



The People Who Make Up the Houston Economy

Insights From the Greater Houston Community Panel on Houston-Area Residents and Their Challenges and Aspirations

Southwest District
September 18, 2025



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Kinder Institute for Urban Research

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Mission

To improve lives through data, research, engagement, and action

Vision

Inclusive prosperity

Ensuring everyone has an opportunity to build and share in Houston's prosperity



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Research approach

Intersecting lines of research



Our approach

Research-practice partnerships



+7 other
school
districts



Harris County
Public Health
Building a Healthy Community



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Today's agenda

- Introduction to the Greater Houston Community Panel
- Exploring a few different topics to better understand the people who make up the economy of the Houston area
 - Who lives in the Houston Area?
 - Challenges and aspirations of Houston-area residents
 - Changing careers and AI in the Houston-area workforce
 - Economic well-being of Houston-area residents





Greater Houston Community Panel



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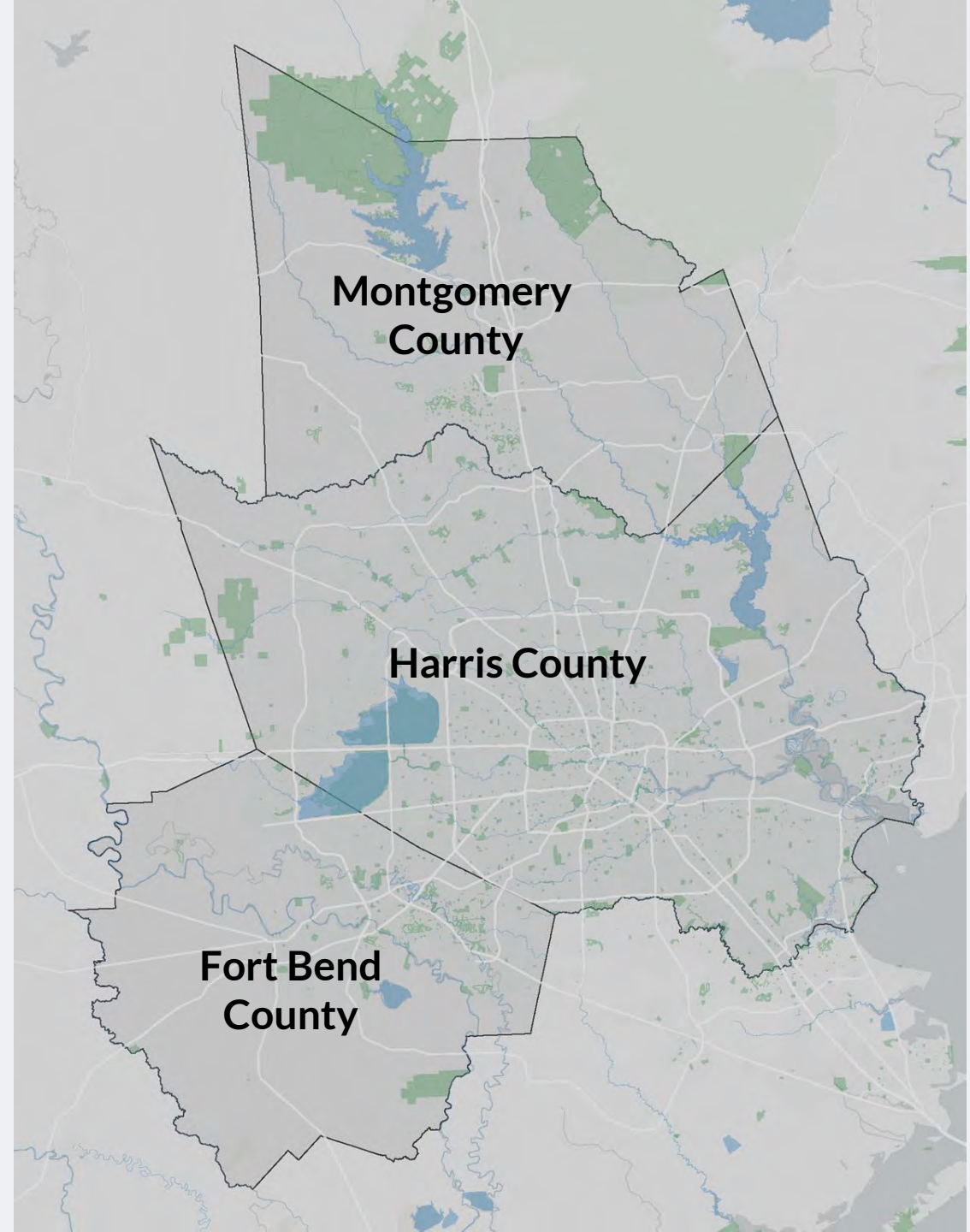
1 in 5

Texans live here



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Greater Houston Community Panel

- Survey study involving more than 11,000 Houston, Harris County, Fort Bend County (joined 2024), and Montgomery County (joined 2025) residents
 - Today's presentation will only include findings from surveys of Houston and Harris County
- Follows same adults over time, with surveys administered online throughout the year since 2023
- Surveys offered in English and Spanish
- Respondents are provided an incentive for each survey they complete



Greater Houston Community Panel

- Provides unprecedented and unparalleled insights into the attitudes, values, preferences, experiences, and circumstances of Houston-area residents
- Works with community partners, including nonprofit organizations and local leaders, to ensure the information being collected is relevant, timely, and useful
- Topics included on previous GHCP surveys include social connectedness, collective efficacy, mass deportation, parks and greenspace, civic engagement, experiences with crime, disaster preparedness, climate change, the energy transition, artificial intelligence, push-and-pull factors of living in Houston, and financial practices and security, along with an array of sociodemographic info



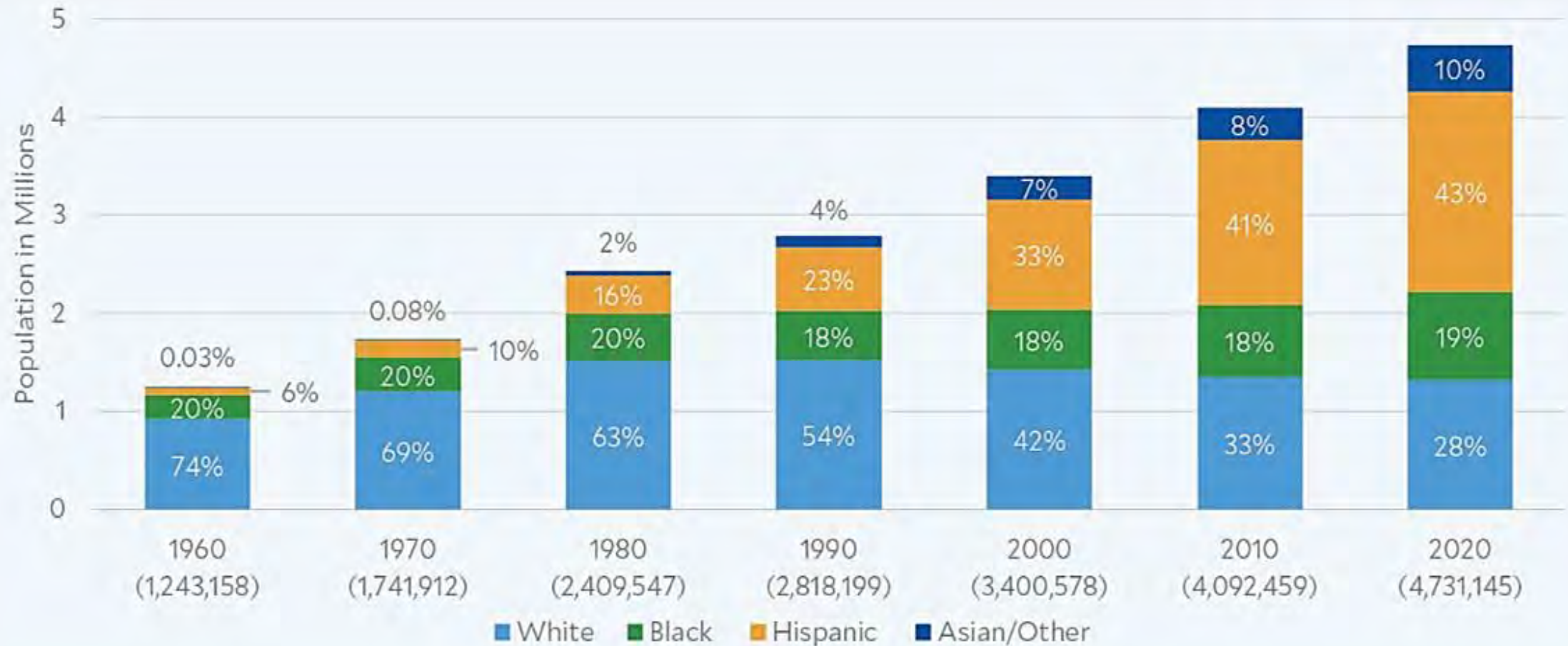


Who lives in the Houston area?



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Everyone: Houston and Harris County went through significant growth and demographic change over last half-century



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960-2020

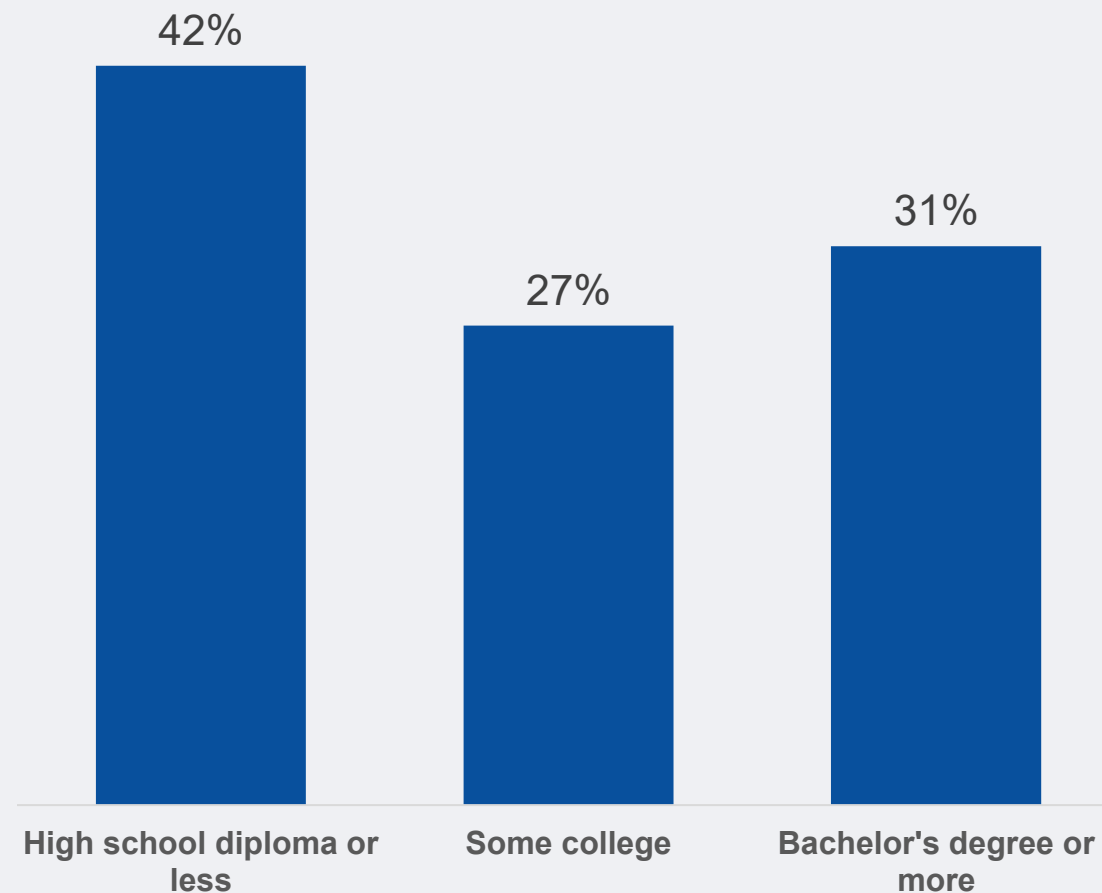


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Educational attainment of Harris County residents

- Around 4 in 10 adult residents have a high school diploma or less
- Around 3 in 10 adult residents have a bachelor's degree or higher



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates

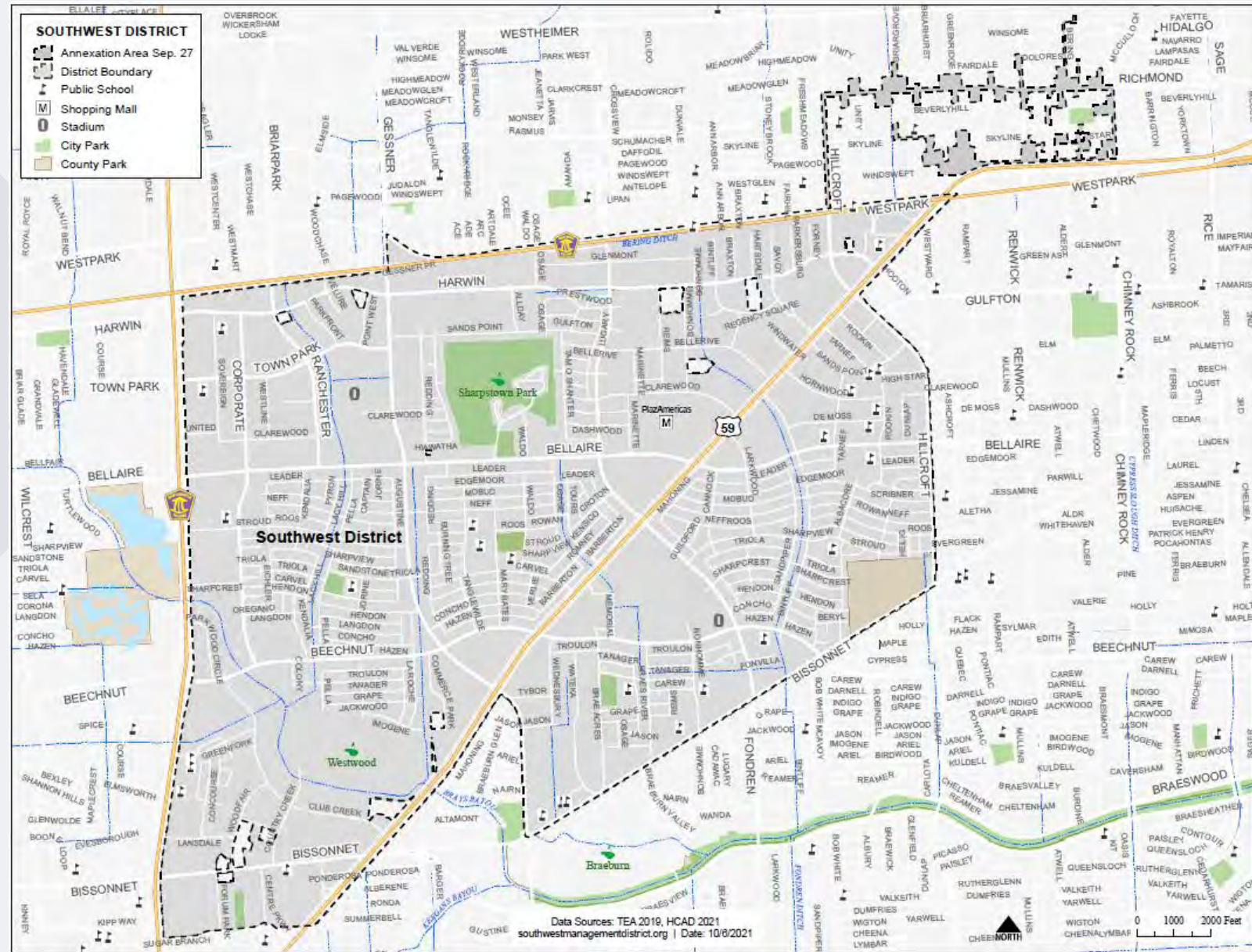


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Southwest District

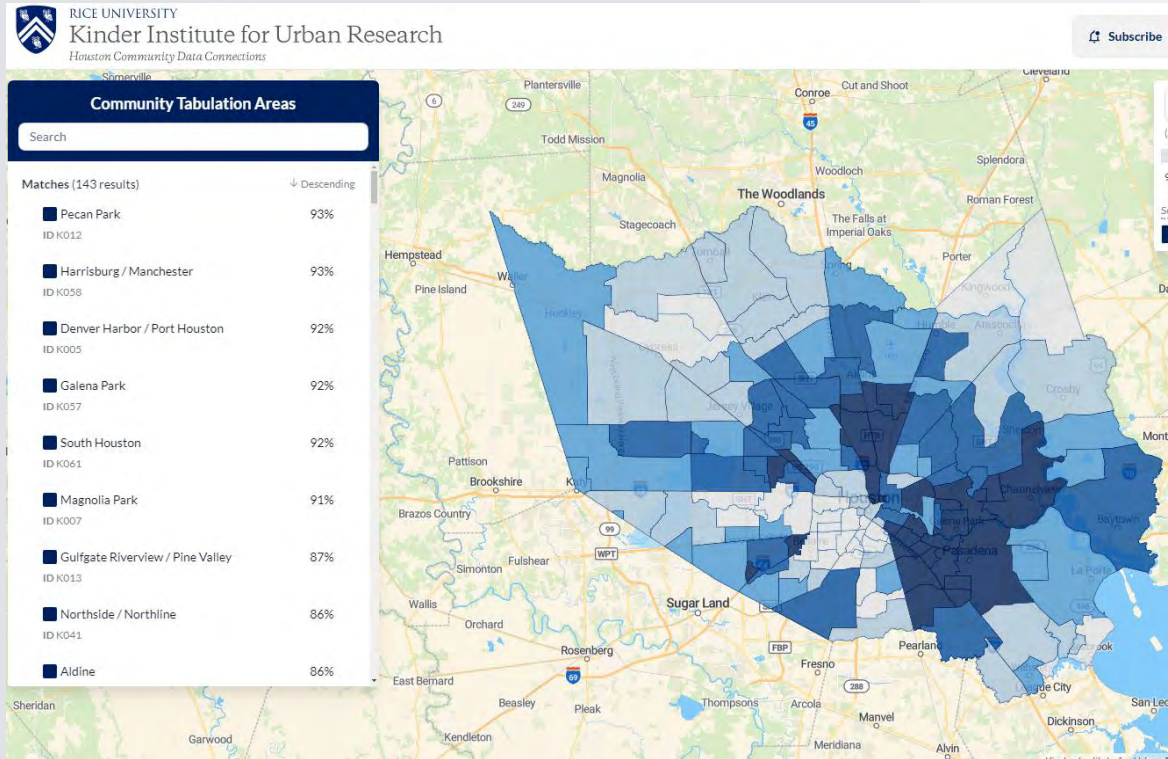
- Made up of many areas and neighborhoods, such as University Area, Harwin, Chinatown, Sharpstown, and Westwood
- About 100,000 residents
- 68% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 13% Black, and 8% White
- 55% born outside the U.S.
- 69% high school diploma or less, 15% bachelor's degree or more



