# Temporal Variations on Allocation of Time 

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A study of the allocation of time and trip making across time of day, day of week, and month of year, as well as over the past 40 years, revealed some interesting findings. People are working much more, shopping somewhat more on weekends, and staying at home less today than they did 40 years ago. Time spent in travel on each weekend day (Saturday or Sunday) exceeds that on any weekday, as it did 40 years ago. Time spent shopping on a typical day in the busiest month (December) is more than twice that in the least busy month (September). Monthly variations in daily time in travel exceed 10 percent. The time-of-day patterns of shopping and other trips for workers and nonworkers are both rational: nonworkers peak in midday away from rush hour, whereas workers peak just after work, indicating trip chaining.

Growing congestion and changing travel patterns in urban areas have forced transportation researchers to venture beyond the confines of the daily work trip. Although work trips have been the traditional focus in transportation planning and policy formulation, recent studies have shown that nonwork trips are a dominant component of daily trip making and are growing faster than work trips $(1,2)$. The historic emphasis on work trips was justified by the fact that the temporal clustering of work trips resulted in peak-hour congestion, dictating most investment decisions. However, as the role of transportation planners moves from investment to management, it is worthwhile to reexamine this issue in the broader perspective of activity patterns. One purpose of this paper is to look at both work and nonwork activity patterns, across all 7 days of the week.

Nonwork trips are tied to some basic and necessary human activities, such as shopping, performing errands, and socializing. Previous studies have related trip making and activity patterns to demographics and socioeconomic conditions (3) and trip generation to variations in land use patterns and metropolitan size (4). However, these activity patterns vary even more significantly across some fundamental criteria: natural and cultural cycles reflected in the calendar and the clock.

The study of human activity patterns has engaged the attention of researchers across disciplines. Recent developments by transportation engineers and modelers include attempts to introduce the concepts of trip chaining, activity sequencing, and combined time of day and route choice into demand forecasting procedures (5-7). Although these models have focused on methods for simulation of activity patterns, less empirical work has analyzed their long-term stability and their placement in a broader economic context. Pioneering work quantifying the use of time has been conducted by Szalar, who compared these results internationally, and Robinson, who conducted and reported on the American portion of that study $(8,9$.$) Meanwhile, sociologists have examined the impact of the$ increasing number of women in the labor force on the quality of life

[^0]and changing roles of time at work and leisure (10-12); planners have studied the allocation of time by activity and location for demographic and socioeconomic classes (13-16); and economists have developed a theory of the allocation of time wherein individuals or households combine time and market goods to produce "commodities" (17).

This study, part of a larger investigation into activity patterns, evaluates empirically the influence of temporal variations on the allocation of time. Much attention has been paid to trends in activity patterns, that is, the aspects of behavior that increase or decrease as a linear function of time. Less has been placed on the cyclical aspects of time-recurring patterns over the course of days, weeks, and years. Although most previous studies of travel behavior and time usage are atemporal, assuming an average day, this study, using the 1990 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, investigates variations in activity patterns by day of the week and month of the year, as well as the more traditional time of day. Information on weekend travel is sparse, and this analysis partially fills that gap. Answers to a number of questions are sought: What is the difference in activity patterns on Saturday versus Sunday? How different are the weekend activity patterns from an average weekday? Is there an average weekday? Does weekend travel exhibit the same diurnal relationship as weekday travel? How different are shopping trips from other nonwork trips?

Next in this paper is a discussion of the data base used in the analysis. This is followed by a review of long-term trends in the use of time, comparing studies performed in 1954 and 1966 and the 1990 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) used here. Cyclical patterns are reviewed, and several hypotheses are tested in a comparison of month-of-year and day-of-week variations, respectively. Last is a discussion of time-of-day variations across the weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The paper concludes with a discussion of the relevance of considering nonwork as well as work travel and considering the temporal variations in human activity patterns.

## DATA

The original data base used in this analysis comes from the 1990-1991 NPTS. The NPTS was conducted as a telephone interview survey by the Research Triangle Institute, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation (18). The survey collected data on household demographics, income, vehicle availability, all trips made on the survey day, long trips made over a 2 -week period, and traffic accidents within the past 5 years. Characteristics of trips include departure time, distance, and duration of the trip, trip purpose and mode, day of the week, and month of the year. The survey was conducted between March 1990 and March 1991 and consisted of 21,817 household interviews and 47,499 persons making almost 150,000 trips. Because each interview consists of a single day, it is important to remember that the comparisons in this study across day
of the week and month of the year do not come from the same individual. Conclusions must therefore be treated with caution. Further research with panel data will be able to compare the same individual across these time slices, offering another perspective on this issue.

First, it may be useful to define travel, activities, and their interrelationship. Activities are of two classes: location-specific activities and travel. Location-specific activities are defined on the basis of reported destination activity (purpose) from the travel survey. Travel is the activity that links other spatially separated locationspecific activities. The core of this study comes from the 1990 NPTS, which like most travel surveys, provided respondents with a choice of answering where they went next (trip purpose), how they got there (mode), and how long it took (trip duration). These location-specific activities are consolidated into the following categories: home, work, shop, and other. The time spent traveling is accumulated into the travel activity category.

Only two pieces of time information were provided: the time of departure for a trip and the travel time for that trip. To create activity data, this study takes the NPTS "travel day" data base and, by looking ahead to the departure time of the next trip, determines the duration of the stop at the destination. A number of individuals did not report the time of arrival or departure for one trip during the day. These individuals were excluded as their daily time did not add up to $1,440 \mathrm{~min}$. Only individuals who ended the day at home were considered in this study, and time at home was computed on the basis of final arrival time at home and initial departure at the beginning of the day. This is added to any stops at home in the middle of the day. For the graphs and tables presented in this paper, only adults aged 18 to 65 were considered. The elderly and children clearly have different diurnal, weekly, and seasonal time allocation patterns, and these may be evaluated in further research.

## ANALYSIS OF LONG-TERM TRENDS

Table 1 summarizes some long-term trends in activity patterns in the United States. These data are illustrative but cannot be compared in rigorous detail because of different methodologies used in the studies as well as limitations on the reported data. The 1954 results are reported by de Grazia (11) from an unpublished study, A Nationwide Study of Living Habits, conducted for the Mutual Broadcasting System by J.A. Ward. The J.A. Ward study used quar-ter-hour diaries during March and April 1954. The 1954 sample was large; 7,000 households and 20,000 individuals. The diaries were collected from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., the remaining time was assumed to be spent at home.

The 1966 results are drawn from tables reported by Szalai and Robinson $(8,9)$ in the monumental 1966 international use of time study. The sample was much smaller, over 2,000 adults, primarily as a day after diary. The data from this study were cross-classified in numerous ways and tables. Some of the tables, such as for travel, shop, and work were directly comparable with those from the other two studies. However, the results for home and other had to be inferred from several tables and adjusted to get a best estimate. This is because a number of activities that could occur at either location (home, other) were reported by type of activity (for instance, television watching or socializing with friends) rather than location.

Despite the differences in methods, some clear trends emerge. In 1990, adult Americans are working more on weekdays and less on Saturday than in 1954. The weekday rise is principally associated with the larger number of women working outside the home.

TABLE 1 Long-Term Trends in Use of Time Time Spent in Primary Activities by Day of Week (in hours)

| Activity | Year |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | Average Weekday | Saturday | Sunday |
| Home | 1954 | 17.0 | 17.8 | 19.2 |
|  | 1965/66 | 15.8 | 18.0 | 19.1 |
|  | 1990/91 | 15.7 | 18.1 | 18.7 |
| Work | 1954 | 4.6 | 2.6 | 0.8 |
|  | 1965/66 | 5.0 | 1.8 | 0.8 |
|  | 1990/91 | 5.4 | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Shop | 1954 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
|  | 1965/66 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.3 |
|  | 1990/91 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.4 |
| Other | 1954 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
|  | 1965/66 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.7 |
|  | 1990/91 | 1.5 | 2.2 | 2.8 |
| Travel | 1954 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
|  | 1965/66 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.1 |
|  | 1990/91 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 1954 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
|  | 1965/66 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
|  | 1990/91 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |

Note: sources 1954 data - Sebastian de Grazia, J.A. Ward<br>1966 data - Robinson, Szalai<br>1990 data - Kumar and Levinson, 1990 NPTS see text for discussion

Although Schor has argued that time at work has risen for men as well, this may not show up in a travel or activity survey but rather in wage data (12). The Saturday drop reflects the widespread adoption of the five-day work week since 1954. The amount of time spent shopping has held remarkably steady, although even small time differences in this category represent larger-percentage differences. Americans would appear to be shopping more on weekends now than before. This is partially a result of Sunday shopping, which was rare in 1954 because of blue laws, but this also seems to be true on Saturdays.

The amount of time in travel is almost identical between 1954 and 1990, although the 1966 study shows 10 to 30 percent higher weekend and 40 percent higher weekday travel time. To what extent this is real and to what extent it is a result of survey methods is unclear. However another study by the authors (3) shows that time in travel in metropolitan Washington has increased between 1968 and 1988 (from 1.3 to 1.7 hr for men and from 1.2 to 1.5 hr for women on weekdays) caused by the rise in nonwork trips and the increase in workers. This increased time is not, as has often been supposed, caused by a longer duration of work trips. The most important information for transportation analysis, the amount of time spent traveling, is ironically the least clear.

The two most curious categories are home and other. Given the increase in participation of women in the labor force, time spent at home from 1954 to 1990 should have been expected to decrease on weekdays. This is supported by the data. However several interacting factors made the issue more complicated. Saturday work has decreased, which makes more time available on Saturdays (for
home and shopping), and the opening of stores (and other activity locations) on Sunday enables people to get out on Sunday.

## ANALYSIS OF CYCLICAL PATTERNS

The analysis of cyclical variations on the allocation of time in 1990 America takes several forms: time of day, day of week, and month of year. Five activity patterns are identified in this paper: home, working, shopping, other, and travel. "Other" activities are defined to include trips for the following: family or personal business, school or church, doctor/dentist, visiting friends or relatives, social/recreational, and any otherwise nonspecified activity (not home, working, shopping, or vacation). The other trips were grouped to maintain sample size significance and simplify the analysis. Time spent at each of the activities and diurnal variations, average frequency, and duration of activities are computed for the different time slices: month of the year, day of the week, and time of day. These are addressed in turn.

The information is presented in graphs that show the mean daily duration of each activity. Behind each graph lies a table, not presented for space reasons but available from the authors on request, which contains matrixes of the $t$-statistic resulting from a difference of means tests for month verses month and for day verses day. In this way, the statistical significance of differences of points on the graph could be ascertained. Monday can be compared with Tuesday, and March can be compared with April, and comparisons between any given day and the average can also be made. The statistical significance of the difference of means that are reported were developed from those tables with a report of significance indicating that the difference is significant at the 90 percent confidence level or better on a two-tailed $t$-test.

## Hypotheses

The NPTS data base offers innumerable possibilities for analysis. Keeping the focus on temporal variations, several hypotheses are explicitly evaluated in this study. First, it is hypothesized that there is a tie between human activity patterns and seasonal cycles, which will be indicated by differences in average activity durations in winter and summer, spring and fall. These differences are expected to occur in each of the activities, with different activity-specific patterns across the months of the year.

The second hypothesis is that Saturday and Sunday behavior are expected to differ from each other and from weekdays, but weekdays are expected to be similar to each other. The difference in activity patterns between Saturday and Sunday results from a variety of obvious religious and cultural reasons. This is tested across activities.

A third hypothesis concerns the temporal distribution of regional and neighborhood shopping: longer shopping trips to stores farther away will occur on weekends. A similar pattern is also expected to emerge for other trips, which should be longer on the lessconstrained weekends.

The last set of hypotheses concerns time of day: that on weekdays, workers will tend to perform shopping and other activities on the way home from work, whereas nonworkers will tend to perform shopping and other trips outside of the peak commuting hours. This results from a desire to avoid congestion during peak periods on the
part of nonworkers and to minimize travel time on the part of workers by combining nonwork trips with the work trip. In short, individuals are assumed to make boundedly rational decisions on the allocation of time that produces this scheduling behavior (3).

## Activity Duration by Month of Year

Figures 1 and 2 display average daily time distribution by month and activity. These graphs indicate seasonal variations in the time spent at various activities. It is hypothesized that there is a link between human activity patterns and natural (and cultural) cycles, which will be reflected by differences in activity durations. Future research may compare activity patterns and geography to get an indication of the relative importance of climate compared with other seasonal/cultural patterns.

Several statistically significant results are found. Time at home peaks around the December holidays ( $1,015 \mathrm{~min}$ ) and reaches a nadir in April ( 960 min ). Many of the differences between months are significant, and although some pairwise comparisons of months do not appear significant, the trends seem to be. For instance, for time at home, January does not significantly differ from February, and February does not significantly differ from March. But January differs more from March for time spent at home (than February) and is significantly different from April, all suggesting a real trend.

Time at work (per person, not per worker) is the opposite from time at home, peaking in April ( 275 min ) and with a low in December ( 220 min ). Moreover, time at work has a secondary valley during July because of summer vacation ( 250 min ). The differences here are not as significant; only December is significantly different from the average month.

Time spent shopping per day peaks in December ( 34 min ), from a September low ( 15 min ). December, January, May, and September are significantly different from the average month, and the months with a great deal of shopping are different from those with below-average shopping.

Time at other is flat, ranging from 100 min in winter to 120 min in spring and summer. May and October are significantly different from the average months, and again, a number of pairwise comparisons are also significantly different.

Travel consumes $62 \mathrm{~min} /$ day in most months but in summer consumes 70 min . May, July, and August differ from the average month, and the winter months are different from the summer months.

## Activity Duration by Day of Week

Figures 3 and 4 display time spent at each of the five activities (home, work, shop, other, and travel) by day of week. For each day, the total time of the five activities adds up to $1,440 \mathrm{~min}$. The hypothesis is that weekday activity patterns are similar to each other but differ from weekends and that Saturday differs from Sunday.

As expected, time spent at each of the activities tends to be somewhat the same across the work week, although it differs over the weekend. However, even during the work week, some variations can be observed:

Time at home on Mondays is greater than on the other four weekdays, perhaps because of recovery from the weekend or the " 3 -day weekend" (associated with official holidays and personal vacation), whereas time at work is slightly less on Mondays. This difference


FIGURE 1 Time at home and work by month (18).


FIGURE 2 Time shopping, traveling, and other by month (18).


FIGURE 3 Time at home and work by day of week (18).


FIGURE 4 Time shopping, traveling, and other by day of week (18).
is statistically significant. However, the time at home on the other weekdays is not statistically different. Time at home is greatest on Sundays ( $1,125 \mathrm{~min}$ ) followed by Saturdays ( $1,080 \mathrm{~min}$ ). The weekends are statistically different from the weekdays and from each other, validating the hypothesis.

Also, time at work on Mondays is significantly different from that on other weekdays and, as expected, the weekends do differ from the weekdays and each other. However, Tuesday through Friday are similar.

Time spent shopping rises from Monday to Friday, with a small peak on Thursday ( 19 min ). Shopping peaks on Saturday ( 45 min ), followed by Sunday ( 25 min ). Although adjacent weekdays are not different from each other (the difference between Monday and Tuesday or between Tuesday and Wednesday is not significant), the difference between nonadjacent weekdays does tend to be significant, again suggesting a trend over the week. The weekend days are significantly different from each other and weekdays.

Time at other activities is fairly flat over the weekdays, with a dip on Thursdays ( 90 min ). Time at other activities peaks on Sundays ( 165 min ) followed by Saturdays ( 135 min ). The weekdays are not significantly different from each other, although the weekend days are different from each other and weekdays.

Time in travel rises slightly from Monday to Wednesday but more sharply from Wednesday to Friday. Time in travel on the weekends is greater than on weekdays, with Saturday being the highest at 68 min . However, weekdays are not significantly different from each other, and Saturday is not significantly different from Sunday, but the weekends are significantly higher than weekdays.

## Trip Making by Day of Week

Figures 5 through 7 show trip frequency, duration, and distance by day of week. These figures are classified by worker and nonworker and come out as might be expected from the earlier discussion.

Figure 5 shows trip frequency. Work trips for workers basically are flat across weekdays, as are trips for shopping. Work trips are more frequent on weekdays than on weekends, and higher on Saturdays than on Sundays. Other trips are fairly consistent across weekdays until Friday, when there is a rise for both workers and nonworkers. Weekends have more nonwork trips than weekdays. However, a higher share of other and shopping trips for workers occurs on weekends than on weekdays compared with nonworkers, indicating a displacement. Again, nonworkers can make these trips on weekdays in midday, which is relatively uncongested, whereas workers must perform these activities on weekends.

Trip duration and distance by day of week, shown in Figures 6 and 7 , come out as might be expected, in part because work trips are longest. Weekend work trips are shorter than weekday trips, likely because of different types of jobs (weekend employment is more often part time, retail jobs). Somewhat surprisingly, the work trip duration variances within the week show statistical significance. Among those who work, Thursday and Friday trips take longer than Monday or Wednesday trips. The Monday verses Friday difference may be explainable by congestion (there are fewer trips on Monday than other days, and many 3 -day weekends begin during Friday evening rush hour). Alternatively, some of the difference may be because of trip chaining, which might add to reported times, but for


FIGURE 5 Trip frequency by day of week.


FIGURE 6 Trip duration by day of week and purpose.


FIGURE 7 Trip distance by day of week and purpose.
some activities (getting gas, stopping at a convenience retail) may not be reported 100 percent of the time.

Interestingly, social/recreational trips are longer than personal business, which are longer than shopping trips, indicating that not all nonwork trips share the same characteristics. Other trips on weekends are longer than on weekdays, but this is hardly true for shopping trips. Personal business is significantly longer on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday than the rest of the week, and socialrecreational trips are longest on the weekend and shortest on Monday.

It was anticipated that regional shopping (mall-going, shopping for durable goods, etc.) would necessitate longer trips than neighborhood shopping (groceries); they are somewhat longer in distance ( 6.5 versus 5.5 mi ) and somewhat shorter in duration (Friday and Saturday have durations of 13 min , whereas other days average 12 min ), indicating higher speeds because of both less congestion on weekends and the use of different, higher-speed roads for regional shopping as opposed to local shopping. The differences between Friday and Saturday and the rest of the week are statistically significant.

Another noteworthy point is that although the trip frequency for other trips exceeds that of the non-other categories, even for workers, the average other trip (either personal business or social recreational) is shorter than the average work trip. So their impact on total travel (e.g., vehicle-miles traveled) is similar. Fortunately, they do have different peaking patterns, as shown in the next section, and use different roadways.

## Time-of-Day Distribution

The time-of-day distribution of trips for workers and nonworkers for the average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday, classified for shop and other trip purposes was analyzed. The time-of-day distribution for work trips on weekdays is well documented and has remained largely stable over the past few decades, with some peak spreading (3). Figures 8 and 9 indicate the time-of-day distributions for shopping and other trips, respectively.

Given the obligatory and regular nature of work trips, it is expected that workers and nonworkers will have somewhat different behavior. The hypothesis is that, on weekdays, workers will tend to perform shopping and other activities after work, often on the way home, to minimize travel through trip chaining; nonworkers, also to achieve travel economies, will tend to perform weekday shopping and other trips outside of the peak commuting hours. In addition, for a variety of religious and cultural reasons, Saturday and Sunday behavior is expected to differ from each other and from that on weekdays. Probably because of the need to rise early for work on Monday, as well the closing of shops, Sunday "ends" for most people earlier than Saturday.

Several results are found from inspection of the graphs. On weekdays, for workers, shopping trips peak after the close of work, whereas other trips have two peaks: at lunch and after the close of work. On weekdays, for nonworkers, shopping trips peak before midday and decline thereafter, and other trips peak after midday


## Hour Beginning

$\rightarrow$ Workers, Weekday $\quad$ Nonworkers, Weekday $\triangle$ All persons, Saturday All persons, Sunday
FIGURE 8 Time-of-day distribution for shopping trips.


- Workers, Weekday $\quad$ Nonworkers, Weekday $A$ All persons, Saturday $\square$ All persons, Sunday

FIGURE 9 Time-of-day distribution for other trips.
(3:00 p.m.). Saturday shopping patterns are similar to nonworkers' weekday patterns, although Saturday, like a typical workday, has two peaks for other activities, at noon and 6:00 p.m. People shop earlier on Saturday than on Sunday, probably because of Sunday church-going, as evidenced by other activities (which include school and church) being conducted earlier on Sunday than Saturday.

## CONCLUSIONS

The prime mover in the rise in both work and nonwork trip making over the past few decades has been the growth in women's participation in the labor force. This rise has directly increased the number of workers and thus work trips. It also resulted in the increase in per capita (if not household) incomes while reducing available time and thereby permitted the substitution of household commodities from outside the home (day care for at-home child rearing, eating out for home-cooked meals), which leads to more nonwork trips per person.

This analysis brings out some interesting results. People are working much more, shopping somewhat more on weekends, and staying at home less today than they did 40 years ago. Time spent in travel on each weekend day (Saturday or Sunday) exceeds that on any weekday, as it did 40 years ago. This finding underscores the need to focus greater attention on weekend travel. Time spent shopping on a typical day in the busiest month (December) is more than twice that in the least busy month (September). Monthly variations in daily time in travel exceed 10 percent. The time-of-day patterns
of shopping and other trips for workers and nonworkers both are a result of rational decision-making processes: nonworkers peak in midday away from rush hour, whereas workers peak just after work, indicating trip chaining.

Several factors suggest that, in the future, nonwork activities will become relatively more important. First, advances in telecommunication should enable more work at home and thus free some time formerly spent commuting for nonwork trips. Second, the large increase in the number of workers in the labor market caused by women joining the workforce is ending. The share of the labor force held by men and women is equalizing. One factor that is certainly related to travel demand is income, but over the past two decades income growth has slowed (3). If this is in part because of the rapid rise in women's participation in the labor force (and a relatively higher labor supply), this trend of sluggish income growth may end as labor becomes scarcer and more costly. These higher incomes may result in nonwork travel and changes in activity patterns.

Thus an understanding in the patterns of nonwork activity should become even more important in coming years. This is pertinent with the growing concern about developing strategies for traffic mitigation and environmental control, which focuses almost entirely on work trips. Some of the findings of this study may be particularly relevant for effective travel demand management programs as well as monitoring environmental consequences. Most air pollution emissions analyses derived from traffic forecasting models assume the "average" day. But as can be seen from these figures, not all weekdays are created equal, weekdays differ from weekends, and travel
patterns vary seasonally. As weather patterns also vary seasonally, climate-specific, as well as congestion-inspired, demand programs may be targeted to account for these variations. In addition, dynamic travel simulation models, which estimate changes over time, should incorporate variations associated with these cycles.
In brief, this study shows empirical relationships between activity patterns and trip making and natural and cultural cycles (time of day, day of week, and month of year). Although many causes can only be speculated about, the results are predictable. Further analysis is required to tie down the causes of many of these variations and determine how the same factors influence different individuals. This research should focus on the interaction of temporal, spatial, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics of individuals in consuming various amounts of activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge Chris Winters and the staff of the Montgomery County Planning Department. The authors also thank four anonymous reviewers for their comments.

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not the Department of Transportation Studies.

Publication of this paper sponsored by Committee on Traveler Behavior and Values.


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