



Department  
for Transport

# National Travel Survey

## Why people travel: Shopping

**Individuals made around 3 shopping trips a week in 2015, compared to around 4 a week in 2002.**

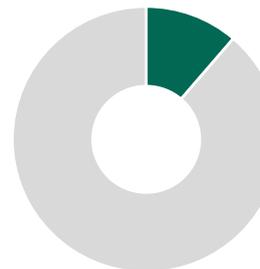
The National Travel Survey (NTS) provides a key source of information on why people travel. This factsheet uses NTS data to focus on shopping trips and what factors might be influencing trends in this type of trip.

A shopping trip is defined in the NTS as ‘any trip to the shops, whether or not anything was bought, and even when there was no intention to buy’.

**Shopping** is the most common reason for travelling, but accounts for a smaller share of distance travelled.



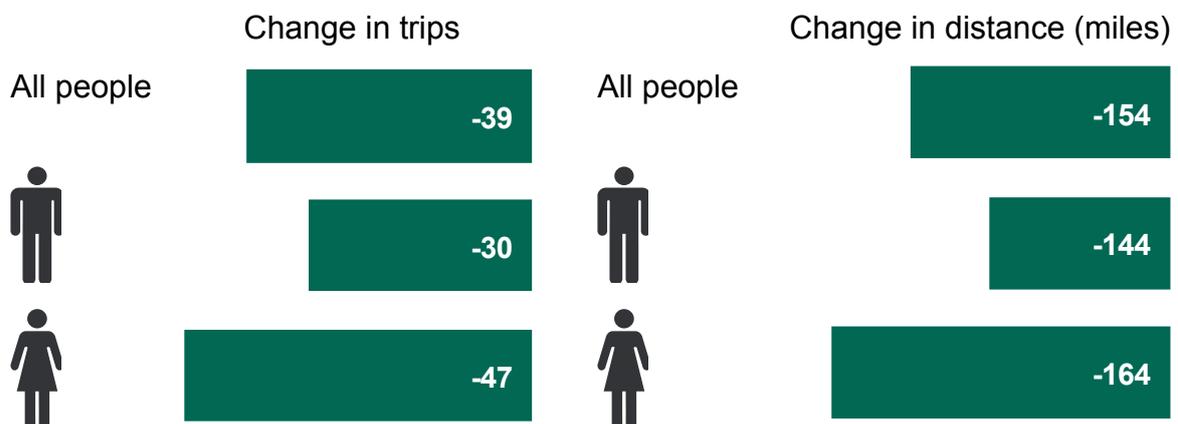
**19%** of trips



**11%** of distance travelled

Since 2002 there has been a downward trend in the number of shopping trips being made. In 2015 there were 177 shopping trips per person compared to 216 in 2002, a reduction of 39 shopping trips. The change in number of shopping trips for females has been larger than that seen in males, with females making 47 less shopping trips in 2015 compared with 2002, and males making 30 less. People are also travelling less for shopping trips, females travelled 164 miles less in 2015 compared to 2002, and males travelled 144 miles less.

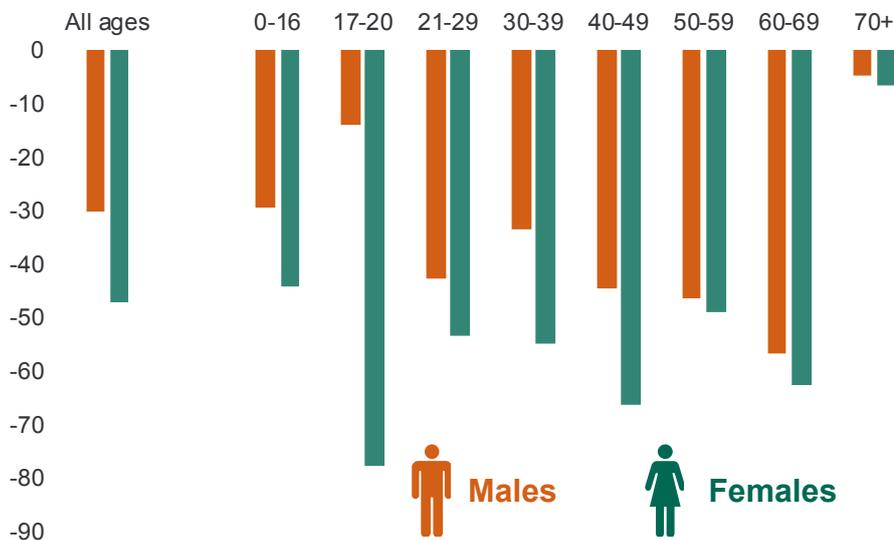
**Chart 1: Change in average trips and distance travelled per person per year for shopping trips: England, 2015 compared with 2002**





## Trends: Shopping trends by age and gender

**Chart 2: Change in average shopping trips per person per year: England, 2015 compared with 2002**

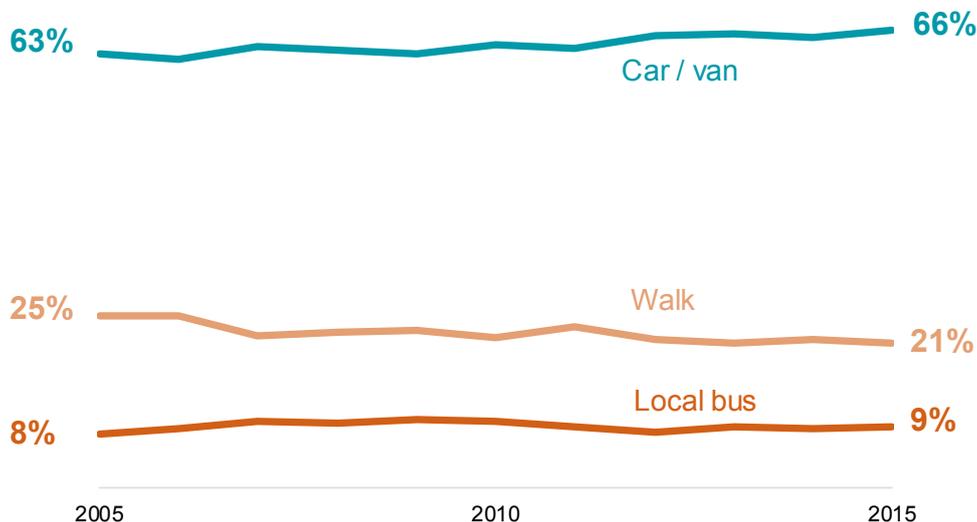


**Chart 2** shows the change in average shopping trips per person per year when comparing 2015 to 2002. Females aged 17-20 have seen the biggest difference in number of shopping trips, with **78 less trips** per person per year for shopping purposes. For males specifically, the biggest difference was seen for the 60-69 age group, with **56 less trips** per person per year for shopping purposes.



## Trends: Mode of travel for shopping trips

**Chart 3: Shopping trips by main mode: England, 2005 to 2015**



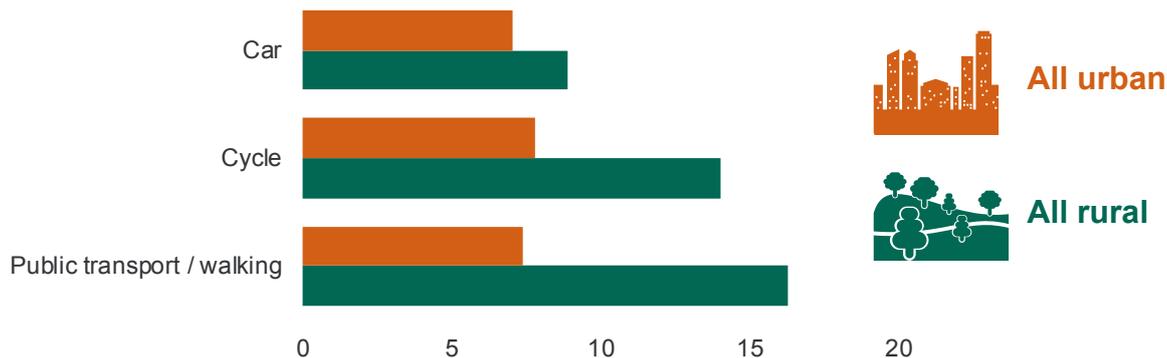
Over the past decade, the proportion of shopping trips being made by main mode of transport has remained relatively stable (**Chart 3**). In 2015, two thirds (66%) of shopping trips were made by car or van, this compares to 63% in 2005. Around 1 in 5 (21%) shopping trips in 2015 were made by walking, compared to 1 in 4 (25%) in 2005. In 2015, 9% of shopping trips were carried out by local bus, compared to 8% a decade ago.



