



# A Santa Cruz Like Me

**The Value of Representational Government**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“A Santa Cruz Like Me” is a partnership between Santa Cruz Community Ventures (Ventures) and Santa Cruz County to paint a picture of Santa Cruz County’s representative bodies. The effort started as a recognition of the value of a representative government to ensure the diversity of our government reflects the diversity of our region.

Different lived experiences can help inform and shape policy and governance to ensure our County is resilient, prosperous, and equitable. “A Santa Cruz Like Me” is a start to explore and identify how we are doing as a County.

### Key Findings

- 1. Critical Under Representation of South County.** The City of Watsonville, which is 31% of the County population, is significantly underrepresented with only 16% representation in County Boards and Commissions.
- 2. Critical Under Representation of Renters.** Over 77% of respondents self-identified as homeowners, compared to the 51% of homeowners captured by DataShare Santa Cruz.
- 3. Critical Under Representation based on Race, Ability, and Age.** 16% of representatives identify as Latino and 17% of representatives identify as having a disability compared to 35% and 34% of the County population respectively. In addition, there was no young adult representation from the survey participation, compared to 13% of the County population. It should be noted that working adults, ages 25-64 had significant over representation, at 67% of representatives versus 49% of population data.
- 4. Critical Over Representation of College Graduates.** 68% of those surveyed held a college degree, with 39% holding a masters degree or higher. Compared to the County population, where college graduates equal 34% and 14% hold a master degree or higher.
- 5. Optional Participation Limited Response Rate.** Response rate was 45% of those surveyed, with a higher rate of participation from commissions and boards representing communities traditionally excluded (i.e. Women’s Commission, Latino Affairs Commission, etc.)



## BACKGROUND

“A Santa Cruz Like Me” was inspired by efforts at the state level to ensure the diversity of our government reflects the diversity of our state. The policies our local leaders form and vote on directly affect our communities so it is important that these leaders do in fact reflect the diversity of our County.

As an organization interested in building an equitable economy, Ventures recognizes the value of a representative government and how this can affect economic decisions. This data-driven effort also aligns with Santa Cruz County’s Strategic Plan goals to create a healthy, safe and more affordable community that is culturally diverse, economically inclusive and environmentally vibrant.



## METHODOLOGY

“A Santa Cruz Like Me” survey was delivered to Santa Cruz County Commissions, Boards, and Supervisors to voluntarily disclose demographic and population descriptive indicators used in other data collection efforts. This includes alignment with datasets found via DataShare Santa Cruz, the central hub of information for Santa Cruz County with the utmost up-to-date data.

This was the first opportunity for appointees to provide demographic information about themselves. In total, 45% of all possible respondents returned a completed survey. The team reviewed and compared overall population numbers from DataShare Santa Cruz and identified indicators with variances of 5% or higher from the population, with special review of variances of 10% or higher.

	Percent of respondents	Percent of county population	Variance
<b>Zipcode</b>			
95003	8.00%	9.15%	1.15%
95010	4.80%	3.36%	1.44%
95018	5.60%	2.99%	2.61%
95060	22.40%	17.81%	4.49%
95062	13.60%	13.46%	0.14%
95065	7.20%	2.95%	4.25%
95066	8.80%	5.51%	3.29%
95076	16.00%	31.10%	15.10%
<b>Age</b>			
18 - 24	0%	13.86%	13.86%
25 - 64	66.83%	49.14%	17.69%
65 - 84	35.20%	15.86%	19.34 %
85 - up	0%	1.83%	1.83%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	61%	50.51%	10.49%
Male	38%	49.49%	11.49%
Nonbinary	1%		n/a



	Percent of respondents	% of County population	Variance
<b>Ethnicity</b> (Census: Race & Hispanic Orig)			
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	2.40%	0.57%	1.83%
Asian	1.60%	7.26%	5.66%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.15%	n/a
Black or African American	2.41%	1.17%	1.24%
Two or more Races	2.40%	4.90%	2.50%
Hispanic or Latino	16%	35.32%	19%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	72%	55.11%	16.89%
<b>Housing Status</b>			
Homeowner	77%	51.10%	25.90%
Renter	22%	49.49%	n/a
Other	1%		n/a
<b>Education</b>			
Bachelor degree	32.80%	23.30%	9.50%
Master degree	28%	11.16%	16.84%
Doctorate	11.20%	2.70%	8.50%
Some college, no degree	7.20%	22.25%	15.05%
Professional degree	5.60%	3.03%	2.57%
Associate degree	4%	8.47%	4.47%
High school diploma or equivalent	1.60%	15.50%	13.90%
Trade/technical/vocational training	1.60%		n/a
<b>Disability Identity</b>			
Yes	16.8%	34%	17.20%
No	77%		

## KEY FINDINGS

**1 Under Representation of South County.** The City of Watsonville, which is 31% of the County population, is significantly underrepresented with only 16% representation in County Boards and Commissions. It is unclear what demographic information is considered during the appointment process and candidate interest may also be impacted by meeting locations, time, and transportation options.

**2 Critical Under Representation of Renters.** Over 77% of respondents self-identified as homeowners, compared to the 51% of homeowners captured by DataShare Santa Cruz. Given the housing crisis facing the County, representation by tenants would provide needed perspectives to housing solutions.

**3 Critical Under Representation based on Race, Ability, and Age.** 16% of representatives identify as Latino and 17% of representatives identify as having a disability compared to 35% and 34% of the County population respectively. In addition, there was no young adult representation from the survey participation, compared to 13% of the County population. It

should be noted that working adults, ages 25-64 had significant over representation, at 67% of representatives versus 49% of population data.

**4 Critical Over Representation of College Graduates.** 68% of those surveyed held a college degree, with 39% holding a masters degree or higher. Compared to the County population, where college graduates equal 34% and 14% hold a master degree or higher. Given that higher education tends to correlate with higher income, this may impact the ability for inclusive workforce development policy.

**5 Optional Participation Limited Response Rate.** Due to the voluntary nature of the survey, response rate was 45%, with a higher rate of participation from commissions and boards representing communities traditionally excluded (i.e. Women's Commission, Latino Affairs Commission, etc.). One would expect that this would lead to lower gaps based on race, gender, and education, which points to possibly greater disparity than those identified.



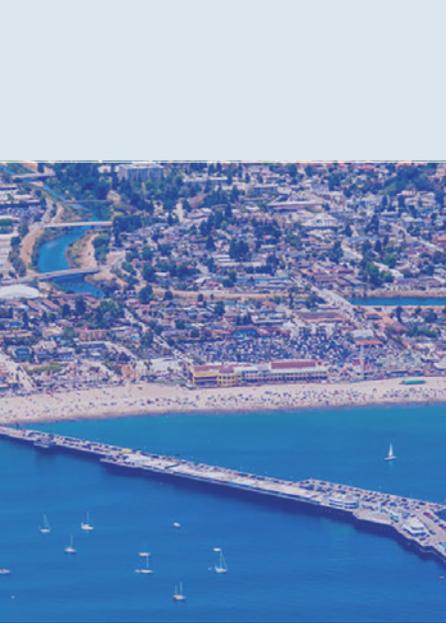
## RECOMMENDATIONS

**1 Create a Committee to Review Variances and Propose Solutions.** In alignment with the county's goal of creating a healthy, safe and more affordable community that is culturally diverse, economically inclusive and environmentally vibrant, it is recommended that a committee be formed to review variances and provide recommendations to address them. Committee members would be charged with exploring solutions to decrease existing variances and monitoring progress.

**2 Require Collection of Demographic Information.** To capture a complete picture of who is applying and ultimately appointed, it is recommended that demographic information be collected during the application process for all board and commission positions. Elected officials should report this information during onboarding. This information should be reviewed on a timely basis to ensure outreach is reaching all members of the community.

**3 Include County Data Review as Part of the Onboarding Process.** In recognition of the county's dedication to move towards a more representative government and the county's investment in CORE and data sharing, it is recommended that the onboarding process for appointees, including those with appointment power, include a review of the makeup of our County and the data dashboards that are available.

**4 Work with Cities within Santa Cruz County to Conduct a Similar Study.** The collection of data across government agencies would provide a clear regional representation.



## APPRECIATION

Special thanks to Kayla Gomez and Stephanie Cabrera for their many contributions to “A Santa Cruz Like Me.”



### **About Santa Cruz Community Ventures**

Ventures partners with rural Latino working-class families in California’s Central Coast to implement transformational programs that activate and strengthen their economic and political power. Together, we are working towards a shared and prosperous economic future where zip code, race, gender, or immigration status do not dictate income or wealth. [sccvonline.org](http://sccvonline.org)



### **About Santa Cruz County**

Situated on the northern half of Monterey Bay, Santa Cruz County is known for its natural beauty including pristine beaches, redwood forests, and rich farmland. Its economy is anchored by tourism, agriculture and technology, and is home to world-class arts and cultural institutions. The County of Santa Cruz serves its 270,000 residents through a county government dedicated to creating a healthy, safe and more affordable community that is culturally diverse, economically inclusive, and environmentally vibrant. For more, visit [www.santacruzcounty.us/VisionSantaCruz.aspx](http://www.santacruzcounty.us/VisionSantaCruz.aspx)