

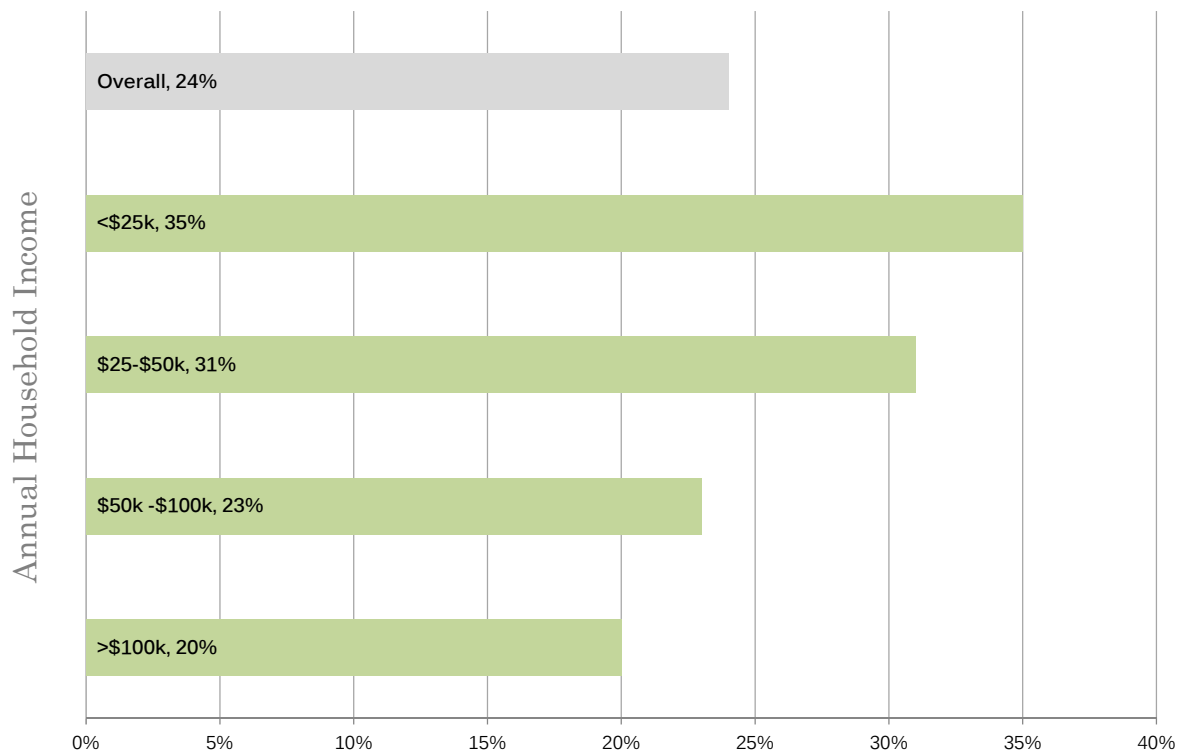
Transportation Public Opinion by Race, Ethnicity, and Income

Overview

This report documents how public opinion about the transportation system and the transportation planning process varies by race, ethnicity, and income in the Wilmington, Delaware region. The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) tracks regional public opinion every four years through a random telephone survey, in step with updates to the Regional Transportation Plan. While opinion on many matters is similar across racial, ethnic, and income groups, there are some key divergences. Some of these divergences from our 2014 survey are explored in this report.

Our data suggests that the higher a household's income the better our transportation system meets its needs. Overall, 24% of respondents said that our system does not meet their needs well. As shown in the graph below, that figure rises as income drops.

