

Poverty and the Working Poor on Long Island

Kathleen Murray and Mary Stephens



Themes

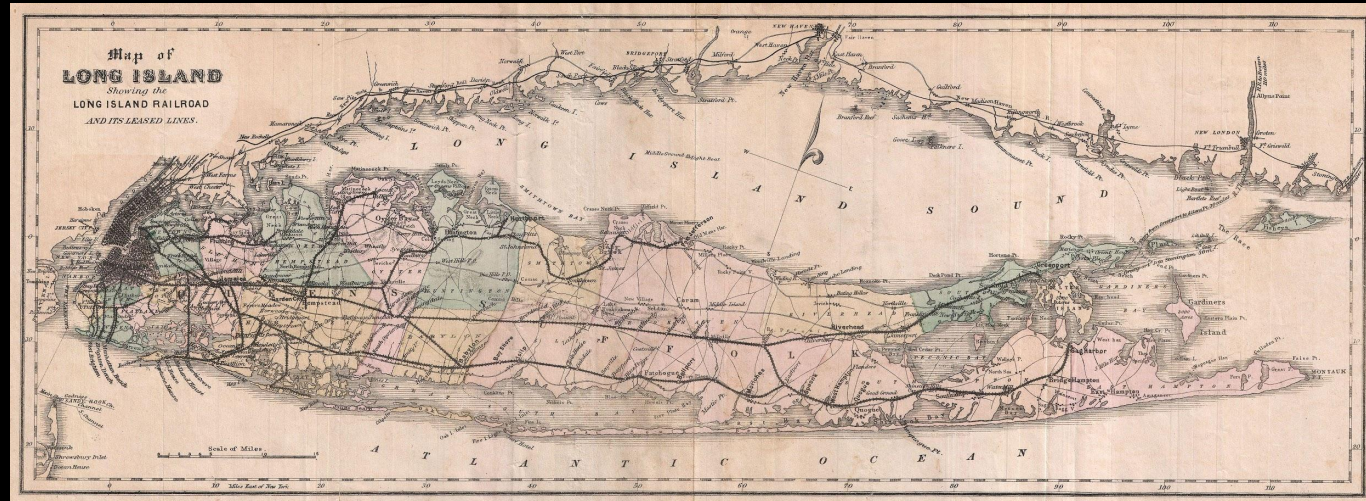
- Poverty threshold vs. Survival threshold
- Misconceptions of Poverty
- Segregation
- Natural Disasters
- Transportation
- Opportunity Gaps



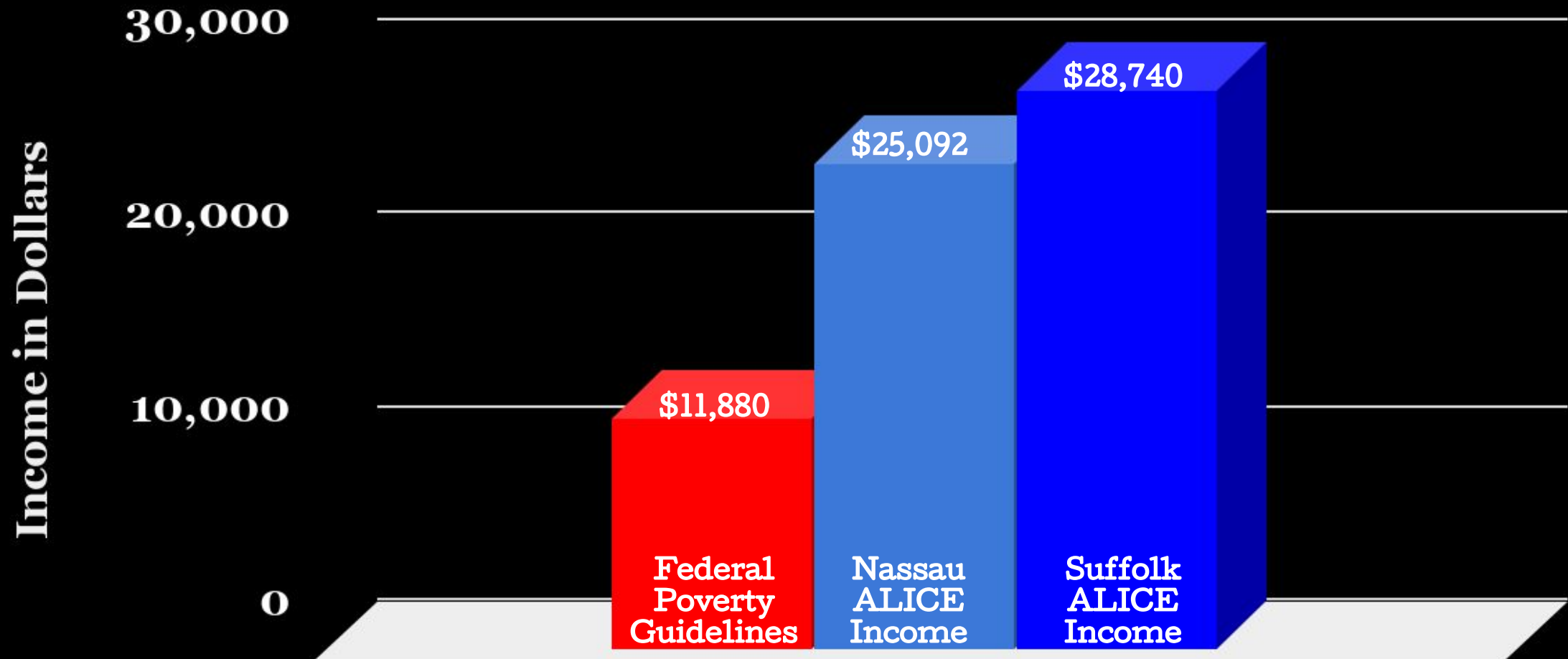
Poverty Threshold vs. Survival Threshold



