

Telecommuting increases work hours and blurs boundary between work and home, new study shows

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(Phys.org)—With fluctuating gas prices and the increasing call for work-life balance, telecommuting has become an attractive option for busy professionals. Yet according to a new study from The University of Texas at Austin, for most employees who work remotely, telecommuting equates to working more hours.

The study, co-authored by Jennifer Glass, professor in the Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center, shows that most of the 30 percent of respondents who work from home add five to seven hours to their workweek compared with those who work exclusively at the office. They are also significantly less likely to work a standard 40 hour schedule and more likely to work overtime. In fact, most telecommuting hours occur after an employee has already put in 40 hours of work at the office.

Using two nationally representative data sources—the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 panel and special supplements from the U.S. [Census Bureau](#)'s Current Population Survey—Glass and her colleague, Mary Noonan, associate professor of sociology at the University of Iowa, analyzed trends in the use of telecommuting among employees and employers in the U.S. civilian workforce.

The results, published in *Monthly Labor Review*, indicate that telecommuting causes work to seep into home life, a problem previously

identified in the 2008 Pew Networked Workers survey. According to the survey, a majority of tech-savvy workers claim that telecommuting technology has increased their overall work hours and that employees use technology, especially email, to perform work tasks even when sick or on vacation.

"Careful monitoring of this blurred boundary between work and home time and the erosion of 'normal working hours' in many professions can help us understand the expansion of work hours overall among salaried workers," says Glass, who is the Barbara Pierce Bush Regents Professor in Liberal Arts.

The researchers also found the labor demand for work-family accommodation does not seem to propel the distribution of telecommuting hours. In fact, parents with dependent children are no more likely to work from home than the population as a whole. According to the findings, employees with authority and status are more likely than others to have the option to work remotely because they have more control of their work schedules.

The authors conclude that telecommuting has not permeated the American workplace, and where it has become commonly used, it is not very helpful in reducing [work](#)-family conflicts. Instead, it appears to have allowed employers to impose longer workdays, facilitating workers' needs to add hours to the standard workweek.

More information: www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/06/art3exc.htm

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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