Response: The Transportation System Does NOT Meet My Needs Well



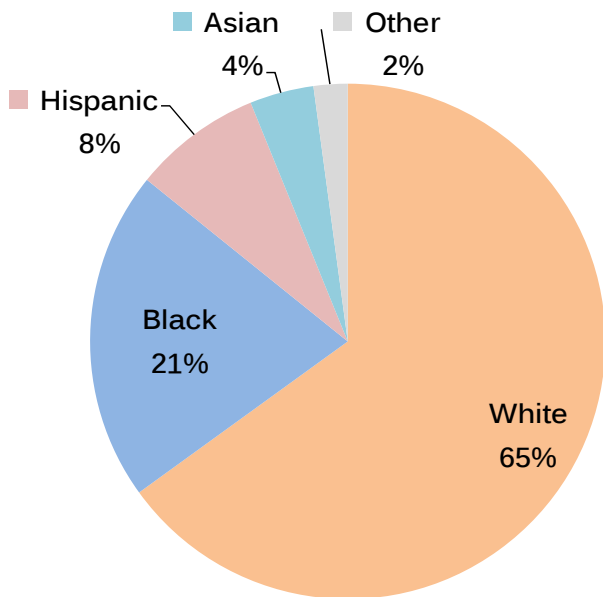
Regional Numbers

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) enabled the establishment of survey response quotas by race and ethnicity. The demographic and socioeconomic classifications we use, along with regional statistics, are shown below.

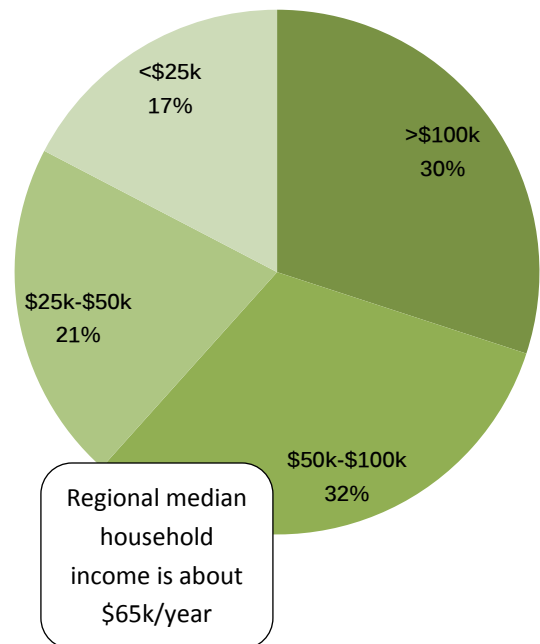
White - non-Hispanic White alone
Black - non-Hispanic Black alone
Asian - non-Hispanic Asian alone
Hispanic - Hispanic of any race

Low income - annual household income less than \$25,000
High income - annual household income more than \$100,000

Racial and Ethnic Distribution, WILMAPCO Region*



Household Income Distribution, WILMAPCO Region*

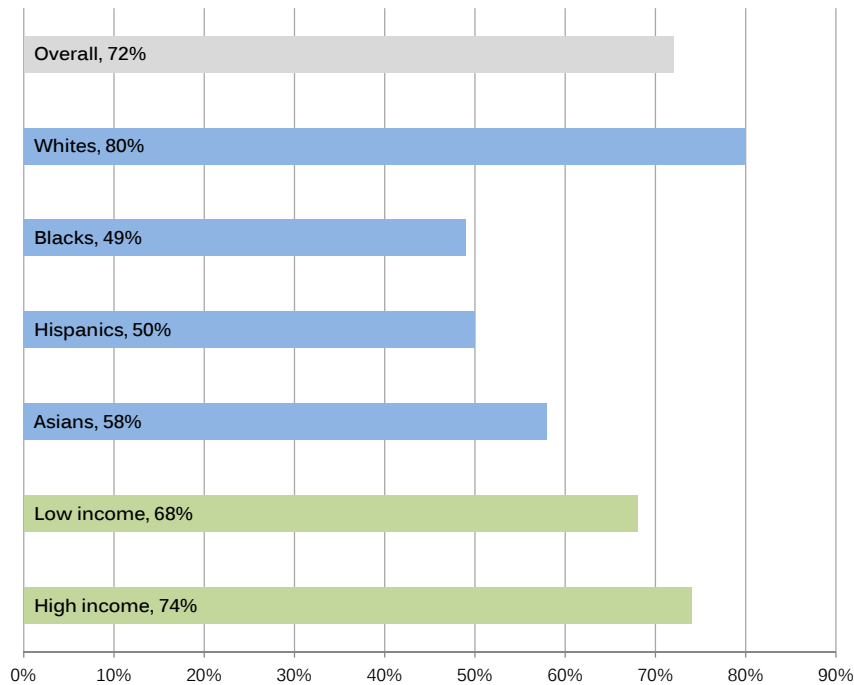


* Source: American Community Survey, 2009 – 2013

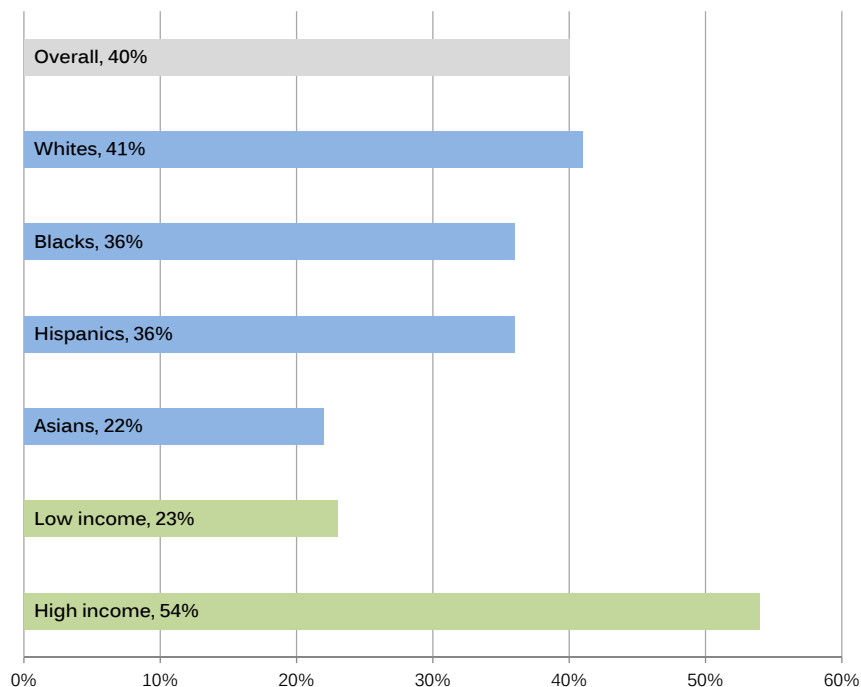
Land Development

Land development has a critical impact on the transportation system. Our survey results suggest that a markedly higher percentage of whites believe that development should occur in growth areas (explained within the survey), versus other ethnicities. Whites, as well as those with high incomes, are also more likely to rate revitalizing existing places and downtowns as a critical issue.

Response: Development Should Occur in Towns and Growth Areas



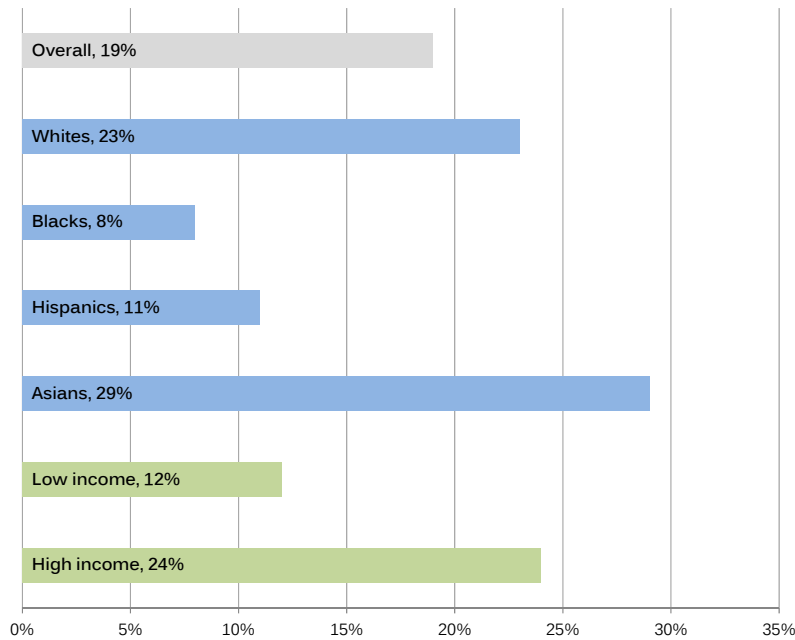
Response: Revitalizing Existing Places and Downtowns is a Critical Issue



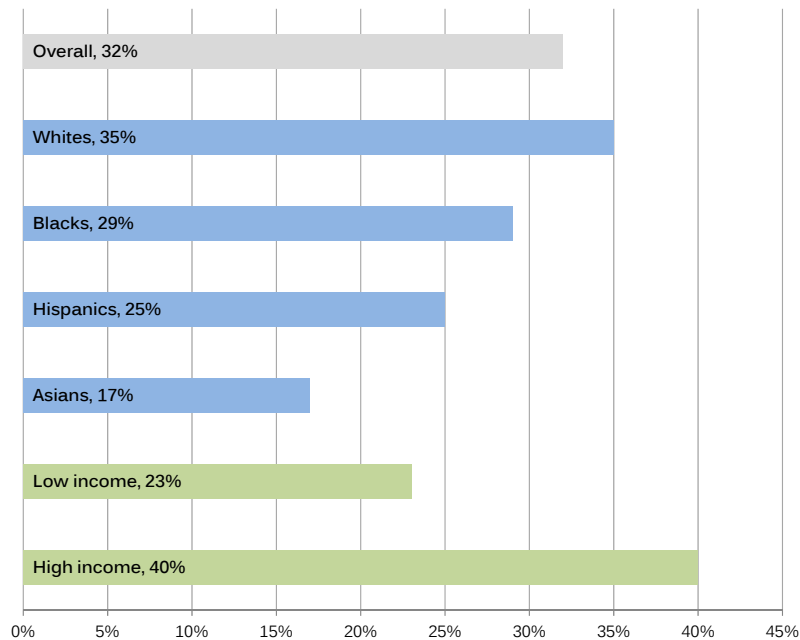
Transportation Funding

The number of desired transportation projects by the State of Delaware exceeds available capital to fund them. Planners and legislators have been exploring additional funding schemes. Our data suggest that support for a gas tax hike is unpopular across the board, but especially among blacks, Hispanics, and those with low incomes. Support for raising tolls is likewise unpopular, but more so among Asians, Hispanics, and those with low incomes.

Response: Support for a Rise in the Gasoline Tax



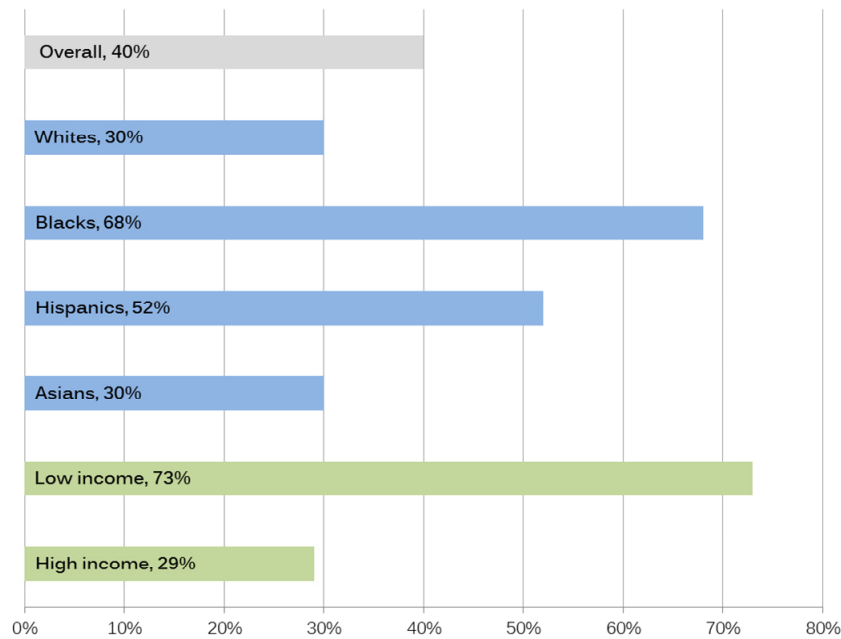
Response: Support for a Rise in Highway Tolls



