

Data Spotlight

Bexar County's Middle Class

March 2018

San Antonio has begun to think and talk seriously about *income inequality* – the gap between the highest- and lowest-income people in our community – and *income segregation*, or the degree to which people of different income levels live apart from each other in different neighborhoods. Another key piece of the puzzle is our *middle-income* population. While the “middle class” concept and identity encompasses more than income alone, income is a major factor.

The national trend is a steadily shrinking middle class.¹ But what’s happening here in San Antonio and Bexar County? We looked at two data “snapshots” five years apart: 2011 and 2016, the most recent year available. Because of small household counts, this report looks only at the three largest racial/ethnic groups: households headed by Hispanics, blacks, or white non-Hispanics. Together these groups make up over 96% of Bexar County households in both 2011 and 2016.

The Pew Research Center’s definition of middle class or “middle-income” households is households with incomes between two-thirds (67%) of the median income and twice (200%) the median income.¹ Because of the way that income is grouped in the U.S. Census American Community Survey dataset, the income ranges used here don’t line up exactly with the cutoffs calculated using Pew’s method, but they’re close. By this definition, Bexar County’s middle-income households earned between about \$26,000 and \$87,000 per year in 2011. With inflation and changes in income distribution, middle-income households earned between about \$30,000 and \$87,000 in 2016.

MIDDLE CLASS in Bexar County



Earns Between: Earns Between:



\$26K-\$81K

2011



\$31K-\$92K

2016

307K
in 2011

290K
in 2016




Total Middle Income

HOUSEHOLDS



**2016 Middle Income
HOUSEHOLDS**

Source: 2011 & 2016 US Census ACS 5 & 1-Year Est.



Despite a significant increase in the number of households overall, the number of middle-income Bexar County households dropped 5.5% between 2011 and 2016, a loss of almost 16,916 households. White non-Hispanic middle-income households experienced a much sharper decline of 14.4%. Hispanic middle-income households experienced a very small decrease of 0.4%, and black/African-American middle-income households tracked fairly closely with the county overall with a drop of 3.8%.

Two clear patterns emerge. First, the stability of Bexar County's middle class is currently anchored by Hispanic and black households, which in 2016 made up 55% and 8%, respectively, of total middle-income households. Both experienced a decline in number, however. That anchor is fragile.

Middle Class			
	2011	2016	% Change
Total Households	307,008	290,092	-5.51
Hispanic	159,115	158,421	-0.44
White (non-Hispanic)	114,245	97,824	-14.37
Black	23,303	22,429	-3.75

Source: US Census 2011 & 2016 ACS 5 & 1-Year Est.

