U.S. Department of Transportation
Research and Innovative Technology Administration

SR-009

Bureau of Transportation Statistics Special Report

July 2008

Opinions on Cell Phone Use on Airplanes, Congestion, and Telecommuting—from the 2006 and 2007 *Omnibus Household Survey*

by June Jones

The annual *Omnibus Household Survey* (OHS), administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), asks respondents about their weekly travel habits, journey to work, opinions about the transportation system, and other related issues. Presented here are a few of the key findings from the November 2006 and 2007 surveys:

- although nearly half of the 18- to 34-year-old survey respondents would allow in-flight cell phone use if deemed safe, less than 30% of respondents age 65 or older shared that opinion,
- about 2 out of 5 U.S. workers who reported their commute as moderately to very congested also reported that congestion had gotten worse over the 12 months preceding the survey,
- less than 3 of 10 workers who feel they could telecommute actually do,
- the majority of workers use their personal vehicle to commute alone to work,
- about 2 out of 5 public transit passengers used transit at least 5 days a week, and
- over 90 percent of airline passengers were satisfied with the amount of time taken to get through security check points.

FINDINGS: Cell Phones in Flight

All survey respondents, whether they had flown or not, were asked whether they thought passengers should be allowed to use cell phones on board flights if there were no issues with the phones interfering with aircraft communications systems. On this question there was clearly not a consensus. While about 4 out of 10 U.S. residents (38.4 percent in 2006 and 39.7 percent in 2007) said that passengers should definitely or probably be allowed to use the phones, slightly less than half (46.4 percent in 2006 and 45.2 percent in 2007) said that they definitely or probably should not be used. The remaining 15 percent from each survey said that they weren't sure.

Those U.S. residents 65 years old or older were much less likely to support use of cell phones on aircraft than were younger respondents, and were most likely to say that cell phones definitely should not be used on board an aircraft.

Table 1. Opinions on Allowing Cell Phone Use on Aircraft if No Safety Issues Exist, 2006 v. 2007 (percent holding opinions)

	Overall	18-34 years	35-64 years	65+ years
2006 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=1,063**	**n=174**	**n=611**	**n=245**
Definitely should allow	21.9	27.8	20.6	12.7
Probably should allow	16.5	17.8	16.9	14.5
Not sure	15.3	16.6	15.6	12.9
Probably should not allow	16.1	15.8	15.9	18.0
Definitely should not allow	30.3	22.0	31.0	41.9
2007 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=979**	**n=150**	**n=552**	**n=249**
Definitely should allow	21.2	23.3	22.6	14.9
Probably should allow	18.5	24.4	17.7	11.7
Not sure	15.1	16.1	14.1	16.7
Probably should not allow	16.7	20.3	16.0	12.9
Definitely should not allow	28.5	15.8	29.6	43.8

NOTE: Confidence intervals (CIs) for overall figures are about ± 3.3% in 2006 and ±3.1% in 2007. CIs for subgroups are larger.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

FINDINGS: Congestion—Overall

The survey asked those who work or volunteer outside the home to describe congestion encountered on their commute to work the week prior to the survey interview. Less than half (46.7 percent in 2006 and 40.4 percent in 2007) reported that traffic was very to moderately congested, while a little more than half (53.3 percent in 2006 and 59.6 percent in 2007) reported traffic as slightly congested or not at all congested.

Workers were also asked whether they think traffic congestion has gotten better or worse on their commute to work during the 12 months prior to the survey. Overall, about 1 in 10 believed that congestion had gotten better, 6 in 10 reported no change, and about 1 in 4 believed that congestion had gotten worse.

Over half (57.7 percent in 2006 and 53.6 percent in 2007) of those workers who reported that their commute the week prior to the survey was moderately or very congested also reported that congestion had stayed the same or gotten better over the last year. Conversely, 42.4 percent in 2006 and 46.5 percent in 2007 of that group reported congestion had gotten worse.

For those workers who reported little or no congestion in the week prior to the survey, over 85 percent (both years) reported that their commute had stayed the same or gotten better over the last 12 months.

FINDINGS: Congestion—Metropolitan Area v. non-Metropolitan Area

Approximately three out of four workers were from metropolitan areas.[1] Non-metro workers were almost twice as likely (51.9 percent in 2006 and 66.1 percent in 2007) as metro workers (27.1 and 29.0 percent) to report they had no congestion the week prior to the survey.

Metro workers (29.1 percent in 2006 and 28.4 percent in 2007) were significantly more likely than non-metro workers (19.0 percent in 2006 and 16.9 percent in 2007) to report that their commute had gotten worse in the last 12 months.

[1] Based on Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census—in 2006, 528 of 683 workers (77.3%) and in 2007, 454 of 605 workers (75.0%) were from MSAs.

Table 2. Rating of Congestion While Commuting, 2006 and 2007

Week prior to interview	2006 percent	95% CI	2007 percent	95% CI
Very to moderately congested	46.7	± 4.5% n=683	40.4	±4.5% n=605
Slight to no congestion	53.3	± 4.5% n=683	59.6	±4.5% n=605
Over the last 12 months				
Better	10.3	± 2.9% n=680	8.8	±2.7% n=607
Stayed the same	62.4	± 4.5% n=680	65.4	±4.3% n=607
Worse	27.3	±3.9% n=680	25.8	±3.9% n=607

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 3. Opinions on Change in Traffic Congestion, 2006 v. 2007 (percent holding opinion)

	Overall	Moderate to very congested	Little to no congestion	95% CI, overall
2006 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=683**	**n=295**	**n=381**	**n=683**
Better over last 12 months	10.3	11.6	9.3	± 2.9%
Stayed about the same	62.4	46.1	76.6	± 4.5%
Worse over last 12 months	27.3	42.4	14.1	± 3.9%
2007 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=607**	**n=244**	**n=359**	**n=607**
Better over last 12 months	8.8	5.3	10.4	± 2.9%
Stayed about the same	65.4	48.3	77.5	± 4.5%
Worse over last 12 months	25.8	46.5	12.0	± 3.9%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.
NOTE: CIs for subgroups are larger than for the total group.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 4. MSA v. non-MSA Congestion Ratings, 2006 and 2007 (percent)

	2006 MSA	2007 MSA	2006 Non-MSA	2007 Non-MSA
Omnibus Household Survey	**n=528**	**n=454**	**n=155**	**n=151**
Week prior to interview, not at all congested	27.1	29.0	51.9	66.1

KEY: CI = confidence interval; MSA = metropolitan statistical area
NOTE: CIs for MSA figures are ± 2.5% and for non-MSA figures are ± 4.8%.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 5. Opinions on Change in Traffic Congestion by MSA and non-MSA Residents, 2006 v. 2007 (percent holding opinion)

	Overall	MSA residents	Non-MSA residents	95% CI, overall
2006 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=683**	**n=524**	**n=155**	**n=683**
Better over last 12 months	10.3	11	7.3	± 2.9%
Stayed about the same	62.4	59.9	73.7	± 4.5%
Worse over last 12 months	27.3	29.1	19	± 3.9%
2007 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=607**	**n=456**	**n=151**	**n=607**
Better over last 12 months	8.8	9.8	5.2	± 2.9%
Stayed about the same	65.4	61.8	77.9	± 4.5%
Worse over last 12 months	25.8	28.4	16.9	± 3.9%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval; MSA = metropolitan statistical area

NOTE: CIs for MSA figures are ± 2.5% and for non-MSA figures are ± 4.8%.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

FINDINGS: Telecommuting

About one in four paid workers who work outside the home said that part of their work could be done at home. Of those who felt that part of their work could be done from home, about two out of three said that their employer allowed telecommuting sometimes. Of those whose employers allow work from home, 32.0 percent in 2006 and 44.1 percent in 2007 actually worked at home at least once in the week prior to the survey interview. Overall, that means that less than 3 out of 10 workers[2] who felt they could do some of their work from home actually did during the week before the survey.

Table 6. Telecommuting Activities, 2006 v. 2007

	Percent "yes"	95% CI
2006 Omnibus Household Survey		
Part of job can be done at home	23.8	± 4.3% n=590
Sometimes allowed to work at home	64.9	± 10.2% n=135
Actually worked at home last week	32.0	± 11.0% n=93
2007 Omnibus Household Survey		
Part of job can be done at home	21.8	± 4.3% n=527
Sometimes allowed to work at home	65.6	± 10.8% n=109
Actually worked at home last week	44.1	± 13.3% n=74

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

NOTE: Questions were asked sequentially. Respondents who answered "no" were skipped out of subsequent questions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

FINDINGS: Weekly Travel

Questions about typical weekly travel habits revealed a clear reliance on personal vehicles as the most frequently used mode of transportation.[3] Respondents were asked to identify the modes of transportation that they used during the week and the number of days that they used each. The overall average days of use for personal vehicles was just under 6 days for both survey years. Over 80 percent of those using a personal vehicle used it at least 5 days during the week. The overall average use of public transportation was less than one-half day per week. However, many of those using public transportation were regular users as about two out of five of these used it at least 5 days a week.

Table 7. Frequency of Mode Use During a Typical Week, 2006 v. 2007

Mode used	Average days/ week	Among mode users percent using 5+ days	95% CI
2006 Omnibus Household Survey			
Personal vehicle	5.7 days	84	± 2.5% n=1,043
Public transit	0.4 days	41.8	± 12.0% n=97
2007 Omnibus Household Survey			
Personal vehicle	5.6 days	81.5	± 2.5% n=1,016
Public transit	0.3 days	38.5	± 11.8% n=100

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

FINDINGS: Journey to Work

About 58% of U.S. residents worked for pay outside the home and traveled to work, on average, about 5 days per week. Among those who said that they did not work for pay, about one in five did some type of volunteer work away from home. Volunteer workers traveled to their place of volunteer work about half as often, an average of just over 2 days per week.

The predominant means for getting to work was driving alone whether working for pay (>85%) or volunteering (>68%). Among volunteer workers, about one in three (35.0% in 2006 and 34.3% in 2007) rode in a company or noncompany vehicle with others, compared to about one in five for paid workers (18.8% and 22.6%).

[2] In 2006, 6.4 million workers worked at home the week prior to the survey out of 30.4 million who felt part of their job could be done from home (about 23%). In 2007, 8.2 million of 28.2 million worked from home (29%).

[3] Personal vehicles include automobiles, vans, SUVs, pickup trucks, RVs or motorcycles.

Table 8. Frequency of Travel to Paid and Volunteer Work Sites, 2006 v. 2007

Work site	Average days/week	Percent working	95% CI for percent working
2006 Omnibus Household Survey			
Paid work	4.7 days	57.9	± 3.5% n=1,092
Volunteer work	2.4 days	19.5	± 4.1% n=504
2007 Omnibus Household Survey			
Paid work	4.8 days	57.7	± 3.5% n=1,015
Volunteer work	2.1 days	16.6	± 3.7% n=488

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 9. Types of Transportation to and from Work/Volunteer Sites, 2006

Type of Mode Used	Paid worker (%)	95% CI	Volunteer worker (%)	95% CI
2006 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=591**		**n=98**	
Non-company vehicle, alone	78.4	± 4.1%	72.9	±11.6%
Non-company with others	13.2	± 3.3%	26.4	±10.8%
Walk	9.3	± 2.9%	22.8	±10.6%
Company vehicle, alone	8.1	± 2.5%	2.1	±2.9%
Company vehicle w/others	5.6	± 2.4%	8.6	±7.8%
Bus	5.5	± 2.4%	0.5	±1.0%
Carpool/vanpool	4.5	± 2.0%	7.0	±7.1%
Subway	3.3	± 1.8%	0.9	±1.8%
Bike	3.1	± 2.0%	8.2	±7.4%
Train	2.7	± 1.8%	0.8	±1.6%
Other	1.6	± 1.0%	1.6	±3.1%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% as respondents could select more than one mode.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 10. Types of Transportation to and from Work/Volunteer Sites, 2007

Type of mode used	Paid worker (%)	95% CI	Volunteer worker (%)	95% CI
2007 Omnibus Household Survey	**n=528**		**n=81**	
Non-company vehicle, alone	81.5	± 4.1%	68.0	±12.0%
Non-company with others	16.9	± 4.1%	31.2	±12.0%
Walk	7.6	± 2.7%	19.7	±9.8%
Company vehicle, alone	9.1	± 3.1%	1.0	±2.0%
Company vehicle w/others	5.7	± 2.4%	3.1	±4.3%
Bus	4.3	± 2.0%	0.0	±0.0%
Carpool/vanpool	3.8	± 2.2%	5.4	±6.3%
Subway	2.4	± 1.8%	0.0	±0.0%
Bike	2.2	± 1.6%	4.1	±5.1%
Train	3.2	± 1.8%	0.0	±0.0%
Other	2.7	± 1.6%	1.0	±2.0%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% as respondents could select more than one mode.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

FINDINGS: Air Travel and Security

About two out of five U.S. residents (37.6 percent in 2006 and 36.8 percent in 2007) flew on a commercial airline in the 12 months preceding the survey, and those who had flown were asked for their opinions on air travel security.

Overall, it appears that travelers have become accustomed to airport security in the post-9/11 environment and they know what to expect. The majority of travelers (84.4 percent and 86.5 percent) who had flown in the 12 months preceding the survey said that the waiting time to get to the security screening checkpoint was what they expected or was shorter than expected. Over 90 percent said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the time taken at security.

About 1 out of 4 passengers had total confidence or a great deal of confidence in the ability of security screeners to keep air travel secure; about half had a moderate amount of confidence, while less than 1 out of 10 reported no confidence in security screeners.

Table 11. Wait Time for Passenger Screening Compared to Expectations, 2006 v. 2007

	2006 percent	95% CI (n=410)	2007 percent	95% CI (n=377)
Much shorter	12.0	± 3.7%	7.7	±3.3%
Shorter	22.7	± 4.7%	29.9	±5.7%
As expected	49.7	± 5.9%	48.9	±5.9%
Longer	10.3	± 3.5%	7.8	±2.7%
Much longer	2.8	± 1.8%	3.8	±2.2%
No expectation	2.5	±1.8%	2.0	±2.0%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

Table 12. Confidence in Screeners to Keep Air Travel Secure, 2006 v. 2007

	2006 percent	95% CI (n=1,020)	2007 percent	95% CI (n=951)
Total confidence	8.0	± 2.2%	6.4	± 1.8%
Great deal of confidence	20.0	± 3.1%	17.4	± 2.9%
Moderate confidence	46.1	± 3.7%	44.6	± 3.7%
Small amount of confidence	17.6	± 2.7%	24.7	± 3.3%
No confidence	8.3	± 2.2%	6.9	± 2.0%

KEY: CI = Confidence interval.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Omnibus Household Surveys, November 2006 and 2007.

About this Report

This report was prepared by June Taylor Jones, Survey Statistician with the Research and Innovative Technology Administration/Bureau of Transportation Statistics (RITA/BTS).

The findings from the Omnibus Household Survey are based on data collected from a random digit dial sample of telephone interviews conducted with over 1,000 nationally representative households in November of 2006 and 2007. Estimates reported here are based on weighted data using U.S. Census Bureau population figures to account for selection probabilities at the household and individual level. All sample surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error including sampling error, coverage error, nonresponse error, and measurement error. Confidence intervals (95%) are provided for all estimates included in this report.

For related BTS data and publications: www.bts.gov

For questions about this or other BTS reports, call 1-800-853-1351, email answers@bts.gov, or visit www.bts.gov.

Data —

- **Omnibus Household Survey Results—**August 2000-October 2003.

Reports —

- **OmniStats**—November 2001-October 2003.
- **Airline Passenger Opinions on Security Screening Procedures** (data from the December 2004 survey)—June 2005
- **Americans Voice Opinions on Congestion, Telecommuting, and Cellphones Aboard Airplanes** (data from the October 2005 survey)—March 2008