

Galway Metropolitan Area

Walking and Cycling Index 2023

Published March 2024





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.



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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 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. For more data, see the Index Data Tool.



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.

i. City is used as a shorthand for Walking and Cycling Index cities, city regions, metropolitan areas and boroughs.

Headlines

Galway Metropolitan Area

Populationⁱ

102,107

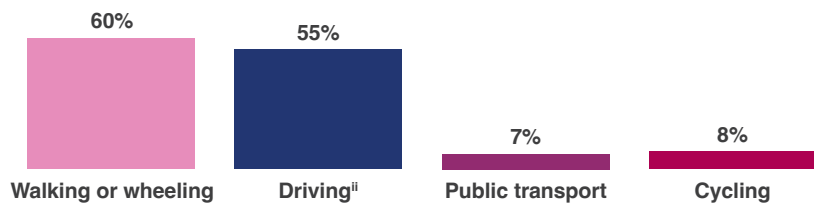
Survey area



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



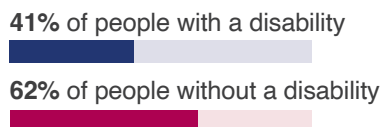
60%
of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

20%
of residents cycle at least once a week

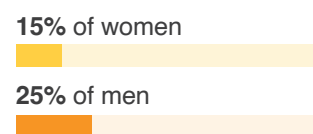
Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

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



Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a weekⁱⁱⁱ

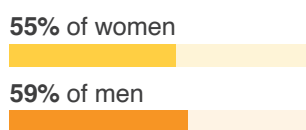


Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

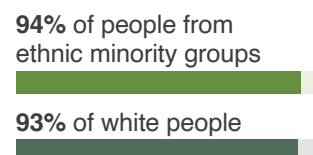
Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety is good



Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good



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



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.

i. CSO Census 2022. This is the most recent available for the Galway Metropolitan Area.

ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. iii. 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.

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.^{iv} 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

6% oppose

more cycle paths along roads, physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

84% support

7% oppose

the creation of more 20-minute neighbourhoods^v

87% support

5% oppose

the creation of more low-traffic neighbourhoods^{vi}

78% agree

13% disagree

that increasing space for people socialising, walking, wheeling and cycling on their local main street would improve their local area

81% support

12% oppose

the ban on vehicles parking on the footpath

63% support

22% oppose

shifting investment from road building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport

iv. 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.
v. See definition on page 14. vi. For definition see Methodology document.



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

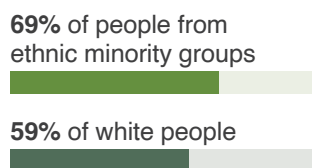
60%
of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

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

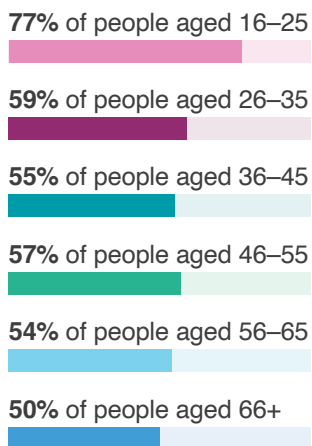
Genderⁱ



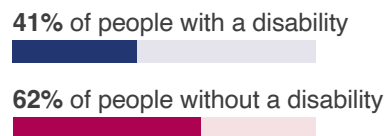
Ethnicity



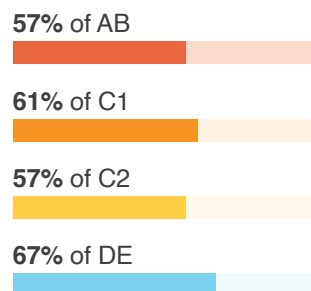
Age



Disability



Socio-economic groupⁱⁱ



i. 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.

ii. 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.

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



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

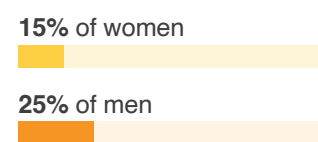
Cycling participation is not equal. Barriers to cycling can be far more pronounced for some people. Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.ⁱ

28%
of all residents cycle

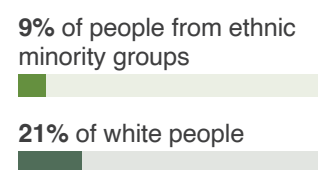
20%
of all residents cycle at least once a week

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

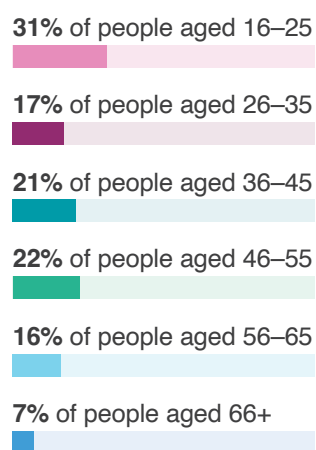
Gender



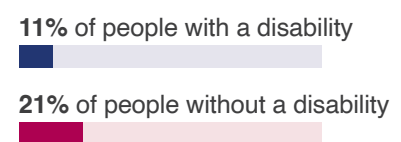
Ethnicity



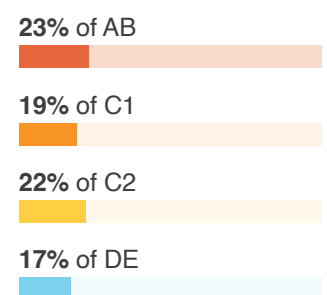
Age



Disability



Socio-economic group



i. See Bike Life reports 2019 (various cities).

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



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, it's faster than the bus and driving through traffic, and it's 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 purposeⁱ

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

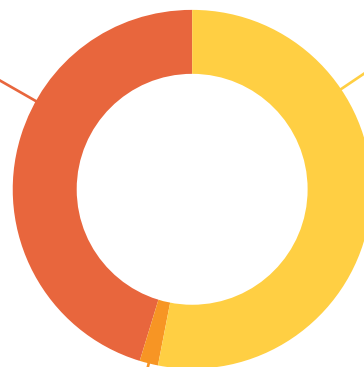
45%

Destination – adults only (like work, school, shopping):
23,500,000

53%

School – children only:
710,000

2%



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.

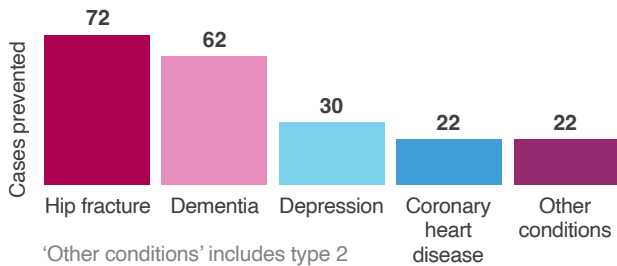
The total annual economic benefit from all trips walked and wheeled in the Galway Metropolitan Area is

€128.4 millionⁱⁱ

i. Trips for enjoyment or fitness include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). School trips are shown separately for children only. ii. This includes trips walked or wheeled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car.

Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

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



'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**

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 millionⁱⁱⁱ

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 NO_x

and

1,700 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

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.^{iv} 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.

iv. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back

125 kilometres

equivalent to the distance from Galway to Tullamore.



iii. 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.



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

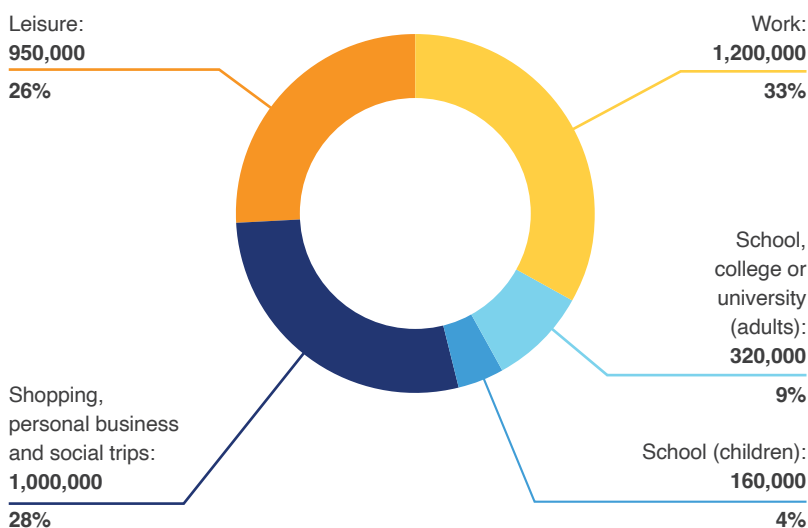
were made in the Galway Metropolitan Area in the past year

This adds up to

17.4 million kilometres

= 48,000 kilometres a day

Annual cycling trips by purpose in the Galway Metropolitan Areaⁱ



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 millionⁱⁱ

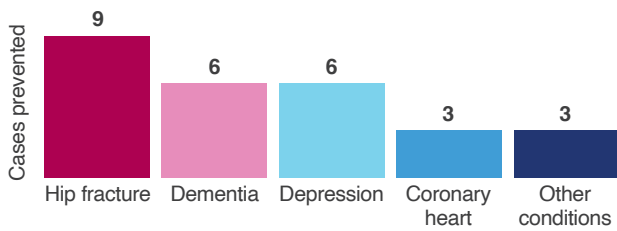
i. Leisure trips include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment).

Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other are just adults.

ii. This includes trips cycled for enjoyment or fitness, and trips to destinations by people with and without a car.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

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



'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

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 millionⁱⁱⁱ

People cycling more instead of driving improves air quality, saving annually:

3,300 kg of NO_x
and
406 kg of particulates
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

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.^{iv} 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.

iv. Litman, 2023. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back

13 kilometres

equivalent to the distance from Galway to Moycullen.



iii. 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.



Walking solutions

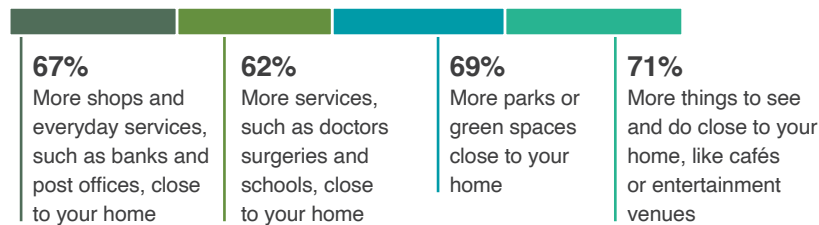
What would help make walking and wheeling easier?

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.

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



16%

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

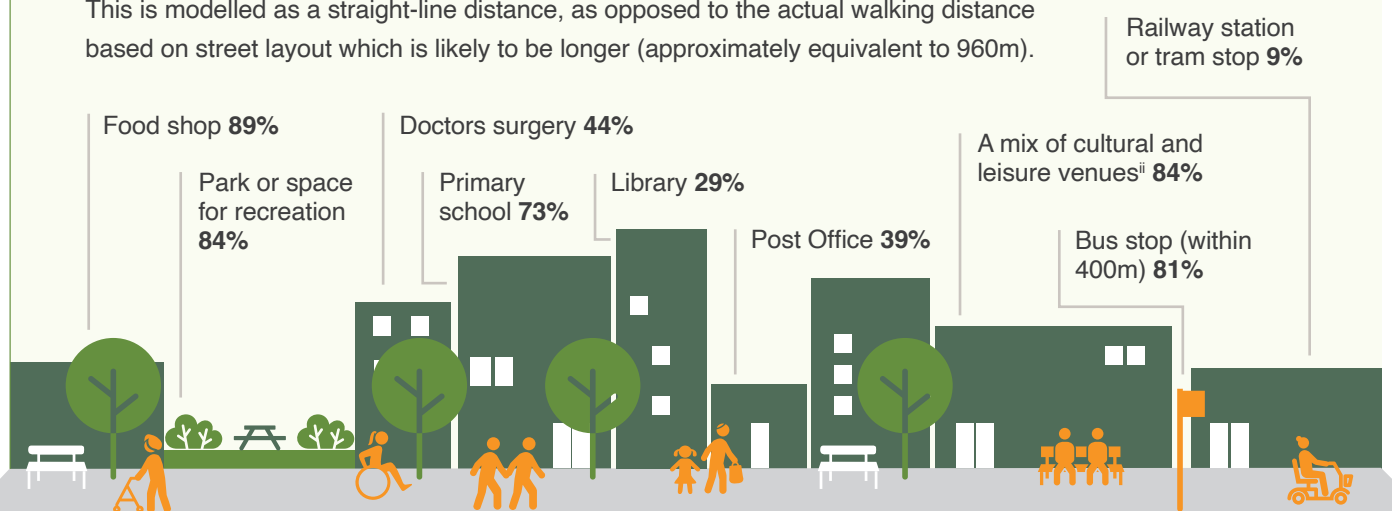
These higher-density neighbourhoods can sustain local businesses and public transport routes more easily. This helps to reduce car dependency.ⁱ

73%

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

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).



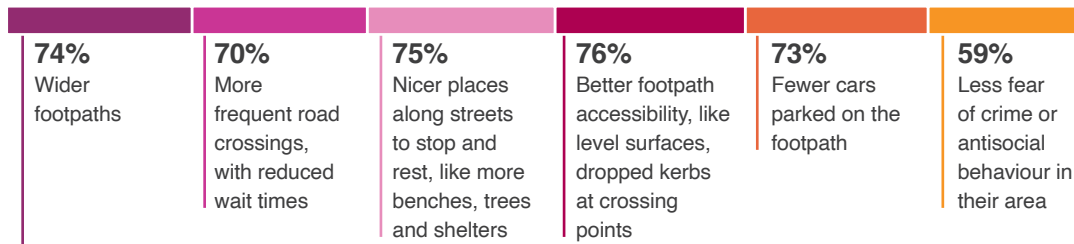
i. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning.

ii. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, like cafés, pubs, bingo halls, cinemas, museums.

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?



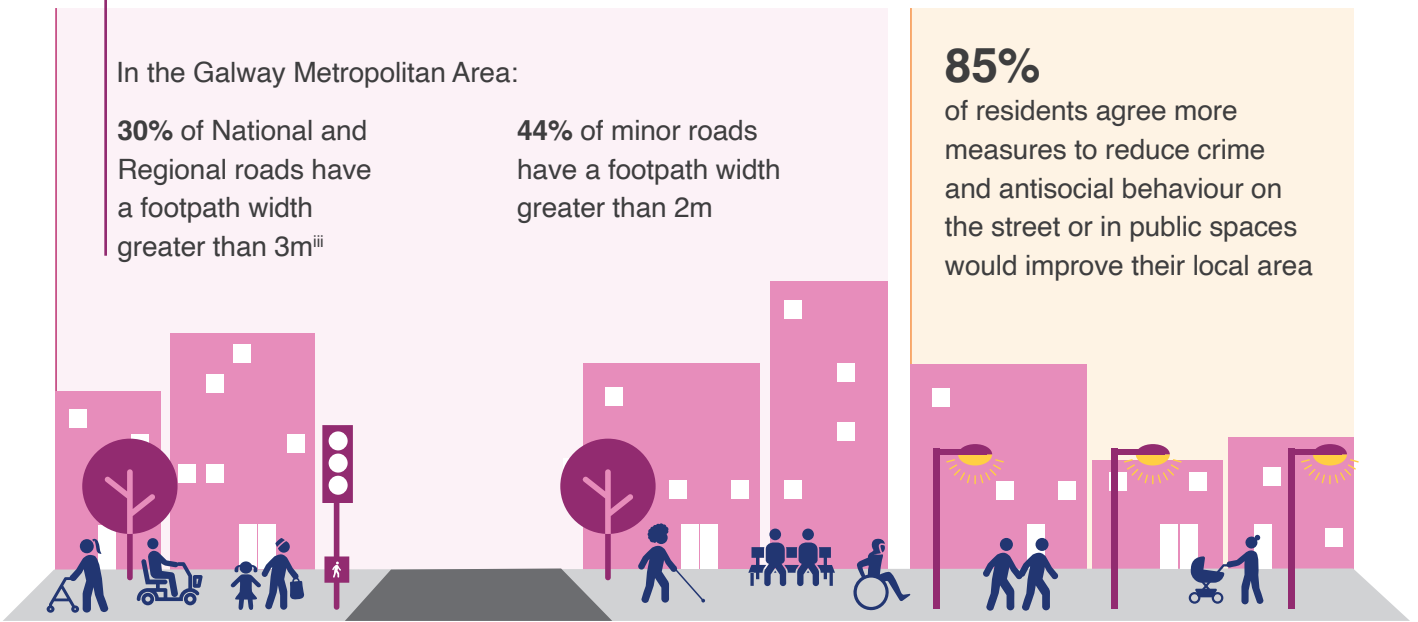
In the Galway Metropolitan Area:

30% of National and Regional roads have a footpath width greater than 3mⁱⁱⁱ

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



iii. 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.



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.

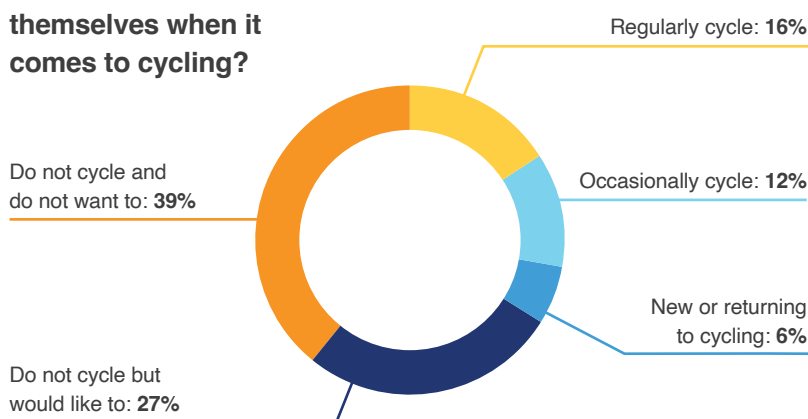


Cycling solutions

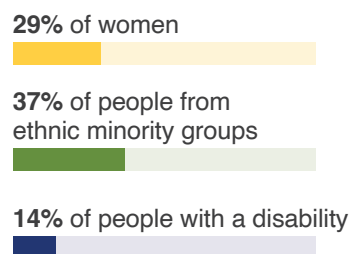
What would make cycling better?

Many Galway Metropolitan Area residents want to cycle

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?

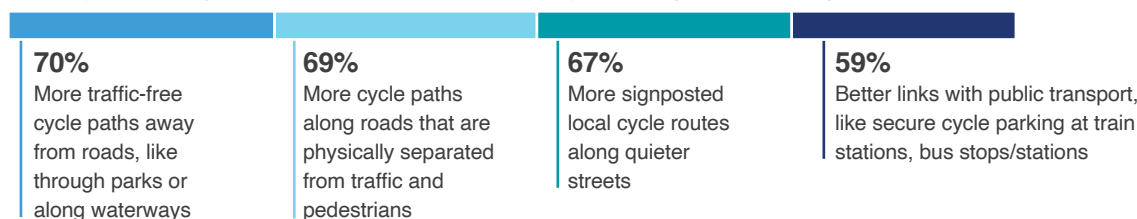


What proportion of residents said they 'do not cycle but would like to'?



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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



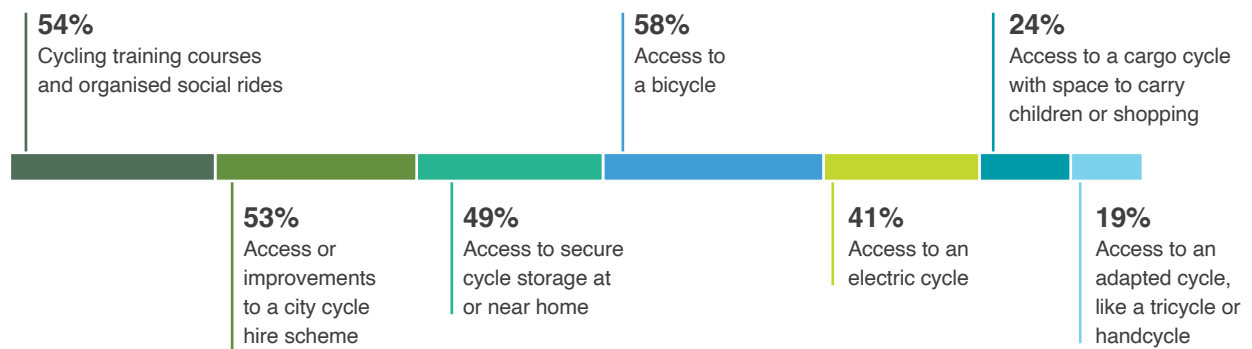
88%

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?



Galway Metropolitan Area cycle hire schemeⁱ

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 shopⁱⁱ



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.

i. Data covers July 2022–June 2023.
ii. © OpenStreetMap contributors.



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.ⁱ

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

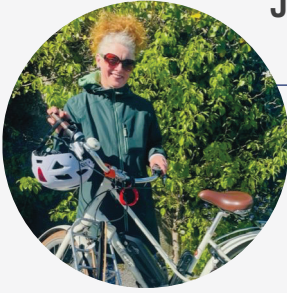
83%

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

87%

support low-traffic neighbourhoods

ⁱ Based on analysis by CycleStreets www.lowtrafficeighbourhoods.org. Low-use minor roads are those classed as 'less significant minor roads' on OpenStreetMap.



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.ⁱⁱ

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



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.ⁱⁱⁱ Also, see Safe Routes to School on page 23.



ii. Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action, 2015.

iii. Figure given is correct as of 31 May 2023.



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 €20m of NTA funding has been spent on Active Travel projects in Galway.

“““

There is an appetite for change and there is a commitment to deliver the infrastructure needed to bring about a modal shift towards active travel.



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 Ragoon 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.



The Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy will support the development of walking and cycling as viable modes of choice, particularly to provide access to local services, and to support the concept of the 10-minute neighbourhood.

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.



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

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

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