



Term Limits in Denver

Charter Review Committee
Monday, Aug 14, 2023

Agenda

- Brief history of Term Limits in Denver
- Problem we are trying to solve
- Research and survey data
- Process of ballot measures
- Questions for Committee on Charter Change

Brief History

- Term limits in Denver didn't exist until 1995. In November of 1994 voters approved the Colorado Term Limits Amendment that established term limits across the state, limiting Federal elected officials to three consecutive terms and State elected officials to two consecutive terms
- The Supreme Court overturned the portion that applied to Federal representatives but kept the State portion in place
- In 1996 a ballot measure to eliminate term limits was referred to the ballot but it failed to pass

Brief History Continued

- In 2000 another ballot measure was referred to voters to increase the number of consecutive terms to three. The voters approved this change.
- **Section § 8.2.6 of the Charter now says:** “Elected officers shall serve no more than three consecutive four-year terms in their respective offices”

What Problem Are We Trying to Solve?

- During the campaign we heard from many residents that they would like to revisit the discussion around terms limits in Denver.
 - Folks did not understand the reason behind three terms instead of the two that the State and Federal governments use most often.

Research - Overview

- We studied 39 cities in total
 - 30 most populous in the United States.
 - 26 had strong Mayor-Council forms of government
 - 14 had Council-Manager or other forms of government
 - 12 were consolidated City and Counties
 - 3 were in Colorado
 - Colorado Springs
 - Pueblo
 - Broomfield
 - Aurora not studied due to current Charter change conversation

Research – Results Continued

All Cities (39)					
Mayor			Council		
<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	21	54%	2	14	36%
3	3	8%	3	4	10%
4	1	2%	4	2	5%
∞	14	36%	∞	19	49%
<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	3	10%	2	5	13%
4	36	90%	4	34	87%
<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
8	21	54%	8	16	41%
12	3	8%	12	4	10%
∞	15	38%	∞	19	49%

Research – Results Continued

Top 30 Cities in Population					
Mayor			Council		
<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	16	53%	2	11	37%
3	2	7%	3	4	13%
4	1	3%	4	2	7%
∞	11	37%	∞	13	43%
<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	3	10%	2	5	17%
4	27	90%	4	25	83%
<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
8	17	57%	8	13	43%
12	2	7%	12	4	13%
∞	11	37%	∞	13	43%

Research – Results

Strong Mayor-Council Government (24)					
Mayor			Council		
<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	11	46%	2	9	38%
3	1	4%	3	1	4%
4	1	4%	4	1	4%
∞	11	46%	∞	13	54%
<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	3	8%	2	1	4%
4	37	93%	4	23	96%
<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
8	12	50%	8	10	42%
12	1	4%	12	1	4%
∞	11	46%	∞	13	54%

