

issues¹ in Labor Statistics

U.S. Department of Labor • U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Where people worked, 2003 to 2007

Work often is associated with a specific workplace—such as a factory, school, office, hospital, or other location—where people perform their jobs. In recent years, however, technological developments have provided some workers with the ability to perform their jobs at other locations. Expanded access to broadband Internet connections, wireless connectivity, and secure data networks provide workers with high-speed and secure access to work files. Internet data storage allows workers to access stored information from any Internet connection, and handheld devices such as smartphones assist in managing work-related communication from almost anywhere. These technological developments and their expansion have helped create the perception that workers today are increasingly working at locations beyond their workplace.

Data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) provide a wide range of information about what activities people do with their time, such as the amount of time spent taking care of a child or engaged in educational activities. This summary focuses on where people work—whether it is at their workplace, home, or another location. It examines annual average hours worked from 2003 to 2007 to determine whether there are observable changes in where workers performed their jobs.

In the following analysis, the term “working” refers to any time that employed people spent doing tasks required for a job. A person who read work-related e-mail messages for 10 minutes on a Saturday is counted as working on that day, as is someone who worked a 12-hour shift. Time diary data from the ATUS capture the time and location of work for all employed people, regardless of their usual work schedule or arrangement. For example, work estimates include work that occurred on days people were scheduled to work and on days they instead had off.

For all years, 2003 to 2007, employed people were more likely to work at their workplace¹ than at any other location on days they worked, with nearly 9 in 10 employed people doing at least some work at their workplace (see table). Additionally, of all the hours they worked per week, about 90 percent were performed at their workplace—a figure that changed little over this 5-year period. The second most common location at which workers performed their jobs was at home. On days they worked, nearly 1 in 5 employed people spent at least some time working at home; this figure was approximately the same for all years 2003 to 2007. Over this period, however, there was a slight increase in the percent of total weekly work hours that employed people worked at home, from 6 percent in 2003 to 7 percent in 2007. Employed people also performed work

at locations other than their workplace and home, such as at a restaurant, someone else’s home, or outside, although they worked at these places less often—about 3 percent of all weekly work hours.

Other than a slight increase in the percent of total weekly hours that employed people worked at home, there was little change overall in where they worked during the 2003–07 period. Because of the nature of their work, some employed people would have less flexibility than others in where they work. For example, consider the job duties of security guards, cooks, janitors, firefighters, mail carriers, store clerks, waiters, and construction workers; these jobs involve work that often must be done at a specific location because the job involves protecting, serving others, delivering, or building—all of which are done at a specific place.² Many of the jobs in the management, professional, and related occupations group involve tasks that are computer-based and, because many of the technological developments discussed earlier are computer-related, it is possible that the duties associated with these occupations could be more readily performed at locations other than one’s workplace.³ Managers, analysts, engineers, accountants, computer programmers, lawyers, and others are classified in this group, which accounts for 36 percent of all employed persons.⁴

In 2003 to 2007, 31 percent of people employed in manage-

ment, professional, and related occupations spent at least some time working at home on days they worked, compared with 13 percent of people employed in other occupations. Those in management, professional, and related occupations also were more likely to work at a location other than their home or workplace (10 percent compared with 7 percent) and less likely to work at their workplace (81 percent compared with 91 percent) on days they worked than were people employed in other occupations.⁵

The percent of people employed in management, professional, and related occupations and who worked at home on days they worked generally trended up from 2003 to 2007. In 2007, about 1 in 3 of those workers spent some time working at home on days they worked. The hours they worked at home also increased, by an average of 1.4 hours per week from 2003 to 2007. This uptick in hours worked at home coincided with an increase of 1.2 hours per week in total work time. The weekly hours that people employed in management, professional, and related occupations worked at their workplace and at other locations remained about the same over the 5-year period. Those employed in other occupations also increased their work hours over the 5-year period (by 0.9 hour per week); however, all of the increase was in the hours they worked at their workplace.

The percent of total weekly work hours that people in management, professional, and related occupations worked at home increased from 10 percent to 13 percent and the percent of hours they worked at their workplace decreased from 86 percent to 84 percent

from 2003 to 2007. The share of total work hours that those employed in other occupations worked at home remained flat from 2003 to 2007 (see chart).

