



For most people, time spent commuting between home and the workplace is an important factor when buying or renting their residences. Real estate professionals who market residential units, developers planning residential projects and community planners would do well to keep this in mind.

People prefer to spend less time commuting and want their homes to be as close to their workplaces as they can afford.

According to the 2004 American Community Survey (ACS) sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America, a commute of less than 45 minutes is the most important factor in deciding where to live for 79 percent of Americans.

The survey found that 87 percent of those planning to buy a house in the next three years place a high priority on a shorter commute time. Sixty percent of prospective buyers prefer

neighborhoods that offer shorter commute times.

ACS findings have important implications for developers. Half of respondents consider improving public transportation and changes in patterns of housing development the best options for reducing commute time and solving traffic problems. Only 20 percent believe that building new roads is the answer to long-term traffic problems.

Texas Versus U.S. Commuters

In 2004, 95.4 percent of Texas workers older than 16 years used a car, truck or van for commuting compared with 91.3 percent for the nation (Table 1). Only 1.5 percent of commuters in Texas compared with 4.8 percent for the United States used public transportation (excluding taxicabs) for commuting. Pedestrians accounted for 1.4 percent of Texas commuters compared with 2.5 percent for the United States. Texans who used taxicabs, motorcycles or bicycles comprised 1.6 percent of commuters, slightly more than the 1.5 percent of U.S. commuters (Table 1).

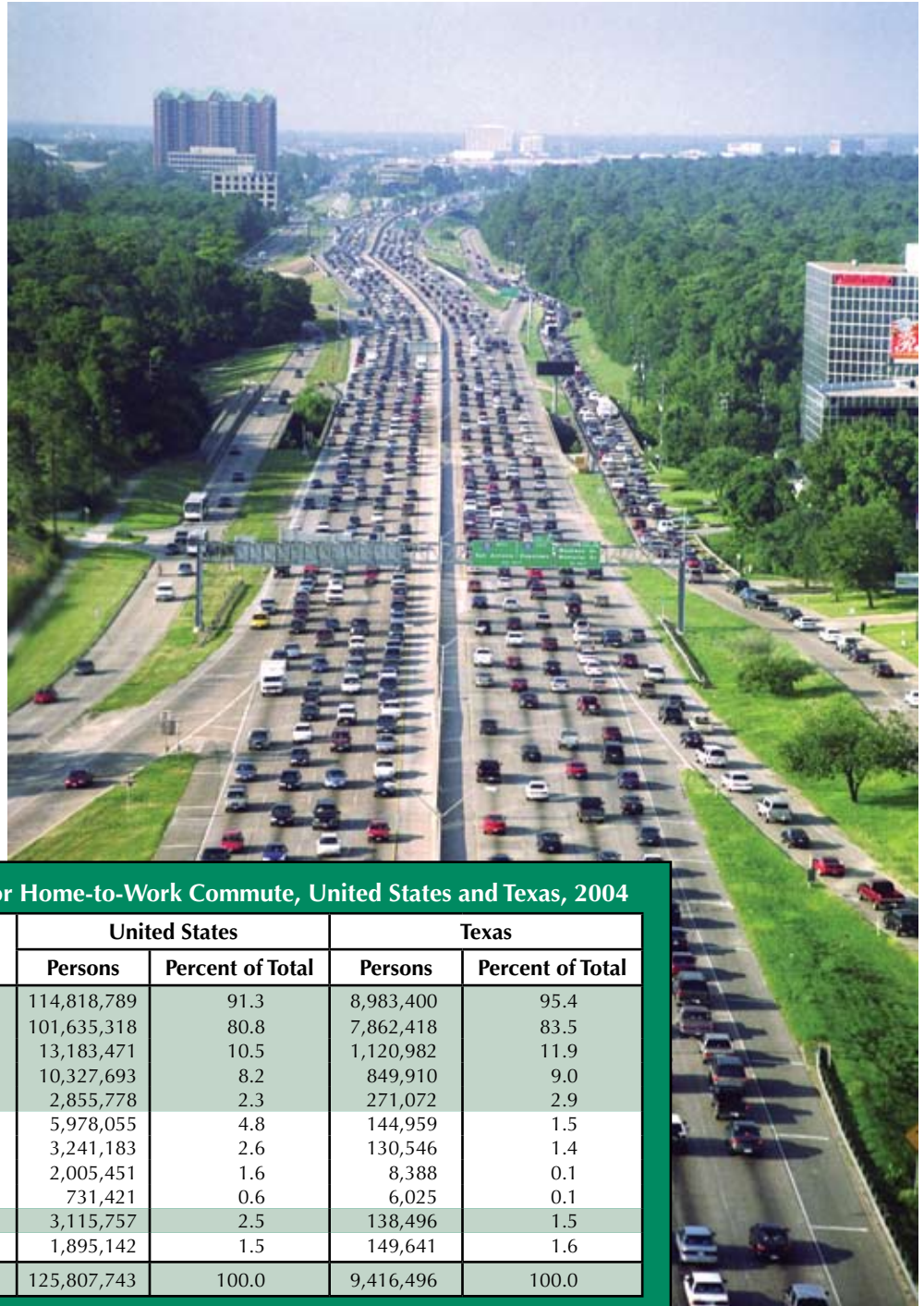


Table 1. Means of Transportation for Home-to-Work Commute, United States and Texas, 2004

Transportation	United States		Texas	
	Persons	Percent of Total	Persons	Percent of Total
Car, truck or van	114,818,789	91.3	8,983,400	95.4
Drove alone	101,635,318	80.8	7,862,418	83.5
Carpooled	13,183,471	10.5	1,120,982	11.9
Two-person carpool	10,327,693	8.2	849,910	9.0
Three-or-more-person carpool	2,855,778	2.3	271,072	2.9
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	5,978,055	4.8	144,959	1.5
Bus or trolley bus	3,241,183	2.6	130,546	1.4
Streetcar, trolley car, subway or elevated	2,005,451	1.6	8,388	0.1
Railroad or ferryboat	731,421	0.6	6,025	0.1
Walked	3,115,757	2.5	138,496	1.5
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle or other means	1,895,142	1.5	149,641	1.6
Total	125,807,743	100.0	9,416,496	100.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Buses or trolley buses are the main form of public transportation for travel between home and work in Texas, accounting for 1.4 percent of commuters. This compares with 2.6 percent for the United States (Table 1).

Despite living in a big state, Texans have succeeded in choosing the location of their residences to minimize commute time. Average commute times in Texas are close to national averages (Table 2). However, commuters who spend more than an hour traveling ac-

Table 2. Home-to-Work Commute Time, United States and Texas, 2004

Travel Time	United States		Texas	
	Persons	Percent of Total	Persons	Percent of Total
Less than 10 minutes	18,757,605	14.8	1,396,910	14.9
10 to 14 minutes	18,312,619	14.7	1,387,333	14.6
15 to 19 minutes	19,532,359	16.1	1,512,018	15.5
20 to 24 minutes	18,423,821	14.9	1,401,808	14.6
25 to 29 minutes	7,631,404	6.2	587,080	6.1
30 to 34 minutes	16,377,676	14.0	1,317,832	13.0
35 to 44 minutes	7,849,662	5.9	551,279	6.2
45 to 59 minutes	9,386,067	7.6	711,499	7.5
60 or more minutes	9,536,530	5.8	550,737	7.6
Total	125,807,743	100.0	9,416,496	100.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

count for 7.6 percent of Texans compared with 5.8 percent for the nation.

About 60.7 percent of Texans who use cars and trucks spend less than 24 minutes commuting (Table 3). Only 5.3 percent of Texas motorists spend more than 60 minutes commuting (Table 3).

Table 3. Travel Time for Car-Truck Commuters Texas, 2004

Travel Time	Persons	Percent of Total
Less than 10 minutes	1,281,845	14.2
Less than 14 minutes	1,340,180	29.1
Less than 19 minutes	1,480,696	45.5
Less than 24 minutes	1,371,034	60.7
Less than 29 minutes	573,887	67.1
Less than 34 minutes	1,276,531	81.3
Less than 44 minutes	533,945	87.2
Less than 59 minutes	680,282	94.7
60 or more minutes	474,229	5.3
Total	9,012,629	100.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Texans prefer to drive alone from home to work with 83.5 percent of them doing so compared with 80.8 percent for the nation. Two-person and three-or-more-person carpools account for 9 and 2.9 percent of Texas commuters, respectively (Table 1).

More than 70 percent of Texas commuters who drive alone are employees of private companies (Table 4). Self-employed workers in incorporated and nonincorporated businesses ac-

Table 4. Texas Drive-Alone Commuters by Class of Workers, 2004

	Persons	Percent of Total
Private for-profit wage and salary	5,735,432	72.7
Employee of private company	5,541,906	70.2
Self-employed in own incorporated business	193,526	2.5
Private not-for-profit wage and salary	412,235	5.2
Local government	690,594	8.7
State government	302,354	3.8
Federal government	266,838	3.4
Self-employed in own not-incorporated business	473,745	6.0
Unpaid family	11,772	0.1
Car, truck, or van — drove alone	7,892,970	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

count for 2.5 percent and 6 percent of drive-alone commuters, respectively. Employees of private, not-for-profit organizations and government account for 6.2 percent and 15.9 percent of commuters, respectively.

Employees in education and the health industry represent 19.7 percent of Texans who commute alone (Table 5). The retail trade industry has the second most drive-alone commuters, followed by manufacturing. Professional and business services and financial activities, two industries dominated by office workers, account for 9.3 percent and 7.4 percent of drive-alone commuters, respectively.

Accidents by Occupation

San Francisco-based Quality Planning Corp. looked at more than one million vehicle accidents. Real estate agents were found to be among the top five occupations most often involved in car accidents. The number of accidents per 1,000 insured drivers was 102 for real estate agents compared with 152 for students, 109 for medical doctors, 106 for attorneys and 105 for architects.

Growing evidence suggests that cellphones have made drivers more accident prone. A study by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis found that drivers talking on cellphones account for 6 percent of U.S. car accidents each year.

These accidents are expensive for employers. The investment firm Smith Barney paid \$500,000 in 2002 to settle a lawsuit filed against one of its brokers who killed a motorcyclist while talking on a cell phone.

Developers and real estate agents, take note. When selling properties and planning communities, minimizing commute time is a good way to maximize customer satisfaction. ➔

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THE TAKEAWAY

Commute time between home and work is a key factor when people shop for homes. Most people want a commute time less than 45 minutes.

Table 5. Texas Drive-Alone Commuters by Industries, 2004

	Persons	Percent of Total
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	1,551,101	19.7
Retail trade	1,014,440	12.9
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	191,927	2.4
Construction	558,002	7.1
Manufacturing	870,649	11.0
Wholesale trade	348,438	4.4
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	450,877	5.7
Information	191,016	2.4
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	582,690	7.4
Professional, scientific, administrative, waste management services	735,015	9.3
Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services	590,827	7.5
Other services (except public administration)	368,536	4.7
Public administration	384,922	4.9
Armed forces	54,530	0.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



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