



# National Travel Survey: Change in travel since 1965



The National Travel Survey has collected consistent data on travel behaviours since 1965, allowing analysis of long-term trends in personal travel. For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first data collection, this document gives an overview of how travel behaviours have changed over 50 years\*.



## Trends in trips, distance and time spent travelling

In 1965...

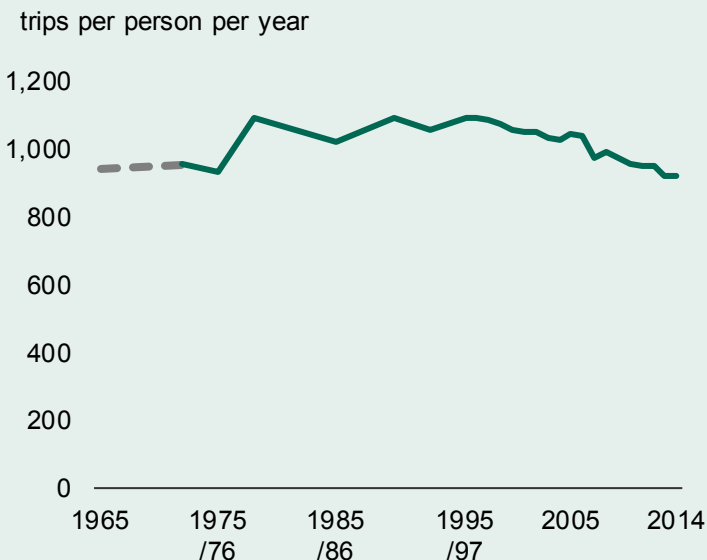


In 2014...



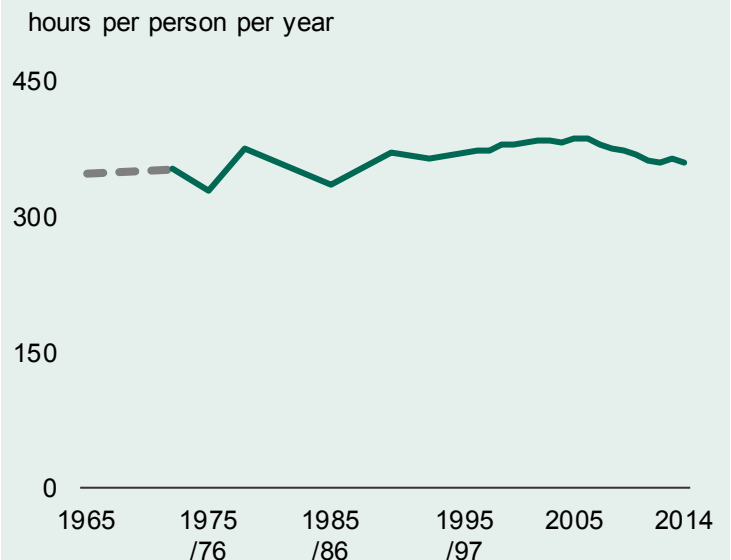
► **Trips:** In 2014, people made on average 921 trips per person per year, compared to an estimated 945 trips in 1965. Trip rates broadly increased until the mid-1990s and have fallen since to reach a similar level to 1965.

Trend in trips: England\*\*, 1965 to 2014



► **Time:** Time spent travelling has remained stable over 50 years, at around an hour a day. The profile of trip duration has also remained broadly unchanged over time, with the vast majority (about 90%) of trips under 45 minutes in both 1965 and 2014.

Trend in time spent travelling: England\*\*, 1965 to 2014



\* As the first NTS did not cover short walks (under one mile), data for 1965 are estimated and showed in grey dotted line. For more information about the estimation method, please see the 'Background and method' section at the end of this document.

\*\* Figures prior to 1989 in this time series are for all residents of Great Britain, and for residents of England after this date. This change is unlikely to affect the broad conclusions presented.

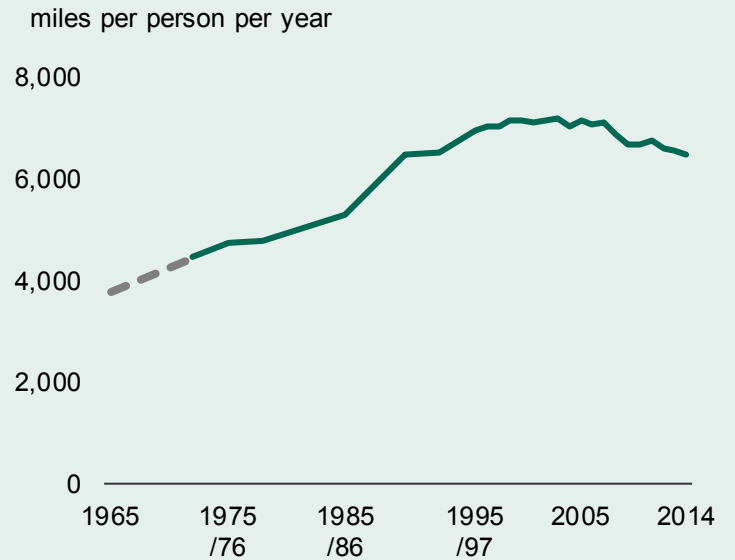


↑ 71%

► **Distance:** while trips and time spent travelling have changed little over 50 years, distance travelled has increased by 71% since 1965.

Therefore, for a similar number of trips and time spent travelling, residents of England travel much further than 50 years ago. This change over time is mainly due to changes in mode use.

Trend in distance travelled: England\*, 1965 to 2014



► **Age and gender:** The change in distance travelled over time is not evenly spread in the population.

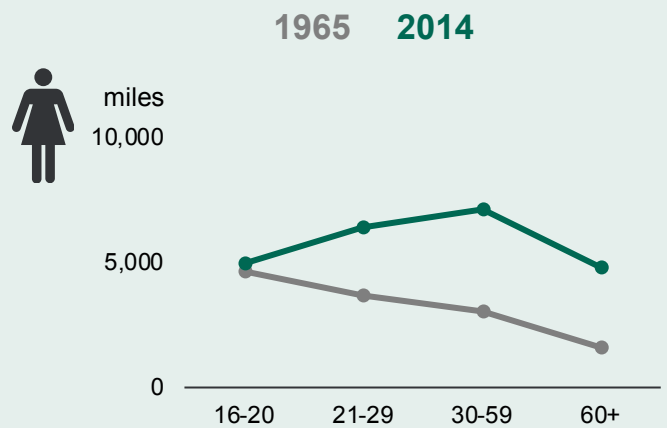
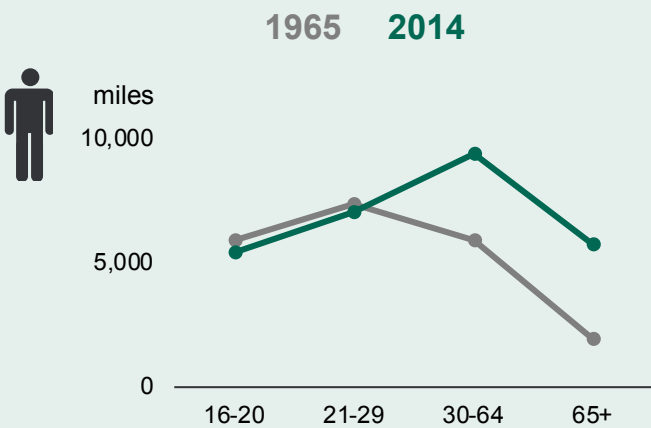
The increase of distance travelled is mostly due to older age groups and women, whereas the mileage of young males has decreased slightly.

Males under 30 travelled the furthest in 1965, whereas older males are now doing more mileage.

Change in distance travelled per person per year (excluding short walks) by age group and gender between 1965 and 2014



Distance travelled per person per year (excluding short walks) by age group and gender, 1965 and 2014



\* Figures prior to 1989 in this time series are for all residents of Great Britain, and for residents of England after this date. This change is unlikely to affect the broad conclusions presented.



## Trends in car access

In 1965...



**42%** of households had at least one car



**29%** of adults had a driving licence

In 2014...



**76%** of households had at least one car

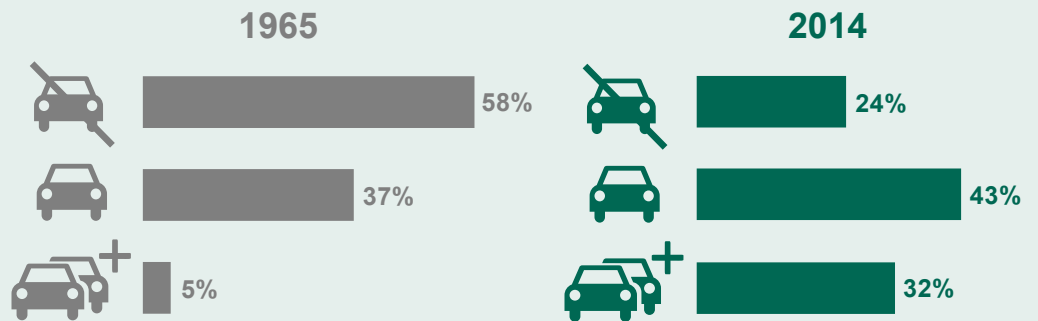


**73%** of adults had a driving licence

### ▶ Car availability:

Car availability of households has increased in the last 50 years. There has also been a large increase in multi-car households: only 5% of households had two or more cars/vans in 1965, compared to 32% now.

Household car availability: 1965 and 2014

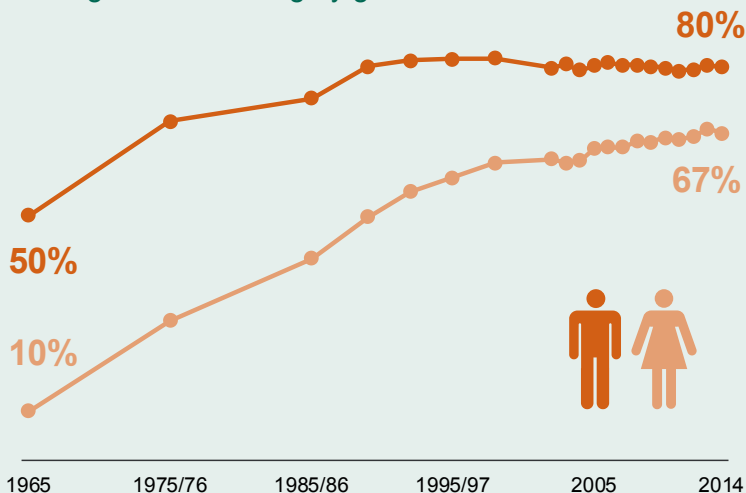


▶ **Driving licence holding:** Driving licence holding has largely increased in 50 years, particularly for women.

In 1965, there were clear gender differences: half of men had a driving licence, while only 10% of women did. Today the gap is narrower, with 67% of women holding a licence compared with 80% of men.

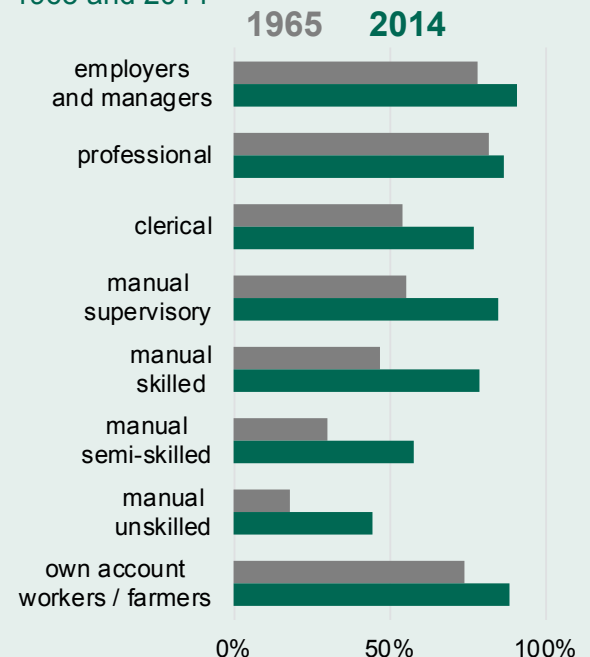
This upward trend is mainly due to women and older people becoming more likely to hold a licence.

Driving licence holding by gender: 1965 to 2014



▶ **Socio-economic position:** Although car access has increased amongst all socio-economic groups, differences between these groups have narrowed over 50 years. Trends for driving licence holding by socio-economic position follow a similar pattern.

Access to at least one car by socio-economic group of the head of household: 1965 and 2014





## Changes in purpose of travel

Reasons for making a trip have remained broadly similar in 40 years\*. Most trip purposes show a slight decrease, except holidays/sport and escort (where the main purpose is to accompany someone else). Some changes in trip rates (averaged over the whole population) could be linked to population change.



**shopping and personal business** remain the most common reasons for making a trip

\* Figures earlier than 1975/76 are not reliable for comparison because of changes in the way purposes are defined in the earliest waves of the survey. Figures presented here relate to 1975/76.

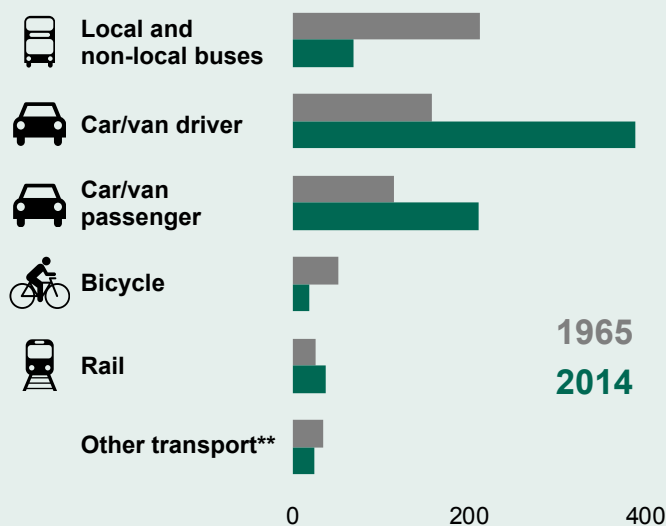
Trips per person per year by purpose, 1975/76 and 2014



## Changes in mode of travel

► **Spread of car use:** Modes of travel have also changed over 50 years. The number of stages made by car, both as a driver and as a passenger, has increased, while stages made by bus and by bicycle have decreased since 1965.

Average number of stages travelled by mode (excluding walks): 1965 and 2014



\*\* Walks of all lengths excluded for comparability reasons.



This change in mode of travel is not only due to the increase in car availability. Both people in households with and without cars have seen an increase in car trips. People in households without cars make more trips as car passenger in 2014 than in 1965.



Even if bus and bicycle use have decreased over 50 years, the bus still remains the most common mode of travel for people in households without cars (excluding walks).

**Definition:** a **trip** (a one-way course of travel with a single main purpose) consists of one or more **stages**, defined by a change in the form of transport.



### Consistency of the National Travel Survey

The National Travel Survey has collected data in a broadly comparable way since the first survey was carried out in 1965, through a face-to-face household interview and a 7-day travel diary completed by respondents of all ages. Data collection became continuous in 1988. The geographical scope of the survey changed in 2013 from residents of Great Britain to England only. Figures from 1989 onwards presented here are for residents of England, while figures prior to this date are for all residents of Great Britain. This change is very unlikely to affect the broad conclusions presented.

### Estimation for 1965

Some changes to the travel diary have been made over 50 years. In 1965, the NTS did not collect any information on short walks (under one mile) whereas this is now captured on the last day of the diary. To be comparable, figures for 1965 have been rescaled to account for short walks. Estimated figures are shown in dotted grey line in this document.

This estimation was undertaken from documentation of the Department for Transport on the earliest waves of the survey:

- *National Travel Survey: 1975/76 Report*, Department for Transport, 1979
- *An analysis of travel patterns using the 1972/73 National Travel Survey*, Transport and Road Research Laboratory, 1977

### Other methodological issues

NTS data from 1995 onwards are weighted, causing a one-off uplift in trips and distance travelled between 1992/94 and 1995/97. Data prior to 2002 are based on combined survey years as the annual sample size was smaller.

There have been a number of other changes to the coverage, scope and definitions used in the NTS over the years. Full details are available in the NTS technical reports, available from the NTS page on gov.uk or on request from DfT.

### Further information

For more information, please contact the National Travel Survey team:

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