



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE NHTS

► What is the National Household Travel Survey?

The National Household Travel Survey is the primary source of information about how people across the Nation travel. This important survey is conducted every 5 to 7 years by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Included in the survey are questions about the members of your household, your travel experiences, and the places you go on an assigned travel day. Results of the survey are used to help understand how the Nation's transportation systems are working, including roads, highways, bike paths, and public transportation. Data from the survey builds a snapshot of how, when, and why we travel in our daily lives. This information helps policy-makers and transportation planners decide how to spend transportation dollars, now and in the future. To learn more about the NHTS, visit nhts.ornl.gov.

► Who is sponsoring this survey?

This survey is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The FHWA supports state and local governments in designing, building, and maintaining the Nation's highway system (Federal Aid Highway Program) and various federally and tribal-owned lands (Federal Lands Highway Program). Through financial and technical assistance to state and local governments, the FHWA is responsible for ensuring that our roads and highways continue to be among the safest and most technologically sound in the world. To learn more about the FHWA, visit fhwa.dot.gov.

► Who is conducting this survey?

The Federal Highway Administration engaged Westat to carry out this survey. Westat is a leading survey research organization with over 50 years of experience. Westat has conducted national and regional transportation-related research for more than 20 years, and has conducted the National Household Travel Survey since 2001. To learn more about Westat, visit Westat.com.

► Why should I take part?

Your travel experiences are unique and important. No matter how you go from place to place, or even if you don't travel much at all, you have an opportunity to provide input that will help define the future of our Nation's transportation system. Your household was selected at random to statistically represent thousands of others like yours, so your participation is essential in helping us build a complete picture of local and nationwide transportation needs.

TAKING THE SURVEY

► How can I take part?

Just follow these 3 steps:

1. First, fill out the brief survey included in the package you received in the mail. Return your completed survey using the pre-paid return envelope .
2. Use the travel logs we will send to you to help you and the members of your household keep track of where you go on your assigned travel day.
3. Finish the survey either online or over the phone, and tell us about the places you went on that day.

Online: [enter your PIN number](#). Your PIN number is printed on the letter we sent to your household.

By phone: call 1- 855 - 350 - 6487(NHTS) to speak with a survey team member.

If you don't know your PIN number or have any questions about the survey, please [contact us](#).

► Will I be paid for taking part?

Yes! As a thank you, your household will be sent \$20 once everyone in your household provides travel information.

► Why was my household chosen?

Your household was randomly selected from a list of residential addresses. Selecting households in this way ensures that everyone in the Nation has the same chance of being chosen, but it also means that we cannot replace your household with another one. All selected households are first contacted by mail, and some may also be contacted by phone, even if your telephone number is unlisted or is on a DoNotCall list. This is because Westat is a survey research organization, not a telemarketer, and scientific surveys are exempt from DoNotCall lists.

► What is a "household"?

A household consists of all the people who live together in one residence and share a kitchen.

► Why do you need to know about my household?

Each person's travel is influenced by things like the age, gender, income and employment of all household members. Collecting this information helps us understand what makes each household's travel unique.

► I did not receive a letter or postcard in the mail; can I still take part?

Maybe! To see if your household was selected to take part in the survey, [contact us](#), select "Joining the Survey", and fill in the information requested. If your household was selected, we will let you know how to participate in the survey.

► How long will the survey take?

It will take about 10 minutes to complete the initial mail survey. The second part of the survey takes about 20 to 25 minutes, but everyone's time varies. It depends on the number of people in your household and the number of places you go.

► What if something unusual happens on my assigned travel day?

Share with us your actual travel experiences on your assigned travel day, even if they were not typical for you. Some people might travel more than usual on some days, some less; some might go to places they don't typically go to. That is expected. The reason we assign a specific travel day is to get a complete picture of transportation needs.

► What if I travel out of town on my assigned travel day?

Continue to record your travel experiences in your travel logs even if you will be out of town on your assigned travel day.

► What if I don't go to many places?

That's fine! People who do not go to many places on their travel day are just as important as those who go to a lot of places. We want to get a complete and accurate picture of travel throughout the Nation. So even if you only went to one place or did not go anywhere on that day, we would still like to your input.

► What if I don't drive?

That's fine! We are interested in all the ways you get around, whether you drive a vehicle, or whether you walk, use the bus, take the train, ride a bicycle, or use a taxi. Even if you are homebound, we still want to make sure your household is included in the survey because everyone's input counts, and we want to get a snapshot of all travel activity.

► Is the survey voluntary?

Yes! The survey is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you don't want to. However, it is important to the success of the survey that everyone chosen takes part. We can assure you that your privacy will be respected. Any information you provide will be kept confidential as required by law.

► Why do you need to know when and where my children go to school?

Getting children to and from school safely is a priority in all transportation planning. As a matter of fact, much local travel is influenced by children's school schedules and activities. For example parents and caretakers often plan other trips around school schedules, including grocery shopping and running other errands. Knowing where children go to school will help us better understand how other household trip-making is connected.

► Why do you need to know my occupation or job?

A significant portion of travel is made by people going to and from work and by people at work. We want to better understand what types of jobs generate travel.

SURVEY DATA

► How will you protect my privacy?

We are committed to respecting your privacy. By law, any information you provide will be kept confidential. The information collected is used for research purposes only. We never sell any personal contact information.

1. We use a number of safeguards to ensure that survey data are protected from accidental disclosure.
2. Your name and other identifying information will not be linked to your survey data or shared with anyone outside of the survey research team.
3. Your information is combined with information from other participants and used for statistical purposes by transportation planners and policymakers.

► What will be done with the data collected from the survey?

The data collected from this survey will be statistically summarized to describe the travel behaviors of all households in various regions. For example, information provided by all participants will be used to summarize the general activities people engage in, the means of travel used to get to these activities, where people are coming from and going to, the extent to which trips are combined together (e.g., grouping together your errands), and the time of day trips are made. For more information about how the data will be protected, review the [Privacy Statement](#).

► How will the information be used?

The survey information will be used to understand the Nation's requirements for transportation, how travel impacts our daily lives, and to plan for future transportation needs. The information is also used by air quality agencies to better understand how vehicles contribute to the types and amount of emissions.

► Will information from the survey be available to the public?

The USDOT and other agencies use this information in a number of reports that are available to the public. For example the FHWA report "Summary of Travel Trends 2009 National Household Travel Survey" can be viewed at nhts.ornl.gov/2009/pub/stt.pdf; other reports are available at nhts.ornl.gov. Your individual information will not be publicly available.

► Will the information help improve the environment?

Yes. Improving air quality by reducing vehicle emissions is an important part of transportation planning and decision making. Learning about your walking, biking, driving, and public transit use will help planners understand the impact of travel on air quality and plan for policy and infrastructure improvements that would support more non-motorized trips to reduce carbon emissions.