

Commuting to Manhattan

**A study of residence location trends for
Manhattan workers from 2002 to 2009**

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March 2012**

Introduction

Manhattan, a global center of finance, culture, fashion and media, harnesses a workforce of 2 million people. Regionally, Manhattan is the business hub for the New York metropolitan area, with commuters entering the city every morning from the other four boroughs, New Jersey, the Hudson Valley, western Connecticut, and Long Island, and distant locations, such as eastern Pennsylvania. The workforce of Manhattan is both growing and changing. There is a growing set of high-income, service-related occupations, and an increasing number of workers are residing in the outer boroughs or to the west, across the Hudson River in New Jersey. In fact, Manhattan now has 59,000 “super-commuters” who do not live within the metropolitan region.

This report examines key trends in the residential location of Manhattan workers. We also discuss the travel, occupation, and income characteristics of Manhattan workers living in the surrounding metropolitan region. Finally, we explore the strength, resilience and vitality of Manhattan as a global economic and cultural hub in the 21st century.

Key Findings

- **More than two-thirds of Manhattan workers live in New York City as of 2009.** About one-quarter of Manhattan workers live within the combined metropolitan region including Northern New Jersey, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and Western Connecticut. The remaining 6% live in regions beyond the New York area.
- **The number of Manhattan commuters from the outer boroughs has increased,** particularly in Staten Island and Brooklyn, each with growth rates that exceeded 10% from 2002 to 2009. In contrast, there was only a 3% increase in within-Manhattan commuters. However, a smaller share of New York City residents of all five boroughs works in Manhattan in 2009 when compared to in 2002. **Due to job growth in the outer boroughs, working residents are now less dependent on Manhattan for work opportunities.**
- Within the region, **the greatest growth rate in Manhattan commuting was from Northern New Jersey,** where there was a 21% increase. Most of this increase can be attributed to Hudson County, located directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Since employment opportunities have declined in most counties in North Jersey since 2002, working residents are becoming increasingly dependent on New York City for

jobs. What's more, PATH ridership hit a record high in 2011, given in the influx in Manhattan commuters from this region.

- **The number of Manhattan commuters from the Hudson Valley and Long Island has either stagnated, or declined** from 2002 to 2009. However, inner ring suburbs such as Westchester, Rockland, and Nassau counties have experienced faster rates of decline in Manhattan workers than areas farther to the north and east.
- **Manhattan is the top work destination in the country for “extreme commuting,” work trips that are more than 90 minutes long each way:** 1 out of every 8 Manhattan workers is an extreme commuter. However, while extreme commutes to Manhattan increased by 18% since 2004, the workforce of Hudson County had one of the fastest growth rates in extreme commuting in the nation, with a percent increase of 105% from 2004 to 2009.
- Among all regions, **the greatest growth rate in Manhattan commuting was from “super-commuters,” or workers living outside the New York City-Newark-Bridgeport Combined Statistical Area** (60% increase), particularly in regions such as Boston and Upstate New York. The growth in Manhattan workers from many of these regions occurred primarily among high income earners, particularly from the Boston area. The non-local workforce that travels to jobs in Manhattan can be characterized as “super-commuters” who travel to work locations that typically are not within a feasible daily commuting distance. **The growth in extreme and super-commutes to Manhattan indicates a rapid expansion of its labor shed that now extends far beyond the New York City metropolitan area.**
- **Three-fourths of all commutes to Manhattan were taken primarily by public transit, and only 11% of all commuters drive single occupancy vehicles to work. . Subway commutes accounted for half of all commutes to Manhattan in 2009, while other mass transit modes such as commuter rail, buses, and ferries accounted for one-fourth of all commutes.** 1.15 million Manhattan commuters take the subway as their primary means of getting to work, which is roughly equal to the total number of commuters to San Francisco and Atlanta *combined*.
- **A Manhattan commuter is 7 times less likely to drive alone to work than the average U.S. worker.** Only 18% of Manhattan workers who own vehicles drive alone to work; 957,000 Manhattan commuters leave their cars at home and take mass transit as an alternative means to get to work.

Characteristics of Manhattan Commuters

Most live close to Manhattan

Approximately 68% of Manhattan's workforce lived within the five boroughs of New York City, and 28% of the workforce lived in other parts of the New York City-Newark-Bridgeport Combined Metropolitan Area in 2009.

Northern New Jersey had the most dramatic growth in Manhattan commuters, with a 21% increase during the period of 2002-09 (Figure 1). One of the fastest-growing areas of residence in New Jersey and the entire region for Manhattan workers is in Hudson County, located just across the river from Midtown and Lower Manhattan. Commuters to Manhattan from Hudson County increased by 34% (17,000 total) from 2002 to 2009, making it one of the fastest growing counties of residence in both percent and absolute terms in the entire region. Hudson County also has two of the Top 5 cities for Manhattan workers in the entire state of New Jersey (Jersey City and Hoboken, Figure 2), and the number of commuters from each of these cities has grown at very high rates during the past decade.

Manhattan commuters from the Hudson County cities of Jersey City, Hoboken, and Union City are frequent users of mass transit modes such as NJ Transit commuter rail, PATH, Hudson River ferries, or commuter buses, accounting for three of the top 10 cities for public transit commuting by residence location in the country (Figure 3). These figures stress the importance and need for mass transit development in northern New Jersey, especially since PATH ridership has increased by approximately 31% since 2005ⁱ, reaching a record high of 76.6 million annual trips in 2011ⁱⁱ.

The Hudson Valley region and Long Island stand out for having the slowest growth in Manhattan commuters, or a slight decline in the case of Long Island. However, the numbers from Figure 1 are slightly misleading. If the regions were to be separated into sub-regions: the Hudson Valley into its Middle (Poughkeepsie area) and Lower (Westchester and Rockland) regions, and Long Island into both Nassau and Suffolk counties, the decline in Manhattan

commuters would be primarily attributed to areas closer to Manhattan such as Westchester, Rockland, and Nassau counties. In contrast, there was a slight growth in Manhattan workers in more distant sub-regions such as the Middle Hudson Valley and Suffolk County.

New Jersey residents increasingly rely on Manhattan for high income jobs

Although the number of Manhattan workers from the outer boroughs increased between 2002 and 2009, they represented a smaller share of each borough's workforce, as their overall working population also grew significantly (Figure 4). Not only are these locations experiencing an increase in both population and employment, but they contribute to greater diversification in workplace locations within New York City: job opportunities have increased in all five boroughs during this period, particularly in Brooklyn. Manhattan's rate of job growth though was the slowest in New York City, which explains why in relative terms, a smaller share of working residents across the city work in Manhattan now than during 2002. Nonetheless, despite the employment growth in the outer boroughs, Manhattan remains the central destination for high-income jobs in the region. Figure 7 indicates that while job growth in the outer boroughs outpaced that of Manhattan, average salaries grew at a faster rate for Manhattan workers than those of any other neighboring county (with the sole exception of Hudson) since 2002.

While New Yorkers rely less on Manhattan as a work destination, New Jersey residents increasingly depend on Manhattan and the rest of New York City for jobs. Since 2002, almost every county in Northern New Jersey has lost jobs, whereas all five boroughs in New York City have gained jobs. These economic trends have affected work trip dynamics, since more New Jersey residents now must look and commute across the Hudson for job opportunities. What's more, as New Yorkers are increasingly taking jobs in the outer boroughs, Manhattan has also become increasingly reliant on commuting from New Jersey to sustain the growth of its labor force. The changing economic trends within the five boroughs and in New Jersey are the primary reasons for how commuting trip patterns have evolved in the Tri-State since 2002.

Manhattan offers residential proximity and a choice of commute routes

As shown in Figure 8, a substantially higher proportion of New York City workers live and commute to jobs within the city boundaries than those of other major cities. What's more, workers throughout all of New York City are significantly more likely to live within the city than

workers from two of the largest cities in the country by municipal land area: Jacksonville, Florida and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Even though more than two-thirds of the workforce is composed of New Yorkers, Manhattan has the largest share of “extreme commuters” among its workforce of any county in the nation. The U.S. Census Bureau defines an “extreme commuter” as any individual who travels more than 90 minutes one-way to work on a regular basis, and a 2005 study revealed that residents of counties in the New York metropolitan area were among the likeliest in the entire nation to be “extreme commutersⁱⁱⁱ.” Using more recent census data from 2009, Figure 9 shows that commuters with Manhattan as their work destination were, by a wide margin, the likeliest to be an extreme commuter. Approximately one in every eight Manhattan workers commutes more than 90 minutes each way to work on a regular basis. However, while Figure 10 shows that Manhattan workers have by far the highest rate of extreme commuting in the region, Figure 11 indicates that Manhattan residents have one of the lowest rates of extreme commuting given the proximity of residences to central commuting districts.

While Manhattan workers are the most likely in the region and the nation to be extreme commuters, Figure 12 reveals that there has only been an 18% increase in the total number of extreme commuters to Manhattan since 2004. The fastest rates of growth in extreme commutes in the region were in Hudson and Westchester counties, for both county workers and residents (Figure 13).

The rise of the Manhattan-bound “Super-Commuter”

The fastest growing region of residence among Manhattan commuters is not located within the New York metropolitan region: 2002-09 saw a 60% increase (22,200 total) in Manhattan workers from regions beyond the city’s Combined Metropolitan Area. Comprising a total of 3.3% of all Manhattan workers, the non-local workforce hails from Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania, Albany, and many parts of Upstate New York, but Boston saw the most dramatic increase: Manhattan workers living in the Boston metropolitan area more than doubled between 2002 and 2009, from 1,400 to 3,100 (Figures 14 and 15).

This non-local workforce represents an emerging demographic in the city’s labor force that can be classified as the “super-commuter.” As previously noted, the U.S. Census Bureau classifies a commuter as an “extreme commuter” given that he or she spends more than 90

minutes traveling to work on a daily basis^{iv}. The “super-commute” is defined by *The Financial Times* as long-range, inter-regional commutes by air or by high-speed rail that are typically weekly or bi-weekly trips, rather than a daily commute that becomes less feasible at such great distances^v. While it is unclear whether these Manhattan workers travel to and from or live in their Census-designated residence locations on a regular basis, these “super-commuting” trends, in addition to the growth in extreme commuting, indicate a rapid expansion in Manhattan’s labor shed that now extends beyond New York City’s metropolitan area.

More than 75% of Manhattan workers rely on mass transit to commute to work

In most regions of the nation, and in much of the New York City metropolitan region, commuters depend on their personal automobiles to access job locations: more than 80% of commuters traveling to work destinations in Northern New Jersey, the Lower Hudson Valley, and Long Island travel to work by car, and 8 out of every 9 American commuters living outside the Tri-State area drive to work. Manhattan commuters have entirely different characteristics in terms of how they get to work: 3 out of every 4 commuters travel by mass transit, and half of all commuters use the city’s subway system that carries 5 million riders per day (Figure 16). Manhattan-bound commuters are more than twice as likely to travel to work by mass transit as an individual working in New York City’s outer boroughs, and more than 24 times as likely to travel by transit as an individual working outside the New York City metropolitan area (Figure 18). Since only 14% of Manhattan workers travel by car to work, they are also more than 6 times less likely than an individual working elsewhere in the United States to commute by car.

However, the commuting characteristics differ by where workers live, as illustrated in Figure 17. Most New York City residents, with the exception of Staten Island, commute by subway into Manhattan. In fact, four out of every five of Manhattan-bound commuters from Brooklyn travel to work by subway. Hudson County has more in common with the rest of New York City in terms of how its working residents commute to Manhattan than Staten Island does, with over 40% traveling by subway. As mentioned earlier, the rapid growth in Hudson County commuting to Manhattan has resulted in record levels of PATH ridership in recent years.

While Manhattan workers from the northern suburbs in Westchester and Connecticut and the eastern suburbs in Long Island tend to commute by LIRR and MetroNorth, respectively, workers from New Jersey are not quite as dependent on NJ Transit, due to the additional option of commuting by bus to the Port Authority and George Washington Bridge terminals. Due to

limited capacity in the North River Tunnels and at Penn Station, not all NJ Transit trains are capable of providing direct access to Midtown. Those that live along NJ Transit lines that do frequently provide Midtown Direct trains are more likely to commute by rail, such as residents of Middlesex and Essex counties. Those that live along NJ Transit's Main and Pascack Valley Lines (Passaic and Bergen counties) are more dependent on commuter buses for travel to Manhattan, since rail passengers must transfer at Secaucus or Hoboken to enter Manhattan. Lastly, Manhattan commuters from Orange and Rockland counties are the only counties where a plurality choose to drive to work, which is also primarily due to the inconvenience of transit journeys to Midtown. The only commuter rail lines that serve the area are the Port Jervis (which connects to the NJ Transit Main Line) and Pascack Valley lines, neither of which provides a "one-seat ride" to Penn Station.

Nevertheless, the accessibility and convenience of the region's mass transit network has allowed 957,000 vehicle owners who work in Manhattan to leave their cars in the driveway or at a suburban park-and-ride lot and travel to work by transit instead, and only 18% of vehicle owners drive alone to work. What's more, Manhattan commutes by mass transit, with the exception of trips by commuter rail from suburban regions, are comparable in terms of length with car commutes, as they range from 45 to 60 minutes, on average (Figure 19).

In fact, Manhattan workers employed in the borough's financial industry are among the most likely to take mass transit to job destinations in Midtown and the Financial District that are easily accessible by rail, subway, or ferries from home destinations such as Westchester County and Hudson County, New Jersey (Figure 20). Westchester County bedroom suburbs such as Bronxville, Scarsdale, and Chappaqua have among the highest rates of transit commuting in the nation, with more than 30% traveling to work by commuter rail, and median household incomes in excess of \$200,000 per year. In addition, Manhattan commuters from the exurbs of Central New Jersey and Western Connecticut are more likely to be employed in the FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) industries than those from other parts of the region, with many commuting in on MetroNorth or NJ Transit Northeast Corridor or Midtown Direct trains. Rockland County and The Bronx were the only counties in the entire region where a plurality of Manhattan-bound commuters were employed in an industry other than FIRE or professional/business services, as they are more likely to be employed in the education/health care services industry (Figure 21). This is likely due to the fact that several major universities

and hospitals are located uptown in Harlem and Washington Heights, and are more easily accessed from those counties.

Conclusion

Manhattan has traditionally served as New York City's "central business district." Despite the fact that job opportunities in the other four boroughs are increasing, Manhattan has a significant and growing concentration of high-income employment. These high income jobs attract a workforce from the city, region and rest of the nation.. The employment opportunities in Manhattan has drawn super-commuters from distant locations such as Boston, northeast Pennsylvania, and upstate New York.. High-income Manhattan workers have also dramatically influenced the character of neighborhoods in Brooklyn, Jersey City, and Hoboken, all of which are easily accessible by mass transit. As more New Jersey residents rely on New York City as a source for job opportunities, trans-Hudson commuting will continue to grow, placing further strain on the existing rail and bus networks that are currently operating at full capacity. What remains unclear though is the impact that this would have on vehicular traffic at the Hudson River crossings. Although trans-Hudson commuting has grown substantially over the past decade, a recent New York City Department of Transportation study found that the average daily vehicular traffic for the George Washington Bridge and Lincoln and Holland Tunnels combined actually declined over the past decade for the first time since records were kept in 1949^{vi}. However, if employment trends continue at this pace, vehicle traffic may also rise to accommodate commuters unable to fit on the already-strained mass transit system.

Manhattan's enormous and diverse workforce – in skills and geographic residence – and its increasing share of national employment indicate its strength, even during the recent national recession.. T continued expansion of Manhattan's labor shed will continue to benefit the region. The commuting trends discussed here should be considered in future regional transportation policies and plans:

This report highlights the central role of commuting in the economic life of Manhattan. Mass transit is essential to support the flow of commuters in, through and out of Manhattan. In addition, the commuter rail systems, taxi system, ferries, heliports and network of bridges and tunnels that accommodate autos, buses and trucks all contribute to the capacity of Manhattan to

serve as a global cultural and economic hub. The island of Manhattan truly depends on a multi-modal system of transportation in order to connect this island to the rest of the city, region and world.

References

ⁱ American Public Transportation Association. "Transit Ridership Report, Third Quarter 2005." 19 January 2006. http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/Ridership/2005_q3_ridership_APTA.pdf

ⁱⁱ Strunsky, Steve. "PATH Trains Handled Record Ridership in 2011." *The Newark Star-Ledger*. 24 January 2012

ⁱⁱⁱ www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/cb05-ac02.html

^{iv} Bruzek, Joe. "Mileage Report: Extreme Commuting." *The Miami Herald*. 28 June 2011.

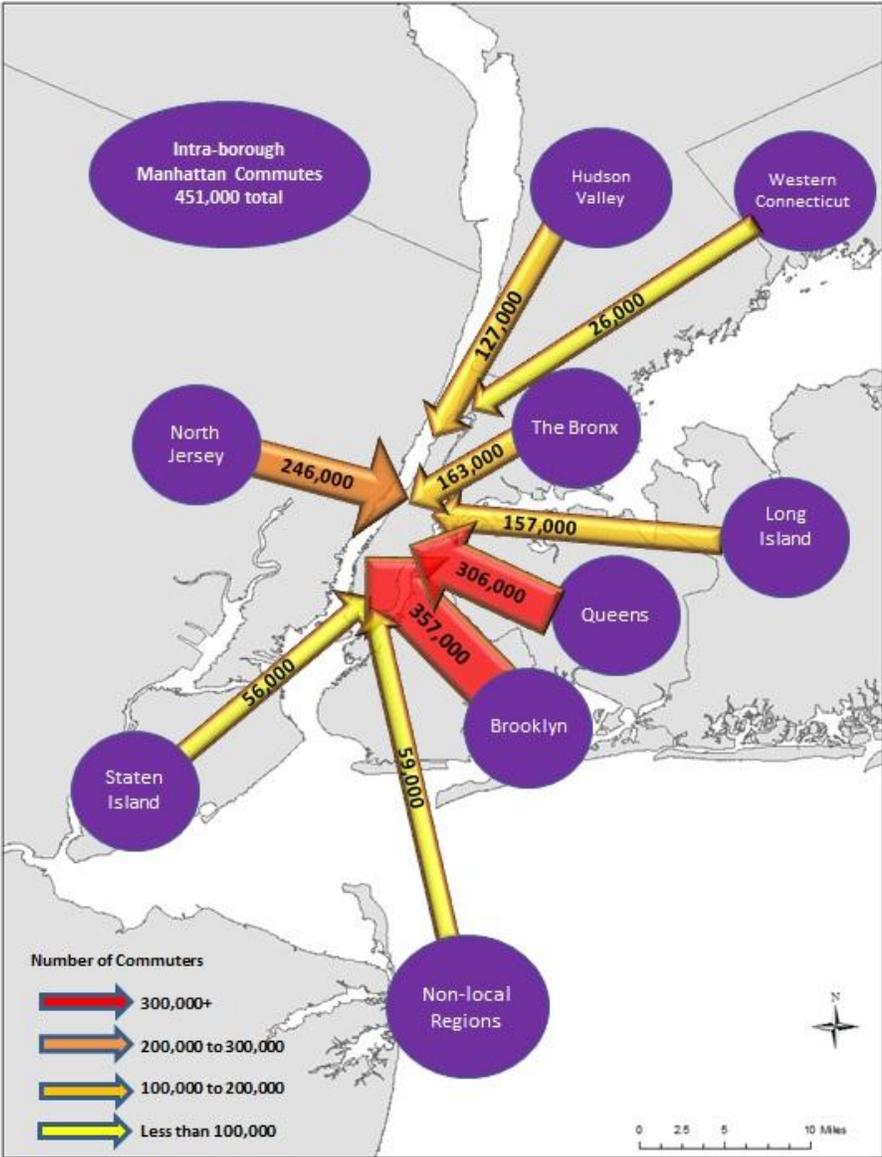
^v Rigby, Rhymer. "Business Traveler: The Rise of the Super-Commuters." *The Financial Times*. 27 December 2011.

^{vi} New York City Department of Transportation. "New York City Screenline Traffic Flow 2009." February 2011.

Appendix

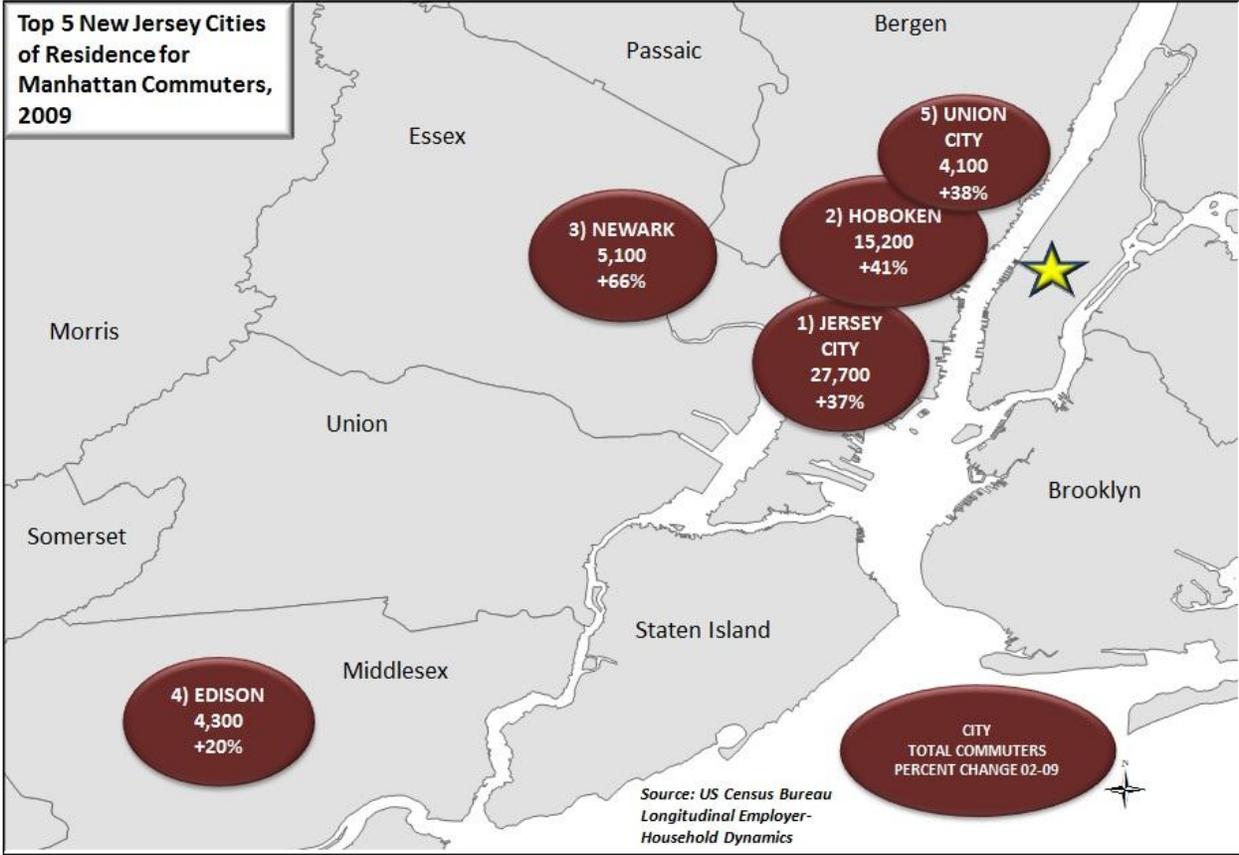
FIGURE 1

Commuters to
Manhattan, 2009



Source: US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-
Household Dynamics

FIGURE 2



Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

FIGURE 3

Top 10 U.S. Cities for Commuting by Public Transit, by Residence, 2009

City	Transit Mode Share	Total Transit Commuters	 Bus	 Subway	 Rail	 Ferry
1. Hoboken, NJ	55.96%	15,369	13.9%	31.6%	2.0%	7.2%
2. New York City, NY	54.71%	2,022,564	12.7%	39.4%	3.6%	0.4%
3. Jersey City, NJ	45.34%	53,172	17.5%	22.6%	2.9%	1.1%
4. Bronxville, NY	41.33%	1,137	0.0%	3.5%	37.8%	0.0%
5. West New York, NJ	39.80%	9,001	34.3%	1.6%	0.3%	3.3%
6. Guttenberg, NJ	39.39%	2,216	34.8%	1.6%	0.2%	1.5%
7. Union City, NJ	38.35%	11,750	36.2%	1.6%	0.2%	0.1%
8. Washington, DC	37.11%	106,528	16.1%	20.3%	0.5%	0.0%
9. Chappaqua, NY	34.88%	1,508	0.0%	1.9%	33.0%	0.0%
10. Larchmont, NY	34.81%	1,069	5.2%	2.2%	27.3%	0.0%

Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

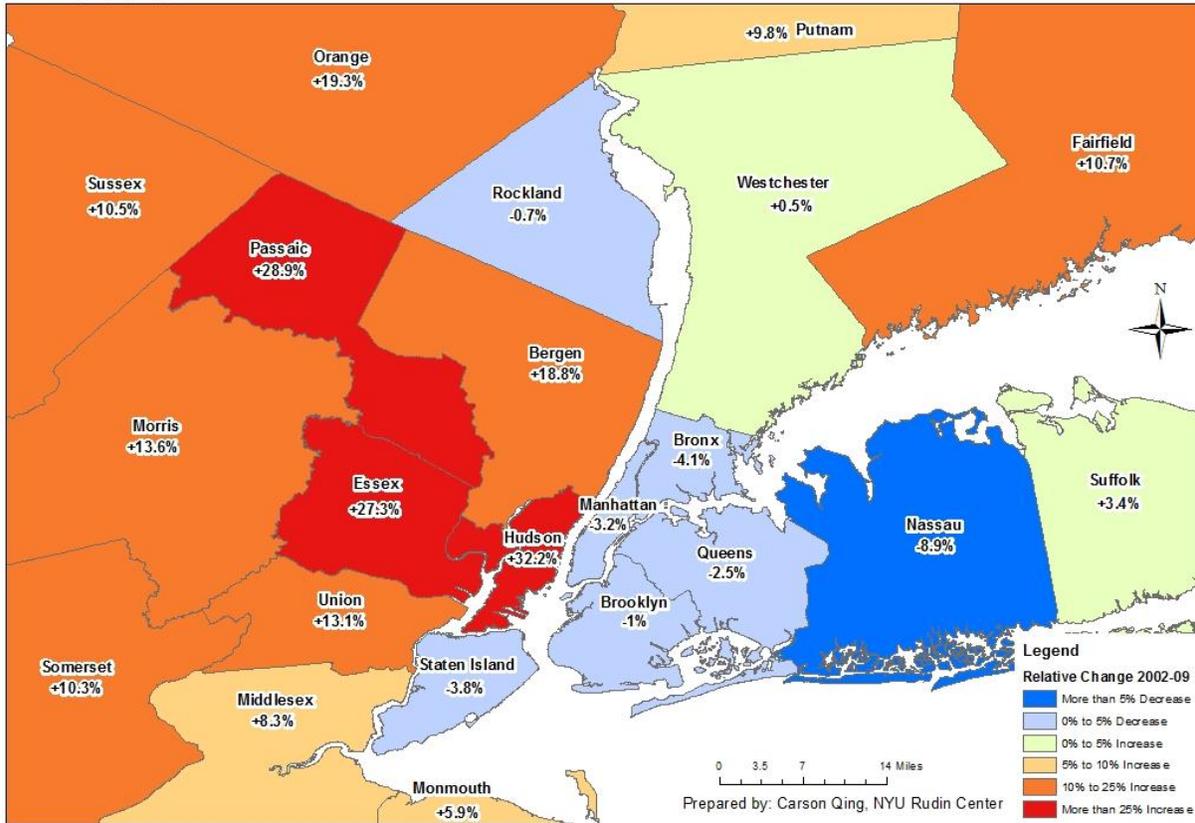
Red: Municipality in Hudson County

Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 4



Relative Percent Change in County Residents with Manhattan as Primary Work Destination, 2002-2009



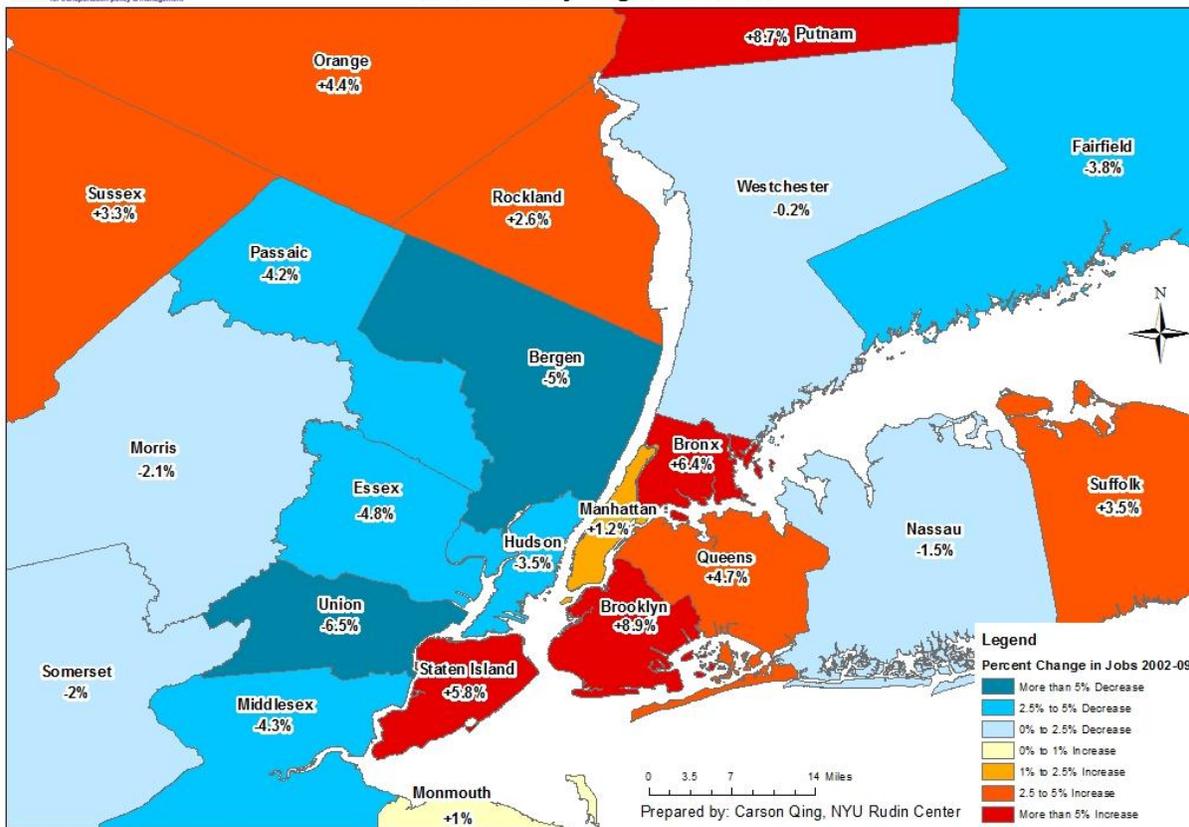
Source: US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
NOTE: Relative Percent Change represents how much more likely a county resident is a Manhattan worker in 2009 relative to 2002.

Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

FIGURE 5



Percent Change in Jobs by County in the New York City Region 2002-09



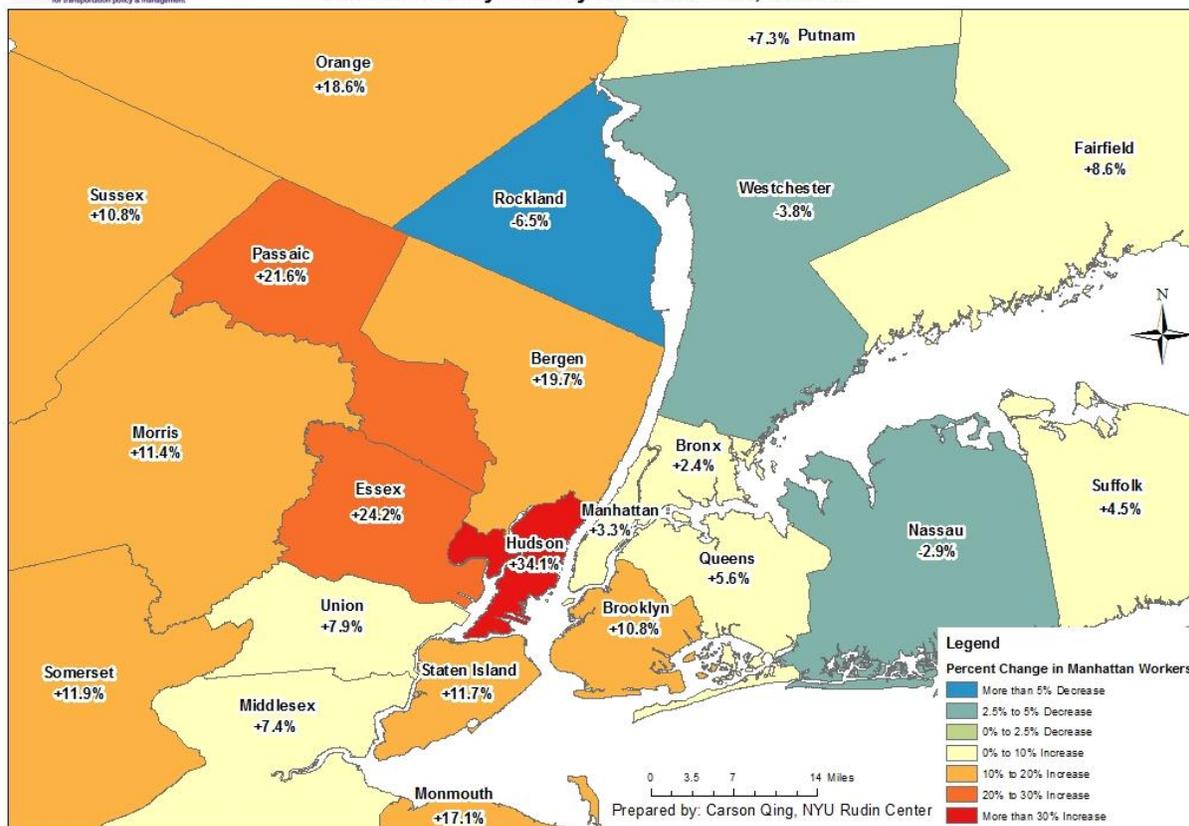
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 6



Absolute Percent Change in Share of Manhattan Commuters by County of Residence, 2002-09



Source: US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

NOTE: Absolute Percent Change represents the growth in the total number of Manhattan workers by each county of residence from 2002 to 2009

Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

FIGURE 7

**Average Annual Earnings
by Place of Work in the
New York City Region**

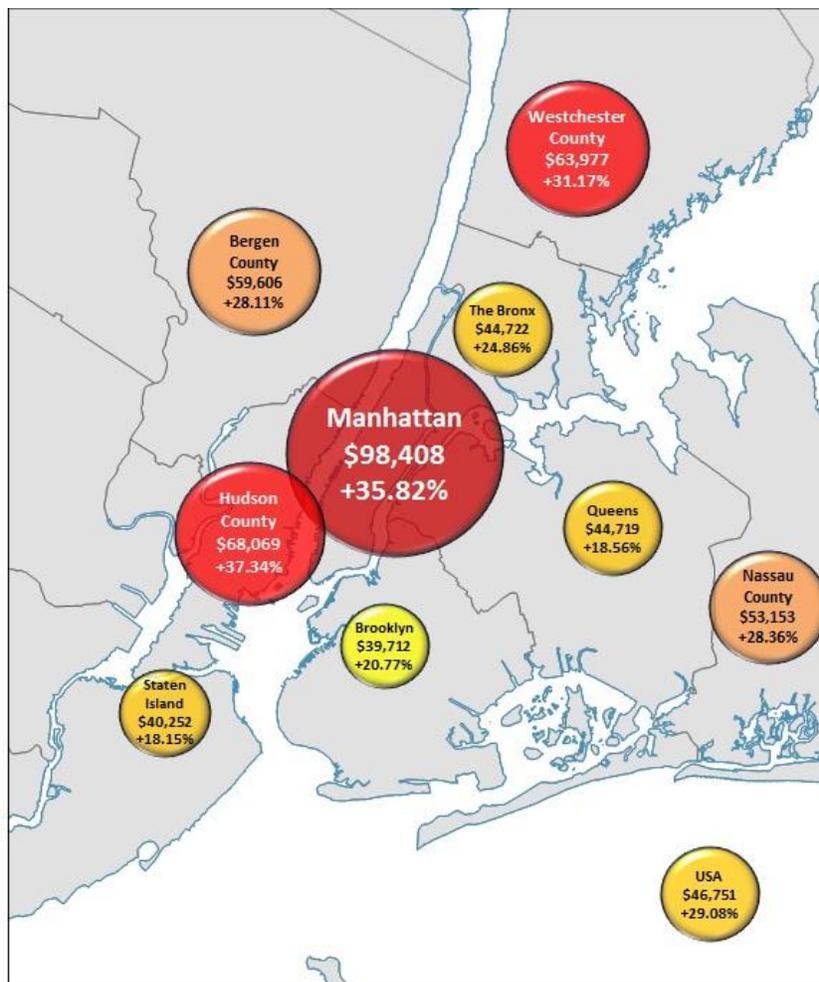


Average Annual Earnings

- More than \$70,000
- \$60,000 to \$70,000
- \$50,000 to \$60,000
- \$40,000 to \$50,000
- Less than \$40,000

NOTE: Size is proportional to average annual earnings

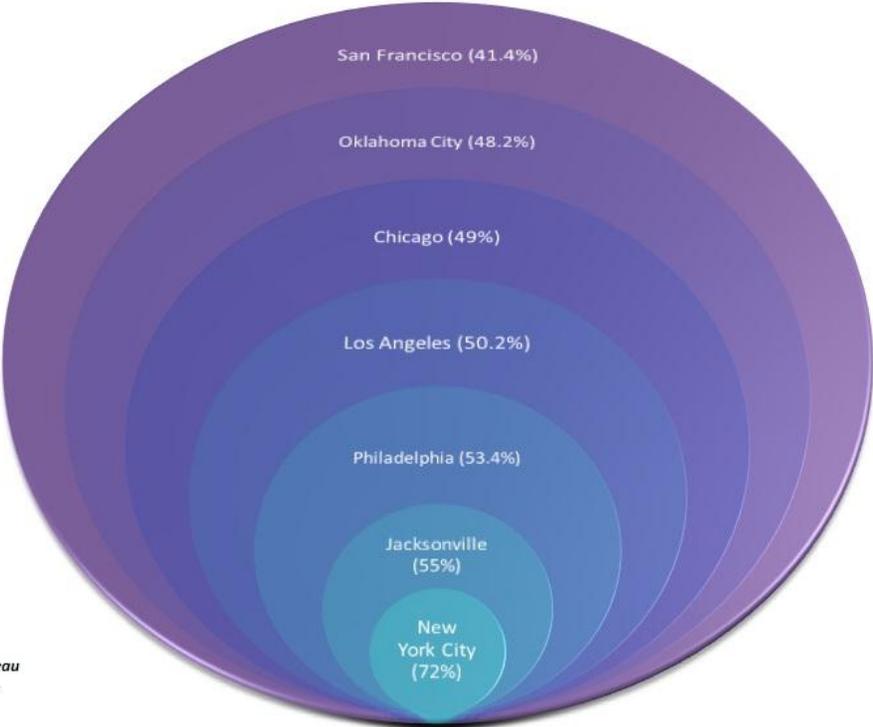
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 8

