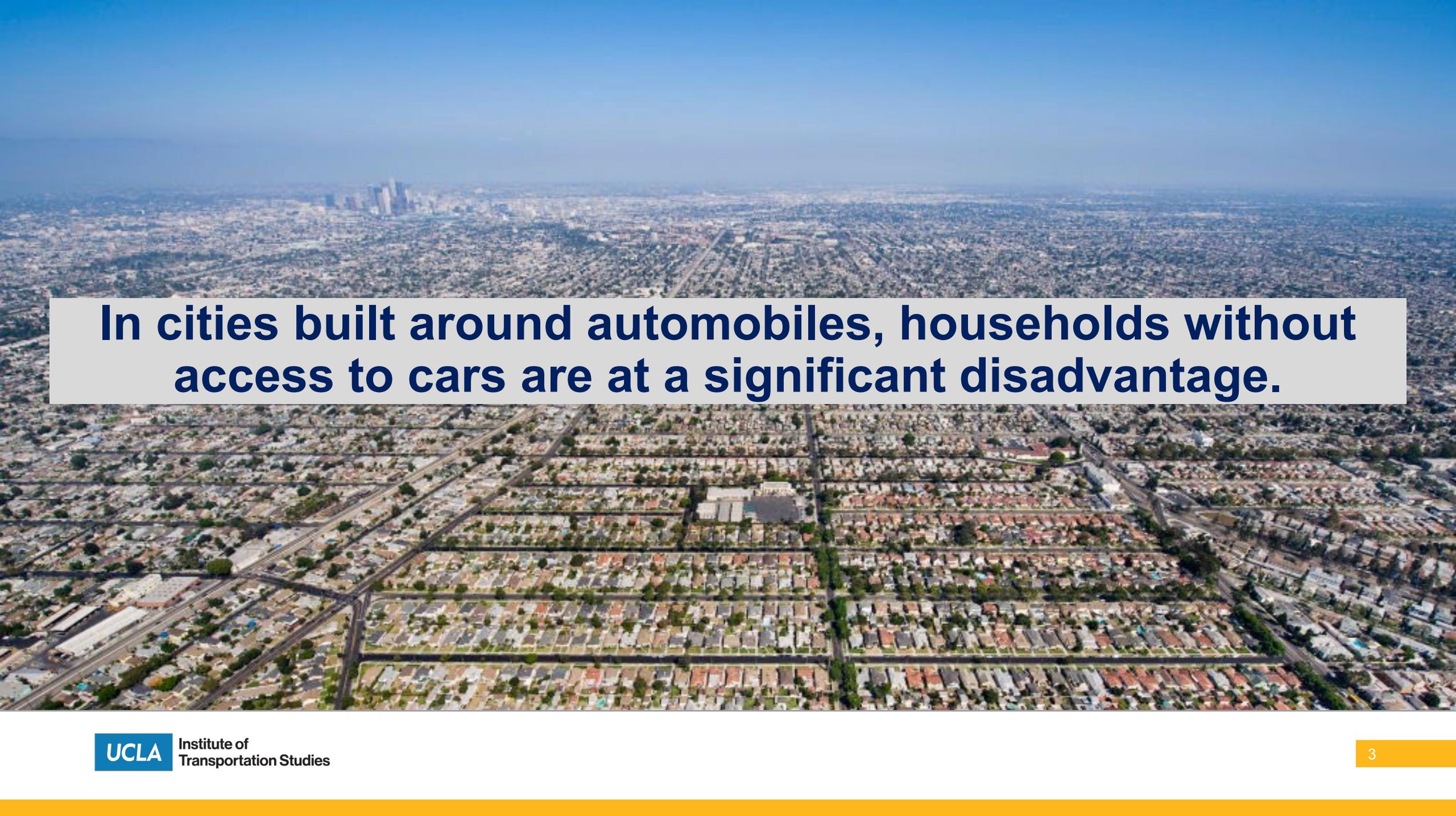


# Public Transit, Access, and Racial Inequality

Evelyn Blumenberg, Professor  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs  
December 3, 2020

# Public Transit, Access, and Racial Inequality

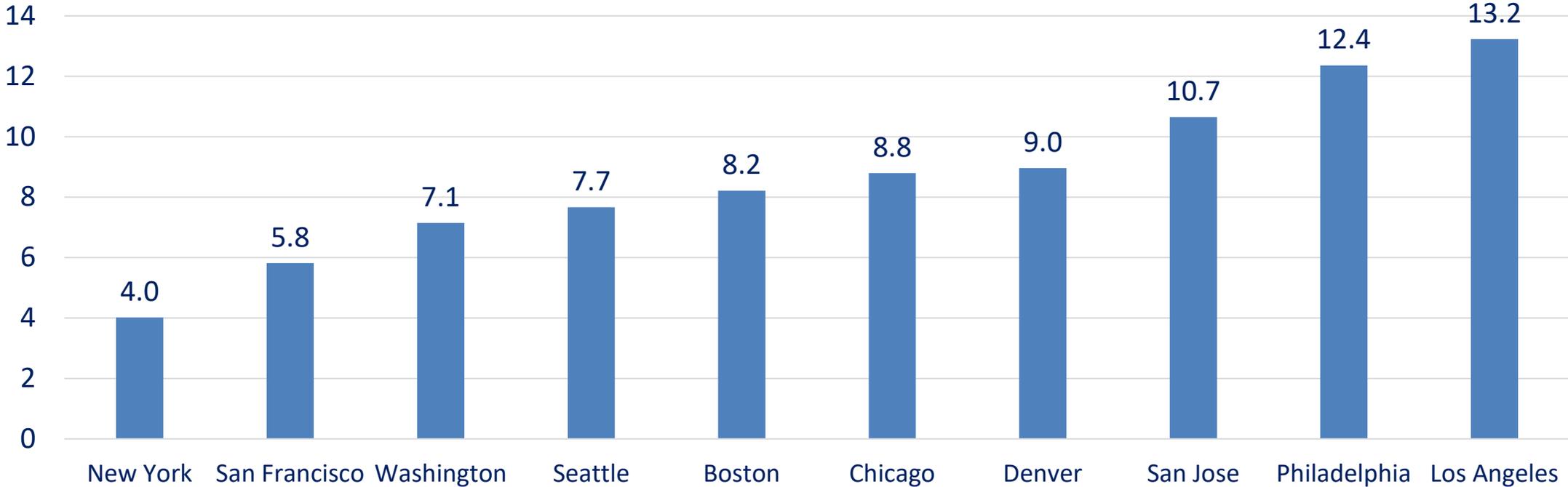
1. Households without access to cars are at a significant disadvantage.
2. For households without cars—disproportionately poor and non-white—transit can be a lifeline.
3. There are long-term racial inequities in public transit, many of them aggravated by the current crisis.

An aerial photograph of a city with a dense grid of streets and buildings. In the distance, a cluster of taller skyscrapers is visible against a hazy sky. A semi-transparent white box with dark blue text is centered over the middle of the image.

**In cities built around automobiles, households without access to cars are at a significant disadvantage.**

# Cars Provide Greater Access to Jobs than Public Transit

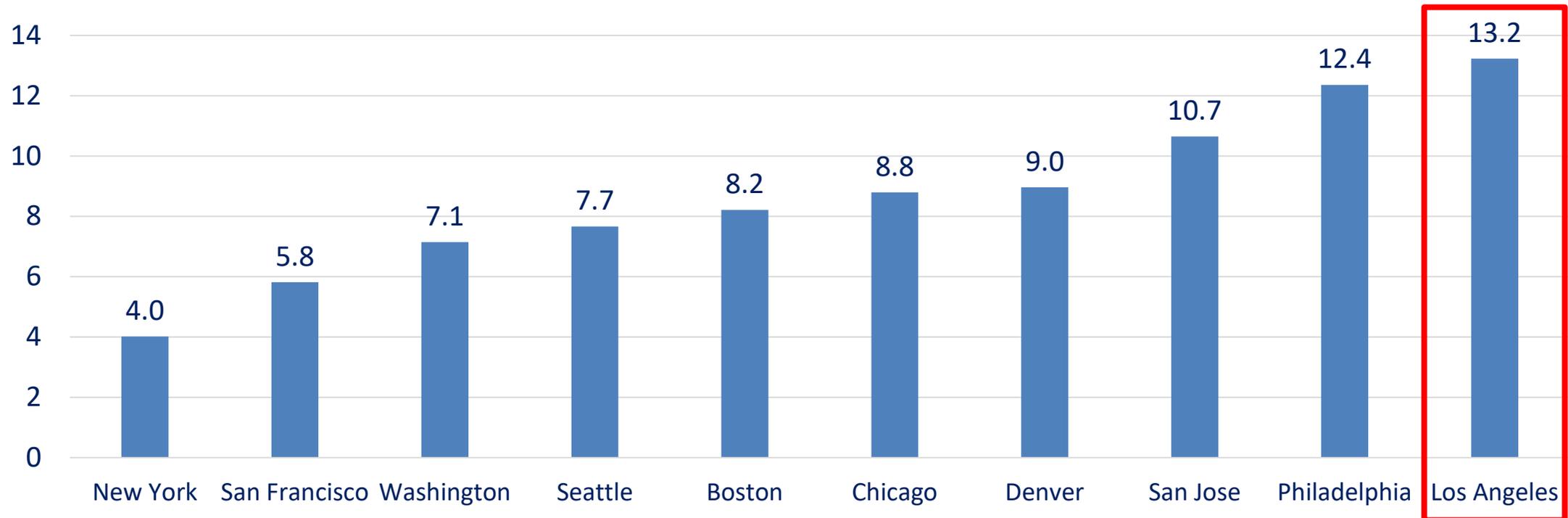
Ratio of Jobs Accessible in 60 Minutes by Auto Relative to Transit (10 Transit-Rich U.S. MSAs)



Source: *Access Across America*. Accessibility Observatory. Center for Transportation Studies. University of Minnesota.

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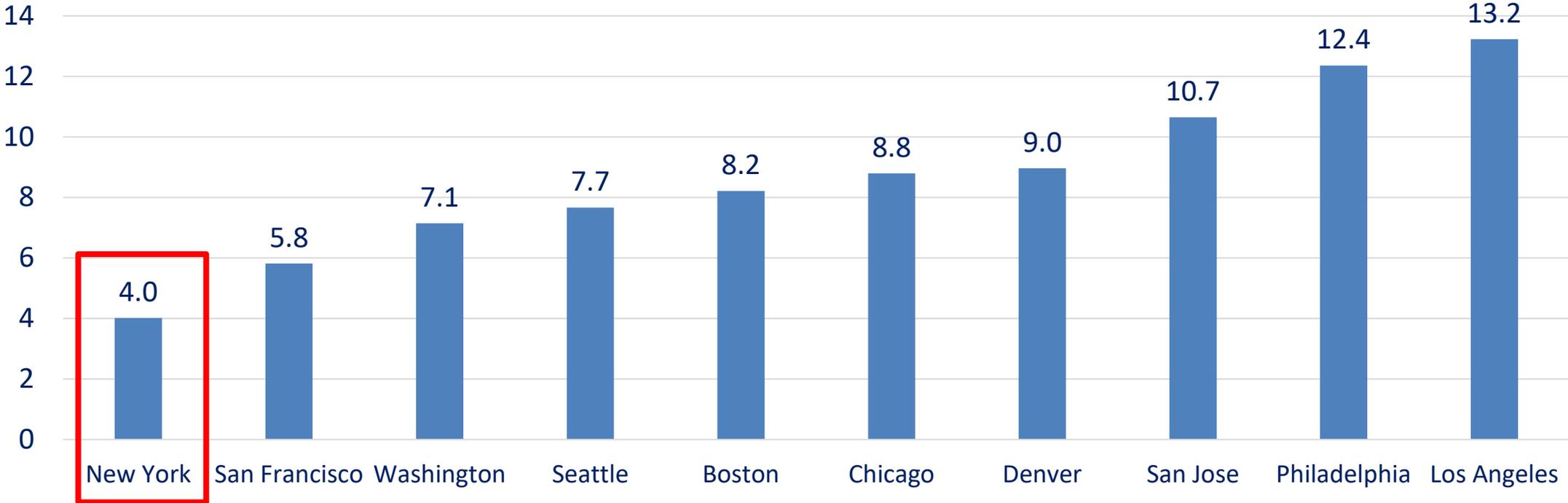
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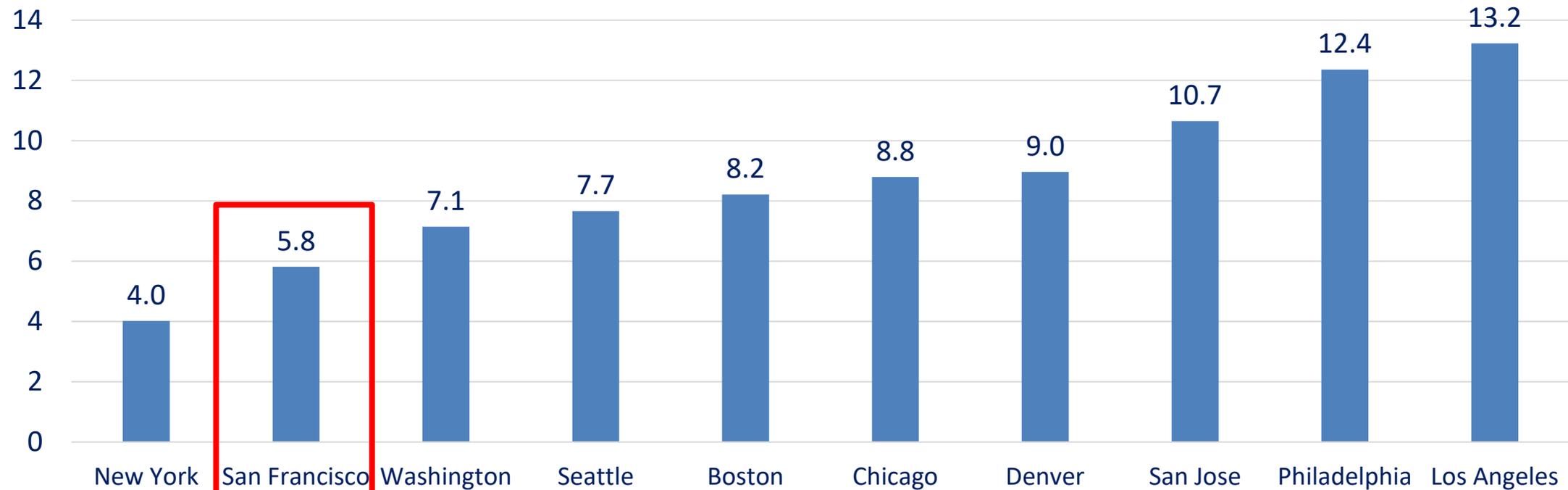
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# Cars Provide Greater Access to Jobs than Public Transit

Ratio of Jobs Accessible in 60 Minutes by Auto Relative to Transit (10 Transit-Rich U.S. MSAs)



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# Other Benefits of Automobiles

- Ease the making of trips to multiple destinations on a single tour (balance home and work responsibilities)
- Convenience (e.g. door-to-door, carry packages, travel with children, protected in bad weather)
- Safe (at night, socially distance)
- Provide shelter
- Pleasure
- Status



**A growing body of research shows that automobiles are associated with a number of positive outcomes.**

# Benefits of Automobiles

- Employment, earnings
- Living in higher-quality neighborhoods
- Intergenerational economic outcomes
  - Health care services
  - Education



COVID Testing



DELIVER WITH UPS IN YOUR OWN CAR!

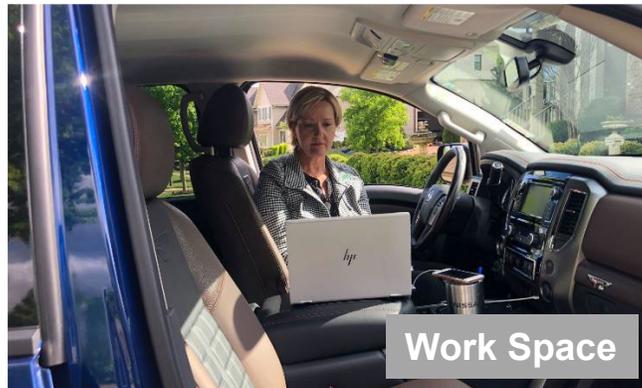
Jobs



Worship



Food Donations



Work Space



Homeless Housing



Food



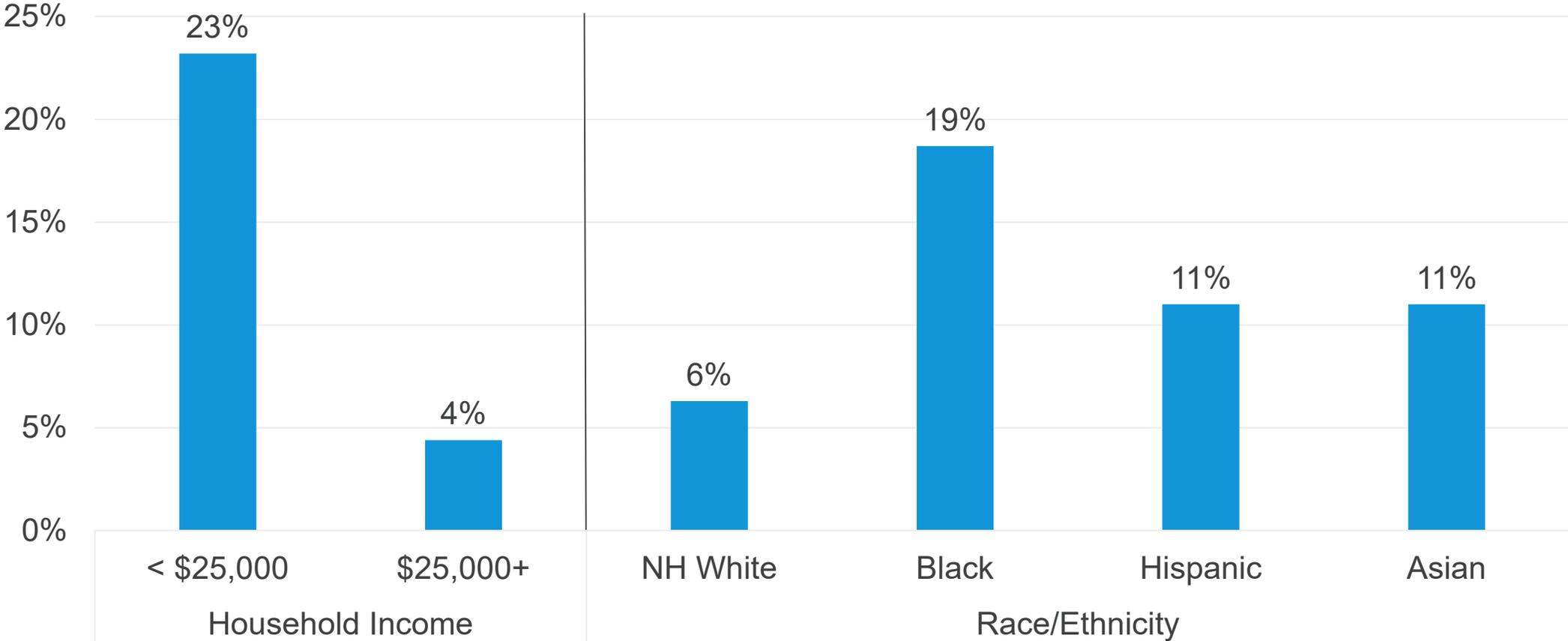
WiFi Access



Entertainment

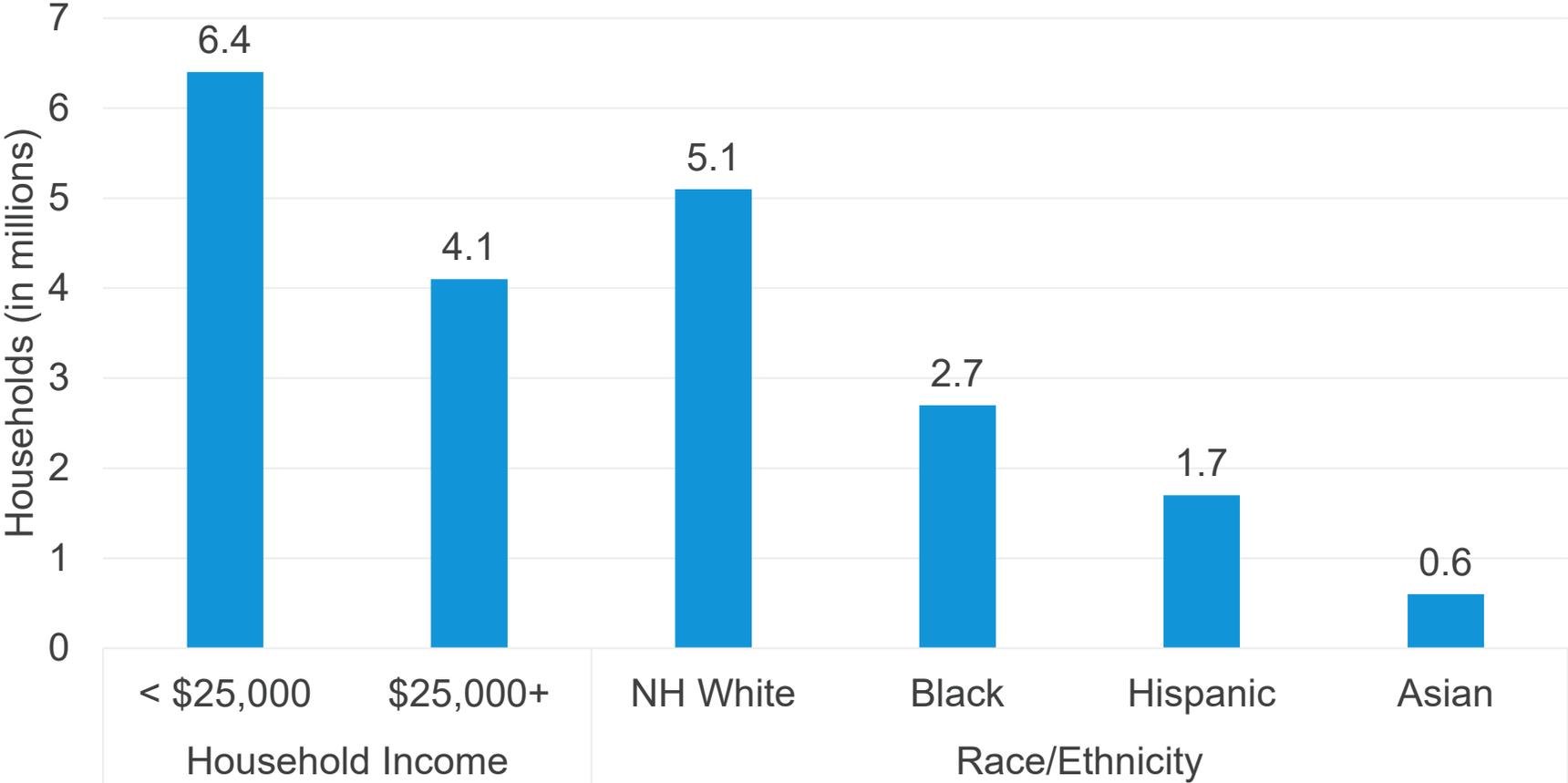
# Income and Racial Disparities in Automobile Access

## % 0-vehicle Households



Source: 2014-2018, ACS 5-year sample.

# # of Zero-Vehicle Households by Income and Race/Ethnicity

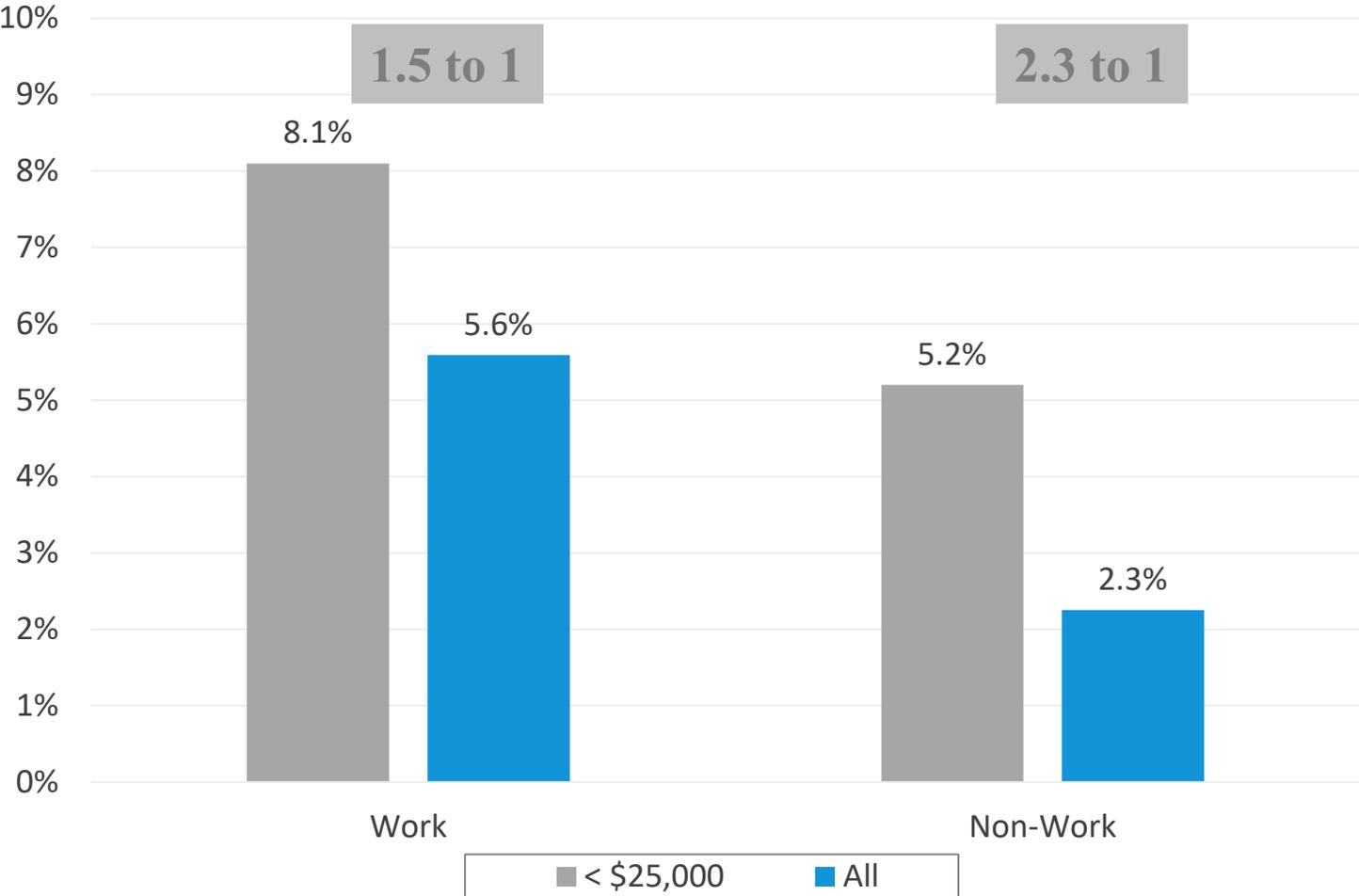


- 10.5 million U.S. households do not have cars
- 50% of households without cars are non-white
- 61% of households without cars have incomes below \$25,000

Source: 2014-2018, ACS 5-year sample.

**For households without cars—who are disproportionately non-white and low-income—transit can be a lifeline.**

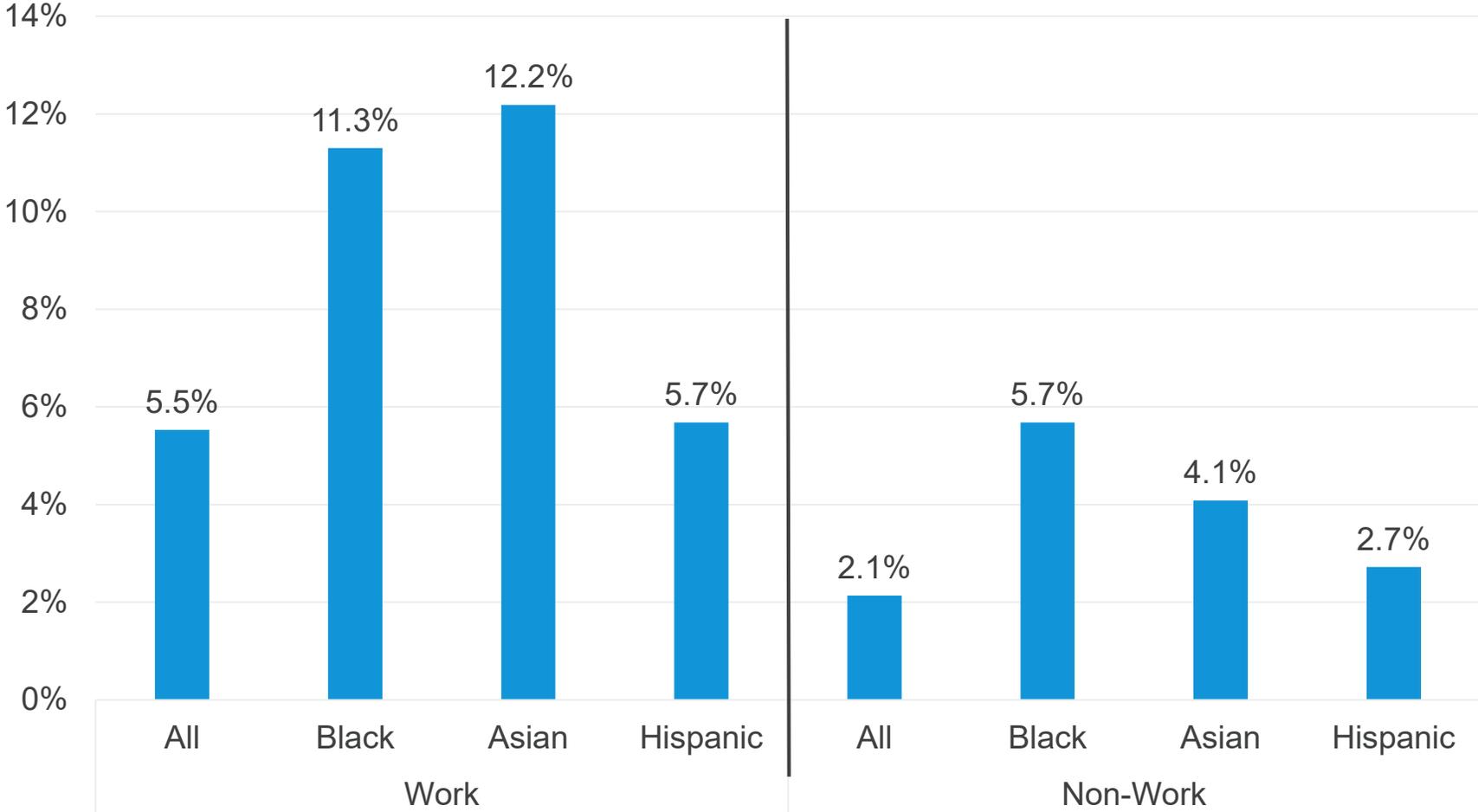
# Transit Mode Share by Income and Trip Purpose



- Most low-income and non-white travelers use cars.
- Low-income and non-white travelers rely on public transit more than higher-income households.
- The disparities in transit use are greatest for non-work travel.

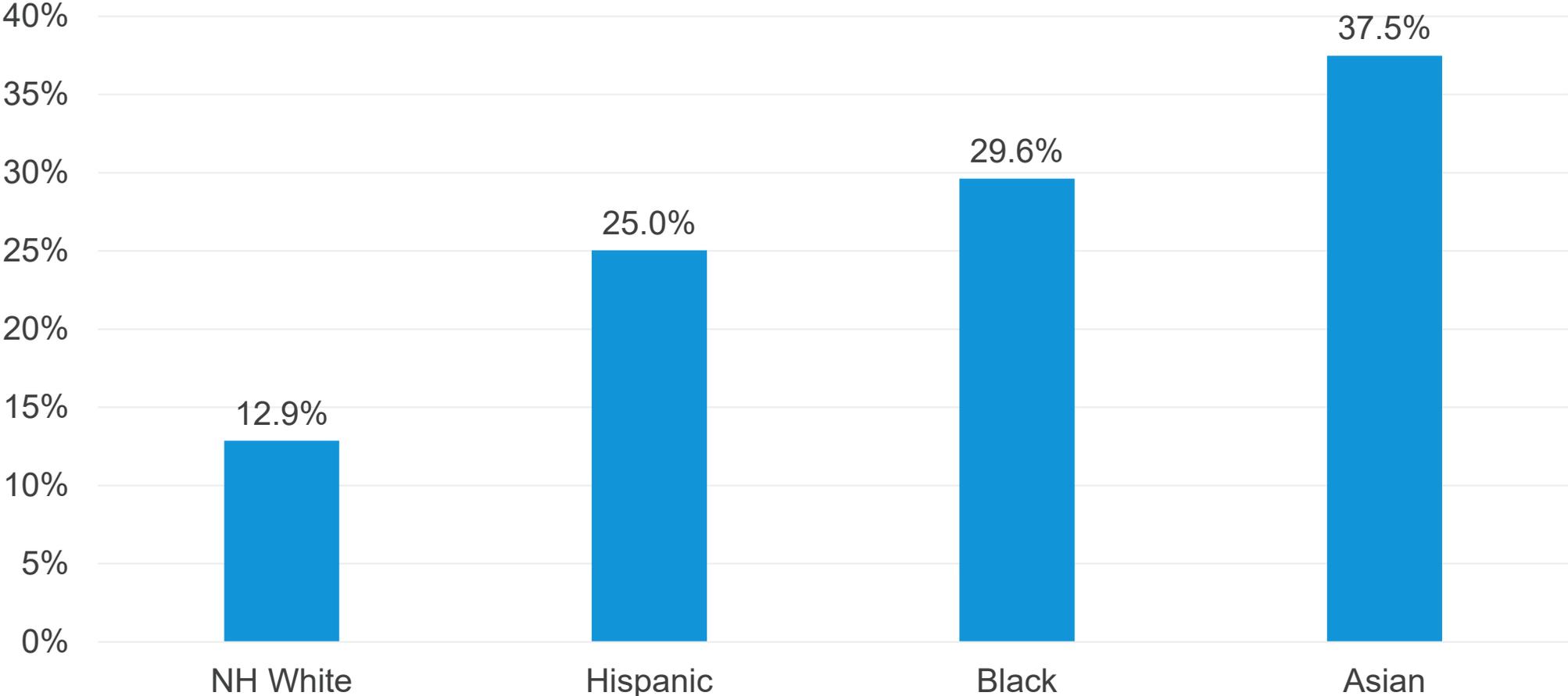
Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey

# Transit Mode Share by Race and Trip Purpose



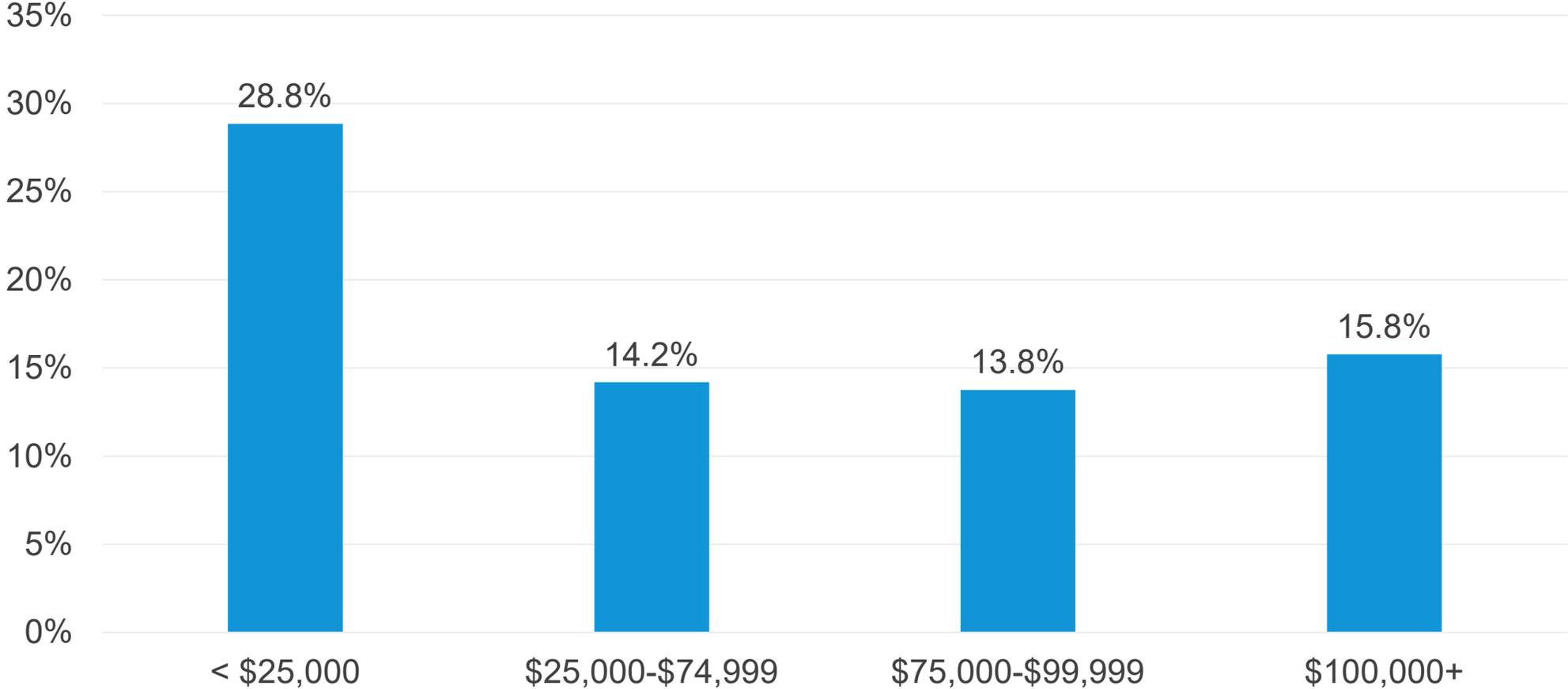
Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.

# Use of Public Transportation to Reduce the Financial Burden of Travel by Race/Ethnicity



Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.

# Use of Public Transportation to Reduce the Financial Burden of Travel by Income



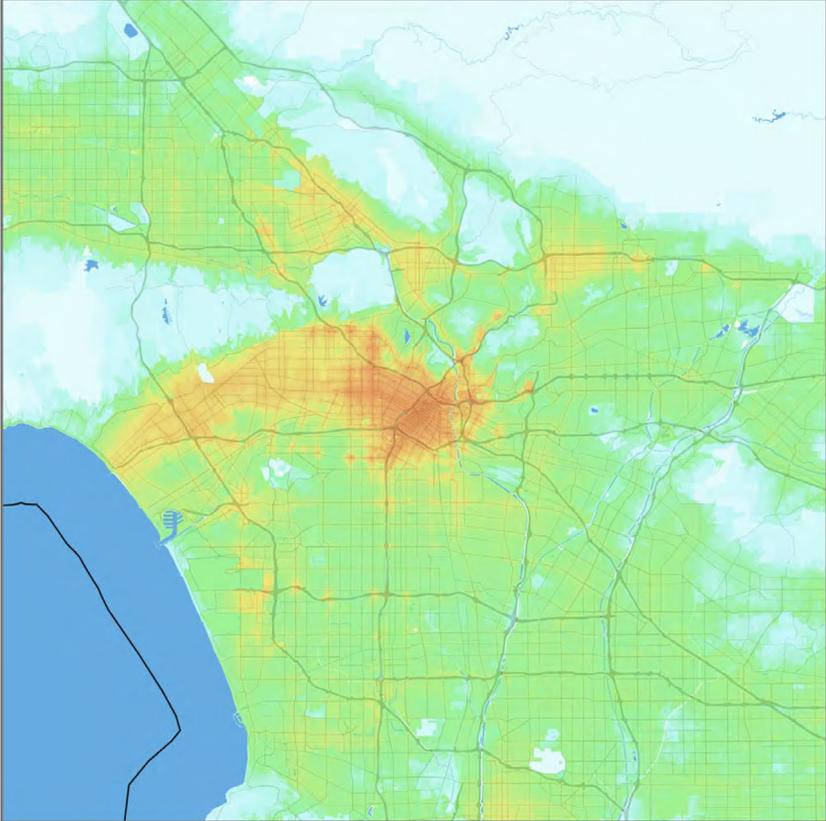
Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.

# Carless Households Tend to Live in Transit-Rich Neighborhoods

## Jobs within 30 minutes by Public Transit (am peak)

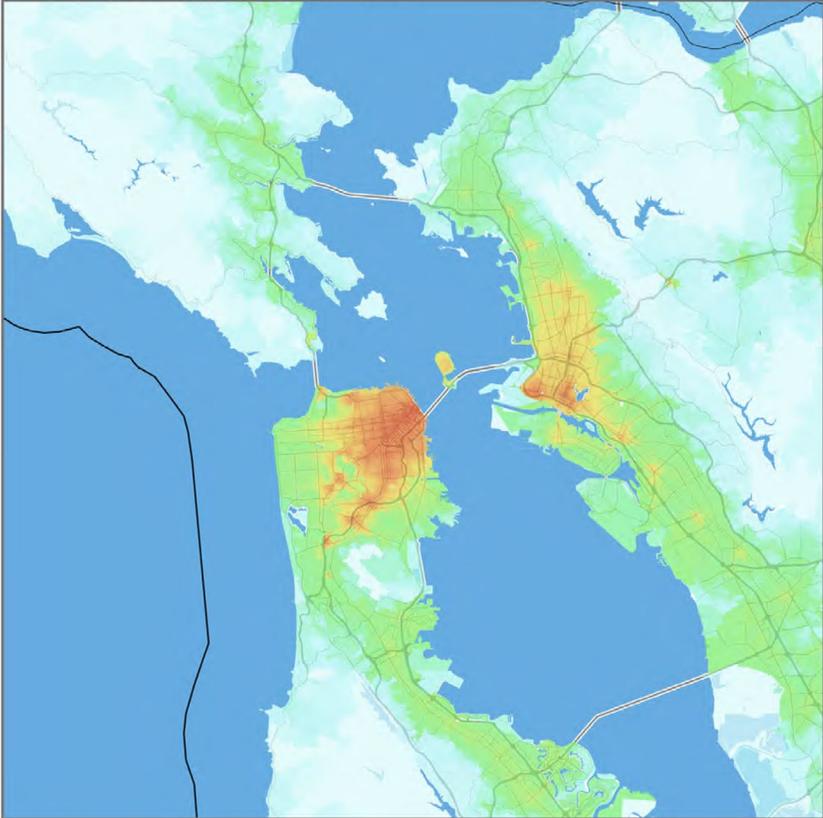
### Los Angeles

Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA



### San Francisco

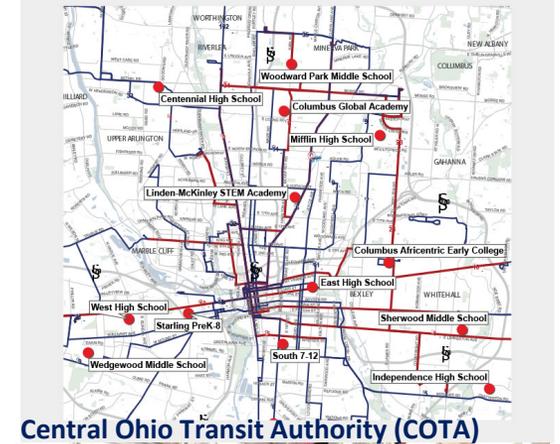
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA



Owen and Murphy (2020). Access Across America: Transit 2019. University of Minnesota.

# Use of Transit for COVID Purposes

- Travel for essential workers
  - TransitCenter Report: 2.8 Million U.S. Essential Workers Ride Transit to Their Jobs (about 1/3 of Pre-COVID transit riders)
- Maintenance of lines to schools that provide free lunches
  - Example: Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in the Columbus-area
- Shelter for the homeless



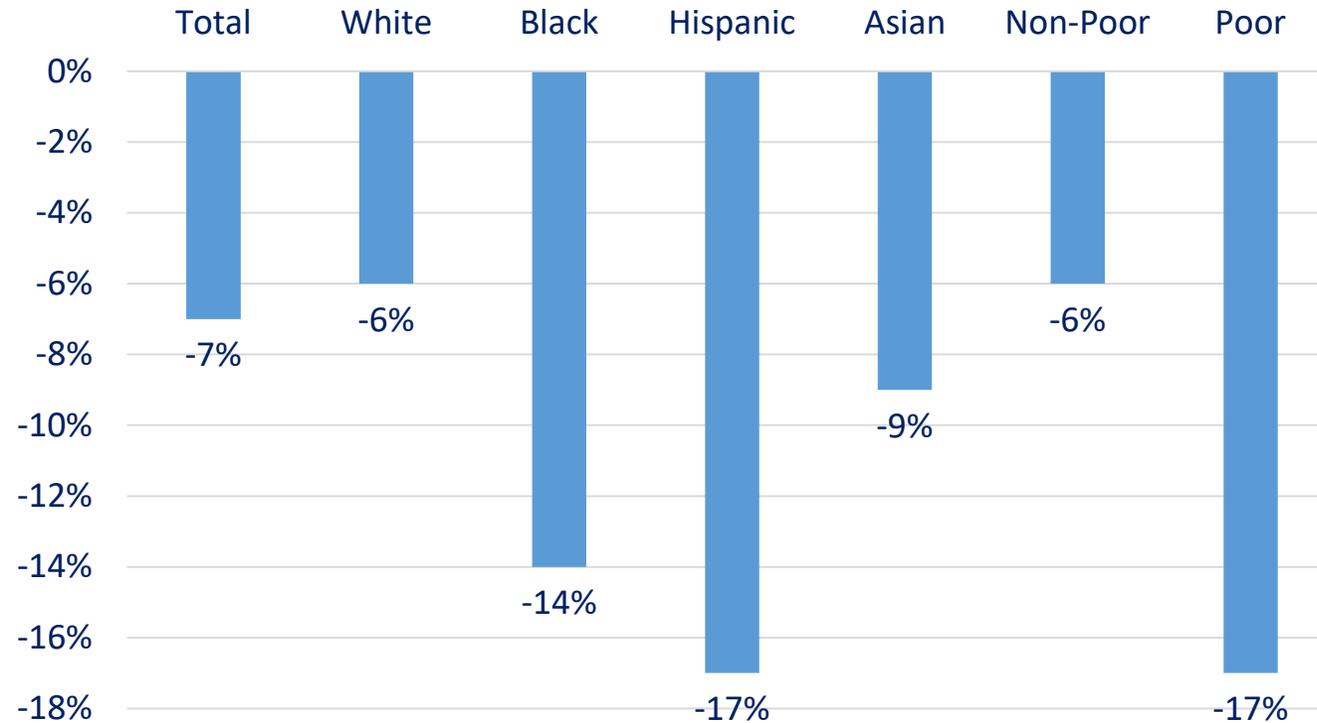
**There are long-term racial inequities in public transit, many of them aggravated by the current crisis.**

# Transit and Racial Inequality

- 1. Access to jobs is declining, widening the gap between the benefits of cars and public transit.**
2. Many transit-dependent and choice riders experience separate and unequal transit services.
3. Declining transit ridership will likely have negative effects on an increasingly low-income and non-white ridership.
4. Access by public transit is predicated on safety – getting to and traveling on buses and trains.

# Continued Dispersion of Households and Jobs

Decline in Job Proximity from 2000 to 2012 by Race, Ethnicity and Poverty

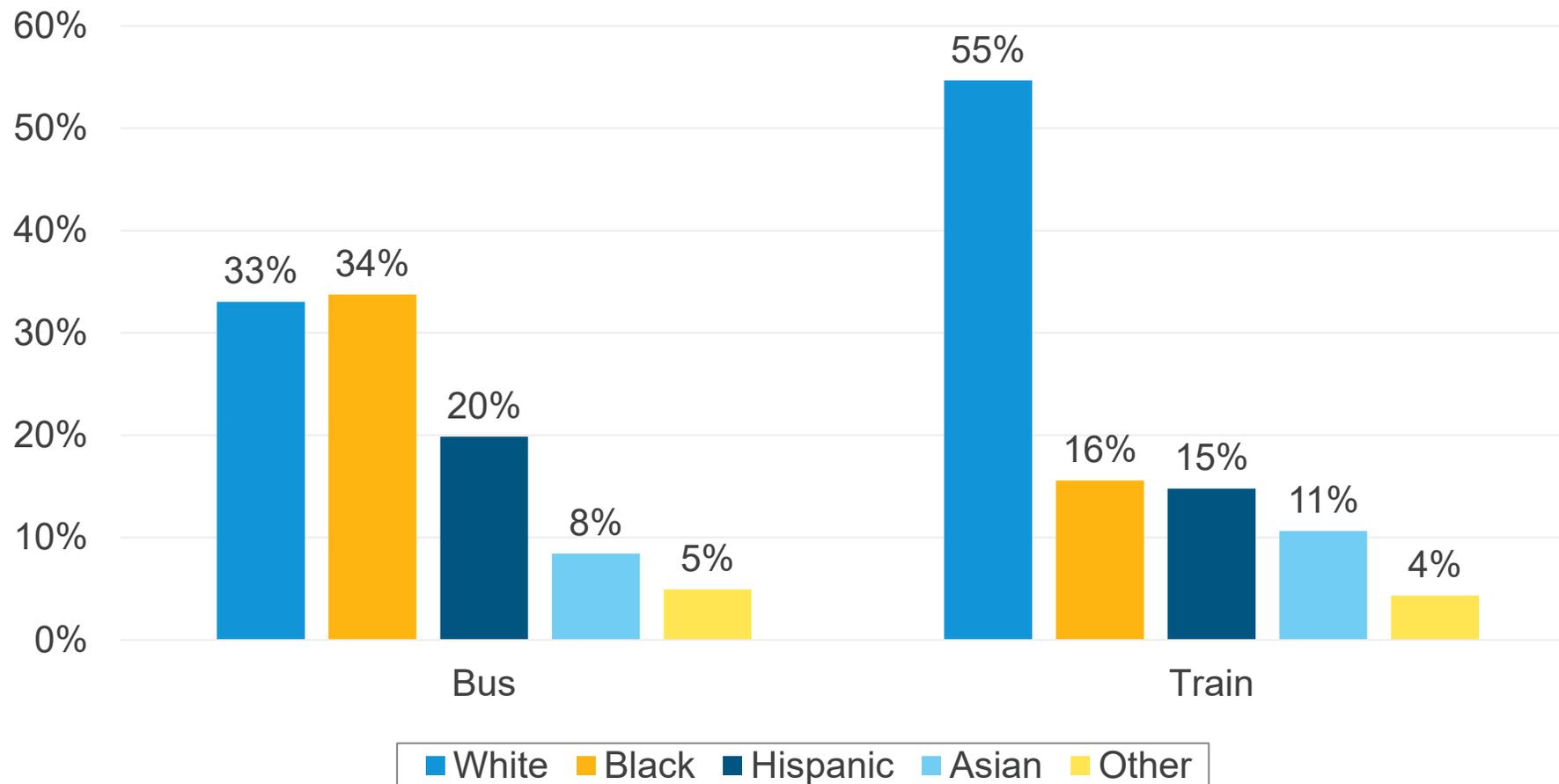


*Job proximity:* The number of jobs within a typical commute distance, which is defined as the typical median commute distance in the metropolitan area.

# Transit and Racial Inequality

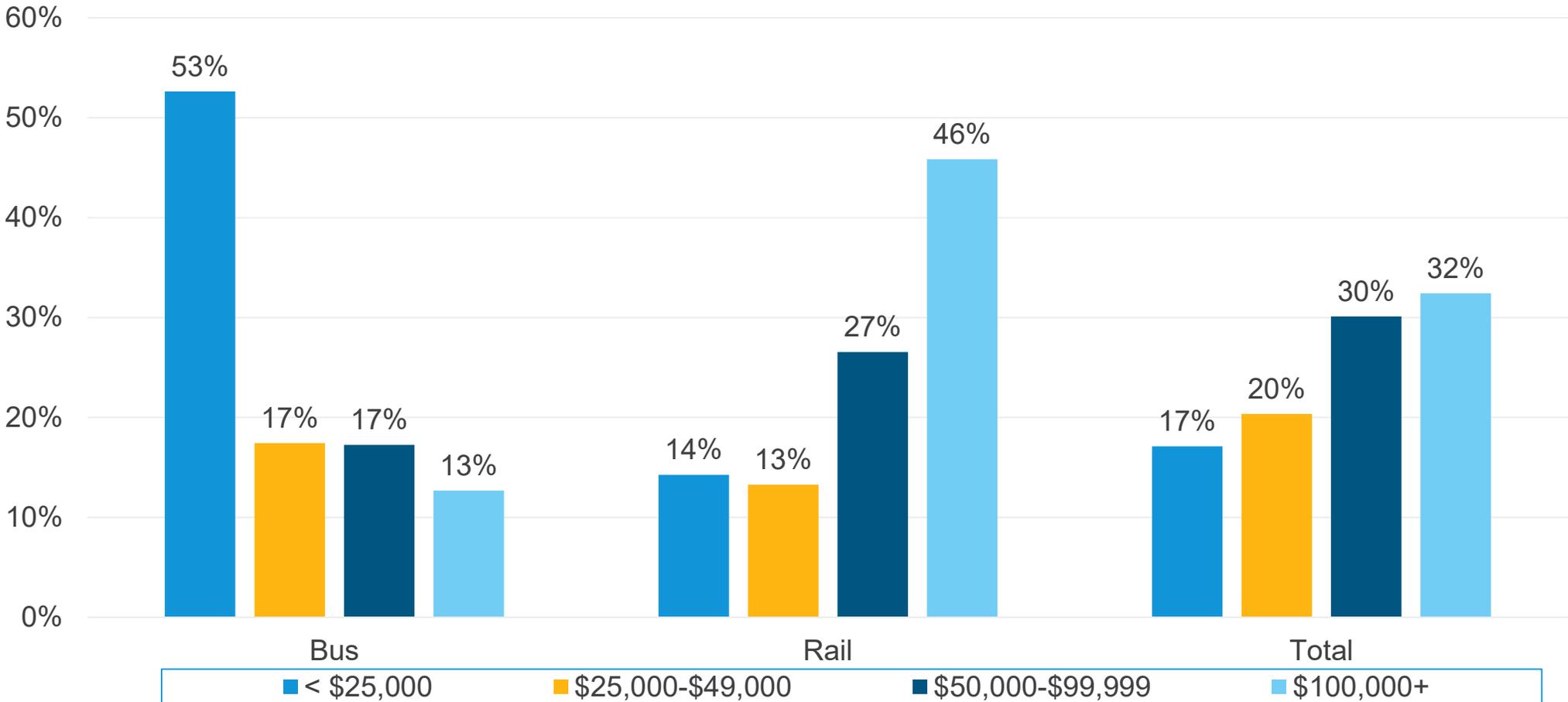
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# Composition of Transit Riders by Transit Mode and Race/Ethnicity



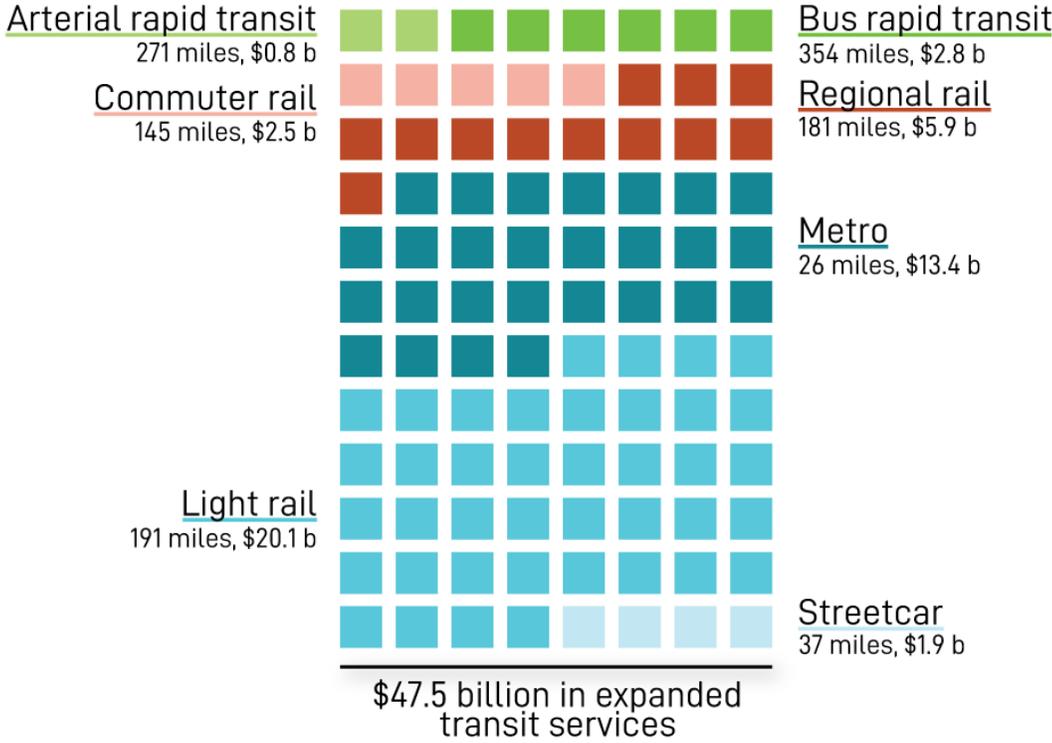
Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.

# Composition of Transit Riders by Transit Mode and Income



# Distribution of Transportation Expenditures by Transit Mode

Expenditures on quality public transit networks  
United States, 2010–2019



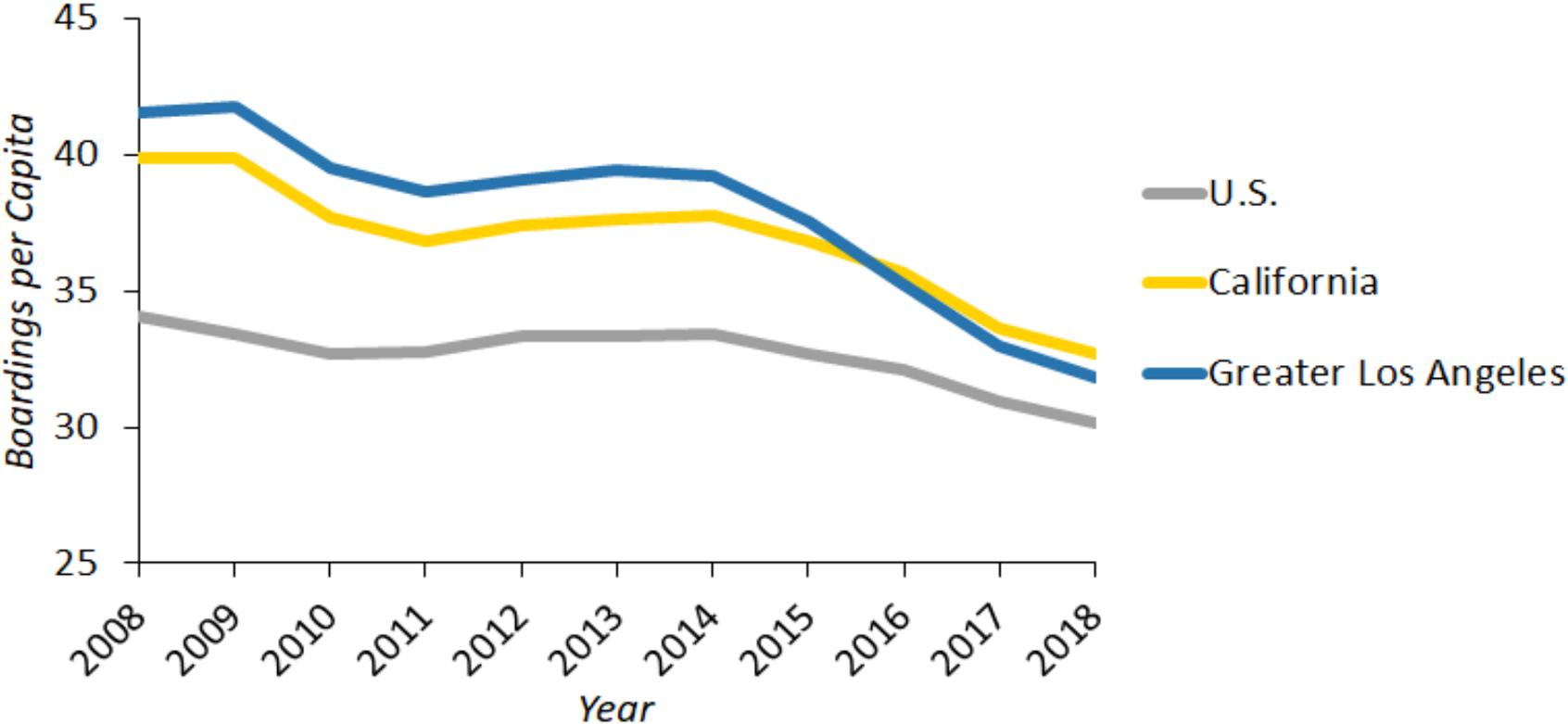
\* Costs inflated to 2019 \$, based on estimated mid point of construction period.

Source: Freemark, Yonah (2020). “Too Little, Too Late? A Decade of Transit Investment in the U.S., Streetsblog USA

# Transit and Racial Inequality

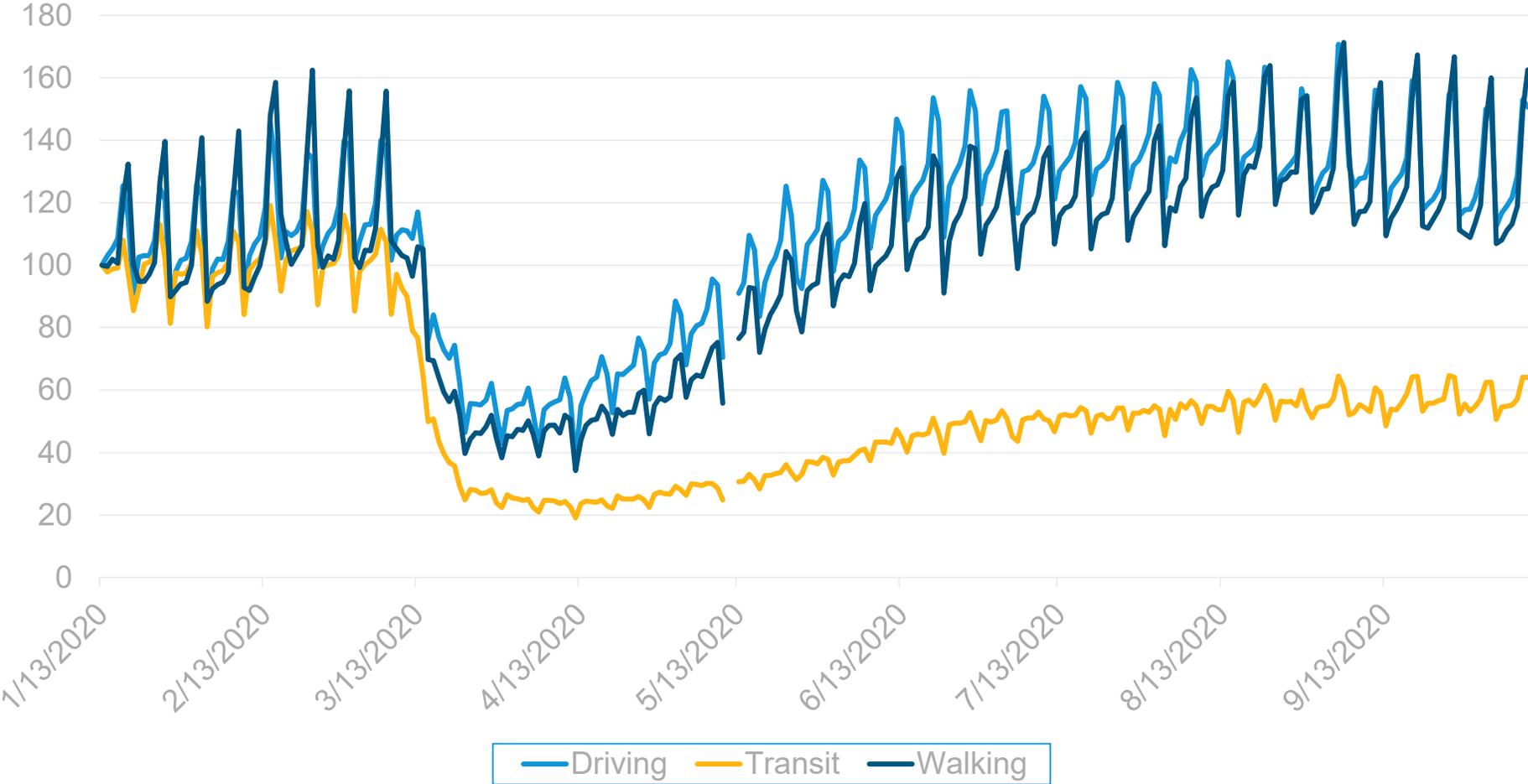
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# Significant Decline in Transit Trips Per Capita



Data source: National Transit Database; American Community Survey; U.S. Census.

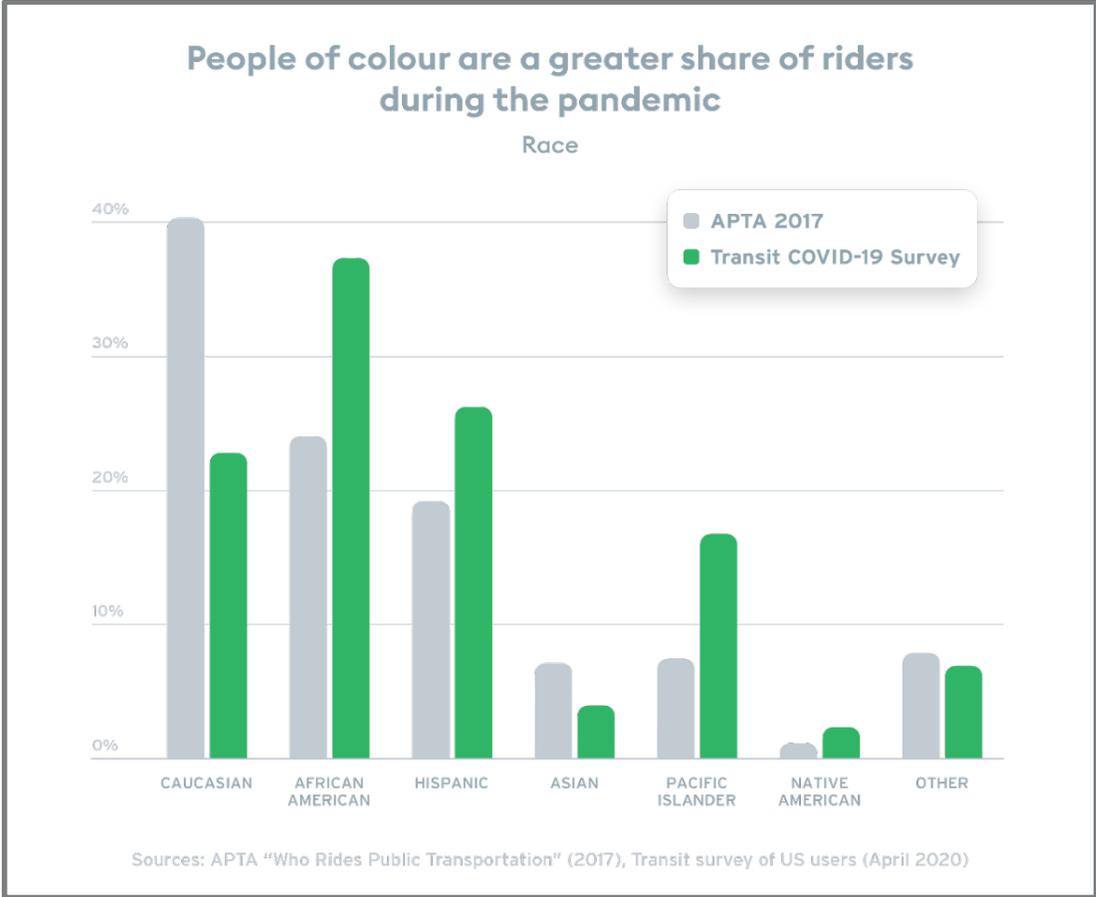
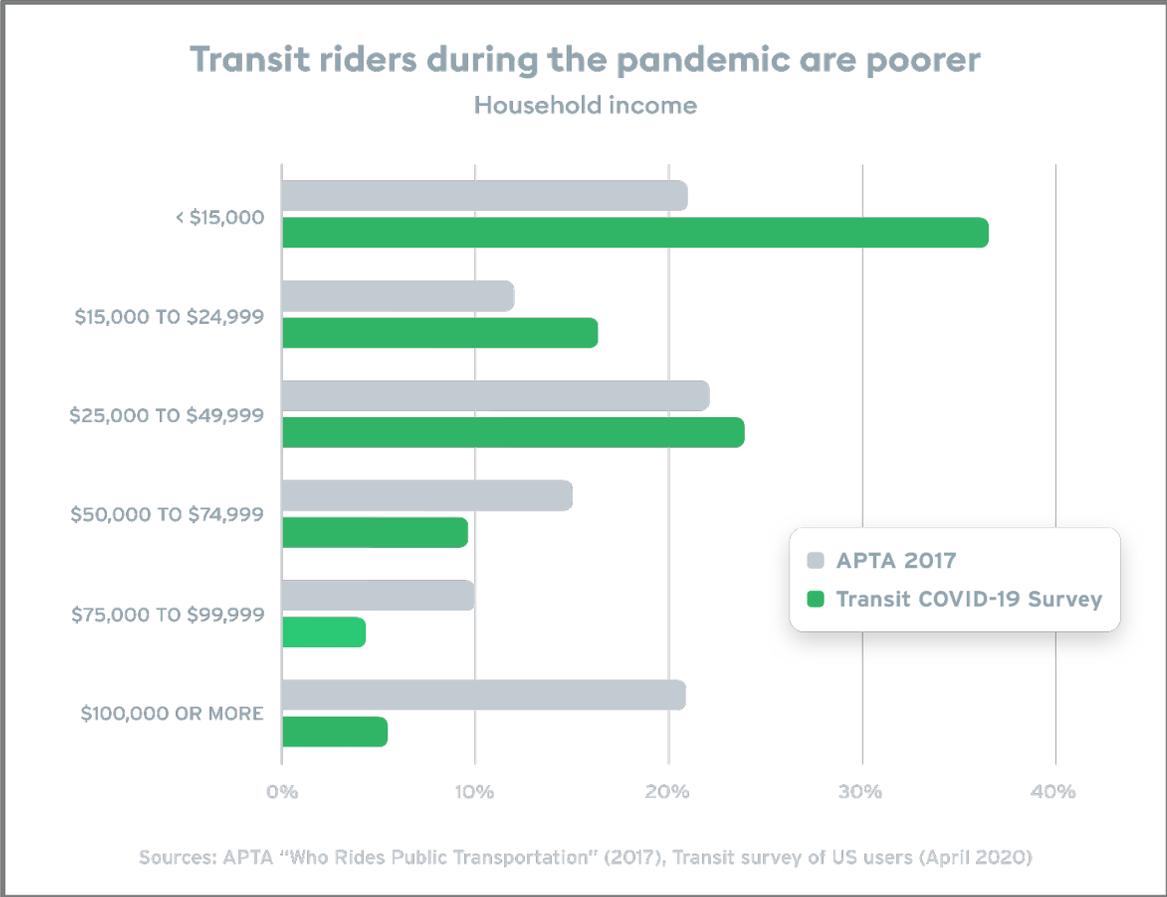
# Change in U.S. Apple Routing Requests by Mode since January 13, 2020



Data: Apple Mobility Reports



# COVID: Transit riders are poorer and a greater share are people of color



Source: Transit App Users

**Reduced transit service—particularly bus service—due to lost revenue will disproportionately hurt poor and non-white travelers.**

**APTA: 60% or more of all transit agencies expect to make service cuts if no additional emergency funds are provided.**

# Reduced Transit Service Due to Lost Revenue will Disproportionately Hurt the Poor and People of Color

Verma, Pranshu (2020), “As the pandemic wreaks havoc on public transit systems across the country, experts say it is low-income residents, people of color and essential workers bearing the brunt,” *New York Times*, August 15.

The Times Editorial Board (2020). “Editorial: Don’t let the coronavirus destroy public transit too,,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 16.

# Transit and Racial Inequality

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# Safety

- Discriminatory policing
- Sexual harassment
- Real and perceived safety risks associated with COVID – on streets/sidewalks, on buses and trains



# Planning, Public Transit, and the Automobile

- *Car-based planning:* Planners and engineers have for decades helped create autocentric cities (e.g. infrastructure investments, automobile-oriented land use, free parking, etc.)
- *Moving beyond car-based planning:* For transit to better meet the needs of travelers – all travelers – we need to better manage the automobile and driving. Otherwise, inequities in access between higher-income white travelers and non-white travelers will remain.