

# Census 2021: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough travel to work summary

## Background and caveats

The 2021 Census was conducted on March 21, 2021. On this date, England was in a national lockdown which began on January 06, 2021. Therefore, **travel to work (and travel in general) was heavily restricted on the day of the Census**, and for several weeks prior. As such, the 2021 Census data does not reflect a period when workers had free choice to choose whether and how to travel to work, unlike the 2011 Census which took place during more typical conditions.

Comparisons have been made between the 2011 and 2021 Census data which help to provide an insight into travel patterns during the lockdown but do not capture the rapidly changing picture post March 2021.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has released a blog post entitled '[Understanding commuting patterns from Census 2021](#)' which further describes the challenges relating to the 2021 travel to work statistics which are noted to be "*reflective of this unusual period*". ONS advise that "*care should be taken when using [Census 2021] data for future planning and policy purposes, especially when making comparisons with 2011*".

Figure 1: ONS Census 2021 travel to work data warning notice, accessed 09/12/2022. (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS061/editions/2021/versions/1>)

As Census 2021 was during a unique period of rapid change, take care when using this data for planning purposes.

ONS is researching the potential use of aggregate mobile phone data, survey data and modelling approaches to produce more timely measures of travel data. Cambridgeshire County Council and partners are also considering options for capturing a post-lockdown picture of local travel patterns in lieu of an appropriate 2021 Census travel to work dataset for planning and policy purposes.

## Definitions

In this summary, reference is made to people “in work”, “those in employment” or “the working population”. This includes all people in employment of any kind, including those working from home. Reference is also made to “commuters” which only includes workers travelling to a usual place of work, i.e. this excludes those working from home and those with no fixed workplace.

Reference is also made to “active travel”. This includes journeys made via cycling or walking. Reference is also made to “private vehicles”. This comprises all taxis, cars, vans, motorcycles, scooters and mopeds – and includes private vehicle passengers unless otherwise stated.

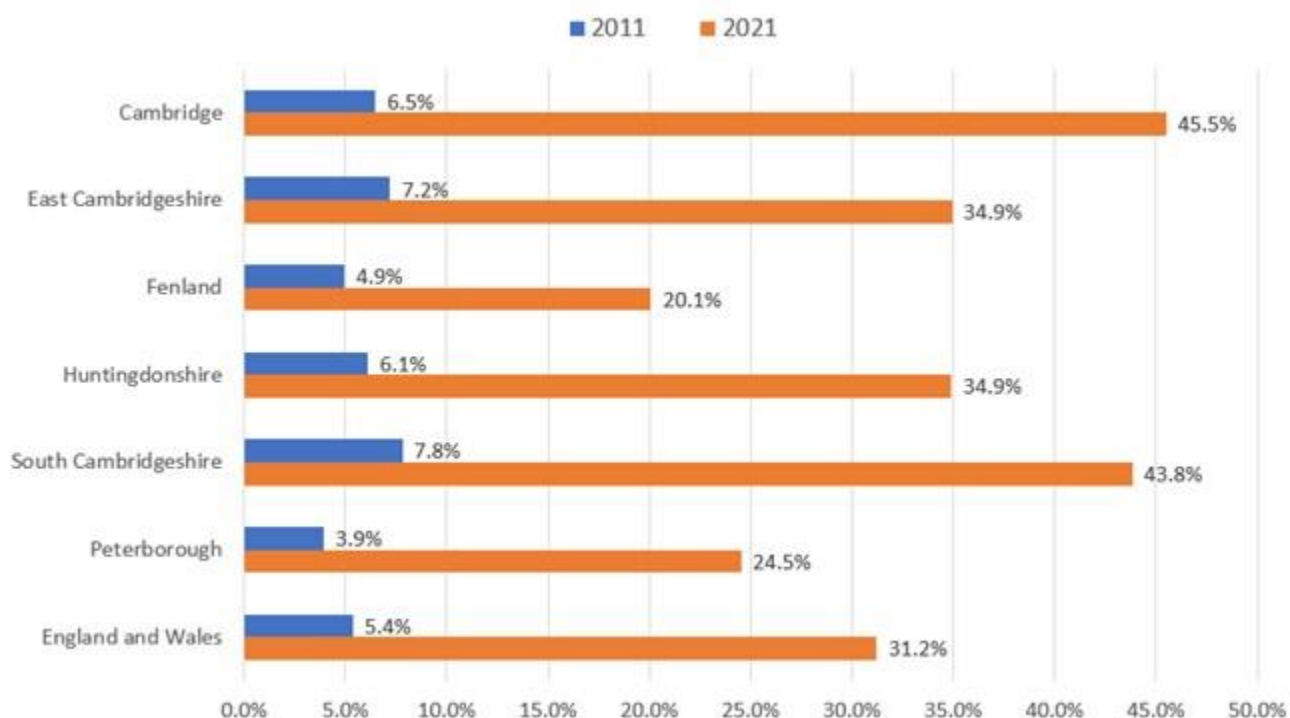
## Method of travel to work

### Working from home

The 2021 Census has indicated a large increase in those stating that they work mainly from home for all districts in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Cambridge has the largest proportion of people in employment working mainly from home (46%) - a significant increase on the figure seen in the 2011 Census (7%). Fenland has the lowest such proportion (20%) – which is also a significant increase on the 2011 figure (5%).

Figure 2 presents the proportion of the working population working mainly from home in 2011 and 2021 for each district and nationally. The national-level figures also show a notable increase in the proportion of respondents working mainly from home in comparison to Census 2011.

Figure 2: Share of Working Population Working Remotely by District, Census 2021 vs Census 2011.



Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of people working from home in England and Wales has increased significantly (+26 percentage points). This is, at least partially, due to the effects of COVID-19. Increases in excess of the national level were recorded in Cambridge (+39) and South Cambridgeshire (+36). Increases in Huntingdonshire (+29) and East Cambridgeshire (+28) were similar to the national increase, whilst Fenland (+15) and Peterborough (+21) experienced a smaller increase.

Differences in the degree of people working mainly from home in 2021 can also be seen in more detail in Figure 3.

The Census 2011 data indicates that the proportion of home working in 2011 was less than 25% across all areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In 2011, the area with the highest proportion was Newnham (Cambridge 007) with 12%, and the area with the lowest proportion was Ravensthorpe & North Bretton (Peterborough 009) with only 2% of working residents working mainly from home.

In 2021, most areas in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had a proportion of home working in excess of 25%. Most areas of South Cambridgeshire reported more than 40% of employed people working from home whilst many areas of Cambridge reported more than 50% of employees working mainly from home.

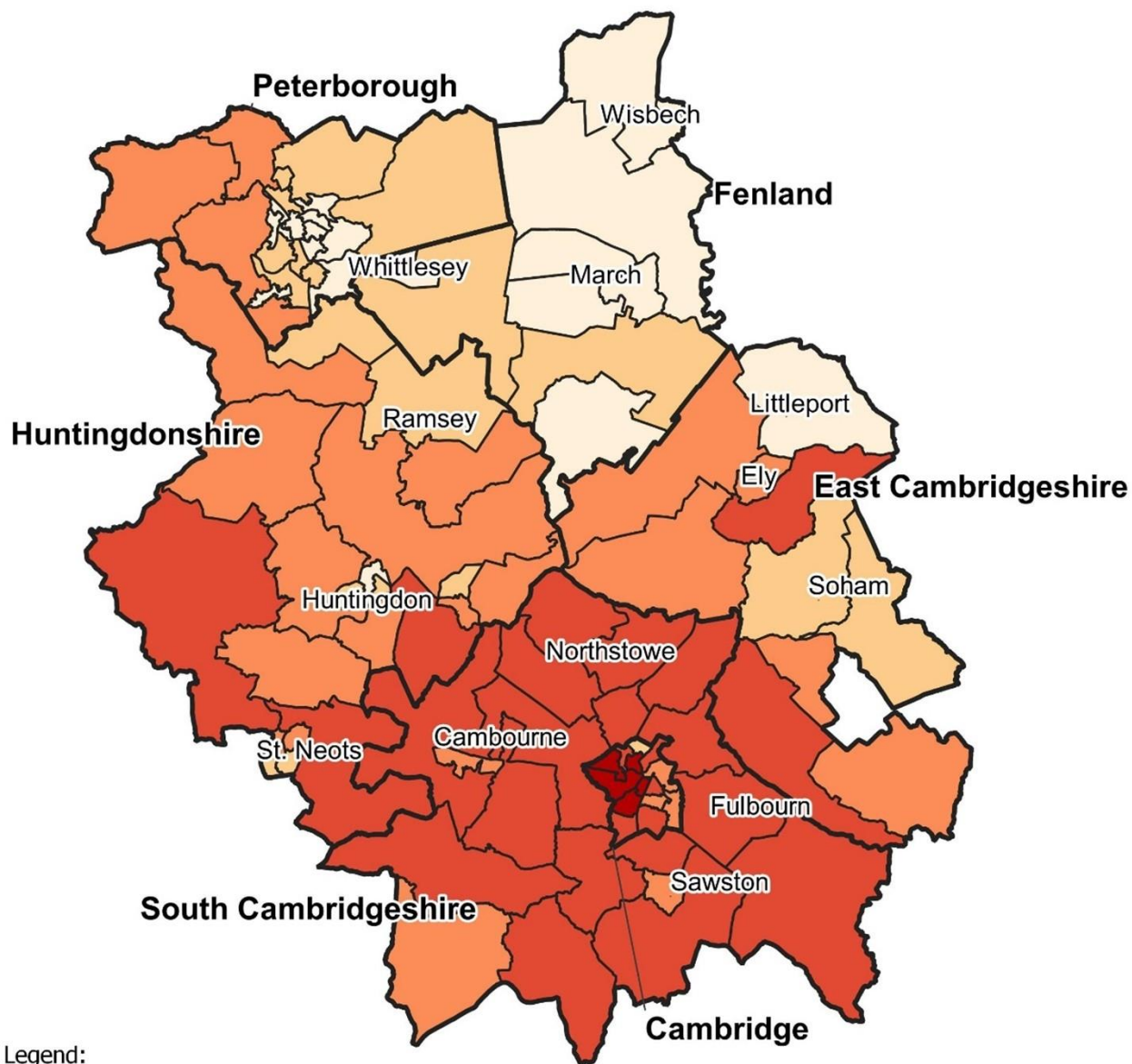
Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire showed similar patterns with most areas reporting home working proportions of between 25% and 40%, with just a handful of areas reporting above that level. Many parts of Peterborough and Fenland reported fewer than 25% of employed people working from home.

The area with the lowest proportion of home working in 2021 was North Wisbech (Fenland 002) with 12% and the area with the highest proportion was still Newnham (Cambridge 007) with 62%.

The significant increase in remote working as a result of COVID-19 has resulted in a reduction in overall volumes of commuters within the 2021 Census compared to the 2011 Census.

Figure 3: Proportion of Workforce Working Remotely, Census 2021.

Census 2021: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Proportion Workforce Working From Home (MSOA).



Legend:

□ District Authorities

2021 Working from home%

□ 0-25%

□ 25-33%

□ 33-40%

□ 40-50%

□ 50%+

## Method of commuting

Table 1 presents numbers of commuters by district in both 2011 and 2021. Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there was a reduction of 92,598 commuters (-24%) between the 2011 and 2021 Census. This overall reduction is comprised of a reduction in both active modes (walking and cycling) of -27% and private motorised vehicle drivers and passengers (-21%).

Table 1 also shows that the reduction in commuting volumes differs greatly by district. Peterborough reported a decrease of 8,369 commuters (-10%) between 2011 and 2021, whereas South Cambridgeshire saw a drop of 26,747 commuters (-37%).

Huntingdonshire is the only district in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that experienced a greater percentage reduction in private vehicle drivers and passengers (-27%) than active travel commuters (-25%).

The reduction in private motorised vehicle use in 2021 was particularly large in South Cambridgeshire (-34%) and Huntingdonshire (-27%) in both percentage and absolute terms. The reduction in Cambridge (-25%) was of a similar percentage but represents a much smaller reduction in absolute terms due to the lower popularity of private vehicle commuting in this area. Peterborough (-5%) and Fenland (-8%) reported much smaller reductions in private motorised vehicle commuters in 2021 compared to the other districts and nationally (-18%).

Table 1: Absolute volume of commuters by district, 2011 vs 2021 Census.

	Total Commuters				Active Travel Commuters				Private Motorised Vehicle Commuters			
	2011	2021	Diff	% Diff	2011	2021	Diff	% Diff	2011	2021	Diff	% Diff
<b>Cambridge</b>	55,581	38,483	-17,098	-30.8%	27,144	18,694	-8,450	-31.1%	21,198	15,811	-5,387	-25.4%
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	40,752	29,089	-11,663	-28.6%	4,280	3,023	-1,257	-29.4%	33,082	24,486	-8,596	-26.0%
<b>Fenland</b>	42,312	37,647	-4,665	-11.0%	6,439	5,111	-1,328	-20.6%	33,969	31,221	-2,748	-8.1%
<b>Huntingdonshire</b>	83,548	59,492	-24,056	-28.8%	11,502	8,635	-2,867	-24.9%	65,960	47,976	-17,984	-27.3%
<b>South Cambridgeshire</b>	72,967	46,220	-26,747	-36.7%	11,458	7,128	-4,330	-37.8%	54,631	36,166	-18,465	-33.8%
<b>Peterborough</b>	84,590	76,221	-8,369	-9.9%	13,229	11,487	-1,742	-13.2%	61,941	58,826	-3,115	-5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>379,750</b>	<b>287,152</b>	<b>-92,598</b>	<b>-24.4%</b>	<b>74,052</b>	<b>54,078</b>	<b>-19,974</b>	<b>-27.0%</b>	<b>270,781</b>	<b>214,486</b>	<b>-56,295</b>	<b>-20.8%</b>
<b>England and Wales</b>	<b>25,103,628</b>	<b>19,101,944</b>	<b>-6,001,684</b>	<b>-23.9%</b>	<b>3,608,922</b>	<b>2,682,952</b>	<b>-925,970</b>	<b>-25.7%</b>	<b>16,974,039</b>	<b>13,937,357</b>	<b>-3,036,682</b>	<b>-17.9%</b>

Figure 4 presents commuters by mode group (active / private motorised / public / other) for each district in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, as well as figures for England and Wales.

In 2021, the proportion of commuters using each mode remained relatively similar to the proportion reported in 2011 in all of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough districts and nationally, despite overall volumes of commuters reducing significantly.

Cambridge continued to report a high level of walking and cycling commuters (49%) compared to the national average (14%). The other local districts reported proportions of cycle commuters more comparable to the national average ranging from 10% in East Cambridgeshire to 15% in South Cambridgeshire.

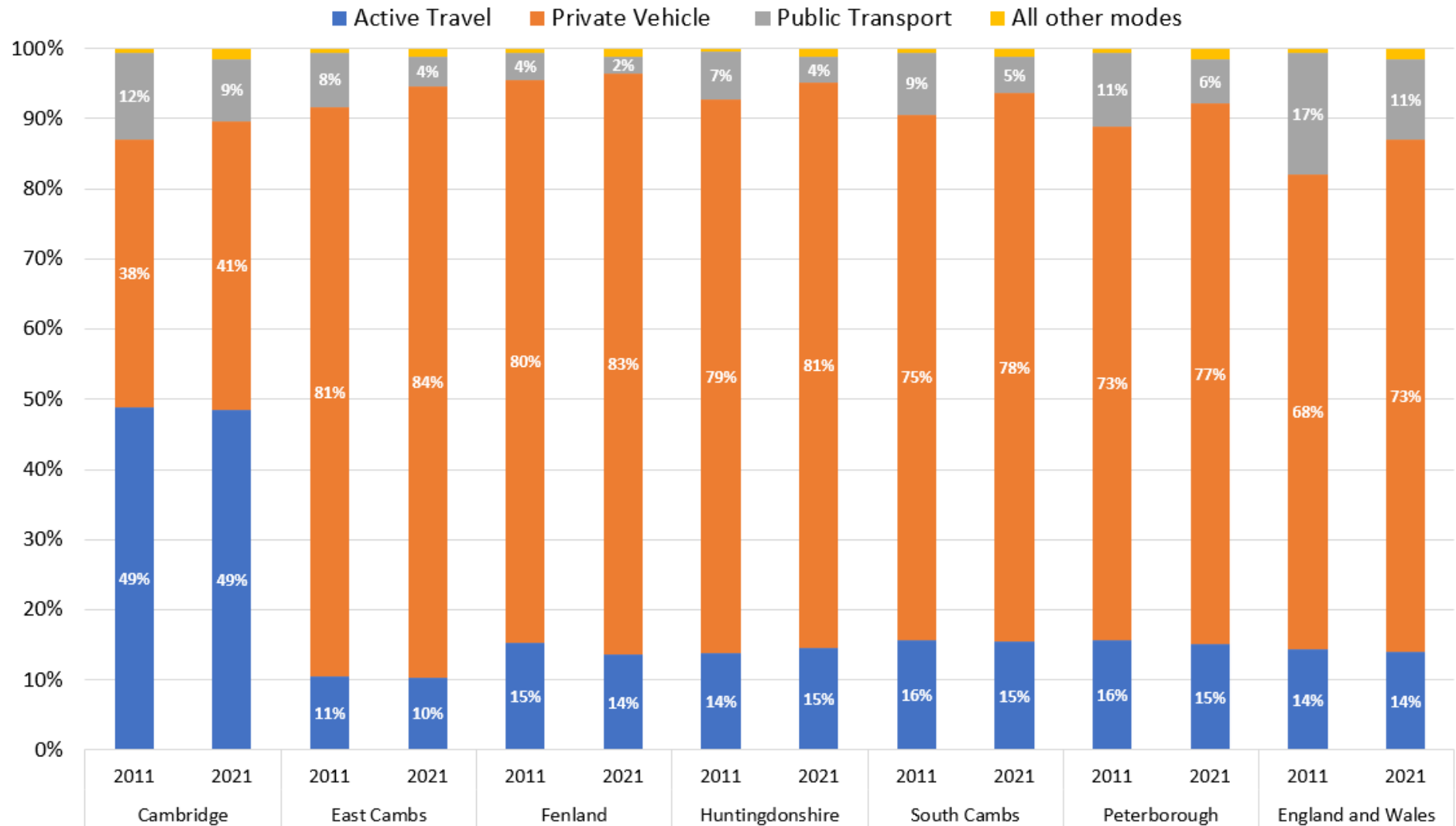
In 2021, the proportion of commuters using public transport across all Cambridgeshire and Peterborough districts is lower than the national average (12%) ranging from 2% in Fenland to 9% in Cambridge.

The proportion of commuters using private motorised vehicles across most local districts is higher than the national average (73%) ranging from 77% in Peterborough to 84% in East Cambridgeshire. The one exception is Cambridge where only 41% of commuters travelled by private motorised vehicle in 2021.

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Figure 4: Mode of Commuting Proportion Split, Census 2021 vs 2011.



