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Transport and Travel in Scotland

Results from the Scottish Household Survey 2023

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

Contents

Key Findings

People are still travelling less than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, 64% of people had travelled the day before their survey interview. This is slightly higher than in 2022 (61%), but well below the 2019 figure of 74%.

Travel to work at least one day a week has gone up slightly from 2022.

83% of working people reported travelling to work at least one day a week compared to 80% in 2022. However, this is still lower than before the pandemic; the figure for 2019 was 95%.

Ownership of electric vehicles is steadily increasing. At the same time, the percentage of people saying they wouldn't consider buying an electric vehicle went up.

4.7% of driving licence holders owned an electric car or van in 2023. This is up from 0.3% in 2016. 54% said they wouldn't consider buying an electric car or van in the future, up from 42% in 2022.

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of short journeys made by active travel compared with 2022.

50.6% of journeys under two miles were on foot in 2023 compared to 46.2% in 2022. The percentage of journeys under 5 miles made by bicycle remained at 2.1%.

Introduction

This report presents transport and travel findings from the 2023 Scottish Household Survey.

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is an annual survey of the general population in Scotland, carried out since 1999. It aims to collect reliable and up-to-date information on a range of topics through a random sample of people in private residences. It is a voluntary and interviewer-led survey.

The survey covers a number of topics relating to transport and travel, including a ‘travel diary’, which involves respondents recounting the details of all of the journeys they made the day before their survey interview.

Further information on the Scottish Household Survey is provided in the supporting information section.

Interpretation of results

Excel tables have been published in the supporting files to this publication. These include figures for previous years and the relevant table numbers are referred to throughout this publication. The Excel tables include specific results for various sub-groups in the population (e.g. men and women, different age groups).

The Travel Diary is a section of the survey which involves respondents recounting details of all the journeys they made the previous day. A journey can consist of one or more stages. A new stage is defined when there is a change in the form of transport or when there is a change of vehicle requiring a separate ticket.

There are a range of further questions in the SHS about transport and travel and the results of these can be found in the Social Survey tables.

Because of sampling variation, some differences may occur by chance. We use standard statistical tests to examine whether differences are likely to be due to chance. Only differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are described as differences in the text of this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

A lookup table for confidence intervals is included in the accompanying excel files (Confidence _intervals). This can be used in conjunction with the estimates and sample size to give an indication of what inferences can reliably be made from the data. In some cases, where the sample size is below 50 respondents, years have been combined or estimates are not given because they might be unreliable.

In this publication, no comparisons are made between figures for 2020 and 2021 and figures for other years. Due to COVID-19 related changes to how they survey was conducted, the 2020 and 2021 editions of the survey are not considered to be comparable with other years. Further information is provided in the supporting information section.

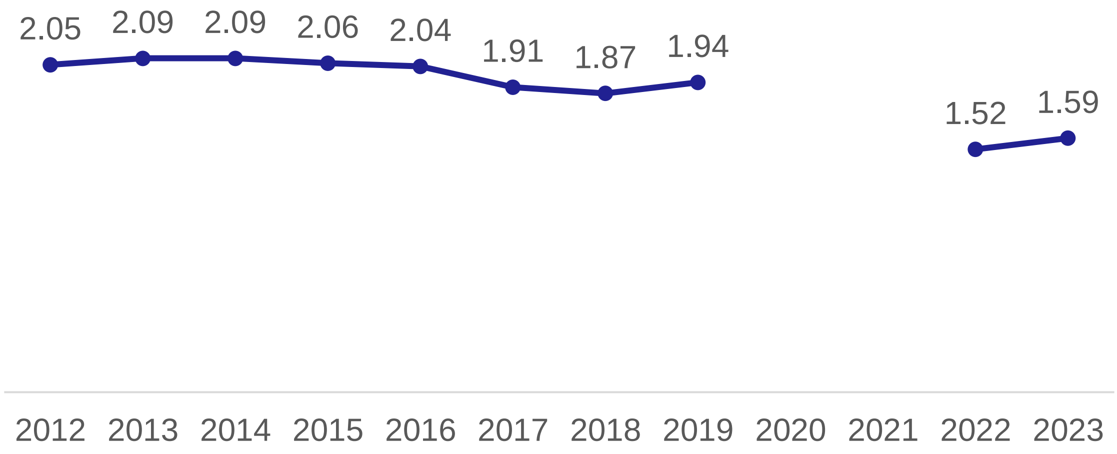
Personal Travel

How much are people travelling?

In 2023, 64% of people had travelled the day before their survey interview. This is slightly higher than in 2022 (61%), but well below the 2019 figure of 74%. This suggests there has been a sustained reduction in daily travel since the COVID-19 pandemic. [Table TD1].

The average number of trips per adult the day before their survey interview was 1.59 in 2023. This is lower than the 2019 figure of 1.94. [Table TD2e, TD3a, Figure 1].

Figure 1: Average number of journeys per day per adult, 2012 to 2023

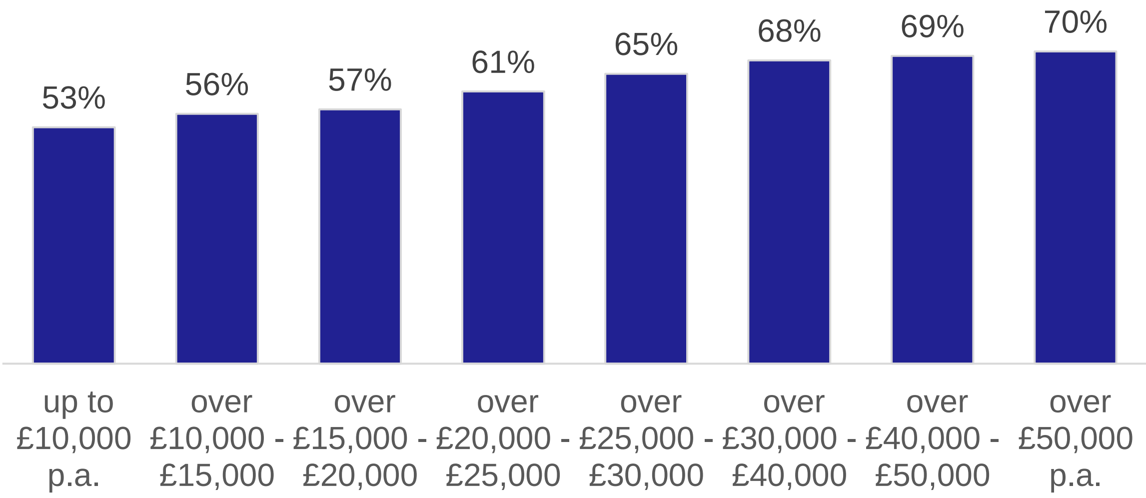


Who travels?

