



**North East Combined Authority**

# **Walking and Cycling Index 2025**



# Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling



**Kim McGuinness**  
North East Mayor

**We know that active travel, whether walking, wheeling or cycling, is key to delivering a green, integrated transport network that works for everyone.**

It improves health, air quality and the places we live. All seven local authorities featured in this report - Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland - are working to transform how we travel, with a pledge to build more than 100km of better cycling and walking routes across the region by 2027, and it's just the start of our plans. Better transport means better opportunity.

Walking, wheeling and cycling must be the natural, safe and inclusive way for people to make everyday journeys. Making active travel accessible to everyone - especially women and girls, is crucial if we are to see continued growth in participation.

The seven authorities have worked with Walk Wheel Cycle Trust on this report, which highlights where we are now, and the barriers that remain, particularly for children travelling to school. It is important that active travel is inclusive for people of all ages and abilities. Through ongoing investment and external funding, we're improving active travel infrastructure, delivering cycle training and promoting active travel across our communities. Working with regional partners, we will continue to deliver on the aims of our Local Transport Plan.

Our towns, cities and neighbourhoods must support safe and easy walking, wheeling and cycling for all, through high quality, joined up infrastructure. This will help more people choose active travel, or combine it with public transport for longer trips. Developing our transport network in this way, alongside training and promotion, will strengthen our economy, improve accessibility, reduce inequalities and create cleaner air for everyone across our region.

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## Contents

Headlines	4
Walking and wheeling	6
Cycling	8
Benefits of walking and wheeling	10
Benefits of cycling	12
Walking and wheeling solutions	14
Cycling solutions	16
Neighbourhood solutions	18
Developing the region	20
Looking forward	22



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## The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index is the biggest assessment of walking, wheeling and cycling in the UK and Ireland. It is delivered by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) in collaboration with 22 regional and local partners. Each area reports on the progress made towards making walking, wheeling and cycling a more attractive, everyday way to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years. This is the first report from the North East Combined Authority. The data in this report comes from 2025 and includes local walking, wheeling and cycling data, modelling and an independent, demographically representative survey of 1,562 residents aged 16 or above. The survey was conducted from March to June 2025. Social research organisation NatCen conducted the survey, which is representative of all residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

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

More details on all reports and an interactive data tool to explore the data in more depth can be found at [www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](http://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index)



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## Defining wheeling

Some people who use 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.

## Headlines

# North East Combined Authority

Population<sup>[i]</sup>

**2,047,820**

**1,703,281 adults**

**344,539 children**

Survey area

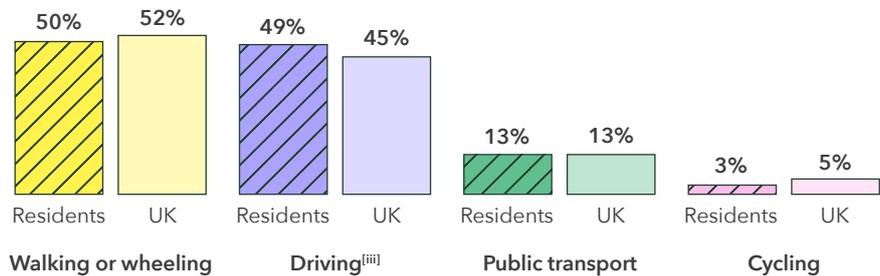


## Frequency of different modes of travel

Walking and wheeling as well as driving are the most common modes of travel amongst residents in the North East.

i. ONS mid-year 2024 population estimates. This is the most recent available for the North East Combined Authority.

Residents who travel by the following modes five or more days a week in the region compared with other parts of the UK<sup>[ii]</sup>



ii. UK aggregate is calculated using all participating UK Walking and Cycling Index areas.  
iii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle.

## Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

Residents' travel choices and their perceptions of walking, wheeling and cycling sometimes vary widely between different groups.

**50%**

of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

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

42% of disabled people

53% of non-disabled people

**11%**

of residents cycle at least once a week

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week<sup>[iv]</sup>

6% of women

17% of men

## Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

63% of disabled people

74% of non-disabled people

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to cycle in their local area

45% of women

50% of men

Proportion of residents who feel welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets of their neighbourhood<sup>[v]</sup>

62% of socio-economic group DE

79% of socio-economic group AB

iv. See footnote on page 6.

v. Socio-economic groups AB are managerial while groups DE are manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment. See page 6 for full definitions.

## Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

Based on modelling of survey data, every year, walking, wheeling and cycling:

prevents  
**4,978**  
serious long-term  
health conditions

creates  
**£1.57 billion**  
in economic benefit for  
individuals and the region

saves  
**60,000 tonnes**  
of greenhouse gas emissions

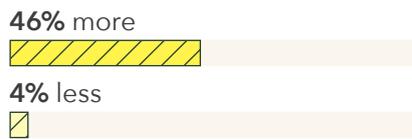
Walking, wheeling and cycling reduces congestion by taking up to 400,000 cars off the roads every day.

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

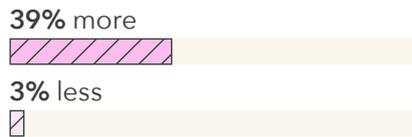
Percentage of residents who would like to use different types of transport more or less in the future:

22% of residents want to drive less. 40% of residents agree that they often use a car because no other transport options are available.

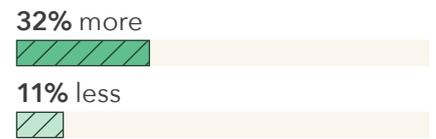
Walk or wheel



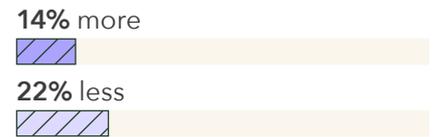
Cycle



Take public transport

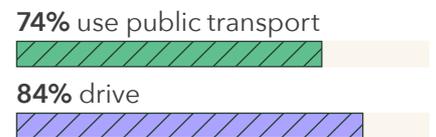
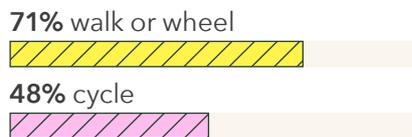


Drive



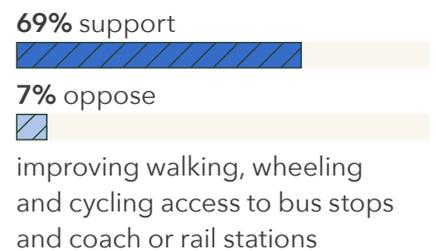
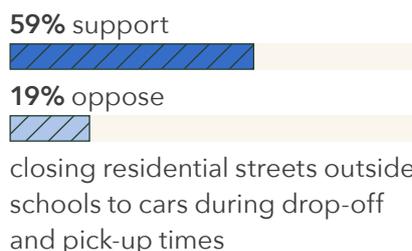
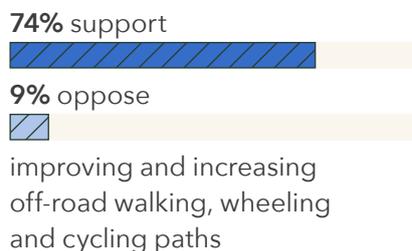
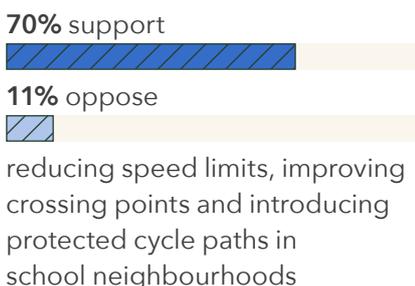
## Cycling is seen as less safe than other forms of transport

Percentage of residents who think it's safe in their local area to:



## Residents support more connected neighbourhoods

49% of residents support shifting investment from road-building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. 20% oppose such a shift.



vi. Local places with services and amenities nearby your home are often known as 20-minute neighbourhoods.

## Walking and wheeling

# Participation, safety and satisfaction

### Walking and wheeling participation

Walking and wheeling is the most common mode of travel for short journeys and is vital for travelling to and from public transport.

Encouragingly, the majority of residents feel it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area and think it is a good place to walk or wheel.

**92%**  
of all residents  
walk or wheel

**50%**  
of all residents  
walk or wheel  
at least five  
days a week

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

#### Gender and sexuality<sup>[i]</sup>

47% of women



52% of men



57% of LGBTQ+ people



49% of non-LGBTQ+ people



#### Ethnicity

55% of people from ethnic minority groups

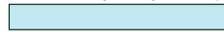


49% of white people



#### Age

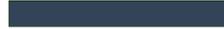
53% of people aged 16-25



47% of people aged 26-35



53% of people aged 36-45



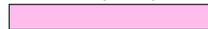
46% of people aged 46-55



51% of people aged 56-65

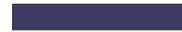


49% of people aged 66+



#### Disability

42% of disabled people

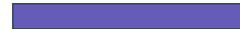


53% of non-disabled people

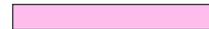


#### Socio-economic group<sup>[iii]</sup>

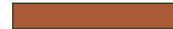
56% of AB (professional and managerial)



49% of C1 (supervisory/ clerical and students)



40% of C2 (skilled manual)



48% of DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)



i. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' was too low to be statistically significant and is not shown.  
ii. Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society.

## Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

**71%**

of all residents think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

**52%**

of all residents think it's safe for children to walk or wheel in their local area

**72%**

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

### Proportion of residents who think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

#### Gender and sexuality

71% of women



71% of men



70% of LGBTQ+ people

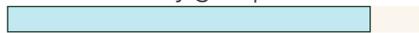


71% of non-LGBTQ+ people

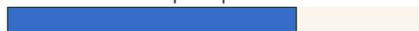


#### Ethnicity

88% of people from ethnic minority groups

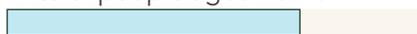


70% of white people

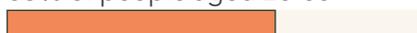


#### Age

71% of people aged 16-25



65% of people aged 26-35



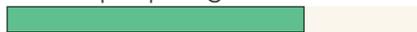
74% of people aged 36-45



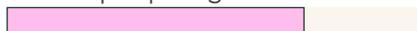
73% of people aged 46-55



72% of people aged 56-65



72% of people aged 66+



#### Disability

63% of disabled people

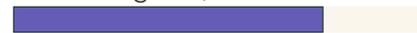


74% of non-disabled people

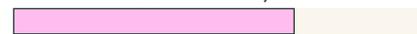


#### Socio-economic group

75% of AB (professional and managerial)



68% of C1 (supervisory/ clerical and students)



65% of C2 (skilled manual)



70% of DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)



### Ian

After being told he was pre-diabetic, Ian hoped walking might help him regain fitness. But low confidence, isolation and multiple health conditions made leaving the house difficult.

Working 1:1 with an Active Travel Officer, Ian began with short walks starting at his doorstep, gradually increasing distance as his confidence grew. In time, he felt ready to join a local group walk, something he had previously thought impossible.

Walking is now part of Ian's weekly routine and helps him feel healthier, more connected and in control of his wellbeing. With ongoing support from the officer, Ian has also joined a library and accessed other wellbeing services.

## Cycling

# Participation, safety and satisfaction



### Cycling participation

There is great potential for cycling in the North East Combined Authority with almost half of residents thinking it's safe to cycle in their local area and that the local area overall is a good place to cycle.

Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.<sup>[i]</sup>

**29%**  
of all residents cycle

**11%**  
of all residents cycle at least once a week

### Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

#### Gender and sexuality

6% of women



17% of men



12% of LGBTQ+ people



11% of non-LGBTQ+ people



#### Ethnicity

20% of people from ethnic minority groups



11% of white people



#### Age

11% of people aged 16-25



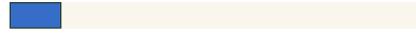
10% of people aged 26-35



16% of people aged 36-45



12% of people aged 46-55



14% of people aged 56-65



6% of people aged 66+



#### Disability

7% of disabled people



13% of non-disabled people



#### Socio-economic group

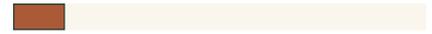
16% of AB (professional and managerial)



6% of C1 (supervisory/ clerical and students)



12% of C2 (skilled manual)



10% of DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)



i. See Bike Life 2019 UK report.

## Cycling safety and satisfaction

**48%**

of all residents think it's safe to cycle in their local area

**35%**

of all residents think it's safe for children to cycle in their local area

**47%**

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

### Proportion of residents who think it's safe to cycle in their local area

#### Gender and sexuality

45% of women



50% of men



48% of LGBTQ+ people



48% of non-LGBTQ+ people



#### Ethnicity

65% of people from ethnic minority groups

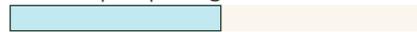


47% of white people



#### Age

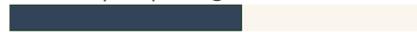
51% of people aged 16-25



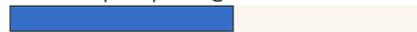
36% of people aged 26-35



56% of people aged 36-45



54% of people aged 46-55



48% of people aged 56-65



44% of people aged 66+



#### Disability

42% of disabled people



50% of non-disabled people

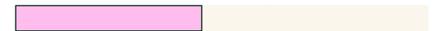


#### Socio-economic group

48% of AB (professional and managerial)



45% of C1 (supervisory/ clerical and students)



52% of C2 (skilled manual)



48% of DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)



### Elizabeth Murphy - Junior Doctor

I recently moved to Newcastle and now cycle most places - cycle lanes are better, and roads quieter, so I feel safer, and it's more reliable than getting stuck in traffic.

As a junior doctor, it's made exercising easier; it's just part of my routine instead of having to think about fitting it in around long shifts. For our communities and spaces, it's so much nicer to have less cars on the street.

