

City of Madison: Southeast Area Plan Survey Part 1 - Survey Results

Prepared by the City of Madison Planning Division | 2025



Introduction:

This report presents a research-based analysis of survey data collected from residents in Madison's Southeast Area. The primary goal of the survey was to better understand residents' priorities related to housing affordability, transportation access, and neighborhood development. By incorporating cross-tabulated visualizations, this analysis highlights how these concerns vary across demographic groups.

Urban planning in Madison is deeply informed by community input gathered through public engagement efforts. In 2024–2025, the City of Madison's Planning Division, in collaboration with Ph.D. students from the UW–Madison Sociology Department, conducted a two-part survey to help inform the Southeast Area Plan, a long-range vision for equitable and sustainable development. This report focuses on Part 1 of the survey, which received responses from more than 480 residents and included questions on housing types, affordability, public transit, infrastructure needs, and neighborhood characteristics.

Data for this report were drawn from a household survey distributed across Southeast Madison. The respondent pool reflects a broad range of ages, income levels, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Both summary statistics and cross-tabulated visualizations are used to identify patterns in resident concerns and priorities, providing a nuanced picture of community needs to inform future planning decisions.

Resident Demographics:

This section provides a summary of who responded to Part 1 of the Southeast Area Plan Survey. Understanding the demographic profile of respondents helps contextualize the survey findings and clarifies which resident groups are represented in the results. Figures 1 through 8 present data on race, ethnicity, age, education, gender, housing tenure, length of residence, and household income.

The survey respondents were predominantly White. As shown in **Figure 1**, 97.1% of participants identified as White, while all other racial groups made up less than 3% of the sample combined. These included Asian or Pacific Islander (1.7%), Black or African American (0.8%), and

American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.4%). This distribution provides insight into the racial composition of those who completed the survey and is useful when interpreting the range of perspectives included in the results.

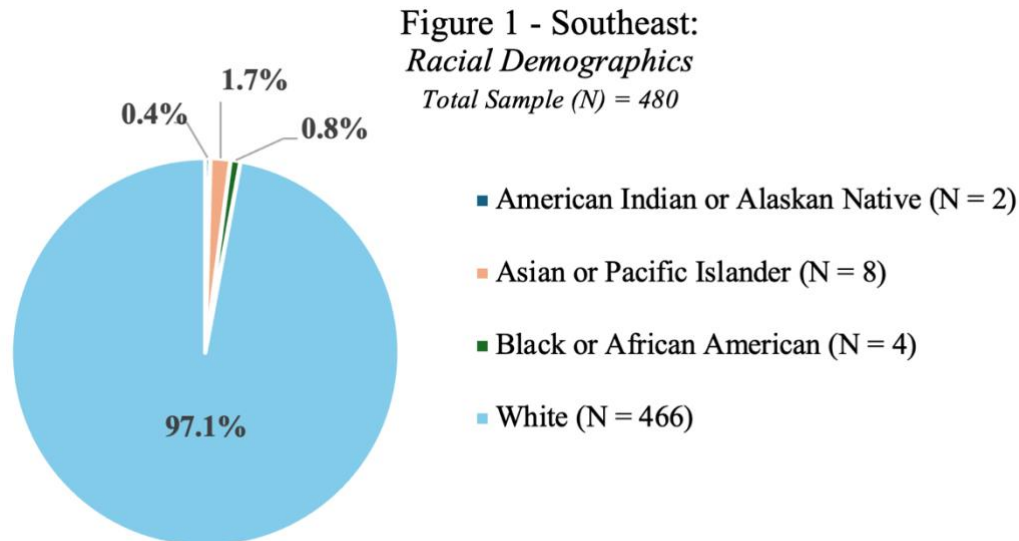
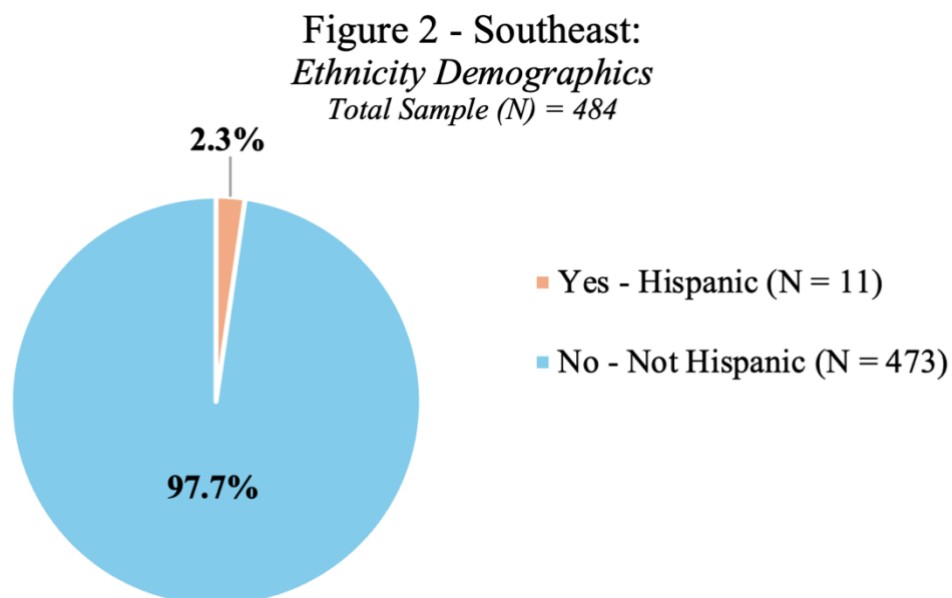
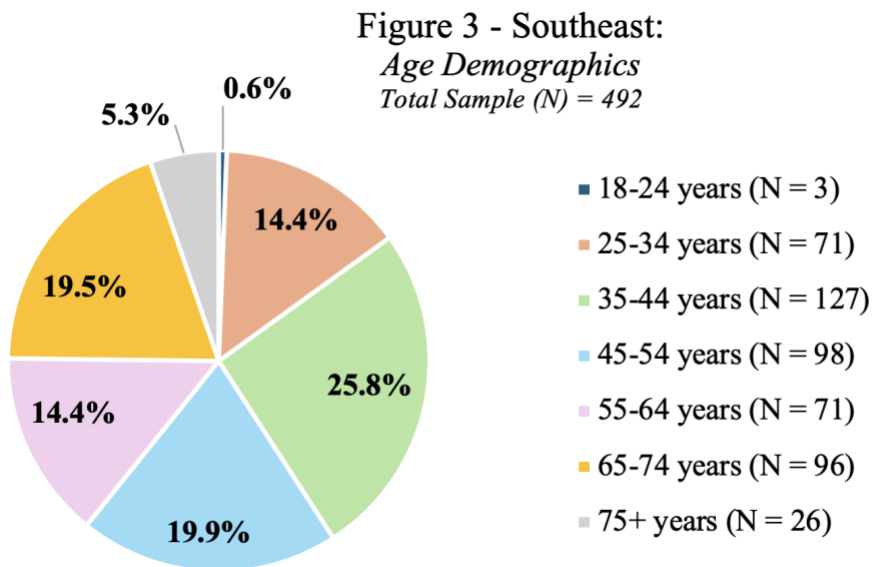


Figure 2 displays the ethnic identity of participants, with 2.3% identifying as Hispanic or Latino and 97.7% not identifying as Hispanic or Latino. The presence of Latino respondents, though small, contributes to the ethnic diversity of the data and is important to acknowledge in evaluating whose experiences and perspectives are reflected in the survey.



Survey participants represented a wide range of age groups. **Figure 3** shows that the largest proportion of respondents (25.8%) were between 35 and 44 years old, followed by those aged 45 to 54 (19.9%) and 65 to 74 (19.5%). Adults between 25 and 34 years old and 55 to 64 years old each made up 14.4% of the total responses. Older adults aged 75 and above represented 5.3% of the sample, while the youngest adults (ages 18 to 24) accounted for 0.6%. This range indicates a broad level of participation across age groups, with a notable concentration among middle-aged and older adults.



Educational attainment among respondents was high. As shown in **Figure 4**, more than half (51.4%) of participants reported having a college degree, and 36.0% had a graduate or professional degree. A smaller share of respondents had completed high school or earned a GED (11.9%), and less than 1% reported not finishing high school. These figures indicate that most survey participants had at least some post-secondary education, which may be relevant in understanding preferences related to land use, infrastructure, and civic engagement.

