



What moves Britain?

Myth versus reality

You might be thinking that these days everyone is sharing a connected, electric vehicle that drives them to work at the push of a button.

However, is this a myth or the reality?

Has how Britain moves really altered that much and if so, has it changed in the ways predicted?

This report answers those questions.

Sustainable transportation is critical to every society. It creates opportunities for economic growth, generates jobs and connects people with the places they need to go. However, the ways we can travel have changed greatly over the past ten years. Until now, there has been little insight into why people prefer some modes of transport over others. Our report focuses on the UK public's attitudes towards how they travel day in, day out, as well as their perceptions of how this could change in future.

Based on exclusive independent data from 2,000 individual consumer interviews, this report aims to help you understand current attitudes to transport and mobility in the UK. From consumers moving away from ownership towards 'usership', to thoughts on the latest developments in vehicle technologies, this report shines a light on what moves Britain and the shifting sands of public opinion. So you can keep your business and employees moving.

Simon Carr,
Chief Commercial Officer, Alphabet (GB) Limited

The car retains the crown

Rising house prices in the UK, combined with advances in communications and transport, have led to Britons living further from their place of work than ever before. As employees become increasingly geographically dispersed, they are needing to travel ever greater distances for both business and pleasure. The vast majority of people are making those journeys by car.

In our survey, almost three quarters (**73%**) of British workers said that their vehicle is essential to their daily commute. Regardless of the mode of transport we use, the average commuting time in the UK has continued to rise. Today, over half (**55%**) of commuters take more than 30 minutes to get to their place of work, almost a quarter (**24%**) spend over an hour or more, while nearly **5%** of people spend between two and six hours a day commuting.

Our research showed that around **12%** of the UK population travel to work by means of public transport, with **7%** taking the bus, **2.5%** by train and a further **2.5%** using other forms such as the Tube or Tram. Those with shorter commutes have the option for 'active' forms of travel, such as walking or cycling, which equates to just under **9%** of commuters nationally.

Despite the renaissance of the tram in cities like Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield, the reality for more remote areas of the UK is that public transport can be inadequate. Rural bus and train services suffer from a lack of investment or support from local authorities, often being based on schedules which no longer fit with modern 24/7 working practices.

This preference for the car as Britons' primary mode of transport also differs by age and gender, with the most likely car commuters (**82%**) being in the 61–70 age bracket. Interestingly, our study also revealed that women are **8%** more likely to commute by car than men.

The reasons cited for choosing to travel by car were varied, although four-in-ten (**41%**) stated that it was down to convenience, while **30%** of commuters surveyed said it was because there were simply no alternative means of transport available, particularly for those in rural areas.



Average travelling time is over 1 hour for 24% of commuters



Almost three quarters of British workers believe that their vehicle is essential for their daily commute.



Half of 18-30 year olds use their vehicle for over an hour every day





Living and working on four wheels

These results shatter some of the most commonly held myths regarding how we live, work and travel in the UK today. The size of the average UK household may have reduced from the previous norm of '2.4 children', but as a nation we have more cars than ever before. The average number of cars per household in England has risen from 1.16 in 2002 to 1.28 according to the 2018 National Travel Survey from the Department of Transport.

Despite the rise of the 24/7 'always on' economy and the changing nature of work, a cursory glance at our roads and public transport networks during peak times highlights that our daily routines and travel patterns are still shared by many people.

Today, the car isn't just a vehicle for 'solo travellers'. In fact, more than a quarter (27%) of people regularly share their car to commute with friends, family or colleagues. However, we're still reticent to give up our own car or share one with strangers, with only 7% of commuters regularly using car sharing services such as DriveNow and Zipcar. Of those who participate in car sharing, nearly half (47%) cite saving money and splitting the cost as the top reasons for choosing to travel in this way, followed by 15% who share to help reduce the impact on the environment.

- **Vehicle usage:** 66% of people use their vehicles for less than an hour a day.
- **Vehicle access:** 72% of people currently have access to a vehicle. As people get older, access to a vehicle increases, with 48% of Generation Z having a car compared with 66% of millennials and 72% of baby boomers.
- **Vehicle turnover:** Over six-in-ten of us change our vehicle every four years but over 21% of people change their car at least every two years.



An average car is parked 96% of the time*



18-30 year olds are the most likely people to change their car at least every two years



London has the highest usage of car sharing services by commuters with 17%



*This is based on the average car only being driven by one person.



