



Department for Transport

National Travel Survey: England 2019

About this release

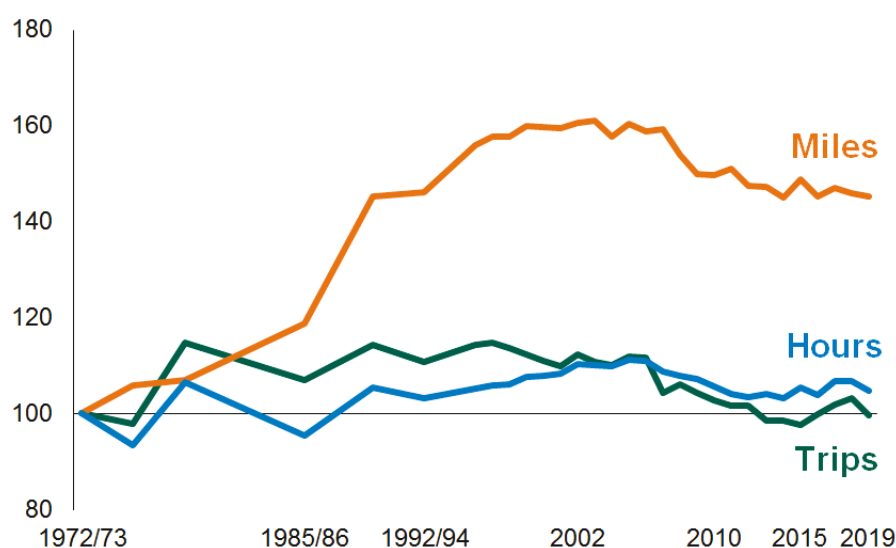
The National Travel Survey is a household survey of personal travel by residents of England travelling within Great Britain, from data collected via interviews and a seven-day travel diary, which enables analysis of patterns and trends.

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The average number of annual trips taken by people in England during 2019 is comparable to the number of trips in 1972/73, following a reduction since the late 1990's.

Figure 1: Trends in trips taken, miles travelled and hours spent travelling (table [NTS0101](#))



Most of the decrease in average trips since 2002 is due to a reduction in the number of car trips taken: a 13% reduction in the number of trips undertaken by car drivers. The average length of a car trip however is unchanged between 2002 and 2019, at 8.4 miles per trip.

Walking trips saw a slight fall from 2018 to 2019 to 250 trips per person per year, however this is an increase compared to the lowest levels of walking recently recorded in 2014. In the last 5 years, people in England made 14% more walking trips, and spent 12% longer walking, per year.

NTS in the light of COVID-19

The data for this study was collected between January 2019 and December 2019. Data collection was therefore completed before the global outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. Travel trends will have been affected by the restrictions of early 2020, so care must be taken in comparing this release with current travel behaviours.

Statistics on transport use during the Coronavirus pandemic can be found [on Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).



Trips [NTS0101]

Average trips per person per year



Distance [NTS0101]

Average distance travelled per year



Time [NTS0101]

Average time travelled per year

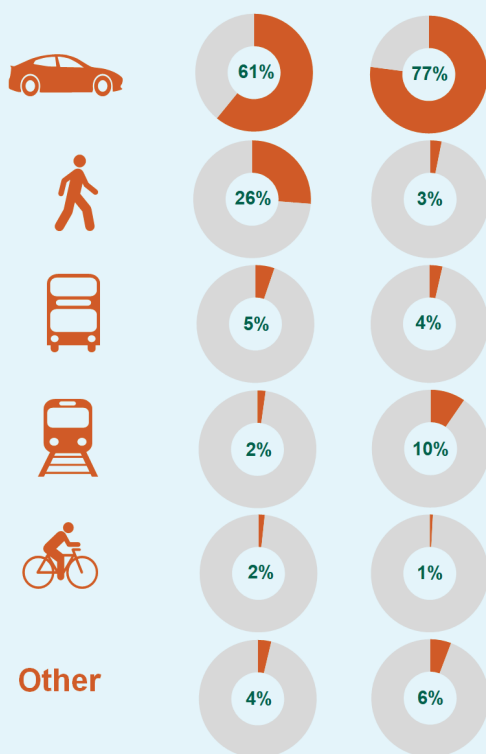


How we travelled [NTS0303]

Modal share

Trips

Distance



People made 953 trips on average in 2019, or 18 trips a week. This was a 3% decrease on the level in 2018. People travelled an average of 6,500 miles in 2019, unchanged from 2018.

However, the trip rate in 2019 was 11% lower than the 2002 figure of 1,074; the average of 6,500 miles travelled in 2019 was 10% lower than the 7,193 recorded in 2002.

On average, people spent just over an hour a day travelling in 2019, including 35 minutes by car (as a driver or passenger), 11 minutes walking, 13 minutes on public transport and 2 minutes on other private transport modes.

The most common trip purpose in 2019 was for leisure (26%), followed by shopping trips (19%) and commuting (15%). These proportions are broadly unchanged since 2002, but the total amount of trips and total distance travelled has decreased since 2002, and 2018.

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.

Why we travelled [NTS0409]

The most common trip purposes were:



Leisure **26%**

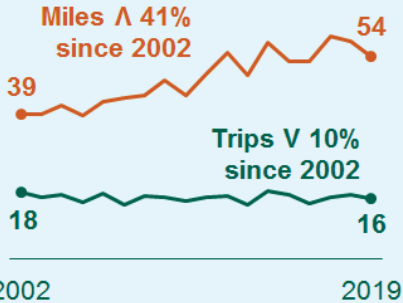


Shopping **19%**

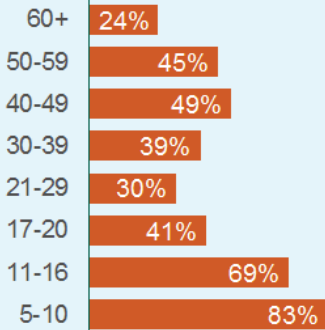


Cycling [NTS0303, NTS0608]

Average cycling trips and distance per year

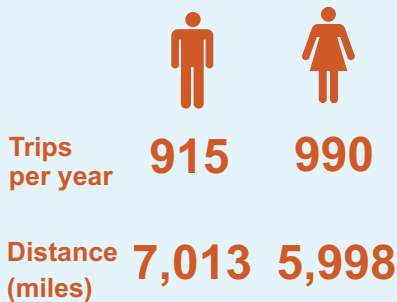


People with access to a bicycle, by age (2017-2019)

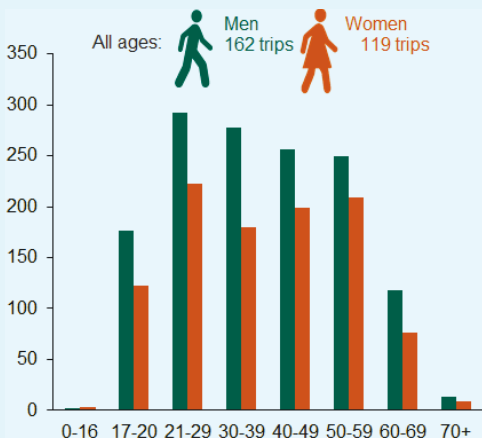


Gender [NTS0601, NTS0605]

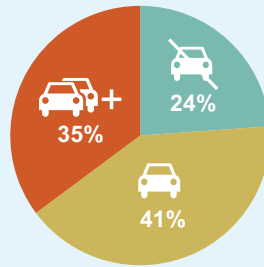
Average trips and distance per person per year, by the gender of the respondent



Commuting trips per person per year, by age and gender, 2019



Car ownership [NTS0205]



76% of households owned at least one car

Licence holding [NTS0201]



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

32.7 million licence holders



80% of males



71% of females

In 2019 men made 8% fewer trips than women, but travelled 17% 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.

In 2019, 75% of English residents aged 17 and over held a driving licence. Around 80% of men in this group hold a licence, a figure that is broadly unchanged since 2002. Around 71% of women in this group hold a driving licence, however this figure has grown by 15% since 2002. Between 2002 and 2019 the number of licence holders increased by over two and half times, to 32.7 million individuals.

With regards to the proportion of men and women who live in households without access to a car, the proportion of men in these households in 2019 was 17%, an increase of half a percentage point since 2002. When considering women, 20% live in households without access to a car, a decrease of 2.8 percentage points over the same period.

Looking at households in England, 76% own at least one car, an increase of 2 percentage points since 2002. This figure depends heavily on the household income: 55% of households in the bottom 20% of household income during 2019 own at least one car (up 5 percentage points since 2002), compared to 86% of households in the top 20% of household income during 2019 (up 2 percentage points since 2002).

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 commercial 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.

Introduction to the 2019 NTS

The 2019 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.

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 different groups; and contributing to the evaluation of policies.

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.

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in July 2011. The continued designation [was confirmed in September 2018](#).

Thank you

The 2019 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.

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 inform response planning during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- ▶ 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

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.

Impact of Coronavirus pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 has affected the operation of the survey. Fieldwork for the NTS 2020 survey was impacted by Coronavirus restrictions, but the extent of this will not be known until all fieldwork for the year has been completed.

This release has been shortened to focus resource on understanding 2020 travel behaviour, although the full suite of tables (with the exception of NTS0801) and underlying data have been published as normal. We would welcome feedback on the changes we have made, as they will help influence decisions about future publications in this series.

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.
- ▶ Alpha has now been completed and a [report](#) outlining the research and findings has been published alongside this release. Alpha designed and tested prototypes exploring how to improve user experience and data quality. The project will next proceed to Beta, which will include pilot testing of the digital diary in field.

User engagement

The National Travel Survey team carries out user engagement throughout the year with a variety of internal and external users. 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

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-2019>.

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

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>. 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 socio-economic classification (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:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/statistics/scottish-household-survey-travel-diary-results-all-editions>

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):

tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/london-travel-demand-survey

In addition to National Travel Survey statistics presented here, DfT and others publish a range of statistics related to modes of transport. 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-2019>

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-2019>

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>

Pre-release details

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 on the 2019 NTS collection page.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2019>

Next update

The next tables in this series are expected to be published in the summer of 2021. This will contain National Travel Survey figures for the period January 2020 to December 2020.

The next written report is expected to be published in the summer of 2021, and will contain annual figures for 2020.



Department for Transport (DfT) statistics Twitter feed

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