

Ladies and gentlemen, stop your engines: Americans driving less

25 July 2013

Miles driven by U.S. motorists in light-duty vehicles are down about 5 percent since its peak in 2006, says a University of Michigan researcher.

Following up his recent research that showed that the number of registered vehicles reached a maximum five years ago, Michael Sivak of the U-M Transportation Research Institute analyzed recent trends in distances driven by cars, pickup trucks, SUVs and vans in the U.S. from 1984 to 2011. He also examined rates per person, per licensed driver, per household and per registered vehicle.

Sivak found that Americans drove 2.647 trillion miles in 2011 (the latest year available), down from a high of 2.773 trillion miles in 2006. In 1984, the distance driven by light vehicles stood at 1.559 trillion miles.

His study also showed that the distance-driven rates per person, per licensed driver and per household have all dropped 9 percent since 2004, while the rate per registered vehicle is down 5 percent during that time.

The latest rates (2011) are: distance driven per person, 8,494 miles (down from 9,314 in 2004); distance driven per licensed driver, 12,492 miles (down from 13,711 in 2004); distance driven per household, 22,069 miles (down from 24,349 in 2004); and distance driven per registered vehicle, 11,318 miles (down from 11,946 in 2004).

"All of these rates reached their maxima in 2004—four years prior to the beginning of the current [economic downturn](#)," Sivak said. "These reductions likely reflect, in part, noneconomic changes in society that influence the need for vehicles—such as increased telecommuting, increased use of public transportation, increased [urbanization](#) of the population and changes in the age composition of drivers.

"Because the onset of the reductions in the driving

rates was not the result of short-term economic changes, the 2004 maxima in the distance-driven rates have a reasonable chance of being long-term peaks as well."

More information: deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2026.1/42/98982/102950.pdf

Provided by University of Michigan

APA citation: Ladies and gentlemen, stop your engines: Americans driving less (2013, July 25) retrieved 26 February 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-ladies-gentlemen-americans.html>

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