



# NHTS BRIEF

National Household Travel Survey

July 2008

## Working At Home—The Quiet Revolution

Many workers dream of working at home, to replace stressful commutes, save time and gas money, and help the environment. Because of electronic communication and increased acceptance in professional occupations, productive and seamless telecommuting is becoming a more feasible option for employers and workers. As a result, the number of workers who work at home is on the rise.

The 2001 NHTS shows that 10.4 million workers telecommuted at least occasionally (at minimum, once in the past two months) instead of traveling to their normal workplace. Since 1995, there has been a dramatic shift in who works at home. Not only are they greater in number, but current telecommuters include a greater percentage of men, persons in high income households, and suburbanites as compared to 1995. The changing character of telecommuters is shown in Exhibit 1.

Telecommuters have much longer commutes than average – in 2001 their one-way distance to work was 17.4 miles compared to 12.1 for all workers. Longer commutes are associated with higher income male workers, who may find greater time and money benefits from working at home.

The 2001 NHTS data indicate that the most likely candidates for telecommuting are workers in technical, professional and sales/service fields of employment, as shown in Exhibit 2.

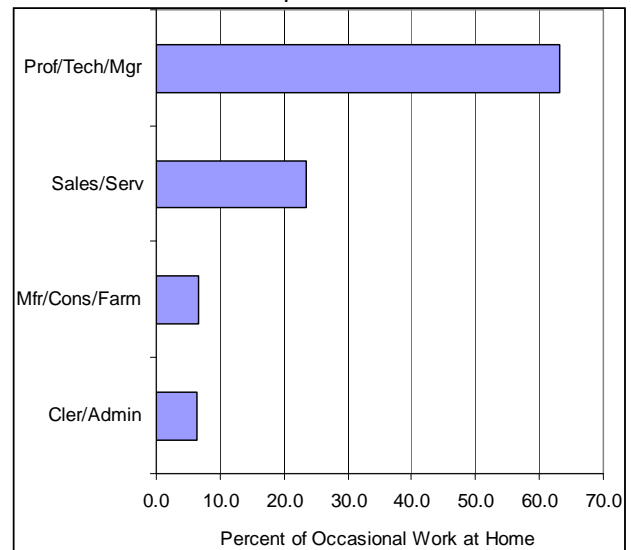
Exhibit 1 – Characteristics of People who Occasionally Work at Home Instead of Traveling to Their Workplace, 1995 and 2001

|  | 1995  | 2001  |
|--|-------|-------|
| <b>Gender</b> (percent work at home)         |       |       |
| <b>Men</b>                                   | 56.9% | 61.7% |
| <b>Women</b>                                 | 43.1% | 38.3% |
| <b>Income</b> (percent work at home)         |       |       |
| <b>Less than \$40K</b>                       | 31.3% | 10.4% |
| <b>\$40-75K</b>                              | 22.0% | 17.4% |
| <b>\$75K or more</b>                         | 23.4% | 53.2% |
| <b>Not reported</b>                          | 23.3% | 19.0% |
| <b>Mean Age</b> (years)                      | 40.4  | 41.5  |
| <b>Average distance to work</b> (miles)      | 14.7  | 17.5  |
| <b>Home Location</b> (percent work at home)* |       |       |
| <b>Suburban</b>                              | 68.9% | 78.5% |
| <b>Urban</b>                                 | 15.6% | 8.6%  |
| <b>Rural</b>                                 | 14.7% | 12.9% |

Source: NHTS Data Series

\*In 1995, 0.8% of households did not have coded geography

Exhibit 2 – Occupations of Telecommuters



Source: NHTS Data Series

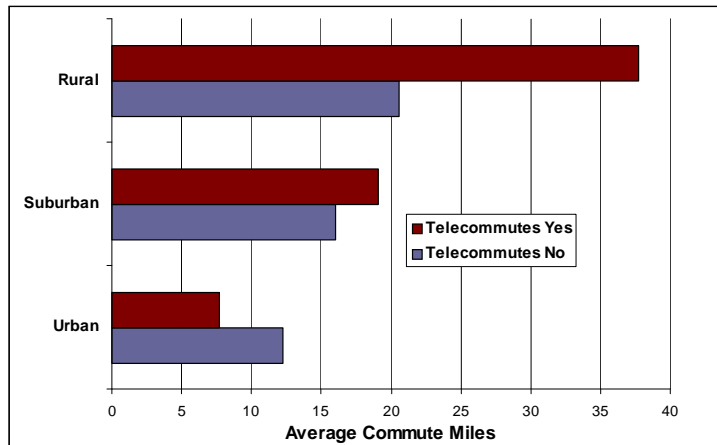
Interestingly, more than twice as many older workers (65 and over) report that they work from home in 2001 as compared to 1995. The NHTS series is tracking this rise in 'working retirement' which may surge as the baby-boomers retire from their professional careers.

In suburban and especially rural areas, workers who sometimes work at home have much longer commutes than other workers (see Exhibit 3). In contrast, workers in urban areas overall have shorter commutes, and the urban workers who occasionally work at home have shorter commutes than other urban workers.

Due to the greater average commute distance for telecommuters, the savings in gas consumption for the days that they do not go in to work is nearly 18 million gallons (as shown in Exhibit 4). With today's fuel cost at a national average of \$4.10, the total daily savings is almost \$74 million.

Working at home benefits workers, who save time and money, and benefits the greater society in reduced congestion, saved fuel, and better air quality. For transportation planners and policy makers, it is important to understand telecommuting trends and implications. The 2008 NHTS includes additional information related to the flexibility workers have in schedule and start times and their telecommuting and work at home options.

**Exhibit 3 – Miles Spent Commuting by Geography**



Source: NHTS Data Series

**Exhibit 4 – Fuel Saved for each Work-at-Home Day**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Number of workers</b>  | <b>145,272,000</b> |
| <b>Number of workers who sometimes work at home</b>               | <b>10,389,672</b>  |
| <b>Percent</b>  | <b>7.2%</b>        |
| <b>Average one-way distance to work for those workers (miles)</b> | <b>17.5</b>        |
| <b>Miles saved each work at home day</b>                          | <b>363,638,520</b> |
| <b>Gas saved each work at home day (gallons)*</b>                 | <b>17,913,228</b>  |
| * using fleet average (NHTS/EIA 2006) of 20.3 mpg                 |                    |

Source: NHTS Data Series

Data and Publications at your fingertips:

**Website:** <http://nhts.ornl.gov>

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- "Rising Fuel Costs—A Big Impact"
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