
Patterns of Employment Location in Six Metropolitan Areas

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These handouts provide a descriptive overview of employment locations in six metropolitan areas: Atlanta, Boston, Houston, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.¹ Table 1 presents key characteristics of these areas, which have very different demographic, housing, and labor market conditions.

The six metropolitan regions range in population from about 2 million to just over 5 million, with the central cities accounting for dramatically different shares of the total. At one extreme, Washington, D.C., is home to only 12 percent of its region's total population, while at the other, Houston is home to 46 percent.

In general, these regions are growing faster than their central cities, in both population and employment. Atlanta grew the fastest during the 1990s, with population increasing 39 percent in the region but only 6 percent in the central city. The Philadelphia and Boston regions grew much more slowly, and the city of Philadelphia actually lost both population and jobs.

The racial and ethnic diversity of U.S. metropolitan areas is well represented by these six metropolitan areas. For example, the Atlanta and Washington regions both have quite large black populations and smaller Hispanic populations. In contrast, both blacks and Hispanics account for much smaller shares of total population in the Boston and

¹ Based on Urban Institute tabulations of data from the 2000 Census Transportation Planning Package, which provides characteristics of workers at the census tract level, based on both place of work and place of residence. Low-wage jobs are defined as jobs with annual wages under \$20,000. High-wage jobs are defined as jobs with annual wages over \$75,000. Suburban counties are classified as either "inner suburbs" or "outer suburbs" based on whether they are contiguous to the central-city jurisdiction.

Table 1. Demographic and Economic Characteristics for Selected Metropolitan Areas

	Atlanta		Boston		Houston		Philadelphia		Seattle		Washington, DC	
	City	Metro	City	Metro	City	Metro	City	Metro	City	Metro	City	Metro
Population, 2000	421,000	2,223,000	589,000	3,406,000	1,935,000	4,178,000	1,518,000	5,101,000	563,000	2,415,000	572,000	4,923,000
% black	61	29	26	7	25	18	43	20	10	5	61	27
% Hispanic	4	6	14	6	37	30	8	5	5	5	5	8
% foreign born	7	10	26	15	26	20	9	7	17	14	13	17
% poor	25	9	29	9	19	14	23	11	12	8	20	7
% unemployed	14	5	7	4	8	6	11	6	5	4	11	4
% adults in mgmt/prof occupations	26	25	26	30	20	22	16	22	32	27	29	33
Population change, 1990–2000	6%	39%	3%	6%	15%	26%	-4%	4%	9%	19%	-6%	17%
Employment change, 1990–2000	5%	34%	-1%	3%	4%	18%	-11%	0%	13%	17%	-14%	8%
Average family income	\$73,000	\$85,000	\$62,000	\$89,000	\$60,000	\$69,000	\$48,000	\$73,000	\$84,000	\$80,000	\$78,000	\$91,000
Average owner-occupied house value	\$241,000	\$173,000	\$240,000	\$289,000	\$121,000	\$127,000	\$72,000	\$147,000	\$315,000	\$273,000	\$252,000	\$226,000

Source: Urban Institute tabulations of 1990 and 2000 Census data.

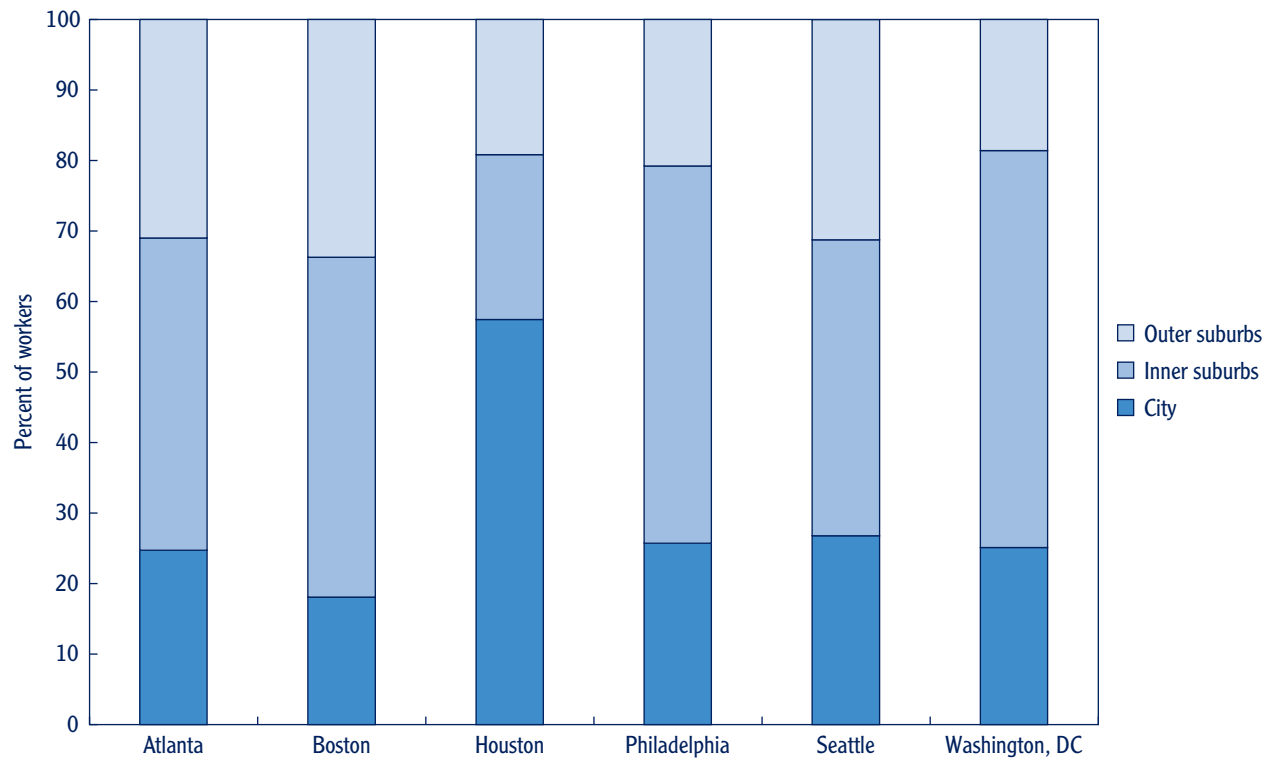
Seattle areas. And in the Houston area, Hispanics account for three of every ten residents. The share of metropolitan-area residents who are foreign born also varies widely, from only 7 percent in Philadelphia to 20 percent in Houston.

Economic conditions also differ significantly across the six metropolitan areas. Poverty and unemployment were lowest in the Washington and Seattle regions, and considerably higher in the Houston area. Not surprisingly, both poverty and unemployment were substantially higher in the central cities than in the suburbs, even in the most prosperous metropolitan areas. Finally, average family incomes range from \$69,000 in Houston, where only about a fifth of all workers has a managerial or professional position, to \$91,000 in Washington, D.C., where a third of all workers are managers or professionals.

Patterns of employment location vary dramatically across these six regions. Figure 1 shows the share of all jobs in each metropolitan area that are located within the central city, the inner suburbs, and the outer suburbs.

Houston is the only one of our six areas where most jobs are located in the central city. In Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, roughly three-quarters of the

Figure 1. Job Locations



region's jobs are in the suburbs; in Boston, the suburbs account for more than eight of every ten jobs.

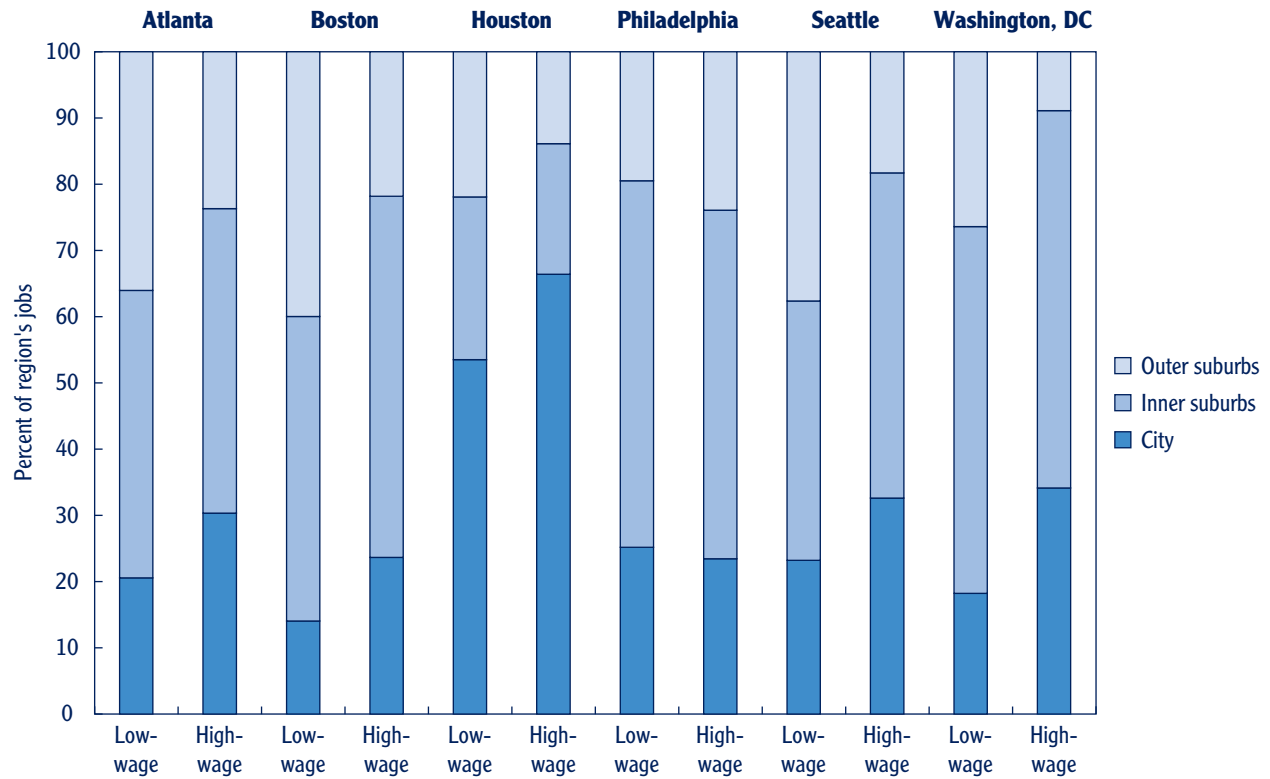
Further, at least one of every three jobs in Atlanta, Boston, and Seattle is located in the outer suburbs. In Houston, Philadelphia, and Washington, the outer suburbs account for only about one in five jobs.

In five of the six metropolitan areas considered here, high-wage jobs are more concentrated in central cities than low-wage jobs (figure 2).

More specifically, the share of high-wage jobs located in the central city is generally about 10 percentage points higher than the share of low-wage jobs. This differential is greatest in the Washington, D.C., region, where 34 percent of all high-wage jobs are in the central city, compared with only 18 percent of low-wage jobs.

In the Atlanta, Boston, Houston, Seattle, and Washington regions, high-wage jobs in the suburbs also tend to be more geographically clustered than low-wage jobs. For

Figure 2. Workplace Locations for Low- and High-Wage Workers



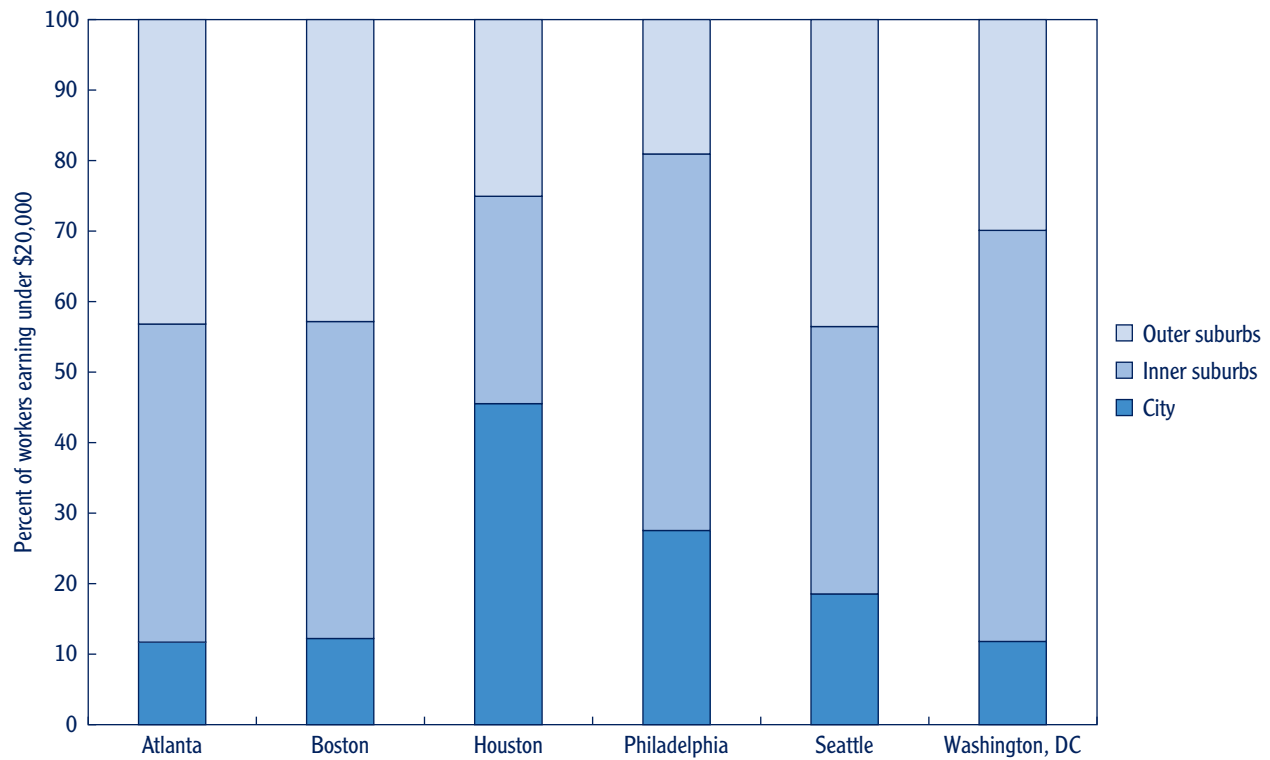
example, more than a third of the Atlanta region’s low-wage jobs are dispersed throughout the outer suburbs, compared with less than a quarter of high-wage jobs. And in the Washington region, fewer than one in ten high-wage jobs are located in the outer suburbs, compared with more than one in four low-wage jobs.

The Philadelphia area is different, with a higher share of high-wage jobs in the suburbs than in the central city, and a lower share in the outer suburbs than in the inner suburbs.

Although low-wage workers are more likely than high-wage workers to live in the central city, the majority live in the suburbs (figure 3). And generally, the share of low-wage jobs in the central city is higher than the share of low-wage workers living there.

In Atlanta and Houston, the central city accounts for a significantly larger share of low-wage work locations than residential locations. In Boston and Philadelphia, the share of low-wage jobs and residences in the central city are essentially the same.

Figure 3. Residential Locations for Low-Wage Workers



Low-wage blacks are more likely to live in central cities than either whites or Hispanics. But even so, the majority live in suburban locations in all but Houston and Philadelphia (table 2).

Table 2. Residential Location by Race and Ethnicity in Selected Metropolitan Areas

	All Workers			Low-Wage Workers			High-Wage Workers		
	City	Inner suburbs	Outer suburbs	City	Inner suburbs	Outer suburbs	City	Inner suburbs	Outer suburbs
Atlanta									
White	7.1	39.2	53.6	5.3	36.6	58.1	12.6	49.2	38.2
Black	18.4	62.4	19.2	24.8	55.8	19.4	17.8	61.5	20.7
Hispanic	10.1	53.7	36.3	10.7	55.2	34.0	9.7	52.0	38.3
Boston									
White	7.7	49.1	43.2	7.7	45.2	47.0	7.0	60.3	32.6
Black	47.5	32.6	19.9	48.4	31.0	20.6	32.5	51.4	16.1
Hispanic	29.5	45.5	25.0	30.6	44.8	24.6	20.3	57.2	22.5
Houston									
White	28.0	37.4	34.6	25.7	36.2	38.0	33.0	36.3	30.7
Black	60.6	23.2	16.3	65.7	18.2	16.1	44.1	28.8	27.1
Hispanic	52.5	30.5	17.0	57.6	26.8	15.6	40.5	35.8	23.6
Philadelphia									
White	15.4	62.7	21.9	17.4	61.5	21.0	8.1	66.3	25.6
Black	53.9	32.2	14.0	58.8	27.6	13.6	34.8	48.8	16.4
Hispanic	37.0	43.5	19.4	39.5	40.9	19.7	18.4	57.7	23.9
Seattle									
White	16.4	41.3	42.2	16.0	37.6	46.4	19.7	51.5	28.8
Black	26.8	33.6	39.6	28.2	29.5	42.3	27.7	44.3	28.0
Hispanic	19.0	44.8	36.3	20.0	43.6	36.3	16.2	55.9	27.9
Washington, DC									
White	6.7	56.8	36.5	6.2	49.2	44.6	8.9	70.2	20.9
Black	20.9	65.2	13.9	25.5	59.4	15.1	16.2	72.4	11.4
Hispanic	10.8	74.7	14.6	12.4	75.0	12.6	12.2	74.5	13.3