

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A First Look at 2016-2020

MARCH 17, 2022



SCAG™

INNOVATING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



ABOUT SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO), representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to encourage a more sustainable Southern California now and in the future.

VISION

Southern California's Catalyst for a Brighter Future

MISSION

To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing, and promoting best practices.

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AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA A FIRST LOOK AT 2016-2020

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After delays due to the pandemic's impact on survey response rates, the U.S. Census Bureau released the long-awaited American Community Survey (ACS) 2016-2020 5-Year sample on March 17, 2022. While the release is the first to include survey results from 2020, SCAG is not expecting to get complete 1-year data for 2020. Only select data sets are available, and none are available for geographies smaller than states.

This release provides an opportunity to compare 15 years' worth of ACS data using 5-year samples since the ACS's inception in 2006. Samples are now available which cover 2006-2010, 2011-2015, and 2016-2020. In effect, these data sets compare the most recently available data (i.e., late 2010s) to conditions five years prior (i.e., early 2010s) and ten years prior (i.e., late 2000s).

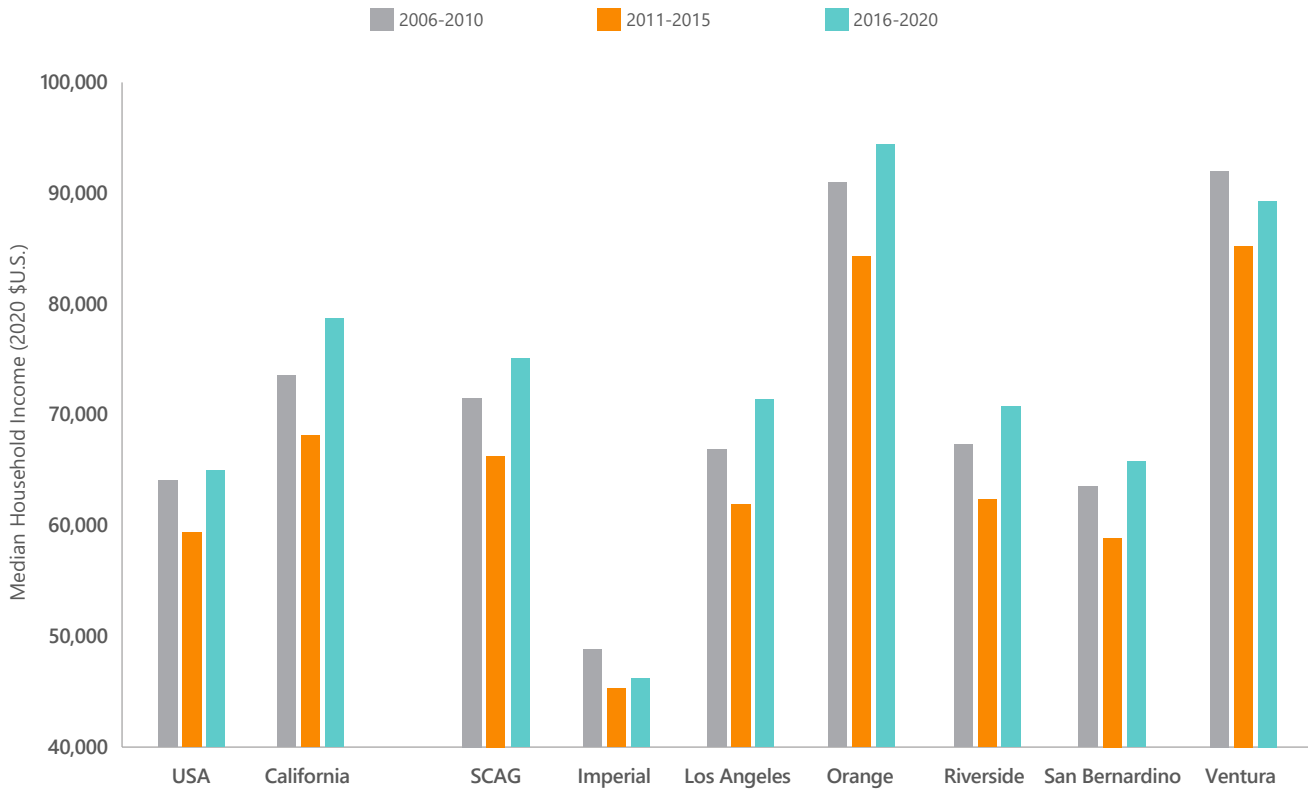
Last year's release of the 2020 Decennial Census PL-94 redistricting file provided more timely information on population and household counts than are available in this new ACS release (in California, the Department of Finance has processed these data at <https://dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics>). We do not anticipate getting detailed Census data, such as complete population by age data, until a yet-to-be-determined time later in 2022. Since the phase-out of the long form Census in 2000, characteristics such as income, education, transportation, and other topics became the sole purview of the ACS.

This report compares the following topics from the inception of the ACS to the present in the United States, California, and the SCAG region and its six counties.

- Household Income
- Self-employment (comparison between 2015-19 and 2016-20 ACS)
- Median Age
- Vehicle ownership by household
- Mode of transportation to work and work from home
- Moves and residential mobility
- Housing tenure and overcrowding

There will be much more to delve into in terms of topics and geographies in the coming months as additional data become available.

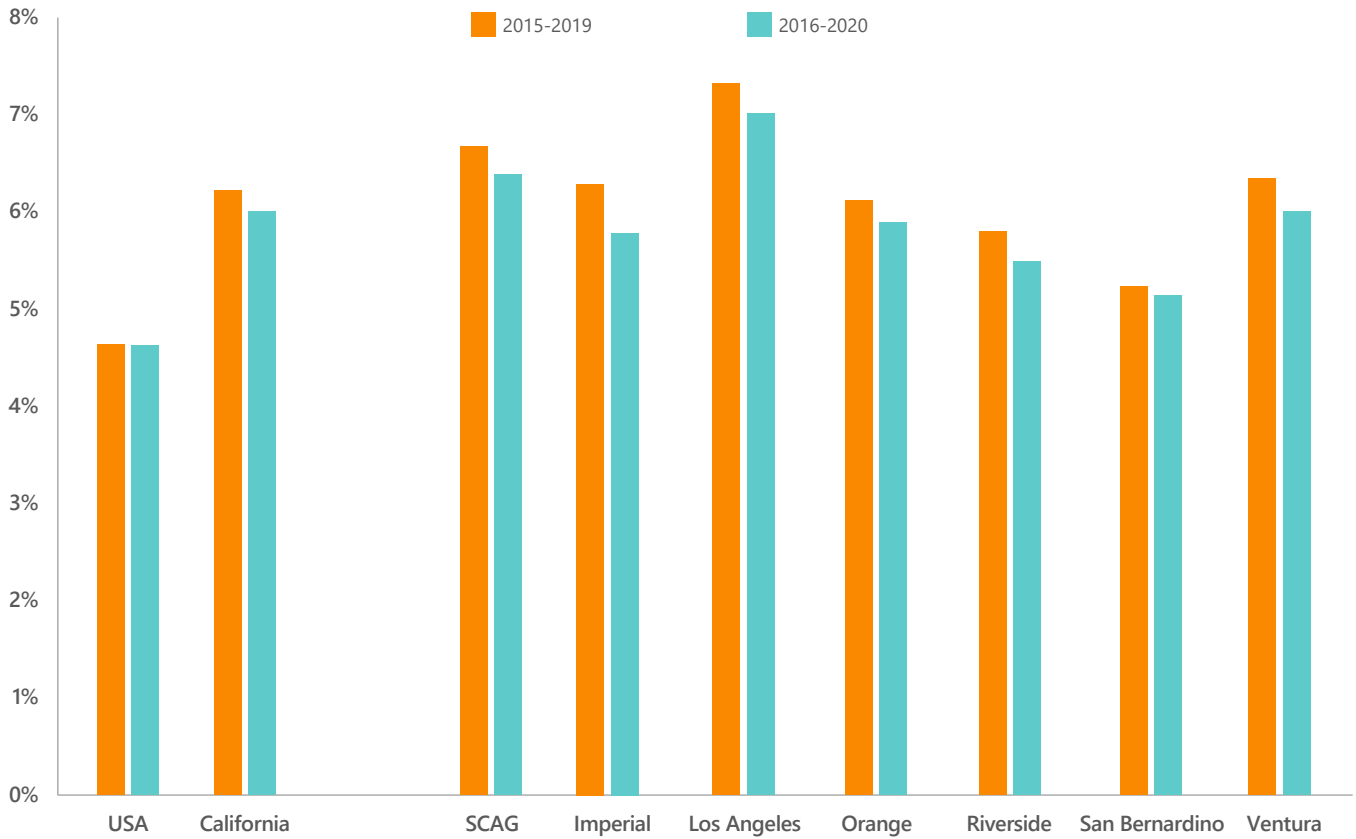
REAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLD INCOMES GREW MORE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA THAN IN THE U.S.

Generally, the recovery from the Great Recession was slow and uneven and only accelerated in the later 2010s. The rebound was stronger in Southern California, where inflation-adjusted incomes were \$3,500 higher in the late 2010s than the late 2000s, compared to only about \$900 higher in the U.S.

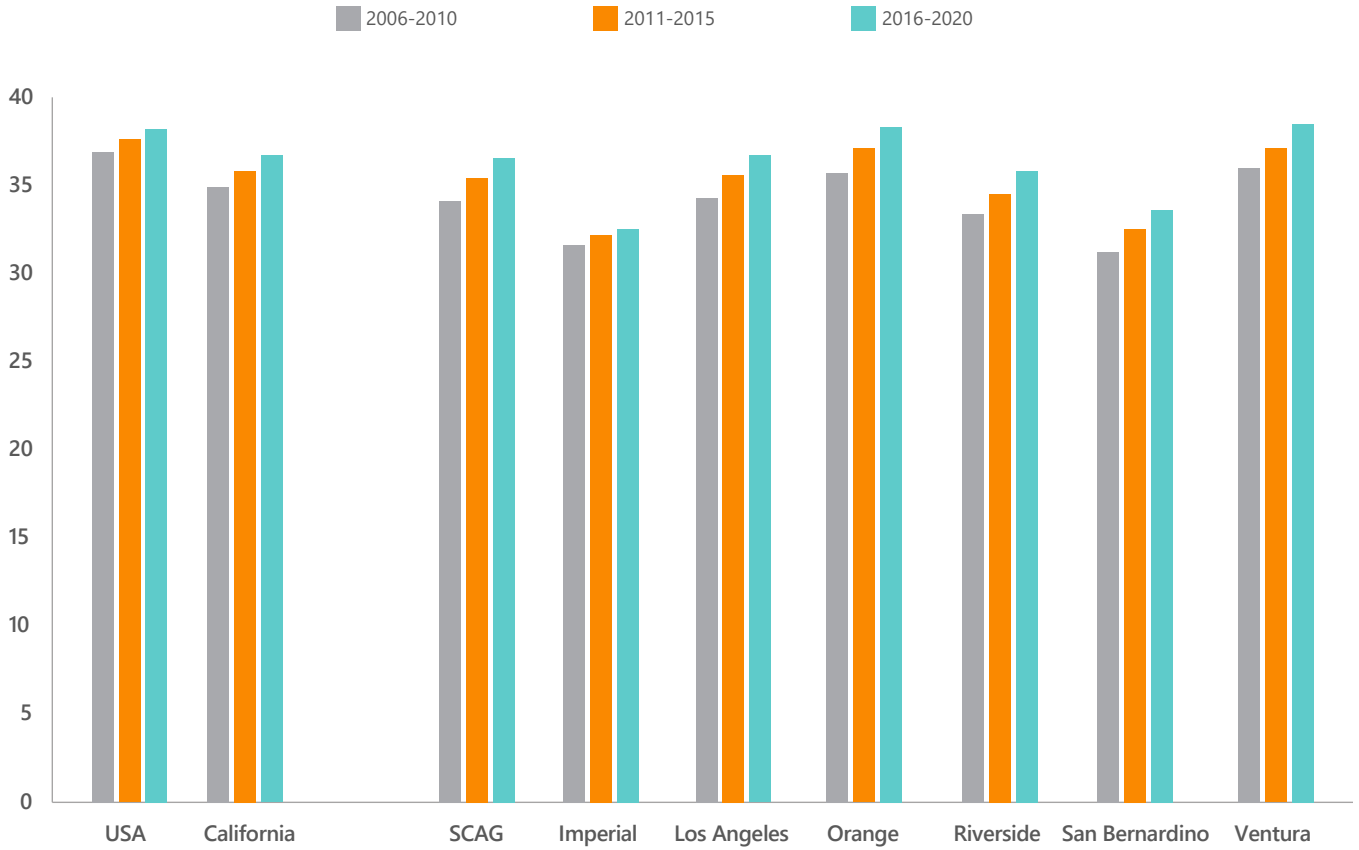
PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT THAT IS SELF-EMPLOYMENT



SELF-EMPLOYMENT DECREASED IN THE SCAG REGION AND IN CALIFORNIA, BUT REMAINED STABLE IN THE U.S.

Comparing self-employment in the SCAG region between the 2015-2019 ACS to the 2016-2020 ACS self-employment decreased from 6.7 percent in 2015-2019 to 6.4 percent in 2016-2020. California also observed a small decrease in self-employment. In contrast, U.S. self-employment remained stable at 4.6 percent. Self-employment remains a much larger share of total employment in the SCAG region (6.4 percent) and in California (6.0 percent) compared to the U.S. (4.6 percent).

