

# Travel in Urban and Rural areas

## Personal Travel Factsheet - July 2007

### Introduction

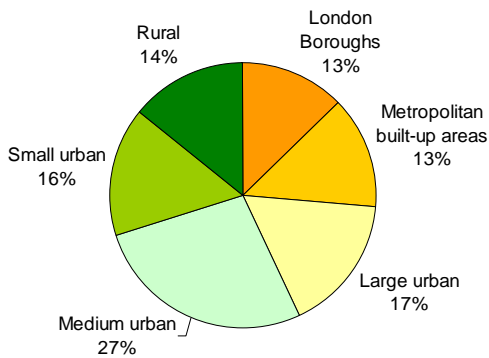
This Factsheet summarises findings on how personal travel patterns vary according to the type of area in which people live. The results cover Great Britain and are based on data from the [National Travel Survey \(NTS\)](#) unless stated otherwise. Data are for 2005 unless otherwise specified.

**Type of area:** Households are classified according to whether they are within an urban area of at least 3,000 population or in a rural area. Urban areas are subdivided for the purpose of this factsheet as follows:  
 London boroughs – the whole of the Greater London Authority  
 Built-up areas of former Metropolitan Counties  
 Large urban – self-contained urban areas over 250,000 population  
 Medium urban – over 25,000 but not over 250,000 population  
 Small urban – over 3,000 but not over 25,000 population  
 Rural – all other areas including urban areas under 3,000 population

### Population by area type

The proportion of individuals in the NTS sample living in each type of area closely matches the proportion in the general GB population (Chart 1).

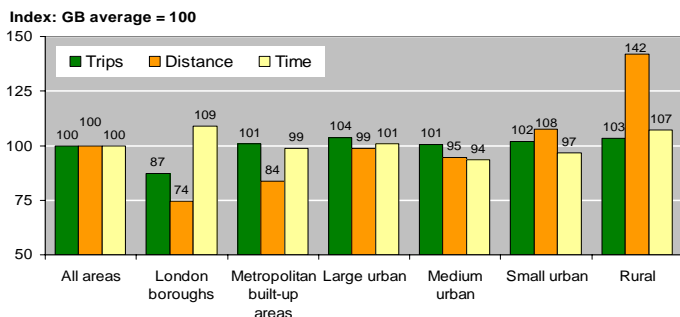
**Chart 1: Percentage of NTS sample of individuals in each area type**



### Overall travel behaviour

The amount of travelling people do and the time they spend travelling varies by area type, with London and Rural areas being particularly distinctive.

**Chart 2: Trips, distance travelled and time spent travelling per person per year by area type**



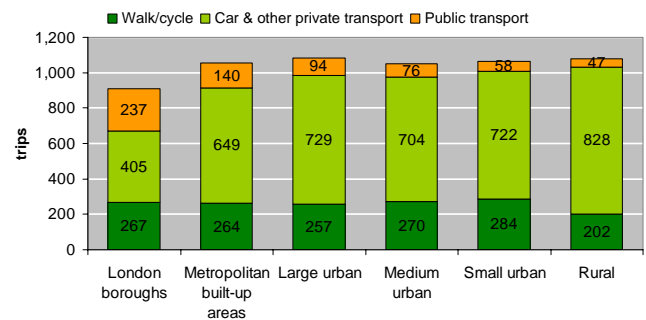
- For all areas outside London, average trip rates are similar (between 1,050 and 1,081 trips per person per year). London residents make on average 15% fewer trips (909) than those who live outside London (Chart 3).
- People in rural areas travel on average 91% further each year (10,237 miles) than those in London (5,369 miles) (Chart 4).

- Similarly, the average length of a trip is longest for those living in rural areas (9.5 miles) and shortest among inhabitants of large cities such as London (5.9 miles) and the former Metropolitan counties (5.7 miles).
- People in rural areas also spend much longer travelling on average in a year (413 hours) than those in most urban areas, but inhabitants of London, despite travelling the least distance, spend the longest time each year travelling (420 hours).

### Mode of travel

- Car and other private transport is most dominant in small urban areas and rural areas, comprising 68% and 77% of all trips respectively. This compares to 45% in London and 62% in the Metropolitan areas.
- The average number of trips made per person each year by public transport increases with the size of urban area, and is highest of all in London (Chart 3).

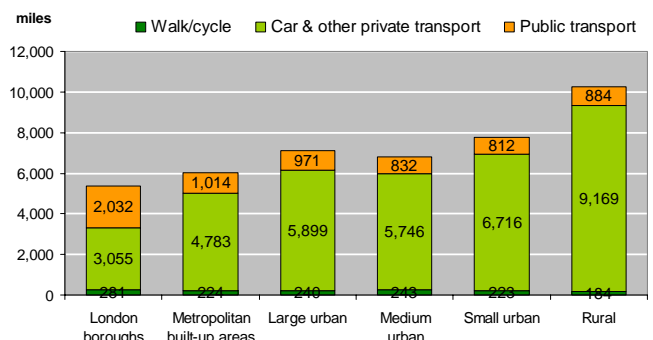
**Chart 3: Trips per person per year by main mode and area type**



Because trips by car and other private transport are longer on average than those by other modes, they comprise a higher proportion of total distance travelled than of trips made (Charts 3 and 4).

- In rural areas, 90% of total distance covered for personal travel is by car or other private modes (excluding walking and cycling) and 9% is by public transport. In large urban areas these proportions are 83% and 14% respectively and in London they are 57% and 38%.

**Chart 4: Distance per person per year by mode and area type**

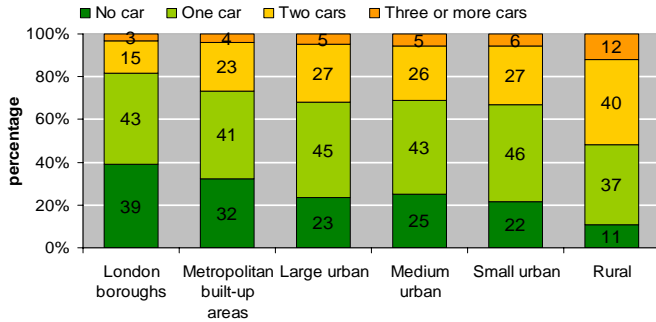


## Car ownership and mileage

The NTS shows that access to a car is one of the most important factors in the amount of travelling people do. This is borne out by the pattern in the proportion of households in each area type who own one or more cars.

- In rural areas, 89% of households have access to a car compared with 61% in London.
- Rural areas also have the highest proportion of households with multiple cars (52%).

**Chart 5: Household car ownership by area type**



## Bus services

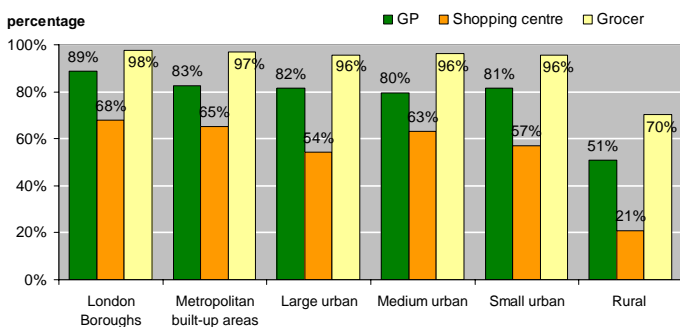
The NTS asks respondents how near they live to a bus service. The minimum criterion for the government's 'bus availability indicator' is that a household should be within 13 minutes' walk of a bus stop with an hourly or better service.

- Between 1998/00 and 2005, the proportion of households in rural areas that met this criterion increased from 45% to 54%.
- In small urban areas the proportion of households with this access increased from 74% to 89% over the same period.
- There was little change in medium and large urban areas, where the vast majority (over 90%) of households live within 13 minutes walk of a bus stop with a service at least once an hour.

## Access to services

Respondents are asked how long it takes to travel to a range of important local services on foot or by public transport (whichever is quicker) from their home. Results show that key services are less accessible to households in rural areas than those in urban areas.

**Chart 6: Proportion of households within 15 minutes (by foot or public transport) of local services by area type**



- In urban areas over 90% of households are within 15 minutes of a shop selling groceries and over 80% are

within 15 minutes of a GP. In rural areas the proportions are 70% and 51% respectively (Chart 6).

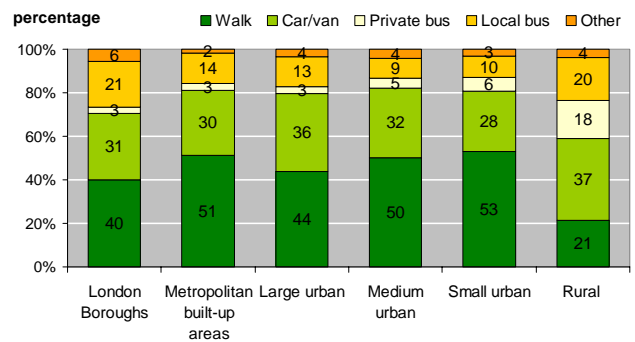
- In rural areas, 32% of households are within 30 minutes of the nearest hospital, compared to 50% in medium urban areas and 54% in London.
- In all sizes of urban areas over 90% of households with one or more child of primary school age are within 15 minutes of a primary school. This compares with 71% of rural households.
- The proportion of rural households with children of secondary school age that are within 15 minutes of a secondary school is also lower (29%) than the proportion among urban households, which ranges from 66% in large urban areas to 77% in London.

## Travelling to school

Children living in different types of area face different journeys to school, and they and their parents make different choices in how to get there.

- In 2002/05, the average distance children in rural areas travelled to get to school was 4.5 miles. This is roughly twice as far as the averages for urban areas, which all fall between 1.8 and 2.4 miles.
- This difference is reflected in the travel choices made by children in rural areas. In particular, far more travel by private coach or school bus (18%) than in urban areas and fewer walk to school (21%) (Chart 7).

**Chart 7: Proportion of trips to school by main mode and area type: 2002/05**



## Working from home

- The proportion of workers who always work from home is twice as high in rural areas (6%) as the GB average (3%).
- The proportion who don't usually work from home but who sometimes do so is also higher in rural areas (7%) than the GB average (5%). The proportion in London is also higher (6%) than nationally.

### 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](http://www.dft.gov.uk/transtat) along with details of the NTS methodology

For further information and any queries please contact:

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