Travis County snapshot from american community survey 2012

2013

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Acknowledgements

This report was researched and written by the staff at the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service, Research & Planning Division. Lead writers were Lori Axler Miranda, Tara Carmean, and Elizabeth Vela, with the support of other division staff, Blanca Tapia Leahy (Division Director), and Sherri E. Fleming (County Executive for Travis County HHS/VS).

Questions or Comments?

For questions or for more information, please contact the Research & Planning Division at HHS_R&P@co.travis.tx.us.

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About the Chartbook

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is one of many surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It includes questions about social, housing, and economic characteristics. While many available data sources address these subjects, the Research & Planning Division has increasingly relied on the ACS as a primary resource to describe current demographics and local conditions. Compared to the more widely-known Decennial Census, which is conducted every 10 years, the ACS is conducted on an ongoing basis and releases data annually. Thus it can provide more up-to-date information, particularly for communities undergoing rapid demographic change. (For more on the ACS, please see the Methodology section at the end of this chartbook.)

About the Chartbook

All of the information contained herein is publicly available via the U.S. Census Bureau's website. However, due to time constraints or technical limitations, it may sometimes be difficult for users to access, analyze, and interpret needed data. By selecting key variables from among the many available, analyzing the data for important relationships and trends, and presenting it in the chartbook in clear, accessible visual format, our goal is to provide current information describing the Travis County community.

Because the data presented in the chartbook is representative of a sample and not the entire population, some of the smaller estimates are affected by sampling error[1] and are therefore unreliable. Similarly, comparisons of indicators between geographies or across time periods may appear significant, but are not. Therefore, we perform testing of estimates that appear unreliable and any comparisons that are explicitly made between geographies or across time periods. (For more information on statistical testing, see the Methodology section at the end of this chartbook.)

We hope this information is helpful in efforts to improve programs, plan community investments, and shape local policies. We encourage users to borrow and cite this material.

1 Sampling error is the difference between the characteristics of a sample and the population from which it was drawn.

Social Characteristics

Age 6

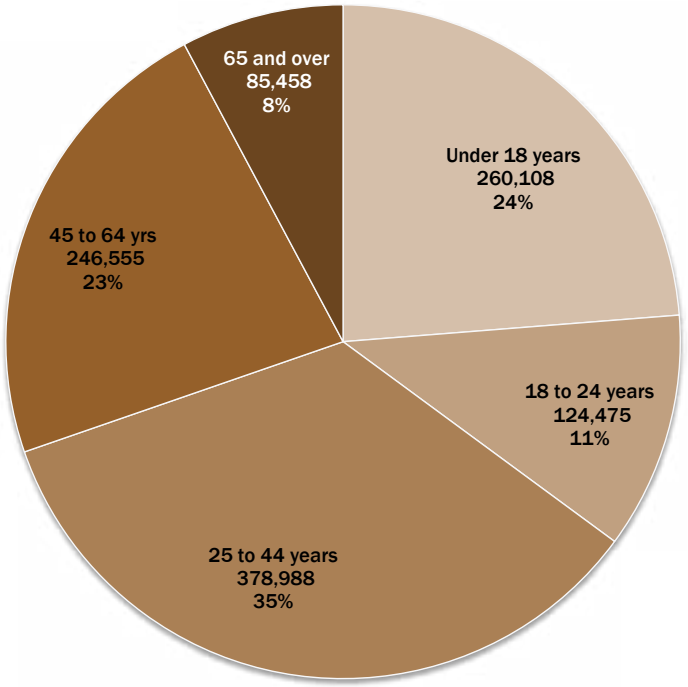
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Age



Note: Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B01001

Age Distribution: Age distribution in Travis County continues to be characterized by a large working age population (18-64). Working age adults comprise about 68% of the county's population. In comparison, the 18-64 year old age group comprises 62% of the Texas population and 63% of the U.S. population.

Median Age: The median age in Travis County is 32.5. This reflects a slightly younger population than that of Texas (33.9) and the United States as a whole (37.4).

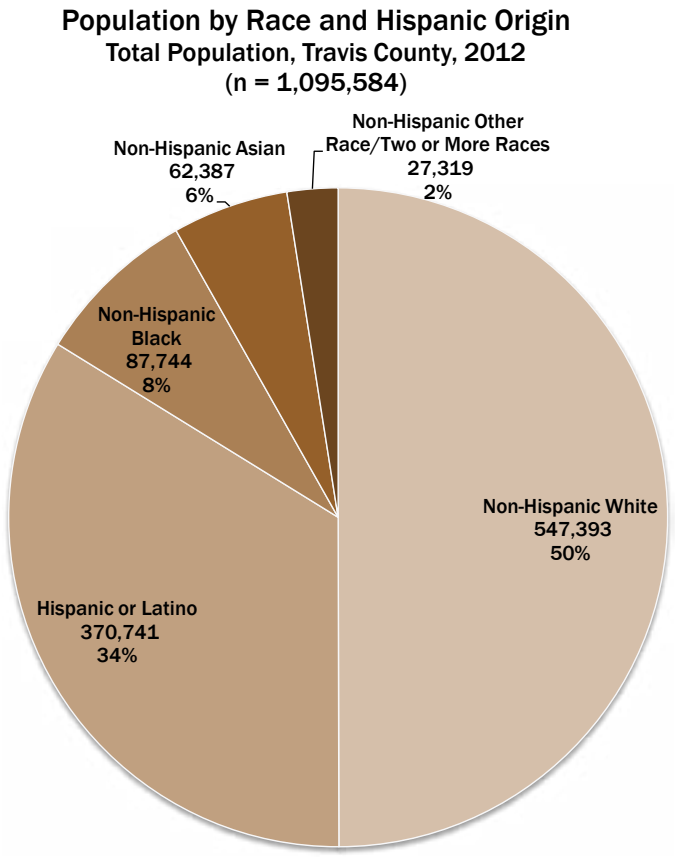
Trends to Watch: Since 2007, the Travis County total population has grown by 12% compared to 9% statewide and 4% nationally.

Growth in Population by Age, Travis County, 2007 and 2012

	2007	2012	Growth	Percent Change
Under 18	243,609	260,108	16,499	7%
18 to 24	114,423	124,475	10,052	9%
25 to 44	337,371	378,988	41,617	12%
45 to 64	214,252	246,555	32,303	15%
65 and over	64,710	85,458	20,748	32%
Total	974,365	1,095,584	121,219	12%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013 Source data: 2007 & 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B01001

Race and Hispanic Origin



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013.
Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B03002

Race and Hispanic Origin: One-half of the Travis County population identifies as Non-Hispanic White (50%) followed by Hispanic or Latino (34%), Non-Hispanic Black (8%) and Non-Hispanic Asian (6%).

Trends to Watch: In noting trends since 2007, Hispanics have increased as a proportion of Travis County's population (from 32% in 2007 to 34% in 2012), while the proportion of Non-Hispanic Whites has decreased (from 52% in 2007 to 50% in 2012).[1]

Geographic Comparison: The table below provides a comparison of the racial and ethnic composition of Travis County, Texas and the U.S.

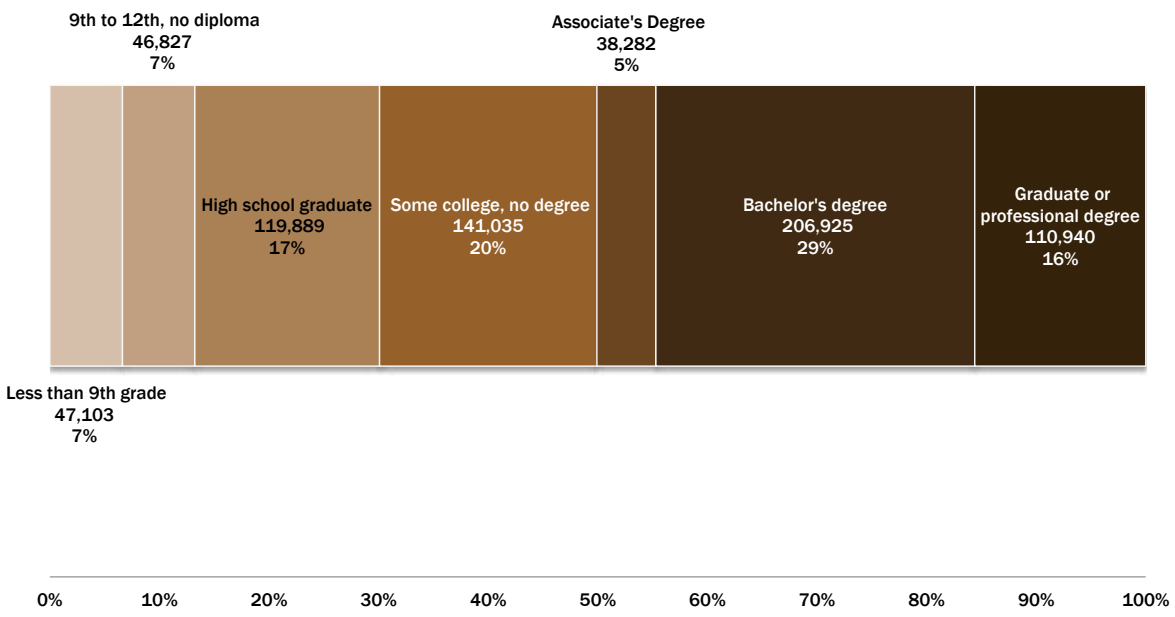
Population by Race and Hispanic Origin
Travis County, Texas & U.S., 2012

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Non-Hispanic White	50%	44%	63%
Hispanic or Latino	34%	38%	17%
Non-Hispanic Black	8%	12%	12%
Non-Hispanic Asian	6%	4%	5%
Non-Hispanic Other Race/Two or More Races	2%	2%	3%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2013 Source: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B03002

1 A statistical test for sampling variability was not appropriate for changes over time or geographic comparison due to use of a controlled estimate. For more information on controlled estimates, please refer to http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2012.pdf

Educational Attainment



Note: Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B15002

Educational Attainment Level: Travis County continues to have a highly educated population. In comparison to state figures, proportionately more Travis County residents have a college degree, and fewer lack a high school diploma.

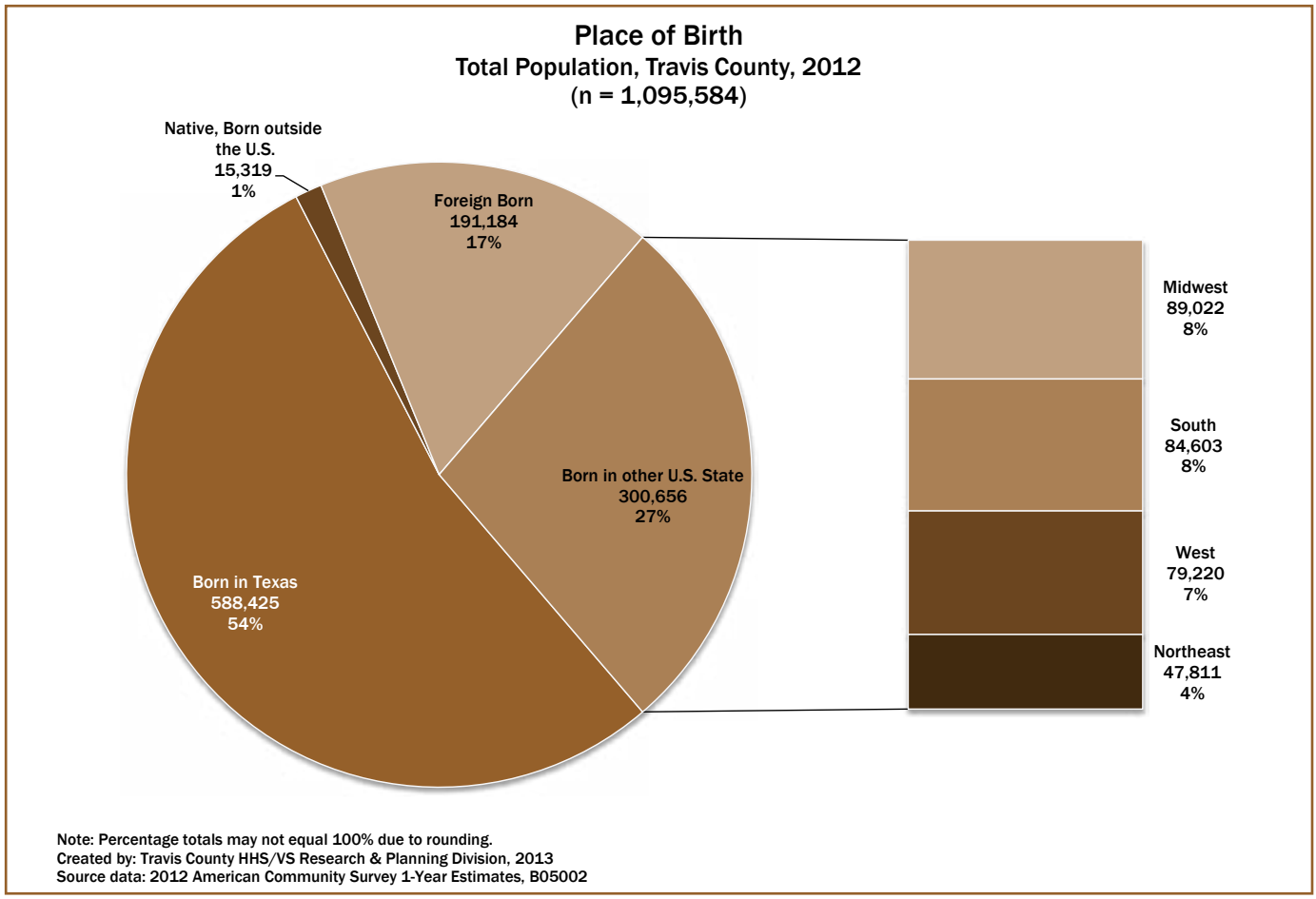
- 45% of Travis County residents have Bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 27% of Texans and 29% of Americans.

- 13% of Travis County residents report having less than a high school diploma or equivalency compared with 19% of Texans and 14% of Americans.

College or Graduate School Enrollment[2]: About 13% of Travis County's population is enrolled in college or graduate school. This compares with about 9% of the Texas population and 9% of the U.S. population.

2 These statistics include individuals enrolled in school which advances a person toward a college, university or professional school (law or medicine) degree. They do not include people enrolled in vocational, technical, or business school. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 115)

Place of Birth



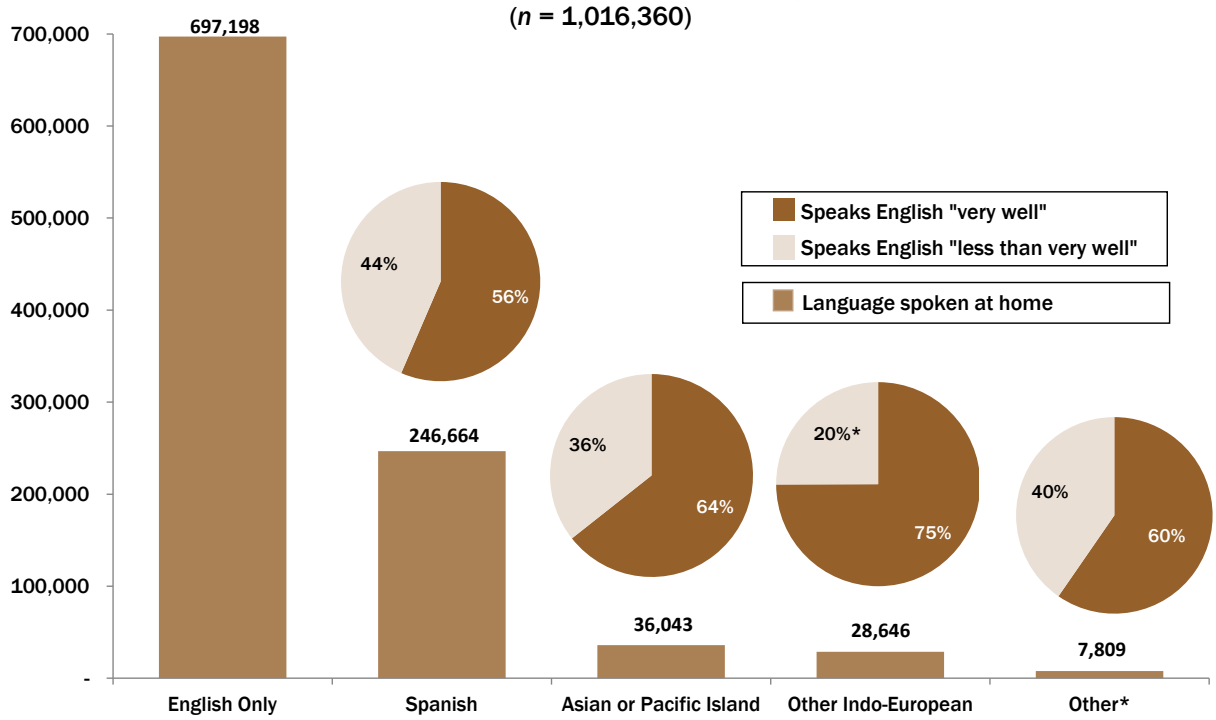
Place of Birth for the Travis County Population: About one-half of Travis County residents (54%) were born in Texas, roughly one-quarter (27%) were born in another state and about 17% of residents are foreign born.

Geographic Comparison: In comparison to state and national averages, Travis County residents are:

- *Less likely to have been born in their current state of residence*. 54% of Travis County residents were born in their state of residence compared with 61% of Texans and 59% of Americans.

- *More likely to be foreign born.* 17% of Travis County residents are foreign born compared with 16% of Texans and 13% of Americans. However, Travis County has a proportionately smaller foreign born population than both Dallas and Harris Counties where immigrants comprise 23% and 25% of the population, respectively.[3]

3 A statistical test for sampling variability was not appropriate for geographic comparison due to use of a controlled estimate. For more information on controlled estimates, please refer to http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2012.pdf



Languages Spoken at Home: Almost one-third of the Travis County population (31% or 319,162 residents) speaks a language other than English at home. In comparison, 21% of U.S. residents and 35% of Texans speak a language other than English at home.

Ability to Speak English: 59% of Travis County residents who speak a language other than English at home also speak the English language "very well;" about 41% speak English "less than very well."

Linguistic Isolation: 7% of all Travis County households (27,872 households) are linguistically isolated.[4] 81% of linguistically isolated households speak Spanish (22,521 households) and 11% of linguistically isolated households speak Asian and Pacific languages (3,101 households).[5]

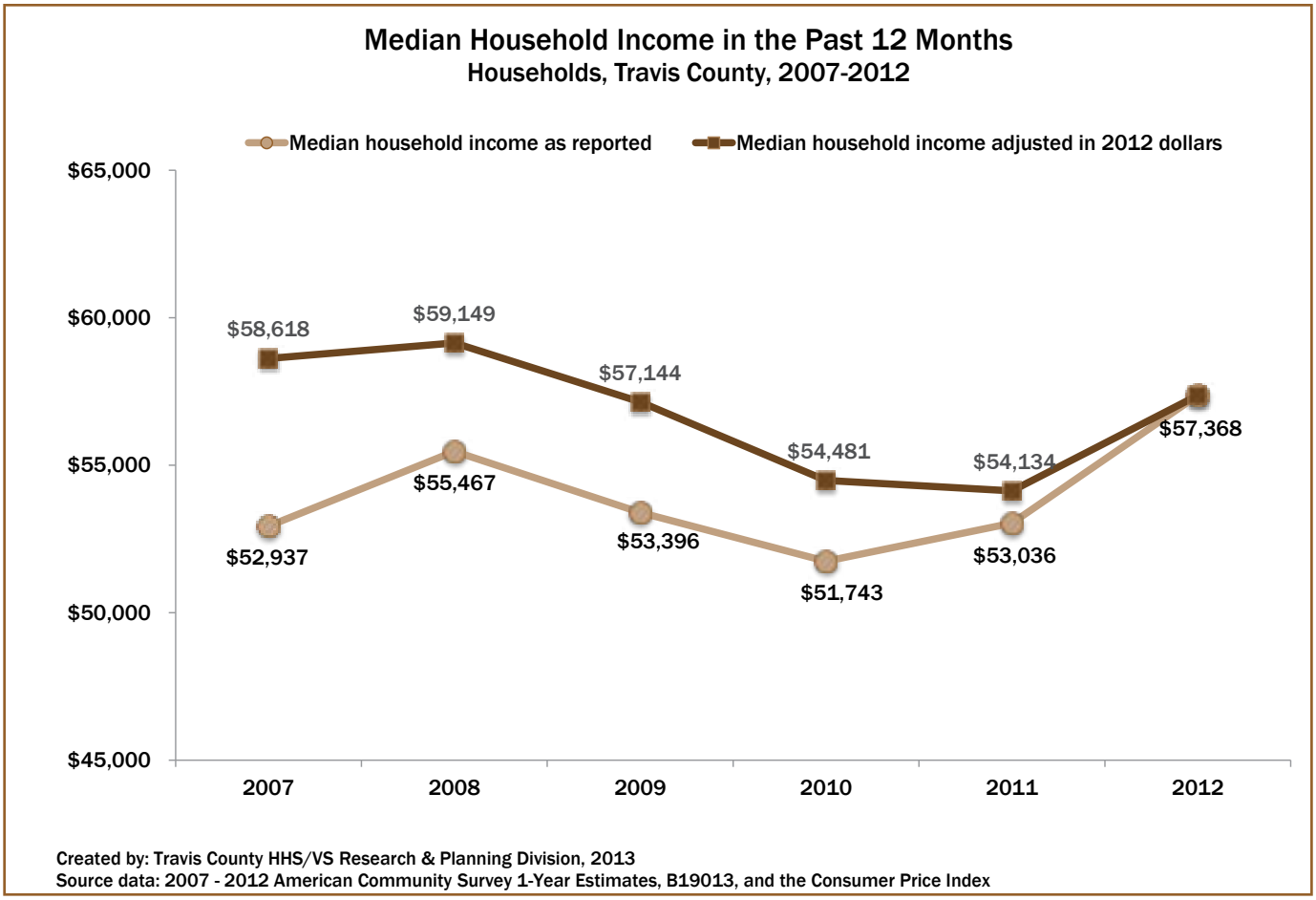
4 A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member 14 years old and over (1) speaks only English or (2) speaks a non-English language and speaks English "very well." In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with the English language. (American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 45). Please note that the American Community Survey did not use the phrase "Linguistic Isolation" in the 2012 1-year estimates. It is included here because the authors believe it is helpful terminology for the purposes of this publication and its intended uses in social services planning.

5 This estimate is not reliable at a 90% confidence interval.

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Median Household Income



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: 2007 - 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B19013, and the Consumer Price Index

Median Household Income[6]: Reported median income increased between 2011 and 2012 by more than $4,300. While reported median household income has increased in the past two years, the actual value of Travis County's median household income[7] (indicated by the top line on the chart above) is still below that of 2007.

Geographic Comparison: Median household income is higher in Travis County than in the U.S. and Texas.

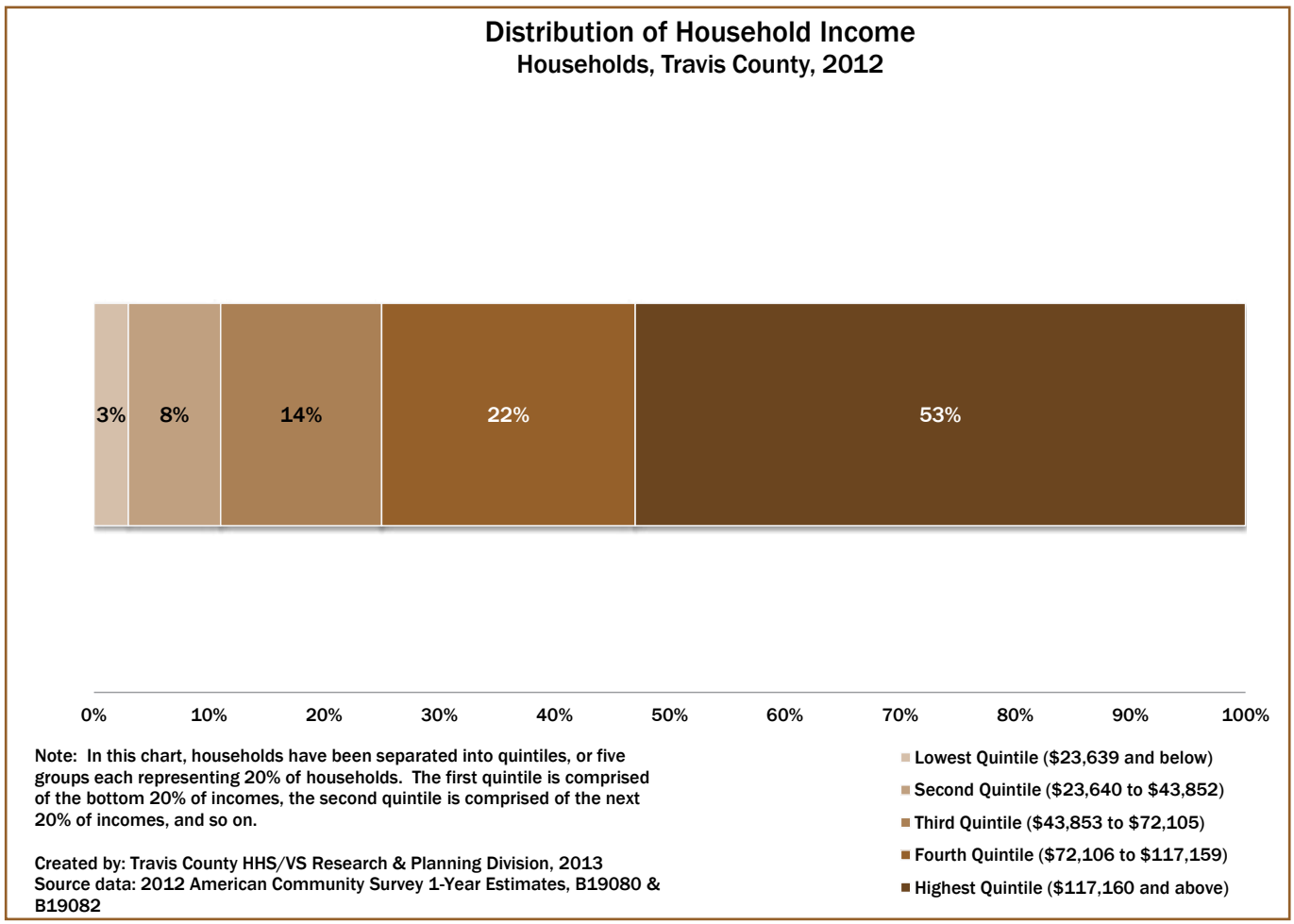
Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months
Households, Travis County, Texas and U.S., 2007 and 2012

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Median Household Income 2007 (in 2012 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)	$58,618	$52,651	$56,185
Median Household Income 2012	$57,368	$50,740	$51,371
Percent Change between 2007 and 2012	-2%	-4%	-9%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013 Source data: American Community Survey 2007 & 2012 1-Year Estimates, B19013, and the Consumer Price Index

6 The ACS asks respondents how much was earned during the past 12 months. Consequently, a person answering the questions in December 2012 would respond based on income earned between December 2011 and November 2012.
7 Inflation adjustment calculation based on Consumer Price Index at: ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiai.txt.

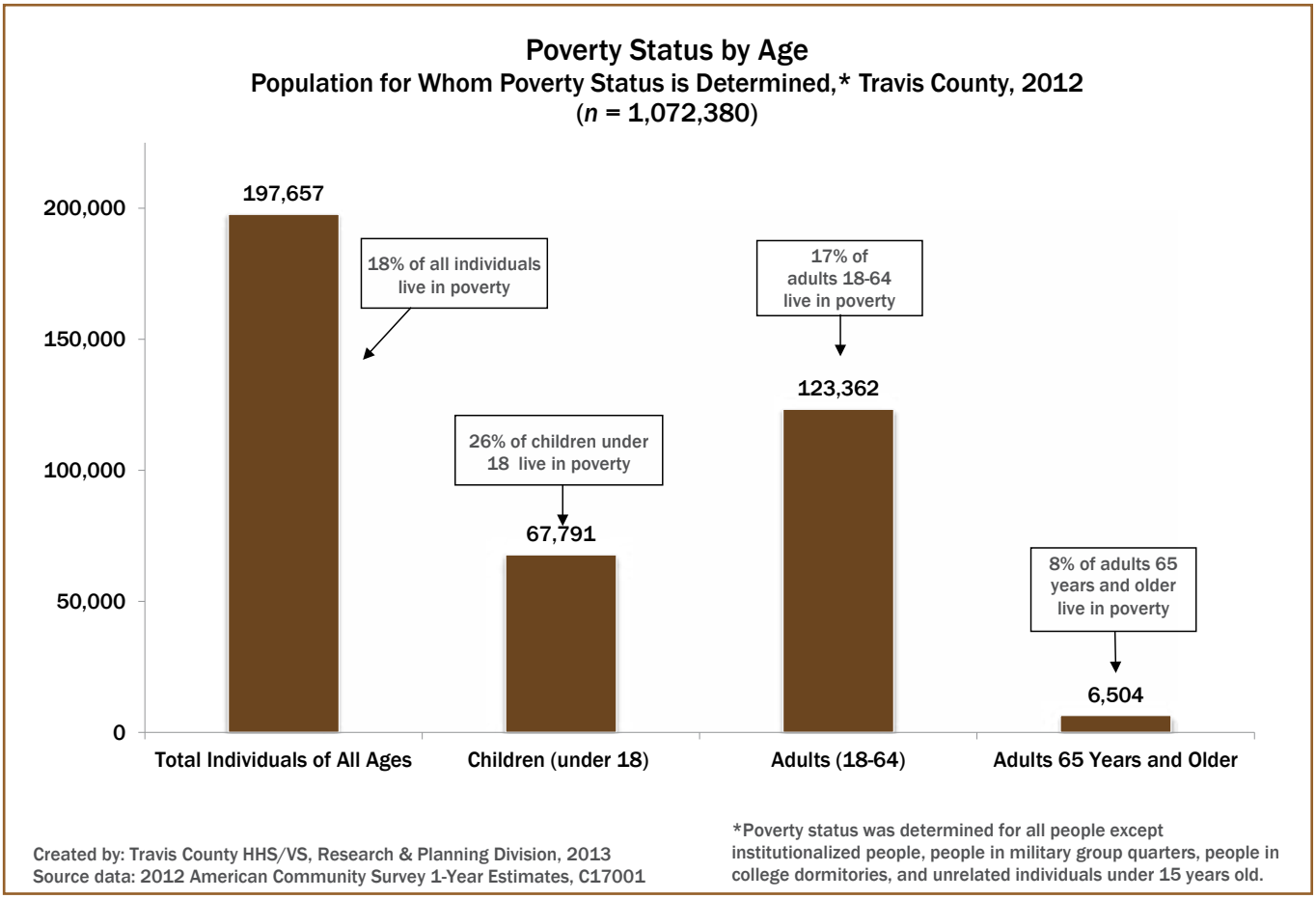
Household Income Distribution



To assess household income distribution, we have separated households into quintiles[8] (five groups, each representing 20% of households). The bottom 20% of households represent about 3% of the county's income, while the top 20% of households represent over half of the county's income (53%).

Geographic Comparison: The distribution of household income by quintile is nearly the same in Travis County, Texas as a whole and the U.S. However, the upper limits of each household income quintile are higher for Travis County than for those of the U.S. and Texas.

8 For shares of household income by quintiles, negative incomes are converted to zero. These measures are the aggregate household income in each quintile as a percentage of the total aggregate income. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 81.)



Just under one-fifth of all Travis County residents (18%) are living in poverty.[9] More than one-quarter (26%) of children under 18 are living in poverty in Travis County.

Poverty Status by Age
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined, Travis County, 2007-2012

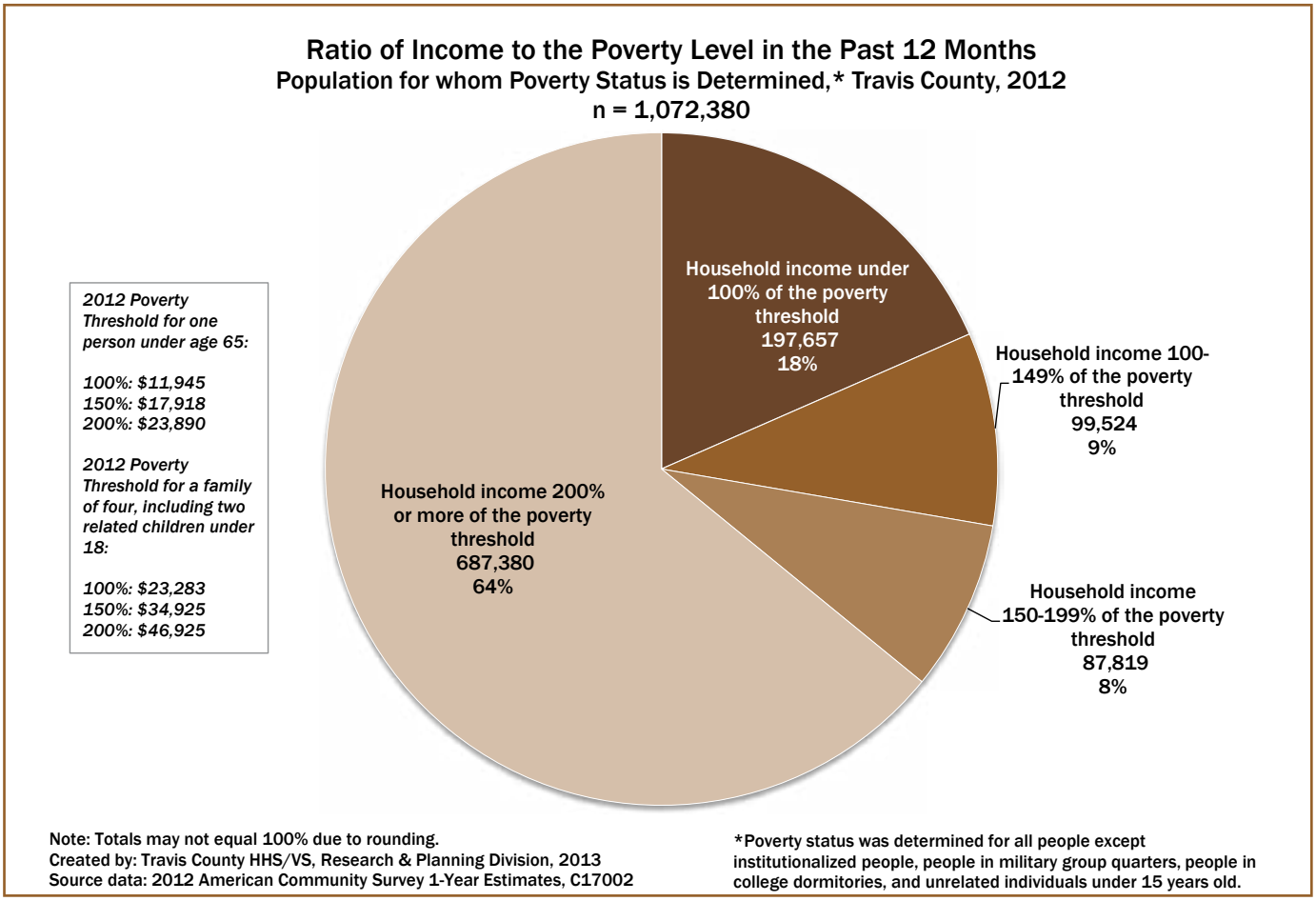
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Individuals in Poverty	141,223	144,336	163,630	194,156	192,436	197,657
Individual Poverty Rate	15%	15%	16%	19%	18%	18%
Children (under 18) in Poverty	45,214	47,723	56,690	62,168	63,680	67,791
Child Poverty Rate	19%	19%	23%	25%	25%	26%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2013 Source data: American Community Survey 2007-2012 1-Year Estimates, C17001

Geographic Comparison: The proportion of persons of all ages living in poverty is the same in Travis County (18%) and the state of Texas (18%) and slightly higher than that of the U.S. (16%).

9 The 2012 poverty thresholds define poverty for an individual under the age of 65 at $11, 945 in annual income and for a family of four including two children under 18 at $23,283 in annual income. The Census Bureau uses poverty thresholds as denoted in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14 as described on the Census Bureau's website at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html. The thresholds consider family size and composition when determining whether an individual is living in poverty and can be found at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html.

Income to Poverty Ratio



In Travis County an estimated 197,657 individuals (18% of the total population) live in households with incomes below the poverty threshold.[10] More than one-third (36%) of Travis County residents, or an estimated 385,000 individuals, live at or below 200% of the poverty threshold.

Geographic Comparison: The table below shows the ratios of income to poverty in Travis County, Texas, and the nation as a whole.

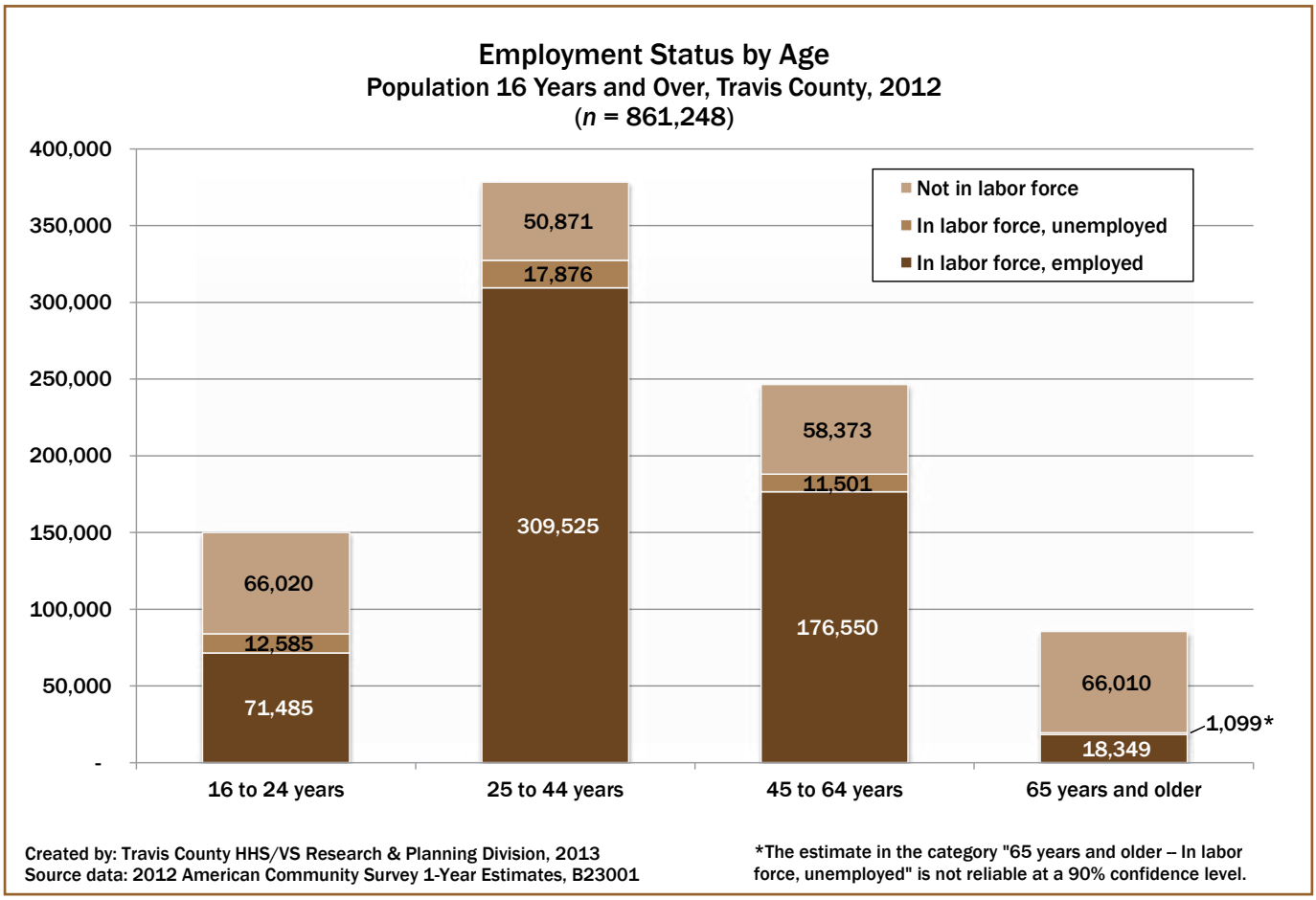
Ratio of Income to the Poverty Level in the Past 12 months
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined, Travis County, Texas, and U.S., 2012

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Income < 100% of the poverty threshold	18%	18%	16%
Income 100%-199% of the poverty threshold	17%	21%	19%
Income 200% or more of the poverty threshold	64%*	61%	65%*

*The difference between these rates is not statistically significant at a 90% confidence level.
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2013 Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B17002

10 The Census Bureau uses poverty thresholds as denoted in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14 as described on the Census Bureau's website at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html. The thresholds consider family size and composition when determining whether an individual is living in poverty and can be found at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html.

Employment and Age



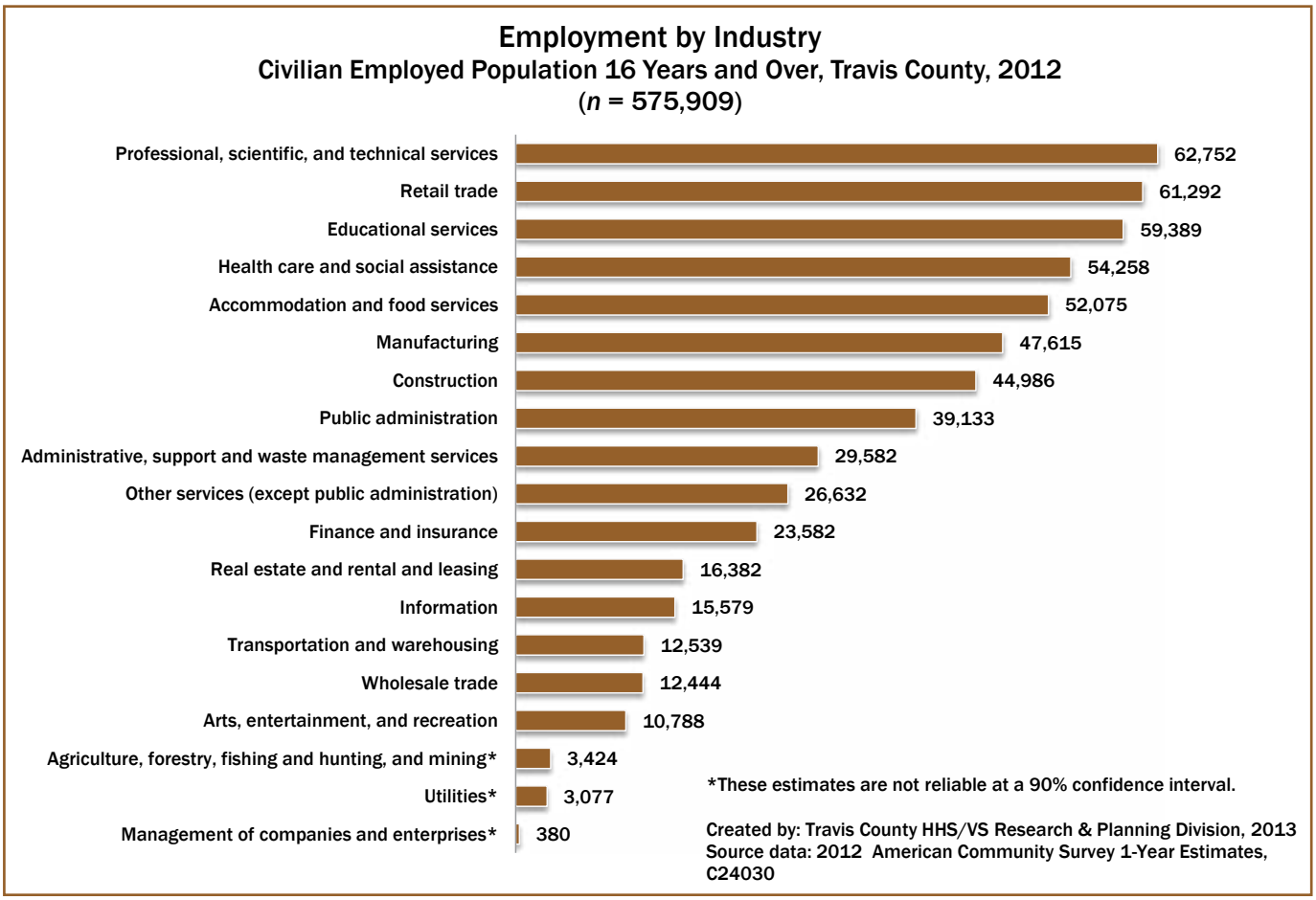
Travis County's Labor Force: In total, 72% of Travis County's population age 16 and over (about 620,000 people) is in the labor force. Approximately 43,000 of them are unemployed, according to 2012 data. This figure represents a drop in both number and proportion of unemployed in 2011.

Labor Force by Age: Individuals between the ages of 25 and 44 constitute the majority (53%) of Travis County's labor force. The 45 to 64 age group comprises 30% of the labor force, followed by the 16 to 24 age group (14%), and finally those 65 years and older (3%).

Unemployment by Age: Travis County's overall unemployment rate (which is the percent unemployed of those in the labor force) was 7% in 2012, down from 8% in 2011. By age, the unemployment rate is highest, at 15%, for those 16 to 24 years old; 6% for those 45 to 64 years old ; and 5% for those 25 to 44 years old.[11]

11 Due to sampling error, the unemployment rate of those in the "65 years and over" category, reported at 6% in 2012, is unreliable at a 90% confidence level.

Employment by Industry

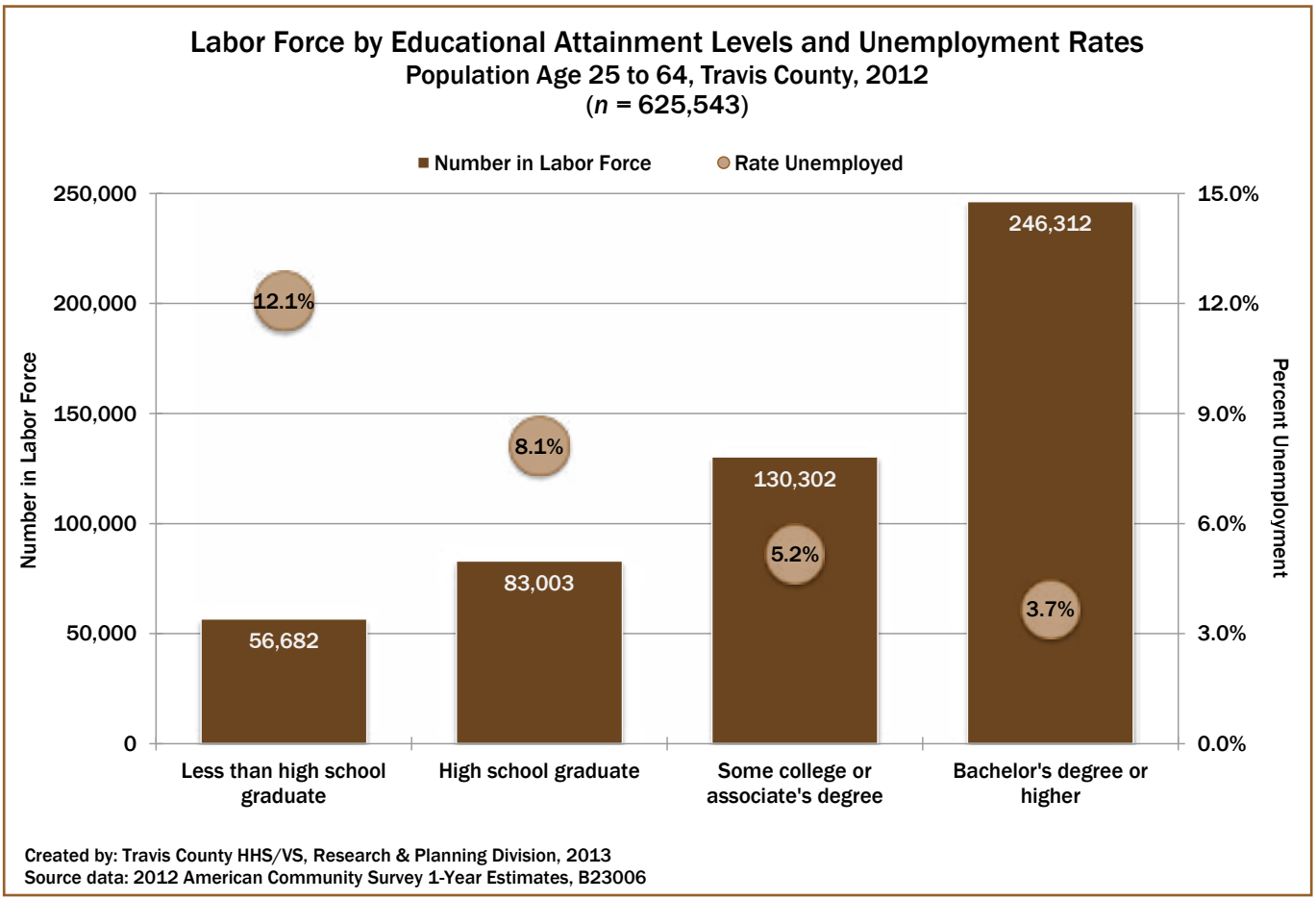


One-half (50%) of Travis County's civilian employed population age 16 and over is employed in the following five industries: accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, educational services, retail trade, and professional/scientific/technical services.

Geographic Comparison: In general, proportions of Travis County workers by industry are similar to those of other major metropolitan counties in Texas as well as the nation and the state as a whole.[12] Some notable differences in Travis County include a slightly higher proportion of workers in professional/scientific and technical services and a slightly lower proportion of workers in transportation and warehousing than in major metropolitan counties in the state, Texas as a whole, and the nation.

12 Comparisons were made to the following counties: Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, and Tarrant.

Employment and Education

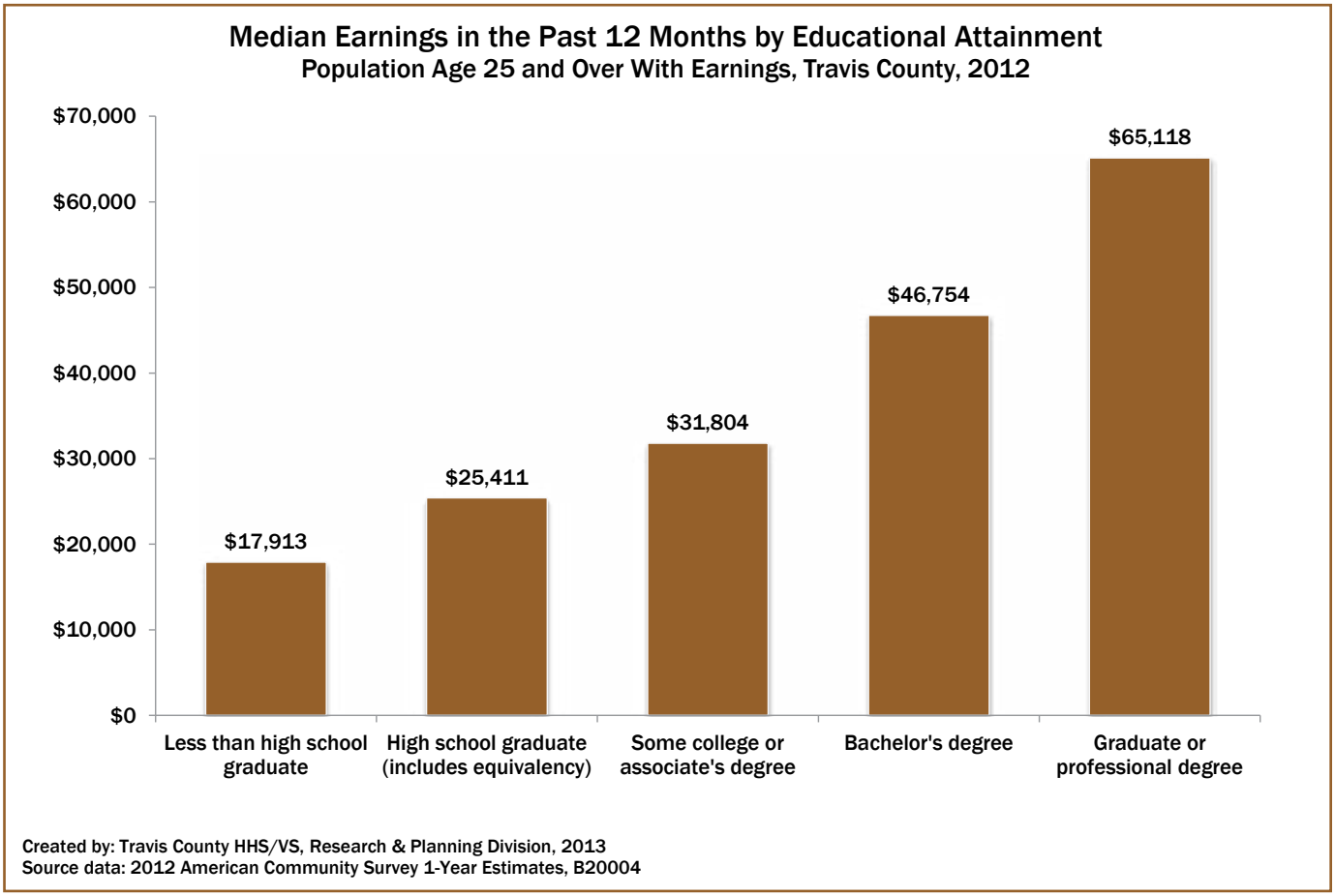


Educational Attainment in the Labor Force: Among Travis County workers between the ages of 25 and 64, almost one-half (48%) have a bachelor's degree or higher, and another one-quarter (25%) have some college or an associate's degree. High school graduates comprise 16% of the labor force, and the remaining 11% have less than a high school degree.

Educational Attainment and Employment Rates: Workforce trends generally predict that unemployment decreases as education levels increase. Accordingly, those with the highest educational attainment levels in Travis County also have the lowest unemployment (less than 4% unemployment for those with a bachelor's degree or higher), and those with the lowest educational attainment levels have the highest unemployment (about 12% for those with less than a high school degree). In fact, there is a statistically significant difference in the unemployment rates between one level of educational attainment and another.

Geographical Comparison: In comparison to Texas and the U.S., Travis County has a very educated workforce. In Travis County, 48% of workers age 25 to 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 31% for Texas and 34% for the U.S. at large.

Earnings and Education



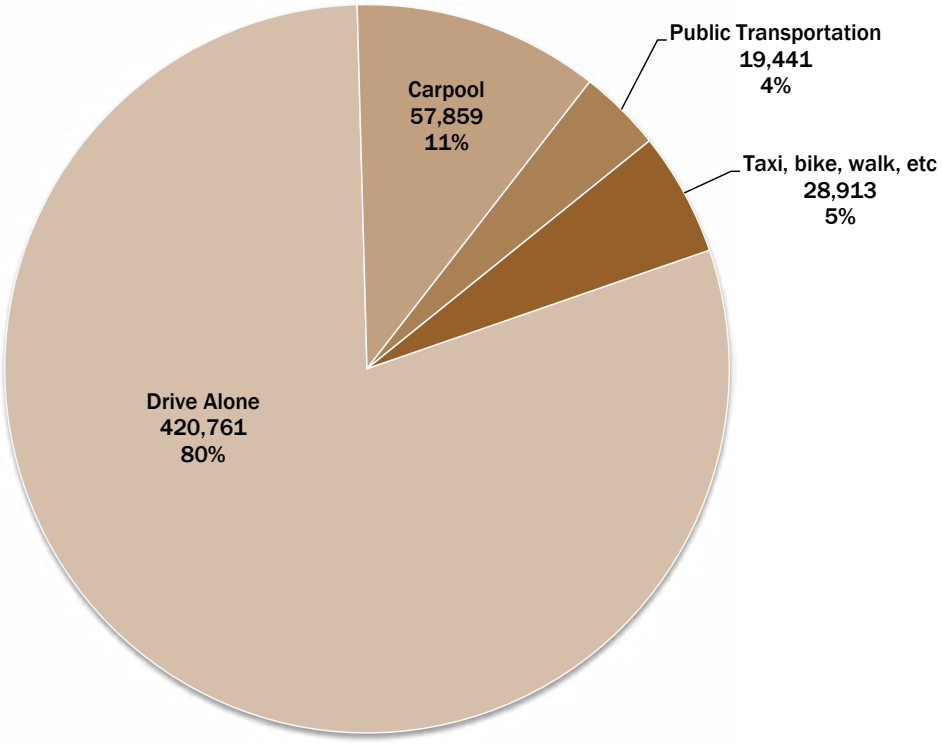
Educational Attainment and Earnings: Educational attainment level and earnings are directly related: As education level increases, earnings also rise. The median earnings for persons with a bachelor's degree are 47% more than for those persons who have some college or an associate's degree. Similarly, the median earnings for those with a high school diploma or GED are 42% higher than those who did not graduate high school.

Median Earnings and Gender: For Travis County overall, 2012 median earnings[13] are $36,029. However, median earnings for men ($40,767) are 30% higher than those for women ($31,432).

Geographic Comparison: Travis County's 2012 overall median earnings ($36,029) are higher than both those of the state of Texas ($33,528) and those of entire U.S. ($35,160).

13 The median divides the earnings distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median and one-half above the median. Median earnings is restricted to individuals 16 years old and over with earnings (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 82.)

Means of Transportation to Work
Workers Age 16 and Older Who Do Not Work at Home, Travis County, 2012
(*n* = 526,974)



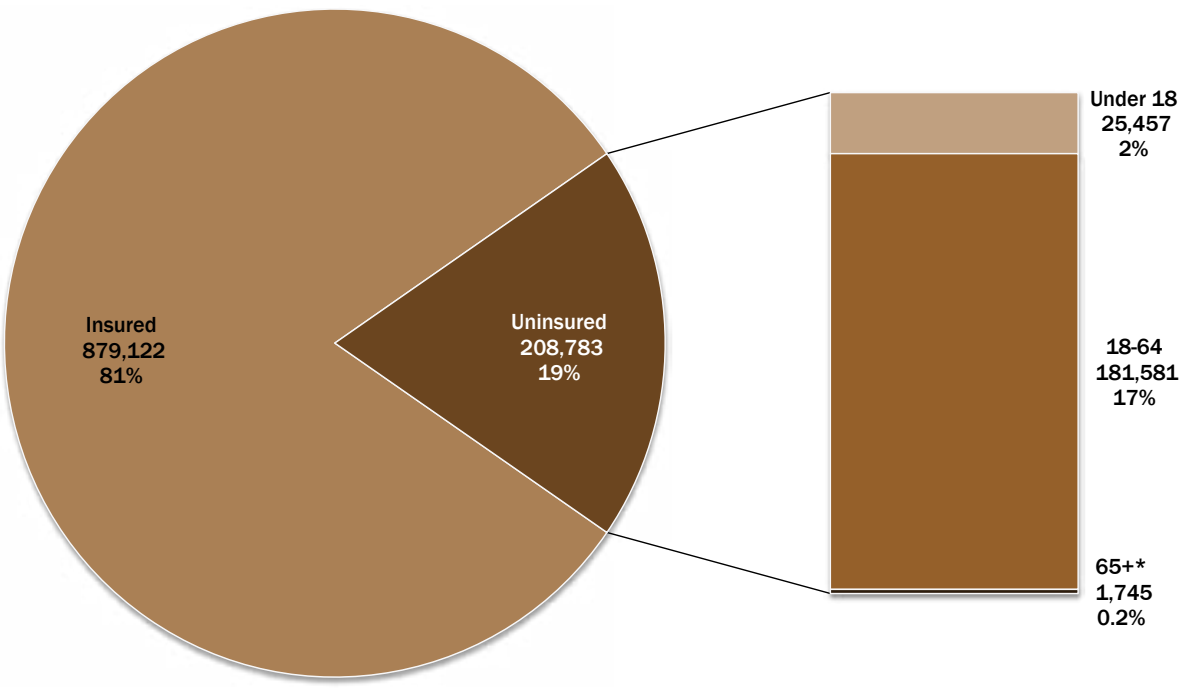
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, C08134

Means of Transportation to Work: The vast majority of Travis County workers aged 16 and older drive to work alone (80% or about 420,800 people). While 11% (approximately 57,900) carpool, only 5% (about 28,900) use other means of transportation, including taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or walking. The remaining 4% (about 19,400) use public transportation. Among all these commuters, most (66%) travel under 30 minutes to get to work, while almost one-third (29%) spend between half an hour and an hour traveling to work. A small percentage of workers (5%) spend an hour or more traveling to work.

Geographic Comparison of Means of Transportation to Work: The proportion of Travis County workers who drive to work alone (80%) is lower than the state (83%) but is on par with that of the nation. In other major metropolitan counties of Texas, the proportion of commuters who drive to work alone hovers between 81% and 86%.[14] The proportion of commuters using public transportation to get to work in Travis County (4%) is lower than the nation (5%) but higher than the state of Texas (2%) and most other major metropolitan counties in the state (ranging between 1% and 3%).[15]

14 Comparison counties include Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris and Tarrant.
15 There was no statistical difference between the proportion of Travis County workers commuting via public transportation and those in Harris County.

Health Insurance



In Travis County, 19% of residents do not have health insurance.[16] Of these 208,783 uninsured individuals, the majority (181,581 people) are adults between the ages of 18 and 64. Another 25,457 individuals (constituting 2% of the total Travis County population) are uninsured and under the age of 18. Just under 1,750 people age 65 and over are living without health insurance (0.2% of the total Travis County population).[17]

Geographic Comparison: Travis County's proportion of uninsured residents (19%) is higher than that of the U.S. (15%) but lower than that of Texas (23%). Other major metropolitan counties[18] in the state have a variety of rates of uninsurance, from a high of 28% in El Paso County to a low of 20% in Bexar County.

16 The Census Bureau defines coverage to include plans and programs that provide comprehensive health coverage. People are considered insured if they report having at least one of the following: Insurance through a current or former employer or union (of respondent or another family member); insurance purchased directly from an insurance company (by respondent or another family member); Medicare for those 65 and over or those with certain disabilities; Medicaid, Medical Assistance, or any kind of government assistance plan for those with low incomes or a disability; TRICARE or other military health care; VA (including those who have ever used or enrolled for VA health care). People who had no reported health coverage, or those whose only health coverage was Indian Health Service, are considered uninsured. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, pp.68-70.)

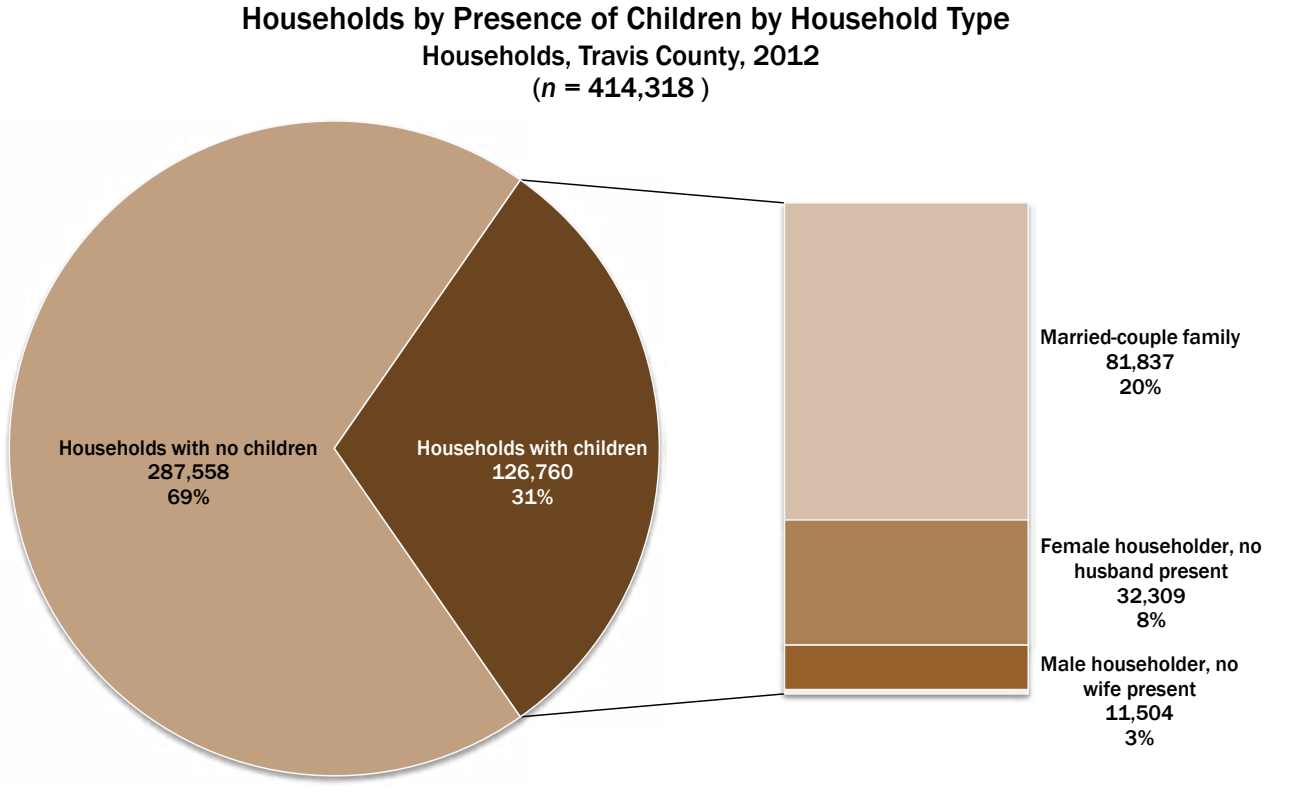
17 This estimate is not reliable at a 90% confidence interval.

18 Comparison counties included Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris and Tarrant.

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Household Type



Households by Presence of Children:

- About one-third (31%) of Travis County households include children, while the remaining 69% do not.

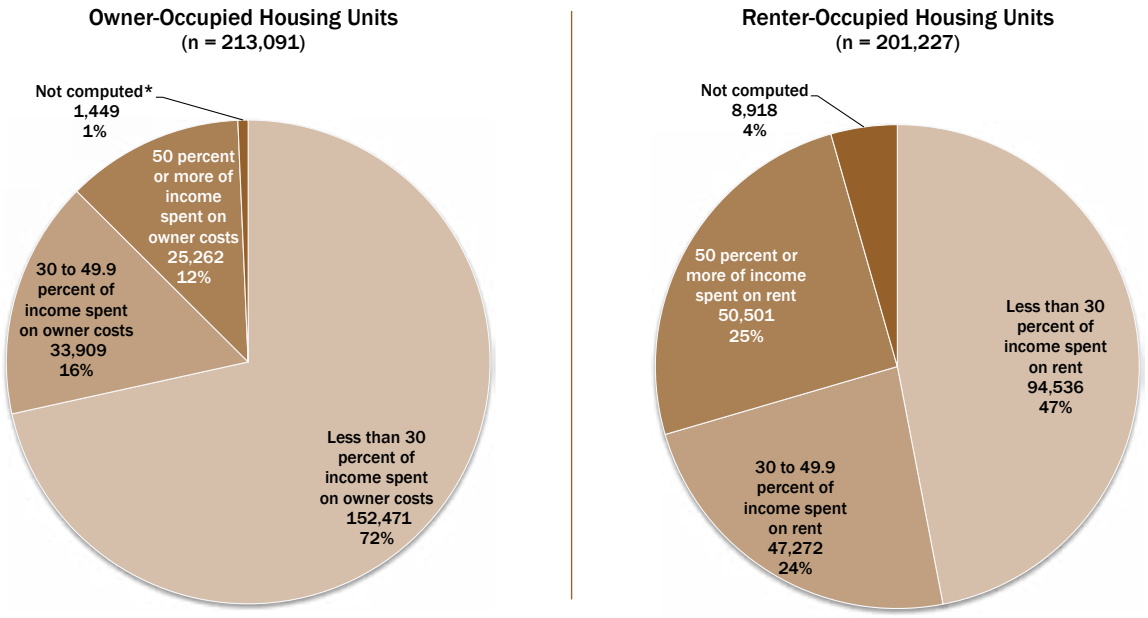
- Of those households with children, the majority are married-couple families. Approximately 43,800 have one householder (majority female) with no spouse present.

Geographic Comparison:

- In comparison to state and national averages, Travis County households are less likely to include children (38% of Texas households and 32% of U.S. households include children).

- Regarding single householders with children with no spouse present, there is no significant difference between Travis County's proportions and those of the state and the nation.

Percent of Household Income Spent on Housing Costs
Travis County, 2012



*The estimate for this category is not reliable at a 90% confidence level.

Note: Households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs have a cost burden; those spending 50% or more on housing costs have a severe cost burden. Percentage totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2013

Source data: 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B25070 & B25091

Cost Burden: In Travis County, 51% of occupied housing is owner-occupied and 49% is renter-occupied. A large percentage of both renters and owners in Travis County experience a housing cost burden, which is defined as spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs.[19] However, the percent of households that are cost-burdened is much higher among renters than owners. About one-half (49%) of renter households spend 30% or more of their income on rent, and one-quarter (25%) of renter households experience a severe cost burden, spending at least one-half of their income on rent. Comparatively, 28% of owner households spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs and 12% spend at least one-half.

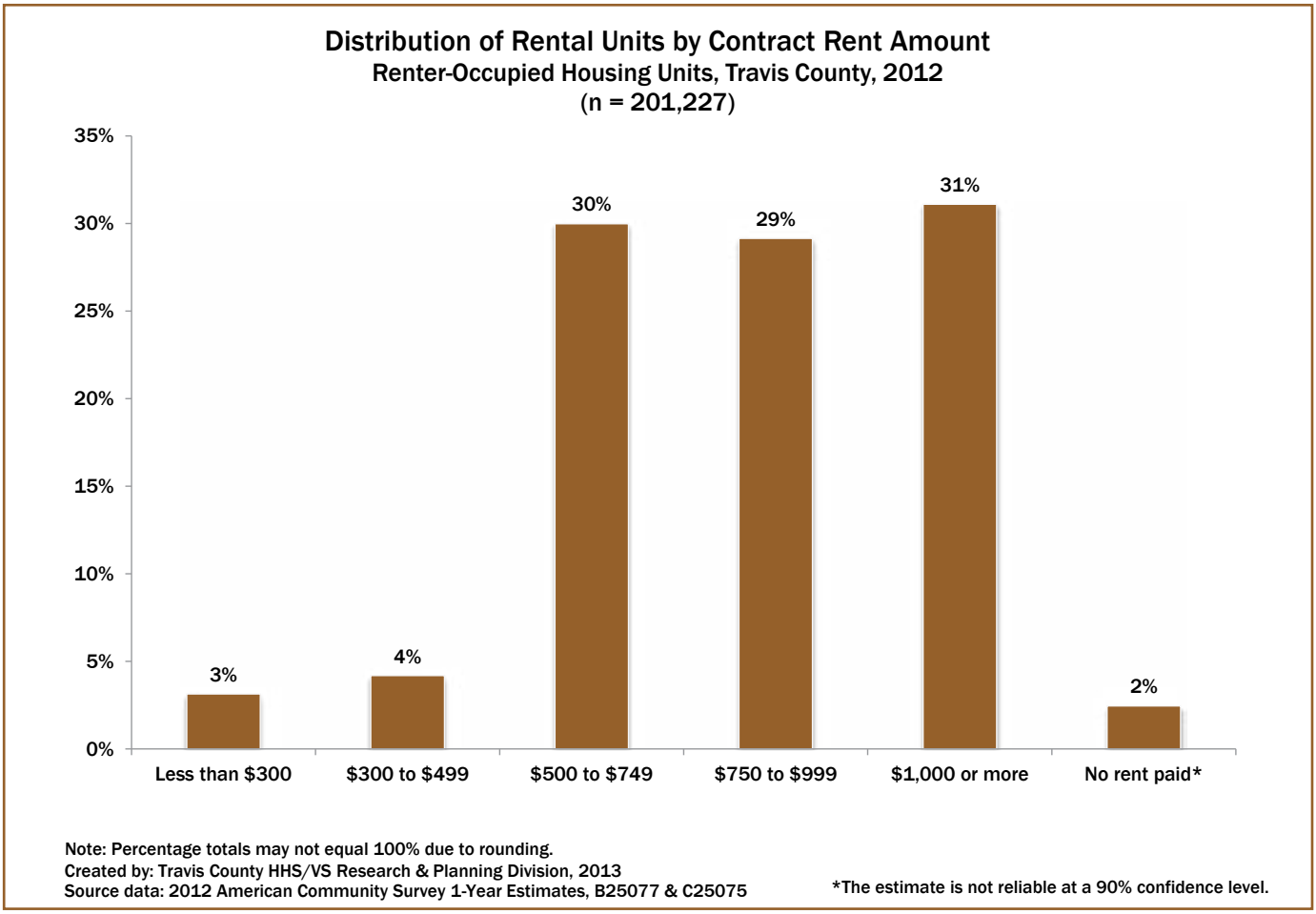
Geographic Comparison:

- A higher percentage of Travis County (49%) and U.S. (48%) renter households are cost-burdened than renter households in Texas (45%). In comparison to other metropolitan counties in Texas, the Travis County proportion is higher than Bexar (44%) and Dallas (45%) counties but it is not significantly different from El Paso (46%), Harris (47%) or Tarrant (46%) counties.

- Similarly, a higher proportion of Travis County (28%) and U.S. (27%) owner households are cost-burdened than owner households in the state (23%). As compared to other Texas metropolitan counties, the percentage of Travis County owners that are cost-burdened is higher than those in Bexar (22%), El Paso (23%), and Tarrant (22%) counties, but it is on par with Dallas (28%) and Harris (26%) counties.

19 See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, http://www.huduser.org/publications/affhsg/worstcase00/app_b.html.

Rent Values



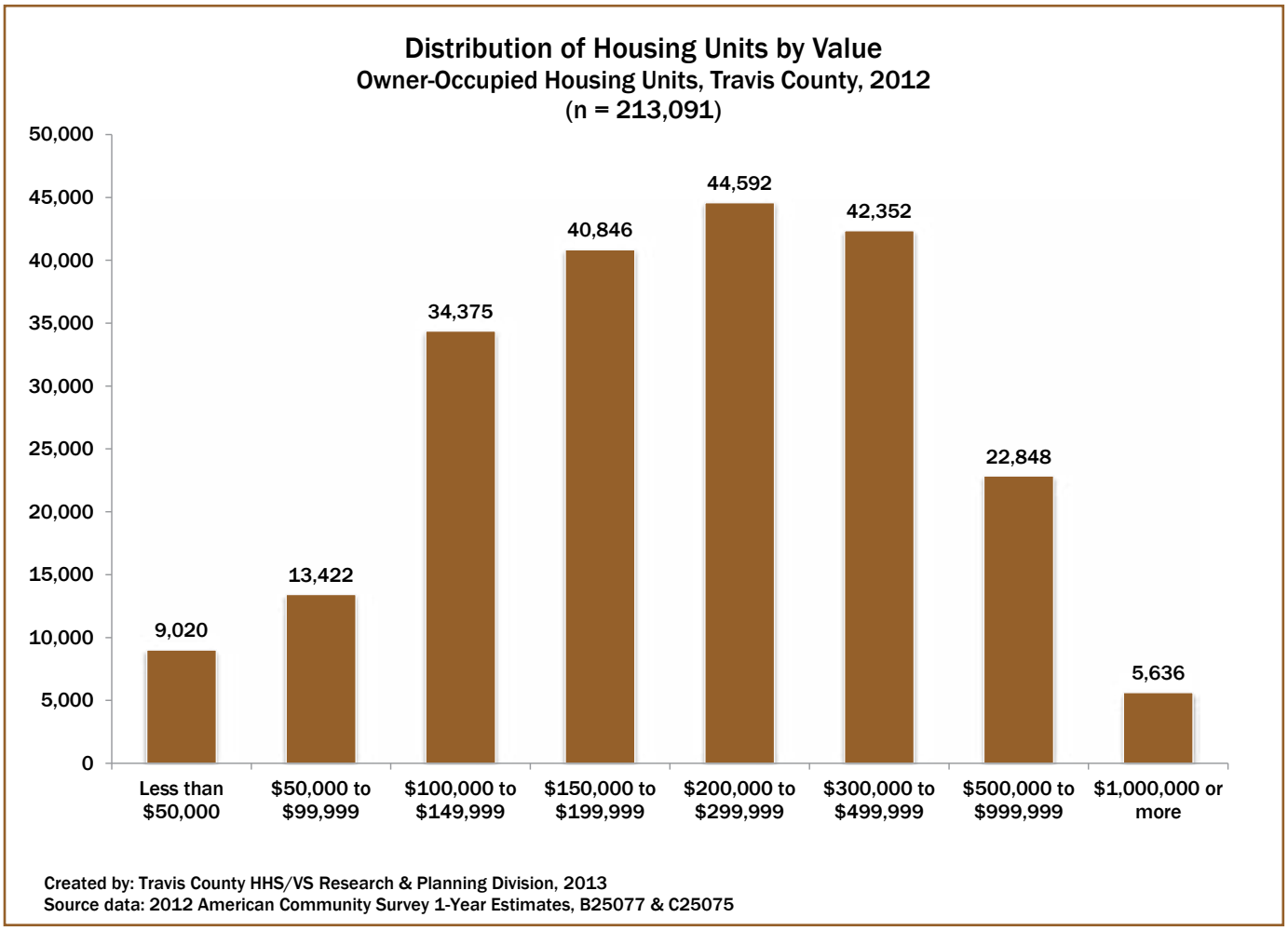
Contract Rent[20] **Distribution:** Well over half (60%) of Travis County's occupied rental units have rents at or above $750. Seven percent (approximately 14,700) of occupied rental units have rents below $500 (not including 3% with no rent paid).[21]

Median Contract Rent: The 2012 median contract rent in Travis County is $839, compared to $684 in Texas and $746 in the U.S.

20 Contract rent is the monthly rent agreed to or contracted for, regardless of any furnishings, utilities, fees, meals, or services that may be included. (American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 14.)

21 "No rent paid" refers to housing units that are renter occupied without payment of rent. The unit may be owned by friends or relatives who live elsewhere and who allow occupancy without charge. Rent-free houses or apartments may also be provided to compensate caretakers, ministers, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, or others. (American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, pp. 14-15.)

Housing Values

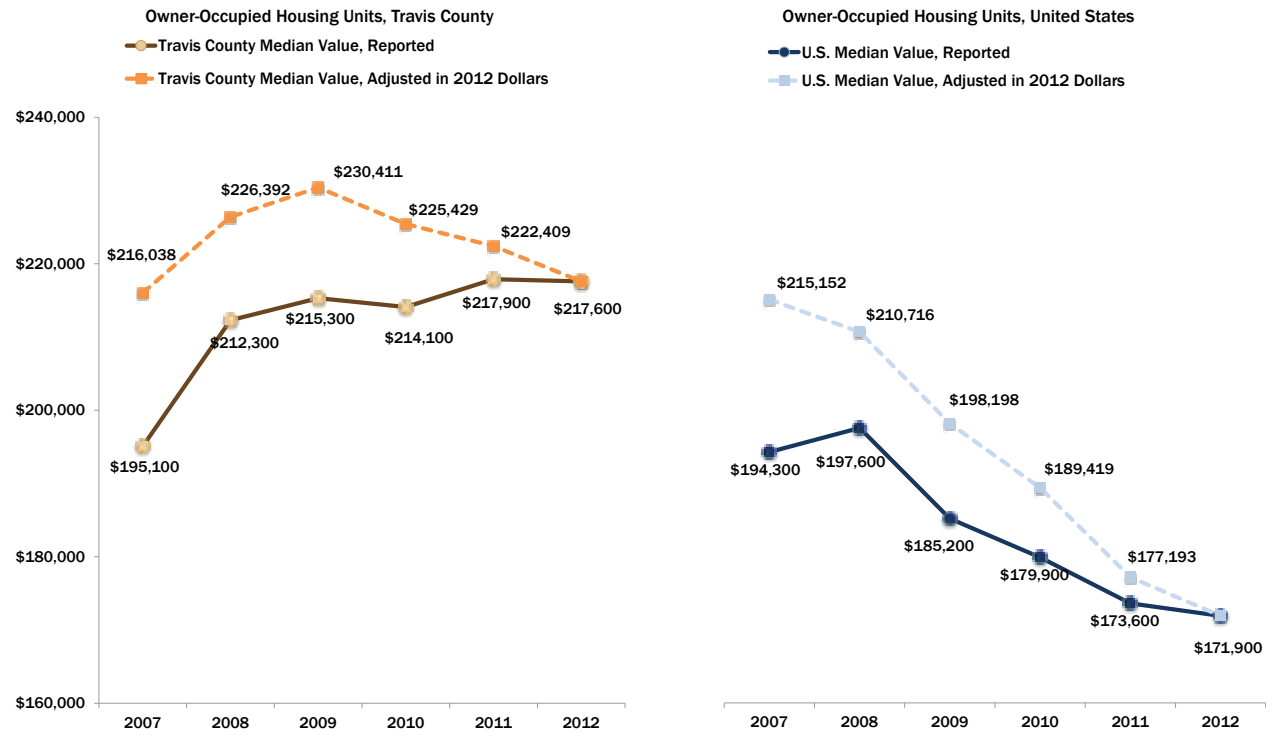


Housing Value Distribution[22]**:** Travis County homes valued between $100,000 and $299,999 comprise 56% (approximately 119,800) of owner-occupied housing in Travis County. Only 11% (approximately 22,400) of owner-occupied homes in Travis County are valued at under $100,000.

Median Housing Value: The median housing value in Travis County is $217,600. This is higher than that of the U.S. ($171,900), and much higher than that of the state of Texas ($129,200).

22 Value is the respondent's estimate of how much the property (house and lot, mobile home and lot, or condominium unit) would sell for if it were for sale. For vacant units, value was the price asked for the property. (American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, p. 40.)

Median Housing Value



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: 2007-2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B25077 and Consumer Price Index

The reported median value of owner-occupied housing units in Travis County rose between 2007 and 2009, dipped slightly in 2010 and rose again in 2011. The reported 2012 median housing value is$600 higher than the 2011 reported value. When adjusted for inflation[23], median home values declined by nearly $13,000 between 2009 and 2012. However, the 2012 median value is only $1,562 more than the 2007 inflation-adjusted value.

Geographic Comparison: National reported median home values increased from 2007 to 2008, but began a steady decline in 2009. The inflation-adjusted median value shows a continual decline from 2007 to 2012. In fact, the inflation-adjusted median value of U.S. homes dropped by 20% over this period.

23 Inflation adjustment calculation based on Consumer Price Index at: ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiai.txt.

Methodology

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) is the primary data source for this chartbook. Data from the 2007-2011 ACS are also referenced for trend analyses.

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) replaces the long form of the 10-year U.S. Census or Decennial Census and collects information on an ongoing basis rather than once every ten years. The survey includes questions about housing, social and economic characteristics.[24] The ACS employs continuous data collection, with annual results produced at the national, state, city, and county levels as well as smaller geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or greater. In 2008, data based on a 3-year sample became available for all areas of 20,000 or more. In early 2011, data based on a 5-year sample became available for many small areas (state, county, city, town, place, census tracts and block groups). Also in early 2011, changes in sampling design were made that have increased the reliability of small tract estimates.[25]

ACS Methodology

The ACS is conducted every month on independent samples of housing unit[26] addresses (whether vacant or occupied) and persons in group quarters[27] facilities and produces annual estimates of the total residential population. Each year, approximately 3 million housing unit addresses in the United States and approximately 200,000 residents in group quarters facilities are selected. Surveys are collected from 1/12 of the sample each month. An address will not be included in the ACS survey more than once in a five-year period.[28]

For Travis County, the original 2012 (entire 12 month) sample of initial addresses selected was 9,409, and the final number of housing unit interviews (actual sample used to produce results) was 6,276. The group quarters population sample is not available at the county level, but for the entire state of Texas, the initial sample selected was 13,110 and the final number of group quarters person interviews was 10,284.[29]

The ACS is conducted primarily through self-response. The ACS employs two distinct data collection methodologies: one for individuals residing in housing units and another for those residing in group quarters. For participants residing in housing units, three attempts are made to administer the survey: (1) by mail, which includes separate mailings of a pre-notice letter, ACS questionnaire, reminder postcard, and replacement questionnaire if needed; (2) by landline telephone, on a sample of addresses that have not returned the completed paper questionnaire and for which a telephone number is known; and finally (3) by personal interviews with a sample of remaining addresses. Sampling and data collection for group quarters varies by group quarters

24 A copy of the questionnaire can be found at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/questionnaires/2012/Quest12.pdf

25 For more information on 2011 reliability improvements, go to http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/2011_acs_improvements/.

26 A housing unit may be a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms or a single room that is occupied (or, if vacant, intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Both occupied and vacant housing units are included in the housing unit inventory. Boats, recreational vehicles (RVs), vans, tents, railroad cars, and the like are included only if they are occupied as someone's current place of residence. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, page 7.)

27 In 2006, group quarters were added to the ACS target population of housing units. A group quarters is a place where people live or stay, in a group living arrangement that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing housing and/or services for the residents. Group quarters include such places as college residence halls, residential treatment centers, skilled nursing facilities, group homes, military barracks, correctional facilities, and workers' dormitories. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2012 Subject Definitions, page 8.) For more information on group quarters, see: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/GroupDefinitions/2012GQ_Definitions.pdf

28 American Community Survey Sample Size Definitions, available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample_size_definitions/

29 U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates, Tables B98001 and B98002.

size.[30]

Limitations

Because the findings are based on a sample rather than entire populations, the results would differ slightly if another sample were drawn or if the entire population were surveyed. This reduces the reliability of the results. A certain amount of variability (also called sampling error) is associated with any estimate based on a sample. In general, the larger the sample, the smaller the sampling error will be.[31] ACS estimates highlighted in this publication with relatively small sample sizes and therefore, relatively large margins of error, have been tested for reliability at a 90% level of confidence.[32] When direct comparisons are made (for example, between geographic areas or over time), tests have been performed for statistical significance at a 90% confidence level. Estimates with coefficients of variation[33] of more than 15% were either excluded or footnoted as being unreliable. Note that testing was not conducted on every possible permutation of comparisons between visible figures in this report's charts and tables, so inferences about statistics and trends should be interpreted with caution.

For more information and instruction on testing for reliability and statistical significance, as well as general guidance on how to use American Community Survey data, please see the Compass guides published by the U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/handbooks/

Non-response error: If certain individuals do not respond to the survey, the strength of the findings will be diminished. Additionally, those who respond to the survey may possess certain traits that skew the results differently than if everyone in the sample responds (this is known as selection bias). However, while surveys are often voluntary, response to the ACS is required by law (Section 221 of Title 13, Chapter 7, United States Code) and those who refuse or willfully neglect to respond to the survey are subject to a fine of up to $5,000.[34] The response rate for the ACS is high (the 2012 response rate for Texas was 97% for housing units and 95% for group quarters).

30 American Community Survey Accuracy of the Data (2012), available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2012.pdf

31 U.S. Census Bureau, *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What General Data Users Need to Know.* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2008. Available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/handbooks/ACSGeneralHandbook.pdf

32 A confidence level or interval is a range of values that describes the uncertainty surrounding an estimate. The "90%" in the confidence interval listed above represents a level of certainty about our estimate. If we were to repeatedly make new estimates using exactly the same procedure (by drawing a new sample, conducting new interviews, calculating new estimates and new confidence intervals), the confidence intervals would contain the average of all the estimates 90% of the time. We have therefore produced a single estimate in a way that, if repeated indefinitely, would result in 90% of the confidence intervals formed containing the true value. (From the US Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates website, http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/methods/statecounty/ci.html, accessed 10/22/13).

33 Coefficient of variation is a measure used to discern the level of reliability of an estimate. It is calculated using the estimate and its standard error. For more information on calculating and using coefficients of variation, see: *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What General Data Users Need to Know,* available at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/handbooks/ACSGeneralHandbook.pdf

34 American Community Survey: Why Were You Selected? available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/why_were_you_selected/