

Hands Up Scotland Survey 2024: Overview

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland – June 2025

The annual Hands Up Scotland Survey, now in its fifteenth year, is published by Sustrans. The survey is funded by Transport Scotland and is designed to provide reliable and up to date information on mode of travel to school in Scotland.

The question posed to all school pupils and nursery children is, 'How do you normally travel to school?' with a choice of travel modes.

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.

Over four-fifths (80.2%) of all state schools in Scotland (excluding nurseries) took part in the 2024 survey. Responses were received from over 461,000 school pupils and over 40,000 nursery children.

A full report detailing the national level findings and greater technical detail on the data collection is also available. This overview is an accompaniment to that report.

Key findings

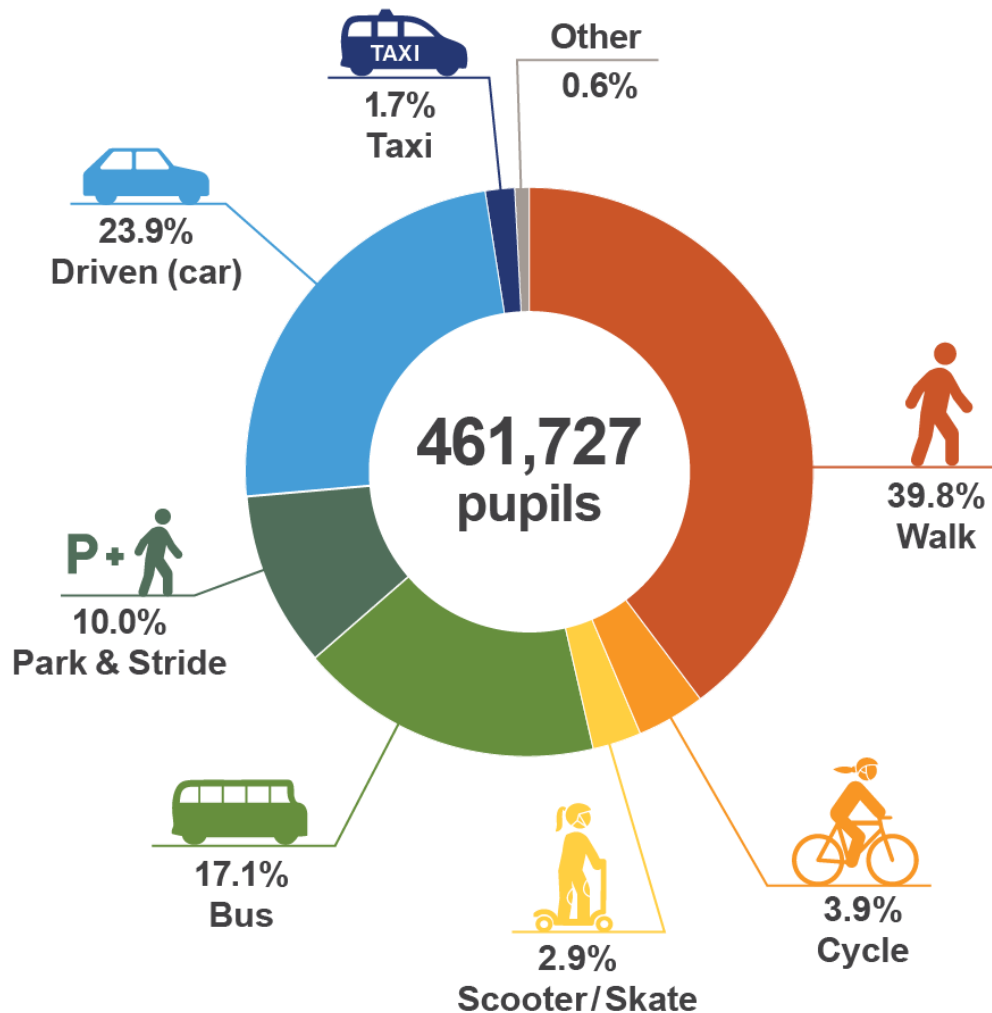
Active travel to school has declined since 2023 and is the lowest it has been since the survey began (2008).

The key findings from the 2024 survey are:

- In 2024, the percentage of school pupils travelling actively to school, either by walking, cycling, scootering or skating, is at 46.6%. This represents a continued decline since a 51.2% high in 2020, and is lower than the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 (47.8%)
- At 3.9%, cycling levels have fallen by 0.8 percentage points (pp) since 2023, and are at the same level as in 2022. This bucks a general rising trend in cycling over the past 10 survey years
- Walking rates fell for the fourth year in a row, by 1.5pp. At 39.8%, this is its lowest level since the survey began, but is still by far the most common way school pupils get to school
- The percentage of pupils scootering or skating to school has fallen by 0.4pp to 2.9%, returning to 2022 levels
- The proportion of pupils being driven to school has risen by 1.4pp to 23.9% in 2024. This is the highest it has been since the survey began
- Bus use has risen for the fourth year in a row, rising by 0.7pp to 17.1%. This is higher than pre-pandemic levels and is the highest level since 2015.

National results 2024

Chart 1: National travel modes: proportion of participating pupils travelling by different modes (all school pupil responses exc. nursery children), 2024.¹



Active travel

46.6% (215,019 out of 461,727) of school pupils (state and independent schools combined) surveyed in 2024 said they normally travel to school in an active way, with walking as the most common mode of travel to school.

Public sustainable travel

17.1% of school pupils (79,140) in 2024 said they normally travel to school by bus.

Multi-mode travel

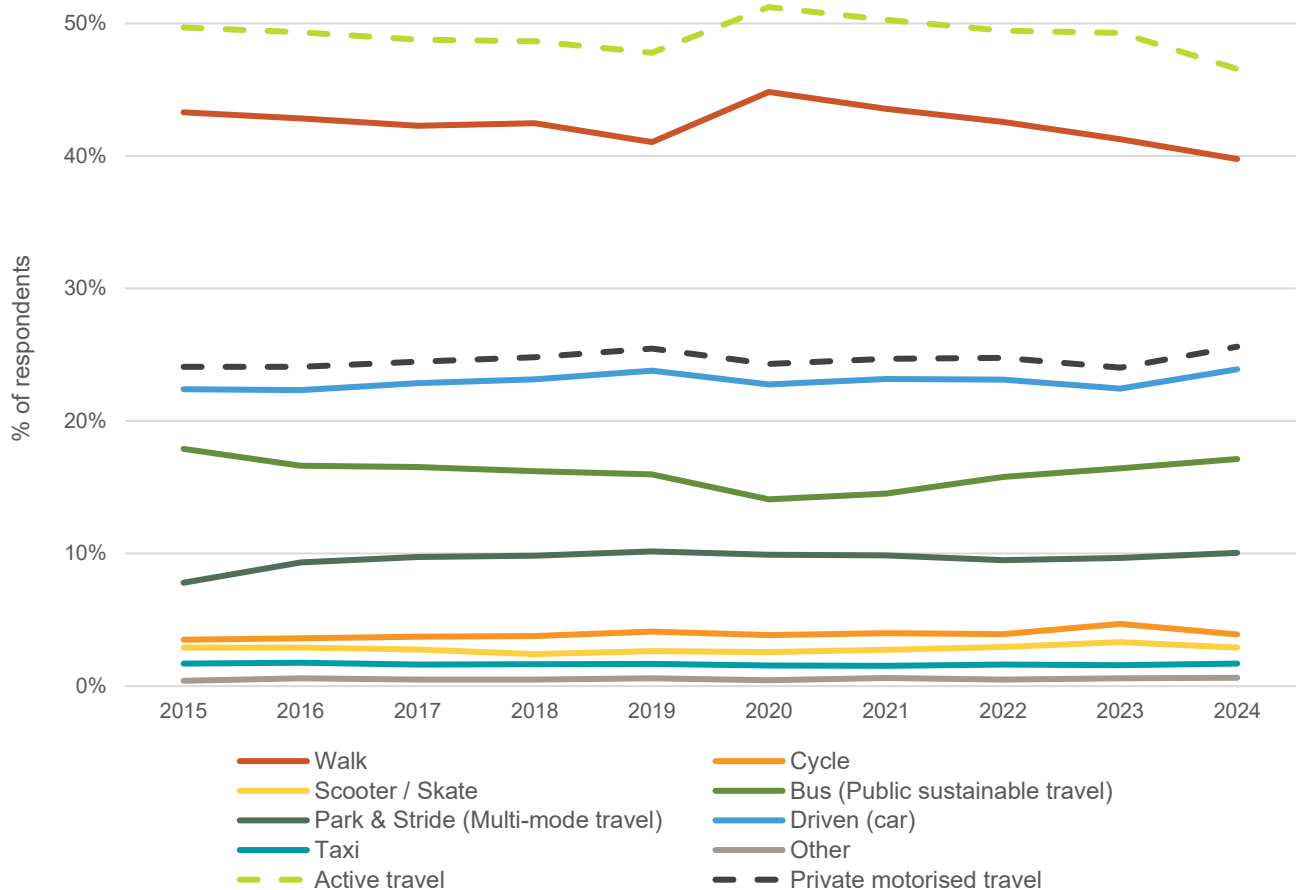
10.0% of school pupils (46,398) in 2024 said they normally park and stride to school.

Private motorised travel

25.6% of school pupils (118,256) in 2024 said they normally travel to school using private motorised transport.

Trends in the 2015-2024 results – All schools

Chart 2: National travel modes and categories: all schools (exc. nursery), 2015-2024²



- Since 2015, active travel to school has remained the most frequently reported mode of travel to school in Scotland
- In 2015, 49.7% of pupils in all schools (exc. nursery) reported travelling actively to school. This percentage has fluctuated, peaking at 51.2% in 2020. Active travel to school has since fallen. Between 2023 and 2024 it fell by 2.7pp from 49.3% to 46.6%. Active travel to school is at its lowest level since the survey began (2008)
- Levels of pupils in all schools (exc. nursery) travelling to school using private motorised transport have fluctuated over the past 10 years. In 2024, levels rose to 25.6%, from 24.0% in 2023. This is the highest level of private transport use to school since the survey began
- Overall, the proportion of pupils travelling to school (exc. nursery) by bus has fallen over the past ten survey years, from 17.9% in 2015 to 17.1% in 2024. However, bus use rose for the fourth year in a row, rising by 0.7pp from 16.4 in 2023
- The proportion of pupils travelling to school by park and stride has shown an overall upward trend over the past ten survey years from 7.8% in 2015 to 10.0% in 2024. This is only 0.2pp lower than the high recorded in 2019 (10.2%).

Response rates

- A total of 1,984 schools took part in the 2024 survey. This represents 29 more schools than in 2023
- State school responses as a proportion of all state schools³ in Scotland were at 80.2% in 2024. This is a 1.3pp rise from the year before and is the second highest response level of the last 10 years, after 2015, which had a response rate of 81.1%
- Responses were received from 461,727 school pupils in 2024. This represents 18,456 more school pupils than in 2023
- 454,959 state school pupils took part in the 2024 survey, which equates to 64.8% of all state school pupils enrolled in Scotland. The number and proportion of state school pupils responding to the survey has fluctuated year by year, falling from a high of 474,200 (69.7%) in 2015 to 454,959 (64.8%) in 2024.

Key results tables

Table 1: National travel modes: by school type, 2024.⁴

School type	Walk	Cycle	Scooter/ Skate	Bus	Park & Stride	Driven (car)	Taxi	Other	Total
Nursery	32.3%	3.8%	3.3%	3.0%	3.9%	52.4%	0.9%	0.4%	40,798
Primary	41.7%	5.6%	4.6%	6.1%	13.2%	27.0%	1.5%	0.2%	281,013
Secondary	38.0%	1.2%	0.2%	35.0%	5.1%	18.0%	1.3%	1.1%	171,318
SEN	3.9%	*	*	29.1%	*	10.6%	49.2%	7.0%	2,628
Independent	16.8%	1.9%	0.6%	18.6%	9.3%	47.9%	0.4%	4.6%	6,768
All state schools (exc. nursery)	40.1%	3.9%	2.9%	17.1%	10.1%	23.5%	1.7%	0.6%	454,959
All schools (exc. nursery)	39.8%	3.9%	2.9%	17.1%	10.0%	23.9%	1.7%	0.6%	461,727

Table 2: National travel modes: all schools (exc. nursery), 2015-2024.⁵

Year	Walk	Cycle	Scooter /Skate	Bus	Park & Stride	Driven (car)	Taxi	Other	Total
2015	43.3%	3.5%	2.9%	17.9%	7.8%	22.4%	1.7%	0.4%	480,161
2016	42.8%	3.6%	2.9%	16.6%	9.3%	22.3%	1.8%	0.6%	458,145
2017	42.3%	3.7%	2.8%	16.5%	9.7%	22.8%	1.6%	0.5%	473,160
2018	42.5%	3.8%	2.4%	16.2%	9.8%	23.1%	1.7%	0.5%	468,537
2019	41.0%	4.1%	2.7%	16.0%	10.2%	23.8%	1.7%	0.6%	472,617
2020	44.8%	3.8%	2.6%	14.1%	9.9%	22.8%	1.5%	0.4%	405,917
2021	43.6%	4.0%	2.7%	14.5%	9.9%	23.2%	1.5%	0.6%	418,147
2022	42.6%	3.9%	2.9%	15.8%	9.5%	23.1%	1.6%	0.5%	456,695
2023	41.3%	4.7%	3.3%	16.4%	9.7%	22.5%	1.6%	0.6%	443,271
2024	39.8%	3.9%	2.9%	17.1%	10.0%	23.9%	1.7%	0.6%	461,727

Endnotes

¹ Table 2.1 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/hands-up-scotland-survey/>

² Active travel is the combination of Walk, Cycle and Scooter / Skate. Private motorised travel is the combination of Driven (car) and Taxi.

³ All state schools: primary, secondary and SEN schools in Scotland, excluding nursery.

⁴ Table 2.3 in supplementary National Results Excel file available to download from:

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/hands-up-scotland-survey/>

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