



Will telecommuting yield the best long-term environmental benefit of COVID-19?

By Ethan Elkind, May 4, 2020

“There’s one potential bright spot for the climate that may outlive this current era: working from home. Prior to the pandemic, only 4 percent of U.S. employees worked from home, [according](#) to Global Workplace Analytics. But now more than half of the 135 million people in the U.S. workforce are in a home office.

“The firm estimates that at this rate, by the end of next year, 25 to 30 percent of the total U.S. workforce will be telecommuting, the carbon equivalent of ‘taking all of New York’s workforce permanently off the road,’ said Kate Lister, president of the firm.

“From a greenhouse gas perspective, it means many fewer driving miles from commuting. Otherwise, approximately 86 percent of Americans drive to work, [according](#) to the National Household Travel Survey. If just 25 percent of Americans began teleworking even one day per week after the pandemic, total vehicle miles traveled would fall by 1 percent, which is actually a significant amount of the more than 3.2 trillion miles driven in the U.S. in 2018. The numbers could go much higher if more people telecommuted multiple days per week.

“And why might these work-from-home habits stick, as opposed to other environmental friendly measures taken during the pandemic? Simple: working from home is more convenient and more [productive](#) for most people. But prior to the pandemic, many managers weren’t comfortable allowing the practice, believing (falsely) that it would hurt bottom lines.

“But now that everyone who can work from home is forced into this arrangement without calamity, my guess is that this manager resistance will fade.”

[Read the full article here.](#)