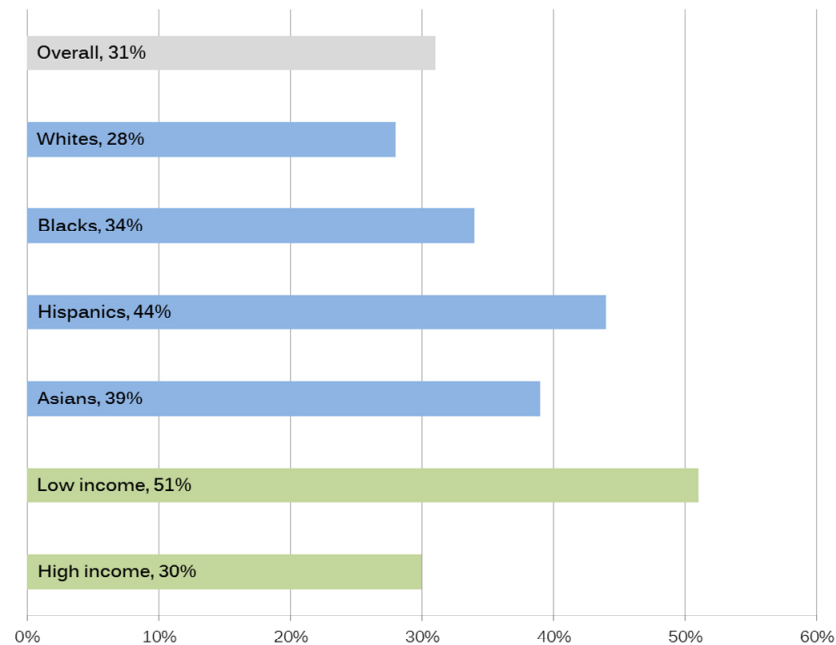
Bus System Improvements

The private car is the dominant means of travel in the WILMAPCO region. As overall use of private cars increases, major expansions of the fixed route bus network have not occurred and are not planned. While most residents in the region do not see buses as very effective at reducing congestion, most blacks and those with low incomes do. Low income respondents are also more likely than other groups to think that improving the bus system is a critical issue.

Response: Buses Very Effective at Reducing Congestion



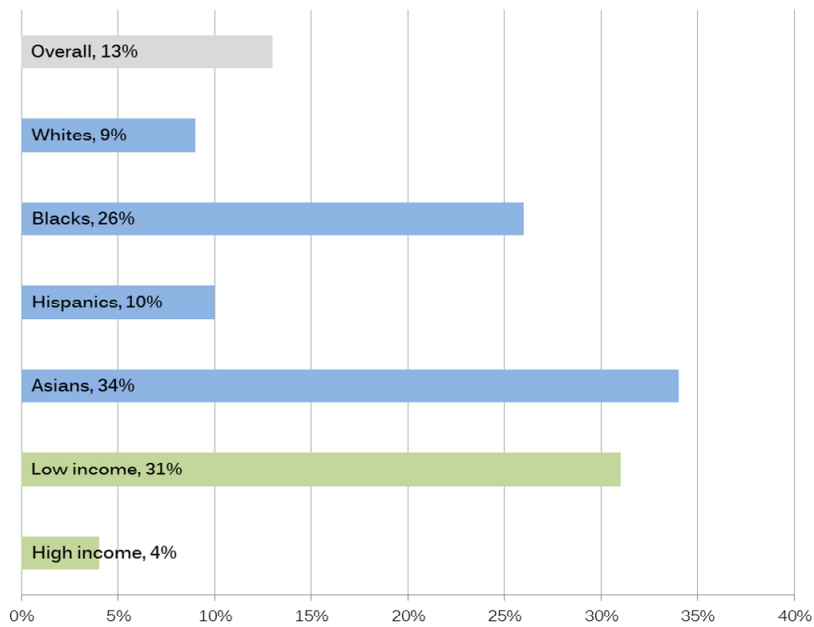
Response: Improving the Bus System is a Critical Issue



