LIVING STREETS SCOTLAND

GETTING SCOTLAND WALKING: THE CASE FOR ACTION

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A Living Streets project in partnership
with Glasgow Centre for Population Health

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SUMMARY

THIS BRIEFING EXPLAINS WHY WALKING IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT FORM OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NOT JUST FOR OUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, BUT BECAUSE OF THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS IT BRINGS TO OUR LIVES.

The significance and benefits of walking are increasingly recognised in policy, exemplified by the proposed trebling of the active travel budget in Scotland over the next three years. However, our sedentary lives, obesogenic environment, car-dominated transport system, issues of safety in public spaces and socio-economic inequalities all contribute to lower-than-optimal levels of physical activity and walking in Scotland.

This paper, which is based on a rapid review of policy and evidence, describes walking trends in Scotland, the health and societal benefits of walking, the relevant policy context, issues which discourage walking and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on walking. In a concluding section, recommendations are made about how to increase walking levels in Scotland and areas where further research, data and evidence are needed.

KEY POINTS

1. **Walking remains an important sustainable mode of transport** despite sharp historic declines
2. **Walking provides multiple health, social and environmental benefits** in our lives
3. There are **significant inequalities** in who walks in Scotland
4. **Considerable health benefits** would result from tackling inequalities in walking
5. **National policies are strongly supportive** of investing in projects to support walking
6. **Enhanced effort is needed at local and national levels** to increase walking in Scotland
7. **More work is needed** to evaluate investments which aim to boost walking

INTRODUCTION

FOR MOST PEOPLE WALKING IS A NATURAL AND ENJOYABLE WAY TO MOVE AROUND. WE LEARN TO WALK EARLY IN LIFE AND DO SO THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES. IT IS OUR MOST COMMON WAY OF MOVING ACTIVELY AND IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MAINTAIN HEALTH IN OLDER AGE.

A good proportion of us commute to work on foot, and walking is one of the most effective ways to maintain health in older age. Our daily trips usually encompass at least some walking, whether for daily errands, on the way to work or study, going to the shops or for leisure.

Walking has many physical health benefits – improving fitness, strengthening bones and muscles, maintaining a healthy weight – and can improve mood, help to combat anxiety and depression, boost confidence and provide independence. Walking is simple, convenient and affordable and can take place anywhere – on streets in our city centres and in our local communities, in parks, out in the country and as part of other journeys. Walking can also contribute to wider societal goals. Replacing short car journeys by walking can help cut carbon emissions, reduce air pollution, alleviate congestion, increase social interaction and can benefit the local economy.

However, despite these many benefits, levels of walking are not as high as they could or should be and in many contexts walking levels have declined.

As an illustration, **24 people out of 100 walked to work in Scotland in 1966 but by 2011 that figure had halved to 12 in 100**[1]. Many of us have sedentary lifestyles, influenced by screen use, automation, and access to a car. This, combined with urban sprawl, car-dominated built environments and over-consumption of unhealthy food, has led some to describe this modern context as the obesogenic environment[2].

So in the midst of a climate emergency, and when two out of three adults are overweight or obese and one third of all adults do not exercise enough[3], how do we encourage more people to walk regularly? In this briefing we explore the evidence about walking in Scotland: its benefits for people of all ages, current policy, factors that discourage walking and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We finish with recommendations for how to increase walking in Scotland and point out where further research, data and evidence are needed.

24 PEOPLE OUT OF 100 WALKED TO WORK IN SCOTLAND IN 1966 BUT BY 2011 THAT FIGURE HAD HALVED TO 12 IN 100

EVIDENCE REVIEW

WALKING IN SCOTLAND

IN THIS SECTION WE DESCRIBE TRENDS IN WALKING, HOW FAR WE WALK AND HOW INDIVIDUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECT LEVELS OF WALKING.

In 2019, walking was the main mode used for 22% of journeys in Scotland, which is a historic low compared to 35% in the 1970s[4]. **A total of 12% of adults walked to work and 52% of children walked to school**[5]. In 2019, the proportion of journeys under two miles made on foot was 47.6%, and 67% of adults had made a journey of more than a quarter of a mile by foot to go somewhere in the last week. Over 60% of adults walked as a means of transport, for pleasure, or to keep fit at least one day a week or more[5].

