

Update from the American Community Survey

Telecommuting in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area

As technology continues to advance and traffic congestion worsens, telecommuting is becoming an increasingly important alternative in the country's major job markets. According to the 2010 American Community Survey, the Washington MSA ranks seventh out of the fifteen largest employment markets in telecommuting with approximately 4.45 percent of the workforce primarily working from home. San Francisco leads the country with 5.76 percent of its workers telecommuting, while Detroit lags behind with only 2.97 percent. Telecommuting is largely a sector specific option, which helps explain why technology-rich economies like San Francisco and Seattle are home to more telecommuters than say Detroit and Houston, which have higher percentages of manufacturing, and trade related jobs.

Figure 1: Telecommuting in the top 15 MSAs

Metropolitan Statistical Area	% Working from Home
San Francisco	5.76%
Atlanta	5.34%
Phoenix	5.23%
Seattle	5.04%
Minneapolis	4.65%
Los Angeles	4.59%
Washington	4.45%
Miami	4.20%
Dallas	4.19%
Boston	4.14%
Chicago	3.99%
New York	3.74%
Philadelphia	3.53%
Houston	3.33%
Detroit	2.97%

What counts as "working from home"?

The American Community Survey defines working from home as a situation in which the primary place of work is the home. Workers who telecommute a few days per week are not counted in the work from home estimates.

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

A closer look at the Washington region suggests suburban and exurban communities, particularly in Virginia, have a greater share of telecommuters than the inner-core jurisdictions. Nine of the top ten telecommuting counties are outside of the inner-core, six of which are exurban counties on the fringes of the region. Residents of outlying areas are more adversely impacted by traffic congestion, and have greater incentive to seek work-from-home arrangements. Loudoun County, which also has one of the most educated workforces in the MSA leads the region with approximately 6.49 percent of workers telecommuting.



Figure 2: Telecommuting in the Washington Region

Jurisdiction	% Working from Home
Loudoun County, VA	6.49%
Warren County, VA	5.50%
Calvert County, MD	5.37%
Montgomery County, MD	5.35%
Fauquier County, VA	5.07%
Frederick County, MD	4.94%
Stafford County, VA	4.94%
Jefferson County, WV	4.89%
Arlington County, VA	4.80%
Fairfax County, VA ¹	4.74%
Clarke County, VA	4.69%
District of Columbia	4.65%
Prince William County, VA ²	3.72%
Alexandria City, VA	3.61%
Spotsylvania County, VA	3.28%
Prince George's County, MD	2.70%
Charles County, MD	2.69%
Fredericksburg City, VA	2.62%

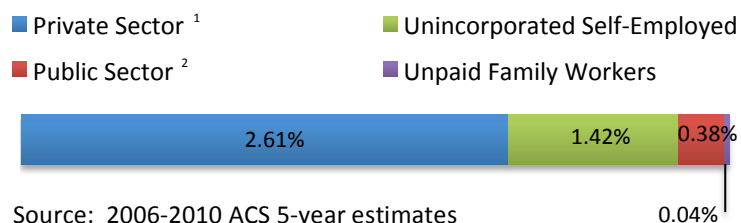
Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

¹ Includes Fairfax City, Falls Church City

² Includes Manassas City, Manassas Park City

Most of the Washington region’s telecommuters work in the private sector. While the public sector represents nearly one-quarter of the regions total workforce, only 0.38 percent of those government employees telecommute. As observed at the national scale, the appetite for telecommuting has not yet gained widespread popularity. There are many policy implications related to these marginal proportions that need to be considered. While many firms are adopting flexible work arrangements to remain competitive in the labor market, broader policy initiatives at the municipal level could fuel the shift.

Figure 3: Telecommuting by Sector in the Washington Region



Source: 2006-2010 ACS 5-year estimates

¹ Includes for-profit, non-profit, incorporated self-employed

² Includes federal, state, and local government

GMU Center for Regional Analysis

The principal mission of the Center for Regional Analysis is to provide research and analytical services to local governments, businesses and other stakeholders in the Washington region focusing on economic, demographic, transportation, housing and fiscal trends and forecasts.

The Center for Regional Analysis has become the “go-to” organization for economic, demographic and housing data and analysis within the Washington and Baltimore regions and is cited locally and nationally as the source of information for the media, research scholars, and investors interested in understanding the Washington area’s economy. The Center posts research reports, presentations, data and other information its website (policy-cra.gmu.edu)

Updates from the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey

The Center for Regional Analysis will issue periodic reports on demographic and economic topics based on newly released data from the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides detailed data every year about states, metropolitan areas, counties and cities. More information about the 2010 Census and the ACS can be found at www.census.gov.