

New research shows individual car use declining and rail ridership increasing in England

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- **This new Independent Transport Commission (ITC) study looking at 1995-2014 data finds individual car use is decreasing among younger people (under-35s), while rail ridership is increasing across all age groups, in spite of the Great Recession (2008-09) and above inflation rail ticket costs.**

The ITC report – “Recent trends in road and rail travel: What do they tell us? On the Move 2 (1995-2014): Overview and policy analysis” – was based on research commissioned from experts Gordon Stokes and Peter Headicar. Using National Travel Survey data, the findings identify the pattern of road and rail travel trends in England between 1995 and 2014. The study updates two previous reports into trends up to 2007 and related attitudinal trends.

Key findings

- The total miles travelled by English residents peaked in 2007 before falling sharply in 2008-09, and stabilising at this lower level. However, because of population growth the per capita (individual) travel by distance is now 10% lower than in the mid-2000s.
- Each English resident is making significantly fewer trips overall in 2014 than in 1995. However, the average trip is now longer in terms of both time and distance.
- Although the aggregate traffic level is rising, individual car driving mileage per adult has declined significantly, 1995-2014. Individual car use amongst younger people, especially men under 35, is falling fastest. At the same time there has been a significant rise in the personal car driving mileage (and licence holding) of older women over 60.
- Rail travel per person by distance has continued to rise sharply due to a greater percentage of the population travelling by rail, rather than existing travellers making more or longer journeys.
- The link between GDP, incomes, and personal travel appears to be weakening. Car driving per adult has declined in spite of overall motoring costs (combining vehicle purchase, fuel and insurance) remaining stagnant since 2000.
- Per capita car use has fallen most slowly in rural areas, but has fallen most sharply in London, which has also seen the greatest rise in the use of modes other than the car.

“This report uncovers seismic shifts in patterns of individual travel behaviour,” **commented Dr Matthew Niblett, Director of the ITC.**

He added: *“We are seeing that the historic correlations between incomes, costs and travel are weakening. An inter-generational divide in travel behaviour is growing. For young adults, cars are increasingly viewed as utilitarian appliances, rather than aspirational goods. And there are also growing differences in travel patterns between rural and urban areas.*

“As the Government and regional transport bodies embark upon delivering a period of large-scale infrastructure investment, our findings raise important planning issues as it is clear that attitudinal factors are becoming an increasingly significant driver of travel. For example, could we reach a ‘Peak Rail’ scenario

as more people are using trains, but the distance travelled and journey frequency are not increasing?”

In the coming weeks, the ITC will be discussing the contents of the report with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Transport for the North and others. The ITC believes that further research is needed, particularly into the causes of these changing travel trends, and analysis should also explore issues around the growth in van travel.

The **ITC research programme** covers a wide range of strategic transport and land use policy issues, including aviation strategy, High Speed Rail and cities, the impacts of technology on travel, and optimising the efficiency in UK freight movements.

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Media enquiries:

If you have a media query about the report or would like to set up an interview, please contact John Stevenson on john@ti-communications.co.uk or 07824 621756.

If you would like more information on the research programme or the ITC, please contact ITC Director Dr Matthew Niblett on director@theitc.org.uk or 07813 174582.

Notes to editor:

- The research behind this report was commissioned by the ITC from **Peter Headicar**, Associate in the Built Environment at Oxford Brookes University and **Gordon Stokes**, Research Associate at the Transport Studies Unit at Oxford University. Mr Headicar is the author of Transport Policy and Practice in Great Britain and was awarded the PTRC Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012. Their accompanying technical report can be downloaded from: <http://www.theitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OTM2-Technical-Report-FINAL.pdf>
- The ITC report uses National Travel Survey (NTS) data supplied by the Department for Transport. It supplements an earlier report using data up to 2007 by ITC Commissioner Professor Peter Jones and Dr Scott Le Vine of Imperial College, London. This can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.theitc.org.uk/docs/47.pdf>
- The **Independent Transport Commission** is Britain's foremost independent land use and transport think tank. The ITC is a research charity providing insight and analysis of the most pressing long-term strategic issues in the fields of transport and land use. Founded in 1999, it is run by a small directorate led by Dr Matthew Niblett of the University of Oxford, with an advisory team of 14 voluntary commissioners. It is based at Cowcross Street in central London. The patrons of the ITC include Lord Adonis, Lord Freeman, Sir Peter Hendy, Sir Patrick Brown and Sir Terry Farrell. For more information, please see the ITC website: www.theitc.org.uk
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