

NADO Annual Training Conference 2023

COVID's Unexpected Rural Dividend

Capitalizing on Remote Work as a Rural Economic Development Strategy

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COVID's Unexpected Rural Dividend

Remote workers' increased access to jobs enables them to remain, return, or relocate to where they'd rather live...

...and many prefer rural areas.



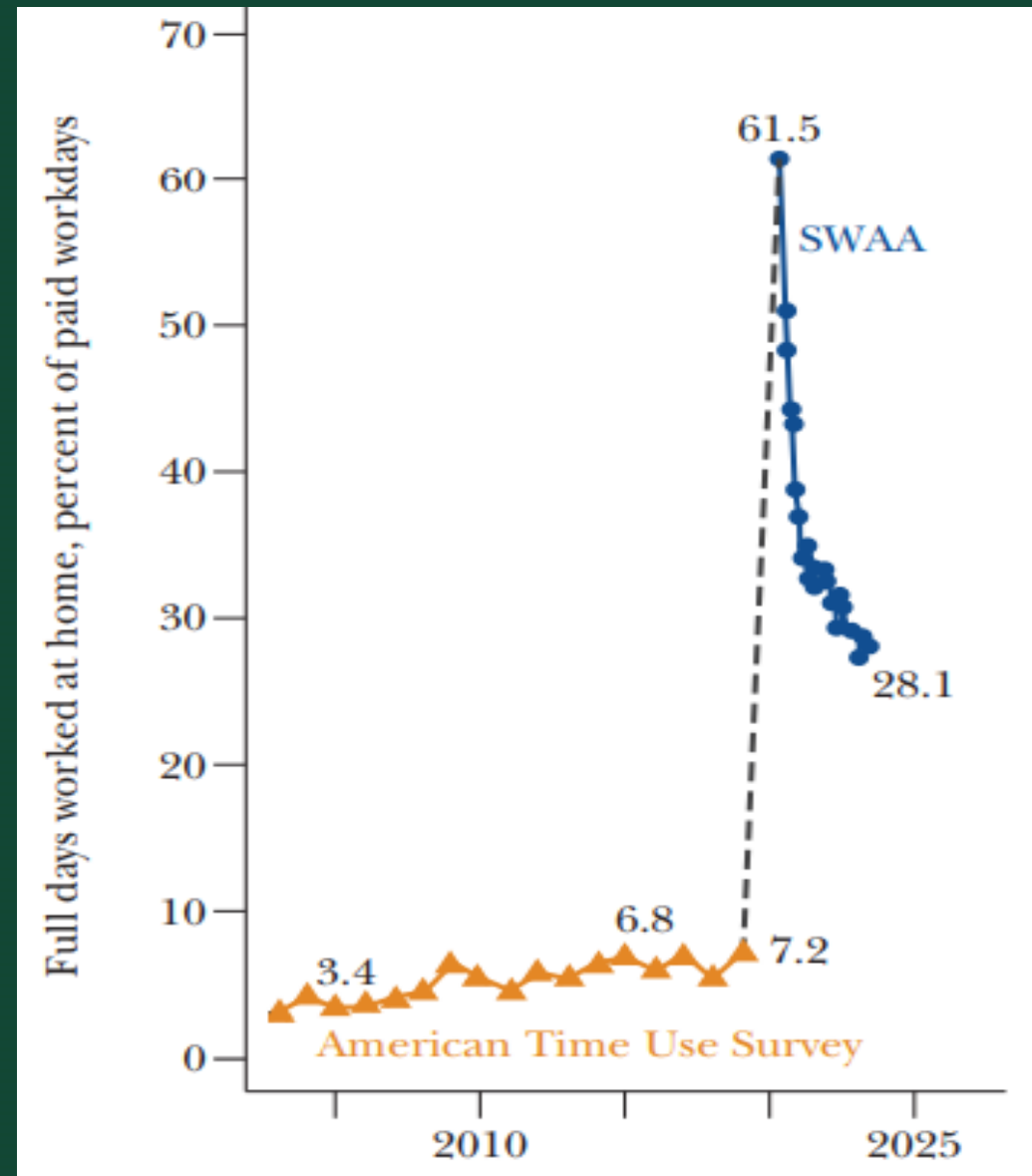
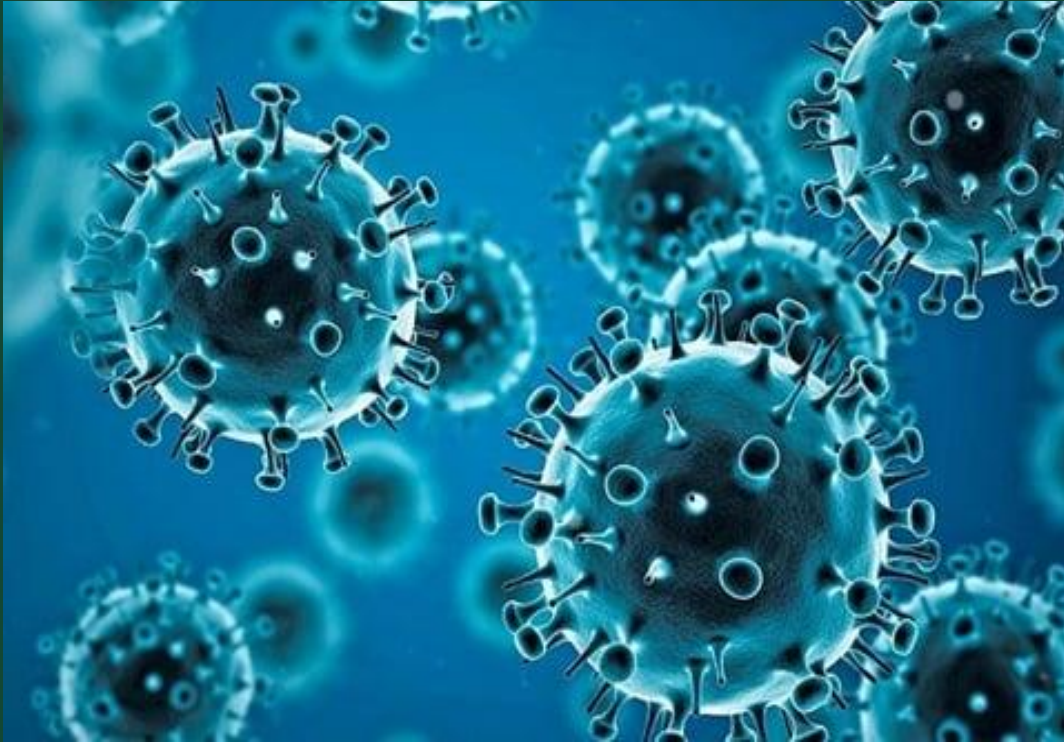
Remote Work (RW) Key Points

1. RW is the “New Normal” for many workers
2. RW favors rural America
3. RW addresses a range of rural challenges
4. “Rural remote readiness” required
5. Do “Try this at Home”

Remote Work by any other name...

