



**Parent/Carer Survey Report:
Travel to School**



About Connect

- Independent membership organisation and charity for parents and parent groups in Scotland for over 75 years
- Offers a range of services including support and advice to parent groups and parents
- Works with school communities and education staff
- Regularly surveys parents/carers on different issues
- Seeking to promote positive relationships and communication between all involved in education and learning

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About This Survey

Ran from **13 March to 11 April 2025**, with **905** responses from **28** local authorities across Scotland

Age/stage of children of respondents (they could select multiple options if they had more than one child)

- Early years/nursery **10% (86)**
- P1 - P3 **41% (372)**
- P4 - P7 **47% (421)**
- S1 - S3 **23% (207)**
- S4 -S6 **17% (153)**

Key Findings

- **Walking** and **driving** are the most prevalent forms of transport to and from school. For **primary school children, this proportion is 84%**, and for **secondary school the proportion is 73%**
- **Nearly three quarters (74%)** of children travel **two miles or less** to school. For primary school children, this proportion is **much higher (80%) than for secondary school children (59%)**
- **Over half (55%)** of children travel to school with a parent or carer. Only **36%** of secondary age children travel with a parent or carer, compared to **65% of primary school children**
- Opinions varied on the age that children should be able to travel independently, **65%** it was somewhere between **ages nine and 12 years old**
- For those travelling to school by walking, cycling or scootering, **exercise and wellbeing (35%)** and **distance (34%)** were key reasons, whilst **distance (28%)** and **safety (28%)** were the most prominent reasons for those travelling by car, bus, or taxi
- More than three quarters (**76%**) of children have claimed their National Entitlement Card, but **64%** report that there are no suitable routes for their child to travel to school by bus
- The majority of parents (**65%**) don't know the conditions of entitlement for free school transport for their child
- **65%** of parents feel active travel to school is **very or quite important**, but key concerns include **safety on their route, distance, parking, and inadequate bike storage facilities at schools**
- Parents reported that **safer walking and cycling routes**, and **lower speed limits near schools** would encourage them to travel actively to/from school
- **Safety measures and education around school is variable.** While road safety and cycling education is common, Safer Routes to School groups are either uncommon or not widely known about
- **Over half (56%)** did not know if their Parent Council were involved in road safety around the school, with known involvement including awareness raising measures and working with schools and local authorities

Calls for Change

Overarching Calls to Action:

- **A national strategy and statutory approaches for:** the provision (or removal) of dedicated school transport by local authorities where necessary; risk assessment of any walking, cycling and scootering routes that are recommended; mitigation of risks; full communication with the school community about the risk assessments
- **More clarity around local authority dedicated school transport provision for pupils and eligibility for free school transport is needed.** Statutory guidance should be considered for local authorities providing, removing or changing dedicated school transport, with a requirement to consult and share risk assessments with parents and school communities
- **Transport provisions must account for access to after school activities(clubs, sports etc).** This must include transport for children and young people leaving school at later times in order to overcome barriers to inclusion
- **Consultation and robust communication with parents, carers and young people about school transport and road safety around schools** should be prioritised, as parents report that current guidance in their area does not account for a variety of living circumstances and parents working patterns
- **Regular risk assessments of walking, wheeling and cycling routes to school, including equalities assessments.** These should be shared with the school community for discussion about mitigations. Parents, children and young people need to be fully informed
- **School Crossing Patrol Officers** are a vital element of safe active travel to school, and many parents call for these to be reinstated, rather than the cuts they currently face
- **A specified national entitlement for children and young people (and families where appropriate)** to have road safety awareness training, education about the health and environmental benefits of sustainable travel to or from all or part of the journey to school and cycle/scootering training in school. This would be in addition to expectations in Curriculum for Excellence

Calls for Change

Primary School Specific Actions:

- **Increase walking/cycling buses** from various areas in a community, allowing children to travel actively to school even when their parents schedules cannot otherwise accommodate this
- **Empower Safer Routes to School groups and JRSOs** to have more say over changes in their community, as parents report they are often not listened to or able to enforce safety measures around their school

Secondary School Specific Actions:

- **Increase road safety education, especially during S1-S3.** The Curriculum for Excellence currently includes road safety education for all age groups. However, we believe this does not go far enough, especially during a time of increased independence in children's lives as they transition from primary to secondary school

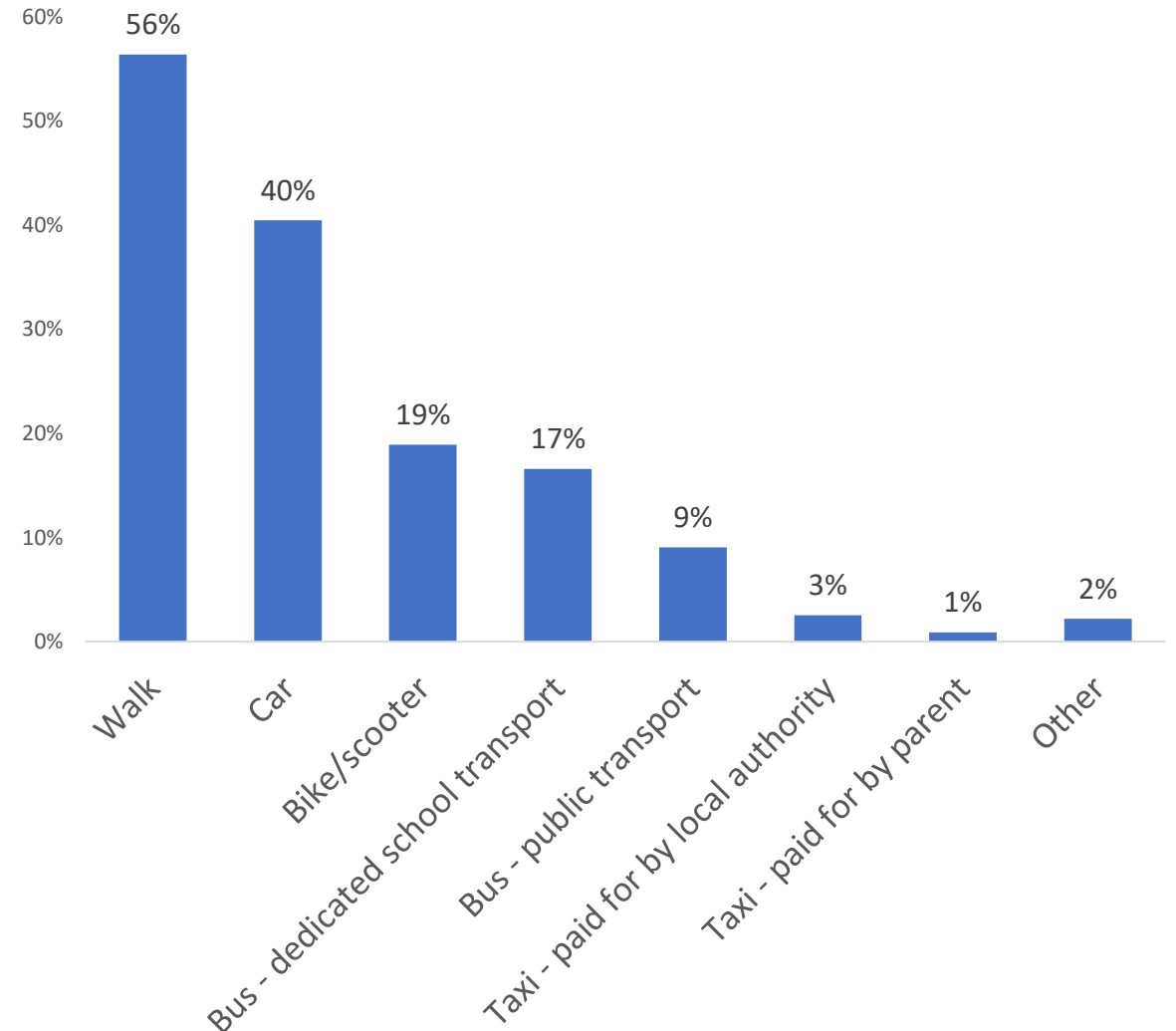
Travel to/from school

How does your child usually travel to and/or from school? (905 answered)

- Over half of parents reported their child walked to/from school for at least part of the journey
- 40% were driven by car to/from school

How far does your child travel to school? (905 answered)

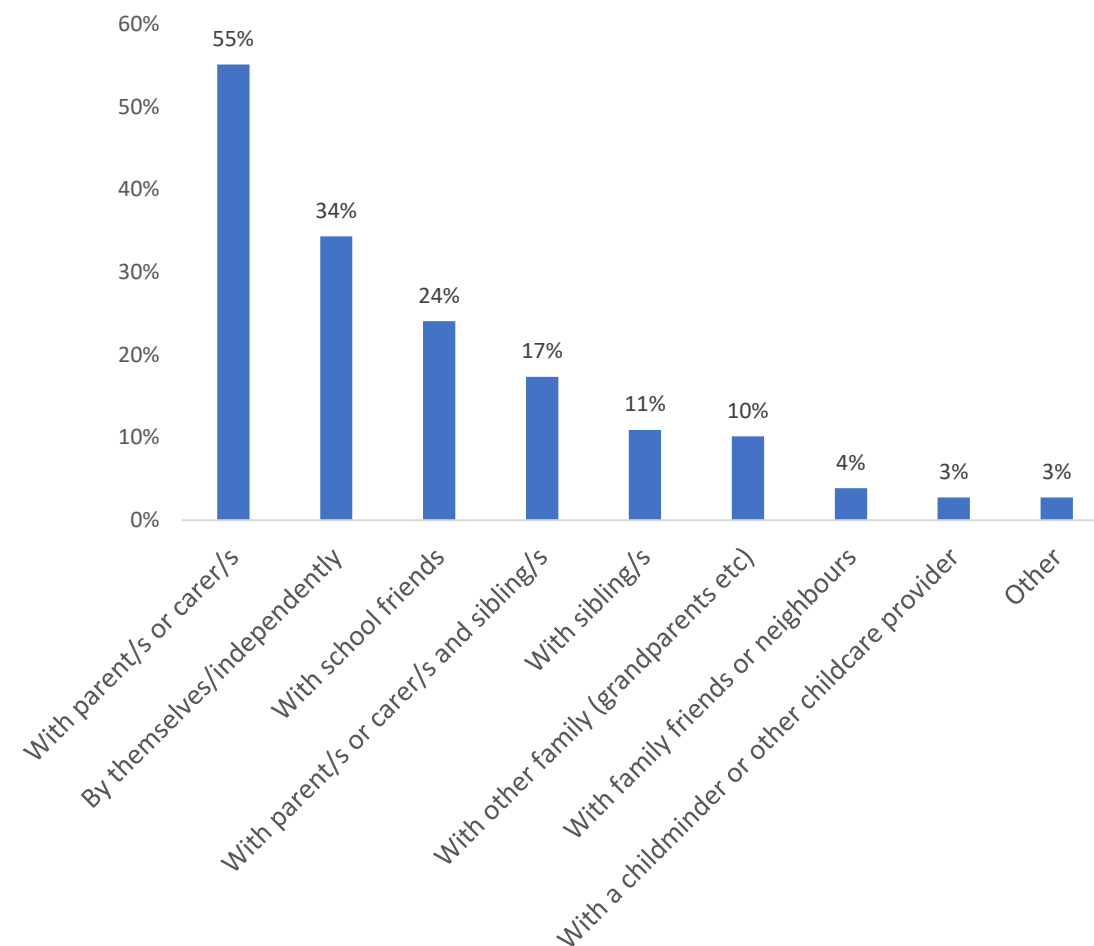
- Under 1 mile **44% (402)**
- 1-2 miles **30% (268)**
- 2-3 miles **12% (108)**
- More than 3 miles **13% (122)**
- Don't know **1% (5)**



Travelling with others

Who does your child usually travel to and from school with? (905 answered)

- With parent/s or carer/s **55% (499)**
- By themselves/independently **34% (311)**
- With school friends **24% (218)**
- With parent/s or carer/s and sibling/s **17% (157)**
- With sibling/s **11% (99)**
- With other family (grandparents etc) **10% (92)**
- With family friends or neighbours **4% (35)**
- With a childminder or other childcare provider **3% (25)**
- Other **3% (25)**
 - Unaccompanied on school bus/other transport with children from the same school
 - With an escort eg as part of ASN school transport



Travelling independently

What age do you think your child will be able to travel independently to and from school, if your child doesn't already do so? If they already travel to/from school independently, please answer with the age they started this. (904 answered, 1 skipped)

- 8 years old or younger **11% (97)**
- 9 years old **14% (129)**
- 10 years old **20% (177)**
- 11 years old **15% (136)**
- 12 years old **16% (144)**
- 13 years old **3% (27)**
- 14 years old **2% (16)**
- 15 years old **1% (6)**
- 16 years old or older **1% (13)**
- Don't know **7% (59)**
- Never **3% (27)**
- My child will not be able to travel independently to/from school **8% (73)**



Reasons for travel – walking/cycling/scooter

Thinking about walking, riding a bike, or scooter to/from school, what are the main reasons behind your family's transport to school choices? Please select all that apply. If your child does not walk, ride a bike or scooter to/from school, please select that answer. (905 answered)

- Exercise and wellbeing **35% (317)**
- Distance **34% (305)**
- Safety **21% (187)**
- Convenience and comfort **17% (156)**
- Sustainability and environmental concerns (reduce pollution, enjoy outdoors/nature etc) **17% (151)**
- To socialise with their friends **16% (149)**
- Weather **15% (139)**
- Need car for onward journey (nursery, other school, work, caring etc) **11% (103)**
- Time pressures **11% (96)**
- Lack of alternatives **7% (64)**
- Health issues or disability **4% (35)**
- Cost of alternatives **3% (23)**
- Other **5% (47)**
 - Lack of parking around schools
 - Promote independence
 - Quicker than by car/bus/taxi

Reasons for travel – car/bus/taxi

Thinking about taking the car, bus, or taxi to/from school, what are the main reasons behind your family's transport to school choices? Please select all that apply. If your child does not take the car, bus, or taxi to/from school, please select that answer. (905 answered)

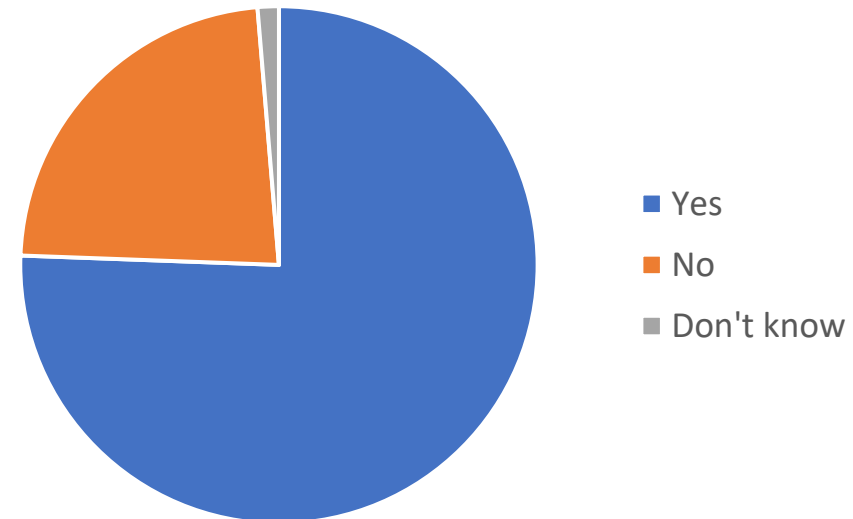
- My child does not take the car, bus, or taxi to/from school **29% (262)**
- Distance **28% (253)**
- Safety **28% (250)**
- Weather **26% (236)**
- Need car for onward journey (nursery, other school, work, caring etc) **25% (224)**
- Time pressures **24% (216)**
- Lack of alternatives **12% (112)**
- Convenience and comfort **11% (98)**
- Poor access to cycle/walking routes **10% (86)**
- Health issues or disability **7% (63)**
- To socialise with their friends **3% (24)**
- Cost of alternatives **2% (22)**
- Sustainability and environmental concerns (reduce pollution) **2% (18)**
- Exercise and wellbeing **1% (9)**
- Other **4% (32)**
 - Children attend different schools or have conflicting schedules eg due to afterschool clubs
 - Poor public transport provision or ineligible for free transport to/from school



National Entitlement Card

Has your child claimed their National Entitlement Card (NEC) which gives them access to free bus travel? (905 answered, 0 skipped)

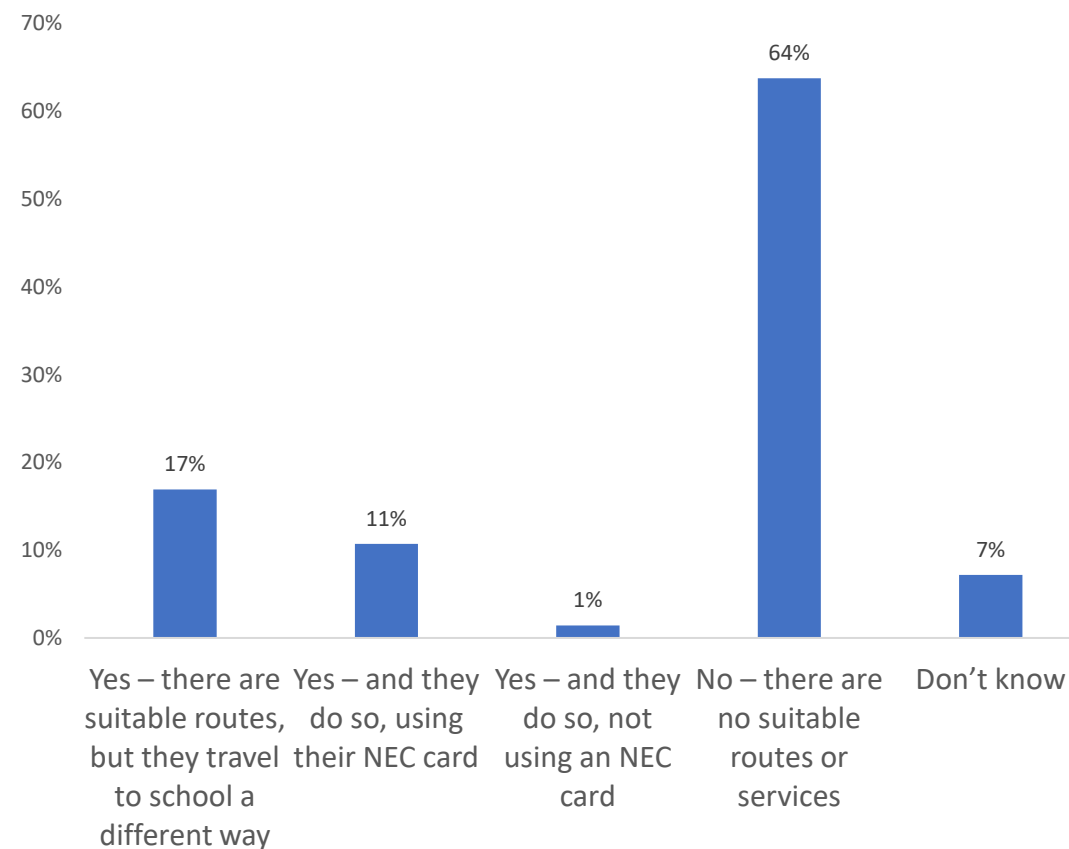
- Yes **76% (684)**
- No **23% (209)**
- Don't know **1% (12)**



Option of bus travel

Does your child or young person have the option of travelling to school by public bus? (905 answered)

- Yes – there are suitable routes, but they travel to school a different way **17% (153)**
- Yes – and they do so, using their NEC card **11% (97)**
- Yes – and they do so, not using an NEC card **1% (13)**
- No – there are no suitable routes or services **64% (577)**
- Don't know **7% (65)**



Free school transport provision and qualification

What is your local authority's criteria for the provision of free school transport? This is usually provided by either taxi or dedicated school bus.

(905 answered)

- 2 miles walking distance **15% (136)**
- 3 miles walking distance **13% (117)**
- Safety concerns (if your child's route to school is unsafe to travel) **7% (61)**
- Low income **1% (8)**
- Disability **4% (33)**
- Attending a school outside their catchment area (eg special school, Gaelic Medium, denominational school) **4% (36)**
- Don't know **65% (592)**
- Other **3% (23)**
 - Differing distances for primary and secondary school
 - Changes made so unsure of provision

Does your child qualify for dedicated school transport provided by your local authority? This question applies to taxis or dedicated school buses.

(905 answered, 0 skipped)

- Yes, and they use it most of the time **16% (141)**
- Yes, and they use it occasionally **1% (12)**
- Yes, but they don't use it **2% (22)**
- No, they qualified previously but the local authority changed the criteria to qualify **6% (50)**
- No, and they have never qualified **49% (441)**
- Don't know **26% (239)**



Importance of active travel

How important is it to you and your family to travel actively (walking, cycling, scootering) to school? Please answer this whether or not you currently travel actively to/from school. (905 answered)

- Very important **41% (375)**
- Quite important **24% (217)**
- Not very important (other factors matter more to me) **29% (263)**
- Not at all important **6% (50)**

Parent Views: Active travel concerns

What concerns, if any, do you have about active travel to and from your child's school? (589 answered, 316 skipped)

- Safety (inc. fast drivers, intersections and busy roads, lack of crossing points, pavements and bike paths, poorly-lit routes, accidents, and other pedestrians or strangers
 - *'Roads not safe. Can't let go by self. Lollipop lady never replaced. Road too busy with fast drivers'*
- Distance to school
 - *'My children go to school out of catchment and therefore the only way to travel is by car (5+miles). Very rural school as well'*
- Impractical due to work or other schedules
 - *'We could ride and stride but time is a factor for me getting to work after school drop off'*
- Parking and congestion
 - *'[Poor] driver [behaviour] outside school by those dropping off children'*
- Lack of bike storage
 - *'We walk primarily due to proximity to school. I'd be keen to look at cycling but there is insufficient suitable bike storage'*
- Weather

Motivations to increase active travel

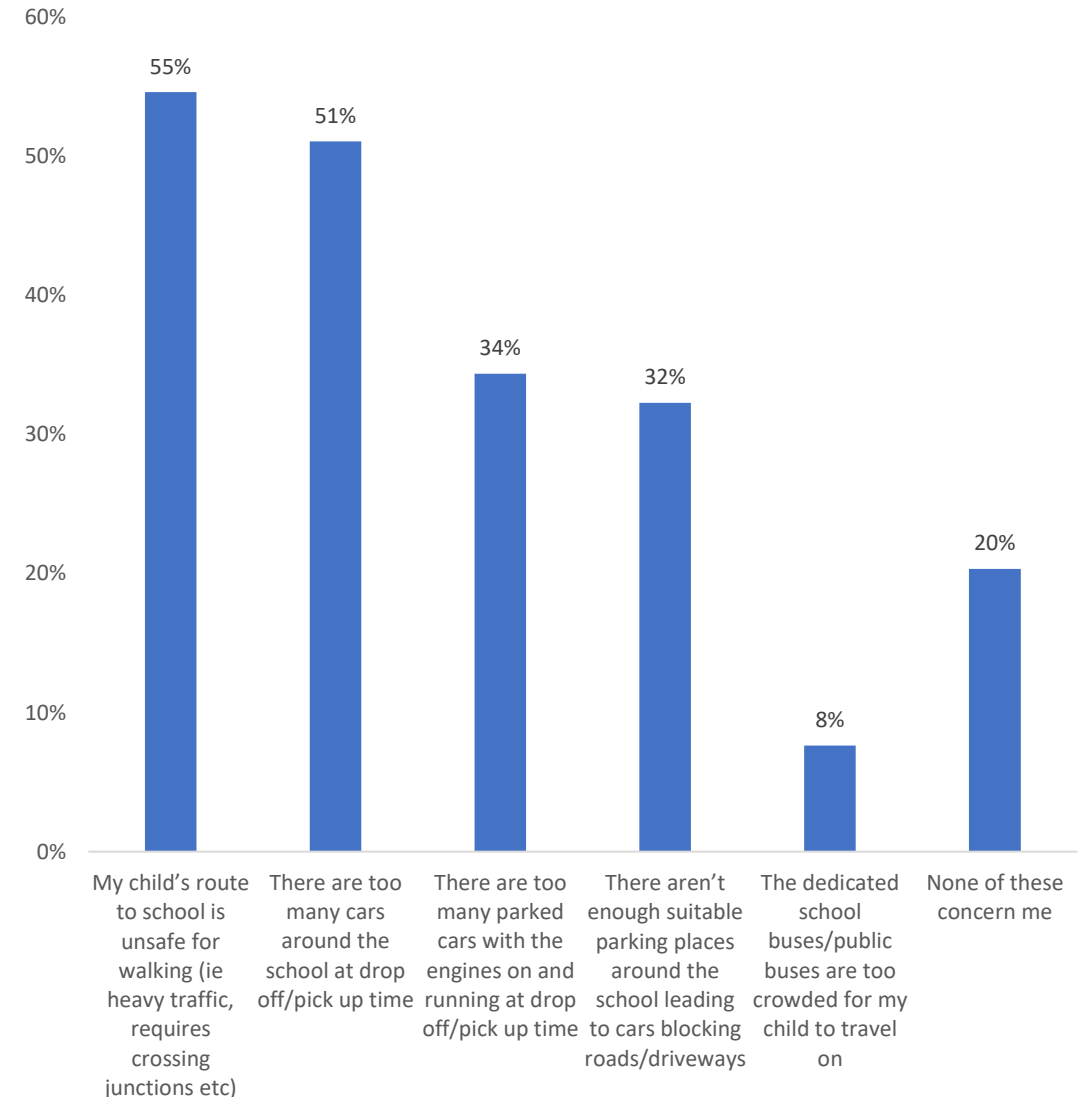
Would any of the following help you and your family to increase your active travel to/from school? Please select all that apply. (905 answered)

- Safer walking routes **37% (336)**
- Slower traffic speeds near school **29% (262)**
- Safer cycling routes **28% (252)**
- More/improved cycle paths **19% (174)**
- Walking bus (meet up with adults and all walk to school) **14% (125)**
- If my child could be accompanied by responsible adults **11% (101)**
- Secure cycle/scooter storage at school **10% (90)**
- Less to carry to school **10% (89)**
- Improved access to school entrance **9% (85)**
- People to cycle/scoot to school with **8% (70)**
- Cycle/scooter training **8% (68)**
- None of the above **29% (261)**
- Other **12% (107)**
 - School crossing patrol officers (lollipop people)
 - Safer crossing points
 - Traffic and parking restrictions near schools
 - Shorter travel distance to/from school

Issues around travelling to school

Are any or the following issues regarding travel to school a concern for you? Please select all that apply.
(905 answered)

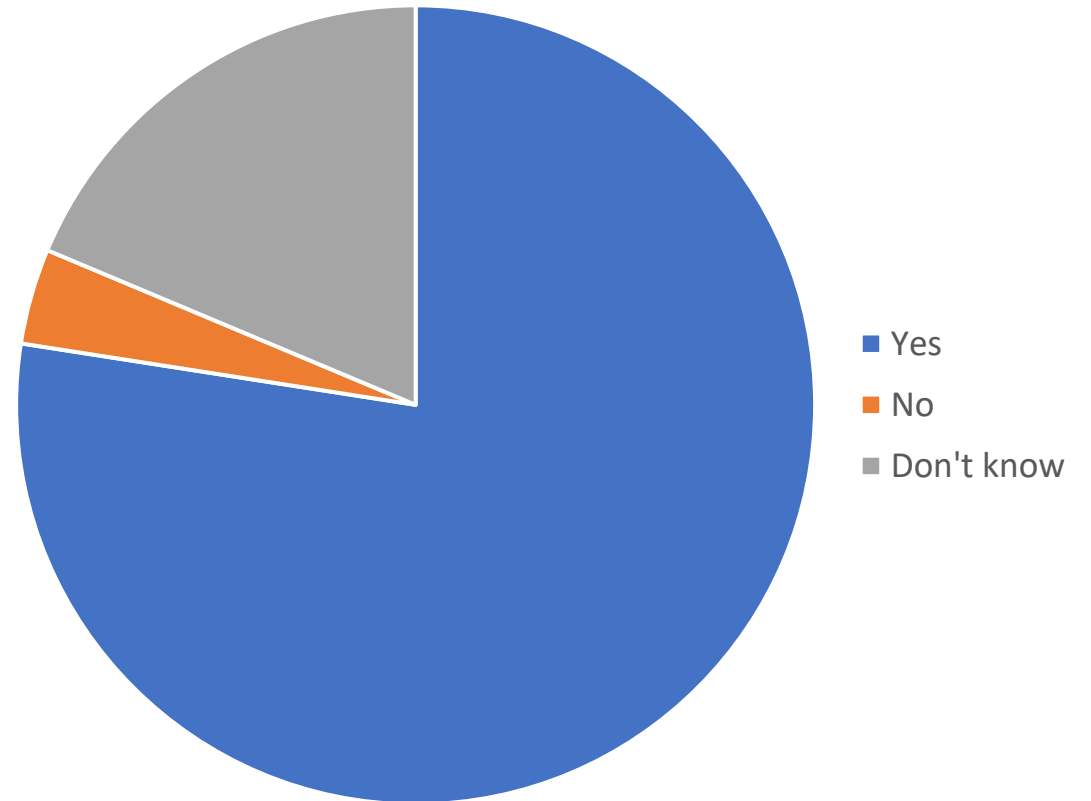
- My child's route to school is unsafe for walking (ie heavy traffic, requires crossing junctions etc) **55% (494)**
- There are too many cars around the school at drop off/pick up time **51% (462)**
- There are too many parked cars with the engines on and running at drop off/pick up time **34% (311)**
- There aren't enough suitable parking places around the school leading to cars blocking roads/driveways **32% (292)**
- The dedicated school buses/public buses are too crowded for my child to travel on **8% (69)**
- None of these concern me **20% (184)**



Bike and scooter facilities

Does your school have facilities for parking bikes or scooters? (905 answered)

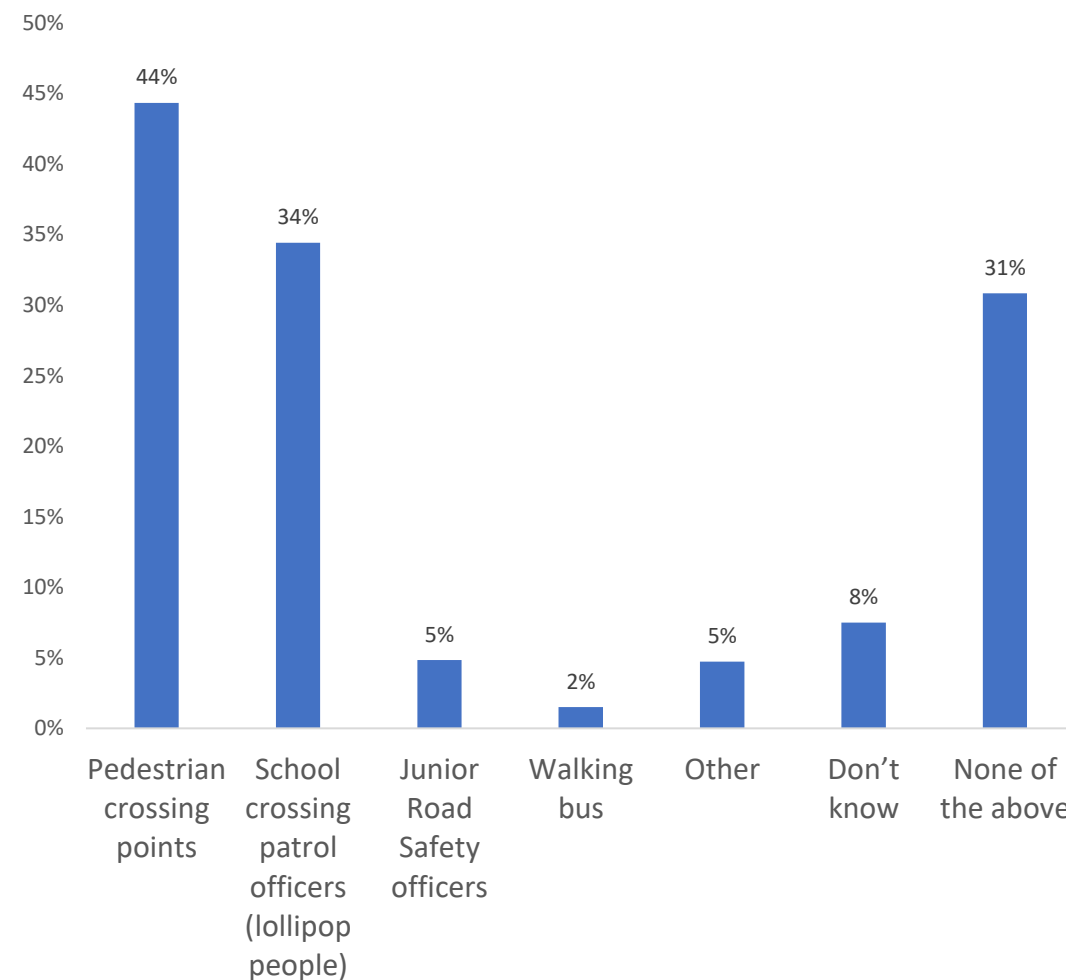
- Yes **77% (701)**
- No **4% (35)**
- Don't know **19% (169)**



Safety measures around school

Does your route to school have any of the following safety measures? Please select all that apply. (866 answered, 39 skipped)

- Pedestrian crossing points **44% (384)**
- School crossing patrol officers (lollipop people) **34% (298)**
- Junior Road Safety officers (usually active within the school, providing road safety information and events) **5% (42)**
- Walking bus **2% (13)**
- Don't know **8% (65)**
- None of the above **31% (267)**
- Other **5% (41)**
 - Safety measures exist but are not effective/do not exist for whole route
 - Safety measures at risk of removal



Safer Routes to School

Does your school have a Safer Routes to School group? (866 answered, 39 skipped)

- Yes **3% (25)**
- No **30% (257)**
- Don't know **67% (584)**

If you said your school has a Safer Routes to School group, is it supported by your local authority? (173 answered, 732 skipped)

- Yes **5% (8)**
- No **12% (20)**
- Don't know **84% (145)**

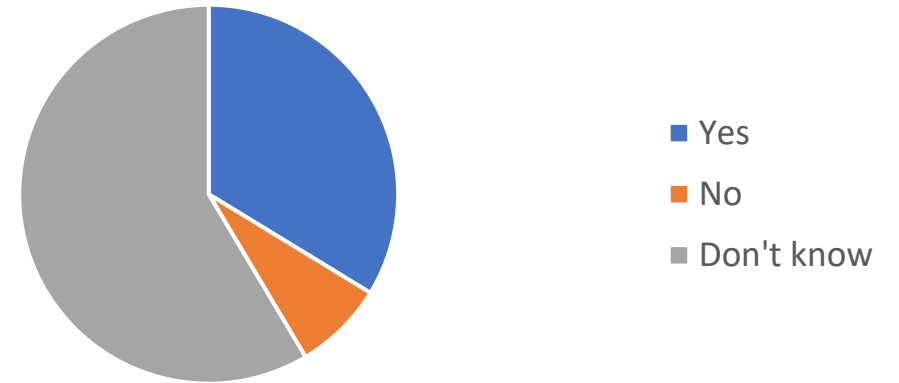
If you said your school has a Safer Routes to School group, could you please tell us what they are trying to do to improve safety? (25 answered, 880 skipped)

- Awareness raising campaigns
 - *'Dressing up as traffic cones, some parent patrol'*
- Walking or bike buses
- Crossing patrols and crossing points
 - *'They have walking bus and footprints to follow'*
- Identifying danger points on routes to school
 - *'Not sure, but they've surveyed parents about safety issues and put up signs for cars to slow down'*
- Restricting parking and introducing safety measures around schools

Road safety and cycle education

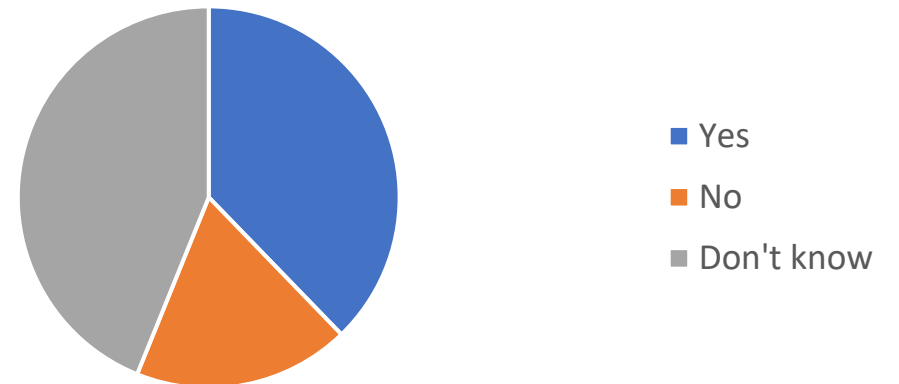
Does your school offer road safety education for children and young people? (866 answered, 39 skipped)

- Yes **34% (292)**
- No **8% (67)**
- Don't know **59% (507)**



Does your school (or parent volunteers) offer cycle training for children and young people? (866 answered, 39 skipped)

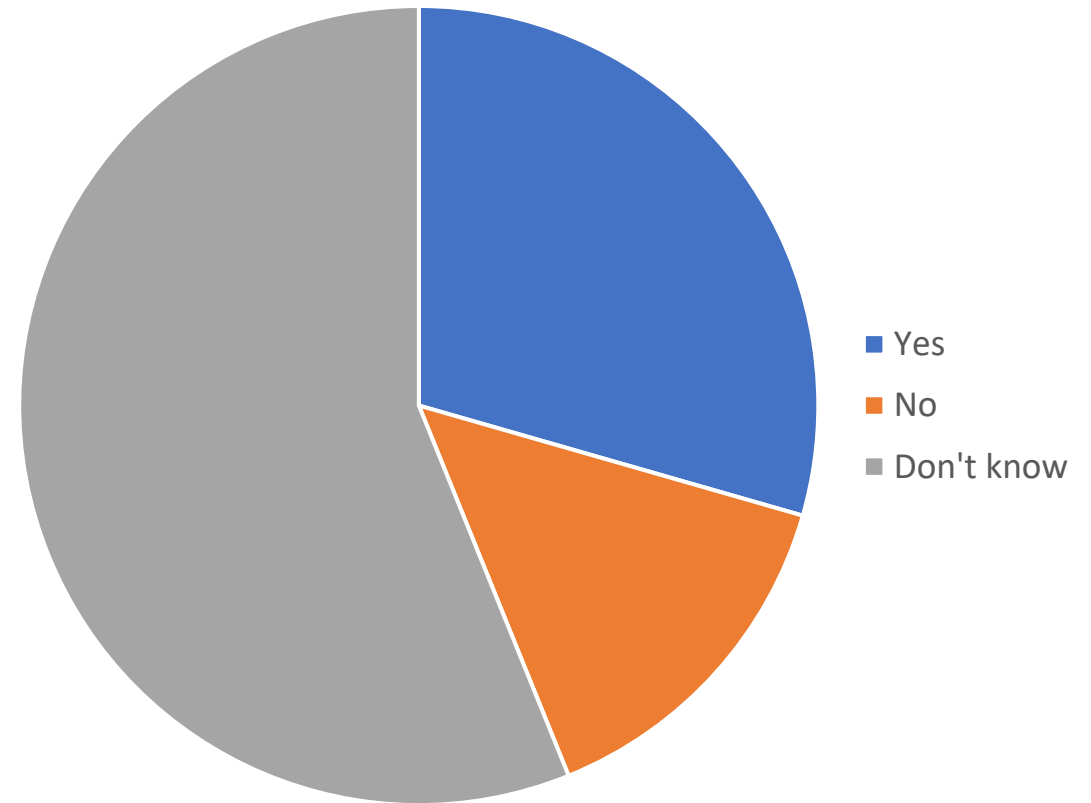
- Yes **38% (327)**
- No **18% (159)**
- Don't know **44% (380)**



Parent Council engagement in road safety

Is your Parent Council involved in active travel or dealing with issues related to road safety around the school? (866 answered, 39 skipped)

- Yes **29% (255)**
- No **14% (125)**
- Don't know **56% (486)**



Parents' Views: Parent Council engagement

If you said your Parent Council is involved in active travel or dealing with issues related to road safety around the school. Could you please tell us more about what your Parent Council is involved in? If you don't know, please leave this blank. (179 answered, 726 skipped)

- Quiet/no traffic zones
- Better parking awareness campaigns and policing
 - *'Trying to police drivers who ignore the school zone area and park recklessly - we take pictures of number plates and send to the police'*
- Awareness raising and raising issues with schools and Local Authorities or other authorities
 - *'Pleas, creating awareness and presence around school grounds to promote safer parking. They have also had meetings with school management team and community police about parking issues'*
- Walking/cycle buses
- Influencing school policy
 - *'Consultation regarding drop off and home time arrangements due to the significant number of vehicles (buses, taxis) entering and exiting the school'*
- Walking route assessment
 - *'Safe walking route assessments, reduction of local speed limits, crossing safety'*

Final Comments

If you would like to expand on any of your previous answers, or have any other comments about travel to school, please use this comment box. (200 answered, 705 skipped)

- Distance to/from school is too far
- Difficulty parking around schools
- Issues with bus travel
 - *'The buses home can be overcrowded and my children don't get on. They live further out than others, but those living close get on first [meaning] it can be over an hours journey for them to travel the three miles home'*
- Safety
- Problems during drop-off
 - *'Not possible for all families to not use car due to other commitments and onwards travel to work. Also car free zone at school is rarely adhered too by the same people and is more dangerous now than before'*
- Weather
- Impact of cars
 - *'Biggest safety concern for me is the speeding cars in our area, that have no consideration whether it's adults or adults with small children walking on a narrow country side path'*

Final Comments

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- Lack of consultation on changes and information for parents
- Safety awareness/training for children
 - *'Road safety around schools should be taken very seriously by the local community. I don't feel that there is enough awareness out there'*
- Lollipop/ crossing guides
 - *'There needs to be more manned patrolled crossing to allow the children to cross safely and have someone looking out for them'*
- Benefits of active travel
 - *'We are lucky to live very close to the school and most of the way is through a park so it is an easy decision to let my child to walk safely by himself or with friends'*
- Barriers to active travel
 - *'I really wish I could take the kids to school on a bus without a 20 minute walk to the bus stop either in the opposite direction to the school, or towards the school ... on the days that I travel to the office in town after dropping them'*

Final Comments

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- ASN
 - *'Other options for travel are not an option for us. Our child attends an [additional] needs school which is 14 miles from our house'*
- Issues with LA provided transport
 - *'Children from my village have funded school bus passes but their school bus also acts as a service bus. Sometimes on the way home it is too full and they are left stranded'*

Final Comments

If you would like to expand on any of your previous answers, or have any other comments about travel to school, please use this comment box. If you have no further comments, please leave this blank. (200 answered, 705 skipped)

- Suggestions for improvements
 - *'All school pupils who live more than 1/2 a mile from school deserve to be provided with safe free school transport such as a bus'*
 - *'The Parent Council would be keen to encourage walking groups to assist working parents with getting their children safely to school'*
 - *'Bring back green cross code training for children'*
 - *'There needs to be a complete rethink on traffic control and safe cycling routes in Scotland. I used to live overseas and it was very common to cycling to shops, work, schools etc'*
 - *'Why won't councils repaint road markings, create traffic calming measures, and make more effort to prevent as many cars from parking badly near schools?'*
 - *'The school does support a young drivers course but I'd rather they encouraged the young people to use their bus passes and not become future drivers'*



We are very grateful to all the parents and carers who took part in this survey

Please contact us by email at info@connect.scot for more information about this survey

Connect

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