

Travel to work

Personal Travel Factsheet - July 2007



Introduction

This Factsheet summarises findings on how people travel to and from work. The results cover Great Britain and are based on data from the [National Travel Survey \(NTS\)](#) unless stated otherwise. Results from the [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) are also presented. The NTS covers adults and children of all ages. The LFS covers adults aged 16 and over. Data are for 2005 unless otherwise specified.

NTS technical note: A trip is a one way course of travel having a single main purpose. The mode of transport for commuting and business trips is the main method of travel used in terms of distance travelled.

Commuting - trips from home to usual place of work, or from work to home.

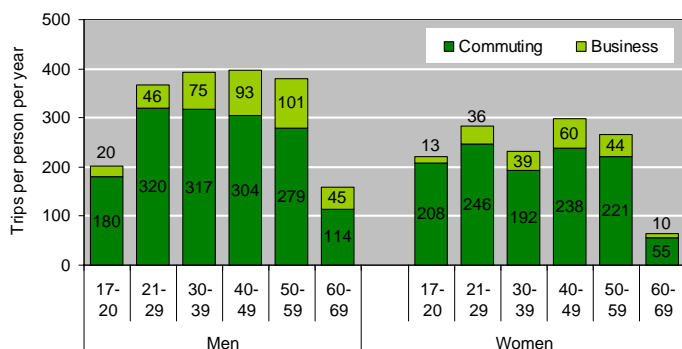
Business - trips in course of work where the purpose of the trip is for the traveller to reach a destination (e.g. a manager travelling between different offices, or a care worker visiting patients). Also trips to/from work by people with no usual place of work and those who work from/at home. Travel to deliver goods, or to convey a vehicle or passengers is not covered.

Recent trends in travel to work and business trips

- Travel to/from work accounts for 15% of all trips, and business trips account for 4% of trips. Commuting and business trips tend to be longer than average and so they account for a greater proportion of total distance travelled (19% and 10% respectively).
- Since 1995/1997, the number of commuting trips has fallen by 8% to 161 trips per person per year and the number of business trips by 3% to 37.
- Over the same period the average distance travelled for commuting has fallen by 2% to 1,391 miles per person per year. Average distance travelled for business fell by 1% to 723 miles.

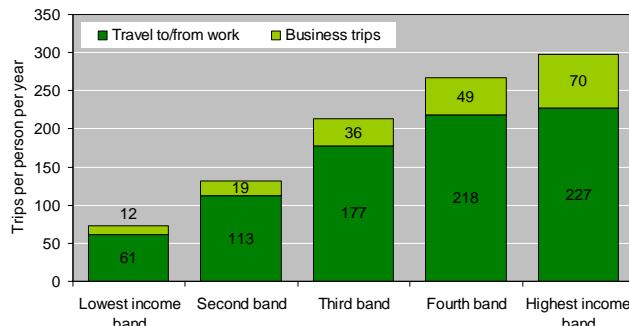
Who travels to work?

Chart 1: Commuting and business trips, by age and sex



- In all age groups apart from 17-20, men make more commuting and business trips than women. Men aged 30 to 49 years make the most commuting/business trips (Chart 1).
- 38% of all trips made by men aged 21 to 39 are for commuting/business purposes. For women in this age group the figure is 20%. The gap narrows among 40 to 59 year-olds (34% and 24%).
- There is a close correlation between the number of commuting/business trips per person per year and levels of household income. (Chart 2)

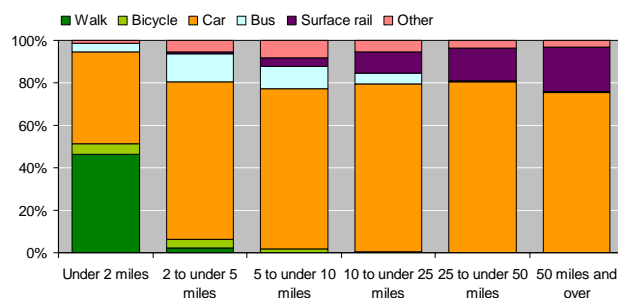
Chart 2: Commuting/business trips, by household income



How do people travel to work?

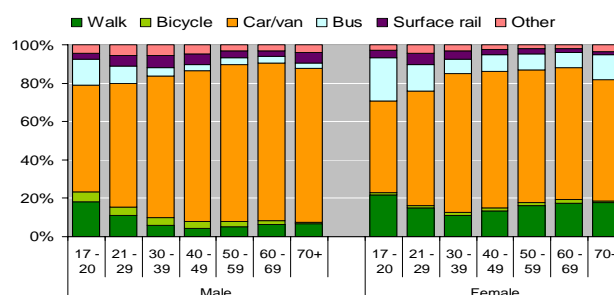
- 69% of commuting trips are made by car, 11% on foot, 8% by bus, 4% by train and 3% by bicycle. Mode of transport varies depending on distance to place of work (Chart 3).
- For business trips, 80% are by car, 8% on foot, 2% by bus, 4% by train, and 1% by bicycle.

Chart 3: Mode of travel for commuting trips, by trip length



- The LFS asks workers about their *usual* method of travel to work. Results are similar to the NTS: 71% usually travel to work by car; 11% walk; 8% go by bus/coach; 6% by rail, and 3% by bicycle.
- Between 1994 and 1997 the proportion usually travelling to work by car increased from 68% to 71%. This has since remained stable.
- Usual method of travel to work is different for workers resident in London, with 42% travelling by car, 16% by bus/coach and 28% by rail.
- There are also differences between men and women. (Chart 4)

Chart 4: Usual mode of travel to work, by age and sex



- While the average car occupancy rate is 1.6, occupancy rates are lower for commuting (1.2) and business trips (1.2) than for any other purpose.
- There is only one person in the vehicle for 85% of commuting trips and 84% of business trips by car. The average figure for all car trips is 61%.

How far do people travel to work?

- The average length of a commuting trip increased by 6%, from 8.2 miles in 1995/97 to 8.7 miles in 2005.
- Men travel 10.5 miles to work on average, 67% further than women (6.3 miles).
- People living in the most rural areas travel furthest to work on average (11.3 miles), while those in major cities outside London travel the shortest distance on average (6.5 miles). London residents travel 8.0 miles.
- People from households in the highest income quintile travel more than twice as far to work on average (12.3 miles) as those in the lowest income quintile (5.8 miles).
- The average length of a business trip is 19.4 miles.

How long does it take to travel to work?

- The average journey to work takes 27 minutes, an increase of 13% on 1995/1997 (24 minutes).
- The average journey to work for Londoners takes 39 minutes, 46% longer than the GB average.
- Men on average spend 21% longer commuting than women (29 minutes and 24 minutes respectively), reflecting differences in journey distance and mode.
- On average, commuting trips by car take 24 minutes, by bus 40 minutes, rail 66 minutes and on foot 17 minutes.

Difficulties travelling to work

- The NTS asks workers what kind of difficulties, if any, they experience when travelling to work.
- 43% of workers who usually travel to work by car or motorcycle say they experience difficulties getting to work. A smaller proportion of those travelling by other modes experience difficulties (32%).
- The main difficulty car/motorcycle users experience on their journey to work is traffic congestion/road-works (mentioned by 39%).
- The most common difficulties for those who travel to work by other modes are unreliable public transport (19%); traffic congestion/road-works (7%) and public transport being 'unpleasant' (4%).

Potential for modal shift

- In 2002/03, 36% of those who usually travel to work by car/motorcycle said they would find it very or quite easy to get to work if they could not travel by car/motorcycle. 57% would find it difficult to travel by another means.

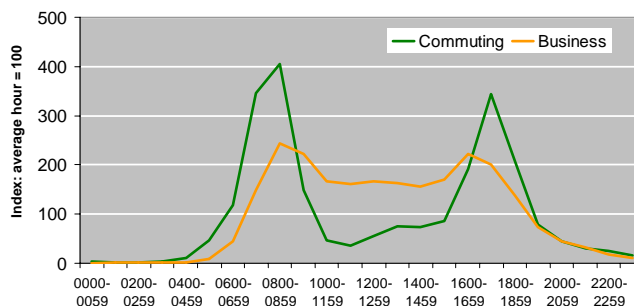
- The most common reasons given for this were not believing it is possible to do the journey by public transport (47%); the distance being too far (30%); poor public transport connections (29%) and unreliable public transport (19%).

Working patterns

- 75% of those in employment or self-employed usually work in a single workplace location (not home), 21% work in different places and 3% usually work at home.
- In addition to the 3% who usually work at home, 15% occasionally work from home or say it would be possible for them to work from home.
- The proportion of workers who usually work from home does not appear to have increased over the last 10 years.
- However, there is evidence that more of those who can sometimes work from home are doing so more often.
- People who are self-employed are much more likely than others to work at home: 17% do so every day.

Travel by time of day

Chart 5: Distribution of commuting and business trips in progress by hour of day, weekdays only



- Chart 5 shows that commuting travel is concentrated into the morning peak (07:00 – 09:00) and the evening peak (16:00 – 19:00).
- Business travel is spread more evenly throughout the working day. (NB there are more commuting trips than business trips.)

Company cars

- In 2005, 6% of all household cars were company owned cars compared with 7% in 1995/1997.
- Based on respondents' estimates, company cars have an average mileage of 19,600 miles, considerably higher than private cars at 8,400 miles. Two-fifths of company car mileage is for business purposes, compared with less than a tenth for privately owned cars.

Further information Since 2002, NTS fieldwork has been conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The main results from the National Travel Survey are published at: www.dft.gov.uk/transtat along with details of the NTS methodology. For further information and any queries please contact: national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk or telephone 020 7944 3097.