



Waterford Metropolitan Area

Walking and Cycling Index 2025



Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling



Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Mayor
Waterford City and
County Council

As Mayor, I am pleased to welcome the second Waterford Metropolitan Area Walking and Cycling Index.

This report provides clear insight into how our residents travel and how strongly they value walking, wheeling and cycling.

As someone who lives in Waterford, I have seen active travel beginning to reshape our city. This report shows that walking, wheeling and cycling remove up to 15,000 cars from our roads daily, generate €67 million in annual economic benefits for individuals and the Metropolitan Area, and prevent 149 serious long-term health conditions.

Momentum is firmly behind our ambitious Active Travel Programme, from connecting the Waterford Greenway to the city centre, to making the front of schools safer through the Safe Routes to School Programme, and the ongoing construction of the sustainable transport bridge linking the North Quays to the city centre.

With continued NTA investment, strong community engagement, and committed leadership from all stakeholders, we can

transform the way we travel, creating a greener, healthier and more liveable city. The message from this report is clear: the public wants to see greater investment in active travel. We will continue to champion a vibrant, sustainable future for all who live, work, visit and invest here.



**Cllr. Mary
Hilda Kavanagh**
Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny
County Council

As Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, I am delighted to welcome the second Waterford Metropolitan Walking and Cycling Index.

As our cities and towns continue to grow, active travel and public transport are essential to keep our communities moving freely, in an affordable and sustainable way.

Currently, half as many women cycle in comparison to men, one third of all residents would like to cycle more. Ongoing investment is essential to create safe, attractive and accessible environments that will restore independent travel for all and enable people to remain active and connected.

This report sets out the evidence needed to ensure that walking and cycling become realistic, welcoming choices for everyone.

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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index is the biggest assessment of walking, wheeling and cycling in the UK and Ireland. It is delivered by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) in collaboration with 22 regional and local partners. Each area reports on the progress made towards making walking, wheeling and cycling a more attractive, everyday way to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years. This is the second report from the Waterford Metropolitan Area, produced in partnership with the National Transport Authority of Ireland. The data in this report comes from 2025 and includes local walking, wheeling and cycling data, modelling and an independent, demographically representative survey of 1,112 residents aged 16 or above. The survey was conducted from May to June 2025. Independent market research company Ipsos B&A conducted the survey, which is representative of all residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

Across this report we have included comparisons to 2023 data where available.

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

More details on all reports and an interactive data tool to explore the data in more depth can be found at www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index



Defining wheeling

Some people who use a wheelchair or a mobility scooter may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling. We use the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

Headlines

Waterford Metropolitan Area

Population^[i]

66,555

53,244 adults
13,311 children

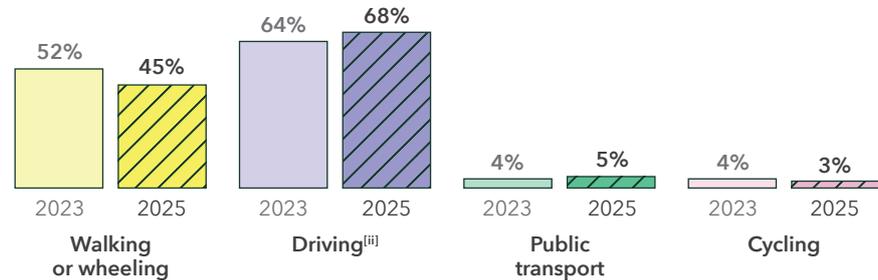
Survey area



Frequency of different modes of travel

Driving is the most common mode of travel amongst Waterford Metropolitan Area residents, followed by walking and wheeling.

Residents who travel by the following modes five or more days a week in the area



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

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

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.

45%

of residents walk or wheel at least five days a week

Proportion of residents who walk or wheel at least five days a week^[iii]

46% of women

44% of men

12%

of residents cycle at least once a week

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

8% of women

16% of men

Not all residents feel safe in their neighbourhood

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

85% of people with a disability

82% of people without a disability

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to cycle in their local area

63% of people aged 16-25

45% of people aged 66+

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

90% of socio-economic group DE

91% of socio-economic group AB

iii. See footnote on page 6.

iv. Socio-economic groups AB are managerial while groups DE are manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment. See page 6 for full definitions.

Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

Based on modelling of survey data, every year, walking, wheeling and cycling.

prevents

149

serious long-term health conditions

creates

€67 million

in economic benefit for individuals and the area

saves

2,700 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions

Walking, wheeling and cycling reduces congestion by taking up to 15,000 cars off the roads every day.

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:

21% of residents want to drive less. 59% of residents agree that they often use a car because no other transport options are available.

Walk or wheel

51% more



4% less

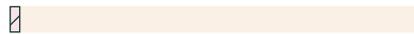


Cycle

32% more



2% less

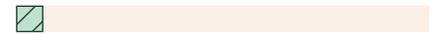


Take public transport

40% more



6% less

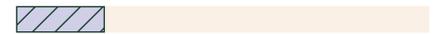


Drive

17% more



21% less



Cycling is seen as less safe than other forms of transport

Percentage of residents who think it's safe in their local area to:

83% walk or wheel



52% cycle



81% use public transport



89% drive



Residents support more connected neighbourhoods

64% of residents support shifting investment from road-building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. 19% oppose such a shift.

87% support



6% oppose

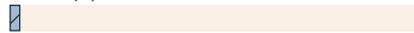


stopping vehicles parking on the footpath

95% support



2% oppose



improving and increasing off-road walking, wheeling and cycling paths

93% support



2% oppose

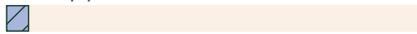


improving walking, wheeling and cycling access to bus stops and coach or rail stations

90% support



5% oppose

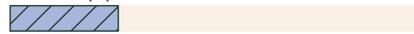


reducing speed limits, improving crossing points and introducing protected cycle paths in school neighbourhoods

58% support



26% oppose



closing residential streets outside schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times

89% support



5% oppose



having shops, schools, green space and public transport within a short walk or wheel of their home^v

v. Local places with services and amenities nearby your home are often known as 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Walking and wheeling

Participation, safety and satisfaction

Walking and wheeling participation

Overall in the Waterford Metropolitan Area the number of residents walking and wheeling at least five days a week has decreased since 2023.

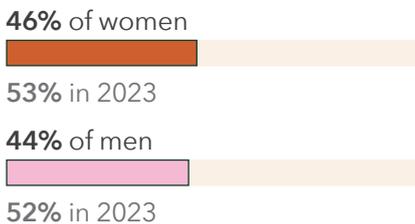
Encouragingly, the majority of residents feel it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area and think it is a good place to walk or wheel.

90%
of all residents walk or wheel
93% in 2023

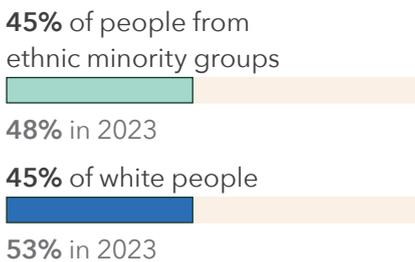
45%
of all residents walk or wheel at least five days a week
52% in 2023

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

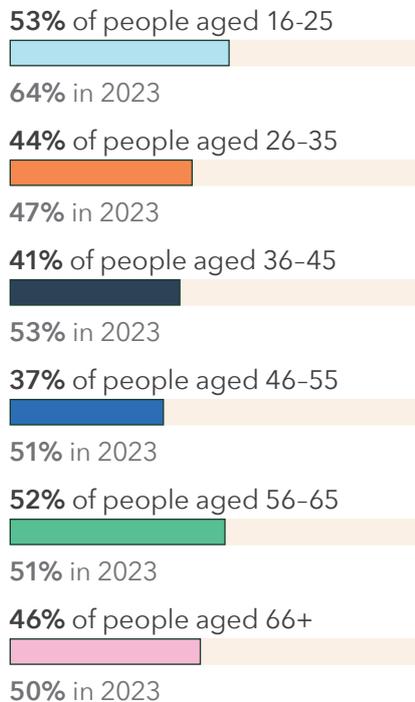
Gender⁽ⁱ⁾



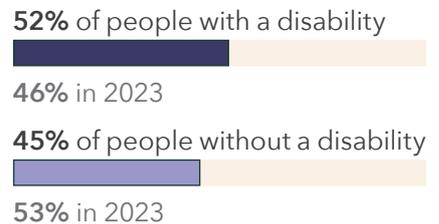
Ethnicity



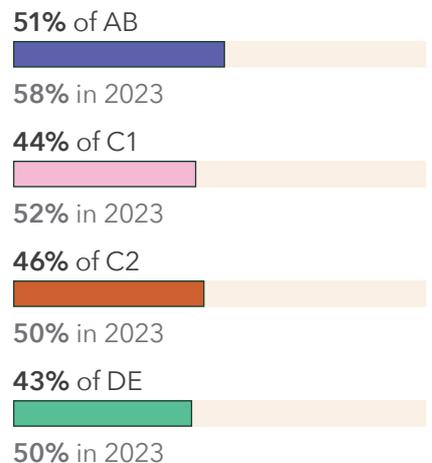
Age



Disability



Socio-economic group⁽ⁱⁱ⁾



i. The sample size for respondents who identified their gender 'in another way' was too low to be statistically significant and is not shown.
 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

83%

of all residents think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

80% in 2023

66%

of all residents think it's safe for children to walk or wheel in their local area

67% in 2023

83%

of all residents think their local area overall is a good place to walk or wheel

84% in 2023

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to walk or wheel in their local area

Gender

82% of women



81% in 2023

84% of men



79% in 2023

Ethnicity

89% of people from ethnic minority groups



84% in 2023

82% of white people



80% in 2023

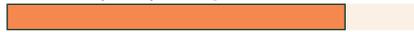
Age

85% of people aged 16-25



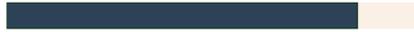
84% in 2023

82% of people aged 26-35



87% in 2023

85% of people aged 36-45



83% in 2023

80% of people aged 46-55



70% in 2023

84% of people aged 56-65



79% in 2023

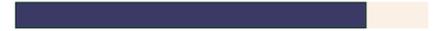
81% of people aged 66+



79% in 2023

Disability

85% of people with a disability



71% in 2023

82% of people without a disability



81% in 2023

Socio-economic group

90% of AB



74% in 2023

81% of C1



83% in 2023

82% of C2



78% in 2023

80% of DE



83% in 2023



JJ Taylor

I walk to college every day, and it's become one of the most enjoyable parts of my daily routine. I started walking mainly because it was the easiest and cheapest option, but over time I've really come to appreciate it for more than that.

It gives me a bit of space before and after a busy day. It's time to think, listen to music or a podcast, or just have a break from screens. It's a simple way to slow things down and clear my head, which I think helps with stress and staying focused. It also helps me feel more connected to the city. You start to notice little things you wouldn't see from a car or bus.

Cycling

Participation, safety and satisfaction



Cycling participation

Currently, 12% of residents cycle at least once a week.

Safety, including road safety and personal safety, is the single largest barrier to cycling.^[i]

The Waterford Metropolitan Area has been working to provide safe, dedicated space for cycling.

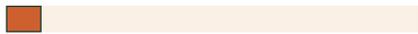
21%
of all residents cycle
25% in 2023

12%
of all residents cycle at least
once a week
16% in 2023

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

Gender

8% of women



9% in 2023

16% of men



23% in 2023

Ethnicity

12% of people from ethnic minority groups



13% in 2023

12% of white people



16% in 2023

Age

14% of people aged 16-25



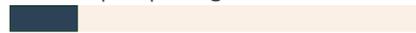
25% in 2023

12% of people aged 26-35



16% in 2023

16% of people aged 36-45



17% in 2023

8% of people aged 46-55



19% in 2023

15% of people aged 56-65



12% in 2023

7% of people aged 66+



6% in 2023

Disability

9% of people with a disability



5% in 2023

12% of people without a disability



17% in 2023

Socio-economic group

15% of AB



18% in 2023

12% of C1



19% in 2023

13% of C2



13% in 2023

9% of DE



12% in 2023

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

Cycling safety and satisfaction

52%

of all residents think it's safe to cycle in their local area

51% in 2023

47%

of all residents think it's safe for children to cycle in their local area

44% in 2023

51%

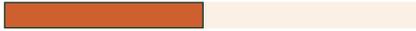
of all residents think their local area overall is a good place to cycle

55% in 2023

Proportion of residents who think it's safe to cycle in their local area

Gender

48% of women



47% in 2023

57% of men



54% in 2023

Ethnicity

66% of people from ethnic minority groups



78% in 2023

50% of white people



48% in 2023

Age

63% of people aged 16-25



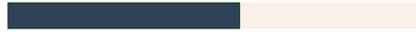
57% in 2023

52% of people aged 26-35



60% in 2023

56% of people aged 36-45



57% in 2023

49% of people aged 46-55



40% in 2023

52% of people aged 56-65



46% in 2023

45% of people aged 66+



43% in 2023

Disability

46% of people with a disability



39% in 2023

53% of people without a disability



52% in 2023

Socio-economic group

57% of AB



43% in 2023

50% of C1



53% in 2023

51% of C2



52% in 2023

53% of DE



53% in 2023



Shane Kelly

Cycling is all about freedom for me. It's the ability to hop on a bike and move without the stress of traffic, parking, and the costs associated with driving. Cycling on my own terms clears my head and gives me energy.

It's also about health. I don't need to carve out time for the gym because cycling is part of my routine.

Waterford is a great place to cycle. The Greenway is a gem, and the city's scale makes it manageable. There's a strong and growing sense of community among people who cycle here, too.

Benefits of walking and wheeling

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

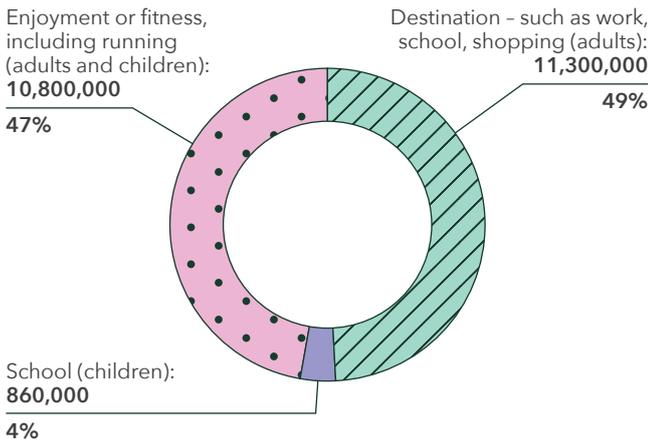


Together, Waterford Metropolitan Area residents walk or wheel 3 times around the world every day

Walking and wheeling improves health and air quality, saves the HSE money, and reduces congestion.

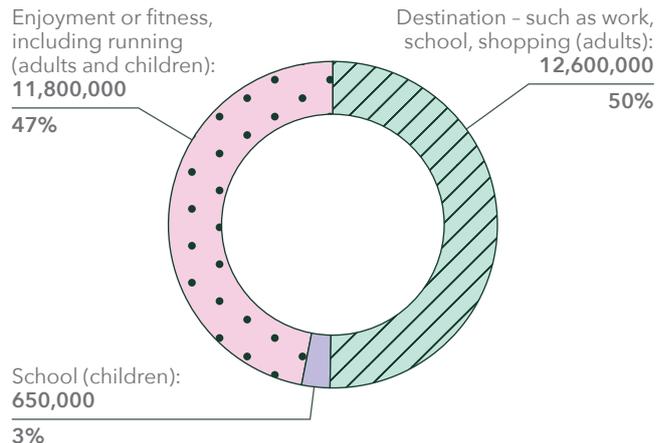
Annual walking and wheeling trips by purpose

23 million trips in 2025 which add up to **44.7 million kilometres**



Average walking or wheeling trip distance: 1.9 kilometres

25 million trips in 2023 which add up to **58.2 million kilometres**



Average walking or wheeling trip distance: 2.3 kilometres

Walking and wheeling benefits residents and society

We model the costs and benefits of walking and wheeling journeys, including those that replace trips which could have been driven, using our Societal Gain model. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

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

€57.5 million

Many of these trips were made by people with access to a car. For these (excluding trips for enjoyment or fitness) our model compares the costs and benefits of walking and wheeling to those of driving.

For these journeys **€1.14** is saved for each kilometre walked or wheeled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **€13.7 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **12 million kilometres** walked or wheeled by those that could have used a car.



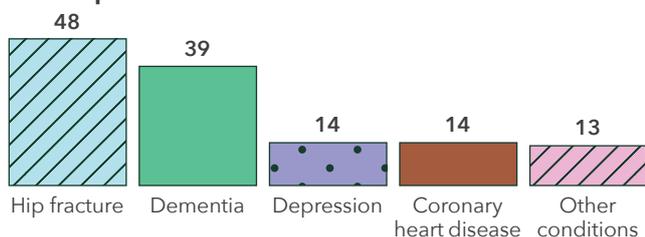
2023 model estimates in this report differ slightly to those published in 2023, due to being recalculated using input data from more robust sources. See methodology report for details.

Walking and wheeling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Walking in the area prevents 128 serious long-term health conditions each year.

167 in 2023

Cases prevented



Above figures are based on applying area data to Sport England MOVES tool, which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity. 'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

This saves the HSE

€1.6 million per year

€2.1 million in 2023

Equivalent to the cost of

26,000

GP appointments

38,000 in 2023

The physical activity benefits from walking

prevent 21 early deaths annually

28 in 2023

which is valued at

€160 million

€215 million in 2023

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. Wheelchair and mobility scooter trips are modelled as walking trips for the purposes of the MOVES and HEAT models.

People walking and wheeling instead of driving improves air quality, saving:

6,200 kg of NO_x

(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

9,900 kg in 2023

and

436 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀, which includes PM_{2.5}) annually.

719 kg in 2023

90% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



88% in 2023

Walking and wheeling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By walking or wheeling instead of driving, residents save

2,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) annually.

3,800 tonnes in 2023

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

25,000 people

taking flights

from Dublin to London Heathrow.

In 2023 transport accounted for **21.5%** of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2023, transport emissions went up by **129.4%**.^[i]

i. Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland's Final Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2023.

Walking and wheeling keeps the area moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^[ii] This helps to keep the area moving for all road users.

14,000 return trips

are walked and wheeled daily by residents who could have used a car.

15,000 in 2023

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

66 kilometres

equivalent to the distance from Waterford City to Tramore two and a half times.

73 kilometres in 2023

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

Benefits of cycling

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

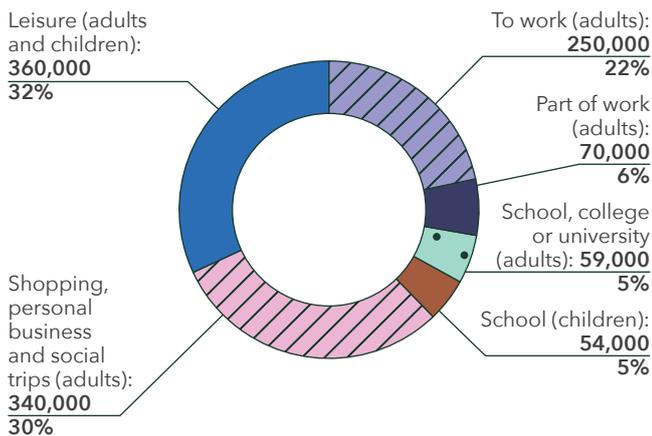


Together, Waterford Metropolitan Area residents cycle once around the world every day

Cycling can be convenient for many local trips, especially in cities and towns. It gives people transport choice and access to education, jobs and community.

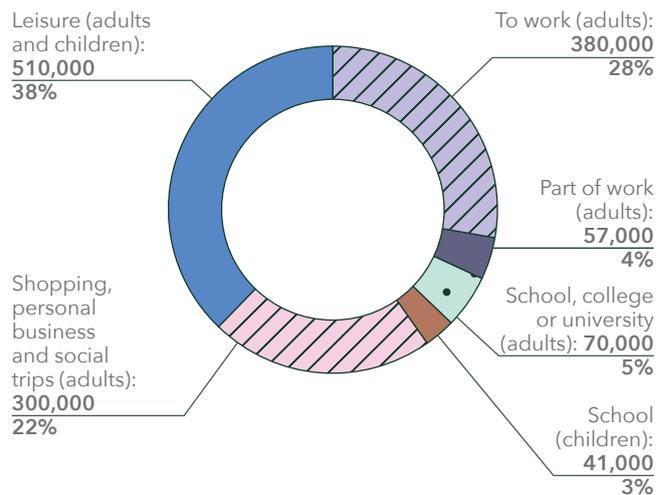
Annual cycling trips by purpose

1.1 million trips in 2025 which add up to **9 million kilometres**



Average cycling trip distance: 7.9 kilometres

1.4 million trips in 2023 which add up to **8.6 million kilometres**



Average cycling trip distance: 6.3 kilometres

Cycling benefits residents and society

We model the costs and benefits of cycling journeys, including those that replace trips which could have been driven, using our Societal Gain model. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, health benefits, air quality and taxation.

The total annual economic benefit from all trips cycled in the Waterford Metropolitan Area is **€9.5 million**

Many of these trips were made by people with access to a car. For these (excluding trips for leisure) our model compares the costs and benefits of cycling to those of driving.

For these journeys **€1.62** is saved for each kilometre cycled instead of driven. Over a year this adds up to **€6.9 million** in economic benefit for residents and society from **4.2 million kilometres** cycled by those that could have used a car.



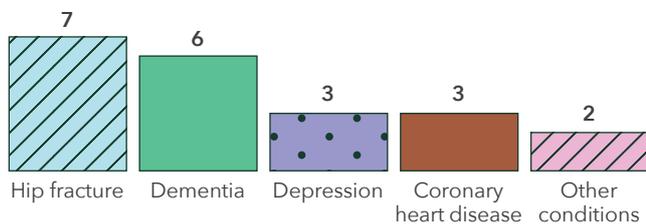
2023 model estimates in this report differ slightly to those published in 2023, due to being recalculated for the inclusion of cycling trips as part of work and using input data from more robust sources. See methodology report for details.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in the area prevents 22 serious long-term health conditions each year.

18 in 2023

Cases prevented



Above figures are based on applying area data to Sport England MOVES tool, which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity. 'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

This saves the HSE

€270,000 per year

€230,000 in 2023

Equivalent to the cost of

4,600

GP appointments

4,300 in 2023

The physical activity benefits from cycling

prevent 1 early death annually

1 in 2023

which is valued at

€10 million

€9.3 million in 2023

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.

People cycling instead of driving improves air quality, saving:

1,600 kg of NO_x

(Nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide)

1,200 kg in 2023

and

122 kg of particulates

(PM₁₀, which includes PM_{2.5}) annually.

92 kg in 2023

90% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



88% in 2023

Cycling helps mitigate the climate crisis

By cycling instead of driving, residents save

709 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) annually.

537 tonnes in 2023

This is equivalent to the carbon footprint of

8,900 people

taking flights

from Dublin to London Heathrow.

In 2023 transport accounted for **21.5%** of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2023, transport emissions went up by **129.4%**.^[i]

i. Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland's Final Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2023.

Cycling keeps the area moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^[ii] This helps to keep the area moving for all road users.

815 return trips

are cycled daily by residents who could have used a car.

1,000 in 2023

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

4 kilometres

equivalent to the distance from The Clock Tower to Waterford Nature Park.

5 kilometres in 2023

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

Walking and wheeling solutions

What would help make walking and wheeling easier?



New homes and existing communities should have services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Putting walking and wheeling at the heart of new and existing communities gives people greater transport choice, while reducing car dependency.

58%

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

70% in 2023

90%

support prioritising new housing developments that support walking, wheeling, cycling or the use of public transport

New developments and existing communities can support walking and wheeling by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live.

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

78%

more shops and everyday services, such as banks and post offices, close to their home

64% in 2023

77%

more government services, such as doctors surgeries and schools, close to their home

61% in 2023

85%

more parks or green spaces close to their home

75% in 2023

80%

more things to see and do close to their home, like cafés or entertainment venues

65% in 2023

Residents want walking and wheeling to better align with buses

While walking and wheeling should be the most attractive option for short journeys, it should also be integrated with public transport for longer trips.

Bus use is the most common form of multi-modal journey across Ireland, and most bus trips depend upon walking and wheeling. Residents told us they need practical improvements to better integrate these modes of transport.



What percentage of residents would find these changes useful to help them take journeys that include walking or wheeling and the bus more often?

89%

more information to help them plan and take a journey (such as apps, maps, signage or public transport staff)

87%

more direct walking and wheeling routes from housing estates to bus stops

88%

accessible walking and wheeling routes to and from bus stops

88%

improved safety while walking or wheeling to and from the bus stop

90%

improved walking and wheeling crossing facilities near bus stops

94%

improved bus stops (such as accessible, well lit and maintained, cover from rain, display of service information)

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?

84%

wider footpaths
73% in 2023

81%

more frequent road crossings, with reduced wait times
72% in 2023

86%

nicer places along streets to stop and rest, like more benches, trees and shelters
74% in 2023

90%

better footpath accessibility, like level surfaces and dropped kerbs at crossing points
81% in 2023

82%

fewer cars parked on the footpath
71% in 2023

73%

less fear of crime or antisocial behaviour in their area
64% in 2023

In the area, for each road making up a junction with traffic lights

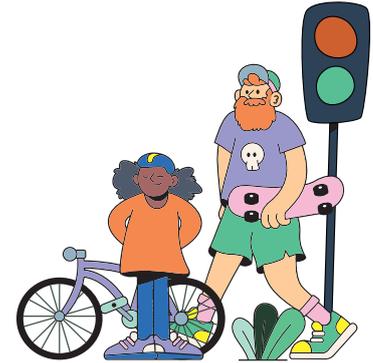
92% have a pedestrian crossing



8% don't have a pedestrian crossing



For example, a T-junction has three roads making up the junction, and a crossroads has four.



Brianna Connaughton

I park and stride with my 6-year-old daughter. Her school promotes health and wellbeing and encourages walking where possible. With work and childcare in opposite directions, walking the full way isn't an option, but this compromise works. We drop her sister off, drive to my work near the school, and walk from there. It's our time to connect, get fresh air and movement, and chat before the day begins.

There are challenges. Narrow footpaths, busy traffic, and car spray on wet days make it hard, and others may not have access to nearby parking like I do.

We'd love to see better infrastructure: a dedicated park and stride area and safer walking routes. It would make a real difference - not just for us, but for many families who want to make healthier, more active choices.

Cycling solutions

What would make cycling better?

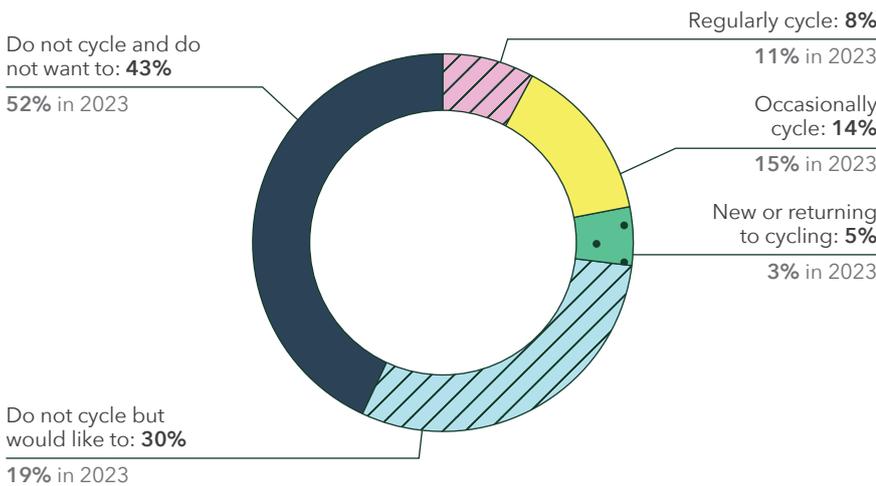


Many residents want to cycle

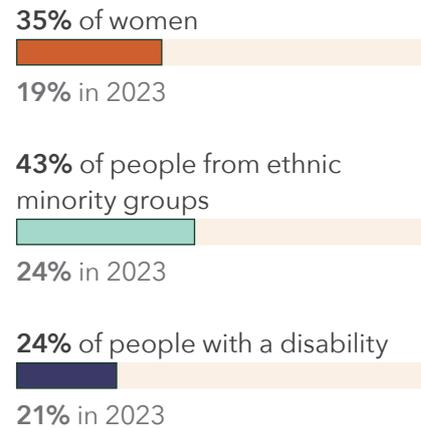
There is considerable appetite to start cycling from residents who don't already.

To meet this demand we must address safety, ensuring people have dedicated space for cycling, as well as supporting access to a cycle, training, cycle parking, and better integration of cycling with public transport.

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?

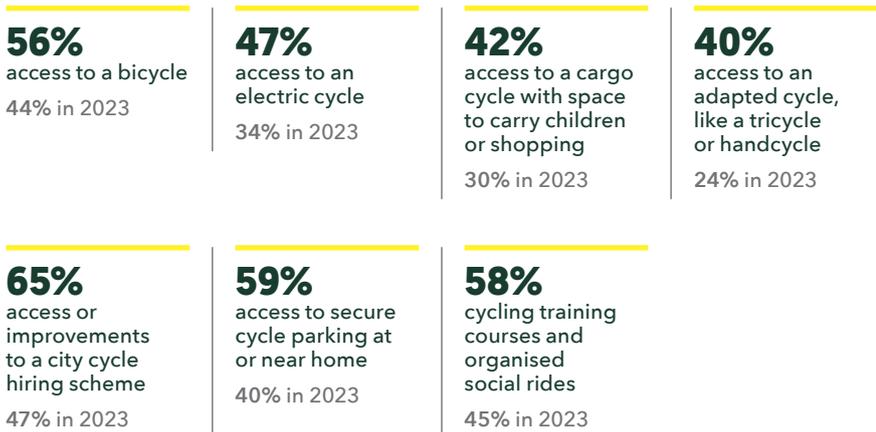


What proportion of residents said they 'do not cycle but would like to'

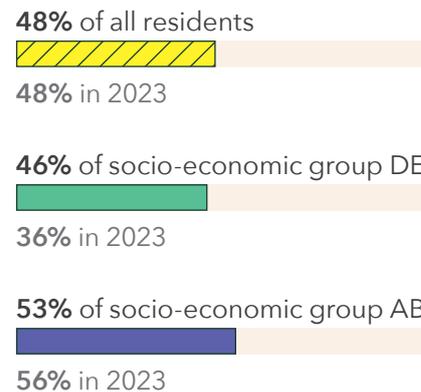


Residents want more support to cycle

What percentage of residents think that these kinds of support would help them start cycling or to cycle more?



Proportions of residents with access to an adult cycle



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

People want networks of dedicated and safe cycle paths, cycle parking and better integration with public transport.

In the area there are:

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

Among residents:

5% of households

are within 125 metres of either traffic-free cycle paths away from the road, cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, or signposted routes along quieter streets

The area has

0 km

of cycle paths level with the footpath, distinguished by a different surface

9 km

of traffic-free cycle paths away from the road

1 km

of cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians

2 km

of signposted routes along quieter streets

12

cycle parking spaces across 2 railway and bus stations

71%

more traffic-free cycle paths away from roads, like through parks or along waterways
57% in 2023

70%

more cycle paths along roads that are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians
55% in 2023

69%

more signposted local cycle routes along quieter streets
56% in 2023

67%

better links with public transport, like secure cycle parking at train stations, bus stops/stations
55% in 2023

95%

support improving and increasing local off-road walking, wheeling and cycling paths

86%

support building more cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic
76% in 2023

93%

support improving walking, wheeling and cycling access to bus stops and coach or rail stations



Csilla Czelvikker

I cycle through Waterford city centre almost every day. It's become part of my daily rhythm- whether I'm heading to work, running errands, or simply enjoying a bit of movement between meetings. I grew up in a small town in Hungary where cycling was part of life. As children, we cycled to school, to the shops, to visit friends. That connection has stayed with me, and even now, decades later and in a different country, I still find comfort and freedom on two wheels.

If I could change anything, it would be to have more dedicated, clearly marked cycle lanes, especially ones that are protected from traffic. Wider cycle paths that link key areas of the city would make a huge difference, not just for seasoned cyclists but for people who might want to start but feel unsure. Better bike parking, more awareness among drivers, and smoother surfaces on some of the older roads would also really help.

Neighbourhood solutions

Thriving places, centring children



Neighbourhoods should prioritise the needs and wellbeing of the people who live there and visit. They should be planned to support community, foster social connection, and be places where everyone feels welcome.

Designing neighbourhoods with children in mind means they work better for everyone.

Improving the journey to school

Schools are at the centre of many neighbourhoods and should be part of any plan to make neighbourhoods better.

This means working with schools to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling, but also improving the neighbourhood around schools to reduce traffic and improve footpaths, crossing points and cycle provision.

58% support



26% oppose



closing residential streets outside schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times

These are known as 'School Streets'.

0 schools

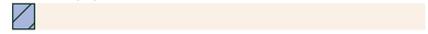
in the area have School Streets schemes

0 schools in 2023

90% support



5% oppose



reducing speed limits, improving crossing points and introducing protected cycle paths in school neighbourhoods

These are known as 'Safe Routes to School'.^[i]

3 schools

are in the Safer Routes to School programme

i. The Safer Routes to School schemes aim to provide distinctive colourful schools zones at the front of schools to prioritise children walking, wheeling and cycling, discourage vehicle drop-offs, and improve crossings and key links for children choosing active travel.

Giving children the independence to roam, play and develop

Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive. Well-designed neighbourhoods can give children freedom to move around, play and socialise, helping children's independence, social skills, and autonomy.

Average age when parents and carers would let children travel independently in their neighbourhood

12 years old
to walk or wheel

13 years old
to cycle

14 years old
to use public transport

79%

agree there is space for children to socialise and play

76% in 2023

Fewer children play out on their streets than ever before. Just 27% of children said they regularly play outside their homes, compared to 71% of those born between 1946 and 1964.

Save the Children, Summer of Play campaign survey, 2022.



Residents support child-safe neighbourhoods

Adults support child-safe neighbourhoods, including traffic-reduction targets and measures to reduce through traffic and traffic speed, but this must be done fairly.

52%

of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles

63% in 2023

87%

support setting traffic-reduction targets and taking action to achieve these

80% in 2023

87%

support low-traffic neighbourhoods

80% in 2023

12%

of the total length of unclassified roads in the area have nothing to prevent through traffic. This can result in rat running.^[ii]

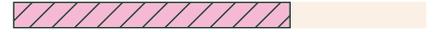
12% in 2023

Residents would find fewer motor vehicles on their streets useful to:

76% walk or wheel more



67% cycle more



74%

support reducing speed limits on local roads in built-up areas to 30 km/h speed limits

28%

of the area's streets should typically have traffic travelling at speeds below 30 km/h (excluding motorways)

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

73% walk or wheel more



65% cycle more



Everyone should feel welcome in their neighbourhood

Improvements to neighbourhoods must also recognise the needs of adults, for example women, people with a disability and people from ethnic minority groups.

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

92%

of all residents



87% in 2023

80%

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

77% in 2023

90% of women



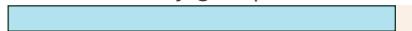
89% in 2023

93% of men



84% in 2023

94% of people from ethnic minority groups



83% in 2023

91% of white people



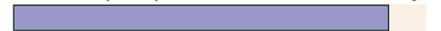
87% in 2023

94% of people with a disability



80% in 2023

91% of people without a disability



87% in 2023

90% of socio-economic group DE



84% in 2023

91% of socio-economic group AB



89% in 2023

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

Improving walking, wheeling and cycling

Getting around Waterford is improving for everyone. Whether you're walking or cycling to work, school, college or the shops, active travel is becoming a safer, easier and more enjoyable way to go about your daily journeys. Choosing active travel benefits your health, helps reduce pollution, and saves you money. Fewer car journeys result in cleaner air, less traffic congestion, and more vibrant, people-friendly streets and town centres.

Waterford City and County Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA), is leading the way on a series of active travel projects designed to make walking, wheeling and cycling more accessible across the Waterford Metropolitan Area. This includes the development of segregated cycle lanes, widened footpaths, safer pedestrian crossings, safer front-of-school areas, and a new sustainable transport bridge. The new infrastructure aims to create a seamless, safer, and more connected travel experience for people of all ages and abilities.

This work forms part of a broader national strategy to promote sustainable transport, as outlined in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023. One of the key aims in the plan is to increase the number of active travel networks so that walking, cycling, and public transport will account for 50% of all journeys made by 2030. Projects are made possible through a coordinated approach involving Department of Transport funding, strategic delivery by the NTA, and on-the-ground implementation by local authorities nationwide.

Importantly, the Waterford Metropolitan Area includes both Waterford and Kilkenny Councils' administrative areas. The planned Urban Core Network will consider the wider metropolitan context and the relationship between North Quays, Ferrybank, and Waterford City.

The new infrastructure aims to create a seamless, safer, and more connected travel experience for people of all ages and abilities.



Waterford Educate Together National School, Carrickphierish

Waterford Educate Together National School, Carrickphierish. This project has successfully encouraged healthier lifestyles among pupils. A reduction in cars around the school, along with safer road crossings and junction improvements, has noticeably improved safety and accessibility. On the back of the works, the school launched a Walking Bus initiative, providing children with a structured, safe way to walk to school under adult supervision.



St Saviour's National School, Ballybeg

Praised for improving the safety and enjoyment of walking and cycling to school, this project has enabled more children to choose active travel. The installation of new pedestrian crossings, pencil bollards, and safety measures has increased visibility and driver awareness, creating a safer, more welcoming front-of-school environment.



Lismore Park Active Travel Pathfinder Project

Enhanced pedestrian permeability through the public green space in Lismore Park has made it safer and easier for residents to walk across the area. Junction tightening and pedestrian priority measures have further improved safety and accessibility, encouraging walking as a convenient and enjoyable mode of travel. Further upgrades are planned to improve connectivity and network quality.



Scoil Mhuire National School, Butlerstown

As part of the Safer Routes to School Scheme, active travel works at Scoil Mhuire National School, Butlerstown, have made the journey to school safer and calmer. Families now park and stride from the nearby church car park, reducing traffic at the school gate and creating a safer environment for all.

Improvements include traffic-calming measures, an upgraded pedestrian crossing, widened footpaths, buildouts, parking realignment, and new placemaking features that enhance visibility and safety at the front of school.

Looking forward

Better places and streets for everyone



North Quays

The North Quays Public Infrastructure Project is a transformative investment, including a transport hub, sustainable pedestrian and cycle bridge, and mixed-use development within the Strategic Development Zone. The new bridge will provide a safe, direct connection between the North Quays, Ferrybank, and Waterford city centre, and will link both the Waterford and South East Greenways. The bridge is expected to open to the public this year.

Waterford BusConnects

Waterford BusConnects is a redesign of the city's bus network by the NTA. It aims to improve service frequency, simplify routes, and enhance connectivity across the city and suburbs. The project supports sustainable transport goals and is part of Ireland's broader BusConnects programme for regional cities.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Waterford City and County Council, in partnership with An Taisce, the NTA, and local schools, continues to deliver active travel infrastructure under the Safe Routes to School Programme. Works at Waterford Educate Together, St Saviour's, and Scoil Mhuire in Butlerstown have encouraged more children to walk or cycle, making school areas safer and more accessible.

Waterford Cycle Connects

The NTA and Waterford City and County Council are developing a comprehensive cycle plan for the metropolitan area. This plan will integrate urban cycle routes, greenways, and inter-urban paths, including links to recent developments. The Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (WMATS), published in December 2022, aims to deliver "a safe, comprehensive, attractive and legible cycle network" across the region.

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

78% on walking and wheeling



74% on cycling



80% on buses



77% on trains



67% on other forms of public transport



60% on driving



...encouraged more children to walk or cycle, making school areas safer and more accessible.

Greenways

The Dungarvan to Waterford Greenway remains one of Ireland's premier greenways, supporting both leisure and commuting. An urban greenway is also planned to connect Waterford and Tramore. The South East Greenway is a joint initiative of Wexford, Kilkenny, and Waterford Councils, supported by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The 24km off-road greenway will connect New Ross and Waterford City. Phase two, opened in September 2025, connects Curraghmore (Co. Kilkenny) to Ferrybank. Final phases should be completed by 2027.

Upcoming Schemes

Several projects will deliver segregated cycle routes along key radial and orbital roads, forming a connected and coherent network. Key projects include the Cork Road and Inner Ring Road schemes. The North Quays Strategic Development Zone will bring new housing and employment opportunities, supported by a sustainable transport bridge. The Lismore Park Pathfinder Project will further enhance permeability and connect with wider cycling routes. The Council will also continue delivering Safe Routes to School, junction upgrades, and cycle parking as part of an integrated, sustainable transport approach.



Noreen McGrath

I regularly walk into Waterford City and really enjoy it. Walking is great for health, meeting people, and enjoying our beautiful local areas. As a member of Waterford Older People's Council and our Residents group, I always encourage walking as part of daily life.

However, there are challenges. Many footpaths are uneven and unsafe, especially for those with mobility issues. Wheelie bins often block the way, forcing people with

walking aids, scooters, or buggies onto the road.

Traffic has increased with the new traffic plan, but there aren't enough pedestrian crossings to keep walkers safe. Public transport is unreliable. Buses don't always arrive or take on passengers.

Looking forward, we need better footpaths, bin management, more crossings, and reliable transport to support active travel for all ages in Waterford.

Notes on methodology

The attitudinal survey was conducted from May to June 2025 (May to July 2023) by independent research company Ipsos B&A.

The survey is representative of all Waterford Metropolitan Area residents, not just those who walk, wheel or cycle.

All other data are sourced from our regional and local partners, national data sets or modelled and calculated by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. All locally-sourced data are correct as of 28 May 2025.

Trip estimates use a model developed by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. When comparing to other travel surveys, some variation may exist in the proportion of journeys travelled by journey purpose.

Trip estimates now include cycling trips as part of work for both 2025 and 2023. Previously published 2023 model estimates have been recalculated to include these and allow for direct comparison and using some different input data from more robust sources. This has also impacted walking trip estimates from 2023.

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 on data sources and calculations, including strengths and limitations of the survey and model methodology, are available at www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/walking-cycling-index

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is the charity making it possible for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

Because people powered movement changes everything. Our health. Our wellbeing. Our world.

www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

Funding and support

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Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is a registered charity in Ireland (20206824), in England and Cymru (326550), and Scotland (SC039263).

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