Community Representation
Social Factor

Community Representation: Definition

Community: A group of people with diverse characteristics linked by social ties, common perspectives, and who may be engaged in joint action in geographical locations or settings. Community can be defined in multiple ways depending on the people asked and what groups have in common.

What's Being Done

HCWC members are addressing this core issue through:

- Increasing workforce diversity
- Supporting networks of community-based organization leaders
- Including diverse community members on workgroups, committees, and coalitions

Lack of Community Representation

Communities of color consistently identified the need for increased community representation. These community members noted the influence that decision makers and policy play in the lives of their communities and the perceived lack of influence they have in making those decisions. Community members wanted to be at the table and have a voice when decisions about their communities are made. They also supported increased civic engagement through education and workshops about the electoral process to increase the number of community members who engage and vote.

Listening session participants in all four counties (most notably in rural communities and communities of color) discussed at length how the dominant population and politics of Portland shape laws, policies, and what the state focuses on. Some communities within the Portland metro area described feeling like minority communities. They do not see their interests and needs reflected unless they align with the demographic majority of Portland. Participants discussed feeling they were not properly represented in the decision-makers, government, employers, and organizations that serve their community.

Due to this lack of representation, participants noted current policies regarding their communities were often outdated, or misinformed due to inaccurate data.

As a solution, community members discussed the need to establish institutional solutions and to have shared power in decision making. Community members desire greater cultural awareness in health care, and more culturally specific providers. There was an emphasis on communities making their voices known, both through voting and social media, to influence decision makers. Participants expressed being a part of neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and communities where there was little diversity and limited opportunities to advance for people of color.

> **"We need more representation of our society in the city government."**
> **– Listening Session Participants**

Community Spaces

Participants in town halls and listening sessions described their community spaces as hubs that connect them to support and provide a space to share resources and information with fellow community members. Community spaces were a source of economic stability, providing professional development training, culturally specific resources, job postings, and community programs to connect people to resources and trainings that would help establish or maintain financial security.

Participants described the benefit of having spaces supporting intersectional communities and community gathering places near their homes. They appreciated what was available, and they strived to expand the number of community hubs.