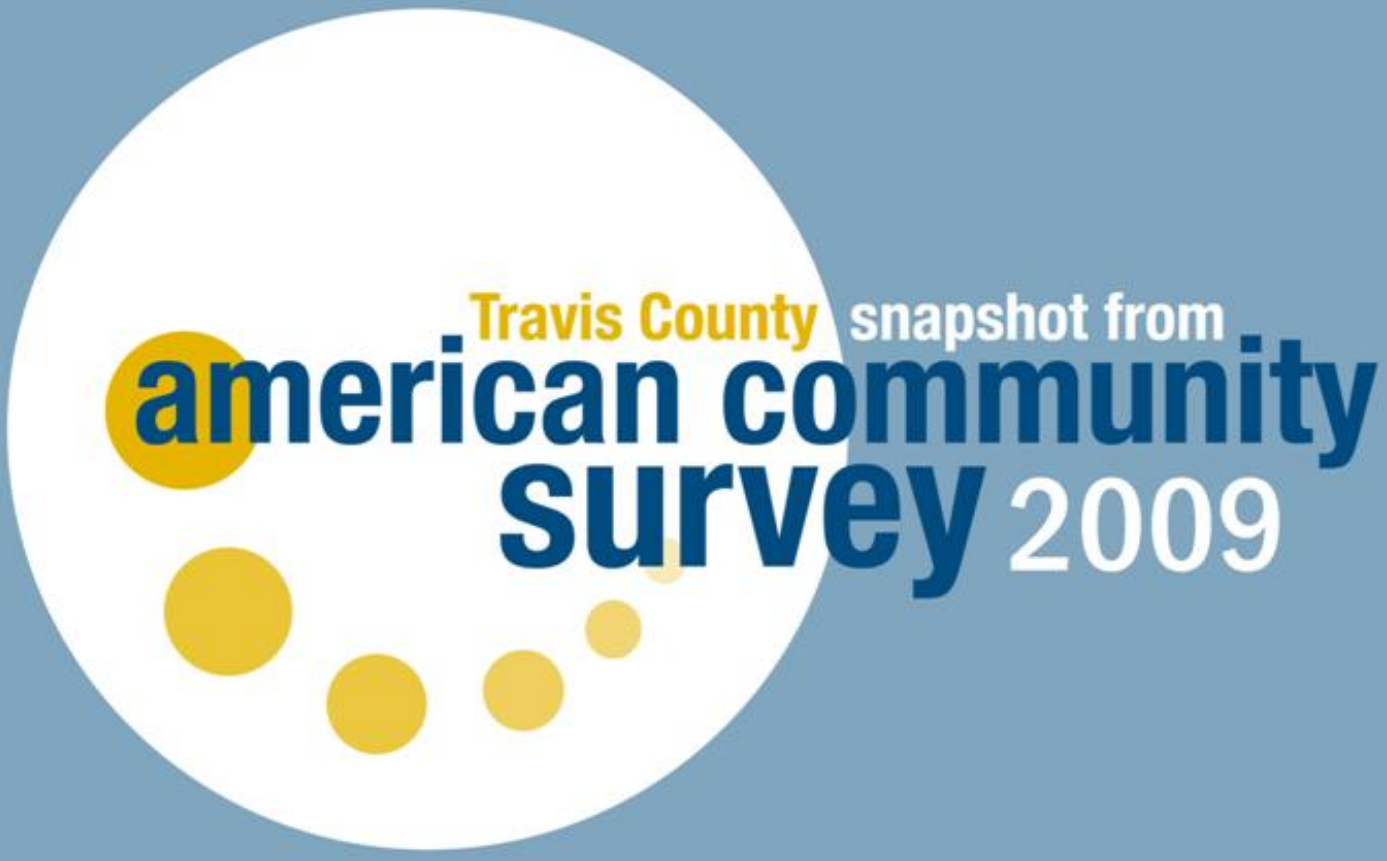

Travis County snapshot from
american community
survey 2009

2010

Travis County snapshot from american community survey 2009

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 Rachel Coff, Anna Lisa Fahrenthold, and Elizabeth Vela, with the support of other division staff, Blanca Tapia Leahy (Division Director), and Sherri E. Fleming (Executive Manager).

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. American Community Survey data is available in one-year, three-year, and five-year estimates. (For more information on the ACS, please see the Methodology section at the end of this chartbook.)

About the Chartbook

This chartbook uses the American Community Survey one-year estimates to create a point-in-time snapshot of our community. We have selected social, economic, and housing characteristics that relate to the scope of human services, and for the most part examine the geography and population of Travis County as a whole. The Research & Planning Division will release new data products in the near future, which will use the ACS three-year and five-year estimates for a more in-depth look at specific topics and sub-populations, as well as potential neighborhood-level analysis.

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 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 here in visual formats, our goal is to provide access to current information describing our community. We hope this information is helpful in efforts to improve programs, influence funding decisions, and shape local policies. We encourage users to borrow and cite this material.

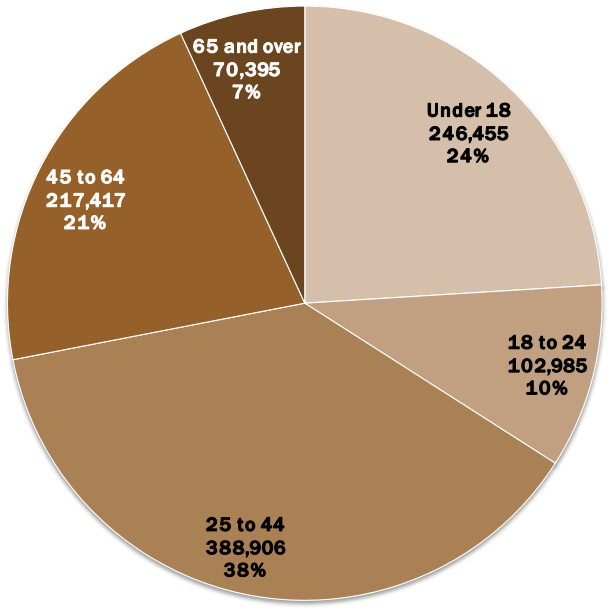
All of the estimates presented in this chartbook (with few exceptions, all footnoted) have been tested at a 90% confidence level for reliability, and where direct comparisons are made, for statistical significance. (For more information on statistical testing, please see the Methodology section at the end of this chartbook.)

Special Considerations

While the ACS is generally considered a timely information source, the data reported in the 2009 survey was collected roughly 9 to 20 months prior to its release in September 2010. While we are beginning to see observable effects of the recent economic recession in the survey results, its full impact may not be reflected in the data contained herein.

Social Characteristics

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Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010
Source data: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Age Distribution: Travis County continues to have a large working age population (18-64) which comprises about 69% of the county's total 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 31.8. This reflects a slightly younger population than that of Texas (33.1) and the United States as a whole (36.8).

Trends to Watch: Since 2000, the Travis County population has grown at a faster rate than the state. This growth is most notable in the 45-64 age group which grew by 47% from 2000 to 2009, compared to 38% statewide and 29% nationally. The child and youth population continues to grow at a faster rate than the population as a whole and experienced a 28% increase from 2000 to 2009, greater than this group's rate of growth across the state (17%) and nation (3%).[1]

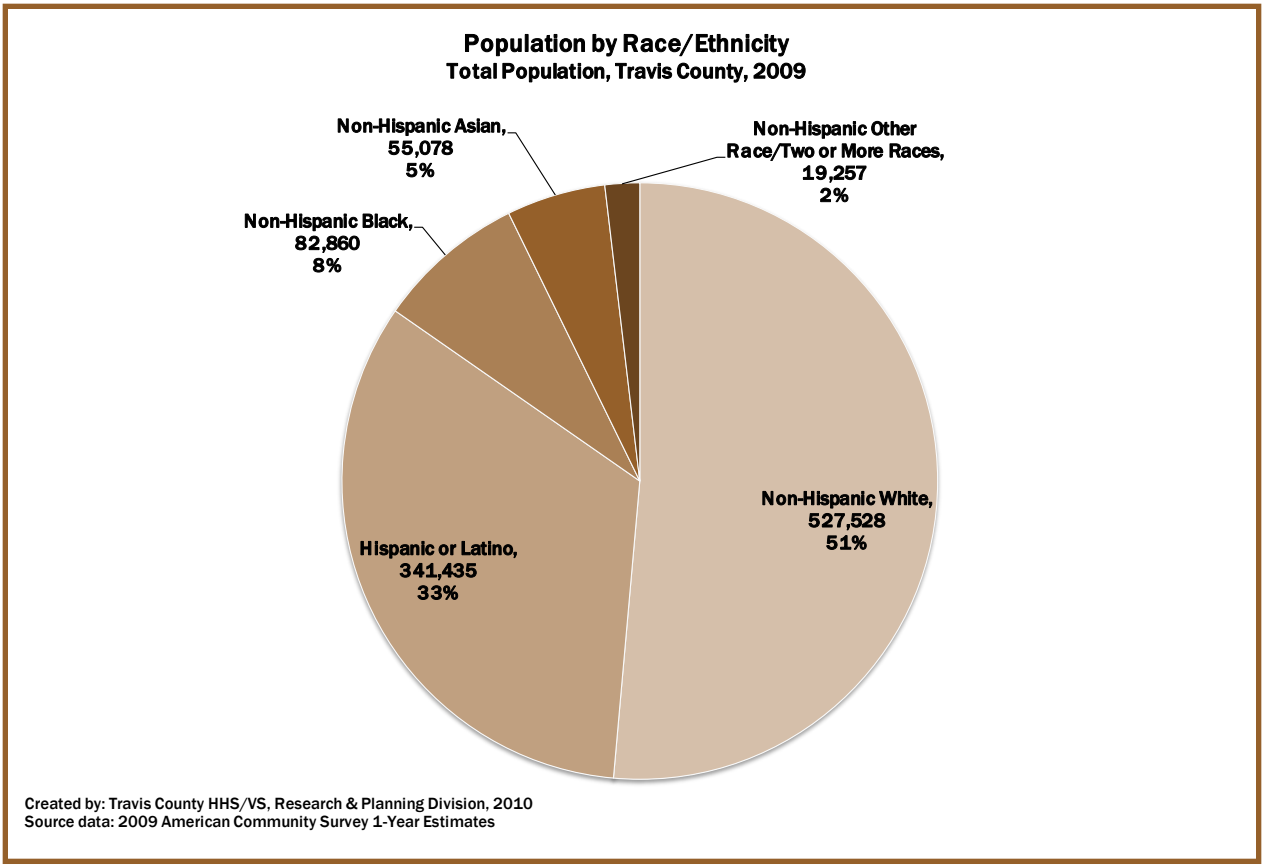
Growth in Population by Age, Travis County 2000-2009

	2000	2009	Growth	Percent Change
Under 18	192,547	246,455	53,908	28%
18 to 24	118,372	102,985	-15,387	-13%
25 to 44	299,477	388,906	89,429	30%
45 to 64	147,450	217,417	69,967	47%
65 and over	54,434	70,395	15,961	29%
Total	812,280	1,026,158	213,878	26%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2010. Source: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

[1] A statistical test for sampling variability or significance was not appropriate for changes over time or geographic comparison due to use of a controlled estimate.

Race and Ethnicity



Race and Ethnicity: The majority of the Travis County population identifies as Non-Hispanic White (51%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (33%), Non-Hispanic Black (8%) and Non-Hispanic Asian (5%).

Trends to Watch: In noting trends since 2000, Hispanics have increased as a proportion of Travis County's population (from 28% in 2000 to 33% in 2009), while the proportion of Non-Hispanic Whites has decreased (from 56% in 2000 to 51% in 2009).[2]

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

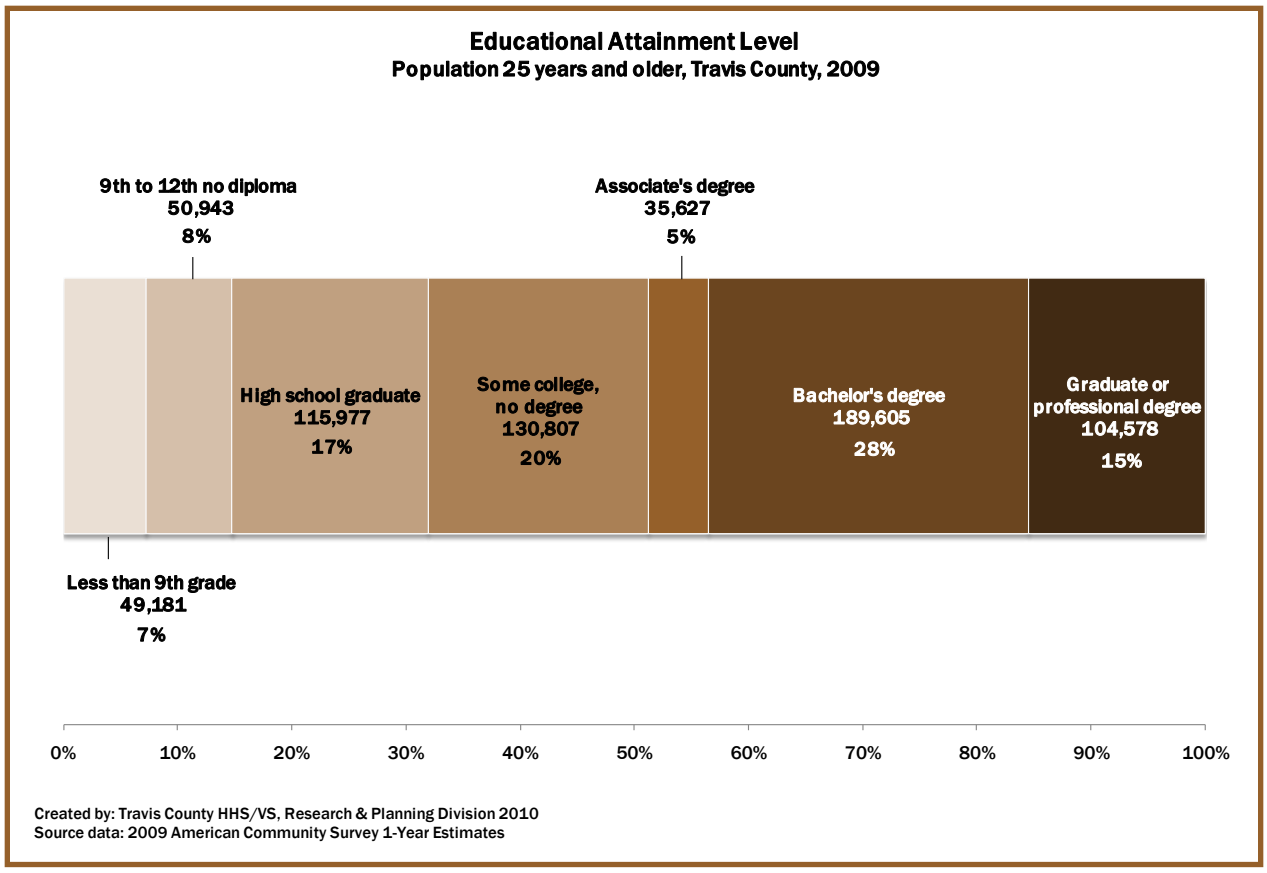
Population by Race/Ethnicity[3]
Travis County, Texas & U.S., 2009

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Non-Hispanic White	51.4%	46.6%	64.9%
Hispanic or Latino	33.3%	36.9%	15.8%
Non-Hispanic Black	8.1%	11.2%	12.1%
Non-Hispanic Asian	5.4%	3.5%	4.4%
Non-Hispanic Other Race/Two or More Races	1.9%	1.7%	2.8%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010. Source: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

[2, 3] A statistical test for sampling variability was not appropriate for changes over time or geographic comparison due to use of a controlled estimate.

Educational Attainment



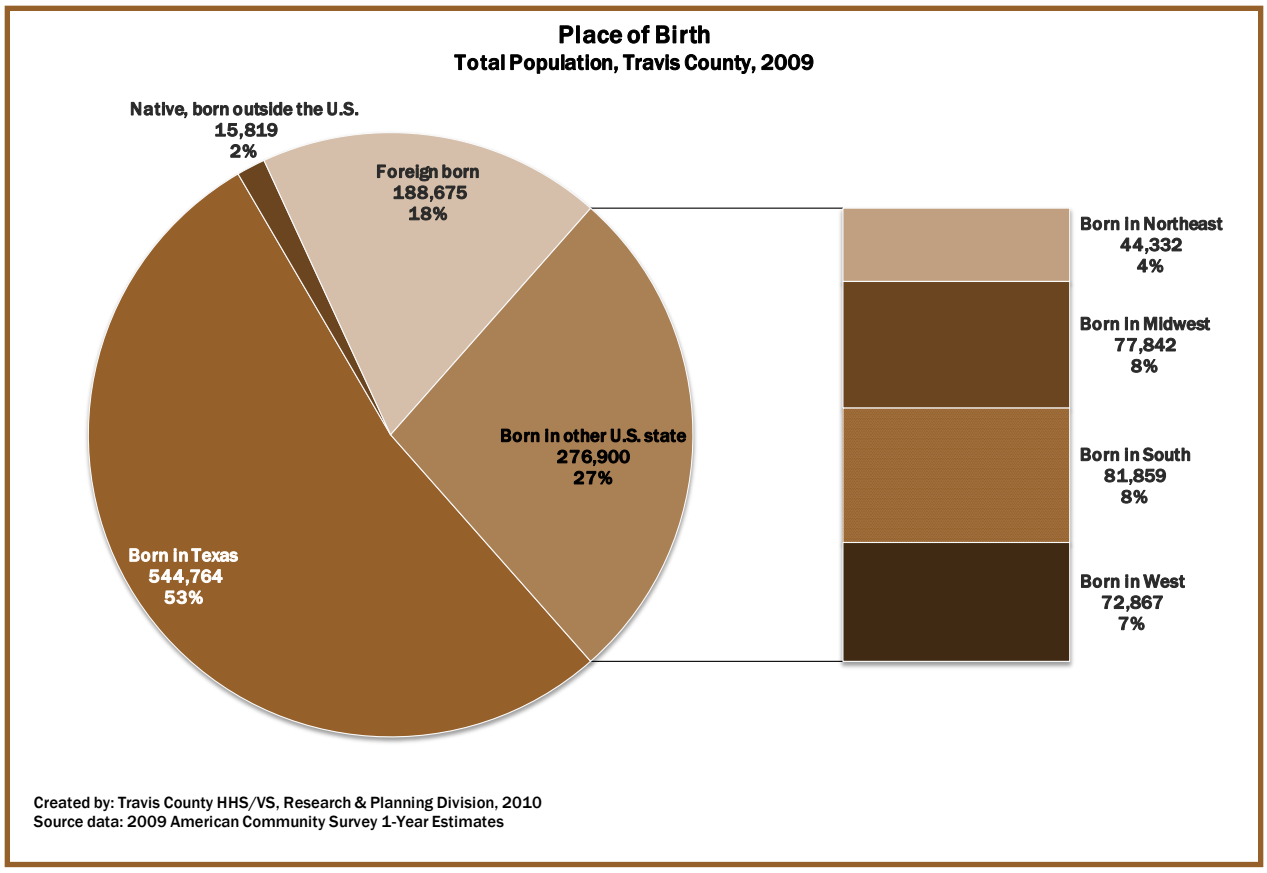
Educational Attainment Level: Travis County continues to have a highly educated population. In comparison to state figures, proportionately more Travis County residents have a college degree, and fewer lack a high school diploma.

- 43% of Travis County residents have Bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 26% of Texans and 28% of Americans.
- 15% of Travis County residents report having less than a high school diploma or equivalency, compared with 20% of Texans.

College or Graduate School Enrollment: About 12% of Travis County's population is enrolled in college or graduate school.[4] This compares with about 9% of the Texas population and 9% of the U.S. population.

[4] 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 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 112.)

Place of Birth



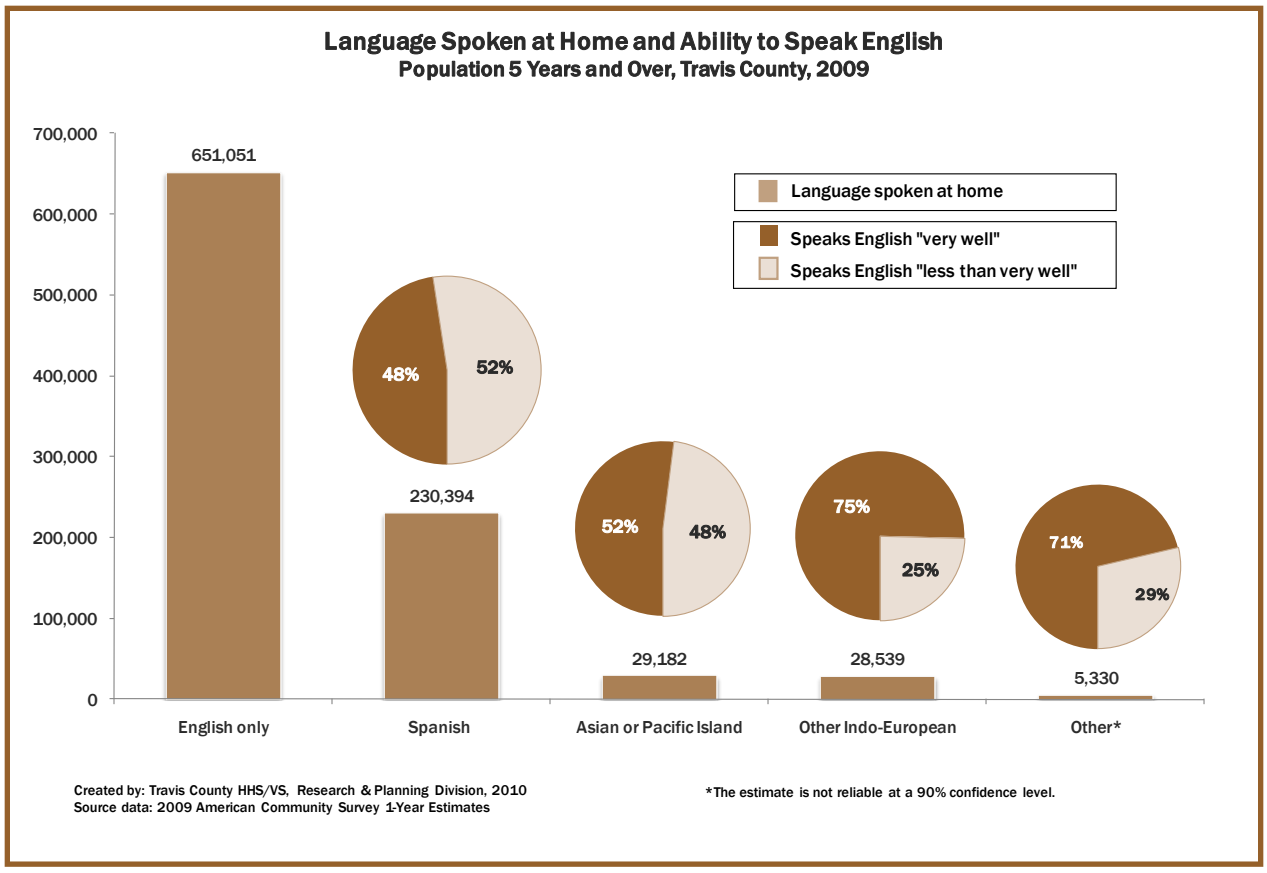
Place of Birth for the Travis County Population: About half of Travis County residents (53%) were born in Texas, roughly one quarter (28%) were born in another state (most commonly in the Southern or Midwestern regions of the U.S.), and about 18% of residents are foreign born.

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*. 53% of Travis County residents were born in their state of residence compared with 61% of Texans and 59% of Americans. However, the proportion of Travis County residents born in Texas is relatively similar to that of several other major metropolitan counties in the state (55% of Dallas County residents, 54% of Harris County residents, and 55% of Tarrant County residents were born in Texas).[5]
- *More likely to be foreign born.* 18% 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 nearly one quarter of the population.[6]

[5, 6] A statistical test for sampling variability or significance was not appropriate for geographic comparison due to use of a controlled estimate.

Language



Languages Spoken at Home: Almost one-third of the Travis County population (31% or 293,445 residents) speaks a language other than English at home. In comparison, 20% of U.S. residents and 34% of Texans speak a language other than English at home.

Ability to Speak English: 51% of Travis County residents who speak a language other than English at home also speak the English language "very well"; about 49% speak English "less than very well."

Trends to Watch: Overall, the number and share of Travis County residents speaking a language other than English at home has grown slightly since 2000 (from 29% or 216,164 in 2000, to 31% or 293,445 in 2009).

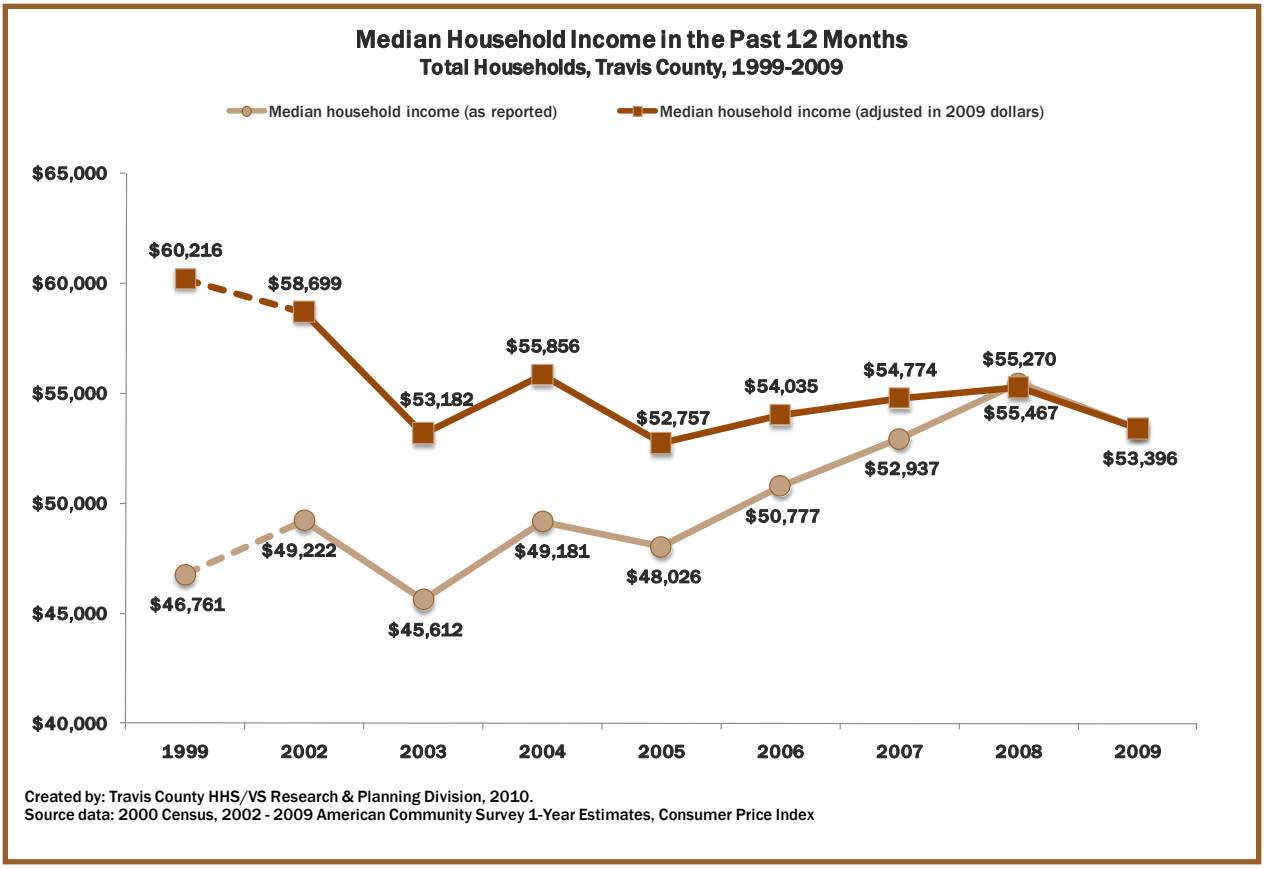
Linguistic Isolation: 8% of all Travis County households (33,692 households) are linguistically isolated.[7] More than 80% of linguistically isolated households speak Spanish (about 27,179 households).

[7] 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/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 44.)

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Median Income



Median Household Income: Reported median income has fallen by nearly 4% from the 2008 level, ending a four-year upward trend.[8] Once adjusted for inflation[9] (indicated by the dark line on the chart above), the actual value of Travis County's median household income was almost $7,000 lower in 2009 than in 1999.[10]

Geographic Comparison: Since 1999, the median household income in Travis County has consistently exceeded that of the U.S. and Texas. However, since 1999, median household incomes have decreased 13% in the county but only 7% and 8%, respectively, in the state and nation over the same period.

Median Household Income (in 2009 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)
Travis County, Texas and U.S., 1999 and 2009

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Median Household Income 1999	$60,216	$51,415	$54,077
Median Household Income 2009	$53,396	$48,259	$50,221
Percent Change between 1999 and 2009	-11%	-6%	-7%

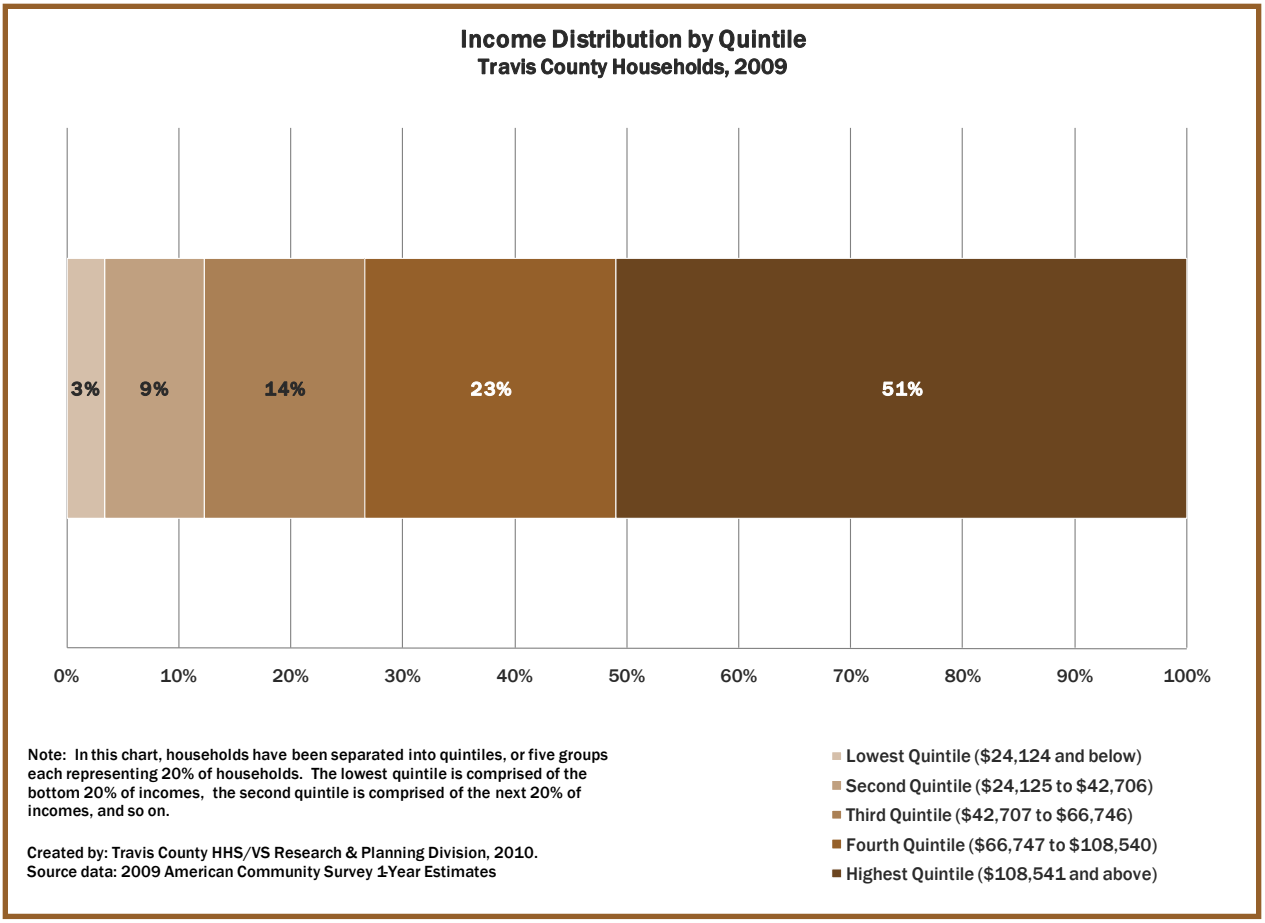
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2010
Source data: Census 2000, American Community Survey 2009 1-Year Estimates, and the Consumer Price Index

[8] Despite a decrease of more than $2,000 in the median household income, this decrease is not statistically significant.

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

[10] The 2000 Census reflects income earned during calendar year 1999. However, the ACS is a monthly survey that asks how much income was earned during the past 12 months. Consequently, a person answering the questions in December 2009 would respond based on income earned between December 2008 and November 2009.

Household Income Distribution



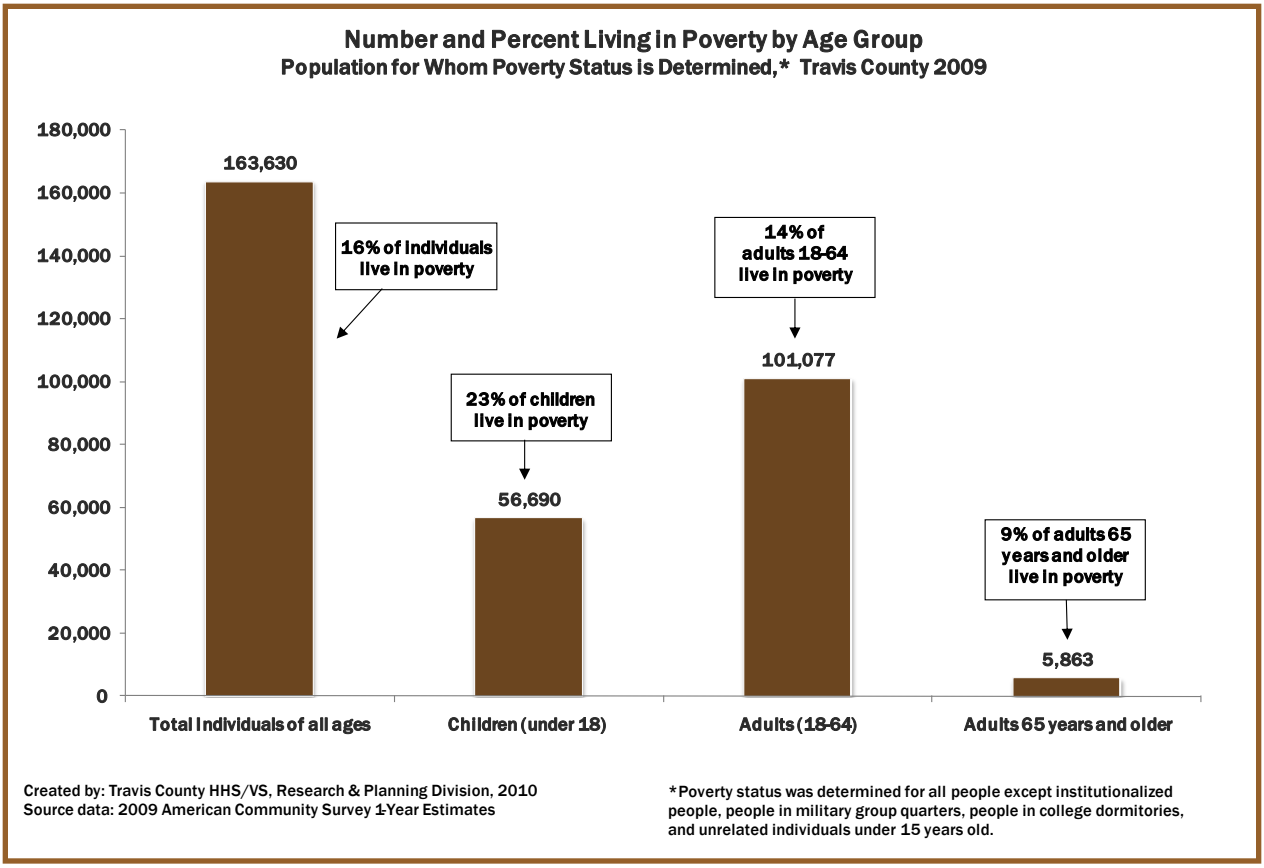
To assess income distribution, we have separated households into quintiles (five groups each representing 20% of households).

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. In fact, the top 5% of households have incomes of $206,769 or higher, and they represent nearly one-quarter (22%) of Travis County household income.[11]

Geographic Comparison: Travis County's quintile share of aggregate income is very similar to that of the U.S. and Texas. However, the upper limits of each household income quintile are higher for Travis County than those of the U.S. and Texas.

[11] 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 household income. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 80.)

Individual Poverty



Poverty Rate Trends: Travis County's poverty rates among individuals (16%) and children (23%) remain significantly higher than in 1999 (Census 2000), when 13% of individuals and 14% of children lived below the poverty threshold.[12] In 2009, the child poverty rate in Travis County reached a ten-year high, up by four percentage points from the previous year. Children are disproportionately represented among the poor, comprising under one-quarter of the total Travis County population, but more than one-third of those living in poverty.

Poverty Estimates and Rates among Individuals and Children, Travis County, 1999-2009

	1999	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Individuals in Poverty	99,388	122,607	116,231	106,765	135,240	137,687	141,223	144,336	163,630
Individual poverty rate	12.5%	14.8%	14.0%	12.6%	15.7%	15.2%	14.7%	14.8%	16.2%
Children (under 18) in Poverty	27,214	39,712	34,260	27,549	45,524	46,039	45,214	47,723	56,690
Child poverty rate	14.3%	19.6%	16.7%	12.9%	21.4%	20.4%	18.7%	19.1%	23.2%

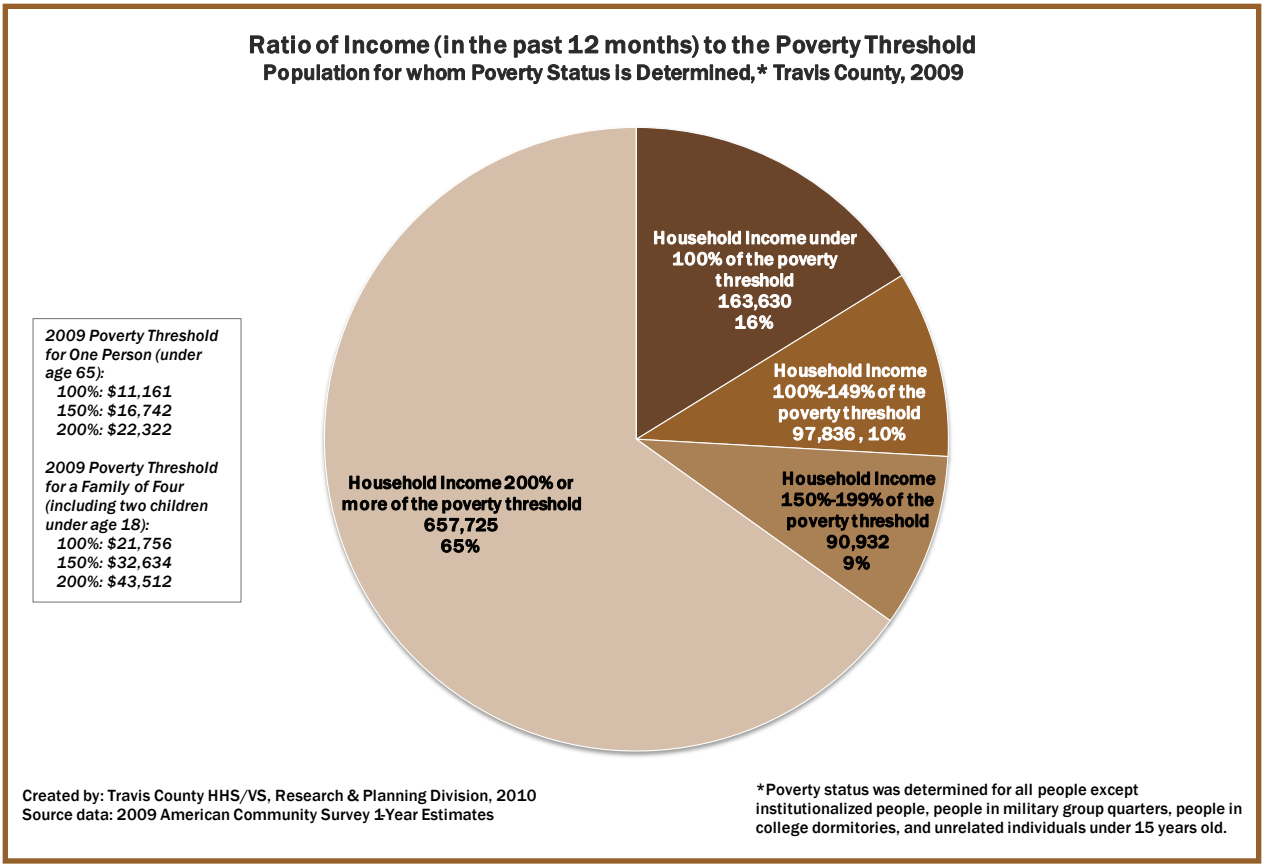
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010. Source: Census 2000, American Community Survey 2002-2009 1-Year Estimates.

Geographic Comparison: Travis County and the state of Texas have slightly higher proportions of people in poverty (16% and 17%, respectively) than the U.S. (14%).

- Travis County (23%) and Texas (24%) have higher proportions of children living in poverty than the U.S. (20%).
- Travis County has a similar adult poverty rate (14%) as the nation (13%) and state (15%).
- The proportion of Travis County residents 65 years and older who live in poverty (9%) is the same as that of the nation, but lower than that of the state (12%).

[12] The Census Bureau's poverty thresholds consider family size and composition when determining whether an individual is living in poverty, and can be found here: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html.

Income to Poverty Ratio



Ratio of Household Income in the Past 12 Months to the Poverty Threshold: In Travis County an estimated 163,630 individuals (16% of the total population) live in households with incomes below the poverty threshold.[13] Over one-third (35%) of Travis County residents, or an estimated 311,005 people, live 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 (in the past 12 months) to the Poverty Threshold
Travis County, Texas, and U.S., 2009

	Travis County	Texas	U.S.
Income < 100% of the poverty threshold	16%*	17%*	14%
Income 100%-199% of the poverty threshold	19%**	21%	18%**
Income 200% or more of the poverty threshold	65%	62%	67%

*The difference between these rates is not statistically significant at a 90% confidence level.

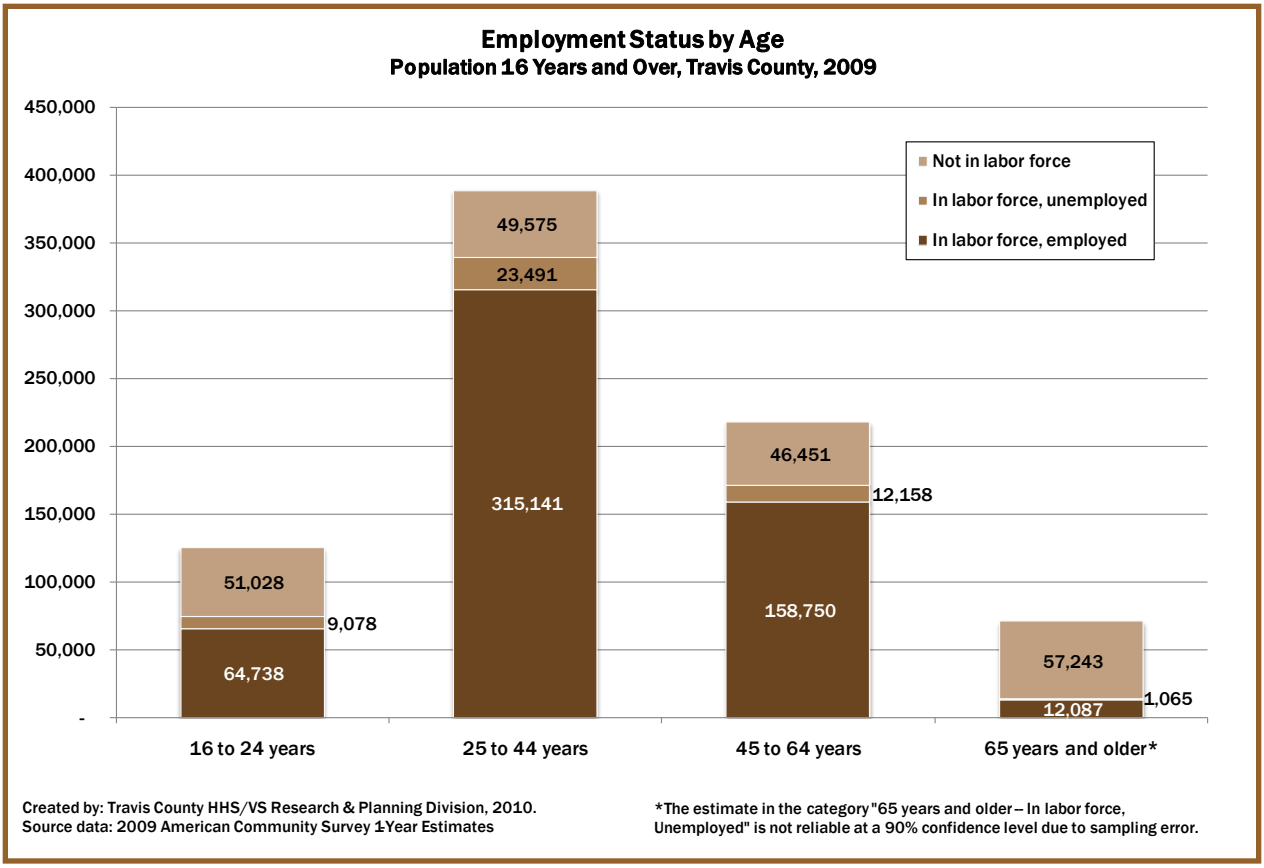
**Ibid.

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010

Souce data: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

[13] The Census Bureau's poverty thresholds consider family size and composition when determining whether an individual is living in poverty, and can be found here: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html.

Employment and Age



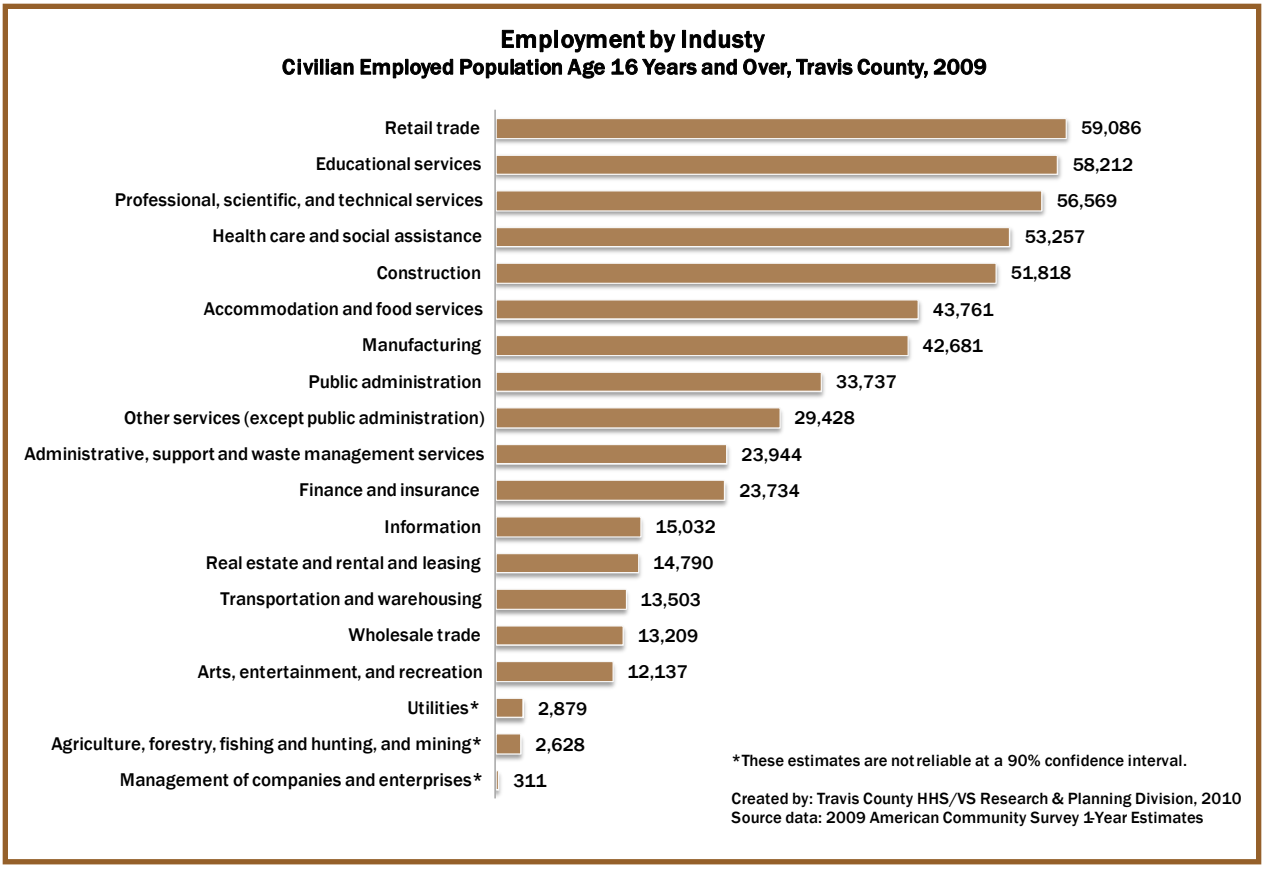
Travis County's Labor Force: In total, 75% of Travis County's population age 16 and over (about 597,500 people) is in the labor force. Approximately 45,800 of them were unemployed in 2009. This figure is a larger number and proportion of the workforce than it was in 2008, when approximately 28,000, or 5%, of people age 16 and over in the county's labor force were unemployed.

Labor Force by Age: Individuals between the ages of 25 and 44 constitute the majority (57%) of Travis County's labor force. The 45 to 64 age group comprises 29% of the labor force, followed by the 16 to 24 age group (12%), and finally those age 65 and older (2%).

Unemployment by Age: Travis County's overall unemployment rate (which is the percent unemployed of those in the labor force) was 8% in 2009. By age, the unemployment rate is highest, at 12%, for those 16 to 24 years old; 7% for those 25 to 44 years old; and 7% for those 45 to 64 years old.[14]

[14] The unemployment rate for the category "65 years and over," reported at 8%, is not reliable at a 90% confidence level.

Employment by Industry

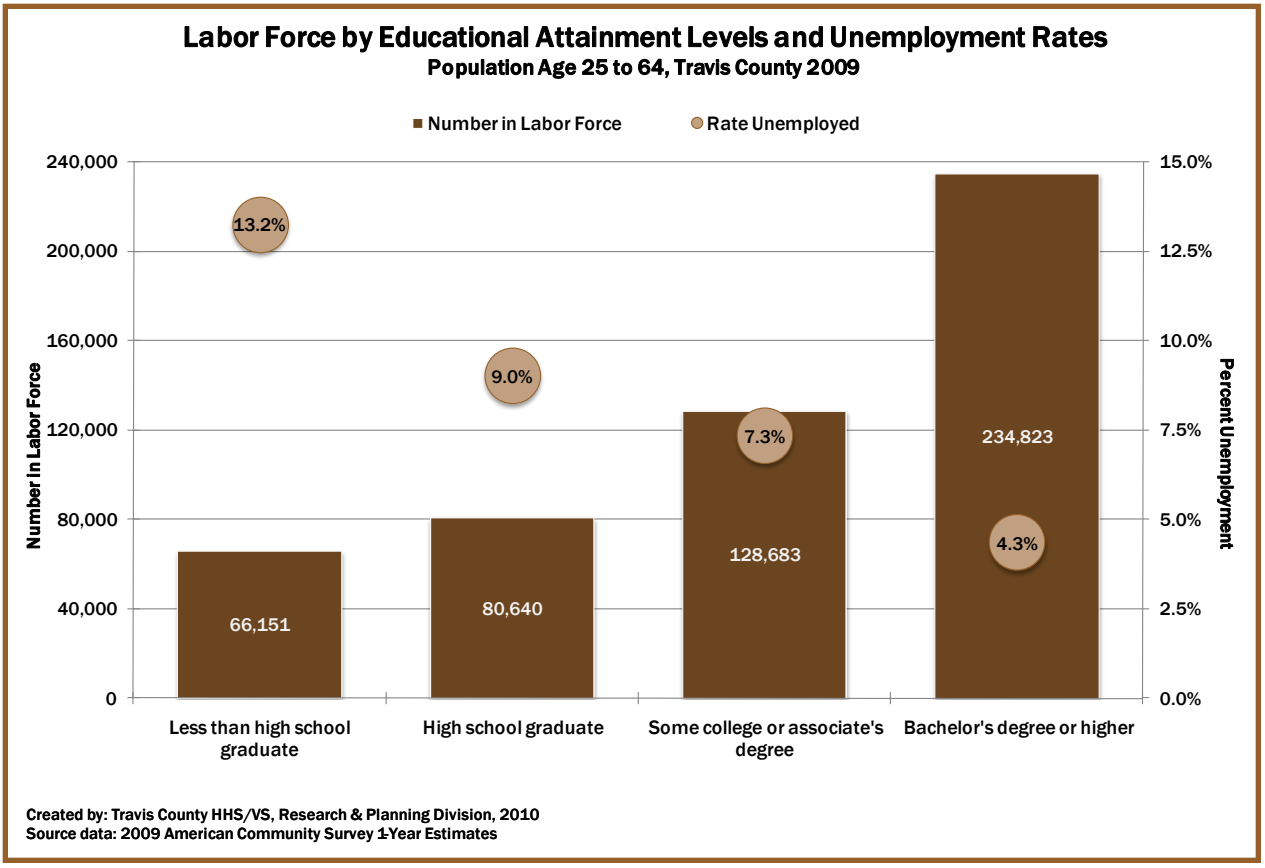


Industries: In 2009, over half (51%) of Travis County's civilian employed population age 16 and over was employed in the following five industries: retail trade; educational services; professional, scientific, and technical services; health care and social assistance; and construction.

Geographic Comparison: In general, proportions of Travis County workers by industry are very similar to those of other major metropolitan counties in Texas,[15] as well as the nation and the state. One notable exception is the higher proportion of workers in Travis County in the professional, scientific and technical services (10%) than in the nation and state (6%) and other Texas metropolitan counties (which employ between 4% and 8% of workers in these industries). Also, Travis County has a lower proportion of workers employed in the transportation and warehousing industries (2%) than the nation (4%), state (5%), and other Texas metropolitan counties (ranging from 4% to 7%).

[15] Comparison counties include: Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, and Tarrant counties.

Employment and Education

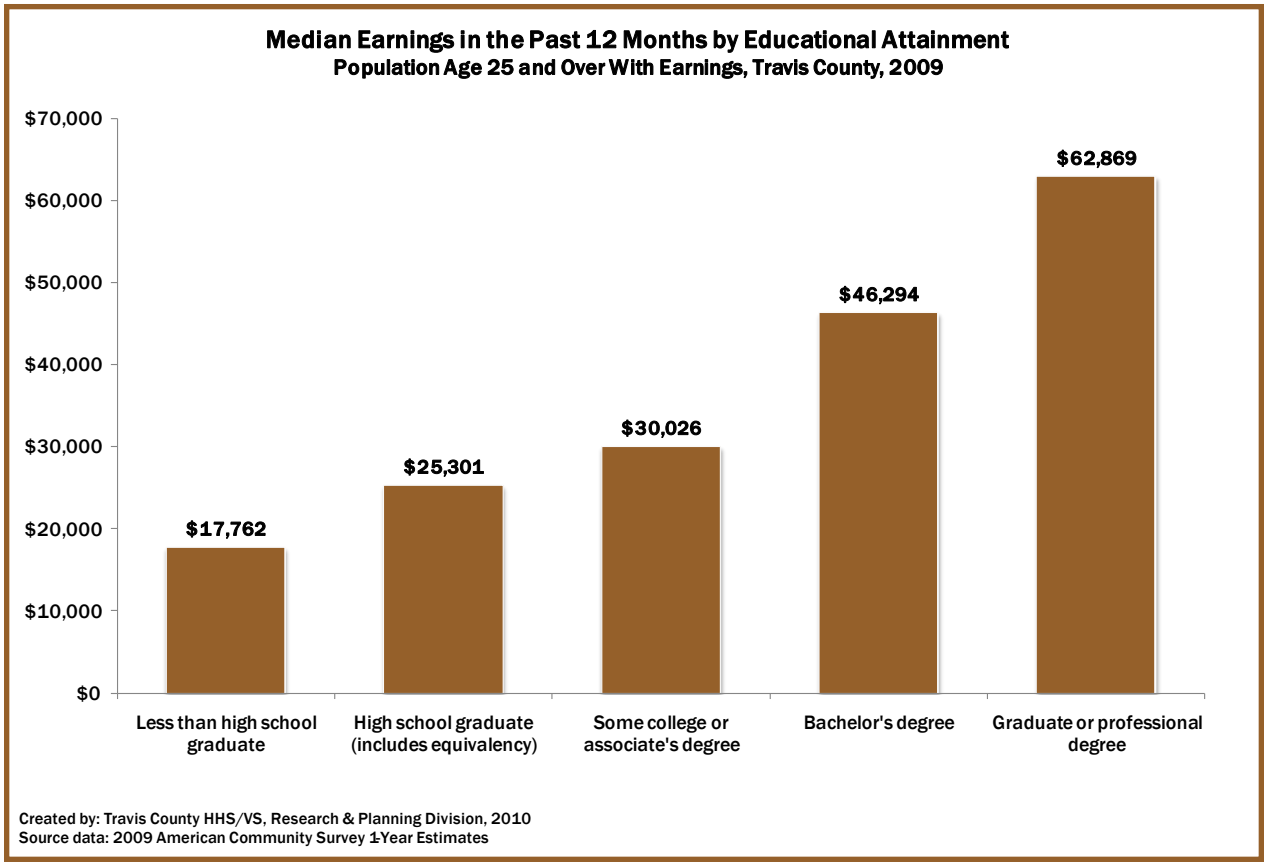


Educational Attainment in the Labor Force: Among Travis County workers between the ages of 25 and 64, almost half (46%) have a bachelor's degree or higher, and one-quarter (25%) have some college or an associate's degree. High school graduates comprise 16% of the labor force, and the remaining 13% have 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 (about 4% unemployment for those with a bachelor's degree or higher), and those with the lowest educational attainment levels have the highest unemployment (13% for those with less than a high school degree). In particular, there is a statistically significant difference between the unemployment rates for the categories "Less than high school graduate" and "High school graduate," as well as between the unemployment rates for "Some college or associates degree" and "Bachelor's degree or higher."

Geographical Comparison: In comparison to Texas and the U.S., Travis County has a highly educated workforce. In Travis County, 46% of workers age 25 to 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29% for Texas and 33% for the U.S. at large.

Earnings and Education

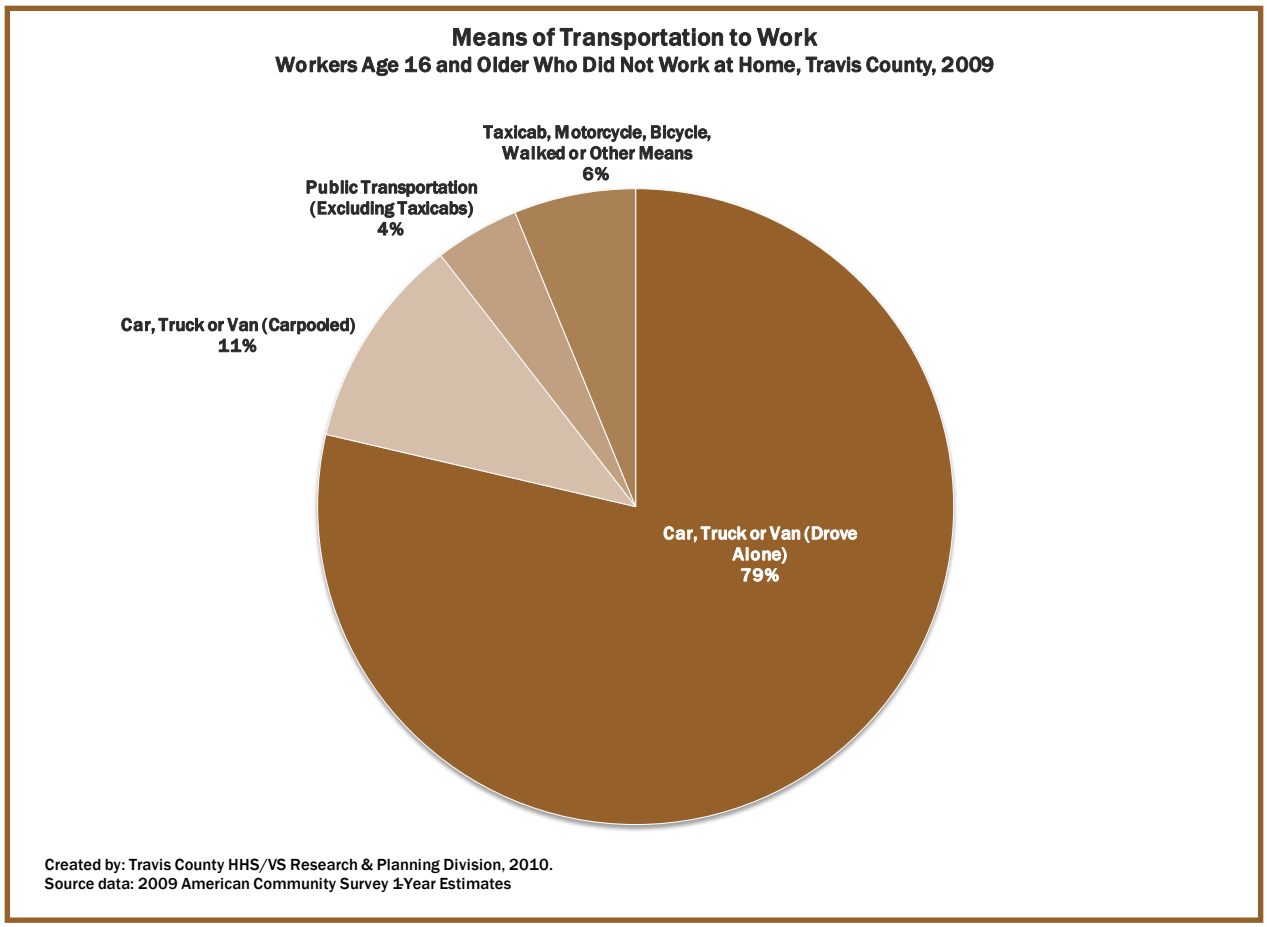


Educational Attainment and Earnings: Educational attainment level and earnings are directly related: As education level increases, earnings also rise. The largest percent difference in 2009 was between those with some college or associate's degrees and those with bachelor's degrees (a 54% difference in median earnings).

Median Earnings and Gender: For Travis County overall, 2009 median earnings[16] were $33,827. However, median earnings for men ($36,749) were 19% higher than those for women ($30,932).

Geographic Comparison: Travis County's 2009 overall median earnings ($33,827) are higher than those of the state of Texas ($31,147), but not significantly different from those of the entire U.S. ($33,071).

[16] 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. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 81.)



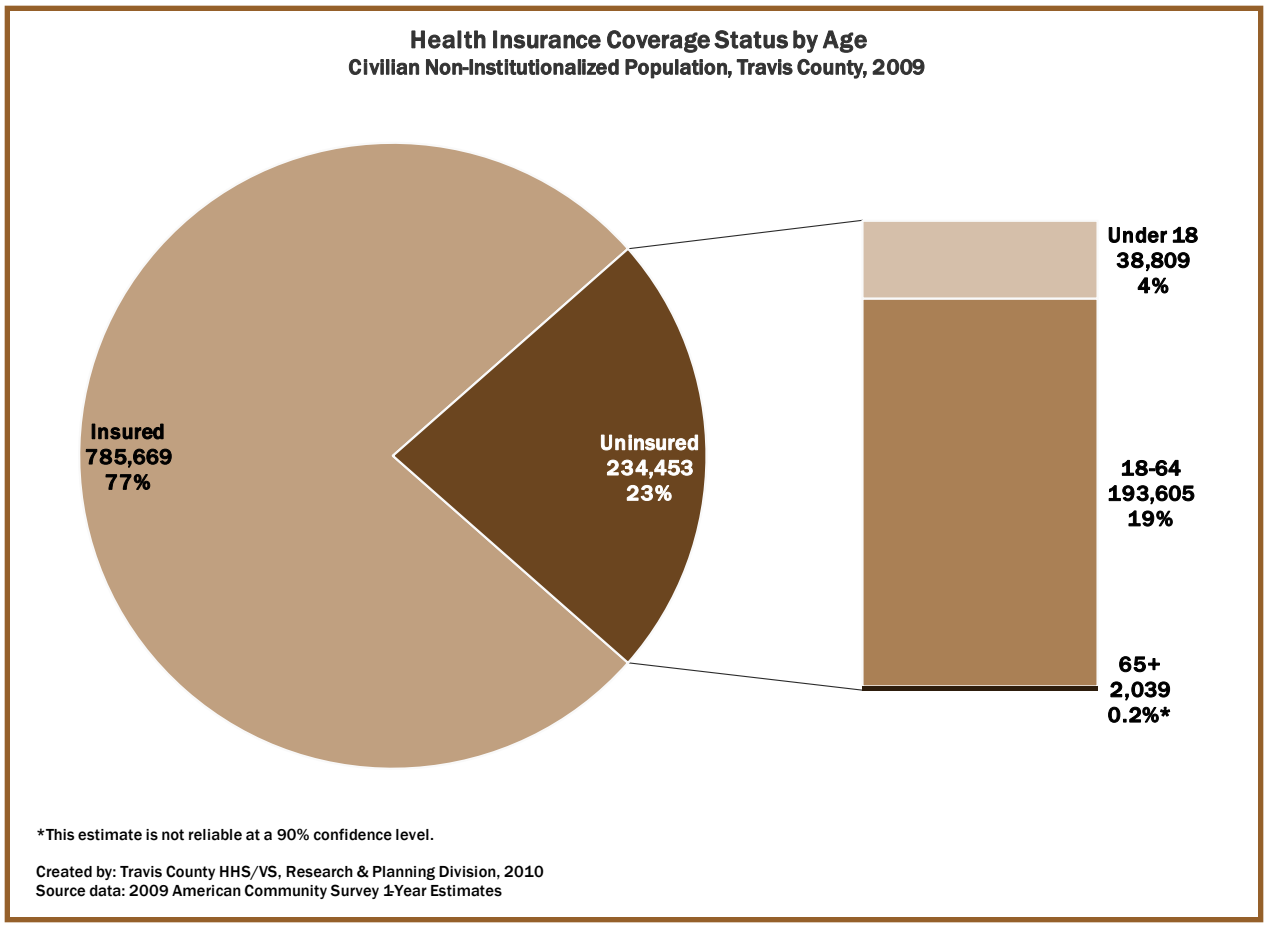
Means of Transportation: The vast majority of Travis County workers aged 16 and older who don't work at home drive to work alone (79% or nearly 400,000 people). Only 11% (approximately 55,000) carpool while just over 4% (about 22,000) use public transportation. The remaining 6% (about 31,000) use other means of transportation, including taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, and walking. An estimated 32,500 residents work at home.

Commute Times: Commute times in Travis County vary by means of transportation. For those driving alone as well as those carpooling, the large majority of commutes are under 30 minutes. For those relying on public transportation, the majority of commutes are 30 or more minutes in duration.

Geographic Comparison of Means of Transportation to Work: The proportion of Travis County workers who drive to work alone (79%) mirrors that of the nation, but is slightly lower than that of the state (83%), and is lower than most other major metropolitan counties in Texas.[17] The proportion of Travis County commuters using public transportation (4%) is similar to the nation (5%), but higher than Texas (2%) and other metropolitan counties in Texas.

[17] Comparison counties included: Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, and Tarrant counties. Of those, Travis County's proportion of workers who drive to work alone had a statistically significant difference from all but Harris County.

Health Insurance



In Travis County, 23% of residents do not have health insurance.[18] Of these 234,453 uninsured individuals, the majority are adults between the ages of 18 and 64.

Geographic Comparison: Travis County's proportion of uninsured residents (23%) is higher than that of the U.S. (15%), but does not differ significantly from that of the state of Texas (24%). Other major metropolitan counties in Texas[19] reveal a variety of rates of uninsurance, from a high of 30% in Dallas County to a low of 21% in Bexar County.

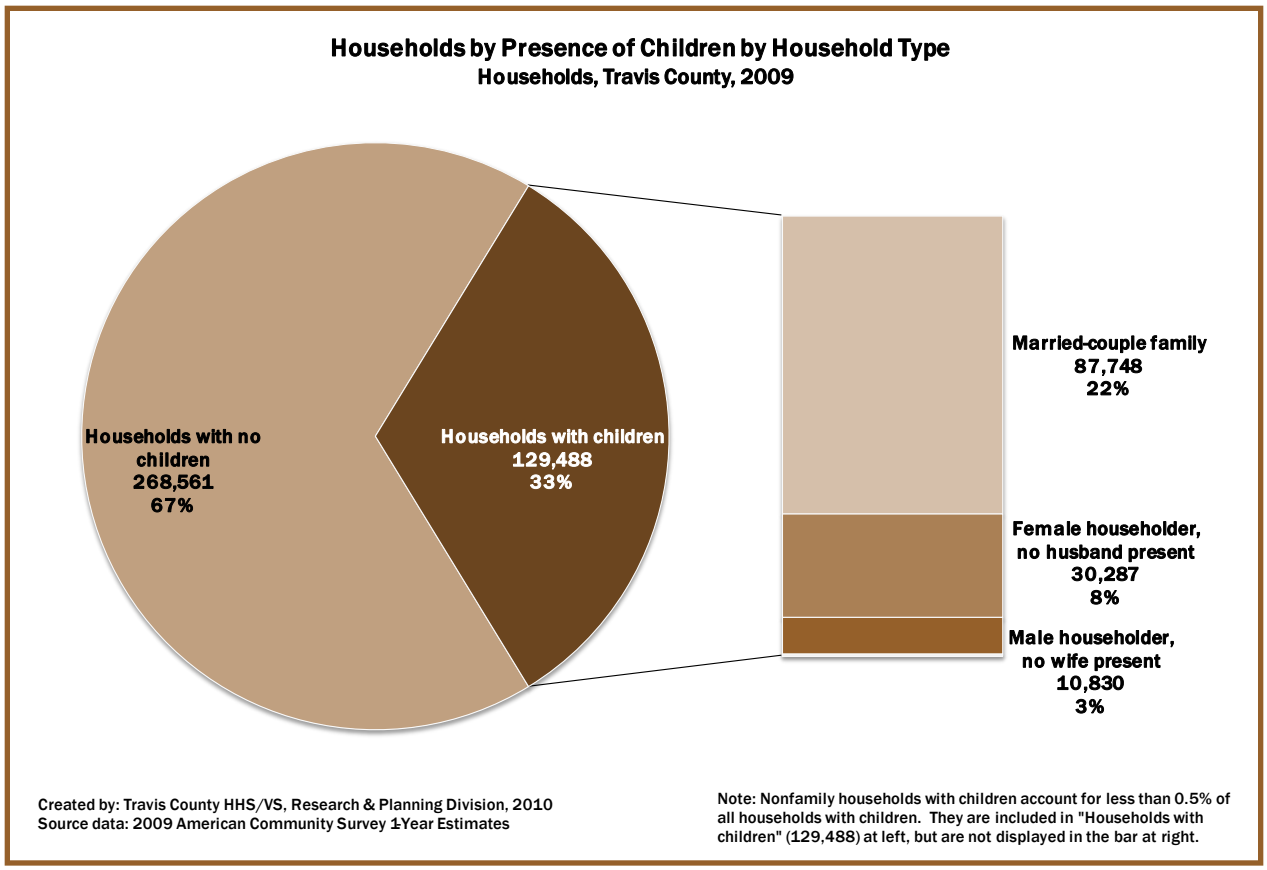
[18] People were considered insured if they were reported to have at least one of the following: Insurance through a current or former employer or union (of respondent or another family member); Insurance purchased directly from an insurance company (by respondent or another family member); Medicare, for people 65 and older or people 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 were considered uninsured. (American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 67-68.)

[19] Comparison counties included: Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, and Tarrant counties.

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Household Type



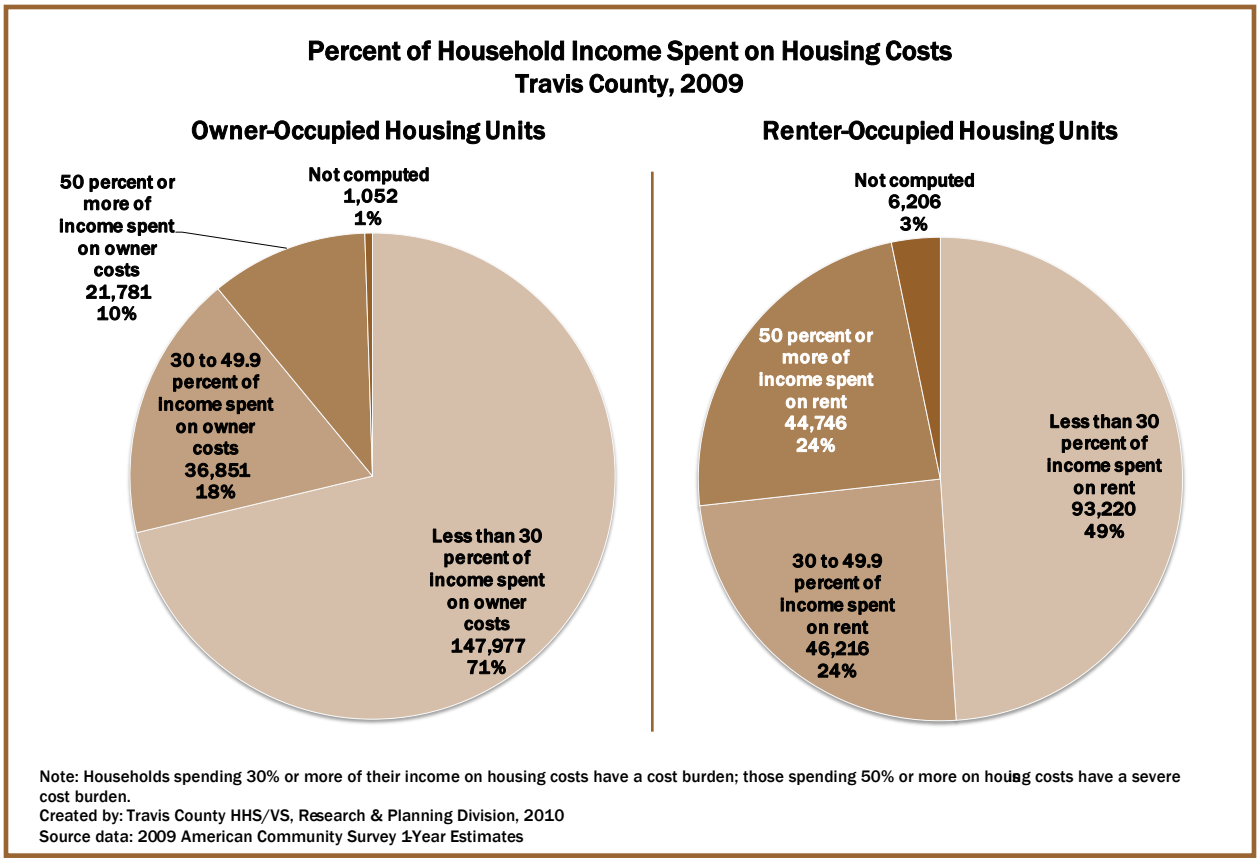
Households by Presence of Children:

- About one-third (33%) of Travis County households include children, while the remaining 67% do not.
- Of those households with children, the majority are married-couple families. Approximately 41,000 (11%) have one householder (the majority female) with no spouse present.

Geographic Comparison:

- Travis County's proportions of households with and without children are very similar to those of the entire U.S. However, in comparison to state averages, Travis County households are less likely to include children (39% of Texas 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.

Renter vs. Owner Cost Burden



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.
Created by: Travis County HHS/VS, Research & Planning Division, 2010
Source data: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

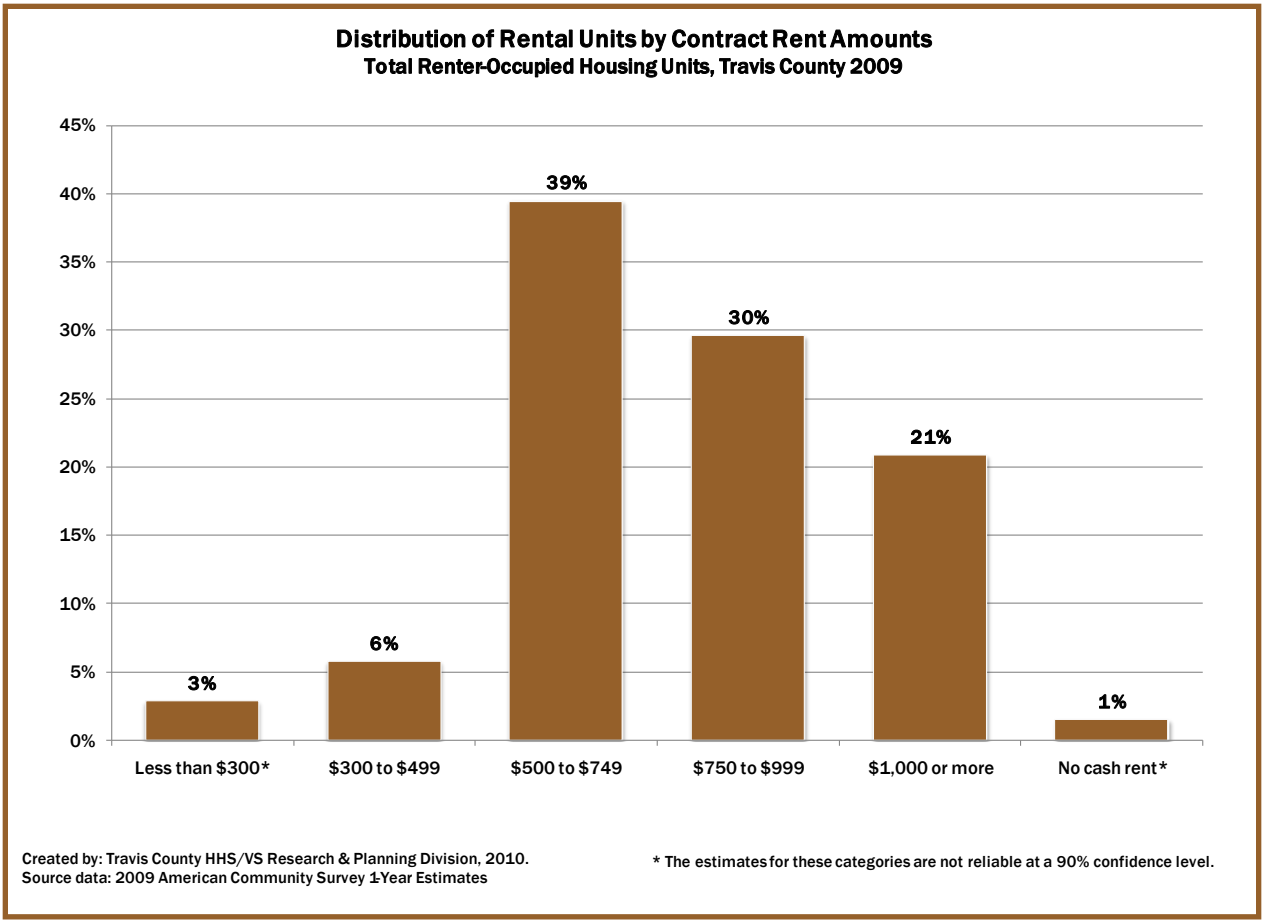
Cost Burden: In Travis County, 52% of occupied housing units are owner-occupied, and 48% are renter-occupied. A large percentage of both renters and owners in Travis County experience a housing cost burden, which is defined as spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs.[20] However, the percent of households that are cost burdened is much higher among renters than owners: 48% of renter households spend 30% or more of their income on rent, and about one quarter (24%) spend at least half of their income on rent; comparatively, 28% of owner households spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs and 10% spend at least half.

Geographic Comparison:

- Travis County renter households experience a higher cost burden rate (48%) than those of the state of Texas (45%), but have similar rates as those of the nation and other metropolitan counties in Texas (Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris and Tarrant counties).
- Travis County owner households' cost burden rate (28%) is lower than that of the nation (30%), but higher than that of the state of Texas (25%). As compared to other metropolitan counties in Texas, the cost burden rate among Travis County owners falls in the middle of the spectrum.

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

Rent Values



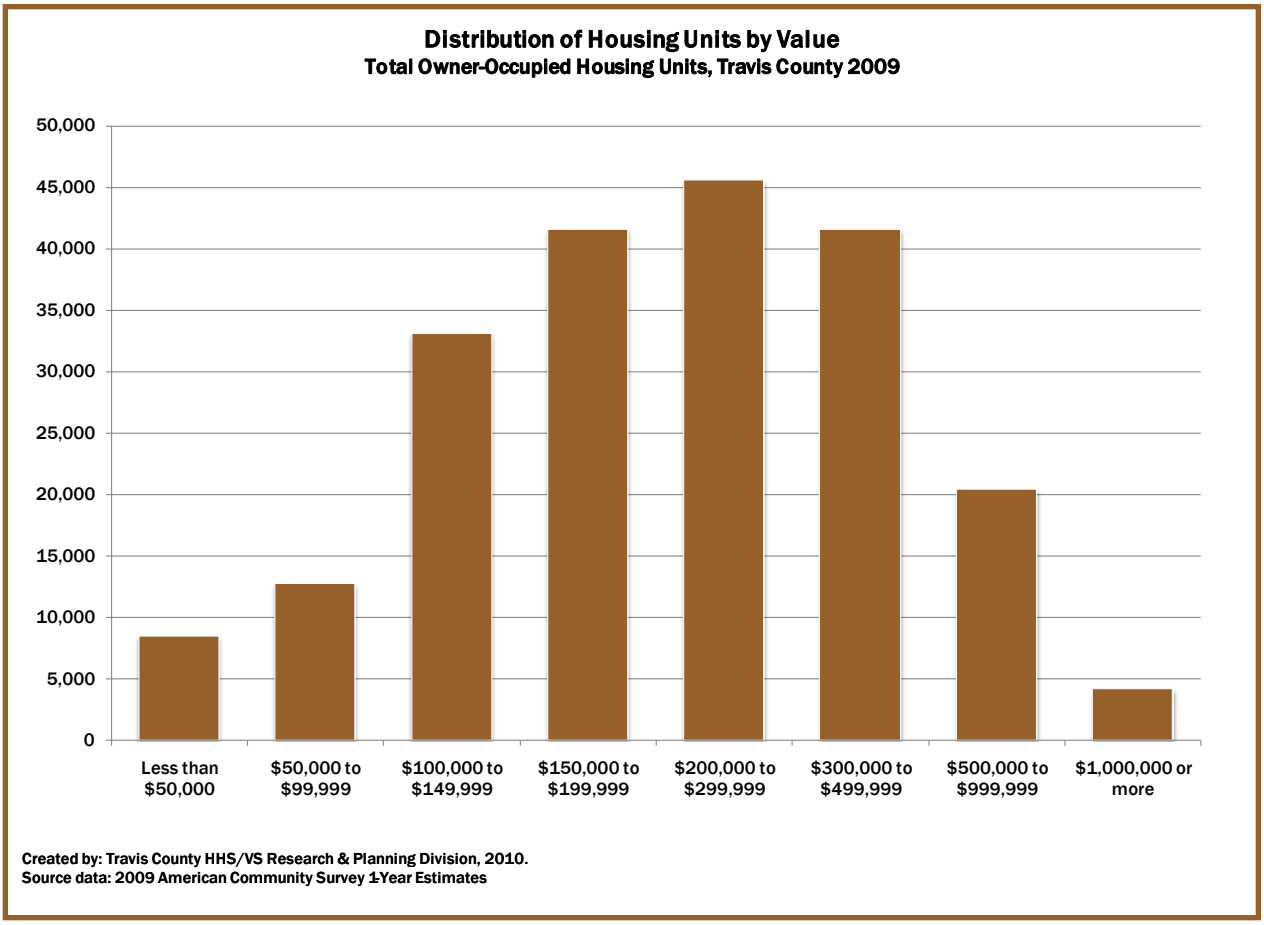
Contract Rent[21] **Distribution:** The Travis County rental market is skewed toward the higher end of rental values. Over half (51%) of Travis County's occupied rental units have rents at or above $750. Only 10% (approximately 16,400) of occupied rental units have rents below $500 (including 1% with no cash rent).[22]

Median Contract Rent: The 2009 median contract rent in Travis County is $758, compared to $632 for Texas and $702 for the U.S.

[21] 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/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 14.)

[22] "No cash rent" refers to housing units that are renter occupied without payment of cash 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/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 14.)

Housing Values

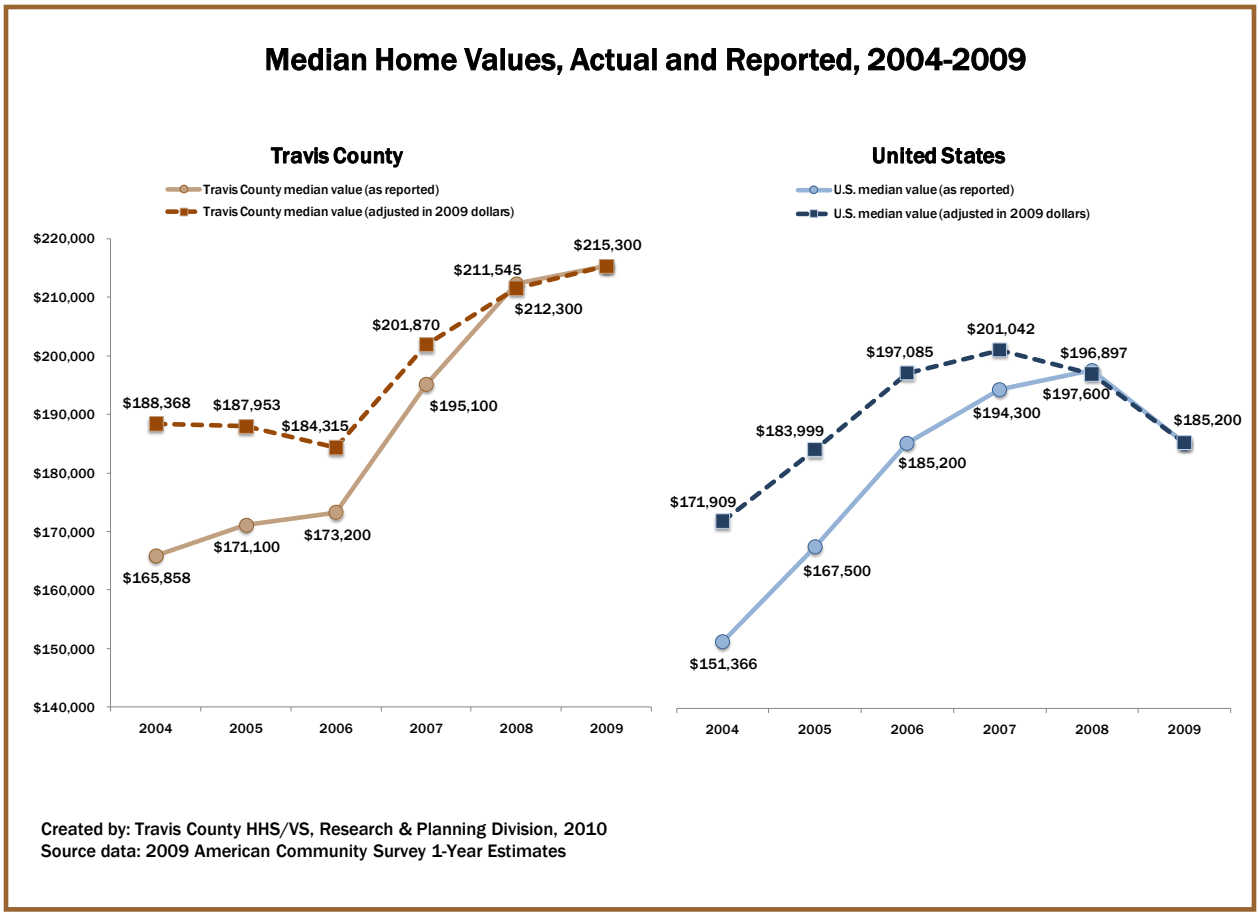


Housing Value[23] **Distribution:** Much of Travis County's owner-occupied housing is clustered in the middle of the value spectrum. Homes valued between $100,000 and $299,999 comprise 58% (approximately 120,300) of owner-occupied housing in Travis County. Only 10% (approximately 21,200) of owner-occupied homes in Travis County are valued at under $100,000.

Median Housing Value: The median housing value in 2009 in Travis County was $215,300. This is higher than that of the U.S. ($185,200), and much higher than that of the state of Texas ($125,800).

[23] 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/Puerto Rico Community Survey 2009 Subject Definitions, p. 40.)

Median Housing Value



Travis County's median home value exhibited a steady rising trend in recent years, followed by a leveling off in 2009. The reported median home value rose from $173,200 in 2006 to $212,300 in 2008; when adjusted for inflation,[24] the rising trend during these years is still evident, although not as sharp. Between 2008 and 2009, the median home value in Travis County did not experience any significant change.

In contrast, while the reported national median home value also increased between 2006 and 2008, when adjusted for inflation, the U.S. median home values show a relatively flat trend during that same time period. Between 2008 and 2009, the U.S. reported median home value fell from $197,600 to $185,200.

This seems to indicate that while national home values appeared to level off over 2006 through 2008 and then fall in 2009, values in the Travis County market continued to rise through 2008 and then level off in 2009.

[24] 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 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) is the primary data source for this chartbook. Data from the 2000 Census and the 2002-2008 ACS surveys are also referenced for specific trend analyses.

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) replaces the long form of the 10-year U.S. Census and collects information on an ongoing basis rather than once every ten years. The survey includes questions about demographic, housing, social and economic characteristics.[i] 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 will become available for many geographies including small areas (state, county, city, town, place, census tracts and block groups).[ii]

ACS Methodology

Sample: The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted every month on independent samples of housing unit[iii] addresses (whether vacant or occupied) and persons in group quarters[iv] facilities, and produces annual or annual average estimates. 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.[v]

For Travis County, the original 2009 (entire 12 month) sample of initial addresses selected was 8,176, and the final number of housing unit interviews (actual sample used to produce results) was 5,323. The group quarters population sample is not available at the county level, but for the entire state of Texas, the initial sample selected was 13,001 and the final number of group quarters person interviews was 10,017.[vi]

Data Collection: 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 phone, 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 size.[vii]

Methodology

Limitations

Sampling Error: 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 (called sampling error) is associated with any estimate based on a sample. In general, the larger the sample, the smaller the sampling error.[viii] In past editions, this chartbook used estimates as reported in the American Community Survey, without testing for the reliability of those estimates. For this year's report, the authors have attempted to minimize this variability by selecting the most reliable data sets available for the characteristics being assessed, and by using the published margins of error to test all estimates and derived estimates for reliability at a 90% confidence level. Estimates with coefficients of variation[ix] of more than 15% were either excluded or footnoted as being unreliable.

Statistical Significance: To test the true significance of a difference in estimates, for example between geographic areas or over time, a statistical test should be conducted. In past years, this chart book has simply reported on the changes observed and did not test for significance. This year, where direct comparisons were made across time or geographies, the authors tested for statistical significance at a 90% confidence level. 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. However, any comparisons explicitly highlighted in the narrative text can be assumed to be statistically significant unless stated otherwise. Some notable exceptions where statistical significance was not found or not possible to determine were also footnoted.

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 handbooks 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 weakened. 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.[x] Thus the response rate for the ACS is high (the 2009 response rate for Texas was 96% for housing units and 97% for group quarters).[xi]

Methodology

Endnotes

[i] A copy of the questionnaire can be found at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/SBasics/SQuest/SQuest1.htm.

[ii] More information on the ACS multi-year estimates and release schedule can be found at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release/.

[iii] 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 2009 Subject Definitions, page 7.)

[iv] 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 2009 Subject Definitions, page 8.) For more information on group quarters, see: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/GroupDefinitions/2009GQ_Definitions.pdf.

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

[vi] Sample sizes are available on the Census Bureau website's American Fact Finder, 2009 American Community Survey, Tables B98001 and B98002, available at: http://factfinder.census.gov.

[vii] American Community Survey Accuracy of the Data (2009), available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2009.pdf.

[viii] U.S. Census Bureau, *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What State and Local Governments Need to Know.* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2009. Available at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/handbooks/.

[ix] 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 State and Local Governments Need to Know,* available at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/handbooks/.

[x] American Community Survey: Must I Respond?, available at: https://ask.census.gov.

[xi] Response rate information is available on the Census Bureau website's American Factfinder, American Community Survey 2009, Tables B98021 and B98022, available at: http://factfinder.census.gov.