

Belfast

Walking and Cycling Index 2021





Foreword

Our vision for walking, wheeling and cycling in Belfast

Making Belfast a more friendly city for everyone



I am delighted to present the fourth biennial publication of *'Belfast Bike Life'*, now named *'Belfast Walking and Cycling Index'*. The report has been extended to

include data and opinions on

walking as well as cycling. It provides us with a sense of the infrastructure improvements needed to help create a sustainable, liveable city, where people and businesses thrive.

Since the pandemic, many more people discovered or rediscovered the enjoyment and benefits of walking and cycling. This report reminds us that cycling participation remains low, with only 17% of people cycling at least once per week. However, the increase in participation – that we all saw in 2020 – reflects the finding that 69% of people tell us that more cycle tracks along roads would help them cycle more, where these are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians.

Following the last report in 2019, some notable changes have been made around the city. These include pop-up cycle lanes, pedestrianisation and quiet streets, the development of parklets and the roll-out of more people-focused infrastructure in the city. The Department for Infrastructure is keen to grasp opportunities to increase

the allocation of road space for walking, wheeling and cycling on our urban streets – recognising the role that these streets have as community places. Most Belfast residents think that their streets are currently dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles.

Active travel has been a priority for the Department for Infrastructure in recent years. It is clear that active and sustainable travel should become a pillar of change within towns and cities in an effort to cut emissions, improve health and wellbeing, and better connect families and communities.

Last year, *'Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021'* was published. The supporting delivery plan identified key schemes throughout the city, with an objective of reaching into those areas of the city where there is currently little separated or traffic-free infrastructure.

'Belfast Walking and Cycling Index 2021' aligns with *'A Bolder Vision for Belfast'*, an ambitious blueprint to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city. A city that is more walking and cycling-friendly, to give everyone the freedom and confidence to be able to walk, wheel or cycle in Belfast.

Liz Loughran, Walking and Cycling Champion, Department for Infrastructure



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The Walking and Cycling Index

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly Bike Life) is the biggest assessment of walking and cycling in urban areas in the UK and Ireland. This is the first year walking has been included.

It is delivered by Sustrans in collaboration with 18 cities and urban areas. Each city reports on the progress made towards making both walking and cycling more attractive, everyday ways to travel.

The Walking and Cycling Index reports every two years. This is the fourth report from Belfast produced in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The data in this report comes from 2021 and includes local walking and cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 1,372 residents aged 16 or above in Belfast. The survey was conducted from June to August 2021 following Covid-19 travel restrictions across the UK being lifted. Social research organisation NatCen conducted the survey which is representative of all residents, not just those who walk or cycle.

Across this report we have included comparisons to 2019 data where available.

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

More details on all Walking and Cycling Index reports can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/walkingcyclingindex



Defining wheeling

We recognise some people, for example wheelchair or mobility scooter users, identify with the term wheeling instead of walking. Therefore we use the terms walking and wheeling together and consider walking and wheeling to include the use of mobility aids and pushchairs.

All walking survey responses within this report include responses from people who wheel. However, please note for graph labels we use walking as a shorthand for walking and wheeling.

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

Report summary

Belfast

Populationⁱ

342,560

Survey area

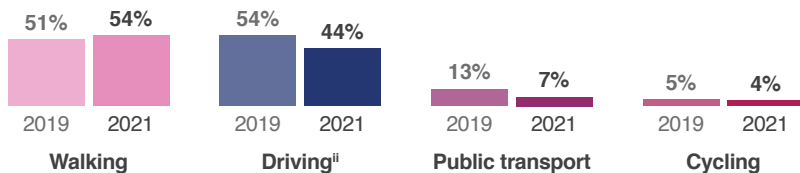


The impact of the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on how, when and the amount we travel, especially in relation to public transport and driving.

Transport use during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Department for Transport, June 2020

Residents travelling by the following modes five or more days a week in Belfast in 2019 and 2021



Participation in walking, wheeling and cycling on a regular basis has increased since 2019.

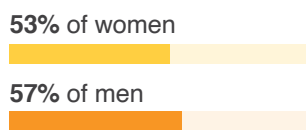
54%
of residents walk at least five days a week
51% in 2019

17%
of residents cycle at least once a week
12% in 2019

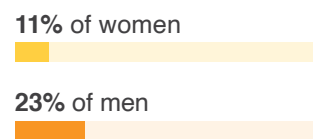
Walking, wheeling and cycling participation is not equal

Many more Belfast residents walk than cycle, with men more likely to be active than women because they cycle more.ⁱⁱⁱ

Proportion of residents who walk at least five days a week

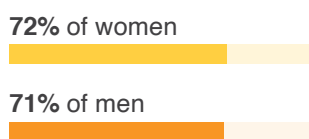


Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

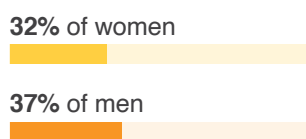


Not all residents feel safe and welcome in their neighbourhood

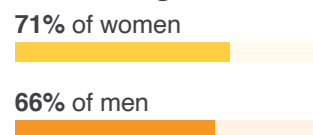
Proportion of residents who think walking safety is good



Proportion of residents who think cycling safety is good



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



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.

i. NISRA mid-year 2020 population estimates. This is the most recent available data for Belfast.

ii. Travelling as driver or passenger of car, van or motorcycle. In 2019, questions did not include traveling by motorcycle.

Everyone benefits when more people walk, wheel and cycle

Every year, walking and cycling in Belfast:

+ Prevents

723

serious long-term health conditions



Creates

£207.9 million

in economic benefit for individuals and the region



Saves

12,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions

Walking, wheeling and cycling help to tackle the climate emergency

Every day, walking and cycling in Belfast takes up to

77,000 cars off the road^{iv}

However,

64.7 million

journeys up to three miles are driven in Belfast each year

If **80%** of these journeys were walked or cycled it could save approximately

21,000 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions^v

Residents want more funding for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport

Percentage of residents who would like to see more government spending on:

60% on walking

61% in 2019

58% on cycling

58% in 2019

66% on public transport

62% in 2019

29% on driving

35% in 2019

This would help support more liveable neighbourhoods

Among Belfast residents:

68% support

14% oppose

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

85% support

3% oppose

the creation of more 20-minute neighbourhoods^{vi}

73% support

7% oppose

the creation of more low-traffic neighbourhoods

71% agree

12% disagree

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

84% agree

3% disagree

more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area

51% agree

21% disagree

closing streets outside local schools to cars during school drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area

iv. Based on walking and cycling by residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling or leisure walking trips.

v. Based upon each journey being 1.5 miles in length. vi. See definition on page 14.



Walking in Belfast

Walking and wheeling participation, safety and satisfaction

Walking and wheeling participation

Overall in Belfast the number of people walking and wheeling regularly (at least five days a week) has increased since the pandemic.

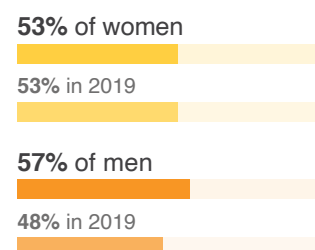
Walking and wheeling are often overlooked in transport. This is despite being an efficient use of space, good for our health and having no environmental impact.

95% of all residents walk 95% in 2019

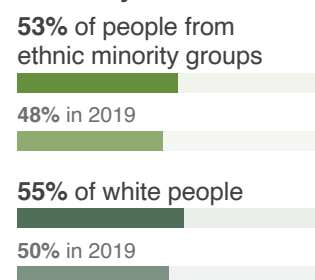
54% of residents walk at least five days a week 51% in 2019

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

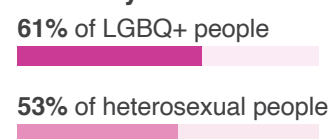
Genderⁱ



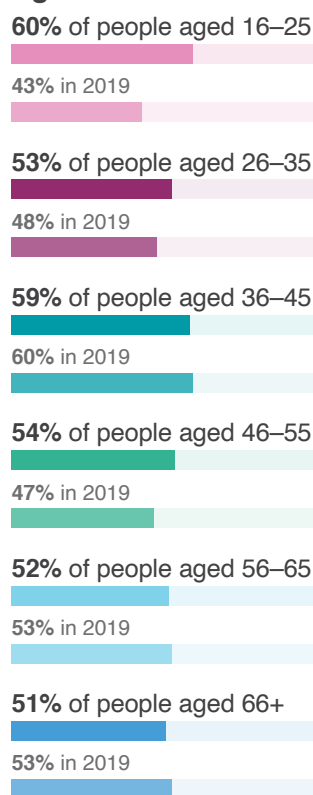
Ethnicity



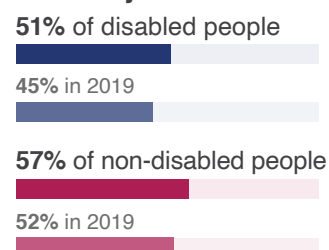
Sexuality



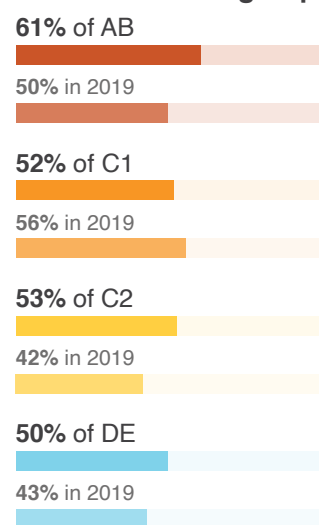
Age



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

Important differences exist in how safe people feel when walking or wheeling. Safety includes both road and personal safety.

70%

of residents think the level of safety for walking is good

53%

of residents think the level of safety for children walking is good

Proportion of residents who think walking or wheeling safety in their local area is good

Gender

72% of women



71% of men



Ethnicity

69% of people from ethnic minority groups



72% of white people



Sexuality

63% of LGBTQ+ people



73% of heterosexual people



Age

68% of people aged 16–25



66% of people aged 26–35



75% of people aged 36–45



74% of people aged 46–55



76% of people aged 56–65



70% of people aged 66+



Disability

63% of disabled people



75% of non-disabled people



Socio-economic group

78% of AB



66% of C1



73% of C2



65% of DE



74%

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



Martha Lavery, Andersonstown, West Belfast



I find some footpaths are a bit up and down. There can be trip hazards. I can be a bit of a klutz so it can be easy to fall.

I think there could be more seating around town. I have a hard time going up hills. If I could just rest for a few minutes that would be a big help.

I enjoy going out with the walking group because when you're in company you're busy talking and don't notice the effort.

There is a lot of traffic in Belfast, that put me off driving. I stopped driving about 10 years ago, I just had enough.

Cycling in Belfast

Cycling participation, safety and satisfaction

Cycling participation

Overall in Belfast the number of people cycling has increased since the pandemic. Despite a much larger potential, only **17%** of people cycle regularly.ⁱ

Cycling participation, however, 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.ⁱⁱ Encouragingly, perceptions of cycling safety have improved since 2019.

35%

of all residents cycle

28% in 2019

17%

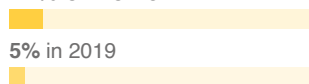
of all residents cycle at least once a week

12% in 2019

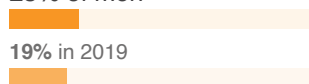
Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week

Gender

11% of women

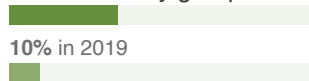


23% of men

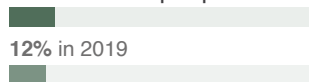


Ethnicity

36% of people from ethnic minority groups



15% of white people



Sexuality

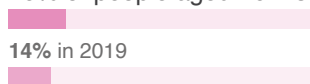
14% of LGBTQ+ people



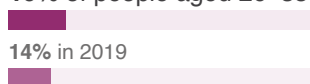
18% of heterosexual people

Age

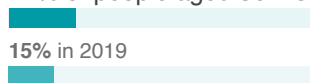
19% of people aged 16–25



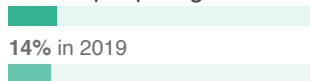
19% of people aged 26–35



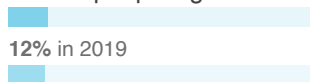
22% of people aged 36–45



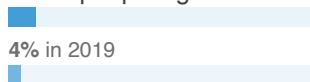
16% of people aged 46–55



13% of people aged 56–65

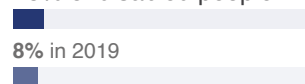


9% of people aged 66+

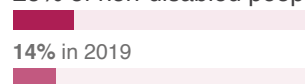


Disability

10% of disabled people



20% of non-disabled people

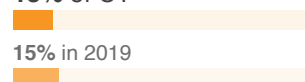


Socio-economic group

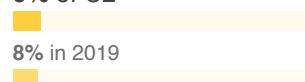
24% of AB



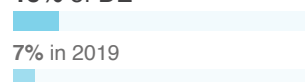
13% of C1



9% of C2



15% of DE



i. Based on people who cycle at least once a week.

ii. See Bike Life, 2019 Belfast report.

Cycling safety and satisfaction

34%

of all residents think the level of safety for cycling in their local area is good

27% in 2019

27%

of all residents think the level of safety for children cycling is good

17% in 2019

36%

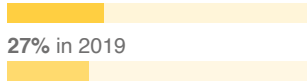
of all residents think their local area overall is a good place to cycle

36% in 2019

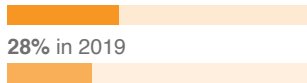
Proportion of residents who think cycling safety in their local area is good

Gender

32% of women

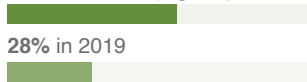


37% of men

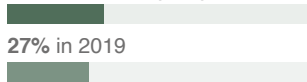


Ethnicity

56% of people from ethnic minority groups

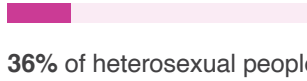


32% of white people



Sexuality

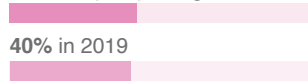
21% of LGBTQ+ people



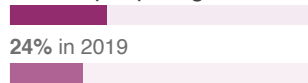
36% of heterosexual people

Age

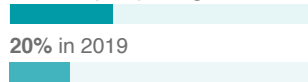
42% of people aged 16–25



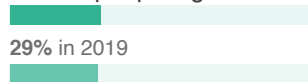
32% of people aged 26–35



34% of people aged 36–45



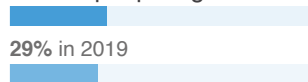
30% of people aged 46–55



36% of people aged 56–65

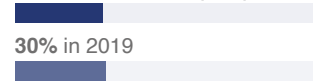


32% of people aged 66+

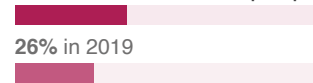


Disability

29% of disabled people

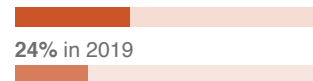


37% of non-disabled people

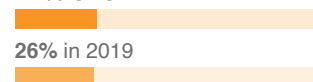


Socio-economic group

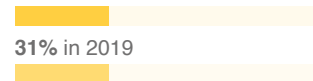
38% of AB



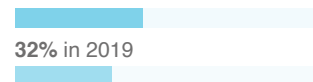
27% of C1



31% of C2



42% of DE



Claire Monteith, Hospital Pharmacist



I work across the two hospital sites – Belfast City and the Royal Victoria Hospital. The secure cycle shelters at the hospitals have helped a lot. I've had a bike stolen from the Royal but now I feel my bike is safer.

Since Covid the traffic isn't as bad and so I've done a lot more cycling. There are lots of cycle lanes on my route from Stranmillis but they just disappear. People don't like you cycling on the footpaths and the cars don't want you on the road, so you don't feel very protected.

I would like to see more greenways and protected cycle lanes, like on the Lagan Embankment.



Benefits of walking

Why everyone gains when more people walk or wheel

The large numbers of walking and wheeling trips in Belfast produce important health, economic and environmental benefits for everyone.

Belfast residents walk or wheel 17 times around the world every day

137.5 million

walking and wheeling trips were made in Belfast in the past year, which adds up to

151.8 million miles

= 420,000 miles a day.

This equates to each resident spending

6 days

walking or wheeling continuously in the past year

Annual walking and wheeling trips by purposeⁱ

Enjoyment or fitness – adults and children (including running):
61,100,000

44%

Destination – adults only (eg work, school, shopping):
68,400,000

50%

School – children only:
8,000,000

6%



Walking and wheeling benefit residents and the local economy in the region

In Belfast, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all walking and wheeling trips is

£182.1 million

Of this total,

£1.9 million

is from people with a car choosing to walk or wheel for transport in the past year.

6p

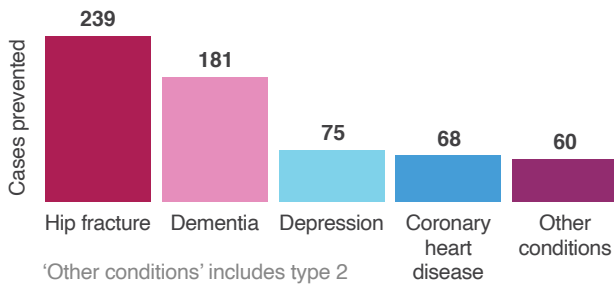
net benefit from each mile walked or wheeled instead of driven



These figures are based upon monetising the costs and benefits of driving and walking. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, medical costs, work absenteeism, congestion, infrastructure, local air quality, noise, greenhouse gases and taxation.

Walking and wheeling unlock health benefits for everyone

Walking in Belfast prevents 623 serious long-term health conditions each year



'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer, colorectal cancer.

Saving the NHS in Belfast

£4.1 million per year

equivalent to the cost of
140,000 GP appointments

Based on applying Belfast data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Belfast the physical activity benefits of walking

prevent 139 early deaths annually

which is valued at

£459 millionⁱⁱ

Please note wheelchair and 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:

30,000 kg of NO_x

and

4,000 kg of particulates
(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

46% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



Walking and wheeling in Belfast help mitigate our climate crisis

8,800 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

20,000 people taking flights

from Belfast International to Tenerife.



Transport now accounts for **20%** of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2019, transport emissions went up by **22%**, while overall emissions went down by **18%**.

Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990-2019, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Walking and wheeling keep Belfast moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.ⁱⁱⁱ This helps to keep Belfast moving for all road users.

71,000 return walking trips

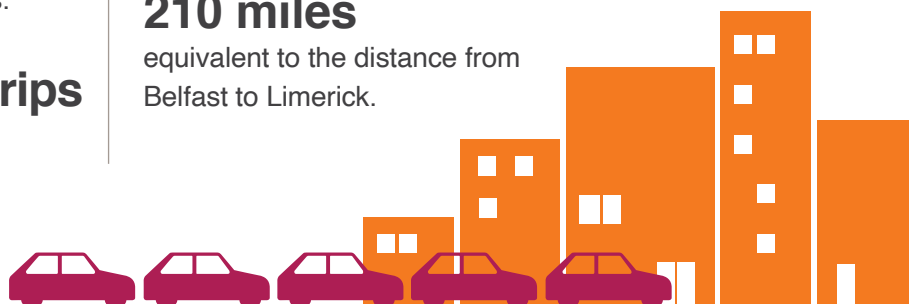
are made daily in Belfast by people that could have used a car.

iii. Litman, 2021. 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

210 miles

equivalent to the distance from Belfast to Limerick.



ii. 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

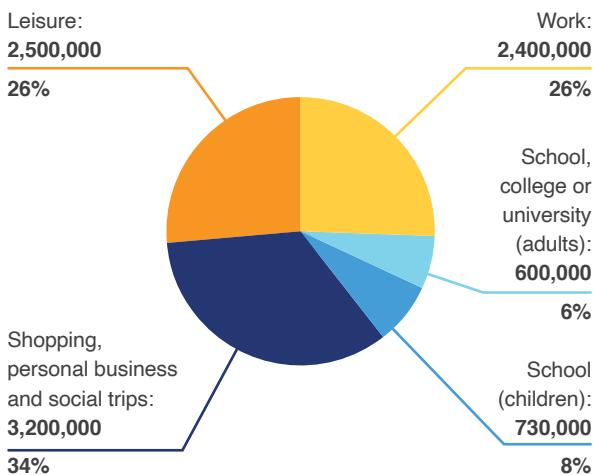
Why everyone gains when more people cycle

Belfast residents cycle 4 times around the world every day

There has been a reduction in commuter trips since 2019 as more people work from home. However, the total number of all cycling trips has increased.

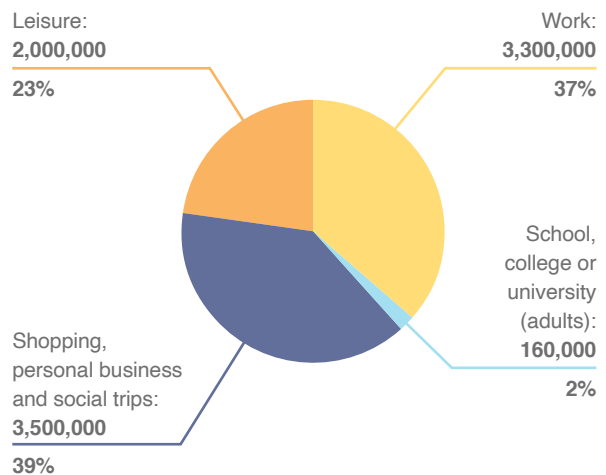
Annual cycling trips by purpose in Belfastⁱ

2021:
9.5 million trips



This adds up to
34.5 million miles
= 94,000 miles a day

2019:
9.1 million trips



This adds up to
34 million miles
= 93,000 miles a day

Cycling benefits residents and the local economy in the region

In Belfast, the net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all cycling trips is

£25.8 millionⁱⁱ

Of this total,

£11.8 million

is from people with a car choosing to cycle for transport in the past year.

95p

net benefit from each mile cycled instead of driven

92p in 2019



These figures are based upon monetising the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, medical costs, work absenteeism, congestion, infrastructure, local air quality, noise, greenhouse gases and taxation.

£26.2 million in 2019

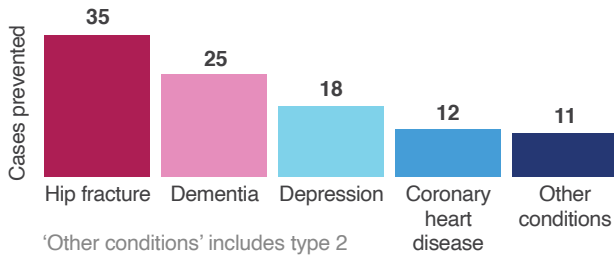
£11.9 million in 2019

i. Leisure trips include adults and children (with and without adult accompaniment). Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other trips are just adults. ii. Benefit has gone down despite a greater number of cycled miles because of a greater proportion of transport trips by people without a car; these trips carry a net cost.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in Belfast prevents 100 serious long-term health conditions each year

92 in 2019



'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer, colorectal cancer.

Saving the NHS in Belfast

£610,000 in 2019

£660,000 per year

20,000 in 2019



equivalent to the cost of

22,000 GP appointments

Based on applying Belfast data to the Sport England MOVES tool which calculates the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Belfast the physical activity benefits of cycling

prevent 10 early deaths annually

11 in 2019

which is valued at

£33.6 millionⁱⁱⁱ

£32.7 million in 2019

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

7,900 kg of NO_x and

8,700 kg in 2019

1,000 kg of particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

1,100 kg in 2019

46% of residents agree the air is clean in their local area



Cycling in Belfast helps mitigate our climate crisis

3,800 tonnes in 2019

3,400 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) saved annually by cycling instead of driving, equivalent to the carbon footprint of

8,200 people in 2019

7,600 people taking flights

from Belfast International to Tenerife.



Transport now accounts for **20%** of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are the use of petrol and diesel in road transport.

Between 1990 and 2019, transport emissions went up by **22%**, while overall emissions went down by **18%**.

Greenhouse Gas Statistics 1990-2019, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Cycling keeps Belfast moving

Studies show walking or cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.^{iv} This helps to keep Belfast moving for all road users.

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

19 miles

equivalent to the distance from Belfast to Antrim.

22 miles in 2019

7,500 in 2019

6,400 return cycling trips

are made daily in Belfast by people that could have used a car.

iv. Litman, 2021. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.



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

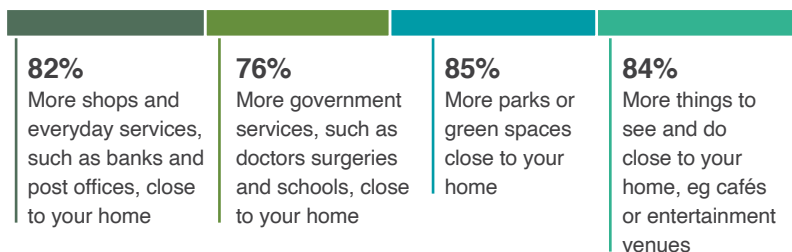
What would help make walking and wheeling better?

Residents want more services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

Ideally, walking should be the most attractive transport option for the vast majority of short journeys. A city can support this by ensuring many of the things people need are found near to where people live. The walking environment should be safe, comfortable, welcoming and attractive.

Neighbourhoods where many facilities can be reached on foot are known as 20-minute neighbourhoods. You can walk from your home to many of the things you need on a regular basis and back again within 20 minutes. This equates to around 800m each way.

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



44%

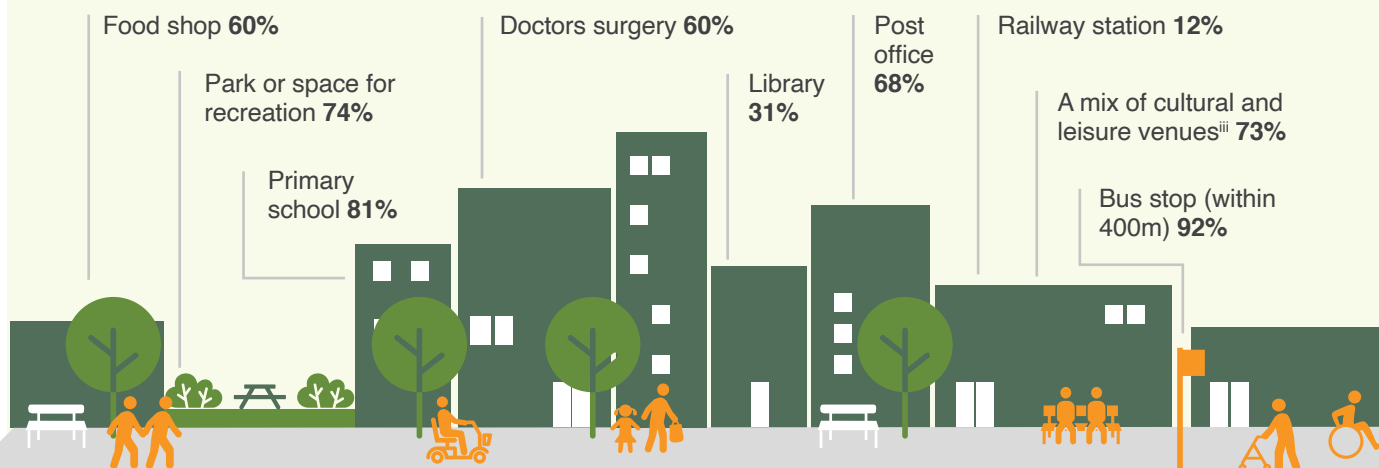
of Belfast households are in neighbourhoods of at least 40 dwellings per hectare. These are or can become 20-minute neighbourhoods.ⁱ

Lower density neighbourhoods have too few people to make much local business or public transport viable.ⁱⁱ

55%

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

Proportion of households within an 800m walk or wheel of the following amenities and services



i. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021, National Model Design Code.

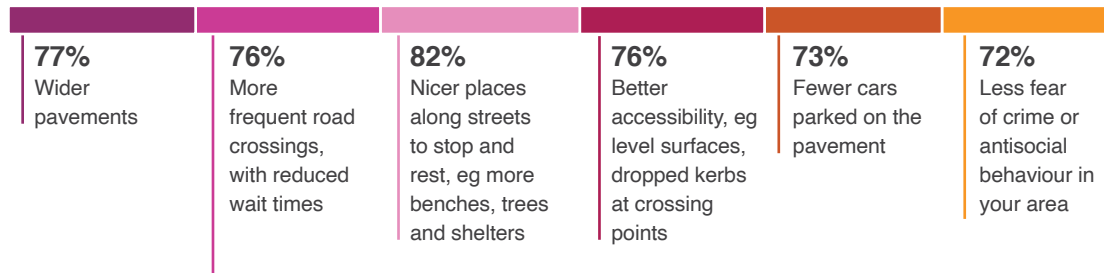
ii. Sustrans, 2017. Linking Active Travel and Public Transport to Housing Growth and Planning.

iii. A minimum of three distinct types of cultural and leisure venues, eg 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 in.

What percentage of residents think that these changes would help them walk or wheel more?



In Belfast:

On all roads making up junctions,

20%

of those with traffic lights for cars have no red and green man for pedestrians

84%

of residents agree more measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the street or in public spaces would improve their local area



Pauline McCallion and family, North Belfast



The girls say they really like walking to school. We walk in all weathers.

The school closed the car park a few years ago because there were lots of problems with too many cars and bad parking. Now no one is allowed to drive into the school. It has made a huge difference. We have lovely grounds and we can now enjoy them. The problem of car parking however has been pushed down the street.

Car parking outside the school has meant the footpaths can be difficult to walk along. Our girls manage to squeeze between the parked cars and hedge but often I have to push the baby in the pram in the middle of the road.

One of the main barriers to walking to school is the dog poo everywhere. We have complained about it but the problem persists. There are also lots of people cycling on the footpaths so we have to watch out for them too.

We are lucky we live in a lovely area with lots of greenery so it is overall a pleasant place to walk.



Cycling solutions

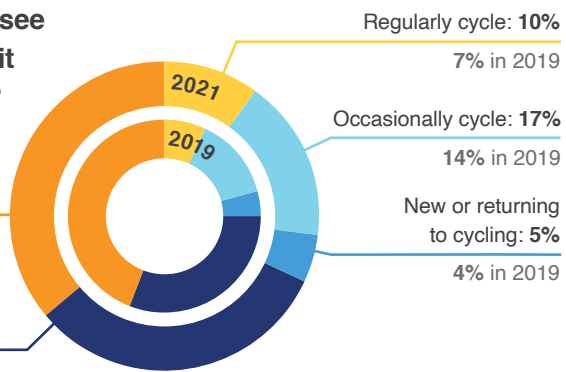
What would make cycling better?

Many Belfast residents want to cycle

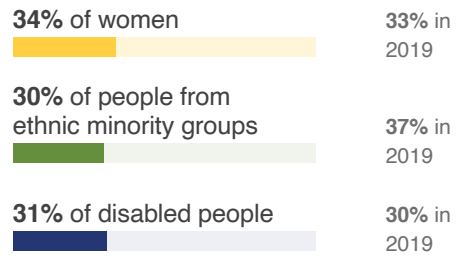
How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?

Do not cycle and do not want to: **36%**
44% in 2019

Do not cycle but would like to: **32%**
31% in 2019

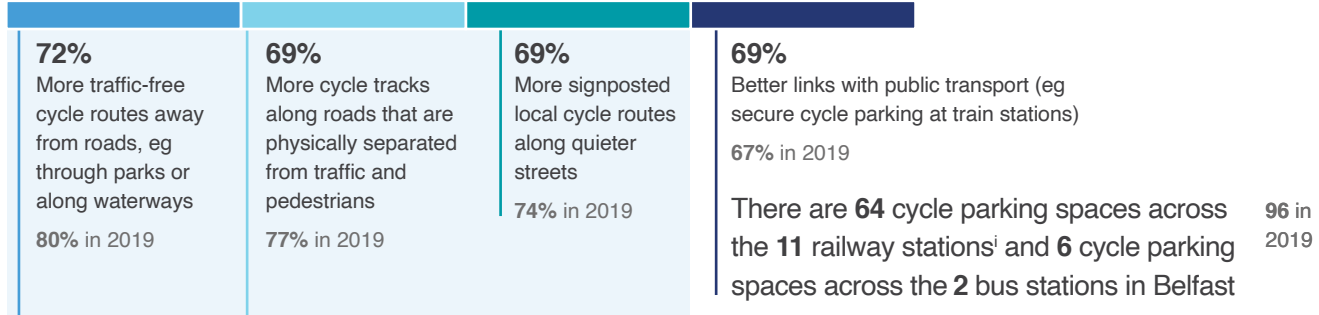


What proportion of residents said they 'do not cycle but would like to'?



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

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



Belfast hasⁱⁱ:
39 miles of traffic-free cycle routes away from the road
39 miles in 2019



2 miles of cycle tracks physically separated from traffic and pedestriansⁱⁱⁱ
2 miles in 2019

68% of residents support building more physically separated on-road cycle tracks, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic
67% in 2019

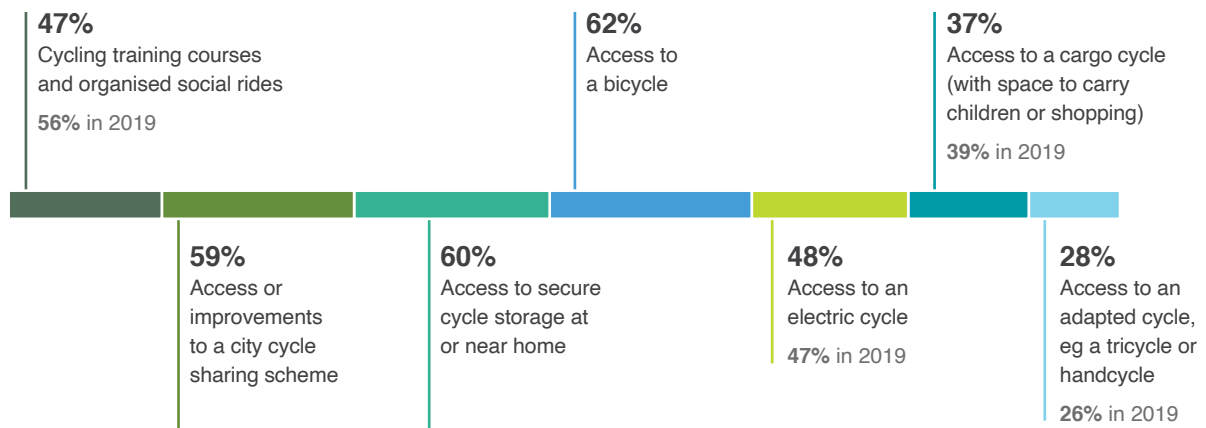
11% of households are within 125m of these routes
11% in 2019



i. This includes cycle parking that is shared with bus users.
ii. To ensure comparability, figures given are correct as of 26 May 2021 for all city reports.
iii. This does not include 'pop-up' cycle tracks installed during the pandemic.

Residents want more support to cycle

What percentage of residents think that these kinds of support would help them cycle more?



Belfast cycle share scheme^{iv}

450 shared cycles
388 in 2019

47 cycle share stations
47 in 2019

116,560 annual trips
181,740 in 2019

Reported cycle thefts

There were **377** reported cycle thefts in Belfast in 2020/21.

584 in 2019/20

For every **316** people who own an adult cycle in Belfast, there was **1** reported cycle theft in the past year.

Cycle access

43% of residents have access to an adult pedal cycle
45% in 2019

25% of households are within 800m of a cycle shop^v



There is a public cycle parking space for every **64** people who cycle in Belfast.

 53 in 2019



Richard Corr, Physiotherapist and cargo bike user



The greenways and bus lanes were a very big influence on where we bought our house. The Comber Greenway and Lagan towpath have made a huge difference to how I commute. I travel with my two young children, dropping them off at nursery on my way to the Royal. I find I can cross the city and feel relatively safe.

I find the cars take more notice of you when they see you cycling with children in the trailer.

As a healthcare worker it was great to get free transport on the buses during Covid. I think that's a fantastic incentive and a great way to get people out of their cars. A lot of my colleagues who live in East Belfast take the Glider across the city and can get to work in 20 minutes.

From an employers' perspective we have just one shower for all the physio staff, male and female, and we don't have anywhere to dry clothes. Better facilities for cycle commuters would be helpful and secure cycle shelters that can fit cargo bikes.

iv. Belfast Bikes cycle hire data. 2021 data for July '20-June '21, 2019 data for July '18-June '19.
v. Credit to the Association of Cycle Traders (ACT) and Cycling UK for their assistance with cycle shop locations and services offered.



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

68% of residents



71% of women



67% of people from ethnic minority groups



66% of men



69% of white people



57% of disabled people



56% of LGBTQ+ people



61% of socio-economic group DE



74% of non-disabled people



72% of heterosexual people



78% of socio-economic group AB



The dominance of motor vehicles can discourage walking, wheeling and cycling

Only 21% of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles.

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

68% Walk more



68% Cycle more



65% in 2019

Unclassified roads are not designed to carry through-traffic, but in Belfast 18% of their total length has nothing to prevent it. This can result in rat-running.ⁱ

58% agree that restricting through-traffic on local residential streets would make their area a better place.

63% in 2019

5% of Belfast's streets have 20mph speed limits.ⁱⁱ

7% in 2019

Residents would find more streets with 20mph speed limits useful to:

58% Walk more



60% Cycle more



58% in 2019

Residents want local streets to be better spaces for people to spend time in

78% in 2019

71%

agree increasing space for people socialising, walking and cycling on their local high street would improve their local area

49%

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

73%

support low-traffic neighbourhoods

i. Based on analysis by CycleStreets www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org.

Unclassified roads are all public roads that are neither motorways, A, B nor C roads.

ii Excludes motorways.



Chris McCracken, Managing Director of Linen Quarter Business Improvement District

I work for the Linen Quarter BID, a not-for-profit business improvement district which focuses on the long-term regeneration of the Linen Quarter area. Three car parking spaces were removed to create a 10-metre parklet in the heart of the business district of Belfast city centre in July 2021.

The parklet is an innovative representation of our understanding of the post-pandemic world and the on-going demand for outdoor shared places where people can safely socialise and enjoy their city.

A recent public consultation we carried out revealed that 91% of people are in support of the removal of car parking spaces, if doing so enhances pavement space and pedestrian areas, so this is a true reflection of the progress people want to see.

To restore economic vitality to Belfast, we need to create a public realm that is focused on health and well-being and the parklet has been well thought out to ensure it contributes to how the diverse demographics of our city live their lives. We have ensured it incorporates opportunities to work and socialise, all against a background of enhanced greenery.

Neighbourhoods must be designed with children in mind



Neighbourhoods should be places for children to thrive: to grow up in, live their lives in and grow old in. 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.

Over 80% of seven-year-olds in Germany are allowed to go alone to places within walking distance, other than school (parents' responses).ⁱⁱⁱ

44% of residents agree there is space for children to socialise and play



64% of households are within 800m of a children's playground



Among Belfast residents:

51% agree



51% agree in 2019

21% disagree



26% disagree in 2019

closing streets outside local schools to cars during drop-off and pick-up times would improve their local area.

These kind of closures are known as 'School Streets'.



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



Developing Belfast

Recent walking, wheeling, cycling and neighbourhood changes

Given the importance of active travel and the contribution it can make to improving physical and mental health, and to tackling climate change, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is committed to creating more opportunities for those who want to walk, wheel and cycle.

The Department recognises that it is essential that we meet our aspirations in relation to decarbonisation and invest in quality walking and cycling routes to create a cleaner and more attractive option that encourages people to move away from their reliance on cars.

A new Blue/Green Infrastructure Fund was set up in the Department for Infrastructure in 2020/21 to act as a catalyst for positive infrastructure and cultural change in the way we live and travel. The £20 million fund is being used to create safer routes for those who choose to walk, wheel or cycle as part of their everyday routine and to create green, liveable places. Investments are being made in new cycle and footway networks, secure cycle parking and cycle repair stations. For example, following a public consultation, the urban section of the Comber Greenway will be lit in a pilot scheme from this summer, to ensure it can be used during the winter and after dark.

The designation of a senior official as a Walking and Cycling Champion is a clear commitment to delivering upon the Programme for Government goal of increasing the number of journeys made by walking and cycling. The priority for the Champion is to lead a change in culture within the Department for Infrastructure, so that walking and cycling will be at the heart of all that the Department does.

The Champion, supported by a Walking and Cycling Advisory Group, has made progress in moving forward a programme of measures to reallocate road space, creating more opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling to drive a green recovery and improve public health.

“

The £20 million fund is being used to create safer routes for those who choose to walk, wheel or cycle as part of their everyday routine and to create green, liveable places.



Lagan Gateway Project

In 2020/21 the Department for Infrastructure committed £1.45 million towards the construction of the new bridge across the River Lagan in South Belfast. The Lagan Gateway Bridge, which was opened to the public in September 2021, is part of what will ultimately be a safe traffic-free commuter route from Belvoir Estate, Cairnshill Park & Ride and Beechill to Stranmillis. It also extends access to the popular Lagan Towpath, which is part of National Cycle Network Route 9 from Belfast to Lisburn. The Department is continuing to invest in this project and has committed a further £550,000 in 2021/22 towards the cost of paths on the Annadale side, to link the new bridge to Belvoir Park Forest.



Parklets

The Covid pandemic and lockdowns have had a negative impact on footfall in our city centres, with many people working from home and shopping online. To encourage people to return to our city centres, DfI worked in partnership with a number of organisations to develop innovative solutions that would make better use of our footways and on-street parking spaces. Parklets have been introduced by transforming car parking spaces to encourage more people to enjoy their local environment in a safe way. And in doing so, support our local traders by allowing them to use more outdoor space. They were designed to meet the social distancing rules and include cycle parking to encourage active travel to and from the destination.

In October 2020, the Department for Infrastructure opened the first parklet on Ormeau Road, Belfast with a further parklet on Linenhall Street in July 2021.



Pop-up cycle lanes

At the outset of the Covid pandemic the DfI took steps to temporarily reallocate road space to facilitate social distancing and active travel choices. As part of the Green Recovery plans, DfI installed a number of pop-up cycle lanes in Belfast, including on Dublin Road, Grosvenor Road and Donegall Road.

Initially the pop-up cycle lanes were designed to help key workers travel to and from the hospitals by bicycle but in the longer term they are designed to deliver safe, convenient and sustainable infrastructure that drives a green recovery and transforms our lives and communities.



Looking forward

Better streets and places for everyone

Belfast Cycling Network Plan

On 4 June 2021, 'Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021' was published.

The publication of the Network provides a blueprint for the development and delivery of coherent, connected and safe infrastructure for everyday cycling in Belfast city over the next ten years.

As part of a £3 million investment in walking and cycling in the Belfast area, some £750,000 is earmarked for Belfast Cycling Network schemes in 2021/22. This includes the start of design work on numerous schemes. The Delivery Plan for the Belfast Cycling Network was published in March 2022.

The Network is intended to dovetail with other urban strategies for Belfast including 'A Bolder Vision for Belfast'. This is an ambitious blueprint to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city. It has been developed jointly by Belfast City Council, the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure.

A further strategy which will impact on the public realm of the city centre is 'Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5' which is being led by the Department for Communities to regenerate a large area of the south side of the centre. In the next five years there will also be the addition of the new Belfast Transport Hub at Weavers Court and work will begin on the north-south phase of the Glider or Belfast Rapid Transit. All of these aim to reduce the dominance of the private car in the city and encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

'A Bolder Vision for Belfast' is built on the principles of:

- promoting wellbeing for all
- prioritising walking, cycling and public transport
- creating lively, safe and green streets
- removing barriers to movement between the city centre and surrounding communities.

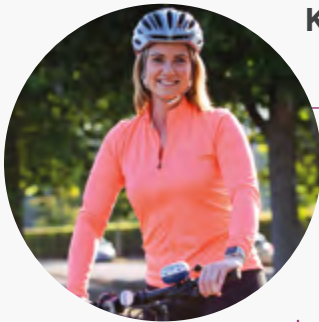
Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Forth Meadow Community Greenway is a Belfast City Council project, which the Department for Infrastructure is supporting through the Blue/Green Infrastructure Fund.

This urban greenway will create 12km of high quality, safe, greenway network, enhancing links between communities and promoting sustainable transport and active travel opportunities in North and West Belfast. It will connect communities between Clarendon Park, Springfield Dam and Falls Park, and help foster many positive and long-term relationships between people from all sections of the community, in an area with a long history of interface tensions.

Alongside the physical infrastructure, the project is also delivering exciting community engagement at key sections along the greenway.

Building the greenway has commenced and it is due to be completed by Autumn 2022.



**Karen Gruhn, Volunteer Cycle Leader,
Forth Meadow Community Greenway**



I'm very fortunate to live right behind the Connswater Greenway in East Belfast. I was really impressed with it and decided to try cycling again, which I hadn't done since I was a teenager.

I would have avoided the road before I did on-road cycle training with Sustrans and wouldn't have been confident to cycle on it. I would never have thought about getting a bike if the traffic-free greenway had not been there.

The greenway here is well kept and cared for. It's very clear to see how much the local people love it, not just cyclists but walkers and everyone else. I really need to get outside, it's so important for my mental health. Getting out and seeing the greenery, hearing the birds and meeting other people – it's amazing.

I decided to volunteer as a Ride Leader for the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. I ride for enjoyment and thought I would love to encourage other people to do the same. I thought about the possibility of the greenway connecting North and West Belfast, with the standard of what we have here in the east. As volunteers working with communities, we spread the message about what we are doing and why we are there. As people start to get used to the space, they will start to own it and become more proud of it.

I've had to weave through back streets to get up to Springfield Dam from where I live, so I can't wait for it to all be connected up and off-road.

I would love to see Belfast be like Copenhagen, where everyone has a bike and bikes are just a primary way of getting around.

Notes on methodology:

The attitudinal survey was conducted from June to August 2021 by independent social research organisation NatCen.

The survey is representative of all Belfast residents, not just those who walk or cycle.

2019 survey data was collected from April to July 2019, also by NatCen, following the same methodology.

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 cycled 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/walkingcyclingindex

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is a registered charity in the UK No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)

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