

Do More Vehicles Make More Miles?

A snapshot analysis of the National Household Travel Survey 2001

One of the most striking changes in travel characteristics over the last quarter century in the U.S. is the nearly doubling (181 percent increase) in household vehicles. The rate of increase in household vehicles is six times the rate of population increase. We went from a society of 72.5 million vehicles serving 197.2 million people in 1969 to 203.9 million vehicles serving 277.2 million people in 2001. The number of households with three or more vehicles increased nearly nine times since 1969.

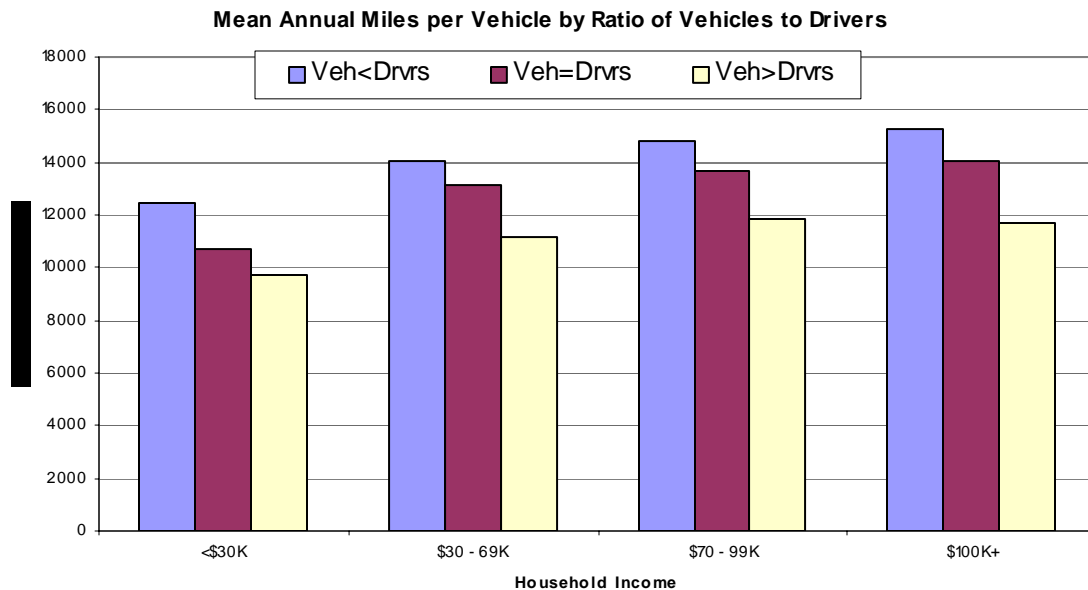
The average vehicle miles per household has grown from 12,423 miles per household per year in 1969 to 21,253. At the same time, the average household size has declined from 3.2 to 2.6. Overall, individuals are logging more vehicles miles per person than ever before, although the rate of growth in vehicle miles seems to be slowing.

Annual Vehicles Miles of Travel by Households, 1969 - 2001

	1969	1990	2001
Annual VMT per Household	12,412.2	18,161.2	21,252.5
Vehicles per Household	1.16	1.77	1.90

Source: NPTS/NHTS Data Series

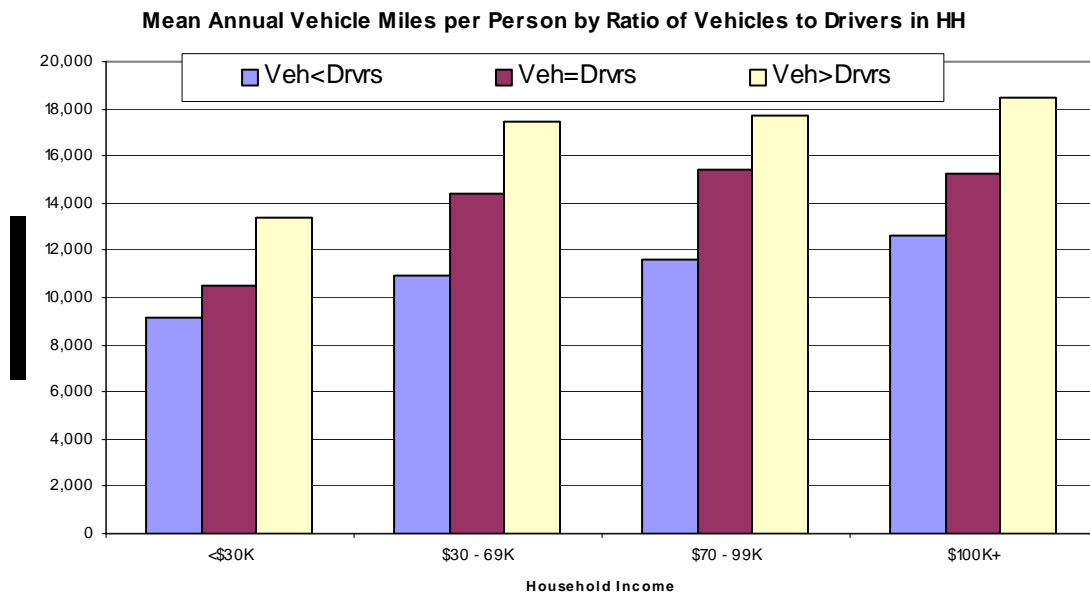
Since the vehicle travel per household is spread over more vehicles the annual miles per vehicle is declining slightly. Within income groups the average miles per vehicle is less when the vehicles in the household outnumber the drivers (see figure 1). Overall each vehicle in a household with more vehicles than drivers is driven 11 percent less miles than in households where there is one car for each driver.



Source: 2001 NHTS

A separate question is whether these added vehicles actually add substantially to vehicle miles of travel by household members—that is do people in households with a lot of cars travel more miles than people in households where there is just one car, or less, for each driver? Figure 2 shows the annual vehicle miles per driver from households with fewer vehicles than drivers, households with one vehicle for each driver, and households with more vehicles than drivers.

People in households with a ratio of vehicles to drivers of over 1.0 travel 24 percent more vehicle miles overall than people in households with only one car per driver, and 61 percent more vehicle miles than people in households with fewer vehicles than drivers. (see Figure 2)



Source: 2001 NHTS

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