Research – Results

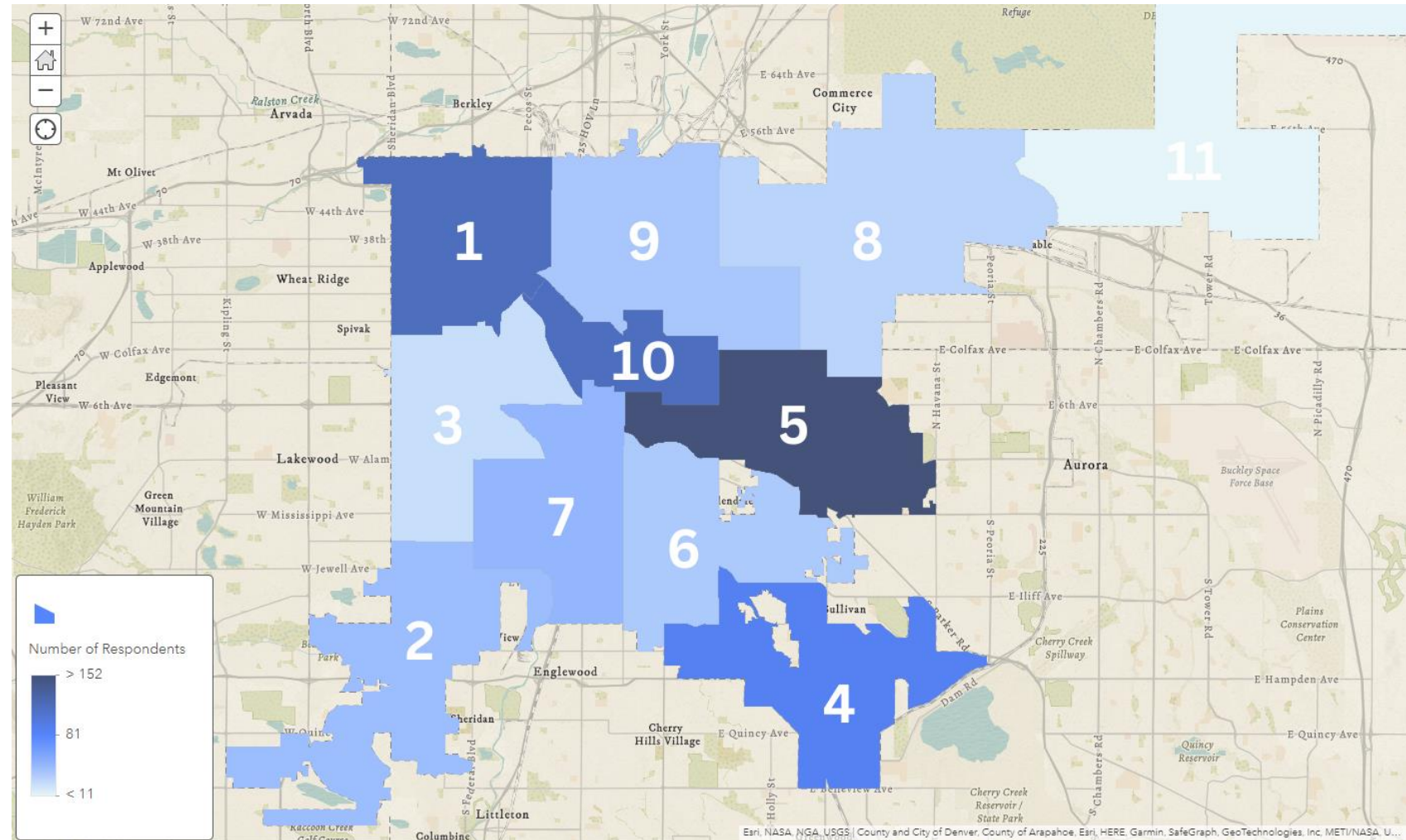
Consolidated City and Counties (9)					
Mayor			Council		
<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Terms</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	6	67%	2	5	56%
3	2	22%	3	1	11%
∞	1	11%	∞	3	33%
<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Length of Term (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
2	0	0%	2	0	0%
4	9	100%	4	9	100%
<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Time (Years)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
8	6	67%	8	5	56%
12	2	22%	12	1	11%
∞	1	11%	∞	3	33%

Research - Conclusions

- The vast majority of the top 30 American cities, cities of a similar size with strong Mayor-Council forms of government, and consolidated city and counties have either no term limits or a two-term limit.
- Almost all cities studied have a four-year term.
- Only Denver, Aurora, Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Los Angeles had a 3-term limit for either Mayor or Council. No cities outside the west (west of the Mississippi), with term limits, had more than a 2-term limit

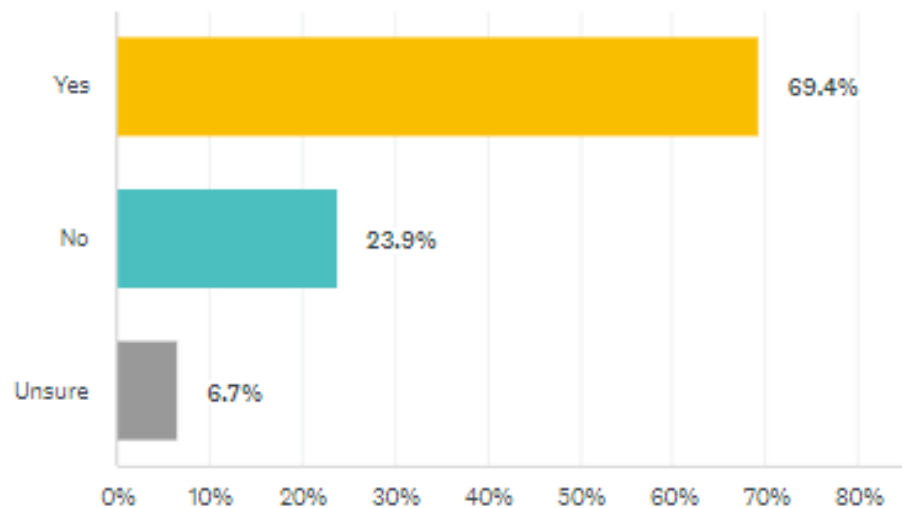
Survey – Geographic Responses

Council District	Number of Responses
1	116
2	43
3	24
4	88
5	152
6	36
7	48
8	30
9	38
10	115
11	11

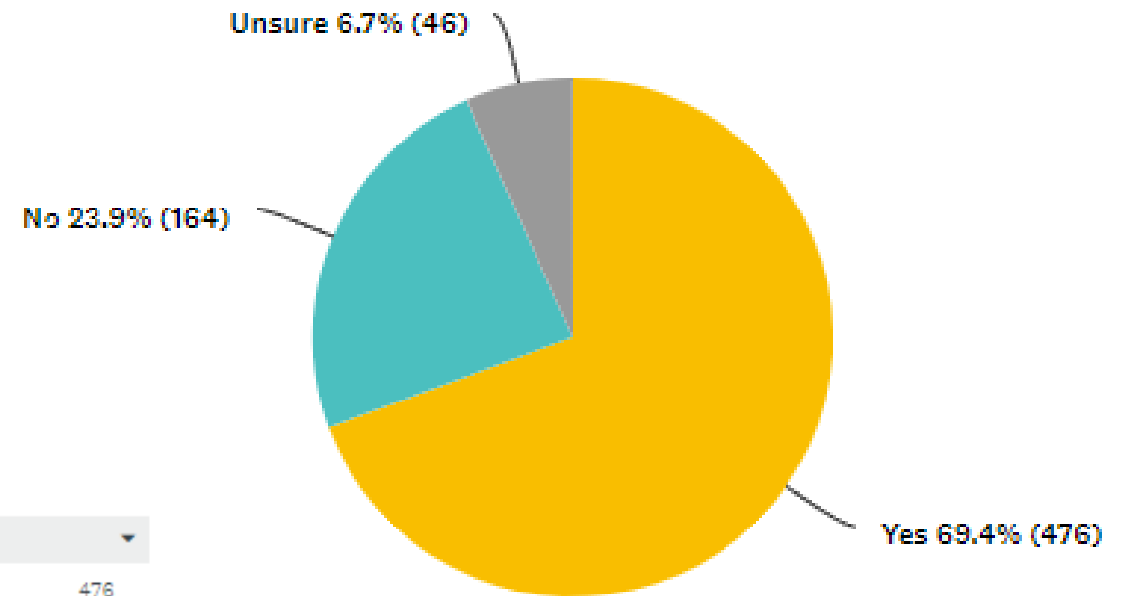


Survey – Term Limits Support

Would you support changing the Charter of the City and County of Denver to limit all elected officials (Mayor, City Council, Clerk and Recorder, and Auditor) to two terms (8 years) instead of the current three term (12 years) system?



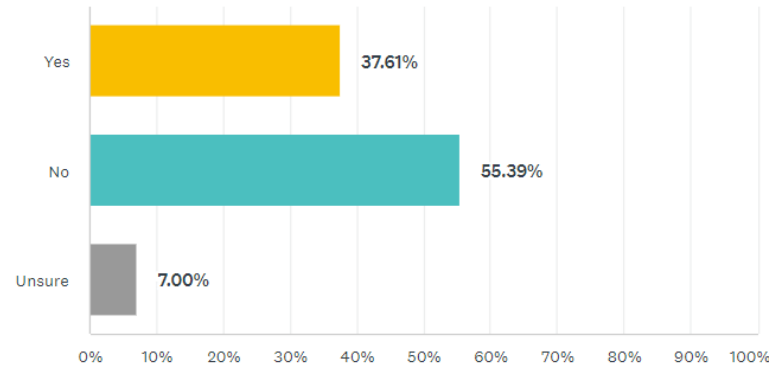
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	69.4% (476)
No	23.9% (164)
Unsure	6.7% (46)
TOTAL	686



Survey – Current Electeds

Do you think that elected officials who ran for office under the current 12 year term limits should be allowed to remain in office for three terms (12 years) even if Denver residents approve a Charter change to lower term limits to two terms (8 years)?

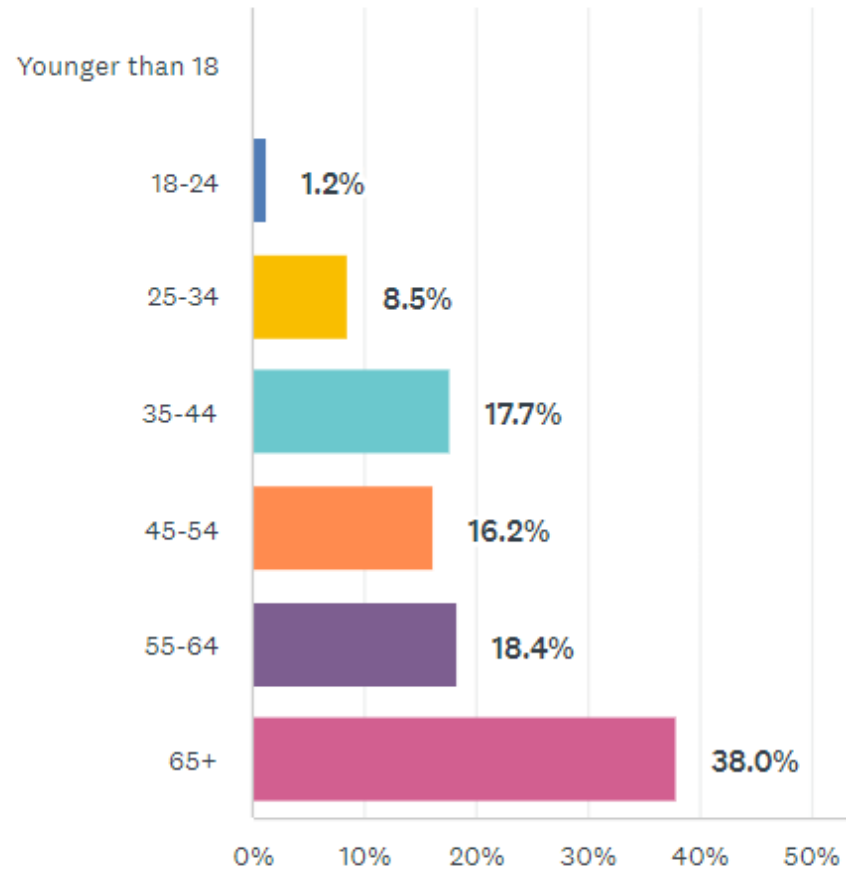
- N.B. This action is not something that can be done legally.



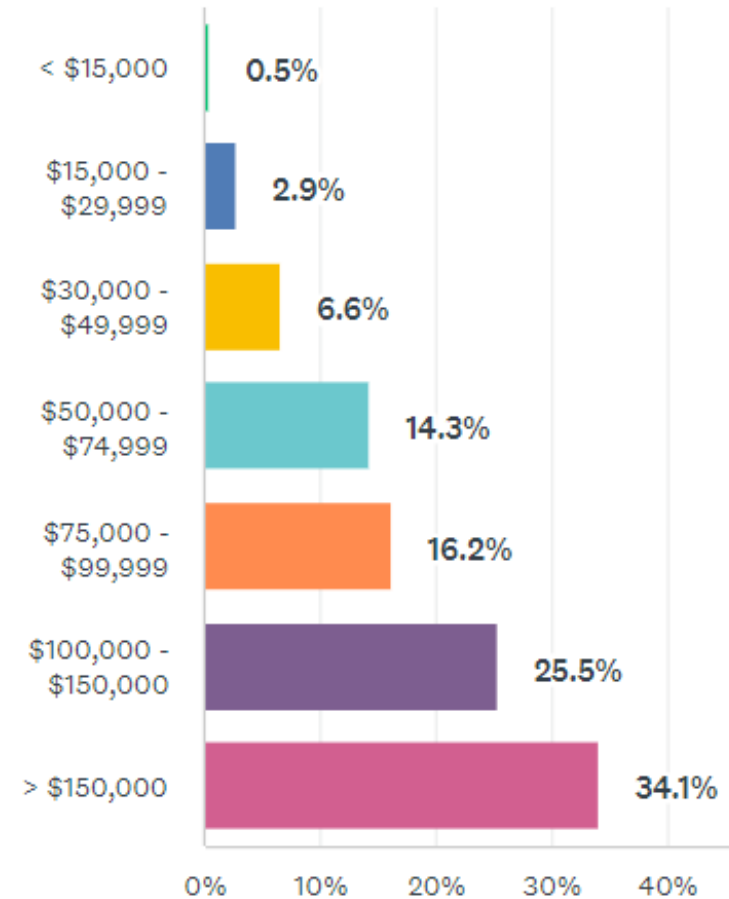
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	37.61% 258
▼ No	55.39% 380
▼ Unsure	7.00% 48
TOTAL	686

Survey – Demographics

Respondent Age

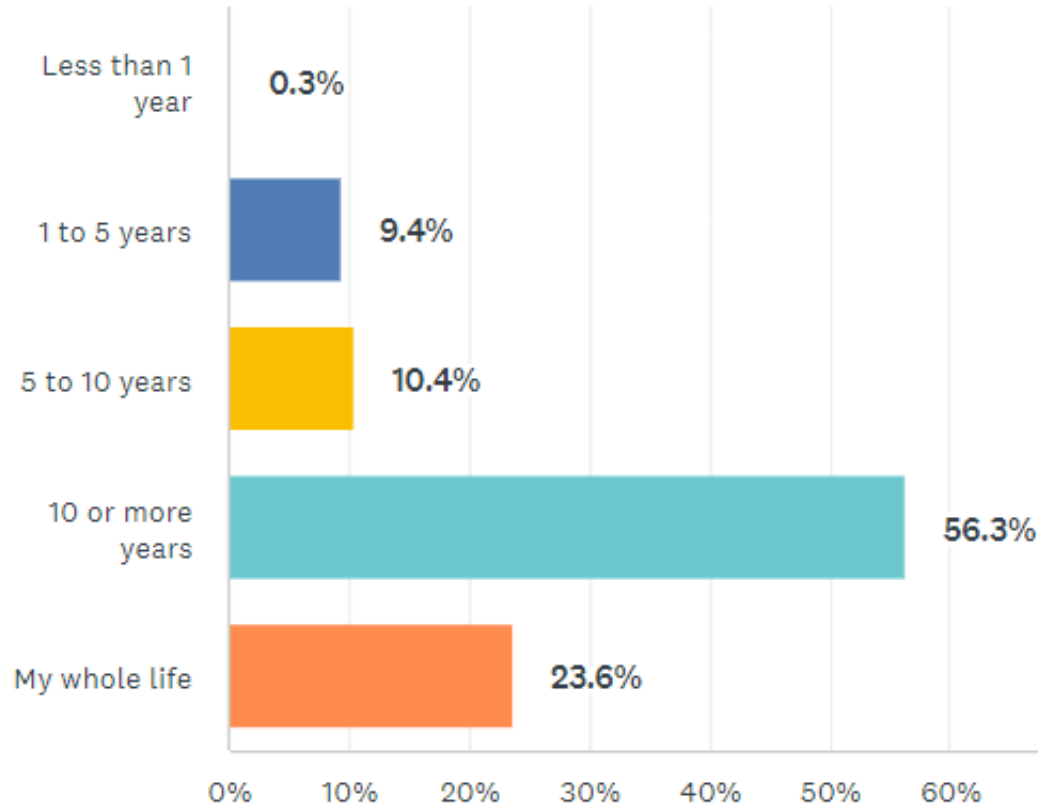


Respondent Income

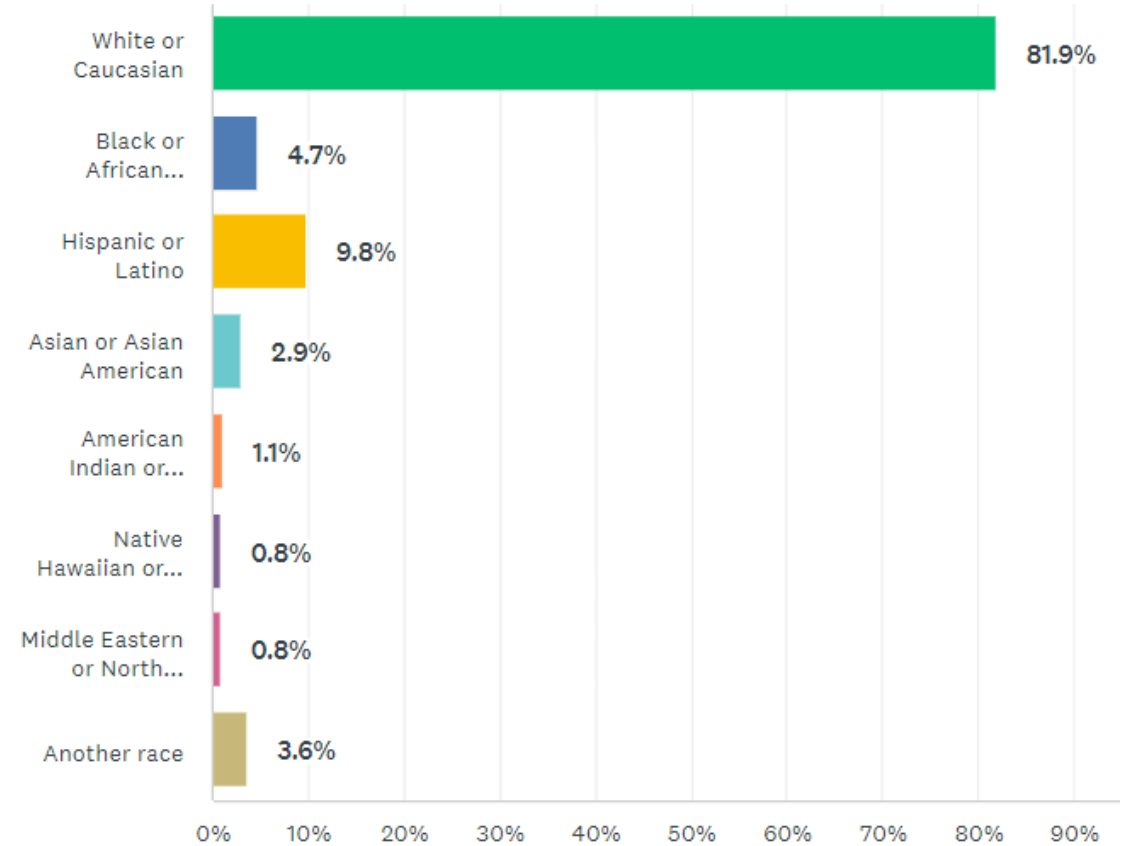


Survey – Demographics

Respondent Time Lived in Denver



Respondent Race/Ethnicity



Survey - Comments

- 343 total comments
- Responses were more even between those in favor and those opposed, with in favor still retaining a majority
- Reasons for those in favor
 - New ideas and energy infused into offices more often
 - Twelve years is too long
 - Encourage more people to participate in running for office
- Reasons those opposed
 - Loss of institutional knowledge as offices turn over
 - Elections are the “term limits” for elected officials already

Survey – Comments Continued

- Other interesting ideas
 - A plurality of people suggested a two-term limit for only the Mayor and keeping a third term for Council
 - Several people suggested a staggering of Council elections (if stricter terms limits were instituted) to preserve institutional knowledge as positions turned over
 - The District Attorney’s office, which also has a three-term limit, should be added to the conversation.

Survey - Analysis

- Survey was open from June 26 to August 4
- 705 Total responses
 - 686 self reported living in Denver
 - This sample size has a margin of error at 95% confidence level approximately 3.75%
 - Based on total estimated Denver population
- While the survey is statistically significant numerically, **the demographics and geographic location of respondents show this is not a representative sample and therefore not statistically significant**

Next Steps

- Follow up on charter review questions, requests for information, and any outstanding items
- Return to Finance and Governance Committee with completed ballot measure
- Present to Council for referral to 2024 ballot

Questions & Discussion