

thinking: new economy

BRIEFING 36

Travel to work patterns in Greater Manchester

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SOURCE:

[Office for National Statistics](#) – 2011 Census:

- Table WU01UK - Location of usual residence and place of work by sex;
- Table WU02UK - Location of usual residence and place of work by age;
- Table WU03UK - Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work

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SUMMARY:

- Greater Manchester (GM) is a relatively stable travel to work area, with 85% of GM residents also working within GM
- As in 2001, Manchester and Trafford remain the focal points as far as locations of work are concerned but Salford is growing as a GM work location
- Over the past decade more GM residents are travelling outside their local authority to work and they are travelling further when doing so
- GM has stronger labour market links to authorities in Cheshire and the High Peak than to Lancashire, Merseyside and the more distant parts of West Yorkshire
- In the face of more and longer journeys to work, commuting by car remains the most popular way of getting to work although growth in walking, cycling and public transport usage has been impressive
- Investments in GM's bus, Metrolink and train networks have come at the same time as large increases in usage but we cannot yet identify the full impact of this expansion in public transport
- GM is witnessing a breakdown in the traditional home/office split, with nearly 20% of GM workers either working from home or having no fixed office address

Introduction

In July and August 2014 the release took place of one of the most complex Census 2011 datasets - the 'flows data' of workers from place of residence (origin) to place of work (destination) and vice-versa. The Office for National Statistics initially released the travel to work flows data for local authority areas but will release more detailed data at smaller geographies over the coming months. The data is available in three separate tables: by gender, age and by mode of transport.

For each local authority area the data shows how many residents travel to work in each of the 404 (merged) local authorities in the UK. The flows data can be used to help build a picture of the travel to work catchment area for any UK authority. For most authorities the largest flow is from one location (the home) to another address (office/shop/factory etc) within the same local authority boundary (an internal flow). We will only be able to conduct detailed analysis of GM's internal flows when the flows data at lower levels of geography is released later in the year.

Where we work

In the decade to 2011 GM's population grew by 6.6% to reach 2.68m; with much of this population growth concentrated within Manchester, Trafford and Salford. Also over this period, 190,000 more GM residents became economically active.

Given this context, in 2011 there were just fewer than 1.06m people travelling to work in GM on a regular basis. Just over 900,000 (85%) of these travelling workers lived within GM, with 155,000 commuting into GM (15%). In 2001 there were 1.03m workers travelling to work in GM with 890,000 (87%) of these workers resident in GM and 138,000 commuting in (13%).

At 155,000 the number of people commuting into GM to work was 27,000 higher than the number of people (128,000) commuting out of GM – i.e. GM is a net importer of workers. In 2001 the net importing figure stood at 35,500. The reduction in the net commuting figure is explained by the increase in the number of workers with no fixed workplace.

The net flows patterns for GM authorities can be summarised as follows:

- Manchester, Salford and Trafford all gain workers from authorities inside GM collectively and additionally are net gainers of workers from authorities outside GM.
- Rochdale, Bury and Stockport, gain workers from outside of GM but lose workers to the rest of GM in net terms.
- Tameside, Oldham, Bolton and Wigan are export of workers to other authorities in the conurbation and also net exporters of workers to authorities outside of the conurbation.

Excluding those who worked from home, nearly 60% of Manchester local authority residents also worked at a site in Manchester. Salford, at 43%, had the lowest percentage of its residents also working within its boundaries. The GM average in terms of retaining workers within the authority is 52% - i.e. one in every two GM non-home workers crosses a local authority boundary during their commute. Since 2001, all 10 local authorities have recorded declines in the percentage of residents who also work at a site within that local authority; the declines have been steepest in Salford and Rochdale (now at 52%).

Looking at those who commuted across the GM boundary (see figure 1 on following page), the largest flows are from areas to the south and east of GM. Flows of commuters to and from areas to the north and west were considerably smaller – e.g. five times as many people commuted from High Peak to work in GM as commuted from Preston. 11,700 people commuted to GM from the 5 West Yorkshire authorities (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield) – a 27% increase on the 2001 figure. Much of this cross-Pennine commuting is between Kirklees/Calderdale and Oldham/Rochdale, although in 2011 there were 5,500 West Yorkshire residents who work in Manchester, Salford and Trafford.

The average distance travelled to work has increased in all regions of England and Wales since 2001 and in 2011 stood at 15km. In the North West the increase was from 12.5km to 14km. For GM districts the 2011 averages ranged from 11.4km in Oldham and Tameside to 13.8km in Wigan.

How we get to work

Driving a car (or van) is by far the most popular mode of travel to work (see table 1 on following page), even for work-trips within the home authority where car driving accounts for more than half the proportion of work-trips. This increases to more than 3 in every 4 work-trips for those residents entering the conurbation to work. Further analysis of 2011 Census data shows that in 2011 70% of households in GM had a car available to them, up from 67% in 2001. One in five GM residents who work within their home authority walk to work – an 11.7% increase in absolute terms since 2001. Bus, bicycle and taxi are the other travel modes that have increased their share of total journeys made for the workers not travelling beyond their own local authority boundary.

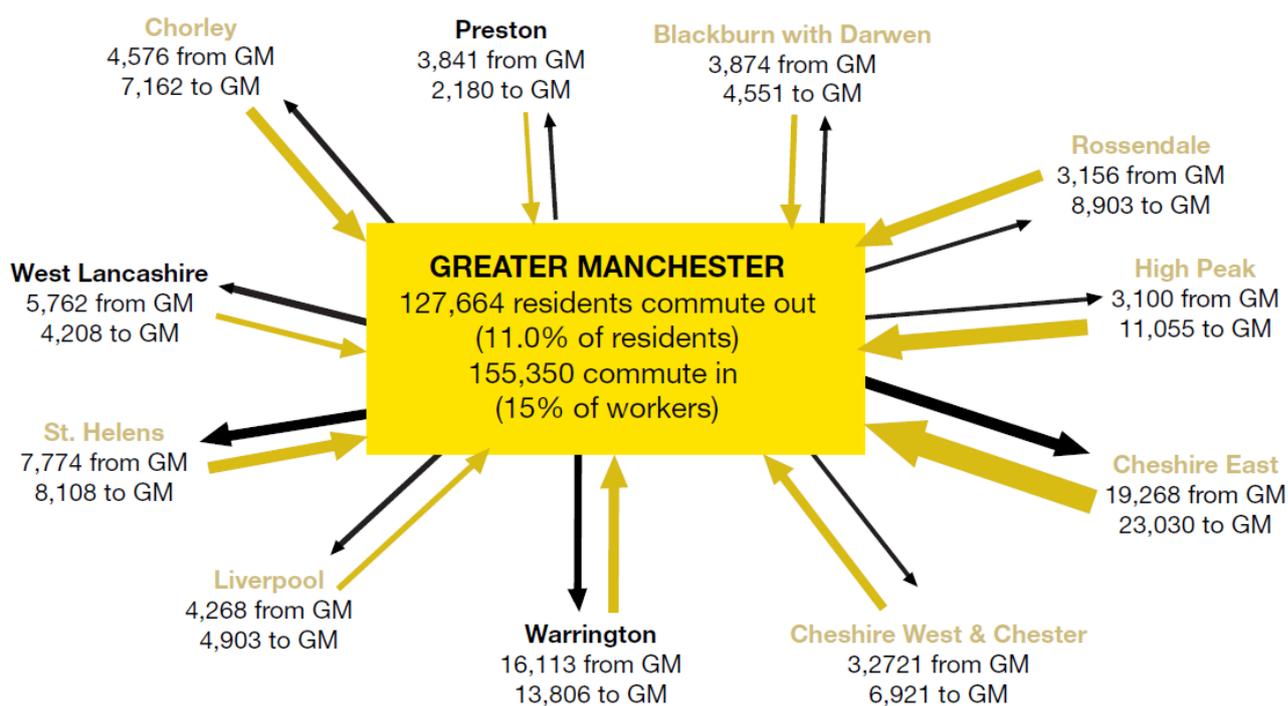
At the locality level, nearly 100,000 Wigan residents commute to work by car; 6,800 Stockport residents use the train to get to work; 5,500 Trafford residents commute by Metrolink; and 8,400 Manchester residents cycle to work (representing one third of all GM residents who cycle to work). 46,500 Manchester residents take the bus to work – the third highest total across all England and Wales local authorities after Birmingham and Leeds (which have larger populations than Manchester local authority area).

The three most recently opened Metrolink lines (Oldham/Rochdale, Droylsden/Ashton-under-Lyne and Chorlton/Didsbury) all opened post-2011, so the data cannot show the impact of these investments upon Metrolink patronage. However, the longer opened lines to Altrincham, Bury and Eccles all recorded increased patronage by GM-based workers. The number of people who used the tram for the longest part of their commute increased from 12,300 in 2001, to 14,900 in 2011, a 21% increase. There will be many more in and out commuters who use Metrolink where the tram journey is not the longest part of their commute (and hence not recorded in the Census data). Train journeys are more likely to be made by workers coming from outside GM than local workers, being twice as popular amongst the former group.

Public transport accounts for a growing percentage of travel to work journeys to destinations in GM– from 2001 to 2011 there was a 14% increase in public transport usage overall, a 48% increase in train journeys and a 21% increase in Metrolink journeys (see table 2). Commuting by bus saw a modest increase. But in absolute terms the increase in daily car journey commutes over the decade (15,000) was greater.

Figure 1: Largest travel to work flows outside GM, 2011

Largest travel to work flows into and out of Greater Manchester



Key

Gold area labels - Inward flow greater than outward flow
 Black area labels - Outward flow greater than inward flow

Source: Census 2011

Source: Census 2011, Table WU01UK, ONS

Table 1: How Greater Manchester's workers travel to work (major modes only), 2011

Mode of travel	Work elsewhere in own authority	Work outside own authority but in GM	Reside outside GM
Driving a car or van	54.0%	69.1%	77.9%
On foot	19.1%	3.0%	2.4%
Bus, minibus or coach	13.5%	11.9%	3.8%
Passenger in a car or van	6.9%	5.3%	4.1%
Bicycle	2.9%	2.0%	0.9%
Taxi	1.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Train	0.9%	4.6%	9.2%
Underground, metro, light rail or tram	0.7%	2.8%	0.5%

(Excludes people who work from home offshore, at no fixed location or outside the UK)

Source: Census 2011, Table WU03UK, ONS

Table 2: Change in mode of transport to work in Greater Manchester, 2001-2011

	All travelling to work	Underground, metro, light rail or tram	Train	Bus, Minibus or coach	Taxi	Driving a car or van	Passenger in a car or van	Motorcycle, scooter or moped	Bicycle	On foot	Other method of travel to work
2001	1,028,751	12,346	24,552	115,605	9,305	649,699	79,864	9,097	20,509	104,888	2,886
2011	1,059,711	14,990	36,227	122,285	8,227	664,883	62,688	6,522	24,180	117,121	2,588
Change	30,960	2,644	11,675	6,680	1,078	15,184	-17,176	-2,575	3,671	12,233	-298
% change	3.0	21.4	47.6	5.8	-11.6	2.3	-21.5	-28.3	17.9	11.7	-10.3

Source: Census 2011, Table WU03UK, ONS

At home or in an office?

By 2011 nearly 100,000 GM residents (9% of the total labour force vs. 10.4% nationally) worked at or mainly from home - a 16,000 increase (+20%) over the decade. In GM, home working was most common in Stockport and Trafford (both 11%) and least common in Manchester, Oldham, Salford and Wigan (all 8%). Alongside this increase in working from home, GM has also witnessed a sharp increase in the number of GM residents with 'no fixed workplace' – 91,000 GM residents (c. 7% of all workers vs. 8.4% nationally) belonged to this category, a 50,000 increase (+125%) in 10 years. The term no fixed workplace covers construction workers who move from site to site, agency workers, and people who work from home some (but not most) of the time. The percentages of residents with no fixed workplace were consistent across the 10 GM authorities.

Summary and potential policy responses

The travel to work data shows that GM remains a relatively stable travel to work area, with 85% of GM residents also working within GM. Manchester and Trafford remain the focal points as far as locations of work are concerned but Salford is growing as a work location. Commuting within GM generally follows a traditional pattern of being from the outlying boroughs into the conurbation core, but residents in all parts of GM are commuting across local authority boundaries more often and are commuting longer distances than in 2001. These trends come at the same time as GM's population is growing and becoming more concentrated within the conurbation core, suggesting that more people are choosing to live centrally then commute to outlying boroughs, travelling against the traditional flow of commuters. Beyond GM's boundary, GM's labour market links are stronger to areas in Cheshire and the High Peak than to Lancashire, Merseyside and the more distant parts of West Yorkshire.

Commuting by car remains the most popular way of getting to work and whilst growth in walking, cycling and public transport usage has been impressive it appears that there remains a core of people who will only travel to work by car. Investments in GM's bus, tram and train networks have come at the same time as large increases in usage. The increase in Metrolink usage can partly be explained by the opening of the Media City Metrolink spur.

The data also gives a good indication of the changing nature of employment with proportionally less employment based from a set workplace and an increase in working at or from home. If these trends continue it could mean the concepts of rush hour and off-peak travel on the roads and public transport network need to be revisited.

The increase in the percentages of GM residents who are travelling across local authority boundaries to work, the increase in commuters from outside GM, and the increased distance of average commutes all suggest that companies in GM have access to a larger pool of labour than was the case in 2001. This is an encouraging development as companies often say that access to skilled labour is a key driver of their success; but the data also shows that GM is not as well linked to the Lancashire and Merseyside labour markets as might be expected given the size of populations in these areas.

The trends of more and longer commuting are placing extra pressure upon GM's transport infrastructure and environmental objectives. Whilst commuting by public transport has increased at a faster rate than commuting by private vehicle the use of a car to travel to work remains the default setting for 63% of workers in GM. Furthermore, the sharp decline in the number of people travelling to work as a passenger in a car suggests an increase in one person car journeys. Measures that would be expected to reduce car usage, and hence GM's carbon footprint, include promoting car sharing, more integrated ticketing/passes so it is easier to change between trains, buses and trams, further extensions of the Metrolink network, dedicated bus lanes, and simpler and quicker 'on the day' public transport payments. These and other measures are all ready being considered or are in the pipeline – for example, the Get Me There Card initially starting on Metrolink but intended to be used across GM public transport in future. Until we have lower level (e.g. ward/postcode) data on exactly where GM workers live and work it is not possible to comment on modifications to existing bus and train routes or where new routes and service need to be provided. Reducing the cost of crossing the GM boundary by public transport should also reduce car usage amongst GM's longer distance commuters and expand GM's potential labour force.