

Commuting time by mode of transport

This factsheet presents the share of time people spent commuting to work by different modes of transport. This information supplements the 'main mode of travel to work' indicator, which will not be updated for 2018 due to Statistics NZ's implementation issues with the 2018 Census.

Key facts



In 2015–18, travel by private vehicle accounted for 79.9% of the time New Zealanders spent commuting to work. The majority of this time was spent as the driver of a vehicle (73.5% of all travel time) as opposed to travelling as a passenger (6.4%).



In 2015–18, about 9.2% of commuting time was spent travelling on foot, 6.5% was spent on public transport, and 2.1% spent cycling.



The percentage of commuting time spent travelling by the different modes of transport stayed largely unchanged between 2003–07 and 2010–14.



In 2010–14, Wellington had the highest share of commuting time spent using active or public transport (23.9% of all travel time). People in Northland almost exclusively commuted by private vehicle, with only 2.7% of their commuting time spent using active or public transport.

Relevance of mode of transport to health

Walking and cycling are beneficial forms of transport for both human health and the environment. These types of transport encourage increased physical activity levels, and produce no air pollution, noise pollution or greenhouse gases. Studies have shown that active commuting (e.g. walking or cycling to work) is associated with an 11% reduction in cardiovascular risk (Hamer & Chida 2008).

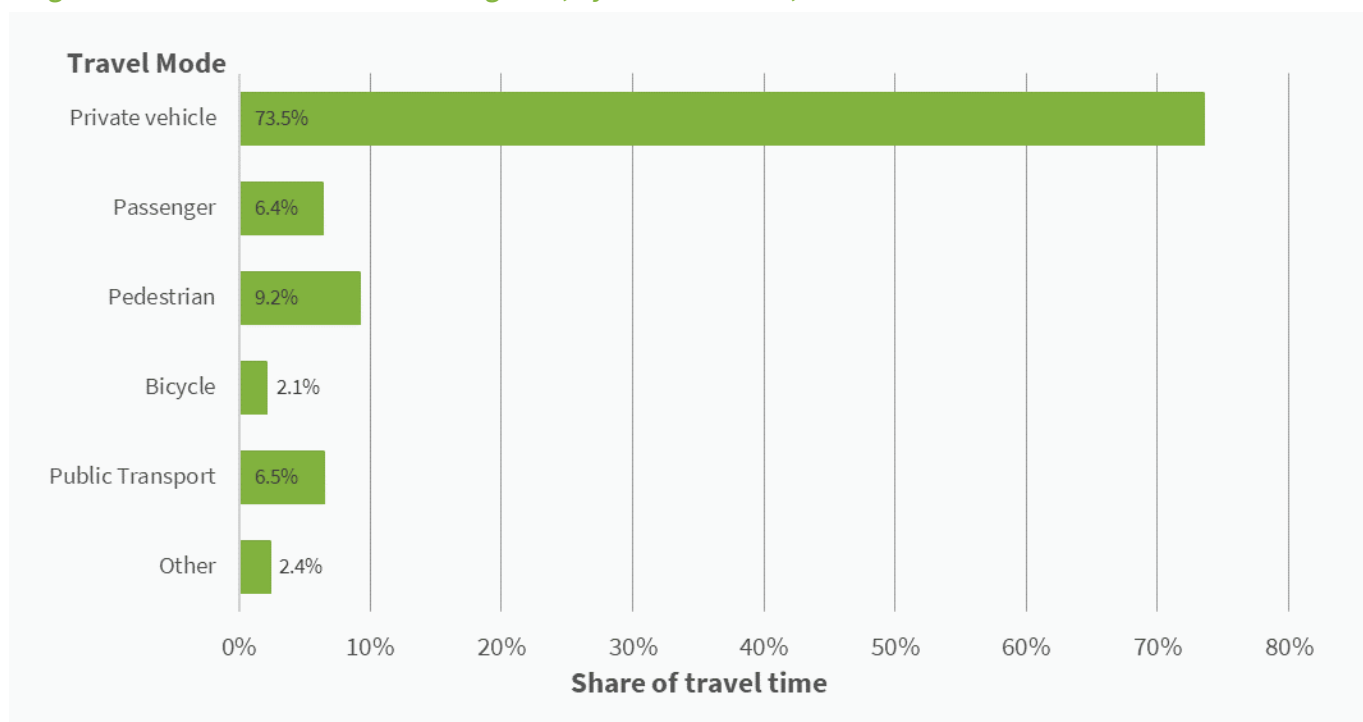
Use of public transport also increases physical activity to a small degree, reduces air pollution and road congestion, is safer than travelling by private vehicle, and can improve mental health (British Medical Association, 2012).

Private motor vehicles were the travel mode of choice for most New Zealanders and most people drove themselves

In 2015–18, New Zealanders spent an average of 150.4 million hours travelling to work every year. About of 73.5% of this commuting time was spent driving a private motor vehicle, with an additional 6.4% spent as a passenger in private vehicles (Figure 1). This meant that overall, 79.9% of all commuting time was spent travelling in private vehicles.

Around 9.2% of all commuting time was spent engaged in pedestrian travel and a further 6.5% of was spent on public transport. Commuting via bicycle represented 2.1% of all commuting time.

Figure 1: Share of annual commuting time, by mode of travel, 2015–18

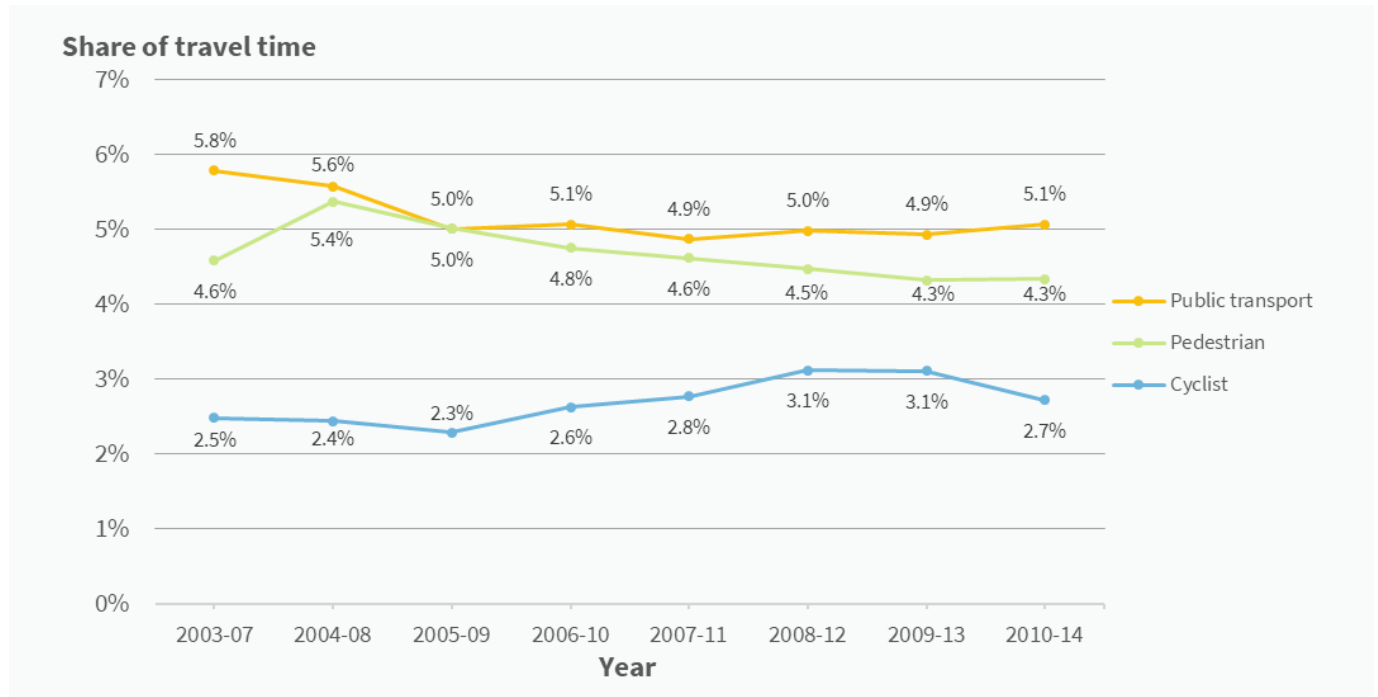


Source: New Zealand Household Travel Survey 2015–18 (Ministry of Transport 2019)

Time spent commuting by all modes of transport remained stable over time

From 2003–07 to 2010–14, the percentage of time spent commuting by active and public transport stayed relatively consistent (Figure 2). There was also little change in the use of private vehicles, which stayed around 85.6% (driver and passenger travel combined) throughout this period.

