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Fast City, Slow Commute

New Yorkers are efficient, direct and fast moving. Their commutes: anything but. In this data analysis, we examine New Yorkers' commutes by neighborhood and across industries.

by Adam Forman

New Yorkers are efficient, direct and fast moving. Their commutes: anything but. In all but one of New York City's 55 Census-defined neighborhoods, the average commute time exceeds the national average of 26 minutes. In 69 percent of the city's neighborhoods, the average commute to work is over 40 minutes.

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This data brief details the average commute times for each of the city's neighborhoods; compares commuting times for workers in different industries; shows which forms of commuting (car, transit or walking) are most prevalent in each neighborhood; and shows that the number of residents commuting to work in their own borough continues to rise.

While nearly every New Yorker suffers through a long commute, the length varies depending on the borough and neighborhoods[i] where they reside. Average commutes[ii] range from 53 minutes in the Rockaways to 26 minutes in the Financial District and Greenwich Village. In other words, over the course of a five day work week, Rockaway residents will spend four hours and 29 minutes more time commuting than those who live in Downtown Manhattan. Of the ten neighborhoods with the longest commutes, four are in Brooklyn, four are in Queens and two are in the Bronx. Of those with the shortest commutes, all but one is in Manhattan. However, even in neighborhoods closely located to the Manhattan jobs centers, commuting times are extensive. The average commute for residents of Astoria is 38 minutes and for Williamsburg, 36 minutes.

The ten neighborhoods with the longest commutes are: the Rockaways (53 minutes), Jamaica (51 minutes),

Brownsville/Ocean Hill (48 minutes), Flatlands/Canarsie (48 minutes), Bellerose/Rosedale (47 minutes), Howard Beach/S. Ozone Park (46 minutes), Kingsbridge Heights/Mosholu (46 minutes), Soundview/Parkchester (46 minutes), East Flatbush (46 minutes) and Bensonhurst (45 minutes).

The three longest commutes in the Bronx are from Kingsbridge Heights/Mosholu (46 minutes), Soundview/Parkchester (46 minutes) and Williamsbridge/Baychester (44 minutes). The three longest commutes in Brooklyn are from Brownsville/Ocean Hill (48 minutes), Flatlands/Canarsie (48 minutes) and East Flatbush (46 minutes). The three longest commutes in Manhattan are from Washington Heights/Inwood (41 minutes), East Harlem (35 minutes) and Central Harlem (34 minutes). The three longest commutes in Queens are from Rockaways (53 minutes), Jamaica (51 minutes) and Bellerose/Rosedale (47 minutes). The longest commute in Staten Island is from South Shore (45 minutes).

Modes of transportation also vary by neighborhood. While 59 percent of New Yorkers use mass transit to get to work, in 10 of the city's 55 neighborhoods, more commuters rely on cars or taxis than any other form of transportation. This is the case in all three Census-defined neighborhoods in Staten Island, six neighborhoods in Queens and one neighborhood in the Bronx. In another six of the city's neighborhoods, over 20 percent of commuters walk or bike to work, including Stuyvesant Town (40 percent), Chelsea/Midtown (35 percent), Lower East Side (34 percent), Greenwich Village/FiDi (34 percent), Upper East Side (25 percent) and Borough Park (22 percent). The five neighborhoods with the highest share of bike commuters are Lower East Side/Chinatown (where six percent of commuters bike to work), Greenwich Village/Financial District (5 percent), North Crown Heights/Prospect Heights (5 percent), Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene (5 percent) and Park Slope/Carroll Gardens (4 percent).

Many New Yorkers avoid commuting altogether. In six neighborhoods, more than seven percent of employed residents are primarily working from home (Upper West Side, Park Slope/Carroll Gardens, Chelsea/Clinton/Midtown, Stuyvesant Town/Turtle Bay, Greenwich Village/Financial District and Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene). Interestingly, it is those neighborhoods with the closest proximity to job centers and the best transit options that have the highest share of residents who work out of their home. The number of New Yorkers working from home increased by 68 percent from 2000 to 2014 and now represents 3.9 percent of the city's working population.

While Manhattan is clearly the city's employment center, New Yorkers are actually more likely to commute to work in their own borough. Among Bronx commuters, 41 percent work in their home borough while 38 percent are employed in Manhattan. The gap is even larger in Queens (41 percent versus 35 percent), Brooklyn (49 percent versus 37 percent) and especially Staten Island (52 percent versus 22 percent).

From 2000 to 2014, the number of New Yorkers working in their home borough increased by 40 percent in the Bronx (from 168,849 to 237,156), 37 percent in Brooklyn (from 431,243 to 591,487), 28 percent in Queens (from 363,822 to 465,506), 23 percent in Staten Island (from 87,259 to 107,542) and 18 percent in Manhattan (from 635,122 to 747,996).

Queens residents are the most likely to work outside of the city. Thirteen percent commute to jobs beyond the five boroughs, followed by the Bronx (12 percent), Staten Island (9 percent), Manhattan (8 percent) and Brooklyn (6 percent).

Beyond neighborhoods and boroughs, commuting patterns also vary by industry. In several sectors, for instance, a large share of employees do not live in New York. In the city's utilities sector, 40 percent of employees commute from outside of the city. Other sectors with a high share of workers commuting from outside the city include finance and insurance (38 percent) and government (30 percent). By contrast, the preponderance of those working in New York's lowest paying sectors—retail, tourism, food services—reside inside the city. All but 10 percent of employees in accommodation and food services, 15 percent in retail and 15 percent in healthcare live in New York City. On the whole, 79 percent of jobs in the New York are filled by city residents. This has changed little since 2000, when 78 percent of New York jobs were occupied by city residents.

Given the large share of non-New Yorkers working in the city's finance and insurance sector, it is unsurprising that it is the industry with the longest average commute: 51 minutes. It is followed by construction (50 minutes), public administration (48 minutes) and manufacturing (48 minutes). Employees in the educational services sector, on the other hand, have the shortest average commutes (40 minutes), followed by those working in arts and entertainment (41 minutes), real estate (41 minutes) and retail (42 minutes).

To reduce commuting times for those living inside and outside of New York, the city will have to improve and expand its transit options. To this end, the Center's 2014 report on New York City infrastructure, Caution Ahead, offered several recommendations for increasing the efficiency of the city's subway system and financing expansion.

First, it recommended an accelerated schedule for the modernization of the MTA's signal system. Adopting Communications Based Train Control across the subway system will increase the frequency and speed of the city's trains.

Second, it recommended the adoption of the Move NY plan, introducing tolls on the city's East River bridges. The plan would generate $1.5 billion in net annual revenue for the MTA, helping to improve state-of-good-repair and to finance system expansion.

Finally, while the MTA operates over 20 LIRR stations in the five boroughs, few New Yorkers use the service because of its high fares and its poor integration with the subway MetroCard. Reducing fares and integrating payment and transfers within the city could dramatically reduce commutes in transit deserts like northeast and southeast Queens.

Mass Transit Drive/Taxi Bike/Walk

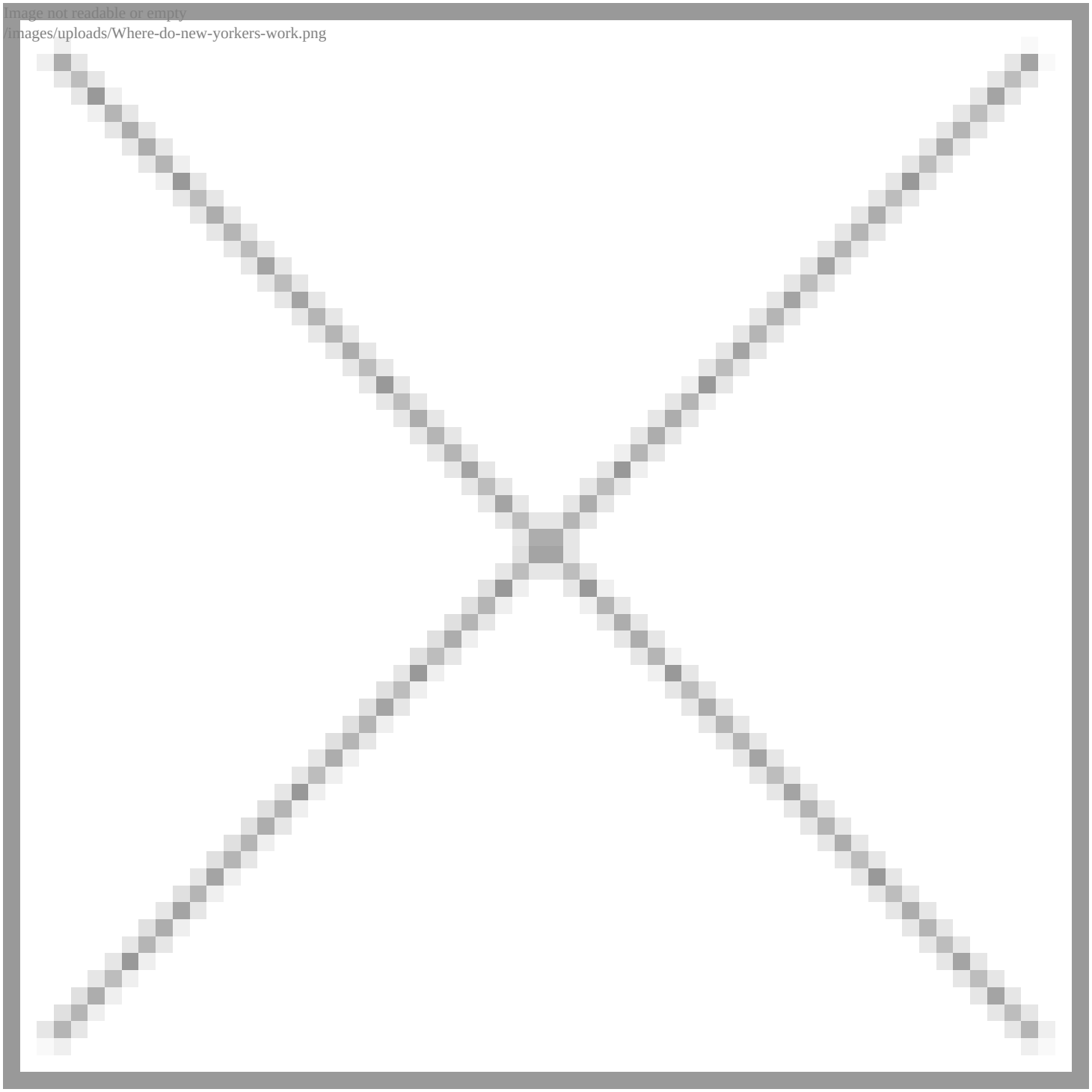
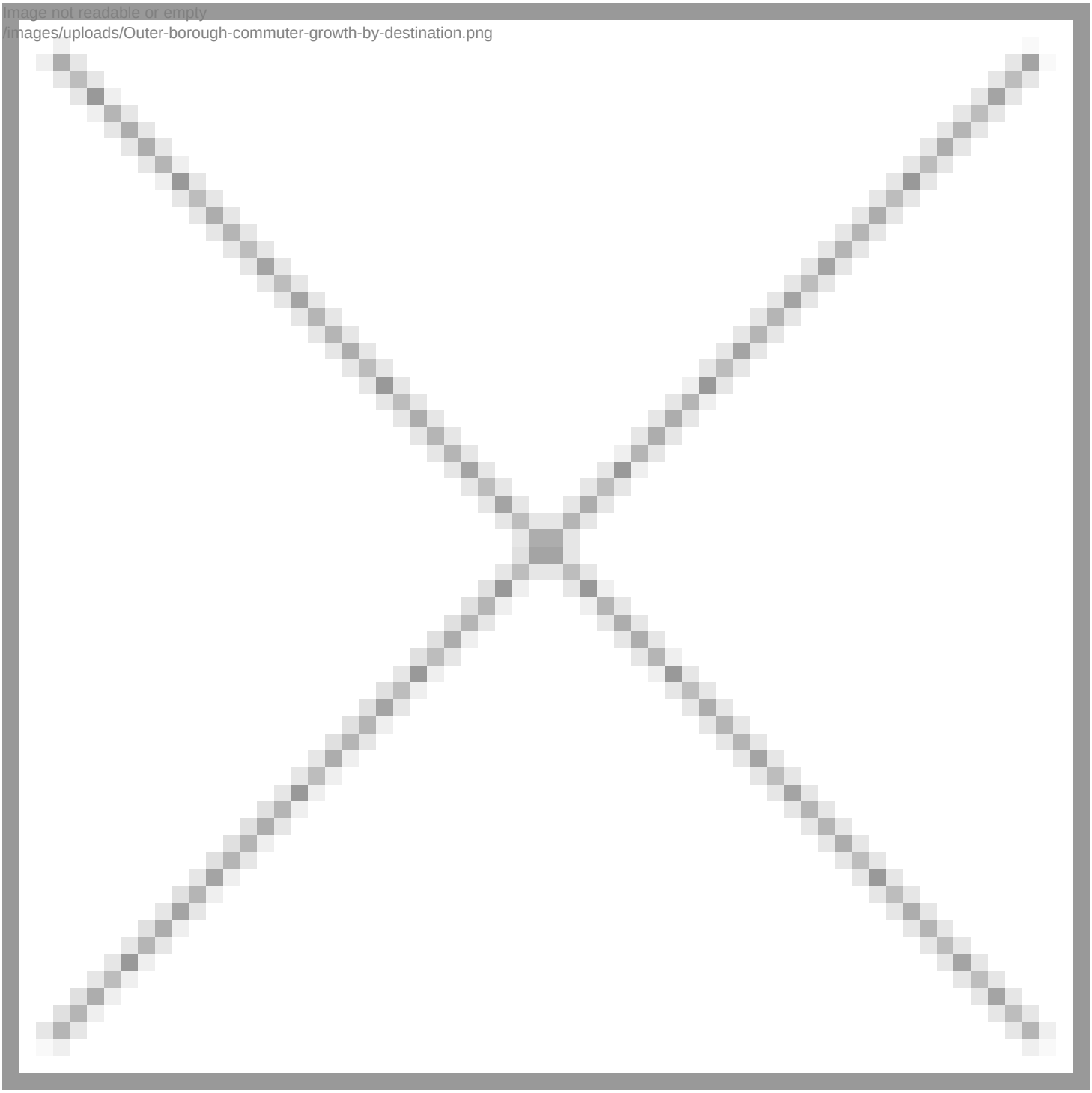

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Average Commuting Time by Neighborhood of Residence, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Average Commute Time
Rockaways	Queens	52.9
Jamaica	Queens	50.9
Brownsville/Ocean Hill	Brooklyn	48.2
Flatlands/Canarsie	Brooklyn	48.1
Bellerose/Rosedale	Queens	46.9
Howard Beach/S. Ozone Park	Queens	46.2
Kingsbridge Heights/Mosholu	Bronx	46.1
Soundview/Parkchester	Bronx	45.8

Average Commuting Time by Neighborhood of Residence, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Average Commute Time
East Flatbush	Brooklyn	45.6
Bensonhurst	Brooklyn	45.4
East New York/Starrett City	Brooklyn	44.8
Kew Gardens/Woodhaven	Queens	44.6
South Shore	Staten Island	44.6
Bay Ridge	Brooklyn	44.5
Elmhurst/Corona	Queens	44.4
Williamsbridge/Baychester	Bronx	44.3
Riverdale/Kingsbridge	Bronx	43.7
Sheepshead Bay/Gravesend	Brooklyn	43.5
Sunset Park	Brooklyn	43.2
Throgs Neck/Co-op City	Bronx	43.1
Coney Island	Brooklyn	43.0
North Shore	Staten Island	42.7
Bayside/Little Neck	Queens	42.6
Jackson Heights	Queens	42.6
Pelham Parkway	Bronx	42.5
Morrisania/East Tremont	Bronx	42.3
Hillcrest/Fresh Meadows	Queens	42.3
Mid-Island	Staten Island	42.0
Bedford Stuyvesant	Brooklyn	41.9
North Crown Heights/Prospect Heights	Brooklyn	41.9
Forest Hills/Rego Park	Queens	41.7
Mott Haven/Hunts Point	Bronx	41.6
University Heights/Fordham	Bronx	41.6
Washington Heights/Inwood	Manhattan	41.4
South Crown Heights	Brooklyn	41.2
Flatbush	Brooklyn	40.9
New York City		40.3
Bushwick	Brooklyn	40.3
Highbridge/S. Concourse	Bronx	40.0
Middle Village/Ridgewood	Queens	39.4
Astoria	Queens	38.3
Park Slope/Carroll Gardens	Brooklyn	38.0
Flushing/Whitestone	Queens	37.7
Sunnyside/Woodside	Queens	37.4
Williamsburg/Greenpoint	Brooklyn	36.2
Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene	Brooklyn	36.0
East Harlem	Manhattan	35.1
Borough Park	Brooklyn	35.1
Central Harlem	Manhattan	34.4
Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights	Manhattan	33.1
Upper West Side	Manhattan	31.8
Upper East Side	Manhattan	31.8
Lower East Side/Chinatown	Manhattan	30.1
Chelsea/Clinton/Midtown	Manhattan	27.8

Average Commuting Time by Neighborhood of Residence, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Average Commute Time
Stuyvesant Town/Turtle Bay	Manhattan	27.0
Greenwich Village/Financial District	Manhattan	26.1

Method of Transit by Neighborhood of Residence, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Mass Transit	Drive or Taxi	Walk/Bike
East Harlem	Manhattan	78%	10%	12%
Central Harlem	Manhattan	77%	10%	11%
Highbridge/S. Concourse	Bronx	77%	17%	5%
Washington Heights/Inwood	Manhattan	77%	12%	10%
Upper West Side	Manhattan	76%	11%	12%
Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights	Manhattan	76%	10%	13%
Mott Haven/Hunts Point	Bronx	74%	14%	11%
Kingsbridge Heights/Mosholu	Bronx	74%	15%	10%
Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene	Brooklyn	73%	14%	13%
Sunnyside/Woodside	Queens	73%	23%	4%
Brownsville/Ocean Hill	Brooklyn	72%	23%	5%
Bushwick	Brooklyn	72%	14%	13%
South Crown Heights	Brooklyn	72%	19%	9%
East New York/Starrett City	Brooklyn	72%	23%	4%
North Crown Heights/Prospect Heights	Brooklyn	72%	16%	12%
Park Slope/Carroll Gardens	Brooklyn	71%	13%	15%
University Heights/Fordham	Bronx	71%	17%	9%
Astoria	Queens	71%	21%	8%
Bedford Stuyvesant	Brooklyn	70%	17%	12%
Sunset Park	Brooklyn	69%	16%	13%
East Flatbush	Brooklyn	68%	28%	4%
Morrisania/East Tremont	Bronx	68%	22%	10%
Elmhurst/Corona	Queens	67%	23%	9%
Williamsburg/Greenpoint	Brooklyn	66%	20%	14%
Jackson Heights	Queens	64%	27%	8%
Flatbush	Brooklyn	63%	28%	9%
Forest Hills/Rego Park	Queens	61%	33%	5%
Bensonhurst	Brooklyn	61%	30%	8%
Soundview/Parkchester	Bronx	61%	34%	4%
New York City		59%	29%	11%
Bay Ridge	Brooklyn	59%	31%	10%
Upper East Side	Manhattan	59%	15%	25%
Kew Gardens/Woodhaven	Queens	58%	36%	6%
Riverdale/Kingsbridge	Bronx	57%	33%	9%
Greenwich Village/Financial District	Manhattan	57%	9%	34%
Middle Village/Ridgewood	Queens	57%	37%	6%
Lower East Side/Chinatown	Manhattan	56%	10%	34%
Chelsea/Clinton/Midtown	Manhattan	54%	10%	35%
Williamsbridge/Baychester	Bronx	53%	41%	6%

Method of Transit by Neighborhood of Residence, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Mass Transit	Drive or Taxi	Walk/Bike
Jamaica	Queens	52%	44%	3%
Pelham Parkway	Bronx	52%	40%	7%
Coney Island	Brooklyn	51%	34%	14%
Sheepshead Bay/Gravesend	Brooklyn	51%	38%	10%
Flatlands/Canarsie	Brooklyn	51%	44%	4%
Stuyvesant Town/Turtle Bay	Manhattan	51%	8%	40%
Borough Park	Brooklyn	49%	28%	22%
Hillcrest/Fresh Meadows	Queens	44%	48%	7%
Throgs Neck/Co-op City	Bronx	42%	51%	6%
Howard Beach/S. Ozone Park	Queens	42%	53%	4%
Rockaways	Queens	40%	53%	4%
Flushing/Whitestone	Queens	37%	49%	14%
North Shore	Staten Island	36%	60%	4%
Bellerose/Rosedale	Queens	34%	65%	1%
Bayside/Little Neck	Queens	34%	63%	3%
Mid-Island	Staten Island	32%	65%	3%
South Shore	Staten Island	22%	76%	1%

