

Travel to School

Personal Travel Factsheet - March 2008



Department for
Transport

Introduction

This Factsheet summarises findings from the [National Travel Survey \(NTS\)](#) on travel to and from school. The results cover trips within Great Britain by household residents and are based on data for 2006 unless otherwise stated.

NTS technical note: A trip is a one way course of travel having a single main purpose. A trip to school is defined as one made by children aged between 5 and 16, where the main purpose is education, excluding trips over 50 miles.

For the purposes of this factsheet, 'primary children' refers to children aged 5 to 10 years old; 'secondary children' refers to children aged 11 to 16 years old.

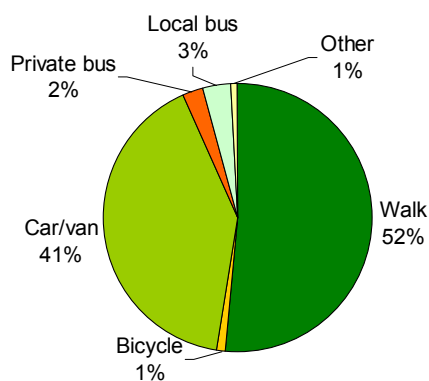
Short walks are believed to have been under-recorded in 2002 and to a lesser extent in 2003.

How do children get to school?

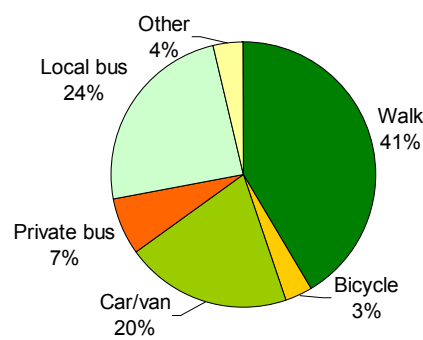
In 2006, just over half (52%) of trips to school by children aged 5 to 10 were made on foot and 41% were made by car.

Among children aged 11 to 16, 41% of trips to school were made on foot, 31% were made by bus and 20% were made by car in 2006. Cycling accounted for a further 3% of trips.

Charts 1a and 1b: Percentage of trips to school by main mode, 2006



Children aged 5 to 10



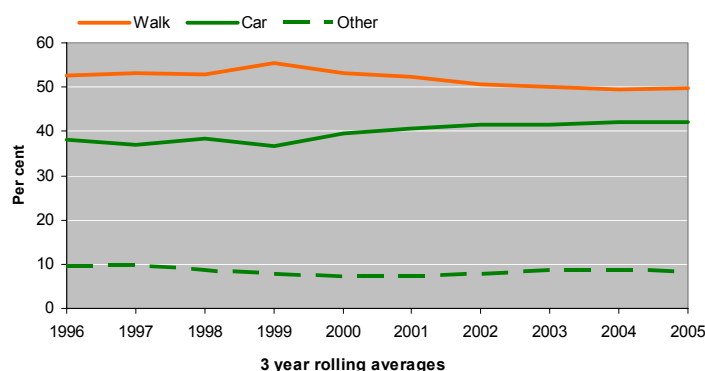
Children aged 11 to 16

Trends in Mode of Travel to School

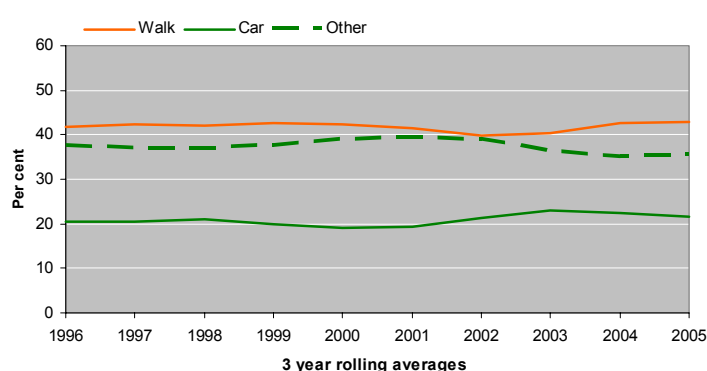
The proportion of primary children walking to school in 2006 (52%) was similar to that in 1995/97 (53%). The proportion of trips by car increased from 38% in 1995/97 to 41% of in 2006. The longer term decline in walking to school and increase in travelling to school by car appear to have levelled off in recent years.

Among secondary school children, the proportion of trips to school made on foot was similar in 2006 (41%) to 1995/97 (42%). The proportion of secondary children travelling to school by car in 2006 was the same as in 1995/97 (20%). Over the same period, the proportion of children aged 11 to 16 travelling to school by bus (including school coaches) declined slightly from 33% to 31%.

Charts 2a and b: Trends in Mode of Travel to School



Children aged 5 to 10



Children aged 11 to 16

Variations in mode of travel to school

Among primary school children, 54% of girls travelled to school on foot, compared with 49% of boys. A higher percentage of boys went to school by car, with 44% travelling by this method compared with 38% of girls.

In 2006, 6% of secondary age boys cycled to school, compared with 1% of girls. A higher percentage of girls (23%) travelled to school by car than boys (18%).

Table 1: Trips to school¹ by sex and main mode, 2006

	Percentage								
	Age 5 to 10			Age 11 to 16			Age 5 to 16		
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All
Walk	49	54	52	41	42	41	45	48	46
Bicycle	1	1	1	6	1	3	3	1	2
Car/van	44	38	41	18	23	20	31	30	30
Private bus	3	2	2	8	6	7	5	4	5
Local bus	3	4	3	23	26	24	13	15	14
Rail	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	1	1
Other	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

¹ Trips of under 50 miles only.

How long does it take children to get to school?

For primary pupils, the average time to school increased from 11.5 minutes in 1995/97 to 12.6 minutes in 2006.

Secondary pupils took 24.4 minutes on average to get to school in 2006. This has increased from 21.4 minutes in 1995/97.

Table 2: Average time to school¹ by children age 5 to 16, 1995/97-2006

	Minutes						
	1995/1997	1998/2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
5-10 years	11.5	12.3	12.9	12.6	13.2	12.6	12.6
11-16 years	21.4	22.3	23.6	23.9	23.1	22.7	24.4
5-16 years	16.3	17.4	18.4	18.6	18.4	17.9	18.7

¹ Trips of under 50 miles only.

How far do children travel to school?

The average primary pupil travelled 1.5 miles to get to school in 2006. This has increased from 1.3 miles in 1995/97.

For secondary pupils, the average journey to school was 3.4 miles in 2006. In 1995/97 it was 2.9 miles.

Variations in mode and distance to school

For trips of less than one mile, 81% of primary pupils walked to school and 18% went by car in 2005/2006. Car was the most commonly used mode of transport to school for children aged 5 to 10 for all trips over 1 mile. Primary pupils travelled to school by bus for 13% of trips of 2 to 3 miles in length and 21% of trips of over 3 miles.

Secondary pupils travelled to school on foot for 92% of trips of less than one mile and 61% of trips between 1 and 2 miles. For longer journeys, car and bus were the most popular modes. Secondary pupils travelled to school by bus for 60% of trips between 3 and 5 miles and 66% of trips of over 5 miles in 2005/2006.

Table 3: Trips to school¹ by length and main mode, 2005/2006

	Percentage																		
	Age 5-10						Age 11-16						Age 5-16						
	Under 1 mile	1 to 2 miles	2 to 3 miles	3 to 5 miles	5 miles and over	All distances	Under 1 mile	1 to 2 miles	2 to 3 miles	3 to 5 miles	5 miles and over	All distances	Under 1 mile	1 to 2 miles	2 to 3 miles	3 to 5 miles	5 miles and over	All distances	
Walk	81	29	2	-	-	50	92	61	17	3	-	43	85	46	11	2	-	46	
Bicycle	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	5	5	4	-	3	1	3	3	3	-	2	
Car	18	62	83	79	67	42	6	22	40	29	24	21	14	40	59	43	34	31	
Bus	-	7	13	19	24	6	1	12	35	60	66	30	1	10	25	49	57	19	
Other	-	-	2	2	9	1	-	1	3	4	9	3	-	1	2	4	9	2	
All modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

¹ Trips of under 50 miles only.

Who takes children to school?

According to their parents, 85% of children aged 7 to 10 years were usually accompanied to school by an adult in 2006. This has risen from 78% in 2002. The main reasons for accompanying their children cited by parents were traffic danger (59%) and fear of assault or molestation (36%).

31% of children aged 11 to 13 years were usually accompanied to school by an adult in 2006, up from 27% in 2002. According to their parents, the main reasons why children in this age group were accompanied were convenience (35%), traffic danger (32%), fear of assault or molestation (25%) and the school being too far away (25%).

Chart 3: Whether or not children are accompanied to school by an adult, 2002 and 2006

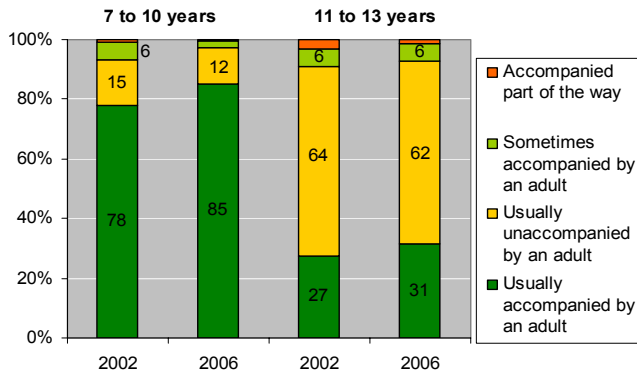


Table 4: The reasons children are accompanied to school by an adult, 2006

	Percentage	
	7 to 10 years	11 to 13 years
Traffic danger	59	32
Fear of assault/molestation	36	25
Convenient to accompany child	22	35
School too far away	20	25
Child might not arrive on time	16	12
Child might get lost	14	3
Fear of bullying	8	10
Other	13	17

Percentages sum to more than 100 as more than one reason may be given

How much traffic on the roads is caused by the 'school run'?

Over the ten year period from 1995/97 to 2006, cars taking children to school ('escort education' trips) in urban areas have increased slightly as a proportion of car trips in the morning peak period (8-8.59am) from 10% to 12%. However, this proportion peaked at 15% in 2004 and has fallen slightly since then.

The point during the morning rush hour at which this proportion reached its highest level in 2006 was 8.45am, with the 'school run' accounting for 18% of car trips by residents of urban areas during term time at this time.

Table 5: Cars taking children to school, 1995/1997 to 2006

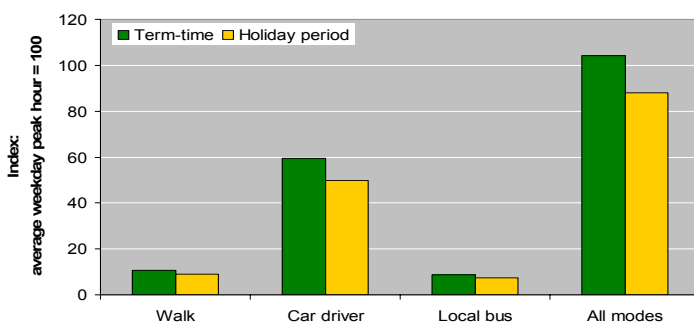
	Percentage of car trips/number						
	1995/ 1997	1998/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
0800 to 0859 hours in urban areas ¹ during term-time	10	11	13	12	15	13	12
Peak traffic time (0835) in urban areas ¹ during term-time	14	16	18	17	22	19	16
Peak percentage (0845 or 0850 ²) in urban areas ¹ during term-time	21	18	20	19	22	20	18
Unweighted sample size of trips at:							
0800-0859	13,053	12,605	8,760	9,611	9,957	9,974	9,122
0835	3,934	3,901	2,680	3,156	3,168	3,135	2,787
0845 ²	3,703	3,421	2,496	2,733	2,932	2,932	2,610

1 Data relate to car trips by people living in urban areas, term-time weekdays only.

2 In 2004 and 2006 the peak percentage was at 0845. In other years shown the peak percentage was at 0850.

How does travel vary in school holiday periods?

Chart 4: Commuting trips in progress during the peak hour¹, term-time and school holiday periods², 2004/2006



1. The peak hour refers to 0800-0859, Monday to Friday

2. The school holiday periods are taken to be the most common holiday periods for England, Wales and Scotland and may not reflect regional differences.

It is not just children's travel which varies between term-time and the school holidays. Travel by adults is also different during these periods, as some will take time off work during the school holidays.

Commuting trips in the peak hour reduced by 15% during the school holidays compared to term time. Commuting trips as a car driver reduced by 17%, commuting bus trips reduced by 12% and commuting trips on foot reduced by 16%.

Regional and urban/rural variations

There are marked regional variations in travel to school, partly associated with the urban/rural characteristics of a region. However, sub national results should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes at this level of disaggregation.

Trips to school were longer on average for residents of rural areas and shorter for pupils in more built-up areas.

Primary children travelled to school on foot most often in all areas except small urban and rural, where more children went to school by car than on foot.

Secondary pupils in London were twice as likely to use the bus (40%) as be driven to school (20%). In different sized urban areas outside London the proportion of secondary age pupils walking to school ranged from 40 to 61%. In rural areas, 14% of secondary children walked to school and over half travelled to school by bus.

Table 6: Percentage of trips to school and average length by main mode and area type, 2005/2006

	Percentage/miles							
	London	English Metropolitan	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Small/ Medium Urban	Small Urban	Rural	All areas
5 to 10 years								
Walk	55	54	54	50	55	44	37	50
Car/Van	32	41	41	44	38	48	50	42
Bus	11	3	4	4	5	4	10	6
Other	1	2	1	3	1	3	2	2
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.9	2.6	1.5
11 to 16 years								
Walk	33	49	46	50	61	41	14	43
Car/Van	20	23	23	22	16	15	23	21
Bus	40	25	24	22	17	36	56	30
Other	7	3	7	6	5	8	7	6
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	3.0	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.5	4.4	6.1	3.2
5 to 16 years								
Walk	44	51	50	50	58	42	25	46
Car/Van	26	31	31	32	27	30	36	31
Bus	25	15	14	14	11	22	34	19
Other	4	2	4	4	3	6	5	4
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	2.1	1.8	2.0	2.0	1.8	3.3	4.4	2.4

1 Trips of under 50 miles only.

Table 7: Percentage of trips to school and average length by main mode and region, 2005/2006

	Percentage/miles												
	North East	North West & Mersey	Yorks & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	Eastern	London	South East	South West	England	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
5 to 10 years													
Walk	57	49	59	50	53	43	55	48	44	51	41	52	50
Car/Van	37	44	35	43	43	45	32	46	48	42	50	39	42
Bus	4	5	4	5	3	7	11	2	7	6	8	8	6
Other	2	2	2	2	-	5	1	4	1	2	1	1	2
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.3	2.1	1.2	1.7	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.3	1.5
11 to 16 years													
Walk	54	44	53	46	43	48	33	35	36	42	37	50	43
Car/Van	15	22	17	19	30	19	20	26	21	22	27	12	21
Bus	26	30	25	30	24	28	40	28	32	30	32	34	30
Other	5	4	5	5	3	5	7	10	11	6	4	4	6
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	2.8	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.0	3.8	3.8	3.1	3.7	3.1	3.2
5 to 16 years													
Walk	56	46	55	49	47	46	44	42	40	46	39	51	46
Car/Van	27	32	25	32	37	30	26	36	35	31	38	23	31
Bus	14	19	16	16	14	19	25	16	19	18	21	23	19
Other	3	3	4	3	2	5	4	7	6	4	2	3	4
All Modes	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average trip length	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.7	2.1	2.8	2.7	2.4	3.0	2.3	2.4

1 Trips of under 50 miles only.