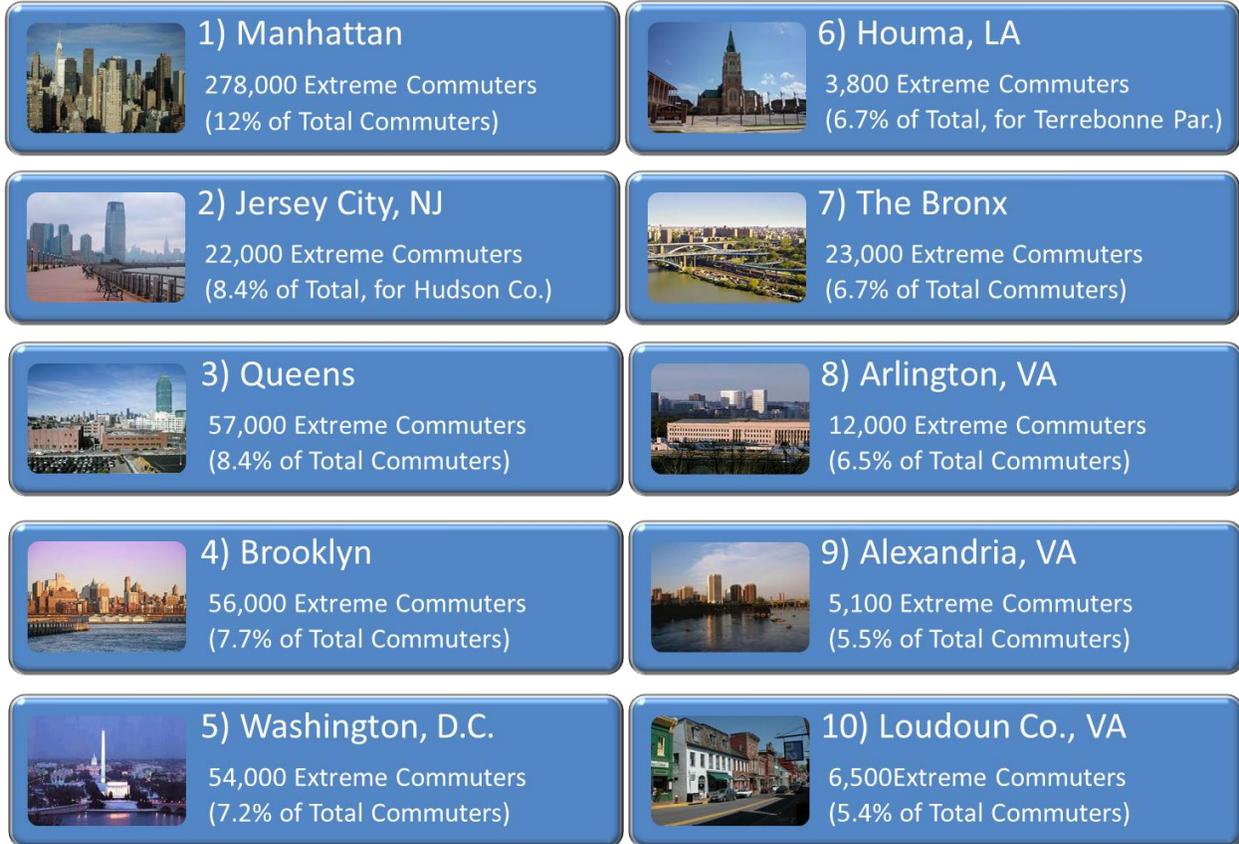
Percent of Commuters Living Within City Boundaries, 2009



Source: US Census Bureau
Longitudinal Employer-
Household Dynamics

FIGURE 9

**Top 10 Extreme Commute Destinations by County of Workplace, 2009
(90+ Minutes Each Way)**

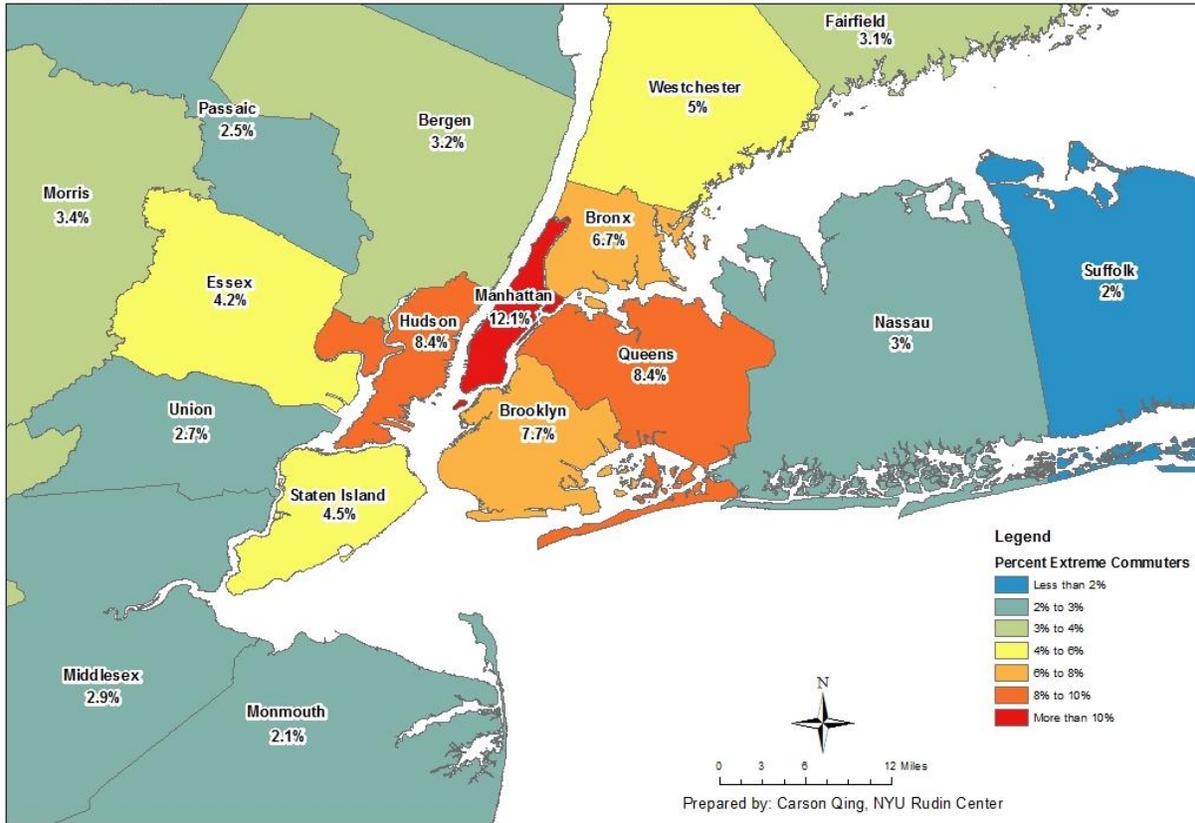


Source: 2009 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 10



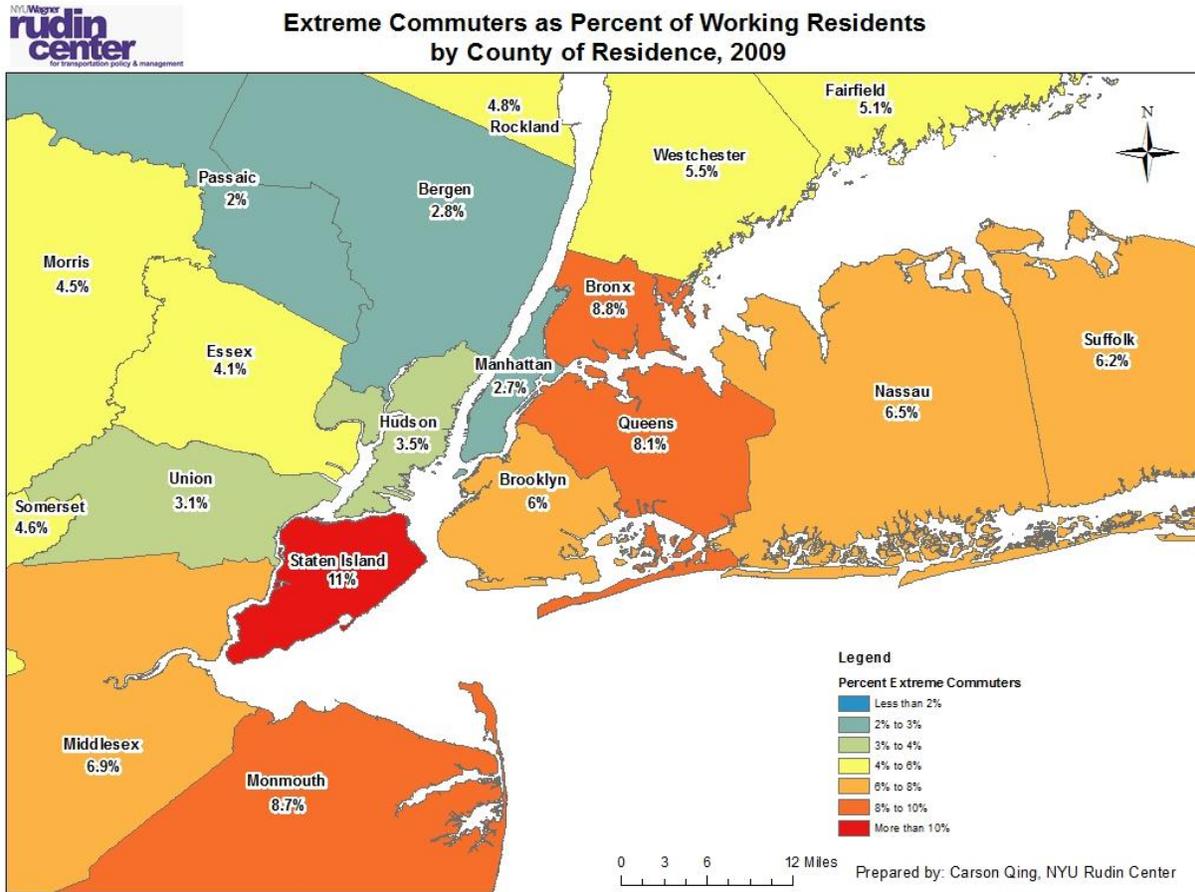
**Extreme Commuters as Percent of Workers
by Work Destination, 2009**



2009 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau
NOTE: The US Census defines an "extreme commuter" as an individual who travels 90+ minutes to work.

