

# BIKE *life*

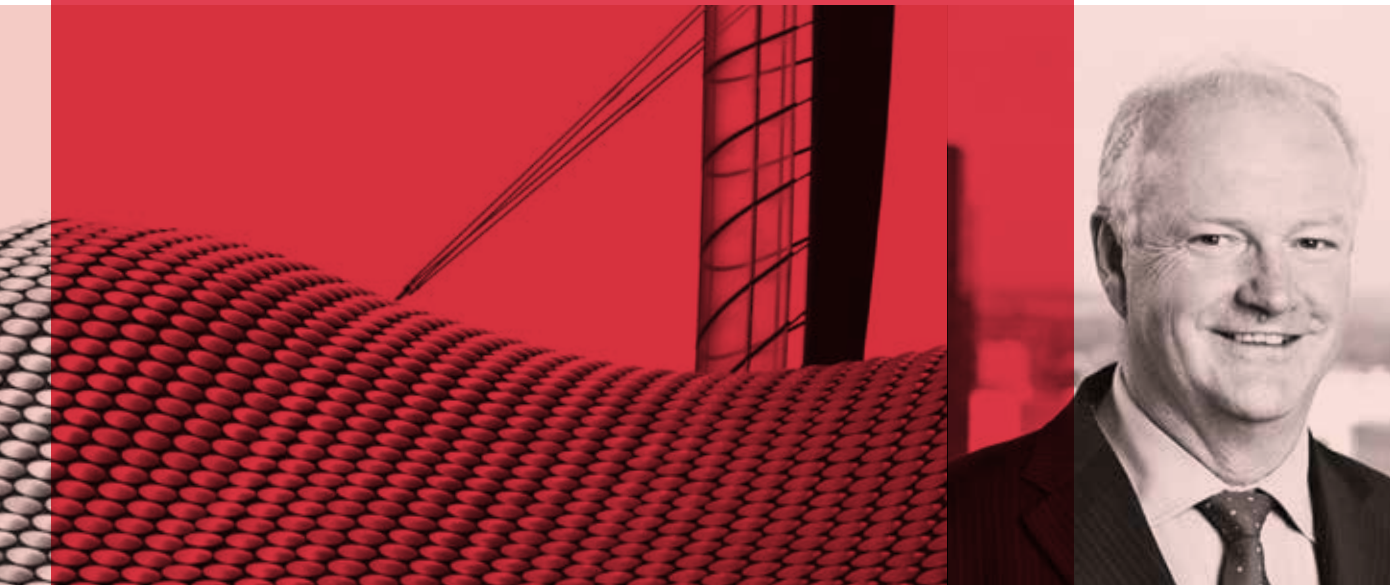
BIRMINGHAM  
2015



 **Birmingham City Council**



  
**sustrans**  
JOIN THE MOVEMENT



# The spirit of the bike in Birmingham

We need look no further than the wonderful independent film 'Bicycle' by Birmingham-based Blue Hippo Media to sum up all that the bicycle means to our city and the Midlands. Tracing the determination of the early, single-minded British bike manufacturers and their first riders, to the freedom and boundless joy of cycling here and now, this beautiful reflection of the bike through 100 years of heritage mirrors the spirit of adventure and freedom that cycling embodies.

The local cycle clubs boast friendship and competition in equal measure; youth members develop skills and race experience. The hipsters on single speeds dabble with bike polo in the evening light in empty car parks; families encourage children on their first bikes as their attention wanders and their wheels follow; the commuters, the couriers, the riders about town and universities, those riding together for comradeship and fitness, the led rides gently encouraging newcomers, disabled riders and returnees to two wheels.

Birmingham does all this and more. But it's time to get serious. 32% of our residents who do not currently ride a bike state that they want to ride. This is the highest proportion of any city surveyed as part of the Bike Life project, and is equivalent to quarter of a million adults.

The demand is clear. We have the responsibility to build safe, intuitive routes to fulfil this latent desire to cycle. We have the responsibility to give people the opportunity to make healthy, active journeys by connecting communities. And we have the privilege of shaping Birmingham in its transition to an inclusive cycling city where hopping on your bike is as carefree and natural a choice as getting in your car has been. That automotive legacy means that we lag behind other cities in our cycling provision. But the vision and the will to improve our urban streets and spaces is woven through our civic DNA.

I welcome this report. It's time to act. The aspiration and desire of residents for change is strong. Good cycling provision puts Birmingham on the map as an active city with the ambition to encourage residents to be healthy. An active city offers a good quality of life and makes good economic sense. It's about freedom, convenience, door-to-door journeying, connecting urban streets to winding lanes, no fares or parking fees. This is what we love about the ride. And there is always room for another bike.

**Tim Manson**  
**Policy & Development Director**  
**Marketing Birmingham**



# Introducing Bike Life

Sustrans is collaborating with seven cities in the UK – Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Greater Manchester and Newcastle – to report on progress towards making cycling an attractive and everyday means of travel.

Bike Life is inspired by the Copenhagen Bicycle Account, and is an assessment of cycling development including cycling conditions, new initiatives and satisfaction with various aspects of cycling.

This is the first of two reports, with the second being published in 2017. The information in this report comes from local data, including a representative survey of over 1,100 residents in Birmingham. More details on the report findings and methodology can be found at [www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife)

Our thanks to the people of Birmingham who took part in the survey and who volunteered to have their photos taken for this report.

## KEY FACTS IN BIRMINGHAM AT A GLANCE

**17 million** bike trips in Birmingham in a year

**20%** of people ride a bike once a month or more

**8 in 10 people** support increasing cycling safety

**77%** of people in Birmingham want to see more spent on cycling

**£33 million** is the benefit to health in the city, in a single year, from the current level of people riding bikes

**13,692 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>** saved annually by people making trips by riding a bike rather than driving – equivalent to the annual emissions of over 5,000 cars

**67p per mile** is the saving to individuals and to the local economy for every mile biked instead of driven – which works out at over £30 million a year for Birmingham at current levels of cycling



# OVERVIEW

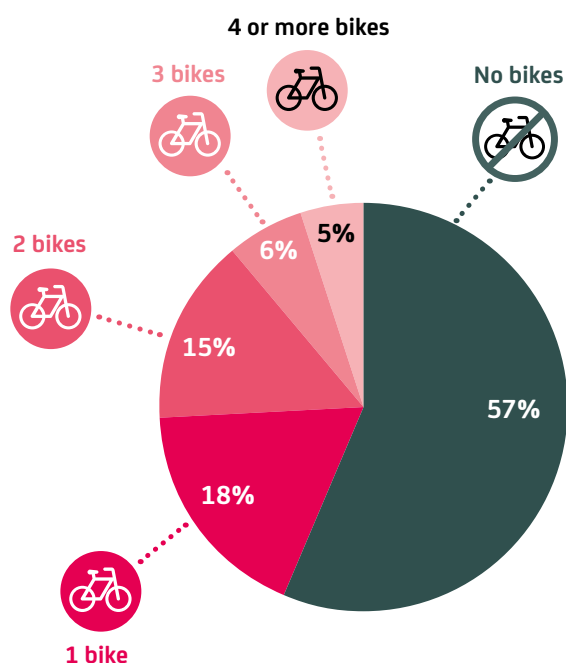
Taking the pulse of  
bike life in Birmingham



## BIKE OWNERSHIP IS A BIG PART OF LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM

**43%** of people in Birmingham live in households that own at least one bike.

HOW MANY ADULT BICYCLES DO YOU OWN IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?



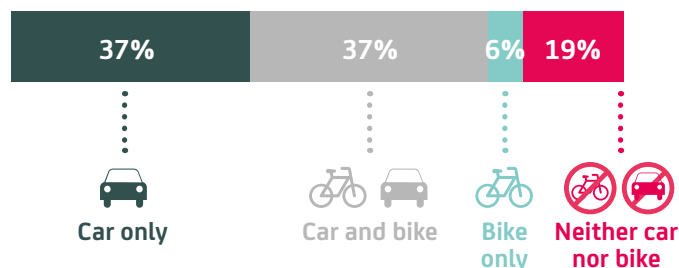
Bike ownership is greatest amongst those aged 45-54 with **52%** having at least one bike in their household compared to **49%** amongst 16- to 24-year-olds and **12%** amongst those aged over 75.

When it comes to children's bikes, nearly a third (**31%**) of people live in households with at least one.

There's a big crossover between owning a bike and owning a car – half of car owners also own a bike.

In Birmingham one in five (**19%**) people live in households with neither a car nor a bike, and **6%** have access to at least one bike but no car. Having the choice to ride a bike safely could help many people to get to jobs, services, family and friends.

HOW MANY CARS AND VANS ARE OWNED, OR ARE AVAILABLE FOR USE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

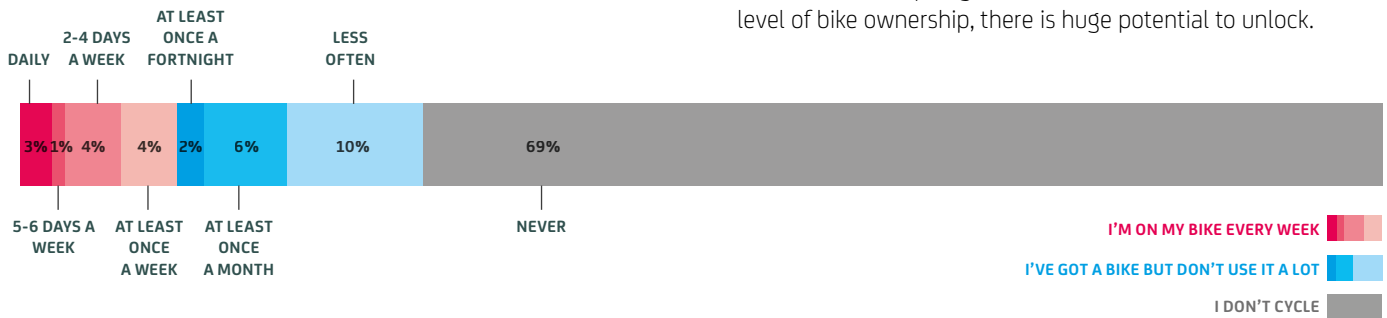


\*Car and bicycle ownership figures refer to percentages of people live in households who have them. This is different from the percentage of households that have a car or bike.

## HOW OFTEN ARE PEOPLE RIDING A BIKE?

THINKING OF HOW YOU USUALLY TRAVEL AROUND, HOW OFTEN DO YOU CYCLE?

A fifth (**20%**) of people in Birmingham say they usually ride a bike at least once a month, with **12%** cycling at least once a week. **4%** are cycling at least five times a week. Given the level of bike ownership, there is huge potential to unlock.

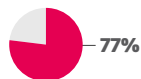


## PERCEPTIONS OF BIKES ARE OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE

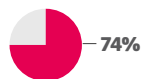
The people of Birmingham love what bike life can offer them.

### They agree that:

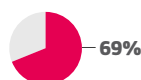
they like to see people out and about on bikes



things would be better if people in general rode bikes more



more people riding bikes would make Birmingham a better place to live and work



things would be better if friends and family rode bikes more



they feel they should ride a bike more



There are lots of reasons why the people of Birmingham think more people riding bikes would make the city a better place:



**Better health and fitness (68%)**



**Reduced traffic (40%)**



**Less pollution (35%)**



**Better for the environment (26%)**



**Cost savings (7%)**

## SAFETY IS A CONCERN, AND PEOPLE WANT MORE INVESTED

Less than four in 10 (**39%**) people think Birmingham is a good place to ride a bike overall, and when you dig deeper there are clear concerns about safety.

**only 27%**

of people rate cycling safety in Birmingham as good or very good

**only 22%**

of people believe that safety for children riding a bike is good or very good

But it's worth remembering that a serious injury or worse is rare at about **once every 2.1 million miles** pedalled around Birmingham.

**Over 8 in 10**

people want better safety for people riding bikes. Better safety requires more investment.

Across the seven cities involved in Bike Life, the average that people want national governments to be spending on cycling is **£26 per person** per year.



\*The question was 'Central and local governments in the UK spend around £300 per person on transport every year. Of this about £3 per person is spent on cycling, rising to £10 per person in some cities. How much do you think should be spent on cycling per person in the UK?'

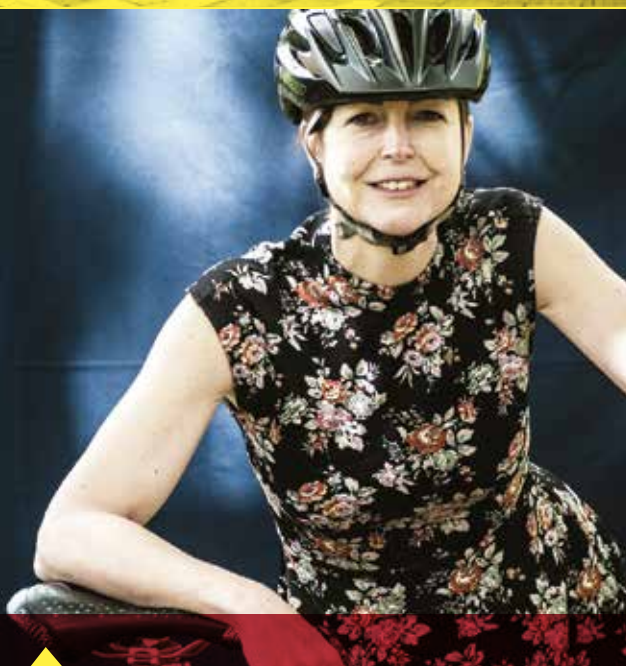


# VIEWS

from the saddle

"It's healthy, adventurous, [good for] exploring, saves money."

Rob Frampton



"Off-road routes are the best... I wouldn't take children on roads – it's far too dangerous. We need more cycle lanes to make road cycling safe for all ages and families."

Larissa Conroy

"It's enjoyable, and I can keep fit."

Jo Davies







"I cycle to keep fit and to explore the city's nice areas."

George Sotiropoulos



I like cycling on the cycle network as it's safe and a great green space."

Reuben Ambler



"I enjoy cycling along canal paths, green spaces and parks. I'd like to find out more about cycle paths to try out new rides."

Liz Gallagher



It's impossible not to smile when cycling! You can get around quickly and cheaply."

David Garside



# IN DEPTH

Facts and figures  
for Birmingham

## WHAT'S AVAILABLE AND WHO'S IN THE KNOW?

161 miles  
of bike routes

INCLUDING

130 miles  
of off-road cycleways

AND

15 miles  
of cycle lanes on roads

15% of people live  
within 125 metres of  
a cycle lane, track or  
shared use path



17.5%  
of Birmingham's  
streets benefit from  
20 mph speed limits



Over 2,500  
public bike  
parking spaces  
in the city

Awareness of bike parking, bike routes and initiatives to increase the numbers of people riding bikes is low amongst residents. Regular bike riders are, on the whole, slightly better informed.

HOW MUCH, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU  
SAY YOU KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING?

Cycle routes on or  
alongside roads

Residents – % great or fair amount of knowledge	29
Regular bike riders* – % great or fair amount of knowledge	46

Traffic-free cycle routes away from  
roads, through parks or along canals  
and former railway paths

Residents – % great or fair amount of knowledge	25
Regular bike riders* – % great or fair amount of knowledge	50

Other cycling facilities such  
as cycle parking

Residents – % great or fair amount of knowledge	12
Regular bike riders* – % great or fair amount of knowledge	30

Initiatives to increase the  
number of people riding a bike

Residents – % great or fair amount of knowledge	19
Regular bike riders* – % great or fair amount of knowledge	24

Residents – % great or fair  
amount of knowledge

Regular bike riders\* – % great or  
fair amount of knowledge

\*Regular bike riders are people who had ridden a bike within four weeks of being surveyed



## HOW DO PEOPLE RATE BIRMINGHAM'S CYCLE ROUTES?

Just over a third (**39%**) think Birmingham is a good place to ride a bike overall, and people rate the following as 'very good' or 'good'. ▶

The **signposting** of cycle routes

**40%**

The **condition** of cycle routes

**39%**

The **directness** of cycle routes

**30%**

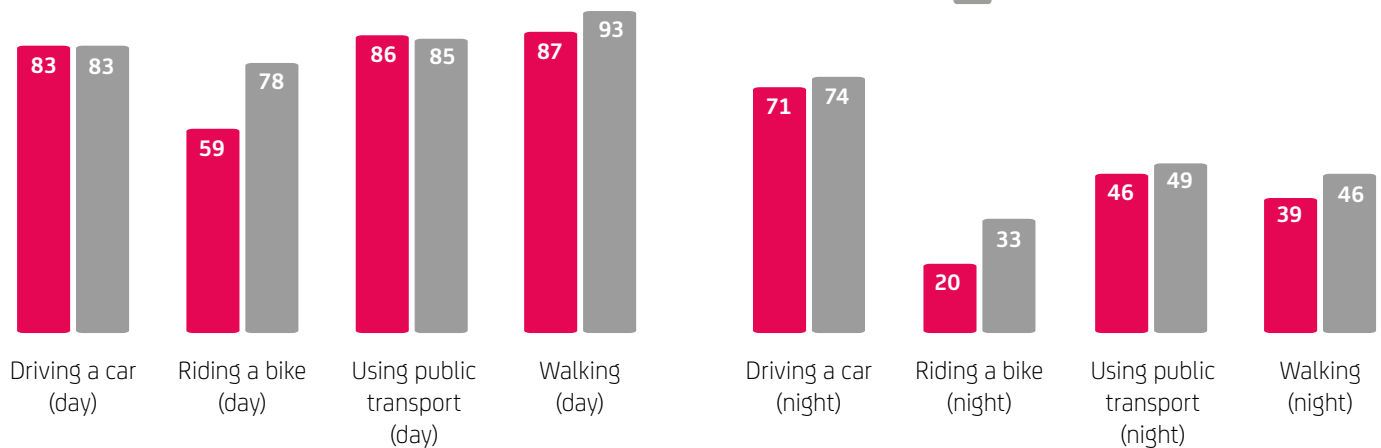
The **amount** of cycle routes

**29%**

## RIDING A BIKE FEELS LESS SAFE THAN OTHER WAYS OF TRAVELLING

HOW SAFE OR UNSAFE DO/WOULD YOU FEEL WHEN DOING THE FOLLOWING:

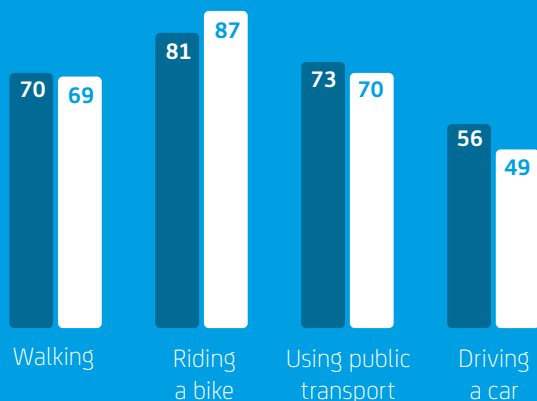
■ Residents – % feel safe  
■ Regular bike riders\* – % feel safe



## PEOPLE WANT IMPROVED SAFETY FOR CYCLING

FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING, DO YOU THINK SAFETY NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?

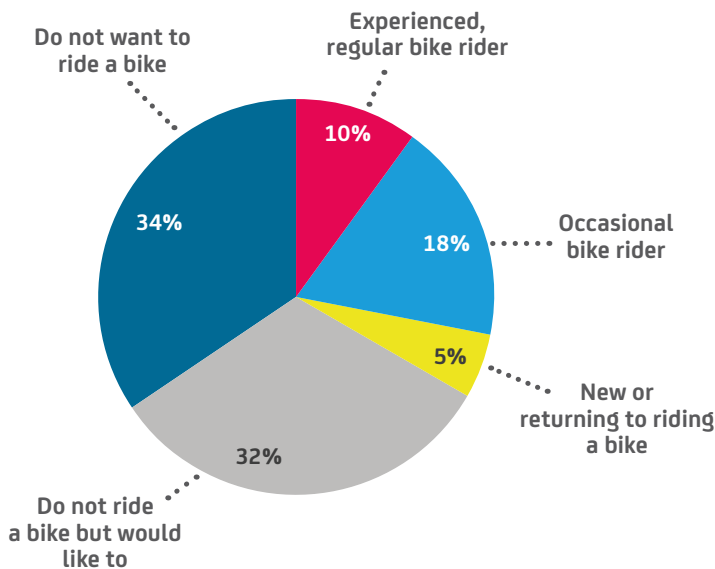
Eight in 10 residents (**81%**) support improving the safety of riding a bike, rising to **87%** among regular bike riders.



■ Residents – % safety needs to be improved  
■ Regular bike riders\* – % safety needs to be improved

# HOW DO PEOPLE SEE THEMSELVES WHEN IT COMES TO RIDING A BIKE?

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOU?



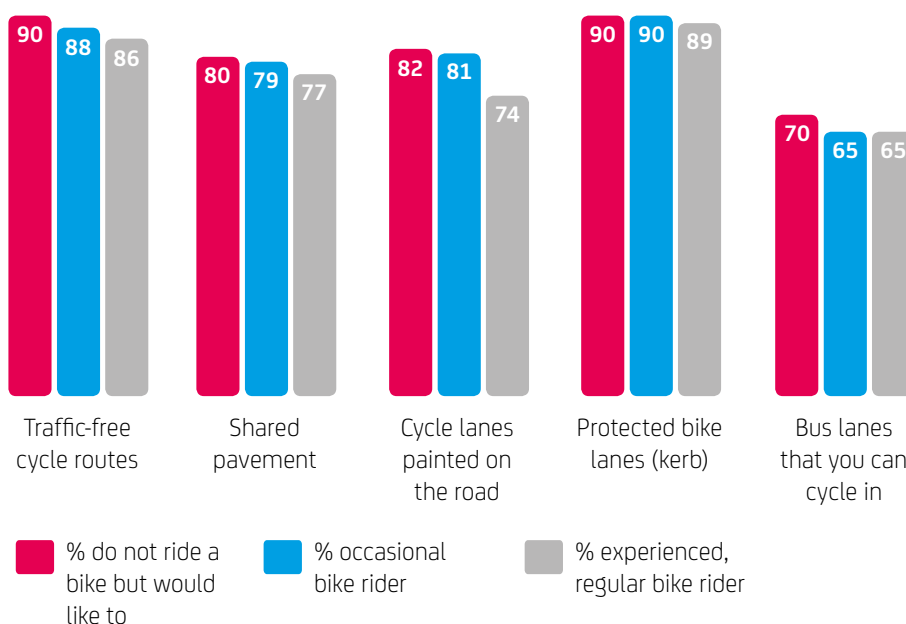
Whilst over a third (**34%**) of people do not want to ride a bike, nearly a third (**32%**) say that whilst they don't currently ride a bike, they'd like to.

Taking these people together with occasional, new and returning bike riders, the potential for growth is clear.

## WHAT KIND OF BIKE ROUTES COULD GET MORE PEOPLE CYCLING?

Protected bike lanes are one of the kinds of routes most people want to help them start cycling or to cycle more – **90%** of people who do not ride a bike but would like to, and of occasional bike riders, say this.

WOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HELP YOU START CYCLING/CYCLE MORE?



A large majority

(**77%**) of residents would like to see more investment in cycling.



Support is high

across all sections of the population, including people aged **over 75 (66%)**, those least likely to ride a bike.



## WHO'S RIDING AND WHERE?

Nearly 100 million miles are pedalled by people in Birmingham every year



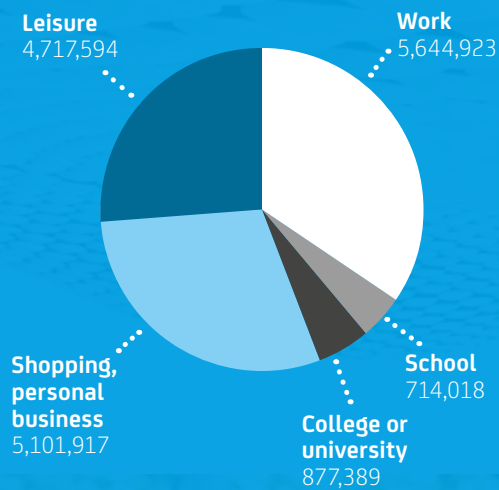
Over 17 million trips are made by bike in Birmingham in a year which, when averaged out over the population, means 15 trips per person per year

Men are more than twice as likely to ride a bike as women – **70%** compared to **30%**

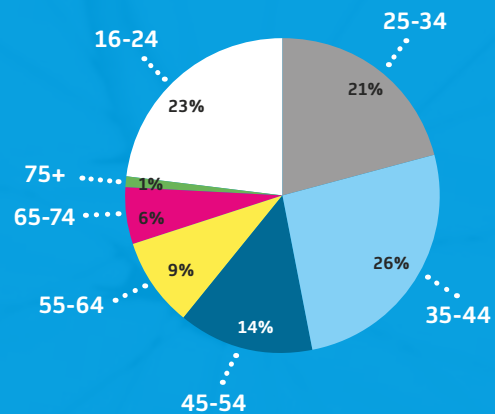


31% of people riding bikes in Birmingham identify as black or minority ethnic compared to nearly 42% of the whole population of Birmingham

### Number of bike trips by purpose



### When it comes to the age of people riding bikes in Birmingham, older people are under-represented



# DEVELOPING BIKE LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM — OUR AMBITIONS



## Birmingham Connected

Birmingham is the UK's largest city outside of London and we're growing fast, with new homes, and new jobs. We need a new approach to the way we travel, so we're investing to reinvent the way people and goods move around the city, making smarter use of existing road space, prioritising people on bikes, buses and trams.

We'll be making it safer and easier for people on bikes to get about by upgrading and developing over 250 miles of cycle routes, offering free-to-use bikes, cycle training, bike maintenance and led rides. Currently 3% of trips are by bike. Our aim is to reach 5% by 2023 and 10% by 2033.

Better, cleaner, healthier ways of getting around are good for us, for business, for visitors, and for the city's reputation as a great place to live, work and visit.

**Councillor Lisa Trickett**  
**Cabinet member for Sustainability**

## Business

Commuters who drive or use public transport might give a sidelong glance to people commuting by bike and wonder if they're made of different stuff. But actually cycling your commute is good for you, good for your business and you'll be in good company. It's one of the best ways to burn calories, build fitness, reduce stress, and generally make you happier and healthier. A healthy you is good for business with less time off sick, and with your bike taking up less precious space you'll probably be able to park right outside your office.

For business it means a healthier, fitter, more productive workforce, and much more potential to locate in city centres, enabling you and a ready supply of skilled workers to take advantage of all the travel connectivity. A few low cost changes will encourage more of your staff to cycle – and you may even get grants for some of it.

**Paul Fielding, Board Director (and Chair of Accessible & Connected Working Group), Colmore Business District**

BIRMINGHAM CONNECTED, THE COUNCIL'S 20-YEAR TRANSPORT VISION, WILL SEE



51,000  
new homes



100,000  
new jobs



200,000  
new trips a day

BIRMINGHAM CYCLE  
REVOLUTION WILL DELIVER



£60m  
invested



5,000  
free-to-use bikes



10%  
of all trips by bike





## Health

We are at a tipping point. We can no longer stand by and wait for the NHS to mop up the fall-out from our increasingly poor lifestyles that currently costs the NHS £120 billion per year, rising to £200 billion by 2020. This is unsustainable.

The most effective way to save the NHS is by us all becoming more active. We are one of four countries where more than 60% of us fail to meet international guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate activity a week.

Cities have a particular problem. In Birmingham there is a difference of 10 years in life expectancy between our more affluent suburbs and the city centre. This health inequality will only worsen when the NHS in its current form eventually crumbles and is replaced by an insurance based system.

Time is not on our side. This report highlights the demand for cycling which must link to other opportunities for activity. At a broader level safer, easier cycling will reverse increasing social isolation which is the self-perpetuating route to ill health and many other ills.

Studies have shown that inactivity is twice as likely to kill as obesity, and being active as opposed to being sedentary will gain people an extra four and a half years of life. Whether aged eight or 80 we are designed to move. The role of this city is to provide that opportunity.

**Dr Ewan Hamnett, former GP and Chair of Birmingham Wellbeing Board**

## Green economy

We've been running bike shops in London and Birmingham for over 25 years. We're a family company priding ourselves on customer service, and we've been acutely aware of the differences in cycling experience between the two cities. People riding bikes have increased exponentially in London, something that we're hoping Birmingham's Cycle Revolution will trigger as it begins to take shape.

The city's 20-year, £4 billion transport plan has at its heart the need to give more travel choice to prevent transport meltdown, and Birmingham Cycle Revolution is a key part of this strategy.

We are advising on cycle parking and cycle hire, and working with key players in and outside the cycle industry to help deliver bicycle sales, hire and servicing throughout the city. We're applying learning from our experiences in London to see Birmingham's ambition become reality, increasing our sales, business and workforce along the way.

Before Birmingham became a 'motor city', it was a world centre for manufacturing bicycles. In fact our site in Digbeth was owned by Kirk and Merrifield, manufacturing prestigious bicycle brands including Kirmer, Swift, Standard and Royal Enfield. As with other competitive cities the world over, I'm sure the bicycle will, very shortly, once again play a key part in the success and vitality of our city.

**Stuart Duckworth, General Manager, On Your Bike, Birmingham**



# BIKE TO THE FUTURE

2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the National Cycle Network in the UK, and Sustrans and its partners have understood the benefits that cycling can unlock in our towns and cities throughout this time.

With the launch of this Bike Life report we can now demonstrate the cross-city support for cycling from people from all walks of life in Birmingham. There's big potential to change things, and with three quarters of people supportive of more investment in cycling there's a big mandate for change across the city.

Birmingham Connected outlines the transport vision for Birmingham for the next 20 years, and includes a welcome commitment to invest in cycling as the city reshapes its image and embraces sustainability. For Birmingham to realise its growth ambitions, it needs to absorb a further 200,000 trips every day. If we can provide the right environment and many of these journeys are by bike, this frees up space and creates more pleasant places for people to live in and move through.

In the short term we'll be making everyone more aware of what we've already got – if even those riding bikes don't know where bike racks are, we need to be letting them know.

There's a clear need for us to focus on safety for people riding bikes to ensure more of those who would like to ride a bike have that choice. This means creating places that are good for, and encourage, cycling. We'll be using this report to measure progress, and to help us prioritise what we need to do to ensure far more of the 32% of our residents who don't currently ride, but want to, can.

We need to listen to what people say – we know that to make it safe for people of all ages and all abilities we need to be doing more to protect people on bikes. That means doing the hard things like protected bike lanes on our major roads, and addressing safety on our quieter roads.

And we'll be working harder to meet expectations to ensure Birmingham becomes a city fit for bikes. We have a way to go, but we will increase how much we invest per head on cycling in the city, and work towards the desired investment of £26 per head.

And we look forward to working on this agenda because investing in cycling can benefit everyone.

## **Bike Life Steering Group**

Councillor Lisa Trickett, Cabinet Member  
Birmingham City Council for Sustainability  
Canal and Rivers Trust  
Centro  
CTC/Pushbikes  
British Cycling  
Birmingham University  
Birmingham City Council  
Ewan Hamnett, Chair of Birmingham Well Being Board  
Marketing Birmingham  
Sustrans





**A note on terminology and methodology:**

We refer to people and residents rather than respondents when reporting findings of the attitudinal surveys.

Due to the rounding up or down of individual figures, the percentages on pie charts may not total 100% exactly.

Further details are available at [www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife)





Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.



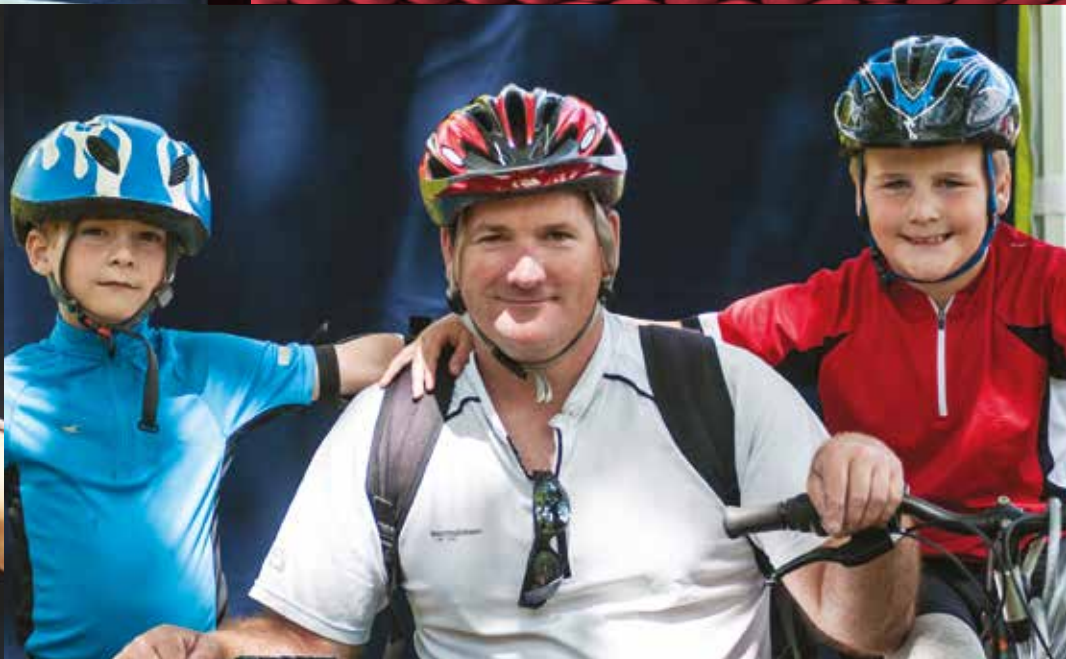
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