



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

March 13, 2015

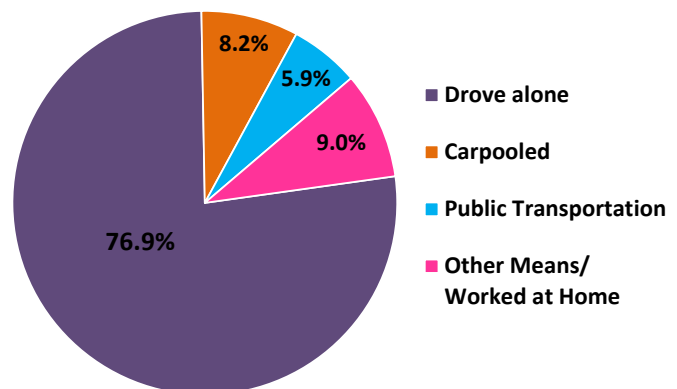
Commuting to Pennsylvania Metro Areas: Most Drive Alone, Philly and Pittsburgh Report Highest Public Transit Usage

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Commuting to work constitutes approximately a fifth of transportation trips taken in the United States.¹ Commuting for the most part occurs in condensed travel periods, resulting in peak travel demand across the transportation infrastructure. It is for this reason and more that data on the journey to work and commuters themselves is of importance for policymakers and community planners as they attempt to best distribute limited public resources. This brief, drawing on data from the 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, offers a review of commuting in the commonwealth by looking at means and time of transportation to work, along with the characteristics of Pennsylvania commuters in the state's metro areas.

Means of Transportation to Work

The main source of transportation for those traveling to the eighteen Pennsylvania centered metro areas to work in 2013 was to drive alone.² As shown in Figure 1, 76.9 percent of all workers in Pennsylvania metro areas commuted by driving alone. This remained the case regardless of the size and population of a metro area. In Harrisburg-Carlisle Metro Area, 82.5 percent of the working population drove alone, 8.7 percent carpooled and only 1.5 percent used public transportation. For workers in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metro Area, 72.9 drove by themselves, 7.6 percent carpooled and 9.9 percent utilized public transit. Out west, in the Pittsburgh Metro Area, the figures were 78.5 percent, 8.5 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively. Of course, the availability of public transportation varies greatly by metro area. Approximately half of the metro areas in the commonwealth reported 1.0 percent or less of the workers commuting via public transportation in 2013. The Altoona, Chambersburg-Waynesboro, and Lebanon Metro Areas had the lowest percentages of public transit utilization.

Figure 1. Means of Transportation to Work, Pennsylvania Metro Areas: 2013



¹ Summary of Travel Trends: 2009 National Household Travel Survey. 2011. <<http://nhts.ornl.gov/publications.shtml>>

² Pennsylvania has eighteen metropolitan areas centered upon Pennsylvania cities.

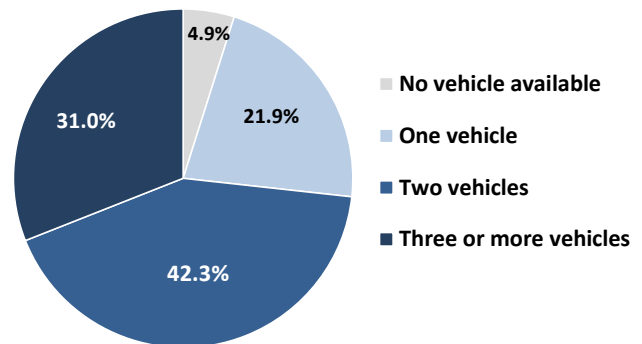


Carpooling and Vehicles Available

The majority of workers (76.6 percent) with at least one vehicle available in the household traveling to a Pennsylvania Metro Area for work drove alone. Just over eight percent (8.2 percent) carpooled to work in 2013. The largest percent of workers carpooling to a metro area for work were located in the East Stroudsburg Metro Area (12.8 percent) and Erie Metro Area (11.6 percent). The Gettysburg Metro Area and Johnstown Metro Area had the lowest percent of work travels coming into the area via carpooling with 5.7 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively.