## Regional differences in shopping trips

There are differences in the average number of shopping trips and distance travelled for shopping trips when comparing regions within England. London has the lowest average number of shopping trips per person per year and the lowest average distance travelled for shopping trips per person per year. [Journey time statistics, published by DfT](#) show average minimum travel time to reach the nearest key services by mode of travel, rural and urban areas.

**Chart 4: Average travel time in minutes to food store: England, 2014**

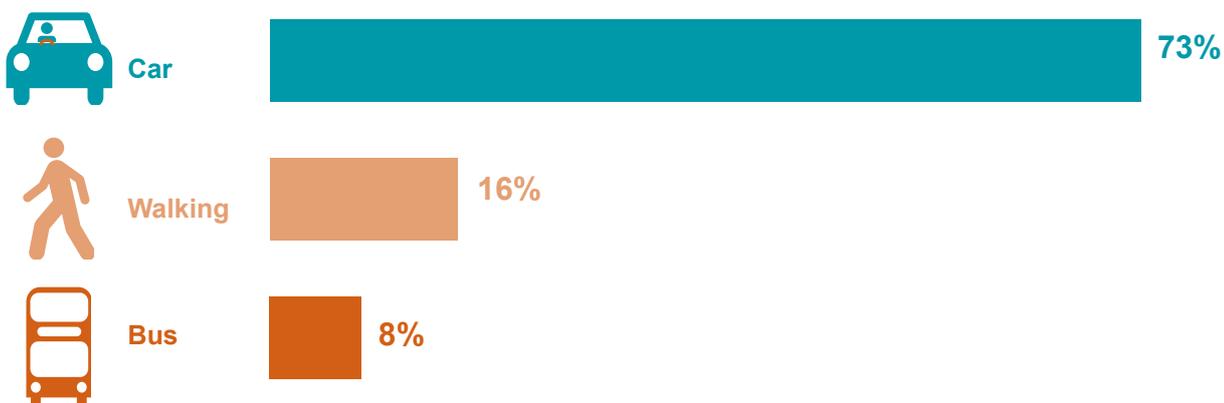


**Chart 4** highlights differences in journey times by mode of transport and urban rural location, the increased journey time to a food store for rural areas supports NTS data which shows people in regions such as the South West travelling on average the furthest for shopping trips.



## Food shopping

**Chart 5: Mode of travel for main household food shop: England, 2015**

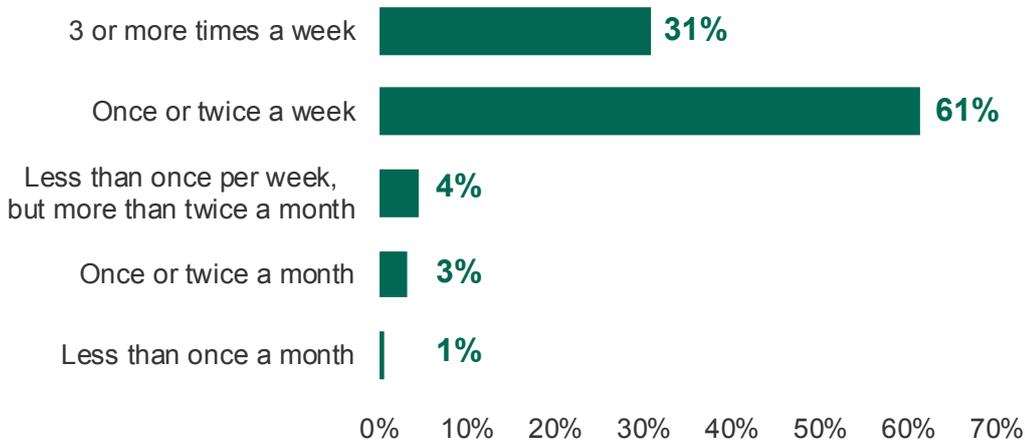


**Chart 5** shows household's mode of travel for their main food shop in 2015. Just under three quarters of households (73%) carried out their main food shop by car or van, 16% walk and 8% go by bus. These proportions were similar to 2013 and 2014.



## Food shopping

**Chart 6: Frequency of households travelling to the shop to buy food and drink for the home: England, 2015**



Households travelled to the shop frequently to buy food and drink for the home in 2015 (**Chart 6**), 31% of households travelled **3 or more times a week** to buy food and drink for the home and 61% went **once or twice a week**. Proportions for 2013 and 2014 were similar. These findings suggest that although shopping trips are declining households are still travelling to the shop specifically to buy food and drink, and therefore it could be other types of shopping trips which are in decline.

**Chart 7: How households usually carry out their main food shop: England, 2015**



**Chart 7** shows how households usually carry out their main food shop in 2015. It shows that 89% of households carry out their main shop by going to the shops in person, 8% order online for home delivery and 2% have someone else go the shops for them (for example a carer, friend or relative). These proportions were similar to 2013 and 2014.

### Notes on the NTS

The NTS is a survey of private households. Data are collected from around 16,000 individuals a year through a face-to-face interview and a 7-day travel diary. As these statistics are derived from a sample survey, resulting estimates can fluctuate as a result of sample variability. Therefore users should be careful when drawing conclusions, particularly from short-term changes or analyses based on small sample sizes.

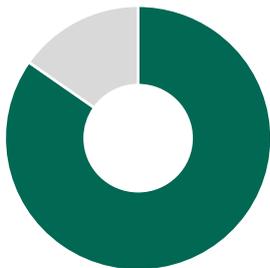
### Coverage

Figures cover England, unless specifically stated.



## Growth in internet access and use

Since 2002 there has been a decline in the number of shopping trips and distance travelled for these trips. One possible explanation for this trend is the growth in internet access and use. The NTS shows that in 2015 **85% of households** had access to the internet at home. **Internet Access statistics, published by the ONS**, show that in 2016, **82% of adults** in Great Britain use the internet every day or almost every day, compared to **35% of adults** in 2006.



**85%** of households have internet access at home



More than **8 out of 10** adults in Great Britain use the internet **daily or almost daily**



## Growth in internet shopping

The growth in internet shopping and households access to the internet is a potential explanatory factor in why there has been a decline in shopping trips. More households are having goods delivered to their home, in 2015 81% of households ordered goods either online, by phone or by post, this compares to 64% in 2002. Of those households ordering goods online, by phone or by post, 25% order place an order at least once a week.

**Chart 8** shows the most common types of goods households ordered online, by phone or by post in 2015. The most common item being ordered is clothes, with 74% of households who ordered online, by phone or post ordering clothes. Two thirds of households ordered books/CDs/DVDs, and 57% of households bought holiday/travel tickets. This supports the point that it may be specific types of shopping trips which are in decline.

