



ARUP



Walking for everyone

Making walking and wheeling more inclusive



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Walking for everyone

This guide is designed to support national and local governments including transport and spatial planning professionals, organisations helping to improve the lives of people who may be marginalised, and anyone helping to make walking and wheeling more inclusive. Whilst our recommendations are primarily focused on the UK, many are applicable across the world.

There are many successful and inspiring examples where places have made walking and wheeling more inclusive. With the right political will, investment, and knowledge, walking and wheeling can help people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, abilities and genders.

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Date of publication: 22 March 2022

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Walking and wheeling

We use the term walking in an inclusive way including the use of mobility aids.

Nonetheless we recognise that some people who use wheeled mobility aids, for example a wheelchair or mobility scooter user, may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling.

We have therefore used the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

Wheeling is defined to only cover modes that use pavement space at a similar speed to walking. It does not include the use of e-scooters or cycles.

Cover photos: Jon Bewley, Jon Challicom, Koïs Miah, Brian Morrison, John Linton, Tony Marsh, Julie Howden, Rich Dyson. All other photos: Living Streets or Sustrans.

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Photo: Paul Tanner

Foreword



Leslie Kern

In an increasingly urban world facing the accelerating effects of climate change, cities and towns can and must be leaders in sustainability. Prioritising walking and wheeling is one path toward this goal. As Walking for Everyone emphasizes, however, an equity-based approach is critical if walking and wheeling are to rightfully take their place at the centre of urban, suburban and rural mobility policy.

The drive toward equity is currently hampered by a data gap. Cities and their transit authorities have not typically gathered mobility data disaggregated by factors such as gender and sexual identity, age, ability, race, religion, or ethnicity. As the Walking for Everyone report notes, we remain in the dark about the walking and wheeling routines, needs, desires, and fears of many groups. Moreover, we know little about how these differences intersect and interact, for example, how disabled women experience issues related to both gender and disability in their daily lives. This report contributes to solving this problem by both summarising existing knowledge and identifying key areas where more research is required.

This information is critical because there is no “one size fits all” approach to equitable improvements in the walking and wheeling landscapes of communities.

Walking for Everyone is very clear on the need for community participation. Top-down decision making processes are likely to miss the nuances of the day-to-day needs and experiences of the local community, and particularly those of community members marginalised by race, disability, age, and other differences. Community-led engagement and ongoing participation across different levels of decision making are crucial in ensuring that any changes respond to the specific, place-based needs of residents.

Walking for Everyone advocates for a holistic approach to walking and wheeling. This means that we need to pay attention to the wide range of factors that influence how, when, and where people move in different ways. These factors are not limited to the physical environment, although the quality of pavements, lighting, dropped kerbs, crossings, and more are essential elements of a good walking and wheeling landscape. We also need to understand, however, how social, cultural, and economic variables shape people’s mobility. These can include everything from

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a sense of fear at night, to the restrictions of religious days of rest, to the experience of name-calling or harassment in public. In other words, questions of power, norms, and values are also part of the picture.

Walking for Everyone sets out an ambitious and inclusive agenda for the future of walking and wheeling across diverse communities. It is time to truly prioritise these forms of mobility and to ensure access, safety, and equity for all.

Leslie Kern, Associate Professor and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at Mount Allison University. She is the author of 'Feminist City'.

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Executive Summary

We believe everyone should have the right to walk and wheel and feel safe, comfortable, and welcome while doing so.

Walking and wheeling helps people access the things they need, for example work, education, food, health services, community and green space. Walking and wheeling benefits physical and mental wellbeing, contributes to the decarbonisation of transport, and helps reduce social and economic inequity.

The objective of this guidance is therefore to help make walking and wheeling attractive and accessible to everyone. Using an intersectional approach, we consider the experiences of eight groups and how the barriers they encounter may be shared or compounded between groups. Our recommendations proposed seek to make walking and wheeling more inclusive for everyone, acknowledging that some people face greater disadvantage and require tailored support.

Walking is often ignored in transport policy.

Addressing barriers to walking and wheeling are typically overlooked. In fact while many policy documents often place walking and wheeling at the top of the transport hierarchy, this is not reflected in funding allocations and scheme delivery.

One reason may be that transport policy has typically served the needs of people that are more likely to be privileged. However, the walking and wheeling environment in many places does not work for everyone. For example, parked cars on the pavement can stop a wheelchair user or parent with children being able to get past. Our streets are not inclusive, despite almost every journey starting and ending with walking or wheeling.

No policy or design, including transport, is neutral: it either perpetuates or reduces social inequity.

Decision-makers, alongside people working to design, plan and improve neighbourhoods and transport, need to better understand the implications of the decisions we take. It is important that we better understand our role and strive to take a more inclusive and open approach that seeks to reduce social inequity.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of walking and wheeling within our local neighbourhoods; however, it has also revealed significant barriers that many marginalised groups face to access and enjoy walking and wheeling.

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Walking policy, plans and delivery should be designed to help reduce the health, economic and societal inequities many people encounter throughout their lives. However, a lack of data often exists on who is walking or wheeling. In addition, for many people walking and wheeling is not a choice but a necessity. We need to improve safety, accessibility, and comfort, as opposed to just focusing on walking and wheeling participation.

How do we improve walking and wheeling for everyone?

We have the collective skills, expertise and ambition as a sector to ensure walking and wheeling is accessible and attractive for everyone, putting those with the greatest need first; for example, those living in areas of multiple deprivation with reduced public transport and local services and amenities.

Addressing these barriers would enable many marginalised groups to access and enjoy walking and wheeling and improve access for all. It is encouraging that more and more local authorities, community organisations, businesses and individuals are seeking to address these barriers. Improving walking for marginalised groups will usually also benefit other groups.

Whilst many barriers to walking and wheeling are shared across marginalised groups, it is also important to recognise that people sometimes have conflicting needs. Valuing and promoting lived experience in transport planning and policy enables us to understand different experiences and prioritise needs, especially where they are conflicting. Designing solutions will inevitably require some compromise but should always put marginalised groups first to better enable equality of outcomes.

We have developed a framework of recommendations and actions primarily for local and national governments across the UK.

Theme 1: Improving governance, planning and decision making

1. Develop inclusive walking and wheeling plans

All nations and local authorities should have a clear cross-departmental plan to develop walking and wheeling. Plans should:

- » Include targets relating to participation and comfort for different demographic groups.
- » Include support for local authorities to ensure greater focus on inclusive walking and wheeling.
- » Seek to ensure the economic, social, health and environmental impacts of walking and wheeling are better accounted for in transport and planning appraisal.
- » Include Equality Impact Assessments.
- » Prioritise areas where the provision of local services and public transport is poorer, especially where this coincides with multiple deprivation.

2. Dedicate long-term funding for making walking and wheeling inclusive, accessible and desirable

National governments should:

- » Better understand the current funding split between cycling, and walking and wheeling.
- » Encourage a pipeline of walking and wheeling plans by local authorities, emphasising neighbourhood approaches to make existing infrastructure more inclusive.
- » Explore the need to create a specific revenue fund for improving and maintaining walking and wheeling infrastructure.

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» Ensure funding for local authorities is tied to demonstrating how schemes tackle inequality and prioritises the approval of schemes with inclusion embedded by design.

» Pilot gender budgeting (i.e. investment aligned to reducing gender inequality) for transport funding in cities and towns using an intersectional approach.

3. Take steps to ensure policy decisions are based on diverse voices, especially those of groups often marginalised

National and local governments should:

» Actively engage communities in policymaking and the design process ensuring marginalised communities are listened to, including paid Lived-Experience Advisory Panels with direct contact to decision makers.

» Commit to long-term plans to diversify the transport and planning sectors.

» Review the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments to understand how they are being used and how they can be improved.

» Develop training for local transport authorities to address inclusion in relation to walking and wheeling.

» Work in paid partnership with trusted community organisations who are often best placed to ensure engagement is more open, inclusive, and meaningful.

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4. Capture better walking and wheeling data for different groups, and invest more in research

National and local governments should:

- » Collect disaggregated data on walking and wheeling at a national level for both trips and stages (i.e. the walking part of longer journeys involving other modes of transport).
- » Develop guidance for local transport authorities to prioritise schemes which reduce inequality, e.g. mapping neighbourhood deprivation and street accessibility audits.
- » Develop guidance for local transport authorities to collect disaggregated data to monitor the impact of schemes on different groups including participation, safety, and comfort.
- » Commission research where necessary to overcome gaps for marginalised communities in relation to walking and wheeling.

5. Embed proximity to the things people need into spatial planning by adopting a ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ approach

National governments should:

- » Embed the concept and practice of 20-minute neighbourhoods into national planning policies and guidance.
- » Set policy and standard processes for ensuring walkability and proximity in national planning guidance alongside appropriate housing density to support this.
- » Provide economic support to help local planning authorities develop housing in brownfield sites proven to maximise proximity and walkability.
- » Review all major new developments which require road schemes to be built outside of the development for connectivity.

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Local planning authorities should:

» Embed the concept and practice of 20-minute neighbourhoods into local planning policies and guidance, actively involving developers, housing associations and the community in the process.

» Agree a spatial vision and adopt Supplementary Planning Documents to ensure new developments are not built in areas likely to have poor walkability.

» Refit existing developments to include high quality walking and wheeling networks.

6. Invest significantly in public transport across the UK, especially buses

National governments should:

» Ensure access to and from public transport is fully inclusive for everyone, especially disabled people, and those with young children and buggies.

» Set minimum service levels to ensure high frequency (including outside of regular office hours), safe and comfortable services, especially poorly served areas.

» Provide national free bus use for people on low incomes or not in work, and all children and young adults up to the age of 22.

Local transport authorities should:

» Consider introducing Workplace Parking Levies to help fund improvements to public transport.

» Introduce smart ticketing to allow seamless integration across different operators.

» Consider and address barriers in the 'first' and 'last' mile of journeys, typically the 'walking or wheeling' stage as part of a longer journey by public transport.

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Theme 2: Creating better places for everyone to walk and wheel

1. Develop national design guidance for walking and wheeling infrastructure

National governments should:

- » Develop specific walking and wheeling infrastructure design guidance to ensure walking and wheeling is fully inclusive, including pavements, crossing points, pavement amenities, and wayfinding.
- » Ensure walking and wheeling guidance is followed within all national funding programmes, including for new developments.
- » Undertake regular reviews of walking and wheeling design guidance and implementation, including views of people with lived experience.

2. Take steps to improve road safety, air quality and reduce physical severance by roads

National governments should:

- » Make 20mph the default speed limit in built-up areas and reduce the speed limit in rural areas on single carriageway roads.
- » Commit to World Health Organization recommended levels for air pollution and roll out Clean Air Zones or Low Emission Zones accordingly.
- » Fund schemes to reduce unnecessary motor vehicle use in areas which have higher risk of collisions and poor safety, overcoming severance by amending road design and increasing safe crossing points.
- » Introduce road pricing across the UK, equitably. Reallocate income to improving sustainable modes, including walking and wheeling.
- » Commit to reducing distance travelled by car by 20% by 2032 across the UK following Scotland's leadership.

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Local transport authorities should:

» Introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to reduce through-traffic on local roads and take steps to improve road safety on main roads.

» Reduce existing shared space on pavements to minimise conflict with people cycling or scootering including increasing protected cycle tracks on the carriageway.

» Create more pavements along rural and suburban roads where none currently exist to ensure connectivity.

3. Ensure pavement space is reserved and maintained for people walking and wheeling

National governments should:

» Prohibit pavement parking across the UK.

» Develop standards to locate cycle and e-scooter parking, and electric vehicle charging points on the carriageway.

Local authorities should:

» Install cycle and e-scooter parking, and electric vehicle charging points on the carriageway.

» Develop clear guidance for the management of pavement space, including advertising, outdoor dining, e-scooters and cycle parking.

» Provide regular welcoming and comfortable places to stop, rest and shelter and increase provision of clean, safe, and accessible public toilets.

» Improve maintenance of pavements and crossing points, especially outside of town centres, and always maintain direct accessibility for people walking and wheeling during roadworks.

» Prioritise and set clear standards for de-icing, cutting back plant growth, and leaf sweeping.

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4. Prioritise design measures to improve personal safety

National and local governments should:

» Place the needs of marginalised groups at the heart of approaches to improve personal safety through co-design.

» Ensure that spatial planning, street and building design seeks to increase footfall and street-level activity fostering a sense of belonging, ownership, and custodianship.

» Establish that any proposed schemes using national funding should include a safety audit and address personal safety, for example following the Women's Budget Group recommendation for Gender Safety Audits.

» Ensure all routes are well-lit and reduce dark and blind spots, and better maintain streets and paths, including cutting back vegetation.

» Work in partnership with the police to provide safe spaces to enable people to report incidents involving anti-social behaviour and harassment, including free advice and legal support where required.

» Provide training to transport and planning professionals to help reduce harassment in public places, including bystander training. This should include what harassment can look like for different groups and how to intervene in an appropriate way, for example avoiding victim-blaming and building trust with the LGBTQIA+, Black and migrant communities.

Theme 3: Supporting everyone to walk and wheel

1. Raise the profile of walking and wheeling, and equip people with the information and tools they need

National governments, in collaboration with the private and third sector should:

» Work together to raise the profile and celebrate the diversity of people walking and wheeling.

» Use real-life stories and case studies to challenge stereotypes and better reflect the multiple identities of people who walk and wheel.

» Develop dedicated and accessible digital and non-digital route planning tools and maps, for example offering audio assistance, reducing language barriers and providing advance information of step-free routes.

2. Invest in walking and wheeling programmes to improve confidence and ability, including social prescribing

National governments and local transport authorities should:

» Pilot and scale up social prescribing programmes through the NHS to address physical and mental health issues through walking and wheeling groups and services.

» Develop mass participation social walking and wheeling programmes and support walking and wheeling community groups that reach a more diverse audience.

» Target older people early, for example in mid-life, to encourage walking or wheeling activity that can be sustained into later life.

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3. Reverse the decline in childhood independent mobility by prioritising children's needs in public spaces

National governments should:

» Explicitly incorporate children's independent mobility into all transport policy, including the creation of a national fund to drive improvements to the built environment that focus on children's needs outside of the school journey.

» Put the needs of children at the heart of spatial planning creating streets, public spaces, and 20-minute neighbourhoods that explicitly work for children.

» Develop guidance to encourage local authorities to better include the needs and views of children, especially children from marginalised backgrounds.

» Develop a new funding scheme for schools in areas with high traffic movement, poor road safety and air quality.

» Review the School Admissions Code and School Transport Guidance to investigate the inclusion of active travel in catchment area and transportation decision-making.

