



# Detroiters' Views on Transportation and Mobility

Detroit remains a driving city, presenting challenges for non-car owners

## FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

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### Overview

For the nearly two-thirds of Detroiters who own a car, Detroit remains the Motor City. These Detroiters rely on cars as their primary mode of transportation, rarely or never use public transportation, and prioritize improving conditions for drivers, lowering the cost of auto insurance in particular, above other options for improving the city's transportation system.

For the third of Detroiters who do not own a car, a group more likely to be poor, black and female, the 2017 DMACS survey finds evidence that transportation can be a challenge. These carless Detroiters rely on the bus system and others to drive them to their destination at much higher rates, and are less satisfied with their transportation options than their car-owning peers are. Four in ten have missed appointments or work because they did not have a way to get there. Despite the obstacles that carless Detroiters face, however, they also prioritize lowering the cost of auto insurance above other transportation improvements, suggesting that they hope to join the ranks of drivers rather than remaining carless by choice.

These findings come from the Winter 2017 Detroit Metropolitan Area Communities Study, a representative survey of 444 Detroiters.<sup>1</sup>

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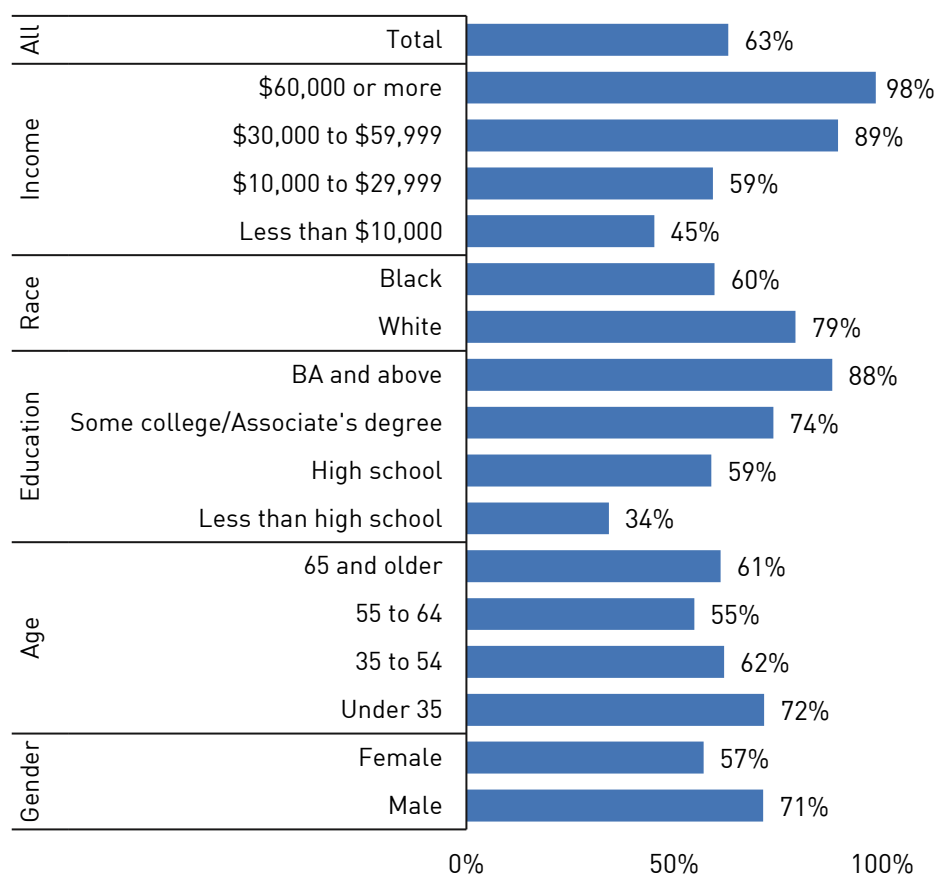
<sup>1</sup> Interviews were self-administered and conducted online as well as using paper and pencil between March and June 2017. Respondents were recruited via mail from the list of 714 adults who responded to the first wave of the DMACS survey. The margin of sampling error for a random sample survey of this size is 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The data have been weighted using a raking procedure by age, education, sex, and race to match Census estimates for the City of Detroit.

## Key Findings

### Most own vehicles, though there are disparities in ownership by class, race, and gender

Almost two-thirds of Detroiters (63%) own or share a vehicle with someone in their household, while one-third (34%) do not. Many stories have been written about young, affluent urban dwellers choosing to live without cars, but the data show that at least in the Motor City, living without a car is rare among educated middle- and upper-income residents and more common at the low end of the socioeconomic scale.

Figure 1: Do you own or lease a car, truck, or motorcycle? (Please consider any operational vehicle you own personally, as well as those you share with another member of your household.) (PERCENT SAYING YES)

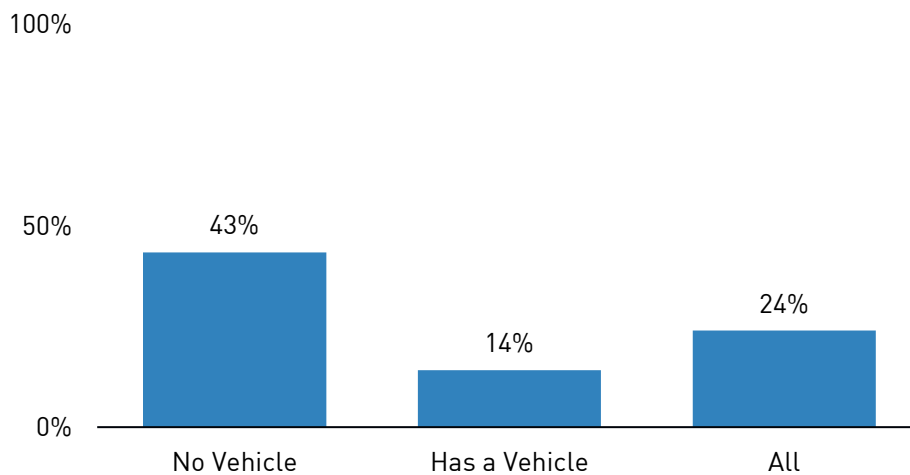


As shown in [Figure 1](#), income and education are strongly associated with car ownership. Slightly less than half of Detroiters (45%) with annual household incomes below \$10,000 own cars. Among Detroiters with less than a high school degree, even fewer (34%) own a vehicle. Other groups less likely to own a vehicle include black Detroiters (60%) and women (57%).

Of Detroiters without a vehicle, four in ten have missed work, an appointment, or an outing due to lack of transportation.

When asked whether or not “in the last month, you have been forced to miss an appointment, skip going somewhere, or miss work because you did not have a way to get there,” 43 percent of Detroiters without a car say they have. This is three times as high as the 14 percent rate reported by car-owning Detroiters.

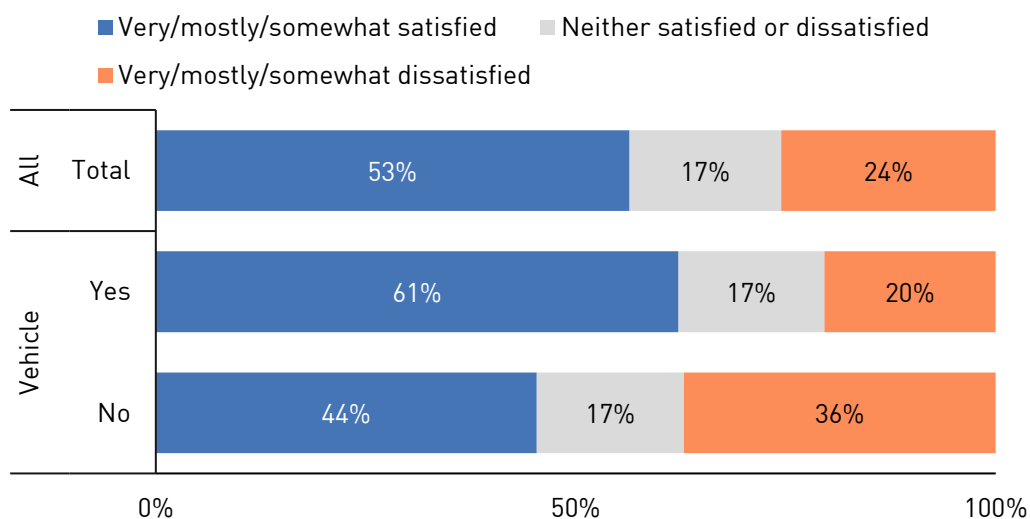
**Figure 2: In the last month, have you been forced to miss an appointment, skip going somewhere, or miss work because you did not have a way to get there? (PERCENT SAYING “YES”)**



