

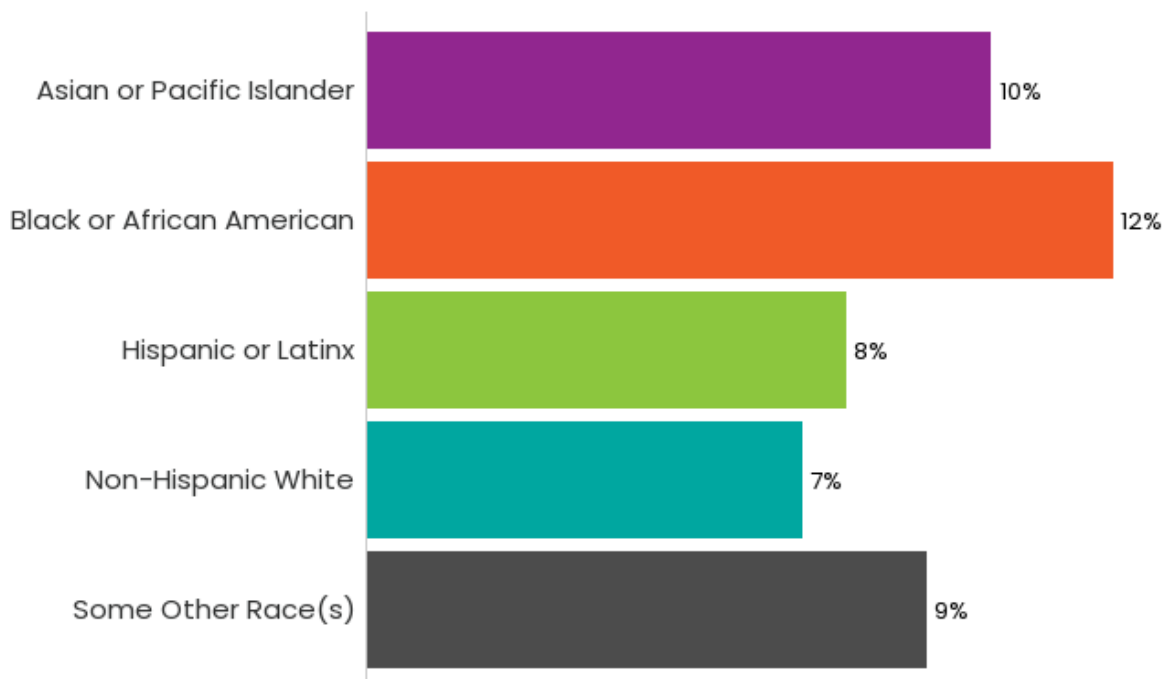


Hispanic Workers Use Transit Less

Introduction

Nationally, Hispanic populations [report relatively high use of public transit](#) compared with non-Hispanic white people. But in the central Puget Sound region, Census data shows that Hispanic workers report relatively low shares of transit commutes, roughly on par with their non-Hispanic white counterparts and at substantially lower rates than other groups. We summarized the commute mode data available in the Census Bureau’s 2017–2021 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) by race and Hispanic origin:

