



Participant Experiences at Envisioning Justice Dialogue Events

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OVERVIEW TAKEAWAYS

Complete responses were received from 144 participants from over 48 zip codes in Illinois at 13 unique events hosted by 6 organizations.

- When asked to rate their satisfaction with the program, 19% indicated that they were “somewhat satisfied” and 81% indicated that they were “extremely satisfied.”
- When asked if they would attend a future Envisioning Justice event if able, 16% said they “probably would” and 67% said they “definitely would.”
- Asked about the ways in which the program made them *more likely* to get engaged, 31% said they were more likely to contact a politician or official, 43% said they were more likely to volunteer, 45% said they would raise awareness online. 47% said they were more likely to sign a petition, and the same number said they were more likely to attend a rally.
- Asked about topics they learned about, 45% indicated “jails and prisons,” 38% indicated restorative justice, 26% said they learned about factors leading to crime, and 21% said they learned about the costs of incarceration.
- Over half of all respondents (51%) said they would further discuss the issues raised in the program with people they know and/or find other local programs on the topic.
- 83% of those responding agreed or strongly agreed that the program enabled them to understand people whom they would ordinarily not encounter.
- 86% of those responding agreed or strongly agreed that they program helped them examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue.
- 92% agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to learn more about the topics and issues raised in the program.

These are the top-level takeaways. You will find other valuable insights in the attached materials. We would be delighted to discuss any questions or to provide deeper dive analysis of key points, should that be of interest.