Levels of walking differ little by gender, but regular walking reduces in older age groups (60 years+)[6]. Exercise and fitness levels decline with age across all genders and all levels of activity[7]. Younger adults are more likely than older adults to meet the MVPA guidelines[i] with only 35% of those aged 75 and over meeting the guidelines in 2019 in Scotland[3].

Participation in walking (for at least 30 minutes in the last four weeks) is lower among those living in the most deprived areas (57%) compared to those living in the least deprived areas (78%)[6]. People with a long-term limiting condition are less likely to be physically active (54%) compared to those with no condition (88%)[6]. Most people in Scotland (83%) feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, but this reduces to just 38% of adults among those who rate their neighbourhood as very poor[8].

People in the highest income households walk more for leisure purposes than those in the lowest income households, while people from the lowest income households or living in the most deprived areas tend to walk to work more than those in higher income households or from less deprived areas. People in remote and rural areas walk less as a means of transport than people in large urban areas[5].

12%
OF ADULTS IN 2019 WALKED TO WORK

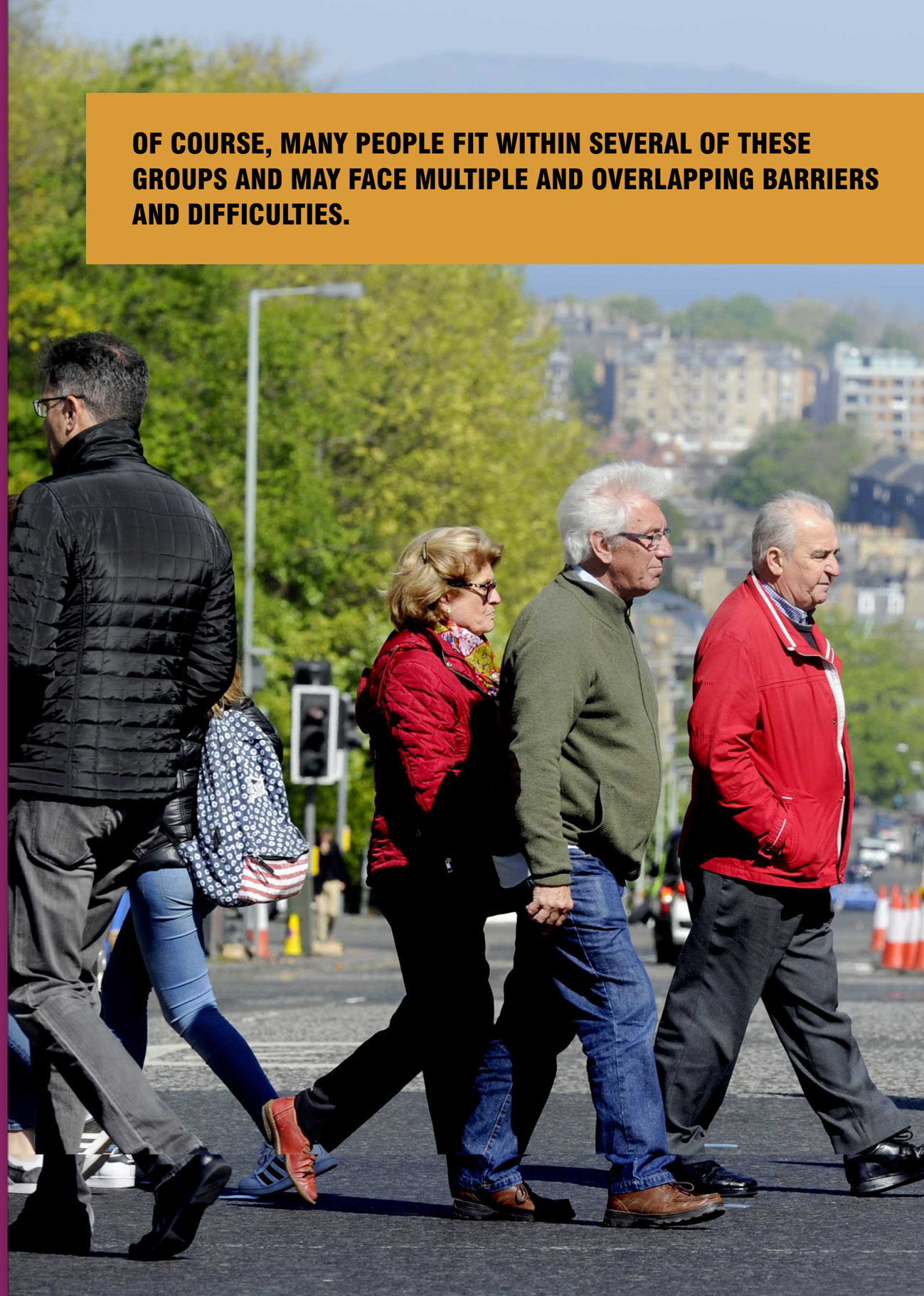
52%
OF CHILDREN WALKED TO SCHOOL

i The current UK guidelines for moderate or vigorous physical activity (MVPA) are at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity, 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or an equivalent combination of the two per week, plus strength exercises on two or more days each week that work the major muscle groups.

THE BOX BELOW SUMMARISES SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT DIFFERENT POPULATION GROUPS THAT RELATE TO WALKING.

POPULATION GROUP	RELEVANT ISSUE
OLDER PEOPLE	■ Generally, in poorer health and less physically active and lack confidence regarding walking journeys ■ Potential social interaction through walking important for tackling social isolation and loneliness ■ Current walking infrastructure doesn't meet basic needs in terms of feeling safety, comfort and convenience ■ More sensitive to air quality issues
WOMEN	■ Less physically active than men, especially through formal sports ■ Have greater safety concerns in public spaces and are more likely to experience threats to their safety ■ Less likely to own a car ■ More likely to have a caring role than men
PEOPLE FROM AN ETHNIC MINORITY	■ Some groups less active ■ Less access to greenspace ■ May be more concerned about safety in public spaces
DISABLED PEOPLE	■ Mobility issues that limit walking speed and distance ■ Face physical barriers to walking due to poor quality or poorly designed infrastructure ■ Challenges reaching accessible public transport services
PEOPLE LIVING IN DEPRIVED AREAS	■ More likely to live close to vacant and derelict land ■ More likely to be a pedestrian road casualty ■ Less likely to feel safe walking alone at night in local community ■ Less likely to have a car so more likely to depend on walking and public transport
CHILDREN	■ Significant proportion do not achieve recommended levels of exercise ■ More vulnerable to traffic accidents due to skills and lack of awareness ■ Concerns over road safety have progressively reduced children's independence to walk on streets ■ Need streets for play and socialising ■ More sensitive to air quality issues ■ Travel choices influenced by parents and their perception of safety in the built environment

OF COURSE, MANY PEOPLE FIT WITHIN SEVERAL OF THESE GROUPS AND MAY FACE MULTIPLE AND OVERLAPPING BARRIERS AND DIFFICULTIES.



HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF WALKING

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (PA) PREVENTS 3.9 MILLION PREMATURE DEATHS GLOBALLY EACH YEAR[9].

Walking in most cases would be recognised as moderate intensity physical activity which can reduce the risk of many common diseases and conditions. This includes heart disease, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, dementia, anxiety, depression, postpartum depression, excessive weight gain, falls with injuries among the elderly, and several cancers. Moderate intensity physical activity can also reduce blood pressure, improve insulin sensitivity, improve sleep, and improve cognition on the day that it is performed as well as through regular exercise[10]. Exercise is also recognised as providing protection against and being an effective treatment for osteoarthritis[11]. In contrast, physical inactivity contributes to the burden of disease from a wider range of diseases including coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancer, and causes premature mortality.

Walking expends energy and therefore has the potential to control weight gain. Dynamic aerobic exercise, such as walking, builds up fitness and enhances a multitude of bodily processes that are inherent in skeletal muscle activity[12].

