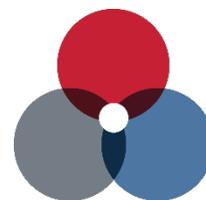




2020 Survey Results



THE CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS EST. 1913
RESEARCH • ANALYSIS • ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

Coordinated by Stark Community Foundation, **THINKBIG** gives residents a voice and brings people together to brainstorm solutions to community needs while celebrating the good in Stark County. Like so many things in 2020, rather than a single day of in-person events, plans for the second annual **THINKBIG** community conversations were adjusted to a week-long series of virtual events.

For 2020's **THINKBIG**, the original intention was to continue conversations on the same 14 topic areas discussed in 2019. However, events over the summer were a pivotal moment in our country shining a bright light on issues of race and racism. Stark Community Foundation felt it was vital that we, as a community, dive deeper into one of the topics discussed in 2019 – inclusion. The virtual 2020 **THINKBIG** centered on racial equity and inclusion was held October 4-10.

Following these **THINKBIG** community conversations, participants were asked to complete a short survey about their thoughts, discussions and ideas they have to move our community forward. 165 surveys were completed and analyzed by The Center for Community Solutions, a nonpartisan Northeast Ohio think tank focused on solutions to health, social and economic issues. These survey results made evident that residents are creative and ready to act on solutions to the issues they see facing their communities.

In 2020, income and employment, education, and economic opportunity emerged as the most pressing issues to address as it relates to racial equity and inclusion.

Participants in **THINKBIG** unanimously agreed that residents can have an impact on improving racial equity and inclusion in Stark County. Ideas about how to do this included more education and open discussion, access to services and opportunities, and diversity across organizations.

THINKBIG participants came from across Stark County and represented adults of every age. Stark Community Foundation believes it is critical for the voices of those impacted by issues to be included in planning processes. While many people of color engaged in **THINKBIG** 2020, most of the people participating in conversations were white. We encourage all members of the community to continue the conversation, seek to impact critical issues in our community, and **THINKBIG**.

THINKBIG Highlights

Nearly **50** THINKBIG conversations

165 participants completed surveys

11 topic areas were discussed – all related to racial equity and inclusion

- access to resources
- education
- health disparities
- housing
- implicit bias
- inclusive storytelling
- mental health
- behavioral health
- privilege and bias
- racial wealth gap
- reclaiming cognitive bandwidth

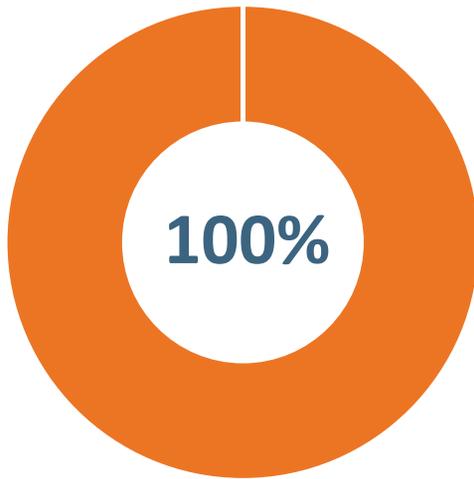
100% of THINKBIG participants believe residents can have an impact in improving racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

THINKBIG Conversation

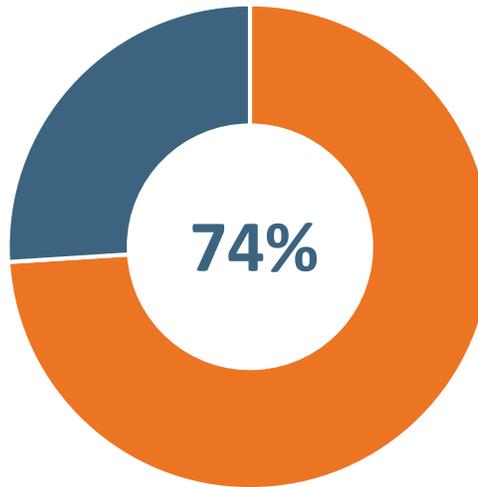
THINKBIG participants are optimistic.

Participants were encouraged by the candid and open conversations they engaged in. Many felt that community members were willing to learn and open to change in Stark County.

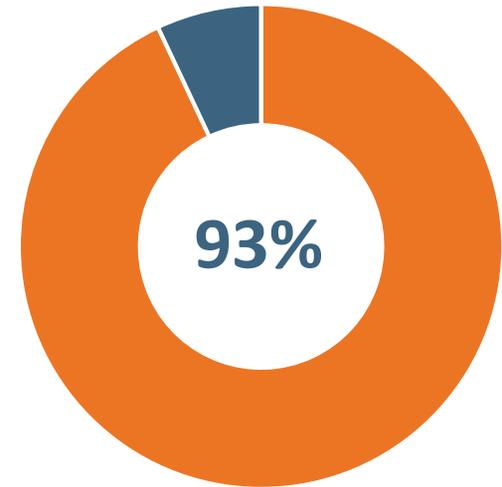
Some voiced a need for more awareness of issues in separate neighborhoods, and others felt overwhelmed by the uncertain future.



believe residents can have an impact on improving racial equity and inclusion in Stark.



are involved in their communities.

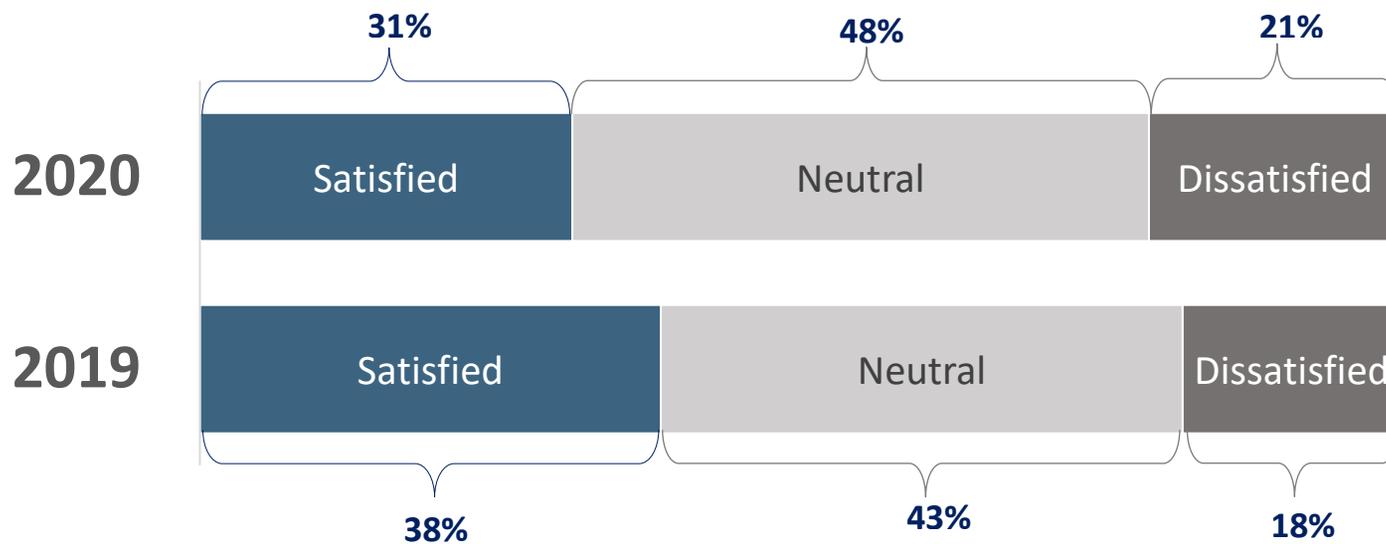


want to take action to help make their community more equitable and inclusive.

THINKBIG *About the Community*

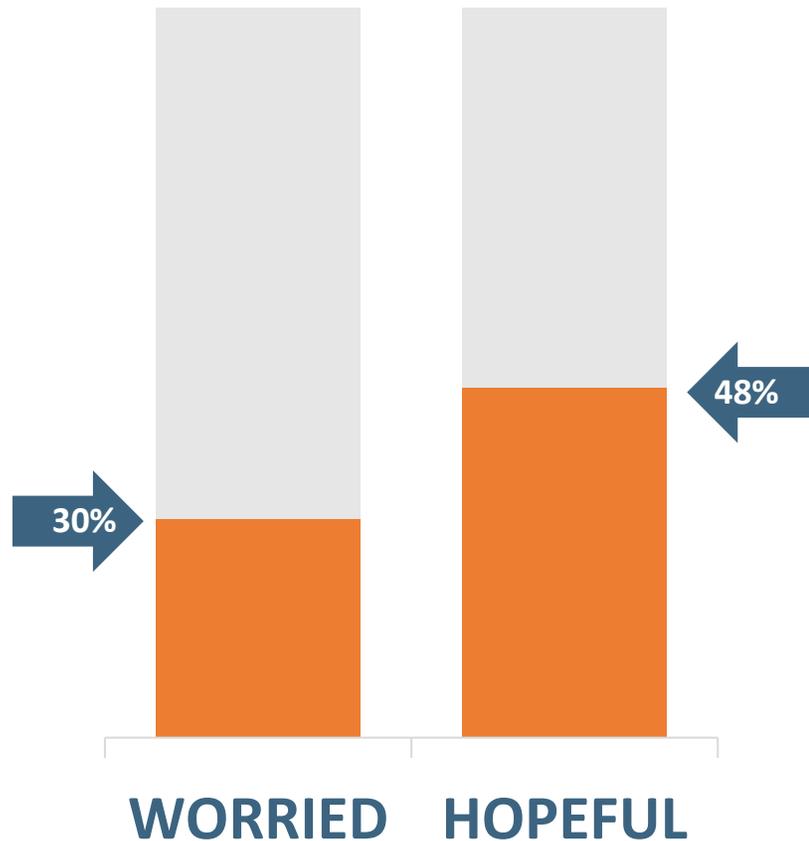
Nearly 3 of 4 THINKBIG participants said Stark County has a strong sense of community and 70% believe Stark County is changing for the better.

However, in 2020 fewer THINKBIG participants were satisfied with the current state of their community than in 2019 and even more were neutral.



Those who attended THINKBIG see potential in their community.

Looking ahead to the next five years, do you feel more hopeful or more worried about what the future holds for our community?



More than 100 organizations were identified that could help implement ideas to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County. Changes participants most wanted to see included more education and open discussion, access to services and opportunities, and diversity across organizations.

Top 5 Strengths of the Community

1. The People and Community Culture
2. Resources
3. Educational Supports
4. Cost of Living/Arts & Entertainment (Tie)
5. Availability of Local Data

The People and Community Culture

Participants felt a willingness to help one another, discuss hard issues on racial equity and inclusion and hear various perspectives were all assets.

Resources

Collaboration across sectors to ensure residents have access to supportive services was noted as a strength, including healthcare, mental health programs, food pantries, and same-day access.

Educational Supports

Newer facilities, colleges in Stark County, and community services that focus on students' needs were all identified as strengths to support youth and higher learning.

Cost of Living/Arts & Entertainment (Tie)

Multiple attendees pointed to the county's affordability and arts and entertainment in Stark as a strength.

Availability of Local Data

Access to local data in resources like the Stark County Assessment and THRIVE was noted by many participants as a strength.

Top 5 Threats to the Community

1. Bias, Racism and Violence
2. Poverty
3. Lack of Diversity
4. "Old Boy Network" Mentality
5. Lack of Visibility of Resources

Bias, Racism and Violence

Many participants expressed concern for residents and businesses ignoring implicit bias, privilege, institutional and systemic racism and violence against Black and Brown residents as threats to the community.

Poverty

Poverty and its symptoms, including lack of access to gainful employment, issues with the benefit cliff, lack of affordable health insurance and gentrification, were pointed to as challenges for residents.

Lack of Diversity

Concerns about lack of diversity and representation in smaller communities, schools and in leadership were raised by multiple attendees.

"Old Boy Network" Mentality

Participants repeatedly mentioned a culture of a "good ol' boy network," causing the exclusion of various groups from decision making and hiring, and stunting innovation.

Lack of Visibility of Resources

Lack of visibility of resources for residents was noted as a challenge, causing barriers to access for individuals in the community.

Top 5 Needs of the Community

1. Bias Training
2. Coordination of Services
3. Education
4. Community Involvement & Collaboration
5. More Diversity in Leaders & Providers

Bias Training

Coming together as a community to have uncomfortable conversations was of concern to many participants.

Coordination of Services

The community would like more access to basic needs and better coordination of services, and felt that a hub and/or wraparound model was necessary to create more awareness of services and meet community needs.

Education

Restructuring and providing more education for better outcomes & equity were seen as needs.

Community Involvement and Collaboration

More collaboration and involvement from residents were noted as a need to improve the community.

More Diversity in Leaders and Providers

More diversity in leadership and providers is seen as a need in Stark County. Residents want to see leaders be more involved in conversations about racism and community needs, and to listen to individuals who may be different from them.

THINKBIG *and Take Action*

THINKBIG participants are ready to act.

The topics THINKBIG attendees deemed the most urgent to address as it relates to racial equity and inclusion were Income & Employment, Education, Economic Opportunity, Basic Needs, and Health and Health Care. The community is least concerned with acting on issues related to Recreation & Entertainment, Cultural Appreciation, and Transportation.



What will THINKBIG participants do next?

- 68%** → Continue the conversation
- 47%** → Participate in similar events
- 46%** → Learn more about organizations that work in this area
- 46%** → Tell people who did not attend THINKBIG about the topic/effort
- 40%** → Volunteer
- 25%** → Donate

Describe one idea your group discussed that you think has the most potential to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

Awareness, Education and Training

- Diversity/sensitivity training for any job that has a direct influence on the younger population (coaches/teachers/police/etc.)
- More trainings and conversations on privilege, bias, and systemic poverty
- Opening up conversations on how implicit bias affects us and the decisions that we make
- Pathways/connections program that allows for higher education students to have access to cultural needs within the Stark County area
- Teaching more diversity in the rural communities
- Create a single unified school district
- Encouraging people to read about our past as a country
- More educational programs related to building wealth
- Town Hall meetings with students to engage them in solutions
- Advancing social media de-stigmatization campaign efforts
- Doing more things like the Unity Challenge
- Encourage friends, family members, colleagues to complete the 'how diverse is your world' exercise
- Mentoring grandparent program
- Reinventing the police force & no blanket immunities

Describe one idea your group discussed that you think has the most potential to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

Representation

- Creating a diversity committee that connects all museums in the area
- Making sure that members of diverse groups (racially, economically, etc.) are part of the conversations when making decisions
- Increasing diversity on community and foundation boards
- Actively work with the county's institutions of higher education to encourage a more diverse enrollment and teaching faculty
- Broadening our own circle
- Engage faith communities to focus on diversity and inclusion in their operation
- To keep our Library a neutral zone for all people
- More equitable opportunities for people of color

Healthcare

- Availability of educational resources around healthcare
- Disparity Health Clinic that mirrors the Cleveland Clinic model, staffed with students working towards their medical degree

Describe one idea your group discussed that you think has the most potential to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

Resources/Collaborative Resources

- Establishing a centralized resource for sharing, promoting, and highlighting culturally diverse businesses, events, and programs
- Creation of one central clearinghouse to go for resources
- Coordination of services
- More investment/resources for youth (ages 18-25) to help with transition to adult life and connection to culturally competent mentors
- Collaboration of strong agencies like Urban League and NAACP to help cover more ground and support
- Looking at the data that is collected through THINKBIG and come up with a community/county wide action plan

Describe one idea your group discussed that you think has the most potential to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

Employment and Career Exploration

- A forward-thinking entity that serves as a bridge for young people to network with industry professionals across different sectors
- New and innovative job fields such as green energy, targeted to include racial equality
- Creating shadowing opportunities for Black high school youth to experience various career opportunities
- Creating coalitions that focus on opening up Stark County employment opportunities to a more diverse and new audience
- Capitalize on the individual talent in Stark County and help companies create more inclusive hiring practices
- Funding for transportation to allow people to get to work in the evening hours

Describe one idea your group discussed that you think has the most potential to improve racial equity and inclusion in Stark County.

Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing

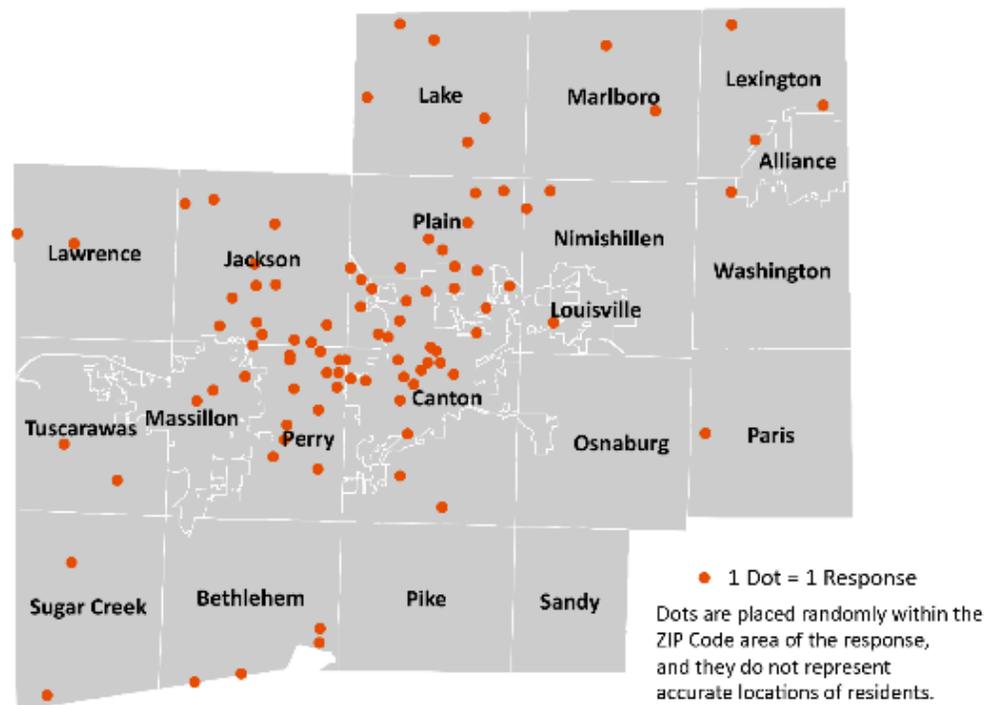
- Have focus groups with SMHA residents regarding their perspective of what needs to be done and would most benefit them
- Develop a program where case managers can “vouch” for participants at banks/lending institutions to help them obtain loans
- Create a workshop specifically for first time African American homebuyers
- Financial investment in the Black community, especially academic scholarships and transitional housing
- Neighborhood revitalization that targets those in need to help them stay in their house and improve their overall quality of life
- Develop and invest in neighborhoods that are racially and socioeconomically diverse
- Invest in programs like Habitat for Humanity
- Building trust in diverse neighborhoods
- A farmer's market in each neighborhood to increase availability of fruits, vegetable and healthy choices

THINKBIG People

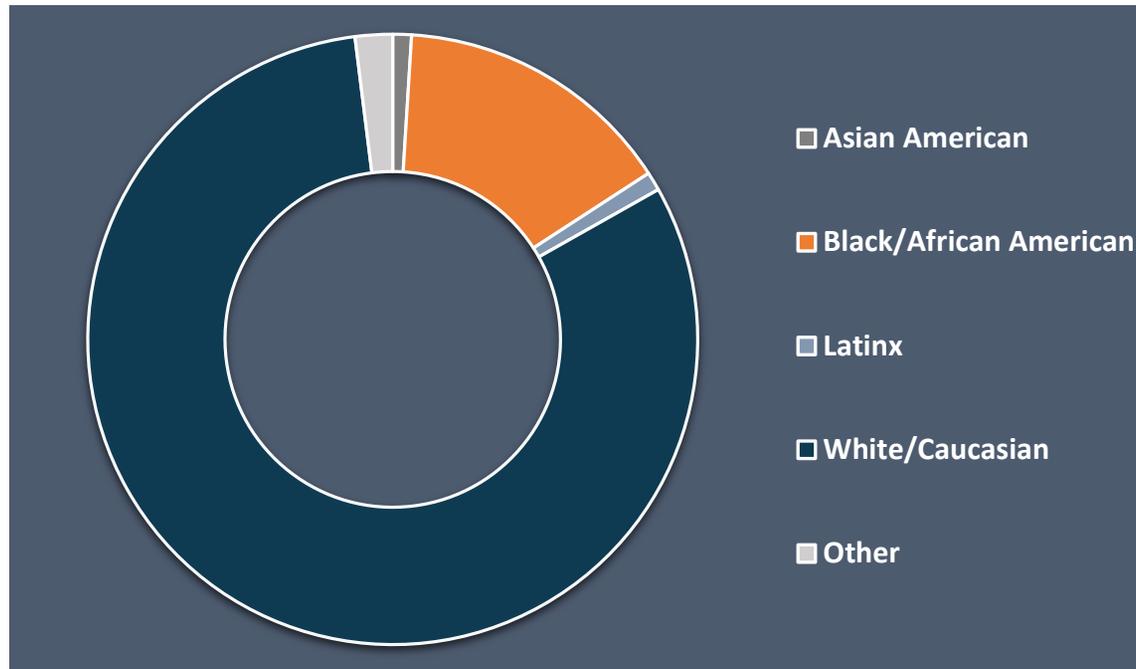
Nearly 50 THINKBIG conversations were held in 2020.

Participants came from across Stark County.

Where do people who attended THINKBIG live?



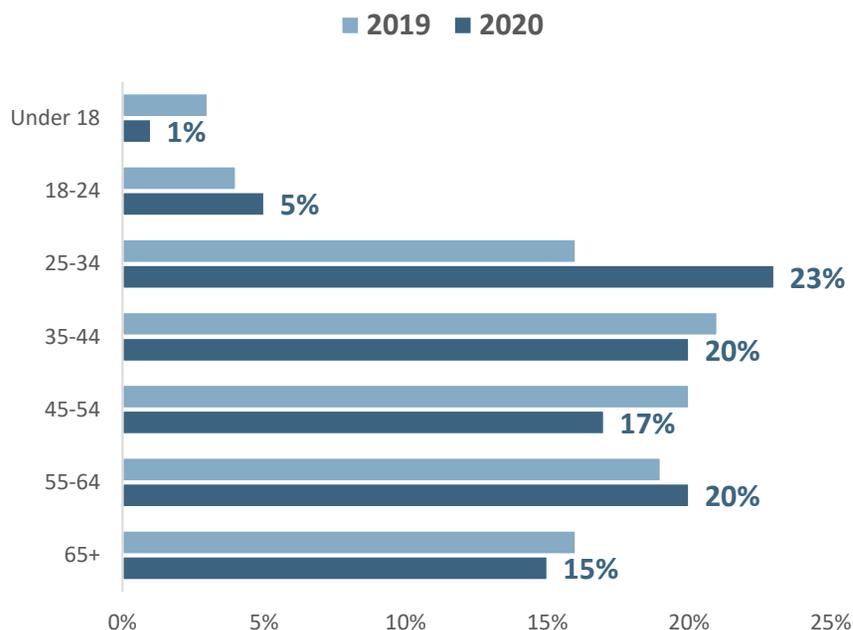
THINKBIG 2020 participants were more racially diverse than the Stark County population as a whole.



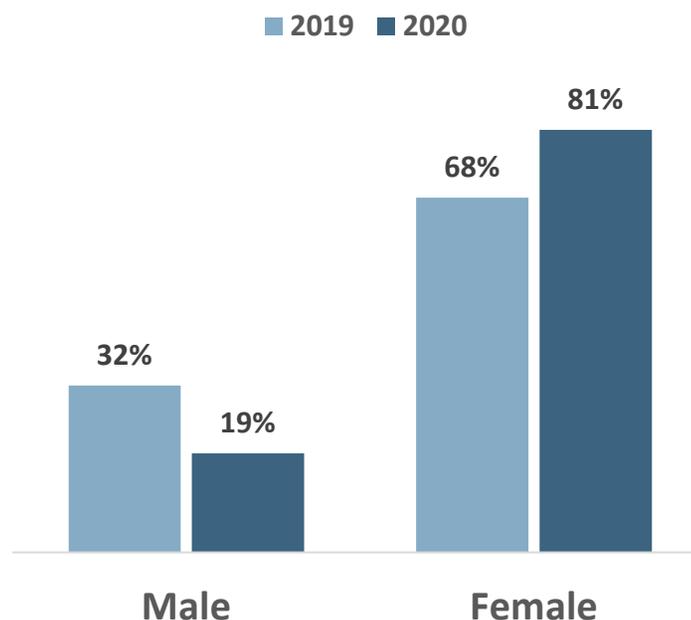
While some THINKBIG participants were people of color, most were white. Over 80% of attendees identified as White/Caucasian and just over 15% identified themselves as Black/African-American. For reference, about 87% of Stark County residents are white and 8% are Black, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau. One participant each identified as Asian American and Hispanic/Latinx. Two more participants who selected the Other category described themselves by providing a written response of “multiracial” and “biracial.”

Similar to 2019, most THINKBIG participants were of working age, but the groups skewed slightly younger. The most common age group in 2020 was 25 to 34 years. Just over 15% of attendees were older than 65 and around 5% were young adults between ages 18 and 24. In 2020, more than three-quarters of THINKBIG participants were female.

Age of THINKBIG Participants



Gender of THINKBIG Participants



When asked about the biggest takeaway from their discussion, one THINKBIG attendee said:

“I was glad people were so honest, candid, and comfortable in the space we created, to admit where their organizations or personal bias created barriers to starting these types of conversations.”