



# Cultural Diversity in Washington Cities

August 2002

## Introduction

The Washington Campaign to Promote Racial Justice was initiated by the Association of Washington Cities this year to *build a broad base of understanding and support from which cities and citizens can work together for stronger communities*. In partnership with the National Conference for Community and Justice and the Anti-Defamation League, we are working to reach three primary goals:

1. Increase support for cities working to advance racial justice,
2. Build understanding of racism in Washington State as it exists today, and
3. Increase citizen involvement from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

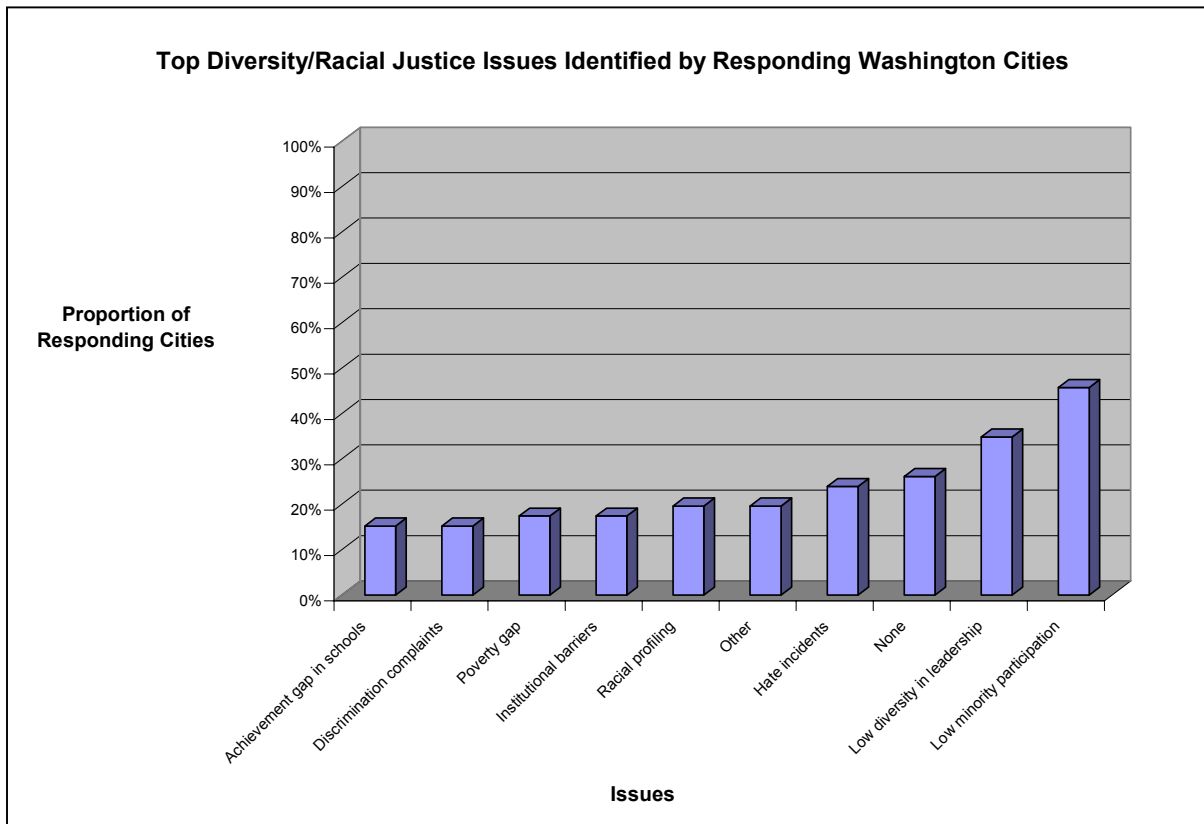
This report presents the results from this spring's "Cultural Diversity and Washington Cities Questionnaire." It explores city concerns, local efforts to address them and potential next steps for cities. Perhaps more importantly, it lays a foundation for reaching two of these goals: increasing support for cities working to advance racial justice and for increasing citizen involvement from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

## Study Details

*Cities were asked to complete the questionnaire to the best of their ability in order to help us provide better assistance to them as they strive to honor diversity and/or achieve racial justice.*

- 46 cities completed the Cultural Diversity in Washington Cities questionnaire (16.4% response rate)
- The cultural diversity of all Washington cities' populations was compared to that of the cities that responded to the survey. There was no significant difference.
- The results of this survey do only represent a small sample of Washington cities, so no firm conclusions should be drawn from it. It is best used as a baseline to promote further exploration of the issues.

## City Concerns: Specific Racial Justice/ Diversity Issues



### Other Key Issues Cities Noted When Considering Diversity/Racial Justice Issues in their Cities

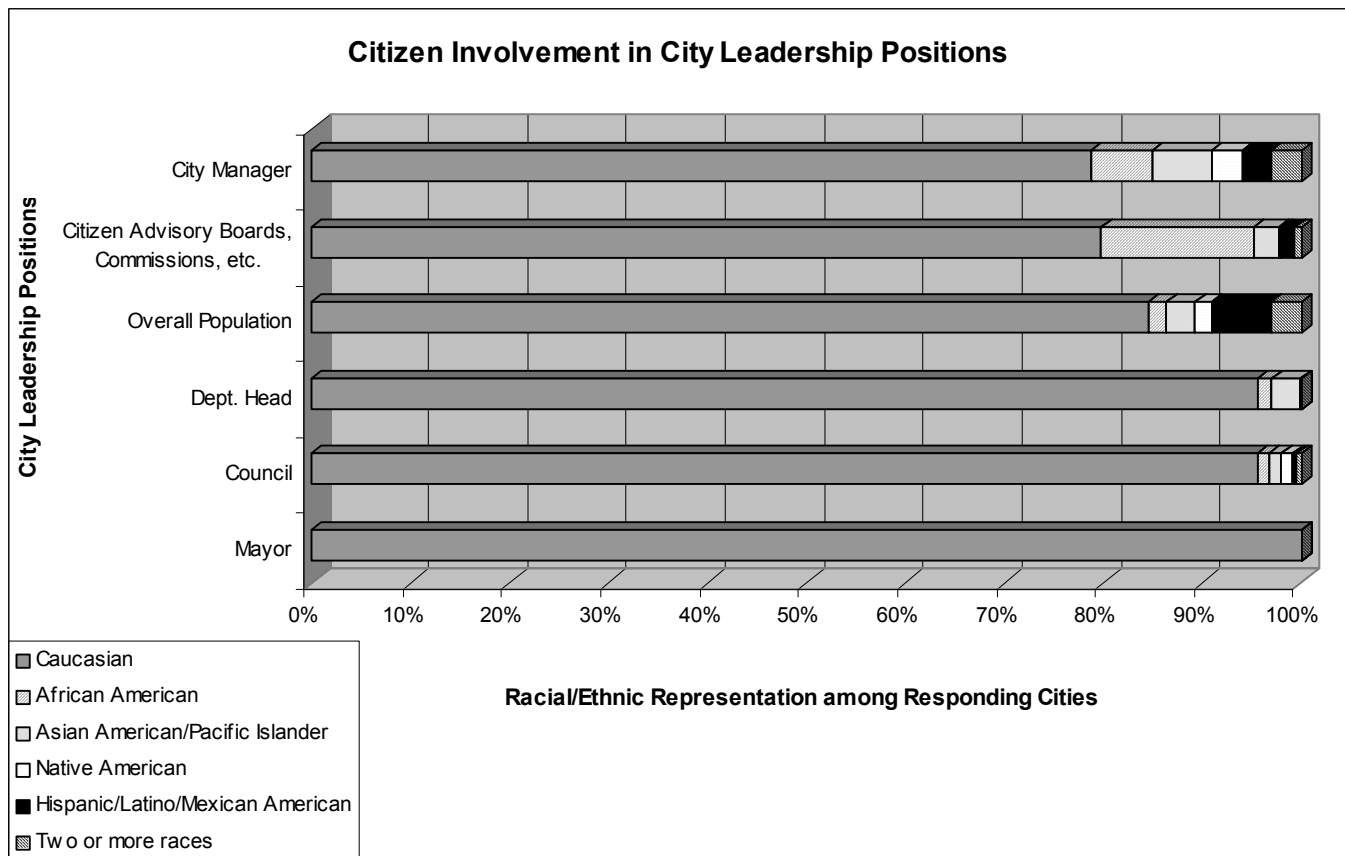
- Lack of minority residents
- Lack of minorities in workforce
- Minority recruitment for city jobs
- False claims of racial profiling for personal gain
- Economic justice, youth development, joblessness, seniors, drug use

