

Walking and Transport in Melbourne

2023 Update



Victoria Walks is an evidence-based health promotion organisation, leading the move for walkable communities in Australia since 2009. Our vision is for healthier, connected communities through more people walking more every day. Victoria Walks is supported by VicHealth.

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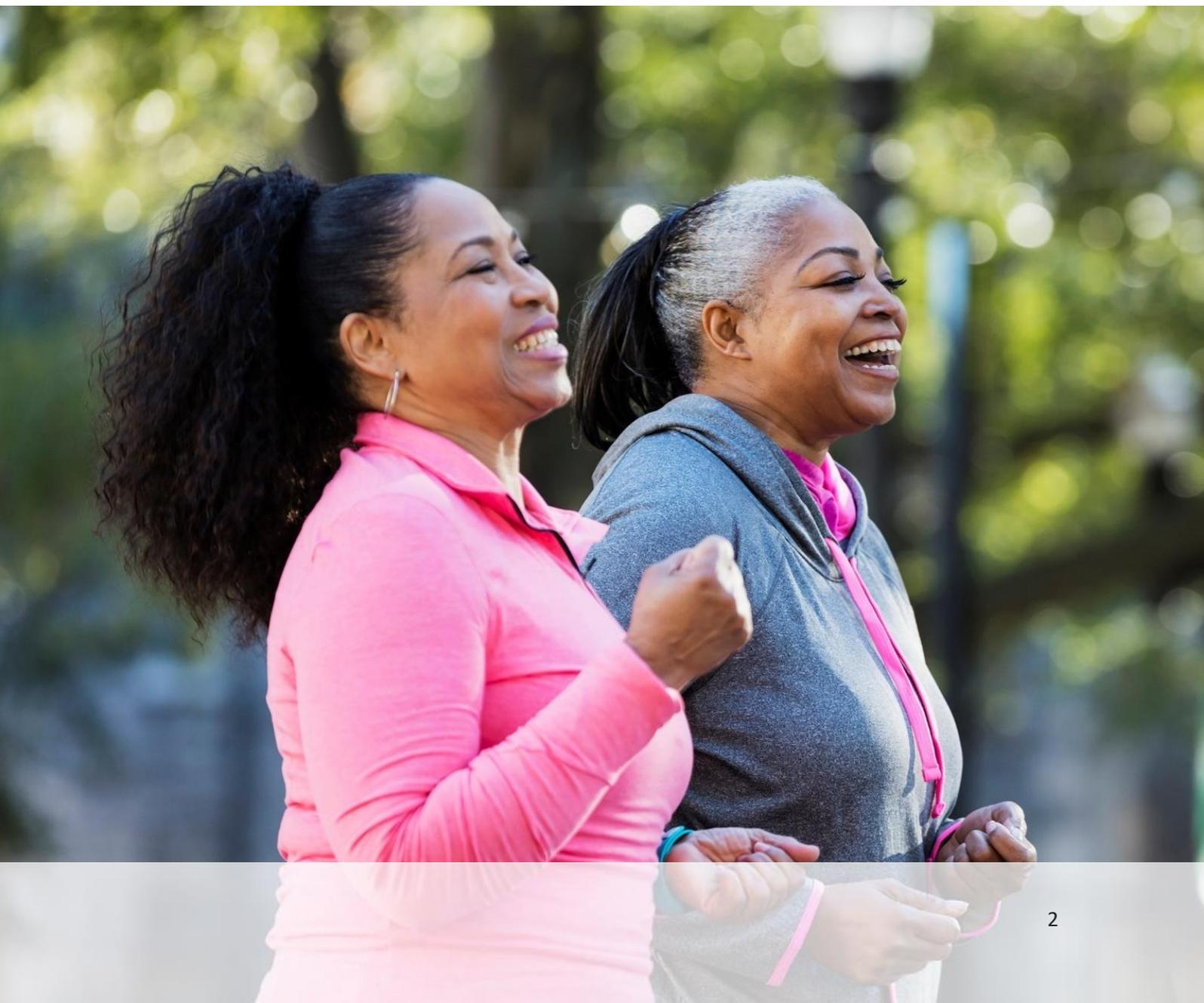
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Victoria Walks published '[Walking and transport in Melbourne suburbs](#)' in 2019. Amongst other things, that report analysed the VISTA data¹ up to June 2016, to provide a comprehensive picture of walking in the context of the transport system. This publication provides an update on that work, considering data collected up to mid-2021. This period includes nearly one and a half years (March 2020 to July 2021) during which the effects of COVID and restrictions led to reduced travel and changes in travel patterns.



1. Mode share

Walking is important for getting around metropolitan Melbourne, with more than one in five weekday trips walked in 2020-21 (Figure 1). This includes walking for both transport (such as to get to a shop) and recreation (such as going for a walk, including walking a dog). Walking is the second most common mode of travel. This has been the case since 2018-19, when it overtook vehicle passenger (refer Figure 4).

