



# Transport User Community

Recent road journeys during Covid-19

October 2020

# What did we ask our community?



## How have you been?

How have our road users been coping with the past seven months of Covid-19 restrictions and the pandemic in general? How have their travel patterns changed, if at all?



## Journeys you've taken

A task to understand how our road users have been travelling, and where, as well as what has made their journeys better or worse during the pandemic.

# Who is in our road users community?

40

40 people using motorways and major 'A' roads in England



Across England



Mix of vehicle types



Mix of commuters, leisure and business travellers, and those who drive for work



A spread of age, gender and ethnicity



Some have disabilities

## As with our rail and bus communities, the pandemic has had a major and often detrimental impact on our respondents' lives

- **Several respondents have been made redundant**, and particularly those working in the arts have struggled to find work. Our student respondents have had to adapt to online teaching and changes in their social lives.
- **Many community members have come to car use to avoid using public transport.** Typically, these respondents previously used the car only for leisure journeys, but in many cases, it has now become their sole mode of transport aside from walking or cycling.
- **Respondents' journeys have become much more local.** Trips into urban centres or on business have all but disappeared amongst this community unless they are commuting.
- **A few respondents are taking taxis if the journey involves a journey into London,** balancing their desire to avoid public transport with their frustrations driving vehicles in congested areas.

*“Lockdown has been an extremely testing and stressful time because I have been made redundant, and my husband has been made redundant. We had to move out of our rented accommodation and relocate.”*

**Female, 32, East Midlands**

*“During the pandemic the only mode of transport I used was the car. I didn’t feel comfortable using any other mode of transport. I felt quite anxious not being able to socially distance from people and I can’t control how close a person sits next to me on the train.”*

**Female, 39, South East**

*“I lost three jobs, because I’m a freelance worker. Two theatre jobs and supply teaching. I have never been out of work before, ever.”*

**Female, 59, South East**

*“Prior to lockdown I worked in Haslemere so I regularly drove the 55 miles from Sevenoaks on the A21, M25 and A3. Since COVID I have remained locally with a few days outs and a staycation in the Midlands.”*

**Female, 58, East**

## Almost universally, road users noticed the fall in traffic during lockdown, and its return to pre-lockdown levels since

- **Respondents have noticed spontaneously that there have been changes to road layouts** to allow pedestrians to social distance. However, these changes are not always reflected in navigation software which can pose problems for some drivers.
- **Road users enjoyed driving during the period of low congestion during lockdown.** While they acknowledge that traffic has since returned to pre-pandemic levels, there is no significant frustration about this and it was seen largely as inevitable.
  - On occasion, members of our community expressed that they feel guilty about their increased usage of the car for environmental reasons.
  - Some have noticed an increase in the number of bikes and electric scooters on local roads.

*“I found traffic significantly reduced during lockdown but in the last few weeks I’ve noticed it going up. I know my friends are using their cars more as they’re anxious of rule breakers on public transport.”*

**Male, 36, South East**

*“I’d like to see more extensive cycle paths with their own traffic light systems to relieve car traffic on the roads and that will help people who can’t avoid driving get to their destinations without getting stuck in traffic.”*

**Male, 23, East**

## The community did not mention many significant changes they would like to see in the management of their roads

- Many felt that getting on with road improvement schemes should have been given priority during the most stringent periods of lockdown – they didn't perceive that this had happened.
  - This would, in their view, have ensured that they were returning to a renewed and up-to-date road network and need not have faced congestion caused by roadworks since.

*“If I could change one thing about the journeys I would prefer fewer temporary traffic lights due to roadworks as they cause a lot of delays due to there being only one main road in my town. My journey from Hertfordshire to Birmingham takes longer because of consistent roadworks and the speed limits on the M1.”*

**Female, 23, North West**

*“I would have got the road works done during the pandemic, (assuming the people doing the work were key workers (working during the lockdown), this would have reduced the congestion.”*

**Female, 50, South East**