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Household travel time by mode of transport

This factsheet presents information from the Ministry of Transport's Household Travel Survey about the time New Zealanders spend travelling using different forms of transport.

Between 2019–22, 82.0% of all annual travel time was spent in private motor vehicles. A further 12.3% was spent using active transport, while 4.8% was spent on public transport.

Those aged under 15 years and 76 years and older spent more of their travel time each year using active transport than other age groups. People aged less than 30 years also spent more time using public transport.

The Wellington region had the highest percentage of time spent using active and public transport than any other region (29.5% of all travel time), followed by Nelson Marlborough (21.4%) and Auckland (19.5%).

Active transport and public transport have benefits for environmental health

A variety of transport modes can be used for household travel, including private motorised transport (such as cars, vans and motorcycles), active transport (such as walking and cycling), and public transport (buses, trains and ferries).

Using active transport has beneficial effects for both health and the environment. These modes of travel increase physical activity and reduce traffic injuries, while also reducing air and noise pollution, as well as greenhouse gas emissions (WHO 2011). In particular, regular physical activity can help prevent a range of diseases including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, and type two diabetes. Active commuting (such as walking or cycling to work) has also been shown to reduce people's cardiovascular risk (Hamer and Chida 2008).

Public transport also increases physical activity to a small degree, produces less air pollution (by reducing the number of vehicles on the road), is safer than travelling by private vehicle, and can improve mental health (British Medical Association 2012).

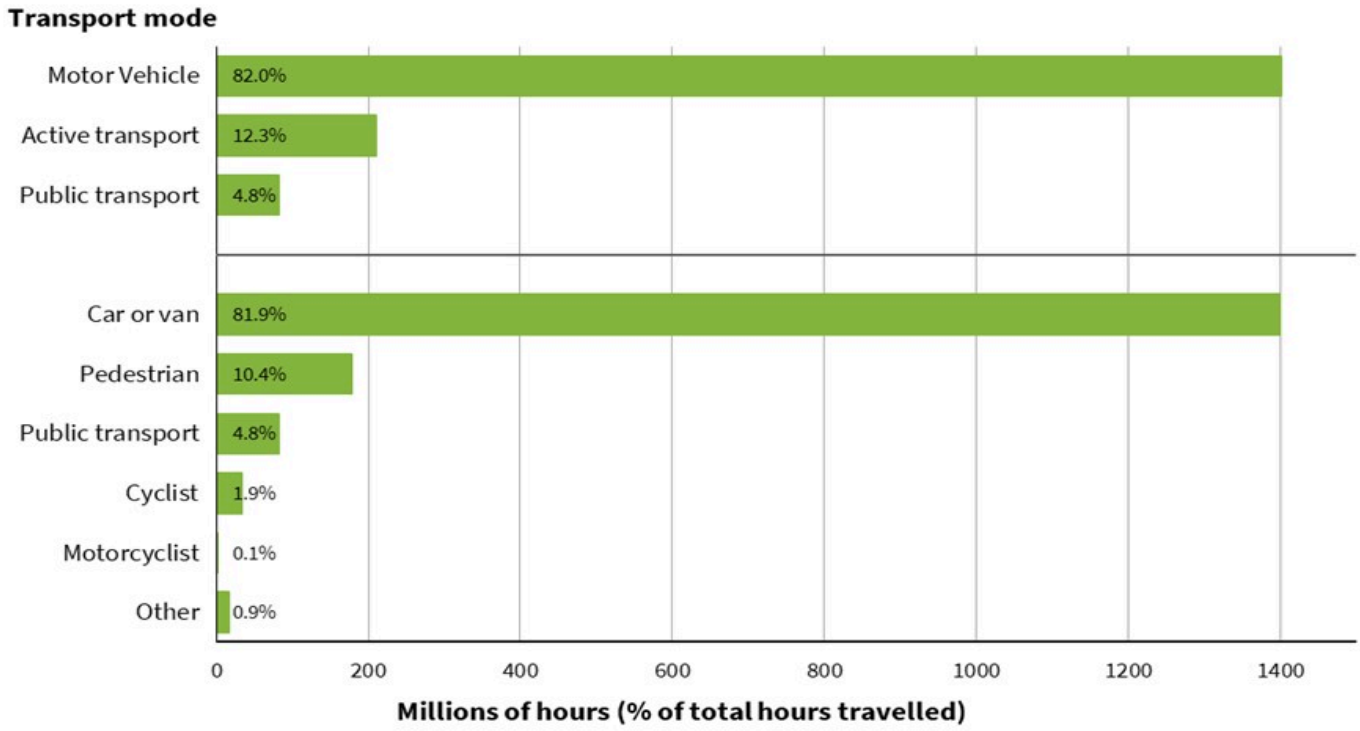
Private motor vehicles were the dominant form of transport

Between 2019–22, New Zealanders spent an average of 1,400 million hours each year travelling by private motor vehicles. This represents 82.0% of the total time spent travelling by any means – 1,708 million hours annually (Figure 1).

Overall, 12.3% of all travelling time was spent using an active form of transport (walking or cycling) and a further 4.8% was spent on public transport (public bus, train or ferry).

The remaining 0.9% of travel time was spent using 'other' transport modes includes travel by aircraft and boat, as well as less conventional forms like horse-riding. Skateboarders, joggers and other 'on-foot' forms of transport are counted as walkers, as are mobility scooters (Ministry of Transport, 2023a).

Figure 1 Hours spent travelling by transport mode each year, 2019–22



Note: 'Active transport' includes pedestrian travel and cycling. 'Public transport' includes travel by bus, train or ferry. 'Motor vehicle' includes car/van drivers and motorcycle riders.

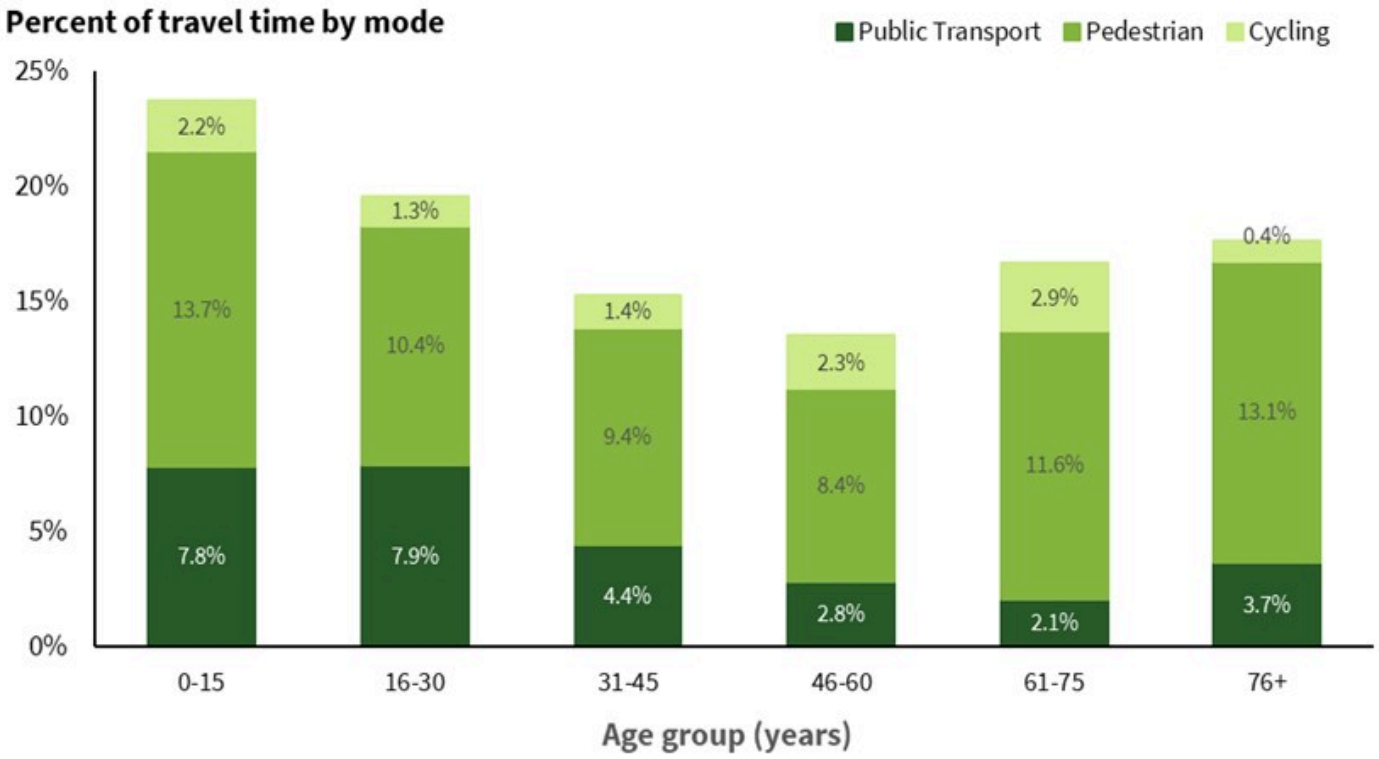
Source: Household Travel Survey (Ministry of Transport 2023b)

Both young and old people spent more time travelling by active or public transport

In 2019–22, the percentage of travel time spent on active and public transport was highest for younger age groups. People aged under 30 years were the greatest users of public transport at just under 8% of travel time for both 0–15 and 16–30 year-olds. These groups were also high users of active transport at 16% and 12% of travel time respectively (Figure 2).

Time spent using active and public transport was lower for 31–45 and 46–60 year-olds. However, the use of active transport increased for older age groups. Most of the increase was due to a rise in time spent walking, though this could be due to mobility scooters being counted as 'walking' by the survey.

Figure 2 Use of active and public transport as a percentage of total travel time, by age group, 2019–22



Note: 'Public transport' includes travel by bus, train or ferry.

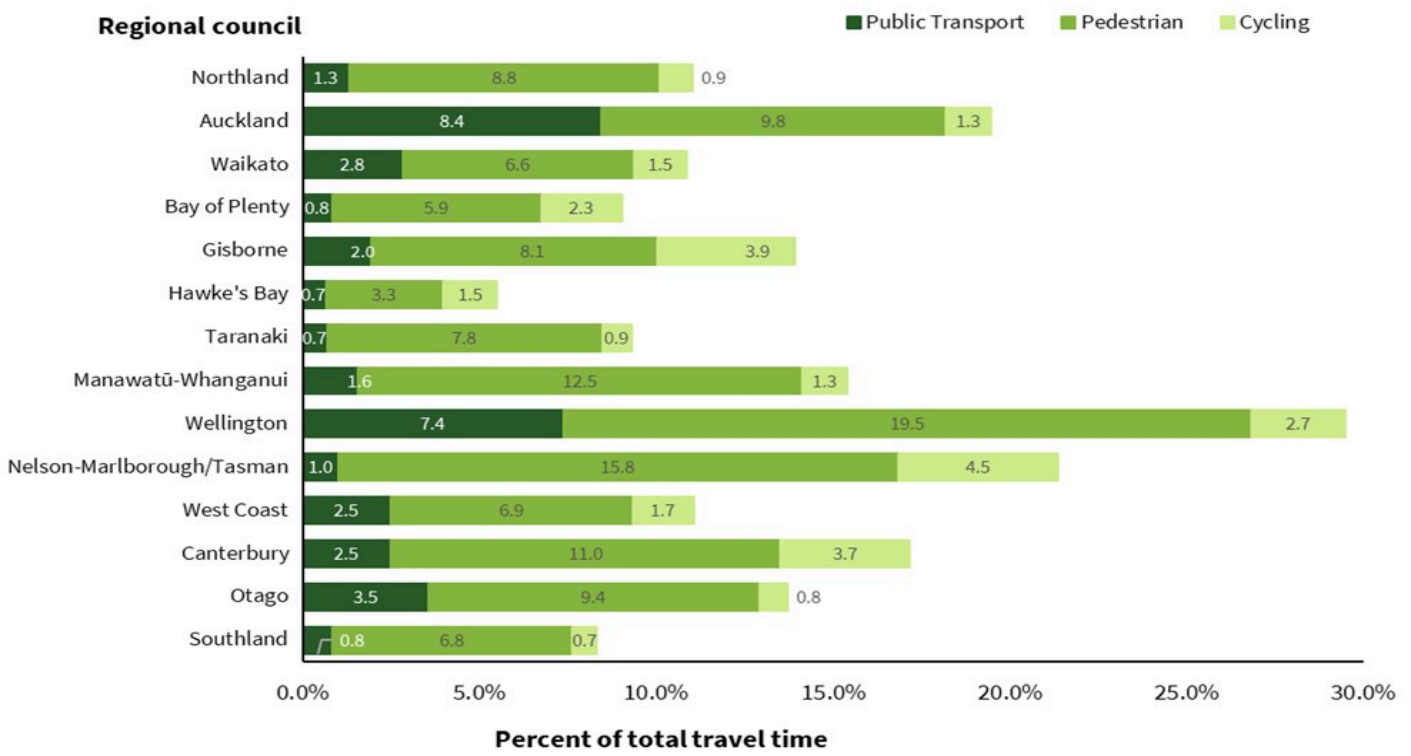
Source: Household Travel Survey (Ministry of Transport 2023b)

There were large regional differences in active and public transport use

The use of active transport and public transport can be limited by several barriers, including concerns about road safety, a lack of safe places to travel and poor urban design. In smaller towns and rural areas, public transport is often not available.

In 2019–22, public and active transport made up a particularly high percentage of travel time for people in the Wellington region (29.5%), compared to the national average of 17% (Figure 3). Much of this is due to the amount of time spent walking, which was nearly double the national average. People in Nelson Marlborough (21.4%) and Auckland (19.5%) regions were also high users of public and active transport. Nelson Marlborough/Tasman had the highest percentage of travel time for cyclists (4.5%), followed by Gisborne (3.9%) and Canterbury (3.7%).

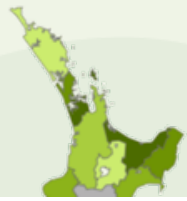
Figure 3 Use of active and public transport, by regional council area, 2019–22



Note: 'The Ministry of Transport reports Nelson Marlborough and Tasman as a single region.

Source: Household Travel Survey (Ministry of Transport 2023b)

Dashboard - Transport



Data for this indicator

This indicator presents the share of household travel time by mode of transport, from the New Zealand Household Travel Survey for the period from July 2019 to June 2022.

'Household travel' excludes professional driver trips - journeys to transport goods or people for commercial purposes. In this factsheet, 'motor vehicles' includes driving or being a passenger in a car, van or motorbike, 'active transport' includes walking and cycling, and 'public transport' includes travel by bus, train or ferry.

Due to changes in the survey methodology in 2015 and 2018, the results for the 2019–22 period are not comparable to prior releases. For this reason, the data presented in this factsheet cannot be compared to the contents of previous editions. Confidence intervals are not available for this data, so care should be taken in assessing differences between values or changes over time.

For further information about the data, see the Metadata sheet.

References

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