

# Study: Long commutes to work by car

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Commuting is a fact of life for many Canadians. In 2016, 12.6 million Canadians reported that they commuted to work by car. For these commuters, the average duration of the commute was 24 minutes, and the median distance to work among those who had a usual workplace was 8.7 kilometres.

For some car commuters, however, the duration of the trip can be particularly long. In 2016, approximately 854,000 car commuters spent at least 60 minutes travelling to work.

From 2011 to 2016, the number of car commuters who took at least 60 minutes to get to work rose by 5%, while the total number of car commuters increased by 3%.

Long commutes by car can affect a person's health, safety and personal finances. With long commutes, too, come traffic, higher levels of stress and less time for other activities.

Long commutes by car also represent a cost to society, as there are environmental impacts associated with car use. At the community level, long commutes can cause traffic congestion, which raises infrastructure costs and lowers overall productivity.

Today, a new study based on census data and published in *Insights on Canadian Society*, takes a deeper look at the characteristics of these car commuters.

The study, "[Results from the 2016 Census: Long commutes to work by car](#)," is part of a series of articles that examine social and economic topics in Canada based on a deeper analysis of 2016 Census results.

## Just over one in five people with a commute of at least 60 minutes carpool

The 854,000 Canadians who reported spending at least 60 minutes getting to work accounted for 7% of all car commuters in Canada. The commuting experience of these people was quite different from those of other car commuters.

For example, just over one-fifth of car commuters (21%) with a commuting time of 60 minutes or more carpoled, compared with 15% for other car commuters.

Car commuters with a long commuting time were also more likely to leave the house early, with 42% departing between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., compared with 25% of other commuters.

Among car commuters taking 60 minutes or more to get to work, the median one-way commuting distance to a fixed work location was 40 kilometres, compared with 8 kilometres among other car commuters.

## Long commuting times are a big city phenomenon

Census metropolitan areas (CMAs), such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal, are not only major population centres, but also large employment centres. People who work in one of these three CMAs but live outside their boundaries are more likely to have long commutes.

In Barrie, Oshawa and Hamilton, for example, many people commute to Toronto, because these CMAs have developed as residential communities with close economic ties to Toronto.

In Barrie, almost one-fifth of car commuters (18%) took at least 60 minutes to get to work. This compared with 17% in Oshawa and 10% in Hamilton. In Toronto itself, the proportion of long-duration car commuters was 11%.

Abbotsford–Mission is another example of a CMA with close economic ties to a large urban agglomeration located nearby, in this case, Vancouver. About 12% of car commuters living in Abbotsford–Mission took at least 60 minutes to get to work.



By contrast, that proportion was generally lower in smaller or more isolated CMAs that had no commuting relationship with other CMAs.

### **Many car commuters with long commute times work and live in the same area**

Long duration commutes are not limited to people living outside of a major CMA. In fact, among those who worked in Toronto, Montréal or Vancouver, a majority of car commuters who reported long commute times also lived within the same CMA.

Among car commuters who worked in Toronto and reported a commuting time of at least 60 minutes, for example, 64% also lived in Toronto. These commuters took almost as long to get to work as those who came from Barrie, Oshawa or Hamilton, despite travelling a shorter distance.

Similarly, of all car commuters with a usual workplace in Vancouver who spent at least 60 minutes getting to work, 81% also lived in Vancouver. These workers took almost as long getting to work as those commuting from Abbotsford–Mission to Vancouver.

The issue of long commuting times by car, therefore, is not restricted to commuters driving into a large metropolitan area, but also includes those commuting by car within the same CMA.

Over the coming weeks, Statistics Canada will publish the results from another study on the dynamics of commuting within the largest CMAs in the country.

### **Commuters without a fixed workplace are more likely to take at least 60 minutes to get to work**

Aside from geographic factors, there are also other characteristics associated with an increased likelihood of long commutes by car.

For example, those without a fixed place of work were over twice as likely to have a long commuting time (14%) than those with a usual place of work (6%).

Higher income workers and workers in the natural resources, agriculture and related production occupational category also had a higher probability of long commuting times. Due to the nature of their jobs, these workers often need to commute longer distances.

By contrast, women and young workers aged 15 to 24 were less likely to report that they took 60 minutes or more to get to work.

**Note to readers**

The data in this analysis are from the 2016 Census of Population. The target population is Canadians aged 15 and older who had a job at the time of the census.

In this release, long car commutes and long commuting time refer to a commute (that is, one way) mainly by car, truck or van, lasting 60 minutes or more. Data on commuting time and on departure time were not collected prior to 2011, and were introduced in 2011 in the National Household Survey.

It is important to note that commuters with a long commuting time are not limited to car users. According to the 2016 Census, 1.5 million Canadians spent at least 60 minutes commuting to work. Of these, about 40% (representing 595,000 people) were public transit users.

The majority of workers with a long commute, however, travelled by car, truck or van. In 2016, 854,000 people spent at least 60 minutes in a car, truck or van commuting, representing 57% of all workers with a long commute.

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3901](#).**

The article "[Results from the 2016 Census: Long commutes to work by car](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).

For more information on *Insights on Canadian Society*, contact Sébastien LaRochelle-Côté (613-951-0803; [sebastien.larochelle-cote@canada.ca](mailto:sebastien.larochelle-cote@canada.ca)).