

Sujet n°2

Telework in the US: before and after the pandemic

Back in in 2018 – in the pre-pandemic world – about 5% of the U.S. workforce teleworked from home. That changed dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; by May 2020 that number had jumped to about 35%. Tech giants Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon and Twitter announced plans to extend teleworking well into the fall¹ and possibly beyond. It's a sea change that will permanently alter the way America works – and how companies conduct business.

Telework offers a host of potential advantages, including improved productivity, lower costs for employers, greater flexibility and less stress for workers, lower exposure to pollution for commuters and less traffic congestion – not to mention job security during the pandemic for those who can do it. A study conducted in 2017 found that many job applicants valued the option to work remotely and would, on average, accept about 8% lower wages to do so.

Our team is researching connections between the pandemic, how people live and work in cities and city climate action. Transportation is central to this issue because it is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and access to reliable and affordable transportation is inequitably distributed – and it was severely disrupted by the pandemic.

Early research suggested that teleworking reduced vehicle use – and with it, emissions – so it's frequently touted² as a way to combat climate change. But subsequent studies revealed a more nuanced picture. Our research indicates that a rush to embrace teleworking should be tempered with two realities: increased telework will exacerbate inequality in America under current economic and social conditions, and the climate benefits are probably very modest, at best.

Adapted from *theconversation.com*, July 22, 2020

¹ *fall = autumn*

² *touted = promoted*