

# **Measure U Focus Groups Final Report**

April 21, 2025

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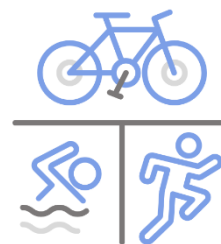
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# 1. Executive Summary

## Top Priorities

Overall, focus group participants prioritized using an equity lens to identify priorities. Primary focus of priorities included City parks and aquatics programming; libraries; road improvements for bicycle safety; support for business development and regulatory reform; homeless services and affordable housing; and zero-fee programming.



## Areas for Deprioritization

Focus group participants would deprioritize police funding; libraries; pet adoption fee waivers; and the use of Measure U funding to address general budget shortfalls within the City of Sacramento. There was agreement that these items are important and beneficial to the community, but that they should not be funded through Measure U.



## People Love the Measure U Budget Dashboard

The Measure U Budget Dashboard has been well-received by participants, who appreciate its transparency and accessibility. However, they expressed a desire for even more detailed data, particularly around the impact and effectiveness of the programs funded by Measure U. This information would help them form more informed opinions about the funding priorities and ensure that the investments align with community needs.

## Desire for More Data on Impact and Effectiveness

Participants want to see not only how many people are served by Measure U programs but also the tangible outcomes these programs have achieved. They emphasized the importance of having both quantitative data (e.g., number of individuals impacted, funds allocated) and qualitative data (e.g., how is the community better off because of Measure U funds) to better assess the effectiveness of the funding. This comprehensive data would help residents evaluate whether Measure U funds are truly making a difference in their communities.

## Trust in Efficient Use of Measure U Funds

There was a strong desire to ensure that Measure U funds are being used efficiently. Participants want to trust that the funds are being allocated to programming that has measurable impact, both in terms of numbers and the quality of the services provided. Ensuring that funds are spent wisely would help reinforce public confidence in the program and its goals.

“ ———  
What I see as the greatest need may not **BE** the greatest need. Each community knows best what they need to be successful. We must engage in trust-building in neighborhoods.

—Focus Group Member

”

### **Ensuring Measure U Funds Reach Under-Resourced Communities**

A recurring theme was the importance of ensuring that Measure U funds are directed toward under-resourced and underserved communities within Sacramento. Participants want to see that the funds are being used for their intended purpose, which is to provide support and resources to those who need them most. There is a strong call for accountability to ensure that these communities are truly benefiting from Measure U investments.

### **Focus on Equity**

Equity was a central theme in all of the focus group discussions. Participants stressed the need for Measure U funds to prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, ensuring that every neighborhood in Sacramento has access to the resources and services they need. They highlighted the importance of addressing systemic inequities and providing support in a way that is accessible to all, regardless of their background or location.

### **Desire for Continued Community Engagement**

Residents expressed a strong interest in participating in more conversations like this one. They want to be actively involved in shaping decisions that affect their communities, especially when it comes to the allocation of public funds. There was a clear desire for ongoing engagement, whether through focus groups, surveys, or other forms of outreach, to ensure that community voices continue to be heard and considered in the decision-making process.



## 2. Background

At the November 20, 2022 meeting, the Measure U Community Advisory Commission (Commission) discussed the possibility of conducting focus groups with community members to inform the Commission's budget priorities and recommendations to City Council. At the Commission's request to solicit participation, approximately 500 respondents to the City Auditor's 2022 Community Survey indicated their interest in participating in a focus group regarding the use of Measure U funds and provided their email address to be contacted.

In adopting the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25 Approved Budget on June 11, 2024, the Sacramento City Council allocated resources in response to the Commission's request for funding to support the implementation of focus groups to learn more about community member preferences for Measure U spending.

The City of Sacramento (City) contracted with Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center (SSNC) to plan and implement three focus groups to gather community input on Measure U spending priorities to inform Commission recommendations on budget allocations for Measure U funds in the fiscal Year 2025/26 Budget.

A focus group is a qualitative research method that involves gathering a small, diverse group of people to discuss specific topics or issues in a structured, facilitated setting. The primary purpose of a focus group is to explore participants' perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular product, service, concept, policy, or other subjects of interest.

Four focus groups were convened by SSNC to gather community input on Measure U spending priorities to inform Commission recommendations on budget allocations for Measure U funds in the Fiscal Year 2025/26 Budget.

The focus groups consisted of two virtual and two in-person sessions. SSNC provided logistical and facilitation support. Recruitment of focus group participants targeted community members who expressed prior interest in participating through the 2022 City Auditor's Community Survey. Participants were invited to participate in focus groups with a goal of being representative of the population demographics of the City of Sacramento.

The results of the focus groups are detailed in this Final Report to the Commission, synthesizing broad themes that emerged from the discussion.

### 3. Methodology

SSNC met virtually with Measure U Commissioners Georgeoff, McGee, and Sala on December 27, 2024 for a general discussion about the focus groups.

The group discussed both the approach and the goals of the focus groups. In terms of approach, there was high value placed on organic discussions and guided responses to scripted questions. The questions to be covered during the focus groups were developed by the group following the meeting.

Special Projects Manager Ash Roughani provided SSNC with data from the 2022 Community Survey, and also created an updated survey (Attachment 1) to assess interest in participating in upcoming focus groups.

This new survey (Attachment 2) was emailed on January 21, 2025 to 410 email addresses from the 2022 Community Survey, with a letter from Teddy Georgeoff, Chair, Measure U Community Advisory Commission and Julie Rhoten, SSNC Focus Group Convener. 100 individuals responded, forming the pool of possible focus group participants. Demographics about the respondents can be found in Attachment 3.

#### **Participant selection**

Respondents were divided by City Council district to ensure representation from across the City and assigned a unique number identifier. Focus group members were selected using a random number generator, and received an invitation to specific focus groups, based on their stated location preferences. Details are below.

1. Hagginwood Community Center: March 10, 2025 • 5:30 pm
  - A total of 13 individuals were invited
  - Six individuals confirmed
  - Four individuals did not respond
  - Three individuals declined and were offered another date.
  - Two individuals attended the focus group
2. Pannell Community Center: March 17, 2025 • 2 pm
  - A total of 6 individuals were invited
  - Four individuals confirmed
  - Two individuals did not respond
  - Three individuals attended the focus group
3. Virtual meeting on Zoom: March 15, 2025 • 10 am
  - A total of 24 individuals were invited
  - Six individuals confirmed
  - One individual declined and was offered another date
  - Fifteen individuals did not respond
  - Five individuals attended the focus group

4. Virtual meeting on Zoom: March 22, 2025 • 2 pm
  - A total of 17 individuals were invited
  - Five individuals confirmed
  - Two individuals declined
  - Ten individuals did not respond
  - One individual attended the focus group

In total, eleven individuals participated in a focus group. Details about participant demographics can be found in Attachment 4.

## **Approach**

Each of the focus groups was facilitated by Julie Rhoten. At least one member of the Measure U Commission was also in attendance at every focus group. In-person focus groups were audio recorded; virtual meetings were recorded via Zoom. The flow of the meeting followed the outline below:

- Welcome & Housekeeping: Refreshments, restrooms, materials, and structure of time together
- Introductions
- Overview: Background on Measure U, review Measure U Dashboard, questions & answers, and other feedback.
- Goals: Creating a space for open sharing, hearing from all present, understanding that all opinions are valid, and disagreeing without being disagreeable.
- About Measure U: history, purpose, priorities
- A look at the Measure U Dashboard
- Questions:
  - General Awareness: How familiar are you with Measure U and its intended purpose?
  - Funding Allocation: What areas of community investment do you believe should be prioritized and consequentially deprioritized with Measure U funding?
  - Equity and Inclusion: How do you think Measure U funds can be used to address inequities within our community?
  - Community Benefits: What positive changes have you noticed in the community as a result of Measure U funding?

- Accountability and Transparency: Do you feel there is enough transparency in how Measure U funds are being allocated and used? And how would you prefer this information be disseminated?
- Long-Term Vision: What are your long-term hopes for the impact of Measure U on our community, and how do you hope it would be measured by the city? (follow up) Are there specific metrics you would be interested in seeing?
- Involvement: What are the best ways for the city to involve residents in future decisions about Measure U? What would make you feel the impact of Measure U funds?
- Wrap Up: Is there any other information that you want to share about Measure U?



## 4. Summary of Responses

### Dashboard Review

The [link to the Measure U dashboard](#) was shared with participants in advance of the focus groups and briefly reviewed at the beginning of each session. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the dashboard's transparency and showed strong interest in exploring it further. While they were generally impressed, several questions and suggestions emerged:

- Add a key or glossary for acronyms such as CIP, MYOP, etc.
- Clarify the discrepancy between the stated projected \$139 million for FY 2024–25 and the \$159 million shown in the pie chart.
- Improve or complete descriptions that are currently blank or overly generic.
- Provide more detail and clarification for categories related to homelessness and the Department of Community Response.
- Include a comparison of Measure U funds to the overall City budget.
- Add functionality or visuals that reflect neighborhood-level investments.
- Incorporate language that ensures allocations are specific and measurable, helping prevent potential diversion of funds.

### General Awareness: How familiar are you with Measure U?

Participants demonstrated varying levels of familiarity with Measure U, which appeared to correlate with how long they had lived in Sacramento. Some recalled it being on the ballot in both 2012 and 2018 and were well-acquainted with its history and intent. Others had only recently become aware of it.

One participant initially believed Measure U funds were primarily designated for youth services, specifically youth employment and training, before reviewing the dashboard.

Participants with a deeper understanding of Measure U emphasized the importance of ensuring that its original intent—supporting underserved and underrepresented communities, as outlined in the 2018 measure—continues to be fulfilled.

Several participants recalled that Measure U passed in 2012 in response to dissatisfaction over the lack of maintenance in City parks following the Great Recession. One participant noted they did not support the 2018 measure, citing concerns that firefighter salaries had increased significantly following the initial

passage in 2012. This sentiment reflected a broader concern about the disconnect between tax dollars and the tangible benefits received by residents.

Two key questions emerged during the discussion, which were explored further in the focus groups:

- What are the tangible benefits of Measure U?
- How are the results and impacts of Measure U communicated to the public?

**Funding Allocation:** What areas of community investment do you believe should be prioritized and consequentially deprioritized with Measure U funding?

Participants were asked to consider which areas of community investment should be prioritized—and which should be deprioritized—when allocating Measure U funds. The following themes emerged:

***Funding Priorities:***

- Programs that support disadvantaged and underrepresented communities
- Youth services, supports, and resources
- Expanded hours and increased access to City swimming pools, including more swim lesson options
- Library services
- Park improvements, including increased tree coverage and consistent maintenance of park restrooms
- Safer road infrastructure for bicyclists
- Zero-fee programs that increase accessibility
- Homeless services (with the caveat that they must be executed effectively)
- Business development initiatives, alongside efforts to reduce regulatory burdens
- Affordable housing

***Areas for Deprioritization:***

- Police funding
- Libraries (noted by some as a lower priority compared to other needs)
- Waiving adoption fees for pets
- Using Measure U funds to cover general City budget shortfalls

**Questions and Concerns:**

- What specific programs are funded under the “Community Investment” and “Entertainment Services” categories within Measure U? Are these investments designed to generate economic return or other indirect benefits for the City?
- Could the City expand volunteer opportunities across departments as a way to extend the impact of Measure U funds, given the acknowledgment that public resources will always be limited?
- Are Measure U-funded homeless services ever audited to understand where and how the funds are being spent?
- Measure U funds for public safety should be used to supplement projects, rather than covering the entire cost of a project.
- Participants expressed a desire for more information on the results of Measure U funding in order to better provide informed feedback on priorities.

**Equity and Inclusion:** How do you think Measure U funds can be used to address inequities within our community?

- Is there data available from individuals in underserved communities?
- Is the data disaggregated by specific community needs?
- Without this data, it is challenging to fully address the question.
- Ensuring access through transportation, ADA compliance, and geographic considerations.
- Strive for equity as much as practically possible.
- Build trust with neighborhood leaders in underserved areas and offer incentives for community participation.
- Ensure that citywide services are equitably distributed across all neighborhoods, particularly underserved ones.
- Host community events that are accessible to all, including offering childcare and food.
- Utilize the City’s SEED tool for better resource allocation.
- Address historical inequities and work to improve access to services and resources in underserved neighborhoods.
- Ensure safe access to housing and food for all residents.
- Focus on building up communities without displacing or gentrifying them.
- Increase the inclusion of underserved individuals on boards and commissions.

**Community Benefits:** What positive changes have you noticed in the community as a result of Measure U funding?

Participants acknowledged several positive changes in the community, although they were unsure if these improvements were directly tied to Measure U funding:

- Regular communication through City Minute emails
- Lawns being maintained and mowed in parks
- An increase in community events
- Faster response times to 311 reports regarding street light and stop sign repairs
- Zero-fee programming for greater accessibility
- Improvements in code enforcement response

Additionally, participants speculated that the slight improvement in communication between the City and County regarding homelessness might be a result of Measure U funding.

**Accountability and Transparency:** Do you feel there is enough transparency in how Measure U funds are being allocated and used? And how would you prefer this information be disseminated?

Again, there was strong support for the Measure U Budget Dashboard, though participants expressed a desire for more detailed information. They wanted to know how many individuals have been impacted by Measure U-funded programs, as well as more insight into outcomes and overall impact, beyond just the number of people served. There was also concern about the efficiency of fund usage and whether a third-party review of Measure U spending is in place.

Participants called for greater transparency regarding how funds are allocated, particularly in relation to improvements versus salaries. They suggested that this information be shared through City Minute, social media platforms, and signage at community centers. While transparency within departments is somewhat visible, participants felt more could be done. Increased transparency would help the community at large better understand whether Measure U funding is leading to tangible improvements.

Several creative ideas emerged for disseminating information about Measure U, including:

- Outreach to neighborhood associations
- Collaboration with community networks
- Signage and taglines highlighting Measure U-funded projects

- Communication via local access TV
- Email, text messages, and social media posts
- More frequent sharing of the dashboard link
- Inserting Measure U spending details in City utility bills
- Displaying Measure U information at City Councilmember tables at events
- Leveraging neighborhood news publications and online platforms

**Long-Term Vision:** What are your long-term hopes for the impact of Measure U on our community, and how do you hope it would be measured by the city? (follow up) Are there specific metrics you would be interested in seeing?

Long-term hopes:

- Measure U funds will be strategically allocated to support and uplift marginalized neighborhoods.
- Greater public understanding of Measure U's goals and outcomes will benefit everyone.
- A vibrant, active community with access to Measure U services will attract more people to Sacramento. As the city's population grows, increased support for businesses will follow.

Discussions about specific metrics were extensive across all focus groups. Several participants recommended adopting the SMART goals framework for Measure U budgeting, as well as for citywide budgeting. This approach would ensure that goals are measurable, achievable, time-bound, and relevant. Another group proposed using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to identify funding priorities, outline how goals will be achieved, and assess overall success.

There was broad consensus that shared metrics would create accountability and provide insight into where needs are most pressing. Some participants pointed out that they remember past City promises for certain services that were ultimately not delivered, or only delivered for a short time period. They emphasized the importance of ensuring the City is held accountable, particularly with Measure U funds and their intended uses.

**Involvement:** What are the best ways for the city to involve residents in future decisions about Measure U? What would make you feel the impact of Measure U funds?

Some participants commended the City for its effective outreach efforts, noting an increase in opportunities for community members to voice their opinions. However, they also identified several barriers to participation, including lack of time, limited resources, and general cynicism toward local government.

The value of a personal invitation to participate was emphasized, along with the need for continuous engagement. This could be achieved through ongoing focus groups, surveys, and other forms of regular feedback.

It was suggested that the City intensify its outreach and feedback efforts. For example, when signage, taglines, or emails indicate Measure U funding, they could simultaneously invite feedback through a link or QR code.

One participant posed a thought-provoking question: "If Measure U were to end, would people miss the services? What difference would be felt?" They suggested that answering this question could help the City tell a more compelling story about the impact of Measure U.

**Wrap Up:** Is there any other information that you want to share about Measure U?

Most participants did not have additional comments specifically regarding Measure U funds. However, concerns about the projected deficit for the City of Sacramento next year, along with the development of the FY 2025/26 City budget, sparked the following additional ideas.

- The City should convene focus groups for the City's budget process.
- Could the City create a dashboard similar to the Measure U Budget Dashboard for the whole City budget?

## 5. Focus Group Challenges & Limitations

When planning and coordinating the focus groups, securing meeting space at the Pannell Community Center proved to be challenging, as it is a highly utilized community venue. Consequently, the in-person meeting at Pannell was scheduled on a weekday mid-afternoon, which likely prevented some participants from attending.

Invitations were sent via both email and phone calls, with email being more effective. Phone calls were less successful, as many people no longer answer calls from unrecognized numbers. Despite participants committing to attend, many were unable to participate.

Perhaps more individuals should have been invited to attend each focus group. However, having too many attendees could have made it challenging to facilitate meaningful discussions and ensure everyone had a chance to contribute.

Originally, the City's agreement was for SSNC to provide three focus groups. A fourth virtual (Zoom) focus group was added by SSNC to both accommodate those who had been unable to attend their original group, as well as to accommodate additional invited participants. Unfortunately, only one individual attended the fourth focus group.

## 6. Conclusion

Thank you so much for trusting SSNC to lead these focus groups for the Measure U Commission. As we've shared before, SSNC's mission is about helping people create positive change in their own lives and in their communities—and this project truly aligned with that purpose. We're genuinely grateful for the opportunity to be involved.

Special thanks to Ash Roughani, Special Projects Manager for the City of Sacramento. His assistance, guidance, and technical support were invaluable to us.

On a personal note, I really appreciated the chance to connect with each participant. Listening to them share their thoughts, experiences, and hopes—not just about Measure U, but about Sacramento as a whole—was both moving and eye-opening. Hearing from both those who have recently made Sacramento their home, as well as those who have spent their whole lives here, gave me a deeper understanding of the City's complexities and its potential. Spending time with people who care so deeply about their community has given me a lot of hope.



## **Attachment 1**

### **Measure U Focus Groups Survey Questions 2025**

1. First Name
2. Last Name
3. Email address
4. Phone number
5. In which City Council District do you currently reside?
6. Please select your preferred focus group location/format. Choose all that apply.
  - In-person: Hagginwood Community Center (3271 Marysville Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815)
  - In-person: Pannell Meadowview Community Center (2450 Meadowview Rd, Sacramento, CA 95832)
  - Virtual Town Hall (via Zoom)
7. What is your gender identity? Choose all that apply.
  - Woman
  - Man
  - Transgender
  - Cisgender
  - Genderqueer
  - Gender non-conforming/Non-binary
  - Questioning
  - Two-Spirit
  - I don't know
  - Prefer not to say
  - Prefer to self-describe
8. Please specify your race/ethnicity. Choose all that apply.
  - Asian
  - Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin)
  - Filipino (not of Hispanic origin)
  - Hispanic or Latino/Latinx
  - Middle Eastern or North African

- Native American or Alaska Native (not of Hispanic origin)
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
- White (not of Hispanic origin)
- Two or more ethnicities (check all that apply)
- Prefer not to say

9. What is your age range?

- 25-29 years of age
- 30-34 years of age
- 35-39 years of age
- 40-44 years of age
- 45-49 years of age
- 50-54 years of age
- 55-64 years of age
- Over the age of 64
- Prefer not to say

10. What is your total household income?

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or More
- Prefer not to say

## Attachment 2

### Email to Previous Survey Respondents with Link to New Survey

On behalf of the Measure U Community Advisory Commission, we'd like to extend an invitation for you to participate in one of three upcoming focus groups aimed at gathering feedback on the impact of Measure U spending.

You're receiving this invitation because you previously completed a Measure U survey and expressed interest in providing further input. While it's been a little while since then, we hope you're still interested in sharing your feedback. We've created a [new survey](#) to assess current interest and would greatly appreciate your participation.

We're looking for your valuable insights on several key areas, including your awareness of Measure U, community priorities, its impact, future investments, and opportunities for further engagement. Your input will directly inform future recommendations from the Commission.

The three focus group sessions will take place at Hagginwood Community Center, Pannell Community Center, and one virtual session via Zoom. Each session will last approximately 90 minutes, with refreshments, childcare, and interpreters available upon request for the on-site sessions. We'll also provide public transportation vouchers as needed by request. Some services may be limited by capacity, but we will do our best to accommodate

Please take a moment to complete the [new survey](#). If you have any questions or need more information, feel free to reply to this email. We look forward to working with you.

Kind regards,

Teddy Georgeoff, Chair, Measure U Community Advisory Commission  
Julie Rhoten, Focus Group Convener

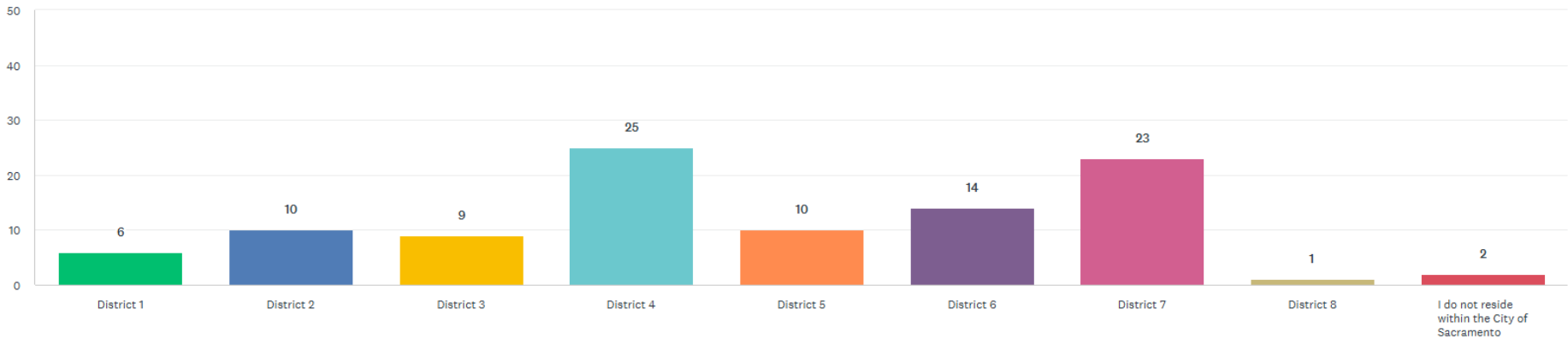
P.S. The City of Sacramento has recently launched its [Measure U Budget Dashboard](#) to increase transparency about how Measure U funds are being spent. We encourage you to take a look!

# Attachment 3

## Results of Measure U Focus Groups Interest Survey 2025

In which City Council District do you currently reside? Use the City's district lookup tool to search by address.

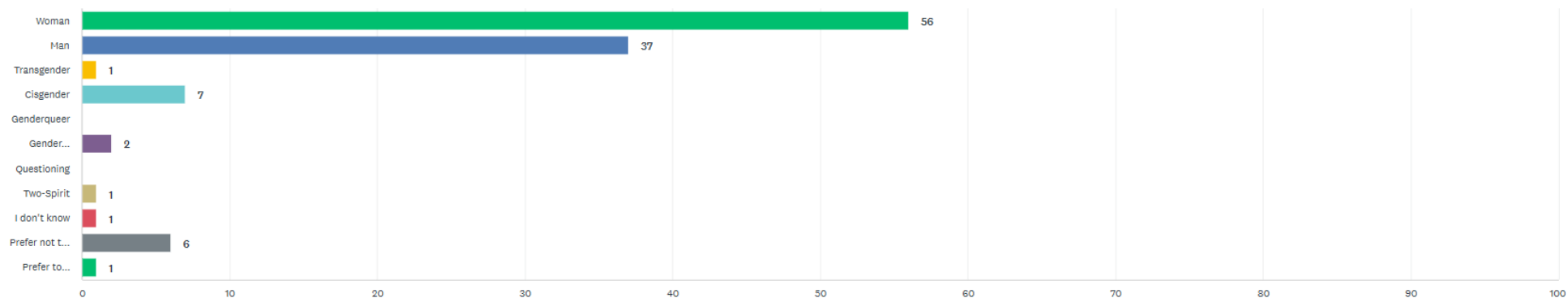
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ District 1	6.00%	6
▼ District 2	10.00%	10
▼ District 3	9.00%	9
▼ District 4	25.00%	25
▼ District 5	10.00%	10
▼ District 6	14.00%	14
▼ District 7	23.00%	23
▼ District 8	1.00%	1
▼ I do not reside within the City of Sacramento	2.00%	2
TOTAL		100

## What is your gender identity? Choose all that apply.

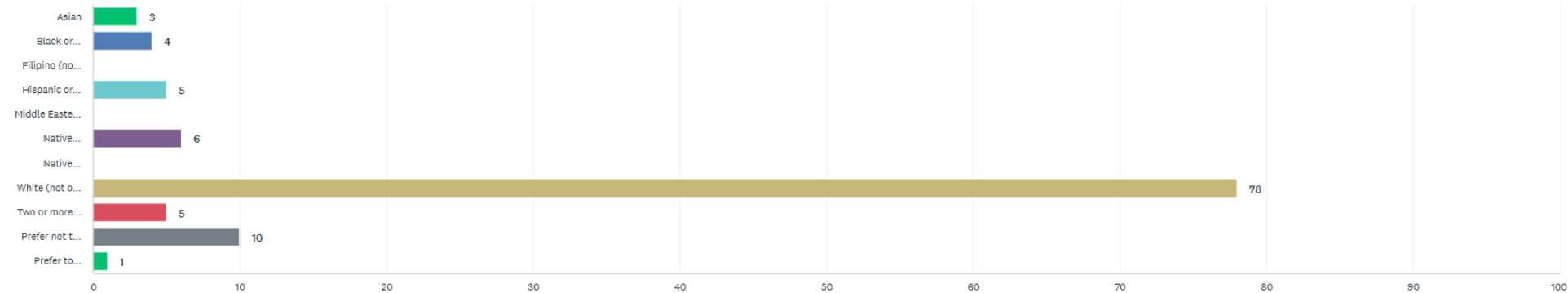
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Woman	56.00%	56
▼ Man	37.00%	37
▼ Transgender	1.00%	1
▼ Cisgender	7.00%	7
▼ Genderqueer	0.00%	0
▼ Gender non-conforming/Non-binary	2.00%	2
▼ Questioning	0.00%	0
▼ Two-Spirit	1.00%	1
▼ I don't know	1.00%	1
▼ Prefer not to say	6.00%	6
▼ Prefer to self-describe	1.00%	1
Total Respondents: 100		

Please specify your race/ethnicity. Choose all that apply.

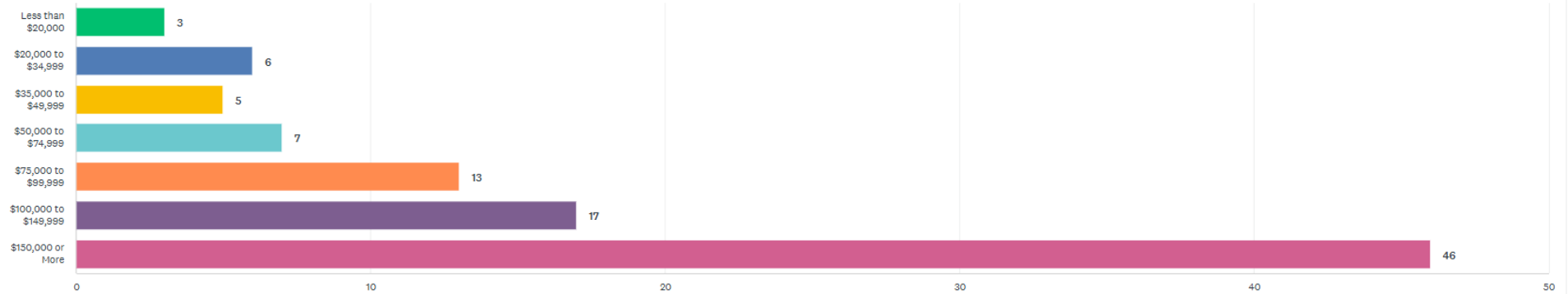
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asian	3.00%	3
Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin)	4.00%	4
Filipino (not of Hispanic origin)	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx	5.00%	5
Middle Eastern or North African	0.00%	0
Native American or Alaska Native (not of Hispanic origin)	6.00%	6
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
White (not of Hispanic origin)	78.00%	78
Two or more ethnicities (check all that apply)	5.00%	5
Prefer not to say	10.00%	10
Prefer to self-describe	Responses 1.00%	1
Total Respondents: 100		

## What is your total household income?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Less than \$20,000	3.09% 3
▼ \$20,000 to \$34,999	6.19% 6
▼ \$35,000 to \$49,999	5.15% 5
▼ \$50,000 to \$74,999	7.22% 7
▼ \$75,000 to \$99,999	13.40% 13
▼ \$100,000 to \$149,999	17.53% 17
▼ \$150,000 or More	47.42% 46
TOTAL	97

## What is your age range?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



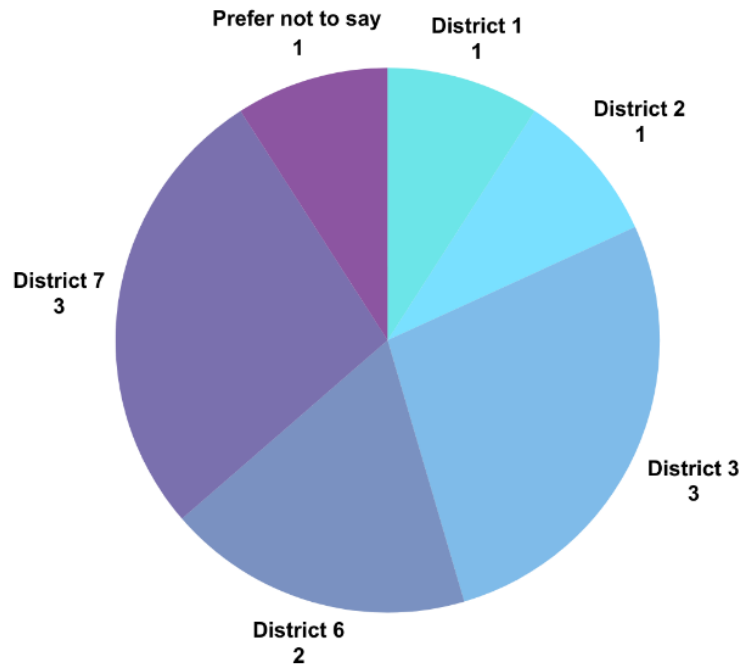
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 20 years of age	0.00% 0
20-24 years of age	0.00% 0
25-29 years of age	1.00% 1
30-34 years of age	7.00% 7
35-39 years of age	12.00% 12
40-44 years of age	9.00% 9
45-49 years of age	10.00% 10
50-54 years of age	9.00% 9
55-64 years of age	11.00% 11
Over the age of 64	37.00% 37
Prefer not to say	4.00% 4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>



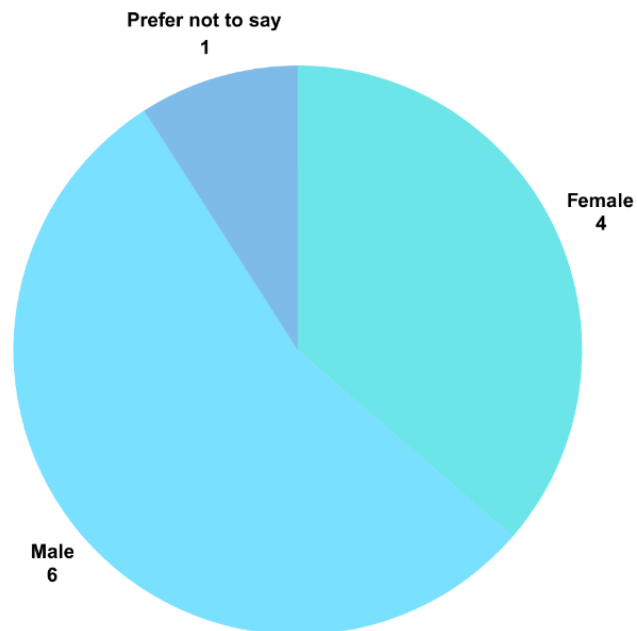
## Attachment 4

### Demographics of Focus Group Participants

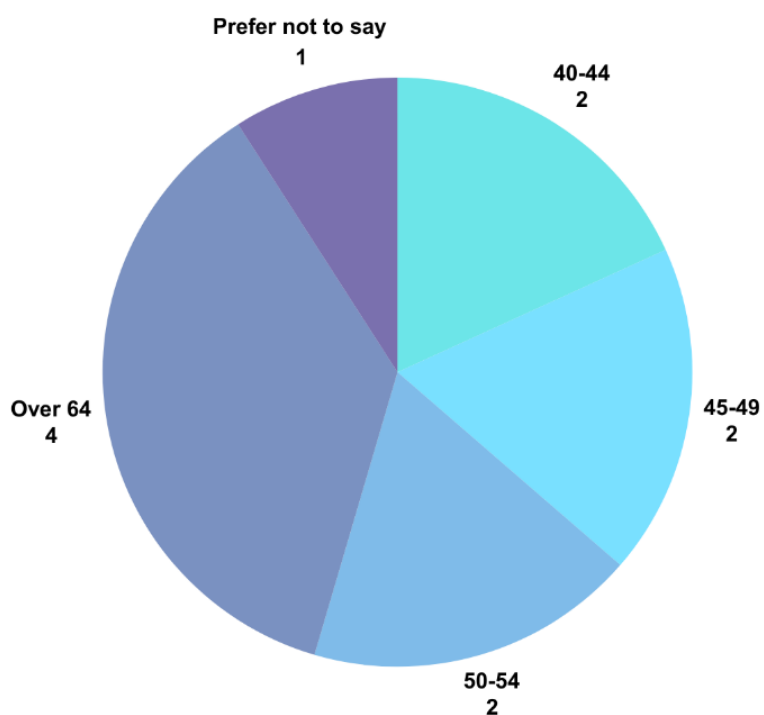
In which City Council District do you currently reside?



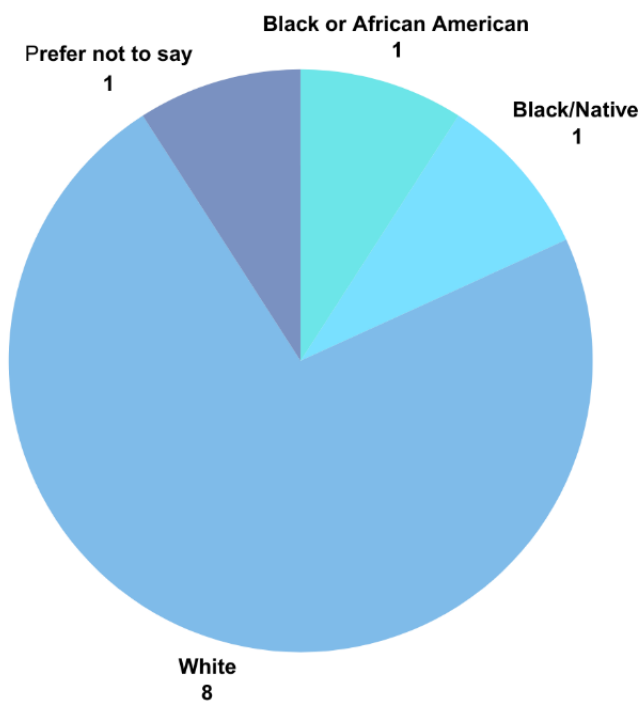
What is your gender identity?



### What is your age range?



### Please specify your race/ethnicity



### What is your total household income?

