



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

2
0
2
4

CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Equiticity

Date: November 23, 2024

Steering Committee Co-Facilitator:
Jose Manuel Almanza, Equiticity

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

Rachel Pate, Chicago United for Equity
Cynthia Avila, Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice

Documentarians:

Claudia Guzman
Elizabeth Lopez

Language:

Spanish



Table of Contents

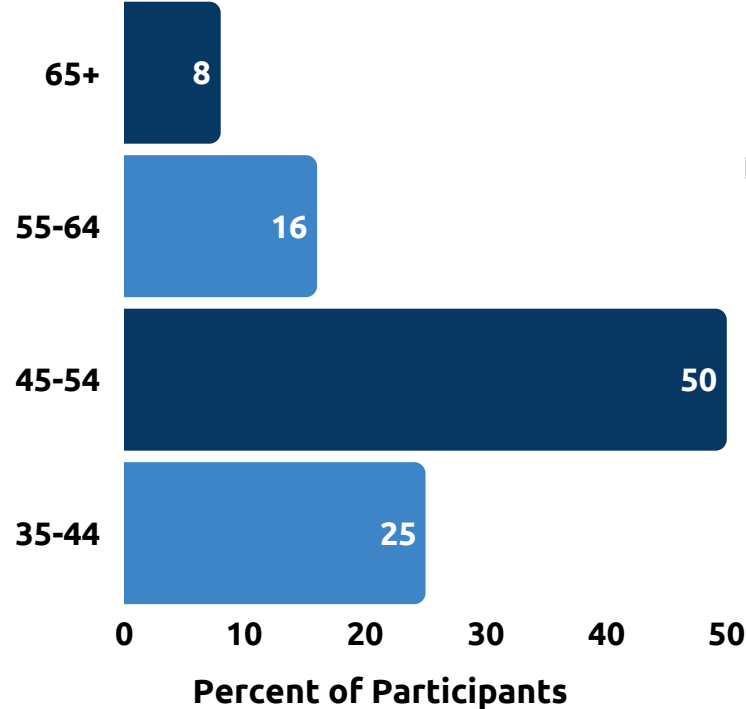
Demographics	_____	01
Objective and Key Takeaways	_____	04
Conversation Highlights	_____	05
Understanding Your Experience	_____	06
How Do You Define Co-Governance?	_____	07

Demographics

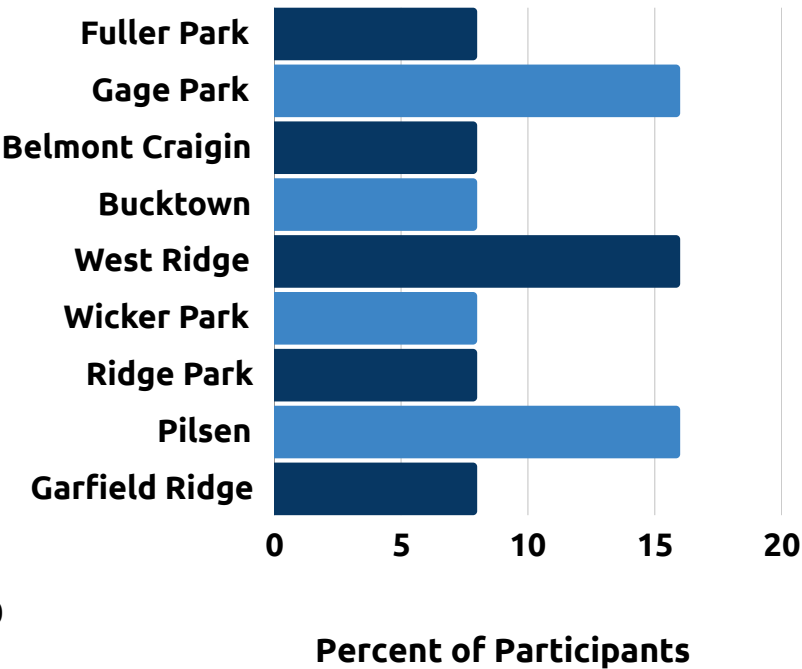
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 12

Age



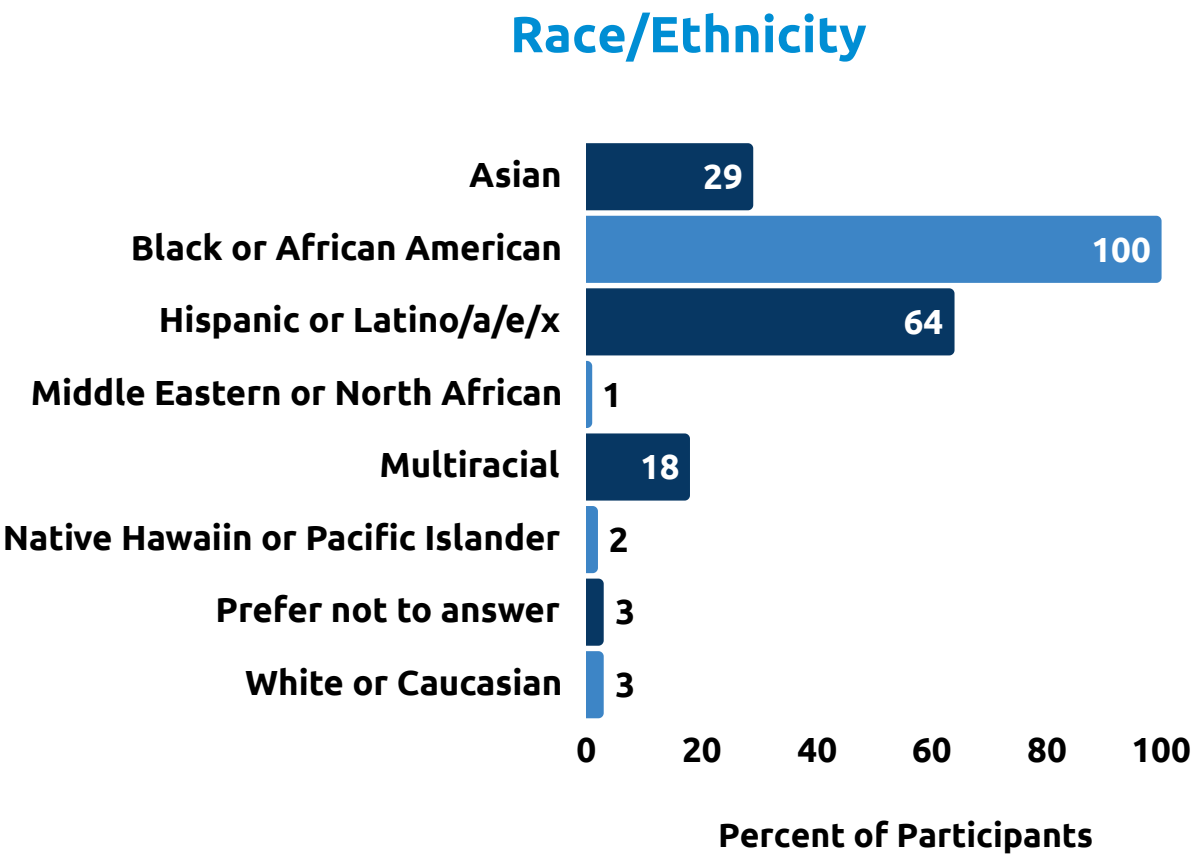
Neighborhoods



Demographics

Participant Demographics

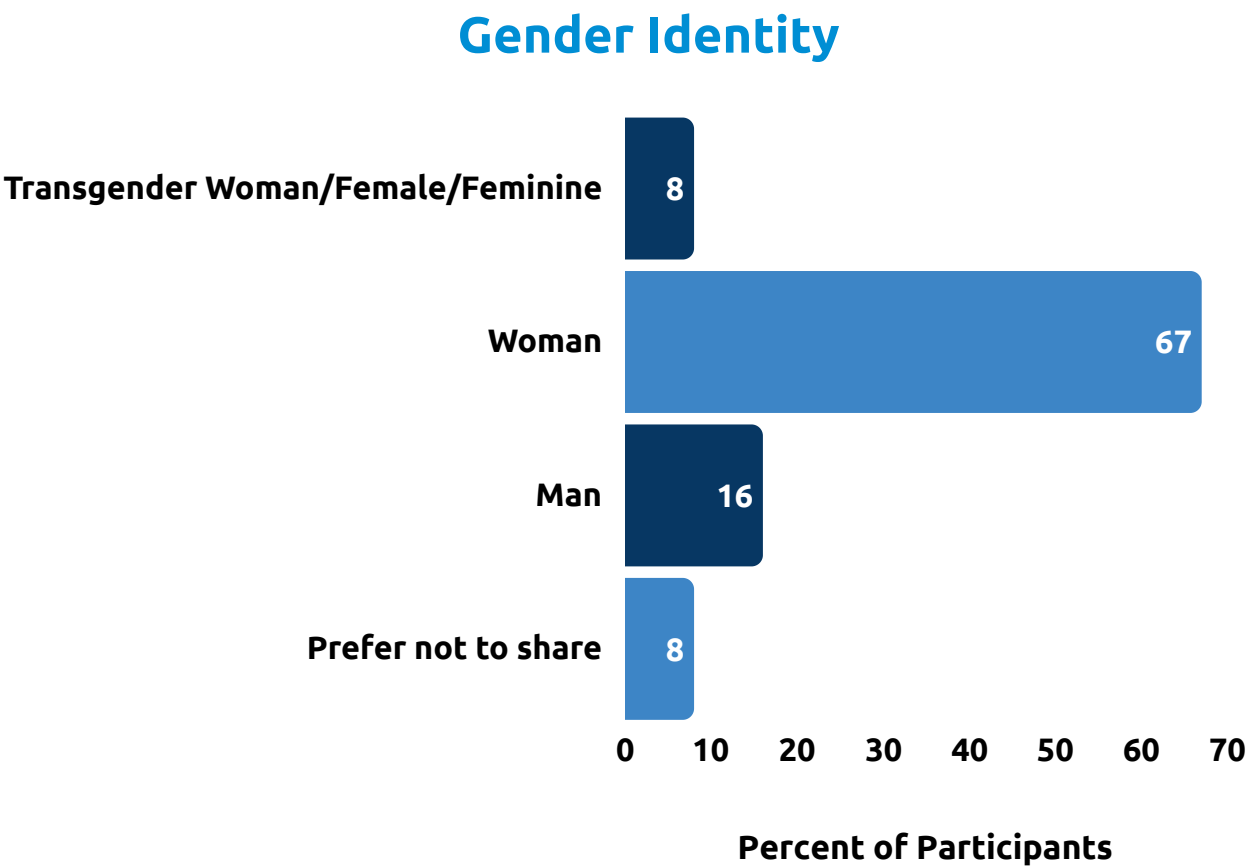
Total Number of Participants: 12



Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 12

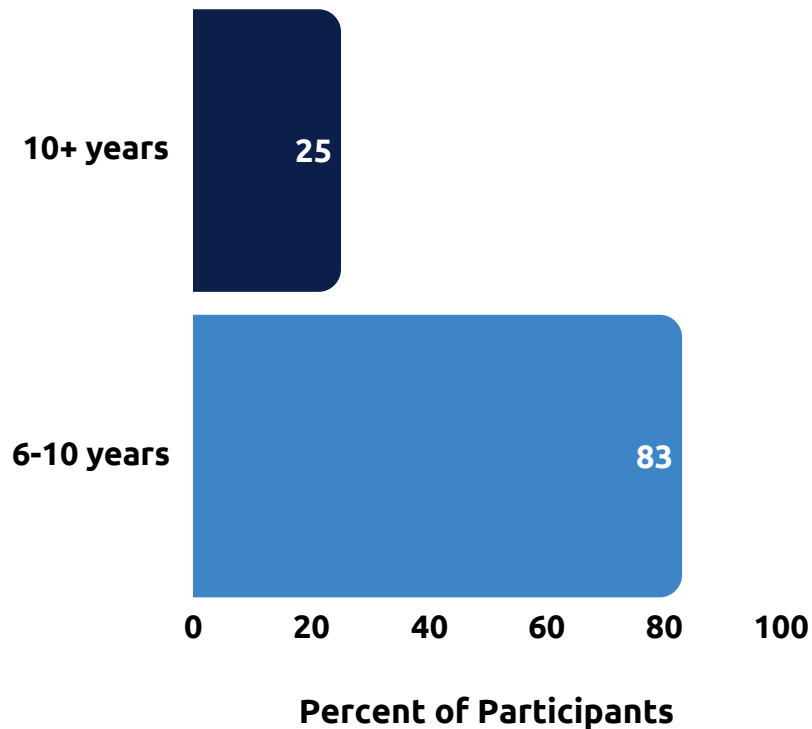


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 12

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

- Issues with unresponsive systems, disrespectful treatment by officials, and dismissive attitudes from leadership are systemic barriers to effective engagement with the City of Chicago.
- Smaller, more intimate public events and open dialogue spaces ensure all voices, especially marginalized ones, are heard and valued in city decision-making processes.
- The bias of law enforcement, inconsistent follow-ups, and lack of accountability in city services underscore the importance of addressing inequities to build trust and engagement within communities.

Conversation Highlights

- This City is not the same as it was 43 years ago. If the city is investing in this focus group, then we know they want to change this. This is a good place to start.”
- “Equity should be a central theme in co-governance but needs to be clearly defined, so that community members understand which groups are included and what it really means beyond a buzzword.”
- Community members should not just sit next to decision-makers but actually be the ones making decisions. Current meetings feel like a one-way channel where complaints are heard but not acted upon.



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

11

"Difficult" ratings: Reported frequent challenges with disrespectful treatment by officials, unresponsive systems, and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

2

"Neutral" ratings: Noted mixed experiences, with limited success navigating city resources or observing improvements through their own efforts.

1

"Excellent" ratings: Reflected on a positive experience at a large public event, though they noted areas for improvement in safety management and attendee behavior.

1

"No Engagement" ratings: Expressed skepticism about being heard due to their youth, leading to disengagement from city processes.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Difficult: "I don't think input will change anything."
- Difficult: "What's the point of making a report? We wanted camera footage from the gym, and they never went to check."
- Difficult: "I had people drugging and drinking outside my alley, and I would call 911, 311, the alder, and no one would help. But if I leave my car for 5 minutes, I get a ticket."
- Difficult: "I was a victim of housing fraud. The person I paid was not the landlord. I filed a report and never got a follow-up."
- Difficult: "Cop stopped me to look inside my purse because he was looking for someone who looked like me."
- Difficult: "Cops don't stop people who look like criminals because they are scared of them."
- Difficult: "Public servants need more empathy and to be more courteous. Every time we interact, we should be able to call a number to report how they are treating us."
- Difficult: "Employees in the medical realm are rude. They need to hear our experiences to resolve issues."
- Neutral: "Public events should be smaller, more intimate. Big group meetings don't capture all voices."
- Neutral: "We need people ticketing in the alleys just like the streets."
- Neutral: "This City is not the same as it was 43 years ago. If the city is investing in this focus group, then we know they want to change this. This is a good place to start."
- No Government Engagement: "I'm young, and they aren't going to want to listen to me."

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

- Trabajan juntos
- Involucrarse
- Co-operar
- Educarse
- Más grupos
- Estrategia
- Poder económico
- Justicia racial
- Comunidad
- Educación cívica
- Compromiso a participar
- Santuario de migrantes
- Tomar decisiones colectivas
- El poder económico y político
- La promoción, portavoz y ampliación
- Mesa de toma de decisiones

- Trabajando activamente con las comunidades
- Personas más perjudicadas por el racismo
- Nuestro sistema económico debe ser parte de la creación de soluciones
- Co-crear programas que satisfagan las necesidades de la comunidad
- Solicitados por su opinión Diseñada en torno a procesos equitativos
- Resultados equitativos que corrigen las disparidades entre grupos raciales, económicas y de género
- Servicios médicos profesionales
- Mejor educación para los niños en la escuela

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:

- It's important to educate ourselves and our community. Community members should involve themselves, amplify their voices, and act as "porta voz" (spokespeople) to influence change.
- The government should actively listen to the reports made by community members. Genuine engagement means taking communities' concerns seriously and addressing them effectively.
- Involve children in community work, such as cleaning alleys, to foster a sense of responsibility and ownership among the younger generation in maintaining the neighborhood.
- More direct and ongoing relationships between residents and their elected officials, particularly aldermen, to ensure that community needs are addressed.
- Provide a sanctuary city training to educate community members and officials about the protections and services available to immigrants. This will ensure that the community is informed and equipped to advocate for their rights.
- True co-creation may not be possible due to power imbalances, particularly when those most impacted by structural racism are unable to participate due to physical or mental barriers, such as incarceration or house arrest.

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:

- Community members should not just sit next to decision-makers but actually be the ones making decisions. Current meetings feel like a one-way channel where complaints are heard but not acted upon.
- Equity should be a central theme in co-governance, but it needs to be clearly defined so that community members understand which groups are included and what it really means beyond a buzzword.
- Plans should come from the community and be informed by their lived experiences. The work should be government-funded but community-informed, recognizing the social and economic impacts of the projects.
- Planning and implementation should be done simultaneously, with community members sitting down with City Council to make decisions together. They stressed the need to move away from a paternalistic approach and prioritize community knowledge in the decision-making process.

