America on the Go . . .

Findings from the National Household Travel Survey October 2003

U.S. Business Travel

Americans make more than 405 million long-distance business trips per year, accounting for 16% of all long-distance travel (see Box A), according to a preliminary analysis of the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS). Conducted from 2001 to 2002, the NHTS asked 60,000 people in 26,000 U.S. households about all trips they took in a given travel period and looked at the characteristics of those travelers and trips. This report examines early NHTS findings on domestic business trips to destinations at least 50 miles from home.

Trip Characteristics

Contrary to the stereotypical image of the business traveler heading off to catch a cross-country flight, the majority of long-distance business trips in the United States are taken to destinations within 250 miles of home and are by automobile. Nearly three-fourths (74%) are less than 250 miles from the point of departure and most of those are within 100 miles. Trips of over 1,000 miles account for only about 7% of all business trips. (See Figure 1).

Still, at 123 miles, the median one-way distance for business trips is greater than that for trips with other purposes. By comparison, the median distance for pleasure travel is 114 miles and for personal or family business trips the median distance is 103 miles. Long-distance commuting trips have a median distance of 69 miles.

The personal vehicle is the dominant travel mode for business travel, comprising 81% of all trips. Air travel accounts for about 16% of all business trips. The use of the two primary modes shifts, however, as trip distance gets longer. Almost all

Box A: What is a Long-Distance Trip?

The National Household Travel Survey defines a long-distance trip as a journey from home to the furthest destination of 50 miles or more. For example, a trip from New York City to Denver to San Francisco would be considered a single trip from NYC to San Francisco.

Although this document primarily addresses long-distance business trips, this definition also applies to pleasure trips, personal and family business trips, and commuting trips for work to a destination 50 miles or more away.

NOTE: A small percentage of business trips are made to international destinations but are not included in the estimates represented in this report.

U.S. Department of Transportation

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

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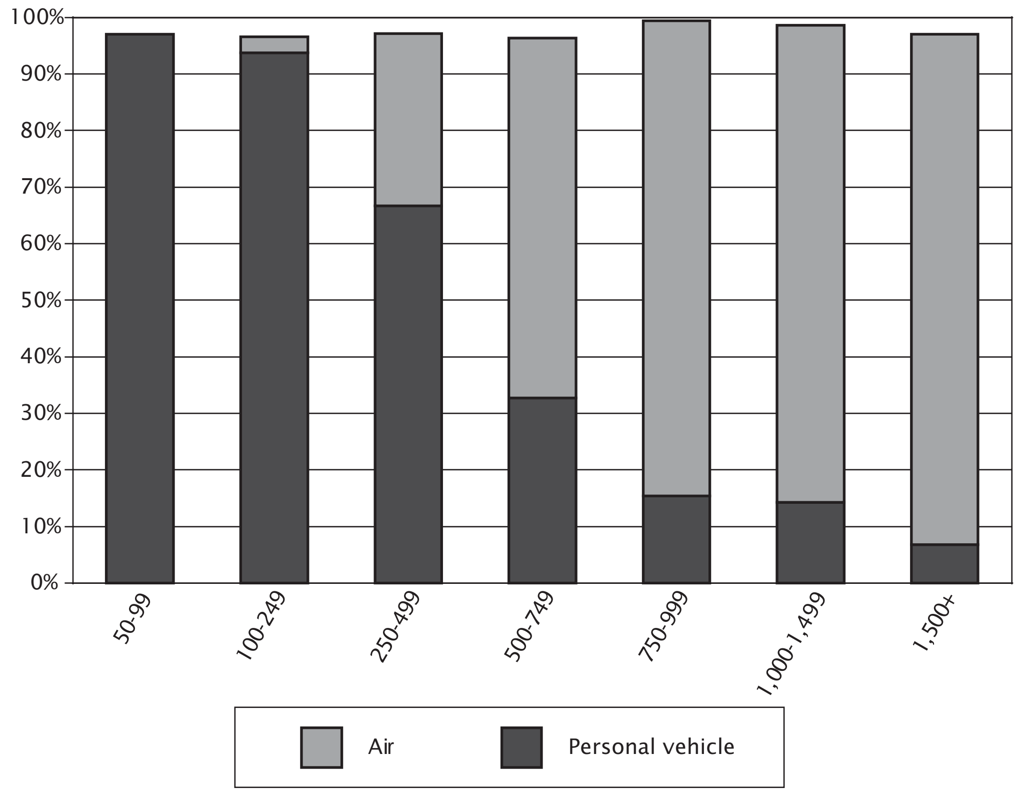
Figure 1. Long-Distance Personal Vehicle and Long-Distance Air Trips by Miles Traveled One Way



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, National Household Travel Survey, 2001.

shorter trips are by personal vehicle—97% of 50 to 99 mile trips and nearly 94% of 100 to 249 mile trips. In the 250- to 499-mile range, the personal vehicle's share of trips declines to 67%, while the airplane accounts for 31% of the trips.

Only after the 500-mile mark does the car give way to the airplane as the dominant mode of business travel. For trips 500 to 749 miles in length, air captures 64%, compared to 33% by personal vehicle. Of business trips between 750 and 1,500 miles, air captures almost 85%, and of trips more than 1,500 miles in distance, a full 90% are made by air. Accordingly, this yields a median trip distance for business travel by car of 102 miles, but one of 816 miles for business travel by air.

Where are They Traveling?

Because the majority of business trips are less than 250 miles in length, it is not surprising that 84% of business trips (341 million business trips) do not cross census region boundaries[1] (Figure 2).

The origins and destinations of the 64 million inter-regional trips are not evenly distributed. The West attracts 7.4 million more inbound business trips than it sends to other regions. The South, on the other hand, has 7.7 million fewer inbound business trips than outbound. There is no statistically detectable difference between the inbound and out-

[1] The Bureau of the Census divides the country into four reporting regions.

bound flows[2] in the Northeast and Midwest. The South is the largest destination for outbound business trips from each region. Also, the South is the largest generator of inbound business trips to each of the other regions.

Traveler Profile

The typical business traveler is likely to be male; work in a professional, managerial, or technical position; be 30 to 49 years old; and have an income well above the population average.

Men account for more than three-fourths (77%) of business trips. This compares to nonbusiness travel where men take 54% of the trips and women 46%.

Those who consider their occupation to be professional, managerial, or technical account for over half (53%) of all business trips. This occupational category represents only about 40% of the general population. Sales or service workers account for the next largest share of business trips, 28%. On the other hand, clerical/administrative workers account for less than 4% of business trips even though they represent almost 12% of the population.

About 55% of all business trips are made by individuals aged 30 to 49. Those in their thirties take 28% of the trips while comprising 16% of the population. Those in their forties take 27% of the trips while comprising 15% of the population. The percentage of trips represented by those in their fifties drops markedly, with only 18% of business trips represented by this age group. Overall, this age group accounts for about 11% of the population. The youngest and oldest groups of adult business travelers, 18 to 29 and 60+ years old, represent about 16% and 10% of business trips, respectively.

Business trips are generally made by those with household incomes that exceed the national average, which is about $47,500, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although 12% of households have annual incomes of $100,000 or more, the NHTS survey found that this income group accounts for over one-fourth (27%) of business trips. Another 18% of trips are made by those with household incomes between $75,000 and $99,000. There are relatively few low-income business travelers. Although 21% of households have incomes of $25,000 or less, only 6% of the business trips are made by that income group.

Source and Accuracy

The findings from the 2001 NHTS survey are based on travel data collected from a random digit dial sample of telephone interviews conducted with over 60,000 individuals in approximately 26,000 nationally representative households. Interviews were conducted between March 2001 and May 2002. Individuals in the NHTS sample were asked to complete a travel diary for a specified day, known as the *travel day*, and were also asked to report on the characteristics of long-distance trips of 50 miles or more from home made during a 4-week period, known as the *travel period*.

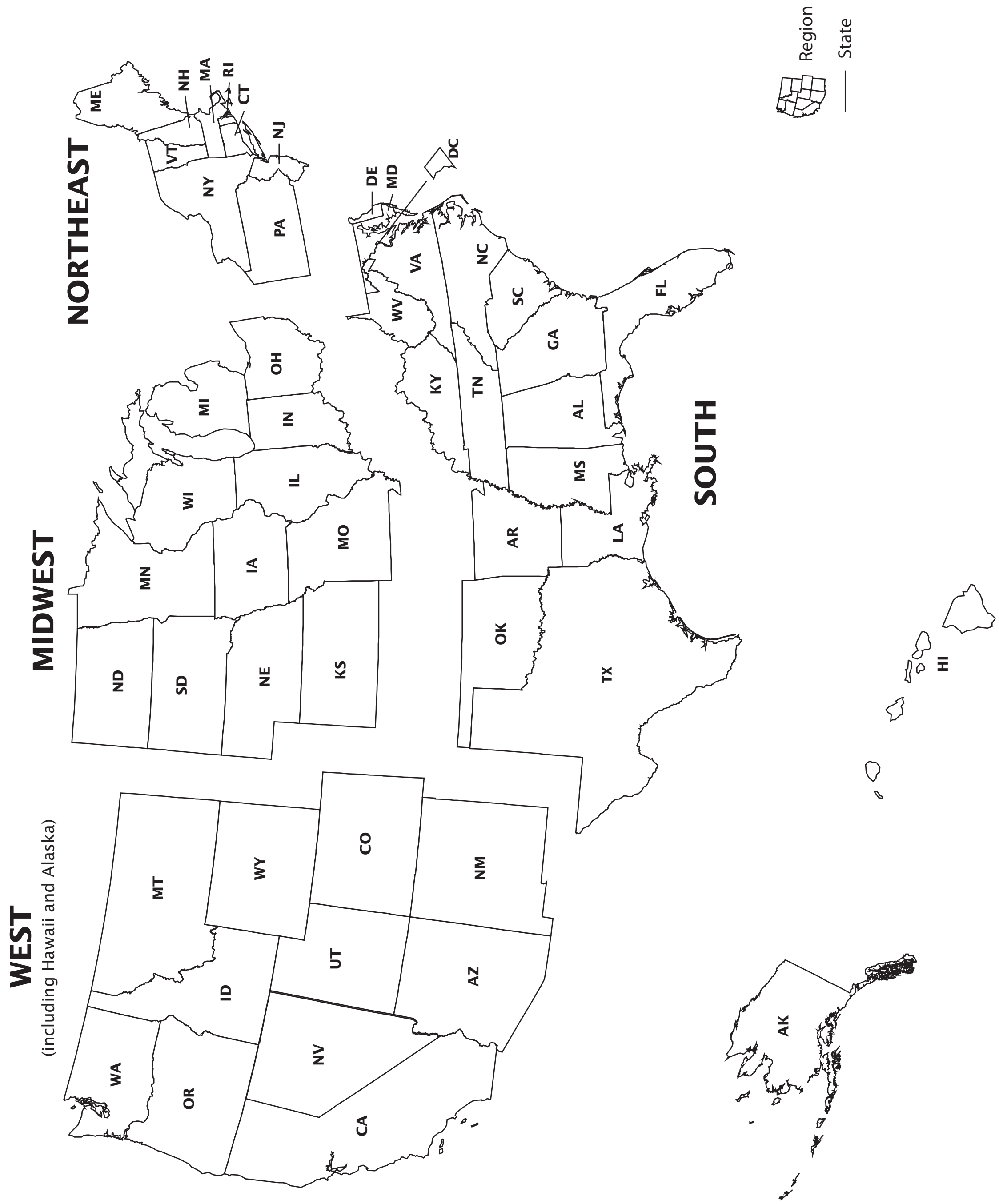
Estimates reported here are based on weighted data to account for selection probabilities at the household and individual level, and are further adjusted for household and individual nonresponse. Comparisons made in this report are statistically significant at a 0.05% level.

About the 2001 NHTS

The 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) updates information gathered by two series of travel surveys—the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) conducted in 1969, 1977, 1983, 1990, and 1995 and the American Travel Survey (ATS) conducted in 1977 and 1995. Results from this report are from preliminary data collected in the long-distance travel section of the survey.

[2] Inbound flow is the number of trips to a Census Region originating from another Census Region. Outbound flow is the number of trips from a Census Region with the farthest destination in any other Census Region.

Figure 2. Census Regions of the United States



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau