

2022 Human Rights Survey Summary

December is Universal Human Rights Month, celebrating the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, outlining the fundamental rights of all human beings. Last year in reaffirming these rights, the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission (HCHRC) surveyed Humboldt County residents, asking about awareness and understanding of human rights. The survey questions were both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative questions primarily measured demographics. Qualitative questions addressed understanding human rights in Humboldt County as a specific contextual social system by looking at patterns of implicit values expressed in survey answers. Using survey answers, we were able to analyze shared meaning and understanding of human rights based on lived experiences as expressed in survey answers. A near-proportional representation of county demographics was represented despite only collecting 364 surveys. When addressing human rights as a concept, community members primarily defined human rights as freedom from something or a right often correlated to written laws or declarations. The most common example of human rights violations was around houselessness, followed by a lack of medical and behavioral health resources, while the third most common example focused on law enforcement.

As a part of the survey, the commission asked residents if they knew the function of the HCHRC, and the results were sobering. Survey results showed that over 80% of teens and almost 55% of adults surveyed said they did not know the commission's function. Additionally, 18% of adults and 12% of teens were unsure, with only 3% of teens and almost 27% of adults aware of the commission's function. In full disclosure, given that 332 adults consented to submit survey questions and the total adult population of Humboldt County is 109 803, this is a small segment of the population, just 0.3% (*Humboldt County, California Population, 2022*).

This indicates that the commission needs to do a much better job at outreach. With knowledge of and support from residents, including community leaders, media representatives, people experiencing violations of their human rights, policymakers, activists, and opinion leaders in our community, the commission can garner credibility. With this support, the commission can better advocate for and with residents. Active measures the commission has taken in response to survey results include creating a junior human rights commission whose members will be high school students. Members will help decide what topics they would like to focus their energies on and help ensure the organization is sustainable. In addition, the HCHRC hopes to increase awareness by continuing to post press releases and articles discussing commission initiatives and responses to actions and events in our community.

Humboldt County is a diverse rural community with a long history and many unique ways of living. Our community has many strengths that can be enhanced to build a more equitable and sustainable society. As ever, the HCHRC endeavors to advocate for human rights. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who took the time to complete the survey. We emphasize that we are making every effort to acknowledge

this data belongs to, and should benefit, our community. To this end, we are listening carefully to our community.