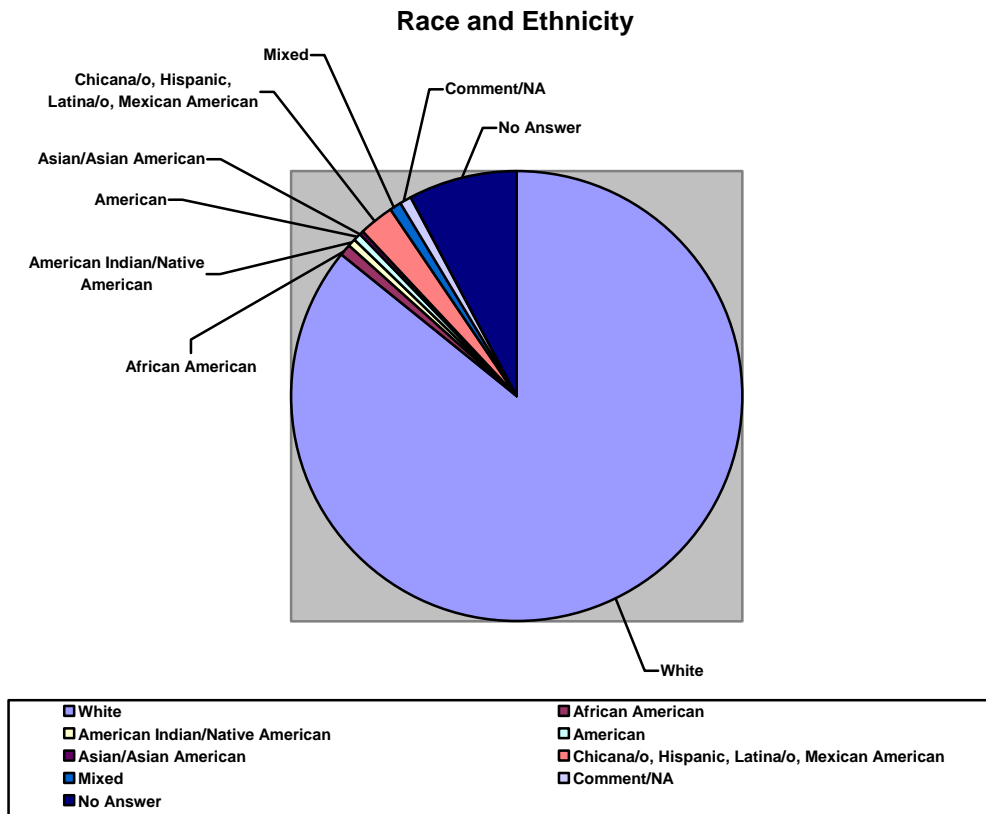


WHA 2005 Membership Survey Results

The Membership Committee is pleased to report that its work on the 2005 membership survey is drawing to a close. Participation in the survey proved particularly impressive, with 44 percent or 763 of the association’s 1731 members responding—a superb rate of return for a mailed survey. Responses revealed both expected and surprising membership characteristics, interests, and concerns.

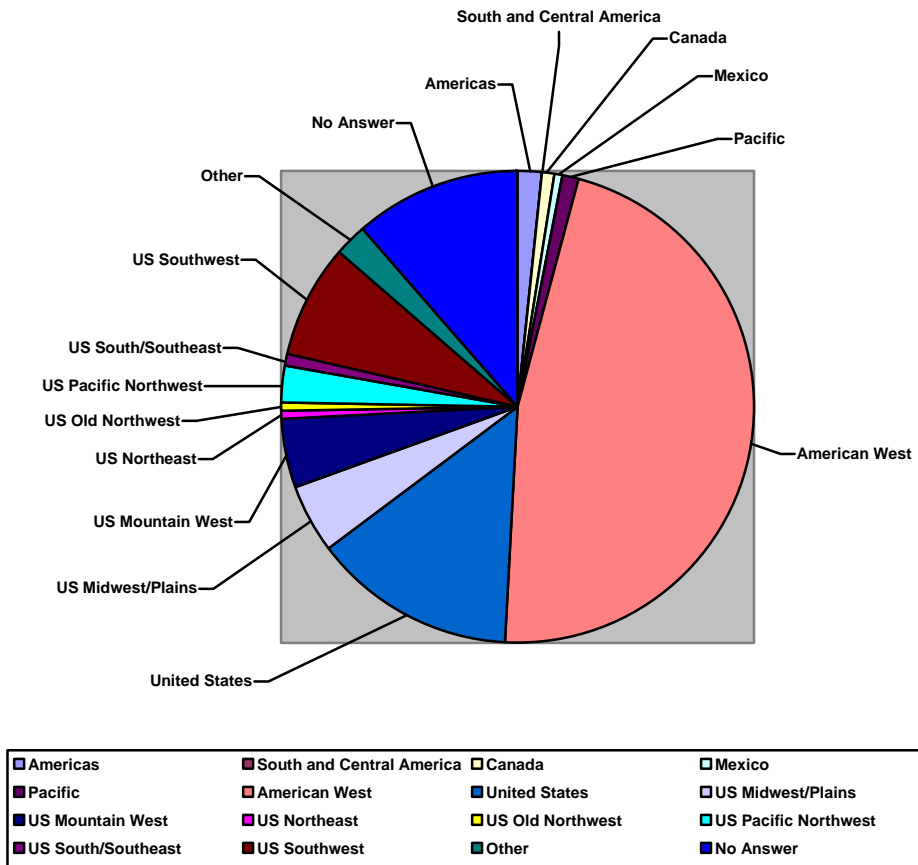
Demographically, the survey offers few surprises and suggests the need for increased efforts to diversify the member base. The WHA membership remains predominantly male and Caucasian. Men comprised a full 68.3 percent of the membership. Further, a full 83.8 percent listed their race/ethnicity as Anglo, Caucasian, European, white, or WASP. California supplied the most members with 15.7 percent, followed by Texas (6.6 percent), Colorado (6.4 percent), Arizona (6.0 percent), and New Mexico (5.1 percent). Regionally, the western half of the United States (starting with the second tier of states west of the Mississippi) accounted for 61.9 percent of responding members, while the southeast (including VA) accounted for 8.5 percent and the northeast quadrant for 19.6 percent.



Beyond simple demographic characteristics, the survey’s findings also illuminate many professional attributes and concerns of the WHA membership. Overall, members tend to hold the Ph.D. (55.4 percent), work in higher education (38.3 percent in four-year institutions and 5.2 percent in two-year colleges) or enjoy retirement (20.1 percent). Most consider Western history as either their primary interest or one that is very important to their professional career (71.1 percent).

The American West predictably emerged as the most popular geographic field of interest, with 79.9 percent placing it in their top three ranking. An unmatched 46.7 percent chose the West as their top area of interest. Topically, Native Americans/First Nations made the strongest showing with 13.1 percent of respondents ranking it their first choice. Environmental History followed with 7.2 percent and the Frontier came in a strong third with 6.7 percent. Chronologically, the largest segment of members preferred the 19th to 20th century category (44.7 percent).

Geographical Area of Interest: Top Choice

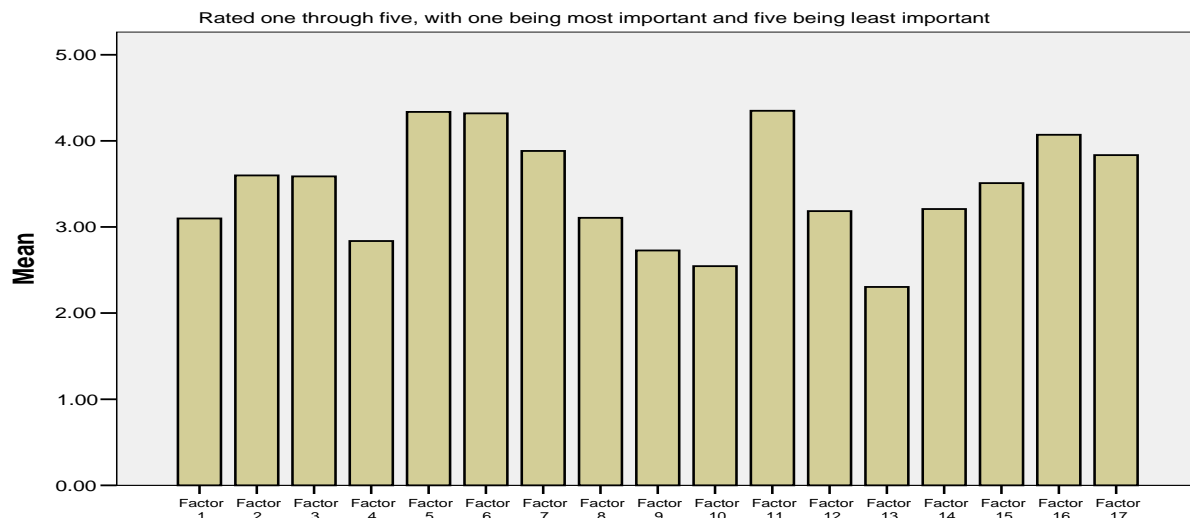


When questioned about the state of Western History, members revealed the most concern about the health of the field as reflected in the job market. Few strongly agreed that the field is healthy in this regard (3.4 percent). A more substantial segment (18.6 percent) doubted its well-being concerning employment opportunities. Yet most members continue to view Western History as a vital field. An impressive 81.7 percent characterized it as having a significant impact on scholarship in US history and 66.2 percent agreed that it speaks to the concerns of the interested public.

As far as the decision to join or maintain membership, publications and organizational reputation stood out as the key motivational factors. Sixty-six percent listed the *Western Historical Quarterly* as being important or most important in this regard. The reputation of the WHA received the second highest importance rating (41 percent) followed closely by *Montana: Magazine of the West* (40.5 percent). The least

important membership factor surfaced as the opportunity to participate in WHA affairs/governance (56.6 casting it as less or least important.) Intellectual exchange and collegiality stood as the strongest conference draw (66.8 percent ranking it as important). Social collegiality registered a close second (57.7 percent). Eating, meeting, and presidential speeches proved the least important factors. Only 7.5 percent of the members considered conference meals and meetings important. The presidential luncheon ranked close as an unpopular attendance factor, with only 8.8 percent considering it important.

WHA Membership and Conference Attendance Factors



Factor 1: conference locations
 Factor 2: conference timing
 Factor 3: conference costs
 Factor 4: program and sessions
 Factor 5: meals/meetings
 Factor 6: receptions/pres. banquet
 Factor 7: conference tours

Factor 8: book exhibit
 Factor 9: social collegiality
 Factor 10: intellectual exchange
 Factor 11: participation in WHA government
 Factor 12: WHA reputation

Factor 13: *Western Historical Quarterly*
 Factor 14: *Montana*
 Factor 15: WHA Newsletter
 Factor 16: WHA website
 Factor 17: membership dues

The Committee will present a panel session/audience discussion of the survey results at the St. Louis meeting this October. We look forward to seeing many of the WHA's members and prospective members at the session.

Respectfully Submitted by Jonathan Foster (UNLV), on behalf of the Membership Committee: Gordon Bakken (CSUF), Jennifer Denetdale (UNM), Jonathan Foster (UNLV), David Rich Lewis (USU/WHQ), Patricia Limerick (UC Boulder), Maria Montoya (UM), David Wrobel (UNLV). The Committee wishes to thank Mike Lansing for his invaluable contributions to the survey effort.