

# Racial Disparities and Equity

## INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

### Key Trends

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- The number of residents of color in Minnesota has grown significantly in recent years and is projected to grow in the next several decades. In 1990, 6% of the state's population was of color; in 2014, it is 19%.
- People of color in Minnesota continue to experience vast economic and financial disparities. For example, black Minnesotans are almost four times more likely to live in poverty than white residents. These disparities have remained constant during the last fifteen years.
- In 2014, most people of color in Minnesota (75%) live in the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. In 2035, that number is projected to remain largely unchanged at 73%. However, people of color are projected to make up 40% of the total population in the Twin Cities area by 2035, up from 24% in 2010.
- In the Twin Cities, a household with the median income spends 48.9% of its income on transportation and housing, compared to 75.3% for a low-income household, which reduces available funds for other life expenses like childcare, health care, and recreational pursuits.

### Framing the Conversation around Racial Inequality and Transportation

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Throughout American history, communities of color have suffered as a result of transit and transportation policies. The national narrative of racial inequality and transportation has played out in Minnesota as well. In the 1960s, the predominantly African American Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul was physically divided as a result of Interstate 94's construction.<sup>1</sup> In July 2015, MnDOT Commissioner Charles Zelle formally apologized to the community for MnDOT's role in the project.<sup>2</sup> More recently, there has been controversy about station development along Metro Transit's Green Line and a road expansion project on predominantly Hispanic sections of Lake Street in Minneapolis.<sup>3</sup>

Although transportation policies can be used to exacerbate racial inequality, they can also alleviate negative effects brought about by development and construction while improving quality of life for all. The Metropolitan Council's *Choice, Place, and Opportunity* report on racial disparity articulates the importance of public policy in addressing inequality:

"Public policy can positively influence the geography of opportunity by expanding residential choices, transportation options, and the locations of economic opportunity. Key place-based policy areas that affect the geography of opportunity include affordable housing policy, fair housing enforcement, transit service, and community development investments."<sup>4</sup>

This paper discusses the current state of racial inequality in Minnesota and how it relates to Minnesota's transportation system.

### Communities of Color in Minnesota

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#### POPULATION FIGURES AND PROJECTIONS

In the last 50 years, Minnesota's population has become much more diverse. In 1960, only 1.2% of the state's residents were people of color; in 2014, they made up 18.6% of the state. Today, there are over one million people of color residing in Minnesota; a number that has almost doubled

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<sup>1</sup> [Minnesota History Center](#)

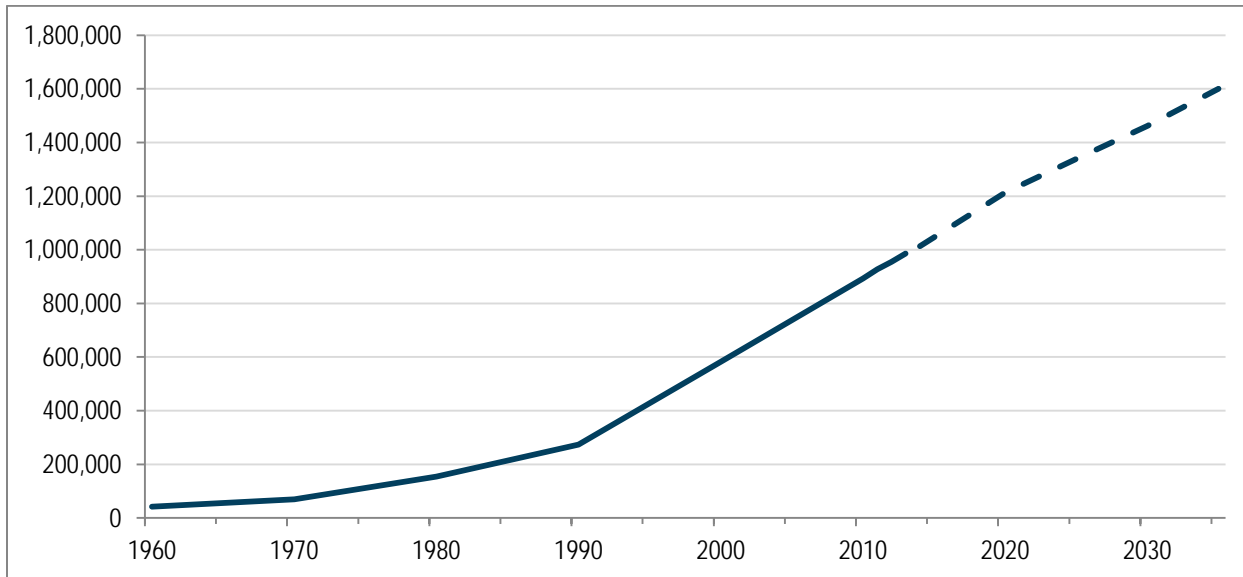
<sup>2</sup> [MPR News, 2015](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Proscio, 2005](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Metropolitan Council, 2014](#)

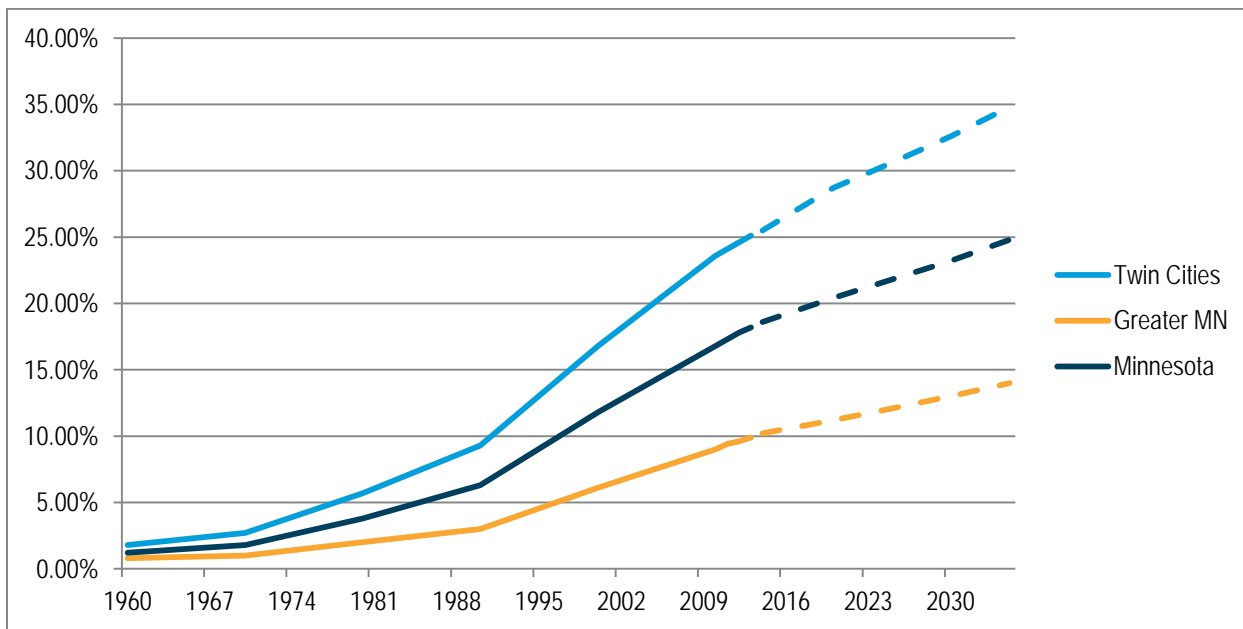
since 2000. This number is projected to grow significantly over the next twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 shows the rapid increase in the population of color in Minnesota:

Figure 1: Persons of Color residing in Minnesota<sup>6</sup>



In 2014, 75% of all persons of color in Minnesota lived in the 7-county Twin Cities area. While communities of color are projected to grow in both the Twin Cities area and Greater Minnesota, the locations where people of color live are not expected to change significantly. In 2035, 73% of all persons of color in Minnesota are projected to live in the Twin Cities region as a percentage of the total population. The following figure shows the breakdown between the 7-county Twin Cities area and the Greater Minnesota region.

Figure 2: Persons of Color as a percent of the total population<sup>7</sup>



<sup>5</sup> The most recent population projections by race and ethnicity available from the state demographer's office are from 2005.

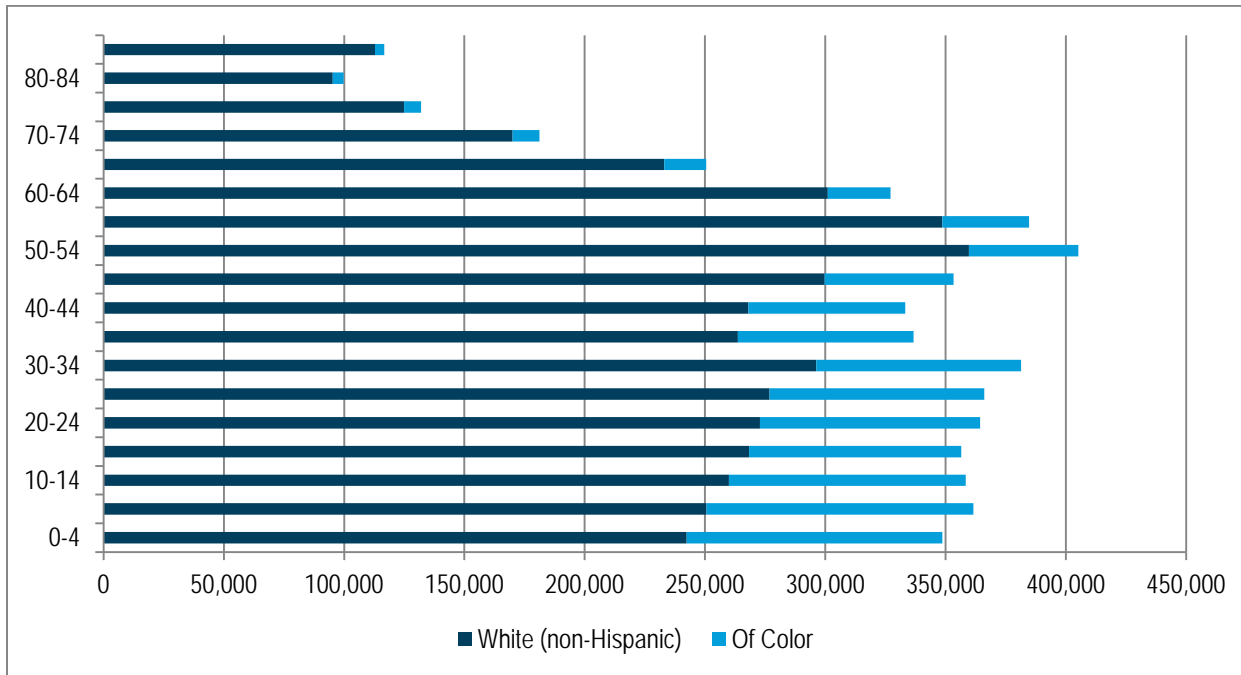
<sup>6</sup> Data from Minnesota Compass; Years beyond 2014 are projected population

<sup>7</sup> Data from Minnesota Compass; Years beyond 2014 are projected population

People of color in Greater Minnesota tend to also live in urban communities. Using the US Census definition of urban (cities with 2,500 people or more), approximately 62% all persons of color living in Greater Minnesota live in urban areas. As a percentage of Greater Minnesota's urban population, people of color make up just fewer than 8%.