I do feel safer cycling or driving than I do walking in the dark in winter. If spaces and routes were better lit, then that would encourage people to walk and cycle more.

## Benefits of walking and wheeling

# Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

### Together, North East Combined Authority residents walk or wheel 87 times around the world every day

Walking and wheeling improves health and air quality, saves the NHS money, and reduces congestion.

Residents made

**705.4 million**

walking and wheeling trips in 2025

This adds up to

**794.1 million miles per year**

or

**2.2 million miles per day**

This equates to each resident spending

**5 days**

walking or wheeling continuously in the past year

### Annual walking and wheeling trips by purpose

Enjoyment or fitness, including running (adults and children):

311,100,000

44%

Destination – such as work, school, shopping (adults):

343,400,000

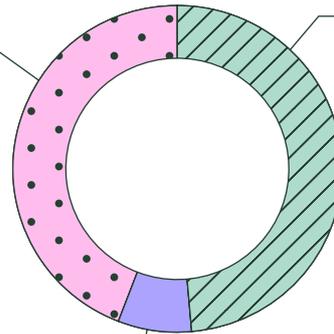
49%

School (children):

50,900,000

7%

Average walking or wheeling trip distance: 1.1 miles



### Walking and wheeling benefits residents and society

We model the costs and benefits of walking and wheeling journeys, including those that replace trips which could have been driven, using our Societal Gain model. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips walked and wheeled in the North East Combined Authority is

**£1.37 billion**

Many of these trips were made by people with access to a car. For these (excluding trips for enjoyment or fitness) our model compares the costs and benefits of walking and wheeling to those of driving.

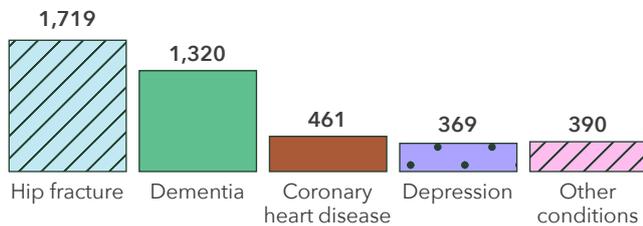
For these journeys 92p is saved for each mile walked or wheeled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **£157.6 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **170.6 million miles** walked or wheeled by those that could have used a car.



## Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Walking in the region prevents 4,259 serious long-term health conditions each year.

### Cases prevented



This saves the NHS

**£50.9 million per year**

Equivalent to the cost of

**1.1 million GP appointments**

Above figures are based on applying North East Combined Authority data to Sport England MOVES tool, which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity. 'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

The physical activity benefits from walking

**prevent 971 early deaths annually**

which is valued at

**£3.99 billion**

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

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

**110,000 kg of NO<sub>x</sub>**  
(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

and

**9,900 kg of particulates**  
(PM<sub>10</sub>, which includes PM<sub>2.5</sub>) annually.

54% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



## Walking and wheeling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By walking or wheeling instead of driving, residents save

**46,000 tonnes**

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) annually.

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

**80,000 people taking flights**

from Newcastle to Tenerife.

In 2023 domestic transport accounted for **29%** of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures.

## Walking and wheeling keeps the region moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.<sup>[1]</sup> This helps to keep the region moving for all road users.

**380,000 return trips**

are walked and wheeled daily by residents who could have used a car.

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

**1,121 miles**

equivalent to the distance from Newcastle to Oxford and back twice.

i. 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



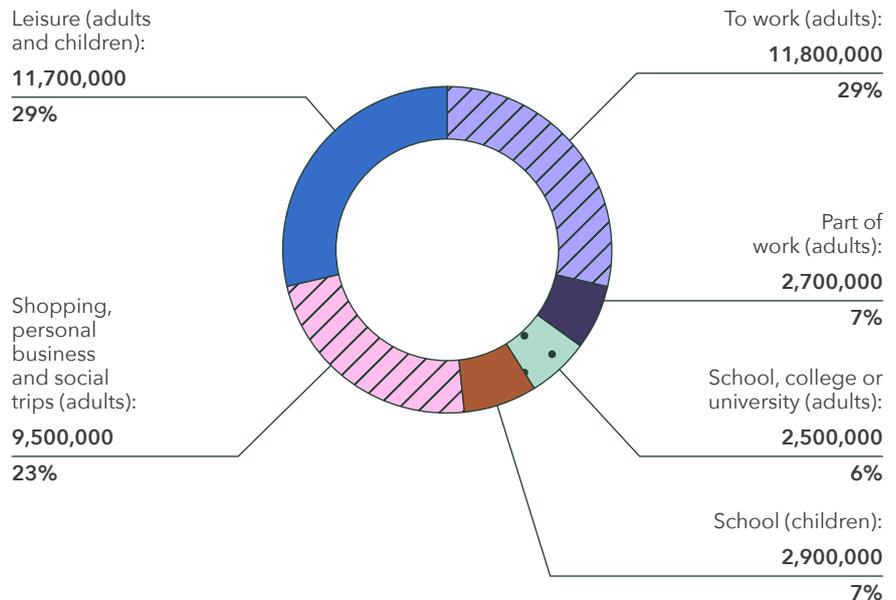
## Together, North East Combined Authority residents cycle 19 times around the world every day

Cycling can be convenient for many local trips, especially in cities and towns. It gives people transport choice and access to education, jobs and community.

Residents made  
**41.1 million**  
cycling trips in 2025

This adds up to  
**170 million miles**  
per year  
or  
**470,000 miles**  
per day

### Annual cycling trips by purpose



## Cycling benefits residents and society

We model the costs and benefits of cycling journeys, including those that replace trips which could have been driven, using our Societal Gain model. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips cycled in the North East Combined Authority is  
**£193 million**

Many of these trips were made by people with access to a car. For these (excluding trips for leisure) our model compares the costs and benefits of cycling to those of driving.

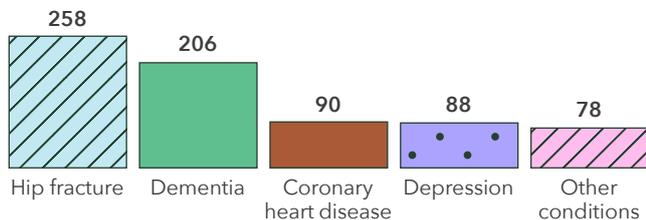
For these journeys **£1.63** is saved for each mile cycled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **£84.4 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **51.7 million miles** cycled by those that could have used a car.



## Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in the region prevents 719 serious long-term health conditions each year.

### Cases prevented



This saves the NHS

**£8.9 million per year**

Equivalent to the cost of

**200,000  
GP appointments**

Above figures are based on applying North East Combined Authority data to Sport England MOVES tool, which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity. 'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

The physical activity benefits from cycling

**prevent 66 early  
deaths annually**

which is valued at

**£271 million**

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.

People cycling instead of driving improves air quality, saving:

**22,000 kg of NO<sub>x</sub>**  
(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

and

**2,400 kg of particulates**  
(PM<sub>10</sub>, which includes PM<sub>2.5</sub>) annually.

54% of residents agree the air  
is clean in their local area



## Cycling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By cycling instead of driving, residents save

**14,000 tonnes**  
of greenhouse gas emissions  
(carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) annually.

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

**24,000 people  
taking flights**  
from Newcastle to Tenerife.

In 2023 domestic transport accounted for **29%** of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures.

## Cycling keeps the region moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.<sup>[1]</sup> This helps to keep the region moving for all road users.

**28,000 return trips**  
are cycled daily by residents who could have used a car.

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

**83 miles**  
equivalent to the distance from Newcastle to Harrogate.

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

## Walking and wheeling solutions

# What would help make walking and wheeling easier?



## New homes and existing communities should have services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Putting walking and wheeling at the heart of new and existing communities gives people greater transport choice, while reducing car dependency.

**47%**

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

**59%**

support stopping new housing developments in areas where driving is the only practical option to visit local services, such as shops and doctors surgeries

New developments and existing communities can support walking and wheeling by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live.

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

**81%**

more shops and everyday services, such as banks and post offices, close to their home

**75%**

more government services, such as doctors surgeries and schools, close to their home

**83%**

more parks or green spaces close to their home

**81%**

more things to see and do close to their home, like cafés or entertainment venues

## Residents want walking and wheeling to better align with buses

While walking and wheeling should be the most attractive option for short journeys, it should also be integrated with public transport for longer trips.

Walking and bus use is the most common form of multi-modal journey across the UK. If we are to increase walking and wheeling and bus trips, residents told us they need practical improvements to better integrate these modes of transport.



What percentage of residents would find these changes useful to help them take journeys that include walking or wheeling and the bus more often?

**75%**

more information to help them plan and take a journey (such as apps, maps, signage or public transport staff)

**69%**

more direct walking and wheeling routes from housing estates to bus stops

**68%**

accessible walking and wheeling routes to and from bus stops

**70%**

improved safety while walking or wheeling to and from the bus stop

**73%**

improved walking and wheeling crossing facilities near bus stops

**81%**

improved bus stops (such as accessible, well lit and maintained, cover from rain, display of service information)

## Residents want better streets

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

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

**69%**

wider pavements

**71%**

more frequent road crossings, with reduced wait times

**80%**

nicer places along streets to stop and rest, like more benches, trees and shelters

**73%**

better pavement accessibility, like level surfaces and dropped kerbs at crossing points

**68%**

fewer cars parked on the pavement

**68%**

less fear of crime or antisocial behaviour in their area



## Northumberland County Council are investing in young cyclists

Keen to encourage a love of cycling from a young age, and to combat access to cycles, Northumberland County Council has set up a series of balance bike libraries across the county.

Housed in libraries, in Berwick, Ashington, Bedlington and Hexham, schools can loan a fleet of balance bikes, for free, complete with an easy to follow 'how to' guide.

We hope that this opportunity will ignite a love of cycling which can be further supported through Bikeability cycle training.

The latest addition to the Balance Bike libraries has been set up as a recreational balance bike library in Walltown Country Park, where cyclists can make the most of the new surfacing, what a stunning place to ride!

## Cycling solutions

# What would make cycling better?

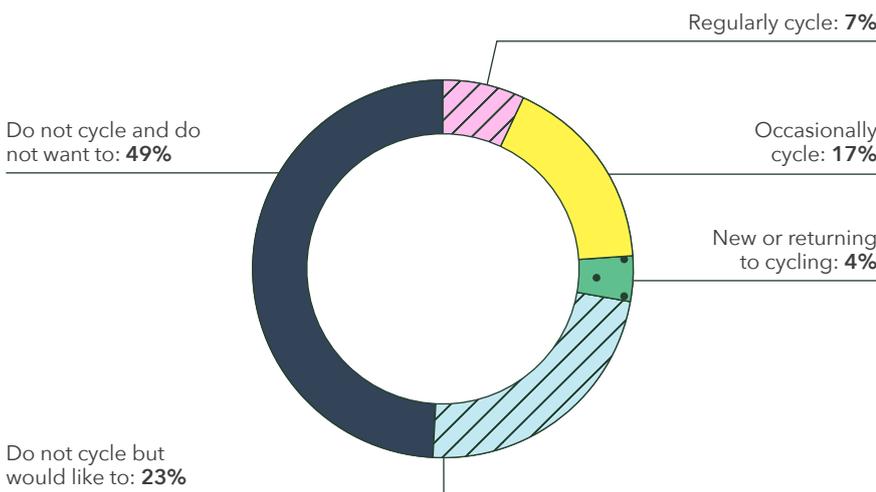


### Many residents want to cycle

There is considerable appetite to start cycling from residents who don't already.

To meet this demand we must address safety, ensuring people have dedicated space for cycling, as well as supporting access to a cycle, training, cycle parking, and better integration of cycling with public transport.

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



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

21% of women

42% of people from ethnic minority groups

23% of disabled people

### Residents want more support to cycle

#### What percentage of residents think that these kinds of support would help them start cycling or to cycle more?

**47%**  
access to a bicycle

**42%**  
access to an electric cycle

**29%**  
access to a cargo cycle with space to carry children or shopping

**23%**  
access to an adapted cycle, like a tricycle or handcycle

**41%**  
access or improvements to a city cycle hiring scheme

**48%**  
access to secure cycle parking at or near home

**38%**  
cycling training courses and organised social rides

#### Proportions of residents with access to an adult cycle

49% of all residents

41% of socio-economic group DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)

59% of socio-economic group AB (professional and managerial)

## Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

People want networks of dedicated and safe cycle paths, cycle parking and better integration with public transport.

In the region there are:

**568 miles**  
of traffic-free  
cycle paths away  
from the road<sup>i</sup>

**18 miles**  
of cycle paths  
physically  
separated  
from traffic and  
pedestrians<sup>ii</sup>

**37 miles**  
of signposted  
routes along  
quieter streets<sup>iii</sup>

**1,294**  
cycle parking  
spaces across  
107 railway,  
bus and metro  
stations, and ferry  
terminals

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

**61%**  
more traffic-free  
cycle paths away  
from roads, like  
through parks or  
along waterways

**57%**  
more cycle paths  
along roads that  
are physically  
separated  
from traffic and  
pedestrians

**57%**  
more signposted  
local cycle routes  
along quieter  
streets

**60%**  
better links with  
public transport,  
like secure cycle  
parking at train  
stations, bus  
stops/stations

Among residents:

**74%**  
support improving  
and increasing  
local off-road  
walking, wheeling  
and cycling paths

**53%**  
support building  
more cycle  
paths physically  
separated  
from traffic and  
pedestrians, even  
when this would  
mean less room  
for other road  
traffic

**69%**  
support  
improving  
walking, wheeling  
and cycling access  
to bus stops and  
coach or rail  
stations

i. Excludes data from Northumberland as data was not provided for this area.

ii. Excludes data from County Durham, Northumberland and South Tyneside as data was not provided for those areas.

iii. Excludes data from County Durham, North Tyneside, Northumberland and South Tyneside as data was not provided for those areas.



### Birtley Active Travel Centre

Being able to cycle has transformed my life. Living with fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis, I'd gone from being fit and active to feeling isolated and without confidence.

I was encouraged to try out an e-bike by the friendly staff at the Birtley Active Travel Centre. This made exercise manageable, as well as providing me with a sense of community.

It's now become a highlight of my week, especially riding with my daughter. We spend quality time together, enjoy getting outside, and explore new places for free.

My proudest moment was cycling to the Angel of the North, proving to myself what's possible on two wheels.

## Thriving places, centring children

Neighbourhoods should prioritise the needs and wellbeing of the people who live there and visit. They should be planned to support community, foster social connection, and be places where everyone feels welcome.

Designing neighbourhoods with children in mind means they work better for everyone.

### Improving the journey to school

Schools are at the centre of many neighbourhoods and should be part of any plan to make neighbourhoods better.

This means working with schools to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling, but also improving the neighbourhood around schools to improve pavements, crossing points and cycle provision.

59% support



19% oppose



closing residential streets outside schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times

70% support



11% oppose



reducing speed limits, improving crossing points and introducing protected cycle paths in school neighbourhoods

These are known as 'School Streets'.

**11 schools**

in the region have School Streets schemes



### Giving children the independence to roam, play and develop

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive. Well-designed neighbourhoods can give children freedom to move around, play and socialise, helping children's independence, social skills, and autonomy.

Average age when parents and carers would let children travel independently in their neighbourhood

**11 years old**  
to walk or wheel

**12 years old**  
to cycle

**13 years old**  
to use public transport

**48%**

agree there is space for children to socialise and play

Fewer children play out on their streets than ever before. Just 27% of children said they regularly play outside their homes, compared to 71% of those born between 1946 and 1964.

Save the Children, Summer of Play campaign survey, 2022.



## Residents support child-safe neighbourhoods

Adults support child-safe neighbourhoods, including traffic-reduction targets and measures to reduce through traffic and traffic speed, but this must be done fairly.

**32%**

of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles

**56%**

support setting traffic-reduction targets and taking action to achieve these

**21%**

of the total length of unclassified roads in the region have nothing to prevent through traffic. This can result in rat running.<sup>[i]</sup>

Residents would find fewer motor vehicles on their streets useful to:

60% walk or wheel more



52% cycle more



**59%**

support reducing speed limits on local roads in built-up areas to 20 mph speed limits

**28%**

of the region's streets have 20 mph speed limits (excluding motorways)<sup>[ii]</sup>

Residents would find more streets with 20 mph speed limits useful to:

52% walk or wheel more



49% cycle more



## Everyone should feel welcome in their neighbourhood

Improvements to neighbourhoods must also recognise the needs of adults, for example women, disabled people and people from ethnic minority groups.

**55%**

agree they regularly chat to their neighbours, more than just to say hello

**48%**

feel able to participate in making their neighbourhood a better place to live

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

**71%**

of all residents



72% of women



71% of men



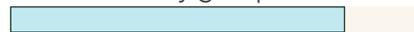
64% of LGBTQ+ people



72% of non-LGBTQ+ people



81% of people from ethnic minority groups



71% of white people



65% of disabled people



74% of non-disabled people



62% of socio-economic group DE (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment)



79% of socio-economic group AB (professional and managerial)



i. Based on analysis by CycleStreets [www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org](http://www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org). Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads.

ii. Percentage excludes County Durham and South Tyneside.

# Improving walking, wheeling and cycling



Active travel investment across the seven North East local authorities is grounded in strong regional policy, notably the 2023 Active Travel Strategy and the 2025 Mayor's Local Transport Plan.

These aim to make walking, wheeling, and cycling safe and natural choices for everyday journeys, integrating them into the wider transport network.

Delivery has been enabled through robust partnerships between the North East Combined Authority, local councils, Active Travel England, and campaign groups. This collaboration has secured around £60 million in funding to support the Mayor's vision of an integrated active travel network.

Significant progress has been made toward the Mayor's target of 100km of improved active travel routes by 2027. A devolved Design Review Panel now supports the development of high-quality infrastructure. Recent achievements include the completion of coastal cycle links in North Tyneside, South Tyneside, and Sunderland, forming significant parts of an 8.5km coastal route.

||  
**Significant progress has been made toward the Mayor's target of 100km of improved active travel routes by 2027.**  
||

Urban realm improvements have also been delivered in key locations such as Grey Street in Newcastle, connecting Durham's development sites, and Gateshead High Street. Due to the diversity of the region, tailored solutions and effective planning are necessary for urban, rural, and coastal areas, with Northumberland and Durham showcasing complex rural route designs.

Efforts to encourage active travel include community training, guided rides, secure bike parking, and tailored travel planning. Gateshead has led the development of an Active Travel Centre, offering collaborative services that promote new opportunities for active travel.



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## North Tyneside – Seafront

A high-quality, fully-segregated cycling facility with improved pedestrian space and crossings along the seafront between Whitley Bay and Tynemouth.

This high-profile location embeds active travel as a main form of movement along this route, dramatically improving the public space for people of ages.

Stretching from near Tynemouth Priory in the south, and with plans to extend it all the way to Northumberland in the North, this route has set a precedent for high quality walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure throughout the region and is part of the region's investment in a joined up coastal active travel network.



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## Gateshead – Leam Lane Library

Gateshead Council have pioneered delivering walking, wheeling and cycling activities from this local library, and contributing to a wider ambition to bring services together, including adult social care, public health, housing, the library and active travel. Bringing together these different services has improved the service offer for individuals, and improved the amount of footfall to attract new attendees to their walks and rides.

The Council have established a large fleet of bikes, including e-bikes for people to use, and have developed a team of staff and volunteers to help deliver their programme.

Leam Lane Library has become a well-established and embedded community asset in this part of Gateshead, and is having a positive impact on many local residents' lives in multiple ways.

## Looking forward

# Better places and streets for everyone



The expansion of the Walking and Cycling Index to include all seven local authorities across the region showcases the benefits of active travel and the tailored solutions required to meet the needs of our diverse communities across rural, urban and coastal communities.

The North East Mayor's pledge to deliver 100km of better active travel routes by 2027, alongside national Mayoral commitments to create 3,500 miles of connections linking schools, homes, high streets, and transport hubs, makes this an exciting time to talk about active travel in the region. A comprehensive package of measures is being introduced around nurseries, schools, and colleges to ensure it is safe, easy, and convenient for everyone to walk, wheel, or cycle their everyday journeys.

Delivering high-quality routes also means addressing cross boundary connectivity. The region is therefore embarking on an active travel network review to ensure that routes are continuous, coherent, and accessible to all. This will help build a joined-up network that connects people and places across local authority borders.

The focus of the Combined Authority is on making it easier for communities to make everyday journeys, through a connected network that integrates with public transport interchanges. Ensuring stations and interchanges are linked by safe, high-quality routes can encourage more people to choose active and sustainable ways to travel. Progress is already being made on a package of measures that will strengthen these connections.

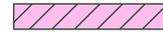
However, the focus from the North East CA is not solely on new infrastructure. Investment is being directed toward maintaining existing highways and active travel networks, as well as improving their long-term resilience and safety.

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

51% on walking and wheeling



38% on cycling



66% on buses



60% on trains



36% on trams



53% on other forms of public transport such as community transport, metro or subway, local ferry



38% on driving



**We want to make it easier for communities to make everyday journeys**

The CA are also committed to ensuring that everyone can access the opportunities new infrastructure provides. This includes programmes for training, access to equipment, workplace travel planning, and a wide range of promotional activities to support and encourage behavioural change.

The Index will provide a strong evidence base for engagement on investment priorities, helping to assess whether investments delivered in the North East are achieving the right outcomes.

Whilst Active Travel Investment is committed to 2027, planning is already underway for the years beyond - learning from current projects to deliver an effective, inclusive, and connected active travel network.



## City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement – Enhancing Active Travel

The North East’s City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) provides the platform to invest in high quality active travel infrastructure.

Over half of CRSTS was directed towards active travel to provide a solid foundation for the transport network, allowing it to be built on in future rounds of investment.

The Active Travel Sub-programme will lead to 22 projects being developed and delivered, amounting to circa 90km of high quality new walking, wheeling and cycling routes across the region.

The approach to assurance was new for the region to expedite delivery allowing local authorities to focus on design, development, engagement and delivery.

Delivering this investment package will bring substantial benefits to the region’s health, wellbeing, and environment. Access to, and uptake of, the new infrastructure will be enabled by wider measures developed in conjunction with the capital investment.

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## Notes on methodology

The attitudinal survey was conducted from March to June 2025 by independent social research organisation NatCen.

The survey is representative of all North East Combined Authority residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

All other data are sourced from our regional and local partners, national data sets or modelled and calculated by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. All locally-sourced data are correct as of 28 May 2025.

Trip estimates use a model developed by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. 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 on data sources and calculations, including strengths and limitations of the survey and model methodology, are available at [www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](http://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index)

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is the charity making it possible for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

Because people powered movement changes everything. Our health. Our wellbeing. Our world.

[www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk](http://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk)

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