

Belfast

Walking and Cycling Index 2025



Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling



Liz Kimmins
Minister
for Infrastructure

Since taking up the role of Minister for Infrastructure in February 2025, I have remained steadfast in my commitment to expanding the availability of attractive and sustainable transport options. My goal is to encourage more people to use public transport and to choose walking, wheeling, and cycling for their everyday journeys.

Active Travel has many benefits for health and wellbeing and can contribute to sustainability, reducing the cost of travel, while making our towns and cities healthier, safer, and more vibrant places to live, work, and socialise.

My Department is accelerating the delivery of high quality active travel infrastructure as part of our efforts to meet the requirements of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Achieving this will take time, but by getting the infrastructure right and investing appropriately, we can deliver a better future for all.

Significant progress has already been made on the majority of short-term schemes within the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact these projects will have on walking and cycling across the city.

My Department has also worked closely with St Ita's Primary School staff and pupils to introduce a pilot project which aims to enhance pedestrian safety, address inconsiderate parking and encourage more pupils to walk, wheel or cycle to school.

Work is almost complete on the Active Travel Delivery Plan, which will set out how my Department will prioritise and delivery active travel infrastructure in our larger towns and cities for the next 10 years and beyond. This plan complements the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan and the Strategic Plan for Greenways to provide a firm basis for prioritising delivery of improved active travel infrastructure.

I would like to thank everyone involved in producing this report and reaffirm my commitment to working with all stakeholders and partners to improve active travel in Belfast and across the North.

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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index 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 sixth report from Belfast, produced in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland with the survey work being led by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. The data in this report comes from 2025 and includes local walking, wheeling and cycling data, modelling and an independent, demographically representative survey of 1,173 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.

Across this report we have included 2023 results for information. Note that no tests for statistically significant change between years have been carried out.

Our thanks to the people of Belfast 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



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

Belfast

Population^[i]

352,390

286,598 adults
65,792 children

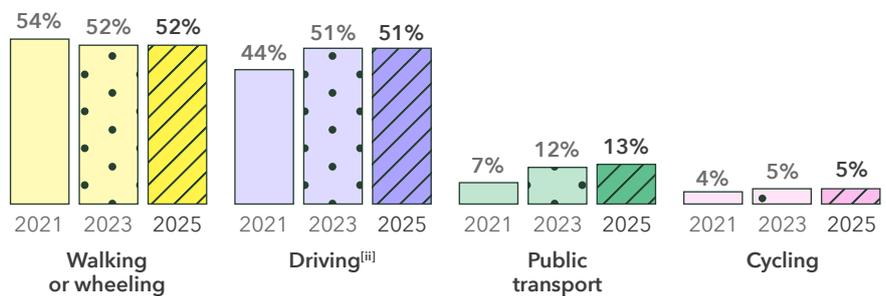
Survey area



Frequency of different modes of travel

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

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



i. NISRA mid-year 2024 population estimates. This is the most recent available for Belfast.

ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle.

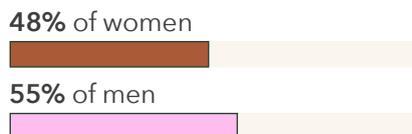
Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

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

52%

of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

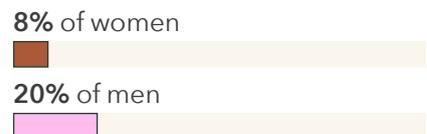
Proportion of residents who walk or wheel at least five days a week^[iii]



14%

of residents cycle at least once a week

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week



Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

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



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



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



iii. See footnote on page 6.

iv. 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
860

serious long-term
health conditions

creates
£332.4 million
in economic benefit for
individuals and the city

saves
17,000 tonnes
of greenhouse gas emissions

Walking, wheeling and cycling reduces congestion by taking up to 97,000 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:

29% of residents want to drive less. 43% of residents agree that they often use a car because no other transport options are available.

Walk or wheel

53% more



4% less



Cycle

44% more



3% less



Take public transport

42% more



8% less



Drive

14% more



29% less



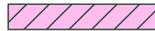
Cycling is seen as less safe than other forms of transport

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

69% walk or wheel



36% cycle



76% use public transport



80% drive



Residents support more connected neighbourhoods

54% of residents support shifting investment from road-building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. 19% oppose such a shift.

68% support



13% oppose



stopping vehicles parking on the pavement

81% support



6% oppose



improving and increasing off-road walking, wheeling and cycling paths

76% support



6% oppose



improving walking, wheeling and cycling access to bus stops and coach or rail stations

74% support



10% oppose



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

56% support



19% oppose



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

79% support



6% oppose



having shops, schools, green space and public transport within a short walk or wheel of their home^[v]

v. 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

Overall in Belfast the number of residents walking and wheeling at least five days a week has stayed the same since 2023.