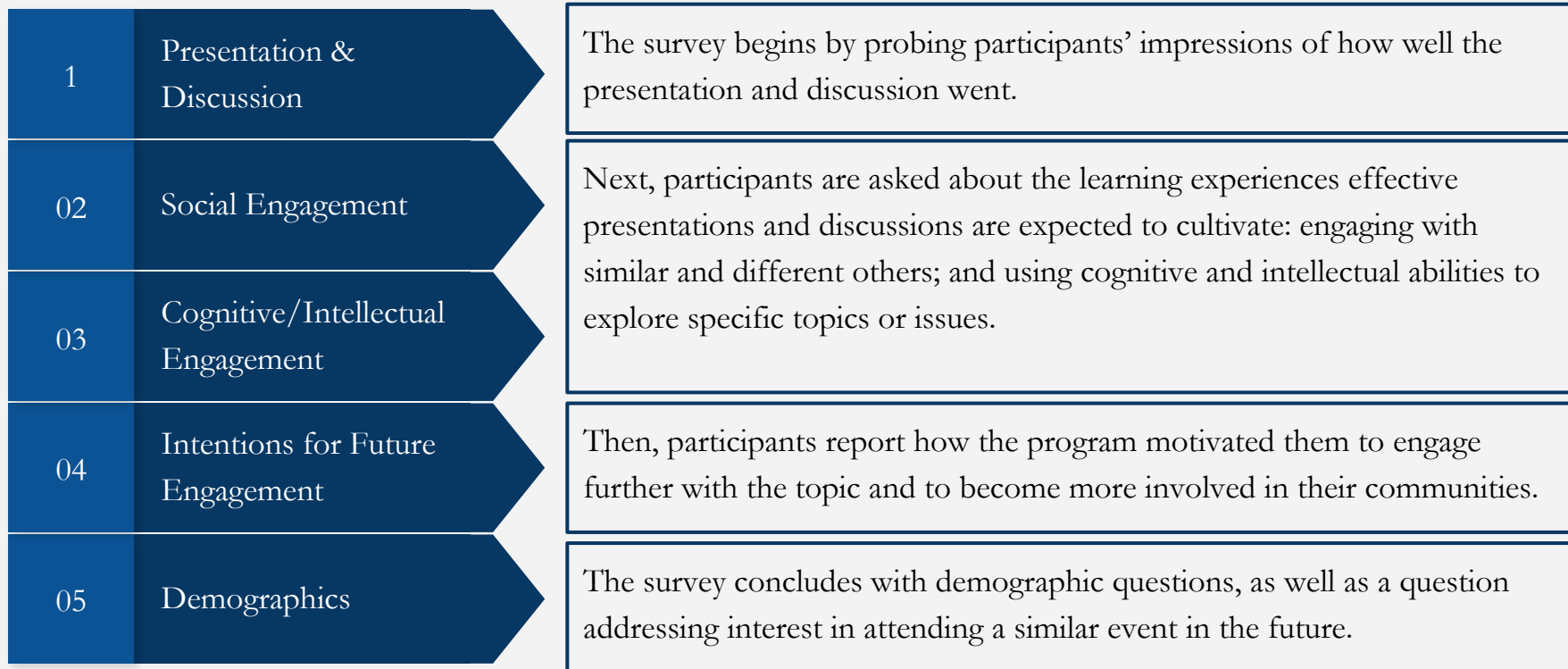
Introduction

This report describes the results of a survey administered to attendees at Justice Dialogues events hosted by six organizations in the Chicago area. Although estimates of total turnout were not available for all six programs, response rates from programs where this information was available ranged from 55% to 73%, which provides a valid basis for making inferences about most participants' experiences at these programs.

The survey, which is described in more detail on the following pages, was designed in consultation with Illinois Humanities to address some of the key experiences and outcomes the Justice Dialogues are intended to cultivate. Of course, each program is unique in some ways, and it is not expected that all successful programs will yield similar survey results. Instead, the results should be interpreted as providing a general snapshot of how participants experience the events, what they think they learned, and how they felt motivated as a consequence.

Assessing Attendee Experiences

Public humanities discussions vary widely, but they often share an underlying logic model: Informative presentations with open discussions are expected to cultivate social and cognitive learning experiences that, in turn, build participants' capacities for lifelong learning and civic engagement. The participant survey was designed to assess this logic model.



Attendee Experiences: *Presentation and Discussion Quality*

Presentation Quality

One key component of a successful discussion program is a foundation in a clear and informative presentation. Research in higher education indicates that the skill and organization of instructors is a positive predictor of student achievement (Pascarella et al., 1996), and survey items used in that research are used here to measure attendees' perceptions of the presenter and presentation.

Discussion Quality

Research focused on small group dynamics has shown that they are most productive when participants feel that all they and others are free voice their opinions and have them heard respectfully. In this survey, items from a measure developed by Barry and Stewart (1997) to study work groups have been used to assess the perceived openness of communication at the event.

Measurement

Presentation Quality was assessed with two items derived from Pascarella et al. (1996).

1. The speaker(s) made good use of examples and illustrations to explain difficult points.
2. The speaker(s) had a good command of what they were presenting.

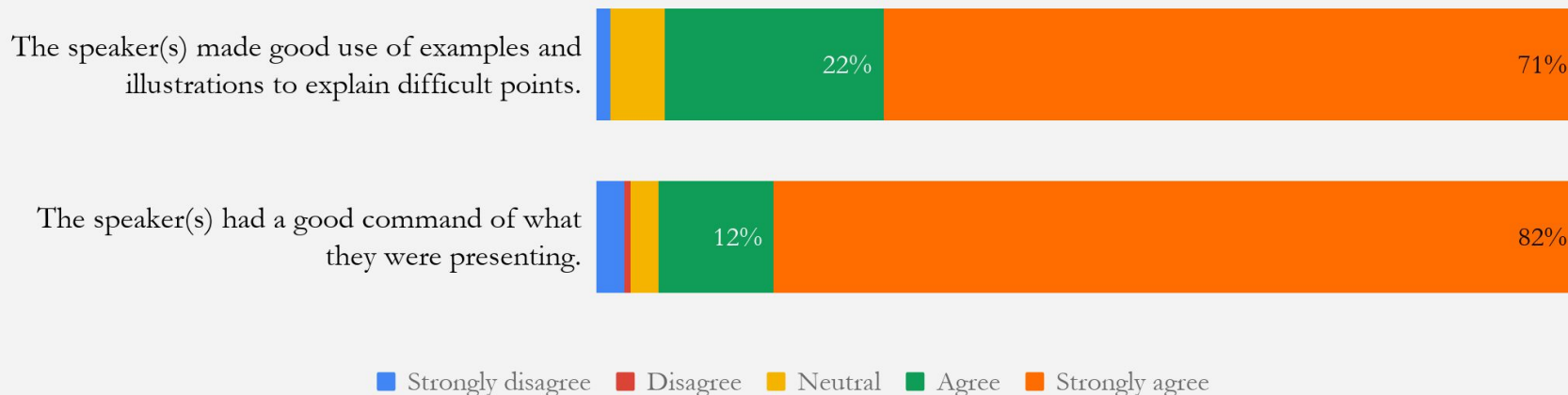
Discussion Quality was measured using two items from Barry and Stewart's Open Communication Scale (1997).

