

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction and Study Overview**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The United States is the most mobile society in the world, with the automobile being the most common form of transportation and the trip to work the most important daily journey made by most people. Nevertheless, access to automobile transportation among various segments of the workforce differs widely. Many trends have changed the composition of the workforce and, consequently, the journey to work in the decades between 1960 and 1990. For example, although a slight majority of workers still commute to central cities, the relocation and growth of workplaces in the suburbs and outside the metropolitan areas have impacted on travel patterns. Another trend with implications for transportation planning is the growth in the number of part-time workers and the self-employed. To the extent that part-time workers include economically disadvantaged workers, there is a need to understand the characteristics of these workers, including the occupations and industries in which they are employed, as well as their current worktrip commuting patterns.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This is a study of part-time workers and their worktrip behavior. It identifies the groups most likely to work part-time and highlights significant demographic, economic, and transportation differences among these workers and their full-time counterparts. This study pays particular attention to the availability of automobiles to part-time workers and the extent of their use as a commuting mode.

Knowing the facts about part-time workers' commuting behavior is essential if we are to understand how specific transportation policies may impact this segment of the workforce. The shift of the U.S. economy from manufacturing to service industries which employs a large proportion of part-time workers, has important implications for transportation policies related to automobile use.

The flexibility afforded by the automobile makes it uniquely suited to part-time workers given their non-standard hours. While automobile use is almost universal among these workers, certain groups within this population experience barriers to access. This study should be valuable therefore to transportation planners at every level of government, who need detailed information identifying these barriers in order to match available services to the needs of the population.

The new welfare program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), requires large numbers of people to enter the workforce, and, federal, state, and local planners may therefore be interested in new initiatives to ensure that these former welfare recipients have access to the transportation they need to have to take advantage of job opportunities. This study will prove valuable to these policymakers as it provides insights into the work related transportation barriers experienced by the low-income population.

### **Organization of the Report**

This report features three main areas of analysis: (1) a literature review of the subject of part-time workers and their journey to work; (2) identification of the segments of the population most likely to work part time; and (3) an analysis of transportation access and the worktrip of part-time workers.

In Chapter 2, we review the literature regarding both part-time workers and the journey to work. We found no specific studies involving part-time workers and their journey to work and, therefore, focused our report on this significant gap in the research.

In Chapter 3, we identify four groups of workers who dominate the part-time workforce—teenagers, women, seniors, and the elderly—and analyze the occupational and income differences among those groups and full-time workers.

In Chapter 4, we analyze the worktrip behavior of part-time workers, placing emphasis on the transportation barriers they encounter. We examine most particularly their access to automobiles for their journey to work.

Finally, in Chapter 5, we provide some of the key findings that emerged from the study and discuss the most important questions and implications for transportation policy.

Presented below are some of the key findings of the study. These findings are discussed in greater detail within the report.

### **Key Findings**

This study makes numerous detailed comparisons between various segments of the part-time workforce as well as between part-time and full-time workers as well as their worktrip behavior. A few comparisons worth highlighting follow.

- ! There are 22.7 million part-time workers in the United States, of whom 14.6 million are women (64 percent) and 8.1 million are men. In 1990, there were 3.9 million teenagers working part-time, 1.1 million senior citizens between the age of 60 and 64, and 3 million elderly workers over 65 years old.

- ! The number of female part-time workers increased by 17 percent between 1980 and 1990. The proportion of females in part-time work was 19 points higher than their proportion in the general workforce.
- ! Fifty-nine percent of married women and 13 percent of unmarried women who work part-time have children (under 18 years old) at home.
- ! Part-time workers were employed an average of 21 hours a week.
- ! Services, sales, and labor accounted for 4 out of every 10 part-time jobs, compared to 2 out of every 10 full-time jobs.
- ! In 1990, 4 out of every 10 part-time workers lived in households with annual incomes of less than \$30,000. Minority part-time workers were more likely to live in such households, than were their white counterparts.
- ! Automobile availability was similar for part-time and full-time workers. Only 5 percent of part-time workers and 4 percent of full-time workers live in households with no private automobile. Part-time workers in low-income households were more likely than other part-time workers to have no automobile available.
- ! Across all levels of personal income, black part-time workers represent the largest proportion of workers in households with no automobile.
- ! The proportions of people who carpooled or drove alone to work differed little between the part-time and the full-time working populations. Public transit, walking, and cycling were more important commuting options for part-time workers than for full-time workers, but the percent of both groups using each of these options was less than 10 percent.

- ! Unmarried women with children under age 18 used the automobile in their work trip at a lower proportion than their married counterparts.
- ! Many part-time workers start their commute at times when public transit may not be a viable option. Only 2 out of 5 part-time workers depart for work between 6 a.m. and 8:29 a.m, compared to 2 out of 3 full-time workers. Part-time workers were three times more likely than full-time workers to depart for work after 12 noon.
- ! More than half of all women working part-time in professional occupations depart for work between 6 a.m. and 8:29 a.m., compared to 29 percent of those in sales occupations.

### **Data and Definitions**

The data used in this study is derived from the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) of the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. The PUMS contains records representing 5 percent of the housing units and the persons in them as well as the full range of population and housing information collected in the 1990 Census (including 500 occupational variables). The PUMS data on labor force status and the journey to work were related to the reference week, which was the calendar week preceding the date on which the respondents completed their questionnaires or were interviewed by enumerators. Table 1.1 provides a definition of some of the key variables used in the analysis.

Table 1.1 Definition of Key Variables

Variables	Definitions
<p><b>Employment Status</b></p> <p>Hours Worked per week</p>	<p>Those who worked 35 or more hours each week were classified as full-time and workers reporting 1 to 34 hours were classified as working part-time.</p>
<p><b>Household Type</b></p> <p>Household</p>	<p>A household includes all persons who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as separate living quarters.</p>
<p><b>Income</b></p> <p>Household Income</p>	<p>Household income includes the income of the householder and all other persons ages 15 and older in the household, whether related to the householder or not.</p>
<p><b>Journey to Work</b></p> <p>Mode of Transportation</p> <p>Private Vehicle Occupancy</p>	<p>This refers to the principal mode of travel or type of conveyance that the person usually used to get from home to work.</p> <p>Private vehicle occupancy refers to the number of persons who usually rode to work in the same vehicle. Those who drove alone included persons who usually drove alone to work as well as those who were driven to work by someone who then drove back home or to a nonwork destination.</p>
<p>Departure Time</p>	<p>Time of day a person usually left for work.</p>
<p>Commuting Time</p>	<p>Time it took to get from home to work. The elapsed time includes the time spent waiting for public transportation, picking up passengers in carpools, and engaging in other activities related to getting to work.</p>