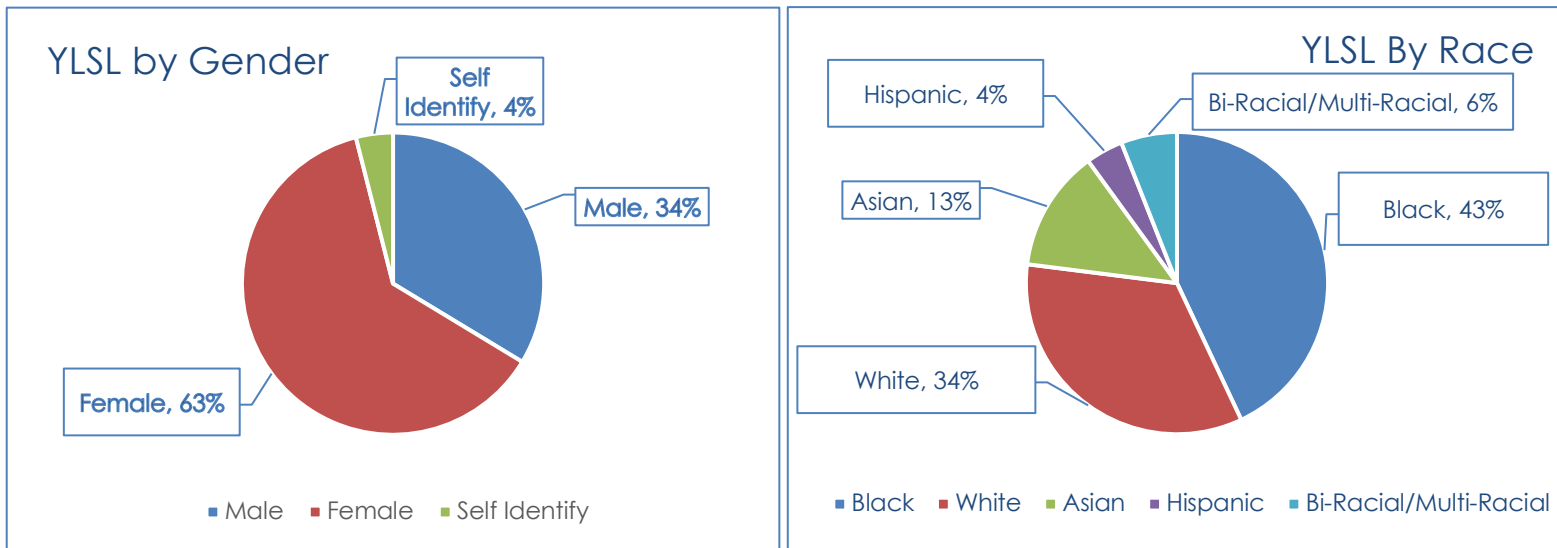


**Youth Leadership St. Louis** (YLSL) is the St. Louis region's only established inter-district high school program that is non-competitive in nature. No other program brings together such a large and diverse group of students. YLSL has been recognized locally, nationally, and internationally for its excellence and service to youth.

With the commitment and support of strong school and community partners, YLSL provided **68 students from 16 partner schools and community organizations, from over 33 different zip codes**, with information, inspiration, and guidance to become the next leaders in our region.



In 2022-23, YLSL offered its facilitator-led experiential civic leadership program to an eager cohort of diverse and dynamic student leaders from across the region. Student leaders kicked off the program year with a retreat at Laumeier Sculpture Park to build relationships and establish expectations. During the year, students increased their knowledge on topics such as Mental Health & Well-Being, Criminal Justice, Valuing Diversity, Housing, Social Responsibility & Leadership, and Regional Economics. At the Class of 2023 send-off event, students were celebrated for their growth and development and presented their Action Research Projects. Last year, YLSL welcomed three new partners: Affton High School, Francis Howell Central High School and Kirkwood High School.

The FOCUS St. Louis 2022-2023 cohort of YLSL left the program better prepared to lead and engage with their schools and communities, work across differences, communicate effectively, and maintain interest in a range of issues critical to our ability to thrive as a region. Cohort outcomes remained very positive and demonstrated overall gains. Overall, YLSL participants report increased skills in the following areas:

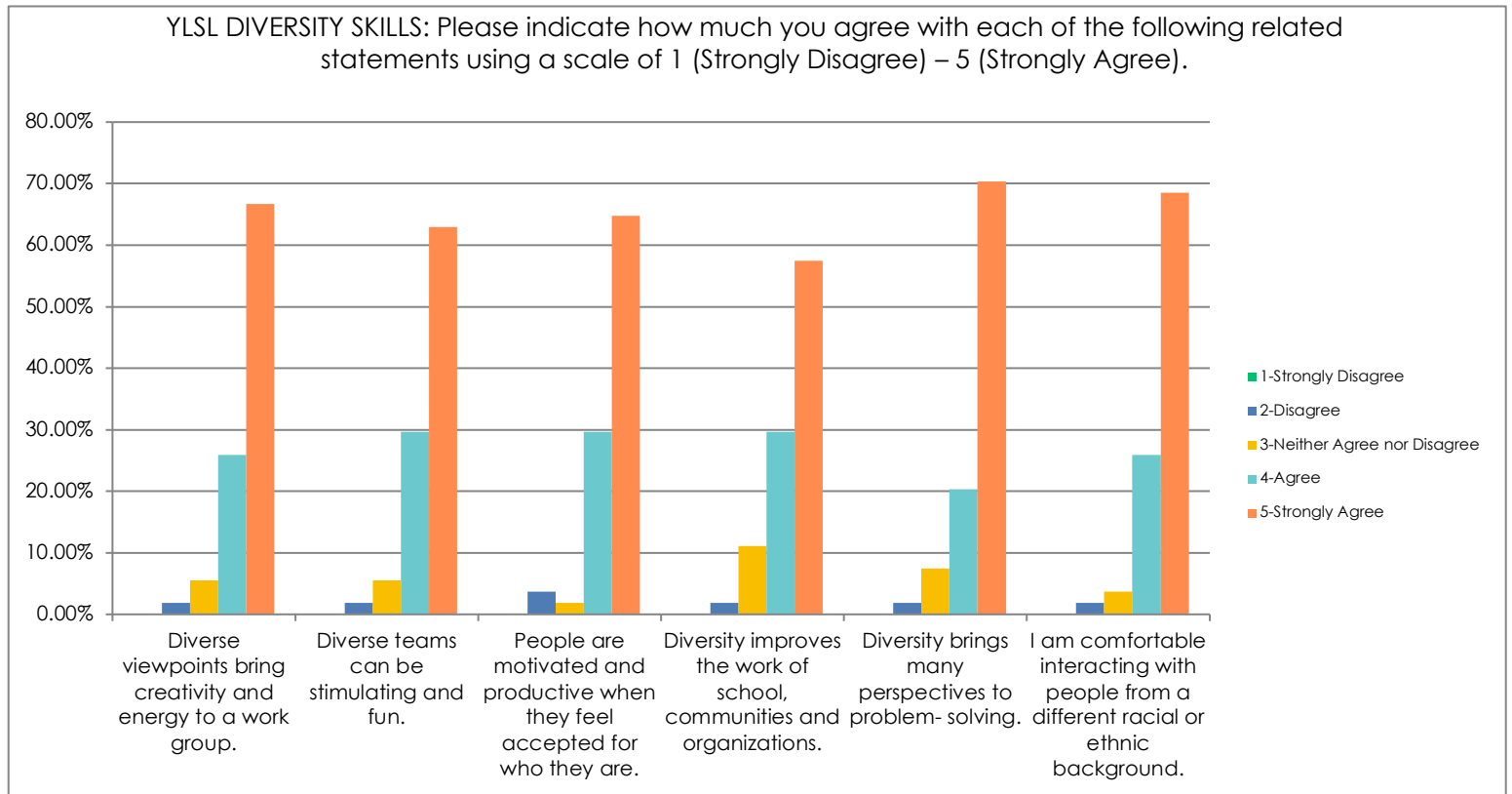
- **81%** report an increase in **self-management** skills
- **77%** report an increase in **getting along with others** or people skills
- **76%** report an increase in **communication** skills
- **70%** report an increase in **decision-making** skills
- **66%** report an increase in **learning** skills

### Belonging and Connection

- **86% of students developed a new or deeper connection with others in the YLSL cohort.**

## Leading Across Difference

YLSL students indicate that leading across difference is an important factor in improving our community and building relationships. Survey results illustrate that YLSL leaders embrace diversity, will leverage diverse perspectives to devise innovative solutions to problems and are comfortable interacting with others that are different from how they identify.



## Civic Readiness and Understanding

Survey results indicate that as a result of participating in YLSL, students have built capacity as civic leaders who demonstrate an understanding of the regional civic landscape, have a greater desire to become more civically involved, and have a greater sense of commitment to see our region thrive.

- **91% of students** have a **better understanding of the civic issues** (criminal justice, education, health, political, and social service) affecting the St. Louis region.
- **86% of students can work across** geographic boundaries, sectors, and demographic **divisions to advance positive change** (in the region, campus, and community).
- **82% of students can** look at issues from multiple angles, seek new perspectives and voices, and **take meaningful action**.
- **78% of students** have a greater **personal commitment and responsibility to the region**.
- **77% of students** have a **greater desire to become more involved in my community**.

## Select YLSL Participant Testimonials

YLSL empowers students to be advocates for themselves, their peers, and their community. I am grateful for the open-minded leadership mindset it instills in our young people. - Dr. Jeremy Mapp  
Youth Leadership St. Louis helped me become a better leader in my community at large.  
- Ismail N. Botchway

YLSL has helped our Immigrant students build their confidence and leadership skills to be agents of change in our community. The program has helped many of our students receive great college scholarships and leadership positions in their schools.

"Connecting with my peers through YLSL not only helped me gain confidence in social settings, but also made me a lot of different friends from different backgrounds."

I think that FOCUS has done a great job teaching me to be comfortable outside of my comfort zone. I know that might sound crazy but every exercise that we did encouraged me to be confident and trust myself when put on the spot. Although being put on the spot is not my favorite, FOCUS taught me that it is okay to be vulnerable and that is what comes with being a leader. I think that FOCUS has made me recognize my passion in life and has helped me learn how to take charge and work for change. I am incredibly grateful for this experience and I have truly had the best time.

YLSL helped me learn more about the reoccurring issues around St. Louis regions. It exposed me to diverse perspectives and I got to associate with different individuals who had great stories to connect with.

I thought I was a strong leader before I started this program, but I have genuinely learned more than I ever thought I would. I have experienced so many new things that I would not have gotten the opportunity to hear about and witness without becoming family with all the diverse youth in YLSL.  
-Paige Scherrer

Through this program I was able to learn about specific issues concerning St. Louis. The program taught us how to be leaders to tackle those specific issues to help our community to become a better place.

I found this program to be very engaging and life-changing for me. I also have learned a substantial amount of leadership skills and I believe I can go into my commission and apply those said skills.

What this program gives to emerging leaders is a testament to the fact that there is still good in this world and that there are people ready to pour into the future.

YLSL was great experience I got to meet new people and learn more culturally.