State of the South: Advancing Equity through Participatory Data

Duke BASS CONNECTIONS

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Context

The Southern US has a history of race-based and economic inequity. While there is a wealth of quantitative data available, less is known about the lived experience of those in the region. Our team partnered with MDC to develop data profiles which were presented to community members in Charleston, SC in the form of a data walk. Our process addressed the following questions:

- How do individuals respond to quantitative data profiles about the key social issues in the South based on lived experience?
- What is needed for societal advancement or to provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the world around us?
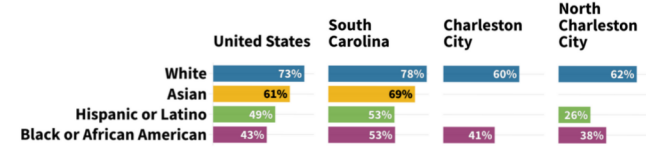
Visualizations

Our team:
- Selected topics based on community and partner input
- Collected and analyzed quantitative data from secondary sources (e.g. US Census)
- Visualized data using Flourish and Canva
- Created 22 visualizations for the Participatory Data Walk

Example of a visualization:

Homeownership by Race/Ethnicity
Percentage within each demographic group who own homes

	United States	South Carolina	Charleston City	North Charleston City
White	73%	78%	60%	62%
Asian	61%	69%		
Hispanic or Latino	49%	53%	26%	
Black or African American	43%	53%	41%	38%

Source: American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates • Missing values in some demographic groups is due to a lack of available data.

Data Walk

A data walk is a participatory method of enhancing research with community insights. It involves:
- Data Preparation
- Community Involvement
- Interactive Exploration
- Guided Dialogue
- Findings Documentation
- Community Feedback

Participants in Charleston's data walk included community members, leaders, artists, educators, and advocates.

This approach allowed participants to:
- **Increase Awareness:** understanding the breadth and depth of the data.
- **Foster Connections:** Participants connect, discovering common ground.
- **Deepen Understanding:** Diverse interpretations enrich everyone's grasp of the data.
- **Emotional Resonance:** Recognizes data's emotional impact.
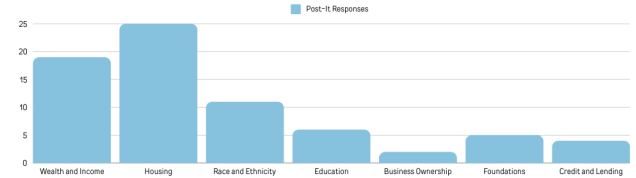- **Data Clarity:** Simplifies and adds meaning to complex data.

Data Analysis

- Our team collected responses from participants through post-it notes and broader written key takeaways.
- We used NVivo to analyze which topics were discussed most frequently and how participants were interacting with the data.
- Examples of participant reactions:

"This is a result of the lack of affordable housing + low paying jobs. It's not that people didn't desire to live on the peninsula, but it's expensive."

"How does racial demographics impact racial equity and justice?"

Post-It Note Responses

- We found that Housing, Wealth and Income, and Race and Ethnicity elicited the most responses from participants for both the post-its and key takeaways
- Responses mostly focused on surprise and demonstrated a desire for further information
- During the group discussion after the data walk, participants focused on systematic biases/obstacles and how they are connected