



2023

Orkney Travel Matters



Walking, wheeling and cycling in Orkney

Published June 2024



Foreword

Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling in Orkney



I'm delighted to introduce our Orkney Travel Matters report. The data in this report gives us an unprecedented understanding of what the Orkney public think about walking,

wheeling and cycling – and what needs to be done to make things better.

Active travel, which involves getting active for our everyday journeys by walking, wheeling or cycling supports good physical and mental health, offering both an accessible and convenient form of exercise. In turn, it plays an important role in reducing the burden on our health services.

Enabling more active travel will also help connect people across Orkney. Accessible and safe active travel routes change how we interact with our local places and each other, fostering a greater sense of local ownership and pride, whilst helping to boost social connection and the local economy.

Walking, wheeling and cycling also play a part in addressing the cost of living and climate crises. Having an affordable and sustainable transport network benefits everyone, and even more so the most vulnerable in our community.

Increasing the uptake and accessibility of walking, wheeling and cycling is therefore a key priority for Orkney Islands Council.

That's why it's so important that we are listening to and learning from the experiences of those living in our isles - and that all those involved in delivering change have access to robust data to make the case for investment.

As this report makes clear, we have a good foundation of active travel participation to build on. However, there is undoubtedly progress to be made in increasing and diversifying that participation across all of Orkney.

In particular, we have work to do on making cycling a safer, more accessible and appealing choice. We also face challenges and a geographical setting which are starkly different to large cities or well-connected towns in the rest of Scotland. Yet this offers us an opportunity to develop active travel infrastructure and behaviour change in a uniquely Orkney way.

This report is a significant step forward in that process. It contains a wealth of information gathered directly from our community which will hugely inform our work going forward. I thank all those involved in developing this report, and particularly those in our community who responded to the Orkney Travel Matters survey.

I look forward to continuing this work with partners across Orkney, and with our communities.

Councillor Kristopher Leask
Chair of Development & Infrastructure



Contents

4	Report summary	14	Walking solutions
6	Walking in Orkney	16	Cycling solutions
8	Cycling in Orkney	18	Neighbourhood solutions
10	Benefits of walking	20	Developing Orkney
12	Benefits of cycling	22	Looking forward

Orkney Travel Matters

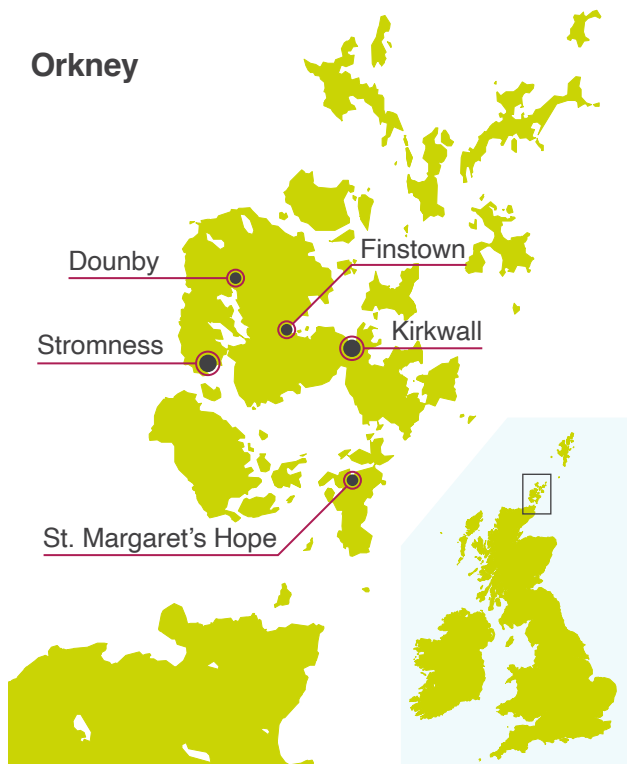
The data in this report comes from 2023 and includes local data, modelling and an independent survey of 600 residents aged 16 or above in Orkney. The survey was conducted from February to April 2023 by an independent consultant agency. The methodology used means that the survey is representative of all residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

This follows on from the Orkney Matters consultation in 2021. The Orkney Matters consultation highlighted the importance of transportation across the County. It identified a strong community aspiration to walk and cycle more. For some there were also concerns over road safety, the speed of traffic, and how this affects a person's choice to walk, wheel or cycle, and how often they make these journeys. The follow up Orkney Travel Matters survey was designed to develop our understanding of these issues.

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

More details on the Orkney Travel Matters report and methodology can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/orkneytravelmatters.

Orkney



Defining wheeling

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

Report summary

Orkney

Populationⁱ

22,540



Walking, wheeling and cycling in Orkney

Walking is the most frequent travel mode.

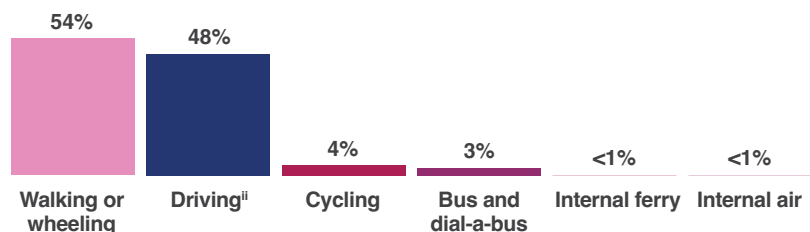
87%

of residents walk or wheel at least once a week

18%

of residents cycle at least once a week

Residents who travel by the following modes at least five days a week in Orkney



Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

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

57% of women

53% of men

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

12% of women

24% of men

Twice as many men cycle at least once a week, compared to women.



