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About the report

The *Real Australian Commute Report* forms part of the Real Insurance Research Series. In its latest instalment, this study explores aspects of commuting in Australia, looking to tackle the cost, time and distance commuted by Australians and how this impacts where people want to work and live. It also explores the effect that COVID-19 had on the experience of Australian commuters working from home.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Real Insurance and conducted by CoreData between 22 July and 12 August 2022. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 5,001 responses from commuting Australians.

The sample is representative of the general commuting population of Australia in terms of cost, distance and time spent commuting across age, gender, wealth, and state/territory.

Important things to observe about the charts and figures

- Footnotes directly underneath the charts (e.g. *Asked to mass transit commuters only*) mainly refer to the sampling involved per question. This is to differentiate who was asked that particular question in the survey.
- Charts without a specific note represent questions that were asked to all respondents.
- The types of questions asked are also noted. For instance, *Multiple answers allowed* appears when the question called for more than one answer from the respondent.
- Some charts and figures may not be equal to 100% due to rounding differences. This is also true for summed up figures.
- Figures were determined from self-reported estimates provided by respondents for a typical week or typical day.
- Annual averages and annual figures were derived/calculated from the survey responses.
- Certain figures have had outlier responses removed and where applicable this will be accompanied with a specific note.
Key findings
Key findings

Commuting time and costs are usually higher in capital cities

- Capital cities have a higher average annual commute cost in 5 of 8 states and territories compared to rural and regional areas.*
- Commuting times are higher in all capital cities compared to suburban, regional and rural areas in their respective state or territory.*

Commuting is costly

- Over 7 in 10 (71%) commuters agree that the rising cost of living has reasonably impacted their commuting costs in the past year. Close to 1 in 2 (48%) say that this has resulted in considerable financial pressure on their household.
- More than 4 in 5 (83%) agree that commuting has never been as expensive as it is now.
- The average daily cost of commuting per person is $20, while the average yearly cost of commuting per person is $4,003.*
- The findings suggest that collectively, Australians spend $43.2 billion annually on commuting.**
- The furthest average daily commutes belong mainly to areas outside of capital cities with other VIC having the tied longest at 39 km with other NSW, other QLD (37km), and other SA (35 km).*
- For capital cities, Brisbane has the furthest average commute at 33 km, followed by Adelaide and Melbourne (both averaging 30 km), Perth (29 km), then Sydney at 28km.*

Commuters like public transport (without the public)

- Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) mass transit commuters wish that public transport commuters had better manners.
- Over 8 in 10 (83%) wish people were friendlier to each other on public transport.
- Close to 8 in 10 (78%) also believe that commuters with poor manners should be fined or even banned from using public transport.

Private commuting can be frustrating

- Over 9 in 10 (91%) car commuters wish other drivers had better knowledge of the rules.
- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) think that drivers behaving poorly should be fined or even banned from using the roads.
- Additionally, more than 8 in 10 (85%) agree that too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe.
- Nearly 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.

*Outliers have been removed in analysis.

**This figure was calculated using survey results and ABS data from June 2022 for employment numbers to get the commuting population. The commuting population was used with self reported costs from survey respondents to derive this figure.
Key findings

Commuters want to be closer to home

- Almost 2 in 3 (68%) commuters agree that commuting time and costs strongly impact their job choice. Additionally, close to 3 in 4 (73%) said they would change jobs to reduce their commute if there were work opportunities closer to home.
- The maximum commuters are willing to spend per week on average commuting before they would move house or change jobs is $80*, while the average longest commute people could tolerate before moving house or changing jobs is 62 mins.*
- Almost 3 in 5 (59%) commuters have somewhat changed their view on how much they are willing to spend in time and money to commute to work due to their experiences through COVID.
- Over 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.

When buying a car, environmental friendliness was important to some

- Low running costs were extremely important when buying a car for more than 2 in 5 (42%) commuters, followed closely by good performance (39%). Over 1 in 5 (21%) point to environmental friendliness as a critical factor in purchasing a car.
- Over 2 in 3 (68%) commuters who own environmentally friendly cars estimate that they are saving more than $150 a month on fuel costs by having an electric/hybrid car; however, over 1 in 2 (55%) say they are paying more than $150 a month on electricity due to owning an hybrid/electric car.
- Many agree that electric/hybrid cars are more expensive when it comes to purchasing spare parts (49%), servicing (41%), and repairs (22%).

Tolls are taking a toll on commuters

- Over 4 in 5 (85%) commuters feel that the government can be doing more to ease the cost of commuting.
- Over 1 in 2 (56%) said that they avoid road tolls on their commute.
- Over 1 in 2 (55%) agree that rising fuel prices are making the cost of tolls unsustainable for them. However, 1 in 3 (33%) agree that road tolls are worth every cent.
- Almost 1 in 2 (49%) people whose income is $200,000 and above agree that road tolls are worth every cent, much higher than any other income band.
- 2 in 3 (66%) of Sydney commuters say that they avoid road tolls on their commute, this is the most of any capital city. This is closely followed by Melbourne (64%) and Brisbane (60%).

Although people are happy living in regional or rural areas, many want to move back

- Over 6 in 10 (62%) commuters say that commuting cost and time are an important consideration when choosing where to live.
- More than 9 in 10 (94%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are at least somewhat happy, with 1 in 2 (50%) being very happy.
- However, almost 7 in 10 (68%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are already in the process or are planning to move back, with more than 1 in 3 (36%) already in the process of moving back.
- The main reasons for moving back are missing friends and family (44%), work opportunities (42%), and missing the lifestyle (37%).

*Outliers have been removed in analysis.
Best and worst commutes
Capital cities have a higher average annual commute cost in 5 of 8 states and territories compared to rural and regional areas. The average daily cost of commuting is relatively split between capital cities and the rest of their respective states. Other ACT has the highest cost at $27 per day, followed by Other NSW ($23), Hobart ($22), Other SA ($22), Sydney ($22) and Melbourne ($21).
Comparative commute times

**Average daily commute time per person**

- **NSW**: 62 minutes (Capital city), 52 minutes (Rest of state)
- **VIC**: 57 minutes (Capital city), 47 minutes (Rest of state)
- **QLD**: 58 minutes (Capital city), 47 minutes (Rest of state)
- **SA**: 56 minutes (Capital city), 43 minutes (Rest of state)
- **ACT**: 50 minutes (Capital city), 37 minutes (Rest of state)
- **WA**: 50 minutes (Capital city), 32 minutes (Rest of state)
- **TAS**: 45 minutes (Capital city), 42 minutes (Rest of state)
- **NT**: 36 minutes (Capital city), 27 minutes (Rest of state)

**Annual average commute time per person**

- **NSW**: 11,232 minutes (Capital city), 9,330 minutes (Rest of state)
- **VIC**: 11,353 minutes (Capital city), 9,864 minutes (Rest of state)
- **QLD**: 8,807 minutes (Capital city), 8,417 minutes (Rest of state)
- **SA**: 11,357 minutes (Capital city), 8,417 minutes (Rest of state)
- **ACT**: 9,924 minutes (Capital city), 8,924 minutes (Rest of state)
- **WA**: 10,118 minutes (Capital city), 9,382 minutes (Rest of state)
- **TAS**: 8,256 minutes (Capital city), 6,718 minutes (Rest of state)
- **NT**: 6,096 minutes (Capital city), 5,306 minutes (Rest of state)

*Figures in minutes; outliers removed in analysis.

**The average daily figures were multiplied by the average number of commuting days to get annual commuting figures.**

Commuting times are higher in all capital cities around Australia compared to the rest of their respective state or territory. The longest daily commute times mainly belong to capital cities with the top four being Sydney (62 minutes), Brisbane (58 minutes), Melbourne (57 minutes), and Adelaide with (56 minutes).
The furthest daily commutes belong mainly to areas outside of capital cities such as Other VIC and Other NSW (both averaging 39km), followed by Other QLD (37km) and Other SA (35km). For capital cities, Brisbane has the furthest commute at 33km, followed by Adelaide and Melbourne (both averaging 30km), Perth (29km), then Sydney (28km).

*Outliers removed in analysis.*
Cost of commuting
Pressures and increasing cost

How much has the rising cost of living impacted your commuting costs in the past year?

- Extremely impacted: 14%
- Considerably impacted: 27%
- Reasonably impacted: 31%
- Minimally impacted: 21%
- Not impacted at all: 8%

How much additional financial pressure has your household felt due to rising fuel and transport costs?