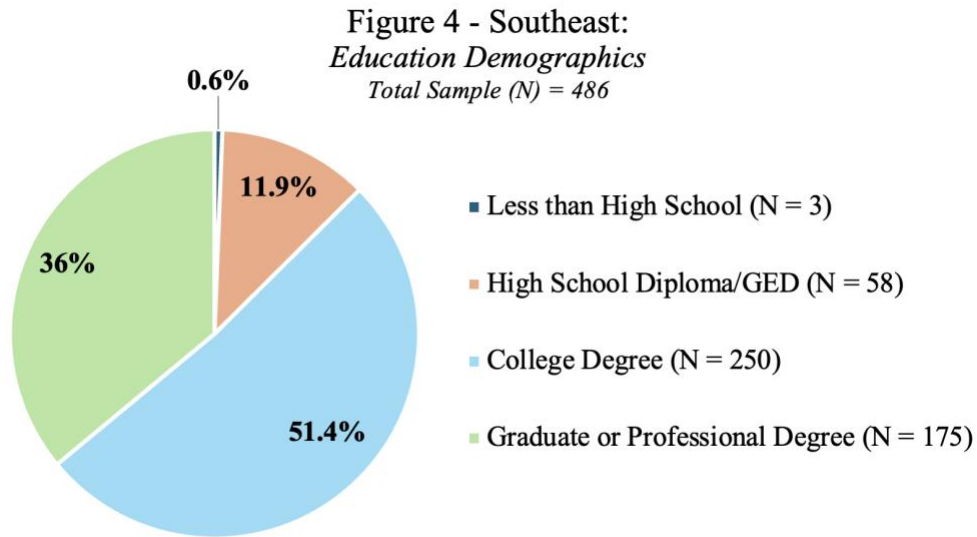
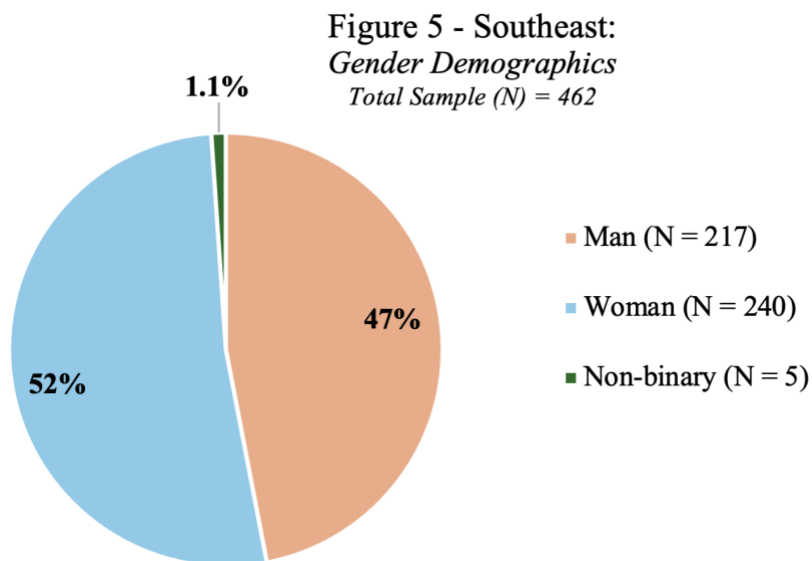


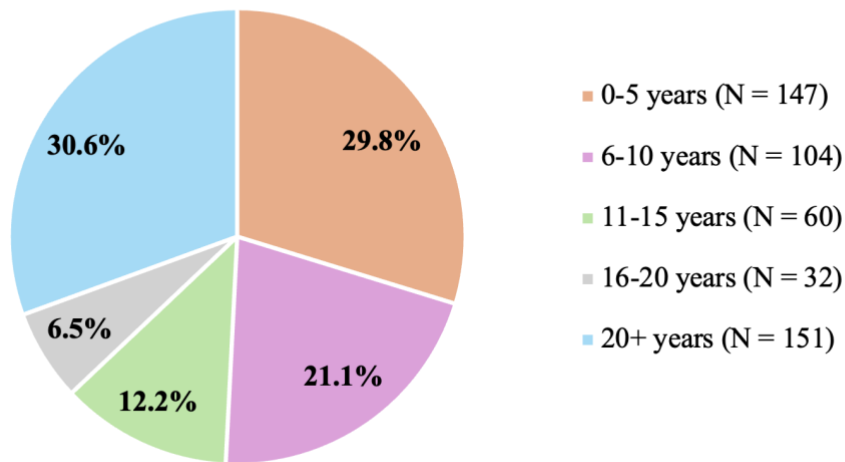
Figure 5 provides an overview of gender identity among respondents. A slight majority (52%) were women, while 47% were men. An additional 1.1% of respondents were non-binary. This distribution shows a near balance between male and female participants, with some inclusion of gender-diverse residents.



Participants varied in how long they had lived in the Southeast area. **Figure 6** shows that 30.6% of respondents had lived in their current neighborhood for more than 20 years, and 29.8% had moved in within the past five years. Mid-range lengths of stay were also represented: 21.1% of

respondents had lived in the area for 6 to 10 years, 12.2% for 11 to 15 years, and 6.5% for 16 to 20 years. This mix of long-term and newer residents contributes to a range of neighborhood experiences that may influence attitudes toward development, amenities, and housing.

Figure 6 - Southeast:
Length of Stay at Residence
Total Sample (N) = 494



The majority of survey respondents reported owning their homes. As shown in **Figure 7**, 95.5% of participants identified as homeowners, while 4.5% identified as renters. This information provides context when interpreting opinions related to housing affordability, neighborhood investment, or stability, as these experiences may differ between renters and owners.

Figure 7 - Southeast:
Residence Type: Rent or Own
Total Sample (N) = 491

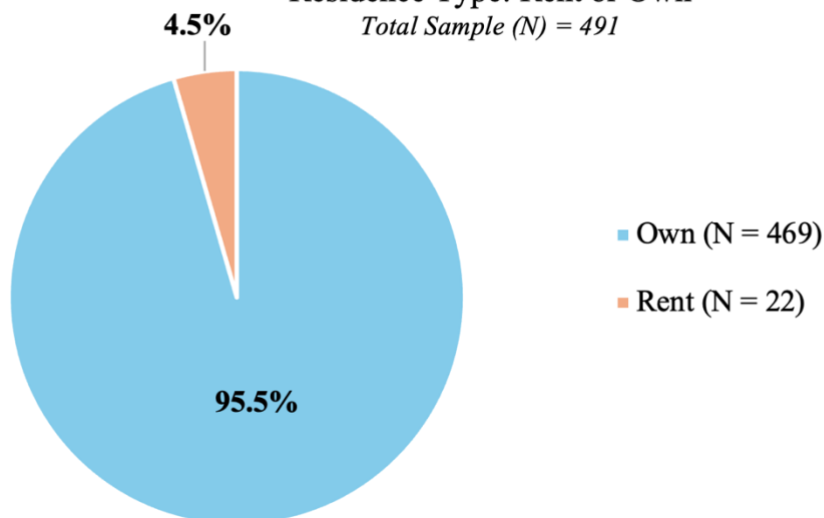
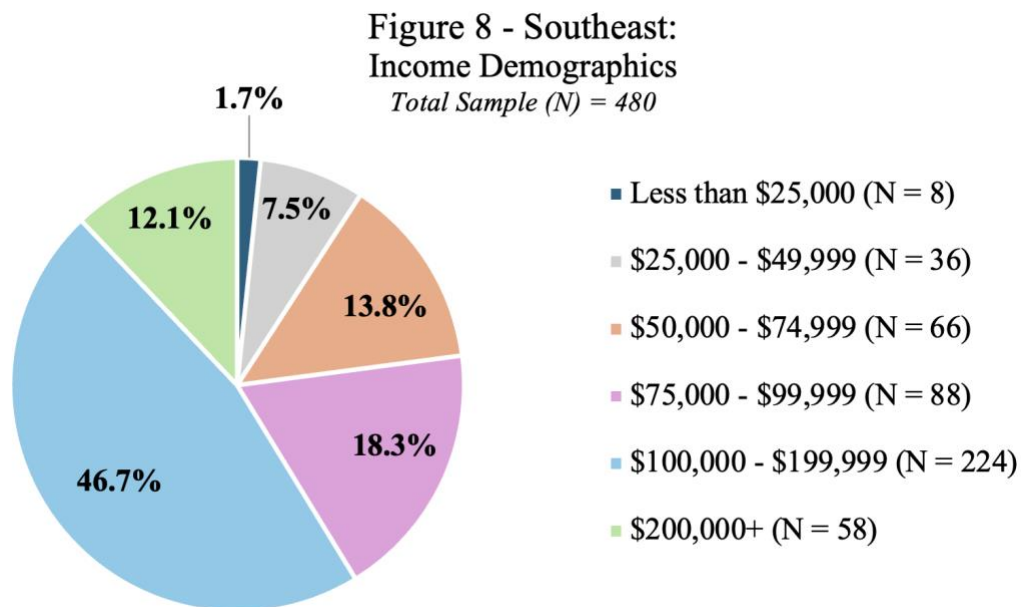


Figure 8 shows that nearly half of respondents (46.7%) reported annual household incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,999. Additional income brackets included \$75,000 to \$99,999 (18.3%), \$50,000 to \$74,999 (13.8%), and \$200,000 or more (12.1%). Smaller portions of respondents reported incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999 (7.5%) and below \$25,000 (1.7%). The income profile of participants provides insight into financial stability, which may shape perspectives on affordability, taxes, and services.



Survey Results - Part 1:

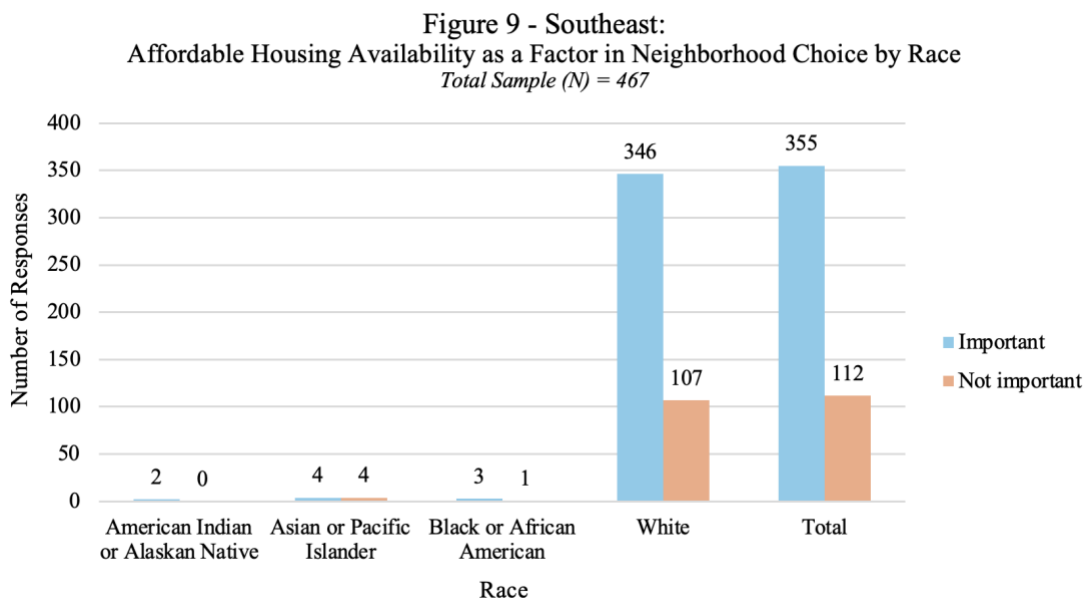
Neighborhood Choice: Affordable Housing and Job Opportunities

Residents were asked to indicate whether certain factors were important in their decision to live in their current neighborhood. Two factors, availability of affordable housing and job opportunities, were examined across key demographic groups, including race, age, and income. Figures 9–14 present a breakdown of how importance varies by demographic category.

Importance of Affordable Housing by Race

Figure 9 displays responses by race regarding whether the availability of affordable housing was an important factor in neighborhood choice. Among the 467 respondents, the vast majority of those who identified as White (346 individuals) considered affordable housing important,

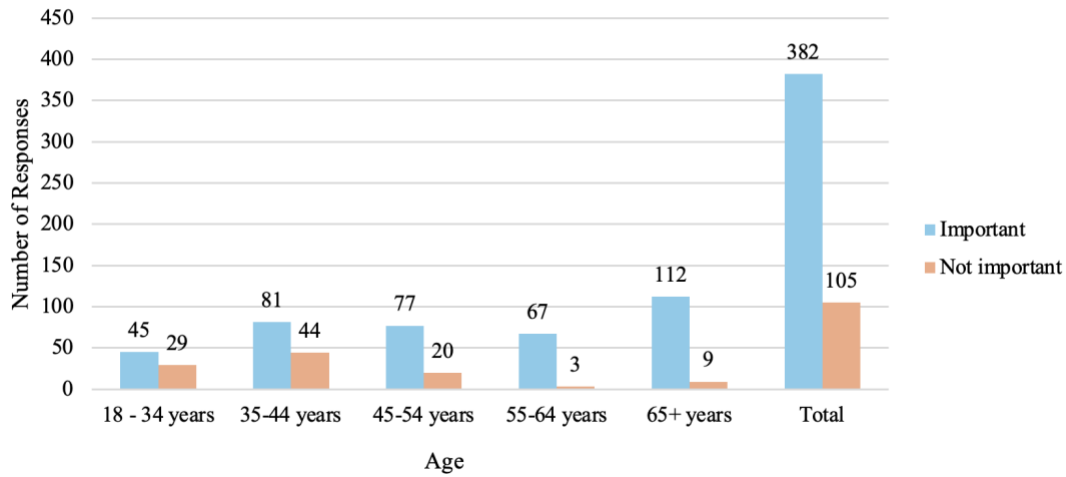
compared to 107 who did not. Among respondents from other racial backgrounds, the total number was relatively small, but patterns remained consistent: for example, 4 out of 8 Asian or Pacific Islander respondents and 3 out of 4 Black or African American respondents also identified affordable housing as an important factor. The data suggest that, across racial groups, the availability of affordable housing is commonly considered an important element in neighborhood selection, with highest response volume among White residents due to their larger representation in the sample.



Importance of Affordable Housing by Age

In **Figure 10**, responses are grouped by age. Affordable housing availability was reported as important by a majority of respondents in every age group. The largest number of responses came from adults aged 35–44 (81 responses) and 45–54 (77 responses), with smaller but still meaningful support among those aged 65 and older (112 total). The age group 55–64 had the smallest number reporting this factor as unimportant (3 responses). Overall, 382 respondents said affordable housing was important, while 105 said it was not, indicating broad agreement across age cohorts.

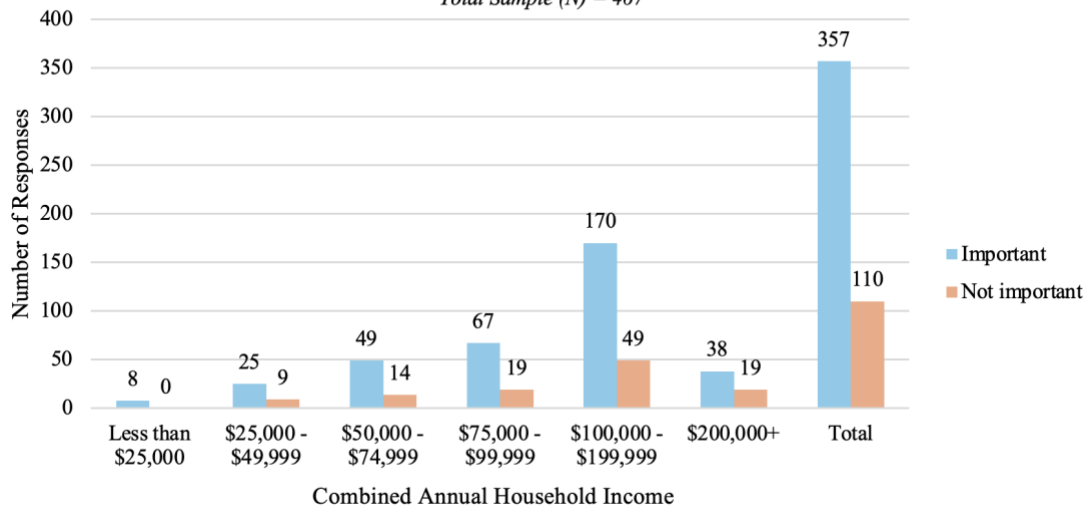
Figure 10 - Southeast:
Affordable Housing Availability as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Age
Total Sample (N) = 487



Importance of Affordable Housing by Income

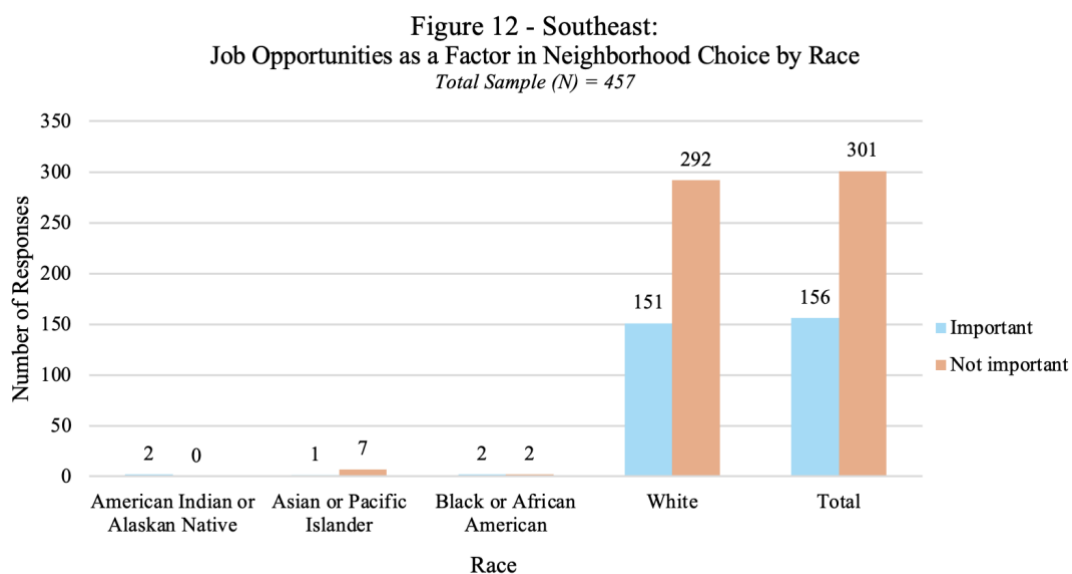
Figure 11 shows responses by combined household income. Interest in affordable housing was present across all income levels, including higher income brackets. The highest number of responses indicating importance came from households earning \$100,000–\$199,999 (170 responses). Even among households earning \$200,000 or more, 38 respondents identified affordable housing as important. This indicates that affordability is a widely shared concern regardless of income level, although the largest volumes of response again came from middle-to-upper income groups due to their greater representation in the sample.

Figure 11 - Southeast:
Affordable Housing Availability as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Income
Total Sample (N) = 467



Importance of Job Opportunities by Race

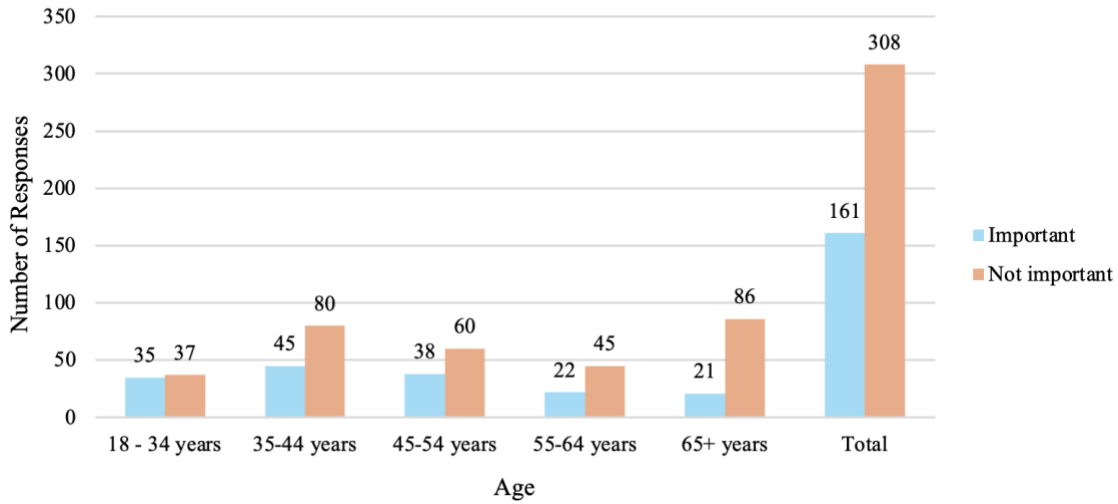
Figure 12 presents the importance of job opportunities as a factor in neighborhood selection across racial groups. Among White respondents, 151 considered job opportunities important, while 292 did not. Smaller numbers of respondents from other racial groups show mixed results. For example, 2 of 2 American Indian or Alaskan Native respondents and 2 of 4 Black or African American respondents marked job opportunities as important, while 7 of 8 Asian or Pacific Islander respondents marked it as not important. Overall, more respondents across all racial groups reported that job opportunities were not a determining factor in neighborhood choice.



Importance of Job Opportunities by Age

As shown in **Figure 13**, younger and middle-aged adults were slightly more likely to value job opportunities in neighborhood selection. The age group 35–44 reported 45 responses marking job opportunities as important, while those 18–34 reported 35. The lowest counts came from those aged 65 and older (21). Across all age groups, more people marked job opportunities as "not important" (308 total) compared to those who said it was important (161 total), suggesting that job availability may not be a primary factor for many residents, particularly older adults.

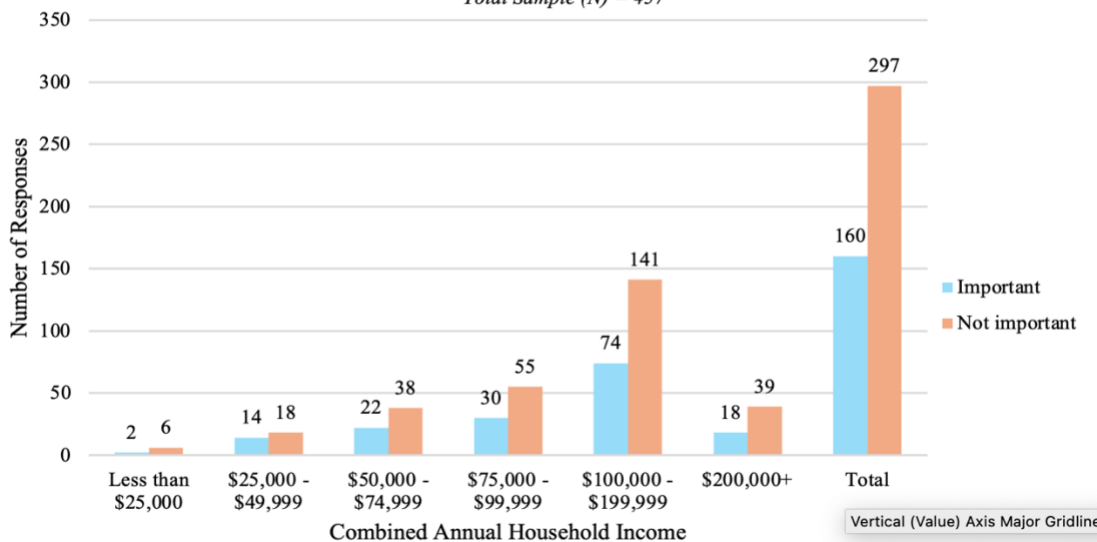
Figure 13 - Southeast:
Job Opportunities as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Age
Total Sample (N) = 469



Importance of Job Opportunities by Income

Figure 14 shows that respondents in every income category expressed a mix of views on the importance of job opportunities. Those with household incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,999 provided the highest number of responses overall, with 74 indicating job opportunities were important and 141 saying they were not. Responses among lower-income groups were fewer in number but similarly mixed. Overall, 160 respondents viewed job opportunities as important, while 297 did not, indicating that across income levels, job availability was less frequently cited as a major factor in deciding where to live.

Figure 14 - Southeast:
Job Opportunities as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Income
Total Sample (N) = 457

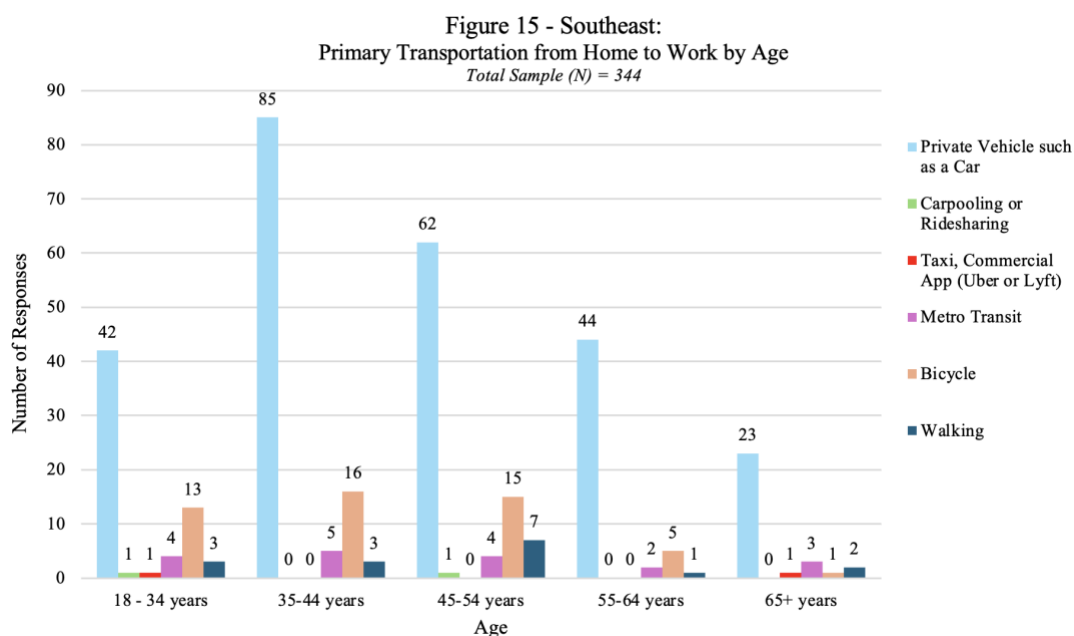


Transportation to Work: Patterns by Age and Income

Residents were asked to identify their primary mode of transportation between home and work. The responses were examined by age and household income to identify trends in mobility patterns across different demographic groups. Figures 15 and 16 provide a breakdown of transportation modes by these categories.

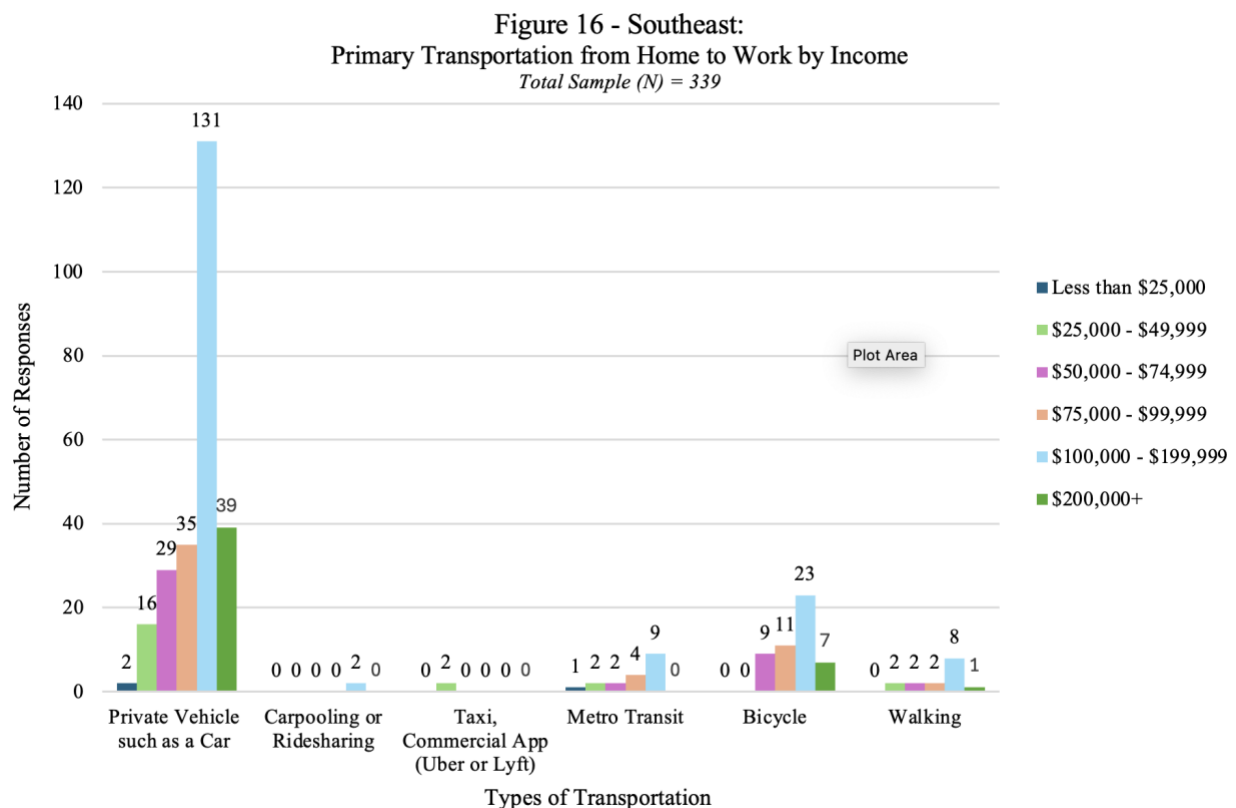
Primary Transportation to Work by Age

Figure 15 displays how respondents across five age groups commute to work. Across all age groups, a private vehicle was the most frequently reported method of transportation. This was especially prominent among residents aged 35–44, with 85 respondents selecting this option, followed by those aged 45–54 (62 respondents) and 18–34 (42 respondents). Use of walking was higher among older and middle-aged groups, peaking at 7 responses among those aged 45–54. Metro Transit, biking, and ride-hailing services were less commonly reported overall but present across most age groups. The youngest group (18–34) showed more diversity in mode choices, including 4 responses for Metro Transit and 3 for walking. Older adults aged 65 and above reported lower overall usage of all transportation types, but private vehicles remained dominant in that group as well. The results indicate that private vehicles are the most common commuting method regardless of age, though some multimodal variation is more visible among younger residents.



Primary Transportation to Work by Income

Figure 16 presents commuting modes by household income. Respondents across all income levels most commonly reported using a private vehicle to travel to work. This trend was particularly pronounced among those earning \$100,000–\$199,999, with 131 respondents selecting this option, the highest of any group. Other income brackets, including \$75,000–\$99,999 (35 respondents) and \$200,000+ (39 respondents), also showed high reliance on private vehicles. In contrast, Metro Transit was most used among respondents earning \$50,000–\$74,999 and \$100,000–\$199,999, though overall numbers remained modest (ranging from 1 to 9 responses per group). Bicycling was most common among middle- and upper-income groups, especially among those earning \$100,000–\$199,999 (23 responses). Walking showed more balanced usage across income groups, including some representation in both lower and higher brackets. The data illustrate that while car usage is widespread across all income levels, lower- and mid-income groups show slightly higher diversity in transit options, particularly in biking, transit, and walking.



Importance of Bus Use for School or Work Commutes

Survey participants were asked to rate how important using the bus is for commuting to school or work. Responses are analyzed by household income and age to understand which groups rely more or less on public transit in their daily lives. Figures 17 and 18 illustrate these patterns across the sample.

Figure 17 presents the importance of bus use by income level. Across all income groups, the most frequent response was “not at all important.” This was especially evident among respondents earning between \$100,000 and \$199,999, with 134 individuals selecting this category. Respondents in the \$50,000–\$74,999 and \$200,000+ income brackets also reported high numbers for “not at all important,” with 45 and 40 responses, respectively. However, bus use was viewed as moderately to extremely important by smaller subsets across all income levels. Notably, 31 respondents in the \$100,000–\$199,999 range said bus use was “slightly important,” and 21 said it was “very important.” The results suggest that while higher-income groups are less likely to view bus transportation as critical for daily commuting, there is still some variation in perceived importance within each income group.

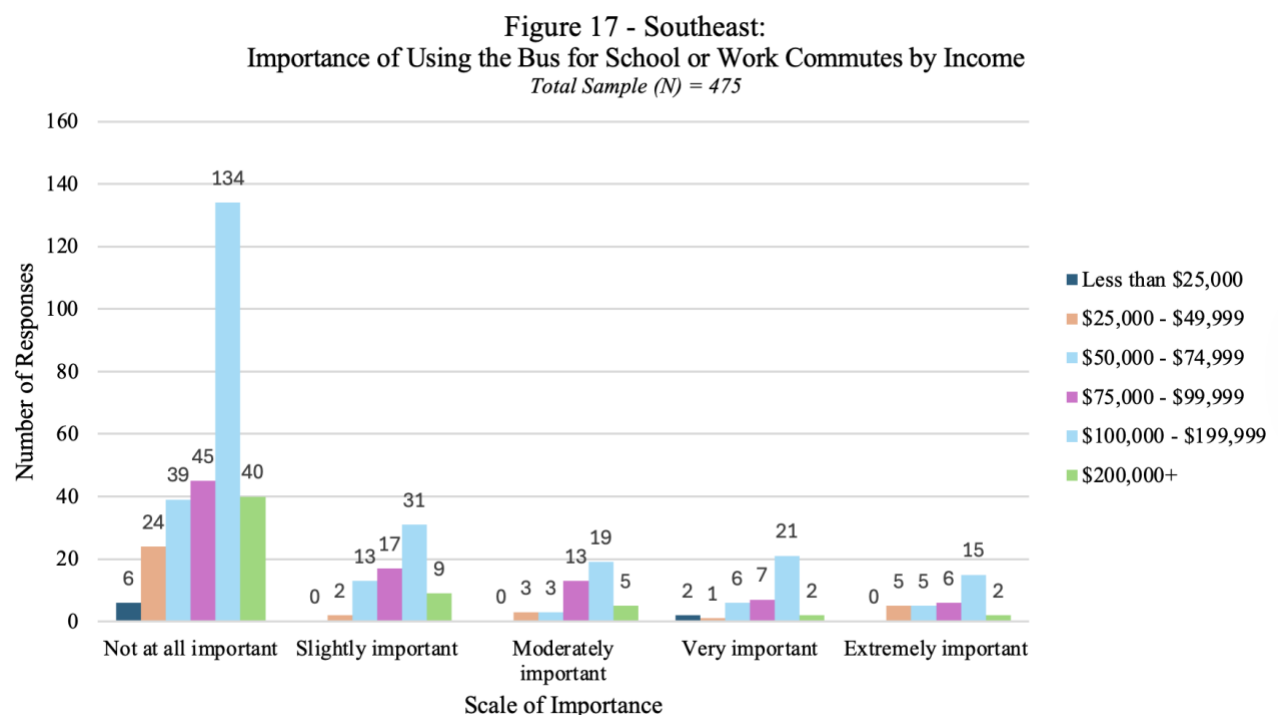
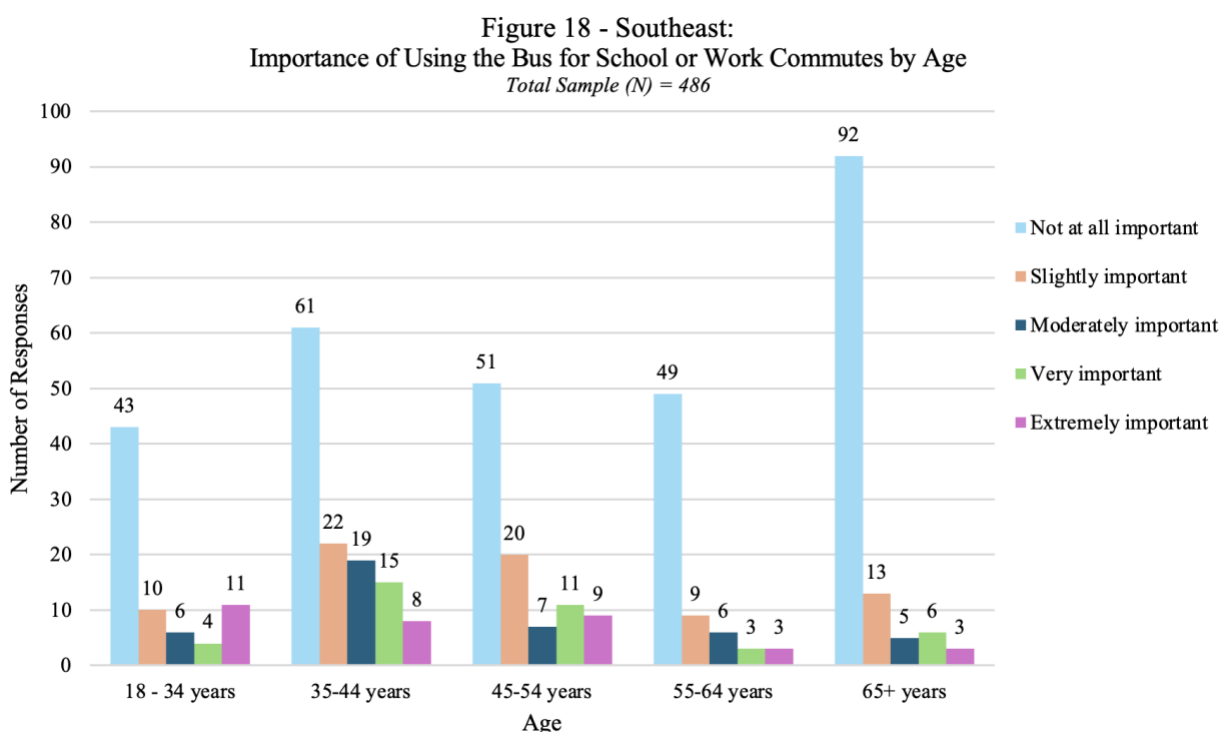


Figure 18 displays the importance of bus use by age. Similar to the income-based results, most respondents across all age groups selected “not at all important.” The 65+ age group had the highest number of respondents in this category (92), followed by individuals aged 35–44 (61), 45–54 (51), and 55–64 (49). Among younger adults aged 18–34, 43 respondents also reported bus use as “not at all important.” Despite this trend, other responses indicate some variability. The 35–44 age group had the highest number of responses across the other levels of importance, including 22 for “slightly important,” 19 for “moderately important,” 15 for “very important,” and 8 for “extremely important.” These findings suggest that although bus transportation is not a central factor for most respondents’ daily routines, there are age-based differences in how public transit is valued—particularly among younger and middle-aged residents.



Importance of Regional Transit Access to Major Cities

As part of the transportation section, residents were asked to evaluate how important it is to have access to regional transit services for traveling to other major cities. The responses were analyzed by household income and age group to better understand who values regional mobility the most. Figures 19 and 20 present this information.

Figure 19 displays the distribution of responses by household income. Across all income categories, the most frequently selected response was "not at all important." This was most notable among those earning \$100,000–\$199,999 (77 responses), followed by \$75,000–\$99,999 (29 responses) and \$200,000+ (17 responses). However, interest in regional connectivity was also evident in other categories. The \$50,000–\$74,999 group, for example, had 25 responses indicating the service was "slightly important" and another 18 marking it as "moderately important." In the highest income group, 22 respondents rated this form of transportation as "extremely important." Overall, while a significant portion of respondents across income levels did not view regional transit access as a daily priority, there was a consistent minority within each group who considered it moderately to highly important.

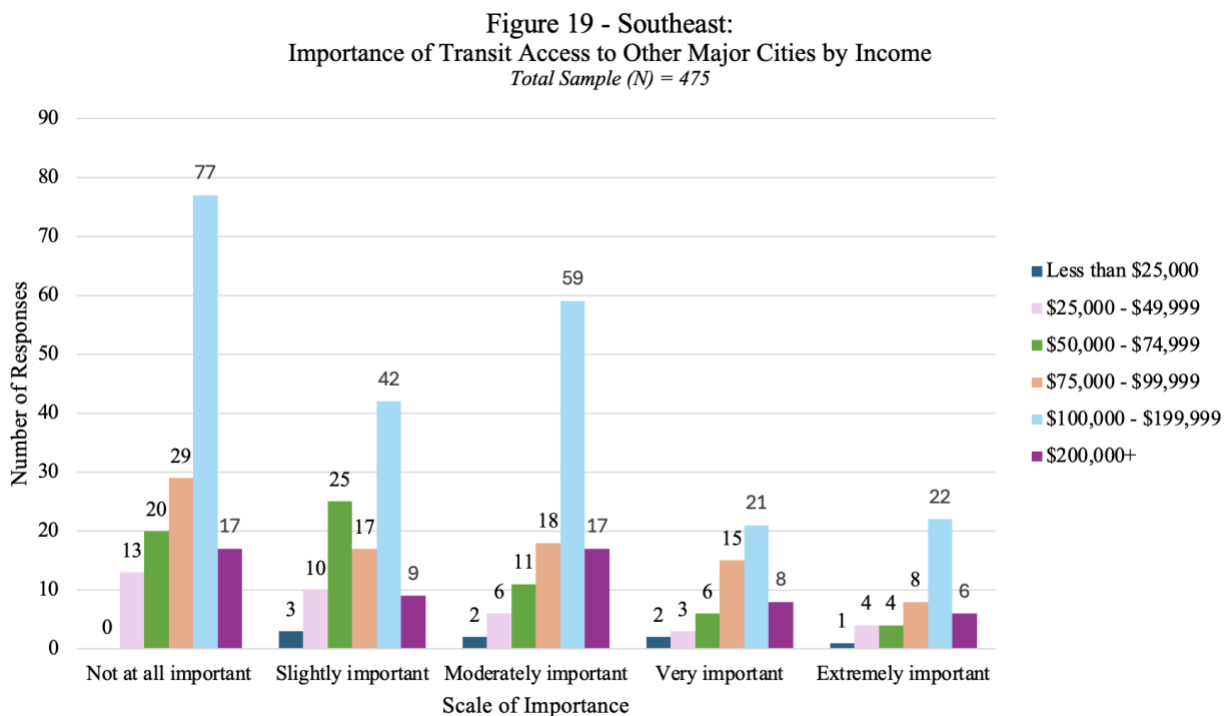
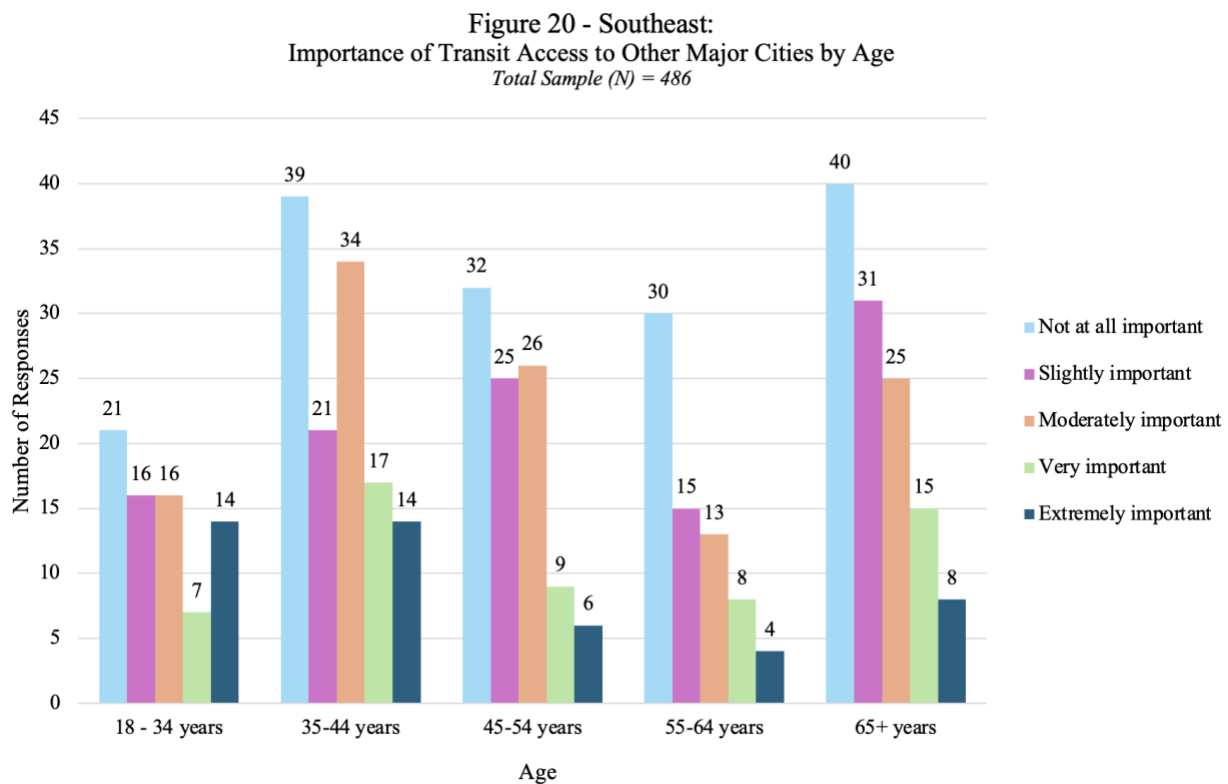


Figure 20 presents responses by age. Among all age groups, "not at all important" remained the most common answer, with the highest counts among those aged 65 and older (40 responses), 35–44 years (39 responses), and 45–54 years (32 responses). However, younger and middle-aged groups were more likely to rate this access as moderately to extremely important. For instance, 34 individuals aged 35–44 rated it as "moderately important," while the 18–34 age group had 14 respondents mark it as "extremely important." The age group 45–54 also showed relatively

balanced responses across all levels of importance. These patterns suggest that while older adults tend to rate intercity transit access as less relevant, younger residents place greater relative importance on it, particularly for regional mobility.



Housing History: Apartment and Condominium Living

The survey asked participants whether they had ever lived in different types of housing, including apartments or condominiums. Understanding prior housing experience provides insight into residents' familiarity with higher-density living arrangements and may inform future housing policy and development preferences. Figures 21 and 22 present the data segmented by household income and age, respectively.

Figure 21 illustrates the percentage of respondents who reported having lived in an apartment building or condominium, segmented by household income. Across all income groups, the majority of individuals indicated prior experience with this type of housing. Those in the \$100,000–\$199,999 income bracket represented the largest group, with 205 individuals reporting yes, followed by 78 in the \$75,000–\$99,999 group and 60 in the \$50,000–\$74,999 group. Even

among the highest earners—those with incomes over \$200,000—most respondents (49 out of 57) had lived in an apartment or condo. The proportion of individuals who had not lived in such housing remained low across all income levels, suggesting that apartment or condominium living is a broadly shared experience regardless of income.

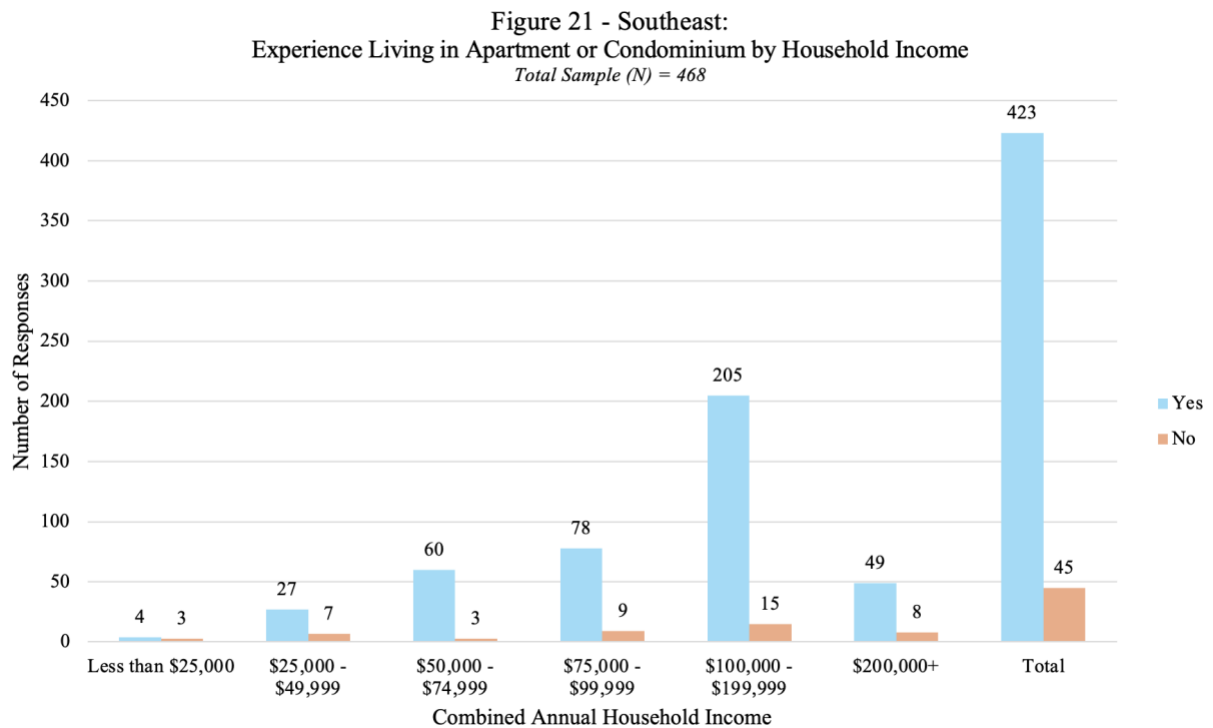
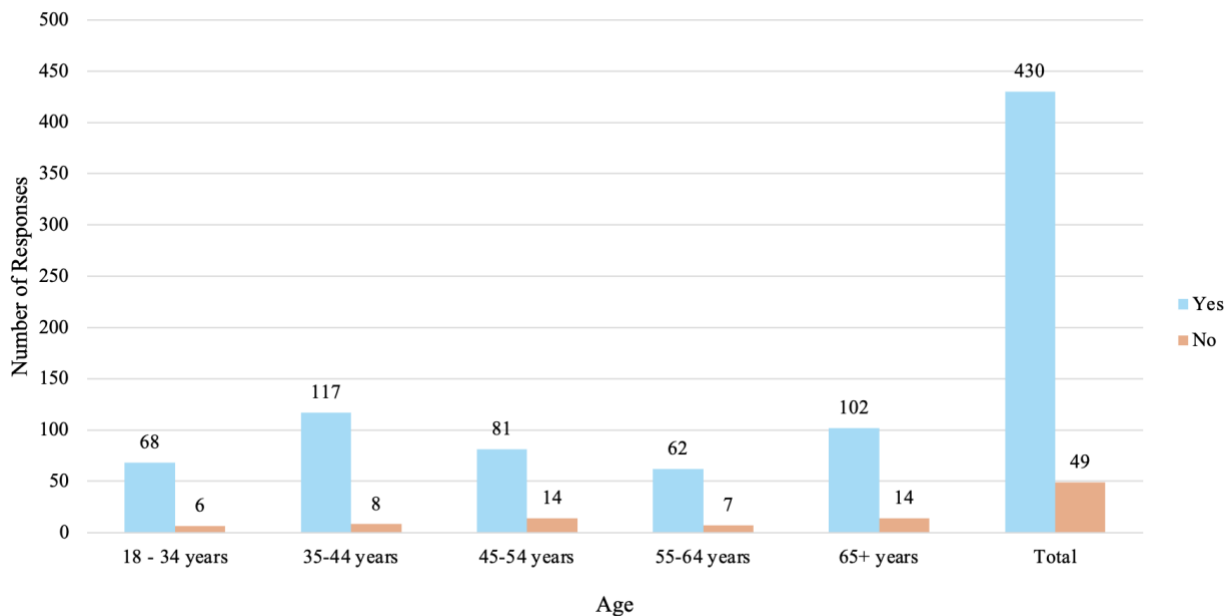


Figure 22 presents the same housing question but segmented by age group. Respondents aged 35–44 had the highest count of apartment or condo experience, with 117 individuals indicating "yes." This was followed by 102 respondents aged 65 and older, 81 aged 45–54, and 68 aged 18–34. Despite generational differences, the trend is consistent: a majority in each age category reported prior experience living in apartment or condominium housing. The number of individuals who responded "no" was relatively small in each age group, ranging from 6 to 14 individuals. These results suggest that apartment and condominium living is a common form of housing across all stages of life.

Figure 22 - Southeast:
Experience Living in Apartment or Condominium by Age
Total Sample (N) = 479



Importance of Increasing Affordable Housing

The survey asked residents to evaluate how important it is to increase the amount of affordable housing—specifically including subsidized housing—in their neighborhood. This question helps assess community priorities related to housing affordability and potential support for future development strategies. Figures 23 and 24 present the responses by household income and age group, respectively.

Figure 23 illustrates how respondents across income groups perceive the importance of increasing affordable housing, including subsidized options, in their neighborhood. Responses vary considerably by income level. Among respondents with annual household incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,999, a plurality (70 individuals) selected “Not at all important,” while smaller yet notable portions also identified it as “Moderately important” (61 individuals) or “Very important” (23 individuals), indicating a mixed response within this group. In contrast, respondents in the \$75,000 to \$99,999 income range were more distributed across the scale, with 27 selecting “Moderately important,” 26 selecting “Not at all important,” and 18 selecting “Slightly important.” The lowest-income group (less than \$25,000) had very few respondents overall, but responses leaned toward higher levels of importance: one respondent each marked

“Moderately important,” “Very important,” and “Extremely important,” while none marked “Not at all important.” Higher levels of support for increasing affordable housing are visible among lower- and middle-income groups, while the highest concentration of “Not at all important” responses came from higher-income brackets, especially those earning between \$100,000 and \$199,999.

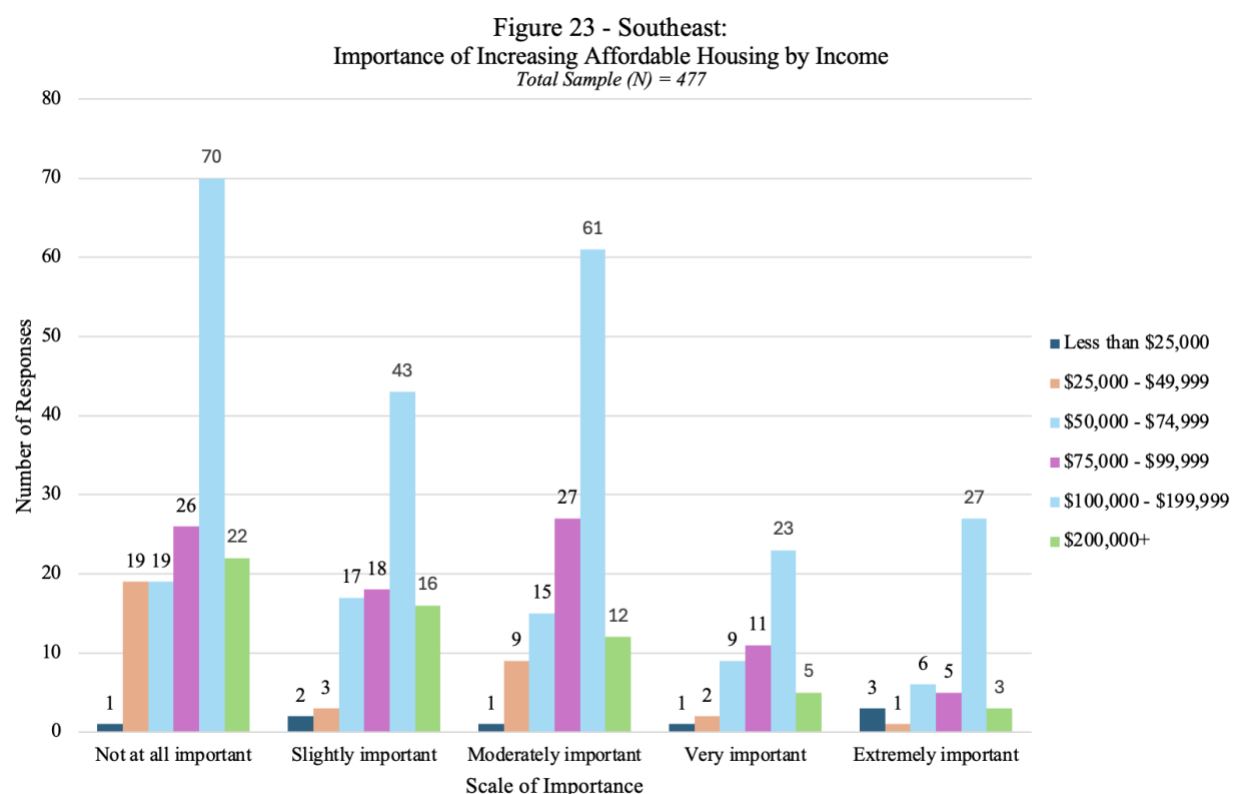
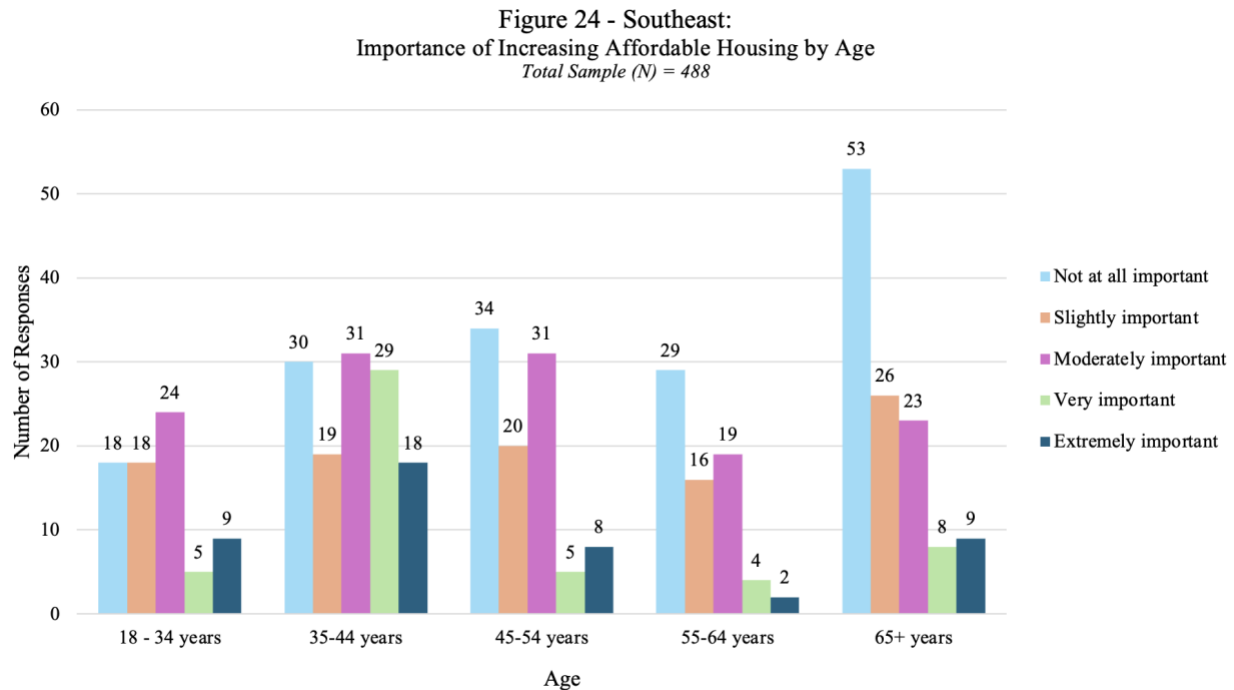


Figure 24 breaks down the importance of increasing affordable housing by age group. Support for affordable housing appears more consistently spread across younger and middle-aged cohorts, while opposition tends to rise with age. Among those aged 18 to 34 years, responses were relatively balanced, with 24 indicating it was “Moderately important,” 18 selecting “Not at all important,” and 18 selecting “Slightly important.” In the 35 to 44 age group, more respondents selected “Moderately important” (31) and “Very important” (29), suggesting a stronger emphasis on the need for affordability among this demographic. For participants aged 65 and older, the dominant response was “Not at all important,” with 53 individuals selecting this option, substantially more than any other category within that age group. Nevertheless, a portion of older respondents still selected “Slightly important” (26) and “Moderately important”

(23), reflecting some level of concern about housing affordability. This pattern suggests that concern for affordable housing is more prominent among middle-aged groups and tapers off among older respondents.



Conclusion:

The Southeast Area Plan Survey results provide a valuable snapshot of how residents experience and prioritize key issues in their neighborhood. The findings show that views on housing, transportation, and community needs vary across age groups, income levels, and life experiences.

Affordable housing, job access, and transportation emerged as recurring themes throughout the survey. Many residents, particularly younger adults and those with lower or middle incomes, expressed strong interest in increasing housing affordability and improving transit options, both locally and to other cities. In contrast, older adults and higher-income households were more likely to rely on private vehicles and place less importance on public or regional transit options. The data also reflect broad familiarity with apartment and condominium living, as most respondents across all groups reported having lived in this type of housing at some point. This

shared experience may help shape future conversations about density, development, and housing variety.

Together, these insights highlight both common values and differing priorities within the community. As planning efforts continue, these perspectives will be important in guiding inclusive, balanced decisions that reflect the diverse needs of residents across the area.