

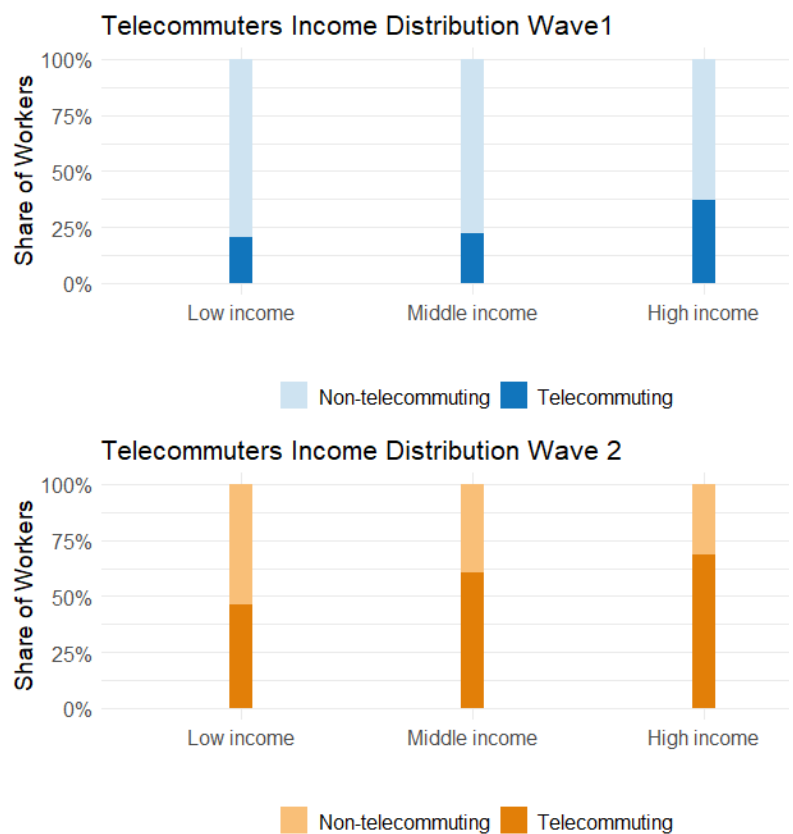
Impacts of telecommuting on mobility practices and related socio-economic inequalities

The Issue

Telecommuting decreases air pollution, traffic, and other negative transport externalities associated with daily commutes. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have offered the largest natural experiment in telecommuting around the world. Hence, two bilingual surveys were conducted in 2019 (wave 1, with 3,683 complete surveys) and 2021 (wave 2, with 4063 complete surveys) to understand and document the travel behaviour of residents in the Montreal metropolitan region. This policy brief examines changing telecommuting patterns from both pre (wave 1), and midst pandemic periods (wave 2). In doing so, we aim to shed light on socio-economic inequality patterns associated with telecommuting.

Findings

- From wave 1 to wave 2, the number of workers engaging in telecommuting increased by 35.2%.
- In both waves, respondents earning higher incomes (\$120,000 & above) were more likely to engage in telecommuting.
- In wave 1, 22.2% of low-income earners (\$60,000 & below) engaged in telecommuting, compared to 37.1% of high-income earners (\$120,000 & above).
- In wave 2, 46.1% of low-income earners (\$60,000 & below) engaged in telecommuting, compared to 60.8% of high-income earners (\$120,000 & above).
- In both waves, men and women engaged in similar amounts of telecommuting.
- In both waves, people conducting hybrid work remained low (on average 2.3% for wave 1 and 6.1% for wave 2).



Policy Recommendations

- » Conduct periodic assessments of all workers' roles to determine whether possible accommodations for telecommuting or hybrid work (working partly remotely and partly in the physical workspace during the same week) can be made.
- » People with roles not permitting telecommuting should be warranted policies and programs such as free transit or priority parking at major transit stations, so that inequities between telecommuters and non-telecommuter are limited.