

Visioneering Wichita Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Survey Results and Next Steps

Why did we do a survey?

Visioneering Wichita is the community's long-term strategic plan. More than 16,000 people from the region had input into the plan. One of the key benchmarks is that our community increases opportunities and understanding among all races – that we “understand, celebrate and embrace all cultures and racial diversity.”

The first step was to create a baseline measure in order to measure long-term changes in racial diversity and plan ongoing strategies. A group of volunteers from throughout the region, called the Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony strategic alliance, worked together to develop a survey to measure perceptions of racial opportunity and harmony.

How did we measure perceptions?

The Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony strategic alliance worked with Wichita State University's Center for Economic Development and Business Research (CEDBR) and Self-Help Network to develop the survey. They used an internet-based survey to measure perceptions of racial opportunities and harmony issues in social interaction, jobs and education.

An online survey was chosen because it was the most cost-effective way to have a statistically valid survey. The number of responses to the survey was monitored weekly to see if respondents were representative of the community, including age, ethnic, economic and geographic cross sections.

It was open to all people in the Wichita MSA of Butler, Harvey, Sedgwick and Sumner counties. The survey was available in English and Spanish. For those without access to computers at home or work, the Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Strategic Alliance worked with libraries, churches and senior citizen centers to provide additional access to the on-line survey.

CEDBR analyzed the survey responses and coalition volunteers, working with Self-Help Network, coded the open-ended comments. From January 13 to February 17 of 2006, 2,523 people took the survey.



What were the results?

An index was created for each of 10 individual questions plus an overall index of racial opportunity and harmony. The entire survey results can be found at www.visioneeringwichita.com.

With an index, the distance from 50 is an indication of the strength of perception. For instance, an index of 20 would be very negative and 80 would be very positive perceptions.

Overall findings include:

- The overall index was 56.8. With the exception of race, the overall index varies little across demographic subgroups, including income, age and education. Among different minority groups, the overall index was:
 - Non-Hispanic Whites – 59.5
 - All Minorities – 49.6
 - Hispanics – 53.6
 - African Americans – 44
- The greatest variation in perceptions is related to issues of educational and economic opportunity. Those questions included perceptions about equal opportunity in education, attending college, getting a job and starting a business.
- The least variation was those related to racial harmony, such as getting along with each other and actions being taken to improve relations.
- While people recognize we have made progress in some areas, such as social interactions, they also recognize we are not where we want to be as a community. In addition, they appeared hopeful that we can make progress.

What will we do with this survey?

As individuals and as a community, we must do the following:

- As individuals, take and share this information in your own lives – your home, neighborhood, schools, work, faith groups and organizations and clubs. As we change our individual circles, our community will also change. Report back to us on how this information has helped make decisions.
- While you are influencing your own circle, the volunteers of the Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony strategic alliance will be doing three things:
 1. Holding informational meetings and sharing the results
 2. Presenting the results to local leaders
 3. Focusing on educational and economic opportunity through all Visioneering Wichita alliances, volunteers and partners, as well as throughout the region. For example, the Entrepreneurship and Small Business strategic alliance is addressing how to assist minorities start companies.

It will be important to tie into changes throughout Visioneering Wichita and community through the identified strategies at all levels – individual, organizational and community – we must have all three and most important, we must have your change in order to make a difference.