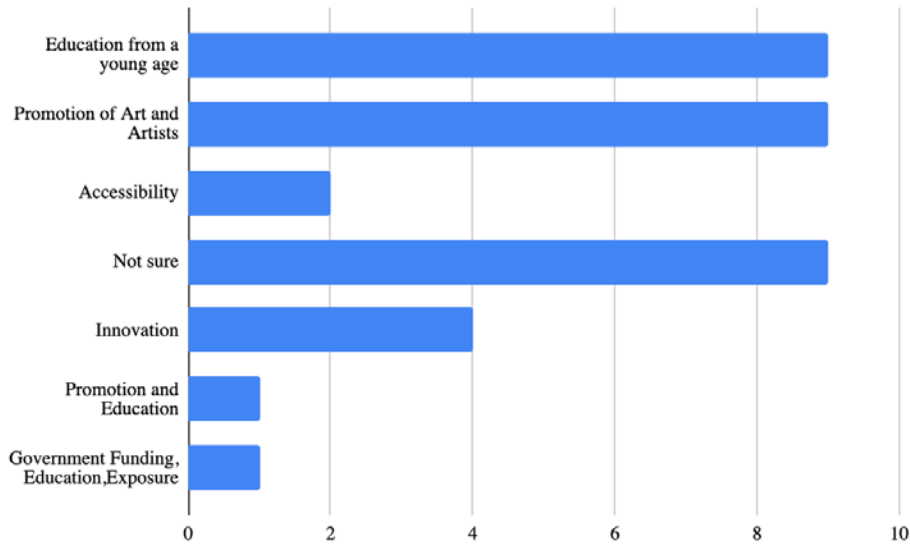


Figure 34. Chart showing respondents' recommendations for the innovation of the Visual Arts.

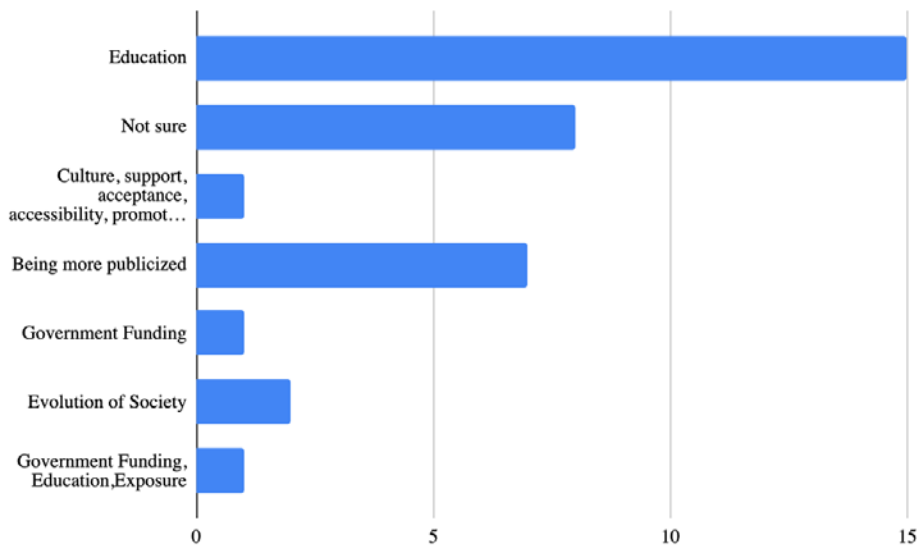


Figure 35. Chart showing factors that may contribute to the innovation of the visual arts.

