

Last updated: April 2011

Introduction

This Factsheet summarises findings on commuting and business travel. The results cover Great Britain and are based on data from the **National Travel Survey (NTS)**. Some results from the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** are also presented. The NTS covers adults and children of all ages. The LFS covers adults aged 16 and over. Data are for 2009 unless otherwise specified.

Table references in this factsheet relate to the separately published file of tables containing the results used in the commentary and those used to produce the charts.

Key definitions

A **trip** is a one way course of travel having a single main purpose.

The **main mode** of transport is the method of travel used in terms of the greatest distance travelled if the trip has more than one stage.

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

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

Due to small sample sizes some tables/charts use data for two or three **survey years combined**. These are shown as 1995/97 (three years combined – 1995, 1996 and 1997) or 2008/09 (two years combined – 2008 and 2009).

For more information see NTS Notes & Definitions at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/databaselpublications/nts/technical/nts2_009notes.pdf

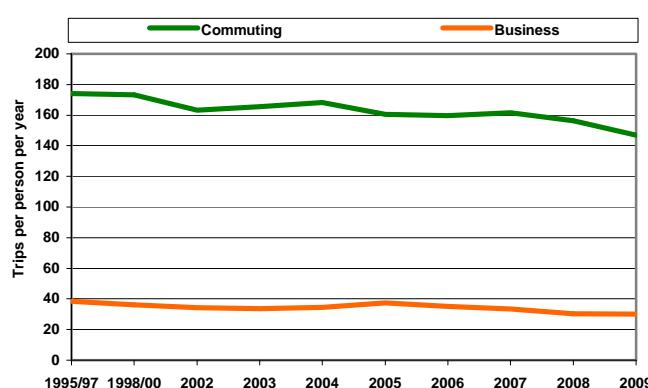
Trends in commuting and business trips

(Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Commuting accounts for 15% of all trips, and business trips account for 3% of trips. Commuting and business trips tend to be longer than average and so account for a greater proportion of total distance travelled (19% and 8% respectively).

Since 1995/97¹, the number of commuting trips has fallen by 16% to 147 trips per person per year and the number of business trips by 22% to 30.

Chart 1: Commuting and business trips: Great Britain, 1995/97 to 2009



Source: National Travel Survey

Over the same period the average distance travelled over a year for commuting has fallen by 11% to 1,266 miles per person. Average distance travelled for business fell by 25% to 551 miles.

Commuting trips by car showed the greatest fall of all modes used. Trips fell by 19% from 121 trips per person per year to 98, and average distance travelled fell by 17%. Commuting trips by walking fell by 22% from 20 trips per person per year to 16, and average distance travelled fell by 1%.

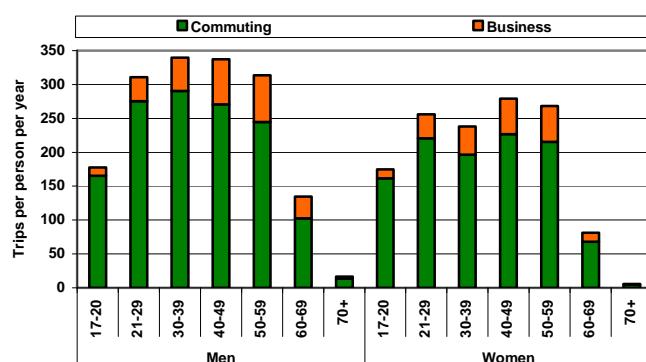
Travel by age and gender

(Table 5)

In all age groups men make more commuting trips than women. Men aged 30-39 make the most commuting trips (290 trips per person per year) and men aged 50-59 make the most business trips (69 trips). 35% of all trips made by men aged 21-29 and 30-39 are for commuting or business purposes.

For women, those aged 40-49 make the most commuting trips (227 trips). Women aged 40-49 and 50-59 make the most business trips (53 trips). 25% of all trips made by women aged 50-59 are for commuting or business purposes.

Chart 2: Commuting and business trips, by age and gender: Great Britain, 2009



Sample size: males = 7,359; females = 8,236

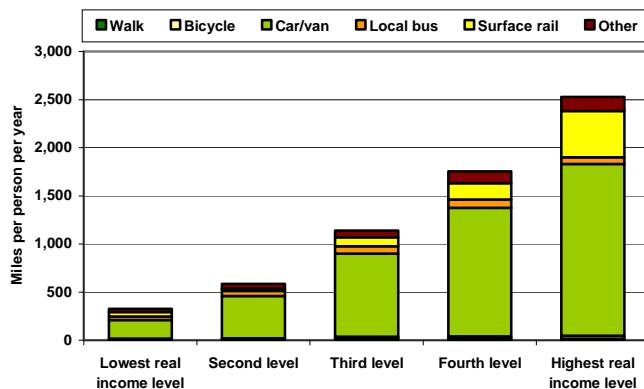
Source: National Travel Survey

Travel by household income group

(Table 6)

As illustrated in Chart 3, there is a close correlation between the commuting distance travelled per person per year and levels of household income.

Chart 3: Commuting distance travelled by main mode and household income: Great Britain, 2009



Sample size: individuals = 19,914

Source: National Travel Survey

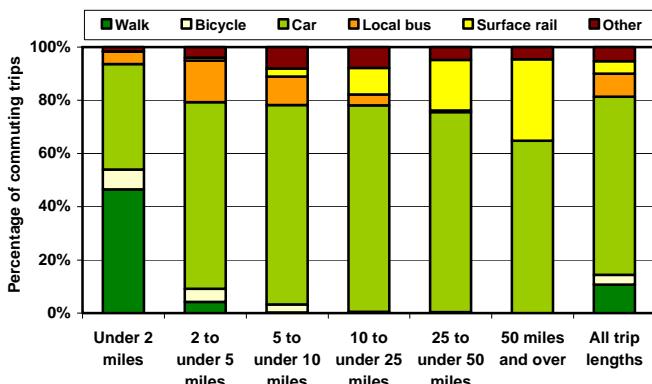
Individuals in the highest income quintile travel almost 8 times further (2,529 miles) for commuting per year than those in the lowest quintile. They also make almost 4 times as many commuting trips (217 trips). The proportion of commuting rail trips increases with income. 9% of commuting trips by individuals in the highest income quintile are by rail compared to 2% by individuals in the lowest income quintile.

How do people travel to work?

(Tables 7 and 8)

Mode of transport varies depending on distance to place of work (Chart 4) with the proportion of commuting trips by surface rail increasing with trip length.

Chart 4: Proportion of trips by main mode and commuting trip length: Great Britain, 2009



Sample size: commuting trips = 49,836

Source: National Travel Survey

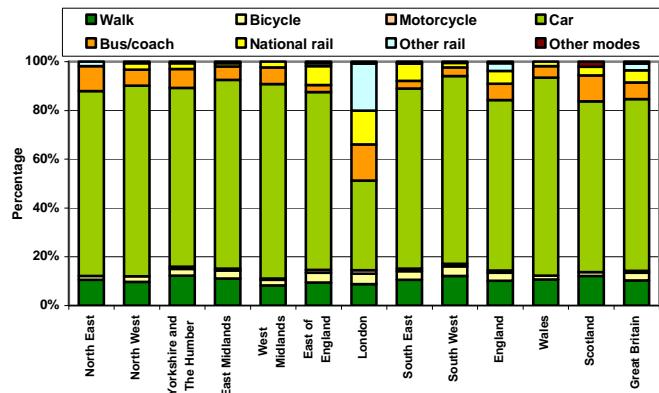
67% of all commuting trips are made by car, 11% on foot, 9% by bus, 5% by surface rail and 4% by bicycle.

For business trips, 78% are by car, 7% on foot, 4% by bus, 4% by train, and 1% by bicycle.

The LFS asks workers about their *usual* method of travel to work. Results for Oct-Dec 2009 are similar to the NTS: 70% usually travel to work by car; 10% walk; 7% go by bus/coach; 5% by surface rail, and 3% by bicycle.

As shown in Chart 5, the usual method of travel to work is different for workers who live in London, with 37% travelling by car, 19% by light rail/underground, 15% by bus/coach, 14% by surface rail, 9% by foot and 4% by bicycle.

Chart 5: Usual method of travel to work by main mode and region: Great Britain, Oct-Dec 2009



Sample size: individuals = 39,534

Source: Labour Force Survey, Oct-Dec 2009

How far do people travel to work? (Table 9)

According to the NTS, the average length of a commuting trip increased by 5%, from 8.2 miles in 1995/97 to 8.6 miles in 2009. Men travel 10.2 miles to work on average, 51% further than women (6.7 miles). The average length of a business trip is 18.3 miles.

People living in rural areas travel furthest to work, on average (11.7 miles), while those in metropolitan areas outside London travel the shortest distance on average (6.9 miles). London residents travel 7.5 miles.

People from households in the highest income quintile travel more than twice as far to work, on average (11.7 miles) as those in the lowest income quintile (5.7 miles).

How long does it take to travel to work? (Table 10)

The average journey time to work has been steadily increasing; it takes 28 minutes, an increase of 18% on 1995/97 (24 minutes).

The average journey to work for London residents takes just over 41 minutes, 48% longer than the national average.

Men on average spend 19% longer commuting than women (29 minutes and 24 minutes respectively), reflecting differences in journey distance and mode.

On average, commuting trips by foot take 18 minutes, by cycling 22 minutes, by car 24 minutes, by bus 41 minutes, and by surface rail 69 minutes.

Car occupancy and mileage (Tables 11 and 12)

While the average car occupancy rate for all car trips is 1.6, occupancy rates are lower for commuting (1.2) and business trips (1.2) than for any other purpose.

There is only one person in the vehicle for 85% of commuting trips and 83% of business trips by car. The average single occupancy figure for all car trips is 60%.

In 2009 the NTS estimated that 30% of all household vehicle mileage was for commuting and 11% for business purposes.

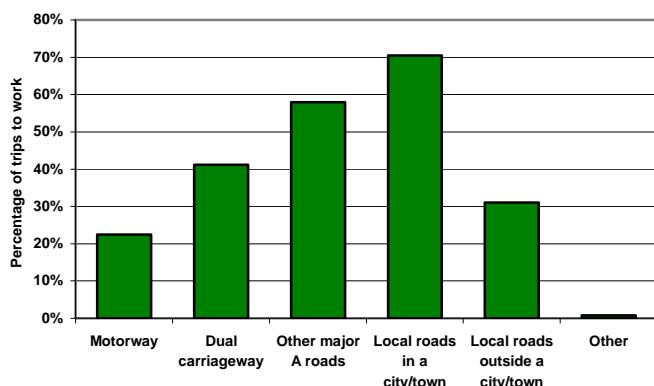
Annual vehicle mileage for business purposes has fallen from 1,710 to 900 miles between 1995/97 and 2009, a drop of 47%. For commuting, annual vehicle mileage has fallen from 2,830 to 2,520 miles, a drop of 11%.

There has been a fall in the proportion of company owned cars in the NTS sample from 7% in 1995/97 to 4% in 2009.

Roads used for travelling to work (Table 13)

The most often used roads for travelling to work are local roads in a city or town (70%). 22% of trips involved travelling on a motorway.

Chart 6: Trips to work by road type: Great Britain, 2008/09



Sample size: commuting trips = 13,161
Source: National Travel Survey

Difficulties travelling to work (Table 14)

The NTS asks workers what kind of difficulties, if any, they experience when travelling to work.

38% of workers who usually travel to work by car or motorcycle say they experience difficulties getting to work. A smaller proportion of those travelling by other modes experience difficulties (31%).

The main difficulty car/motorcycle users experience on their journey to work is traffic congestion/road-works (mentioned by 35%).

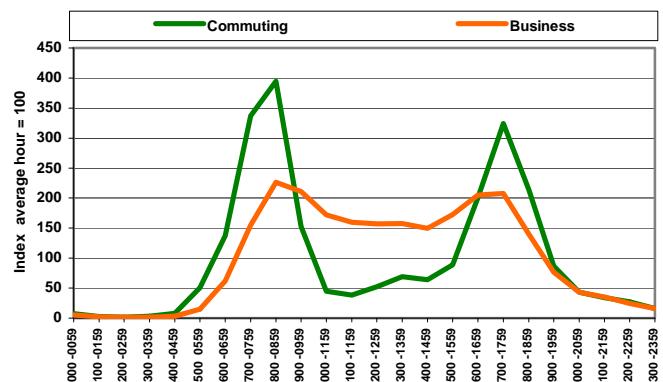
The most common difficulties for those who travel to work by other modes are: unreliable public transport (14%) – a fall from 20% in 2002; traffic congestion/road-works (6%); and public transport being 'unpleasant' (5%).

Travel by time of day (Table 15)

Chart 7 shows that commuting travel is concentrated into the morning peak (07:00 – 09:00) and the evening peak (16:00 – 19:00).

Business travel is spread more evenly throughout the working day. (Note: there are more commuting trips than business trips.)

Chart 7: Distribution of commuting and business trips in progress by hour of day, (weekdays only): Great Britain, 2009



Sample size: commuting trips = 44,718; business trips = 10,073
Source: National Travel Survey

Workplace (Table 16)

According to the NTS in 2009, 74% of those in employment usually work in a single workplace location (not home), 22% work in different places and 5% usually work at home.

People who are self-employed are more likely to usually work at home/same building as home (24%).

Further information

A set of tables containing the results used in this factsheet and the data used to produce the charts are published at:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/factsheets/commuting.xls>

The main results from the National Travel Survey along with information on sample sizes, standard errors, and other factsheets are published at:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/>

Details of the NTS methodology can be found in the Technical Report at:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/technical/nts2009technical.pdf>

Further information on the Labour Force Survey can be found at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Source.asp?vlnk=358>

For any queries relating to the figures in this factsheet or requests for additional information please contact:
Telephone - 020 7944 3097
Email - national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk