

Does the car have a future?

The growth in motoring in Britain.

There's been enormous growth in motoring in Britain over the last 20 years. Compared with 1988, there are now 7.6 million more drivers and 9.34 million more cars using largely the same roads.

The serious growth in car ownership began in the mid-1950s.

Then, cars were the preserve of the few. Today, they are an integral part of ordinary, everyday British life.

This growth in ownership has fundamentally changed our lives. The freedoms a car brings have given us greater choice in where we live and work, and how we spend our time.

Today, three-quarters of households have a car, seven out of ten adults hold a licence and there are more than eight cars for every ten drivers

- What do you think about the costs of buying and running a car?
- What social advantages are there to car ownership?
- What are the economic consequences of car ownership? Who benefits? What are the costs?
- What are the environmental consequences of running a car?
- How do you think the cost of owning and running a car compares to the cost of public transport?

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COSTS

The RAC analysis also looked at buying a car, running a car and the cost of fuel in turn, and found that, in real terms, compared with 1988:

- It is 24% cheaper to buy a car
- It is 57% cheaper to run a car
- But it costs more than twice as much to fill it up

Or, over 20 years:

- The cost of running a car increased to £94 from £65 a month
- The real cost of buying a new car increased to £498 from £277 a month
- The cost of petrol increased to 88.9p a litre from 38p
- The cost of diesel increased to 99.9p per litre from 38.4p

- What do you think about the costs of buying and running a car?
- What social advantages are there to car ownership?
- What are the economic consequences of car ownership? Who benefits? What are the costs?
- What are the environmental consequences of running a car?
- How do you think the cost of owning and running a car compares to the cost of public transport?
- Do you have any ideas on how to cut the cost of motoring?

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Types of cars

Over the past 20 years the range of cars on offer has increased dramatically.

We are buying smaller cars - though small cars are actually getting bigger - with less powerful but more efficient and cleaner engines. In part, this shift to smaller cars and more efficient engines is driven by cost and lifestyle choices. We're also a lot more willing, whilst there's a financial incentive to do so, to drive diesel cars.

It also reflects a much greater awareness of the environmental and the social cost of motoring. We're using our cars less for long journeys and more for shorter ones, such as shopping and commuting.

Smaller cars and engines not only make more sense, they do less environmental damage.

- Does this information match your own experience? What type of car would you like to buy in the future?
- What social advantages are there to car ownership?
- What are the economic consequences of car ownership? Who benefits? What are the costs?

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- What are the environmental consequences of these facts?
- Should everyone expect to be able to buy and run a car? Explain your answer?
- What are the alternatives?

Motoring and technology



It's very clear that the cars we'll be driving in 20 years' time will be near-unrecognisable compared to those we were driving just 20 years ago.

But can technology do more than just give us better and better cars?

Can it make a serious contribution to helping us achieve a sustainable future for motoring?

These are big and important questions that affect the future of everyone in Britain.

There is now widespread and growing support for the environmental agenda amongst motorists.

For example, in 2008:

- More than two-thirds of us, 'would buy a more environmentally-friendly car if the tax incentives were better'
- Half of us say we 'carefully consider CO2 emissions when buying a car'

The green message is getting through to motorists - the challenge now is to translate it into hard action.

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We think we are now more dependent on our cars, and more car focused than in 1988.
But do we think this is sustainable?

- What do you think the car of the future will be like?
- Would you consider the CO2 emissions when buying a car?
- Is there a sustainable future for motoring?
- What are the alternatives?

More information on CO2 emissions can be found at climatechange.gov.uk. You'll find it in the 'On the move' section

Our increased dependence on cars

Today, society and the lives we lead are increasingly organised around the assumption of having access to a car. So much so, 9% of motorists say they never walk.

Nine out of 10 motorists think Britain has become more car-dependent in the last 20 years. Half of us say it's because we're making more journeys, and a third that we're using our cars more for shorter journeys. This is borne out by the facts.

There are many reasons for our increased dependence on cars. Some reflect their greater accessibility and affordability. Some reflect an actual, or perceived, lack of realistic alternatives. And some reflect broader changes in our society.

Take walking as an example. Between the late 1990's and 2006, the average number of journeys made on foot fell by a quarter - from 328 to 249 per year. (There has been a similar decline in cycling, which also fell by a quarter across the same period, from 21 to 16 journeys per year.)

In 2008, 9% of motorists say they never walk. The car may be what people use instead, but the fundamental point is that we're losing the habit of walking. This is the real area for concern - not least because of the implications for our personal well-being and health.

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- What is your own experience of travelling by car? Do you use the car for short journeys that you could take on foot? Explain.
- Do you find these figures alarming? What are the implications for the future? For example, health and wellbeing.
- What are the environmental implications?
- Is this lifestyle sustainable?
- What will our towns of the future be like if these trends continue?
- What can we do now to improve the outlook for the future?

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The Future

The RAC Report on Motoring uses two key attitudinal measures of our car-dependence and both show significant changes across 20 years.

The most dramatic has been in our attitudes to public transport. Today, 62% of us say 'I would use my car less if public transport was better'.

That is a complete turn around from twenty years ago, when 70% of us said we would not.

The other change is that in 1988, 84% of us agreed 'I would find it very difficult to adjust my lifestyle to being without a car'; in 2008, it's now fallen to 73%.

- How often do you or your family travel by public transport?

Explain.

- Do you think changes are needed to make public transport better? What sort of improvements can you suggest?
- Could you adjust your lifestyle to being without a car? What sort of difficulties would you face? What would be the advantages?
- What social advantages are there to car ownership?
- What are the economic consequences of car ownership? Who benefits? What are the costs?
- What are the environmental consequences of car ownership?

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Social issues

What do people want? What do people need?

Better and more buses and trains. More cycling and walking		More cars	
Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs	Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs

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Economic issues

Better and more buses and trains More cycling and walking		More cars	
Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs	Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs

Environmental issues and Sustainability

Better and more buses and trains More cycling and walking		More cars	
Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs	Benefits	Disadvantages/Costs