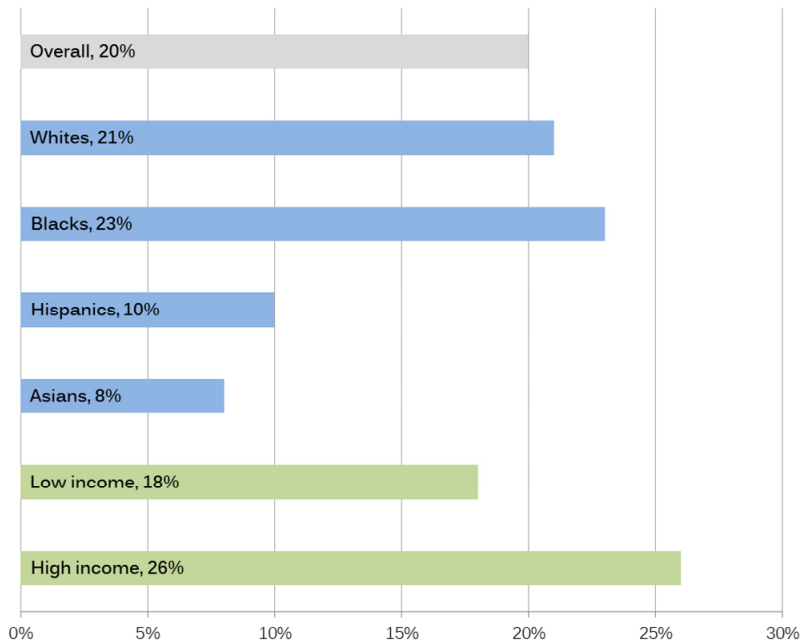
Walking and Bicycling Safety

Very few people in the WILMAPCO region travel on foot or bicycle. Our survey suggests that personal safety is one minor reason they do not. When it comes to walking, Asian, black, and low income respondents were more likely than other groups to list personal safety as a reason why they do not walk around their area. Few respondents, especially Hispanics and Asians, said they would bicycle more if there were more bike routes and lanes. Those with high incomes were the most likely to agree with that statement.

Response: I Don't Walk in my Area Because I Don't Feel Safe



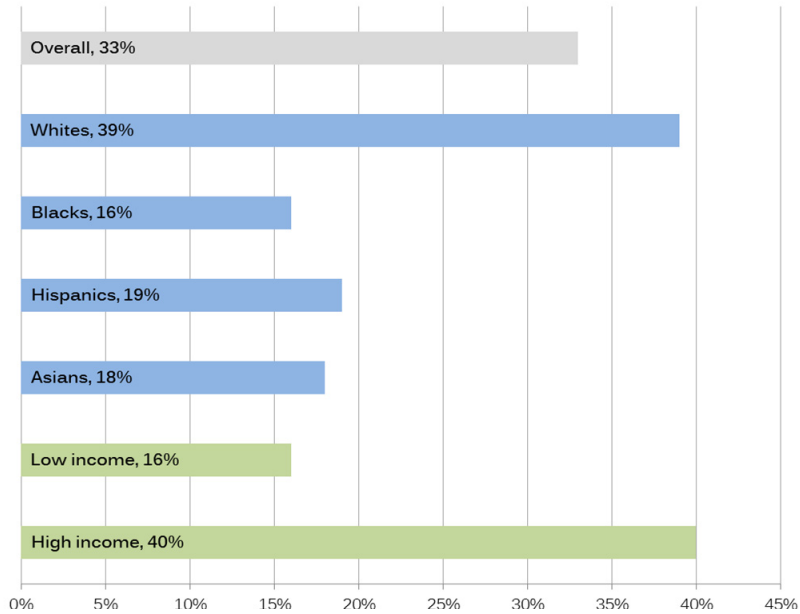
Response: I Would Bike More if I Felt Safer with More Bike Routes and Lanes