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More data available on HCDC about the current population in Harris County as well as neighborhoods in the county:





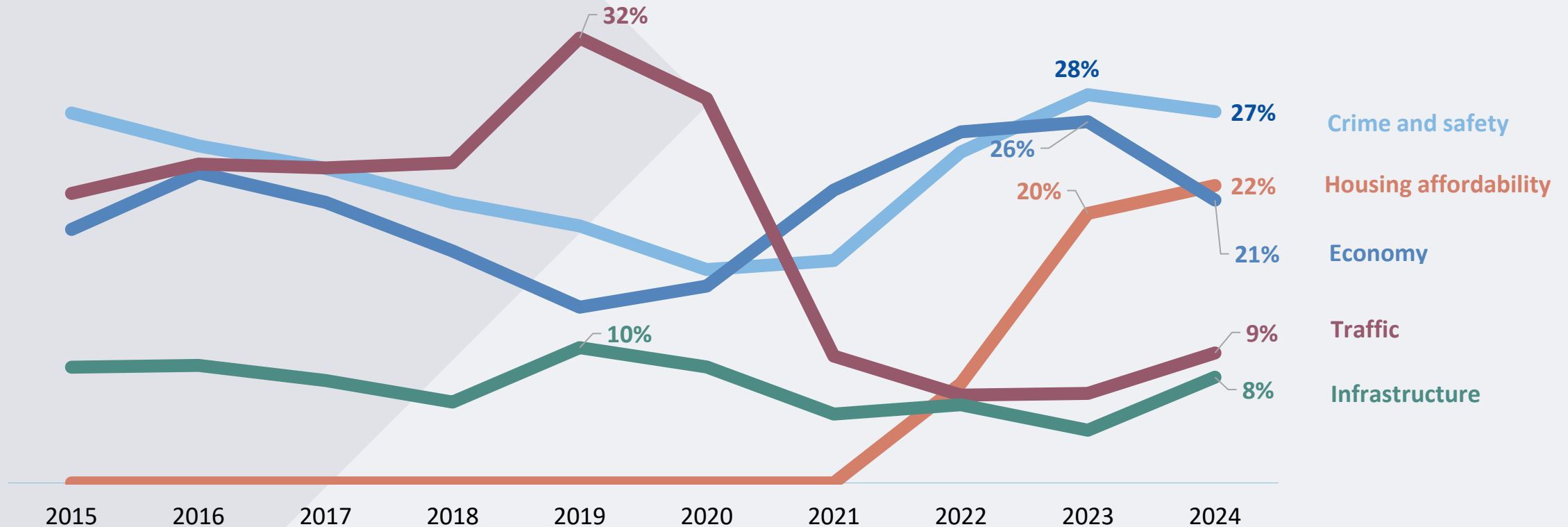
Challenges and aspirations of Houston-area residents



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Crime and safety, cost of housing, and the economy are considered the “biggest problems” facing the Houston area



Note: The chart includes the five most frequent categorized responses to the open-ended question, "What would you say is the biggest problem facing people in the Houston area today?" The other categories are pollution and the environment (5% in 2024), social group tensions (2%), city government and taxes (2%), schools and children (1%), public health and health care (1%), and other (3%).

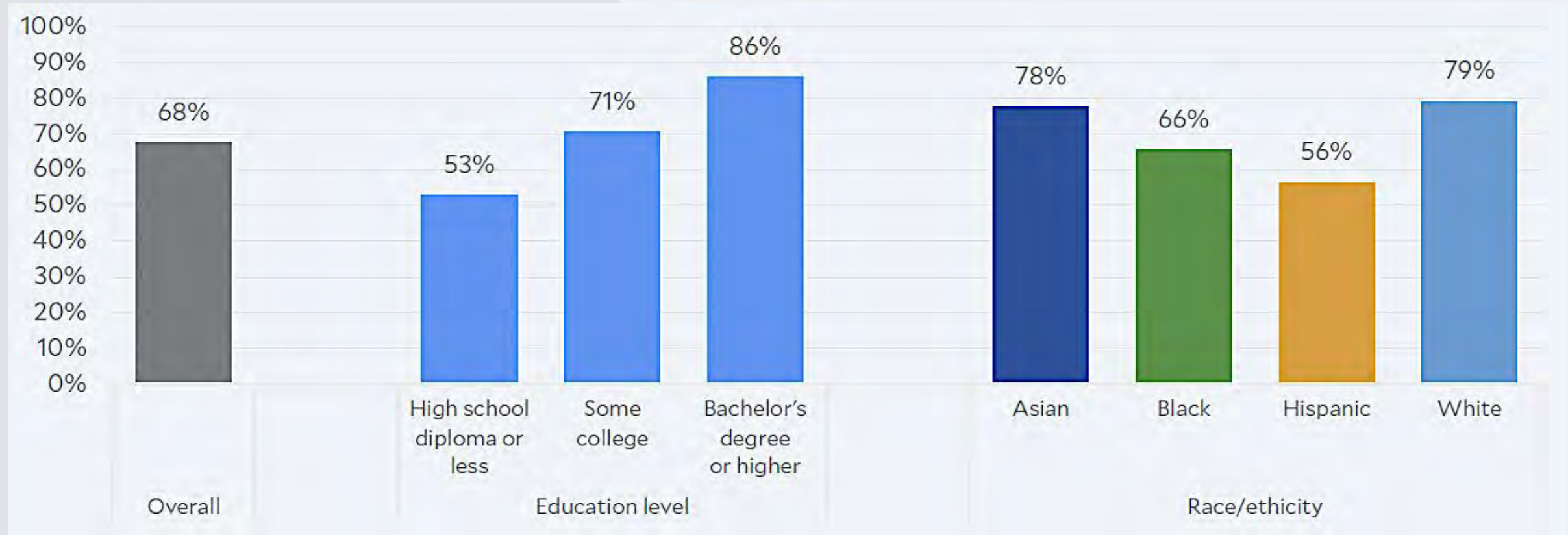


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There's an opportunity gap, as differences in education level correspond to differences in perceived employment opportunities

People thinking they have “good” or “excellent” job opportunities also varies by race/ethnicity



High levels of evictions, with 10 neighborhoods having more than 1,000 eviction filings in 2022

362,247

Eviction filings from January 2020 to July 2025, an average of 178 per day or about 7 per hour

About 1 eviction filing every 8 minutes

76,692

Eviction filings in past 12 months, third-most behind New York City and Phoenix

Twice the filing rate of NYC in past 12 months

Source: Eviction Lab, Princeton University, <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/>

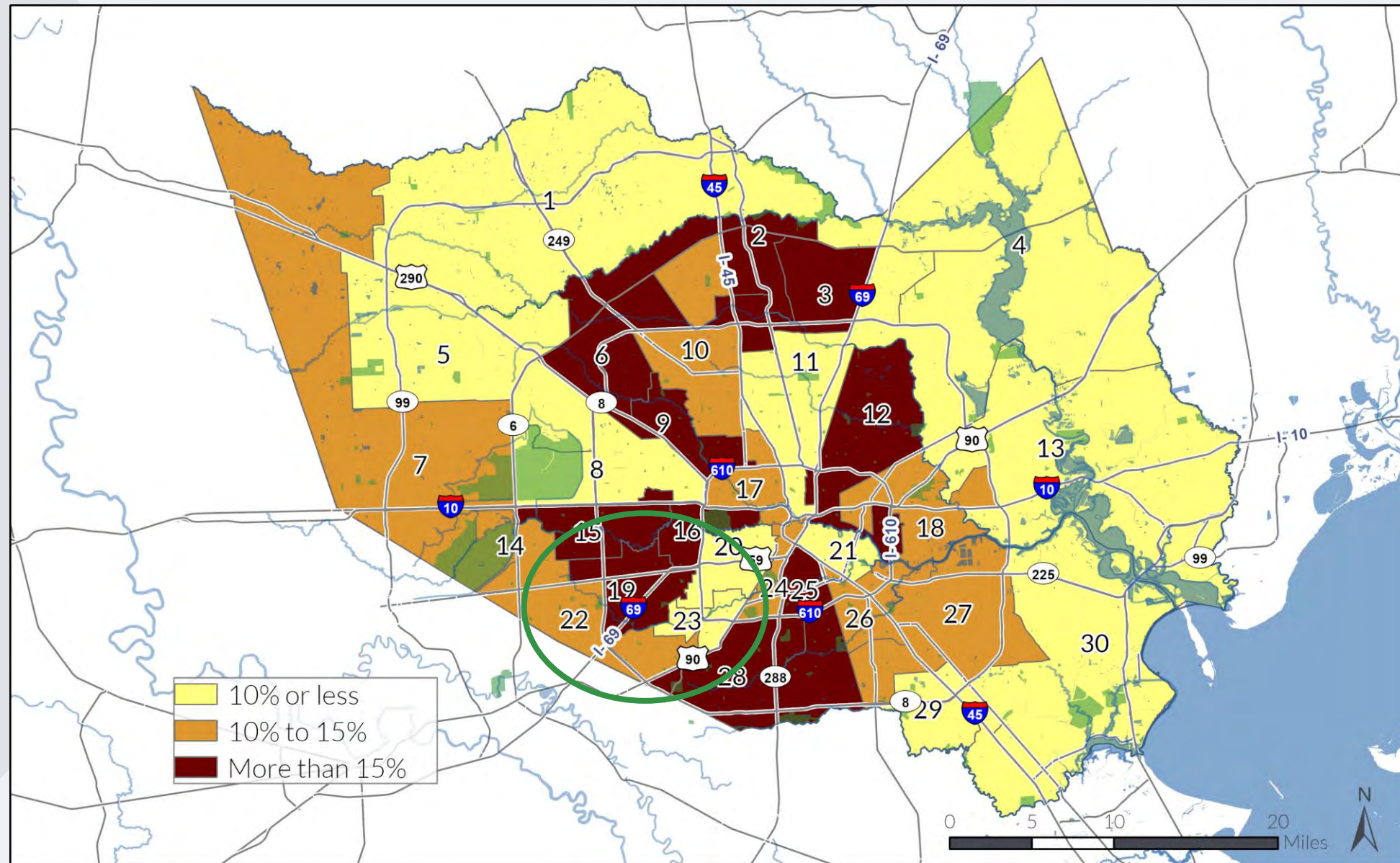


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Neighborhood	2022 filings
Eldridge/West Oaks	2,910
Westchase	2,444
Alief	2,075
Mid-West	1,918
Briar Forest	1,809
Uptown	1,724
Five Corners	1,383
Sharpstown	1,174
Astrodome	1,121
Westbury	1,018

**Higher
percent of
residents in
the Southwest
District have
moved
because they
felt they could
no longer
afford to live
where they
were**



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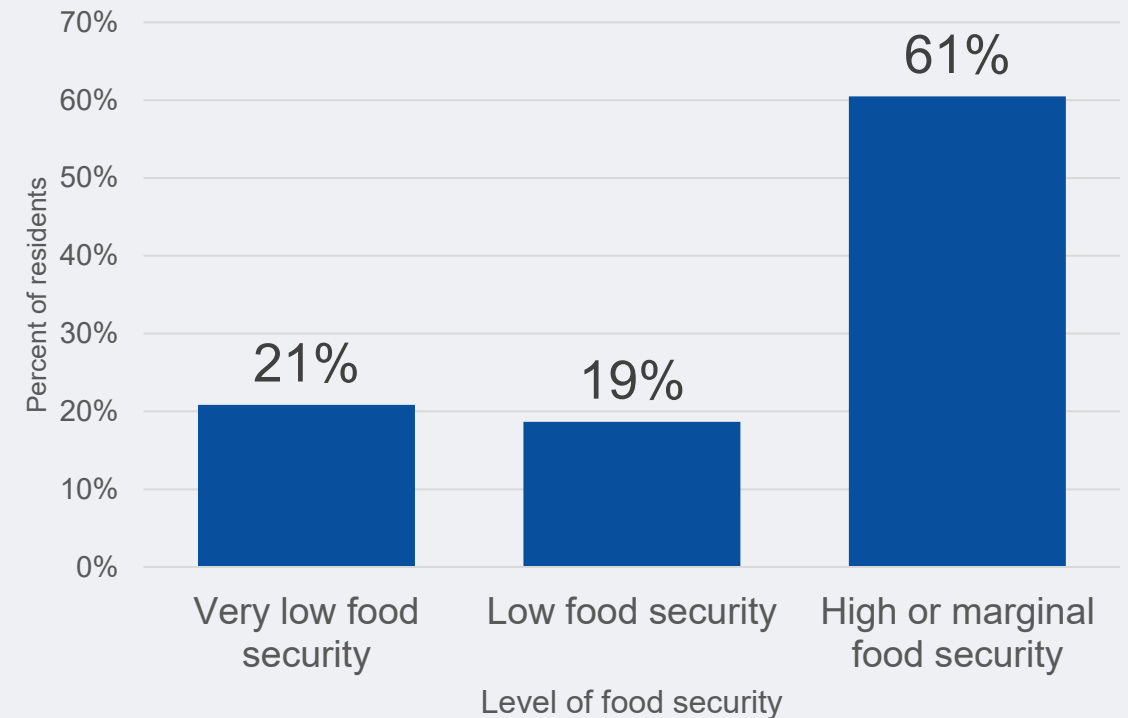
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Worry about being able to afford their housing and experiencing low levels of food security

Nearly **5 in 10 Harris County residents** report being **worried they will be unable to pay for their housing**

47% worried
about paying for
housing

More than **1 in 5 residents** experienced **very low food security** in the past year



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Social mobility using subjective social class

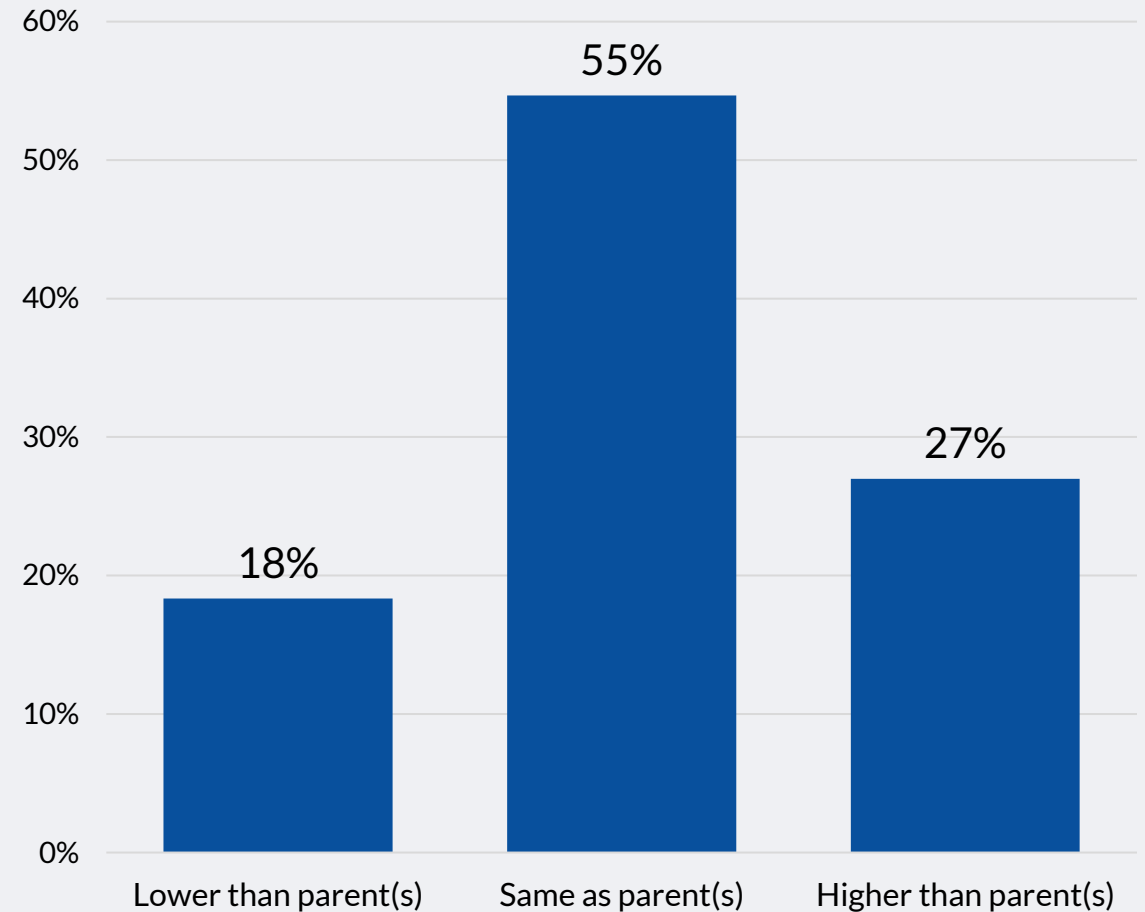
- Respondents asked to place themselves on a “social ladder” based on where they see themselves in society
- Respondents then asked to retrospectively report on where they thought their parents were on the same ladder when R was 15 years old

Now think back to when you were 15 years old. Imagine this ladder represents where your parent(s)/guardian(s) stood in society when you were growing up. Once again, people at the top of the ladder are those who were best off, while people at the bottom were the worst off.



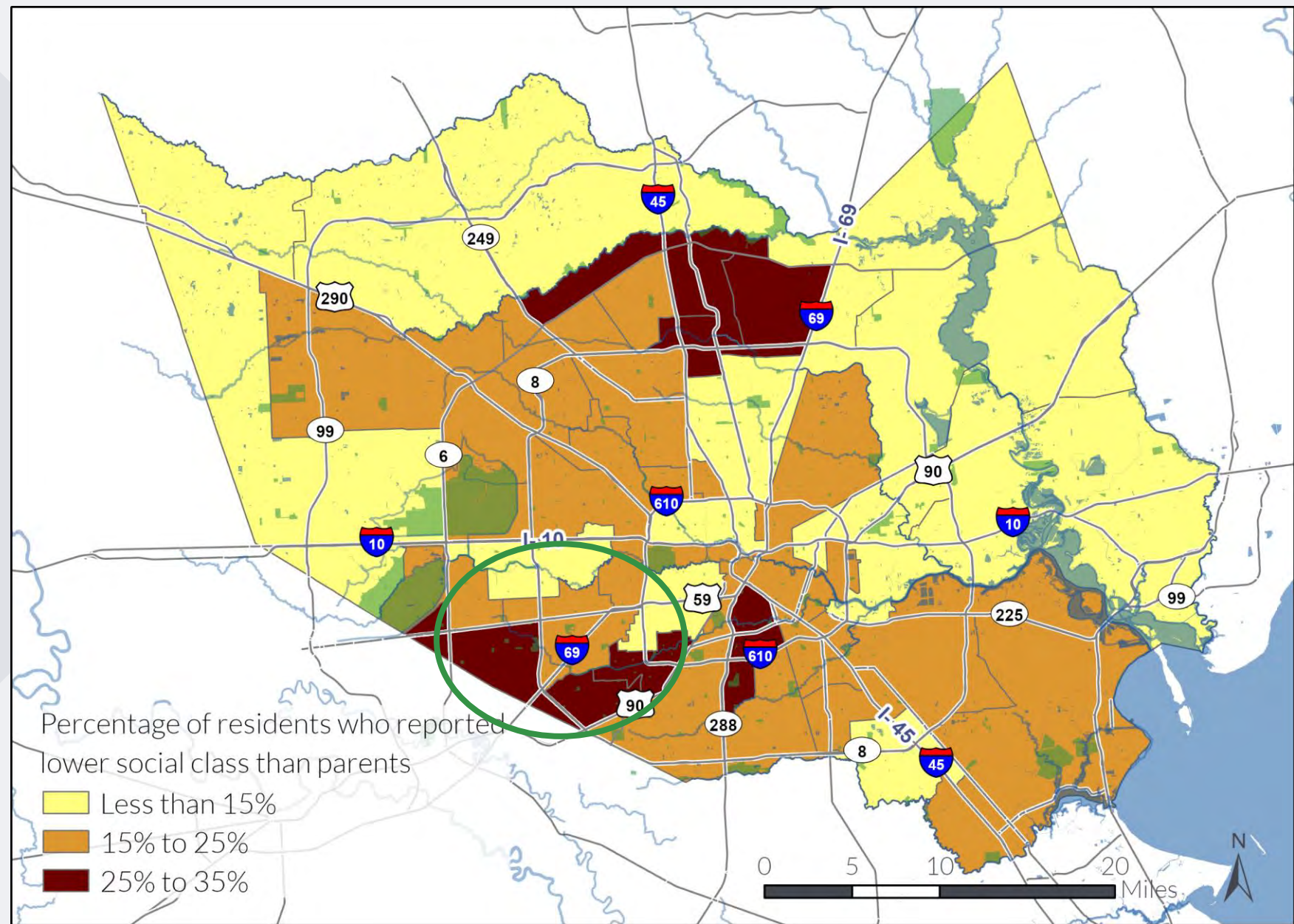
Subjective social mobility of Houston-area residents

- More than half of residents think their status is the same as their parent(s)
- About 1 in 5 rate their own social status lower than that of their parent(s)
- Almost 3 in 10 rate their own social status higher than that of their parent(s)



Between 15% and 25% of residents in Southwest District rated themselves as having lower social status than their parents

- Neighborhood areas nearby had between 25% and 35% of residents report the same



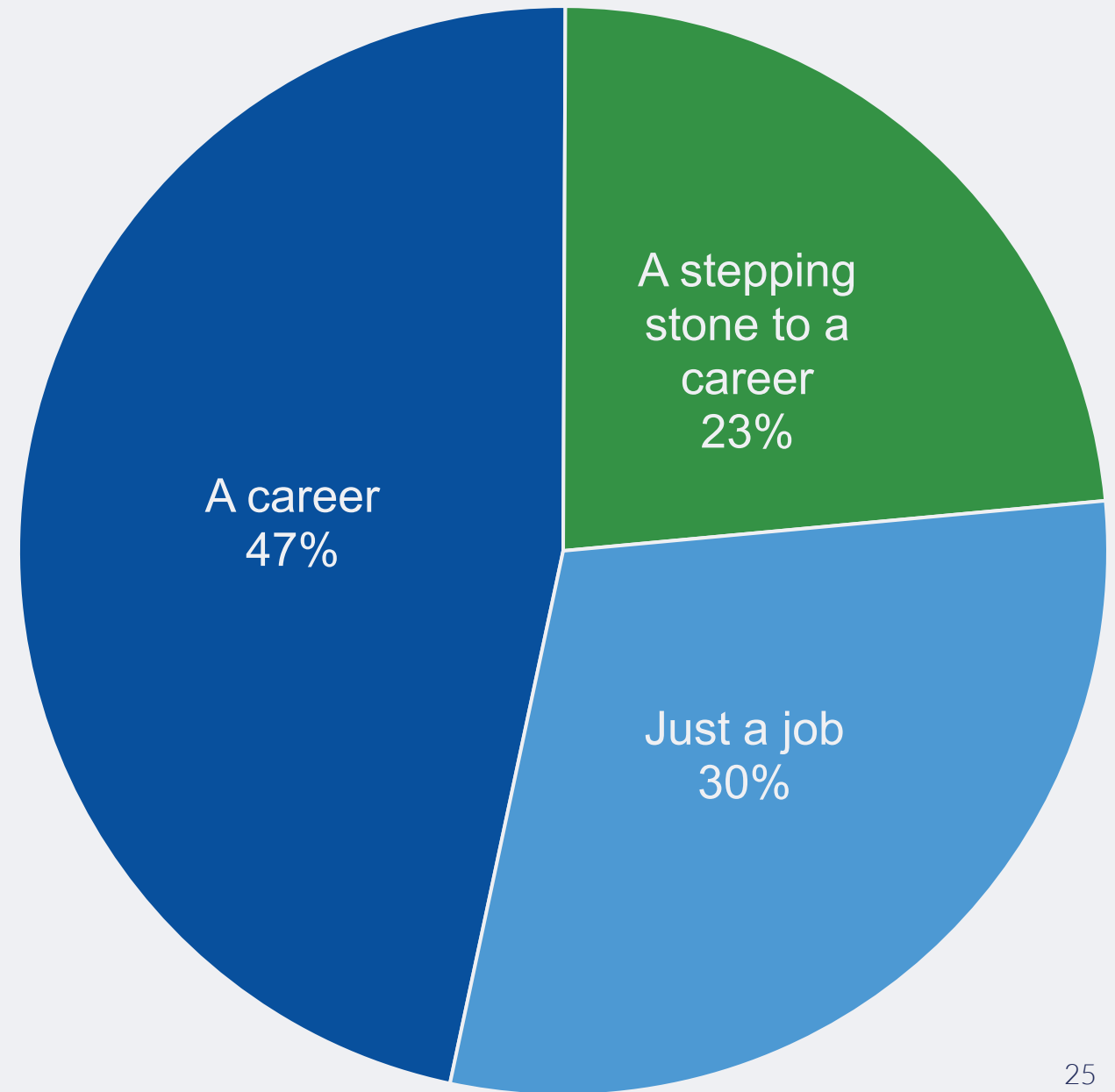


Changing careers and AI in the Houston-area workforce



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- **Less than half of area workers see their current job as a career**
- **About 1 in 4 area workers see their job as a stepping stone to a career**
- **Around 3 in 10 area workers see what they are doing as “just a job”**



Half of Harris County workers want to stay in their current job

**Want to stay in
same type of job**

5 in 10

workers want to keep doing the same type of job they are currently doing

**Change jobs and
careers**

28%

of workers want to change jobs and careers in the next 5 years, and of those, about 7 in 10 said it was very or extremely likely they will do it

Number of workers

494,000

workers could be changing jobs and careers in the next 5 years if those wanting to change jobs make a switch



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Artificial intelligence is here and expected to be disruptive

