# Aberdeen Walking and Cycling Index 2021

Published May 2022

Aberdeen City Council

Sustrans

## Foreword

Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling in Aberdeen

As a cyclist, a walker, and a lover of the environment, of course I’m going to encourage you to read on, hoping to persuade you that walking and cycling benefits your health, the environment, the economy, and society.

But I’m guessing you already know that, right?

The good news is that active travel in Aberdeen is normal. 97% of residents say they walk or wheel and 37% say they cycle. Of course, it’s a different picture when asked about frequency, but the potential to make active travel an active choice is there.

This report is packed full of facts and figures to back up the benefits of active travel and how much of it we do already as part of our everyday lives. I believe that the changes in the past two years mean that we can make active travel much more of a reality now than we ever thought possible.

Why?

We can now imagine what our lives could be like based on our experiences of the pandemic:

Where people are evaluating the way they work, with many expecting to work from home more often

Where more people have been shopping locally

Where more people have been enjoying nature and the outdoors

Where communities have been there for each other

The experience of community has gathered pace during the pandemic with significant volunteering, kindness, and heightened awareness of vulnerability and inequality. Communities that are supported to focus on the environment and nature are more sustainable in terms of social cohesion, health, and the economy. Improving road safety and active travel infrastructure is a big part of this. Our goal is to make active travel the easy, natural and obvious choice.

So, whilst those involved in transport policy and planning continue to find ways to minimise the harms from transport and to support community schemes (see [page 33](#_Developing_Aberdeen)), the rest of us can do what we’re already doing or aspire to do, only more!

On average, it takes 66 days for a new behaviour to become automatic. Try it!

**Jillian Evans, Chair of Sustainable City Outcome Improvement Group and Head of Health Intelligence, NHS Grampian**

## Contents

[Report summary 7](#_Toc103081175)

[Walking in Aberdeen 11](#_Toc103081176)

[Cycling in Aberdeen 15](#_Toc103081177)

[Benefits of walking 18](#_Toc103081178)

[Benefits of cycling 21](#_Toc103081179)

[Walking solutions 24](#_Toc103081180)

[Cycling solutions 27](#_Toc103081181)

[Neighbourhood solutions 30](#_Toc103081182)

[Developing Aberdeen 33](#_Toc103081183)

[Looking forward 35](#_Toc103081184)

## 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[[1]](#footnote-1) 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 first report from Aberdeen produced in partnership with Aberdeen City Council. The data in this report comes from 2021 and includes local walking and cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 1,313 residents aged 16 or above in Aberdeen. 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 Aberdeen 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**](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/walkingcyclingindex)

Map of the UK and Ireland showing the cities participating in the Walking and Cycling Index: Aberdeen, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Dublin Metropolitan Area, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greater Cambridge, Greater Manchester, Inverness, Liverpool City Region, Perth, Southampton City Region, Stirling, Tower Hamlets, Tyneside and West Midlands.

### 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.

## Report summary

Aberdeen

### Population[[2]](#footnote-2)

228,670

### Survey area

Map showing the area covered by the survey with Dyce, Bridge of Don and Aberdeen highlighted. The area is approximately 73 square miles and covers all of Aberdeen.

### Walking and cycling in Aberdeen

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on how, when and the amount we travel, especially in relation to public transport and driving.

Covid-19 Analysis, Transport for Scotland, 2021

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

Walking: 57%

Driving[[3]](#footnote-3): 41%

Public transport: 6%

Cycling: 4%

While new travel patterns are still establishing, walking is by far the most popular travel mode.

57%of residents walk at least five days a week

15%of residents cycle at least once a week

### Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

In Aberdeen, fewer women cycle than men and a smaller proportion of people aged 16-25 walk at least five days a week compared to people aged 46-55.

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

53% of of people aged 16–25

65% of people aged 46–55

#### Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week[[4]](#footnote-4)

10% of women

20% of men

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

#### Proportion of residents who think walking safety is good

71% of socio-economic group DE

86% of socio-economic group AB

#### Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good

40% of women

42% of men

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

62% of socio-economic group DE

86% of socio-economic group AB

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.