Percent of Commuters Who Use Transit, By Race/Ethnicity



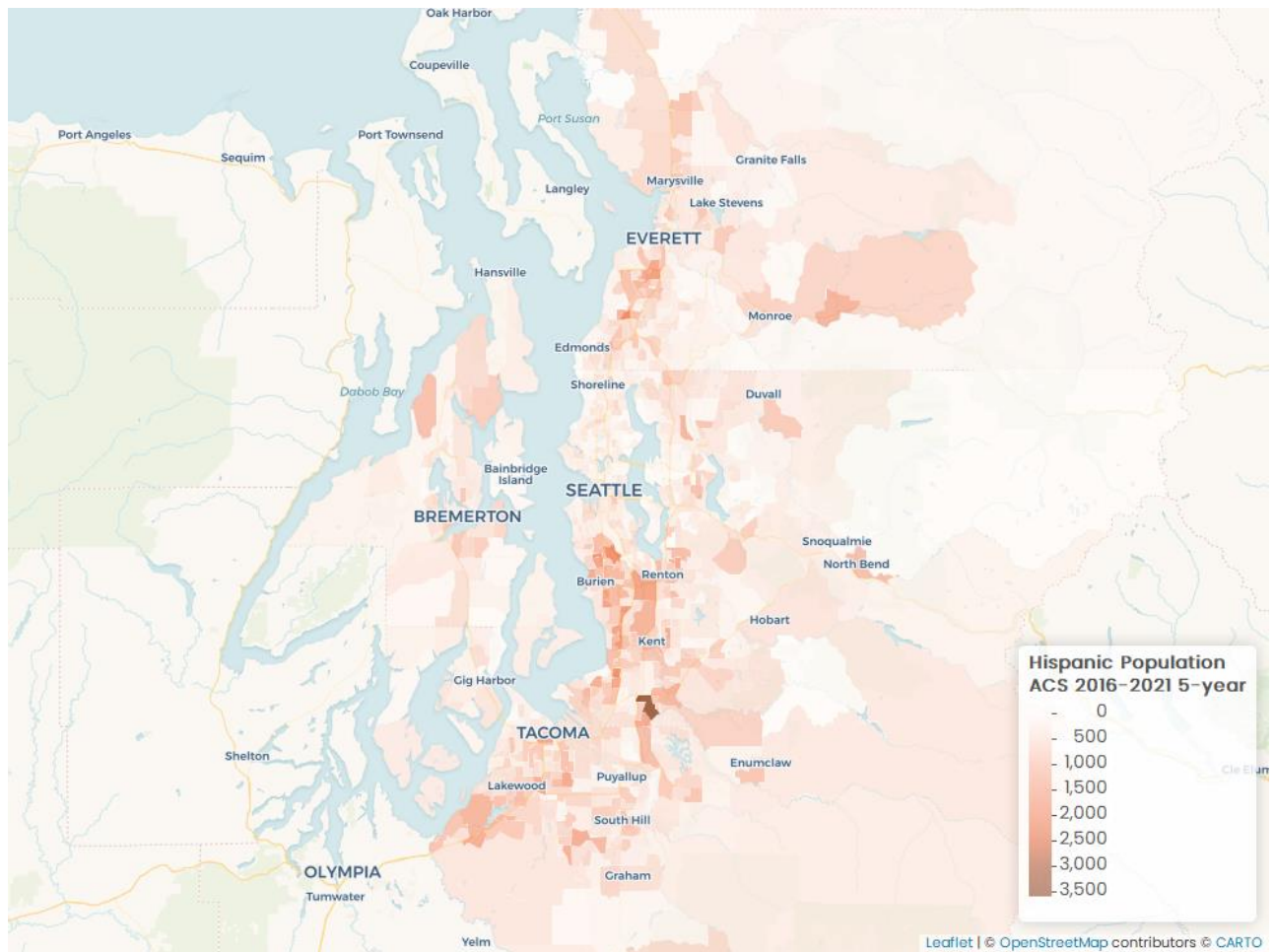
Source: 2017–2021 Census Public Use Microdata Sample

This led us to wonder what are the factors that inform these choices, and what are

