

# Public experiences of car sharing

## Key findings

### Extent of car sharing

- Overall, 61% of respondents took part in some form of car sharing in the month prior to interview, either giving lifts to, or receiving lifts, from a non-household member, or belonging to a formal car share scheme.
- 39% of all adults said they had received a lift from someone who lived outside their household, while 42% of all adults had given a lift to someone outside their household. The non-household members were usually family or close friends.
- 1% said that they were a member of a formal lift sharing scheme run by their employer or another organisation.

### Nature of car sharing

- Of those who had received lifts, two-fifths (42%) said the last occasion had been for a one-off journey or a journey that would occur less than once a month. However, in 28% of cases the lift took place at least once a week.
- 28% of those who had received lifts said that they made the same journey by another means at least once a week, usually by driving themselves.
- 63% of the passenger car-share journeys were 20 minutes or less in duration, 22% between 21 and 45 minutes and 15% in excess of 45 minutes.
- Lifts covered a broad range of different journey purposes. Overall, 25% of those who received a lift in the last month said that the journey was for the purpose of work/business or travelling from work/business, usually back home.
- The most common reason given for sharing a lift was because it was more convenient, mentioned by 63% of respondents. Around a quarter had shared a lift because they could not drive themselves; 8% said they had done so because they wanted to reduce road congestion; 7% for environmental reasons.
- Overall, around two-thirds (68%) of those who had received a lift made some form of recompense, either by returning the favour or contributing to the cost.

# 1 Introduction

This report examines the extent of car sharing in Great Britain, and how this varies across different socio-demographic groups. It also examines the reasons why people car share and the nature of car sharing trips. Both informal and formal car sharing arrangements are included, though it should be noted that the vast majority of car-sharing is informal. The results are based on a module of questions included in the NatCen Omnibus Survey in July to September 2007 (Box 1).

## Box 1 NatCen Omnibus Survey – design details

The NatCen Omnibus is a random probability survey of adults aged 16 or more living in private households in Great Britain. The July to September Omnibus interviewed 1,530 adults face-to-face in their own homes between 19 July and 17 September. The response rate was 55%. The questions were commissioned and designed by the Department for Transport. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Annex B.

This report was prepared by Chloe Robinson and Alun Humphrey of the National Centre for Social Research and Tracey Budd of the Department for Transport.

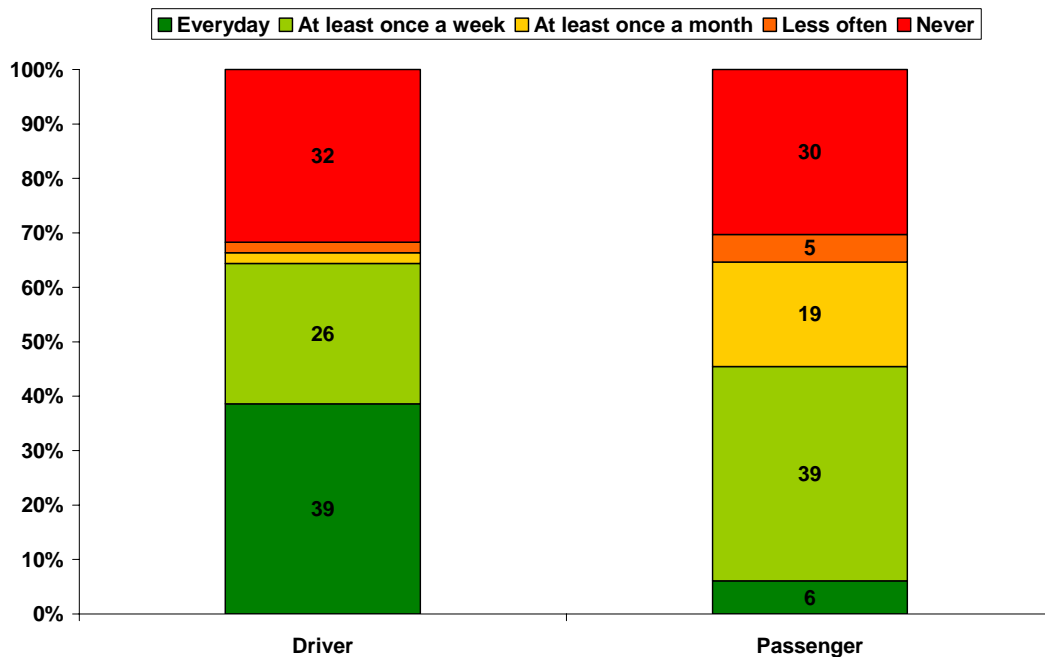
# 2 Extent of car sharing

## Levels of car use

Respondents were asked which methods of travel they had used in the past year within Great Britain and their frequency of car travel, as driver and passenger, in the month before interview.

- Overall, 68% of respondents had driven a car or van in the last year and a similar proportion (70%) had been a passenger in a car or van for travel in Great Britain (Table A.1).
- Two-thirds (66%) of all respondents had driven a car/van at least once in the past month, with almost four in ten (39%) driving everyday (Table A.2).
- 65% of respondents had travelled as a car passenger in the last month, though just 6% had done so everyday. A further 39% of respondents had been a car passenger at least once a week in the past month (Table A.3).

**Figure 1** Frequency of travelling as a car passenger or car driver in the month before interview



Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatCen Omnibus. Base number: 1530

Levels of car use varied across social groups.

- Men, those aged between 35 and 54 and the highest income earners were particularly likely to have driven on a daily basis in the past month.
- People in London were less likely to have driven. A fifth (19%) of Londoners drove every day; 53% had not driven at all in the last month.
- Women and young people aged between 16 and 24 were particularly likely to have travelled as a passenger at least once a week in the month before interview (55% and 60% respectively).

### Levels of car sharing

The questionnaire assessed the extent of car-sharing in several ways. Those who had travelled as a car passenger in the last month were asked whether or not they had *received a lift* from someone who did not live in the same household as themselves during the period, while those who had travelled as a car driver were asked if they had *given a lift* to someone outside their household. Respondents were instructed to include both informal arrangements and formal car-sharing arrangements. All respondents were also asked whether they were a member of a formal lift-sharing scheme operated either by an employer or another organisation.

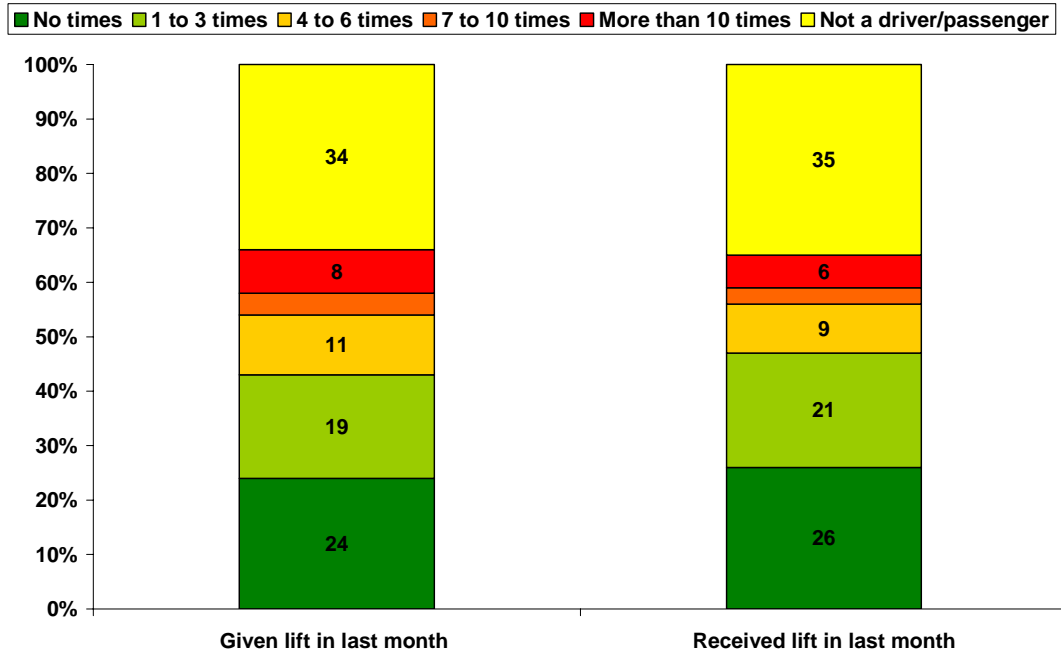
Key results are:

- Nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents who had travelled as a passenger in the past month said they had *received a lift from someone outside their household* during the period.<sup>1</sup> (Table A.4).
- A similar proportion of those who had driven in the past month said they had given *a lift to someone who was not part of their household* during that time (63%) (Table A.5).
- Nationally, 61% of all respondents either *give a lift to or received a lift from someone who did not live in their household* in the month prior to interview.
  - 39% of all respondents had received a lift from someone outside their household in the last month (6% on one occasion, 15% on two or three occasions and 18% four times or more). (Table A.6).
  - 42% of all respondents had given a lift to someone who did not live in their household (6% on one occasion, 13% on two or three occasions and 22% on four or more occasions). (Table A.7).
- Most lift-sharing is based on informal arrangements. Just 1% of respondents said that they were a member of a formal scheme run by their employer or another organisation (Table A.8).
- The following groups were most likely to have participated in some form of car sharing, either giving or receiving lifts in the month prior to interview or belonging to a formal car share scheme (Table A.9):
  - Those aged between 16 and 24 (70%) and between 25 and 34 (68%);
  - Those in the highest income group (69% of those with a personal income of £27,301 or more per year);
  - Those in managerial or professional (67%) or intermediate occupations (66%);
  - Those living outside London (63% compared with 50% of those living in London).
- To a large extent these patterns reflect general patterns of car use, for example, with higher levels of car use by those in the highest income groups, or in managerial occupations. However, the National Travel Survey indicates that young people make fewer car trips than older people, which suggests that young people in particular car-share for a higher proportion of their car trips.

---

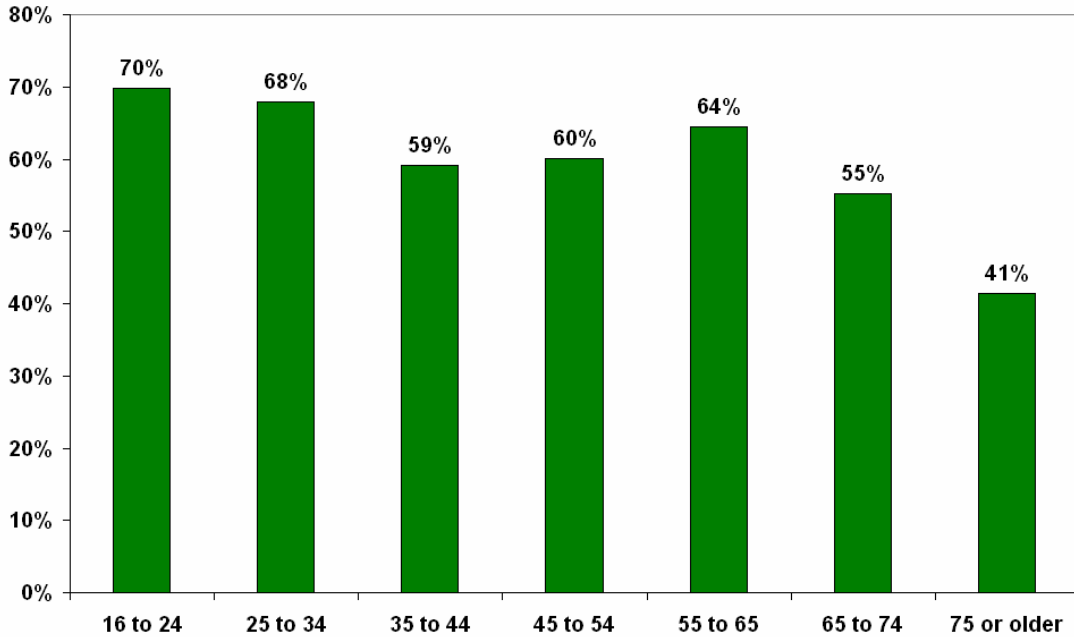
<sup>1</sup> The lift could have been for a regular journey such as travel to work or for an occasional journey such as a day trip.

