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**CONTACT:**

Kirk Hovenkotter  
Commute Seattle  
(425) 301-4938

[kirkh@commuteseattle.com](mailto:kirkh@commuteseattle.com)

Bart Treece  
Mobility Innovation Center at the UW  
(206) 685-4478  
[btreece@uw.edu](mailto:btreece@uw.edu)

## Survey of 64,000 Seattle commuters reveals new insights into busiest travel days, travel choices, housing type, and hybrid work

Partnership with the University of Washington on redesigned survey highlights opportunities for region

Seattle — Three years after COVID-19 dramatically changed the nature of work and transportation, [a new survey](#) of workers reveals how these changes are affecting downtown and all of Seattle today. The survey's findings – summarized below – will help leaders, planners, and decision makers understand how people get around Seattle in this new era of work.

The findings from the redesigned survey developed by the [Mobility Innovation Center at the University of Washington](#) and [Commute Seattle](#) uncover new insights and trends for travel into the city center, neighborhoods across the city, and trips taken for work, groceries, healthcare, and school. One out of ten people who work in the city of Seattle took the survey.

“Our survey looks at the people beyond the percentages. It reveals that where we work, what kind of homes we live in, and how much we make shapes how we get around Seattle.” said Commute Seattle Executive Director Kirk Hovenkotter. “Now is the opportunity to leverage investments in transit, biking, walking and rolling for everyday trips, not just commute trips.”

Launched by the Mobility Innovation Center, in partnership with Commute Seattle, a [UW Urban Design and Planning](#) team consisting of Ph.D. candidate Lamis Ashour, professor Qing Shen, and emeritus professor Anne Vernez Moudon led efforts to redesign the Center City mode split survey with one that better captures insights into trip choice and motivators, as well as origin and destination data. As a result of this collaboration, decision makers have a clearer picture of travel trends by different demographic groups, employment type, and even housing information.

“We’re dealing with a new reality for travel, and a new approach was needed,” said Mobility Innovation Center Director Bart Treece. “The richness of data and insights are the result of cross-sector partners committed to understanding our new normal so we can all move forward together.”

### Key Findings

**Commuting** - *Travel choices and days of the week survey questions provide insights for commuting.*

- **Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday commutes are vastly different from Monday and Friday.** Seattle workers are more likely to physically commute to their workplace on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. In the Center City, 39% of people telework on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Monday and Friday, they are much more likely to telework with 57% of people teleworking on Friday.



- **1 out of 5 people drive alone to work at peak times in the Center City.** Drive alone commute trips to the Center City declined since 2019, from a rate of 26% during that year, to 25% in 2021, and 21% in 2022.
- **Transit commute trips rebounded slightly.** Respondents with Center City workplaces shared that they used public transit 22% of the time in 2022, up slightly from 18% in 2021, but lower than the 46% in 2019.
- **More people drive alone to offices outside of the Center City.** New insights reveal that people who work at large employers in the Center City are more likely to telework or take public transit. Fifty-one percent of respondents at large employers in the Center City telework, compared to 30% outside the Center City. People who work at large employers outside of the Center City are more likely to drive alone to work. Forty percent of these employees drive alone compared to 19% of those inside the Center City.

**Travel behavior and housing** - *New portions of the survey included questions about respondent home location using major intersections as a locator, how they travel for non-commute trips, and housing type.*

- **Time and money are the leading influence of trip choice.** Survey respondents indicated that time/duration, flexibility/convenience, and affordability/cost were the most important factors for how they travel.
- **People with the best transit, biking, and walking options could take more advantage of these options to get to work.** A high concentration of people who drive alone or telework live in neighborhoods with great biking, walking, and transit infrastructure including central, northwest, and northeast Seattle.
- **Traffic has returned not just because of work trips, but because of other trips.** Over 75% of people drive alone for trips to groceries, healthcare, and school pickup and dropoff. People take more of these trips a week than they do from home to work.
- **Connection between housing and travel.** People who live in single-detached housing are more likely to telework. Those who live in apartments and condos are more likely to work in-person. People who live in single-detached housing are more likely to drive alone, ferry or vanpool to work. People who live in apartments, condos, or townhouses are more likely to walk to work, take an employer-provided shuttle, and use Uber/Lyft to commute.
- **Family obligations like childcare needs make people more likely to drive to work.** People with children or dependents at home are more likely to drive alone to work than people without dependents or children. It was the third highest stated reason why respondents chose to drive alone to work.

**Income and commute mode** - *New to this survey were questions related to income and travel options to help identify trends and potential disparities.*

- **People in higher income households are more likely to telework.** High-income respondents, those in households earning \$150,000 per year or more, are more likely to telework or have hybrid commute options. Respondents who live in households that earn below \$60,000 per year are more likely to work in person.
- **A reversal in the income of the average transit rider.** People who live in households that make below \$90,000 are more likely to take transit than those who make over \$90,000, a [reversal](#) from pre-pandemic.
- **Income difference between walkers and rollers.** People who walk to work are more likely to have a lower household income, be younger (15-34), single and live in rented apartments or condos. In contrast, employees in high-income households (\$150,000 and above) are more likely to bike/e-bike to work than others.



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at the  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

## **Background**

The Seattle Commute Survey has been conducted since 2010 as the Center City Mode Split Study. The survey provides detailed insights into commuter trends for transit, people driving alone, walking, biking, vanpool, carpool, and other modes. This redesigned survey was made possible in part by support from Challenge Seattle, BECU, and Pemco Insurance. Over 64,000 people completed the survey. The Seattle Department of Transportation and the Washington State Department of Transportation helped with the development of the survey to ensure data produced met commute trip reduction reporting requirements.

For more information and the full report visit [commuteseattle.com/2022survey](http://commuteseattle.com/2022survey). Commute Seattle offers complimentary consultations to Seattle businesses of all sizes looking to retain and recruit talent with affordable and sustainable commute options. For a full list of services, visit [commuteseattle.com/business-services](http://commuteseattle.com/business-services).

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## **About Commute Seattle**

Commute Seattle is the nonprofit that works to make it easy to walk, bike, ride, and roll for the 600,000 people who go to work in Seattle everyday. It is supported by the Downtown Seattle Association, Metropolitan Improvement District, Seattle Department of Transportation, King County Metro and Sound Transit. For more information, visit [commuteseattle.com](http://commuteseattle.com). Follow us on Twitter (@CommuteSeattle), Instagram (@commute\_seattle), and on Facebook (Facebook.com/CommuteSeattle).

## **About the Mobility Innovation Center at the University of Washington**

A partnership between Challenge Seattle and the University of Washington, the Mobility Innovation Center tackles specific transportation challenges using applied research and experimentation. Housed at CoMotion, University of Washington's collaborative innovation hub, the multi-disciplinary center brings together the region's leading expertise from business, government, and academic sectors to use technology and innovation to find transportation solutions.

## **University of Washington Department of Urban Design and Planning**

A part of the College of the Built Environments, the mission of the Department of Urban Design and Planning is to develop a community of inquiry, learning, and practice that helps urban regions to become more livable, just, economically effective, and environmentally sound through a democratic process of urban design and planning.