

Group hopes to compare local racial, ethnic views

Conference for Community and Justice wants to see how area stacks against the national viewpoints.

By Cathy Mong
Staff Writer

DAYTON — The local office of the National Conference for Community and Justice hopes to compare the attitudes of Greater Dayton residents about racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and other social-class groups with those presented in the recently released NCCJ national survey, *Taking America's Pulse*.

Some data presented in TAP III (TAP I and TAP II were completed in 1993 and 2000, respectively) show that positive strides are being made in intergroup relations.

"We're real pleased this has been done," said Pat Meadows, executive director of the NCCJ office at 32 N. Main St. "We're beginning to put together a plan to put the results before various groups and government leaders and to create some forums ourselves."

Taking the nation's pulse

Some findings from *Taking America's Pulse III*:

Percentage of respondents who say the following groups are the most discriminated against:

Gays and lesbians	41 percent
Muslims	35 percent
The poor	29 percent
Blacks	26 percent

Percentage of people who feel the most unfamiliar with:

Muslims	32 percent
Atheists	26 percent
Fundamentalist Christians	26 percent
Jews	17 percent

About immigration

76 percent believe immigrants suffer some discrimination.

44 percent favor reducing the number of immigrants.

38 percent favor holding the number at its current level.

58 percent believe immigrants are good for the economy.

46 percent believe immigrants take jobs away from American-born citizens.

78 percent agree immigrants make America more open to new ideas and cultures.

54 percent think it's better if these groups adapt and blend into society.

Source: *Taking America's Pulse III*, a phone survey of 2,558 people conducted between Jan. 13 and March 30, 2005.

The organization, formerly known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, was founded in 1927 to fight bias, bigotry and racism in America. The Dayton office is one of 17 nationwide.

Most data are taken from the TAP III survey on Intergroup Relations, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Intergroup Relations conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the NCCJ.

The survey was a phone sample of 2,558 people conducted between Jan. 13 and March 30, 2005. The report was written by Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The margin of variance is about plus or minus 4 percentage points for the cross-sectional sample.

Regional variation exists, with Midwesterners feeling closest to whites and furthest from Jews, Hispanics, Muslims, atheists, gays and lesbians, immigrants and the poor.

The Midwest and Southerners believe equally that atheists have too much influence in society.

Midwesterners tend to be the most optimistic on job promotions, media coverage and health

care issues. Gay rights are most supported in the Northeast followed by the West, Midwest and then the South.

The survey also dealt with reported and perceived discrimination, Meadows said.

Blacks reported the most discrimination, followed by Asians, Hispanics and whites, according to the study.

The study also gauged which groups get along, with whites and Asians reporting the most positive relationships (79 percent and 92 percent respectively). When assessing which groups are least positive about their relationships, blacks and Asians rank each other last (55 percent and 70 percent respectively).

Yet blacks perceive the best relations with Hispanics at 75 percent, while Hispanics rated relations with blacks third at 58 percent, above Asians at 52 percent. For Hispanics, getting along with whites was perceived as the most positive at 69 percent, but whites ranked Hispanics last at 71 percent.

Blacks have the most negative view of intergroup relations, seeing relatively high conflict and tension, much discrimination,

few opportunities and a lack of influence by minority groups.

The study reveals a hopefulness in reporting higher numbers of interracial and inter-ethnic contact — experiences with workplace or social interaction — than was reported in TAP II.

► Reported contact by non-blacks with blacks increased from 67 percent in 2000 to 83 percent;

► Contact by non-Hispanics with Hispanics increased from 51 percent to 75 percent;

► Contact by non-Asians to Asians rose from 49 percent to 56 percent.

"The more we're in touch with each other, the more it leads to better relations," Meadows said. That is not always easy in a city such as Dayton that is historically segregated.

"In cities, regardless of socio-economics, if it's integrated, it is better. As soon as there are tensions, it quickly rises to a racial issue. It tells us the feelings are right under the surface."

Meadows asks anyone who is interested in working with her to present the report's findings, or to be part of a discussion about TAP III, should call her at (937) 222-6225.