

A dark-themed map of the Atlanta metropolitan area and surrounding regions, showing major highways (Interstates 75, 85, 285, 205, 405, 94, 154, 167, 278, 477, 540, 575, 75, 19) and city names such as Acworth, Kennesaw, Marietta, Smyrna, Mableton, Douglasville, Atlanta, Decatur, Candler-McAfee, East Point, Hapeville, Forest Park, Riverdale, Fairburn, Union City, South Fulton, Stockbridge, Roswell, Dunwoody, Sandy Springs, Brookhaven, and Alpharetta. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey rectangle containing the title and contact information.

# Regional Snapshot: Atlanta Migration Patterns

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# Summary findings

1

The data presented here profile metro to metro migration trends for young adults, age 16-26, between the years of 2000 and 2018.

2

The largest cohort of young adult in-migration that Atlanta sees comes from low-income Black movers. In fact, of all young movers into Atlanta during this period, 78% came from Black movers. Atlanta has a reputation as a place of opportunity for Black populations, and these data support that.

3

In fact, almost all of the young adult in-migration that the Atlanta area has experienced since 2000 has come from movers of color. Compared to some of its peers, the Atlanta has one of the lowest net in-migration from white movers.

4

The largest income cohort (across all race/ethnicity groups) of young adult in-migration that Atlanta sees comes low-income. Of all the young adult in-migration into Atlanta during this period, about 72% come from the lowest income quartiles.

5

The top commuter zone of origin for migration *into* Atlanta is New York City, while the top commuter zone destination for migration *out of* Atlanta is LaGrange (GA)—followed closely by...New York City.

# Background

1

We have used data from a July 2022 study published by Harvard University and the U.S. Census Bureau. This study shows migration patterns for individuals who move across “commuting zones” between late childhood (as measured at age 16) and young adulthood (as measured at age 26). The time span evaluated is, roughly, 2000 to 2018.

2

Birth cohorts for those in the study range from 1984 - 1992; considering this and the timespan mentioned above, the young adult migration patterns discussed in this study predate the Covid-19 pandemic.

3

With fertility rates falling for Hispanic, Black, White, and Asian populations across the metro area, and migration capturing an ever-growing share of population increase, data like these on migration patterns will be key in understanding the likely origins and destinations of young adult population change for Atlanta.



# Part 1 | Migration Demographics

*What's the demographic makeup of Atlanta's young adult migration populations, and how does it compare to select peer cities?*

# Net Migration: All Income Levels

Commuter Zone	Black Net Migration	White Net Migration	Hispanic Net Migration	Asian Net Migration	"Other" Net Migration
Atlanta	35,187	2,087	4,076	424	3,516
Austin	4,329	57,159	16,392	1,763	3,598
Charlotte	10,173	20,508	2,624	111	1,404
Chicago	-32,718	6,995	-9,110	-484	-4,002
Dallas	12,392	25,369	6,219	516	2,703
Houston	15,938	9,011	5,510	-221	2,268
Jacksonville	2,584	13,956	2,551	-20	926
Los Angeles	-5,052	28,546	-54,368	-3,353	-7,782
Miami	-10,670	-2,432	-17,049	-414	-1,483
Nashville	8,053	37,598	2,478	298	1,680
New Orleans	-7,970	3,849	387	-234	-127
New York	-16,260	126,059	-21,551	8,596	1,750
San Francisco	-1,528	45,465	5,571	4,161	1,227
Seattle	4,841	52,592	11,772	2,706	4,487
Washington, D.C.	1,028	58,476	3,470	1,226	364

Shown with "peer city" commuter zones, Atlanta experienced, by far, the largest net in-migration from young Black adults. Conversely, Chicago saw the largest net out-migration of young Black adults. White net in-migration is much lower in Atlanta than in other southern commuter zones such as Austin, Charlotte, Dallas, Nashville, or Washington, D.C. The amount of White migration into the New York City area is, by far, the single largest movement of a race/ethnic group in or out of a commuter zone. **Key takeaway: The young adults who moved to Atlanta's have overwhelmingly come from populations of color rather than from white populations. With few exceptions, this trend is a clear outlier from the other "peer metro" commuter zones shown.**

# Net Migration: High Income

Commuter Zone	Black Net Migration	White Net Migration	Hispanic Net Migration	Asian Net Migration	"Other" Net Migration
Atlanta	4,738	-2,027	754	191	346
Austin	958	37,117	5,338	952	1,541
Charlotte	1,954	13,064	629	53	348
Chicago	-2,194	5,307	-2,333	-176	-143
Dallas	1,740	15,775	1,881	46	701
Houston	1,989	1,560	25	-483	-80
Jacksonville	23	7,849	591	-59	205
Los Angeles	826	27,935	-10,912	-874	-236
Miami	-1,015	-449	-5,603	-165	-83
Nashville	1,398	25,371	995	218	651
New York	1,875	106,958	3,934	7,452	5,113
New Orleans	-409	3,293	161	-60	229
San Francisco	-31	32,544	1,894	2,553	768
Seattle	632	28,717	3,422	1,480	1,222
Washington, D.C.	51	40,892	1,074	548	-34

This table focuses on young adult migration only from those in the upper income quartiles. Atlanta's high-income Black net in-migration outpaces all other commuter zones. Conversely, Atlanta sees the largest net out-migration of high-income white young adults. And while we note heavy out-migration from historic Hispanic epicenters like Los Angeles and Miami, Atlanta is not shown (in this dataset) to have experienced any appreciable gain in high-income Hispanics. **Key takeaway: High-income White young adult populations are leaving the Atlanta area, while areas such as Austin, Charlotte, Dallas, Los Angeles, Nashville, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. have experienced large positive net migrations of this demographic. By far, the most geographically mobile high-income racial category is white.**

# Net Migration: Middle Income

Commuter Zone	Black Net Migration	White Net Migration	Hispanic Net Migration	Asian Net Migration	"Other" Net Migration
Atlanta	5,254	1,915	766	91	637
Austin	826	9,949	3,821	414	715
Charlotte	1,800	3,841	581	20	282
Chicago	-4,118	1,607	-2,222	-218	-309
Dallas	1,656	5,133	1,409	183	582
Houston	2,024	3,657	999	57	456
Jacksonville	375	2,775	494	-16	141
Los Angeles	-627	2,710	-13,670	-961	-1,245
Miami	-1,661	-461	-3,385	-95	-213
Nashville	1,131	6,664	510	42	310
New Orleans	-503	508	61	-60	42
New York	-3,459	11,998	-2,665	1,020	137
San Francisco	-416	6,515	1,106	736	142
Seattle	592	11,207	2,706	571	859
Washington, D.C.	-609	9,481	675	294	24

This table focuses on young adult migration only from those in the middle income quartiles. Atlanta's middle-income net migration patterns follow high-income patterns fairly closely. Once again, the largest middle income racial/ethnic group moving into Atlanta is Black young adults. While Atlanta net migrations by middle-income Hispanic, Asian, and "other" young adults have been fairly "middle-of-the-pack" compared to other peer cities, middle-income *white* migration again lags well behind most other cities shown. This holds true despite an overall positive net migration of white young adults into Atlanta (compared to a negative net migration of high-income whites). **Key takeaway: The vast majority (61%) of all middle-income net in-migration into Atlanta comes from Black young adults, which is true for other income categories as well. And while net migration of middle-income white young adults is positive for Atlanta, it still lags behind levels in most other peer cities.**

# Net Migration: Low Income

Commuter Zone	Black Net Migration	White Net Migration	Hispanic Net Migration	Asian Net Migration	"Other" Net Migration
Atlanta	25,195	2,199	2,556	142	2,533
Austin	2,545	10,093	7,233	397	1,342
Charlotte	6,419	3,603	1,414	38	774
Chicago	-26,406	81	-4,555	-90	-3,550
Dallas	8,996	4,461	2,929	287	1,420
Houston	11,925	3,794	4,486	205	1,892
Jacksonville	2,186	3,332	1,466	55	580
Los Angeles	-5,251	-2,099	-29,786	-1,518	-6,301
Miami	-7,994	-1,522	-8,061	-154	-1,187
Nashville	5,524	5,563	973	38	719
New Orleans	-7,058	48	165	-114	-398
New York	-14,676	7,103	-22,820	124	-3,500
San Francisco	-1,081	6,406	2,571	872	317
Seattle	3,617	12,668	5,644	655	2,406
Washington, D.C.	1,586	8,103	1,721	384	374

This table focuses on young adult migration only from those in the lower income quartiles. Atlanta's low-income Black migration *greatly* outpaces that in the other commuter zones shown and is the largest demographic category across all the commuter zones shown. Other major sunbelt commuter zones like Dallas and Houston, recipients of the second- and third-largest number of low-income Black young adults, experienced positive net migrations less than half those of Atlanta. While Chicago's net out-migration of low-income Black population seems to "match" to Atlanta's positive migration number, two other commuter zones sent even more of this demographic to Atlanta than Chicago: New York City and Miami (with Chicago being the third largest place of origin).

**Key takeaway: Atlanta leads the nation in attracting low-income, Black young adults.**





# Part 2 | Migration *to* Atlanta

*From where are persons migrating to Atlanta, and what do we know about these populations demographically?*

# In-migration by commuter zone

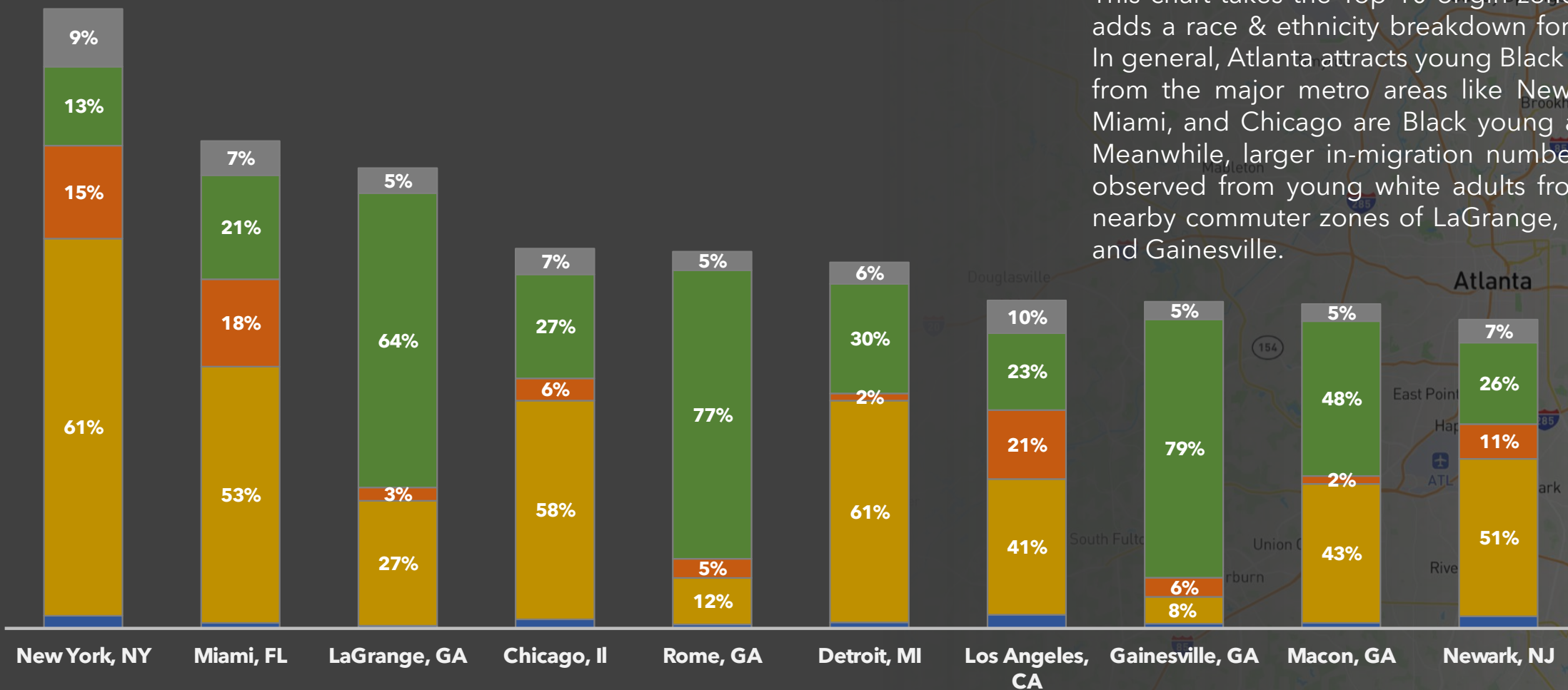


Most young adults moving to the Atlanta commuter zone (across all income and race/ethnicities) came from the large metro areas of New York and Miami. However, the largest places of origin for in-migration *regionally* include LaGrange, Rome, Gainesville, and Macon.

# In-migration by race/ethnicity (by commuter zone)

■ Asian 
 ■ Black 
 ■ Hispanic 
 ■ White 
 ■ Other

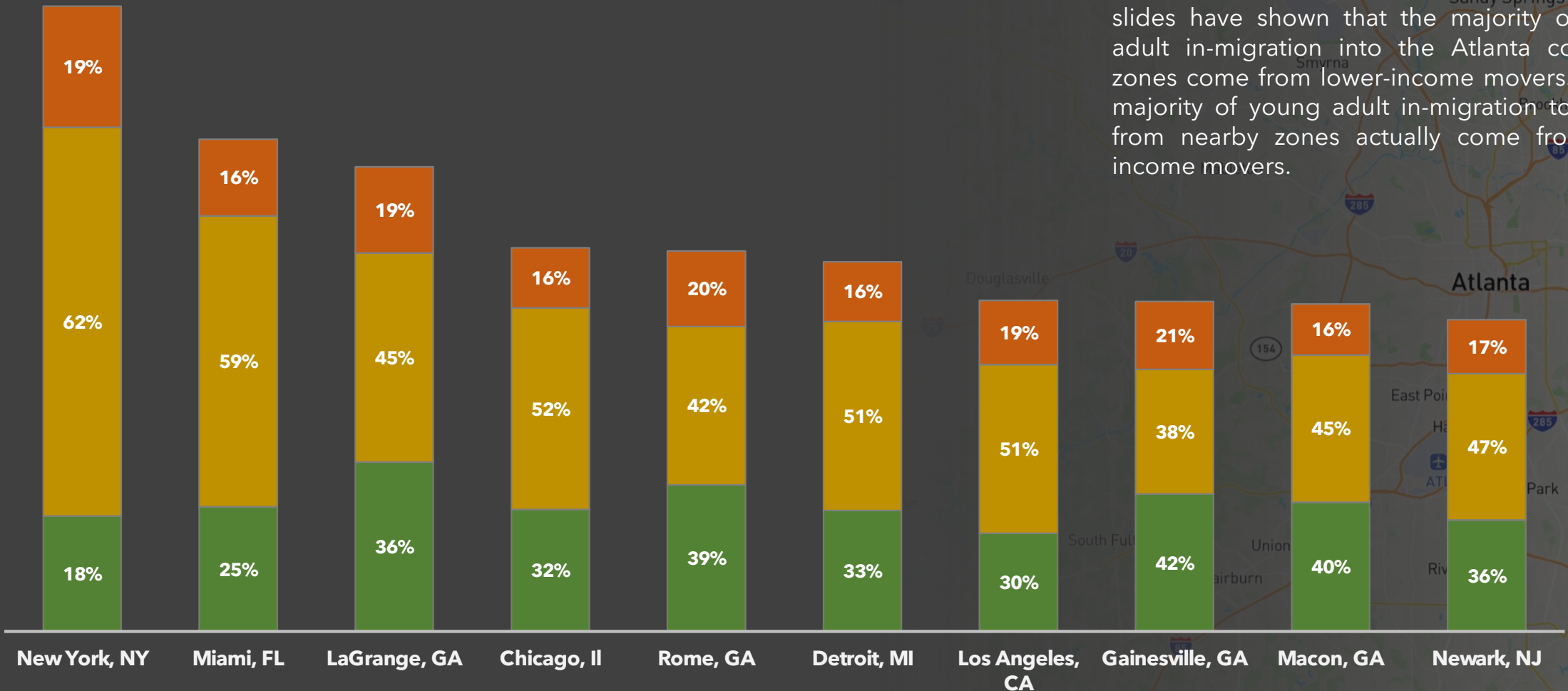
This chart takes the Top 10 origin zones and adds a race & ethnicity breakdown for each. In general, Atlanta attracts young Black adults from the major metro areas like New York, Miami, and Chicago are Black young adults. Meanwhile, larger in-migration numbers are observed from young white adults from the nearby commuter zones of LaGrange, Rome, and Gainesville.



# In-migration by income level (by commuter zone)

■ High Income ■ Middle Income ■ Low Income

This chart takes the Top 10 origin zones and adds an income breakdown for each. Previous slides have shown that the majority of young adult in-migration into the Atlanta commuter zones come from lower-income movers. But the majority of young adult in-migration to Atlanta from nearby zones actually come from high-income movers.

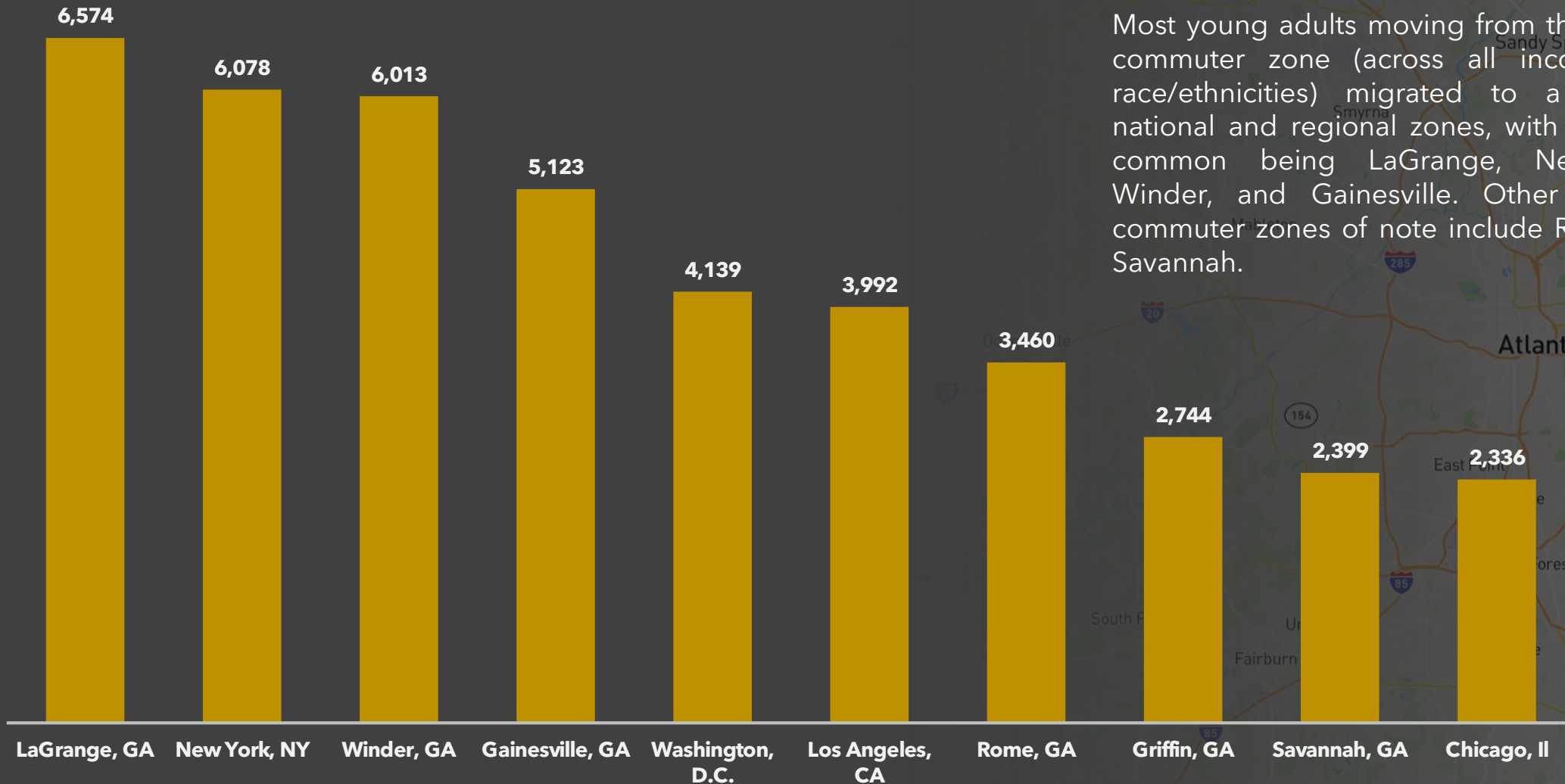


A dark-themed map of the Atlanta metropolitan area and surrounding regions, including parts of Georgia and Alabama. Major highways like I-75, I-85, I-285, and I-20 are visible. City names such as Acworth, Marietta, Smyrna, Atlanta, Decatur, and Fairburn are labeled. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey layer.

# Part 3 | Migration *from* Atlanta

*To where are persons migrating from Atlanta, and what do we know about these populations demographically?*

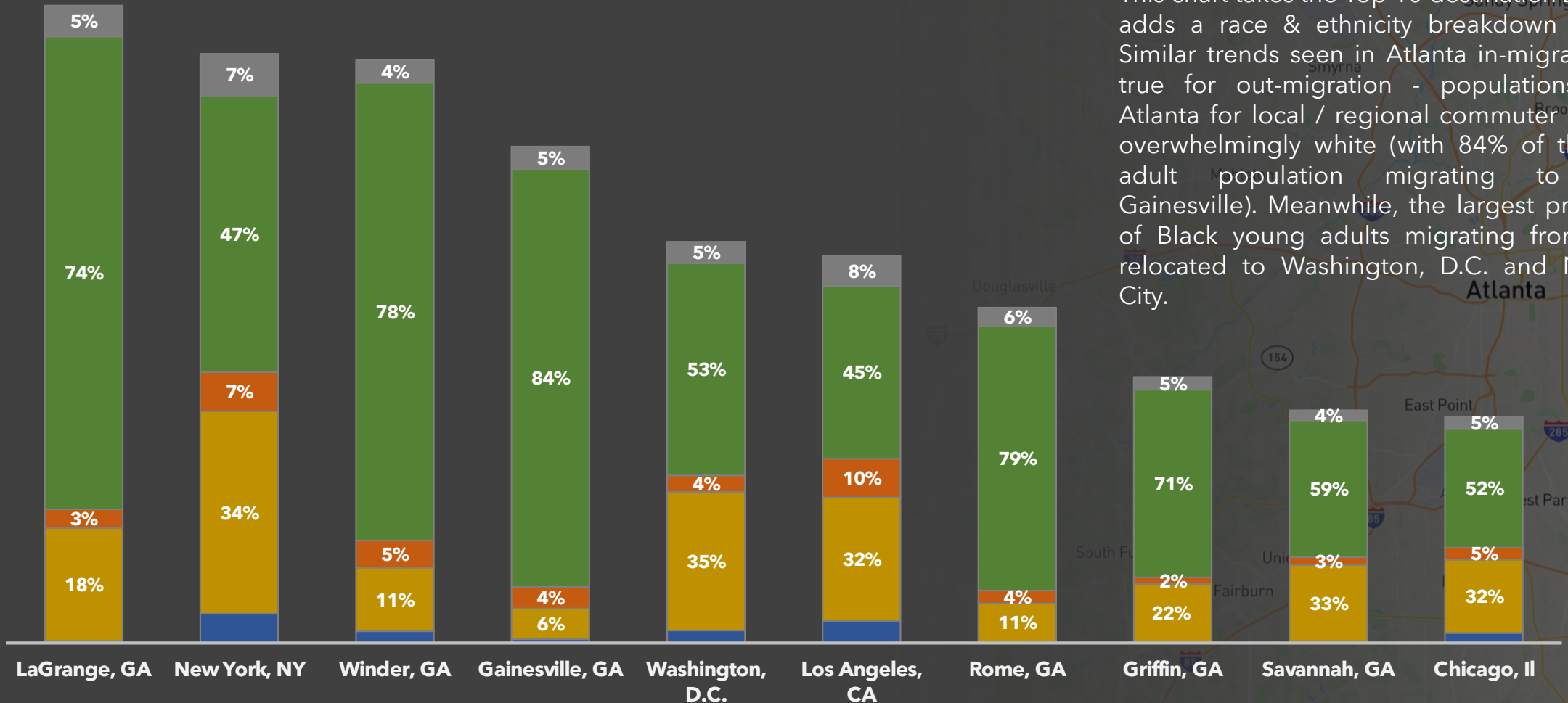
# Out-migration by commuter zone



Most young adults moving from the Atlanta commuter zone (across all income and race/ethnicities) migrated to a mix of national and regional zones, with the most common being LaGrange, New York, Winder, and Gainesville. Other regional commuter zones of note include Rome and Savannah.

# Out-migration by race/ethnicity (by commuter zone)

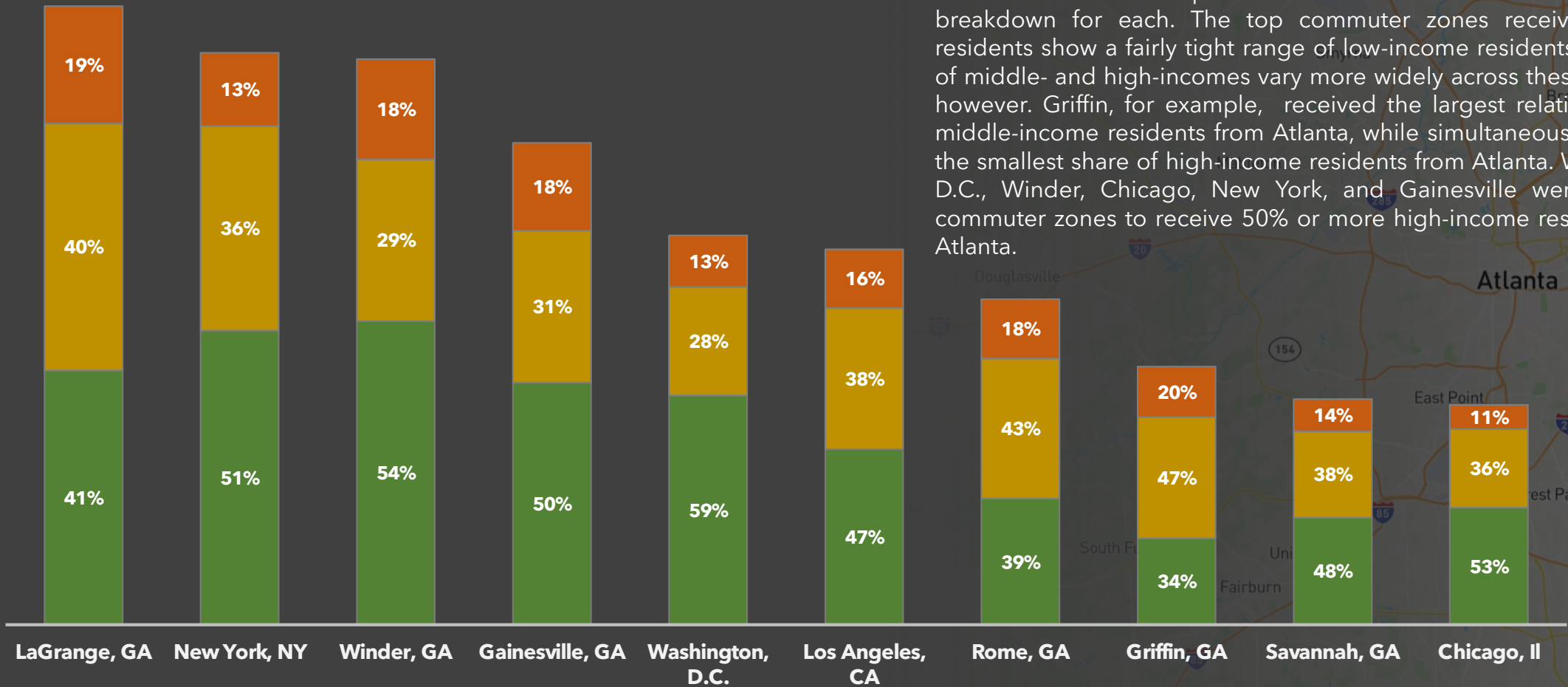
■ Asian 
 ■ Black 
 ■ Hispanic 
 ■ White 
 ■ Other



This chart takes the Top 10 destination zones and adds a race & ethnicity breakdown for each. Similar trends seen in Atlanta in-migration hold true for out-migration - populations leaving Atlanta for local / regional commuter zones are overwhelmingly white (with 84% of the young adult population migrating to nearby Gainesville). Meanwhile, the largest proportions of Black young adults migrating from Atlanta relocated to Washington, D.C. and New York City.

# Out-migration by income level (by commuter zone)

■ High Income ■ Middle Income ■ Low Income



This chart takes the Top 10 destination zones and adds an income breakdown for each. The top commuter zones receiving Atlanta residents show a fairly tight range of low-income residents. The share of middle- and high-incomes vary more widely across these 10 zones, however. Griffin, for example, received the largest relative share of middle-income residents from Atlanta, while simultaneously receiving the smallest share of high-income residents from Atlanta. Washington, D.C., Winder, Chicago, New York, and Gainesville were the only commuter zones to receive 50% or more high-income residents from Atlanta.

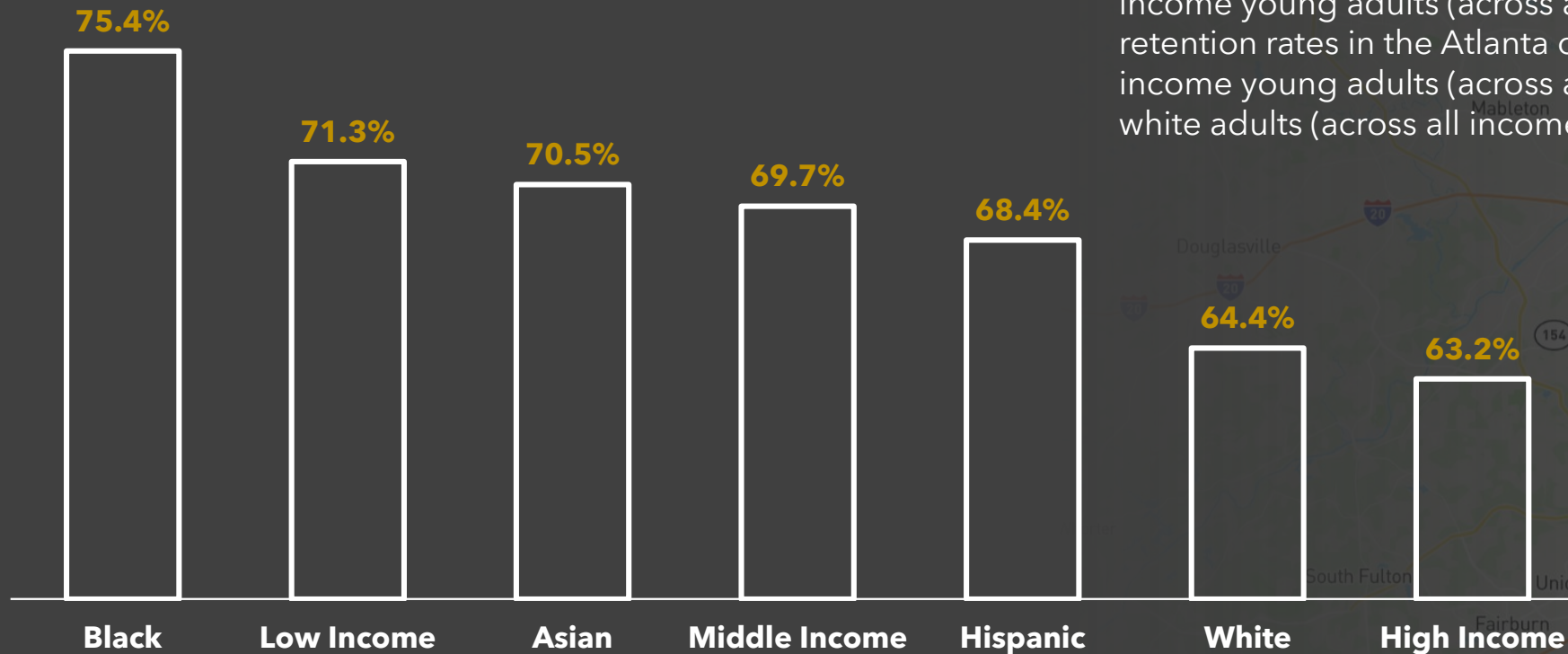




# Part 4 | Retention Rates

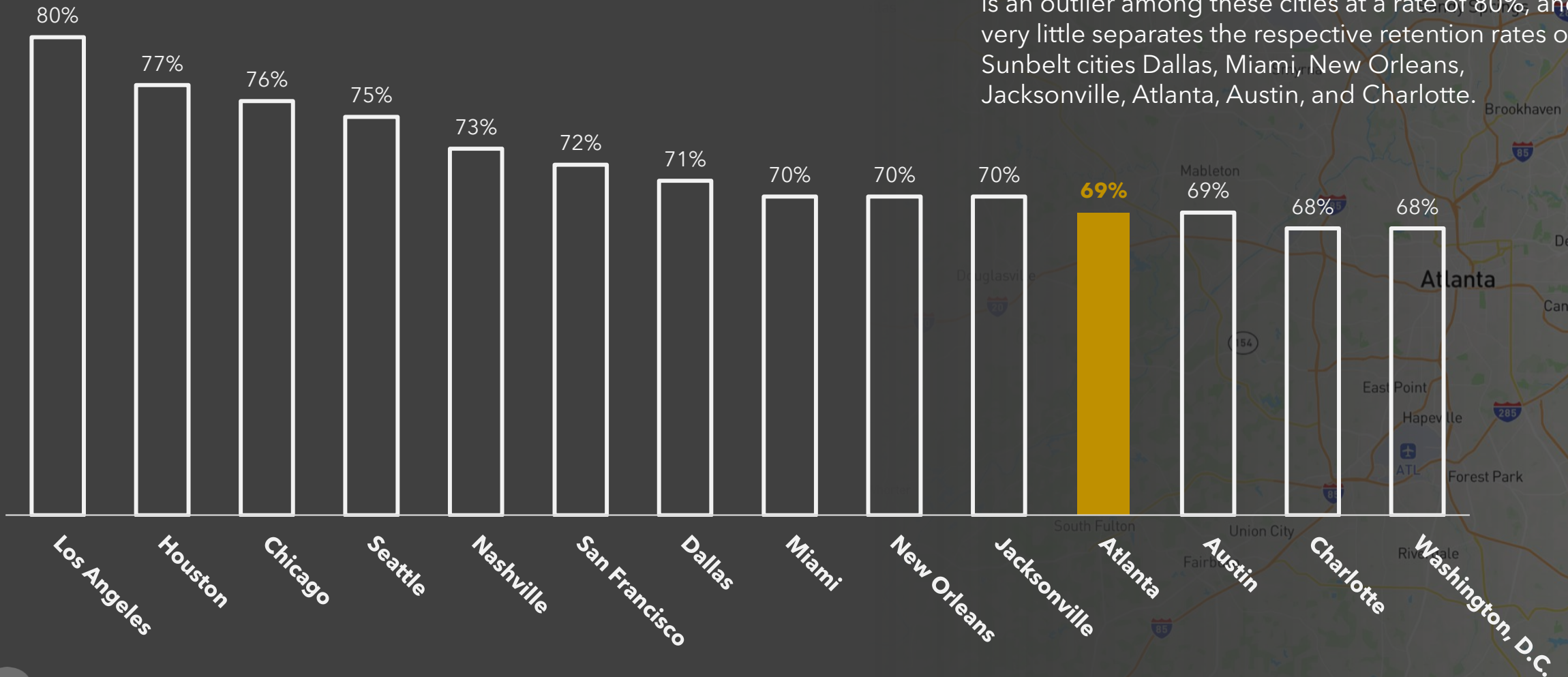
*What subsets of young adults are most likely to stay in the area in which they were born? How do Atlanta's retention rates compare to its peer cities?*

# Overall retention (Atlanta)

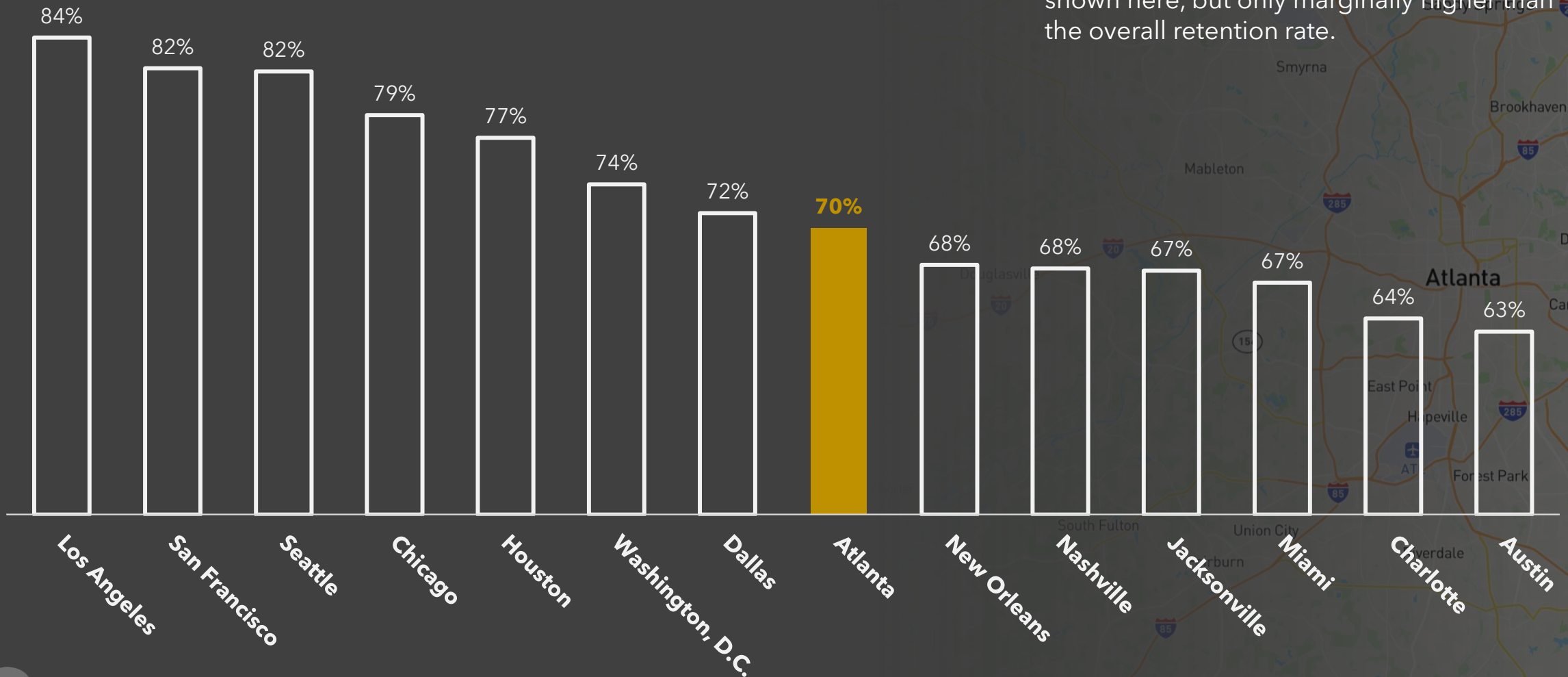


Unlike previous slides, we now will focus on young adults STAYING in the Atlanta and peer commuting zones. This chart shows **overall retention rates** for young adults in Atlanta's key 7 categories. The highest retention rates are among young Black adults (across all income levels) and low-income young adults (across all race/ethnicities). The lowest retention rates in the Atlanta commuter zone are among high income young adults (across all race/ethnicities) and young white adults (across all income levels).

# Overall retention

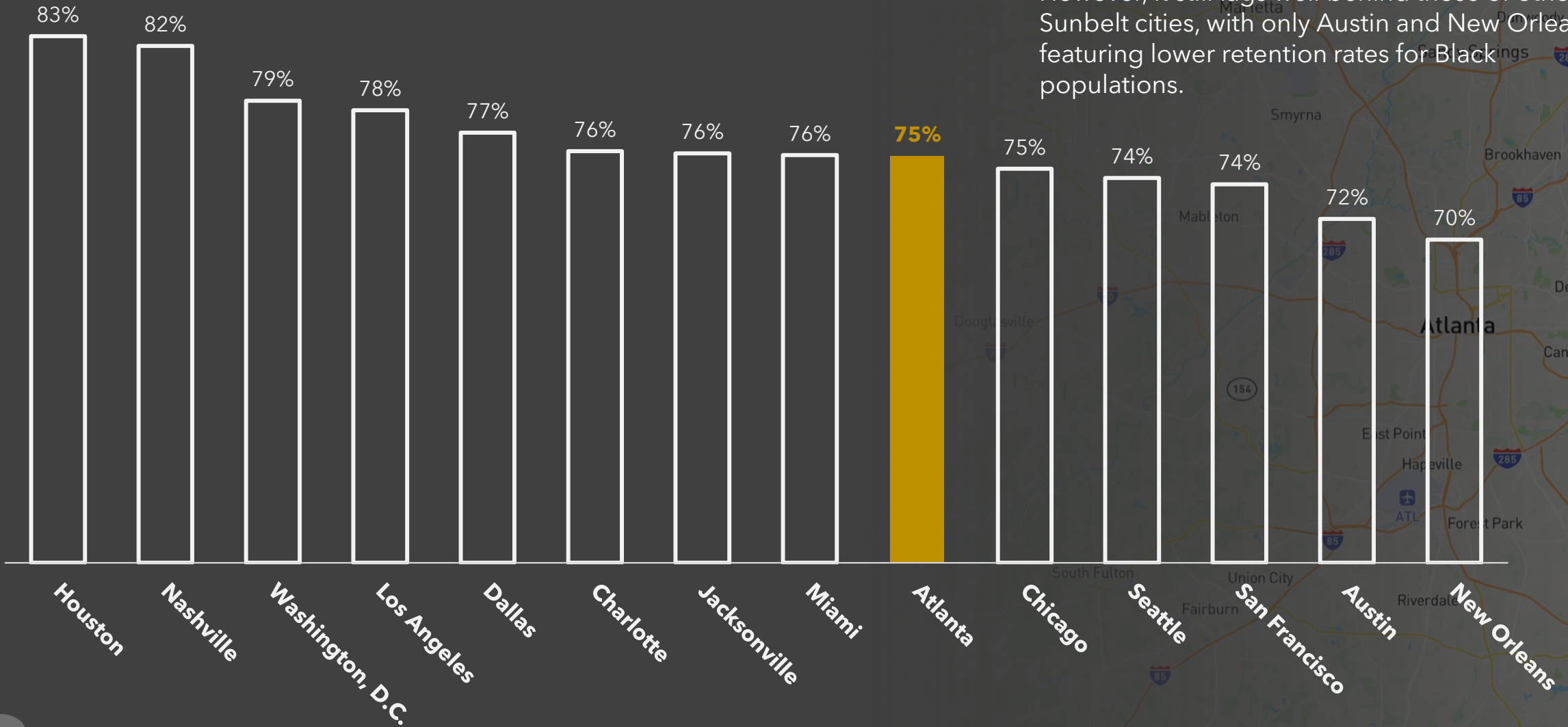


# Asian only



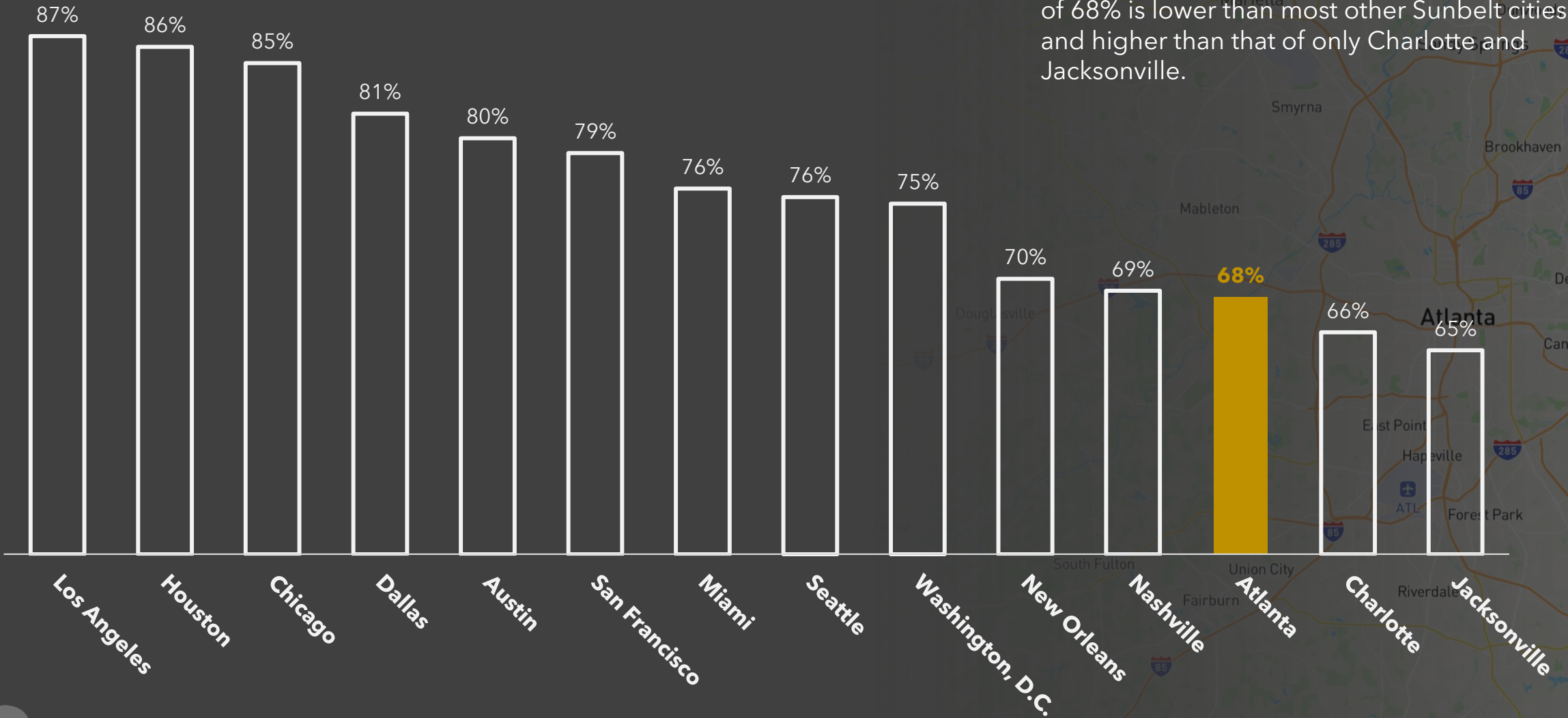
This chart shows retention rates for **Asian (non-Hispanic) young adults** across all income levels. Atlanta's retention rate of 70% is more in line with the median of the cities shown here, but only marginally higher than the overall retention rate.

# Black only



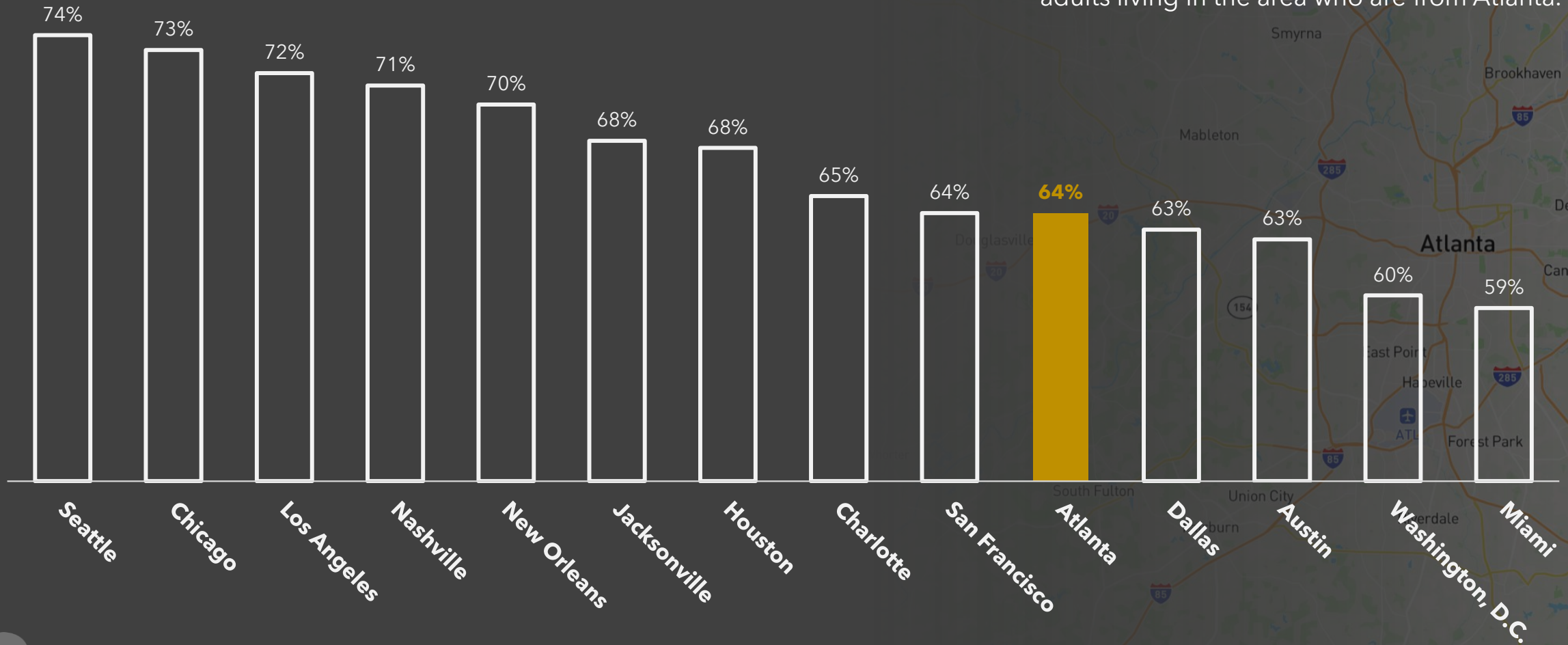
This chart shows retention rates for **Black (non-Hispanic) young adults** across all income levels. Atlanta's retention rate of 75% is the highest of all of the four race/ethnic categories for the region. However, it still lags well behind those of other Sunbelt cities, with only Austin and New Orleans featuring lower retention rates for Black populations.

# Hispanic only



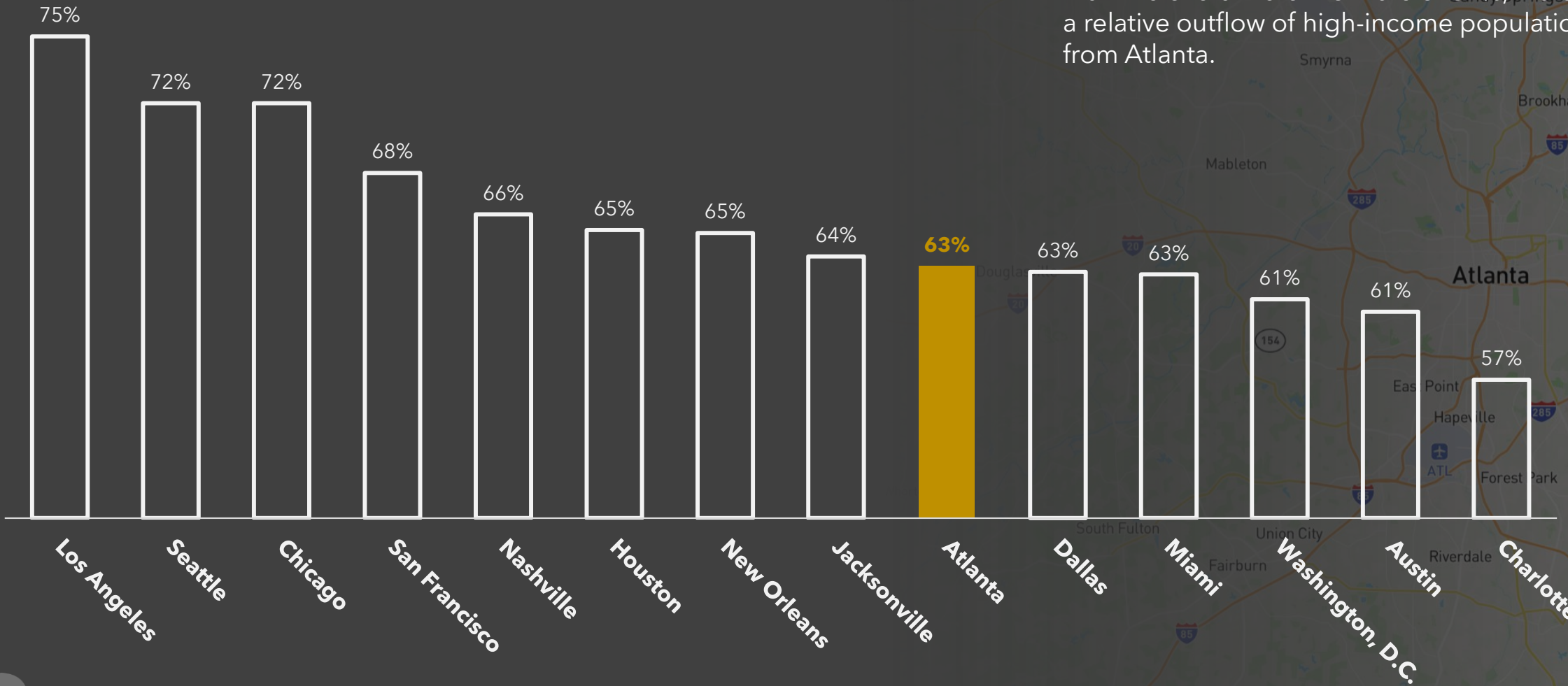
This chart shows retention rates for **Hispanic young adults** across all income levels. As with the case for Black populations, Atlanta's low rate of 68% is lower than most other Sunbelt cities and higher than that of only Charlotte and Jacksonville.

# White only



This chart shows retention rates for **white (non-Hispanic) young adults** across all income levels. Atlanta's retention rate of 64% is the lowest of all of the four race/ethnic categories for the region but still represents roughly 2 out of 3 young White adults living in the area who are from Atlanta.

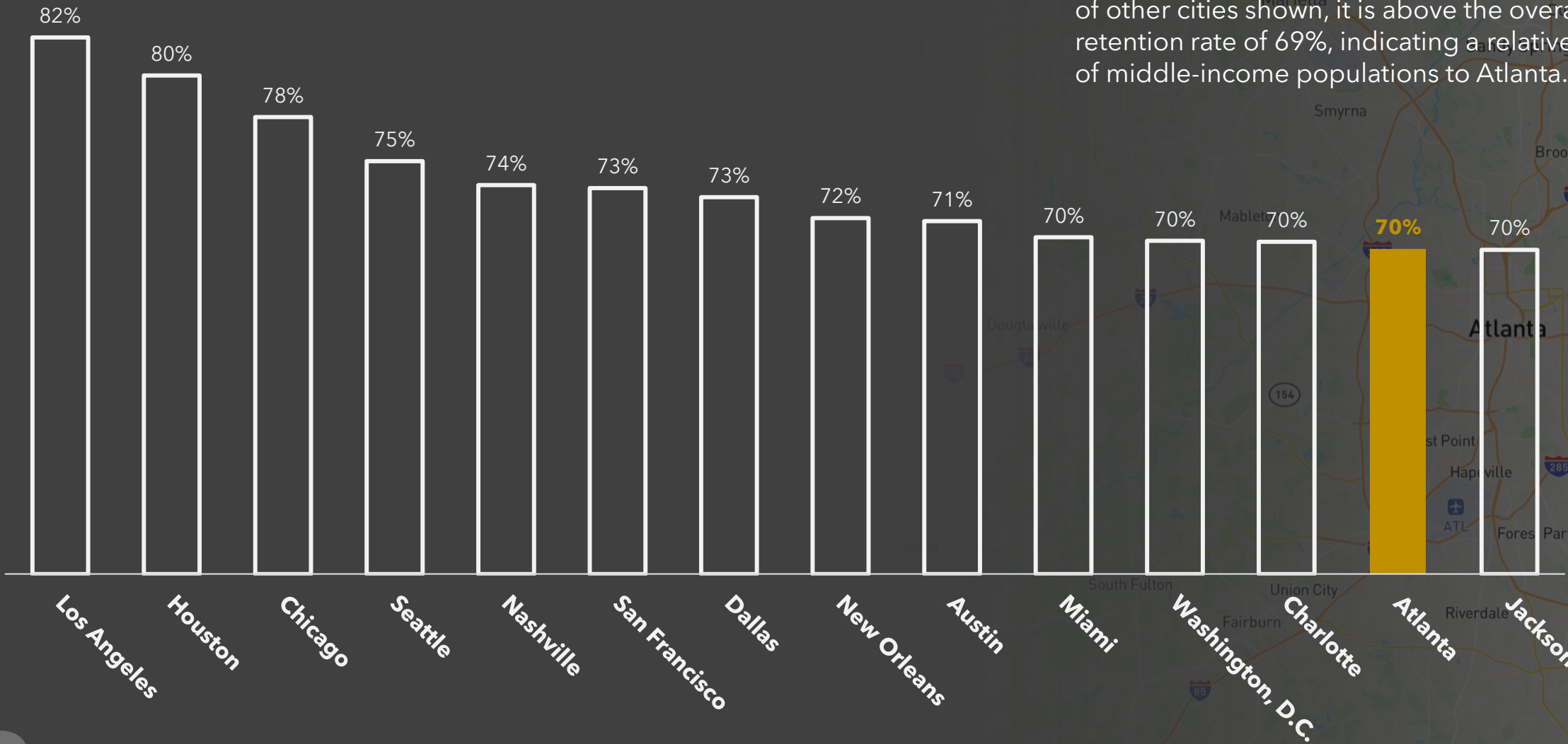
# High income only



This chart shows retention rates for **high-income young adults** across all racial/ethnic groups. Atlanta's retention rate of 63% is near the median value for the cities shown, but lower than the overall retention rate of 69%, indicating a relative outflow of high-income populations from Atlanta.

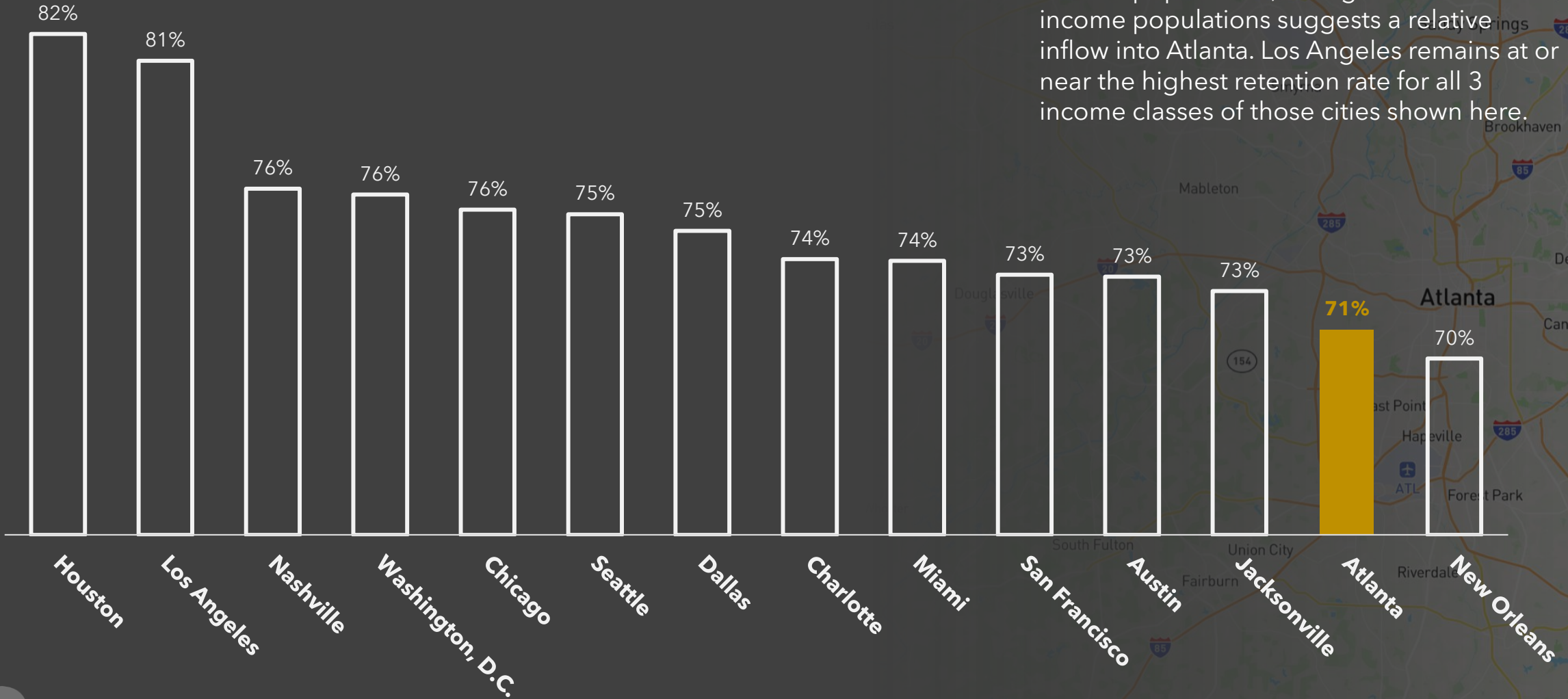


# Middle income only



This chart shows retention rates for **middle-income young adults** across all racial/ethnic groups. While Atlanta's rate is among the lowest of other cities shown, it is above the overall retention rate of 69%, indicating a relative inflow of middle-income populations to Atlanta.

# Low income only



This chart shows retention rates for **low-income young adults** across all racial/ethnic groups. Much like the data for middle-income populations, the figure for low-income populations suggests a relative inflow into Atlanta. Los Angeles remains at or near the highest retention rate for all 3 income classes of those cities shown here.

For further information on the data explored in this snapshot, please visit:

[\*\*\*migrationpatterns.org\*\*\*](https://migrationpatterns.org)

**MIGRATION PATTERNS**