In summary, people employed in fields where workers regularly use personal computers, such as those in manage-

ment, professional, and related occupations, are those most likely to be affected by the recent development and expansion of technologies that facilitate high-speed, secure information exchange. The ATUS data show that people working in management, professional,

and related occupations were more likely to perform their work at locations other than their workplace than were those employed in other occupations. The data also show that people employed in professional, management, and related occupations increased

Percent of employed persons working,¹ average hours worked, and percent of hours worked, by location worked and occupation, 2003 to 2007 annual averages

Location and occupation	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Employed persons, total					
On days they worked, the percent of persons who worked ² —					
At workplace	87.2	86.9	87.3	86.2	86.5
At home	18.6	19.2	19.6	21.1	19.9
At another location	9.5	7.7	7.3	8.0	6.8
Average hours worked per week, total	35.9	36.3	35.8	36.6	36.8
At workplace	32.2	32.6	32.4	32.7	33.1
At home	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.7
At another location	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.1
Of total weekly work hours, the percent of hours worked—					
At workplace	89.9	89.7	90.5	89.2	89.9
At home	6.3	7.2	6.7	7.3	7.4
At another location	3.8	3.1	2.7	3.4	2.9
Employed in management, professional, and related occupations					
On days they worked, the percent of persons who worked ² —					
At workplace	81.2	80.7	80.9	80.2	79.6
At home	29.3	28.5	30.4	34.3	32.9
At another location	12.3	10.1	9.1	10.1	9.0
Average hours worked per week, total	37.5	38.5	37.7	38.4	38.7
At workplace	32.2	32.7	32.6	32.6	32.3
At home	3.6	4.2	4.0	4.4	5.0
At another location	1.6	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.4
Of total weekly work hours, the percent of hours worked—					
At workplace	86.0	85.1	86.5	84.9	83.7
At home	9.6	10.9	10.5	11.4	12.8
At another location	4.4	4.0	3.0	3.8	3.5
Employed in other occupations³					
On days they worked, the percent of persons who worked ² —					
At workplace	91.0	90.8	91.2	89.9	90.6
At home	12.0	13.4	13.1	13.0	12.2
At another location	7.8	6.3	6.2	6.8	5.5
Average hours worked per week, total	34.9	35.0	34.7	35.6	35.8
At workplace	32.2	32.5	32.3	32.7	33.5
At home	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.5
At another location	1.2	.9	.9	1.1	.9
Of total weekly work hours, the percent of hours worked—					
At workplace	92.3	92.7	92.9	91.9	93.4
At home	4.3	4.8	4.5	4.9	4.2
At another location	3.5	2.5	2.6	3.2	2.5

¹ Includes work at main job and other job(s), and excludes travel related to work.

² Estimates for the percent of people working at home, a workplace, or another location on days they worked do not sum to 100 percent because some people worked at more than one location.

³ "Other occupations" refers to all occupations except management, pro-

fessional, and related occupations.

NOTE: Working at home includes any time persons did work at home and it is not restricted to persons whose usual workplace is their home. "Another location" refers to places other than one's home or workplace.

the hours they worked at home over the 2003–07 period.

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and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC, 2012. For additional information about where people work or for a technical description of the ATUS from which the data

used in this summary were derived, call (202) 691-6339, send an e-mail to atusinfo@bls.gov, or visit the ATUS Web site at www.bls.gov/tus/.

Information in this summary will be made available to senso-

ry-impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200. Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339. This report is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission. □

—Notes—

¹ A workplace is a flexible term that refers to the place a person usually works. An accountant’s workplace may be an office building and a sales clerk’s workplace may refer to a store. The term refers to any place that people work, including factories, hospitals, schools, workshops, restaurants, and other locations.

² For information about which occupations are most and least likely to be performed at home, see Mary Dorinda Allard and Jill Lacey, *Issues in Labor*

Statistics: Work-at-home patterns by occupation, March 2009, available online at: www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils72.pdf.

³ According to the Current Population Survey, almost 30 percent of workers in management, professional, and related occupations reported working at home in May 2004, and nearly two-thirds of all persons who usually worked at home were employed in these occupations. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Work at home in 2004*, September 2005, available online at: www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/homey.pdf.

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⁴ The Management, professional, and related occupations group also includes teachers, scientists, and healthcare practitioners and technicians, all of which are jobs that to some extent are attached to a workplace whether it is a school, laboratory, hospital, or clinic. This suggests that there is likely some variation in where people within this occupational group work. Past research has shown that teachers have some flexibility in where they perform their job duties, as teachers

frequently work at home in addition to their workplace. For more information about teachers, see Rachel Krantz-Kent, “Teachers’ work patterns: when, where, and how much do U.S. teachers work?” available online at: www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2008/03/art4full.pdf.

⁵ The sum of the estimates for the percent of people working at home, a workplace, or another location on days they worked exceeds 100 percent because some people worked at more than one location.

Percent of total weekly hours that employed persons worked at home by occupation, 2003 to 2007 annual averages