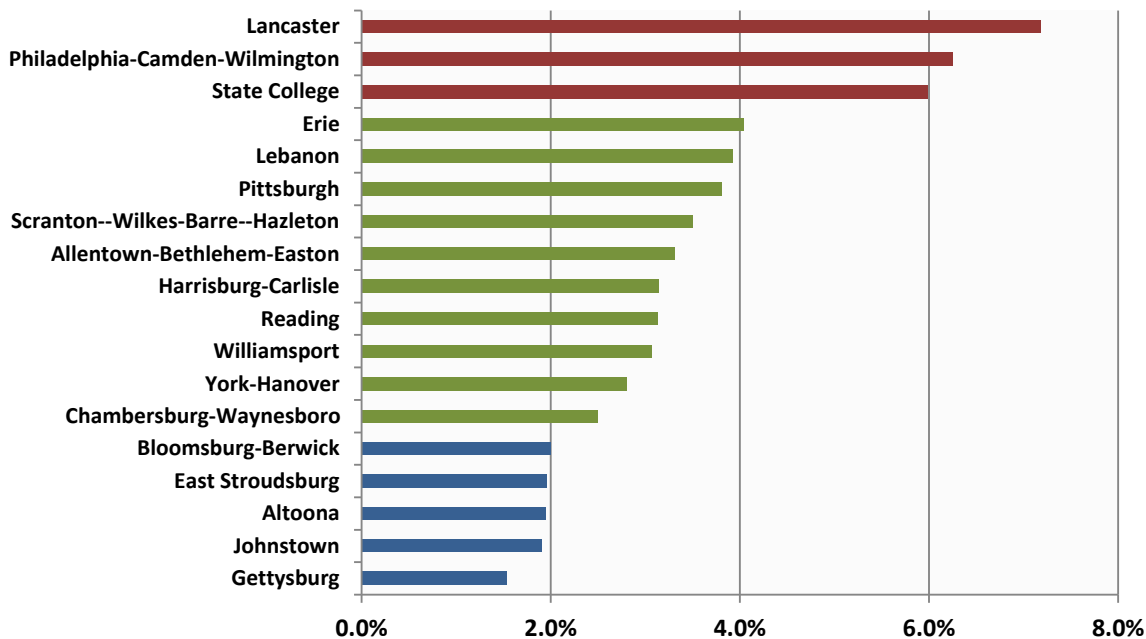
Nearly three-quarters of workers in Pennsylvania centered metro areas had two or more vehicles available in 2013 (Figure 2). The Gettysburg Metro Area had the highest percent of workers from households with two or more vehicles available with 81.9 percent. The Bloomsburg-Berwick Metro Area followed closely with 81.5 percent in 2013. Metro areas with the lowest percent of workers from multiple car households include the Erie (68.8 percent) and Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington (69.8 percent).

Figure 2. Vehicle(s) Available for Commuters to Pennsylvania Metro Areas: 2013



Approximately five percent workers traveling to Pennsylvania Metro Areas did not have a vehicle in 2013. The metro area with the highest percentage of commuters without cars was Lancaster with 7.2 percent lacking a vehicle (Figure 3). The Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington (6.3 percent) and State College (6.0 percent) metro areas followed in terms of commuter population having no availability of a vehicle. In contrast to workers in Pennsylvania Metro Areas, just over 2-in-10 of commuters (22.1 percent) to the New York Metro Area had no vehicle available in 2013.

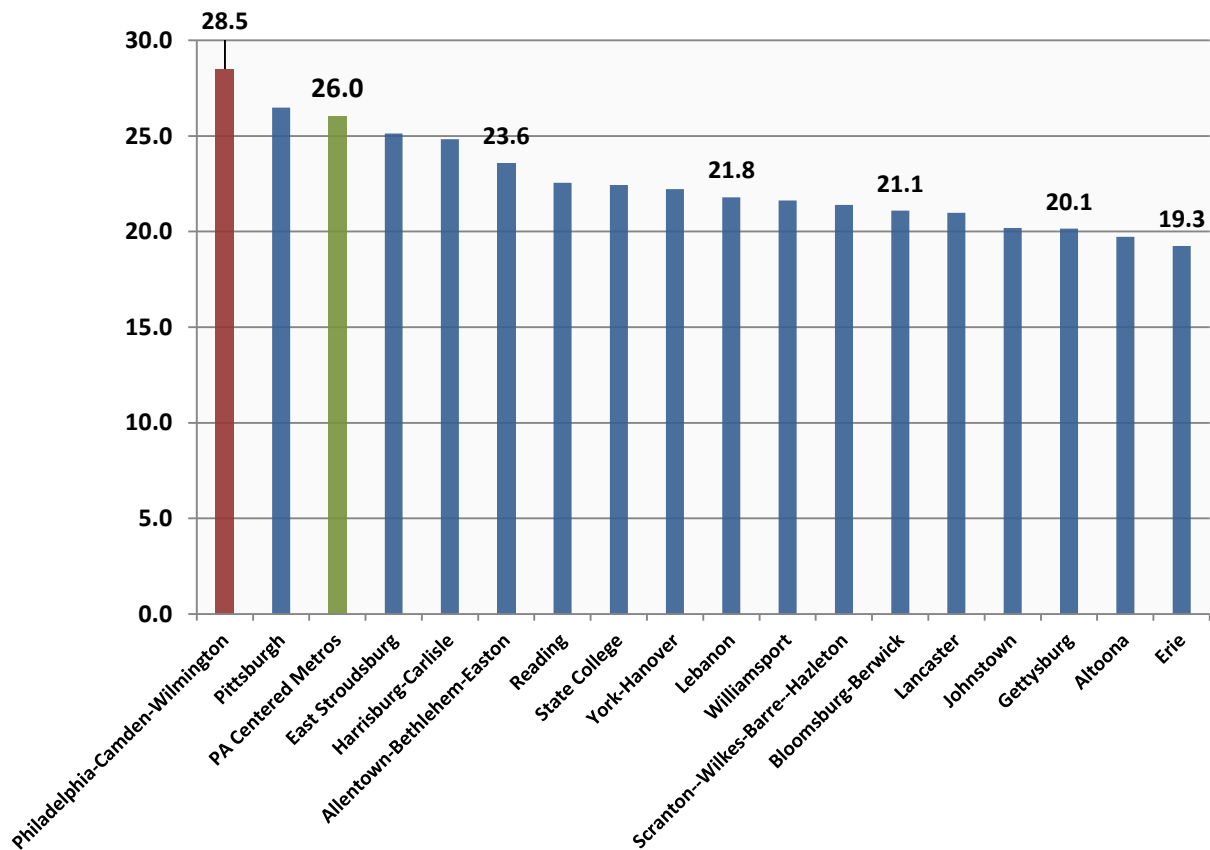
Figure 3. Percent of Workers in PA Metro Areas without a vehicle available: 2013



Duration of Commute and Time Arriving at Work

On average, workers commuting to the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metro Area (28.5 minutes) had the longest commute among Pennsylvania Metro Areas in 2013. Commuters to this metro area spent, on average, nearly ten minutes (9.2 minutes) more than those heading to the metro area with the shortest commute time – Erie Metro Area (19.3 minutes). The Altoona Metro Area (19.7 minutes) and Erie Metro Area were the only two areas with average commute time for workers less than twenty minutes. Overall, the mean commute time for workers heading to a Pennsylvania Metro Area for work was 26.0 minutes in 2013 (Figure 4).

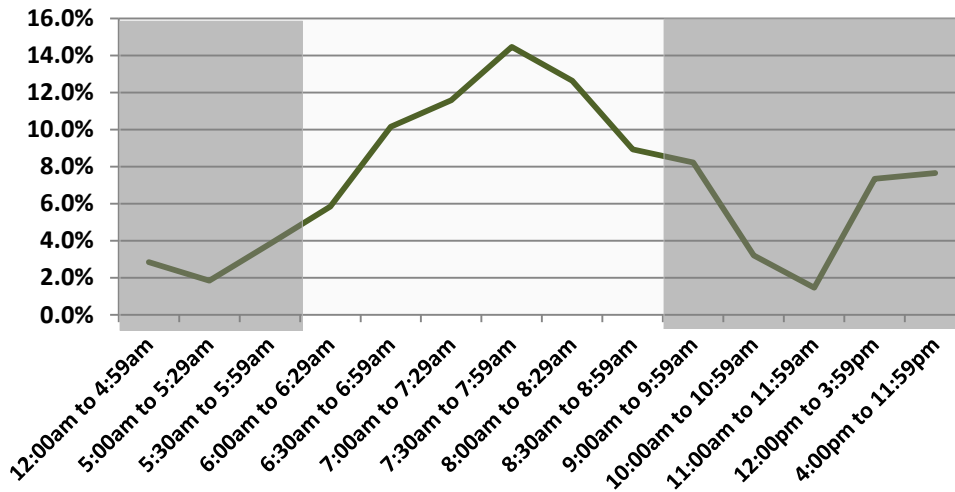
**Figure 4. Mean Travel Time to Work(in minutes),
PA Metro Areas: 2013**



Eight percent of daily commuters to Pennsylvania Metro Areas traveled 60 or more minutes to get to work in 2013. The Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metro Area (10.4 percent) had the largest percentage of commuters taking an hour or longer to get to work. As large as this percentage appears, the New York Metro Area more than doubles it coming in with 21.0 percent of workers traveling an hour plus to get into work. The Altoona Metro Area (23.8 percent) and Lebanon Metro Area (22.7 percent) fall on the other end of the spectrum with nearly a quarter of those traveling to these areas for work taking less than 10 minutes to get there.

Rush hour is typically a term most commuters do not enjoy hearing. Two-thirds (63.6 percent) of all workers commuting to Pennsylvania Metro Areas for work arrive between 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Within this prime morning arrival time frame, the percentage arriving at work peaks between 7:30 a.m. to 7:59 a.m. at 22.7 percent. Figure 5 shows the distribution of commutes to Pennsylvania Metro Areas by time arriving at work in 2013.

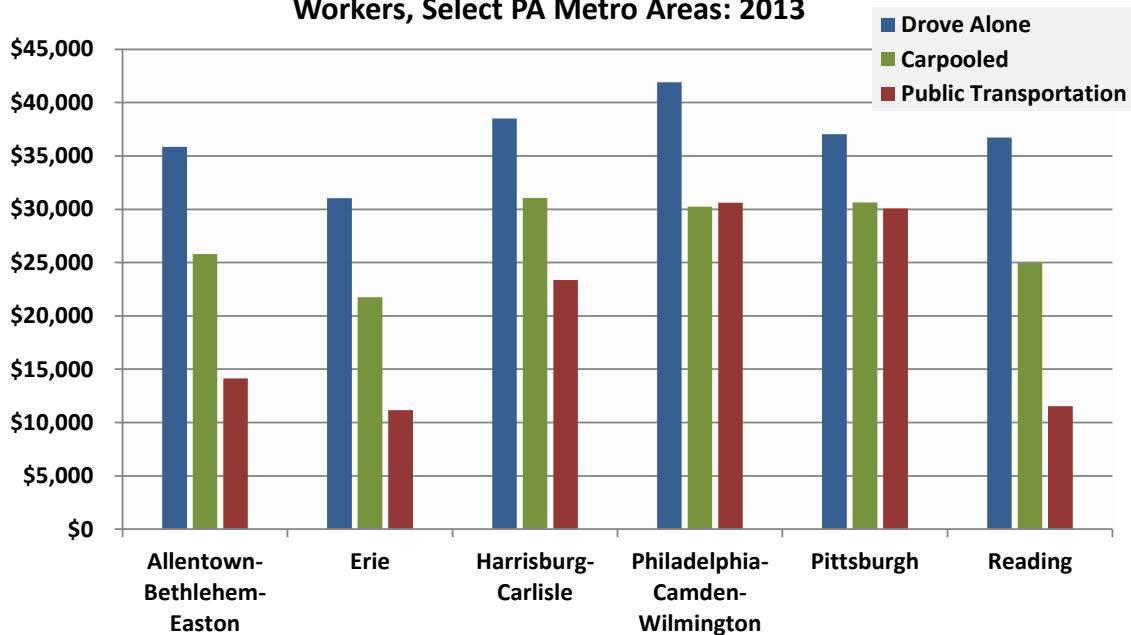
Figure 5. Time Arriving at Work from Home, PA Metro Areas: 2013



Income by Means of Transportation

The American Community Survey also provides data on the socioeconomic characteristics of commuters. Among the six metro areas in Figure 6, workers who used public transportation to get to work in 2013 reported lower median earnings than those who drove alone in 2013. The Reading Metro Area had the largest difference in median earnings between workers who used public transit and drove alone at \$25,181. The difference between public transit users and sole drivers was \$11,300 in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington Metro Area and \$6,967 in the Pittsburgh Metro Area.

Figure 6. Median Earnings by Means of Transportation to Work for Workers, Select PA Metro Areas: 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.

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