Share of Residents Who Work from Home by Neighborhood, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Share of Residents Who Work from Home
Astoria	Queens	3.8%
Bay Ridge	Brooklyn	4.8%
Bayside / Little Neck	Queens	4.0%
Bedford Stuyvesant	Brooklyn	5.1%
Bellerose / Rosedale	Queens	2.3%
Bensonhurst	Brooklyn	2.4%
Borough Park	Brooklyn	4.3%
Brooklyn Heights / Fort Greene	Brooklyn	7.2%
Brownsville / Ocean Hill	Brooklyn	2.4%
Bushwick	Brooklyn	3.2%
Central Harlem	Manhattan	3.9%
Chelsea / Clinton / Midtown	Manhattan	8.2%
New York City		3.9%
Coney Island	Brooklyn	1.9%
East Flatbush	Brooklyn	3.1%
East Harlem	Manhattan	3.4%
East New York / Starrett City	Brooklyn	1.7%
Elmhurst / Corona	Queens	0.5%
Flatbush	Brooklyn	2.6%
Flatlands / Canarsie	Brooklyn	2.9%
Flushing / Whitestone	Queens	2.3%
Forest Hills / Rego Park	Queens	4.4%
Greenwich Village / Financial District	Manhattan	7.2%
Highbridge / S. Concourse	Bronx	5.7%

Share of Residents Who Work from Home by Neighborhood, 2014

Neighborhood	Borough	Share of Residents Who Work from Home
Hillcrest / Fresh Meadows	Queens	2.6%
Howard Beach / S. Ozone Park	Queens	0.8%
Jackson Heights	Queens	0.8%
Jamaica	Queens	1.8%
Kew Gardens / Woodhaven	Queens	4.5%
Kingsbridge Heights / Mosholu	Bronx	5.7%
Lower East Side / Chinatown	Manhattan	3.6%
Middle Village / Ridgewood	Queens	2.4%
Mid-Island	Staten Island	5.9%
Morningside Heights / Hamilton Heights	Manhattan	6.0%
Morrisania / East Tremont	Bronx	4.6%
Mott Haven / Hunts Point	Bronx	3.5%
North Crown Heights / Prospect Heights	Brooklyn	3.3%
North Shore	Staten Island	1.2%
Park Slope / Carroll Gardens	Brooklyn	8.4%
Pelham Parkway	Bronx	2.4%
Riverdale / Kingsbridge	Bronx	3.8%
Rockaways	Queens	4.5%
Sheepshead Bay / Gravesend	Brooklyn	4.3%
Soundview / Parkchester	Bronx	2.8%
South Crown Heights	Brooklyn	3.0%
South Shore	Staten Island	1.2%
Stuyvesant Town / Turtle Bay	Manhattan	7.8%
Sunnyside / Woodside	Queens	1.9%
Sunset Park	Brooklyn	2.6%
Throgs Neck / Co-op City	Bronx	1.9%
University Heights / Fordham	Bronx	3.7%
Upper East Side	Manhattan	6.4%
Upper West Side	Manhattan	9.3%
Washington Heights / Inwood	Manhattan	4.6%
Williamsbridge / Baychester	Bronx	1.8%
Williamsburg / Greenpoint	Brooklyn	6.3%

Industry Share of New York City Jobs Filled by Non-City Residents, 2014

Industry	Share of Employees Who Live Outside New York City
Utilities	40%
Finance and Insurance	38%
Public Administration	30%
Management of companies and enterprises	29%
Wholesale Trade	28%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	28%
Construction	26%
Manufacturing	26%
Information	25%

Industry Share of New York City Jobs Filled by Non-City Residents, 2014

Industry	Share of Employees Who Live Outside New York City
Educational Services	21%
Average	21%
Transportation and Warehousing	21%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	20%
Administrative and support and waste management services	17%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	16%
Personal Services and Repair Services	15%
Health Care and Social Assistance	15%
Retail Trade	15%
Accommodation and Food Services	10%

Average Commuting Time by Industry, 2014

Industry	Average Commute Time
Finance and Insurance	51
Construction	50
Public Administration	48
Manufacturing	48
Information	47
Utilities	47
Administrative and support and waste management services	47
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	46
Average	45
Health Care and Social Assistance	44
Wholesale Trade	44
Transportation and Warehousing	44
Management of companies and enterprises	43
Personal Services and Repair Services	43
Accommodation and Food Services	43
Retail Trade	42
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	41
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	41
Educational Services	40

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[1] This data brief is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey.

[2] Average commuting times exclude those who do not work or work from home.

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CENTER FOR AN URBAN FUTURE
120 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005

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