Walking is also a weight-bearing activity, helping to maintain bone strength, mobility and balance. It also provides broader health and wellbeing benefits, reducing isolation and loneliness and encouraging social interaction. Walking has been shown to have a positive effect on the symptoms of depression in some populations[13].

Group walking in natural environments can help people connect with others and with nature, and there is some limited evidence that this type of activity supports improvements to mood, self-esteem and symptoms of depression[14]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments acknowledged the importance of outdoor exercise (walking, cycling and jogging) for people's health and wellbeing by including it as one of the few legitimate reasons for people to leave their homes during the early stages of lockdown.

A RECENT STUDY, USING DATA FROM THE 2011 CENSUS, SHOWED THAT 51% OF PEDESTRIAN COMMUTERS IN SCOTLAND MET THE 30 MINUTES A DAY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TARGET SOLELY FROM THEIR DAILY COMMUTE AND THE ANNUAL HEALTH ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF REGULAR WALKING TO WORK WAS ESTIMATED TO BE APPROXIMATELY EUR 700.2 MILLION[16].

Active travel, which includes walking, is one of the most practical and sustainable ways to increase daily physical activity[15]. Although only a relatively low proportion of commuters walk to work in Scotland, approximately 12%, this still equates to over 250,000 people. Many habits – both good and bad – begin in childhood. The 2021 Active Healthy Kids Scotland Report Card, a 'state of the nation' report on the physical activity and health of Scottish children and adolescents conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights that Scottish children spend far too long sitting in front of screens and only about half of children are travelling actively to school[17]. The report also points to multiple inequalities in healthy behaviours with markedly worse outcomes for deprived children compared to their less deprived peers in relation to: screen and computer time, active commuting to school, engagement in sport, outdoor excursions, diet and access to safe outdoor spaces[17].

However, walking can provide many positive influences from early in life. For example, being able to walk to a park or to school and playing outside can provide children and young people with multiple developmental benefits: the opportunity to socialise, to engage in active, creative, outdoor play, to explore and experience natural environments and to develop independence and self-confidence[18].

It has been argued that changes to street designs to promote active travel (during the pandemic and beyond) should also consider streets as sites of dwelling, playing and connection for the benefit of both children and the wider community[19].

Walking can bring economic benefits, particularly for high streets and local economies. The Pedestrian Pound[20], published by Living Streets, shows that investment in better streets and places delivers quantifiable commercial returns and that businesses, residents, developers and visitors all benefit from investment in the public realm and walkability. Walking, and infrastructure for walking, has a key part to play in an effective public transport system and there are multiple health, environmental and mobility benefits in creating places where walking and cycling are prioritised[21]. Infrastructure for walking is cheaper to build than new roads, has a much lower carbon footprint associated with construction and usage, and self-evidently does not have the same potentially detrimental impacts on health and the environment[22]. A European Commission study found that in 2016 UK road transport was responsible for £99bn in external costs related to congestion, road crashes, climate impacts, air and noise pollution, and damage to wildlife, soils and habitats, representing almost 5% of UK GDP[23].

"SUSTAINABLE PLACES, WHERE WE REDUCE EMISSIONS AND.... LIVEABLE PLACES, WHERE WE CAN LIVE BETTER, HEALTHIER LIVES"

POLICY

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING POLICIES IN SCOTLAND HAVE BECOME PROGRESSIVELY ALIGNED IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVE TRAVEL AND INCREASING LEVELS OF WALKING.

The National Walking Strategy, published in 2014[24], was followed by an action plan in 2016. There is recognition of the role active travel can play in both increasing levels of physical activity[25] and addressing overweight and obesity[26]. Environments where walking is prioritised – for instance where road space is reallocated away from motorised transport towards active forms of travel – can lead to a modal shift away from car use, can reduce our carbon footprint and air pollution, and are more pleasant to be in[27].

The National Transport Strategy supports the sustainable transport hierarchy prioritising walking and wheeling as the most sustainable modes of travel and commits to creating a transport system where "walking, cycling and public and shared transport take precedence ahead of private car use"[28]. **In May 2021, the Scottish Government committed to a large increase in its spending on active travel**, to £320 million per year by 2024/25; a trebling of current funding[29].

The updated Climate Change Plan contains new policies aimed at reducing car demand, including a target to reduce car kms by 20% by 2030, and expanding active travel and public transport use[30].

Placemaking is another linked strand of government policy, influenced by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which when successfully implemented can help encourage sustainable travel, improve air quality, support green infrastructure and mitigate climate change[31].

Within the 2020 Programme for Government is **a commitment to work with local government** and other partners to take forward plans for 20-minute neighbourhoods, "where people can meet their needs within a 20-minute walk from their house – enabling people to live better, healthier lives and supporting our net zero ambitions." The draft national planning strategy (NPF4) envisages "sustainable places, where we reduce emissions and.... liveable places, where we can live better, healthier lives" through compact growth, supporting local living by creating networks of 20-minute neighbourhoods, and by facilitating walking and cycling[32].

ISSUES

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT CAN ENABLE OR DISCOURAGE WALKING. WE SUMMARISE SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT BARRIERS AND ISSUES THAT CAUSE DIFFICULTIES BELOW.

We know that the quality of the walking network influences usage. Street clutter and poorly maintained paths/pavements (including rubbish, uneven surfaces) can make walking (and wheeling) more difficult and a less pleasant experience. A recent report highlights the poor quality of the pedestrian environment near social housing, while noting this is a much more widespread problem[33].

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED INCLUDE:

1. **Poor footway quality** and on street parking

2. **Minor junction design** which prioritises vehicle movement

3. **'Middle-status' streets without support for pedestrians** to cross or a design adequate to slow traffic

4. **Major roads, where the pedestrian environment is particularly poor**, and opportunities to cross are limited

5. An **absence of passive surveillance** across wide urban areas

6. **Limited availability of walkable facilities** such as local shops, and particularly long or unpleasant walks to supermarkets or other key facilities

Roads with high traffic volume and high road speeds can lead to community severance, reduced social interaction, greater safety concerns[34 35] and thus less local active travel. Literature reviews confirm a consistent association between high traffic volumes and speeds of traffic and low levels of walking[36].

A UK study of urban severance found that survey participants who perceived the traffic volume as 'heavy' and the traffic speed as 'fast', and who reported these as a factor affecting their ability to walk locally and avoided using the busiest road due to those conditions, had a significantly lower wellbeing than those who did not report these perceptions[37].

Despite downward trends, there are still too many pedestrian road casualties. There were 812 pedestrian casualties in Scotland in 2020 – accounting for 16% of all casualties – and of these, 323 were seriously injured and 34 died[38]. Previous research showed pedestrian casualty rates for children and adults were between two and three times higher in the most deprived areas compared to in the least deprived parts of Scotland[39]. Approximately one in ten reported pedestrian casualties are injured in 'hit and run' incidents[ii].

Another study, commissioned by Living Streets, found that people from an ethnic minority (excluding white minorities) and a deprived area were three times more likely to be killed or injured walking on Britain's roads than a white person from a non-deprived area[40].

Women and non-binary people experience increased vulnerability and discrimination in outdoor settings and there is intersectionality to consider which puts them at a heightened risk and vulnerability[41]. As a consequence, they regularly and subconsciously make decisions on how they travel and use public spaces based on their safety in a way in which men typically do not[42].

DISABLED GROUPS HAVE FELT THAT THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT SOME NEW ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED, FOR EXAMPLE, THE IMPACTS OF TEMPORARY CYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC WHERE THIS HAS MADE CROSSING STREETS HARDER AND ALTERED ACCESS TO BLUE BADGE PARKING.

There are many health and wellbeing benefits of living close to greenspace but in Scotland, while most adults (65%)[43] live within a five-minute walk of their nearest area of green space, fewer adults in deprived areas live within a five-minute walk of their nearest greenspace compared to adults in the least deprived areas (58% compared to 68%). People in deprived areas are also much more likely to live close to vacant and derelict land. Over half of people living in the most deprived decile in Scotland were estimated to live within 500 metres of derelict land in 2019 (55%), compared to 11% of people in the least deprived decile[44].

A recent Scottish study found the population groups least likely to use the outdoors on a weekly basis include people with a disability, Muslims, residents of Scotland's most deprived areas, people of Black and other non-white ethnic groups and people aged 76 and over[43].

ii Based on an analysis of pedestrian road (Stats 19) casualties in Scotland by GCPH.

COVID-19 IMPACTS

ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE AND THE OUTDOORS BECAME MORE VALUED IN THE EARLY PHASE OF THE PANDEMIC.

THE PANDEMIC HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

Walking was one of the few activities people could do outdoors in the early period of lockdown, and with less motorised traffic many more people went out walking, particularly for leisure[45]. However, Transport Scotland analysis suggests that **during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic walking levels in Scotland were depressed overall**, reflecting in part reduced walking to work and to public transport, and perhaps also the location of automatic counters not capturing the increase in recreational walking seen during the pandemic[46].

Research conducted in Scotland in early summer 2020 found that many people reported benefits from the time they spent outdoors during lockdown. **Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported mental health benefits, that their experiences had helped to de-stress, relax and unwind,** and that spending time outdoors had made them feel energised and revitalised[47].

Access to green space and the outdoors became more valued in the early phase of the pandemic. Many people wanted to spend more time outdoors for leisure and exercise, and to walk and cycle more. However, inequalities in access and use of green space were apparent: socially disadvantaged people and older people were even less likely than before the pandemic to access green spaces during the COVID-19 restrictions, and nearly a fifth of Scottish adults with long-term health conditions or disabilities felt prevented from enjoying nature due to not feeling physically safe/safe from harm[48].

Children's lives have been affected in multiple ways by COVID-19 and the associated restrictions, including their access to the outdoors. During the early phase of the pandemic, **activities for young children (aged 2-7 years) such as playing outside, walking, cycling and scooting were much more common in higher-income families**. Children in larger families were less likely than those in smaller families to have been walking, cycling, scooting, or going to a park or another greenspace and this was also the case for children from single-adult families compared to two-adult families[49].

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

THE RECENT INCREASE IN THE ACTIVE TRAVEL BUDGET[29] SHOULD HELP SPEED UP IMPROVEMENTS IN WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE, ALONGSIDE MORE ESTABLISHED PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON CYCLING.

Climate change and transport policies that aim to reduce car use and encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport are welcome, as is **the specific target of reducing car kilometres driven by 20% by 2030**[30]. Nevertheless, in the context of the global climate emergency, the introduction of practical measures to help implement these policies needs to accelerate.

Good walking infrastructure is a fundamental enabler of everyday walking for everyone and is particularly important for older people, but community evidence underlines that the walking environment in Scotland is hostile for older people. Scotland has an increasingly ageing population and walking is especially important for older people as it combines maintaining physical health alongside providing opportunities for social interactions.

Within urban environments there is a need for a good quality network of streets for walkers and wheelers, which is attractive, well maintained, accessible for everyone, offers resting places, is trip hazard and obstacle free, avoids severance, feels safe and which enables social interaction.

As part of the process of creating better infrastructure, communities need to be more involved in advocating for good walking infrastructure. The Walking Connects programme delivered by Living Streets is an example of how to bring the voices of older people into decision making[50].

Additionally, **disabled people, who represent at least 20% of the population[iii], should be among those involved in the early design stages** of new active travel infrastructure, in order that their views and experiences are heard and better designed paths and streets are built which are accessible to all.

A 20mph speed limit has been shown to be an effective public health intervention and the commitment to a 20mph speed limit[29] in built-up areas across Scotland should help drive down road speeds, reduce collisions and reduce casualties[51]. Slower speeds, better crossings and less traffic can help achieve the national road safety vision “of a future where no-one is killed on Scotland’s roads, and the injury rate is much reduced.”[52]

iii 20% of all Scots reported having a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day (Census, 2011)

The introduction of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) has been demonstrated to reduce car ownership[53] and LTNs are benefiting poorer and ethnic minority communities in London, where local authorities and Transport for London used equity criteria in their planning[54]. LTNs could have a role in the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods in Scotland, and particularly in areas with the highest risk of road collisions where there is the greatest potential to reduce casualties.

Women's safety in public places is a related issue. A survey during the pandemic (in 2020) found that **women were much less likely than men to feel safe – 62% and 89%**, respectively – walking alone in their local area after dark; additionally, **adults living in the most deprived areas were even less likely to feel safe (58%)**[55]. We need to look at how we can make our outdoor spaces safer for everyone. For example, by providing better street lighting at night and on popular paths across parks – further steps to protect women's safety have been outlined in a recent report from Glasgow[56]. If people feel safer in their local neighbourhoods at all times of day, then they will be more likely to have the confidence to travel actively.

Levels of children's physical activity are a concern. The Daily Mile, a school based physical activity programme developed at a Stirling school in which pupils run or walk outside for 15 min (1 mile) at a self-selected pace during class time, has been shown to make primary school children more active, less sedentary and improves their fitness and body composition[57]. Nevertheless, clearly more needs to be done to encourage and enable children to be active on a daily basis.

More safe and attractive outdoor environments that all children can access would help. Access to outdoor and natural space is important for everyone's wellbeing and is particularly important for children's play, socialisation and development. However, inequalities in access, safety and quality of greenspace exist. Equitable access to good quality greenspace for all communities is needed, which in turn will help encourage more children and adults to walk and be active outdoors. Greenspaces, such as parks and canal paths, should be treated as core parts of active travel networks.

A SURVEY DURING THE PANDEMIC (IN 2020) FOUND THAT WOMEN WERE MUCH LESS LIKELY THAN MEN TO FEEL SAFE – 62% AND 89%, RESPECTIVELY – WALKING ALONE IN THEIR LOCAL AREA AFTER DARK...

Wider placemaking and transport policies have a role to play in creating an outdoor environment that encourages more walking. Placemaking approaches are important but need to be a mandatory rather than optional part of planning new developments or redesigning existing communities. We need to reimagine and redesign our urban environments to create more compact towns and cities in which walking and other types of active travel become seen as the most convenient, safe and affordable choices[32].

Creating an integrated public transport system which links well with walking routes will be important. Part of this is about convenience, integrating ticketing across different services would help – ideally one ticket for trains, buses, trams, underground services and bike share schemes – but public transport also needs to be cheaper if more people are to choose to use it. Increasing public transport use will encourage more walking as part of multi-purpose journeys.

In tandem with investing in active travel and public transport, we should at the same time be increasing our efforts to reduce car use, to help encourage people to switch to more sustainable travel options and to drive down carbon emissions and air pollution[58]. There should be a presumption against building new roads[59] and an end to out-of-town developments.

However, we need to do more. As long as car travel remains relatively cheap and more convenient than public transport and active travel alternatives for most journeys, it will be difficult to encourage sufficient numbers of people to switch to more sustainable forms of travel. As an example, in the last decade the cost of motoring has risen but below cost of living increases, while bus costs have risen far more[60]. Approaches to increase the costs of car use through road pricing and reform of motor taxation will also be needed[61].

FURTHER RESEARCH, DATA AND EVIDENCE

THERE IS RELATIVELY LIMITED RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF NEW ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE ON LEVELS OF WALKING (AND ON CYCLING) IN SCOTLAND.

As investment in active travel infrastructure rises, there needs to be focus on the impact, and any unexpected consequences, of new paths, bridges and active travel networks. This will help provide the evidence of what works most effectively to increase levels of active travel, including walking.

Alongside more research, we also need better sources of information on all forms of active travel. While walking data is available at a national level (e.g. trends, demographic detail), breakdowns of who walks at a local authority level are much more limited. More detailed surveys that provide local coverage and greater differentiation by different demographic characteristics, including by age and disability, are needed to better understand and address inequalities in walking.

Surveys could also be useful for assessing public attitudes, preferences and concerns relating to walking, and for gathering information on behavioural influences, including weather, convenience, cost, safety and concerns about air pollution and climate change. Sustrans' new Walking and Cycling Index, which includes statistics on walking and wheeling and city and region reports (seven of which cover Scotland), is a major step forward in this regard[62]. However, further information about real life experiences and the quality of the street environment is still needed.

Additionally, a much more extensive national network of pedestrian counters is needed to understand trends in walking in different geographic contexts and for different types of journeys.

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