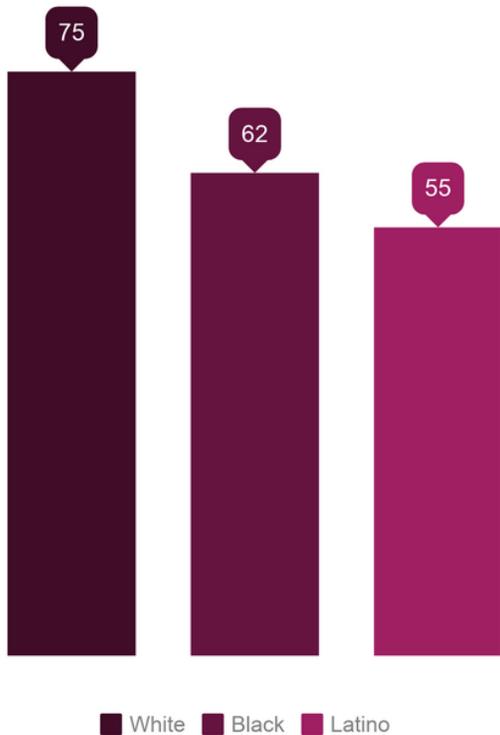# HEALTH EQUITY & COMMUNITY VOICE

Health inequities:

Avoidable, unfair, and unjust differences in health status, or in the distribution of health factors, between different population groups.
(World Health Organization)

Average age of death in Washtenaw County by race/ethnicity (MDHHS 2011)

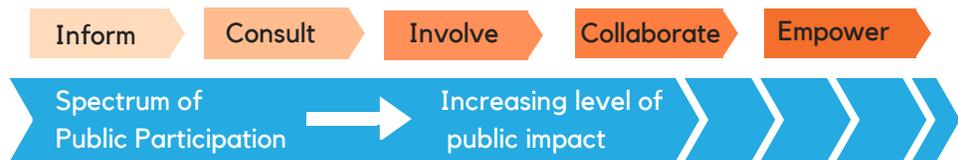■ White ■ Black ■ Latino

Equity:

Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.
(PolicyLink)

Health equity:

A state in which all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.
(Health Equity Institute)

Inequities in the **social determinants of health** —built environments, access to healthcare and healthy food, social and community context, education, economic stability, and overall opportunity — often determine inequities in health status. We must **expand the definition of health** to address these upstream social, economic, and environmental disparities in order to achieve **health equity**.

Achieving health equity will also require agencies to leave their comfort zones and extensively collaborate with new community partners. This will involve changing the **leadership paradigm** and learning from people with **lived experience**. Local community engagement should focus on developing community-institution partnerships guided by **community voice** in order to identify challenges and collaborate on opportunities. Equitable outcomes come about when community members are **empowered** to take ownership of change.

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

Spectrum of Public Participation → Increasing level of public impact

In the summer of 2016, the Washtenaw County Health Department, with support from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) and state of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' Health Disparities Reduction and Minority Healthy Section, organized four **community conversations** in various Washtenaw County neighborhoods. The goal of these events was to support intense community discussion, planning and action within specific neighborhoods and populations. The health department used existing networks of community-based organizations to engage neighborhood residents, leaders, and organizations.

Washtenaw County
Health Department