

UK report

Walking and Cycling Index 2023



Published March 2024



Foreword

A shared vision for walking, wheeling and cycling



Our mission at Sustrans is simple, we want to make it easier for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

But we cannot do it alone. We need politicians to see how active travel can benefit places and commit to change.

We need teams of transport professionals to engage communities, and design and build solutions. And most importantly we need everyone to share their challenges and solutions and be open to change.

None of this is possible without data. Data tells us what is working and what isn't, what people, especially marginalised groups think, and the vital impact walking, wheeling and cycling is making.

This is where the Walking and Cycling Index fits in. It is the clearest picture of walking, wheeling and cycling across the country, representative of 18 urban areas and regions.

The Walking and Cycling Index is now ten years old. Over the past decade I feel privileged to have witnessed across all our partner cities an increased level of ambition, a commitment to do things well, and the delivery of schemes and programmes that have given many more people the choice to walk, wheel or cycle.

However, our work is not done. Only 38% of all residents think that cycling in their local area

is safe. And only 61% of disabled people feel welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets where they live.

This directly impacts our travel choices. For example, our landmark 2017 report on the gender gap in cycling showed twice as many men as women cycle regularly. Sadly this year's data shows no progress since – 21% of men cycle at least once a week in comparison to only 10% of women.

This is not about forcing people to do something they don't want to do. This is not about restricting choice. New data in this edition of the Index shows for the first time that very few people want to drive more (15%), but over a third feel locked into having to drive due to a lack of alternative options. At the same time, 50% of people want to walk or wheel more, and 43% want to cycle more.

The UK is spending record sums on transport, but we don't always allocate this in the best way. We need to do more to listen to the views of the public and their message is clear – give us choice by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to deliver a truly integrated transport system.

Let's commit to walking, wheeling and cycling and give more people the choice to travel in the way that they want to, for the benefit of everyone.

Xavier Brice
Chief Executive, Sustrans



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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly Bike Life) is the biggest assessment of walking, wheeling and cycling in urban areas in the UK and Ireland.

It is delivered by Sustrans in collaboration with 23 cities and urban areas. Each city reports on the progress made towards making walking, wheeling and cycling more attractive, everyday ways to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years.

The data in this report comes from 2023 and includes local walking, wheeling and cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 21,374 residents aged 16 or above in the eighteen UK Index cities. The surveys were conducted from March to June 2023. Social research organisation NatGen conducted the surveys, which are representative of all residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

Our thanks to the people of the UK Index cities who took part in the survey and shared their stories with us.

More details on all reports can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index. For more data, see the [Index Data Tool](#).



Defining wheeling

We recognise that some people who use wheeled mobility aids, for example a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling. We use the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

i. City is used as a shorthand for Walking and Cycling Index cities, city regions, metropolitan areas and boroughs.

Headlines

UK aggregated

Populationⁱ
10,259,083

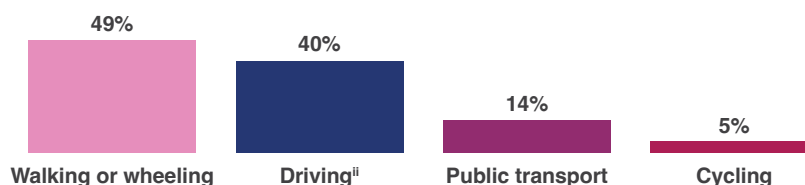
Total number of residents surveyed
21,374

Walking is the most common mode of travel

More people walk or wheel five or more days a week than any other mode of travel.

Walking and wheeling is vital for short journeys but also key to many longer trips to get to and from public transport.

Residents who travel by the following modes five or more days a week in Index cities



49%
of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

15%
of residents cycle at least once a week

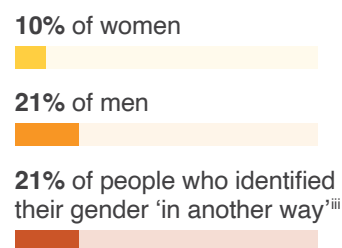
Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

Some people may face greater barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling. For example there has been a gender gap in cycling for many years across the UK.

Proportion of residents who walk or wheel at least five days a week



Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week



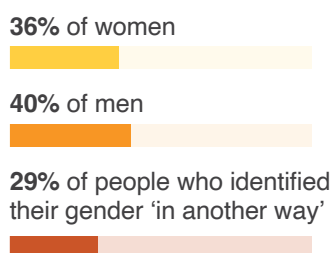
Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety is good



Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. See definitions on page 6.

Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good



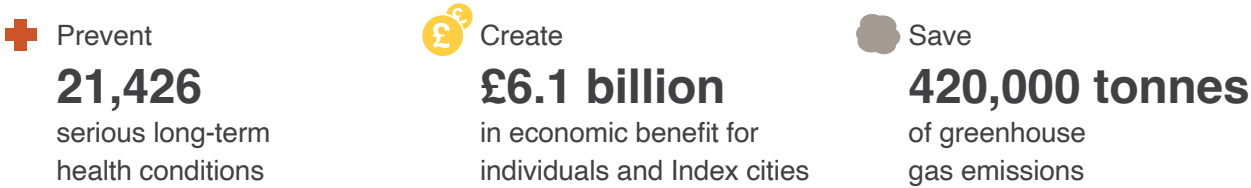
Proportion of residents who feel welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets of their neighbourhood



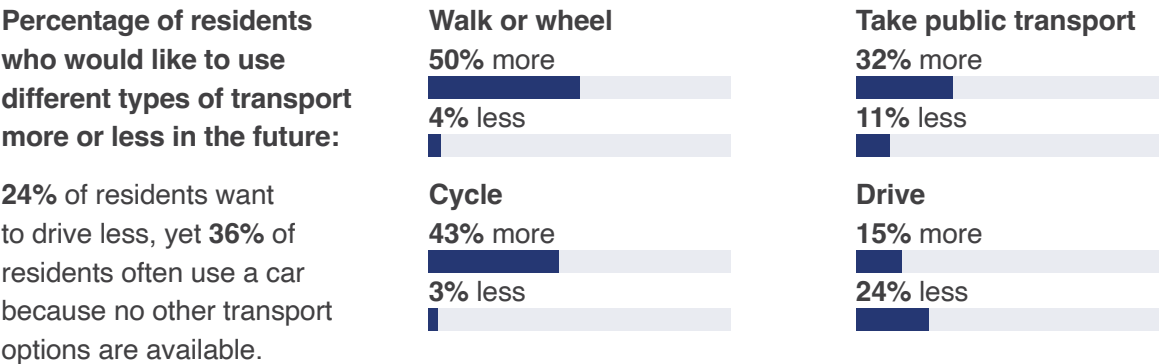
i. ONS Census 2021 for England and Wales, NRS mid-year 2021 population estimates for Scotland and NISRA 2022 mid-year population estimates for Belfast. This is the most recent available for the UK Index cities. ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. iii. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' is 0.9% of the total sample.

Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

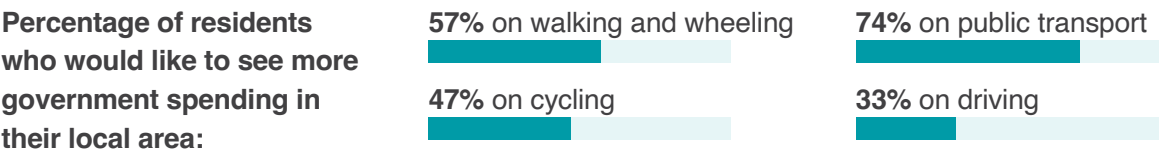
Every day, walking, wheeling and cycling in Index cities take up to **2,300,000** cars off the road^{iv}. Each year in Index cities these three modes combined:



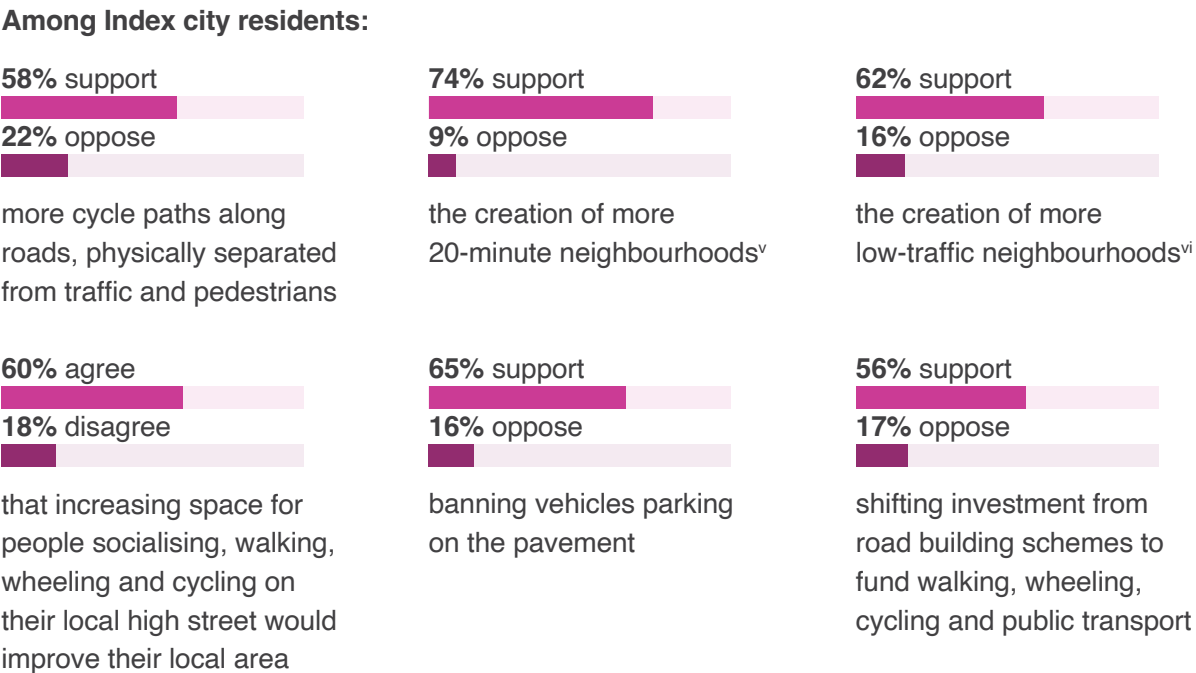
Residents want to walk, wheel and cycle more and drive less



Residents want more funding for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport



Increased funding would help support more liveable neighbourhoods



iv. Based on walking, wheeling and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking or wheeling trips.
v. See definition on page 14. vi. For definition see [Methodology document](#).

Walking and Cycling Index
UK aggregated report 2023

Walking

Walking and wheeling participation, safety and satisfaction

Walking and wheeling participation

Walking and wheeling are often overlooked in transport. This is despite being an efficient use of space, good for our health and having no environmental impact.

A brisk 10-minute walk every day provides many health benefits.ⁱ More needs to be done to enable people in underrepresented groups to gain from the benefits of walking and wheeling every day.

94%

of all residents walk or wheel

49%

of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

Proportion of residents who walk or wheel at least five days a week

Gender and sexuality

48% of women



50% of men



55% of people who identified their gender 'in another way'ⁱⁱ



58% of LGBTQ+ people



48% of non-LGBTQ+ people



Ethnicity

43% of people from ethnic minority groups



50% of white people



Age

56% of people aged 16–25



52% of people aged 26–35



49% of people aged 36–45



46% of people aged 46–55



48% of people aged 56–65



44% of people aged 66+



Disability

44% of disabled people



51% of non-disabled people



Socio-economic groupⁱⁱⁱ

52% of AB



51% of C1



41% of C2



44% of DE



i. Walking for health, NHS, July 2019. ii. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' is 0.9% of the total sample.

iii. Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Group C1 is supervisory/clerical and students. Group C2 is skilled manual. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment.

Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

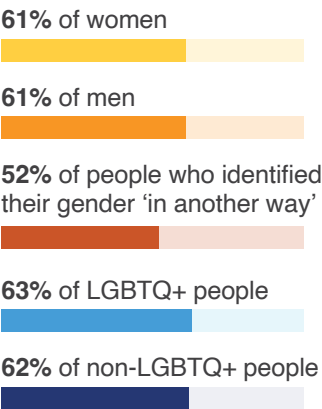
61%
of residents think the level of safety for walking or wheeling is good

46%
of residents think the level of safety for children walking or wheeling is good

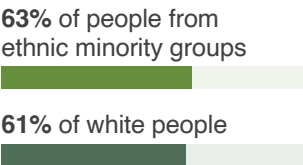
69%
of residents think their local area overall is a good place to walk or wheel

Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety in their local area is good

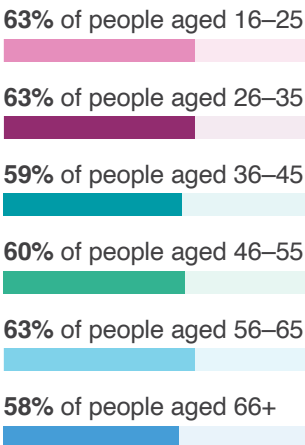
Gender and sexuality



Ethnicity



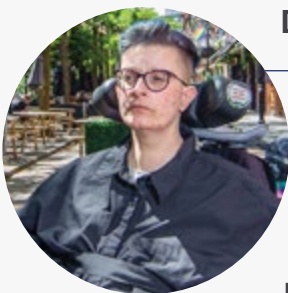
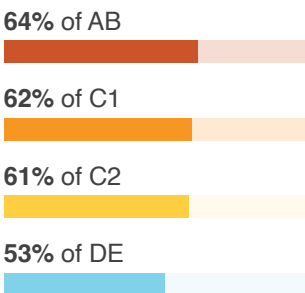
Age



Disability



Socio-economic group



Dennis, Greater Manchester



Most of the pavements near where I live are old and uneven. If you add in parked cars too it's like doing an assault course.

