

**ANALYSIS OF  
COMMUTING WORKFORCE  
Boone/Winnebago County, Illinois**

**January, 2007**

**Compiled and Prepared by  
THE PATHFINDERS**



**Dallas, Texas**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Pathfinders has employed its experience in producing area workforce assessments for site-selection clients and local and state economic development organizations to produce this evaluation of the Boone/Winnebago County, Illinois commuter workforce. The information presented in this report has been developed independently of the client, and the client has not influenced the findings. For the purposes of this report, Boone County and Winnebago County are considered one entity, and that entity is referred to as Boone/Winnebago County.

By definition, the civilian labor force of a location is a numerical estimate of employed and unemployed people by place of residence. The civilian labor force minus the number of unemployed persons equals the employed labor force. The employed labor force in Boone/Winnebago County is of good size and is certainly capable of providing workers for employers; however, it appears that a certain percentage of these workers choose to live inside Boone/Winnebago County but to work outside the county. The Pathfinders was retained by the Boone/Winnebago County Workforce Investment Board, Rockford Area Economic Development Council, Growth Dimensions for Belvidere and Boone County, and Winnebago County Economic Development to conduct a survey of those individuals who fit this model.

A random sample of telephone numbers of qualified respondents in Boone/Winnebago County was obtained for use in the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing or CATI system. The Pathfinders then conducted telephone interviews with individuals throughout the county. The purpose of these interviews was to identify those individuals who live inside the county but work in a different county. Information was collected on: (1) the county of employment; (2) the reasons for working outside the county; (3) the likelihood of working in Boone/Winnebago County if comparable jobs became available; and (4) such factors as gender, age, education, current pay, current occupation, experience, and skills. Sufficient interviews were completed with qualified individuals to produce results for the entire county labor force which vary by no more than plus or minus 5 percentage points. If the survey were repeated 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be the same as those resulting from a survey of every individual.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Boone/Winnebago County has a labor force of approximately 171,200 of which 7,500 are currently unemployed, resulting in an employed labor force of 163,700.
- Approximately 42,600 people, or 26% of the employed labor force of Boone/Winnebago County, live inside the county but work outside the county. These individuals are referred to in this report as the “commuters”.
- 27% of the commuters report the reason for working outside the county is better salary/benefits in another county.
- Almost 20% of the commuters work in Cook County.
- The average one-way commute distance is 40 miles, and the average commute time is 46 minutes.
- The median age of commuters is 43.
- Over one-third of the commuting labor force (36%) has a two-year degree or higher.
- The largest category of employment of the commuters is manufacturing.
- The median current pay of the commuters is \$25.05 per hour.
- 73% of the commuters would consider taking a comparable job in Boone/Winnebago County if one became available.
- 47% of the commuters would consider taking an available, but not comparable, job in Boone/Winnebago County.



## ASSESSMENT OF THE BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY COMMUTING WORKFORCE

A survey of employed individuals who reside in Boone/Winnebago County was conducted in order to determine the percent of those workers who leave the county each day for work. Survey results indicate that 26% of Boone/Winnebago County workers, or approximately 42,600 people, commute to a neighboring county for employment.

### NUMBER OF BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY COMMUTERS

Description	Number of Persons	Percentage
Workers who commute	42,600	26%

Given that over a quarter of the Boone/Winnebago County employed workforce leaves the county each day for work, certain questions naturally arise, for example:

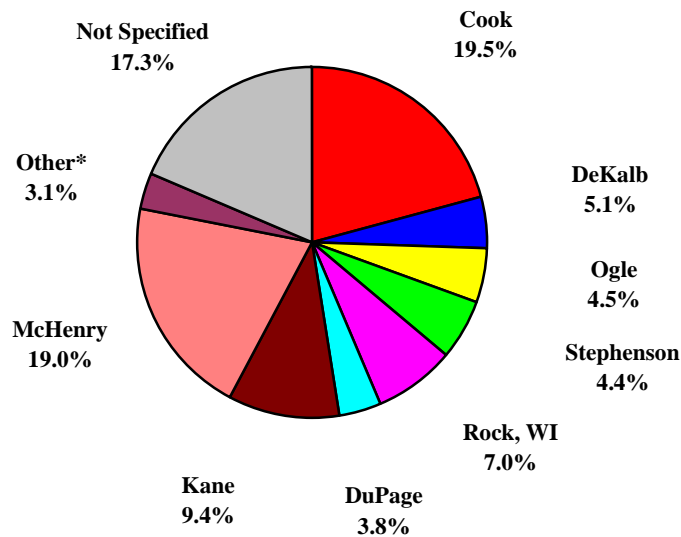
- Where do these commuters work?
- What kinds of jobs do they have?
- How much money do they make?
- Why don't they work in Boone/Winnebago County?
- What kind of education and skills do they have?

This report will answer these and other questions and give an insight into the commuting workforce of Boone/Winnebago County.



Almost 20% of the 42,600 Boone/Winnebago County commuters, or approximately 8,300 individuals, work in Cook County, followed by 19% who work in McHenry County. The chart below illustrates the counties of employment of the Boone/Winnebago County commuters.

### COMMUTERS COUNTY OF EMPLOYMENT



\* “Other” includes Lee, Milwaukee, Walworth and Jo Daviess Counties.

The density map which follows is a graphical depiction of the counties of employment of the Boone/Winnebago County commuters. The percentage of commuters working in each county is portrayed from lowest (white) to highest (dark green). It can easily be seen that the greatest concentration of commuters are found to be employed in Cook and McHenry Counties.





The commuting individuals were surveyed as to their reasons for working outside Boone/Winnebago County. It should be noted that some cross-over exists in these answers therefore the percentages will exceed 100%.

**REASONS FOR WORKING OUTSIDE  
BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY  
42,600 Commuters**

Sector	Percentage
Better Salary/Benefits in Another County	27%
Lack of Jobs in County	26%
Like Current Job	25%
Better Location	21%
Work for Well-Known Company	10%
Seniority	5%
Work involves Traveling/Clients are Outside County	4%
Child Care Availability	3%
Enjoy the Drive/Time for Relaxation	3%
Had Job Before Moving to County	2%
Other*	2%

\* “Other” includes a variety of reasons, each with small representation, such as company transfers to another county and close to retirement.



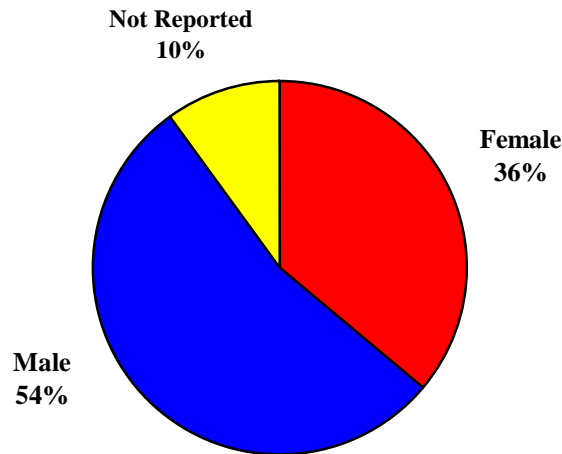


## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

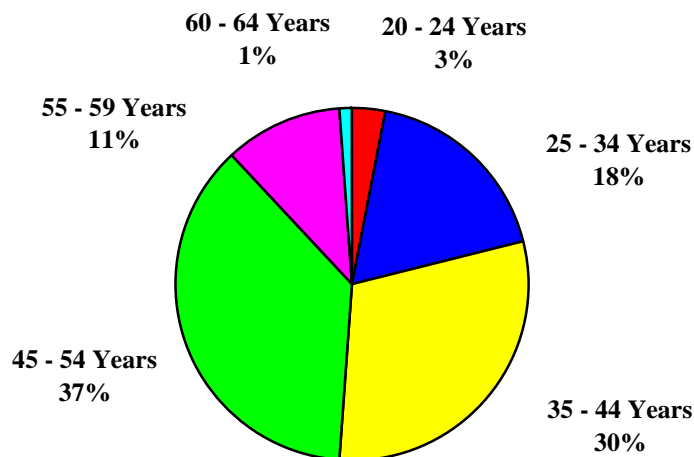
### Boone/Winnebago County

The following charts provide information on various characteristics of those individuals who reside in Boone/Winnebago County but work in a different county. As these data relate solely to those individuals in the county who are commuters, they will vary from data representative of the labor force as a whole.

#### COMMUTERS - GENDER



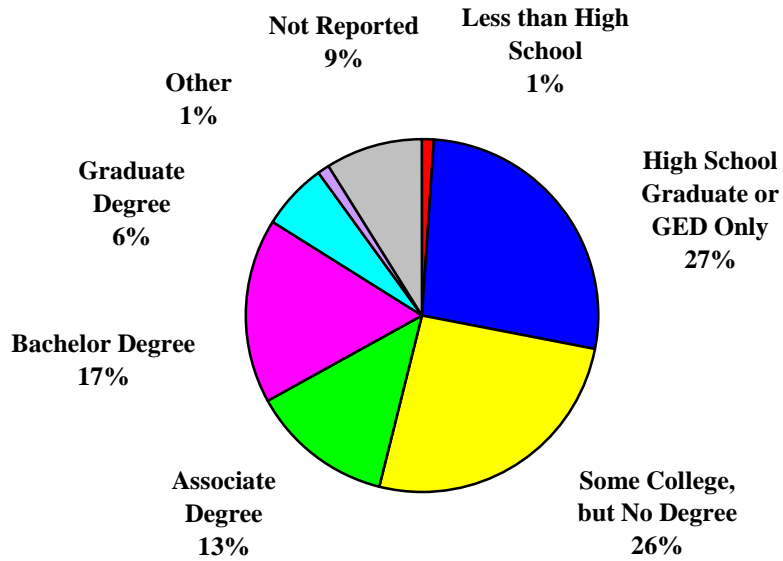
#### COMMUTERS - AGE



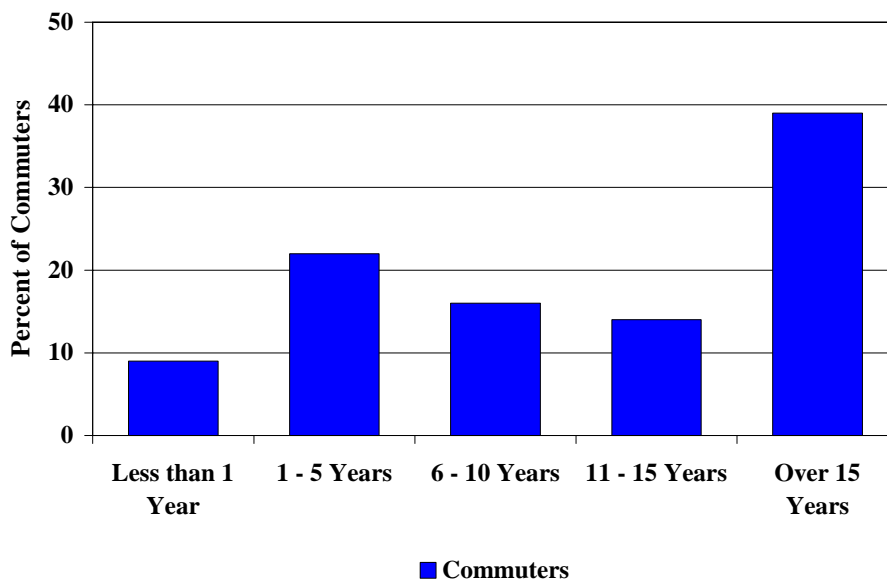
## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

#### EDUCATION



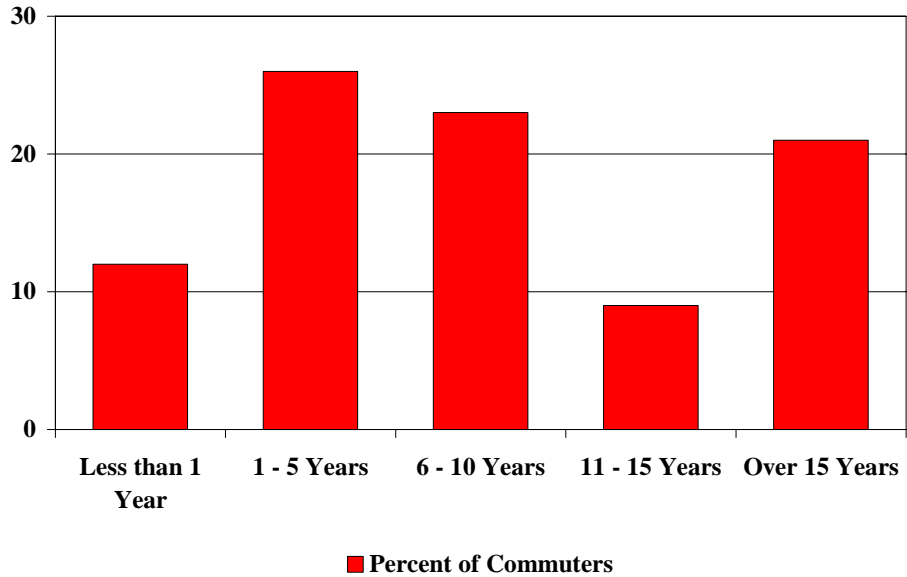
#### LENGTH OF TIME LIVED IN BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY



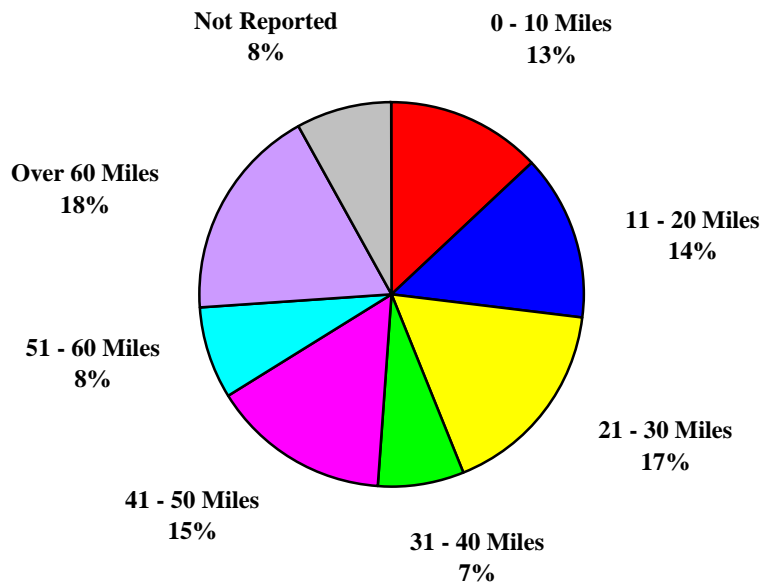
## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

#### LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT JOB



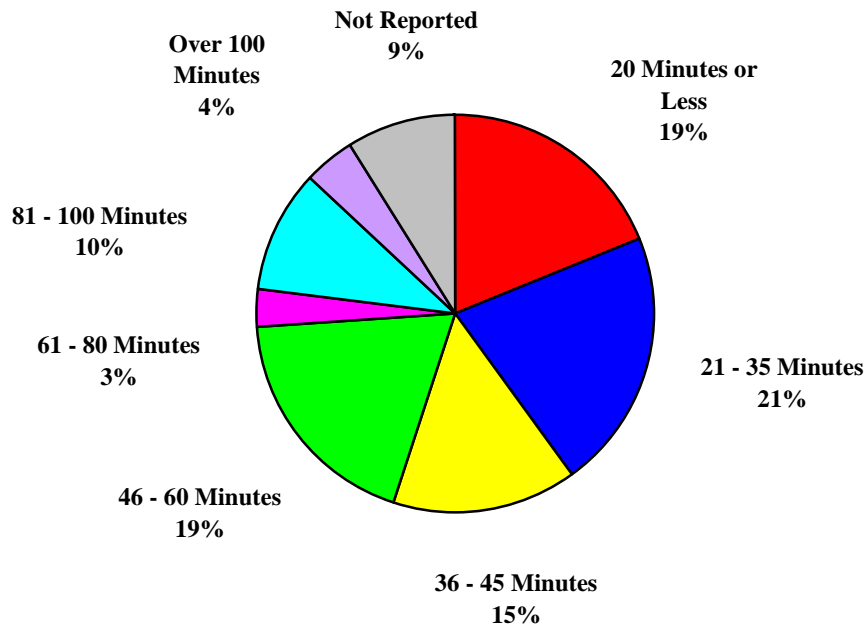
#### COMMUTING DISTANCES



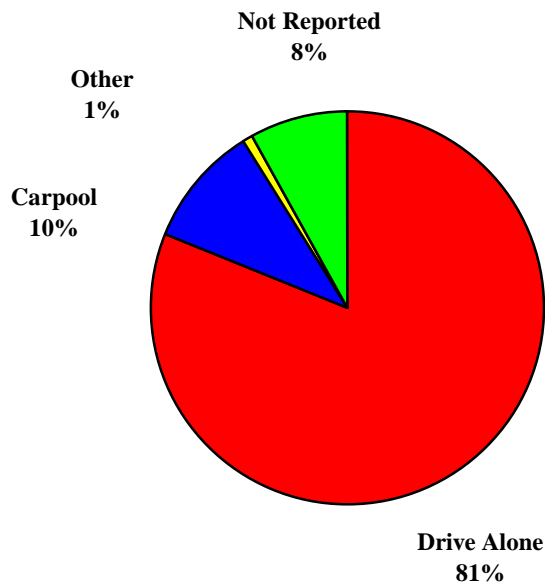
## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

#### COMMUTING TIMES



#### COMMUTING TRANSPORTATION



## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

#### CURRENT SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT (rounded)

Sector	Percentage
Manufacturing/Assembly	15%
Construction/Trades/Utilities	14%
Sales/Services	11%
Medical/Healthcare	9%
Financial/Insurance/Real Estate	8%
Distribution/Transportation/Warehousing	5%

Other sectors of current employment were reported by the commuters, each with less than 5% representation. These included, among others, food service/production and government/civil service.

#### WEEKLY EXPENDITURES

During the course of the survey, the commuters were asked to estimate the amount of money spent each week for fuel, tolls, parking and other expenses related to commuting. The median dollar amount reported was \$48.74 per week. Further, the commuters were asked to estimate the amount spent on miscellaneous purchases made outside of Boone/Winnebago County as a result of their commute to work including meals, entertainment, services, retail purchases, etc. The median dollar amount reported for these expenditures was \$34.97 per week, for a total of approximately \$84.00 spent each week outside Boone/Winnebago County.



**CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS**

**Boone/Winnebago County**

**CURRENT PAY RATES**

The following data represent the current pay rates of the Boone/Winnebago County commuters. Many workers expressed their wage requirements in annual terms, but all wage figures in this report are presented in hourly rates. Selected conversions may add perspective to the hourly rates. Figures presented below are based on 2,080 hours per year.

**CONVERSION CHART**

Hourly	Annually
\$ 10.00	\$ 20,800.00
\$ 12.00	\$ 24,960.00
\$ 14.00	\$ 29,120.00
\$ 16.00	\$ 33,280.00
\$ 18.00	\$ 37,440.00
\$ 20.00	\$ 41,600.00
\$ 22.00	\$ 45,760.00
\$ 24.00	\$ 49,920.00
\$ 26.00	\$ 54,080.00
\$ 28.00	\$ 58,240.00
\$ 30.00	\$ 62,400.00

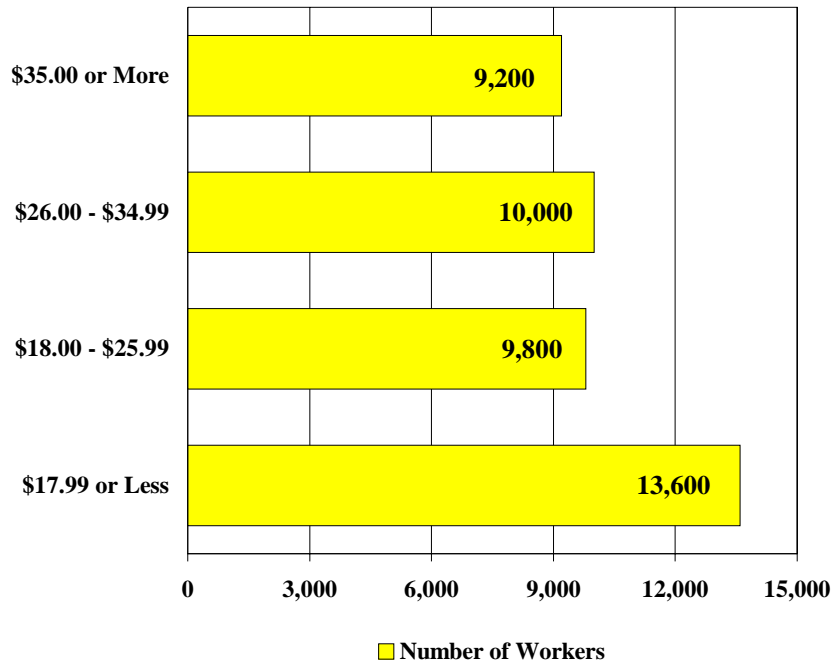
Hourly	Annually
\$ 32.00	\$ 66,560.00
\$ 34.00	\$ 70,720.00
\$ 36.00	\$ 74,880.00
\$ 38.00	\$ 79,040.00
\$ 40.00	\$ 83,200.00
\$ 42.00	\$ 87,360.00
\$ 44.00	\$ 91,520.00
\$ 46.00	\$ 95,680.00
\$ 48.00	\$ 99,840.00
\$ 50.00	\$104,000.00



**CURRENT WAGE RATES PER HOUR OF COMMUTERS BY RANGE**

**Boone/Winnebago County**

**42,600 Commuters**



Utilizing the current wage information as reported by the respondents, the following conclusions can be drawn concerning the Boone/Winnebago County commuters:

- At the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile, the current pay of the commuters is \$11.86 per hour or less.
- At the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, the current pay of the commuters is \$16.03 per hour or less.
- At the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, the current pay of the commuters is \$25.05 per hour or less.
- At the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, the current pay of the commuters is \$31.86 per hour or less.
- The upper 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the commuters has a current pay of \$31.87 per hour or more.



**NUMBER OF COMMUTERS  
AT SPECIFIC CURRENT WAGE RATES PER HOUR (rounded)**

**Boone/Winnebago County**

**42,600 Commuters**

<b>\$9.00 or Less</b>	<b>\$10.00 - \$10.99</b>	<b>\$11.00 - \$11.99</b>	<b>\$12.00 - \$12.99</b>	<b>\$13.00 - \$13.99</b>	<b>\$14.00 - \$14.99</b>
2,400	1,000	1,000	1,300	1,000	1,700

<b>\$15.00 - \$15.99</b>	<b>\$16.00 - \$16.99</b>	<b>\$17.00 - \$17.99</b>	<b>\$18.00 - \$18.99</b>	<b>\$19.00 - \$19.99</b>	<b>\$20.00 - \$20.99</b>
2,200	2,000	1,000	1,000	500	1,700

<b>\$21.00 - \$21.99</b>	<b>\$22.00 - \$22.99</b>	<b>\$23.00 - \$23.99</b>	<b>\$24.00 - \$24.99</b>	<b>\$25.00 - \$25.99</b>	<b>\$26.00 - \$26.99</b>
800	800	800	2,000	2,200	600

<b>\$27.00 - \$27.99</b>	<b>\$28.00 - \$28.99</b>	<b>\$29.00 - \$29.99</b>	<b>\$30.00 - \$30.99</b>	<b>\$31.00 - \$31.99</b>	<b>\$32.00 - \$32.99</b>
1,000	300	1,000	2,500	3,700	300

<b>\$33.00 - \$33.99</b>	<b>\$34.00 - \$34.99</b>	<b>\$35.00 - \$35.99</b>	<b>\$36.00 - \$36.99</b>	<b>\$37.00 - \$37.99</b>	<b>\$38.00 - \$38.99</b>
300	300	300	500	300	800

<b>\$39.00 - \$39.99</b>	<b>\$40.00 - \$40.99</b>	<b>\$41.00 - \$41.99</b>	<b>\$42.00 - \$42.99</b>	<b>\$43.00 - \$43.99</b>	<b>\$44.00 - \$44.99</b>
300	500	300	300	800	500

<b>\$45.00 - \$45.99</b>	<b>\$46.00 - \$46.99</b>	<b>\$47.00 - \$47.99</b>	<b>\$48.00 - \$48.99</b>	<b>\$49.00 - \$49.99</b>	<b>\$50.00 or More</b>
300	800	300	800	300	2,100





## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

The following table shows the approximate number of commuters who are experienced in the categories listed. It should be noted that some cross-over exists as those individuals polled may have experience in more than one job classification.

### EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE (rounded)

#### 42,600 Commuters

Experience	Number of Commuters	Percentage
Office Operations	19,600	46%
Sales/Customer Service	16,200	38%
Middle Management	15,300	36%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	12,800	30%
Warehouse/Distribution/Transportation	12,400	29%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	10,200	24%
Information Technology/Telecommunications	8,100	19%
Electronics/Engineering	8,100	19%
Upper Management	7,700	18%
Medical/Health Sciences	7,200	17%
Call Center	5,500	13%



## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUTERS

### Boone/Winnebago County

The following table shows the approximate number of commuters who are skilled in the categories listed. It should be noted that some cross-over exists as those individuals polled may have skills in more than one job classification.

### EMPLOYMENT SKILLS (rounded)

#### 42,600 Commuters

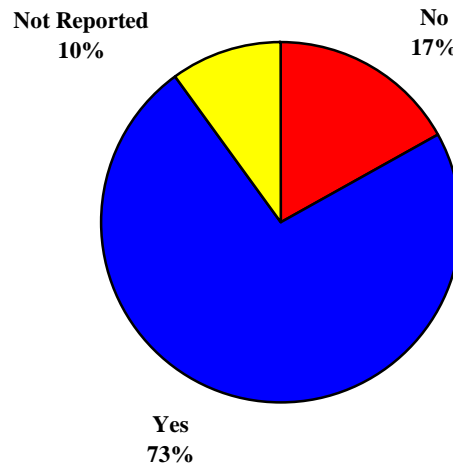
Skills	Number of Commuters	Percentage
Office Operations	17,500	41%
Middle Management	14,500	34%
Warehouse/Materials Handling	12,800	30%
Manufacturing/Assembly/Fabrication	12,400	29%
Maintenance/Installation/Repair	10,200	24%
Technician/Quality Assurance	8,900	21%
Upper Management	8,500	20%
Information Technology/Telecommunications	8,500	20%
Electronics/Engineering	7,200	17%
Medical/Health Sciences	6,800	16%



**COMMUTERS’ OPINIONS ON COMPARABLE / AVAILABLE JOBS  
Boone/Winnebago County**

The approximately 42,600 individuals who live in but work outside of Boone/Winnebago County were surveyed as to whether they would consider taking a job in Boone/Winnebago County if one comparable to their current job became available. As shown below, 73% of these workers responded positively.

**CONSIDER TAKING A COMPARABLE JOB  
IN BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY?**



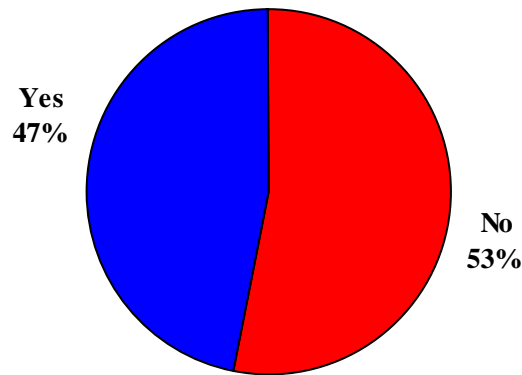
Response	Number of Commuters*	Percentage
Yes	31,100	73%
No	7,200	17%
Not Reported	4,300	10%

\* rounded



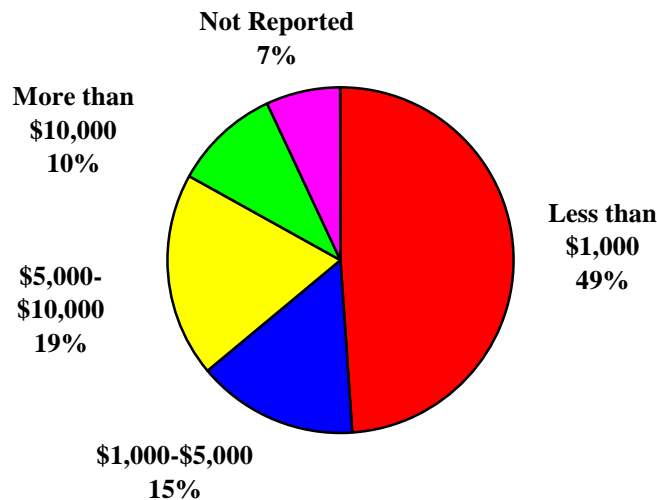
Further, those individuals who work outside Boone/Winnebago County were surveyed as to whether they would consider taking a job in Boone/Winnebago County that was available but not comparable to their current job. 47% of these workers responded positively.

**CONSIDER TAKING AN AVAILABLE, BUT NOT COMPARABLE,  
JOB IN BOONE/WINNEBAGO COUNTY?**



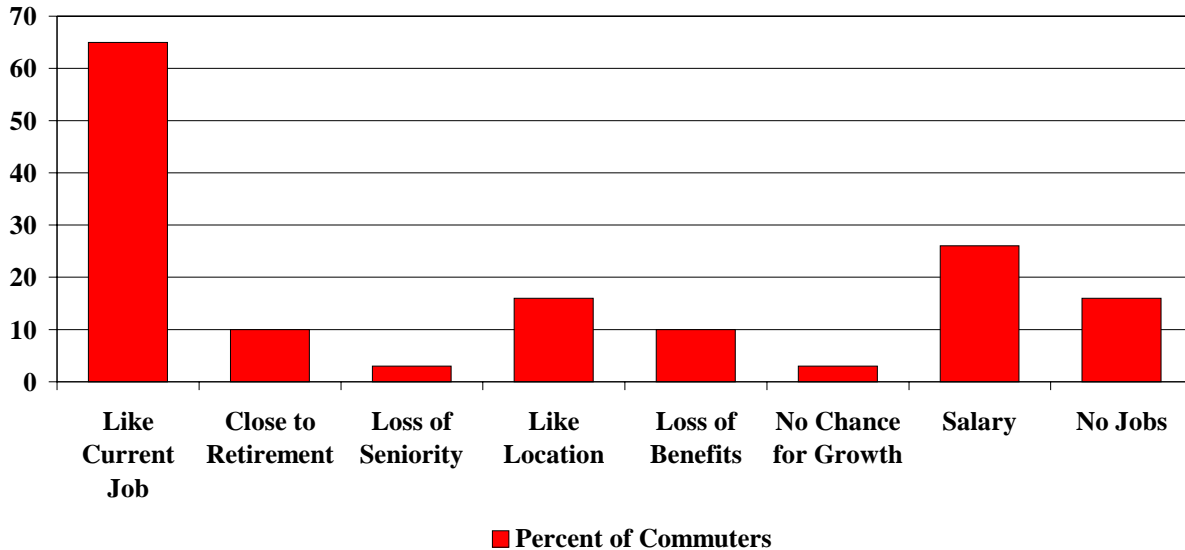
The commuters who would take an available, but not comparable, job in Boone/Winnebago County were asked how much of a reduction in annual salary they would be willing to take in order to work in their home county.

**Reduction in Annual Salary**

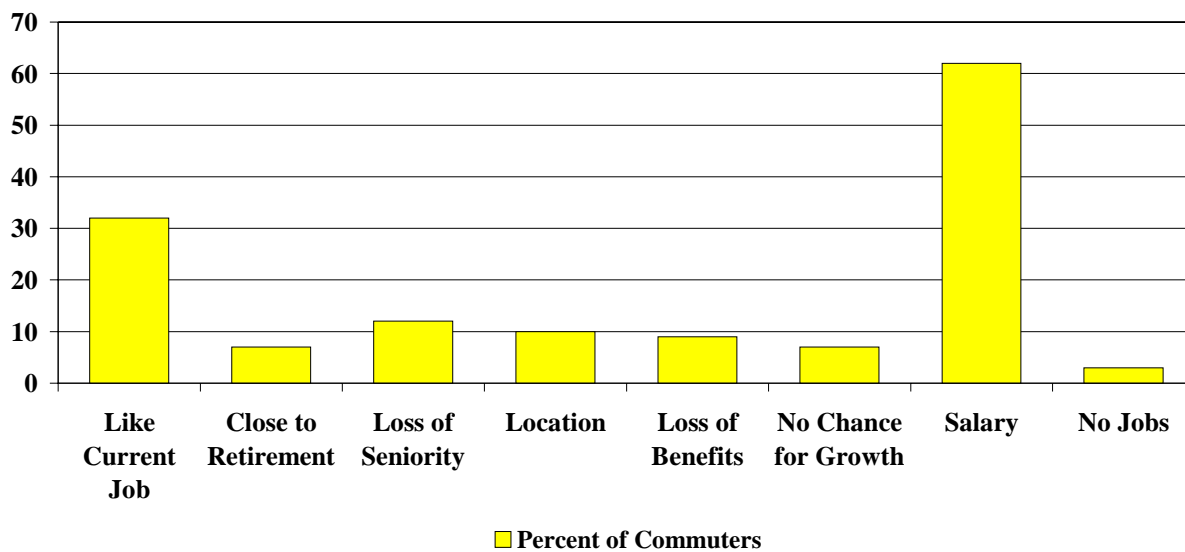


Those individuals who responded negatively to the questions were then asked why they would not consider taking a job in Boone/Winnebago County if: (a) one comparable to their current job became available and (b) one was available, but not comparable, to their current job. The reasons are shown in the chart below. It should be noted that some cross-over exists in these answers.

### REASONS FOR NOT TAKING A COMPARABLE JOB



### REASONS FOR NOT TAKING AN AVAILABLE JOB



## CLOSING REMARKS

The foregoing report represents an assessment of the commuting workforce in Boone/Winnebago County. The information gathered from the household survey of individuals, after being tabulated and analyzed, documents the number of commuters, their counties of employment, their reasons for commuting and their likelihood of considering employment in Boone/Winnebago County. Also included in the assessment are such factors as age, gender, education, current pay, current occupation and commuting distances of these individuals.

In total, approximately 42,600 individuals live in Boone/Winnebago County and work in a different county. Of these individuals, 31,100 (73%) would consider working in Boone/Winnebago County if a job comparable to their own became available. The reader is cautioned that, while the number of commuters identified in the region, as well as their skills, experience, education, and costs, is accurate, all of those individuals may not be acceptable candidates for an employer. Their previous work records, stability, integrity, intelligence, appearance, and other factors are not considered in this report.

The information contained in this report can be used as an aid by local officials in their economic development efforts to attract these commuters into Boone/Winnebago County. In order for these workers to stay in Boone/Winnebago County, jobs comparable to their own will need to be created. With the continued attraction of new companies for the purpose of job creation, these individuals might well bring their skills and experience, plus their dollars, back into Boone/Winnebago County. Attracting new employers to the county can also be considered a local business retention and expansion initiative by increasing the potential customer base for those resident businesses which sell their goods and services to customers within the boundaries of the county.





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