# Public Transportation Usage Among U.S. Workers: 2008 and 2009

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents data from the 2008 and 2009 American Community Surveys (ACS) on the percentage of commuters who used public transportation to get to work in U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (metro areas).[1] The percentage of workers who usually travel to work using public transportation has remained at about 5 percent since the 1990 Census.[2]

Public transportation accounts for a small percentage of commutes at the national level, but plays a more prominent role in several of the nation's largest metro areas, especially in densely populated communities. About 39 percent of all workers who usually travel to work using public transportation live in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area. In an effort to provide more transportation choices for Americans nationwide, investment in public transportation systems has been an integral component of several major federal transportation programs in recent decades.

The ACS asks respondents about their usual means of transportation to work. "Public transportation" includes workers who used a bus, trolley, streetcar, subway or elevated rail, railroad, or ferryboat, and did not work at home. Respondents were to report their usual transportation method for the previous week, whether or not the information was consistent with their commuting activities for the majority of the year.

Workers are civilians and members of the Armed Forces, 16 years and older, who were at work the previous week. Persons on vacation or not at work the prior week are not included.

Means of transportation to work refers to the principal mode of travel that the worker usually used to get from home to work during the reference week. People who used different means of transportation on different days of the week were asked to specify the one they used most often. People who used more than one means of transportation to get to work each day were asked to report the one used for the longest distance during the work trip. Workers who worked at home are not included in this category. For more detailed definitions of these terms and other ACS terms, see the ACS subject definitions list at <www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/>.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION USAGE AMONG U.S. WORKERS: 2008 AND 2009

Among the nation's workers, 6.9 million commuted to work using public transportation in 2009. This is a reduction from 2008, when 7.2 million workers

[1] For more information on metropolitan statistical areas, please see <www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/omb/bulletins/fy2009/09-01.pdf>.

[2] Percent public transportation usage for 1990 and 2000 was 5.12 and 4.57, respectively.

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used public transportation to get to work. Table 2 lists ACS estimates of the number of workers who commuted by public transportation in the 50 largest metro areas, in 2008 and 2009, as well as the change over the year.[3] The national percentage of workers 16 years and over who used public transportation to commute to work in 2009 (5.0 percent) was not statistically different from the percentage in 2008.

The New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area had the highest percentage of workers who commuted by public transportation (30.5 percent). It was followed by the San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA Metro Area, where 14.6 percent of workers commuted by public transportation.[4] The percentage of workers who commuted by public transportation exceeded 10 percent in only 5 of the 366 metro areas in 2009.[5] In Los Angeles, the nation's second largest metro area, about 6 percent of workers commuted by public transportation. Also falling within the category of 5 to 10 percent were several college towns, including Ithaca, NY, and Ames, IA. For the majority of metro areas, including several large metro areas such as Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI, the public transportation usage rate among workers did not exceed 2 percent. The map provides a visual illustration of the percentage of workers who commuted by public transportation for all metro areas in 2009.

Table 2 shows comparisons between the 50 largest metro areas in 2008 and 2009. Ten experienced a statistically significant decline in the number of public transportation commuters, and two (Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA, and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV) experienced a statistically significant increase in the number of public transit commuters.[6] The 2009 estimates were not statistically different from the 2008 estimates in the remainder of the metro areas. Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH; Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA; and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, were the only three metro areas that experienced a statistically significant increase in the percentage of workers who commuted by public transportation, and four metro areas experienced a statistically significant decline in the percentage of public transportation commuters.[7]

Table 1 shows the top 15 metro areas ranked by the number of workers who commuted by public transportation in 2009. The New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area had the highest number of workers who used public transportation in 2009, at 2.7 million workers. The Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI Metro Area and the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area had the second and third highest number of workers who used public transportation, at 506,000 and 405,000 workers, respectively. All except 4 of the metro areas included in this list were among the 15 largest metro areas in 2009.[8]

## SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on people and households that responded to the ACS in 2008 and 2009. The resulting estimates are representative of the entire population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the "2009 ACS Accuracy of the Data" document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2009.pdf>.

For more information about the public transportation usage or other commuting characteristics of U.S. workers, go to the U.S. Census Bureau's Journey to Work and Migration Statistics Branch Web site, at <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/journey.html>, or contact the Journey to Work and Migration Statistics Branch at 301-763-2454.

[3] The margins of error for estimates in Table 2 were calculated using an unrounded standard error.

[4] The percentage of public transportation commuters in the San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA Metro Area was not statistically different from that of the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area.

[5] For the following metro areas, the percentage of workers who commuted by public transportation in 2009 exceeded and was statistically different from 10 percent: Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH; Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI; New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA; San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA; and Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV.

[6] The following metro areas experienced a statistically significant decline in the number of public transportation commuters: Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC; Columbus, OH; Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI; Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX; Las Vegas-Paradise, NV; Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA; New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA; Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ; San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA; and Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC.

[7] The following metro areas experienced a statistically significant decline in the percentage of public transportation commuters: Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC; Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX; San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA; and Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC.

[8] The following metro areas were not included among the 15 largest in 2009: Baltimore-Towson, MD; Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI; Pittsburgh, PA; and Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA.

# Percentage of Workers Who Commuted by Public Transportation by Metropolitan Statistical Area: 2009

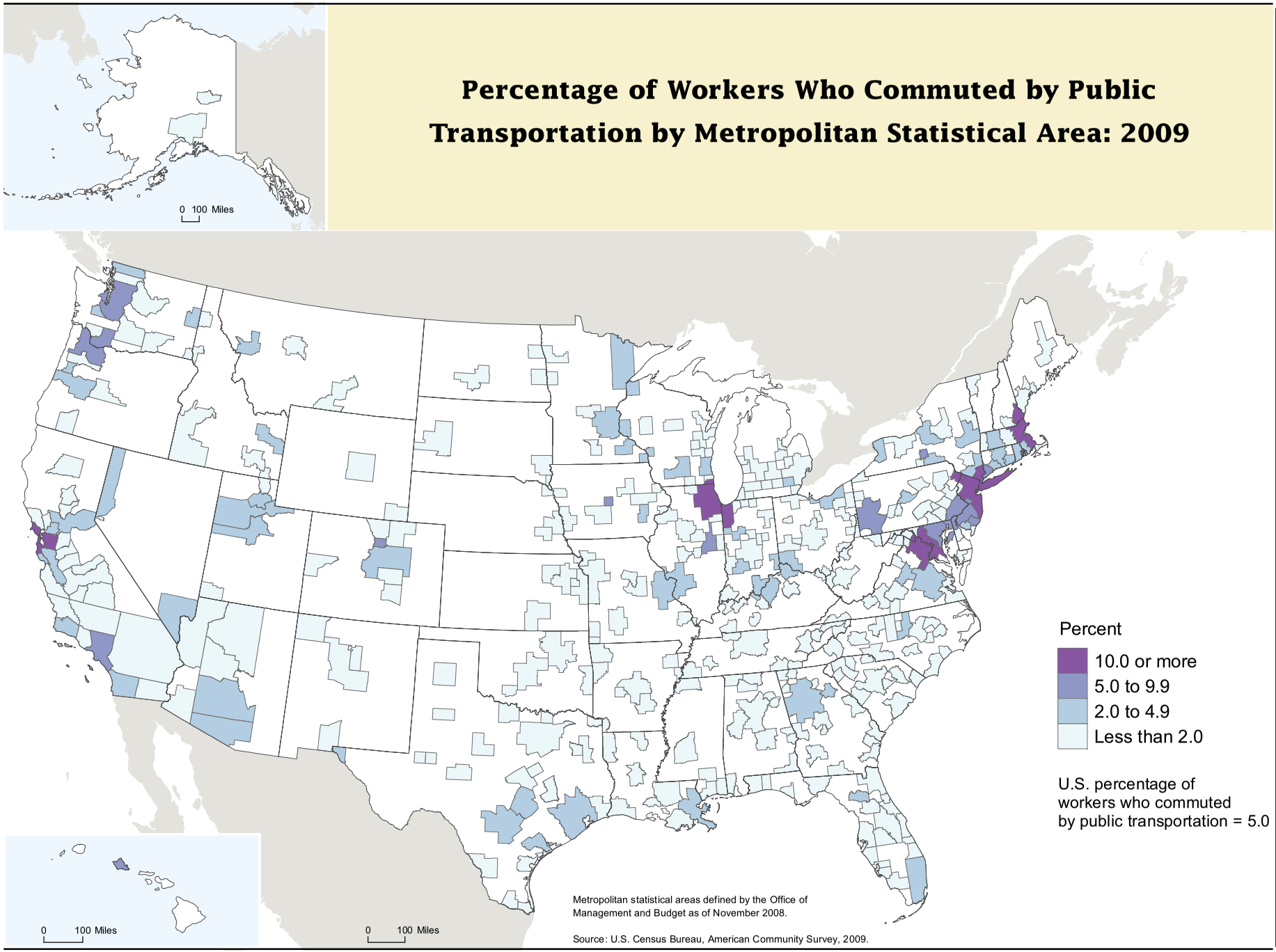

Table 1.

## Top 15 U.S. Metropolitan Statistical Areas Ranked by Number of Workers Age 16 and Older Who Commuted to Work by Public Transportation: 2009

| Rank | Metropolitan statistical area | Used public transportation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | Percent |
| 1 | New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA | 2,673,447 | 30.5 |
| 2 | Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI | 506,221 | 11.5 |
| 3 | Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV | 404,829 | 14.1 |
| 4 | Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA | 360,028 | 6.2 |
| 5 | San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA | 304,111 | 14.6 |
| 6 | Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH | 283,582 | 12.2 |
| 7 | Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD | 256,987 | 9.3 |
| 8 | Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA | 147,955 | 8.7 |
| 9 | Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA | 92,326 | 3.7 |
| 10 | Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL | 85,771 | 3.5 |
| 11 | Baltimore-Towson, MD | 82,119 | 6.2 |
| 12 | Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI | 78,837 | 4.7 |
| 13 | Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA | 63,877 | 6.1 |
| 14 | Pittsburgh, PA | 62,928 | 5.8 |
| 15 | Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX | 60,547 | 2.2 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

## WHAT IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.

Table 2.

## Public Transportation Usage for the 50 Largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas[1]: 2008 and 2009

(Estimates and percents are for members of the Armed Forces and civilians who were at work last week and used public transportation to get to work)

