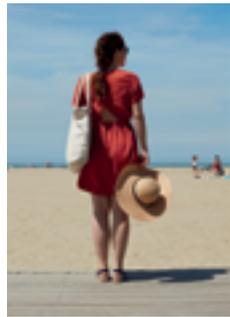


BRINGING PEOPLE CLOSER

TO THE PLACES THEY LOVE AND TO EACH OTHER



Study on the social
impacts of carpooling

BRINGING PEOPLE CLOSER

TO THE PLACES THEY LOVE AND TO EACH OTHER

We imagine a fairer, more open world of travel. Where people are given the independence to connect with the places they love — and each other — in a smart, simple and affordable way.

Study on the social impacts of carpooling

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“Carpooling creates a unique space, enabling exchanges between people who might never have otherwise met.”

THE SOURCE OF OUR HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING is not money or fame, but good relationships. This is the conclusion of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, the most comprehensive study ever conducted on happiness, which tracked the lives of more than 700 people since 1938¹.

If we are happier and healthier thanks to good interactions with others, we should then consider how much room we are making for human connection in our fast-paced lives. Truth is, moments of genuine connection are rare outside of one's close circles. Carpooling creates a unique space, enabling exchanges between people who might never have otherwise met. It removes barriers and creates social ties.

In the past decade, BlaBlaCar members have shared countless anecdotes of the surprisingly enriching exchanges that occurred while carpooling. To understand the nature of these social interactions and their impact, we conducted a survey with French research consultancy firm Le BIPE², involving 4,733 BlaBlaCar members in 9 countries, and dozens of individual interviews.

This research follows a previous report on digital trust, *Entering the Trust Age*, published in 2016 with Professor Arun Sundararajan from NYU Stern Business School, which shed light on trust as a key enabler for the collaborative economy. The findings of both studies are interesting, when considered in the context of two major global trends:

The first is the recent political environment that has shown a strong tendency for people to close up and look inward. Yet in contrast, the rise of carpooling and other collaborative activities shows a striking openness to others, ability to trust strangers and desire to connect with others.

The second contrast relates to the influence of technology on social interactions. On the one hand, there are claims that the internet disconnects us from real-life interactions and isolates us. On the other, we see that technology can also connect us like never before by enabling new encounters that would not have occurred otherwise.

Within this context, this study takes a close look at precisely what types of social interactions and ties are enabled by BlaBlaCar. The report is structured as follows: it first zooms in on the circumstances unique to carpooling. Three sections titled according to BlaBlaCar's core values — Freedom, Fairness and Fraternity — then delve into the results of the study. The last section unveils some eloquent member and team anecdotes.

¹ Robert Waldinger (under the direction of), Harvard Study of Adult Development, *Harvard Business School* (2017)

² Le BIPE is a strategy consulting firm founded in France in 1958, specialising in forecasting, data sciences, socio-economic outlook and future trends analysis. Le BIPE supports companies and industries in a wide variety of sectors all over the world. (www.bipe.com)

Study Methodology

The study was conducted by French research consultancy Le BIPE in fall 2016. A total of 4,733 BlaBlaCar members were surveyed in 9 countries (France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Ukraine and UK).

Dynamics of carpooling encounters

Let's zoom in on the circumstances specific to carpooling which foster enriching exchanges.

Unique circumstances

- 01 LASTING**
Journeys last a couple of hours on average, leaving sufficient time for the occurrence of a profound exchange.
- 02 END IN SIGHT**
There is an end to the journey, and no guarantee of meeting again, which eases genuine exchanges freed from the judgement inherent to more longer-lasting relationships.
- 03 SYMMETRICAL**
In the car, it's a relationship of equals between peers who share costs, sit together and look in the same direction. This setup can be less intimidating than having to look someone in the eye³ and contributes to travellers opening up.
- 04 CONFIDENTIAL**
The shared car space and closed circle creates a sense of confidentiality, which naturally fosters interpersonal interactions.
- 05 UNEXPECTED**
The frequent discovery of an unexpected affinity with a co-traveller comes as a pleasant surprise and makes the journey more genuine and enriching. And the surprise can also be to reconnect with someone you knew. 28% of members have run into old acquaintances whilst carpooling on BlaBlaCar!

A trusting and benevolent context

Trust created online

Even if they have never met previously, members are empowered to trust each other thanks to digital trust tools, and are no longer strangers to each other. This is the main conclusion of the study, *Entering the Trust Age*, published jointly with NYU Stern Professor Arun Sundararajan, and resulting from a survey of 18,000 BlaBlaCar members in Europe. The survey revealed that 88% of BlaBlaCar members give a high level of trust to another member with a full online profile, a figure far higher than members with a high level of trust in their colleagues (58%), their neighbours (42%) or a social media contact (16%).

