

issues in Labor Statistics



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Work-at-home patterns by occupation

Working at home can provide people with numerous benefits—flexibility in their schedules, fewer commutes, and opportunities to catch up on work. According to the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), about 12 percent of full-time workers with a single job did some work at home on an average day in 2003–07. (See table.) However, the ability to work at home is greatly affected by the nature of one’s work because some types of work can be more easily performed at home than others.

ATUS data provide insight into which workers were the most likely to do some work at home, and also yield information on the share of total weekly work hours people spent at their workplace, at home, and at other locations.¹

¹Workers are considered to have done some work at home if they did at least 1 minute of work for their primary job at home.

²According to the May 2004 Current Population Survey (CPS), for about 45 percent of wage and salary workers and 17 percent of self-employed workers, the primary reason for working at home was to “finish or catch up on work.” However, for about 46 percent of self-employed workers, the primary reason for working at home was “business is conducted from home,” compared with 8 percent of wage and salary workers with this reason. For more results from the May 2004 CPS, go to <http://www.bls.gov/cps/lfcharacteristics.htm#workhome>.

³For more information on time use of teachers, see “Teachers’ work patterns: when, where, and how much do U.S. teachers work?” by Rachel Krantz-Kent at <http://www.bls.gov/pub/mlr/2008/03/art4full.pdf>.

Data presented here are averages for people age 15 years and over and for all 7 days of the week throughout 2003–07. Also, data refer only to workers with a single job who were employed full time; that is, they usually worked 35 or more hours per week.

Self-employed workers were over three times more likely to do some work at home than wage and salary workers. About 34 percent of the self-employed did at least some work at home on an average day, compared with 10 percent of wage and salary workers. Self-employed workers also spent a larger percent of their total weekly work hours at home than did wage and salary workers—24 percent compared with 4 percent. These two groups likely had different reasons for working at home; self-employed workers primarily worked at home because they had home-based businesses, whereas wage and salary workers mainly did work at home to catch up on work.² On days that they worked at home, about 28 percent of the full-time self-employed worked more than 7 hours at home, compared with 8 percent of wage and salary workers. Conversely, on days that they worked at home, 52 percent of full-time wage and salary workers spent 1 hour or less working at home, compared with 30 percent of self-employed workers. (See table and charts 1 and 2.)

Self-employed workers in every occupational group also worked a larger percentage of their total weekly work hours

at home than did wage and salary workers. The largest difference between self-employed and wage and salary workers occurred among arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations. Self-employed workers in these occupations worked about 55 percent of their total weekly work hours at home, compared with only 7 percent for wage and salary workers. Self-employed workers in personal care occupations, which include childcare workers, also worked a large share of their total weekly work hours at home (about 43 percent), compared with 9 percent for wage and salary workers in these occupations.

Among wage and salary workers, those employed in education, training, and library occupations worked some of the largest percentages of their total weekly work hours at home (12 percent). Workers in this occupational group (83 percent of whom are teachers) have some flexibility in where they choose to grade assignments and write lesson plans.³ Wage and salary workers employed in computer and mathematical science occupations also worked among the largest percentage of their total weekly work hours at home (10 percent).

The nature of some occupations makes working at home difficult because such jobs must be performed in specific locations, such as a restaurant or factory, or the jobs require frequent interaction with others. Among wage and salary workers, the occupational groups with some of the smallest per-

centages of total weekly work hours spent at home (about 1 percent) include food preparation and serving occupations, production and serving occupations, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations. Among self-employed workers, those employed in construction and extraction occupations and health care practitioner and technical occupations worked some of the smallest percentages of their total weekly work hours at home (about 8 percent). Workers in transportation occupations also worked among the smallest share of total weekly work hours at home, regardless of whether they were wage and salary workers (1 percent) or self-employed (11 percent).

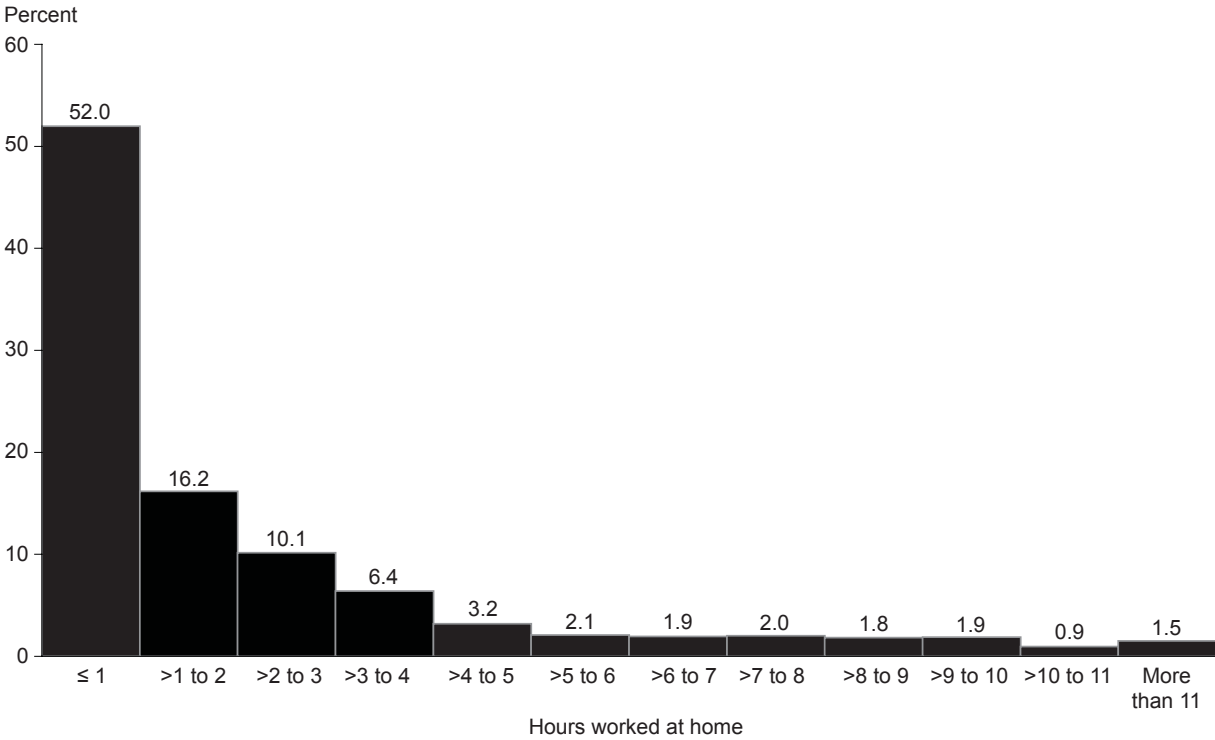
This *Issues* paper was prepared by Mary Dorinda Allard and Jill Lacey, economists in the Division of Labor Force Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC 20212. For additional information on time spent working at home or for a technical description of the ATUS from which the data used in this summary were derived, call (202) 691-6339, or send an e-mail to atusinfo@bls.gov.

Information in this summary will be made available to sensory-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. □

Percent of full-time workers with a single job who worked at home on an average day, and percent of total weekly work hours spent at various locations, by class of worker and occupation, 2003–2007

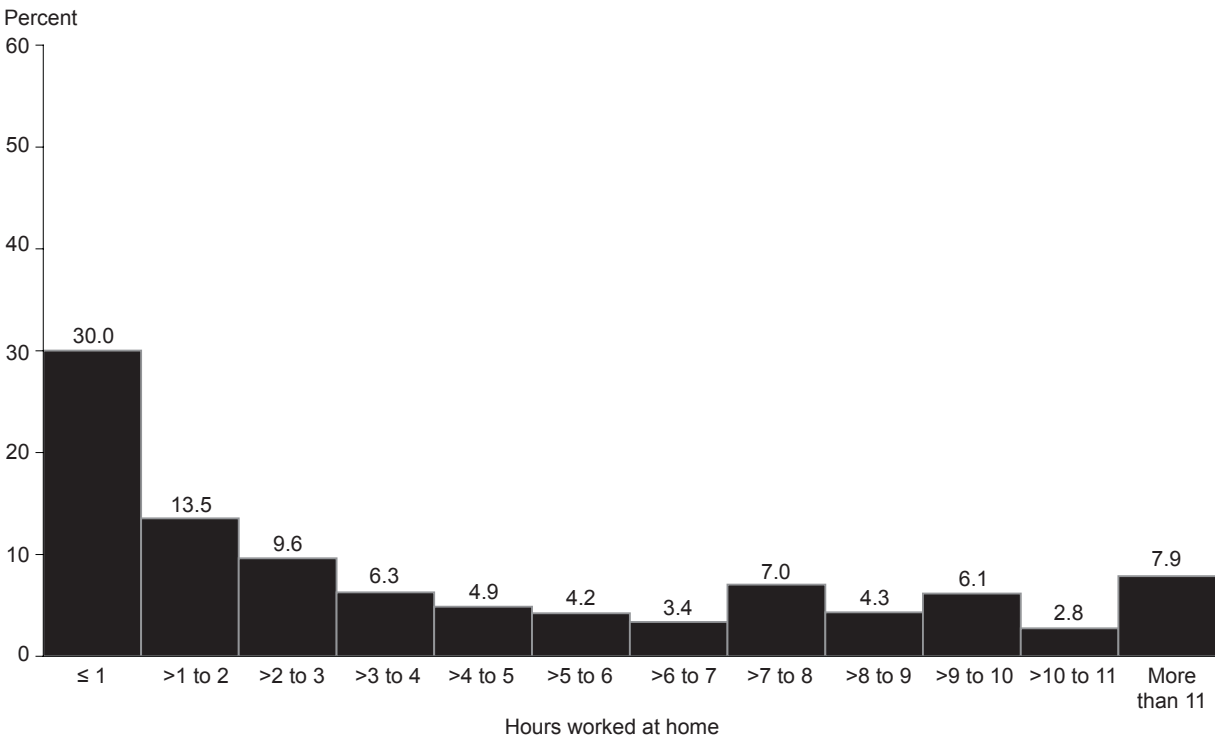
Characteristic	Percent who worked at home on an average day	Percent of total weekly hours worked at various locations		
		Workplace	Home	Other location
Total, all classes of worker and occupations	12.2	91.2	5.9	2.8
Wage and salary workers, total	10.0	93.5	3.9	2.5
Management occupations	20.1	89.0	7.1	3.9
Business and financial operations occupations	11.3	92.2	5.3	2.5
Computer and mathematical science occupations	20.6	89.0	9.8	1.1
Architecture and engineering occupations	10.4	95.4	3.0	1.6
Life, physical, and social science occupations	13.6	91.8	5.0	3.2
Community and social service occupations	19.0	88.4	6.8	4.9
Legal occupations	15.4	92.2	4.4	3.4
Education, training, and library occupations	28.1	84.8	11.8	3.4
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	19.0	89.8	7.0	3.3
Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations	10.7	94.0	3.2	2.8
Healthcare support occupations	4.0	95.8	3.2	1.0
Protective services occupations	6.0	96.9	1.7	1.5
Food preparation and serving occupations	3.0	95.9	.5	3.5
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	2.1	98.4	.8	.8
Personal care occupations	10.2	88.0	8.8	3.2
Sales and related occupations	13.1	92.0	5.5	2.5
Office and administrative support occupations	4.2	97.5	1.4	1.1
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	9.8	91.3	7.9	.8
Construction and extraction occupations	3.8	95.6	1.2	3.2
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	5.6	96.7	1.2	2.1
Production occupations	2.0	97.8	.7	1.4
Transportation occupations	2.9	94.5	.9	4.6
Self-employed, total	34.3	71.1	23.5	5.4
Management occupations	37.4	67.4	26.4	6.2
Business and financial operations occupations	48.6	62.2	32.3	5.5
Legal occupations	46.6	70.9	20.5	8.6
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	54.9	35.3	55.2	9.5
Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations	30.0	88.2	8.3	3.5
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	20.1	80.3	13.2	6.5
Personal care occupations	37.1	52.0	42.6	5.5
Sales and related occupations	29.0	77.0	16.0	7.0
Construction and extraction occupations	23.5	89.3	8.1	2.6
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	22.8	84.3	14.3	1.4
Transportation occupations	28.6	84.7	11.3	4.0
All other occupations	39.9	63.6	32.6	3.8

Chart 1. More than 50 percent of full-time wage and salary¹ workers with a single job worked 1 hour or less at home on days that they worked at home



¹ Excludes unincorporated self-employed workers. Data are only for days on which workers did some work at home. Data are averages for 2003-07.

Chart 2. About 28 percent of the full-time self-employed¹ who had a single job worked more than 7 hours at home on days that they worked at home



¹ Includes unincorporated self-employed workers. Data are only for days on which workers did some work at home. Data are averages for 2003-07.