

Facts and figures to support school travel initiatives

Information for parents and schools



Sustrans' Links to Schools work in Swindon

Key Facts

- Bike It has increased the opportunities to walk and cycle to school for more than 100,000 children
- In the school year 2008/09, the number of pupils regularly cycling to Bike It schools doubled
- In 2009 Sustrans worked with a total of 253 schools on infrastructure measures creating a safer journey for all
- In 2010 Sustrans offered cycle parking grants to 402 schools
- In 2008 17 million trips to school were made on the National Cycle Network
- In 2009 50% of children in Bike It schools told us they wanted to cycle to school.

Introduction

Sustrans' School Travel projects help hundreds of thousands of UK children get to school more safely and sustainably. School travel initiatives encourage children to walk and cycle to school through practical and educational measures. These facts and figures provide evidence to support school travel projects and inspire staff, pupils, parents and the local community to work together to make the school journey safer, healthier and more enjoyable for everyone.

The journeys we make

Road traffic is growing

- In 2009, the overall motor vehicle traffic volume in Great Britain was 313.2 billion vehicle miles, an

increase of 7.9% from 1999.⁽¹⁾

- The growth in car travel has been accompanied by a reduction in motoring costs.⁽²⁾
- In 2009 bus and rail fares were respectively 24% and 13% higher than in 1997 (in real terms).⁽²⁾
- Total traffic, measured in vehicle kilometres, is forecast to grow by 25% by 2025 and 43% by 2035.⁽³⁾

We are travelling further

- Average journey length has increased from 5.2 miles in 1985/86 to seven miles in 2009.⁽⁴⁾
- On average people in Great Britain travelled 6,775 miles in 2009, compared to 5,317 miles during 1985.⁽⁴⁾

We are walking and cycling less

- In 2009 we made an average 228 walking trips per person per year, compared to 350 trips in 1985/86.⁽⁴⁾
- In 2009 we made an average 15 bicycle journeys per person per year, compared to 25 in 1985/86.⁽⁴⁾
- 42% of people in the UK own one or more bicycles, but only 2% of all journeys are made by bicycle.⁽⁴⁾

We are using cars more

- In 2008 we made an average 410 trips per person (as car drivers) compared to 317 in 1985/86 – an increase of 29%.⁽⁴⁾
- Trips by car (as driver or passenger) accounted for 63% of all trips made and 79% of distance travelled in 2009.⁽⁴⁾

Yet most journeys could be cycled or walked

- 20% of the journeys made in 2009 were less than one mile.⁽⁴⁾
- 54% of all the journeys under five miles were made by car in 2008.⁽⁵⁾
- The average car or van journey in 2009 was only 8.4 miles.⁽⁴⁾
- At a leisurely pace, you can cycle one mile in five minutes (which is twice the speed of a car in rush-hour traffic),⁽⁶⁾ and on average people walk between two and four miles per hour.⁽⁷⁾
- The average speed of vehicles travelling on key urban roads in England at the height of the school day morning peak is 13 mph which is almost the same as cycling (12 mph).⁽¹⁾

Travelling to school

School journeys are getting longer

- In general, the patterns of travel of primary (age five -10) and secondary school (age 11-16) children are different, partly due to increasing independence with age, but mainly because primary school children live much closer to their schools.⁽⁴⁾
- The average length of a trip to school has increased from 2.1 miles in 1995/97 to 2.5 miles in 2009. During this period, the average trip length for primary school children has increased from 1.3 to 1.5 miles, and for secondary school pupils, 2.9 to 3.3 miles.⁽⁴⁾
- The average annual cost of the school run by car per primary school child is £367.⁽⁸⁾

More children go by car and fewer walk

- In 2009, 31% of children aged between five and 16 travelled to school by car, an increase of 10.7% from the 1998 figure. 43% walked to school in 2009, a decrease of 12.2% from 1998.⁽⁴⁾

Trend for independent travel may be changing

- In 1971 80% of seven to eight year olds walked to school independently,⁽⁹⁾ whereas in 2009 only 11% of seven to 10 year olds and 60% of 11–13 year olds were usually unaccompanied by an adult.⁽⁴⁾
- In all age groups the main reasons given for accompanying children to school were traffic danger and fear of assault.⁽⁴⁾
- The NSPCC estimates that on average 11 children a year are killed by strangers, whereas 49 were killed travelling as passengers in cars in 2008.⁽¹⁰⁾

Journeys to school⁽⁴⁾

	1985/86		1995/97		2009	
	5-10 year olds	11-16 year olds	5-10 year olds	11-16 year olds	5-10 year olds	11-16 year olds
walk	63%	46%	53%	42%	50%	38%
cycle	1%	6%	0%	2%	1%	3%
car	26%	13%	38%	20%	42%	22%
bus	9%	33%	7%	33%	7%	32%
other	1%	2%	2%	3%	0%	5%



School children enjoying a traffic-free walk along National Route 46 of the National Cycle Network



In 2008 64 million journeys on the National Cycle Network were made by children to get to school or for play.





Children and staff from Edmund Waller Primary School in Lewisham celebrate completing a cycle with their Bike It officer Felix

Pollution and climate change

Provisional statistical data shows:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas associated with climate change, accounted for about 85% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2008.⁽¹¹⁾
- The majority of CO₂ emissions from transport sources are from road transport which produced 117 million tonnes in 2008 compared with 109 in 1990.⁽¹¹⁾
- Since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions from road transport have increased by 7%.⁽¹¹⁾
- The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% (below 1990 levels) by 2050. The interim target for 2020 is a 34% reduction.⁽¹¹⁾
- A 2008 carbon footprint study estimated that schools in England emit 8.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. School travel accounts for 16% of this.⁽¹²⁾

Road casualties

Information about road casualties in a particular area can be obtained from the Road Safety Team of your local authority, which is usually located within the Highways Department.

Road accidents cause many child injuries

- In 2008 there were 230,905 reported casualties from personal injury road accidents. 21,996 of these were children.⁽¹³⁾
- 64% of children killed or seriously injured in 2008 were pedestrians, 17% were car passengers and 15% were cyclists.⁽¹³⁾
- There is a morning peak in reported child casualties between 8am and 9am and another peak from 3pm onwards, coinciding with school travel.⁽⁴⁾
- The health benefits of cycling greatly outweigh any risks involved – on average cyclists live two years longer than non-cyclists.⁽¹⁴⁾

Our child road safety record is improving

- The number of children reported killed or seriously injured due to road accidents in 2008 was 59% lower than the 1994-1998 average.⁽¹³⁾
- In 2008 children (aged 0-15 years) made up 19% of the population, yet only 10% of all casualties. During the 1994-1998 baseline period, children made up 21% of the population and 14% of casualties, showing that the child casualty rate has

declined more quickly than the adult rate.⁽¹³⁾

- An increase in cycling often leads to a reduction in cyclist casualties. A doubling of cycling would lead to a reduction in the risks of cycling by around a third.⁽¹⁴⁾

Children need to develop road safety skills

- An 11 year old starting secondary school is almost twice as likely as a 10 year old at primary school to be killed or seriously injured in road collisions.⁽¹⁵⁾
- Children who walk to primary school develop road safety awareness and are less vulnerable when they walk independently to secondary school.⁽¹⁵⁾
- Young children perceive the world differently to adults, for example they have difficulty judging the speed and distance of vehicles and so need to be taught how to negotiate traffic.⁽¹⁵⁾
- Children who walk to school are actively engaged with their local community, have wider social networks, and have greater spatial awareness and road sense.⁽¹⁵⁾

Speeding is the biggest problem

- Speed is one of the biggest contributory factors in fatal road accidents. In 2008, 4,685 people were killed or seriously injured in crashes where a speed contributory factor was reported. 586 of these were fatalities.⁽¹⁶⁾
- A pedestrian struck by a car driven at 20 mph has a 95% chance of survival. This reduces to 80% if driven at 30 mph and 10% at 40 mph.⁽¹⁶⁾
- 7 out of ten mothers admit to regularly breaking the speed limit, while half admit to using a mobile phone when driving with their children in the car.⁽¹⁷⁾
- A London survey showed that the introduction of 20 mph zones was associated with a 42% reduction in road casualties between 1986 and 2006. The percentage reduction was greatest in younger children.⁽¹⁶⁾

Health

Car fumes are bad for us

- Children living near roads with heavy vehicle traffic have twice the risk of respiratory problems as those living near less congested streets.⁽¹⁸⁾
- Car passengers in slow-moving traffic face pollution levels two to three times higher than those experienced by pedestrians.⁽¹⁹⁾
- The catalytic converter, which can destroy many polluting



due to increased car use affects children's stamina, alertness at school and academic performance.⁽²⁶⁾

- A study in California showed a direct link between children's fitness levels and academic scores in Literacy and Numeracy. On average, those in the fittest category had scores twice those of the least fit.⁽²⁷⁾
- By achieving the recommended levels of physical activity children can maintain a healthy body weight; develop healthy bones, muscles and cardiovascular system and improve coordination and movement control.⁽²⁸⁾
- Physical activity has also been associated with psychological benefits in young people by improving their control over symptoms of anxiety and depression.⁽²⁸⁾

chemicals in a car's exhaust gases, only works well when it is hot. The school run is usually too short to allow the catalytic converter to reach the necessary temperature. As more children are driven to school, the air near the school becomes more polluted.⁽²⁰⁾

Car fumes can trigger asthma

- 1.1m children in the UK are being treated for asthma.⁽²¹⁾
- There is a person with asthma in one in every five households in the UK.⁽²¹⁾
- Environmental pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and may play a part in causing some asthma.⁽²¹⁾
- 66% of people with asthma say that traffic fumes trigger their symptoms.⁽²²⁾

We are getting more overweight

- Among boys and girls aged two to 15, the proportion who were obese increased

between 1995 and 2007, from 10.9% to 16.8% among boys, and from 12.0% to 16.1% among girls.⁽²³⁾

- By 2050 it is predicted that 70% of girls and 55% of boys will be overweight or obese.⁽²⁴⁾
- Obesity is known to lead to both chronic and severe medical problems.⁽²⁴⁾
- In 2050 obesity is predicted to cost the NHS and wider society a total of £49.9 billion (at 2007 prices).⁽²⁴⁾

Physical activity

- In 2007 28% of boys and 37% of girls did not achieve the recommended level of physical activity which is one hour per day.⁽²³⁾
- A Hertfordshire study showed that Year 8 pupils walking the school journey each day used more calories than during the 2 hours of PE they receive each week.⁽²⁵⁾
- The reduction in levels of physical activity

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Further information

Visit the School Travel website www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel for:

- latest news and information on Safe Routes to Schools
- specific information and events for each of the UK regions
- downloadable resources including other information sheets
- case studies, curriculum materials and newsletters

For School Travel enquiries call 0117 915 0100 or email schools@sustrans.org.uk

About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day.

It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk

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