

# School Travel Survey for Parents

Sustrans and Scottish Parent Teacher Council

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## About Sustrans

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](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)**

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## About Scottish Parent Teacher Council

Scottish Parent Teacher Council is a membership organisation and charity whose purpose is to make parental involvement in children's education as good as it possibly can be.

We work with parents, schools and local authorities all over Scotland to achieve this. We do it because we believe that parental involvement is one of the most important factors in improving positive outcomes for young people

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# 1 Introduction

In partnership with Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC), Sustrans Scotland designed an online survey to capture parents' attitudes, their concerns and the challenges that they and their children face when travelling to and from school. SPTC is a membership organisation and charity whose purpose is to make parental involvement in children's education as good as it possibly can be.

Sustrans Scotland works with pupils, parents and carers, teachers and local communities making the streets around schools safer for people to choose to travel actively, by walking, cycling or scootering, and will use the information captured through this survey to shape services, resources and initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

This report focusses on the qualitative analysis of survey responses. An excel report which summarises the quantitative analysis has also been produced.

## 2 Methodology

The survey was hosted on Bristol Online Surveys (BOS) and was open from the 17th of March until the 24th of April 2017. The link to the survey was sent to over 3,000 parents via Parents' Voice, the SPTC's online survey group. The link to the survey was also shared across the SPTC's social media channels and in the SPTC newsletter. There was some evidence, through personal correspondence, that parents passed the survey link on to other parents they knew such as members of their local school's parent and teacher groups.

1,232 parents completed the survey. Respondents came from across almost all areas in Scotland. However, respondents to this survey represent a small sample of Scotland's parents who are engaged with a national charity for parental involvement in education and therefore the results are not representative of all parents across Scotland.

The main focus of analysis in this report has been on the reasons for parents' mode choice for school travel (where they have influenced this) and their perception of why their children travel in this way; the barriers to choosing to travel actively to school; and the factors which could make active travel the easy and desirable option.

This report consists of thematic analysis taken from the qualitative responses to survey questions. A full list of survey questions is given in [Appendix A](#). The parents were asked:

- 'What are the main reasons for your child/ren using these modes of travel [to and from school]?' Parents were requested to provide further information regarding their selections and to provide any other reasons for their school travel mode choice
- 'To what extent are the following factors barriers that prevent you or your child/ren from using active travel (e.g. walking, cycling, scootering) to school? - Please provide further information on your choices'
- 'To what extent would the following factors encourage you or your child/ren to use active travel (e.g. walking, cycling, scootering) to school? - Please provide further information on your choices'

Qualitative analysis of these questions was undertaken to further explore parents' attitudes to active travel to school. Thematic analysis revealed areas which had not been covered in the quantitative

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of brevity, throughout this report 'parents' will be used as shorthand for 'parents and carers'.

survey questions and provided a more detailed explanation to parents' responses, allowing us to more fully understand the parents' reasons and perceived barriers to active school travel for their children.

The methodology of this analysis involved reading through all of the responses from the 'further information' responses to each question. Responses were coded and grouped into general broad themes, such as safety. Some of these themes came from the quantitative options, whereas other emerged from the responses alone. These broad themes were then examined in more detail and, for some themes, disseminated into a number of sub-categories.

The main themes are:

- Positive outcomes of active travel
- Safety
  - Including lack of safe walking and cycling routes, lack of safe roads and paths, lack of safe crossings, unsafe school entrance, traffic volume, traffic speed, dangerous driving, environment, weather and proposed solutions to these safety concerns
- Time and resource constraints
- Institutional barriers to active travel
  - Including available transport provision and active travel training and promotion in school and by parents
- Attitudes to active travel
- Necessity of child being accompanied to and from school by an adult
- Distance
- Social and developmental impact of active travel

### 3 Findings

Before examining the qualitative findings, it is worth noting the quantitative responses to each of the analysed questions. Some of the qualitative responses supported the quantitative results, where as other responses did not. Some new themes emerged which were not apparent in the quantitative data alone and some other elements which appeared in the quantitative data were not evident in the qualitative analysis.

The main reasons for choice of school travel mode were convenience (32.0%), to maintain or improve fitness (30.4%) and physical safety (e.g. traffic) (29.4%). A table detailing the quantitative responses to travel mode to school is given in [Appendix B](#).

The main barriers to active travel for children as perceived by their parents were: it isn't safe (practical, e.g. traffic) (42.4%), lack of cycle routes (29.0%) and it's too far to walk (22.1%). These are barriers which have also emerged through analysis of the qualitative responses. Some parents suggested solutions to these barriers. Two charts detailing the quantitative responses are given in [Appendix C](#).



The main areas which parents thought would encourage their child to travel actively were: safer cycling routes (63.2%), more and improved cycle paths (61.9%) and slower traffic speeds near school (61.0%). Again, these encouraging factors were evident in the qualitative responses. Two charts indicating these quantitative responses are given in [Appendix D](#). Some respondents stated that their children already travel actively, although some of these parents did indicate the factors which would make them and their children travel by active means more or that would make them feel more at ease with this choice. Some others parents thought that the barriers they and their children faced to travelling actively were insurmountable.

The themes which emerged from the thematic analysis are explained in more detail below. Levels of active travel and the positive impact of this are first explored. The report then details barriers to active travel, encouraging factors and reasons for mode choice that apply to all types of transport, not solely walking and cycling.

### 3.1 Levels of active travel to and from school

Many parents responding to the survey indicated that their children already travel actively to and from school. 51.2% of children, according to their parents, travelled to school by walking, cycling or scootering and 54.5% travel home from school by these means.

This section examines the themes that have emerged that are exclusively associated with positive reasons for choosing to travel actively. The main reasons for parents choosing active travel for the school run were that their children enjoyed it, it's good for their children's health, and it provides children with a chance to socialise with their friends and parents, or they chose active modes due to the larger positive impact on the environment and society.

Alongside this, parents felt that allowing their child to travel actively to school increased the child's confidence and independence. This was especially the case for parents who allowed their children to travel alone or with other children, but without a responsible adult. Some parents reported their children travel actively to and from school simply because there is no alternative available for them.

These reasons were all available options (see [Appendix B](#)) in the quantitative element of the survey (other than simply enjoyment). The information below provides more detail on these reasons.

Some parents highlighted that the key motivation was the fact that their child liked and enjoyed travelling to school by bike, scooter or on foot. Parents could see the wider benefit of this in terms of their child starting the school day in the right mind-set and being healthier. Generally, parents stated that a variety of reasons combined influenced their decision to encourage and facilitate their children travelling actively.

'[The children] like to walk to school, meet people along the way, also clears the head for a good start to the day.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'My children walk themselves to school despite the risk, because we think the benefits are so obvious that they outweigh the potentially devastating risks. My children have been happier and healthier since they began walking to school.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'I prefer the children to walk if at all possible, for their health, I think it improves educational outcomes and is better for the local environment.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Some parents envisioned the wider benefits of travelling actively, not just for their child and themselves, but for everyone:

'Getting people out of cars and increasing the mass of cyclists would be great for society as well as the environment and people's health. The volume of traffic has much to do with people's fear for allowing children to cycle to school or play on the street.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Other parents, however, appeared to be reluctant to adopt active modes for their children or themselves:

'Speaking as a driver and a parent the last thing we need is more cyclists clogging up the roads. We also do not need the speed limit to be reduced. I think what we have at the moment works fine so should be left as is.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

## 3.2 Lack of safe walking and cycling routes

Concerns around physical safety was reported as the main barrier (42.4%) to their children travelling to school actively according to parents. This theme recurred in all three questions.

Parents were concerned about unsafe walking and cycling routes, lack of or inadequate pavements, ineffective or lack of crossings, unsafe school entrances and dangerous driving. Many parents said these concerns were the reason why their children travelled to school by other means, or why they only travelled actively when accompanied by adults.

A number of parents said their children did travel actively some of the time, but they were still worried about them due to these reasons, while other parents thought that the walking and cycling routes from their home to school were safe and could not be improved. Although other safety concerns, such as stranger danger, were occasionally mentioned, the main deterrent for parents was concerns over their child's physical safety. Parents stated they were scared and talked about their fears about their children travelling to school.

### 3.2.1 Lack of safe roads and paths

Unsafe roads and paths suitable for walking and cycling were mentioned by some parents as barriers they perceived as being insurmountable, although 57.0% of parents thought that safer walking routes and 63.2% thought that safer cycling routes would encourage their child to travel to school actively (Appendix D).

'I do not see how a safe route for cycling can be created between residential areas and school without using the roads which are not safe.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

Parents highlighted that roads were too busy and that there was a lack of traffic calming measures in place. Many wished that routes were better and claimed that improved safety would allow their children to walk or cycle to school. Despite these concerns, a number of parents did try and encourage or help their children to make occasional or part school journeys by walking or cycling.

'They would like to cycle especially during summer, but roads though fairly minor are very unsuitable - narrow/ poor visibility and 'rush hour' drivers very intolerant of children on the roads. We have cycled a few times with an adult in attendance. Both are very competent on a bike, but drivers squeezing past, giving the cyclists less than 30cm of space make it a very stressful and unpleasant experience.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'We/they could cycle (they are reasonable cyclists as are we their parents) however the traffic is heavy, parked cars along the route and no cycle lanes. I have also been knocked down whilst cycling in the area [and] had to attend A&E and this deters me from allowing my children to cycle to school or me to work. We only cycle for pleasure.' – Parent (in response to barriers question)

'Cycle & walking routes between our villages would transform Scottish children's poor health and high obesity.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

Another safety concern in this area was a perceived lack of or inadequate pavements, meaning that if children were to walk to school they would have to be accompanied by an adult, and even then they would still be walking along a busy road. This seemed to be a particular problem with families who lived in rural areas. There was also a problem with lack of pavements around the school entrance.

'Even if we lived closer I would have to transport my children due to the area surrounding the school (within 1 mile) is not safe for children to walk or cycle, due to busy road and inadequate road verges with no pavement.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

### 3.2.2 Lack of safe crossings

Parents also highlighted that lack of adequate crossings was a deterrent to travelling actively to school. Again, parents stated that this meant they would not allow their children to travel to school without an adult. They also stressed that lack of safe crossings was a particular worry for those with younger children.



'Hope to allow them to walk alone/with other kids when they are older, but speeding traffic and some driver's failure to observe two zebra crossings on journey to school scare me.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'My children have to walk down a very busy main road, at the bottom there is a cross roads, a yellow box that is not adhered to and at school time the traffic is chaotic and dangerous. This in my opinion is a major safety issue. Sadly due to this my children cannot walk to school as I did when I was a child.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

### 3.2.3 Unsafe school entrance

Parents had concerns around the safety of the school entrance, with some feeling that walking or cycling to school would be too dangerous for this reason. Others would only let their children travel in this way when accompanied by an adult. 31.9% of parents thought that improved access to the school entrance would encourage their child to walk, cycle or scoot to school ([Appendix C](#)).

Our children get cycling proficiency lessons in p4. There is now a bike shelter - 99% empty as no one in their right mind would cycle to our school. I do not think that cycling benefits or is safe near our school as access is ludicrous.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

'We walk and it is not far, but it is dangerous for kids to walk themselves due to the speed of all the other people dropping off their kids and parking around the area, which makes visibility poor for crossing the road. A lollypop lady [sic] would be great to encourage independence and then hopefully more parents would let their kids walk.' – Parent (in response to barriers question)

### 3.2.4 Traffic volume, traffic speed and dangerous driving

Some parents indicated that traffic and dangerous driving was a major barrier. Certain parents suggested speeding was the issue or volume of traffic, others suggested driver ignorance around people who cycle or walk or that distracted and frustrated drivers were the main problem. Dangerous driving in particular meant that many parents felt they could not let their children travel to school unaccompanied.

'The main issue I have with my children walking to school on their own is the risk posed by the traffic, to myself as well not just a younger child. The risk is from the amount of moving cars, parked cars reducing safe places to cross and speeding. I would not want myself or children to cycle to school on roads due to the traffic. We enjoy cycling but keep this to the cycle track due to safety for us all. It is not safe for cyclists on the road.' – Parent (in response to barriers question)

'We live rurally and are outside the nearest village so distance and road safety are our main issues. I fully support cycling but need to accompany them and traffic is increasingly aggressive.' – Parent (in response to barriers question)

'I feel I have to accompany my youngest child because the roads around school get very busy and I've seen numerous near misses because drivers aren't concentrating or are frustrated.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

### 3.2.5 Environment

Some parents stated that although routes and the area around the school entrance was not completely safe, they still allowed their children to walk to school. However, some parents mentioned additional issues around safety and the larger impact on their child's health. Parents suggested that the volume of road vehicles resulted in an unpleasant environment in term of car fumes and air quality. One parent felt that: 'it would be lovely if the children could walk and enjoy the fresh air, unfortunately all they are breathing in is car fumes. It's very sad and concerning.'

### 3.2.6 Weather

Parents mentioned that the weather was a deterrent to walking and cycling, with 13.5% of parents saying this was a barrier to active travel for their child ([Appendix C](#)). However, when their responses were examined in detail, this was again an issue of safety. Parents were mainly concerned with the dark afternoons and early mornings of winter or the weather causing reduced visibility and increased danger of children being hit by a vehicle.

### 3.2.7 Proposed solutions to safety concerns

Parents suggested several potential solutions to these safety concerns. A number of parents suggested appointing crossing wardens on school routes. Other solutions suggested to help tackle the issue of safety included 'slower speeds on roads along which children walk to school between 8 and 9am and 3 and 4pm', 'a zone around school where parents can't park or drop off and a designated drop zone where parents drop children off and they walk via a safe route to the school', 'less parking around the school' and 'traffic speed management'.

## 3.3 Time and resource constraints

Parents mentioned many practical reasons why active travel to school did not fit in with their or their children's lives. They viewed some of these reasons as insurmountable barriers to active travel. The main message coming from parents was that life is complicated and it is difficult to balance life, work and school commitments, especially when families have more than one child.

The main practical problem of travelling actively to school was to do with lack of time and general time constraints. Lack of time was the third highest major barrier for parents (24.7%) when it came to active travel to school ([Appendix C](#)) and convenience was the top reason for travel mode choice, selected by 32.0% of respondents ([Appendix B](#)).

Parents mentioned that they needed to get to work on time and drop their children off en route, or they needed their car to get to work or to do their job. Some parents also mentioned that having other children to get to different destinations, such as nursery or another school, meant that they could not travel actively as destinations were in opposite directions or there was not enough time to fit in more than one school run. Other commitments such as out of school activities also influenced school travel, especially after school.

'My daughter has had cycle training, and I am happy she can manage on her bike, it's just the other traffic on the roads I worry about. If she could be accompanied, either on foot or on a bike, I would very quickly like to allow her to go to school by either means. I can't do it at present as I have to travel to take my son to a nursery and then I go onwards to work. I am very sorry that so little is holding my kids getting this useful exercise/outside time, but the situation is rubbish.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

'Always seem to be in a rush in the morning and usually jump in the car to save time.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Some parents highlighted that child health problems, or health problems of parents, meant active travel was difficult or impossible. 2.7% of parents suggested a main reason for travel mode choice was due to health issues ([Appendix B](#)), although only 1.6% of parents saw health issues as a major barrier to active travel for their child ([Appendix C](#)).

Parents highlighted that for a variety of reasons, such as cost, time, distance or lack of alternative travel modes, that they had no other option than to travel to and from school the way they did. This mainly referred to travelling to school by car, but some parents pointed out that this meant they had to travel actively, even though they did not feel safe when doing this. 13.3% of parents cited lack of alternatives as their reason for travel mode ([Appendix B](#)).

'Respect the fact that for some parents, travelling by car is the only option in the fast paced, hectic morning schedules we all have to stick to.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'Providing 'more' and 'safer' cycle/walk paths does not change distance or latitude. It also demonises the car and makes it 'bad' and creates more of a difficulty for those who cannot use any other form of transport. Meeting up with others, be it adult or pupil, means that the mass as a whole travels at the speed of the lowest common denominator i.e. the slowest. To make up for this, more time would need to be set aside which again pushes into the inefficient use of time for each person.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

### 3.4 Institutional barriers to active travel

Parents mentioned a number of school related issues which deterred their children from travelling actively. Alongside this parents mentioned the negative attitude of some schools towards active travel and lack of cycle training and lack of encouragement to travel actively.

### 3.4.1 Available transport provision

A number of parents mentioned that their children were eligible, or they wished they were eligible, for subsidised school transport. This was an area which was not captured through the quantitative survey options.

This access to, or desire for access to, school transport was usually due to the distance between the school and the residence or because a safe route to school was not available. Others mentioned that they wanted a school bus to be available to their children as the walking and cycling route was unsafe and the only alternative was to drive to school. Some parents stated that although a school bus was available for their children they choose to drive them to school instead as they felt the school transport was inadequate.

A number of parents wanted the school to provide free transport as they could not afford to pay for the bus themselves, meaning they travelled by whatever alternative was available to them, usually walking or driving.

'Child is eligible for school transport but I found that this added 30-45 minutes to the start and end of the school day. This is too long for a 2 mile journey so I have withdrawn him from school transport and drive him to and from school now.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Certain parents had their school journey by car subsidised by their local authority, again due to distance or a safe route to school being unavailable. This did not necessarily mean that parents and children made no attempt to travel to school actively some of the time.

'[The] council have deemed it an unsafe walking route, taxi is provided to and from school for us and neighbouring children. (3 kids, one car journey)' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'As we live more than 2 miles from our catchment school we are entitled to school transport. But no school transport is provided (as we live in a very rural location) and so we are paid mileage by the council to transport our own child to/from school (it is called "parental conveyance". Having said we drive to/from school we do regularly try (time permitting) to walk and/or cycle the last 1/4 mile or so. We really appreciate the schools efforts to encourage this (via Sustrans "bike week" / "bike breakfast" and walk to school schemes).' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

### 3.4.2 Active travel training and promotion in school and by parents

Some parents mentioned that cycle training and road safety were not taught in school or that the school did not encourage travelling actively to school. Parents stated that cycling was not promoted by the school and that providing a free bus ticket to school regardless of whether the child took the bus or walked was also discouraging.

A number of parents emphasised that school rules did not encourage children to cycle or scoot to school, for example, some schools had an age limit as to when pupils could take their bikes or scooters to school and others did not allow bikes or scooters to be kept in the school grounds. 53.2% of parents thought that having secure cycle and scooter storage at school would encourage their children to travel by these means ([Appendix D](#)).

Parents highlighted that a lack of road safety training and cycle training were major deterrents to their child travelling actively to school. Their children, therefore, did not have the suitable skills for travelling in this way, even though it was reported by parents that 91.6% of children had access to a bicycle. Some parents mentioned that their children could not ride a bike or scooter adequately or, for some, at all.

‘Cycle training is not currently available at primary school and access at secondary is limited. Training for kids is essential to encourage and provide confidence.’ – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

Some parents highlighted the positive aspects of cycle training and stated they would encourage their children to take part in these initiatives. 49.2% of parents felt that cycle and scooter training would encourage their child to travel actively to and from school ([Appendix D](#)).

‘At 6 my boys are young and one lacks some confidence on a bike although has improved with the big pedal initiative at school and a cycle skills session - would definitely attend cycle skills session/club especially as part of active schools.’  
– Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

### 3.5 Attitudes to active travel

Some parents reported that their child enjoyed cycling to school and this was one of the main reasons for that choice of travel mode. Parents could see other benefits to this, with one parent suggesting cycling improved her daughter’s ‘cycle confidence and personal confidence’.

However, other parents emphasised that their child’s attitude to cycling specifically was a major barrier to using this mode as a means of travelling to school. Although only 3.6% of parents perceived not ‘fitting in’ as a major barrier to active travel for their child ([Appendix C](#)), a number of parents stated that their children thought that ‘cycling... is not cool’ and stated that there was a stigma attached to cycling to school which could cause problems for their child as they ‘may not fit in’ and their children think ‘cycling is embarrassing’. Other parents stated that their child felt self-conscious when cycling or when they arrived at school due to their appearance.

Some parents did suggest that this attitude to cycling could be changed as ‘more interest from friends would encourage my child to cycle to school occasionally’. This is reflected in the quantitative response as 45.4% of parents thought that having other people to cycle or scoot to school with would encourage their child to travel actively to school ([Appendix D](#)).

Parents suggested that the attitude of other parents, as well as the school, was also a problem when it came to promoting and encouraging active travel. Some parents suggested that parents should take part in their child’s cycle training, whilst others suggested that other parents judged their parenting style when they allowed their child to travel independently.

‘Parents would be better being involved with cycle/scooter training so they’re telling kids similar things and also doing it themselves regarding role modelling also.’ – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

'I have regularly suggested a "walk to school" club at the parent's council meetings, but they have fallen on deaf ears and have not gotten much enthusiasm going.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

'My child has cycled to and from school since August last year. ...she enjoys it and even perseveres in the rain. But I know that my neighbours and other school mums think that I am being neglectful of her. I know they are wrong but it's still hard. There is such a culture of not letting your children out of your sight and not letting them take any risk, such as cycling to school through a park on their own.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

### 3.6 Necessity of child being accompanied to and from school by an adult

Many parents reported that their children were, or they wanted them to be, accompanied by an adult when travelling to and from school. Parental concerns over safety appeared to be the main reason for this, with certain parents stating that being accompanied by an adult would be essential for their child to travel to school actively. Of the parents surveyed, it was reported that 55.7% of children travelled to school accompanied by an adult and 52.8% travelled home from school accompanied by an adult.

Although many parents wished for their children to be accompanied by a responsible adult when travelling to school, there was a mix of attitudes surrounding this. Many parents were not able to accompany their child themselves but would be grateful if others could do this:

'My child would love to cycle/scoot to school but I can't afford the time to allow this in the morning. If others were able to help my child do this, I would strongly consider this.' – Parent (in response to encouraging factors question)

Other parents were happy to accompany other children to school if they were fortunate enough to be able to accompany their own children:

'My daughter prefers to cycle than to walk, I do not drive and fully support walk/cycle to school initiatives. At 9 years old and with roads to cross on route to and from school, I feel it is important to accompany my daughter to school with her friend who also cycles to our house before we set off together in the mornings.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Many parents mentioned the benefits or hindrances of implementing a walking bus (where adults and children meet up and walk to school together). 28.7% of parents thought that a walking bus would encourage them to support or accompany their child to school by walking and 30.9% thought a walking bus would encourage their child to travel this way ([Appendix D](#)). Again the attitude of parents towards this was mixed. Some parents were very keen, whereas other parents were reluctant to get involved in this. A number of parents said they do not have the time for this, but would help with this if they could. Other parents were unwilling to be the responsible adult for other people's children, only their own. A number of parents who were keen to be involved with this, and other incentives such as cycle training, suggested that they cannot get the required support from the school or other parents.



### 3.7 Distance

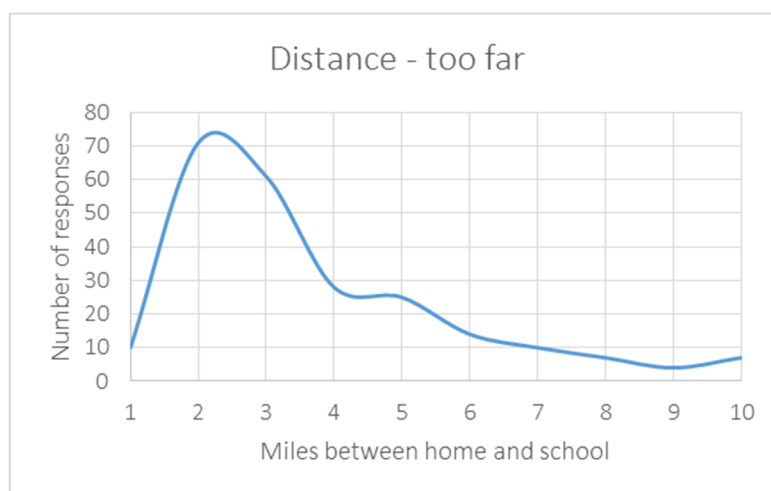
Some parents emphasised that the barriers to active travel to school for their children could not be overcome. Many of these insurmountable barriers stated by parents involved the distance between their home and the school being too far. 22.3% of parents stated that a large travel distance between their home and the school was a main reason for their choice of travel mode ([Appendix B](#)). However, many parents, although stating distance was the problem, then emphasised the safety of the route as the real deterrent:

'It's not the distance as much as the safety aspects of letting them cycle alone on a busy country road (national speed limit).' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

The problem seemed to be that the parents could not envisage these longer routes to school being improved safety wise – so travelling quite a far distance on these unsafe routes was not an option for these parents' children.

In terms of actual distance, 260 parents provided a distance between their home and their child's school, and indicated if it was in kilometres or miles, when selecting the 'distance too far' option for the reason for travel mode question. The mean average distance considered too far by parents was 4.7 miles, however this was due to a minority of families living over 10 miles from school. The majority (91%) of parents who responded to the question had to travel 10 miles or less to get to their child's school. A graph showing the frequency of responses is given in Chart 3-1. This shows that the median average was 3 miles and the mode was 2 miles. Distance need not be such a major deterrent as the quantitative data suggests, but rather it appears that safety is the underlying issue.

**Chart 3-1 Distance between their home and school which is considered too far to walk or cycle according to parents**



### 3.8 Social and developmental impact of travel mode

Parents highlighted many social reasons why they or their children chose different ways of travelling to school. 20.8% of parents selected their children socialising with friends as a reason for selected mode of travel ([Appendix B](#)). Parents indicated that walking to school with their child allowed them uninterrupted time to spend with their child to talk to each other. This is valuable time together which both children and parents were reported to enjoy.

'Gives me valuable distraction free time to chat and catch up on their days.'  
– Parent (in response to reasons question)

Some parents highlighted that they liked their children walking to school with their friends to socialise and experience other benefits of being unaccompanied by an adult, such as developing road sense, independence and confidence.

'I think going to and from school with a friend encourages them to be more independent and resilient. It improves social skills also.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

Certain parents expressed that these positive social experiences was a reason why they were pleased their child travelled with classmates on the school bus.

'I believe that living in rural locations, the socialisation of being on a school bus is extremely important for both general development, for promoting independence and also for developing good social networks within the community.' – Parent (in response to reasons question)

## 4 Conclusion

To summarise, the main barriers to travelling actively to and from school as perceived by parents primarily revolve around physical safety issues. Parents are concerned about unsafe walking and cycling routes, pavements, crossings, school entrances and dangerous driving. These concerns are the reason why many children travel to school by non-active modes, or why they do not travel to school unaccompanied by an adult. Many parents can see how these problems could be remedied and have made suggestions, such as improvement to routes and school entrances and implementation of crossing wardens, on how these issues could be tackled.

Other barriers to active travel include practical issues, such as lack of time, and a negative attitude of children, parents and schools towards active travel. However, as the response to the survey demonstrates, many children are travelling to and from school by walking, cycling and scootering and are fully supported in this and encouraged by their parents who understand the benefits associated with active travel.

## 5 Appendix

### A. List of survey questions:

#### Section 1. About your child

1. What year is your child in? (Parents could add details of up to 5 children)

#### Section 2. Your Child's Travel Behaviour

2. How does your child usually travel to and from school? (Parents could add details of up to 5 children)
3. Who does your child usually travel to and from school with? (Parents could add details of up to 5 children)
4. What are the main reasons for your child/ren using these modes of travel? Please select all that apply.
  - Weather
  - More than one child to get to a different destination
  - Safety - personal e.g. stranger danger
  - Safety - physical e.g. traffic
  - Lack of alternatives
  - Need car for onward journey to work
  - Environmental concerns
  - Convenience
  - Cost
  - Maintain/improve physical health and fitness
  - Time savings
  - Comfort
  - Additional journeys
  - Poor access to cycle/walking routes
  - Distance - too far
  - Distance - too close
  - Health issues
  - To experience the outdoors/fresh air/nature
  - Maintain/improve well-being
  - To socialise with their friends
  - Other

- 4.a If you selected Other, please specify:

4.b If you selected 'Distance - too far', please estimate the distance, in miles or kilometres, from your home to school

4.c Please provide further information on your choices:

5 Does your child/ren have access to a bike or scooter?

### Section 3. Active Travel

6 To what extent are the following factors barriers that prevent you or your child/ren from using active travel (e.g. walking, cycling, scooting) to school?

- ☐ It isn't practical for my lifestyle
- ☐ It isn't safe - personal - e.g. stranger danger
- ☐ It isn't safe - practical - e.g. traffic
- ☐ There is a lack of showers/changing facilities at my destination
- ☐ It's too hilly
- ☐ It's too far to walk
- ☐ It's too far to cycle
- ☐ The weather
- ☐ I/they wouldn't fit in
- ☐ Don't have enough time
- ☐ Can't fit it into my work patterns
- ☐ There aren't enough cycle routes that connect my place of work/school to my home
- ☐ Don't own a bicycle
- ☐ The cost of cycling
- ☐ Fitness
- ☐ Health Issues

6.a Please provide further information on your choices:

7 To what extent would the following factors encourage you or your child/ren to use active travel (e.g. walking, cycling, scootering) to school?

- ☐ Walking bus (meet up with adults and all walk to school)
- ☐ Safer walking routes
- ☐ Safer cycling routes
- ☐ Secure cycle/scooter storage at school
- ☐ People to cycle/scoot to school with
- ☐ Less to carry to school
- ☐ Slower traffic speeds near school
- ☐ Improved access to school entrance
- ☐ If my child could be accompanied by responsible adults

- More/improved cycle paths
- Cycle/scooter training

7.a Please provide further information on your choices:

#### Section 4. Location

8 Please provide the postcode of your child's school:

9 Please provide your home postcode:

## B: Reasons for mode choice

**Table 5-1 Parents' responses to the question: 'What are the main reasons for your child/ren using these modes of travel?'**

Reason	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Convenience	394	32.0%
Maintain or improve physical health and fitness	374	30.4%
Safety - physical, e.g. traffic	362	29.4%
Maintain or improve wellbeing	344	27.9%
To experience the outdoors/fresh air/nature	332	27.0%
Distance too far	275	22.3%
Need car for onward journey to work	270	21.9%
To socialise with their friends	256	20.8%
Safety - personal, e.g. stranger danger	221	18.0%
Time savings	201	16.3%
Distance too close	175	14.2%
Lack of alternatives	164	13.3%
More than one child to get to a different destination	149	12.1%
Weather	146	11.9%
Poor access to cycle/walking routes	140	11.4%
Environmental concerns	134	10.9%
Cost	91	7.4%
Other	73	5.9%
Comfort	39	3.2%
Health issues	33	2.7%
Additional journeys	23	1.9%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>4196</b>	

\* Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. All 1,232 respondents answered this question.



## C: Barriers to active travel to and from school

Chart 5-2 Barriers to active school travel for parents

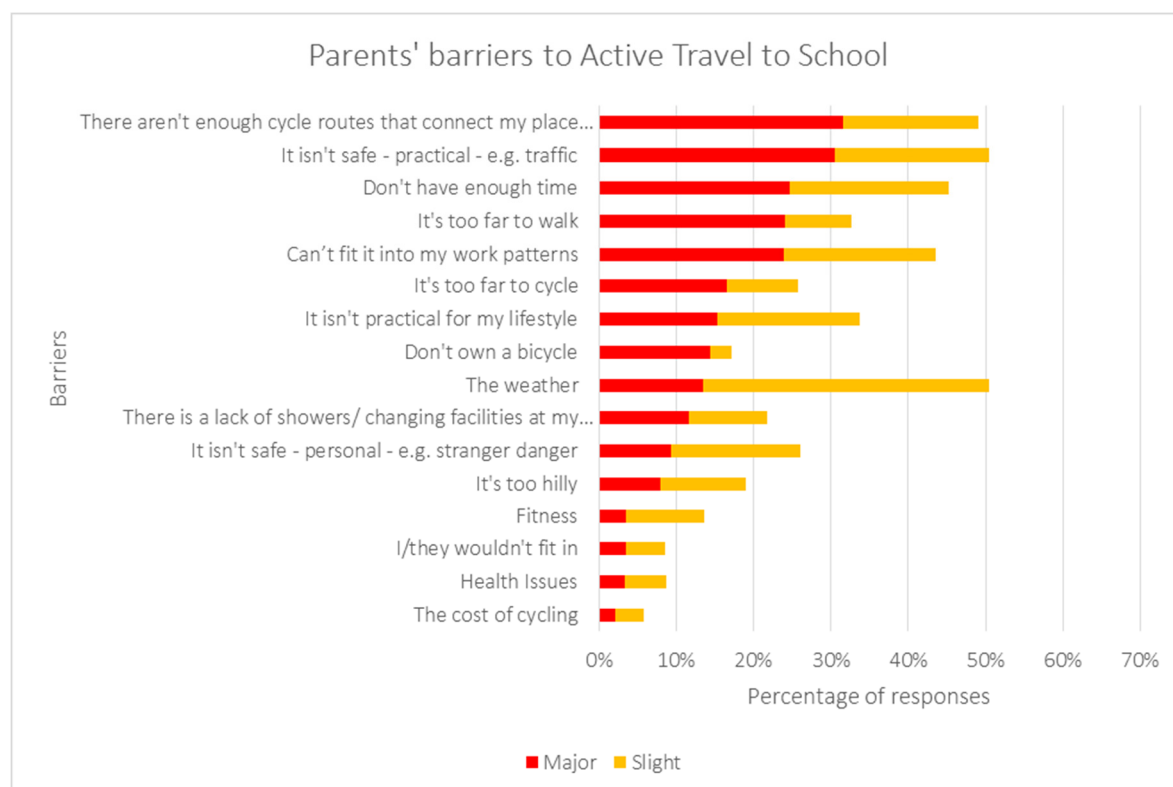
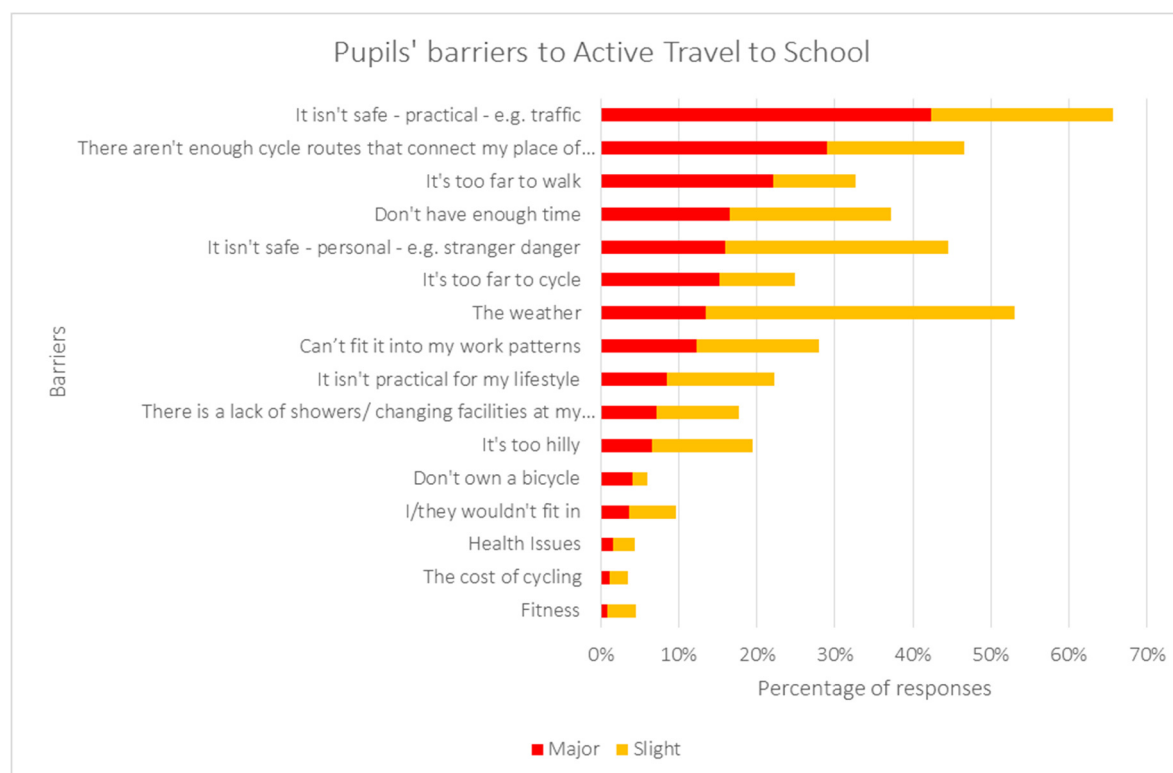


Chart 5-3 Barriers to active school travel for children as perceived by their parents



D: Encouraging factors for active travel to and from school

Chart 5-4 Encouraging factors for active school travel for parents

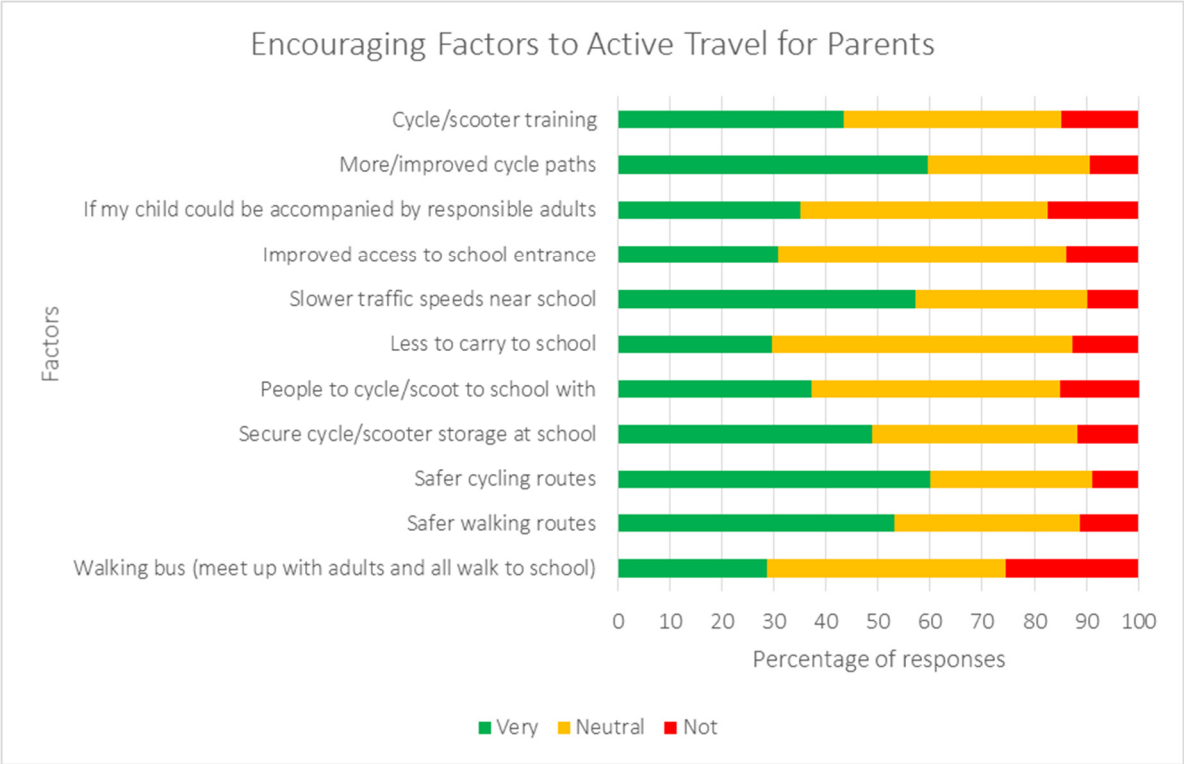


Chart 5-5 Encouraging factors for active school travel for children, as perceived by their parents

