**Fiscal Facts: The Uneven Rise of Remote Work**

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, remote and hybrid work arrangements remain widespread in Wisconsin and nationally. Still, U.S. Census data show that working from home is far more common in some Wisconsin counties than others, driven by their concentrations of jobs in “remote-capable” occupations.

Among 24 of the most populous counties in Wisconsin -- for which data are available from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey -- remote work was most common in 2021 for residents of Dane and Ozaukee counties, where more than 20% of workers ages 16 and over primarily worked from home. It was least common in Dodge, Rock, Manitowoc, and Sauk counties, where less than 10% of workers primarily worked from home. Statewide, the rate was 14.8%, compared with 17.9% of workers nationally.

Differences in local economies influence the share of jobs that can be performed remotely. A 2020 National Bureau of Economic Research study estimates that at least two-thirds of jobs in each of five major sectors (educational services; finance and insurance; information; management of companies and enterprises; and professional, scientific, and technical services) can be done fully or partially from home.

To gain more recent insight into remote work trends, we drew on U.S. Census data from the Household Pulse Survey, an online survey introduced in April 2020 to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergent issues. The most recent available results dated to January 2023.

Among the questions in the survey are whether anyone in the respondent’s household teleworked or worked from home in the last seven days. It is notable how stable responses to this question have been since mid-2021. In Wisconsin, the share of survey respondents answering “yes” to this question was 24.7% in July and August of 2021. In January 2023, it was 23.9%. Nationally the “yes” share was 27.4% in summer 2021, and 27.7% in January 2023.

Survey data from Gallup also suggests there has been a strong shift to hybrid work arrangements nationally.

The shift to remote work also has affected downtowns and local economies. For example, demand for office space may be reduced long-term, particularly in the Madison and Milwaukee metros, where remote work is more common. Fewer daily on-site workers also mean reduced spending on goods and services in downtowns and other job centers -- though demand for these may increase in residential areas where more people are now working remotely.

Public transit ridership also plummeted in Wisconsin cities and nationally in 2020 and 2021, and though it bounced back somewhat in 2022, it remains far below pre-pandemic levels.

The increase in remote work and its effects on individuals, families, businesses, and communities may be one of the pandemic’s most far-reaching outcomes. For cities and metro areas in Wisconsin, it presents both challenges and opportunities that should be considered in planning for the future of downtowns and other job centers, transportation systems, and other aspects of community life.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at* [*wispolicyforum.org*](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/state-tax-burden-up-but-overall-burden-still-falling/)*.*