



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: City Council
FROM: Alex Khojikian, City Manager
PREPARED BY: City Clerk's Office
MEETING DATE: March 03, 2025
SUBJECT:
Boards and Commissions – 2025 Demography Study

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the 2025 Commissioner Demography Study results and provide direction for ongoing surveying and outreach.

BACKGROUND:

The primary role of boards and commissions is to increase public input and participation in the determination of City policies and programs. Members of the boards and commissions are appointed by Council and are considered volunteers, as it is an unpaid position under the City Charter.

From January through February this year, staff conducted its third demographic survey of individuals who serve on the City's appointed boards and commissions. The City has five commissions, two boards, and two committees. In total, 46 out of 47 individuals serving on the advisory bodies participated in this survey.

Outreach and Recruitment:

The City Clerk's office conducts annual recruitment for scheduled vacancies in the spring of each year and recruits for any unscheduled vacancies. Recruitment efforts traditionally included using the City's website, digital newsletters, and social media to announce the opening of the recruitment period; contacting a subscriber list of individuals who have expressed an interest in service throughout the year; posting flyers at city facilities; reaching out to City Services Academy and Leadership Program graduates; and engaging current commissioners and council members to help spread awareness.

In 2024, the City Clerk's Office launched its inaugural "Outreach and Recruitment Success Plan" for Boards and Commissions—a strategic planning initiative that set clear priorities, new strategies, and a messaging framework to transform recruitment efforts across the city. The plan's primary objectives were to:

- **Increase the Number of Applicants:** Boost the volume of candidates for each vacancy.
- **Broaden the Applicant Pool:** Actively engage individuals from underrepresented communities.
- **Enhance Community Engagement:** Raise public awareness about the city's advisory committees and highlight diverse pathways for civic participation.

Targeted outreach initiatives were put into action. The Clerk's Office established direct partnerships with key community-based organizations—including NAACP Branch San Mateo, Taulama for Tongans, and various labor organizations—as well as with neighborhood associations and local places of worship. Moreover, to address language barriers and improve representation, the City produced translated recruitment materials that better educate and inform residents about the critical role of Commissions. Educational materials related to the City's Youth Commissioner positions were also shared with school student leadership programs, in addition to inclusion within the Generation Voter youth engagement

programs.

Looking forward, the results of the 2025 demography study will help the Clerk’s Office further develop this framework, and target disparities identified. Table 1 details the recruitment applicant trends from 2021 to 2024. In the most recent cycle, the Library Board experienced a 25% increase in applicants, while the Community Relations Commission saw an 80% rise. The Park and Recreation Commission led with an impressive 275% surge, and the Planning Commission doubled its numbers with a 100% increase. The Senior Advisory also demonstrated strong growth with a 133% increase in applicants, in contrast to the Sustainability and Infrastructure Commission, which recorded a 25% decrease from the 2022 recruitment. Table 2 details the percentage breakdown of 2024 applicants by district, with an ideal target of 20% per district. In this cycle, District 2 comes very close at 19%, while Districts 4 and 5 each account for 22% of the applicants. In contrast, Districts 1 and 3 deviate from the target, with one exceeding and the other falling short of the 20% mark. Overall, this analysis reveals a notable rise in applications, underscoring the success of our targeted recruitment strategies.

Table 1: Total Number of Applications per Board or Commission Recruitment (2021-2024)

Board or Commission	Number of Applicants			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sustainability and Infrastructure Commission	9	8	-	6
Library Board	10	-	8	10
Community Relations Commission	6	5	-	9
Park and Recreation Commission	4	-	4	15
Planning Commission	6	-	-	12
Senior Advisory Commission	3	0	3	7
Personnel Board	4	-	2	-
Measure S Oversight Committee	-	-	5	-
Mosquito and Vector Control District	-	-	-	1
Total Applications	41	13	22	60

Table 2: 2024 Applications by District

District	Applicants	Percent of Total Applicants
1	16	27%
2	11	19%
3	7	12%
4	13	22%
5	12	22%
Total	60	

Design and Procedure

Staff aimed to be mindful of the potential sensitivity of demographic survey questions, with the goal of achieving a 100% completion rate from board members and commissioners. At the same time, efforts were made to improve upon the original survey’s language and responses to promote inclusivity. Feedback received was utilized to refine the language within the responses, resulting in a broader array of response options.

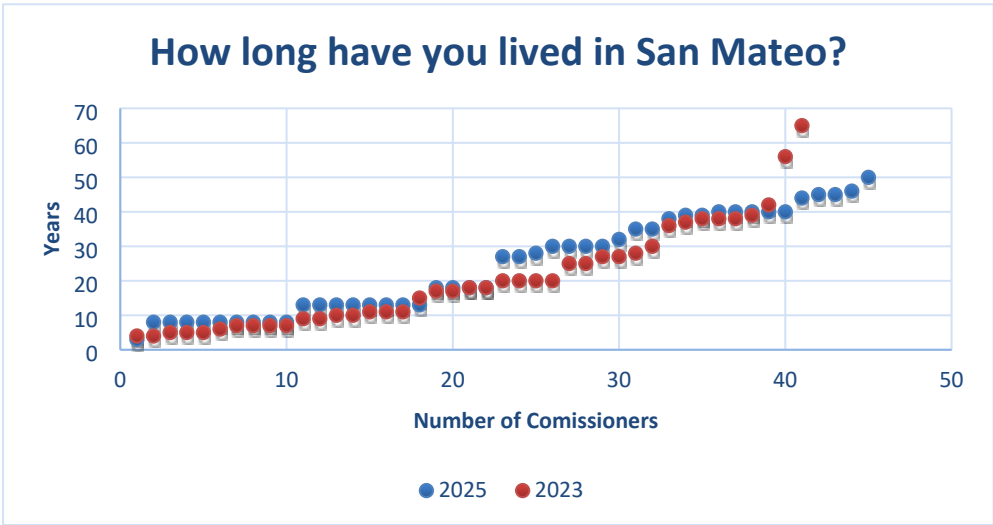
The survey was sent to all current board and commission members. To provide additional data, staff also attempted to survey committee members, with the caveat that only one response can be provided for individuals serving on multiple bodies. There was a one-hundred percent response rate from the following groups: Community Relations Commission, Park & Recreation Commission, including youth commissioner, Library Board, Senior Advisory Commission, Measure S

Oversight Committee, Civic Arts Committee, Sustainability and Infrastructure Commission, Personnel Board, and Mosquito & Vector Control District. There was an eighty percent response rate or 4 out of 5 responses for the Planning Commission.

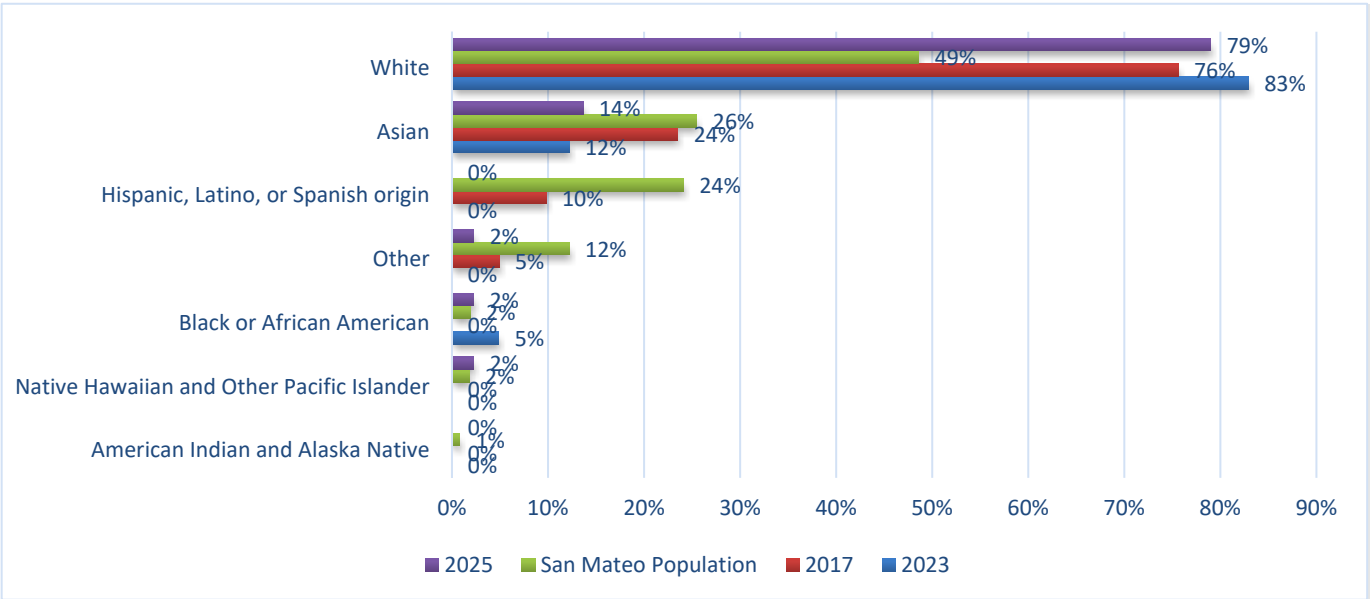
Survey results were then compared, whenever possible, to data for the whole city population as reported on the 2021 American Community Survey and 2020 Census results, and the projections released in May 2024. Furthermore, the 2025 demography study was compared to the 2023 and 2017 study to help identify any trends or developments.

