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STRESSED OUT BRITS SEEK SANCTUARY BEHIND THE STEERING WHEEL

Brits are spending more and more of their lives behind the wheel, but a new study from **Lloyds TSB Insurance** shows that this may be out of choice rather than necessity. According to the research, the family car is no longer being used simply for getting from A to B but, in many households, it doubles up as additional wardrobe space, a hideaway from family demands and even as a second home.

Over a quarter of motorists (26 per cent) admit to spending up to two hours a day in their vehicle. A further two per cent spend more than 5 hours behind the wheel and worryingly, well over a third (39 per cent) believe that time spent on the road will only increase.

Yet, despite being trapped by traffic jams and cow-towed by seemingly ceaseless commutes, many Brits are choosing to seek solace in their saloons in times of trouble. Over a third (34 per cent) admit to retreating to the car after an argument with their partner and one in five (19 per cent) slink away to their vehicle if they need to cry in private. A further 19 per cent admit to decamping to the coupe simply to escape family demands and, for more than one in ten (13 per cent), the car provides some much needed peace and quiet.

Cramped British householders are now demanding more from their motor, viewing them as extensions of their already overloaded homes. Nearly one in ten (9 per cent) admit to hoarding household junk in their cars and six per cent are attempting to escape the rat race by using their motors as makeshift offices (6 per cent). For some, the motor is even likely to be a 'sartorial saloon' as two per cent admit to storing their shoes in their car and, for one per cent, the car even doubles up as a second wardrobe.

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Phil Loney, managing director of Lloyds TSB Insurance, says: “For many cramped and stressed-out households, the car is proving to be a vital escape valve from today’s ‘pressure cooker’ lifestyle. Far from simply being a convenient mode of transport, the car is now just as likely to conceal a cache of outdated clothes, unwanted junk and even disgruntled family members. As our vehicles become ever more vital in modern life, it is even more important to have adequate car insurance.”

The research suggests that driving also has a powerful effect on our personalities. A third (31 per cent) say that being behind the wheel makes them feel independent and grown up and nearly a quarter (23 per cent) say their car makes them feel protected and safe. One in ten (10 per cent) uninhibited drivers admit to letting their true colours shine through as soon as their feet hit the pedals.

Britain’s vehicular love affair doesn’t end at the garage door. Well over half of Brits (53 per cent) say they would consider hiring a mobile home on holiday and one in five (20 per cent) of car crazy Brits would consider permanently abandoning bricks and mortar for a life on the road.

For many (59 per cent), the flexibility of being able to stay anywhere is key, whilst for over a quarter (26 per cent) being able to go away at a moment’s notice is the biggest benefit. Well over one in ten (14 per cent) consider the greatest lure of living in a mobile home to be the freedom from mortgages.

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Notes to editors:

- General Insurance advice is provided by Lloyds TSB Insurance Services Limited. Registered in England No. 968406. 25 Gresham Street London EC2V 7HN. Members of the General Insurance Standards Council.
- 1572 people were surveyed by Tickbox in August 2004.

For more information:

Catherine Battershill
Lloyds TSB Press Office
Tel: 020 7356 2495
Catherine.battershill@lloydsb.com
www.mediacentre.lloydstsb.com