



20 21 / THE WACO SNAPSHOT REPORT

JEREMY R. RHODES, EDITOR

THE WACO SNAPSHOT

The turbulence of a pandemic and the uneven energy of a rebounding city have converged in Waco to resemble the contents of a Pandora's box – a storm of surprising difficulties with gifts of hope hidden within.

In recent months, Waco has experienced great acceleration and accentuated deficit. In response to the equal realities of strength and vulnerability, a group of community leaders converged with curiosity and sincere affection for their city. They set out to explore both the blessings and afflictions that reveal a snapshot of Waco and its wellbeing. They asked, “How shall we navigate such unpredictable times? How can we make the best of opportunities and avoid the consequences of unintended mistakes?”

Prosper Waco is committed to providing data, indicators, and analysis that reflect the landscape of need, opportunity, and possibility for Greater Waco. Decision-making begins with knowledge. Fourteen outstanding community leaders (p. 30) joined several Prosper Waco staff members to seek greater understanding of our community needs. These members of the Waco Snapshot Committee see different aspects of the community every day, and they met over months with genuine curiosity – making lists, prioritizing, re-prioritizing, and ferreting out greater understanding from indicators and data points that seemed most relevant for this time. Thank you, thank you to these volunteers who committed to looking beyond their own individual endeavors to embrace an effort on behalf of a larger conversation for Greater Waco.

The Waco Snapshot Report 2021 is not a comprehensive analysis or an academic treatise. This report is a real-world tool for community organizations, individuals, elected officials, families, churches, ministries, and business leaders.

We hope you use the Waco Snapshot Report to prompt new questions and imagine new steps for our community. Prosper Waco invites conversation, exploration, and response as we fulfill our mission to build a better Waco in which all members of our community are able to measurably improve their education, health, and financial security.

With hope,

Suzii Paynter March
CEO Prosper Waco



CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Community Data	
Population and Income	3
Education	10
Housing	13
Health	16
Labor & Economic Development	20
Connectivity	26
Takeaways	29
Participants	30



INTRODUCTION

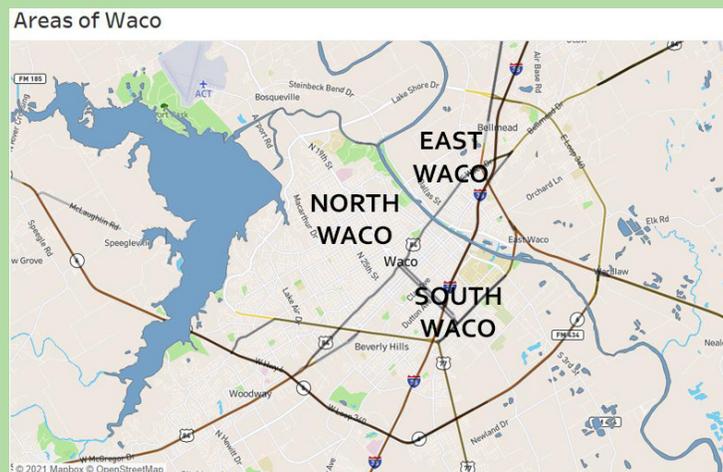
The challenges of the last two years have led many of us to re-think the ways we work toward prosperity, growth, and justice in the Waco community. As we rebuild a “new normal” after the COVID-19 pandemic, we have an opportunity to take stock of the current state of our city. Where are we? What trends are we noticing in our neighborhoods, schools, and agencies? Exploring these areas of progress and need from a birds-eye view will allow us to create better strategies for targeted intervention in the Waco community. With gratitude, we celebrate how far our city has come, yet we recognize our responsibility to continued learning and growth.

This “Waco Snapshot Report” aims to provide an overview of the current state of Waco, its trends over the last few years, and comparisons between Waco and its peer cities. In determining Waco’s peer cities, we follow the guidance of the “City of Waco Comprehensive Plan 2040.” According to that plan, Waco’s peer cities are Abilene, Amarillo, Bryan, College Station, Lubbock, Odessa, San Angelo, Temple, Tyler, and Wichita Falls. For the charts that refer to peer counties, McLennan County is compared to the counties of those 10 peer cities.

Wherever possible, this report breaks down the data by neighborhood and by race/ethnicity. By doing this, we hope to provide a fuller picture of Waco, allowing us to see how prosperity and hardship are concentrated in certain parts of our community. The authors hope these visualizations can encourage leaders and decision-makers in Waco to consider equity in our strategies to improve the lives of all Wacoans.

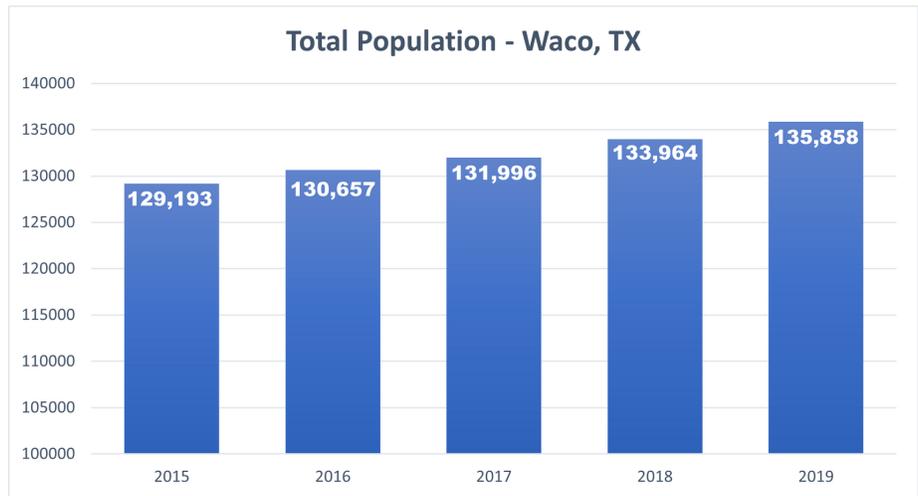
A note on areas of Waco:

Historically, the directional labels of Waco have been named according to a convention that is slightly different than standard cardinal directions. Imagine that the map was rotated 45 degrees clock-wise, so that the Brazos River ran north-to-south, and Waco Dr (Hwy 84) ran east-to-west. East Waco is everything east of the river; North Waco and South Waco are divided by Waco Dr (Hwy 84).



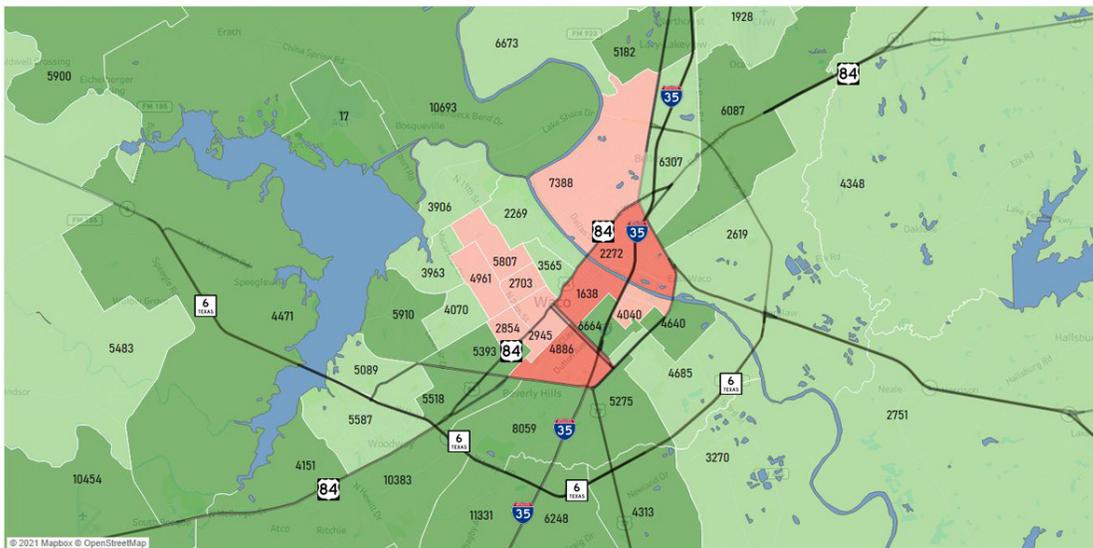
TOTAL POPULATION

- While most of the greater Waco area saw a population increase from 2010-2020, parts of the city saw a declining population. The three primary areas of population decline are East Waco, downtown, and the 25th/26th St corridor, from I-35 in the southeast to Park Lake Dr in the northwest.
- The suburbs to the southwest and north of Waco saw the largest population increases from 2010-2020, such as China Spring, Woodway, Hewitt, and Robinson.



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table b01003

Change in Total Population in Waco, TX, 2010-2020

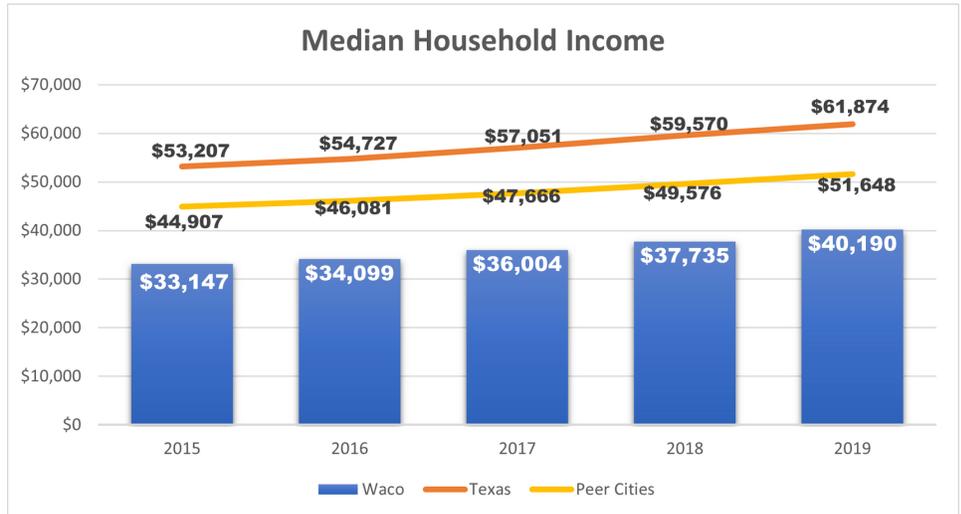


Map based on data from the 2010 and 2020 decennial censuses. The coloring shows the change in total population from 2010 to 2020. Green areas showed increases in total population from 2010 to 2020, while red areas showed decreases in total population over that time. The numbers represent the total 2020 population for that area. The geographic boundaries are census tracts.

- Null
- Decrease in total population of more than 10 percentage points
- Decrease in total population of 0-10 percentage points
- Increase in total population of 0-10 percentage points
- Increase in total population of more than 10 percentage points

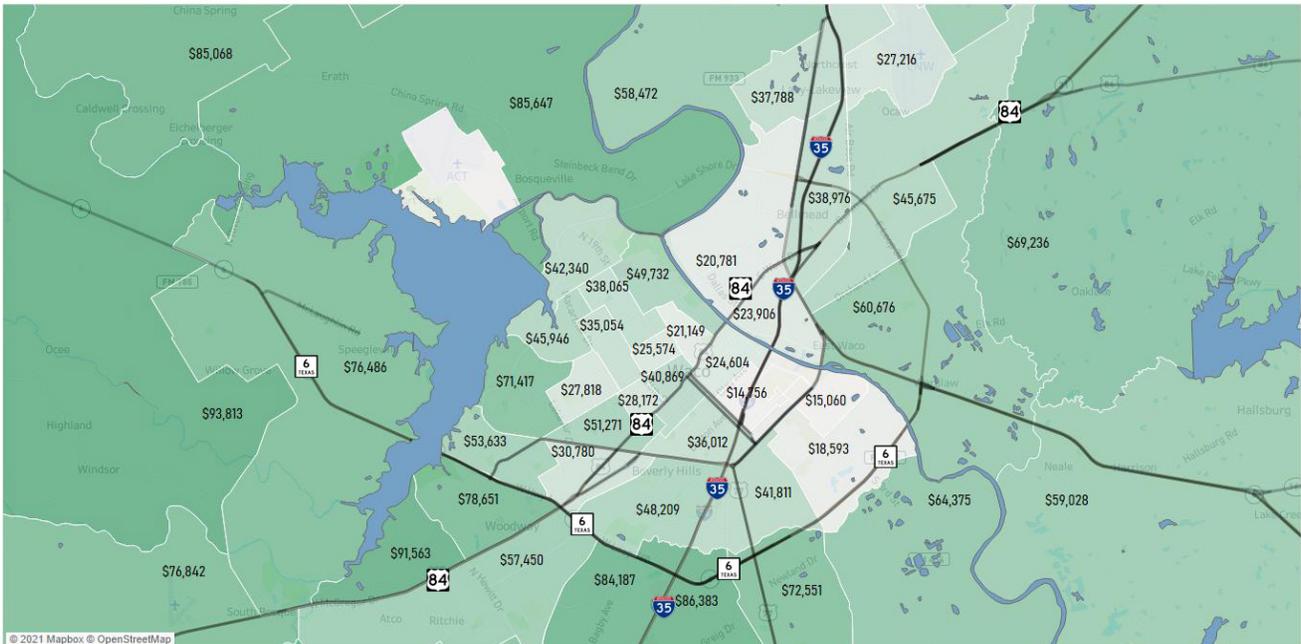
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- While the median household income has steadily increased in Waco over the last 5 years, the city still has noticeably lower incomes than the state of Texas overall, and lower than its peer cities.
- East Waco and South Waco continue to have the lowest median household incomes in the city, while Waco's suburbs have incomes that are 4 to 6 times higher than East and South Waco.