» Ensure families have the right to send their children to the same school.

» Review and adopt Daylight Saving Time throughout the year to allow children to better utilise daylight hours and reduce road casualties.

Local transport authorities should:

» Develop approaches that enable children to be active citizens and have a say in the development of their cities, towns, and neighbourhoods.

» Develop a Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure the needs of children are met through urban development and regeneration.

» Ensure all schools have a School Travel Plan supported by access to a School Travel Officer paid for by the local authority.

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4. Close the disability mobility gap (the gap in journeys by disabled and non-disabled people) by making walking and wheeling inclusive

National governments should:

- » Ensure cost is not a barrier to disabled people accessing mobility aids, including wheelchairs, assistance dogs, personal assistants, and support workers.

Local government and the private sector should:

- » Work with disabled people and local disability organisations to understand their needs including conducting accessibility audits whenever local authorities are making improvements to a street, as well as funding schemes that focus on inclusive walking and wheeling.

- » Raise awareness of the needs of people with different access requirements, including invisible disabilities, and address stigma around the use of mobility aids.

- » Develop positive schemes for local shops to address access issues.

- » Develop local community hubs to offer support to individuals who require it when walking and wheeling.

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Introduction

Walking and wheeling is widely recognised as good for our health, the environment, and the economy. It has been argued that although most people see walking in a positive light, as an activity it is often ignored across society, including in the planning of urban infrastructure.¹ For example we make assumptions about the efficiency of our streets based on counting motor vehicles, while not counting people.

Walking and wheeling is vital in getting people to work, meeting family and friends, accessing services like healthcare and education and improving our mental health. Too often, however, our pavements and streets are not inclusive, and many people live too far away from everyday services and amenities to reach them by walking or wheeling.

Barriers to walking and wheeling, in a similar way to other transport modes, can affect many people but are often amplified where disadvantage and marginalisation already exists.

What are we trying to achieve?

This guidance aims to:

- Improve knowledge and understanding of the walking and wheeling needs of different demographic groups more likely to be marginalised in society.
- Help secure sustained political commitment to improve walking and wheeling for everyone.
- Inform long-term planning, design, delivery, and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure in cities and towns that enable people from all backgrounds and abilities to walk and wheel and feel safe and comfortable doing so.

Who is more likely to be marginalised in society?

Many groups can face deep-rooted barriers to their experience of, and interaction with, transport systems and travel. This shapes and sometimes limits individual travel choice or means that people do not feel safe, comfortable, or welcome while travelling.

Many people experience inequity: unfair, avoidable differences arising from poor governance, prejudice, discrimination, or cultural exclusion. This marginalises people and often means health, social and economic outcomes are worse.

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People from certain backgrounds, personal circumstances or identities are more likely to be marginalised, including people from protected characteristic groups and people at risk of or experiencing deprivation. We studied 8 groups: women, people from LGBTQIA+ groups, children, older people, people from ethnic minority groups, people from minority religions, disabled people and people living in or at risk of deprivation.

Research groups

Women Female persons (for the purposes of the protected characteristic of sex under the Equality Act 2010), who were recorded as female at birth, and people who identify as women.

People from LGBTQIA+ groups People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer plus other sexual identities.

Please note where existing research does not apply to all LGBTQIA+ groups we use the appropriate term, for example LGBT.

Children Children under the age of 16.

Older people People aged over 65.

People from ethnic minority groups Ethnic minority groups include Black, Asian, other minority ethnic groups, as well as people who identify as White Gypsy and Traveller, and multi-racial.

People from minority religions People of all minority religions in the UK, aside from Christianity.

Disabled people People who identify as disabled or as having a long-term health condition.

People living in or at risk of deprivation People at risk of deprivation or living in deprivation. This can include people on low incomes, people who live in areas of multiple deprivation and people from socio-economic groups D and E under the Market Research Society's classification (semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations).

We understand that there are limitations to these terms and that not everyone will identify in these ways. We have worked to make this research as inclusive as possible and include a range of experiences, whilst recognising that data gaps exist for certain groups and intersections.

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Methodology

The study consisted of four steps which took place in 2021 and early 2022:

1. A literature review of the evidence base around behaviours, attitudes, barriers and solutions to increasing participation in walking and wheeling amongst the research groups listed above and their wider socio-economic and transport contexts.*
2. Interviews with people from organisations who represented different demographic groups or academic experts, to better understand the travel context, barriers and potential solutions for their members or beneficiaries.
3. An online workshop with the organisations above and the transport sector to look across different groups and identify and develop solutions to improve walking and wheeling for all people.
4. The development of guidance and case studies to help make walking and wheeling more inclusive.

* Please note we have tended to focus on data, for example walking participation from 2019 as 2020 was a very unusual year resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. To account for this a chapter on the impact of the pandemic is included.

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Women

Socio-economic context

Gender inequity damages the physical and mental health of millions of girls and women around the world including across the UK.² The UK has made little or no progress recently on improving gender equity in comparison to other nations³ and suggestions have been made that gender equality may have gone backwards because of the Covid-19.⁴

There are major differences in the UK regarding gender and employment. For example, the full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate is only 45% for women in comparison to 61% for men.⁵ Women remain underrepresented in digital skills, ICT, and other technology sectors,⁶ including the transport sector, where women account for only a fifth of workers.⁷

A significant pay gap remains between men and women. On average women earn 15% less than men.⁸ At the same time women do on average 60% more unpaid care work than men.⁹ Significant differences also exist in power, for example women only made up 34% of MPs in the House of Commons, and 32% of Government Ministers in 2021.¹⁰ In the devolved administrations 48% of the members of the Welsh Senedd, 36% of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament, and 34% of MLAs in the Northern Irish Assembly are women.¹¹ The percentage of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies was 29% in 2020.¹²

Physical activity

Women are less likely to report being active at the recommended levels than men. 42% of women and 34% of men are not active enough for good health.¹³

Transport and travel

Women make up 51% of the UK population,¹⁴ however their journeys are often ignored in transport planning where a focus on commuting exists.

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Journey patterns and daily mobility needs for women and men are often different:

- Men make more commuting trips than women^{15,16}
- Women make more encumbered trips, including trips with children^{17,18,19,20}
- Women make more trips for shopping and escorting children to education^{21,22}
- Men may walk longer distances per trip^{23,24,25,26}
- Women make more multi-stop trips than men^{27,28,29,30,31,32}
- Women are more likely to make multi-stop, multi-mode trips, whereas men are more likely to make radial journeys for commuting purposes³³
- Women make more public transport journeys overall and are more likely to travel by bus while men are more likely to travel by train^{34,35}
- Women are less likely to walk at night^{36,37}
- Women routinely feel less safe on streets than men and 71% of women have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces, increasing to 86% for women aged 18-24³⁸

Walking and wheeling

Women in their 30s had the highest walking rates overall in 2019.^{39,40} In the UK, women tend to make more walking trips in comparison to men. National statistics showed that in England in 2019, women made on average 15% more walking trips a year than men⁴¹ and in Scotland 14% of women commuted by walking compared to 10% of men.⁴² In Wales however women tend to walk less often than men.⁴³

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Contribution

Anna Johnson, ex. Women's Budget Group

“To decarbonise transport and democratise the right to safe mobility, active travel must be inclusive and sustainable.

There are gendered differences in transport usage, for example the division of domestic and caring responsibilities which means women make more frequent, short journeys throughout the day. Because women's journeys are often encumbered (with prams, groceries etc), walking can be more challenging. Perceptions and experiences of safety and accessibility are shaped by identity and influence mobility behaviour. Everyday street harassment impedes safe mobility for women and girls.

Gender and other inequalities in transport stem from the way the sector focuses on 'technical' issues such as engineering and technology over 'social' issues for example gender and inclusion. This prioritises top-down, technology-led solutions and produces male bias in transport systems and a male-dominated industry.

Women's Budget Group recommends gender-responsive participatory planning, budgeting, and the collection of gender-disaggregated data. Active travel routes for care-related and local journeys to key services should be prioritised. It will be key to diversify the transport sector, and support staff through mentoring programmes. Rethinking active travel governance and ownership can increase affordability, accessibility and accountability to the public.”

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People from LGBTQIA+ groups

Socio-economic context

The LGBTQIA+ community is made up of people from various demographic groups.⁴⁴

Around 93.7% of the UK population identifies as heterosexual, whereas 2.7% identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.⁴⁵ Men and younger people (aged 16-24 years old) were more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The estimated UK trans population falls between 200,000 and 500,000.⁴⁶

There is a lack of robust data breaking down different subgroups of LGBTQIA+ people in the UK and a mixed evidence base in relation to disability and LGBTQIA+ people.^{47,48} However, trans people self-reported a higher prevalence of disability than cis-gender LGB people.

Recent evidence has shown that LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience poorer mental and physical health outcomes than heterosexual people.⁴⁹ There is strong evidence suggesting LGBTQ+ people in the UK have higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.^{50,51} Research indicates that poorer health outcomes may be connected to long-term stress associated with an LGBTQ+ identity, including experiences of homo/bi/transphobia, stigmatisation and social isolation.^{52,53}

Physical activity

There is limited evidence on physical activity within LGBTQ+ groups.⁵⁴ One survey in England⁵⁵ found that LGBTQ+ people were less likely than the general population to meet the overall recommended guidelines for physical activity, with 42% of LGBTQ+ people reporting they meet the minimum requirements compared to 59% of the general population.

Transport and travel

There is very limited evidence about LGBTQIA+ groups and transport and travel from the UK. Fears of harassment are reported to influence walking behaviour, with 3 in 10 LGBT people avoiding certain streets because they do not feel safe, rising to 44% among trans people.⁵⁶ When asked what type of physical activity LGBTQ+ people take part in, 68% of respondents indicate they walked for travel and 66% said they walked for recreation in the past 4 weeks.⁵⁷

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Children

Socio-economic context

There were 12.7 million children (under 16) in the UK population in 2019, an 8% increase from 2009.⁵⁸ Nearly half (44%) of children in a single parent family were in poverty before the Covid-19 pandemic, compared to one in four (26%) of those living in other families.⁵⁹

Physical activity

The number of children meeting recommended levels of physical activity⁶⁰ varies across Great Britain as does how this is measured. For example, in 2019 to 2020, 45% of children and young people aged 5-18 years in England met the guidelines.⁶¹ In Scotland in 2019, 69% of children aged 2-15 years met the guidelines⁶² and 51% of children aged 3-17 met the guidelines in Wales (assumed data for 2017).⁶³

In 2019, 47% of boys in comparison to 43% of girls in England met guidelines recommended levels of physical activity.⁶⁴

Physical activity promotes healthy development by improving bone and muscle strength, motor control and healthy weight. It can also increase attention and improve behaviour and attitudes.^{65,66} Having the freedom to walk more creates opportunities for physical activity and children with higher independent mobility are typically more physically active.⁶⁷

Transport and travel

Over the past few decades, studies have noted a reduction in children's ability to move independently around their neighbourhoods. This has coincided with the increase in vehicular traffic.^{68,69,70} Other reasons for the decline in children's independent mobility include less walkable neighbourhoods, parents' safety concerns, busy family schedules, and longer distances from school and leisure activities.⁷¹

Independent mobility has many benefits to children, for example, improving children's cognitive development, such as developing wayfinding abilities⁷² and sociability, building relationships with others beyond their immediate family and developing a sense of community.^{73,74} It allows children to make more decisions for themselves, and in turn learn to handle the responsibilities which go with decision making.⁷⁵

In transport planning, children are often understood to travel to schools and playgrounds exclusively. This overlooks their broader lives and constrains independent mobility.

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Walking and wheeling

National Travel Survey data for England shows a gradual decline in the proportion of primary school aged children walking to school since 2002, alongside an increase in children driven to school. For secondary school aged children, the percentage of trips walked remains constant since 2008.

Figure 1: Primary (Pri) and Secondary (Sec) School travel 2002 to 2019 (National Travel Survey data 2002-2019, table NTS0614)



Contribution

Susannah Walker and Imogen Clark, Co-founders of Make Space for Girls

We campaign to make parks and similar spaces more welcoming to teenage girls. Safety is a critical issue.



Everyone wants to hear good news stories: walking changed my life, made me healthier, connected me to my community and rekindled my love of nature. But walking cannot be for everyone if we don't tackle the daily street violence faced by girls. We must stop thinking CCTV is the answer. We must stop downplaying the sexual harassment that girls suffer daily. And men and boys must take responsibility for their actions. In 2016, nearly 1/3rd of UK young men surveyed had made sexually harassing comments to a woman or girl they didn't know in a public place in the previous month. One third. This must stop.

So, let's be bold: let's put the right of girls to feel safe on the streets at the heart of Walking for Everyone.

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Older people (65+)

Socio-economic context

Older people made up 18% of the UK population in 2018. This is expected to rise to 24% by 2038.⁷⁶

The likelihood of being disabled and/or experiencing multiple chronic and complex health conditions increases with age.⁷⁷ In addition, women outnumber men at older ages. 54% of people aged over 65 are women.⁷⁸

Loneliness and social isolation can also be prevalent amongst older people, especially those that live alone. Within the next 10 years, 2 million people aged 50 and over in England are projected to be lonely if efforts to tackle loneliness are not made.⁷⁹

Physical activity

Physical activity in the UK declines as age increases. In England, for example, 40% of people aged over 75 were categorised as active, in comparison to 70% of 16–34-year-olds.⁸⁰

Transport and travel

Driving remains the most common form of transport for older people in the UK, with 68% of households where someone is aged over 70 having their own car.⁸¹

Many older people also use public transport, partially because of free travel on some services. Despite this, 32% of people in England aged over 65 never use public transport.⁸² This suggests public transport does not meet the needs of many older people.

Older people have seen both their cities and transport change significantly. Some older people feel that travel has become harder in cities as car use and populations have grown.⁸³ Older people are reluctant to travel during the peak times as it gets too busy. Walking is popular for local journeys.⁸⁴

Walking and wheeling

The annual walking figures for England⁸⁵ show women's walking rates peak in ages 30-39 and fall to the lowest levels among people aged 70 and above. Men's walking rates were more consistent and peaked among 0–16-year-olds, again falling as men get older.

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People from ethnic minority groups

Socio-economic context

Approximately 18% of the population of England and Wales belong to ethnic minority groups, including 7.5% from Asian ethnic groups, 3.3% from Black ethnic groups, 2.2% with Mixed ethnicity and 4.4% identifying as White Other.⁸⁶

There remains an ethnicity pay gap between White British employees and employees from ethnic minority groups, although this has reduced in recent years to 2.3% in 2019 according to the Office for National Statistics.⁸⁷ However this reduction hides the significant gaps in income between different ethnic minorities, with Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers earning 16% and 15% less respectively than their White British counterparts.⁸⁸

Physical activity

In England between 2019 and 2020, people of Mixed ethnicity were the most likely out of all ethnic groups to be physically active while people from the Asian ethnic group were less likely than average to be physically active.⁸⁹ In the Black and Asian ethnic groups, men were more likely to be active than women.