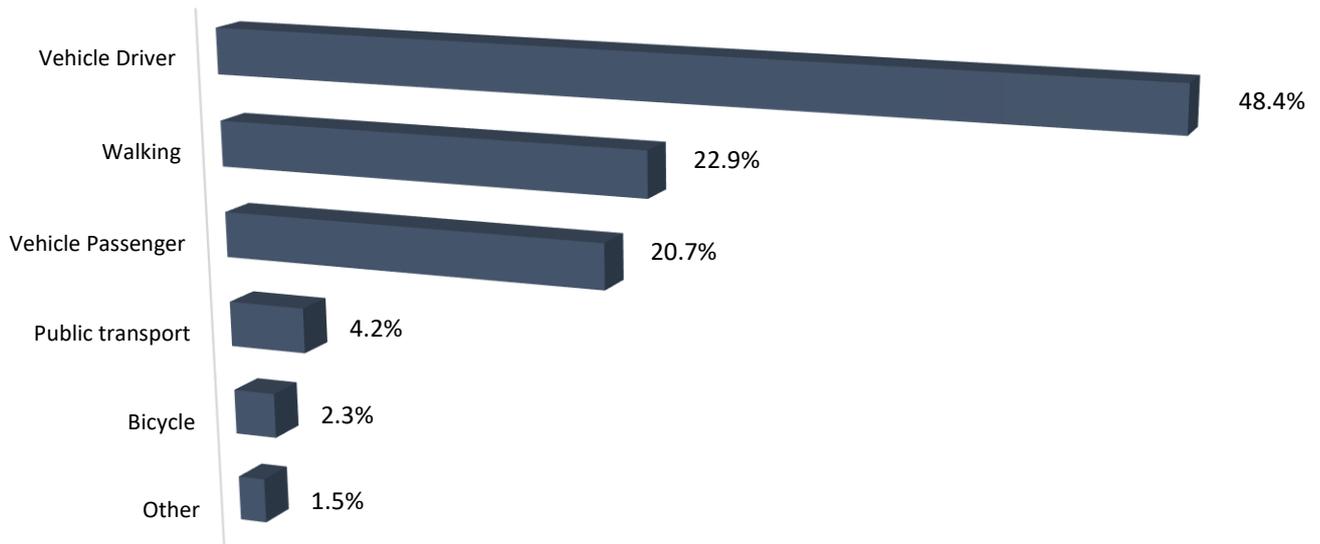


Figure 1 Proportion of trips by main mode 2020-21, metropolitan Melbourne

¹ Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel and Activity, collected by the Victorian Government.

1.1. Mode share and distance

Half of walking trips between 2016 and 2021 were less than 820 m, with significantly more trips walked in inner Melbourne than the outer suburbs. Walking is the most common mode of transport for weekday trips less than 1 km in length, with three in four (75.2%) walked during the period.