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

Every year, walking and cycling in Aberdeen:

* Prevents **603** serious long-term health conditions
* Creates **£162.9 million** in economic benefit for individuals and the region
* Saves **8,900 tonnes** of greenhouse gas emissions

### Walking, wheeling and cycling help to tackle the climate emergency

Every day, walking and cycling in Aberdeen takes up to 59,000 **cars off the road[[5]](#footnote-5)**

However, 41.1 millionjourneys up to three miles are driven in Aberdeen each year

If 80% of these journeys were walked or cycled it could save approximately 14,000 tonnesof greenhouse gas emissions[[6]](#footnote-6)

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

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

51% on walking

55% on cycling

59% on public transport

28% on driving

### This would help support more liveable neighbourhoods

#### Among Aberdeen residents:

61% support, while 19% oppose, more cycle tracks along roads, physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

60% agree, while 19% disagree, increasing space for people socialising, walking and cycling on their local high street would improve their local area

80% support, while 4% oppose, the creation of more 20-minute neighbourhoods[[7]](#footnote-7)

75% agree, while 6% disagree, more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area

65% support, while 12% oppose, the creation of more low‑traffic neighbourhoods

39% agree, while 27% disagree, closing streets outside local schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area

## Walking in Aberdeen

Walking and wheeling participation, safety and satisfaction

### Walking and wheeling participation

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

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

97%of all residents walk

57%of residents walk at least five days a week

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

##### Gender[[8]](#footnote-8)

57% of women

56% of men

##### Ethnicity

54% of people from ethnic minority groups

57% of white people

##### Sexuality

59% of LGBQ+ people

58% of heterosexual people

##### Age

53% of people aged 16–25

61% of people aged 26–35

57% of people aged 36–45

65% of people aged 46–55

55% of people aged 56–65

49% of people aged 66+

##### Disability

52% of disabled people

59% of non-disabled people

##### Socio-economic group[[9]](#footnote-9)

59% of AB

60% of C1

52% of C2

51% of DE

### 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.

79%of residents think the level of safety for walking is good

61%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

78% of women

80% of men

##### Ethnicity

76% of people from ethnic minority groups

79% of white people

##### Sexuality

73% of LGBQ+ people

80% of heterosexual people

##### Age

75% of people aged 16–25

75% of people aged 26–35

80% of people aged 36–45

86% of people aged 46–55

77% of people aged 56–65

81% of people aged 66+

##### Disability

74% of disabled people

80% of non-disabled people

##### Socio-economic group

86% of AB

73% of C1

88% of C2

71% of DE

81%of residents think their local area overall is a good place to walk

### Quote from Jeff Bruce

I like walking along the beach with my son. Aberdeen has an iconic seafront and there’s not many of those around. It’s great for fresh air and there’s lots of coffee shops and small independent businesses in this area.

The junction where Market Street, Guild Street and the harbour meet can be challenging for pedestrians. It’s on a dual carriageway but is still a retail space and the badly designed junction makes it difficult to cross. It’s fenced off with cast iron street furniture at the staggered crossing so it can get jam packed and there’s often a bottleneck, especially on Saturday afternoons with people coming from the shopping centre. I think it would be difficult to cross if you were elderly or were sensory impaired.

The Union Street pedestrianisation has been good during the pandemic as you can now amble up the street without difficulty. This is a positive step forward for Aberdeen. Overall, I think Aberdeen is safe to walk in; you just need to have your wits about you at the hotspots.

## Cycling in Aberdeen

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

### Cycling participation

Despite a much larger potential, only 15% of people cycle regularly.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Cycling participation, 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.

37%of all residents cycle

15%of all residents cycle at least once a week

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

##### Gender

10% of women

20% of men

##### Ethnicity

27% of people from ethnic minority groups

14% of white people

##### Sexuality

13% of LGBQ+ people

14% of heterosexual people

##### Age

17% of people aged 16–25

14% of people aged 26–35

20% of people aged 36–45

18% of people aged 46–55

15% of people aged 56–65

9% of people aged 66+

##### Disability

9% of disabled people

17% of non-disabled people

##### Socio-economic group

18% of AB

14% of C1

16% of C2

10% of DE

### Cycling safety and satisfaction

41%of all residents think the level of safety for cycling in their local area is good

32%of all residents think the level of safety for children cycling is good

40%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

40% of women

42% of men

##### Ethnicity

58% of people from ethnic minority groups

39% of white people

##### Sexuality

22% of LGBQ+ people

43% of heterosexual people

##### Age

42% of people aged 16–25

36% of people aged 26–35

40% of people aged 36–45

48% of people aged 46–55

40% of people aged 56–65

42% of people aged 66+

##### Disability

31% of disabled people

44% of non-disabled people

##### Socio-economic group

42% of AB

38% of C1

52% of C2

39% of DE

### Quote from Clive Potter, volunteer delivery cyclist

I have been volunteering for Community Foods Initiative North East (CFINE) since October 2020, delivering food bank parcels on a cargo bike.

During lockdown I would deliver boxes with provisions such as fruit and bread to those who need them.

Using a cargo bike is really helpful to get around the city quickly in an environmentally friendly way.

I find getting around Aberdeen with the cargo bike quite easy, despite some narrow paths.

## Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

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

### Aberdeen residents walk or wheel 13 times around the world every day

99.9 millionwalking and wheeling trips were made in Aberdeen in the past year, which adds up to 116.1 million **miles** = 320,000 miles a day

This equates to each resident spending 6 **days** walking or wheeling continuously in the past year

#### Annual walking and wheeling trips by purpose[[11]](#footnote-11)

Destination – adults only (eg work, school, shopping): 51,600,000 (52%)

School – children only: 4,300,000 (4%)

Enjoyment or fitness – adults and children (including running): 44,000,000 (44%)

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

In Aberdeen, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all walking and wheeling trips is £143.9 million

Of this total, £1.3 millionis from people with a car choosing to walk or wheel for transport in the past year.

5**p** 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 Aberdeen prevents 520 serious long-term health conditions each year

##### Cases prevented

Hip fracture: 197

Dementia: 158

Depression: 58

Coronary heart disease: 57

Other conditions: 50

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

Saving the NHS in Aberdeen £3.4 million **per year**

equivalent to the cost of 110,000 **GP appointments**

These figures are based on applying Aberdeen data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity

In Aberdeen the physical activity benefits of walking **prevent** 142 **early deaths annually** which is valued at £468 million**[[12]](#footnote-12)**

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: 20,000 **kg of NOx** and 2,800 **kg of particulates** (PM10 and PM2.5)

62% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

### Walking and wheeling in Aberdeen help mitigate our climate crisis

6,800 tonnesof greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by walking or wheeling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of 42,000 **people taking flights** from Aberdeen International to London

Transport within Scotland now accounts for 25% of Scotland’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 11.3%, while overall emissions went down by 52%.

Calculated using the Greenhouse Gas Account, which has replaced the previous method in Scotland. Scottish Government: Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990 to 2019.

### Walking and wheeling keep Aberdeen moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.[[13]](#footnote-13) This helps to keep Aberdeen moving for all road users.

54,000 **return walking trips** are made daily in Aberdeen by people that could have used a car.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back 162 milesequivalent to the distance from Aberdeen to Glencoe.

## Benefits of cycling

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

### Aberdeen residents cycle 3 times around the world every day

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

5.8 millioncycling trips were made in Aberdeen in the past year

This adds up to 23.2 million **miles** = 64,000 miles a day

#### Annual cycling trips by purpose in Aberdeen[[14]](#footnote-14)

Work: 1,600,000 (28%)

School, college or university (adults): 450,000 (8%)

School (children): 330,000 (6%)

Shopping, personal business and social trips: 1,800,000 (30%)

Leisure: 1,600,000 (28%)

### Cycling benefits residents and the local economy in the region

In Aberdeen, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all cycling trips is £19 million

Of this total, £7.1 millionis from people with a car choosing to cycle for transport in the past year.

94**p** 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.

### Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

#### Cycling in Aberdeen prevents 83 serious long-term health conditions each year

##### Cases prevented

Hip fracture: 30

Dementia: 22

Depression: 13

Coronary heart disease: 10

Other conditions: 9

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

Saving the NHS in Aberdeen £550,000 **per year**

equivalent to the cost of 18,000 **GP appointments**

These figures are based on applying Aberdeen data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity

In Aberdeen the physical activity benefits of cycling **prevent** 9 **early deaths annually** which is valued at £29.6 million**[[15]](#footnote-15)**

People cycling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually: 4,200 **kg of NOx** and 606 **kg of particulates** (PM10 and PM2.5)

62% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

### Cycling in Aberdeen helps mitigate our climate crisis

2,100 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by cycling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of 13,000 **people taking flights** from Aberdeen International to London

Transport within Scotland now accounts for 25% of Scotland’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 11.3%, while overall emissions went down by 52%.

Calculated using the Greenhouse Gas Account, which has replaced the previous method in Scotland. Scottish Government: Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990 to 2019.

### Cycling keeps Aberdeen moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.[[16]](#footnote-16) This helps to keep Aberdeen moving for all road users.

4,300 **return cycling trips** are made daily in Aberdeen by people that could have used a car.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back 13 miles equivalent to the distance from Aberdeen to Newburgh.

## 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.

63%of Aberdeen households are in neighbourhoods of at least 40 dwellings per hectare. These are or can become 20-minute neighbourhoods.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Lower density neighbourhoods have too few people to make much local business or public transport viable.[[18]](#footnote-18)

56%agree they can easily get to many places they need to visit without having to drive

#### What proportion of residents would find more local amenities and services useful to walk or wheel more?

79%More shops and everyday services, such as banks and post offices, close to your home

74%More government services, such as doctors surgeries and schools, close to your home

84%More parks or green spaces close to your home

81%More things to see and do close to your home, eg cafés or entertainment venues

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

Food shop 74%

Park or space for recreation 98%

Primary school 74%

Doctors surgery 46%

Library 36%

Post office 61%

Railway station 4%

A mix of cultural and leisure venues[[19]](#footnote-19) 78%

Bus stop (within 400m) 95%

### 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?

71% Wider pavements

67% More frequent road crossings, with reduced wait times

79% Nicer places along streets to stop and rest, eg more benches, trees and shelters

69% Better accessibility, eg level surfaces, dropped kerbs at crossing points

65% Fewer cars parked on the pavement

63% Less fear of crime or antisocial behaviour in your area

##### In Aberdeen:

81% of A and B roads have a pavement width greater than 3m[[20]](#footnote-20)

68% of C and unclassified roads have a pavement width greater than 2m

On all roads making up junctions, 17% of those with traffic lights for cars have no red and green man for pedestrians

75%of residents agree more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area

### Quote from Christa Reid, accessibility advocate

I’m a member of the Aberdeen Disability Equity Partnership (DEP). I am passionate about making the city accessible for everyone. I work with and speak up for visually impaired friends who find it difficult to safely move around.

I believe their everyday trips would be improved by addressing the problem of pavement surfaces. Pavement textures are not always suitable for visually impaired people. Some can find it difficult to navigate the shared-use areas for bikes and pedestrians so I think separating these spaces with clearly defined surfaces would benefit the visually impaired community. A mutual respect is needed on these shared-use paths. The use of bells to alert people to the presence of a bike would make a huge difference. I know that some visually impaired people can find it difficult to access the bus stops around Union Street, due to the new traffic restrictions. I think re-working these bus stops could make them more accessible.

Overall I think that the council should consult people with disabilities if they want to improve access to the city for everyone.

## Cycling solutions

What would make cycling better?

### Many Aberdeen residents want to cycle

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

Regularly cycle: 9%

Occasionally cycle: 20%

New or returning to cycling: 6%

Do not cycle but would like to: 32%

Do not cycle and do not want to: 33%

#### What proportion of residents said they ‘do not cycle but would like to’?

34% of women

45% of people from ethnic minority groups

32% of disabled people

### Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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

71% More traffic-free cycle routes away from roads, eg through parks or along waterways

69% More cycle tracks along roads that are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

68% More signposted local cycle routes along quieter streets

60% Better links with public transport (eg secure cycle parking at train stations)

There are 72 cycle parking spaces across the 2 railway stations and 1 bus station with no cycle parking spaces dedicated for bus users only

##### Aberdeen has[[21]](#footnote-21):

33 milesof traffic-free cycle routes away from the road

1 **mile** of cycle tracks physically separated from traffic and pedestrians[[22]](#footnote-22)

14%of households are within 125m of these routes

61%of residents support building more cycle tracks physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic

### Residents want more support to cycle

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

41% Cycling training courses and organised social rides

50% Access or improvements to a city cycle sharing scheme

54% Access to secure cycle storage at or near home

55% Access to a bicycle

45% Access to an electric cycle

28% Access to a cargo cycle (with space to carry children or shopping)

23% Access to an adapted cycle, eg a tricycle or handcycle

##### Public cycle parking

There is a public cycle parking space for every 115 people who cycle in Aberdeen.

##### Reported cycle thefts

There were 121 reported cycle thefts in Aberdeen in 2020/21. (75 in 2019/20)

For every 821people who own an adult cycle in Aberdeen, there was 1reported cycle theft in the past year.

##### Cycle access

51%of residents have access to an adult pedal cycle

28%of households are within 800m of a cycle shop.[[23]](#footnote-23)

### Quote from Molly, secondary school student

I joined a cycling club when I was 10 and I’ve been competing in road and velodrome cycling ever since. I love cycling with my club, the Deeside Thistle Cycling Club, which has one of the largest numbers of female cyclists in the UK. It feels great to train alongside women and girls my own age. We even have a female coach, ex-professional cyclist Sarah Rowe.

There are about 1,200 students at my school. A good number of boys cycle to school, but there are only one or two girls who cycle. I’ve seen people looking at me and thinking “why is she doing that”, but I don’t care. I think that the uniform, the lack of safe infrastructure and being intimidated by the boys, can stop girls from cycling.

I dream of a future where girls would feel safe to cycle to school. I think if there was better cycling infrastructure in Aberdeen it would make it easier for girls to start cycling, and if more girls cycled then it would become normal.

## 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

77% of residents

77% of women

78% of men

76% of people from ethnic minority groups

78% of white people

67% of disabled people

81% of non-disabled people

83% of LGBQ+ people

78% of heterosexual people

62% of socio-economic group DE

86% of socio-economic group AB

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

Only 32% 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:

61% Walk more

57% Cycle more

Unclassified roads are not designed to carry through-traffic, but in Aberdeen 23% of their total length has nothing to prevent it. This can result in rat-running.[[24]](#footnote-24)

50% agree that restricting through-traffic on local residential streets would make their area a better place.

22% of Aberdeen’s streets have 20mph speed limits.

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

55% Walk more

54% Cycle more

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

60%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

65%support low-traffic neighbourhoods

### Quote from Stuart McPhee, business owner

I manage a hotel and bar on Belmont Street in Aberdeen. Since the latest vehicle restrictions and pedestrianisation of the street, there has been no impact on my deliveries, guests and customers.

I think the new pedestrianised area adds value and gives a neighbourhood feeling to the city centre. People can relax and socialise.

I think that it is the best way forward for Aberdeen to permanently pedestrianise this area. It increases the connectivity and has an important role to play in place making.

I work with a baker for our pizza dough and they are based a couple of streets from the hotel. Before restrictions, the baker would walk with the dough, which is heavy and was time consuming, or I would drive to collect it but it was difficult to get to by car, and not environmentally-friendly.

Since the new restrictions, my baker gets the dough delivered by cargo bike and it is a great solution for both of us!

### 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.

10 **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).[[25]](#footnote-25)

55% of residents agree there is space for children to socialise and play

78% of households are within 800m of a children’s playground

#### Among Aberdeen residents:

39% agree, while 27% 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’.

0permanent School Streets schemes exist in Aberdeen[[26]](#footnote-26)

## Developing Aberdeen

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

Aberdeen, Europe’s foremost energy city, is going through important change, taking it from the oil and gas capital of Europe to leading the way for the transition to alternative and sustainable energy production with a focus on hydrogen. To achieve this, the city is working in partnership with BP to create Scotland’s first ‘green’ hydrogen facility.

During the pandemic, increases in the number of people walking and cycling were recorded, supported by temporary cycle lanes and footways, thereby shining a light on what can be achieved. If routes are improved and space is allocated for active travel, the transformation from private cars to active travel can happen. Major infrastructure and behaviour change projects have been completed to improve walking and cycling in the city.

These include paths created alongside the new Diamond Bridge, a programme of cycle parking and maintenance stands and counters to monitor pedestrian/cyclist numbers.

Behaviour change and soft intervention projects promoting active travel have been improved with the addition of walking wayfinding boards throughout the city centre and the GoABZ travel-planning app.

### Flood Management Scheme

At Maidencraig, essential flood defence work, created an ideal opportunity to increase sustainable travel across the flood plains. Walking and cycling paths were constructed along the top of the flood prevention bunds to connect residential areas and provide a safe route to school for children and young people. Another benefit is the increase in local biodiversity due to the planting of wildflowers, providing a sand martin nesting wall and the construction of a pond-dipping platform for educational use by local schools.

### GoABZ

GoABZ is a recently launched journey planning application for smartphones. It encourages users to plan their journeys ahead and think about how they want to travel. It offers alternative methods of travelling to the private car, detailing public transport (bus and train) and active travel options (walking, wheeling and cycling). The app highlights the cost saving and the reduction in travel time if applicable. It is anticipated that this will promote the benefits of using more sustainable methods of travel, not only to a person’s health but also to their budget.

A new feature on the app is GoABZ Discover which details a series of 10 new trail guides which will help locals and visitors discover places full of history, heritage and open green spaces in the city. The e-bike share scheme will also be integrated with GoABZ when it is launched in spring 2022.

### Broad Street Partial Pedestrianisation

This street is located outside Marischal College, the home of Aberdeen City Council, where there is a significant amount of pedestrian traffic accessing many premises.

This development offered a prime opportunity to create some high-quality place-making in the form of a grassed area, water fountains, seating, mature tree planters and high-quality external lighting.

The completion of the Broad Street regeneration works has transformed a key part of the city centre and created a flexible new event space.

### I-Bike Officer for Aberdeen City

The Aberdeen I-Bike Officer has delivered a total of 25 scooter skills sessions for all year groups, from Primary 1 to Primary 7. They also worked with some pupils to help them to learn how to ride a bike. To facilitate future work, new cycle and scooter parking has been purchased for 22 schools. Scooters have also been purchased for a school and training provided to school staff to ensure scooter sessions can be safely delivered for years to come.

## Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

Aberdeen is transforming from a city traditionally based on fossil fuel energy to a carbon net-zero city. To support this transition there are many transformational projects planned, such as the city centre Low Emission Zone (LEZ), the City Centre Masterplan and the Beachfront Masterplan.

Some shorter-term upcoming projects include the Core Path Condition Survey and a Cycle Signage Strategy.

### Bike Hire Scheme

A 450 e-bike share scheme for Aberdeen is currently underway and will launch in spring 2022. It is hoped that the scheme will add to the change from end-to-end private car commuting, providing a flexible alternative for short commutes and for ‘the last mile’ of longer commutes. This would be another step closer to the council’s goal of reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality across the city.

### Multi Modal Studies - Radial Corridors

The redetermination of the city’s roads hierarchy, post Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), has spearheaded multi-modal studies along six radial routes connecting Aberdeenshire to the city.

These studies are concentrating on transformational changes to the public transport network including bus priority (Aberdeen Rapid Transit). and active travel elements. The objective is to have the city centre as a destination rather than a through-route. This change will allow congestion and associated emissions to be reduced in the city centre and for air quality to improve.

### Cross City Connections

The Aberdeen Cross City Transport Connections project aims to provide transport connections, public transport and active travel between new areas of development. The project focusses on areas on the outskirts of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, with the aim of providing viable, attractive and direct linkages that can be used as an alternative to the private car. Essentially, the aim is to increase the sustainable transport-based accessibility options associated with new developments.

### I-Bike Officer

Looking forward, the I-Bike Officer will be delivering the learn to ride course with the ultimate goal of having all Primary 6 pupils completed the Bikeability Level 1, in the spring.The aim is to provide students with the skills to safely ride their bikes to school and for leisure, and increase the likelihood of cycling becoming a travel habit among young people.

The hope is that this will increase the number of adults cycling in future years, supporting the move from the car as the primary means of transport for short journeys.

### City Centre and Beach Masterplan

The City Centre and Beach Masterplan is a transformational proposal to revitalise the city centre and beachfront areas, comprising many individual projects. The transport elements, which are detailed in the supporting Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, include re-prioritising the city centre and beachfront into spaces with a focus on walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport access and use, and improving active travel connectivity.

### Quote from Jacqui Lang, dog walker

I became a dog owner during lockdown and I’ve loved discovering new places to walk to. In Aberdeen you never have to go far to find somewhere enjoyable to walk – the beach, hills and woods. I have easy access to the city centre and would usually choose to walk to the shops, cafes and restaurants.

The pop up spaces for walking and cycling during the pandemic felt pleasant to walk down so I would have loved to see these being kept and enhanced as they could benefit walking and cycling in the city. In general Aberdeen feels very much like cars have priority, with walking and cycling treated as secondary.

The attitude seems to be the car is the ruler and that people should have the right to drive into the city centre and park there. There are some areas in Aberdeen where walking feels quite unsafe, for example crossing to the riverside from Duthie Park, as there is a lack of safe crossing for pedestrians.

I have visited other European cities where they have made it difficult to bring your car into the city. This results in a more pleasant environment and it would be great to see more of this in Aberdeen.

## 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 Aberdeen 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](http://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](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

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

© Sustrans May 2022

© All photos: Brian Sweeney. Except: NHS Grampian (page 2 headshot), Aberdeen City Council (page 21 top and bottom).

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

Printed with 100% renewable energy using an alcohol-free process and vegetable-based inks

Walking and Cycling Index Aberdeen has been funded by Transport Scotland. The project is co-ordinated by Sustrans.

Transport Scotland

Aberdeen City Council

Sustrans

1. City is used as a shorthand for Walking and Cycling Index cities, city regions and boroughs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NOMIS mid-year 2019 population estimates. This is the most recent available for Aberdeen. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Based on walking and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking trips. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Based upon each journey being 1.5 miles in length. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See definition on [page 24](#_Residents_want_more). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Group C1 is supervisory/clerical and students. Group C2 is skilled manual. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Based on people who cycle at least once a week. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Trips for enjoyment or fitness include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). School trips are shown separately for children only. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Litman, 2021. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Litman, 2021. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021, National Model Design Code. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, eg cafés, pubs, bingo halls, cinemas, museums. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. To ensure comparability, figures given are correct as of 26 May 2021 for all city reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This does not include ‘pop-up’ cycle tracks installed during the pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Credit to the Association of Cycle Traders (ACT) and Cycling UK for their assistance with cycle shop locations and services offered. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Based on analysis by CycleStreets [www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org](http://www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org). Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Children’s Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Figure given is correct as of 26 May 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)