



Department for Transport

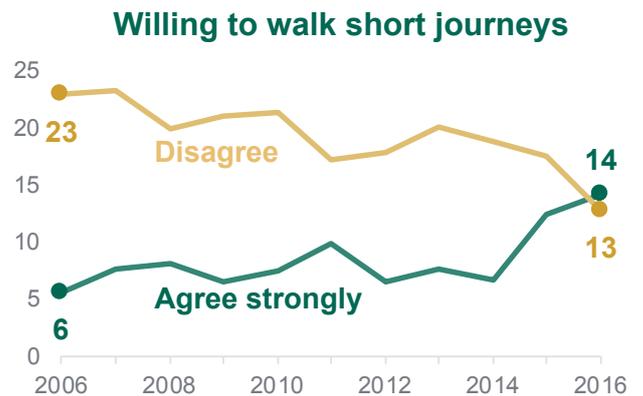
# British Social Attitudes Survey 2016: Public attitudes towards transport

This statistical release is part of a series of surveys measuring people’s attitudes towards transport since 1996. The surveys include issues such as willingness to change current travel behaviours, attitudes to the environment and transport, congestion, and views on road safety. This report covers changes in long-term trends up to 2016.



## Willingness to change mode from short car journeys

- ▶ A strong willingness to walk short journeys less than 2 miles, rather than go by car, has increased, from 6% in 2006 to 14% in 2016, whilst the proportion disagreeing has fallen from 23% to 13% in the same period.



## Aviation and the environment

- ▶ Whilst 45% agree that people should be able to travel by plane as much as they like, even if new terminals or runways are needed, only 20% support unlimited flights if these harm the environment.



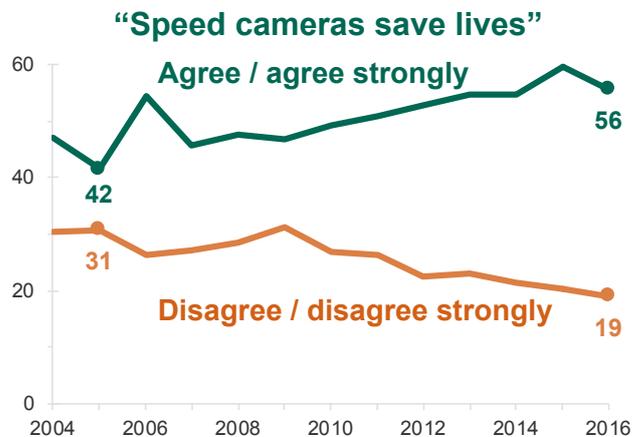
## Mobile phones

- ▶ Whilst 50% agree that all use of mobile phones while driving, including hands-free phones, is *dangerous*, only 40% agree that all such use of mobile phones should be *banned*.



## Speed cameras

- ▶ Agreement that “speed cameras save lives” rose from a low of 42% in 2005 to 56% in 2016, whilst disagreement fell from 31% to a low of 19% over the same time.



- ▶ Nearly half of respondents think that speed cameras are mostly there to make money. A third said that there are too many speed cameras, but agreement with this has decreased to 32%, the lowest point in the last decade.

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### About these statistics

The British Social Attitudes Survey is conducted by the National Centre for Social Research and contains questions on attitudes towards transport sponsored by the Department for Transport. It is a representative survey of adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain, collecting data through a combination of face-to-face interviews and self-completion questionnaires. The latest data for this report was collected in 2016. Some attitudes change very slowly; a relatively small sample means that other responses show yearly change due to sampling variability, which does not reflect real change. This report focusses on changes in long-term trends.



### Behaviours and willingness to change

- ▶ There are now fewer people who never travel by train (46% in 2002, 33% in 2016), and more who travel less than once per week (44% in 2002, 56% in 2016). There has been little change in percentage travelling more frequently.
- ▶ A strong willingness to walk short journeys rather than go by car has increased, from 6% in 2006 to 14% in 2016, whilst the proportion disagreeing has fallen from 23% to 13% in the same period.
- ▶ Opposition to using a bus for short journeys, (rather than go by car), has reduced, from 45% in 2006 to 34% in 2016.



### Transport and the environment

- ▶ Whilst 45% agree that people should be able to travel by plane as much as they like, even if new terminals or runways are needed, only 20% support unlimited flights if these harm the environment.
- ▶ Opposition to unlimited car use, even if this harms the environment, has fallen to a low of 31%.
- ▶ Whilst opposition to higher car taxes for the sake of the environment has fallen to a low of 49%, 64% agree that drivers should pay less if their cars are better for the environment.
- ▶ Whilst 61% think everyone should reduce car use, 47% are unwilling to reduce their own use until others do so.



### Congestion, mobiles, speed bumps

- ▶ Concern with congestion on motorways and in towns, which rose between 2012 and 2015, has fallen again slightly in 2016.
- ▶ Whilst 50% agree that all use of mobile phones while driving, including hands-free phones, is *dangerous*, only 40% agree that all such use of mobile phones should be *banned*.
- ▶ Support for speed bumps in residential streets has risen. In 2009, 44% were in favour, whilst 41% were against. By 2016, 50% were in favour, and only 29% against.
- ▶ 59% perceive that roads are too dangerous to cycle on - a record low.



### Speed cameras

- ▶ Some aspects of support for speed cameras have risen: agreement that “speed cameras save lives” rose from a low of 42% in 2005 to 56% in 2016, whilst disagreement fell from 31% to a low of 19% over the same time.
- ▶ Similarly, agreement that “there are too many speed cameras” has fallen from a peak of 47% in 2008 to 32% in 2016; the most common attitude on this is now neutral (neither agree nor disagree), at 36% in 2016.
- ▶ Scepticism remains high, however. 48% still agreed in 2016 that “speed cameras are mostly there to make money”, although this has fallen from 58% in 2004.



## Frequency of travel

### Infrequent users of public transport:



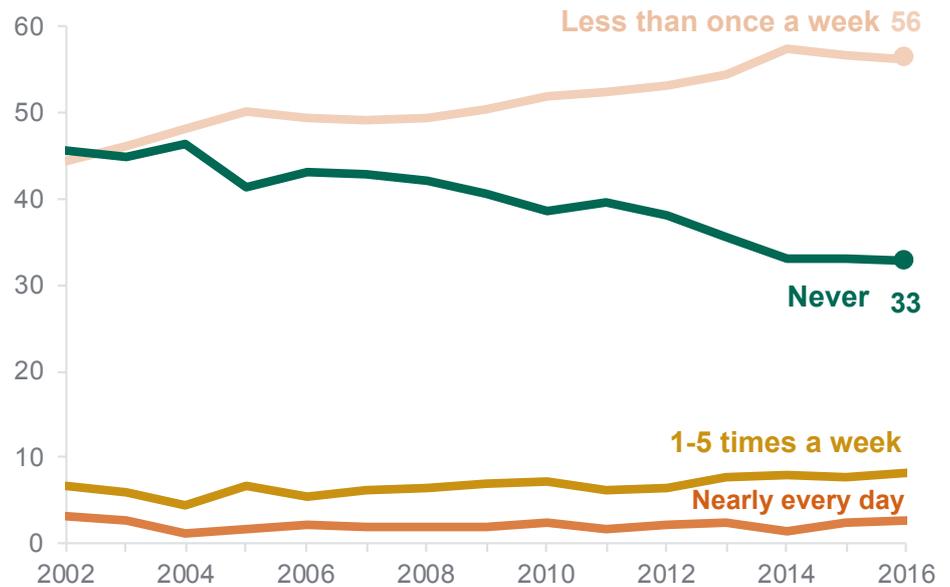
As well as being asked about attitudes to transport, respondents are asked how often they currently travel by different modes. For both bus and train travel, the main changes have been among those using services infrequently.

There has been a rise in the percentage who do travel by bus, but do so less than once per week, from 23% in 2002, to a peak of 30% in 2015.



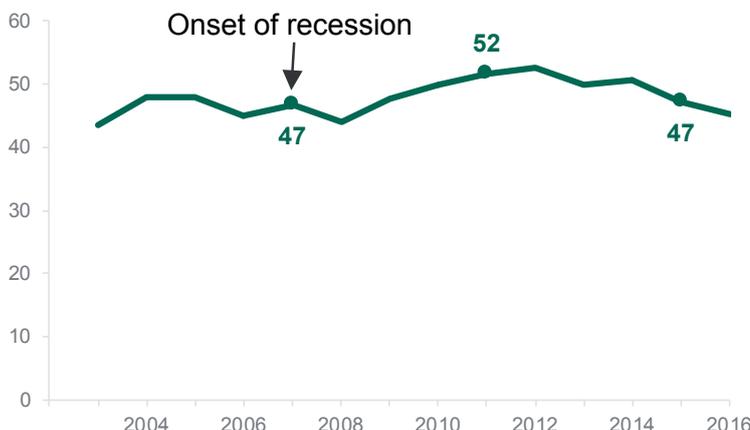
Similarly, for train travel since 2002, there has been a decrease in the proportion who never use a train, matched by an increase in those who use a train less than once per week (Chart 1). There has been hardly any change in the proportion travelling once per week or more.

Chart 1: Frequency travelling by train [ATT0304]



**Air travel:** There has been change in the proportion of those reporting *no* flights. Although we cannot be certain, the trend is consistent with a response to recession – increasing from 2008 (when fewer people could afford flights), then falling again since 2012, as people’s incomes increased again (Chart 2). Since 2008, there has been little net change within the proportions who *do* make different numbers of flights.

Chart 2: Percentage making no flights per year [ATT0306]



### Definition

Outward and return flights and any transfers are counted as one trip.

### Other sources

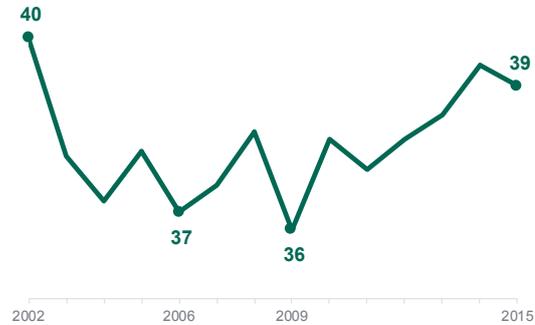
Frequency of travel by mode presented here is consistent with figures from the National Travel Survey (NTS0313). Detailed information on how people travel is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>.



We can use the National Travel Survey (NTS) to tell us about personal trips made by car or van. In 2015, 136 car / van trips per person per year were short trips of under 2 miles (NTS0308) - 23% of all driver trips, and 25% of all passenger trips. These numbers and percentages (short car trips as a share of all car trips) have scarcely changed since 2007.

**Chart 3: Short car trips as a percentage of all short trips**

However, if we consider just short trips (under 2 miles), and what modes are used to make these, then the share made by car or van fell gradually from 40% in 2002 to a low of 36% in 2009, and since then has been rising again, to 39% in 2015 (Chart 3. Source: National Travel Survey).

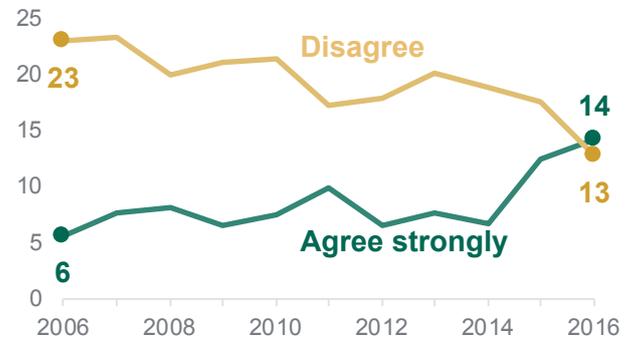


Since 2006, BSA respondents have been asked three questions about their willingness to change their current travel behaviour. They are asked how strongly they agree or disagree that “Many of the journeys of less than 2 miles that I now make by car I could just as easily walk / go by bus / cycle.” Those who agree or strongly agree are taken as “willing” to change.



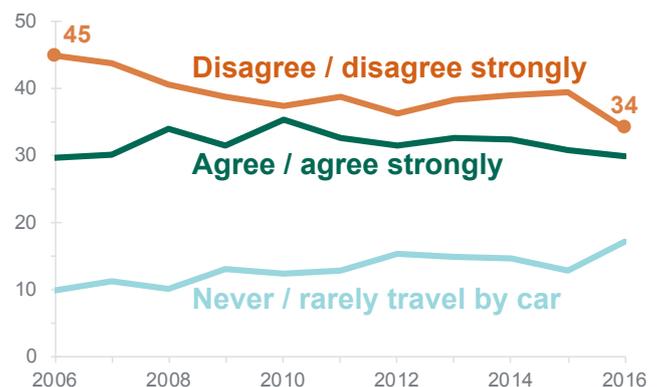
A strong willingness to walk short journeys less than 2 miles, rather than go by car, has increased, from 6% in 2006 to 14% in 2016, whilst the proportion disagreeing has fallen from 23% to 13% in the same period (Chart 4).

**Chart 4: Many of the journeys of less than 2 miles that I now make by car, I could just as easily walk. [ATT0315]**



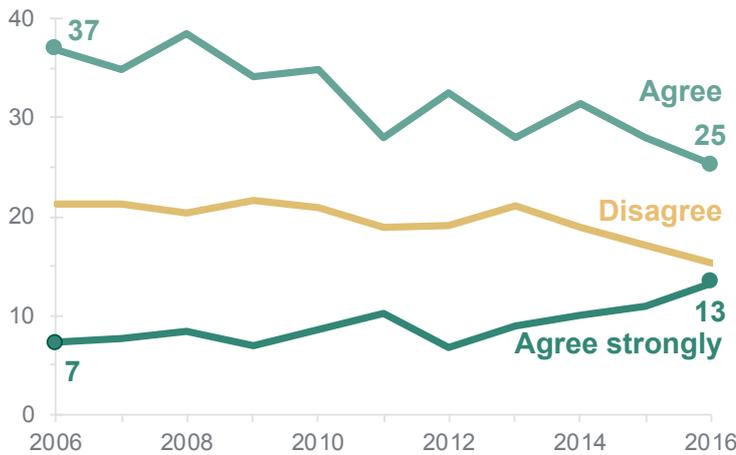
Opposition to using a bus for short journeys, (rather than go by car), has fallen, from 45% in 2006, to 34% in 2016; but the switch has been towards those who never or rarely make short car trips, rather than towards willingness to travel by bus (Chart 5).

**Chart 5: Many of the journeys of less than 2 miles that I now make by car, I could just as easily go by bus. [ATT0316]**





**Chart 6: Many of the journeys of less than 2 miles that I now make by car, I could just as easily cycle. [ATT0317]**



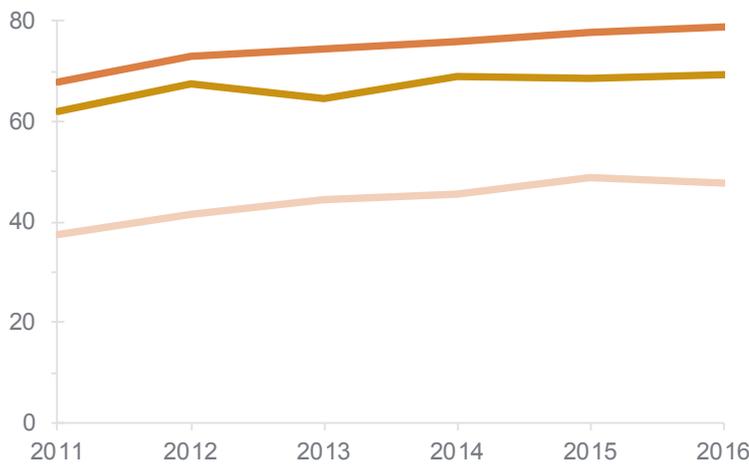
Although more people are willing than unwilling to switch to cycling journeys of less than 2 miles, net support for cycling short distances has declined, from 44% in 2006 to 39% in 2016. However, the strength of attitudes has grown: as the proportion agreeing has declined, the proportion agreeing strongly has increased in recent years (Chart 6).



**Transport and climate change**

Belief in human-caused climate change has increased, from 76% in 2011 to 84% in 2016 (ATT0318).

**Chart 7: “What has the most overall impact on climate change?” Proportions mentioning each response. [ATT0319]**



Vans and lorries



Cars



Buses and coaches

Vans & lorries are perceived as most to blame overall, then cars. The impact attributed to these and to buses & coaches has risen since 2011 (Chart 7).

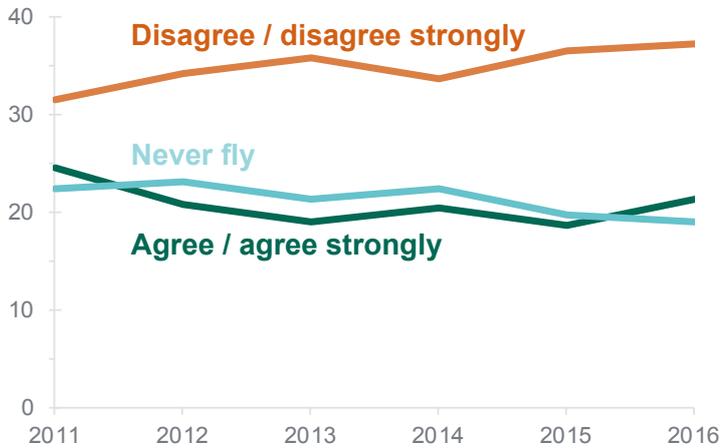


Willingness to buy a car with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is high, but has hardly changed since 2012; 78% either agree they are willing, or already do this in 2016 (ATT0321).

Nor has willingness to drive less for the sake of the environment changed much. The proportion willing and the proportion unwilling are about equal - 40% agreed, 39% disagreed in 2016 (ATT0322).



**Chart 8: “I am willing to reduce the amount I travel by plane to help reduce the impact of climate change” - Proportions agreeing or disagreeing [ATT0323]**

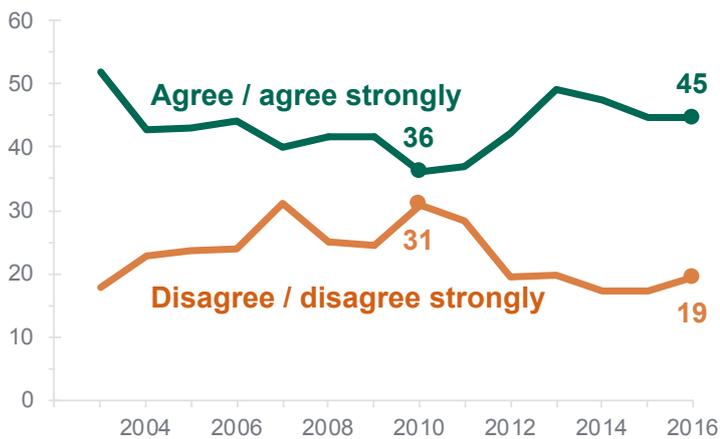


**Air travel**

Nor are most people willing to reduce air flights to combat climate change. Unwillingness to reduce flights has increased since 2011 (Chart 8).

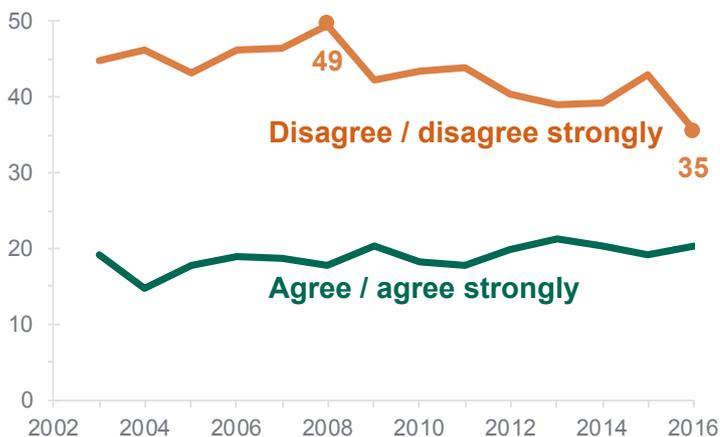
About two thirds of people (64% in 2016) believe “People should be able to travel by plane as much as they like” (ATT0324). Support for this unlimited flying used to be even higher in 2003, but the biggest change was up to 2007, since when attitudes have been more stable.

**Chart 9: “People should be able to travel by plane as much as they like, even if new terminals or runways are needed to meet the demand”- Proportions agreeing or disagreeing. [ATT0325]**



If the question qualifies that new terminals or runways are needed to meet demand, the most common position is still support for the right to unlimited flying (45% in 2016), but this is lower than the unqualified 64% above. Year on year changes have been volatile since 2003. Opposition to new terminals or runways increased to 31% in 2010, then declined again to 19% in 2016 (Chart 9).

**Chart 10: “People should be able to travel by plane as much as they like, even if this harms the environment” - Proportions agreeing or disagreeing. [ATT0326]**



However, if unlimited flying harms the environment, the most common position is disagreement; this opposition has declined from 49% in 2008, to 35% in 2016 (Chart 10).

In 2016, 46% agreed or strongly agreed that “the price of a plane ticket should reflect the environmental damage that flying causes, even if this makes air travel more expensive” (ATT0327).



Chart 11: “People should be allowed to use their cars as much as they like, even if it causes damage to the environment” - Proportions agreeing or disagreeing. [ATT0329]

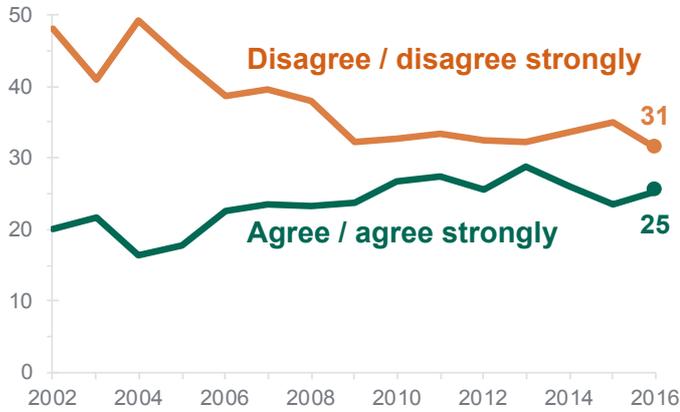


Chart 12: “For the sake of the environment, car users should pay higher taxes” - Proportions agreeing or disagreeing [ATT0330]

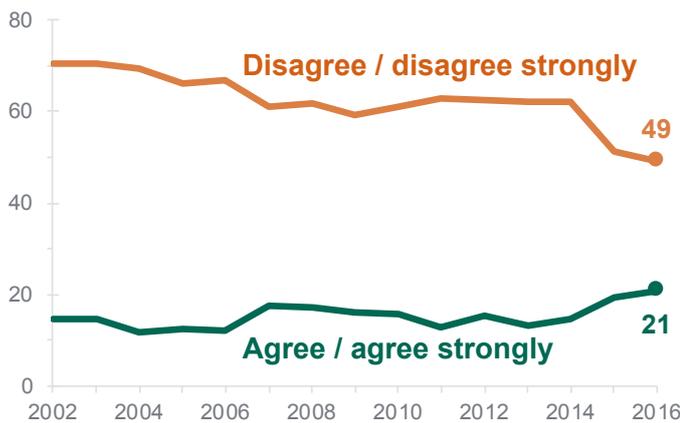
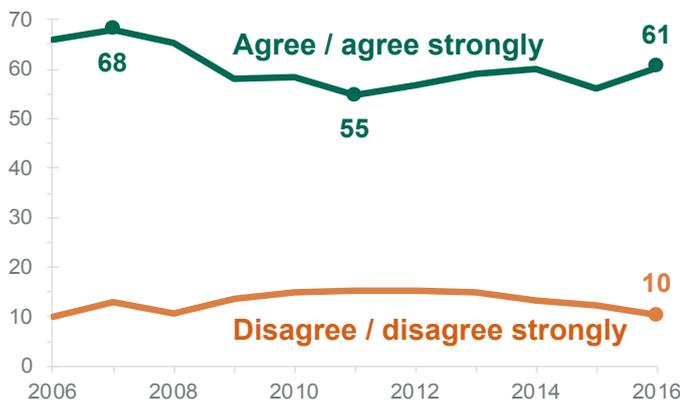


Chart 13: “For the sake of the environment, everyone should reduce how much they use their cars” - Proportions agreeing or disagreeing [ATT0332]



### Cars and the environment

Opposition to unlimited car use, even if it damages the environment, was declining until 2009, then levelled out (Chart 11). In 2016, this opposition was at a low of 31%. The most common attitude, since 2009, has been a neutral one (36% in 2016). The trends in charts 10 (planes) and 11 (cars) are similar.

From the wording of the question, it is possible that respondents who agree may believe people should *choose* to limit car use - see chart 13 below - but still want to be *allowed* unlimited use.

Opposition to higher car taxes for the sake of the environment is the most common position, but there seems to have been a sudden drop in the last 2 years to a low of 49%, whilst support is at a high of 21% (Chart 12).

However, there is a high level of agreement that “People who drive cars that are better for the environment should pay less to use the roads than people whose cars are more harmful to the environment” (64% in 2016). This level has changed little over the last decade (ATT0331).

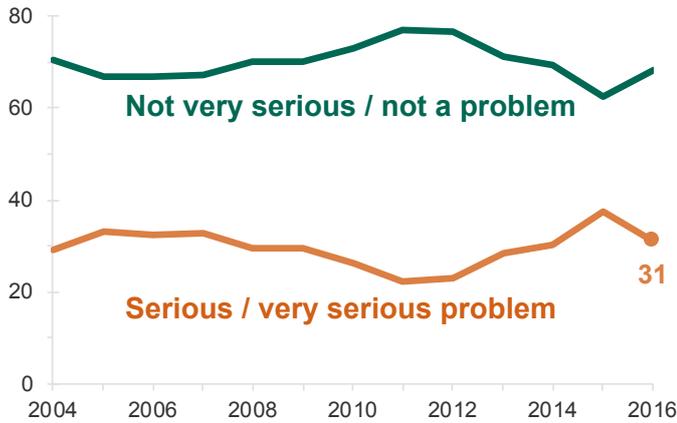
There is a strong majority for “everyone” to reduce car use, increasing from 55% in 2011 to 61% in 2016 (Chart 13).

Nonetheless, there is a strong resistance to reducing their own car use until others do likewise - 47% agree there’s no point (ATT0333).

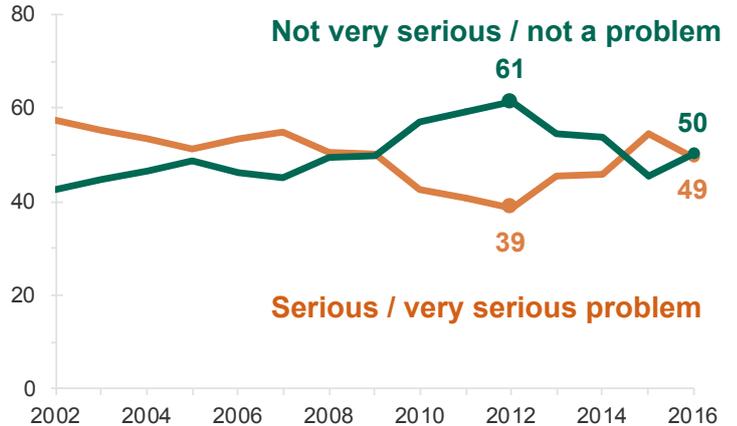


## Congestion

**Chart 14: Proportions perceiving motorway congestion as a problem [ATT0334]**



**Chart 15: Proportions perceiving congestion in towns and cities as a problem [ATT0335]**



Motorway congestion is perceived as much less of a problem than congestion in towns & cities: in 2016, 31% of respondents considered it as a serious or very serious problem (Chart 14), compared with 49% who thought congestion in towns and cities was as serious (Chart 15).



Concern with congestion in towns & cities (orange line in Chart 15) fell to 39% over the 10 years to 2012; it rose for 3 years, and now concern / lack of concern has broadly evened out, at around 50% each.

The survey suggests that there was a sharp drop in concern over both types of congestion between 2015 and 2016, but it is difficult to tell if this reflects a real change in the population, or sampling variation from one year to another.



Chart 16 shows that the proportions who are fairly or very concerned about damage to the countryside from road building have remained consistently high between 2005 and 2016, between two thirds and three quarters of respondents. As with the figures for congestion, the proportions appear to have swung more over the last 2 years, after remaining level for some time, but it is not possible to tell if this reflects real change or annual sampling variation.

**Chart 16: Proportions expressing concern about damage to the countryside from road building [ATT0338]**

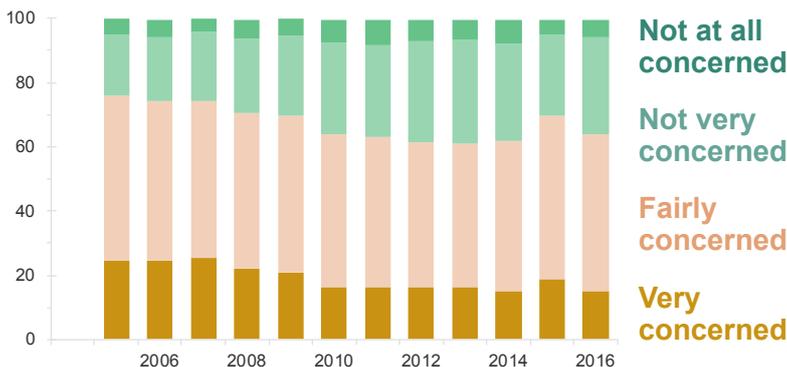
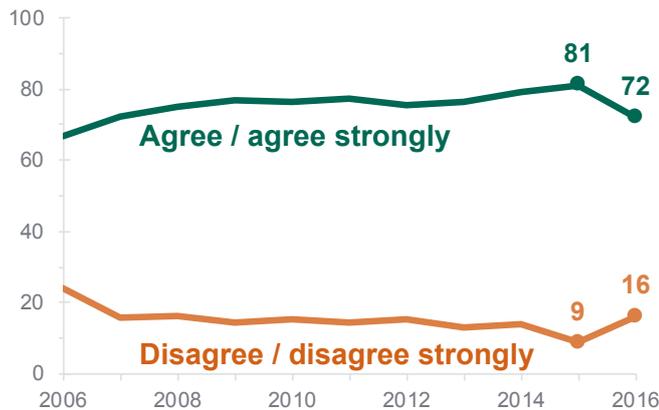


Chart 16 can be viewed in two different ways: if we consider the bottom two rows of each column, we can say that nearly two thirds of adults are either fairly or very concerned about road building in the countryside. On the other hand, if we consider the middle two rows of each column, we can say that over three quarters of adults fall somewhere in the middle, and that less than a quarter hold strong views one way or the other.



Chart 17: Belief that “Most people don’t know how much alcohol they can drink before being over the legal drink drive limit” [ATT0347]



### Drink driving

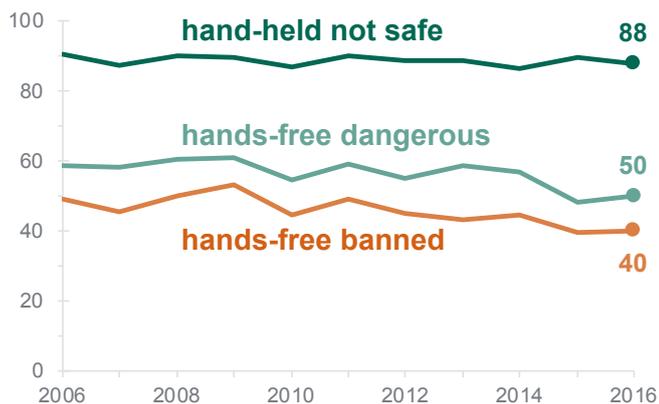
Belief that “If someone has drunk any alcohol they should not drive” has remained consistently high for the last decade, at about four fifths of adults (ATT0346).

However, a similar proportion of adults believe that “Most people don’t know how much alcohol they can drink before being over the legal drink drive limit”. Whilst those who agree rose to a peak of 81% in 2015, this share fell to 72% in 2016 (Chart 17).



### Driving and mobile phones

Chart 18: Driving while using mobile phones - percentages agreeing or strongly agreeing with 3 statements [ATT0349], [ATT0350], [ATT351]



Since 2006, respondents have been asked whether they agree or disagree with three statements about driving and mobile phones:

**“It is perfectly safe to talk on a hand-held mobile phone while driving” (ATT0349)**

**(Chart 18 shows those disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement);**

**“All use of mobiles while driving, including hand free kits, is dangerous” (ATT0350);**

**“All use of mobile phones while driving, including hands free, should be banned” (ATT0351).**

In 2016, 88% of adults agreed that it is not safe to drive while using a *hand-held* mobile phone. This percentage has remained consistent for a decade (Chart 18).

When the statement specifically includes the danger of *hands-free* phones, however, the percentage agreeing falls to 50% in 2016. This level of agreement has fallen by 9 percentage points over the last ten years. A further 20% neither agree nor disagree; this level has increased slightly over the decade.

When the statement is about *banning* hands-free mobiles altogether while driving, the percentage agreeing falls further, to 40% in 2016. Support for banning mobile phones while at the wheel has generally remained about 10 percentage points below those agreeing that hands-free phones are dangerous.

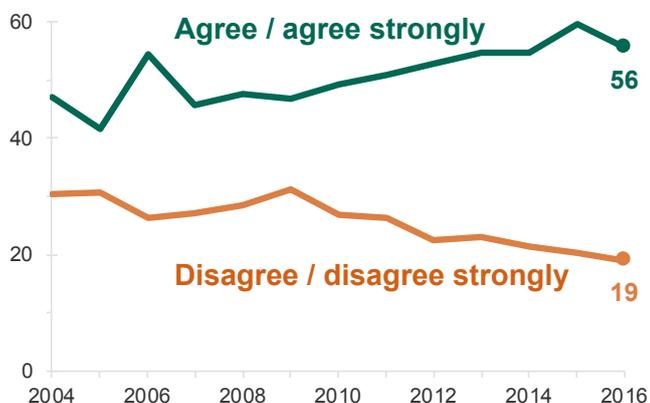
In 2016, 71% agreed or strongly agreed that “The law on using mobile phones whilst driving is not properly enforced” (ATT0352). This level has been similar since 2007.



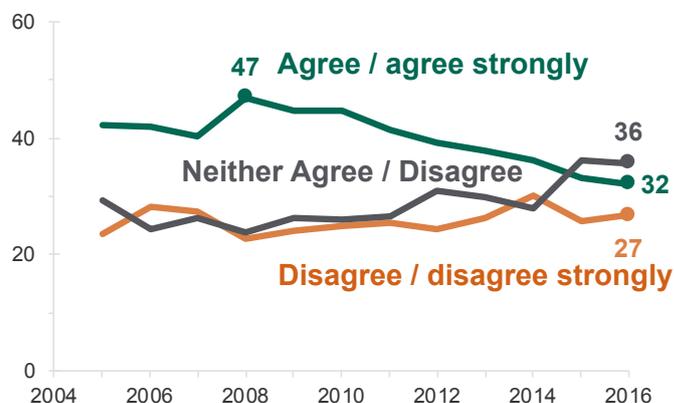
## Speed cameras

Belief in the efficacy of speed cameras has been increasing steadily since 2007, with 56% agreeing in 2016 that they save lives (Chart 19).

**Chart 19: “Speed cameras save lives” - Proportions agreeing and disagreeing [ATT0354]**

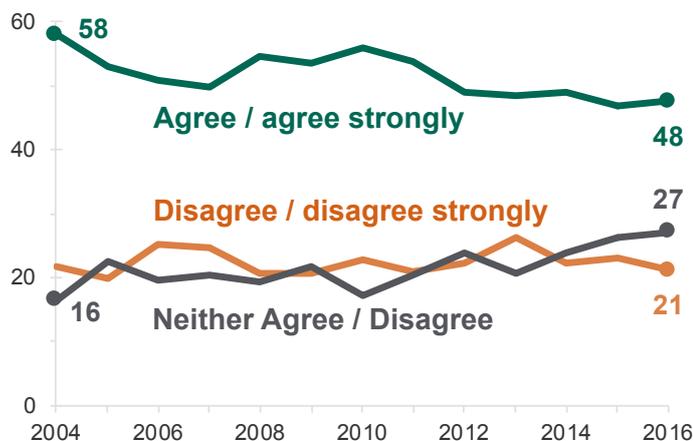


**Chart 20: “There are too many speed cameras” - Proportions agreeing and disagreeing [ATT0356]**



At the same time, scepticism towards speed cameras has been declining (Chart 20). In 2008, the dominant view was that “there are too many speed cameras”, with 47% agreeing. By 2016 there has been a net switch, mainly to a neutral position more than to disagreement. There are now 36% with a neutral view, compared with 32% who agree there are too many. Taken together, charts 19 and 20 suggest that public opinion has been growing more positive in its attitude to speed cameras for several years now.

**Chart 21: “Speed cameras are mostly there to make money” - Proportions agreeing and disagreeing [ATT0355]**



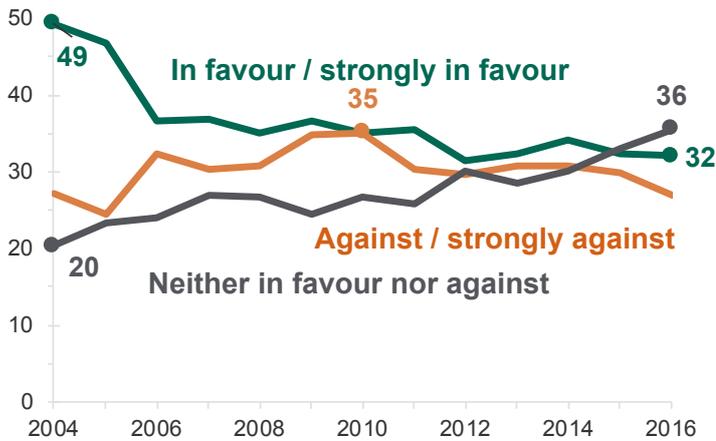
Notwithstanding charts 19 and 20, the view that speed cameras are mostly there to make money is still the dominant view, although here too, there has been a net shift, with the proportion agreeing declining from 58% in 2004 to 48% in 2016, whilst the proportion with a neutral view has increased from 16% to 27% over the same period (Chart 21).

Just over half of adults agree that “Average speed cameras are preferable to fixed speed cameras”, and over a quarter of people are neutral. There has been very little change in these levels over time (ATT0357).



## Residential streets

**Chart 22: “Closing residential streets to through traffic”: Proportions in favour and against [ATT0358]**



### “Closing residential streets to through traffic”



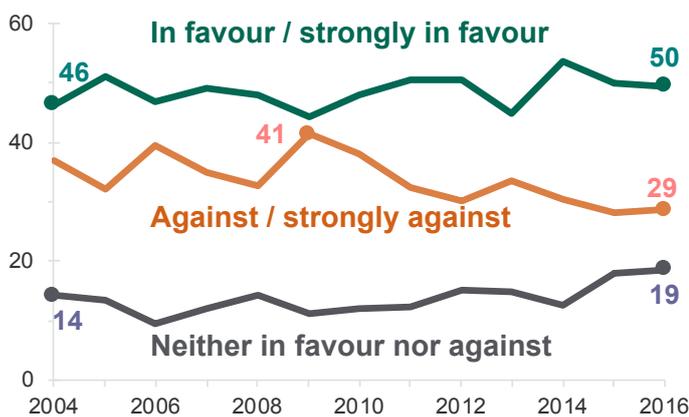
The peak of support was 49%, in 2004, and the biggest changes were in the first couple of years after that (Chart 22). Since 2004, the main net shift has been towards a neutral position (36% in 2016), although opposition has also declined somewhat since a peak of 35% 2010.

### 20mph limits in residential streets



69% support these in 2016, and there has been little change in attitudes over time (ATT0359).

**Chart 23: “Having speed bumps to slow down traffic in residential streets”: Proportions in favour and against [ATT0360]**



### Speed bumps in residential streets

Opposition to speed bumps has declined, from 41% in 2009 to 29% in 2016. Proportions supportive or neutral have increased, to 50% and 19% respectively in 2016 (chart 23).



### Perception of cycling danger

In 2016, 59% agreed that “It is too dangerous for me to cycle on the roads”, which is significantly lower than the 64% who agreed in 2015. The perception that roads are too dangerous for cyclists is at its lowest since the question was first asked in 2011 [ATT0313].



### The British Social Attitudes Survey

The British Social Attitudes survey is a representative household survey of adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain, which collects data on public attitudes towards a range of topics through a combination of face-to-face interviews and self-completion questionnaires.

The British Social Attitudes survey is managed and conducted by The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), and contains questions sponsored by a number of organisations including Government Departments. This document contains results for the questions sponsored by the Department for Transport. The NatCen British Social Attitudes Survey report can be found on their [website](#).

This report was prepared by John Cummings, a statistician in the Department for Transport. Please email [attitudes.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:attitudes.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk) with technical enquiries about this report.

### Detailed statistical tables

Detailed analysis of long term trends may be found in Trends in Attitudes to Transport, 1990 to 2009. Excel tables ATT0301 - ATT0360 containing the results discussed in this report can be found on the DfT website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-social-attitudes-survey-2013-attitudes-towards-transport>

Tables on public attitudes towards other aspects of transport are available here, although for varying years, as the surveys are not annual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-public-attitudes-to-transport#publications>

These include: ATT01 Public attitudes to buses, ATT02 Attitudes and behaviour to climate change, ATT04 attitudes to train services, ATT05 Public attitudes towards electric vehicles. The site also has reports on public attitudes to air travel, and towards mobility scooters.

### Methodology

The sampling frame is the Postcode Address File (PAF) and is limited to those living in private households. The sampling method uses a multi-stage design with three separate stages selecting postcode sectors, addresses and individuals. The survey is weighted to correct for the unequal selection of addresses, dwelling units and individuals and biases caused by differential non-response.

In 2016, respondents were randomly allocated to one of three self-completion modules (A, B, and C). Thus the sample size for certain questions varies depending on which module(s) they featured in.

Fieldwork was mainly carried out between July and October 2016, with a small number of interviews taking place in November.

### Further information

The achieved sample size for the 2016 face-to-face interviews was 2,942 respondents. This equates to a response rate of 46%. Of the 2,942 face to face survey respondents, 991 completed self-completion module A, 977 completed self-completion module B and 974 completed self-completion module C.

All results presented here are weighted and any differences in results between 2015 and 2016 are statistically significant at the five per cent level of confidence using an estimated design factor (DEFT) of 1.2.