AI will have a major impact on Houston workers

58%

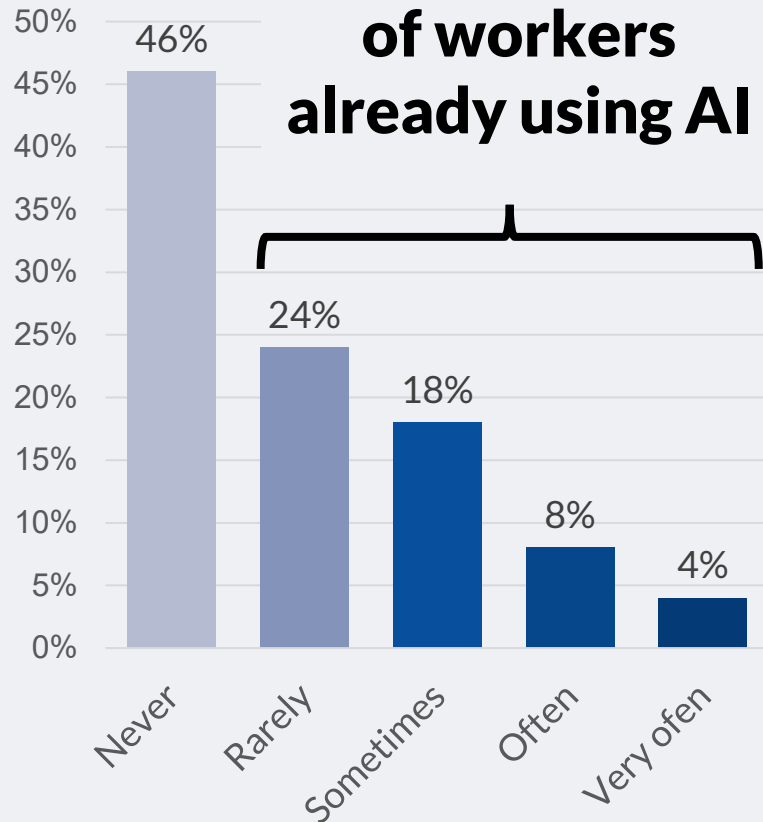
of Houston-area residents see AI having a major impact on workers, and another 30% say it will have at least a minor impact

Worry about AI eliminating jobs

170,000 workers

Around 7% of Houston-area workers are very or extremely worried AI will eliminate their job in the next 5 years

More than half of workers already using AI





Economic well-being of Houston-area residents



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Current earnings of Houston and Harris County residents

\$72,336

per household

About \$36,000 per individual

Source: American Community Survey, 2023, 1-year estimate



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Month-to-month income (in)stability

Stable

2 in 3

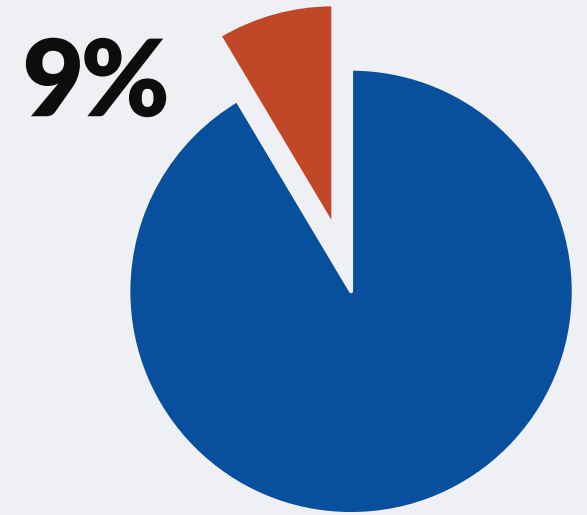
Houston-area residents report a stable month-to-month income

Varies a little

26%

of Houston-area residents report their income varies a little month to month

Varies a lot



About 1 in 11 Houston-area residents report an unstable month-to-month income



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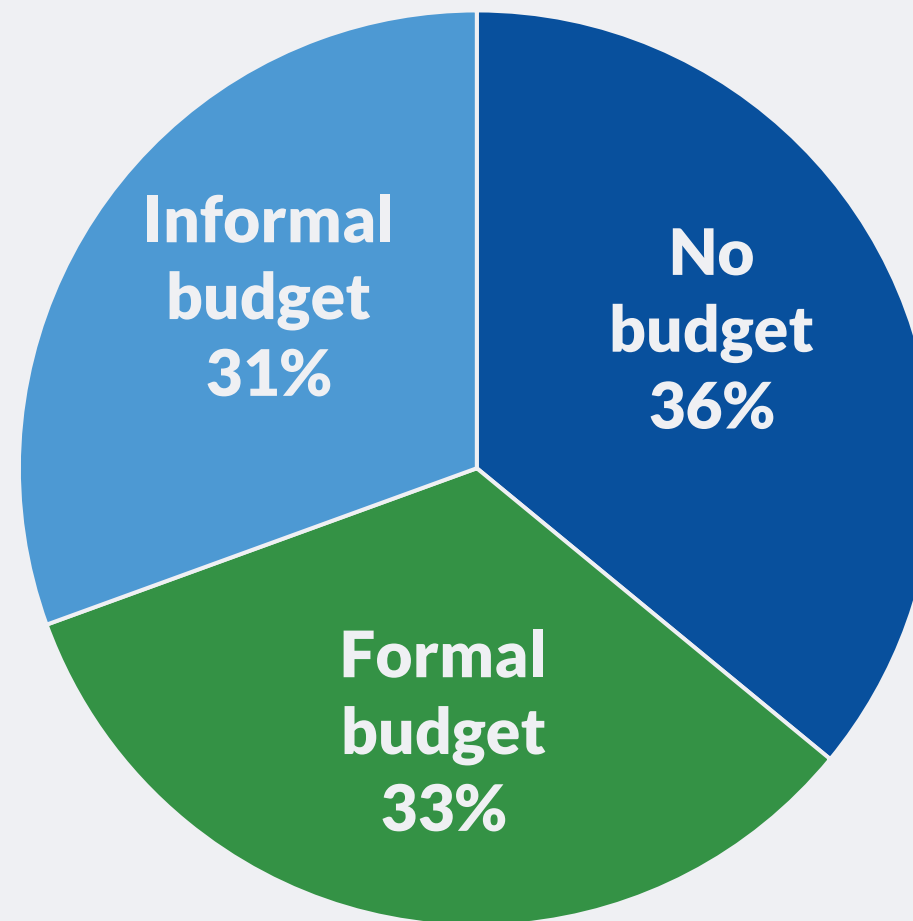
Budget practices of Houston-area residents

No budget

36%

of Houston-area residents do not keep any type of monthly budget

Formal and informal budget



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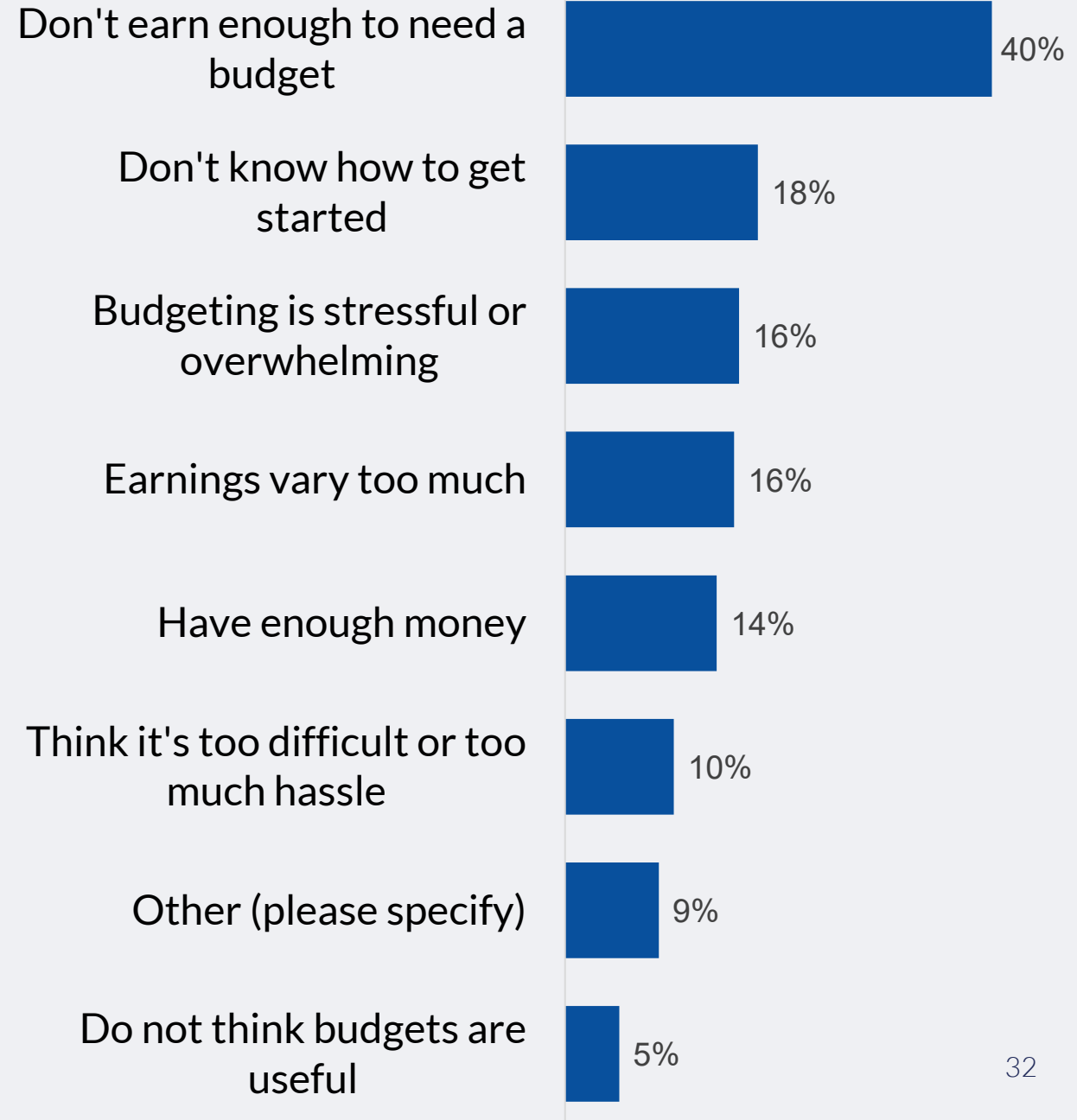
Most common barriers people feel when it comes to budgeting

- Of residents who said they did not currently keep a budget:
 - 4 in 10 said it was because they did not earn enough
 - 1 in 5 were unsure how to get started
 - Only 1 in 20 did not think budgets were useful



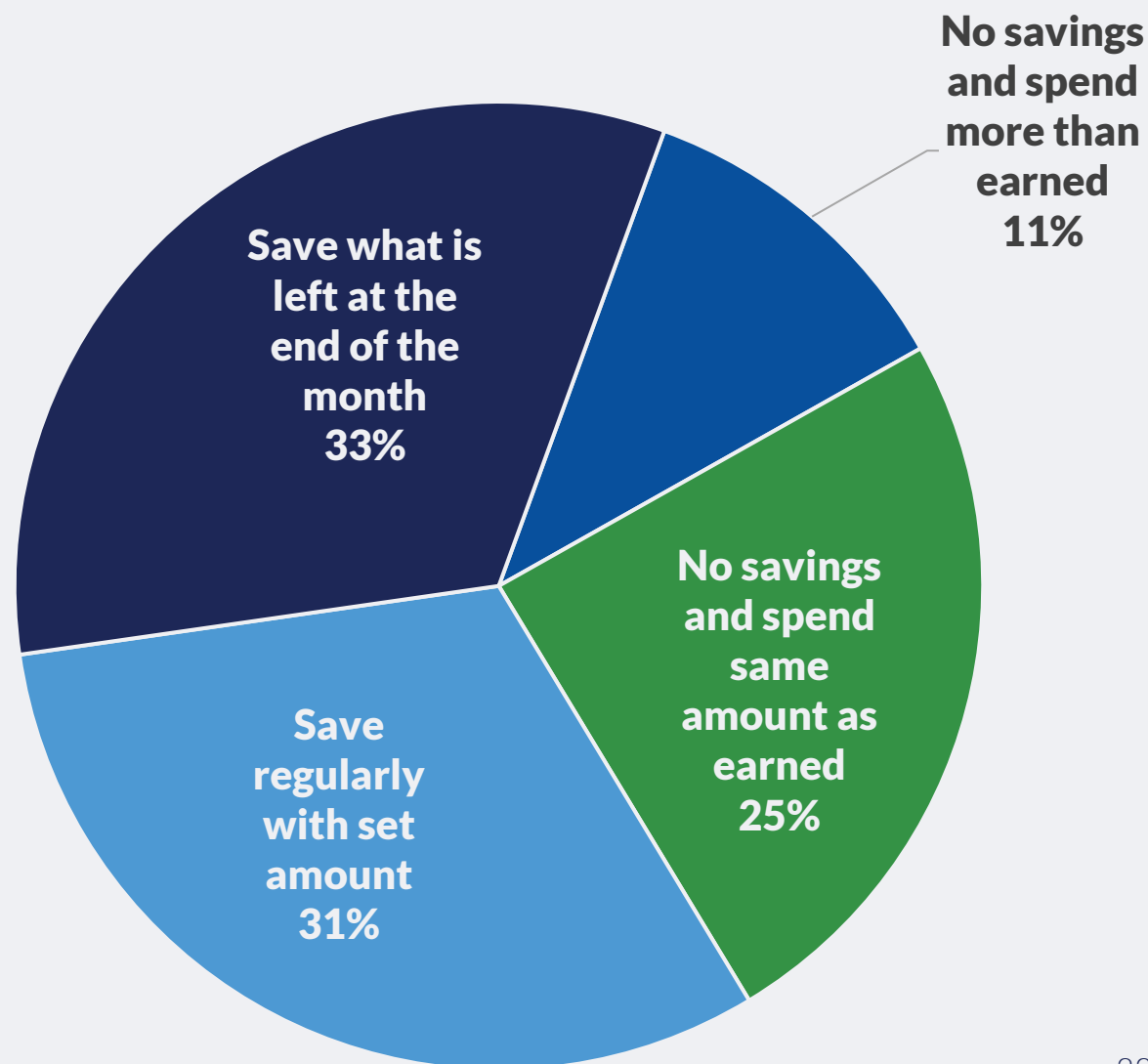
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Savings practices of Houston-area residents

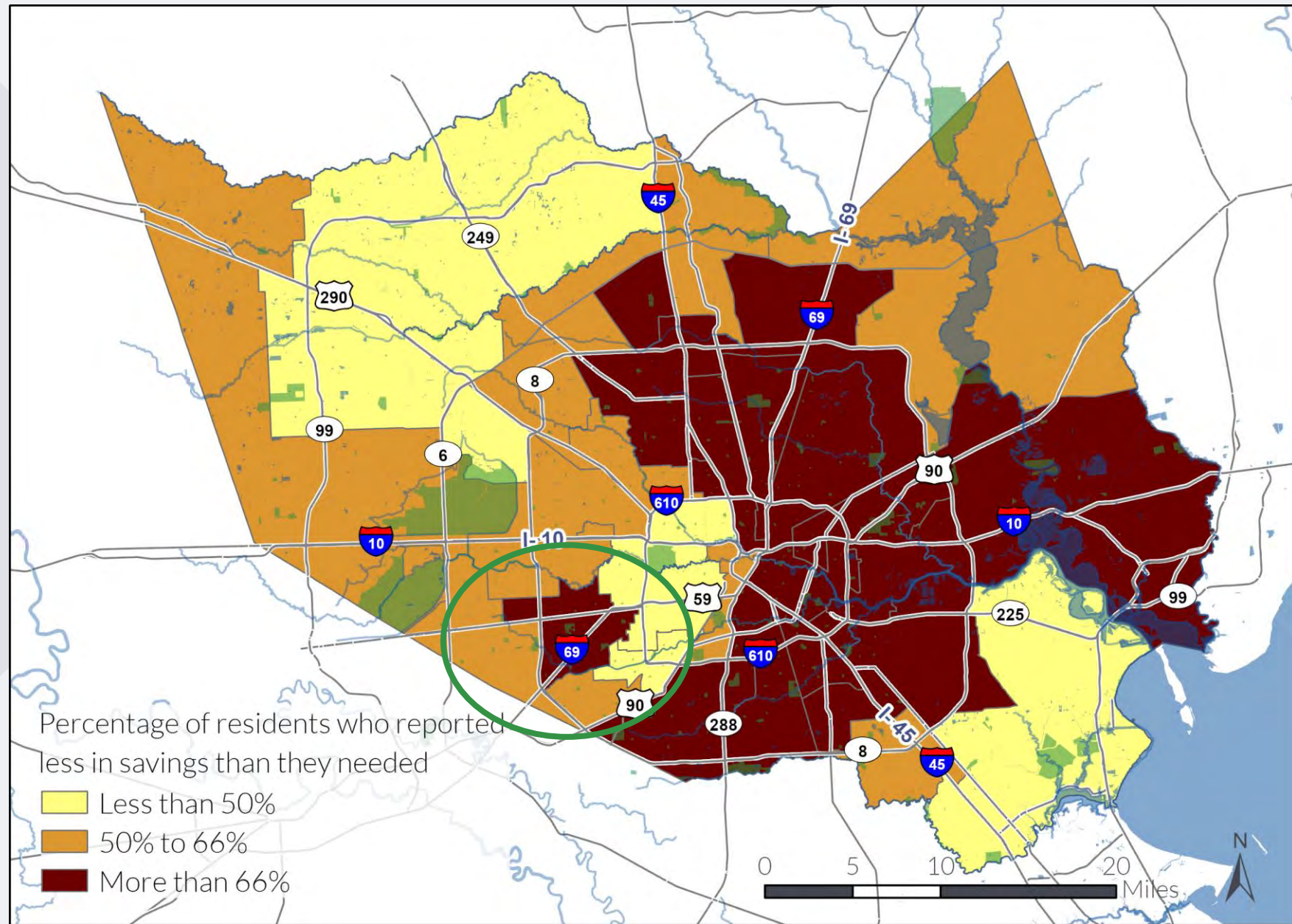
- Two-thirds of Houston-area residents reported some type of savings practice
 - One-third said they saved what was left at the end of the month, and another third saved a set amount
- One-quarter did not do any saving, but tended to spend about the same as they earned
- 1 in 9 residents did not do any saving and spent more than they earned



Most residents have less in savings than they say they need

In 12 neighborhood areas, more than two-thirds of residents say they have less savings than they need