- Extreme: 11%
- Considerable: 36%
- Manageable: 36%
- Minimal: 12%
- Not at all: 5%
**Average commuting cost per person**

- **Per day:** $20
- **Per week:** $104
- **Per year:** $4,003

*Individual cost was calculated from self-reported daily commuting estimates, with outliers removed. The average daily figures were multiplied by the average number of commuting days to get annual commuting figures. Commuting cost does not include registration/maintenance costs which are estimated to be a further $2,015 annually on average.*

**Collectively, Australians spend $43.2 billion per year commuting**

**This figure was calculated using survey results and ABS data from June 2022 for employment numbers to get the commuting population. The commuting population was used with self reported costs from survey respondents to derive this figure.*
Public vs private commuting etiquette
Public commuting sentiment

How much do you agree with the following statements?

I wish other public transport commuters had better manners 87%
I wish people were friendlier to each other on public transport 83%
Commuters with poor manners should be fined or even banned from using public transport 78%
I prefer not to interact with anyone when using public transport 77%
Public transport would be great if it weren't for the other commuters 64%
I have had a nice/interesting conversation with a stranger on public transport 62%

*n = 1,902, mass transit commuters only

Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) mass transit commutes wish that public transport commuters had better manners. Over 8 in 10 (83%) wish people were friendlier to each other on public transport, and close to 8 in 10 (78%) also believe that commuters with poor manners should be fined or even banned from using public transport.
Private commuting attitudes

How much do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agreed Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wish other drivers and road users had better knowledge of the rules</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers and road users behaving poorly should be fined or even banned from using the roads</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After seeing how people drive overseas, I’m less likely to complain about drivers here</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can tell how annoying another road user will be depending on the vehicle they drive</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*n = 3,949, car commuters (public/private cars)

Over 9 in 10 (91%) car commuters wish other drivers had better knowledge of the rules, while almost 9 in 10 (87%) think that drivers behaving poorly should be fined or even banned from using the roads. Additionally, 85% of commuters agree that too many drivers and road users are not courteous or safe.
Impact of commuting on work decisions
Almost 2 in 3 (68%) commuters agree that commuting time and costs strongly impact their job choice. Additionally, close to 3 in 4 (73%) agree that if there were work opportunities closer to home, they would change jobs to reduce their commute.
Views on cost and time of commuting

What is the maximum you would be willing to spend per week in commuting costs before you’d move house or get a different job?

$80

What is the longest commute to get to work you could tolerate before you’d move house or get a different job?

62 mins

Have your experiences through COVID-19 and working from home changed your view on how much time and money you are willing to spend on your commute?

- Yes, to a great extent: 22%
- Yes, to some extent: 41%
- No, not really: 37%

*Outliers removed in analysis.

The maximum commuters are willing to spend per week on average commuting to work before they would move house or change jobs is $80, while the longest commute people could tolerate before moving house or changing jobs is 62 minutes.

Almost 3 in 5 (59%) commuters have to somewhat changed their view on how much time and money they are willing to spend on their commute as a result of experiences through COVID-19.
Work preferences

What are your preferred work arrangements in terms of work location?

- To work completely from an office: 34%
- To work from home and an office equally: 28%
- To work mostly from an office: 17%
- To work mostly from home: 14%
- To work completely from home: 7%

Nearly 1 in 3 (34%) commuters prefer to work completely from an office, while almost 3 in 10 (28%) prefer to work from home and an office equally. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) prefer to work completely from home.
Location, location, location
Over 6 in 10 (62%) commuters say that commuting cost and time are an important consideration when choosing where to live.

Over 1 in 4 (26%) respondents who live in coastal/regiona/rural areas work remotely/work from home a few days a week. Of these, 3 in 5 (60%) think they will be able to continue working from home for the foreseeable future.

* n = 1,021, respondents who live in coastal/regiona/rural areas

* n = 265, respondents who live in coastal/regiona/rural areas AND work remotely
Going regional and rural

Are you happy with your decision to move to a coastal, regional or rural area?

- Very happy: 50%
- Somewhat happy: 44%
- Somewhat unhappy: 5%
- Not happy at all: 1%

* n = 525, respondents who moved from inner city to regional areas

Why are you planning to move back to the inner city or urban areas?

- Miss friends and family: 44%
- Work opportunities: 42%
- Miss the lifestyle: 37%
- Coastal/regional/rural life was not all it was cracked up to be: 29%
- No longer able to work remotely: 20%
- Other: 3%

*Multiple answers allowed
*n = 359, respondents who are planning on moving back to the inner city

Are you planning on moving back to the inner city or urban areas?

