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# **COMMUTING TO WORK IN THE 30 LARGEST U.S. CITIES**

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COMMUTING TO WORK IN THE 30 LARGEST U.S. CITIES

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16. Abstract <p>The aim of this study was to provide a broad overview of commuting by workers 16 years of age and older in the 30 largest U.S. cities, by highlighting the following aspects of commuting: who, how, how time consuming, and when. The study used the 2013 data from the American Community Survey—an ongoing annual survey by the U.S. Census Bureau.</p> <p>Below are the cities that were found to be on either extreme on several of the aspects examined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Median age: 34.4 years in Boston, 41.7 years in Louisville</li> <li>• Males: 45.9% in Detroit, 56.2% in Houston</li> <li>• No vehicle available: 1.8% in Fort Worth and San Jose, 46.0% in New York</li> <li>• Working at home: 2.1% in Memphis, 7.1% in Austin and Portland</li> <li>• Driving alone to work: 21.4% in New York, 82.9 in Louisville</li> <li>• Carpooling to work: 4.9% in New York, 12.4% in Memphis</li> <li>• Using public transportation to work: 0.7% in Oklahoma City, 56.7% in New York</li> <li>• Walking to work: 1.2% in Fort Worth, 14.5% in Boston</li> <li>• Bicycling to work: 0.1% in El Paso, 5.9% in Portland</li> <li>• Mean travel time to work: 20.7 minutes in Oklahoma City, 39.7 minutes in New York</li> <li>• Leaving for work between 5:00 am and 8:59 am: 59.8% in Detroit and Las Vegas, 73.5% in Jacksonville</li> </ul>					
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## **Introduction and Approach**

The aim of this study was to provide a broad overview of commuting to work in the largest U.S. cities, by highlighting the following aspects of commuting: who, how, how time consuming, and when. The data came from the American Community Survey—an ongoing annual survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a).

The American Community Survey provides 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates. This study used the 1-year estimates for 2013. The information is for workers 16 years of age and older.

The data for the 30 largest U.S. cities were analyzed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). The examined cities are listed in Table 1. The data are for the residents of the respective cities (not the metropolitan areas). The combined population of these 30 cities in 2013 was 39,410,377, representing 12.5% of the entire population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015c).

Table 1  
Population in the 30 examined cities.

Rank	City	Population
1	New York, NY	8,405,837
2	Los Angeles, CA	3,884,307
3	Chicago, IL	2,718,782
4	Houston, TX	2,195,914
5	Philadelphia, PA	1,553,165
6	Phoenix, AZ	1,513,367
7	San Antonio, TX	1,409,019
8	San Diego, CA	1,355,896
9	Dallas, TX	1,257,676
10	San Jose, CA	998,537
11	Austin, TX	885,400
12	Indianapolis, IN	843,393
13	Jacksonville, FL	842,583
14	San Francisco, CA	837,442
15	Columbus, OH	822,553
16	Charlotte, NC	792,862
17	Fort Worth, TX	792,727
18	Detroit, MI	688,701
19	El Paso, TX	674,433
20	Memphis, TN	653,450
21	Seattle, WA	652,405
22	Denver, CO	649,495
23	Washington, DC	646,449
24	Boston, MA	645,966
25	Nashville, TN	634,464
26	Baltimore, MD	622,104
27	Oklahoma City, OK	610,613
28	Louisville, KY	609,893
29	Portland, OR	609,456
30	Las Vegas, NV	603,488

## Results

### **Commuting: Who**

*Age* (Table 2). The cities with the youngest median ages of workers were Boston (34.4 years), Washington, DC (36.5 years), and Austin and Denver (both 36.8 years). On the other hand, the cities with the oldest median ages were Louisville (41.7 years), Jacksonville (41.5 years), and Las Vegas (41.4 years). The median age in each of the examined cities was less than the median age for all U.S. workers (42.2 years).

*Gender* (Table 3). Males constituted the smallest percentages of workers in Detroit (45.9%), Baltimore (46.9%), and Philadelphia (48.0%). On the other extreme, males constituted the largest percentages of workers in Houston (56.2%), San Jose (56.1%), and Dallas (56.0%). In comparison, in the United States, males constituted 52.9% of all workers.

*Earnings* (Table 4). Median earnings were lowest in Detroit (\$22,888), El Paso (\$25,021), and San Antonio (\$27,500). The highest earnings were in Washington, DC (\$52,310), San Francisco (\$51,329), and Seattle (\$46,125). The corresponding value for all U.S. workers was \$32,625.

*Vehicle availability* (Table 5). The smallest percentages of workers with no vehicle available were in Fort Worth and San Jose (both 1.8%), and El Paso (2.0%). In contrast, the largest percentages with no vehicle available were in New York (46.0%), Washington, DC (27.7%), and Boston (21.9%). For all U.S. workers, the corresponding percentage was 4.5%.

Table 2  
Median age of workers.

Rank	City	Median age (years)
1	Boston	34.4
2	Washington, DC	36.5
3	Austin	36.8
4	Denver	36.8
5	Columbus	37.0
6	Seattle	37.5
7	Chicago	37.7
8	Dallas	37.8
	Fort Worth	37.8
10	Nashville	38.0
	San Diego	38.0
12	Baltimore	38.6
	Philadelphia	38.6
14	San Francisco	38.7
15	Houston	38.8
16	Charlotte	39.1
	Portland	39.1
	San Antonio	39.1
19	El Paso	39.6
	Indianapolis	39.6
	Los Angeles	39.6
22	Oklahoma City	39.7
23	Phoenix	40.0
24	Memphis	40.1
25	New York	40.2
26	San Jose	41.0
27	Detroit	41.3
28	Las Vegas	41.4
29	Jacksonville	41.5
30	Louisville	41.7
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>42.2</i>



Table 3  
Percentage of male workers.

Rank	City	Males (%)
1	Detroit	45.9
2	Baltimore	46.9
3	Philadelphia	48.0
4	Washington, DC	49.0
5	Memphis	49.6
6	Boston	49.8
7	Charlotte	50.5
8	Columbus	50.8
	Indianapolis	50.8
10	Louisville	50.9
11	New York	51.5
	Portland	51.5
13	Chicago	51.9
	Nashville	51.9
15	Jacksonville	52.0
16	Fort Worth	52.6
	Seattle	52.6
18	Las Vegas	53.1
19	San Antonio	53.3
20	Denver	53.4
21	San Francisco	54.1
22	Oklahoma City	54.3
23	El Paso	54.8
24	Austin	54.9
	Phoenix	54.9
26	San Diego	55.1
	Los Angeles	55.1
28	Dallas	56.0
29	San Jose	56.1
30	Houston	56.2
<i>U.S.A.</i>		52.9

Table 4  
Earnings of workers.

Rank	City	Median earnings (\$)
1	Detroit	22,888
2	El Paso	25,021
3	San Antonio	27,500
4	Los Angeles	27,550
5	Memphis	28,373
6	Dallas	30,208
7	Houston	30,252
8	Indianapolis	30,372
9	Las Vegas	30,411
10	Oklahoma City	30,667
11	Phoenix	31,002
12	Nashville	31,371
13	Louisville	31,466
14	Jacksonville	31,715
15	Columbus	31,774
16	Fort Worth	31,815
17	Philadelphia	31,852
18	Charlotte	31,979
19	Austin	33,304
20	Chicago	34,518
21	Baltimore	35,706
22	Denver	35,831
23	Portland	35,903
24	San Diego	37,280
25	New York	37,333
26	Boston	37,674
27	San Jose	42,022
28	Seattle	46,125
29	San Francisco	51,329
30	Washington, DC	52,310
<i>U.S.A.</i>		32,625

Table 5  
Workers with no vehicle available.

Rank	City	No vehicle available (%)
1	Fort Worth	1.8
	San Jose	1.8
3	El Paso	2.0
4	Oklahoma City	2.5
5	Nashville	2.8
6	Jacksonville	3.2
	San Diego	3.2
8	Columbus	3.6
9	Indianapolis	3.7
10	Phoenix	4.0
11	Las Vegas	4.1
	San Antonio	4.1
13	Austin	4.2
14	Dallas	4.3
	Denver	4.3
16	Charlotte	4.5
17	Houston	4.6
18	Louisville	4.9
	Memphis	4.9
20	Los Angeles	6.8
21	Portland	7.1
22	Seattle	8.5
23	Detroit	11.5
24	Baltimore	15.9
25	Chicago	16.4
26	San Francisco	18.6
27	Philadelphia	18.9
28	Boston	21.9
29	Washington, DC	27.7
30	New York	46.0
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>4.5</i>

## **Commuting: How**

*Working at home* (Table 6). The smallest percentages of workers working at home were in Memphis (2.1%), Louisville (2.4%), and Baltimore (2.5%). In contrast, the largest percentages were in Austin and Portland (both 7.1%), and Denver (7.0%). The corresponding percentage for all U.S. workers was 4.4%.

*Driving alone* (Table 7). The smallest percentages of workers driving alone to work were in New York (21.4%), Washington, DC (32.3%), and San Francisco (36.4%). In contrast, the largest percentages were in Louisville (82.9%), Oklahoma City (82.6%), and Jacksonville (81.4%). The percentage for all U.S. workers was 76.4%.

*Carpooling* (Table 8). The smallest percentages of workers carpooling to work were in New York (4.9%), Washington, DC (5.3%), and Boston (5.4%). The largest percentages were in Memphis (12.4%), Houston (12.2%), and Las Vegas and Phoenix (both 12.0%). The percentage for the United States was 9.4%.

*Using public transportation* (Table 9). The smallest percentages of workers using public transportation were in Oklahoma City (0.7%), Fort Worth (0.8%), and Jacksonville (1.6%). In contrast, the largest percentages were in New York (56.7%), Washington, DC (38.5%), and Boston (33.0%). The percentage for the United States was 5.2%.

*Walking* (Table 10). The smallest percentages of workers walking to work were in Fort Worth (1.2%), Oklahoma City (1.3%), and Jacksonville (1.4%). The largest percentages were in Boston (14.5%), Washington, DC (13.6%), and San Francisco (10.9%). The percentage for the United States was 2.8%.

*Bicycling* (Table 11). The smallest percentages of workers bicycling to work were in El Paso (0.1%), Fort Worth (0.2%), and Charlotte, Dallas, Nashville, Oklahoma City, and San Antonio (all 0.3%). In contrast, the largest percentages were in Portland (5.9%), Washington, DC (4.5%), and San Francisco (3.8%). The percentage for all U.S. workers was 0.6%.

Table 6  
Working at home.

Rank	City	Worked at home (%)
1	Memphis	2.1
2	Louisville	2.4
3	Baltimore	2.5
4	Las Vegas	2.9
	Philadelphia	2.9
6	Indianapolis	3.0
	Oklahoma City	3.0
8	El Paso	3.1
9	San Antonio	3.2
10	Boston	3.4
11	Columbus	3.6
12	Fort Worth	3.7
	Houston	3.7
14	Detroit	3.8
15	San Jose	3.9
16	New York	4.1
17	Chicago	4.4
	Dallas	4.4
	Jacksonville	4.4
	Washington, DC	4.4
21	Phoenix	4.6
22	Nashville	4.9
23	Los Angeles	5.4
24	Charlotte	5.8
25	San Diego	6.2
26	Seattle	6.7
27	San Francisco	6.8
28	Denver	7.0
29	Austin	7.1
	Portland	7.1
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>4.4</i>

Table 7  
Driving to work alone in a car, truck, or van.

Rank	City	Drove alone (%)
1	New York	21.4
2	Washington, DC	32.3
3	San Francisco	36.4
4	Boston	40.6
5	Chicago	49.7
6	Philadelphia	49.9
7	Seattle	50.5
8	Portland	57.4
9	Baltimore	61.3
10	Los Angeles	67.1
11	Denver	69.8
12	Detroit	70.1
13	Austin	73.7
14	Phoenix	74.7
15	San Diego	74.9
16	Houston	75.3
17	Charlotte	75.5
18	Dallas	75.8
	San Jose	75.8
20	Las Vegas	76.7
21	San Antonio	78.9
22	Columbus	79.3
23	El Paso	79.5
	Memphis	79.5
25	Fort Worth	80.9
26	Nashville	81.1
27	Indianapolis	81.2
28	Jacksonville	81.4
29	Oklahoma City	82.6
30	Louisville	82.9
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>76.4</i>

Table 8  
Carpooling to work in a car, truck, or van.

Rank	City	Carpooled (%)
1	New York	4.9
2	Washington, DC	5.3
3	Boston	5.4
4	San Francisco	6.8
5	Seattle	8.0
6	Louisville	8.2
7	Denver	8.3
8	Chicago	8.5
	Nashville	8.5
	Philadelphia	8.5
11	San Diego	8.7
12	Jacksonville	9.1
13	Baltimore	9.2
	Columbus	9.2
15	Austin	9.9
	Los Angeles	9.9
	Portland	9.9
18	Indianapolis	10.2
19	Charlotte	10.7
20	Fort Worth	11.1
	San Antonio	11.1
22	Oklahoma City	11.3
23	El Paso	11.4
24	Dallas	11.8
	San Jose	11.8
26	Detroit	11.9
27	Las Vegas	12.0
	Phoenix	12.0
29	Houston	12.2
30	Memphis	12.4
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>9.4</i>

Table 9  
Using public transportation to work.

Rank	City	Used public transportation (%)
1	Oklahoma City	0.7
2	Fort Worth	0.8
3	Jacksonville	1.6
4	El Paso	1.7
5	Nashville	1.9
6	Memphis	2.2
7	Indianapolis	2.3
8	Louisville	2.7
9	Columbus	3.3
10	San Antonio	3.6
11	Dallas	3.8
12	Charlotte	4.0
	Phoenix	4.0
14	Austin	4.2
	Houston	4.2
	San Diego	4.2
17	Las Vegas	4.5
	San Jose	4.5
19	Denver	7.4
20	Detroit	8.1
21	Los Angeles	10.8
22	Portland	11.9
23	Baltimore	18.8
24	Seattle	20.9
25	Philadelphia	27.2
26	Chicago	27.8
27	San Francisco	32.7
28	Boston	33.0
29	Washington, DC	38.5
30	New York	56.7
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>5.2</i>



Table 10  
Walking to work.

Rank	City	Walked (%)
1	Fort Worth	1.2
2	Oklahoma City	1.3
3	Jacksonville	1.4
4	El Paso	1.6
5	San Antonio	1.7
	San Jose	1.7
7	Las Vegas	1.8
	Phoenix	1.8
9	Indianapolis	1.9
	Dallas	1.9
11	Louisville	2.1
12	Charlotte	2.2
	Houston	2.2
	Memphis	2.2
15	Nashville	2.3
16	Austin	2.4
17	Columbus	2.8
18	Detroit	3.5
19	Los Angeles	3.6
20	San Diego	3.7
21	Denver	4.5
22	Portland	6.1
23	Baltimore	6.4
24	Chicago	6.7
25	Philadelphia	8.1
26	Seattle	9.1
27	New York	10.0
28	San Francisco	10.9
29	Washington, DC	13.6
30	Boston	14.5
<i>U.S.A.</i>		2.8

Table 11  
Bicycling to work.