When the children were small I got forced onto the road while they were on the path as there was no space for the wheelchair. I couldn't see them behind the parked cars. It was very upsetting.

Unsafe pavements isolate people in their homes. When I was a manual wheelchair user I couldn't go anywhere on the pavement.

We need to design our neighbourhoods to suit people rather than cars. We should get rid of cars on pavements.

Making streets accessible for everyone helps with health and wellbeing and it builds community. If you're not in a vehicle you get to know people. It creates nicer neighbourhoods.

Cycling

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

Cycling participation

Despite a much larger potential for cycling, only **15%** of people cycle regularly.ⁱ

Cycling participation, however, is not equal. Barriers to cycling can be far more pronounced for some people. Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.ⁱⁱ

36%

of all residents cycle

15%

of all residents cycle at least once a week

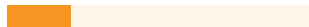
Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

Gender and sexuality

10% of women



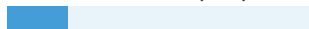
21% of men



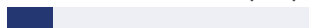
21% of people who identified their gender 'in another way'



20% of LGBTQ+ people

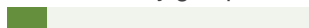


15% of non-LGBTQ+ people



Ethnicity

13% of people from ethnic minority groups



16% of white people



Age

16% of people aged 16–25



18% of people aged 26–35



18% of people aged 36–45



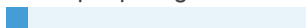
18% of people aged 46–55



15% of people aged 56–65

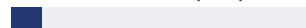


7% of people aged 66+



Disability

10% of disabled people



17% of non-disabled people

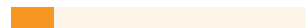


Socio-economic group

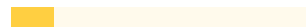
19% of AB



14% of C1



14% of C2



11% of DE



Cycling safety and satisfaction

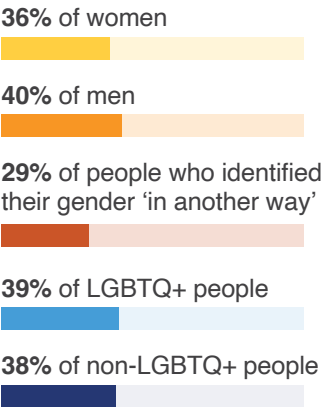
38%
of all residents think the level of safety for cycling in their local area is good

31%
of all residents think the level of safety for children cycling is good

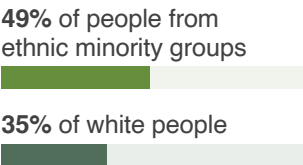
44%
of all residents think their local area overall is a good place to cycle

Proportion of residents who think cycling safety in their local area is good

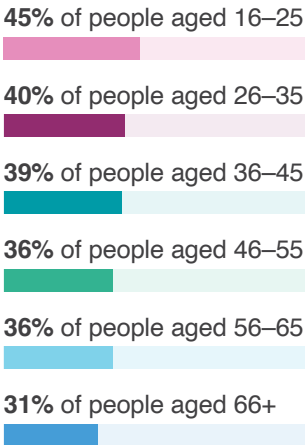
Gender and sexuality



Ethnicity



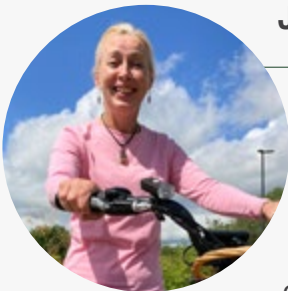
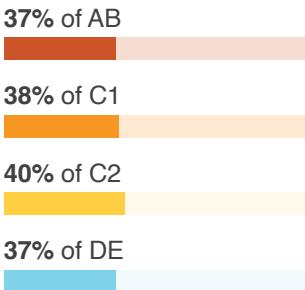
Age



Disability



Socio-economic group



Joanne, Belfast



I’ve had a trike for over two years, and recently upgraded to an e-trike. My walking can be bad because of cerebral palsy, but when I’m on my trike, it’s like my cerebral palsy just disappears.

I had been on anti-depressants for 9 years, but within two months of getting my trike, I was off the medication. It’s lifechanging.

I’ve named my new e-trike ‘Joy’, because that is what it gives me.

It can be tricky because there aren’t many good cycle lanes. The lanes that are there are usually too narrow for my trike, so I either go on the footpath or the road.

I would love to help more people with disabilities get involved in trying out trikes and e-trikes.



Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

The large numbers of walking and wheeling trips in Index cities produce important health, economic and environmental benefits.

Index city residents walk or wheel 417 times around the world every day

3.7 billion

walking and wheeling trips were made in Index cities in the past year, which adds up to

3.8 billion miles

= 10.4 million miles a day.

This equates to each resident spending

5 days

walking or wheeling continuously in the past year.

Annual walking and wheeling trips by purposeⁱ

Enjoyment or fitness – adults and children (including running):
1,462,300,000

39%

Destination – adults only (like work, school, shopping):
1,974,600,000

53%

School – children only:
268,700,000

7%



Walking and wheeling benefits residents and the local economy

The Walking and Cycling Index uses a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and walking. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

The amount saved for each mile walked or wheeled instead of driven ranges from **19p** in Dunfermline, to **£1.37** in Tower Hamletsⁱⁱ

Over a year this adds up to

£563.3 million

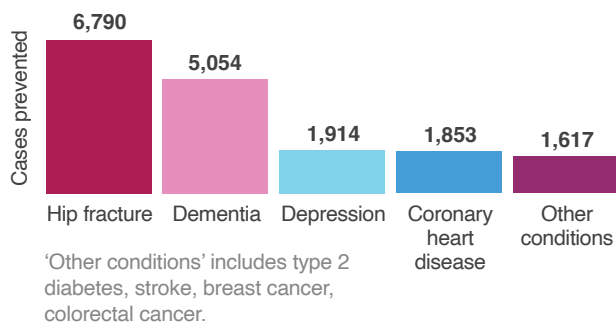
from adults with a car in their household walking or wheeling to work, school and other destinations.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips walked and wheeled in Index cities is

£4.8 billionⁱⁱⁱ

Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Walking in Index cities prevents 17,228 serious long-term health conditions each year



Saving the NHS in Index cities

£213.6 million per year



equivalent to the cost of
5.2 million GP appointments

Based on applying data from the UK Index cities to Sport England MOVES tool which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Index cities the physical activity benefits of walking

prevent 4,444 early deaths annually

which is valued at

£16.1 billion^{iv}

Please note wheelchair or mobility scooter trips are modelled as walking trips for the purposes of the MOVES and HEAT models.

People walking and wheeling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually:

640,000 kg of NO_x

and

92,000 kg of particulates
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

44% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



Walking and wheeling in Index cities helps mitigate our climate crisis

260,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by walking or wheeling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of



320,000 people taking flights

from London Heathrow to New York

In 2021 transport accounted for **26%** of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures

Walking and wheeling keeps Index cities moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^v This helps to keep Index cities moving for all road users.

2 million return walking and wheeling trips

are made daily in Index cities by people that could have used a car.

v. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back

5,900 miles

equivalent to the distance from Birmingham to Tokyo.



iv. Based on WHO/Europe Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT), which enables an economic assessment of the health benefits of walking by estimating the value of reduced mortality resulting from specified amounts of walking.



Benefits of cycling

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

Index city residents cycle 141 times around the world every day

362.9 million cycling trips

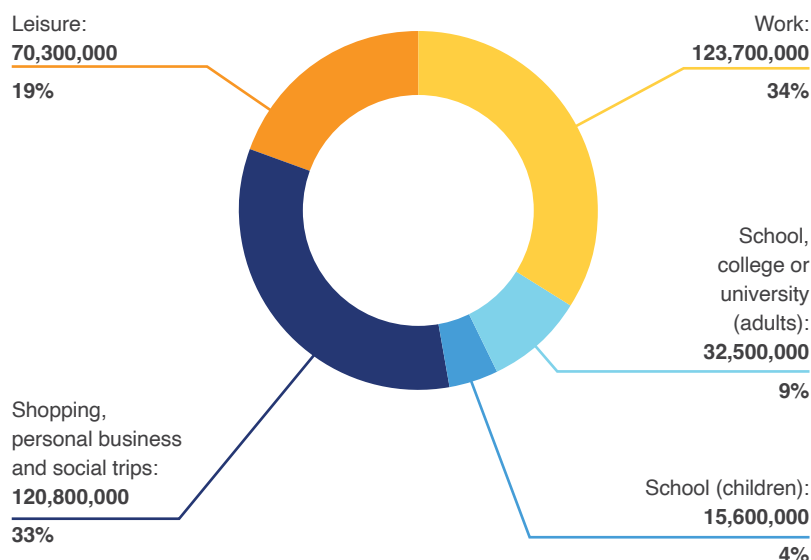
were made in Index cities in the past year

This adds up to

1.3 billion miles
= 3.5 million miles a day

i. Leisure trips include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other trips are just adults.

Annual cycling trips by purpose in Index citiesⁱ



Cycling benefits residents and the local economy

The Walking and Cycling Index uses a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

The amount saved for each mile cycled instead of driven ranges from **£1.13** in Dunfermline to **£2.31** in Tower Hamletsⁱⁱ

Over a year this adds up to

£867.7 million

from adults with a car in their household cycling to work, school and other destinations.

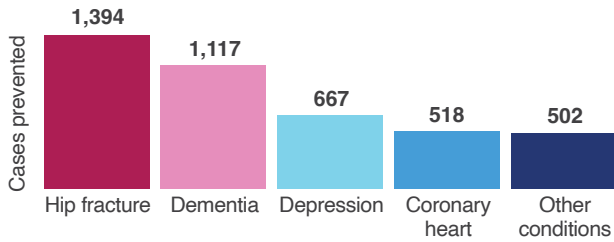
The total annual economic benefit from all trips cycled in Index cities is

£1.3 billionⁱⁱⁱ

ii. The variation is due mainly to the variation in traffic speed between cities and the cost ascribed to congestion in urban areas of different sizes. iii. This includes trips cycled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in Index cities prevents 4,198 serious long-term health conditions each year



'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer, colorectal cancer.

Saving the NHS in Index cities

£54.9 million per year



equivalent to the cost of
1.3 million GP appointments

Based on applying data from the UK Index cities to Sport England MOVES tool which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Index cities the physical activity benefits of cycling

prevent 471 early deaths annually

which is valued at

£1.7 billion^{iv}

People cycling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually:

280,000 kg of NO_x

and

44,000 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

44% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



Cycling in Index cities helps mitigate our climate crisis

160,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by cycling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of



190,000 people taking flights

from London Heathrow to New York

In 2021 transport accounted for **26%** of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures

Cycling keeps Index cities moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^v This helps to keep Index cities moving for all road users.

290,000 return cycling trips

are made daily in Index cities by people that could have used a car.

v. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back

867 miles

equivalent to seven trips around the M25.



iv. Based on WHO/Europe Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT), which enables an economic assessment of the health benefits of cycling by estimating the value of reduced mortality resulting from specified amounts of cycling.



Walking solutions

What would help make walking and wheeling easier?

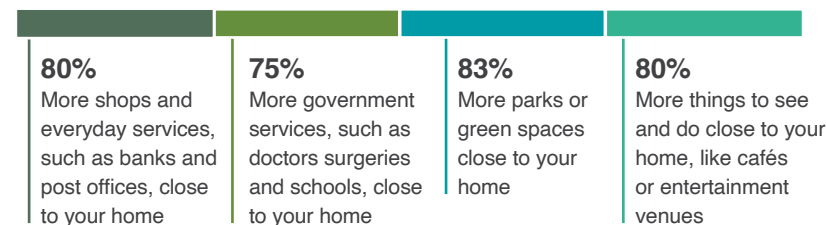
Residents want more services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Ideally, walking or wheeling should be the most attractive option for short journeys. An area can support this by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live. The environment should be safe, comfortable and welcoming.

20-minute neighbourhoods are places where you can walk from your home to many of the things you need on a regular basis. Based on a 20-minute return journey this is around 480 metres each way for the majority of people.ⁱ

i. Asher et al, 2012. Most older pedestrians are unable to cross the road in time: a cross-sectional study. Age and Ageing.

What percentage of residents would find more local amenities and services useful to help them walk or wheel more?



64%

of Index city households are in neighbourhoods of more than 40 homes per hectare. These are or can become 20-minute neighbourhoods.

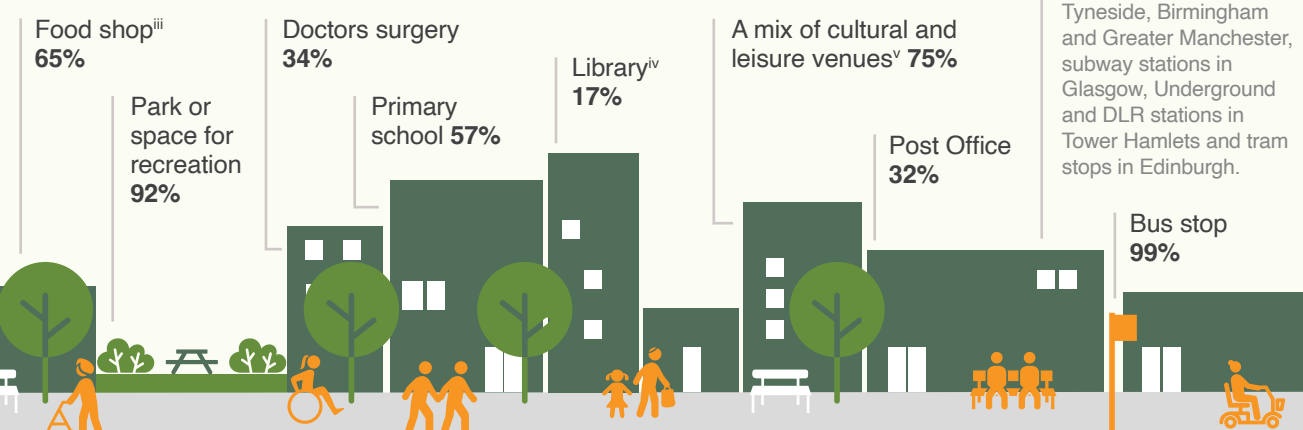
These higher-density neighbourhoods with more people can sustain local businesses and public transport routes.ⁱⁱ

55%

agree they can easily get to many places they need to visit without having to drive

Proportion of households within a 400m radius of the following amenities

This is modelled as a straight-line distance, as opposed to the actual walking distance based on street layout which is likely to be longer (approximately equivalent to 480m).



