2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce

Presented by

Global Workplace Analytics

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Key Findings

Telecommuting Demographics

- Regular telecommuting grew 115% in the past decade, nearly 10 times faster than the rest of the workforce.

- The average annual income for most telecommuters is $4,000 higher than that of non-telecommuters.

- The percent of women and men who telecommute is about equal.

- Half of telecommuters are 45 years of age or older, compared to just 41% of the overall workforce.

- Telecommuters are, on average, more highly educated than other employees. Approximately 53% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 37% of non-telecommuters.

- Telecommuting is most common in Management occupations, but employees in Computer, Mathematical, and Military occupations work at home much more frequently than their peers.

- While the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry has the highest percentage of telecommuters relative to its share of the workforce, the Management of Companies and Agriculture industries top the list because of an administrative job component.

- In more than half of the top U.S. metros, telecommuting exceeds public transportation as the commute option of choice. It has grown far faster than any other commute mode.

Telecommuting Geography

- Telecommuting grew the most in Chattanooga, TN (325% increase), Bremerton-Silverdale, WA (273%), and Youngstown, OH (246%).

- Telecommuting is most prevalent in Boulder, CO (8.5%), Corvallis, OR (6.9%), and Raleigh, NC (6.2%).

- Telecommuting is least prevalent in Corpus Christi, TX (1.3%), Bloomington, IN (1.3%), and Lafayette, LA (1.0%).

Access to Telecommuting

- Forty percent more U.S. employers offered flexible workplace options than they did in 2010. Still, only 7% make it available to most of their employees.

- Larger companies are most likely to offer telecommuting options to most of their employees.

- New England and Mid-Atlantic region employers are the most likely to offer telecommuting options.

- Full-time employees are four times more likely to have work-at-home options than part-time employees.

- Non-union employees are twice as likely to have access to telecommuting, but union employee access is growing rapidly.

Impact of Telecommuting

- Employers can save over $11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year. Across the existing work-at-home population, that potentially adds up to $44 billion in savings. If the telecommuting workforce expanded to include those who could and wanted to work from home, the potential employer savings could approach $689 billion a year.

- Existing telecommuters reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of taking over 600,000 cars off the road for a year. If the work-at-home workforce expanded to include those who could and wanted to telecommute half of the time, the GHG savings would equate to taking 10 million cars off the road.

- Half-time telecommuters gain back 11 days a year—time they would have otherwise spent commuting.

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Important Information About the Data in This Report

Thanks to advances in technology, much of what employees used to do at an office now can be done just about anywhere. And that's what they're doing. We can all see it happening—more and more employees working at home, in coffee shops, on the train, and at co-working spaces.

But, surprisingly, almost no one is tracking this important change in the ways employees in the U.S. work. Research repeatedly shows that offices around the globe sit empty half of the time, yet we know little about where the employees that used to occupy them have gone. Who are they? What kind of work do they do? What kind of companies do they work for? Those are the questions this *2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce* report sets out to answer.

📌 Parameters of This Report

Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau's America Community Survey (ACS) asks members of 3.5 million households questions about where they work. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also conducts an annual nationwide survey, but both organizations only release a few basic findings in a media-friendly format. The rest of the details are buried in databases only researchers, such as Global Workplace Analytics, take the time to download and understand.

This report focuses solely on full-time employees who answered "worked at home" to the ACS question, "What was your primary means of transportation to work during the survey week?"

This report does not include the self-employed (such as freelancers), employees who split their day between an office and home, those who work extra hours at home, or those who work at home less than half the time.

Keep in mind as you read this report that the entire work-at-home employee population is 10 to 15 times larger than those who do so *half-time* or more. Unfortunately, no government or private sector source produces robust data on those less frequent telecommuters. Nevertheless, business and community leaders can learn much about what is possible from the most frequent telecommuters.

If you're a business leader, the information in this report will help you how to consider:

- Better assessing your real estate needs
- Increasing workspace efficiency, and reducing real estate overhead
- Evaluating your IT readiness and the communications, collaboration, and technology needs of your workforce
- Effectively integrating employee mobility into hiring, training, and management practices
- Developing and marketing products and services that support remote work
- Better addressing the special needs of the disabled, of military families, and of caregivers

If you're a community or public sector leader, this information will help you how to consider:

- Solving regional issues such as outbound workforce migrations, talent shortages, and labor force mismatches

- Understanding the ROI of broadband investments

- Reducing the offshoring of jobs

- Encouraging populations to work and shop where they live

- Establishing laws to encourage home-based work and abolish those that discourage it

- Understanding the role telecommuting could play in reducing traffic congestion, conserving energy, and reducing pollution

- Increasing labor productivity

Global Workplace Analytics has been helping corporate and community leaders understand the business case for emerging workplace trends for over 10 years. Its last public report on the trends was released in 2011. FlexJobs has been helping people find flexible work since 2007.

Telecommuting Demographics
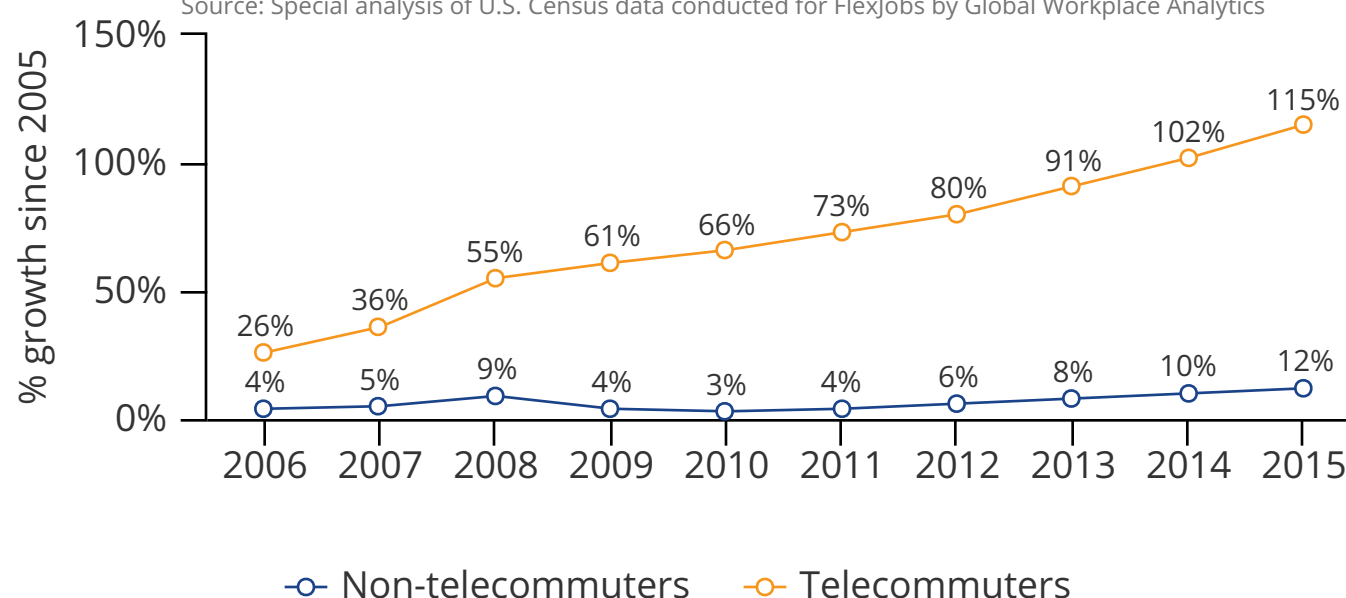
Total Workforce and Class of Worker

Nearly 4 million U.S. employees worked from home at least half of the time in 2015. That represents about 3% of U.S. workforce—a 115% increase since 2005. During the same period, the non-telecommuter population grew by less than 12%.

⭐ Regular telecommuting grew 115% in the past decade, nearly 10 times faster than the rest of the workforce.

Telecommuting growth since 2005

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

Year	Non-telecommuters	Telecommuters
2006	4%	26%
2007	5%	36%
2008	9%	55%
2009	4%	61%
2010	3%	66%
2011	4%	73%
2012	6%	80%
2013	8%	91%
2014	10%	102%
2015	12%	115%

% growth since 2005

○— Non-telecommuters   ○— Telecommuters

The federal government and for-profit companies have the highest percentage of telecommuters (3.1% of their workforce in each case). Local governments lag the furthest behind (for-profit companies, federal government, non-profit companies, state government) with only 1.4% participation.

Obviously, technological advances played a big role in making it easy to work wherever and whenever. It's hard to believe, but way back in 2005, LinkedIn was in its infancy, Facebook was still gestating, and the iPhone had not yet been conceived. These days, that phone and devices like it, high-speed broadband, and cloud-based storage and software are as essential to business success as telephone PBX systems were back in the day.

While technology enabled telecommuting, it is people that are driving the trend forward. Across every age group, what they want—and increasingly demand—is the flexibility to work how, when, and where they want. And smart employers are finally coming to understand, what's good for their people is good for them.
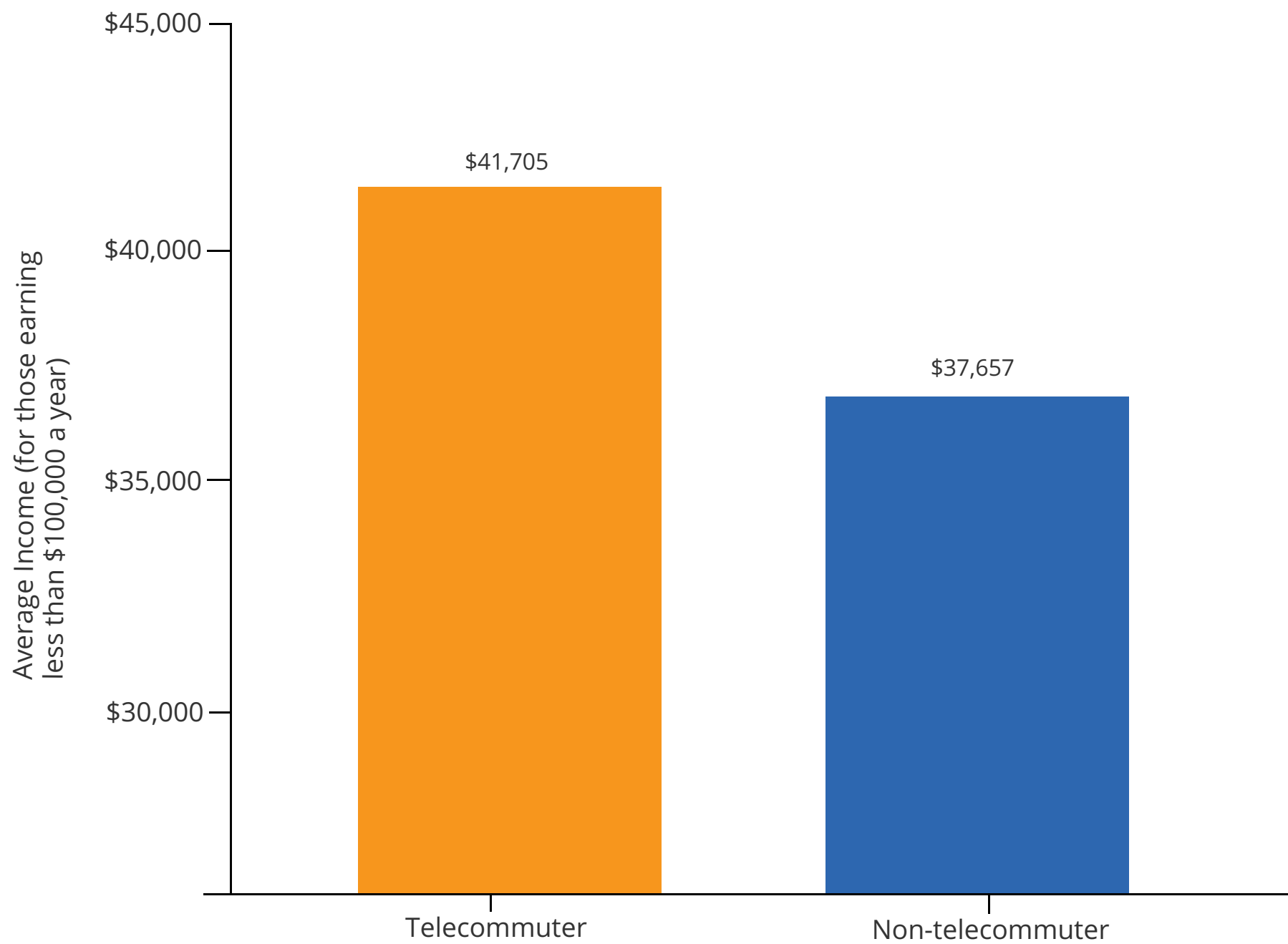
Telecommuting by Income

Among those who earn $100,000 a year or less (79% of telecommuters versus 67% of non-telecommuters), the average telecommuter makes approximately $4,000 a year more than non-telecommuters.

> The average annual income for most telecommuters is $4,000 higher than that of non-telecommuters.

Average Income: Telecommuters vs. Non-telecommuters

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

Average Income (for those earning less than $100,000 a year)

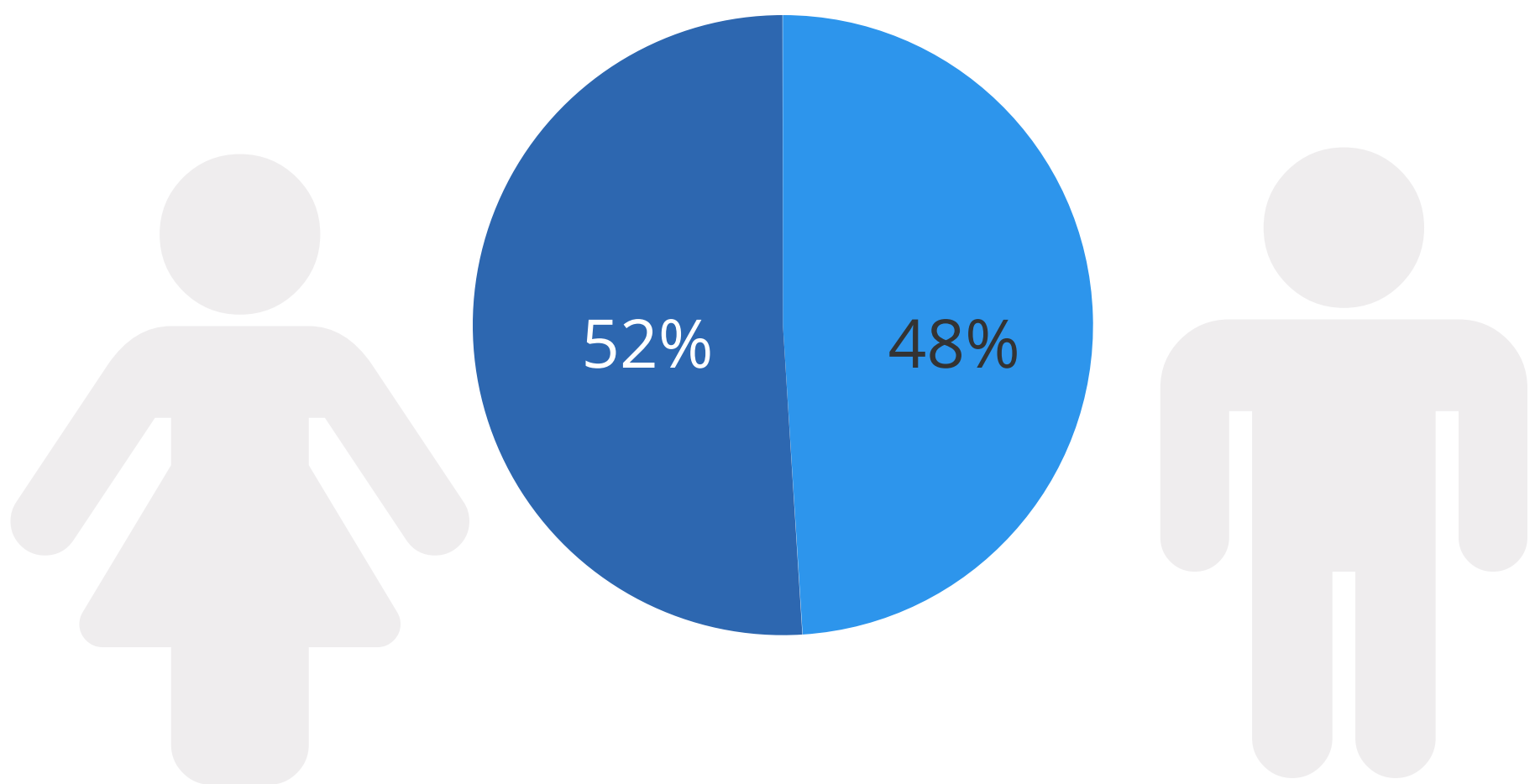|	Telecommuter	Non-telecommuter
	$41,705	$37,657

Telecommuting by Gender

Work-at-home participation is roughly equal between the genders. Fifty-two percent are female (compared to 48% of the total workforce). This split has changed little over the past decade.

> The percent of women and men who telecommute is about equal. This debunks a common myth that telecommuting is a "mommy" thing.

Prevalence of telecommuting by gender

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

52%   48%

Telecommuting by Age

A typical telecommuter is older than the average employee. Half are 45 years of age or older, compared to just 41% of the overall workforce.

The greatest disproportional participation in telecommuting occurs in the following age groups:
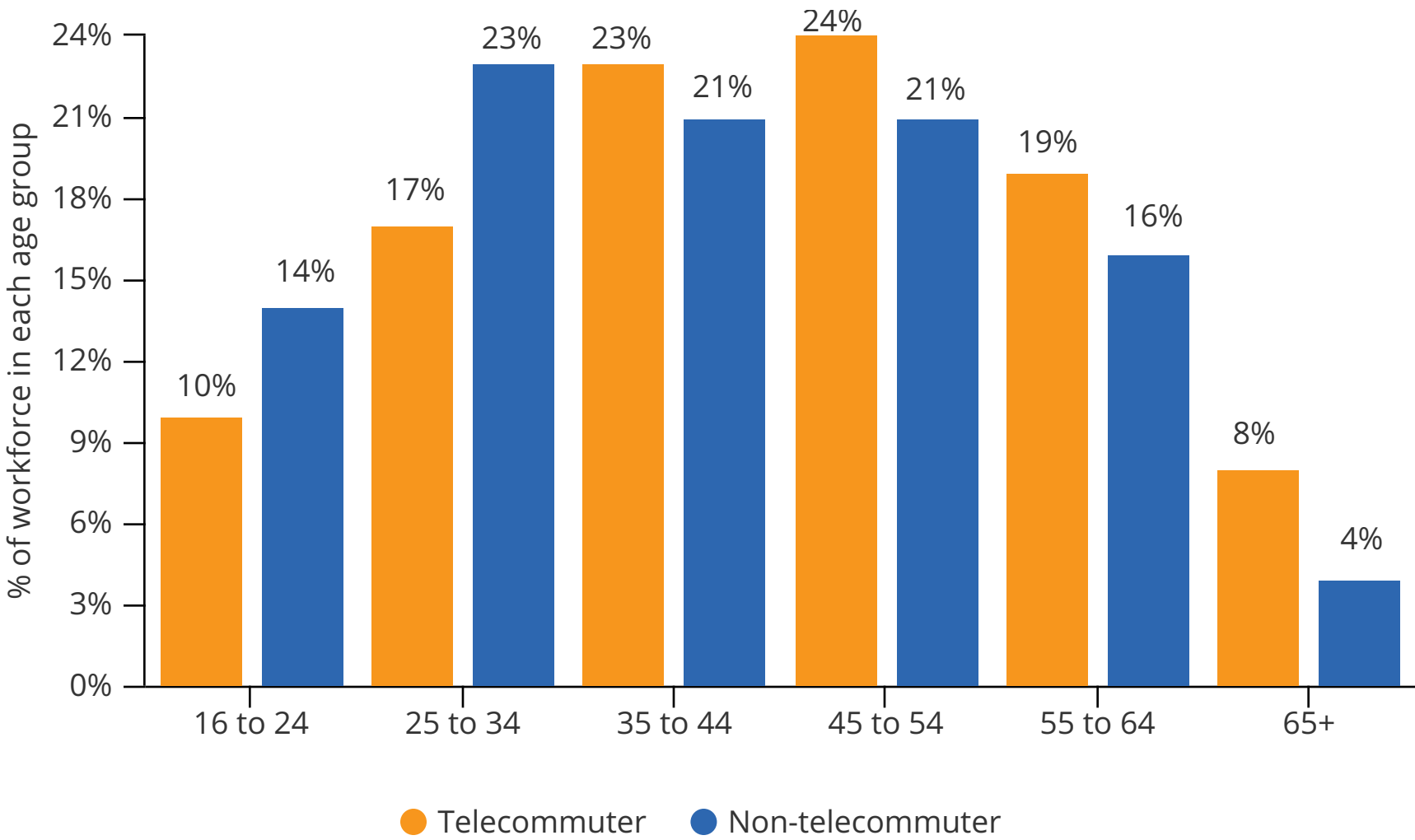
Age	Telecommuting compared to non-telecommuting workforce participation
65+ years old	**1.7 times greater**
55 to 64 years old	1.2 times greater
35 to 54 years old	1.1 times greater
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

> Half of telecommuters are 45 years of age or older, compared to just 41% of the overall workforce.

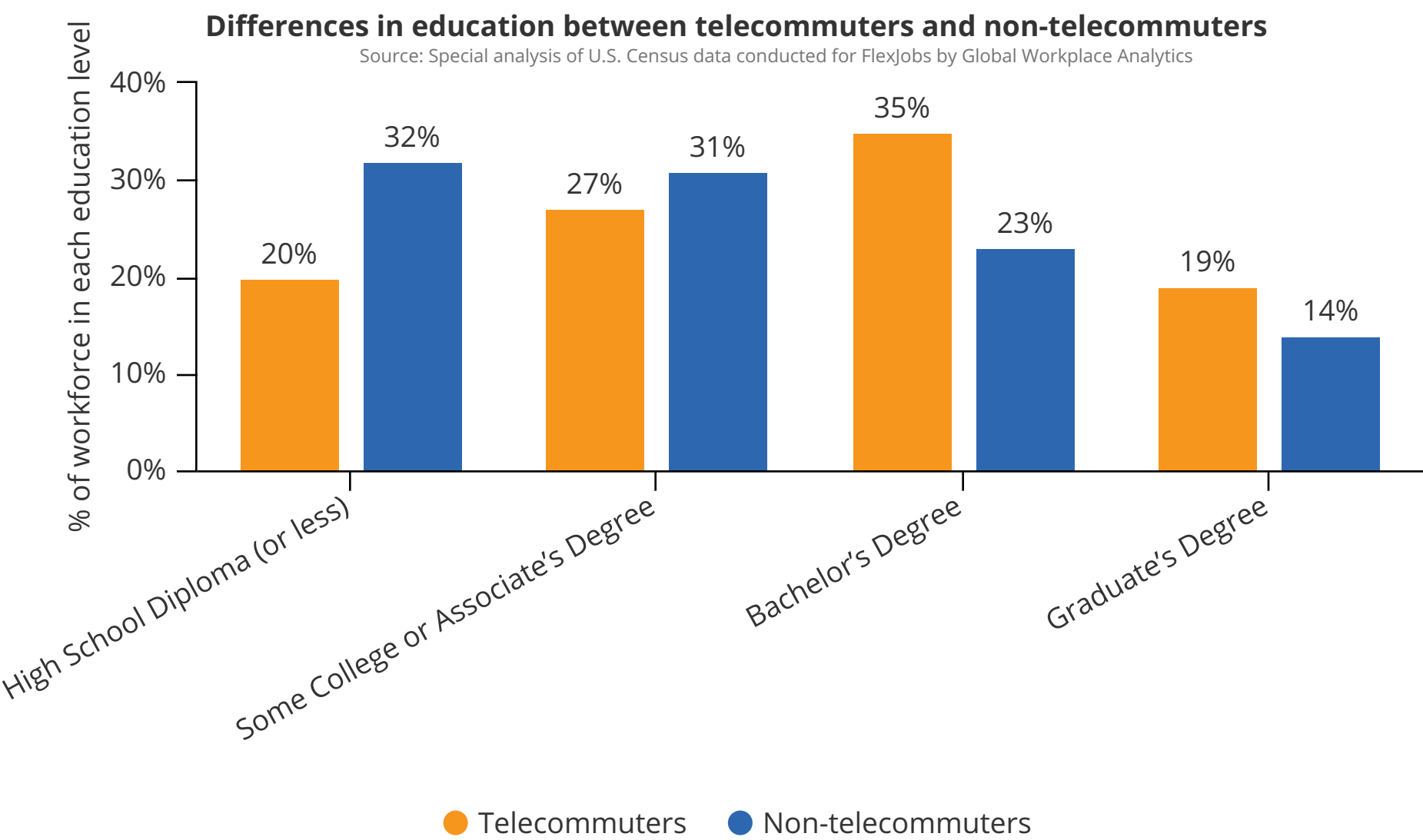**Differences in population by age between telecommuters and non-telecommuters**

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

% of workforce in each age group

● Telecommuter ● Non-telecommuter

Telecommuting by Education

Telecommuters are, on average, more highly educated than other employees. Approximately 53% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 37% of non-telecommuters.

But not all work-at-home jobs require a college degree. Twenty percent of telecommuters have a high school diploma (or less) and 27% have an associate's degree.

Differences in education between telecommuters and non-telecommuters

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

% of workforce in each education level

Education level	Telecommuters	Non-telecommuters
High School Diploma (or less)	20%	32%
Some College or Associate's Degree	27%	31%
Bachelor's Degree	35%	23%
Graduate's Degree	19%	14%

● Telecommuters   ● Non-telecommuters

> Telecommuters are, on average, more highly educated than other employees. Approximately 53% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 37% of non-telecommuters.

Telecommuting by Occupation

Management, office/administrative occupations, and sales together account for 43% of telecommuter jobs compared to just 34% of non-telecommuter jobs.

Top 5 occupations for telecommuters	
Occupation	**% of total telecommuters in each occupation**
1. Management	**16%**
2. Office and Administrative Support	14%
3. Sales and Related	13%
4. Business and Financial Operations	9%
5. Computer and Mathematical	9%
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

Top 5 occupations with disproportionately more telecommuters	
Occupation	**Prevalence in telecommuting vs. non-telecommuting workforce**
1. Computer and Mathematical	**2.8 times greater**
2. Military	2.5 times greater
3. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	2 times greater
4. Personal Care and Service	2 times greater
5. Business and Financial Operations	1.9 times greater
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

Though participation levels vary by occupation, telecommuters are found in every industry.

> Telecommuting is most common in management occupations, but employees in computer, mathematical, and military occupations are much more likely to work at home.

Telecommuting by Industry

The Professional Services industry accounts for the largest share of telecommuters (17% of total). The Healthcare and Finance industries account for 12% and 10% respectively. But relative to their share of the total workforce, telecommuting is most common in Management, Agriculture, Real Estate, Information, and Mining industries. You might expect some jobs in those industries to be work-at-home compatible due to their high administrative component, but Agriculture and Mining industry compatibility may come as a surprise. The information age is changing the nature of jobs in every industry.
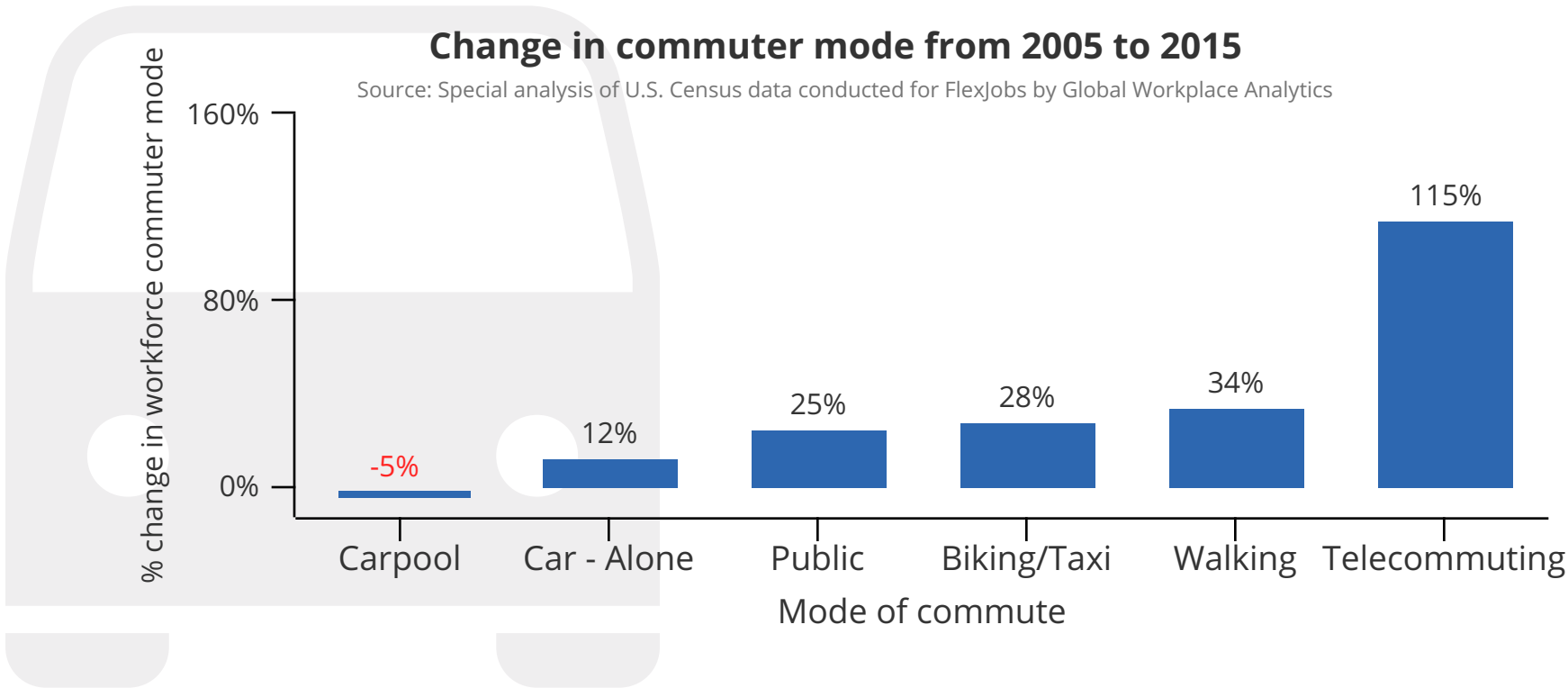
> While the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry has the highest volume of telecommuters, relative to its share of the workforce, the Management of Companies and Agriculture industries top the list because of administrative job components.

Top 5 industries for telecommuters

Industry	% of telecommuters in each industry
1. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	17%
2. Healthcare and Social Assistance	11.6%
3. Finance and Insurance	9.7%
4. Manufacturing	8.5%
5. Educational Services	7.5%

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

Top 5 industries with disproportionately more telecommuters

Industry	Prevalence in telecommuting vs. non-telecommuting workforce
1. Management of Companies and Enterprise	32.8 times greater
2. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	3.7 times greater
3. Real Estate and Rental Leasing	3.4 times greater
4. Information	3 times greater
5. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	2.4 times greater

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

Telecommuting by Mode of Transport

At the national level, telecommuting grew far faster than any other means of transportation to work over the past decade.

Change in commuter mode from 2005 to 2015

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

% change in workforce commuter mode

| Mode	Value
Carpool	-5%
Car - Alone	12%
Public	25%
Biking/Taxi	28%
Walking	34%
Telecommuting	115%

Mode of commute

In over half (57%) of the largest metros areas, the percentage of workers who telecommute exceeds the percentage who use public transit services.

> In more than half of the top U.S. metros, telecommuting exceeds public transportation as the commute option of choice. It has grown far faster than any other commute mode.

Across the top metros (those with a workforce of 1 million or more) the numbers show that 76% of employees drive to work without sharing the ride, 8.8% carpool, 7.1% use public transit, 3.1% telecommute (versus 2.9% nationally), 2.8% walk, and 1.9% bike or take a taxi.

Top 5 metro areas where telecommuting exceeds public transportation	
Area	**How many more people telecommute than take public transit**
1. Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	**332%**
2. Kansas City, MO-KS	297%
3. Dallas-Fort Worth Arlington, TX	226%
4. Austin-Round Rock, TX	210%
5. Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	190%

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

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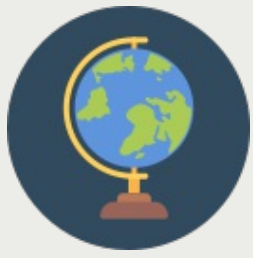
Telecommuting Geography

Highest Concentration

Boulder, CO, has the highest concentration of telecommuters with 8.5% of their workforce working at home at least half of the time. That's almost 3.5 times more than the national average of 2.9%.

The U.S. metro areas with the highest concentrations of telecommuters tend to be small and mid-sized cities—7 of the top 10 have an employee workforce of 300,000 or less.

Top 5 telecommuting metro areas	
Area	**% of total workforce who telecommute**
1. Boulder, CO	**8.5%**
2. Corvallis, OR	6.9%
3. Raleigh, NC	6.2%
4. Charlottesville, VA	5.5%
5. Austin-Round Rock, TX	5.4%
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

Lowest Concentration

Lafayette, LA, areas have the lowest concentration of telecommuters and the bottom 5 areas for telecommuting have less than half the national average percent of telecommuters.

Bottom 5 telecommuting metro areas	
Area	**% of total workforce who telecommute**
1. Lafayette, LA	**1.0%**
2. Binghamton, NY	1.3%
3. Bloomington, IN	1.3%
4. Corpus Christi, TX	1.3%
5. Atlantic City-Hammonton, NJ	1.4%
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

Large Metro Areas

Across the large metro areas, Austin-Round Rock, TX, metro area has the highest concentration of telecommuters, nearly twice (5.4%) the national average (as a percent of employees). Detroit, MI, falls at the bottom of this ranking with only 2.3% working from home.

Top 5 telecommuting metro areas with more than 1 million workers

Area	% of total workforce who telecommute
1. Austin-Round Rock, TX	5.4%
2. Denver, Aurora-Lakewood, CO	5.1%
3. Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	4.8%
4. Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	4.6%
5. San Diego-Carlsbad, CA	4.5%
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

Bottom 5 telecommuting metro areas with more than 1 million workers

Area	% of total workforce who telecommute
1. Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	2.3%
2. Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	2.4%
3. New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	2.5%
4. Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	2.8%
5. Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	2.9%
Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics	

What about the biggest cities? New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Dallas are on par with the national average telecommuting rate of 2.9%.

Telecommuting Growth by Metro

The metro area with the highest growth of telecommuters was Chattanooga, TN, with a 325% increase in the number of telecommuters over the past decade.
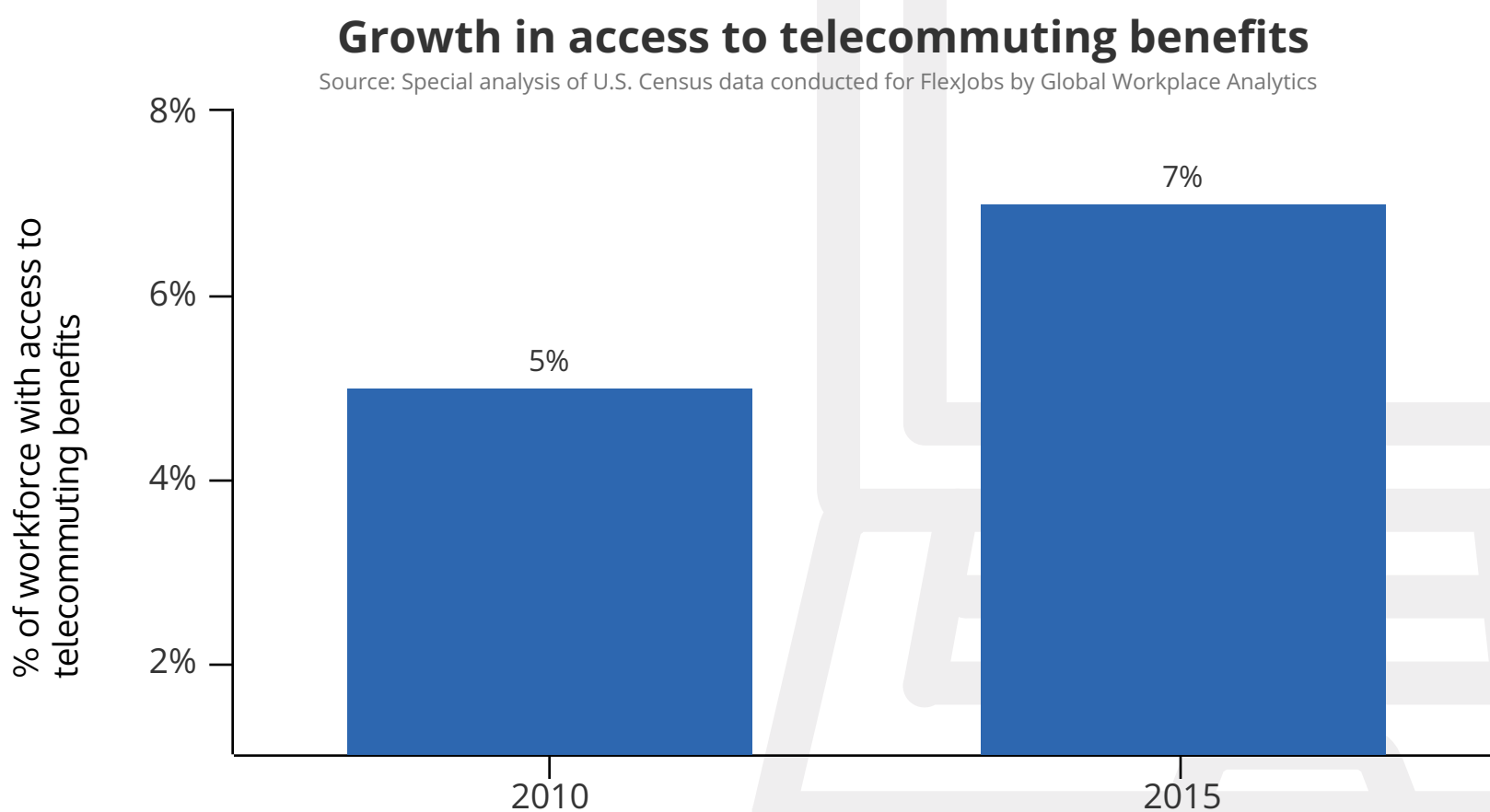
Top Growth Among All Metro Areas: 2005 – 2015

