



Does teleworking reduce traffic?

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Gridlock has become a daily part of our morning commute. Teleworking could solve Malta's traffic troubles by reducing cars on the road, but little research exists to prove the idea. While reading for a bachelor's degree in Geography, I (Natalia Vella) explored teleworking as a means of reducing car traffic. Essentially, is teleworking an effective solution to minimise travelling distance in Malta?

In Malta, the private car is the most popular daily mode of transportation used by commuters. Average commuting distance by car has grown year on year. In 2017, this was 2,976 million km (by all licensed cars) which increased to 3,196 million km by 2019. Maltese people get around.

While many studies imply that telework reduces overall travel, new studies also suggest the opposite. In my research, questionnaires were distributed to University of Malta employees who have been or are now teleworking. My study looked into their work from home experience and travel behaviour during teleworking days.

Most teleworkers (76.1%) responded that they would have made these trips regardless of if they were teleworking or not. When comparing the participants' trips before and during teleworking days, it was discovered that they travelled more during teleworking days than they did when they were not teleworking. The trips were mostly done by car (53.8%) and used for grocery shopping and everyday necessities. Most participants (87.4%) said that the main factor behind teleworking was COVID-19, while only 15.1% mentioned eliminating the daily commute.

Participants' daily routines had not changed, because they stated that trips such as grocery shopping and other errands were still necessary regardless of whether they were teleworking or not. In addition, teleworking allowed them to have more free time by eliminating the need to go to and from work, which created time for other additional activities.

My study examined whether the concept of teleworking can or cannot be used to limit commuting and change travel behaviour. It found that teleworking did not reduce daily travel. The more teleworking individuals did, the more they travelled for reasons other than work – the addiction to car travel remains. **T**