

Residents of 'boom time' suburbs face unsustainable commutes

April 24 2014, by Thomas Deane

People living in the 'boom time' suburbs of Dublin are more likely to endure unsustainable commutes to work than those living in older accommodation. Research shows that people living in newly constructed housing in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) are more likely to depend on cars to 'get from A to B' and that their journey times are also longer.

Many of the new housing developments in the GDA are not linked to Dublin city centre by [rail networks](#), and new public transport infrastructure has generally lagged behind construction. However, even within the same electoral districts or geographical areas, those living in housing built after 2001 are more likely to drive than those living in houses in that area built before 2001.

In the five-year period from 2001-2006, 17% of housing in the GDA was constructed, with a further 10% added by 2011. Much of this new housing is at a higher density to the older, more traditional Dublin suburbs, and comprises apartments and duplexes. Due to the breakdown of the property market and construction industry in Ireland there is now a large stock of unfinished and unoccupied housing in the GDA.

Among the most interesting results, which used Census data in their analyses, was that a higher proportion of commuters living in newly constructed housing drove alone to work (68% of people living in post-2006 housing, compared to 56% living in pre-1970 housing). Also, only 19% of people in the former category walked or cycled to CBD employment, compared to the more environmentally friendly figure of

30% in the latter category.

Dr Brian Caulfield, Assistant Professor in Civil Engineering at Trinity College Dublin, and lead author of the journal article featuring the research, said: "These results show that another negative impact of the housing boom is that those individuals living in newer housing stock, due to lack of transport alternatives, have more unsustainable travel patterns."

Dr Caulfield hopes the results might prove useful in shaping future research and in developing potential transport solutions, while underlining the importance of monitoring change and responding to it on short time scales. He added: "These results also show how important it is to collect Census data and how vital it is for providing us with a picture of how the city we live in is always changing."

The results, when examining CBD work trips, also show that people living in houses built before 1970 are the least likely to have commutes of over 20 minutes (55%, compared to 71% of all of those living in [housing](#) built after 2006).

Co-author of the research, Dr Aoife Ahern, from University College Dublin's School of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering, added: "As the economy improves and traffic returns to pre-recession levels, those living in these 'boom time' houses will only suffer longer journey times, thus exacerbating existing problems."

This research has recently been published in the journal *Case Studies on Transport Policy*.

More information: Brian Caulfield, Aoife Ahern, "The green fields of Ireland: The legacy of Dublin's housing boom and the impact on commuting," *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, Volume 2, Issue 1, July

2014, Pages 20-27, ISSN 2213-624X,
[dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2013.12.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2013.12.001).

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