As Minnesota's population continues to age, the state's senior population will continue to become more diverse. Figure 3 shows a population pyramid illustrating the number of Minnesotans of Color in comparison to white Minnesotans based on age group.

Figure 3: Minnesota's population divided by age and race, 2014<sup>8</sup>



### RACIAL DISPARITIES IN MINNESOTA

Across the country, the racial wealth gap remains large: in 2011, the median white household had \$111,146 in wealth holdings (assets including cars, homes, investments, etc.), compared to \$7,113 for the median black household and \$8,348 for the median Latino household.<sup>9</sup> In Minnesota, the situation is no better. One recent study from 2015 found that Minnesota ranked last among all states in financial inequality between whites and people of color.<sup>10</sup> The study obtained Census and Labor Statistics data and compared the median household income, home ownership rate, poverty rate, and educational attainment between whites and the racial group with the greatest disparity compared to white Minnesotans. For example, it found that in Minnesota, blacks are almost four times more likely to live in poverty than whites. Florida is included as an example of the highest-performing state in terms of minimizing disparities. The relevant findings are summarized in the table below:

| Rank | State     | Largest Percent Difference in Household Income (most disadvantaged group) | Homeownership Rate Gap (most disadvantaged group) | Poverty Rate Gap (most disadvantaged group) | Educational Attainment Gap (most disadvantaged group) |
|------|-----------|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | Florida   | 31.8% (blacks)  | 34.4 % (blacks)                                   | 102.8% (blacks)                             | 39.1% (blacks)  |
| 51   | Minnesota | 51.1% (blacks)  | 68.3% (blacks)                                    | 296.7% (blacks)                             | 51.0% (Hispanics)                                     |

<sup>8</sup> [Data from Minnesota Compass, US Census Population Projections](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Demos, 2015](#)

<sup>10</sup> <http://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-financial-gaps-by-race/9842/#main-findings>

The figures below offer a snapshot of racial disparities in Minnesota:<sup>11</sup>

Figure 4: Percent of population below the poverty line<sup>12</sup>

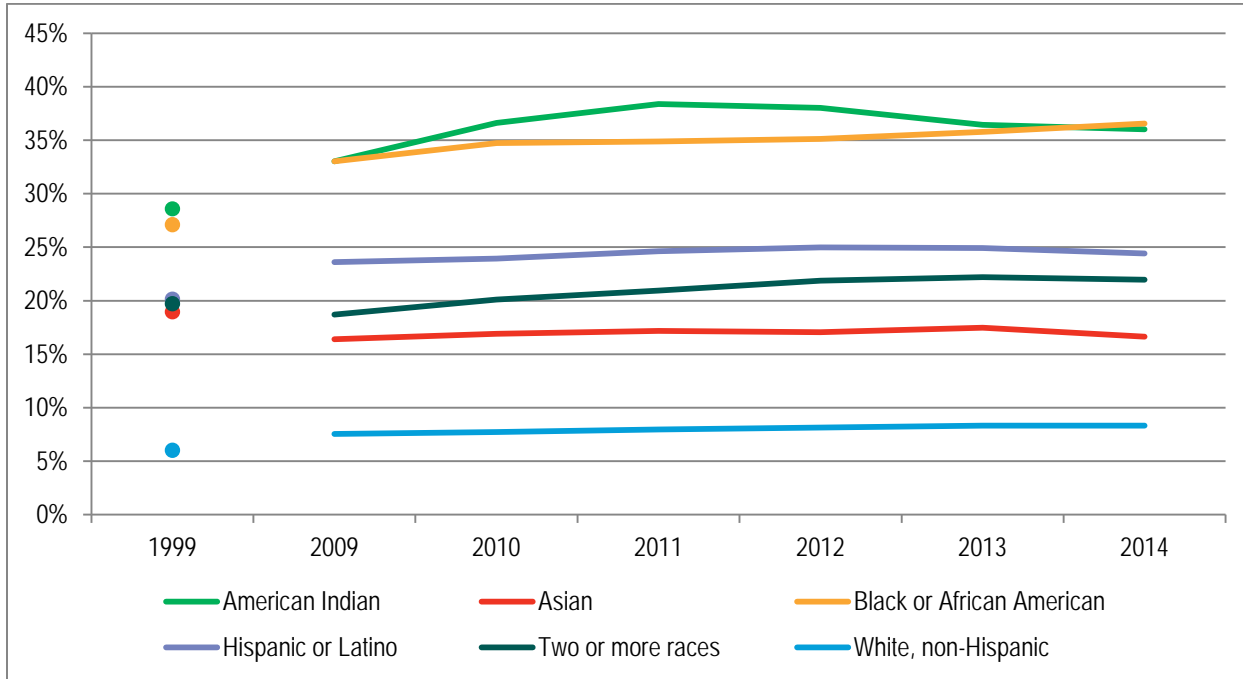
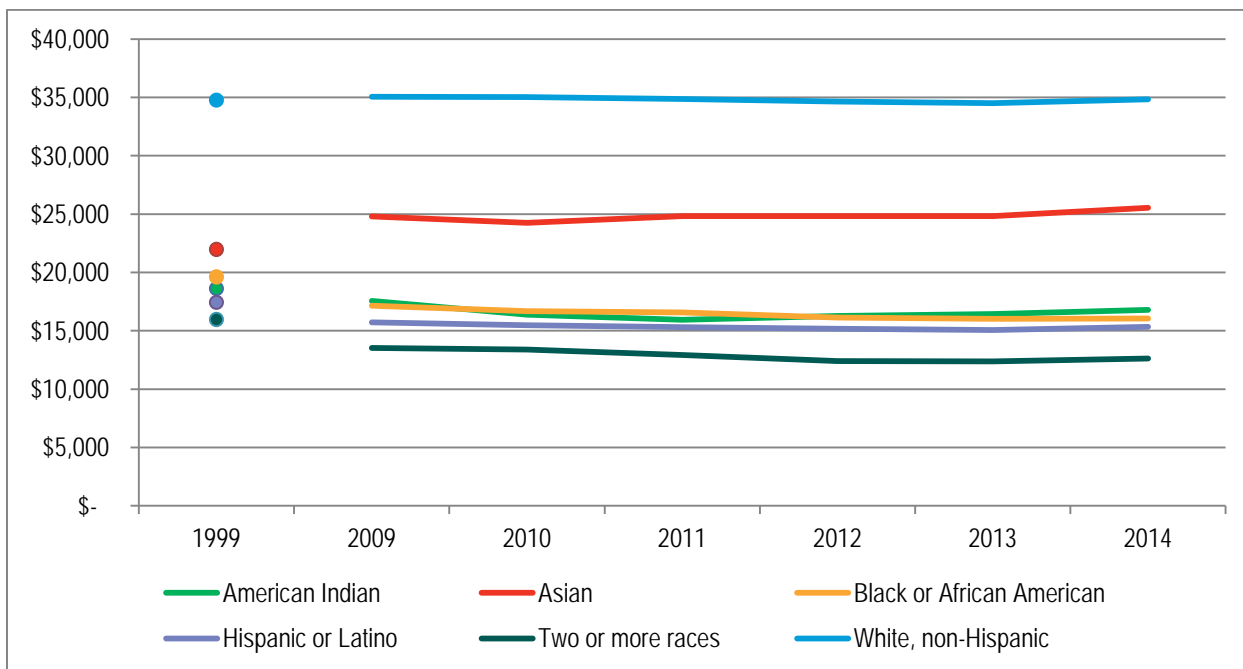


Figure 5: Real per capita income by race (Individuals over age 15, 2015 Dollars)<sup>13</sup>



<sup>11</sup> All figures and data from the U.S. Census' American Community Survey

<sup>12</sup> American Community Survey, 2014

<sup>13</sup> American Community Survey, 2014

Figure 6: Median household income by racial or ethnic group (2015 Dollars)<sup>14</sup>

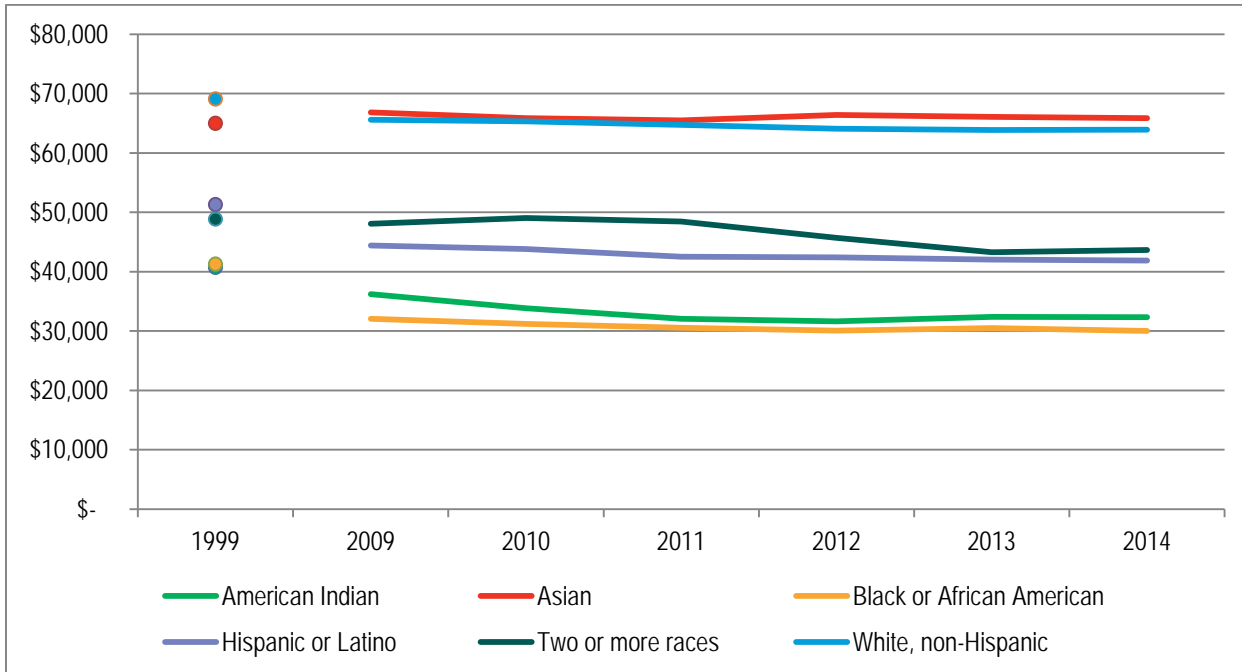
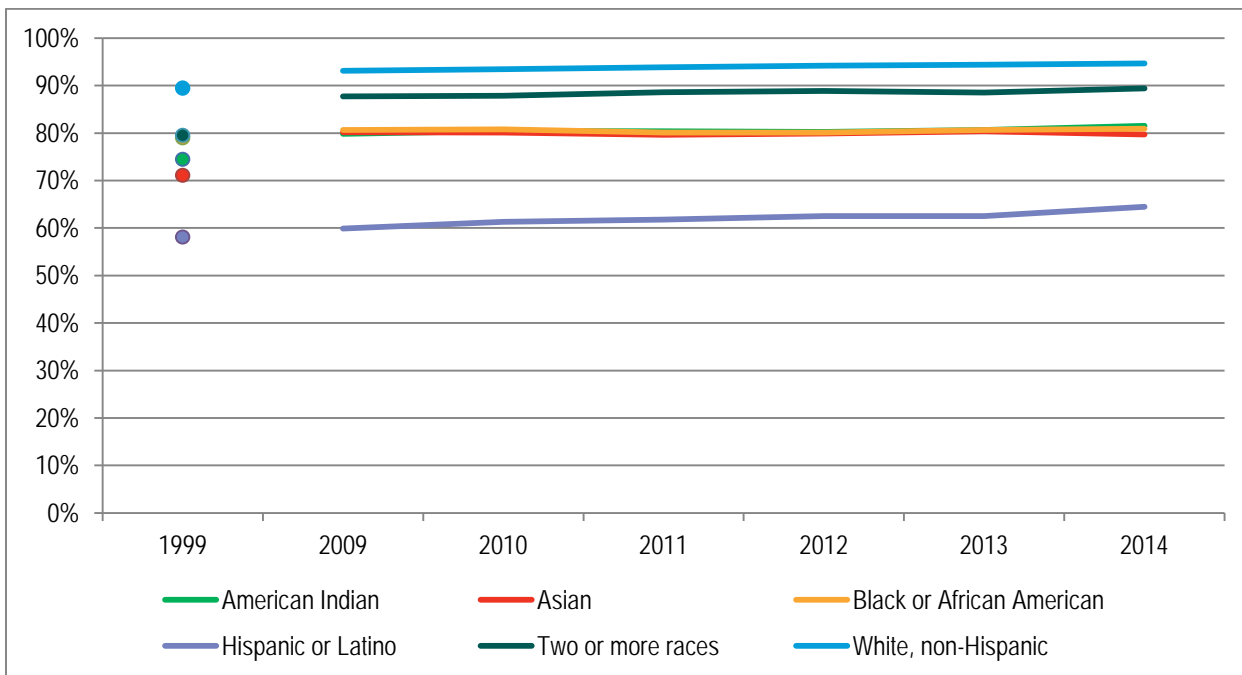


Figure 7: High school graduation rates by racial or ethnic group, individuals over 25<sup>15</sup>



Detailed breakdowns of median household income and high school graduation rates begin to show where Minnesota's disparities are most stark on a statewide level. American Indians and Black Minnesotans have the lowest household incomes of all groups in Minnesota, and alarmingly have seen their median household incomes fall at more significant rates than other Minnesotans since 1999. Increased immigration rates may have some impact on lower incomes for Minnesotans of color, though it is highly unlikely that immigration is the only factor leading to declines in per-capita

<sup>14</sup> American Community Survey, 2014

<sup>15</sup> American Community Survey, 2014

incomes. Educational attainment has an impact on the amount that people earn in their professional careers, making low graduation rates a real concern for American Indians, Hispanic, and Black Minnesotans. Individuals who graduate from high school earned, on average, more than \$10,000 more per year than those who did not complete high school in 2014.<sup>16</sup>

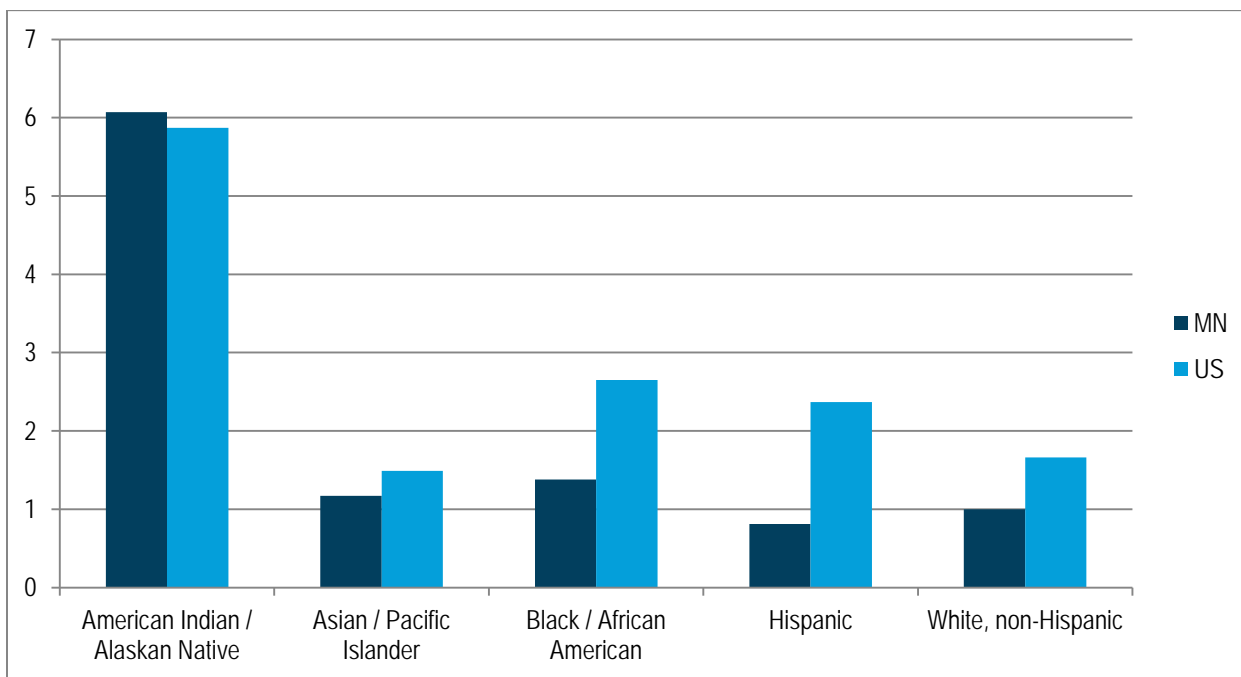
### Minnesota’s Tribal Nations

Detailed economic information about those living on Tribal lands in Minnesota is not readily available by Nation, though it is important to note that there are likely significant differences from Nation to Nation based on a wide variety of factors. The data referenced in the previous section provides a statewide perspective on the economic and educational well-being of Minnesota’s American Indians, but does not provide enough detail to develop a sound understanding of the differences from Nation to Nation. Across Minnesota, as of 2010, it is estimated that just fewer than 50 percent of American Indians over the age of 16 and available to work were not employed.<sup>17</sup> Further, between 30 and 34 percent of American Indians who are part of a federally recognized tribe in Minnesota have incomes below the poverty line; this compares to 11.5 percent of Minnesota’s population as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

### Pedestrian Safety

Disparities between white Minnesotans and Minnesotans of Color extend beyond academic achievement and income into physical safety on the transportation system. Figure 8 compares the rate of pedestrian fatalities by racial or ethnic group between Minnesota and the United States as a whole. This is an especially important topic given the income gap that persists between people of color and white Minnesotans. Regardless of income, people living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to walk for transportation than those living in the rest of the metro area.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 8: Number of pedestrian fatalities by racial/ethnic group per 100,000 people, 2003-2010<sup>20</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014

<sup>17</sup> Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2013

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2013; American Community Survey, 2014

<sup>19</sup> Met Council, 2014

<sup>20</sup> Dangerous by Design, Smart Growth America, 2014

## Twin Cities Area: Transportation Behaviors of Disadvantaged Populations

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Because 75% of people of color in Minnesota live in the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, this section takes a closer look at the racial disparities in the Twin Cities and implications of poverty on transportation options and needs. Low-income populations are used as a proxy for communities of color in this portion of the study for two reasons. First, there is a lack of data which explicitly illustrates the relationship between communities of color and transportation. In addition, the previous section illustrated that communities of color are more likely to be low-income than the general and white populations in the Twin Cities.

### AREAS OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY

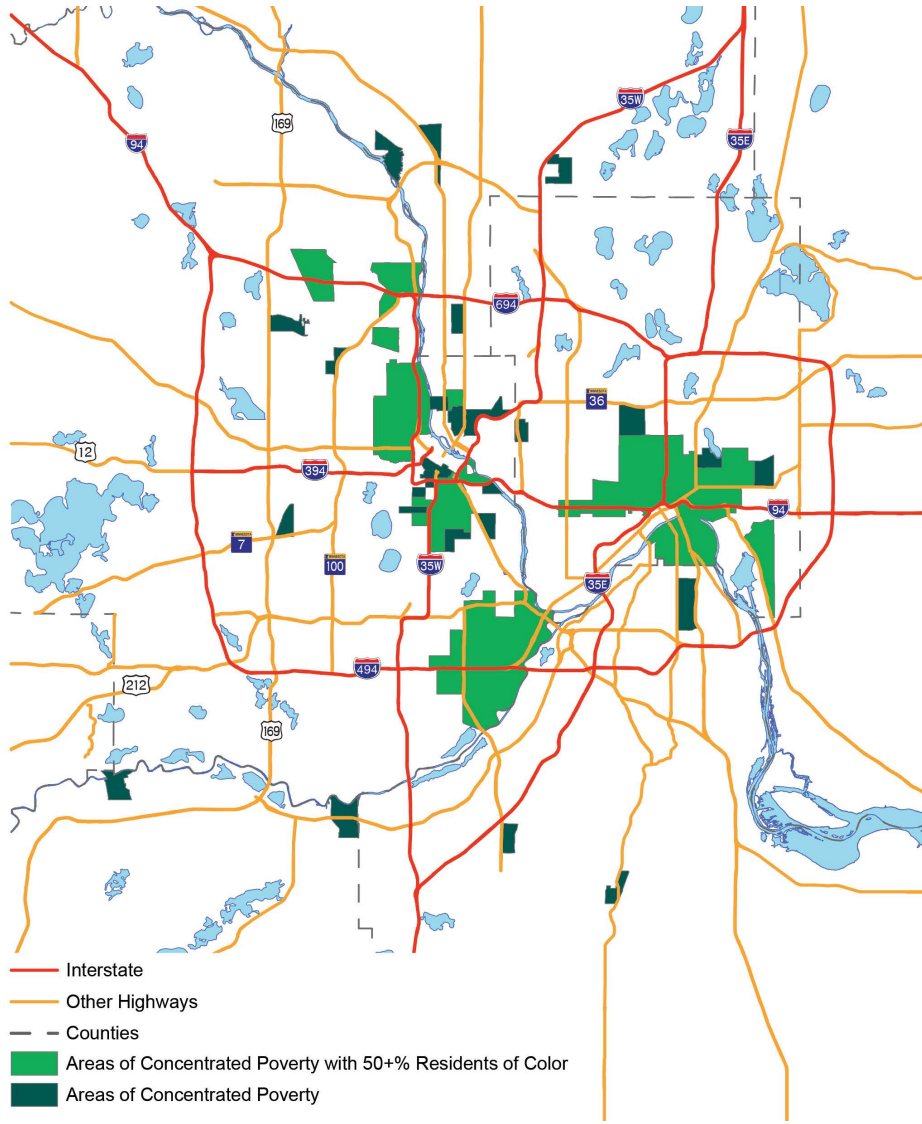
People of color are overrepresented in the Twin Cities' Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP) – census tracts where at least 40% of residents are poor. According to the most recent American Community Survey data from 2009-2013, 82 of 112 ACPs in the 7-county region are majority people of color. Only 6% of the Twin Cities area's white population lives in ACPs compared to 40% of the region's black population and 34% of the region's Latino population. The data also shows that the poor do not entirely reside in the Twin Cities core. Currently, the suburban and rural areas within the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area have more low-income residents than Minneapolis and St. Paul combined.<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed survey of racial inequality in the Twin Cities, refer to the Metropolitan Council's 2014 report *Choice, Place, and Opportunity*, a comprehensive study of racial inequality in the region.<sup>22</sup> Areas of concentrated poverty have become the focus of increased planning efforts by the Metropolitan Council and are shown in the following map.

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<sup>21</sup> [Metro Stats: Areas of Concentrated Poverty in the Twin Cities Region, 2015](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Metropolitan Council: Choice, Place, & Opportunity, 2014](#)

Figure 9: Areas of Concentrated Poverty and major highways in the Twin Cities Metro



## TRANSPORTATION BEHAVIOR IN AREAS OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY

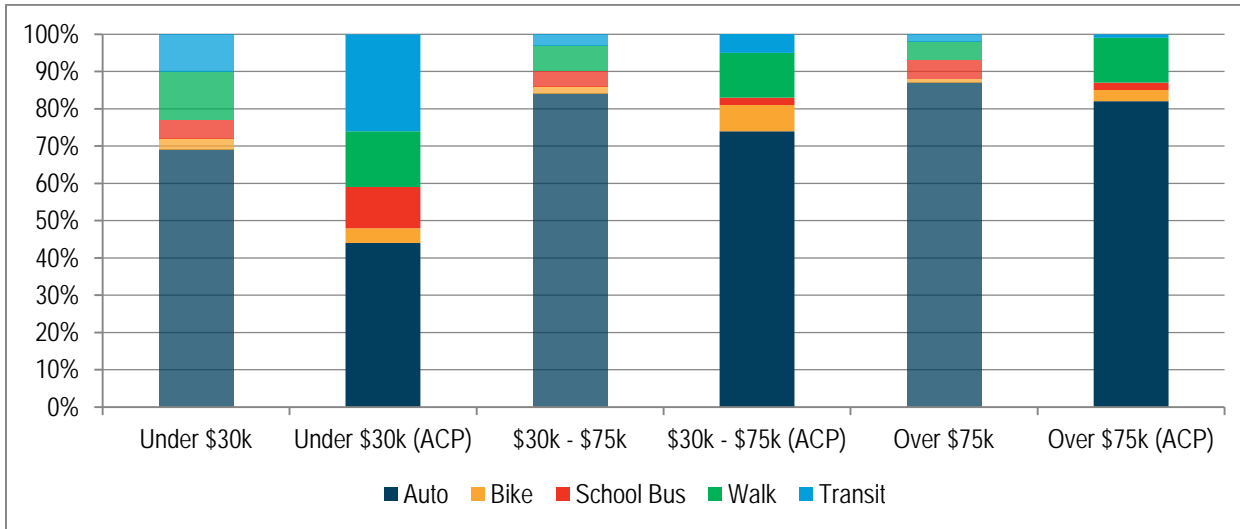
The Metropolitan Council has analyzed differences in mode use and travel behavior between people living in areas of concentrated poverty (ACP) and those living outside of ACPs. The results of this analysis have found that people in ACPs rely more heavily on transit, bicycling, and walking to get around. Over one-quarter of all trips made by people living in ACPs with incomes under \$30,000 are taken via transit.<sup>23</sup> Increased rates of travel via transit, walking, and biking are not limited to only people with low incomes – even people making more than \$75,000 who live in ACPs rely more heavily on biking and walking to get around than those making similar amounts outside of ACPs, as can be seen in Figure 10.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Metropolitan Council, 2015

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



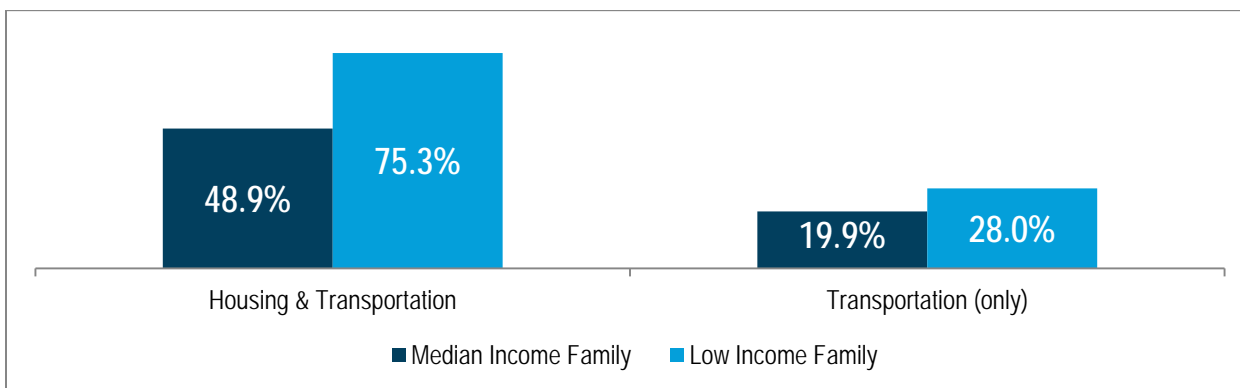
Figure 10: Mode split in the Twin Cities Metro based on residential location



## TRANSPORTATION SPENDING

Low-income families tend to spend significantly higher percentages of their income on necessities like housing and transportation. In the area around the Twin Cities<sup>25</sup>, the financial burden of transportation is much heavier on lower-income single, parent households with an income of \$33,376 than on a household with the median income of \$66,751.<sup>26</sup> Figure 11 shows the percentage of income spent on transportation and housing by category.

Figure 11: Percentage of income spent on housing and transportation



## TRANSIT USAGE

In the Twin Cities, lower income populations make up a greater percentage of transit ridership than share of the overall population. In 2014 people with a household income of less than \$24,000 made up 18% of the total population and represented over 40% of all transit users. More than half (52%) of all transit users surveyed reported that they had no working automobiles for use.<sup>27</sup> Those residing in the four top zip code areas for origins of bus transit travel are poorer on average than the average Minnesotan. The median household incomes of those four zip codes were all lower than

<sup>25</sup> The 16-county Twin Cities urban area includes the following counties: Anoka; Carver; Chisago; Dakota; Hennepin; Isanti; Le Sueur; Mille Lacs; Pierce; Ramsey; Scott; Sherburne; Sibley; St. Croix; Washington; Wright

<sup>26</sup> Data is from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Location Affordability Index, which tracks the affordability of transportation and housing by measuring relevant spending for median income households and low-income households. Lower-income single-parent families", known as "single-parent families" in the Location Affordability Index, are defined as 1-person households with 1 worker and income equivalent to 50% of median income for the geography. Information can be found here: <http://www.mncompass.org/transportation/transportation-expenses#1-12157-g>

<sup>27</sup> 2014 Metro Transit rider Survey

the state average of \$56,000: 55407 (\$43,000; South-Central Minneapolis); 55404 (\$22,000; Midtown, Stevens Square, & Elliot Park – Minneapolis); 55106 (\$39,000; East Side of Saint Paul); and 55411 (\$26,000; Jordan, Near North – Minneapolis).<sup>28</sup>

## HOMELESSNESS IN MINNESOTA

Across the state more than 10,000 people are without a home on any given night in Minnesota and another quarter of a million spend more than half of their income on housing costs alone.<sup>29</sup> People both living through homelessness and at risk of homelessness suffer in terms of maintaining their health, employment status, and social well-being. MnDOT has participated in the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness (MICH) since 2013, working with other state agencies to identify the root causes of homelessness and contributing to efforts toward ending them. *Heading Home*, the MICH's first action plan identified access to resources and employment as a key factor in preventing and ending homelessness. MICH is currently updating *Heading Home* and a new action plan will be made available in 2016.

## Existing Programs in Minnesota

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There are programs and initiatives in the state that seek to specifically target racial inequality in transportation and other related policy areas.

### METRO TRANSIT EQUITY INITIATIVES

The Metropolitan Council's Metro Transit Equity Initiatives identifies areas for improvement in transit equity and the necessary initial action steps. It targets transitway access for people living in areas of concentrated poverty (ACPs). The plan for 2014-2015 outlines four concrete action steps, which are adding 150-200 new or replacement customer waiting shelters, providing enhanced shelter amenities, ensuring equal opportunity employment at the Met Council, and expanding community engagement with populations of color.<sup>30</sup>

### MDH CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY

The Minnesota Department of Health established the Center for Health Equity in 2013 to "make advancing health equity an essential goal for a healthy Minnesota and the work of MDH."<sup>31</sup> It was established with the intent of bringing an overt and explicit focus on health equity to the efforts of the Minnesota. The Center was launched concurrently with the completion of the Advancing Health Equity Report, which was mandated by the state legislature in 2013. The Report makes seven recommendations, including advancing health equity through health policies that across sectors like transportation and education. The Report's recommendations are based on conversations with thousands of participants and guide the efforts of the Center.<sup>32</sup> This builds on the *Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative* begun in 2001 to eliminate racial disparities by partnering with populations of color and American Indians.<sup>33</sup>

### MNDOT OFFICE OF EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Within MnDOT, the Office of Equity and Diversity seeks to integrate diversity and inclusion into the agency's best practices. It plays a dual role of supporting employees of all backgrounds as well as providing training for employees to better engage with customers of all backgrounds. It provides language training for employees to speak and understand various accents. It also implements the agency's Unified Diversity and Inclusion Plan to create a more inclusive workplace. Additionally, diversity is one of MnDOT's six core values. Developing MnDOT employees' skills changes how employees hear and process different perspectives which can ultimately leading to a more equitable transportation system.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.esri.com/data/esri\\_data/ziptapestry](http://www.esri.com/data/esri_data/ziptapestry)

<sup>29</sup> [Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Metropolitan Council Equity Approach, 2014](#)

<sup>31</sup> [MDH Center for Health Equity](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota, 2014](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative, 2013](#)

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Lynnette Geschwind, Office of Equity and Diversity