

SRA

Scottish Rural Action

#FareEnough?

The impact of public transport costs on education and employment opportunities for young people in rural Scotland.



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FOREWORD

Transport is a vitally important service for communities everywhere, offering access to lifeline services and reducing isolation. It is the backbone of our economy, and a good transport system encourages travel, connecting skilled people with the right employer to their mutual benefit, and enabling collaboration across organisations and sectors.

Young people are at a critical stage in their development, making important decisions about their future and embarking on the first steps of their career. Transport can enable their access to essential education and training, but in a rural area, transport is often a barrier. This report highlights the impact of transportation costs specifically on access for rural young people to education and employment. Young people tell us they are missing out on jobs and training, which will have a lifelong impact on their skill levels, earnings and our rural economy.

Although this report looks at a relatively small sample of young people, the results are eye-opening. If we do not investigate further, and address the concerns raised here as a matter of urgency, we risk excluding yet more young people from reaching their potential and damaging our rural economy.

Young people in rural areas deserve the same access to education and employment as young people who live elsewhere, and to do that, we need an integrated, reliable, frequent and affordable public transport system, now and for the future.

Emma Cooper
Chief Executive

ABOUT SCOTTISH RURAL ACTION

A powerful voice for the people of rural Scotland.

We are a grassroots-led, charitable organisation. We seek to ensure that decision-makers understand the needs and strengths of rural communities in Scotland, and that policy does not disadvantage rural communities.

We work by:

- Influencing policy and services at a national, regional and local level to ensure the needs and interests of marginalised people living in rural areas are not overlooked.
- Representing the voice of rural Scotland on key Scottish Government decision-making committees.
- Connecting with rural communities through our developing active volunteer-led networks to build a grass-roots rural movement.
- Organising the Scottish Rural Parliament every two years to connect rural communities with decision-makers and to raise the profile of rural needs and strengths.
- Providing opportunities for rural communities to connect, share and learn from each other.

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WHAT DID WE DO?

We conducted a short online survey of young people aged 16 – 26 using SurveyMonkey, which we circulated through our mailing list and social media networks.

The survey consisted of 10 questions and asked young people living in rural Scotland about the impact of travel costs on their ability to access education and employment. We also asked some questions about travel distances. We did not ask questions about the frequency, connectedness, reliability or availability of public transport, although many young people commented on this. A full question list is available in the appendices.

WHO RESPONDED?

A total of 308 young people aged 16-26 responded to the survey. Respondents chose to categorise their location as rural or remote rural and we also provided the option for young people to tell us that they were from a rural area, but no longer live there ('from rural').

The results were analysed by rurality and age, but the detail of 'from rural' responses was not further broken down by age due to the small number of respondents.

Age	Rural	Remote rural	From rural	Total
16-18	104	38	13	157
19-21	43	20	6	70
22-26	49	24	5	79
Total	198	82	24	308

[NB. Not all young people submitted age and/or location data which accounts for discrepancies in the total column.]

KEY FINDINGS

- 48% of young people have been prevented from going to work because travel is too expensive
- Over 20% of young people's income is spent on travel to work
- Almost 30% of young people have been stopped from accessing education or training because travel is too costly
- 33% of young people travel over 30 miles per day for work or education



TRAVEL BENEFITS AND SUBSIDIES

In Scotland there are currently two ways young people aged 16–18 can access free or discounted travel:

School travel – Children and young people attending their nearest suitable school are eligible for free travel provided by their local authority if the child is under 8 and has to walk further than 2 miles, or is over 8 and has to walk further than 3 miles. This is assessed and managed by local authorities.

National concessionary travel scheme – Young people aged 16-18 can access reduced travel through the Young Scot card. This entitles young people to 1/3 – ½ off most rail journeys, 1/3 off bus journeys and two free ferry journeys each year for those living on an island. This is managed by Young Scot in partnership with Transport Scotland and local authorities.