1. The group listened to each individual's input.
2. Members of the group were free to make positive/negative comments.

Presentation Quality: *Participant Responses*

Nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed that information was presented clearly and that the speakers were well prepared. Based on these responses, the quality of the programs' presentation of information met or exceeded the expectations of attendees.

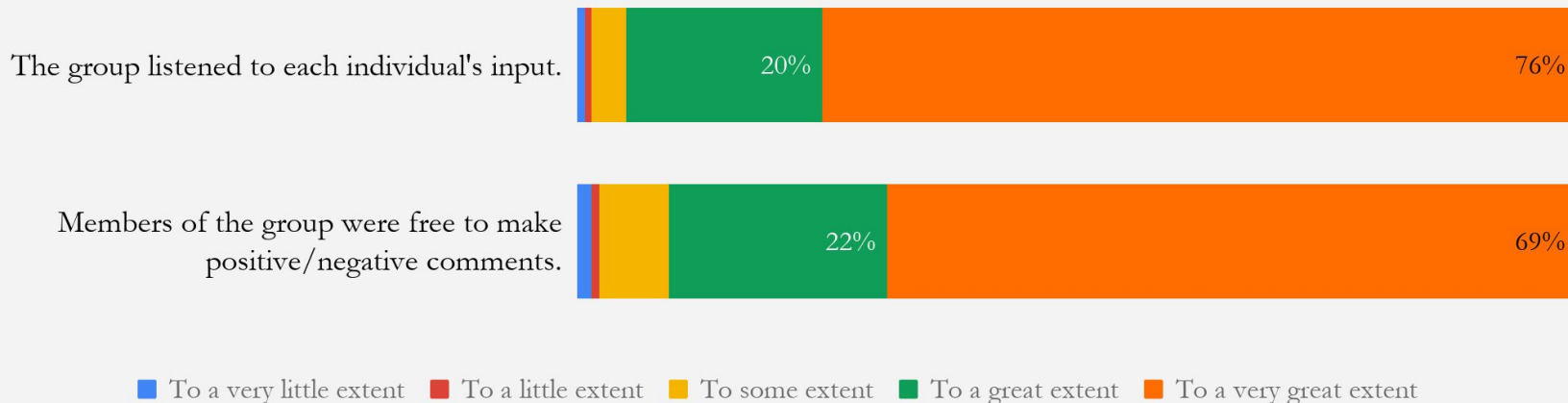
Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response



Discussion Openness: *Participant Responses*

Survey respondents reported that the discussions were open and respectful, with over 70% indicating that participants listened to each other and felt able to speak freely to a very great extent. These results suggest that the programs successfully cultivated civil dialogue.

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response



Engagement: *Social and Cognitive/Intellectual*

Social Engagement: Bonding & Bridging

The arts and humanities can provide opportunities for building and maintaining relationships. One way in which they can do this is by strengthening existing relationships. Sharing the thoughts and feelings evoked by a humanities program can help foster a sense of belonging by affirming shared experiences and values. Public programs can also bring together people who would otherwise be unlikely to spend time together. In these cases, audience members may come to better understand the perspectives and experiences of members of different social groups who are either present or the subject of inquiry.. These different ways of cultivating social ties can be understood in terms of *bonding* and *bridging* social capital, as described by Putnam (2000).

Cognitive/Intellectual Engagement

Intellectual engagement in the humanities is often characterized by reflecting on one's previous beliefs, or metacognition, and gaining deeper understanding, or insight, into an issue. These types of thinking are often assessed in undergraduate liberal arts education, making them relevant to high quality public humanities programs.

Measurement

Social bonding was assessed with the following items:

1. There were voices and perspectives represented here that spoke to my own experiences.
2. I felt that other people here share many of my interests and values.

Social bridging was assessed with the following items:

1. This program helped me to understand people whom I'd ordinarily not encounter.
2. This program helped me to understand the experiences of people who differ from me.

Cognitive/Intellectual Engagement was assessed with the following items:

1. This program enabled me to understand the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue.
2. I learned something that changed the way I understand an issue or concept.

Social Bonding: *Participant Responses*

Respondents reported generally high levels of social bonding, suggesting that the events provided opportunities for strengthening a sense of belonging and community. One possible downside of this pattern of results may be that they reflect a relatively low degree of diversity of opinions.

