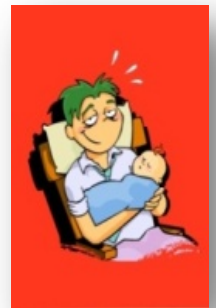
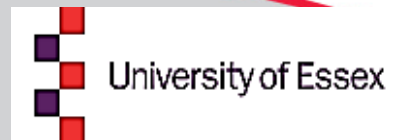


# Life Transitions and Travel Behaviour Project Research Storyline

## How Life Events Prompt Changes in the Commute to Work



University of the  
West of England



# The value of gaining a better understanding of commuting

- Commuting trips account for about a quarter of carbon emissions from passenger transport
- Achieving a modal shift in commuting towards public transport, walking and cycling will generate considerable benefits locally and globally
- But commuting behaviours become routine and people are often **resistant to change**
- Research is needed to understand in what circumstances **people are open to changing** commute mode
- There is increasing interest in **life events** like moving home or changing jobs as opportunities for behaviour change



# Understanding Society

- **Longitudinal studies** survey the **same participants** at regular intervals **over time**
- This enables us to understand how and why their behaviour is *changing* over time
- **Understanding Society** began in 2009 as a **new longitudinal study** of the UK population
- It is tracking the lives of members of **40,000 households** and is part funded by DfT



Understanding Society  
THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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About – Everything you need to know about the study

Understanding Society is a unique and valuable academic study that captures important information every year about the social and economic circumstances and attitudes of people living in 40,000 UK households.

It also collects additional health information from around 20,000 of the people who take part.

Information from the longitudinal survey is primarily used by academics, researchers and policy makers in their work, but the findings are of interest to a much wider group of people including those working in the third sector, health practitioners, business, the media and the general public.

Key facts

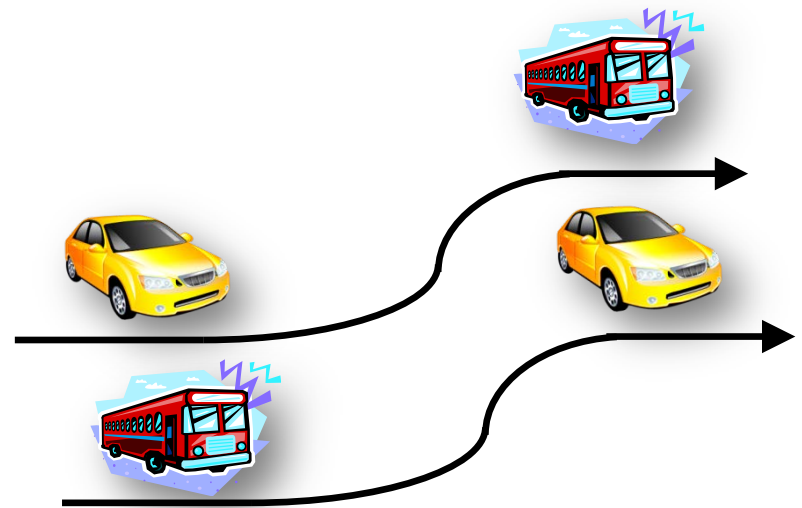
- 40,000 households – 2,640 postcode sectors in England, Scotland and Wales – 2,400 addresses from Northern Ireland
- £48.9 million funding (until 2015)
- Approximately 3 billion data points of information
- Innovation Panel of 1,500 respondents
- Participants aged 10 and older
- Building on 18 years of British Household Panel Survey
- 35-60 minutes: the average time to complete each face to face interview

# A longitudinal study of commuting behaviour

## The Life Transitions and Travel Behaviour Project

- Took advantage of the first two waves of Understanding Society (2009/10 and 2010/11)
- For the first time it enabled us to examine the circumstances in which individuals **change their commuting mode** across a large sample of the English workforce

We investigated the relationships between commute mode changes and life events by examining bivariate associations and conducting multiple regression analysis



# How were people commuting to work in 2009/10?

## Mainly by car...



- Nearly 2 in 3 people travelled to work by car in 2009/10

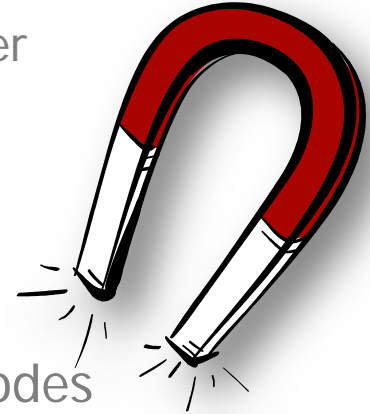
Commute mode	Percentage of English workforce (weighted)
Car (as driver or passenger)	64.2%
Walk	10.0%
Working from home	7.8%
Bus/coach	5.4%
Train	4.5%
Cycle	3.6%
Underground/light rail	2.7%
Other	1.7%
Total	100.0%

Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 (2009/10)

# How likely is it for people to *change* commute mode from year to year?

## This depends on commute mode

- Non-car commuters were much more likely to change mode than car commuters e.g.
  - 1 in 3 cyclists and public transport users switched to another mode
  - Only 1 in 10 car commuters made a change
- **The car also exerts a strong pull** to users of other modes
  - Half of the cyclists and public transport users that *changed mode* switched to car commuting
  - Young adults (<30) were the *most likely* age group to switch to commuting by car



# Car commuting is **highly stable**

- Car commuting is also sustained for **twice as long** as non-car commuting:

Average period of time spent commuting by different modes (no. of consecutive years)	
Car / motorcycle	6.3
Walk or cycle	3.2
Public transport	3.0

Source: British Household Panel Survey : 1991- 2009

- Once people start commuting by car they remain commuting by car for a significant period of time

# Changes to and from car commuting are **much more common** for those experiencing **life events**

e.g. 15% of non-car commuters changed to car commuting with **no change** in employment

Life event	Life event prevalence	%age of workers switching from:			
		car to non-car		non-car to car	
		with life event	with no life event	with life event	with no life event
Gained a driving licence	1.9%	<b>18.48</b>	8.49	<b>34.68</b>	16.10
Switched employer	10.5%	<b>18.21</b>	7.38	<b>29.39</b>	<b>15.08</b>
Gained a partner	1.9%	<b>16.32</b>	8.40	23.86	16.65
Residential relocation	6.8%	<b>15.01</b>	8.04	<b>23.24</b>	16.15
Had child	3.9%	8.54	8.58	<b>22.85</b>	16.56
Lost a partner	1.2%	<b>16.45</b>	8.48	15.78	16.81

Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 and 2 (2009/10 to 2010/11); n=15,200 workers  
 Bold figures highlight greater prevalence of commute mode change amongst the group experiencing each life event  
 The table illustrates simple bivariate associations. Individuals may experience more than one life event at a time

**This doubles to 30%** of non-car commuters changing to car commuting **with a change** in employment



# Change in distance to work is the **main driver** of changes to commuting mode

Clearly this occurs when people **move home** or **change employer**

- Change to car commuting is more likely if the distance increases above **two miles (30 times more likely!)**
- Change to non-car commuting is more likely if the distance reduces below **three miles (9 times more likely)**

Commuting mode is *highly sensitive* to distance, especially to *increases* in distance



# Changing where you live is also influential

- There is *increased likelihood* of switching to non-car commuting with:
  - Moves to areas with higher population density
  - Moves to areas with lower journey times to employment by public transport
- There is *increased likelihood* of switching to active commuting (walking and cycling) with:
  - Moves to areas with mixed land uses (homes, shops, jobs and services)



# Changing employer has an independent effect **beyond** changes in work distance

- Changing employer makes it more likely that people change to or from commuting by car
- This may relate to a change in transport availability to or at the workplace
- But it could also be that employment change simply prompts *deliberation* over commuting behaviour



# Environmental attitude makes a difference

- Car commuters are more likely to switch to non-car commuting if they are 'willing to act to protect the environment'
- Conversely, being unwilling to act does not make it more likely to switch to car commuting



# Other factors that make it more likely to change to/from car commuting

## Changing to car commuting

- Acquiring a driving licence
- High no. of household cars
- Live outside London
- Live close to large employment centres
- Aged 16-29
- Male
- Do not have higher education qualification



## Changing to non-car commuting

- Stopping cohabitation
- Low no. of household cars
- Live in an area with a poorer living environment (main roads)
- Self-employed or working for a small employer



# Implications

- Job changes and home moves are frequently experienced events that strongly increase the likelihood of a change in commuting mode
- The characteristics of where people live also matters
- Policy areas that can respond to this:
  - Travel planning, especially working with employers
  - Public transport provision
  - Spatial planning
- For further information, including a more detailed Evidence Summary, see...