Limitations have been identified in previous strategies aiming to promote physical activity among ethnic minority groups, such as a poor understanding of the needs of different groups and poor communication methods.⁹⁰ In addition, concerns over harassment from the police and other institutional racism have been documented in the UK influencing physical activity and how people spend time outdoors.^{91,92}

Transport and travel

White people tend to travel more overall, travel more for leisure and travel using private transport more frequently compared to other ethnic groups.

The 2019 National Travel Survey provides a broad insight into the different travel patterns across ethnic groups in England from 2015 to 2019. Those identifying as White travel significantly further than people identifying as multi-racial, Asian and Black.⁹³ Out of all ethnic groups, the percentage of trips made for leisure was highest among White people at 27% of all journeys, and lowest for the Asian, Black and Other ethnic groups at 17%.

White people made the highest proportion of journeys by car at 63%.⁹⁴ All other groups made considerably fewer journeys by car, with the next closest group (Asian) at 52%. Out of all ethnic groups, Black people made the fewest journeys by car at 40% and were most likely to journey by local bus at 19%.

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Walking and wheeling

As a proportion of all journeys, non-White ethnicities tend to make more walking journeys (29-35%) than White people (25%).⁹⁵ Multi-racial groups walked the most from 2015 to 2019 at 269 miles walked on average per year, followed by 'Other' at 217 miles and those identifying as White at 202 miles.⁹⁶

The purpose of walking also varies between ethnic groups. In London in 2015, the reported rates of walking to get to work, school or college are higher in ethnic minority groups at 50% of people reporting they walk at least 5 days a week.⁹⁷ This is not further differentiated by ethnic minority group but compares to only 31% for White Londoners.

People who follow minority religions

Socio-economic context

59.5% of the total population of the UK identifies as belonging to Christianity.^{98,99} The second largest group is 'No religion' at 25.7%. 4.4% identify as belonging to Islam, 1.3% to Hinduism, 0.7% to Sikhism, with Judaism, Buddhism, and 'other religions' forming 0.4% of the population each.¹⁰⁰ Although these proportions vary throughout different UK nations, the dominant presence of Christianity is consistent.

Greater religious diversity exists in urban centres. For example, in Scotland, 5%, 7% and 4% of the population of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen respectively identify with non-Christian religions, compared with the country average of 2%.¹⁰¹

Physical activity

Across multiple religions, there is a recognition that physical activity is important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In the case of Islam, religious leaders and observers identify a resonance between the teachings of Islam and leading an active lifestyle.^{102,103,104,105,106} This promotion of activity is prefaced with the caveat that it does not violate dress codes or modesty teachings. Because of this expectation, walking is one form of activity that is specifically sanctioned by religious teachings and provides valuable exercise.^{107,108} Walking to the place of worship may be viewed more positively than driving in some Muslim communities.¹⁰⁹

Research also shows there are some differences in the types of sport and physical activity that people of different faiths do. For some faith groups, there's also a larger difference between levels of physical activity between men and women. This may be influenced by certain cultural expectations around what they should wear or how they behave.¹¹⁰

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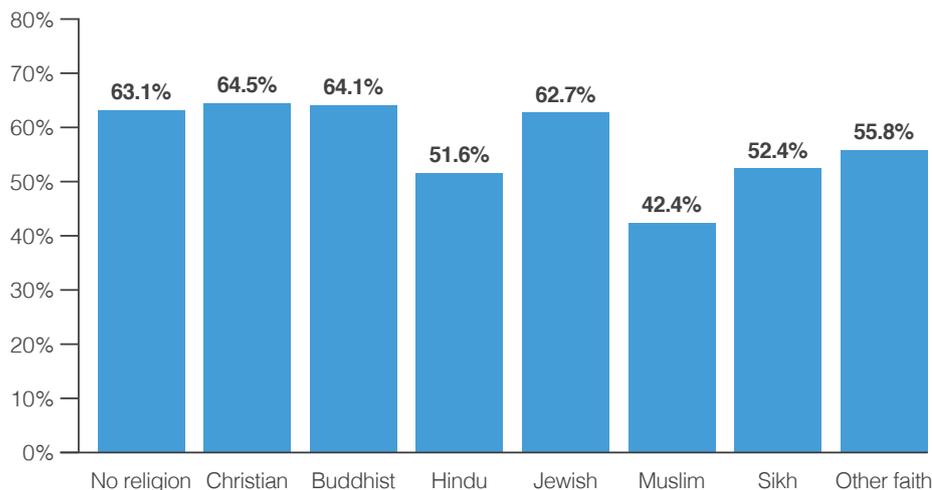
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Transport and travel

Recorded walking is highest in Christian and non-religious groups, and lowest among Muslim groups. In England in November 2019-20 over 60% of Christian, Buddhist, Jewish and non-religious people said they walked at least twice in the last 28 days compared. This compares with 42.2% reported by Muslims, and 52% by Hindus and Sikhs.¹¹¹

Figure 2: Walking participation for difference religions.¹¹² Participation: at least twice in the last 28 days.



Contribution

Mohammed Ismail, Uffo Athletic

At Uffo Athletic, we empower and support the Somali and wider Muslim communities in London to lead healthier and happier lives through walking, athletic activities, and traditional/cultural games.

Wintertime can be a major barrier for our walkers. There are perceived safety issues for female participants in the evening and a general belief that cold weather will increase risk of getting ill. There is also the issue of resources to purchase appropriate winter clothing and footwear.

Somali women often work in the care services so find it inconvenient to attend our morning or evening led walks. Feedback from our participants supports our plans to lead walks from March to September and offer an alternative indoor exercise during wintertime.

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Disabled people

Socio-economic context

Around 1 in 5 of the UK population (over 14 million people) report having a disability that limits their daily activities.¹¹³ Disability is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as:

“a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities”.¹¹⁴

This could include chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and cancer, physical disabilities, such as mobility and dexterity, mental health such as depression and anxiety, learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia and sensory impairments, such as hearing and vision.

Females are more likely to report a disability than males for all age groups.¹¹⁵ Disability becomes more prevalent with age: 8% of children are disabled, compared to 19% of working age adults and 46% of adults over State Pension age.¹¹⁶ Mobility-related disabilities are the most common, affecting 7 million people followed by stamina, breathing or fatigue by 5.1 million and mental health by 4.1 million.¹¹⁷

Physical activity

Physical inactivity is more common for disabled people or people with a long-term health condition (41%) than those without (20%) and the more co-occurring disabilities an individual has, the less active they tend to be. 49% of those with three or more co-occurring disabilities are inactive.¹¹⁸

Physical activity is particularly important for disabled people because it ‘not only... promote[s] health and prevent[s] disease but also reduce[s] the number of secondary conditions that can result from an initial disability’.¹¹⁹ Secondary conditions could include chronic muscle pain or contractions, falls or other injuries, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, pressure ulcers, feeling isolated or depressed, obesity or sleeping poorly.¹²⁰

It has also been reported that some disabled people in receipt of benefit payments have concerns about being seen as ‘too healthy’. There is a fear this could impact negatively on the Government’s assessment of support, often known as the ‘activity trap’. It is helpful to have physical activity guidelines for disabled people¹²¹ and in 2022 guidelines for disabled children and disabled young people have been put in place.¹²²

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Transport and travel

A significant review of disabled people and travel took place in England in 2017.¹²³ It found:

- Disabled people travel less and for different purposes in comparison to non-disabled people.
- The nature and type of an individual's disability links to travel behaviour, for example, sight loss relates to an individual driving less and using public transport more.
- It is essential not to consider disabled people as homogenous – a wide variety of conditions, and travel behaviour and experiences exist.

Barriers to transport and the wider built environment can restrict choice for disabled people when considering travel options. For example, steps for people with reduced mobility or a lack of accessible information for people who are partially sighted or deaf may mean that a journey is made inaccessible.

Walking and wheeling

The same review found disabled people may be less likely to consider replacing short car journeys with walking:¹²⁴

“People experiencing difficulties with personal care (e.g. getting dressed; taking a bath or shower) and those with physical coordination problems (e.g. balance) appear to be most likely never to use public transport or to walk or cycle for short journeys. They are followed by people with mobility issues, loss of manual dexterity and incontinence.”

This underlines the importance of creating inclusive built environments, because incorporating physical activity into daily life through active travel is an effective way of helping to maintain good physical and mental health.

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Contribution

Katie, Transport for All

Walking has always been my favourite way to get around (I use the term walking in a broad sense. I use a wheelchair and have never set foot on the ground!). The freedom, joy, spontaneity and independence it affords is something I don't experience often as a wheelchair user while travelling. Other modes of transport require meticulous planning (eg booking assistance or enquiring about ramps) whereas walking allows me to open the door and go.

It is not without challenges. The pavements are often cluttered with bollards, bins, A-boards and lampposts. Sometimes e-scooters and dockless bikes are strewn on the ground, or a car is parked over the pavement. Other times the paving tiles are too uneven or bumpy to wheel over, or the pavement is simply too narrow to pass.

Every time I encounter a barrier I must re-route and find another way. Simple 5 minute journeys quickly become half hour mazes.

Transforming the pedestrian environment to be accessible to disabled people would have a dramatic impact, enabling so many to enjoy positive impacts to mental and physical health, feeling a part of one's community, and perhaps stumbling across a new favourite spot. That's what Transport for All campaigns hard to achieve.

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People living in or at risk of deprivation

Socio-economic context

Income inequality in the UK has increased almost continuously since an historic low in the late 1970s.¹²⁵ Evidence shows that people living in our most deprived areas face the worse health inequalities in relation to health access, experiences and outcomes.¹²⁶ ‘Multiple deprivation’ is a relative measure used to identify areas with high levels of deprivation based upon seven factors: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and the living environment.¹²⁷

Deprivation tends to be dispersed across the country, and most places have pockets of high levels of deprivation. Living in a deprived area is likely to be associated with poverty. In 2019 the Social Metrics Commission estimated that 14.3 million people in the UK were in poverty, of which 8.3 million were working-age adults, 4.6 million were children and 1.3 million were pension age adults.¹²⁸ In-work poverty has increased in recent years, with more than half of people in poverty living in a working family in 2020.¹²⁹

People from single parent families, some ethnic minorities¹³⁰ and disabled people¹³¹ are more likely to be living in deprivation or in poverty.

Physical activity

Inequalities exist in physical activity between people living in deprived areas and the rest of the country. Those in routine/semi-routine jobs and those who are long-term unemployed or have never worked (NS-SEC 6-8*) are the least likely to be active (52%).¹³²

Transport and travel

Transport and travel are vital to reduce deprivation as they provide access to employment, education and other services and amenities.

Research demonstrates mobility and accessibility inequalities are highly correlated with social disadvantage. A Government Foresight report on inequalities in mobility and access in the UK transport system¹³³ found:

- Car owners and main drivers in households are the least mobility constrained across all social groups.
- Lowest income households have higher levels of non-car ownership, 40% have no car access – female heads of house, children, young and older people, people from ethnic minority groups and disabled people are concentrated in this group.
- There are considerable affordability issues with car ownership for many low-income households.

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The same report also found low-income households and other marginalised groups, such as children, older people, and disabled people, are also more exposed to health-related externalities of the transport system:

- People living in disadvantaged areas tend to live in more hazardous environments, with greater proximity to high volumes of fast-moving traffic and high levels of on-street parking and, as such, they have higher levels of exposure to road traffic risk.
- Young people (11–15 years) from disadvantaged areas are more likely to experience traffic collisions than their counterparts living in other urban areas.
- Traffic-related air pollution is associated with worse pregnancy outcomes and the risk of death and exacerbation of asthma and chronic chest illnesses in children.

Recent research by Living Streets found people from poorer communities are more likely to be killed or injured on Britain's roads with those from ethnic minority groups (excluding white minorities) more at risk.¹³⁴

Walking and wheeling

Walking is an affordable and potentially equitable form of transport, and yet many people at risk of deprivation find themselves forced to walk in adverse social and environmental circumstances or seek more costly alternatives, such as public transport whose provision is often poor.

In England a clear decrease in leisure walking participation exists from people of higher to lower socio-economic groups. This trend is less pronounced in walking for utility. There are many reasons why walking for leisure is lowest among people living in or at risk of deprivation which may include a lack of access to good quality green space¹³⁵ and reduced time for leisure walking.

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The impact of Covid-19

The pandemic affected us all but many of the impacts were felt differently by different groups. Typically, people from already marginalised groups experienced the greatest negative outcomes on their everyday lives including travel.

Women

Women's job losses have surpassed men's¹³⁶ as they are more likely to work part-time and in sectors that have been severely impacted. The economic position of women is likely to have a significant impact on travel choices.¹³⁷

During school closures, mothers were one-and-a-half times more likely to do the majority of childcare in heterosexual couples.¹³⁸ Furthermore, women were more likely to take on the emotional labour of checking in on family, friends, or neighbours.¹³⁹ Research has shown that women's anxiety has increased more than men's and their happiness has decreased more during the pandemic.^{140,141}

Sport England's research into physical activity during the pandemic found that men's activity levels were more severely impacted than women's activity.¹⁴² They partially attributed this to women already having higher walking levels (walking being a source of physical activity that remained available during the pandemic).¹⁴³

LGBTQIA+ groups

A large-scale review on the experiences of LGBT+ people in Britain during the pandemic found that trans and younger LGBT+ people were more likely to self-harm or attempt or think about suicide.¹⁴⁴ This is attributed to increased feelings of loneliness and isolation, compounded by difficulties accessing mental health support during lockdowns.

Children

The annual Good Childhood Report published by the Children's Society shows that there has been a significant decline in children and young people's happiness with life as a whole and with friends.¹⁴⁵ Worry and anxiety about Covid-19 has been compounded by the effect of successive lockdowns leading to the temporary closure of schools, parks and play spaces, limitation of non-essential trips and social distancing. Social distancing (and self-isolation because of Covid-19) reduced the choice and autonomy children and young people had over their lives; it has prevented them from spending time with their friends and participating in their usual activities.¹⁴⁶

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Older people (65+)

Walking declined amongst many people because of Governmental shielding instructions during the pandemic. Of the people classified as clinically extremely vulnerable by the Government in 2020, 20% were aged 60-69, 13% were aged 70-74 and 30% were aged 75+. ¹⁴⁷ Sport England found some groups may have found it harder to stay active during the first three lockdowns, including people aged 55 and above. ¹⁴⁸

Ethnic minority groups

Black and Asian ethnic groups have experienced the highest death rates from Covid-19. ¹⁴⁹ Research suggests a range of possible, often overlapping, reasons for this heightened morbidity and mortality including co-occurring disabilities, pre-existing health inequalities, socioeconomic background, occupation and diet. ¹⁵⁰

Vaccination rates for ethnic minority groups are lower than the rest of the UK, and this extends to some religious communities. ^{151,152} Vaccine hesitancy may be explained by reduced confidence in healthcare systems following negative experiences of racism, discrimination or cultural insensitivity. ¹⁵³

Minority religious groups

Lack of trust in governance and wider society has been created in part by lack of observance of any non-Christian religious festivals, therefore impacting members of minority religions. ¹⁵⁴ There have been religious objections to vaccines in general, with some citing concerns over vaccines containing products forbidden to members of certain religions. ¹⁵⁵

The Covid-19 pandemic has restricted religious gatherings across the UK. For many, prayer shifted towards online services attended virtually at home as recommended by the government and religious leaders. ^{156,157,158} Overall, there is very little data regarding how different religious groups were and are impacted by Covid-19.

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Disabled people

The Activity Alliance annual disability and activity survey¹⁵⁹ showed how lockdown restrictions created new barriers that non-disabled people are less likely to experience.

Table 3: Barriers to physical activity created by Covid-19¹⁶⁰

Barrier	Disabled people	Non-disabled people
The need to self-isolate at home	38%	13%
A fear of contracting the virus	35%	23%
Impact on health	31%	13%
Concerns about social distancing	29%	20%

The pandemic has had a significant effect on disabled people's ability to engage in physical activity. Sport England's Active Lives Adult Survey Coronavirus Report reveals how the negative impact of inactivity increases with number of conditions reported. There was an increase of 11.2% in the number of adults with complex needs (three or more conditions) inactive in May 2020 compared to May 2019.

People living in or at risk of deprivation

The UK Office for National Statistics reported that '55.1% of people with income over £20,000 are able to work from home compared with 19.1% of people with income less than £20,000'. In July 2020 an opinion piece from the UK on potential health impacts of travel changes postulated that fewer people on low incomes can work from home, and would have fewer travel choices, so some may walk and cycle more.

The Health Foundation's Covid-19 Marmot Review showed how more deprived areas have suffered disproportionately from Covid-19, concluding that: 'Building Back Fairer requires a sizeable reduction in private car use and greater active travel and use of public transport'.

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How to make walking and wheeling more inclusive

Focus on what we have in common

While differences exist between different demographic groups, many of the barriers to improve walking and wheeling are shared.

Therefore, rather than focusing on the differences between people, this guidance attempts instead to address common issues and solutions that would benefit many people across different marginalised groups.

We have grouped recommendations and actions into three themes:

1. Improving governance, planning and decision making
2. Creating better places for everyone to walk and wheel
3. Supporting everyone to walk and wheel

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1 Improving governance, planning and decision making

Recommendation 1:

Develop inclusive walking and wheeling plans

While infrastructure for walking and wheeling may be more developed and extensive than for cycling, it is often far from accessible or inclusive. In addition, many people do not live close enough to everyday services and amenities to walk or wheel.

Marginalised groups, including the ones studied here, are more likely to be affected by barriers or challenges in relation to walking or wheeling. These can make journeys frustrating, uncomfortable, unsafe or inaccessible. This is compounded by the fact that many of these groups are more dependent on walking and wheeling for their everyday journeys as car ownership is lower.

Currently in the UK, only Scotland has a separate national walking plan. When walking and cycling are combined, for example in the UK Government's Gear Change vision for England, walking and wheeling can be overshadowed.

We believe all UK nations should have a specific plan for walking and wheeling to complement existing plans, or that existing plans should be made more even to ensure equal focus on actions for walking and wheeling as those for cycling. Walking and wheeling is very different to cycling and therefore they need different infrastructure.

It is imperative that these plans focus on making walking and wheeling inclusive, improving both participation and people's experiences and comfort when walking or wheeling.

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Embedding walking and wheeling in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and the operations of Active Travel England

The launch of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in 2017 represented a significant step forward to improve walking and cycling in England. The second CWIS is due imminently and there is therefore an opportunity to ensure it focuses more on walking and wheeling and inclusion more broadly.

Alongside CWIS2, Active Travel England (ATE) the Department for Transport's new Executive Agency is currently being formed. There is a huge opportunity to better embed inclusive walking and wheeling through its strategy, delivery plans, including the funding of local schemes and inspectorate role to ensure national guidance is applied.

Actions

National Inclusive Walking and Wheeling plans should:

- » Include governance and practical delivery actions reflecting many of the recommendations made in this document.
- » Introduce measurable national targets relating to the diversity of people walking and wheeling, alongside their experience while doing so, for example their level of comfort and safety. These should be reported publicly each year.
- » Be cross-governmental and join up action from transport, planning and community, education and health departments.
- » Include a programme of support and guidance for local authorities to increase knowledge and practice that ensures greater focus on inclusive walking and wheeling.
- » Seek to ensure the economic, social, health and environmental impacts of walking and wheeling are better accounted for in transport and planning appraisal.

Local transport authorities should:

- » Ensure they have a network plan for walking and wheeling, for example in England a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and that this plan includes an Equality Impact Assessment.
- » Prioritise improvement schemes for areas where the provision of local services and public transport is poorer, especially where this coincides with multiple deprivation.

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Transport for London's Walking Action Plan

The Walking Action Plan by Transport for London sets out how they intend to tackle barriers to walking, with the aim of making it the easiest and most attractive way of making short trips in London. The Walking Action Plan recognises the need for partnership, working with the boroughs, Business Improvement Districts, businesses, the police, schools, community and residents' groups and stakeholder organisations. It includes embedding the [Healthy Streets Approach](#) which has a focus on placing inclusion into at the heart of decision-making.



Scotland's Walking Strategy – Let's get Scotland walking

The National Walking Strategy developed in 2014 outlines our vision of a Scotland where everyone benefits from walking. The strategy focuses on the health benefits of walking and has three strategic aims around creating a walking culture, improving the walking environment, and enabling safe, independent mobility for everyone.



Photo: John Linton / Sustrans

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Recommendation 2:

Dedicate long-term funding for making walking and wheeling inclusive, accessible and desirable

While funding for walking and cycling has increased overall and some nations have committed multi-year funding for the first time, it is currently unclear how much is spent on walking and wheeling. It is unclear if funding specifically supports marginalised groups, and schemes are not typically monitored to understand if, or how, they tackle inequality.

Funding for School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods is welcomed and helps encourage behaviour change but neither programme will address walking and wheeling infrastructure. Continuing to expand schemes such as Mini-Hollands in England and Places for Everyone in Scotland is vital to reaching as many areas and communities as possible.

Improving walking and wheeling is often about making lots of relatively small changes to improve what's already in place and make it more inclusive, in effect: 'We don't need much but we need it everywhere'. This is very different to a more traditional transport scheme that tends to be a single large intervention, for example building a new road or cycle track.

Where walking and wheeling infrastructure is improved, this often happens as a by-product of a different scheme, for example a new bus lane or cycling scheme. This is helpful but can result in walking and wheeling infrastructure not being seen as a priority, especially away from city centres or local high streets.

Maintaining existing pavements and crossings requires revenue funding, however this is in short supply.

It is essential that local governments understand the improvements which need to be made for walking and wheeling, and that national governments support local transport authorities to focus more on walking and wheeling through guidance and funding.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Understand better the current funding split between cycling and walking and wheeling.
- » Encourage a pipeline of walking and wheeling plans by local authorities. The current review of LCWIP guidance in England, for example, should put more emphasis on neighbourhood approaches making existing infrastructure more inclusive.
- » Explore the need to create a specific revenue fund for improving and maintaining walking and wheeling infrastructure. This should focus beyond city centres and larger high streets to ensure residential areas, smaller towns, suburban and rural areas are not omitted.
- » Ensure funding for local authorities is tied to demonstrating how schemes tackle inequality, including Equality Impact Assessments alongside evaluation requirements to monitor impact for specific groups.
- » Review funding appraisal guidance for walking and wheeling to recognise the co-benefits for health, equality, and the environment. In England, ensure that Active Travel England prioritises approval of schemes with inclusion embedded by design.
- » Pilot gender budgeting in relation to transport funding in cities and towns across the UK using an intersectional approach. Gender budgeting is an approach that recognises the different situation and needs of women and ensures investment reduces gender inequality.

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Greater Manchester - Beelines

A consistent problem of improving walking is that we need lots of little low-cost improvements, as opposed to a brand-new shiny route or big scheme. Beelines was the approach taken in Greater Manchester to develop a region-wide walking and cycling network.

Beelines was successful in its approach. It packaged up the myriad of small improvements required to improve walking turning them into an ambitious and large-scale programme that has the potential to be transformative. This included improving crossing points, reducing traffic in neighbourhoods and better wayfinding to enable people to walk and wheel more. The programme was successful in generating significant funding for walking and cycling.



Photo: TfGM

Vienna, Austria - Gender budgeting

In January 2005, the Viennese authorities took the decision to implement gender budgeting, to enable gender mainstreaming. The goal is to help create a gender-sensitive society where solidarity, opportunities and responsibilities are shared by women and men in equal measure in all aspects of public life, including urban spaces, transportation and language.

Gender budgeting is a way of analysing the budget for its effect on gender equality. The aim is to promote gender sensitive budgets. These are budgets which recognise the different situation and needs of women and men and aim to promote gender equality. Gender budgeting is now an integral part of the City of Vienna's budget preparation process and has been a legal obligation since 2009.



Photo: Leyre / Unsplash

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Women’s Budget Group - Improving Equality Impact Assessments

The Women’s Budget Group’s (WBG) analysis of the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) within local government budget processes, underlines that EqIAs can be a useful measure of how public bodies are meeting their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the 2010 Equality Act.



However, the WBG research found most local authorities are not routinely undertaking equality impact assessment to evaluate the policy impacts of budgeting processes. Also, there is a lack of conformity in terms of how EqIAs of budgetary decisions are made, which has implications for achieving equality objectives.

Nevertheless, WBG points out that, when done well, EqIAs have the potential to bring equality to the forefront of the debate and can enable action and approaches for identifying and tackling multiple sources of inequalities. To achieve this, WBG highlights that cultural change is required: ensuring that local authorities understand the value of EqIAs and implement these in a meaningful and robust way.

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Recommendation 3:

Take steps to ensure policy decisions are based on diverse voices, especially those of groups often marginalised

All transport strategies, planning and investment, that include walking and wheeling should be designed around the diverse needs of citizens, and prioritise marginalised groups. This can only happen when people making decisions are representative of people living in the UK and when they listen and engage people with lived experience in decision making.

Women make up only 20% of the UK transport sector¹⁶¹ and other groups are also under-represented, especially in senior decision-making roles. When people who govern, design, and deliver transport, walking and wheeling do not represent the wider population, unconscious and conscious bias can mean decisions, policies and schemes are not designed around the needs of all groups.

Public engagement and consultation often lack diverse views, especially from marginalised groups. Public consultations tend to occur at the end of the decision-making process through online consultations or meetings. This relies on people being proactive in responding. Time availability, IT literacy, accessibility, and language are also common barriers to responding to a consultation. Furthermore, children are completely excluded from most consultations.

The current model of engagement is typically passive and exploitative. Views of marginalised groups are ignored, and decisions are not representative of the wider community. When the views of marginalised people are sought, they are often not paid for their time and input.

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Actions

National and local governments should:

- » Actively engage communities in policymaking and the design process ensuring marginalised communities are listened to. This should include recruiting paid Lived-Experience Advisory Panels, composed of people from protected characteristic groups, to review policy and programmes, providing feedback and advice, and assist to make walking and wheeling inclusive. Lived-Experience Advisory Panels should have direct contact with key decision makers, for example Walking and Cycling Commissioners.
- » Commit to long-term plans to diversify the transport and planning sectors. For example, offer mentoring or apprenticeship programmes to under-represented groups and ensure recruitment and development processes are truly inclusive.
- » Review the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments to understand how they are being used and how they can be improved as legal tools to ensure equality, including considering the roles of Active Travel England and Transport Scotland as inspectorates.
- » Develop training for local transport authorities to address inclusion in relation to walking and wheeling, including Equality Impact Assessments.
- » Work in paid partnership with trusted community organisations who are often best placed to ensure engagement is more open, inclusive, and meaningful.
- » Better balance what government thinks is the best option with the needs of the community and provide more flexible funding to best match the needs of the community.

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Transport for All – Guidance and training for Equality Impact Assessments

Transport for All is the only disabled-led group working to increase access to transport and streets across the UK. They work to ensure that the lived experience of disabled people is applied to the design, implementation, and evaluation of services.

Transport for All's Pave the Way report (2021) found that disabled people face a range of barriers to accessing their local streets. Building on this research, they are working with Local Authorities across the UK to change approaches to street design. This work includes:

- Disability Equality Training that increases participants' understanding of the Social Model of Disability, how to use this to remove barriers, and the importance of pro-active engagement and consultation with disabled people;
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) guidance and training, supporting local authorities to adopt a model of "EqIAs in action" - living documents created early in the design process, fully informed by lived experience;
- Facilitating meaningful engagement with disabled residents and visitors, capturing lived experience, and seeking solutions to barriers.



Photo: Transport for All

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Croydon Living Streets Group – Our Voice, Our Streets

Our streets and public spaces are important for health and wellbeing and were especially so during the lockdowns. Sadly, instead of places where young people feel they belong, teenagers often feel unsafe or unwelcome.



Photo: Stanley Arts

Croydon Living Streets Group led a project to engage with teenage girls and non-binary young people in Croydon to campaign for changes in our public spaces. The aim was to ensure that all young people, particularly those from marginalised groups, were able to claim their democratic rights to our cities and to explore why young women and teenage girls are far less likely to use local park facilities.

The group explored South Norwood on foot, practising photographic portraiture skills and using the local environment to inspire poetry on places of safety and those of menace. These observations were then compiled into a manifesto for change, which was presented to the Croydon Council in the autumn. The manifesto includes a clear set of actions Croydon Council could take as part of a pledge to be a young person friendly town.

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Recommendation 4:

Capture better walking and wheeling data from different groups, and invest more in research

A lack of data exists on walking and wheeling across the UK. There is even less disaggregated or intersectional data available, i.e., data that has been broken down by demographic groups, for example gender, religion, or socio-economic status.

If government is to understand the needs of different groups and the impact of policies and programmes on them, it is essential that they prioritise the collection of disaggregated data on a regular basis.

There are also gaps in the evidence base, for example very little evidence exists on the experience and perspectives of the LGBTQIA+ community in relation to walking and wheeling aside from personal safety and hate crime. Gaps also exist in research focusing on intersections across groups and how barriers can be compounded.

Actions

National and local governments should:

- » Collect disaggregated data on walking and wheeling at a national level for both trips and stages (i.e. the walking part of longer journeys involving other modes of transport) of trips. This should be linked to national objectives to ensure walking and wheeling are more inclusive.
- » Develop guidance for local transport authorities to prioritise schemes which reduce inequality. The mapping of neighbourhood deprivation and transport access alongside street accessibility audits should be widely used to assist with this.
- » Develop guidance for local transport authorities to monitor and evaluate the impact of schemes on different groups including participation, safety and comfort.
- » Ensure local transport authorities collect disaggregated data to evaluate schemes and programmes.
- » Commission research where necessary to overcome gaps in data around walking and wheeling for marginalised communities, for example the LGBTQIA+ community, religious groups, and disabled people, alongside intersections across different groups. This should address barriers and solutions as well as inform the design of the built environment where the needs of different groups can sometimes differ.

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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly Bike Life) will launch in May 2022. It will feature data on walking for the first time across 18 UK and Irish urban areas, including cities and city regions. It is designed to support greater political commitment, investment and delivery of walking and wheeling and to do so in a way that reflects inclusion.



The Index will feature data for different demographic groups in relation to walking and wheeling including behaviour, safety, comfort, attitudes, and solutions. The Index will use modelling to analyse the number of walking and wheeling journeys and the benefits for the economy, health, and the environment from these journeys.

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Accessibility audits – City of London Street Accessibility Tool

The City of London Street Accessibility Tool (CoLSAT) enables designers and planners to quickly and easily identify how street features impact on the different needs of disabled people. By recognising that accessibility requirements of disabled people can sometimes be conflicting, the tool supports decision-makers to consider differing needs across groups and identify optimal trade-offs to ensure no one is excluded from using our streets. CoLSAT features both accessibility ratings and the lived experience of disabled people to strengthen understanding and application of inclusive street design.

Developed as part of the City of London's Transport Strategy, the tool has been made freely available to improve accessibility of streets anywhere. It highlights that a journey is only as accessible as its weakest section and provides the basis for engagement and discussion to maximise the benefits for all.



Photo: © C.Totman

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Recommendation 5:

Embed proximity to the things people need into spatial planning by adopting a ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ approach

National planning policy can ensure services and amenities are no more than a 20-minute return walk or wheel from where people live. This equates to less than 800m for most people, although distances should be even shorter to make the 20-minute neighbourhood fully inclusive. Some services like green space and bus stops should ideally be within a 5 minute or approximately 400m walk or wheel.^{162,163}

Research shows too many new developments are being built in the wrong locations or in ways that lead to car dependency.¹⁶⁴ Urban sprawl often means residential areas are far-removed from everyday amenities and services, including employment. This increases and ‘locks-in’ car-dependency, and makes walking and wheeling, and often public transport impossible.^{165,166,167} When we design places around cars, driving will always be the most attractive, convenient, and easiest way to travel. For many without access to a private vehicle, this can lead to isolation and transport poverty.

Not having friends and family living within walking or wheeling distance also reduces walking through not having places to walk to, and walking companions.¹⁶⁸ Children do not travel as far as adults and therefore need local amenities within their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood sprawl requires parents to drive children around as other transport modes are unavailable or unviable, and this burden falls unevenly on women.

Services and amenities being too far away can also affect many disabled people who may be limited in how far they can walk and wheel or how long they can stay out before needing to charge the batteries of essential equipment. Evidence also suggests residents from poorer areas can find it more challenging to travel to reach services that are unavailable locally.¹⁶⁹

There is a strong correlation between green space provision, deprivation, and ethnicity in the UK,¹⁷⁰ for example green space is typically located further away from where Hindu and Sikh groups live in Leicester.¹⁷¹

Many people are time-poor, for example women and single parents, and people from religious groups may have less time available to walk due to the requirements of attending religious gatherings.¹⁷²

A recent YouGov survey¹⁷³ demonstrated the importance of time availability in the access of greenspace by different groups. They found that manual workers were two-thirds less likely to visit a park after

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lockdown restrictions were enforced than those who worked in managerial occupations and were more likely to be working from home. Women were also less likely to visit a park than men due to spending more time on childcare during lockdown.

Actions

National governments should:

- » Embed the concept and practice of 20-minute neighbourhoods into national planning policies and guidance.
- » Set policy and standard processes for ensuring walkability in national planning guidance. This should deliver new housing that is close to services and facilities, at the appropriate density to make services and facilities viable, alongside high-quality walking and wheeling networks that promote comfort alongside connectivity.
- » Provide economic support to help local planning authorities develop housing in locations proven to maximise proximity and walkability. This should include funding to unlock brownfield sites which are proven to allow for greater densities, which facilitates the local growth of shops, amenities, and public transport by consumer demand.
- » Review all major new developments which require road schemes to be built outside of the development for connectivity. If major road schemes are required for a new development, it is a good sign that the development is in the wrong place.

Local planning authorities should:

- » Embed the concept and practice of 20-minute neighbourhoods into local planning policies and guidance.
- » Agree a spatial vision and set policy through Supplementary Planning Documents that sets accessibility standards to ensure new development is not built in areas likely to have poor walkability, that require new roads, or create car dependency. Urban regeneration plans should support greater accessibility.
- » Existing developments should be retrofitted to include high quality walking and wheeling networks that promote comfort alongside connectivity.
- » Actively involve developers and housing associations as well as the local community to ensure a 20-minute neighbourhood approach is better supported and understood to ensure better and more walkable neighbourhoods can be created.

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Edinburgh – 20-minute neighbourhood plan

20-minute neighbourhoods are neighbourhoods where people can find most of their daily and weekly needs within a short walk of their home, with readily available public transport to reach the rest.

To deliver net zero transport by 2030, Edinburgh has begun work on the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhood hubs across the city, with the aim of providing a network of places that enable people to live well locally.

By reconfiguring services around existing communities, these 20-minute neighbourhoods encourage people to walk, wheel or cycle rather than use cars, enabling them to live, work and play without generating unnecessary carbon emissions. The project will also work with communities to develop proposals and seek funding for a pilot to explore the delivery of one of the 20-minute neighbourhoods to become a net zero community.



Photo: John Linton

Active Travel England – Statutory role in planning decisions

The Department for Transport's new Executive Agency, Active Travel England, will be a statutory consultee on major planning applications to ensure that the largest new developments properly cater for people walking, wheeling and cycling.

This gives Active Travel England the opportunity to turn down schemes where walking and wheeling has not been given adequate attention or does not follow national design guidance.



Photo: Jon Bewley

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Recommendation 6:

Invest significantly in public transport across the UK, especially buses

Public transport use is intrinsically linked to walking and wheeling. The first and last part of most public transport journeys are walked or wheeled. Public transport allows for longer journeys by bus or rail that are sustainable. However, when public transport services are inadequate, too expensive, or poorly located the result is many people choosing to drive or being left isolated.

Travel by public transport is highly gendered. In 2017 across England, a third more women than men travelled by bus and a third more men than women travelled by rail.¹⁷⁴ In 2011 the percentage of journeys to work by bus for Black people (24%) was almost twice as much as any other ethnic minority group (12-14%) and four times as much as for White people (6%).¹⁷⁵ Car access is far less amongst women, people from ethnic minorities and people living in deprived areas. This means dependency on public transport is often greater for these groups.

Older people are also often reliant on public transport, for example through their free bus pass, as are children¹⁷⁶ as they cannot drive.

However, our public transport system is often insufficient for many people's needs. It can be expensive, infrequent and involve waiting late at night. Fears around walking or wheeling and public transport are often connected as these travel modes are frequently undertaken within the same journey.

Disabled people are more reliant on public transport because of lower car access; however accessibility issues persist. On average, overall journey times by public transport can be 80% higher for disabled people compared to non-disabled people.¹⁷⁷ Disabled people are more likely to need to devise adaptive strategies to cope with physical and organisational barriers, for example arranging for assistance on journeys involving public transport.¹⁷⁸

People from more deprived households are more likely to live in areas with poor transport connections.¹⁷⁹ People in low paid and insecure jobs often need to travel longer distances for work, at unusual times, and to places not well served by public transport.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Ensure access to and from public transport is fully inclusive for everyone, especially disabled people, and those with young children and buggies.
- » Set minimum service levels to ensure high frequency (including outside of regular office hours), safe and comfortable services, especially in more rural locations and poorly served areas.
- » Provide national free bus use for people on low incomes or not in work, and all children and young adults up to the age of 22.

Local transport authorities should:

- » Consider introducing Workplace Parking Levies to help fund improvements to public transport.
- » Introduce smart ticketing to allow seamless integration across different operators.
- » Consider and address barriers in the ‘first’ and ‘last’ mile of journeys, typically the ‘walking or wheeling’ stage as part of a longer journey by public transport or car.

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[Nottingham – Workplace Parking Levy](#)

Nottingham City Council introduced the UK's first Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) to tackle forecast congestion growth by placing a modest charge on workplace parking to incentivise employers to manage and reduce their workplace parking provision. Income raised by the WPL is ring fenced for major transport infrastructure initiatives that have delivered step change improvements.



Photo: Nottingham City Council

The WPL has unlocked over £600m of inward investment that has delivered step change improvement through the extension of a tram line into a tram network, redeveloped Nottingham Railway Station into a 21st Century transport hub and supported the city's popular Link bus network, thus offering high quality, affordable public transport options. Before Covid-19 the tram was carrying 19m passengers per annum and the Linkbus network 8m.

The WPL revenue stream has enabled Nottingham City Council to match-fund and take advantage of prudential borrowing – for example, WPL has unlocked £200m for one of the largest electric bus fleets in Europe and the world's largest fleet of Biogas double decker buses. The WPL is attracting worldwide interest and Leicester, Hounslow and Oxford are all progressing WPL schemes.

[Scotland – Free bus travel for under 22s](#)

From February 2022, all young people and children aged 5-21 years living in Scotland are eligible for free bus travel. The Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme is being delivered by the Scottish Government in partnership with the Improvement Service, National Entitlement Card Programme Office and Young Scot. Anyone under 22 can apply for a card which grants free travel on any bus in any part of Scotland on registered bus services.



Photo: John Linton

This enables children and young people, particularly those from marginalised communities or low-income families, to freely use buses to access education, leisure and employment opportunities. To ensure inclusivity of the scheme, applications can be made online or offline with various forms of 'proof' accepted, including 'out of date' passports and asylum seeker or refugee documentation.

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Recommendation 1:

Develop national design guidance for walking and wheeling infrastructure

Many marginalised groups, especially disabled people, face challenges when walking and wheeling which others take for granted. For example, the type and condition of the pavement surface, its width, the angle of walkways, a lack of dropped kerbs, appropriately coloured tactile paving; and the provision of a ‘spinning cone’ at crossing points.^{180,181}

Blind and partially sighted people find low objects or low-contrast street furniture a barrier. Neuro-divergent people and those with cognitive conditions can find colour, noise, street furniture and/or crowds distressing. Deaf or hard of hearing people face communication barriers if travel information is only provided orally.

Women are more likely to take encumbered trips or trips with children, including the use of pushchairs.¹⁸² This means barriers, such as bollards, raised kerbs, uneven surfaces, and/or narrow paths can also disproportionately affect women.¹⁸³

Poor lighting is common across many neighbourhoods and environments, and sometimes this is deliberate, for example to protect bats.¹⁸⁴ This can make places feel unsafe for a range groups and older people may require brighter lighting due to natural deterioration of eyesight.¹⁸⁵

The frequency and suitability of crossings can also be important.¹⁸⁶ The lack of signalised crossings is a particular barrier for children compared to adults due to their size and perception skills, as well as for Blind and partially sighted people who cannot depend on eye contact to use zebra crossings. Signalised crossings often do not give priority to people walking, wheeling, or cycling, or even long enough for people to cross. Research shows that only 11% of older people walk as fast or faster than DfT’s standard pedestrian crossing speed (1.22m/s). Older women and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been found to walk even slower¹⁸⁷ as may disabled people, especially many wheelchair and other mobility aid users.

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To create inclusive streets and neighbourhoods for everyone to walk and wheel, we need national design guidance. This should go hand in hand with national funding to ensure that best practice is followed where funding is allocated.

In England the Government has recently updated its Inclusive Mobility Guide¹⁸⁸ and is in the process of reviewing Manual for Streets.¹⁸⁹ The Healthy Streets Framework¹⁹⁰ is also a helpful framework to better embed public health in transport, public realm, and planning. No specific guidance exists, however, for infrastructure design in relation to walking and wheeling and ensuring this is inclusive for everybody.

Barriers or conflicts still exist in many infrastructure designs, for example new bus-stop bypasses and continuous footways, as well as existing infrastructure, such as crossing design, mini-roundabouts, pedestrian guard-railing, access barriers and chicanes. We also need to pay greater attention to how street design can improve personal safety, accessibility, and comfort, and to increase consistency in design so people are more familiar with the street environment and understand who has priority.

In 2020 the Government published LTN 1/20 which has been very successful in improving design practice for cycling in England, as has Cycling by Design in Scotland. It is important to ensure future design guidance for walking and wheeling is followed by designers and engineers by aligning it to national funding, and through inspections of both local transport authorities and developers.

Actions

National governments should:

- » Develop specific walking and wheeling infrastructure design guidance to ensure walking and wheeling is fully inclusive, including pavements, crossing points, pavement amenities, and wayfinding. This guidance should address inclusion, road safety and personal safety in walking and wheeling design guidance and should be developed in partnership with people with lived experience.
- » Link guidance to national funding for walking and wheeling schemes and funding should be withheld if schemes do not demonstrate how they meet government guidelines. For example, in England, guidance developed by Active Travel England (ATE) should link to Active Travel England's funding and inspectorate role.
- » Undertake regular reviews of walking and wheeling design guidance including how effectively it is implemented by local transport authorities. Reviews should include the views of people with lived experience across all groups.

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Transport for London's Planning for Walking – Tools to support the development of public realm design briefs in London

Transport for London's (TfL) Planning for Walking toolkit contains good practice guidance for planners and designers, encompassing all aspects of the public realm. The toolkit recommends a combination of data-driven analysis and best practice urban design principles throughout the design process, to create a high-quality walking environment. Inclusion is one of the key design principles, and specific guidance is provided to improve the pedestrian environment for all protected characteristic groups covered by the Equality Act of 2010.

