City of Madison:
Southwest 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 Southwest Area. The primary goal of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of residents' priorities related to housing affordability, transportation access, and neighborhood conditions.

Urban planning in Madison is shaped by resident feedback gathered through a variety of public participation methods, including community surveys. 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 Southwest Area Plan, a long-range vision to help guide how the physical parts of our community change over time. This includes things like land use, housing, transit, streets, and bike paths. This report focuses on **Part 1** of the survey, which received responses from more than **890 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 the Southwest area. 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.

Methodology[1]:

Approximately 4,800 postcards containing survey information and a QR code were mailed randomly to residential properties within the Southwest Area. Over 60 percent of the total survey responses were from the postcard mailings. In addition to the postcard mailings, multiple outreach strategies were used to increase participation and reach a broad cross-section of residents. Paper copies and QR codes linking to the survey were distributed at community events such as Meadowridge Library programs, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church community

---

[1] This document was updated on December 2, 2025 to add more information about the survey methodology.

dinner, Bike to Work Week events along the Southwest Commuter Path, and local food pantries. These events were selected to engage residents of all demographic backgrounds and digital access levels.

The survey was also promoted through email updates to subscribers of the Southwest Area Plan mailing list and through a press release and social media posts issued by the City of Madison, broadening awareness across online and community networks.

A total of over 890 individuals participated in Part 1 of the survey, representing a diverse range of ages, income levels, and racial and ethnic groups. Responses were aggregated and analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to explore variation in priorities across demographic subgroups. The resulting data provide a basis for identifying key community needs and shaping recommendations to be included in the Southwest Area Plan.

Resident Demographics:

This section provides a summary of who responded to Part 1 of the Southwest 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.

Understanding the composition of the survey respondents is critical for interpreting the results. Figure 1 presents the racial composition of respondents. The majority identified as White, making up over nine out of ten participants (93.4%, N = 762). Smaller proportions identified as Asian or Pacific Islander (3.4%, N = 28), Black or African American (2.8%, N = 23), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.4%, N = 3). While the sample reflects strong

representation from White residents, it also includes a modest number of respondents from other racial backgrounds.

Figure 2

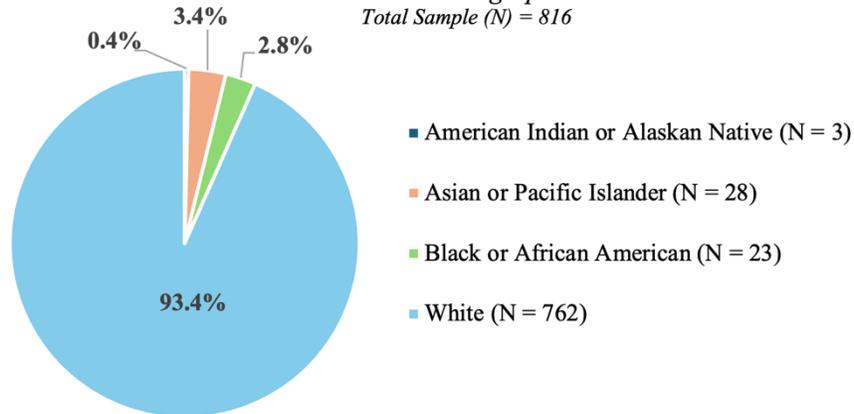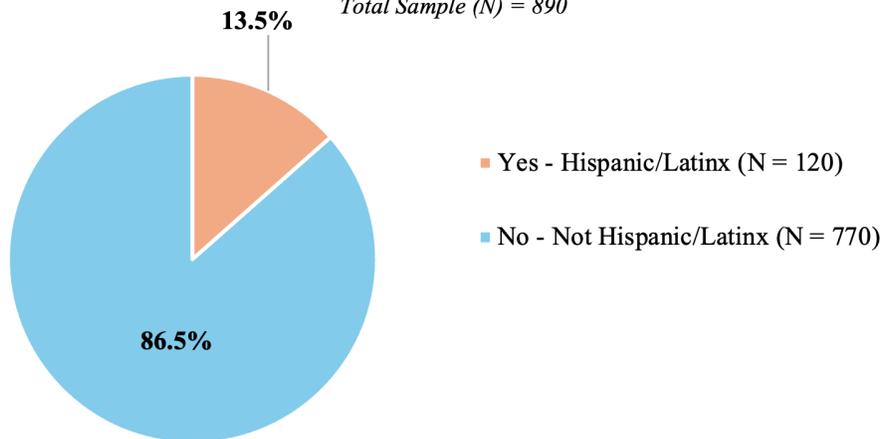Figure 1 - Southwest:
Racial Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 816

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (N = 3)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (N = 28)
- Black or African American (N = 23)
- White (N = 762)

0.4% 3.4% 2.8% 93.4%

shows the distribution of responses regarding Hispanic/Latinx identity. Most respondents reported that they did not identify as Hispanic or Latinx (86.5%, N = 770). A smaller but notable portion of the sample, 13.5% (N = 120), identified as Hispanic/Latinx. This indicates that the survey captured perspectives from both Hispanic/Latinx and non-Hispanic/Latinx residents, though the latter group made up the larger share of participants.

Figure 2 - Southwest:
Ethnicity Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 890

- Yes - Hispanic/Latinx (N = 120)
- No - Not Hispanic/Latinx (N = 770)

13.5% 86.5%

Figures 3 and 4 offer insight into the age and educational profile of survey participants in the Southwest area. These demographic indicators suggest a relatively established and educated respondent base.

Figure 3 illustrates that the majority of survey respondents fall within the middle-aged adult categories. Specifically, 21.6% of participants were aged 35–44, followed closely by those aged 25–34 (18.3%) and 45–54 (17.5%). Respondents aged 55–64 and 65–74 also made up significant portions of the sample, representing 16% and 16.8% respectively. Notably, younger adults (18–24 years) accounted for just 1.8% of responses, indicating limited representation from the youngest adult demographic. Meanwhile, respondents aged 75 and older comprised a small but noteworthy 8.1% of the sample. This age distribution suggests that the survey primarily captured the perspectives of adults in their prime working and family-raising years, many of whom may already be long-term residents with a strong stake in neighborhood development and stability.
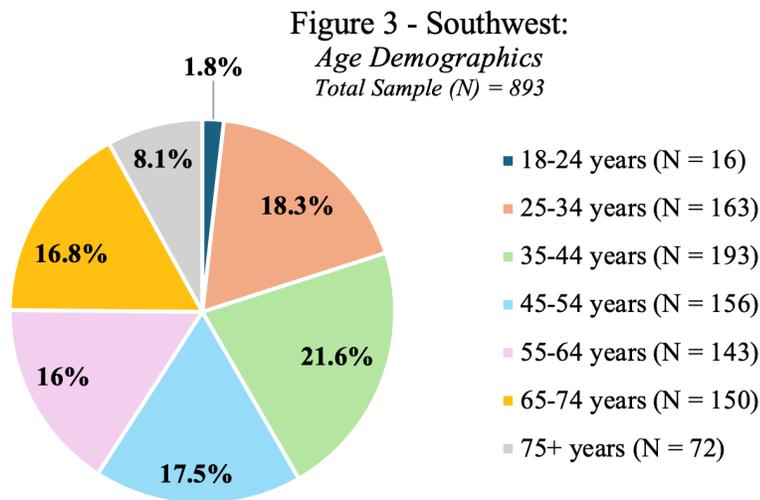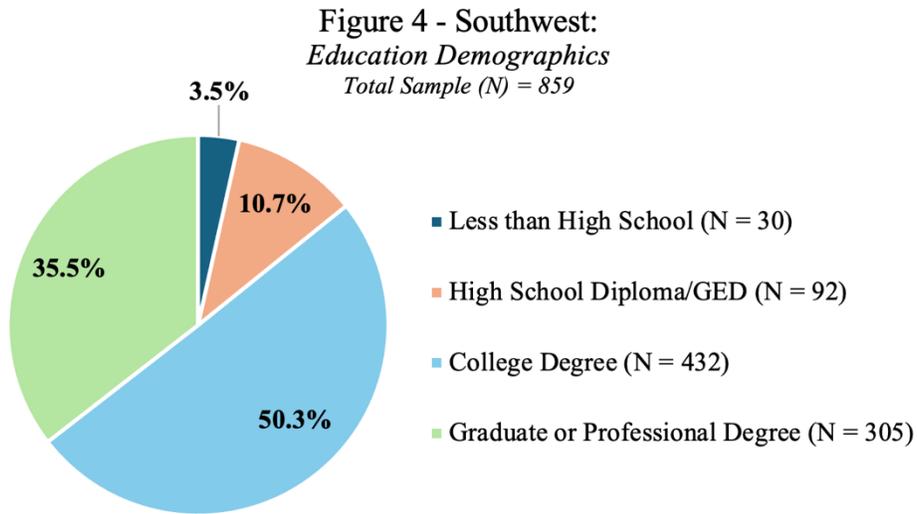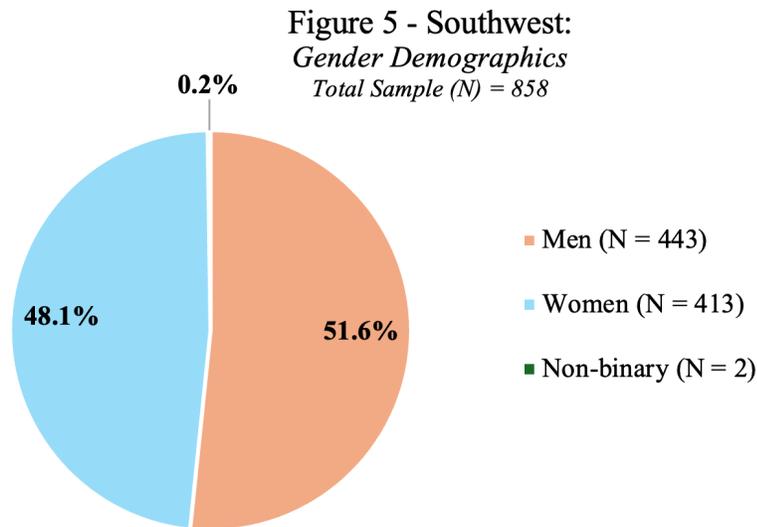

Figure 3 - Southwest:
Age Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 893

- 18-24 years (N = 16)
- 25-34 years (N = 163)
- 35-44 years (N = 193)
- 45-54 years (N = 156)
- 55-64 years (N = 143)
- 65-74 years (N = 150)
- 75+ years (N = 72)

Figure 4 further supports the notion of a well-established respondent group by highlighting high levels of educational attainment. Over half of all participants (50.3%) reported holding a college degree, and an additional 35.5% had obtained a graduate or professional degree. Together, these two categories account for an overwhelming 85.8% of the sample. In contrast, only 10.7% reported having a high school diploma or GED, and a mere 3.5% had less than a high school education. This distribution reveals that most respondents are highly educated, a factor that often correlates with greater civic engagement, policy awareness, and access to resources.

Combined, the data from Figures 3 and 4 suggest that the survey reflects the views of an older, more educated population—groups that are typically more likely to engage in planning processes and respond to civic surveys. While these responses offer valuable insights into community priorities, they also point to potential gaps in representation from younger and less formally educated residents, which may be important for ensuring inclusivity in future outreach efforts.

Figure 4 - Southwest:
Education Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 859

3.5%
10.7%
35.5%
50.3%

- Less than High School (N = 30)
- High School Diploma/GED (N = 92)
- College Degree (N = 432)
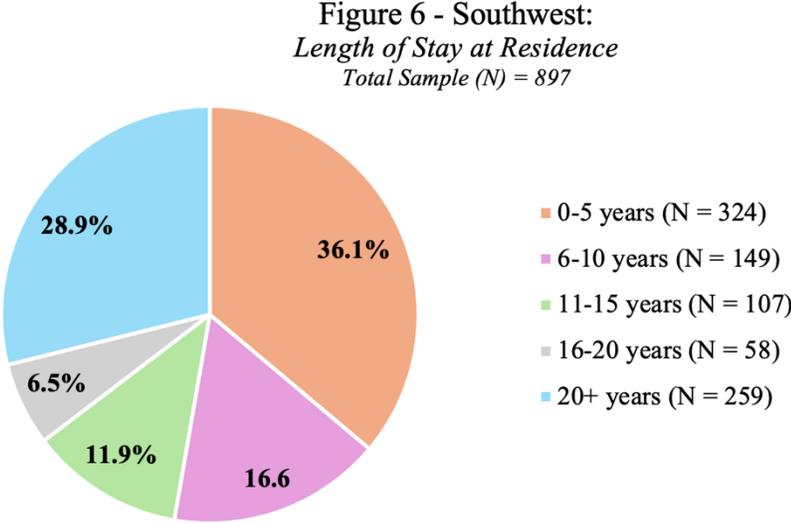- Graduate or Professional Degree (N = 305)

The survey had a fairly even mix of men and women. About 52% of respondents were men and 48% were women, as presented in **Figure 5**. Two respondents were non-binary, making up just 0.2% of the responses.

Figure 5 - Southwest:
Gender Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 858

0.2%
48.1%
51.6%

- Men (N = 443)
- Women (N = 413)
- Non-binary (N = 2)

The majority of survey participants in the Southwest area reported higher household incomes. Nearly 40% of respondents said they earned between $100,000 and $199,999 per year, and another 20% reported earning over $200,000. This means that more than half of the people who responded to the survey have relatively high incomes.

At the same time, smaller but still notable portions of the population reported earning under $100,000. About 12.1% earn between $75,000 and $99,999, while roughly 10% fall into each of the lower three income brackets: under $25,000, $25,000–$49,999, and $50,000–$74,999. In **Figure 6**, the income distribution shows that while the area has a large number of higher-income residents, there is still a mix of income levels represented.

Figure 6 - Southwest:
Length of Stay at Residence
Total Sample (N) = 897

- 0-5 years (N = 324)
- 6-10 years (N = 149)
- 11-15 years (N = 107)
- 16-20 years (N = 58)
- 20+ years (N = 259)

As illustrated in **Figure 7**, over one-third of respondents (36.1%) have lived in the Southwest area for five years or less, indicating a notable influx of newer residents. At the same time, nearly 28.9% have resided in the neighborhood for more than 20 years. This balance between recent arrivals and long-term residents reflects a diverse range of experiences and connections to the area.

Figure 7 - Southwest:
Residence Type: Rent or Own
Total Sample (N) = 891

16%

84%

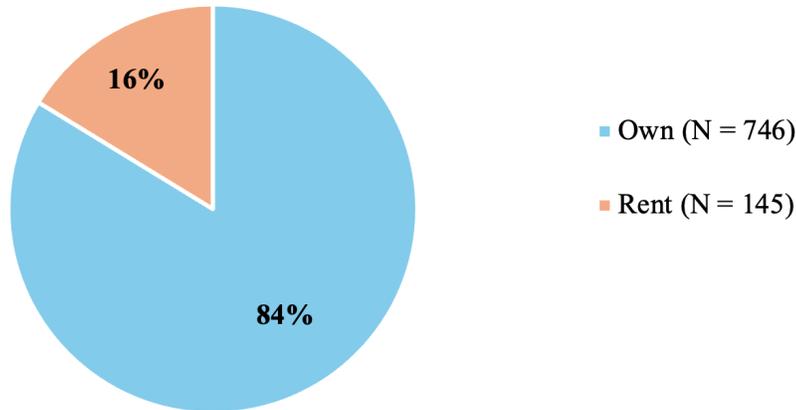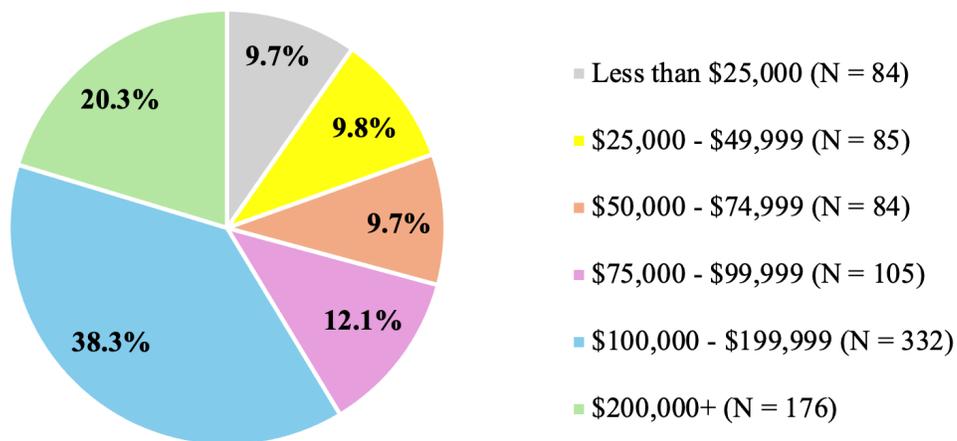- Own (N = 746)
- Rent (N = 145)

Figure 8 shows that the overwhelming majority of participants (84%) are homeowners, while only 16% rent their homes. This high rate of homeownership reinforces the image of a relatively rooted population, as ownership often correlates with longer residence durations. Together, Figures 7 and 8 suggest that while the Southwest area is home to a steady base of long-term homeowners, and also continues to attract new residents.

Figure 8 - Southwest:
Income Demographics
Total Sample (N) = 866

9.7%
20.3%
9.8%
9.7%
38.3%
12.1%

- Less than $25,000 (N = 84)
- $25,000 - $49,999 (N = 85)
- $50,000 - $74,999 (N = 84)
- $75,000 - $99,999 (N = 105)
- $100,000 - $199,999 (N = 332)
- $200,000+ (N = 176)

Survey Results - Part 1:
Affordable Housing as a Neighborhood Priority

Figures 9 and 10 present clear evidence that affordable housing is a widespread concern across both age and income groups. It is important to note that many survey questions allowed respondents to select more than one option from the list, so percentages in the figures will not add up to 100 percent. This applies to many of the charts in this report.

In **Figure 9**, younger and middle-aged residents, particularly those between 18–44 years, overwhelmingly report that the availability of affordable housing is an important factor in their neighborhood choice. Even among older adults (65+), a strong majority still rank it as important (154 vs. 58 not important), suggesting this issue spans generations.
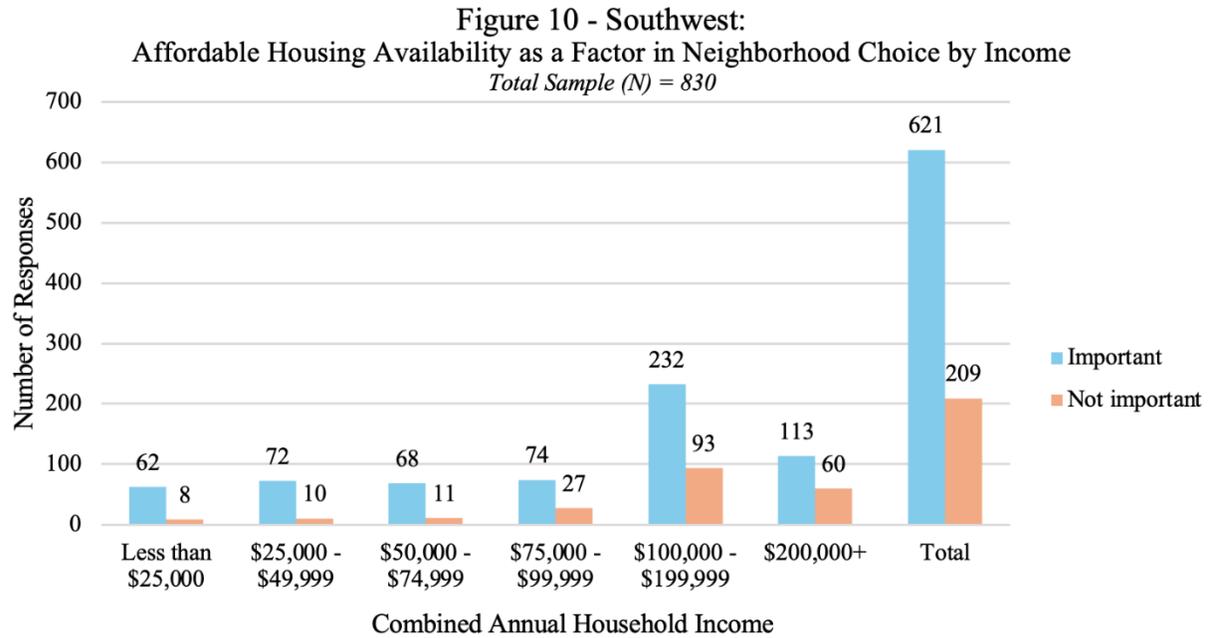
Figure 9 - Southwest:
Affordable Housing Availability as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Age
Total Sample (N) = 852
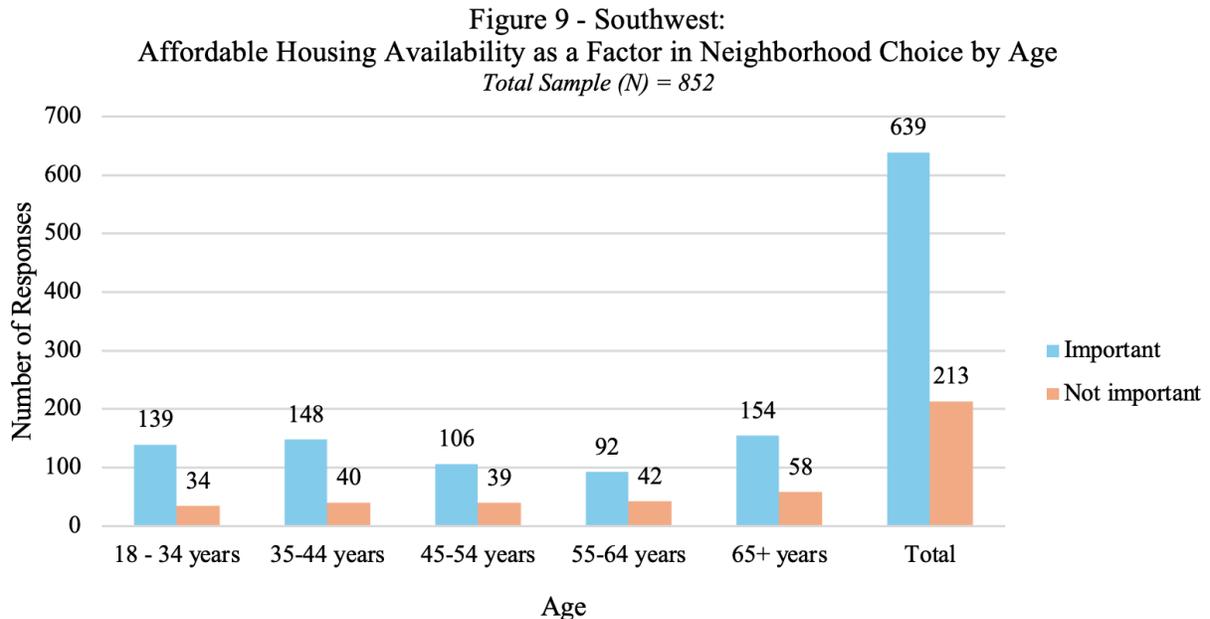
Figure 10 shows a similarly broad concern across income groups. Although lower-income respondents are more likely to report affordable housing as important (e.g., 62 out of 70 in the < $25,000 group), a notable number of higher-income individuals also express concern. Among those earning $100,000–$199,999, 232 respondents still considered affordability important. This challenges the assumption that only lower-income households are concerned about affordable housing, reflecting a broader anxiety over housing accessibility in Madison. As previously noted

above, because respondents were able to select more than one option from the list, percentages in many charts, such as Figure 10, will not add up to 100 percent.

Figure 10 - Southwest:
Affordable Housing Availability as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Income
Total Sample (N) = 830

Job Opportunities and Age-Income Dynamics

In contrast to the widespread concern over housing, job opportunities appear to be more age- and income-dependent. In **Figure 11**, younger age groups (18–44 years) place greater importance on job availability when choosing where to live, while older adults (especially those 65+) largely deem it unimportant. This aligns with the life course: younger individuals are more likely to be actively participating in the workforce and making career-related moves.

Figure 11 - Southwest:
Job Opportunities as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Age
Total Sample (N) = 840
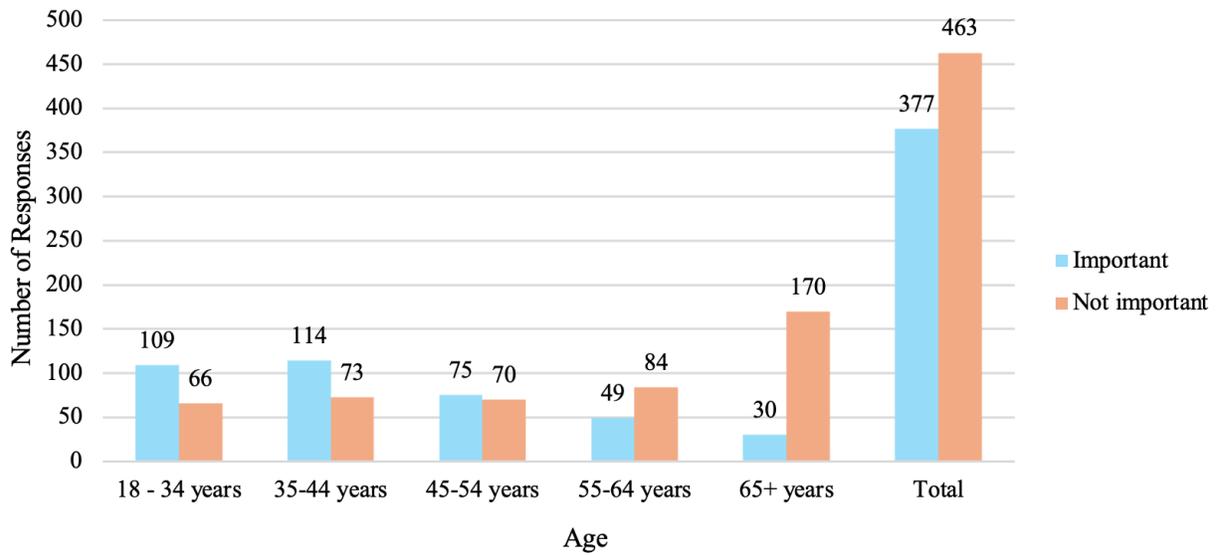
Figure 12 illustrates similar trends by income. Respondents with annual incomes under $100,000 are more likely to value job availability in their neighborhood. Interestingly, this importance declines among higher-income groups, where those earning above $100,000 report "job opportunities" as less relevant—potentially indicating career stability, retirement, or remote work flexibility. Collectively, Figures 9–12 show that while housing affordability cuts across all demographics, job concerns are more pronounced among those early in their careers or earning less.

Figure 12 - Southwest:
Job Opportunities as a Factor in Neighborhood Choice by Income
Total Sample (N) = 818
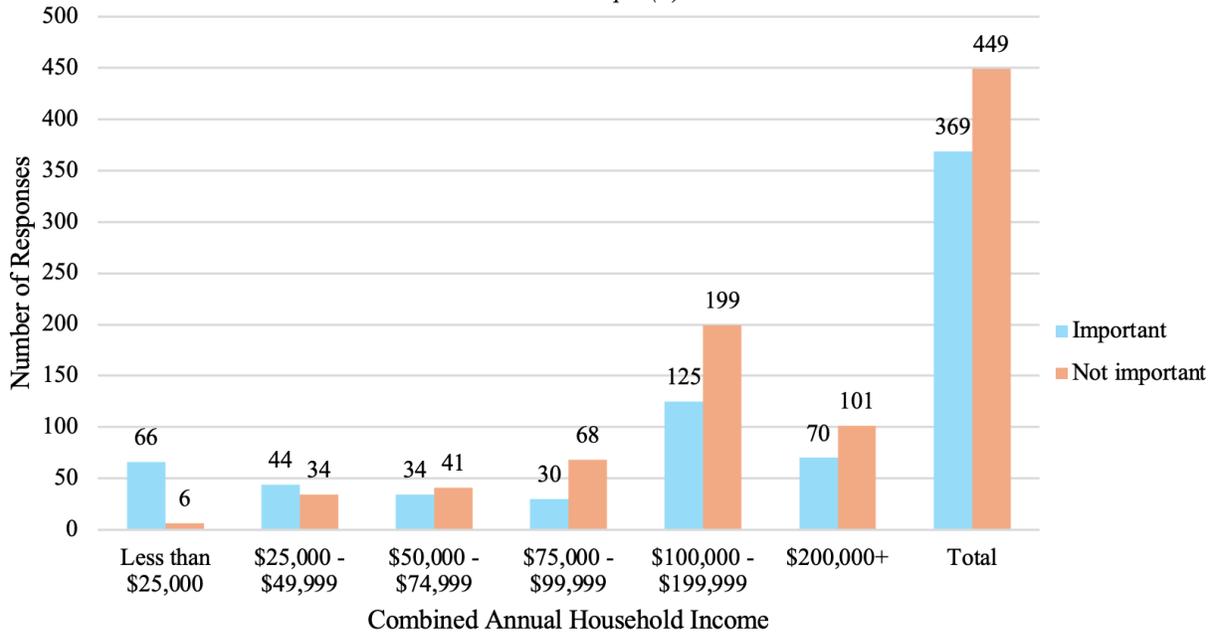
Commuting Patterns Across Age and Income Groups

Figures 13 and 14 provide insight into how transportation habits vary across age and income groups in the Southwest survey sample.

Figure 13 shows that across all age groups, the majority of respondents commute by private vehicle, with the highest usage among those aged 35–44 years (121 responses). The reliance on cars gradually decreases with age, with only 37 responses from those aged 65 and older. Biking is more common among younger groups (particularly 18–44), while walking and public transit show limited but consistent use. These trends suggest that younger residents may be more multimodal in their travel behavior, while older adults rely predominantly on private cars.

Figure 13 - Southwest:
Primary Transportation from Home to Work by Age
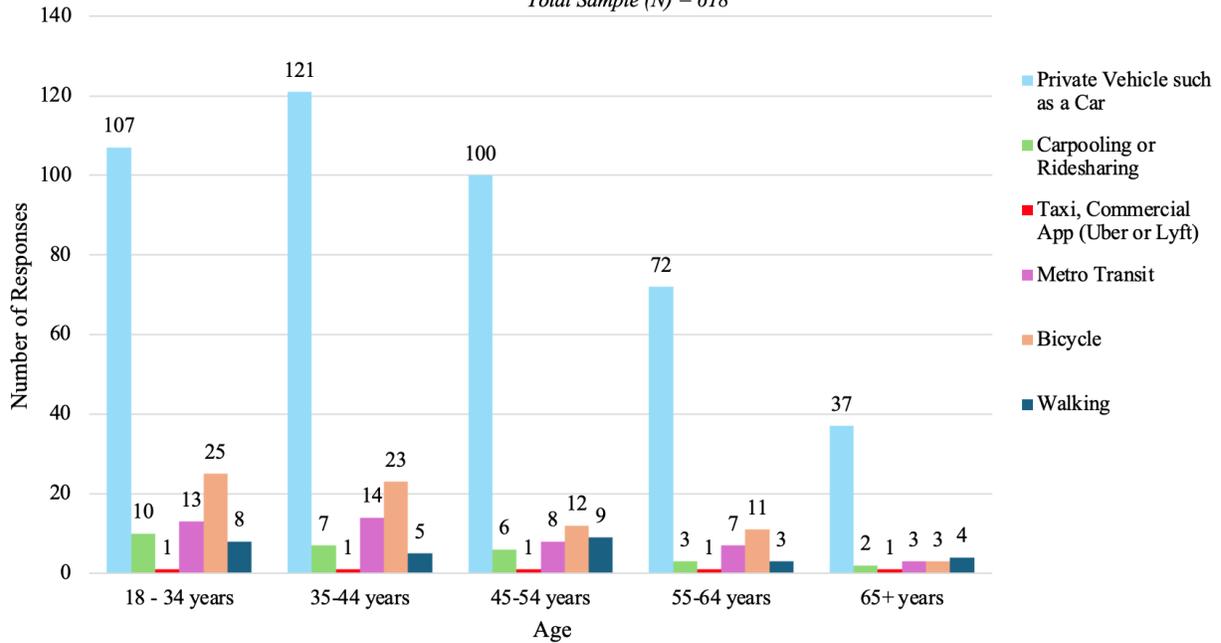*Total Sample (N) = 618*

Figure 14 demonstrates that private vehicle use is most prominent among respondents earning $100,000–$199,999, who account for 176 of the 605 responses. Conversely, lower-income groups display slightly more variety in transportation modes, including carpooling, transit, biking, and walking, although at much smaller rates. For example, metro transit is used most by the lowest income group (<$25,000) with 14 responses, and biking peaks again among higher earners. These patterns suggest that both financial resources and lifestyle preferences shape transportation choices, with car ownership strongly tied to income.

Figure 14 - Southwest:
Primary Transportation from Home to Work by Income
Total Sample (N) = 605
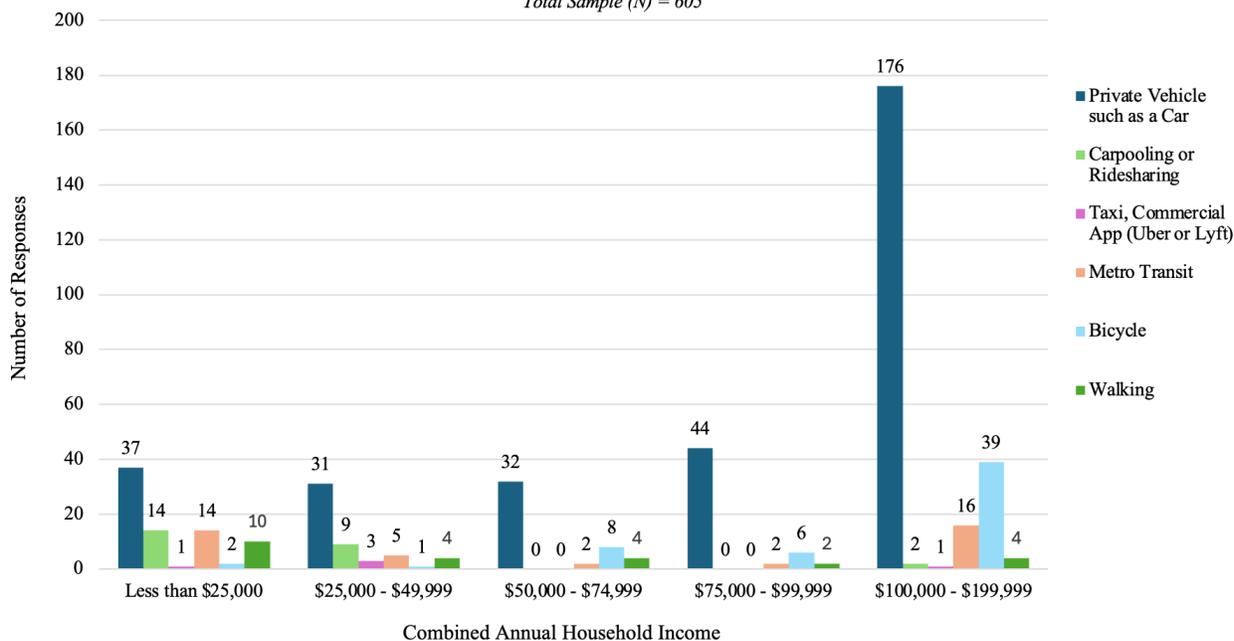
Importance of Bus Use for Commuting by Income and Age

Figure 15 highlights how the importance of using the bus for commuting to work or school varies by income level. The data show that respondents in the highest income brackets ($100,000–$199,999 and $200,000+) are significantly more likely to report that bus use is "not at all important" for their commutes, with 202 and 111 responses, respectively. In contrast, lower-income respondents—particularly those earning less than $75,000—were more likely to rate bus use as "very important" or "extremely important." These patterns suggest that lower-income residents may depend more on public transit as a primary commuting option, while higher-income residents are more likely to rely on private vehicles or other modes of transportation.

Figure 15 - Southwest:
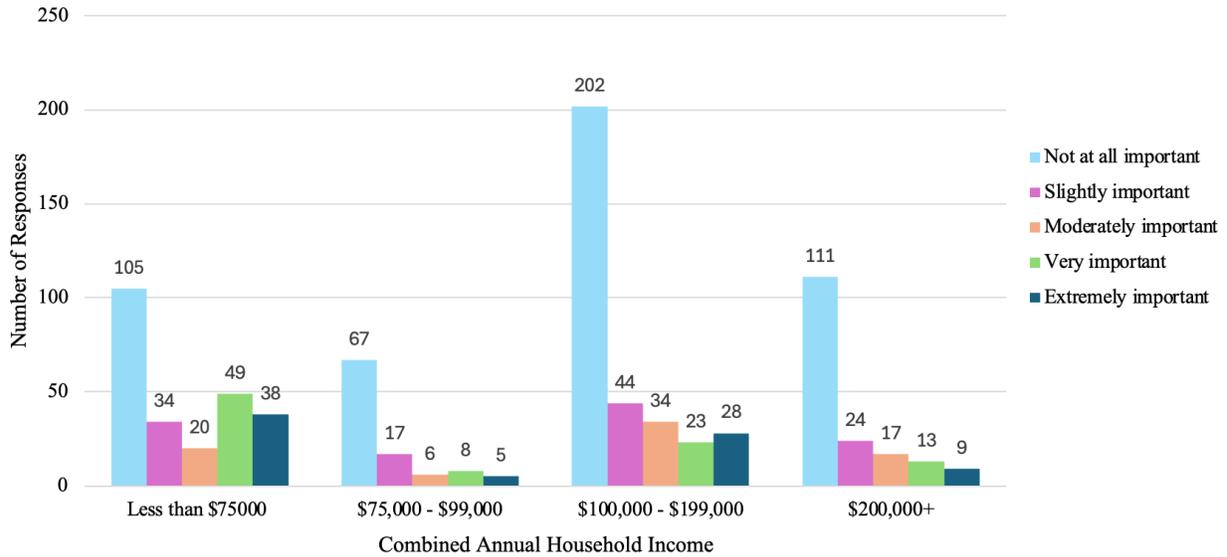Importance of Using the Bus for School or Work Commutes by Income
Total Sample (N) = 854

Figure 16 examines responses by age group and reveals that older adults (65+ years) were most likely to indicate that bus commuting was "not at all important," with 163 responses. Meanwhile, younger and middle-aged respondents, especially those in the 18–34 and 35–44 year ranges, showed more variation in their responses. These groups had higher numbers of participants identifying bus commuting as at least "moderately important," indicating that public transit may

Figure 16 - Southwest:
Importance of Using the Bus for School or Work Commutes by Age
Total Sample (N) = 879
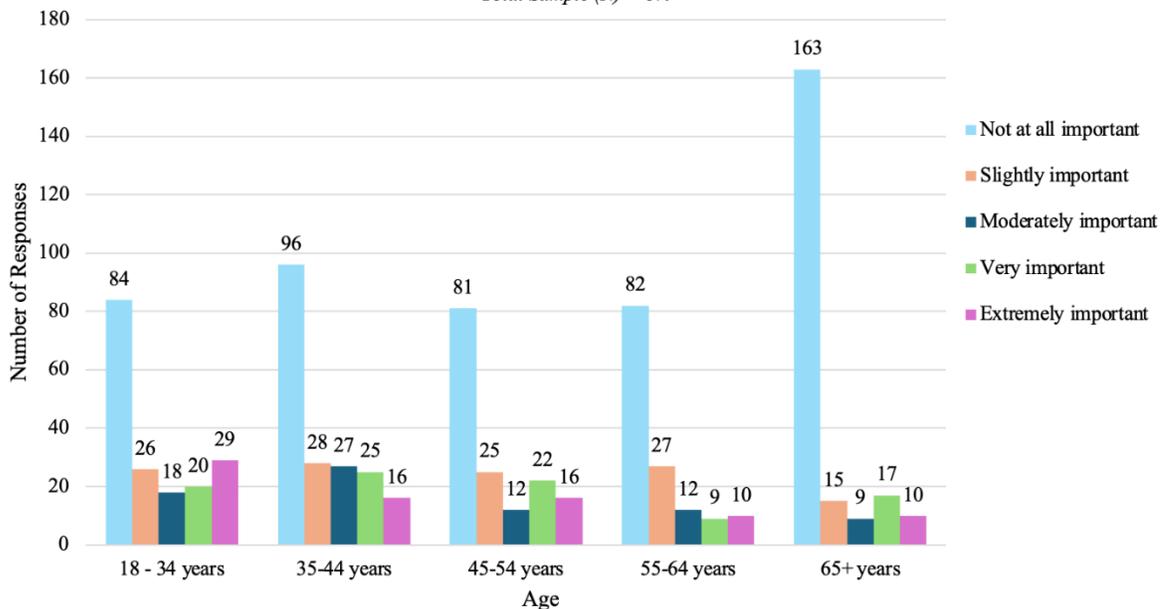
be a more relevant or practical option for younger age groups who are more likely to be in school or the workforce.

Prioritization of Regional Transit Access Across Demographics

In **Figure 17**, we observe that those with higher incomes (particularly in the $100,000–$199,999 range) are more likely to consider this type of regional transit access as not at all important, with 105 responses in that category. Conversely, residents with household incomes below $75,000 were more likely to rate access as "very" or "extremely" important, though still with fewer responses overall. This suggests a potential economic divide in transportation priorities, with lower-income residents expressing more interest in intercity transit connectivity, possibly reflecting greater dependence on shared transportation systems.

Figure 17 - Southwest:
Importance of Transit Access to Other Major Cities by Income
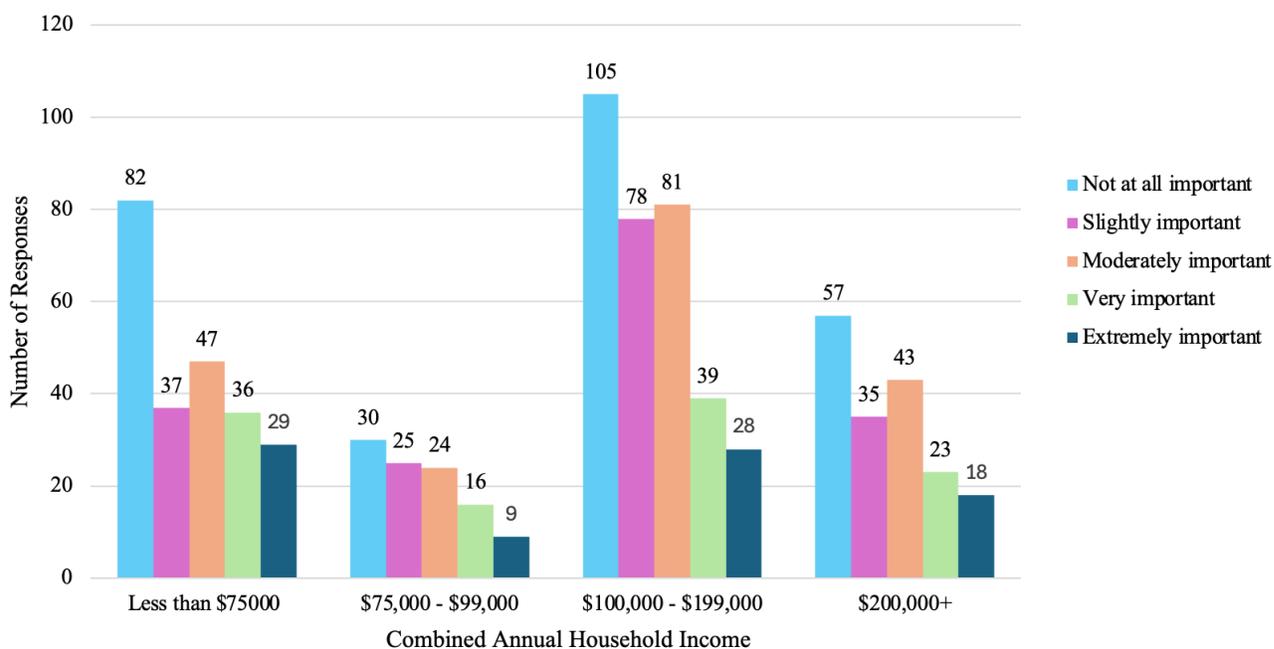*Total Sample (N) = 842*

Figure 18 shows that age plays a role in shaping attitudes toward regional transit access. Younger age groups, particularly those between 18–44 years old, are more likely to rate access to other cities via transit as "very" or "extremely" important. By contrast, older respondents, especially those aged 65+, tend to view such access as less critical, with 80 individuals in this age group rating it as "not at all important." These patterns suggest generational differences in

how regional mobility is valued, with younger individuals possibly seeking greater flexibility for work or leisure travel.

Figure 18 - Southwest:
Importance of Transit Access to Other Major Cities by Age
Total Sample (N) = 868
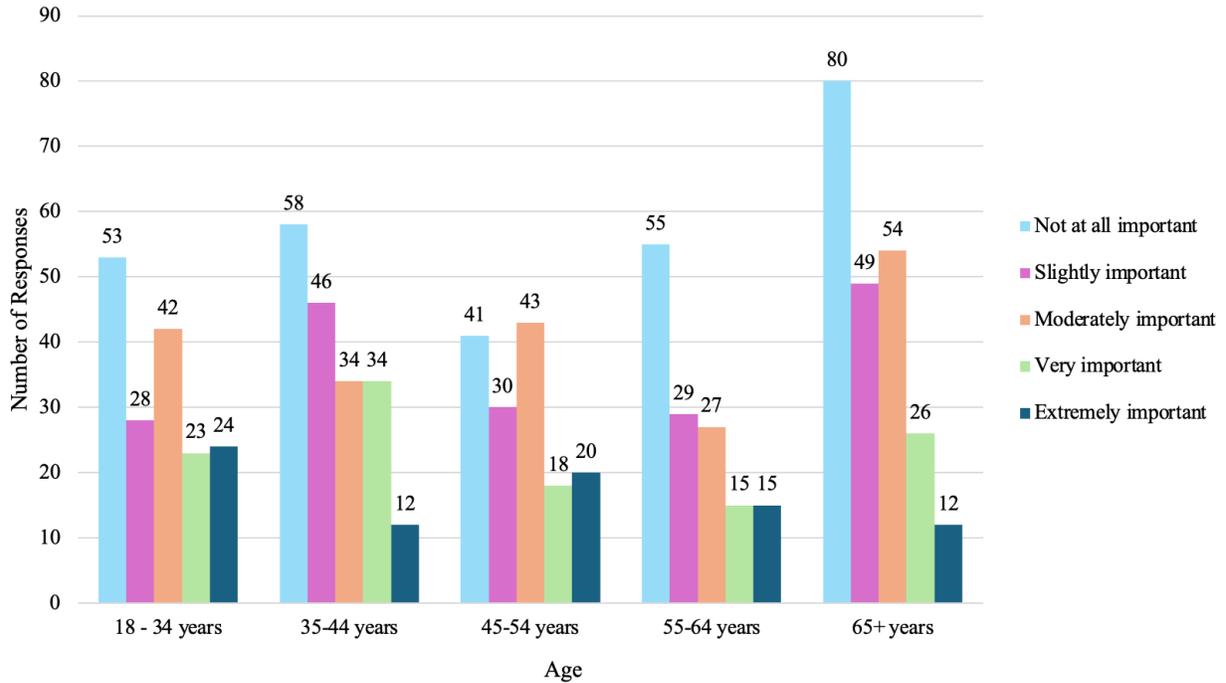
Together, Figures 17 and 18 illustrate how the importance of access to transit options connecting the Southwest area to other major cities varies by income and age groups.

Experience with Apartment or Condominium Living Across Income and Age

Figure 19 shows the distribution of residents' experience living in an apartment or condominium by household income. A strong majority across all income brackets reported having lived in such housing, with the highest number (309) coming from households earning between $100,000–$199,999. Even among higher-income respondents ($200,000+), most had this experience, suggesting that apartment or condo living is not exclusive to lower-income groups. Overall, 93% of respondents reported having lived in an apartment or condominium.

Figure 19 - Southwest:
Experience Living in Apartment or Condominium by Household Income
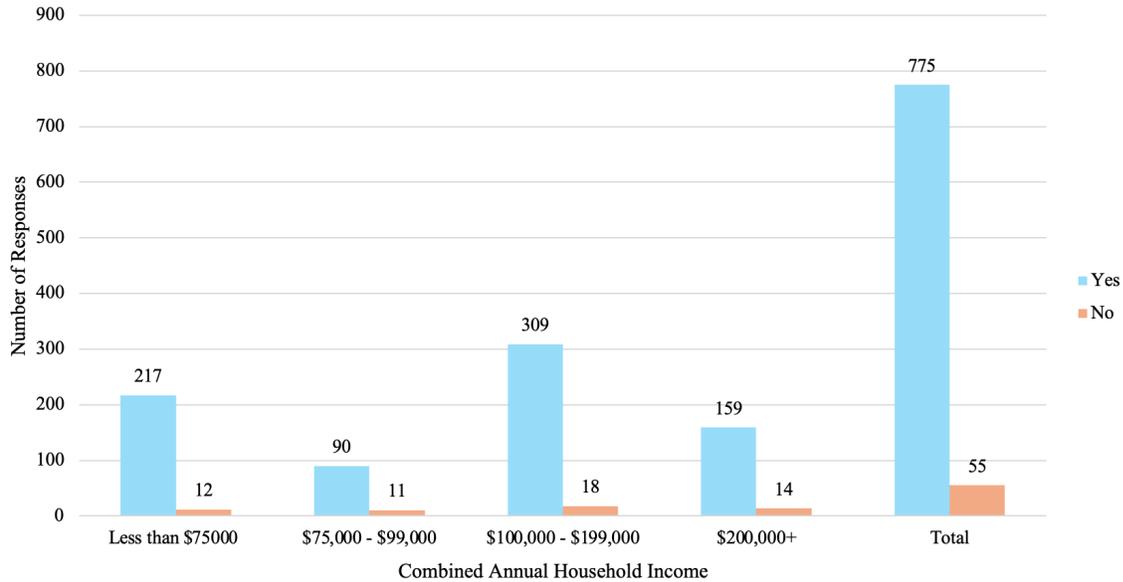*Total Sample (N) = 830*

Figure 20 presents this same information broken down by age. All age groups overwhelmingly reported having experience living in an apartment or condominium. The highest number of "Yes" responses came from the 65+ age group (192), indicating that this type of housing is familiar to older adults as well. Across all groups, relatively few respondents reported no experience with this housing type, highlighting its prevalence throughout the community.

Figure 20 - Southwest:
Experience Living in Apartment or Condominium by Age
Total Sample (N) = 853
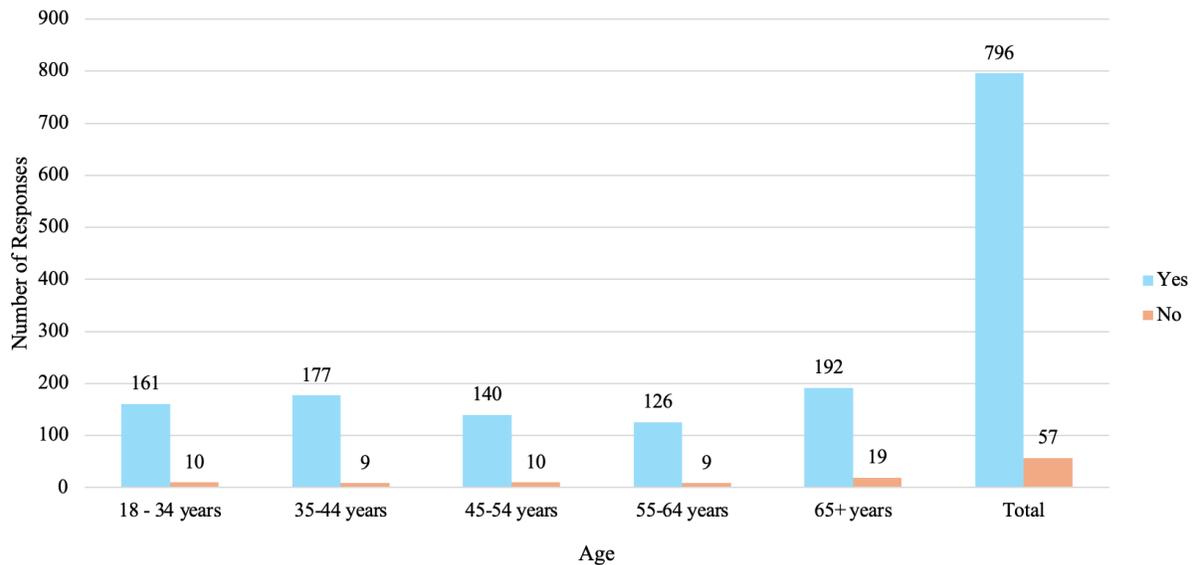
Support for Expanding Affordable Housing by Age and Income

Figure 21 shows that income is a strong predictor of how important respondents find affordable housing expansion. Those earning less than $75,000 annually were the most likely to rate this issue as "very" or "extremely" important, while those earning between $100,000–$199,999 were much more likely to consider it "not at all important." In fact, this middle-to-upper income group had the highest share of responses in the "not at all" and "slightly important" categories.

Figure 21 - Southwest:
Importance of Increasing Affordable Housing by Income
*Total Sample (N) = 859*

Figure 22 presents a similar breakdown by age. Respondents aged 65 and older were more likely to consider affordable housing expansion unimportant, with 82 people selecting "not at all important"—more than any other age group. Younger age groups showed more balanced distributions, with consistent levels of support across all importance categories, suggesting more mixed or moderate perspectives.

Figure 21 and Figure 22 explore how survey respondents in the Southwest area view the importance of increasing affordable housing, broken down by income and age groups. Together, these figures indicate that lower-income respondents and younger adults are more likely to view

affordable housing development as a high priority, while older and higher-income groups show lower perceived importance.

Figure 22 - Southwest:
Importance of Increasing Affordable Housing by Age
Total Sample (N) = 882
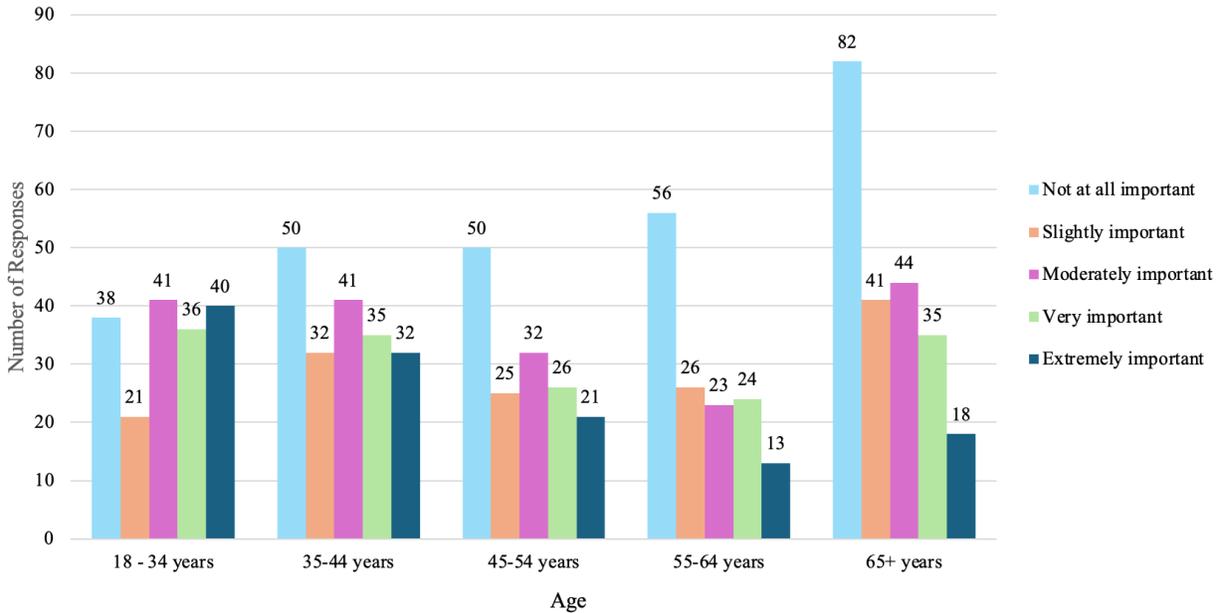
Conclusion:

The findings from the Southwest Area survey provide valuable insight into the diverse needs, preferences, and lived experiences of community members. Across the data, it is clear that factors such as age, income, and housing history significantly shape how residents view neighborhood priorities, from the importance of affordable housing and job opportunities to access public transit and transportation habits. Younger residents and lower-income households consistently expressed stronger support for initiatives related to affordability and transit accessibility, while older and higher-income respondents placed greater emphasis on private vehicle use and showed more varied opinions on the importance of expanding affordable housing.