



NPTS Brief

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Mobility and the Melting Pot

Research confirms that men and women travel differently. Men make fewer but longer trips, work farther from home, and when men and women travel together in a vehicle, men typically drive.

Women make more but shorter trips, often doing the business of daily life—ferrying the kids, shopping, and running errands. Working women insert these short trips into their commutes, and are more likely to adopt flex-time and change commute times or routes to avoid congestion.

The amount of difference between men and women's travel also varies by race and ethnic origin.

Hispanic men and women show the largest differences by gender when just the percent of people working and driving is considered, whereas Asian and White men and women are more similar.

Differences between people of the same race and gender, such as between a low-income and high-

income African-American men, can also be dramatic.

Many, but not all, of the differences in travel by people of different races and ethnic origins can be explained by differences in income, work-status, household size, geographic location, or other factors related to the person's life cycle.

Some of the differences arise from residential segregation, historic, or cultural factors.

This brief provides an overview of just some of the differences in mobility and travel patterns by sex, race and ethnicity found in the national survey of travel conducted by the USDOT.

As the diversity of the traveling public increases, the people involved in planning, design, and enforcement, whether on the roads, at airports, or other public venues, must be sensitive to the role that gender, race, and ethnic origin play in determining travel patterns.

Travel Differences by Race and Ethnic Origin

The U.S. population is becoming more diverse. By 2000, the Hispanic population had grown to 12.5 percent share, for the first time a greater percent of the total population than African-Americans' 12.3 percent. By 2050, 43 percent of the U.S. population is forecasted to be people of color (Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians); with more than one-quarter of the people in the U.S. of Hispanic origin.

Overall, the national travel survey shows:

- Whites enter the paid workforce and drive at younger ages than African-Americans or Hispanics. However, both workforce participation and driving have increased for African-Americans and Hispanics in the last decades, and future growth in travel is expected to come more from minority groups (Exhibit 1).
- More African-American households have vehicles available than in the past, and as a group African-Americans have increased the number of miles and speed of travel since 1995.
- African-American and Hispanic men travel about 14,500 miles a year compared to 18,900 for White men (see Exhibit 2), however all men spend about the same amount of time in travel—560 hours per year. The same is true for African-American and Hispanic women who travel 12,100 and 12,800 miles a year, respectively; compared to White women's 15,600; but all spend about 530 hours a year in travel.
- African-American and Hispanic men spend more of their daily travel time and miles for work and work-related trips than do White men.

Exhibit 1 - Percent of Drivers by Age for Different Races and Ethnic Origins

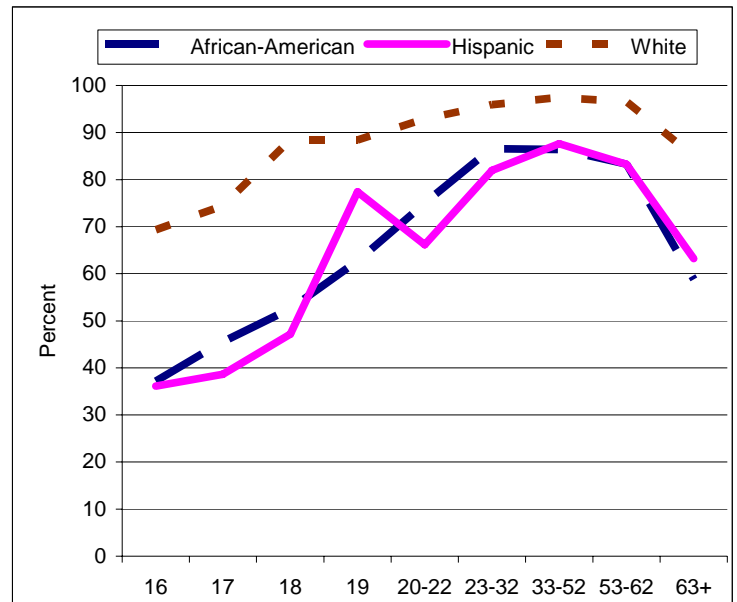
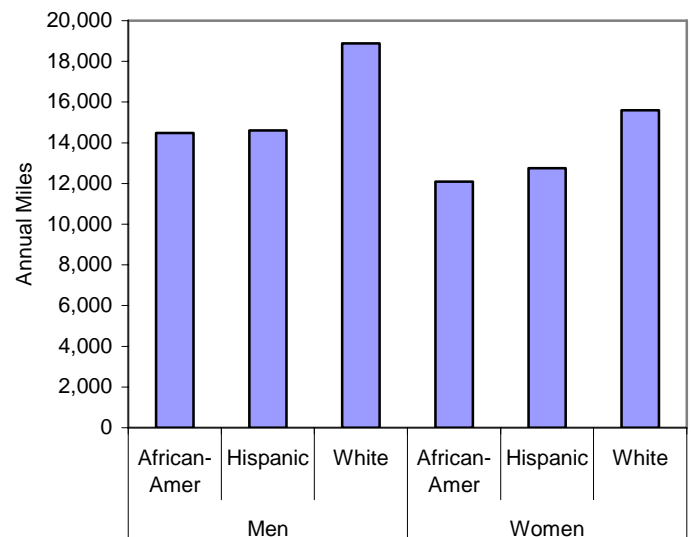