**Figure 2 Frequency of providing/receiving lifts to/from non-household member in last month**



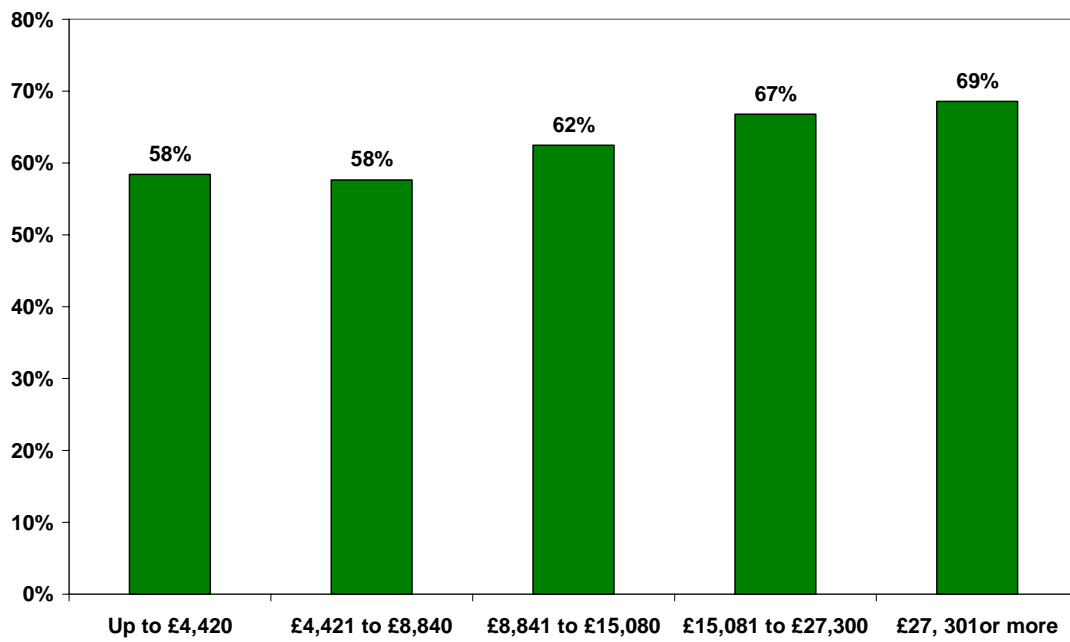
Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatGen Omnibus. Base number: 1530

**Figure 3 Participation in some form of car sharing by age**



Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatGen Omnibus. Base number: 16-24=130, 25-34=218, 35-44=295, 45-54=253, 55-64=266, 65-74=188, 75 or older=180

**Figure 4 Participation in some form of car sharing by income**



Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatGen Omnibus. Base number: Up to £4,420=223, £4,421 to £8,840=320, £8,841 to £15,080=282, £15,081 to £27,300=294, £27,301 or more =219

### 3 Nature of car sharing

Respondents who had car-shared as a passenger in the last month were asked a series of questions about the most recent occasion to assess the nature of these arrangements and their importance to travel patterns. The key results are presented below. Tables A.10 to A.20 present the results for socio-demographic groups, though it should be noted that due to small sample sizes the results should be treated with caution.

#### Frequency of receiving a lift for the specific journey and use of alternative modes

Respondents were asked how often they made their most recent passenger car-share journey and whether they also made the same journey by any other means.

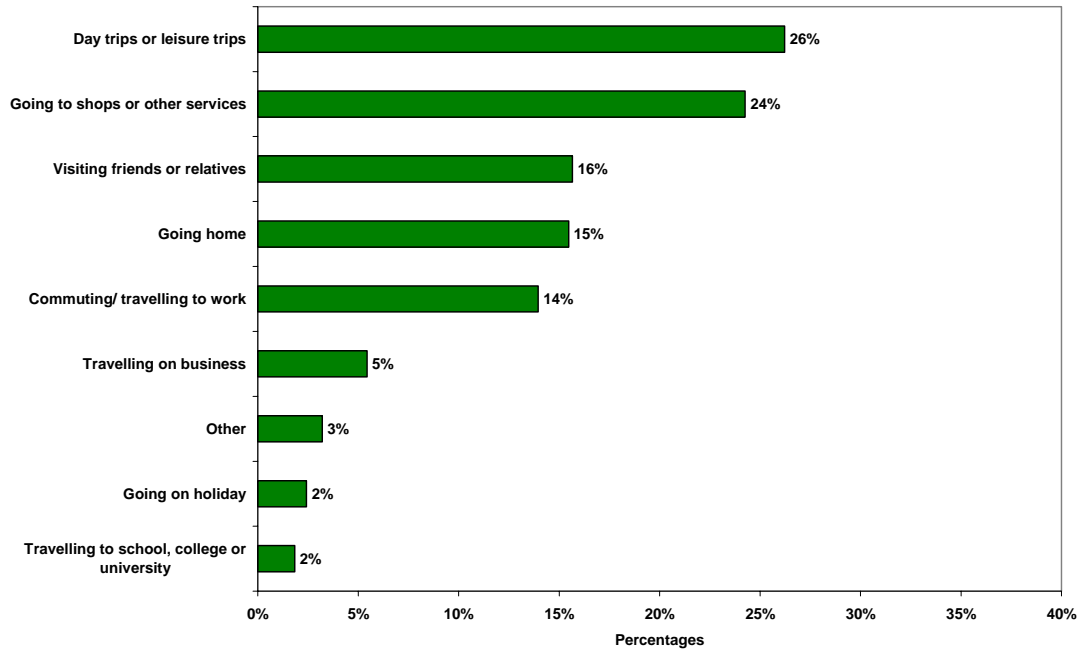
- In two-fifths (42%) of cases the most recent car-share lift had been for a one-off journey or a journey that would occur less than once a month. However, in 28% of cases the lift took place at least once a week.
- A third (33%) said that they never made the journey in any other way, meaning that either the journey was a one-off or that a lift was their only means of making the journey. 28% of lift-sharers said that they made the journey by another way at least once a week.
- For those who did make the journey in another way, around half (47%) drove themselves, 29% used public transport and 24% made the journey on foot or cycled. It should be noted that on the occasion the respondent drove they may have given a lift to another person.
- 38% of those who had been given a lift in the last month said they usually received a lift for other journeys that they made regularly.

#### Journey purpose

Car-share lifts covered a broad range of different journey purposes.

- The most frequently mentioned journeys were day trips or other entertainment/leisure trips (26%) and going to the shops or other services (24%). Other frequently mentioned journeys were visiting friends or relatives (16%), going home (15%) and commuting/travelling to work (14%).
- There was some variation in purpose across social groups, reflecting more general patterns in journey purposes.
- Overall, 25% of those who received a lift in the last month said that the journey was for the purpose of work/business or travelling from work/business, usually back home.

**Figure 5 Purpose of journey for which lift shared**



Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatCen Omnibus. Base number: 596

### **Journey length**

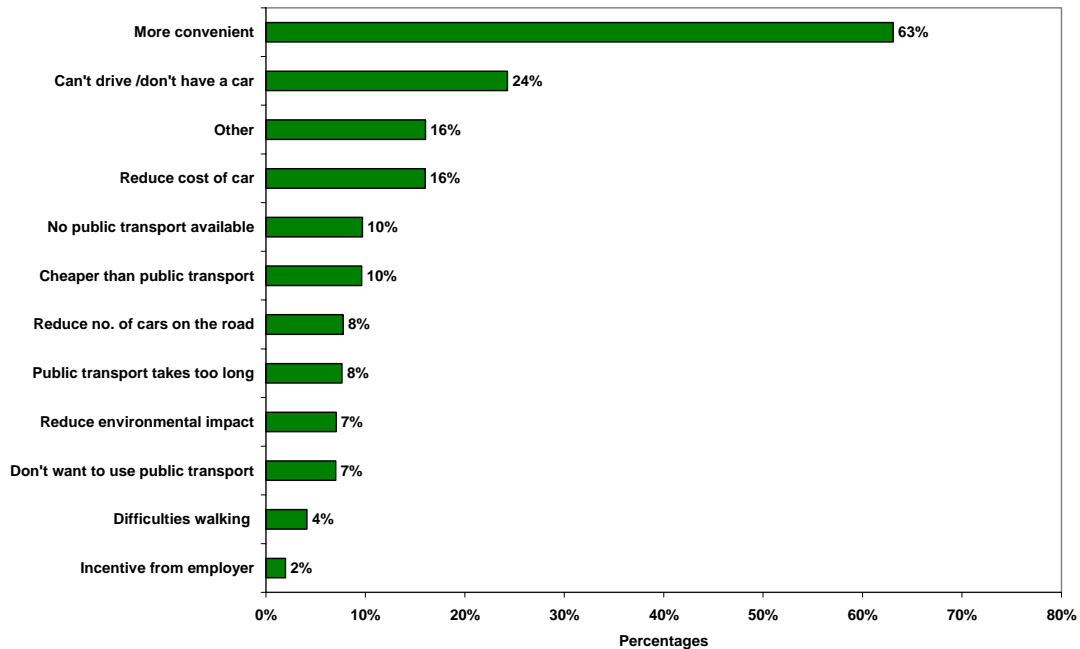
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of car-share trips were of 20 minutes or less in duration. A further 22% were up to 45 minutes in duration, while 15% exceeded 45 minutes.

### **Reasons for sharing a lift**

- The most common reason given for receiving a lift on the last occasion was because it was more convenient, mentioned by 63% of respondents.
- Around a quarter said that they had shared a lift because they could not drive themselves.
- 22% mentioned problems with public transport, either not wanting to use public transport, the time it would take or lack of services available.
- Similarly, 22% mentioned cost-related factors, either to reduce the cost of car travel or because public transport was more expensive.
- 8% had done so because they wanted to reduce road congestion; 7% for environmental reasons.
- 2% mentioned that their employer provided an incentive to car-share.

- Older people and those in routine/manual occupations or with lower incomes were particularly likely to say they could not drive themselves or had no access to a car.

**Figure 6 Reasons for sharing a lift**



Notes: Source: July/September 2007 NatGen Omnibus. Base number: 596

### Relation to driver

- Most car-share trips were given either by relatives (29%) or close friends (38%). A fifth (21%) said that they were given the lift by a work colleague.
- Men were more likely to receive a lift from a work colleague than women, while women were more likely to receive a lift from a relative. Similarly, work colleagues featured more often among those in managerial and professional groups and with higher incomes.

### Driver destination

- In the majority (72%) of cases, the driver was going to the same destination as the respondent meaning that for the remaining 28%, the driver was either going out of their way, or making an extra stop in order to provide the lift.

### Contributions to the cost of the journey

- In around two-thirds (68%) of cases the passenger made some form of recompense for the lift, either by returning the favour (57%) and/or contributing to the cost (20%). Those who had undertaken journeys lasting more than half an hour were more likely to have directly contributed to the cost (35%).