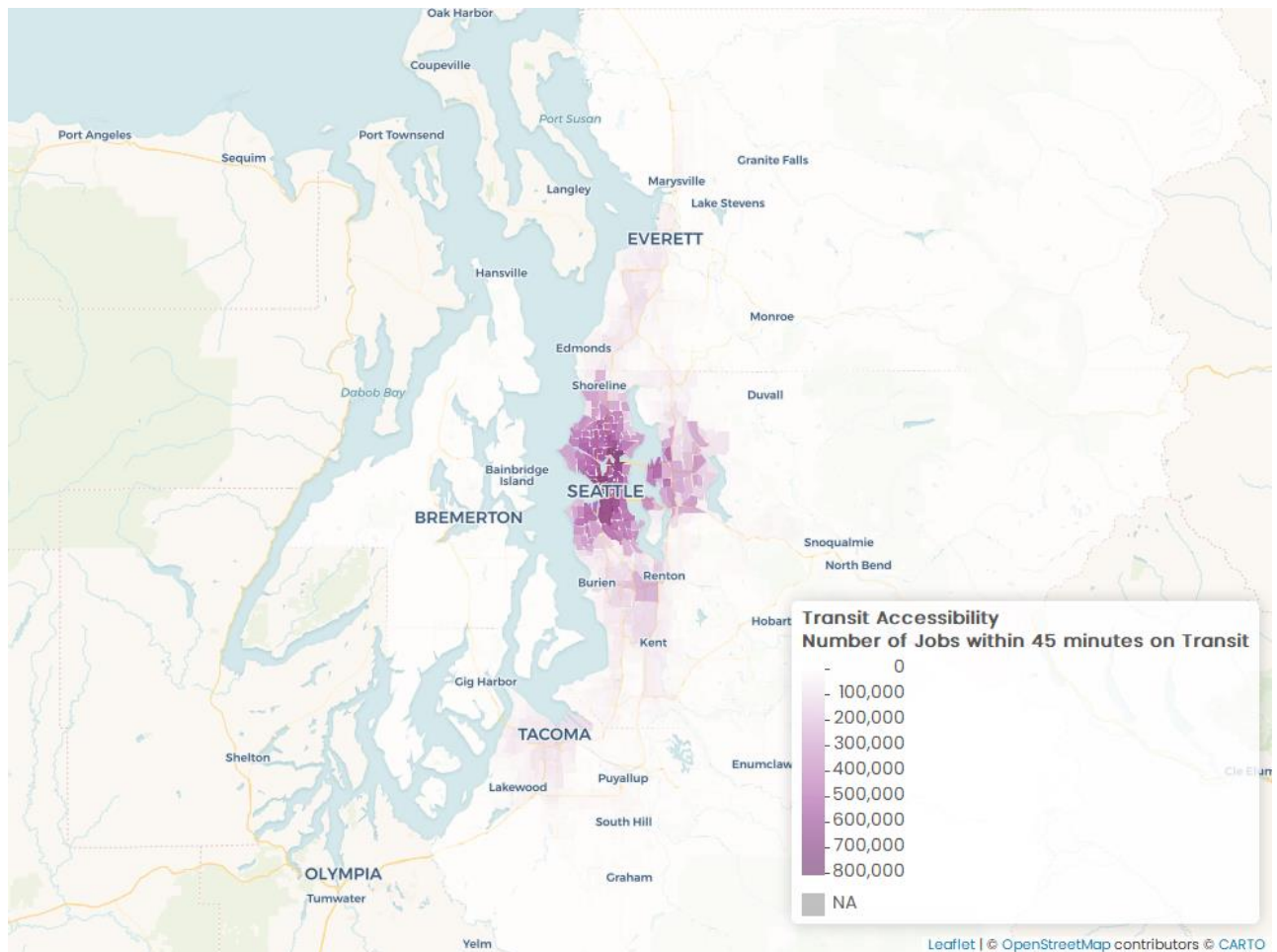
some of the pressures that lead the area’s Hispanic workers to favor cars over transit at higher rates than other populations.

Home Locations Make a Difference

First, we looked at the places that the Hispanic populace lives. Using Census data from the 2021 5-year American Community Survey, we looked at the Hispanic population counts by tract. As shown in the map below, large concentrations of Hispanic populations are in south King County – notably Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way and Auburn – and southern Snohomish County along the SR 99 Corridor.

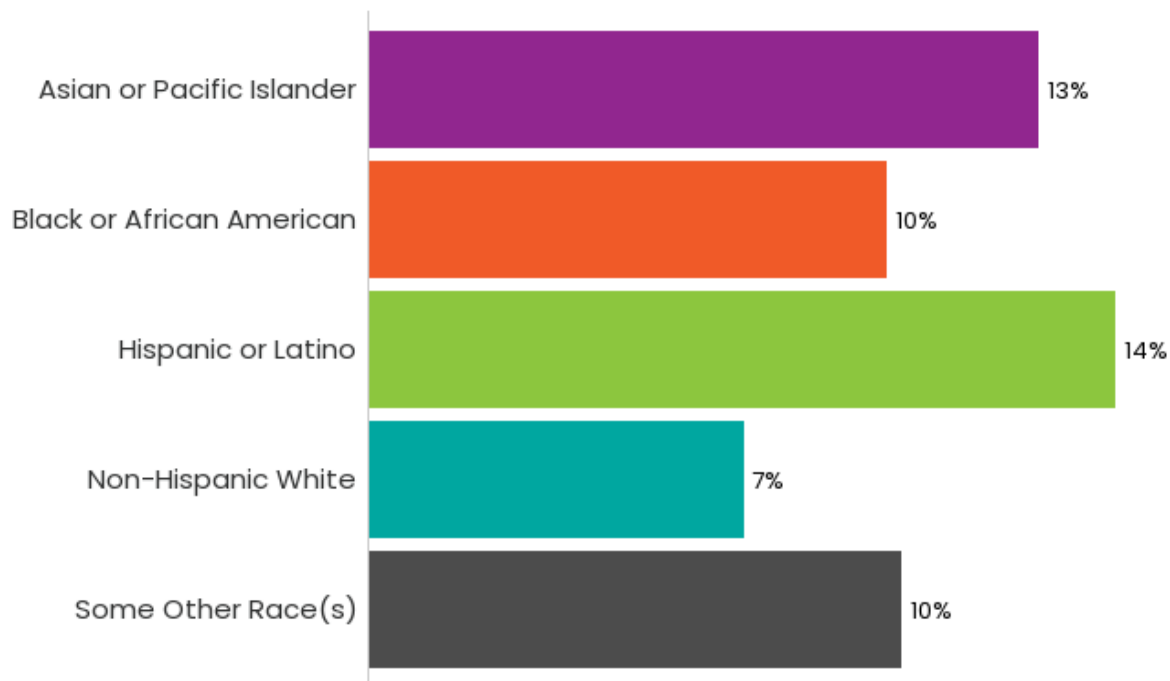


To see how well commuters in these areas of high Hispanic concentrations are served by transit, we calculated the number of jobs accessible by transit within 45 minutes for each Census tract. This map, below, shows that the areas with best transit access to jobs are concentrated in central Seattle and Bellevue. Residents in these areas can reach a large pool of jobs by a 45-minute transit ride – nearly 800,000 jobs for some tracts. By contrast, people living in the areas of high Hispanic populations can reach a much smaller pool of jobs by equivalent means: many can only reach between 30,000 and 60,000 within the same 45-minute window. Residents of the tract with the single highest Hispanic population, in Auburn, have only 20,000 jobs accessible within this window. And the fewer the jobs accessible by transit, the higher the likelihood that a given worker will need to drive to get to his or her place of work.



The effects of the lower levels of transit accessibility for Hispanic workers can be seen not only in the lower use of transit as documented above, but also in high carpooling rates among this group. Hispanic workers are twice as likely to commute by carpool as non-Hispanic white workers: The rates for these two groups are 14% and 7%, respectively. This might be a response, in part, to less accessible transit commute options for Hispanic workers.

Percent of Commuters Who Carpool, By Race/Ethnicity



Source: 2017–2021 Census Public Use Microdata Sample

Not All Occupations Are Equally Well-Suited to Transit

Some occupations are better or less suited to commuting by transit than others. Using Census data, we found the top three occupations for Hispanic workers to be Construction (11%), Food Preparation and Service (11%) and Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance (8%). Construction and Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance workers in particular are associated with very low transit commute rates (between 2% and 5%) and Hispanic workers are heavily represented in these occupational categories compared to non-Hispanic workers. As noted in [this Seattle Times article](#), these jobs do not lend themselves well to transit because the work can require transportation of heavy tools and equipment or shifts are scheduled for evening or night hours when transit service is less accessible. While these occupations represent just one-fifth (20%) of all Hispanic workers, low transit commute rates associated with

these sectors are likely a contributing factor to the lower overall rate of Hispanic transit ridership.

Conclusion

The relatively low rate of transit commute trips among Hispanic workers appears to be tied to several factors. Residence location, transit infrastructure, and occupation types all have their effects on the transit commute mode share for Hispanic workers. In particular, the misalignment of transit services with the areas in the region that many Hispanic workers live points to an opportunity: More targeted transit investments in these areas would benefit Hispanic commuters and would contribute to a more equitable system overall. Further investments to better accommodate people working throughout all times of day would enhance equity in the system even more. PSRC's Transportation Equity Pilot, co-created with the Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), will seek to explore strategies that can improve how the agency invests in the region's transportation network and address barriers like these faced by marginalized communities across the region.