The reduction in travel since 2019 has been seen across the population, with decreases seen for males and females, all age groups, and all geographic sub-groups. [Table TD1]

The percentage travelling increased with income, with 53% of those with a household income below £10,000 travelling compared to 70% of those with an income above £50,000. [Table TD1 and Figure 2]

Figure 2: Percentage of adults travelling the previous day by household income, 2023

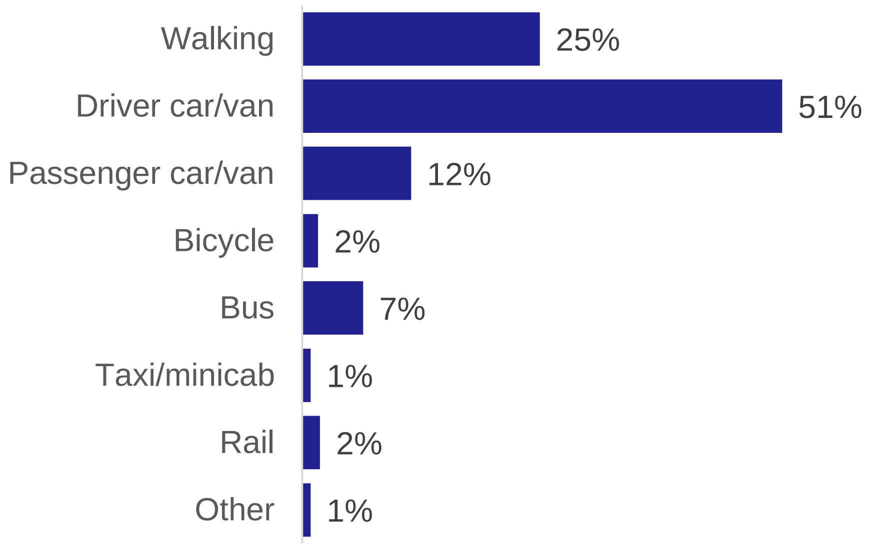


How do people travel?

Driving a car or van was the most common mode of transport, accounting for over half of journeys (51%). This is a drop since 2022 (55%).

Walking was the next most common mode of transport and saw a rise from 23% of journeys in 2022 to 25% of journeys in 2023. 12% of journeys were as car or van passenger, 7% by bus and 2% by rail. [Table TD2, Table SUM1, and Figure 3]

Figure 3: Modal share of all journeys, 2023

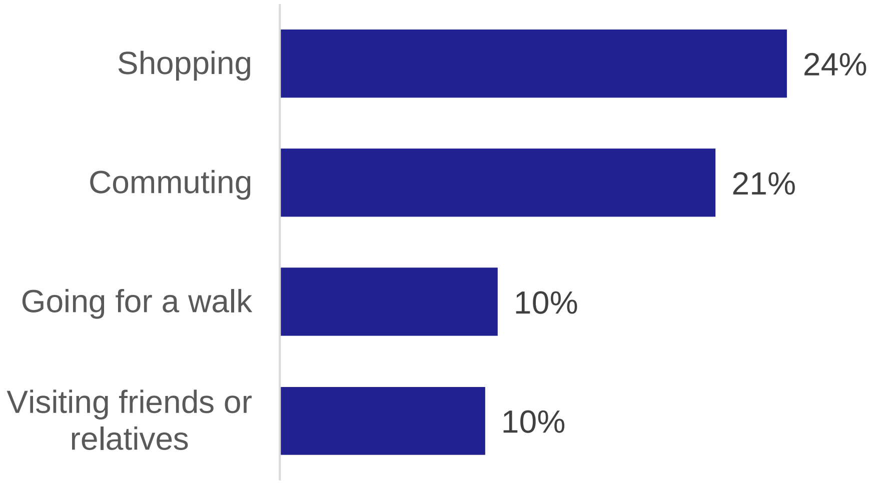


The overall reduction in travel between 2019 and 2023 means that, although the proportion of journeys made by each mode is similar over time, the number of journeys in 2023 for most modes was lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of journeys made by walking and cycling were at similar levels to 2019 and prior years. [Table TD2e]

Why do people travel?

As has consistently been the case in recent years, the two most frequent reasons for travel were shopping (24% of journeys) and commuting (21% of journeys). The proportion of journeys made for commuting was slightly lower in 2023 than in 2019 (21% vs 23%). 'Going for a walk' has seen an increase to 10% of journeys from 7% in 2019. [Table TD3 and Figure 4].

Figure 4: Purpose of travel (most frequent categories), 2023



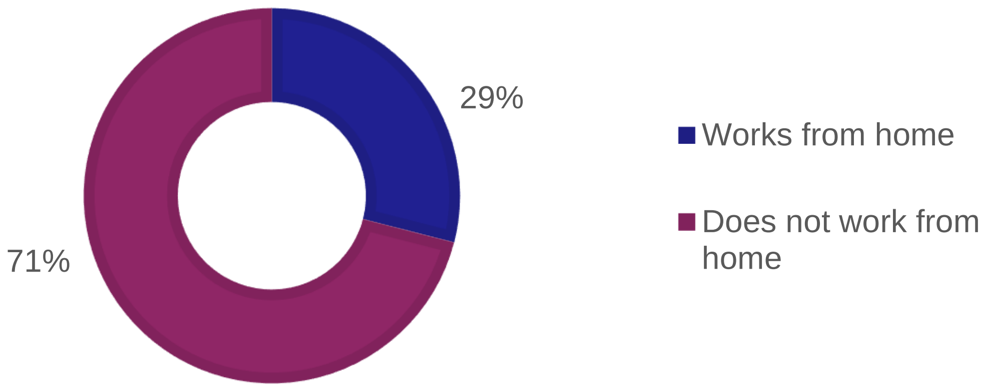
The number of journeys made for most purposes was similar in 2023 to 2022, but commuting trips per adult per day remained down by a quarter since 2019 (0.45 to 0.34). [Table TD3a]

Travel to Work

Working from home

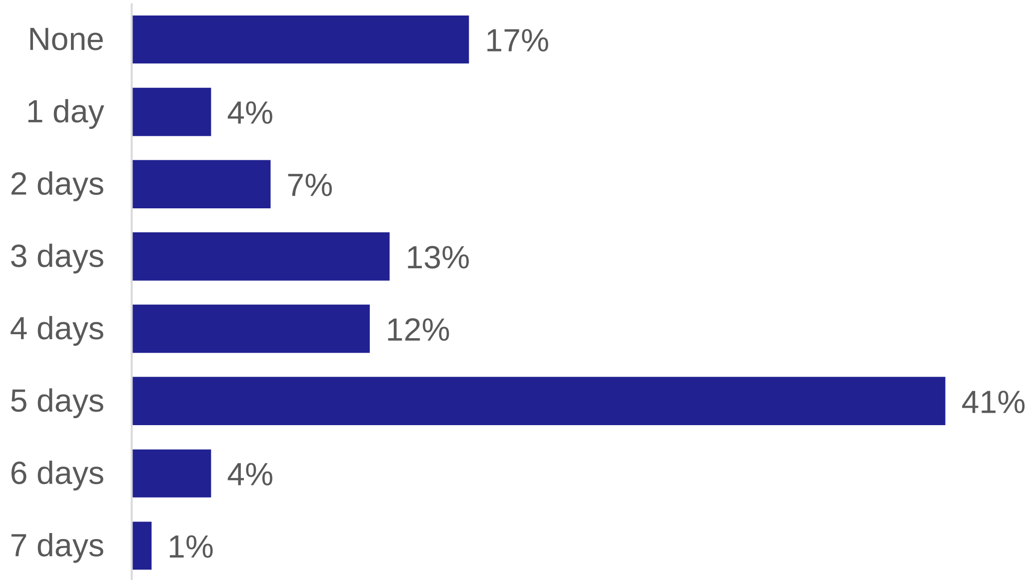
In 2023, the proportion of employed people who described themselves as working at or from home was 29%. This is markedly higher than the figure in 2019 (16%). [Table 7a and Figure 5]

Figure 5: Percentage of employed people working from home, 2023



There was a slight increase in 2023 in the proportion of working people reporting travelling to work at least one day per week at 83% compared to 80% in 2022. This remains lower than in 2019 when the figure was 95%. In 2019, almost two thirds (62%) of working people travelled to work 5 days a week, but in 2023 the figure had fallen to 41%. [Table 56 and Figure 6]

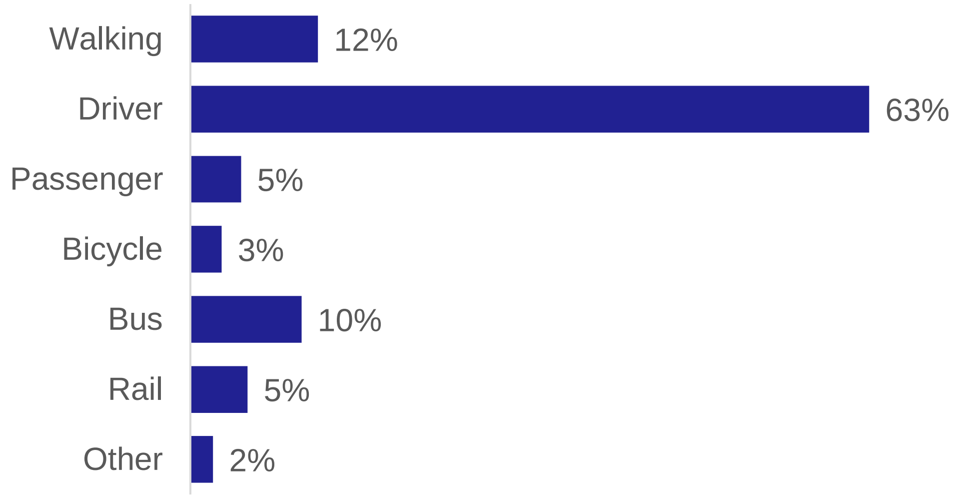
Figure 6: Number of days working people travelled to work per week, 2023



How do people travel to work?

In 2023, two thirds of people who travelled to work (68%) usually travelled by car or van, usually as a driver (63%). 12% of people usually walked to work, while 10% usually took the bus. These figures are similar to 2019. [Table Sum 1, Table 7 and Figure 7]

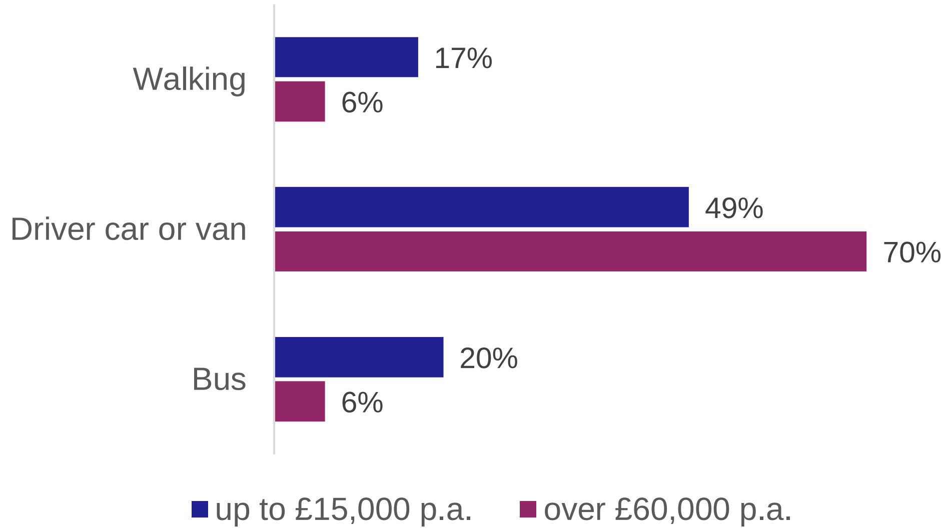
Figure 7: Method of travel to work, 2023



Who travels to work by which mode?

Those on a household income below £15,000 were less likely to travel by car (49%), and more likely to walk (17%) or get the bus (20%) than those with household income over £60,000 (70%, 6% and 6% respectively). [Table 7 and Figure 8]

Figure 8: Percentage of people walking, driving or taking bus to work for highest and lowest income bands, 2023

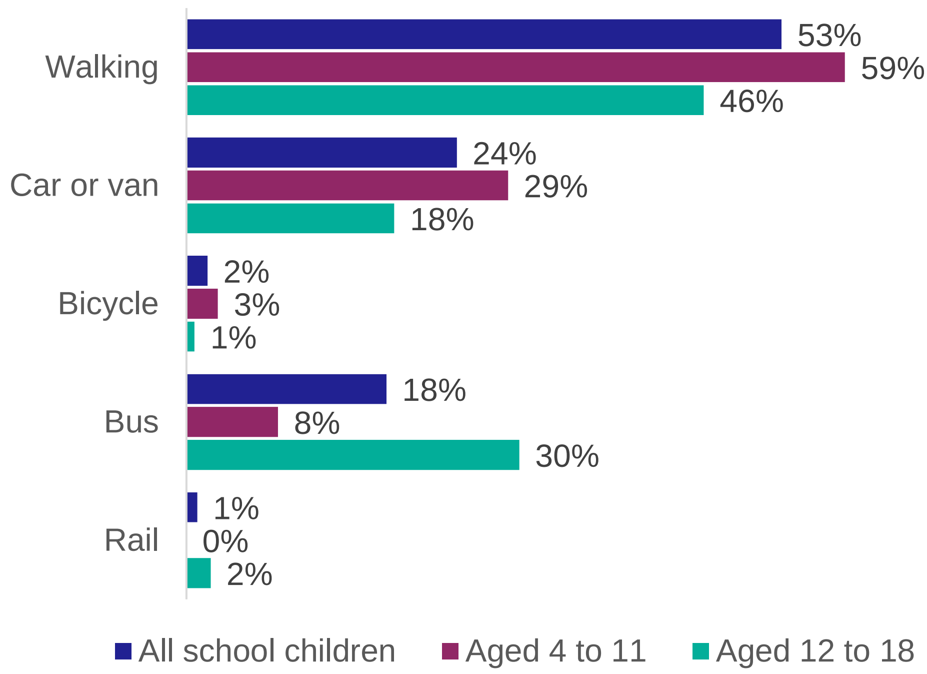


Travel to School

How do children travel to school?

Over half of children (53%) walked to school, around a quarter (24%) travelled by car and under a fifth (18%) used a bus. There was variation in mode of travel by age. In the 4 to 11 age group, 59% reported walking to school, compared to 46% in the 12 to 18 age group. The older age group were more likely to catch a bus than younger children (29% compared to 8%). [Table 15 and Figure 9]

Figure 9: Method of travel to school, 2023 (main modes)

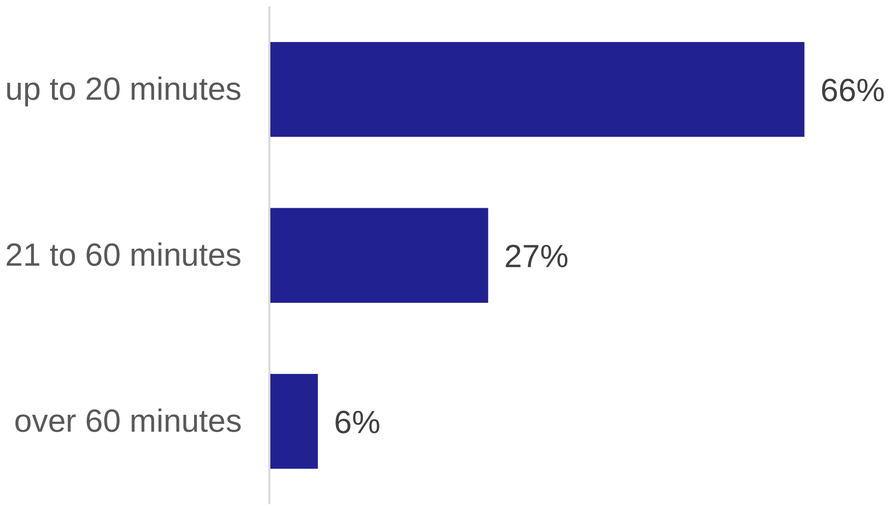


How long do people travel for?

Duration of travel

The majority of journeys reported were of short duration. 66% of journeys lasted up to 20 minutes. Only 6% lasted more than an hour. [Table TD6 and Figure 10]

Figure 10: Percentage of journeys made by duration of journey, 2023

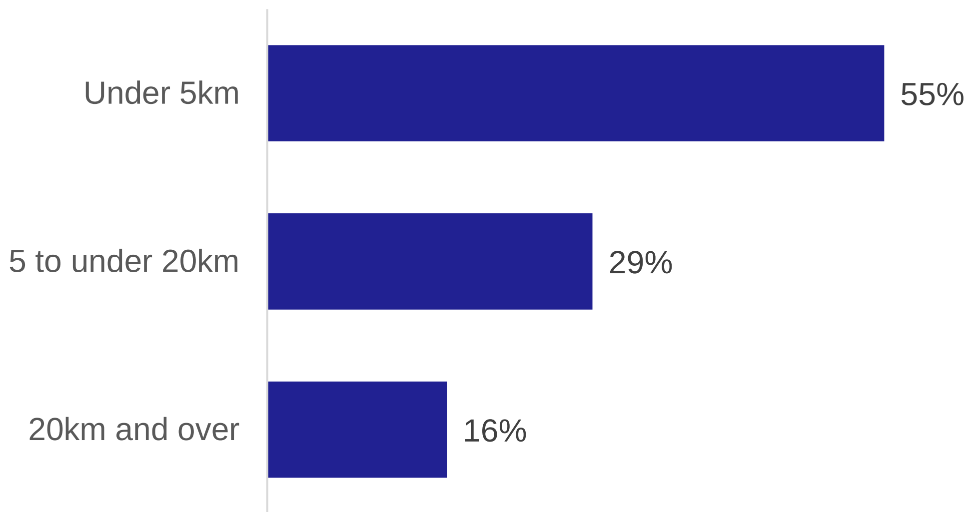


Distance travelled

Over half (55%) of journeys were under 5 km. [Table TD4 and Figure 11]

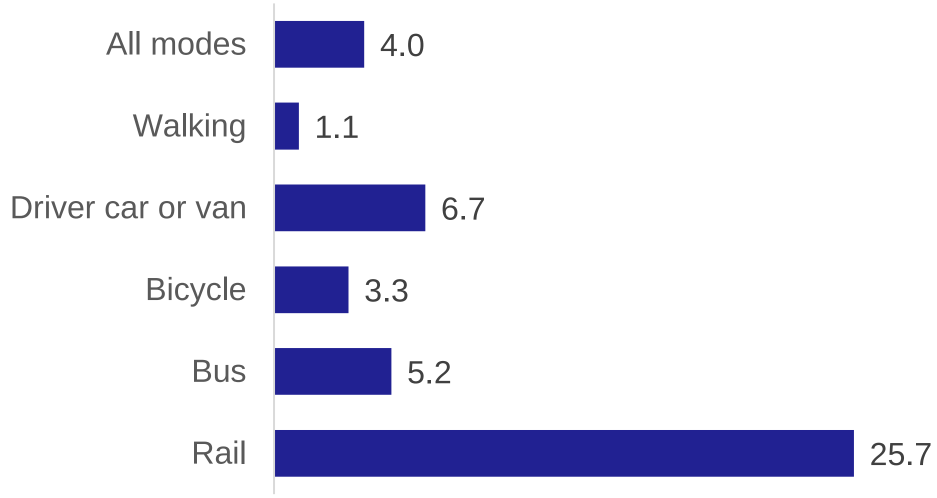
The median journey length was 4.0 km, and the mean journey length was 12.7 km. [Table TD5]

Figure 11: Percentage of journeys by road network distance, 2023



Walking journeys were an average (median) length of 1.1 km, with car driver journeys at 6.7 km and rail the longest at 25.7 km. [Table TD 5a and Figure 12]

Figure 12: Average (median) distance (km) by different modes of transport, 2023



70% of journeys under 1 km were made on foot; car journeys (whether as a driver or passenger) accounted for most of the remainder (25%). Car was the most common mode of travel for all distance groupings greater than 2 km. [Table TD2a]

Motor vehicles, traffic and driving

Driving licences

In 2023, 71% of people aged 17 and over held a full driving licence. Men were more likely to hold a driving licence than women, with 77% of men aged 17+ having one, compared to 67 per cent of women. The percentage of men holding a licence has been fairly stable since 1999, but for women this has been steadily increasing from 51% in 1999. [Table 1]

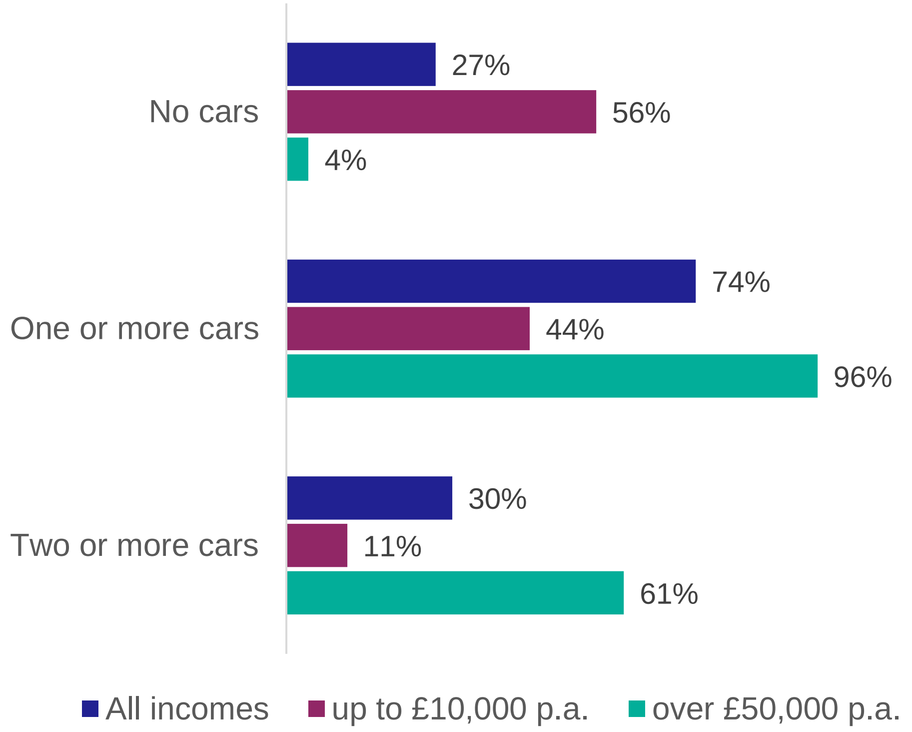
People were more likely to have driving licences in rural areas (62% of adults in large urban areas had a driving licence, compared to 86% of those in rural areas). [Table 1]

Car and van access

74% of households had access to one or more cars or vans for private use. This has increased since 2013 (70%). 29% of households had access to two or more cars or vans for private use. This has also increased since 2013 (26%) [Table 18b, Table SUM1]

Car access increased with household income, as did the number of cars available per household: 44% of households with an annual income up to £10,000 had access to one or more cars, compared to 96% of households with an annual income of more than £50,000. [Table 18b and Figure 13]

Figure 13: Household access to cars or vans by selected household income bands, 2023



Households in rural areas were more likely to have access to a car than those in urban areas. Car access in accessible rural households was 88%, compared to 64% in large urban areas, where more public transport is available. [Table 18b]

Frequency of driving

65% of people drove at least once a week in 2023 with 35% driving every day. The percentage driving every day remains lower than in 2019 (43%). [Tables 20 & SUM1]

Frequency of driving was higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and increased with income. [Table 20]

Fuel spend and cost of parking

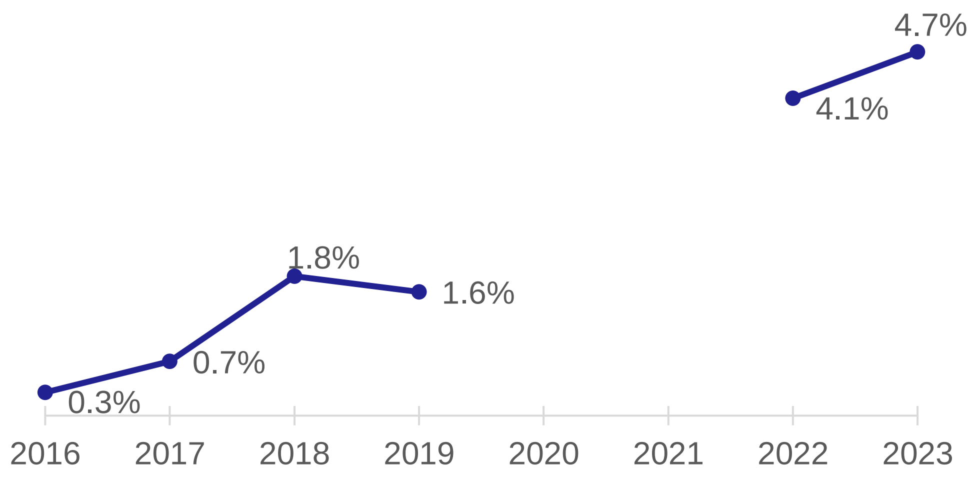
The average (mean) amount which an adult driver spent on vehicle fuel 'in the last month' was £127. [Table 2a]

The average (mean) spent by an adult on parking (including non-drivers) was £0.80 per week. For those who drove, the figure was £1.20. [Table 52]

Electric vehicles

4.7% of driving licence holders reported owning an electric car or van in 2023. This is up from 0.3% in 2016. [Table 49 and Figure 14]

Figure 14: Percentage of driving licence holders owning an electric vehicle, 2016-2023.



Electric cars being environmentally friendly was the most common reason respondents gave for having bought, or why they would consider buying, a plug-in electric car or van (69% of respondents) [Table 50].

The percentage of drivers saying they wouldn't consider buying an electric car increased to 54% in 2023 from 42% in 2022. [Table 49]

When asked their reasons for not considering buying a plug-in electric car or van the most common answer given was the cost of vehicle purchase (52%), followed by availability or convenience of charging points (48%) and the battery (i.e. the distance that can be travelled on a charge) (42%) [Table 51].

Public transport

Public transport satisfaction

Satisfaction with public transport rose in 2023 (64% of respondents said they were very or fairly satisfied) compared to 2022 (58%), but was lower than in 2019 and prior years. [Table 4]

Satisfaction was higher amongst actual users of public transport (those that had used bus or train in the past month) with 74% of users reporting that they were satisfied in 2023. [Table 4b]

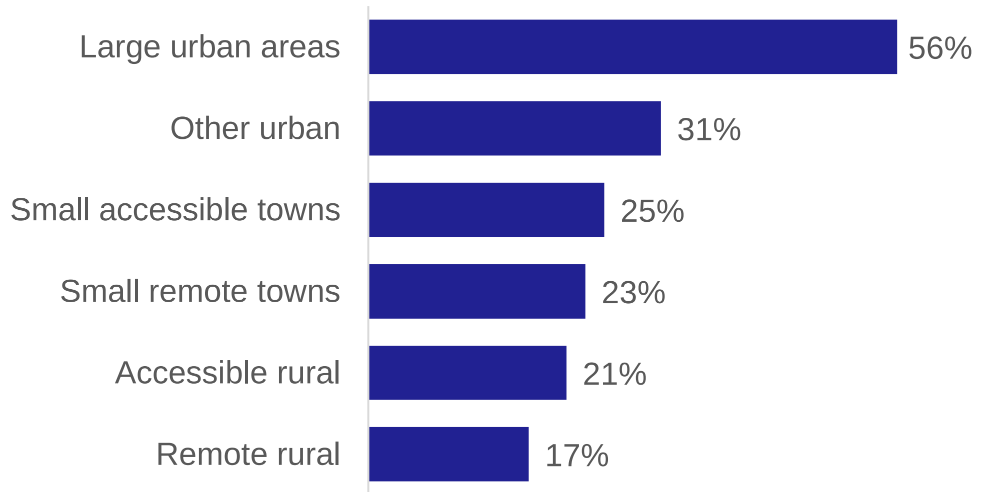
Satisfaction with public transport was lowest in rural areas. Satisfaction rates for those living in remote rural and accessible rural areas (47% and 46% respectively) contrasted with a satisfaction rate of 72% for those living in large urban areas.

Local bus services

38% of survey respondents had used the bus in the past month. The percentage using the bus everyday or almost every day was 7%. This was an increase on 2022 (5%), but still lower than in 2019 and prior years. [Table SUM1, Table 28a]

Frequency of bus use was higher in urban areas: 56% of people in large urban areas used the bus at least once a month compared to 17% in remote rural areas. [Table 28a and Figure 15]

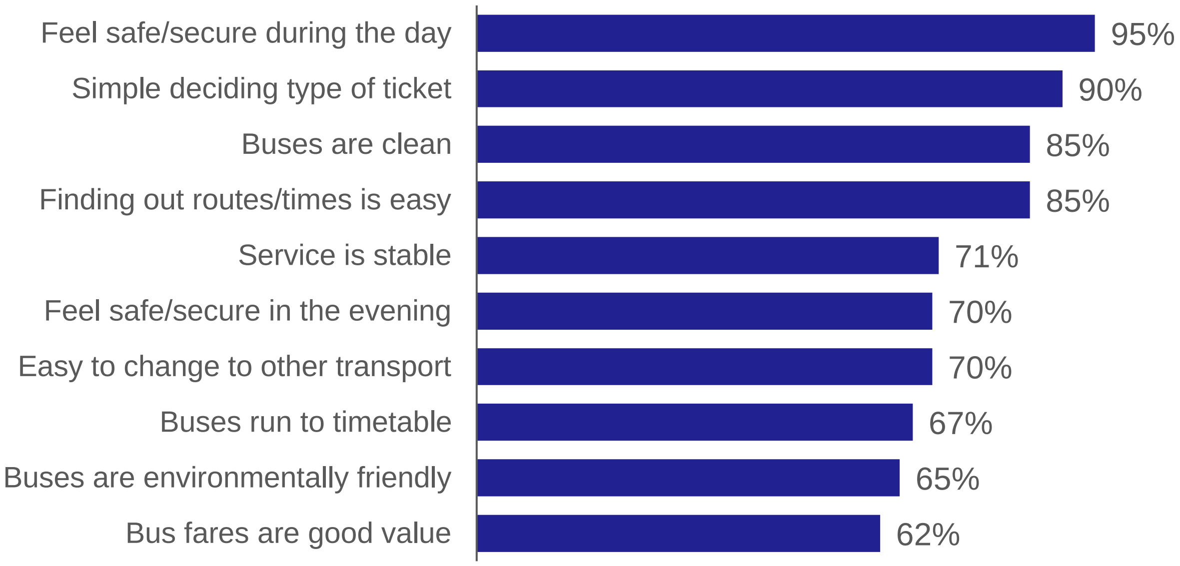
Figure 15: Percentage of adults using the bus at least once a month, by urban rural category, 2023



Views on bus services

Bus users were asked whether they agreed with a number of statements about their bus service. They were most likely to agree that they felt safe or secure on the bus during the day (95% of users agreed), but were less likely to agree that they felt safe or secure using the bus during the evening (70%). Less than two thirds (62%) of users agreed that fares were good value. Almost a quarter of users (24%) disagreed that buses run to timetable. [Table 29 and Figure 16]

Figure 16: Percentage of bus users agreeing with statements on their bus service 2023

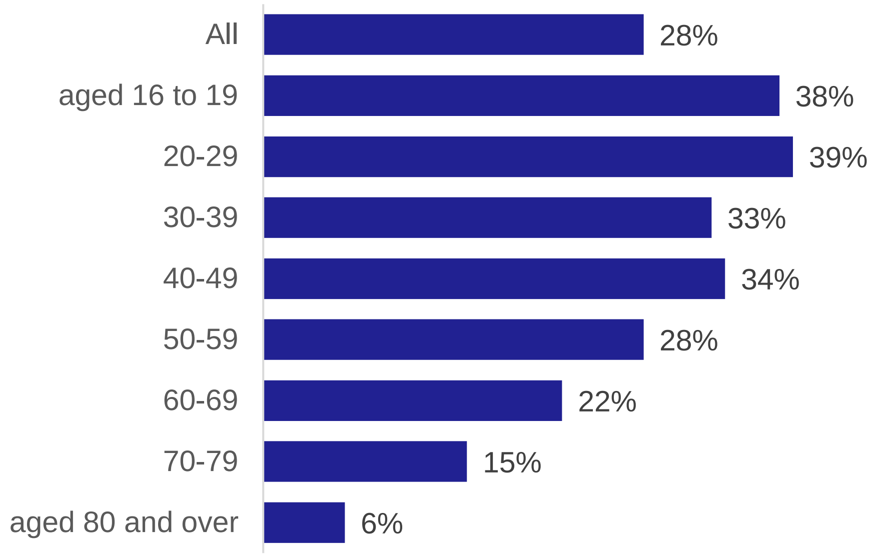


Rail travel

Over a quarter (28%) of survey respondents had used the train in the last month, which is an increase from 24% in the previous year. [Table 28b, Table SUM1]

The proportion of people who reported that they had used the train in the last month decreased with age: 38% of those aged 16-19 and 39% aged 20-29 had used the train in the last month, compared to 15% aged 70 to 79 and 6% of those aged 80 and over. [Table 28b and Figure 17]

Figure 17: Percentage of adults using the train at least once in the past month by age, 2023

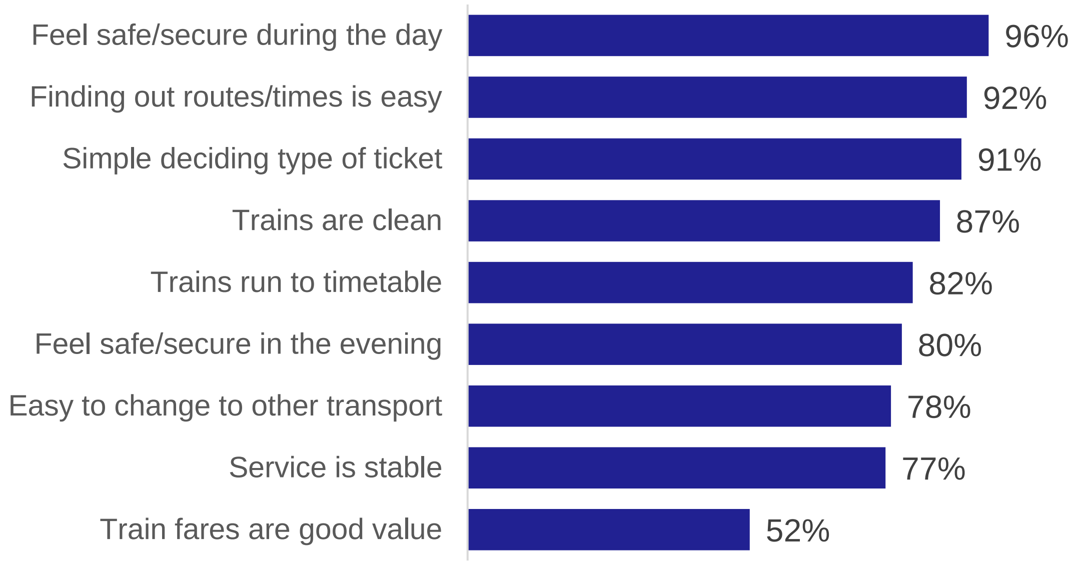


Of those who had used the train in the last month, the most frequent journey purpose was visiting friends or relatives (31%) followed by shopping (30%). [Table 44]

Views on rail services

Rail users were asked whether they agreed with a number of statements about their rail services. A high percentage of rail users agreed that they felt safe or secure using the train during the day (96%). A third of rail users (33%) disagreed that train fares were good value. [Table 30 and Figure 18]

Figure 18: Percentage of rail users agreeing with statements on their train service, 2023



Public transport cost

The average amount spent by an adult on public transport in 2023 was £2.80 per week. Most people (82%) spent nothing. This includes those who do not use public transport and holders of a pass for free travel. [Table 53]

For those who said they used public transport at least once a week, the average spent was £7.40 per week and 56% spent nothing (this will include free pass holders). [Table 53]

Affordability of transport

70% of people said their transport costs were either fairly easy or very easy to afford. This is an increase from 2022 (64%).

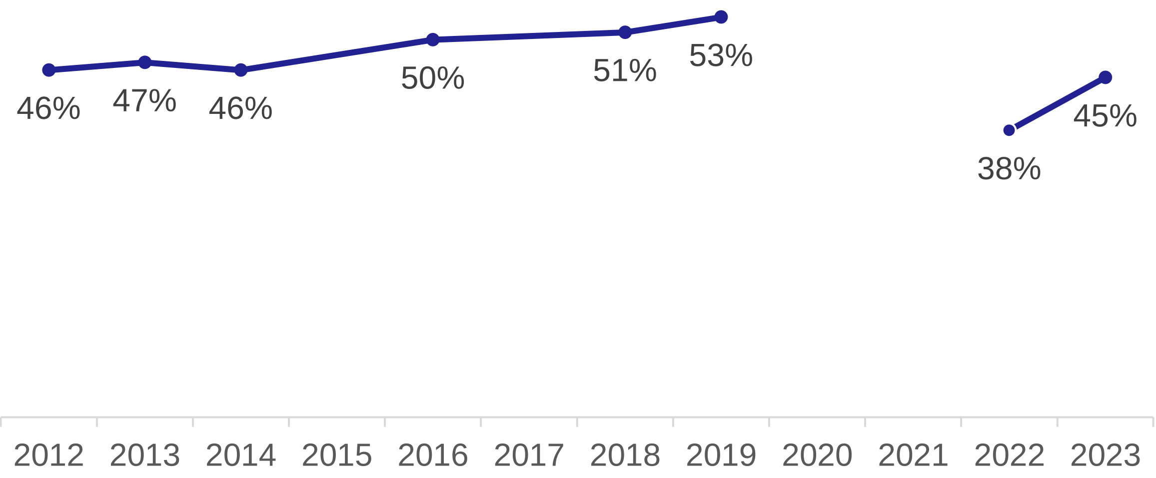
Those in households on incomes up to £10,000 were less likely to consider their costs affordable (57%). [Table 54]

54% of respondents said that transport costs affected the method of travel they used. [Table 55]

Aviation

In 2023, 45% of adults said they had taken at least one flight for leisure in the last 12 months. This is an increase from 2022 (38%), but lower than 2019 (53%). [Table 37a and Figure 19]

Figure 19: Percentage of adults taking flights for leisure, 2012-2023



Flights taken for business remained lower than in the period 2009 to 2019. In 2023, 5% of adults had taken a flight for business compared to 8% in 2019. [Table 38a]

Flights to Europe were most common amongst those flying for leisure (80% of those that flew for leisure flew to Europe at least once). For business flyers, flights to the rest of the UK were most common (59% flew at least once to the rest of the UK).[Tables 37b, 38b]

By far the two most common reasons people gave for flying within the UK over other forms of transport was that it was quicker (82%) and cheaper (38%). [Table 39]

Use of delivery services

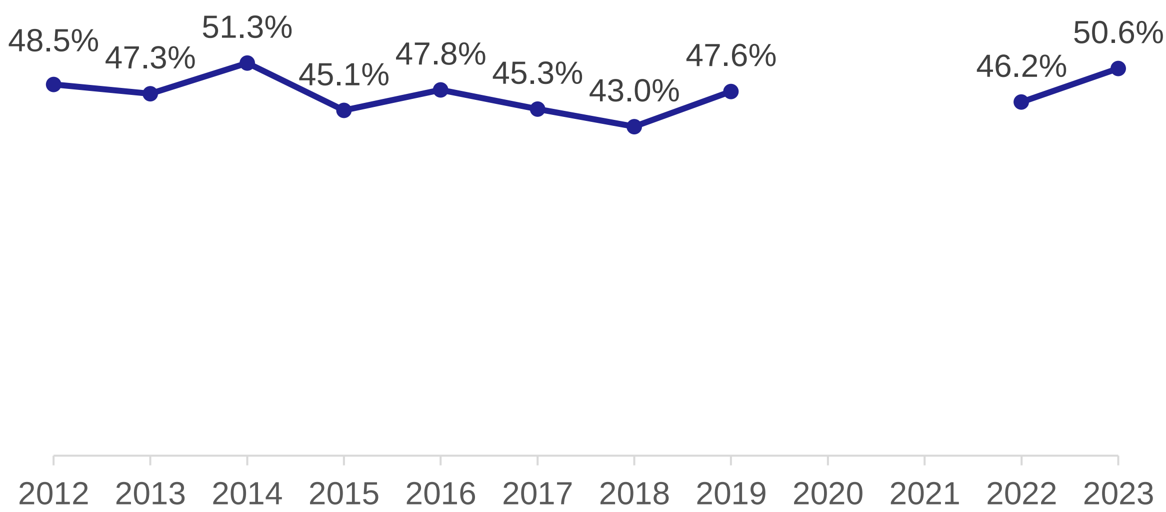
9% of adults used internet shopping on the previous day, 1.3% used supermarket delivery and 2.9% ordered delivery of takeaway food. [Table TD17]

Active travel National Indicator

Scotland's National Performance Framework includes a 'journeys by active travel' National Indicator, which monitors the proportion of short journeys that are made by the two main active travel modes: walking and cycling.

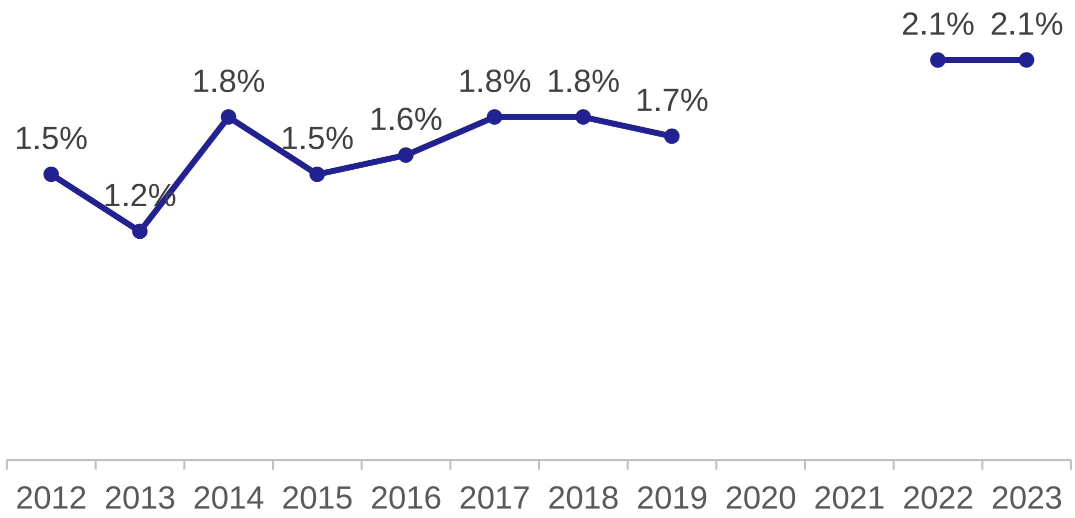
50.6% of journeys under two miles were on foot in 2023. [Table TD4c and Figure 20] This compares to 46.2% in 2022. This increase is statistically significant at the 95% level.

Figure 20: Percentage of journeys under 2 miles by main mode, walking National Indicator, 2012 to 2023



2.1% of journeys under five miles were by bicycle. This is the same as 2022. [Table TD4d and Figure 21]

Figure 21: Percentage of journeys under 5 miles by main mode, cycling National Indicator, 2012-2023



Supporting Information

Additional background information on the SHS

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) started in February 1999. Its principal purpose is to collect information to inform policy on Transport, Communities and Local Government, but other topics are covered, such as household composition, amenities, employment or unemployment, income, assets and savings, credit and debt, health, disabilities and care, and other topics. The SHS provides the first representative Scottish data on many subjects, such as access to the Internet, daily travel patterns, etc.

Where appropriate, the SHS uses the harmonised concepts and questions for government social surveys which have been developed by the Government Statistical Service, to facilitate comparison with the results of other government surveys. However, differences in sampling and survey methods mean that SHS results will differ from those of other surveys.

The SHS is intended to be a survey of private households. For the purposes of the survey, a household is defined as one person or a group of people living in accommodation as their only or main residence and *either* sharing at least one meal a day *or* sharing the living accommodation. A student's term-time address is taken as his/her main residence, in order that they are counted where they live for most of the year.

The sample was drawn from the Small User file of the Postcode Address File (PAF), which is a listing of all active address points maintained by the Post Office. The Small User file excludes addresses where an average of more than 25 items of post is delivered per day. Blocks of flats etc, which have several dwellings at the same address, are *not* excluded from the Small User file: in such cases, the file's Multiple Occupancy Indicator is used to count each dwelling separately for the selection of the sample.

People in certain types of accommodation (such as nurses' homes, student halls of residence etc.) will be excluded from the SHS unless the accommodation is listed on the Small User file of the PAF and it represents the sole or main residence of the people concerned. People living in bed and breakfast accommodation may be included, *if* it is listed in the Small User file of the PAF and if it is their sole or main residence. Prisons, hospitals and military bases are excluded. This exclusion of some forms of accommodation may have particular effects upon the inclusion of certain groups in survey, such as disabled people.

Further information on the Scottish Household Survey can be found on the Scottish Government website.

Comparability with previous years

In 2022 and 2023, as has been typical for most of the SHS's history, the survey was carried out as a face-to-face interview, primarily administered in people's homes. This represents a return to the traditional methodology after the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the 2020 and 2021 survey years and necessitated a change in approach.

Only a small proportion of the 2020 survey had been completed before the Covid-19 pandemic took full effect. The approach was adapted, and the remainder of the 2020 survey fieldwork was carried out using telephone interviewing. In 2021, telephone interviewing was again used.

Everything else being equal, we would expect some genuine changes in people's views, experiences, and habits relating to transport during the pandemic. However, it is not possible to determine the extent to which differences between the 2020 and 2021 results and previous years represent genuine changes in views and experiences, or are due to changes in how the survey was carried out.

Response rates for the telephone survey were lower than for previous face-to-face surveys, and there was a change in the profile of respondents (e.g. home owners and people with degree level qualifications were over-represented). There are also potential mode effects (respondents answering differently over the telephone than they would face-to-face).

In addition, 2020 data only covered October 2020 and January to early April 2021, so there may have been a seasonal effect upon some data.

For these reasons, the 2020 and 2021 editions of the survey are not considered to be comparable with other years.

As the survey has returned to the traditional methodology for 2022 and 2023, the 2022 and 2023 editions are considered to be comparable with earlier surveys.

The annual SHS Methodology Reports provide more detail on the changes in approach, and how this may have impacted the results.

Other Transport findings from the Scottish Household Survey

Disability and Transport

A publication providing further analysis of the Scottish Household Survey for disabled people, as well as measurements from other sources, Disability and Transport, was published on 18th October 2022. An updated version of the publication, incorporating 2022 and 2023 data, will be published early next year.

Transport Scotland Statistics

The full range of transport statistics publications are available on the Transport Scotland website.

Official Statistics

These statistics are official statistics. Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Transport Scotland statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

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The data collected for the SHS is made available via the UK Data Service and may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact shs@gov.scot for further information.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@gov.scot.

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