



COMMUNITY  
MEETS  
GOVERNANCE

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# CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

**Location:** Good Neighbor Center

**Date:** November 12, 2024

**Steering Committee**

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Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

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**Language:** English



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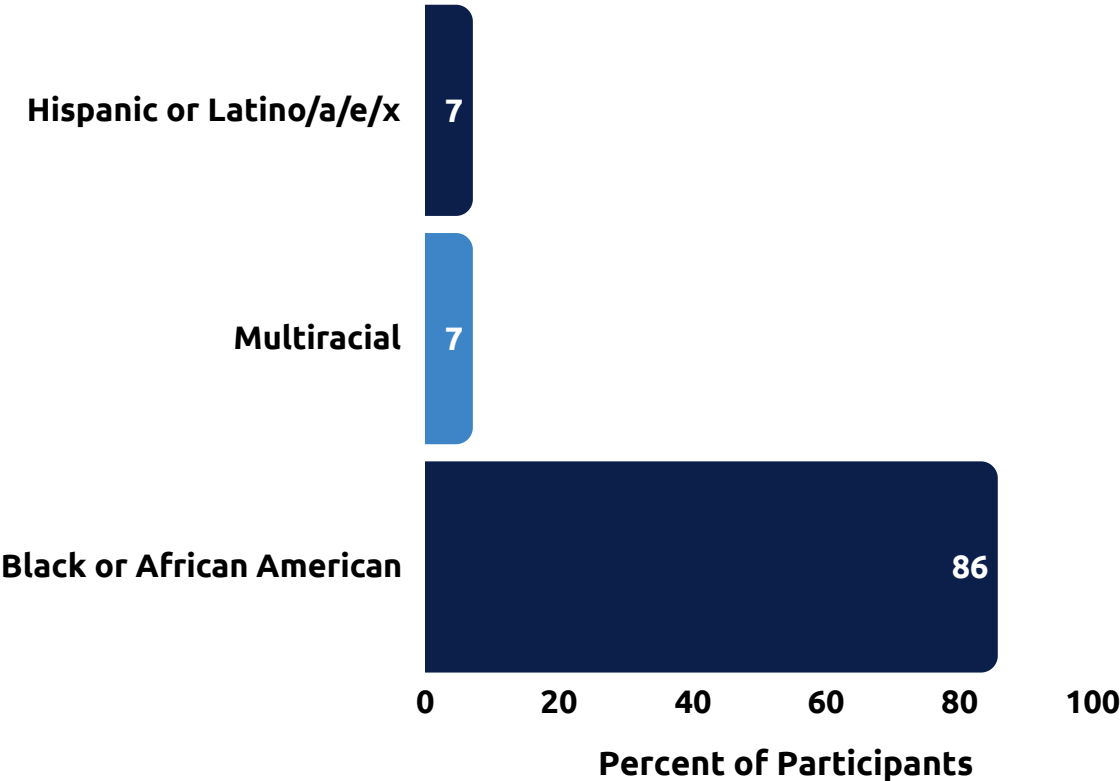
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# Demographics

## Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 14

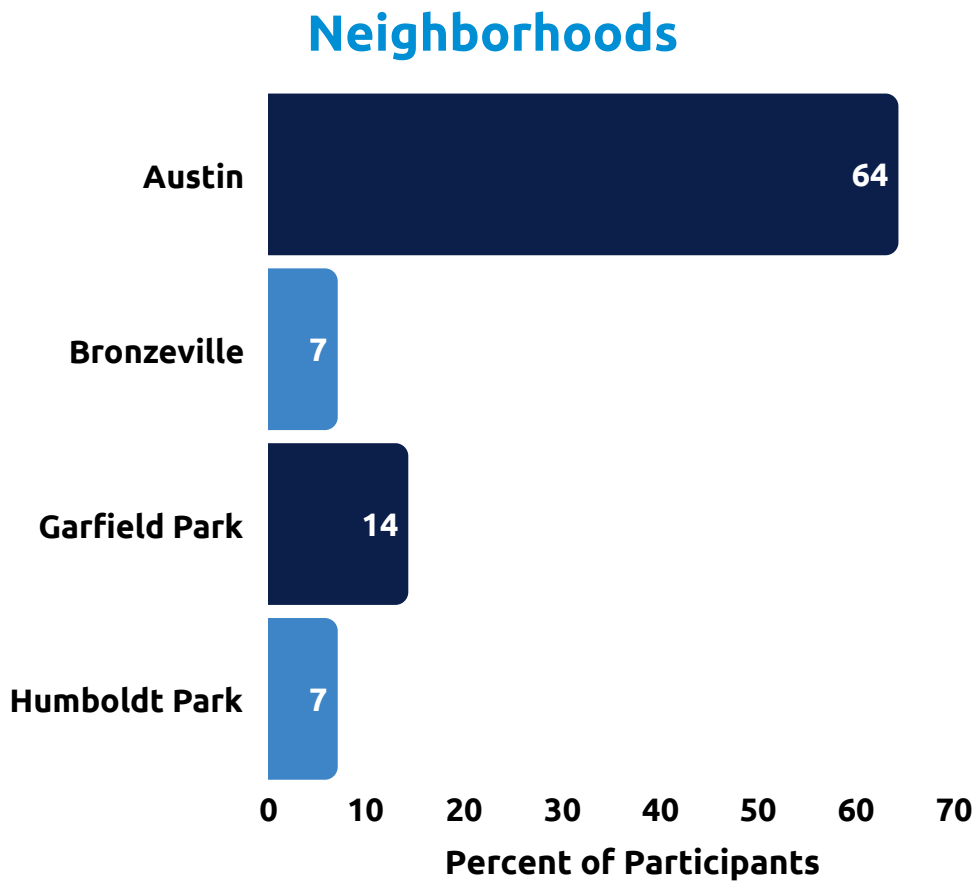
### Race/Ethnicity



# Demographics

## Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 14

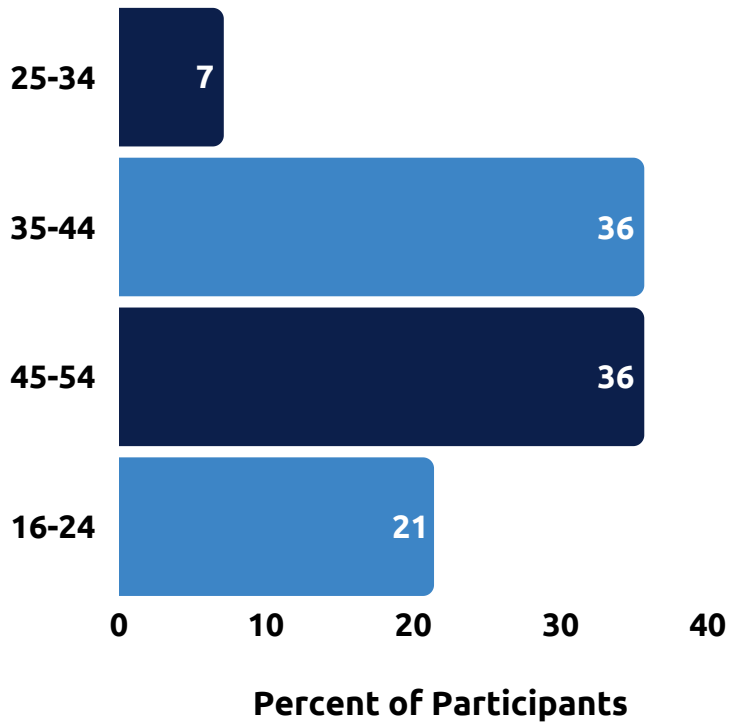


# Demographics

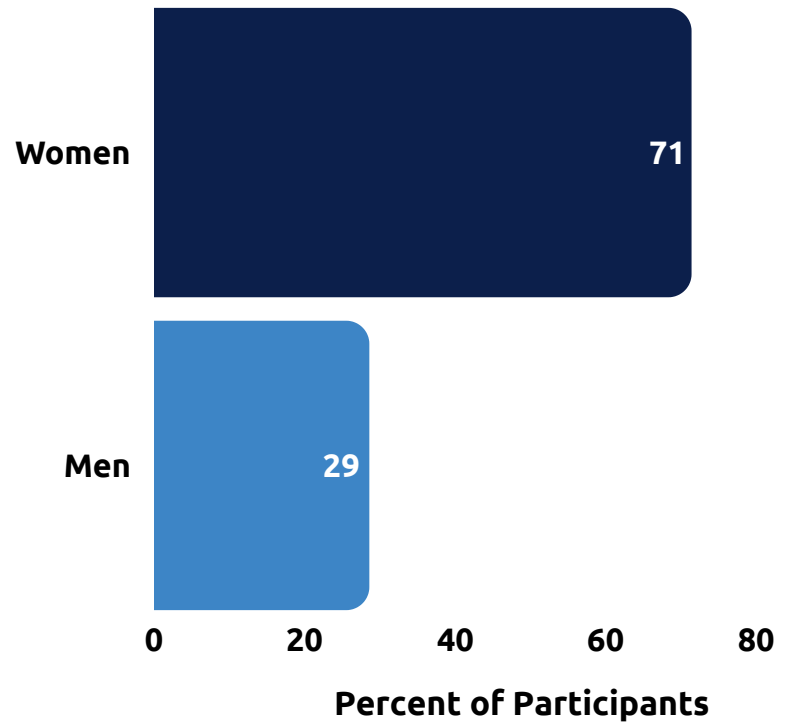
## Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 14

### Age



### Gender Identity

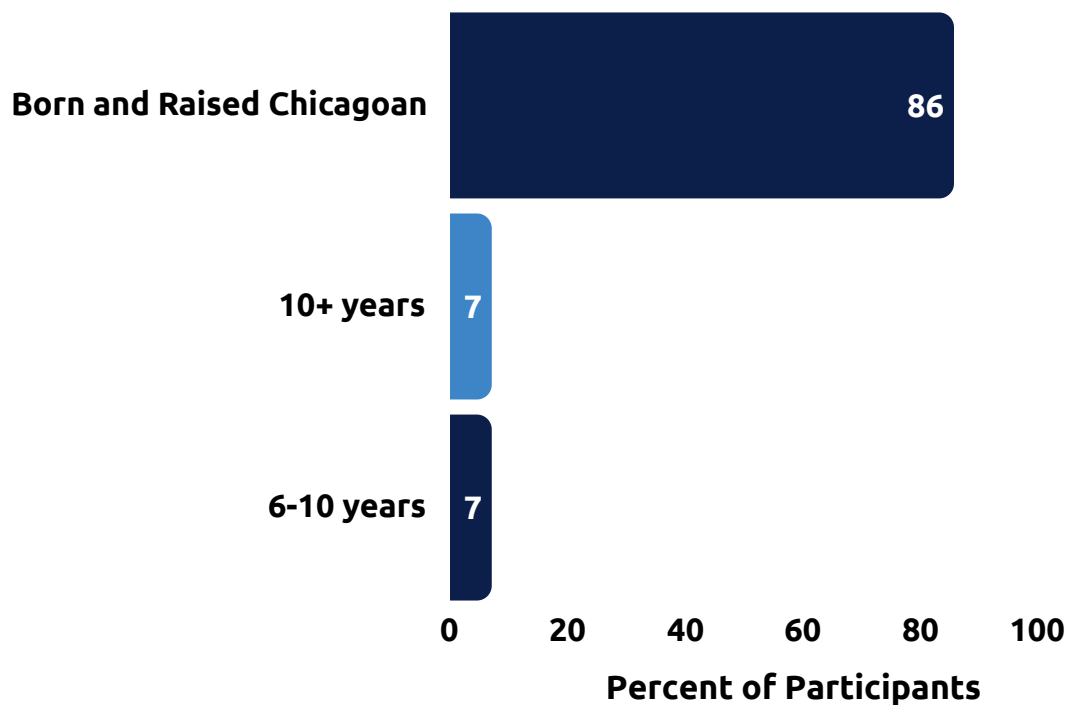


# Demographics

## 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

- We need genuine community representation and action on raised concerns.
- Systemic barriers like bureaucracy and lack of access should be addressed.
- Government accountability and follow-through are important.



# Conversation Highlights

- "The city knows we need housing. When will they stop just listening and actually address the issue? People feel like nothing happens after elections."
- "Closed schools should be repurposed into community centers or shelters to benefit neighborhoods."

## 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

**"Difficult" ratings:** Focused heavily on negative experiences with parking tickets, including the runaround when trying to set up payment plans, doubled fines when contesting tickets, and the lack of responsiveness from aldermen.

**"Neutral" ratings:** Recounted mixed experiences, such as successfully contesting tickets in suburban areas but facing long delays with 311.

# Understanding Your Experience

## Engagement Activity Results

**“Excellent” ratings:** No participants rated their experiences as excellent.

**“No Engagement” ratings:** Expressed not knowing where or how to engage with the government effectively.

## Reflections

- Persistent issues with parking tickets and speed cameras.
- Frustration with being redirected multiple times without resolutions.
- Desire for more transparency and direct community meetings with decision-makers.
- Frustration with being repeatedly asked what they need without seeing any progress. Government should provide tangible action rather than constant questioning.
- The City knows we need housing. When will they stop just listening and actually address the issue? People feel like nothing happens after elections.
- City spending is wasteful - there are projects like dumping rubber duckies downtown while more urgent needs go unaddressed.
- How can community be more directly involved in decision-making? There is a lack of access to decision-making spaces.
- City representatives attending meetings often lack decision-making power, making our voices feel unheard.

# Understanding Your Experience

## Reflections

- Schools and community spaces have been repurposed for purposes that don't serve local residents. Homeless populations often have nowhere to go, while immigrants and refugees appear to have more resources allocated to them.
- Long-term residents experiencing homelessness receive less support than newcomers. During the PIT count, we saw inadequate resources for the homeless population.
- Elected officials should already know what is needed in the community; we repeatedly voice the same issues.
- We are grateful for the purpose of this focus group and the role of reporting back to the mayor.
- Campaign promises, such as not raising property taxes, are broken once officials take office. Officials should stand by commitments made during campaigns.

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

- **Difficult:** Red light and speed cameras feel targeted in Chicago compared to the suburbs.
- **Difficult:** Parking ticket payment plans are complicated. Often there are conflicting instructions that cause you to fall into a default payment if you missed one payment.
- **Difficult:** Becoming a city worker is challenging. It feels like connections are required to gain access.
- **Difficult:** 311 has long wait times and you are redirected to unhelpful resources.

# Understanding Your Experience

## Reflections

- **Difficult:** Town halls are unproductive - the issues discussed are not reflective of the community's lived experiences or concerns.
- **Neutral:** 311 staff are either rude or unhelpful, leading to extended wait times and frustration.
- **Neutral:** City services sometimes provide the minimum effort required, fulfilling requests but without any exceptional service or engagement.
- **No Engagement:** Not knowing who to contact for assistance creates barriers to engagement.
- **No Engagement:** I'm disconnected from government processes and uncertain how to start engaging with city services.

# How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

- Increase transparency and clarity on how residents can address issues and who to contact for specific concerns.
- Ensure that community meetings result in tangible actions, with clear follow-ups to demonstrate progress and accountability.
- Create mechanisms to act on community input, moving beyond information gathering to implementing solutions that address identified needs.
- Address long-standing community issues by acknowledging and resolving recurring problems, rather than pretending they are new or unknown.
- Establish systems for shared decision-making, where residents have a genuine role in shaping policies and decisions rather than being part of a one-way communication process.
- Develop accountability structures to hold government decision-makers responsible for following through on commitments and addressing community concerns.
- Foster trust between residents and government by ensuring meaningful participation and demonstrating that community contributions lead to real change.
- Promote power sharing by creating opportunities for communities to collaborate directly with decision-makers, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.

# How Do You Define Co-Governance?

## Reflections

- More people should come together during community meetings. The city should ensure that everyone shows up, not just two or three representatives.
- Community meetings should be held at least once a month to listen to the community's problems.
- Officials need to take action after these meetings. It's not enough to listen; they need to come back with results.
- Closed schools should be repurposed into community centers or shelters to benefit neighborhoods.
- More accountability in governance. Line items or policies should be directly tied to votes to ensure representation and follow-through between elections.
- Secure money before approaching community with plans, as it's disheartening to provide input on projects that may never materialize due to funding gaps.

