

FEDERAL ETC UPDATES

STATE OF THE COMMUTE SURVEY SHOWS FEDS CONTINUE TO LEAD



The Commuter Connections 2016 State of the Commute (SOC) survey has shown that in the Washington, DC region, the federal government is responsible for most of the growth in teleworking over the last six years, and has, over the last nine years, consistently posted more significant gains than the private, non-profit, and state and local government sectors.

Additionally, respondents who worked for federal agencies were most likely to have more benefits/services available to them than those who worked for other types of employers.

The State of the Commute survey, conducted every three years by Commuter Connections, surveyed 5,903 randomly selected employed residents of the Washington region. The first survey in 2001, found that 11 percent of those surveyed teleworked regularly or at least occasionally. The 2016 survey saw that number rise to 32 percent. Additionally, the overall average frequency of teleworkers who did so at least one day a week increased to 58 percent in 2016, from 48 percent in 2010. Formal telework programs are most common among federal government employees. Nearly seven in ten (69%) federal employees stated that they teleworked under a formal program.

The growth in three of the respondent sectors – state/local government, private, and non-profit – remained relatively steady over the past nine years, while the growth of teleworking in the federal sector rose dramatically from 16 percent to 45, far outpacing the other sectors.

By comparison, 31 percent of private sector employees reported teleworking, up from 28 percent in 2010, and 33 percent of workers in the non-profit sector teleworked, up from 26 percent in 2010. Just 14 percent of state and local government employees said that they teleworked in the 2016 survey.

The federal Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 is credited as a major factor contributing to the increases. The law requires all federal agencies to develop formal telework policies, identify all positions suitable for teleworking, and to designate staff specifically to help implement and monitor telework programs. The law also provided guidance on developing written employer-employee telework agreements, and providing training to workers and managers on teleworking best practices.

The legislation sought to reduce the need for additional office

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space for a growing federal workforce and to ensure that daily operations, especially critical ones, could continue when weather, such as superstorm Sandy, or disasters, such as the 2011 earthquake, forces the government to close, or otherwise prevent workers from traveling to their offices.

Congress and the government's senior managers have also come to see teleworking as a valuable tool in attracting and retaining talented workers who are seeking ways to reduce costs and the burden of daily commuting.

There is still room for growth in teleworking as 20 percent of federal respondents said that they "could and would" telework, if given the opportunity. Overall, 9 percent of respondents said they could telework but are not interested in doing so.

The overall growth in teleworking will continue to help reduce demand on roadways and the transit system, as well as providing numerous other benefits for both employers and employees.

In the area of flexible work schedules and access to benefits, the federal government again leads the way.

The SOC survey showed that respondents who worked for federal agencies were most likely to have benefits/services available (84%), compared with 44 percent to 57 percent of respondents who worked for other types of employers. And flexible schedules were most likely to be available to federal workers (73%), and least likely to be offered to state/local government workers (37%).

Federal agency workers also had greater access to individual services, than other respondents. This was especially true for transit/vanpool subsidies where 73 percent of federal workers said subsidies were offered, while only 42 percent of non-profit workers, and about one-quarter of respondents who worked for

private firms and state/local agencies had this benefit. Most other benefits/services were also disproportionately available to federal agency workers.

An area where the federal government does not lead the way is offering free parking. Federal agency workers and respondents who worked for non-profit organizations were least likely to have free parking at work; only 44 percent of federal workers and 54 percent of non-profit workers had free parking, compared with 70 percent who worked for private firms and 74 percent who worked for state/local governments.

Respondents who had to pay for parking used alternative transportation modes at higher rates than did respondents with free parking.

For more information on Commuter Connections' 2016 State of the Commute survey, and to get help starting or improving your commute benefit programs, visit www.commuterconnections.org.