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response

I felt that other people here shared many of my interests and values.



There were voices and perspectives represented here that spoke to my own experiences.

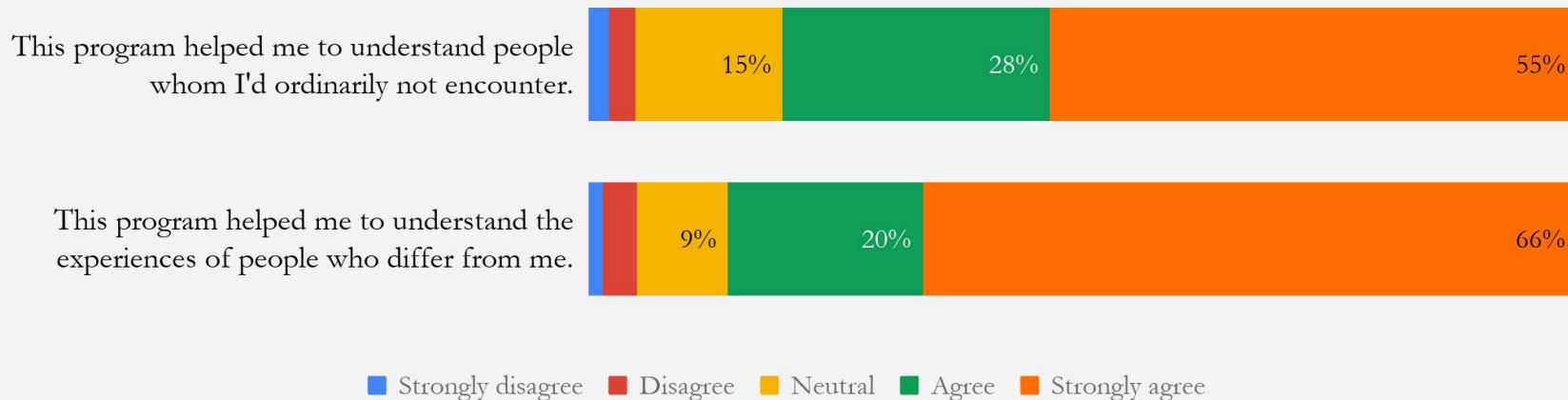


■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Social Bridging: *Participant Responses*

Social bridging refers to relationships cultivated across groups. Thus, a critical condition for developing *bridging* relationships is that people are exposed to people or ideas that differ from those they ordinarily engage with. Most participants reported that the event helped them understand people who differ from them. Even if these groups were relatively homogenous, participants may have discussed or otherwise engaged with different perspectives.

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response



Cognitive/Intellectual: *Participant Responses*

Respondents reported high levels of cognitive/intellectual engagement at both events, and it is notable that over 55% strongly agreed that they learned something that changed their understanding of the topic. For some attendees, the programs may not have prompted changes in thinking or understanding about the topics because of strong prior engagement. For example, one participant, “The things we discussed were things that I was already familiar with . . . However, in hindsight, I am glad that others got something out of it.”

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response

This program enabled me to understand the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue.



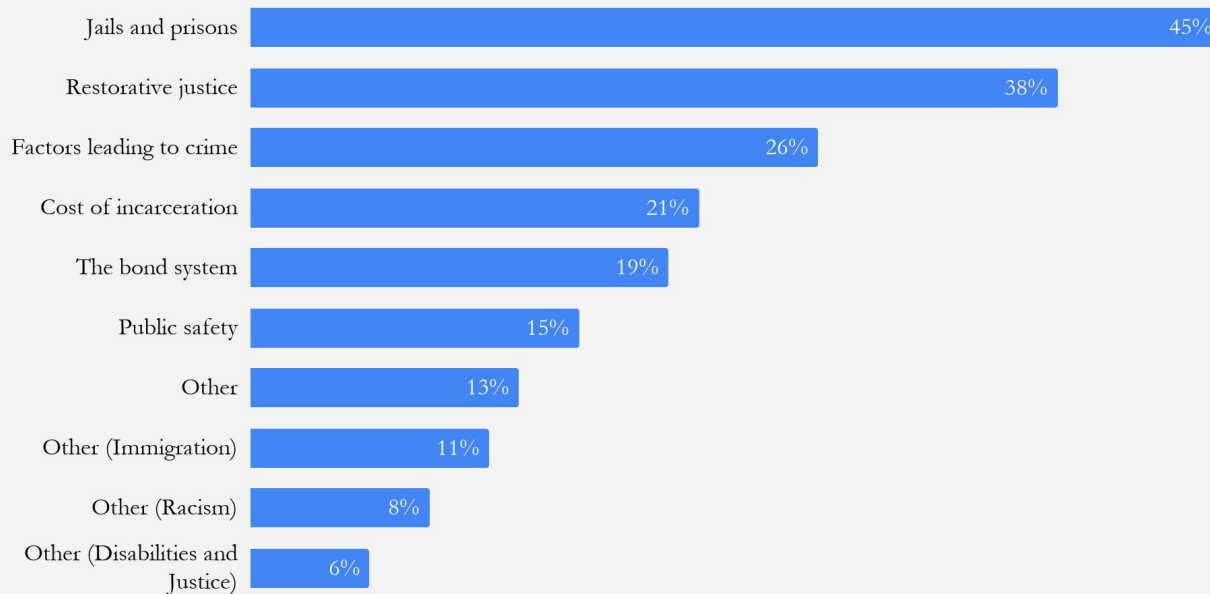
I learned something that changed the way I understand an issue or concept.



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Acquiring Knowledge: *What Attendees Learned*

What Participants reported learning about



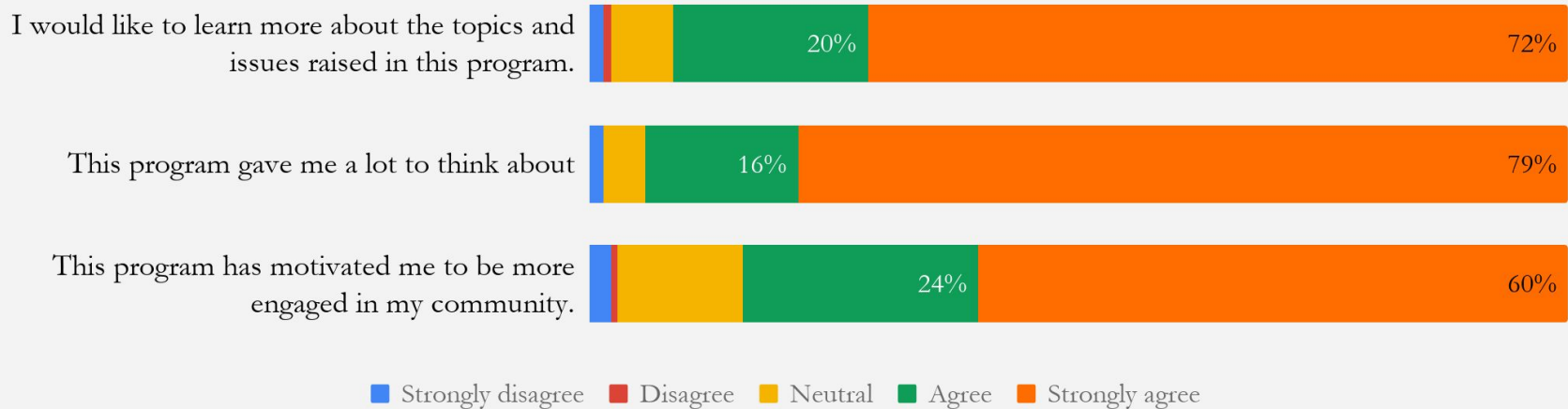
Survey respondents were asked to review a list of topics and select those they “learned something about” during the program. The question specified that participants should select topics only if they personally learned something. Therefore, the results are dependent both on what topics the program addressed and the prior knowledge of attendees.

82% of all participants indicated learning about at least one topic, and, 54% reported learning about at least two topics, and 31% reported learning about 3 or more topics.

Intentions for Future Engagement: *Participant Responses*

Both programs appear to have motivated attendees to engage further with the issues raised, both intellectually and civically.

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response



Taking Action to Learn More: *Participant Responses*

Beyond reporting their interest in learning more, participants were asked to select from a list those actions they thought they were “more likely to do as a result of [the] program.” Since it is most valuable to know how the program might have *increased* motivation, the question was framed so that respondents should not have selected actions they were already likely to take. Therefore, this is a conservative measure of the extent to which the program motivated participants to seek more information. 86% reported motivation to take at least one of the actions below.

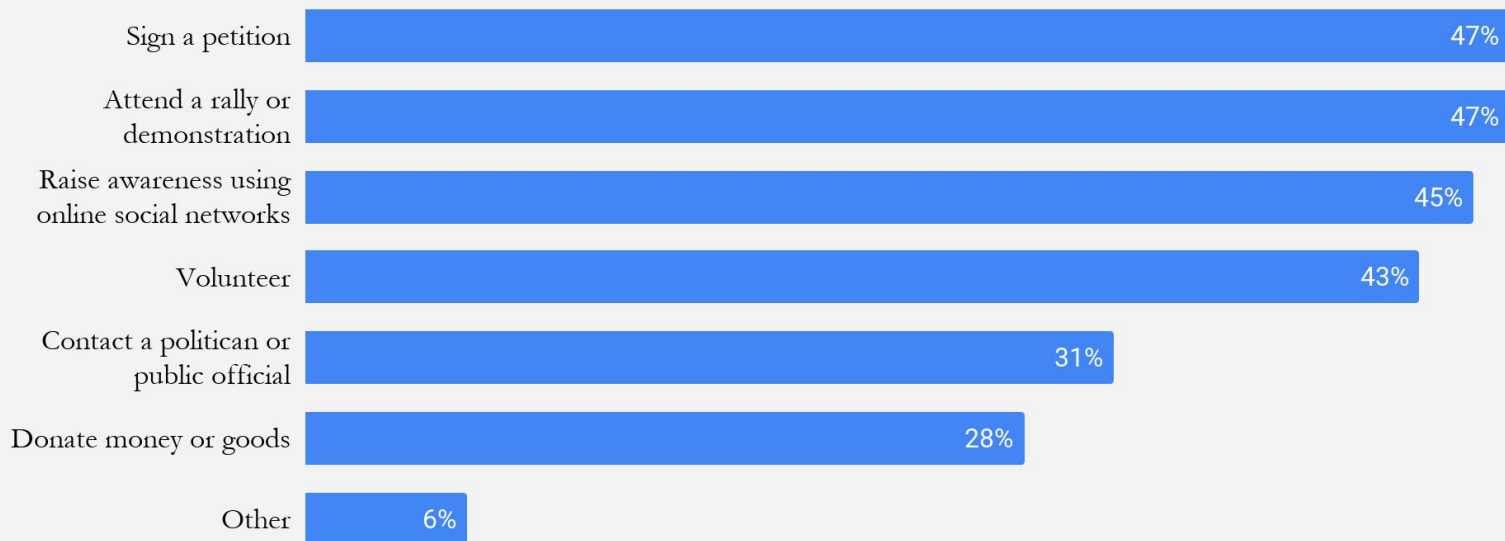
How Participants were motivated to learn more



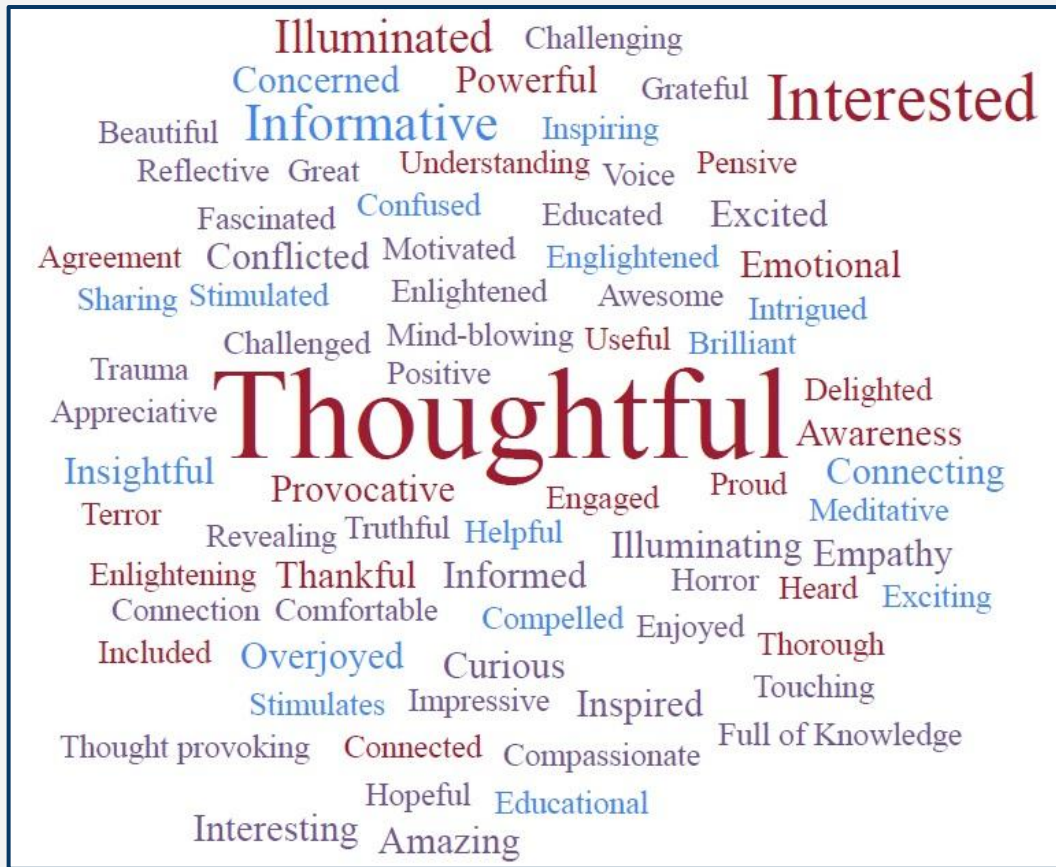
Taking Action to Effect Change: *Participant Responses*

Survey respondents were asked to select from a list of civic actions those they felt they were more likely to take because of the program. Although affirmative responses are no guarantee of action, they provide a basis for evaluating how much participants were motivated to be more engaged. 85% reported motivation for at least one civic action, and 62% selected two or more civic actions.

How people were motivated to take civic action



What words or phrases did attendees use to describe their most important feelings or experiences across all programs?



Attendee Satisfaction and Interest in Future Programs

The survey included two items that provide general indices of attendees' overall impressions. One of these questions asked respondents to rate their satisfaction, and they all expressed being at least somewhat satisfied, and most reported being extremely satisfied. Perhaps a more telling indicator of satisfaction are responses to a question addressing attendees' intentions to go to a similar event in the future: People are unlikely to want to repeat an experience they did not find rewarding. As with the satisfaction question, respondents from both programs indicated that they probably or, more commonly, definitely would attend a similar program in the future.

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response

Please rate your overall satisfaction with today's program.



■ Extremely dissatisfied ■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat satisfied ■ Extremely satisfied

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Response

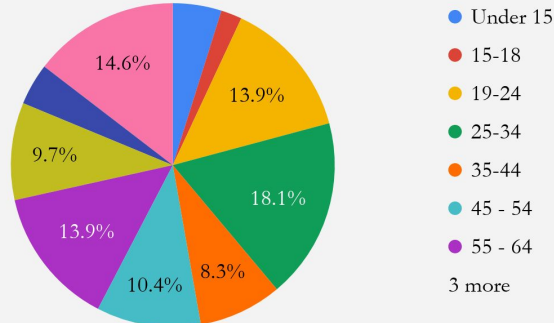
If you are able, do you think you would attend another program like this in the future?



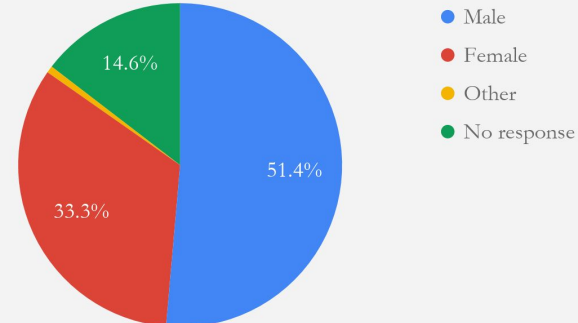
■ Definitely would not ■ Probably would not ■ Maybe ■ Probably would ■ Definitely would

Demographic Characteristics

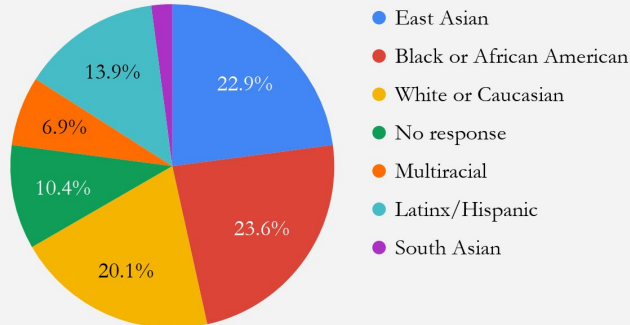
Ages of Survey Respondents



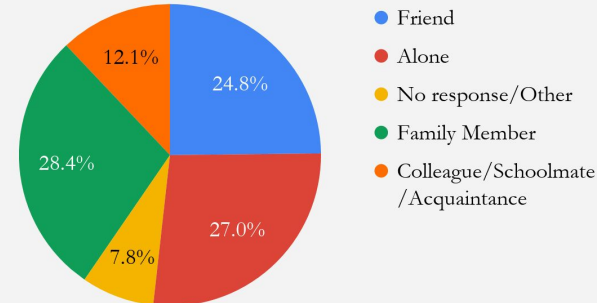
Gender



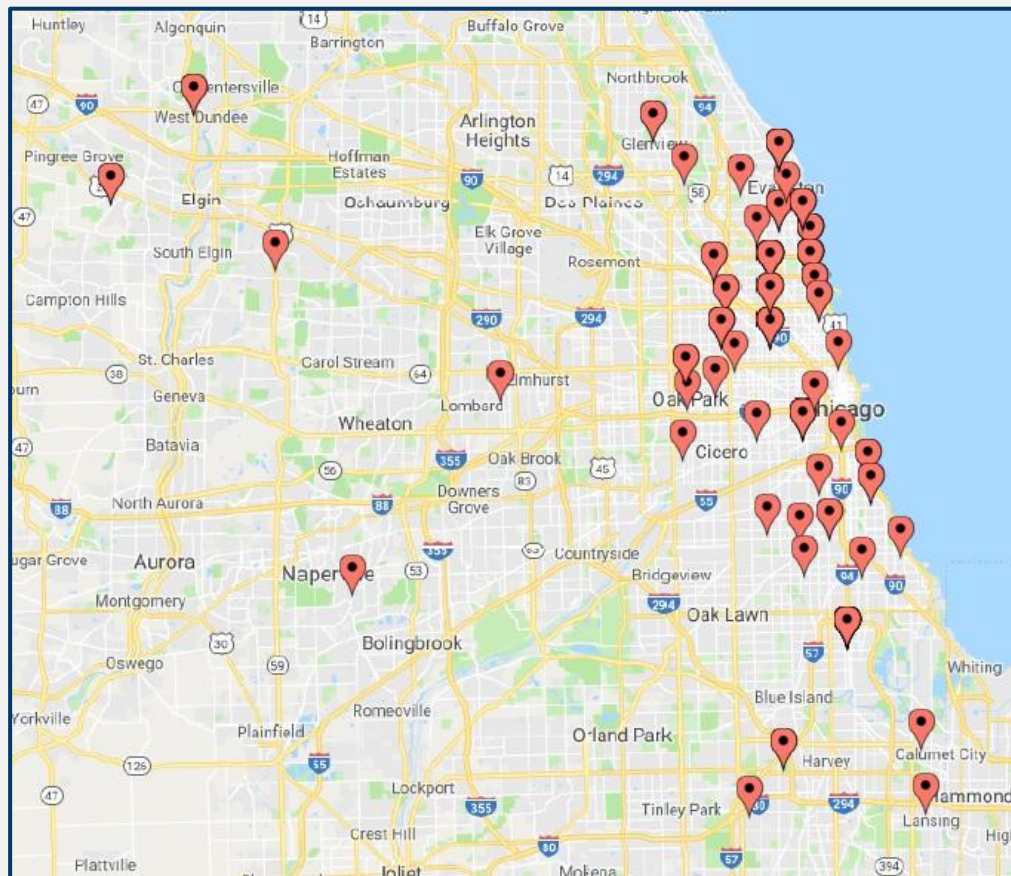
Race/Ethnicity



Whom did participants come to the program with?



48 Zip Codes Reported by Participants



Thank You

*For questions about the methods or
results described in this report, please
contact:*

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References

References

- Barry, B., & Stewart, G. L. (1997). Composition, process, and performance in self-managed groups: the role of personality. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(1), 62.
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