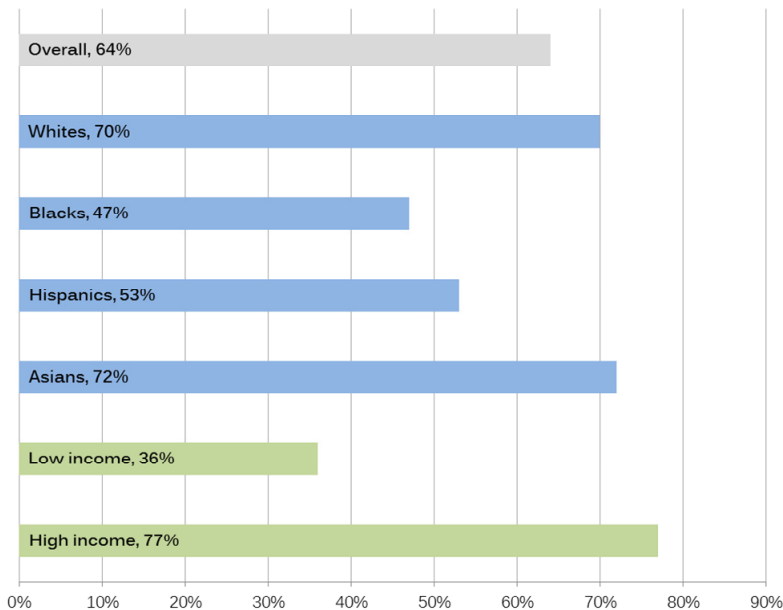
Familiarity with WILMAPCO

Whites and high income respondents were more than twice as likely to be familiar with WILMAPCO compared to the other groups. High income respondents were two and a half times as likely to be familiar with the agency compared to low income respondents. Interest in receiving information from WILMAPCO varied. Most respondents, especially whites, Asians, and high income earners did not want to hear again from the agency, while at least half or more of blacks, Hispanics, and low income respondents requested more information.

Response: I am Familiar with WILMAPCO



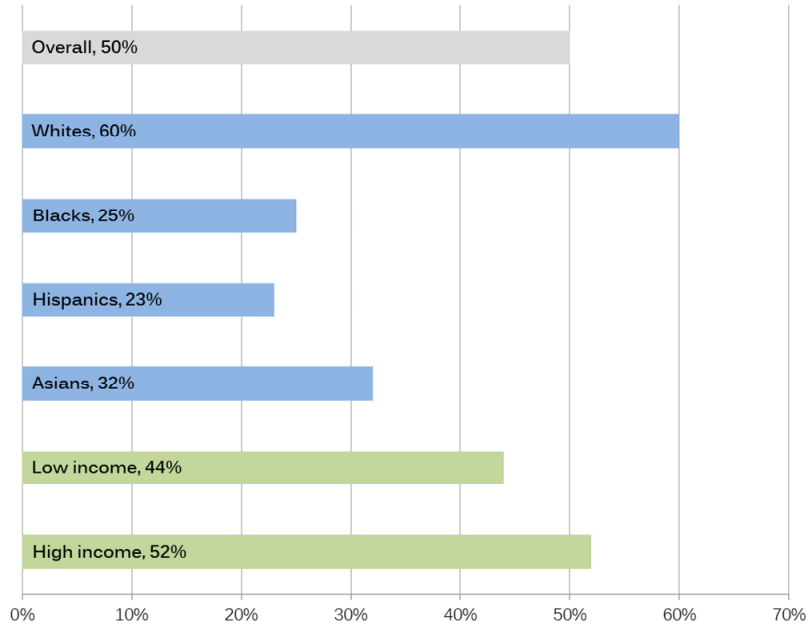
Response: I am Not Interested in Receiving Free Information from WILMAPCO