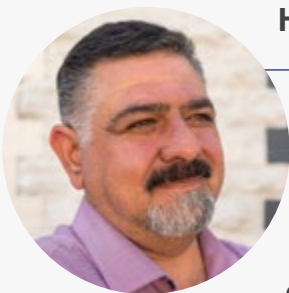
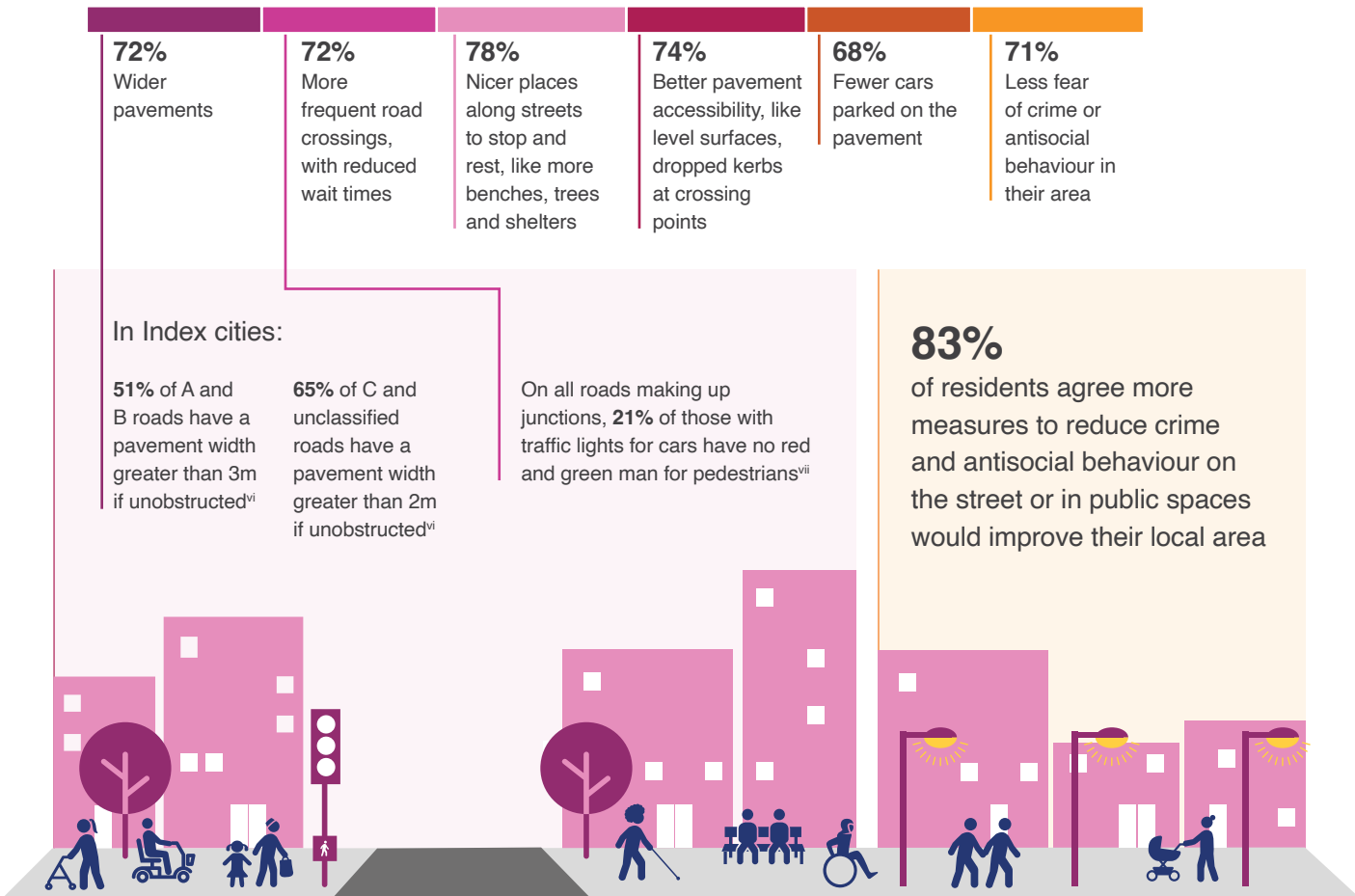
ii. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning. iii. Excludes Dundee.

iv. Excludes Aberdeen, Cardiff, Dundee, Greater Cambridge, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Southampton City Region, Stirling and Tyneside. v. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, like cafés, pubs, bingo halls, cinemas, museums.

Residents want better streets

There are many ways to make our streets and neighbourhoods safe, welcoming and comfortable for everyone to walk or wheel in.

What percentage of residents think that these changes would help them walk or wheel more?



Heewr, Cardiff



After I had an accident and had a problem with my leg, I recognised that walking when I was ill was difficult between places, especially bus stops.

Cardiff has a lot of narrow streets, with a lot of stressed drivers, because people are frustrated at how busy it is in the city centre and other parts of town.

There should be less cars and more opportunities for people to rest while they walk.

To see more trees around different parts of the city would help people want to walk more, too. Without trees and green spaces, places look empty. People feel more relaxed in nature. Anywhere you want to attract people for walking, you should have trees, parks, and green spaces.

vi. Excludes Belfast. A and B roads are main roads. C roads and unclassified roads are more minor roads and often residential streets. vii. Excludes Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Greater Manchester and Tyneside as data was not provided.

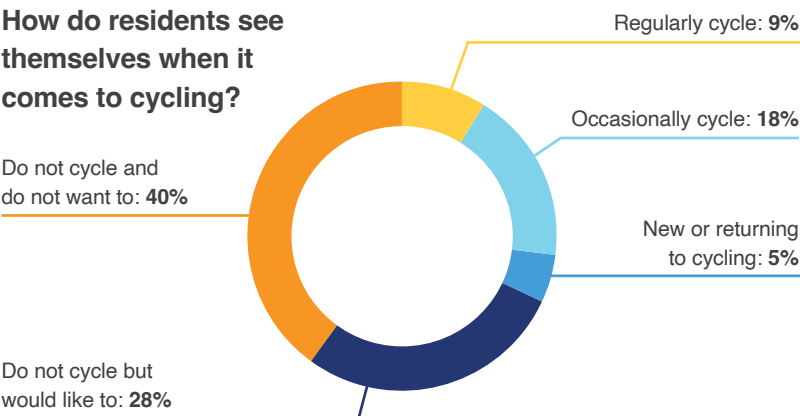


Cycling solutions

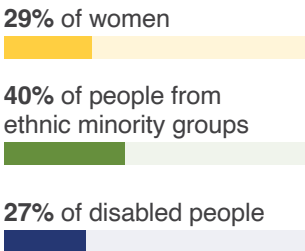
What would make cycling better?

