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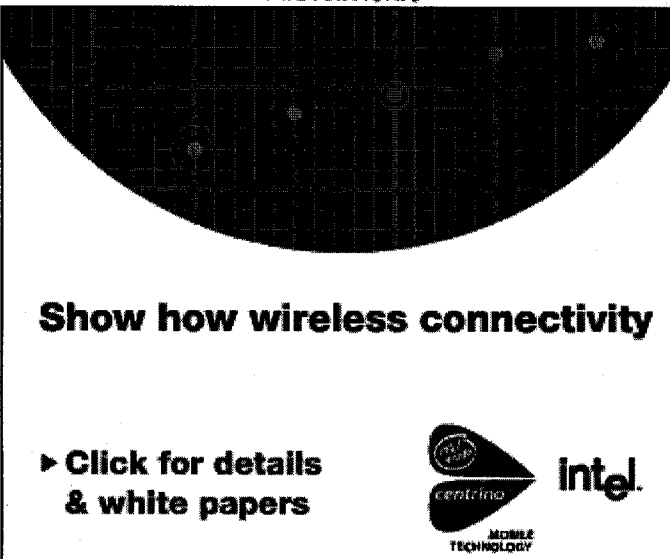
## Steering Employers Toward Telework

By Katherine Shaver  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Monday, October 27, 2003; Page B01

*Second in a series*

Some of the chief complainers about the Washington region's notorious traffic jams are business leaders who blame congestion for delayed deliveries, missed meetings and employees sapped of energy from stressful commutes.

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They push for billions of dollars worth of new or widened highways and extended subway service -- projects that have gotten stymied in years of studies, public debate and budget battles.

But many traffic experts say businesses, federal agencies and other employers could do far more to help reduce traffic backups almost immediately and relatively cheaply by

allowing more employees to work from home or from a telework center even one day a week.

"I think out of all the options we have, it's one of the easiest things we could do" to reduce traffic delays, said Laurie Schintler, a George Mason University assistant professor who researched the potential of telecommuting in the Washington region.

Even with promising data on time savings, increased productivity and greater accessibility to high-speed Internet from home computers, the idea hasn't taken hold with most employers.

For every additional 3 percent of commuters who worked from home on any given day, traffic delays would be cut by 10 percent, Schintler said, based on projections using computer traffic models. That would feel like the lighter

### The Road Ahead Solutions for

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- **Day 1: A Cheaper, Faster**
- **Day 2: Steering Employers Toward Telework**
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• **Video:** The Post's Katherine Shaver discusses her series of articles on the Washington metropolitan area.

• **Audio:** The Post's Katherine Shaver discusses her series of articles on the Washington metropolitan area.

—Graphics

- **Teleworking: The New Normal**
- **Traffic by the Number**
- **Easing the Way at Three Intersections**

—Live Discussions

• **About the Series:** Post writer Katherine Shaver was on the radio about her series of articles on solutions to traffic congestion in the metro area.

• **Telecommuting:** Gil Gorman, member of the International Telecommuting Association and Council, will discuss telecommuting.

• **Intersections:** Deborah Gorman, manager of public and government affairs for AAA Mid-Atlantic, will discuss traffic and intersections in the metropolitan area.

• **Message Board: What Do to Fix Traffic?**

—Survey

• **How Often Do You Telework?**

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traffic that motorists now enjoy Friday mornings, when many people work from home or start their weekends early. For motorists with a one-hour round-trip commute, the time savings would add up to an extra half-hour of free time every week.

A shift to more teleworking won't dissolve traffic congestion. In fact, its benefits quickly diminish if those working from home take advantage of the more flexible schedules to make extra car trips, such as to the grocery store or their children's school. Indeed, experts say, most traffic consists of people running errands, not driving to work.

But allowing more people to skip the commute even one day a week could have a noticeable impact on the worst traffic. That's because much of the region's road and transit network functions well much of the day. It's the morning and afternoon commuting rushes that are most taxing for the highways, roads and transit systems.

### Resistance to Change

About 15 percent of employees in the Washington area worked from home at least one day a month last year, with most averaging 1.5 days a week, according to a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments survey.

Those numbers make the Washington region one of the top in the nation for telecommuting. But there is potential for much more. With computer-oriented desk jobs so prevalent in the nation's capital, advocates of telecommuting say, about three of every five workers could forgo the commute at least one day a week.

Many federal agencies, which combined are the area's largest single employer, are doing little to ease the morning and evening rush. Federal law required that by 2001, agencies establish policies to allow at least one out of four employees deemed eligible for telecommuting the chance to do so. That was supposed to grow to three out of four by the end of this year and to all employees by the end of 2005. As of late 2001, fewer than one in 20 federal employees teleworked, according to a survey by the Office of Personnel Management.

Abby Block, who helps oversee federal telecommuting programs for OPM, said many agency supervisors are concerned about the security of data on home computers and the costs of outfitting home offices. She said she expects telecommuting to pick up government-wide as more agency heads realize the potential cost savings in office rental space and the ability of telecommuting employees to keep government running from their homes in case of a terrorist attack, bad weather or other emergency.

Werner Schaer, chief executive of the Herndon-based Software Productivity Consortium, a not-for-profit group that helps companies adapt new technologies to improve profits, said he focuses the telecommuting pitch to private companies on studies that show it can save \$5,000 to \$10,000 per employee annually through productivity gains and reduced office space needs and travel. The problem: Business executives' concerns about traffic congestion pale in

### — Telecommut

How many days do you telecommute?

- 0 to 2 days  
 3 to 5 days  
 6 to 7 days  
 I don't telecommute

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**Note:** This is an unscientific survey of Washington, D.C. readers.

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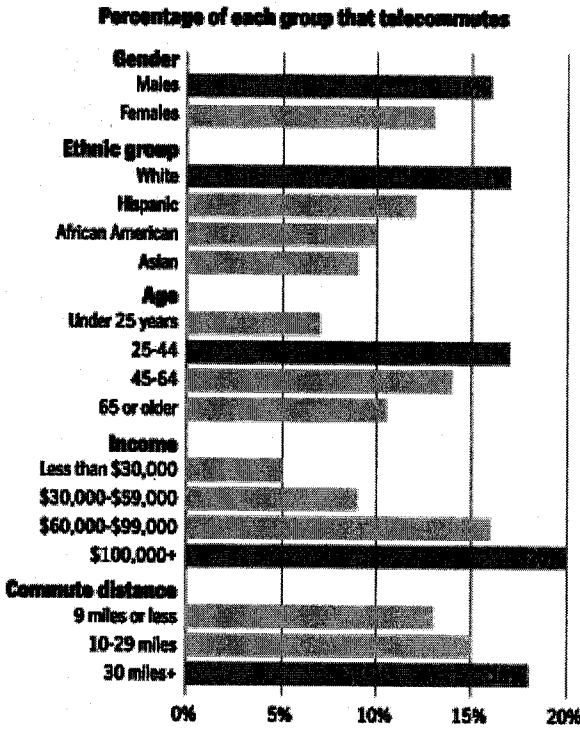
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## Teleworking: The New Commute

Traffic experts argue that for every 3 percent of commuters who could work from home one day a week, traffic delays would be cut by 10 percent. A look at the current landscape of local telecommuters:

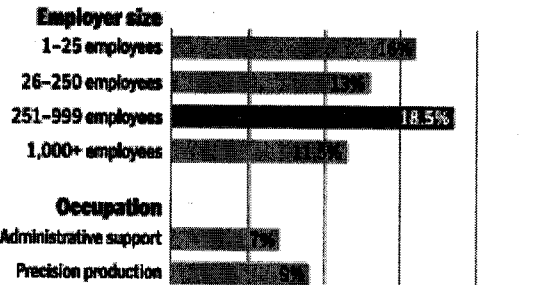
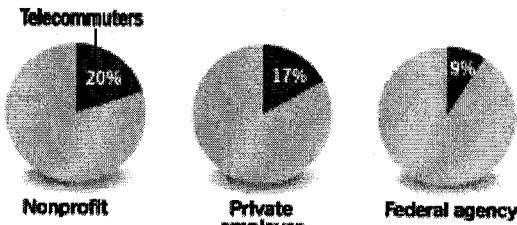
### Who Telecommutes?

About 15 percent of Washington area employees say they telecommute at least occasionally. Telecommuters were statistically more likely to be white males with an income greater than \$60,000 who commute more than 30 miles.



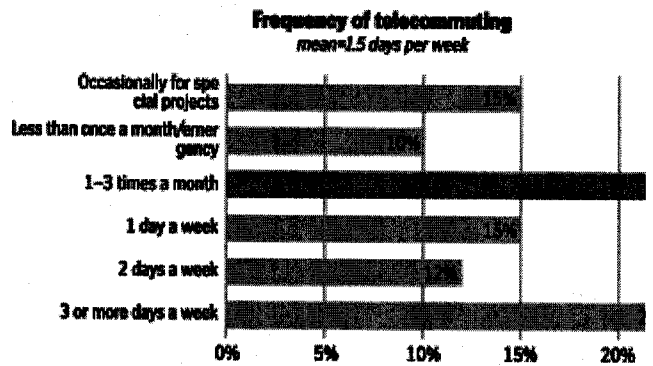
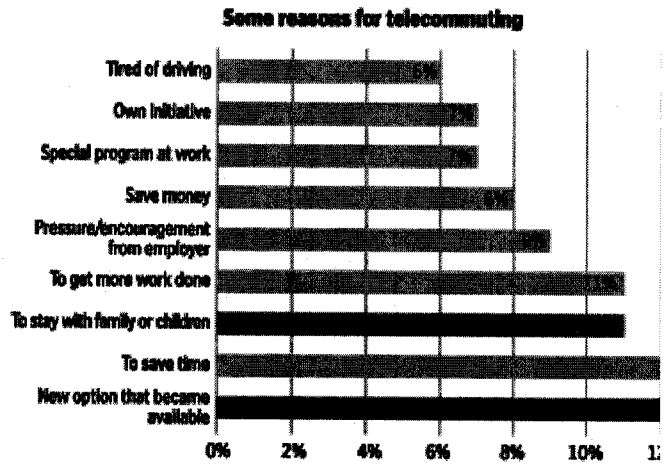
Telecommuters were statistically more likely to be employees of nonprofit organizations or private employers, employees of small employers and employed in sales, executive or technical occupations.

### Employer type



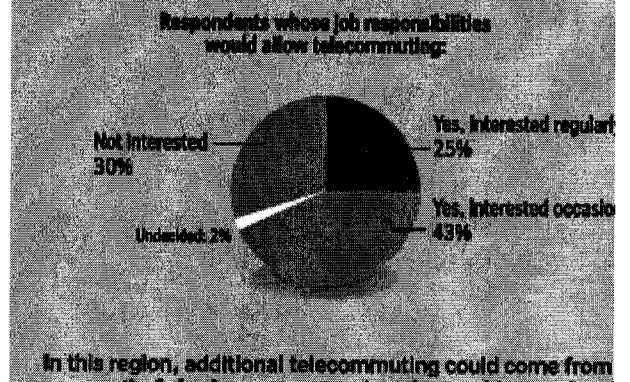
### Reasons for Telecommuting

About 1 in 10 telecommuters said they started telecommuting more work done or to stay with family or children.



### Changing the Commuter Landscape

Of those surveyed, about seven in 10 non-telecommuters would be interested in some form of telecommuting:



comparison to worries about everyday survival in a tight economy, he said.

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