

# What a Dollar Costs: Travel Times and Distances to Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in King County, Washington

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Increasing rates of homelessness may be creating service imbalances/deserts. Long travel times and distances to services and limited transportation options pose a significant access barrier. For people experiencing homelessness, the relative cost of travel to service locations must be worth the benefit of support.

**How far are people experiencing homelessness willing to travel to receive support?**

**Can travel data identify service imbalances and improve access?**

We use travel data from a representative sample of people experiencing homelessness in Seattle-King County, WA, US; twelfth-largest county by population and host to the fourth-largest unhoused population.

## (1) Long travel distances suggest service imbalances/deserts.

Median trends imply reasonable access...

but right tails suggest **poor access**.

→ Median travel distances were short (3 miles).

→ Many respondents travelled >10 miles.  
→ Majority of respondents are living **unsheltered**.

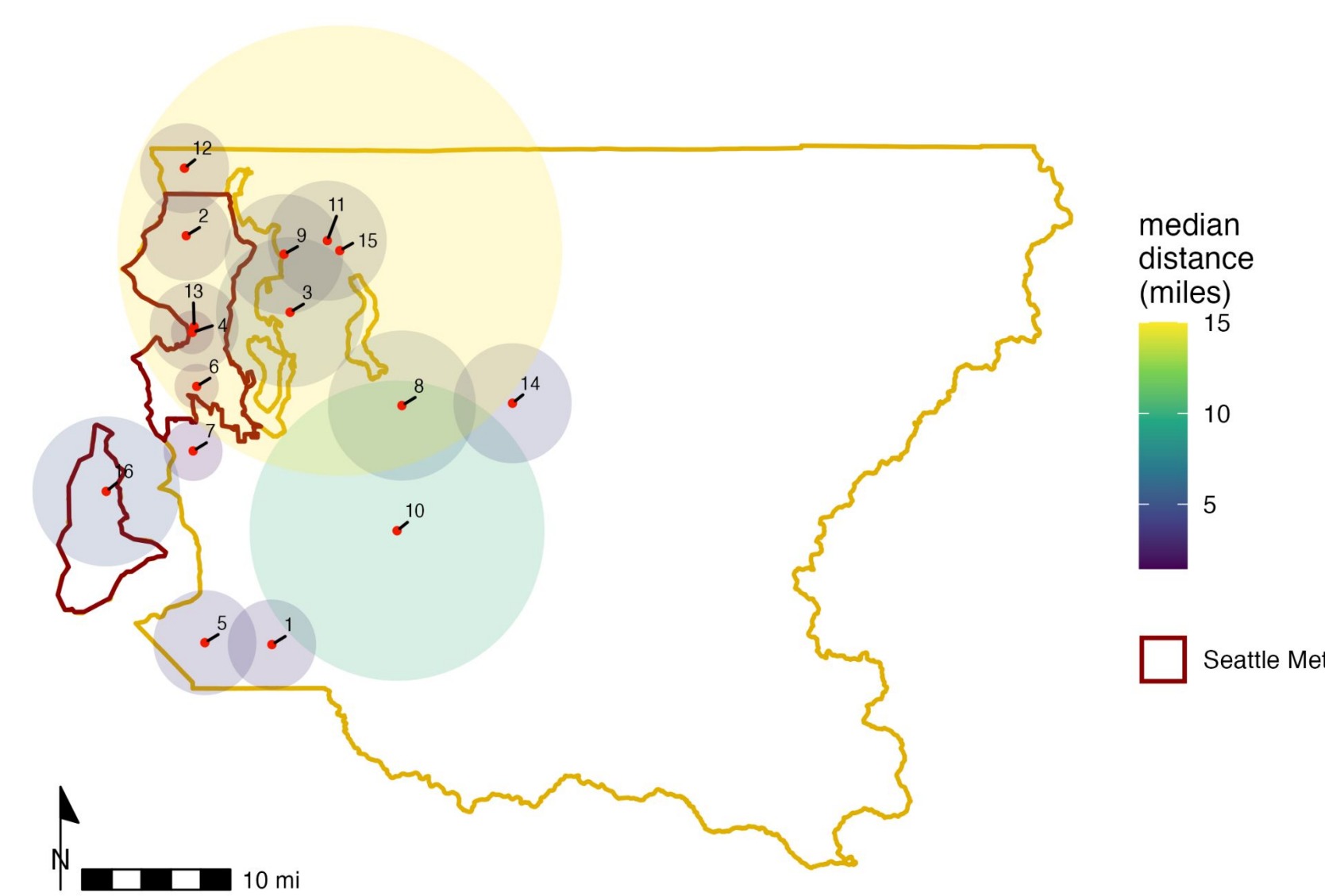


Fig 1. Median travel distance buffer zones around service locations in Seattle-King County.

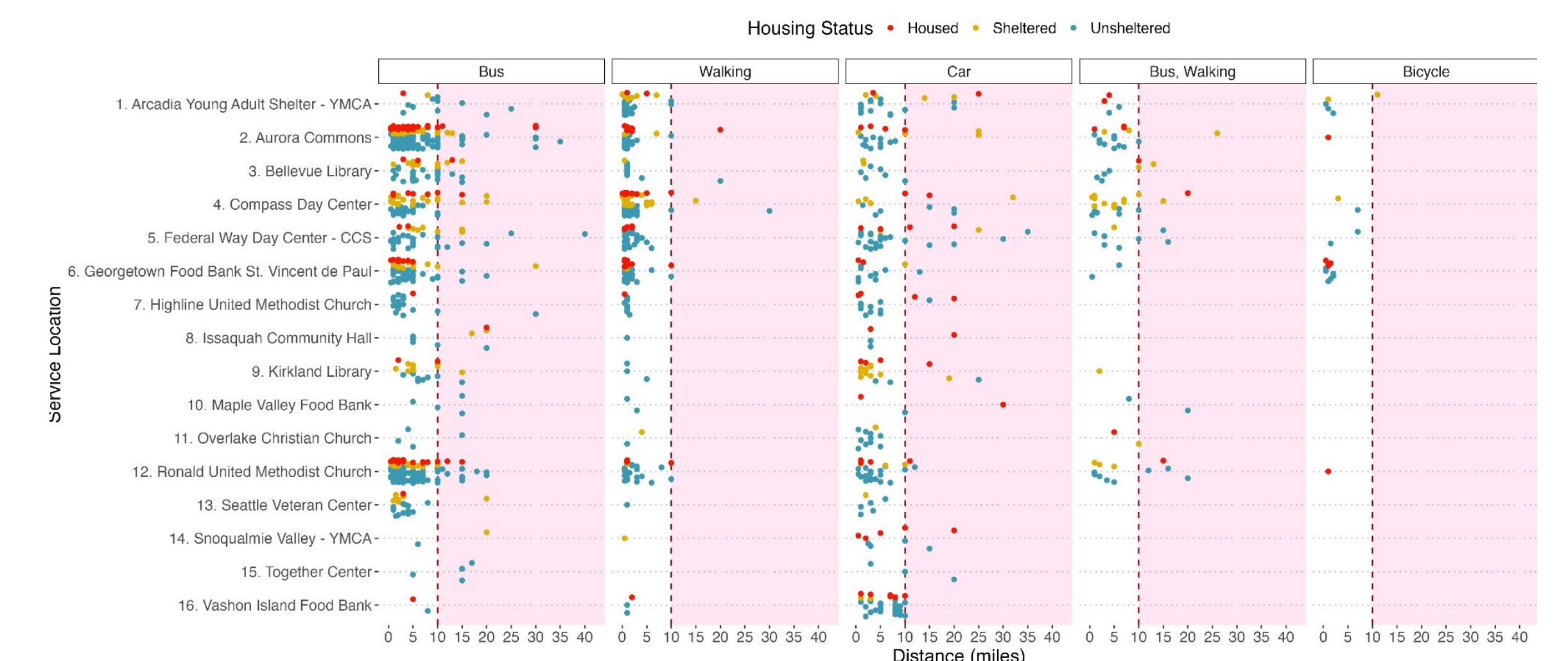


Fig 2. Distance travelled by top 5 transportation modes by service location and housing status.

## (2) Large catchment areas suggest large imbalances between where people in need reside in East and South King County and where services are located.

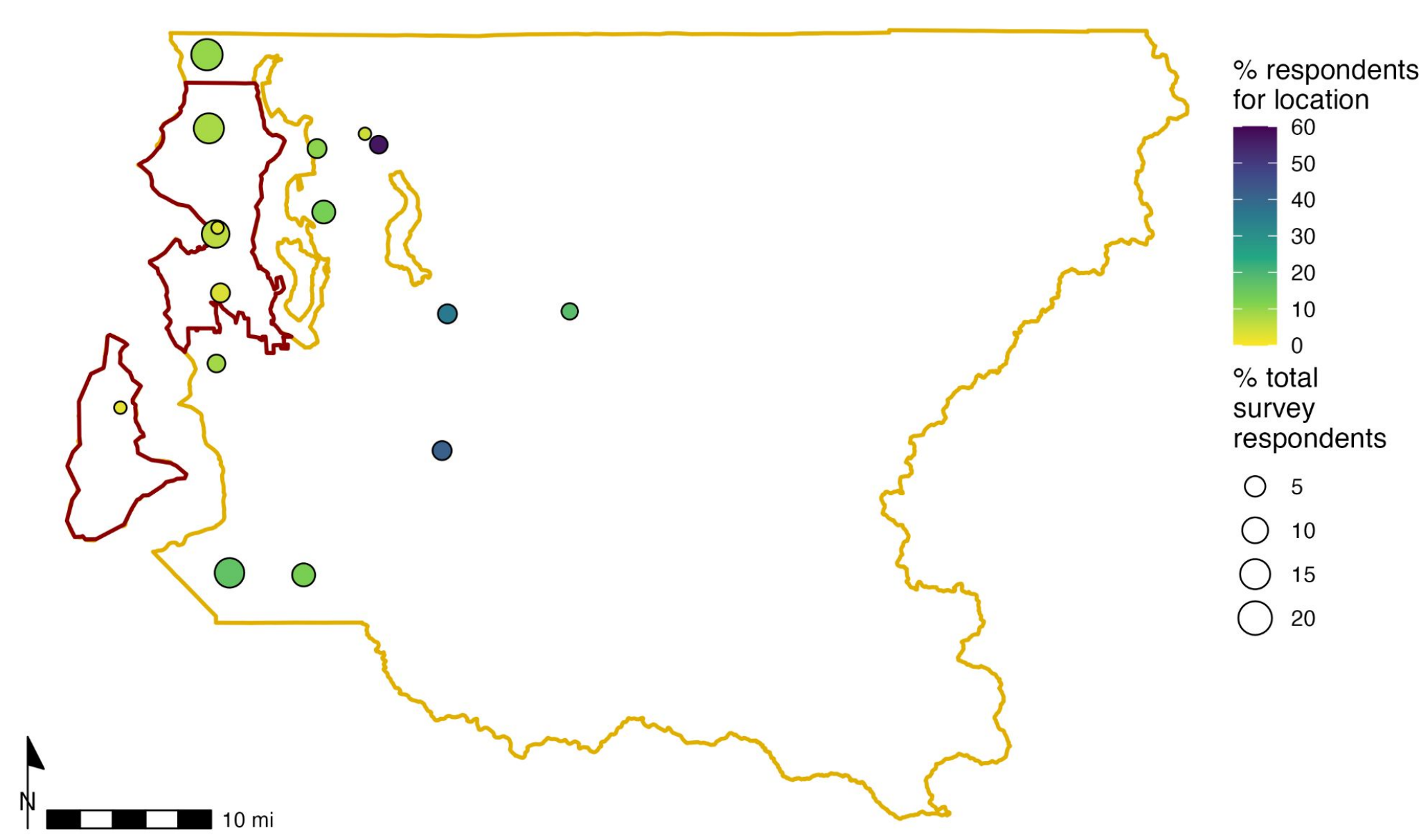


Fig 3. Percent of respondents who traveled >10 miles.

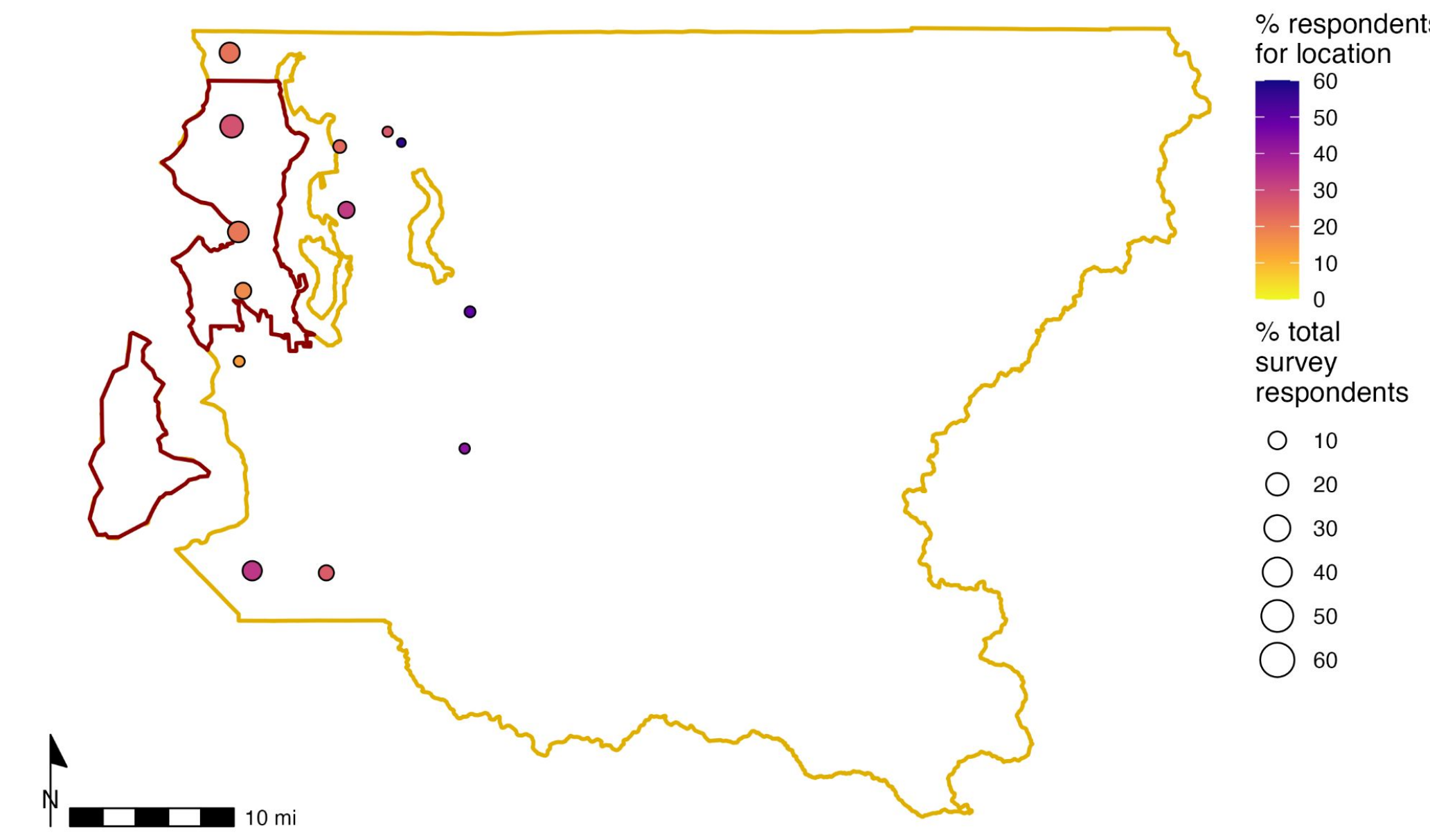


Fig 4. Percent of respondents who traveled >30 minutes.

## (3) Outside the Seattle Metro area, the majority travel on foot or by bus to service locations, despite limited infrastructure.

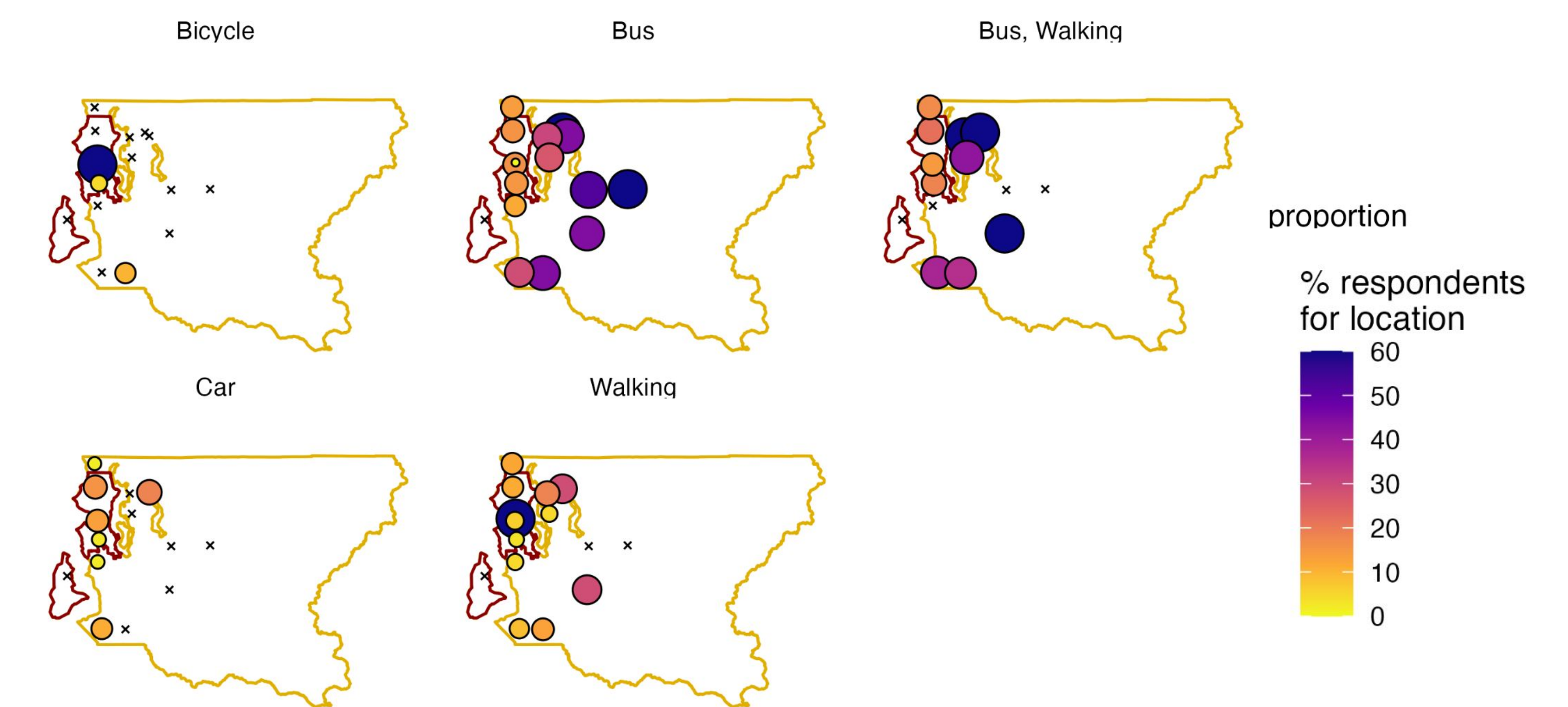


Fig 5. Percent of respondents using the top 5 transportation modes.



**To address these access barriers, we recommend:**

- expanding mobile service clinics along the urban periphery;
- broadening bus fare subsidy programs in East and South King County.

