

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF

Racial/Ethnic Background of Commissioners

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Core Question

The purpose of this brief is to examine the racial and ethnic characteristics of the commissioners who served on the 2021 Los Angeles City Redistricting Commission (LACRC) and address the following questions:

- 1) What is the racial and ethnic make-up of the 2021 LACRC and to what extent are Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and whites represented on the commission?
- 2) Do commissioners tend to mirror their council member's racial or ethnic background?
- 3) Do commissioners tend to mirror the racial or ethnic background of their council member's district?

Summary of Topline Findings

This report examines the racial and ethnic make-up of the redistricting commission by focusing on the following four groups: Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans, and whites¹:

- 1) The racial and ethnic make-up of the commission resembled the racial and ethnic make-up of Los Angeles. However, Latinos were somewhat under-represented.
- 2) Commission district and city-wide elected officials were likely to select commissioners based on their racial and ethnic background.
- 3) Commissioners also tend to reflect the largest racial and ethnic group within their district.

Background

The commission consists of 21 members who are appointed by district and city-wide elected officials, including Los Angeles' 15-member City Council and the City Mayor, Controller, and Attorney. The City Council President appoints two commissioners while the other 14 city council members appoint one commissioner each. Additionally, the City Mayor appoints three commissioners while the City Attorney and City Controller appoint one commissioner each. The city charter, moreover, does not provide any institutional checks on their appointment authority.² Consequently, elected officials have a great deal of influence over who participates in the Los Angeles City Redistricting Commission.

¹ Unfortunately, we were unable to examine commissioner's characteristics by national origin group.

² However, it does prevent city officers or employees from serving on the commission.

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/laac/0-0-0-406#:~:text=No%20City%20officer%20or%20employee,service%20provisions%20of%20the%20Charter.

To determine the commissioner's racial and ethnic background, we relied on various sources and biographies online. According to Table 1, non-Hispanic Whites and Latinos make up the largest percentage of commissioners in 2021 followed by Asian Americans and African Americans. Based on the racial and ethnic make-up of the city of Los Angeles, Asian Americans are proportionately represented, African Americans and Non-Hispanic whites are over-represented, and Latinos are under-represented.

Table 1. Commission by Race and Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Commission %(n)	Expected (Based on ACS)	Los Angeles % (2021 ACS-5 year)
Asian American	14% (3)	3 Commissioners	12%
African American	14% (3)	2 Commissioners	8%
Latino	33% (7)	10 Commissioners	48%
White (not Hispanic)	38% (8)	6 Commissioners	29%
Note: Commission percentages based on final serving commissioners only. Individuals who resigned or were removed were excluded from analysis.			

The over-representation of whites on the commission is not attributed to city-wide elected officials, including the city's Mayor who appointed two Latinos and one African American commissioner. Instead, the over-representation of white commissioners is due to council members who do not select commissioners who look like them or their district racially or ethnically. According to Table 2/3, for example, council members O'Farrell (District 13) and Rodriguez appointed white commissioners despite residing in districts that are over 50 percent Latino. Previously, Rodriguez appointed Liz Saldivar -a Latina -to the commission. However, she later left the commission.

Despite these exceptions, Tables 2 and 3 reveal that council members tend to select commissioners who look like them and to a lesser extent their district. Of the 23 commissioners appointed over the lifetime of the 2021 commission, 65% (15) council members appointed a commissioner with a similar racial or pan-ethnic background. However, just under half (48%) of commissioners resemble their council member's district –though in some cases commissioners resemble the second largest racial/ethnic group in their council member's district. For instance, Harris-Dawson (D-10), who appointed Commissioner Valerie Lynn Shaw, represents a district.

Table 2: List of Final Serving Commissioners

Commissioner Name	District	Appointing Council Member	Race/Ethnicity	% Latino (2010)	% Black (2010)	% Asian (2010)	% White (2010)	Commissioner Reflects Majority Status of District?	Commissioner Reflects Pan Race/Ethnicity of Council Member?
Richard Polanco	1	Cedillo	Latino	70.50%	2.80%	17.90%	7.90%	Yes	Yes
Denis Cagna	2	Krekorian	White	45.00%	4.40%	7.70%	41.50%	Yes	Yes
Richard Katz	3	Blumenfield	White	37.40%	4.60%	13.40%	43.20%	Yes	Yes
Jackie Goldberg	4	Ryu Raman	White	15.20%	5.40%	16.60%	61.20%	Yes	No
Rocky Delgadillo	5	Koretz	Latino	10.80%	4.20%	16.50%	66.90%	No	No
Fred Ali	6	Martinez	White	70.50%	3.50%	9.80%	15.10%	No	No
Rachel Torres	6	Martinez	Latino	70.50%	3.50%	9.80%	15.10%	Yes	Yes
Wendy Mitchell	7	Rodriguez	White	68.90%	3.70%	6.50%	19.90%	No	No
Valerie Lynne Shaw	8	Harris-Dawson	Black	54.50%	40.70%	1.40%	1.70%	No	Yes
Susan Minato	9	Price	Asian	78.10%	15.20%	2.50%	3.30%	No	No
Rev. Edward L. Anderson	10	Ridley-Thomas	Black	48.30%	25.90%	16.30%	7.70%	No	Yes
Michele Prichard	11	Bonin	White	18.80%	5.70%	13.80%	59.90%	Yes	Yes
David Hyun	12	Lee	Asian	26.90%	4.40%	19.30%	47.70%	No	Yes
Natalie Freidberg	13	O'Farrell	White	54.20%	3.50%	18.00%	22.90%	No	Yes
Sonja F. Diaz	14	De Leon	Latino	67.20%	6.10%	13.00%	12.60%	Yes	Yes
Nam Le	15	Buscaino	Asian	62.10%	12.80%	6.80%	16.60%	No	No
Hon. Carlos R. Moreno	CA	Mike Feuer	Latino						
Elissa Barrett	CC	Ron Galperin	White						
Maria Brenes	Mayor	Eric Garcetti	Latino						
Charisse Bremond Weaver	Mayor	Eric Garcetti	Black						
Tammy Membreno	Mayor	Eric Garcetti	Latino						

List of Commissioners: <https://redistricting2021.lacity.org/LACCRC/documents/211028/Final-Report-Draft-10.26.pdf>

Commissioner Characteristics: Various Online Bios and Sources

District Demographics: http://redistricting2011.lacity.org/PDF/LACITY/Approved/Council%20District%20Data_Adopted%20Plan.pdf

Table 3: List of Commissioners who Resigned or Quit

Commissioner	District	Appointing Council Member	Apt. Begin	Apt. End	Race/Ethnicity	% Latino (2010)	% Black (2010)	% Asian (2010)	% White (2010)	Commissioner Reflects Majority Status of District?	Commissioner Reflects Pan Race/Ethnicity of Council Member?
Michael Woo	4	Ryu Raman	9/22/20	1/1/21	Asian	15.20%	5.40%	16.60%	61.20%	No	Yes
Alexandra Suh	4	Ryu Raman	9/22/20	10/13/21	Asian	15.20%	5.40%	16.60%	61.20%	No	Yes
Michele Siqueiros	6	Martinez	10/9/20	7/7/21	Latino	70.50%	3.50%	9.80%	15.10%	Yes	Yes
Elizabeth Saldivar	7	Rodriguez	9/16/20	9/1/21	Latino	68.90%	3.70%	6.50%	19.90%	Yes	Yes
Paloma Perez-McEvoy	9	Price	10/8/20	4/9/21	Latino	78.10%	15.20%	2.50%	3.30%	Yes	No
Miguel Martinez	9	Price	4/9/21	10/15/21	Latino	78.10%	15.20%	2.50%	3.30%	Yes	No
Andrew Garsten	13	O'Farrell	10/6/20	9/23/21	White	54.20%	3.50%	18.00%	22.90%	No	Yes
Cecilia Cabello	Mayor	Eric Garcetti	9/23/20	6/22/21	Latino	15.20%	5.40%	16.60%	61.20%	No	Yes