

Introduction

This Factsheet summarises findings on levels of walking and public attitudes to walking. The results cover Great Britain and are based on data from the [National Travel Survey \(NTS\)](#) unless otherwise stated. Some results from the [ONS Omnibus Survey](#), and the [British Social Attitudes Survey \(BSAS\)](#) are also presented. The NTS covers adults and children of all ages; the Omnibus Survey adults aged 16 and over and the BSAS adults aged 18 and over. Data are for 2005 unless stated otherwise.

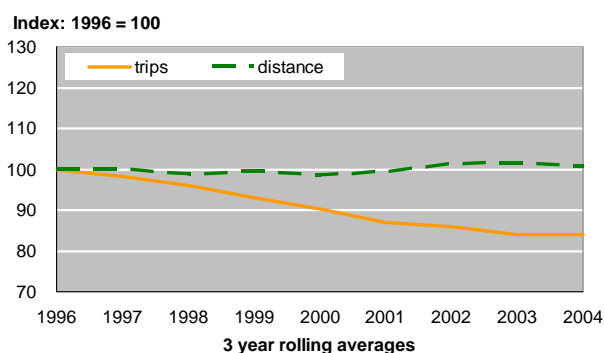
NTS technical note: A trip is a one way course of travel having a single main purpose. Walk trips are those where walking is the main mode in terms of distance. Walks under 50 yards and off the public highway are excluded. Walks of between 50 yards and 1 mile are only recorded by respondents on the 7th day of the diary, and these are then grossed up by a factor of 7. Distance travelled figures include walks made as part of any trip.

Levels of walking

Walking is an important form of transport, particularly for short trips, but the number of walking trips people make has been declining in recent years.

- Walking accounts for nearly a quarter (23%) of all trips and 3% of total distance travelled, with the average GB resident making 245 walk trips per year and travelling a distance of 197 miles on foot.
- In addition to the 245 trips per year mainly made on foot, the average person walks 67 further stages (parts of other trips which are mainly by another mode of transport).
- Between 1995/97 and 2005 the average number of walk trips per person fell by 16%, from 292 to 245 per year.
- Over the same period, the average distance travelled on foot remained stable at around 200 miles per person per year (Chart 1).
- This pattern reflects an increase in the average length of a walk trip from 0.6 to 0.7 miles.
- The proportion of trips under a mile which are made on foot has fallen from 80% in 1995/97 to 76% in 2005, while the proportion of trips between 1 and 2 miles made on foot has risen from 25% to 31%.

Chart 1: Trends in number of walk trips and distance walked per person per year: 1996-2004

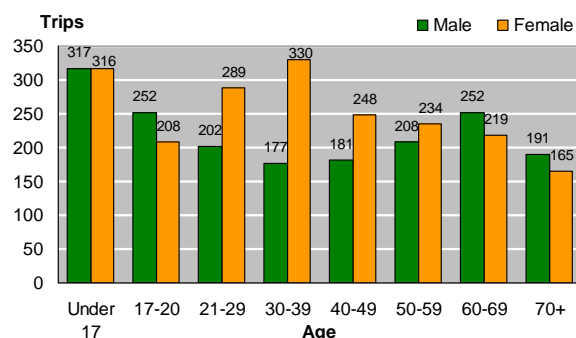


Who walks the most?

- On average females make 15% more walking trips than males, making 261 walk trips per year compared with 228 for males.

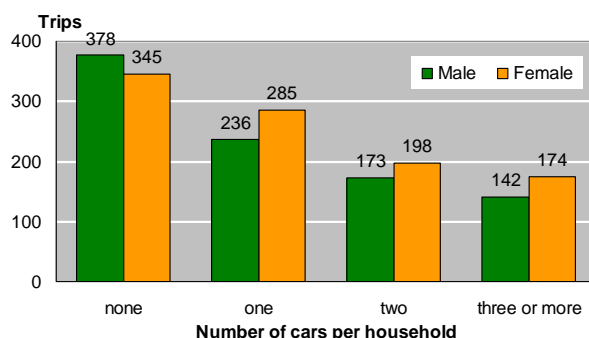
- This pattern holds for all age groups between 21 and 59. The greatest difference is for those aged 30-39, amongst whom women make 86% more walk trips than men (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Walk trips per person per year by sex and age: 2005



- Although females make more walk trips there is less difference in the average total distance walked between males and females (192 and 201 miles per year respectively).
- People living in households without a car make more trips per year on foot on average than those in households with a car (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Walk trips per person per year by household car ownership: 2005



- Similarly, people living in households with lower levels of income make, on average, more walk trips and travel further on foot than those in higher income households

Why do people walk?

- The three main reasons for making a walk trip are shopping (21% of walk trips), education (including escort education) (20%), and leisure or social purposes (20%). In addition 17% of walk trips are 'just to walk' (to walk the dog, for example).

Walking to school and work

- Approximately half (49%) of trips to/from school by primary school children (aged 5-10) are on foot compared with 44% of school trips by secondary school children (aged 11-16).
- This pattern reflects the fact that primary school children have less far to travel to school on average than secondary school children; 51% live

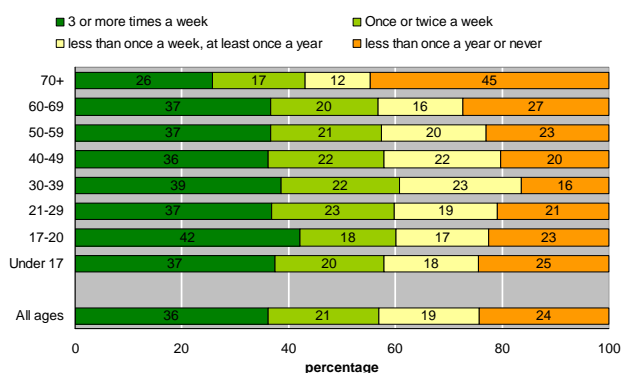
within 1 mile of school compared with 29% of secondary school children.

- For school trips of under a mile, 80% of trips by primary school children are on foot and 92% of those by secondary school children.
- 11% of all commuting trips are made on foot.

Walks of 20 minutes or more

- 36% of people say they walk 20 minutes or more (including walks which are not on the public highway) at least 3 times a week, and a further 21% do so once or twice a week. Nearly a quarter (24%) walk for 20 minutes less than once a year or never.
- People aged 30 to 39 are the least likely to say they walk for 20 minutes less than once a year or never (16%), whereas almost a half (45%) of those aged 70 and over said this was the case (Chart 4).

Chart 4: Frequency of 20 minute walks by age: 2005

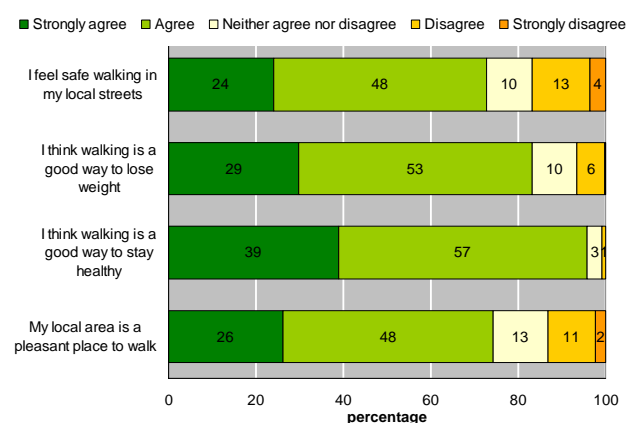


Attitudes to walking

People generally have positive attitudes towards walking, agreeing that it is good for their health and the environment.

- A large majority of adults (95%) agree that walking is a good way to stay healthy and 82% agree it is a good way to lose weight (Omnibus 2005).
- In addition, most people feel safe walking on their local streets (72%) and agree their local area is a pleasant place to walk (74%) (Omnibus 2005) (Chart 5).
- There is some variation by area type with 55% of people living in the most deprived areas saying they feel safe walking in their local streets and 57% considering their area a pleasant place to walk. This compares with 79% and 88% respectively among those living in the least deprived areas (Omnibus 2005).

Chart 5: Attitudes to walking



Walking and health

- A third (33%) of adults say walking for more than 10 minutes is their only form of exercise in a typical month, while a further 42% say they walk and undertake some other form of exercise (Omnibus 2005).
- Those who walk relatively infrequently tend not to consider their walking to be a form of exercise.

Potential for increasing walking

There is support for measures to promote walking and scope to increase walking by reducing the proportion of short trips currently made by car.

- The majority of adults agree that everyone should be encouraged to walk to help their health (97%), help the environment (94%) and to ease congestion (92%) (Omnibus 2002).
- Many households are within reasonable walking distance of local shops and facilities. In 2004, 81% of households were within a 13 minute walk of their nearest local food store and 59% were within 13 minutes of their nearest chemist.
- Over a fifth (21%) of trips under a mile in length are currently made by car, suggesting there is considerable potential to increase walking.
- According to BSAS, 37% of respondents agree that '*Many of the short journeys I now make by car I could just as easily walk*'.
- Almost four in ten (37%) car users say they would reduce their car use '*if there were safer walking routes*', whilst 30% say they would do so '*if pavements were better*' (Omnibus 2002).
- Similarly, around four in ten car users say they would walk more '*if congestion charging was introduced*' (42%), '*if it was more expensive to park*' (36%) and '*if it was difficult to park*' (42%) (Omnibus 2002).
- Car users who already walk relatively frequently are more likely to say they would reduce car use/increase walking, than those who are infrequent walkers (Omnibus 2002).

Pedestrian priority

There is public support for taking measures to improve conditions for pedestrians, even if this inconveniences other road users.

- Almost three-quarters (73%) of adults agree that '*pedestrians should be given more priority*', while only 6% felt that '*pedestrianised areas simply inconvenience car users*' (October 2002 Omnibus).

Further information

Since 2002, NTS fieldwork has been conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

The main results from the National Travel Survey are published at: www.dft.gov.uk/transtat along with details of the NTS methodology and articles based on Omnibus Survey modules.

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