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.

93%

of all residents walk or wheel

94% in 2023

52%

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

52% in 2023

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

Gender and sexuality^[i]

48% of women



52% in 2023

55% of men



52% in 2023

56% of LGBTQ+ people



59% in 2023

51% of non-LGBTQ+ people



50% in 2023

Ethnicity

48% of people from ethnic minority groups



53% in 2023

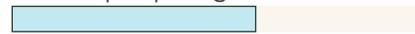
52% of white people



52% in 2023

Age

59% of people aged 16-25



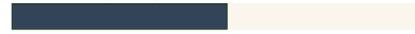
55% in 2023

53% of people aged 26-35



48% in 2023

52% of people aged 36-45



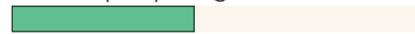
54% in 2023

53% of people aged 46-55



54% in 2023

44% of people aged 56-65



49% in 2023

47% of people aged 66+



50% in 2023

Disability

43% of disabled people



44% in 2023

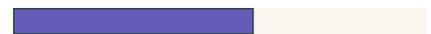
55% of non-disabled people



55% in 2023

Socio-economic group^[iii]

58% of AB



56% in 2023

52% of C1



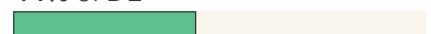
52% in 2023

39% of C2



42% in 2023

44% of DE



48% in 2023

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. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Group C1 is supervisory/clerical and students. Group C2 is skilled manual. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment.

Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

69%

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

58% in 2023

45%

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

46% in 2023

73%

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

70% in 2023

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

Gender and sexuality

68% of women



57% in 2023

71% of men



61% in 2023

67% of LGBTQ+ people



53% in 2023

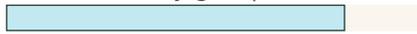
69% of non-LGBTQ+ people



60% in 2023

Ethnicity

82% of people from ethnic minority groups



70% in 2023

68% of white people



58% in 2023

Age

71% of people aged 16-25



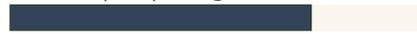
52% in 2023

72% of people aged 26-35



55% in 2023

73% of people aged 36-45



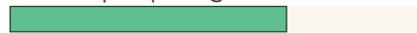
60% in 2023

68% of people aged 46-55



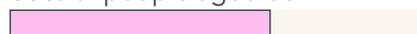
60% in 2023

67% of people aged 56-65



64% in 2023

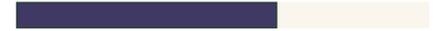
63% of people aged 66+



63% in 2023

Disability

63% of disabled people



52% in 2023

71% of non-disabled people



61% in 2023

Socio-economic group

71% of AB



67% in 2023

72% of C1



54% in 2023

48% of C2



62% in 2023

69% of DE



46% in 2023



Hannah Sloane

I live just outside Belfast City Centre and commute regularly to the Cathedral Quarter. When I first moved here, I drove everywhere, assuming it would be easiest. Sitting in traffic soon proved otherwise, so I switched to the bus—and now enjoy a refreshing 20-minute walk as part of my daily routine.

It's a simple way to stay active, clear my head, and avoid the stress of driving. Walking home after work helps me unwind and reconnect with the city. Belfast's improved transport options make this balance of walking and commuting easy and rewarding.

Cycling

Participation, safety and satisfaction



Cycling participation

Currently, 14% of Belfast residents cycle at least once a week.

Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.^[i]

The potential for cycling is huge, and unlocking it depends on providing safe, dedicated space for cycling.

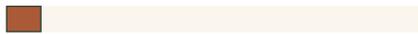
31%
of all residents cycle
32% in 2023

14%
of all residents cycle at least
once a week
12% in 2023

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

Gender and sexuality

8% of women



7% in 2023

20% of men



16% in 2023

17% of LGBTQ+ people



19% in 2023

14% of non-LGBTQ+ people



10% in 2023

Ethnicity

9% of people from ethnic minority groups



14% in 2023

14% of white people



12% in 2023

Age

16% of people aged 16-25



13% in 2023

12% of people aged 26-35



13% in 2023

20% of people aged 36-45



17% in 2023

17% of people aged 46-55



12% in 2023

14% of people aged 56-65



9% in 2023

7% of people aged 66+



8% in 2023

Disability

8% of disabled people



8% in 2023

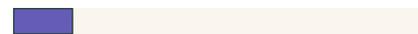
16% of non-disabled people



14% in 2023

Socio-economic group

14% of AB



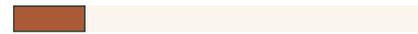
13% in 2023

15% of C1



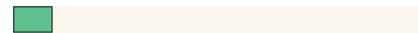
11% in 2023

17% of C2



8% in 2023

9% of DE



13% in 2023

i. See Bike Life 2019 Belfast report.