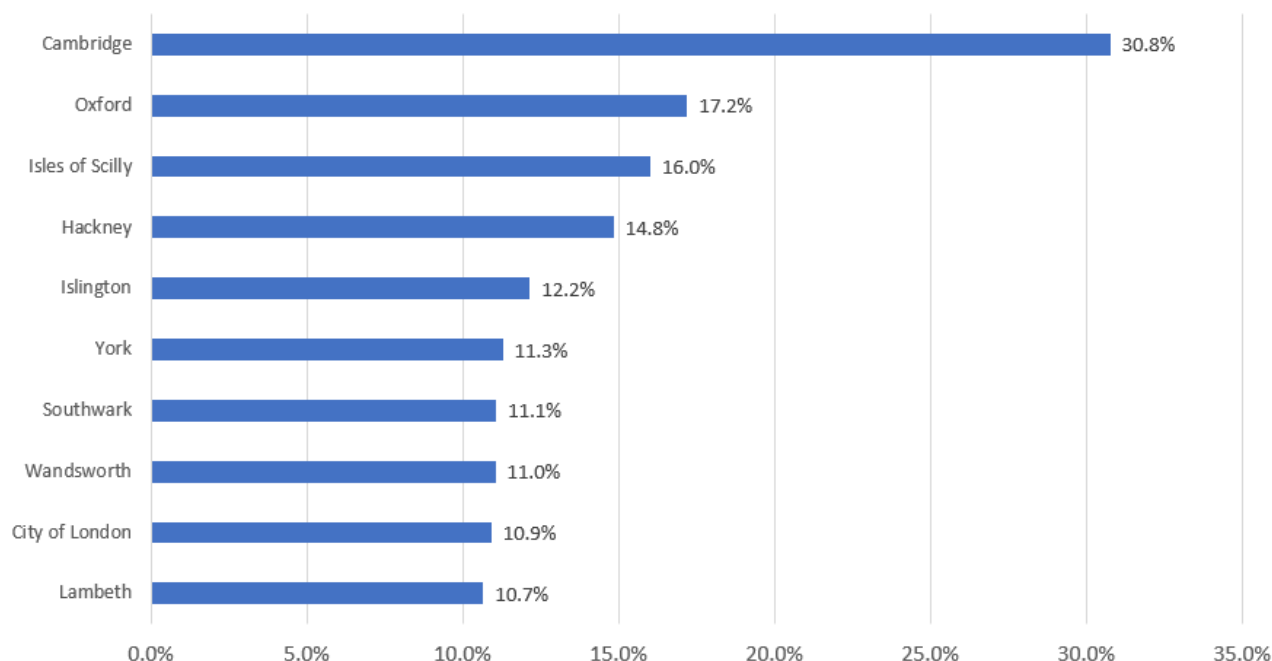
Active Travel = walking and cycling; Private vehicle = taxis, cars, vans, motorcycles, scooters, and mopeds (drivers and passengers); Public transport = buses, trains, light rail, underground, metro, and tram; Other = not previously listed.

## Cycling

Cambridgeshire has a long history of high levels of active travel. The 2021 Census indicates that Cambridge continues to be the district with the highest proportion of commutes made by cycle with 31% of commuters reporting that they typically cycle to work. This is some way ahead of the second-highest district, which is Oxford (17%).

Figure 5 lists the top ten districts in England and Wales for proportion of cycle commuters based on the 2021 Census. South Cambridgeshire (9%) is the 16th-highest district authority by this metric.

Figure 5: Top 10 District Authorities (England & Wales) for % of Commuters Travelling by Bicycle, Census 2021.



## Private motorised vehicles

Figure 6 presents the proportion of commuters who drive a car or van to travel to work (excludes passengers) at MSOA level for 2011 and 2021.

The area with the highest proportion of car or van usage in 2011 among commuters was Bluntisham (Huntingdonshire 007), with 83%. The area with the lowest proportion of car or van usage was Petersfield (Cambridge 008), with only 20%.

Figure 6 compares the proportion of commuters travelling to work by car between 2011 and 2021. It indicates that many areas experienced an increase in the proportion of people commuting by car/van in 2021 despite absolute numbers of commuters reducing across all modes.

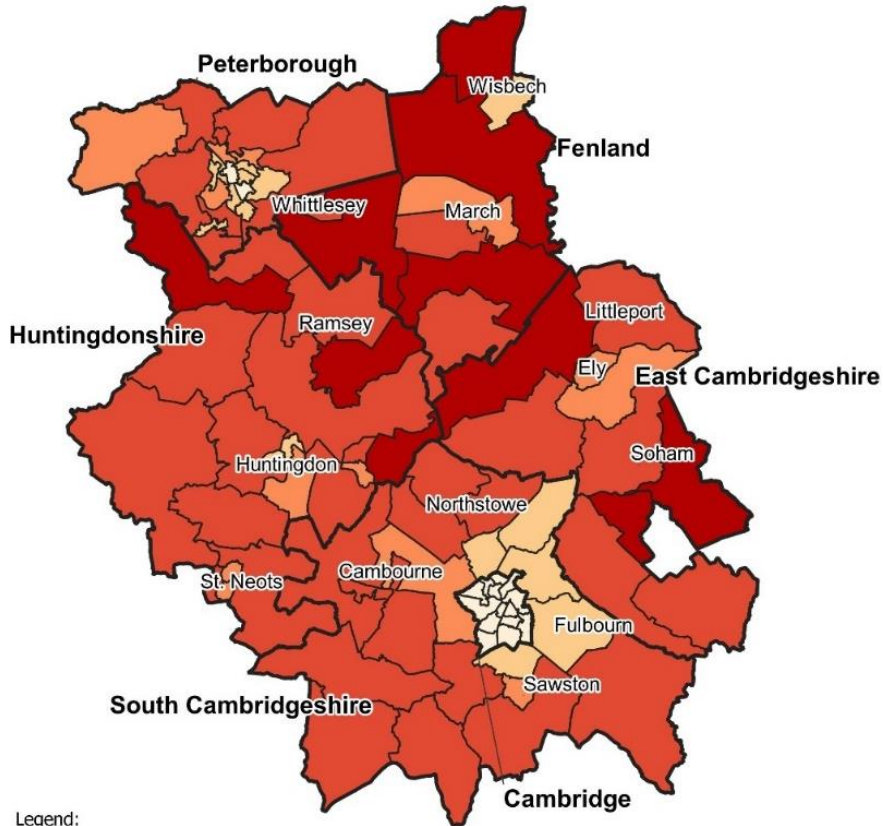
This is notable in western areas of Huntingdonshire, and in several areas across South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire. The central areas of Cambridge and Peterborough, however, do not show much change in proportions between 2011 and 2021.

The area with the highest proportion of car or van usage in 2021 among commuters was Coates (Fenland 008), with 86%. The area with the lowest proportionate car or van usage in 2021 among commuters was still Petersfield (Cambridge 008), with 25%.

The proportionate increase in car and van usage is potentially a result of COVID-19 guidance from government, which encouraged those who had to travel to do so outside of mass transit systems, i.e., public transport. In certain areas of the county, this leaves only a private vehicle as an option for transit beyond a certain distance.

**Figure 6: Proportion of Commuters Travelling by Car or Van (excluding passengers) by MSOA, Census 2011 vs 2021**

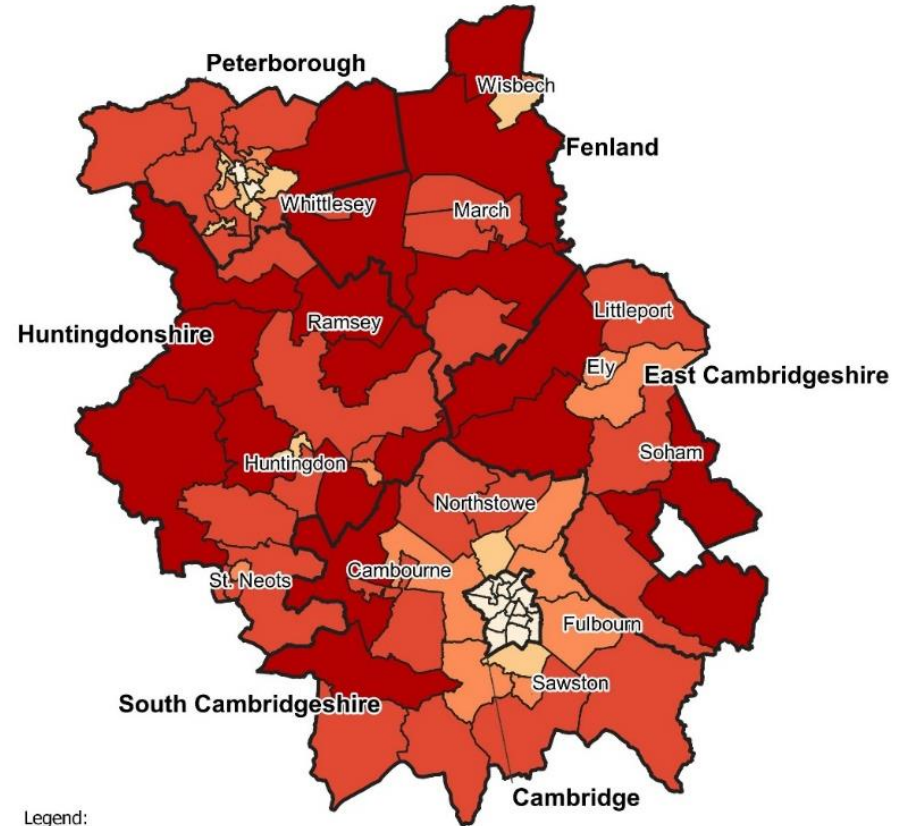
Census 2011: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Proportion of Commuters travelling by Car or Van (MSOA).



Legend:  
 □ District Authorities  
 Car Commuters %  
 0-50%  
 50-60%  
 60-70%  
 70-80%  
 80%+

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Census 2021: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Proportion of Commuters travelling by Car or Van (MSOA).



Legend:  
 □ District Authorities  
 Car Commuters %  
 0-50%  
 50-60%  
 60-70%  
 70-80%  
 80%+

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## Distance Travelled to Work

Figure 7 presents a proportionate breakdown of distances travelled to work in both 2011 and 2021 by local district, and national figures for England and Wales.

Cambridge is, by some distance, the district with the highest proportion of commuters living within 5km of their workplace (68%); although this is a slight drop from 2011 (71%).

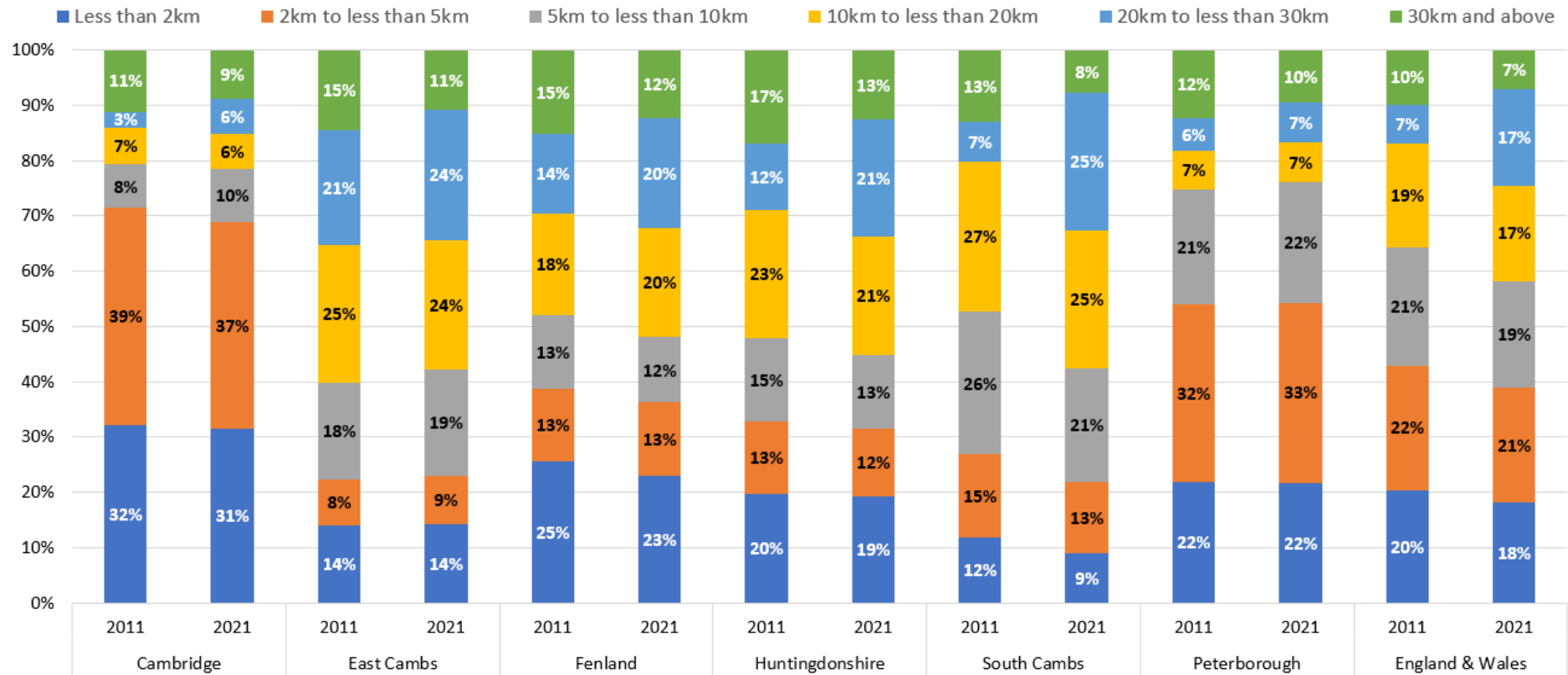
Peterborough (55%) is the only other district authority in 2021 which exceeds the national level (39%) for employees travelling less than 5km to their regular place of work.

Peterborough has also subverted the overall nationwide trend having seen a slight increase in the proportion of employees living within 5km of work compared to the 2011 Census (54%). East Cambridgeshire is the only other district in which this has occurred, with the 2011 proportion of employees living within 5km of work (22%) increasing in 2021 (23%).

All districts report a reduction from 2011 to 2021 in the proportion of employees who live at least 30km from their place of work.

Huntingdonshire remains the district with the highest proportion of employees living at least 30km away from their workplace (13%), although this represents a lower proportion than the equivalent figure for Huntingdonshire in 2011 (17%).

Figure 7: Distance travelled to work, 2011 vs 2021 Census.



Nationally, the proportion of commuters living within 5km of their regular workplace has reduced from 42% in 2011 to 39% in 2021. Conversely, the proportion of commuters living between 20km and 30km from their place of work has increased from 7% in 2011 to 17% in 2021.

The National Travel Survey (2021) indicated that the average cycle trip in England (leisure and commuter trips) was approximately 5.9km in length. Figure 8 presents the proportion of commuters who indicated that they travelled less than 5km to work, in 2011 and 2021 respectively. This is within range of a typical cycle trip.

In central Peterborough, several areas had more than 60% of commuters living within 5km of their workplace in 2011: but this had reduced to 45-60% of commuters in 2021.

A similar pattern was seen in March (Fenland), and in the area around Fulbourn (South Cambridgeshire); where 45-60% of commuters lived within 5km of their workplace in 2011 – which reduced to 30-45% in 2021.

In 2011, the area with the highest proportion of commuters living within 5km of their workplace was Newnham (Cambridge 007), with 73%; whereas the area with the lowest proportion was Toft (South Cambridgeshire 010), with 13%.

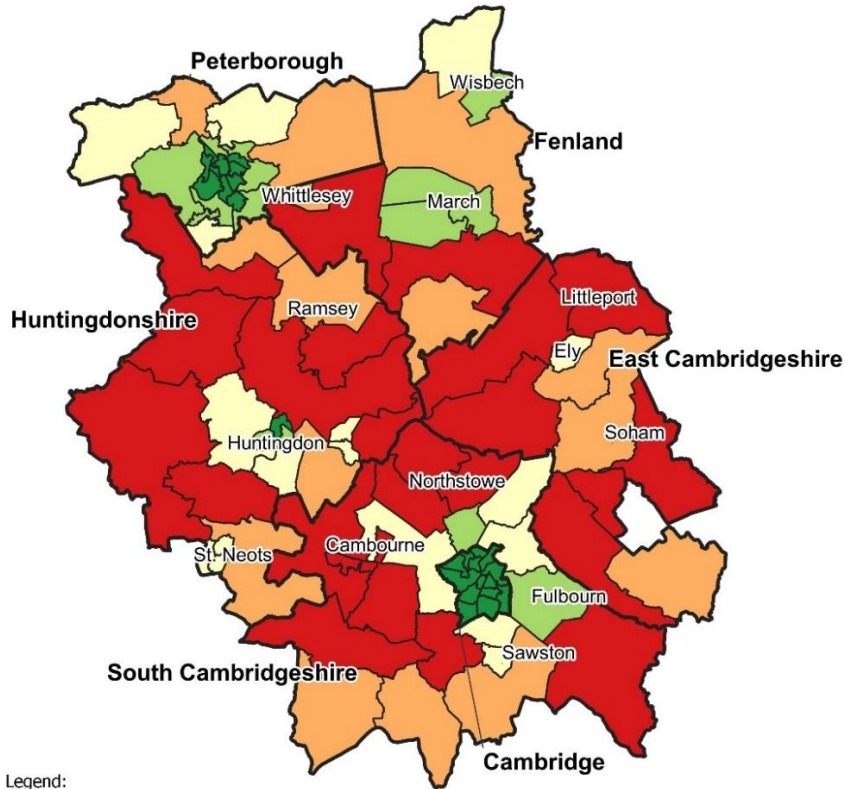
In 2021, the area with the highest proportion of commuters living within 5km of their workplace was the area to the north and east of Addenbrooke's (Cambridge 013), with 76%; whereas the area with the lowest proportion was Sawtry (Huntingdonshire 004), with just 14%, notably lower than the national level (39%).

An increase in the proportion of commuters living within 5km of their workplace has been in evidence in Cottenham, Great Shelford and Harston (all South Cambridgeshire), Wittering (Peterborough), and King's Ripton (Huntingdonshire).

Cambridge (68%) maintains a high proportion of resident commuters who live within 5km of their place of work.

**Figure 8: Census 2011 vs Census 2021, Proportion of Commuters who live within 5km of their place of work by MSOA**

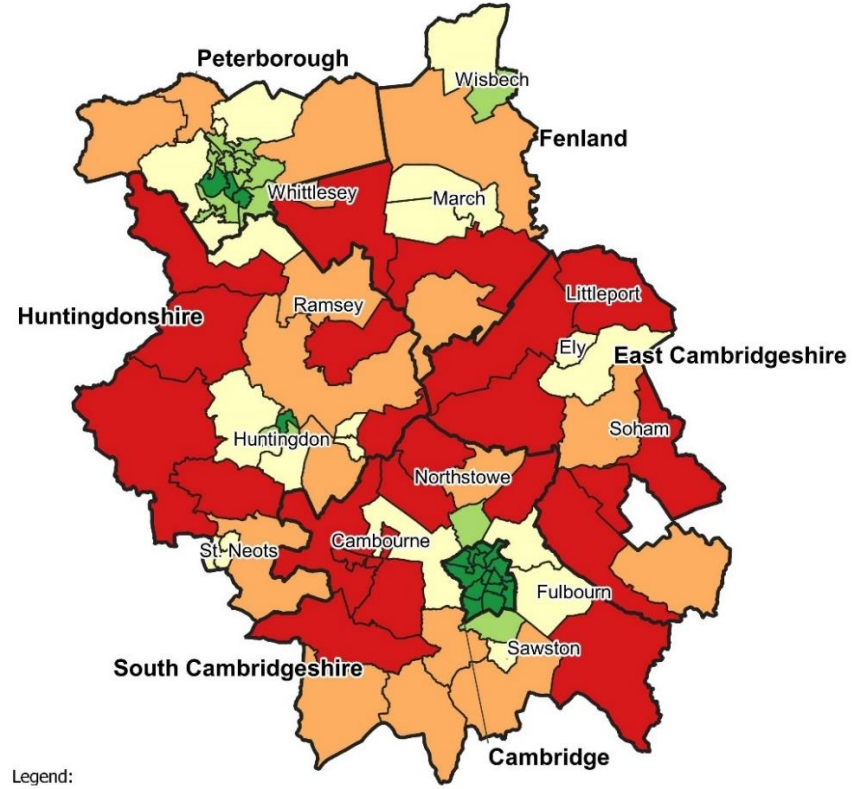
Census 2011: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Proportion of Commuters Travelling Less than 5km to Workplace (MSOA).



Legend:  
 □ District Authorities  
 %Within 5km of Workplace  
 ■ 0-20%  
 ■ 20-30%  
 ■ 30-45%  
 ■ 45-60%  
 ■ 60%+

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Census 2021: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Proportion of Commuters Travelling Less than 5km to Workplace (MSOA).



Legend:  
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