

# Hands Up Scotland Survey 2021

## Statistical News Release (26 May 2022)

### An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

This statistical news release reports key results from the 2021 Hands Up Scotland Survey on mode of travel to schools and nurseries in Scotland. This document accompanies the Hands Up Scotland Survey 2021 National Summary Report and National Results tables.<sup>1</sup>

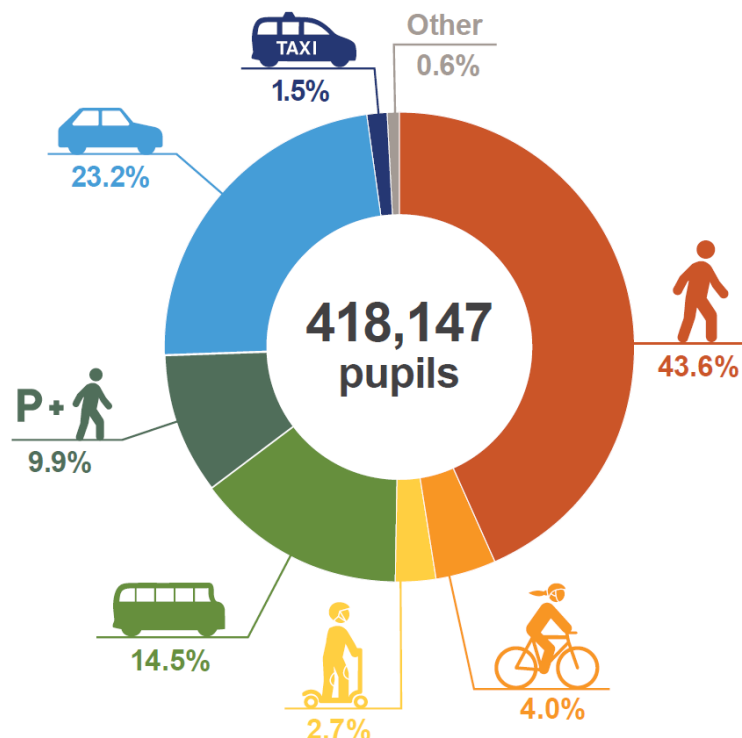
The annual Hands Up Scotland Survey, now in its fourteenth year, is published by Sustrans as an Official Statistic in Scotland. The survey is funded by Transport Scotland to provide an accurate and up-to-date picture of how pupils travel to school.

In 2020 and 2021, the coronavirus pandemic is expected to have influenced both the results and the response rate, but the full extent of its impact is not known. The travel modes are categorised as follows:

- **Active travel:** walking, cycling and scootering or skating
- **Public sustainable travel:** bus
- **Multi-mode travel:** park and stride (driven part of the way by car and walk the rest)
- **Private motorised travel:** driven (car) and taxi.

## National results 2021

Chart 1: National travel modes: proportion of participating pupils travelling by different modes (all school pupil responses exc. nursery children), 2021.<sup>2</sup>



### **Active travel**

50.3% (210,267 out of 418,147) of school pupils (state and independent schools combined) said they normally travel to school in an active way, with walking as the most common mode of travel to school.

- 43.6% of school pupils (182,160) said they normally walk to school.
- 4.0% of school pupils (16,706) said they normally cycle to school.
- 2.7% of school pupils (11,401) said they normally scooter or skate to school.

### **Public sustainable travel**

14.5% of school pupils (60,782) said they normally travel to school by bus.

### **Multi-mode travel**

9.9% of school pupils (41,240) said they normally park and stride to school.

### **Private motorised travel**

24.7% of school pupils (103,313) said they normally travel to school using private motorised transport:

- 23.2% of school pupils (96,919) said they are normally driven to school in a car.
- 1.5% of school pupils (6,394) said they normally travel to school by taxi.

## Response rates 2021

### School response rates

In 2021, a total of 3,153 schools and nurseries took part in the survey from all 32 local authorities in Scotland, during the designated survey week (13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021). 1,879 were schools and 1,274 were nurseries. Of this, 1,861 state schools (primary, secondary and SEN) participated, which equates to 75.3% of all registered state schools in Scotland.

The total number of state schools responding to the survey has increased from 1,756 in 2020 (the lowest of the last ten survey years) to 1,861 in 2021. 2021 represents the second lowest number of schools responding to the survey of the last ten survey years.

**Table 1: National response rates: number and proportion of schools responding to the survey, 2021.<sup>3</sup>**

School type	Number of schools which received survey	% of all schools in Scotland which received survey	Number of schools which returned data	% of schools receiving survey which returned data	% of all schools in Scotland which returned data
Nursery	2,871	N/A	1,274	44.4%	N/A
Primary	2,003	100.0%	1,586	79.2%	79.2%
Secondary	354	99.2%	247	69.8%	69.2%
SEN	108	97.3%	28	25.9%	25.2%
Independent	84	N/A	18	21.4%	N/A
<b>All state schools (exc. nursery)</b>	2,465	99.8%	1,861	75.5%	75.3%
<b>All schools (exc. nursery)</b>	2,549	N/A	1,879	73.7%	N/A

### Pupil response rates

Responses were received from 37,071 nursery children and 418,147 school pupils, amounting to 455,218 responses overall. This is the second lowest number of responses of the last ten survey years but represents 12,230 more responses from school pupils than in 2020. 413,616 state school pupils took part, which equates to 58.7% of all state school pupils enrolled in Scotland.

**Table 2: National response rates: number of pupils responding to the survey by school type, and proportion of respondents from the total roll by each school type, 2021.<sup>4</sup>**

School type	Number of pupil respondents	% of Scottish state school roll
Nursery	37,071	N/A
Primary	268,855	68.9%
Secondary	143,118	46.6%
SEN	1,643	21.6%
Independent	4,531	N/A
<b>All state schools (exc. nursery)</b>	413,616	58.7%
<b>All schools (exc. nursery)</b>	418,147	N/A
<b>All schools and nurseries</b>	455,218	N/A

## National results 2021: by school type

Annual results highlight the extent of variation in travel behaviour between different school types and care should be taken when interpreting results across school types due to considerable variation in pupil response numbers. Due to rounding, row percentages may not always add up to 100%, and category totals may not always add up to the values presented for individual travel modes.

### Nursery schools

- 41.5% of nursery children reported normally travelling to school by an active mode.
- 2.3% of nursery children reported normally travelling to school by public sustainable transport.
- 4.2% of nursery children reported normally travelling to school using multi-mode travel.
- 51.4% of nursery children reported normally travelling to school using private motorised transport.

### All state schools (primary, secondary and SEN) comparison

- Primary school pupils reported the highest level of active travel to school of all school types, at 54.3%, followed by secondary school pupils at 44.3%.
- The highest level of bus usage is reported in secondary schools, at 31.3% of pupils compared to 26.5% of SEN school pupils and just 5.5% of primary school pupils.
- 12.1% of primary school pupils reported park and stride as their usual mode of travelling to school, compared to 5.4% of secondary school pupils.
- Secondary school pupils reported the lowest levels of travel to school using private motorised transport of all school types at 17.8%, compared to 27.9% of primary school pupils and 55.4% of SEN school pupils.

**Table 3: National travel modes: by school type (nursery and state schools), 2021.<sup>5</sup>**

School type	Walk	Cycle	Scooter/ Skate	Bus	Park & Stride	Driven (car)	Taxi	Other	Total
Nursery	35.5%	3.3%	2.6%	2.3%	4.2%	50.5%	0.9%	0.7%	<b>37,071</b>
Primary	44.8%	5.3%	4.1%	5.5%	12.1%	26.5%	1.4%	0.2%	<b>268,855</b>
Secondary	42.5%	1.6%	0.2%	31.3%	5.4%	16.6%	1.2%	1.2%	<b>143,118</b>
SEN	1.9%	*	*	26.5%	0.0%	8.3%	47.2%	15.9%	<b>1,643</b>

### All state schools (primary, secondary and SEN) and independent schools comparison

- Pupils in state schools reported higher active travel levels (50.6%) compared to independent school pupils (20.9%).
- A higher percentage of state school pupils (14.5%) reported normally travelling to school by bus, compared to 14.1% of independent school pupils.
- 9.7% of state school pupils reported travelling to school using multiple modes, compared to 20.8% of independent school pupils.
- A lower percentage of state school pupils normally travel using private motorised modes at 24.5% compared to 40.9% of independent school pupils. 23.0% of state school pupils reported normally travelling to school by car compared to 39.5% of independent school pupils. However, a higher proportion of state school pupils (1.5%) travel to school by taxi, compared to independent school pupils (1.3%).

**Table 4: National travel modes: by school type (state schools and independent schools), 2021.<sup>5</sup>**

School type	Walk	Cycle	Scooter /Skate	Bus	Park & Stride	Driven (car)	Taxi	Other	Total
All state schools	43.9%	4.0%	2.7%	14.5%	9.7%	23.0%	1.5%	0.6%	<b>413,616</b>
Independent	16.4%	3.1%	1.5%	14.1%	20.8%	39.5%	1.3%	3.4%	<b>4,531</b>

## National results comparison – All schools (exc. nursery): 2012-2021

Trends in the data are analysed for the last ten survey years, with the baseline year in this report being 2012. Percentage point (pp) change has been calculated based on the rounded figures presented in this statistical news release.

A number of factors may impact on travel behaviour from year to year (e.g. weather conditions, school mergers, closures and relocations) as well as policies and schemes introduced by central government, local government or individual schools. In 2020 and 2021, coronavirus was a substantial additional factor.

### Active travel

Since 2012, active travel to school has remained the most frequently reported mode of travel to school across Scotland. In 2012, 49.7% of pupils in all schools (exc. nursery) reported travelling actively to school. This percentage has fluctuated, reaching 50.4% in 2014, falling to 47.8% in 2019 and rising to the highest level of the past ten survey years in 2020 (51.2%).

In 2021, active travel to school decreased 0.9pp from 2020 to 50.3%, though remains higher than the pre-pandemic levels of 2019.

The breakdown of individual active travel modes is as follows:

- Following a steady decline from 45.1% in 2012 to 41.0% in 2019, and then a sharp rise to 44.8% in 2020, there has been a 1.2pp decrease in the proportion of pupils **walking** to school in 2021 (43.6%).
- The survey has recorded an increasing trend in **cycling** over the past ten survey years, from 2.9% in 2012 to 4.0% in 2021, an increase of 0.2pp from 2020 (3.8%).
- The percentage of pupils who say they normally **scooter or skate** to school increased from 1.6% in 2012 to 2.9% in 2015. Since 2016 there has been a decreasing trend. The proportion of pupils reporting to scoot or skate to school has increased 0.1pp from 2.6% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2021.

### Public sustainable travel

The proportion of pupils using the bus has steadily decreased over the past ten survey years, from 18.2% in 2012 to 14.5% in 2021. Between 2015 and 2020 bus use fell every year, with the greatest drop observed in 2020 (-1.9pp) to a low of 14.1%. In 2021, this has increased by 0.4pp (to 14.5%) but bus use remains 1.5pp lower than in 2019.

### Multi-mode travel

The percentage of pupils normally travelling to school by park and stride increased from 7.8% in 2012 to a high of 10.2% in 2019. In 2020 it decreased 0.3pp to 9.9%, where it remains in 2021.

### Private motorised travel

Levels of pupils in all schools (exc. nursery) travelling to school using private motorised transport have increased from 23.9% in 2012 to 24.7% in 2021, up 0.4pp since 2020 (24.3%) but 0.8pp lower than the high of 2019.

- The proportion of pupils being **driven** to school had increased from 22.2% in 2012 to 23.8% in 2019. In 2020 this declined for the first time in four years, down 1.0pp to 22.8%, but in 2021 has increased by 0.4pp to 23.2%.
- **Taxi use** has remained fairly consistent over the past ten survey years, typically ranging between 1.5% and 1.8%. In 2021, taxi use stayed at 2020 levels (1.5%), a 0.2pp decrease from 2019.

**Table 5: National travel categories: all schools (exc. nursery) 2012 – 2021.**

Year	Active travel	Public sustainable travel	Multi-mode travel	Private motorised travel	Other	Total
2012	49.7%	18.2%	7.8%	23.9%	0.5%	<b>457,488</b>
2013	50.3%	18.8%	7.5%	23.0%	0.4%	<b>467,397</b>
2014	50.4%	17.7%	7.8%	23.5%	0.5%	<b>487,147</b>
2015	49.7%	17.9%	7.8%	24.1%	0.4%	<b>480,161</b>
2016	49.3%	16.6%	9.3%	24.1%	0.6%	<b>458,145</b>
2017	48.8%	16.5%	9.7%	24.5%	0.5%	<b>473,160</b>
2018	48.7%	16.2%	9.8%	24.8%	0.5%	<b>468,537</b>
2019	47.8%	16.0%	10.2%	25.5%	0.6%	<b>472,617</b>
2020	51.2%	14.1%	9.9%	24.3%	0.4%	<b>405,917</b>
2021	50.3%	14.5%	9.9%	24.7%	0.6%	<b>418,147</b>

## Technical Notes

### Data collection

Data collection for the Hands Up Scotland Survey occurs on an annual basis in the second week of September. In 2021 data collection took place between 13th and 17th September. However, data from schools conducting the survey within a grace period of 1 week either side of the official survey date was accepted and included in the analysis.

All 32 local authorities in Scotland are invited to take part in the Hands Up Scotland Survey. The survey is designed to record information about any and all pupils enrolled in nursery, primary, secondary, SEN and independent schools in Scotland.

This approach is designed to produce a large national dataset which can be used to examine information on mode of travel to school in detail at a national, local authority and school level as well as by school type and year group.

Pupils of primary and secondary school age are asked to respond to the Hands Up Scotland Survey themselves. Assistance may be provided to nursery or SEN school pupils by a parent, guardian or member of school staff when responding to the survey, depending on the level of support required.

Schools and local authorities were instructed that survey materials and completed forms be shared electronically (e.g. digital copies sent by email) with, and within, schools rather than sharing physical paper copies. This was to prevent the risk of transmission of coronavirus, and to align with Scottish government guidance<sup>6</sup>.

### Response rates

There are limitations to the comparability of data across years and school types; although survey design and methodology have remained consistent, response rates vary considerably over the 14 years that the Hands Up Scotland Survey has been conducted, and across school types. Survey receipt and response rates as a percentage of equivalent schools in Scotland and equivalent Scottish school roll are calculated using the Scottish Government Education Statistics. Data on the number of schools and their pupil roll are available for state primary, secondary and SEN schools from the Scottish Government. Pupil roll numbers are not published for state nursery or independent schools in Scotland.

Survey receipt and response rates as a percentage of Scottish/LA school roll and as a percentage of all schools in Scotland/LA are calculated using Scottish Government Education Statistics. As these data are not available for state nursery or independent schools, it is not possible to calculate receipt or response rates for these school types.

### School type

'All state schools' includes primary, secondary and SEN schools only.

'All schools' includes primary, secondary, SEN and independent schools only.

Nursery data is presented separately as the number of nursery school respondents has more than tripled since data was first collected. This large increase in nursery pupils participating over a short space of time, had the potential to skew the national statistic in favour of nursery pupil travel and potentially present drastic changes in school travel modes over the years. In addition to this, nurseries have very different operating times compared to the other school types. For example, some nursery pupils only attend mornings, afternoons, and part of the week. Whereas those aged primary and up are in full time education.

### Interpreting results

The aggregated national level results do not necessarily include the same pupils over time as the same local authorities/schools/pupils might not respond to the survey each year. The survey data is not weighted to take this into account. This may have implications for inter-year comparisons; particular caution should be applied when attempting to draw conclusions from small percentage point changes. For further information regarding school participation please refer to Table 1.5 *Local authority response rates: number of schools surveyed*, and Table 1.6 *Local authority response rates: number of schools returning data*, in the Hands Up Scotland Survey National Results data tables, available from Sustrans' website, available at:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

Where the number of responses is low (less than 100), care should be taken when interpreting results. Percentage statistics based on a small number of responses may see large annual fluctuations.

A number of variables may impact on travel behaviour from year to year (e.g. weather conditions, school mergers, closures and relocations) as well as policies and schemes introduced by central government, local government or individual schools. In 2020 and 2021 coronavirus was also a substantial additional factor. Therefore, caution should be applied when seeking to interpret annual variations.



As the Hands up Scotland Survey is carried out over a one week period, weather conditions may differ considerably from year to year. It should be noted that weather conditions have an impact on travel choices and may influence pupil response to the survey, although the phrasing of the survey question aims to overcome this limitation as much as possible ('How do you normally travel to school?').

Due to rounding, row percentages may not always add up to 100%, and category totals may not always add up to the values presented for individual travel modes.

In 2008, the first year of the survey, Sustrans Scotland offered a prize draw as an incentive for school participation. In 2013, Sustrans Scotland offered a prize draw as an incentive to receive responses from all year groups. Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of state schools responding to the survey increased from 77.0% to 78.7%. However, it is not possible to ascertain whether a proportion of these schools were encouraged by the incentive or whether this increase in school responses was the continuation of an overall trend. It is not possible to ascertain whether the survey mode options were read out in the same order in each school or class that participated between 2008 and 2015, as the mode options presented on the survey form were tabulated. The order of presentation was consistent between 2008 and 2012, and 2013 to 2015, but inconsistent between these two time periods. Since 2016, the modes have been listed, removing any ambiguity. It is not possible to ascertain whether any observed differences in mode share between these years were as a result of these changes, or other unrelated factors. An online survey platform was made available to schools and nurseries from 2016, as an alternative to sending paper survey forms to local authority officers. Local authority officers decided which method was most suitable to offer to schools in their area. The majority of local authorities opted to use the online survey platform but some continued with manual data entry by collecting paper survey forms.

In 2020, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, instructions to schools clarified that when asking "How do you normally travel to school?", the question is referring to travel to school since returning to school in August 2020, rather than how they travelled prior to lockdown. It was advised that if a pupil/group of pupils feel unable to answer the question "How do you normally travel to school?", they could be prompted with "Since you have been back to school, which way do you travel to school most of the time?", but that the prompt should only be used if it is clear that they have not understood the "How do you normally travel to school?" question. This guidance was added in response to the fact that travel to school had ceased at the end of 20th March 2020<sup>7</sup> and resumed from the 11th August 2020<sup>8</sup>, with all schools fully open by the time of data collection in September.

Percentage point changes have been calculated based on the rounded figures presented in this summary report. If users wish to calculate percentage point change based on unrounded figures, please refer to the relevant tables in the Hands up Scotland Survey National Results data tables, available from Sustrans' website, available at: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

## Confidentiality

Where a percentage represents a value of between one and four pupils, it has been suppressed to maintain anonymity of respondents and replaced with an asterisk (\*). Where suppressed data is included in the mode category calculation, the value for that category has also been suppressed.

## Official Statistics Publication

The Hands up Scotland Survey has been designated an Official Statistic in Scotland by Parliamentary Order and is produced in line with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The code covers a range of measures, such as relevance, integrity, quality, accessibility, value for money and freedom from political influence.

A Parliamentary Order was passed designating Sustrans as Official Statistics Providers as of 1st June 2012, prior to the publication of Hands up Scotland Survey 2011 results. The primary aim of Official Statistics in Scotland is to provide an accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful picture of the economy and society to support the formulation and monitoring of economic and social policies by government and others.

More information on the standards of Official Statistics in Scotland is available at:

<https://statistics.gov.scot/home>

## Enquiries

For media enquiries relating to the information contained in this, or any other Hands Up Scotland Survey documents, please contact Sustrans' Press Office on 0131 346 3010 or email at [press@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:press@sustrans.org.uk)

Non-media enquiries about Hands Up Scotland Survey should be made to Sustrans' Hands Up Scotland Survey team, Sustrans Research & Monitoring Unit, 1 Exchange Crescent, Conference Square, Edinburgh, EH3 8RA or email:

[HandsUpScotland@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:HandsUpScotland@sustrans.org.uk)

Where users wish to undertake more detailed analyses for a specific project and these documents do not provide the required information or format, a data request may be submitted. To submit a data request, please read the information and download the data request form at:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

Sustrans' Research and Monitoring Unit assesses the impacts of Sustrans' work and evaluates the interventions of partners and clients across the UK, including extensive work with schools and young people. More information is available at:

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/research-monitoring-and-evaluation/>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Documents available at: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

<sup>2</sup> Table 2.1 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

<sup>3</sup> Table 1.3 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

<sup>4</sup> Table 1.1 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

<sup>5</sup> Table 2.3 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey>

<sup>6</sup> For more information on coronavirus guidance, please refer to 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools' (<https://lasswadehsc.mgfl.net/wp-content/uploads/ReducingRisksinSchoolsguidance-version6.0-August2021-finalversion.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to <https://www.gov.scot/news/update-on-school-closures-and-exams/>

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to <https://www.gov.scot/news/schools-to-re-open-full-time/>