### Those without vehicles are less satisfied with transportation in the city

Satisfaction with transportation in the city is somewhat lower for those who do not own or share a vehicle, as shown in [Figure 3](#). While six in ten Detroiters who own a car (61%) report being “somewhat satisfied”, “mostly satisfied”, or “very satisfied” with their transportation options, less than half of those without a vehicle are similarly satisfied with their options (44%).

Figure 3: On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is completely dissatisfied and 7 is completely satisfied, how satisfied are you with your transportation options for getting to work, school, appointments, shopping, social events, visiting friends or family, or other activities?



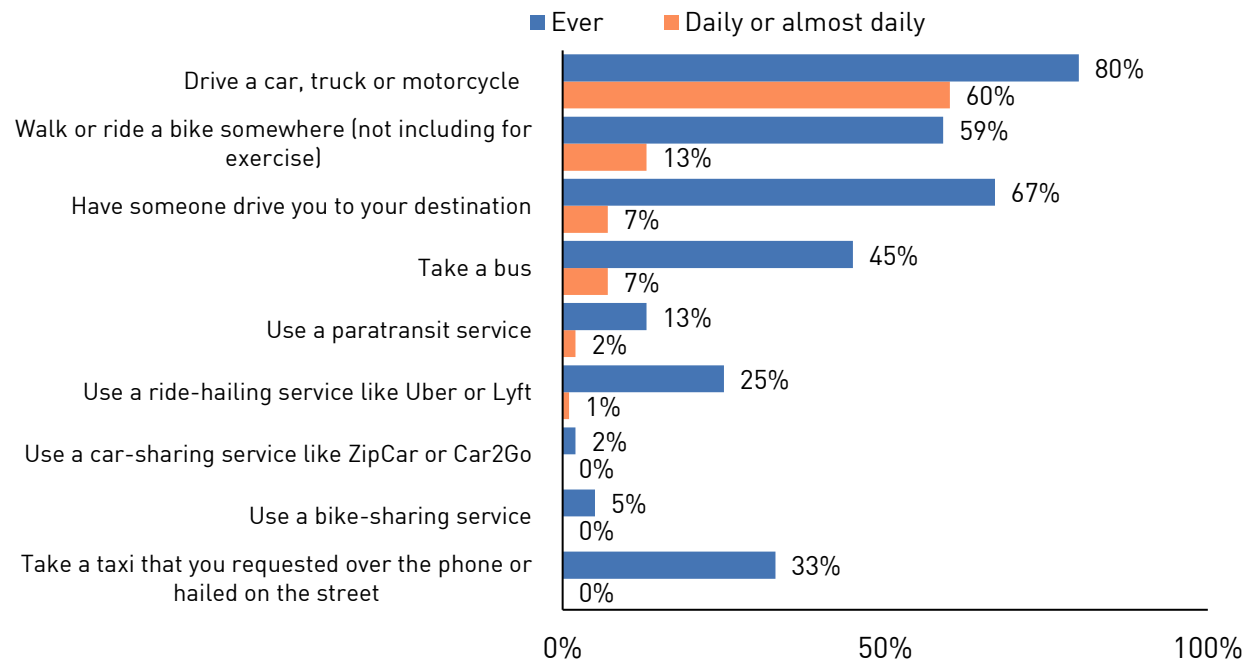
**Overall, most Detroiters drive, while few rely on “new mobility” options such as ride sharing or car sharing**

As shown in [Figure 4](#), 80 percent of Detroiters drive at least occasionally, including 60 percent of who drive daily or almost daily. In addition, many Detroiters rely on others to drive them places: 67 percent ever have someone else drive them, though only 7 percent do so daily or almost daily.

No other transportation option comes close to driving in terms of daily transportation. The second most common form of daily transportation used by Detroiters is walking or riding a bike somewhere, which 13 percent say they do daily, though six in ten (59%) do sometimes. Additionally, few Detroiters take a bus on a daily basis (7%), but almost half (45%) do at least occasionally.

Ride-hailing services, such as Uber or Lyft, are used daily or almost daily by very few Detroiters (1%), but a quarter (25%) use them at least occasionally. On the other hand, car-sharing services like ZipCar or Car2Go are very rarely used. No Detroiters use them on a daily basis, and only 2 percent use them at all.

Figure 4: Please indicate how frequently, if ever, you currently use the following forms of transportation: daily or almost daily, weekly, several times a month, less often, or never?

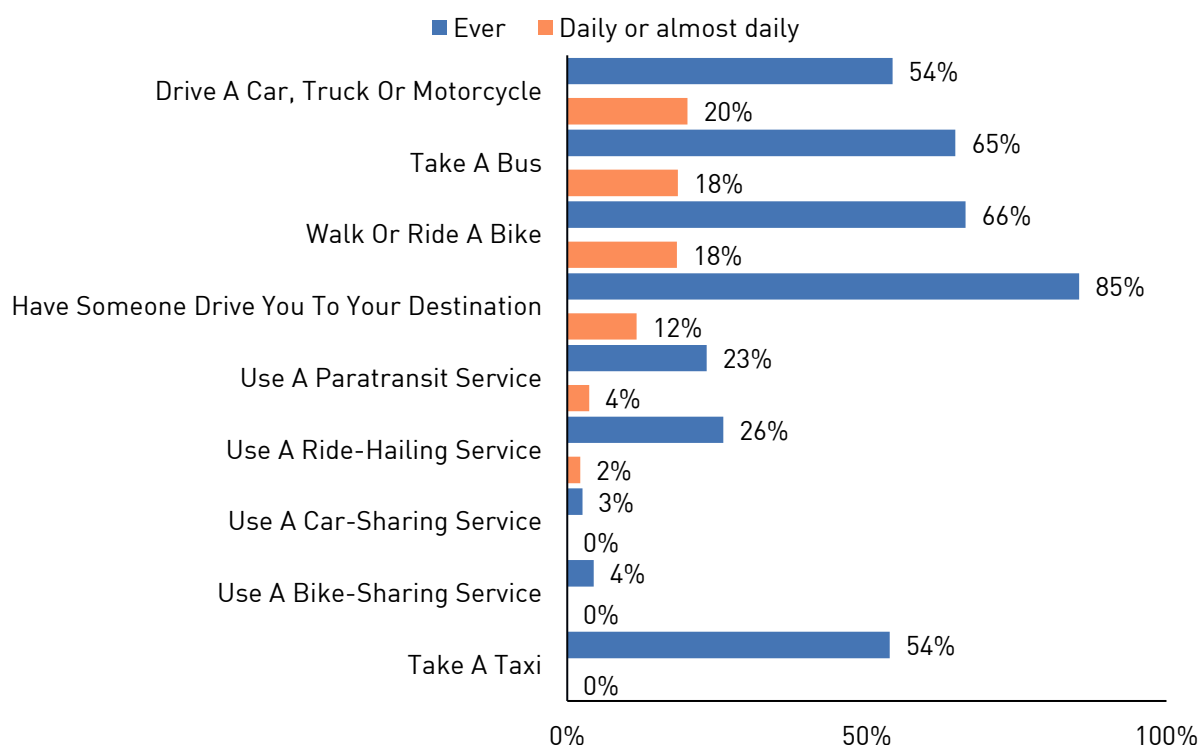


### Carless Detroiters primarily rely on the bus and rides from others

Detroiters without a vehicle typically ride the bus or rely on others for rides more than they depend on services such as car-sharing and ride-hailing. [Figure 5](#) illustrates daily and total use of these forms of transportation among Detroiters who do not own or share a vehicle.

- Among carless Detroiters, 12 percent get someone to drive them daily or almost daily (85% ever)
- One in five (18%) takes the bus daily or almost daily (65% ever).
- Carless Detroiters are not much more likely than those with vehicles to use ride hailing services (26% ever), use bike sharing (4% ever) or car-sharing services (3% ever)

Figure 5: Please indicate how frequently, if ever, you currently use the following forms of transportation: daily or almost daily, weekly, several times a month, less often, or never? (Among Detroiters with no Vehicle)



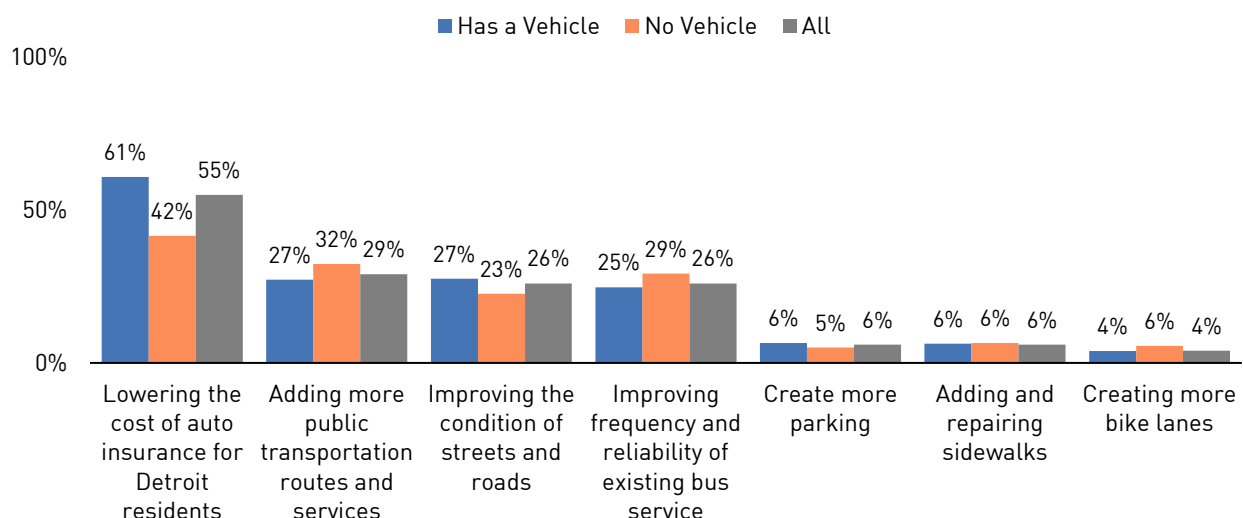
### Detroiters prioritize improving driving conditions above all other transportation improvements

To assess Detroiters’ priorities for transportation we used a technique known as “best-worst scaling” in which respondents were shown several groupings of potential transportation improvements and asked to select the best and the worst from each list.

The results show that reducing the cost of auto insurance is a top priority among Detroit residents. When assessed against 5 other possible options for improving transportation and mobility, Detroiters selected lowering the cost of auto insurance as the best option 55 percent of the time.

As shown in [Figure 6](#), the items next most frequently selected item by Detroiters are adding more public transportation routes and services (29%), improving the conditions of streets and roads (26%), and improving the frequency and reliability of the existing bus service (26%). At the bottom of the list are creating more bike lanes (4%), adding or repairing sidewalks (6%), and adding more parking (6%).

Figure 6: Which of these ideas for improving transportation and mobility in and around Detroit is the BEST? Which of these ideas for improving transportation and mobility in and around Detroit is the WORST? (PERCENT OF TIME SELECTED AS “BEST”)



Priorities for reform are fairly similar regardless of vehicle ownership. Both Detroiters with and without a car prioritize lowering the cost of auto insurance well above other options. Those without a car selected this less often than those with vehicles (42% vs. 61%), but still selected it more often than all other options. Rates of selection for the other options are even closer, differing by at most 5%.

## Acknowledgements

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