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table b19013

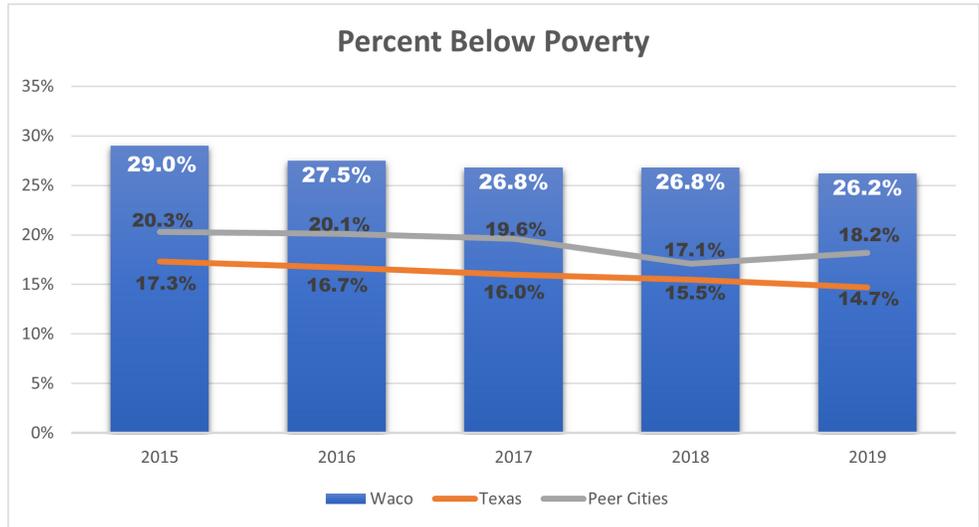
Median Household Income, 2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table b19013). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the median household income for that tract. The tracts with darker shades of green have higher median incomes.

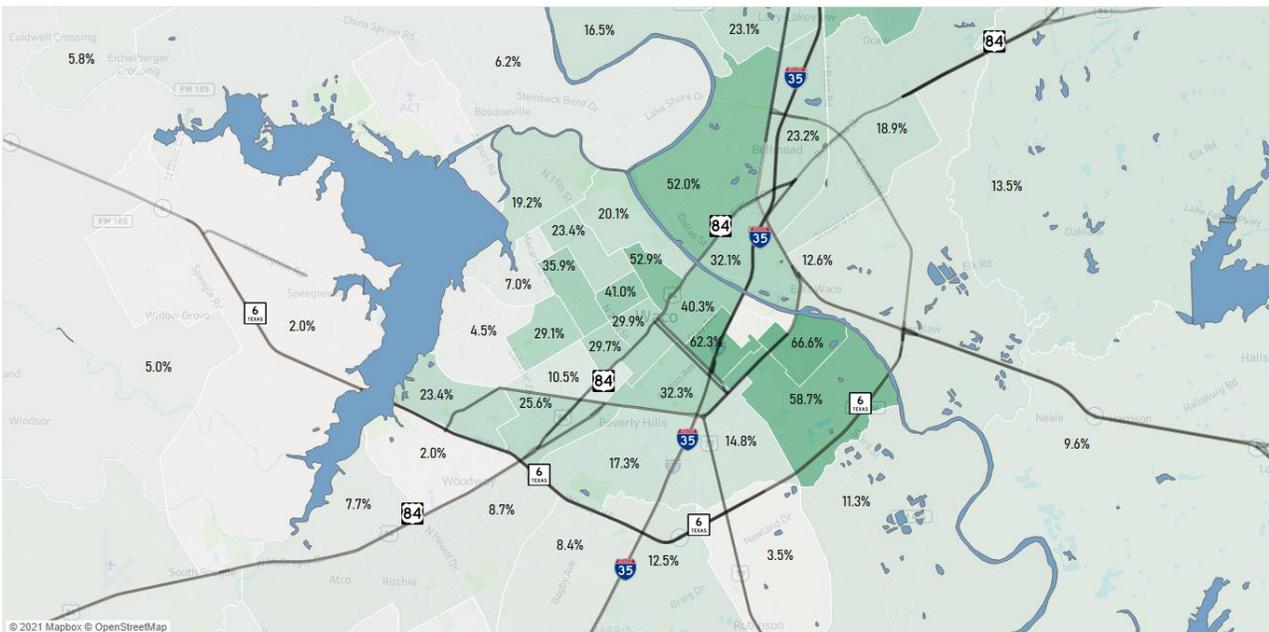
POVERTY

- Waco has seen a steadily declining poverty rate from 2015 to 2019.
- Waco's poverty rate is consistently higher than its peer cities.
- Waco's highest poverty rates are in East and South Waco.



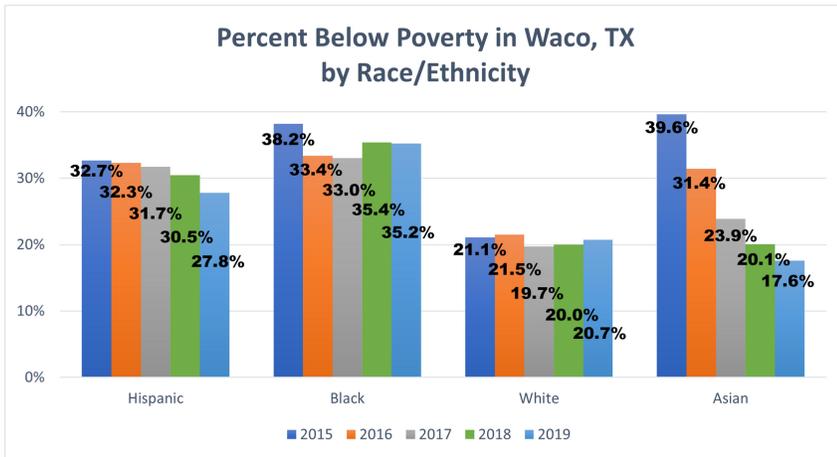
*Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table b17001

Percent Below Poverty, 2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table b17001). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percent of the population with income in the last 12 months below the federal poverty level. The tracts with darker shades of green have higher poverty rates.

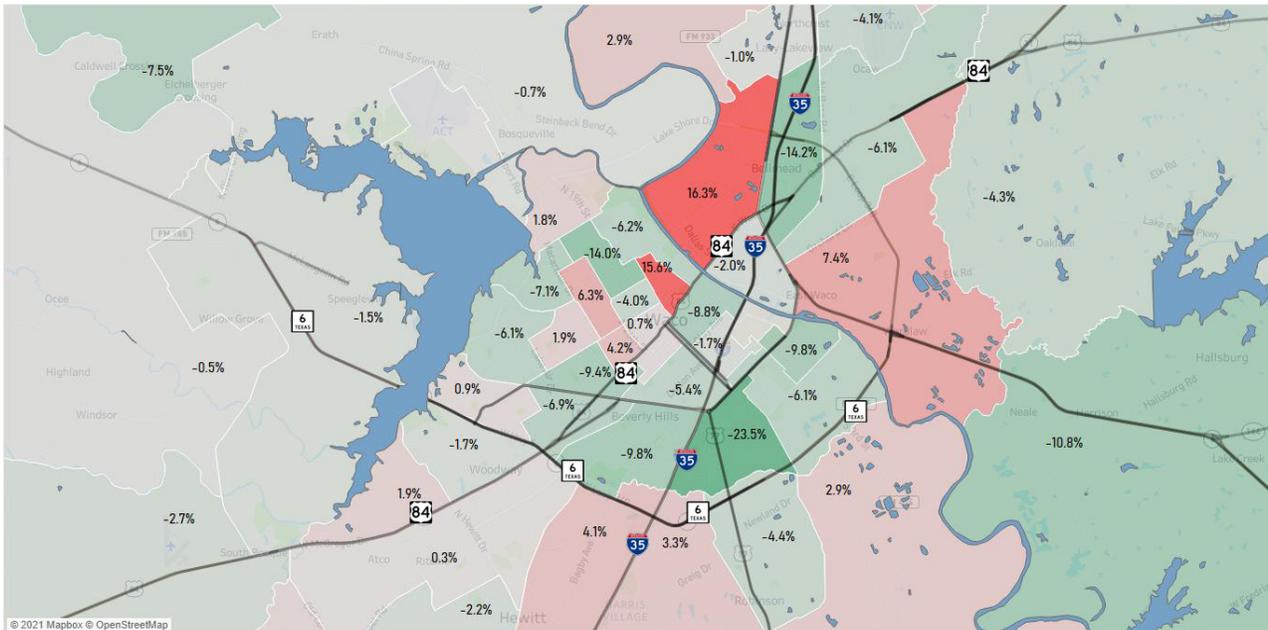
POVERTY



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table b17001

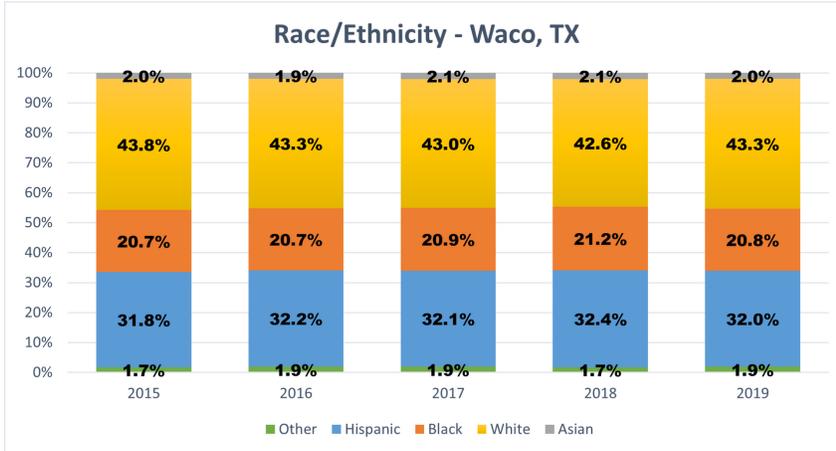
- All racial and ethnic groups in Waco have seen a decline in poverty rates from 2015 to 2019.
- Asian residents have seen the steepest declines in poverty, while the other racial/ethnic groups have seen more modest declines.
- From 2015 to 2019, many areas of Waco saw an increase in poverty rates, though most of those areas saw increases of less than 5 percentage points.
- The steepest increases in poverty rates occurred in the Carver neighborhood of East Waco (an increase of 16.3 percentage points) and the Brook Oaks neighborhood (an increase of 15.6 percentage points).

Change in Percent Below Poverty, 2015-2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table b17001). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate change in the percent of households that are under the federal poverty level from 2015-2019. The red regions saw an increase in poverty, while the green regions saw a decline.

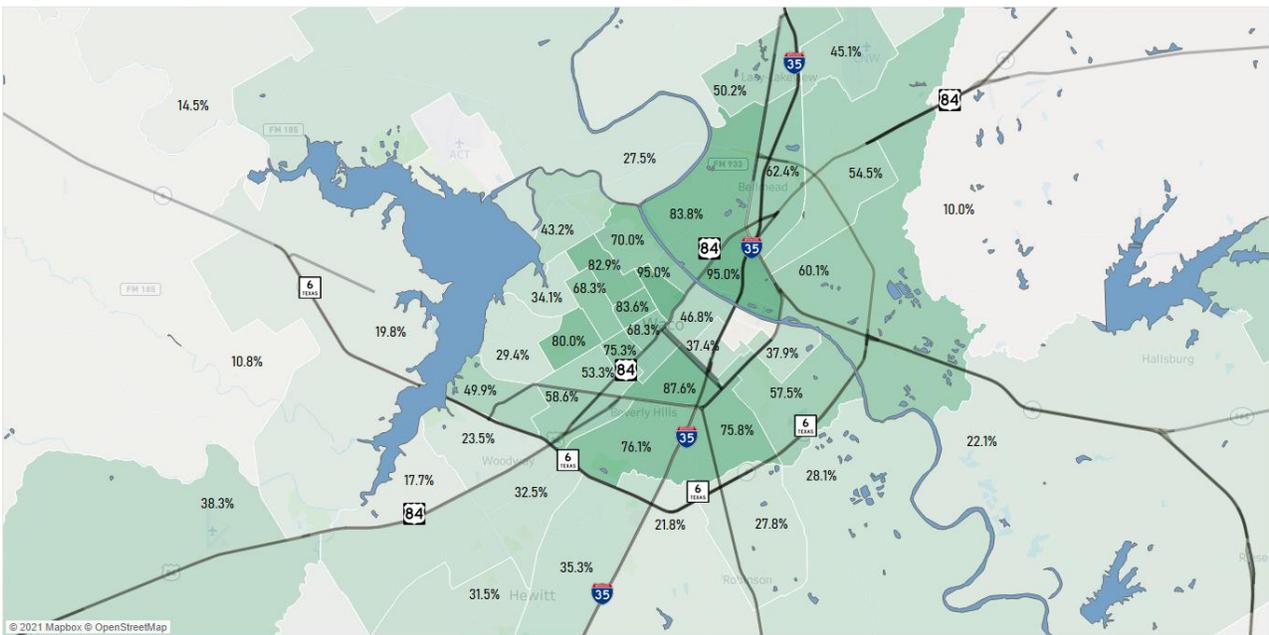
RACE & ETHNICITY



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table dp05

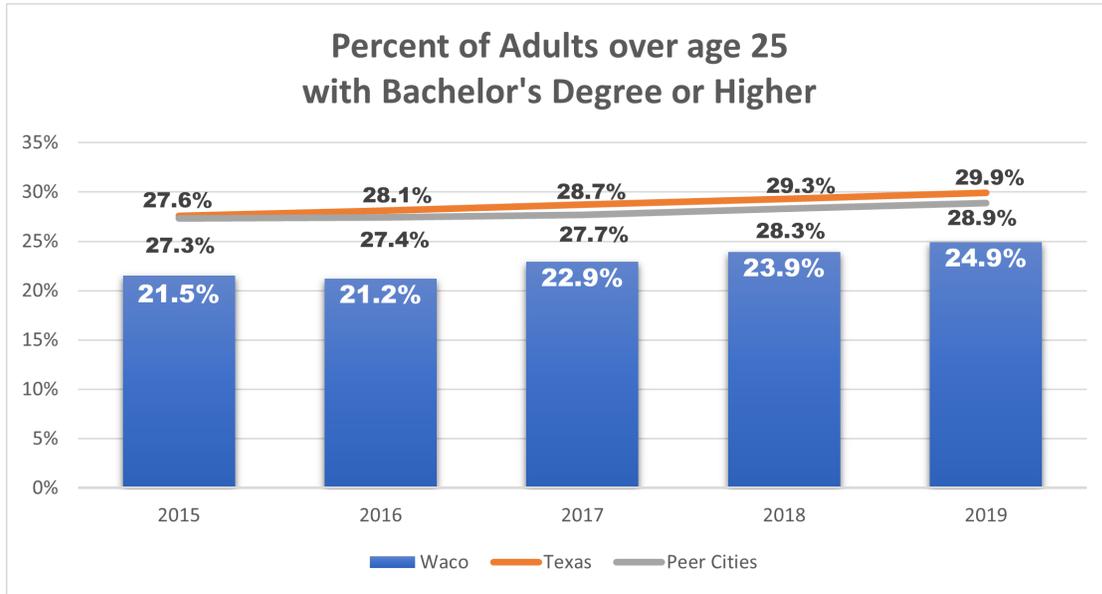
- The racial and ethnic composition of Waco has changed little from 2015 to 2019, with Whites making up the largest group, followed by Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians.
- Most areas within the Waco city limits are comprised mostly of people of color, while most of the Waco suburbs are majority white.

