



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Statistical Digest of Rural England

# Transport and travel

This document is part of the larger compendium publication the [Statistical Digest of Rural England](#), a collection of rural statistics on a wide range of social and economic government policy areas.

The Statistical Digest of Rural England is an official statistics publication meaning these statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found on the [Code of Practice web pages](#).

These statistics allow comparisons between the different rural and urban area classifications. The Rural-Urban Classification is used to distinguish rural and urban areas. The Classification defines areas as rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.

More information on the Rural-Urban Classification can be found on the [Rural-Urban Classification web pages](#).

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

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Last updated: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022

# Transport and travel

- **Disclaimer:** As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, there were changes in travel behaviour, a reduction of data collected and changes in the methodology of data collection. The Department for Transport recommend that care should be taken when interpreting and comparing this data.
- In 2020 people living in the most rural areas travelled almost twice as far per year than those in the most urban areas.
- In 2020 in the most rural areas 90 per cent of travel was made using a car (as a driver or passenger) compared with 72 per cent in the most urban areas.
- In 2020 seven per cent of households in rural areas had no access to a car or van compared with 24 per cent in urban areas.

## Travel behaviour

**Average number of trips and total distance travelled per person per year, time spent travelling and average trip length in 2020, by settlement type, in England**

	Trips per person	Distance travelled (miles) per person	Travelling time (hours) per person	Trip length (miles)
Urban Conurbation	690	3,625	262	5.3
Urban City and Town	772	4,479	269	5.8
Rural Town and Fringe	801	5,276	297	6.6
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	728	5,767	273	7.9
England	739	4,334	269	5.9

Source: DfT National Travel Survey, [Table NTS9903](#), [Table NTS9904](#), [Table NTS9913](#), [Table NTS9910](#)

- The average number of trips is only 3 per cent higher than the national average in rural areas and travelling time per person is only 6 per cent higher. However, the average total distances travelled are much higher for people living in Rural Town and Fringe areas (22 per cent higher) and in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings (33 per cent higher).

Notes: Trips include those made on foot, by private car or van as both a driver and passenger, by bicycle, motorcycle, private hire bus and other modes of private transport, by local bus, by rail and London Underground, and by non-local bus, taxi / minicab and other modes of public transport (air, ferries and light rail).

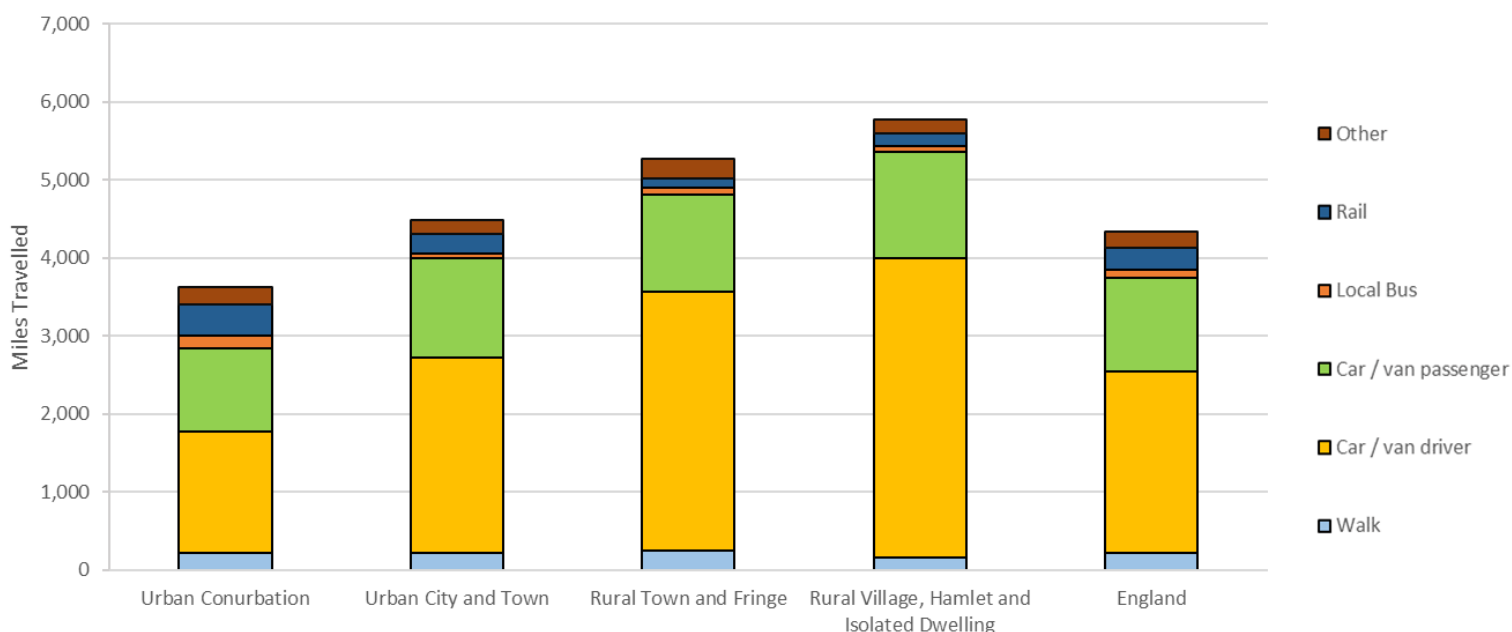
The results are weighted. Weights are applied to adjust for non-response to ensure the characteristics of the achieved sample match the population and for the drop off in trip recording. The survey results are subject to sampling error.

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

Source: DfT, National Travel Survey, Email: [national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk](mailto:national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk)

## Distance travelled

### Average total distance travelled, per person per year, by mode and settlement type, in England, 2020



- In 2020 people living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings travelled 5,767 miles on average compared with 3,625 in Urban Conurbations and 4,334 in England as a whole.
- When travel as both a car driver and passenger are taken together, 90 per cent of the distance travelled by people living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings was made by car compared with 72 per cent in Urban Conurbations and 81 per cent in England as a whole.

### Average total distance travelled, per person per year, by mode and settlement type, in England, 2020

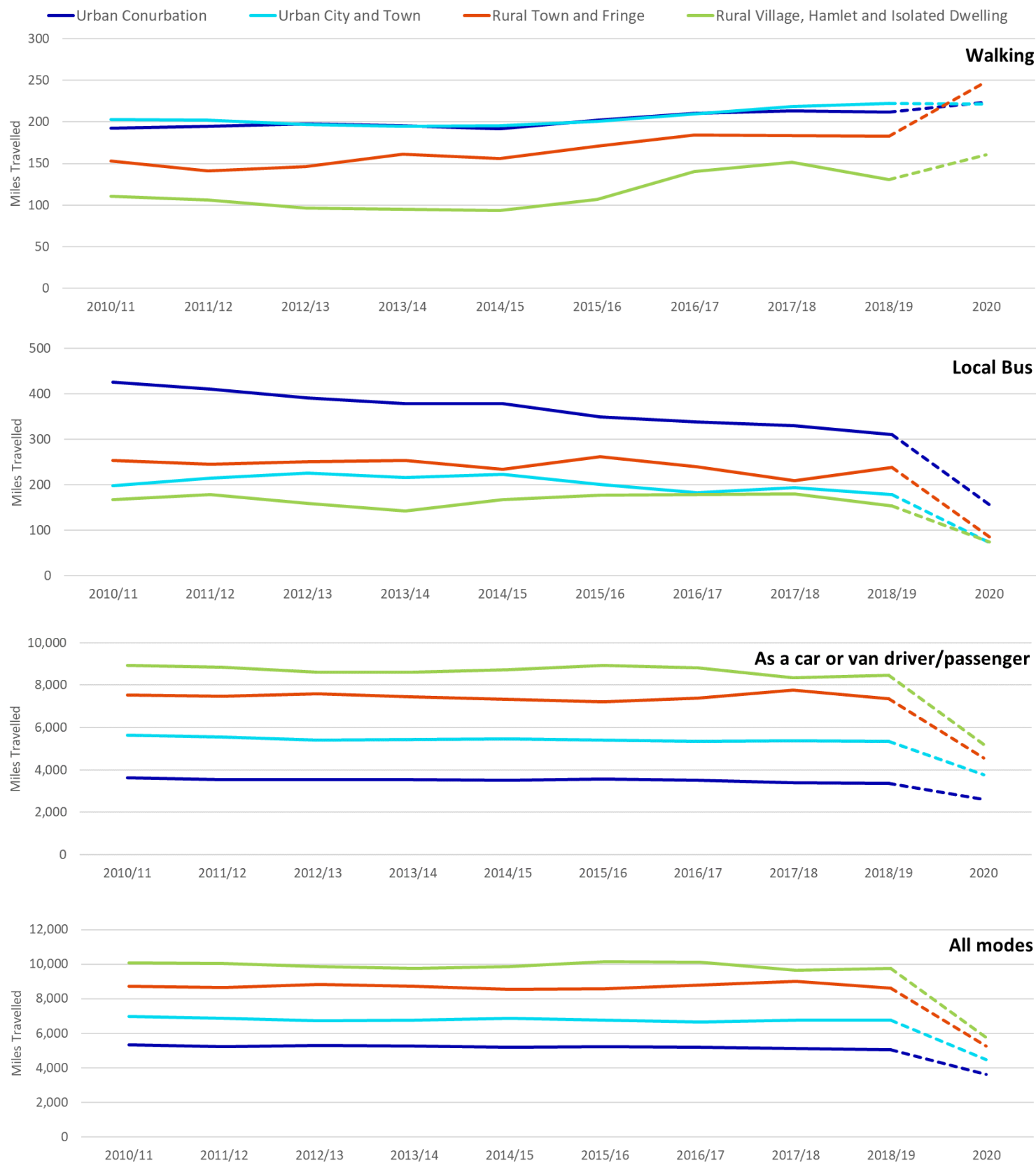
	Miles per person per year						All modes
	Walk	Car/van driver	Car / van passenger	Local bus	Rail	Other	
Urban Conurbation	223	1,545	1,079	157	397	224	3,625
Urban City and Town	222	2,499	1,267	72	246	172	4,479
Rural Town and Fringe	248	3,318	1,247	86	123	254	5,276
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	161	3,842	1,358	74	157	176	5,767
England	220	2,323	1,200	107	285	201	4,334

Source: DfT National Travel Survey [Table NTS9904](#)

# Average total distance travelled, per person per year, by mode of transport and settlement type, in England, 2010/11 to 2020

Note: The scales (y-axis) in charts below differ and this should be considered when making cross-modal comparisons.

Due to a difference in data collection in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data are presented as a single year. This change is denoted by a dashed line.



- The miles travelled by walking has increased more in Rural areas than in Urban areas over the last decade, with a particularly large increase throughout 2020. This is likely to be as a result of the COVID-19 enforced lockdowns increasing the amount of recreational and other walking.
  - Average distance travelled by those from Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings increased by 50 miles (31 per cent) and those living in Rural Town and Fringe by 95 miles (38 per cent) between 2010/11 and 2020.
  - In Rural Villages, average distance travelled by walking increased by 30 miles from 2018/19 to 2020, and by 65 miles in Rural Town and Fringe areas over the same period.
  - Urban areas showed significantly smaller increases; miles travelled by walking in Urban City and Town increased by 9% between 2010/11 and 2018/19, and did not change during the pandemic.
  - Walking was the only mode showing an increase across all areas for the average distance travelled in 2020. Previously, the long-term trend showed a small increase in miles travelled by walking in all areas across between 2010/11 and 2018/19.
- The long-term trend (2010/11 to 2018/19) across all areas was a steady decrease in miles travelled by local bus. When 2020 is compared to previous years there was a sharp decrease in the average number of miles travelled by bus across all areas; this is likely to be an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The miles travelled by local bus has decreased by 269 miles per person per year in Urban Conurbations over the last decade, including a major decrease of 154 miles per person per year in 2020.
  - Similarly, miles travelled by local bus has decreased in rural areas by 131 miles from 2010/11 to 2020, including a 116 miles per person per year decrease in 2020.
  - These major declines seen in the most recent data could be a result of: (a) enforced lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic restricting mobility creating and (b) large numbers working from home ([home working](#)) during the pandemic and therefore not commuting by bus.
- The miles travelled by car or van remained steady between 2010/11 and 2018/19 but showed a large decrease more recently – particularly in rural areas; this is likely to be an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The distance travelled by car has decreased by 5%, or 293 miles per person per year in Urban City and Town over the period 2010/11 to 2018/19, followed by a major decrease of 1,577 miles in 2020.
  - The distance travelled by car has also decreased by 5%, or 462 miles per person per year in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings between 2010/11 and 2018/19, followed by a 3,265 miles per person per year decrease in 2020.
- Tables of the average total distance travelled per person per year broken down by mode of transport and rural-urban classification for 2010/11 to 2020 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: The sample size for one year is too small to produce robust results so this analysis combines data from two years, until 2020, which is reported as a standalone year.

Distance by mode is based on stage distance.

Local Bus includes London buses. Rail includes London Underground. Other includes: bicycle, motorcycle, private hire bus, other modes of private transport, non-local bus, taxi / minicab and other modes of public transport (air, ferries, light rail).

These data are available broken down into these more discrete categories in the accompanying Excel document but were presented in this manner in the digest for clarity - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020>

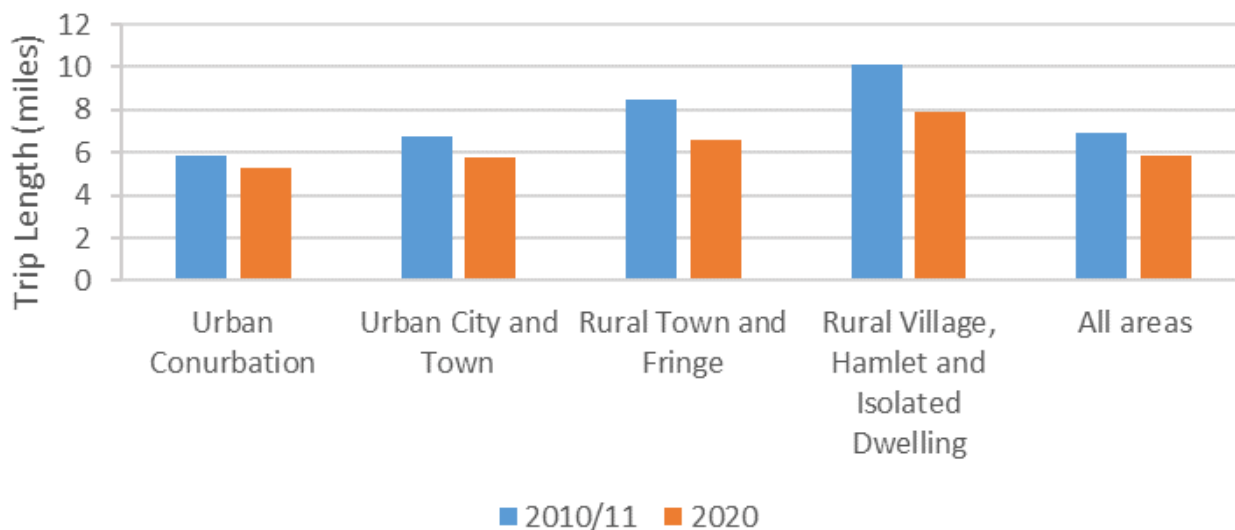
National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9904](#) .

The results are weighted. Weights are applied to adjust for non-response to ensure the characteristics of the achieved sample match the population and for the drop off in trip recording. The survey results are subject to sampling error.

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

Source: DfT, National Travel Survey, Email: [national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk](mailto:national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk)

### Average trip length (miles), by settlement type, in England, 2010/11 and 2020



- There have been decreases in the average trip length for all areas between 2010/11 and 2020: Urban Conurbation (12 per cent decrease from 5.9 to 5.3 miles), Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling (27 per cent decrease from 10.1 to 7.9 miles), Rural Town and Fringe (29 per cent decrease from 8.5 to 6.6 miles), and Urban with City and Town (17 per cent decrease from 6.8 to 5.8 miles).
- The average trip length in England was 6.9 miles in 2010/11 and 5.9 miles in 2020, showing a 17% decrease.

### Average trip length (miles), by settlement type, in England, 2010/11 to 2020

	Average trip length (miles)	
	2010/11	2020
Urban Conurbation	5.9	5.3
Urban City and Town	6.8	5.8
Rural Town and Fringe	8.5	6.6
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	10.1	7.9
England	6.9	5.9

Source: DfT National Travel Survey [Table NTS9910](#)

Notes: The sample size for one year was initially deemed too small to produce robust results so this analysis combines data from two years at the start, but the methods of reporting have recently been changed to standalone years.

For a full time series from 2002/03 to 2020 please see the original DfT dataset

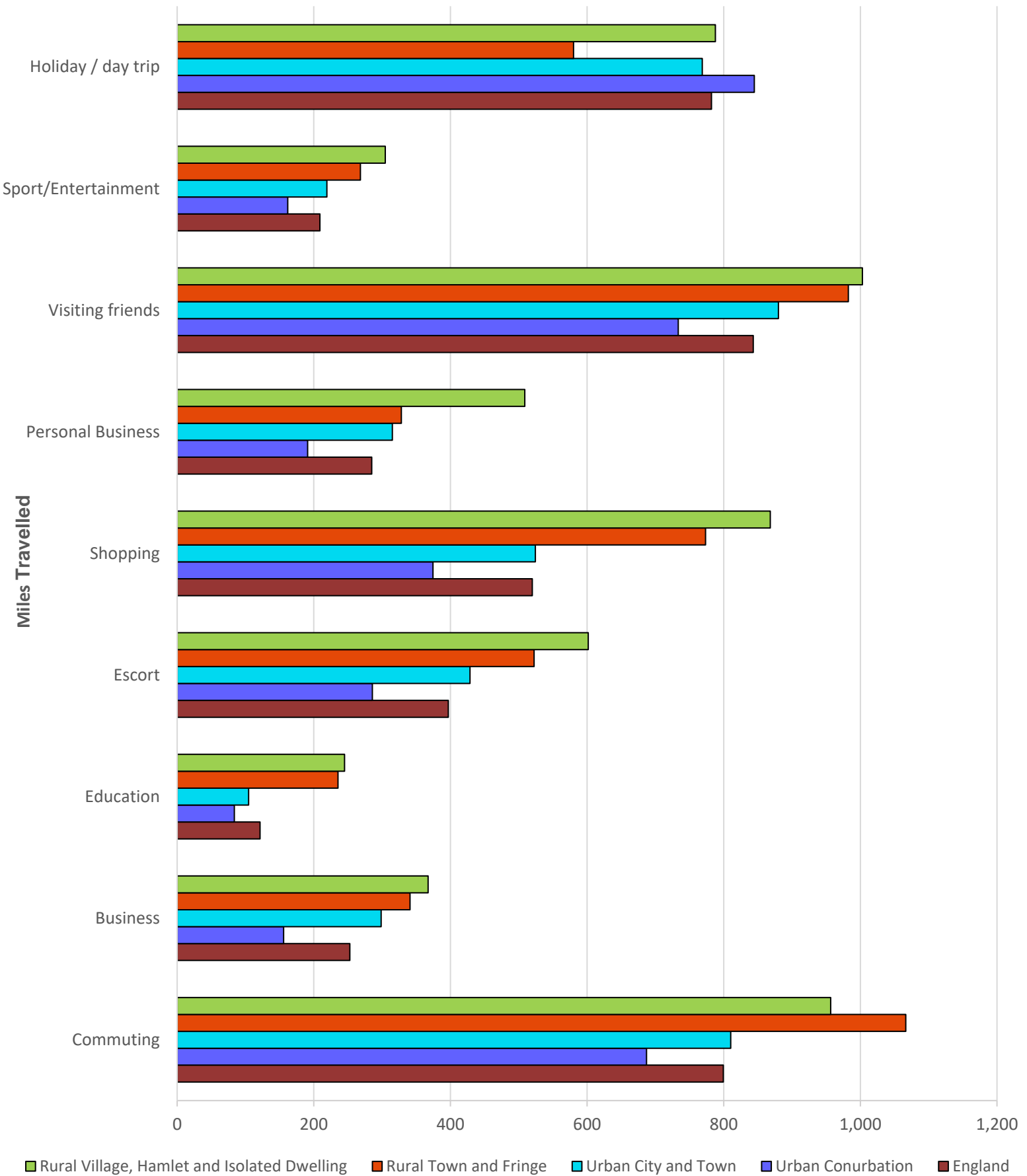
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020> National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9910](#)

The results are weighted. Weights are applied to adjust for non-response to ensure the characteristics of the achieved sample match the population and for the drop off in trip recording. The survey results are subject to sampling error.

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

Source: DfT, National Travel Survey, Email: [national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk](mailto:national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk)

**Average number of miles travelled, per person per year, by purpose and settlement type, in England, 2020**



- In 2020 those living in rural areas travelled more miles for all purposes than those in urban areas.
- In almost all categories those living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings travelled farther than those in other settlement types. The only journey purpose where this was not the case was 'commuting' (for which those in Rural Town and Fringe travelled farthest)., Commuting was the purpose with the most milage, but proportionally the difference between rural urban classifications is minor; 19% of total distance travelled is taken up by commuting in urban areas, and 18% in rural areas.
- For almost all purposes, those living in Urban Conurbations travelled the fewest miles compared with those living in other settlement types. The only journey purpose where this was not the case was 'holiday/day trip', where those living in Rural Town and Fringe travelled the least. In this instance, people living in Urban Conurbations travelled the furthest to reach a holiday/trip location.
- For the purposes of 'business', 'education', 'escort', 'shopping', 'personal business' and 'sport/entertainment' those living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings travelled twice the distance each year when compared to those living in Urban Conurbations.
- A table of the average number of miles travelled per person per year broken down by purpose and rural-urban classification for 2020 is available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: The 'escort' category contains both escorting to education institutions and other escorting.

The 'visiting friends' category contains both visiting friends at a private home and visiting friends elsewhere.

These data are available broken down into these more discrete categories in the accompanying Excel document but were presented in this manner in the digest for clarity -<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020> - National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9907](#)

The results are weighted. Weights are applied to adjust for non-response to ensure the characteristics of the achieved sample match the population and for the drop off in trip recording. The survey results are subject to sampling error.

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

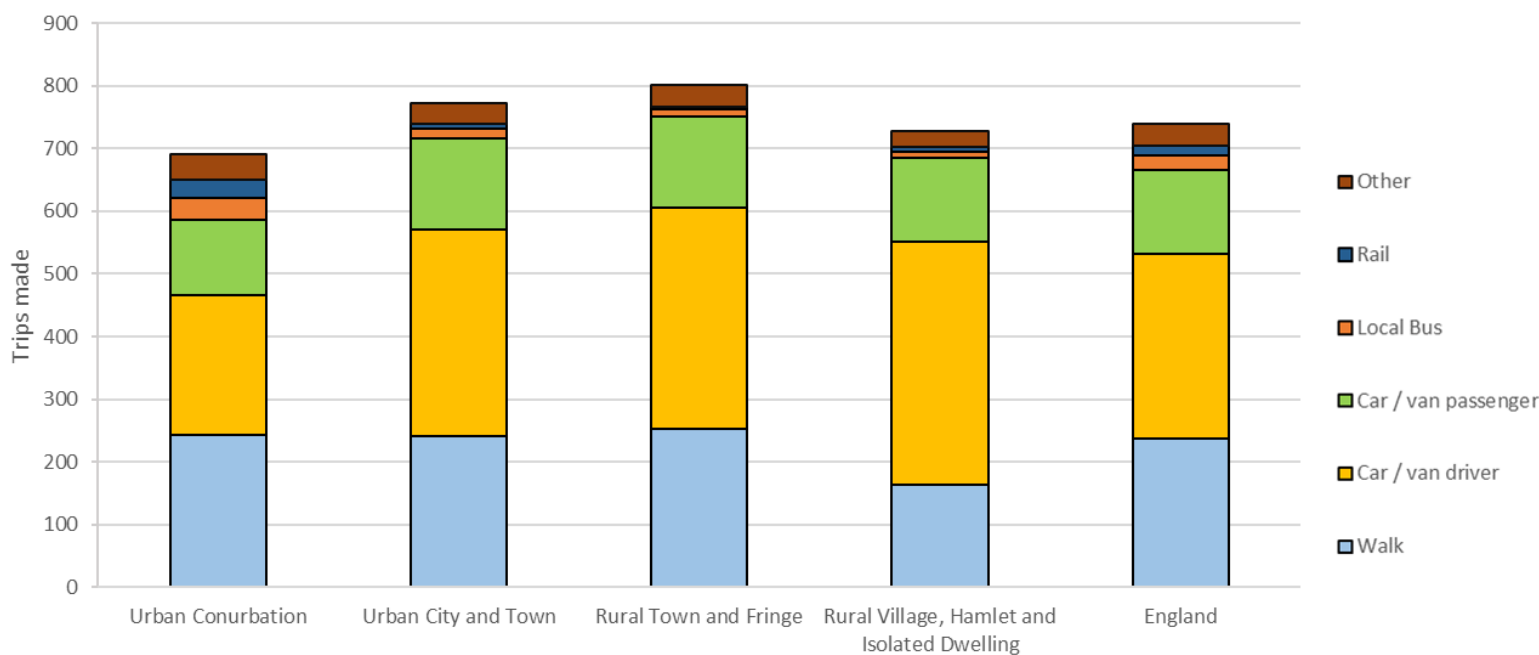
Source: DfT, National Travel Survey, Email: [national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk](mailto:national.travelsurvey@dft.gov.uk)



## Trips made

- Those living in Rural Town and Fringe make on average 29 more trips per year compared with those in Urban with City and Town and 111 more trips than those living in Urban Conurbations.
- People living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings are less likely to use walking as their mode of transport, making 22 per cent of trips this way compared with 32 per cent for England as a whole.
- When combining journeys made as a car or van driver and those made as a passenger these make up 72 per cent of trips for those in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings compared with 58 per cent for England as a whole.

Average number of trips made, per person per year, by mode and settlement type, in England, 2020



Average number of trips per person per year, by mode and settlement type, in England, 2020

	Trips per person per year						All modes
	Walk	Car/van driver	Car / van passenger	Local bus	Rail	Other	
Urban Conurbation	244	223	119	35	28	41	690
Urban City and Town	241	330	146	15	9	32	772
Rural Town and Fringe	253	354	144	13	3	35	801
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	164	387	134	11	6	26	728
England	236	295	134	22	16	35	739

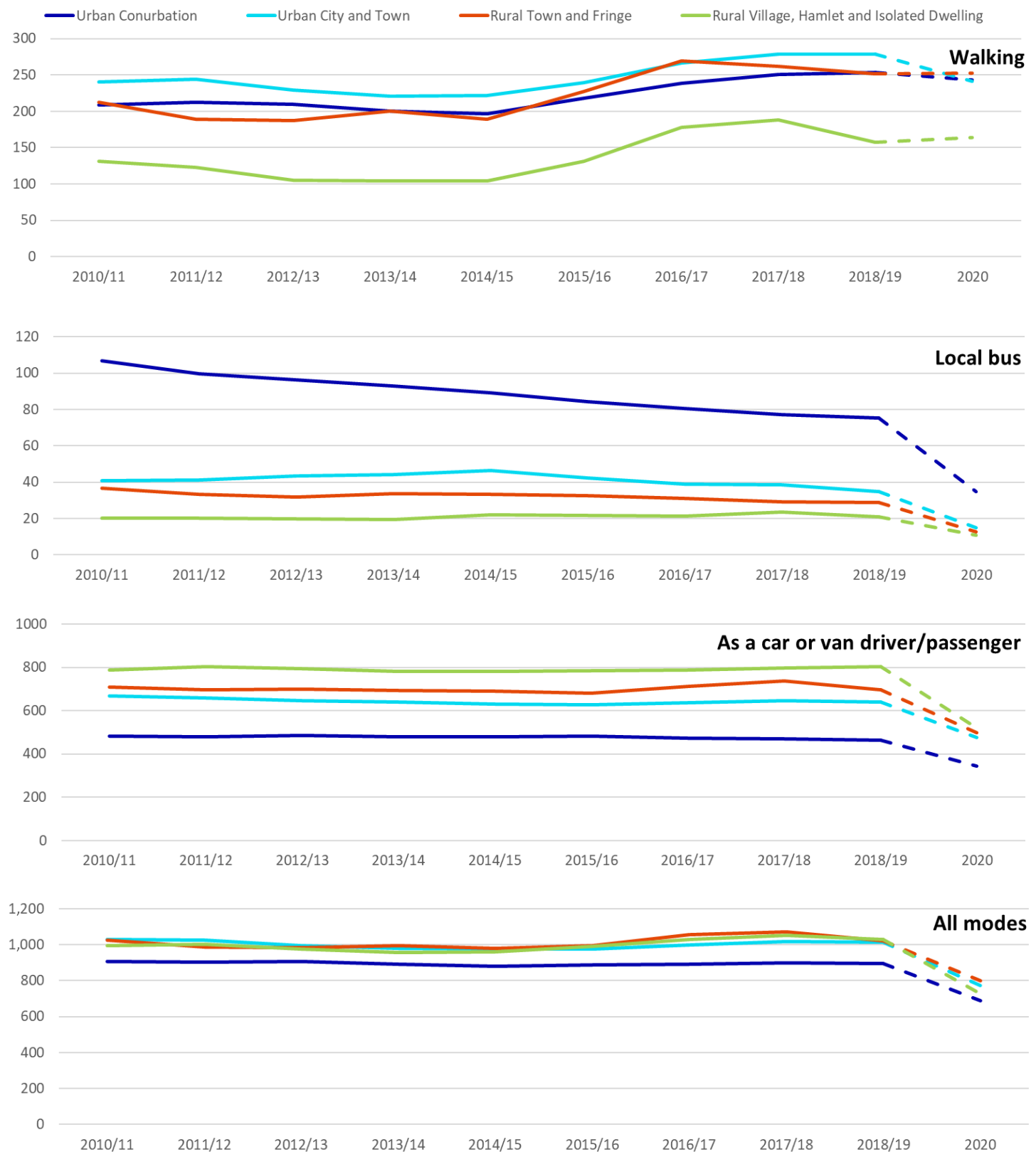
Source: DfT National Travel Survey [Table NTS9903](#)

- The data in this table and a percentage breakdown are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

## Average number of trips made, per person per year, by mode and settlement type, in England, 2010/11 to 2020

Note: The scales (y-axis) in charts below differ and this should be considered when making comparisons

Due to a difference in data collection in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data are presented as a single year. This change is denoted by a dashed line.



- For the time period of 2010/11 to 2020, people in Rural areas have on average made fewer than half as many trips per person by local bus as people in Urban Conurbations.
  - From 2010/11 to 2018/19, people from Rural Town and Fringe areas only showed a decrease of 8 trips per person per year, while those from Rural Villages showed an increase of 1 trip per person per year.
  - A significant drop was seen in 2020. Rural areas saw a decrease of 13 trips per person year, and urban areas showed a decrease of 30 trips per person per year. This reflects the lockdown rules put in place to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented travel itself as well as the need for travel due to the introduction of measures such as working from home.
- Over the last decade, people living in Urban Conurbations made fewer trips on average across all modes of transport than those living in Urban with City and Town or Rural areas. People from Rural Town and Fringe made the most trips on average. However, the variation between areas is small.
- People living in Urban Conurbations made the least trips as a car or van driver/passenger across the period of 2010/11 to 2020, possibly due to a greater reliance of public transport.
- The number of trips made by walking is lowest for Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings over the last decade, and highest for people living in Urban City and Town areas.

#### Average number of walks per person per year, by settlement type, in England, 2018/19 to 2020

Number of walks in 2020 vs 2018/19

	2018/19		2020	
	Total Walks	Of which: walks of over a mile	Total Walks	Of which: walks of over a mile
Urban Conurbation	254	59	244	83
Urban City and Town	279	76	241	92
Rural Town and Fringe	252	56	253	99
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	158	41	164	69
England	256	64	236	87

Source: DfT National Travel Survey [Table NTS9903](#)

Whilst the total number of walks by those in Rural Villages was lowest between 2011/12 and 2020, they showed the highest proportion of walks over a mile (42%) in 2020 and the second highest in 2018/19 (26%). The total number of walks per person was lower in 2020 than in 2018/19, however the number of walks over a mile was 11% higher in urban areas and 16% higher in rural areas. This could be a result of the stay-at-home order during the COVID-19 pandemic, where people opted to walk for leisure and exercise. Similarly, the decrease in walks of less than a mile could be related to a reduction in commuting, i.e., walking to a train station, throughout the pandemic.

- Tables of the average number of trips made per person per year broken down by mode of transport and rural-urban classification for 2010/11 to 2020 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: The sample size for one year is too small to produce robust results so this analysis combines data from two years, until the data format was changed for 2020, which is published as a standalone year.

Local bus includes London buses.

Rail includes surface rail and London Underground.

Other includes bicycle, motorcycle, private hire bus, non-local bus, taxi/minicab and other modes of public transport (air, ferries, light rail).

These data are available broken down into these more discrete categories in the accompanying Excel document but were presented in this manner in the digest for clarity - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020> - National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9903](#)

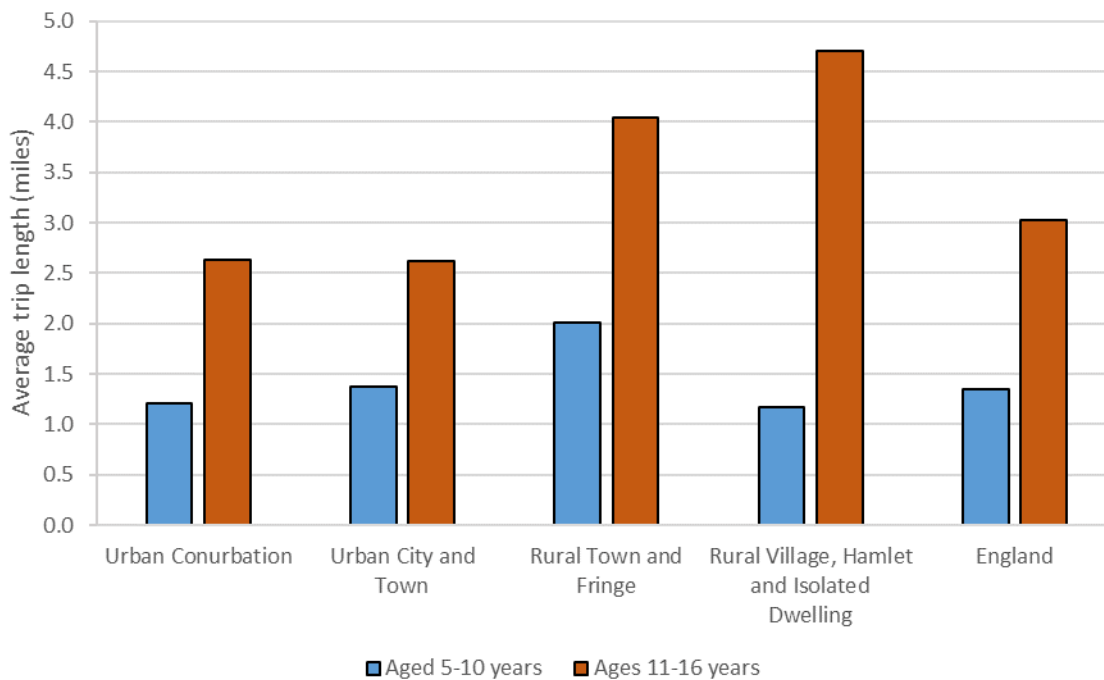
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Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

# Journey to School

Average journey length to school by settlement type and age group, in England, 2020



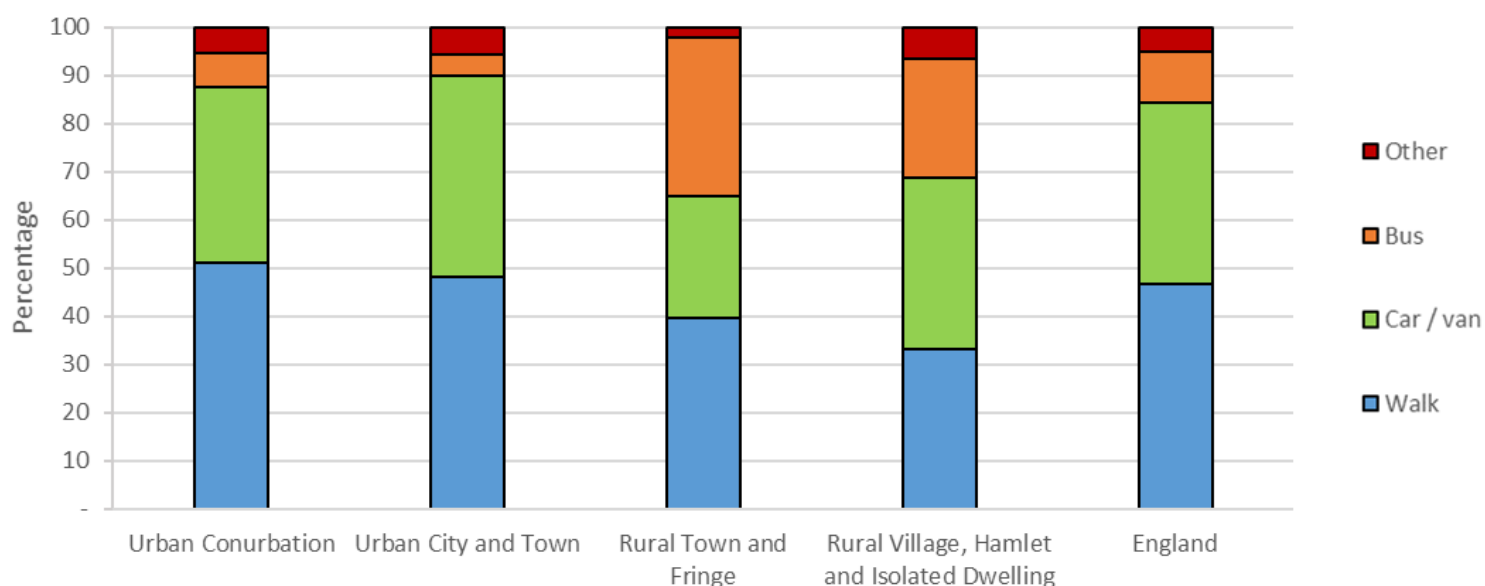
- The average journey length to school is longer for those living in rural areas than urban ones. Those with the longest journey are 11 to 16-year olds living in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings who travel 4.7 miles on average, this compares with a journey of 2.6 miles in an Urban Conurbation for the same age group. This means 11 to 16-year olds in Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings are travelling nearly twice as far as those in Urban Conurbations to get to school.

Average journey length (miles) to school by age group and settlement type, in England, 2020

	Average journey length (miles)	
	Aged 5-10 years	Aged 11-16 years
Urban Conurbation	1.2	2.6
Urban City and Town	1.4	2.6
Rural Town and Fringe	2.0	4.0
Rural Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling	1.2	4.7
England	1.3	3.0

Source: DfT National Travel Survey [Table NTS9908](#)

## Mode of transport used for journey to school by settlement type, in England, 2020



- Children in urban areas are most likely to walk to school out of any other mode of transport, whereas those in rural areas tend to either utilise a car/van or bus.
- Only 36 per cent of children living in rural areas walk to school, compared with 50 per cent of those in urban areas.
- In urban areas, only 6 per cent of children commuted via a local or private bus, compared with 29 per cent of children in rural areas.
- There was a smaller difference between rural and urban areas in terms of using a car or van to get to school, with 30 per cent and 39 per cent of children opting for this method respectively.

## Mode of transport used for journey to school by settlement type, in England, 2020

	Percentage			
	Walk	Car / van	Bus	Other
Rural	36	30	29	4
Urban	50	39	6	5
England	47	37	11	5

Notes: Includes trips under 50 miles only.

Bus includes public and private buses (including school buses). Other includes bicycle, rail, other private and public transport.

These data are available broken down into more discrete categories in the accompanying Excel document but were presented in this manner in the digest for clarity - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020> - National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9908](#)

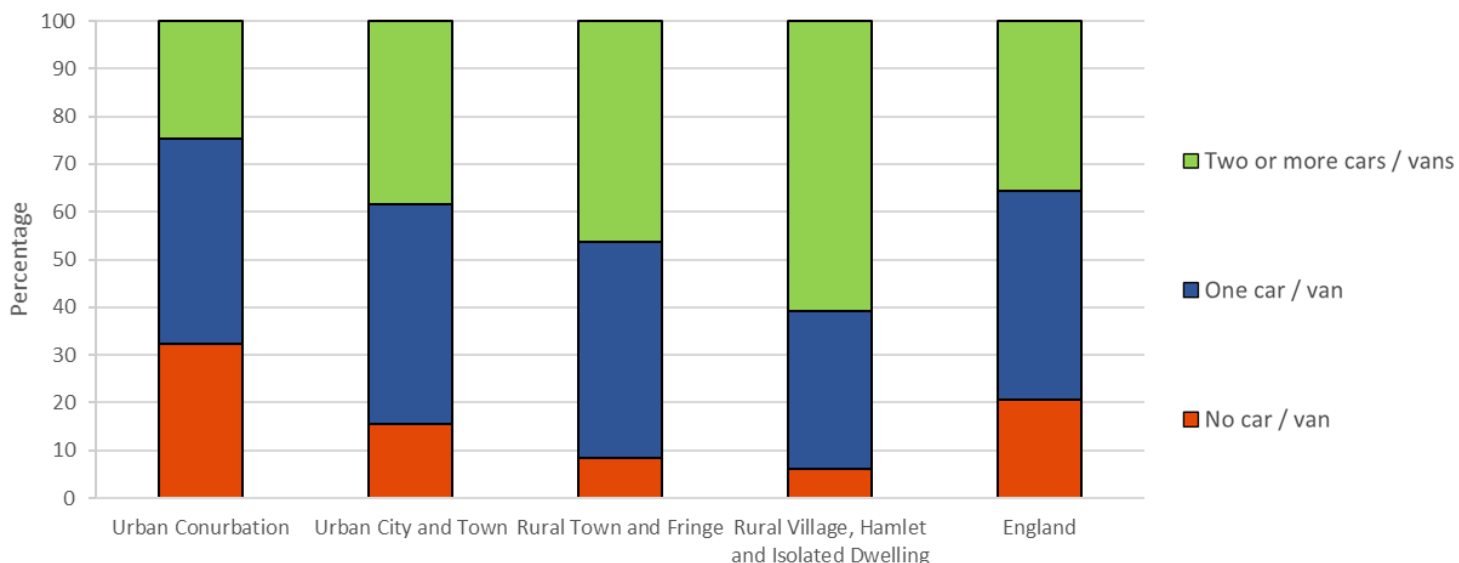
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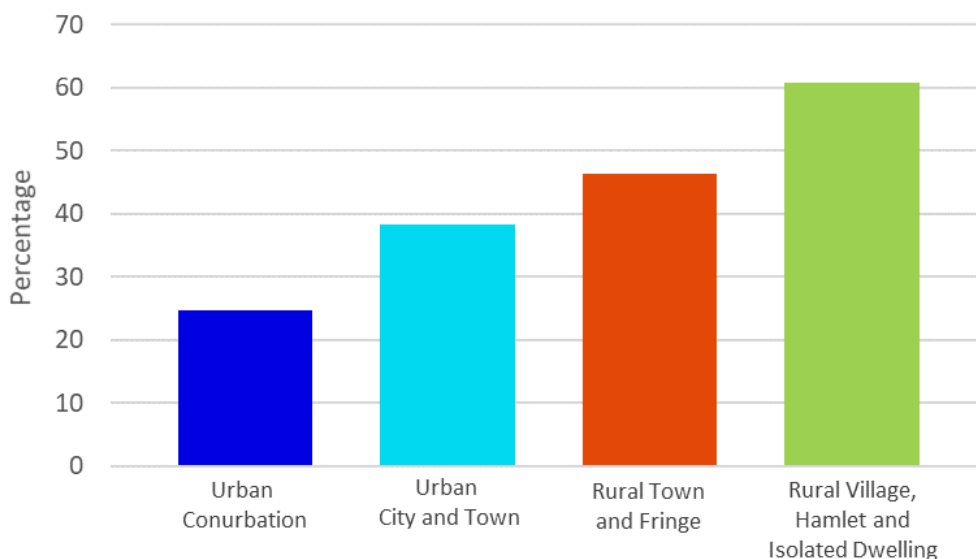
# Car Availability

Household car availability by settlement type, in England, 2020



- In 2020 the percentage of households who owned one car or more was higher in rural areas than in urban areas. 94 per cent of households in Rural Villages, Hamlets or Isolated Dwellings owned a car, compared with 68 per cent in Urban Conurbations.
- 61 per cent of households in Rural Villages, Hamlets or Isolated Dwellings own two or more cars/vans compared with 25 per cent of those in Urban Conurbations.
- Between 2010/11 and 2020, the proportion of households in Urban Conurbations with no car/van was at least 4 times greater than the proportion of households from Rural Villages, Hamlets or Isolated Dwellings.
- In the last 10 years, there has been little change in the percentage of houses with a car owned for any settlement type.

Percentage of multi-car households by settlement type, in England, 2020



- There are considerably more multi-car households in rural areas (54 per cent) than in urban areas (32 per cent). The more rural an area is, the more likely it is to be a multi-car household.
- Over the last 10 years, there has been little change in the number of multi-car households.
- Tables of household car ownership, broken down by rural-urban classification for 2010/11 to 2020 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes: The results are weighted. Weights are applied to adjust for non-response to ensure the characteristics of the achieved sample match the population and for the drop off in trip recording. The survey results are subject to sampling error.

For a full time series from 2002/03 to 2020 please see the original DfT dataset -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020> - National Travel Survey: 2020 Tables, [Table NTS9902](#)

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

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