

## 2006 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR KING COUNTY STUDY PARTICIPANTS

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### POPULATION AND SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The King County residents in this survey were contacted either by mail from a random sample of the county voting list or in person immediately prior to jury service at the Seattle Municipal Courthouse, the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle, or the Kent Regional Justice Center. Courthouse response rates among jurors were outstanding, with over 70% of eligible jurors participating for a total of 6,605 responses. The mail survey response rate (21%) was significantly lower, yielding 270 total responses; such high non-response is common for surveys of that variety. Follow-up surveys were sent to a subset of those who took the first survey, and response rates were high (60-70%), with 3,480 persons taking the survey after jury service. The courthouse survey method reflected the study's principal interest in the experience of those citizens who report for jury duty when summoned. It was our expectation that the courthouse population would differ from a general survey population, let alone the county population.

Table 1 shows that, above all else, those reporting for jury service (or simply responding to the mail survey) had many more years of formal education than the county as a whole. Nearly every prospective juror 25 and older was a high school graduate (compared to 91% county-wide), and roughly two-thirds were college graduates (compared to just 43% county-wide). In addition, 86% of King County jurors identified themselves as White, compared to 74% of the county-wide population. The most under-represented ethnic group among prospective jurors, particularly in Seattle, was Hispanic residents, making up just 2% of the jury pools despite representing 7% of the county population and 14% of the Seattle population.

**Table 1. Comparison of Demographics from U.S. Census and Survey Respondents for King County and Seattle**

Statistic	King County			Seattle	
	Census	Court	Mail	Census	Court
Median age (yrs)	46	48	53	46	50
In labor force	71%	75%	61%	67%	76%
HSgrad (25 & up)	91%	<b>99%</b>	<b>99%</b>	84%	<b>99%</b>
BA/BS (25 & up)	43%	<b>63%</b>	<b>69%</b>	27%	<b>72%</b>
Female	51%	54%	52%	51%	52%
White	74%	86%	89%	76%	82%
Black	6%	3%	3%	12%	5%
Asian	13%	7%	4%	4%	10%
Hispanic	7%	2%	2%	14%	2%
NAmer/Pacific	1%	2%	3%	< 1%	1%

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ATTITUDES

#### Public Participation in King County before the 2004 Presidential Election

Those participating in this survey were more educated than the general King County population, and they also were more active in civic affairs. Voter turnout in King County was very high in 2004 among all registered voters, but those showing up for jury duty voted at even higher rates in the primary (63% vs. 46%) and general election (94% vs. 83%) than did the general population.

We view the juror and mail survey samples as a generally representative cross-section of the *engaged* public. Those who volunteer for surveys, let alone answer a jury summons, are not only more likely to vote, but also more likely to engage in other civic activities. What we can ask is *how* this subgroup participates in public life and whether that varies across the different parts of the county.

Survey respondents were very interested in politics and public affairs, with 49% following such subjects “most of the time” and 86% at least “some of the time.” The county region with the most uninterested persons (19%) was South County (Seatac, Renton, Kent, Auburn), and Seattle had the fewest such persons (11%). The main public affairs information source survey participants used was “printed and online newspapers/magazines,” with 60% reading such sources nearly every day. South County residents were least likely to listen to radio, and both South County and Cascades (Duvall to Fall City) residents were least likely to read print news sources.

Seattle residents were the least likely to access TV news daily (only 48% doing so nearly every day), and South County residents relied most heavily on TV news (58% nearly every day). National studies have shown that reliance on TV news is often associated with *less* engagement in public affairs, and this is consistent with our findings.

Along with the Issaquah/Sammamish region, Seattleites were most likely to talk about politics. The most frequent mode of talk was actually *listening*—trying to get information about candidates or issues, with 40% of Seattle and Issaquah/Sammamish residents engaging in such exchanges at least monthly. By contrast, only 21% of these same residents engaged in “persuasive” talk—conversations aimed at changing someone else’s mind—at least monthly. The least talkative region was South County, with 17% and 31%, respectively, listening and persuading each month.

Seattle residents were also the most likely King County residents to join political groups and attend political functions. When it came to volunteering in political campaigns, contacting public officials, and talking about local community affairs, Seattleites were matched by residents of the Issaquah/Sammamish and Cascades regions. For instance, 35% of residents in these regions contacted a public official at least once in the past six months, and roughly half of these residents talked about local issues with fellow residents at least monthly.

Participation in group life showed a different pattern. Seattleites were frequent joiners in cultural groups, but they were the least likely to regularly participate in religious groups. The Eastside (both Bellevue/Redmond and Issaquah/Sammamish regions) were the most active in cultural, neighborhood, and charitable groups. For example, 54% of these Eastsiders occasionally participate in charitable group activities, and 42% of them participate in neighborhood groups. Unfortunately for nonpartisan groups (the League of Women Voters and the like), 90% of residents across the county never participate in these groups.

### **Civic Attitudes During the 2004 Presidential Election**

Comparing responses from before the 2004 election with those recorded afterward, attitudes in King County did not change dramatically. The clearest changes were an increased confidence in fellow citizens and declining confidence in courts. Counting only those who completed both the initial and final surveys, the proportion of King County respondents who believed “few Americans consider voting in elections to be an important civic duty” dropped from 36% to 22%. For this same group, the proportion having “high” or “very high” confidence in state and local judges dropped from 55% to 48%, as did confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court (from 62% to 56%).

These changes were relatively consistent across the county’s regions, but there were differences among the counties in people’s basic attitudes. Clearest among these were a greater sense of political self-confidence in Seattle, particularly compared to the South County and Cascades regions of the county. For instance, 53% of Seattleites said they were “better informed about politics and government than most people,” but only 38% felt that way in South County and Cascades. Based on the civic knowledge test included in the survey, Seattleites are, indeed, a bit better informed. Notably, such *confidence* in one’s political knowledge and abilities is important in and of itself (that is, aside from the reality of the situation), and it may partly account for why Seattleites are more politically active than their counterparts.

## JURY SERVICE

Many of the questions in our survey specifically examined the jury service experience. Our study was designed to focus on this often-underappreciated aspect of public life.

### The King County Jury Experience

Though many prospective jurors were dismissed during voir dire, those dismissed did not differ in dramatic ways from those who ultimately served as jurors. The largest difference may have been education level, with 36% of sworn jurors not possessing a college degree compared to just 24% of those seated in the jury box before being dismissed.

Survey respondents generally reported a positive experience at the county or municipal courthouse, but it was clear that one's reflections on the time spent at court depended most of all on whether one was put on a jury. Only 38% reported that they were "hopeful to be required to serve on a jury" when they reported to jury service, but even reluctant jurors generally had a very positive experience.

Seventy-three percent of the prospective jurors were sent to courtrooms holding criminal trials, ranging from murder to misdemeanors, with the remainder sitting in an equally diverse set of civil trials. Almost all of those who were not seated on a jury stayed at the courthouse exactly two days. The median service for empanelled jurors was four days, with 77% spending six or fewer days there. The median juror deliberated for four hours, with 78% deliberating for six hours or fewer.

After jury service, 24% of those who sat on a fully empanelled jury rated their overall experience as "excellent," with 37% rating it as "very good" and 23% as "good." Taken together, 84% of empanelled jurors said their experience was at least "good." By contrast, 47% of those who were dismissed without sitting on a jury rated their experience as no better than "satisfactory," with only 7% saying it was "excellent." Moreover, for 64% of the empanelled jurors, jury service "exceeded expectations," with only 5% having an experience that didn't meet their hopes for jury service. The majority of non-jurors (53%) said service was "about what I expected."

Focusing on the empanelled jurors, 62% said the treatment they received from judges was "very good" or "excellent," with only 1% rating their treatment as "less than satisfactory." Jurors perceived considerable diversity among their peers, with 71% percent said the jurors they met "came from very different backgrounds." The trial itself was "difficult to understand" for only 11% of the jurors, and 77% agreed that it was "very interesting to think about," with the same percentage believing the "jury played a very important role in resolving the case." Even higher percentages were satisfied with the quality of jury deliberation (89%) and the final verdict (84%).

After serving, 20% of empanelled jurors spoke "many times" about their experience with their family members, 52% discussed their service "a few times," and a total of 96% talked about service "at least once or twice." Jurors spoke of their time at the courthouse just as often with people outside their immediate family. Even 42% of non-jurors shared their thoughts about jury service with friends and others at least "a few times."

### The Civic Impact of Jury Service

Jury service may be satisfying, but can it actually lift the civic spirits of those who serve? Can it change how people participate in public life? In a series of studies, including the one in which you participated, we have addressed this question by focusing on how jury service is linked to voting in the United States. Our initial study looked at a single locale, Thurston County, Washington. We collected court and voting records for a period of years and merged them by matching jurors' full names with unique matching records in the voter database. This first study found that after controlling for other trial features and past voting frequency, citizens who served on a criminal jury that reached a verdict were more likely to vote in subsequent elections than were those jurors who deadlocked, were dismissed during trial, or served as alternates.

The effect was augmented by the number of charges against the defendant, with trials including more charges yielding greater increases in jurors' voting rates.

A grant from the University of Washington made possible an extensive follow-up study. Data gathered from Colorado, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington found the same pattern of increasing voting rates, except that this larger dataset revealed that the critical distinction was between those who deliberated (*including* hung juries) and those who did not. Once again, the number of charges against the defendant had an additional, significant effect on post-service voting rates. This study was also large enough to permit breaking down participants into two subgroups, and this analysis found that the increased voting effects were apparent only for previously infrequent voters (voting less than 50% of the time) who served on criminal trials. Frequent voters and all of those who served on civil juries did not have a significant increase in voting after jury service.

The National Science Foundation survey you participated in provided an additional test of this pattern of findings. The King County survey revealed that a juror's subjective experience was also a critical variable in predicting changes after jury service. Specifically, results showed that for both empanelled jurors *and* those reporting for service but not empanelled, the degree to which the jury service experience exceeded their expectations was positively associated with increased post-service voting rates. In other words, those who found jury service to be better than they expected became more likely to vote in the future relative to those whose expectations were barely met (or worse).

The King County surveys also measured changes in other forms of civic and political engagement. Though those who report for service and never sit on a jury do not experience profound change in their civic lives, many of those who do sit on juries experience increased interest in politics and local issues, increased public affairs media use, greater participation in political activity, and more frequent conversations on politics and community affairs.

Summarizing across these studies, it is apparent that jury service can have a significant impact on people's broader civic participation. Whether it has such an effect depends on the person and the jury experience—with the clearest effect being for those persons who come into jury service with lower levels of civic engagement, have an involving experience deliberating on a jury, and have a positive subjective assessment of their time spent in the courtroom. In sum, our research suggests that for over two hundred years, the jury system has been quietly replenishing the reservoir of civic spirit and political engagement in the United States.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH REPORTS**

We intend to publish our main results in a book in 2007, tentatively titled *Civic Awakening: What the Jury Teaches America*. To learn more about this study, visit [www.jurydemocracy.org](http://www.jurydemocracy.org). If you have comments or reflections you wish to share at any time, contact John Gastil at <mailto:jurydem@u.washington.edu>.