



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Scottish Transport Statistics 2025

**PERSONAL AND CROSS-
MODAL TRAVEL**

Contents

Introduction	3
Key points	3
Main Points	4
Trips.....	4
Distance travelled	4
Duration travelled.....	4
Car access.....	4
Driving	4
Walking.....	5
Travel to Work (<i>SHS data</i>).....	6
Travel To Work (<i>non-SHS data</i>)	6
Travel to School.....	7
Travel Abroad	8
Transport Model for Scotland	8
Concessionary Travel	9
Traveline Scotland	9

Introduction

This chapter previously included information from the National Travel Survey (NTS). However, Scottish data are no longer collected in the NTS, estimates for Scotland from the NTS are available in previous editions of this publication. This chapter now focuses on estimates derived mainly from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS), findings from other sources are marked as such within the text.

The SHS is a sample survey and provides person-based cross-modal information, in contrast to most of the earlier chapters, which tend to be based on particular modes of transport. The SHS also includes a travel diary that asks respondents for information about the journeys they made on the previous day, including information on the duration, distance, purpose and mode of travel. More information and further tables covering transport findings from the Scottish Household Survey can be found in Transport and Travel in Scotland: <http://bit.ly/2qbgypZ>

In this edition of STS we have also presented relevant information on travel behaviours collected from the 2011 census as previously published by the National Records of Scotland. More information about the sources used can be found in the Sources section on page 225.

Over the period that the 2020 Scottish Household Survey was being conducted (October 2020 and January – March 2021) people in Scotland were subject to restrictions on travel and daily activity.

Most notably, this included the ‘second lockdown’, which ran from 5 January 2021 to April 2021, and incorporated a legal requirement forbidding anyone from leaving their home except for essential purposes.

Some of the survey questions were last asked in 2019.

Key points

- 73% of people had travelled the previous day when asked as part of the 2024 Scottish Household Survey.
- Of the 457 million public transport journeys made in 2024, 73 per cent were by bus, 19 per cent were journeys by rail, air accounts for 6 per cent and ferries 2 per cent.
- Thirty one per cent of journeys to work and 74 per cent of journeys to school are by public and active travel.

Main Points

Trips

In the 2024 Scottish Household Survey 73% of people reported having travelled the previous day.

As in previous years, the car was the most popular mode of transport for journeys made in 2024, with 51% of journeys made as a car driver.

Twenty six per cent of adults used the bus at least once per week in 2024, whereas only 10% used the train. The gap was less for usage over the past month, with 39% using a bus compared to 31% for the train.

Distance travelled

In 2023, most journeys tended to be over short distances, with 14% of all journeys being under 1 km long and a further 26% between 1 and 3 km. The average (median) journey distance in 2024 was 4.3 km.

The average (median) walking journey was 1.3 km in length in 2024. Car journeys tended to be over greater distances, with a median car driver journey of 6.5 km.

In 2024, shopping (23%) and going to work (20%) were the most frequent journey purposes.

Duration travelled

In terms of time, most journeys in 2024 (68%) lasted for less than 20 minutes. Only 4% of journeys lasted more than an hour.

Car access

Adults in households with more cars were more likely to have travelled the previous day – in 2024, 60% of adults living in households with no cars normally available travelled the previous day, compared to 79% of adults with two or more cars.

Car driving by adults increased with an increase in car availability. Where no car was normally available, 2% of adults' journeys were as a driver of a car, compared to 53% where one car was available, and 67% where two or more cars were available.

Adults in households with no car access made a far higher proportion of their journeys by public and active travel in 2024. Where no cars were available there was a far higher proportion of journeys by foot: 50%, compared to 24% where one car was available and 16% where there were two or more cars. The proportion of trips by bus was also considerably higher for adults in households with no car: 24%, compared to 4% for those with one car and 2% for those with at least two cars.

Driving

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) provides information about how often people aged 17 or over drive. In 2024, 38% of men, 32% of women and 35% of all people aged 17+ said that they drove every day. A further 29% stated they drove at least once a week (but not every day), 3% drove less frequently, 4% had a full driving licence but never drove, and 29% did not have a full driving licence. (*Table 11.10*)

The frequency of driving varied with age. In 2024, 46% of people aged 40 to 49 said they drove every day. As age rises this falls (to 14% for people aged 80 and over). The frequency of driving also varied with the annual net income of the household. Fifty two percent of people aged 17+ living in households with an annual net income of between £50,000 – £60,000 said they drove every day, compared with 18 percent of those living in households with an annual net income of up to £15,000. Almost a quarter (24%) of people aged 17+ in large urban areas drove every day compared to 45% in 'remote rural' areas. (*Table 11.10*)

Walking

In 2024, 66% of adults made a journey of more than a quarter of a mile by foot to go somewhere in the last seven days – the third highest proportion seen in the last decade. Adults (aged 20-29) were the most likely to have walked to go somewhere (78%), compared with 63% of those aged 50-59. Adults aged over 80 were the lowest at 38% (*Tables 11.11 & 11.13*)

In 2024, 69% of adults said that they had walked for pleasure or to keep fit at least once in the last seven days – the third highest in recent times. There was some variation with age: the percentage was highest for those aged 30-39 (76%) and lowest for those aged 80 or above (39%). There was less variation with household income, although those with net annual incomes of over £20,000 were more likely than those with lower incomes. (*Tables 11.11 & 11.13*)

Travel to Work (SHS data)

The SHS shows that 25% of employed adults worked from home in 2024. Sixty five percent of self-employed people worked from home. (Tables 11.17 & 11.21)

Overall, the SHS found that the majority (66%) of employed adults who did not work from home travelled to work by car or van (as either the driver or as a passenger) in 2024. This percentage tended to increase with age (20-29: 60%, Over 40: around 69% to 73%), type of employment (58% of those who work part-time, compared to 68% for full-time) and annual net household income (rising to 74% of those in the £50,000 - £60,000 band). (Table 11.18)

Other usual means of travel to work were: walking (12%); bus (10%); rail (6%); bicycle (2%) and other modes (3%). Use of such modes of transport also varied. For example: in general, the greater the income of the household, the less likely a person was to walk or use the bus to travel to work; the percentage who walked to work was highest in small remote towns (31%) and the percentage who commuted by bus was highest in large urban areas (19%). (Tables 11.18 & 11.22)

Travel To Work (non-SHS data)

Other data sources show a similar pattern to the Scottish Household Survey data and also enable comparison with the rest of Great Britain.

Labour Force Survey results suggest that, between 2013 and 2024, there has been little change in the percentage for whom a car or a van is the usual means of travel to work (69% in 2013 and 70% in 2024). There was little change to walking which was 13% in 2013 and 11% in 2024. People who work at home are excluded from these figures. These figures are similar to the findings from the SHS shown in table 11.18. (Table 11.14)

There appears to have been little change in recent years in the average times taken to travel to work by the main modes of transport (in 2024: 23 minutes by car; 34 minutes by bus and 15 minutes by foot). (Table 11.15 b)

The Scottish Census 2022 showed 2.5 million people aged 16 and over in employment, excluding full-time students. 32% of these worked mainly from home. Of the remaining 1.7 million people, 31% had a journey of under 5 km to work, 40% had a journey of between 5 km and 30 km to work and 7% travelled 30 km or more to work. 21% had no fixed place of work or worked outside the UK. (Table 11.31).

Information about travel to work has been collected in population censuses since 1966. Excluding those that worked at home, the percentage of the working

population using cars to travel to work had increased from 21% in 1966 to 72% in 2022 and the percentage using buses had fallen from 43% in 1966 to 8% in 2022. There had also been a significant fall in the proportion of the working population who walk to work, from 24% in 1966 to 11% in 2022. (*Table 11.16*)

The 2011 Census showed that the distance of people's journey to work tended to vary with their access to cars or vans. Seventy-four per cent of people living in households with no car or van available had a commute of fewer than 10 km, compared with 60 per cent of those in households with one car or van available and 47 per cent of those in households with two or more cars or vans available. Conversely, the proportion of people who travelled 30 km or more to work was higher for people in households with two or more cars or vans available (10 per cent) than for those in households with one car or van available (7 per cent) or with no cars or vans available (4 per cent). (*Table 11.33*)

Travel to School

In 2023, 53% of children in full-time education at school usually walked to school, 18% usually went by bus, 24% by car or van, 2% cycled. There was little difference between the sexes, but varied greatly with age: 59% of primary school age pupils (those aged up to 11) usually walked to school compared with only 46% of those of secondary school age (those aged 12 and over); 29% of primary pupils went by car or van compared with only 18% of secondary pupils; and only 8% of primary pupils usually travelled by bus compared with 29% of those of secondary age. (*Table 11.19*)

Those usually travelling by car/van tended to rise with household income, to around 28% of pupils from households with an annual net income between £25,000 and £40,000, reflecting patterns seen elsewhere in this chapter e.g. travel to work and car use more generally. Walking to school was lowest (19%) in remote rural areas. The Sustrans Hands Up Scotland Survey shows similar findings. (*Tables 11.19, 11.23 & 11.23a*)

According to the 2011 Scottish Census, 88% of children aged between 4 and 11 travelled less than 5 km to school, including 72% who travelled less than 2 km. 51% of those aged over 18 travelled less than 5 km to their place of study. 430,000 people of any age travelled under 2 km to their place of study, with 73% of these people travelling by foot, 6% travelling by bus and 17% as a passenger in a car or van. Of the 428,000 people who travelled 2 km or more to their place of study, 31 per cent did so as a car driver or passenger, 43 per cent travelled by bus and 7 per cent travelled by train. (*Table 11.34 & 11.35*)

Travel Abroad

According to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) survey, Scottish residents made an estimated 6.6 million visits abroad in 2024 with 6.4 million visits (96%) being made by air. Edinburgh was the main airport used and accounted for about 3.1 million visits (46% of all visits abroad), followed by Glasgow (2.1 million or 31%), Aberdeen (248,000 or 4%). Around 167,000 visits abroad (3%) were made by sea. There were 88,000 visits made using the Channel Tunnel. (*Table 11.24*)

Around 62% of Scottish residents' visits abroad were made for holiday purposes. Of these, 2.7 million (41%) were on a package holiday whilst the rest travelled independently. There were 1.8 million (27%) visits abroad to visit friends or relatives and 556,000 visits abroad for business purposes (8%). (*Table 11.24*)

Seventy four per cent (4.9 million) of Scottish residents' visits abroad were made to EU countries and visits to other European areas totalled 32,000 (0.5%). Visits to Canada and the USA together totalled about 397,000 (6%). (*Table 11.25*)

The estimated number of visits abroad by Scottish residents rose from 4.2 million in 2004 to a peak of 4.8 million in 2008, a rise of 14%. There were then increases (apart from 2013) in the numbers each year from 2010 until 2019, an increase of 41%. Between 2005 and 2008 there was a decline in the number of package holidays, although since 2009 the trend has been upwards. Those travelling independently has generally increased as well. Other holidays increased by 14% between 2009 and 2019. There was also a large increase in the number of visits to friends and relatives over the same period, with numbers doubling between 2009 and 2018 and falling 23% between 2018 and 2019. Some of the apparent year-to-year changes may be due to sampling variability, however, the general trends reflect patterns described elsewhere in this publication. (*Table 11.26*)

Transport Model for Scotland

Information on travel between different parts of Scotland is available from the Transport Model for Scotland (TMfS). The base year of TMfS is 2018.

It is estimated that, on an average weekday in 2018, 6.35 million person-trips were made by car, bus or train across the boundaries of one or more of the zones which are within the area covered by the TMfS. Just over one third (35%) of these trips were within the Clydeplan region, 24% within SESplan region, 6% within TAYplan, and 9% within Aberdeen City & Shire. (*Table 11.27*)

Of the 6.35 million inter-zonal person trips per weekday it is estimated that 5.4 million were by car. These accounted for over four-fifths of the total, and the main features

of the pattern of trips by car were similar to those described in the previous paragraph. There were also an estimated 900 thousand inter-zonal person-trips by bus or train per weekday. Two fifths of these were within Clydeplan, and just over a quarter were within SESplan. (*Table 11.27*)

There was an average of just over 4.6 million journeys per weekday by cars and goods vehicles, with each vehicle containing one or more people. One third were within Clydeplan, and just under a quarter were within SESplan. (*Table 11.27*)

Concessionary Travel

201 million passenger journeys were made under all types of concessionary fare schemes in 2024-25, 7% more than in 2023-24. Concessionary travel schemes have varied over the years: a national minimum standard of free off-peak local bus travel for elderly and disabled people in Scotland was introduced from 30 September 2002, the scheme was extended to men aged 60-64 from 1 April 2003. In 2006 this was superseded by the introduction of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme for the elderly and disabled which allowed free bus travel across Scotland. The Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme launched in January 2022. The scheme provides free bus travel across the country for everyone living in Scotland between the ages of 5 and 21 with a valid NEC. Including the young persons' scheme, concessionary bus travel accounted for 193 million passenger journeys in 2024-25, 96% of concessionary journeys by all modes of transport). (*Table 11.29*)

Traveline Scotland

In 2023 Traveline Scotland received 66,400 telephone calls which was 28% less than the previous year. Its Web site and smart phone app recorded 19 million hits in 2023, down 15% from the previous year. (*Table 11.30*).



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