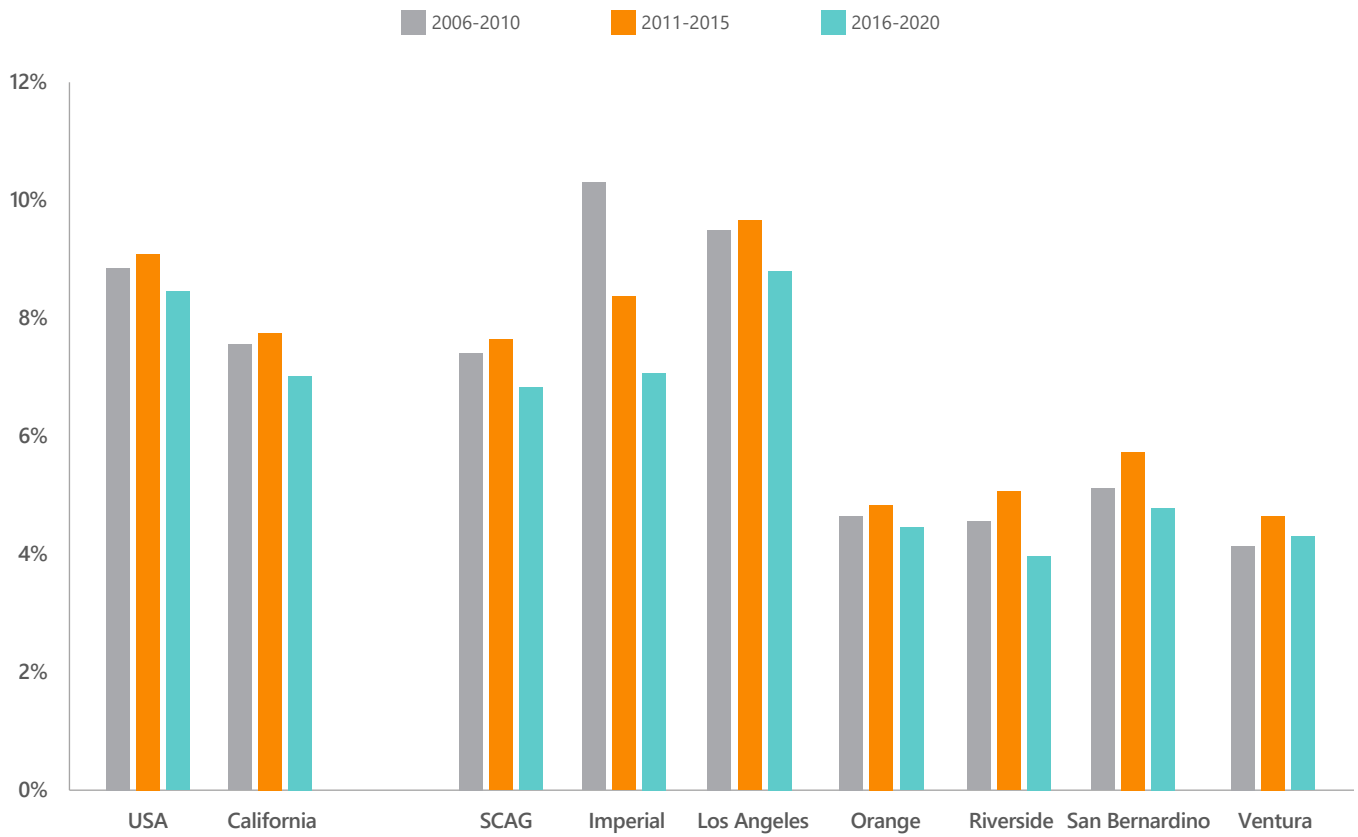
MEDIAN AGE



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IS CATCHING UP TO THE NATION IN AGE

Southern California's population has generally trended younger than the nation, owing to historically higher fertility and immigration rates in Southern California. The region's population, however, appears to be aging more quickly than the state and nation. A decade ago, the median age of Southern Californians was 2.8 years younger than the nation, but this difference has shrunk to only 1.7 years. The 2016-2020 ACS reports a median age of 36.5 in the SCAG region compared to 38.2 for the U.S.

PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO VEHICLES

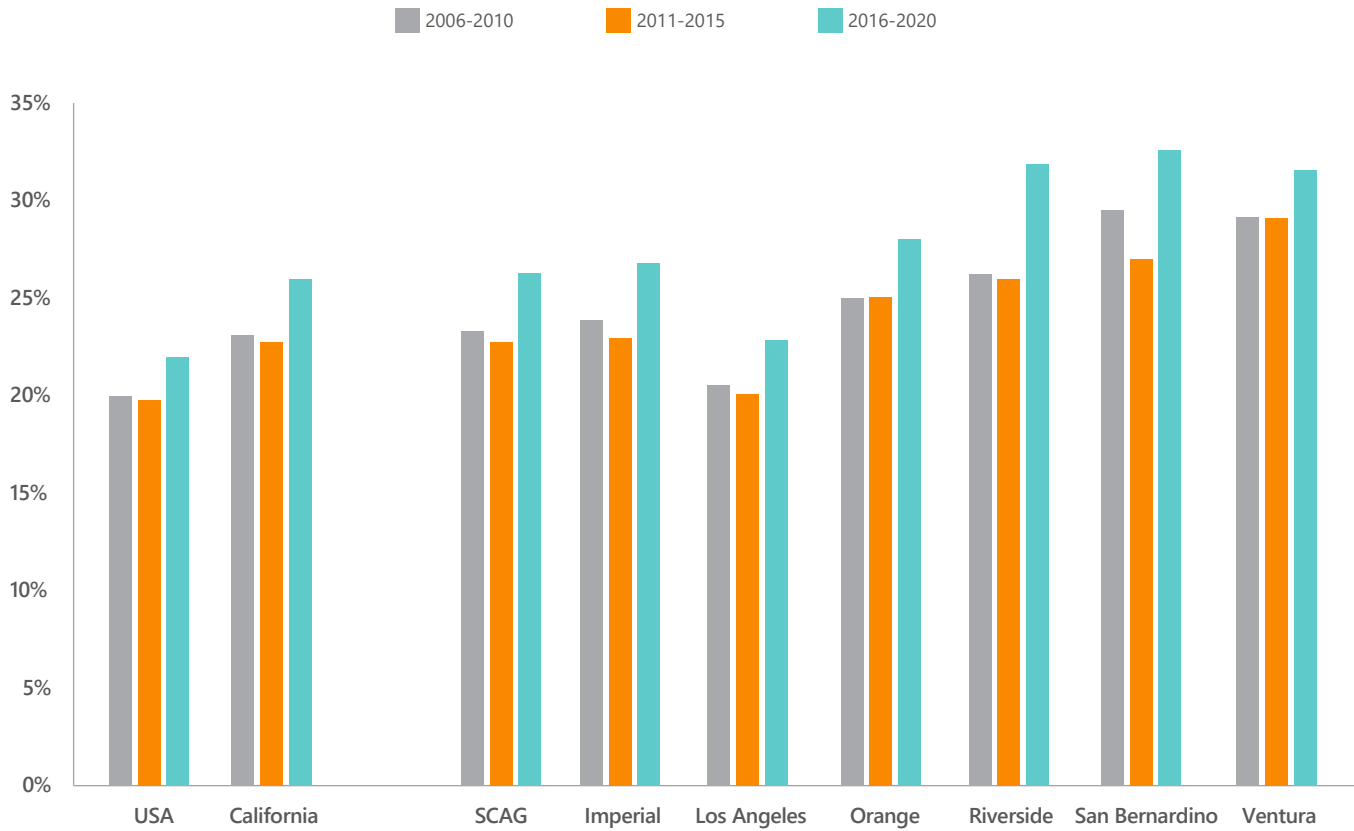


VEHICLE OWNERSHIP DECREASED IN ALL REGIONS

During the years following the Great Recession, data indicated slight decreases in vehicle miles travelled. With the economic recovery of the late 2010s and low or stable gas prices, the data indicates increases in vehicle miles travelled.

As the economy continued to grow after the Great Recession, the share of households with no vehicles dropped compared to a decade earlier. This share decreased more steeply in SCAG (from 7.4 percent to 6.8 percent) relative to the nation (8.9 percent to 8.5 percent). The mixed urban/suburban environment of Los Angeles County has the highest percentage with 8.8 percent no-vehicle households, while Riverside County has the lowest at 4.0 percent.

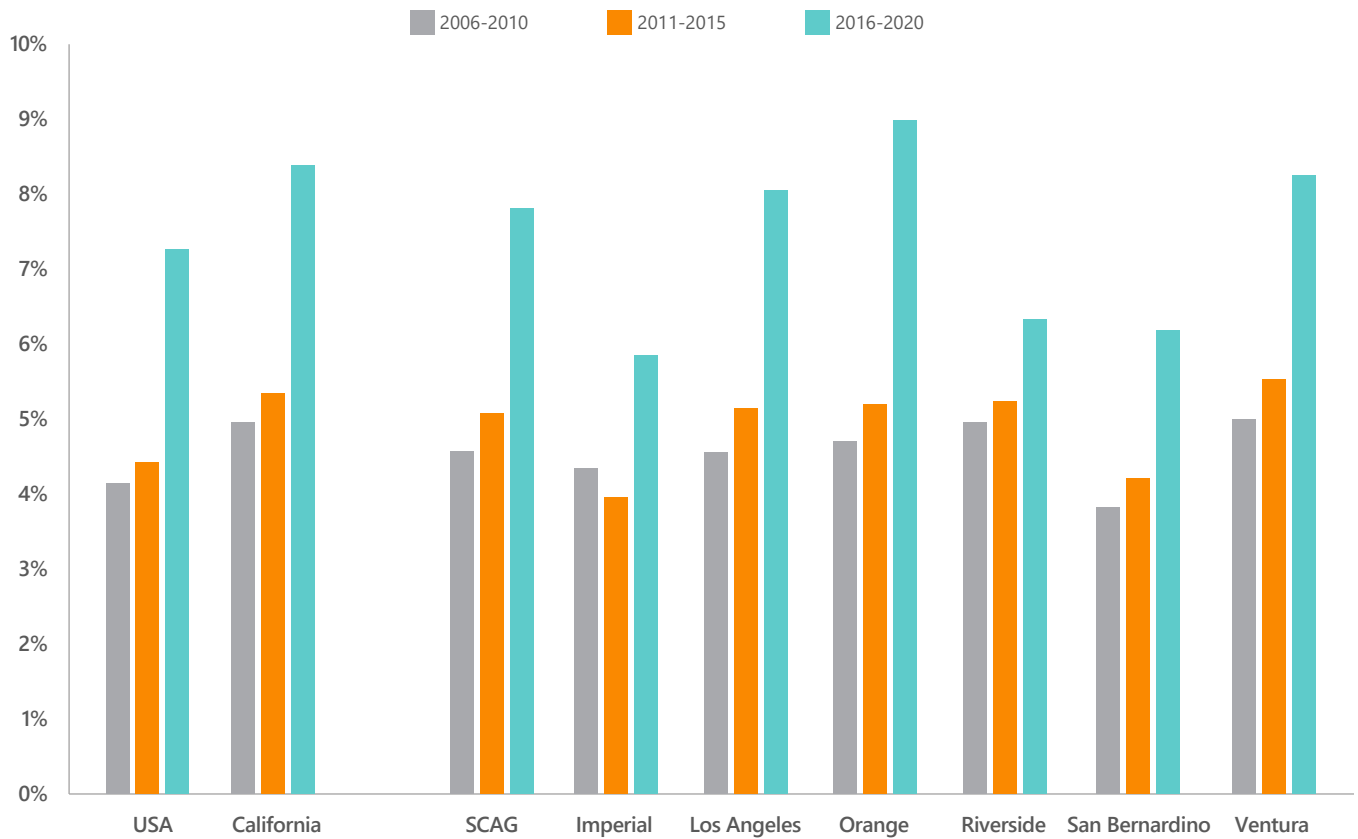
PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH THREE OR MORE VEHICLES



HOUSEHOLDS WITH VEHICLES HAVE MORE VEHICLES IN ALL REGIONS

The share of households with three or more vehicles increased in the U.S., California, and all SCAG counties over the last decade. In the last five years alone, the share of SCAG region households with three or more vehicles increased from 22.8 percent to 26.3 percent – a substantially larger increase than the U.S. as a whole, where 3+ vehicle households increased from 19.8 percent to 22.0 percent.

SHARE OF WORK COMMUTES WHICH ARE WORK FROM HOME

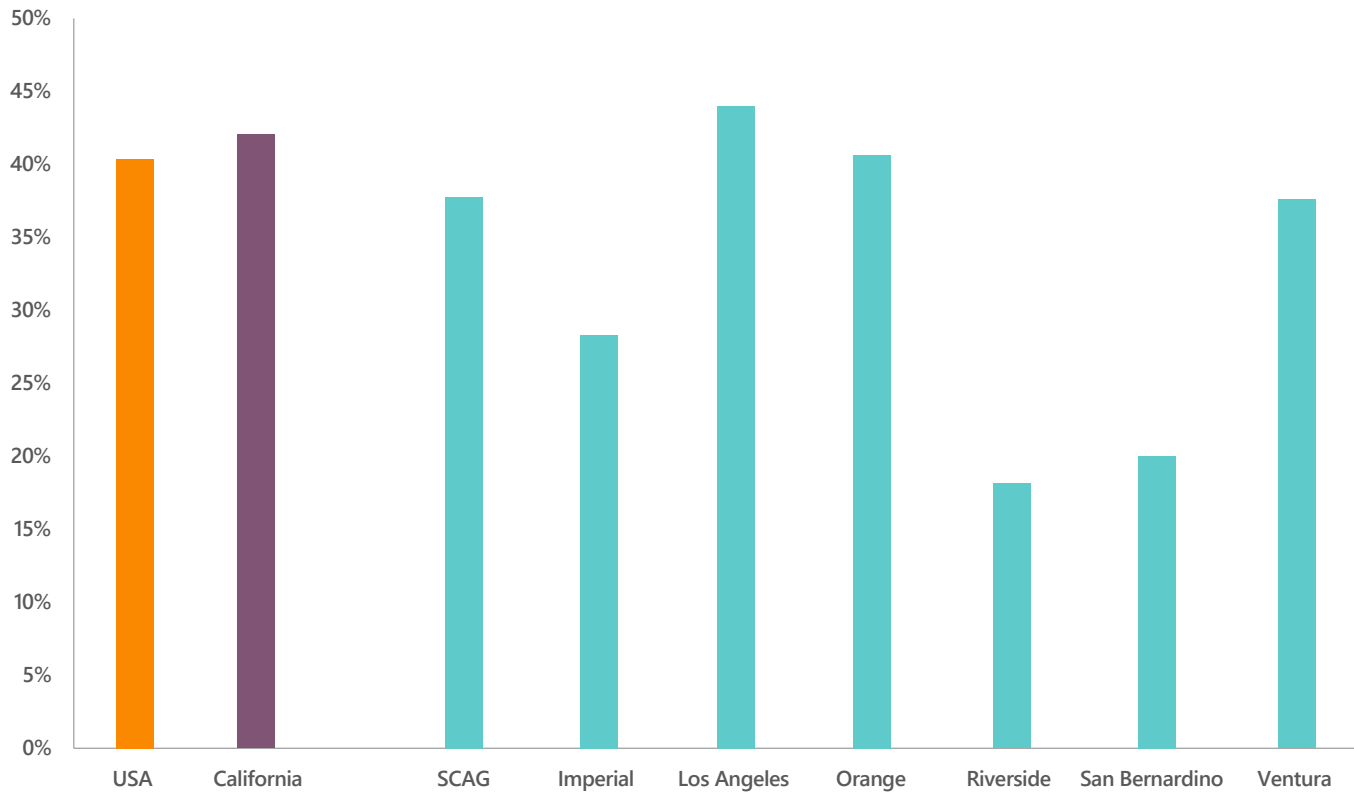


WORKING FROM HOME HAS INCREASED AND COMMUTING BY TRANSIT HAS DECREASED

The travel mode share data in the ACS is limited to work commutes and only reports the “principal” mode during the week in which respondents are surveyed.

Working from home rose significantly compared to the prior five-year period in all areas, with a 3.2 percent increase in both the U.S. and SCAG region. Across the region’s counties, this varies noticeably based on each county’s industry composition. Compared to the region’s inland counties, the coastal counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura have higher shares of professional services employment, which can be done at home.

