JSNA Bitesize

Health and Wellbeing Facts and Figures, October 2020

Oxfordshire JSNA

Active Travel in Oxfordshire during Coronavirus

This bitesize highlights data from Oxfordshire County Council's 'Vivacity Lab' (VL) smart detection system. VL sensors use machine learning software which locates and classifies road users within the field of view (of the sensor). There are 75 sensors in Oxfordshire. The data range is 1st March to 27th July for both 2019 and 2020. This date range considers the UK government lockdown commencing on the evening of 23 March. April and May 2020 saw particularly warm and dry weather. Evidence indicates that poor or extreme weather can be a barrier to participation in physical activity. The analysis is based on peak time only (7am-10am & 4pm-7pm Monday to Friday). A daily average has been calculated from the original data.

This section of analysis is based on one sensor monitoring all road users crossing **Magdalen Bridge** in Oxford. This bridge carries traffic and pedestrians into and out of the centre of Oxford. There is a cycle lane along this section of road. The sensor is one of the busiest in Oxford. Students and tourism can affect travel activity in Oxford.

During April 2020, at the height of lockdown, there was a 72% drop in cars travelling past this sensor compared to 2019. As of July 2020, the volume of cars travelling over Magdalen Bridge was 28% less than at the same time in 2019. The rebound in car use has been greater than found with walking and cycling. This may be due to more traffic flowing through the city as lockdown has eased. Historically, in July, there has been a reduction in cars travelling past this sensor.
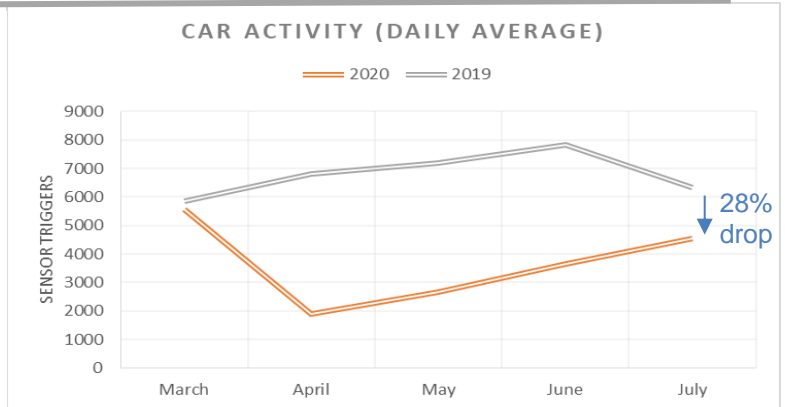

There was also a 72% drop in cycles travelling past this sensor in April. This, however, is not returning to pre-coronavirus levels as rapidly as cars (46% below the level in 2019). This may be due to more people working from home and less travel into the city.

Between 23rd March and 23rd July, 200 bikes have been given free of charge to NHS and social care staff.

> More about 'Bikes for Key Workers' below
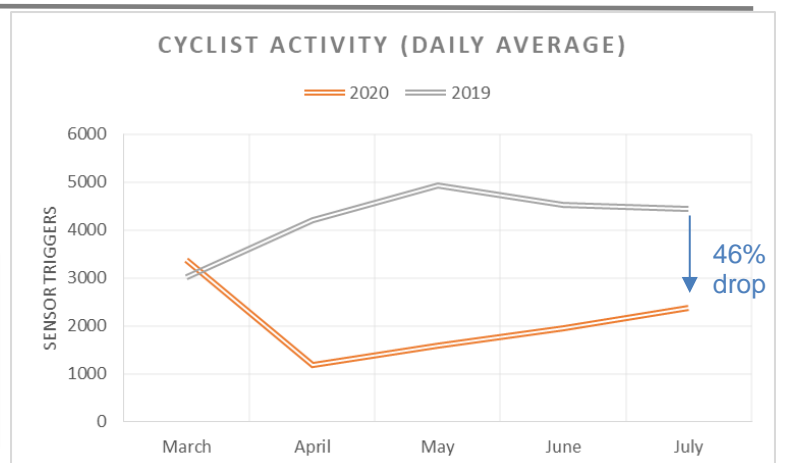
During April 2020, data indicates people were more inclined to walk (down 69%) than cycle or drive (down 72%). Walking in Oxford is taking the longest to return to pre-covid levels with a 52% drop in activity in July 2020 versus July 2019. Oxford travel can be affected by tourism. Recent forecasting from VisitBritain suggests a decline of 73% of visits inbound (11.0 million) into the United Kingdom. Experience Oxfordshire have estimated Oxfordshire is losing between £112.5m and £137.5m per month in lost tourism business.
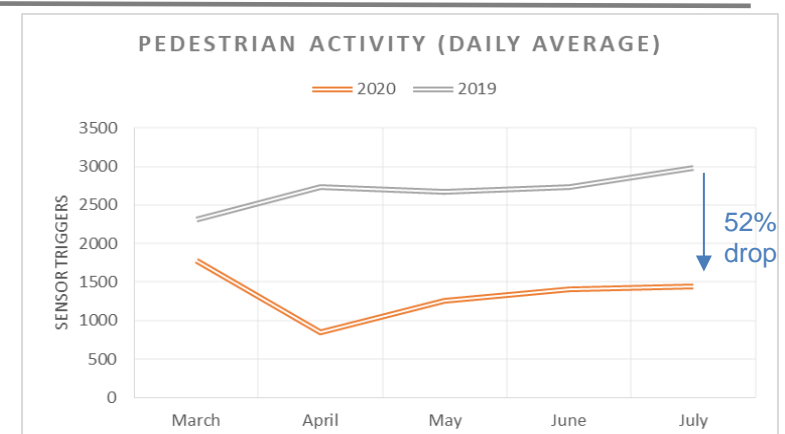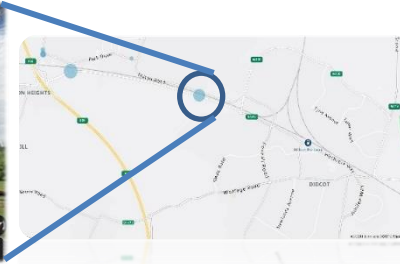
The following analysis is based on one sensor monitoring road users along the A4130, Didcot. The sensor is located near to the junction of the housing development, Great Western Park. There is a dedicated cycle and pedestrian path running along parts of the A4130.

The A4130 carries traffic towards and away from Didcot. This section of road suffers from severe congestion but is less likely to be affected by tourism and student travel. Similar to Oxford, car activity in Didcot dropped by 69% in April 2020. Analysis of the Didcot sensor data indicates that car activity is returning to pre-coronavirus levels faster than that of the Oxford sensor, with a drop of 19% (data 2020 vs 2019) compared to Oxford (drop of 28% see previous chart).

CAR ACTIVITY (DAILY AVERAGE)

— 2020 — 2019

19% drop
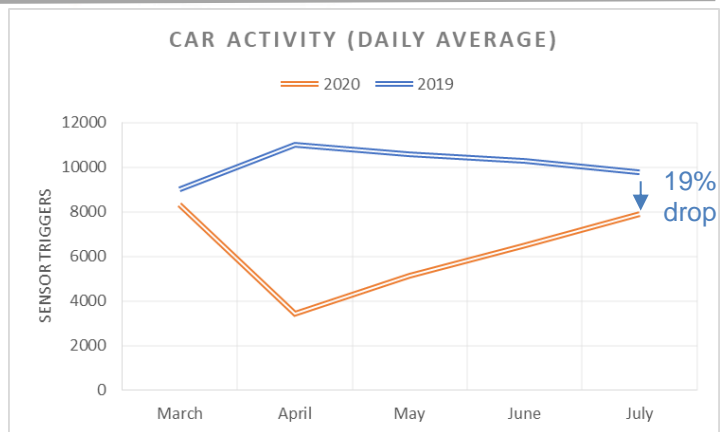
Analysis indicates that two modes of transport, pedestrians and cyclists, have seen an increase in active travel in comparison to 2019. The month of May saw the largest increase in cyclist activity during the coronavirus, with an increase of 164% compared with 2019.

Levels have dropped since May and are close to returning to levels seen in 2019 (see chart).

CYCLIST ACTIVITY (DAILY AVERAGE)

— 2020 — 2019
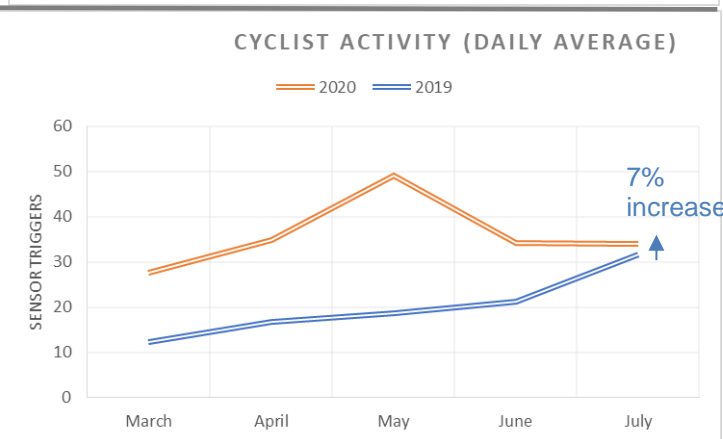
7% increase

Walking has been a more popular choice than cycling during the months March – July 2020. In May, we saw a 1210% increase in pedestrian activity compared with that of 2019. During March-July 2020, more people have been walking than they did during the same period in 2019. Although, more recently, as car activity has increased, pedestrian and cycle activity has decreased.

PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY (DAILY AVERAGE)

— 2020 — 2019

43% increase
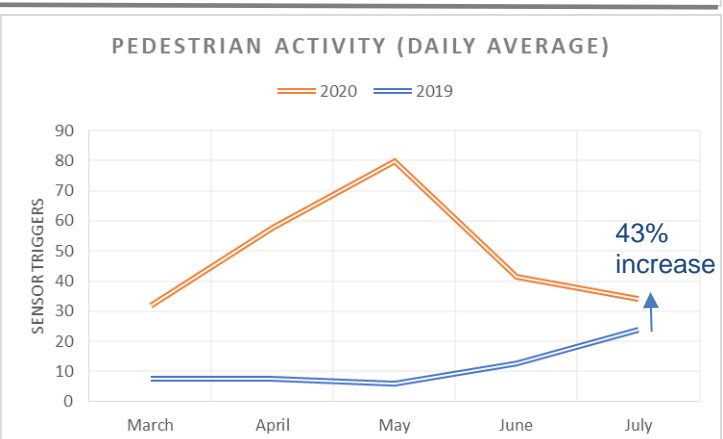
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