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics
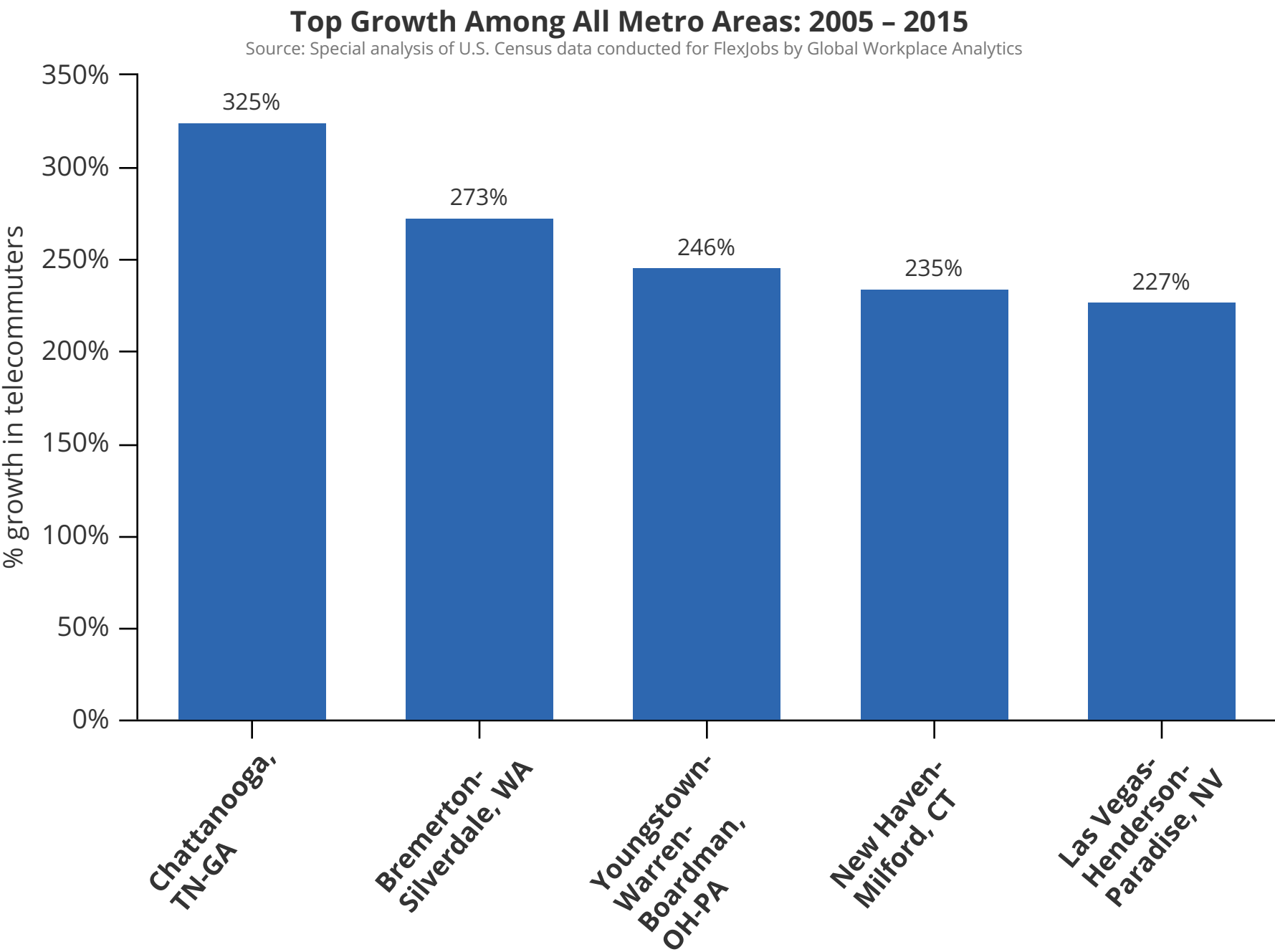
Access to Telecommuting Options

Access to Telecommuting by Total Workforce

Many surveys suggest as many as 70% of employers offer flexible workplace options, suggesting flexibility is very common. While the majority of employers may offer some employees the option to work at home, far fewer make it available to all or most.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tracks the prevalence of flexible workplace benefits with a more rigid standard than public surveys. It only counts employers who offer telecommuting to *all or most* of their people. According to BLS data, only 7% of U.S. employers offered telecommuting benefits in 2015. Still, this represents a 40% increase from the 5% that did so just five years before.

Growth in access to telecommuting benefits

Source: Special analysis of U.S. Census data conducted for FlexJobs by Global Workplace Analytics

★ 40% more U.S. employers offered flexible workplace options in 2015 than in 2010, but still only 7% make it available to most of their people.
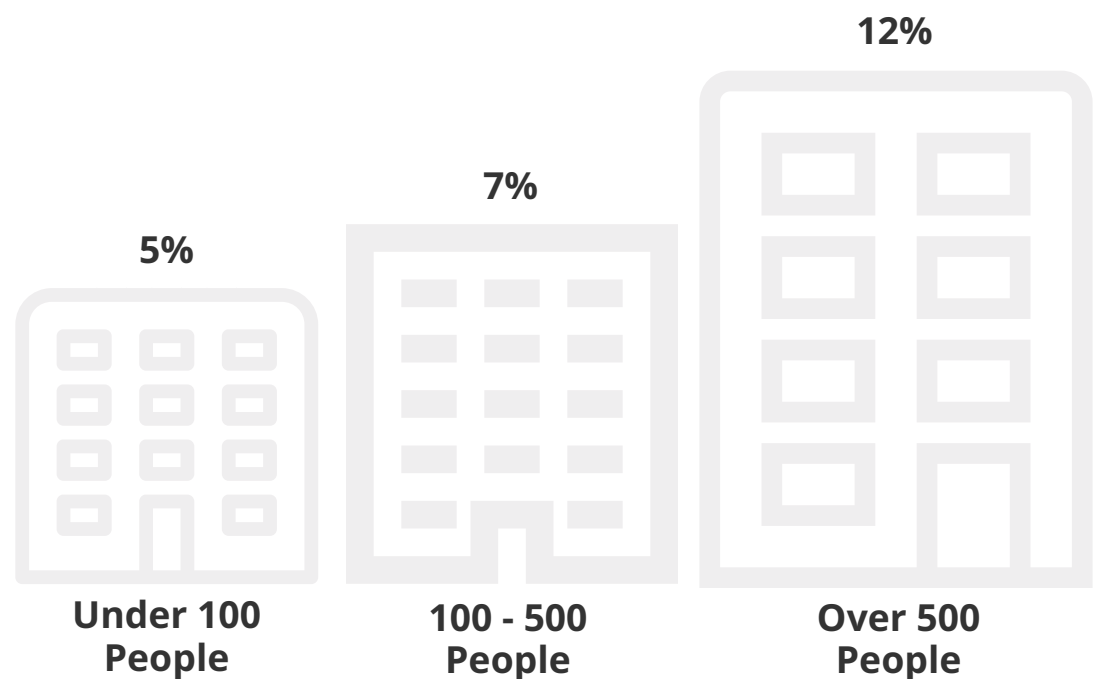
Access to Telecommuting by Company Size

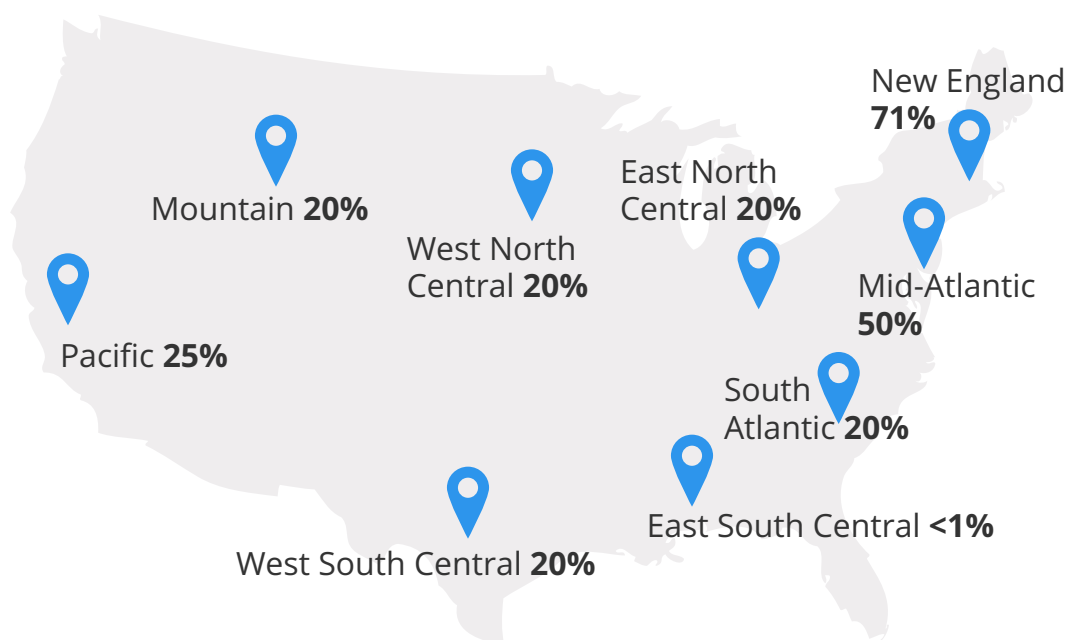> Larger companies are most likely to offer telecommuting options to most of their people.

Telecommuting options are more than twice as common in large companies (those with over 500 employees) than small ones (those with under 100); offered by 12% and 5% respectively.

The greatest growth of the offering is seen among mid-size companies (between 100 and 500 employees), up 75% since 2010.

5%
7%
12%

Under 100 People
100 - 500 People
Over 500 People

Access to Telecommuting by Geography

Telecommuting growth by region since 2010

Mountain **20%**

West North Central **20%**

East North Central **20%**

New England **71%**

Pacific **25%**

Mid-Atlantic **50%**

South Atlantic **20%**

East South Central **<1%**

West South Central **20%**

There are significant geographic differences in employers that offer work-at-home options to all or most employees. Growth has been strongest in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions (respectively up 71% and 50% since 2010).

Employers in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions offer telecommuting options far more (12% and 9% of employers respectively), than those in the East South Central region.

> New England and Mid-Atlantic region employers are the most likely to offer access to flexible workplace options.

Access to Telecommuting by Part-Time/Full-Time Status

Employers are more likely to offer work-at-home options to full-time workers (8% of employers) than part-time employees (2%).

That doesn't look like it will change any time soon. While access among full-time employees increased 33% since 2010, there was no change for part-timers.

> Full-time employees are four times more likely to have work-at-home options than part-time employees.

Access to Telecommuting by Union Status

Seven percent of non-union employees have access to flexible work benefits (up 40% since 2010), compared to only 3% of union employees, though growth for the latter group doubled since 2010.

> Non-union employees are more than twice as likely than union employees to have access to telecommuting, but union access is growing rapidly.

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Impact of Telecommuting

Global Workplace Analytics has developed research-based models to estimate the impact of various workplace strategies. Its Telework Savings Calculator™ has been vetted by the U.S. General Accountability Office and used by hundreds of government and private sector employers to make the people, planet, and profit business case for telecommuting.

Based on savings assumptions drawn from Global Workplace Analytics' extensive academic and empirical research, its model estimates the 3.9 million employees who telecommuted (half-time or more) in 2015 collectively saved employers $44 billion a year (an average of $11,000 per half-time telecommuter).

More critically, if those who held work-at-home compatible jobs (56% of employees) and wanted to work from home at least some of the time (85% of employees) did so just half-time, those employer savings could total $689 billion a year.

> **Employers can save over $11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year.** Across the existing work-at-home population, that potentially adds up to $44 billion in savings. If the telecommuting workforce expanded to include those who could and wanted to work from home, the potential employer savings could approach $689 billion a year.

Savings factor (based on half-time telecommuting)	Assumed decrease with half-time telecommuting	Savings estimate for 3.9 million existing half-time telecommuters	Savings estimate for 62 million potential telecommuters
Productivity	15%	$27.5 billion	$436 billion
Real estate	25%	$7.6 billion	$121 billion
Absenteeism	31%	$5.1 billion	$81 billion
Voluntary turnover	10%	$1.5 billion	$24 billion
Continuity of operations	1 day/year	$1.7 billion	$27 billion
Total employer savings		**$43.6 billion**	**$689 billion**

Not all the benefits of telecommuting programs can be reduced to numbers. Well-executed programs can also help employers:

- Expand their labor pool and reduce talent/labor gaps
- Optimize space utilization
- Enhance organizational agility
- Reduce travel time to and from meetings
- Increase employee engagement
- Reduce the cost of technology
- Lower employee stress
- Reduce work/life conflict
- Slow the brain drain
- Enhance creativity and innovation
- Focus on employee results vs. presence
- Reduce paper usage and the associated storage space
- Expand without increasing their geographic footprint
- Lower or eliminate parking and transit subsidies
- Avoid environmental penalties and compliance costs
- Become a "best place to work"
- Solve parking availability problems
- Enhance the corporate image
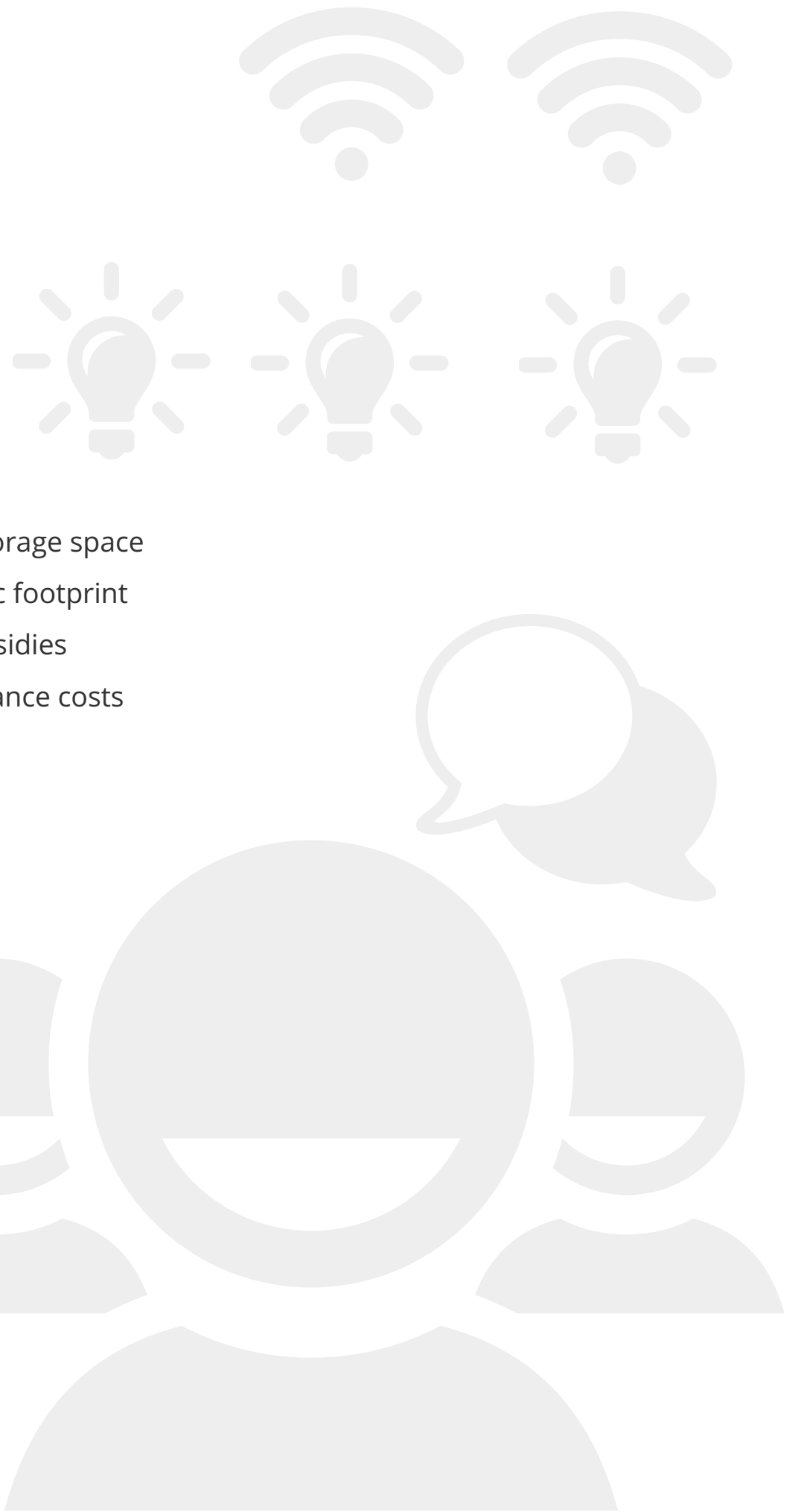
Impact on the Environment/Community

The environmental and community impact from the current telecommuting population of 3.9 million telecommuters who work from home at least half-time saves $1.5 billion a year. The greenhouse gas reduction savings is equivalent to taking over 600,000 cars off the road for a year.

Savings would total $24 billion a year from the environmental and community impact if the practice expanded to include half-time telecommuting among those with compatible jobs (56% of employees) and a desire to work from home (85% of employees). The greenhouse gas reduction would equate to taking over 10 million cars off the road for a year.

Environmental/Community impact (half-time telecommuting)	Annual savings estimate for 3.9 million existing telecommuters	Annual savings estimate for 62 million potential telecommuters
Vehicle miles (not) traveled	7.8 billion	124 billion
Vehicle trips avoided	530 million	8 billion
Tons of greenhouse gases (GHG) avoided (EPA method)	3 million	54 million
GHG equivalent of cars off the road	617 thousand	10 million
Reduced traffic accident costs	$498 million	$8 billion
Oil savings ($50/barrel)	$980 million	$16 billion
Total environmental/community financial savings	**$1.5 billion**	**$24 billion**

Telecommuting can also help:

- Reduce traffic congestion and road wear and tear
- Lower unemployment and under-employment, particularly among the disabled, military families, senior caregivers, and others with special flexibility needs
- Increase productivity by reducing traffic delays
- Slow the outbound migration of citizens in geographically isolated areas, vacation communities, and places that have suffered a collapse of core industries (e.g. coal mining, steel production, auto production, etc.)
- Reduce crime by increasing daytime presence of homeowners
- Increase the return on investment of publicly funded broadband projects
- Reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil

> Existing telecommuters reduce greenhouses by the equivalent of taking over 600,000 cars off the road for a year. If the work-at-home workforce expanded to include those who could and wanted to telecommute half of the time, the GHG savings would equate to taking 10 million cars off the road per year.

Impact on Employees

The benefits of telecommuting are numerous and can help employees:

> **Save Money**: Full-time telecommuters save over $4,000 each year. Half-time telecommuting employees save an average of $2,677 annually in commuting costs (gas, tolls, public transit passes, parking, car maintenance, etc.), food (buying out lunches, coffee), tax breaks, and professional attire upkeep (purchasing, dry cleaning, and laundering).
>
> **Save Time:** By not spending time commuting every day, the average employee also gains back the equivalent of over two workweeks (11 days) per year.

Reduce Work-Life Conflict:

- lower stress
- spend more time with children, family, and friends
- improve relationships with loved ones
- increase quality of life
- improve love and sex life
- more time for hobbies, side projects
- phase into retirement

Improve Work Performance and Career Growth:

- increase productivity and engagement
- fewer distractions, less office politicking
- feel more loyal to employer
- find work in rural or economically disadvantaged areas
- transition to a new career

Increase Community Involvement:

- volunteer more in children's schools/local organizations
- increase community and neighborhood awareness

Improve Health and Wellness:

- make more time for physical activity
- eat healthier
- recover from illness or surgery at home
- care for a health issue or disability
- create a comfortable, ergonomic work space
- less exposure to common illnesses: colds, flus, etc.

Balance All Responsibilities:

- maintaining work as a military spouse
- care for aging parents, children, dependents
- reduce living expenses by not needing to live by work
- juggle multiple professions

Reduce Carbon Footprint:

- reduce CO_2 emissions by not commuting
- control use of heat, AC, lighting
- opt to use less paper, disposable items
- travel less thanks to virtual meetings

Concluding Thoughts

Telecommuting has expanded steadily over the past decade, even increasing in usage during the Great Recession when overall employment dropped, and it's increasingly seen as a valuable business strategy that benefits employees, organizations, and the environment. However, there are a number of things organizations can do to maximize the full benefits of telecommuting as a business strategy.

The benefits of telecommuting for people, the planet, and profits have been proven. To encourage the positive expansion of telecommuting, we recommend the following action steps for government agencies, businesses, and professionals.

Action Steps for Government Agencies

Local, state, and federal governments should encourage telecommuting by eliminating the disincentives that currently exist in areas like tax law, labor law, and insurance.

- The "telecommuting tax penalty" that currently exists, where telecommuters living in a state with a "convenience of the employer" rule can be taxed twice on their income, is an unnecessary and unjust penalty on telecommuting. Tax laws need to be updated to reflect the current state of telecommuting and its widespread use.

Government agencies should invest in programs to help communities increase awareness and incentivize employer participation and explore telecommuting-friendly incentives to add economic competitiveness, resilience, and opportunity for their constituents.

- At the federal level, the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act is a law that encourages large federal government agencies to allow employees to telecommute to the furthest extent possible, and it has been successful in encourage telecommuting, reducing costs, and maintaining the continuity of government functions during extreme weather, bad traffic, and other disruptive events.

- The Maine Center for Business and Economic Research has partnered with the University of Southern Maine to study Maine's growing telecommuting workforce as a way to encourage economic growth and employment in the state.

- Teleworks USA, based in eastern Kentucky, was launched as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to help connect job seekers in rural areas and small towns with remote job opportunities. It aims to bring high-demand, high-growth telecommuting jobs to workers in eastern Kentucky.

- Montana's "Come Home and Bring Your Job With You" campaign encourages Montanans who've left the state to find jobs to return to Montana and telecommute instead. This effort includes a partnership with the Montana Chamber of Commerce.

Action Steps for Businesses

Businesses should consider how telecommuting can help to grow and develop their workforces and support their business goals.

- Areas such as skills gaps, pressing hiring needs, jobs suited for remote work, current remote workers, potential cross-border hiring options, business expansion opportunities, and labor regulations and laws are all excellent starting points.

Most importantly, companies already engaged in telecommuting need to start tracking their programs to truly understand and refine their benefits.

- Only 3% of companies with flexible and remote work programs conduct any sort of formalized analysis.

- Tracking and analysis of remote work programs can help improve their outcomes, further reduce costs and improve productivity, and ensure telecommuting programs are an effective part of the business strategy.

Action Steps for Professionals

If you're not already telecommuting in your current job:

- Ask your manager or human resources department about your options. Sixty-seven percent of telecommuting and flexible work programs are offered at a manager's discretion, so there may not be one equally implemented telecommuting policy at your place of employment.

- Propose a telecommuting arrangement. Start small, perhaps one day per week, and offer a trial period to give your manager time to get used to the idea if they seem hesitant.

- Seek out a new employment opportunity with one of the thousands of companies that offer telecommuting options.

If you are able to telecommute in your current role:

- Encourage widespread adoption of telecommuting within your organization.

- Suggest creating an employee resource group (ERG) within your organization for telecommuters to help support and grow the program.

- Discuss telecommuting with friends, family, and your professional network to dispel myths about telecommuting such as: telecommuters aren't productive; only certain industries are compatible with telecommuting; or telecommuters do not put in the same hours as their in-office counterparts.

- Consider finding remote volunteer positions, which are increasingly available, to give back and encourage telecommuting at the same time.

It's clear that telecommuting is increasing in usage and popularity. It is finally time to focus on the next level of telecommuting: supporting the adoption of laws that help, rather than burden, telecommuters; formalizing corporate telecommuting programs that tie the practice to business strategy and the bottom line; and tracking the effectiveness of telecommuting long-term.

We've reached the point where the focus is no longer on whether telecommuting is just a momentary trend, but is instead on its widespread acceptance and long-term sustainability.

About

About FlexJobs

FlexJobs is the leading online service for professionals seeking telecommuting, flexible schedule, part-time, and freelance jobs. With flexible job listings in over 50 career categories, and opportunities ranging from entry-level to executive and freelance to full-time, FlexJobs offers job seekers a safe, easy, and efficient way to find professional and legitimate flexible job listings.

Having helped over 2 million people in their job searches, FlexJobs has appeared on CNN and Marketplace Money and in TIME, Forbes, Fortune, and hundreds of other trusted media outlets. FlexJobs' Founder & CEO Sara Sutton Fell has also launched two additional partner sites, Remote.co and 1 Million for Work Flexibility, to help provide education and awareness about the viability and benefits of remote working and work flexibility. Sutton Fell is also the creator of The TRaD* Works Forum (*Telecommuting, Remote, & Distributed), dedicated to helping companies leverage the benefits of telecommuting, remote, and distributed teams.

About Global Workplace Analytics

Global Workplace Analytics and the tools it has created have helped hundreds of public and private sector employers and communities make the triple-bottom-line business case for remote work and the resulting increase in agility, engagement, productivity, and employee well-being.

It is the leading expert on telework and emerging workplace trends. Its research is informed by a propriatary database of over 4,000 workplace-related research papers, case studies, and other documents. Its Telework Savings Calculator™, one of many return-on-investment models it has developed, was the only tool recommended for quantifying the impact of telework in government in a U.S. General Accountability Office report. One of its business case reports was cited in the Governor of Washington's executive order calling for more telework among public sector employees.

The principals of the firm, Kate Lister and Tom Harnish, are sought-after consultants, speakers, researchers, and writers. They have written or contributed to four books and hundreds of articles. They are frequently quoted in the media, including the Harvard Business Review, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, and many others.