Rank	City	Bicycled (%)
1	El Paso	0.1
2	Fort Worth	0.2
3	Charlotte	0.3
	Dallas	0.3
	Nashville	0.3
	Oklahoma City	0.3
	San Antonio	0.3
8	Indianapolis	0.4
	Jacksonville	0.4
	Las Vegas	0.4
	Memphis	0.4
12	Louisville	0.5
13	Detroit	0.6
	Phoenix	0.6
15	Baltimore	0.7
16	Houston	0.8
	San Diego	0.8
18	Columbus	1.0
	San Jose	1.0
20	Los Angeles	1.2
	New York	1.2
22	Austin	1.4
	Chicago	1.4
24	Boston	1.9
25	Denver	2.0
26	Philadelphia	2.3
27	Seattle	3.5
28	San Francisco	3.8
29	Washington, DC	4.5
30	Portland	5.9
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>0.6</i>

**Commuting: How time consuming**

*Travel time to work* (Table 12). The shortest mean travel times to work were in Oklahoma City (20.7 minutes), Columbus (21.4 minutes), and Louisville (21.6 minutes). The longest mean travel times were in New York (39.7 minutes), Chicago (33.7 minutes), and Philadelphia (32.0 minutes). For all U.S. workers, the mean travel time was 25.8 minutes. (Workers who worked from home were not included in these calculations.)

Table 12  
Travel time to work.

Rank	City	Mean travel time to work (minutes)
1	Oklahoma City	20.7
2	Columbus	21.4
3	Louisville	21.6
4	Memphis	21.9
5	El Paso	22.1
6	Indianapolis	22.6
7	Nashville	23.3
	San Diego	23.3
9	San Antonio	23.4
10	Austin	23.5
11	Charlotte	24.1
12	Jacksonville	24.3
13	Phoenix	24.7
14	Denver	24.8
15	Las Vegas	24.9
16	Portland	25.3
17	Dallas	25.8
18	Seattle	26.2
19	Houston	26.3
20	Fort Worth	26.5
21	Detroit	26.8
22	San Jose	27.3
23	Boston	29.5
24	Los Angeles	29.9
	Washington, DC	29.9
26	Baltimore	30.5
27	San Francisco	31.5
28	Philadelphia	32.0
29	Chicago	33.7
30	New York	39.7
<i>U.S.A.</i>		25.8

## **Commuting: When**

*Conventional departure times* (Table 13). The percentages of departures to work between 5:00 am and 8:59 am were lowest in Detroit and Las Vegas (both 59.8%), and Columbus (64.7%). The highest percentages were in Jacksonville (73.5%), Oklahoma City (72.8%), and Nashville (72.5%). For all U.S. workers, the analogous percentage was 71.0%.

*Early departure times* (Table 14). The percentages of departures to work between 12:00 am and 4:59 am were lowest in Washington, DC (1.8%), San Francisco (1.9%), and Austin (2.5%). The highest percentages were in Phoenix (7.8%), Las Vegas (7.1%), and Baltimore and Fort Worth (both 5.0%). For all U.S. workers, this percentage was 4.4%.

*Late departure times* (Table 15). The percentages of departures to work between 9:00 am and 11:59 pm were lowest in Phoenix (23.3%), Oklahoma City (23.6%), and Jacksonville and Nashville (23.7%). The highest percentages were in Detroit (35.9%), Las Vegas (33.1%), and Columbus (32.2%). For all U.S. workers, the analogous percentage was 24.6%.

Table 13  
Conventional departure times from home to work.

Rank	City	Leaving home between 5:00 am and 8:59 am (%)
1	Detroit	59.8
	Las Vegas	59.8
3	Columbus	64.7
4	Louisville	66.5
5	Los Angeles	66.9
6	San Jose	67.2
7	Boston	67.4
8	Portland	67.5
9	Memphis	67.9
10	Chicago	68.3
11	New York	68.7
12	Philadelphia	68.8
13	Phoenix	68.9
14	Austin	69.0
	Indianapolis	69.0
16	San Francisco	69.2
17	San Antonio	69.3
	Seattle	69.3
19	Baltimore	69.4
20	Fort Worth	69.7
21	El Paso	69.8
22	Charlotte	70.1
23	San Diego	70.3
24	Dallas	71.7
25	Washington, DC	72.0
26	Denver	72.4
	Houston	72.4
28	Nashville	72.5
29	Oklahoma City	72.8
30	Jacksonville	73.5
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>71.0</i>

Table 14  
Early departure times from home to work.