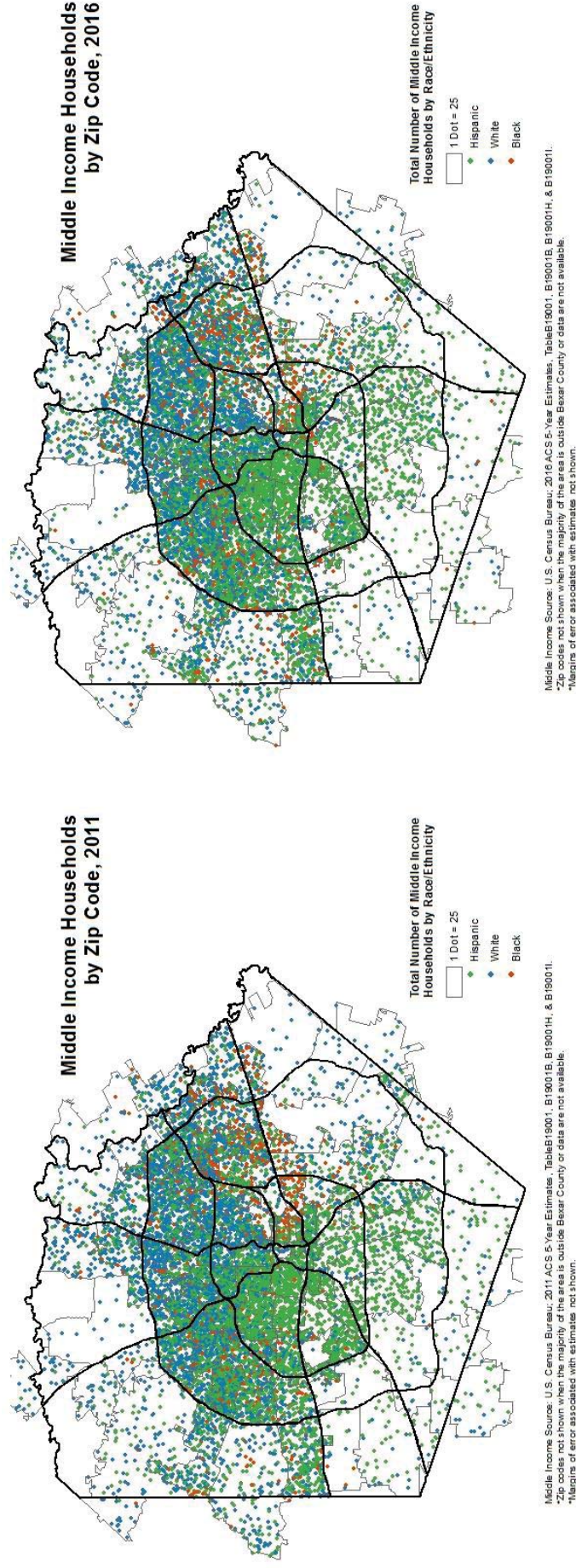
Second, Bexar County's overall loss of middle-income households was driven almost entirely by the loss of 16,421 white non-Hispanic middle-income households, compared to 694 Hispanic households and 874 black households. As evidenced by a drop of 6,711 in the total number of white non-Hispanic households of any income level, about 40% of the "lost" white non-Hispanic middle-income households resulted from factors like out-migration or death. The other roughly 60% reflects an increase in the number of higher-income households. The increase could be due to a variety of factors, including in-migration of higher-income white non-Hispanic households, upward economic mobility, or higher-income young adults establishing new households of their own.

Hispanics, on the other hand, saw a gain of 20,312 households in 2016 as compared to 2011. About one in 10 of these households were lower-income, but nearly 19,000 households were higher-income. Again, factors contributing to this increase might include in-migration of higher-income Hispanic households, upward economic mobility, or higher-income young adults establishing new households. Compared to 2011, 2016 saw a gain of 4,817 black/African-American households in Bexar County. A much smaller percentage of that gain was higher-income, with 2,993 additional higher-income households and 2,698 additional lower-income households.

Middle Income Households by Race/Ethnicity

2011 & 2016

Figure 1



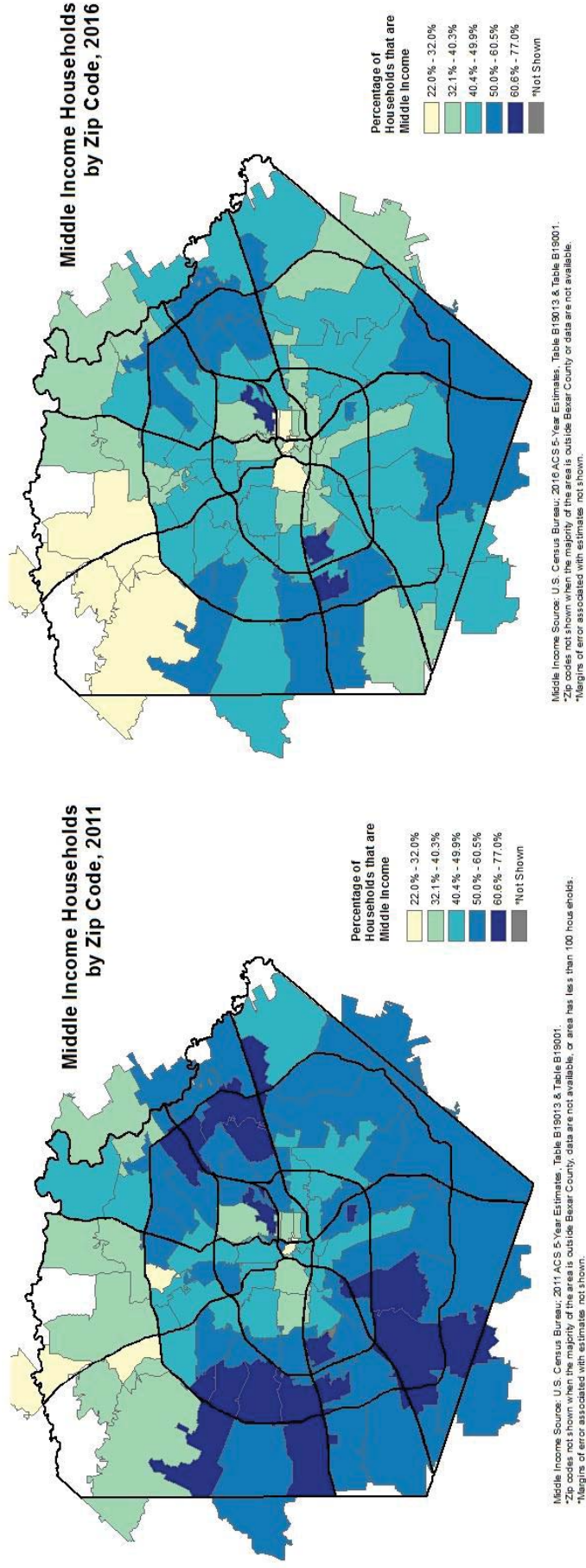
The dot-density maps in Figure 1 show the rough geographic distribution of middle-income households in 2011 and 2016. One dot on the map represents 25 households. The dots are randomly scattered within the zip code and do not mark the actual locations of the households.

Despite having similar household incomes, the three groups of middle-income households show very different geographic patterns. White non-Hispanic middle-income households are very heavily concentrated in the northern half of the county. While less dramatic, a concentration of black middle-income households on the east and northeast sides is evident. Hispanic middle-income households are the most widely-distributed, but still more heavily concentrated on the west and south sides.

All Middle Income Households

2011 & 2016

Figure 2



Looking at the percent rather than the number of households that are middle-income controls for factors like migration. That percent varies dramatically by zip code (Figure 2). Most of the zip codes where half or more of households are middle-income are outside Loop 410. Although the percent of households that are middle-income decreased markedly between 2011 and 2016, the geographic distribution didn't change dramatically.

In 2011, though, Bexar County had clear geographic clusters where more than six in 10 households were middle-income. These clusters were generally between Loop 410 and 1604 on the northwest, central south, and northeast areas of the county, including current and former military bases: JBSA-FT, Sam Houston, JBSA-Randolph, JBSA-Lackland and JBSA-Kelly Field Annex, and Brooks City Base. While the percent of households that were middle-income in 2016 was still relatively higher in those areas, the only zip code with a substantial number of households where a large majority were middle-income was JBSA-FT. Sam Houston. While the data don't offer what percent of middle-income households are connected with the military, and the populations of several of these zip codes are small and thus the margins of error large, it appears that the military is another anchor of Bexar County's middle class.

Middle Income Hispanic Households

2011 & 2016

Figure 3

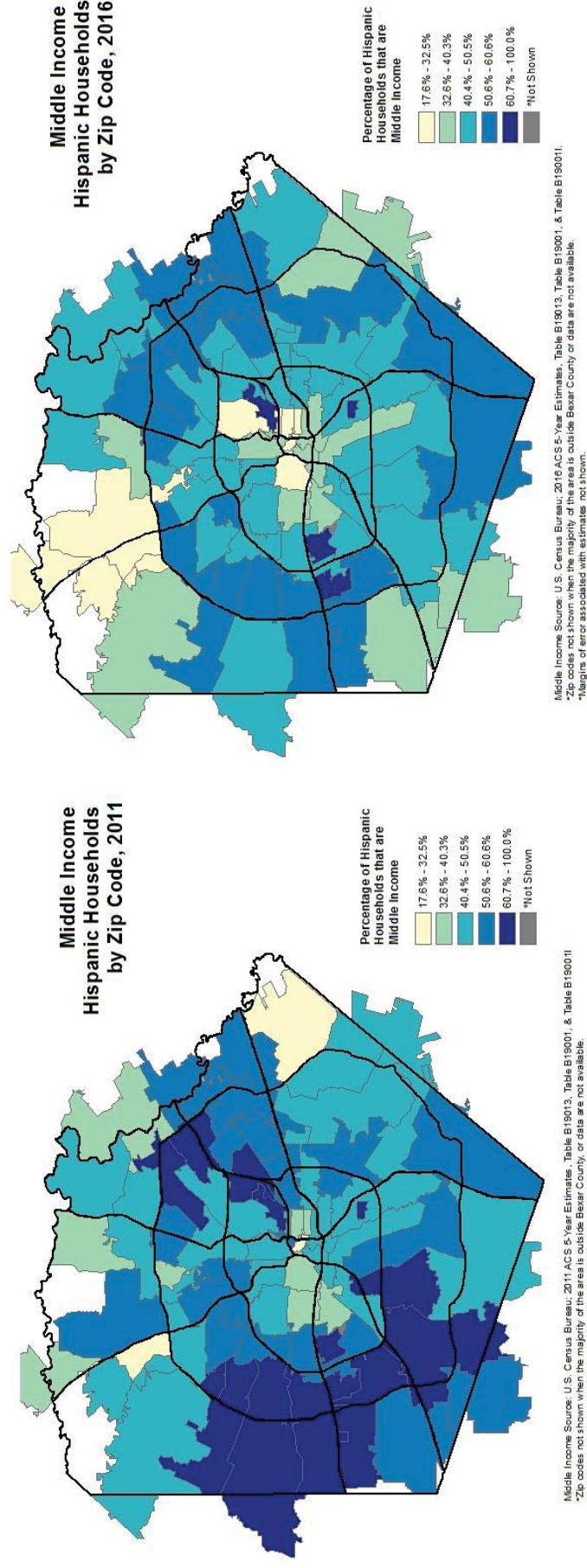
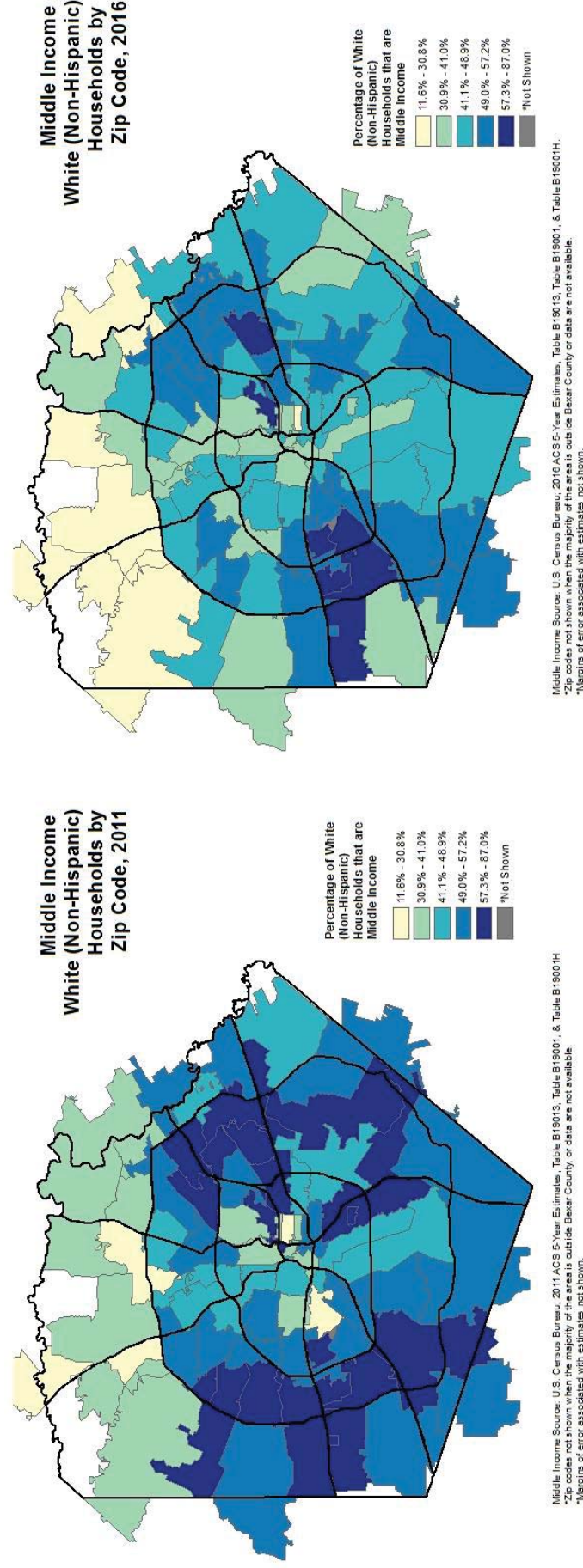


Figure 3 maps by zip code the percent of Hispanic households that were middle-income in 2011 and 2016. In 2011, the western half of the county had a large cluster of Hispanic middle-income households, stretching from the northern-most segment of Highway 16 (Bandera Road) to the southern-most segment of Highway 16 (Palo Alto Road) and South Zarzamora Street. A second cluster extended from JBSA-FT. Sam Houston up through the older suburban neighborhoods along the Northeast Corridor. Among Hispanic households, the percent that were middle-income dropped substantially. Again, the only zip codes where more than 60% of households were middle-income in 2016 were JBSA-FT. Sam Houston and JBSA-Lackland/JBSA-Kelly Field Annex, although the latter two have a very small number of households.

Middle Income White Households

2011 & 2016

Figure 4

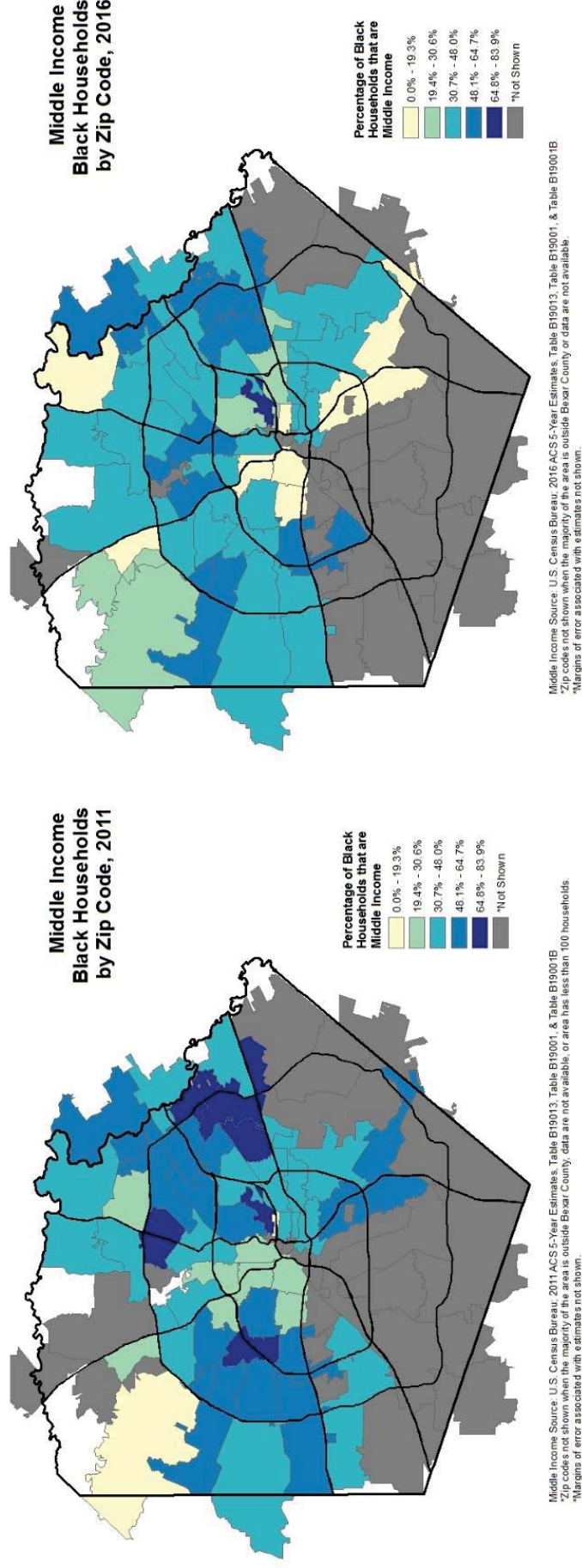


Among white non-Hispanics, the percent of households that were middle-income decreased across the county. Large clusters of zip codes where a high percent of all white non-Hispanic households were middle-income in 2011 shrank to a handful of zip codes by 2016, with military bases again as a constant.

Middle Income Black Households

2011 & 2016

Figure 5



Because the total number of black/African-American households in Bexar County is relatively small and unevenly distributed across the county, data for middle-income black households are not available for a large number of zip codes (Figure 5). Still, though, the number of zip codes with a higher percent of middle-income households shrank markedly. A somewhat different pattern of change over time emerges for black households, though, with an increase in the percent of households that are middle-income on the northwest side and the near-northside.

Methodology & Notes

All analyses in this report use data from the 2011 and 2016 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, while the Pew Research Center used the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) calculated from ACS. County-level figures are calculated from ACS 2011 and 2016 one-year estimates. Zip code-level figures are calculated from ACS 2011 and 2016 five-year estimates to reduce margins of error and improve the trustworthiness of the estimate. “Zip code” is used as shorthand for “ZIP Code Tabulation Area”² throughout. For purposes of exploring differences by race/ethnicity, households were classified according to the race/ethnicity of the head of household, not all household members.

