



# The State of the American Commute

**An analysis of 2019 commuter trends and perceptions**



# Executive summary

**We surveyed over 7,000 workers in over 16 metropolitan regions to learn how the commute is decreasing productivity, adding to costs, and extending the workdays of approximately 145 million Americans.**

In many cases, government data hasn't kept pace with innovations in mobility, meaning many employers still don't know how best to adapt to the pains, patterns, and trends of the commute. This report expands on government statistics to develop a broader understanding of commuting's impact on Americans' physical, financial, and emotional well-being.

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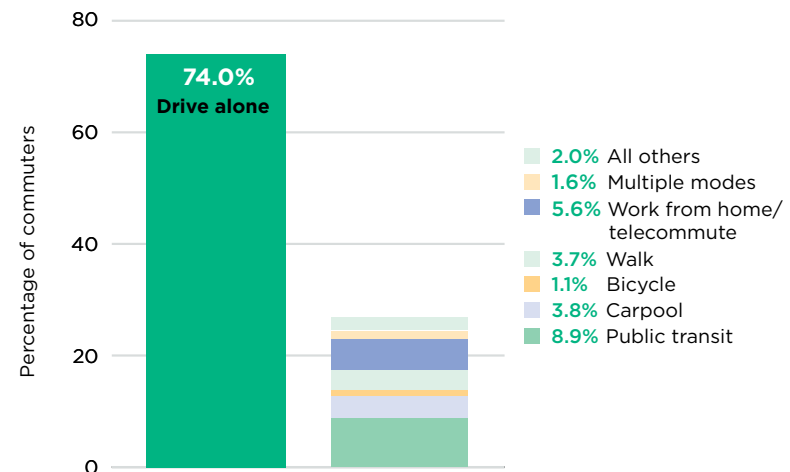
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## How we get to work

### Primary mode of commuting

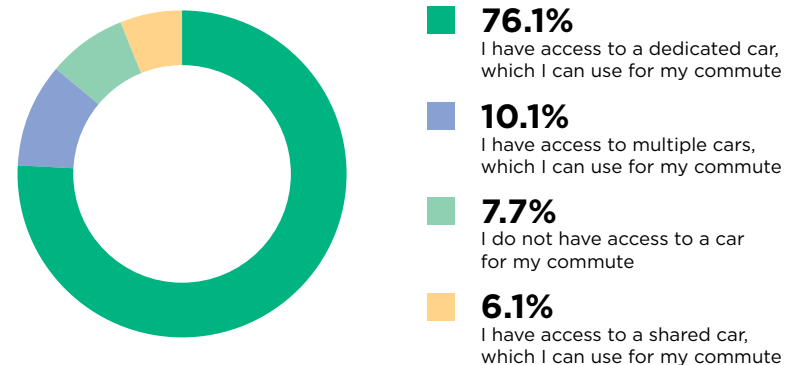
Solo drivers account for nearly three quarters of all commuters, resulting in more cars on the road and considerable delays.

**While most people drive to work alone, more than one-third of workers have tried commuting by public transit or carpool.**



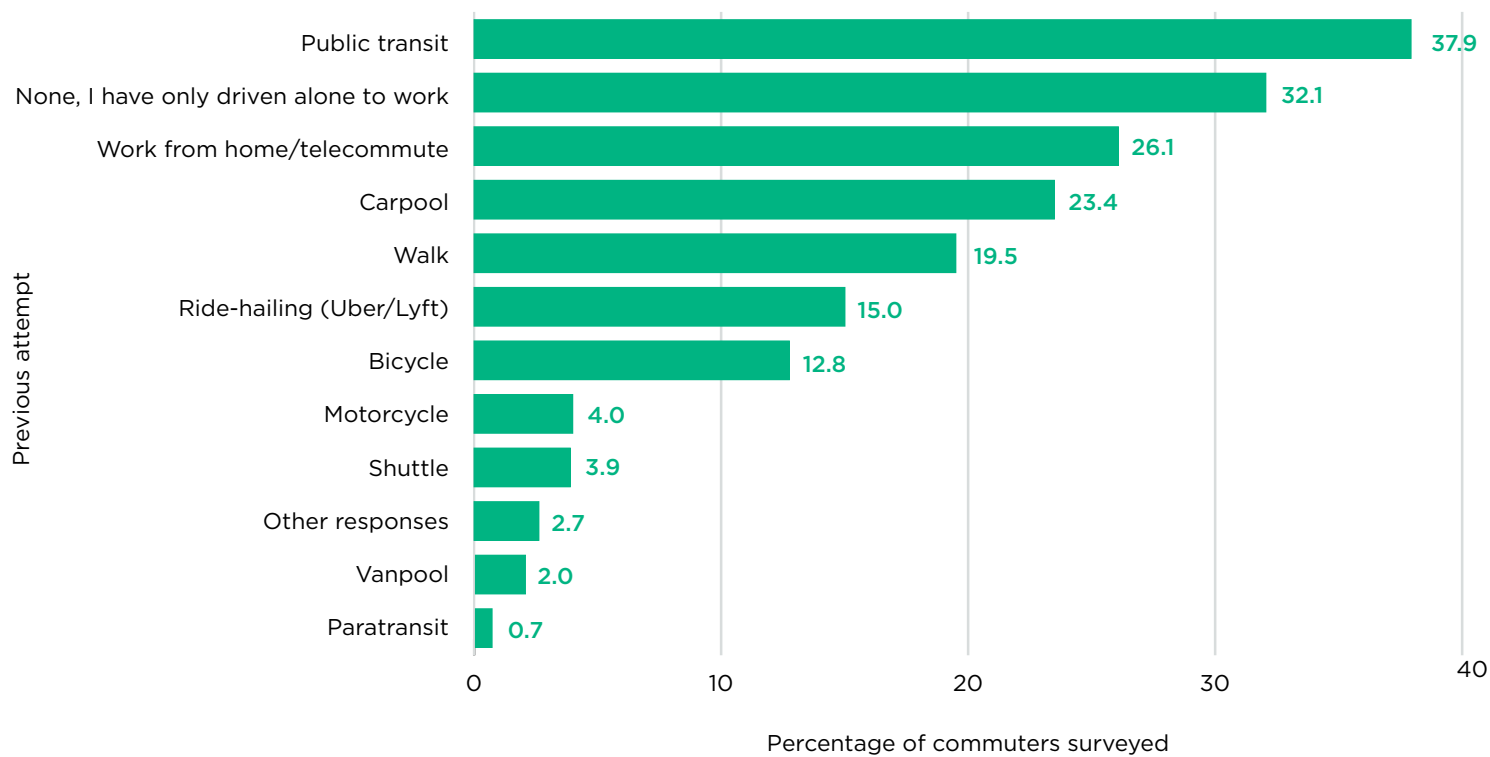
### Access to personal vehicle

86% of commuters surveyed reported having access to at least one dedicated vehicle for their commutes, with 10% reporting having access to multiple vehicles.



### Alternative modes of commuting

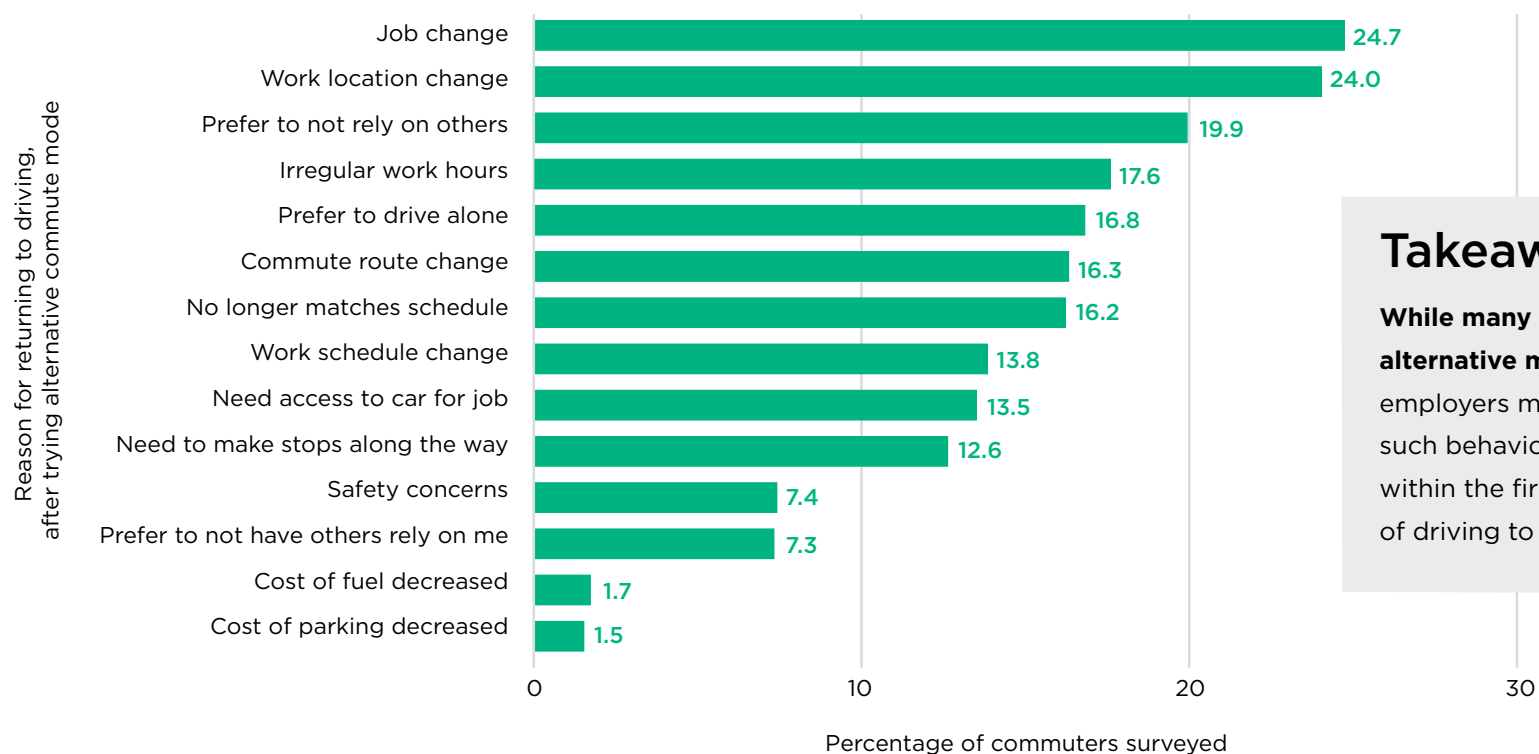
While most commuters drive to work alone, 38% have previously used public transit. Nearly a quarter have taken advantage of carpooling in the past as well.





## The most common reasons for returning to driving

Once commuters tried alternative modes of commuting, several reasons kept them from continuing to do so. Most commonly, changes in their job or work location, as well as irregular hours or having to rely on others, resulted in a return to driving alone.



### Takeaway:

**While many workers are open to trying alternative modes of transportation,** employers must find ways to incentivize such behavior changes while still working within the firmly-entrenched expectation of driving to work alone.

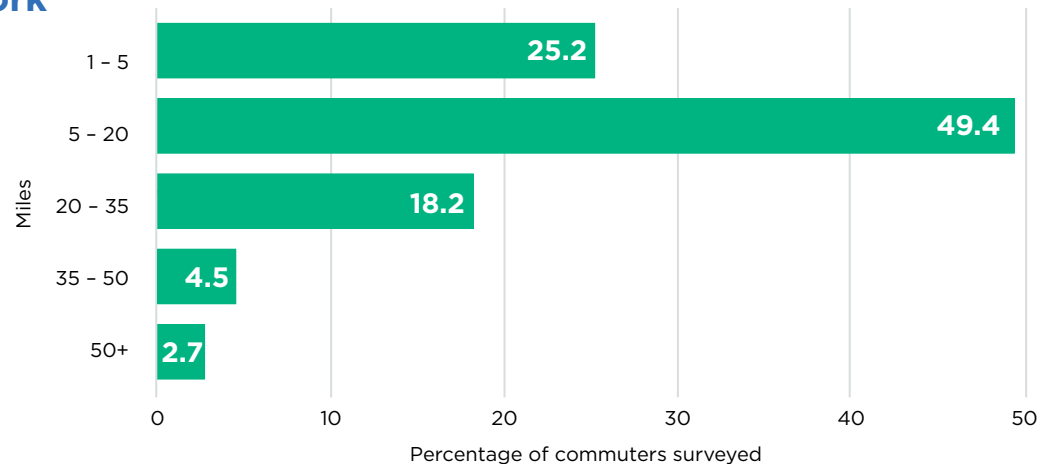
# How far we commute

Commutes have been growing steadily longer over the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Given that **85% of U.S. professionals say they'd take a pay cut for a shorter commute**, finding ways to address commuting pains should be a focus for business leaders.

## Approximate one-way distance in miles between home and work

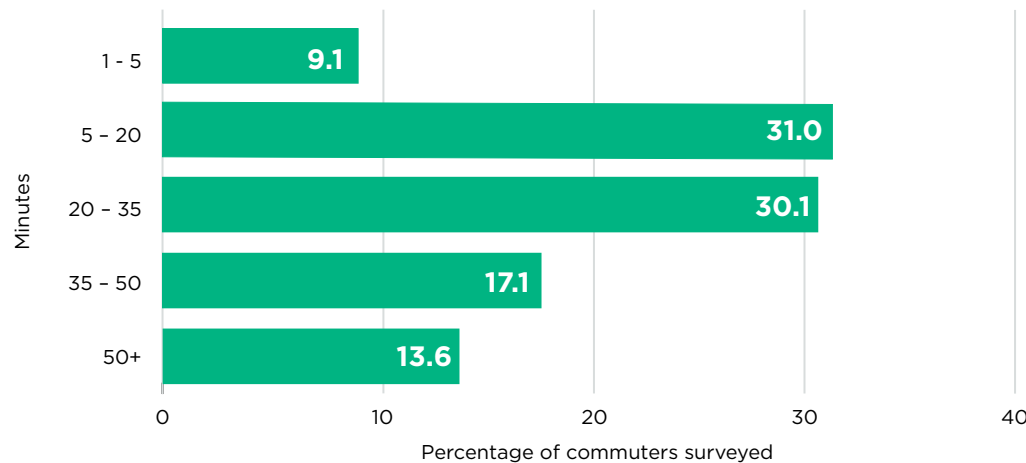
With commute lengths expanding, only a quarter of workers live one to five miles from their work, while half live five to 20 miles away.

As increases in housing prices continue to outpace income growth,<sup>2</sup> American workers will struggle to prioritize proximity to work locations, thereby keeping commutes longer and more stressful.



## Approximate one-way distance in minutes spent traveling between home and work

Our survey indicated that the average commuter travels 28 minutes to work one-way.



With unemployment at 50-year lows, an unappealing commute is more than enough reason for candidates to seek other employment options.<sup>3</sup>

### Takeaway:

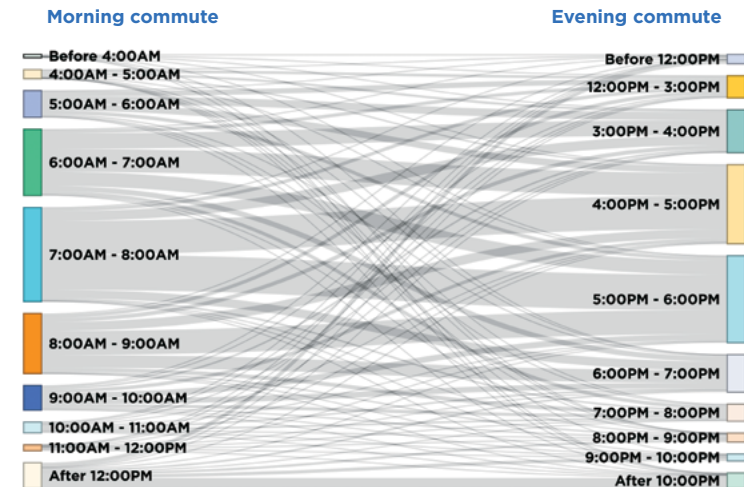
The commute is taking up more minutes and spanning more miles by the year, and will only continue to get worse.

## When and where we commute

Because each worker's commute is unique,  
a one-size-fits-all solution won't work.

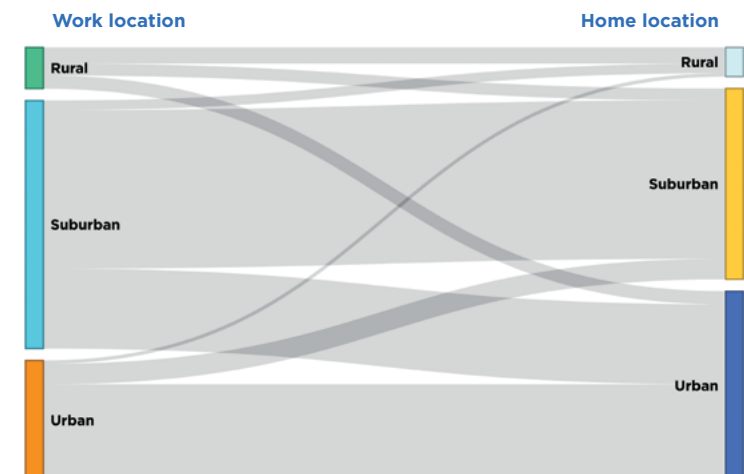
### Commute flows

This visualization shows commute flows over a single day. While much of the activity takes place during typical rush-hour times—for instance, between 7AM and 8AM, and then between 5PM and 6PM—American workers both head to and leave work at a wide range of times.



### Where we commute between

Only about half of suburbanites stay in the suburbs for their work. Similarly, workers who live in rural areas commute fairly evenly among urban, suburban, and rural areas.

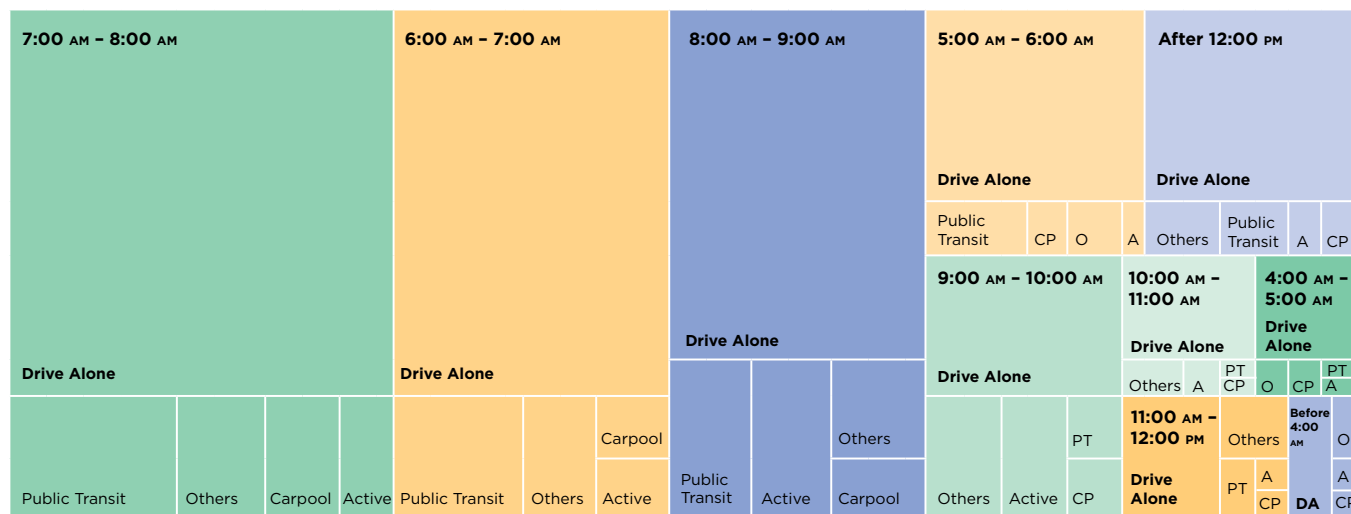




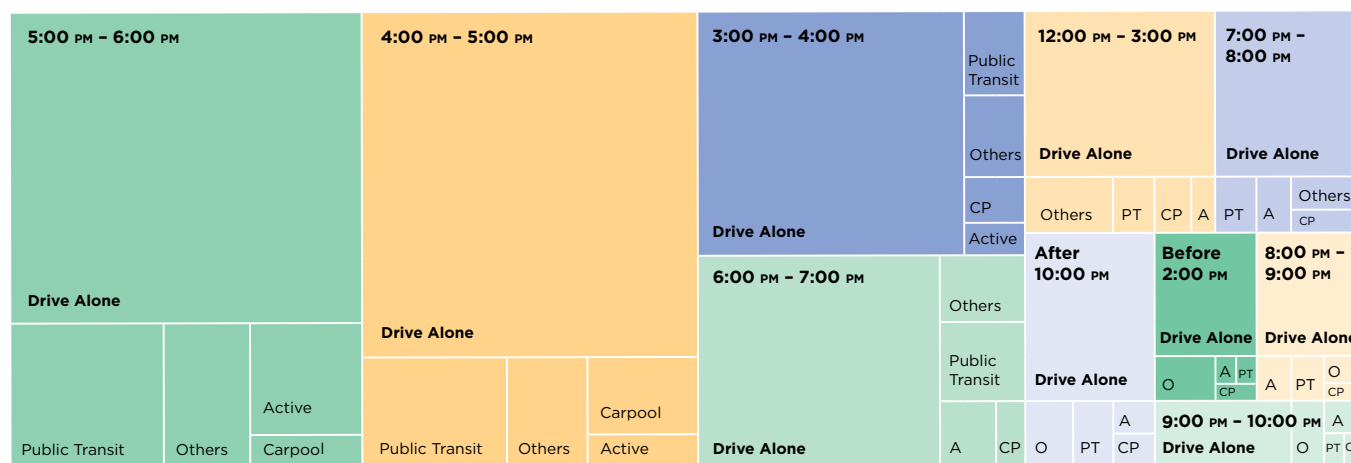
Across the board—and across all times of day—solo drivers are in the majority.

## Time & primary commute mode (AM)

The following visualizations combine data on when individuals commute with their preferred methods of transportation.



## Time & primary commute mode (PM)

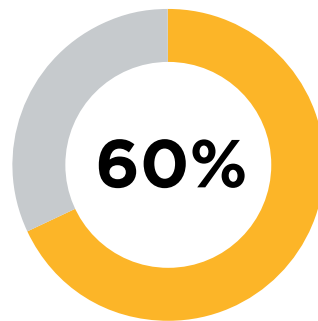


A = Active; C = Carpool; DA = Drive Alone; O = Others; P = Public Transit.

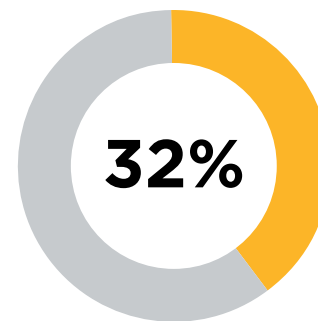
# Commuter perceptions

As the commute continues to take up more miles and minutes, its effects are beginning to show not only on the roads but also in the workplace.

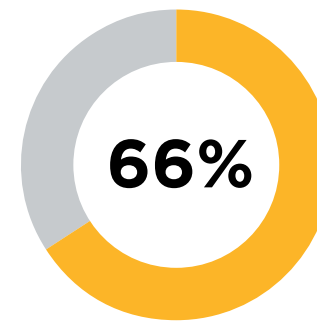
## How increased traffic affects commuters



Traffic/congestion has gotten worse



Commuting causes me stress



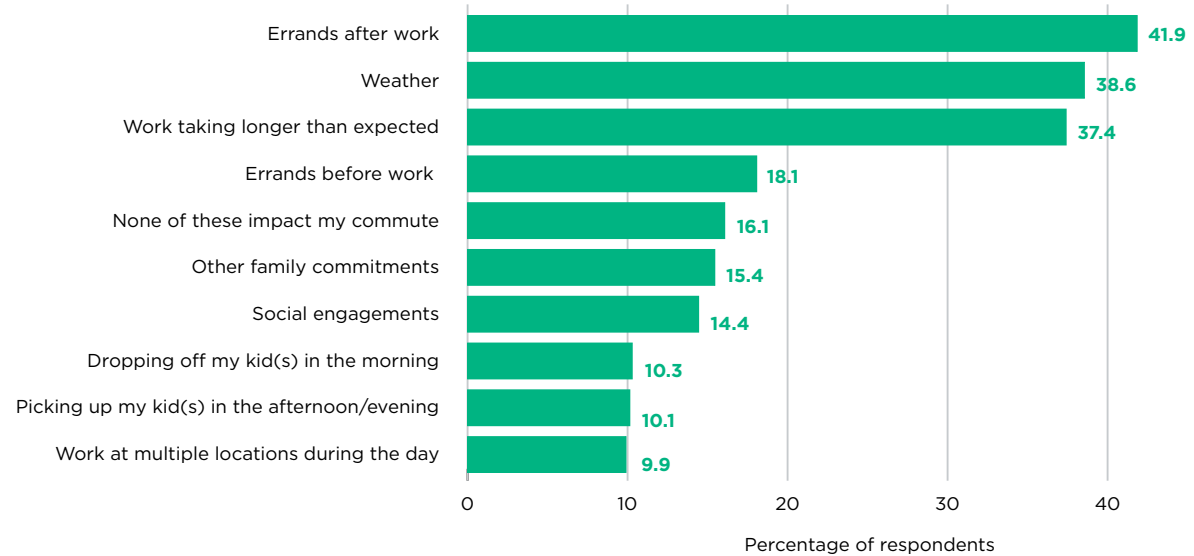
I can see that commuting causes others stress

Those surveyed indicated not only that traffic conditions had declined on their commute but also that these conditions caused all-around psychological strains. 66% of Americans observe commuting stress

in others, while only 32% reported commuting stress themselves. Even if we don't feel the pain of the commute personally, we're highly attuned to its impact on others in our day-to-day lives.

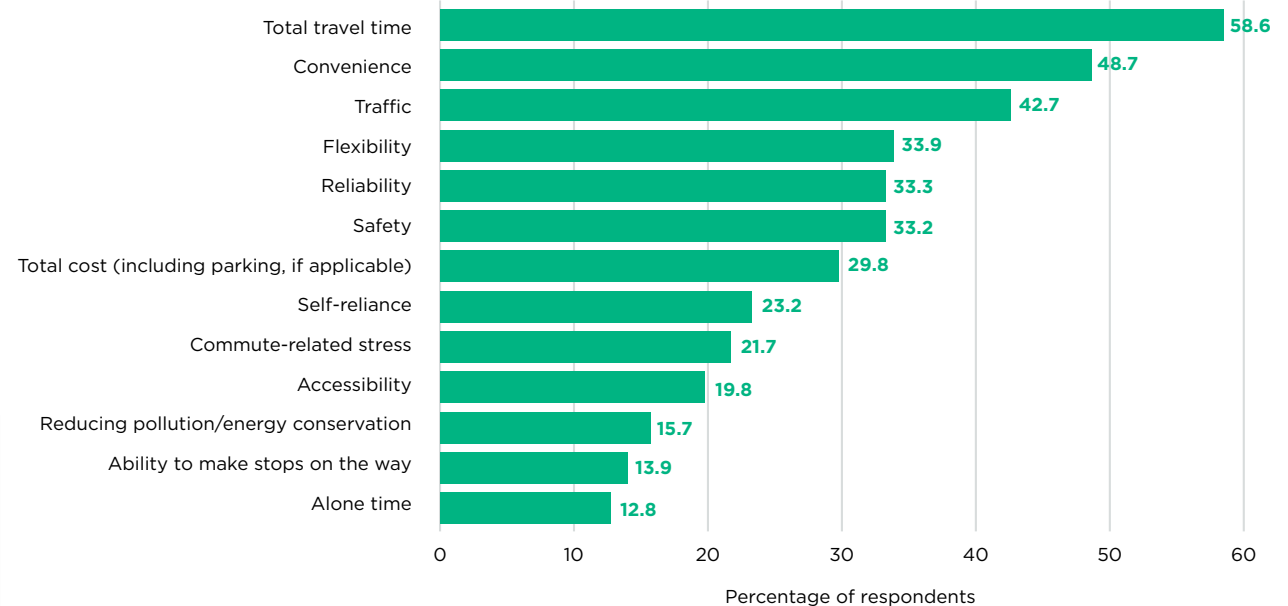
## Common disruptions to the commute

Whether they're everyday errands, inclement weather, or extended workdays, the main commuting obstacles are those that put its smoothness and predictability at risk.



## Deciding how we commute

Looking at how workers choose to commute—and what disrupts those choices—shows that time and convenience are the most important variables to solve for.



## Takeaway:

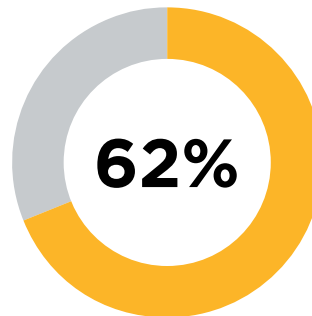
**Commuters are aligned in their need for alternatives that reduce stress and save time,** and employers must adopt solutions that ease these pains.

# Why are leading employers taking notice?

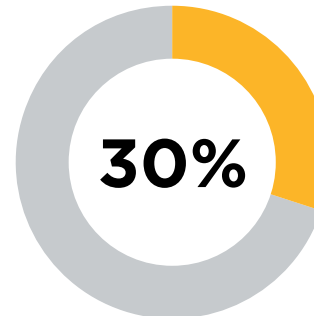
The pains of the commute go far beyond just psychological strains, **directly affecting employers' ability to attract and retain top talent.**

### How the commute affects hiring, job satisfaction, and retention

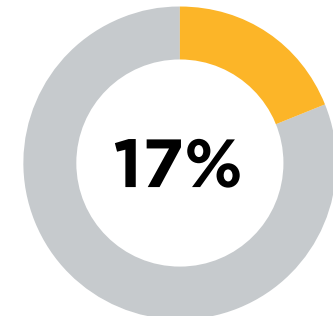
The commute affects both prospective candidates' interest in applying for jobs and current employees' willingness to stay at them.



I have not applied for certain jobs based on the commute to that location<sup>4</sup>



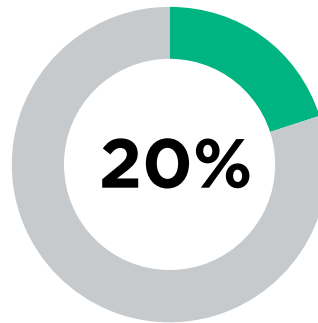
I have considered quitting a job based on the commute to that location



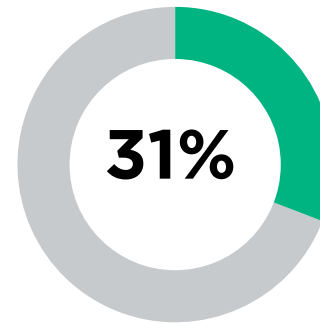
I have quit a job based on the commute to that location

## What we'd do with a shorter commute

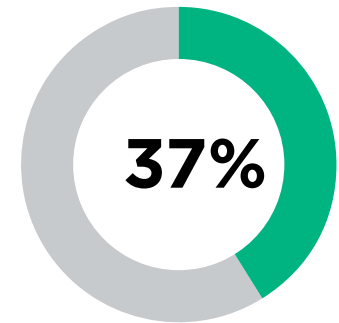
Those surveyed indicated a wide range of ways that freeing up time from the commute would also free up more time for themselves, such as learning a new skill, getting more sleep, or exercising.



Learn new skills

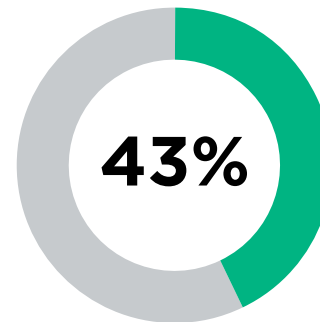


Make healthier food choices

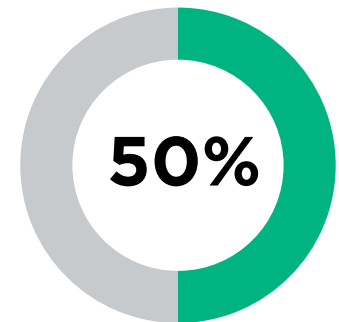


Get more sleep

The commute is an opportunity for emotional self-maintenance and building community—17% of people said they'd volunteer with the time saved by a shorter commute.



Socialize with family and friends



Exercise

### Takeaway:

**Employers should view the commute as not just an employee pain but as a competitive advantage.**

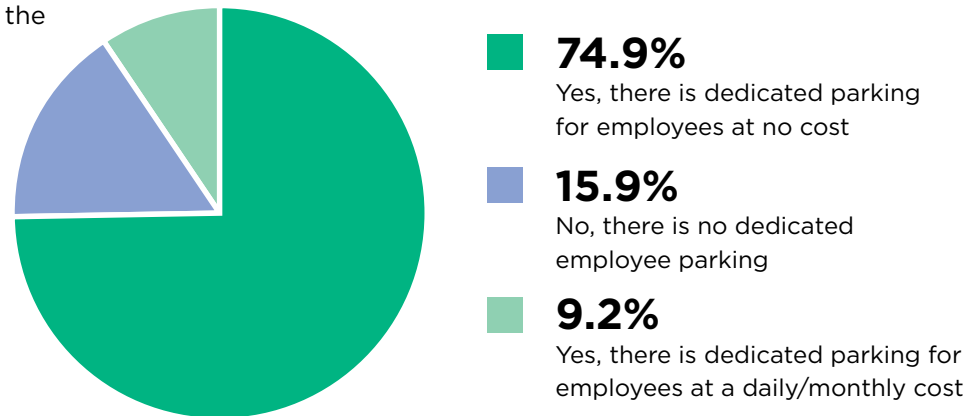
# What should employers do differently?

Being aware of the pains, challenges, and opportunities associated with your employees' commute is the first step to addressing the day-to-day needs of your workforce. But businesses can be doing even more to support their workers' daily routines.

## Access to free on-site parking

Although our survey indicated that three quarters of employers offer on-site parking at no cost, few realize the full range of employee benefits the commute makes necessary.

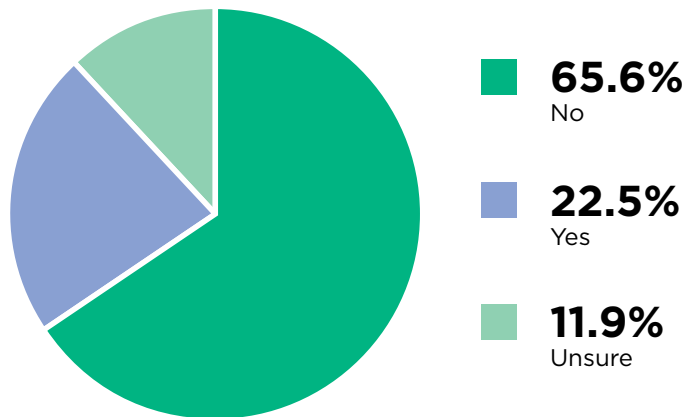
For commuters who are most likely to switch modes, options that cut costs, allow for flexibility, and incorporate additional help (such as ride matching in carpooling) are the most compelling motivators.





## Companies that incentivize alternative transportation modes

Less than a quarter of those surveyed said their companies incentivize alternative transportation modes—such as public transit, carpools, vanpools, bicycling, walking, and electric vehicles.



Free parking, flexible work schedules (including the ability to work from home), on-site locker rooms, and subsidized transit are some of the top benefits that would convince employees to switch commuting modes.

### Takeaway:

**Offering a more robust range of commuting solutions is a benefit to employees and an advantage to employers.** It empowers commuters to take the stress not only off their wallets but off their minds as well.

## Additional factors to consider

### Gas prices in the 10 most expensive states

With gas prices hovering well above \$3 per gallon in the nation's most expensive areas, reducing the number of cars on the road and splitting fuel costs are crucial steps for easing commuting strains.

**Increased congestion means more trips to the pump. This is on top of the costs of car ownership, which can be about \$8,500 per year.<sup>5</sup>**

Although prices have decreased in some areas, the cost of gas remains prohibitive to SOV commuters.

Rank	State	Price on 7/12/2018	Price on 7/12/2019	Year-over-year change
1	Hawaii	\$3.77	\$3.65	-3.0%
2	California	\$3.66	\$3.75	+2.6%
3	Washington	\$3.44	\$3.34	-2.9%
4	Alaska	\$3.41	\$3.23	-5.2%
5	Oregon	\$3.32	\$3.21	-3.4%
6	Nevada	\$3.24	\$3.29	+1.7%
7	Idaho	\$3.14	\$2.96	-5.9%
8	Utah	\$3.14	\$2.91	-7.2%
9	Connecticut	\$3.09	\$2.83	-6.5%
10	Pennsylvania	\$3.05	\$2.92	-4.3%

## Average monthly transit costs

Even for commuters who live along transit lines, the expenses of public transportation can be as prohibitive as the costs of car ownership.

