New data finds Aussies are commuting further and for longer

New report reveals Australians are travelling further and for longer on their daily commute, amid housing affordability concerns

SYDNEY, October 2025 – Australians are travelling further, for longer, and paying more to get to work, according to the *Real Australian Commute Report 2025*, commissioned by Real Insurance.

Based on a survey of over 5,000 commuters nationwide, the average commute now takes 64 minutes a day, an increase of ten minutes since 2022, with workers covering 37 kilometres daily, up from 32 kilometres just three years ago.

While the average out-of-pocket cost sits at $19.10 per day, car owners are also feeling the pinch of rising maintenance costs, with annual vehicle upkeep now at $2,298, compared with $2,015 in 2022.

Cars remain the most popular way to get to work, with almost two in three Australians (64%) relying on private vehicles. However, trains have seen the strongest growth in usage, with three in 10 (30%) commuters now choosing rail, up from just over one in five (21%) in 2022. Other modes such as bus travel, walking, rideshare and trams have remained steady, while use of non-electric bikes and scooters has dropped from 8 per cent in 2022 down to 6 per cent in 2025.

When the Journey to Work Breaks the Budget

The research shows the cost-of-living crisis is continuing to weigh heavily on commuting choices. More than seven in 10 Australians (71%) say financial pressures are impacting the way they travel to work, consistent with 2022, while almost two in three (62%) still consider commuting to be "expensive."

To manage costs, many are adjusting their behaviour. For some, this means finding the cheapest fuel deals available, while others are relying more heavily on public transport or deliberately avoiding toll roads, which has emerged as a new strategy in 2025. A growing number of commuters are also embracing multi-modal journeys, mixing cars, trains, buses or walking to possibly save money. Meanwhile, a smaller group are turning to navigation apps to help them identify faster and cheaper routes in real time. By contrast, use of car-sharing services has declined since 2022.

"In outer-urban areas, cost pressures hit harder because driving often isn't a choice, it's a necessity. With few or no viable public transport options, families face mounting fuel, toll and maintenance costs just to reach work or education. What we're seeing is not lifestyle choice but forced car ownership, a symptom of transport disadvantage that's deepening under the current cost-of-living crisis."

From Congested Roads to Packed Trains: What Annoys Australians Most

Beyond the financial burden, Australians are grappling with daily frustrations that make their journeys more stressful. Public transport users are most annoyed by delays and cancellations, with two thirds (66%) highlighting this as their top concern. Overcrowding is also a significant source of frustration, reported by nearly six in 10 (59%) commuters, while more than half (52%) say they are impacted by the behaviour or even the smells of fellow passengers. Despite these challenges, nearly nine in 10 (90%) try to keep themselves entertained on public transport, and seven in 10 (71%) report that they attempt to stay productive during their travel time.

Drivers face a different set of challenges. Traffic congestion remains the single biggest frustration, according to nearly six in 10 (59%), while inconsiderate (51%) or aggressive (49%) drivers are close behind. Interestingly, almost half of those who commute by car admit that they judge other drivers based on the type or brand of vehicle they own, suggesting that the social dynamics of driving play a subtle but ongoing role in shaping the commuter experience.

"For people living on the fringe, long, stressful commutes are more than an inconvenience, they're a daily drain on wellbeing. Hours spent in congestion or unreliable public transport services translate into less time for family, exercise and rest. The mental toll is often invisible, but it intensifies social isolation and fatigue, especially where commuting is the only link between affordable housing and employment."

Flexibility Rules, But Longer Commutes Are Here to Stay

The survey highlights how commuting patterns are closely linked to work choices and broader lifestyle decisions. Australians now say they could tolerate up to 91 minutes of daily travel before reconsidering their job or where they live, a significant increase from just 62 minutes in 2022. This shift suggests that while commutes are getting longer, there may also be a growing acceptance that travel is a trade-off for housing and employment opportunities.

At the same time, flexibility remains a key priority. Nearly two in three respondents who are hybrid workers (64%) said they would consider changing jobs if they were required to return to the office full time. The cost of commuting is also a central factor in where Australians choose to live, with 65 per cent reporting that it influences their housing decisions, and 58 per cent saying it has already shaped where they have settled.

"Hybrid and flexible work are now lifelines for outer-urban workers. Without them, many simply couldn't sustain the time and cost of daily travel. Giving people flexibility isn't just about productivity, it's about equity. It helps level the playing field for those who can't afford to live close to the city but still need access to urban jobs and services."

Next Stop: Electric Cars, Scooters and Smarter Infrastructure

The future of commuting in Australia is also undergoing change. Nearly half of Australians (48%) either own or are considering purchasing an electric or hybrid vehicle. For most, the attraction lies in lower running costs, which were cited by nearly three in four (74%) respondents who own or are thinking about owning an electric/hybrid car. However, barriers remain. Affordability was identified as the biggest obstacle by 39 per cent of respondents not interested in owning a hybrid/electric car, while more than one in three (36%) pointed to challenges around access to charging facilities. Environmental scepticism is also on the rise, with 35 per cent questioning the benefits of electric vehicles.

Attitudes towards e-bikes and scooters remain mixed. While 43 per cent view them positively, almost a third (32%) hold a negative perception, suggesting that widespread adoption is still some way off.

Infrastructure is another pressure point. Almost half of respondents (48%) said that recent transport upgrades have done little to improve their daily commute. When asked about priorities for government investment, commuters most often pointed to better roads, more frequent or expanded public transport services, cheaper fares and reduced tolls as the measures that would make the biggest difference to their travel experience.

"If we want fairer, cleaner, and more connected commutes, we need to start by fixing the gaps at the edge, where buses don't run, trains stop short, and walking or cycling isn't realistic or safe. Investment in frequent, reliable and accessible public transport, shared transport (i.e. micromobility), and better first-mile links would transform how outer-suburban and regional communities connect to opportunity."

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About the Real Australian Commute Report 2025

The findings in this article are drawn from the Real Commute Report 2025, which surveyed a nationally representative sample of Australian adults about their commuting habits and attitudes. The survey was conducted online, using demographic stratification to ensure responses reflected Australia's diverse population by age, gender, and location.

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning provider of insurance products, specialising in life, income protection, funeral, health, home, car, pet, travel and landlords' insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance have protected the quality of life of many Australians through the delivery of innovative products. Real Insurance is the proud recipient of many product and service awards, including being announced as the 2023 Roy Morgan Customer Satisfaction - Risk & Life Insurer of the Year, 2026 Mozo Experts Choice for Exceptional Value Car Insurance - 2025 Product Review award for Life Insurance and Funeral Insurance, 2023 WeMoney Finalist award for Best in Flexibility in the life insurance category, and Feefo's 2025 Platinum Trusted Service Award across a range of products. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd.