



COMMUNITY  
MEETS  
GOVERNANCE

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# CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

**Location:** Asians Americans Advancing Justice

**Date:** October 26, 2024

**Steering Committee**

**Co-Facilitator:** Mark Anthony  
Florida, Paul M. Angell Family  
Foundation

## **Chicago United for Equity /Office of Equity and Racial Justice Co-Facilitators:**

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## **Documentarians:**

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**Language:** English, Urdu



# Table of Contents

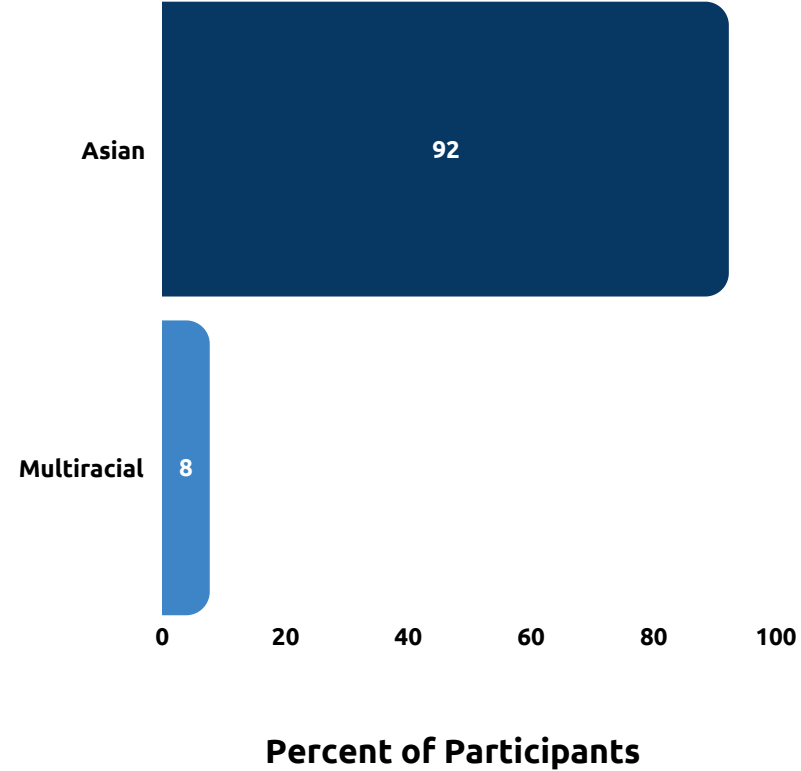
Demographics	01
Objective and Key Takeaways	04
Conversation Highlights	05
Understanding Your Experience	06
How Do You Define Co-Governance?	09

# Demographics

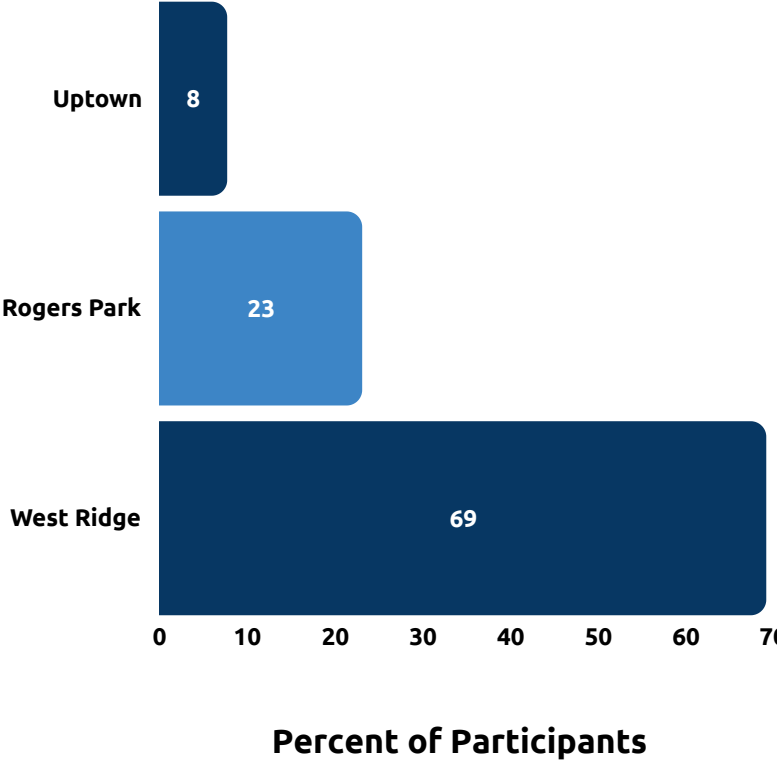
## Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 14

### Race/Ethnicity



### Neighborhoods

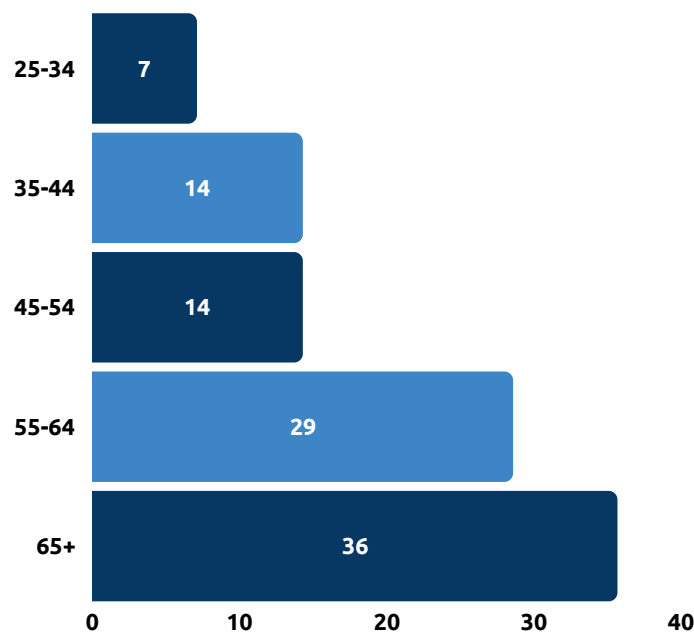


# Demographics

## Participant Demographics

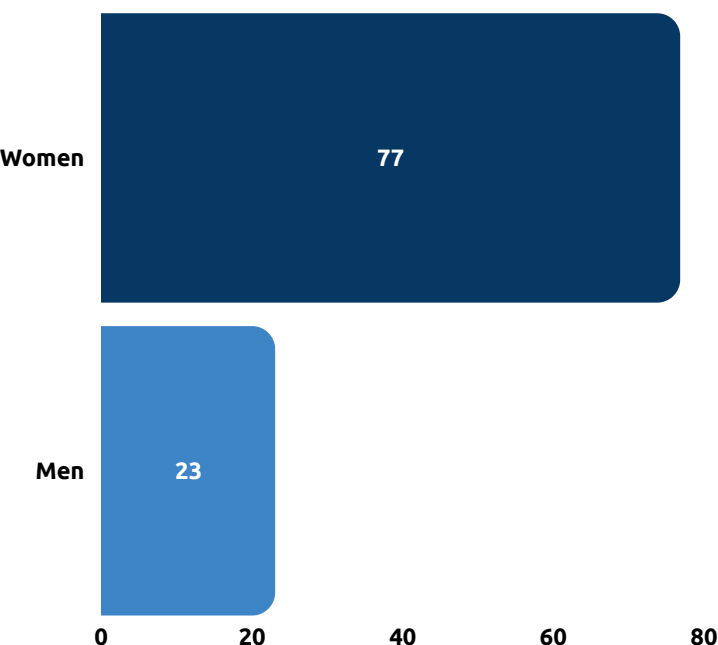
Total Number of Participants:14

Age



Percent of Participants

Gender Identity



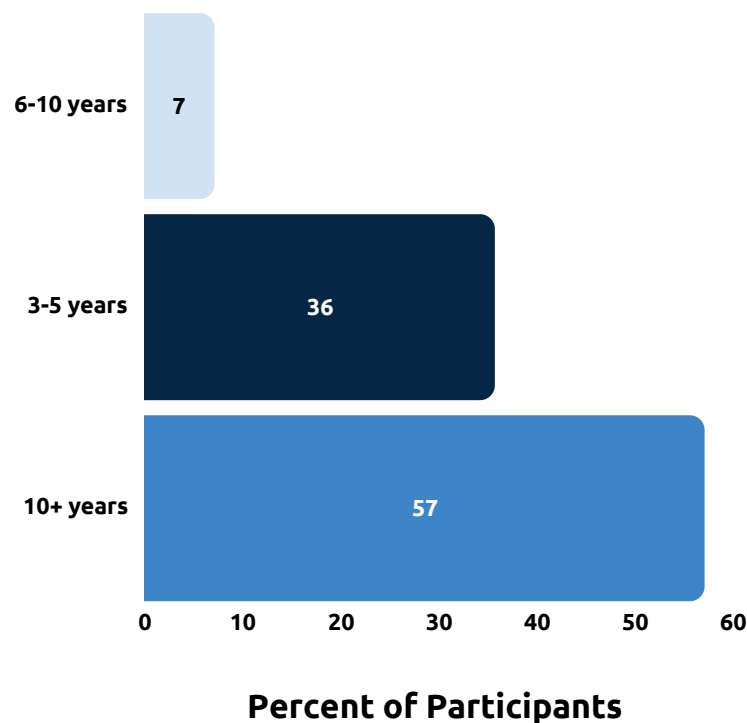
Percent of Participants

# Demographics

## Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants:14

### How long have you lived in Chicago?



# Overview

The Office of Equity & Racial Justice (OERJ), Chicago United for Equity (CUE), and Chicago's Co-governance Steering Committee guided community members through a conversation to create a shared definition of co-governance that prioritizes equitable partnerships and decision-making between government and community.

## Objectives

- Provide insights on current experiences with city government—highlighting both successes and challenges.
- Imagine what co-governance could look like in practice, focusing on equity, transparency, and inclusivity.

## Key Takeaways

- Regular government visits to community centers — such as holding monthly office hours on the first Saturday to facilitate open forums and surveys — can be a way to leverage existing community structures and spaces to reduce formal barriers.
- Language translation services and adequate resources in alderpersons' offices are a barrier. Consistent and standardized practices are needed to ensure equitable communication and access for all residents.
- In-person forms, such as town halls, voting opportunities, and collaborative spaces, can bridge the gap by allowing the government to understand and address the community's most pressing concerns.

# Conversation Highlights

- "I live in Devon, and our alderman does not seem to care about the community. We face a significant issue with cleanliness—garbage cans have been removed from bus stops, and our alleys are not properly maintained. Additionally, the City fails to clear snow, which has led to an increase in falls and fractures."
- "I have not engaged with the government because I don't know how to get involved. However, my community is facing significant challenges, including long wait times for public transportation, health insurance issues, and barriers to language access."
- "I have never had any experience interacting with the Chicago government. As an immigrant, I am unable to vote and feel I have limited influence. However, if given the opportunity, I would like to actively participate and learn more about the process."





# Understanding Your Experience



Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences engaging with the City of Chicago, rating experiences as "Difficult," "Neutral," "Excellent," or "No Government Engagement."

## Engagement Activity Results

3

"Difficult" ratings

1

"Excellent" ratings

2

"Neutral" ratings

8

"No engagement" ratings

The majority of participants had limited or no prior engagement with the City of Chicago. Many cited challenges due to unresponsive systems and a lack of accessibility.

## Reflections

*Documentarians translated the following reflections into English:*

- The Department of Streets and Sanitation left streets unclean and perpetuated negative stereotypes that certain communities are dirty. Despite bringing the issue to their alderwoman, no action was taken.

# Understanding Your Experience

## Reflections

- Language barriers are a major obstacle, particularly for immigrant communities. More events with language support could help amplify their voices.
- A participant who has a disability shared an experience on a CTA bus where they were mistreated by the driver, resulting in police involvement. Although the CTA addressed their complaint, the participant emphasized the importance of providing staff with training in compassion and cultural sensitivity to better support diverse community needs.
- There is a lack of government outreach in our communities; more accessible, informal interactions with representatives at community centers could improve engagement.
- There is insufficient focus on immigrant and undocumented communities, particularly regarding medical issues. One participant shared that their insurance was revoked despite being a taxpayer and a legal resident.
- Bus services in the Devon area are bad. There is no regularity, and bus frequencies are not good. The city needs to do something about it.

# Understanding Your Experience

## Reflections

*Participants also shared the following reflections in their participant handouts:*

- **No Engagement:** I have not engaged with the government because I don't know how to get involved. However, my community is facing significant challenges, including long wait times for public transportation, health insurance issues, and barriers to language access.
- **Neutral:** Alderman contact information is accessible, but the details provided on their websites vary significantly. Same-day voter registration was an excellent and accessible experience. However, attending meetings during the day is challenging due to work and family responsibilities.
- **Difficult:** I am an immigrant and have held my green card for the past three years. Despite being a taxpayer, my income is currently zero, and my health insurance ended in April 2024. I went to Cook County for assistance and waited for 5-6 hours, but at 72 years old, I found it extremely uncomfortable to stand or sit for such a long time. Unfortunately, my issue was not resolved.
- **Difficult:** I moved to Chicago in 2007 from Pakistan seeking safety and security. However, I now see similar problems here. Why is there so much crime, and what actions is the government taking to address and reduce it?

# How Do You Define Co-Governance?



**Facilitators shared three definitions of co-governance and asked participants to underline or verbally share phrases they would like to see reflected in Chicago's definition of co-governance.**

## Engagement Activity Results

**Six participants highlighted the entirety of the definition from Partners for Dignity and Human Rights.**



- Government and communities work together through formal and informal structures to make collective policy decisions, co-create programs to meet community needs, and ensure those policies and programs are implemented effectively.” (Partners for Dignity & Rights)
- Co-governance is a strategy centered around sharing economic power.
- Government is actively working with communities to design and implement policies.
- Community members aren't only asked for their input, but are at the decision-making table.
- Center people who are most harmed by structural racism.
- Economic and political power
- Correct disparities among racial, economic, gender, and other groups.
- Design and implement policies
- Structural racism
- Inequality
- Racism of any type

# How Do You Define Co-Governance?

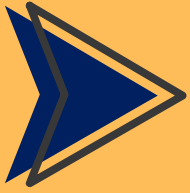


**Facilitators asked participants what they thought would be an effective pathway to co-governance:**

*Documentarians translated the following reflections into English:*

- They should consider our side as well, not just their own. They have a duty and responsibility to listen to residents.
- Provide a proper platform for the community so that when there are questions or issues that need to be addressed, they can be solved through in-person interaction—similar to what we are doing today.
- Hold town hall meetings for each neighborhood. These meetings would allow residents to hear what the City has to say and also provide an opportunity for the City to listen to residents.
- Town hall meetings are helpful because they enable a two-way conversation where government agencies truly listen to residents.
- Community centers, which already offer many activities during the summer, are ideal spaces for government officials to engage with residents. For example, government officials could hold office hours at places like the Indo-American Center on Devon Avenue.
- Government officials could bring surveys to gather feedback, ask open-ended questions, and address community concerns.
- Language should not be a barrier. People often don't attend events because they worry about their English skills.
- Officials should make the effort to stop by for as little as half an hour. A simple "Hi, I'm your representative, do you have any questions?" would make engagement less intimidating and more accessible.
- Community centers should work hand in hand with residents to bridge communication gaps.

# How Do You Define Co-Governance?



**Facilitators asked participants what they thought would be an effective pathway to co-governance:**

- Community centers should work hand in hand with residents to bridge communication gaps.
- “I have never been part of the decision-making process.” “But do you want to be?” “Yes.”
- Provide participatory budgeting opportunities—such as asking residents, “If you had \$50,000 to spend, what would you prioritize?” Government representatives could present budget ideas and gather input from the community.
- Medical insurance is a major issue in the community, particularly for non-immigrants and undocumented residents. For example, one resident, a legal resident whose insurance was stopped, has serious heart issues. He pays taxes but has no way to address his medical bills. The government needs to listen to these concerns and find solutions.
- There is a lack of outreach from our alderperson that engages residents and identifies their needs. Conversations like this one today would be incredibly helpful.
- Residents need to be connected to resources and have clarity on how to access them. For example, if someone is having tenant issues, they should know where to go and how to get support.

