# Galway Metropolitan Area Walking and Cycling Index 2023

Published March 2024

National Transport Authority

Galway County Council

Galway City Council

Sustrans

## Foreword

Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area

### Cllr. Eddie Hoare, Galway City Council:

As Mayor of the City of Galway, I am pleased to welcome the first Galway Metropolitan Area Walking and Cycling Index. This report highlights the health, environmental and economic benefits of walking and cycling in Galway, as well as the important role that active travel will play in the city’s future.

In recent years, supported by the National Transport Authority, European Regional Development Fund, and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Galway City Council has committed to significant walking and cycling improvements. Recent examples include the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge; new walking and cycling infrastructure at the Martin Junction, Eglinton Canal, Miller’s Lane and Doughiska, and the establishment of Ireland’s first city-centre School Street at Scoil Iognáid.

It is encouraging to see these investments already having a positive impact. I note that walking and cycling in Galway prevents 236 serious long-term health conditions each year, while also delivering €144.4 million in economic benefits.

These positives will only grow further with the progression of further schemes including public transport corridors on Dublin Road, the Cross‑City Link and further planned enhancements to walking and cycling infrastructure.

Galway City Council’s commitment to active travel reflects its mission to make Galway the best city in which to live, work, study, visit and invest through delivering services in an equal, inclusive, and sustainable manner.

### Cllr. Liam Carroll, Galway County Council:

Here in Galway County, we welcome the Walking and Cycling Index report, which provides a useful and demographically representative insight into the behaviours and opinions of residents living in the areas like Oranmore, Claregalway and Barna towards walking, wheeling and cycling.

Galway County Council, supported by the National Transport Authority, have started work on some exciting new projects across the area. For example, the design and delivery of a coastal cycleway which will directly link Oranmore Village to the Train Station.

Another project is the introduction of a Safe Routes to School scheme in the Oranmore Village schools’ area which will facilitate safer walking and cycling for hundreds of students.

As Cathaoirleach of Galway County, I look forward to seeing how the Index supports and informs our upcoming and future projects.

## Contents

[The Walking and Cycling Index 5](#_Toc159313959)

[Headlines 6](#_Toc159313960)

[Walking in the Galway Metropolitan Area 10](#_Toc159313961)

[Cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area 13](#_Toc159313962)

[Benefits of walking 16](#_Toc159313963)

[Benefits of cycling 19](#_Toc159313964)

[Walking solutions 22](#_Toc159313965)

[Cycling solutions 25](#_Toc159313966)

[Neighbourhood solutions 28](#_Toc159313967)

[Developing the Galway Metropolitan Area 31](#_Toc159313968)

[Looking forward 33](#_Toc159313969)

[Notes on methodology: 36](#_Toc159313970)

## The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly Bike Life) is the biggest assessment of walking, wheeling and cycling in urban areas in the UK and Ireland.

It is delivered by Sustrans in collaboration with 23 cities and urban areas. Each city[[1]](#footnote-2) reports on the progress made towards making walking, wheeling and cycling more attractive, everyday ways to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years. This is the first report from the Galway Metropolitan Area produced in partnership with the National Transport Authority of Ireland. The data in this report comes from 2023 and includes local walking, wheeling and cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 1,103 residents aged 16 or above in the Galway Metropolitan Area. The survey was conducted from April to July 2023. Independent market research company Behaviour & Attitudes conducted the survey, which is representative of all residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

Our thanks to the people of the Galway Metropolitan Area who took part in the survey and shared their stories with us.

More details on all reports can be found at [www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index). For more data, see the [Index Data Tool](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/index-data-tool).

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

### Defining wheeling

We recognise that some people who use wheeled mobility aids, for example a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling. We use the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

## Headlines

Galway Metropolitan Area

### Population[[2]](#footnote-3)

**102,107**

### Survey area

Map showing the area covered by the survey with Barna, Calway City, Baile Chláir and Oranmore highlighted. The area is approximately 161 square kilometres and covers all of Galway Metropolitan Area.