### Lack of Diversity in Civic Involvement & Leadership

Among a host of issues that local government leaders might be concerned about, low participation of racial/ethnic minorities in local government affairs came out on top, closely followed by low levels of diversity in city leadership positions.

It is clear that many of these cities have recognized the importance of hearing from their diverse community members. However, these cities are apparently not seeing that diversity represented in various city affairs and leadership positions in their communities.

*Is it true that some racial/ethnic groups are not as well represented in city affairs and leadership positions as others?* According to this study, the answer is yes *and* no *and* we don't know. First, this question cannot be fully answered because the study did not reveal the racial/ethnic demographics of citizens who write letters to their city officials nor of those who attend public hearings or other public forums hosted by the city. However, the survey did capture the racial and ethnic demographics of citizens in elected and administrative leadership positions in cities and of those serving on citizen commissions and advisory boards. Here, involvement varies between each of the positions.



## Findings

- The racial/ethnic diversity of **city administrative positions** is roughly in proportion to that of the sample population. However, there is actually more diversity amongst city managers than in the sample population, while department heads are more homogenous than the sample population.
- **City elected positions** are much less diverse. In this sample, every mayor is Caucasian. This is clearly not true of all Washington cities, so the reader should take great caution in drawing conclusions here.
- Participation on **citizen commissions and advisory boards** varies between racial/ethnic groups. Among the responding cities, fewer Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native Americans participate in these civic involvement opportunities, whereas a greater proportion of African Americans are involved.

Much more information is needed to determine what is actually happening here. However, it is interesting to note that the most diverse of these positions happens to be the administrative positions. To the extent that cities can only select from an applicant pool, they have some control over managing this level of diversity. Elected officials, on the other hand, are clearly chosen by the people, and volunteer efforts clearly come out of community members' spare time. It is hard to bring anyone out to these positions and other civic engagement and leadership opportunities. Solutions to this issue will likely take time and attention to each community's dynamics.

## What are cities doing to address these concerns?

As many cities know from experience, increasing diversity in city leadership positions, staffing and citizen involvement opportunities is no easy task. If a formula exists that can fix this problem, no one seems to have found it yet. However, some city efforts may eventually help to bring out a more diverse group of people to run for the city council, serve on a board or apply to be a department head.

### **Diversity Training**

For one, some cities (33%) are providing diversity training for their staff and leadership. Diversity training can help staff and leaders to identify and change behaviors and attitudes that may have previously gotten in the way of involving a more diverse group of citizens. This is one way to create a more welcoming environment.

Diversity training is most commonly being offered to city staff and administrators (73% of those who offer diversity training). Other cities hold the training for:

- Staff, administrators *and* elected officials (9%)
- Staff only (9%)
- Law enforcement only (9%)

### **Diversity Trainers Used by Responding Cities**

Washington Cities Insurance Authority (WCIA)

- Mark Busto – Sebris Busto, P.S.
  - James Webber – Littler & Mendelson
- (WCIA provides free training on legal issues for members only.)*

Dan Distelhort

Raymond Reyes

Laurel Winston – Edmonds Community College

Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission  
*(The commission offers training for law enforcement only.)*

City staff trained as diversity trainers

Sonny (Floyd) Massey – Sokaki & Associates

Go to [www.awcnet.org/racialjustice.htm](http://www.awcnet.org/racialjustice.htm) for more information on diversity trainers around the state.

Dr. David Whitfield & Natalie Mattson – Integral Leadership

### **Specific Strategies to Increase Civic Participation**

Most cities did not identify any specific strategies to encourage more minority participation in city affairs (76%). Existing strategies among responding cities include:

- Holding meetings in neighborhood locations (9%)
- Publishing multilingual announcements (9%)
- Having interpreters at meetings (7%)
- Targeted recruitment (7%)

### **Diversity Programs**

Some cities also mentioned that they had created diversity commissions (or other similar groups of citizens or city staff) to create a more open and welcoming city hall. These groups of focused city staff and citizens can be effective vehicles for sifting through the issues that may be involved here.

### **Next Steps**

Nearly two-thirds of the cities that stated that they were concerned about the lack of diversity in citizen involvement opportunities or in city employment and leadership are trying something to improve the situation.

Tight budgets and other issues may be standing in the way of other cities trying out different strategies. These barriers need to be identified.

## Hate Crimes & Racial Profiling

Of cities that expressed concerns over one or more diversity or racial justice issues, the next biggest areas of concern were hate crimes and racial profiling. These can be painful and highly emotional issues for communities, so they are especially important to address carefully and thoughtfully.

### City Action

Of cities expressing a concern over these issues, nearly all of them are taking some form of action. The vast majority have policies and procedures in place. Police officer training is the next most common kind of action cities are taking on both of these issues. Several cities are also taking greater leadership strides, such as holding community forums, publicly announcing council positions through resolutions/ordinances and learning more about the issues. In fact, most cities are trying more than way to address these issues.

City Efforts to Address Racial Profiling	
Racial profiling policies	67%
Police officer diversity training	67%
Other	44%
Studying the issue	33%

City Efforts to Address Hate Crimes	
Police dept operating procedures	82%
Police officer/other staff training	45%
Community forums	27%
Hate crimes ordinance	18%
None	18%
Other	9%

### More to Do

Even though these can be difficult issues, some cities are recognizing that there may be problems and are making efforts to address them appropriately. These cities deserve ample credit for their efforts.

Of course, these problems do not go away easily, and there is more that can be done. Luckily, many resources exist to help expand city and community efforts. Hate crimes and racial profiling resources can be found on the AWC website at [www.awcnet.org/racialjustice.htm](http://www.awcnet.org/racialjustice.htm).

## Our Institutions, Poverty & Schools

Each of these issues is fundamental to any discussion of racial justice. Most researchers, analysts and ordinary citizens will often point to the poverty and achievement gaps as major indicators that there is a problem with institutional racism in this country (see box below for explanations of these terms). Furthermore, many people also say that discrimination in schools and jobs is less obvious and more a product of institutional racism.

Fewer than 20% of responding cities expressed concern about any one of these issues. Yet these issues may actually be among the key barriers to participation in city governments as a citizen, employee or leader.

Perhaps these issues seem outside of the range of issues that cities can reasonably address. However, there are important steps that city officials and staff can take to help end these serious problems in many Washington communities. In fact, some cities around the country have already begun this kind of work. Examples will be gathered and posted to the AWC website to help promote specific actions that Washington cities can take.

## **Definitions**

### **Institutional Racism**

An indirect and largely invisible process -- the often unintentional barriers and selection/promotion procedures which disadvantage members of ethnic minority groups.

(Excerpt from Price, A. J. (1997) *Human Resource Management in a Business Context*)

### **Poverty Gap**

The total amount by which the income of all poor households falls below the poverty line -- reflects both the extent of poverty (i.e., how many poor people there are) and the depth of poverty (how far below the poverty line these people fall).

This topic is often discussed in terms of racial justice because people of color, especially African and Hispanic Americans, disproportionately fall below the poverty line. For instance, though poverty rates were in decline, "one-third of African-American children (33.1 percent) and nearly one-third of Hispanic children (30.3 percent) were still poor in 1999."

(Center on Budget & Policy Priorities: [www.cbpp.org/9-26-00pov.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/9-26-00pov.htm))

### **Achievement Gap in Schools**

There is increasing recognition that the changing makeup of cities accounts for much of the failure of urban schools. The social and economic realities of the greater community and patterns of residential and educational segregation play important roles in differences in educational attainment.

(Massey and Denton 1993, Bartelt 1994a, Kantor and Brenzel 1993)

## **For More Information**

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