Rank	City	Leaving home between 12:00 am and 4:59 am (%)
1	Washington, DC	1.8
2	San Francisco	1.9
3	Austin	2.5
4	Charlotte	2.6
5	Seattle	2.7
6	Boston	2.8
	Jacksonville	2.8
	New York	2.8
	Philadelphia	2.8
10	San Jose	2.9
11	Indianapolis	3.0
12	Columbus	3.1
	Portland	3.1
14	Denver	3.5
15	Oklahoma City	3.6
	San Diego	3.6
17	El Paso	3.7
18	Dallas	3.8
	Houston	3.8
	Los Angeles	3.8
	Nashville	3.8
22	Memphis	3.9
23	San Antonio	4.0
24	Louisville	4.2
25	Detroit	4.3
26	Chicago	4.8
27	Baltimore	5.0
	Fort Worth	5.0
29	Las Vegas	7.1
30	Phoenix	7.8
<i>U.S.A.</i>		<i>4.4</i>

Table 15  
Late departure times from home to work.

Rank	City	Leaving home between 9:00 am and 11:59 pm (%)
1	Phoenix	23.3
2	Oklahoma City	23.6
3	Jacksonville	23.7
	Nashville	23.7
5	Houston	23.8
6	Denver	24.1
7	Dallas	24.5
8	Fort Worth	25.3
9	Baltimore	25.6
10	San Diego	26.1
11	Washington, DC	26.2
12	El Paso	26.5
13	San Antonio	26.7
14	Chicago	26.9
15	Charlotte	27.3
16	Indianapolis	28.0
	Memphis	28.0
18	Seattle	28.2
19	Philadelphia	28.4
20	Austin	28.5
	New York	28.5
22	San Francisco	28.9
23	Los Angeles	29.3
	Louisville	29.3
25	Portland	29.4
26	Boston	29.8
27	San Jose	29.9
28	Columbus	32.2
29	Las Vegas	33.1
30	Detroit	35.9
<i>U.S.A.</i>		24.6



## Discussion

Table 16 summarizes the findings for the cities that were at either extreme of all the aspects considered.

Table 16  
Cities at either extreme of the aspects considered.

City	Extreme
New York	Highest percentage without a vehicle
	Lowest percentage of driving alone to work
	Lowest percentage of carpooling to work
	Highest percentage of using public transportation to work
	Longest travel time to work
Detroit	Lowest percentage of male workers
	Lowest earnings
	Lowest percentage of leaving for work during conventional time
	Highest percentage of leaving for work after conventional time
Boston	Lowest worker age
	Highest percentage of walking to work
Fort Worth	Lowest percentage without a vehicle
	Lowest percentage of walking to work
Louisville	Highest worker age
	Highest percentage of driving alone to work
Memphis	Lowest percentage of working at home
	Highest percentage of carpooling to work
Oklahoma City	Lowest percentage of using public transportation to work
	Shortest travel time to work
Phoenix	Highest percentage of leaving for work before conventional time
	Lowest percentage of leaving for work after conventional time
Portland	Highest percentage of working at home
	Highest percentage of bicycling to work
Washington, DC	Highest earnings
	Lowest percentage of leaving for work before conventional time
Austin	Highest percentage of working at home
El Paso	Lowest percentage of bicycling to work
Houston	Highest percentage of male workers
Jacksonville	Highest percentage of leaving for work during conventional time
Las Vegas	Lowest percentage of leaving for work during conventional time
San Jose	Lowest percentage without a vehicle

## References

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