**Only 27% of Americans live along transit routes, meaning that public transportation is an option for relatively few commuters.**

### Takeaway:

**Between the costs of housing, gas, and public transit, the commute is far more expensive—and far more complicated—than it may initially appear.**

Location	Average cost
Austin	\$96.25
Charlotte*	\$88.00 - 170.00
Chicago*	\$105.00 - 275.00
Cincinnati*	\$70.00 - 105.00
Columbus	\$85.00
Dallas*	\$96.00 - 192.00
DC	\$100.00
Detroit	\$70.00
Houston	\$66.00
LA	\$100.00
Minneapolis	\$83.00
Phoenix	\$64.00
Pittsburgh	\$97.50
San Francisco Bay Area*	\$65.60 - 433.50
Seattle	\$18.00 - 207.00

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

Understanding the commute landscape means understanding the problems that affect your city, your workforce, and your business at every level. Here are a few key takeaways from our survey that government data alone won't tell you:

## 1. How we commute

- 74% of Americans drive alone to work, resulting in 50+ billion solo drives per year
- More than one third have tried alternatives in the past, but resorted back to SOVs because of changes in work location or schedules

## 2. When we commute

- What 9-5 job? Commute patterns are more complex and wide-ranging than ever, meaning new and flexible solutions must be introduced and emboldened to meet the evolving workforce

## 3. Commuter perceptions

- 60% of people have observed traffic getting worse on their commute

## 4. Impact on well-being

- 32% say traffic causes them commute stress and 66% observe commute stress in others

- More than 30% of respondents would use their extra time for personal improvement activities (50% would exercise, 43% would spend time with friends/family, 37% would sleep, 20% would learn new skills)

## 5. Impact on employers

- The commute has caused 17% of employees to quit a job and convinced 62% not to apply for one in the first place

While no one solution will fix America's commuting problem, embracing a mosaic of modes to meet the needs of commuters is a major step toward easing one of the biggest issues facing businesses.

### To make meaningful progress, companies should adopt commuter programs that:

1. Provide financial incentives that employees find meaningful
2. Advance solutions that are flexible enough to meet the day-to-day needs of employees
3. Support options for switching and tools to help employees make the switch easier (e.g., guaranteed ride home, automated matching)

## Appendix: Who we surveyed

### Industry

Advertising & marketing	3%
Agriculture	1%
Airlines & aerospace (including defense)	2%
Automotive	2%
Business support & logistics	4%
Construction, machinery, and homes	4%
Education	14%
Entertainment & leisure	4%
Finance & financial services	5%
Food & beverages	4%
Government	8%
Healthcare & pharmaceuticals	7%
Insurance	3%
Manufacturing	4%
Nonprofit	5%
Real estate	3%
Retail & consumer durables	7%
Telecommunications, technology, internet & electronics	7%
Transportation & delivery	2%
Utilities, energy, and extraction	1%

### Employee count

Less than 500	46%
500-1,500	12%
1,500-3,000	9%
3,000-4,500	5%
4,500-6,000	4%
Greater than 6,000	24%

### Work setting

Rural	7%
Suburban	47%
Urban	46%

### Gender

Female	59%
Male	40%
Other	1%

### Age

18 to 24	7%
25 to 34	16%
35 to 44	19%
45 to 54	18%
55 to 64	27%
65 or older	13%

### Combined statistical area

Austin-Round Rock-Marble Falls, TX CSA	5%
Boston-Worcester-Manchester, MA-RI-NH CSA	7%
Charlotte-Gastonia-Salisbury, NC-SC CSA	2%
Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, IL-IN-WI CSA	11%
Cincinnati-Middletown-Wilmington, OH-KY-IN CSA	3%
Columbus-Marion-Chillicothe, OH CSA	3%
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX CSA	7%
Detroit-Warren-Flint, MI CSA	4%
Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, TX CSA	5%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside, CA CSA	14%
Milwaukee-Racine-Waukesha, WI CSA	2%
Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud, MN-WI CSA	5%
Pittsburgh-New Castle, PA CSA	3%
San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, CA CSA	9%
Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia, WA CSA	5%
Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, DC-MD-VA-WV CSA	5%
Other	13%

### Job level

C-Suite or senior executive	9%
Senior management	9%
Mid-level management	22%
Intermediate or mid-career	38%
Entry level	13%
Technical or other	9%

### Current tenure

Less than 1 year	16%
1-2 years	13%
2-5 years	21%
5-10 years	6%
10-15 years	11%
More than 15 years	23%

## Sources

- [1. Washington Post - Americans' commutes keep getting longer, according to survey data](#)
- [2. Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University - The state of the nation's housing 2017](#)
- [3. Washington Post - U.S. unemployment fell to 3.6%, lowest since 1969](#)
- [4. LinkedIn - Help Job-Seekers Discover If Your Role Is Right for Them With "Your Commute"](#)
- [5. Motor Trend - AAA Study: New cars costs nearly \\$8,500 a year on average](#)

## About Scoop

Scoop is the largest enterprise carpooling solution in the U.S., facilitating more than 6M carpool trips to date. It partners with organizations such as LinkedIn, T-Mobile, and Workday to offer convenient and enjoyable carpooling to workforces tired of fighting traffic alone. By helping make employees happier, healthier, and more productive, Scoop supports organizations solving for the third largest driver of voluntary attrition: the commute.

**To learn more about how you can provide an impactful commute solution to your workforce, visit [takescoop.com/partners](https://takescoop.com/partners) or reach out to [partners@takescoop.com](mailto:partners@takescoop.com)**

