

For many people, daily life revolves around commuting —whether it’s traveling to work, dropping children off at school, or running errands. Most commutes are by car, which means lots of time behind the wheel. On average, commuters travel 10 to 16 miles one way to work, sometimes spending about 1.5 hours daily in traffic. Over time, the stress of it can significantly affect physical and mental well-being.

While the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a period of remote work for many, offering a rare reprieve from daily commutes, studies indicate that job satisfaction and mental health still declined during that time. This suggests that while avoiding the commute may relieve some stressors, other underlying issues tied to work-life balance, isolation, or screen fatigue may also be at play.

Nonetheless, the impact of commuting, particularly by car, should not be underestimated. We’ve all experienced the frustration of rush hour traffic, but rarely do we pause to consider how this repeated stress shapes our health. Research has found that the stresses associated with driving — navigating congested roads, finding parking, dealing with aggressive drivers, and maintaining constant vigilance — can lead to increased levels of anxiety, irritability, and even symptoms of depression. The physical toll is also noteworthy. Long hours of sedentary driving contribute to poor posture, fatigue, and chronic pain.

By contrast, public transportation, especially rail systems, has been shown to reduce these negative effects. Traveling by train offers a more relaxed environment, allowing passengers to read, listen to music, stand, walk,

RAIL MIGHT BE HEALTHIER CHOICE FOR COMMUTERS

BY TONISHA MELVIN



or simply rest prior to a workday, resulting in lower stress levels and a greater sense of calm. Some studies have linked rail commuting with improved focus, reduced anxiety, and even lower rates of depression compared with car commuting.

Interestingly, how we cope with these commuting stressors can be influenced by our personality traits. Individuals with higher emotional resilience or a more laid-back disposition may navigate traffic with less frustration, while those prone to anxiety or perfectionism may find commuting particularly draining. Understanding our temperament can help us develop healthier responses to everyday stress and potentially influence the choice of transportation that works to our best benefit.

In light of these realities, it may be time to rethink our daily transportation habits—not just for the sake of efficiency, but for our long-term mental and physical health.



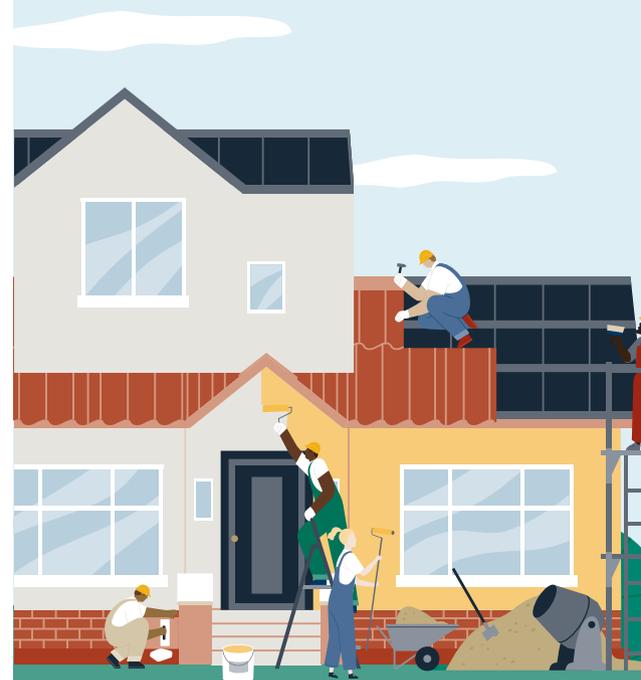
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