Many Index city residents want to cycle

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?

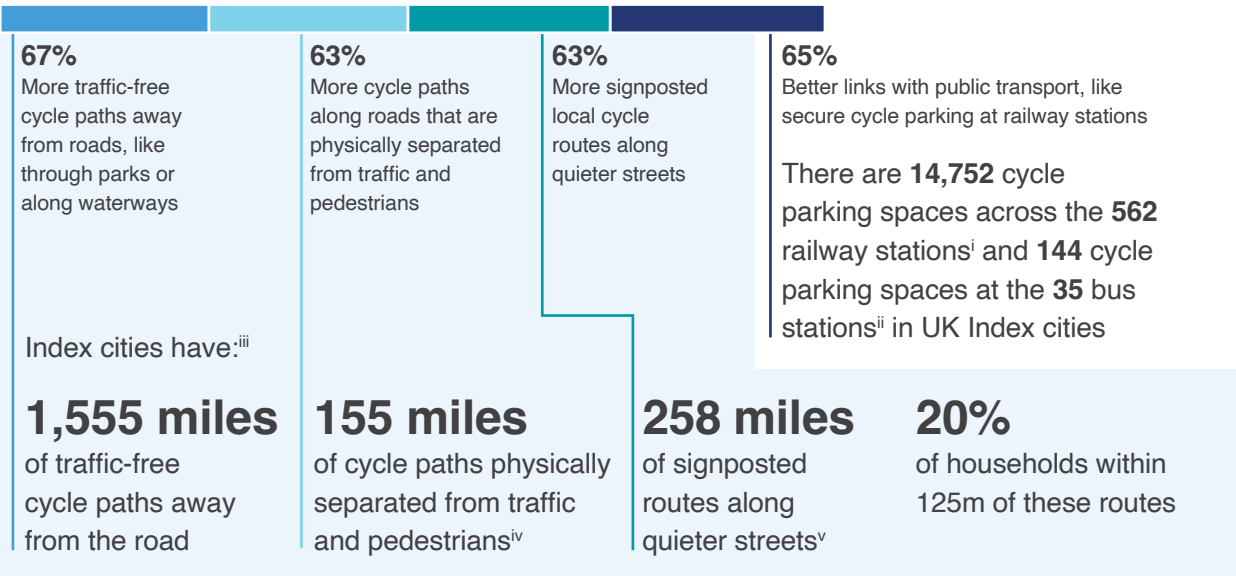


What proportion of residents said they ‘do not cycle but would like to’?



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

What percentage of residents would be helped to cycle more by better facilities?



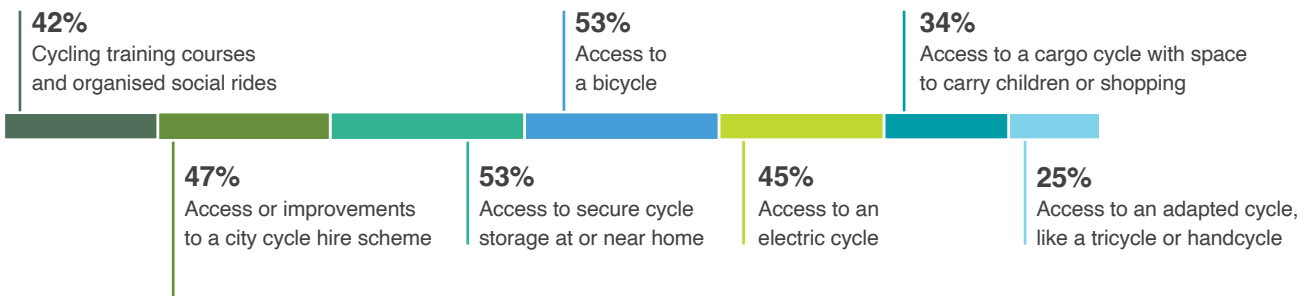
58% of residents support building more cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic

i. Includes cycle parking outside: metro stations in Birmingham and Tyneside, subway stations in Glasgow, tram stations in Greater Manchester, Underground and DLR stations in Tower Hamlets and ferry terminals in Liverpool City Region.
ii. Includes bus station cycle parking for Belfast, Dundee, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Southampton City Region, Stirling and Tyneside only.
iii. To ensure comparability, these figures are correct as of 31 May 2023 for all aggregated city reports.

iv. Dunfermline currently have no segregated cycle routes. v. Excludes Aberdeen, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Dundee, Dunfermline, Greater Cambridge, Inverness and Southampton City Region as data was not provided. Perth currently have no signed cycle routes on low-trafficked and low speed roads. Data for Tyneside is for Newcastle and Gateshead only.

Residents want more support to cycle

What percentage of residents think that these kinds of support would help them cycle more?



Cycle hire schemes in 11 Index cities^{vi}

7,211 hire cycles

910 cycle hire stations

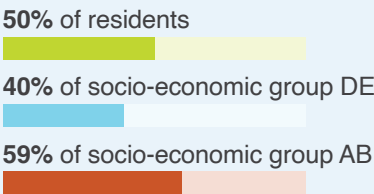
4,028,912 annual trips

Reported cycle thefts

There were 16,762 reported cycle thefts in Index cities in 2022/23. 18,576 in 2021/22

For every 251 people who own an adult cycle in Index cities, there was 1 reported cycle theft in the past year.

Proportions of residents with access to an adult cycle



56% of residents support financial discounts for people on low incomes or not in employment to help them buy a cycle

34% of households are within 800m of a cycle shop^{vii}

vi. Data for July 2022–June 2023 for all cities except Southampton City Region where data is from October 2022–June 2023 and Aberdeen where data is from November 2022–June 2023. Excludes Bristol, Dundee, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Liverpool City Region, Perth and Tyneside as there are currently no permanent cycle share schemes in operation.

There is a public cycle parking space for every 50 people who cycle in Index cities.



Sekou, Glasgow



After seeing loads of people on bikes in Glasgow, I rented a bike through the city hire scheme and gave it a go. It was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made!

I eat and sleep better, my mental health has improved, and I feel more relaxed.

Cycling has become my main mode of transport. It is cost-effective and I love the freedom it gives me.

When it’s too windy or rainy, I walk instead.

It’s been an amazing change in my life, everyone should give it a try!

vii. Credit to the Association of Cycle Traders (ACT) for their assistance with cycle shop locations and services offered.

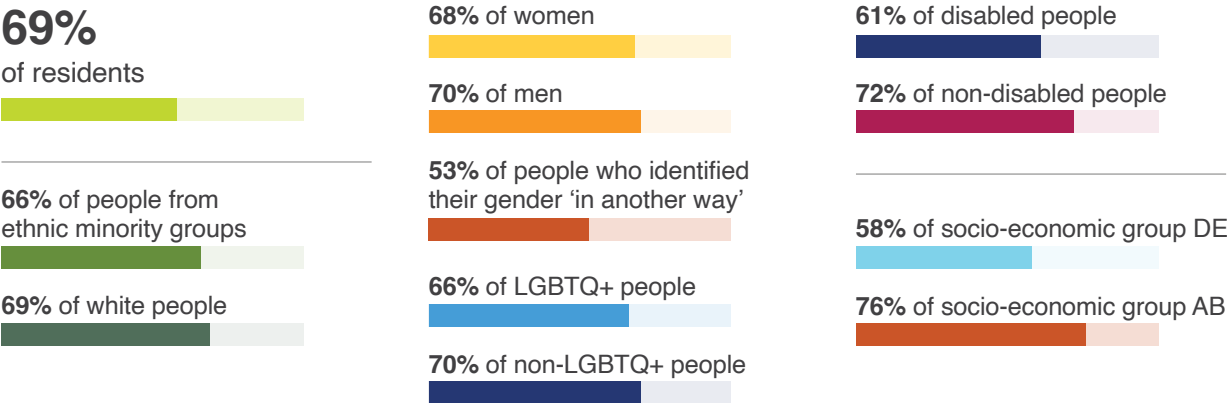


Neighbourhood solutions

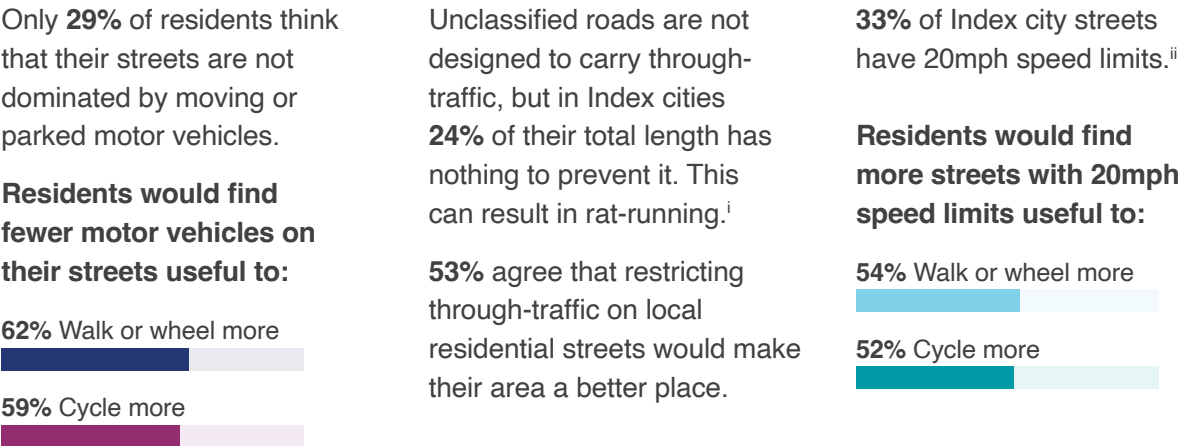
What would help make neighbourhoods better?

All residents should feel welcome in their neighbourhood

Proportion of residents that feel welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets of their neighbourhood



The dominance of motor vehicles can discourage walking, wheeling and cycling



Residents want local streets to be better spaces for people to spend time in



i. Based on analysis by CycleStreets www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org. Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads. ii. Total road length excludes motorways. To ensure comparability, figure given is correct as of 26 April 2023 for all aggregated cities.



André and Emma, Southampton



“We took the premises on in February 2022 and it’s always been for years a road with traffic. It wasn’t a pedestrianised route like we have now. We took the lease on knowing that they were going to properly redevelop, which they have now. It is absolutely perfect.

We just love having it pedestrianised. It’s a lot quieter, like people can really engage, you haven’t got the danger of cars.

It’s really nice and wide, and it’s clean as well, and it’s a good surface for walking on and cycling. The bicycle racks outside the shop are important for the customers as most of them cycle or walk to the shop.”

André recently started cycling to work and really enjoys it, it is better for the environment, it’s more economical and it is healthy, helping him get fitter.

Neighbourhoods must be designed with children in mind

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive. Increasing independence, providing space to play and socialise, and improving the journey to school are all important.

If we design neighbourhoods with children in mind they will then work better for everyone else too.

12 years old

average age when people living with children would let them walk, wheel or cycle independently in their neighbourhood.

80% of seven-year-olds in Germany are allowed to go alone to places within walking distance, other than school.ⁱⁱⁱ

49% of residents agree there is space for children to socialise and play



54% of households are within 400m of a children’s playground



Among Index city residents:

50% agree



24% disagree



closing streets outside local schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area

These are known as ‘School Streets’.

141 schools

in Index cities have School Streets schemes^{iv}

iv. To ensure comparability figure given is correct as of 31 May 2023. There are currently no permanent School Streets schemes in Aberdeen, Belfast, Dunfermline, Inverness and Stirling. Excludes trial schemes in Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Perth, Southampton City Region, Tower Hamlets and Tyneside as these are not permanent.



iii. Children’s Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015.



Developing Index cities

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

Prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling can improve journeys for everyone, especially alongside affordable and convenient public transport. This has an even greater impact for disadvantaged groups, who depend on these modes of transport to access work, education and opportunities.

At the same time making these changes can reduce air and noise pollution, as well as carbon emissions. More people travelling actively also contributes towards improved physical and mental health while increasing access to nature.

Where cities have achieved this, we also see positive improvements for the local economy. Cities designed for people are safer, less congested, and highly competitive, attracting businesses, residents, tourists.

While there is broad consensus on the benefits of sustainable transport, the job at hand is much more challenging. Changing how streets are designed, giving more space and priority to other modes can impact journeys by car. While many people want to walk, cycle and use public transport more, these options may not exist. We need to help people reduce car use, but fairly.

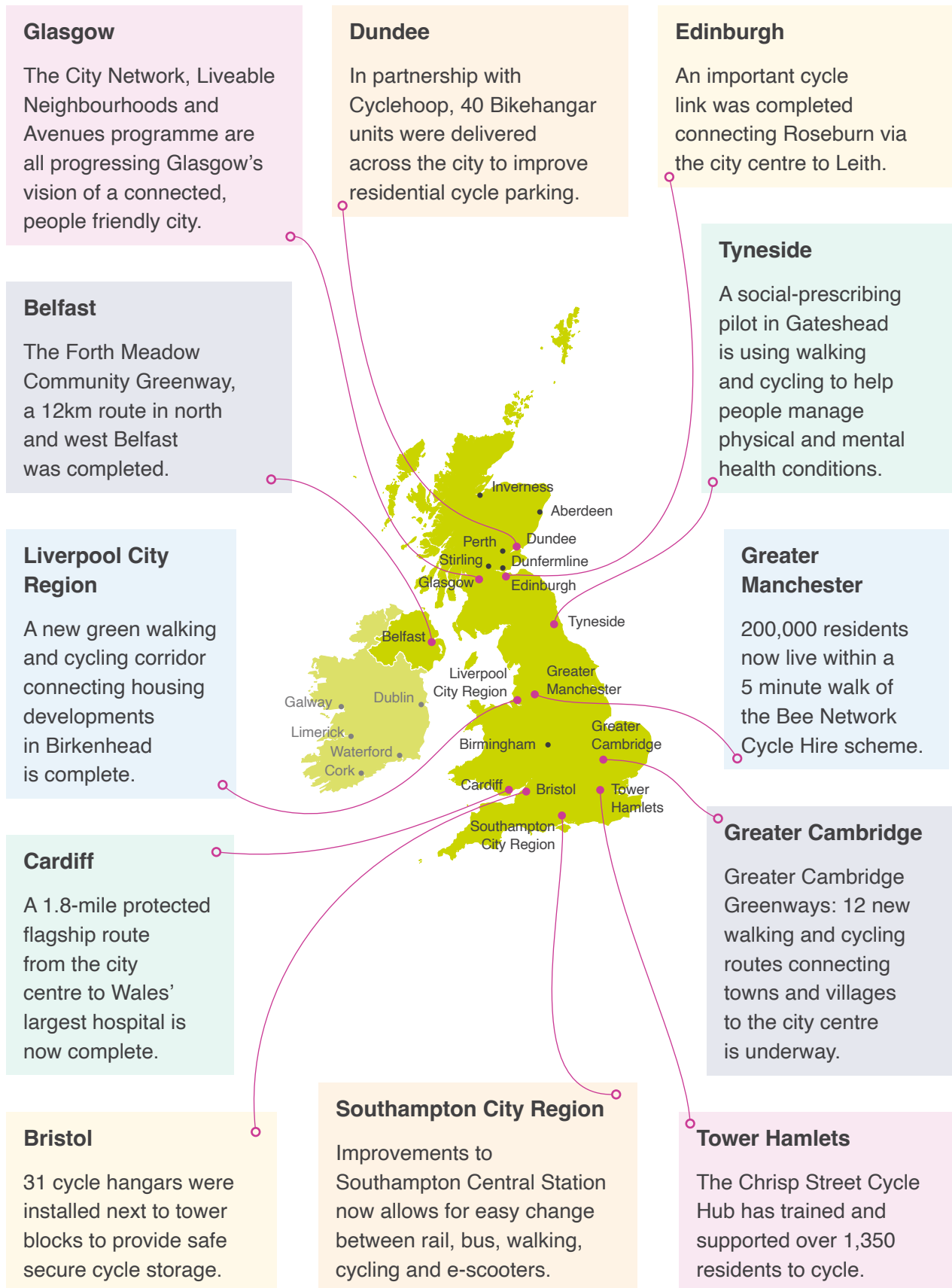
Luckily, we have come a long way since the Walking and Cycling Index was first published, as Bike Life, back in 2015. Local transport authorities have become more ambitious, investment has increased, and the quality of what is delivered is far superior.

We have seen steady increases in many places of 20mph streets, protected on-street cycle paths, improvements to off-road routes, and more low traffic neighbourhoods and school street schemes.

Across our cities one in five households are now within 125 metres of a relatively good cycle route, and one in three streets now have 20mph speed limits. Cycle rental schemes in 11 of our cities had a combined ridership of over 4 million journeys over the year.

We now need to join up these individual schemes, especially cycling and walking infrastructure to create safe, accessible, and attractive networks and neighbourhoods that also integrate with public transport.

Examples of just a few of the many schemes and programmes delivered over the past two years include the completion of protected on-road cycle schemes safe enough for children to use, improvements to cycle storage for disadvantaged residents, social prescription pilots to increase activity, and schemes to improve the integration of public transport with walking, wheeling and cycling.





Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

At Sustrans we want to help create a society where the way we travel creates healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

These are places which are designed around people's needs, equitably. These are places that help people live well and healthily while not impacting on the environment now and in the future.

A big part of this is changing how people move around their neighbourhood, town or city and beyond. And to be successful there are several challenges that need to be overcome.



In the future we must make progress on these challenges. And if we do so we will create streets and places for everyone that are healthy, welcoming, and ultimately better for everyone.

Improving transport choices for everyone

Across the UK many groups face greater disadvantage than others across their lives including women, people of colour, disabled people, people on a low income and children. This is seen in transport where many people from these groups are less likely to own a car and face economic barriers to travel.

This acts to reduce transport choice and may lead to missed opportunities, jobs and education and greater likelihood of isolation. People shouldn't need a car to get around: alternatives including public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling should be attractive, safe, affordable and convenient. However cycling is seen as unsafe, walking is inaccessible for many and not prioritised, while bus services have been steadily reducing and trains are expensive. Many cities across Europe as well as London demonstrate this doesn't need to be the case.

Reducing the impact of how we get around on the climate and air pollution

While air pollution currently poses the largest environmental risk to public health associated with 28,000-36,000 deaths every year, reducing the impact of climate change is rapidly becoming our greatest challenge.

Electric cars will help, but alone are not sufficient. We need to help people to leave their cars at home for more and more journeys by ensuring attractive alternatives exist. This means listening to what residents have told us time and time again in the Walking and Cycling Index: that they want to walk, wheel and cycle more, and for places to invest more in public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling.

Increase childhood independence

On average parents and carers would not let their children walk, wheel or cycle independently in their neighbourhood until the age of twelve. This contrasts starkly to other countries, for example in Germany where 7-year-olds are allowed to go to places alone within walking distance.

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to develop and thrive. They should enable increasing independence, space to play and socialise. However perceptions of safety stop parents and carers from enabling their children to do so, whilst costing society from having to escort children for all trips they make.

In the future we must make progress on these challenges. And if we do so we will create streets and places for everyone that are healthy, welcoming, and ultimately better for everyone.



James, Birmingham



Every school day, I use the Priory Road and A38 cycle routes to get to and from school, unless the weather is bad, when I'll go by bus.

Riding my bike gives me a sense of freedom, because I know when I should leave to get to school on time, and I don't have to worry about the buses being on time.

The protected cycle lanes give me a safer environment to cycle along than the road, without the risks of cars passing too closely, especially with the designated crossings. On traffic light systems at the big junctions, I would prefer priority for the cycle lane, to encourage more people to cycle.

When I pass the cycle counter on the A38 route, it makes me happy to know lots of other people are cycling to and from work and school instead of taking the car.

Maintenance is almost as important as putting in these new cycle lanes. In the winter, it gets clogged up with lots of leaves which block the drains; then it'll be really slippery to cycle over, especially on corners, and it'll be completely flooded.

Notes on methodology:

The attitudinal survey was conducted from March to June 2023 by independent social research organisation NatGen.

The survey is representative of all Index city residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

All other data is sourced from our city partners, national data sets or modelled and calculated by Sustrans.

Trip estimates use a model developed by Sustrans. When comparing to other travel surveys, some variation may exist in the proportion of journeys travelled by journey purpose.

Rounding has been used throughout the report. In many cases we have rounded to the nearest whole number. Rounding is avoided where this may cause confusion, for example with modelled estimates shown in the summary and benefits sections.

More information and a detailed methodology are available at www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index

Sustrans makes it easier for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

Sustrans works for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

Join us on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

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