From car ownership to 'usership'

Buying a car outright is more difficult for younger generations. They're likely to have less disposable income available (if they're saving for a house deposit or paying rent), face eye-watering insurance costs – the average premium for someone under 25 has risen to £1,600 per year – and may also have significant student debts to repay: £50,000 on average for a three-year degree. However, they continue to see the need for a car in their lives. Over half (**58%**) of 18–30 year-olds have a vehicle and over two-thirds (**68%**) of commuters in this age group travel to work by car.

From digital music and video on demand to the smartphone in their pocket, millennials are used to paying a monthly amount for a product or service they require. This 'subscription economy' is built upon the idea that they prefer to pay for the outcomes they want, when they want them, rather than purchasing a product with the upfront costs and burden of ownership. The same is being seen with cars. Millennials (**53%**) are twice as likely to consider leasing their next car as people aged 46–60 (**26%**). People in the 18–30 age bracket are also significantly more likely to change their car at least every two years.

Being more open minded to new technologies, Generation Z and millennials are far more likely to choose an electric or hybrid car as their next vehicle compared with older generations. Nearly half of millennials (**45%**) and a third of Generation Z (**29%**) said they were likely to go electric for their next car, compared to **21%** for Generation X and only **10%** of baby boomers. Generation Z also expressed the highest propensity for car sharing (**17%**).

Millennials continue to see the value of a car in their lives



Two thirds of commuters aged 18-30 travel to work by car





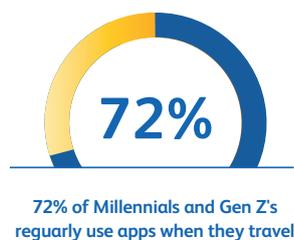
App savvy on the move

Our smartphones and connected devices are increasingly becoming 'life hubs' for us all. Today, UK consumers have on average 80 apps on their phone and as a nation we have become increasingly app savvy travellers. Our research showed that while around a third (**36%**) of vehicle users regularly use travel apps to avoid traffic, find parking or locate fuel, this number more than doubles to over **72%** among millennials and Generation Z.

With the increasing role of apps in all aspects of our personal and business lives, how we use these mobile devices and connect with our vehicles is changing. A third (**34%**) of people believe it's important that their next car is connected to the internet and integrated with their smartphone apps. This number increases to **50%** of people aged between 18–45.

Recent road safety campaigns to reduce phone usage while driving seem to be having an effect, with **64%** of people expressing never using their phone while driving with a further **20%** only making 'hands free' calls. However, a minority of road users still clearly aren't getting the safety message.

Half of 18–45 year olds believe that it is important their next car is connected to the internet and integrated with smartphone apps.



Are your friends electric?

Much has been written about the UK's move towards electrified vehicles. As part of its 'Road to Zero' strategy, the Government wants at least half of all new cars to be ultra low emission by 2030. The change has already begun. Businesses and drivers that have started to move towards ultra-low and zero emission vehicles are helping to future-proof themselves for regulatory and taxation changes on the horizon.

Consumer demand for electric vehicles (EVs) is rising and many of us know somebody that drives one. Yet our research showed that only one in five (**21%**) drivers in the UK has actually driven an electric car. **38%** of people we surveyed expressed that although they had never tried an electric vehicle, they were keen to do so. Of those who have driven an electric vehicle, over seven-in-ten (**71%**) would drive one again.

It is clear that concerns around sustainability and the environment are increasingly important to consumers. Over a quarter (**26%**) of those surveyed said that when choosing their next car it was likely to be battery electric or hybrid fuelled, with the majority of those (**70%**) expressing a preference for a hybrid electric vehicle.

The road to electric vehicle adoption

While electric vehicle technology is gaining popularity, there remain significant barriers to consumer take up. Just under half of UK adults think electric vehicles are the ideal solution for transport and almost a third (**31%**) believe that the switch to electric vehicles is the most positive step we can make to improve air quality.

However, **89%** of respondents cited at least one disadvantage of electric cars with lack of charge points, limitations on vehicle range and the upfront cost of EVs being the primary concerns. With one third of UK families – especially those living in cities – without dedicated parking space, charging at home is not always possible.

The UK government wants at least 50% and as many as 70% of all new cars to be ultra low emission by 2030, alongside up to 40% of new vans



21% have driven an electric vehicle



38% would like to try an electric vehicle



45% of millennials are likely to choose an electric vehicle next





There remain concerns for the British public in relinquishing control of their vehicle to a computer

Autonomous vehicles: A road less defined

Autonomous vehicle technology, otherwise known as cars which are 'driven' by artificial intelligence (A.I.) rather than a human being, is increasingly in the news. The Government announced recently that self-driving vehicle trials would take place on UK roads by the end of 2019. But while the UK's shift towards electric vehicles seems inevitable, the road to fully autonomous vehicles in Britain is less clear.

So far the excitement around autonomous vehicles (AVs) has been led by Silicon Valley and the automotive industry. As our survey reveals, the UK public is already forming its opinions on this future tech, without having experienced it first hand. While **25%** were open to this new technology, the majority were uncertain about it as yet. Of those asked, **20%** of respondents said they were 'unsure' as to whether or not they were in favour of autonomous vehicles in future, while **55%** would take a lot more convincing before they felt confident in the new technology.

Our respondents identified a number of benefits of AVs, such as the ability to multi-task during journeys (**17%**), to reduce accidents (**12%**) and congestion (**10%**) or to help with parking (**11%**). But there remains a concern around relinquishing control and allowing algorithms to completely take over a vehicle.

The most commonly expressed concerns with AVs are the perceived relinquishing of control (**38%**), the difficulty in determining who is responsible in the event of an accident (**15%**) and worries about driving manually while sharing the road with self-driving cars (**15%**).

At the moment **30%** of British people would be willing to travel in an autonomous vehicle in the future and this feeling varies among the sexes, with half as many women as men saying they are willing to travel in one (**21%** versus **40%**). As with electric vehicles though, the popularity in AVs increases among the young, with **42%** of millennials being in favour compared with **18%** of baby boomers.



A quarter of Brits are already in favour of autonomous vehicles without having experienced them



This rises to 42% of millennials



30% of British people are willing to travel in an AV in the future



A European perspective

This report is focused on the UK market but Alphabet serves customers in 28 markets around the world. Driver and consumer attitudes in other European countries can be markedly different to the UK. Our Alphabet colleagues in Spain have recently undertaken a similar analysis of mobility trends and attitudes in their market, so it's interesting to compare the results for the two countries.

Although the car remains the most popular mode of transport for both UK and Spanish adults, with over two thirds (68%) having a car, in Spain the idea of financing or leasing a vehicle is much less deeply entrenched than the UK. There, 92% of drivers own their vehicles outright, compared with much lower numbers in the UK. However, a similar pattern remains towards leasing from the emerging generations, with 42% of Spanish 18–30 year olds saying they would consider leasing a vehicle in the future.

The frequency of changing vehicles also highlights some cultural differences between the two countries. Whilst almost two thirds (63%) of UK adults change their vehicle at least every four years, only 5% of Spanish adults do. When asked, the top reasons that would encourage someone in Spain to change their vehicle more often would be to replace it with a more economical vehicle (27%), followed by one that has improved security (25%). In the UK it was a cheaper vehicle (48%), reduced cost of motoring (46%) and better fuel consumption (42%). In both countries, over half of adults with a vehicle (UK: 60%, Spain: 59%) have never totalled up how much they spend on their car each year.

Percentage who change vehicle at least every four years



In Spain, only 24% of adults with their own vehicle use it for an hour or more a day and even less (18%) among 18–30 year olds. This is significantly less than the 34% of people in the UK that use their cars for at least an hour a day.

Percentage who use car for an hour or more a day



The answer is Alphabet

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Vehicle ownership is an area where the two countries are far closer. Eight-in-ten adults in Spain have their own vehicle (81%), compared to 72% in the UK. A car is essential for 73% of UK commuters with a vehicle but only for 60% of Spanish employees with a vehicle. Three quarters of UK commuters with a vehicle (75%) typically commute by car compared to only 50% of Spanish employees with a vehicle.

Percentage with access to their own vehicle



Regarding electric vehicles, Spaniards mirrored respondents from the UK in their attitudes, with 27% saying they would likely buy an electric vehicle with their next car purchase. However, far less (8% versus 21%) have so far had the opportunity to drive one. Interestingly, only 30% of UK adults would be willing to travel in an autonomous car in the future compared to 93% of Spanish adults.

Percentage who have driven an electric vehicle



What moves Britain?

Stories around the demise of the car as the primary mode of travel for British people have been greatly exaggerated. The reality is that the car is more important than ever for all generations of families, commuters and employees. More Brits travel by car than all other forms of transport combined.

Clearly, the way our vehicles are fuelled and powered is changing with the electric and hybrid revolution taking place. The way we use our vehicles, how they fit within our modern lives with our connected devices is changing too. But the autonomous vehicle future that was predicted on the horizon isn't here yet and the UK public will clearly need to be convinced about them moving forward.

So, the UK's relationship with the car is changing but it is more important than ever in helping to connect people, families, communities and businesses. For more information on how Alphabet can help to get your business or employees moving, contact us on: 0370 50 50 100.