Figure 2: Share of commuting time spent using active and public transport, 2003–07 to 2010–14



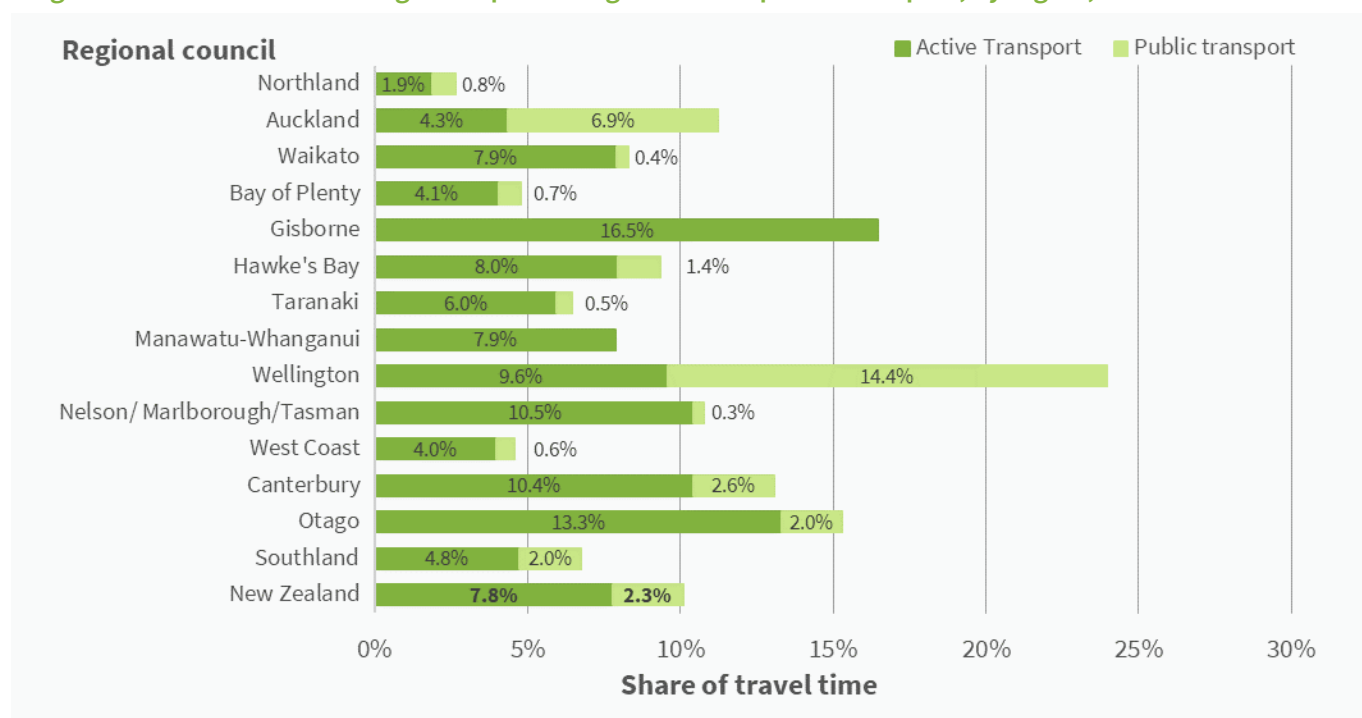
Note: Due to changes in the survey methodology, the 2015–18 figures are excluded from this time series as they are not comparable.
Source: New Zealand Household Travel Survey 2003–14 (Ministry of Transport 2018).

Time spent commuting by active and public transport varied between regions

In 2010–14, the Wellington region had the highest percentage of commuting time spent on public transport (14.4%) (Figure 3). The Gisborne region had the highest percentage of time spent using active transport (16.5%). Wellington also had the highest percentage of overall commuting time spent on both active transport and public transport combined (23.9% of all travel time).

Regional councils with low percentages of commuting time using active transport and/or public transport included Northland, West Coast and Bay of Plenty regional councils, all of which had less than 5% of overall commuting time spent on active and public transport combined.

Figure 3: Share of commuting time spent using active and public transport, by region, 2010–14



Note: Some results have been suppressed due to small sample sizes. Regional data for travel to work specifically is not yet available for 2015–18.
Source: New Zealand Household Travel Survey 2010–14 (Ministry of Transport 2018).

Data for this indicator

This indicator presents the share of household travel time spent travelling to work, by mode of transport, from the New Zealand Household Travel Survey. The New Zealand Household Travel Survey is carried out by the Ministry of Transport and collects information about day-to-day travel in New Zealand.

Due to a change in the survey methodology, the results for the 2015–18 period are not comparable to releases prior to 2015. Confidence intervals are not available for this data, so care should be taken in assessing differences between values or changes over time. For additional information, see the metadata link below.

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. ‘Pedestrian’ includes travel by foot, or foot-propelled devices such as skateboards. ‘Other’ includes travel by aircraft, boat (other than ferries) and less conventional forms such as horse riding.

References

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Hamer, M., Chida, Y. 2008. Active commuting and cardiovascular risk: A meta-analytic review. *Preventive Medicine* 46:9–13.

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