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## Telecommuting found to boost morale, cut stress

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By Patricia Reaney

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Tired of traffic jams, late trains, packed buses? Telecommuting can be a big plus for workers and employers because it boosts morale and job satisfaction and cuts stress, researchers said on Monday.

In an analysis of 46 studies on telecommuting, researchers found that working away from the office by using computers, cell phones or other electronic equipment can have more pluses than negatives for people and the companies that employ them.

"Our results show that telecommuting has an overall beneficial effect because the arrangement provides employees with more control over how they do their work," said Dr Ravi Gajendran of Pennsylvania State University.

"Telecommuting seems to have some mildly positive effects on employee morale, on work-family balance and on stress," he added in an interview.

Gajendran and David Harrison, who reported their findings in the journal of Applied Psychology, studied data on 12,833 telecommuters who spend time working away from the office.

Telecommuting has been a growing trend in the United States since about 2000. Last year an estimated 45 million Americans telecommuted, an increase of 4 million from 2003, according to the magazine WorldatWork.

Gajendran believes the numbers will continue to grow as access to broadband increases.

"Over the last couple of years there has been a spike, especially in the number of people who are regularly telecommuting. By regularly I mean people who are telecommuting at least once a month," he said.

"There has almost been a 60 percent increase in those numbers."

Although some companies and workers feared telecommuting could hamper career prospects or lead to a breakdown in relationships with managers and co-workers, the researchers found no evidence to support it.

"Telecommuting by and large does not have any negative relational outcomes as has been commonly believed," said Gajendran.

There was also no evidence that telecommuting stymied career development.

Telecommuting also has added benefits, according to the researchers, because it cuts commuting costs and relieves congestion on inner city transport systems, as well as traffic on roads.

"If you could save a long commute, say two days a week or maybe even one, you will see substantial costs saving as well as substantial reductions in terms of pollution," Gajendran explained.