



Media Release

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NEW RESEARCH REVEALS PET PEEVES AND UNUSUAL HABITS OF REAL AUSSIE COMMUTERS

Real Insurance study sheds light on daily commuting struggles, while experts point to opportunities for self-improvement

For anyone that has ever taken a bus, train, or driven to work, the daily commute is a subject that quickly draws countless tales – often part horror story, part humorous saga - from colleagues, family and friends alike. According to the *Real Insurance Australian Commuting Survey*, released today, this source of stress and frustration is common for many Australians, and will continue to be so as more and more employed commit to lengthy commutes in search of the perfect balance between work and home life. Fortunately, this seemingly utopian ideal is appearing to move within reach as experts recommend Aussies take advantage of their commute as an opportunity for self-improvement and positive reflection.

The *Real Insurance Australian Commuting Survey* is the fifth instalment in a series of national studies, with the latest round investigating the habits of, and challenges faced by, those travelling to work by car and on public transport.

Head of Corporate Affairs and Real Insurance spokesperson Mr Phillip Anderson said, “Commuting is no longer seen as a way of simply getting from A to B. We’ve found that the majority of commuters use a car to get to work, and on average they’ll spend more than seven hours in their car during a typical week. That’s nearly 400 hours per year, so it’s not much of a stretch to suggest that the car, and in many ways, public transport, have already become an extension of the home. This is particularly true in light of technological advancements that encourage multi-tasking and on-the road behaviours that traditionally might only have been seen in the home.”

With the average Aussie prepared to spend up to 56 minutes each way on their commute, the likelihood of being irritated or developing unusual habits on the road is becoming more common during what can be a tense and draining journey.

The majority of respondents say ‘Tailgaters’ – those who drive so close behind you they appear to be trying to save petrol by reducing wind resistance – and ‘Non-indicators’ (55.8% each) are the main source of annoyance faced while driving. Trailing only slightly in levels of peevishness caused are ‘Lane-hoggers’ (47.4%) and ‘Lane-cutters’ (45%).

However, it can be suggested that there is an element of hypocrisy here with some of the more unusual habits admitted to by respondents including brushing or flossing their teeth, shaving, watching a favourite TV show, and even drying their hair with the car heater.

Further raising concerns for car commuters, and no doubt their collective blood pressures, is an apparent misunderstanding of the rules - a massive 92 per cent of car commuters highlighted this as a major source of

frustration. A similar number also agreed that too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe (86%), giving rise to substantial support for fines or bans on drivers that behave poorly (85%) as revealed by the survey.

“These responses clearly paint a picture of cars filled with either distracted or frustrated individuals making the daily trek to work. Importantly, this is not something that occurs once a month or once a week, it’s happening every day and for a considerable amount of time. Perhaps some regular international travel might help - almost half (48%) of the respondents questioned agreed that they would be less likely to complain about Australian drivers after seeing how people drive overseas,” Mr Anderson added.

While the majority of respondents across Australia identified the car as their mode of commuter transport, the survey also reveals a similar battle taking place in the public transport arena, with more than half (55%) of respondents agreeing that it would be great were it not for other commuters.

Leading frustrations include the desire for better manners from fellow passengers, while there is also a strong call for commuters to be friendlier to each other with 82 per cent agreeing that this would have a positive impact on their daily commute.

Perhaps most alarming is the national anxiety over sharing cramped conditions with other members of the general public and the potential health concerns. An overwhelming majority of public transport commuters claim that ‘Germ sharers’ and ‘Loudmouths’ pose the biggest annoyance (93% each), with ‘Seat-hoggers’ and ‘Blockers’ following closely behind (91% and 89%, respectively).

Whether it be travelling to work by car or by public transport, the challenges facing commuters seem to be the source of great anguish for the public. It begs the question, how are workers able to tolerate the apparent and consistent agony?

According to Dr David Bissell, one of Australia’s leading experts on commuting, things may not be as bad as they appear and perceptions are to blame, “What’s particularly striking about commuters is that while they’re very quick to be negative about the time spent on the way to work, increasingly they are using it for important, positive ends. For many it’s about preparing for the day ahead, for other’s they really value the personal time. Technology has really led this where the use of tablets and phones free up treasured time at home. We even see people watching films or catching up on boxsets while on their commute and in a funny way, they are the individuals who are going in the right direction as they are making the most of their travel time. Those individuals have made a decision on how they want to use their trip and answered, how can I beat the humdrum and mundane? What do I do with this time? What will make me feel better?”

Reflecting on the study, Dr Bissell added, “I hope that some of the findings in this research will be a wakeup call as to truly maximise the commute, we need to change our thinking and be more positive. Questions need to be asked; how can I get to know my city better or get to know new people? Perhaps our commuters need to take a slightly different route to work, even if only for a few days a week. Exploiting that wiggle room is something they can control to mix up their day to day and keep the commute interesting.”

“The spotlight is very often on the negativity of the commute, but if we focus on the positive things we see, the daily human interactions, it will change the concept as a whole, leading to a substantially more enjoyable experience,” Dr Bissell concluded.

With a firm focus on mindset being the key to happy commuting, Dr Bissell’s comments offer a new way of thinking for many, and with proven results. As cities continue to expand and accommodation costs rise in city centres, it is widely regarded that commuting is here to stay and while a positive outlook may go some way to

improving the commute, it is clear there is a limit. For many the enjoyment of their work is a major factor in the commute with 59% of respondents agreeing they would travel for more than an hour for their dream job as opposed to less than 30 mins for less than ideal job.

It certainly highlights the external factors which can make the commute even more painful where the real challenge is not with the people around us, but in the job or career which has been chosen and perhaps, needs to be changed.

Additional findings from the report

Top Pet Peeves on the Road:

- Tailgaters – they drive so close behind you they appear to be trying to save petrol by reducing wind resistance (55.8%).
- The non-indicators – they assume everyone knows what they plan to do and refuse to use indicators (55.8%).
- Lane-hoggers – they drive slow in the fast lane and do not move over to let faster traffic go by or don't let you merge into their lane (47.4%)
- Lane-cutters – they enthusiastically skip the queue and cut in further ahead, slowing down the traffic flow (45%).

Top Pet Peeves on Public Transport:

- Germ sharers – they spread their germs around when coughing and/or sneezing by not covering their mouth (93%).
- Loudmouths – they talk loudly on the phone or with others, sometimes about very personal topics (93%).
- Seat hoggers – they take up unnecessary space, including those who prefer to let their bag (s) sit instead of you (91%).
- Blockers – they block your way in or out by standing too close to the door or shove you out of the way to make their way in or out (89%)

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About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning Australian insurer, with a goal to protect the quality of people's lives. Real Insurance has been named as the top Risk and Life Insurer in Roy Morgan's 2015 annual Customer Satisfaction

Awards and was also awarded the 2014 Highly Commended Trusted Brand Award in the Life and Funeral Insurance categories, as voted for by Australian consumers. The company has been in the Australian market since 2005 with product offerings in car, home, life, income, pet, funeral, travel and bike insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd and The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd.

About the 'Real Insurance Commuting Survey'

In order to explore the commuter experience in Australia, CoreData surveyed 1000 Australians across the nation in October 2016.

Hard quotas by state were also engaged to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples (NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200).