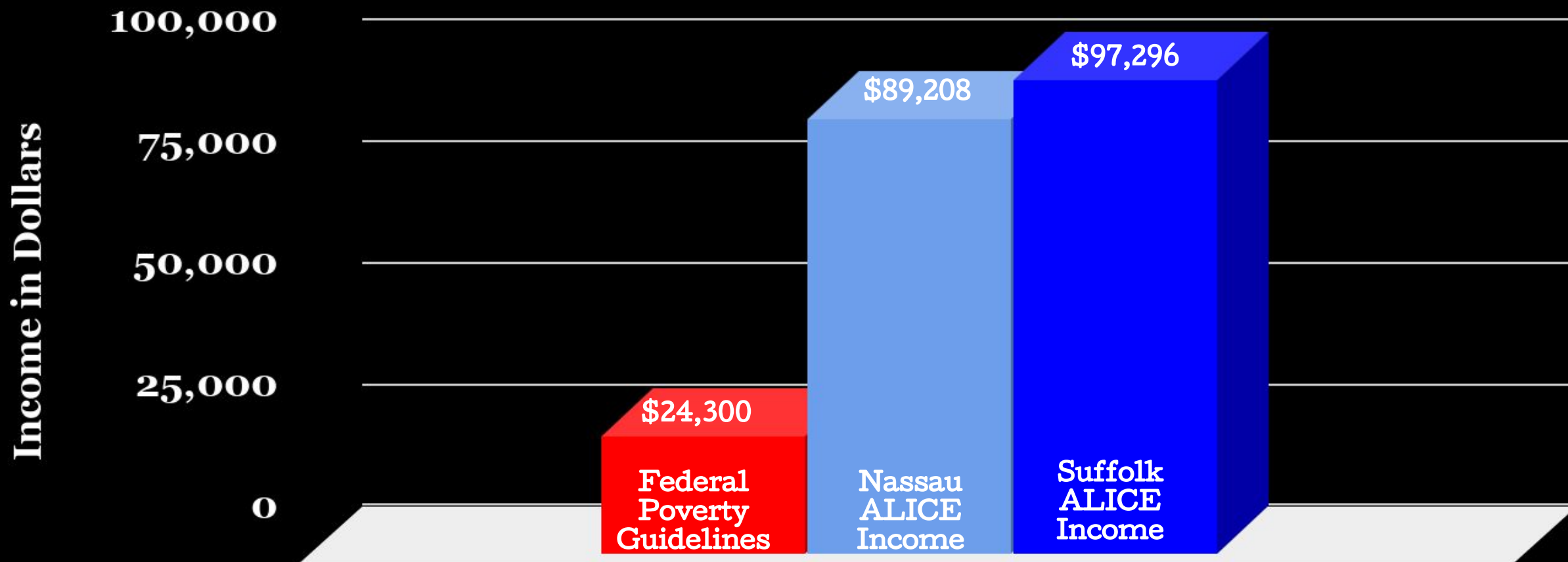
Federal guidelines vs. ALICE Threshold- Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed



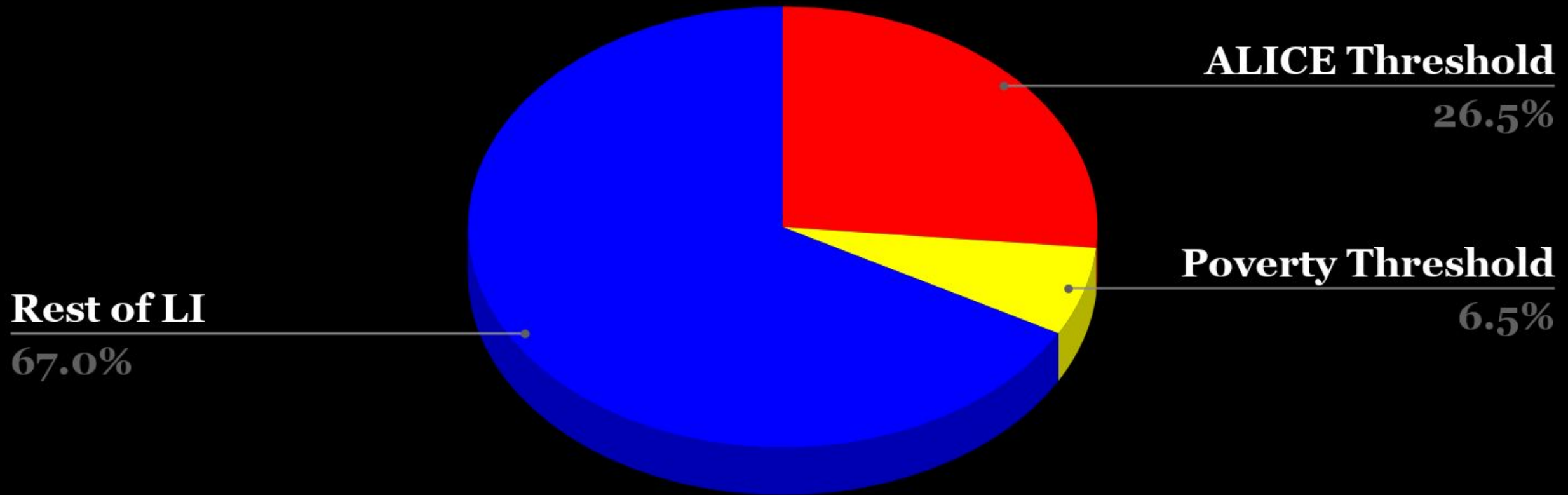
Poverty Guidelines and Survival Income for a Single Adult



Poverty Guidelines and Survival Budgets for a Family of Four



Measures of Financial Health



“And this is not just folks who are considered poor by the federal poverty level, which is completely inadequate at identifying poverty in our region. This is folks who by federal standards would be considered middle-class and well to do, who are living paycheck to paycheck, who are unable to find housing that they can afford, even though they have respectable incomes.”

—President/CEO LI Non-Profit

Misconceptions of Poverty



Long Island is an Area of Great Wealth

“Long Island has a history of being known by literary works like Great Gatsby. People think of the Hamptons, and they think of opulence. And it used to be the case that we had pockets of poverty on Long Island, but the demographics had shifted and we have pockets of wealth today. And each and every community that you go into, regardless of its composition has folks that are struggling, folks that are living invisible lives, people that are living in the shadows, and our representatives in Albany often don't have that understanding of who we are.”

—President/CEO LI Non-Profit

There is No Poverty on Long Island

“When people think of poverty, they think of just homeless people. They think of people who live on the street, who have no clothes, that are begging for food with signs, and the truth is that poverty could look like our own family. Poverty could be, we don’t know how we’re going to pay our mortgage next month. Poverty could be there’s no money in the bank to even think about college... There are so many different facets to what it looks like, the people and the faces, the kids that go to school hungry. And the parents that don’t eat at night because there’s not enough food to eat for everyone ... It’s not the person that, physically you could see something’s wrong.”

—Manager of Community Education
and Outreach, LI Non-Profit

People Choose To Live In Poverty

“We're living in a time where there's a culture of permission to look at poverty as human limitation, as opposed to circumstance. And so we see a real shift in the comfortability that folks have both on social media and in person. Really demonizing and dehumanizing people who are struggling, talking about people without recognizing their humanity first.”

—President/CEO LI Non-Profit

You Only Live in Poverty Because You
Don't Work Hard Enough

“We don't want people to stay stagnant and if someone is poor in America, you're supposed to be able to pull yourself out of that. But a lot of times we challenge people to do that with no resources and we say, **why can't you pull yourself up by your own bootstraps?** Some people don't have boots. So it's a thing where we have to support that.”

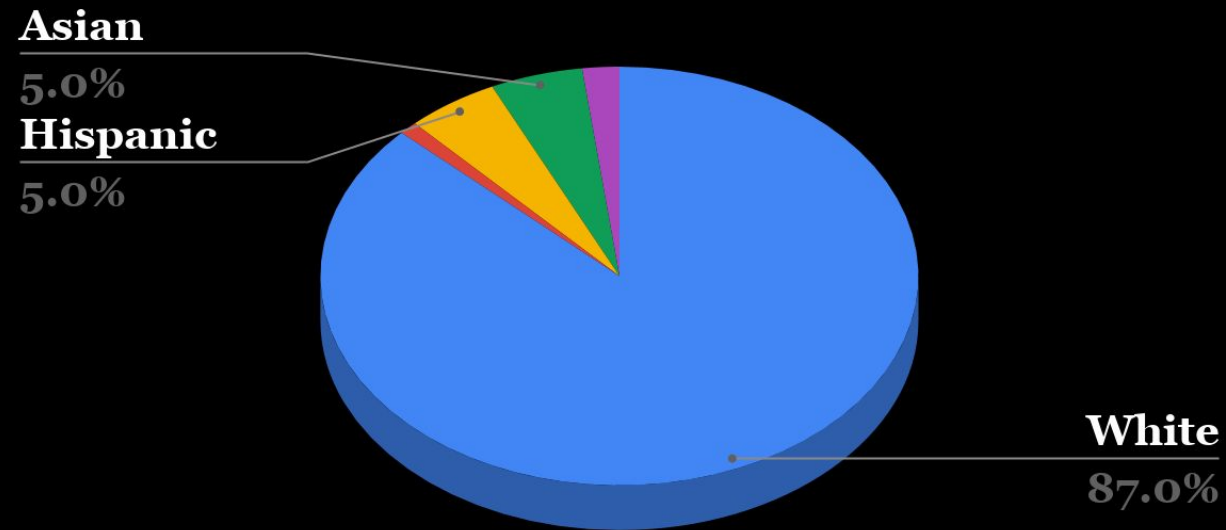
—Director of Diversity and
Development, LI Non-Profit

Segregation

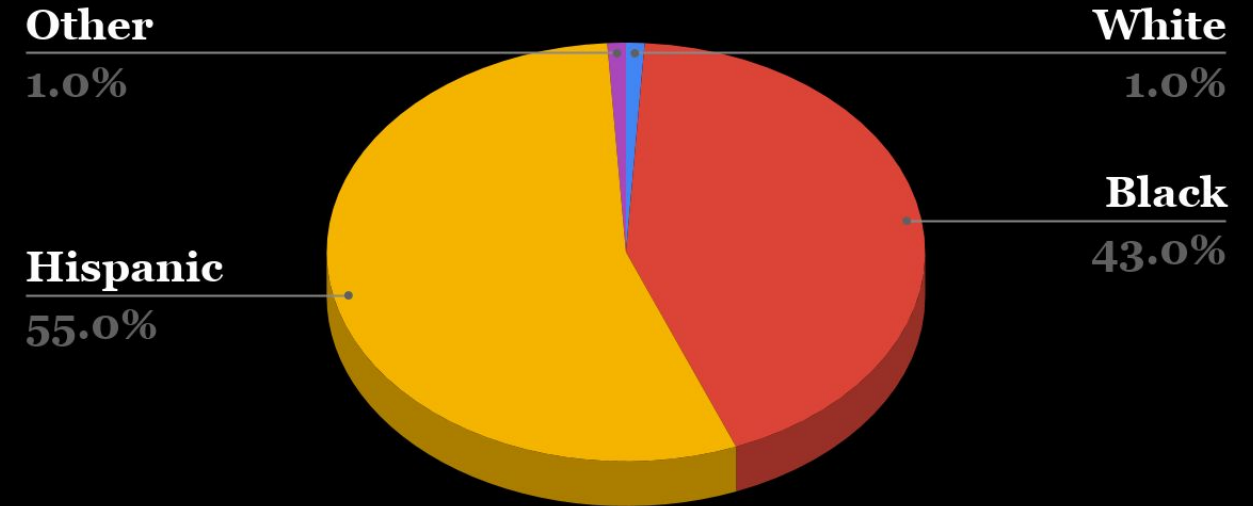


Demographics Differences

Cold Spring Harbor

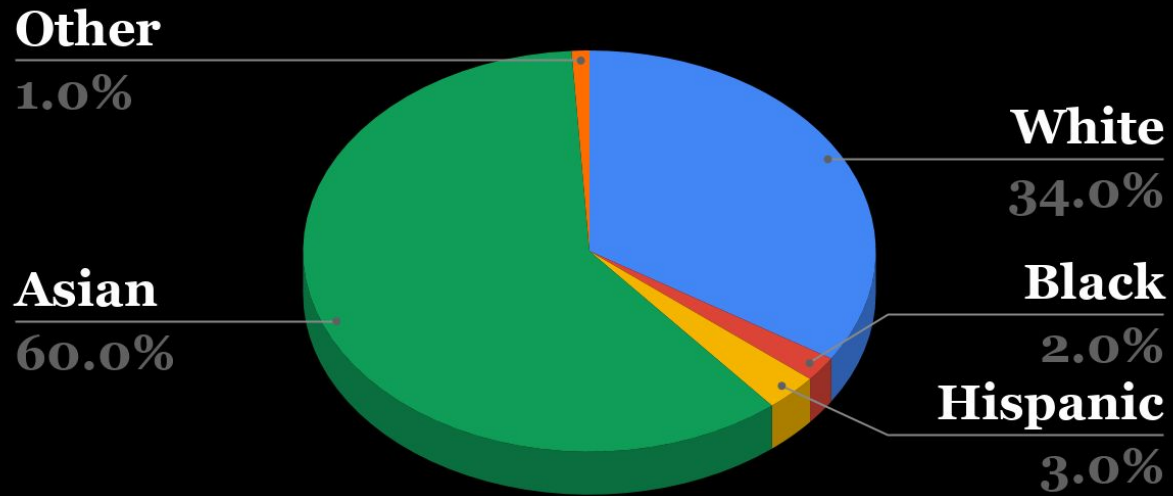


Wyandanch

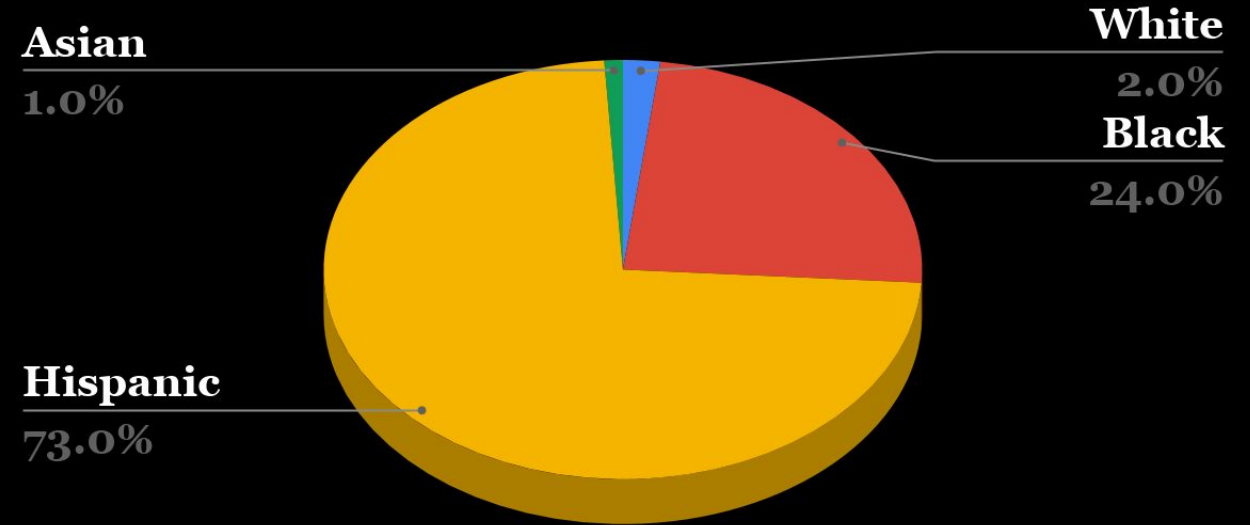


Demographics Differences

Jericho



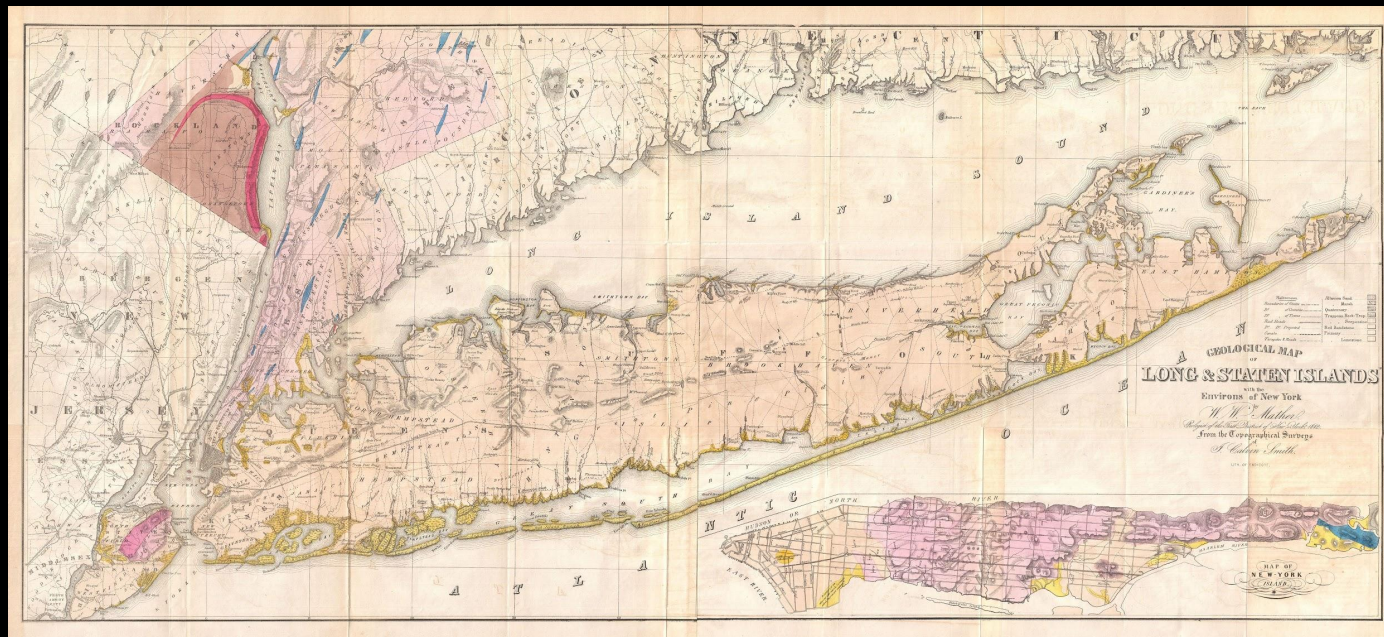
Hempstead



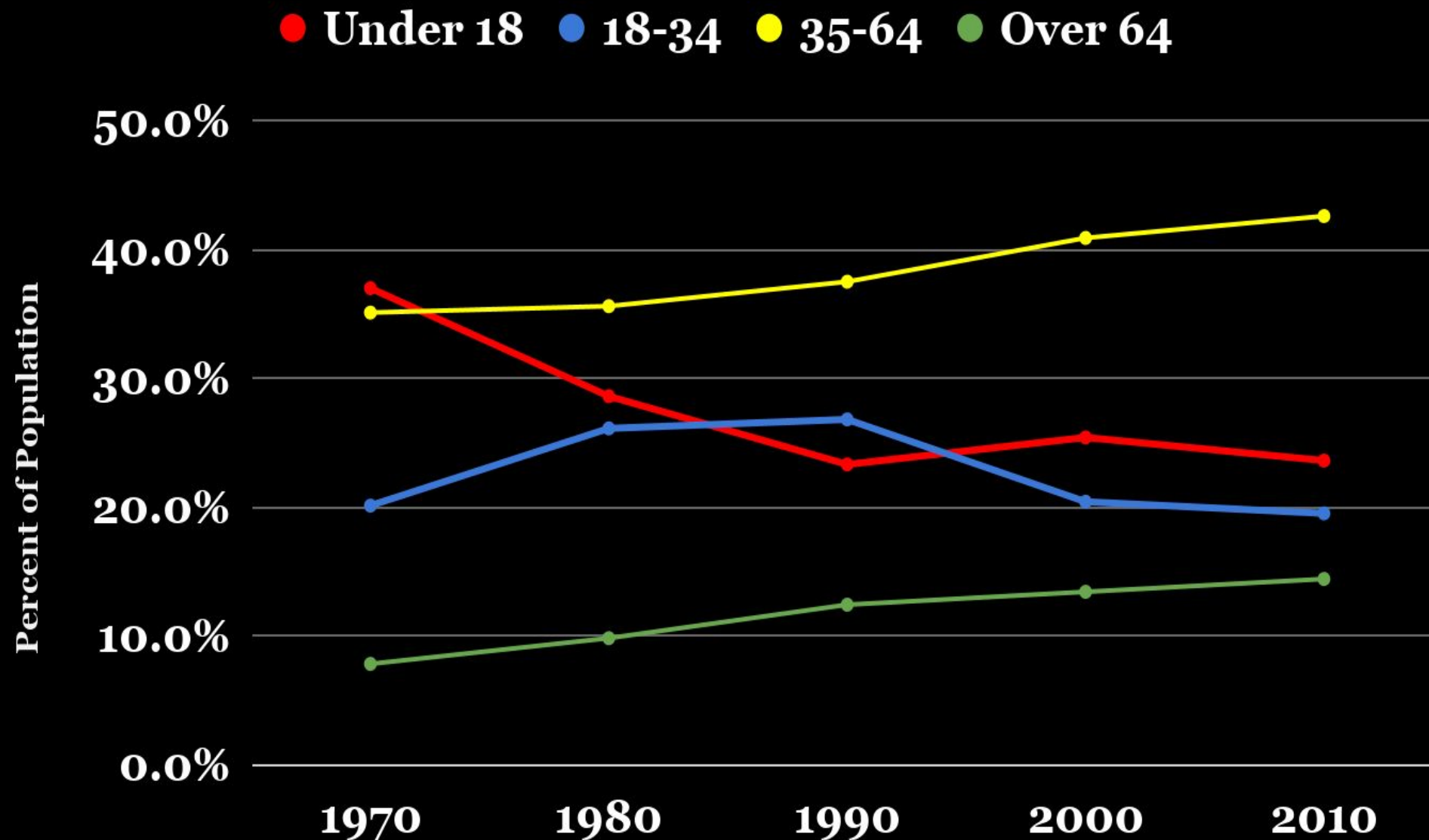
“And they were from South Africa. And they went on a tour of Long Island. And after their tour for a couple of days, they sat with the people ... one time and they said what you have here is apartheid. It was visible to them. And they didn't know how it had happened, that it was that legal, that it was done here legally, that it's all set up. I think the challenge is that we have those fine lines and that everyone wants everyone to stay in their lane and stay apart from each other.”

—CEO, LI Non-Profit

Demographic Changes



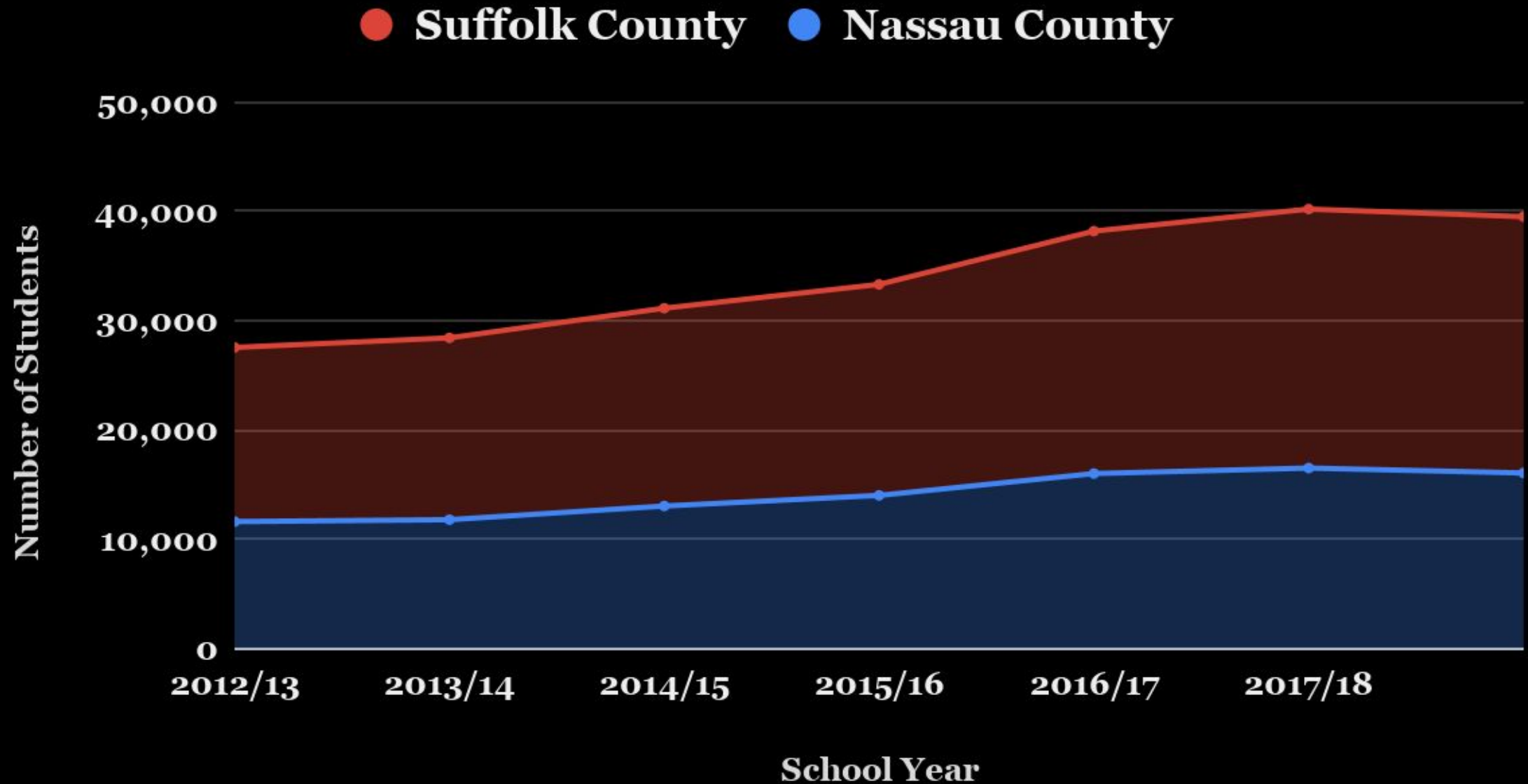
Changing Age Demographics



“The ENL rate is getting larger in every district. Rich or poor? And instead of looking at that as a positive thing, it comes down to that us versus them... For some reason we want to ...see diversity as not a good thing anymore and that’s a big problem. So until, maybe, we start looking at diversity as the only way somebody can learn and, that the best teacher is to learn from each other, then I don’t know. ...It’s a whole mindset shift.”

—Doctoral Student, Molloy College

English Language Learner Population



Natural Disasters



Superstorm Sandy... really opened the perception of what it means to somebody that might need help and people ...would say “I would never need to go to a pantry” or “I would never eat a meal in a soup kitchen” or “my kids would never take hand me down clothes.” And now it’s, they realize that there’s nothing wrong with that, one, but if they are in need of it at least they know there’s an option where they could go. Hopefully little by little we’re breaking the stigma on that cause it’s hard. It’s hard. A lot of Long Islanders, they’re very proud people.

—Manager of Community Education
and Outreach, LI Non-Profit

“We’re going to learn a really hard lesson about the economy as we emerge from this chapter we are in. Where the economy has really been essentially shut down entirely like nothing we’ve ever seen in our lifetime. I fear the tsunami of need that is right around the corner...It will likely amplify the gaps between the poor and the rich.”

–CEO Faith-based Non-Profit LI

Transportation



“Trains are horrible on the East End, buses are horrible, they don’t run after a certain time, they don’t run on the weekends. It’s a huge issue on Long Island. That makes Long Island unique. Nassau and Suffolk County, the transportation, lack of transportation. In the city, you can jump on a train, a bus. People can’t afford Ubers everywhere they go. So I think that’s something that can really be improved upon, the transportation issue.”

—Manager of Community Education
and Outreach, LI Non-Profit



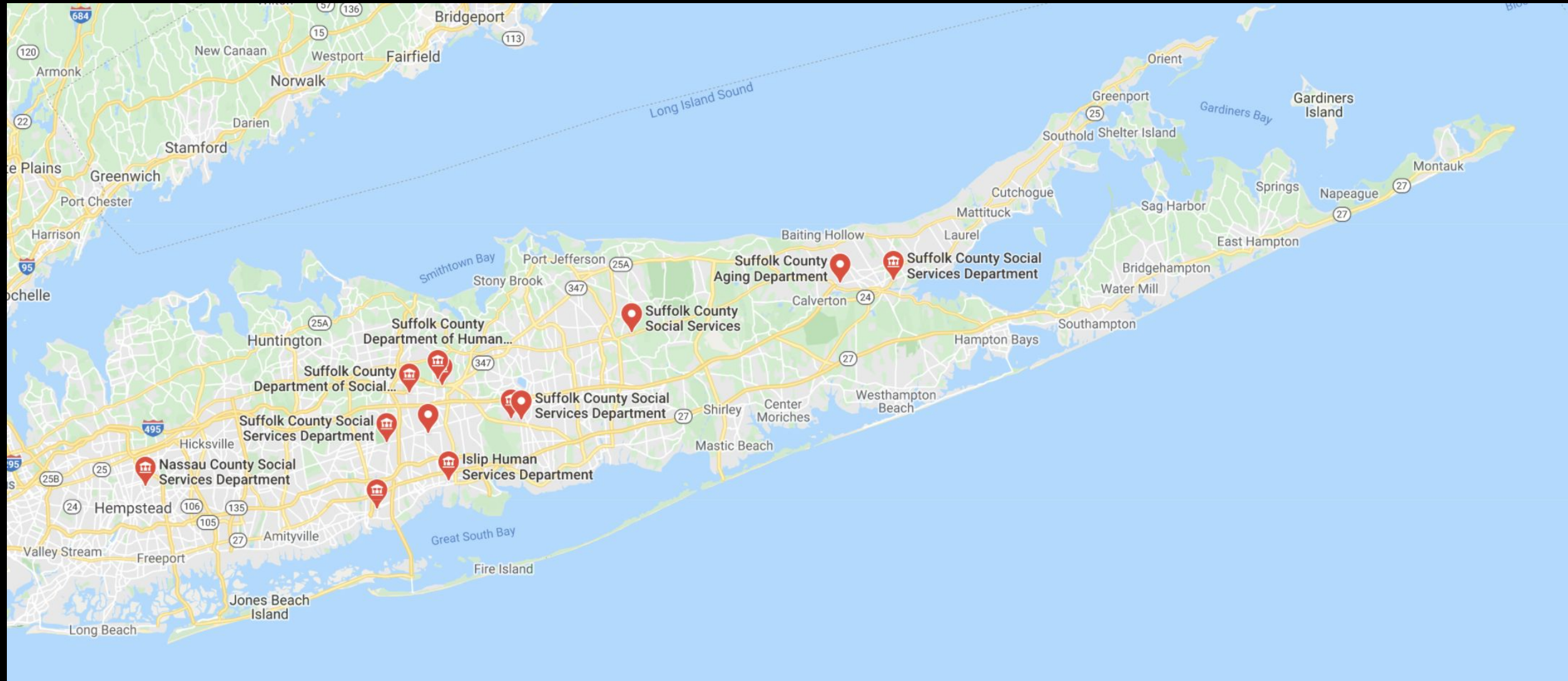
Long Island Rail Road



Suffolk County Bus Map



Social Services Map



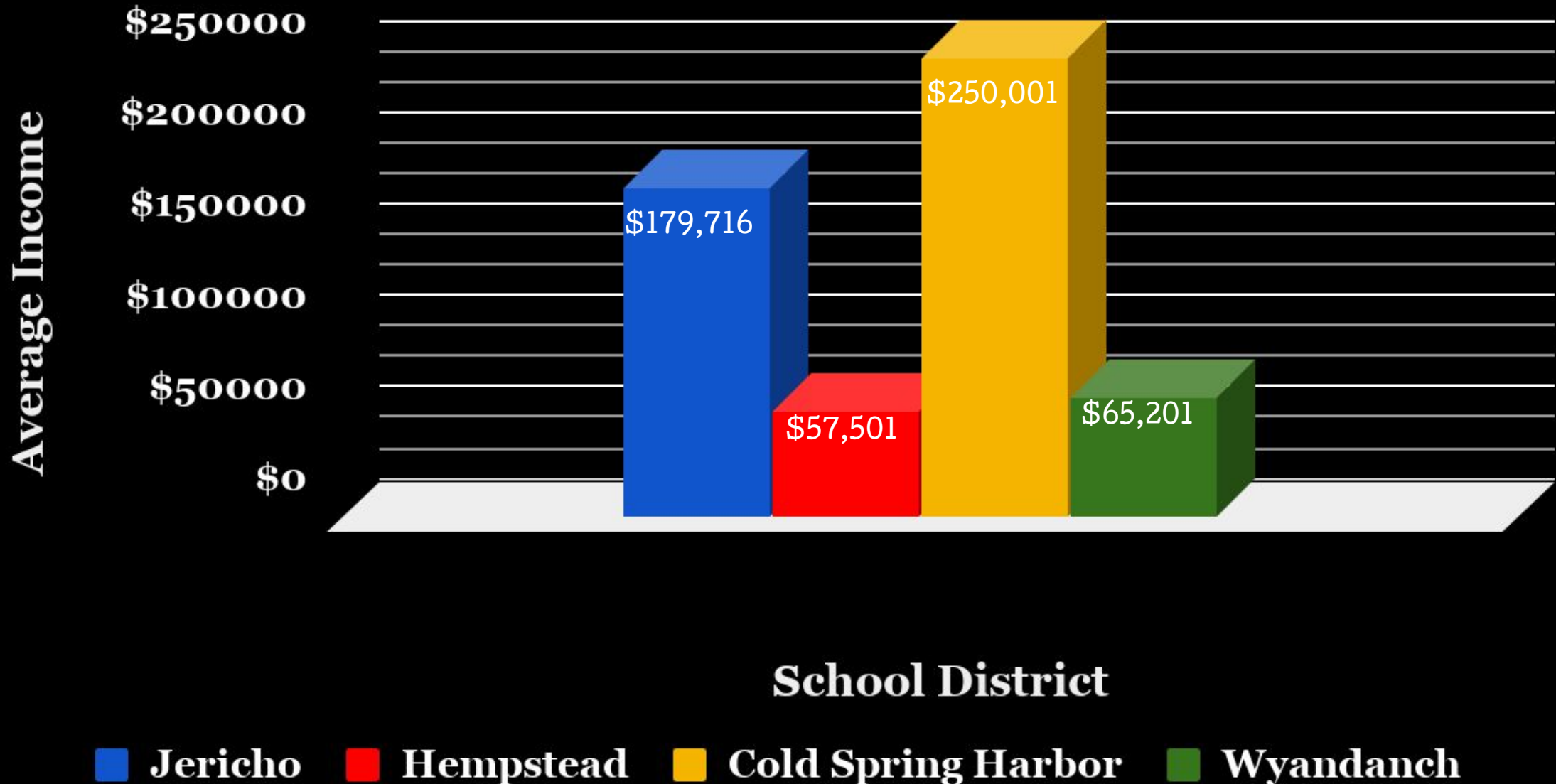
Opportunity Gap



“We have 124 school districts... you can have a child who lives next door to another child who by the time they enter preschool have radically different trajectories just based on the zip code or the zoning in which they're born.”

—President/CEO LI Non-Profit

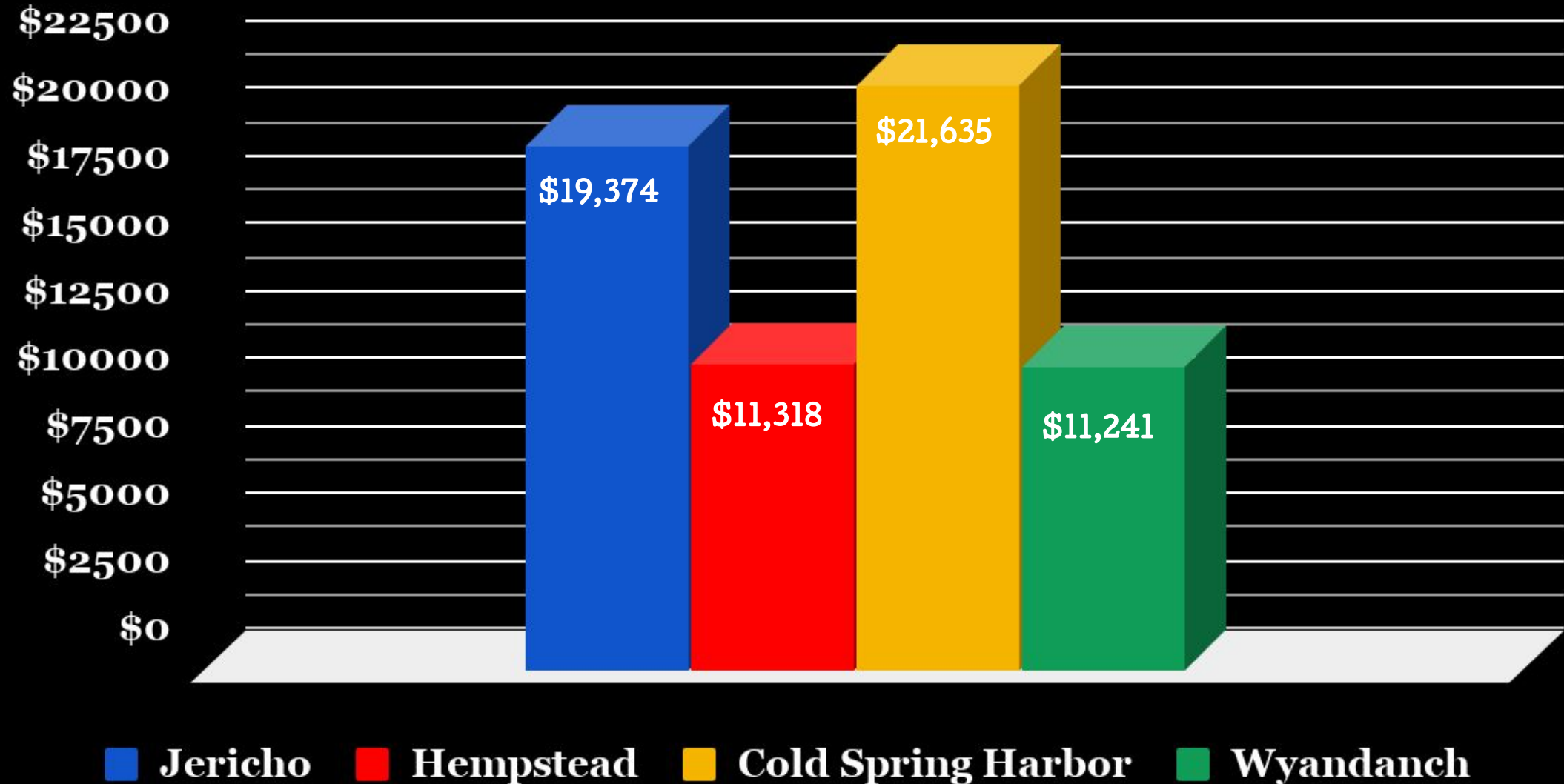
Income Disparity on Long Island



“We see people trapped in poverty because they're living in school districts where the caliber of the education system is so below par that the individuals don't stand a chance of pulling themselves up by their bootstraps and miraculously going to Harvard and turning their life around and having different opportunities.”

—CEO, LI Non-Profit

Per Pupil Spending



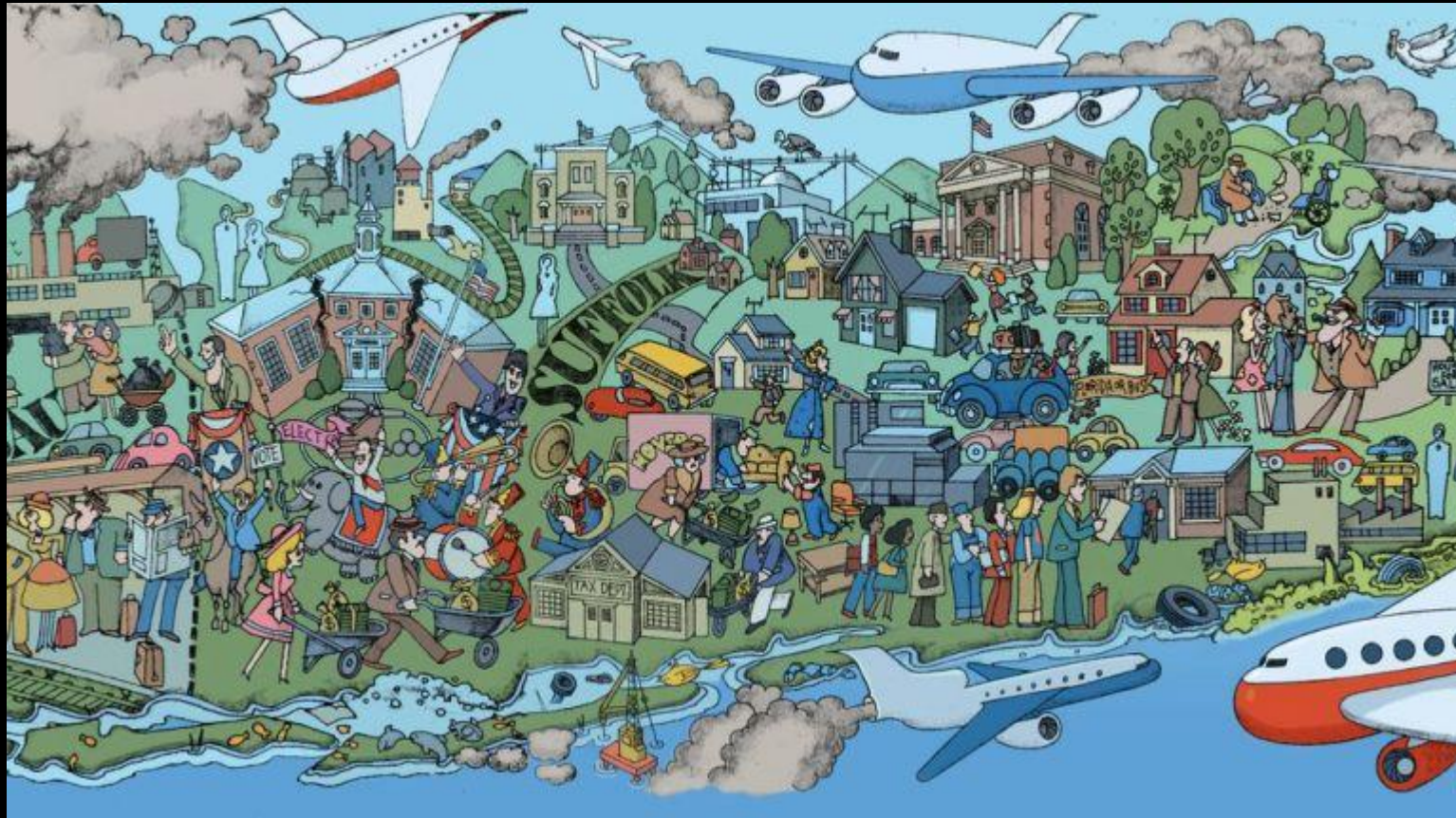
Fractured Regional Government



“Each town has its own sort of culture, its own identity. I don't think that there is something that is more unique...for one than the other in terms of the challenges that we face...of fractured government, because coordination of services is challenging... particularly in communities of poverty but the fractured layers of government are ubiquitous across the region.”

—President/CEO LI Non-Profit

Learning from the past to inform our future





“When you close that fist it’s of no use except to hurt...you need to open your hand, whatever is in it you then allow for someone else to take, but while it’s open others can put things in your hand...With a closed hand you can’t do anything. You have to open it, therefore you risk losing something but you also make it possible to receive something.”

—Executive Director, LI Homeless Shelter