

The scope for increasing active travel

- 57% of trips made in Ireland are under 8 km. Excluding Dublin residents (who tend to make shorter trips), 50% of trips made by those living in the rest of Ireland are still under 8km.
- Yet ¾ of trips are made by car, as are 2/3 of trips even in densely populated areas.
- Half of trips under 2km are driven, as are 2/3 of trips between 2km and 4km.
- 15% of trips are on foot and 2% of trips are cycled.
- Therefore, there is substantial scope for increased walking and even more so, increased cycling.
- For longer trips, active travel and public transport can be mutually supportive.

The need for change

- Over the short timeframes necessary to reduce emissions, technological change alone will not be enough to meet policy goals.
- Substantial behaviour change is also necessary (= cleaner, and fewer, motor vehicles).
- Strategies to avoid climate crisis should prioritise policies that provide greatest societal benefits.
- As well as reducing CO₂ emissions there are major co-benefits from increasing active travel.
- This includes physical activity health benefits, better access to jobs and services for people on lower incomes, greater independence for children and older people, etc.

Can we get this change?

- Evidence increasingly shows that improving conditions for active travel, and/or making car use less attractive, does lead to behaviour change.
- We see this at a city level e.g. in the past 20 years, London saw an increase in population of 2 million, but car trips did not grow, and the mode share of cars fell from 52% to 38%.
- But we also see evidence from studies looking at specific impacts of interventions, for instance the Cambridge Busway Cycleway which led to increased active travel, particularly in rural areas and among those with children.
- My own work has found that restricting through motor vehicle access to neighbourhoods has led to a 20% reduction in past-week car use for residents in those areas.

How to get this change

- Motor traffic is the fundamental barrier to walking and cycling (this problem remains even with electric vehicles): active travel is much more pleasant, safe, and enjoyable where people don't have to mix with motor vehicles.
- For cycling, a step change is needed, with safe separated cycleways on major roads; minor roads are only truly 'cycle-friendly' if speeds and volumes of motor traffic are kept very low.
- Car-dominated environments particularly dissuade women (and other under-represented groups, and those travelling with children) from cycling: hence safe cycle infrastructure may fall under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.
- For walking, reducing the amount, speeds, and dominance of motor traffic can help increase walking and improve the walking experience (and free up space for greening, benches, etc.). This will particularly benefit disabled pedestrians who are at high risk of being injured by motor vehicles.
- Given the urgent need for change and the political challenges often facing implementation, the use of trials and temporary interventions can be effective, quick, and provide crucial early data on what works and what needs to be adapted in a given context.

Dr. Rachel Aldred, Reader in Transport, University of Westminster, UK
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References

On active travel and co-benefits of emissions reduction strategies:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(07\)61254-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(07)61254-9/fulltext)

On mode shift in London and the impact of 'mini-Holland' walking and cycling schemes:

<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-report-11.pdf>

On pedestrian injury risk and how this varies demographically:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140517306308?via%3Dihub>

On the Cambridge Busway Cycleway and its impact on active travel:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749379715006224>

On preferences for cycle infrastructure by age and gender:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01441647.2016.1200156>

Please appreciate that I have had little time to prepare this and hence have only made some brief notes, with a few links to relevant papers by myself and others. I am very happy to provide more references after the session on any of the topics we discuss, if this would be useful, or respond to emails.

Statistics on travel in Ireland come from the National Travel Survey. You may find my publications via

https://scholar.google.co.uk/citations?hl=en&user=jycgGvsAAAAJ&view_op=list_works

To contact me: r.aldred@westminster.ac.uk