- Yes, in the process of moving back: 36%
- Yes, in the next 1-2 years: 32%
- Yes, but not for at least 2 years: 9%
- No: 23%

* n = 525, respondents who moved from inner city to regional areas

More than 9 in 10 (94%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are at least somewhat happy, with 1 in 2 (50%) being very happy. However, almost 7 in 10 (68%) of those who moved from inner city to regional areas are already in the process or are planning to move back, with more than 1 in 3 (36%) already in the process of moving back. The main reasons for moving back are missing friends and family (44%), work opportunities (42%), and missing the lifestyle (37%).
Electric vs fuel
Important factors for choosing a car

Low running costs were extremely important when buying a car for more than 2 in 5 (42%) commuters followed closely by good performance (39%). Nearly 1 in 5 (21%) point to environmental friendliness as a critical factor in purchasing a car.
Benefits and expenses of hybrid/electric cars

How much extra do you estimate you spend on electricity each month by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?

- Less than $50 per month: 5%
- $51 to $100 per month: 11%
- $101 to $150 per month: 15%
- $151 to $200 per month: 13%
- $201 to $300 per month: 17%
- $301 to $400 per month: 15%
- $401 to $500 per month: 8%
- More than $500 per month: 2%
- I don’t know: 3%
- I don’t pay any extra electricity: 11%

*\(n = 530\), respondents who own environmentally friendly cars

How much do you estimate you save on fuel each month by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?

- Less than $50 per month: 3%
- $51 to $100 per month: 13%
- $101 to $150 per month: 15%
- $151 to $200 per month: 19%
- $201 to $300 per month: 22%
- $301 to $400 per month: 15%
- $401 to $500 per month: 9%
- More than $500 per month: 2%
- I don’t know: 2%

*\(n = 530\), respondents who own environmentally friendly cars
Benefits and expenses of hybrid/electric cars

Are there any other additional expenses you have faced by owning your electric/hybrid car compared to a fuel-based equivalent?

- Yes, the costs of regular servicing are higher: 41%
- Yes, the costs of spare parts are higher: 49%
- Yes, the costs of repairs are higher: 22%
- No, there are no additional expenses: 15%
- I don’t know: 4%
- Other: 1%

*n = 530, respondents who own environmentally friendly cars

Over 2 in 3 (68%) environmentally-friendly car owners estimate that they are saving more than $150 a month on fuel costs by having an electric/hybrid car; however, over 1 in 2 (55%) say they are paying more than $150 a month on electricity due to owning a hybrid/electric car.

Nearly 1 in 2 (49%) environmentally friendly car owners agree that spare parts are more expensive for electric/hybrid cars, more than 2 in 5 (41%) say that servicing is more expensive and more than 1 in 5 (22%) say that repairs are more expensive.
Changes in Government law and policy
Government on cost of commuting

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements below

- The government can do more to ease the costs of my daily commute
  - Agree: 85%
  - Disagree: 12%
  - Not applicable: 3%

- More should be done to accelerate the uptake of environmentally friendly cars
  - Agree: 75%
  - Disagree: 21%
  - Not applicable: 4%

- I avoid toll roads on my commute
  - Agree: 56%
  - Disagree: 22%
  - Not applicable: 23%

- With fuel prices rising the cost of road tolls is unsustainable for me
  - Agree: 55%
  - Disagree: 24%
  - Not applicable: 21%

- Road tolls are worth every cent
  - Agree: 33%
  - Disagree: 53%
  - Not applicable: 14%

Over half (56%) said that they avoid road tolls on their commute and over 4 in 5 (85%) agree that the government could do more to ease the costs of their daily commute. Over 1 in 2 (55%) agree that with fuel prices rising the cost of road tolls is unsustainable for them. However, 1 in 3 (33%) also say that road tolls are worth every cent.
Almost 1 in 2 (49%) people whose income is $200,000 and above agree that road tolls are worth every cent, much higher than any other income band.
Avoiding tolls

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: I avoid toll roads on my commute (by city)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 in 3 (66%) of Sydney commuters say that they avoid road tolls on their commute, this is the most of any capital city. This is closely followed by Melbourne (64%) and Brisbane (60%).
About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning provider of insurance products, specialising in life, funeral, pet, travel, car, home, and bike insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance has 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, most recently being announced a winner of the 2022 ProductReview.com.au awards for Life Insurance and Funeral Insurance, and the Reader’s Digest 2022 Gold Quality Service Awards for Funeral Insurance and Pet Insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd.