



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Southside Together Organizing
for Power (STOP)

Date: November 25, 2024

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Language:

English



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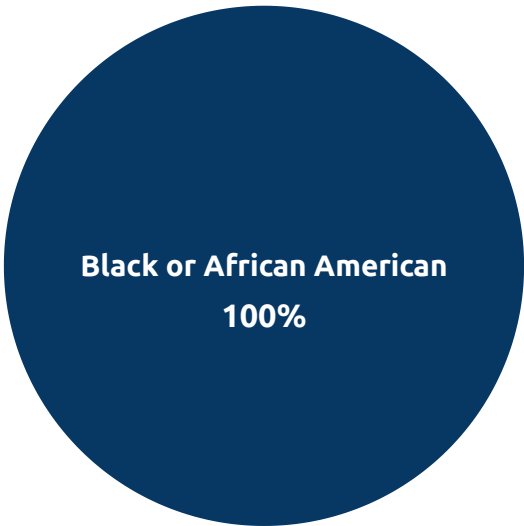
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Demographics

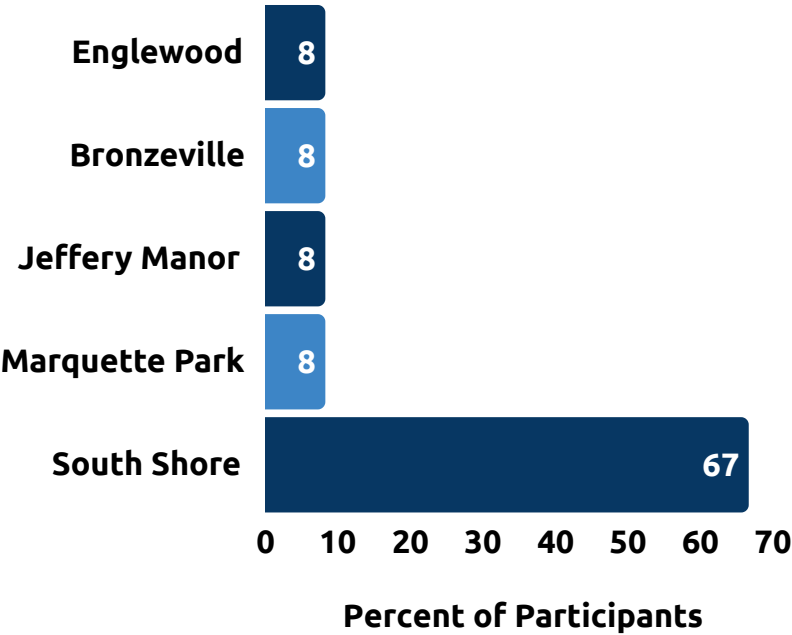
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 12

Race/Ethnicity



Neighborhoods

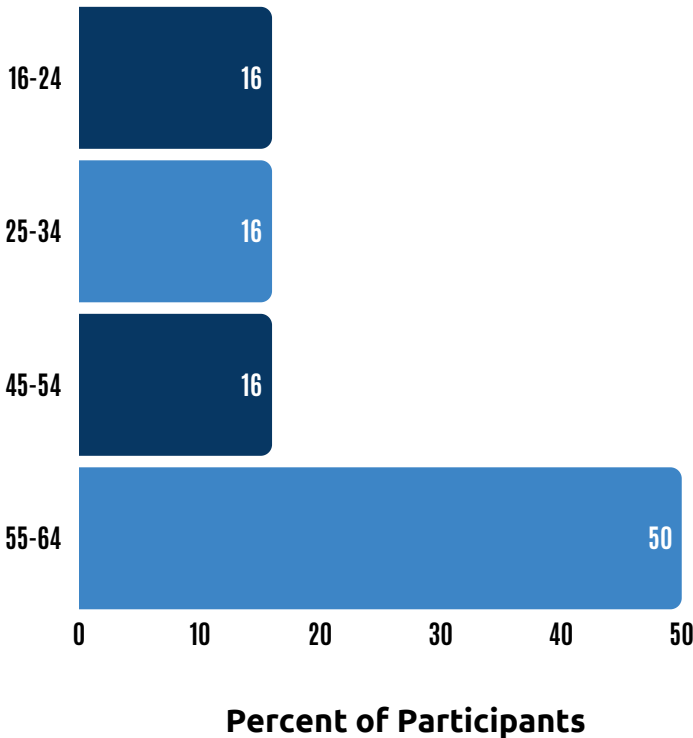


Demographics

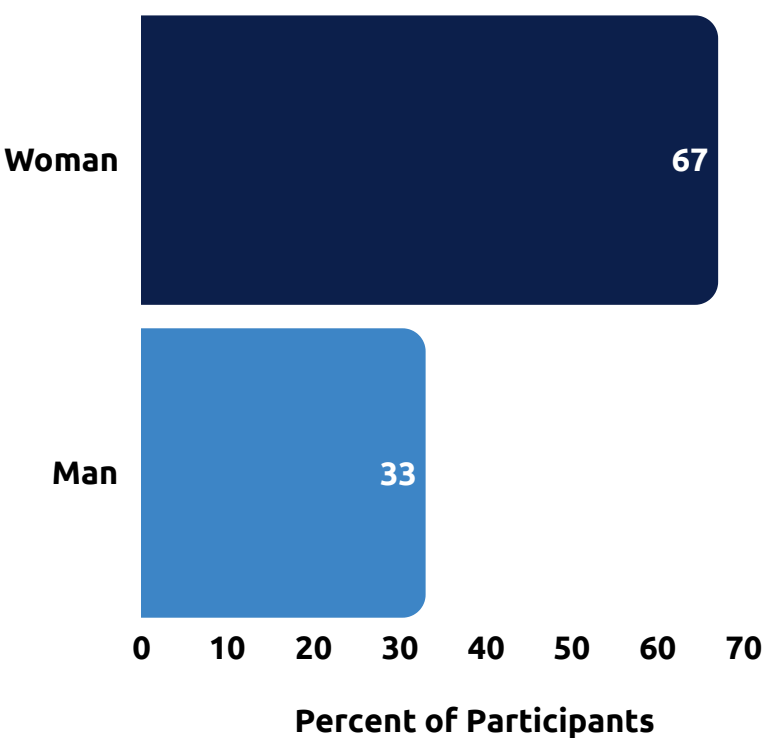
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 12

Age



Gender Identity

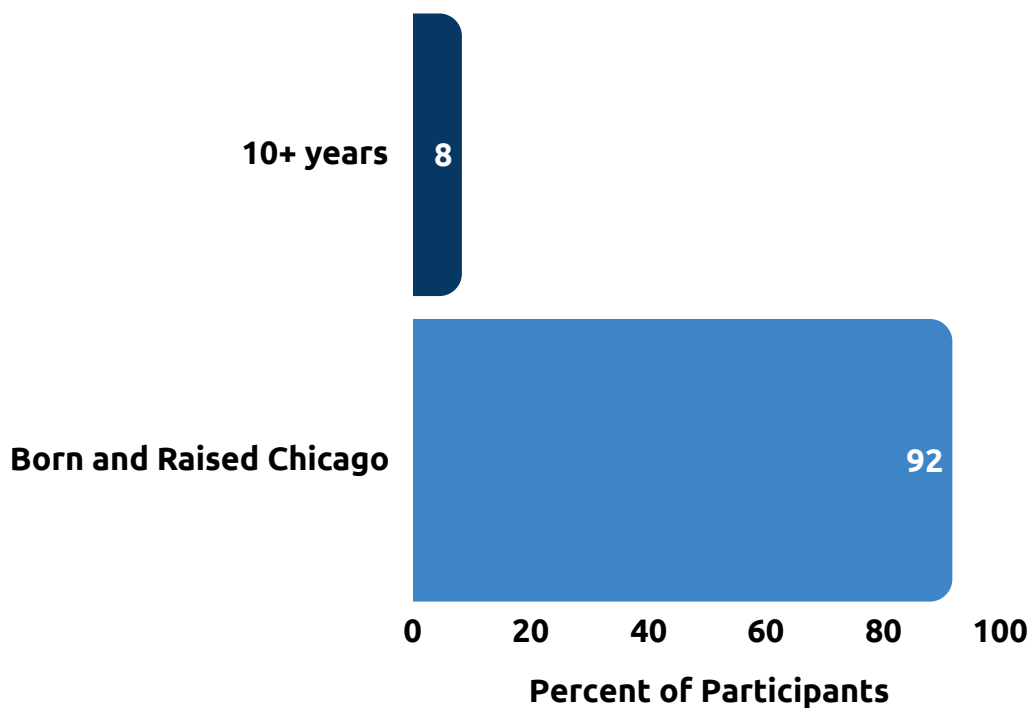


Demographics

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

- The city's bureaucratic processes are challenging. It is difficult to reach the right people, which creates barriers to effective engagement.
- Government officials need to be more accountable to community. Actions and decisions should be transparent.
- Government should prioritize community input, and decisions should be based on the needs of those directly impacted, rather than driven by political or financial interests.

Conversation Highlights

It feels like you need to know someone to get things done in this city. It's a setup and it's designed to keep people out of the conversation."

"Co-governance should focus on equitable outcomes, decision-making, and legislation and policies that reflect these values."

""Part of the solution development process should include pressure testing the solution against the community. The community must be involved throughout the process, addressing barriers and finding middle-ground solutions."

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

8

"Difficult" ratings: Reported frustration with unresponsive city services, including difficulties reaching the right contacts and getting their issues addressed.

1

"Neutral" ratings: Mentioned difficulties with an alderman's office but acknowledged they learned useful information.

1

"Excellent" ratings: Reported a positive interaction with city services related to housing.

1

"No Engagement" ratings: Avoided engaging with the government due to feelings of being ignored and their perception of the system's ineffectiveness.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Difficult: The lack of communication and coordination among city departments is frustrating.
- Difficult: The government does not listen to their concerns and the system is designed to make it difficult to navigate.
- Neutral: Even when you are able to get some information, the process is cumbersome.
- Difficult: "From a lot of the experiences I've had, it's been a little hard to pipeline to a person in command or a person who has the answer you need. Even applying for roles within the education field, where I work, is difficult. Sometimes, there are language barriers, which counts as a difficulty."
- Difficult: "It feels like you have to know somebody to get something done. I think about elected officials who lean on the work of 'you can't help them all, so you help who you can.' They set it up this way. You can't think you have to go inside to change it, no, I think we need to get rid of it all."
- Difficult: "I have shortcuts because of the family business, but even then, it is still frustrating. Even with shortcuts, it is a frustrating process. You shouldn't need a lawyer mom to tell you who to call."
- Difficult: "People need aid, and people in the city know they are going to struggle to get help. There isn't any good communication, and that's the whole point. It needs to be scrapped."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Neutral: It is difficult but I have learned to get by, even though it feels like the system is designed to limit their access.
- Excellent: I am treated well by the city's services and have effective support.
- No Government Engagement: I have not engaged with the government. They're not going to want to listen to me because I'm young.'
- Difficult: "The alderwoman, the police—they all need to be voted out. They are trying to rise above while we are below."
- Difficult: "I can't get past my fundamental belief that government exists to keep people off balance, so you can't come together to make change. It happens in all branches of government; everything is designed to limit your access to power."
- Difficult: "The government doesn't want to dismantle white supremacy/capitalism—they want a better stance in it. They intentionally misdirect people and fail to provide solutions."
- Difficult: "Every time the government shows up, they smile and agree but then turn around and say, 'We're not going to do this.' Then we vote for them again."
- "Government often shows up, agrees to ideas, but then fails to follow through, leaving the community feeling unheard and disconnected."
- "The city is playing games by perpetuating inequalities, leaving the poor even more impoverished while maintaining a system that benefits the powerful."

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

Participants verbally shared or highlighted the following phrases from three definitions to build Chicago's definition of co-governance:

- People who are most harmed by structural racism and economic systems are part of creating the solutions.
- *There is a power imbalance in the phrase co-creating solutions*
- Implemented effectively
- "Equitable outcomes"
- "Decision making at the table"
- "Community involvement"
- "Sharing power"
- *"Pressure testing solutions"*
- *"Face-to-face interaction"*
- *"Technology for direct connection"*

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

Reflections

- "The needs and interests of citizens must be centered. As a citizen, I should be prioritized in my needs/wants/concerns over the needs of the government. These needs should be balanced with the needs of others."
- "Co-governance should focus on equitable outcomes, decision-making, and legislation and policies that reflect these values."
- "Part of the solution development process should include pressure testing the solution against the community. The community must be involved throughout the process, addressing barriers and finding middle-ground solutions."
- "The government derives its power from the people, so when the government actively miseducates citizens about their power, it keeps them uninformed and unable to effectively use that power."
- "There should be face-to-face interactions where officials get to know us and show up in the community, not just in meetings where they benefit."
- "Elected officials are self-serving, but as a citizen, I must also be self-serving. I need to attend meetings, but I should be able to demand more for my community."

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

Reflections

- "There should be an agreement between the city and the community that is beneficial for the people, focusing on mutual respect and accountability."
- "An app could be useful to connect directly with those making policies, allowing for more transparent communication and engagement."
- "Young people should be empowered to use their voice, as their perspective is often excluded. If you're not at the table, you're on it—decisions will be made for you."
- "I think we need a fundamental upheaval of government structures. The challenge is getting people who hold power in the government to share it with those who have been historically excluded."

