# Scotland report Children's Walking and Cycling Index

Published March 2025

Halfords

Transport Scotland

Sustrans

## Foreword

A shared vision for walking, wheeling and cycling

### The Scottish Youth Parliament's Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

We, the Scottish Youth Parliament's Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs (TERA) Committee are delighted to introduce Sustrans' first ever Children's Walking and Cycling Index for Scotland.

This is the first time Sustrans has sought to better understand the travel behaviours, attitudes and experiences of children, highlighting how children aged 6 to 15 in Scotland move around their local area, what they think about it, and their aspirations for the future. In line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that young people have the right to be heard in all matters affecting them, giving children across Scotland a voice on these issues is crucial.

Getting more young people walking, wheeling and cycling for more of their everyday journeys can have a big impact on their lives. That is why one of SYP's current manifesto policies aims to make it easier, cheaper, and safer for young people to use active and sustainable travel options.

With climate change as the number one issue that young generations will face in our lifetime, zero-emission, sustainable and active travel simply must be an available and natural choice for everyone.

By meaningfully engaging with Scotland's young people on the transport issues that affect them most, we can ensure that the future of our country supports the future generations. We are therefore excited to introduce this report from Sustrans, and hope it sparks awareness and action on transport issues facing children and young people all across Scotland.

### Dr Lee Muir, Head of Strategic Partnerships and Business Development, Sustrans Scotland

Sustrans works across Scotland to encourage more children and young people to get active for their everyday journeys.

Designing routes and places which give our young people safe, independent, and healthy choices for getting from A to B benefits everyone.

This report tells us we already have a captive audience – children want to travel actively. And in particular, they want to cycle more.

But they don't feel like they have enough say in the changes being made in their local area.

Sustrans hopes this report amplifies young voices and prompts more engagement with children on local transport issues – and we're urging decision makers to ensure young peoples' perspectives are at the heart of improving the places we live and the ways we get around.

Our thanks go to Transport Scotland for funding this report and to our sponsor Halfords.

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## The Children's Walking and Cycling Index Scotland

The Children's Walking and Cycling Index Scotland assesses walking, wheeling and cycling across the nation.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The data in this report comes from an independent survey of 1,092 children aged 6 to 15, representative of Scotland's population. The survey was conducted at the end of August 2024 as part of YouGov's Children and Parents Omnibus Survey.

We hope, like the adult Walking and Cycling Index, to repeat this survey every two years to track progress made towards making walking, wheeling and cycling a more attractive, and everyday way for children to travel.

Our thanks to the children across Scotland who took part in the survey and shared their stories with us through the case studies found within this report.

More details on the Walking and Cycling Index can be found at [www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index).

## Headlines

Scotland

### Scotland child population[[2]](#footnote-3)

594,515

### Total number of children surveyed

1,092

### How do children get around?

Almost half of trips by children (46%) are made by walking, wheeling and scooting.

Cycling is also popular, with 13% of trips made by cycle.

#### Mode share for all trips made by children in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 46%

Cycling: 13%

Using public transport: 12%

Driven by car or van: 29%

### Most children walk, wheel or use a scooter everyday

Two-thirds (66%) of children walk, wheel or scoot five or more days a week.

At the same time 42% of children are driven five or more days a week, showing their dependency on adults for transport.

#### Children who travelled by the following modes five or more times in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 66%

Driven by car or van: 42%

Using public transport: 20%

Cycling: 19%

### A gender gap exists in children's cycling

#### Proportion of children who cycled at least five times in the last week

16% of girls

22% of boys

#### Proportion of children who think their local area is a good place to cycle

68% of girls

72% of boys

#### Proportion of children who see themselves as someone who often cycles

14% of girls

18% of boys

### Children want the government to do more to meet their needs

#### What percentage of children think the government is doing enough to:

##### Give children a say in improving their neighbourhood and country

25% yes I do

53% no I do not

##### Help children to be healthy

34% yes I do

42% no I do not

##### Help children to play and socialise outdoors

26% yes I do

50% no I do not

### Children want to travel more, especially when it comes to cycling

#### Percentage of children who would like to use different types of transport more or less in the future:

##### Walk or wheel

31% more

17% less

##### Take public transport

29% more

15% less

##### Cycle

48% more

11% less

##### Be driven

19% more

23% less

### Children support practical steps to improve walking, wheeling and cycling

84% support, while 3% oppose, more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling

77% support, while 6% oppose, more cycle paths along roads separated from cars

66% support, while 12% oppose, closing streets outside schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up

79% support, while 2% oppose, making sure more things they need to get to are within walking distance

79% support, while 4% oppose, stopping cars parking on the pavement

82% support, while 3% oppose, more road crossings

67% support, while 4% oppose, more public transport

89% support, while 3% oppose, free travel for children on public transport

71% support, while 7% oppose, reducing the speed of cars

## Walking, wheeling and scooting

Participation, trips and purpose

### Walking, wheeling and scooting participation

Walking, wheeling and scooting are vital for children's travel needs and practised by most children almost daily.

These activities improve children's physical and mental health, while allowing quality time together as a family and a chance for children to spend time with their friends outside of school.

Walking levels are broadly the same for gender and ethnicity. However, differences occur, for example, between disabled and non-disabled children, those at primary and secondary school, as well as when comparing socio-economic groups.

88% of all children walked, wheeled or used a scooter in the last week

66% of all children walked, wheeled or used a scooter at least five times in the last week

#### Proportion of children who walked, wheeled or used a scooter at least five times in the last week

##### Gender

67% of girls

65% of boys

##### Ethnicity

69% of children from ethnic minority groups

66% of white children

##### Age

66% of children aged 6–7

70% of children aged 8–9

70% of children aged 10–11

64% of children aged 12–13

59% of children aged 14–15

##### Disability

52% of disabled children

68% of non-disabled children

##### School level[[3]](#footnote-4)

69% of children at primary school

62% of children at secondary school

##### Socio-economic group[[4]](#footnote-5)

63% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

73% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

### Child walking, wheeling and scooting trip frequency and purpose

145.4 million trips are walked, wheeled or scooted by children each year in Scotland.

Whilst most trips by children are made to visit the park, playground or for fun (39%), high numbers of trips are also taken for other purposeful journeys (34%) and to and from school (27%).

This shows the need to consider children's travel for all purposes.

#### Annual child walking, wheeling and scooting trips by purpose

To and from school: 39,700,000 or 27%

To visit the park, playground, or walking for fun: 56,400,000 or 39%

To see friends or family or visit other places like shops, cafés or doctors: 49,300,000 or 34%

#### Children's frequency of walking, wheeling and scooting trips in the last week, by purpose

##### To and from school

0 times: 34%

1-4 times: 22%

5-9 times: 31%

10-14 times: 9%

Don't know: 4%

##### To visit the park, playground or walking for fun

0 times: 27%

1-4 times: 51%

5-9 times: 13%

10-14 times: 3%

Don't know: 4%

##### To see friends or family or visit other places like shops, cafés or doctors

0 times: 30%

1-4 times: 53%

5-9 times: 12%

10-14 times: 2%

Don't know: 3%

### Case study: Fatimah, 12 years old, Dundee

My primary school was very nearby so we used to walk there and back every day.

Once you start walking places, it becomes part of your life. Because I've been walking to primary school since P1, it stuck.

Now I'm at high school, it's a bit further away, but I still like to walk back from school with my friends. It's about half an hour's walk, so I get a good bit of exercise in. I feel that sense of accomplishment, and it makes me feel good.

I definitely feel safe walking in my local neighbourhood, but I don't really like walking in certain places like streets with noisy bars. Keeping aware of your surroundings is important.

## Cycling

Participation, trips and purpose

### Cycling participation

Positively, 43% of children cycled in the last week, however big differences exist across different demographic groups in cycling behaviour.

For example, only 16% of girls cycle at least five times a week in comparison to 22% of boys.

43% of all children cycled in the last week

19% of all children cycled at least five times in the last week

#### Proportion of children who cycled at least five times in the last week

##### Gender

16% of girls

22% of boys

##### Ethnicity

32% of children from ethnic minority groups

18% of white children

##### Age

22% of children aged 6–7

22% of children aged 8–9

20% of children aged 10–11

17% of children aged 12–13

15% of children aged 14–15

##### Disability

16% of disabled children

20% of non-disabled children

##### School level

22% of children at primary school

15% of children at secondary school

##### Socio-economic group

19% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

19% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

### Child cycling trip frequency and purpose

45.4 million trips are cycled by children each year in Scotland.

The most popular reason for cycling is to visit the park or purely for fun and recreation which makes up almost half of trips children cycle each year (49%). Cycling is often far easier for children in a green space away from roads and less attractive to both children and families for journeys that are shared with traffic.

#### Annual child cycling trips by purpose

To and from school: 7,900,000 or 17%

To visit the park, playground, or cycling for fun: 22,100,000 or 49%

To see friends or family or visit other places like shops, cafés or doctors: 15,300,000 or 34%

#### Children's frequency of cycling trips in the last week, by purpose

##### To and from school

0 times: 77%

1-4 times: 13%

5-9 times: 7%

10-14 times: 2%

Don't know: 0%

##### To visit the park, playground or cycling for fun

0 times: 61%

1-4 times: 31%

5-9 times: 4%

10-14 times: 0%

Don't know: 4%

##### To see friends or family or visit other places like shops, cafés or doctors

0 times: 72%

1-4 times: 22%

5-9 times: 3%

10-14 times: 0%

Don't know: 3%

### Case study: Mark, 13 years old, Perth

I often go cycling in the hills near where I live. My parents let me cycle there on my own, because it's on quiet roads with little traffic.

I love cycling on my mountain bike because I can be in my own thoughts. It clears my head, and I have time to myself. It's good exercise, and when you get up high into the hills, it's a great view! It's really worth it.

I'm not allowed to cycle by myself on busy roads. I sometimes cycle them with my dad, but it's scary when cars are overtaking you.

I think if the faster roads had cycle lanes, it would be very good! I would feel safer than being in the middle of the road with cars.

## Walking and wheeling solutions

What would help make walking and wheeling easier?

### Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

Ideally, walking or wheeling should be the most attractive option for short journeys. The environment should be safe, comfortable and welcoming.

Positively, most children are satisfied with their local area as a good place to walk or wheel, and consider it safe to do so. However, not all groups feel as safe as others, for example disabled children are far less likely to feel safe (83%) than non-disabled children (92%).

89% of children think their local area is a good place to walk or wheel

90% of children think the level of safety for walking or wheeling in their local area is good

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

##### Gender

89% of girls

92% of boys

##### Ethnicity

92% of children from ethnic minority groups

90% of white children

##### Age

89% of children aged 6–7

92% of children aged 8–9

91% of children aged 10–11

91% of children aged 12–13

88% of children aged 14–15

##### Disability

83% of disabled children

92% of non-disabled children

##### School level

90% of children at primary school

91% of children at secondary school

##### Socio-economic group

91% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

88% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

### There are many practical steps we can take to help children to walk or wheel more

#### To help children walk or wheel more we need to ensure many of the things children need are found near to where they live

72% of children would find it useful if their school was closer to their home

80% of children would find it useful if things like parks, shops and playgrounds were closer to their home

#### Children need pavements clear from obstructions and convenient crossing points to walk and wheel more

68% of children would find it useful if there were fewer cars parked on the pavement

80% of children would find it useful if there were more road crossings

#### We need to improve road safety to help children walk or wheel more

72% of children would find it useful if there were slower speed limits for cars

70% of children would find it useful if there were fewer cars on our streets

### Parents, guardians and others with children in their household support the views of children to improve walking and wheeling[[5]](#footnote-6)

68% of parents and guardians support a ban on cars parking on the pavement

64% of parents and guardians support the creation of more low-traffic neighbourhoods

### Case study: Eilidh, 16 years old, Dundee

I travel to a lot of places on my own in my powered wheelchair.

Outside the city centre I come across a lot of problems, even just on my journey to school. My brothers can walk to school in under 10 minutes, but that route isn't safe enough for me. The safest route would actually take me half an hour, but I don't do that because I get cold and it's annoyingly far!

I come across so many problems on a daily basis. I'm very determined, so I work around everything. But it's tiring and unfair.

If simple things like surfaces and dropped kerbs were improved, I would be a lot more independent.

## Cycling solutions

What would make cycling better?

### Most children already cycle or want to start

#### How do children see themselves when it comes to cycling?

Cycle often: 16%

Cycle from time to time: 45%

New or returning to cycling: 9%

Do not cycle but would like to: 14%

Do not cycle and do not want to: 14%

More boys than girls see themselves as someone who cycles often

#### Proportion of children who see themselves as someone who cycles often, by gender

14% of girls

18% of boys

### Cycling safety and satisfaction

70% of children think their local area is a good place to cycle

70% of children think cycling safety in their local area is good

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

##### Gender

69% of girls

71% of boys

##### Ethnicity

77% of children from ethnic minority groups

70% of white children

##### Age

66% of children aged 6–7

72% of children aged 8–9

72% of children aged 10–11

74% of children aged 12–13

66% of children aged 14–15

##### Disability

66% of disabled children

71% of non-disabled children

##### School level

70% of children at primary school

70% of children at secondary school

##### Socio-economic group

71% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

67% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

### Increasing access to cycles and cycle training

81% of children have access to a cycle

##### Children's cycle ownership, by socio-economic group

84% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

75% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

**66%** of children would find it useful to have a cycle to help them cycle more

##### Children who would find it useful to have a cycle to help them cycle more, by socio-economic group

64% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

69% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

**69%** of children would find cycle training useful to help them cycle more

##### Children who would find cycle training useful to help them cycle more, by ethnicity

81% of children from ethnic minority groups

68% of white children

### Improving the environment for cycling

#### Children need safe cycling infrastructure that protects them from cars to help them cycle more

79% of children would find it useful to have more traffic-free cycle paths away from cars

75% of children would find it useful to have cycle routes along quiet streets where there are fewer cars

#### We need to reduce the dominance of cars to make cycling feel safer for children and help them cycle more

72% of children would find it useful if there were slower speed limits for cars

74% of children would find it useful if there were fewer cars on their streets

### Case study: Jack, 15 years old, Edinburgh

I've been on a bike for as long as I can remember. My mum and dad taught me how to cycle when I was only 3! It has always brought me such joy just being on the bike, so much freedom.

I like cycling in Edinburgh. I feel safe enough as I am a confident cyclist, but it's true there's still too many drivers who pass too close when sharing the road.

I'd love to see more families cycling in Edinburgh, not just on cycle paths, but on roads, to show it's just another way of getting around. If more people do it, attitudes will change. Drivers will be more aware, and it will inspire others to start cycling!

## Children's views about transport

Who gets a good deal?

### Children are worried and don't think the government shares their concerns

Transport has a direct link to accessing education and opportunity. It can improve both physical and mental health while having the potential to either positively or negatively impact the environment.

Many children worry about these things and we need to improve transport for children and their families to improve their lives.

#### What percentage of children worry about issues that affect them, their family or the planet?

41% My family having enough money

44% Pressure from school

26% The effects of climate change

30% My health including stress and anxiety

19% None of these

### Children believe having a car and money makes it easier to get around

Most children agree that certain groups, including themselves, find it much harder to get around than others.

#### Who do children believe has an easier or harder time getting around?

##### People with more money

85% easier

5% harder

##### People with less money

7% easier

82% harder

##### People with a car

91% easier

4% harder

##### People without a car

10% easier

83% harder

##### Adults

79% easier

10% harder

##### Children

22% easier

63% harder

### Children living in households on a lower income are more likely to find it difficult to access the things they need to live well

Children living in households on a lower income are less likely to have access to a car or van, less likely to live in an area with everything they need, and less likely to be able to access local places. This reduces life opportunities and can be detrimental for health and wellbeing.

8% of children live in households without access to a car or van

##### Children who live in households without access to a car or van, by socio-economic group

5% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

14% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

**58%** of children agree their neighbourhood has everything they need

##### Children who agree their neighbourhood has everything they need, by socio-economic group

60% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

51% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

**72%** of children agree they can easily get to places they need to visit

##### Children who agree they can easily get to places they need to visit, by socio-economic group

73% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

70% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

Both children and parents and guardians on a lower income are likely to think the air is less clean in their neighbourhood.

Households on a lower income are more likely to be in places with poorer air quality, often as a result of increased traffic levels.

75% of children agree the air is clean in their neighbourhood

##### Children who agree the air is clean in their neighbourhood, by socio-economic group

76% of children from socio-economic group ABC1

71% of children from socio-economic group C2DE

59% of parents and guardians agree the air is clean in their neighbourhood

##### Parents and guardians who agree the air is clean in their neighbourhood, by socio-economic group

63% of parents and guardians from socio-economic group AB

46% of parents and guardians from socio-economic group DE

## What do children want?

Giving children a voice to improve transport

### Children do not think the government does enough to meet their needs

Most children think the government needs to do more to meet their own and their family's needs. This should start with giving children a greater say in how their local neighbourhood, city or country should be improved.

53% of children do not think the government is doing enough to give them a say in improving their neighbourhood and country (compared to 25% who do)

#### What percentage of children think the government is doing enough to:

##### Ensure families have enough money to live well

20% yes I do

56% no I do not

##### Help children to be healthy

34% yes I do

42% no I do not

##### Tackle climate change

23% yes I do

47% no I do not

In the UK fewer children play out on their streets than ever before.[[6]](#footnote-7)

##### Help children to play and socialise outdoors

26% yes I do

50% no I do not

##### Help children access nature

28% yes I do

44% no I do not

People should have the choice to travel sustainably. Without this, children's transport choices are curtailed as they cannot drive.

##### Help people reduce car use by providing other transport choices

28% yes I do

46% no I do not

##### Help people without a car access the things they need to live well

23% yes I do

47% no I do not

### Children support practical steps to improve transport

Children support actions to make it easier, safer and more accessible to walk, wheel and cycle. Children also want to see more services and affordable public transport where they live.

#### What percentage of children support or oppose these measures?

79% support, while 2% oppose, making sure more things they need to get to are within walking distance

79% support, while 4% oppose, stopping cars parking on the pavement

82% support, while 3% oppose, more road crossings

78% support, while 3% oppose, reducing the prices of cycles

84% support, while 4% oppose, giving all children cycle training

84% support, while 3% oppose, more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling

77% support, while 6% oppose, creating more cycle paths along roads separated from cars

67% support, while 4% oppose, more public transport

89% support, while 3% oppose, free travel for children on public transport

66% support, while 12% oppose, closing streets outside schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up

71% support, while 7% oppose, reducing the speed of cars

58% support, while 11% oppose, people driving less

## Primary school journeys

How are children getting to school?

### Walking and wheeling are the most common modes of travel

Most journeys to and from primary school are walked, wheeled or scootered. Many children are driven to school because they live further afield, or are dropped off by parents or guardians on their way to work or other places.

#### Mode share for all primary school trips in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 51%

Cycling: 11%

Using public transport: 9%

Driven by car or van: 29%

#### Children who travelled to primary school by the following modes five or more times in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 42%

Driven by car or van: 21%

Cycling: 11%

Using public transport: 5%

### Mode share for all primary school trips in the last week, by gender

Primary school children have similar patterns of mode share, however girls appear to walk, wheel or scoot more frequently than boys for school journeys.

#### Girls

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 54%

Cycling: 10%

Using public transport: 7%

Driven by car or van: 29%

#### Boys

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 48%

Cycling: 12%

Using public transport: 10%

Driven by car or van: 30%

### Children at primary level support actions to improve transport

Children at primary school level support actions to improve walking, wheeling and cycling as well as public transport.

84% support, while 3% oppose, more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling

78% support, while 5% oppose, creating more cycle paths along roads separated from cars

67% support, while 12% oppose, closing streets outside schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up

81% support, while 2% oppose, making sure more things they need to get to are within walking distance

79% support, while 4% oppose, stopping cars parking on the pavement

83% support, while 3% oppose, more road crossings

64% support, while 5% oppose, more public transport

90% support, while 3% oppose, free travel for children on public transport

73% support, while 7% oppose, reducing the speed of cars

### Case study: Ethan, 6 years old, Orkney

I got a new bike for Christmas - my first one without stabilisers! It was a bit hard at the beginning, but it didn't take me that long to practice.

I like cycling because it's good exercise and it's fun. It's like sitting and walking at the same time, but faster, like a car. I go so fast, I don't even know how fast I'm going! Bikes are more fun than the car. On bikes we don't have seatbelts, because we're the engines of it.

We normally cycle to school and cycle back home. But only when it's a sunny day.

I'm definitely gonna need a bigger bike as I get bigger. When I'm a grown up and I cycle, I'll be a master at it!

## Secondary school journeys

How are children getting to school?

### Walking and wheeling are the most common modes of travel

In comparison to primary, secondary schools are often further away from where children live. Public transport is increasingly used as children become more independent.

#### Mode share for all secondary school trips in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 43%

Cycling: 7%

Using public transport: 26%

Driven by car or van: 24%

#### Children who travelled to secondary school by the following modes five or more times in the last week

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 37%

Using public transport: 20%

Driven by car or van: 14%

Cycling: 7%

### Mode share for all secondary school trips in the last week, by gender

Girls continue to walk, wheel or scoot more than boys, while boys use public transport more.

#### Girls

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 46%

Cycling: 6%

Using public transport: 23%

Driven by car or van: 25%

#### Boys

Walking, wheeling and scooting: 40%

Cycling: 8%

Using public transport: 30%

Driven by car or van: 23%

### Children at secondary level support actions to improve transport

83% support, while 4% oppose, more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling

76% support, while 6% oppose, creating more cycle paths along roads separated from cars

63% support, while 13% oppose, closing streets outside schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up

77% support, while 2% oppose, making sure more things they need to get to are within walking distance

78% support, while 5% oppose, stopping cars parking on the pavement

81% support, while 3% oppose, more road crossings

70% support, while 4% oppose, more public transport

89% support, while 3% oppose, free travel for children on public transport

68% support, while 8% oppose, reducing the speed of cars

### Case study: Hazel, 12 years old, Dumfries and Galloway

I live in quite a rural area. Apart from some of the country lanes, it's hard to ride my bike because the larger roads don't feel safe. I cycle on the forestry tracks as they're nice.

I cycle with my mum, my dad, my little sister and our dog. We sometimes cycle to school, and we cycle to a farm to buy eggs. We also cycle when we go swimming in the river, or to the library in the town.

My dad taught me to cycle. I remember when I was learning to cycle, and a seagull stole my sausage roll!

I don't feel safe on my bike in the town centre, or riding to town. The cars go too fast and there's nowhere else to ride because you're not supposed to go on the pavement.

My dream town would have better places to ride bikes and walk, with more trees and less cars as well.

## Looking forward

What children need to become more active

### Designing safer infrastructure for everyone

For more children to walk, wheel, scoot and cycle for their everyday journeys, we need safe and widely available infrastructure. Reducing speed limits, installing segregated cycle lanes, and improving road crossings are all changes that will benefit children and adults alike.

Many of our towns and cities are already introducing School Streets schemes to create a safer environment around schools, leading to more active journeys and reduced air pollution.

Involving children in design processes can also help create public spaces that everyone can enjoy, such as Kirkwall's Papdale East Park in Orkney – a redeveloped community space with a new road crossing to the nearby school, ensuring trips are safe and accessible.

### Breaking down financial barriers to cycling

Alongside safety, cost is a significant barrier to cycling. This report shows a near 10% gap in children's cycle ownership between the higher and lower socio-economic groups.

Aiming to tackle this, The Bike Station's Wee Bike Library in Edinburgh and Perth allows families to borrow children's bikes for free and exchange them for the next size up when needed. Bikes suit children aged 2 to 16, and families can borrow lights, a lock and a helmet, and obtain free repairs.

More schemes like this will enable more children to get around actively and independently – and at a low cost to families. Cycling is cheaper than running a car. Investing in the support that families need to access cycling, helps alleviate transport poverty.

### Supporting children to form healthy, climate-positive travel habits

Active children are healthier children. Choosing to walk, wheel and cycle is also a way for children to take climate action, helping combat eco-anxiety.

In tandem with improving infrastructure and access to bikes, education is an important tool to provide the behavioural support children need to form healthy, zero-carbon travel habits that they can continue into adulthood.

Sustrans' IBike programme has been running for 15 years, providing cycle skills to pupils across Scotland as part of a whole-school approach encouraging more active travel. Research published by Sustrans in 2024 found that pupils attending schools with programmes like IBike are walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling more than the national averages.

Aligning with the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence as a way of supporting Learning for Sustainability, active travel can provide schools with links to key themes of outdoor learning, sustainable development and global citizenship.

### Changing hearts and minds to achieve net zero

As well as supporting children to take up active travel, there is an urgency for parents and guardians to rethink their everyday travel habits.

Domestic transport remains the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. To meet our climate commitment of net zero by 2045, our reliance on the car for short everyday journeys needs to change quickly.

For families who have available options to walk, cycle or take public transport, choosing these over the car, even if occasionally, makes a positive impact by saving emissions.

By making these changes, parents and guardians can encourage their children to think differently and make sustainable travel their instinctive first choice, as they grow up.

### Addressing rural challenges

Creating a shift in everyday travel behaviours is even more challenging in rural communities, where many people need a car to access essential services. However, it is still both possible and important to provide safe rural links for people to walk, wheel and cycle.

Opened in June 2023, a new 6km off-road shared-use path between the town of Peebles and the village of Eddleston in the Borders now provides a convenient and accessible route for local people of all ages to walk, wheel and cycle between the settlements – connecting communities and services.

This report shows children in Scotland support more schemes like this – 84% said they would like more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling. Prioritising this going forward will help all children in Scotland, no matter where they live, to lead active lives.

## Notes on methodology:

The online behaviour and attitudinal survey was conducted from 22 August–1 September 2024 by international online research group YouGov.

The survey is representative of all children aged 6–15 years old in Scotland, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

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.

More information is available at [www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index)

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

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

Join us on our journey. [www.sustrans.org.uk](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/)

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The Children's Walking and Cycling Index Scotland has been funded by Transport Scotland and sponsored by Halfords. The project is co-ordinated by Sustrans.

1. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. NRS 2023 mid-year population estimates. Ages 6–15 years old. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Includes children who are home-schooled. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Group C1 is supervisory/clerical and students. Group C2 is skilled manual. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Parents and guardian data is a subset of respondents (aged 16+ years) with children in the household taken from the 2023 Walking and Cycling Index Scotland aggregated data set. This may include other people, for example siblings or grandparents. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Save the Children, 2022. Summer of Play Survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)