

The background of the poster features two young women sitting at a table. The woman on the left is a Black woman with curly hair and glasses, smiling and pointing towards the documents on the table. The woman on the right is a white woman with blonde hair, looking towards the camera. They are surrounded by various documents, including one with a red border and another with a blue border. The text 'THE BIG TABLE' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located to the right of the word 'TABLE'.

THE BIG TABLE™

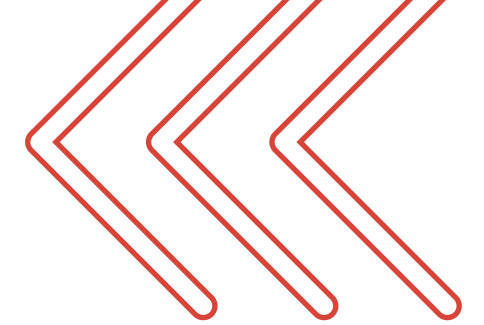
THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION

5.17.17



**The Big Table
conversations
brought thousands
of people together to
talk, listen, and learn
from one another.**

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Thank you! We are grateful for your partnership in creating a strong and connected community.

On May 17, approximately 5,000 people from more than 30 different cities in central Ohio gathered around more than 450 tables to strengthen relationships and broaden perspectives. The Big Table provided an opportunity for residents from all walks of life to host or attend conversations that built a stronger and more connected community.

“Every voice has value. The Columbus area is at its best when we discuss the issues that connect us,” said Douglas F. Kridler, President and CEO of The Columbus Foundation. “Through thoughtful dialogue and commitment to our community, we can work to strengthen central Ohio together.”

The Big Table fosters authentic human interaction and civic engagement. By taking the time to talk, listen and learn from each other, we build understanding, spread kindness, and share ways to positively impact our community.

Conversations included participants ranging from children to seniors and were spread among offices, homes, schools, churches, libraries, restaurants and other public spaces. At the end of each conversation, participants completed commitment cards that captured ways in which they were inspired to personally better the community moving forward.

After The Big Table, The Columbus Foundation sent a survey to registered Big Table hosts who distributed it to their guests. This report discusses the highlights of their survey responses and what we are learning together.

THE POWER OF CONVERSATION

While The Big Table provides a powerful opportunity to tackle tough issues and imagine creative solutions, participants recognized that **the real power of the event was simply sitting down and getting the conversation started.**

BUILDING EMPATHY

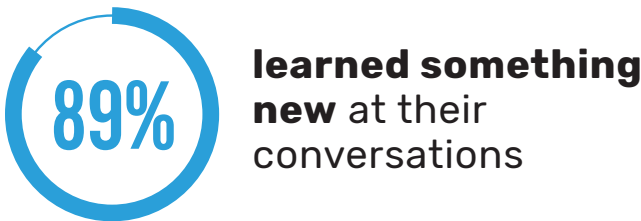
Many participants discussed how the conversations fostered by The Big Table were the first step in breaking down barriers and building meaningful relationships.

Participants communicated the need to start actively developing the values of kindness, empathy, and compassion. They believe this starts by simply hearing the stories of people from diverse backgrounds and being willing to open themselves up and share their own stories.

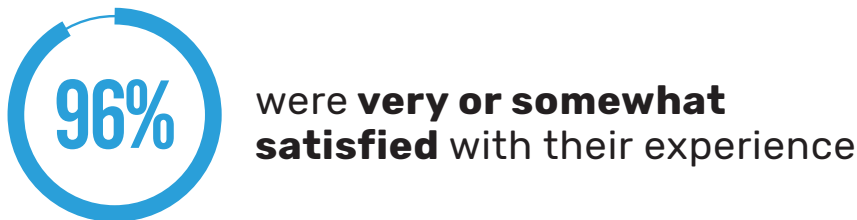
They believed that the power of The Big Table was in sitting across the table from someone they didn't know and would have never met in their daily life and listening to them.

People left their conversations feeling inspired to find ways in their own daily lives to continue to foster small group discussions across cultural and economic divides.

Moving forward, participants said the most important thing was to make sure that in every conversation, human dignity and empathy are at the center of the experience.



“When talking about how we should organize or shape how we can better collaborate in some structure, someone said we just need to start by knowing each other.”



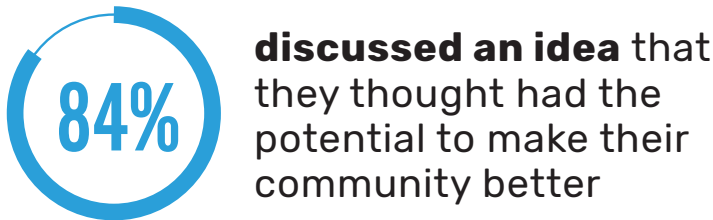
KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Participants felt that one of the most important things they could do is learn from the experience of The Big Table and keep the conversation going.

There were many ideas about how to make this happen:

- Develop more centralized locations like community centers and organize more events that provide a place for people from different communities to get together.
- Start hosting small dinner parties that gather a table of random people together for a casual dinner and discussion.
- Encourage people who were not at the table this time to be at the table next time.
- Be intentional about engaging others whose points of view are significantly different from ours.
- Get uncomfortable--commit to having a follow up conversation with a group outside of your current network.
- Find ways to help more diverse people tell their story and amplify their voices.

“I appreciated seeing people with very different perspectives sharing an appreciation for listening to one another and creating relationships and dialogue to improve the community.”

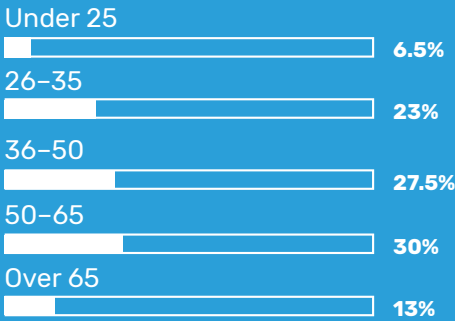


“People don't know what they don't know. Community conversation helps engage people across all facets of the city.”

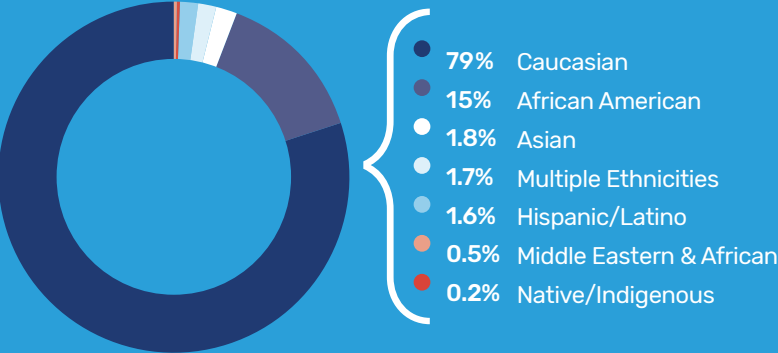


THE BIG TABLE IN NUMBERS

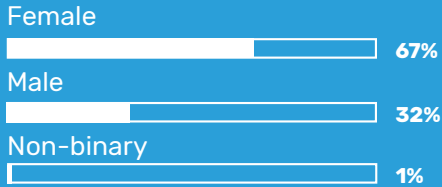
AGE



ETHNICITY



GENDER



EDUCATION

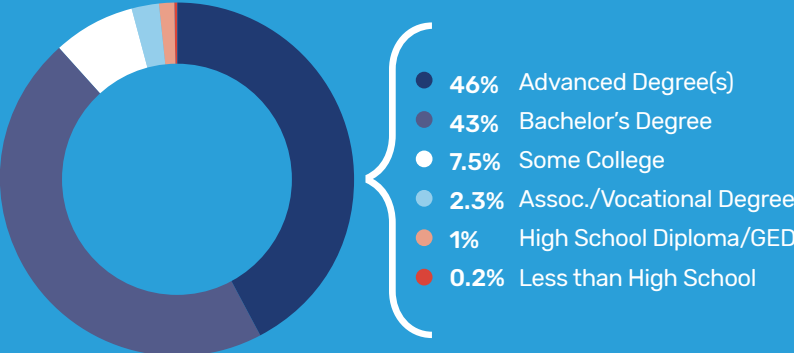
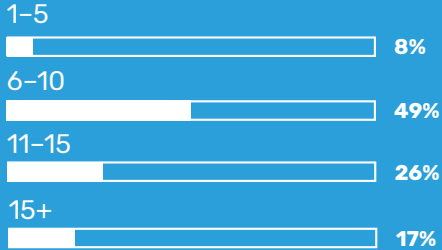


TABLE SIZE



didn't know some or all of the other people at their table before The Big Table

5000+ *at* 450+ *across* 30+
Participants Tables Cities

COLUMBUS

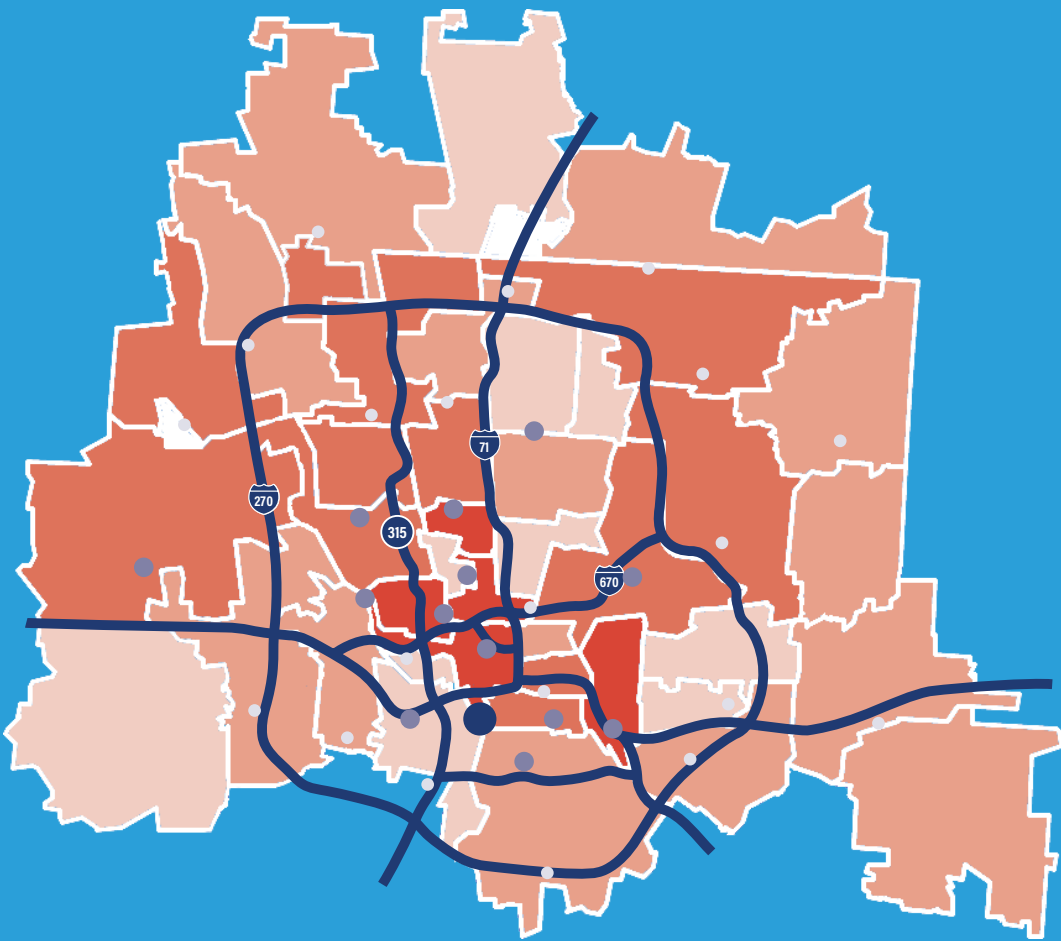
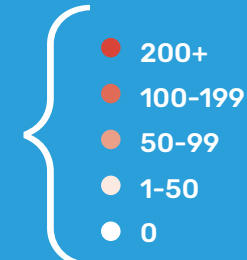


TABLE LOCATIONS*

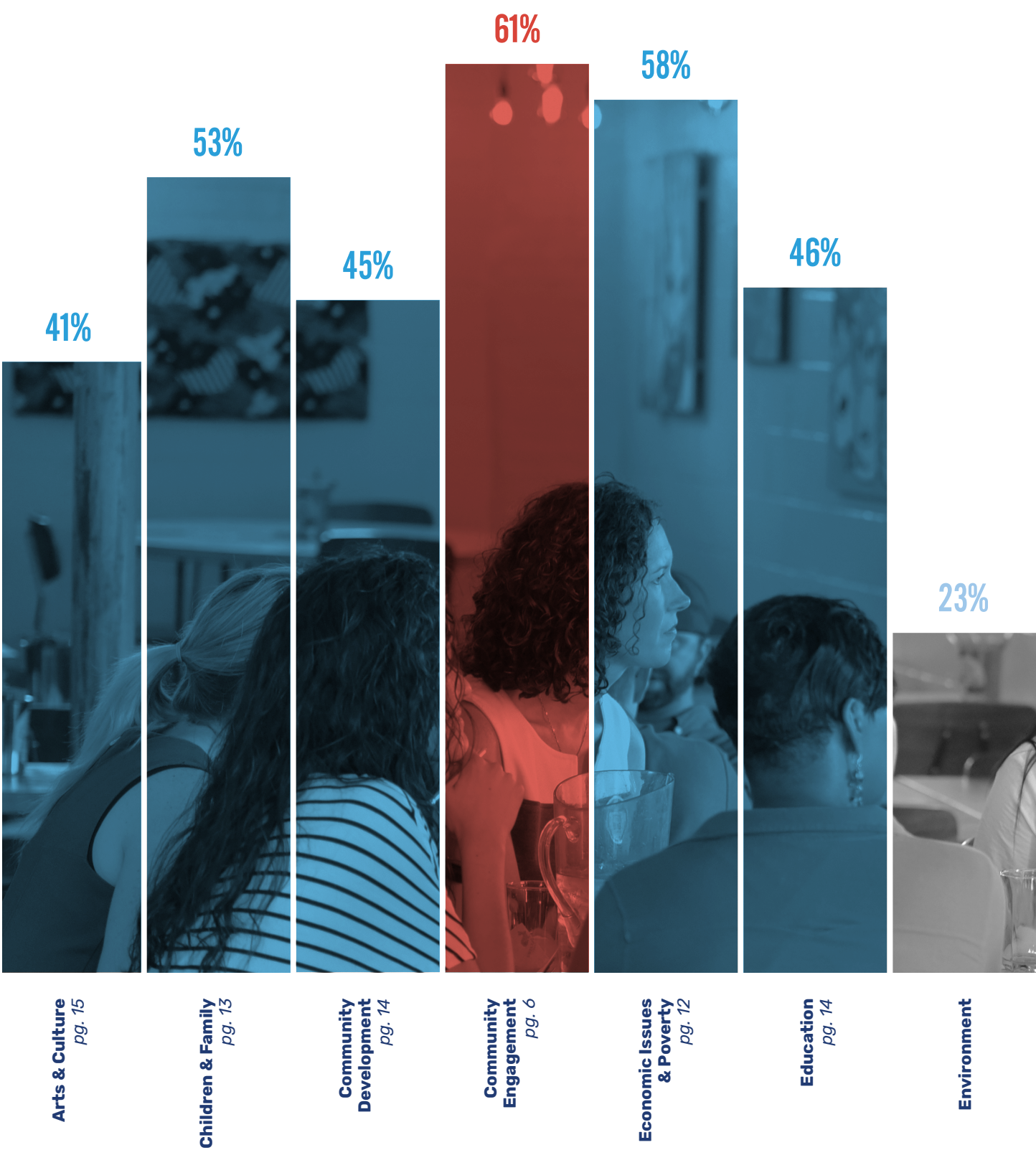


PARTICIPANTS' RESIDENCES*

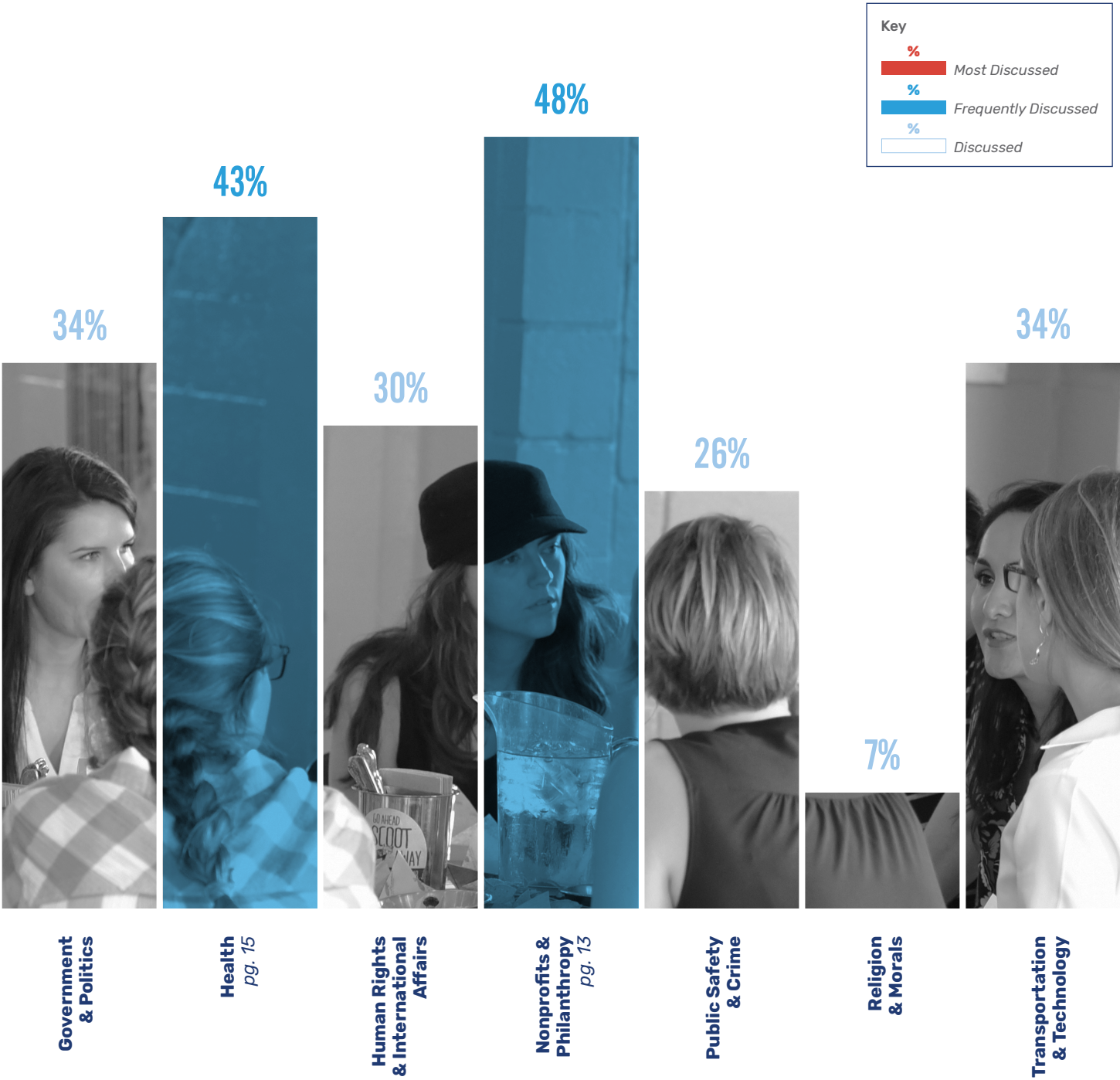


* Approximated numbers based on self-reporting

WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT



Many topics were discussed at The Big Table. Here's what hosts said their tables talked about the most...



The Big Table discussions were as diverse as the people who participated.

The following pages highlight what we are learning from many of those discussions.

ECONOMIC ISSUES & POVERTY

Many participants discussed possible solutions to poverty and most felt that the power to address the underlying issues that cause it would be found when a diversity of voices were able to be heard.

Needs Identified

- Bring together a diverse array of people from the community so they are involved in creating and implementing solutions that impact their communities.
- Find ways to share stories about the journeys of those in poverty to help develop empathy between the “haves” and the “have nots.”

Popular Solution Idea

- Businesses could work with communities and government to help bring more resources into communities of need—especially by helping these communities develop and nurture small businesses.

58%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

“The economy and unemployment in Columbus have bounced back after the great recession; however, there are still the same number of people living in poverty. We have not moved the needle on reducing that one bit. It is astounding and a huge call to action”



CHILDREN & FAMILIES

“Building our youth is all about seed planting. Drop the seed, hope it rains and grows. You have to foster it and check on it, make sure the conditions are right for it to grow. Those seeds have the potential to be a beautiful garden.”

Students and young people said they know they are the next generation of leaders and they want more opportunities to be involved and feel responsible for shaping their communities.

Needs Identified

- Put families at the center of our communities so families are making communities stronger and communities are helping families succeed
- Focus on building stronger leadership skills in children, students, and young adults so they are empowered to be involved and create change in their communities.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Establish programs to facilitate young people doing service for their communities
- Host community conversations that allow youth to have their voices heard and can expose children to different communities and cultures.

53%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

48%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

“A person in my group told us about how a non-profit has hired a social worker to help mentor client/employees through difficult situations and has found it to be very helpful to all involved.”

NONPROFITS & PHILANTHROPY

Nonprofits were recognized as incredibly important to improving communities.

Needs Identified

- Need to attract and engage a new generation of young volunteers and instill in them a deep sense of the importance of service and giving back—they are our future leaders and the success of the non-profit sector depends on them.
- Nonprofits need to focus on collaboration--with each other and with for-profit companies--to share resources and ideas so they can be more effective in responding to the community’s needs.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Find better ways to connect those in need with those who are looking for ways to volunteer or give back.
- Find ways to leverage the talent and expertise of local universities





46%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

“We have an urgent need to prepare for jobs of the future; this isn’t an issue that can wait.”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Participants felt that as Columbus grows, the city needs to find and maintain a unique identity that everyone can celebrate.

Needs Identified

- Columbus has a lot of potential and could (and should) be known as a magnet for people interested in social change.
- There are so many great resources in Columbus, so we need to find a way to connect all the resources to the communities that need them.
- Communities need to ensure that the people who have historically lived there don’t get priced out of their own homes.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Developing individual identities for neighborhoods will give them something they can come together around and see as a source of pride.
- The city and business leaders could collaborate to help communities turn abandoned buildings into spaces the community needs small businesses, art spaces, and safe gathering spaces.

45%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

“Creating new events and experiences in neighborhoods doesn’t mean you have to remove people who are currently in that area. People who live in neighborhoods should be involved with what is happening within them, they shouldn’t be closed off or feel like they need to (or are being forced to) move from the area.”

EDUCATION

Discussions about education focused on the importance of collaborations between businesses and schools.

Needs Identified

- The business community needs to get more involved in education starting at earlier ages so students are regularly exposed to ideas and role models that will help them develop a future career.
- Students want to be and should be more involved in the processes and conversations that determine their education--schools should empower them through involvement.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Trades-based companies should partner with high schools to develop more apprentice programs and training for career paths in skilled trades.
- STEM programming that begins early in school will help students who are underrepresented in those fields see themselves in technology jobs in the future.

HEALTH

Addiction and mental health were the primary focus of tables that discussed health issues.

Needs Identified

- People need more awareness of the drug epidemic, specifically how to prevent more people from going down that path and how to help people who are seeking recovery.
- There is a gap in services for young adults with disabilities as well as adults who are trying to live independently with intellectual disabilities.
- Communities need to know more about how public health organizations can better connect people with mental health issues with resources they need.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Mental health and addiction should be given as much effort as the rest of healthcare.
- Support systems centered on shared interests could help foster meaningful community engagement for people with developmental disabilities.

43%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

“A participant shared a poem she wrote about her experience as an addict; it was very touching and strengthening to see her heartfelt authenticity and resolve.”



ARTS & CULTURE

Tables that discussed the arts felt that creativity is happening all around our region and need to be amplified and celebrated.

Needs Identified

- Arts have a transformative power to make people rethink their environments and how they interact with each other.
- Art and activism are happening all around Columbus neighborhoods that are overlooked and these voices need to be amplified.
- Access to the arts has significant impact on children and it’s so important to give them opportunities to experience various forms of art.

Popular Solution Ideas

- Public art creates an emotional connection to the city and can inspire and change neighborhoods by bringing a sense of pride and shared story. Engaging the community to participate in creating public art in their communities is a way to see themselves in the art piece, which fosters a sense of ownership and reduces vandalism.

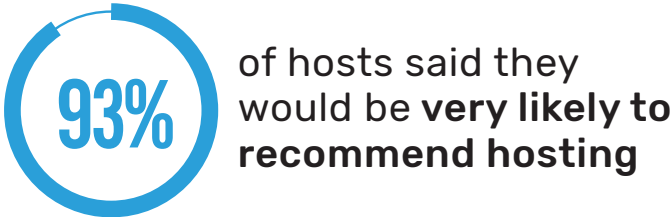
“We need regular conversations among disenfranchised artists and arts groups”

41%

of hosts said their tables talked about this issue

HOST EXPERIENCES

Hosts were inspired by the experience of facilitating conversations at their tables and want to make this an annual event in their community.



“They are super easy to organize and host! I’ve enjoyed meeting new people and sharing information to help support each other’s ideas.”

While some hosts may have been nervous about providing the right setting, many realized that once people got in a room together, the discussions flowed easily. They felt rewarded that they had given others the opportunity to connect and have their voices heard.

- When hosts reflected on what they got out of their experiences, many felt that the event was a way to give back to their community by providing the space for inspiring conversations.
- Most hosts agreed that The Big Table is a great way to talk to people you don’t know well and it provided them with a rewarding way to collaborate and connect with others.
 - Hosts thought that their experiences were interesting because they love learning about new ideas and being a host was a great way to help others learn as well.

- Looking forward, some hosts said there were things they looked forward to improving next year.
- Many said they would like to work to increase the diversity of their guests
 - A few hosts who did not have the opportunity to attend the informational meeting thought that doing so might have made them feel a little less nervous about hosting.



WHAT’S NEXT

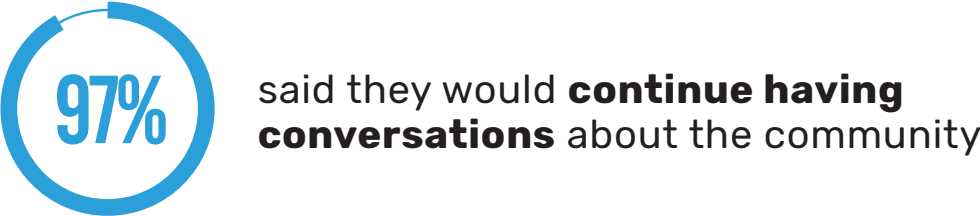
The Big Table is always open for conversation.

We hope The Big Table is only a starting point in sparking conversations, and that all participants continue to talk, listen, and learn from each other as we create a strong, connected community.

Subscribe to The Big Table email list for updates and news at: bigtable@columbusfoundation.org

Keep in touch with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn and tell us about your Big Table experiences using the hashtag [#TheBigTable](https://twitter.com/TheBigTable).

“It is important to connect diverse elements of our community and to give them the opportunity to tell their story and to listen to others tell theirs.”



THANK YOU

to all of the hosts, participants, and partners who made The Big Table a success!



THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION

OUR MISSION

To assist donors and others in strengthening and improving our community for the benefit of all its residents.

OUR PROMISE

To help you help others through the most effective philanthropy possible.

Survey analyzed and report designed by:

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