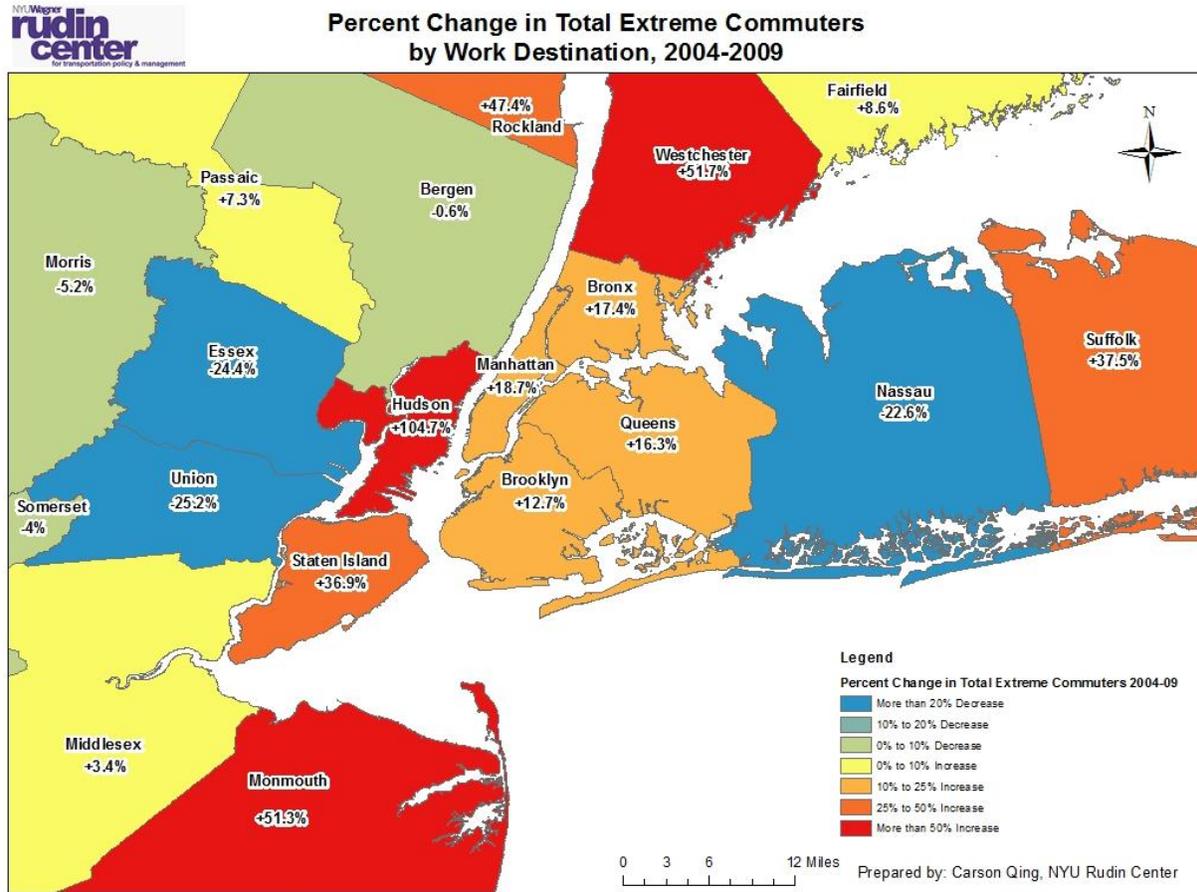
Source: 2009 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 11



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

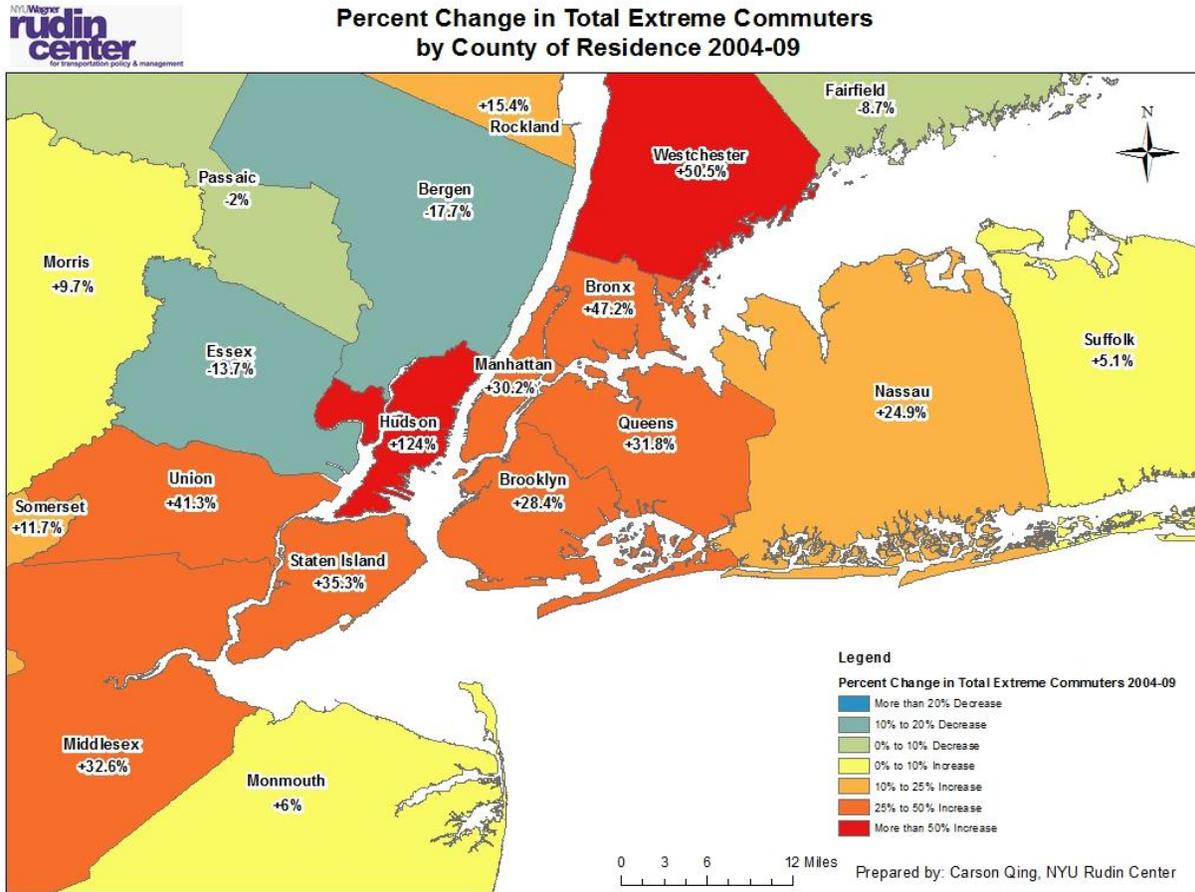
FIGURE 12



2004, 2009 American Community Surveys, US Census Bureau
 NOTE: The US Census defines an "extreme commuter" as an individual who travels 90+ minutes to work.

Source: 2004, 2009 American Community Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau

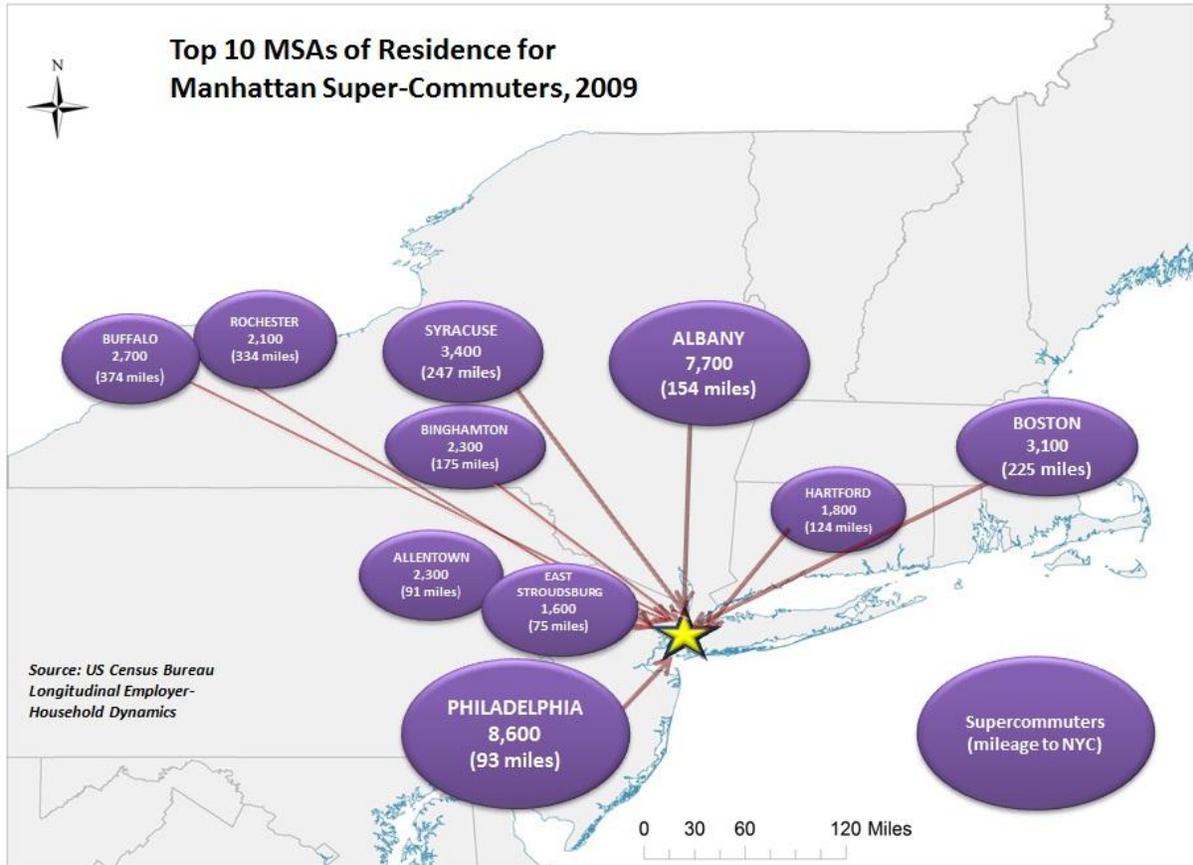
FIGURE 13



Source: 2004, 2009 American Community Surveys, US Census Bureau
 NOTE: The US Census defines an "extreme commuter" as an individual who travels 90+ minutes to work.

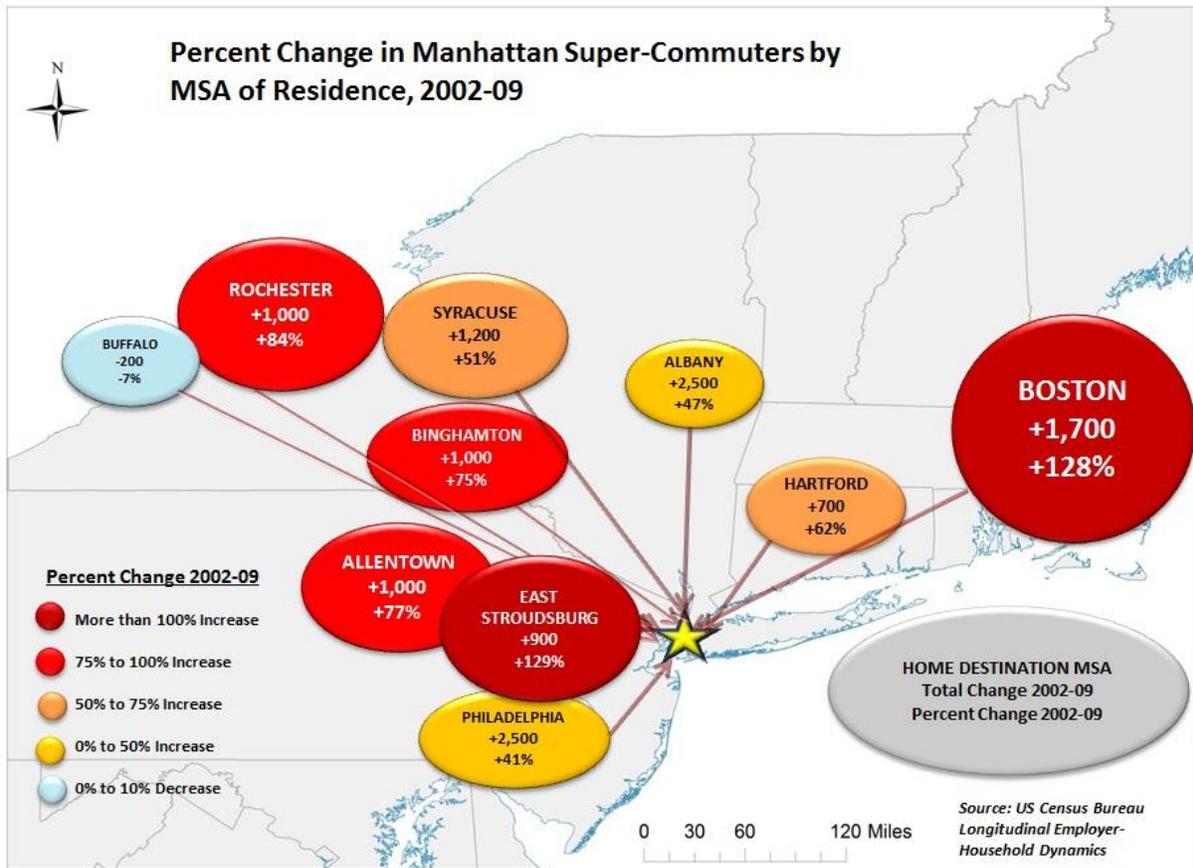
Source: 2004, 2009 American Community Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 14



Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

FIGURE 15



Source: U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

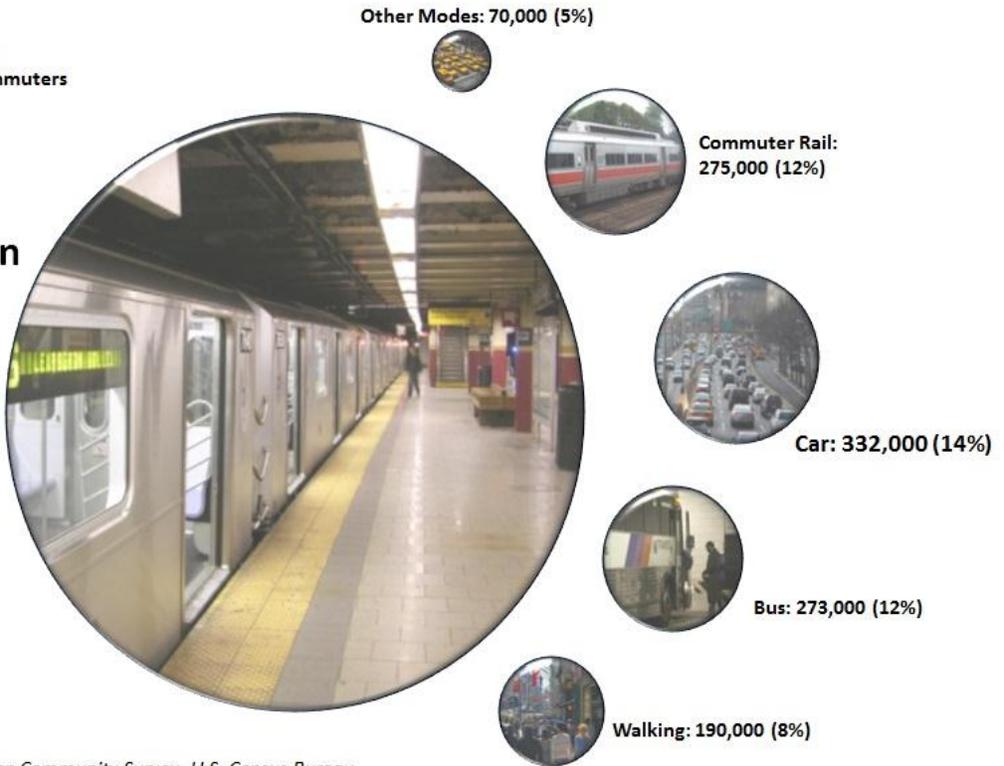
FIGURE 16

HOW MANHATTAN COMMUTERS TRAVEL TO WORK, 2009

*NOTE: Symbols are sized proportionally

LEGEND
Mode of Commuting
Total Number of Commuters
(Percent of Total)

**Subway:
1.15 million
(49%)**

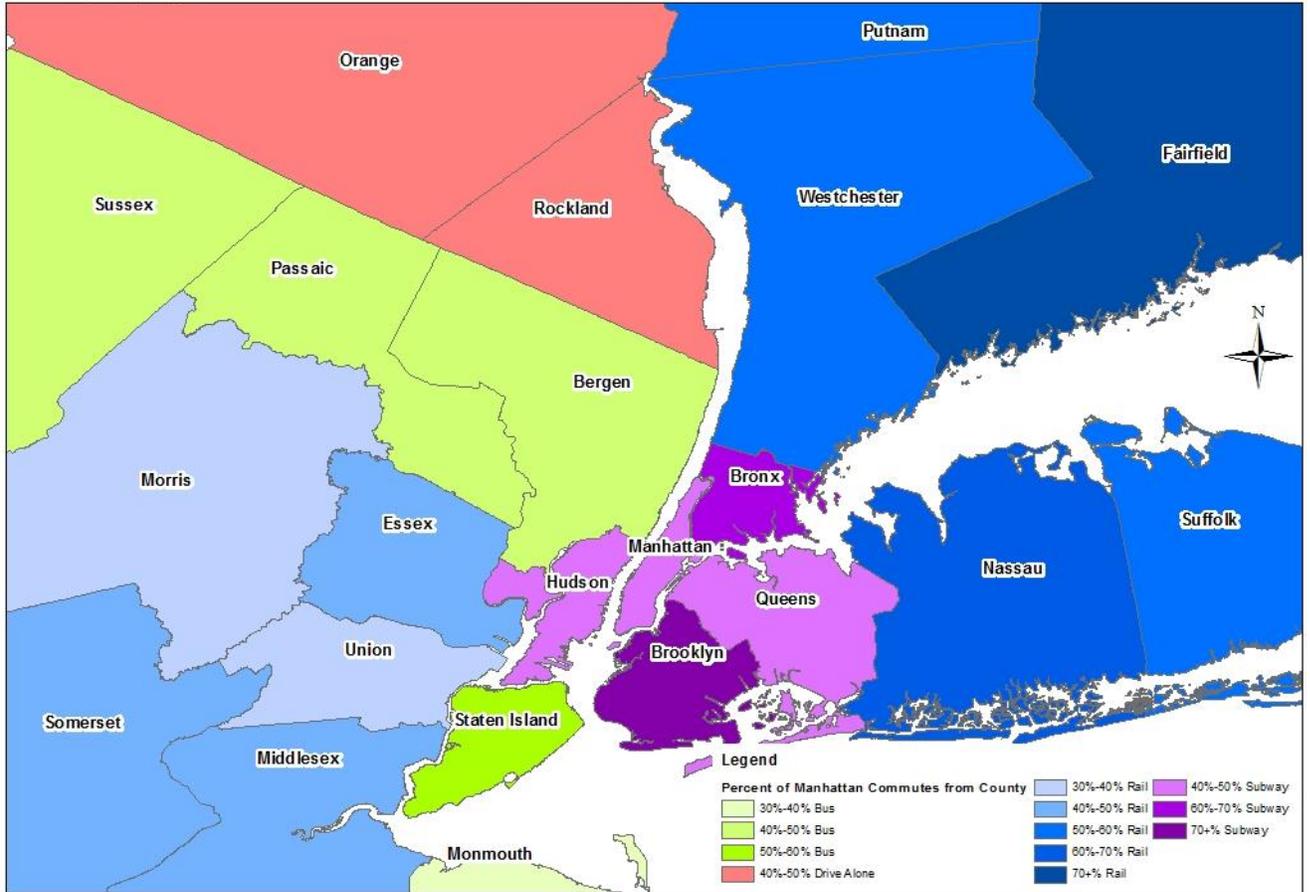


Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

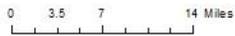
FIGURE 17



Top Primary Mode of Commuting for Manhattan Workers by County of Residence, 2008



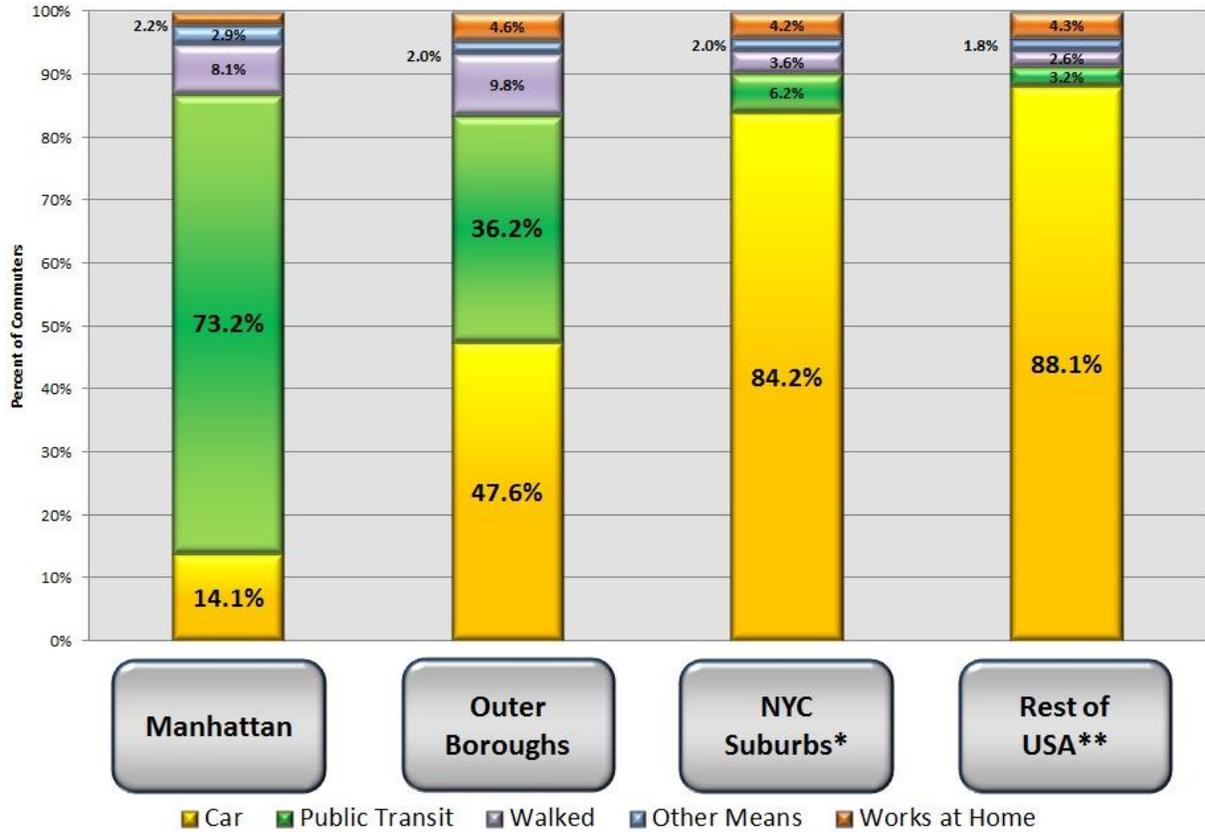
Source: US Census Transportation Planning Package, 2008



Prepared by: Carson Qing, NYU Rudin Center

FIGURE 18

Commuting Modal Split by Workplace Geography, 2009



Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

*NYC Suburbs include Northern New Jersey, the Lower Hudson Valley inc. Westchester, Rockland, Putnam counties, and Long Island

**The rest of the USA includes everywhere outside the New York City-Northern New Jersey-Long Island Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

FIGURE 19

Average Travel Time of Work by Mode of Commuting to Manhattan, 2009



Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 20

**Top 3 Industries of Employment by Percent of Workers
Commuting to Manhattan by Mode of Transport, 2009**

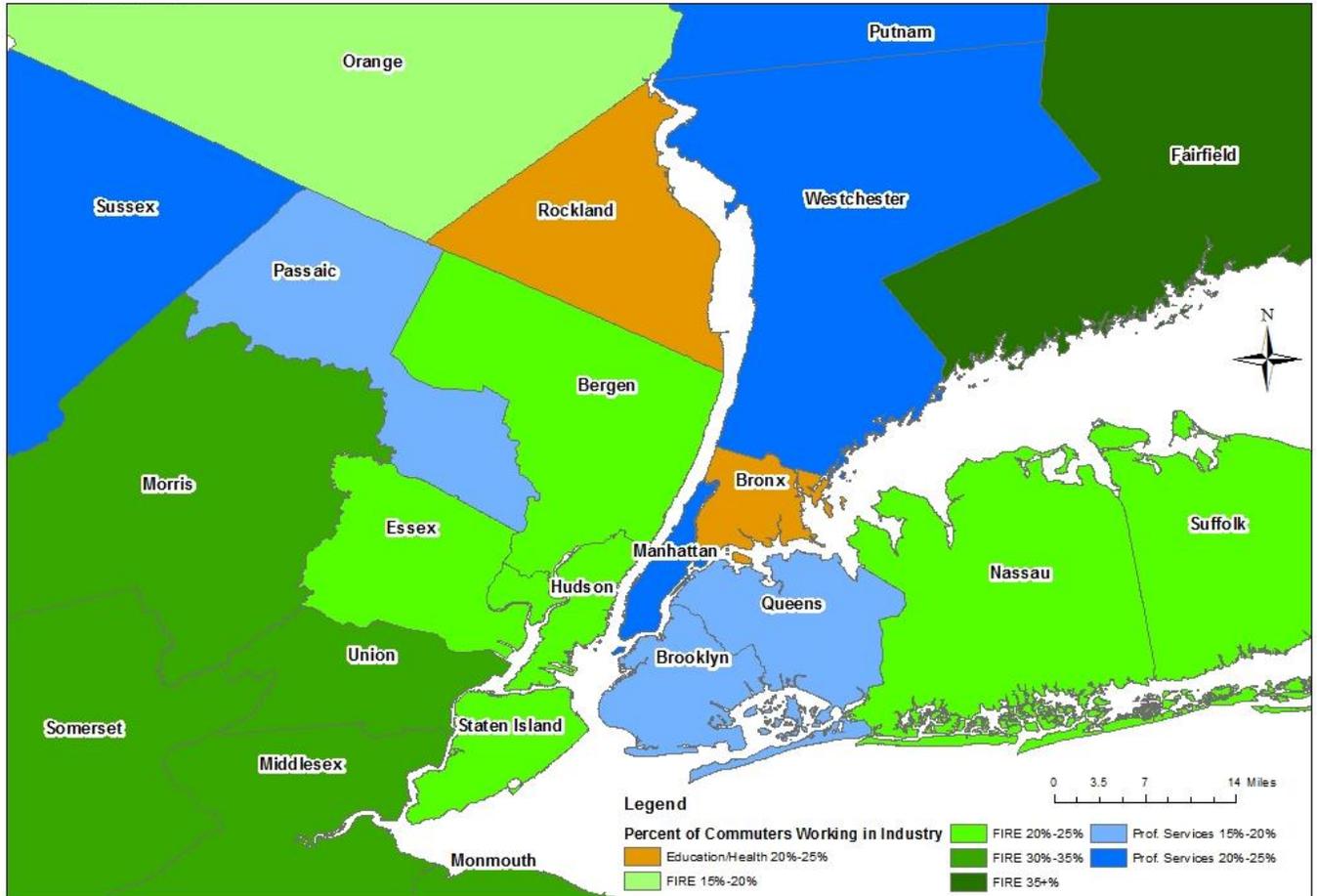
 Drive Alone	 32%	 24%	 23%
 Public Transit	 78%	 77%	 76%
 Walked	 12%	 10%	 9%
 Taxi/Bike	 4.2%	 3.1%	 3.0%
 Work at Home	 3.3%	 3.1%	 3.1%

Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

FIGURE 21



Manhattan Commuters by Industry and County of Residence, 2009



NOTES: Represents plurality of commuters by industry from county. FIRE: Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate
 Source: US Census Transportation Planning Package, 2008

Prepared by: Carson Qing, NYU Rudin Center

Industry Definitions:

“FIRE” Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

“Professional and Business Services”

The U.S. Census Bureau uses this broad category to classify workers in fields such as law, accounting, architecture and design, engineering, computer programming, science/pharmacy, administration, security, and waste management.