



# Source Diversity

## PUBLIC REPORT

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**i**MPACT ARCHITECTS

# Executive Summary

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KUOW commissioned Impact Architects to conduct a retroactive source and content diversity audit in an effort to set a baseline of voices, perspectives, and topics covered in its reporting and content. The findings and recommendations will be used to inform ongoing KUOW editorial strategy as well as to contribute to planning for ongoing source diversity tracking.

The audit included six programming areas over the 2020 calendar year: The digital presentation of News/Enterprise stories from the KUOW newsroom, Seattle Now, The Record, Speakers Forum, and the podcasts Radioactive and The Wild. The audit coded each story's topics and sources based on standard demographic categories, together with the addition of a "community" category, which included populations with a significant presence (>1%) in the Seattle area (i.e., Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Horn of Africa). This was particularly important to KUOW as the organization strives to include perspectives and experiences from across Seattle, including immigrant communities that would be lost in basic coding for race and ethnicity.

The analysis of the audit data focused on the intersection of multiple variables, through which we identified the following trends:

- Health was either the primary or secondary topic for about a quarter of all records.
- Arts/culture/sports was the second most common topic by a significant margin.
- Arts/culture/sports topics had a more diverse population of sources than health topics.
- Women comprised 55% of all source records, a figure that was consistent across all but one programming area.
- While KUOW includes Black sources at a rate that is about six percentage points higher than population estimates in Seattle and King County, two-thirds of these sources are found in either arts/culture/sports topics or racial justice topics.
- KUOW includes Native sources at a rate that exceeds local population estimates.
- KUOW's sourcing for Hispanic/Latinx sources is well below local population estimates.
- The location for the majority of sources is tied to Seattle, without a neighborhood designation.

These findings, along with other trends identified at the program level, clearly identify areas where KUOW is succeeding at including diverse perspectives in coverage as well as opportunities to explore new stories and include the experiences of all Seattle area residents in reporting.

### *Recommendations for Next Steps*

- **Identify the activities that might have contributed to the high rate of inclusion of women sources and apply these tactics where needed.** There's either a common practice or cultural norm that has resulted in the high rate of inclusion of women sources across programming areas, and identifying it could be key to making progress in places where KUOW wants to improve.
- **Consider the implications of Black sources being mostly confined to two topic areas, and ask what stories and perspectives might be missing with respect to Black sources and other topics.** KUOW's overall representation of Black voices is high, but it's also limited to inclusion in sports/entertainment/arts and racial justice.
- **Determine what processes or assumptions led to the varied results for race/ethnicity, and set process-oriented goals from there.** Besides Black sources, KUOW has high representation of Native sources, a low representation of Hispanic/Latinx sources, and mixed representation of Asian sources that differs depending on the population comparison. What practices can be applied elsewhere? What challenges exist?
- **Chart a path forward.** Decide how KUOW wants to use this information going forward, especially in terms of developing a system for sustained tracking.

# Approach

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Impact Architects' audit of KUOW sources and content over a 12-month period (2020 calendar year) included six programming areas: The digital presentation of News/Enterprise stories from the KUOW newsroom, Seattle Now, The Record, Speakers Forum, Radioactive, and The Wild. We manually retrieved a randomized sample for each program, and we coded each record for a variety of characteristics. Ultimately, we coded enough records for each program to give a representative sample, including 597 total records and 458 unique sources.

We approached each record through the lens of an audience member, with the understanding that a core element of KUOW's goal for its source diversity initiative is to be more representative of its listening area, which will then create deeper and more trusting relationships with new sectors of the community that might not yet be KUOW audience members. To code each record, we used visual cues, reporters' and sources' own words and descriptions, and online research to make judgments about each source's characteristics. To acknowledge and mitigate potential errors in our judgments, we had an "unknown" category for each measure of diversity that we used when in doubt.

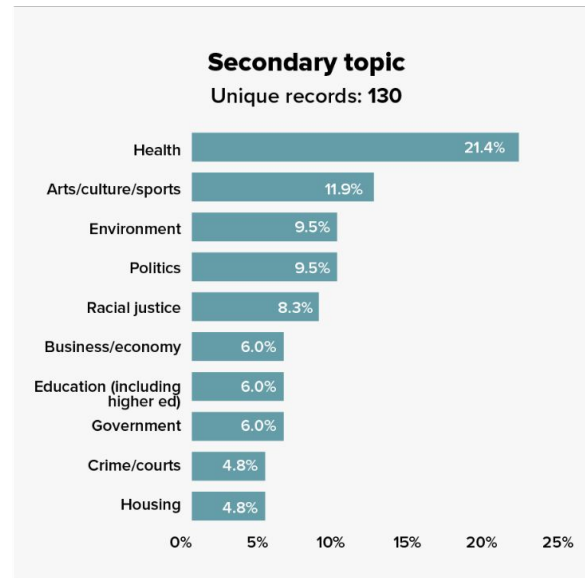
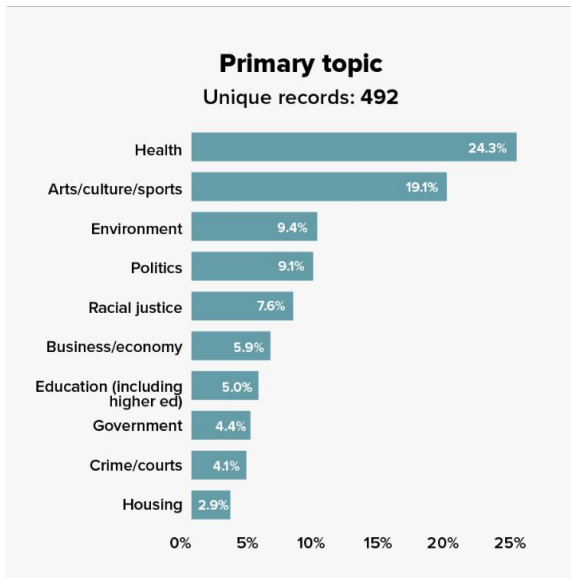
Given the various dimensions that we coded for each source, we are able to compare across content areas/topics and programs, as well as conduct comparisons across different demographics. While we included KUOW journalists as "sources" in the event that they appeared as guests or subject matter experts for another person's reporting, they are filtered out of all charts throughout this report.

# Content

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## Health and Arts

Health was the most frequent topic during 2020 (24% primary topic, 21% secondary topic), followed by arts/culture/sports (19% primary topic). The most common primary/secondary topic intersections are health with business/economy, health and arts/culture/sports, and racial justice and politics.



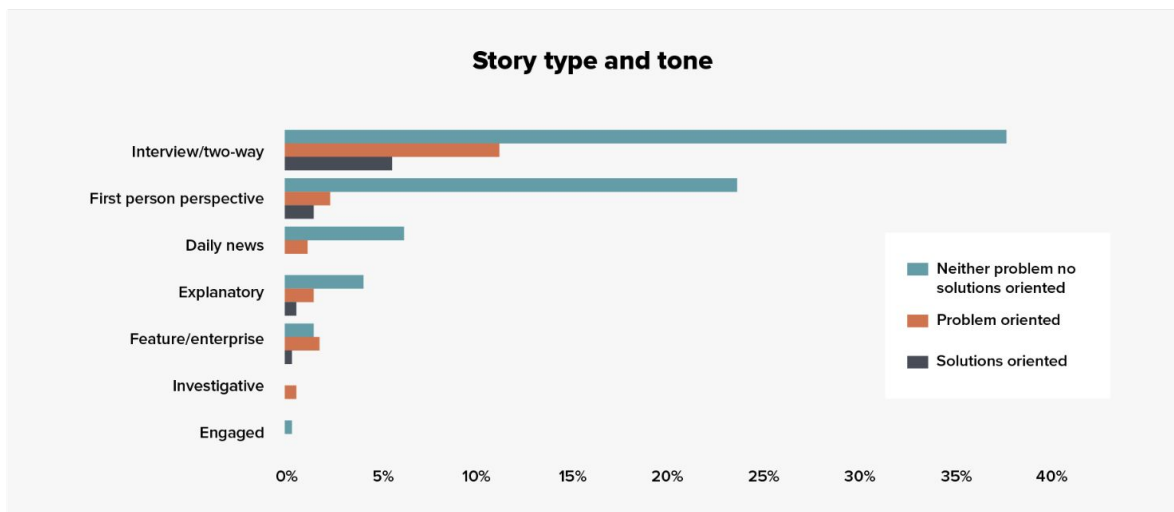
Digging deeper into health and arts/culture/sports, we find that the type of sources that are included in each topic area were quite different. Health stories had a gender breakdown very close to that of KUOW sources overall: 58.8% of unique sources in stories where health was the primary topic were women.

However, the population of sources that appeared in health stories is less diverse when it comes to race/ethnicity. Across all KUOW programming, 61.9% of sources are white, but for health topics, that number is 70.6% among unique sources and 72.3% of all sources. Health topics, however, also include a high percentage of Asian/Asian American sources, at 13.2% of unique sources. This is not surprising given that, according to a 2018 [survey by the American Association of Medical Colleges](#), about 17% of physicians are Asian. The high percentage of white and Asian sources means that other racial/ethnic groups are less well represented in health topics — 4.4% Black and 1.5% Hispanic/Latinx.

Arts/culture/sports, on the other hand, had one of the most racially and ethnically diverse populations of sources. Besides racial justice, arts/culture/sports had the lowest percentage of white sources (49.2%) and the highest percentage of Black sources (20.3%). It also easily had the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latinx sources, at 8.5%. In fact, half of all Hispanic/Latinx sources we identified in this audit appeared in an arts/culture/sports story. Asian/Asian American sources were also well represented at 13.5%, as are American Indians/Alaska Natives at 3.4%.

## Story Type and Tone

We coded each story based on type (such as daily news, explanatory, etc.) and tone, for which there were three options: solution oriented, problem oriented, and neither problem nor solution oriented. Our judgments [followed the Solutions Journalism Network's](#) definitions.



The most common story type in our sample was the interview/two-way (54.6%). This story type also had the highest percentage of all three categories of story tone. The most common combination of type and tone was the interview/two-way that was neither problem nor solution oriented. The high percentage of interview/two-way stories is primarily due to the presence of The Record and Seattle Now, both of which rely heavily on this story type.

On the whole, the stories in our audit show that while there were more problem- than solution-oriented stories, those that were neither problem nor solutions oriented were far more common than both.

## Sources

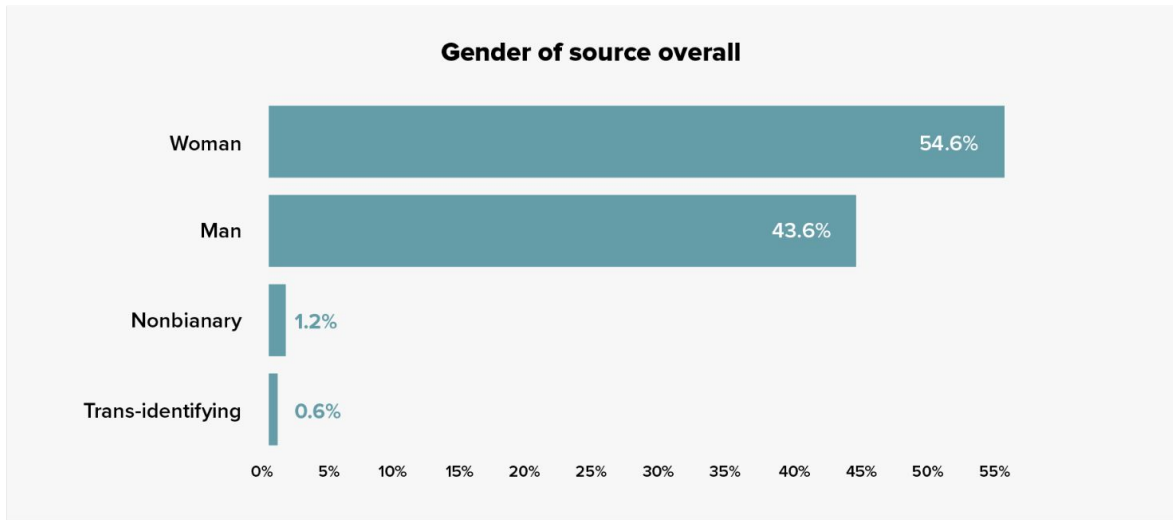
While more source diversity audits in public media are becoming more prevalent, there are not enough similar studies to draw comparisons that would determine "success" or "failure." Instead, we analyze the source diversity results based on the terms of the specific organization and its context. We make some assumptions about equitable inclusion based on population demographics and the general benchmark to reflect the population of a listening area. We then analyze those assumptions based on that context, as well as other verifiable factors. Finally, we dive deep into how the demographic characteristics intersect. This process helps us identify "spotlights" and "opportunities."

### Spotlights

#### ***Amplifying Women's Voices***

KUOW stands out for its equitable inclusion of women's perspectives across content areas. Women comprise 54.6% of all sources in this audit, compared with 43.6% men. Nonbinary and trans-identifying individuals combined to comprise 1.8% of our sample.

Given this success, KUOW can identify the processes and activities that were involved in achieving gender equity and apply these learnings to other inclusive sourcing initiatives. For example, KUOW has the opportunity to more intentionally include perspectives of nonbinary and trans-identifying individuals. [According to a 2015 Gallup survey](#), 4.8% of Seattle's population identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. While that figure isn't an exact benchmark for nonbinary and trans-identifying individuals, it does provide helpful context.



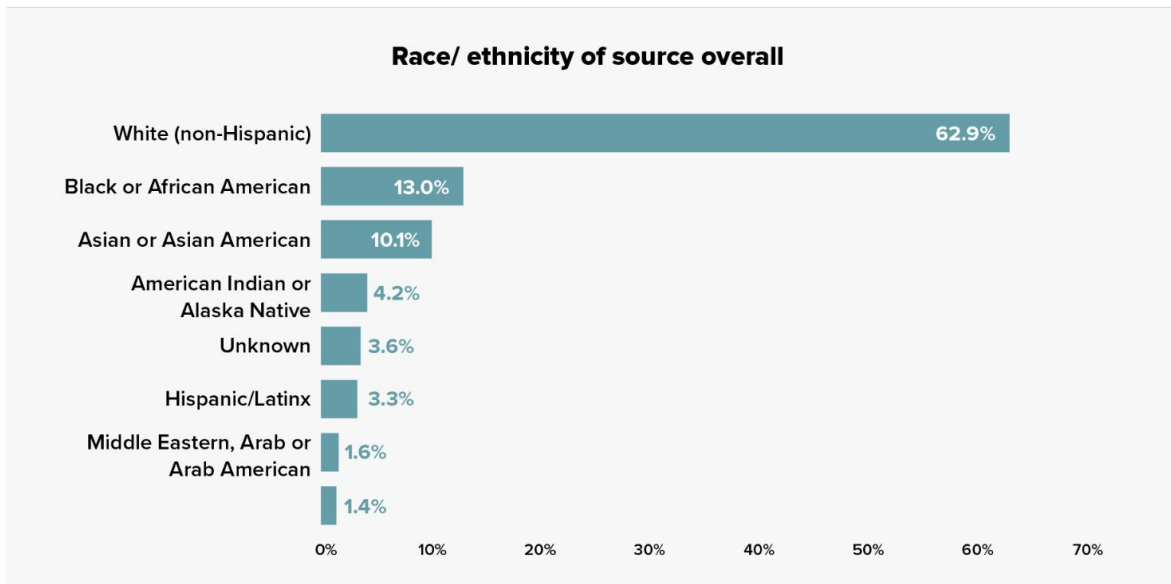
### ***Amplifying Black and Native Voices***

KUOW has a high representation of Black sources when compared to population estimates. Across the six programming areas, the percentage of Black sources for KUOW is 13.8%, and, according to 2019 data, 7.3% of Seattle's population is Black, while it's 7% for King County and 4.4% for Washington State.

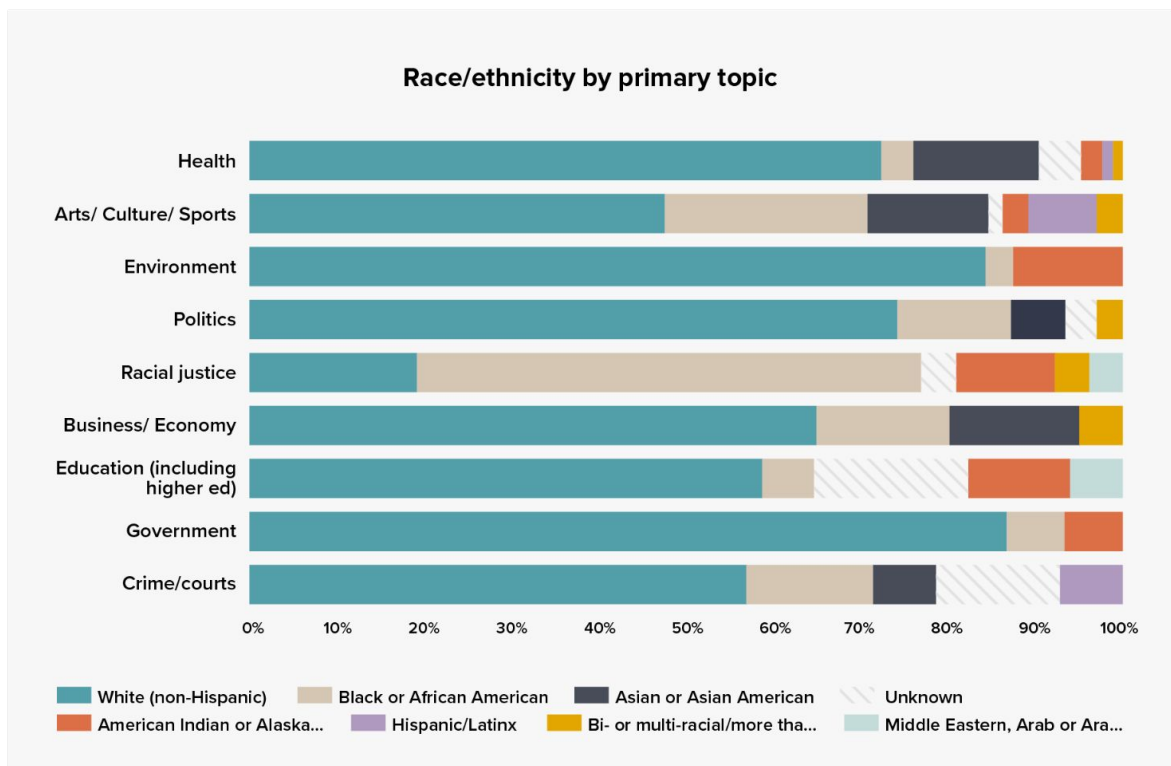
### **Race and ethnicity in Washington State, King County, and Seattle**

| Region       | White alone | Black | American Indian | Asian | Native Hawaiian or PI | Two or more | Hispanic/Latino |
|--------------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Washington   | 78.5%       | 4.4%  | 1.9%            | 9.6%  | 0.8%                  | 4.9%        | 13.0%           |
| King Country | 66.2%       | 7.0%  | 1.0%            | 19.7% | 0.8%                  | 5.2%        | 9.9%            |
| Seattle      | 67.3%       | 7.3%  | 0.5%            | 15.4% | 0.3%                  | 6.9%        | 6.7%            |

*SOURCE: United States Census Bureau*



When race/ethnicity is examined by primary topic, it shows that Black sources are predominantly found in arts/culture/sports (23.4%) and racial justice (57.7%, with two-thirds of Black sources included in one of these two topic areas). The presence of racial justice stories and subsequent representation of Black sources in those stories might explain why the percentage of Black sources is higher than population estimates. The relatively high representation of Black sources is a spotlight, but when seen through the lens of where the sources disproportionately appear, it can also be viewed as an opportunity to include Black perspectives and voices in other topic areas.





While the overall percentage is small, our sample shows KUOW's representation of Native voices exceeds current population estimates. We identified 4.7% of all sources as American Indian/Alaska Native, compared with the most recent American Indian/Alaska Native population estimates of 0.5% for Seattle, 1% for King County, and 1.9% for Washington State. Native sources were most likely to be community/advocacy group representatives (33.3%) or artists (16.7%) and were split 50/50 between men and women.

In general, KUOW under-indexes white voices (61.9%) compared to population estimates, which are 67.3% for Seattle, 66.2% for King County, and 78.5% for Washington State.

## Opportunities

There are clear opportunities in KUOW's inclusion of sources from diverse racial and/or ethnic backgrounds. The most notable discrepancy between population estimates and sourcing in our audit is found in the Hispanic/Latinx population. The proportion of KUOW sources who were Hispanic/Latinx amounted to 3.3%, whereas the population estimates are 6.7% for Seattle, 9.9% for King County, and 13% for Washington State.

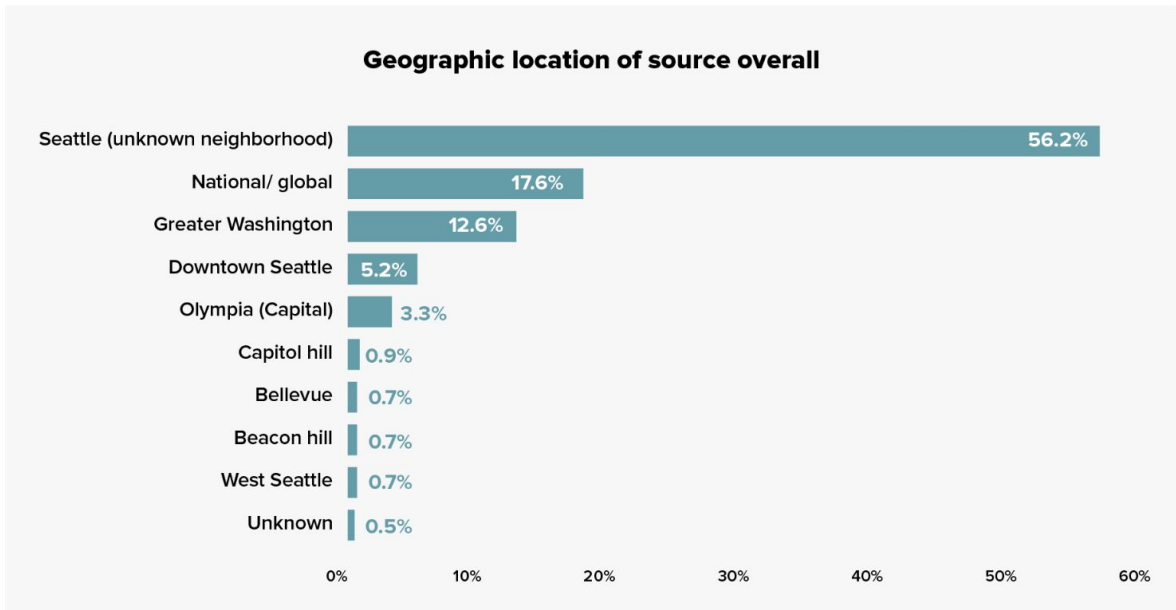
Additionally, there was an unequal distribution of Asian/Asian American sources across KUOW content, especially when benchmarked against population estimates. Asians comprise 10% of all sources, which roughly matches the population percentage for Washington State, but it is below that of Seattle and King County. Similar to the Hispanic/Latinx population, which is about six percentage points less in Seattle than it is in Washington State, there are differences among Seattle, King County, and Washington State regarding the proportion of sources identified as Asian. The percentages are 15.4% for Seattle, 19.7% for King County, and 9.6% for Washington State.

Only 3.2% of sources for News/Enterprise were identified as Asian/Asian American. Even accounting for the margin of error, the result is significantly lower than population estimates.

Another opportunity for KUOW to seek diverse perspectives and stories is with respect to the geographic location of sources. In collaboration with KUOW, we identified 23 geographic locations as options. Of those 23, 19 were geographic designations (neighborhoods) within King County, such as Bellevue, Federal Way, Capital Hill, Downtown, and Ballard. These 19 designations comprised just 11.3% of all records.

Three of the 18 locations included locations outside of Seattle: Olympia (for capital coverage), Greater Washington (for all other localities in Washington), and National/Global (outside of Washington). These three designations comprised 33.5% of all records, with National/Global having the highest percentage of sources (19.3%).

The highest percentage of sources, 52.5%, ended up in a category we created out of the need to minimize a high percentage of "unknown" records, "Seattle (unknown neighborhood)."

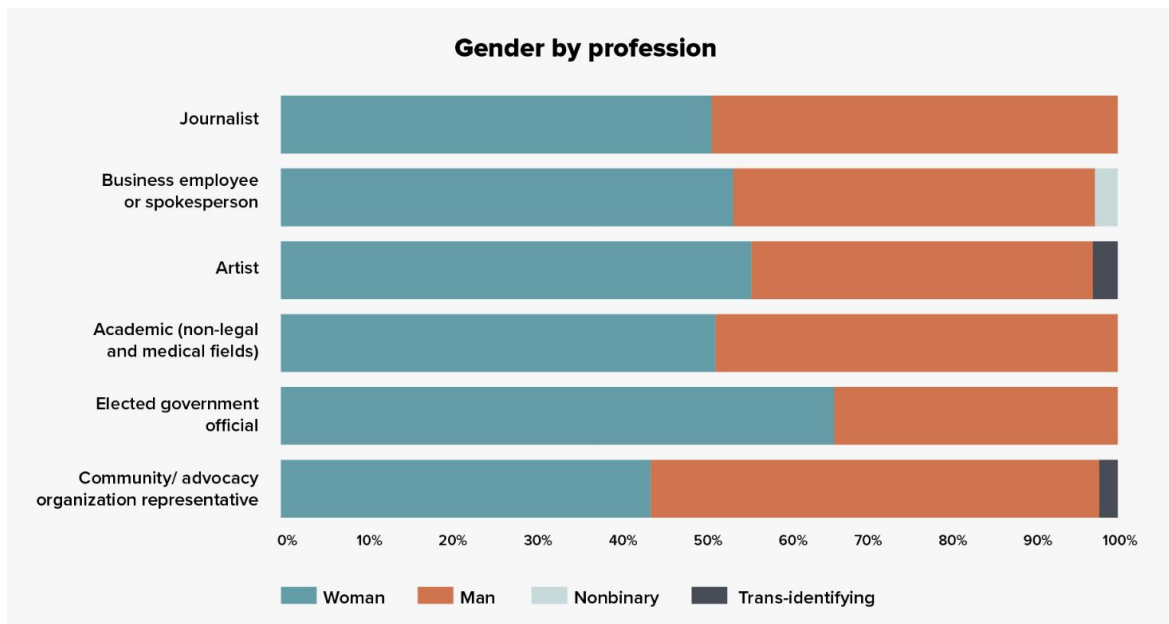


The opportunity here might be to either dig deeper into stories with a clear neighborhood hook or to be more intentional about identifying the Seattle neighborhood in KUOW stories.

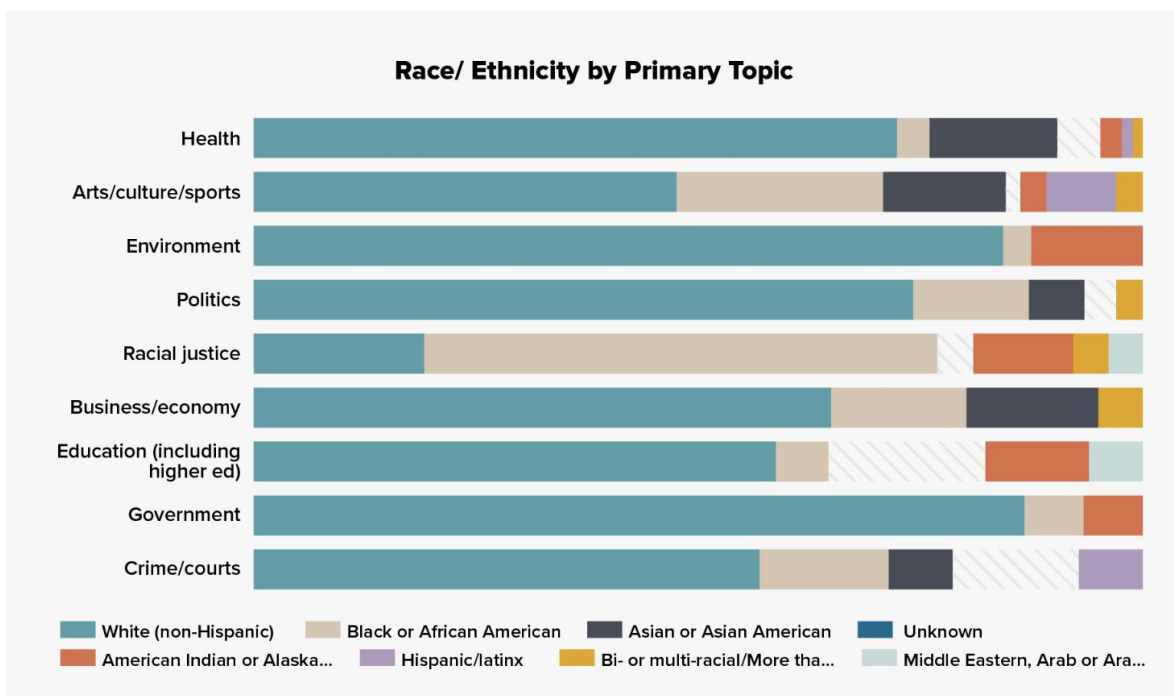
### Intersections

A core goal of this audit is to use the data to identify untold stories, and perhaps the most effective way to do that is to dig deep into how the demographic characteristics intersect to see what individuals' and communities' stories are currently missing from KUOW's coverage.

For instance, one of the most effective intersections to examine is race/ethnicity by gender. Because KUOW has a higher percentage of women sources than men, it's not surprising to discover that the breakdown shows more than 50% women for each race/ethnicity category with a significant number of records. Among Hispanic/Latinx sources, only 44.4% are men, and among Black sources, 47.9% are men. These figures should raise some questions about what stories might be missing from these populations.



Examining race/ethnicity together with profession can also identify potential storytelling directions. While most of the professions include a percentage of white sources that is similar to the overall breakdown — around 63% — a few emerge as having higher and lower percentages. On the high side are academics (79.3% white), elected government officials (84.1% white), and medical professionals (77.5% white). While these professions are similar in that they are associated with institutional power and authority and have historically been overwhelmingly white and male spaces, there are also significant differences.



Since there are only so many elected government officials to call upon, striving for more racial/ethnic diversity can only go so far. But that's not at all the case for academics or medical professionals as sources from these professions with diverse backgrounds are relatively easy to find and have incentive to speak with the media. NPR maintains a [Diverse Sources Database](#) with hundreds of experts from a variety of academic fields.

There are dozens of other ways to analyze source diversity data by examining intersecting traits. This type of analysis is one of the most productive ways for identifying what types of stories might be missing from KUOW's news production by asking who is missing or underrepresented from its population of sources.