

# Place and Wellbeing: Movement Theme

**Evidence informed links from transport to health**



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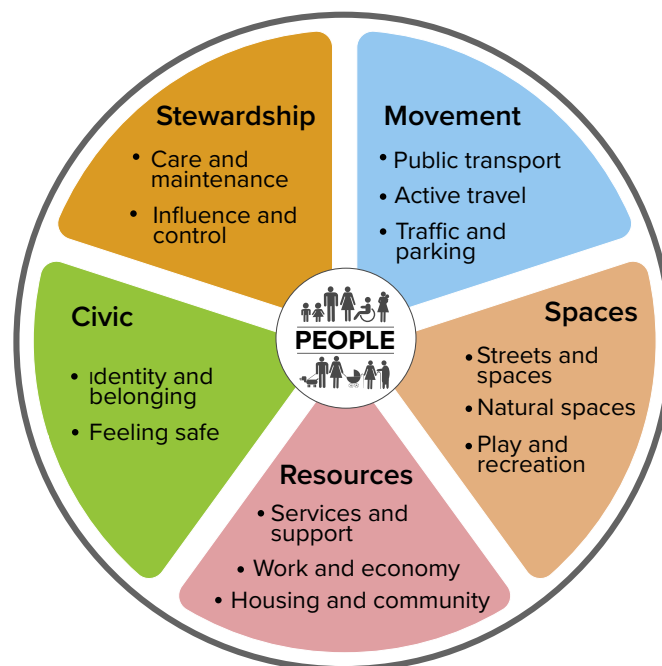
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# About this report

This briefing covers the movement theme within the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#). It draws on evidence to set out the ways in which aspects of the transport system — including active travel, public transport and motorised traffic — impact on health and health inequalities.

## Place and Wellbeing Outcomes



The principles of equality, net-zero emissions and sustainability underpin all of these themes, and all themes should be embedded in policy and action

## Purpose

This briefing is aimed at policymakers and decision-makers in the transport sector; planners and managers at all levels in local authorities and health boards; other community planning partners including health and social care partnerships; third sector organisations and community groups.



## Place and wellbeing: integrating transport and public health

The places we live, work, play and age have an important role in determining our health and wellbeing and enabling communities to thrive.

### A transport system supportive of population and individual health

The transport system, including active travel, public transport, private vehicles and transport infrastructure and services, is an essential part of a place. It is integral to creating better health and does so in many ways but can also cause harm to health.

Transport provides physical access to the building blocks of good health and wellbeing such as education and employment, affordable and good-quality healthy foods, leisure and the natural environment, and social and community connections. However, motorised vehicles, particularly private motorised vehicles, cause harm to health including:

- road traffic collisions
- financial hardship from forced car ownership where other travel options are lacking
- roads with high traffic levels or speeds can disrupt interactions between communities on two sides of the road. This is called 'community severance'. It affects interpersonal networks and social contacts of residents, as well as reducing access to goods and services for some members of the community
- pollution from particulate matters and emissions, which are responsible for global warming and climate change.

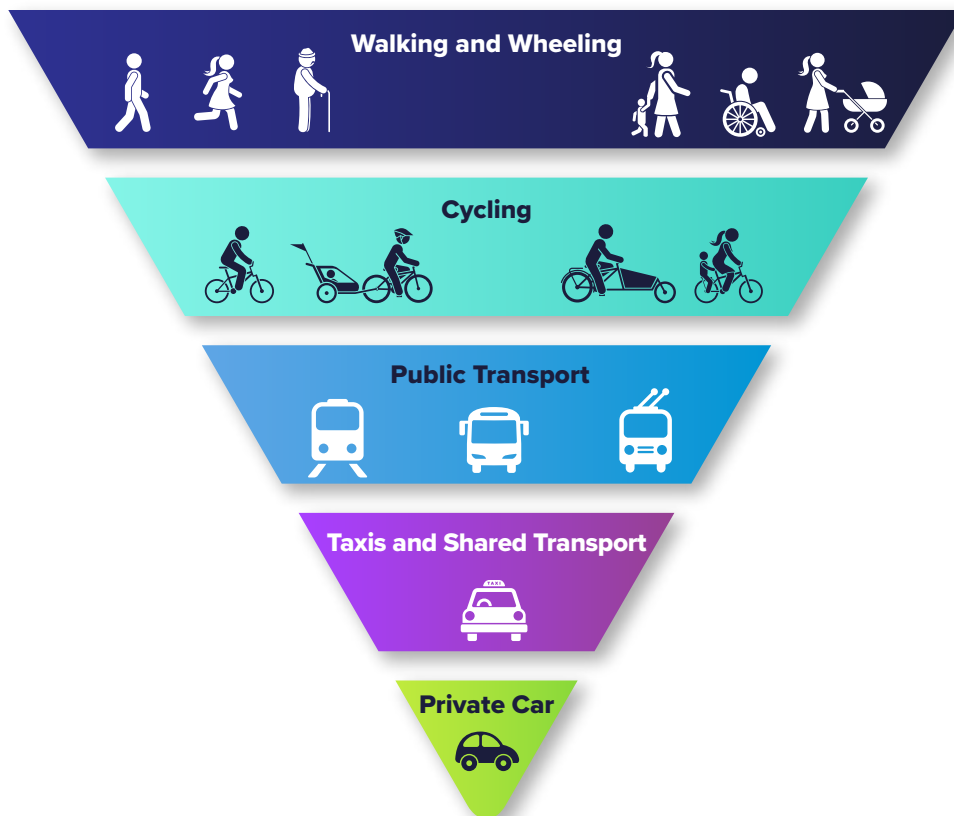
Modes of transport that minimise their impact on the environment, promote equity and contribute to improved health and wellbeing, referred to as sustainable transport reduces these harms.

Not everyone has access to the same transport options. [Transport poverty](#) is defined as the lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life. This has important health and social implications because it means not everyone has equal access to the building blocks of good health.

The [National Transport Strategy 2 \(NTS2\)](#) outlines four interconnected priorities to deliver its vision: reducing inequalities; taking climate action; helping to deliver inclusive economic growth; and improving health and wellbeing.

Embedding the sustainable transport hierarchy where active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) takes precedence, followed by public transport, while single-occupancy car use remains at the bottom of the hierarchy should be embedded in decision making to achieve these challenges.

### Sustainable Transport Hierarchy



Source: National Transport Strategy (NTS2), Transport Scotland

### Place and Wellbeing Outcomes: movement theme

One way of supporting a sustainable transport system to improve population and individual health is ensuring that the outcomes within the Movement theme are met in conjunction with the other themes of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes. This should be done in a way that takes account of the needs of different populations and geographies to ensure they achieve equitable outcomes for all.

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**Active travel**

Everyone can:

- easily move around using good-quality, accessible, well-maintained and safe wheeling, segregated walking and cycling routes and access secure bike parking.
- wheel, walk and cycle through routes that connect homes, destinations and public transport, are segregated from, and prioritised above, motorised traffic and are part of a local green network.

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**Public transport**

Everyone has access to a sustainable, affordable, accessible, available, appropriate, safe, public transport service.

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**Traffic and parking**

Everyone can benefit from:

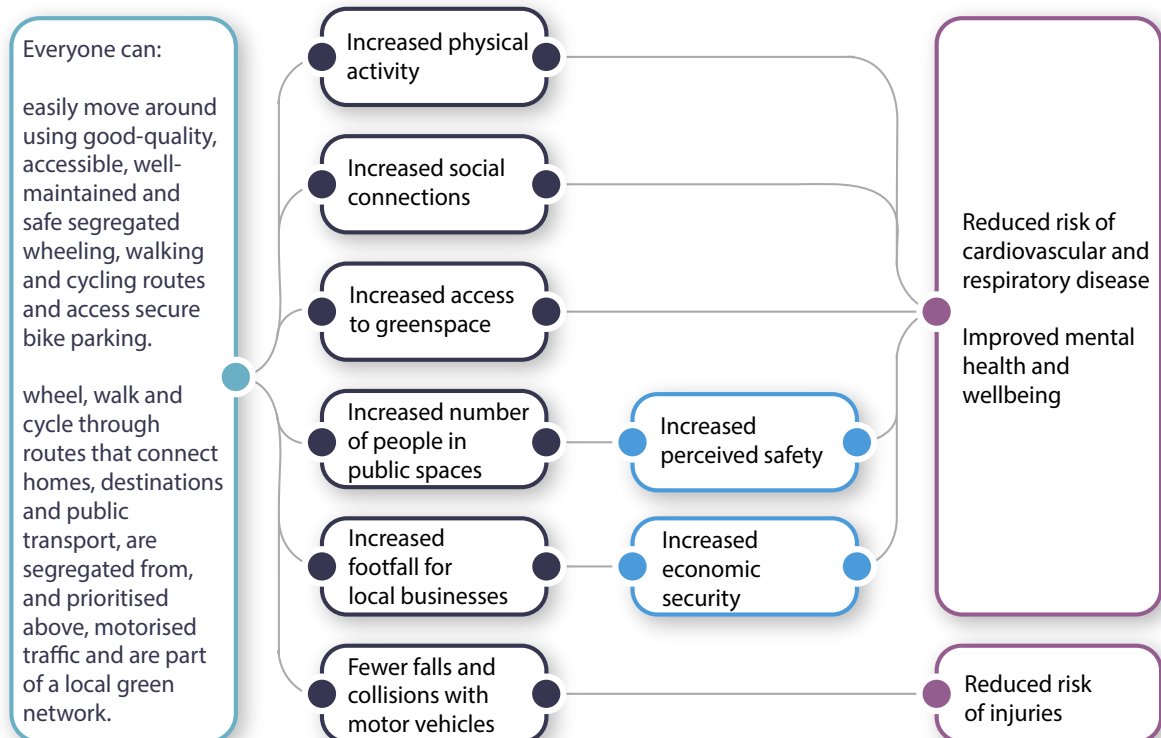
- reducing volume of traffic and traffic speeds in the community.
  - traffic management and design, where traffic and car parking do not dominate or prevent other uses of space, and car parking is prioritised for those who don't have other options.
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# How can the transport system help us achieve better and more equitable health for all?

The following section describes how each of the outcomes within the movement theme can contribute to improved health and/or reduce health harms. It also demonstrates the potential impact on health inequalities if the needs of different populations are not considered when developing and delivering policy.

## Walking, Wheeling and Cycling (Active Travel)



There is good evidence that walking, wheeling and cycling can bring benefits to physical and mental health. Using these modes of transport for both recreation and commuting can play an important role in increasing the level of physical activity and can provide opportunities for social interaction. In addition to the benefits directly from walking, wheeling and cycling - exposure to green space whilst traveling actively can also provide additional health benefits.

Local inclusive economic growth can play an important part in improving health and reducing inequalities. Improving safe walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure can increase footfall for local businesses. All of these factors can contribute to reduced risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and improved mental health and wellbeing.

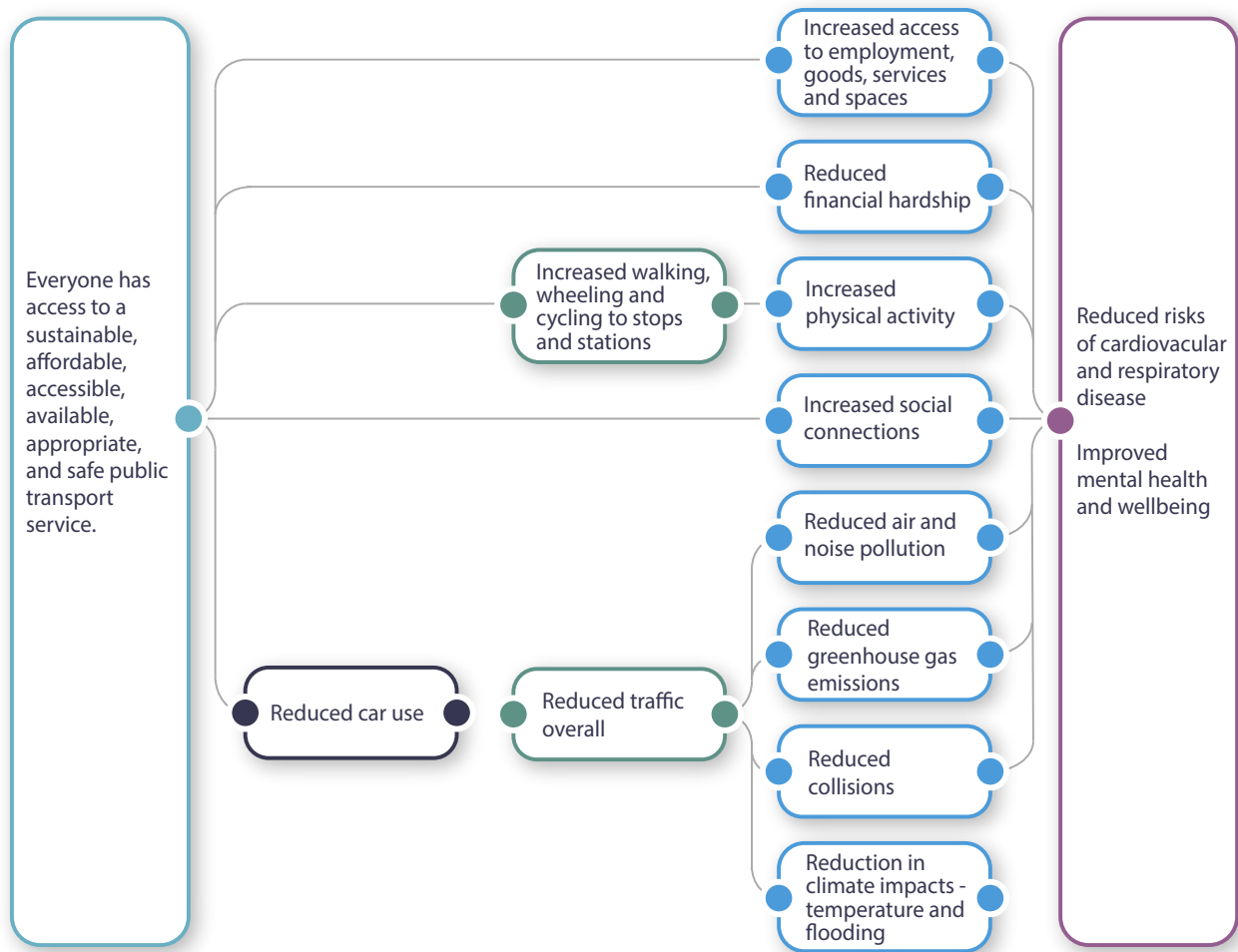
Pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists can be at risk of injury from falls, particularly if paths and pavements are uneven or poorly maintained. However, the greatest risk of pedestrian or cyclist injury is from motor vehicles. Safe infrastructure that separates pedestrians and cyclists from motor vehicles and safe speed limits are needed to reduce this risk. The health benefits of walking and cycling outweigh any potential health risks and harms.

### Inequalities in active travel

- Women and disabled people often report that they feel unsafe walking or cycling, particularly at night or in places that are not overlooked.
- There is a higher prevalence of cycling among higher-income groups; lower prevalence of cycling among women, older people and people from a BAME background; and accessibility barriers for disabled cyclists and wheelers.
- Inequalities in the wider community could arise if pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is unavailable or does not meet the needs of everyone including disabled people and older people. This could exacerbate health inequalities.



## Public Transport



Public transport is a sustainable mode of transport. It is essential for many people to access health and social care, other services, employment, education, training, leisure, sport and social activities.

Using public transport often involves walking, wheeling or cycling to stops and stations and can contribute to increased levels of physical activity and improved health outcomes. It also offers an opportunity for increased social connectedness.

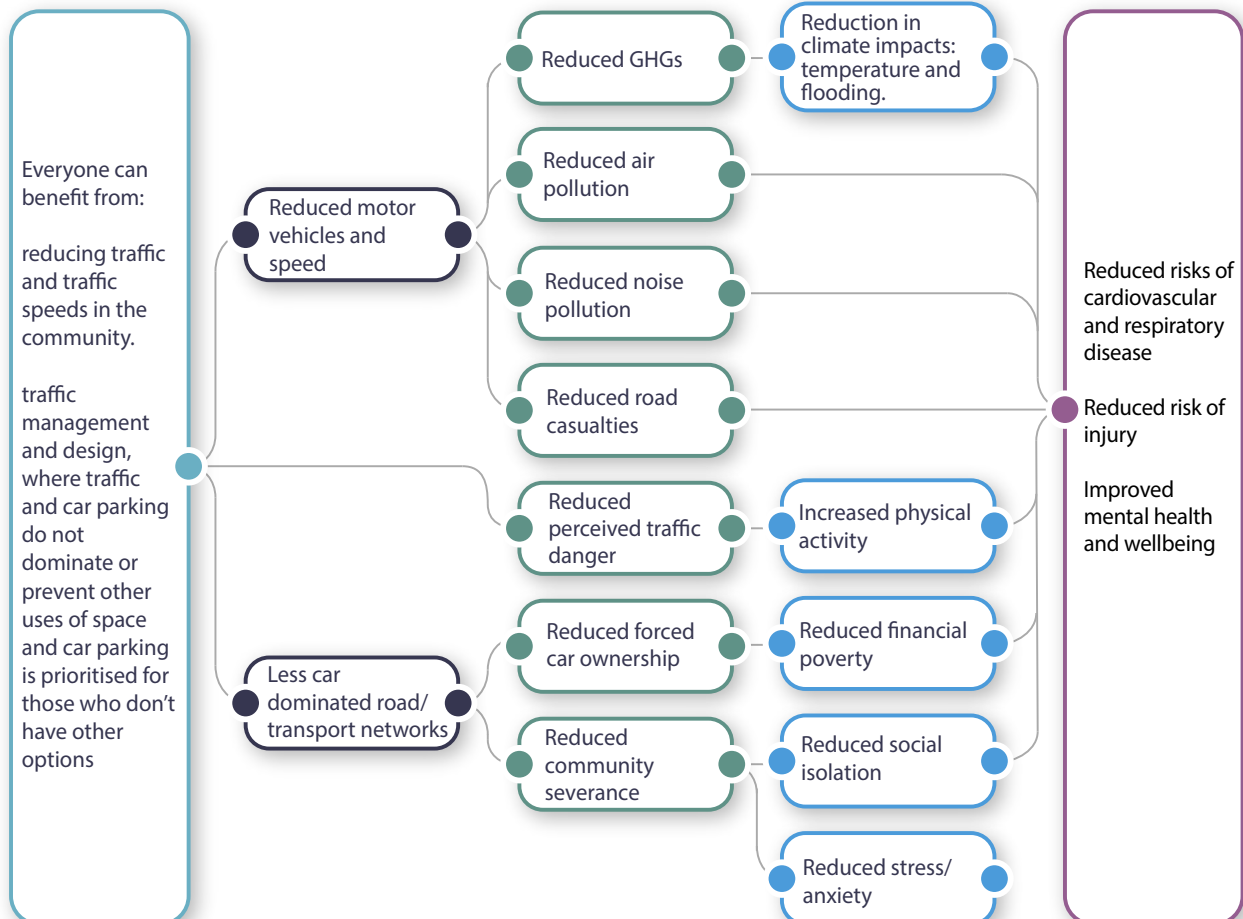
Public transport can carry people more efficiently than cars. Where greater use of public transport results in less car use this can contribute to:

- less congestion
- improved air and noise quality
- a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- fewer collisions.

## Inequalities in public transport

- Inequalities in access to an available; reliable; affordable; accessible and safe public transport system can differentially affect access to health care, education and training, employment, and goods and services. This is often the case for those without access to a private car, people on low income, older people and disabled people.
- Inequalities in access to public transport across geographical areas can differentially affect access to goods and services.
- Disabled people often report accessibility barriers that prevent them using public transport.
- The cost of public transport can be a barrier for people on low incomes.
- Public transport is essential for people without access to a car - who are disproportionately young people, older people, disabled people and people on low incomes.

## Reduced motor traffic



Motor vehicle traffic can negatively affect the health of vehicle users and, more particularly, the broader community in a number of different ways. Reducing traffic levels will bring benefits to health due to:

- reduced air and noise pollution
- reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- reduced road collisions
- reduced perceived traffic danger.

Car travel is a sedentary form of transport, and environments dominated by motor vehicles can feel unsafe for walking, wheeling and cycling. This means that car use can contribute indirectly to physical inactivity in the wider community as well as directly in car drivers and passengers.

Less car dominated roads/transport networks can also lead to positive health outcomes. Roads with high traffic levels or speeds can disrupt interactions between communities on two sides of the road. This is called 'community severance'. It affects interpersonal networks and social contacts of residents, as well as reducing access to goods and services for some members of the community.

Financial hardship and poverty contribute significantly to poor health. Limited access to public and active transport options can result in social isolation. People experiencing transport poverty are often forced to run a car or use private hire vehicles to access employment or meet their daily needs, despite having limited resources. This "forced car ownership" places additional financial hardship on low-income households.

### **Inequalities associated with car use**

- Car use differentially benefits wealthier people
- Forced car ownership can contribute to poverty and disproportionately affects people on low incomes and people in rural areas with fewer other options
- People with low incomes, young people, older people and disabled people are less likely to have access to a car
- People with low incomes, young and older people, and people with long term conditions disproportionately experience risks from motor traffic, including those associated with poor air quality, injuries from road collisions, noise pollution and community severance



## Conclusion

The evidence in this briefing demonstrates that the influence of transport on health and health inequalities is complex and wide ranging.

The transport system enables people across Scotland to access the building blocks of good health. Transport policy has the potential to deliver an integrated transport system which positively influences the public's health and addresses transport poverty.

The evidence shows that some areas of the transport system, such as active travel and public transport, have a positive impact on health, but differences in population needs must be considered so that health inequalities are not widened.

It is recommended that a [Place and Wellbeing Assessment](#) or scoping [Health Impact Assessment](#) is carried out as part of the development of national or local transport policy to ensure that these needs are identified and actions are put in place to mitigate any negative effect.

# Other sources of information

The evidence detailed in this Place and Wellbeing: Movement Theme briefing document is from the following sources:

- Public Health Scotland. [Evidence behind Place Standard Tool and Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#). Edinburgh: Public Health Scotland; 2022.
- Public Health Scotland. [Transport Poverty: A Public Health Issue](#)
- Public Health Scotland. [Transport use, health and health inequalities: The impact of measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19](#)
- Public Health Scotland. [Roadspace reallocation in Scotland](#)
- Essential Evidence for Scotland. [Essential Evidence 4 Scotland - Transport Research Institute](#) (napier.ac.uk)

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# Place and Wellbeing Collaborative

