Highlights

Infrastructure increases as highest priority national issue
- In the March 2012 quarter, 8% of Australians nominated transport and 14% nominated infrastructure as one of the two highest priority issues in Australia today, a slight increase from 7% last quarter.

Public transport the highest priority for transport
- Nearly half of Australians said that the highest priority issue for transport in Australia is public transport improvements, followed by road improvements (28%).

Transport not changing in local area
- 56% of Australians said that transport in their local areas is the same now as one year ago, down from 59% last quarter.

Lowest level of confidence about local transport in short-term
- Only 16% Australians said that transport in their local areas will be better in one year’s time, the lowest in nine quarters.

Views stable on transport in Australia in short-term
- Nearly a quarter of Australians think that transport in Australia will be better in one year’s time and a quarter think transport will get worse, similar to the results of last quarter.

Australians confident about transport in Australia in longer-term
- Australians continue to be more confident that transport in Australia will be better in five years than in one year, with almost half (45%) thinking that transport in Australia will be better in five years.

ITLS Index of Transport Confidence
- Compared to the launch of TOPS in March 2010, Australians are much less confident about transport in their local areas in March 2012 (Confidence index: from 100 to 86), slightly more confident about transport in Australia in one year (Confidence index: from 100 to 101), and unchanged in confidence about transport in Australia in five years.

Public transport priorities
- 68% of Australians said that the highest priority for public transport should be investing in public transport (PT) within cities; while only 23% support high speed rail (HSR) between cities. Support for investing in public transport within cities was highest amongst people living in capital cities, students, and frequent PT users.

Taxi services in local area
- In the March 2012 quarter, 51% of Australians said that taxi services in their local areas have not improved in the last 12 months; while only 14% said that taxi services have improved.

About the Transport Opinion Survey
The Transport Opinion Survey is a quarterly survey of 1,000 adults aged 18 years and over across Australia launched in March 2010. The sample is representative of Australia’s population distribution and demographic characteristics. Interviews are conducted by telephone by Taverner Research using trained interviewers.
The Quarter 1, March 2012 survey was conducted over 10-26 February 2012. Current issues in this quarter included public transport investment priorities (HSR between cities vs. PT within cities) and whether taxi services have improved in the last 12 months.
1. Transport as a national priority

Which two of these issues [from list of 10 issues in random order] do you think are the highest priority in Australia today?

- In the March 2012 quarter, health was the highest priority issue in Australia, nominated by 44% of Australians, followed by economy/employment (38%) and education (29%).
- 8% of Australians nominated transport as one of the two highest priority issues in Australia today (up from 7% last quarter), and 14% nominated infrastructure.

In the March 2012 quarter, transport was most important in NSW (12%) among all states.
2. Highest priority issue for transport

What do you think is the highest priority issue for transport in Australia now?

- In the March 2012 quarter, nearly half of Australians (49%) said that the highest priority issue for transport in Australia is public transport improvements. Public transport has been the highest priority transport issue in the nine quarters of the survey. Over a quarter of Australians (27%) nominated road improvements.

Highest priority transport issue in Australia, Mar 2011-Mar 2012

- All states regard public transport improvements as the highest priority issue in transport, especially in Victoria (61%).
3. Confidence about transport improving in local area

Compared to 1 year ago, do you think the state of transport in general in your local area is better now, the same, or worse now?

- In the March 2012 quarter, 56% of Australians said that transport in their local areas is the same now as one year ago, down from 59% last quarter.

- In the March 2012 quarter, 68% of West Australia residents said that transport in their local areas is the same now as one year ago, higher than other states (52%-55%).
Do you think that in 1 year’s time, the state of transport in general in your local area will be better than it is now, the same, or worse than it is now?

- In the March 2012 quarter, 55% of Australians said that transport in their local areas will be the same in one year’s time. Only 16% said transport will be better, the lowest in nine quarters.

- In the March 2012 quarter, there was an improvement in confidence in South Australia: 23% said that transport in their local areas will be better in one year, up from 13% last quarter; while a significant drop was witnessed in Queensland (from 31% to 17%) during the same period.
What were you thinking of most when answering that question [about transport in your local area in 1 year’s time]?

- In the March 2012 quarter, the 16% of Australians who said that transport in their local areas will be **better** in one year were thinking about both public transport (46%) and roads (28%) as two major reasons. “Other” includes 6% who were thinking of the government role in integration, planning and coordination.

![Transport in local area - reason for being better in 1 year, until Mar 2012](image)

Note: Responses were grouped into the above categories. “Other” includes responses about transport in general, responses about both public transport and roads, and issues not included in other categories.

- In the March 2012 quarter, the 25% of Australians who said that transport in their local areas will be **worse** in one year were thinking about roads (37%) and population-related changes (32%) as two major reasons. “Other” includes 6% thinking of the government role in integration, planning and coordination.

![Transport in local area - reason for being worse in 1 year, until Mar 2012](image)

Note: Responses were grouped into the above categories. “Other” includes responses about transport in general, responses about both public transport and roads, and issues not included in other categories.
4. Confidence about transport improving in Australia

Do you think that in 1 year's time, the state of transport in general in Australia will be better than it is now, the same as now, or worse than it is now?

- In the March 2012 quarter, 41% of Australians said that transport in Australia in one year will be the same as now. 24% of Australians said that transport in Australia will be better in one year's time, and a quarter said that transport will be worse.

- In the March 2012 quarter, 31% of Victoria residents said that transport in Australia will be worse in one year, and 18% said that it will be better. Other states are relatively more confident.
Do you think that in 5 years’ time, the state of transport in general in Australia will be better than it is now, the same as now, or worse than it is now?

- In the March 2012 quarter, Australians remained more confident that transport will be better in five years than in one year, with almost half (45%) thinking transport in Australia will be better in five years.

- In the March 2012 quarter, 63% of South Australia residents think that transport in Australia will be better in five years than now, much more confident than people living in other states. In contrast, people living in Victoria are least confident, where 40% said that transport in Australia will be better in five years than now and 34% said it will be worse.
5. Change in confidence over time – TOPS Index

Responses from the first Transport Opinion Survey about transport getting better or worse were used to set an index of 100 for quarter 1, March 2010. Each quarter, changes in community confidence about transport in the local area, transport in Australia in one year’s time and transport in Australia in five years’ time are reported as changes in the TOPS Index.

A TOPS Index value of more than 100 means that Australians’ confidence about transport getting better is stronger than in March 2010, while a TOPS Index value less than 100 means that such confidence is weaker than in March 2010.

The TOPS Index shows that in the March 2012 quarter compared to the previous quarter:
- Australians became significantly less confident about transport in local area in one year’s time
- Australians became slightly less confident confidence about transport in Australia in one year’s time
- Australians were unchanged in confidence about transport in Australia in five years’ time.

Compared to the launch of TOPS in March 2010, Australians are much less confident about transport in their local areas in March 2012 (Confidence index: from 100 to 86), slightly more confident about transport in Australia in one year (Confidence index: from 100 to 101), and unchanged in confidence about transport in Australia in five years.
6. Public transport priorities

In the March 2012 quarter, a new question was asked about priorities for public transport. 

Now a question on priorities for public transport. Should the highest priority for public transport be investing in high speed rail between our cities or investing in public transport within our cities?

- Overall, 68% of Australians said that investing in public transport within cities was the highest priority; while only 23% support high speed rail between cities. 9% of respondents were unable to choose a priority.
- Support for investing in public transport within cities was highest amongst frequent public transport users, people living in capital cities and students.
- There was little difference in views on the highest priority for public transport by gender.

Public transport priorities, Mar 2012

Note: The % in brackets below X-axis for each category indicates the % of respondents in that category of state, town size, public transport use frequency, sex, age and labour force status. Town size is self-reported by respondent.
7. Taxi services in local area

In the March 2012 quarter, a second new question was asked about taxi services in the local area. Do you think that Taxi services in your local area have improved in the last 12 months?

- In the March 2012 quarter, only 14% of Australians said that taxi services in their local areas have improved in the last 12 months; while 51% said there had been no improvement.
- 35% of respondents answered ‘don’t know’. Based on a reasonable assumption that those respondents who answered ‘don’t know’ may not have used a taxi recently or have limited experience of using a taxi and hence they are not regular taxi users, only 21% of regular taxi users said that taxi services have improved, compared to 79% who said there had been no improvement (worse or unchanged).
- 19% of West Australian residents said that taxi services have improved in the last 12 months, followed by NSW residents (16%). 21% of frequent public transport users (at least 3 days a week) said that taxi services have improved, compared to 12%-15% for less-frequent PT user groups.
- There was little difference in views on improvement in taxi services by gender.

Note: The % in brackets below X-axis for each category indicates the % of respondents in that category of state, town size, public transport use frequency, sex, age and labour force status. Town size is self-reported by respondent.
Timing of TOPS

The fieldwork for each quarter was conducted on the following dates:

- March 2010: 13-28 February 2010
- June 2010: 15-30 May 2010
- September 2010: 23 August-5 September 2010
- December 2010: 5-17 November 2010
- March 2011: 9-27 February 2011
- September 2011: 11-25 August 2011
- December 2011: 4-22 November 2011
- March 2012: 10-26 February 2012

More information

Visit the TOPS website for quarterly reports, media coverage and to register to receive TOPS updates by email each quarter.

http://sydney.edu.au/business/itls/tops

The Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies in The University of Sydney Business School provides education and conducts research in transport, logistics and supply chain management.

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