| Metropolitan area | 2008 public transportation | | | | 2009 public transportation | | | | Change in public transportation usage (2009 less 2008) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) |
| **United States** | **7,186,530** | **46,249** | **5.0** | **0.1** | **6,922,424** | **42,396** | **5.0** | **0.1** | **–264,106** | **62,741** | **–** | **–** |
| Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA | 93,756 | 6,365 | 3.6 | 0.2 | 92,326 | 7,995 | 3.7 | 0.3 | –1,430 | 10,219 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Austin-Round Rock, TX | 25,526 | 3,000 | 3.0 | 0.3 | 24,113 | 3,638 | 2.8 | 0.4 | –1,413 | 4,716 | –0.2 | 0.5 |
| Baltimore-Towson, MD | 88,056 | 5,544 | 6.5 | 0.4 | 82,119 | 5,132 | 6.2 | 0.4 | –5,937 | 7,555 | –0.3 | 0.6 |
| Birmingham-Hoover, AL | 4,569 | 1,229 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 3,360 | 1,063 | 0.7 | 0.2 | –1,209 | 1,625 | –0.2 | 0.3 |
| Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH | 272,917 | 9,327 | 11.6 | 0.4 | 283,582 | 10,583 | 12.2 | 0.4 | 10,665 | 14,106 | *0.6 | 0.6 |
| Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY | 18,162 | 2,484 | 3.4 | 0.5 | 18,676 | 2,417 | 3.6 | 0.5 | 514 | 3,466 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC | 19,800 | 2,823 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 15,417 | 2,246 | 1.9 | 0.3 | *–4,383 | 3,608 | *–0.4 | 0.4 |
| Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI | 522,547 | 13,047 | 11.3 | 0.3 | 506,221 | 12,311 | 11.5 | 0.3 | –16,326 | 17,938 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN | 27,069 | 2,968 | 2.6 | 0.3 | 24,649 | 3,022 | 2.4 | 0.3 | –2,420 | 4,236 | –0.1 | 0.4 |
| Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH | 38,435 | 3,216 | 3.9 | 0.3 | 35,493 | 3,565 | 3.8 | 0.4 | –2,942 | 4,802 | –0.1 | 0.5 |
| Columbus, OH | 15,070 | 2,138 | 1.7 | 0.2 | 11,897 | 2,160 | 1.4 | 0.3 | *–3,173 | 3,039 | –0.3 | 0.3 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX | 51,351 | 3,823 | 1.6 | 0.1 | 46,452 | 3,818 | 1.5 | 0.1 | –4,899 | 5,403 | –0.1 | 0.2 |
| Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO | 64,420 | 5,296 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 59,240 | 4,326 | 4.6 | 0.3 | –5,180 | 6,838 | –0.2 | 0.5 |
| Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI | 34,107 | 3,304 | 1.7 | 0.2 | 28,939 | 3,422 | 1.6 | 0.2 | *–5,168 | 4,757 | –0.1 | 0.3 |
| Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT | 15,172 | 2,183 | 2.5 | 0.4 | 16,445 | 2,112 | 2.8 | 0.4 | 1,273 | 3,038 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX | 71,908 | 5,349 | 2.6 | 0.2 | 60,547 | 4,929 | 2.2 | 0.2 | *–11,361 | 7,274 | *–0.4 | 0.3 |
| Indianapolis-Carmel, IN | 10,277 | 2,000 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 8,310 | 1,678 | 1.0 | 0.2 | –1,967 | 2,611 | –0.2 | 0.3 |
| Jacksonville, FL | 7,660 | 1,733 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 7,343 | 1,730 | 1.2 | 0.3 | –317 | 2,449 | – | 0.4 |
| Kansas City, MO-KS | 15,231 | 2,189 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 12,348 | 2,226 | 1.2 | 0.2 | –2,883 | 3,122 | –0.3 | 0.3 |
| Las Vegas-Paradise, NV | 33,140 | 4,234 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 27,834 | 2,590 | 3.2 | 0.3 | *–5,306 | 4,963 | –0.5 | 0.5 |
| Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA | 380,484 | 12,110 | 6.4 | 0.2 | 360,028 | 13,185 | 6.2 | 0.2 | *–20,456 | 17,903 | –0.2 | 0.3 |
| Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN | 13,066 | 2,113 | 2.2 | 0.3 | 13,724 | 2,520 | 2.4 | 0.4 | 658 | 3,289 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| Memphis, TN-MS-AR | 7,300 | 1,660 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 8,212 | 1,624 | 1.5 | 0.3 | 912 | 2,322 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL | 93,277 | 6,184 | 3.7 | 0.2 | 85,771 | 6,434 | 3.5 | 0.3 | –7,506 | 8,924 | –0.2 | 0.4 |
| Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI | 28,407 | 3,108 | 3.6 | 0.4 | 27,437 | 3,195 | 3.7 | 0.4 | –970 | 4,457 | – | 0.6 |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI | 83,771 | 4,355 | 4.8 | 0.2 | 78,837 | 4,762 | 4.7 | 0.3 | –4,934 | 6,453 | –0.1 | 0.4 |
| Nashville-Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin, TN | 7,896 | 1,443 | 1.0 | 0.2 | 8,829 | 1,622 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 933 | 2,171 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA | 13,470 | 2,776 | 2.6 | 0.5 | 14,390 | 2,175 | 2.7 | 0.4 | 920 | 3,527 | – | 0.7 |
| New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA | 2,755,897 | 24,847 | 30.4 | 0.3 | 2,673,447 | 26,566 | 30.5 | 0.3 | *–82,450 | 36,374 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Oklahoma City, OK | 2,957 | 1,155 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 2,466 | 921 | 0.4 | 0.2 | –491 | 1,477 | –0.1 | 0.3 |
| Orlando-Kissimmee, FL | 15,214 | 2,209 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 17,368 | 2,816 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 2,154 | 3,579 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD | 257,961 | 9,317 | 9.3 | 0.3 | 256,987 | 10,409 | 9.3 | 0.4 | –974 | 13,970 | – | 0.5 |
| Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ | 50,744 | 5,020 | 2.6 | 0.3 | 42,855 | 4,394 | 2.3 | 0.2 | *–7,889 | 6,671 | –0.3 | 0.3 |
| Pittsburgh, PA | 65,071 | 4,227 | 5.8 | 0.4 | 62,928 | 3,767 | 5.8 | 0.3 | –2,143 | 5,662 | – | 0.5 |
| Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA | 68,810 | 4,630 | 6.3 | 0.4 | 63,877 | 4,299 | 6.1 | 0.4 | –4,933 | 6,318 | –0.2 | 0.6 |
| Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA | 21,389 | 2,459 | 2.7 | 0.3 | 20,534 | 2,518 | 2.7 | 0.3 | –855 | 3,519 | – | 0.5 |
| Raleigh-Cary, NC | 5,702 | 1,454 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 5,231 | 1,328 | 1.0 | 0.2 | –471 | 1,969 | –0.1 | 0.4 |
| Richmond, VA | 12,514 | 2,152 | 2.0 | 0.4 | 11,676 | 2,003 | 2.0 | 0.3 | –838 | 2,940 | – | 0.5 |

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2.

## Public Transportation Usage for the 50 Largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas:[1] 2008 and 2009—Con.

(Estimates and percents are for members of the Armed Forces and civilians who were at work last week and used public transportation to get to work)

| Metropolitan area | 2008 public transportation | | | | 2009 public transportation | | | | Change in public transportation usage (2009 less 2008) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) | Estimate | Margin of error[1] (±) | Percent | Margin of error[1] (±) |
| Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA | 31,211 | 4,078 | 1.8 | 0.2 | 28,913 | 3,469 | 1.8 | 0.2 | –2,298 | 5,354 | – | 0.3 |
| Sacramento–Arden-Arcade–Roseville, CA | 27,158 | 2,665 | 2.8 | 0.3 | 24,632 | 3,254 | 2.7 | 0.4 | –2,526 | 4,207 | –0.1 | 0.4 |
| St. Louis, MO-IL | 38,115 | 3,827 | 2.8 | 0.3 | 33,881 | 3,215 | 2.6 | 0.2 | –4,234 | 4,998 | –0.2 | 0.4 |
| Salt Lake City, UT | 18,161 | 2,254 | 3.2 | 0.4 | 16,375 | 2,397 | 3.0 | 0.4 | –1,786 | 3,290 | –0.2 | 0.6 |
| San Antonio, TX | 23,335 | 3,098 | 2.5 | 0.3 | 21,342 | 3,492 | 2.3 | 0.4 | –1,993 | 4,668 | –0.2 | 0.5 |
| San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA | 48,489 | 4,521 | 3.4 | 0.3 | 43,289 | 3,659 | 3.1 | 0.3 | –5,200 | 5,816 | –0.3 | 0.4 |
| San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA | 308,137 | 8,558 | 14.4 | 0.4 | 304,111 | 9,655 | 14.6 | 0.4 | –4,026 | 12,902 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA | 32,081 | 3,935 | 3.6 | 0.4 | 26,319 | 2,665 | 3.1 | 0.3 | *–5,762 | 4,753 | *–0.5 | 0.5 |
| Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA | 138,309 | 6,360 | 8.0 | 0.4 | 147,955 | 6,793 | 8.7 | 0.4 | *9,646 | 9,306 | *0.7 | 0.5 |
| Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL | 16,636 | 2,994 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 16,695 | 3,368 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 59 | 4,506 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC | 18,283 | 3,098 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 11,973 | 2,256 | 1.4 | 0.3 | *–6,310 | 3,833 | *–0.7 | 0.5 |
| Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV | 387,332 | 10,326 | 13.4 | 0.4 | 404,829 | 12,540 | 14.1 | 0.4 | *17,497 | 16,244 | *0.8 | 0.6 |

* Statistically different at the 90 percent confidence level.

– Represents or rounds to zero.

[1]Fifty most populous metropolitan statistical areas based on population estimates as of July 1, 2009. Metropolitan statistical area boundaries defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of November 2008.

[2]Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009.