- Work from Home
- Hybrid Work
- Telecommuting
- Telework
- Work from Anywhere
- Mobile work
- Virtual work
- Distributed work



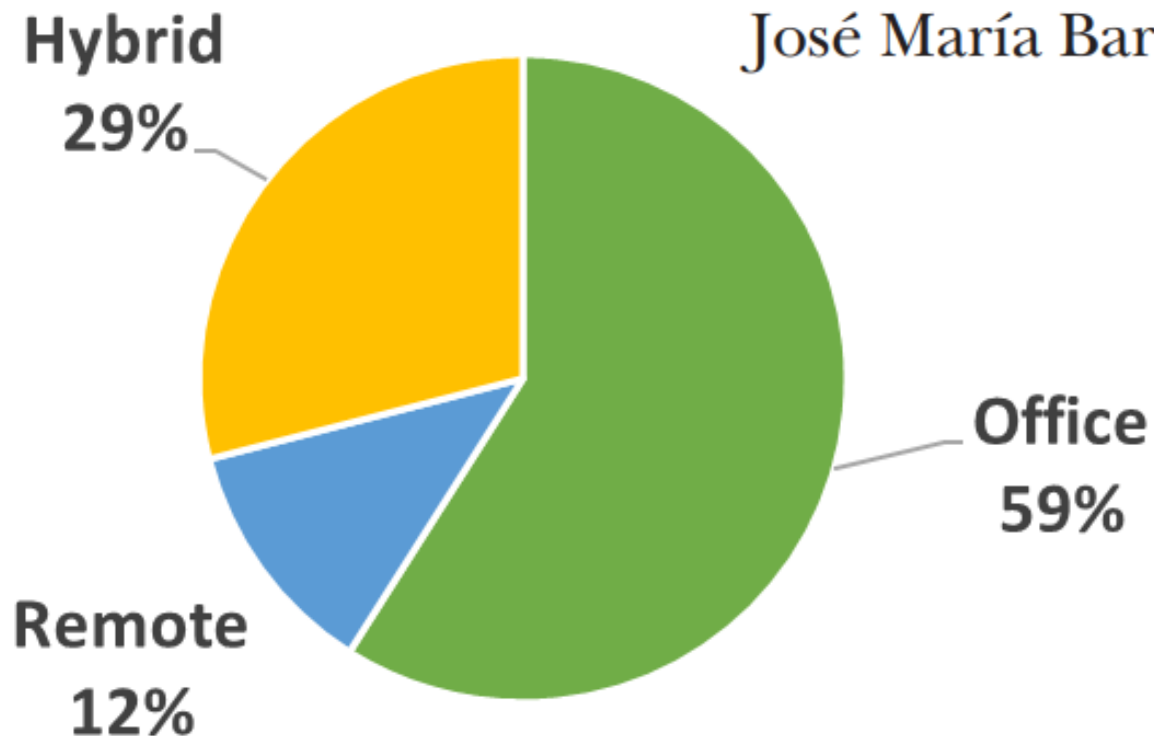


... is the “New Normal”

Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 37, Number 4—Fall 2023—Pages 23–50

The Evolution of Work from Home

José María Barrero, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis



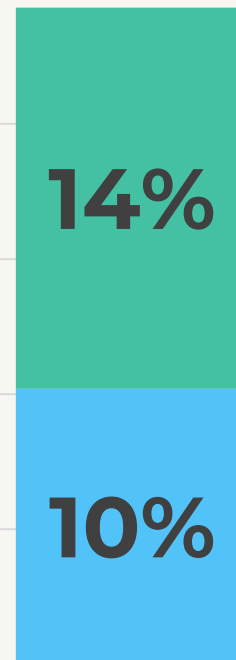


Survey of Business Uncertainty

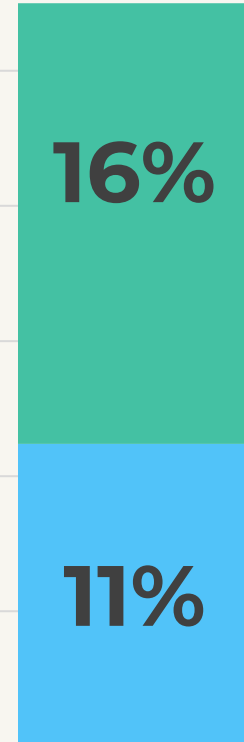


Monthly Report: August 2023

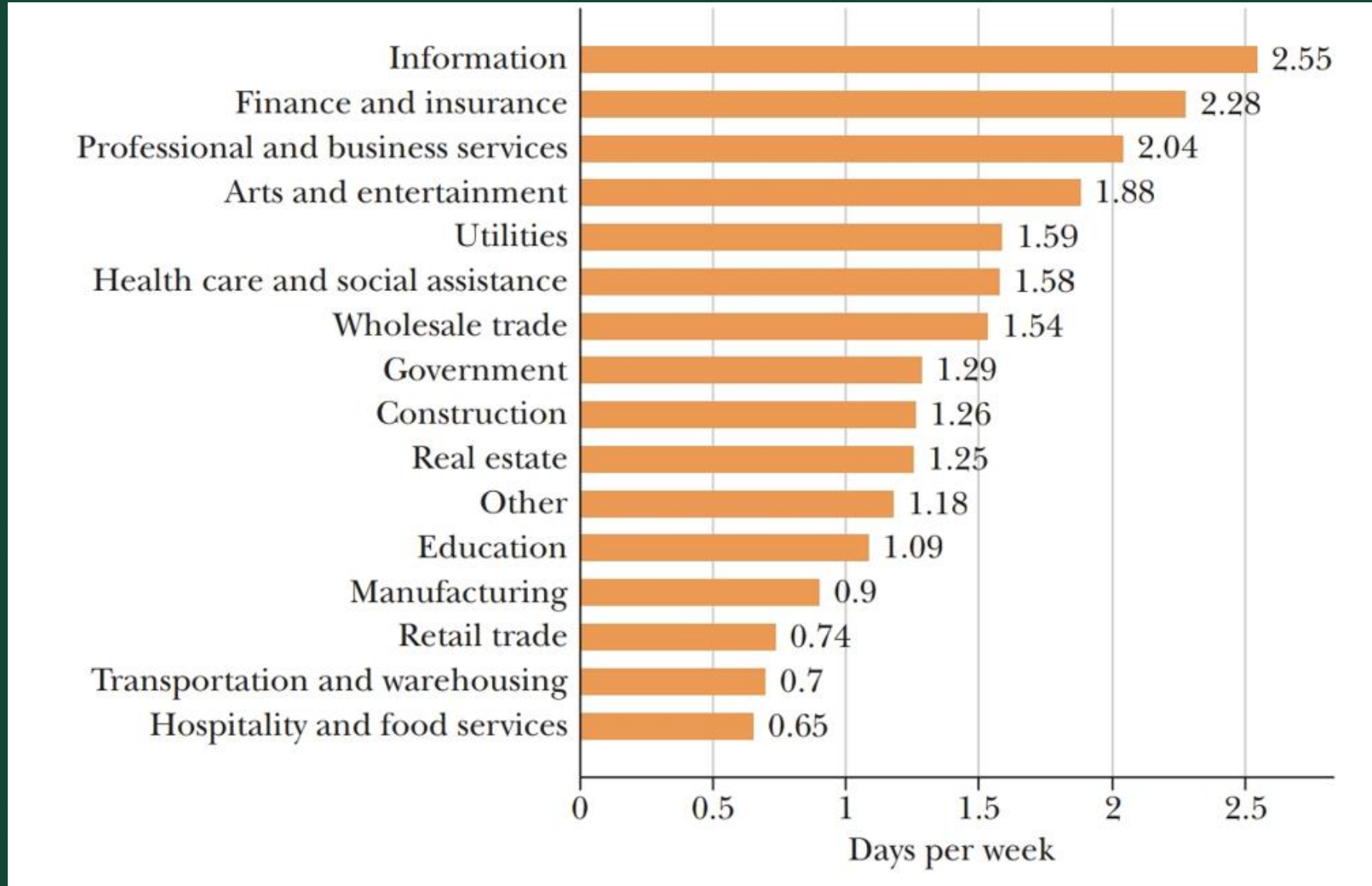
■ Remote ■ Hybrid



2023



2028



Remote Work Favors Rural America

After decades of economic forces favoring cities, Remote Work reduces geographic barriers and increases rural access to employment



Remote Work Is Poised to Devastate America's Cities

Remote Work Is Bleeding Cities Dry

America's Downtowns Are Hurting

Superstar Cities Are in Trouble

Pre-COVID: US Jobs More Mobile Than People

Geographic “Skills Gaps” expanding due to jobs moving while relocation of people more inhibited

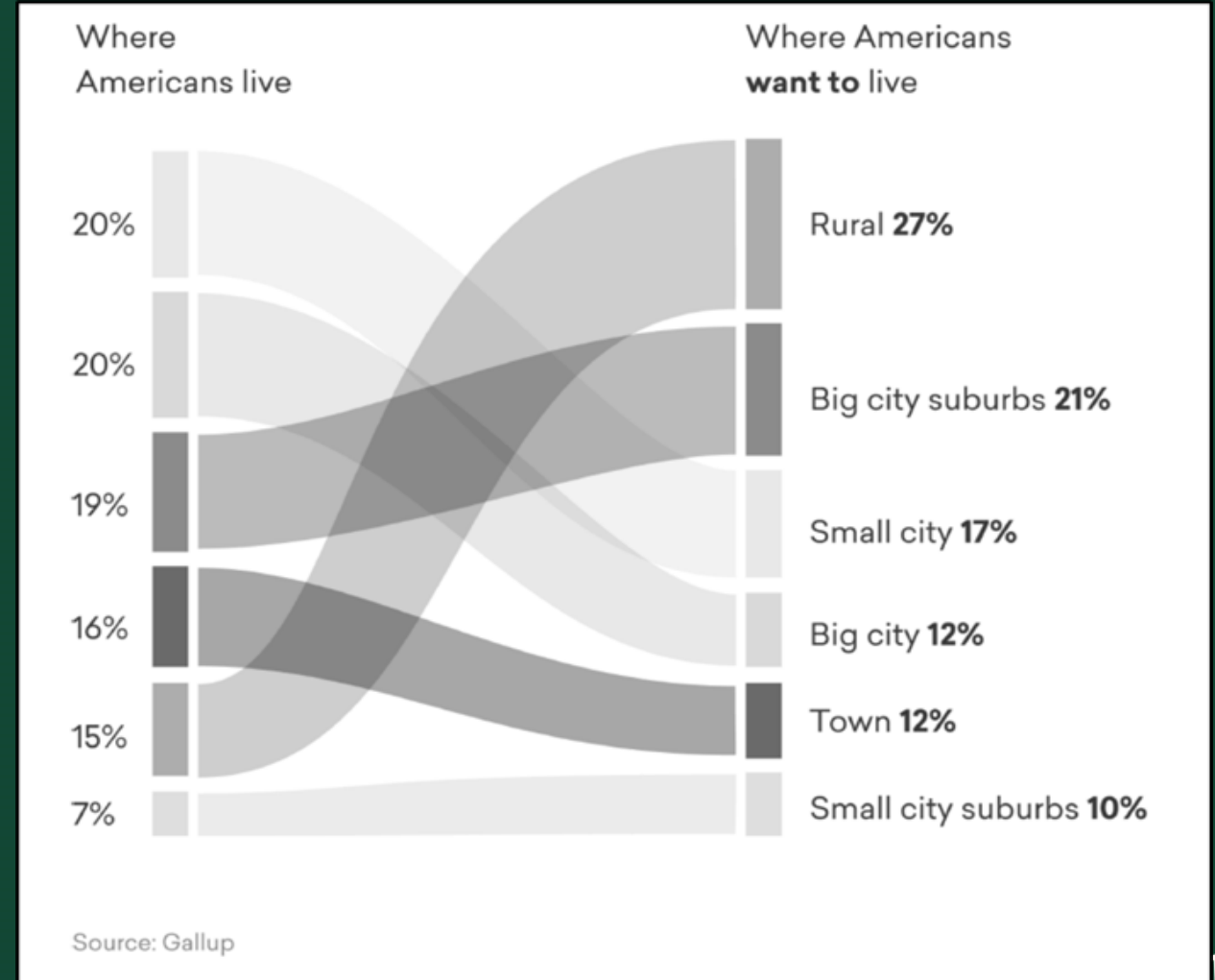
- Unemployment AND open jobs increasing
- Upward mobility impaired
- Total commuting times and costs increasing
- Workforce participation declining

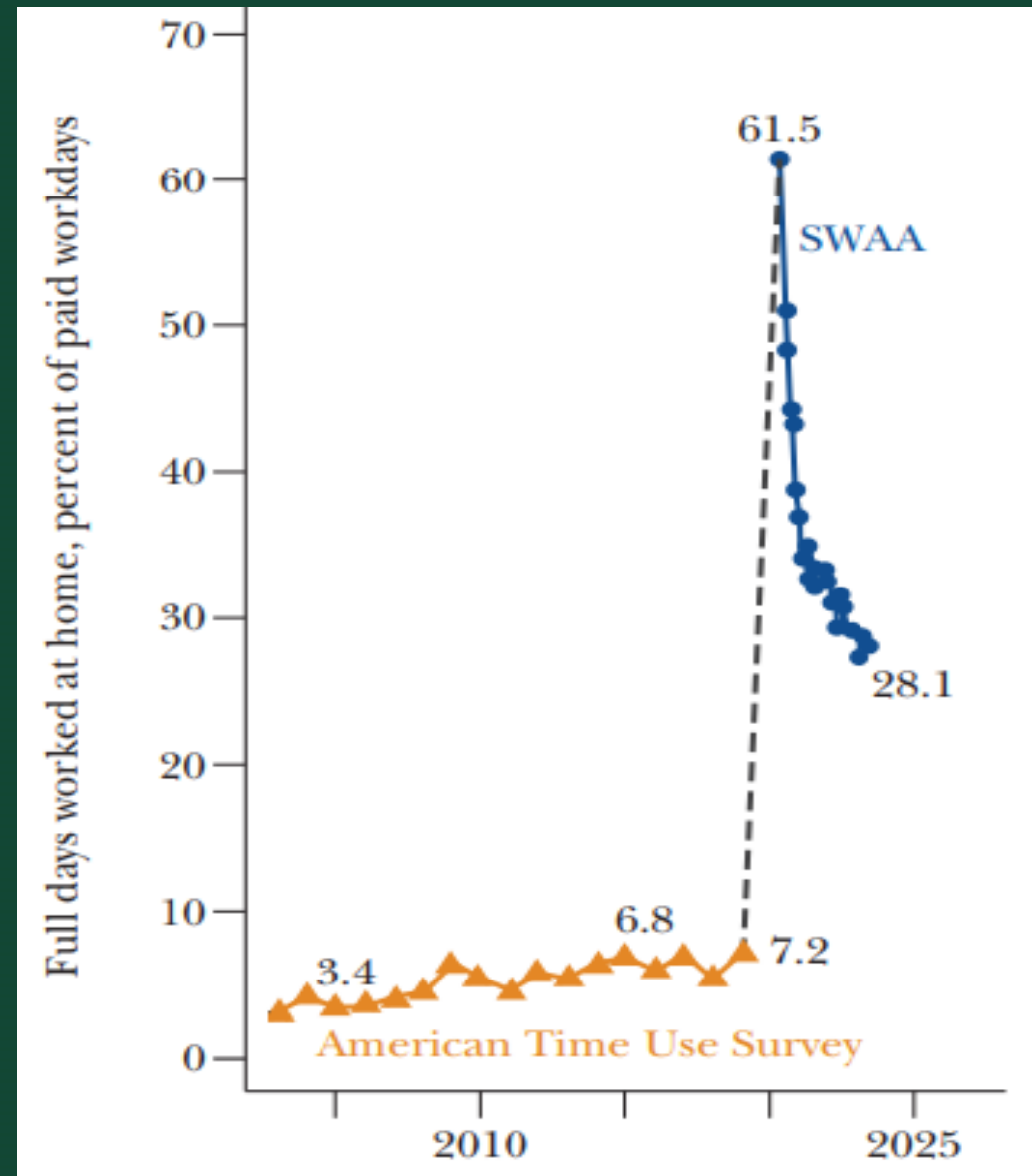
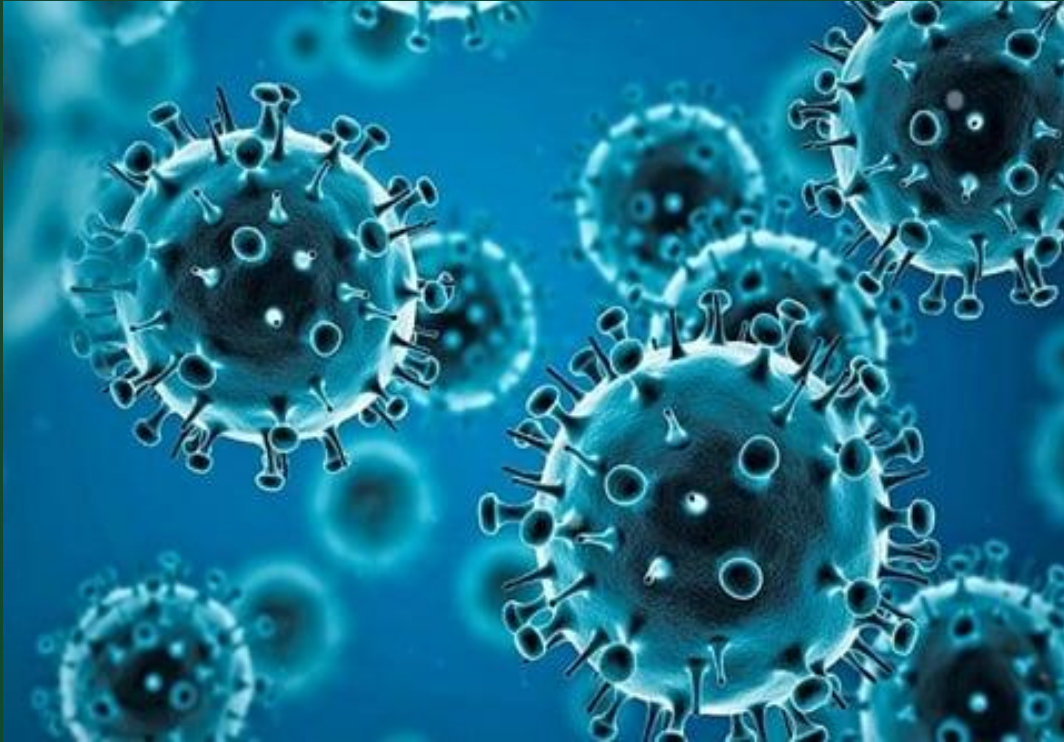
An inefficient market for both labor and capital.

Thwarted Rural Relocation & Retention

2018-2021 Gallup Polls:

“If Americans did sort themselves according to their desires, **there would be an exodus** from the big cities and, to a lesser degree, from small cities and town, accompanying a **movement to rural areas.**”





Remote Work Favors Rural America

RW reduces job market inefficiencies by expanding commuting sheds and labor sheds

- Commuting further, but less often, increases job options
- Near- and long-term effect on housing location

Bridges people- and place-based ED strategies

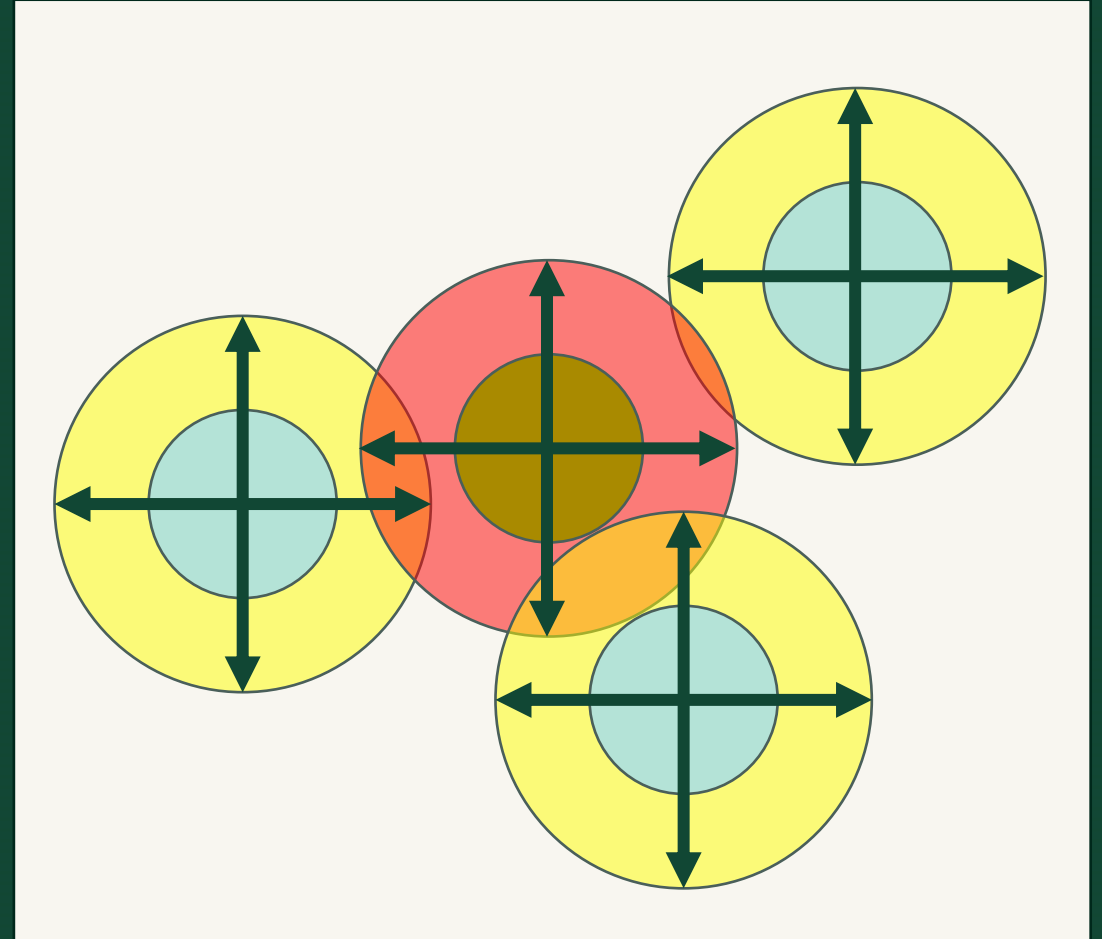
Remote Work and Housing Location

National Housing Survey Special Topics Report



Remote workers accept longer,
but less frequent, commutes
This improves job access and
optimization

“More and better jobs”



Remote work enables people to remain in - or return to - their rural hometowns

- 32% would relocate/commute further
- 79% prefer non-metro homes
- **33% of 18-34 age group want to buy a house in a rural community**

Remote Work and Housing Location
National Housing Survey Special Topics Report

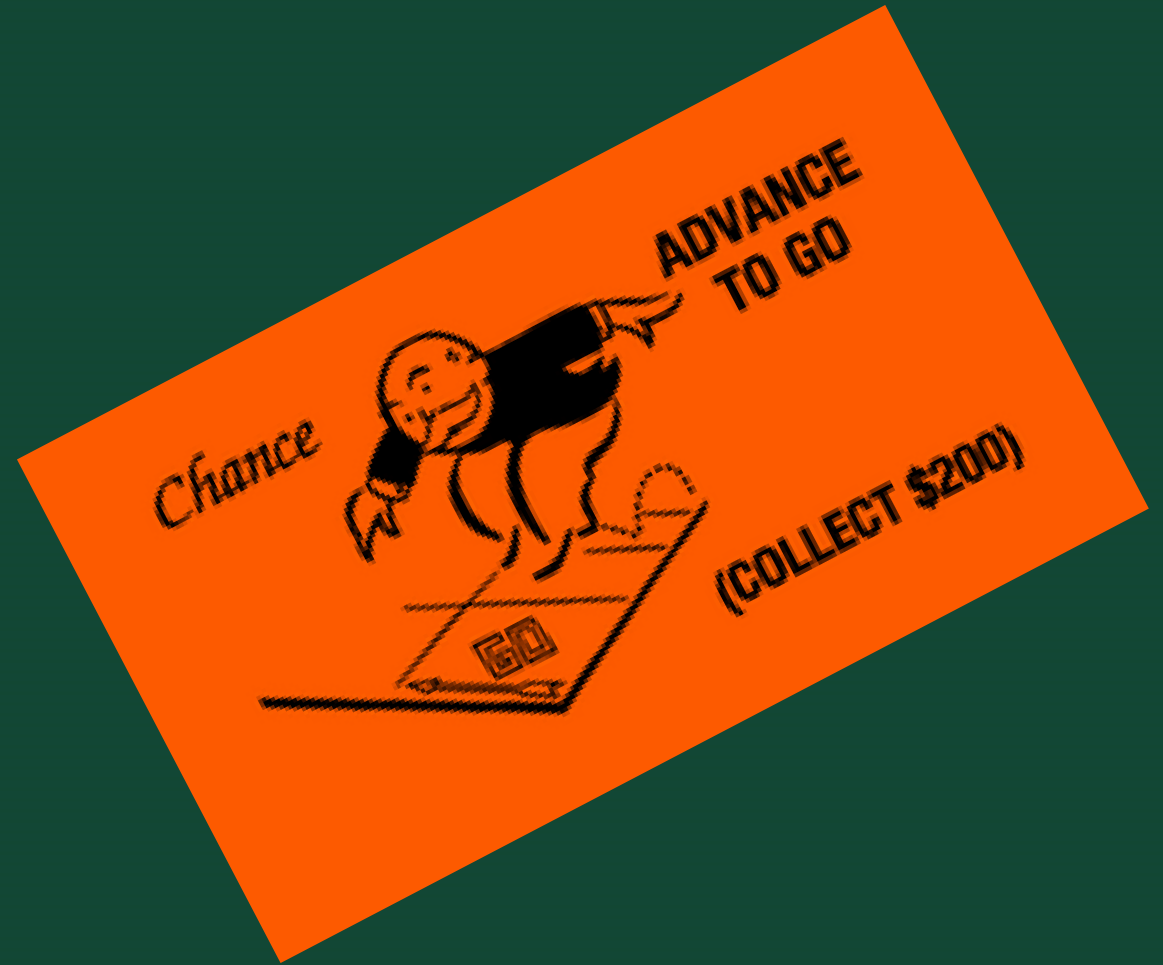


RW Addresses a Range of Rural Challenges

- Income stability, growth, and equity
- Workforce participation and entry level
- Displaced worker re-employment
- Economic/employment diversification
- **Out-migration by youth and prime working age**

The Unexpected Dividend

Ohio University evaluation of remote worker attraction programs led to recognition of remote work benefits for **current rural residents and communities**



Remote Worker Attraction Programs

Alabama
Arkansas
Georgia
Hawaii
Kansas

Maryland
Maine
Oklahoma
Vermont
West Virginia

Modest, unscalable impacts

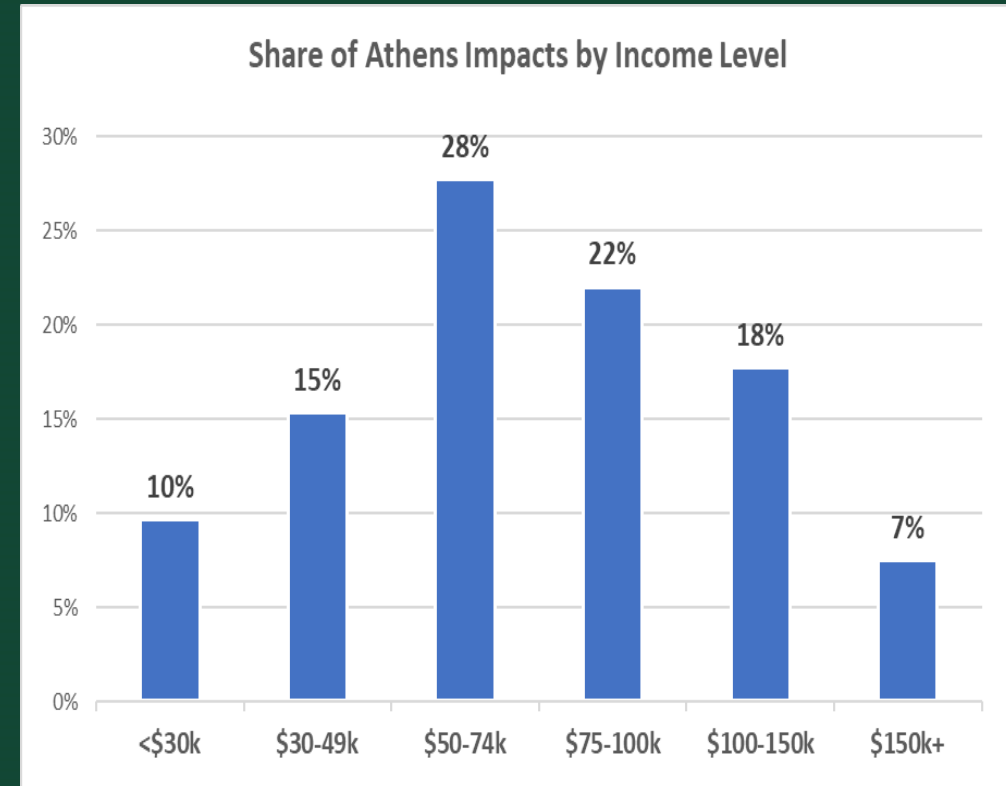


tulsa
remote



Remote Work by Current Rural Residents

- Comparable, but greater, impacts
- More remote workers
- Diverse occupations & incomes
- Economically scalable with upside potential
- **Numerous resident and community benefits**



Resident Remote Work Benefits



- Increases number/variety of jobs
- Improved disposable income and time
- Reduced barriers to workforce participation
- Better skill to employment matching
- Improved upward mobility
- **Optimized residence options**

Community Remote Work Benefits

- Enhanced local spending
- Stronger local tax base
- Higher workforce participation
- Graduate/youth retention
- Economic diversification
- **“Prime working age” vitality**



“Rural Remote Readiness” Required...



...But Rural is Readier than You'd Think

We have tools,
infrastructure, experience,
skills,

...and cultural norms...

not widely available before
COVID



Mapping Remote Work Exercise

Outside of your home, think of a few places where you work remotely:

1. What kind of places are they?
2. How far (miles/minutes) away are they?
3. Why do you go there?
4. What would improve remote work there?

Do “Try this at Home”

1. Form a Remote Work advisory team
2. Map current remote work infrastructure
3. Score “Remote Work Readiness” factors
4. Explore RW commuting shed job options
5. Assess RW workforce development status
6. Design a remote work strategy portfolio

Remote Work Advisory Team

- Start with yourselves
- Cross section: age, occupation, income, etc.
- ID existing RW resources and deficiencies
- Develop & assess scorecard of priorities
- Focus on easiest, highest impact fixes first



Map Current Remote Work Infrastructure



Easy Improvements First



“Rural Remote Ready” Scorecard

1. Internet Access
2. Attainable Housing
3. Childcare
4. Cost of Living
5. Remote Workspaces
6. Outdoor Recreation
7. Professional Education
8. Remote Work Training
9. Travel Access
10. Financial Incentives

SE Ohio “Remote Ready” Status

POSITIVE

1. Attainable Housing
2. Cost of Living
3. Outdoor Recreation
4. Professional Education

NEUTRAL

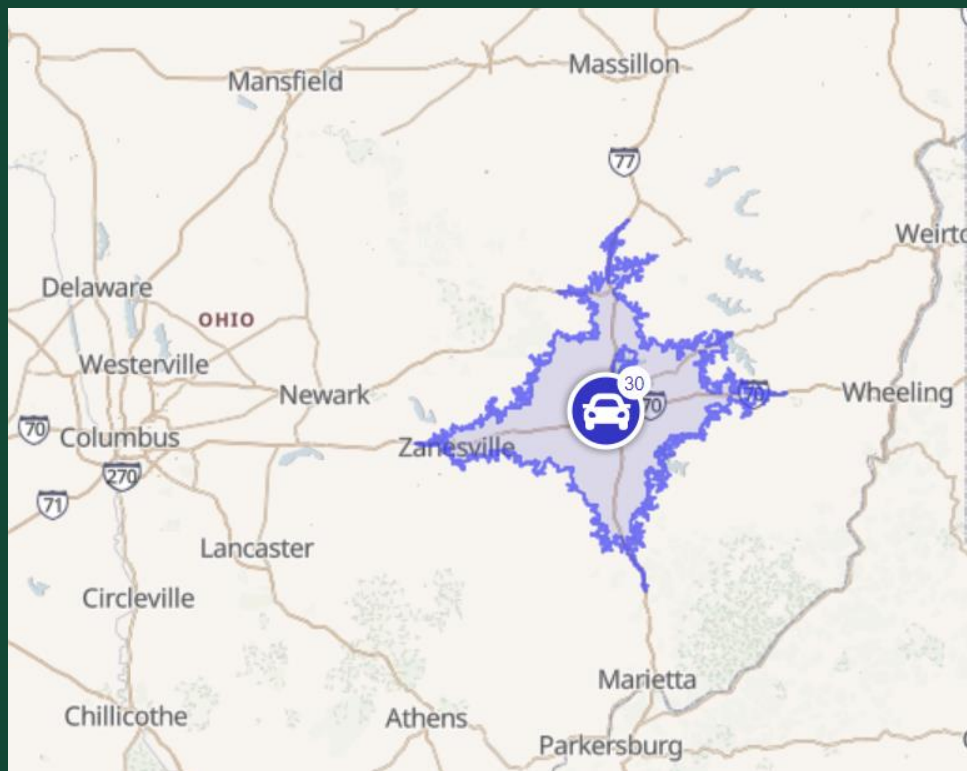
1. Internet Access
2. Remote Workspaces
3. Childcare
4. Travel Access

NEGATIVE

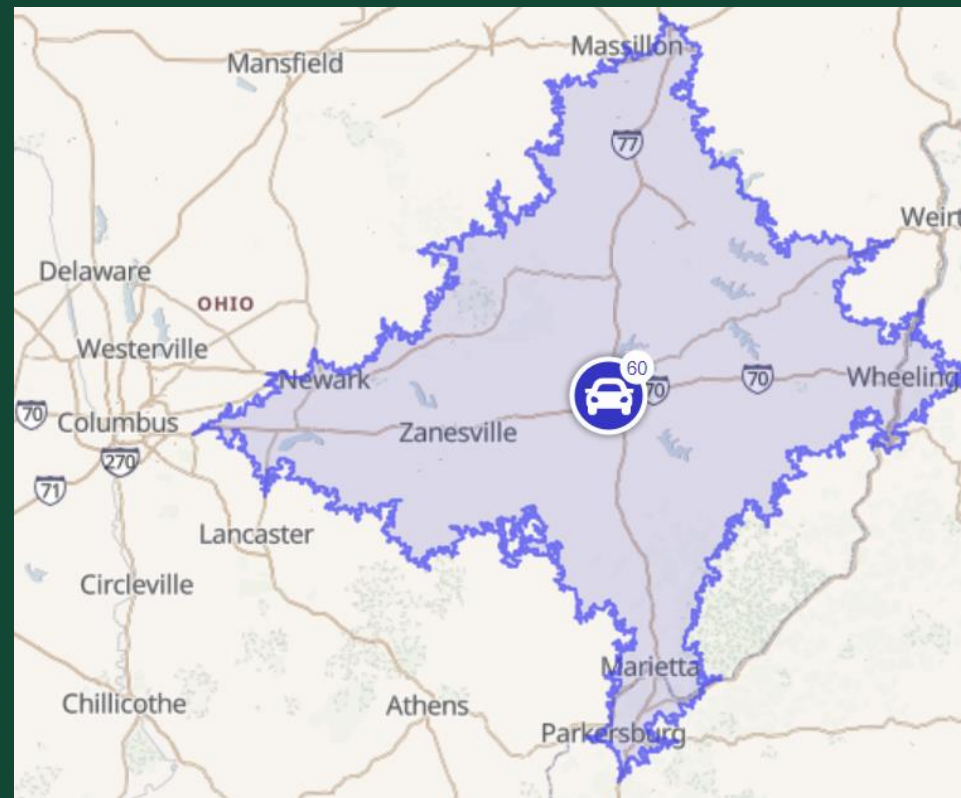
1. Remote Work Training
2. Financial Incentives

RW Commuting Shed Extension Effect

30 min. = 2,322 jobs



60 min. = 10,653 jobs



Indeed.com Open Remote Working Jobs

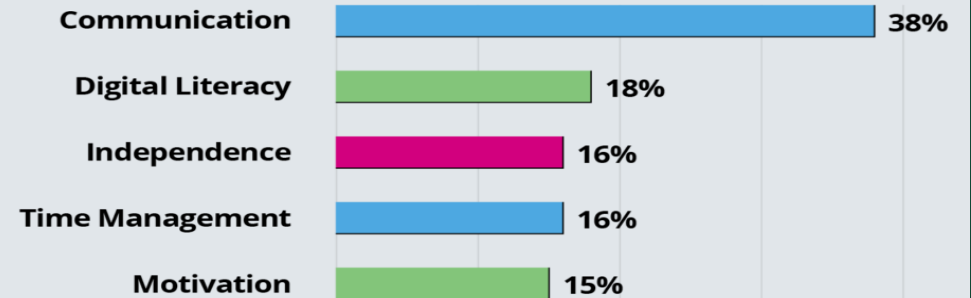
	US	OHIO
TOTAL	127,865	3,024
ENTRY	57,391	1,444
MIDLEVEL	56,437	1,161
SENIOR	7,102	115
\$40,000+	109,192	2,372
\$55,000+	88,618	1,903
\$70,000+	68,531	1,510
\$100,000+	43,268	969

Remote Workforce Development

Expand the RW pie by
preparing rural residents
for - and placing them in
- remote and hybrid jobs

Requires both
occupational and
remote working skills

What Skills Are Remote Employers Looking For?*



Remote Work Strategy Portfolio

CONTINUE - Support continued remote working

CONVERT - Help commuters become remote workers

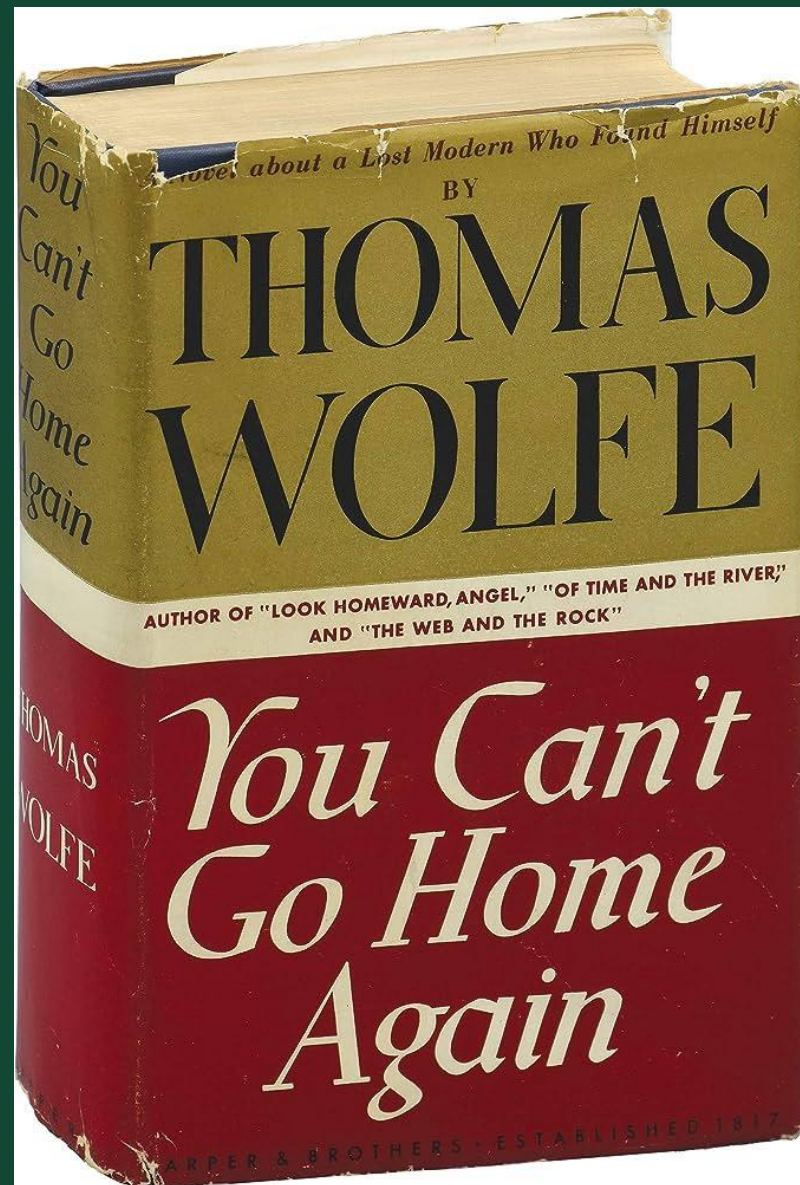
UPSKILL – Emphasize remote work training/placement

RETAIN - Support remote work for graduates

REPATRIATE: Attract remote working former residents

PRACTICE: “Walk the Talk” in public employment

Thomas Wolfe, 1900-1938



COVID's Unexpected Rural Dividend

Maybe You CAN Go Home Again
or Never Have to Leave

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