

We asked... You told us

Place of Work and Journey to Work

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

Where Americans Worked

In question 22 on the 1990 census forms, we asked people where (the location) they worked the week before the census. You told us that:

- In 1990, 88 million workers—or around three-fourths (76 percent) of all American workers 16 years and over—worked in the same county in which they lived.
- Another fifth (20 percent) of all workers worked outside their home county within their home State, and 3 percent worked outside their home State.

How Americans Went to Work

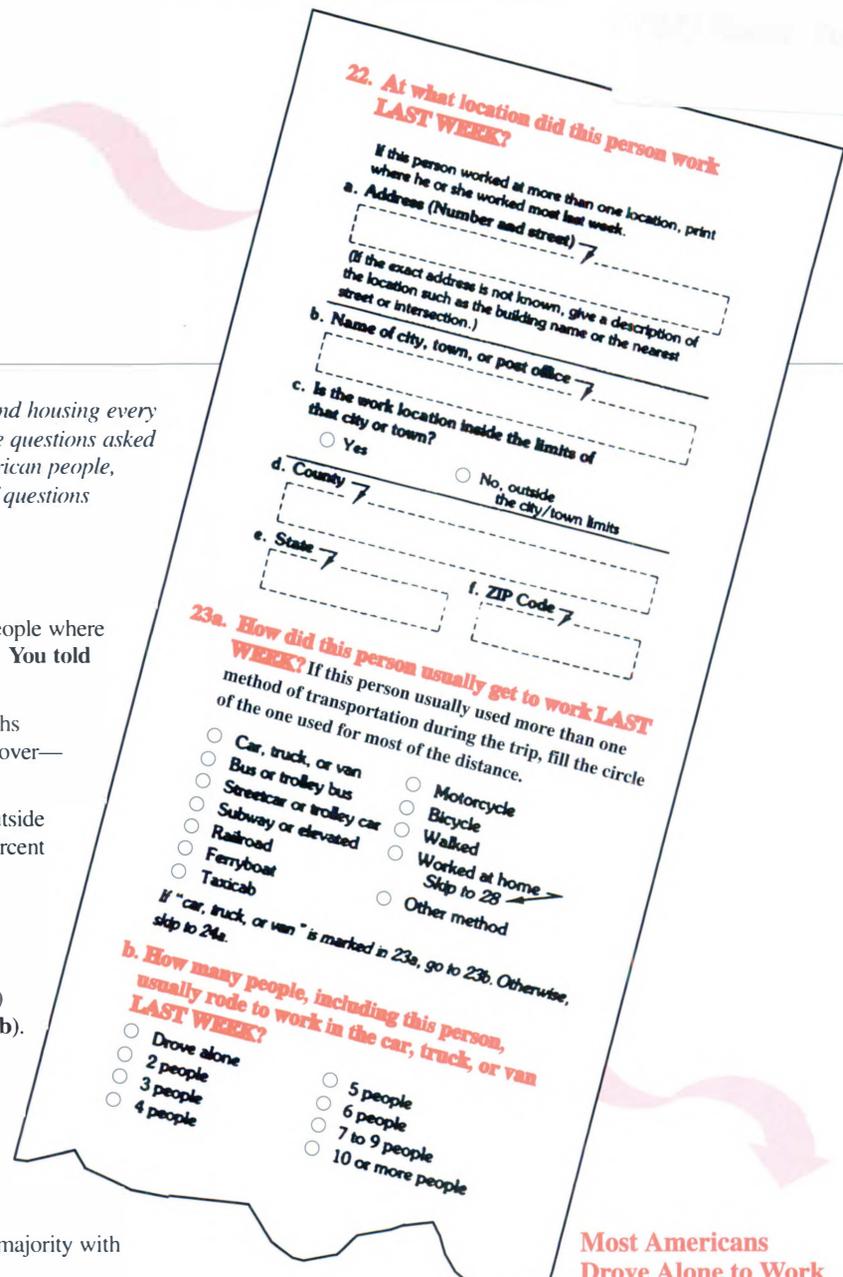
In question 23, we asked people what means of transportation they used to get to their workplace (part 23a) and how many people usually rode with them (part 23b).

- A private vehicle—such as a car, truck, or van—was the overwhelming choice of American workers as their primary mode of transportation to work. About 73 percent of Americans drove alone to work in 1990, an increase from 64 percent in 1980 (see chart).
- Another 13 percent of workers carpooled, the vast majority with only one other passenger.
- Nationwide, only a small proportion of workers—5 percent—used some form of public transportation to commute to work. However, the use of public transit was much higher in metropolitan areas¹ (6 percent) than in nonmetropolitan areas (1 percent) and considerably higher in the central cities of metropolitan areas (12 percent) than in the suburbs (3 percent).

Who Uses This Information?

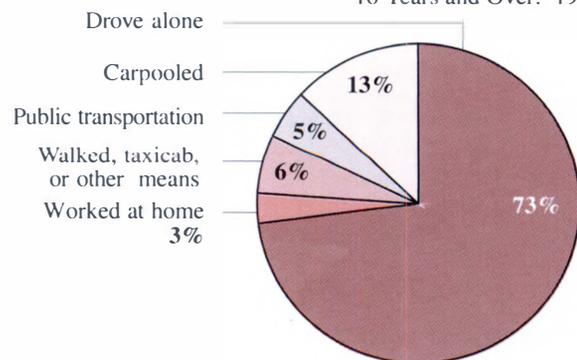
- Just a few examples:
- Federal Government to formulate national transportation and energy use policies
 - State governments to estimate State and county commuting patterns for funds allocation and program planning
 - Local governments to predict transportation needs in disaster recovery or contingency planning
 - Private business and industry to define daytime populations for use in marketing and site location

¹Generally, a metropolitan area consists of a sizable central city (or cities) and the surrounding suburbs, with a total population of at least 100,000. Metropolitan areas are defined in terms of counties (cities and towns in New England). Central cities include the largest city in each metropolitan area as well as other cities that meet population size and commuting requirements.



Most Americans Drove Alone to Work

Means of Transportation
to Work for Workers
16 Years and Over: 1990



Census Trivia: According to the 1990 census, which metropolitan area had the highest public transit use to work: Jersey City, New York, or San Francisco? (Answer on reverse.)

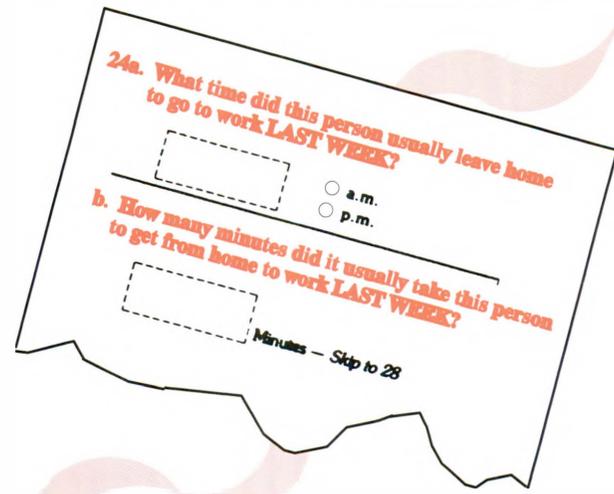
Departure Time

In question 24, we asked people what time they left home to go to work (part 24a) and how long it took them to get to work (part 24b).

- You told us that the most popular hour to leave for work in 1990 was between 7:00 and 7:59 a.m. (see the left chart below). About 31 percent, or 35 million workers, left home during that hour. The second most frequent departure interval was between 6:00 and 6:59 a.m., when 20 percent of workers left home, while 16 percent left between 8:00 and 8:59 a.m. There was little difference in average departure times between persons living in metropolitan areas and those living outside them.

Travel Time

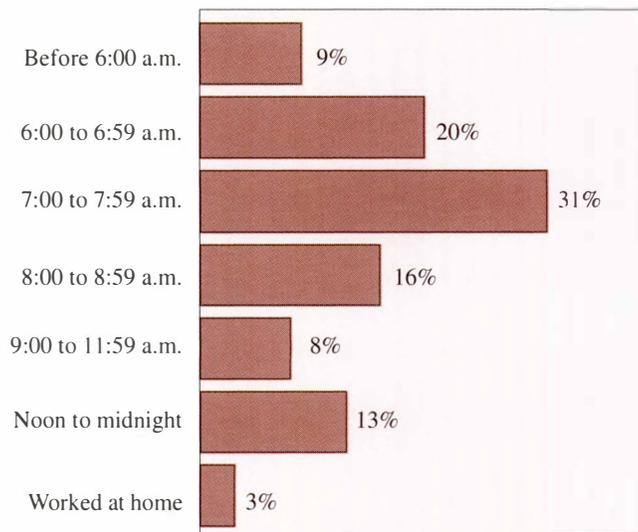
- The average U.S. worker took 22.4 minutes to get from home to work (one-way) in 1990 (see the right chart below). This was a 3-percent increase from the average of 21.7 minutes traveled in 1980.
- In 1990, New York State had the longest mean travel time with 28.6 minutes, while the shortest was 13.0 minutes in North Dakota.



Two-Thirds of Workers Departed for Work Between 6-9 a.m.

Departure Time to Work for Workers
16 Years and Over: 1990

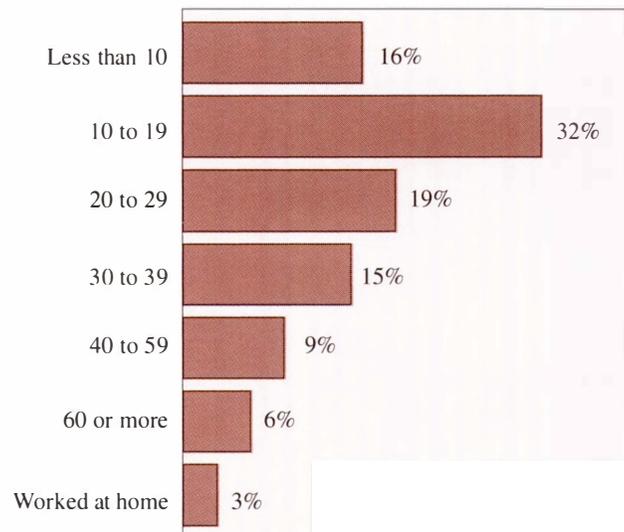
(In percent)



Average Travel Time to Work Was 22.4 Minutes

Travel Time to Work for Workers
16 Years and Over: 1990

(In minutes)



Want to Know More?

Consult the series of 1990 census reports, CP-2, *Social and Economic Characteristics*, at a large public or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Call:

- Customer Services at the Census Bureau, **301-457-4100**, for ordering information about the GPO reports listed above or to order copies of CQC bulletins or other Census Bureau products
- Karen Mills, **301-457-3953**, for general information on CQC bulletins
- Celia Boertlein, **301-457-2454**, for more information on place of work and journey to work data

Note: Data on place of work and journey to work are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

Trivia Answer: Nearly half (47 percent) of all workers in the New York metropolitan area used some means of public transportation to get to work in 1990, the highest proportion for any metro area. Jersey City metro area ranked second, with 29 percent, and San Francisco metro area was third, with 20 percent.



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