Exhibit 2 - Annual Miles of Travel by Sex, Race, and Ethnic Origin



Range of Daily Movement

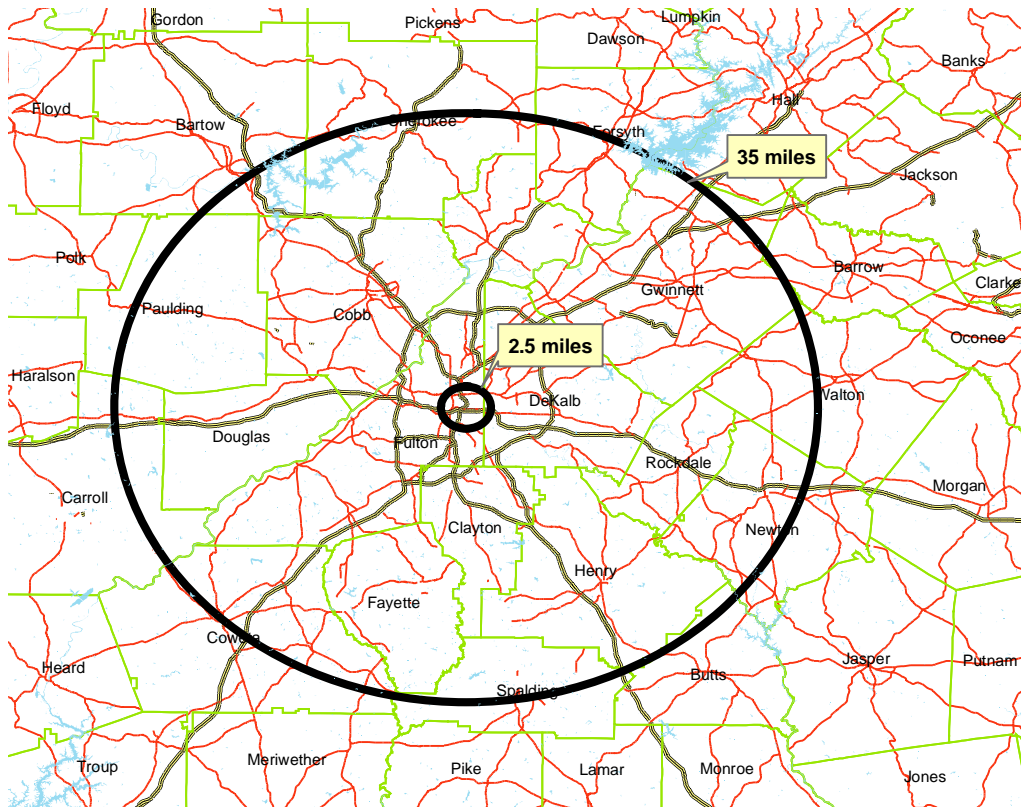
Driving and working are key factors in travel behavior; people who work must travel nearly every day to their workplaces, and people who drive have a wider range of daily activities than people who don't drive. However, within all race and ethnic groups men travel more miles than women. Although Whites as a group travel more than African-Americans and Hispanics as a group, looking only at high-income travelers shows the opposite: working, high-income, Hispanic men travel the most miles in an average day, followed by working, high-income African-American men, and then working, high-income White men.

People at the high-end of daily travel have an exponentially larger range of movement than people at the low-end. The impact can be

dramatic, as shown in Exhibit 3. This example uses the average range of daily activities for two different African-American men mapped onto the city of Atlanta, GA as an illustration. The smaller circle represents the range of daily movement for the lower-income non-working African-American man and the larger circle, which covers areas in 13 counties, represents the daily range of travel for a high-income, working African American man.

The impact of the limited mobility of lower-income men is not known for the specific individual, but overall such a limited range affects access to potential employers, and may restrict access to health services, education, shopping at discount stores, and a vast array of social and recreational activities.

Exhibit 3 – An Example of the Daily Range of Activity for Low-Income and High-Income African-American Men, Mapped on Atlanta, GA

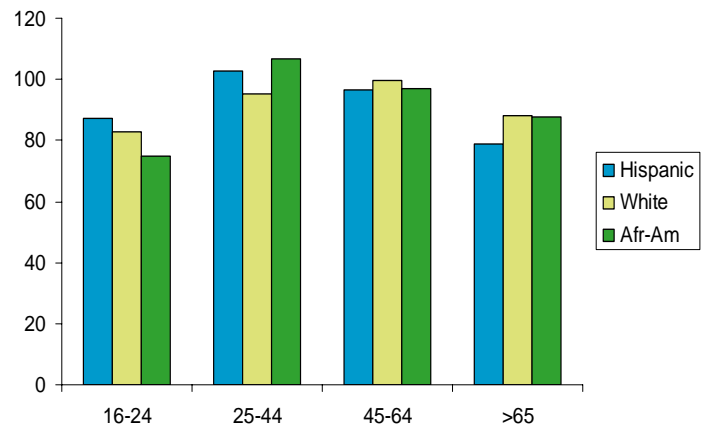


Time in Travel

Overall, Americans are spending more time everyday traveling, and traveling farther for each trip. The number of daily trips per person has remained about the same, but the average distance of daily trips has been increasing. Generally, the longest trips are to and from work, followed by visiting friends and relatives, and then trips for medical treatments.

African-American males between the ages of 25-44 spend the most time on the road per day in a car (107 minutes) followed by Hispanic males (103 minutes). A white male in the same age group averages 95 minutes on the road per day. As shown in the Exhibit 4, young African-Americans (ages 16-24) spend the least time in a car on the road per-day.

Exhibit 4 - Minutes Spent in Vehicles per Day by Race and Ethnicity



For more information, please visit our Website:

<http://nhts.ornl.gov>

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About the National Personal Travel Survey

Conducted periodically by the USDOT since 1969, the survey collects travel data from a sample of U.S. households. The information has been used to understand trends in the nation's trip making and miles of travel by mode, purpose, and time-of-day for use in policy, planning, and safety.

Data is collected for all household members and for each day of the year, yielding a rich demographic profile linked to daily travel and vehicle characteristics.