

Working at Home: The Quiet Revolution



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Many workers who sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic each morning dream of working at home, to replace stressful commutes with relaxed mornings, save time and gas money, and maybe even help the environment. Because of electronic communication, the nature of working at home is changing rapidly, and the number of workers who work at home (at least occasionally) is rising.

The NHTS data series shows that 10.4 million workers work from home occasionally instead of traveling to their normal workplace. Since 1995, there has been a dramatic shift toward more men working at home, higher-income older workers, and far more suburbanites. The changing character of workers who sometimes work at home is shown in Exhibit 1.

People who occasionally work at home have much longer commutes than average--in 2001 the 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.

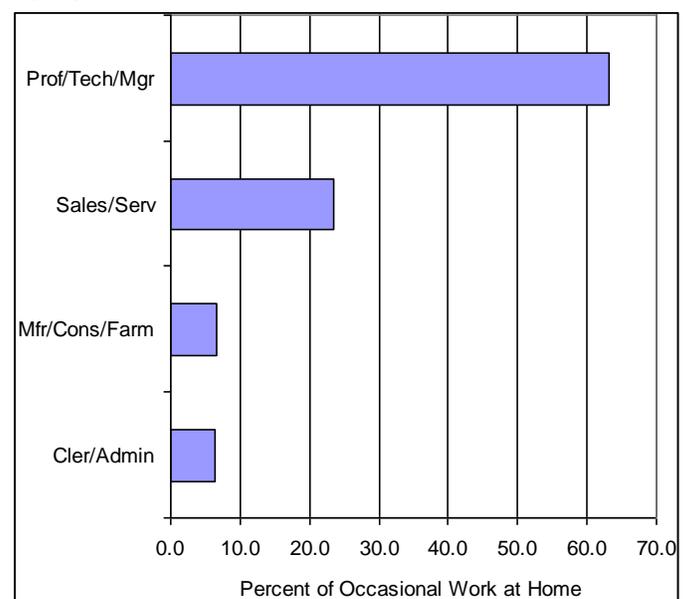
The most likely candidates for occasional work at home are workers in technical, professional and sales/service fields of employment, as shown in Exhibit 2. Interestingly, more than twice as many older workers (65 and over) report that they work from home. The NHTS series is tracking this rise in 'working retirement' which may surge as the baby-boomers retire from their professional careers.

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

	1995	2001
Men	56.9	61.7
Women	43.1	38.3
<40K	31.3	10.4
\$40-75	22	17.4
75+	23.4	53.2
NR	23.3	19
Mean Age	40.4	41.5
Distance to work	14.7	17.5
Suburban	68.9	78.5
Urban	15.6	8.6
Rural	14.7	12.9

Source: NHTS Data Series, in 1995 0.8% of households did not have coded geography

Exhibit 2 – Occupations of Occasional Work-at-Home



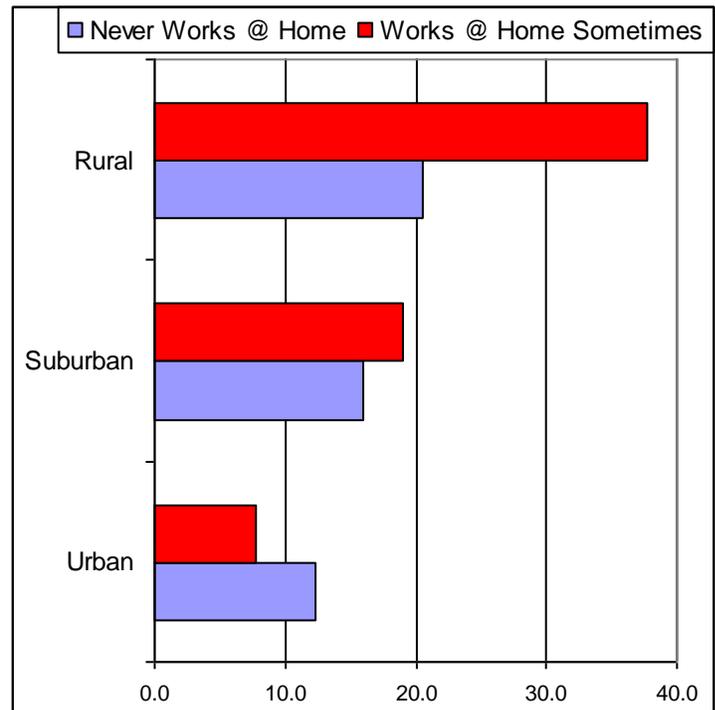
In suburban and especially rural areas, workers who sometimes work at home have much longer commutes than other workers (see Exhibit 3). In contrast, workers in urban areas overall have shorter commutes, and the urban workers who occasionally work at home have shorter commutes than other urban workers.

In addition, the workers in all areas that sometimes work at home have a slightly lower average number of daily trips compared to other workers, mostly because nearly twice as many of these workers do not travel at all on an average day.

Because of the longer commute distance of workers who occasionally work at home, 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).

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 track the trends in workers who work occasionally at home. The new NHTS includes more detail 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

Number of workers	145,272,000
Number of workers who sometimes work at home	10,389,672
Percent	7.2%
Average one-way distance to work (miles) for those workers	17.5
Miles saved each work at home day	363,638,520
Gas saved each work at home day (gallons)*	17,913,228

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