8% of Brits in transport poverty - Lift-sharing saves £1034 a year

Monday 20 November, 2023

New data from the Social Market Foundation (SMF) shows that 5 million people (8% of the British population) are being driven into poverty by transport costs.

Cars are the most expensive mode of transport, with the report stating that car usage costs the median British household over £5,650 per year. There are often limited alternatives though, particularly in rural areas, with people being forced into expensive car ownership by an absence of dependable and affordable public transport.

The SMF gives some long-term recommendations on how to tackle transport poverty, but according to other specialists there is a way of dramatically reducing driving costs now. And it's something that's on the increase in the UK - lift-sharing. The UK & Ireland's largest car-sharing platform, Liftshare, has calculated that its members save an average of £1034 each per year.

Recently released Commuter Census data from Mobilityways found that, out of 7,439 survey respondents, the biggest year on year increase in commuting mode is car sharing. Travelling by car alone remains the most common mode of transport for the commute, so it's clear that many more people could be cutting their costs by switching to car sharing. This year, 43% of Commuter Census respondents travelled to work by car alone, and a further 4% by car alone EV (Electric Vehicle). Combined, this is an increase from the single-occupancy commute levels recorded in the Government's 2021 Census, which saw 45.1% of commuters driving to work in a car or van.

Mobilityways consultant commutologist, Millie Botting, comments, "There is, however, an indication that people are starting to move away from driving alone, to more affordable and sustainable modes of transport." This year's Commuter Census shows that people are returning to the workplace more, with a drop in 'I usually Work from Home' from 16% in 2022 to just 4% in 2023. Millie Botting continues, "As people travel more for work again, their modes are changing, with car sharing up 5% year-on-year. Plus, there are more people using almost all forms of public transport, including train, bus and tube."

This rise in car-sharing is mirrored by Liftshare's recent announcement of an 80% YOY increase in the number of people sharing through the journey matching platform in September, and a record-breaking summer, with double the usual numbers joining Liftshare
in July and August this year.

Liftshare Community Manager, Amy Young, comments "The increasingly prohibitive cost of car ownership is certainly a factor in the number of additional people trying lift-sharing. Drivers can cut the cost of their journey by half, or more if they take extra passengers. But we also hear from our members that they enjoy helping others get from A to B more affordably and conveniently. For those who don't drive, it can be the case that public transport is too expensive or not feasible where they live."

As a social enterprise, Liftshare offers its platform free of charge to members of the public. People can join as a driver or passenger, and add a journey for their regular or shift commute, as well as for one-off trips. Liftshare displays a suggested contribution against each journey, with payment being arranged between sharers. Or for regular journeys where more than one sharer drives, they can take it in turns driving, which also reduces the stress and tiredness of the commute. To find out how much you could save by lift-sharing, try the Liftshare Savings Calculator.

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