



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Date: November 20, 2024

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Language:

English



Table of Contents

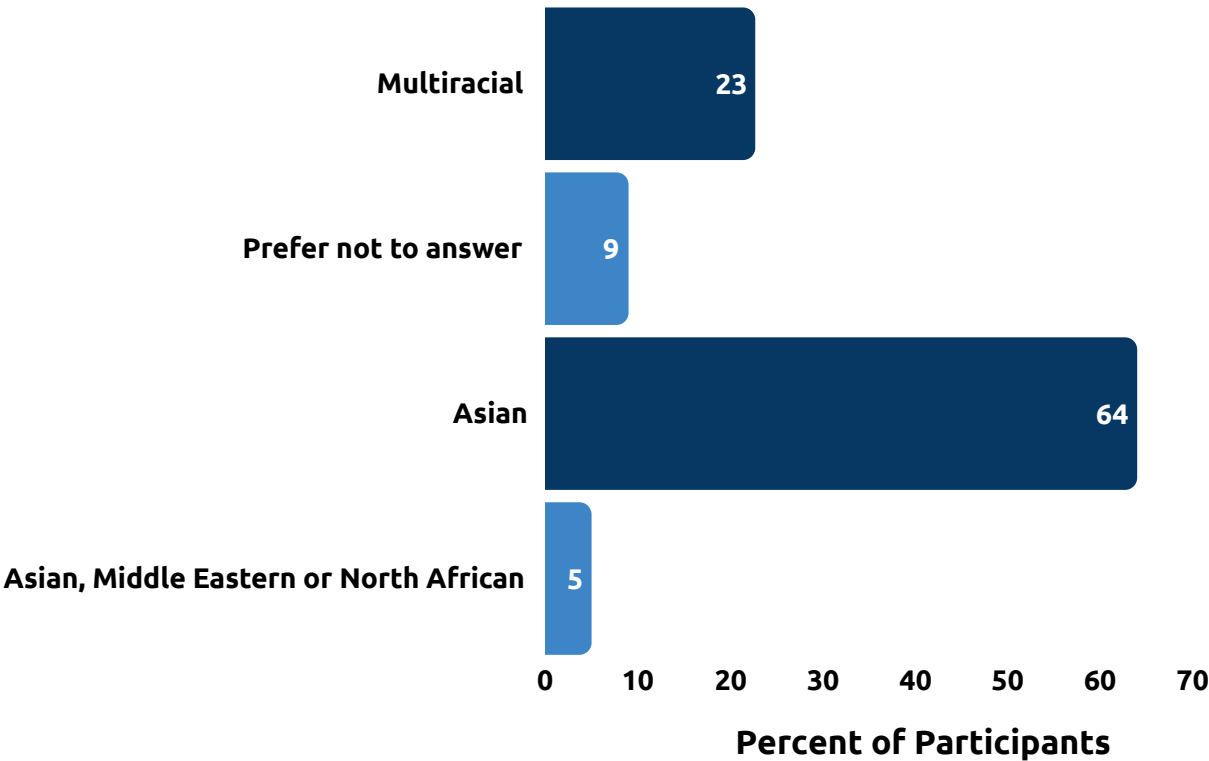
Demographics	_____	01
Objective and Key Takeaways	_____	05
Conversation Highlights	_____	06
Understanding Your Experience	_____	07
How Do You Define Co-Governance?	_____	11

Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 22

Race/Ethnicity

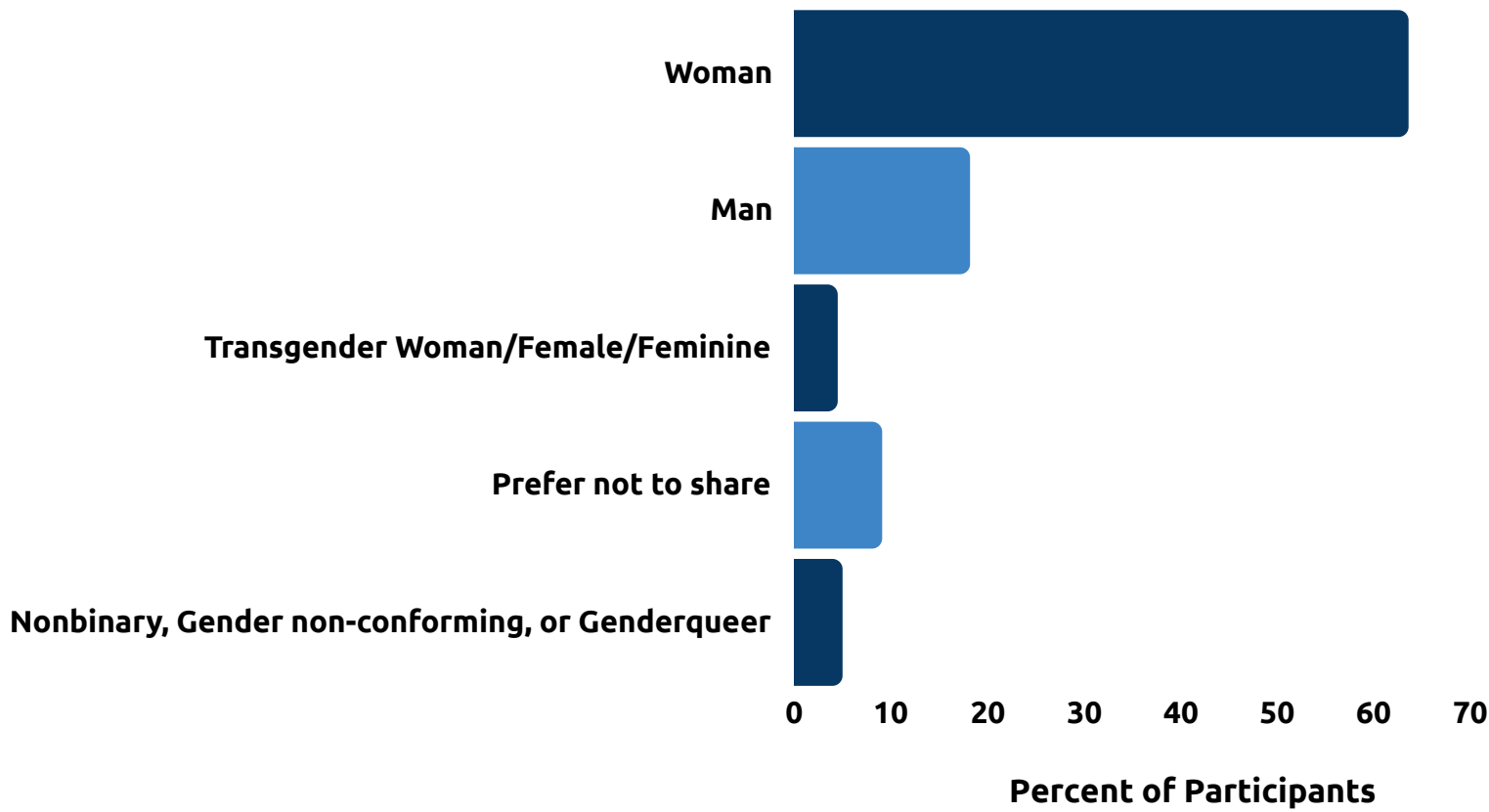


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 22

Gender Identity

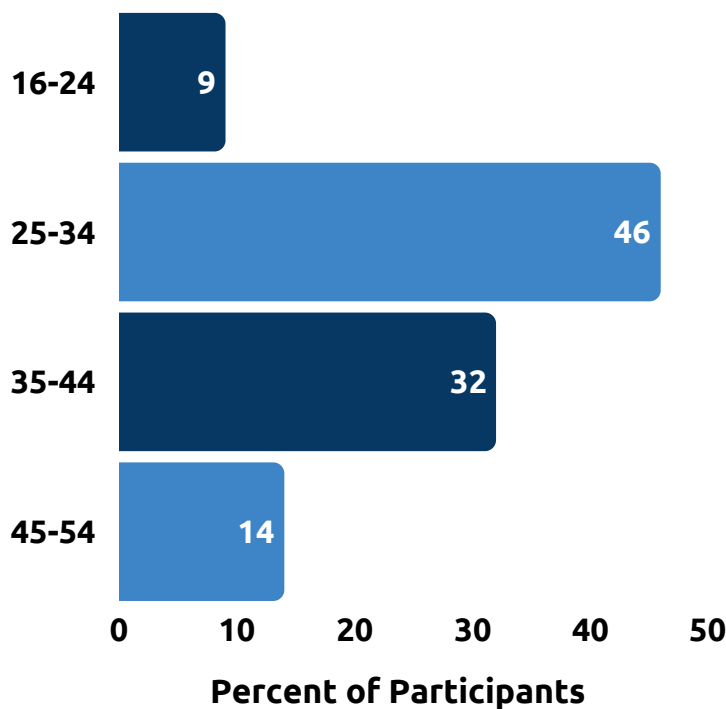


Demographics

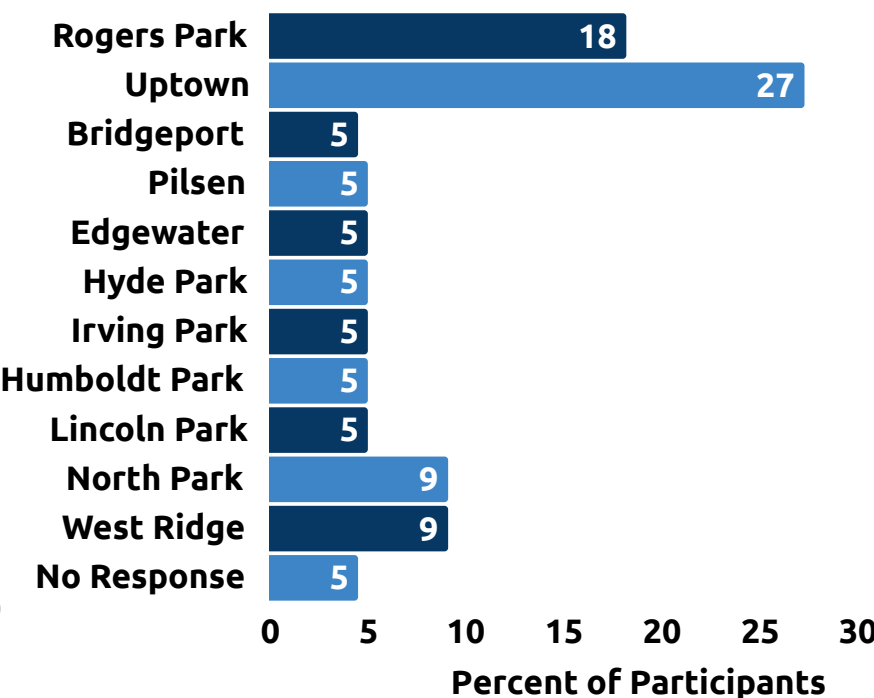
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 22

Age



Neighborhoods

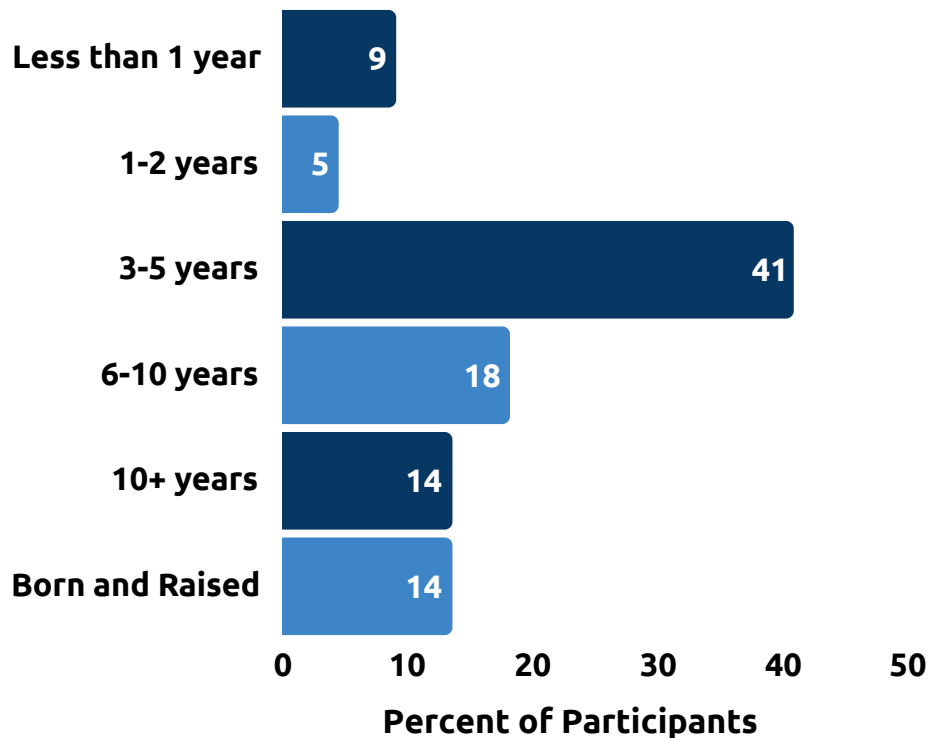


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 22

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.

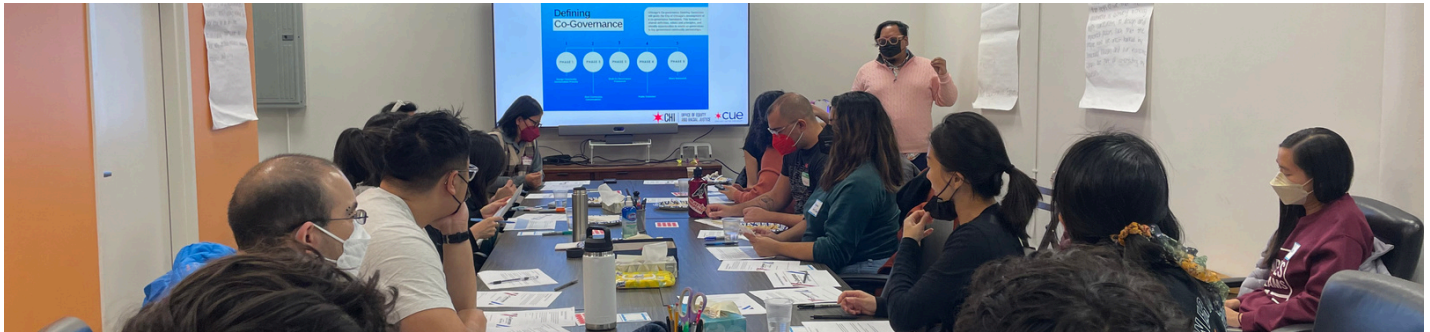
Objectives

- 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

- Decisions should be made alongside community members, not just by city officials sitting behind closed doors.
- The Government should follow up on promises made, especially regarding community needs and City services.
- Participants want to see more proactive engagement with the government, particularly through clearer communication and transparent decision-making processes.

Conversation Highlights



- "The decision-makers should reflect the community, and residents should be able to make decisions directly instead of delegates."
- "There needs to be a focus on dismantling racist processes in how decisions are made."
- "Communication is key, and there needs to be side-by-side work with decision-makers."

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

6

"Difficult" ratings: Shared experiences with inequitable distribution of resources, racism, and poor response times from city services. There were also frustrations with the complexity in navigating the system, including difficulty with engaging city departments.

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"Neutral" ratings: Reported limited success was achieved through follow-up. They still faced barriers, such as poor communication and lack of accessible services.

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"Excellent" ratings: Described a positive experience with local outreach efforts and personal relationships with community organizers who helped navigate the city processes.

4

"No Engagement" ratings: Shared that they either avoided government engagement due to disillusionment or faced barriers such as a lack of knowledge or discomfort in engaging with government structures.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Difficult: City government feels convoluted and extremely challenging, unwilling to help.
- Difficult: The city wants my money, but when I want help, it's a whole different story.
- Neutral: It's easy to pay a parking ticket, but when it comes to public comment or getting my voice heard, it's a different experience.
- Excellent: The staff at the ward office was helpful and took time to address my concerns. I felt heard.
- No Government Engagement: There is no open-door process, and no follow-up, which makes me avoid engaging with the government.
- Neutral: I typically receive a response from their ward office when emailing, but at times, there is no response. While I can draft an email, others in their community are reluctant to put in the effort to share their opinions. "It would be nice to have an easier way to show support or opposition for a cause."
- Difficult: City services operate differently: "When it comes to fines, it seems really efficient, but when it comes to going to City Council or City Hall, we're shuffling between departments. Some processes feel really efficient, but without being plugged into an organization, I wouldn't have known how to make a public comment."
- Difficult: "We were involved in mutual aid groups for the migrant crisis, but then the city made an announcement out of left field, and we had no idea it was coming. It felt hard to work with the city because we had been working with them on this issue but were blindsided by the decision."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Excellent: I visited their ward office with concerns about biking routes. I appreciated the staff's willingness to help and walk through possible plans. "I was able to do that because my work starts late enough, but I recognize that not everyone has that privilege."
 - "That feels very individual, that one staff member helped me. How can we zoom out and think about how that could be institutionalized in the system?"
- Emailing to the ether... Email is easy, but does it go anywhere or do anything? Is there an easier way to put our opinions into something?"
- The City could provide a pre-written survey on its website, asking if people support or oppose current initiatives. "It's way easier to get people to engage when it's one button versus writing out a whole email where they don't know enough to draft a whole paragraph."
- A citywide survey that lets people prioritize the top 10 things they want their taxpayer dollars to go toward would be interesting to see how the community would allocate the resources."
- The City could post plans on the website and have community conversations where these plans are presented. "The one-on-one meeting worked well for me, but I don't know what a better way of doing that would be."
- How do you ensure that Asian American issues remain at the forefront when people are making decisions at the City?"
 - "At my school, not many kids' issues are out there, we just want problems fixed."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- After a survey, the results should be shared. "This is what the majority of people want to see. They should be transparent about the budget and how they're working it out."
- What would it look like to engage proactively with the government in creating new programming or policies? We want to bake the cake with you, not just react to an already established budget."
- "I would love to see my employer let me dedicate an hour a day to speak to the government. But thinking about parents and caregivers, where's the time to do this?"
- Hosting government events in places where people already are, like farmers' markets, where they feel more comfortable. "Having it in spaces where people are comfortable, like kids playing on the playground, is the ideal time for people to engage in the decision-making process."
- New residents should be given resources from the start, making it easier to access city services. "There was a week where people kept finding poisoned birds and rats in the neighborhood, and somehow the alderwoman saw that quickly. It would be great if there was a streamlined way for everyone to get resources."

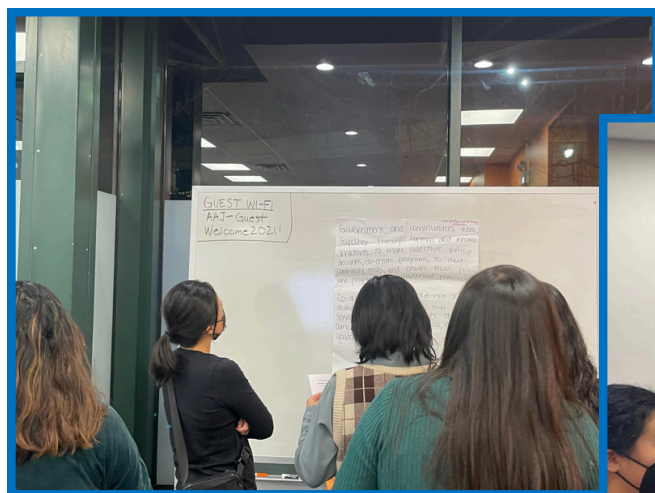
How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

Co-governance is a strategy centered around sharing economic and political power to ensure that the government works with communities to create policies that address the needs of those harmed by structural racism and our economic system



How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

Reflections

- Co-governance must ensure that decisions are made with accountability, especially to the communities most impacted by these decisions.
- There needs to be a focus on dismantling racist processes in how decisions are made.
- Co-governance must involve community involvement and the co-creation of policies and solutions.
- Communication is key, and there needs to be side-by-side work with decision-makers.
- The outcomes of co-governance should always prioritize equitable solutions for the community.
- More transparency and a proactive approach, particularly around policy formation and resource allocation.
- What if part of the budget was decided by the community, like a People's Budget?"
- Community-driven conversations are crucial to making policies that actually benefit the residents.
- A percentage of the budget, such as 15%, should be approved by community members to ensure real power-sharing and avoid empty promises.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

Reflections

- A "People's Budget" makes co-governance a tangible reality, where community members have a say in how public funds are allocated.
- Progress should be shared in different wards or with various organizations. Engagement should be an ongoing process to keep people feeling involved.
- The City should always be responsible for correcting harmful policies or services. This responsibility should be at the core of any policy-making process.
- Make civic engagement more accessible by going into communities where people already are, rather than expecting them to come to city-run events. Outreach should be a central part of co-governance.
- Co-governance should allow community members to have real influence over decisions.
- The CTA's decision about the Pink Line was left to children; similar processes should be applied to meaningful decisions that affect adults in the city.
- The government needs to demonstrate that it truly cares about the people, not just the donors or lobbyists. Show that people's voices are being genuinely heard.
- The City hosts alternative spaces to create solutions while ignoring existing community solutions. "If these solutions exist, what's wrong with them?"
- If the city had more diverse representation—across economic, racial, and gender lines—there might be a solution that works for everyone.
- Education about local government, especially regarding how to engage with it meaningfully.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

Reflections

- Many members of the community are not involved in the decision-making process and need education on how to engage meaningfully. The City needs to host more town halls, conduct broader outreach to people, and listen to people's responses seriously
- Allow people to propose bills or ideas for policy changes without needing to be an alderperson. Community members should have the ability to create change outside of elected positions.
- Co-governance work should be integrated into people's daily lives (e.g., flexible times for civic engagement that would accommodate both employed and unemployed individuals as well as students.)
- Integrating civic engagement into places where people spend their time (e.g., community events or markets) would increase participation and make it more accessible.
- The decision-makers should reflect the community, and residents should be able to make decisions directly instead of delegates.
- The community should have a mechanism to conduct checks and balances on government actions.
- Participatory budgeting and decision-making on community projects should reflect real-time needs and community involvement.
- Emergency response systems should be at the forefront of co-governance to ensure better resources for the most vulnerable communities.
- Everyone should have the basic stability they need to live and invest in their community. Addressing housing costs is crucial, as the lack of affordable housing prevents people from investing in their communities.

