



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Community Organizing & Family Issues

Date: October 30, 2024

Steering Committee

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Language: English



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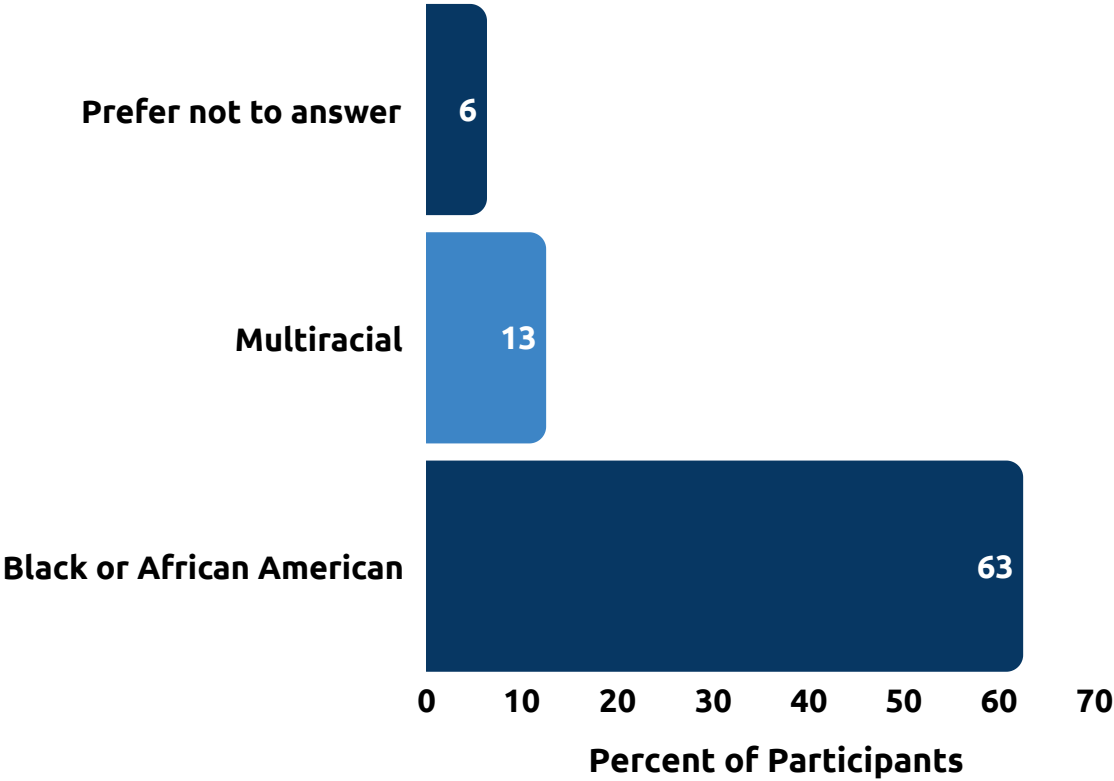
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Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

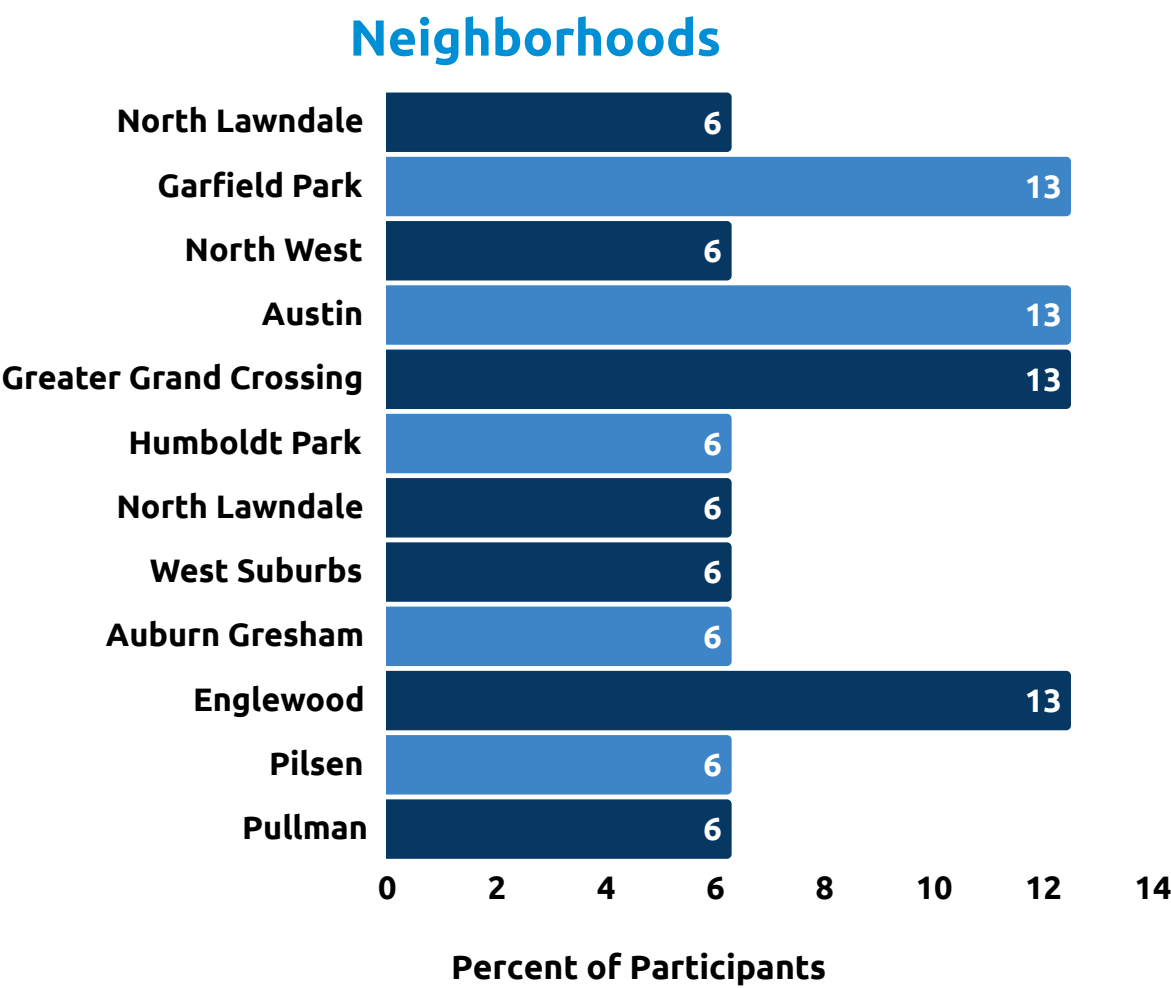
Race/Ethnicity



Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

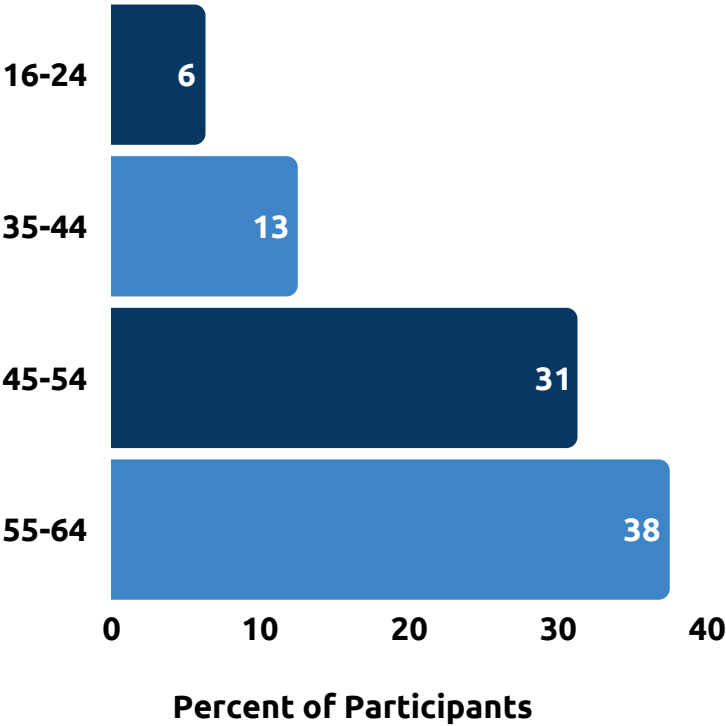


Demographics

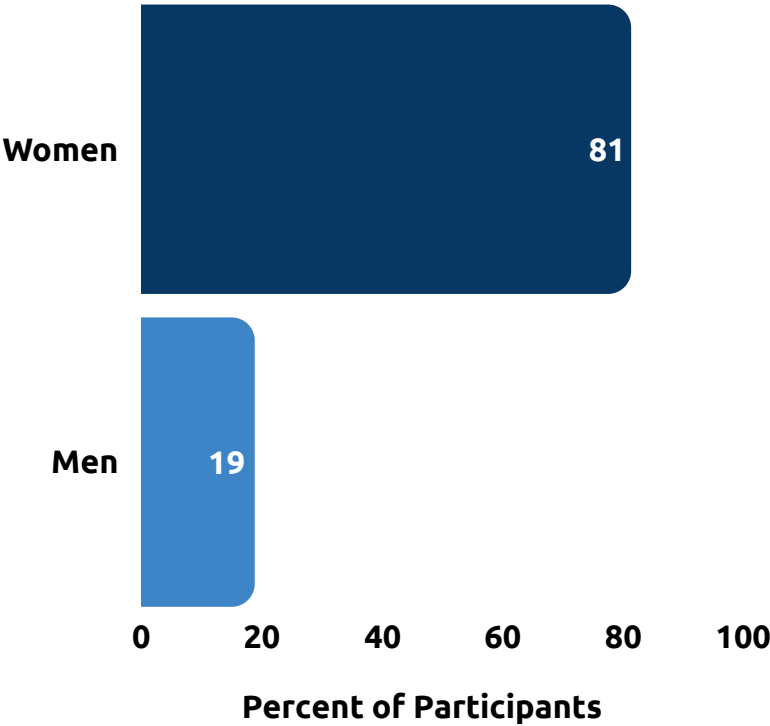
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

Age



Gender Identity

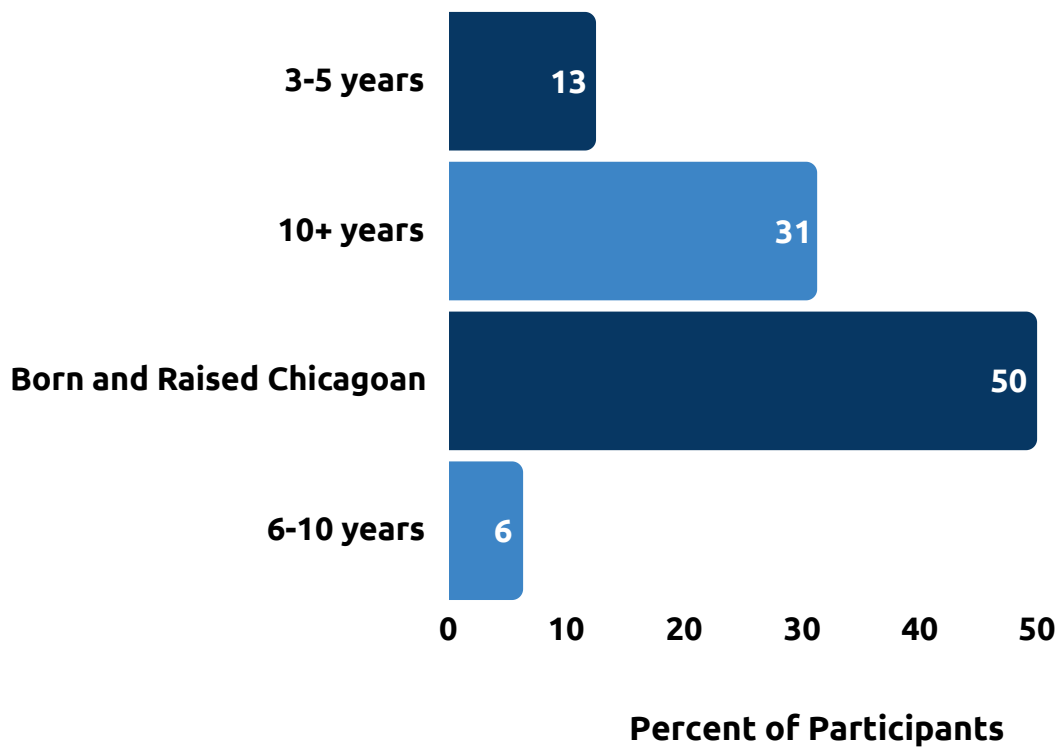


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

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

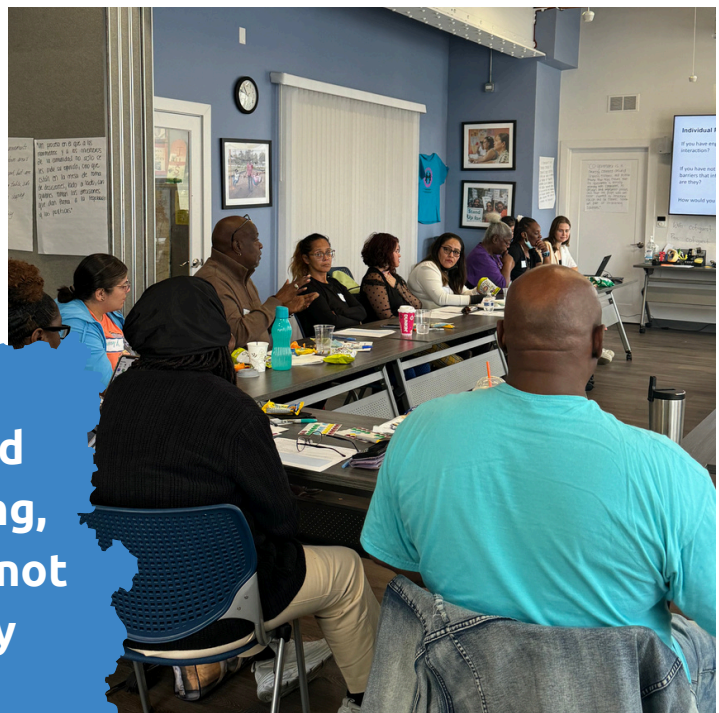
Clear, transparent communication, with accessible resources centralized in one location, will help reduce confusion and inefficiencies.

Neighborhood-specific councils or precinct captains can act as direct liaisons between residents and government.

Involve young people in civic processes to build trust and develop future leaders.

Conversation Highlights

- "Co-governance should mean real power-sharing, where communities are not just heard but actively involved in making decisions."
- "We need community councils or precinct captains to act as bridges between residents and government—people who truly understand local needs."
- "Transparency and accountability are essential—co-governance won't work if government doesn't follow through on promises and build trust."



"Co-governance should mean real power-sharing, where communities are not just heard but actively involved in making decisions."

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

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"Difficult" ratings: Reported frequent issues with unresponsive aldermanic offices, confusing processes, and inaccessible resources.

6

"Neutral" ratings: Noted limited success when persistently following up with government services like 311.

2

"No Government Engagement" ratings: Avoided engaging with government due to previous negative experiences or barriers with language and transportation.

0

"Excellent" ratings: None

Reflections

- Participants expressed frustration with the lack of coordination among city departments, noting that one department often doesn't know what another is doing.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- There is a lack of coordination among city departments, one department often doesn't know what another is doing.
- It is difficult to access resources - you are often directed to multiple locations without clear guidance on how to resolve issues.
- Government often over-promises during campaigns but fails to deliver once elected, leaving communities underserved.
- The lack of follow-up after engaging with government offices leads residents feeling ignored or dismissed.
- Clear and direct communication from government offices to address concerns effectively is preferred.
- Issues such as unsafe, poorly lit streets and unaddressed maintenance requests are ongoing problems.
- There is better government responsiveness in certain areas of the city, such as the North Side, as compared to the South Side.
- Relying on online platforms or digital tools for government engagement creates accessibility issues for those without reliable internet access.
- Advocating as part of a group or organization often yields better results than approaching government offices individually.
- Difficult: "Participants recalled calling 311 repeatedly to resolve issues like recycling schedules, only to receive conflicting or incomplete information."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

Participants also shared the following reflections in Spanish in the participant handouts:

- **Difficult:** “Government offices often make residents feel like they are a bother when seeking assistance, treating them dismissively rather than addressing their needs.”
- **Difficult:** “Aldermanic offices frequently lack basic information, such as garbage pickup schedules or street repair updates, leaving residents frustrated.”
- **Difficult:** “Residents are often sent to multiple locations to resolve a single issue due to poor coordination between departments.”
- **Difficult:** “Access to critical resources, like mental health services, is hindered by long waiting lists and unclear processes.”
- **Difficult:** “Campaign promises from elected officials are rarely followed through, eroding trust in government.”
- **Difficult:** “I called 311 repeatedly to resolve issues like recycling schedules, and I received conflicting or incomplete information.”
- **Difficult:** “Infrastructure concerns, like poorly lit streets, remain unresolved despite repeated complaints to aldermanic offices.”
- **Neutral:** “Only after persistent follow-ups and multiple calls I experienced success with 311 services.”

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

Participants also shared the following reflections in Spanish in the participant handouts:

- **Neutral:** “North Side aldermanic offices are more responsive compared to those on the South Side.”
- **Neutral:** “Mixed interactions included staff who attempted to help but lacked the necessary knowledge or resources to provide solutions.”
- **No Engagement:** “I often do not know where to start or how to engage with government offices.”
- **No Engagement:** “During a Springfield trip, policymakers were too busy to engage with residents, leaving them feeling ignored.”
- **No Engagement:** “Language barriers and fears of miscommunication discourage engagement.”

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

- Structural Racism
- 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

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

- Shared decision-making with communities actively engaged at every stage.
- A cultural shift where government sees community members as equal partners rather than constituents.
- Address systemic inequities in resource distribution and decision-making.
- Accountability mechanisms, such as regular evaluations of government performance.
- Tangible outcomes from engagement.
- Foster trust by ensuring government delivers on promises and commitments.
- Include marginalized voices, particularly those from communities historically excluded from decision-making processes.