Not all residents feel safe walking, wheeling and cycling in their local area

Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety is good^{iv}

54% of people living in a town

34% of people living in a village

38% of people living rurally

56% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good

33% of people living in a town

21% of people living in a village

27% of people living rurally

52% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

63%

of residents would find improving the behaviour of people driving cars useful to help them start cycling, or cycle more

i. NRS mid-year 2021 population estimates. This is the most recent available for Orkney. ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle.

iii. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' was too low to be statistically significant and therefore is not presented here. iv. Town refers to Kirkwall and Stromness. Village refers to places like Finstown, Dounby and St Margaret's Hope. Rural refers to the Orkney Mainland outwith these settlements.

Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

Every year, walking, wheeling and cycling in Orkney:

+ Prevents

83

serious long-term health conditions



Creates

£18.1 million

in economic benefit for individuals and Orkney



Saves

717 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions

Walking, wheeling and cycling help to tackle the climate emergency

Every day, walking, wheeling and cycling in Orkney takes up to

4,900 cars off the road^v

However,

5.8 million

journeys up to three miles are driven in Orkney each year

If **80%** of these journeys were walked, wheeled or cycled it could save approximately

1,900 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions^{vi}

Residents want more funding for walking, wheeling and cycling

Percentage of residents who would like to see more government spending in their local area:

53% on walking and wheeling



41% on electric vehicle infrastructure



55% on cycling



44% on roads and driving



This would help support more liveable places across Orkney

Among Orkney residents, more footpaths and more cycle paths were identified as the most helpful infrastructure measures to help them walk, wheel or cycle further.

The provision of more footpaths, pavements and walking routes between towns and villages:

70% would find useful



19% would not find useful



More cycle paths alongside roads that are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians:

63% would find useful



23% would not find useful



v. Based on walking, wheeling and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking trips.
vi. Based upon each journey being 1.5 miles in length.



Walking in Orkney

Walking and wheeling participation, safety and satisfaction

Walking and wheeling participation

Walking and wheeling are good for our health and wellbeing, and also have a positive impact on the environment and protecting our climate.

Walking and wheeling are an efficient use of the space in our streets, helping take the pressure off the transport network and enabling more people to access local towns and villages.

97%
of all residents walk or wheel

54%
of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

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

Rurality

70% of people living in a town

57% of people living in a village

43% of people living rurally

52% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

Ageⁱ

46% of people aged 26–35

42% of people aged 36–45

56% of people aged 46–55

58% of people aged 56–65

57% of people aged 66+

Household income

53% of people whose total annual household income is up to £19,999

59% of people whose total annual household income is £20,000 to £49,999

52% of people whose total annual household income is £50,000 and above

Gender

57% of women

53% of men

Disability

51% of disabled people

54% of non-disabled people

i. The sample size for 16-25 old respondents was too low to be statistically significant and therefore is not presented here.

Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

Important differences exist in how safe people feel when walking or wheeling. Safety includes both road and personal safety.

45% of residents think the level of safety for walking or wheeling is good

32% of residents think the level of safety for children walking or wheeling is good

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

Rurality

54% of people living in a town



34% of people living in a village



38% of people living rurally



56% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Age

47% of people aged 26–35



43% of people aged 36–45



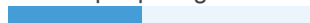
52% of people aged 46–55



40% of people aged 56–65



44% of people aged 66+



Household income

54% of people whose total annual household income is up to £19,999



47% of people whose total annual household income is £20,000 to £49,999



53% of people whose total annual household income is £50,000 and above



Gender

45% of women



46% of men



Disability

50% of disabled people



52% of non-disabled people



59% of residents think their local area overall is a good place to walk or wheel



Adele Lidderdale



We made the decision to switch from two petrol cars to an electric vehicle and to upgrade our bikes, so we walk and cycle for a lot of our day-to-day journeys now. A typical journey would be taking our eight-year-old child to primary school, about a mile and a half each way.

The school run is done when there is quite a lot of competition on the road. It can be dangerous with vehicles. We tend to use pathways that have been developed for walking and cycling that bypass the main roads as often as possible. These help us feel more confident about making the journey because sometimes it can seem a little daunting to hop on to the road.

Our child has additional support needs, so that active journey into school really helps him in his day because once he has done that bit of moving around first thing it makes it easier for him to concentrate.

During the school run, there are other families who are walking and cycling as well. That time on the way to and from school to catch up with other parents and friend groups is another big benefit for us. So, there are loads of advantages to making these journeys by bike or on foot.



Cycling in Orkney

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

Cycling participation

Cycling participation is not equal. Barriers to cycling can be far more pronounced for some people. **63%** of residents would find improving the behaviour of people driving cars useful to help them start cycling, or cycle more.

Weather conditions are also a large barrier to cycling in Orkney with **55%** citing wind and **40%** citing rain as reasons why they do not cycle or cycle less often.

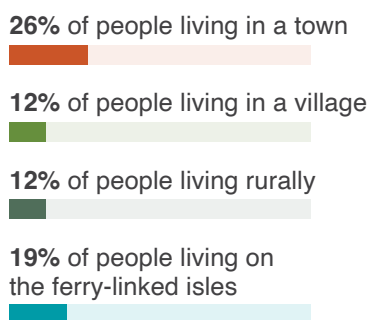
However, measures such as increased access to e-bikes and improved cycling infrastructure can help overcome weather-related barriers. For example, the town of Bodø in northern Norway has levels of wind and rain comparable to Orkney,^{i, ii} but has amongst the highest rates of cycling in Norway, with cycling making up **8%** of journeys,ⁱⁱⁱ compared to **1%** in Orkney.^{iv}

53%
of all residents cycle

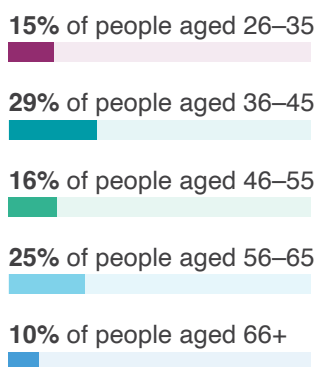
18%
of residents cycle at least once a week, demonstrating a significant potential for future increases

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

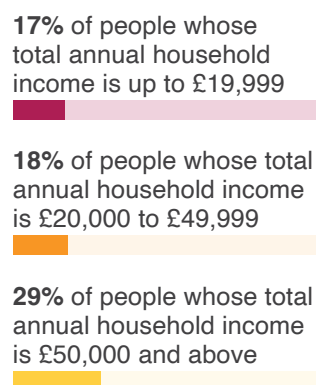
Rurality



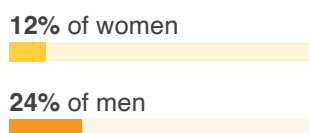
Age



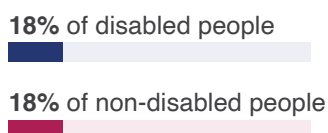
Household income



Gender



Disability



Cycling safety and satisfaction

32%

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

25%

of residents think the level of safety for children cycling is good

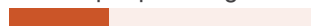
42%

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

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

Rurality

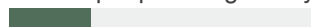
33% of people living in a town



21% of people living in a village



27% of people living rurally



52% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Age

34% of people aged 26–35



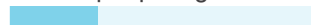
30% of people aged 36–45



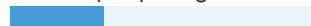
36% of people aged 46–55



29% of people aged 56–65



31% of people aged 66+

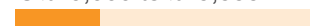


Household income

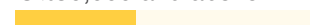
44% of people whose total annual household income is up to £19,999



28% of people whose total annual household income is £20,000 to £49,999



40% of people whose total annual household income is £50,000 and above



Gender

30% of women

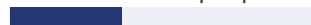


35% of men



Disability

37% of disabled people



36% of non-disabled people



Trisha Delday



I am a cleaner at a self catering business in Kirkwall and at the cheese factory. I've been at the factory for about 18 years. I don't have a car and I ride my e-bike to work most of the time, summer and winter. It's cheap exercise. I used to go swimming but now I don't have the time. If I didn't cycle in the winter I wouldn't get any exercise.

To begin with I didn't feel safe cycling on the road, but now it's much better. Drivers give you more distance since the highway code changed. They are a bit more respectful, folk will let me get out, but a lot of people know me now, I think.

I have one lot of grandkids on a Tuesday and another on a Thursday. They love going outside, exploring, walking, cycling, picking things up, seeing the wildflowers and standing on stones along the Ayre Road walkway. They keep you busy! When I've got the kids I try and go on the path with them. They don't understand traffic so you need to watch them. If you stick to the paths you're ok. But I like to know where I'm going first and it makes it easier if the kids know where they're going, too.



Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

The large numbers of walking and wheeling trips in Orkney produce important health, economic and environmental benefits for everyone.

Orkney residents walk or wheel 23 times the length of Great Britain every day

7.9 million

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

9.8 million miles

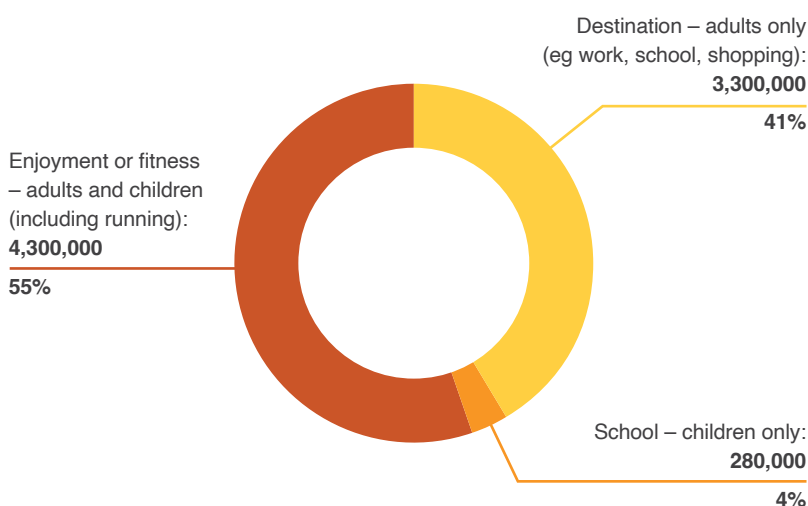
= 27,000 miles a day

This equates to each resident spending

5 days

walking or wheeling continuously in the past year

Annual walking and wheeling trips by purposeⁱ



i. Trips for enjoyment or fitness include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). School trips are shown separately for children only.

Walking and wheeling benefit residents and the local economy

We use a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and walking. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits and taxation.

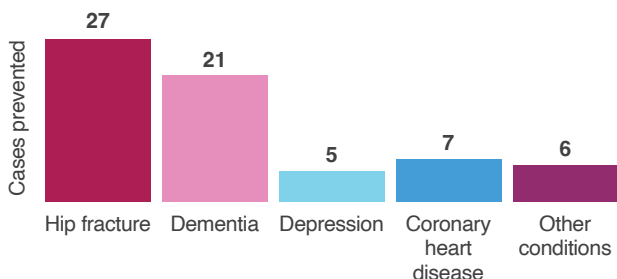
The total annual economic benefit from all trips walked and wheeled in Orkney is

£15.2 millionⁱⁱ



Walking and wheeling unlock health benefits for everyone

Walking in Orkney prevents 66 serious long-term health conditions each year



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

Saving the NHS in Orkney

£780,000 per year



equivalent to the cost of

19,000 GP appointments

Based on applying Orkney data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Orkney the physical activity benefits of walking

prevent 13 early deaths annually

which is valued at

£48.6 millionⁱⁱⁱ

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

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

Walking and wheeling in Orkney help mitigate our climate crisis

516 tonnes

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

3,200 people taking flights

from Aberdeen International to London



In 2021, transport within Scotland (excluding international aviation and shipping) accounted for **26%** of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite a reduction in emissions associated with the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, transport rebounded in 2021 and remains the largest source of emissions in Scotland.

Scottish Government, Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 2021

Walking and wheeling keep Orkney moving

Studies show walking frees up road space in comparison to driving.^{iv} This helps to keep Orkney moving for all road users.

4,200 return walking and wheeling trips

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

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

12 miles

equivalent to the distance from St Magnus Cathedral to the Ring of Brodgar.



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



Benefits of cycling

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

Orkney residents cycle 7 times the length of Great Britain every day

Cycling is a hugely efficient way to travel, and can often be quicker than travelling by car.

960,000

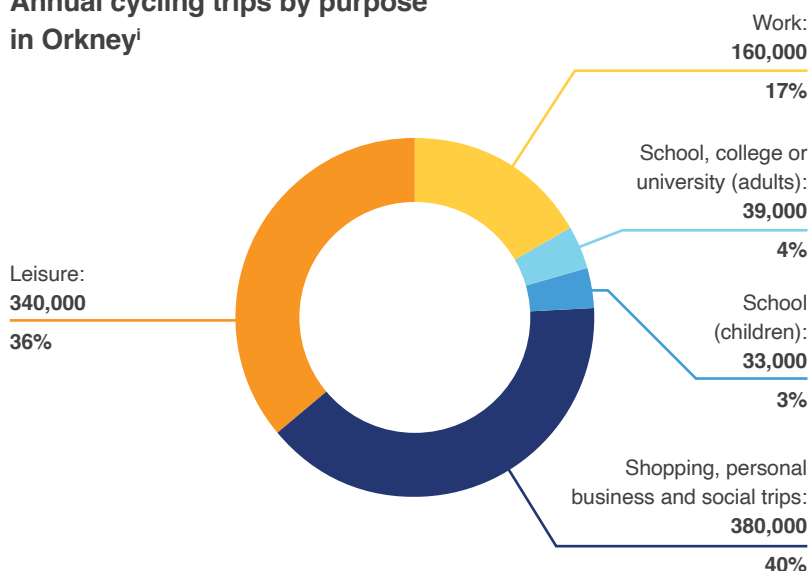
cycling trips were made in Orkney in the past year

This adds up to

3.2 million miles

= 8,800 miles a day

Annual cycling trips by purpose in Orkneyⁱ



Cycling benefits residents and the local economy

We use a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits and taxation.

80p is saved

for each mile cycled instead of driven in Orkney.

Over a year this adds up to

£580,000

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

The total annual economic benefit from all trips cycled in Orkney is

£3 millionⁱⁱ

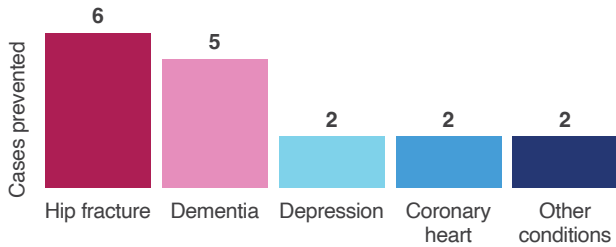
i. Leisure trips include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment).

Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other trips are just adults.

ii. This includes trips cycled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in Orkney prevents 17 serious long-term health conditions each year



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

Saving the NHS in Orkney

£210,000 per year



equivalent to the cost of

5,100 GP appointments

Based on applying Orkney data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity

In Orkney the physical activity benefits of cycling

prevent 1 early death annually

which is valued at

£5 millionⁱⁱⁱ

Cycling in Orkney helps mitigate our climate crisis

200 tonnes

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

1,300 people taking flights

from Aberdeen International to London



In 2021, transport within Scotland (excluding international aviation and shipping) accounted for **26%** of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite a reduction in emissions associated with the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, transport rebounded in 2021 and remains the largest source of emissions in Scotland.

Scottish Government, Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 2021

Cycling keeps Orkney moving

765 return cycling trips

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



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



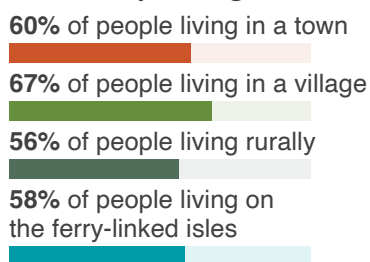
Walking solutions

What would help make walking and wheeling better?

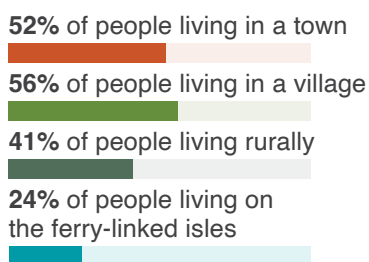
Residents want more services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Which social and community aspects would help residents to walk or wheel more?

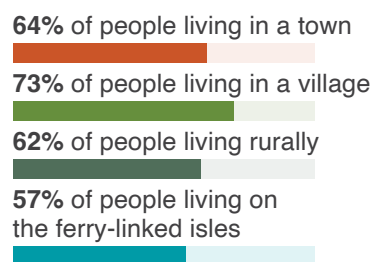
Nicer places along streets to stop and rest, eg benches, planting, shelters



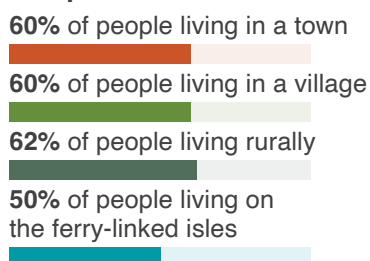
Fewer motor vehicles on our streets in towns and villages



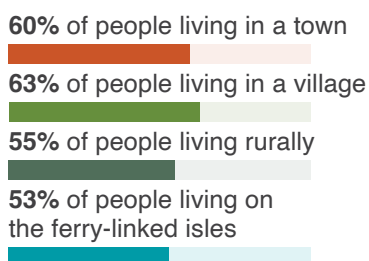
Better links with public transport



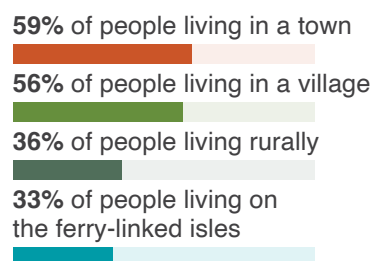
More shops and everyday services, such as banks and post offices



More public services, such as health care, council services and education

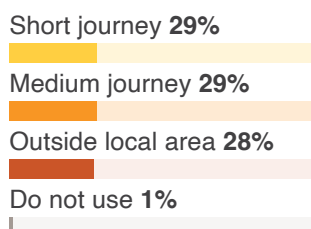


More parks and green spaces close to your home

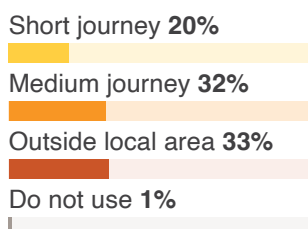


Residents' perceptions of the proximity of the following amenities and services from their homeⁱ

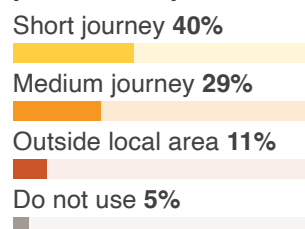
Food shop



Healthcare facility



Connection to public transportⁱⁱ



i. 'Short journey' means a 10-minute walk distance (or 20-minute round trip). 'Medium journey' means beyond a 10-minute walk distance, but still within your local area, parish or island. 'Outside local area' means outside their local area, parish or island.
 ii. Bus stops, travel centre, pier for ferry services or airfield.

Residents want better streets

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

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

Provision of more footpaths, pavements and walking routes in towns and villages

72% of people living in a town



80% of people living in a village



67% of people living rurally



63% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Provision of more footpaths, pavements and walking routes between towns and villages

74% of people living in a town



84% of people living in a village



70% of people living rurally



52% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Lower speed traffic on rural roads in your area

41% of people living in a town



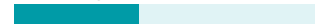
65% of people living in a village



51% of people living rurally



41% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Fewer cars parked on the pavement

70% of people living in a town



68% of people living in a village



47% of people living rurally



38% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Better pavement accessibility, eg level surfaces, dropped kerbs

58% of people living in a town



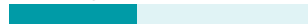
57% of people living in a village



47% of people living rurally



42% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Wider pavements

61% of people living in a town



62% of people living in a village



47% of people living rurally



49% of people living on the ferry-linked isles



Duncan McLean



My wife and I run three businesses in Kirkwall. For us as shop owners, pedestrians are extremely important because they walk in and spend money. We have a mix of customers including locals and tourists, but in the summer months tourism is particularly important and having a more pedestrian-friendly centre would be a really good thing.

From our point of view, here on Broad Street, if there was half as much traffic, it would be twice as good as a street.

The Places and Spaces project has improved the area. The widening of the pavement in particular is better because there is great footfall in the summer these days, more than there used to be, so it's good for people to be able to walk safely and comfortably along the pavements. The crossings, I think with the different textures and so on, work really well.

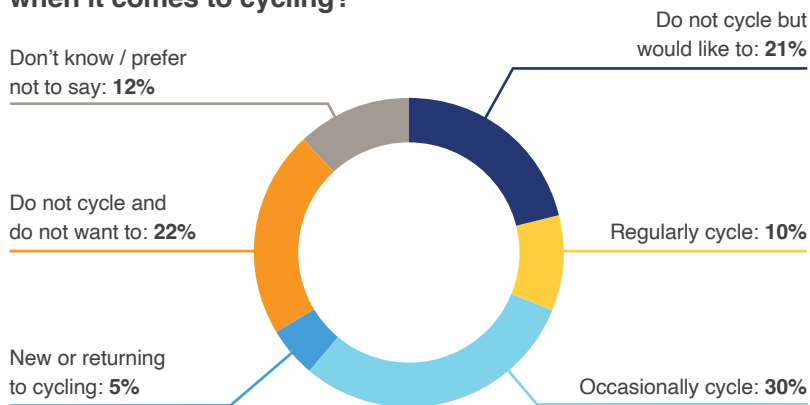


Cycling solutions

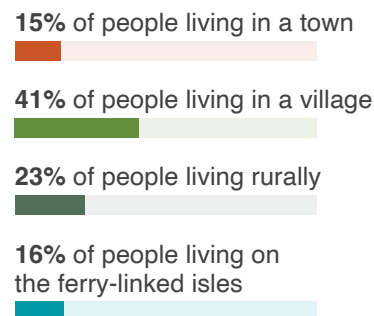
What would make cycling better?

Many Orkney residents cycle or want to cycle

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?



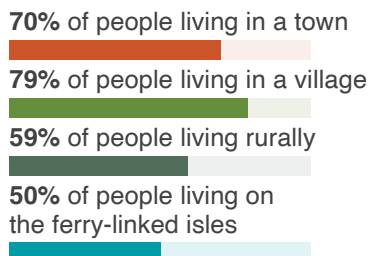
What proportion of residents said they 'do not cycle but would like to'?



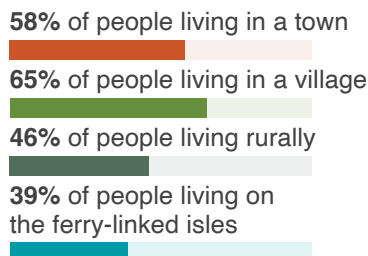
Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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

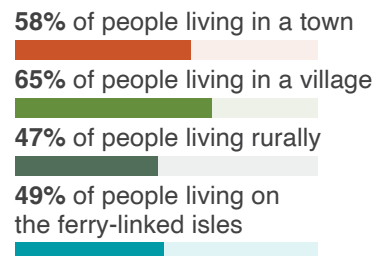
More cycle paths along roads that are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians



More signposted local cycle routes along quieter streets



Better links with public transport (eg secure cycle parking at travel centres, bus stops, ferry terminals and airport / airfields)



In Orkney, there are:

8 miles
of shared use footways

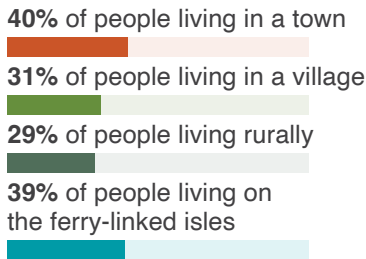
15%
of households are within
125m of these routes

61%
of residents have access
to an adult cycle

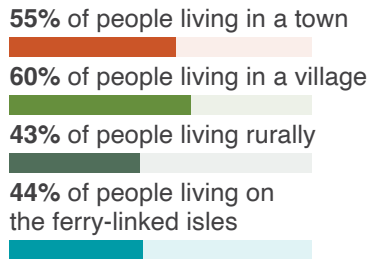
Residents want more support to cycle

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

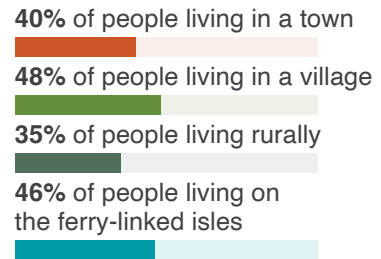
A cycle sharing scheme to loan bikes on a short or longer-term basis



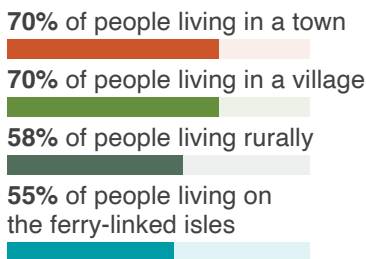
Access to secure cycle storage at key destinations like work, shops, in town



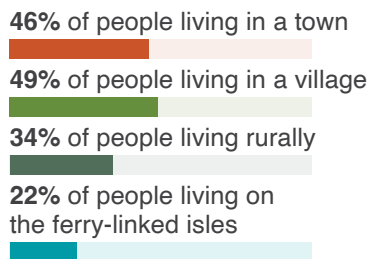
Access to a suitable or better bicycle



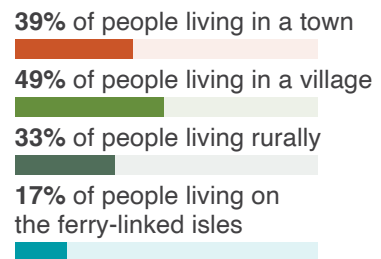
Improving the behaviour of people driving cars



Fewer motor vehicles on our streets in towns and villages



Fewer motor vehicles on rural roads in your area



Colin Macaldowie



I had a stroke in May last year and had to have a pacemaker fitted. I cycled a lot working as a vet before the stroke, so when I was told cycling could help with my therapy, my partner Susan contacted Magda at Cycling UK's Rural Connections programme. I got a recumbent bike in January and I've been using it ever since.

The recumbent bike is wider than a bicycle, with one wheel at the back and two wheels at the front. It can be tricky to use due to its width and it needs space to turn but working with Magda has helped build my confidence. She got adjustments made to the gears and brakes so that everything is on the side where I have full function in my hand. I'm hoping in time, with physio, I'll get movement back in my other hand as well. My motivation is just to get back to cycling as I did before. I have my bike at home and I really want to get back to using it.

I use the bike to get to the shops. Traffic is more of a problem riding a bike like this than on a standard bicycle. I'm used to riding bikes, so I can cycle among traffic, but there are too many cars on the road. You really struggle. People who are less confident in traffic need cycle lanes.

Magda tried different routes with me and made sure I was safe before I went out on the roads. Magda is really great. Without the Cycling UK programme, I wouldn't have been able to do this. Without it, I would be scunnered!



Neighbourhood solutions

What would help make neighbourhoods better?

Residents want measures to make their neighbourhoods and communities better places to live

What percentage of residents agree that these kinds of interventions would make their local area, community, isle or parish a better place to live, learn, work or visit?

Increase space for walking, wheeling and cycling and allowing space for social interaction in towns and villages, even if this reduces space for cars

59% of people living in a town

71% of people living in a village

47% of people living rurally

32% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

Restrict through-traffic on local residential streets in towns / villages

38% of people living in a town

37% of people living in a village

17% of people living rurally

8% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

Close streets / roads outside local schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up times

32% of people living in a town

26% of people living in a village

15% of people living rurally

4% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

More measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces

57% of people living in a town

39% of people living in a village

49% of people living rurally

47% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

Reduce speed limits on local roads in towns / villages to 20 mph

45% of people living in a town

45% of people living in a village

36% of people living rurally

35% of people living on the ferry-linked isles

0.9%

of Orkney's streets have 20mph or 15mph speed limits.



Karin Jonnson



I grew up in a small village called Ardala in Sweden. You cycled everywhere. The rural roads were quite similar to here in Orkney. As children we were very good cyclists and the drivers were aware there were lots of kids cycling. It was a small community, so people would pass and give you a wave. A bit like here, everyone knows everyone, except here I can feel that drivers aren't very used to so many cyclists on the road. In Sweden I think cycling is seen more as a type of transportation, whereas here, I feel it is more seen as a sport.

For the first four years here, we only had bicycles, so we would mainly hang out at Scapa or we'd ride around Kirkwall, but I never really felt comfortable going further due to road safety. I would probably say the connections are what's missing. Now I don't feel comfortable just letting my son go riding by himself because there is not the awareness from people in cars and because the infrastructure ends.

In Sweden, as here, people have their cars. But they also have their bikes. If you went shopping, you would take your car because you would have heavy stuff to take back home. But if you're visiting friends or going to the bank or dentist you take the bicycle, not the car.

I would like to see people use bikes a bit more as a mode of transport.

Places must be designed with children in mind

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

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

10 years old

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

Over **60%** of eight-year olds in Norway are allowed to cycle on main roads alone (parents' responses).ⁱ

Those living with children, when they travel with them:

19% use a buggy or pushchair when walking or wheeling

8% use a baby carrier or sling

6% use a child seat or cargo bike when cycling

Closing streets outside local schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times are known as 'School Streets'.

Schools Streets are often popular in urban areas as they provide school children with a safer area on busy city streets. However, our survey shows that there is less demand for similar measures in Orkney.

This difference is something which can be investigated further, and is a good example of how this survey can help ensure that walking and cycling investment in Orkney is focused on projects that suit Orkney's unique context.



i. Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015.

Developing Orkney

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

Orkney – an innovative, green and sustainable place



Orkney has long been at the forefront of the effort to decarbonise our energy system and our next challenge is to decarbonise our transport. Whilst solutions are tested and developed, a key contribution we can all make is to walk, wheel and cycle more.

This report shows us that Orkney residents enjoy travelling actively and want to see improvements to help them do more of it. Several popular infrastructure and behaviour change projects have been delivered in recent years, and this section of the report highlights some of these.

Rural Connections



In 2021, Cycling UK launched a behaviour change project to get more people in rural and remote areas of Scotland walking, wheeling and cycling.

Magda Choluj, Rural Connections Development Officer for Orkney provided support to people of all ages and abilities across the isles to get active for everyday journeys, leisure and adventure.

The project worked in several ways to support walking, wheeling and cycling for all abilities including: an e-bike loan and try out scheme; fleet loans for community groups, organisations, businesses and schools; support for local community groups, organisations and businesses to coordinate and add walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities to their existing activities; and support for individuals to build confidence.

The popular and impactful project concluded in Orkney in 2023 and left a strong legacy to build upon.

Arcadia Park



Arcadia Park is a community-designed green space in Kirkwall which was officially opened in September 2022.

The project has created a peaceful place where local people can exercise, switch off and connect with the natural environment. The park is now home to ponds, wildflower meadows, woodlands and sculptures. These features are all connected by a network of accessible active travel routes, enabling people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the space and to connect to other routes nearby.

The project was funded by Transport Scotland via Sustrans Places for Everyone and ArtRoots funds.

Papdale East Park



In April 2023, the Kirkwall community came together to celebrate the official opening of Papdale East Park.

Delivered by the Council, the project attracted investment from a range of funders including Transport Scotland via Sustrans, NatureScot and the Council's Crown Estate Fund.

The park is made up of a network of paths and landscaping features which have transformed the space. Key features include a burn, walking, wheeling, and cycling routes, as well as native shrubs and trees and a wildflower meadow for enhanced biodiversity. A community space and new road crossing which links the park to Kirkwall Grammar School have also been created to ensure trips are safe and accessible.

Building the foundations for Active Travel delivery in Orkney



These projects demonstrate what can be achieved when we work together to unlock investment in Orkney. However, they also highlight several challenges, such as the difficulty in securing staff resource and limited budgets to maintain new infrastructure.

To help tackle these challenges, the Sustainable Travel Group was formed in December 2021. The Group's aim is to make efficient use of investment in active and sustainable travel by joining up Council plans and strategies, and identifying funding and delivery mechanisms. The group brings together people across a range of organisations including the Council, NHS Orkney, Voluntary Action Orkney, Hitrans, Cycling Scotland, Cycling UK, Public Health Scotland and Sustrans.

A key part of the Sustainable Travel Group's work has been to establish a baseline assessment of walking and cycling in Orkney in this report. Now we have the evidence of what Orkney residents want to see, we have strong foundations to build from.



Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

Working together



We are working in partnership with Sustrans and Hitrans to build our capacity and expertise to deliver infrastructure and behaviour change projects that help everyone to walk, wheel and cycle more. A range of initiatives are already being unlocked and progressed, including strategy development, project work and community outreach. A small selection of these are highlighted below. To deliver on these ambitions, we will need to work collaboratively as a Council and with our partners and communities in the months and years ahead.

Active Travel Strategy



The Council's Local Transport Strategy 2023 – 2043 is due to be approved in July. It sets an ambition of an Orkney transport network which allows people and goods to get where they need to be safely and efficiently, whilst contributing to improved health and wellbeing and the journey to net zero. To help deliver this vision, a new Active Travel Strategy will set out our approach to planning infrastructure and behaviour change interventions. We aim to embed this within council decision making processes across a range of service areas.

Orkney Active Travel Network



In partnership with Sustrans, we are working to explore the potential to develop an Orkney Active Travel Network project. This would connect a range of initiatives including the Local Transport Strategy's St Margaret's Hope – Kirkwall – Stromness protected cycling and walking route project, the Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Onshore Cable project between Warebeth and Finstown, the Islands Deal World Heritage Site Active Travel Network project and the National Cycle Network reinstatement project. Subject to funding, it is anticipated that a feasibility study will be led by Sustrans in 2024/25.

School Travel Plans



With the support of Parent Councils, Community Councils and Development Trusts, we completed School Travel Plans for Shapinsay and Eday Community Schools, Stronsay and Westray Junior High Schools and Stromness Primary School in 2023/24. We will develop Travel Plans with the rest of our schools over the next two years, whilst also helping to deliver the changes identified through this work.

Weyland Bay Coastal Path



Through partnership working with Sustrans, pedestrian and cycle data was collected along the proposed route of this project. This data enabled us to trial an inclusive design process tailored to a rural and island context. A funding application has now been made to Transport Scotland. Should this application be successful, we anticipate construction in 2024/25.

Orkney Quiet Routes Pilot Project



Quiet Routes are a way of delivering active travel network connections in rural areas, where segregated path infrastructure is not feasible or would be too costly.

Quiet Routes include the introduction of signage to remind vehicle drivers of the presence of people walking, wheeling, cycling or riding horses on the road. These approaches work on narrow, unlined rural roads with low traffic volumes and where routes are already used by people travelling actively.

Subject to funding, we are considering piloting Quiet Routes in a number of locations across Orkney in 2024/25.



Alex Clark



I have owned Cycle Orkney for 18 years and in that time we have become a lot more than just a bike shop. For example, we teach Bikeability to schoolchildren in Orkney with the Council and offer bike maintenance training. We have done a couple of schemes with the job centre to help unemployed folk get a cycling-specific qualification.

Recently we've seen a shift in bike purchasing to the point where we are selling more than double the number of e-bikes to standard bikes. We've also seen many people trading in their second car for an e-bike. I know one lady who used to drive three miles every day. Now she rides her e-bike all year round. A chap who lives in Norseman Village and works in Dounby has to get over the Lyde Road, and, as you get older, getting over the Lyde Road gets a little bit tougher, but he bought his e-bike and now he does that route in all weathers. The e-bike has transformed people's lives in Orkney in terms of transport because it means that wind and terrain is no longer an issue for them.

The biggest thing holding back people in terms of using a bike or an e-bike as a genuine mode of transport is infrastructure. If we have decent infrastructure we'll get more people on bikes.

Notes on methodology

The attitudinal survey was conducted from February to April 2023 by independent consultant agency Eyland Skyn. The methodology used means that the survey is representative of all Orkney residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

All other data is sourced from national data sets or modelled and calculated by Sustrans.

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

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

More information and a detailed methodology are available at www.sustrans.org.uk/orkneytravelmatters.

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is a registered charity in the UK No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)

© Sustrans June 2024

© Photos: Orkney Photographic (Kristopher Leask, page 2).
Orkney.com (pages 2, 8, 20). Case study photos provided by the individuals. All other photos: Alan McAteer.

Thanks to Open Route Service for their support with their isochrone plugin in QGIS.

Printed on recycled paper.



Orkney Travel Matters has been funded by Transport Scotland. The project is co-ordinated by Sustrans.

