



SUMMARY REPORT & RECOMMENDATION

Strategic
Engagement
Process for the
Dane County
Board of
Supervisors

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In April of 2024, the nINA Collective embarked on a strategic community engagement process and development of an outreach model for the Dane County Board of Supervisors. The project used a racial and social equity lens to engage and hear from residents regarding their concerns and priorities for Dane County government to address. The process included focus groups held throughout the geographic area of Dane County, including additional focus groups provided for Spanish and Hmong speaking residents.

During May and June 2024, the nINA Collective facilitated ten focus groups. Four groups were facilitated virtually. Six of these groups were in-person across Dane County. We had 101 focus group participants. In addition, we also conducted a survey which received 839 responses in total. Participant demographics for both methodologies are detailed in the full report.



Resident participants appreciated the following qualities in Dane County:

1. Appreciate the natural environment
2. Like the free family and community events
3. Generally find Dane County to have a high quality of life (especially people who do not have marginalized identities.)

Policy priority areas identified for Dane County were:

1. The inaccessibility of Dane County, specifically in regards to: affordable housing, transportation, civic engagement, and education (listed in order of how frequently they were mentioned).
2. The lack of diversity in neighborhoods and lack of a true sense of belonging in the wider community, especially for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.
3. Unsustainable growth and the accompanying cost of living increases that are pricing many current residents out of Dane County.

Regarding civic engagement residents experienced:

1. A lack of intentionality and coordination around civic engagement efforts which leads to confusion and mistrust.
2. A lack of clarity about who to contact regarding their concerns, and what falls in the purview of the County and the Dane County Board.
3. A general feeling of disengagement, because many of them have given feedback before and don't know what (if anything) has come of their past contributions.

Specific resident recommendations included:

1. Increase housing supply at ALL price points/tenancy structures (own, rent, etc.) with a focus on affordable housing
2. Establish cross-sector partnerships to broaden modes of communication and create a business community and government partnership that streamlines information directly to communities most in need.
3. Increase recognition of Indigenous history and land at County spaces, especially at the airport.
4. Offer resources on navigating the new bus system - particularly in other languages
5. Improve outreach and communication between the County/Dane County Board and the public. There is a need to rebuild (or build) trust with the BIPOC community.
6. Increase opportunities for residents to gather and build community, especially in the winter. Specifically, create spaces for: youth and teens; different cultural groups; and communal gardening.

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Introduction

This report includes findings and analysis from focus groups facilitated by the nINA Collective in Dane County, Wisconsin. This and other forthcoming documents will inform and prepare the Dane County Board of Supervisors for ongoing community engagement, input, and collaboration.

In these focus groups and our general experience, community members and constituents are eager to help government administrators hear and understand their concerns and perspectives on building and sustaining a healthy and vibrant community. Based on that experience, our strong advice is that this administration listens and learns from its constituents' input. Perhaps even more important than listening will be your demonstration of understanding and responsiveness to that information and input.

Community Engagement Process and Context

During May and June 2024, the nINA Collective facilitated ten focus groups. Four groups were facilitated virtually. Six of these groups were in person:

- One at the Middleton Public Library
- Two at the Sun Prairie Public Library
- One at the Fitchburg Public Library
- One at the Bayview Community Center, in Hmong
- One at the Latino Academy, in Spanish



We had 101 focus group participants; 13 people participated in Hmong, 11 in Spanish, and 77 in English. In addition to the session being offered in Spanish, Spanish facilitation was also available during the in-person sessions at the public libraries and at two of the virtual sessions. We also provided sign language interpreters for two of the virtual focus groups.

We had representation from 31 of the 37 Supervisor districts in Dane County. We had strong diversity across age and race; however, the gender representation skewed heavily towards

female participants. See Appendix A for the specific geographic and demographic details regarding participants.

After receiving feedback from residents through the focus group process, we created a Strategic Engagement Survey that included 10 questions related to residents' experiences with and perceptions of their communities and Dane County more broadly. The survey also included five demographic questions on age, race, gender, ZIP code, and duration of residence in Dane County. See Appendix B for the specific demographic details of survey respondents.

The survey was distributed to Dane County's list of residents who have utilized its Polco survey system. The nINA Collective also shared the survey through its contacts and social media channels. Some of the questions were designed to gather a broader set of responses to the key themes emerging from the focus groups that were conducted as part of this strategic engagement process. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

Lastly, nINA Collective sent a follow-up survey to all 85 focus group participants for whom we had an email address to get feedback on our first draft of the themes you will see in this report. We received a total of 29 survey responses from focus group participants (about a 35% response rate). Overall, focus group participants agreed with our findings based on their feedback. These responses are reflected in this final report draft..



Focus Group Summary

It is important to acknowledge that—across all focus groups and conversations—participants had some difficulty recognizing the difference between the county government purview and that of municipalities or even the State of Wisconsin. Residents tend not to consider the county government when thinking about their experience as residents. These boundaries and spheres of responsibility are not well known or well-understood by individuals in Dane County (transportation and bus service is a good example of this city/county jurisdictional confusion). That is, they do not understand their quality of living and experience as a matter of “county” jurisdiction. Instead, their experience is situated more within the context of municipality, village, city, or neighborhood. Because we believe it is essential for county officials to hear constituents' experiences, expectations, and concerns, we include the full spectrum of their responses here.

Most focus group participants expressed some desire to be in community with their neighbors and fellow residents. They believe

that the size, geography, resources, and history of Dane County (and its municipalities) particularly lend to a vibrant sense of community.

Benefits of Living in Dane County

People said they wanted to be in community with their neighbors, and most spoke to the beauty and livability of the cities, spaces, and places in the county. Their comments focused on their appreciation of the natural environment, the lakes and parks, and the many opportunities for outdoor activities and enjoying nature.

Some participants talked about events and attractions that are both family-oriented and community-oriented and serve as opportunities to come together as residents. Finally, some suggested that Dane County is a place of “high livability.” They expressed satisfaction with their quality of life and indicated that their neighborhoods meet their needs.

Policy Priority Areas for Dane County Residents

In every focus group, participants felt that the most prominent challenge in Dane County was the inaccessibility of necessary services and support. Dane County residents (both longtime and recent) shared their experience of immense change in the county in the context of population growth. Many people said that, in their experience, the county needs to meet the challenges created by population growth at this pace. With regard to inaccessibility, many participants mentioned the lack of affordable housing. However, participants also expressed concerns about the inaccessibility of Dane County regarding transportation, civic engagement, education, affordable housing, and the fact that the provision of those services—along with access to resources and food—are heavily siloed. These issues are outlined below in the order of frequency in which they were mentioned.

Affordable Housing

Across all ten focus groups, affordable housing was named as a significant challenge in the county. More specifically, participants expressed their concerns about the lack of housing availability to meet the needs of various lower-income and asset levels of Dane County families and individuals.

Participants noted that as rents rise, it is increasingly more challenging to live comfortably in the county, so residents are either displaced out of the county or to the outskirts of the county. Of particular note was the observation by many participants that new housing projects are constantly popping up. They said that it is not that there is no housing but that the housing made available by developers in the county is being built in concentrated areas at rent or mortgage levels that many Dane County families cannot meet.





"There's definitely a large need for more affordable units. People are getting pushed into units that are then putting them over budget, and then they're not able to maintain it."

"I have so much stress over how am I going to have a place to live?...I make more money than I ever have, but it's still not enough. I pulled myself up out of being on BadgerCare, Section 8, food stamps, all of it. I almost would rather go back to it, because of how freaking hard it is to pay rent here. Rent alone."

"We had a conversation about the housing crisis. I said, 'There's no crisis. There's housing out there. People just can't afford it.'"


Participants were satisfied with the concentration of housing and with shaping a Dane County with denser living spaces. However, most people expressed a deep concern that the result of the building and construction as the work and planning progress will be a Dane County that is not affordable for everyone.



"...if every single corner gets demolished from what was there, and the same looking type of building goes up, and maybe doesn't always make sure there is Section 8 or other kind of mixed uses for that space. That just amplifies the problem, rather than solves it."

Transportation


Focus group participants were also concerned about the availability and accessibility of transportation services—particularly bus services. People who expressed these concerns said that bus service in the county is not well-suited to the timing and routing needs of the people who rely on them the most.



"With the buses, it would be tricky to get to some of these places. I'm someone who has always picked where I've lived based off of the bus system getting me to work because parking is expensive. And there's not really good options outside of the bus if you aren't living immediately on campus."

Participants also acknowledged the great businesses, the helpful local organizations (particularly those that support marginalized communities), the inviting neighborhoods, and the beautiful scenic areas in the county. However, many folks in the focus groups said that it is difficult for some people to access these welcome resources and sites by public transportation. According to some of our focus group participants, a personal vehicle is, unfortunately, a necessity for individuals and families hoping to experience all that Dane County has to offer.

They noted the financial requirement and the environmental cost of so many people owning and driving cars on county streets and roads. In this way, participants suggested that Dane County is not necessarily "growing in the right way." Some of these issues intersected as they were discussed in focus groups. Participants connected some of these issues when they told us they noticed housing being built in areas where any new resident would have to have a car to get around. For many of them, this



"Public transportation in Madison is pathetic and if you even think about going outside to the rest of Dane County, going to natural areas, which are beautiful, you have to have a car. So, this dependence on fossil fuels and cars is not something I think Madison has dealt with very well."

"Having to rely on mass transit, that would drive me crazy. I couldn't do that, as somebody who uses a wheelchair, I can't wait outside or even get to the bus stop. I can't even wheel that far."

point emphasized the need for more accessible public transportation to meet the needs of those who might rely on it the most.

In another area where the issues intersected in our discussions, participants (whose first language was not English) spoke about the language inaccessibility of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. Participants said that for people in Spanish-speaking communities, the recent change from a numbers-based routing system to a letters-based routing system was a barrier to navigating the new system. Similarly, Hmong speakers, who must navigate public transportation and don't speak English, shared the same concerns about the difficulty presented by language inaccessibility. Resources and guidance on the new system in other languages were named as a helpful addition to ensure that residents whose first language is not English can still navigate the transit system.

Siloing of Resources

The issue of how and whether resources are provided to people who need them has been a perennial question in Dane County and other places across Wisconsin and the country. The availability of services and support and accessibility of those resources are essential to the residents of Dane County and, therefore, important to the administration. Because this question is often asked and only partially answered, the County will need to approach this and other questions raised in the focus groups from a fresh, values-based perspective.

These focus groups, rooted in equity and inclusion, provide an opportunity to intentionally develop strategic planning and creative thinking about how to approach this question in a new way, informed by this and future community engagement activities.

Some Dane County residents told us that essential resources and support are not readily available to everyone who needs them.



"The resources are actually accessible for some and not for others."

"I think another thing that we could use more support on is for people who are undocumented. Not just more resources, but also more inclusivity and acceptance because of where I work, we have immigrants coming here from Verona, we have people coming from here from the west side because the services on the west side do not feel welcoming to them. So now, our food pantry and our housing services and all of our services that we provide are utilized by people who aren't necessarily in our community. And we're happy to do that. But at some point, we have to look at a more systemic issue and how can we help and support people across Dane County, so they're not having to drive from Verona to Sun Prairie?"



Again, there is evidence that the issues raised in our focus groups overlap and intersect in important and informative ways. Housing, transportation, and service access are just a few intersecting issues that incorporate the reality of racial inequity in policy, process, and planning.



"I will say as someone who's involved in a nonprofit, I'm envious of the west side of Madison. And there's a real need on the East Side of Dane County."

"There are so many human services in Dane County, it's crazy. The thing I always advocate about is that everything is on Park Street or on East Washington. So, if you are not mobile or you don't have enough money to take a bus, or you can't get there. It's so hard to access those resources."

"Building a center of town where so much activity is happening around that and then basically moving everybody else to farther and farther away from the center of the city."

Education

People from various income and education levels participated in our focus group discussions. For a few of our respondents, the feeling of exclusion and the lack of a sense of belonging came most powerfully from their perception of Dane County and Madison as places where formal post-secondary educational accomplishment is paramount.



"The thing about the Madison area and Dane County is that everyone has a Master's. And if they don't, it's hard to find a job that's sustainable for an individual."

"If you don't have a Master's degree or Bachelor's degree, you kind of feel a little left out, especially amongst your peers."

"I believe that a lot of students of color are pushed into elitism because the only way to actively survive and to thrive in this area is to become elite, go to college, go and get a doctorate or a Master's so that you can be something."

"My guess is that most of us have an undergraduate degree at the minimum. And so I just wanted to call that out that there is a lot of privilege when it comes to education here. So, I'd be curious to know what the differences are for people who don't have that education?"

This is an interesting issue for your administration to consider. The county has little to no direct impact on individuals' feelings of belonging related to their own (or others') educational attainment. However, this information about people's perceptions and lived experiences can provide some context and direction for future community engagement planning and processes.

Each of the following themes from the focus groups: civic engagement, belonging, and systemic racism and oppression went directly to the issues of racial and social equity and inclusion.

Civic Engagement

Some participants experienced the disconnect between themselves and county policymakers as exclusion. They shared sentiments that they were not being asked to participate. They believed the administration was not interested in their contributions or input, which may be perceived as overt exclusion.



"I don't really have a voice because it isn't offered to me."

"The town's association is all old white men."



Others said that there were no accessible opportunities to influence policies that shape their community. As such, civic engagement was not believed to be equitable, and the perception from residents was that those who can and do participate likely already have the privilege and civic power to influence change. Similarly, those most negatively impacted by these policies are most likely to be left out, and in turn, decision-making can reinforce inequitable conditions, outcomes, and choices.

Participants' concerns about the inaccessibility of civic engagement were two-fold: 1) exclusivity of participation (as discussed above) and (2) knowledge about opportunities for involvement and input.

The issue of residents' knowledge and information about opportunities to influence policy and decision-making will be an important locus for creative thinking and collaborative planning for community engagement. What we heard in focus groups is the notion that civic engagement is limited to those with the flexibility to engage in this "volunteerism" or "part-time job," which may mean that some Dane County residents believe that civic engagement is inherently geared toward certain groups.



"Things get done by people who show up, and not everyone can show up, right? Because you got kids or a job that's third shift...so the people with the time or the flexibility to participate in civic issues are the ones who end up making the decisions or informing the decisions."



Most residents that I've met don't know that they can participate in opportunities like this or don't know that they can participate or attend some of those county board meetings or council meetings or they don't necessarily know they can express their voices and opinions.

Despite good faith efforts from the county or the city to provide opportunities for engagement, civic engagement is a volunteer activity or a part-time job. It just is.

Also, to the extent that county administrators do make these opportunities available to everyone, some people simply do not get the message.

Regardless of the reason—exclusion or lack of information—civic engagement is inaccessible for some Dane County residents.



Belonging and Social Inclusion

Dane County, particularly Madison, is generally perceived as a progressive, liberal, and justice-oriented locality. However, participants expressed that despite this perception, there are many concerns about neighborhood diversity and equity, inclusion, and belonging, and these concerns were named as additional challenges in the county.



"Even now in Stoughton, it's different from being in the city of Madison. I was getting the stares of like, who are you? What are you doing here?"

"But you have some people that are anti-Black, anti-Hispanic, anti-immigrant. And they don't be subtle."

"Middleton has over 1,800 African Americans that live here. When you have the events, which I love, it don't cater but to one group of people."

"I would say that as a marginalized person it has been really difficult to live here, I could never see myself living here for any longer than I absolutely have to."

"Lastly, I will say that Blackness, specifically Black American culture, is tolerated here. There is no space for celebration. There is no space for Black Americans to experience their culture."

Participants shared that spaces within Dane County seem to cater to dominant or majority identities across the spectrum, which leaves people of color and other marginalized groups feeling excluded and, ultimately, missing a sense of belonging. Some people in the groups said that the disproportionately small number of racially marginalized people in Dane County shapes a perception that individuals and families from certain racial groups do not belong. A lack of culture and language-congruent resources hinders a non-English speaking or non-native speaker's sense of belonging. Additionally, there are few authentic and culturally relevant opportunities to explore diverse identities.

Disparities/systemic racism

Participants were asked about how well they feel their voice or perspective is heard or prioritized, as well as their overall feelings about the communication and engagement efforts of leadership in their communities, and these were the key findings:

Dane County residents expressed the lack of intentionality with community engagement efforts often feel “performative,” specifically in attempts to diversify the voices that are heard. There may be opportunities to participate, but participants shared that nothing ever changes, so these opportunities are not perceived as intentional or purposeful.



“There’s a culture of saying that we want better, and saying that things should change, and that people are doing things...we create spaces for people to reveal their trauma and to go back and experience their trauma again and share it amongst all these people. And everyone’s like ‘yeah, yeah, yeah’ and then nothing happens, and you’re still struggling with that trauma.”

“You can be inclusive and not welcoming, like you can ask people to join, but if you’re not really looking for their feedback, then it’s just sort of performative.”

Dane County residents in our discussion groups expressed a need for more communication from stakeholders in local governance. They said that although there are active platforms for interaction at more of a local neighborhood level, it is hard to know who to contact or where there are opportunities to have their voices heard at higher levels of local governance. Some participants were willing to participate in focus groups, committees, community meetings, etc., but it was a matter of not hearing about opportunities.



“...better advertise how we reach our people and let them know that yes, their opinion is valued.”

“Unfortunately, you do have to know who to communicate, who to contact, and that’s something that nowadays, it’s a skill that I believe we don’t see.”

“I do believe that if Dane County would work more with what it is, just local businesses, to keep us a little bit more informed...”

“I’ll just say from a neighborhood perspective, there seems to be a fairly strong effort to communicate to the people in a neighborhood through a monthly newsletter, there’s an active Facebook group for neighbors. As far as city level or county government, I don’t know...”

People often cited the coincidence of finding the focus group they were presently participating in (with the nINA Collective) as an example. For other participants, the lack of communication was more a matter of needing to know the stakeholders in local governance. In particular, many participants did not know their County Supervisor or what issues were in the county's purview, so they did not feel any connection to or involvement in policy or process.

Dane County residents (particularly people of color and other marginalized people) are mistrustful of campaigns for community engagement. The perception is that more powerful individuals and agencies bring residents together to hear their experiences, input, and recommendations, and the upshot is that resulting projects reject or ignore community input or never come to fruition. Even worse, residents often don't know anything about project plans or outcomes because there is no process for feedback or follow-up.



There is a final vital point about disconnection and segregation in Dane County. For us, as observers and facilitators, it showed up not in the direct feedback from participants but in how people of various racial identities and economic situations interacted and talked together over a meal in our in-person focus group settings.

Participants noticed and expressed curiosity about each other's shared and disparate experiences of living in Dane County in the context of their racial identities and financial circumstances. This is clearly one of the results of racial segregation—people live in separate neighborhoods and even separate towns in Dane County. They rarely find themselves in the same space and time, sharing a meal and getting to know each other's lives. They were relaxed, open, and eager to listen to others' lives.

This experience of participants' relaxed but curious and responsive listening and talking with each other sparked a question about how we think about segregation in Dane County. Government agencies and policymakers often think about segregation only from the aspect of the poverty and pain that is statistically more likely to be present in segregated neighborhoods of racially marginalized people. But, it seems clear that segregation is also very basic and straightforward in that it keeps people apart—fearful and unsure in each other's company. This positive, in-person focus group experience suggests that continuing to explore and learn from interactions like this might be fruitful. A question for your future strategic planning is how we can continue to be mindful of this aspect of segregation and disrupt it.

Themes from specific demographic groups

We did not conduct these focus groups in racial affinity space. However, we did hear from people in various racial and other marginalized identity groups that they had some concerns and recommendations regarding their experiences based on their identities.

You'll notice that some concerns are repeated across all groups and mentioned above (i.e., the cost of living). We find that it is important to highlight these issues, even if previously mentioned, to reinforce that marginalized communities are not a monolithic group. Even if relatively universal, each concern is informed by unique identities and experiences, which should inform our decision-making.

Black Residents

When we spoke to Black Dane County residents, they said that affordable housing was a major concern, noting that people must move further and further to the outskirts of the county to afford



living in the county. They experience the housing crisis as community members get priced out of the market. In essence, the cost of living, particularly housing, matches the jobs that are in the area. However, the jobs are not being filled by local residents.

Black residents also emphasized that it is difficult to feel like you belong in Dane County. Although Dane County/Madison has a reputation for being progressive, Black people don't often experience it as such. One example that was brought up was the few opportunities to embrace Black American culture, particularly in a celebratory way, like with food and music. Milwaukee is the closest place to have those experiences. Although there are events in Dane County meant to bring people together in this way, the music and food offered at those events do not cater to the Black community.

Residents with disabilities

When we spoke to residents with disabilities, they emphasized Dane County's inaccessibility, particularly its reliance on inadequate public transportation. Traveling is not practical if you have to rely on having a car to navigate the county. As the cost of living has severely increased in the area, it is becoming harder to live comfortably in Dane County.

Residents with disabilities also highlighted that Madison is known for being "liberal," but the reality is that there is no meaning nor tangible action behind that label. Residents whose identities are racially and otherwise marginalized continuously struggle with the same concerns that they always have.



Hmong Residents

When we spoke with Hmong residents, they shared their appreciation for programs, services, and organizations within the city of Madison that are offered to Hmong people but lack awareness about the resources at the county level. Hmong residents named that the city of Madison has a community of Hmong people. However, outside of Madison, the sense of belonging for Hmong residents is a significant concern because of the racism and discrimination within other areas of the county. As such, Madison feels safe, but not the larger Dane County.

Hmong residents also mentioned the rising cost of living and difficulty securing affordable housing and accessing affordable healthcare. Furthermore, Dane County is not accessible for those who must navigate public transportation and don't speak English.

Regarding community engagement, Hmong residents in the county have continuously been asked to vocalize their experiences as Madison and Dane County residents. Still, there has yet to be any action or change. They shared that it feels like a waste of time to try to give feedback

because no matter the concerns they uplift, their needs are not prioritized. Moreover, they do not feel connected to the people who want to speak to them and do not feel that there is a relationship between themselves and the local leadership who wants to hear their concerns.



Spanish-speaking Residents

When we talked to Spanish-speaking residents, they said that Dane County is not accessible in numerous ways. One concern was the lack of outdoor activities and recreational spaces for kids that don't require high fees or a membership fee, especially in the winter. Also in regards to accessibility, Spanish-speaking residents expressed their concerns about the recent changes to the routing system of the bus, particularly the modifications from a number-based system to a letters-based system. Residents also spoke about the affordability of housing.

Other mentions by the Spanish-speaking residents were more gathering spots for BIPOC communities, particularly around food trucks or Spanish-speaking vendors that are not within a mall. Additionally, driver's education for adults at a reasonable fee was named.

Indigenous Residents

When we spoke to Indigenous residents in Dane County, they voiced that there is not enough education provided to non-Indigenous community members about the significance of the land itself that Madison, and even Wisconsin, sit on as some of the most Indigenous cultural centers of the Great Lakes. They said that both acknowledgement and teaching from the county about the historic communities in Dane County before the Dane County that we know are urgently needed in public spaces (e.g., signage at the airport).

Indigenous residents also spoke about the need for an intertribal community. With fewer than 1,000 Indigenous people living in Dane County, there should be more opportunities to meet each other, get to know each other, and organize with each other.

Recommendations from focus group participants

1. Increase housing supply at ALL price points/tenancy structures (own, rent, etc.) with a focus on affordable housing.
2. Establish cross-sector partnerships to broaden modes of communication and create a business community and government partnership that streamlines information directly to communities most in need.
3. Increase recognition of Indigenous history and land at County spaces, especially at the airport.
4. Offer resources on navigating the new bus system - particularly in other languages



5. Improve outreach and communication between the County/Dane County Board and the public. There is a need to rebuild (or build) trust with BIPOC community.
6. Increase opportunities for residents to gather and build community, especially in the winter. Specifically, create spaces for:
 - a. youth and teens
 - b. different cultural groups
 - c. communal gardening



Dane County Strategic Engagement Survey Summary

The Strategic Engagement Survey included 10 questions related to residents' experiences with and perceptions of their communities and Dane County more broadly. The survey also included five demographic questions on age, race, gender, ZIP code, and duration of residence in Dane County.

The survey was distributed to Dane County's list of residents who have utilized its Polco survey system. The nINA Collective also shared the survey through its contacts and social media channels. Some of the questions were designed to gather a broader set of responses to the key themes emerging from the focus groups that were outlined above.

Survey Demographics

There were 839 respondents. As a whole, this group is considerably older than the general population of Dane County, with nearly half (47.5%) of respondents reporting an age of at least 55 years.

The racial and ethnic makeup of the group is less representative than the general population of Dane County, with a slightly higher proportion of White respondents and lower proportions of Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian groups. 28 respondents chose at least two race/ethnicity groups, nine identified as Biracial or Multiracial, and 75 chose "prefer not to say."

In the data analysis and disaggregation, we have created a grouping of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) to address the relatively small numbers within racialized groups and to highlight any differences between BIPOC and White respondents' perspectives.



48% of the respondents were women and 43% were men. Just over 1% identified as either nonbinary/nonconforming or another gender identity; fewer than 1% identified as transgender; 6% chose “prefer not to say.”



Nearly 2/3 (64%) of respondents have lived in Dane County for at least 20 years. Only one respondent has lived in Dane County for less than one year. There is a somewhat even distribution of the other groups on this question (9% at 15-19 years; 14% at 10-14 years; 10% at 5-9 years).

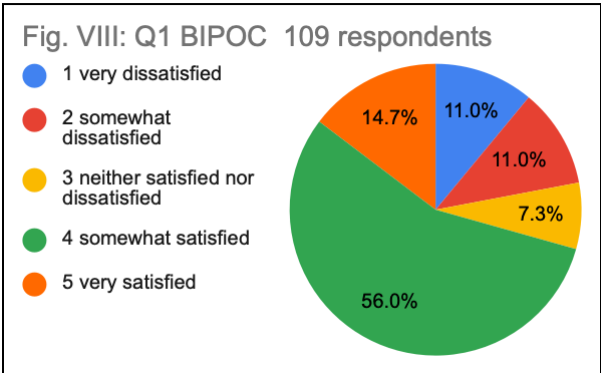
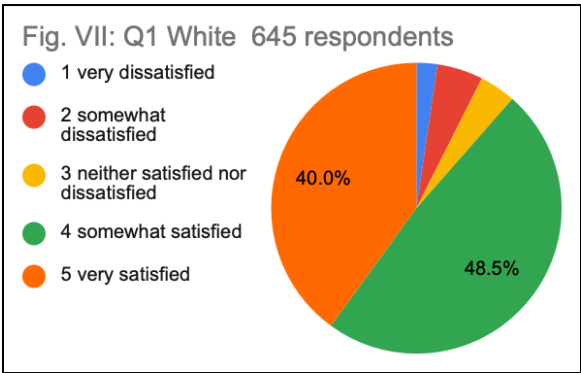
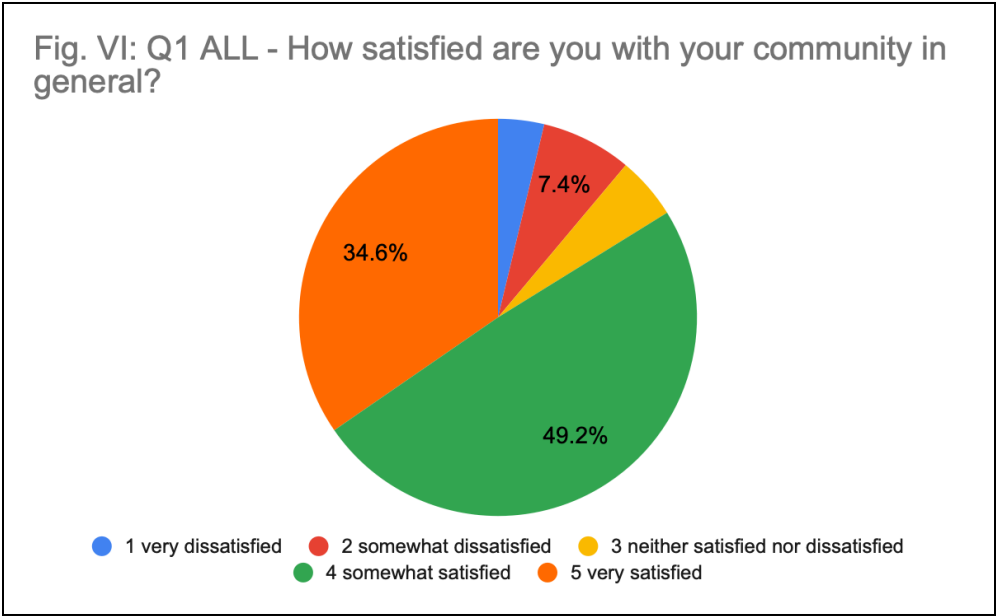
The ZIP codes with the highest number of respondents were as follows: 53562 (160 respondents); 53711 (70); 53590 (66); 53704 (64); and 53593 (54).

When reviewing the survey data, it is important to keep in mind that this should not be considered a representative sample of the full population of Dane County. This group of survey respondents, in comparison with the focus group participants, is generally older, less racially diverse, has lived in Dane County for a longer period of time, and may have historically been more engaged with county government than the general population.

Survey Responses (Q 1-10)

For each question, unless otherwise indicated, the charts depict all responses, followed by the White and BIPOC groups.

1. How satisfied are you with your community in general? (Figs. VI-VIII)



2. My community is moving in the right direction (Figs. IX-XI)

Fig. IX: Q2 ALL - My community is moving in the right direction:

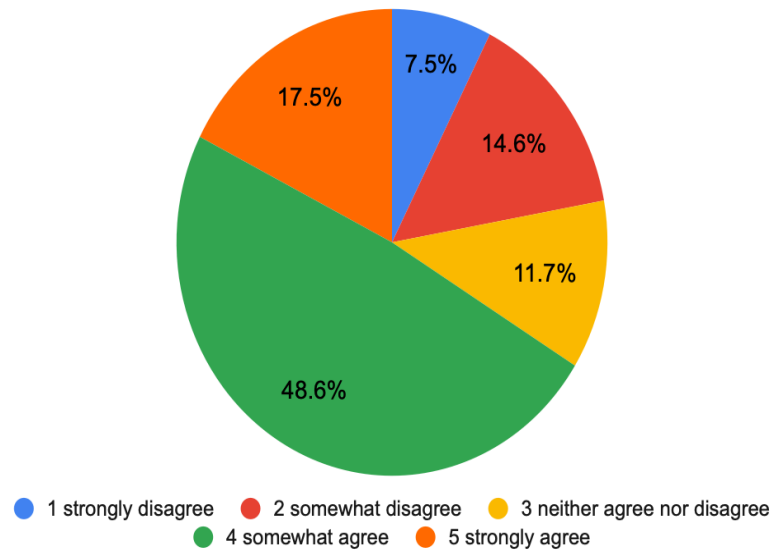


Fig. X: Q2 White 645 respondents

- 1 strongly disagree
- 2 somewhat disagree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 somewhat agree
- 5 strongly agree

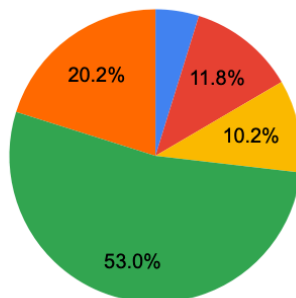
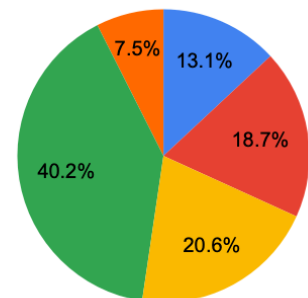


Fig. XI: Q2 BIPOC 109 respondents

- 1 strongly disagree
- 2 somewhat disagree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 somewhat agree
- 5 strongly agree



3. How would you rate the sense of community where you live? (Figs. XII-XIV)

Fig. XII: Q3 ALL - How would you rate the sense of community where you live?

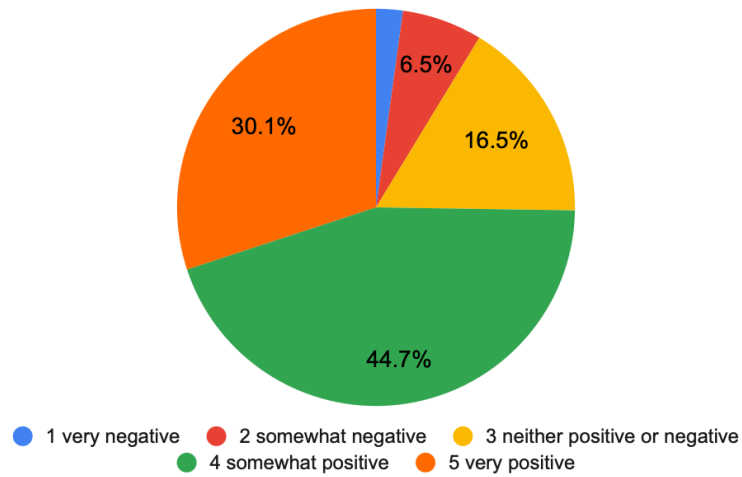


Fig. XIII: Q3 White 645 respondents

- 1 very negative
- 2 somewhat negative
- 3 neither positive or negative
- 4 somewhat positive
- 5 very positive

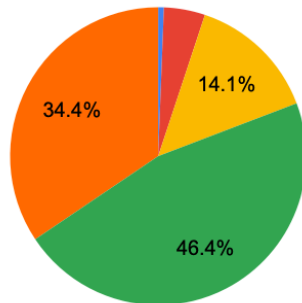
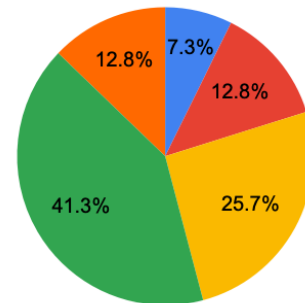
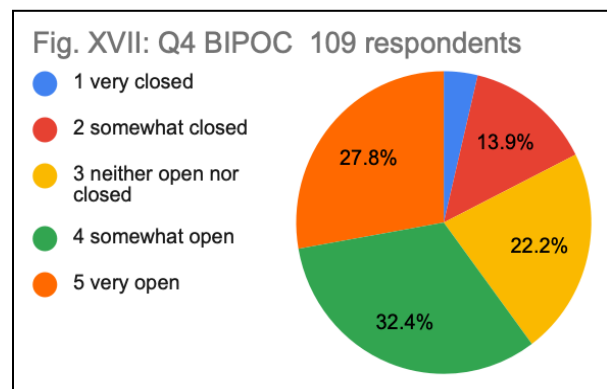
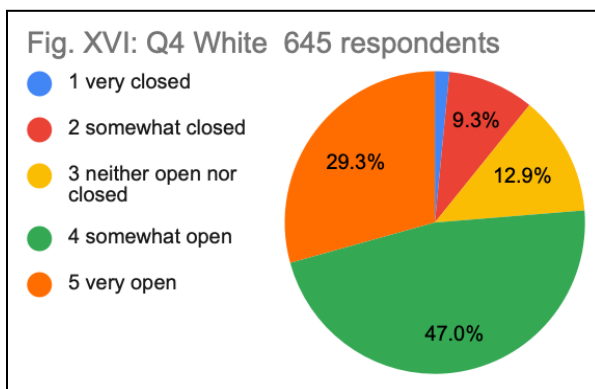
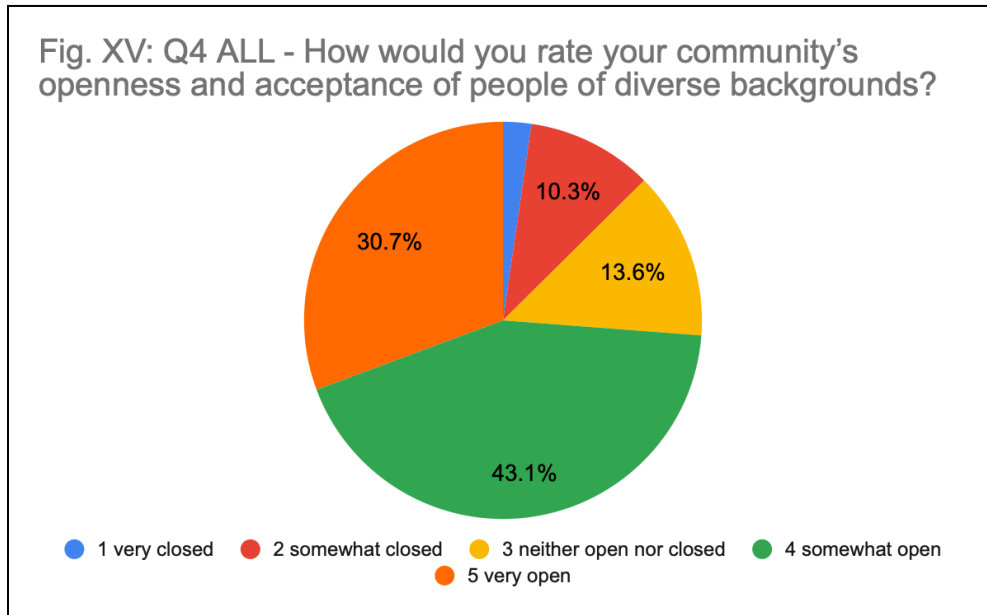


Fig. XIV: Q3 BIPOC 109 respondents

- 1 very negative
- 2 somewhat negative
- 3 neither positive or negative
- 4 somewhat positive
- 5 very positive



4. How would you rate your community's openness and acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds? (Figs. XV-XVII)



5. How safe do you feel in your community? (Figs. XVIII-XXIII)

Fig. XVIII: Q5 ALL - How safe do you feel in your community?

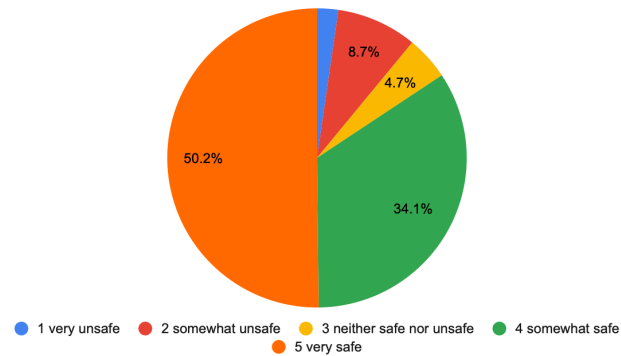


Fig. XIX: Q5 White 645 respondents

- 1 very unsafe
- 2 somewhat unsafe
- 3 neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 somewhat safe
- 5 very safe

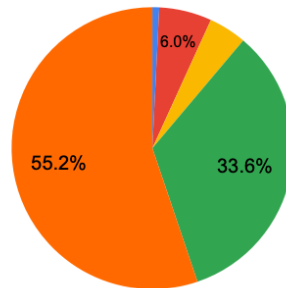


Fig. XX: Q5 BIPOC 109 respondents

- 1 very unsafe
- 2 somewhat unsafe
- 3 neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 somewhat safe
- 5 very safe

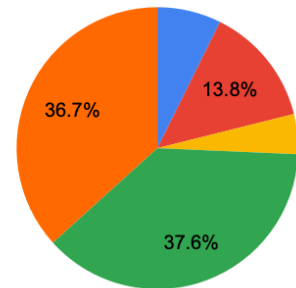


Fig. XXI: Q5 Men 352 respondents

- 1 very unsafe
- 2 somewhat unsafe
- 3 neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 somewhat safe
- 5 very safe

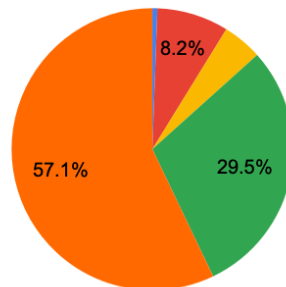


Fig. XXII: Q5 Women 395 respondents

- 1 very unsafe
- 2 somewhat unsafe
- 3 neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 somewhat safe
- 5 very safe

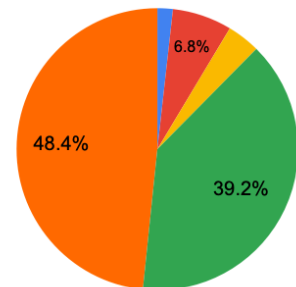
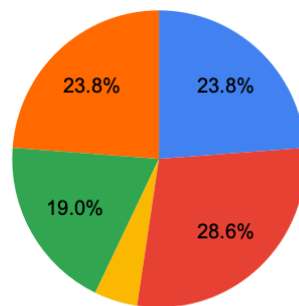
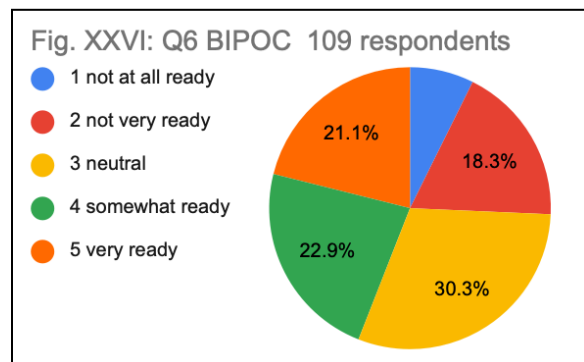
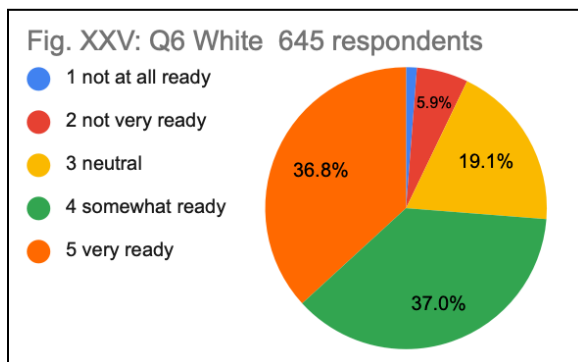
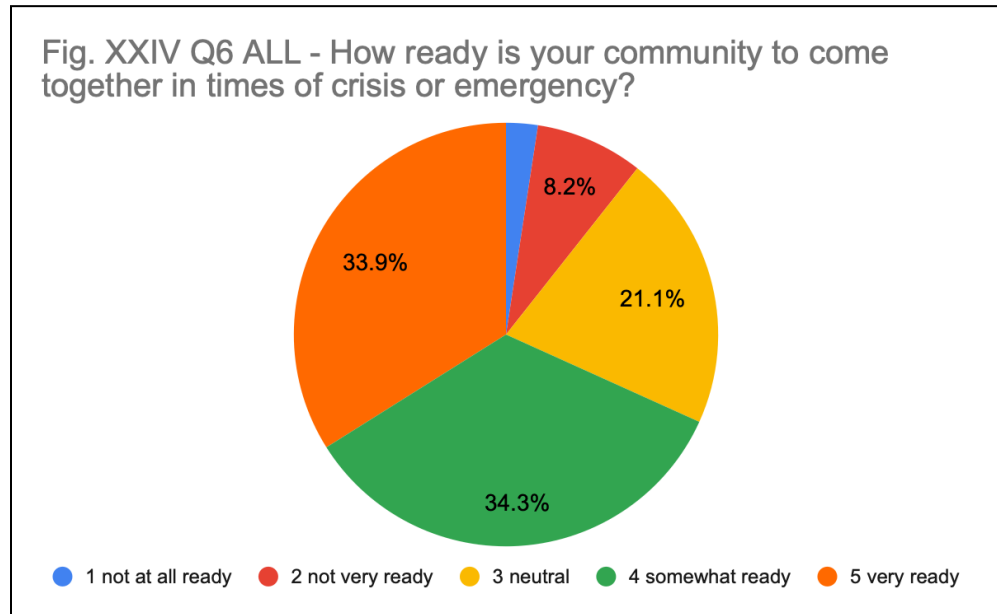


Fig. XXIII Q5 Non-Binary/Trans* 21 respondents

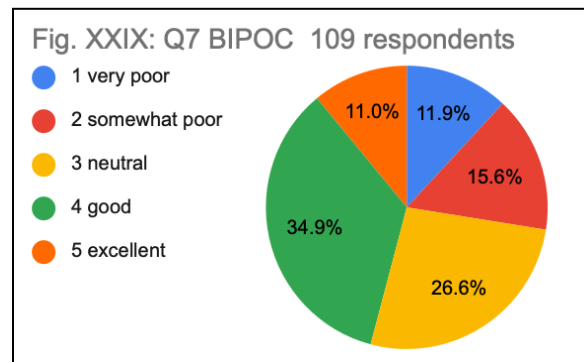
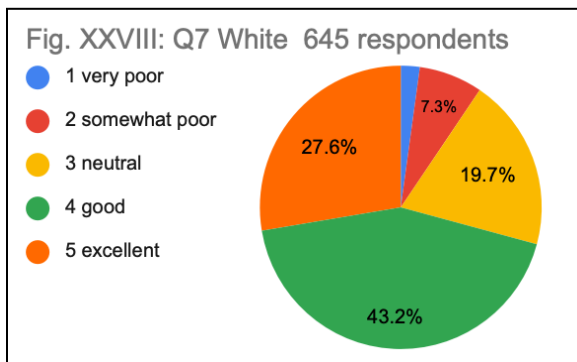
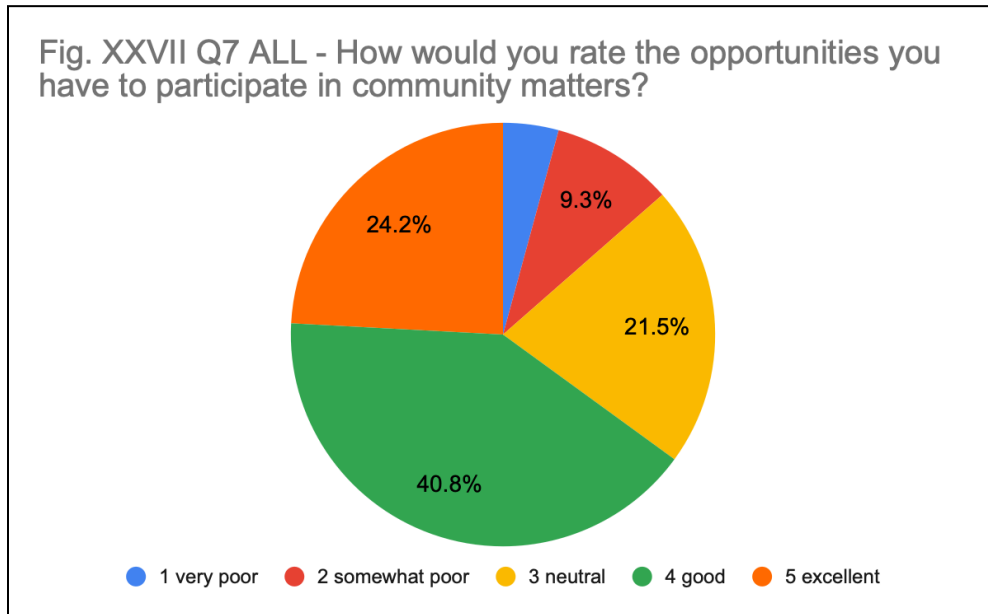
- 1 very unsafe
- 2 somewhat unsafe
- 3 neither safe nor unsafe
- 4 somewhat safe
- 5 very safe



6. How ready is your community to come together in times of emergency? (Figs. XXIV-XXVI)



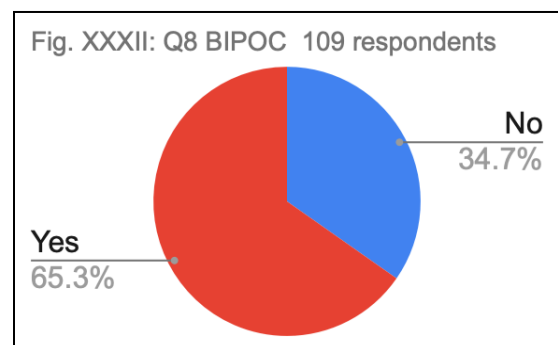
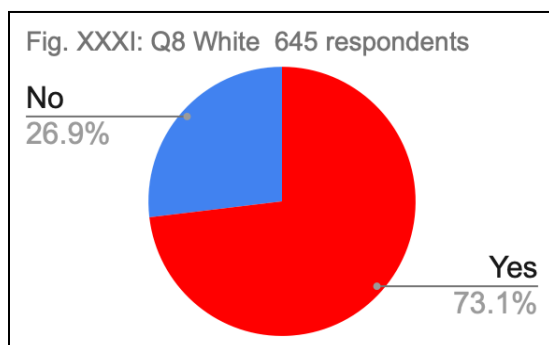
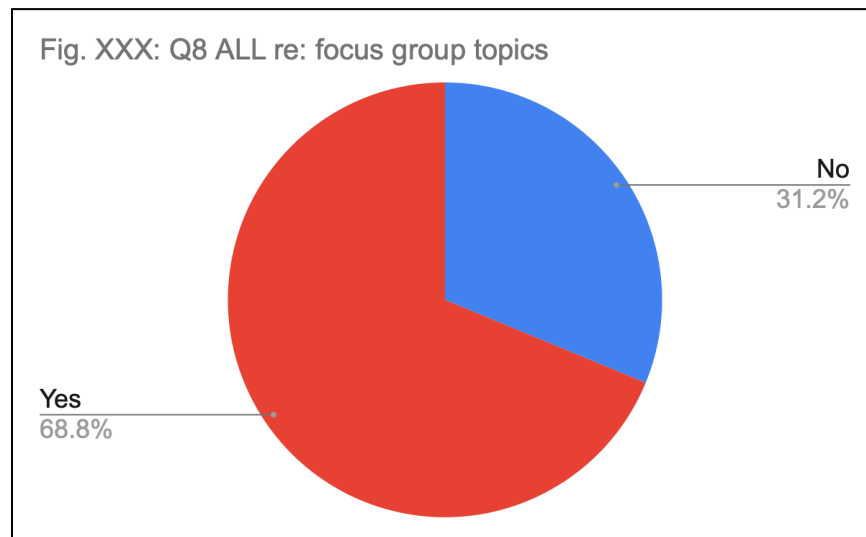
**7. How would you rate the opportunities you have to participate in community matters?
(Figs. XXVII-XXIX)**



8. We have hosted a number of focus group discussions in Dane County over the past month. In those groups, the following topics were raised as being among the most important issues facing Dane County:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of accessible, affordable, reliable transportation options
- Inaccessibility or “siloing” of county and municipal services
- Lack of a sense of belonging
- Racial disparities
- Lack of communication, especially about how to be engaged with local government

When you think about the biggest issue that Dane County needs to address, is it included in these topics? (Figs. XXX-XXXII)



Recommendations from Survey Participants

9. Are there other important issues the County needs to address? List up to three.

10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experiences in or desires for Dane County?

Note: Questions 9 & 10 are open-ended questions to follow up on Question 8 regarding the most important issues Dane County needs to address. Following is a summary of the most highly-shared ideas provided by survey respondents. For this summary, responses to Questions 9 & 10 have been combined, as there are many redundancies in main themes across the two questions.

Please note that the first three topics below were also deemed very important by focus groups, indicating high levels of consensus around these specific policy priorities.

Housing and Development

- Widespread lack of affordable housing
- Need for sustainable housing solutions; concerns over rapid development of apartment and condo buildings
- Concerns about overdevelopment and urban sprawl
- Preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods
- Need for high-density, multifamily housing with nearby services and transportation

Social Services and Community Resources

- Accessible and affordable childcare
- Mental health and substance use services
- Senior care and support for disabled individuals
- Community centers and out-of-school youth activities
- Public amenities including parks and recreational areas (in this case, it should be noted that most respondents shared their appreciation for the wide array of public outdoor spaces in Dane County, and a desire for them to be preserved.)

Education

- Quality of public schools
- Educational opportunities and career-focused learning
- Support for multicultural educational programs



The top three policy priority areas from survey respondents that were not mentioned much by focus group participants in order of how frequently they were mentioned were:

Taxes and Economic Concerns

- High property taxes
- High cost of living and economic burdens on residents
- Fiscal responsibility and budget balancing in local government
- Impacts of taxes on housing affordability
- Concerns of local government over-spending on public services

Crime and Public Safety

- Gun violence
- Law enforcement and policing, including both increasing and decreasing resources for police and law enforcement
- Safety in schools and communities
- Accountability in the criminal justice system, including racialized inequities in policing and courts along with holding people who commit crimes accountable

Environmental Concerns

- Clean waterways and lakes
- Pollution and climate change
- Conservation of natural resources
- Sustainable practices (including in local government) and renewable energy

nINA Recommendations

As outside consultants supporting this process, the nINA Collective came to understand key dynamics that, if addressed, would support a smoother strategic engagement process in the future. These following recommendations pertain to those learnings, and they pertain to communication, equity, and community relationships rather than the policy topics as identified by the community members. Specific strategies to support these recommendations will be included in the forthcoming Toolkit.

- Increase communications between supervisors and residents
 - Hold regular listening sessions
 - Build relationships with key groups/organizations in your districts
- Expand the pool of Polco users



- Select events and opportunities where people who are not represented in your current Polco respondents and plan to table at them
 - Sign people up for Polco
 - Share info about what the county does & what they are doing as a result of these last engagement sessions
- Develop (or strengthen) county relationships with municipalities concerning your mutual interests and concerns around residents' feelings of belonging, inclusion, and equity.
- Consider hosting more opportunities for residents to engage with their neighbors outside of this type of structured process.
- Build and resource a county working group with representatives from relevant commissions and committees to develop a strategy for identifying policy priorities and implementation based on feedback from this report.
- Support continued County leadership discussion and understanding around identity, equity, and belonging.
- Develop a communication plan to share the results of this process and to respond to concerns that an equity focus will create an unfair advantage for racially and socially marginalized people and communities in Dane County.

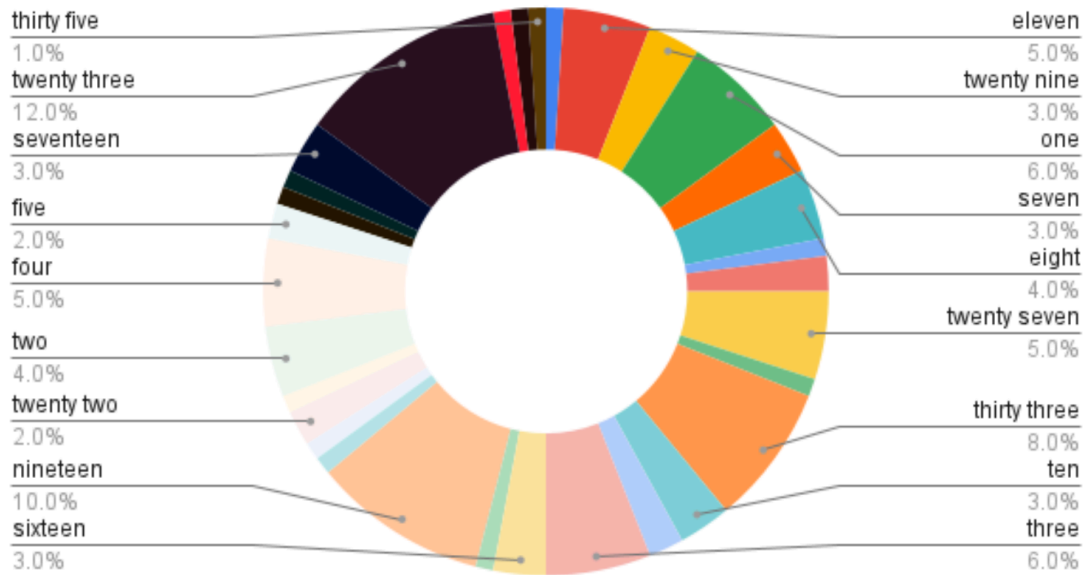
Conclusion

We had a much more diverse sample in the focus groups in all regards, and those participants clearly articulated the need for improved access to housing, transportation, and family sustaining wages in Dane County. On the other hand, our survey respondents were predominantly white, older, longer-term residents of the county, and they are generally having a very positive experience in Dane County. These two data samples clearly outline the story of two different Dane Countys. The call to the Dane County Board of Supervisors now is to ensure that their policy priorities and decisions work to ensure that the excellent quality of life experienced by majority populations in Dane County can be experienced by all.

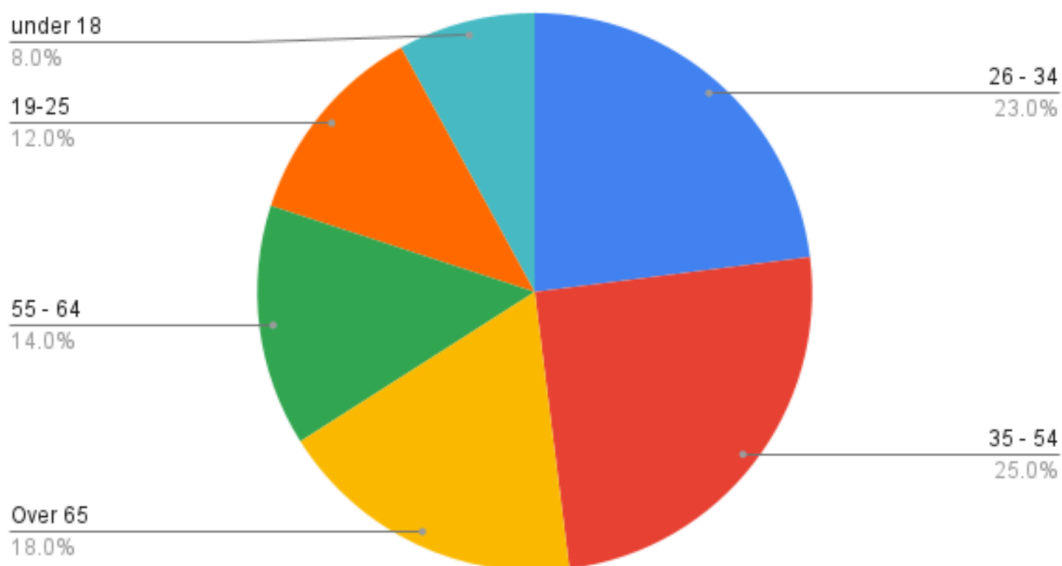


Appendix A: Focus Group Demographics

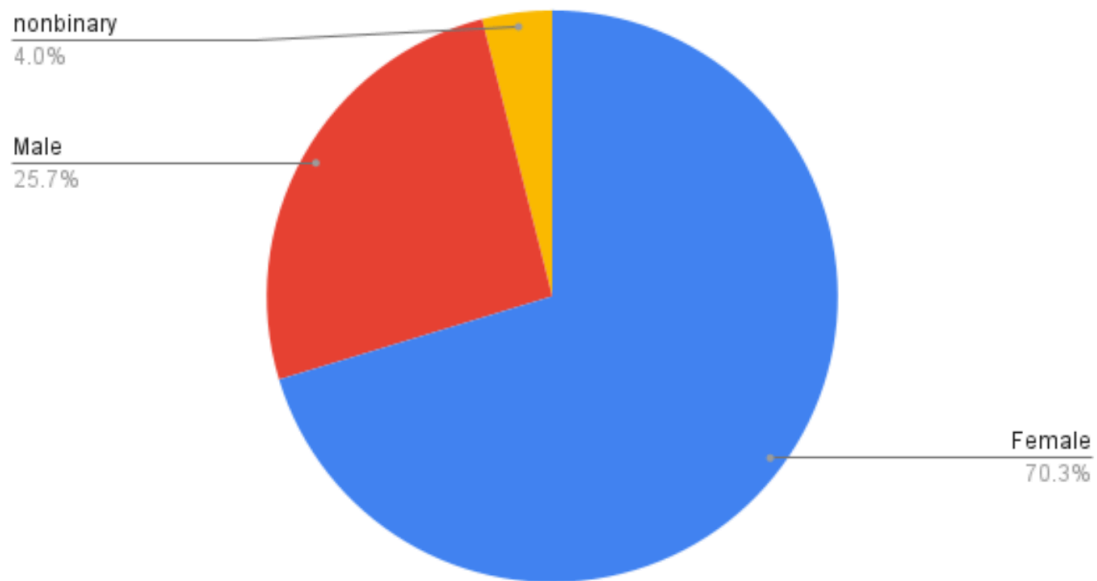
Count of Supervisor Districts



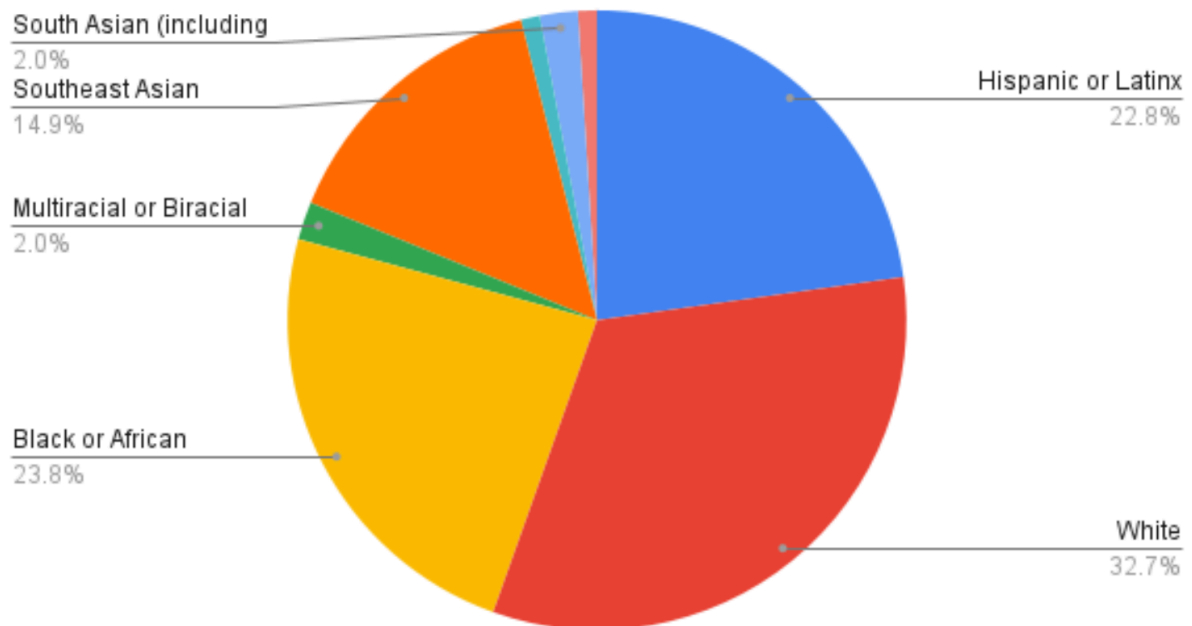
Count of Age



Count of Gender



Count of Racial and/or Ethnic Identity



Appendix B: Survey Participant Demographics

Fig. I: Q11 - In what age group are you?

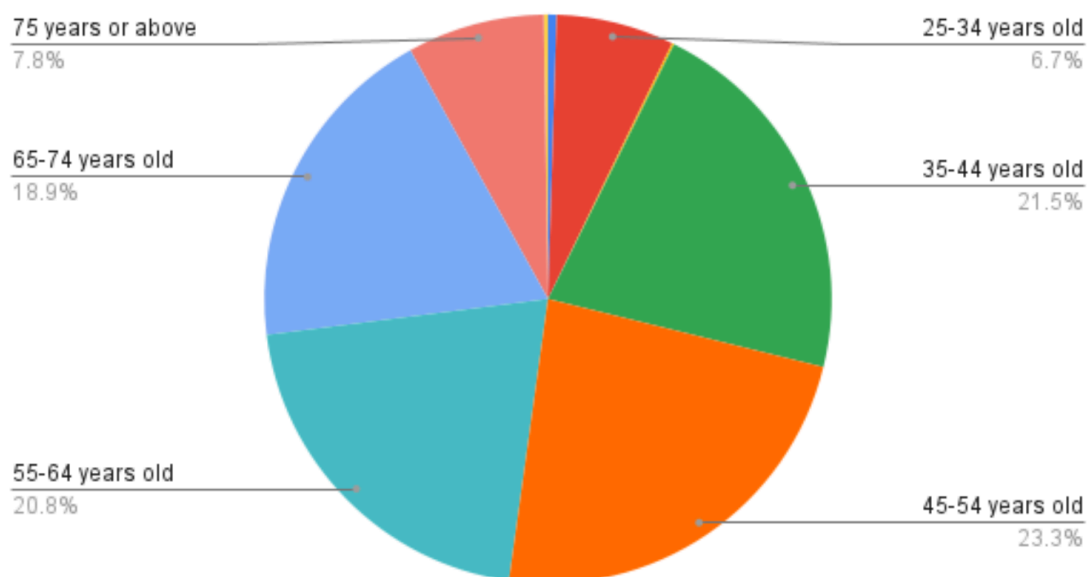


Fig. II: Q12 - What is your gender identity

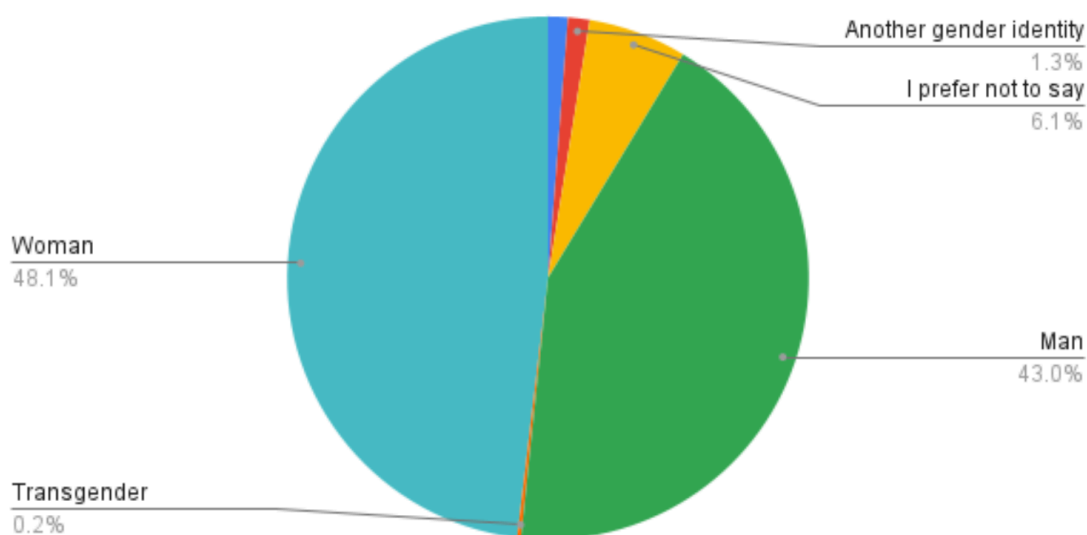


Fig. III: Q14 - What is your race and ethnicity

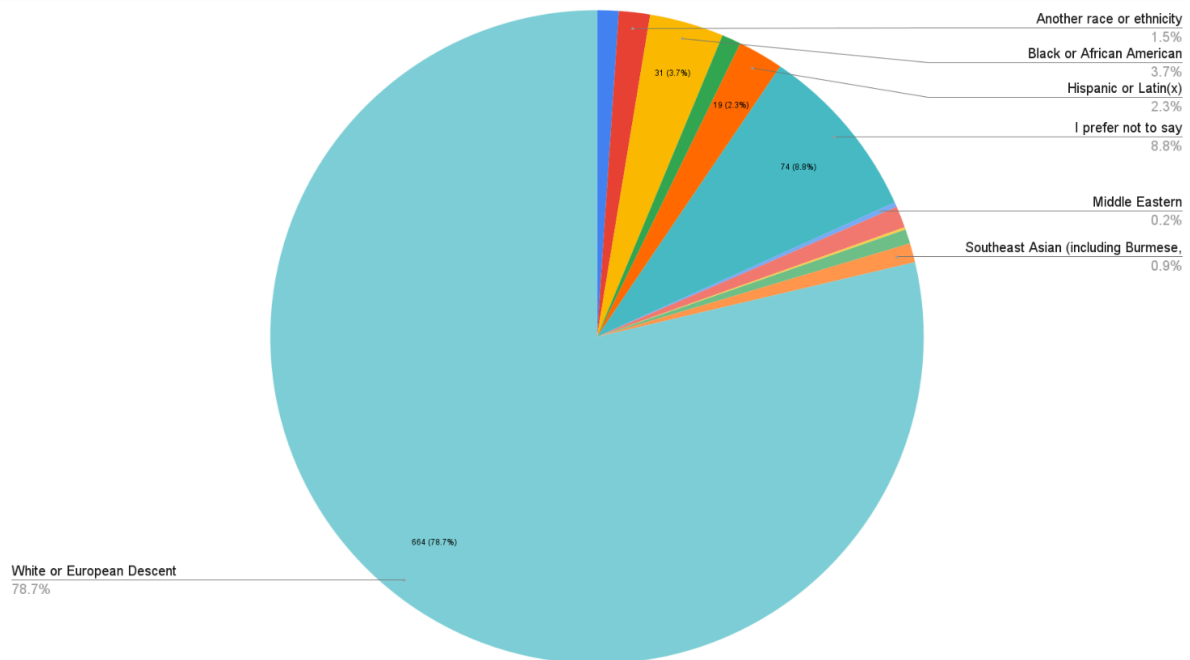


Fig. IV: Q17 - How long have you lived in Dane County?

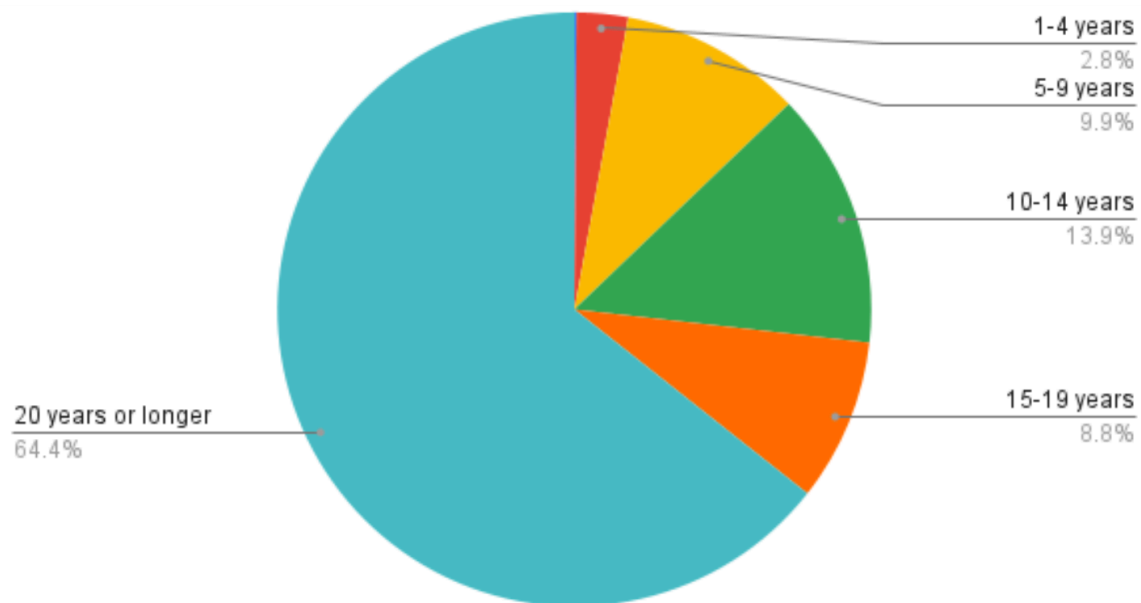


Fig. V: Q16 - What is your ZIP code?

