Department for Transport

National Travel Survey: England 2018

About this release

The National Travel Survey is a household survey of personal travel by residents of England travelling within Great Britain, from data collected via interviews and a seven-day travel diary.

The NTS is part of a continuous survey that began in 1988, following ad-hoc surveys from the 1960s, which enables analysis of patterns and trends.

Some key uses of the data include describing patterns, for example how different groups of people travel, monitoring trends in travel, including sustainable modes; assessing the potential equality impacts of transport policies on different groups; and contributing to evaluation of the impact of policies.

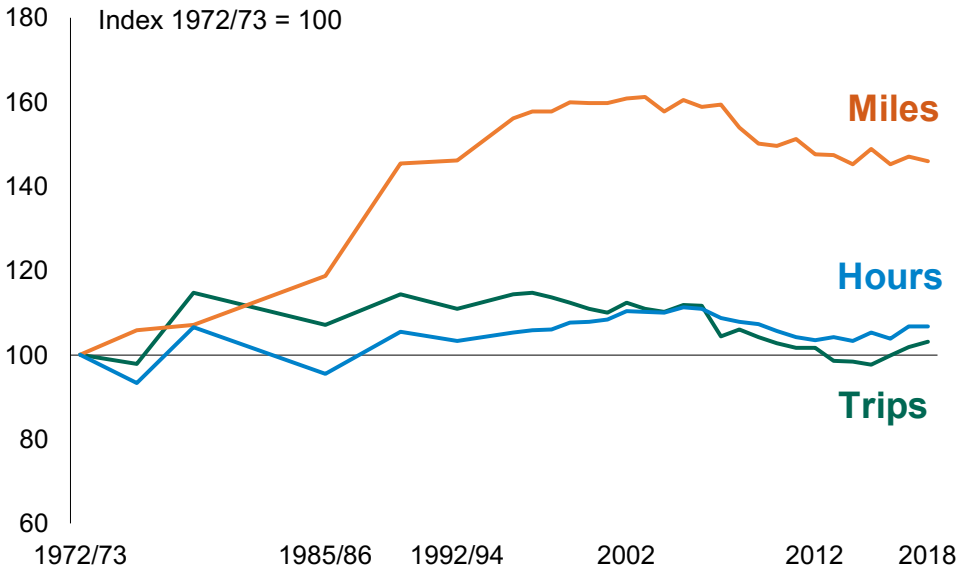
Next Published: July 2020

Follow @DfTStats

The average number of yearly trips made by people living in England have increased each year from 2015 to 2018. The 986 trips people made on average in 2018 was the highest since 2009.

Most of the increase in the average number of trips recorded in the NTS since 2015 was due to an increase in walking trips. However, the most recent trends in the average distance travelled and the average time spent travelling were more mixed.

Trends in trips, miles travelled and hours spent travelling: 1972/73-2018



Note: Figures prior to 1989 relate to Great Britain

Although there were recent increases in trip rates, they were lower in 2018 than the early-2000s, as was the average distance travelled and average time spent travelling per person.

From the late 1970s to the early-2000s, the average distance people travelled per year increased but the number of trips and time spent travelling stayed broadly the same.

RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN: Darren Stillwell AUTHORS: Adam Evans - Andrew Kelly - Matthew Slocombe
FURTHER INFORMATION: Media: 020 7944 3231 Public: 020 7944 3077 national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk

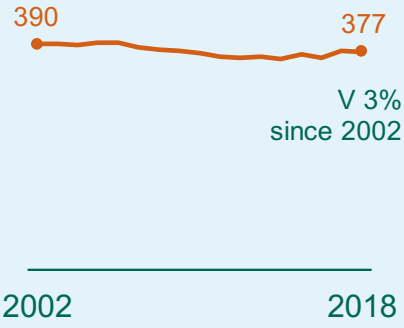
Department for Transport

National Travel Survey
England 2018 Main Results

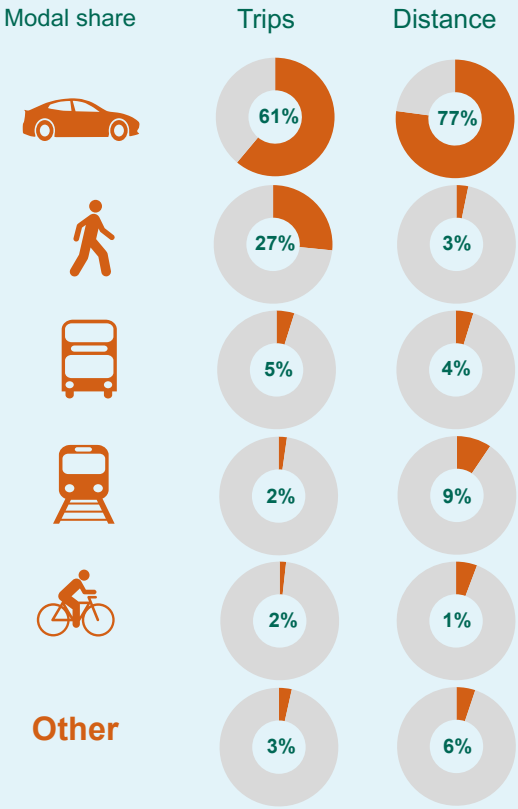
Trips [NTS0101]
Average trips per person per year

Distance [NTS0101]
Average distance travelled per year

Time [NTS0101]
Average time travelled per year



How we travelled [NTS0303]



Why we travelled [NTS0409]

The most common trip purposes were:

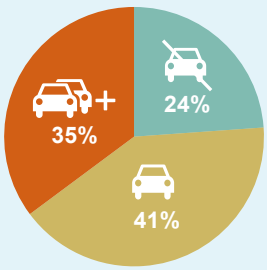
Leisure **26%**

Shopping **19%**

Gender [NTS0601, NTS0605]

	Men	Women
Trips per year	956	1,016
Distance (miles)	6,990	6,082

Car ownership [NTS0205]



76% of households owned at least one car

Licence holding [NTS0201]

75% of residents (17+) held a driving licence

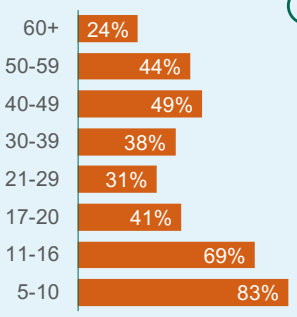
33.6 million licence holders

81% of males

70% of females

Cycling [NTS0303, NTS0608]
Average cycling trips and distance per year

People with access to a bicycle, by age (2016-2018)



For further information:

Search 'National Travel Survey' on GOV.UK

national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk

020 7344 3097

Index

Introduction to the 2018 NTS

The 2018 National Travel Survey (NTS) is the latest in a series of household surveys designed to provide a consistent source of data on personal travel behaviour across England.

This annual statistical release has further background information on the NTS, developments to the survey over the last few years, and our plans for continued user engagement.

We always welcome feedback to help ensure that the survey meets the needs of users, and any feedback provided will help inform the future design and development of the survey.

Thank you

The 2018 survey fieldwork, data input, coding and some analysis was carried out by the National Centre for Social Research. Special thanks are due to the project team, the coders and to all the interviewers at NatCen.

The help of the members of the public who gave their time to respond is gratefully acknowledged.

Accessing micro-level NTS data for analysis

In addition to the published statistics described in this document together with accompanying statistical tables, the underlying dataset and guidance in analysing it can be accessed from the UK Data Service or the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service for users who wish to explore the data for themselves.

What travel is included in the NTS?

The NTS only includes personal travel within Great Britain, by residents of private households in England, along the public highway, by rail or by air. Travel off-road, or for commerical purposes (to deliver goods or to convey a vehicle or passengers) is not included.

What is a trip?

The basic unit of travel in the NTS is a trip, which is defined as a one-way course of travel with a single main purpose.

What is a stage?

Trips consist of one or more stages. A new stage is defined when there is a change in the mode of transport.

Presentation of results

For this statistical release, we have acted on user feeedback and undertaken the following:

- We have added additional tables to this statistical release on variables that we have not analysed, or rarely analysed, before. For example, we have produced new tables using our new questions on people with disabilities.
- We have produced more interactive tables, and reformatted some to also include both time series and cross-sectional data on the same worksheets. This will allow users to see how data vary within different groups within individual years (for example, comparing trip rates for men and women in 2018) and also within a specific group or groups over time. One of the reasons for this is to present the NTS data in a way that demonstrates its primary use - to analyse trends over a longer time period.
- We have produced standard errors for a selection of tables including, for the first time, for trip rates by age gender and main mode.
- We have further refined the layout of the tables on GOV.UK (and amended titles) so they are in a more intuitive order (for example, all of the tables on different modes of transport are now grouped together). This will hopefully help users find the tables they need more easily.
- For tables that are disaggregated by mode of transport, we have used the same categories for each table as much as possible to provide consistency for users. While this means that there will be more missing or small values, users will be able to compare specific modes of transport more easily between tables.
- Similarly, for tables showing different trip purposes, we have used the same categories for each table as much as possible to provide consistency for users.
- We often make comparisons with data from 2002. This is the first year that we have a complete set of data in a format that allows detailed, consistent analysis of the NTS.

Measures

There are three key measures we use in the NTS tables and this publication:

Trip rates (usually the average number of trips per person per year):

This is the total number of trips recorded in the NTS divided by the total number of individuals in the NTS.

Miles travelled per person per year:

The total miles recorded in the NTS divided by the number of individuals.

Time spent travelling per person per year:

The total hours recorded in the NTS divided by the number of individuals.

Users should note these measures are not mode or purpose specific; for example the base for the calculation of car driver trips per person per year includes people who could not or did not drive during their diary week (for example, children).

Uses of the NTS

The NTS is one of DfT's main sources of data on personal travel patterns. Data from the NTS is used extensively by DfT to monitor changes in travel behaviours and to inform the development of policy. The findings and data are also used by a variety of other organisations including: other government departments, university academics and students; transport consultants; local authorities and voluntary sector organisations representing a wide range of interests including motorists, cyclists, public transport passengers, the elderly, rural communities and children.

NTS data has or will be used:

- To help forecast future trends in road traffic as part of the National Transport Model.
- To monitor the number of cycle stages per person per year for an indicator in the Department's Single Departmental Plan.
- To monitor trip rates of disabled people as part of the evaluation of the Inclusive Transport Strategy.
- For measuring cycling stage and walking trips for the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.
- To answer Parliamentary Questions and other Ministerial Correspondence.
- In the development of the National Cycling Propensity Tool for DfT.
- For monitoring road accident rates among different road users, especially pedestrians.
- To assess the take-up of concessionary passes and the impact on bus use and help develop concessionary travel reimbursement guidance for DfT.
- To understand how people travel to the shops and the impact of home deliveries.
- To understand how travel patterns vary according to area type, e.g. in urban or rural areas.
- To examine travel among different groups, such as elderly people and people with mobility difficulties.
- To get information about users of different modes of transport.
- To produce free annual reports that allow analysis of changes in personal travel over time.
- By academics and consultants to produce research reports by accessing data via the UK Data Archive and the ONS Secure Research Service.
- To provide analysis and advice for over 300 requests to the NTS team each year.

Recent NTS developments and future plans

In the 2017 NTS statistical publication, we outlined some developments that we were taking forward as part of an ambitious programme of developments for the survey. This section outlines the progress we have made with some of these developments since July 2018.

Digital diaries

- In May 2019, we published the results of the Discovery report looking at the feasibility of using digital methods to capture NTS travel diary information. The recommendation in the report was to proceed to an Alpha phase to begin the journey to replace the paper-based diary with a digital diary. It found sufficient user need and expected benefits of a digitised travel diary (as part of the NTS) for respondents keeping the diary, the interviewers, and the NTS data users. We now working with digital colleagues to progress this project into the Alpha phase.

National Travel Attitudes Study (NTAS, previously referred to as the NTS Panel)

- In May 2019, we published the results of the first wave of the National Travel Attitudes Study (NTAS)). This is a companion product of the NTS. Whilst the NTS provides a wealth of information on the travel patterns and behaviour of individuals, the NTAS provides information on public attitudes to travel and transport. The NTAS covers responses from individuals aged over 16 in England, drawn from people who have previously responded to the NTS. We are using the NTAS as a way to get quick evidence for emerging policy areas in the Department, and as a way to link attitudinal data (from the NTAS) with behavourial data (from the NTS). The next NTAS wave will be in the field in August and will report near the end of the year.

Incentive and advance letter experiments

- Alongside this publication, we have also published the final results of three experiments. One was an experiment to test a new version of the advance letter that is sent to respondents, which ran throughout 2018. The second and third were experiments to test two new levels of unconditional incentive that ran throughout 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 respectively. The purpose of these experiments was to try and improve response rates that have been decreasing on the NTS over the last three years. However, the result of the three experiments was that none of these changes had a significant impact on improving the response rate or the overall sample quality. Note that interim reports on the advanced letter experiment and the first incentive experiment were first published in January 2019.

- We intend to commission more work looking at response rates and the incentive structure for 2019. This may include looking at non-monetary incentives, or changing the conditional incentive (the £5 for completing the diary and the survey).

Publish ad hoc queries

- For the first time in January 2019, we published a set of ad hoc queries that we had produced for external customers. This was in order to increase the information available to other users and we have made more available alongside this release. In this release we are publishing a further set of ad hocs.

Development of the survey

- Through user feedback, either on a bespoke basis, or through more formal user feedback exercises, we are continuing to review and develop the content of the survey to ensure it remains fit for purpose and the questions asked of respondents are relevant. The latest feedback exercise was in June 2019 where we sought users' views on changing, alternating, rotating or removing questions from the 2020 survey to reduce the respondent burden. We have published the results of that feedback exercise alongside this publication.

Standard errors for the survey

- In January 2019, we published a set of tables updating standard errors for 2017, based on the ONS methodology developed in 2011. We have updated them and added additional tables for 2018 data.

Quality report

- In January 2019 we published a new Quality Report, outlining various aspects of NTS quality, such as weighting, sampling, standard errors, imputation and confidentiality. We have updated the Quality Report and added in an extra section on the refusal questionnaire.

Interactive online analysis tool

- We are developing an online analysis tool for our users that could allow them to do some bespoke analysis of NTS data and hopefully bridge the gap between the standard tables that we publish and the microdata released on the UK Data Service and the ONS Secure Research Service.

Publishing data in different formats

- We get requests from users to publish data in different formats, for example data accompanied with R code, for users to replicate our work. We will look to make some of this available over the next few months. This will also involve disseminating data using APIs.

User engagement

The National Travel Survey team carries out user engagement throughout the year with a variety of internal and external users and we will continue to do so, including on some of the future plans mentioned above. Our methods of engagement include, but are not limited to:

- Regular discussions with internal policy colleagues to discuss the addition of new questions, or changes to existing questions.
- Regular discussions with colleagues in external organisations on changes to existing questions or new questions via email, or through forums like the Transport Statistics User Group.
- Through more formal consultations or requests for feedback. In recent years, these have included a user feedback exercise on reviewing questions from the NTS (a report on the results of this feedback has been published alongside this statistical bulletin) and a consultation on the collection of short walk data in the NTS.
- Through engagement by NatCen via their social media and other channels.
- By reviewing ad hoc requests from internal and external customers.

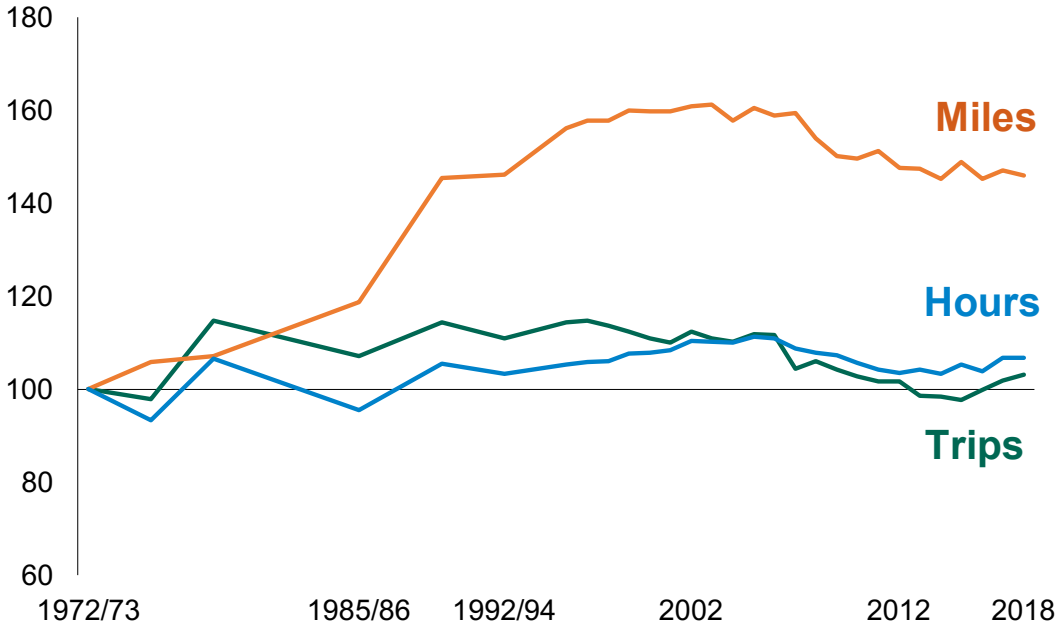
Travel trends since the 1970s

From the early 1970s to the early-2000s, the average distance people travelled per year increased, but the number of trips and time spent travelling stayed broadly the same. The average number of trips made, time taken and distance travelled were lower in 2018 than 2002, although trips rates have increased in the last three years.

The average distance travelled increased by 61% from 1972/73 to a high of 7,211 miles in 2003. Over the same period, the average number of trips and average time spent travelling increased by 11% and 10% respectively.

Chart 1: Trends in trips, miles travelled and hours spent travelling: Great Britain (1972/73-1988) and England (1989-2018) [NTS0101]

Index 1972/73 = 100



Further information

The statistical datasets published alongside this release provide a series of tables containing further data. NTS01 presents trends in travel over time, and NTS02 covers driving licence holding and vehicle availability. Section NTS09 provides further data relating to household vehicles mileage

1972/73 (GB)

4,476 miles
353 hours
956 trips

travelled per person per year on average

2018 (England)

6,530 miles (+46%)
377 hours (+7%)
986 trips (+3%)

Between 2002 and 2018, average trips, distance and time have decreased. Since 2015, however, we have seen an upturn in average trips made. The 986 trips people made on average in 2018 was the highest level since 2009. The most recent trends in the average distance travelled and the time spent travelling remains more mixed.

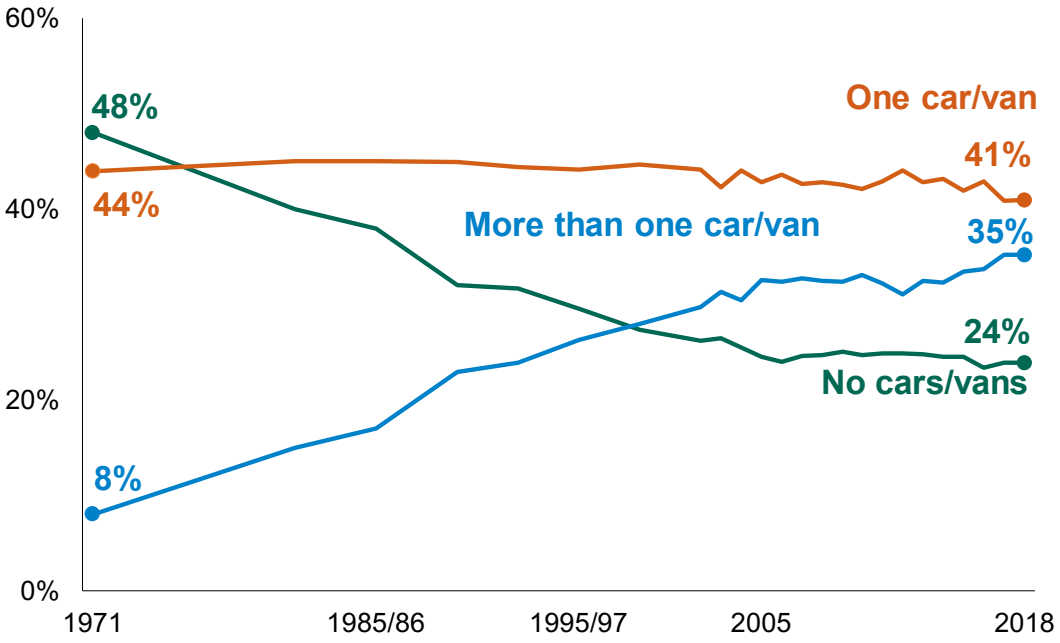
Household car and van access

There have been significant long-term increases in the proportion of households with access to a car or van although figures for 2018 were similar to those for 2017.

The proportion of households without a car has fallen from 48% in 1971 (based on the Census) to 24% in 2018 while the proportion of households with more than one car increased over this period, from 8% to 35% (Chart 2).

In 1985/86, there were 8 cars for every 10 households in Great Britain; in 2018 there were 12 cars for every 10 households in England. In addition around 3% of households owned one or more motorbikes although motorbike ownership is more prevalent in households with cars than those without.

Chart 2: % of households with access to a car: Great Britain (1971-1988) and England (1989-2018) [NTS0205]



The cost of purchasing a motor vehicle is lower than 20 years ago, contributing to increased car ownership. The Consumer Prices Index shows that in 2018, the cost of purchasing a motor vehicle was 9% less than in 1998. The ONS Living Costs and Food Survey showed that households spent around £27 a week on average purchasing cars and vans (both new and secondhand, either outright or by loan/hire purchase) - about 5% of total household expenditure,.

Cars and vans

The results presented here include household access to a van. The text refers to "car" only in some places simply for the purpose of readability.

Related data sources

Household car availability is also collected by the Census.

http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/index.html

The Department for Transport also publishes Vehicle Licensing Statistics:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vehicles-statistics

These statistics show the number of licensed road vehicles and new vehicle registrations derived from DVLA data.

Types of vehicles people own

The NTS has a wealth of information about the types of vehicles that people own, including fuel type, the transmission and where they are usually parked.

In the 2018 NTS in England, around 63% of cars were petrol, and about 35% were diesel. Around 1.5% were another fuel type, such as plug-in hybrid or electric. These figures are broadly comparable with the DfT vehicle statistics based on DVLA data. In 2018, a question on the transmission of the vehicle was asked for the first time. Around 77% of cars were manual, and 23% automatic (Chart 3)

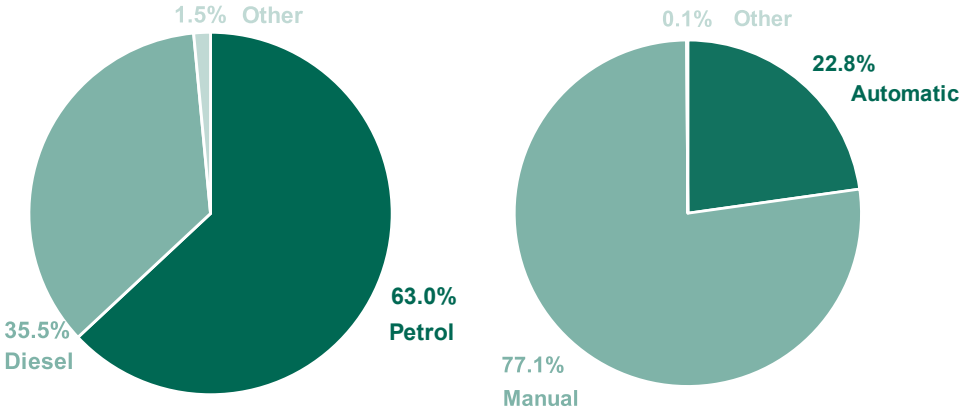


Chart 3: Fuel type and transmission of cars in the NTS: England 2018 [Ad hoc analyses]

Around 70% of respondents usually parked their vehicles on private property, but since 2002 there has a been a change in trend. The proportion parking vehicles in garages has decreased, and the proportion parking elsewhere on private property has increased by about the same amount. While people in the most rural areas are more likely to park their vehicles on private property than people in urban conurbations (89% compared to 65%), we see the same trend of less parking in garages across different types of rural and urban areas. This type of NTS parking data has been shown to be of particular importance for local authorities from feedback to NTS user engagement exercises.

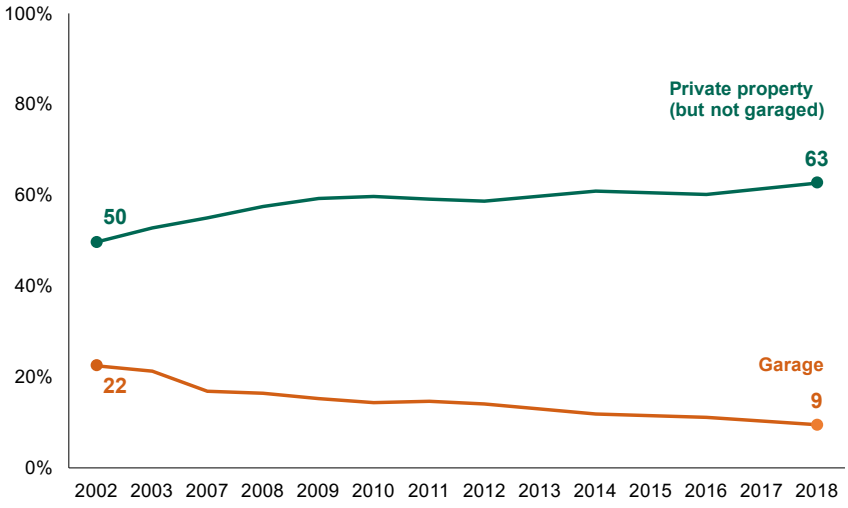


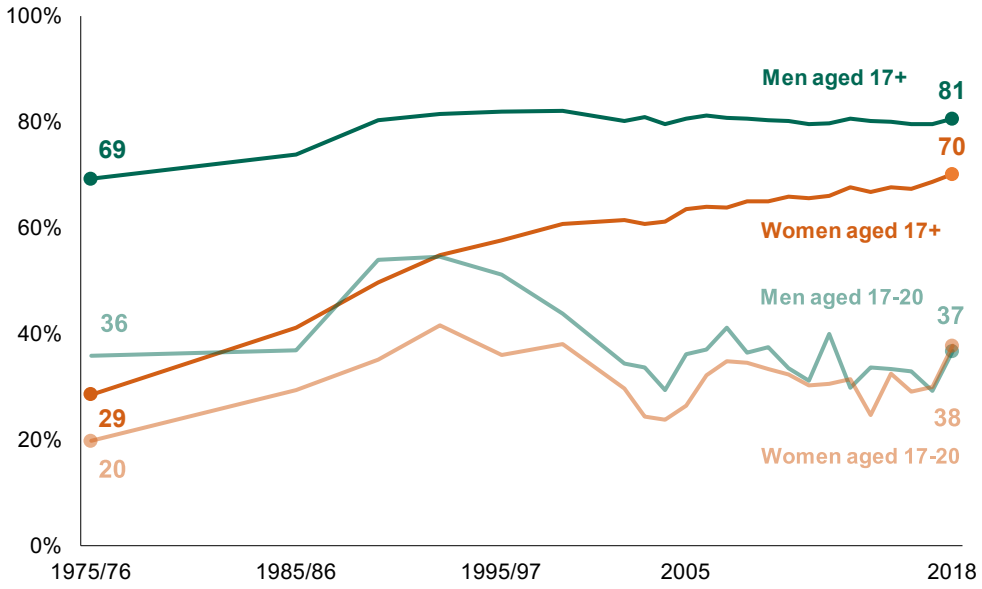
Chart 4: Where vehicle is parked overnight, England 2002-2018 [NTS0908]

Driving licences

Over the last 40 years, the proportion of people having a driving licence has increased, with the increases being greater for women than men. The NTS estimates that around 18 million men and 16 million women had a driving licence in 2018.

Over the time period since 1975/76, there have been significant increases in the proportion of people with a driving licence (Chart 5). For women, there was an increase from 29% to 70% over this period. There have also been significant increases in the proportion of older people with driving licences. Between 1975/76 and 2018, the proportion for people aged 70 and over rose from 15% to 67%.

Chart 5: % of people owning a full driving licence: England 1975/76-2018 [NTS0201]



Related data sources

DfT publishes statistics about driving tests and instructors.

DVLA publishes a breakdown of licence holders by age and gender at http://data.gov.uk/dataset/driving-licence-data

Further reading

A detailed research report on changes to young people's travel behaviours, published by DfT is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-peoples-travel-whats-changed-and-why

In 2018, there was an increase of around 8 percentage points in the proportion of men and women aged 17 to 20 who had a driving licence. This is an unusually large year-on-year increase, but more years are required to see whether this is a developing trend of more younger people learning to drive and passing their test following decreases from the mid-1990s. Driving licence data for Great Britain for June 2017 and July 2018 based on DVLA records suggests a small increase in licence holding rates for people aged 17-20 but not of the level seen in the NTS between 2017 and 2018.

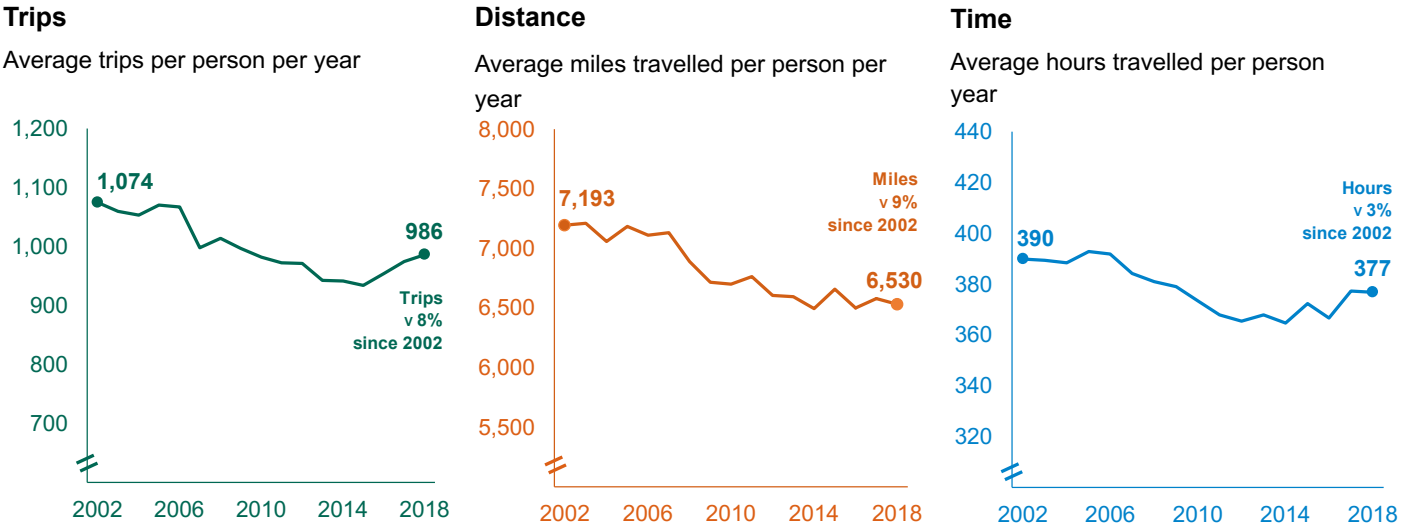
Recent trends in trips, miles and hours

Following a trend of steady decreases in trip rates and miles travelled since the late-1990s, there was an increase in the average number of trips per person in the years from 2015 to 2018. The most recent trends for distance travelled and hours spent travelling was more mixed.

People made 986 trips on average in 2018, or 19 trips a week. This was a 1% increase on the level in 2017. People travelled an average of 6,530 miles in 2018, a 1% decrease on the 2017 figure.

However, the trip rate in 2018 was 10% lower than the highest recorded in both 1978/79 and 1996/98 of 1,097; the average of 6,530 miles travelled in 2018 was 9% lower than the high of 7,211 recorded in 2003 (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Trends in trips, miles travelled and hours spent travelling: England 2002-2018 [NTS0101]



On average, people spent over an hour a day travelling in 2018, including 36 minutes by car (as a driver or passenger), 12 minutes walking, 12 minutes on public transport and 2 minutes on other private transport modes.

Understanding reasons for these trends is difficult. The averages presented here mask different trends for different types of people, modes and types of trip. Some of the many factors might include changing demographic patterns, changing patterns of trips, and the impact of new technologies influencing the demand for travel, for example the increase in online social networking, the capability for home working and online shopping.

Further reading

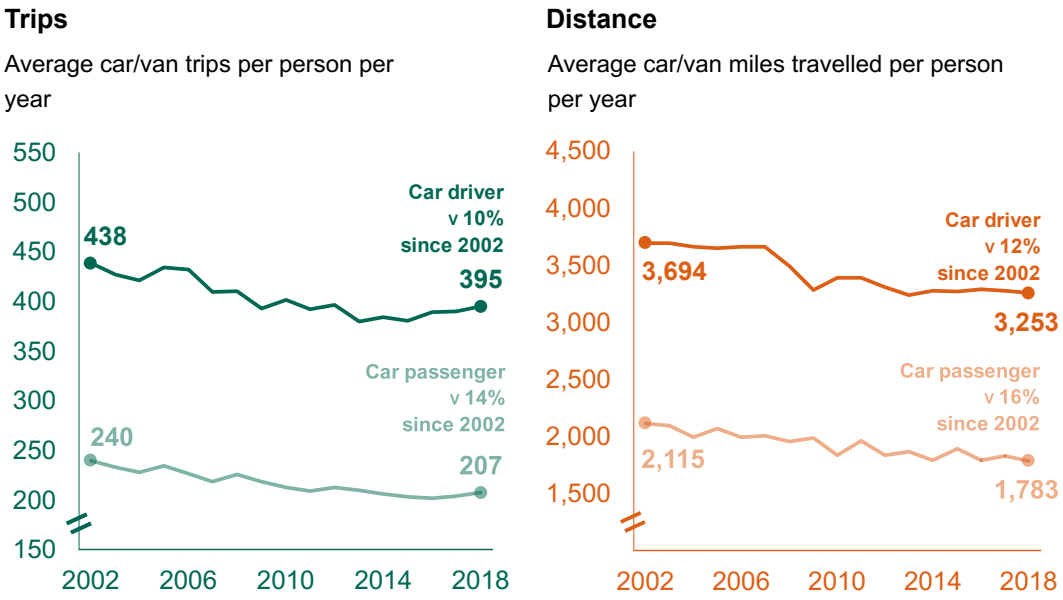
A factsheet on shopping trends, published by DfT is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nts-factsheets

Trends in private modes of transport

From 2017 to 2018 in England, there was an increase in the average number of trips per person made by car and walking, while the number of bicycle trips per person remained the same. People did around 9 trips on private transport for each one on public transport.

While there has been a decrease in the number of car trips since 2002 of 11%, since 2015 there has been an upturn in the trend. From 2015 to 2018, car trips (either as a driver or a passenger) increased by 3%. For average miles travelled by car, the trend since 2002 is similar to that for trips, with a 13% decrease. However we do not see the same upturn in more recent years for miles travelled (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Trends in car/van trips and car/van miles travelled (as driver or passenger): England 2002-2018 [NTS0303]



The NTS also asks households about their yearly mileage for each car they own (note this section excludes vans).

There has been a decrease in household mileage of 17% between 2002 and 2018, from 9,200 miles to 7,600 miles per car per household (Chart 8). Of the decrease of 1,600 miles over that time period, around 900 miles were due to a decrease in business mileage.

Cars and vans

The results presented here and in other sections also include trips made and miles driven by vans, unless stated. The text generally refers to “car” only. This is simply for the purpose of readability.

Further reading

Aggregate trends in road traffic are published in the Department’s traffic statistics available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-traffic-statistics

Experimental statistics derived from vehicle odometer readers taken at annual MOT tests are also published by DfT.

DfT also publishes road traffic forecasts.

A more detailed analysis of trends in car trips and mileage can be found in ‘Understanding drivers of road travel’.

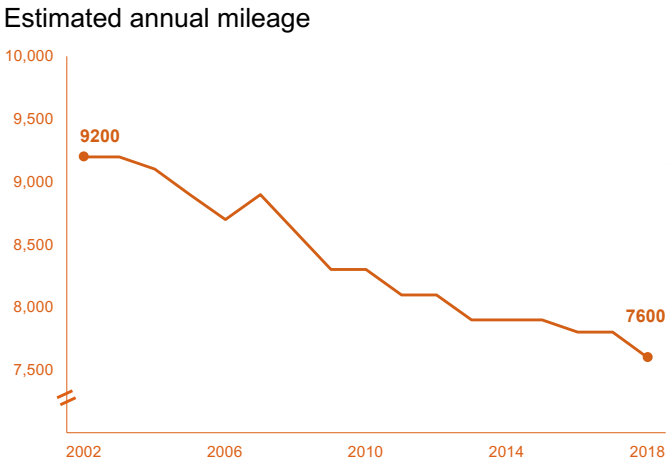


Chart 8: Annual mileage of household cars: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0901]

Walking

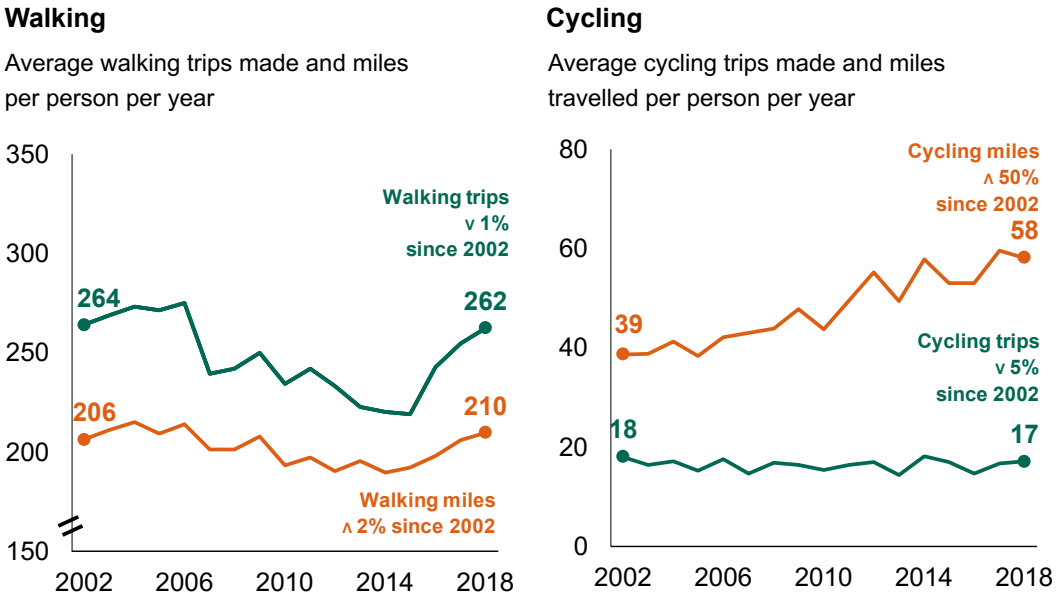
A **walking stage** in the NTS is one where someone walks as part of an overall trip. If the walk stage constitutes the longest stage in the trip by distance, it is also classed as **walking trip.** Walks under 50 yards and walks off the public highway are excluded.

After car trips, walking was the next most often used mode of transport in England in 2018, with 262 walking trips per person per year (Chart 9), constituting 27% of total trips (compared to 61% for car trips). Walking consituted around 3% of average miles travelled. The number of walking trips has been increasing in the last three years: in 2018, the number of walking trips was at the highest level since 2006, and miles travelled the highest level since 2006.

Cycling

A cycling trip in the NTS is one where cycling is the main mode in terms of distance. Distance figures include cycling stages made as part of any trip.

Chart 9: Average walking and cycling trips and miles per person per year: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0303]



Further reading

A more detailed analysis of trends in walking and cycling can be found in the 2018 Walking and Cycling Statistics release.

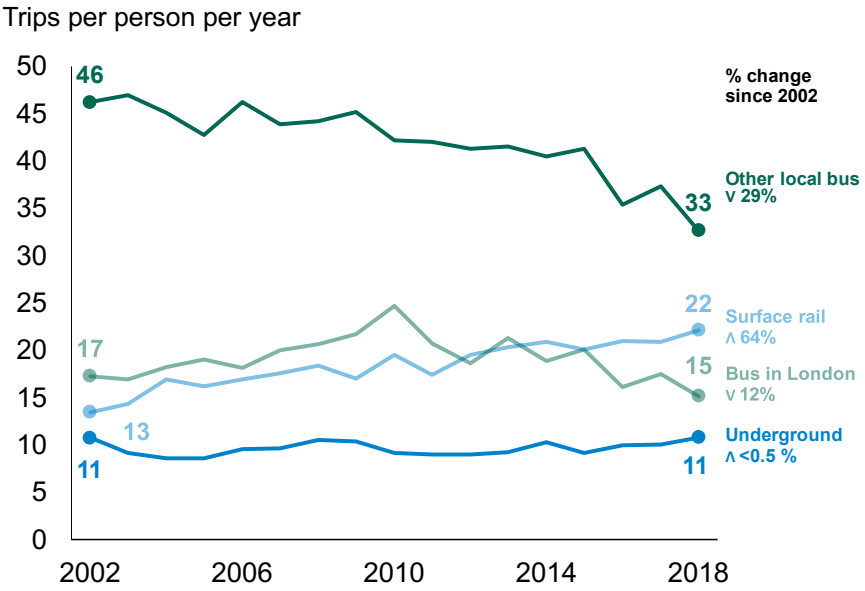
Cycling trips made and cycling miles travelled were at similar levels in 2018 as they were in 2017, at 17 trips per person per year (18 stages) and 58 miles per person. The latter figure was 50% higher in 2018 than in 2002.

Trends in public transport use

In 2018, there was a continuation of trends for the different public transport modes: an increase in rail trips and distances per person and a decrease in local bus use.

Surface rail trips per person per year increased from 13 trips to 22 trips between 2002 and 2018 (Chart 10). Trips on other local buses decreased from 46 trips per person per year in 2002 to 33 in 2018. People made around 15 trips per year on average on buses in London, a number that has been decreasing since a high of 25 trips in 2010.

Chart 10: Trips per person per year by selected public modes: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0303]



What are the public transport modes in the NTS?

Public modes of transport in the NTS are local buses in London, other local buses, non-local buses, surface rail (that includes the London Overground), London Underground, light rail, tram and domestic air and ferry.

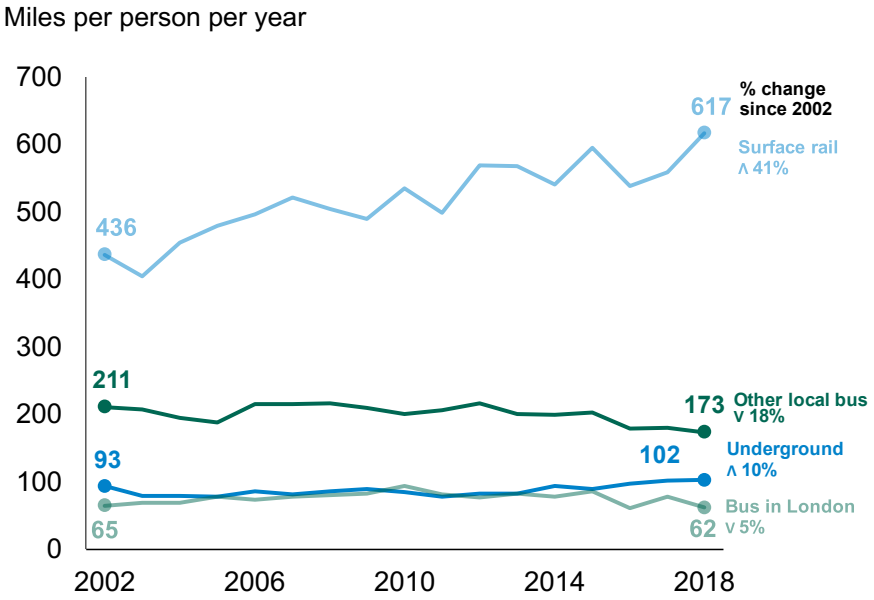
The NTS also classes taxis as a mode of public transport.

There are a broadly similar set of trends for the distance travelled (Chart 11 over the page). People travelled an average of 617 miles per person on surface rail in 2018, a 41% increase since 2002.

Similar to the figures on average trips made per person, the average distance travelled by people on buses also decreased between 2002 and 2018, although the average trip distance for buses outside London of 5.3 miles was one of the highest recorded since 2002, indicating that people were tending to make longer bus journeys on average.

These trends are broadly consistent with data collected from other data sources and presented in other DfT statistical releases.

Chart 11: Miles travelled per person per year by selected public modes: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0303]



There are many factors that affect the trends in public transport. The Annual Bus Statistics release outlined some of these factors that explained the falls in bus passengers on local bus services in recent years.

First, it is likely that congestion in urban areas and city centres has affected bus performance leading to a fall in bus patronage. Other factors include high household car ownership, and any reductions of local authority supported services will likely have contributed to some decline on local bus services.

Some decline in bus services might be attributed to overall decreases in the total number of trips in recent years. The proportion of trips that were local bus trips has remained broadly similar at 6% in recent times, although has been decreasing in the last three years (Chart 12).

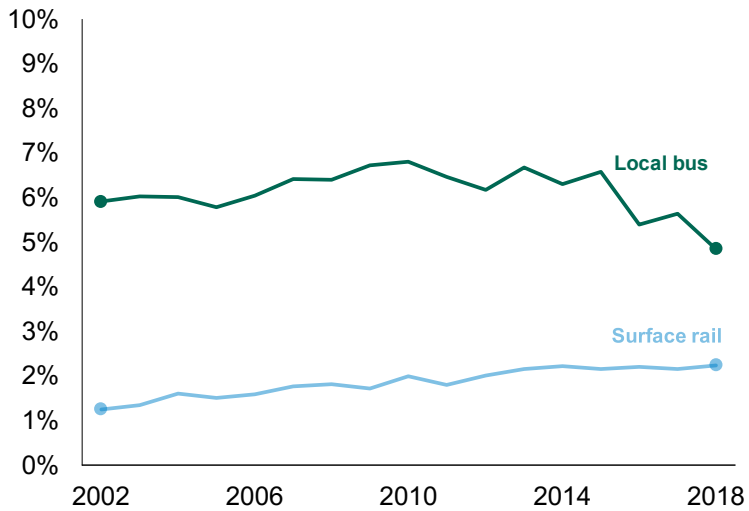


Chart 12: % of all trip per person per year on local buses or surface rail: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0303]

Related data sources

DfT publishes a range of statistics on public transport including:

Annual Bus Statistics

Rail Statistics

Light Rail and Tram Statistics

Taxi Statistics

Why the distinction between "buses in London" and "other local buses"?

The NTS, as well as the Department's Annual Bus Statistics differentiate between buses in London and buses in England outside of London.

Buses in London, through Transport for London, operate under a different regulatory framework to the rest of England. The size of the bus market in London and differing trends in bus use also makes it sensible to disaggregate these two area types.

Journey lengths

Most trips are relatively short. In England in 2018, 25% of trips were under 1 mile, and 68% under 5 miles.

Walking was the most frequent mode used for short trips: 80% of trips under one mile were walks. For all other distance bands, the car was the most frequent mode of travel (Chart 13). Nearly all walks recorded in the NTS are under 5 miles, compared with 58% of car driver trips and 7% of trips by surface rail. Excluding the London Underground, 73% of rail trips were 10 miles and over.

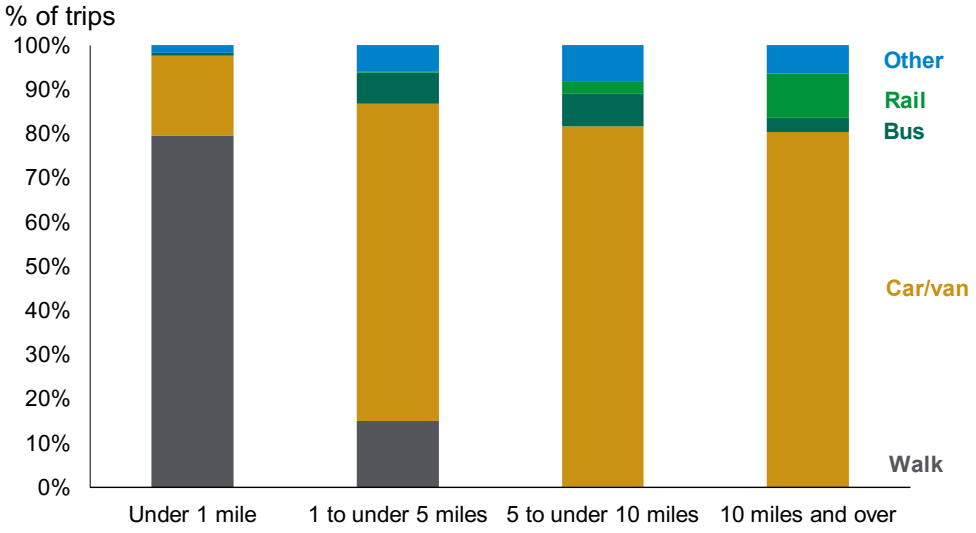


Chart 13: Mode share of trips by main mode for different trip lengths: England, 2018 [NTS0308]

For longer trips from 50 to 150 miles, around 80% were by car for the average of the years from 2014 to 2018 (Chart 14). A similar proportion of trips were done using rail for most of the distances shown, although a higher proportion of 250 to 350 mile trips were done by rail (around 25%). Only when the trip distance was 350 miles and over do trips using domestic flights become significant. 33% of domestic trips of that distance were flown in 2014/2018.

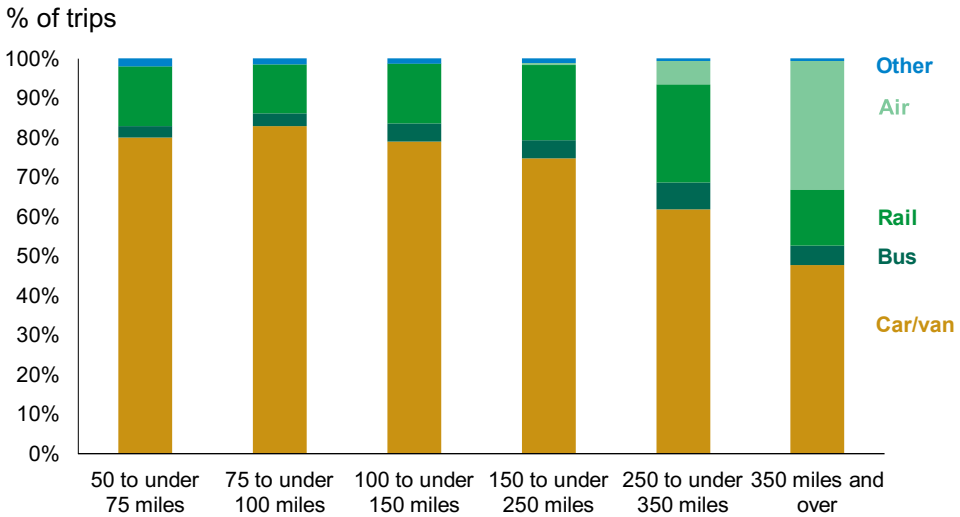


Chart 14: Mode share of trips by main mode for long distance trips: England, average of 2014 to 2018 [NTS0317]

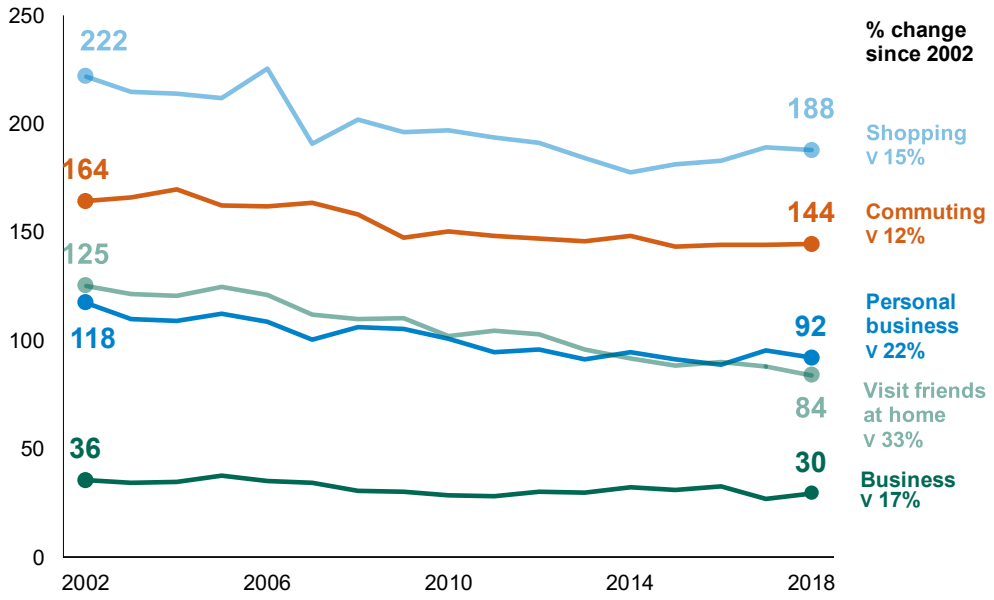
Trends in trips and miles travelled by purpose

Between 2002 and 2018, both the average number of trips made per person per year, and the average miles travelled decreased for many of the main trip purposes such as commuting and shopping.

The subject of the National Travel Survey is personal travel - trips people make in order to reach a destination. Therefore the NTS provides a key source of information on **why** people travel.

Chart 15: Average number of trips per person per year for selected purposes: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0403]

Trips per person per year



Between 2002 and 2018, there were decreases in average trip rates for many of the main trip purposes (Chart 15). For personal business trips (examples of these trips include going to the doctor, church or to the library) and visiting friends at home, the decreases were 22% and 33% respectively. Conversely, trips to visit friends elsewhere have been broadly increasing since 2013, although this is a relatively small share of overall trips.

Each person made an average of 144 commuting trips per year, the same figures as in each of the years 2015 to 2017. Up to 2015, commuting trips had been decreasing, and research by the Department (see box) proposed several

NTS purpose of travel

Commuting: trips from home to usual place of work or from usual workplace to home

Business: personal trips in course of work

Education: trips to school or college

Shopping: trips to the shops or from shops to home

Personal business: visits to services, medical consultations, etc.

Visit friends: trips to visit friends, either at someone's home or elsewhere

Other leisure: mostly entertainment, sport, holidays and day trips

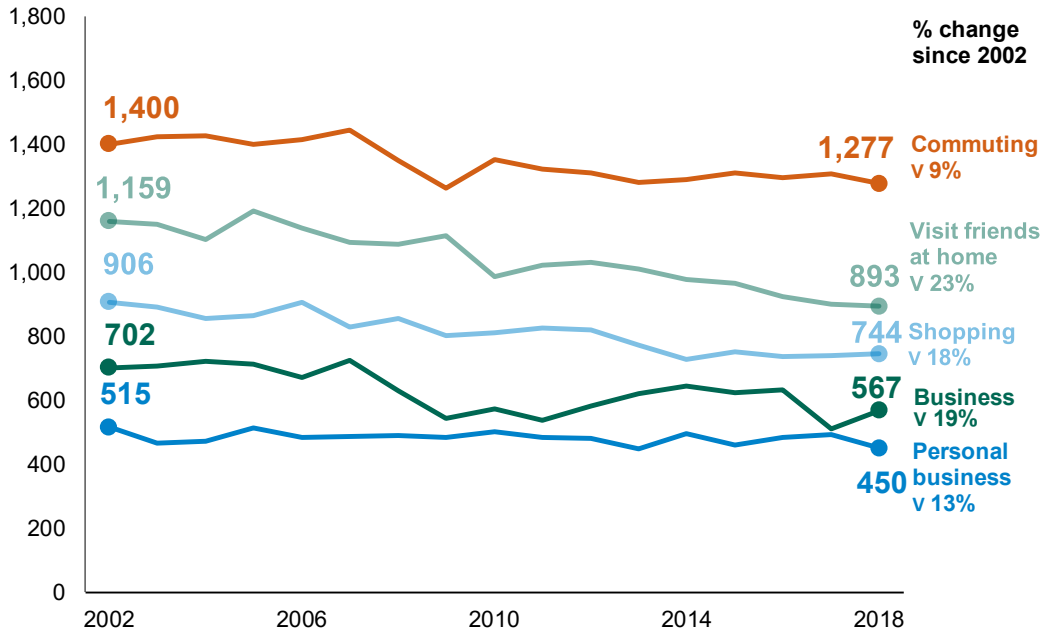
Escort trips are those made to accompany someone else e.g. taking a child to school is escort education.

For more details on trip purposes, please see Notes and definitions.

reasons why commuting trips have decreased in recent years such as: workers are commuting to work fewer days per week; a growth in trip-chaining (where people combine two or more trips for differing purposes, such as dropping-off children at school on the way to work) between home and work, and a corresponding decline in traditional 'Commuting', directly from a worker's home to usual workplace; a growth in the number of workers who do not have a fixed usual workplace; and a growth in working from home, and part-time and self-employment.

Chart 16: Average miles travelled per person per year for selected purposes: England, 2002-2018 [NTS0403]

Miles per person per year



There were similar trends for the same purposes for the average miles travelled per person per year (Chart 16). After a 19% decline in the miles travelled for business trips between 2016 and 2017, business miles increased to 567 miles per person per year in 2018. Since 2002, the decrease in business miles does tie in with a similar trend in household car mileage.

In recent years, there has been a change in the trend in shopping trips. After a decline to 2014, the number of trips has increased since then to 188 trips per person per year and the average distance people travelled per year for shopping trips has remained broadly level since 2015.

Further reading

Departmental research into commuting trends is available in the report 'Commuting Trends in England, 1988 to 2015' that used NTS (and other) data to investigate reasons for decreases in commuting trips. The report is available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commuting-trends-in-england-1988-to-2015

Difficulties travelling to different locations or services

As well as the purpose of travel, the NTS interview has information on whether people have problems travelling to work, or to different services or locations.

Since 2010, around 12% of adults said they had difficulty travelling to at least one location or service (not including difficulties travelling to work) (Chart 17). These proportions have not varied much in the years since 2010. A higher proportion of people had difficulties travelling to hospital than to other locations: 7% of adults in England in 2018.

% of all people aged 16+

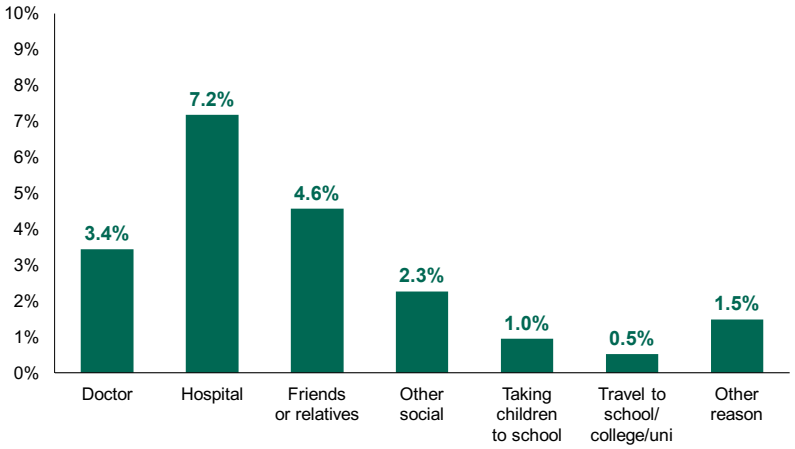


Chart 17: % of people aged 16+ who had difficulty travelling to different services or locations: England, 2018 [NTS0807]

[Respondents can give more than location as a response. 12% of respondents gave at least one location as a response]

Respondents are also asked what difficulties they have travelling to work (if any), for different modes of transport. Around 69% of people who didn't drive to work (essentially people using public transport modes, walking or cycling) had no difficulties. Those that did cited unreliable public transport as the most common reason for the difficulty. For those experiencing difficulties driving to work, 39% stated traffic congestion or roadworks as a reason. Around 57% of drivers to work said they had no difficulties (Chart 18).

% of all people aged 16+, in work, not usually working at home

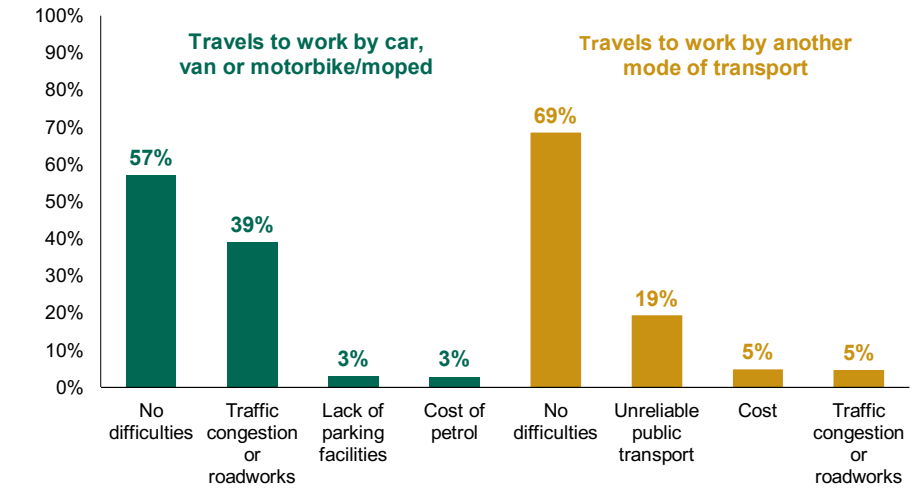


Chart 18: % of adults who have difficulty travelling to work by different modes of transport: England, 2018 [NTS0808]

[Respondents can give more than one difficulty so totals can sum to more than 100%]

Trends in how and why men and women travel

The modes of transport used, and the reason for travelling, differ between men and women, and people of different ages.

In 2018, men made 6% fewer trips than women, but travelled 15% further. This partly reflects differences in the type of trips made. Women make more trips for shopping and escort education, which tend to be relatively short, whereas men make more commuting trips, which tend to be longer.

Men

956 trips

6,990 miles

per person per year

Women

1,016 trips

6,082 miles

per person per year

Chart 19: % of trips per person per year, by mode, age and gender: England 2018 [NTS0601]

Variations in trip mode by age and gender reflect differences in access to cars, as well as different trip purposes (Chart 19). In 2018, car (as driver or passenger) accounted for more than half of trips for all age groups except 17-20 year olds. While both men and woman made around 60% of their trips by car in 2018, men made a higher share of trips as a driver than women (43% compared to 37%) and this difference increased for older age groups.

People aged 17-20 made 98 trips by local bus, more than any other age group, and about twice as many as the average. The share of trips by bus is also higher for older ages, perhaps as a consequence of having free concessionary travel. The NTS estimates that 73% of eligible people held a concessionary pass in 2018 (NTS0620). Surface rail (excluding the London Underground) had its highest share among men aged 20-39, accounting for 5% of total trips for this group.

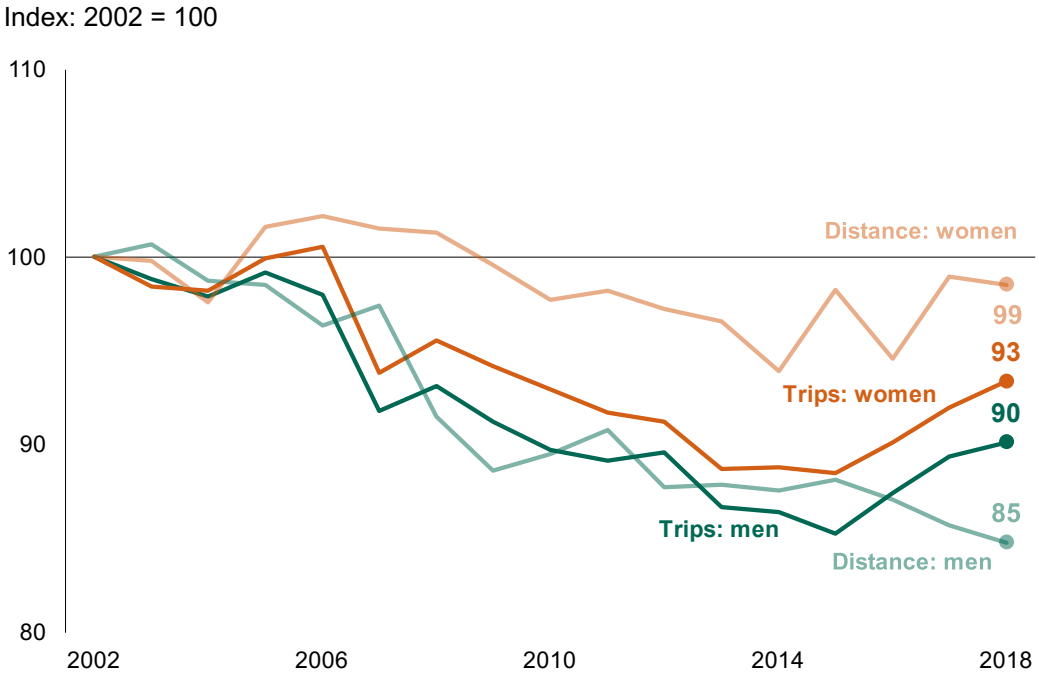
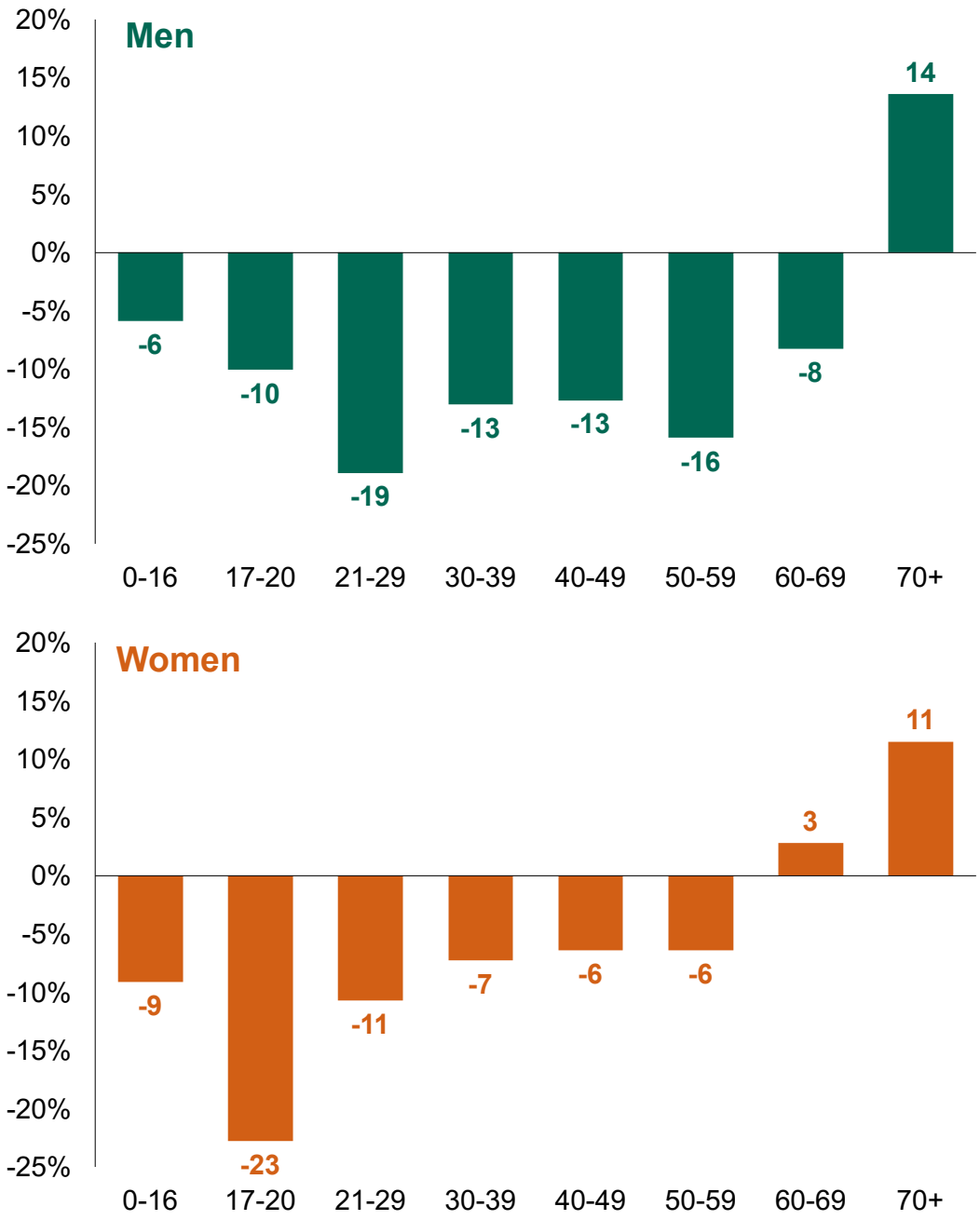


Chart 20: Average trips and miles per person per year, by sex: England 2018 [NTS0601]

Average distances travelled per person per year are showing different trends in recent years for men and women (Chart 20) although trip trends are similar. The average miles women travelled in 2018 were at almost the same level as that in 2002. This was in contrast to the average miles men travelled per person that continued to decline between 2017 and 2018, mostly as a result of a drop in car driver miles. The distance men travelled in total was 15% lower in 2018 than in 2002.

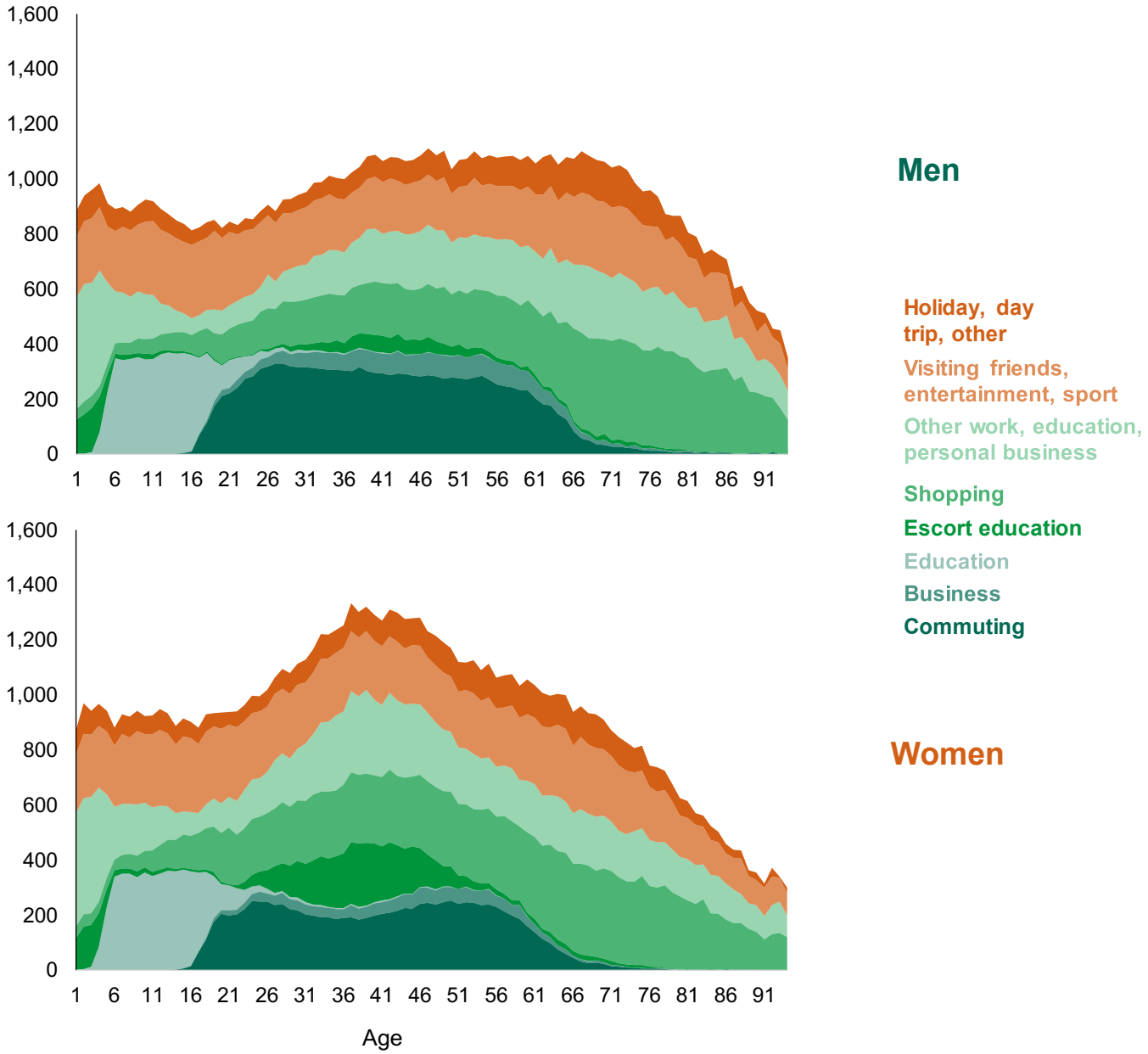
Trips by men and women increased between 2017 and 2018, mostly as a result of an increased number of walks for men, and car trips for women. It is not possible to give definitive reasons for these year on year changes, but the number of walking trips has increased for three consecutive years.

Chart 21: % change in trips per person per year, by age and sex: England change between 2002 and 2018 [NTS0601]



There are also differences in how trip rates have changed over time by different age groups (Chart 21). For most age groups, trip rates have decreased since 2002, with the 17-20 year old female group showing the biggest decrease at 23%. The 70+ group showed the biggest increases for both men and women. While the 2018 figure is much higher than usually expected for that age group, and might be an outlier, there has been a trend of increasing trips for men and women aged 70+ since 2013. It is worth users exercising some caution when looking at changes with smaller groups such as the 17-20 year olds where the number of trips recorded and individuals is relatively small and subject to higher proportional levels of sampling variability.

Chart 22: Average trips per person per year, by purpose, age and gender: England 2002/2018 average [based on NTS0611]



The reasons why people travel also differs for men and women, and for men and women of different ages (Chart 22). At younger age groups, education accounts for a large proportion of trips - about 40% of trips for children aged between 5 and 15.

Between ages 15 and 30, trip rates increase for men and women at broadly the same rate; from age 25 until late-50s commuting becomes the single most common reason for travel for men.

Between ages 30 and 50, women make more trips than men, the most notable difference being for escort education (mostly taking children to school).

From age 60, shopping trips increase and account for around a third of trips for older age groups; however overall trip rates are lower. Men make more trips than women at these ages, on average.

Travel by disabled people

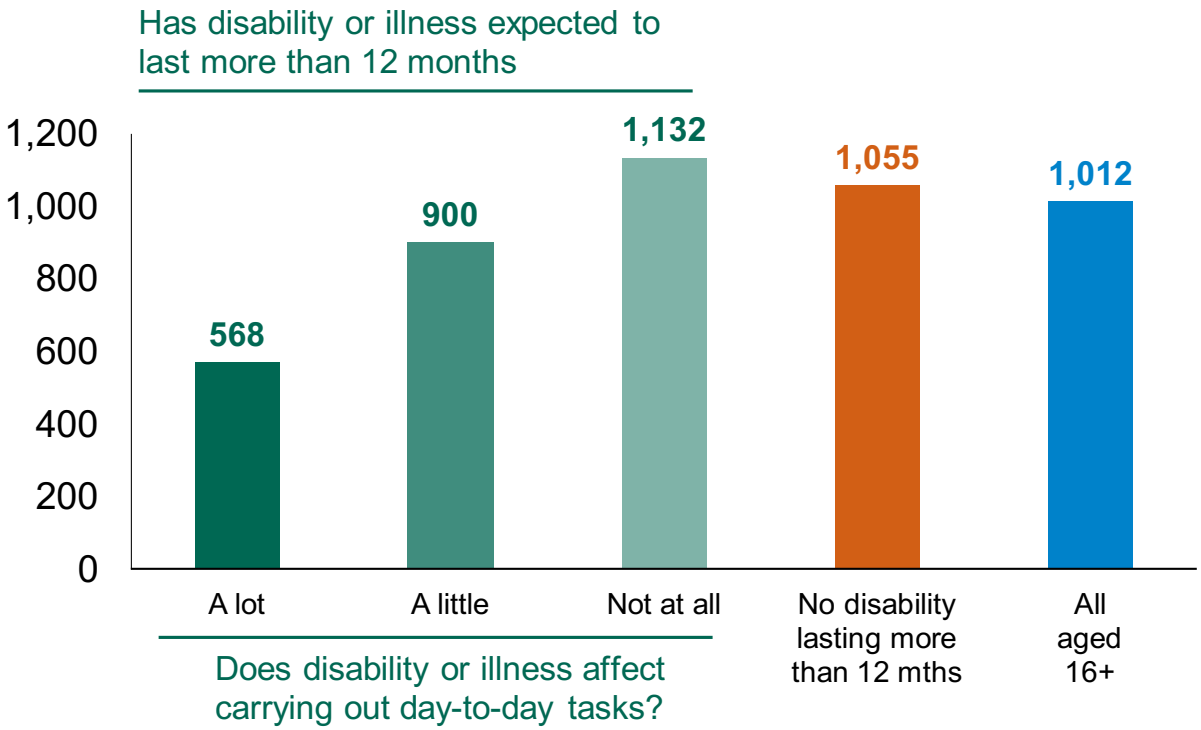
Since 2007, the NTS has asked whether people have a mobility difficulty (see box). For 2018, we additionally asked about long-term illnesses or disabilities.

These new questions are able to identify people who are disabled under the 2010 Equality Act. In 2018, the average number of trips for people who were affected a lot in their ability to carry out day-to-day activities by a disability or illness was less than 60% of the average for all adults (568 trips vs 1,012 trips) (Chart 23).

Mobility difficulties

The NTS asks adults (aged 16+) whether they have mobility difficulties. Those who say that they have difficulties travelling on foot, by bus or both are classified as having mobility difficulties.

Chart 23 (left): Average trips per adult per year, by disability: England, aged 16+, 2018 [NTS0711]



Disability

In 2018 the NTS additionally asked everyone whether they had a disability or illness expected to last more than 12 months, and whether these conditions reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. These questions help to understand people who are disabled under the 2010 Equality Act.

Also in 2018, the NTS asked what impairments people had, the question identifying a number of physical, cognitive and mental health impairments.

Travel patterns in rural and urban areas

People living in rural areas in England made more trips and travelled further than those living in urban areas in 2017/18. People in the most rural areas travelled almost twice as far on average than people in urban conurbations (including London).

The difference in overall trip rates between types of residence is mainly due to differences in levels of car use. For the average of 2017 and 2018, people living in the most rural areas made fewer walking trips and more car trips than average. People living in urban conurbations made use of buses more (77 trips per person per year, with 42 of these trips in London) and rail (34 trips per person per year, excluding London Underground) than people living in other types of area.

Urban conurbations	Urban city and town	Rural town and fringe	Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling
899 trips	1,020 trips	1,073 trips	1,053 trips
5,113 miles	6,743 miles	9,022 miles	9,665 miles
per person per year	per person per year	per person per year	per person per year

Bus and surface rail trips combined accounted for 12% of trips for people in urban conurbations, compared to 3% of trips by residents in the most rural areas. People living in the most rural areas rely more on the car, which accounted for 76% of all their trips in 2017/18. By comparison, 52% of trips by residents of urban conurbations (including London residents) were made by car in 2017/18 (Chart 25).

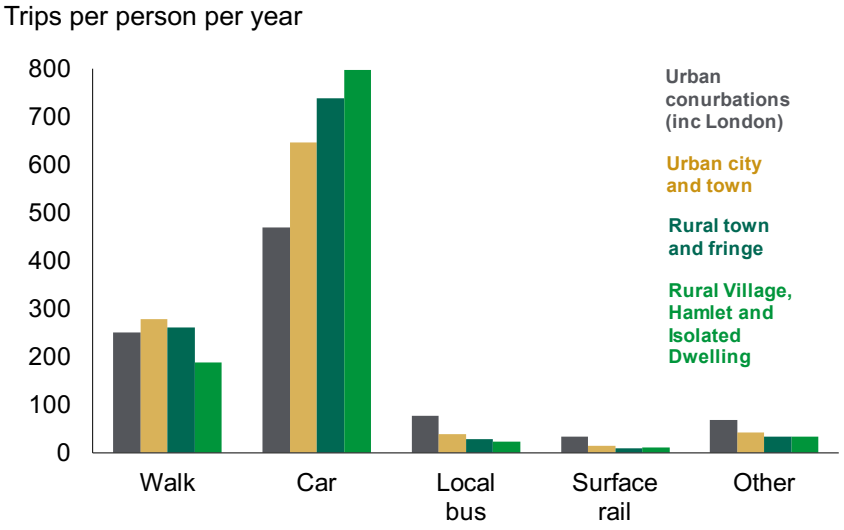


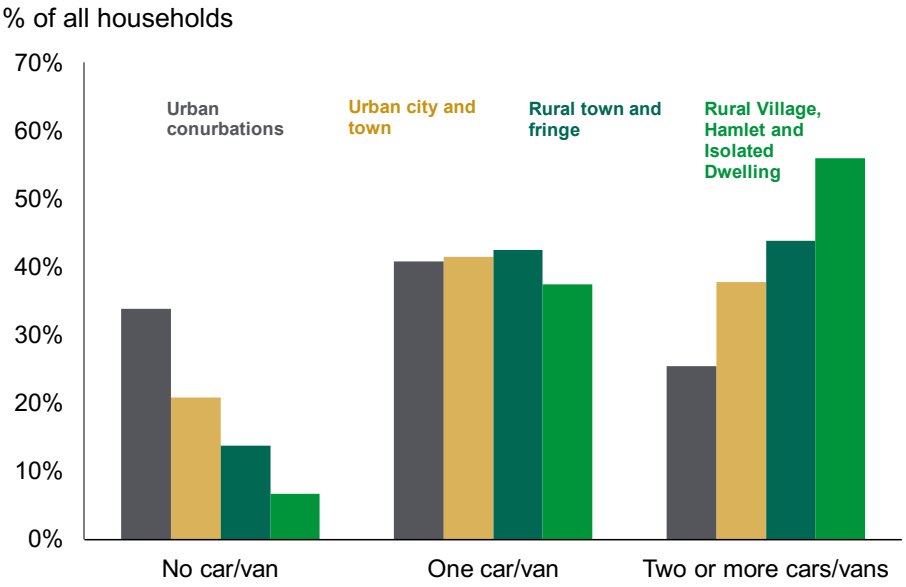
Chart 25: Average trips per person per year, by mode and area type: England 2017/2018 [NTS9903]

Rural and urban areas

The types of residence presented here are based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification. An area is defined as rural if it falls outside of settlements with a resident population of more than 10,000. please see: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-definition.

Given the main difference in travel patterns between urban and rural areas lies in car use, households living in rural areas are also more likely to have access to a car or van than urban residents. Indeed, 34% of households in urban conurbations do not have a car (and 45% in London, a 4 percentage point increase on 2016/2017), compared to 21% in urban cities and towns, 14% in rural towns, and 7% in the most rural areas. Conversely, more than half of households living in the most rural areas have more than one car/van (Chart 26).

Chart 26: Household car access, by area type: England, 2017/2018 [NTS9902]



Further reading

The Statistical Digest of Rural England uses a lot of NTS data and includes various rural/urban analyses.

The same difference by type of residence is observable in the holding of a driving licence. 68% of residents in urban conurbations held a driving licence, compared with 90% of people living in the most rural areas. The gap in driving licence holding between men and women is also narrower in rural areas. The gap was 8 percentage points in rural town and fringe areas, and 3 percentage points in the most rural areas, compared to 13 percentage points in urban conurbations (Chart 27).

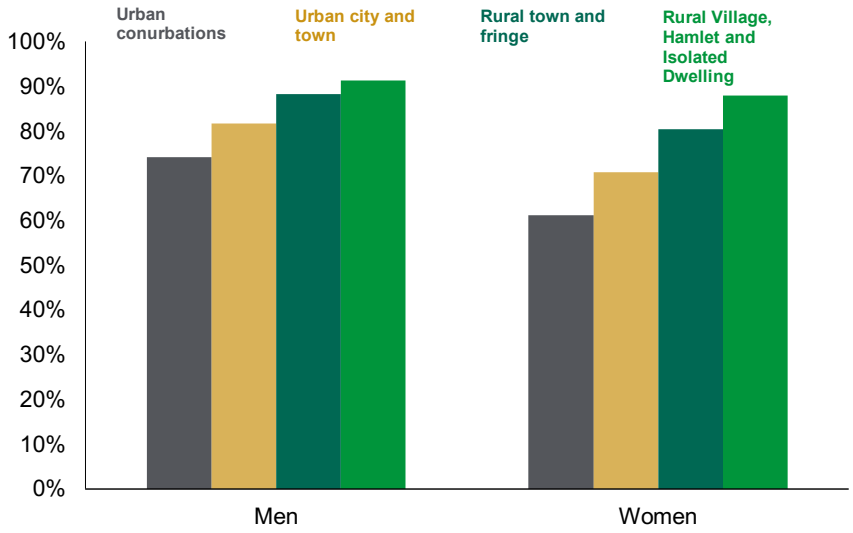


Chart 27: % of adults aged 17+ with a driving licence, by sex and area type: England 2017/2018 [NTS9901]

Factsheets

We have produced a series of factsheets to accompany this publication that give some key statistics in summary form for different modes of transport, and different purposes. These are available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2018.

The topics covered are:

- How people travel - walking
- How people travel - bicycle
- How people travel - car
- How people travel - bus
- How people travel - surface rail
- How people travel - air
- Why people travel - shopping
- Why people travel - commuting
- Why people travel - business
- Why people travel - leisure
- Why people travel - education

Notes and background information

This publication presents an overview of results from the 2018 National Travel Survey. This section provides brief background notes and links to sources of further information.

National Statistics designation

Statistics from the National Travel Survey were assessed during 2010 by the UK Statistics Authority. An assessment report was published in October 2010. The statistics were confirmed as National Statistics in July 2011.

Following a compliance check in September 2018, the National Travel Survey maintained its National Statistics designation.

Other topics covered by the NTS

The National Travel Survey covers a range of topics, including the following, which are covered by the published NTS data tables at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics provides a set of results tables covering the topics presented in this release and the additional topics above. The full list of table sections is:

- Trends in personal travel (Tables NTS0101 to NTS0108)
- Driving licence holding and vehicle availability (Tables NTS0201 to NTS0208)
- How people travel (Tables NTS0301 to NTS0317)
- Why people travel (Tables NTS0401 to NTS0412)
- When people travel (Tables NTS0501 to NTS0506)
- Travel by age and gender (Tables NTS0601 to NTS0625)
- Travel by car availability, income, ethnic group, household type and NS-SEC (Tables NTS0701 to NTS0710)
- Accessibility (Tables NTS0801 to NTS0806)
- Vehicles (Tables NTS9901 to NTS9915)
- Travel by region and Rural-Urban Classification of residence (Tables NTS9901 to NTS9915)

Related information

From January 2013, the coverage of the NTS changed to sample residents of England only. This change was agreed following a public consultation in 2011. Details of the consultation outcome can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230560/NTSconsultationSummaryofresponses.pdf

Related surveys carried out in other areas of Great Britain which cover similar topics (though do not use the same collection methods as NTS) include:

Transport Scotland collect personal travel data for residents of Scotland using a one day travel diary in their Scottish Household Survey:

https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-2017/

In Northern Ireland data are collected via the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland, based on a similar methodology to the NTS (interview and 7-day travel diary):

https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/travel-survey-northern-ireland

The Welsh Government collect information on active travel as part of the National Survey for Wales, although this does not include a travel diary:

http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/

Within England, Transport for London conduct the London Travel Demand Survey for London residents which is much bigger than the London sample of the NTS (and uses a different data collection method):

https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/consultations-and-surveys#on-this-page-1

In addition to National Travel Survey statistics presented here, DfT and others publish a range of statistics related to modes of transport - as signposted throughout this document. Detailed comparisons between the NTS and other sources are not always possible because of differences in collection, coverage and measurement. However, where the NTS and other statistics refer to the same phenomenon, a degree of coherence between different sources can be observed over time, although year-on-year changes can vary.

The full range of statistics published by DfT can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics

Methodology notes

Strengths and limitations of the NTS

The NTS is a long-running survey which uses a high-quality methodology to collect a broad range of information on travel behaviours at the England level. The methodology has been broadly unchanged over several decades meaning that trends can be monitored. Figures are weighted to be representative of the population. However, like any statistical source, the NTS has its limitations. For example, as a sample survey resulting figures are estimates with associated sampling error. In addition, figures below national level require several years data to be combined, and figures for geographies below regional level cannot be published.

Survey methodology

Since 2002, the Department for Transport has commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) as the contractor for the NTS. Full guidance on the methods used to conduct the survey, response rates, weighting methodology and survey materials can be found in the National Travel Survey Technical Report at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2018

A 'Notes and definitions' document which includes background to the NTS, response rates, sample size and standard error information and a full list of definitions can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2018

Sample sizes

These are included in all the individual web tables. As estimates made from a sample survey depend upon the particular sample chosen, they generally differ from the true values for the population. This is not usually a problem when considering large samples but may give misleading information when considering data from small samples, such as cyclists in a particular age group.

A note explaining the methodology used to calculate the 2009 NTS standard errors and tables of standard errors for selected key statistics are published at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nts-standard-error-guide

We have used this methodology to update the standard errors for 2018 that are presented in the NTSE set of tables.

National Statistics

The NTS results are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The National Travel Survey was assessed by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice and was confirmed as National Statistics in July 2011. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found in the pre-release access list at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2018

To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released please follow us on Twitter via our @DfTstats account: http://www.twitter.com/DfTstats. TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates