

West Midlands

Walking and Cycling Index 2021



Published May 2022



Foreword

Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling in the West Midlands



The facts are clear; cycling and walking offer significant benefits to ourselves and our wider communities; helping us clean up our air, reducing congestion, providing a cheap and reliable mode of transport and improving our health.

In the West Midlands, we recognise the need to change our car-centred society and transport system and focus on people.

Over the last two years, the West Midlands has displayed our commitment to this understanding, laying out a vision and delivering initiatives that will support and enable people living and working in the city-region to reconsider how they make short journeys, swapping to cycling or walking. I am proud that the West Midlands, out of all the areas in this year's Walking and Cycling Index, has seen the largest rise from 2019 to 2021 in the number of people who cycle overall.

But we need to do much more. We are living in a climate emergency, have a growing population and are in a health crisis; this change needs to happen now.

Change is hard. My job as the region's first Cycling and Walking Commissioner, appointed by West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, is to show our communities what's possible and the benefits of reshaping our urban centres. West Midlands residents, as this data shows, are with us and want to be able to embrace active travel; it's up to us to make it the natural first choice for short journeys.

More than anything, this is about providing people with the dignity of choice about how they get around. This year's report shows that 60% of WM residents either cycle already or would like to do so and 58% support building more on-road cycle routes, even if this means less space for other road traffic. With 41% of car journeys in the West Midlands under two miles – we are quite clearly using the wrong tool for the job in urban centres.

To challenge the status quo, we need to be bold and we need to be supported by funding to do the right thing. Collaboration will be key, and I will work with local leaders, officials and communities to embrace the opportunities that people-friendly cities will provide.

By focusing on people-friendly streets in this next decade, we can enjoy a happier, healthier and a more prosperous region.

Adam Tranter
Cycling and Walking Commissioner,
West Midlands Combined Authority



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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly Bike Life) is the biggest assessment of walking and cycling in urban areas in the UK and Ireland. This is the first year walking has been included.

It is delivered by Sustrans in collaboration with 18 cities and urban areas. Each city reports on the progress made towards making both walking and cycling more attractive, everyday ways to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years. This is the second report from the West Midlands produced in partnership with Transport for West Midlands. The data in this report comes from 2021 and includes local walking and cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 1,304 residents aged 16 or above in the West Midlands. The survey was conducted from June to August 2021 following Covid-19 travel restrictions across the UK being lifted. Social research organisation NatCen conducted the survey which is representative of all residents, not just those who walk or cycle.

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

More details on all Walking and Cycling Index reports can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/walkingcyclingindex



Defining wheeling

We recognise some people, for example wheelchair or mobility scooter users, identify with the term wheeling instead of walking. Therefore we use the terms walking and wheeling together and consider walking and wheeling to include the use of mobility aids and pushchairs.

All walking survey responses within this report include responses from people who wheel. However, please note for graph labels we use walking as a shorthand for walking and wheeling.

i. City is used as a shorthand for Walking and Cycling Index cities, city regions and boroughs.

Report summary

West Midlands

Populationⁱ

2,928,592

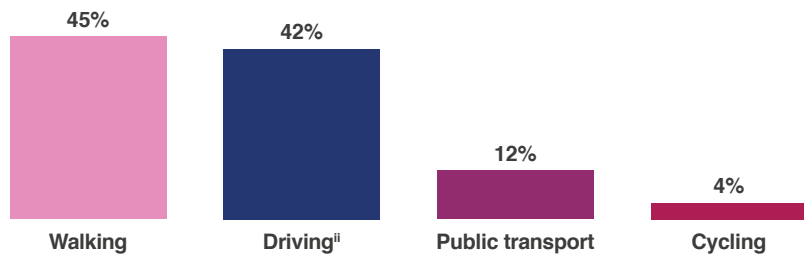


Walking and cycling in the West Midlands

During the Covid-19 pandemic, walking and cycling provided people with a safe and convenient choice for getting around the West Midlands to reach jobs and essential services.

See also: Transport use during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Department for Transport, June 2020

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



Nearly half of all West Midlands residents walk or wheel five or more days each week.

45%
of residents walk at least five days a week

13%
of residents cycle at least once a week

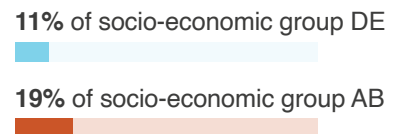
Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

People from socio-economic groups D and E walk and cycle less than those from groups A and B.

Proportion of residents who walk at least five days a week

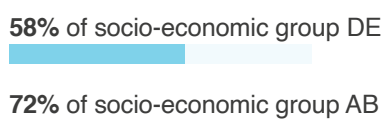


Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

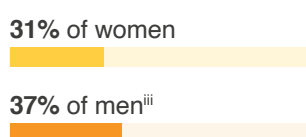


Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

Proportion of residents who think walking safety is good



Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good



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



Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment.

i. NOMIS mid-year 2019 population estimates. This is the most recent available for the West Midlands. ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. iii. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' was too low to be statistically significant and therefore is not presented here.

Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

Every year, walking and cycling in the West Midlands:

+ Prevents

5,091

serious long-term health conditions



Creates

£1.24 billion

in economic benefit for individuals and the region



Saves

94,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions

Walking, wheeling and cycling help to tackle the climate emergency

Every day, walking and cycling in the West Midlands takes up to

580,000 cars off the road^{iv}

However,

502.5 million

journeys up to three miles are driven in the West Midlands each year

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

170,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions^v

Residents want more funding for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport

Percentage of residents who would like to see more government spending on:

58% on walking



52% on cycling



64% on public transport



39% on driving

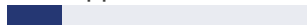


This would help support more liveable neighbourhoods

Among West Midlands residents:

58% support

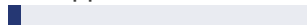
18% oppose



more cycle tracks along roads, physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

77% support

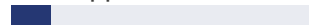
4% oppose



the creation of more 20-minute neighbourhoods^{vi}

63% support

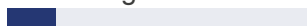
13% oppose



the creation of more low-traffic neighbourhoods

64% agree

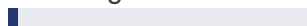
16% disagree



increasing space for people socialising, walking and cycling on their local high street would improve their local area

85% agree

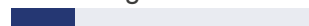
3% disagree



more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area

54% agree

21% disagree



closing streets outside local schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area

iv. Based on walking and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking trips.

v. Based upon each journey being 1.5 miles in length. vi. See definition on page 14.



Walking in the West Midlands

Walking and wheeling participation, safety and satisfaction

Walking and wheeling participation

Walking and wheeling are often overlooked in transport. This is despite being an efficient use of space, good for our health and having no negative environmental impact.

94%
of all residents walk or wheel

45%
of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

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

Genderⁱ

45% of women

46% of men

Ethnicity

42% of people from ethnic minority groups

46% of white people

Sexuality

49% of LGBTQ+ people

45% of heterosexual people

Age

48% of people aged 16–25

45% of people aged 26–35

50% of people aged 36–45

47% of people aged 46–55

41% of people aged 56–65

38% of people aged 66+

Disability

43% of disabled people

46% of non-disabled people

Socio-economic groupⁱⁱ

47% of AB

46% of C1

46% of C2

42% of DE

i. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' was too low to be statistically significant and therefore is not presented here.

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

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

64%

of residents think the level of safety for walking is good

49%

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

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

Gender

65% of women



64% of men



Ethnicity

67% of people from ethnic minority groups



63% of white people



Sexuality

56% of LGBTQ+ people



65% of heterosexual people



Age

67% of people aged 16–25



63% of people aged 26–35



61% of people aged 36–45



65% of people aged 46–55



63% of people aged 56–65



67% of people aged 66+



Disability

57% of disabled people



67% of non-disabled people



Socio-economic group

72% of AB



65% of C1



53% of C2



58% of DE



67%

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



Social Prescribing Patient



I was referred to a social walking group by my GP surgery as part of a weight loss programme because I'm diabetic and was doing less physical activity during lockdown.

Since joining the group, I've lost a stone in weight and my diabetes has improved.

I really enjoy being part of this group. It helps my mental wellbeing. I live alone, so, it's nice to have a bit of banter and a good laugh.

When I'm with the group I don't feel fazed by the weather or feel like I'm exercising. I look forward to seeing this family, if I should use the word.



Cycling in the West Midlands

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

Cycling participation

Overall in the West Midlands, more people are cycling since the pandemic, with a 3% increase since 2019. So, while there's plenty of growth potential, we're moving in the right direction.

Participation in cycling, however, is not equal. Barriers to cycling can be far more pronounced for some people. Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.ⁱ

32%
of all residents cycle

13%
of all residents cycle at least once a week

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

Gender

8% of women

18% of men

Ethnicity

12% of people from ethnic minority groups

13% of white people

Sexuality

15% of LGBTQ+ people

12% of heterosexual people

Age

13% of people aged 16–25

17% of people aged 26–35

13% of people aged 36–45

15% of people aged 46–55

11% of people aged 56–65

7% of people aged 66+

Disability

9% of disabled people

14% of non-disabled people

Socio-economic group

19% of AB

9% of C1

7% of C2

11% of DE

Cycling safety and satisfaction

34%

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

28%

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

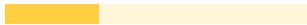
39%

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

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

Gender

31% of women



37% of men



Ethnicity

40% of people from ethnic minority groups



31% of white people



Sexuality

25% of LGBTQ+ people



35% of heterosexual people



Age

40% of people aged 16–25



34% of people aged 26–35



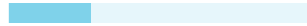
37% of people aged 36–45



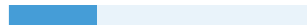
35% of people aged 46–55



27% of people aged 56–65

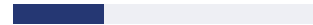


29% of people aged 66+



Disability

30% of disabled people



35% of non-disabled people



Socio-economic group

32% of AB



30% of C1



30% of C2



41% of DE



Colin, Walsall



I suffered a head injury and it drastically changed my life. Amongst many consequences, I could no longer drive due to seizures.

I purchased a bicycle from a car boot sale and my cycling journey back to health began.

Cycling to work every day, my health began to improve. Eventually I overcame my seizures, I've had none for over ten years.

As a Go Sky Ride Leader, I joined other ride leaders to take family groups on led rides. I am helping people and teaching them to ride a bicycle so that they too can appreciate the two-wheel miracle.



Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

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

West Midlands residents walk or wheel 107 times around the world every day

1.01 billion

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

971.5 million miles

= 2.7 million miles a day.

This equates to each resident spending

4 days

walking or wheeling continuously in the past year

Annual walking and wheeling trips by purposeⁱ

Enjoyment or fitness – adults and children (including running):
412,900,000

41%

Destination – adults only (eg work, school, shopping):
494,900,000

49%

School – children only:
104,200,000

10%



Walking and wheeling benefit residents and the local economy in the region

In the West Midlands, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all walking and wheeling trips is

£1.05 billion

Of this total,

£61.7 million

is from people with a car choosing to walk or wheel for transport in the past year.

26p

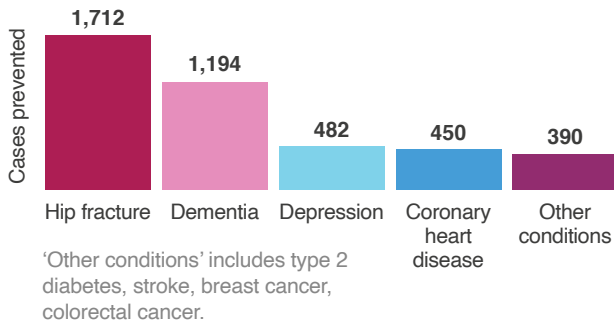
net benefit from each mile walked or wheeled instead of driven



These figures are based upon monetising the costs and benefits of driving and walking. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, medical costs, work absenteeism, congestion, infrastructure, local air quality, noise, greenhouse gases and taxation.

Walking and wheeling unlock health benefits for everyone

Walking in the West Midlands prevents 4,229 serious long-term health conditions each year



Saving the NHS in the West Midlands £28.5 million per year

equivalent to the cost of **950,000 GP appointments**

Based on Sport England MOVES tool which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In the West Midlands the physical activity benefits of walking

prevent 868 early deaths annually

which is valued at **£2.86 billionⁱⁱ**

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

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

180,000 kg of NO_x
and
26,000 kg of particulates
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

38% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

Walking and wheeling in the West Midlands help mitigate our climate crisis

66,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by walking or wheeling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of



150,000 people taking flights from Birmingham to Tenerife

Transport now accounts for **27%** of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2019, transport emissions went down by only **5%**, while overall emissions went down by **44%**.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures.

Walking and wheeling keep the West Midlands moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.ⁱⁱⁱ This helps keep the West Midlands moving for all road users.

530,000 return walking trips are made daily in the West Midlands by people that could have used a car.

ⁱⁱⁱ Litman, 2021. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

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

1,600 miles equivalent to the distance from the West Midlands to Fort William, Scottish Highlands and back, twice over.



ii. 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.



Benefits of cycling

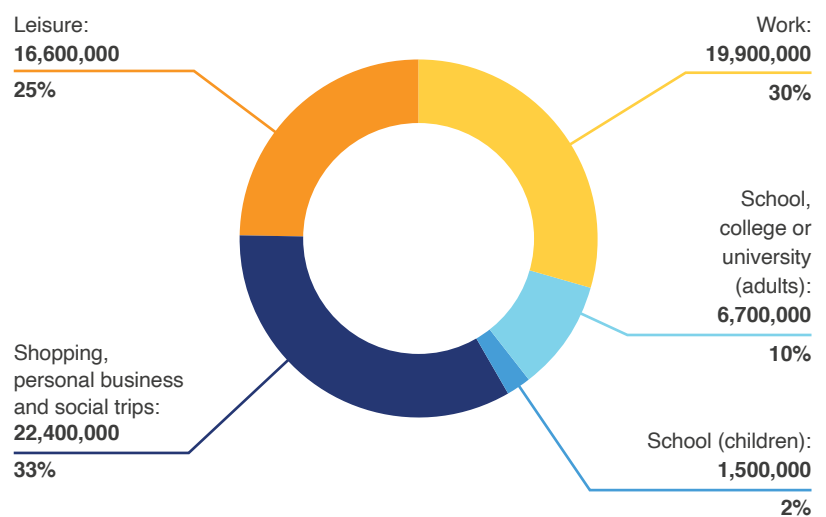
Why everyone gains when more people cycle

West Midlands residents cycle 25 times around the world every day

67.1 million cycling trips were made in the West Midlands in the past year

This adds up to **225.3 million miles** = 620,000 miles a day

Annual cycling trips by purpose in the West Midlandsⁱ



Cycling benefits residents and the local economy in the region

In the West Midlands, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all cycling trips is **£190.9 million**

Of this total, **£116.2 million** is from people with a car choosing to cycle for transport in the past year.

£1.15 net benefit from each mile cycled instead of driven

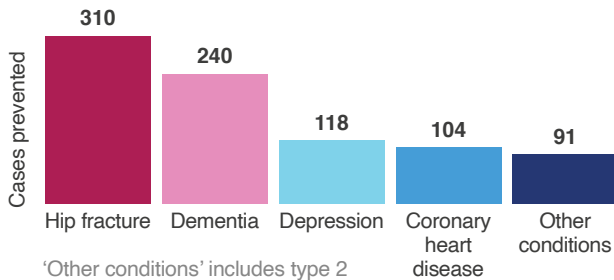


These figures are based upon monetising the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, medical costs, work absenteeism, congestion, infrastructure, local air quality, noise, greenhouse gases and taxation.

ⁱ Leisure trips include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other trips are just adults.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in the West Midlands prevents 863 serious long-term health conditions each year



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

Saving the NHS in the West Midlands £5.5 million per year



equivalent to the cost of **180,000 GP appointments**

Based on Sport England MOVES tool which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In the West Midlands the physical activity benefits of cycling

prevent 64 early deaths annually

which is valued at

£212 millionⁱⁱ

People cycling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually:

53,000 kg of NO_x
and

7,900 kg of particulates
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})



38% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

Cycling in the West Midlands helps mitigate our climate crisis

28,000 tonnes

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



65,000 people taking flights

from Birmingham to Tenerife

Transport now accounts for **27%** of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2019, transport emissions went down by only **5%**, while overall emissions went down by **44%**.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures.

Cycling keeps the West Midlands moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.ⁱⁱⁱ This helps keep the West Midlands moving for all road users.

51,000 return cycling trips

are made daily in the West Midlands by people that could have used a car.

iii. Litman, 2021. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

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

153 miles

equivalent to the distance from the West Midlands to Kendal, Lake District.



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



Walking solutions

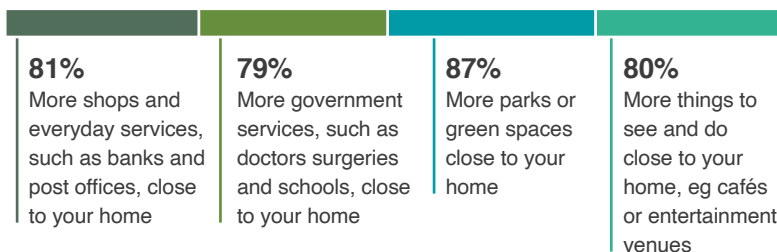
What would help make walking and wheeling better?

Residents want more services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Ideally, walking should be the most attractive transport option for the vast majority of short journeys. A city can support this by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live. The walking environment should be safe, comfortable, welcoming and attractive.

Neighbourhoods where many facilities can be reached on foot are known as 20-minute neighbourhoods. You can walk from your home to many of the things you need on a regular basis and back again within 20 minutes. This equates to around 800m each way.

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



60%

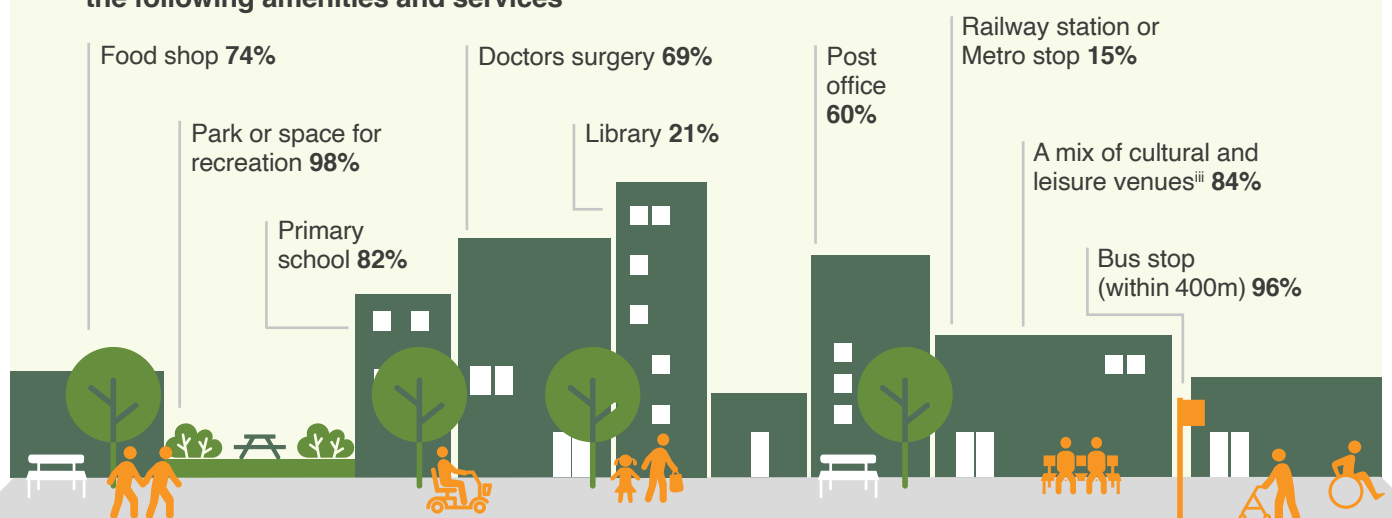
of West Midlands households are in neighbourhoods of at least 40 dwellings per hectareⁱ. These are or can become 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Lower density neighbourhoods have too few people to make local business or public transport viableⁱⁱ.

52%

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

Proportion of households within an 800m walk or wheel of the following amenities and services



i. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021, National Model Design Code.

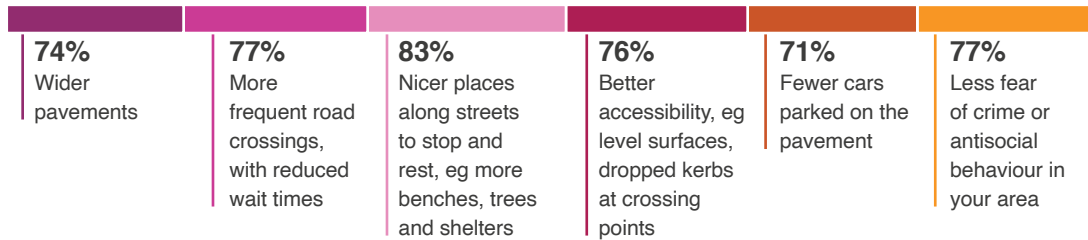
ii. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning.

iii. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, eg cafés, pubs, bingo halls, cinemas, museums.

Residents want better streets

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

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



In the West Midlands:

50%

of A and B roads have a pavement width greater than 3m^{iv}

68%

of C and unclassified roads have a pavement width greater than 2m

85%

of residents agree more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area



Better Streets scheme, Berkswell



In Berkswell, Solihull the majority of the children who go to Berkswell Church of England Primary School live outside of the village and so have to be driven in every day. Add in poor parking provision and small village roads and the school run was congested and unsafe.

Better Streets funds projects identified and championed by local communities and the local Parish Council led the application to upgrade the area, with detailed design and delivery carried forward by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council engineers. Key features of the scheme include a zebra crossing which allows children and parents to cross safely, as well as new footpaths giving safe and direct routes to the school and village centre.

At all four entrance points and within the village centre there are now traffic calming measures which again drastically reduce the speed of traffic passing through. An agreement for use of a local hospitality car park has meant that parents can park up and walk the rest of the way into the village with their children, giving them the benefits of walking part of the school run and uptake towards this has greatly increased since the introduction of the crossing facility and associated measures. The scheme has delivered not just a safe way for kids to get to school in the morning, but has made the village itself safer and more pleasant to walk, cycle and spend time in.

iv. A and B roads are main roads. C roads and unclassified roads are more minor roads and often residential streets. Pavement width does not account for obstructions, such as bus stops or litter bins.

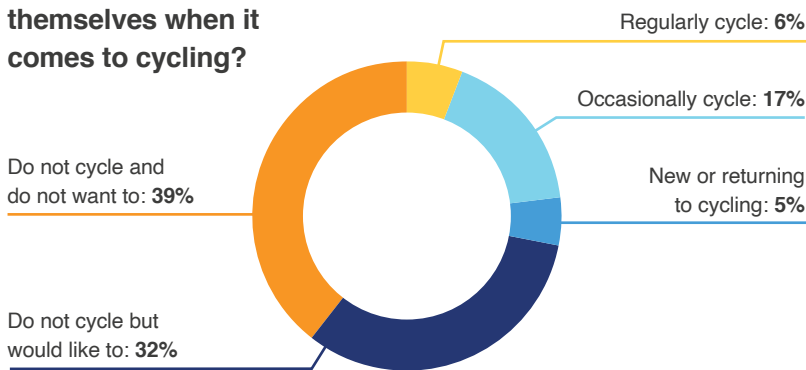


Cycling solutions

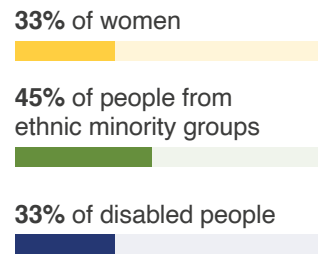
What would make cycling better?

Many West Midlands residents want to cycle

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?



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



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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



The West Midlands hasⁱⁱ

501 miles of traffic-free cycle routes away from the road

17 miles of cycle tracks physically separated from traffic and pedestriansⁱⁱⁱ

14% of households are within 125m of these routes

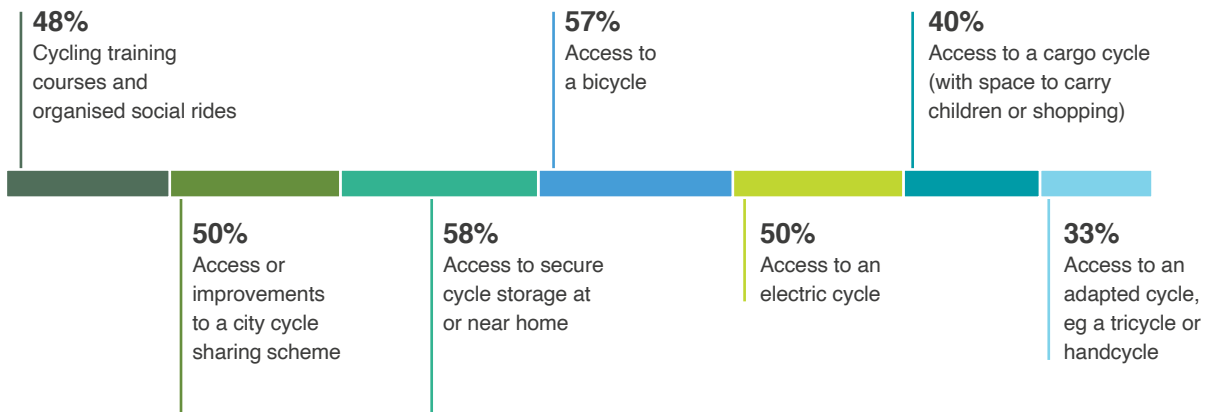


58% of residents support building more cycle tracks physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic

i. Cycle parking at railway stations includes cycle parking at metro stations, and cycle parking that is shared by rail, metro and/or bus users. ii. To ensure comparability, figures given are correct as of 26 May 2021 for all city reports. iii. This does not include 'pop-up' cycle tracks installed during the pandemic.

Residents want more support to cycle

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



West Midlands cycle hire scheme^{iv}

The West Midlands scheme launched in March 2021 and data collection for this report, comparable to other cities, runs to 30 June 2021. Up to that date, there were

1,065 pedal bikes for hire
152 cycle hire docks
68,905 trips

Latest available figures shown on page 21

Reported cycle thefts

There were **2,236** reported cycle thefts in the West Midlands in 2020/21.

For every **478** people who own an adult cycle in the West Midlands, there was **1** reported cycle theft in the past year.

Cycle access

46% of residents have access to an adult pedal cycle

16% of households are within 800m of a cycle shop^v



There is a public cycle parking space for every **107** people who cycle in the West Midlands.



Algar, Sutton Coldfield



I started using West Midlands Cycle Hire this year, having not cycled since my children were young.

I found the bikes really easy to use straight away and attended a cycling skills session to build my confidence back up, which was really helpful. I fell off the first time but just jumped straight back on!

It's amazing, it just comes back naturally. It's easy and it's really nice being out in the fresh air.

Now, I'm in the park three times a week and use those times to just regenerate and refresh; I find it so good for my mental health and it allows me to think with clarity. I feel so much younger again.

iv. Serco cycle hire data.

v. Credit to the Association of Cycle Traders (ACT) and Cycling UK for their assistance with cycle shop locations and services offered.



Neighbourhood solutions

What would help make neighbourhoods better?

All residents should feel welcome in their neighbourhood

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

59% of residents



57% of women



63% of people from ethnic minority groups



61% of men



57% of white people



51% of disabled people



45% of LGBTQ+ people



52% of socio-economic group DE



62% of non-disabled people



61% of heterosexual people



69% of socio-economic group AB



The dominance of motor vehicles can discourage walking, wheeling and cycling

Only 27% of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles.

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

67% Walk more



61% Cycle more



Unclassified roads are not designed to carry through-traffic, but in the West Midlands 30% of their total length has nothing to prevent it. This can result in rat-runningⁱ

54% agree that restricting through-traffic on local residential streets would make their area a better place.

9% of the West Midlands' streets have 20mph speed limits.ⁱⁱ

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

57% Walk more



54% Cycle more



Residents want local streets to be better spaces for people to spend time in

64%

agree increasing space for people socialising, walking and cycling on their local high street would improve their local area

52%

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

63%

support low-traffic neighbourhoods

i. Based on analysis by CycleStreets www.lowtrafficeighbourhoods.org.

Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads.

ii. Excludes motorways.

Neighbourhoods must be designed with children in mind

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive: to grow up in, live their lives in and grow old in. Increasing independence, providing space to play and socialise, and improving the journey to school are all important.

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

13 years old

average age when people living with children would let them walk or cycle independently in their neighbourhood.

Over **80%** of seven-year-olds in Germany are allowed to go alone to places within walking distance, other than school (parents' responses).ⁱⁱⁱ

46% of residents agree there is space for children to socialise and play



63% of households are within 800m of a children's playground



Among West Midlands residents:

54% agree



21% disagree



closing streets outside local schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area

These kind of closures are known as 'School Streets'.

23

permanent School Streets schemes exist in the West Midlands^{iv}



John Williams, Governor at Corngreaves Academy, Dudley



At Corngreaves, it's really important that we support pupils in and out of the classroom. This includes a focus on road safety, keeping them safe on the way to and around the school gates. We are also aware of our impact on our local neighbourhood and its residents. This led us to rethink how we support and encourage our students to get to and from school.

We have worked closely with Transport for West Midlands to join the Living Streets WOW challenge, which rewards children for walking some or all of their journey and has been very successful.

Through the Park That Bike scheme, we have received free cycle parking installed on the playground, meaning that our pupils now have the choice to walk, scoot or cycle to school and keep their bike/scooter safe while they learn.

These changes have given our students and parents more choice in how they travel to school, benefitting not only our pupils' health, wellbeing and fitness, but reducing congestion and improving air quality in our local community.

iii. Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015.
iv. Figure given is correct as of 26 May 2021.



Developing the West Midlands

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

Since our 2019 report we've seen an increase in cycling levels across the region. The Covid-19 restrictions and quieter streets helped to inspire people to rediscover their neighbourhoods - on foot and by bike.

During this period, there was a national shift in opinion towards active travel. This has meant greater support for schemes that prioritise safer active travel routes. Decision makers have responded with increased funding for infrastructure projects and there's a stronger commitment to community engagement too.

Recent government investment has also helped, speeding up plans to improve connections within local centres and giving priority to people over cars. In Birmingham we've seen a revolution in transport with the "Places for People" initiative. Low-traffic neighbourhoods and traffic cells in the city centre mean that sustainable transport is now prioritised over cars.

There are more School Streets too. The initiative started with three schools in Solihull – there are now 23 across Solihull, Birmingham and Walsall.

In Summer 2020, we launched the Starley Network. It's a vision for a 500-mile cycling and walking network across the region. It will link into the wider public transport network across the West Midlands and provide more safe space for people to walk, wheel, cycle and scoot more short journeys.

Mayor Andy Street was re-elected in 2021 with a promise to continue prioritising active travel. And in December 2021 he appointed a new Walking and Cycling Commissioner to help deliver this vision. Adam Tranter will work across the region and nationally to build political support, lobby for investment and help influence policy.



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West Midlands Cycle Hire

West Midlands Cycle Hire launched in March 2021. It has delivered 175 docking stations and 1,500 bikes, including 150 eBikes, across Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, Stourbridge, Sutton Coldfield, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It's a key part of the Cycling Charter Action Plan which intends to reduce barriers to cycle ownership and access. It also supports the region's wider goals of increasing physical activity and social inclusion.

So far, the scheme has seen over 200,000 journeys, totalling 530,000km. The scheme has been supported by a launch offer of a free 30-minute ride, an early bird offer and minute bundles for users. The launch of eBikes at the end of 2021 offers an even more accessible way to cycle for those new to cycling, building confidence or cycling longer journeys.

The scheme, run by Serco as part of a five-year contract, is truly made in the West Midlands. The bikes, locks and docks are all produced here supporting local businesses and jobs.



Addressing inequalities

Disabled people experience many barriers to active travel and are under-represented in cycling. To tackle this, we are delivering several inclusive cycling schemes through the Cycling and Walking programme. This includes the 'Out on Your Loan' initiative which provides people with long-term access to adapted cycles.

So far, 20 people have benefitted from training and a long-term loan of an adapted cycle. We've also sought to understand the physical, and psychological barriers participants face. Feedback on routes and physical obstructions to safer routes are helping us to understand these barriers and work to deliver ways to overcome them.

We've also increased access to the 'Wheels for All' hubs initiative thanks to the Better Streets Community Fund. This allows people to try out adapted cycles in a park setting and we have doubled the number of sessions from three to six across the region.



Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

In recent years, the West Midlands has taken huge leaps forwards in its attitudes towards, commitment to and investment in supporting people to leave their cars at home and take more journeys through active travel. But we have so much more to give.

If we want to tackle climate change, health inequality and generally provide a nicer place for people to live, work and visit, we must help people to choose healthier, more sustainable, modes of transport. We must invest in schemes that break down barriers to cycling and walking. Barriers such as a lack of confidence or the basic skills needed to ride a bike.

Our ambition is to inspire people to take up active travel at least once a week. This can have a huge impact on air quality, congestion and lead to longer-term behaviour change. So, we will provide a wide-range of options for people from travel planning support, to led rides and training sessions. Thousands of people across the region have already received support from us, and we're working hard to make it thousands more.

Starley Network

The next year will see the start of permanent infrastructure being delivered across the region. We are continuing to update plans for the Starley Network, making it grow and improve, taking into consideration increased investment in a post-Covid-19 world. Many more schemes are in the pipeline which will bring better connectivity between cycling and walking infrastructure and the wider public transport network.



We are living in a climate emergency, have a growing population and are in a health crisis; change needs to happen now.

More than anything this is about providing people with the dignity of choice about how they get around.

By focusing on people-friendly streets in this next decade, we can enjoy a happier, healthier and a more prosperous city-region.

Adam Tranter
Cycling and Walking
Comissioner, West
Midlands Combined
Authority

West Midlands Cycle Hire

The Cycle Hire scheme has been well received in the region with many people using the bikes alongside other forms of transport. eBikes have proven particularly popular, giving even more people access and confidence to try cycling or to get back on a bike. The scheme is looking at the viability of adding more bikes and docks to the West Midlands in the future and if adapted cycles could be a positive addition.

Social Prescribing

Social prescribing allows doctors and link workers to provide prescriptions for exercise and active travel to tackle health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing. A successful pilot saw over 560 patients benefit from free-to-access initiatives such as walking groups and cycle training. Next steps will see the West Midlands Combined Authority develop a plan to deliver a three-year social prescribing pilot across Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Cycling for everyone

Birmingham is set to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. As part of its Legacy, 'Cycling for Everyone' will be delivered before, during and after the Games. This will support and inspire people in disadvantaged communities to use cycling as an enjoyable way to get around and stay active.

Cycling for Everyone will address barriers to cycling in communities which are less likely to benefit from investment in active travel. It will encourage people to be actively involved in a range of schemes which help to tackle health inequality and provide a sustainable mode of transport.

The project will be community-led to identify what support people need most. We will then work closely with them to help define their local programme. Support includes things like cycle training or free bikes – or even helping those that don't know how to cycle or just lack confidence.

Evaluating the impact

"You can't manage what you don't measure" goes the saying, so we're developing robust monitoring and evaluation across our programmes. Looking forward, we will look at new technology that collects data on the benefits of delivering active travel schemes. This includes counters and on-board systems on pedal cycles and apps. This will provide evidence to support further investment into walking and cycling; investment that will improve connections for people to access local services, parks as well as education and employment.

Notes on methodology:

The attitudinal survey was conducted from June to August 2021 by independent social research organisation NatCen.

The survey is representative of all West Midlands residents, not just those who walk or cycle.

All other data is sourced from our city partners, national data sets or modelled and calculated by Sustrans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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