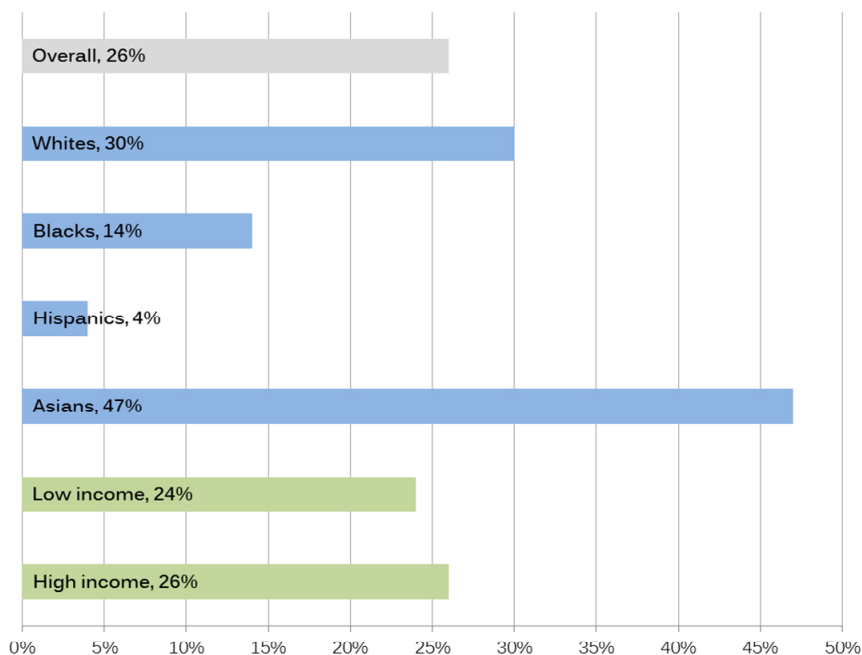
Familiarity with Air Quality

Much of our public outreach about ozone involves promoting awareness of “ozone action days.” While about half of respondents in our survey were familiar with action days, only a quarter of blacks and Hispanics were. Knowledge of PM2.5 was also notably lower among blacks and Hispanics; it was, however, markedly higher among Asians.

Response: Knowledge of Ozone Action Days



Response: Knowledge of Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)



Discussion and Next Steps

This data report initiates a process of more carefully considering variations in public perceptions of the transportation system and transportation planning process by race, ethnicity, and income. Below are some key points:

- Planners and decision makers should be cognizant of the variability that exists between and across different population groups and factor that knowledge into the decision-making process. While a transportation decision may appear to be popular on the whole, it can be decidedly unpopular for a particular group and vice versa.
- WILMAPCO must continue to strengthen efforts to promote awareness of the agency, the transportation planning process, and air quality issues among minority and low income groups. Our outreach strategies have not fully dissipated inequities in levels of public awareness.
- Planners should refine the questions asked in the WILMAPCO Public Opinion Survey to enhance relevance particular to understanding differences between population subgroups. Additionally, a quota reflective of educational attainment should also be introduced in the next survey, as college graduates are overrepresented in our sample.
- Key variances in responses based on race, ethnicity, and income should be documented and studied in greater detail within our Environmental Justice/Title VI Reports.

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is a Metropolitan Planning Organization serving New Castle County, Delaware and Cecil County, Maryland.

This data report is part of a series that summarizes key data to allow both residents and decision-makers to better understand our region.

Other data reports are available at: www.WILMAPCO.org

