SOMERVISION2040

Sustainability • Diversity • Opportunity • Connectivity • Community

Committee Meeting

May 13, 2019 - The Armory

City of Somerville
Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Working Groups

Climate and Sustainability

Commercial Development, Business and the Arts

Community and Governance

Housing

Public Space and the Natural Environment

Transportation and Infrastructure

Youth and Education

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Working Group Timeline

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Working Group Meeting Introductions, Who's Missing, Work Time	**Wednesday, May 29, 6-8pm at The Armory**
Working Group Meeting Health Lens, Equity Lens, Work Time	**Tuesday, June 11, 6-8pm at The Armory**
DEADLINE: First Draft and Information Requests	**Monday, July 1**
Working Group Meeting Inter-Working Group Discussions, Work Time	**TBD, Late August**
Working Group Meeting Regional Perspective, Work Time	**TBD, September**
DEADLINE: Final Draft	**Tuesday, October 1**

Goals for Tonight

- **Share what we've learned so far**
- **Provide more data and research resources**
- **Learn about historical inequities in Somerville**
- **Analyze possible action items**

Agenda Overview

- Welcome & Meeting Overview

- Facilitator Introduction

- SomerVision Update

- Exploring Equity in Somerville

- Connecting Actions to Values

- Up Next and Q&A

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Role of Facilitator
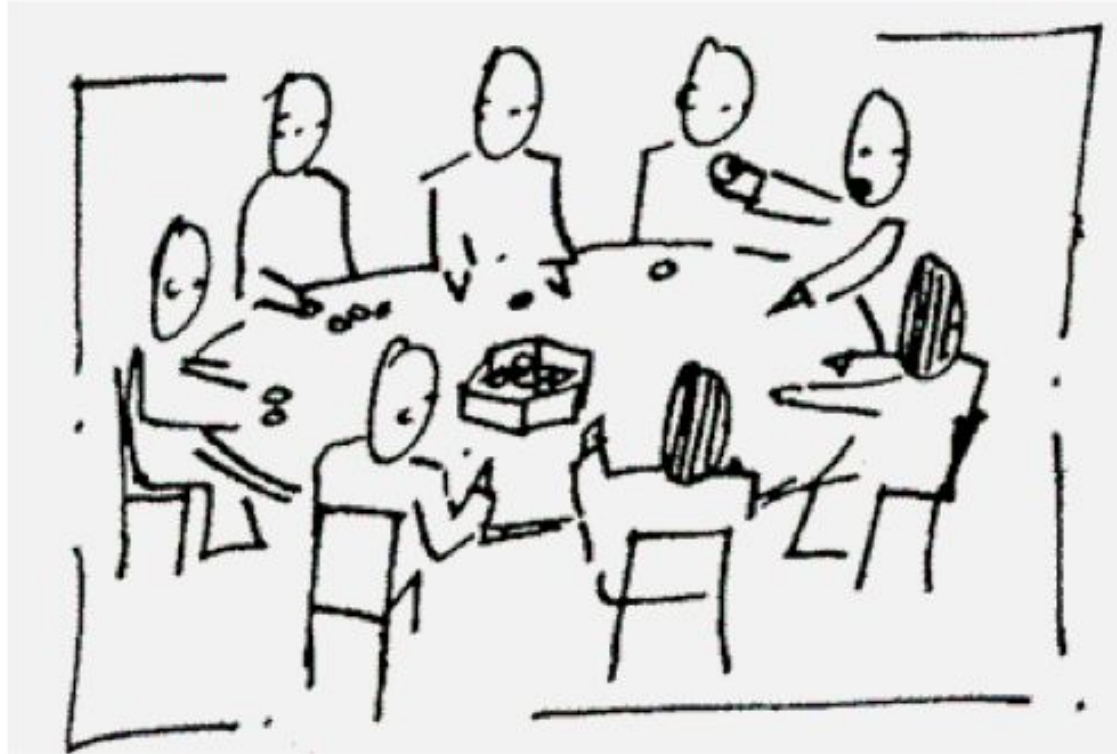
Ground Rules

- Start and end on time

- Stay on topic

- It's ok to disagree . . . Respectfully

- Focus on issues not personalities

- Listen . . . Don't interrupt

- Speak up . . . Everyone contributes

- Be present . . . Cell phones off or on vibrate

- Keep the spirit of these rules with outside communication

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SomerSupper Feedback

- **24 events with 211 participants**

- **Many different formats and networks, but more work to do**

- **Participants reported learning about new services or organizations, developing an interest in further community engagement, and/or enjoying the format.**

Rising Housing Costs

- **Rising costs and turnover are a major threat to the community**

- **Affects our ability to be diverse racially, diverse economically, family-friendly, artist-friendly**

- **Regulatory concerns around subpar living conditions in some cases and "illegal" third units in others**

- **Rent control?**

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Families

- **Displaced because of high cost of housing**
- **Can't find a place to own, either because of cost, not enough bedrooms, or no yard or other desired amenities**
- **Illegal housing discrimination against renters with children**

Transportation & Walkability

- **More separated bike lanes!**

- **Not safe enough to travel by bike**

- **Improve the bus service**

- **Better North-South connections via transit needed**

- **Room for improvement on walkability**

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Housing Density

- **Generally seemed pro-density, especially near transit and for the purposes of affordable housing**

- **But need to include open space increases at the same time**

- **Conflict: Being sensitive to surrounding neighborhoods**

- **Conflict: Managing parking in high-density areas**

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Open Space & Trees

- Small spaces really add up!

- More trees, please

- Conflict: Is relying on neighboring open space an acceptable trade-off?

- Conflict: Increase access to community gardens by adding more, implementing term limits, or opening them up through art?

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Regional Perspective

- **Somerville leaders should influence neighbors and state officials to take responsibility for shared regional challenges**

- **Examples include housing access and affordability and permission to increase gas and excise taxes**

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Equity in Somerville

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Protect and foster the **diversity** of our people, culture, housing and economy.

————————————

Celebrate the unique character of our neighborhoods and the strength of our **community** as expressed in our history, cultures and vibrant civic engagement.

————————————

Invest in the growth of a resilient **economic base** that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.

Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces car dependence, and is **accessible**, inviting and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

————————————

Build a **sustainable** future through climate leadership, balanced transportation, engaging civic spaces, exceptional educational opportunities, improved health, varied and affordable housing options, and the responsible use of our natural resources.

————————————

Affirm our responsibility to current and future generations through continued **innovation** in business, technology, education, arts and government.

Home Owners' Loan Corporation - Redlining Map - February 1, 1938

RESIDENTIAL SECURITY MAP

LEGEND

- A FIRST GRADE
- B SECOND GRADE
- C THIRD GRADE
- D FOURTH GRADE
- SPARSELY BUILT UP (COLOR INDICATES GRADE)
- INDUSTRIAL
- COMMERCIAL (IMPORTANT RETAIL AND WHOLESALE AREAS)
- UNDEVELOPED OR FARMLAND (NO PROBABLE CHANGE WITHIN 5 YEARS)

PREPARED BY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND STATISTICS
WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE
APPRAISAL DEPARTMENT
HOME OWNERS LOAN CORPORATION
FEB. 1, 1938

SECTION 2

Example case: East Somerville

- Since the 1890s, the area had been inhabited mostly by Irish, Italian, French Canadian and Greek immigrants.

- The first recent distinct ethnic group to come to East Somerville were from Cape Verde starting in the 1960s, followed by Haitians, Salvadorans, Brazilians and other latino immigrants. These groups have made *tremendous* contributions to the city and its appeal with culture, arts and entrepreneurship.

- East Somerville is today the **densest and most diverse neighborhood** in the city.

A Tale of Two Transit Systems

- Route 28 was originally built in 1922.

- I-93 was extended through Somerville and Charlestown to the Central Artery from 1965 to 1973, placing East Somerville **between two highways**.

- For decades, despite its density, East Somerville has not had any mass transit stops. Sullivan Square station (1975) is too far east and Assembly station (2014) too far north for most residences. *The GLX is meant to solve this.*

A Tale of Two Transit Systems

○ Meanwhile, Somerville's northwest area was able to keep away major sources of pollutants, including highways.

○ In the 1960s or 1970s, local officials and citizen groups **successfully petitioned** the MBTA to create a Red Line subway stop in Somerville at Davis Square.

○ Davis opened to passengers for the first time on December 8, 1984, spurring major development and revitalization of the area.

Political capital is a group's ability to exert influence on public institutions:

- *Money is one form of it, but so is knowledge of how to advocate for oneself, educational background that allows some to assert themselves as experts, time to participate in the public process, and confidence that their demands of public officials will be heard*

- Marginalized and low-income communities can lack **some or all of the above**, so equity in public policy requires adjusting to that discrepancy between groups and acknowledging the history of how some groups have been systematically denied political capital

- We have to actively build political capital within marginalized groups, but some like small children for example, have inherently no political capital *so we must use ours on their behalf*

The Ladder of Inference

Action

Beliefs

Conclusions

Assumptions

Select Data

Reflexive Loop
Our beliefs affect what data we select next time

Pool of Available Data

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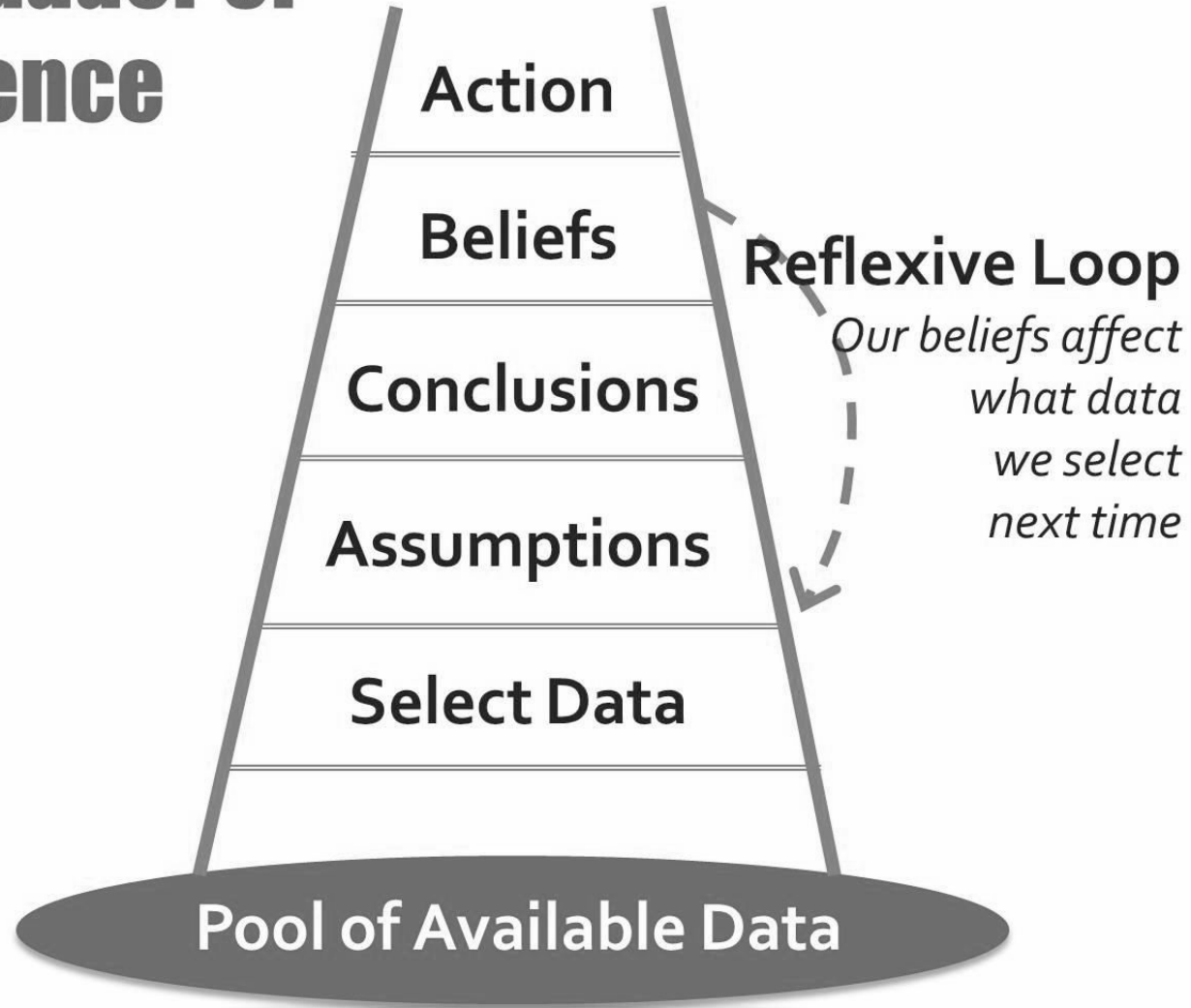
How do we study inequity?

○ **Quantitative analysis:** When large scale social processes *on average* create disadvantages for some individuals on the basis of their identity, those are *systemic inequalities*. In large data analysis they appear as trends and only represent individual differences between groups when other influencing factors are equal.

○ **Qualitative analysis**: If we pick out two random sample individuals however, all factors are *rarely equal*. Individuals can have overlapping identities, unique challenges, and have small scale interactions that don't follow broader trends. We must speak to individuals to understand their particular intersection of life experiences.

High-income Mortage Loan Application Denial Rates by Race in the Boston Metro Region

Race	2009	2015
White	9.6%	8.6%
Black	25.3%	20.6%
Latino	18.3%	15.0%
Asian	8.9%	9.5%
Native American	16.3%	15.9%
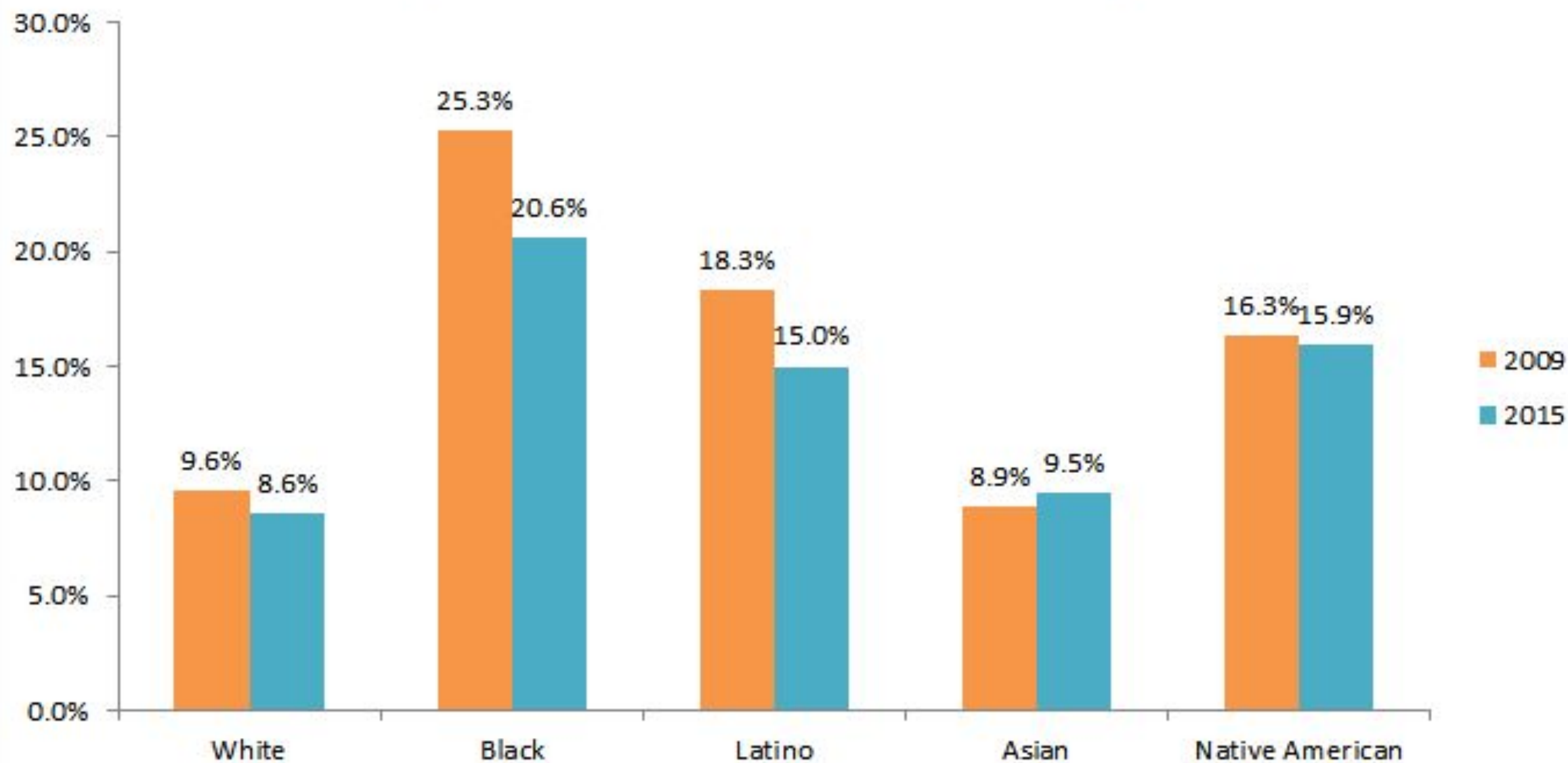
Cost Burdened Households by Race 2011-2015 Estimates

Legend:
- Cost Burdened (orange)
- Severely Cost Burdened (purple)

Categories: White, non-Hispanic; Black; Asian; Hispanic; Other

Y-axis: 0.00% to 50.00%
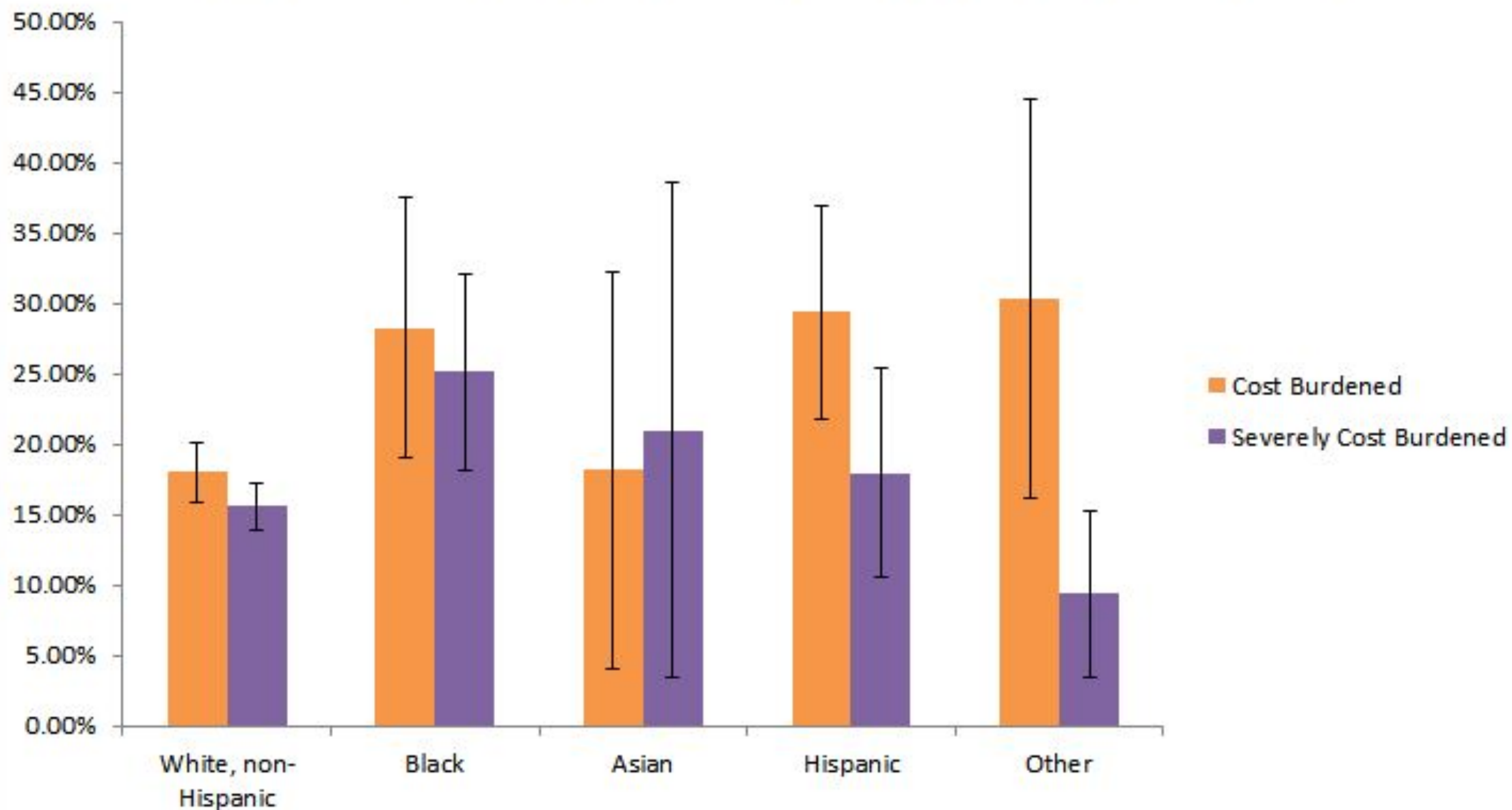
Median Household Income Estimate 2013-2017

Median Household Income	$84,722
Black alone Householder	$36,991
Asian alone Householder	$81,406
Other race alone Householder	$81,000
Multi-race Householder	$77,098
White Non-Hispanic Householder	$92,688
Latino Householder	$72,738
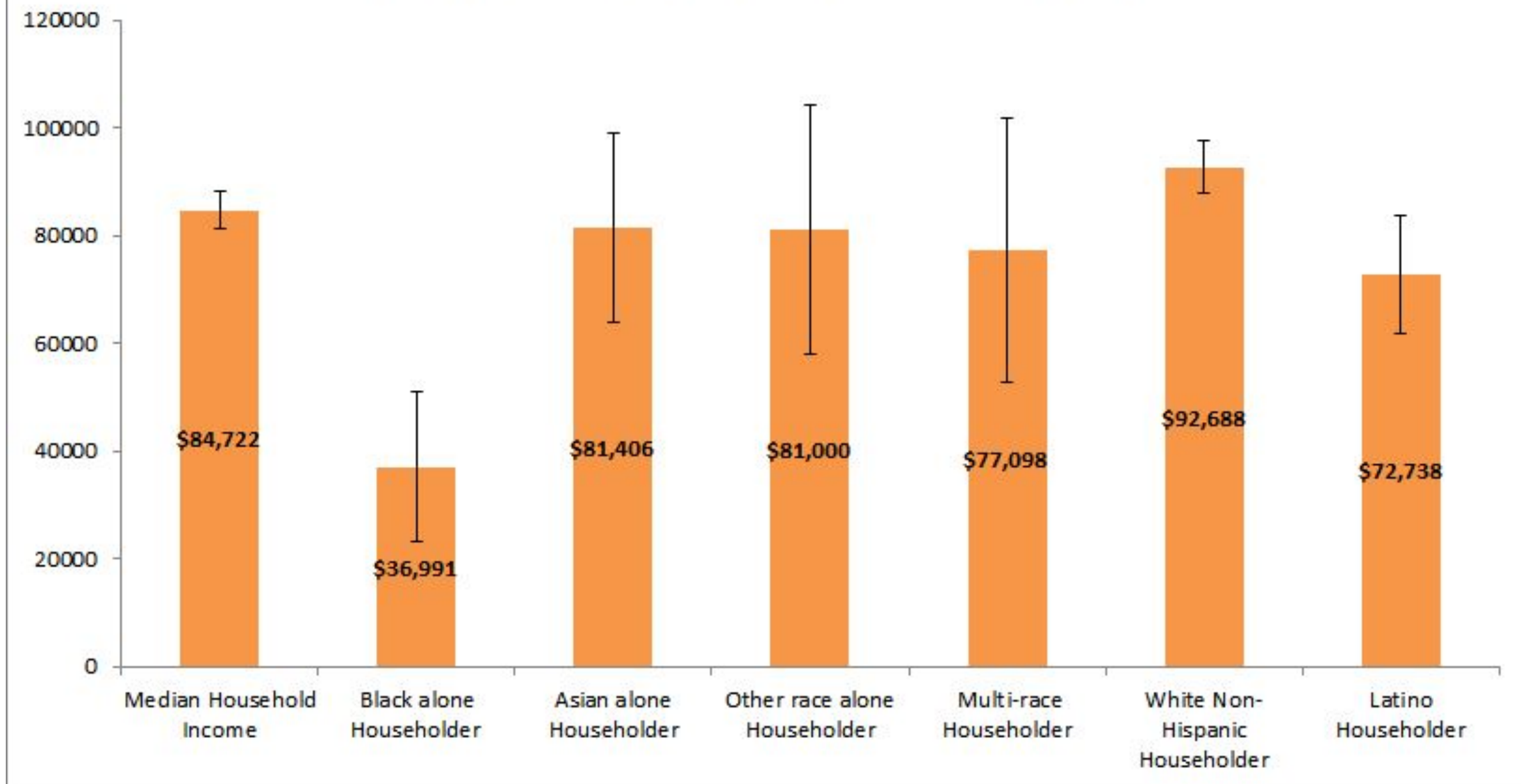
Comparison of the value of assets held by white and nonwhite households

	Liquid Assets		Total Assets	
	Median amount (U.S.dollars)	Nonwhite household percentage of white household liquid assets	Median amount (U.S.dollars)	Nonwhite household percentage of white household liquid assets
White	25,000	100.0	256,500	100.0
U.S. Black	670	2.7**	700	0.3**
Caribbean Black	3,500	14.0*	12,000	4.7***
Cape Verdean[b]	150	0.6**	—	—
Puerto Rican	20	0.1**	3,020	1.2***
Dominican	150	0.6**	1,724	0.7***
Other Hispanic	700	2.8**	15,000	5.8***
NEC[a]	4,000	16.0***	18,000	7.0***

% Students Disciplined

Category	%
All	4.0%
English Learners	2.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	5.1%
Students with Disabilities	7.3%
High Needs	4.8%
White	2.5%
Hispanic/Latino	4.6%
African American/Black	8.6%
Asian	2.0%

% Dropped Out

Category	%
All	6.9%
English Learners	20.9%
Low Income	8.2%
Students with Disabilities	8.3%
High Needs	9.7%
White	2.9%
Hispanic/Latino	11.4%
African American/Black	2.2%
Asian	0.0%
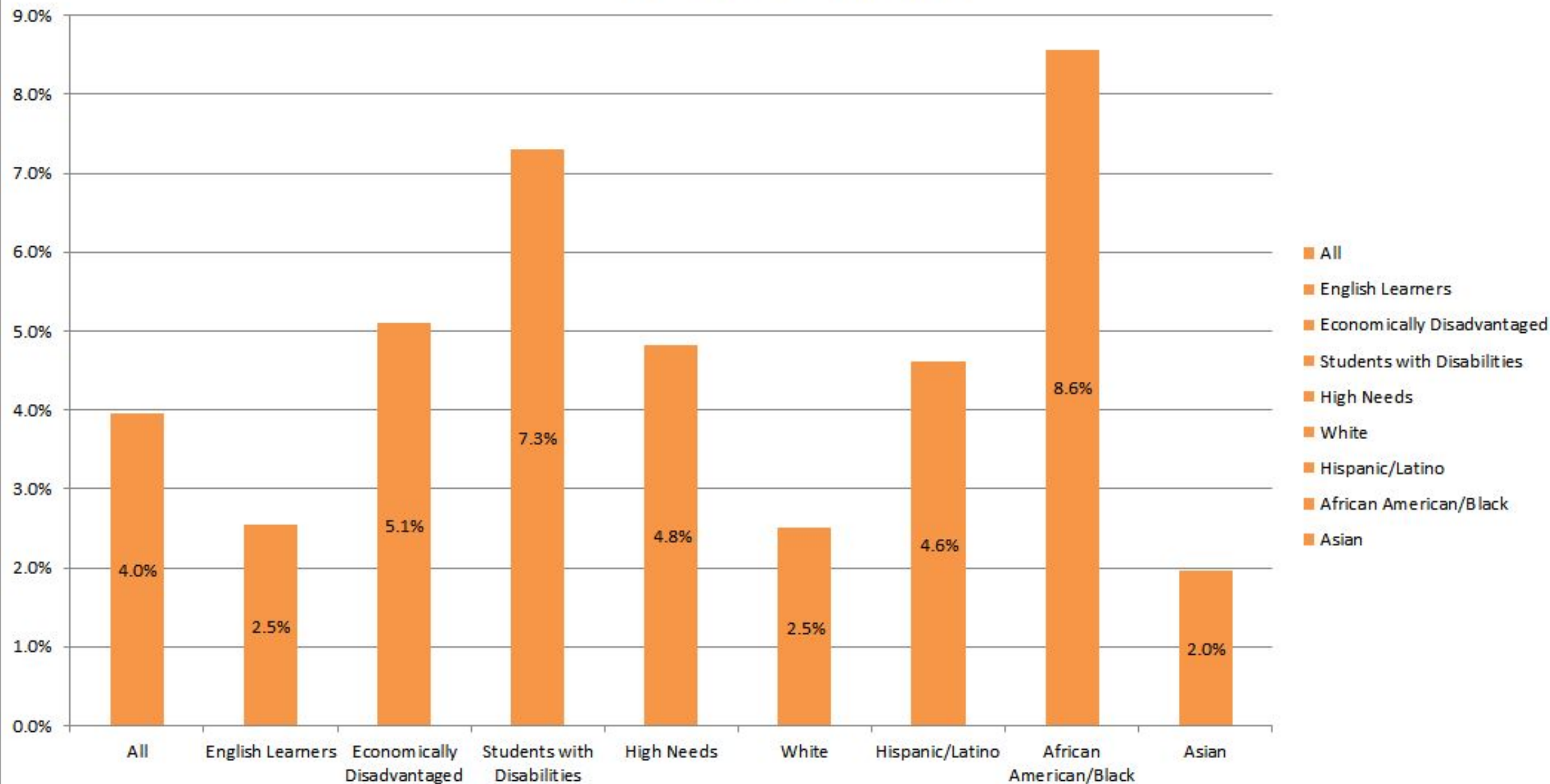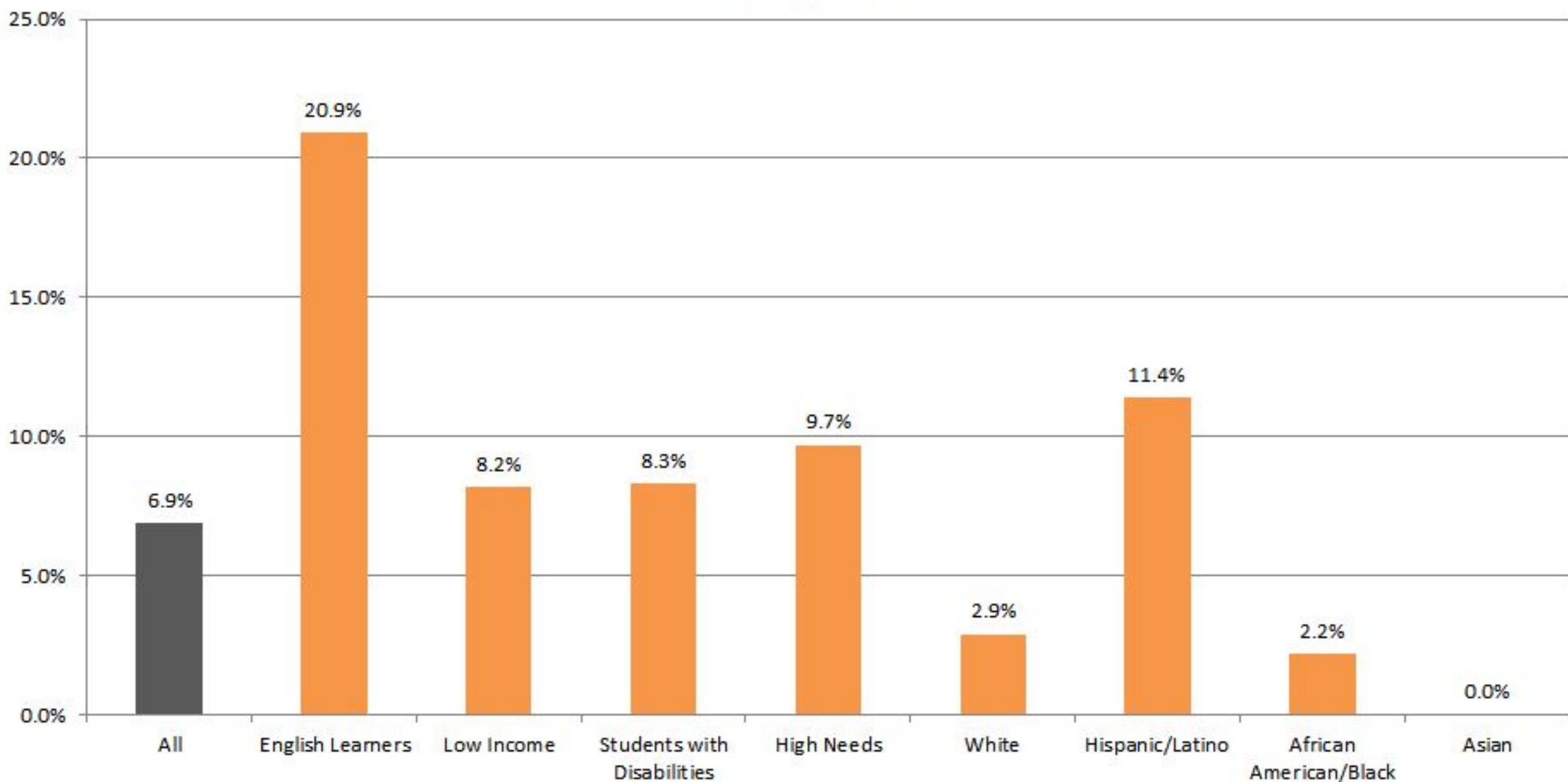
Other Examples of Systemic Discrimination

- Discrepancy in hiring between people of color and white people with similar qualifications

- Discrepancy in pay between men and women assuming equivalent jobs and qualifications

- Harsher policing and sentencing of people of color assuming similar criminal infractions

- Financial penalties imposed on the working poor that trap them in poverty

  - **What else?**

How is Somerville transitioning from equality to equity?

- Inclusionary Zoning

- Office of Housing Stability

- SomerViva

- SomerLearning

- *What else can we come up with?*

Equality   Equity
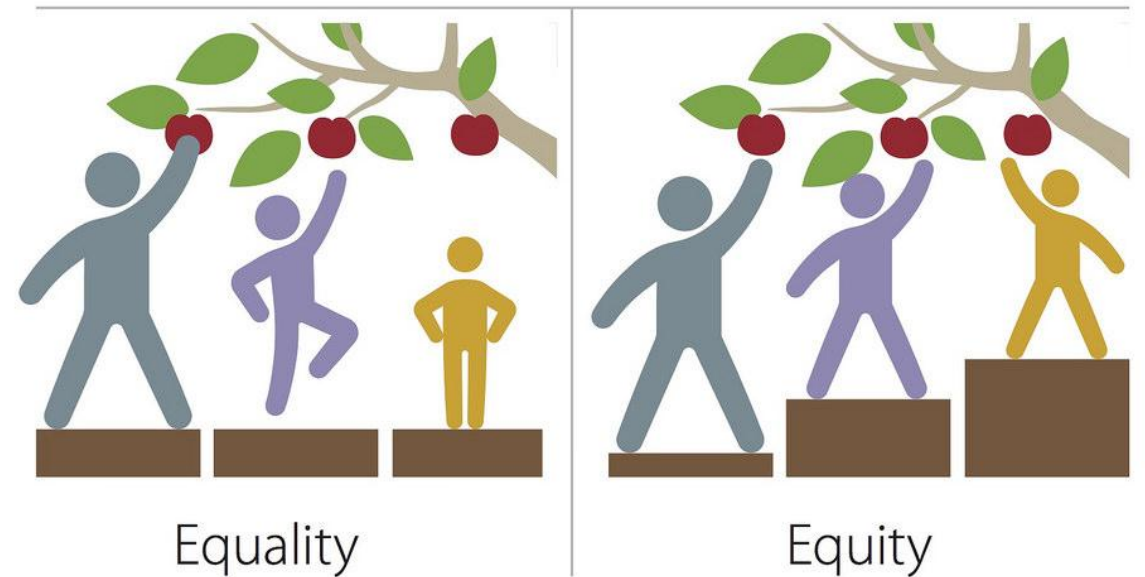
Committee Expectations

- **Always consider equity** as you work on SomerVision, it's on you to do this and to ask questions of staff when you are unsure.

- Check yourself for your biases, *we all have them.*

- Go beyond just considering the point of views of other groups based on what you know, seek them out and ask questions.

- You are representing **the interests of your whole community**, not just your own.

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Connecting Actions to Values

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Connecting Actions to Values: Round 1

TAKING A TRIP ON THE IDEA TRAIN

- Start at any station

- Introduce yourselves

- Read the Potential Action

- Discuss the questions

- Makes notes - you don't have to agree!

- When the bell rings, move on with your group to the next station

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EXAMPLE: Build more protected bike lanes.

SUPPORTS OUR VALUES:

- Evidence suggests it will encourage a more **diverse** set of bikers.
- Supports the **growth** and **sustainability** of our community by encouraging people to bike rather than drive.
- Ensure **accessible** transportation for bicyclists.

UNDERMINES OUR VALUES:

- Conflicts with prioritized bus lanes, making transit less reliable and **accessible** for bus users.
- Requires removal of parking, which can harm business **growth** and **accessibility** for people who are better served by cars.
- Space used by separated bike lanes can no longer be used for parklets, undermining **sustainability**.

Connecting Actions to Values: Round 2

SYNTHESIS & IMPROVEMENT

- Find an action relevant to your committee

- Introduce yourselves: your name and 1 reason you wanted to be on this committee

- Review all of the notes about this action

- Write 2 new flip charts: #1 - areas of agreement and #2 - areas of disagreement

- Then discuss and write flipchart #3: what can be done to improve this action?

- Get ready for report out: 1 thing that surprised you and 1 way to improve the action

Connecting Actions to Values: Report

- 1 thing that surprised you

- 1 way to improve the action

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Next Meetings

Equity Lens in SomerVision

TUESDAY, MAY 21
4PM
CITY HALL

Working Group Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29
6PM - 8PM
THE ARMORY

Working Group Meeting

TUESDAY, JUNE 11
6PM - 8PM
THE ARMORY

To Review

SomerVision 2040.com

Questions?