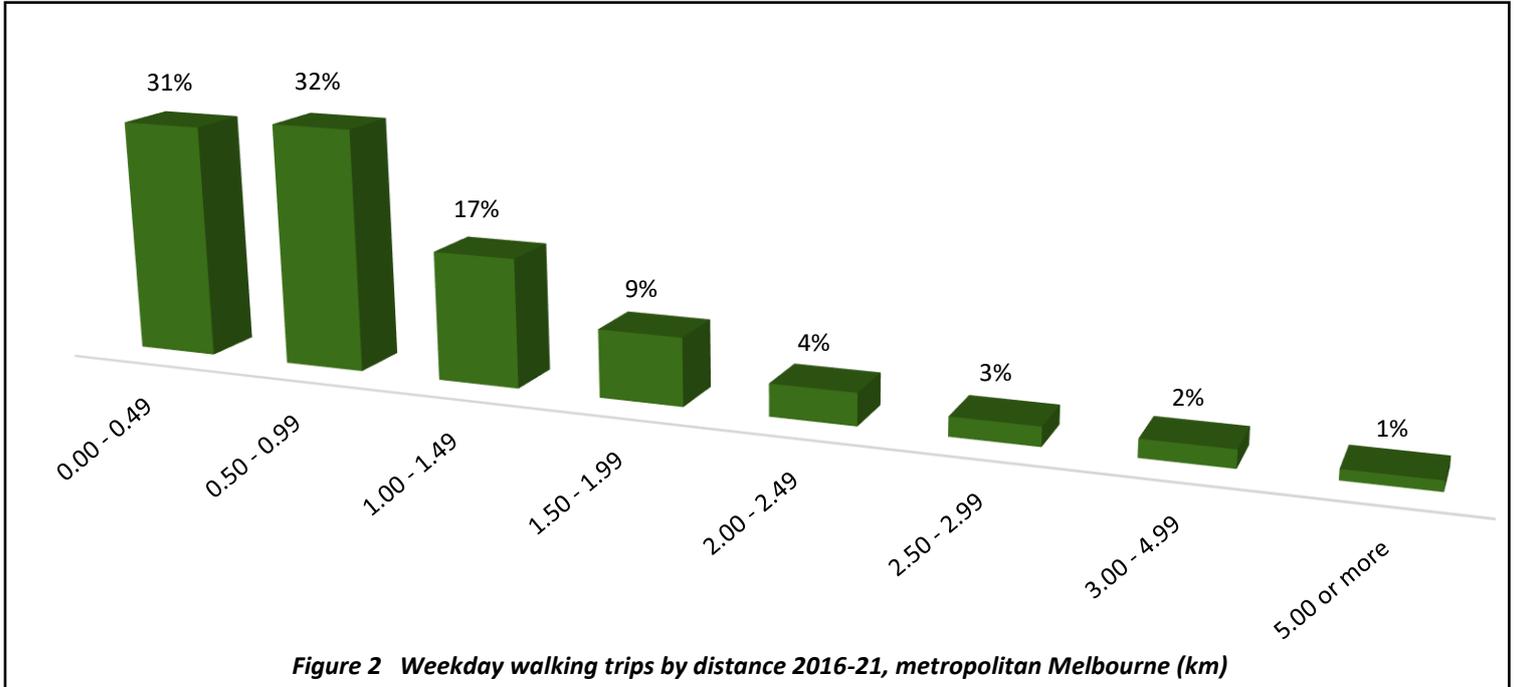


Table 1 Proportion and length of trips walked by origin location 2016-21

Location	Trips walked	Median length (m)
Inner Melbourne	41.1%	590
Middle Melbourne	22.9%	870
Outer Melbourne	14.1%	890
ALL metro Melbourne	21.3%	820

Table 2 Mode share by trip length 2016-21, metropolitan Melbourne

Trip distance (km)	Walk	Vehicle driver	Vehicle passenger	Public transport	Cycle	Other
0 - 0.99	75%	15%	7%	0%	2%	1%
1 - 1.99	36%	39%	20%	1%	2%	3%
2 - 2.99	13%	50%	28%	5%	3%	0%
3 - 3.99	4%	58%	29%	4%	2%	2%
4 - 4.99	3%	54%	32%	6%	3%	2%
5 - 9.99	1%	60%	27%	9%	3%	1%
10 or more	0%	66%	18%	12%	1%	1%
ALL Distances	21%	48%	21%	6%	2%	1%

1.2. Mode share and young people

Our earlier research showed that people between 10 and 19 years-old are the age group most reliant on walking. Nearly half of people in this age group who leave home (44%) on any given day walk as part of their travel, including in combination with public transport.

About one in five children walk to school, with 20% of children travelling to primary school walking and 18% to secondary schools. Public transport becomes increasingly important for young people to travel to education as they age. One in five children (21%) aged 4-12 walk or take public transport (excludes private school buses) to primary school, compared to nearly two in three (64%) people aged 16-24 travelling to tertiary education or technical schools.

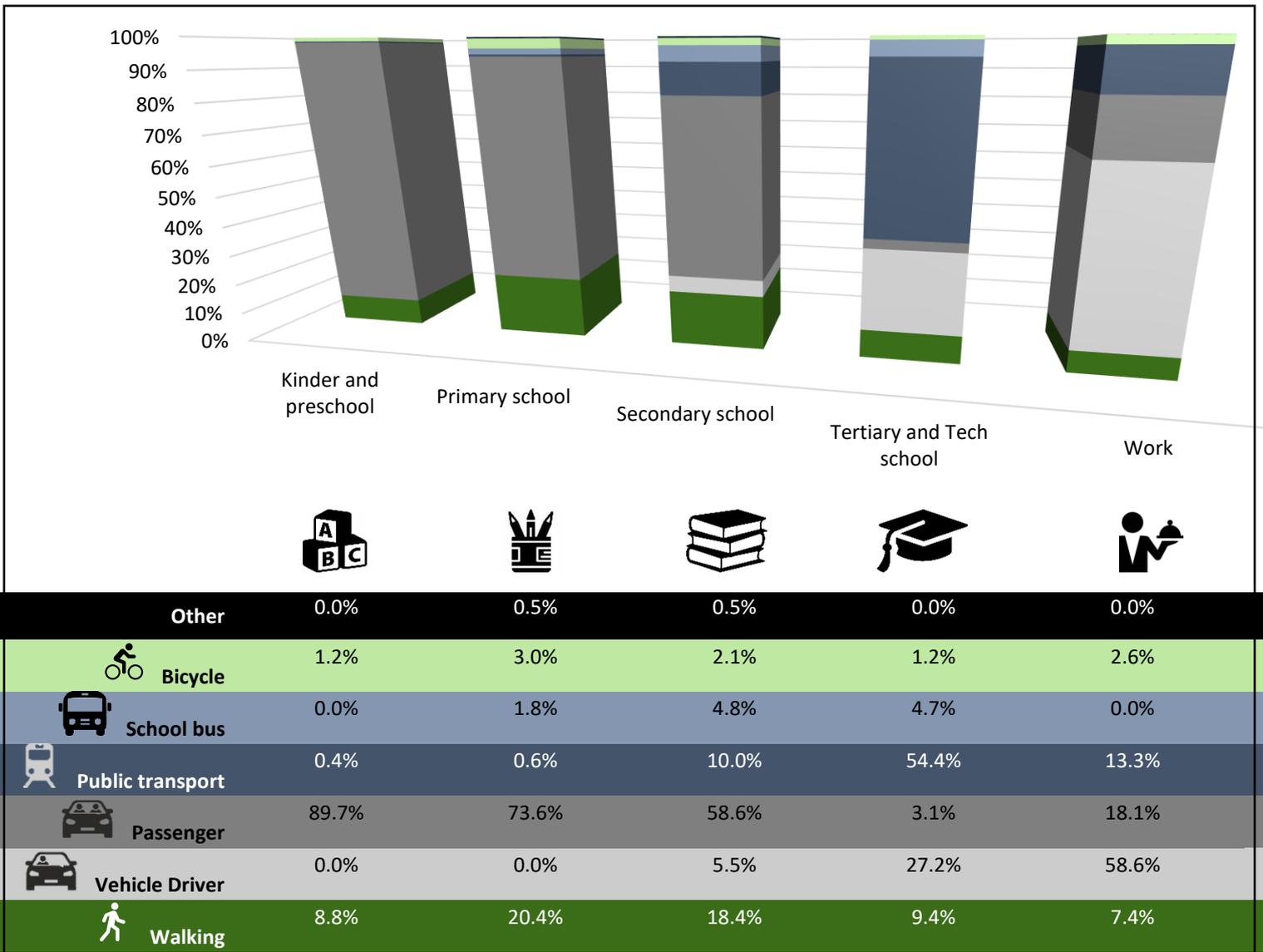


Figure 3 Proportion of weekday trips made by people under 25 years of age to various destinations 2016-21, metro Melbourne

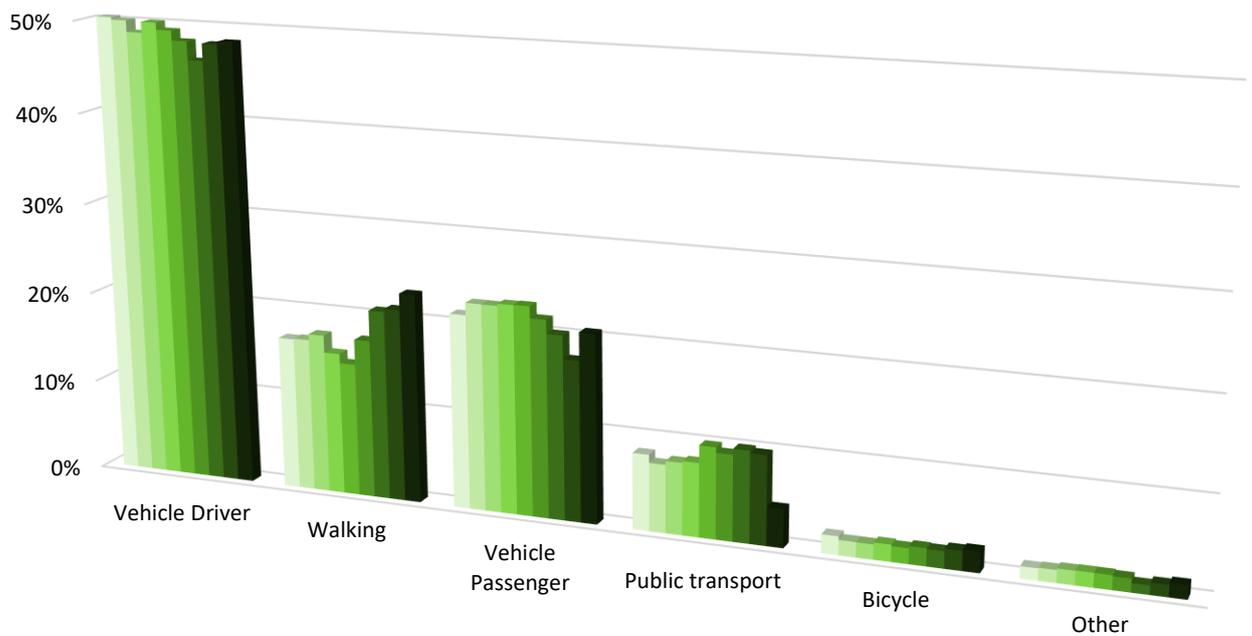
Vehicle trips to drop children at school contribute to peak hour congestion and make it less safe for those walking and riding. One-quarter (24.9%) of vehicle trips in metropolitan Melbourne beginning between 8 and 9 am are to a primary or secondary school, according to analysis of VISTA 2016-21 data. Further school related vehicle trips occur when some of these drivers then return home.

2. Travel patterns over time

Walking for all purposes became more common over time, to a high of nearly 23% of all trips in 2020-21. Cycling rates are also increasing, although from a low base. The pandemic accelerated walking and cycling rates further.

The proportion of public transport trips was also increasing prior to 2020, when COVID and lockdowns reduced public transport use (which usually also involves walking). The 2020-21 data shows a more than halving of public transport trips from a year earlier. The report *'Infrastructure beyond COVID-19: A national study on the impacts of the pandemic on Australia'* by Infrastructure Australia and L.E.K. (2020) early in the pandemic suggests walking “displaced public transport for some short trips and to access local retail options”.

Conversely, vehicle driver and passenger mode shares have been falling over the long term. Even though they each increased in 2020-21 compared to a year earlier (vehicle driver only marginally), both are still lower than the annual rates up to and including 2016-17.



						
2012-13	50.4%	16.7%	21.3%	8.3%	2.0%	1.3%
2013-14	50.1%	16.8%	22.6%	7.4%	1.6%	1.4%
2014-15	48.9%	17.5%	22.6%	7.9%	1.6%	1.5%
2015-16	50.1%	15.6%	22.8%	8.1%	1.8%	1.6%
2016-17	49.3%	14.6%	22.9%	10.0%	1.7%	1.5%
2017-18	48.3%	17.4%	21.6%	9.4%	1.9%	1.4%
2018-19	46.3%	20.8%	20.1%	10.0%	1.8%	1.0%
2019-20	48.1%	21.1%	17.6%	9.7%	2.1%	1.3%
2020-21	48.4%	22.9%	20.7%	4.2%	2.3%	1.5%

Figure 4 Proportion of weekday trips made by each mode between 2012-13 and 2020-21, metro Melbourne

2.1. Walking to school

There is no clear trend in the proportion of children walking to school over the past decade. After a drop in 2015-16 to a low of 15%, walking to school peaked in 2018-19 with more than one in five children walking. However it has subsequently declined, with a further drop during the pandemic possibly due to school closures.

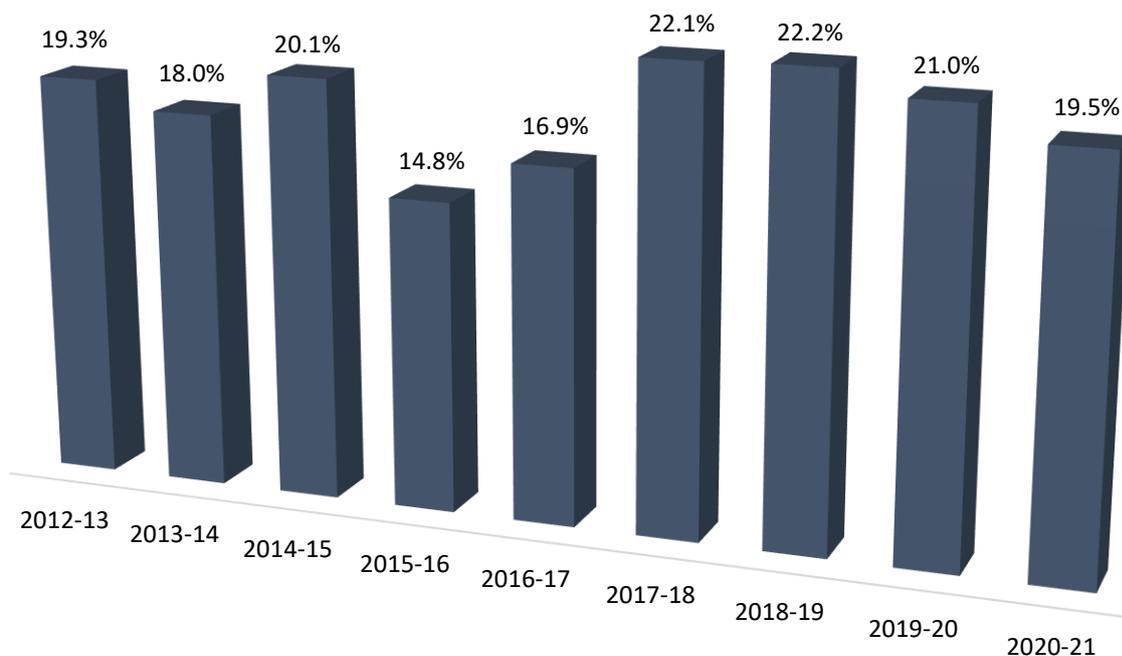
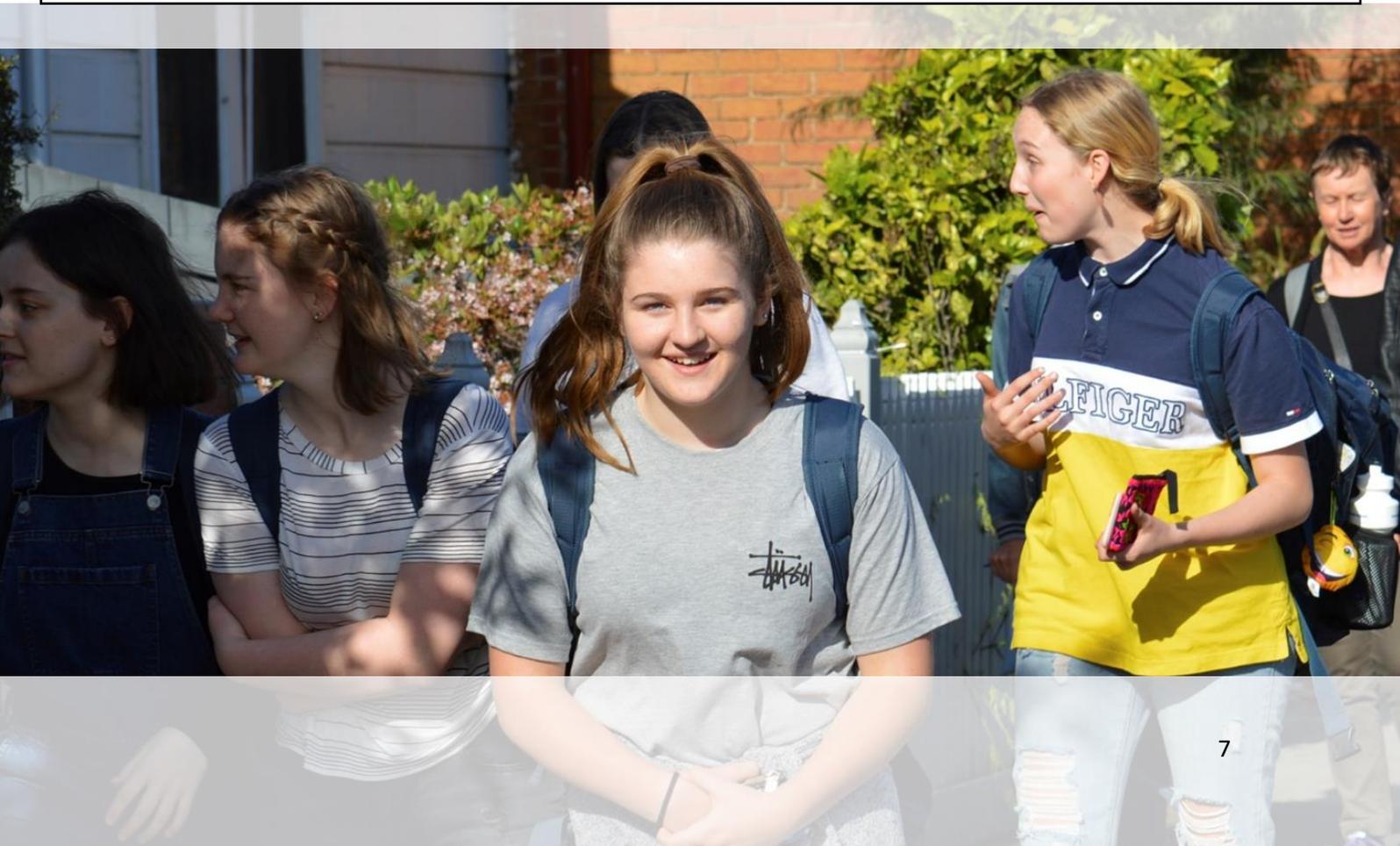


Figure 5 Proportion of weekday trips walked to school (primary and secondary) by 4-18 year-olds, metro Melbourne



3. Purpose

The main purpose for walking trips for the period 2016-20 was similar to 2012-16 (earlier publication). The most common purposes were recreational, personal business (which includes taking the dog for a walk) and social reasons. Together these three purposes accounted for more than half of all walking trips.

To investigate the impacts of COVID and lockdowns in Melbourne, 2020-21 was considered separately. This shows that walking for recreation became even more important during that year, increasing from 21% of all walking trips between 2016-20 to nearly one in three in 2020-21. Conversely, walking trips for social, work related, and education purposes significantly decreased. The increase in walking during COVID appears to have been mostly due to recreational walking, which in part may have been due to restrictions and stay at home orders reducing the number of transport trips to particular destinations e.g. work, school, etc.

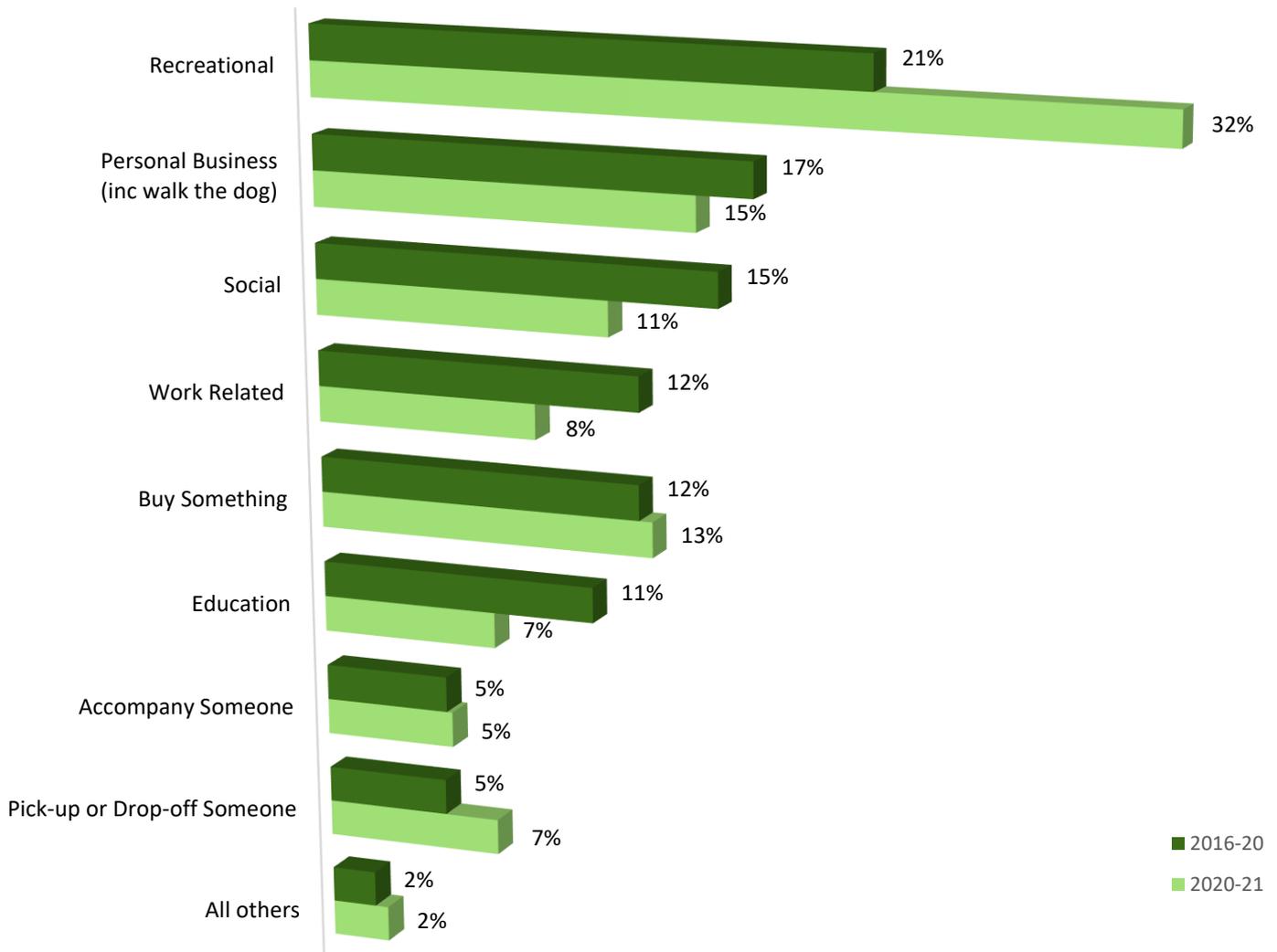


Figure 6 Weekday walking trips by purpose for 2016-20 and 2020-21, metropolitan Melbourne

3.1. Purpose for transport trips

Given the significant growth in walking for recreation, a subsection of transport trips (i.e. to get to a specific destination) was analysed (see ‘More information’ for details about which trips were included). For these transport trips, walking makes up a smaller proportion of trips at about 15% in 2020-21, compared to nearly 23% of trips for all purposes. As for all trips, the long-term trend for transport trips shows an increase in the proportion of walking, although there was a slight drop in walking for transport during COVID (compared to a significant increase in walking for recreation). This is presumably a reflection of travel restrictions and fewer trips to particular destinations.

RECOMMENDATION: The State Government should track walking travel for transport specifically over time.

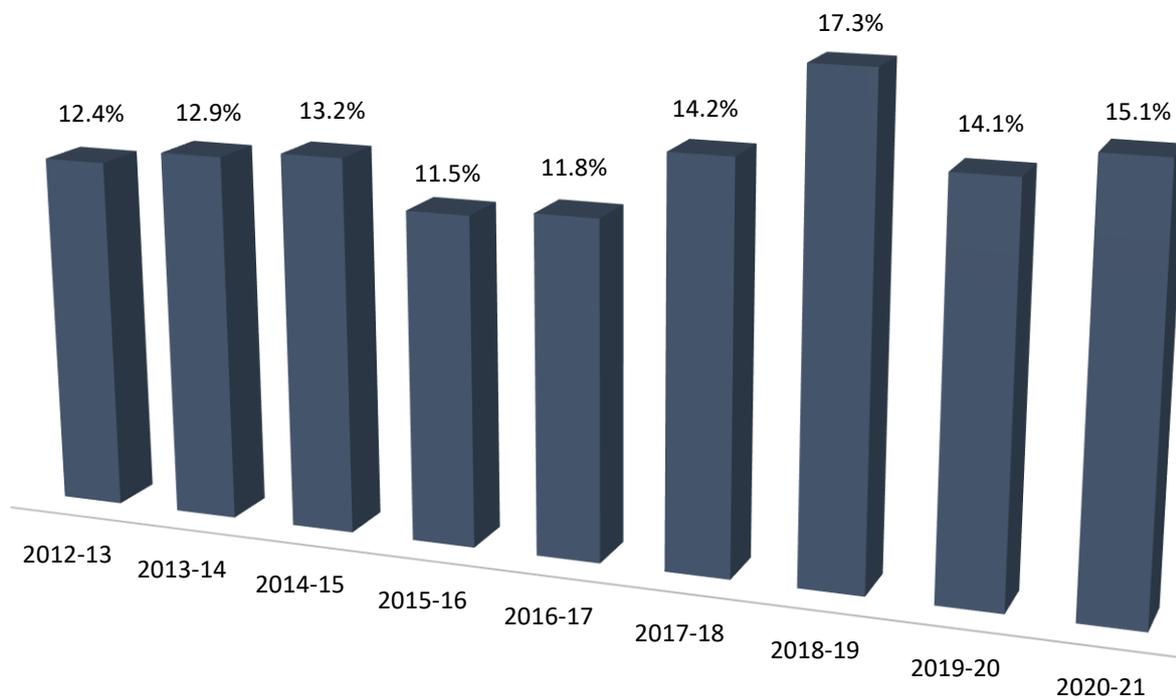


Figure 7 Proportion of weekday trips for transport (i.e. to get to a specific destination) walked by year, metro Melbourne



4. More information

This analysis is based on VISTA data collected during financial years 2016-17 to 2020-21. Data up to 2017-18 is available [online](#), DoT provided the remaining years' data direct to Victoria Walks. Data from 2012-16 is included in understanding trends.

Weekday trips originating in the 31 council areas that make up [metropolitan Melbourne](#) are included, using SA3 level weightings.

Walking trips refers to those that are walked entirely for any purpose, including transport (to get somewhere) and recreation (to go for a walk). The mode hierarchy used in VISTA means walking is not considered the main mode unless no other modes are used. Our earlier research found basically all public transport trips (public bus, train and tram) also involve some walking.

From 2016-17, new modes 'mobility scooter' and 'jogging' were added to the survey form. These have been included as part of 'walking' for this analysis. They represent only a small proportion of trips (0.64% in 2020-21).

Trips for children under 5 are estimated as part of the VISTA data editing process by the DoT and do not reflect trips made with people outside of the household e.g. a grandparent picking up a three year old and taking them to kinder is not captured. This means trips for those under 5 are underestimated.

The following filters were used to understand young people's travel (Figure 3). These criteria reduce the chance the person was travelling to that location for some reason other than education/care e.g. an adult travelling to a school for work or a young child who went with their parent to school to drop off an older sibling.

- Childcare, kinder and preschool:
 - 0 – 5 years old inclusive
 - destplace2 = 'Childcare' or 'Kinder or Preschool'

- destpurp2 = 'Accompanied someone', 'At childcare', 'At school' or 'Education (NEC)'
- duration = 30 minutes or more
- Primary school
 - 4 – 12 years old inclusive
 - destplace2 = 'Primary school'
 - destpurp1 = 'Education'
- Secondary school
 - 11 – 18 years old inclusive
 - destplace2 = 'Secondary school'
 - destpurp1 = 'Education'
- Tertiary/technical school
 - 16 – 24 years old inclusive
 - destplace2 = 'Technical school' or 'Tertiary'
 - destpurp1 = 'Education'
- Work
 - 11 – 24 years old inclusive
 - destplace2 = 'My Workplace'
 - destpurp1 = 'Work Related'

The sub-section of trips for transport (Figure 7) was calculated using the following categories from VISTA:

- Social
- Work related
- Buy something
- Education
- Pick-up or drop-off someone
- Pick-up or drop-off something

This is not a complete list of all walking transport trips. It excludes a small number categorised as:

- 'recreation'. Trips to participate in recreational activities such as sport and concerts are excluded (approx. 0.3% of all recreation trips).
- 'personal business'. The majority (approx. 85%) of these relate to walking the dog. This means trips to medical/dental locations, banks, etc are excluded.