Percent People of Color, 2019



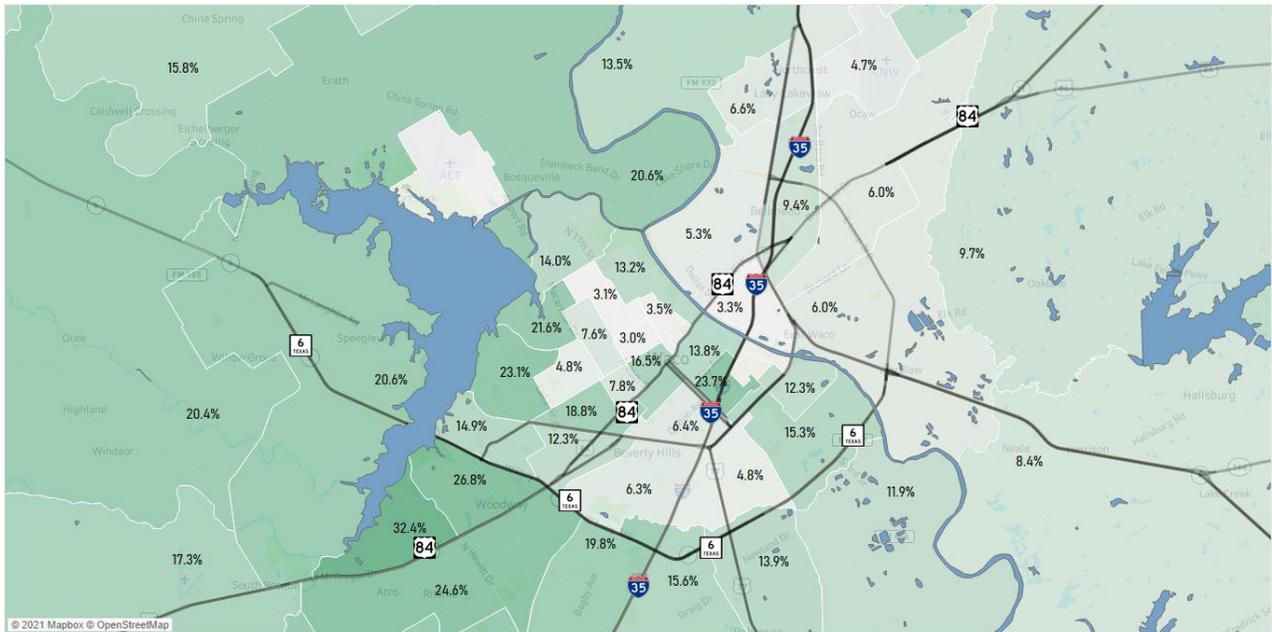
Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table dp05). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percent of the population who are people of color, defined as residents who identify as Hispanic or any race other than white alone. The tracts with darker shades of green have a higher percentage of people of color

ADULTS WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE



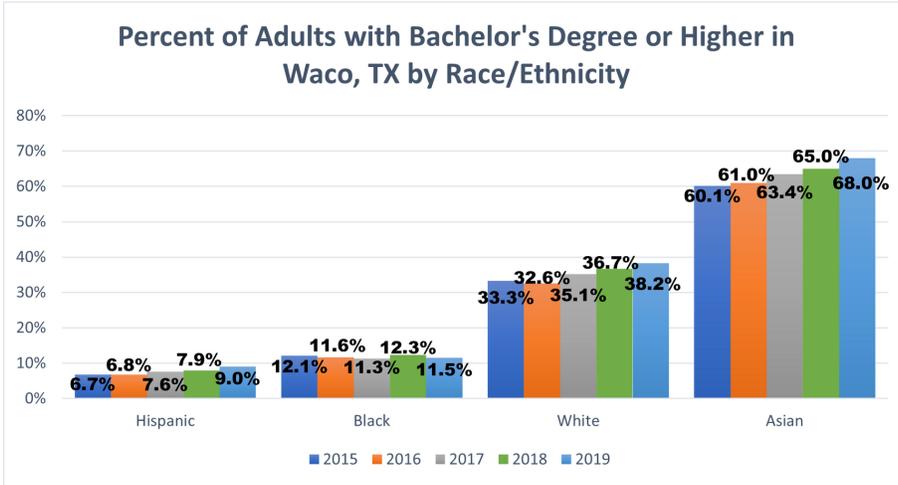
- Waco has seen an increase in the percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree, but the rates remain lower than the education levels of its peer cities.

Percent with Bachelor’s Degree, 2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table S1501). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percentage of residents who have at least a bachelor’s degree. The darker greens indicate a higher percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree.

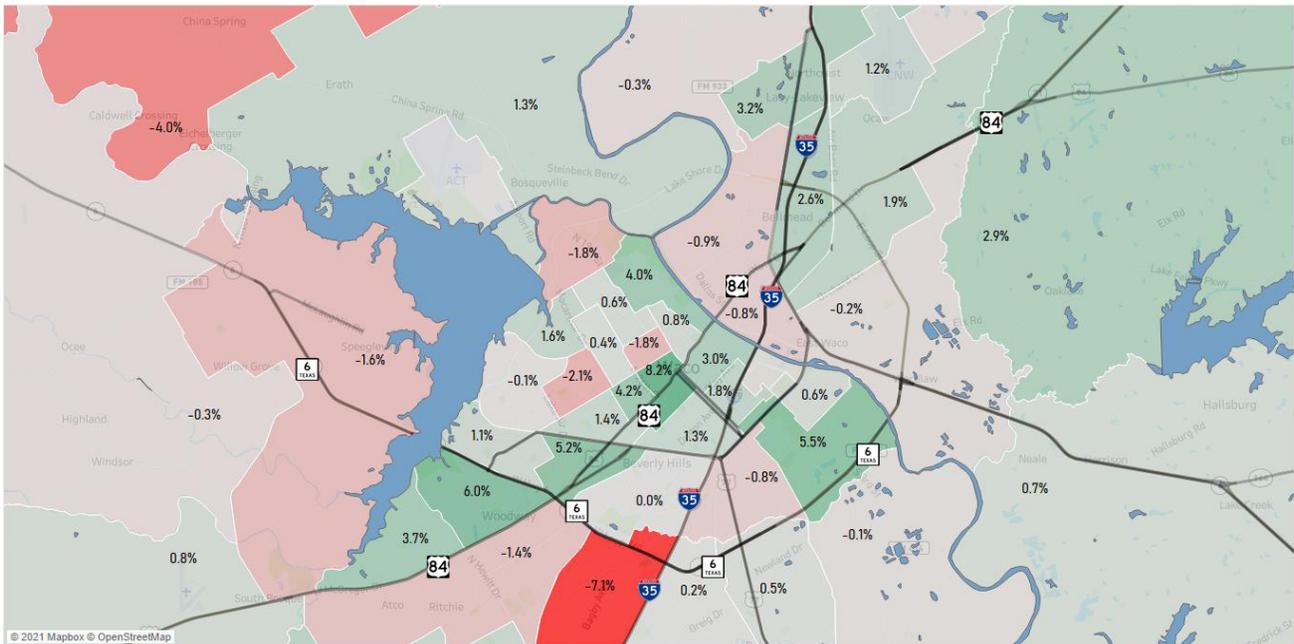
ADULTS WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table S1501

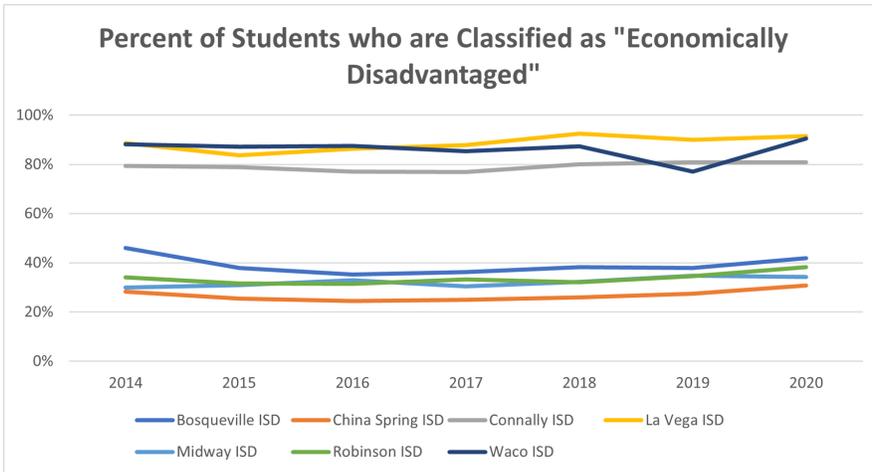
- Education levels of Hispanic and Black residents of Waco remain significantly lower than the rates for Whites and Asians.
- Over the 5-year period, Black residents of Waco are the only group that did not see increases in this education measure.
- Most of Waco saw an increase in the percentage of residents with at least a bachelor's degree; notable exceptions include East Waco, Hewitt, Sanger Heights, and Speegleville.

Change in Percent with Bachelor's Degree, 2015-2019



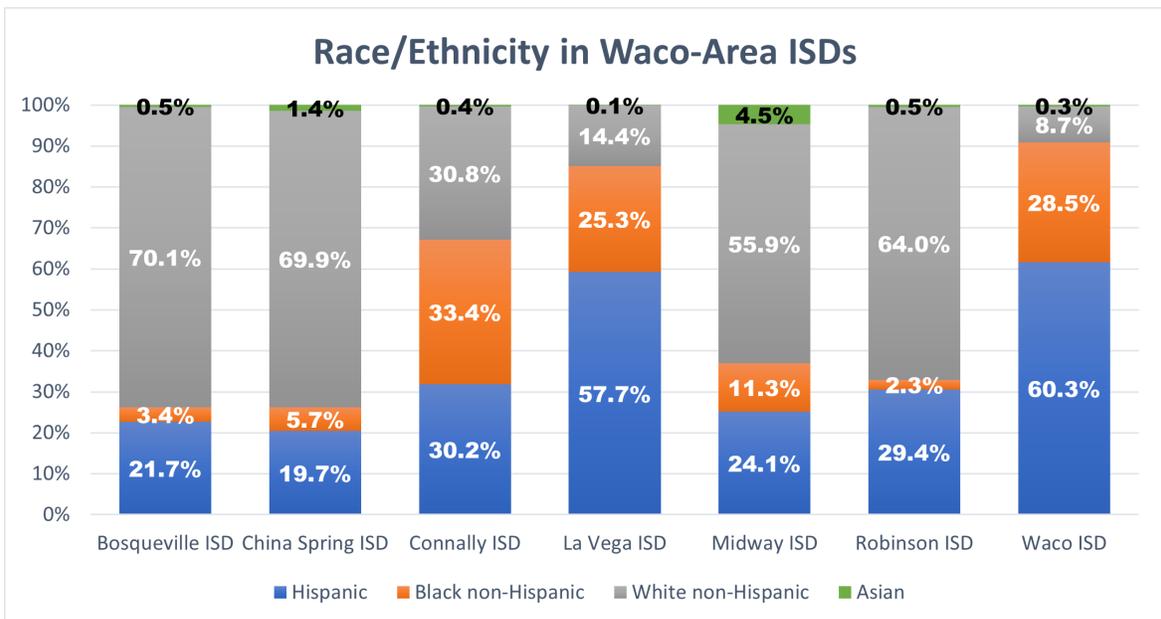
Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table S1501). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the change in percent with a bachelor's degree from 2015-2019. The red regions saw a decline in percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree, while the green regions saw an increase.

STUDENTS IN WACO



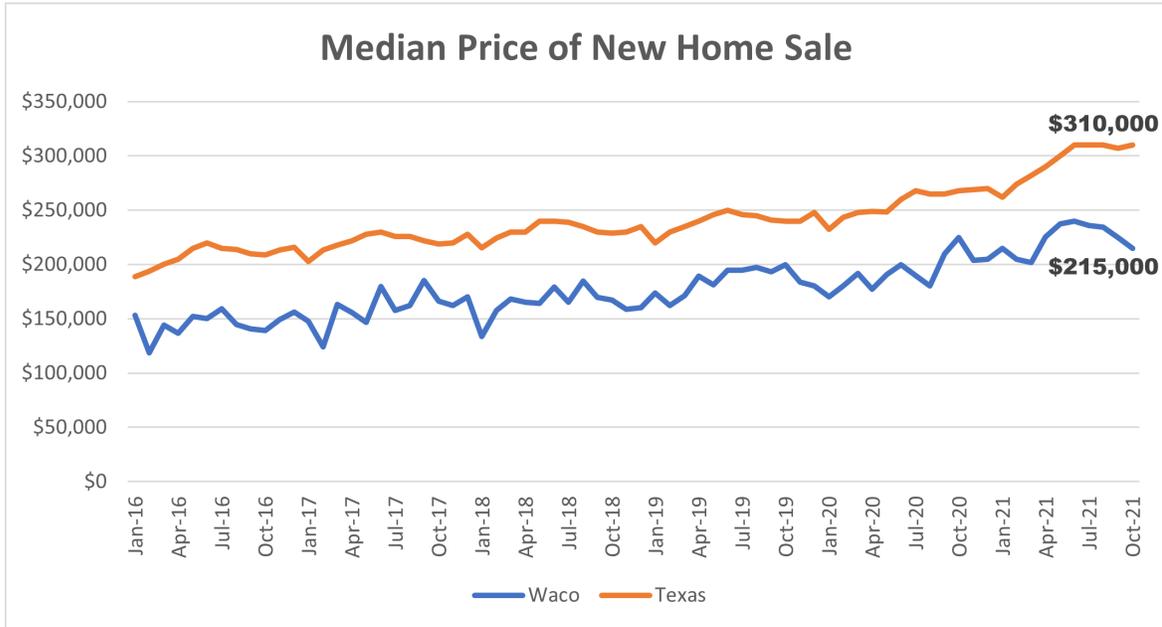
* Data from Texas Academic Performance Report

- 80-90% of students in three Waco school districts (Waco, Connally, and LaVega ISDs) are classified as economically disadvantaged.
- For the 4 school districts that are primarily outside of the city limits (Midway, Bosqueville, China Spring, and Robinson ISDs), only 30-45% of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged.
- These numbers have stayed relatively steady since 2014.
- The school districts whose student bodies are more than 50% white are also the school districts with lower percentages of economically disadvantaged students.

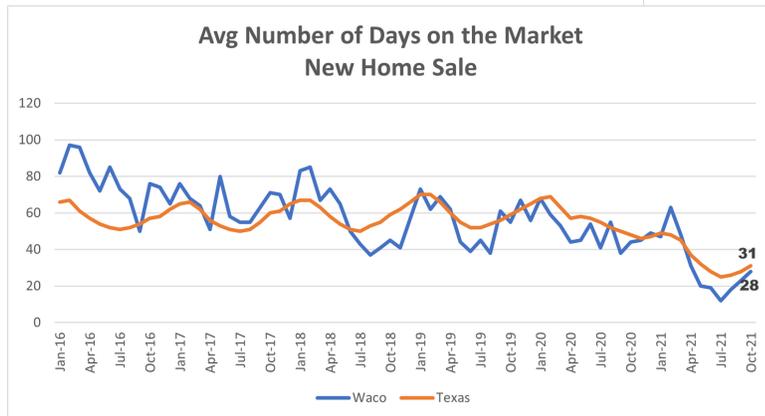
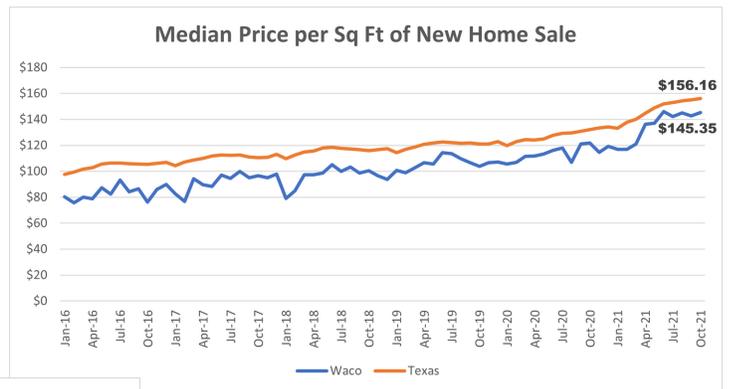


* Data from Texas Academic Performance Report

WACO HOUSING MARKET



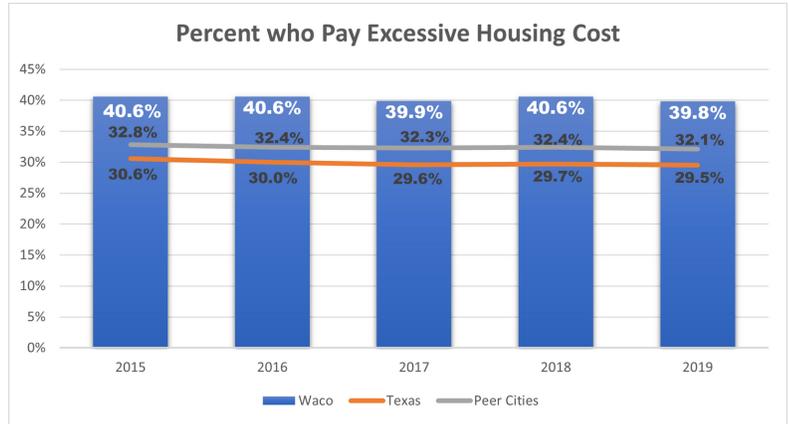
- The last 6 years have seen a steady increase in Waco home prices, though the median price for a home in Waco remains below the median price for the entire state.
- A gradual decline over the last 6 years in the average number of days a home spends on the market before selling indicates a housing market that increasingly advantages home sellers over home buyers.



* All data on this page from Texas Association of Realtors

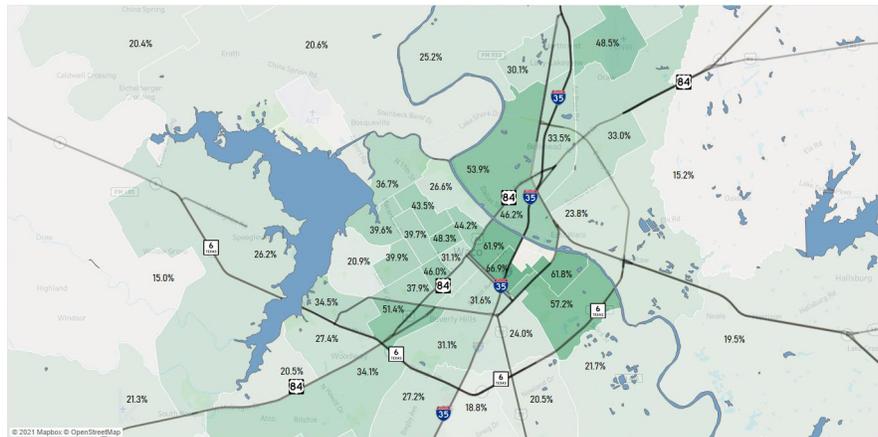
EXCESSIVE HOUSING COST

- “Excessive housing cost” is defined as spending more than 30% of one’s monthly income on housing.
- Over the last 5 years, the percentage of Waco residents who spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing has remained steady.
- A higher proportion of Waco residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing than residents of its peer cities.
- Areas with high percentages of residents who pay “excessive” housing cost (East Waco, South Waco, downtown) are also areas with low median incomes.
- Most Waco residents who pay “excessive” housing cost have low incomes and inexpensive housing costs.



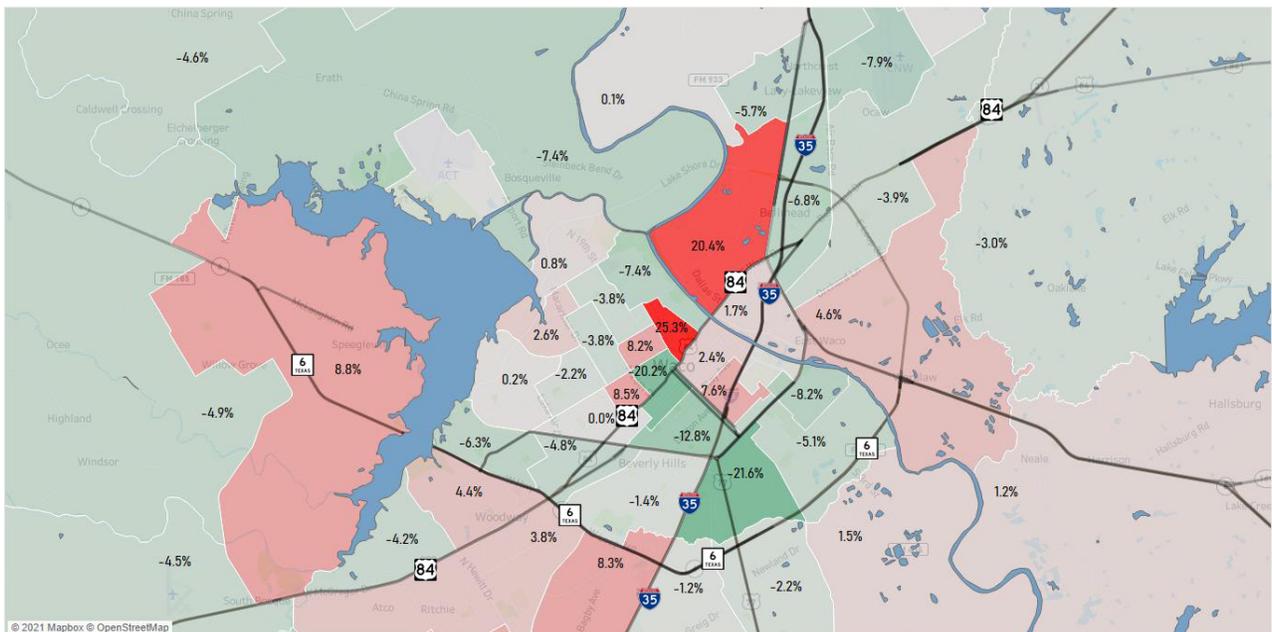
* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table dp04

Percent with Excessive Housing Cost, 2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table dp04). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percentage of residents who pay at least 30% of their monthly income on housing. The darker greens indicate a higher percentage of residents with excessive housing cost.

Change in Percent with Excessive Housing Cost, 2015-2019

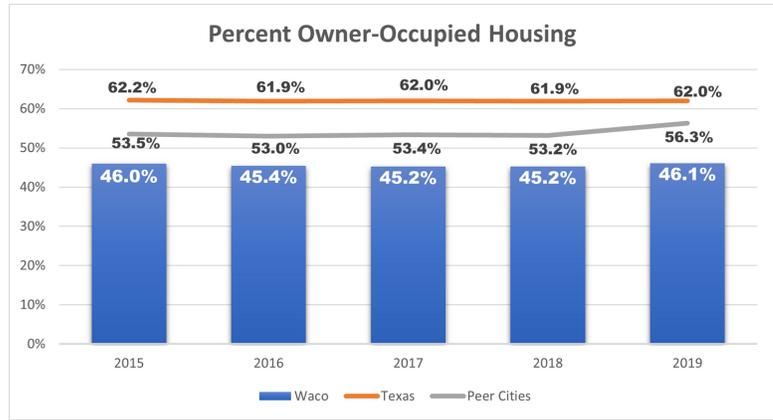


Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table dp04). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the change in percent of residents who pay at least 30% of their monthly income on housing from 2015-2019. The red regions saw an increase in percentage of residents with excessive housing cost, while the green regions saw a decline.

HOUSING

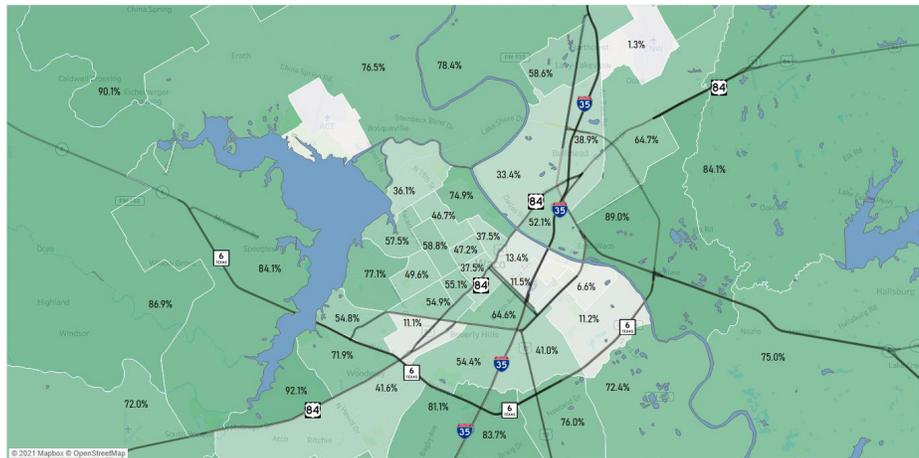
OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING

- The percentage of Waco housing units that are occupied by a homeowner has stayed consistent over the last 5 years.
- Waco has a lower home-ownership rate than its peer cities.



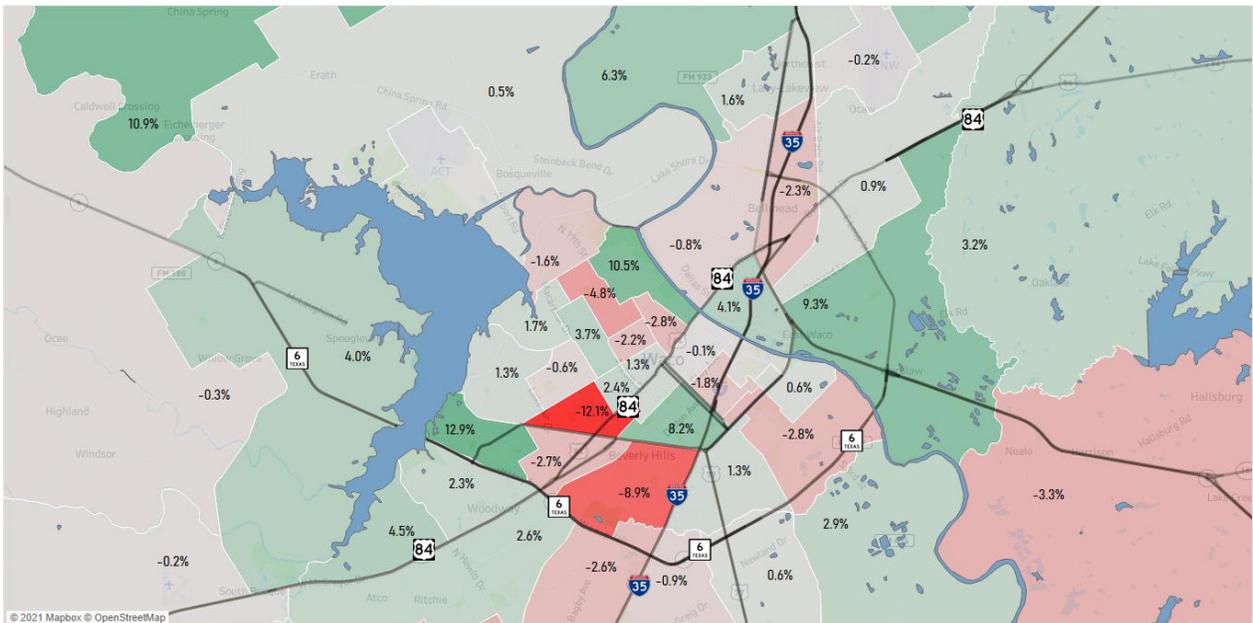
* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table dp04

Percent Owner-Occupied Housing, 2019



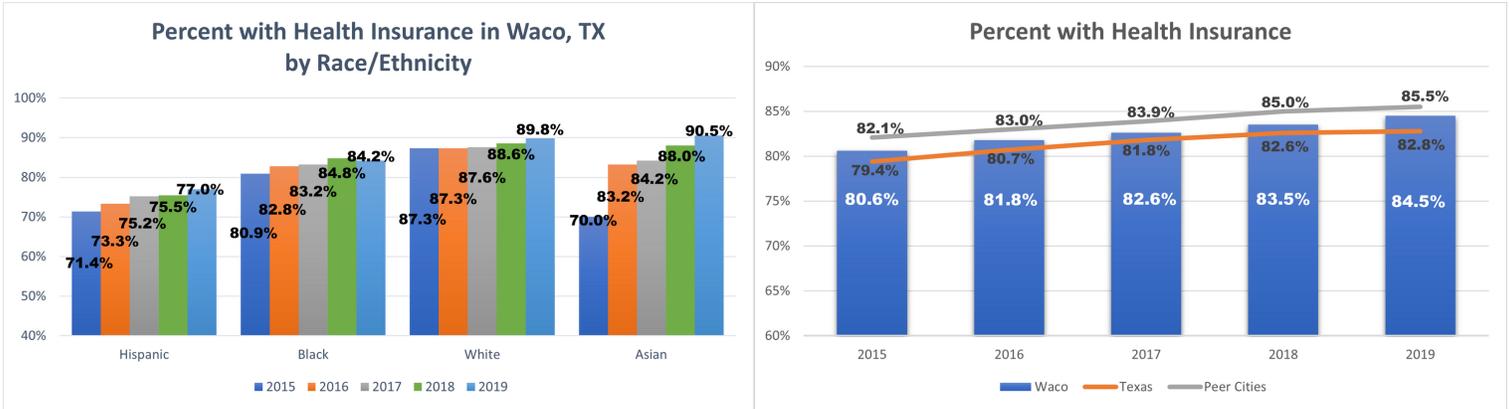
Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table dp04). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percentage of households occupied by a homeowner. The darker greens indicate a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing.

Change in Percent Owner-Occupied Housing, 2015-2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table dp04). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the change in percent of households that are occupied by a homeowner from 2015-2019. The green regions saw an increase in percentage of owner-occupied housing units, while the red regions saw a decline.

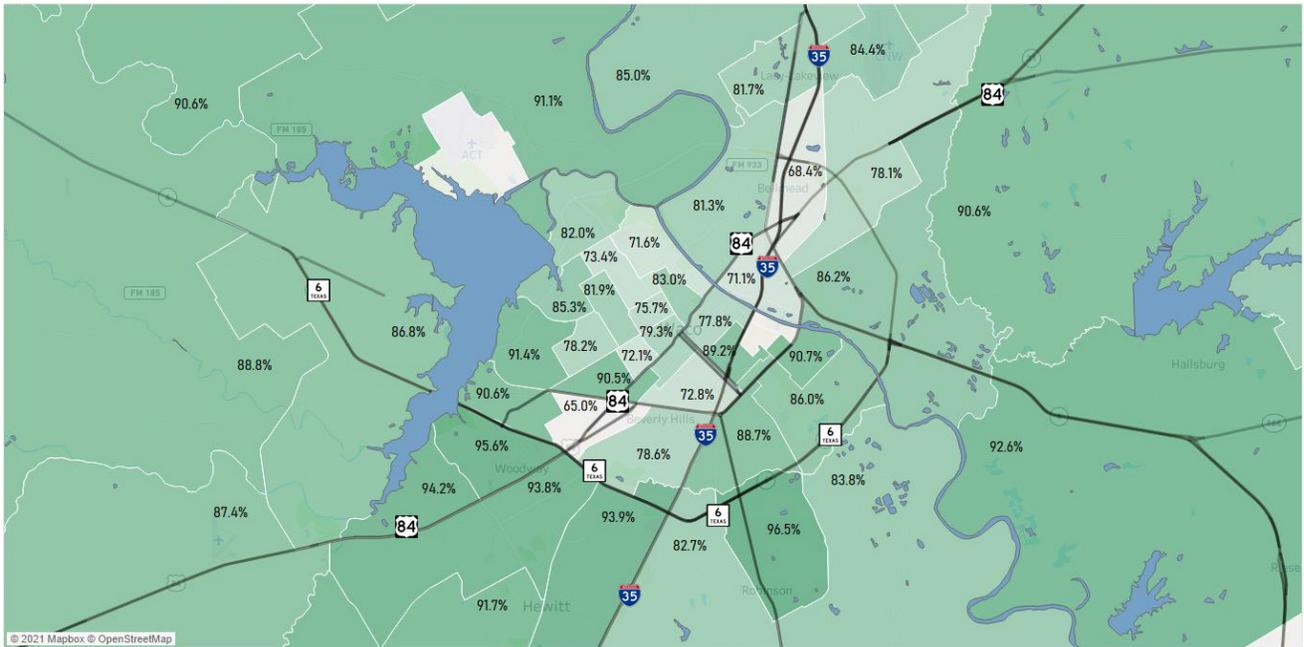
HEALTH INSURANCE



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Table s2701

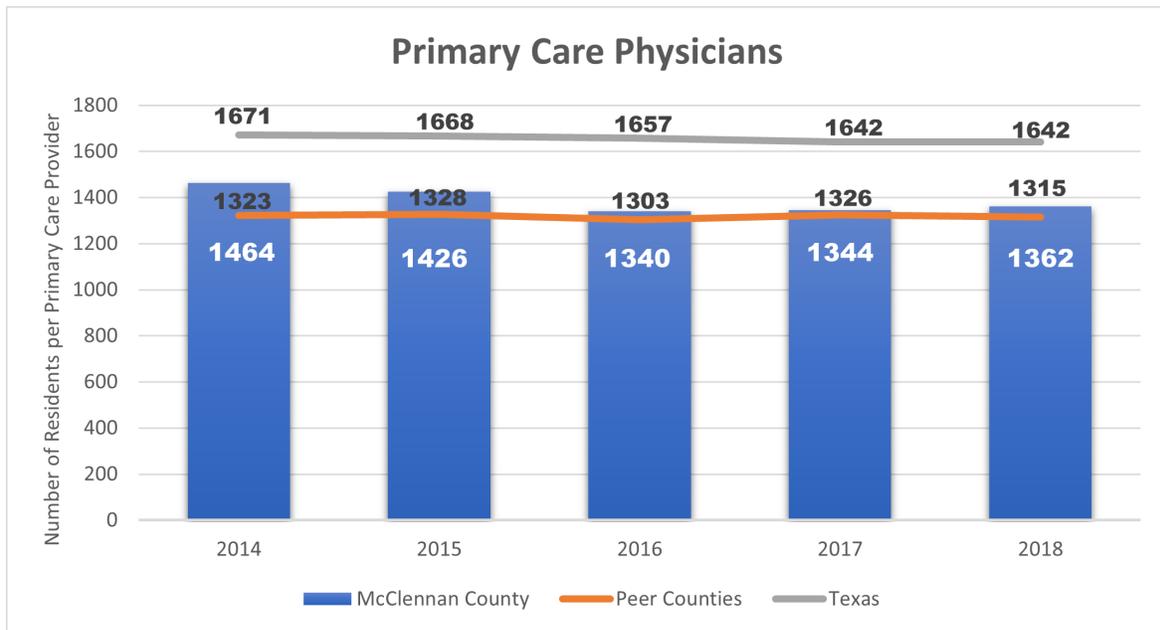
- Over the last 5 years, Waco has seen an increase in the percentage of residents who have health insurance.
- While the percentage of insured Wacoans remains below the percentage for its peer cities, it is higher than the percentage for the entire state of Texas.
- Each of the racial/ethnic groups in Waco has experienced an increase in the percentage with health insurance from 2015 to 2019.
- Hispanic residents of Waco have the lowest rates of health insurance coverage.
- The southwestern suburbs of Waco have the highest rates of health insurance coverage (all over 90%).

Percent with Health Insurance, 2019



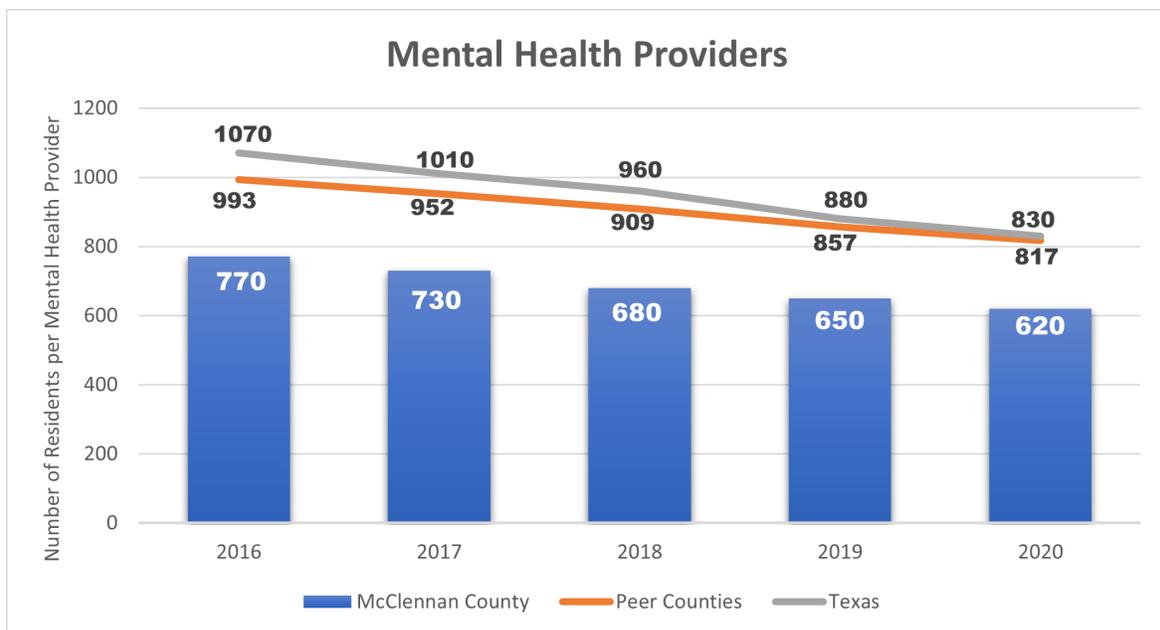
Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table s2701). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percent of the population who have health insurance. The tracts with darker shades of green have more residents with health insurance coverage.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE



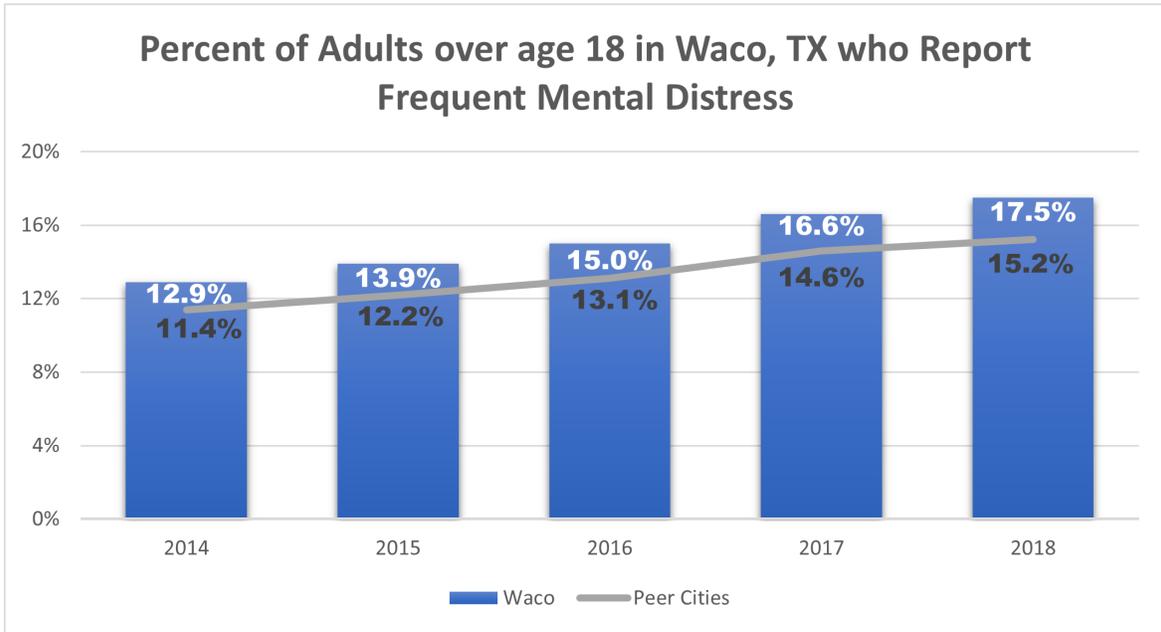
* Data from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings

- McLennan County has a better (lower) ratio of residents to primary care providers than the state average, and its numbers are slightly higher than its peer counties.
- McLennan County has a better (lower) ratio of residents to mental health providers than the state average, and better than its peer counties. The ratio has been improving since 2016.



* Data from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings

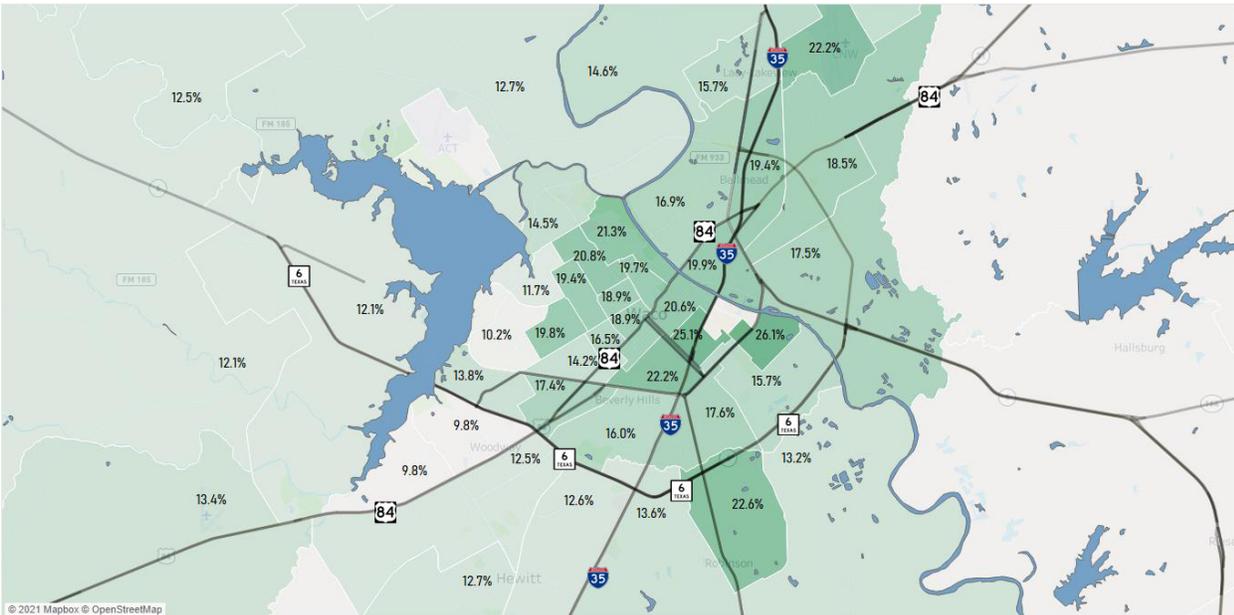
MENTAL DISTRESS IN WACO



* Data from Department of Population Health, NYU Langone Health. City Health Dashboard

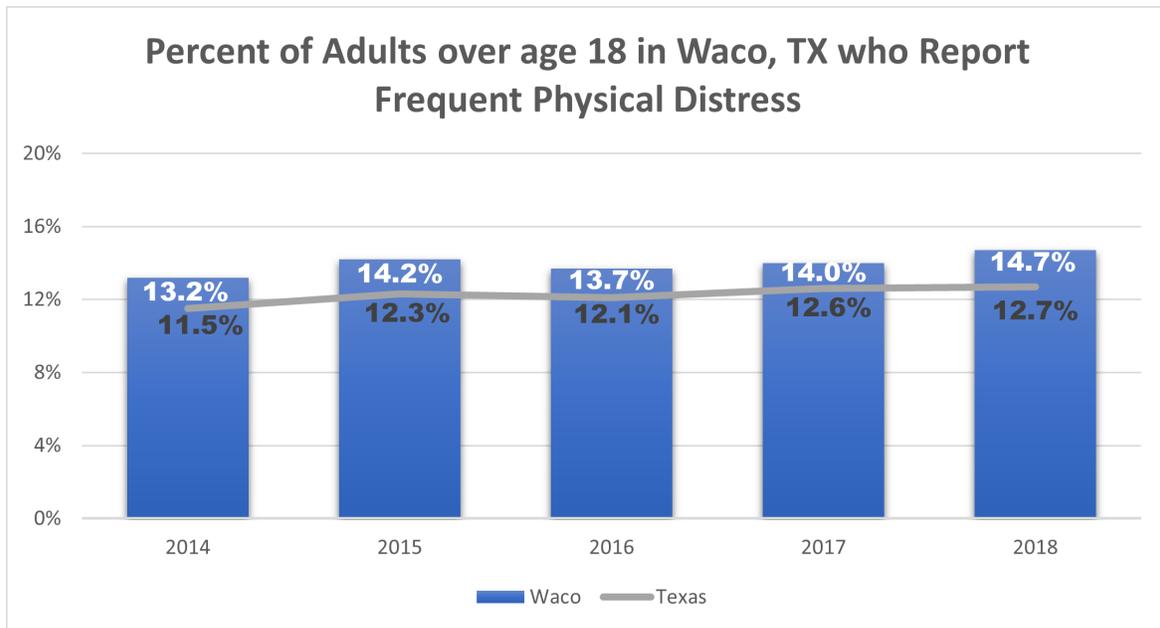
- From 2014 to 2018, there was a steady increase in the percentage of Waco residents who report frequent mental distress.
- Many of the more affluent areas of Greater Waco (western Waco, Woodway, Hewitt, China Spring) show lower levels of mental distress than areas with lower median incomes.

Percent with Frequent Mental Distress, 2018



Data comes from the PLACES Project, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as provided by the City Health Dashboard, NYU Langone Health, from 2018. The numbers represent the percentage of adult residents who report having poor mental health for at least 14 of the past 30 days. The tracts with darker shades of green have higher rates of mental distress.

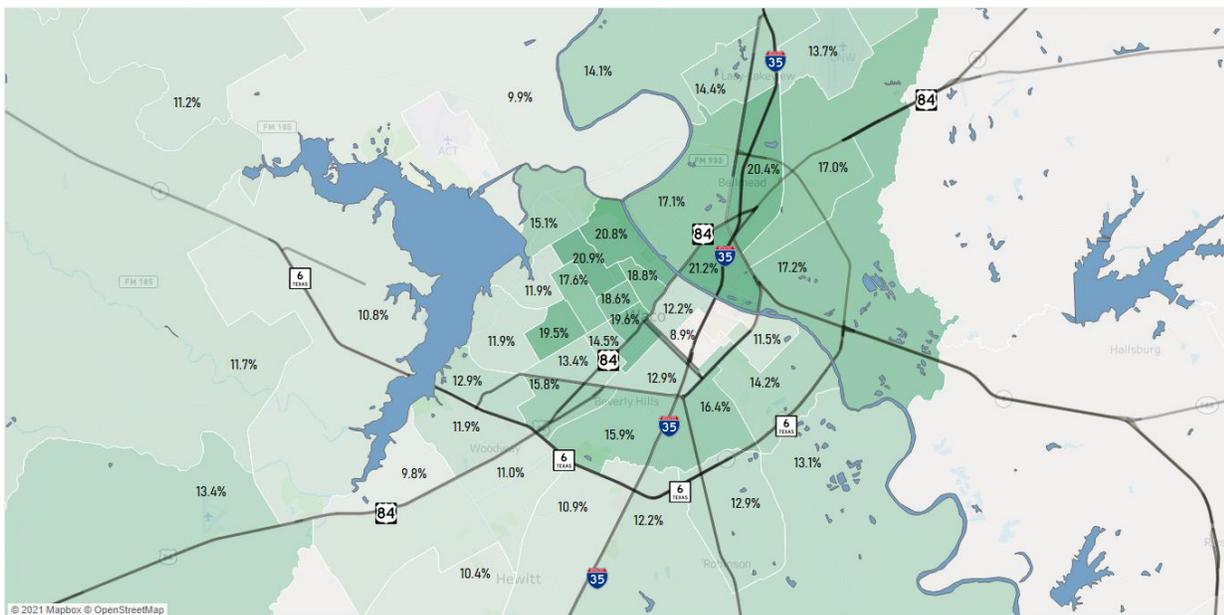
PHYSICAL DISTRESS IN WACO



* Data from Department of Population Health, NYU Langone Health, City Health Dashboard

- From 2014 to 2018, there was a steady increase in the percentage of Waco residents who report frequent physical distress.
- Many of the more affluent areas of Greater Waco (western Waco, Woodway, Hewitt, China Spring) show lower levels of physical distress than areas with lower median incomes.

Percent with Frequent Physical Distress, 2018

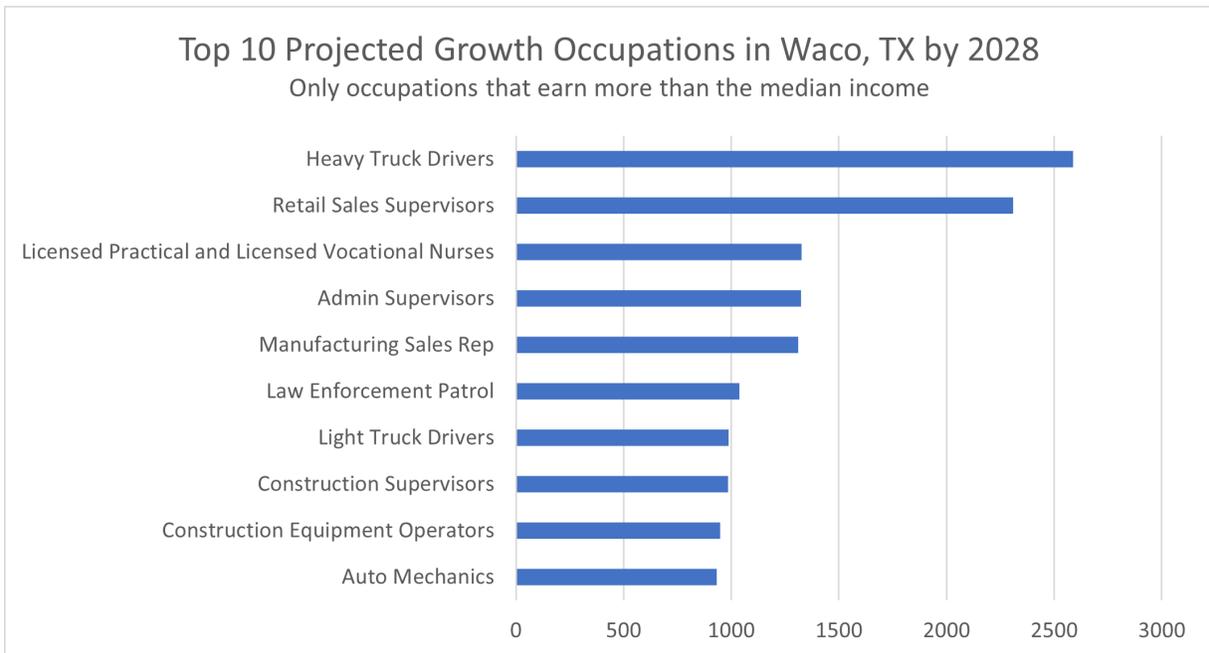


Data comes from the PLACES Project, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as provided by the City Health Dashboard, NYU Langone Health, from 2018. The numbers represent the percentage of adult residents who report having poor physical health for at least 14 of the past 30 days. The tracts with darker shades of green have higher rates of physical distress.

PROJECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROWTH

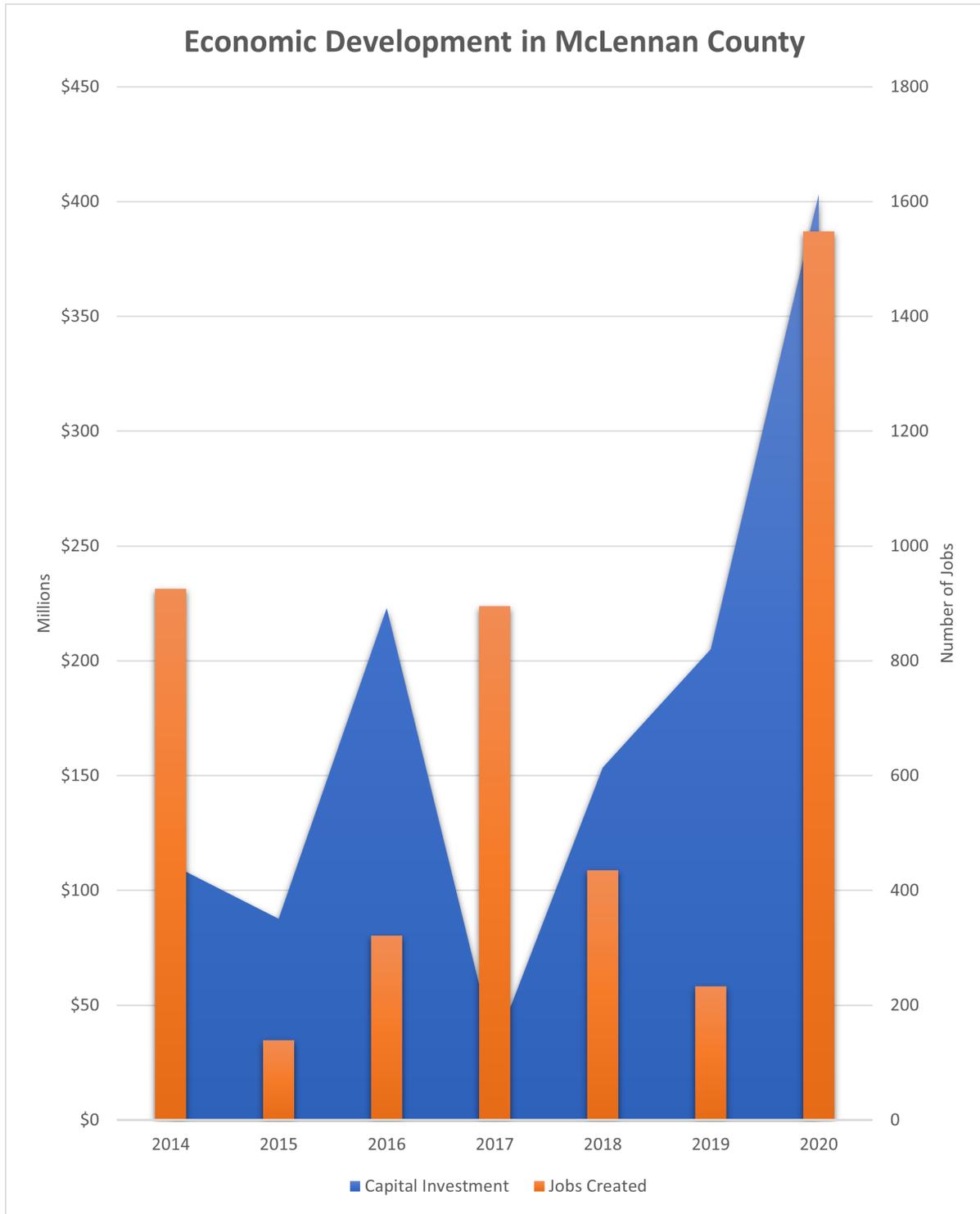


* Data from Texas Labor Analysis

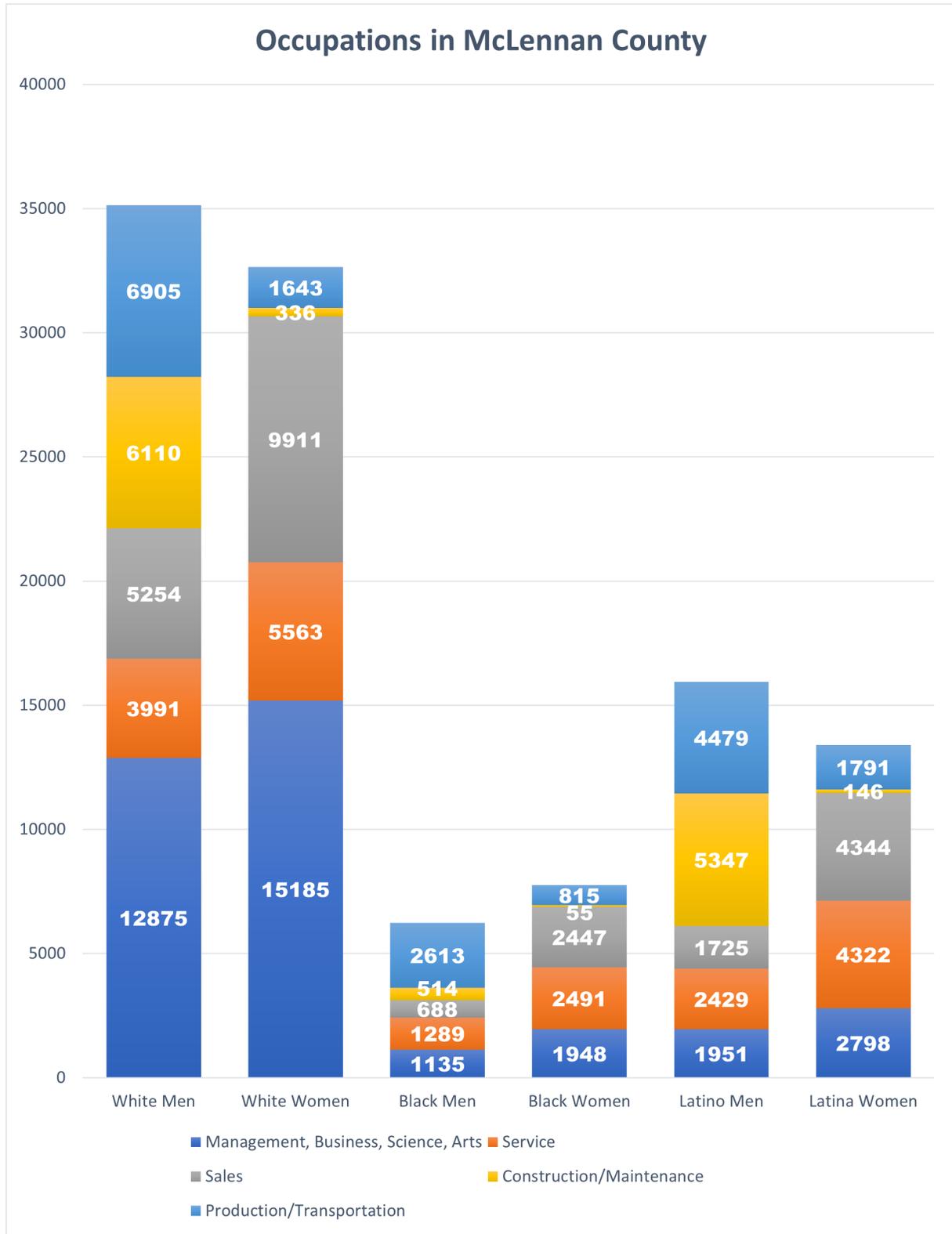


* Data from Texas Labor Analysis

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

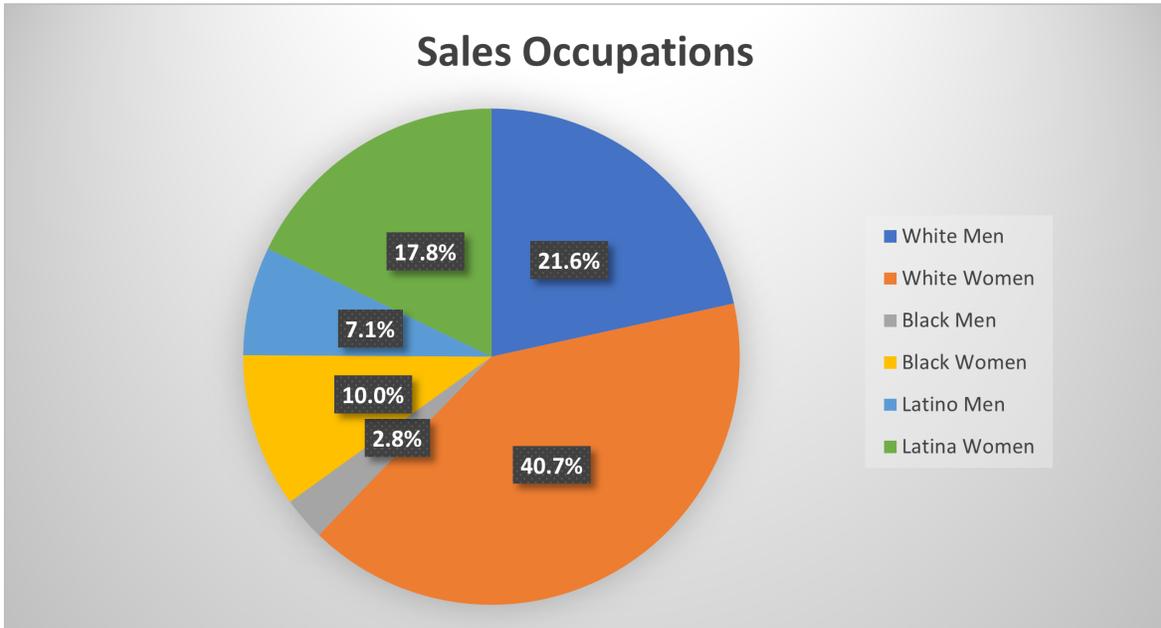


OCCUPATIONS



* Data from American Community Survey (5-year estimates), Tables C24010b, C24010i, and C24010h

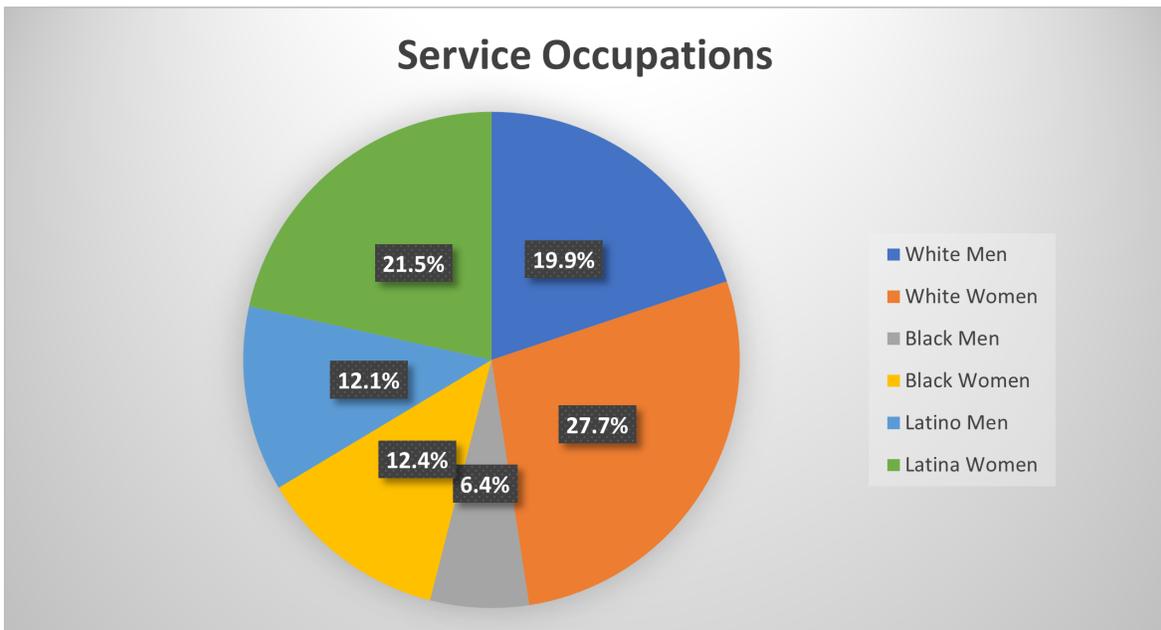
OCCUPATIONS



* Data from American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates), Tables C24010b, C24010i, and C24010h

- Some of the common occupations in the sales sector are direct sales positions and administrative support positions.
- About 62% of Wacoans in these positions are White, and White women make up the largest share of these jobs.

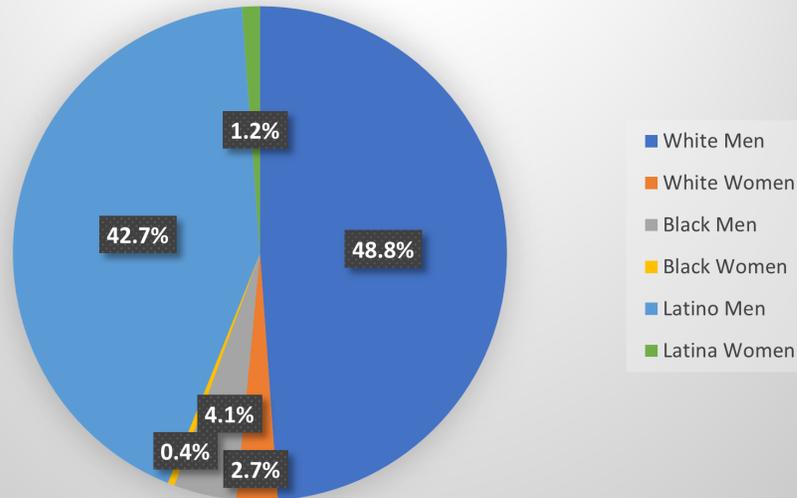
- Some common occupations in the service sector are healthcare support, restaurant and food service, and amusement/recreation workers.
- There is more racial/ethnic diversity in this sector than any other sector.
- White women and Hispanic women make up the largest share of these workers in Waco.



* Data from American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates), Tables C24010b, C24010i, and C24010h

OCCUPATIONS

Construction/Maintenance Occupations

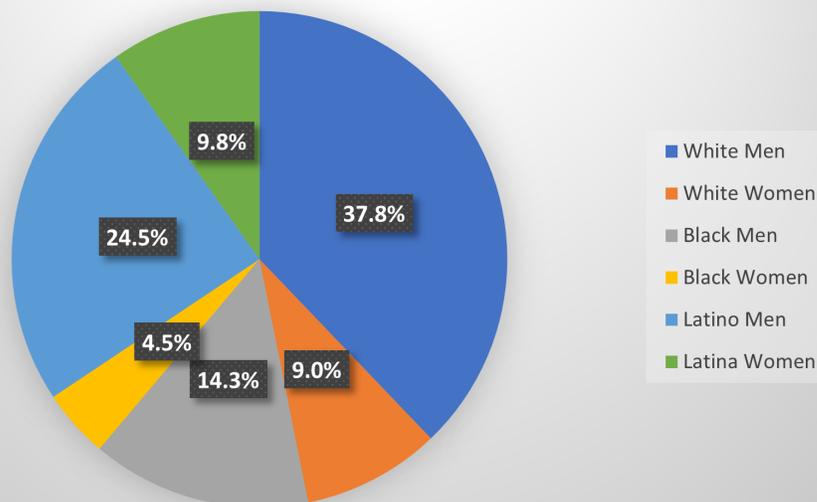


* Data from American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates), Tables C24010b, C24010i, and C24010h

- Some of the most common occupations in the construction/maintenance sector are construction, repair and installation, farming, and other resource extraction occupations.
- Taken together, White and Hispanic men make up over 90% of the Waco residents working in these occupations.

- In Waco, White and Hispanic men make up the majority of people working in the production/transportation sector..

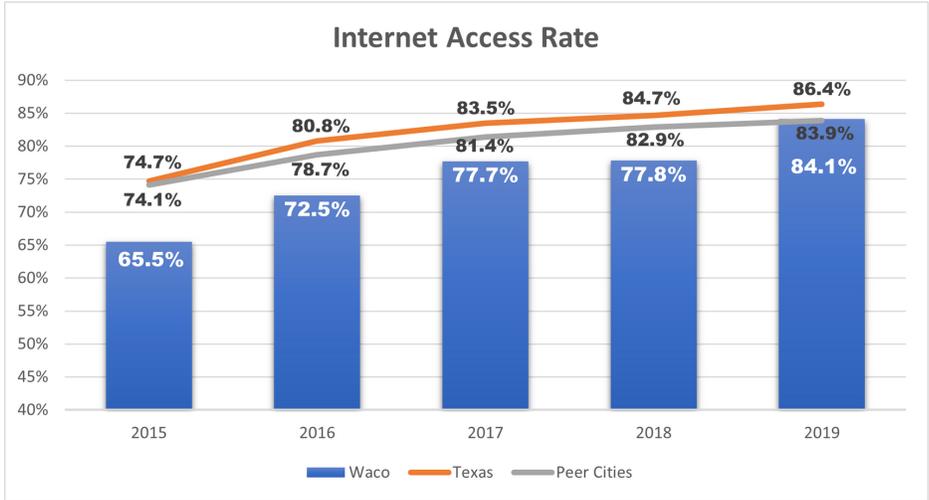
Production/Transportation Occupations



* Data from American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates), Tables C24010b, C24010i, and C24010h

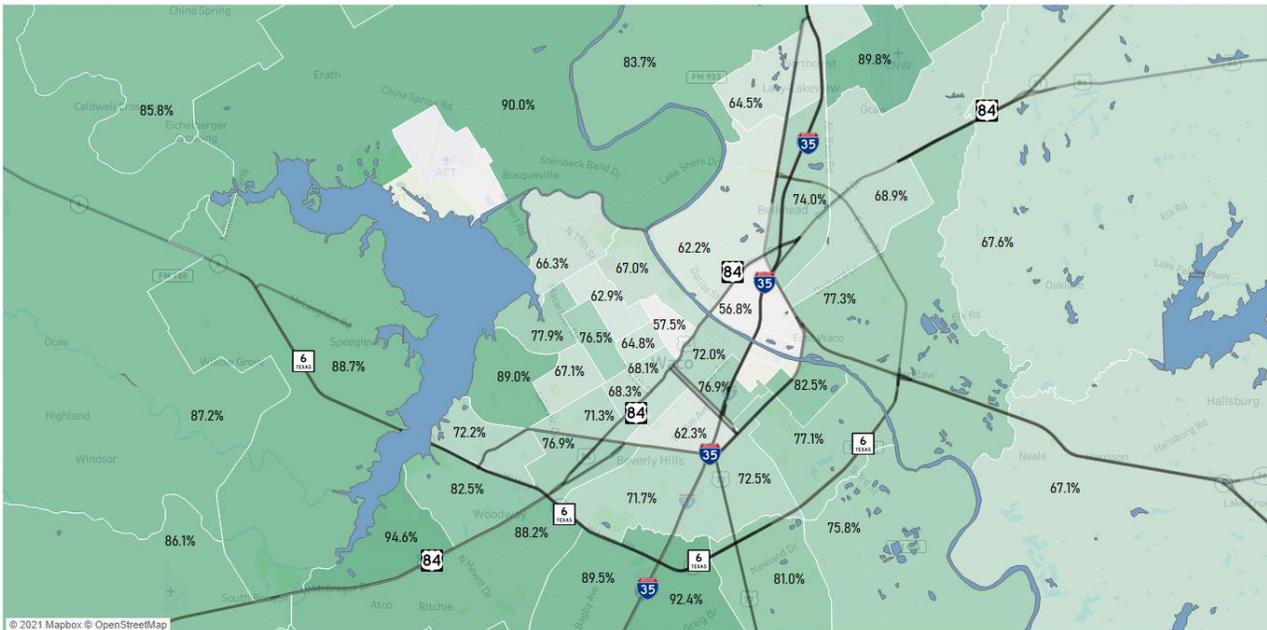
INTERNET ACCESS

- All geographies depicted have seen an increase in the percentage of residents with internet access.
- Waco has been below its peer cities for most of the last 5 years, but the gap has evened since 2015.
- The southwestern suburbs of Waco have a much higher percentage of residents with internet access, while East Waco remains near the bottom.



* Data from American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates), Table b28002

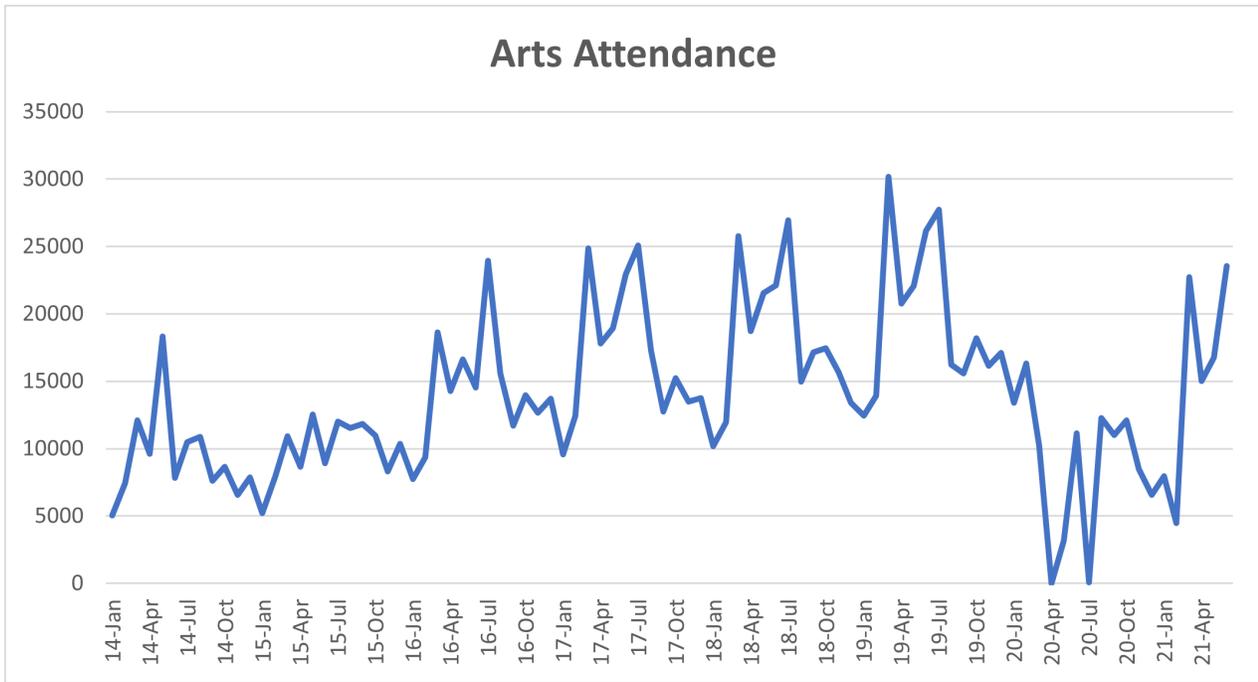
Percent with Internet Access, 2019



Data comes from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), collected by the US Census Bureau (5-year estimates, table b28002). Geographic boundaries are census tracts. The numbers indicate the percentage of households with an internet subscription of any kind. The darker greens indicate a higher percentage of households with an internet subscription.

ARTS

- Waco saw a steady increase of attendance at arts events such as museums, concerts, and art installations from 2014 to 2019.
- The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring of 2020 caused attendance at arts events to plummet.
- By the summer of 2021, attendance at arts events had recovered to a level close to the pre-2020 levels.



* Data from Creative Waco. Includes attendance at Dr. Pepper Museum, Armstrong Browning Museum, Waco Civic Theater, Historic Waco, and the Waco Arts Center

Other arts & culture facts:

- The City of Waco and Creative Waco annually regrant \$125,000 to five mature arts organizations in Waco: Art Center of Waco, Cultural Arts of Waco, Deep in the Heart Film Festival, Waco Civic Theatre, & Waco Symphony Orchestra.
- Every dollar invested in the arts by the City of Waco attracts another \$16 of additional investment.
- During the COVID pandemic, Waco avoided a severe loss of arts momentum and growth due to strong local support and investment, innovative solutions, and the emergent nature of our arts and cultural sector.

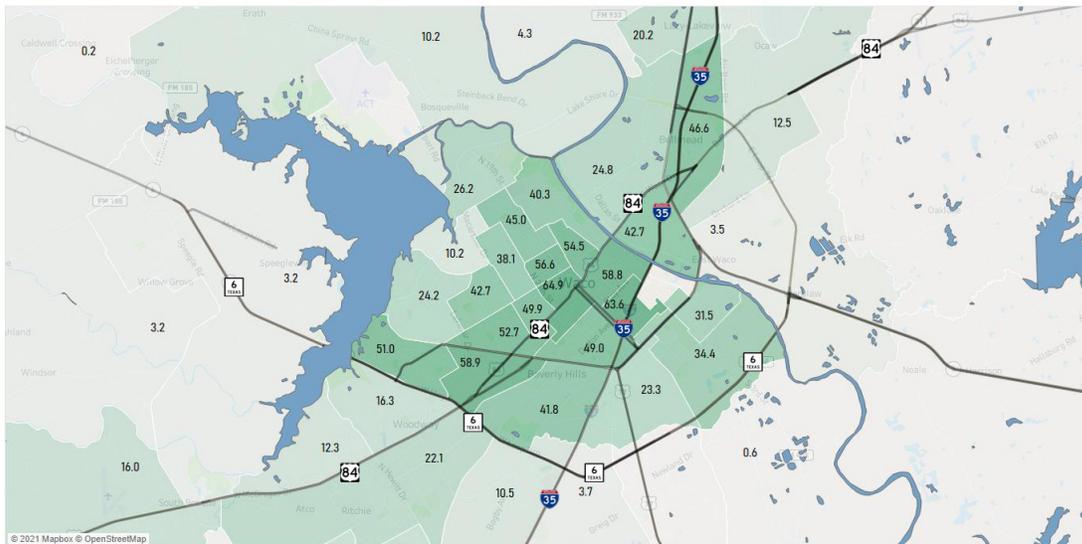
Notable recent additions to the Waco arts sector:

- Doris Miller Memorial
- Waco Sculpture Zoo
- New Art Center of Waco Campus
- Deep in the Heart Film Festival
- Waco Family and Faith Film Festival

CONNECTIVITY

OUTDOORS

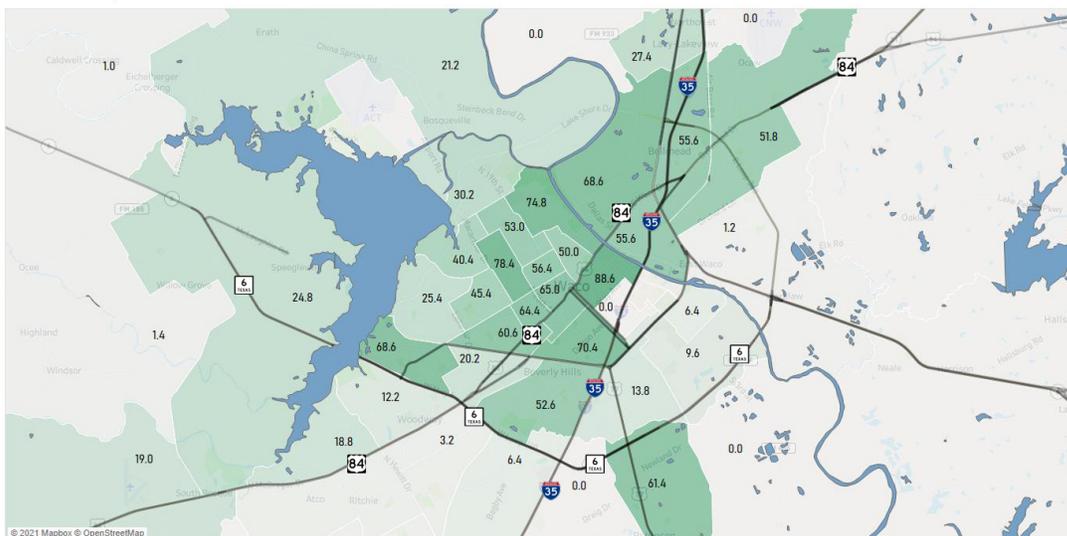
Walkability Index, 2019



The walkability index comes from Walkscore, as provided by the City Health Dashboard, NYU Langone Health. The index ranges from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating more amenities within walking distance. Geographic boundaries are census tracts, and data are from 2019. Tracts with darker shades of green have higher walk score indexes.

- The walkability index captures the availability of walking routes to different types of nearby amenities.
- Areas near the city center have higher walkability scores than suburban and rural portions of the greater Waco area.

Park Access, 2018



Park Access comes from ParkServe, as provided by the City Health Dashboard, NYU Langone Health. It is the percentage of residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park. Geographic boundaries are census tracts, and data are from 2018. Tracts with darker shades of green have higher park access.

- This metric gives the percentage of the area living within a 10-minute walk to a park.

TAKEAWAYS

This report is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of all things Waco. It is meant to be a conversation starter. Our hope is that community leaders can use this information to inspire and inform their strategies for improving the lives of all Waco residents. Most of these indicators can also be explored more fully on www.WacoRoundtable.org, where you can examine over 120 different variables in McLennan County. You can find videos containing instructions on how to navigate The Waco RoundTable at www.prosperwaco.org/roundtable.

Some of the primary takeaways from this report appear below.

The persistent significance of racial and ethnic inequality

- The income of Hispanics in Waco is about **30% less** than the income of Whites, while Black residents of Waco make about **45% less** than Whites.
- School districts in Waco that are made up of more than 60% students of color have **twice the rate** of economic disadvantage as districts that are at least 60% white.
- White residents are about **3-4 times** more likely than Black and Hispanic residents to have a bachelor's degree, and Asians are more than **6 times** as likely as Blacks and Hispanics.

The persistent significance of place and neighborhood

- Many low-income areas in the Waco city limits saw **population decline** from 2010 to 2020, while much of the suburbs saw population growth.
- Parts of West Waco have median incomes that are **3-4 times** higher than parts of East Waco.
- Even though home values are relatively low in East and South Waco, residents of East and South Waco are spending a **higher share** of their monthly income on housing than residents in other parts of Waco.
- The low-income areas of Waco have a **higher share** of residents reporting physical and mental distress than the suburban and rural parts of the county.

Waco fares worse than its peer cities in most areas, including:

- Income and poverty
- Education level of adults
- Home ownership
- Physical and mental health

PARTICIPANTS

The Waco Snapshot Report was created by a committee consisting of representatives from education, fine arts, the business community, and other non-profit organizations. The committee began meeting in June of 2021 at the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce to discuss plans for the report, and made all decisions concerning which indicators should be included in the final report. If you have any questions regarding the report, or if you would like digital image copies of some of the maps or charts, please contact Jeremy Rhodes, Prosper Waco’s Director of Research and Community Impact at jeremy@prosperwaco.org.



*Fernando Arroyo
Waco Family Medicine*



*Jennifer Branch
Greater Waco
Chamber of Commerce*



*Krista Brinser
Baylor University
Office of External Affairs*



*Holly Burchett
Baylor University
Office of External Affairs*



*Josh Caballero
Grassroots
Community Development*



*Kerri Fisher
Diana Garland
School of Social Work*



*Anna Futral
CASA of
McLennan County*



*Tiffany Gallegos-Whitley
Prosper Waco*



*Jared Gould
Rapoport Academy*



*Aaron Mize
Communities in Schools*



*Beth Olson
Prosper Waco*



*Kelly Palmer
Waco City Council Representative
District Four*



*Rachel E. Pate
Cen-Tex African American
Chamber of Commerce*



*Cuevas Peacock
Baylor University
Office of External Affairs*



*Sarah Pedrotti
Transformation Waco*



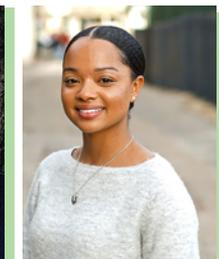
*Hermann Pereira
Prosper Waco*



*Jeremy R. Rhodes
Prosper Waco*



*Sammy Salazar
Prosper Waco*



*Kennedy Sam
Creative Waco*

Thank you to the organizations whose staff members made this report possible

