



LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL ANALYSIS BRIEF

HOMEBOODIES AND ROAD WARRIORS

Nancy McGuckin
www.travelbehavior.us

The underlying premise of *daily* travel is that people fulfill their need for employment, goods and services by accessing those opportunities through travel outside of the home. In contrast, there is no similar underlying premise for *long-distance* travel—those trips to destination 100 miles or more from home. Beyond travel required as part of one’s job (only about 22 percent of long-distance trip-making is business travel) it is complicated to account for all the factors that combine to motivate people to embark on a long trip.

Maybe surprisingly, quite a large percentage of the population doesn’t engage in long-distance travel at all. From the last available data the average American took between 4.5 long-distance trips per capita per year¹ (including those who travel and those who don’t), or about one trip per month per household. However, 35 percent of people 18 and older reported no long-distance travel at all (shown in Exhibit 1).

‘Homebodies’, who report no long distance travel in an average year, are slightly older on average, less likely to be employed, and report lower incomes. At the other end of the spectrum the ‘Road Warriors’ represent just 5 percent of the population but account for 20 percent of the long-distance trips. The road warriors are slightly younger, more likely to be employed, and report higher incomes than other travelers.

Exhibit 1 – Characteristics of Different Types of Traveler

(The 1995 ATS defines long-distance as trips with a destination 100 miles or more away from home)

	Number of Trips per Year				
	Homebody (Zero Trips)	Average (1-5)	Frequent Traveler (6-20)	Road Warrior (21 or more)	All (People 18+)
Percent of People	35%	40%	20%	5%	100%
Percent of Trips		35%	45%	20%	100%
Per Capita Trip Rate		4.1	9.8	23.2	4.5
Mean Trip Length		524.4	417.4	337.2	417.2
Percent Worker	53%	65%	71%	78%	63%
Percent Business Travel		8%	16%	42%	22%
Other Family Members on Trip		1.1	1.0	0.6	0.9
Average Nights Away		4.9	3.3	2.2	3.5
Mean Income	\$33,708	\$45,334	\$55,231	\$63,991	\$43,928
Average Age	46.0	43.2	43.8	44.7	44.4

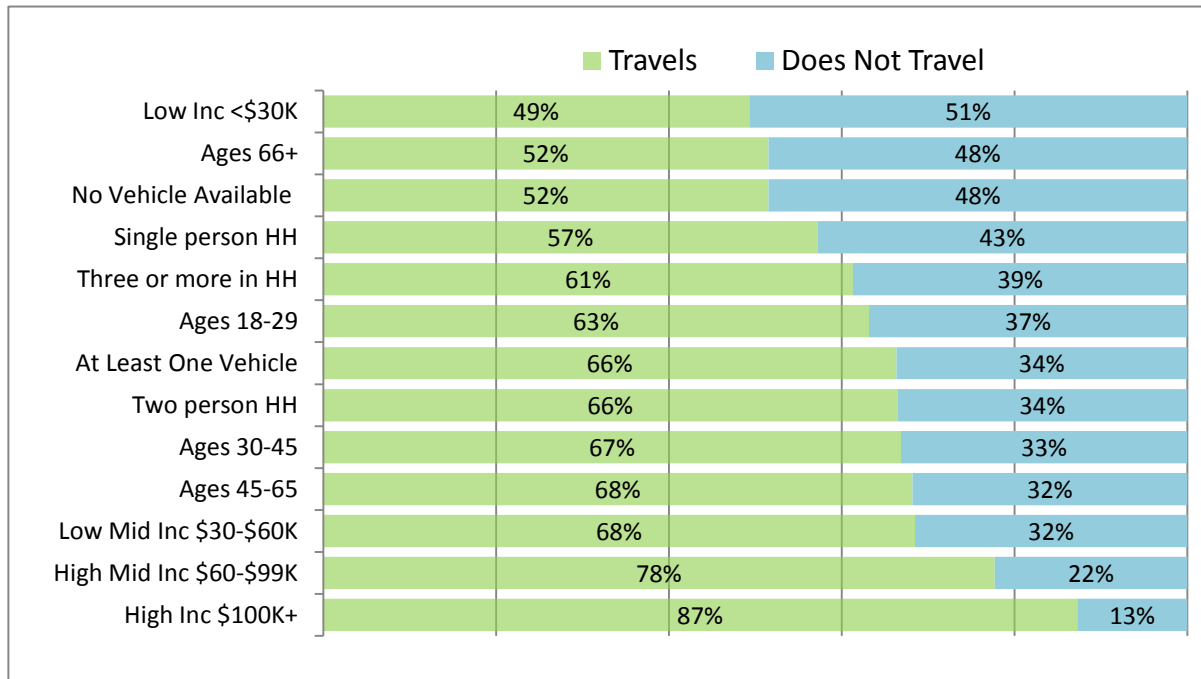
For a traveler who makes an average number of trips per year (between 1 and 5) very few are for business, just 8 percent. The trips these average travelers make are longer both in distance and

¹ This brief presents McGuckin’s analysis of the 1995 ATS data files—the most recent large sample long-distance national travel survey. See: [American Travel Survey \(ATS\) 1995 - RITA | BTS | Transtats](#)

duration: the mean trip length (524.4 miles) is a third longer than those for road warriors, and the average night's stay is over twice as long (4.9 nights away). In comparison the road warrior travels 42 percent of the time for business, has the shortest trip lengths, and averages just 2.2 nights per trip.

Within each category of income, age, and household size shown in Exhibit 2, half to most people report at least one long-distance trip. For example, about half of the people in the lowest income group report long distance travel and half do not. Similarly, about half the people in the oldest age group (66 and older) report travel and half do not. Even about half of the people living in households without vehicles report at least one long-distance trip a year.

Exhibit 2 - Characteristics of People who Take Long Distance Trips and Those Who Do Not



A variety of statistics, such as numbers of travelers, person-miles traveled, and total travel receipts, indicate that long-distance travel is growing and becoming increasingly important to the U.S. economy. Available national statistics indicate that the amount of long-distance travel by Americans doubled between 1977 and 2001². But current information to assess long-distance travel trends and the characteristics of travelers is lacking. Timely and reliable information about business and leisure long-distance travel—including who is traveling, together or alone, for what reasons, and by what means—is required to help policy makers balance investments and plan for future needs.

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² The USDOT sponsored the American Travel Survey in 1977 and 1995, which defined long distance travel as trips of 100 miles or more away from home. Some of these data were updated at the national level with a smaller sample in the 2001 National Household Travel Survey.