### Frequency of different modes of travel

The majority of residents walk or wheel on a regular basis in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

#### Residents who travel by the following modes five or more days a week in the Galway Metropolitan Area

Walking or wheeling: **60%**

Driving[[3]](#footnote-4): **55%**

Public transport: **7%**

Cycling: **8%**

**60%** of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

**20%** of residents cycle at least once a week

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

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

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

**41%** of people with a disability

**62%** of people without a disability

#### Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week[[4]](#footnote-5)

**15%** of women

**25%** of men

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

#### Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety is good[[5]](#footnote-6)

**86%** of socio-economic group DE

**81%** of socio-economic group AB

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

**55%** of women

**59%** of men

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

**94%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**93%** of white people

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

Every day, walking, wheeling and cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area take up to **29,000** cars off the road.[[6]](#footnote-7) Each year in the Galway Metropolitan Area these three modes combined:

* Prevent **236** serious long‑term health conditions
* Create **€144.4 million** in economic benefit for individuals and the Galway Metropolitan Area
* Save **6,300 tonnes** of greenhouse gas emissions

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

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

##### Walk or wheel

**53%** more

**2%** less

##### Cycle

**42%** more

**1%** less

##### Take public transport

**32%** more

**6%** less

##### Drive

**17%** more

**21%** less

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

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

**72%** on walking and wheeling

**77%** on cycling

**79%** on public transport

**24%** on driving

### Increased funding would help support more liveable neighbourhoods

#### Among Galway Metropolitan Area residents:

**88%** support, while **6%** oppose, more cycle paths along roads, physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

**78%** agree, while **13%** disagree, that increasing space for people socialising, walking, wheeling and cycling on their local main street would improve their local area

**84%** support, while **7%** oppose, the creation of more 20-minute neighbourhoods[[7]](#footnote-8)

**81%** support, while **12%** oppose, the ban on vehicles parking on the footpath

**87%** support, while **5%** oppose, the creation of more low‑traffic neighbourhoods[[8]](#footnote-9)

**63%** support, while **22%** oppose, shifting investment from road building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport

## Walking in the Galway Metropolitan Area

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 environmental impact.

**93%** of all residents walk or wheel

**60%** of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

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

##### Gender[[9]](#footnote-10)

**64%** of women

**57%** of men

##### Ethnicity

**69%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**59%** of white people

##### Age

**77%** of people aged 16–25

**59%** of people aged 26–35

**55%** of people aged 36–45

**57%** of people aged 46–55

**54%** of people aged 56–65

**50%** of people aged 66+

##### Disability

**41%** of people with a disability

**62%** of people without a disability

##### Socio-economic group[[10]](#footnote-11)

**57%** of AB

**61%** of C1

**57%** of C2

**67%** of DE

### Walking and wheeling safety and satisfaction

**85%** of residents think the level of safety for walking or wheeling is good

**73%** of residents think the level of safety for children walking or wheeling is good

**89%** of residents think their local area overall is a good place to walk or wheel

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

##### Gender

**85%** of women

**86%** of men

##### Ethnicity

**94%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**84%** of white people

##### Age

**89%** of people aged 16–25

**88%** of people aged 26–35

**84%** of people aged 36–45

**87%** of people aged 46–55

**79%** of people aged 56–65

**81%** of people aged 66+

##### Disability

**79%** of people with a disability

**86%** of people without a disability

##### Socio-economic group

**81%** of AB

**86%** of C1

**87%** of C2

**86%** of DE

### Quote from Christina Hyland, Stay at home mum

I love walking in Galway, particularly along the promenade in Salthill.

It’s amazing for all and it really is a great asset for walker and cyclist alike.

I do find it difficult walking in town however as the footpaths are not wide enough for a double buggy.

Sometimes I find myself having to go out on the road with the pram which I don’t like doing, but I don’t have a choice.

It would be nice to see this prioritised.

It would make areas of the city much more accessible for myself and other parents.

## Cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

### Cycling participation

Cycling participation 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.[[11]](#footnote-12)

**28%** of all residents cycle

**20%** of all residents cycle at least once a week

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

##### Gender

**15%** of women

**25%** of men

##### Ethnicity

**9%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**21%** of white people

##### Age

**31%** of people aged 16–25

**17%** of people aged 26–35

**21%** of people aged 36–45

**22%** of people aged 46–55

**16%** of people aged 56–65

**7%** of people aged 66+

##### Disability

**11%** of people with a disability

**21%** of people without a disability

##### Socio-economic group

**23%** of AB

**19%** of C1

**22%** of C2

**17%** of DE

### Cycling safety and satisfaction

**57%** of all residents think the level of safety for cycling in their local area is good

**49%** of all residents think the level of safety for children cycling is good

**63%** 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

**55%** of women

**59%** of men

##### Ethnicity

**79%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**54%** of white people

##### Age

**65%** of people aged 16–25

**60%** of people aged 26–35

**60%** of people aged 36–45

**54%** of people aged 46–55

**46%** of people aged 56–65

**49%** of people aged 66+

##### Disability

**49%** of people with a disability

**58%** of people without a disability

##### Socio-economic group

**49%** of AB

**59%** of C1

**64%** of C2

**54%** of DE

### Quote from Vivien Desbrus Punch, Student

I am a first-year psychology student at the University of Galway and occasionally cycle to university.

I cycle because it’s a nice way to get around, its faster than the bus and driving through traffic, and its good exercise.

I find that drivers are usually quite accommodating to cyclists, and I haven’t had any incidents on the road. The campus is nice for cycling as there are very few cars and there are lots of places to park my bike.

Unfortunately, it rains a lot in Galway, so I find myself on the bus frequently. If only we could throw a big roof over Galway, I’d say we’d all be cycling everywhere.

## Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

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

### Galway Metropolitan Area residents walk or wheel 8 times around the world every day

**44.2 million** walking and wheeling trips were made in the Galway Metropolitan Area in the past year, which adds up to

**110.3 million kilometres** = **300,000 kilometres** a day.

This equates to each resident spending **14 days** walking or wheeling continuously in the past year.

#### Annual walking and wheeling trips by purpose[[12]](#footnote-13)

Destination – adults only (like work, school, shopping): **23,500**,**000** or **53%**

School – children only: **710,000** or **2%**

Enjoyment or fitness – adults and children (including running): **19,900**,**000** or **45%**

### Walking and wheeling benefits residents and the local economy

The Walking and Cycling Index uses a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and walking. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

**€0.97 is saved** for each kilometre walked or wheeled instead of driven in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

Over a year this adds up to **€27.6 million** from adults with a car in their household walking or wheeling to work, school and other destinations.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips walked and wheeled in the Galway Metropolitan Area is **€128.4 million[[13]](#footnote-14)**

### Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

#### Walking in the Galway Metropolitan Area prevents 209 serious long-term health conditions each year

##### Cases prevented

Hip fracture: **72**

Dementia: **62**

Depression: **30**

Coronary heart disease: **22**

Other conditions: **22**

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

Saving the HSE in the Galway Metropolitan Area **€3.1 million** per year, equivalent to the cost of **57,000** GP appointments

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

In the Galway Metropolitan Area the physical activity benefits of walking prevent **49** early deaths annually, which is valued at **€380 million[[14]](#footnote-15)**

Please note wheelchair or 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:

**14,000 kg** of NOx

and

**1,700 kg** of particulates(PM10 and PM2.5)

**92%** of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

### Walking and wheeling in the Galway Metropolitan Area helps mitigate our climate crisis

**4,900 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 **54,000 people taking flights** from Shannon Airport to London Heathrow

In 2021 transport accounted for **18%** of Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2021 transport emissions rose by **114%**.

Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland’s Final Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2021.

### Walking and wheeling keeps the Galway Metropolitan Area moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.[[15]](#footnote-16) This helps to keep the Galway Metropolitan Area moving for all road users.

**26,000 return walking and wheeling trips** are made daily in the Galway Metropolitan Area by people that could have used a car.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back **125 kilometres** equivalent to the distance from Galway to Tullamore.

## Benefits of cycling

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

### Galway Metropolitan Area residents cycle once around the world every day

**3.7 million** cycling trips were made in the Galway Metropolitan Area in the past year

This adds up to 17.4 million kilometres = **48,000 kilometres** a day

#### Annual cycling trips by purpose in the Galway Metropolitan Area[[16]](#footnote-17)

Work: **1,200**,**000** or **33%**

School, college or university (adults): **320,000** or **9%**

School (children): **160,000** or **4%**

Shopping, personal business and social trips: **1,000**,**000** or **28%**

Leisure: **950,000** or **26%**

### Cycling benefits residents and the local economy

The Walking and Cycling Index uses a model to understand the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. For example travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

**€1.43 is saved** for each kilometre cycled instead of driven in the Galway Metropolitan Area.

Over a year this adds up to **€11.9 million** from adults with a car in their household cycling to work, school and other destinations.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips cycled in the Galway Metropolitan Area is **€16.1 million[[17]](#footnote-18)**

### Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

#### Cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area prevents 27 serious long-term health conditions each year

##### Cases prevented

Hip fracture: **9**

Dementia: **6**

Depression: **6**

Coronary heart disease: **3**

Other conditions: **3**

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

Saving the HSE in the Galway Metropolitan Area **€450,000** per year, equivalent to the cost of **8,100** GP appointments

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

In the Galway Metropolitan Area the physical activity benefits of cycling prevent **3** early deaths annually, which is valued at **€19.1 million**[[18]](#footnote-19)

People cycling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually: **3,300 kg** of NOx

and

**406 kg** of particulates (PM10 and PM2.5)

**92%** of residents agree the air is clean in their local area

### Cycling in the Galway Metropolitan Area helps mitigate our climate crisis

**1,400 tonnes** of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by cycling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of **16,000 people taking flights** from Shannon Airport to London Heathrow

In 2021 transport accounted for **18%** of Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2021 transport emissions rose by **114%**.

Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland’s Final Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2021.

### Cycling keeps the Galway Metropolitan Area moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.[[19]](#footnote-20) This helps to keep the Galway Metropolitan Area moving for all road users.

**2,800 return cycling trips** are made daily in the Galway Metropolitan Area by people that could have used a car.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back **13 kilometres** equivalent to the distance from Galway to Moycullen.

## Walking solutions

What would help make walking and wheeling easier?

### Residents want more services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Ideally, walking or wheeling should be the most attractive option for short journeys. An area can support this by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live. The environment should be safe, comfortable and welcoming.

20-minute neighbourhoods are places where you can walk from your home to many of the things you need on a regular basis (like shops, parks, schools) and back again within 20 minutes.

**16%** of Galway Metropolitan Area households are in neighbourhoods of more than 40 homes per hectare.

These higher-density neighbourhoods can sustain local businesses and public transport routes more easily. This helps to reduce car dependency.[[20]](#footnote-21)

**73%** agree they can easily get to many places they need to visit without having to drive

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

**67%** More shops and everyday services, such as banks and post offices, close to your home

**62%** More services, such as doctors surgeries and schools, close to your home

**69%** More parks or green spaces close to your home

**71%** More things to see and do close to your home, like cafés or entertainment venues

#### Proportion of households within an 800m radius of the following amenities

This is modelled as a straight-line distance, as opposed to the actual walking distance based on street layout which is likely to be longer (approximately equivalent to 960m).

Food shop **89%**

Park or space for recreation **84%**

Doctors surgery **44%**

Primary school **73%**

Library **29%**

Post Office **39%**

A mix of cultural and leisure venues[[21]](#footnote-22) **84%**

Railway station or tram stop **9%**

Bus stop (within 400m) **81%**

### Residents want better streets

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

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

**74%** Wider footpaths

**70%** More frequent road crossings, with reduced wait times

**75%** Nicer places along streets to stop and rest, like more benches, trees and shelters

**76%** Better footpath accessibility, like level surfaces, dropped kerbs at crossing points

**73%** Fewer cars parked on the footpath

**59%** Less fear of crime or antisocial behaviour in their area

#### In the Galway Metropolitan Area:

**30%** of National and Regional roads have a footpath width greater than **3**m[[22]](#footnote-23)

**44%** of minor roads have a footpath 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

### Quote from Amy Spain-Butler, PhD student in sustainable land use

I’m originally from Dublin, but I came to Galway as a teenager. There are many things I love about this city, like how everything I need is just a 10-minute walk away and how there are always places to sit and socialise.

I enjoy how quiet it is in the pedestrian-only areas, such as Shop Street and the Quays. If there are any events or festivals on in the city throughout the year it’ll always drag me out of the house, just because it’s so easy to get there.

Pedestrians have priority on the University of Galway campus which I enjoy. You can see that with all the dedicated spaces between buildings and sectioned-off areas.

I always feel safe when rushing to lectures, or even just wandering around.

## Cycling solutions

What would make cycling better?

### Many Galway Metropolitan Area residents want to cycle

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

Regularly cycle: **16%**

Occasionally cycle: **12%**

New or returning to cycling: **6%**

Do not cycle but would like to: **27%**

Do not cycle and do not want to: **39%**

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

**29%** of women

**37%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**14%** of people with a disability

### Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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

**70%** More traffic‑free cycle paths away from roads, like through parks or along waterways

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

**67%** More signposted local cycle routes along quieter streets

**59%** Better links with public transport, like secure cycle parking at train stations, bus stops/stations

**88%** of residents support building more cycle paths 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?

**54%** Cycling training courses and organised social rides

**53%** Access or improvements to a city cycle hire scheme

**49%** Access to secure cycle storage at or near home

**58%** Access to a bicycle

**41%** Access to an electric cycle

**24%** Access to a cargo cycle with space to carry children or shopping

**19%** Access to an adapted cycle, like a tricycle or handcycle

#### Galway Metropolitan Area cycle hire scheme[[23]](#footnote-24)

**186** hire cycles

**23** cycle hire stations

**5,830** annual trips

#### Reported cycle thefts

There were **323** reported cycle thefts in the Galway Metropolitan Area in 2022/23 (**513** in 2021/22).

For every **124** people who own an adult cycle in the Galway Metropolitan Area, there was **1** reported cycle theft in the past year.

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

**48%** of residents

**45%** of socio-economic group DE

**51%** of socio-economic group AB

**84%** of residents support financial discounts for people on low incomes or not in employment to help them buy a cycle

**23%** of households are within 800m of a cycle shop[[24]](#footnote-25)

### Quote from Wayne Wrafter

I’ve cerebral palsy on my left side and it affects my balance and mobility.

I have been cycling a recumbent trike since 2019, which not only keeps me more mobile but also allows me to keep up with my four growing boys!

There is no real infrastructure within Oranmore or Galway. You have the odd cycle lane here and there but for the most part I’m cycling on the road.

We need to see more movement on improving the overall infrastructure.

More cycle lanes, the removal of kissing gates, more awareness of cyclists on the road and most of all respect. Drivers do not give you the space you need on the road, and it would be great to see this improve.

## 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

**93%** of residents

**93%** of women

**94%** of men

**94%** of people from ethnic minority groups

**93%** of white people

**91%** of people with a disability

**93%** of people without a disability

**93%** of socio-economic group DE

**91%** of socio-economic group AB

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

**65%** of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles.

#### But residents would find fewer motor vehicles on their streets useful to:

**64%** Walk or wheel more

**60%** Cycle more

Low-use minor roads are not designed to carry through-traffic, but in the Galway Metropolitan Area **12%** of their total length has nothing to prevent it. This can result in rat-running.[[25]](#footnote-26)

**72%** agree that restricting through-traffic on local residential streets would make their area a better place.

#### Residents would find more streets with 30km/h speed limits useful to:

**65%** Walk or wheel more

**58%** Cycle more

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

**78%** agree increasing space for people socialising, walking, wheeling and cycling on their local main street would improve their local area

**83%** agree they regularly chat to their neighbours, more than just to say hello

**87%** support low‑traffic neighbourhoods

### Quote from Justine Delaney, Office manager / Sustainability ambassador

The Council’s ‘Greening the Laneways’ is brilliant for local communities, tidying up existing connecting access channels between neighbourhoods.

Opening micro routes between housing estates like Knocknacarra and Ballinfoyle would enable children to get to school and GAA clubs without having to rely on lifts.

Knocknacarra School Cycle Bus has been in operation for over eight years, enabling many children to cycle safely to school, kick starting their day in a healthy and energised way and the Safe Routes to School programme at Scoil Iognáid primary school has provided a calmer environment at drop off and pick up times.

Strategic planning for public transport and active travel should be aimed at those not in a position to own or run a car now and those who are considering a shift in the next few years, for whatever reasons.

### Neighbourhoods must be designed with children in mind

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive. 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.

**11 years old** average age when people living with children would let them walk, wheel or cycle independently in their neighbourhood.

**80%** of seven-year-olds in Germany are allowed to go alone to places within walking distance, other than school.[[26]](#footnote-27)

**91%** of residents agree there is space for children to socialise and play

**74%** of households are within 800m of a children’s playground

Among Galway Metropolitan Area residents:

**48%** agree, while **24%** disagree, closing streets outside local schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area.

These are known as ‘School Streets’.

**1** school in the Galway Metropolitan Area has a School Streets scheme.[[27]](#footnote-28) Also, see Safe Routes to School Programme (SRTS).

## Developing the Galway Metropolitan Area

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

The National Planning Framework (NPF) has identified that Galway City and suburbs are projected to grow between 50‑60% in the period up to 2040. The projected population growth associated with this economic expansion is expected to result in a significant increase in the demand for travel infrastructure.

Traffic congestion in Galway City and hinterland has been an issue for decades. Congestion impacts on quality of life, the urban environment, safety of all road users, and the economic performance of Galway City as the gateway and economic driver of the West Region. Its impact extends far beyond the city into the wider county and region, due to the large commuter population reliant on the city for employment and education.

There has been a realisation from both Galway City Council and Galway County Council that there is an appetite for change and there is a commitment there to deliver the infrastructure needed to bring about a modal shift towards active travel.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has been working with Galway City Council for many years in the development and delivery of Active Travel Projects. Since 2021, both Galway City Council and Galway County Council have established dedicated active travel teams with a total of 19 staff members now working exclusively on Active Travel Projects.

To date, over €20 million of NTA funding has been spent on Active Travel projects in Galway.

### Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridge

The Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge opened in May 2023, marking an important milestone in the delivery of the Galway Transport Strategy. It provides an important link across the River Corrib, offering a fantastic architectural and urban amenity space for the people of Galway.

Approximately 85 metres in length, and crossing three watercourses, it offers uninterrupted views of both the Galway Cathedral and the Convent of Mercy. The bridge is shaped as a salmon, to reflect the heritage of fishing in the area. The official name will be confirmed following public consultation and review by the naming committee in the coming months.

### Miller’s Lane

Officially opened in June 2023, this project consisted of the upgrading of an existing overgrown pathway to provide an urban greenway in the Knocknacarra area, linking Rahoon Road and Kingston Road. This cycling and pedestrian only route provides safe off-road connectivity for school children in the Knocknacarra area. The lane, which averages approximately 4m wide, has been upgraded with a high-quality asphalt surface, low level public lighting and attractive landscaping throughout. User numbers have been rising steadily since it opened.

### Safe Routes to School – School Street pilot – Scoil Iognáid

In 2020, Galway City Council in partnership with Scoil Iognáid, the NTA and An Taisce’s Green-Schools programme, launched a pilot School Streets programme the first city centre School Street in Ireland.

This pilot project was delivered via an iterative process combining on-going communications, consultation and engagement to deliver a ‘School Zone’ design creating a safer, calmer front-of-school environment.

The pilot project has been hugely successful and has changed the travel culture and practices at Scoil Iognáid. Further to the success of the pilot, a permanent project has been developed and is currently at construction stage. This project aims to tackle some behavioural issues observed during the pilot. It includes front-of-school improvements and an expansion of the scope of the project to include additional road links junctions on the approach to the school. The project is expected to be completed towards the middle of 2024.

## Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

The Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy is currently in development and will replace the Galway Transport Strategy. The Strategy will assist the City and County Councils with meeting their obligations under the Climate Action Plan 2023. A key ambition of the Strategy is to develop a safe, efficient, resilient, and integrated transport network for all users, which will meet current and future travel requirements.

### South Doughiska Cycle Scheme

These routes have been designed to provide the highest quality of service possible for all users and comprises the provision of segregated pedestrian and cyclist facilities along the length of the route between the Dublin Road to the north and the Dublin to Galway Railway line to the south.

The scheme has been developed as a primary cycle route within a residential area and will serve the residents of the Doughiska area by providing connectivity to the city centre via the BusConnects Galway Dublin Road Scheme and BusConnects Galway Cross City Link scheme.

### Eglinton Canal

This scheme aims to improve the provision of the route from the Claddagh Quay to the south and University Road to the north. The route comprises resurfacing along the canal tow path and the provision of new signalised crossings at New Road, Presentation Road, Dominick Street and Father Griffin Road.

This 0.85km scheme will connect the University of Galway to the north, with Raven Terrace to the south, and on to the city centre.

### Ballybane and Castlepark Cycle Scheme

Ballybane Road and Castlepark Road are located to the east of Galway City, servicing the Ballybane and Castlepark areas. The scheme will connect key attractors by the provision of a Primary (Ballybane Road), and Secondary (Castlepark Road) cycle network routes (2.5km in total). The scheme forms a key part of the wider Cycling Network proposed for Galway City.

### Oranmore Village to Oranmore Train Station

Galway County Council are developing a scheme to provide enhanced connectivity between Oranmore Village and Oranmore Train Station. The station is located within 2km of the Oranmore Village centre and provides a reliable and frequent commuter service into Galway City. By providing new cycling infrastructure and improving pedestrian connectivity from Oranmore and the rapidly expanding Garraun area to the train station, it will enhance the attractiveness of using the train for commuters into Galway city.

### Safe Routes to School Programme (SRTS)

An Taisce’s SRTS Team and Galway City and County Councils are actively rolling out Safe Routes to School projects at several schools in and around the city.

Delivery plans for round 1 schools have been completed, with construction works commencing in Q4 of 2023. Delivery plans for round 2 schools are currently in development.

### Quote from Gary Higgins, Engineer

I’m fortunate enough to live within walking distance of Galway city centre and like to take advantage of this as much as possible. It’s a very walkable city with mostly flat terrain. The main parts of the city are within easy walking distance of the centre.

With car traffic issues a common topic of conversation in Galway, it’s easy to forget that there are many people who still make their daily commutes predominantly on foot. This can come with an added social benefit when unknown faces become familiar and evolve daily greetings. When you stop in regularly for a coffee or groceries, you quickly get to know the staff and other regulars.

While there’s issues with substandard footpaths in places and some difficulties where car traffic and walking overlap, there have been several works and improvements in recent years that shows walkability is being seen as an important part of Galway becoming a modern city, and hopefully there is more of this to come.

Rain is another common topic of conversation here, but appropriate clothing solves a lot of this. It can also be a good excuse to stop in the local pub or coffee shop.

## Notes on methodology:

The attitudinal survey was conducted from April to July 2023 by independent market research company Behaviour & Attitudes.

The survey is representative of all Galway Metropolitan Area residents, not just those who walk, wheel 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 travelled by journey purpose.

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

More information and a detailed methodology are available at [www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index)

Sustrans makes it easier for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

We work for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

Join us on our journey. [www.sustrans.org.uk](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/)

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

© Sustrans March 2024

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

Walking and Cycling Index Galway Metropolitan Area has been funded by the National Transport Authority. The project is co-ordinated by Sustrans and has been supported by Galway County Council and Galway City Council.

1. City is used as a shorthand for Walking and Cycling Index cities, city regions, metropolitan areas and boroughs. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. CSO Census 2022. This is the most recent available for the Galway Metropolitan Area. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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-5)
5. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Based on walking, wheeling and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking or wheeling trips. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See definition in **Walking solutions**. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For definition see [Methodology document](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/walking-cycling-index). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. 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-10)
10. 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-11)
11. See Bike Life reports 2019 (various cities). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Trips for enjoyment or fitness include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). School trips are shown separately for children only. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. This includes trips walked or wheeled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. 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-15)
15. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. 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-17)
17. This includes trips cycled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. 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-19)
19. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, like cafés, pubs, bingo halls, cinemas, museums. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. National and Regional roads are main roads. Footpath widths were calculated using Tailte Éireann’s (formerly OSi) Prime II data licenced under the National Mapping Agreement: CYAL50370872 © Tailte Éireann – Surveying. Footpath width does not account for obstructions, such as bus stops or litter bins. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Data covers July 2022–June 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. © OpenStreetMap contributors. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Based on analysis by CycleStreets [www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org](https://www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org/). Low‑use minor roads are those classed as ‘less significant minor roads’ on OpenStreetMap. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Children’s Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Figure given is correct as of 31 May 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)