The toolkit details design choices to improve visual and tactile legibility, design consistency, clear and comfortable spaces, suitably placed street furniture, and the provision of regular resting points. It also recommends Equality Impact Assessments be carried out on all projects. In accordance with the Mayor of London's Healthy Street's initiative the aim is to create comfortable, safe and inclusive places that help to make walking and wheeling more attractive, enjoyable options for both leisure and transport.



Photo: TfL

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Recommendation 2:

Take steps to improve road safety, air quality and reduce physical severance by roads

Many marginalised groups are more likely to be involved in a road collision or suffer from air pollution.

Evidence shows that more deprived areas typically have more traffic.¹⁹¹ This is despite resident car ownership being lower and the need to walk being higher.¹⁹² Higher traffic levels go hand in hand with larger roads, air pollution, increased community severance, and a higher risk of being seriously injured in a collision for people walking and wheeling, including children. Many people from ethnic minority groups live in deprived areas^{193,194} and air pollution has a particularly damaging impact on ethnic minority groups and those on low incomes.¹⁹⁵

In the UK, the Marmot Review¹⁹⁶ showed the dramatically higher death rates among children walking or wheeling from lower socio-economic groups. Children's visual limitations in assessing speed and distance may be a key factor contributing to such incidents.^{197,198} Studies suggest children may not be able to detect vehicles approaching at speeds greater than of 20 mph. Sustrans in 2019 reported that children on foot or cycle are more than three times as likely to be involved in a traffic collision in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland than in the 20% least deprived areas.¹⁹⁹

Sustrans' Glasgow-based research found that many women felt reluctant to walk around the city because of busy and chaotic roads.²⁰⁰ This discourse around traffic safety and children has contributed to many mothers and parents choosing to drive rather than use active modes.^{201,202}

Older people are more likely to fall and have greater consequences from a collision.²⁰³ This barrier is compounded when older people also have a disability. In Northern Ireland people aged over 65 cited traffic going too fast as their main reason for being dissatisfied with walking.²⁰⁴

Often community severance exists through road layout design, for example a busy A-road or urban motorway that cuts through a community.²⁰⁵ Danger from high volumes of traffic may make accessing even nearby destinations challenging²⁰⁶ and reduce community cohesion.

Many groups, especially disabled people and people who live in suburban or rural areas are can be more dependent on cars. This is often driven by how we have planned and designed the built environment, and the reverse is true in London where disabled people use cars less than non-disabled people both as a driver and as a passenger.²⁰⁷ We need to ensure their needs are considered whilst working to provide attractive alternatives and reduce unnecessary car trips.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Make 20mph the default speed limit in built-up areas across the UK and reduce the speed limit in rural areas on single carriageway roads. A review of studies suggests the risk of pedestrian fatality is approximately 1.5% at 20mph when hit by a vehicle in comparison to 8% at 30mph.²⁰⁸
- » Commit to World Health Organization recommended levels for air pollution and roll out Clean Air Zones or Low Emission Zones accordingly across urban areas.
- » Fund schemes to reduce unnecessary motor vehicle use in areas which have higher risk of collisions and poor safety, overcoming severance by amending road design and increasing safe crossing points.
- » Introduce road pricing across the UK, taking steps to ensure road pricing is implemented equitably. Reallocate savings and additional income to improving sustainable modes, including walking and wheeling.
- » Commit to reducing unnecessary journeys by car following the leadership of Scotland to reduce distance travelled by car by 20% by 2032.

Local transport authorities should:

- » Introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to reduce through-traffic on local roads and take steps to improve road safety on main roads, including the introduction of continuous crossings.
- » Reduce conflict between people walking or wheeling and those cycling or scootering by reducing existing shared space on pavements and ensuring physically protected space is provided for cycling on the carriageway.
- » Create more pavements along rural and suburban roads where none currently exist to ensure connectivity.

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Wales - Making 20 mph the default speed limit in built-up areas

In July 2019, the Welsh Government set up the Welsh 20mph Task Force Group which published a report, in July 2020, recommending a speed limit of 20mph on urban roads in Wales.

In July 2021, the Welsh Government started the first phase of introducing the 20mph default limit in 8 communities across Wales. This was followed, in autumn 2021, by a 12-week public consultation run by the Welsh Government on proposals to introduce the 20mph default speed limit on restricted roads in Wales, that is, roads where streetlights are placed no more than 200 yards apart – usually located in residential and built-up areas with high pedestrian activity.

If Wales legislates to implement this change in 2023, it will be the first country in the world to do so. The Welsh Government's ambitions for a sustainable transport system, including the roll out of the 20mph speed limit reduction, are also supported by budget commitments.



New York – Creating a low traffic neighbourhood

An initiative in New York's Meatpacking district has developed a strategic initiative to implement a neighbourhood-wide Pedestrian Orientated District, which responds to the additional public space demands created by Covid-19 whilst creating outcomes designed to support everyone, including the LGBTQIA+ community historic to the area.



Photo: James Franciso

They plan to create flexible streets, using Enhanced Planter Barricades to block street entrances during the day, and allow vehicle traffic overnight. The introduction of these barriers, as well as increased greenery, seating, public art and a wider footpath, have created a more inclusive neighbourhood that signals a shift towards prioritising pedestrians and promoting diversity.

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Recommendation 3: Ensure pavement space is reserved and maintained for people walking and wheeling

The integrity of walking and wheeling infrastructure must be protected by ensuring pavement space is not taken over by other activities. Obstructions may put people at risk by forcing them onto the carriageway. The expectation that a trip is highly likely to involve obstructions can be enough to prevent someone leaving their house.²⁰⁹

The encroachment of pavement space by for example: parked vehicles, cycles, e-scooters and charging points causes obstructions and can damage footway surfaces. This especially affects those with young children, older people, Blind and partially sighted people, and people with mobility access requirements. Recent polling by Living Streets indicates that 87% of parents have had to walk into the road because of pavement parking, and that 80% would be more likely to walk their child to school if cars were not parked on the pavement.²¹⁰ Forthcoming research from Sustrans found 72% of disabled people would find fewer cars parked on the pavement useful to walk or wheel more.²¹¹

Vehicles parked on the pavement, causing an obstruction and damaging footway surfaces is an urgent problem and discriminates against people walking or wheeling, especially for those with young children, older people and people with visual or mobility access requirements. Scotland has led the way with the introduction of legislation in 2019 for a nationwide prohibition on pavement parking, and the Welsh Government also plans to regulate pavement parking.

It is legal in permitted areas to cycle or use a e-scooter from an official Governmental trial in pavement space. Furthermore, some people cycle or scooter on sections of pavements because it is unsafe to do so in the road. People cycling and riding scooters on the pavement can cause conflict with people walking and wheeling because they can be hard to hear and move more quickly.

Other activities also encroach onto pavements, such as eating and drinking outside which has increased dramatically since the pandemic. Many of these changes were undertaken quickly without proper consultation decreasing space and accessibility of pavements – this particularly affects disabled people, people with prams and older people. Advertising boards, wheeled bins, parked cycles and scooters can also be problematic and need to be better managed.

The maintenance of pavements should be given greater priority to ensure accessibility, including mending paving, cutting back overgrown foliage, sweeping up leaves, and the provision of accessible routes during roadworks.

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In the UK, local authorities are legally required to grit highways in icy conditions. While, technically, pavements are part of the highway it is not typical practice to de-ice pavements in many areas. Concerns about the risk of slips and falls during icy conditions can stop people from leaving their home.

Standing is difficult and painful for some people, particularly those with arthritis, rheumatism and back problems. The walking environment also needs places for people to stop and rest at frequent intervals, including seating, shelter, and toilets. The lack of these facilities affects many disabled people, older people as well as pregnant and breastfeeding people.^{212,213,214} Even when public toilets are available, they may not be fully accessible,²¹⁵ open or feel safe.

Finally, protecting heritage features should never exclude people from being able to use an environment, for example the use of cobble stones.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Prohibit pavement parking across the UK.
- » Develop standards where all cycle and e-scooter parking, and electric vehicle charging points are accessible but located on the carriageway. This should be supported by Government backed innovation.

Local authorities should:

- » Install cycle and e-scooter parking, and electric vehicle charging points on the carriageway.
- » Develop clear guidance for the management of pavement space including advertising boards, outdoor dining, and e-scooters and cycle parking that always ensures full accessibility.
- » Provide regular welcoming and comfortable places to stop, rest and shelter and increase provision of clean, safe, and accessible public toilets. Seating should be provided at intervals of no more than 50 metres.
- » Repurpose car parking space and unused areas into safe protected spaces that people can use, for example pavement build-outs, cycle and e-scooter parking, parklets and outdoor dining areas.
- » Improve maintenance of pavements and crossing points, especially outside of town centres.
- » Always maintain direct accessibility for people walking and wheeling during roadworks on the carriageway and pavement.
- » Prioritise and set clear standards for de-icing, cutting back plant growth, and leaf sweeping of pavements following practice in European cities like Stockholm.

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Transport for London's Temporary Traffic Management handbook – Roadworks

As part of Transport for London's Walking Action Plan, the Temporary Traffic Management Handbook was released in January 2019 to help improve planned and designed roadworks, which can too often create barriers for people walking or cycling. The handbook provides guidance for traffic management designers and work promoters on how to make streets safer for people who walk, cycle and ride motorbikes, especially children, disabled people and older people.



Photo: TfL

The guidance recognises that temporary deviations from a more familiar landscape can present a barrier for some, and it aims to make streets easier to use, more attractive, inclusive, intuitive, consistent, and safe – to encourage and enable everyone to use our streets.

The Parklet Programme – Hackney, East London

After a successful and popular pop-up parklet and persistent campaigning for several years by the Hackney Living Streets Group, in 2018 Hackney Council launched a trial parklet programme, which eventually saw seven Parklets installed across the Borough.



Photo: Hackney Council

With only approximately 33% of households owning a car, parklets repurpose parking spaces on the street to provide communal space for everyone. Featuring seating, planting and tables for people to use, these outdoor spaces provide resting places for visitors, and green space for those who would otherwise not have access.

Additionally, guidance issued by Hackney Council encourages applicants to consider how disabled people will be able to use the parklets, and to think about how the design could enable other sustainable methods of transport such as cycle parking.

Following on from the success of this trial, Hackney Council has now launched a new application process for community or business parklets and the borough is now actively encouraging applications for this scheme.

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Recommendation 4: Prioritise design measures to improve personal safety

Transport professionals and urban planners often overlook the issue of personal safety, including in relation to walking and wheeling. This disproportionately affects women, people from the LGBTQIA+ community, people from ethnic minority groups, disabled people, people living in deprived areas, children, and people at the intersections of these groups.

We need to develop a thorough understanding of what impacts and influences the safety and perceptions of safety of different people. This includes challenging our own assumptions, biases, and approaches, and working in partnership to influence wider societal change.

71% of women have experienced harassment in public spaces, increasing to 86% for women aged 18-24.²¹⁶ The tragic recent murders of Fawziyah Javed, Geetika Goyal, Julia James, Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard and many others brought into focus the dangers women risk when walking, instigating renewed calls to reduce violence against women and girls on the streets. YouGov surveys showed an increase in women who feel unsafe walking alone at night from 46% in 2018 to 63% in 2021.²¹⁷

The physical characteristics of places can make women and other groups feel more at risk, for example, dark, isolated, remote, unpopulated spots, or spots with obstructed visibility or evidence of other anti-social behaviour. Many women and other groups will consequently try to avoid spaces with those characteristics and change their routes²¹⁸ or drive instead.

Many walking routes are along former railway paths or in quiet areas that feel unsafe and suffer from crime, especially during hours of darkness. Many of these routes do not offer safety to women and girls, particularly in the evenings, but even during the day - they may not have frequent exit points, be poorly lit, unkempt and a site for loitering and drug use.

3 in 10 LGBT people avoid certain streets because they don't feel safe and a third will avoid holding their partner's hand walking down the street.²¹⁹ Four in five LGBTQ+ victims of street crime do not report it to the police, mainly because they fear it would not be taken seriously.²²⁰ The use of symbols and messaging can sometimes help in increasing feelings of personal safety, for example rainbow symbols or LGBTQIA+ flags.

Disabled people also report greater experience of harassment.²²¹ People with a learning disability face heightened risks of stigma and discrimination. This can lead to uncertainty and fears about leaving the house and increased loneliness as a result.

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Within the UK, studies of people from ethnic minority groups cited safety as a concern when walking, including walking in unsafe neighbourhoods.^{222,223} Concerns with safety increases at night and when there is low footfall.²²⁴ Londoners from ethnic minority groups are much more likely to say they feel unsafe walking after dark, and only 52% say they feel safe, in comparison with 67% for non-Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups.²²⁵ Knife crime is identified as an area where there is a significant disparity between ethnic groups, with 35% of people identifying as Black, Asian or from other ethnic minority groups citing it as a barrier to using public transport more often, compared to 25% from those identifying as White.

People living in deprivation are more likely to fear crime²²⁶ and children from deprived neighbourhoods encounter greater safety risks on the way to school.²²⁷ Parental concerns about neighbourhood crime, bullying and stranger danger are most likely to influence and restrict children's independent mobility.^{228,229}

Safety fears can lead to parents driving children, especially daughters and gender diverse teenagers, to school and other destinations. Across the UK, 1 in 8 girls said that their first experience of unwanted sexual attention was in a public space when they were aged 12 or younger.²³⁰

Intersectionality is very important here. People identifying with more than one marginalised identity are likely to experience more acute prejudice and harassment which impacts negatively on their sense of safety when walking and wheeling, for example, sexism, racism, ableism, and homo, bi or transphobia.

Increasing street level activity through design that encourages more people to be around generally helps to increase perceptions of safety. However, in some situations, for example in areas with people who've been drinking, this can lead to some people avoiding certain areas or times, and even completely avoiding walking or wheeling.

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Actions

National and local governments should:

- » Place the needs of marginalised groups at the heart of approaches to improve personal safety through co-design.
- » Ensure that spatial planning, street and building design seeks to increase footfall and street-level activity fostering a sense of belonging, ownership, and custodianship.
- » Establish that any proposed schemes using national funding should include a safety audit and address personal safety, for example following the Women's Budget Group recommendation for Gender Safety Audits.²³¹
- » Ensure all routes are well-lit and reduce dark and blind spots, and better maintain streets and paths, including cutting back vegetation.
- » Work in partnership with the police to provide safe spaces to enable people to report incidents involving anti-social behaviour and harassment, including free advice and legal support where required.
- » Provide training to transport and planning professionals to help reduce harassment in public places, including bystander training. This should include what harassment can look like for different groups and how to intervene in an appropriate way, for example avoiding victim-blaming and building trust with the LGBTQIA+, Black and migrant communities.

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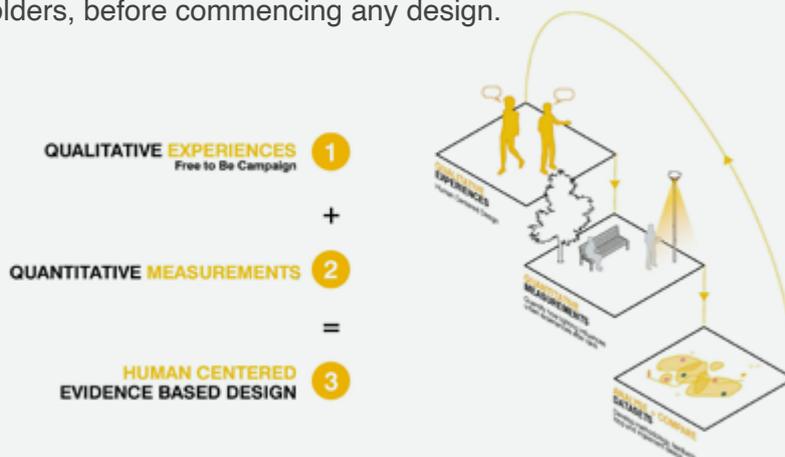
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Case studies

Melbourne - Out of sight, out of mind

In partnership with Monash University's XYX Lab and PLAN International, Arup conducted research to better understand how lighting affects perceptions of safety in Melbourne for women and girls. They found that the brightness, context, and quality of lighting effects the perception of safety, and in subsequently developed the Night-time Vulnerability Assessment (NVA) and other community engagement tools to inform safer design for night-time. They used these tools in the City of Darebin, where they were able to analyse the existing condition and engage with key stakeholders, before commencing any design.



Get Home Safe toolkit – Improving safety through design

In April 2021, three female transport planners at Atkins developed the Get Home Safe toolkit in response to tragic events in London highlighting women's lack of safety in public spaces.

The accompanying report centres women's experiences of walking in public spaces alone, featuring the example of Zara and the 23 key decisions she must make on her way home. It also underlines the importance of designing safety into the first and last 'mile' of journeys where women often make adjustments to feel (more) safe.



Photo: Jon Bewley

The toolkit looks beyond conventional 'safe by design' elements to consider a holistic range of factors to enable women to feel safe, focusing on 'look and feel' factors often overlooked. Guidance is provided on landscape, human presence, digital, infrastructure, community/social and 'TLC' to produce 'cared for' streetscapes with safety and comfort built-in through design.

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Photo:
Dave Warren/Picture Team



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Recommendation 1:

Raise the profile of walking and wheeling, and equip people with the information and tools they need

Walking is often taken for granted. But for many people walking and wheeling poses significant challenges and our walking environment and walking culture is neither inclusive nor diverse. We need to raise the profile of walking and wheeling and ensure everyone is equipped with the relevant support to ensure they feel welcome and comfortable on a trip to the local shops or a ramble in the countryside.

Recreational walking and wheeling can be perceived as exclusive or that you need specialist equipment, which may put some groups off participating. Standard free mapping apps do not cover all footpaths and getting information about such routes often involves payment. In addition to the cost barrier, informal knowledge about local recreational walking and wheeling routes, for example, the access point to a footpath, can be difficult for diverse groups to obtain.

Urban environments can also be difficult for certain groups to access and enjoy, for example many girls feel they have less of a right to occupy public space such as multi-use games areas (MUGAs) in parks. We need to do more to address this and ensure no one feels uncomfortable walking, wheeling, or spending time in public space. Cultural norms and stereotypes need to be addressed, including gendered expectations that suggest boys are more physically active than girls and negative assumptions or stigma around disability.

In addition, public awareness should be increased of different cultural attitudes. One example is in Islam, dogs are traditionally seen as dirty or impure. The presence of others walking their dogs may some Muslims feel uncomfortable, particularly if off the lead.²³²

A national conversation is needed to raise the profile of walking and wheeling and its benefits for accessibility, community participation, physical activity, and mental health. Any campaigns or actions in this area need to focus on societal changes that would make walking and wheeling more attractive for everyone. This includes addressing institutional

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barriers, for example racial stereotyping by the police or the make-up of boards who govern our national parks and areas of beauty.

Signposting and wayfinding are important in addressing barriers to walking and wheeling. Maps and planning tools are too often not provided in accessible formats, leaving some marginalised groups without access to wayfinding information.

Enhanced information about wayfinding can also help to challenge incorrect perceptions about how long it takes to reach a destination. Walking is sometimes seen as taking longer when this may not be the case in urban areas. Research in London showed that over 70% of respondents agreed that 'knowing that walking was as quick as the bus/tube for short journeys' would encourage them to walk more.²³³ Digital apps can support more traditional wayfinding while also suggesting and guiding people on walking and wheeling tours of their local area.

Actions

National governments, in collaboration with the private and third sector should:

- » Bring together public and third sector organisations, alongside the media, to work together to raise the profile and celebrate the diversity of people walking and wheeling. Diverse audiences should be considered to ensure that messaging is representative, accessible, and culturally relevant.
- » Show how walking and wheeling can be easy, available for everyone, safe, and fun. Emphasise the social benefits of walking and wheeling, whilst recognising the positive effects on health.
- » Use real-life stories and case studies to challenge stereotypes and better reflect the multiple identities of people who walk and wheel, helping more people relate to walking and wheeling.
- » Develop dedicated digital and non-digital route planning tools and maps and ensure clear signposting for all routes including indicators of journey time (to allow comparison of walking and wheeling routes with other travel modes).
- » Ensure route planning tools address the needs of specific groups, for example offering audio assistance, reducing language barriers and providing advance information of step-free routes.
- » Develop educational self-guided walking trails aimed at diverse groups, for example learning about Black History in UK cities or finding green space and wildlife in urban areas as trialled by Go Jauntly.

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France - Car advertisement caveat encouraging consumers to walk, cycle or take public transport wherever possible

New French regulation (March 2022) requires car advertisements to include environmental messages. Viewers are advised to consider walking, cycling, public transport or ride sharing where possible, through messages such as: “For short journeys, walk or cycle”, “Consider carpooling” and “On a day-to-day basis, take public transport”. Car advertisements must also include the hashtag #SeDéplacerMoinsPolluer (which roughly translates to ‘Move Pollute Less’) to encourage people to create less pollution through their transport choices.



Photo: John Linton

The regulation covers radio, television, theatre, digital and print advertisements, and companies failing to comply will face fines. This initiative has the potential to provide a more balanced influence of car adverts on people’s mode choices, through highlighting the preferred mode hierarchy, in favour of walking and cycling for short trips.

Lazarillo – Providing audio navigation

Lazarillo is a smartphone application for Blind and partially sighted people used by over 230,000 users worldwide. Its aim is to help guide people through the built environment with real-time voice messages. It features navigation and geo-location services, which are accessible for people who normally would not be able to use them, with help of voice messages pointing users towards local facilities, public transport, reference points, and road junctions, as they travel through cities.



Photo: Jon Bewley

It can also help navigate to a specific destination and allows users to save their preferred destinations and access them without relying on online connection when on the move. Lazarillo can be used in healthcare facilities, culture centres, shopping centres, and can be adopted by the individual institutions; but it can also be adopted more widely, as part of ‘smart city’ by local authorities, making sure Blind and partially sighted people are included.

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Go Jauntly – Creating educational self-guided walking trails

Go Jauntly is a free smartphone app which aims to help people connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors by recommending greener walks and encouraging people to walk more. The route planning function helps users find the greenest route from A to B (as well as the fastest route) and also has a feature which creates circular green walks from your doorstep. The app also recommends walks and strolls based on your location for those with no end point in mind. As part of the walk, users are encouraged to take “Nature Notes” within the app, to record elements they found interesting; those – alongside any walks users take, either pre-determined by the app or created by users themselves – can then be shared with other users of the application.

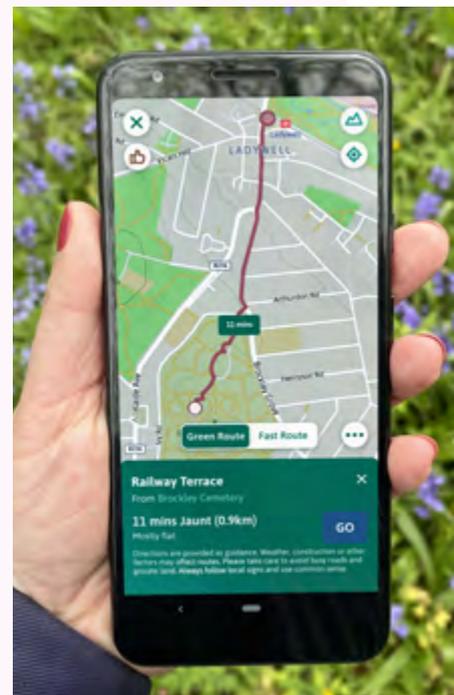


Photo: Go Jauntly

Go Jauntly developed a partnership with Bristol City Council in 2021, and as part of the agreement, a number of walks – not only nature-based – have been developed. This included a Black History walk, street art walks, and others, showing the potential of the app to not only encourage everyone – including under-represented groups – to walk, but also to educate people.

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Recommendation 2:

Invest in walking and wheeling programmes to improve confidence and ability, including social prescribing

Loneliness is a significant issue for many older people. More than 2 million people over 75 in England live alone, and more than 1 million say they have gone over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour, or family member.²³⁴ Not having a reason to go out can reduce the desire to walk or wheel – for example not having a partner, nearby family and friends or a dog. The social aspect of walking is a key motivator for both people in mid-life and older people to start and continue walking.²³⁵

Recreational walking and wheeling, especially in the countryside, can have strong associations with identity which can alienate people from marginalised groups. Furthermore, some cultural attitudes in ethnic minority communities²³⁶ can reduce walking and wheeling. Some Asian groups encourage their children to focus on education to the detriment of engaging in physical activity.²³⁷ Other ethnic minority groups, especially first- and second-generation immigrants, may not see walking and physical activity as socially acceptable²³⁸ or necessary.^{239,240,241,242,243}

In contrast, social walking and wheeling programmes can be particularly attractive to individuals from ethnic minority groups, especially women who may feel more comfortable as part of a group. This can overcome information and language barriers that may exist.²⁴⁴ Language barriers can also impact on communication about healthcare information, including the benefits of walking, leading to some older people and first-generation people from ethnic minority groups having poor health literacy.

Religious festivals that involve fasting such as Ramadan limit individuals' ability to be active. Ramadan is a month long, with this prolonged absence from activity presenting the additional barrier of re-incorporating activity into regular routine.²⁴⁵ Gender segregation for both men and women, often associated with Islam,²⁴⁶ can pose a challenge for accessing public spaces, such as streets, and therefore may be a barrier to walking.^{247,248}

Social walking and wheeling programmes that provide targeted support for people come in many forms and can help to improve health and wellbeing while also building confidence. Programmes should be based upon identified need and be highly targeted to specific populations to ensure everyone feels welcome and comfortable participating.

The recent practice of social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or a local charity. For example, signposting people who are less active to walking groups.

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Actions

National governments and local transport authorities should:

- » Pilot and scale up social prescribing programmes through the NHS to address physical and mental health issues through walking and wheeling groups and services.
- » Support walking and wheeling community groups and real-life champions to reach a more diverse audience, for example organising social walking and wheeling programmes for specific religious groups and ethnic minority communities to overcome cultural barriers.
- » Target older people early, for example in mid-life – 50-70 years of age, to address issues and encourage walking or wheeling activity that can be sustained into later life following the approach being developed by the Centre for Ageing Better.
- » Develop mass participation social walking and wheeling programmes for example Park Walk (a walking version of Parkrun) and Couch to Walking 5k (based on the existing model for Couch to 5k for running).

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Uffo Athletic – Walking groups for Somali and Muslim Communities

There are a number of groups in the UK who aim to promote walking to new audiences and local communities. Uffo Athletic is a group that encourages access to physical activities, including walking, running and athletic activities in the Somali and Muslim communities, providing “an environment that is open, empathetic, understanding and culturally appropriate”.

The group uses the understanding of the communities’ lived experiences and barriers to provide a programme of activities including walking, that meets the needs of local communities. The programme allows participants to experience the numerous physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits of physical exercise, including increased energy levels and confidence, whilst decreasing social isolation.

Belfast – Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Forth Meadow Community Greenway is a new walking and cycling route which traverses several interface areas in north and west Belfast that were badly affected by the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland. Communities who identify as Protestant or Catholic continue to live uneasily beside each other, in the worst cases there remain high walls, known as ‘peace-lines’. The idea for the new greenway is to provide a shared space for both ‘sides’ of the community to use for both leisure and travel.

It is a £5.1 million EU PEACE IV-funded project to connect existing open spaces in north and west Belfast along a 12km route leading to the new Transport Hub in the city centre. Sustrans role in the project is to recruit 12 Walk and 12 Cycle leaders. The newly trained leaders will then encourage people across the communities to promote and share the new greenway.



Photo: Rachael Ludlow-Williams

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Ramblers Wellbeing Walks (formerly Walking for Health)

Social prescribing allows health and care practitioners to refer people to local non-clinical services and can take various forms, including referring people to local Ramblers Wellbeing Walks groups.

Wellbeing Walks is a free programme of regular, community-based short accessible group walks across England (between 10 and 90 minutes) with varying levels of difficulty, suitable for people with different levels of mobility or fitness, recovering from illness, and new to physical activity.

The walks are risk assessed and are frequently tailored to local health care needs. As reported by participants and social prescribing link workers (i.e., employees in non-clinical roles that, among others, connect people to community groups), the walks enable people to take advantage of the significant physical and mental health benefits of walking, whilst facilitating social interaction and helping reduce feelings of loneliness.



Photo: © Arup

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Recommendation 3:

Reverse the decline in childhood independent mobility by prioritising children's needs in public spaces

Children represent the future generations of all other groups reviewed by this research. Active and independent mobility can contribute to physical activity, social and motor development, and other health-related outcomes.²⁴⁹ Yet children are almost always overlooked in how we design and plan neighbourhoods and streets. Evidence shows this is reducing independent mobility with negative health and developmental consequences, while also potentially making many escorted journeys for parents and guardians more challenging.

Over the past few decades, studies have noted a reduction in children's ability to move independently and freely around their neighbourhoods in the UK – for example, to play, to travel to school or to visit local shops.^{250,251,252} One English study estimated that 40% of ten to eleven-year-olds born between 1932 and 1941 travelled to school alone, compared to 9% between 1990 and 1991.²⁵³

A recent international review of childhood independent mobility found that England was far behind the group of top performing countries which included Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Japan and Denmark.²⁵⁴ In Finland at age 7, most Finnish children can already travel to places within walking distance alone; by age 8 a majority can cross main roads, travel home from school and go out after dark alone. In contrast, in England only at the age of 11 do we see most children allowed to go to places within walking distance alone and less than 40% of children aged 14 are allowed out after dark.

Reductions in childhood independent mobility have coincided with the increase in vehicular traffic which is worse in areas of multiple deprivation. Sustrans reported children walking or cycling were more than three times as likely to be involved in a traffic collision in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland than in the 20% least deprived areas.²⁵⁵

Issues also exist around permission for children to use public space. For example, children playing outside can be seen as 'anti-social behaviour' and many shops request that no school children should enter unaccompanied. Our streets are our biggest source of public space. They should meet the needs of children as well as adults. Streets that enable independent mobility for children support healthy child development.

Parents are often 'gatekeepers' of children's behaviour. Social and cultural norms about caring for children and good parenting influence adult restrictions on children's independent mobility.²⁵⁶ For instance, close supervision of children is recognised as good parenting, whereas letting

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children roam freely signals poor parenting. Studies have shown that parents will reduce the activities of their own daughters to accommodate the expectations of other parents who were more restrictive in their approach.²⁵⁷ Seeing examples of other parents supporting their children to travel actively on the street can positively influence parents' own choices.

Schools can also influence both children's and parents' behaviours, for example by establishing a School Street or encouraging walking. Travelling actively to school helps individuals improve their health and wellbeing, however we also need to ensure the journey to school is improved.

Currently, UK national governments are overlooking children's needs in walking and wheeling and transport policy more broadly. For example, the new Welsh Transport Strategy barely mentions children despite the Future Generations Act. Gear Change, the UK Government's vision and plan for walking and cycling does not mention children outside of School Streets and cycling, and the Scottish National Travel Strategy delivery plan references the reduction of child poverty but doesn't reference children's mobility needs and transport. These documents include policy and actions that will help children, but they are not explicit or prioritised.

Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is an air pollutant that is a concern for people's health when levels in air are high. Recent research showed over 7,800 schools, equivalent to a third of the schools in England were in areas with annual mean PM_{2.5} above previous World Health Organization recommended limits.²⁵⁸

Schools in high PM_{2.5} areas were more likely to be ethnically diverse and have disadvantaged pupils attending.²⁵⁹ Air pollution may discourage children or parents from letting their children walk to school compounding the problems with more driving.

Local authorities should be using public health data to prioritise transport interventions around schools with the greatest need for health and wellbeing support, rather than those with the resource to campaign effectively for safer school streets as can currently be the case. This is often the case with School Streets programmes that rely on schools being in residential areas, as opposed to main roads, and have a willing contingent of parent volunteers in a position to help.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Explicitly incorporate children's independent mobility into all transport policy, including the reduction and restriction of motor vehicles in built-up areas and improvements to the built environment that focus on the needs of children including and beyond the school journey.
- » Create a national fund to drive action to improve children's independent mobility.
- » Put the needs of children at the heart of spatial planning and urban development creating streets, public spaces, and 20-minute neighbourhoods that explicitly work for children.
- » Develop guidance to encourage local authorities to better include the needs and views of children, especially children from marginalised backgrounds in transport policy, including walking and wheeling.
- » Develop a new funding scheme to specifically reduce or restrict traffic around schools in areas with high traffic movement and associated poor road safety and air quality.
- » Review the School Admissions Code and School Transport Guidance to investigate the inclusion of active travel in catchment area and transportation decision-making.
- » Ensure families have the right to send their children to the same school.
- » Review and adopt Daylight Saving Time throughout the year to allow children to better utilise daylight hours and reduce road casualties.

Local transport authorities should:

- » Develop approaches that enable children to be active citizens and have a say in the development of their cities, towns, and neighbourhoods.
- » Develop a Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure the needs of children are met through urban development and regeneration.
- » Ensure all schools have a School Travel Plan supported by access to a School Travel Officer paid for by the local authority. Plans should be created in collaboration with children, teaching staff, parents and transport planners and must focus beyond the school gates including the supported roll-out of school streets, walking buses and crossing patrols.
- » Collect data on rates of walking and wheeling to school in their area.

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Goals for a child friendly New Orleans

Using Arup's Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods publication, the Office of Youth and Families (OYF) in New Orleans has identified 11 goals for child-friendliness in New Orleans.

As part of the 11, they have identified 4 priority goals, which include creating a walkable New Orleans, transforming blight into play spaces, and improving access to nature, recreation, and water. They plan to improve the walking environment through infrastructure and policy changes and will connect new spaces throughout the city with safe circulation routes.

They have also identified key stakeholders to collaborate with, to achieve each goal.



Photo: Kristina Volgenau / Unsplash

Air quality benefits of School Streets

Thirty cutting-edge sensors to record nitrogen dioxide levels have been used in a study (published in March 2021) to investigate the air quality benefits of new School Streets, installed as part of the Mayor's Streetspace for London plan.

The sensors were positioned at 18 primary schools across Brent, Enfield and Lambeth adjacent to, and at the ends of, roads that would be closed at certain times on school days as part of the School Streets initiative. Comparator sites were also set up outside schools that were not part of the School Streets initiative.



The comparison of concentration profiles at similar sites (typically one with a School Streets intervention and one without) showed a reduction in the daily average (school day) nitric oxide (NO) concentrations of approximately 5%. At peak times average reductions in NO concentrations of up to $8 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (34%) were achieved during the morning intervention period. The resultant reduction in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) during the school drop-off period has been estimated as being up to $6 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (23%). This demonstrates that School Streets can play a role in reducing peak exposure to pollution concentrations outside of schools.

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Walking School Buses

Walking school buses are frequently used in the UK and US to promote active travel to and from school in a safe and organised way. They consist of a group of pupils with adults at the front and back, often wearing high-vis jackets to make them more visible. There are multiple benefits to this approach including improved safety due to better visibility and social benefits as children have more time to socialise with one another. [Research from Safer Routes Partnership has also shown that this can improve pupils' attendance in schools.](#)

It is an equitable method of transport – many parents are not comfortable to let children walk to school without adult supervision, and not all may have the time or resources to drop them off by car or bus. Guardians also rotate which means that getting their children to and from school is less of a burden; this is especially important for people who work non-standard work shifts.



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Recommendation 4:

Close the disability mobility gap (the gap in journeys by disabled and non-disabled people) by making walking and wheeling inclusive

Disabled people take far fewer trips every year than non-disabled people. In 2019, the National Travel Survey for England found that people with a mobility-related disability take 38% fewer journeys each year by any mode of transport than non-disabled people.²⁶⁰ This is partially a result of barriers, including walking and wheeling, that can lead to isolation, reduced physical activity, not being able to access services and amenities, and poor mental wellbeing.

Disabled people may have some of the most complex and varied barriers for walking and wheeling. Significant intersectionality also exists between disabled people and older people and people at risk of, or living in, deprivation. For example, 41% of disabled working age adults reported a mobility-related disability in 2019/20 in comparison to 68% of disabled adults over State Pension age.²⁶¹ As people live longer in the UK and the number of older people increases, the proportion of disabled people or people with long-term health conditions is also likely to increase.

Too often the media frames disability as tragedy. In fact, disabled people are disabled by physical, social and institutional arrangements.²⁶² When we do not account for the needs of everyone when designing places and systems, we disable people and prevent them from fully taking part in society.

This is known as the Social Model of Disability, however this model is not yet fully understood and accepted by society and therefore many barriers to walking and wheeling for disabled people remain.²⁶³ While we need to highlight accessibility issues, they should always be framed around the Social Model of Disability.

Mobility-related disability is the most common, affecting just under half of all disabled people.²⁶⁴ Stigma exists around the use of mobility aids in public spaces, prompted by desire to 'pass' as a non-disabled person. Many disabled people require mobility aids to help them walk or wheel including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, assistance dogs, personal assistants, and support workers. While some support is available it often does not go far enough.

Disabled people and their families are more likely to live in poverty than non-disabled households²⁶⁵ and the costs of suitable equipment to enable walking or wheeling are often prohibitive. More needs to be done to ensure people have appropriate access to mobility aids that meet their needs and enable independent travel. Walking statistics from 2019²⁶⁶

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show that adults without mobility requirements make twice as many walking trips and walk nearly three times as far as those who do have mobility requirements.

Around a quarter of adults living in England have a mental health condition such as depression or anxiety. Research has shown many people who live with anxiety find travel challenging, including interacting with fellow travellers, interacting with staff and purchasing tickets, wayfinding, finding support, and needing to take urgent action.²⁶⁷ Many people prefer to avoid very crowded conditions which can limit the times they travel or routes they take. More places to be able to stop and ask for help, better signage and more toilet facilities would all be useful, alongside educating other travellers to better understand their needs.

Many disabled people also require suitable services and amenities nearby where they live, including more accessible shopping environments and green space. It may take more effort and longer for many disabled people to walk or wheel and amenities should be located even nearer. The People and Nature Survey for England found having a long-term health condition makes it less likely that people will visit natural spaces.²⁶⁸

The debate around car use can become very polarised and risks alienating certain groups who are more dependent on driving, for example disabled people who may rely on a vehicle as their mobility aid. However, cars can both help and hinder disabled people.

Disabled people may be less likely to think of replacing short car journeys with walking, especially those who have access requirements around personal care, physical coordination problems, mobility issues, loss of manual dexterity and/or incontinence.²⁶⁹ We need to recognise that this issue is nuanced and acknowledge that the combination of numerous accessibility barriers faced by many disabled people pushes some towards the ease and convenience of driving.

Other disabled people may not be able to drive or afford a car, leaving them more reliant on walking, wheeling and public transport. This underlines the importance of creating inclusive built environments so disabled people are enabled to fully access walking, wheeling and physical activity. Improvements that support disabled people to travel actively will also benefit other groups typically marginalised in transport planning such as children, parents and older people.

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Actions

National governments should:

- » Ensure cost is not a barrier to disabled people by reviewing the Access to Work scheme and NHS support to access mobility aids. This should cover financial support to access mobility aids, including wheelchairs, assistance dogs, personal assistants, and support workers.

Local government and the private sector should:

- » Work with disabled people and local disability organisations to understand their needs and how schemes are benefiting them.
- » Give greater priority to overcoming barriers to walking and wheeling for disabled people. This should include conducting regular accessibility audits whenever local authorities are making improvements to the street, as well as funding schemes that focus on inclusive walking and wheeling.
- » Raise awareness of the needs of people with different access requirements, including invisible disabilities, and address stigma around the use of mobility aids.
- » Develop positive schemes for local shops to address access issues, for example supporting public use of toilets, allowing guide dogs inside, and following Alzheimer UK's dementia friendly retail guide.²⁷⁰
- » Develop proficiency training for individuals to improve capability and confidence to walk and wheel independently, and train local community hubs to offer advice and information to individuals who require it when walking and wheeling.

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Case studies

Breda, Netherlands – Europe’s “most accessible city”

Breda won the 2019 Access City Award for making the city more accessible to disabled citizens. Breda is an old European town, which can usually present significant barriers to disabled people, due to cobblestones and narrow pavements. However, Breda has been working to eliminate as many of those challenges without sacrificing historical authenticity. This started in the 1990s with the establishment of the Breda-Gelijk (Equal Breda) foundation.

One such example is cobbled pavements – the city turned them upside down and sliced them width-ways to produce a flat surface. Buses are fully accessible for wheelchair users, and drivers receive disability awareness training. Private businesses also participate – many put out portable ramps in front of their door when they open for the day; over 800 shops and bars have been certified to be accessible for wheelchair users, and websites are checked to make sure that they’re accessible for people with learning disabilities. Furthermore, even Breda’s Forest Mastbosch is wheelchair accessible. Whereas the interventions have largely focused on mobility-related requirements to date, more regulations are planned to improve lives of people with learning disabilities, for example introducing easy-read requirements for documents, or introducing a mandatory accessibility checklist for all events in the city.



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Marburg, Germany - Designing cities for blind and partially sighted people

Marburg has a history of being a ‘Blindenstadt’ – a city for blind people. During World War One, an institute for blind people was founded to support those blinded in the war. This institute has shaped the city around it, with many improvements made since it was founded. Features include tactile paving, beeping traffic lights, floorplans in buildings which blind people can interact with, as well as bronze models of major city sights, allowing blind and partially sighted people to more fully experience those.

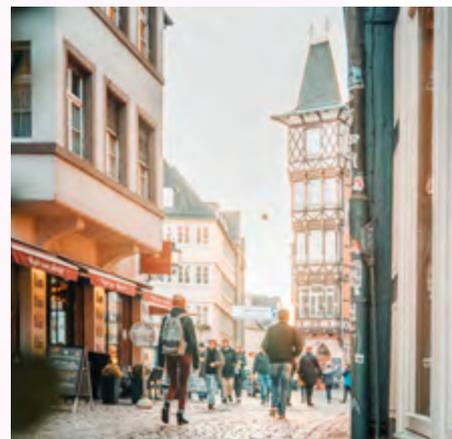


Photo: Ansgar Scheffold / Unsplash

Marburg offers a range of leisure activities tailored for people with sight loss, including horse-riding, rowing, football and skiing. This has resulted in the city having Germany’s highest proportion of blind students and a new wave of innovations to help people with sight loss. These include innovative screen readers, foldable walking canes, and enhanced use of 3D models as teaching aids. This innovative approach to firstly city design, and then to education, awareness, and training, has meant that the city is often described as the ideal city for people with sight loss.

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This guidance provides a framework for making walking and wheeling more inclusive across the UK covering governance, places and supporting people. It is imperative that local and national governments, the third sector and businesses work together if we are to make walking and wheeling inclusive and unlock the huge co-benefits for society, the economy and the environment.

We call upon Government in partnership with others including Sustrans, Arup and Living Streets to do more and to get better at ensuring what we already do has inclusion and equity at its heart.

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Thanks to everyone who participated in this research, especially interviewees and workshop participants who have contributed to this report with their own research, experiences, views and perspectives.

This includes representatives from the following organisations who participated in Interviews and a workshop to help form these recommendations: Access Association, Alzheimers Society, Centre for Ageing Better, University of Westminster Active Travel Academy, Chwarae Teg, Croydon Living Streets Group, Guide Dogs, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, Leonard Cheshire, Make Space for Girls, Mencap, myGwork, Stonewall, Transport for All, Uffo Athletic and Leisure Group, the Women's Budget Group, Women in Transport, Women Like Me.

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