4. Motorization Rate – Number of Vehicles for 1,000 Inhabitants

The motorization rate is defined as the number of passenger cars per 1,000 inhabitants and is a common indicator in international comparisons of economic development and environmental issues. A high motorization rate corresponds with a high level of economic development and quality of life. On the other hand, increased numbers of cars are a burden on the environment associated with extensive use of energy sources, local and global air pollution, and development of road networks which encroach on public space and fragment natural habitats.

Between 1951 and 2004, Israel’s motorization rate increased from 6 vehicles to 228 vehicles per 1,000 residents. A 300% increase was noted between 1960 and 1969 and a 111% increase between 1970 and 1979.

In terms of sustainable development, a high motorization rate is associated with air pollution in urban areas which is accompanied by extensive energy use, noise, urban heat island effect and road congestion as well as loss of open space as a result of road infrastructure development. The growth of suburbanization is also associated with increased use of private cars because of the inability of public transportation to service suburban residents. The success of a sustainable policy will largely be measured by its ability to divert a share of kilometers traveled in private vehicles to public transportation so as to diminish the burden on the environment.

Figure 5: Motorization Rate in Israel between 1950-2004

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics