

New study reveals health and social benefits of car-free living

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Participating in a three-week car-free challenge has enhanced the health and well-being of Oxford residents, according to [research](#) conducted by The University of Bath's Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST), in partnership with climate charity Possible and Low Carbon Oxford North (LCON), conducted this research project.

After ditching their cars for three weeks, 10 out of the 12 drivers across Oxford who participated said they plan to continue with reduced car use beyond the project.

The findings of this research project show that:

- Day-to-day transport emissions were slashed by 53% on average, with some people virtually eliminating CO₂ emissions associated with transport.
- 10 out of the 12 people reported that they intend to cut down on car use permanently because of participating in the project.
- 3 out of the 12 people reported that they plan to make significant lifestyle changes because of the project, such as giving up their car completely.

Following the project, many participants reported improved health and well-being, reconnection with the [local environment](#) and people, as well as a sense of accomplishment for contributing to the reduction of air pollution and [climate change](#). Some participants also reported saving money.

The project highlights the importance of support—such as accessible information about travel options and [peer support](#)—in encouraging people to make changes.

The report outlines a series of barriers to car-free living experienced by the group during the project. It makes several recommendations to national and local governments, including ensuring public transport is reliable, affordable, and accessible, investing in safe cycling infrastructure across the city, and making appropriate provisions for residents with mobility difficulties.

Dr. Claire Hoolohan, co-investigator at CAST, said, "Transport is the largest emitting sector in the UK, and cars contribute considerably to the overall emissions. Modal shifting—from cars to public transport and active travel—is one of the most effective ways to reduce emissions.

"This experiment enables people to experience life without a car while continuing all their usual activities. This [project](#) shows many benefits, including a sense of connectedness to the outside world, more social opportunities, more time to relax, and more autonomy. It also illustrates the extent of change needed in society to enable car-free living.

"Improving local infrastructure for active travel, accessible and affordable [public transport](#) services, and wrap-around support such as training, [financial support](#), and repair services for people new to traveling without a car."

The car-free challenge took place in March 2024.

More information: [Going Car Free](#)

Provided by University of Bath

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