Cycling safety and satisfaction

36%

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

35% in 2023

27%

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

29% in 2023

37%

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

37% in 2023

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

Gender and sexuality

32% of women



31% in 2023

42% of men



39% in 2023

26% of LGBTQ+ people



35% in 2023

36% of non-LGBTQ+ people



37% in 2023

Ethnicity

51% of people from ethnic minority groups



55% in 2023

35% of white people



34% in 2023

Age

47% of people aged 16-25



38% in 2023

34% of people aged 26-35



36% in 2023

41% of people aged 36-45



35% in 2023

37% of people aged 46-55



32% in 2023

32% of people aged 56-65



30% in 2023

29% of people aged 66+



41% in 2023

Disability

32% of disabled people



29% in 2023

38% of non-disabled people



37% in 2023

Socio-economic group

33% of AB



38% in 2023

38% of C1



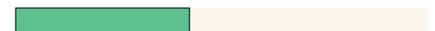
32% in 2023

36% of C2



40% in 2023

42% of DE



34% in 2023



Daniela Balmaverde

I've been cycling in Belfast for twenty years, and four years ago my family bought an Urban Arrow cargo bike. It quickly became part of our daily life. My daughter loves school runs in it, especially with the canopy keeping her dry.

The electric assist makes it easy for anyone to ride, whether carrying kids, groceries, or even bulky items. For me, cycling is the perfect balance: fast, practical, and healthy. I'd love to see more bikes in Belfast, supported by better cycle lanes and urban spaces designed for people, not just cars.

Benefits of walking and wheeling

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

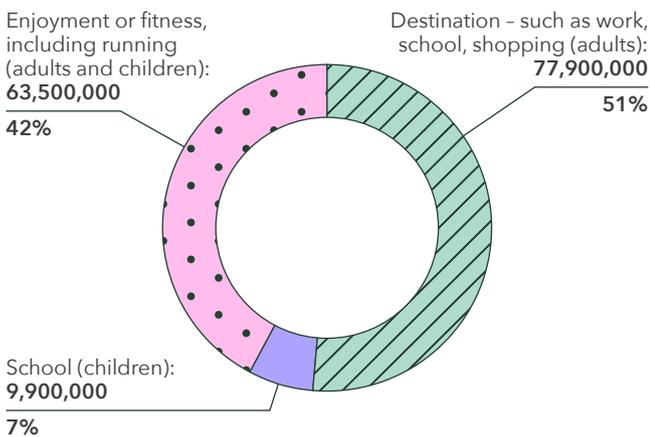


Together, Belfast residents walk or wheel 18 times around the world every day

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

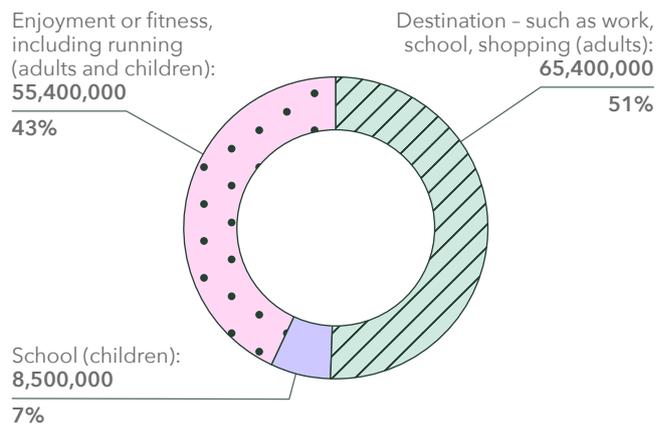
Annual walking and wheeling trips by purpose

151.3 million trips in 2025 which add up to **164.7 million miles**



Average walking or wheeling trip distance: 1.1 miles

129.3 million trips in 2023 which add up to **127.6 million miles**



Average walking or wheeling trip distance: 1.0 mile

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 Belfast is

£272.5 million

£165.5 million in 2023

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 **75p** is saved for each mile walked or wheeled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **£29 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **38.9 million miles** walked or wheeled by those that could have used a car.

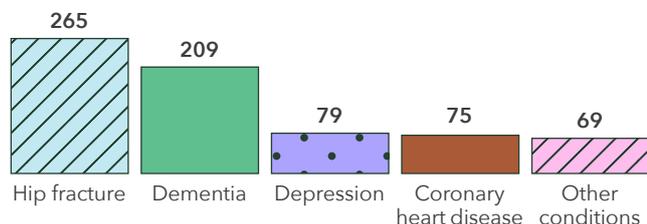


Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Walking in the city prevents 698 serious long-term health conditions each year.

585 in 2023

Cases prevented



Above figures are based on applying city 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.

This saves the NHS

£8.8 million per year

£7.3 million in 2023

Equivalent to the cost of

190,000

GP appointments

180,000 in 2023

The physical activity benefits from walking

prevent 157 early deaths annually

131 in 2023

which is valued at

£646 million

£475 million in 2023

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:

32,000 kg of NO_x

(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

26,000 kg in 2023

and

2,300 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀, which includes PM_{2.5}) annually.

2,000 kg in 2023

42% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



44% in 2023

Walking and wheeling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By walking or wheeling instead of driving, residents save

10,000 tonnes

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

8,800 tonnes in 2023

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

19,000 people taking flights

from Belfast International to Tenerife.

In 2023 transport accounted for **21.5%** of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport. Between 1990 and 2023, transport emissions went up by **5%**, while overall emissions went down by **31.5%**.^[i]

i. Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990-2023, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Walking and wheeling keeps the city moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^[ii] This helps to keep the city moving for all road users.

86,000 return trips

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

70,000 in 2023

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

256 miles

equivalent to the distance from Belfast to Longford and back.

210 miles in 2023

ii. 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

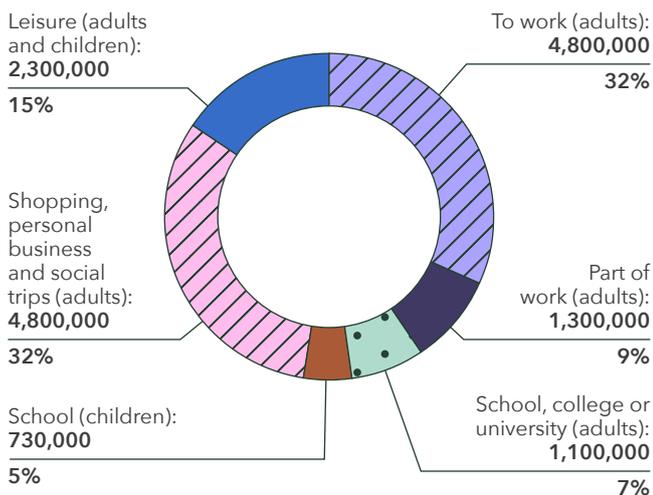


Together, Belfast residents cycle 6 times around the world every day

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.

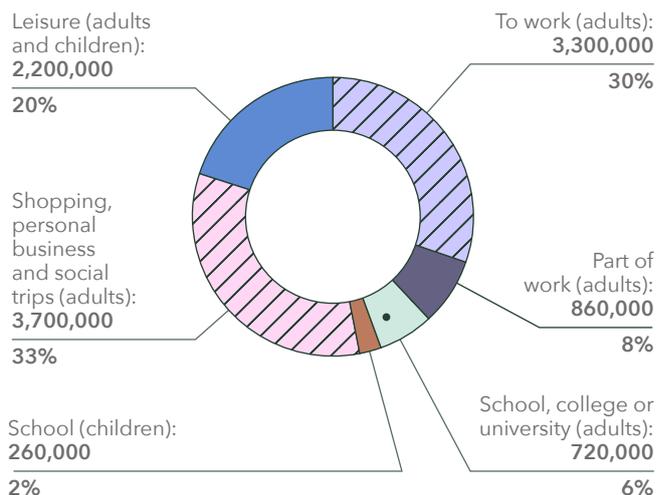
Annual cycling trips by purpose

15.1 million trips in 2025 which add up to **58.5 million miles**



Average cycling trip distance: 3.9 miles

11 million trips in 2023 which add up to **37.8 million miles**



Average cycling trip distance: 3.4 miles

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 Belfast is

£59.9 million

£39.3 million in 2023

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 **£1.45** is saved for each mile cycled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **£34.4 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **23.7 million miles** cycled by those that could have used a car.



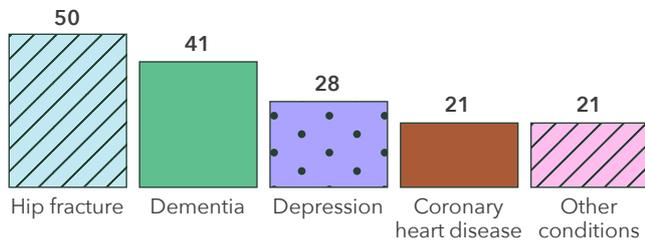
2023 model estimates in this report differ slightly to those published in 2023, due to being recalculated for the inclusion of cycling trips as part of work. See methodology report for details.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in the city prevents 162 serious long-term health conditions each year.

126 in 2023

Cases prevented



Above figures are based on applying city 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.

This saves the NHS

£2.2 million per year

£1.6 million in 2023

Equivalent to the cost of

48,000

GP appointments

40,000 in 2023

The physical activity benefits from cycling

prevent 18 early deaths annually

13 in 2023

which is valued at

£75.3 million

£46.9 million in 2023

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:

13,000 kg of NO_x

(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

11,000 kg in 2023

and

1,100 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀, which includes PM_{2.5}) annually.

923 kg in 2023

42% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



44% in 2023

Cycling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By cycling instead of driving, residents save

6,400 tonnes

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

5,200 tonnes in 2023

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

12,000 people taking flights

from Belfast International to Tenerife.

In 2023 transport accounted for **21.5%** of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport. Between 1990 and 2023, transport emissions went up by **5%**, while overall emissions went down by **31.5%**.^[i]

i. Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990-2023, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Cycling keeps the city moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^[ii] This helps to keep the city moving for all road users.

12,000 return trips

are cycled daily by residents who could have used a car.

10,000 in 2023

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

34 miles

equivalent to the distance from Belfast to Newcastle, Co.Down.

30 miles in 2023

ii. 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.

54%

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

57% in 2023

54%

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

50% in 2023

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?

80%

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

76% in 2023

75%

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

74% in 2023

83%

more parks or green spaces close to their home

84% in 2023

82%

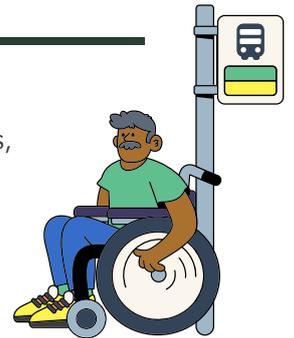
more things to see and do close to their home, like cafés or entertainment venues

80% in 2023

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?

76%

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

70%

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

73%

accessible walking and wheeling routes to and from bus stops

76%

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

79%

improved walking and wheeling crossing facilities near bus stops

86%

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?

76%

wider pavements
73% in 2023

75%

more frequent road crossings, with reduced wait times
74% in 2023

80%

nicer places along streets to stop and rest, like more benches, trees and shelters
82% in 2023

79%

better pavement accessibility, like level surfaces and dropped kerbs at crossing points
75% in 2023

73%

fewer cars parked on the pavement
71% in 2023

71%

less fear of crime or antisocial behaviour in their area
67% in 2023

In the city, for each road making up a junction with traffic lights

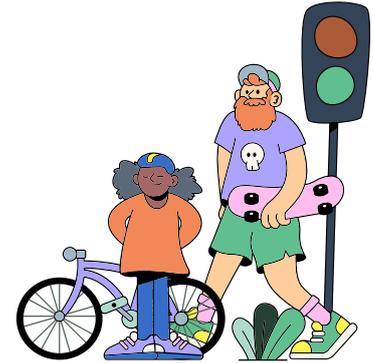
84% have a pedestrian crossing



16% don't have a pedestrian crossing



For example, a T-junction has three roads making up the junction, and a crossroads has four.



Phillip O'Rawe

I'm a freelance IT consultant living near the Ormeau Road in South Belfast, and walking is an important part of my daily life. Whether for leisure or getting around, I find walking both enjoyable and practical.

With my wife Clare, some of our favourite routes include the Lagan Towpath (easily reached via the Noah Donohoe Bridge), the Divis and Black Mountain trails, and walks around the Titanic Quarter. We like routes that combine scenery, history, and ideally a café stop along the way.

For shorter trips, I prefer to walk rather than drive, taking advantage of nearby shops and amenities to do small, frequent grocery runs.

Walking in Belfast is generally pleasant, though some junctions and parked cars can make it less pedestrian-friendly. Still, I value the exercise, fresh air, and sense of connection walking gives to my community, while helping me reduce my reliance on the car.

Cycling solutions

What would make cycling better?

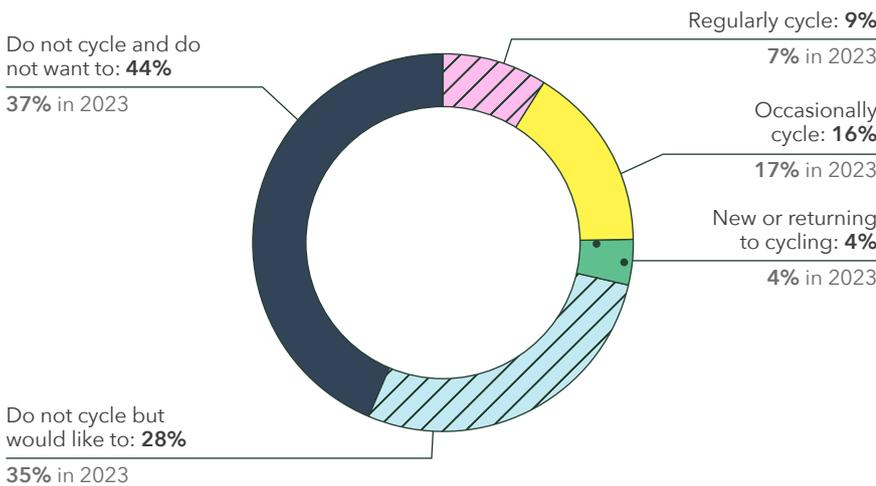


Many residents want to cycle

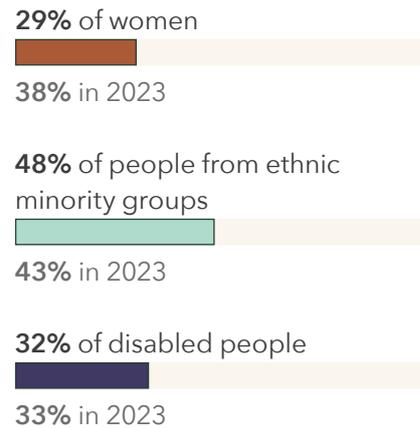
There is considerable appetite to start cycling from residents who don't already.

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?

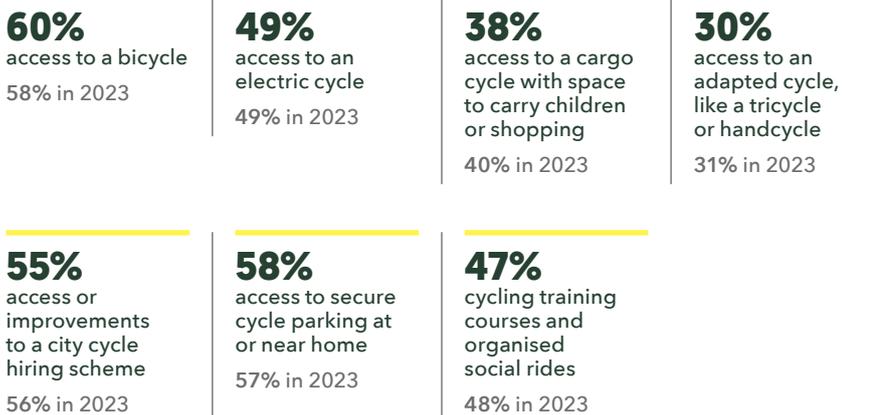


What proportion of residents said they 'do not cycle but would like to'

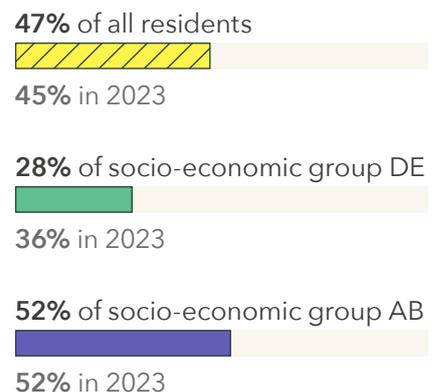


Residents want more support to cycle

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



Proportions of residents with access to an adult cycle



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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

In the city there are:

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

Among residents:

13% of households

are within 125 metres of either traffic-free cycle paths away from the road, or cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

11% in 2023

48 miles

of traffic-free cycle paths away from the road

40 miles in 2023

3 miles

of cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

2 miles in 2023

105

cycle parking spaces across 16 railway and bus stationsⁱ⁾

70 spaces across 13 stations in 2023

71%

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

67% in 2023

67%

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

66% in 2023

66%

more signposted local cycle routes along quieter streets

65% in 2023

70%

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

68% in 2023

81%

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

64%

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

65% in 2023

76%

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

i. 2025 data includes cycle parking at Park and Ride stations.



Roger Knipe, Doran Consulting

I'm the Technical Director at Doran Consulting and head of our Sustainability Group. As an engineering firm based in the city centre, we're increasingly focused on supporting Net Zero goals both through our projects and in how we travel.

We encourage our 150 staff to choose sustainable commutes, and with on-site cycle storage, showers, and changing facilities, many now walk, cycle, or use public transport instead of driving. I've always enjoyed cycling to work. It's quicker, cheaper, and sets me up for the day.

We'd love to see more joined-up, protected cycle routes into Belfast city centre to make active travel easier and safer for everyone.

Neighbourhood solutions

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 reduce traffic and improve pavements, crossing points and cycle provision.

56% support



19% oppose



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

74% support



10% oppose



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

These are known as 'School Streets'.

0 schools

in the city have School Streets schemes

0 schools in 2023



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

10 years old
to walk or wheel

12 years old
to cycle

12 years old
to use public transport

40%

agree there is space for children to socialise and play

44% in 2023

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.

26%

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

25% in 2023

68%

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

64% in 2023

68%

support low-traffic neighbourhoods

68% in 2023

14%

of the total length of unclassified roads in the city have nothing to prevent through traffic. This can result in rat running.^[i]

17% in 2023

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

71% walk or wheel more



62% cycle more



64%

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

6%

of the city's streets have 20 mph speed limits (excluding motorways)

6% in 2023

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

59% walk or wheel more



57% 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.

52%

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

51% in 2023

47%

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

42% in 2023

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

73%

of all residents



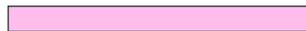
71% in 2023

71% of women



69% in 2023

75% of men



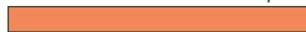
73% in 2023

67% of LGBTQ+ people



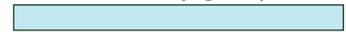
65% in 2023

74% of non-LGBTQ+ people



73% in 2023

80% of people from ethnic minority groups



79% in 2023

72% of white people



71% in 2023

67% of disabled people



65% in 2023

75% of non-disabled people



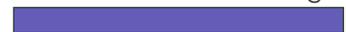
74% in 2023

72% of socio-economic group DE



56% in 2023

80% of socio-economic group AB



81% in 2023

i. Based on analysis by CycleStreets www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org. Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads.

Improving walking, wheeling and cycling



The Department for Infrastructure (DFI) is committed to providing active, sustainable, and inclusive transport options for everyone. By providing attractive travel options, they empower people to make more sustainable choices.

With safe, reliable, and accessible active travel infrastructure, individuals are more likely to embrace healthier alternatives to driving. This shift can lead to more vibrant places where traffic congestion and air quality are less of an issue, and our streets feel safer and more pleasant for everyone.

In February 2025, DFI successfully concluded a public consultation on the draft Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland. The Department was pleased with the high level of engagement, receiving over 330 responses. These valuable insights helped shape the final plan, which was published late last year.

This plan complements the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan and the Strategic Plan for Greenways, which provides a firm basis for

prioritising delivery of improved active travel infrastructure within our towns and cities, for the next ten years and beyond. The Department is updating their design guidance for active travel which will help ensure that the infrastructure they deliver is high quality, with safety at its heart and is welcoming and accessible to all.

The Department continues to work in close partnership with local councils to identify their greenway priorities and to develop a supportive grant framework that enables the successful delivery of greenways and other active travel initiatives.

With safe, reliable, and accessible active travel infrastructure, individuals are more likely to embrace healthier alternatives to driving.



Belfast Cycling Network

Since the launch of the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan over three years ago, DFI has made good progress on several schemes. Most recently, construction is underway on Lagmore Avenue, and Phase 1a of the West Belfast Greenway commenced in 2025. The Department is progressing the legislation required for several key routes, including Sydenham Greenway Phase 1, Ravenhill Road and Ormeau Embankment, Montgomery Road, Island Street, and Durham Street. A pre-planning application has also been submitted for West Belfast Greenway Phase 1b with a public engagement event held in October 2025.



Stranmillis Embankment

In June 2025, the Department for Infrastructure completed an upgrade to the eastern footway and cycle track on Stranmillis Embankment, a key route in the Belfast Cycling Network. This is one of the first schemes to benefit from new intuitive red surfacing and splayed kerbs to increase safety and usable width for cycling and has significantly improved accessibility and safety for all users, especially those with mobility aids or prams. A new crossing was also installed at the entrance to Botanic Park to provide a safe crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists.



Belfast Bikes

Beryl was announced in April 2025 as the new operator of the bike share scheme, which is managed by Belfast City Council and sponsored by Frank & Honest Coffee. Thanks to funding from the Department for Infrastructure, 100 state-of-the-art e-bikes have been added to the Belfast Bikes fleet. The e-bikes provide a convenient and attractive option for those who might not otherwise consider using a traditional bicycle. In late 2025, 300 new pedal bikes were introduced, bringing the total fleet to 400, comprising of 100 e-bikes and 300 pedal bikes.



Grand Central Station

September 2024 marked the opening of Grand Central Station - the largest integrated transport hub on the island of Ireland. Replacing Great Victoria Street Station and the Europa Bus Centre, this state-of-the-art facility is expected to support around 20 million customer journeys annually and will serve as the main gateway to Belfast. Public realm work to put a clear focus on allocation of road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport around the station is continuing.

Looking forward

Better places and streets for everyone



Eastern Transport Plan (ETP)

The Department for Infrastructure is working closely with key stakeholders to develop the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) 2035. This plan will outline proposals for the future transport network across Belfast and the surrounding council areas, replacing the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015.

The vision for ETP 2035 includes a goal to enhance and rebalance transport networks in favour of sustainable and efficient modes. A key objective is to reduce car dependency within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area and beyond. To achieve this, the plan will introduce measures that prioritise active travel and public transport, including the development of safe, coherent, and direct infrastructure for walking, wheeling, and cycling. These improvements aim to make active travel more attractive and practical for everyday journeys.

The ETP will also strengthen connections to city, town, district, and local centres, offering communities greater access to sustainable transport options. By enhancing these networks, the plan seeks to significantly increase the number of trips made by walking, wheeling, and cycling, contributing to a healthier, greener, and more connected region.

Belfast Cycling Network

Design work is ongoing on a number of Belfast Cycling Network schemes including Dublin Road and Botanic Avenue, Limestone Road and Cavehill Road, West Belfast Greenway Phase 2 and Sailortown and Ulster University active travel scheme.

In addition, the Department is in the process of commissioning consultants to commence design work on the six signature active travel schemes, one of which is Sydenham Greenway Phase 2. The design and planning phases are expected to take approximately 3 years to complete.

The Department is also starting to develop and prioritise the next tranche of schemes in the Belfast Cycling Network and will ensure that schemes brought forward are consistent with the emerging Eastern Transport Plan.

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

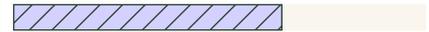
58% on walking and wheeling



50% on cycling



65% on buses



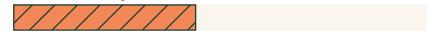
56% on trains



37% on trams



44% on other forms of public transport such as community transport, metro or subway, local ferry



35% on driving



The vision is to deliver an integrated plan to enhance and re-balance transport networks in favour of sustainable and efficient modes.

Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge

The Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will be a twin-pylon cable-stayed steel bridge spanning 143m across the River Lagan from the Lagan Towpath at the Gasworks site to the Ormeau Embankment, close to the 'Ozone' indoor tennis centre and leisure complex.

Approach ramps will be provided beyond the bridge at each end to tie into the existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. The width

of the bridge, at 5.0m, will accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists and improve linkages between communities from both sides of the River Lagan. It will also improve transport linkages to the City Centre for pedestrians and cyclists and accessibility to leisure facilities and parks for local communities and commuters. It will encourage sustainability by enabling people to choose healthier cleaner forms of transport and improve road safety to provide an alternative traffic free route.



Peter Maxwell

I cycled to work - rain or shine - nearly every day for over 30 years. In Belfast, cycling is much faster and cheaper than driving. Since retiring, I still cycle frequently for shopping and leisure.

Some areas of the city are easy and pleasant to cycle in, such as the city parks and designated cycle lanes. However, it can be challenging to navigate some of the busier roads, even where cycle lanes exist, as they are often obstructed by parked cars.

For me, the best aspect of cycling in Belfast is the freedom it offers. It's often quicker than driving, and you can enjoy the fresh air and stay fit at the same time. And contrary to popular belief, it doesn't rain as much in Belfast as people might think!

Improvements to cycling infrastructure would make a significant difference. Properly designated cycle lanes greatly improve safety, but unfortunately, many painted lanes simply stop abruptly, forcing cyclists into traffic. Reducing speed limits to 20mph on certain urban roads and city streets would also enhance safety for both cyclists and pedestrians.

For anyone considering taking up cycling, I'd recommend starting on quieter roads or exploring the city's beautiful parks and cycle lanes to build confidence. Cycling is a fantastic way to experience Belfast, visit friends, go shopping, and do your bit for the environment by reducing reliance on cars.

Notes on methodology

The attitudinal survey was conducted from March to June 2025 (and 2023) by independent social research organisation NatCen.

The survey is representative of all Belfast 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.

Trip estimates now include cycling trips as part of work for both 2025 and 2023. Previously published 2023 model estimates have been recalculated to include these and allow for direct comparison.

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

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

Funding and support

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Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is a registered charity in the UK number 326550 (England and Cymru), SC039263 (Scotland) and 20206824 (Republic of Ireland).

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