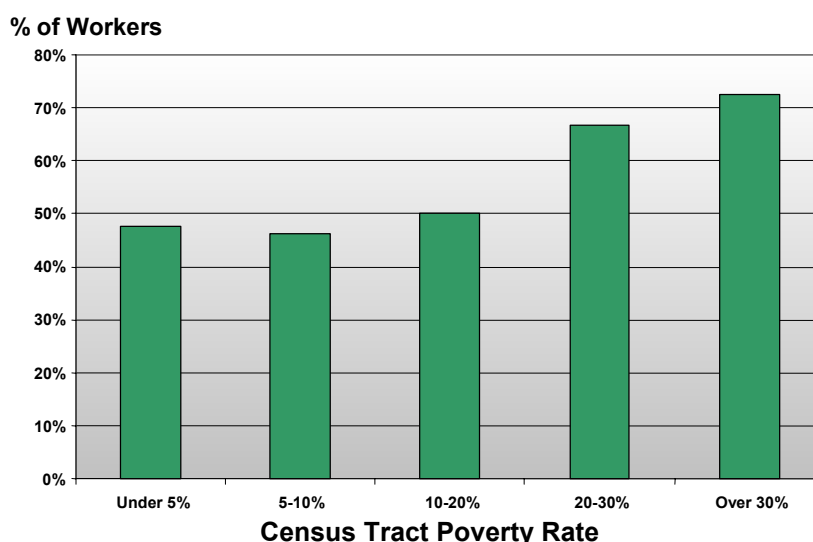


Transportation To and From Work

The Washington region is burdened by some of the worst commuting problems in the country. The region currently ranks fifth in the nation for traffic congestion, with area residents spending an average of 35 hours a year stuck in traffic.¹ Local governments are considering a number of solutions to these problems including infrastructure improvements and changes to the public transportation fare system. As these decisions are made it is important to consider what we know about where people work and how they get to their jobs on a daily basis.

To help address these questions we have reviewed briefly some of the data on transportation to work in the Washington, DC metro area available in the 2000 census. Distance, travel time and mode of transportation are analyzed both by county and level of neighborhood poverty.

Percent of Workers who Work in County of Residence, by Census Tract Poverty Rate, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000, Urban Institute.

Where do we work?

- Less than half of workers (48%) in the Washington DC metro area work in their county of residence.
- The percentage of workers in their county of residence is highest for the District of Columbia (73%), Montgomery County (59%), and Frederick County (59%) and lowest for Manassas Park (9%), Falls Church (16%), and Fairfax (23%).
- Workers from higher poverty areas are more likely to work in their county of residence than those from lower poverty census tracts.

How long is our commute?

- The average travel time to work for the DC region is 32.8 minutes. Public transportation users have an average travel time to work of 46.1 minutes, 13.3 minutes longer than the region's average travel time.
- The counties with the lowest average travel times for their residents are Fredericksburg (24.6 minutes), Falls Church (26.4 minutes) and Arlington (27.3 minutes). The highest travel times are Calvert County, MD (39.8 minutes) Charles County, MD (39.3 minutes) and Warren County, VA (39.1 minutes).

¹ 2002 Urban Mobility Study, Texas Transportation Institute. See <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>.

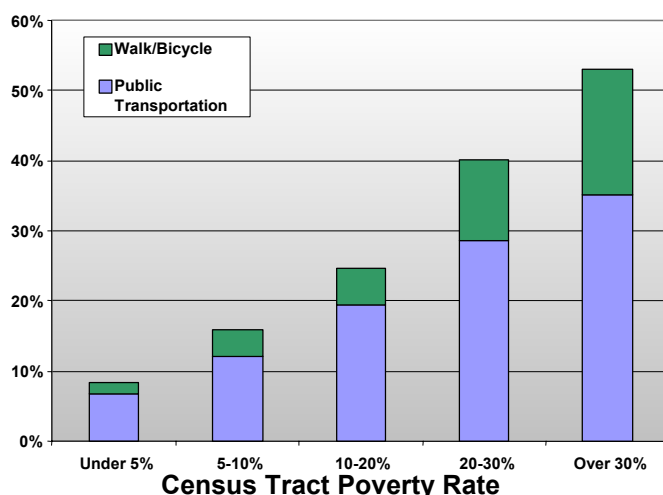
- Travel time does not vary significantly by the poverty rate of a census tract. Residents in tracts with the lowest levels of poverty average a travel time of 33.4 minutes, while the average for high poverty areas is slightly lower, with an average of 31.4 minutes.

How do we get to work?

- 82% of workers in the Washington DC metro area drive to work. 11% take public transportation, 4% work at home, and another 4% walk, bike, or take some other form of transportation.
- The District of Columbia has the highest proportion of public transit users (33%) and walkers and bikers (13%). Berkeley County, WV has the highest percentage of workers who drive (95%).

Percent of Workers Using Public Transportation, Walking or Cycling, by Census Tract Poverty Rate, 2000

% of Commuters



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000, Urban Institute.

- Neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty have higher proportions of workers who get to work by public transportation, walking and biking. In the lowest poverty census tracts, 8% of the workforce does not use a car to get to work. In neighborhoods with poverty rates over 30%, by contrast, 52% of workers do not use a car.

The Data

These findings are based on data from Census 2000 SF3files, available through the Department of Commerce at <http://www.census.gov>.

The Author

Noah Sawyer is a Research Assistant with the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center at The Urban Institute.

