

Method of Travel to Work

Summary Bulletin for Shropshire

March 2023

Key Points

- The number of Shropshire residents employed remained virtually unchanged between 2011 and 2021. However, the modes of transport used have changed significantly and will have been heavily influenced by restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of the 2021 Census.
- There has been a strong up-lift in people working from home. As the public were tasked with working from home where possible during the height of the pandemic, this increase was to be expected. However, of note is the fact that compared to regional and national averages, home working was more prevalent in Shropshire in 2011. In 2021 however, a higher proportion of the national workforce was based primarily at home than was the case in Shropshire (31.5% compared with 27.2%). This will be because more people in Shropshire work in sectors where home working is not possible.
- Of those that do travel to work, the car remains the most common option nationwide, but especially in Shropshire. While numbers have decreased because of higher numbers of people working from home, the reduction has been less pronounced than numbers using either public transport or walking/cycling.
- Use of public transport is exceptionally low in Shropshire – the usage rate ranks Shropshire 169th out of 174 upper tier local authorities.
- How people travel to work does vary across Shropshire, with those living rurally more likely to work from home and less likely to use public transport. People living in Shrewsbury and the key market towns are much more likely to walk or cycle although using the car still dominates.



Means of Travelling to Work

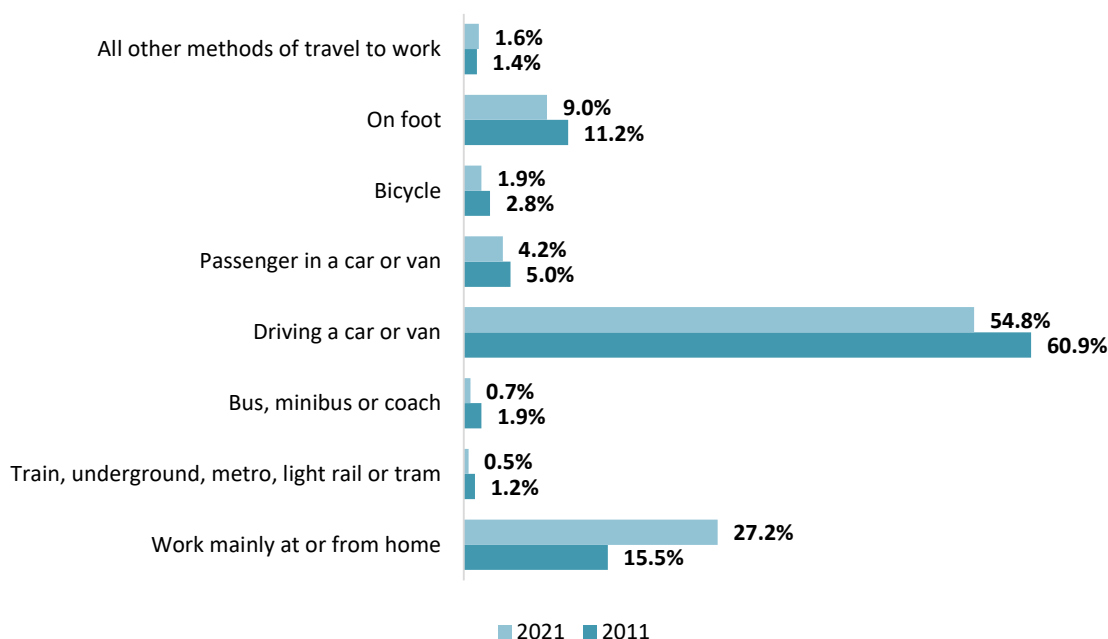
The total number of Shropshire people in employment rose only very marginally between 2011 and 2021. However, over the decade, the methods people choose to travel to work underwent significant change, primarily because of the Covid-19 pandemic. 17,958 more people were working mainly from home in 2021 than in 2011, which equates with growth of 76.2%. Except for “other methods of travelling to work”, which increased by 16%, all other transport modes declined, with some, especially public transport, declining significantly.

Numbers in Employment by Method of Travel to Work

	2011	2021	% Change
Work mainly at or from home	23,567	41,525	+76.2%
Train, underground, metro, light rail or tram	1,852	797	-57.0%
Bus, minibus or coach	2,932	1,110	-62.1%
Driving a car or van	92,722	83,469	-10.0%
Passenger in a car or van	7,655	6,421	-16.1%
Bicycle	4,339	2,926	-32.6%
On foot	17,077	13,662	-20.0%
All other methods of travel to work	2,165	2,512	+16.0%
Total	152,309	152,424	+0.1%

The chart below shows the breakdown of Shropshire workers by the method they used to travel to work in 2011 and 2021. This shows that there was a strong increase in the share held by “working mainly or from home” with more than a quarter of the workforce based primarily at home in 2021 compared with 15.5% in 2011. This strong increase will be inflated by the government guidelines which were in place at the time of the 2021 Census tasking people to work from home whenever possible. Because there was such a strong increase in numbers working from home, the number travelling to their place of work from home reduced (by 18,845 people, or by 13.9%).

Breakdown by Method of Travel to Work, 2011 & 2021



Working from Home

Although the proportion of people working primarily from home was 76.2% higher in Shropshire in 2021 than it had been in 2011, growth has been much lower than in either the West Midlands (+169.9%) or England (+216.2%). To some extent, this is because the base was stronger in Shropshire in 2011, with 15.5% of those in employment working mainly from home. This compares with around a tenth of the regional and national workforce. By 2021, the proportion of workers based mainly at home was lower than it was in England. This will be primarily due to the types of industry sectors and occupations that dominate. Some of the key sectors in Shropshire (manufacturing, health care, retail) make it more challenging to work at home than in locations where a higher proportion of people are normally office-based. In 2021, the proportion of the workforce based mainly at home ranked Shropshire 93rd out of 174 upper tier local authorities (in the third quintile). In 2011, however, Shropshire was in the top quintile of local authorities (42nd out of 346 district authorities).

Number Working Mainly from Home

	2011		2021		% Change 2011-2021
	Number	As % all Workers	Number	As % all Workers	
Shropshire	23,567	15.5%	41,525	27.2%	+76.2%
West Midlands	250,813	9.8%	676,936	25.7%	+169.9%
England	2,631,930	10.4%	8,321,252	31.5%	+216.2%

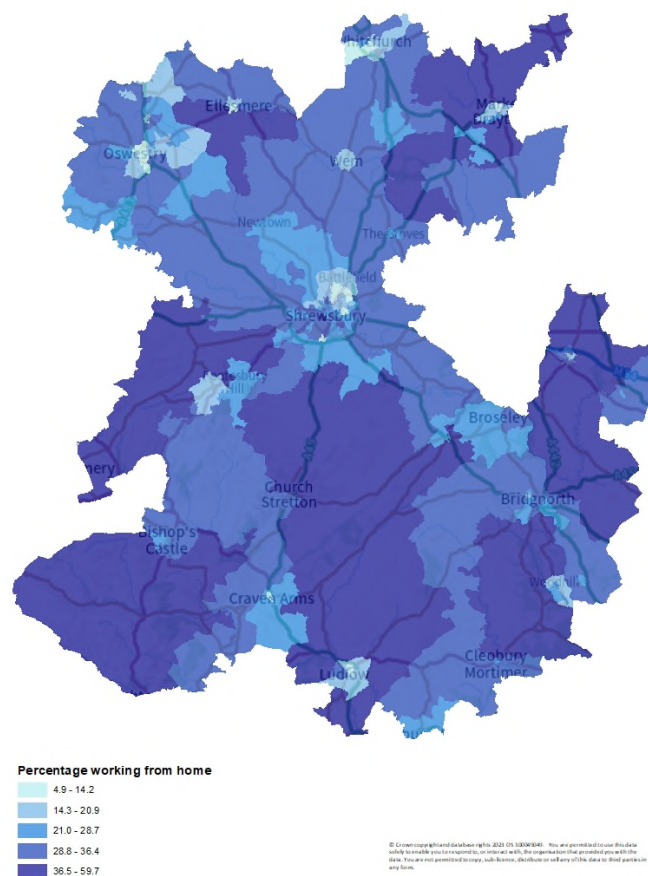
The map opposite shows the proportion of the labour force primarily working from home in March 2021. The number varies across Shropshire, with rates generally highest in rural locations and lowest in the towns.

However, with Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the Census, the propensity to work from home was more related to the type of employment being undertaken rather than the location.

The ten electoral divisions with the highest rate of home working in 2021 were:

- Shifnal South and Cosford (46.4%)
- Hodnet (42.9%)
- Corvedale (41.6%)
- Clun (39.3%)
- Brown Clee (38.9%)
- Burnell (38.5%)
- Loton (36.5%)
- Chirbury & Worthen (36.3%)
- Worfield (36.2%)
- The Meres (35.9%)

Proportion Working Mainly from Home



Public Transport

Nationally, the number of people using public transport as their main method of travelling to work halved between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses. This decline will in no small part be attributable to the Coronavirus pandemic when people avoided public transport wherever possible. In Shropshire, usage of public transport was already low in 2011, with just 3.1% of workers using the bus or train as their main means of getting to work. By 2021, this had fallen to 1.2% of workers, which is less than 2,000 people. Public transport was used by less than 2% of all people travelling to work (that is excluding those working from home). Compared with other upper tier local authorities, Shropshire ranks 169th out of 174 in terms of public transport usage rates to travel to work.

Number using Public Transport

	2011		2021		% Change 2011-2021
	Number	As % all workers	Number	As % all workers	
Shropshire	4,784	3.1%	1,907	1.2%	-60.1%
West Midlands	260,644	10.2%	143,409	5.5%	-45.0%
England	4,152,453	16.4%	2,152,157	8.2%	-48.2%

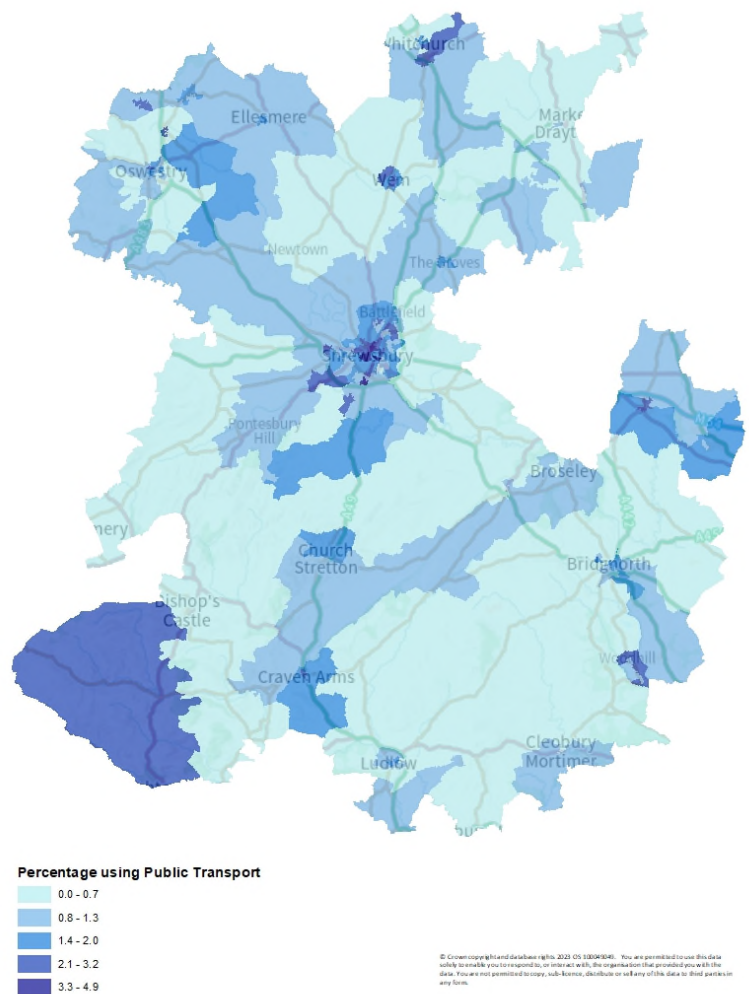
Of those using public transport to get to work in Shropshire, the majority used the bus (58%) or train (40%), with very small numbers using other forms of public transport.

The map opposite shows the proportion of the population using public transport to travel to work. The proportion is low across the county and stands at less than 1% in many parts of rural Shropshire, where access to trains and buses is challenging.

The use of public transport was higher in Shrewsbury and the main market towns but did not rise above 5% in any Shropshire lower-level super output area (LSOA). The ten electoral divisions with the highest rate of public transport use in 2021 were:

- Quarry & Coton Hill (3.8%)
- Castlefields & Ditherington (2.7%)
- Sundorne (2.2%)
- Bowbrook (2.1%)
- Abbey (2.0%)
- Meole (1.9%)
- Bagley (1.9%)
- Highley (1.9%)
- Belle Vue (1.9%)
- Underdale (1.9%)

Proportion using Public Transport



Car/Van/Motorcycle

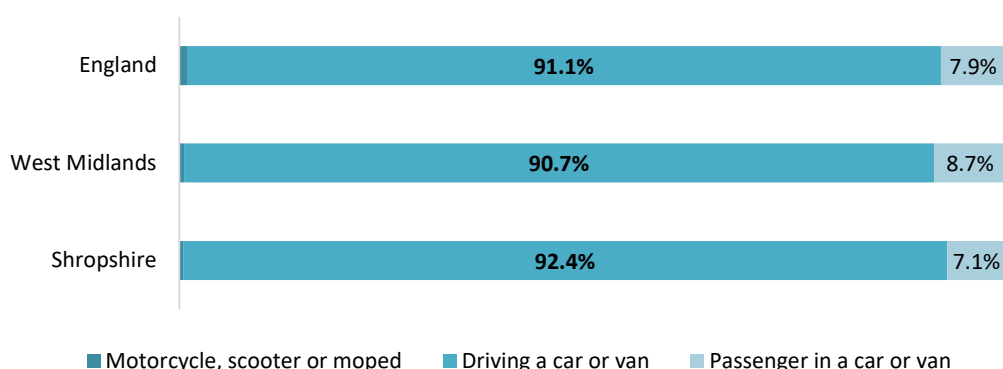
More people travel to work by car, van or motorcycle than by any other form of transport, with 59.3% of those in employment choosing this method in 2021. This does, however, represent a decline from 65.9%, which is the equivalent of 10,059 fewer people travelling by motor vehicle (a tenth fewer). Numbers and percentages have likewise reduced regionally and nationally as well. To a very large extent, this will have been caused by lockdown restrictions and Government guidelines at the time of the 2021 Census. Despite the decline, a higher proportion of Shropshire residents use a motor vehicle than is the case nationally or regionally. More than four-fifths (81.7%) of all journeys made to work in Shropshire (that is excluding those working from home) involved a motor vehicle.

Number using Car/Van/Motorcycle

	2011		2021		% change 2011-2021
	Number	As % all workers	Number	As % all workers	
Shropshire	100,337	65.9%	90,318	59.3%	-10.0%
West Midlands	1,720,646	67.4%	1,539,007	58.3%	-10.6%
England	14,870,684	58.8%	12,893,554	48.9%	-13.3%

More than nine out of ten journeys to work involving a car were attributable to people driving and this proportion was similar in Shropshire, the West Midlands and England. The split between drivers and passengers has remained little changed since 2011.

Breakdown of Motor Vehicle Journeys to Work by Type



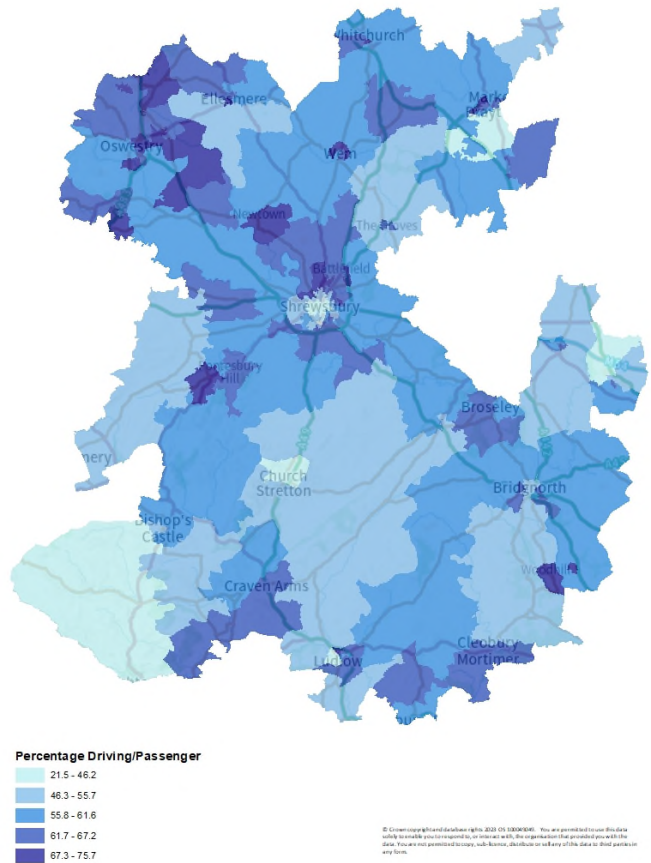
Using a car (primarily driving rather than as a passenger) is the most common means of travel to work across most of Shropshire, accounting for as much as three-quarters of all people employed in some areas.

Rates are lower in the town centres, where there is greater access to public transport, and where walking is a feasible option and where cycling infrastructure is better. They are also lower in some rural areas where levels of home working are high.

The ten electoral divisions with the highest rate of motor vehicle use in 2021 were:

- Highley (71.6%)
- Oswestry East (70.2%)
- St Martin's (69.3%)
- Whittington (69.1%)
- Gobowen, Selattyn & Weston Rhyn (68.6%)
- Harlescott (67.2%)
- Rea Valley (66.3%)
- Monkmoor (66.1%)
- Ellesmere Urban (66.1%)
- Market Drayton West (65.2%)

Proportion using Car/Van/Motorcycle



On Foot/Bicycle

A slightly higher proportion of Shropshire workers walk or cycle to their place of employment than is the case nationally or regionally (10.9% in 2021 compared with 8.5% in the West Midlands and 9.7% in the England). Numbers have fallen across all geographies since 2011, when 14.1% of Shropshire workers cycled or walked. This equates with 4,828 fewer people (a reduction of 22.5%).

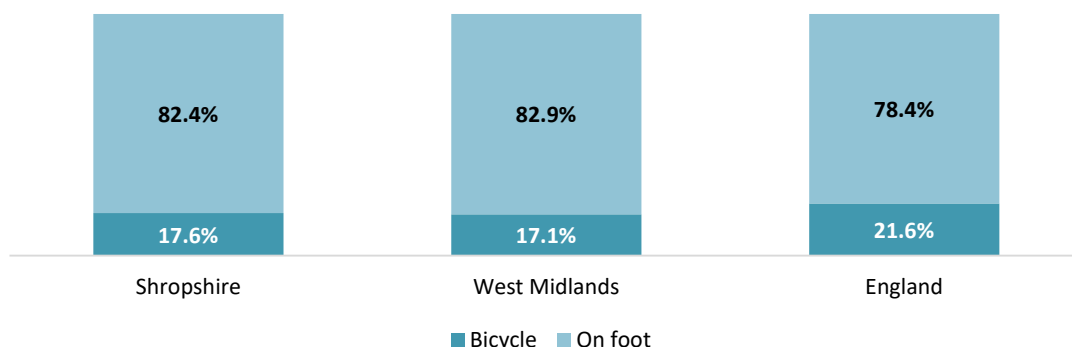
Number Walking/Cycling

	2011		2021		% change 2011-2021
	Number	As % all workers	Number	As % all workers	
Shropshire	21,416	14.1%	16,588	10.9%	-22.5%
West Midlands	280,355	11.0%	224,349	8.5%	-20.0%
England	3,204,748	12.7%	2,571,196	9.7%	-19.8%



More than four times as many Shropshire workers walk to work than cycle. The split between walking and cycling is similar in the West Midlands, with cycling taking a slightly larger share across England.

Breakdown between Walking and Cycling



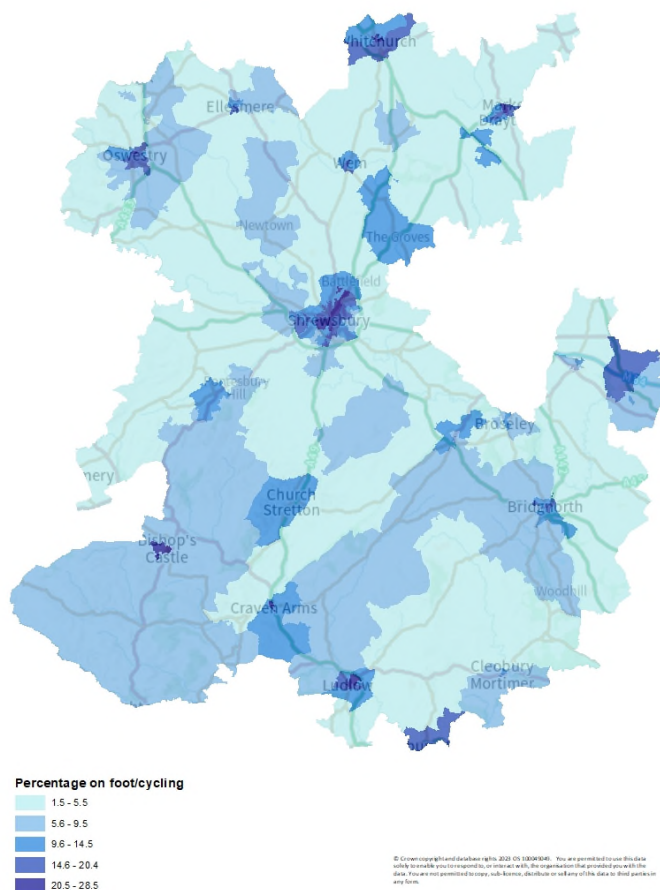
Walking or cycling to work is not a viable option for much of the rural Shropshire population as the distance they have to travel between home and workplace is too far. In many areas, less than 5% of those in employment walk or cycle.

In the main towns including Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch and Market Drayton, walking and cycling is a more common option. In some smaller settlements such as Bishop’s Castle, there is also a relatively high proportion of workers walking or cycling as their main transport option, which reflects the high number of residents that work locally.

The ten electoral divisions with the numbers walking or cycling in 2021 were:

- Quarry & Coton Hill (23.4%)
- Castlefields & Ditherington (23.3%)
- Ludlow East (21.5%)
- Oswestry West (20.1%)
- Ludlow North (20.1%)
- Porthill (19.1%)
- Sundorne (18.1%)
- Belle Vue (18.1%)
- Harlescott (17.7%)
- Underdale (17.5%)

Proportion Walking/Cycling



Definitions

Employed (In employment)

- A person aged 16+ is defined as employed (or in employment) if in the week before the census they carried out at least one hour's paid work, either as an employee or self-employed.

This includes casual or temporary work, on a government-sponsored training scheme, doing paid or unpaid work for their own or family business, being away from work ill, on maternity leave, or on holiday or temporarily laid off.

Main job

- The 'Main job' of a person aged 16+ is the job in which they usually work the most hours. For people not working at the time of the census the main job relates to the person's last job. Topics based on employment all relate to a person's main job.

Travel to Work

- Census 2021 travel to work data use the 2001 travel to work specification, which is a method consistent with variables from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Data relates to the main method of transport used.

The data in this bulletin have been extracted from 2021 Census table TS061 and from 2011 Census DC7701EW1a

For more information please contact: BusinessIntelligence@shropshire.gov.uk

Or refer to ONS website:

[Labour market and travel to work: Census 2021 in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

