

Household Vehicles Energy Consumption 1991

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As part of EIA's mission to provide meaningful data, the consumption surveys have ongoing user needs efforts to ascertain the requirements of its users. If you have any suggestions to make the data in this report more useful to your needs, please contact F. Ronald Lambrecht, RTECS Manager, at 202-586-4962 or at the address below.

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Contents

Executive Summary	ix
1. Introduction	1
Background	1
Other Data Sources	2
Organization of the Report	2
2. Trends in Household Vehicle Stock	5
Number of Household Vehicles	5
Vehicle Stock Composition	9
Change in Vehicle Stock	10
Average Number of Vehicles	12
3. Vehicle Miles Traveled	15
Total and Average Vehicle Miles Traveled	15
Insights from the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS)	23
4. Vehicle Fuel Efficiency and Consumption	27
Vehicle Fuel Efficiency	27
Vehicle Fuel Consumption	33
Potential Fuel Savings from Replacing Old Vehicles	39
Fuel Consumption in Households Participating in Income Supplement Programs	40
Detailed Tables	43
Table Organization	43
Row and Column Factors	43
Quick-Reference Guide	43
Appendices	
A. How the Survey Was Conducted	113
B. Estimation Methodologies	127
C. Quality of the Data	145
D. Survey Forms	161
E. U.S. Climate Zone and Census Regions and Divisions Maps	201
F. Related EIA Publications on Energy Consumption	205
Glossary	211

Tables

1. Comparison of Household and Total Vehicle Stock	7
2. Households by Number of Vehicles and 1990 Family Income, July 1991	8
3. Number of Vehicles by Model Year and Census Region, 1991	10
4. Changes in Vehicle Stock by Selected Household Characteristics, 1991	12
5. Annual Percent Change in Vehicles and Vehicle Miles Traveled, 1983, 1985, 1988, 1991	15

6. U.S. per Household Vehicle Miles Traveled, Vehicle Fuel Consumption and Expenditures for Income Supplement Programs, 1991	41
7. Summary of Household and Vehicle Characteristics by Categories of Income Assistance, 1991	42
8. Number of Vehicles, Vehicle Miles, Motor Fuel Consumption and Expenditures, 1991	45
9. U.S. per Household Vehicle Miles Traveled, Vehicle Fuel Consumption and Expenditures, 1991	49
10. U.S. per Vehicle Miles Traveled , Vehicle Fuel Consumption and Expenditures , 1991	51
11. U.S. Vehicles by Model Year, 1991	55
12. U.S. Vehicle Fuel Efficiency by Model Year, 1991	58
13. U.S. Average Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Vehicle Model Year, 1991	61
14. U.S. Vehicle Miles Traveled by Family Income, 1991	64
15. U.S. Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Family Income, 1991	67
16. U.S. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled by Family Income, 1991	70
17. U.S. Average Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Family, 1991	72
18. U.S. Vehicles by Household Composition 1991	74
19. U.S. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled by Household Composition, 1991	78
20. U.S. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled by Vehicle Fuel Efficiency Category, 1991	80
21. U.S. Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Vehicle Type, 1991	84
22. U.S. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled by Vehicle Type, 1991	88
23. Number of Vehicles by Vehicle Type, 1991	92
24. Number of U.S. Households by Vehicle Fuel Expenditures, 1991	96
25. U.S. Average Household Energy and Vehicle Expenditures, 1991	98
26. U.S. Average Household Energy and Vehicle Consumption, 1991	102
27. U.S. Households by Changes in Vehicle Stock, 1991	106
B1. Distribution of Average Monthly Vehicle Miles Traveled Fractions	130
B2. Distribution of Residential Transportation Energy Consumption Survey Vehicles by Type of Fuel Used, 1991	140
C1. Average Bureau of Labor Statistics Gasoline Prices and 1985 Residential Transportation Energy Consumption Survey Prices by Census Region and Fuel Type	151
C2. Average Bureau of Labor Statistics Vehicle Fuel Expenditures and 1985 Residential Transportation Energy Consumption Survey Vehicle Fuel Expenditures by Census Region and Fuel Type	153

Illustrations

1. RTECS and Other Estimates of Households and Total Vehicles	5
2. Total Household Vehicle Ownership, and Ownership by Income	8
3. Household Vehicle Composition, 1991	9
4. Vehicle Stock Composition	11
5. Trends in Vehicles and Population Ratios	13
6. Household and Vehicle Miles Traveled by Survey Year	16
7. Average Household Vehicle Miles Traveled and the Number of Drivers	18
8. Average Household Vehicle Miles Traveled and Income	19
9. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled per Vehicle and Age of Primary Driver	20
10. Average Vehicle Miles Traveled and Vehicle Age	21
11. Average Household Vehicle Miles Traveled and Census Regions	22
12. Trends in Vehicle-Trip Length, 1983 and 1990	26
13. Average Fuel Efficiency of All Vehicles by Model Year	28
14. Average Fuel Efficiency of All Vehicles by Type of Vehicle	29
15. Average Fuel Efficiency of All Vehicles by Census Region	31

16. Average Fuel Efficiency of All Vehicles by Household Composition	32
17. Average Fuel Efficiency of All Vehicles by 1990 Family Income	33
18. Average Annual Household Fuel Consumption by Census Region	34
19. Average Annual Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Census Region	35
20. Average Annual Household Fuel Consumption by Household Composition	36
21. Total Annual Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Vehicle Type	37
22. Average Annual Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Vehicle Type	38
23. Average Annual Vehicle Fuel Consumption by Vehicle Model Year	39
A1. Example of a Decoded Vehicle Identification Number	118
A2. Location of the Vehicle Identification Number	119
B1. Estimation Schematic	128
B2. Miles per Gallon Adjustment Procedures	133
C1. Use of RSE Row and Column Factors	156

Executive Summary

This report, *Household Vehicles Energy Consumption 1991*, is based on data from the 1991 Residential Transportation Energy Consumption Survey (RTECS). Focusing on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and energy end-use consumption and expenditures by households for personal transportation, the 1991 RTECS is the fifth in a series conducted since 1978 by the Energy Information Administration (EIA). Over 3,000 households with more than 6,000 vehicles were surveyed, providing information on their vehicle stock and annual miles traveled per vehicle. The information provided represents the characteristics and energy consumption of the 84.6 million households with vehicles nationwide. An additional 10 million households did not own or have access to a vehicle during the survey year.

Use of residential vehicles and fuels in 1991 showed little change from 1988 and was indicative of the current state of personal transportation in America. Two noticeable changes for 1991 were a small increase in the average number of miles traveled both per household¹ and per vehicle, and a slight decrease in the average consumption of motor vehicle fuel per household. An increase in the average fuel efficiency (miles per gallon-MPG), was the reason for the decreased consumption. However, vehicle fuel expenditures per household rose by 16 percent between 1988 and 1991, primarily due to a 21 percent rise in the price of vehicle fuel.

Results from the 1991 RTECS indicate that:

- Annual vehicle miles traveled per household and per vehicle were 18.9 and 10.6 thousands respectively.
- The average number of vehicles per household did not change between the 1988 and 1991 RTECS: Both surveys reported approximately 1.8 vehicles per household.
- The total number of vehicles in the U.S. stock by vehicle type remained approximately the same for 1991 and 1988. The exception has been minivans and sport-utility vehicles (listed as jeep-like vehicles in previous publications), which have almost doubled from 7 million to 12.4 million and are classified as trucks for fuel efficiency standards.
- Approximately 9 percent of the vehicle stock consisted of pre-1975 models.
- Average fuel consumption was 979 gallons per household and 548 gallons per vehicle, both down slightly from 1988, though not statistically significant.
- In 1991, the average on-road vehicle MPG was 19.3, up 5 percent from 18.3² in 1988. This change resulted from retiring old vehicles and purchasing newer models which are more fuel efficient. The size of the increase was limited by the increased sales of vehicles classified as trucks (i.e., minivans and sport-utility), which have lower fuel efficiency standards³.

¹Per household numbers are only for households with vehicles unless otherwise stated.

²The methodologies for calculating fuel efficiency, fuel consumption, and fuel expenditures were the same as in the 1988 RTECS. See Appendix B, "Estimation Methodologies" and Appendix C, "Quality of the Data."

³According to Department of Transportation statistics, there has been essentially no improvement in the overall efficiency of the new car fleet for the last 10 years. In actuality, efficiency has been declining since 1988. The availability of inexpensive fuels, desire for larger and faster vehicles, and flashy advertising are probably the main factors contributing to this phenomena.

- In 1991, households spent an average of \$1,161 for vehicle fuel compared to \$998 per household in 1988.

- Lower-income households appear to be paying a larger percentage of their income on vehicle fuel.
- Household vehicles consumed 10.3 quadrillion Btu of vehicle fuel, the same as in 1988. This represents approximately 31 percent of the 32.8 quadrillion Btu of all petroleum consumption in the United States and 13 percent of the total U.S. energy consumption of 81.1 quadrillion Btu.
- In 1991, combined household energy expenditures were \$2,333 for both their housing unit and vehicles, with vehicle fuel purchases accounting for 50 percent. In 1988 only 47 percent of household energy expenditures were for vehicle fuel.

The 1991 RTECS provides baseline information on motor vehicle use in the residential sector. To be included in this survey one of two criteria must be met. Vehicles must be (1) owned or used by household members on a regular basis for personal transportation or (2) company vehicles, not owned by the household, but kept at home and regularly available to household members. Data from the RTECS and a companion household survey, the Residential Energy Consumption Survey, are available to the public in published reports and on public-use personal computer diskettes for the 1988 and 1991 surveys and on 9-track tapes for all years.⁴

Table ES1 summarizes selected vehicle energy-related items from the 1991 RTECS. This table allows the reader to easily discern energy information related to vehicle characteristics. The household averages in this table are based on households with vehicles.

Table ES1. Summary of Vehicle Characteristics by Census Region, 1991

Vehicle Characteristics	U.S. Total	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Number of Households (millions)	94.6	19.3	23.4	32.3	19.6
Number of Households with Vehicles (millions)	84.6	16.0	21.1	29.5	18.0
Number of Vehicles (millions)	151.2	27.0	38.4	52.7	33.2
Vehicle Miles Traveled (billions)	1,602	295	403	571	333
Vehicle Fuel Consumption (billion gallons)	82.8	14.1	21.3	29.8	17.6
Number of Vehicles per Household .	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
Vehicle Miles Traveled per Household (thousands)	18.9	18.5	19.1	19.3	18.5
Vehicle Miles Traveled per Vehicle (thousands)	10.6	10.9	10.5	10.8	10.0
Vehicle Fuel Efficiency (miles per gallon)	19.3	20.9	19.0	19.2	18.9

Note: Because of rounding, data may not sum to totals.

⁴See Appendix F, "Related EIA Publications on Energy Consumption," for a list of EIA publications available concerning the consumption of energy.

Source: Energy Information Administration, Office of Energy Markets and End Use, 1991 Residential Transportation Energy Consumption Survey.