**Chart 8: Types of goods households ordered online, by phone or by post: England, 2015**



**74%** of households ordered clothes



**67%** of households ordered books, CDs, DVDs



**57%** of households bought holiday/travel tickets

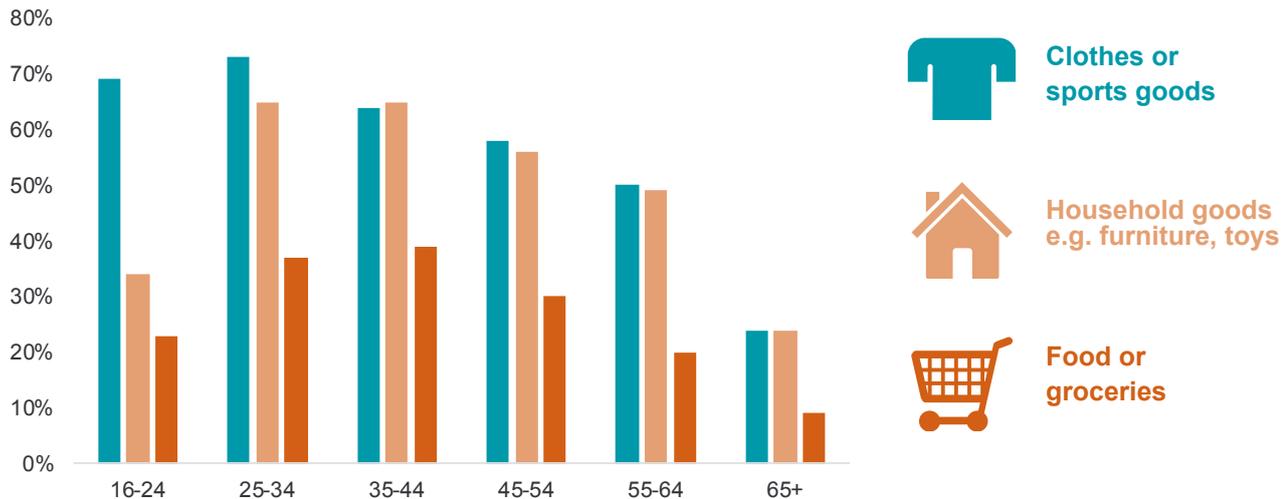
**Internet Access statistics, published by the ONS**, show that in 2016, **77% of adults** in Great Britain had bought goods or services online in the past 12 months, this compares to **53% of adults** in 2008. The **Internet Access statistics** also highlight differences between age groups when looking at the types of goods and services bought online (**Chart 9, page 6**).



## Growth in internet shopping

The largest difference between age groups in goods and services bought online was for clothes or sports goods, with 73% of adults aged 25 to 34 purchasing these in the past 12 months, compared to 24% of those aged 65 and over. The ordering of food or groceries online varies by age group, 39% of those aged 34-44 have ordered these online in the past twelve months, compared to 9% of those aged 65 and over.

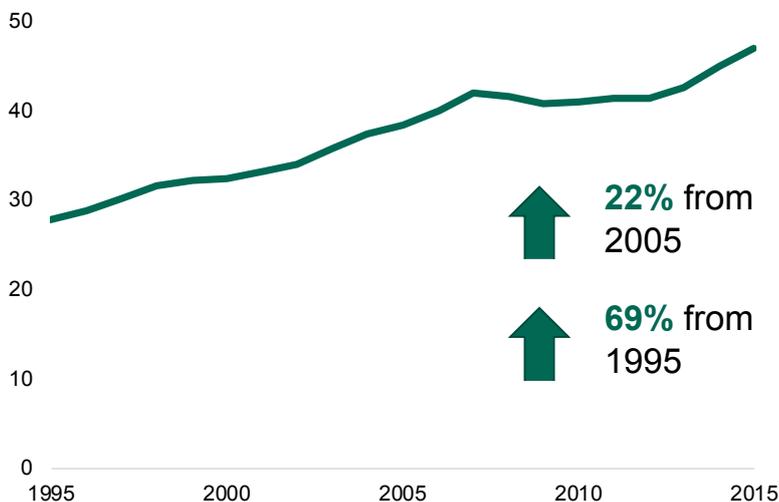
**Chart 9: Types of purchases made online by age group: Great Britain, 2016**



## Road traffic: Light Goods Vehicles (Vans)

The NTS collects data on personal travel and therefore trips made specifically to deliver/collect goods in the course of work are excluded. [Road Traffic Estimates, published by DfT](#) present annual estimates of traffic on Great Britain's roads.

**Chart 10: LGV road traffic (billion vehicle miles): Great Britain, 1995 to 2015**



[Road Traffic Estimates](#) show there has been a rapid rise in light goods vehicle (LGV) traffic over the last 20 years, LGV traffic now makes up around 15% of total traffic, compared to 10% in 1995. In 2015 LGVs travelled 46.9 billion vehicle miles, an increase of 22% when compared with 2005 (**Chart 10**). The growth in internet shopping outlined earlier in this factsheet is one of the possible drivers of the growth in LGV traffic.



### Further reading and references

More details about travel behaviours of English residents can be found in the 2015 National Travel Survey publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2015>.

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: 2015](#) on the above page.

More factsheets on further specific topics from the National Travel Survey can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nts-factsheets>.

### Contact us

For any questions or queries in relation to this factsheet, please contact the National Travel Survey team:

- Responsible Statistician: Claire Pini
- Email: [national.travelsurvey@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:national.travelsurvey@dft.gsi.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 020 7944 3097