Young people may also be eligible for a means-tested student loan and bursary for studying at University, or for a means tested

Educational Maintenance Allowance (ages 16-19) for further education. EMA is paid fortnightly in arrears, currently at £30/week.

Following the review of the national concessionary travel scheme in 2017 in Scotland, when we first released results from this survey, the Scottish Government announced that it would introduce:

- ✓ Free bus travel for young modern apprentices;
- ✓ Free bus travel for young carers in receipt of the planned young carer grant;
- ✓ Three months of free bus travel for recipients of the proposed job grant who are aged between 16 and 24, once those benefits come into force.

In addition, a large number of public transport routes, including bus, ferry and rail, are subsidised by the Scottish Government or local authorities to provide services which are not otherwise commercially viable.



48% OF YOUNG PEOPLE SAID COST OF TRAVEL PREVENTED THEM FROM ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT; 30% SAID COST OF TRAVEL PREVENTED THEM FROM ACCESSING EDUCATION

WE CAN ESTIMATE THAT TRANSPORT IS COSTING YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 18-21 OVER 20% OF THEIR SALARY ON AVERAGE

TRAVEL DISTANCES AND COSTS

Young people reported currently travelling over 50 miles per day in 12% of cases and over 30 miles per day in 33% of cases.

Young people showed resilience and commitment to travelling for education and employment and a willingness to embrace multiple modes of transport if required.

Walk 2 miles from Wark on Tweed to Cornhill on Tweed via dangerous road, then catch the 9:40 gets in to Kelso at around 10:01am (I... may be sacked soon... as I work from 10am to 6pm).

I leave at 430 to get to work at 8



If public transport was free, then 66% of young people told us they would be willing to travel over 30miles per day – twice the



number of young people who currently travel this distance.

If free then it would open up lots of doors with opportunities behind them

I'd travel wherever gave me the best opportunities.

Young people told us that it costs them at least £10 per day in 32% of cases (ages 16-26), rising to 36% of 19-21-year-olds and 38% of young people aged 22-26 years-old.

Cost for public transport in Scotland is shocking. When studying and at part time placement 5 days a week, my travel cost £50 per week.

Using average UK wage data and 2018-19 income tax rates, we can estimate that transport is costing young people aged 18-21 over 20% of their salary on average.

“The price of public transport is very high, I can’t get a job where I live now and I need one to be able to see friends and family in far away areas and I don't get to keep my wages if most of it goes to traveling to my place of work”

“The cost of the bus fare was the equivalent of 2hrs pay which for a 4-5hr shift became untenable.”

THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL COSTS ON EMPLOYMENT

Almost half (48%) of young people told us that cost prevented them from accessing suitable employment. Of these, 9% had to move and 39% could not take a job.

I can't afford to travel so I've had to take a job close by with little career opportunities even though [sic] I have a Degree? There isn't enough work for me on the farm. It's a sad situation but very common in rural areas!

Had to move from my mum and dad's house to stay with family in Fort William in order to get to work.

For young people at the start of their careers, salaries can be low, shifts can be short, and the cost of public transport is a significant barrier.

Can't access jobs as salary would barely cover travel cost.

I had a part time job in a town 1/2 hr away. The cost of the bus fare was the equivalent of 2hrs pay which for a 4-5hr shift became untenable.

Young people told us that they overcome this barrier in many different ways. Some young people take less well paid jobs, with fewer opportunities, to avoid having to travel or move.

“couldn't justify spending half my wages on public transport to get to and from work”

I have taken a job in the past with bad hours and pay as to not pay travel costs as I could walk the 3 miles there

I've taken lower paid jobs or jobs with less hours closer to home because it meant not travelling for 3 hours a day and wasn't costing me over £100 a month (which is a lot of money on minimum wage or part time hours).

“The only way I could access work was to get into debt with financing a car loan. A large percentage of my wage goes on my car.”

Young people rely on parents and friends to give them lifts or support them with travel costs, and this can be a big worry for them.

...(my) family have been subsidising my train fares. Which is a strain on them too as they also are struggling to pay their own way let alone pay someone else's.

Other young people struggle to pay their transport costs and worry about managing their budget, but have no alternative.

I travel daily between Stirling and Glasgow usually during peak times. I only have a budget of £10 per day. I more often than not go over this budget and have to borrow before my next pay day.

As the frequency and availability of transport in rural areas is also a major concern for young people, and it is cheaper to drive, many young people take this option if they can afford to do so, sometimes getting into debt as a consequence.

I was unable to access employment until I passed my driving test and now have my car costs to fund

Young people are forced into car ownership due to poor travel times for trains and buses, and a lack of frequency of trains and buses. Air pollution and poor public health are killing people in Scotland, and private cars are the leading cause of both of these things.

Where there is transport, there is frustration amongst the younger age groups about the charging of adult fares to 16 and 17-year

olds, and the minimum wage rates being insufficient to cover costs.

A child fare covers you until you are 15 and yet you cannot drive yet.

“They expect you to pay adult prices aged 16 or 17 when you’re NOT AN ADULT. It’s really frustrating. The prices almost double... This is an age when your parents are no longer giving you money and you usually do not have a career. You should only have to pay for an Adult ticket if you are an adult.”



“If I don’t get travel expenses £46 a week soon I will need to leave college”

THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL COSTS ON EDUCATION

Almost 30% of young people indicated that they had been prevented from accessing educational opportunities due to the cost.

It's not fair that I can't go to training as it's too expensive

As a consequence, 20% of young people told us they had to miss out, and 10% told us they actually had to move for their education.

The cost of travel to mainland Scotland has prevented me from attending many educational events / short courses

Costs and long travel times forced me to rent term time accommodation on Scottish mainland.

Of the 70% indicating that cost had not stopped them from accessing education, many then commented about the challenges that paying for travel was for them and their family.

It has made finances tight

Mum is disabled and money is very limited, I have to travel to college and bus fare is expensive.

I... walk 3 miles to school everyday rather than pay for the bus

For those young people supporting themselves, the cost was clearly a stressor.

I could not rely on public transport to get me to college so had to buy a car that takes up most of my apprenticeship wage.

In a small number of cases, young people told us they were concerned that they would not be able to continue paying for their travel for education.

If I don't get travel expenses £46 a week soon I will need to leave college

Young people also felt that whilst the cost of transport may not have prevented them from accessing education, it was inhibiting their educational choices, including access to extra-curricular activities, further and higher education.

My transport to school is paid for from Acharacle to Ardnamurchan High school but if I chose to go to Mallaig or Lochaber High, where there are better choices of subjects it would cost several thousand pounds

“Missed University open days because travel too expensive.”

per year so I am limited to my school by my location.

The reliance on parents may be for the provision of transport due to a lack of public transportation, for financial support due to the cost of transport, or in some cases, for the cost of provision of accommodation because the young person has had to move away from home.

I am going to have to spend hundreds of pounds on accommodation when I go to college in Fort William (which is about a 1h drive away) next year cause there is no longer an early morning bus service which I would be eligible to get help towards but won't get help with accommodation.

“Growing up in a rural area with very few transport links, all of which were expensive, meant that travelling for any reason independently could easily make a small activity take an entire day, so was always carefully considered”



“Mum is disabled, and money is very limited, I have to travel to college and bus fare is expensive.”

YOUNG PEOPLE ALSO SAID...

Rural public transport is not frequent or reliable enough and takes too long for short journeys.

I leave at 430 to get to work at 8 which is ridiculous. Not only cost but there are not buses available that suit all work hours. More frequent service would be very much appreciated.

There is no public transport, even though I'm not so far from town. I cannot get any work due to transport

Added to that the buses are regularly late or break down.

The disadvantages that some young people face are compounded by the lack and cost of public transport.

the cost is too high and I struggle because someone needs to come with me

I'm a young carer and there is little to no financial help available, I feel discriminated against.

The poor rural public transport service has an impact beyond that of employment and educational opportunities, resulting in poorer opportunities and a declining younger population.

most people my age move out of the area to access employment and rely on parents to transport to further education

If you live rurally, for example in Strathearn, it is not only about accessing education or employment it is also about access to the Job Centre and other services.

Makes me very dependent on my parents as we have no public transport in our village and it curtails socialising and after school activities.

I think the cost of the buses affects young people not just for work and education, but also social life can be limited, and opportunities to attend things in town

“Many older people are able to access bus services for free and although I understand that the services must be supplemented, many young people in education and low paid employment suffer disproportionately due to the cost and frequency of services.”

The fare charging system is unfair and lacks coherence.

It is ridiculous that you can travel from Aboyne to Aberdeen for more than the cost of a bus from Aberdeen to Edinburgh.

A journey from Peebles to Innerleithen costs £1.50 but it also costs this to go to 'Eshiels, Cardrona and Walkerburn despite the difference in distance.

It is unreasonable for older people who are financially comfortable to receive free and concessionary travel when young people cannot access education or employment due to the cost of travel.

I think young people should be subsidised more whilst those over 60 still employed should not be receiving free bus travel.

Perhaps the senior bus pass could be pegged to state pension age in order to free up eligibility for students who, after all, would only be holders for 4 years in most instances.

We also know a 60-year-old who still works and uses he free travel to get to work (he earns a lot).

Many OAPs in this area are wealthy and have means of transport that are not buses, trains etc. However young people who struggle to find employment in the area pay out the nose for a somewhat poor service.

There should be safe active travel options in rural areas. This would improve health, reduce car ownership levels and make otherwise inaccessible journeys quicker and free.

I am not regularly able to walk especially in winter due to the dangerous roads

It is difficult and dangerous for me to cycle or walk on the road to Kelso... at best I could get fitter but at worse I could be killed by the crazy drivers that use these roads.

Often the price of public transport in rural/remote areas isn't the biggest problem, but accessibility is. I live a 40 minute walk from the nearest bus and train stations, and the majority of the walk is along dangerous single-lane country roads with no pavement.

...there needs to be less investment and incentivisation of private car use. Air pollution and poor public health are killing people in Scotland, and private cars are the leading cause of both of these things. The Government and local authorities need to make walking and cycling the easiest, safest and most prioritised transport modes in rural and urban areas.

“I have spent some time in Glasgow visiting friends and have found the cost of transport far far cheaper. Also the frequency of transport was every 5 mins I can only dream of this where I live.”

APPENDIX ONE: SURVEY QUESTIONS

What is your age? (multiple choice)

16-18
19-21
22-26

Less than £5
£5-10
£10-15
£15-20
more than £20
Comments

What is your local authority area? (multiple choice)

All Scottish local authority areas provided as an option.

Do you consider where you live to be: (multiple choice)

Rural
Remote e.g. island, far from local services/town
Rural and remote
None of the above but I am from a rural area
Comments

Have you taken a job as it had very little or no travel cost? (multiple choice)

Yes
No
Maybe
Comments

Has the cost of public transport stopped you from accessing education? (multiple choice)

Yes - I had to move
Yes - I could not go
No
Comments

How far do you currently travel for education or employment (round trip)? (multiple choice)

Up to 20 miles
20-30 miles
30-40 miles
40-50 miles
More than 50 miles
Comments

Has the cost of public transport stopped you from accessing employment? (multiple choice)

Yes - I had to move
Yes - I could not go
No
Comments

If public transport was free, how far would you be willing to travel for employment or education? (multiple choice)

Up to 20 miles
20-30 miles
30-40 miles
40-50 miles
More than 50 miles
Comments

If you currently travel for education or employment, how much does your daily commute cost? (multiple choice)

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Text box space provided.