The middle income brackets for both years are determined according to the method used by The Pew Research Center in several analyses of the middle class.³ That method defines middle-income households as those for which annual household income is two-thirds to double the median income. The income ranges and the number of households in each range were determined by using Tables B19013 and B19001 from the ACS Survey for Bexar County. The ranges were adjusted using a three-person household, also following Pew Research Center’s method- where adjusted household income is household income divided by the household size raised to the “N” power. For the purposes of this analysis we used an “N” equal to 0.5. If we had record level data the middle income cut-off for 2011 would be \$26,997 - \$80,990 and for 2016 would be \$30,757-\$92,272. Because we are limited to the ACS income breakdowns, all amounts are rounded to nearest income bracket. As a result, we cut off the upper range of middle income at \$87,000 for years 2011 and 2016 to cover the majority of households in this category.

Dot density maps were used to illustrate the geographic distribution of middle income households by race/ethnicity. One dot represents 25 middle-income households. Each dot represents not the exact location of any household, but rather the presence of 25 middle-income households in that ZIP Code Tract Area.

A natural breaks distribution was used for the maps showing the percent of households that were middle-income. This method arranges values into different classes based on naturally-occurring groups in the actual data for that map.

Sources

¹ Pew Research Center. (2016, May 11). *America’s shrinking middle class: A close look at changes within metropolitan areas*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/05/11/americas-shrinking-middle-class-a-close-look-at-changes-within-metropolitan-areas/>

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *ZIP Code™ Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs™)*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/zctas.html>

³ See for example Fry, R, & Kochhar, R. (2016). *Are you in the American middle class? Find out with our income calculator*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/11/are-you-in-the-american-middle-class/>



Reference Maps



Major Highways within
Bexar County