Results

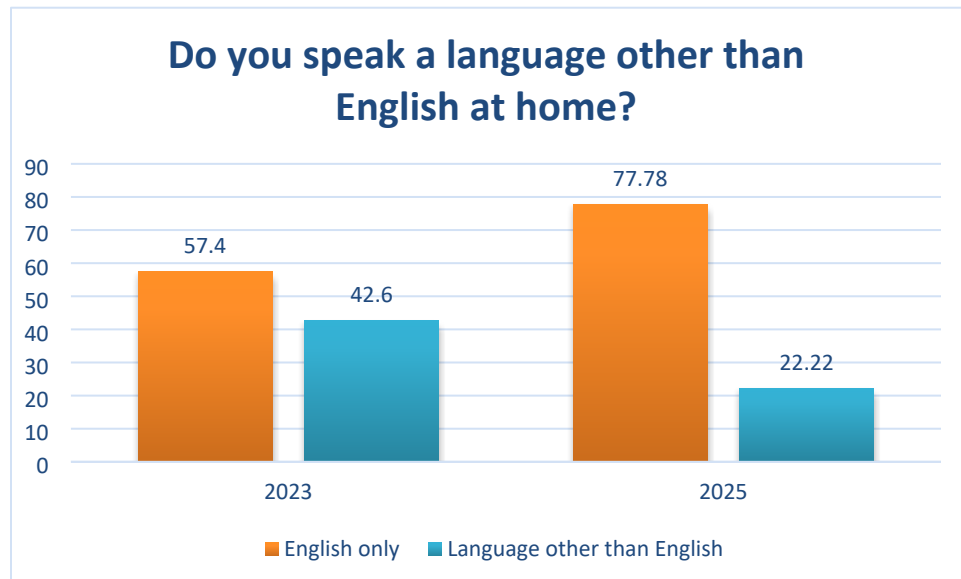
- 1. **Duration of Residence in San Mateo:** In 2017 the average number of years lived in San Mateo was 25, with over 80% residing in San Mateo for over a decade. In 2023, that average dropped down to 20 years, with only 70% of respondents living in San Mateo for over a decade. In 2025, the average increased to 24.5 years, with 77% residing in San Mateo for over a decade, and 46% residing for over the average (24.5 years).



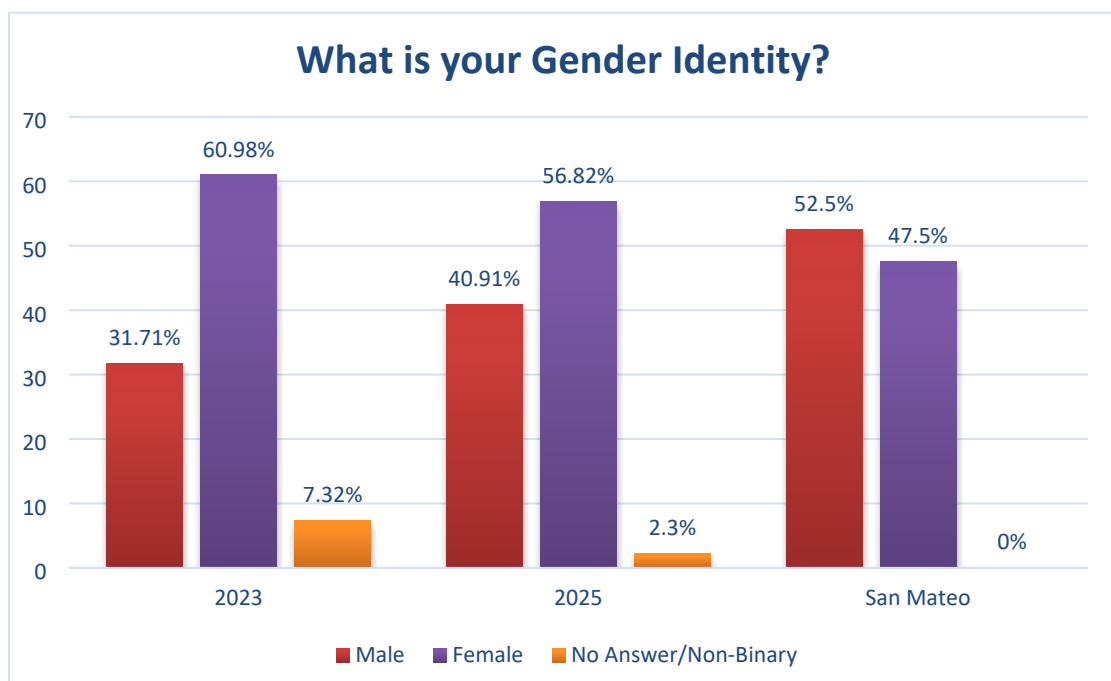
- 2. **Race/Ethnicity:** As was seen in the 2017 study, the 2023 survey revealed a smaller proportion of people of color serve on San Mateo’s commissions as compared to the City’s general population. For the 2025 survey, we received 43 responses to this question denoting 35 or 79.5% identify as white, 14% identify as Asian, and 2% responses identify as other.



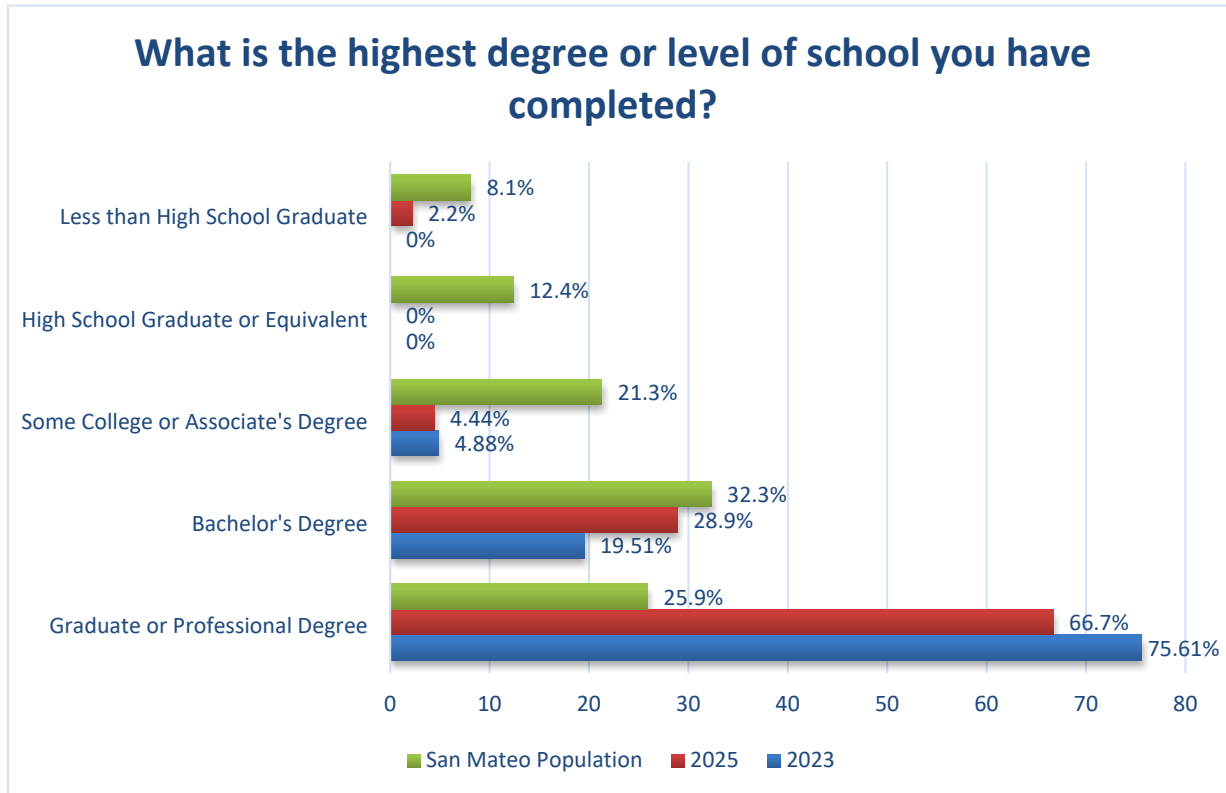
3. **Language:** A smaller proportion of commissioners speak a language other than English at home as compared to the general population. In the 2025 survey, 21% speak a language other than English. These languages include Farsi, Dutch, Korean, Mandarin, French, Tongan, Danish, Hebrew, and Italian.



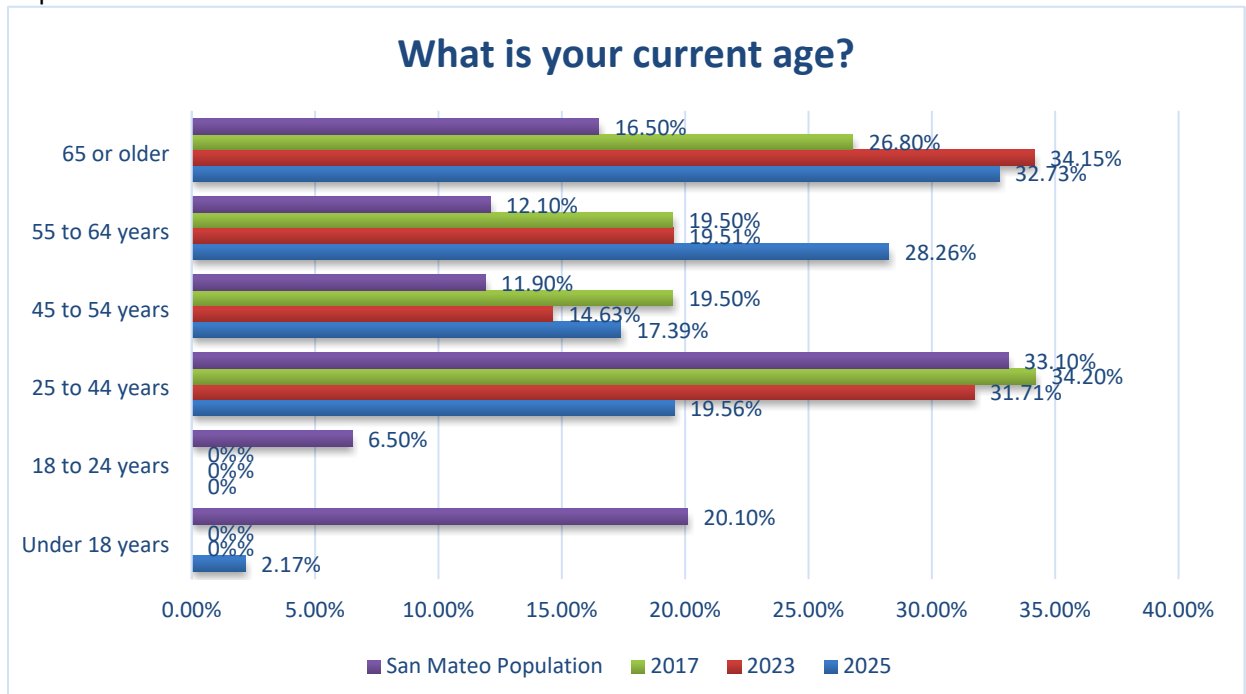
4. **Gender:** In 2025, the composition of board members and commissioners in the City of San Mateo shows a higher proportion of females, with 56.8% identifying as female compared to 40.9% identifying as male and 2.3% identify as non-binary. This contrasts with the city's overall population, where females make up about 52.5% of residents, indicating a notable gender representation difference within the local governing bodies. As seen in the chart below, the gender disparity between 2023 and 2025 decreased narrowly. The American Community Survey collects data on sex by asking respondents to choose one of two options, male or female, whereas our survey allowed for self-identification.



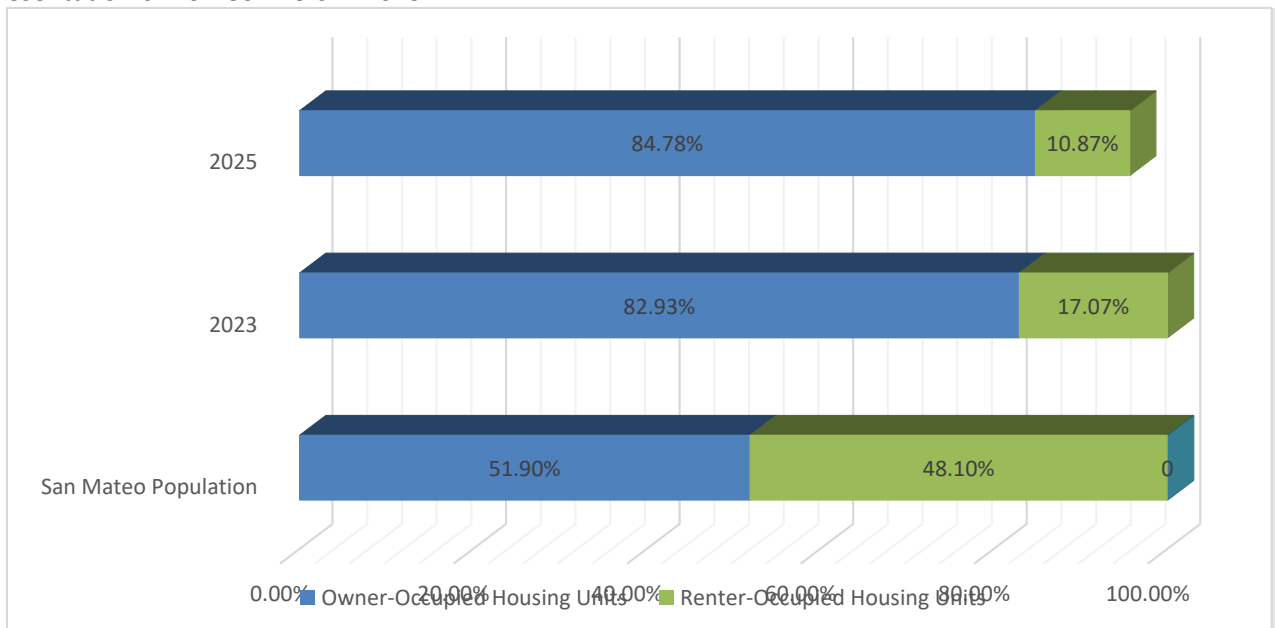
5. **Educational Attainment:** San Mateo’s Boards and Commissions members are highly educated, with about 66.7% holding a post-graduate degree in 2025, which represents a decrease from 75.6% in 2023. 33.3% of Commissioners in 2025 hold a bachelor’s or associate degree, representing an increase from 24.4% in 2023. This survey marks the first demography study conducted with youth commissioners.



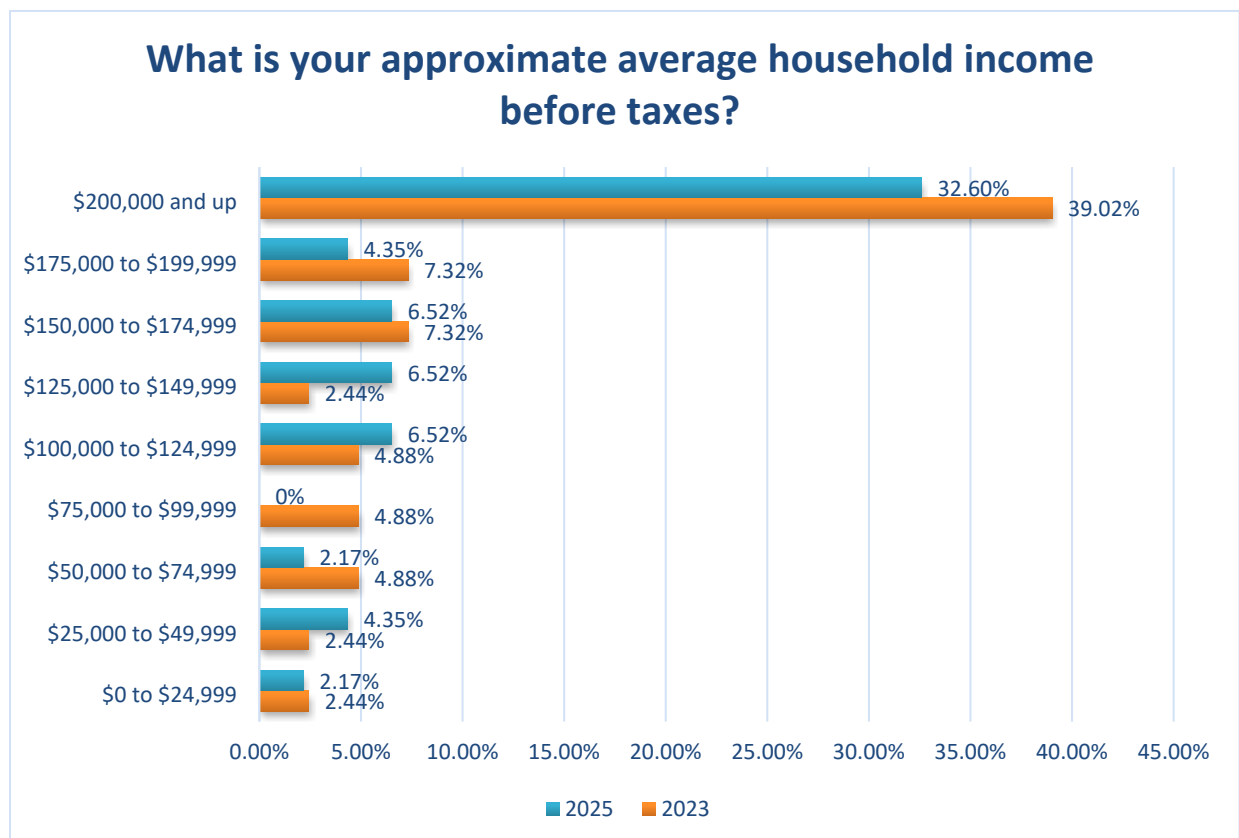
6. **Age:** There continues to be general age diversity amongst Boards and Commissioners, with those who are 65 or older and older being the largest age group with 32.7%. The survey shows that those aged 44 or under are underrepresented.



- 7. Housing Status:** Renters remain under-represented. The results show that 10.8% of boards and commissioners rent or live with parents. 4.4% are identified as other living arrangements. There continues to be an over-representation of homeowners in 2025.

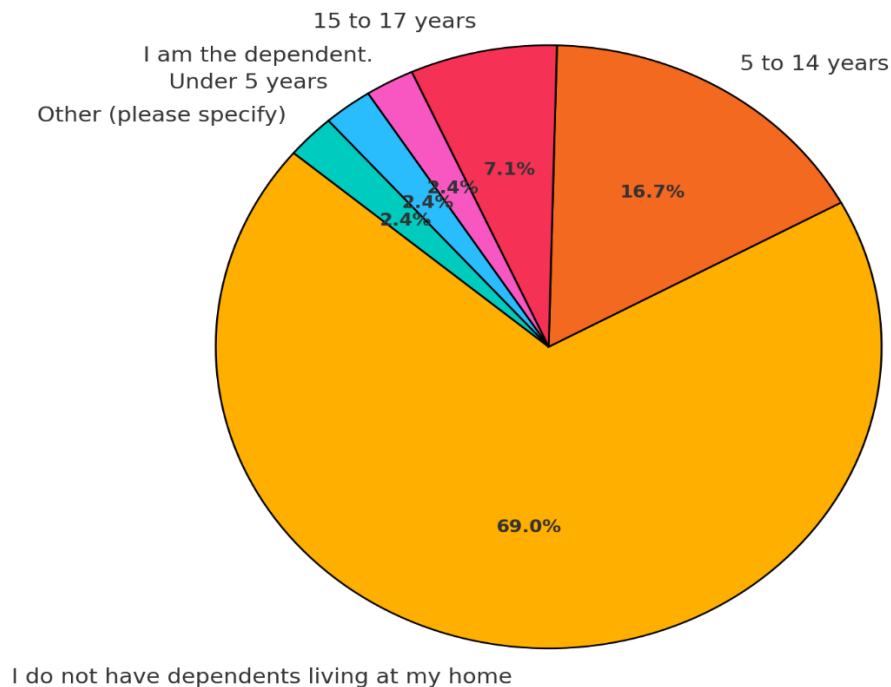


- 8. Income:** Of those who reported their average household income 57% receive an income of \$150,000 or higher. According to the Census data the median household income in San Mateo County is \$149,907. 23.91% of respondents reported an income over \$300,000.

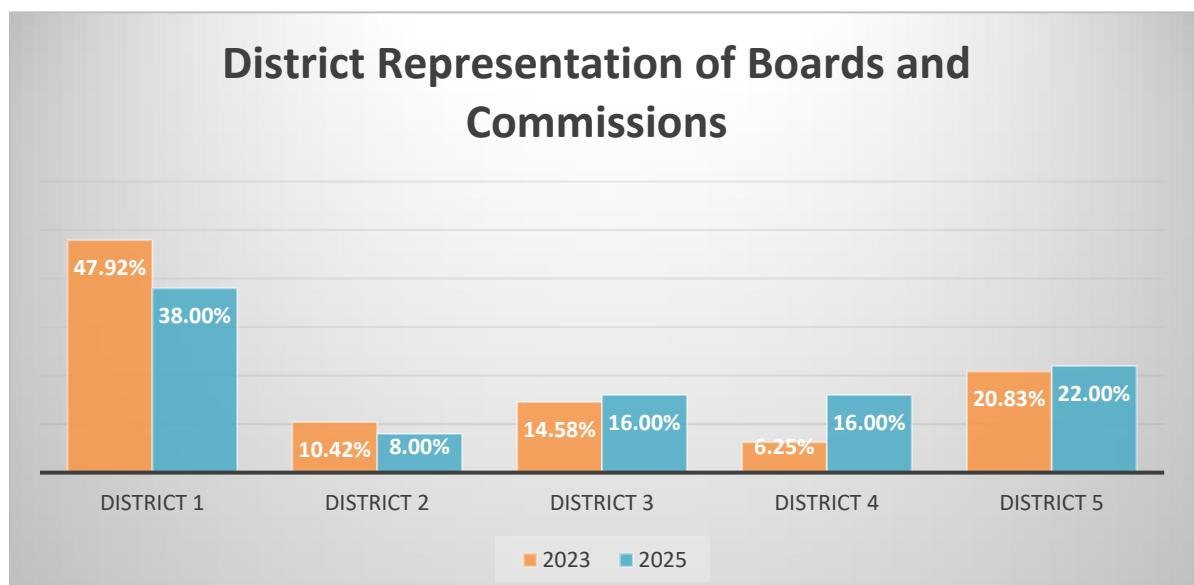


- 9. Dependents:** As in 2023, 34% of Board Members and Commissioners have dependents living in their home, which is approximately 7 percentage points higher than the number of households in San Mateo with dependents (U.S Census 2023). The reason for this is that the Census data only lists households with children under 18, and does not keep track of other dependents, such as seniors, people with disabilities, or simple living at home. Of those that responded to this question, 19% have dependents between 5 to 17 years of age, while 14.3% selected “Other” as their response, representing multiple dependents of different ages, themselves as dependents, among other options.

If you have dependents living in your home, how old are they?



- 10. Districts:** District 1 remains the highest represented amongst at 38%, however this was a decrease of almost 10 percentage points from 2023. District 2 remains underrepresented at 8% and experienced a decrease of 2.42 percentage points. Districts 3, 4, and 5 experienced increases in representation.



Continuing to Bolster Recruitment Efforts:

The data from the 2025 survey offers valuable insights for staff to pinpoint specific areas where additional outreach and education on the role of advisory bodies is needed. To engage underrepresented communities, strategies may include additional bilingual materials that explain the role and benefits of serving on an advisory body and forming new partnerships with community organizations, school districts, parent groups, neighborhood associations, businesses, nonprofit rental housing providers, and other groups within these communities. City staff plan to launch a “Spotlight on Commissioners” video campaign as part of the 2025 Spring recruitment campaign to further highlight interest in the role.

Spring Recruitment 2025:

As part of the 2024 update to Council Rules and Procedures, the Council amended the duration of eligibility lists for candidates who were eligible for appointment should another vacancy occur from 12 months to 6 months, with the objective of allowing additional opportunities for applicants to apply. In 2025, ten commissioners will have reached the end of their partial or first term and will be eligible to serve an additional term. Council adopted Rules and Procedures provide that the default for currently serving Commissioners shall be interviewed for reappointment, however, appointment subcommittees can proceed with automatic reappointment with a majority consensus or majority vote of the Council. Historically, the Council has reappointed Commissioners who are eligible to serve another term based on continued interest in serving. During this discussion, the Council may provide further direction on this process as an approach to further diversify boards and commission representation.

Next Steps:

1. Provide feedback on the 2025 demography study results
2. Provide direction on opportunities to further diversify representation.

BUDGET IMPACT:

The annual data collection, analysis, and presentation of these commissioner demographics will not have any budgetary impact apart from staff time.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This study session is not a project subject to CEQA, because it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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