➤ Including in the Southwest District



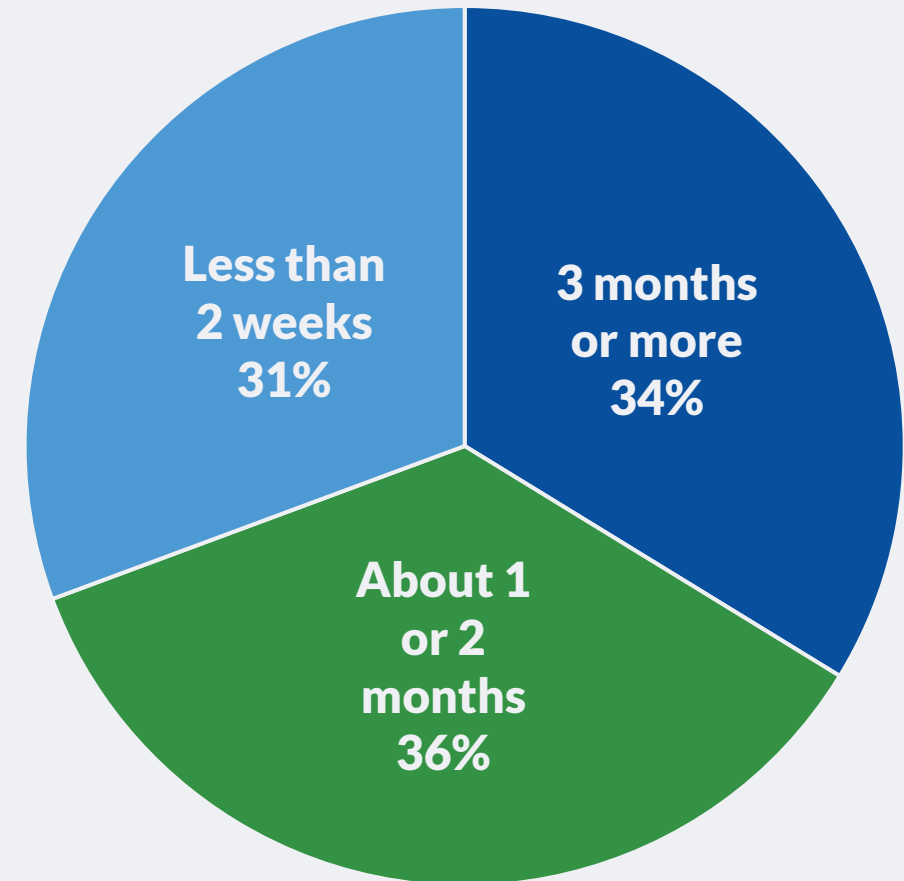
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Financial security of Houston-area residents

- Residents asked how long they could cover expenses using only savings or money they had set aside (if they lost their primary source of income)
- 3 in 10 residents would be able to cover expenses for less than 2 weeks
- Only one-third have enough in savings for 3 months or more

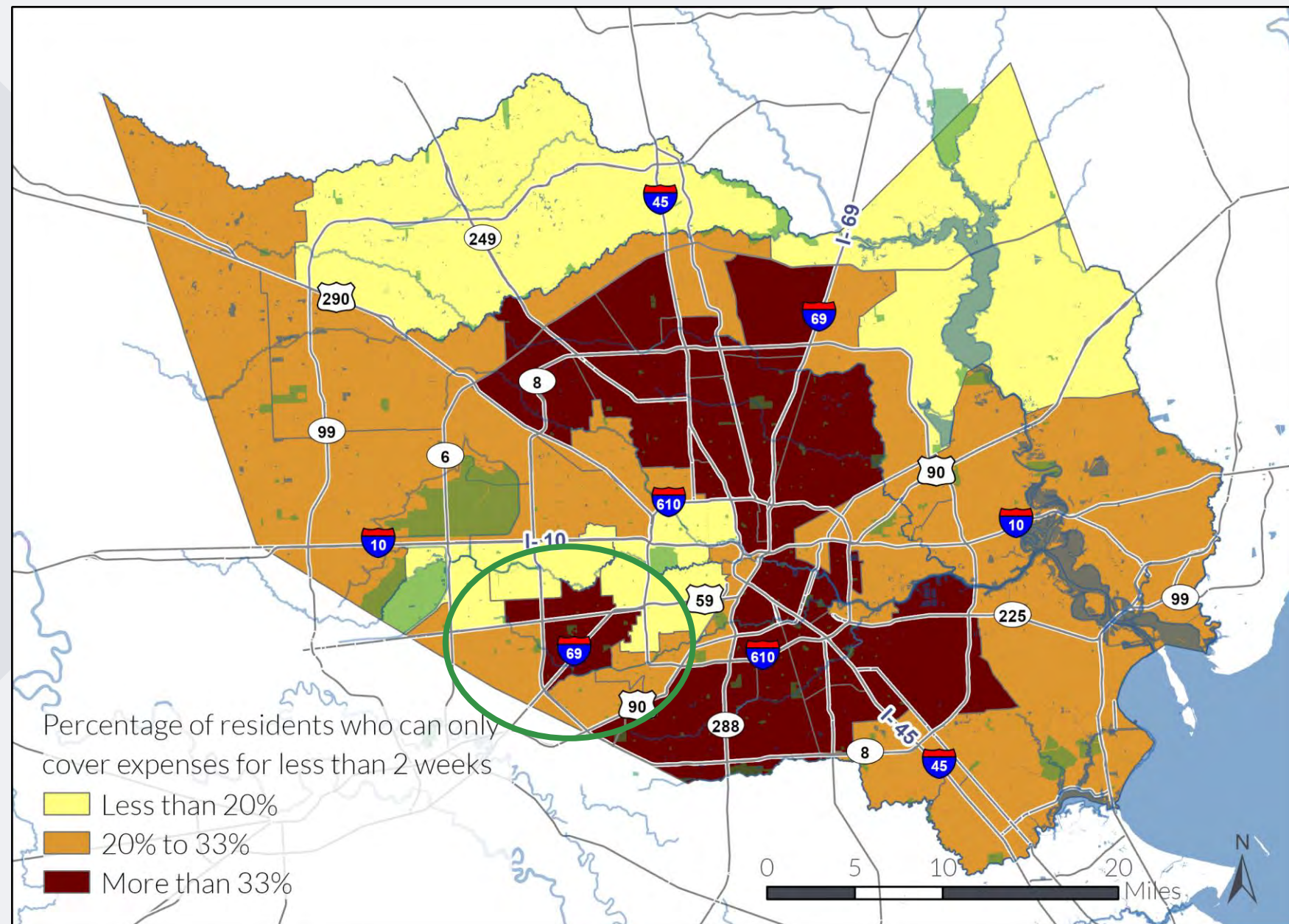
Length of time resident could cover expenses using only savings



Large parts of the area with highly vulnerable people

More than one-third of residents in 11 neighborhood areas have less than 2 weeks worth in their savings

➤ Including in the Southwest District



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Summary



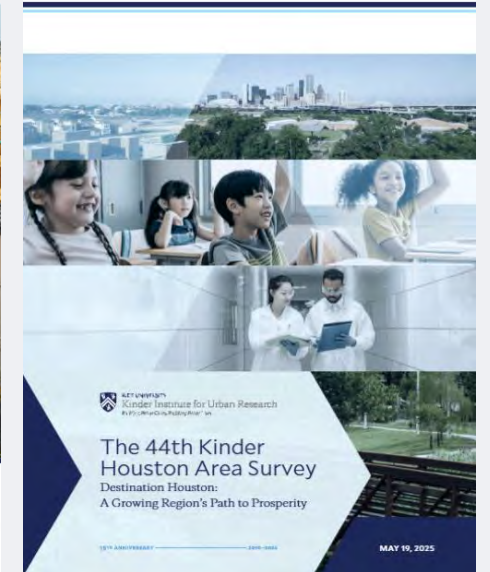
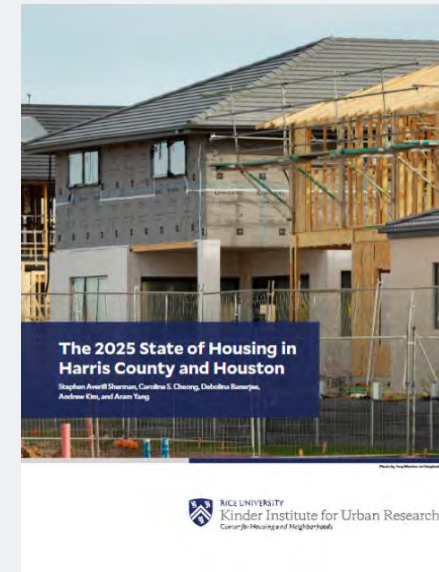
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Key takeaways

- Houston area is growing and diversifying
- Challenges exist with crime and safety, housing affordability, and economic mobility
- About half of workers in the Houston area think of their job as a career
- A quarter of workers expect to change jobs and careers in the next 5 years
 - About 70% of those workers say the change is very or extremely likely — that's almost 500,000 people
- AI is here and expected to be disruptive to the workforce
- A third, a third, a third — budgeting and savings practices and financial security
- Southwest District is a microcosm of the region's diversity, where residents from all over the world strive towards greater prosperity for themselves and the region



Some of our research



Explore more at
kinder.rice.edu/research



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Thank you!

Kinder Institute for Urban Research

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