A benevolent environment

The encounters resulting from connecting online then happen in a benevolent environment specific to collaborative activities, and are best explained by the following elements:

01

A SHARED APPETITE FOR ENCOUNTERS

Carpooling leads to naturally accepting to open one's door, or to enter someone's private space, which shows an altruistic predisposition and openness to others.

02

MUTUAL EMPATHY

Collaborative interactions often involve peers who seek genuine exchanges on equal footing and typically show more empathy towards each other than they do in professional exchanges.

03

COOPERATION DURING THE RIDE

Joint responsibility leads to implicit cooperation. In over 90% of cases, an agreement was reached collectively between travellers on the temperature in the car, the number of breaks during the journey, or the size of luggage.

04

VIRTUOUS RATINGS

Ratings further encourage good behaviours, as revealed by a 2015 study on carpooling and road safety conducted by BlaBlaCar with TNS Sofres. 83% of drivers gave a high attention to the ratings left by passengers, and the majority of them declared that these ratings encouraged them to have a more virtuous driving behaviour.





Freedom

Unlocking new transport capacity
with vast territorial coverage



80% of members carpool to see family and friends. Amongst them, 60% declare that they can now see their loved ones more.

80%

of members
carpool to see
their family and
friends

BLABLACAR HAS UNLOCKED A PEER-TO-PEER TRANSPORT network by optimising car usage at scale. Thanks to a large and trusted community of more than 60 million members, carpooling now provides an affordable and convenient transport solution on millions of axes across over 20 countries.

Carpooling's fast growth can be partly explained by the fact that it addresses the latent and growing demand for mobility. According to a study by consultancy firm McKinsey⁴, the total amount of money invested to transport people and goods has quadrupled over the past 40 years, growing faster than the global GDP average. Furthermore, we have now reached 1 billion tourists globally⁵.

Carpooling caters to these new travel aspirations by reducing constraints related to distance or geographic isolation. This gives travellers more freedom and creates countless opportunities to socialise along the way.

4 Mobility of the Future, McKinsey&Company (2012)

5 Tourism Highlights, UNWTO (2017)

45% say they travel more, organise more weekend trips and holidays

When asked what their main reasons for carpooling are, BlaBlaCar members mention convenience (82%) and financial reasons (77%). The practicality and affordability of carpooling result in 86% of members declaring that they have access to a more affordable travel solution.

Carpooling also offers wide geographic coverage, thanks to the granularity of different routes covered by BlaBlaCar drivers.



**Marine, 23
France**

“86% declare that they have access to a more affordable travel solution.”

I started using BlaBlaCar in 2012 when I moved to Lille to pursue my studies, whereas my boyfriend lived in Mont Saint Michel. Both cities are far away, and trains were very expensive and unpractical. So I turned to BlaBlaCar. I felt that the travel time was much shorter and the price was much cheaper. I've never stopped using the service ever since.

In France, for example, about 85% of trips on BlaBlaCar cover routes that do not connect two large cities together and there are over 35,000 departure points on BlaBlaCar during peak weekends. Carpooling connects points over underserved routes and axes, and provides a needed alternative to other means of transport. Consequently, close to half of respondents (45%) declare that they travel more and organise more weekend trips and holidays since they started carpooling.

Students returning home on weekends, long-distance relationships, family members working far from home, weekend getaways with friends — the reasons for travelling with BlaBlaCar are numerous, and each time carpooling facilitates these experiences and the resulting relationships. When looking at why people carpool, 80% of members declare it is to see their family and friends. Amongst them, 60% declare that they see their family and friends more frequently thanks to BlaBlaCar.

Constraints resulting from distance are diminished, travel aspirations are set free — and with them, countless human exchanges. This is what we explore in the next two chapters on Fairness and Fraternity.



Fairness

Sharing a ride and its costs
with peers from all walks of life



47%*

say carpooling has made them more open to other cultures and opinions

CARPPOOLING IS A RELATIONSHIP OF EQUALS between peers who share costs and “a journey within the journey.” Irrespective of their backgrounds, everyone is on an equal footing, contributing equally to a ride made possible because they are all willing to share the journey together and split its costs.

The large variety of profiles that make up BlaBlaCar’s carpooling community offers an enriching diversity to travellers.

The first comment from anyone who has carpoled is that they would never have met the people they travelled with in their everyday lives. Carpooling sometimes has the power to lower cultural, social or generational barriers, open one’s mind, and eventually carry travellers much farther than their destination.

Initially, carpooling’s early adopters tend to be students. But as usage grows and spreads to become more mainstream, it permeates through society and becomes the mirror image of a country’s social mix. We have witnessed this evolution in over of our 20 countries of operation. In France and Spain, our oldest markets, the local BlaBlaCar community is now largely representative of the population.

*47% of the members who have declared that the profiles of people they met on BlaBlaCar was more diverse than their social circles.

To deepen the analysis and understand the real impact of such a diverse community we asked members to compare the level of diversity experienced through BlaBlaCar to the diversity they are exposed to in their everyday lives.

50% of members declare that the people they have travelled with on BlaBlaCar in the past year represent a greater diversity when compared to the social circles they typically interact with. And this number grows with the frequency with which a member carpoles, reaching 57% for members who carpoled more than 10 times in the past year. Overall, 35% of members have experienced a greater generational diversity, 30% a greater diversity of socio-economic backgrounds and 29% a greater diversity of cultural origins.

Numerous studies, such as the work conducted by Katherine W. Phillips⁶ (Columbia Business School), have shown that diversity is conducive to increase creativity and open-mindedness. Amongst the members who have declared that the profiles of people they met on BlaBlaCar were more diverse than their social circles, close to half of respondents (47%) recognise that carpooling has made them more open to other cultures and opinions.

Departure and arrival points, the main point in common between travellers, are weak factors for social demarcation, and democratise the carpooling experience. Journeys shared on BlaBlaCar (300 kilometers on average) provide unique occasion for social, generational or cultural exchanges that are rarely replicated in other parts of society.

The next section, Fraternity, reveals the nature of the in-car exchanges that can create this type of experience.

50%

say the people they’ve travelled with in the past year represent a greater diversity compared to the social circles they typically interact with

Marine, 23, France

Marine recalls the time she carpoled with a CEO of a global company — someone she wouldn’t have met in her daily life, let alone chat for hours with.

Through carpooling, you will meet people from different socio-economic backgrounds, ages and professions. In my own environment, I’m not used to so much diversity.

When I found out that I was carpooling with a CEO, I was intimidated.

The passengers and I looked at each other thinking, “That’s not possible! Why is the head of a global company sharing his car?”

He didn’t need the money, but BlaBlaCar was a good way for him to chat with others to pass the time, as he drove a

lot. He shared stories with us: how he created the company and how he took risks.

If the CEO of my company was the driver, I don’t think I could say, “Hey! What’s up?” But we chatted like friends. And that’s the spirit of BlaBlaCar!



Fraternity

Opening to enriching exchanges
and living a journey within the journey

87%

declare having had enriching exchanges while carpooling



Corrado, 53
Italy

The spontaneity of travelling together provides the perfect environment to hear different points of view. Yes, knowing a good restaurant in a new town is helpful and cool. But I have actually made some meaningful bonds. There is more to it than friendship. It's a real community.

WHAT DO PEOPLE TALK ABOUT while carpooling? And what does the nature of these exchanges reveal?

During a carpool, exchanges in the car can often be the source of a reciprocal enriching experience for travellers. 87% of members declare having had enriching exchanges. According to the members surveyed, the topics addressed vary from leisure (50%), travel (47%), culture (37%), or, less frequently, politics (25%) and religion (11%). Personal topics are discussed somewhat more frequently (39%) than professional ones (32%).

Conversations can be more meaningful than one would expect. BlaBlaCar members can learn from each other, feel useful to others, or even reveal things about themselves to an unjudging friendly ear. These conversations which result from unique interactions in the car (see page 8) can be the source of positive and profound personal changes.

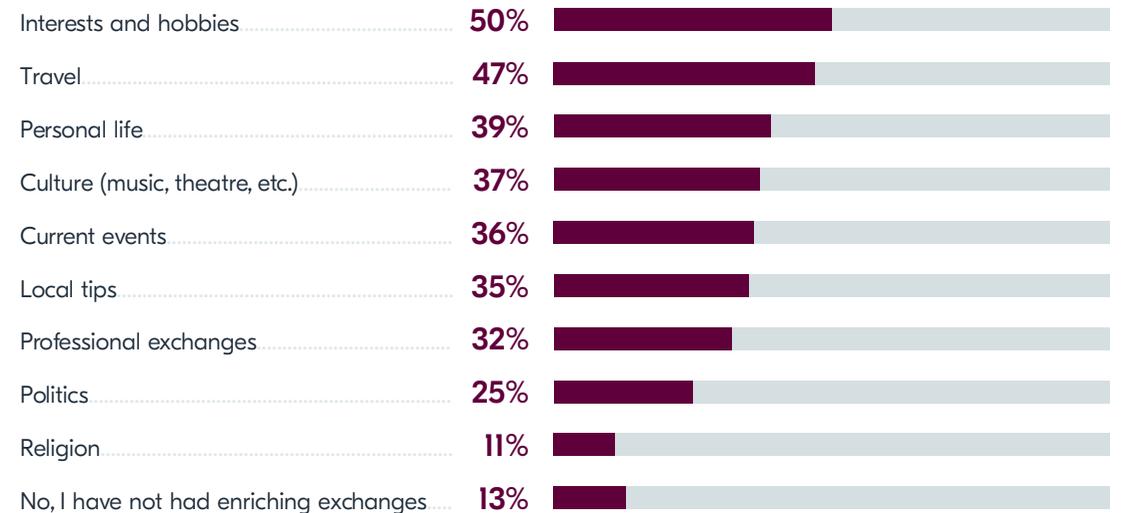
More than half of the members surveyed declared having gained perspective on a situation (56%) or received good life advice (61%) during a past journey. Overall, 84% of members learned something new while carpooling.

76% say they've felt useful to others by listening or exchanging.

These interactions allow members to give as well as receive: 3 out of 4 of those surveyed (76%) declare having felt useful to others through listening or exchanging while carpooling.

Enriching exchanges with BlaBlaCar

Over the past 12 months, have you had enriching exchanges with BlaBlaCar members while carpooling?



The trusted and benevolent environment naturally lead carpoolers to talk about personal topics. 69% of members declare having spoken about themselves or personal topics during the journeys conducted over the past year.

This tendency to seek genuine exchanges and to open up is typical of collaborative activities⁷ unlike professional relationships⁸ which tend to be purely transactional. Perhaps one of the most surprising findings of this study shows that 21% BlaBlaCar members, or 1 out of 5, declare having revealed something about themselves whilst carpooling which they had never told anyone before!

When we consider that travellers have often never met before their trips, and that the typical journey only lasts a few hours, it's clear how strong the human dimension of carpooling can be.

21%

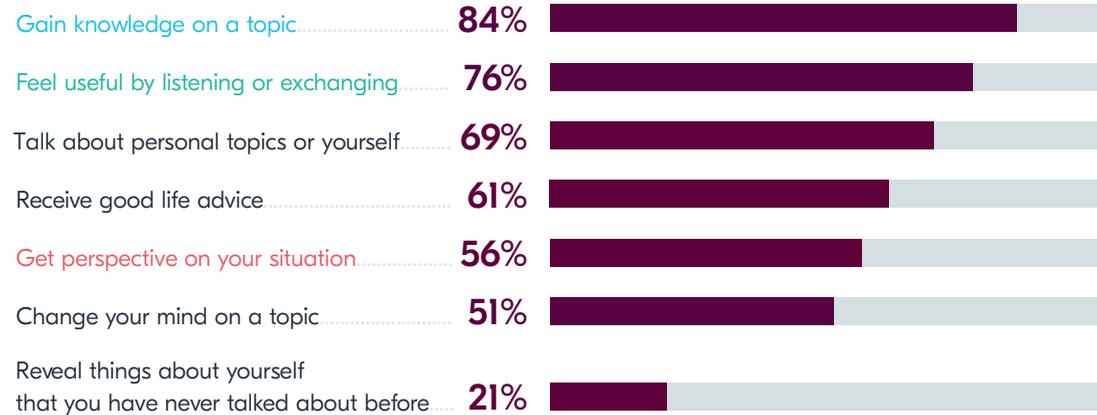
revealed things about themselves that they never talked about before

⁷ Charlotte Dejean-Thircuir, Students' Collaborative Processes And Community Building During an Online Activity, *Alsic* (2008)

⁸ Anne-Sylvie Pharabod, La sociabilité à l'oeuvre dans les échanges collaboratifs, *Orange Labs* (2016)

Meaningful conversations

Over the past 12 months, has carpooling with BlaBlaCar allowed you to ...



Gain knowledge



Nick, 22
Germany

I once shared a ride with a women's rights activist. We talked about equal rights for women. She listed all the injustices we still have in Germany, and how women are underprivileged. It made me aware of the challenges women face in their professional lives. It was eye-opening!

Feel useful



Vyacheslav, 42
Russia

I received a message from a guy who was booking the trip on behalf of his mother, who is deaf. I told him that it was her lucky day because I knew sign language. My 22-year-old son is deaf too, so I was happy to communicate with her. I loved hearing her stories and sharing mine.

Get perspective



Giovanna, 80
Italy

My grandchildren signed me up on the platform as a challenge to come and visit them more often. I instantly loved the human dimension and especially the opportunity to meet new people. I'm particularly curious to discover the perspectives of younger people who live a life very different from mine.



Sociologist Anne-Sylvie Pharabod explains: "The absence of an established link between people engaged in these short-lived moments of sociability invite some to confide. They share things which they would not tell their close circle for fear of their judgement."⁹

German sociologist Georg Simmel had in his time spoken about "the friendship of travel," saying: "It does not commit one to anything, it preserves the possibility of going back to anonymity when separating forever a few hours after. It leads to sharing strange things, giving in completely to the desire to confide, a desire which is tamed in more established long-term relationships because of its consequences."¹⁰

This experience can also be more long-lasting and profoundly change individuals. Half of BlaBlaCar members (51%) declared having changed their mind on a topic following a carpooling experience, a result that resonates with the effect on open-mindedness mentioned on page 17.

To further deepen our analysis, we calculated odd ratios, a statistical measure which expresses the level of dependency between two variables. We looked at how meaningful conversations (page 22) can impact the openness to other cultures or opinions (page 17). And the results are striking.



Kevin, 46
UK

I realised why I had such good experiences and why my passengers seemed to have a good time too: because I treated people who shared my journeys as if they weren't just passengers. I treated them as I would treat a friend I was meeting for the first time.

⁹ Anne-Sylvie Pharabod, Meeting Up with Unknown Internet Users. A friendly company without bonds? *Sociologie* (2017)

¹⁰ Georg Simmel, Etudes sur les formes de la socialisation, *Puf* (1999) (1908)

Carpooling changes you

How much more likely are you to become more open to other members' cultures and opinions if you have ...

Times more likely to say
"carpooling has made me more open
to other cultures and opinions"

| | |
|--|------------|
| Revealed things about yourself that you have never talked about before | 4.8 |
| Changed your mind on a topic | 3.8 |
| Received good life advice | 3.7 |
| Got perspective on your situation | 3.2 |
| Felt useful by listening or exchanging | 2.9 |
| Gained knowledge on a topic | 2.6 |
| Talked about personal topics or yourself | 2.0 |

How to read these results: Odd ratios are a statistical measure that calculates the dependency between two variables. Here, a member who has had one of the meaningful conversations listed in the left column is X times more likely to have responded, in a separate question, that carpooling has made him/her more open to other cultures and opinions.

Members who have revealed things about themselves they had never told anyone before are close to 5 times (4.8) more likely to declare that they have become more open to others since carpooling, whilst those who received good life advice are close to 4 times (3.8) more likely to be so. In other words, carpooling creates a context favourable to opening up to others, and if you have a meaningful exchange, it can change you.

And the alchemy of a great carpooling journey can sometimes lead to more long-lasting relationships. Finding a flatmate, a business partner, a sports partner, or a colleague are some of the exciting anecdotes from BlaBlaCar shared journeys.



An impressive 37% of members who have carpooled over 5 times in the past year stayed in touch with at least one BlaBlaCar member, often to travel on other trips (22%), but also as friends (15%).

The experience is so unique that it brings together its stakeholders and generates a strong sense of belonging to a community: 55% of members declare feeling part of a community. The figure goes up to 74% for members who have travelled over 10 times over the past year.

Some members even choose to go a step further by becoming "Helpers" on community chat BlaBlaHelp. First launched in October 2014 in France, it now also enables volunteering members to help fellow members with their carpooling experience in Spain and Poland. Over 1,100 active Helpers provide more than 60,000 answers to their peers every month, answering 95% of requests under 10 seconds, with one motivation: helping others.



BlaBlaHelpers, France

Community chat BlaBlaHelp is a peer-to-peer support solution, which takes the form of a desktop widget. Over 1,100 active Helpers provide more than 60,000 answers to fellow members every month.



Louis-Victor, 21

City: Montreuil, France

Member since: 2014

Occupation: Web design student and freelancer

Meet Louis-Victor

The millennial has grown up with a sharing state of mind, so it was a no-brainer to join BlaBlaCar once he got a driver's license.

“When I saw the empty seats in my car, I thought, ‘This is dumb. I could be meeting people and sharing the costs.’”

Changing one's mind

During one of my trips from Paris to Lille to visit my girlfriend, I met a 60-year-old psychologist who specialised in music therapy. She worked with children, using music to help them get back on track. She practised it with autistic children who need different forms of communication or have trouble integrating into society. Through the simplicity of music, she was able to communicate with them.

Initially, I was quite skeptical because I believe in the scientific nature of medicine. I specialised in science for my baccalaureate so, for me, everything has to be justified. When we say we don't know why something heals, but it just does — I have a hard time believing it. There was another passenger in the car who was just as skeptical as me!

For two hours, we debated the merits of music therapy. The psychologist explained that our bodies actually have a miraculous way of responding to music. By the end, I started changing perspective. Today, I believe in music therapy, so I think it was a win for her as she made her case very convincingly. It was certainly a win for me, as I learned something new and changed my mind on a topic I knew little about.

Openness to others

My first trip as a passenger was with three Muslims, and we talked about Islam the entire trip.

At first, they were uncomfortable talking about religion. They thought that as a Christian I would have preconceived ideas and wouldn't be open. I understand that these conversations aren't always easy to have, but there was something about the BlaBlaCar environment that enabled the discussion to happen. We ended up talking open-heartedly about everything — religion included!

I'm quite proud of this experience because everyone was genuinely making an effort to understand each other's religion. We all sit in the car, going in the same direction for a few hours — so we might as well talk to each other and exchange different points of view. Growing up in France, I feel that it's hard to meet new people, and something about being in the car together encourages us to make an effort. That's a great thing.

I'm grateful to have these types of conversations I wouldn't have otherwise outside of the car. I can share ideas that are important to me and in return, they can share things that are important to them. It was a beautiful experience to learn from people who come from different religious backgrounds. That's really the unique opportunity that BlaBlaCar offers: a community made of diverse and open-minded people.

“When I saw the empty seats in my car, I thought, ‘This is dumb. I could be meeting people and sharing the costs.’”



Marine, 23

*City: Paris, France
Member since: 2012
Occupation: Business
master's student*

Meet Marine

The master's student initially joined BlaBlaCar to save money, but she ended up staying for the community.

When Marine and her boyfriend found themselves studying in different cities in France, she faced a heartbreaking question: How were they going to see each other?

Unable to find affordable train tickets from Lille to the underserved Mont Saint-Michel, the business student turned to BlaBlaCar in 2012.

"I felt that the travel time was much shorter and the price was much cheaper," Marine says. "Ever since my first experience, I never stopped using BlaBlaCar — it's been five years."

Marine, 23, now lives in Paris pursuing a master's in business. And she's still carpooling after all these years — thanks to the memorable encounters she's had, like the chance to talk with a driver during a three-hour journey about their shared passion for volunteering at blood drives. Or the time she gave advice to a father who had a strained relationship with his daughter.

Each carpool has provided Marine with a chance to interact with the BlaBlaCar community, which she says is full of people who are "generous, open-minded, kind and always very pleasant."

Feeling useful to others

I'm typically a good listener, and I can tell when people need to confide in me. Sometimes people find themselves in weird places in their lives and they use the open carpooling environment to talk about it.

I remember sharing a ride with a young man, who had started studying something unusual in dentistry — making denture frames. He told me it was just a couple of months since school started, but it was going badly. He felt lonely and rejected because he couldn't connect with his classmates who had different behaviours and values. He wanted to quit.

The other passengers and I encouraged him to wait it out. The young man was pursuing his dream career, but he had trouble staying motivated.

So in the car, we told him, "Keep going! You'll see what happens, so try to persist. Don't worry about the others."

After the ride, I stayed in touch with him because I really wanted to know whether he managed to overcome it. Turns out, he persisted and now everything is going very well!

Carpooling creates memories like this one. It's a great experience from beginning to end. I like the idea of going on an adventure by connecting with people. Afterward — and this happens a lot — we send each other messages like "Good luck! See you soon! Call me if you have any questions about what we've discussed." BlaBlaCar is about combining pleasure with practicality.

Martijn, 41

City: Hamburg, Germany

Member since: 2013

Occupation: Aerospace engineer, project manager



Meet Martijn

Carpooling provides more than just financial benefits. For this 41-year-old father, he not only found friendship, but solace.

Martijn is a project manager and engineer from Vlissingen, Holland. After working in the United States with an aeronautical company, Martijn moved back to Europe.

Martijn now drives back and forth between Vlissingen and Hamburg, a city he's called home for 10 years. He joined BlaBlaCar upon a colleague's recommendation to save money and interact with people during a long journey.

"When you sign up, you're definitely willing to travel with people you don't know. That's an important thing," Martijn says. "It's for people who are socially open."

Through his Vlissingen-Hamburg trips, Martijn has found himself discussing the nuances of long-distance relationships to spontaneously going sailing with his passengers.

"The stories that are being told during a ride are often worth being retold," he says.

Each ride has led to a nice conversation. The key, Martijn says, is to be open to talking with others:

Revealing things about oneself

"I'm a pretty open person. I often take my children with me when I carpool to Holland to see their mother/my ex-partner. When passengers ask about the kids, I'm open about the fact that I don't live with their mother.

My ex-partner has a personality disorder. On a couple of trips, I've met passengers who can relate to having a partner with a disorder. It's a unique experience to connect on such a personal topic in the car.

These are things you don't immediately talk about with strangers, but I feel comfortable opening up and keen on getting their insights. A special bond results from carpooling bringing us together.

It also helped meeting a passenger with a background in psychology. I just felt at ease opening up to her and saw an opportunity to exchange views about how curable or treatable these disorders were.

I've also met people who are in the same situation as me. It's nice to get our worries off our chest and to understand how they live with their partners. Actually, I'm still in touch with one of the passengers! We live near each other and occasionally grab a beer together.

I don't always share these experiences because it can be awkward or intense to reveal them to your family. You don't want them to worry. You're like, "I have it under control." And I don't want to expose my ex-partner.

But when you meet people who have experienced the same thing — there's a really immediate emotional connection. To be able to talk about that during a carpool, it feels like therapy or being in a self-help group. It's really healing."

"The stories that are being told during a ride are often worth being retold."



Rosita, 56

City: L'Etang-la-Ville, France

Member since: 2011

Occupation: Retired

Meet Rosita

From doctors to students, this BlaBlaHelper has learned a lot from the multitude of passengers in her six years of carpooling.

When 56-year-old Rosita told her friends that she was going to carpool, they asked: “But why?”

Rosita laughs upon recalling their initial hesitation — many of them have changed their minds and are now, indeed, carpooling.

“You have to have an open mind. Those who are not open-minded don’t carpool,” Rosita explains.

For the retiree, carpooling is about sharing the financial costs. And BlaBlaCar is about community and helping each other out. It’s why she volunteers as a BlaBlaHelper to give fellow members advice on the platform.

“I couldn’t go to Liège as often if I didn’t have passengers to share the costs,” she says.

Talking about personal topics

“After moving to France 10 years ago, I made a lot of trips back to Belgium to see my friends. I travelled from Paris to Liège, which is about 400 kilometers. It’s a long trip, so a stopover is necessary. At the start of our trip, I usually announce that we’ll have a meal together at a pit stop.

When we’re sitting at the table — that’s when the passengers really get to know each other. We then get back in the car and they don’t stop talking. There’s something about the stopover that creates a connection.

I remember a curly-haired filmmaking student from Liège. He was going to Paris to attend a

special cinema event on the Champs-Élysées. After our pit stop, he switched seats so he could sit in the front with me. He said, “This is an important day, and I’m happy to share it with you!” He was so kind and excited to share parts of his life.”

Openness to others

“For me, anyone who reserves a seat can come — it’s very ingrained in me.

On another trip, I received a call from a man who had reserved a seat online. “The seat I booked is actually for my mother. Is it OK?” he asked. It was not a problem for me. When I arrived at the meeting point, the lady was completely veiled. I greeted her as I always do, but the other passengers were quiet.

At the usual pit stop, I learned that she had lost a daughter. It struck me. I also lost my daughter. In that moment, we no longer saw our differences. We saw a mother. I told her I was in the same situation. She took me in her arms, and we genuinely bonded, and that’s a moment I’ll never forget.”

“You have to have an open mind. Those who are not open-minded don’t carpool.”

“Each journey is unique, and encounters are as diverse as they are genuine.”

HUMAN CONNECTIONS ARE INHERENT TO CARPOOLING.

BlaBlaCar's trusted community unlocks a significant untapped transport capacity. Its network has an unprecedented reach and granularity, offering new freedom to travel, in a fair and friendly environment.

The main learning from this study is that carpooling brings people together in more ways than one. The generational, cultural, or socio-professional diversity found in a BlaBlaCar overcomes the transparent barriers that we are otherwise confronted with elsewhere in society. The reassuring atmosphere in the car can often lead to enriching exchanges, from opening up to others, to feeling useful or to reciprocal learnings.

Carpooling, therefore, transports but can also transform.

“This experience positively transforms the way people look at each other,” according to sociologist Anne-Sylvie Pharabod. A feel-good surprise results from meeting people from all walks of life, but also from trusting one another in a fast-paced world where anonymity and mistrust are otherwise often the rule. Each journey is unique, and encounters are as diverse as they are genuine.

The human journey within the journey might explain why 74% of members have inspired their loved ones to try.

At a time where the world is closing in on itself, and the impact of technology on social relations is in question, it's heartwarming to see that people still long for human connection.

BlaBlaCar believes in a more open world of travel, bringing people closer to the places they love, and to each other.

We are members too!

At BlaBlaCar, our team is also made up passengers and drivers, eager to hit the road together and meet other members. Here are some of their experiences.

It was Easter weekend and all the trains were sold out or too expensive. So I thought, "Why not try BlaBlaCar?"

I had just returned to Paris after studying in Bogota, Colombia, for a year, and I felt lost in regards to my career prospects. I shared this with another passenger, Phil, during a Paris-Bordeaux trip

Phil gave advice on finding jobs. He suggested that I consider BlaBlaCar for its international environment, which was something I was looking for. I had no idea that my first time using BlaBlaCar would lead to a career opportunity.

— Victoria Herouard,
User Experience



Carpooling is a unique opportunity to travel and exchange with people. I realised that early on, so instead of playing games on my phone, I preferred learning from others and vice-versa during a trip.

When I met Victoria, I gave her tips on CVs and cover letters. I suggested on a whim that she check out BlaBlaCar for job opportunities.

So it was a pleasant surprise when I saw Victoria in the office!

I didn't set out to convince her to apply, but was happy to know our conversation had inspired her.

— Philippe Cayrol,
VP of Business Partnerships



I was travelling with retirees visiting their grandson. He went to a school providing what's known as active learning, and which I wanted my daughter to attend. I had tried to get parent testimonials for a year. For three hours I heard about the school, its approach to education, and how it integrates kids with disabilities, which was the case with their grandson. The conversation was intimate, genuine, and truly useful.

— Nicolas Brusson,
Co-Founder/CEO



Every time I travel I want to learn from my co-travelers how we can improve our product. In the early days of BlaBlaCar I once traveled from Lyon to Paris with a driver called Philippe. I spent 4h listening and writing down his feedbacks on the computer I'd placed on my laps. This resulted in no less than 18 product improvements that I shared with Francis upon arrival. We deployed them all!

— Frédéric Mazzella,
Founder/President



I shared a trip with a man who had just become CEO of a restaurant chain. This challenge was new to him. He was on his way back from a team-building workshop, which had finished late on the night before. We confided in each other and had a genuine conversation on the challenges of building robust businesses and great teams.

— Francis Nappes,
Co-Founder/CTO



I once carpoled with a fireman instructor, a specialist in hip prosthesis, and a lady who sold vegetables in Rungis, Paris' largest market. It was fascinating to learn about these three very different jobs: the latest fire fighting techniques, the daily routine in Rungis market, and the very niche world of hip prosthesis manufacturing. It was like watching a TV documentary but I had the actual experts with me in the car!

— Laure Wagner,
Community Team

I carpoled from Toulouse to Paris with two guys. We all sat in the front of the car, so our conversation was happening organically. The driver, originally from Africa, worked in transportation. The other passenger was a 20-something photographer from Poland.

We were having a lot of fun, until the driver said gay people should not be able to get married or adopt children. He believed homosexuality was a choice. I wanted to have a thorough and open discussion about it.

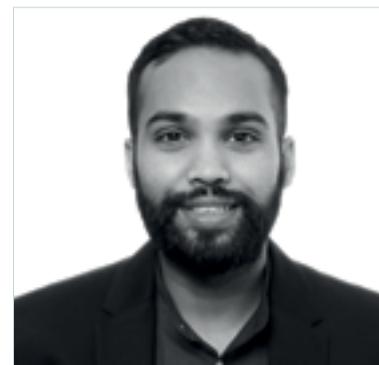
What happened next? Well, the driver revealed that he previously had a crush on a man but chose to be with a woman. The Polish passenger also revealed that he had a crush on a guy. Both admitted they never told anyone before.

There was an openness to our conversation that enabled them to confide in one another. There was also this understanding that we wouldn't see each



other again, which allowed them to be vulnerable without risk. After this trip, I better understood their beliefs and they understood mine. That was the first time that I realised how powerful carpooling with strangers can be — even if you never see them again.

— Marie Schneider, User Experience



I was carpooling from Paris to London as a driver, and one of the passengers was a musician. He played guitar and violin and had already composed a few albums with his group. Being a bassist myself, we exchanged a lot about our common passion for music, and in particular for rock music. We saw each other again after the trip. He invited me to play with his group during rehearsals, and I sometimes go and see him play in bars. Thanks to this shared trip, I made a new friend.

— Sankara Wickremasinghe,
IT Technician



A passenger once shared a photo with me that I'll remember forever: two teenagers playing football while holding Kalashnikov rifles in the war-torn city of Aleppo, Syria. The man was a photographer from Syria. This was his first BlaBlaCar trip, and he happily shared his story with me. I was at lost for words upon learning about his life.

— Virginie Lagadec,
Community Team



I travelled with Emeric, a stonemason who had moved to Bretagne for a five-year castle renovation project. After learning about his passion for masonry, I visited Emeric's place the next day to see his work in person! For a moment, it allowed us to escape from our daily concerns and current affairs. It was a breath of fresh air.

— Adrien Tahon,
Head of Channels

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Copywriting: Verena Butt d'Espous, Kevin Deniau and Annie Nguyen |

Graphic design: Annie Nguyen, Karim Hanini and Monika Holod |

Research: Research consultancy Le BIPE, Remi Ravaz, Verena Butt d'Espous and Kevin Deniau | **Printer:** Burlat, 35 rue des metiers 12850 Onet-le-Chateau

Printed in France | 2018

