

Science for Environment Policy

Do companies influence travel behaviour of employees?

Information on travel behaviour can provide insight into the most effective and sustainable ways to manage traffic congestion and its environmental impacts. A new German study focuses on service-related traffic and shows that employees of different types of companies have distinctly different travel behaviour.

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Service-related traffic is generated by services such as home maintenance, gardening, consultancy or facility management (but does not include freight), and accounts for up to 20% of [urban](#) road traffic. While much research has focused on personal travel behaviour, which is of course decided entirely by individuals, SRT behaviour can be substantially influenced by the employer.

The researchers analysed data from two German-wide surveys: the Motor Vehicle Traffic in Germany (KiD) survey, and the 'Service-Related Traffic' survey. They conducted analyses of travel patterns, focusing on times of travel, the origin and destination and the purpose of the trip.

Four distinct patterns of travel behaviour were identified. The first, mainly associated with construction businesses, consisted of travel peaks in the morning and evening and low rates of travel during the day, with the vehicle at a construction site during the day and at a company's premises in the evening. The second behaviour pattern was associated with electricity, water supply and construction businesses and was similar to the first; however, vehicles were also used for some personal trips.

The third pattern identified represented a wider range of service providers, and was dominated by the use of private cars, and visits to different customers and businesses throughout the day. High trip rates for both the working day and personal business are associated with this pattern. Finally, the fourth pattern of travel behaviour is similar to the third with high daily trip rates, but with lower personal use, and is associated with all service sectors apart from construction.

The results also demonstrated that private car use and greater distances are associated with larger companies, vehicles of companies located in urban areas travelled less than those in rural areas, and use of GPS navigation systems and regulated driving systems were correlated with increased mileage. Many of the most influential factors affecting travel behaviour were related to 'internal' business factors, such as the size of company and how trips were organised.

Although this study is based on German travel data, similar patterns are likely to be found in many other European countries. The results could inform policymakers when considering the growing impacts of SRT and facilitate effective partnership-working with businesses.