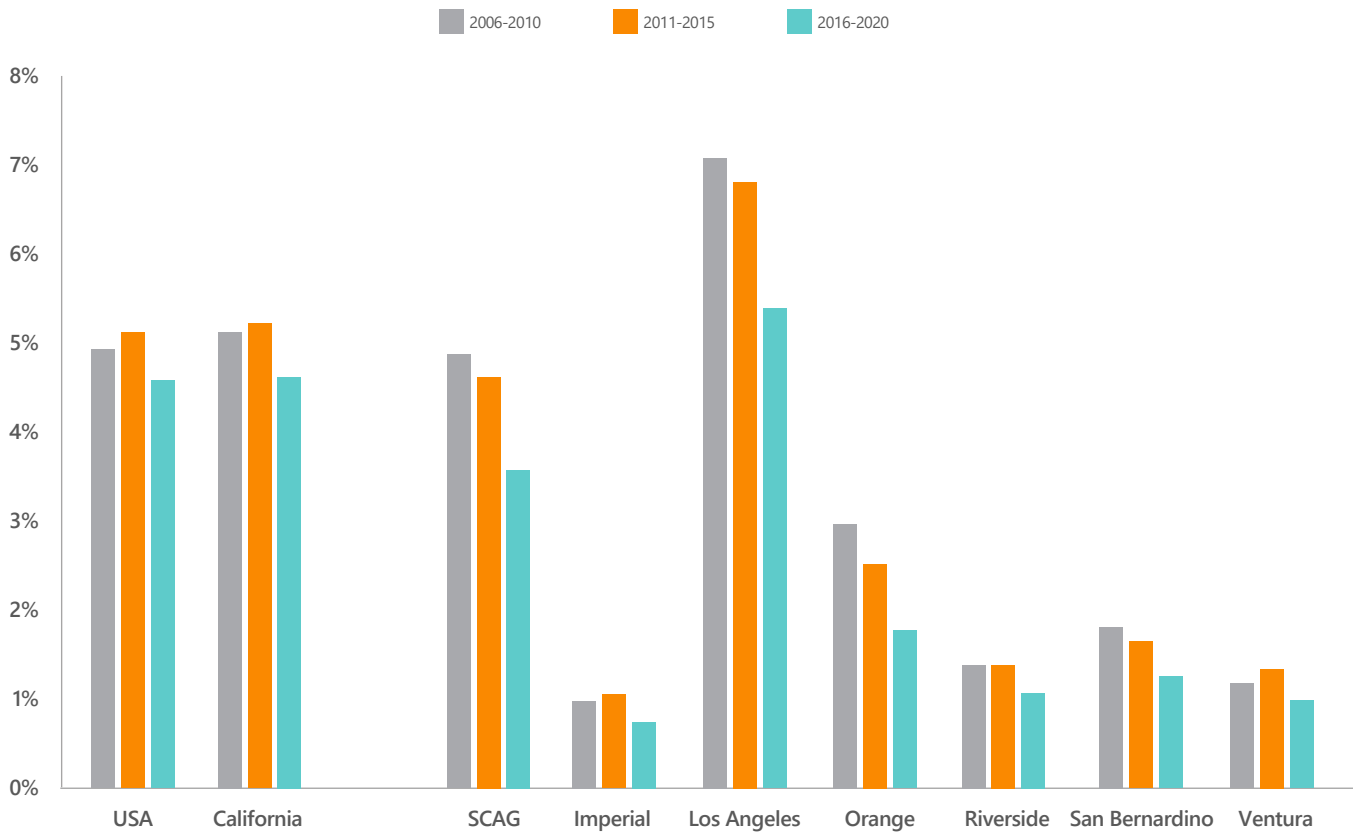
PERCENT CHANGE IN WORKING FROM HOME 2015-2019 ACS TO 2016-2020 ACS



SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN WORKING FROM HOME DRIVEN BY PANDEMIC

Focusing on the growth in work from home between the 2015-2019 ACS and the 2016-2020 ACS, we see an increase of 37.7 percent in the SCAG region, with the greatest growth in Los Angeles County (44 percent) and the smallest growth in Riverside County (18.1 percent). The overall growth in the SCAG region is comparable to the growth in work from home in California (42.1 percent) and the nation (40.3 percent). The significant growth between the two most recent ACS surveys suggests that the increase in working from home is due to the pandemic.

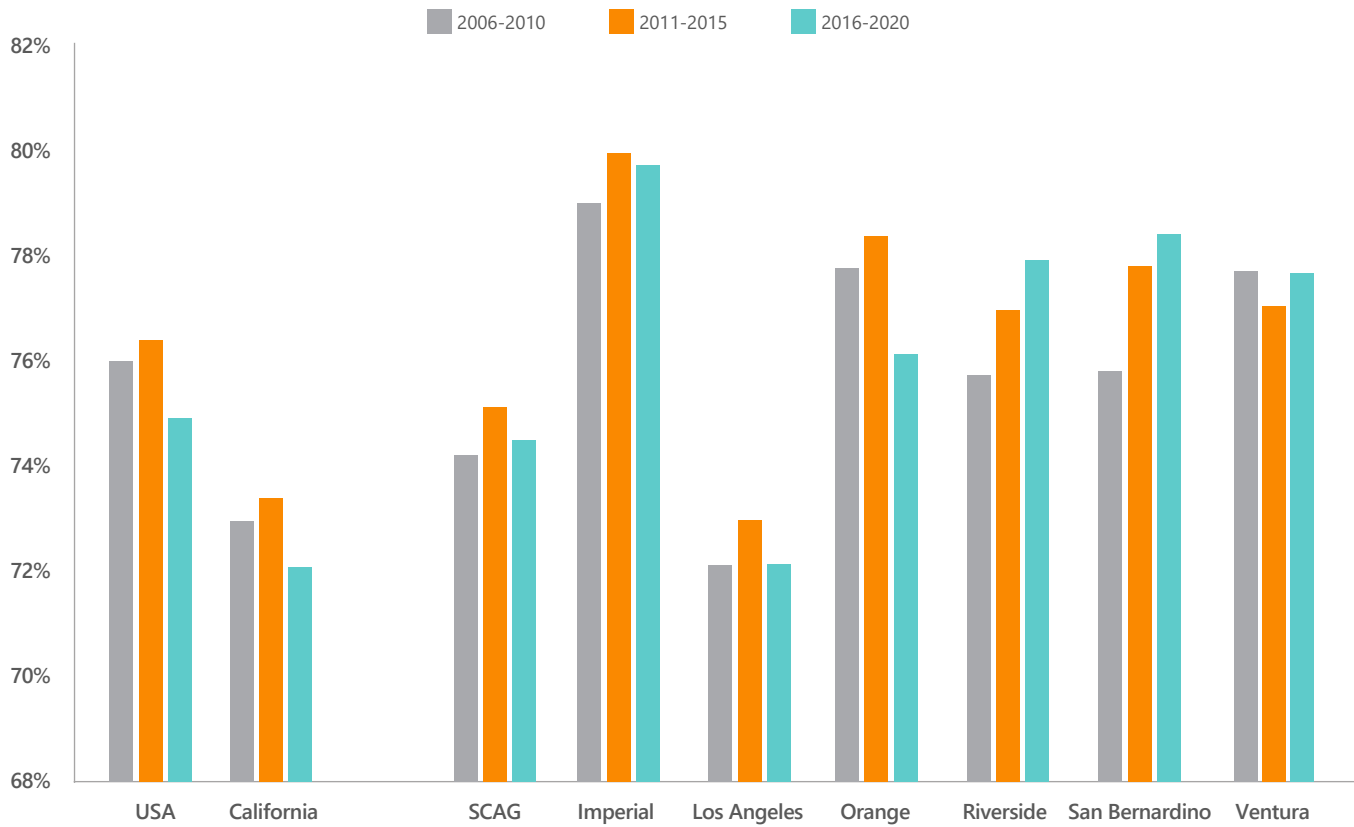
PERCENT OF WORK COMMUTES ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



TRANSIT USE DECLINED IN ALL REGIONS

Meanwhile, the decline in transit use in the past five years was roughly twice as steep in the SCAG region than the U.S., dropping from 4.6 percent to 3.6 percent versus 5.1 percent to 4.6 percent, respectively. SCAG has researched the decline in transit use in many American regions in the years leading up to and including the pandemic (see the [“Falling Transit Ridership: California and Southern California”](#) report).

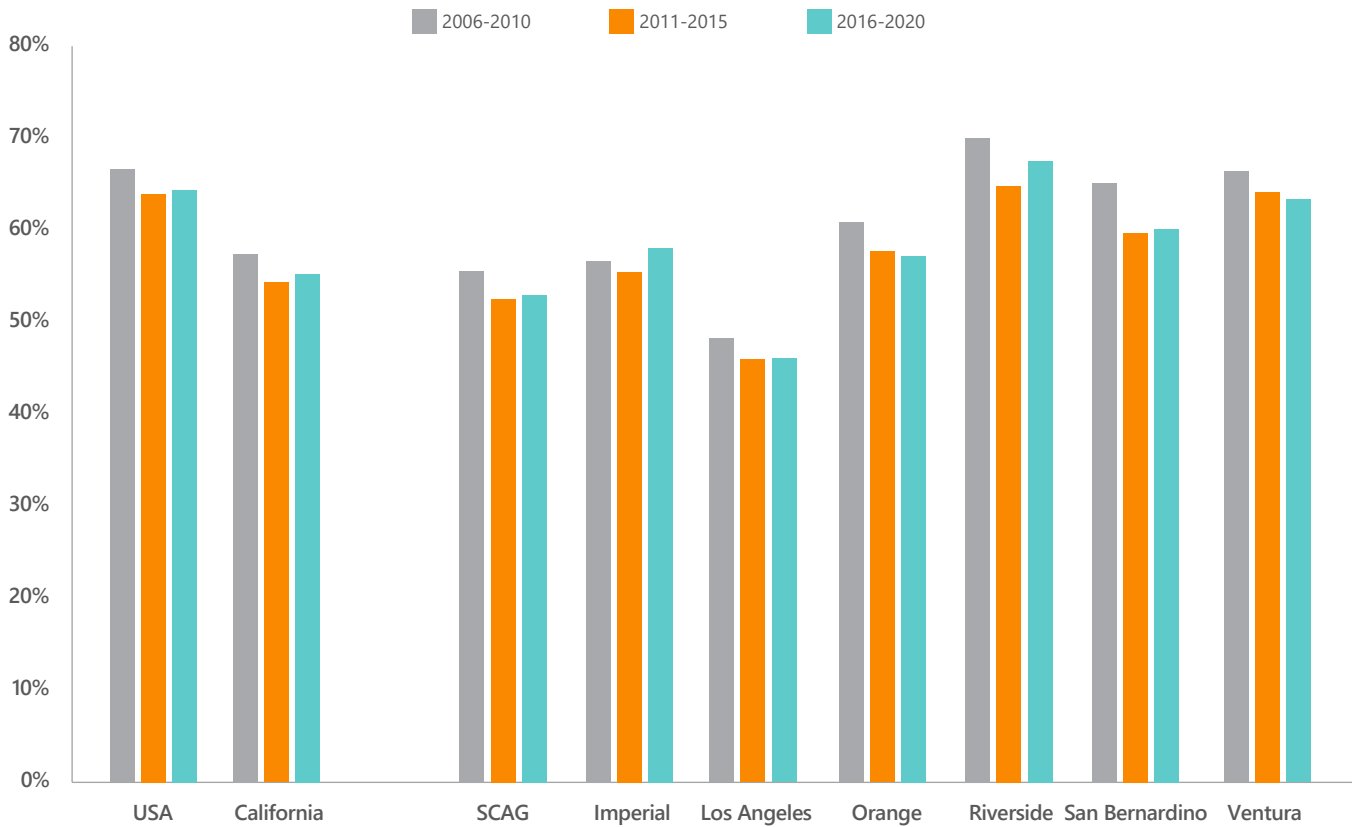
PERCENT OF DRIVE-ALONE WORK COMMUTES



DRIVING ALONE DECREASED IN THE LATEST IN ALL REGIONS

Single-occupant vehicle use for work commuting is a useful measure for determining whether the region will meet its goals for greenhouse gas emissions and congestion reduction. Most geographies, including the state and nation, saw an increase in the drive alone share in the early 2010s and a drop in the late 2010s. The SCAG region overall also witnessed a similar pattern. The 74.5 percent of the region’s commuters who drive alone in the late 2010s represents a very slight increase from ten years prior. In contrast, drive alone rates increased in both periods in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Carpooling, which is not shown below, saw the biggest drop of any work commute mode in the SCAG region, down from 12.0 percent in the late 2000s to 10.0 percent in the late 2010s.

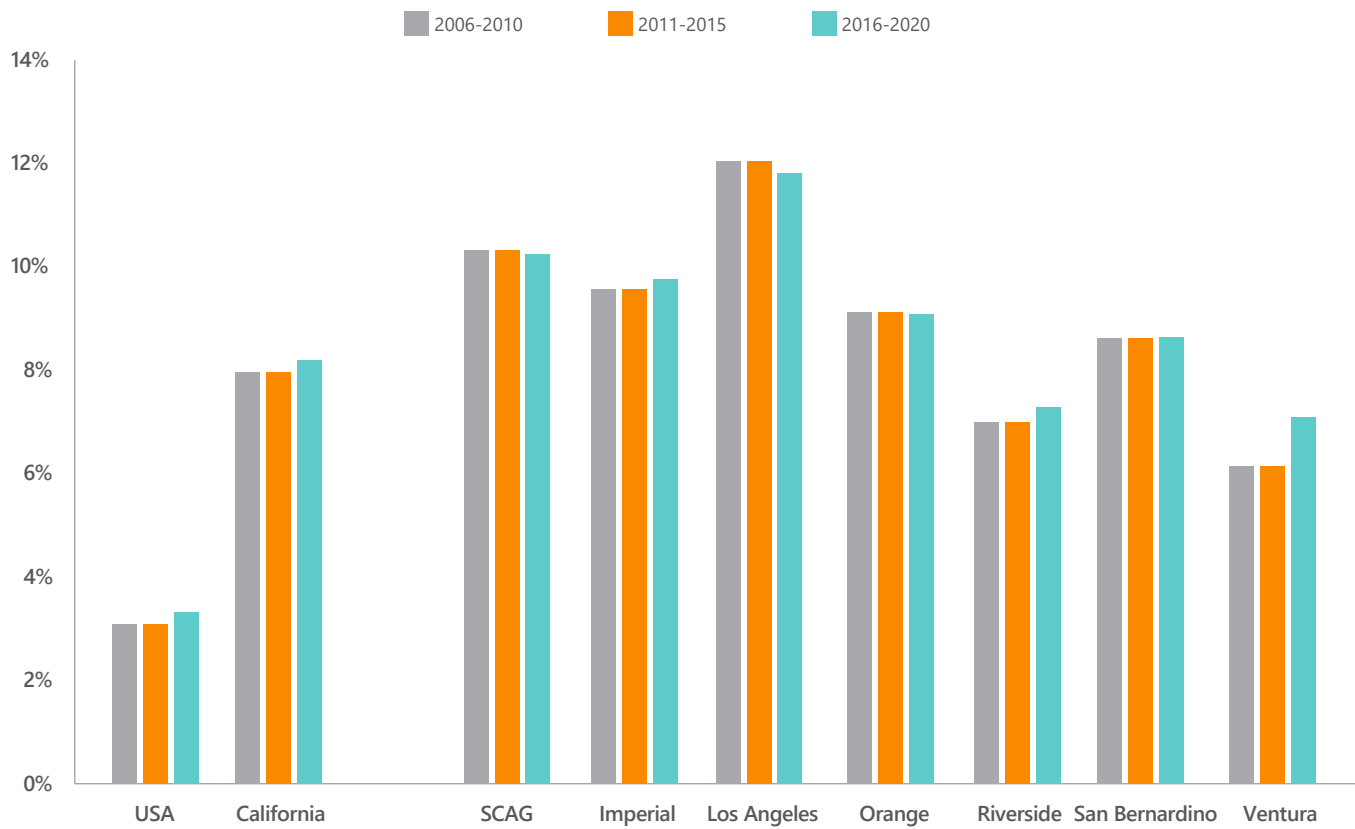
PERCENT OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING



SCAG REGION HAS BEEN SLOWER TO REBOUND OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING THAN CALIFORNIA AND U.S.

The share of households that reside in owner-occupied housing was lower in the late 2010s than the late 2000s everywhere in Southern California, the state, and the nation. In most places, owner occupancy rebounded somewhat in the late 2000s, but less so in the SCAG region than elsewhere in the state. This also followed a steeper decline, resulting in relatively low homeownership rates in Southern California and in Los Angeles County in particular. Across Southern California, there were 2.6 percent fewer owner-occupied households in the late 2010s than in the late 2000s.

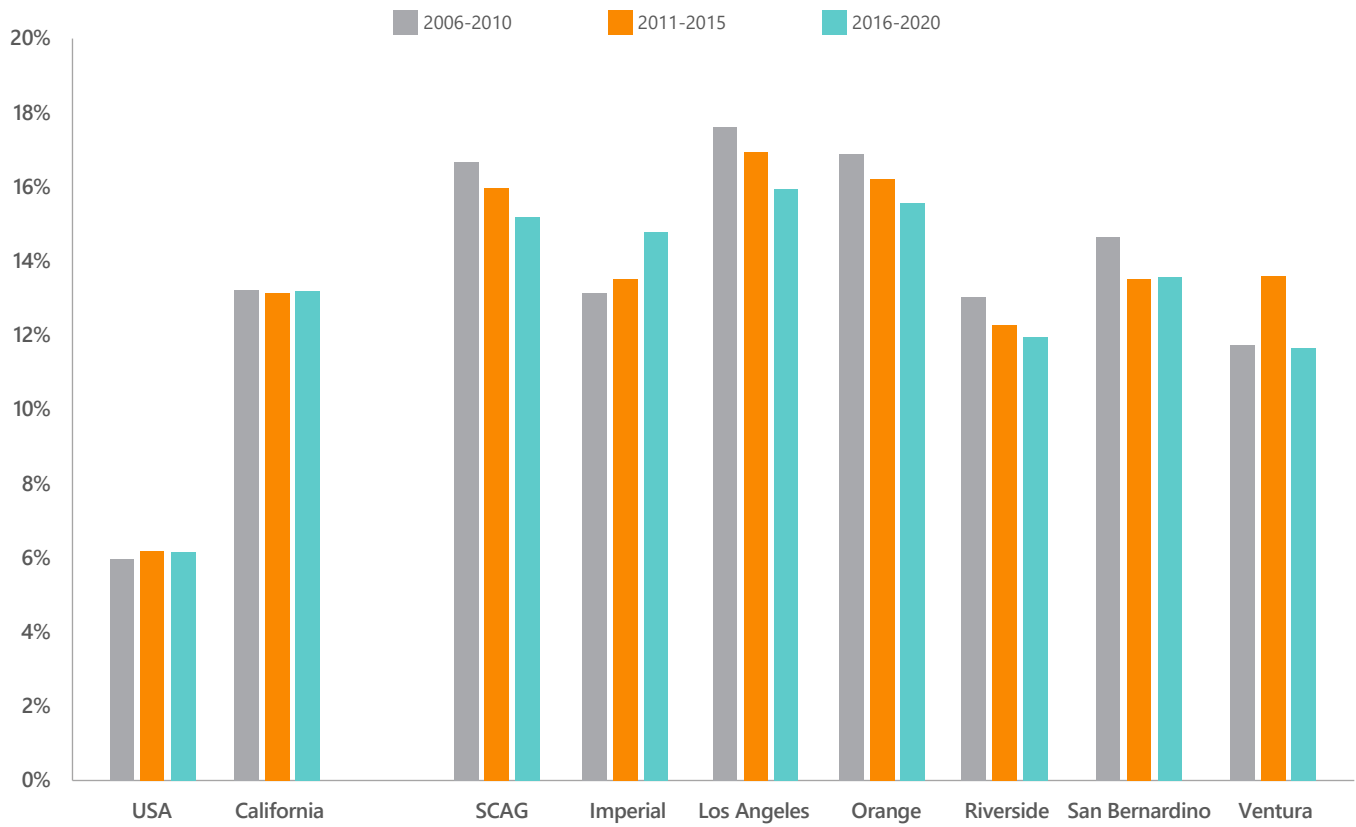
PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD WITH OVERCROWDED HOUSING



SCAG REGION OVERCROWDING CONTINUES TO EXCEED CALIFORNIA AND U.S. OVERCROWDING

Household overcrowding has been an increasing focus in state and regional housing planning. The SCAG region is typically one of the most overcrowded regions in the nation. Since the inception of the ACS, rates of household overcrowding – more than one person per room in a dwelling unit – have remained fairly stable in most places. Year-over-year variation, however, is not visible in these data. Despite the stability across time, overcrowding varies significantly across places and affects about four times the share of households in Los Angeles County as it does in the U.S.

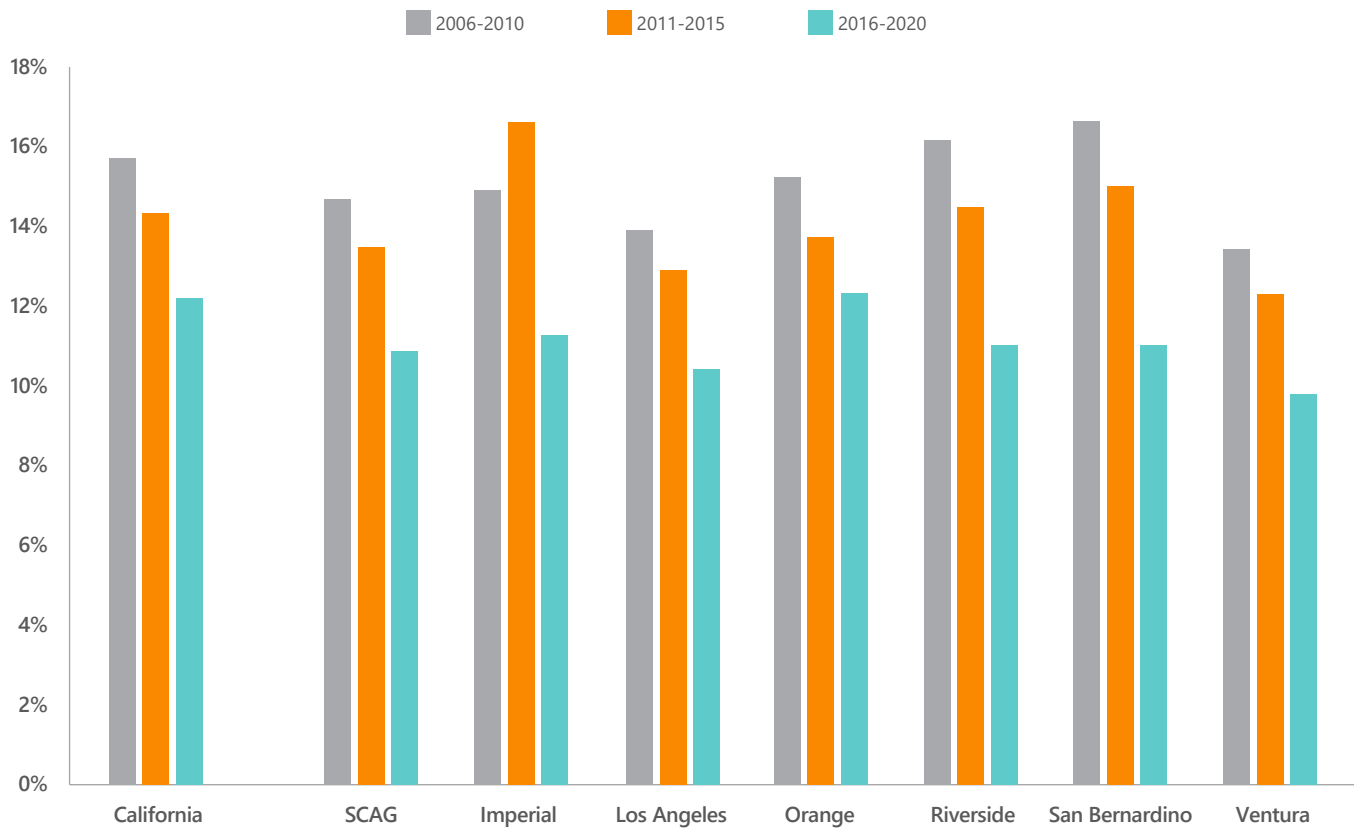
PERCENT OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS WITH OVERCROWDING (GREATER THAN 1 PERSON PER ROOM)



SCAG REGION RENTER OVERCROWDING DECREASED IN MOST RECENT PERIOD

Renter overcrowding can be used as a more acute indicator of housing insufficiency, and trends in Southern California differ from overcrowding elsewhere. Despite fairly stable overcrowding rates in the state and nation, rental overcrowding in the SCAG region dropped from 16.7 percent in the late 2000s to 15.2 percent in the late 2010s.

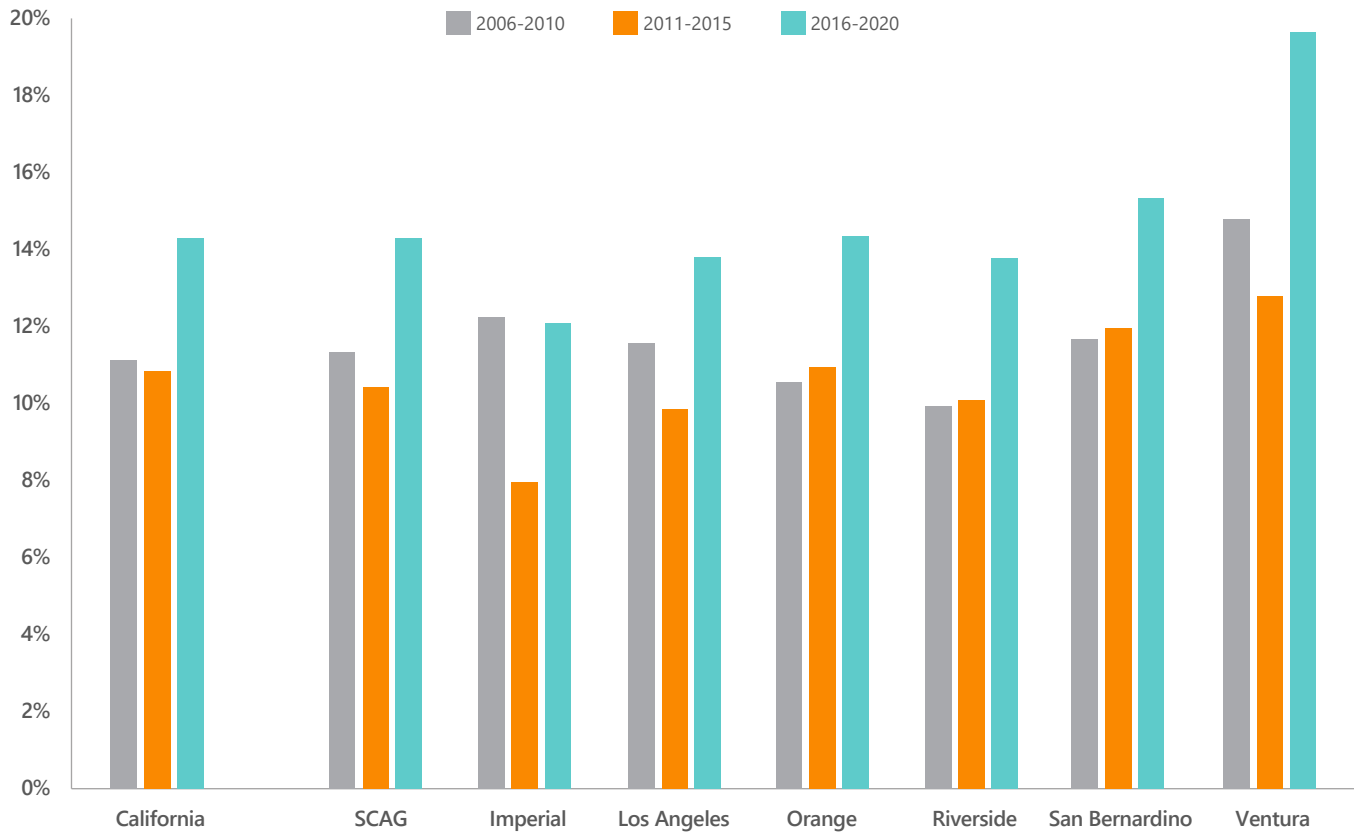
PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT LIVED IN A DIFFERENT HOME A YEAR AGO



RESIDENTIAL MOVES IN THE SCAG REGION HAVE DECREASED

Ten years ago, 14.7 percent of SCAG region residents lived in a different home than they did the prior year – this is now down to 10.9 percent. This decrease in residential moves has been widely researched and is thought to generally be the result of high housing prices and a tight market (see the presentation, "[California Exodus and the Great Plunge in Local Residential Mobility](#)," from the 32nd Annual Demographic Workshop).

SHARE OF MOVES ACROSS STATE BOUNDARIES



INCREASE IN MOVES TO OUT-OF-STATE LOCATIONS

The data indicates that more of the moves were to out-of-state locations. The ACS will provide a fuller picture of the origins and destinations of movers later this year when the complete microdata are released. The share of SCAG region movers who left the state decreased from 11.3 percent in the late 2000s to 10.4 percent in the early 2010s, but shot up to 14.3 percent in late 2010s, mirroring a similar trend across the state. This suggests that places outside Southern California became increasingly attractive between 2016-2020, but also that the propensity toward interstate moving can vary substantially in either direction in a relatively short period of time (see the [University of California, Los Angeles Anderson Forecast's assessment](#)).





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