

# Better transport options linked to greater health and wellbeing, study finds

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Transport infrastructure in the north of England needs vital improvements, researchers have warned, as a study finds a link between travelling outside your local area and positive health and wellbeing.

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People who travel more outside their local area feel healthier than those who stay closer to home, a study has found.

Both the frequency and distance of journeys away from the house contribute to a better sense of wellbeing, as they both contribute to increased social interactions.

The research by University College London (UCL) was focused on the north of England, where residents both face worse health outcomes and poorer transport accessibility than the rest of the country.

Researchers say the study shows the need for investment in medium and long-distance transport options, such as better serviced roads and access to trains and buses, in the most underserved areas.

It comes as doubts remain over the government's commitment to HS2, with the project's second phase shrouded in confusion since it was **scrapped by Boris Johnson**, only to be recommitted to by his successor Liz Truss.

Transport Secretary Mark Harper **has failed to commit to the plan** to building the high-speed rail project in full.

Phase one will open between 2029 and 2033 and run from London to Birmingham over 134 miles, but phase two - connecting Birmingham to Manchester via Crewe, originally carrying on to Leeds - is up in the air.

## 'Older generations are left behind'

The study, supported by Transport for the North and published in Transport & Health, saw more than 3,000 residents surveyed and found the strongest link between travel constraints and health among the over-55s.

People in that age bracket are more likely to also suffer from limited mobility and loneliness, thus exacerbating the impact of poor transport links.

Lead author of the study, Dr Paulo Ancaes, explained: "In the north of England, rural and suburban areas with limited access options are more likely to experience population loss as young people move to the cities in search of work and good travel options.

"Meanwhile, older generations are left behind in these areas with limited transport options.

"The range of places they can visit is low, leading to less social participation and lower levels of general health."

The research also comes during an unprecedented period of strikes on the UK's rail network, **with much of the country left with no services whatsoever this week.**

Unions have warned that more disruption will ensue if they do not reach a deal with rail operators.

The winter of industrial action follows a summer which saw a major train operator slash its intercity timetable and suspend ticket operations, which Labour said had left cities like Manchester and Liverpool **"cut off" from London.**