



National survey of attitudes to walking and wheeling in Scotland 2023

Final Report – November 2023

**paths
for all**
FOR A HAPPIER,
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND



56°
DEGREE
INSIGHT
Undertaken by 56 Degree
Insight for Paths for All

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Introduction

Introduction

Paths for All is Scotland's walking charity. Established in 1996, they work in partnership with 30 national organisations with a shared vision of a healthier, happier, greener Scotland, where everyone can be active every day. Walking is the easiest and most accessible way to be active, and their work to change the way people move, travel, and enjoy life in Scotland is focused on the following three themes:

- Walking is for everyone.
- Walking is for everywhere.
- Walking is for every day.

Their [strategy](#) sets out their vision for tackling physical inactivity, poor mental health, increased health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency.

Paths for All commissioned 56 Degree Insight to undertake their 2023 National Survey. The survey was also supported by Living Streets Scotland who part funded the research and MACS (Mobility and Access Scotland) who provided valuable input at the questionnaire design stages.

The survey has provided an updated picture of the Scottish adult population's participation and attitudes to walking, updating information last collected in 2019 and complementing other sources of information such as the Scottish Household Survey and Scotland's People and Nature. The study has also included a follow up qualitative stage with 24 in-depth interviews undertaken with a cross section of adults in different population segments defined from the survey data.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

Everyone...

- How does walking participation vary across the population?
- What motivates different population groups to walk?
- Do the barriers that reduce participation vary across the population?
- How to increase levels of walking participation amongst target groups?
- In general how do behaviours and attitudes vary by demographic and geography? (age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, car ownership, household income)

Everyday...

- To what extent is walking included in everyday routines?
 - Going to work
 - Going to school
 - Shopping
 - Using public transport
 - Visiting friends or family
 - Dog walking
- What is the relationship between walking and other modes of transport?

Everywhere...

- What types of place/ environment do the Scottish population walk in?
- How accessible to home are the places that could be walked to
- To what extent is convenience a factor when deciding to walk or drive?



Study method

Online survey

An online survey approach was used to provide robust population coverage and comparable results to those collected in the 2019 survey.

A sample of 1,000 adults was surveyed between 14th and 25th June 2023 with sampling quotas used to ensure a representative distribution on the basis of gender, age, social grade and place of residence.

Please note the following points when using the survey results:

- Throughout the 2023 survey respondents were asked about walking and wheeling. This was defined in the questionnaire as “*By wheeling we mean using a wheelchair or mobility scooter.*”
- Any trends or variations between results highlighted in the text are statistically significant unless stated otherwise.
- Responses to all questions are reported as claimed by the nationally representative sample. However, it should be noted that in some cases respondents may claim to have walked at a level of frequency which is higher or lower than reality. For example, a social-desirability bias may lead some respondents to claim higher levels of walking participation than reality or an effect called telescoping may lead to respondents recalling walking during the last month when the walk actually took place longer ago.

In-depth interviews

Following the completion of the online survey, a series of 24 in-depth interviews were undertaken with a selection of members of the public to obtain more detail on their behaviours and attitudes in relation to walking and wheeling.

Respondents for this element provided their permission to be recontacted at the end of the online survey with appointments for interviews then made by 56 Degree Insight and interviews subsequently conducted via video-call.

Each interview lasted around 45 minutes with the discussion structured around an agreed topic guide covering key areas of interest. Respondents were also shown materials such as marketing materials and asked to provide their feedback.



Participation levels

How often, why and where Scots walk and wheel



Section summary

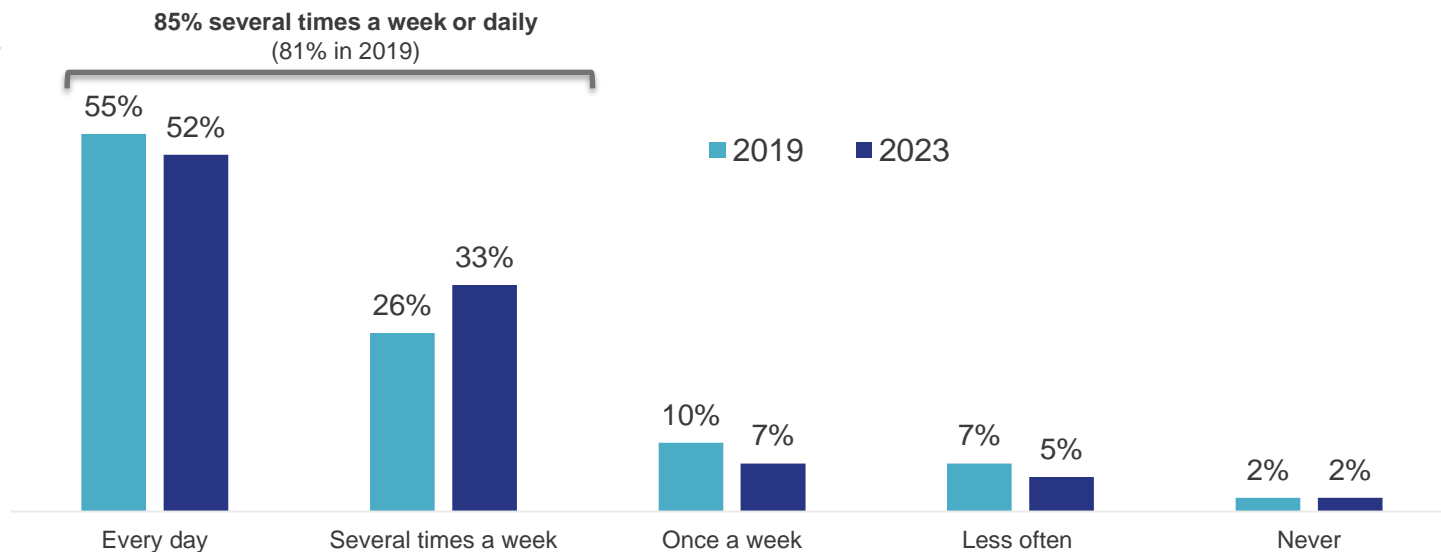
- 85% of Scottish adults walk or wheel every day or several times a week, a slight increase on the levels recorded in the 2019 survey (81%).
- In general levels of participation are highest amongst people aged under 45, people with children in their household and those with good health.
- The most common motivations for frequent walking are leisure and exercise (59% walk daily or several times a week), going to work (32%), dog walking (26%) and going to visit family or friends (23%).
- The most common destinations for frequent walking are local shops that sell everyday necessities (44% walk to daily or several times a week), local parks and greenspaces (35%) and public transport links such as bus stops (29%).
- During the month prior to the survey, 85% of Scots had walked in places within towns and cities while 77% had walked in the countryside. The most frequently walked in urban locations were roadside pavements (61%) and urban green spaces (50%) while the most popular rural places were woodland (33%) and coastline (33%).
- 84% of Scots agree that they enjoy walking because it is good for their health and 80% agree that it helps them to relax. Other benefits recognised by over half included benefits to the environment (66%) and walking because it is more affordable than driving (60%).



Most Scottish adults walk or wheel on a regular basis, half on a daily basis and a third several times a week

FIGURE 1 – General frequency of walking for any reason

While overall 52% normally walked every day, this was higher amongst people aged under 45 (63%), people with children in their household (63%), people who described their health as good (66%) and, most notably, dog owners (77%).



*How frequently, if ever, do you walk for the following purposes?
How frequently, if ever, do you walk to each of the following places?
NET combining all reasons and types of place*



Leisure and exercise is the most common motivation for frequent walking. Since 2019 the percentage walking frequently to public transport terminals has decreased

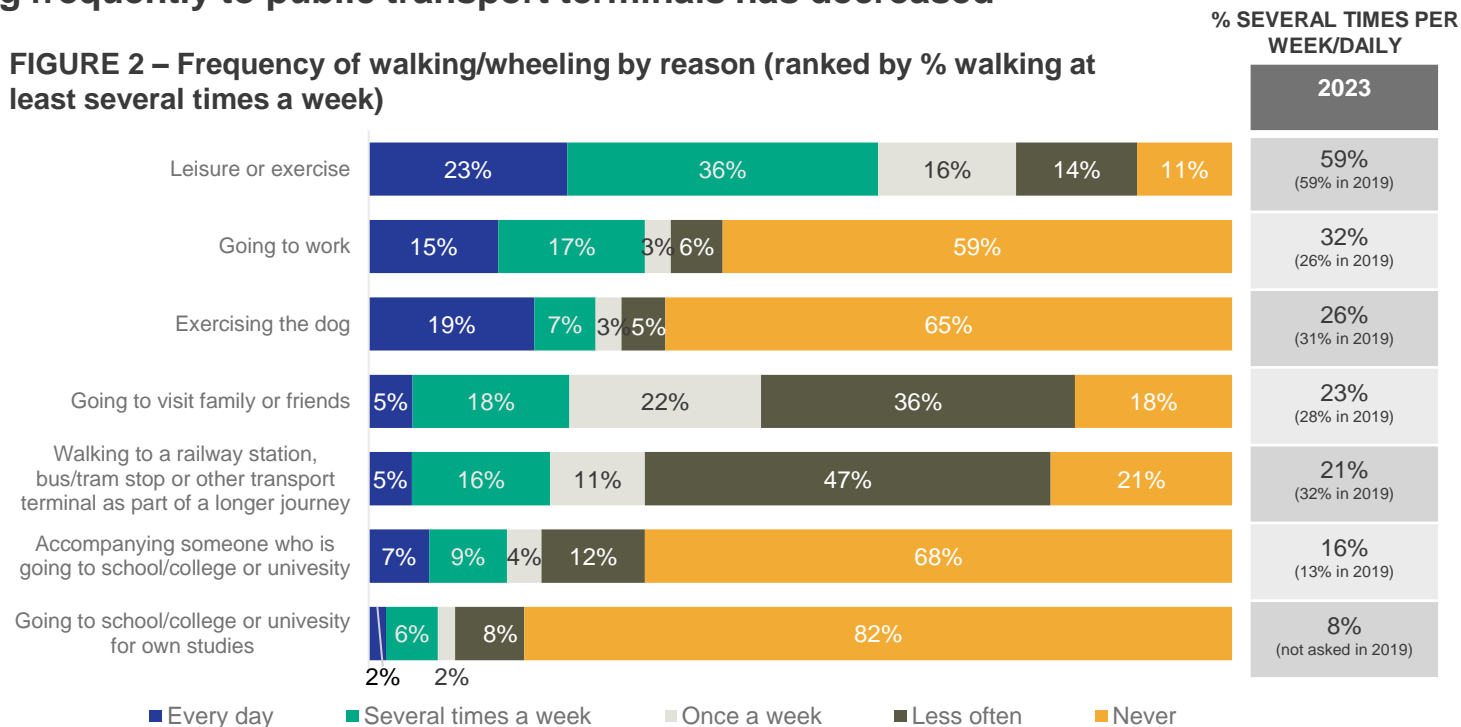
There are number of variations in frequency of walking for different purposes across different population groups.

A higher percentage of men than women walked at least once a week to go to work or to get to a bus stop, station or other public transport terminal while a higher percentage of women walked their dog or walked to visit friends or family at this level of frequency.

People aged 16 to 34 were the most likely to walk most often for routine purposes especially to go to education, visit friends or family or to use public transport.

However, people aged 35 to 44 were the most likely to walk at least weekly for leisure or exercise.

FIGURE 2 – Frequency of walking/wheeling by reason (ranked by % walking at least several times a week)



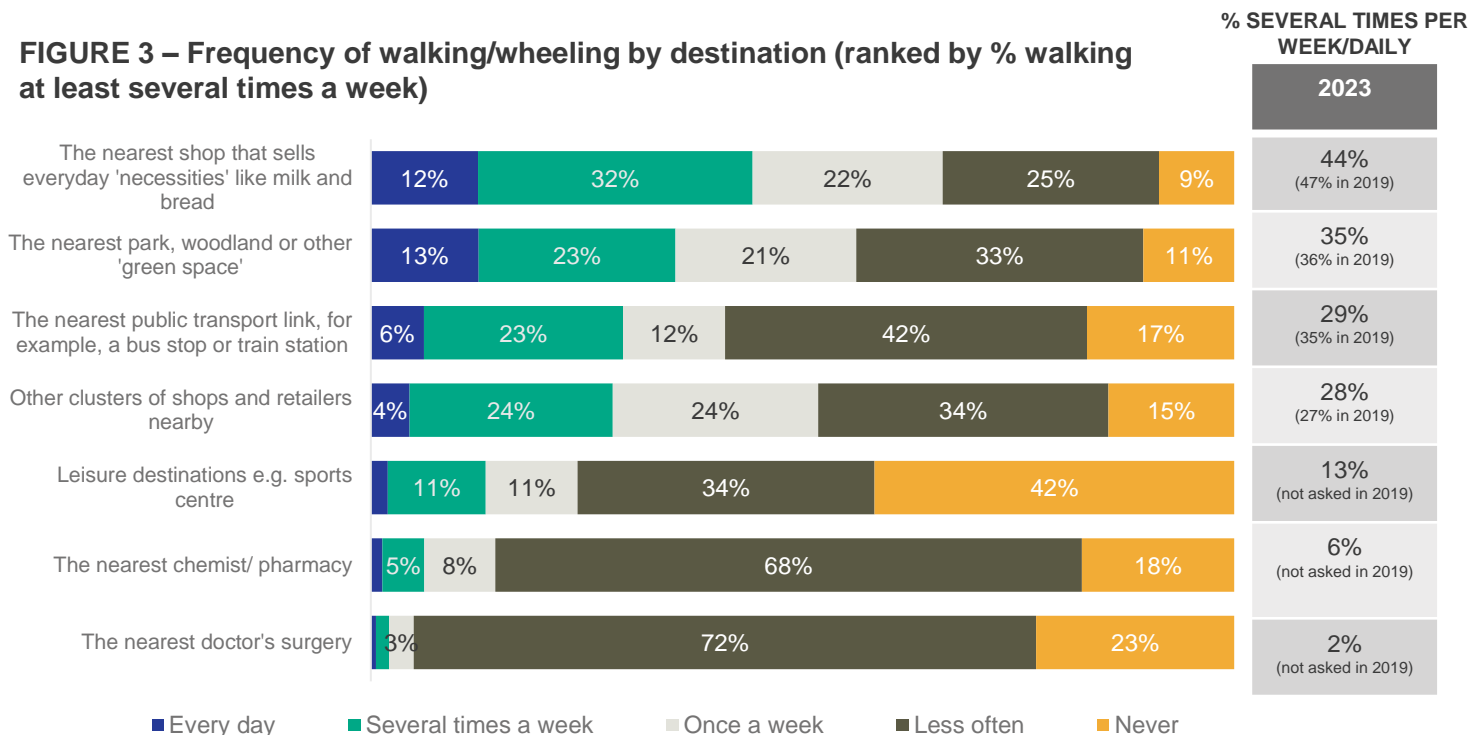
How frequently, if ever, do you walk or wheel for the following purposes?
 *In 2019 this answer option was worded as "Walking children to school"



Local shops and green spaces are the most common walking destinations

FIGURE 3 – Frequency of walking/wheeling by destination (ranked by % walking at least several times a week)

Comparing the places walked to by different population groups, those aged under 45 were more likely to walk at least weekly to shops (73%) while people with children were somewhat more likely to walk to their nearest park or green space (65%) or to leisure destinations (35%) at least weekly.



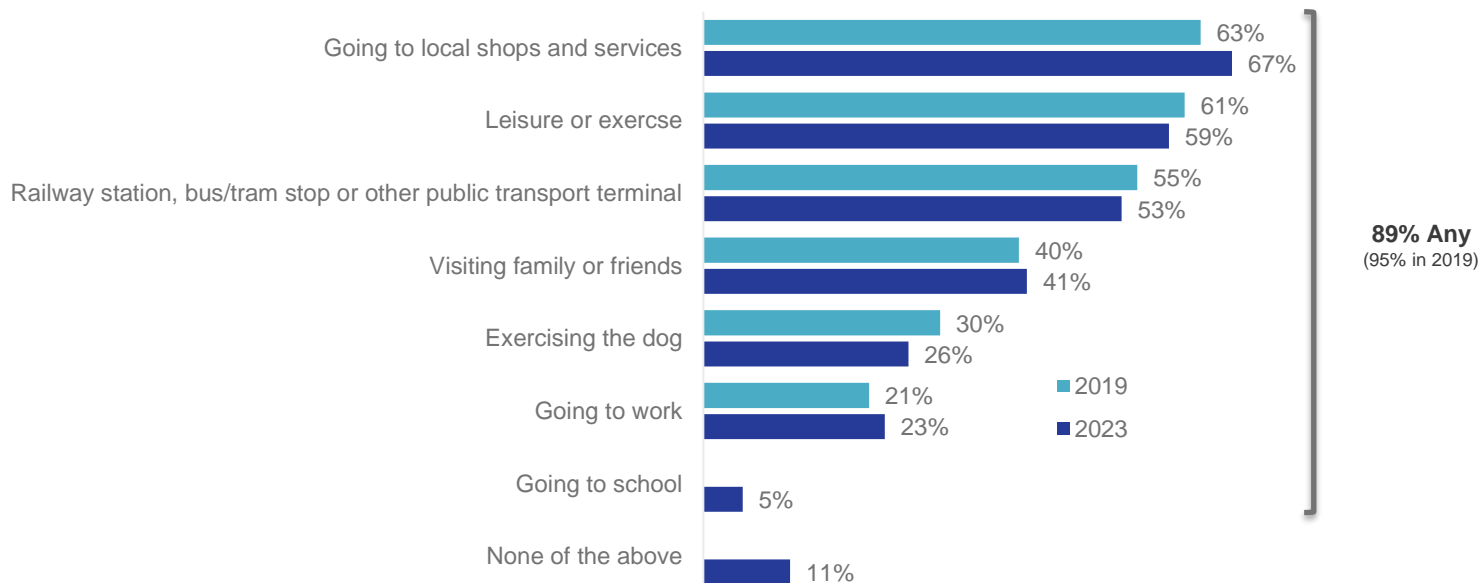
How frequently, if ever, do you walk to each of the following places?



Around 9 in 10 walked or wheeled for any purposes in the previous month including two thirds going to local shops and services

FIGURE 4 – Activities done in last month where walking/wheeling was main part of journey

Variations in walking undertaken in the last month amongst different population groups reflected the general patterns in participation levels described on the previous pages.



Which of the following, if any, have you done in the last month, where walking or wheeling was the main part of the journey?



While most walking takes place in urban places such as roadside pavements and parks, since 2019 increased percentages reported walking in countryside and coastal locations

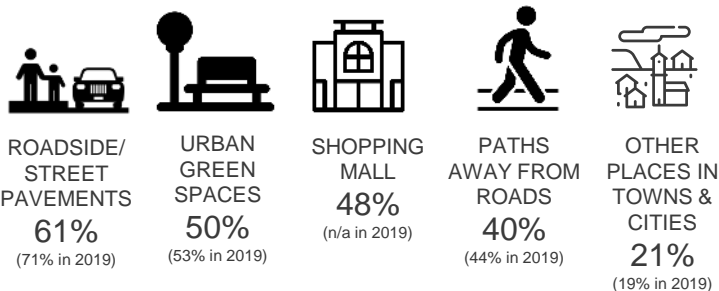
FIGURE 6 – Places walked or wheeled in the last month

The types of place walked in varied somewhat amongst different demographic groups.

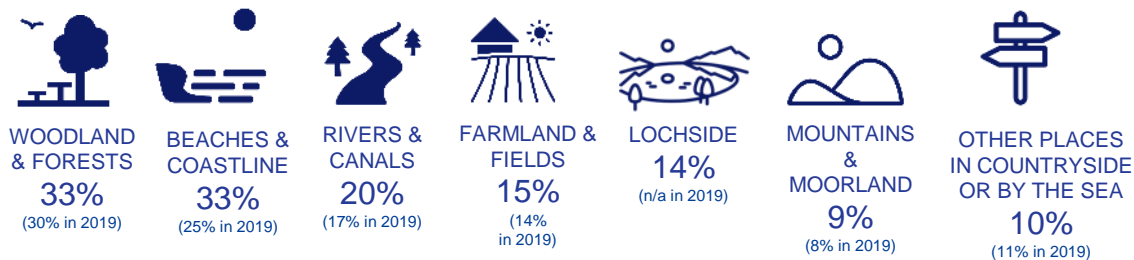
Reflecting overall participation levels, people aged under 45 were more likely than those aged 45 or over to have walked in any of the urban or countryside environments.

Most notably, 40% aged under 45 walked in woodland compared to 28% aged 45+ and 25% walked by a river or canal compared to 16% aged 45+.

PLACES IN TOWNS AND CITIES – 85% OVERALL (87% in 2019):



PLACES IN COUNTRYSIDE AND COAST – 77% OVERALL (55% in 2019):



Data on current levels of frequency of walking or wheeling, purposes and motivations and interest in walking more often was used to identify six unique population segments and explored further in qualitative research



As described on the right, the segments range from those most engaged and supportive of walking to those who walk infrequently either because they choose not to or because health or other barriers make it difficult.

BUDDING ENTHUSIASTS

Walking is a regular part of life, both for leisure and getting places.

Advocate walking to others and notice issues in local area.

Would love to walk even more.

PART OF THE ROUTINE

Walk on a regular basis for many purposes but no strong interest in walking more often or promoting to others.

LIMITED BUT LOOKING TO CHANGE

Currently walk on occasion, including dog walks, but 'life gets in the way' of walking more often.

Would like to be able to walk more if they could fit it in to busy lifestyles.

NEEDS MUST

Walking is a way of getting around as it is the only option or more affordable than alternatives.

Priorities for this group include making the walking experience better.

JUMP IN THE CAR

While most walk on occasion, especially in good weather, the default is to drive as it feels easier and is part of the normal routine.

RESTRICTED OR RELUCTANT

For many of this group health or age issues make walking difficult or impossible.

For others a lack of interest or motivation to walk is a barrier with limited desire to walk more often.

"Walking is always the first choice, it's just easier and I feel like I'm staying fit that way – it kills two birds with one stone!"

"We make sure our daughter has two pairs of wellingtons in case one pair is wet, a raincoat, a fleece - all the clothes so we can go out in any weather."

"We've made our garden a complete square where I can hang up the washing, that square is paved and now I go around that square maybe 10 times a day if I can to give me exercise. I don't want to end up in a wheelchair."

"I usually only walk if there's some place to get to, not just for the sake of it."

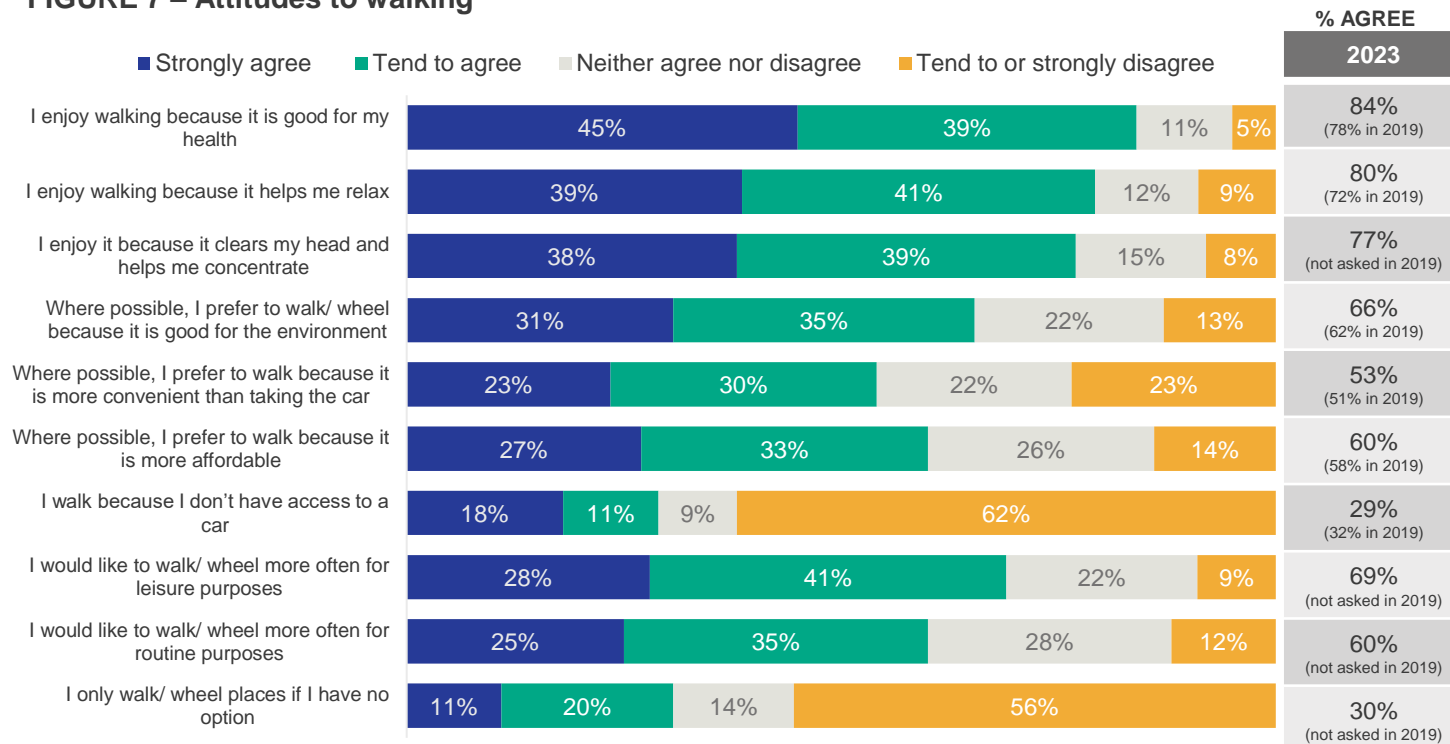


Most Scottish adults enjoy walking because of the health and wellbeing benefits. These reasons have become more important since 2019

FIGURE 7 – Attitudes to walking

Levels of agreement with each of the statements varied by demographics.

For example, amongst those aged under 45 50% strongly agreed that they enjoyed walking because it is good for their health but this decreased to 44% amongst those aged 45 to 64 and just 35% amongst those aged 65 and over.



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about walking?

While physical health is often the primary motivation for walking or wheeling, mental wellbeing benefits are also very important outcomes of participation

The qualitative research explored the benefits of walking and wheeling in more detail.

The physical health benefits tended to be the most widely recognised and often the key motivation for choosing to walk or wanting to walk more often.

However, when describing what they gained from time spent walking, the more emotional, wellbeing related aspects were mentioned most.

Other benefits referenced were generally more functional, and included walking being seen as the easier option (often in conjunction with public transport) or the only viable alternative.

In contrast, while protecting the environment was sometimes seen as proving a 'feel good factor' for those who walked regularly, it was generally not given as the primary motivation.

PHYSICAL HEALTH



- Often the primary motivator for leisure walks or choosing to walk on journeys instead driving.
- Those who have no choice other than walking also welcome the fact it is also good for them.
- Some routinely monitor daily step counts.

"You're at one with the world"

MENTAL WELLBEING



- While not the main motivation this is often the main benefit gained.
- Walking alone allows time to think and 'de-stress', walking with others provides social benefits.
- Time in nature can be particularly beneficial.
- This benefit can be gained on either walks taken for leisure or for a particular purpose such as going to or from work.

"You always see people out when you're with the dog."

"If your sat in the house it's very easy to get caught up in your own mind."

THE ONLY OR BEST OPTION



- For some walking is the only way to get to the places they need to be.
- However, the health and wellbeing benefits are still noticed and appreciated by many.
- For some while a car is an alternative, walking is preferred as either cheaper or more convenient - especially in cities with good public transport.

"It's actually quite pleasant to have a 30 minute walk after work. Just to clear the head, you start disconnecting on the way home."

"Daylight and fresh air...its sometimes good to not be stuck behind the screens."

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT



- Less likely to motivate decisions to walk than other factors
- Some feel pleased that they are 'doing the right thing' but others have not considered this factor.

Increasing participation

Trends and opportunities for growth



Section summary

- Walking and wheeling participation now in comparison to pre-pandemic levels has increased for 38% of the population but decreased for 19% while the remaining 41% are participating at the same levels as before.
- Population groups most likely to have increased walking and wheeling participation include those in good health, those aged 16 to 34 and those who are financially comfortable. However levels of participation have not changed for those in the older age groups and those with bad health.
- Around a quarter of the working population work from home more now than they did before the pandemic. Working from home has had a mixed impact on this group with 46% increasing their walking participation but 35% walking or wheel less often when they work from home.
- Reasons given for increased walking due to working from home include having more time available and making a conscious effort to take breaks for exercise. Reasons for walking less often include the loss of time spent walking as part of the commute and feeling less inclined to walk during breaks/ lunchtime.
- Looking to the future 69% of Scots would like to be able to walk or wheel more often for leisure purposes and 60% would like to be able to walk or wheel more often for routine purposes.
- Asked what would encourage increased participation, the most frequently selected factors were feeling safer at night (34%), better quality pavements (32%) and someone to walk with (31%).



During the pandemic while almost two in five increased their walking participation, almost as many stated that they walked less

Across the population as a whole fairly similar proportions of the population claimed to either increase or decrease their walking participation during lockdown periods, resulting in a fairly small net change overall (i.e. 38% - 36% = +2%).

However, as shown overleaf, this net change varied somewhat between different population groups.

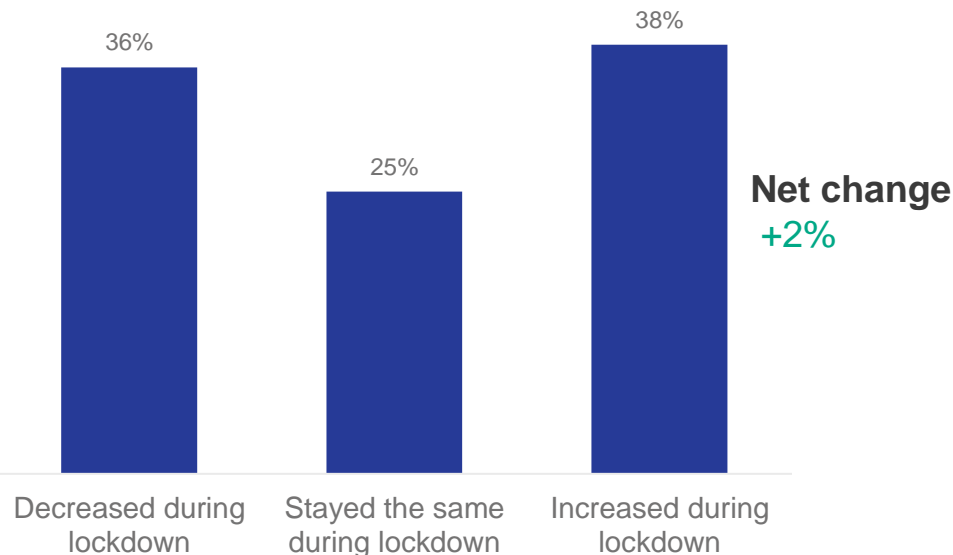
The highest net changes were reported by those who work full time, those aged 35 to 44, people with good health, dog owners and people who describe themselves as financially comfortable,

Conversely, the largest net decreases in participation were reported by people with a mobility impairment, people with poor health and unemployed people.

FIGURE 8 – Change in participation during pandemic lockdown periods

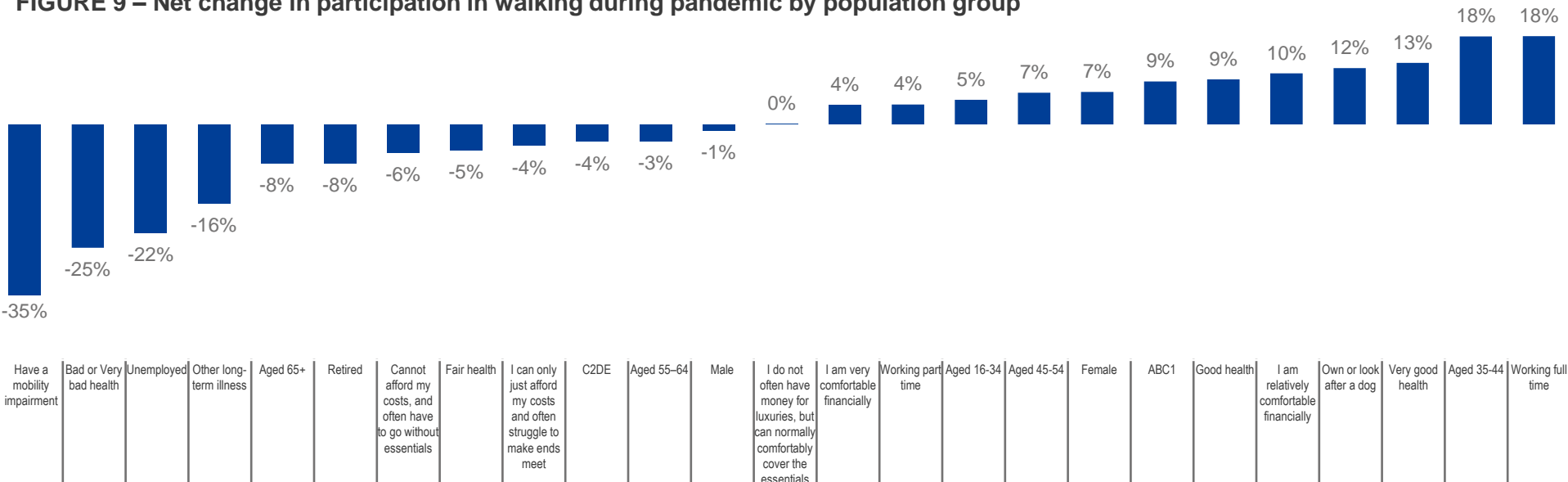
We'd like you to think back to the 'lockdown' periods during 2020 and 2021 when restrictions on movement were in place to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and many businesses such as leisure centres, certain shops and offices were closed.

During this time do you think the amount you walked or wheeled increased, decreased or stayed the same in comparison to your normal habits before the pandemic?



Overall levels of walking and wheeling increased most amongst people aged 35-44, those in good health, those working full time and dog owners. However, they decreased most amongst those in the poorest health and oldest age groups

FIGURE 9 – Net change in participation in walking during pandemic by population group



A wide range of reasons were provided for changing walking behaviours during lockdown periods

Why do you think this was the case?

Decreased amount walked during lockdown periods

"I was frightened to leave the house."

- 30% Covid restrictions
- 18% Wanted to stay at home
- 10% Wanted to keep myself safe
- 10% Many places were closed
- 7% Following lockdown rules

"Following instructions only to leave home when necessary."

"Restrictions made it difficult to go far."

"I was shielding, so not outdoors."

"Scared to go out in case I caught the virus."

"I have a low immune system so had to be very careful when going out side."

"I was working full time then in a hospital as I had not yet retired from my nursing career."

"I have difficulty walking and usually push a trolley round a supermarket for exercise (or swim), but this was not possible during lockdown."

"Everyone was walking dogs."

Increased amount walked during lockdown periods

"Had more time to spare and found walking helped my mood."

- 20% Nothing else to do
- 17% To get some exercise
- 12% Had more time
- 11% To get out of the house
- 3% Needed fresh air

"It was during the 2nd lockdown when there was no time restricted to being outside, we would walk for hours just so we weren't sitting in the house, especially when the weather was nice."

"All we were allowed to do."

"Took a lot of walks to relieve the boredom of being stuck in the house."

"I was working from home and spent a lot of my spare time running to get out of the house."

"Almost felt obligated to exercise daily as it was permitted and also was an opportunity to meet people outdoors when allowed."

"Just to get about and about in wide open spaces."

Two fifths of Scottish adults walk more frequently now than they did before the pandemic

FIGURE 10 – Change in participation in walking/ wheeling now compared to pre-pandemic

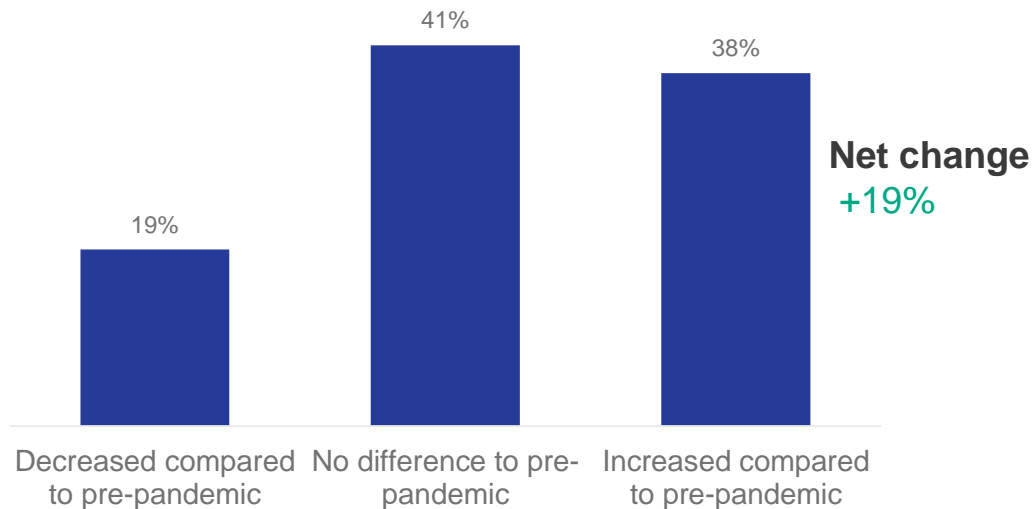
Across the population as a whole there has been an overall net increase in walking participation since the pandemic (38% - 19% = +19%).

As shown overleaf, the level of change has varied between different population groups.

The highest net increases were reported by people who describe themselves as very comfortable financially, those in very good health and people aged 16 to 34.

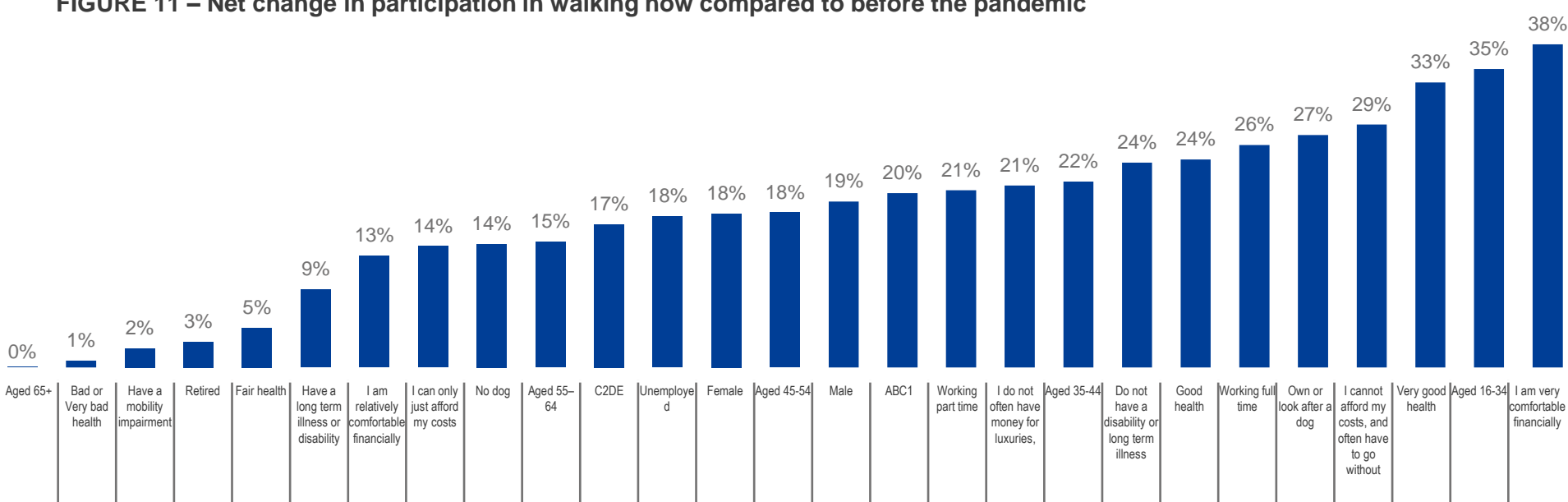
Conversely, while no groups recorded an overall net decrease, there was no net change amongst those aged 65 and over and net increases in participation were very small amongst people with poor health and people with a mobility impairment.

And thinking about your current levels, has the frequency that you walk or wheel now increased, decreased or stayed the same as it was before the pandemic?



While pre to post pandemic changes in walking and wheeling participation are positive for most population groups, they are most pronounced for younger age groups, people in good health, those who work full time and dog owners

FIGURE 11 – Net change in participation in walking now compared to before the pandemic



The most common reasons provided for increasing walking/ wheeling participation since the pandemic included the fun/ enjoyment of participation, a desire to get more physically fit and to relax and unwind

Why do you think this was the case?

Increased

"Because I'm actively trying to be more outdoors as it helps my mental health."

"I've realised that I'm not making the most out of my surroundings. Missed speaking to people and family."

"I seem to have more time now to do it."

"I appreciate the outdoors a bit more now."

"I am more conscious of getting my steps in."

"I have gotten used to being outside and walking and really enjoy it"

"Put on weight during pandemic - trying to lose it now."

"I'm trying to get fitter and strengthen leg & thigh muscles to stop my leg giving way unexpectedly."

"My exercise options have changed due to changing workstyle - so walking more and running for exercise."

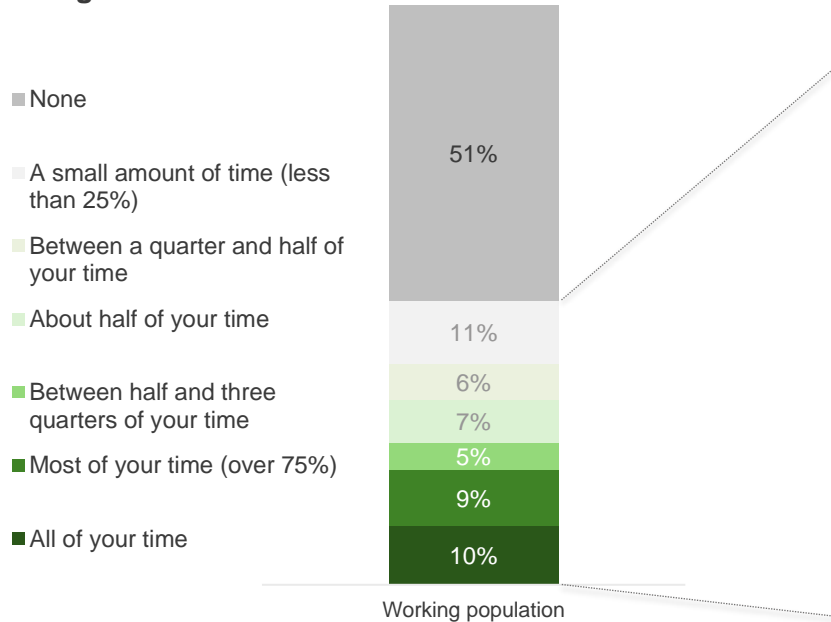
"I noticed how good it was to be out in the open and walking made me happy. It's also better for the environment so only use car on rainy days now as it's a medium sized town."

"I enjoyed walking during the pandemic and found new local green spaces I continue to walk to."



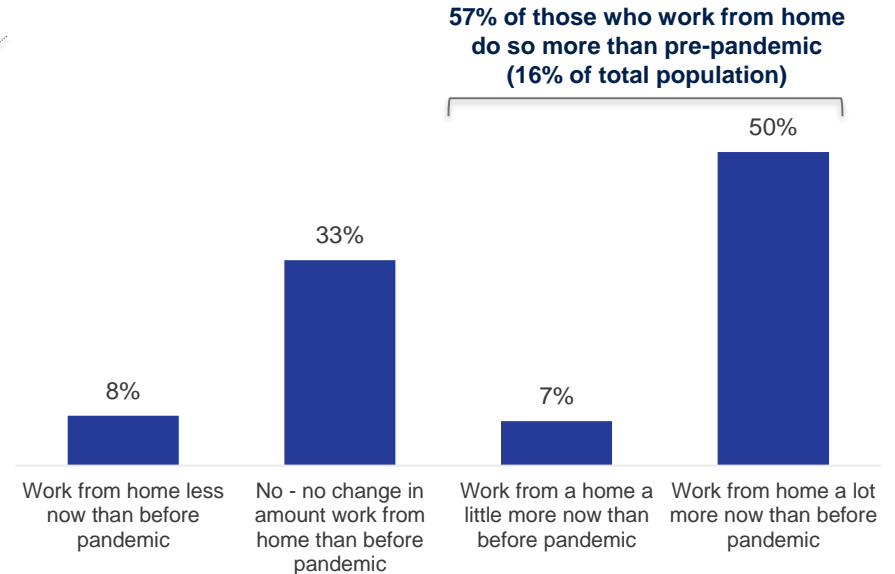
Around half of the working population worked from home at any point in the previous month with around a quarter doing so for at least half of the time. Most work from home more often now than before the pandemic

FIGURE 12 - Proportion of time in last month spent working from home



What proportion of your time working during the last month, if any, was spent working from home?

FIGURE 13 - Whether amount work from home is different from working patterns pre-pandemic



Was the amount that you worked from home during the last month any different from your normal working patterns before the pandemic?



While almost half of those who work from home more than pre-pandemic believe this has led them to walk or wheel more often, a significant minority feel that they participate less often as a result

Overall, around half of those who work from home more now than before the pandemic stated that this had led to them walking more often (46%).

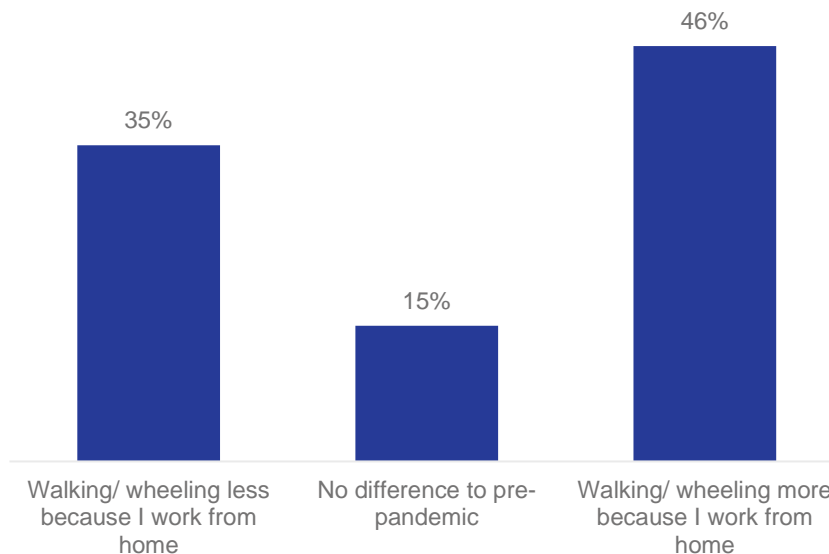
This percentage was higher amongst:

- Men (55% vs 40% of women)
- People aged 35 to 44 (50%)
- People with children at home (54%)
- Dog owners (63%)

Also 14% of those who work from home had introduced a 'fake commute' (i.e. an additional routine walk taken to replace walking previously undertaken as part of commute to work).

A slightly higher percentage of men than women had introduced a fake commute (17% vs 13%).

FIGURE 14 - Impact of working from home on amount on amount of time spent walking or wheeling (amongst those working from home more now than before the pandemic)



Net change
+11%

14% have introduced a
'fake commute'

*Do you think that working from home has any effect on the amount of time you spend walking (or wheeling) on days when you are working?
(Based on those working from home more now than pre-pandemic)*



Those walking less because they work from home most often state this is due to the loss of their commute. Some of those who walk more often stated that this was due to having more time available, the need to take a break by going for a walk or being able to walk to local amenities

Walking/ wheeling less because I work from home...

"I no longer have a commute and stay at home during my lunch break."

"I am more exhausted after working at home and don't feel as though I have the same energy as when I'm in the office."

"Not walking to work or on visits to clients."

"When working from home I don't need to walk into work or walk to catch the train so this has decreased my walking on these days."

"As walking was part of my commute. I would go for a walk at lunchtime but now I'm more inclined to stay in the house and do housework."

"It takes me 25 minutes to get to work each morning by walking so not having to go to the office means I lose 50 min in total of walking."

Walking/ wheeling more because I work from home...

"I'm not as tired anymore from commuting and have that extra 2 hours a day."

"I have more time to walk as I spend less time commuting to the office."

"Working from home I am able to walk my dogs more during the day. I would just sit in the office usually."

"I can be more active after with the time I'd have spent commuting. I am more energised to walk on lunch break."

"I use my local shop more and I also have more time to myself."

"It's a good way of taking a break and relaxing."

"I want to get away from my desk and home environment."

Asked what factors in general would encourage them to walk or wheel more often, the most common responses related to safety, better paths locally and having someone to walk with

FIGURE 15 – What would encourage increased walking participation

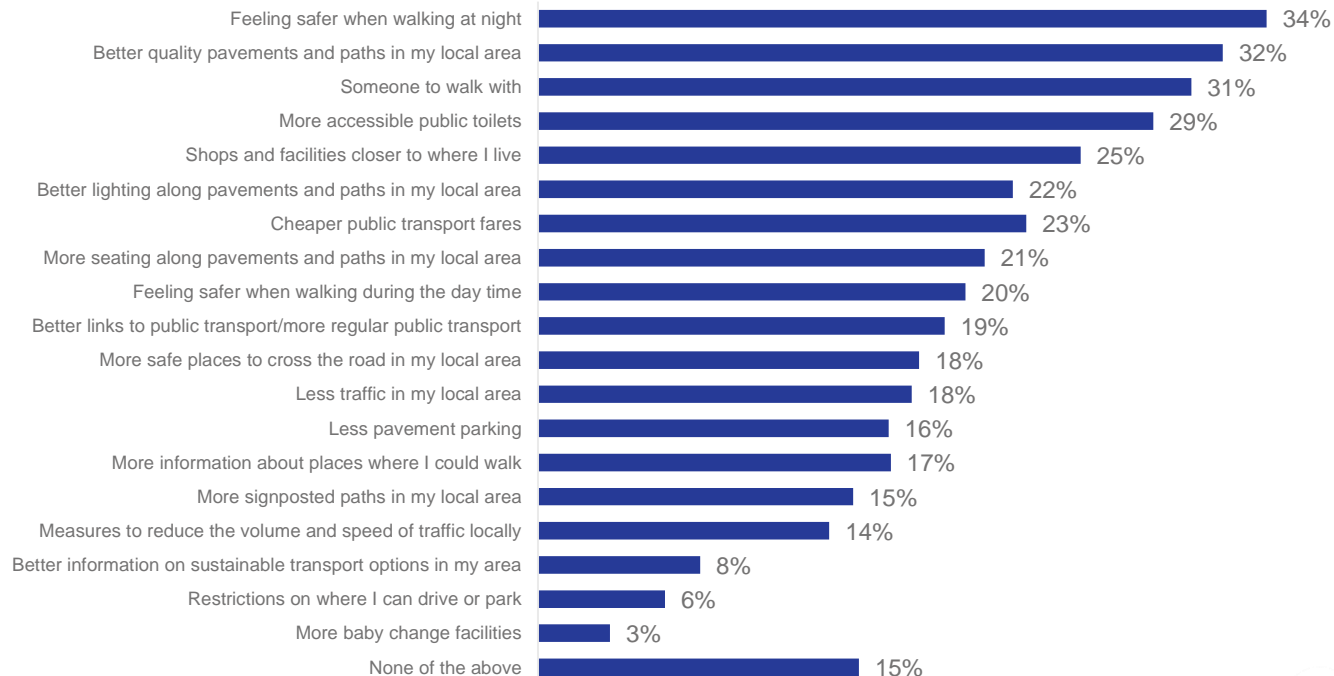
The factors selected varied by demographic group, in particular by sex and age.

Women were more likely than men to select the following factors:

- Feeling safer when walking at night (44% vs 23% of men)
- Someone to walk with (36% vs 25% of men)
- Shops and facilities close to where I live (31% vs 19% of men)
- Better lighting along pavements and paths in my local area (28% vs 16% of men)
- Feeling safer when walking during the day (24% vs 16% of men).

Those aged 16 to 24 were also more likely than older age groups to select factors relating to feeling safer (61% at night and 36% during day), having someone to walk with (48%) and cheaper public transport fares (37%).

Those aged 65+ and people with a disability were more likely to select more seating on paths in their local area (27% and 26% respectively).



Which of the following, if any, would encourage you to walk more often?



The qualitative research explored changes in walking participation during and since the pandemic in more detail and, in particular, how working from home influenced behaviours. The impacts were varied with many seeking to continue increased walking habits they had acquired during lockdown while others felt that they had returned to pre-pandemic routines.



DURING PERIODS OF LOCKDOWN

- During initial periods of lockdown, especially in spring 2020, many spent more time outdoors walking to pass the time, stay fit, see friends and family and 'stay sane' when there were few other ways to get out of the house.
- The main exceptions were those who were shielding or too nervous to spend time outdoors and those who continued to work as normal (or indeed worked harder) during this period).
- Many explored their local area and discovered new places to walk during this period and a number of references to the mild weather were made. Some even commented that they appreciated the lack of traffic during the early periods of lockdown.

"I thought this is the way forward, we should be locked down more often!"



SINCE THE PANDEMIC

- For some, as restrictions eased their frequency of walking also returned to pre-pandemic levels, as they returned to clubs or other activities which had been unavailable during lockdown.
- However, others who had increased walking during lockdown tried to keep up their new habits and continued to enjoy the local places they had discovered.



IMPACTS OF CHANGING WORKING PATTERNS

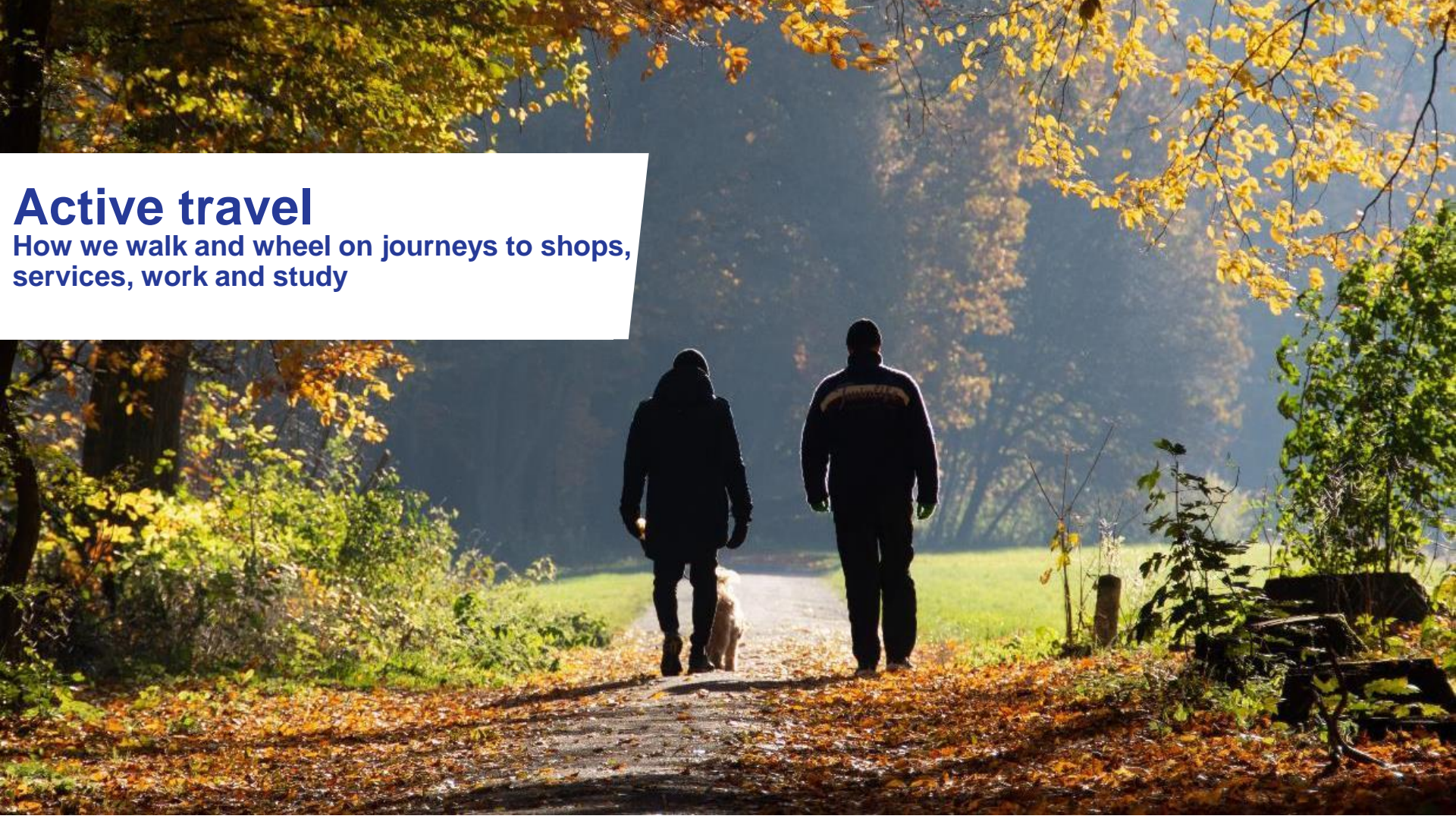
- Those who work from home more often since the pandemic described a mixed impact on how often they walked.
- Some reported increasing their walking by using the time previously spent commuting or making a conscious effort to take a break and a walk at lunchtime.
- However, others felt that when they worked from home they were less likely to leave their desk so spent less time walking during the working day. This included feeling less inclined to go for a walk at lunchtime (some mentioned instead using the time for household chores) and losing the walking that had previously been part of their commute.

"To be honest I just didn't know a lot of those paths existed until the lockdown when we made a point to go out everyday and explore."



Active travel

How we walk and wheel on journeys to shops, services, work and study



Section summary

- The distances Scots would be prepared to walk to reach a destination varies somewhat between types of place and by population groups.
- On average, while a maximum of 11 minutes would be spent walking to reach a public transport link or a shop that sells everyday necessities and 14 minutes would be taken to walk to a primary school, longer durations would be walked to reach a secondary school, leisure centre or workplace (20, 21 and 26 minutes respectively).
- Two main population groups were the most willing to walk for longer periods to reach these type of place - those in good health who are typically working full time and in younger age groups and those who are unemployed and struggling financially.
- While over four in five Scots are prepared to walk for the duration it would take them to reach their nearest public transport link (85%), shops that sell everyday necessities (85%) and green spaces (83%), much smaller percentages would be prepared to walk for the duration needed to reach their workplace (34%), the nearest secondary school (56%) or leisure centre (59%).
- 53% of Scots walked or wheeled to a public transport terminal as part of a longer journey during the previous month. Compared to 2019, an increased percentage of 2023 journeys involved travel by train while fewer involved using a scheduled bus service.



Most Scots would not walk for more than 20 minutes to reach shops, schools and other local services. Similar durations were recorded in 2019

FIGURE 16 – Durations would be prepared to walk

■ Less than 10 minutes ■ 11-20 minutes ■ 21 minutes to half an hour ■ More than half an hour

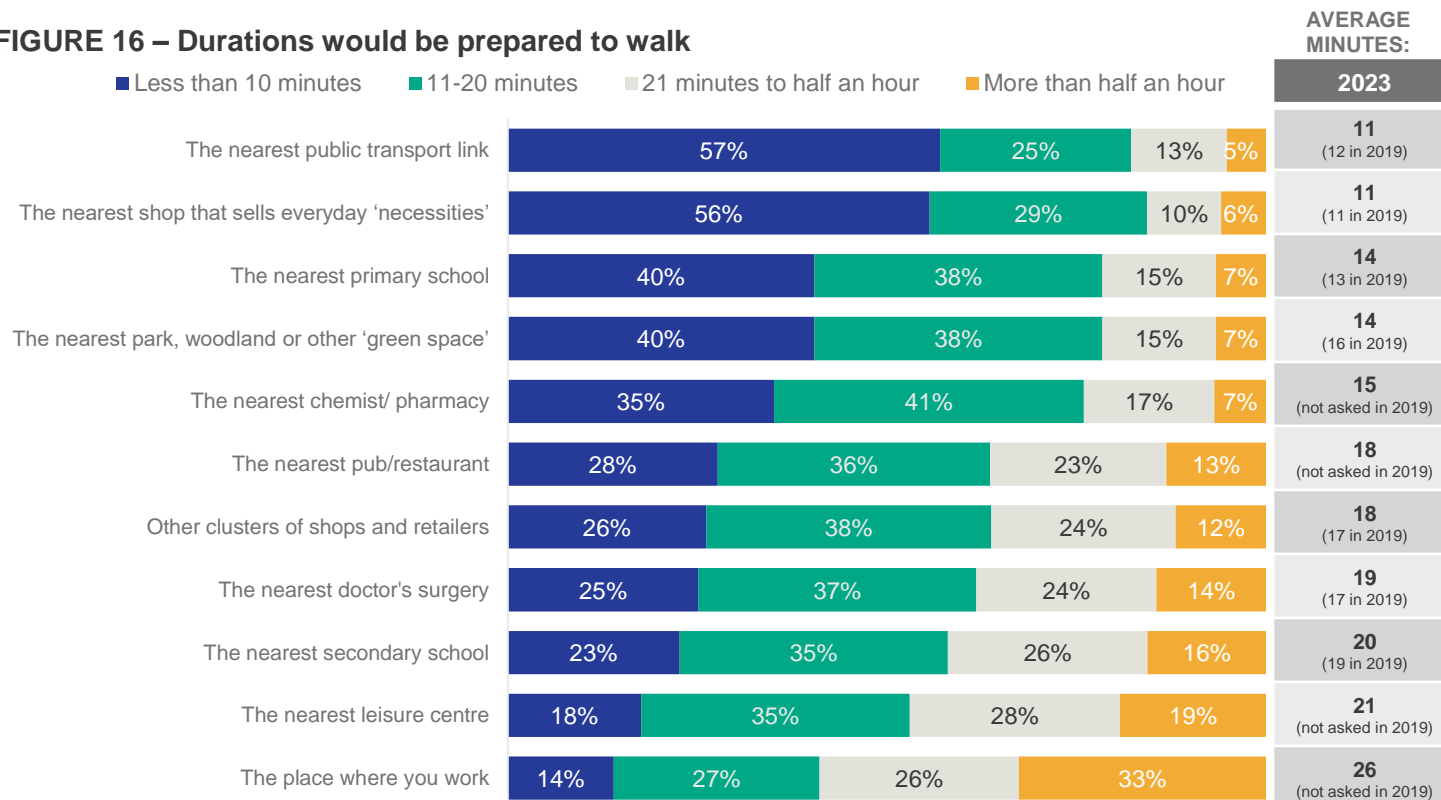
Across all of the places listed, respondents would be prepared to walk for an average of 18.0 minutes.

This overall average was highest amongst the following groups:

- People aged 25-44 (18.9 minutes)
- People who work full time (18.6)
- Unemployed people (19.0)
- People with good health (18.8)
- People who are struggling financially (18.8).

However, it was lowest amongst:

- People aged 55+ (17.3 minutes)
- People with bad or very bad health (16.3)
- People with a mobility impairment (16.3).



Personally, how long would you be prepared to walk for to get to each of the following places? (All respondents excluding Don't Know/Not applicable responses)

While most of the population are within a 10 minute walk of a public transport link or shop that sells essentials, most would need to walk or wheel somewhat further to reach their nearest secondary school, leisure centre or their place of work

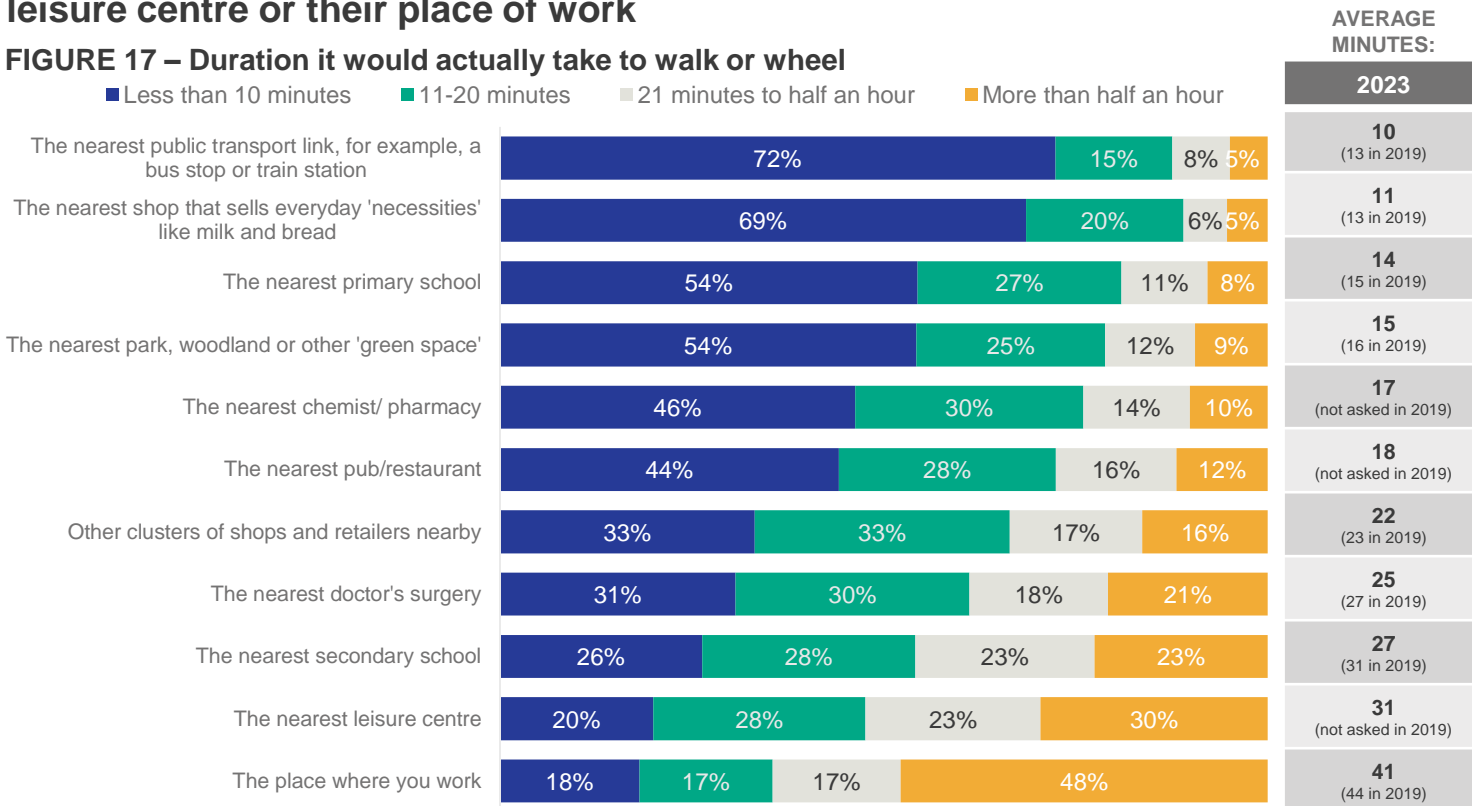
FIGURE 17 – Duration it would actually take to walk or wheel

■ Less than 10 minutes ■ 11-20 minutes ■ 21 minutes to half an hour ■ More than half an hour

Across all of the places listed, respondents stated that it would actually take an average of 18.7 minutes to walk to these destinations.

The overall average duration that it would actually take was highest amongst the following groups:

- Those aged 55+ (19.3 minutes)
- Women (19.1)
- People with bad or very bad health (22.5)
- People with a mobility impairment (20.7).

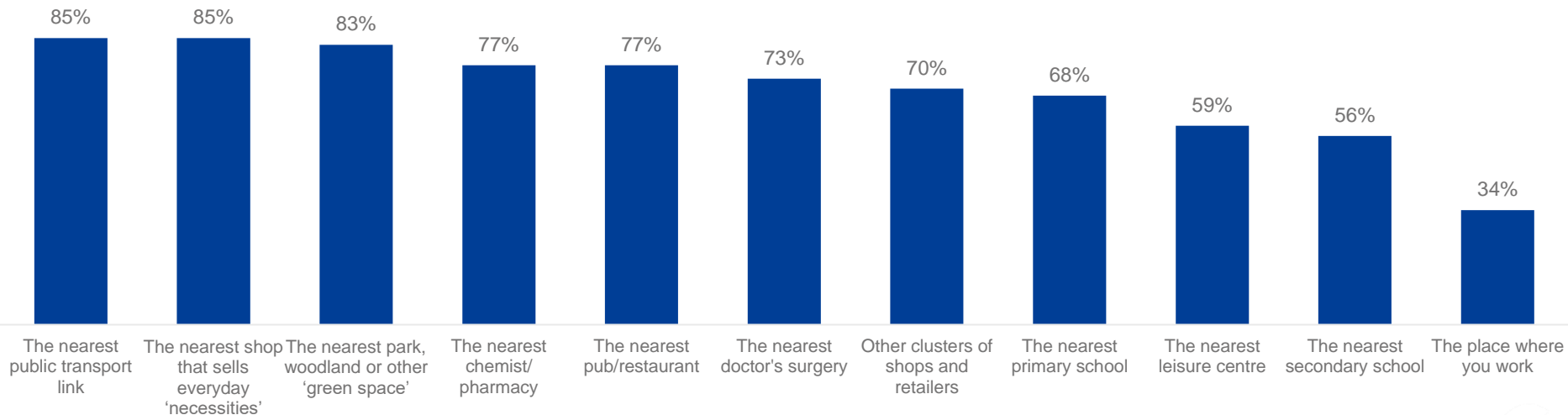


Roughly how long would it actually take you to walk or wheel from home to each of the following places?

While for over four in five, public transport, shops that sell essentials and green spaces are within an accepted walking distance, only around a third would be prepared to walk the distance required to get to their place of work

Across all of the types of place, those with bad or very bad health and those with a disability or a long term health condition or illness were the most likely to state that the walking durations required were beyond those they would be prepared to walk.

FIGURE 18 – Proportions of Scottish population stating that the duration they are prepared to walk/wheel for to reach different destinations are within the time it would actually take



Respondents walking to public transport links most often stated that on the last occasion this was to catch a train, an increase since 2019, while a reduced percentage walked to catch a bus

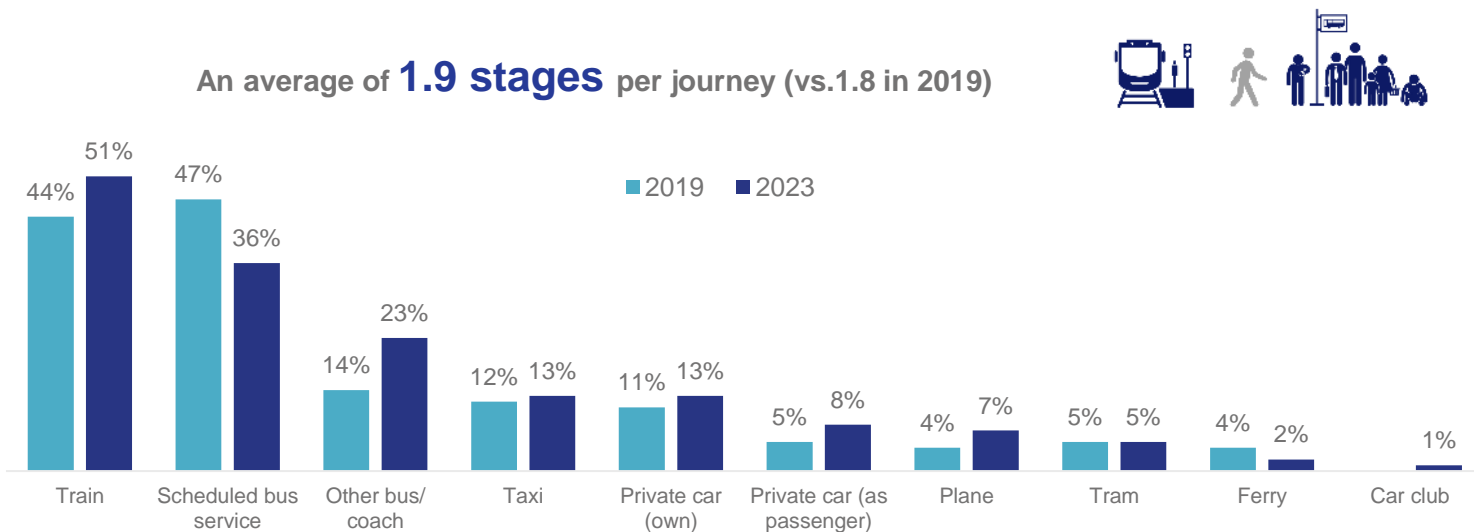
Overall, 53% of the population had walked or wheeled to a railway station, bus stop, tram stop or other public transport terminal as part of a longer journey during the previous month.

This percentage was highest amongst the following groups:

- Those aged 16 to 24 (71%) and 25 to 44 (58%)
- More affluent ABC1 social grades (58%)
- People who work full time (61%)

The modes of transport used and number of stages per journey did not vary significantly between groups.

FIGURE 5 – Modes used on last journey which involved walking to a public transport link



Thinking of the last occasion you did this, which of the following modes of transport did you use on this journey?
How many stages did this journey include in total?
(Respondents who walked to public transport)



Making local areas more suited to walking routine journeys is supported across the population

The qualitative research included a discussion of walking as active travel, covering the types of routine journeys taken on foot and related motivations and barriers. While levels of activity varied somewhat between the population segments, the majority of those spoken to in every segment supported the idea of making local areas more suited to walking routine journeys.

	BUDDING ENTHUSIASTS	PART OF THE ROUTINE	LIMITED BUT LOOKING TO CHANGE	NEEDS MUST	JUMP IN THE CAR	RESTRICTED OR RELUCTANT
General behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking is 1st choice for all journeys unless it is not a viable option e.g. due to distance, heavy shopping or extreme weather. Get frustrated when they see other people driving short journeys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often take routine short journeys on foot as this is their habit and often the easiest or cheapest choice. They also recognise the physical health benefits from walking on these journeys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk on routine journeys sometimes but time spent walking is more likely to be for leisure or dog walking purposes (this group has the highest levels of dog ownership). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This group record the 2nd highest frequency of walking on routine/ non-leisure journeys (e.g. to public transport, work or college). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking for routine purposes is very limited with the car most often used unless a walk also has a leisure purpose (e.g. enjoying good weather by walking to a local shop). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very infrequent walkers for either leisure or routine purposes. Not anticipating or looking to increase walking frequency in future due to significant barriers which exist.
Motivations & barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking is often seen as the most practical choice but also welcome the health and wellbeing benefits and feel good doing the right thing for environment. The main barrier to walking is a lack of options to walk to certain places. As such they are strong supporters of changes to make local areas more walking friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With an older age profile many benefit from free bus travel or reduced rail fares making these more appealing modes. Health is also an important motivation. This group tend to be happy with the amount of walking they do but changes which improve their experience when walking would be welcomed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This group have a high interest in integrating more walking into their lives. However busy lifestyles can make it harder to find time or impractical to walk on routine journeys or use public transport. As such, this group respond positively towards concepts such as 20-minute neighbourhoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most often this group walk and use public transport because they don't have other options. As such, they sometimes tolerate poor experiences when walking. Benefits from walking such as health are understood and appreciated but not a reason for participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise walking as a beneficial activity for health, but are less likely to see it as an attractive option for routine journeys, easily discouraged by factors such as poor weather. While they support improvements which make local areas more suited to walking, they also want to see changes which make it easier to drive to local amenities such as shops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers which are difficult to overcome restrict walking including physical limitations or disability. When walks are taken issues such as uneven pavements or a lack of benches can be a significant issue. Some interest in activities such as short walks with the social element particularly appealing.

"If it's rain and snow I'll go in the car - I'm not that extreme!."

"A car's a nuisance now, I think as you get older you're less interested in driving. I don't go anywhere."

"My doctor's in Blackridge because the doctors in Armadale was full - so I can't walk there."

"It's a time thing - if you jump in the car for 10 minutes, in the shop for 20 minutes than back in 10 minutes, rather than a 2 hour trip."

"I think, is there a benefit to me in walking that sort of distance and it comes back to weather? I don't want to go back to having to change my trousers every time I come in because they are soaking wet!"

Local paths and access

Experiences and expectations for walking and wheeling in local areas



Section summary

- The largest proportions of the population feel that the number of local services within walking distance of their home have decreased in the last 5 years and that the conditions and number of paths in their local area has worsened. These results are more negative than in the 2019 survey suggesting a decline in opportunities for walking and wheeling over this period.
- The most common issues encountered when walking or wheeling locally include litter and dog poo (60%), cyclists on pavements (47%), poorly maintained pavements (47%) and cars parked on pavements (46%). The percentages reporting these issues has increased since 2019.
- Rating the importance of different aspects within their local area, the most important areas are feeling safe, streets and public areas being well cared for and appealing to spend time in, good quality green spaces and shops that sell essentials within easy walking distance.
- Asked what factors would be important in the scenario of moving house, amenities to walk to were found to be important to most (67% local shops and facilities, 54% a regular bus service) while half would like the area to have a good network of paths (52%). In contrast, much smaller percentages stated that being convenient to drive to the nearest town centre or retail parks were important (31% and 23% respectively).
- 71% support the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods.



Scots have a wide range of opinions on their local paths and opportunities to walk to local services. Since 2019 views on the conditions of local paths have become more negative

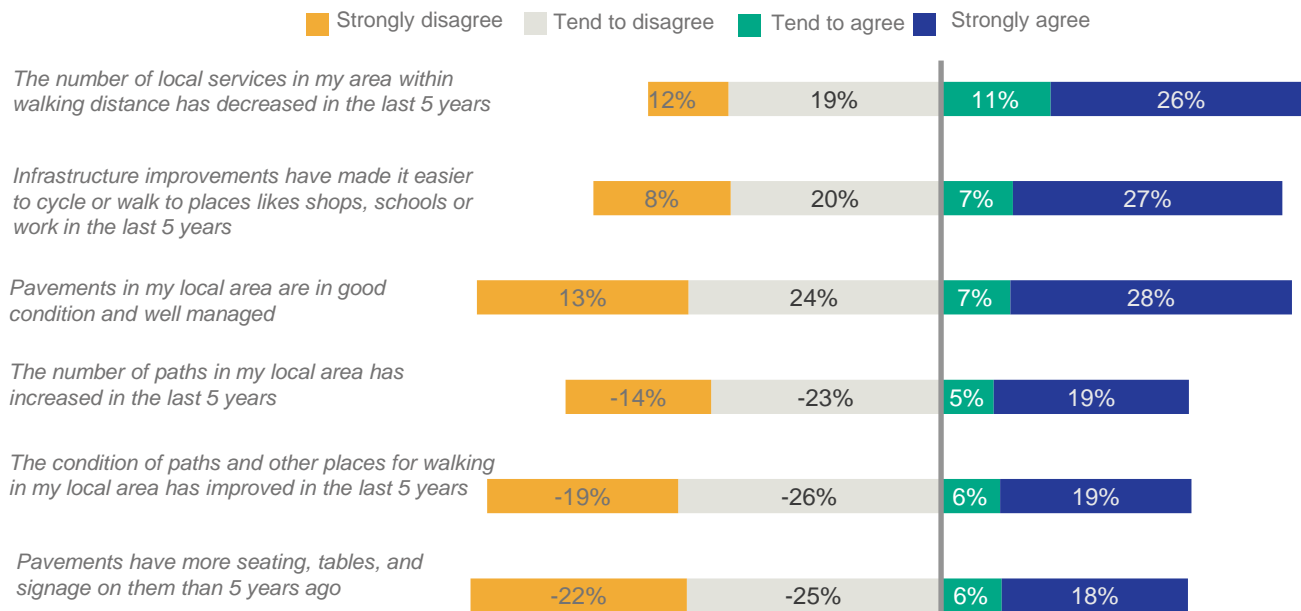
FIGURE 19 – Levels of agreement with attitude statements relating to walking in local area

People aged under 45 were more likely than those aged 45 or over to agree with the positive statements including:

- 45% agree that pavements in their local area were in good condition and well managed (vs. 27% aged 45+)
- 36% agree that the number of paths in their local area has increased in the last 5 years (vs 16% aged 45+)
- 48% agree that infrastructure improvement have made it easier to cycle (vs 23% aged 45+).

Other groups more likely to agree with the positive statements included those with children in their household and those in the Budding Enthusiast segment.

Conversely those in the Jump in the Car and Restricted or Reluctant segments were the least likely to agree.



Net Agreement

2023
+7 (+4 in 2019)
0 (not asked in 2019)
-11 (+4 in 2019)
-12 (not asked in 2019)
-20 (-3 in 2019)
-22 (not asked in 2019)

Note: proportions neither agreeing or disagreeing not shown.

The next few questions are related to your local area, by this we mean the town or village you live in, your city neighbourhood, etc. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about walking in your local area?



Littering, cyclists on pavements and poorly maintained pavements are the most common issues encountered. Pavement conditions have become a greater issue since 2019

FIGURE 20 – Issues encountered when walking in local area

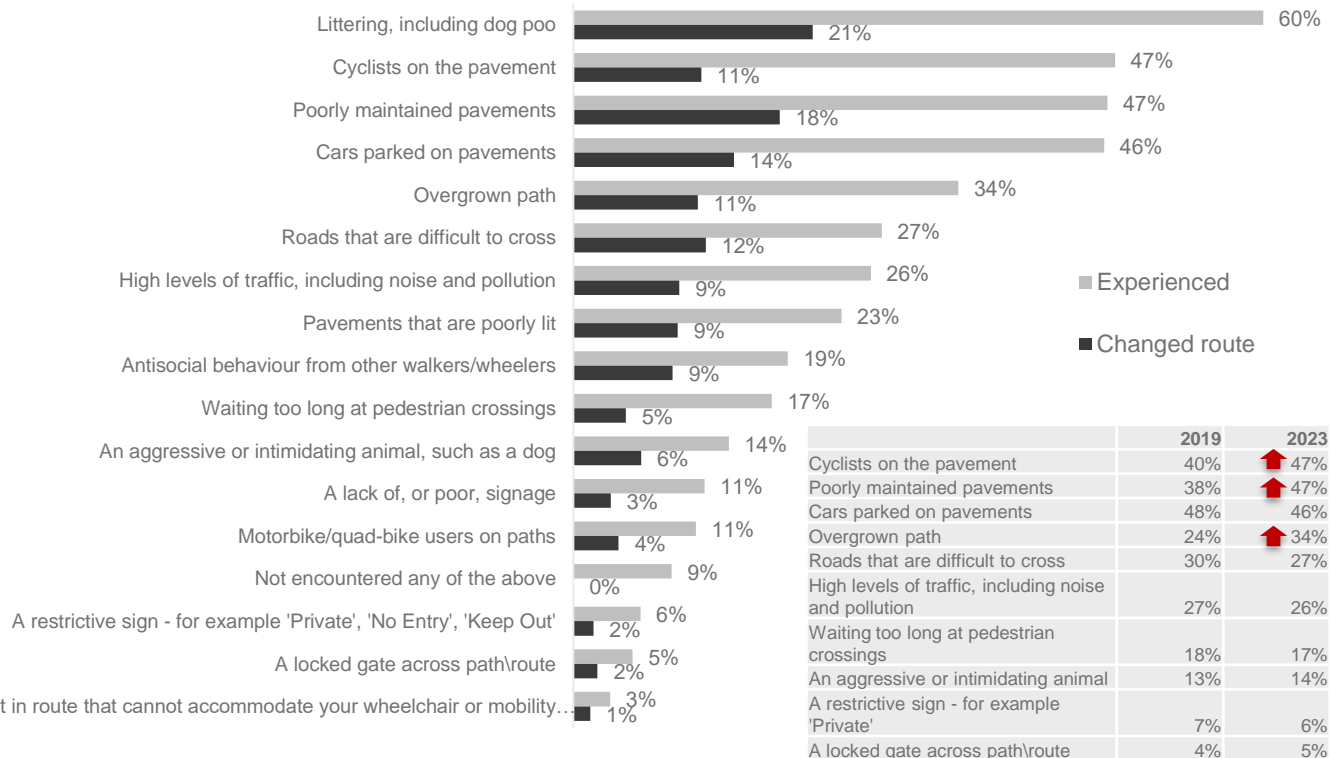
People aged under 45 were more likely to reference the following problems:

- Pavements that are poorly lit (27% vs 20% aged 45+)
- Waiting too long at pedestrian crossings (24% vs 12% aged 45+)
- Anti-social behaviour from other walkers/ wheelers (23% vs 15% aged 45+)

However, people aged 45 or over were more likely to have encountered the following:

- Cars parked on pavements (51%)
- Poorly maintained pavements (52%)
- Cyclists on the pavement (54%)

People with a long term physical or mental health condition or illness were also significantly more likely to have encountered cars parked on the pavement, roads that were difficult to cross or poor maintained pavements (53%, 34% and 54% respectively).



While walking in your local area recently which, if any, of the following have you experienced?

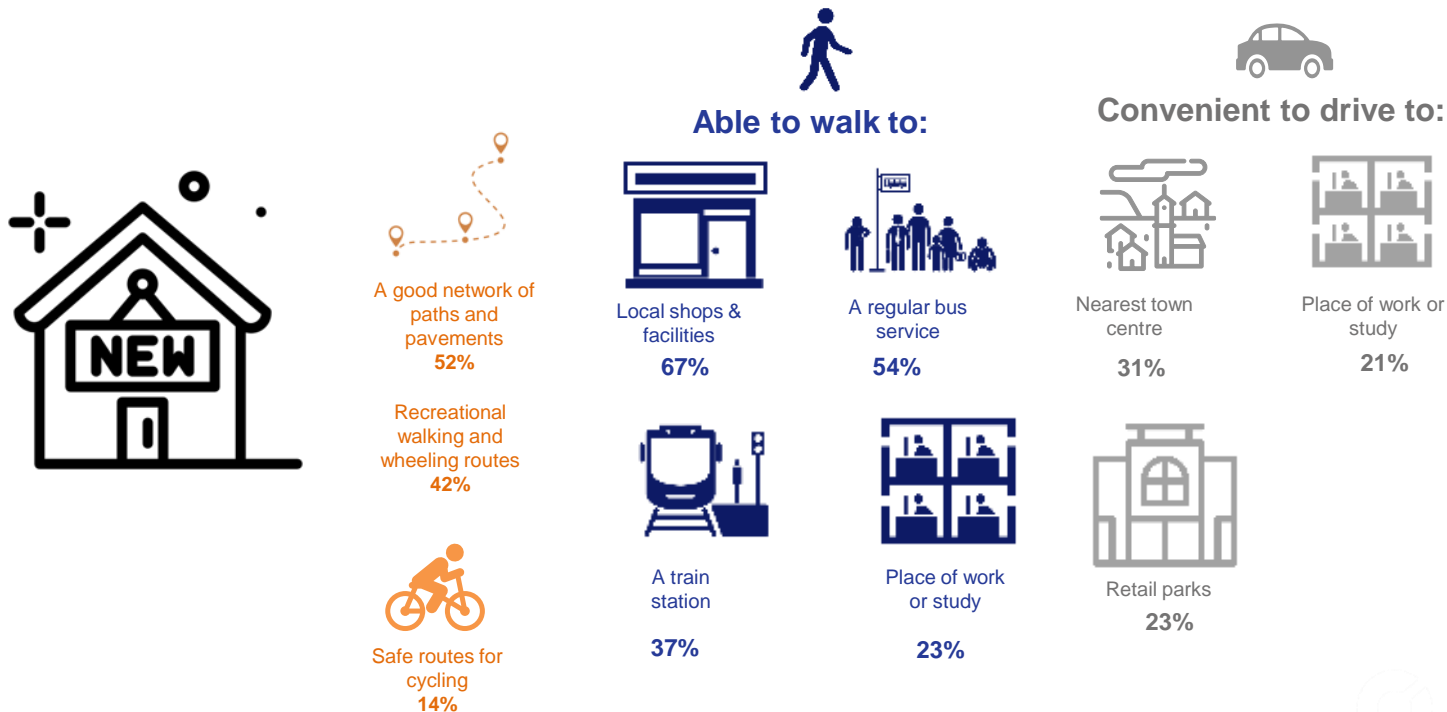
And which of these, if any, caused you to change where you walked (e.g. take a different route) or make you less likely to walk in this place again?

In the scenario of moving house, path networks and being able to walk to shops and public transport are important to more people than being able drive to towns and retail parks

FIGURE 22 – Factors which would be important when choosing where to live

Responses varied between different population groups, particularly by age.

While those aged under 45 were more likely than older age groups to state that they would like to be able to walk to the place they work or study and to be close to safe routes for cycling, those aged 45 or over were more likely than younger people to prioritise being within walking distance of a regular bus service and having a good network of paths and pavements.



Imagine you were moving house to a different area. In this imaginary situation how important would each of the following be in your choice of where to live?



Feeling safe when walking and wheeling, streets and public areas being cared for and having good quality local greenspaces and shops that sell essentials within walking distance are key for most

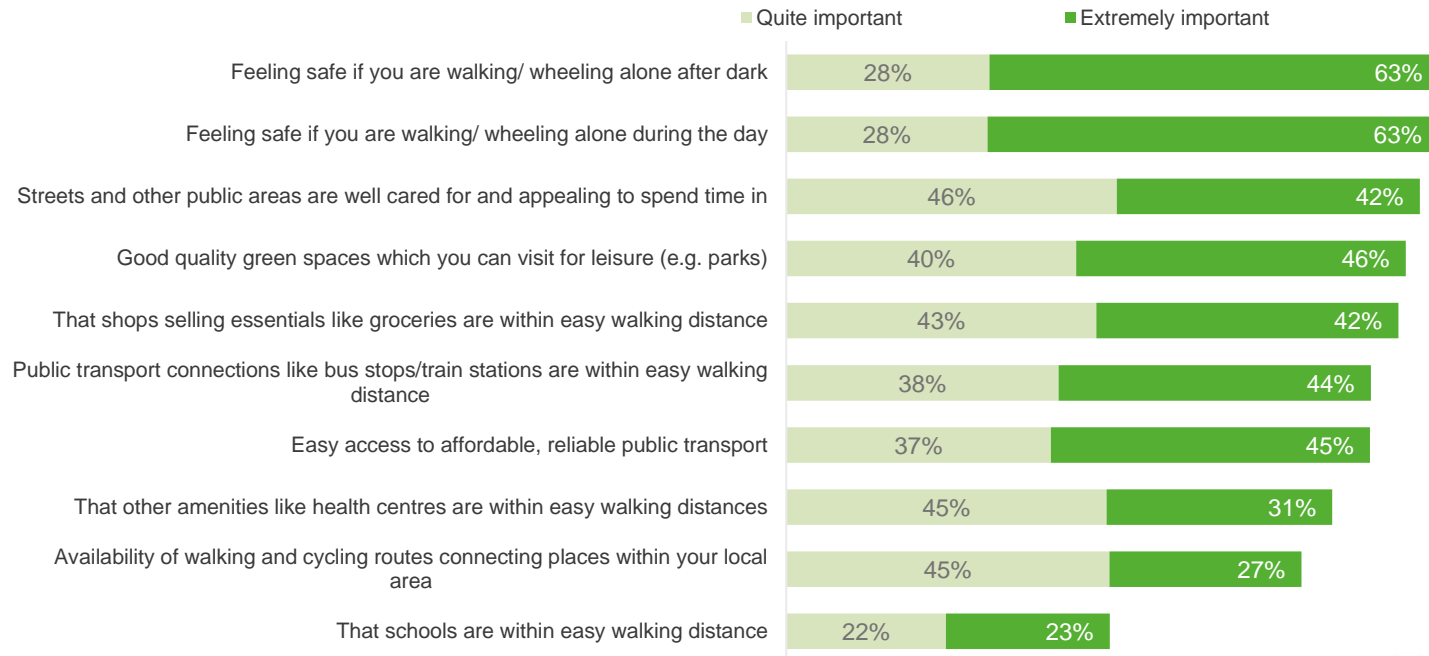
FIGURE 23 – Importance of different amenities in local area

Responses varied between different demographic groups.

A higher percentage of women than men rated the following aspects as extremely important:

- Feeling safe if walking/ wheeling alone during the day (71%)
- Feeling safe if walking/ wheeling alone after dark (68%)
- Shops selling essentials like groceries within easy walking distance (46%).

Other variations included a higher percentage of people with children rating the availability of walking and cycling routes connecting local places as extremely important (35%) and dog owners rating good quality green spaces and feeling safe walking alone in the dark as extremely important (53% and 69% respectively).



While most rate their area positively in relation to the provision of shops that sell essentials and public transport connections within easy walking distance, feeling safe after dark and the appeal of public areas received less positive ratings

Figure 24 – Rating of quality of local area

Rating of the quality of local areas also varied between different demographic groups:

- A higher percentage of men than women provided a positive rating for feeling safe when walking alone in the dark (64% vs 48% of women).
- A higher percentage of people in the more affluent ABC1 social grades provided positive ratings for the quality of local green spaces (80% vs 71% of C2DEs) and feeling safe when walking alone in the dark (62% vs 49% of C2DEs).
- People who stated that they were very comfortable financially provided the highest positive ratings in relation to streets and public areas being well cared for and appealing (73%) and feeling safe walking alone either during the day or after dark (95% and 80% respectively).



And how would you rate the quality of where you live in relation to the same list?

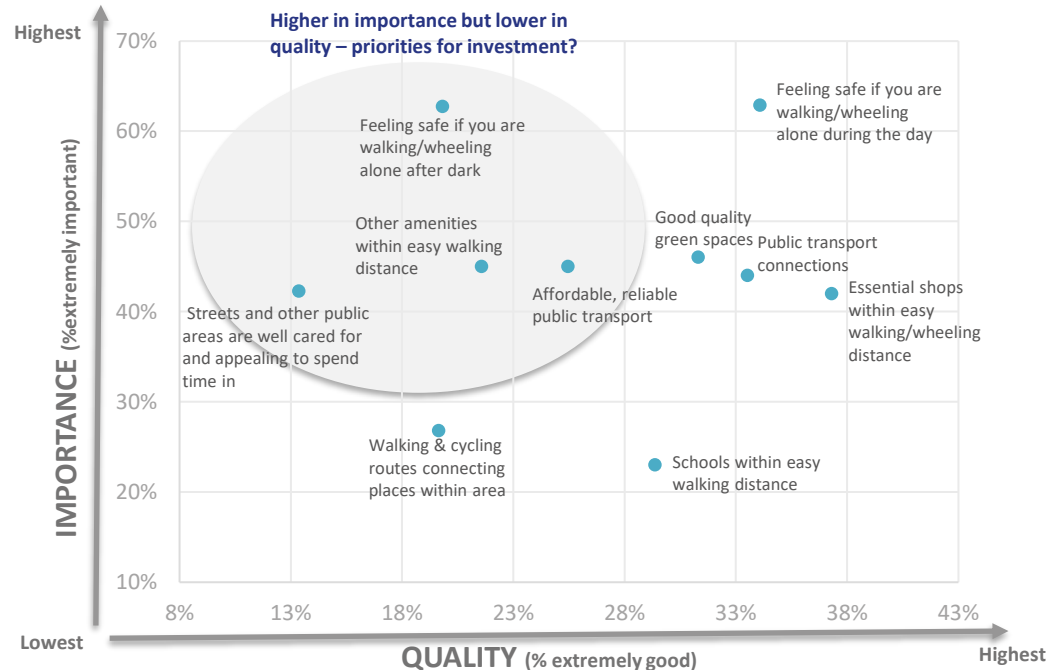
Comparing importance and quality ratings suggests that improving safety at night and caring for public areas are key priorities for investment

FIGURE 25 - Importance of amenities v quality rating (% of population)

Overall, areas most likely to be rated as important but receiving lower quality ratings included:

- Feeling safe when walking or wheeling alone after dark
- Streets and public areas being well cared for and appealing to spend time in
- Affordable, reliable public transport

Given this position these areas should be considered as the higher priorities for investment to increase the appeal of local areas for walking.



Considering local areas in more detail – a SWOT analysis

The qualitative research explored perceptions of local areas as places for walking in more depth, identifying areas which were commonly seen as strengths and weaknesses and potential opportunities and threats for the future. There was a great deal of consistency of views across the different population segments.



STRENGTHS

"It's nice to live in a small town, it's safe for the kids and everything is within walking distance."

- There was a clear correlation between the availability of amenities locally and the appeal of taking part in walking. In particular the following:
 - Close proximity to regularly used amenities such as schools, convenience shops and doctor's surgeries.
 - Close proximity to well maintained parks, natural places such as woodland or beaches, a network of path.
 - Close proximity to good public transport options which are as easy or easier to use than the alternative of driving.

"I'm 5 minutes from the Post Office and we have 36 eateries! I'm also near the station and we have an excellent bus service into town."

"We're right on the edge of the countryside here. There's a really nice walk which is a loop about 3 miles."

"We've got public parks but the big problem with that is that we've got not public toilets at all in Clackmannanshire."



OPPORTUNITIES

- A greater emphasis on local amenities, green spaces and public transport connection in planning and housing development.
- Creation of more dedicated path networks. Inclusion of sign posting, benches for rests and the availability of public toilets would enhance appeal for those who have less confidence or health concerns.
- In some areas more information on the places to walk for recreation could also help. As was shown during lockdown periods in 2020, there is potential for people to discover their own areas leading to increased usage.

WEAKNESSES



- Provision of amenities was sometimes perceived as being low priority or an 'after thought' to housing developers.
- In some areas public transport is non-existent, too infrequent, unreliable or slow, this was a particular issue for rural residents and major disincentive for those with a car.
- In some areas green spaces are non-existent or unappealing due to their condition or safety concerns.
- Some referred to local pavements in a poor condition - a particular issue for people with more limited mobility.
- In rural areas a lack of safe roadside pavements and poor public transport could mean that walking simply wasn't a viable option for a routine journey.

"There's a problem here with litter and dog owners who don't clean up. I don't know why they do that as we've been to other towns and they don't have it."

"I've noticed in the last 4 or 5 years that the parks and public spaces have become quite neglected - litter doesn't get picked up as much as before and broken things don't get repaired."

"We used to be able to get a bus direct from Rosewell to Edinburgh but Lothian Buses shafted us a few months ago."

"The woods were lovely but now we are going to have a long walk to a built up area to get to a greenspace."

THREATS



- Continued new housebuilding and other developments which lead to a loss of existing green spaces and exert additional pressure on remaining spaces.
- Reduction of budgets for the management of existing infrastructure impacting on the quality of roadside pavements, green spaces, bus routes, etc.

SWOT
ANALYSIS

While almost two-thirds have noticed faults in pavements or paths recently, few reported these issues and the problems were usually not resolved

Population groups most likely to have noticed pavement faults included:

- People with a long term illness or disability (79%)
- People aged 65 or over (73%)
- Members of the C2DE social grades (73%).

Reasons for not reporting problems also varied across different population groups with those aged under 45 more likely to state that this was because they did not know it was possible to report issues (30%) or that they didn't know how to (45%) while people aged 45 or over were more likely to believe that reporting issues would be a waste of time (68%).

63%
have noticed any pavement or path faults while walking or wheeling in local area recently



22%
reported the problem(s) to anyone

77%
did not report the problem(s) to anyone

30%
of those reporting problems stated that they were dealt with (6% of those noticing any problems)

Why not?



While issues such as uneven pavements are no more than a minor concern for many, they can be a significant barrier to walking or wheeling for people with a mobility impairment

The issues of poor pavement conditions and pavements being obstructed was discussed in the qualitative research.

Particular issues referred included the following:

- Uneven footpath surfaces, usually due to a lack of maintenance (e.g. misaligned slabs or tree routes breaking surface) but sometimes due to design (e.g. dropped curves for driveways).
- Cars parked on pavements blocking the route, sometimes exacerbated by inconveniently placed bins.
- Blocked drains leading to puddles which block the way. Sometimes issues were made worse by inconsiderate drivers.

While these problems were no more than minor inconveniences for some respondents as they could easily pass them, they could create a much more significant problem for people with physical disabilities or poor eyesight. These issues were particularly prevalent amongst the Restricted or Reluctant population segment.

Other issues mentioned by members of this group included difficulties with overhanging foliage making routes difficult to pass and unexpected gradients on paths where more information or signage in advance would be helpful.



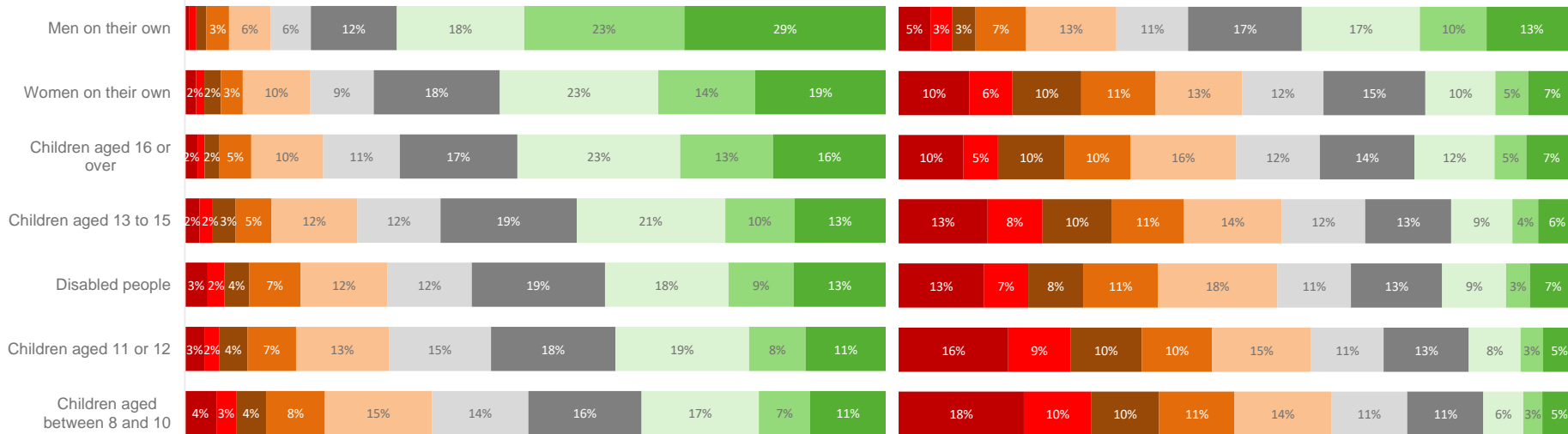
Views on the levels of safety walking or wheeling locally are varied, particularly after dark and for women, children and disabled people

Comparing average ratings (from 1 for 'not at all safe' to 10 for 'completely safe'), in general men provided higher ratings than women with the greatest differences in relation to safety after dark. Men provided an average rating of 5.7 in relation to women on their own after dark compared to 5.0 amongst female respondents. Similar differences in ratings were provided by men and women in relation to disabled people and children in all of the age groups.

FIGURE 21 – Feelings of safety walking or wheeling in local area
During the day...

■ 1 Not at all safe ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 ■ 8 ■ 9 ■ 10 Completely safe

After dark..



On a scale from 0 for not at all safe to 10 for completely safe, how would you rate the safety of your local area as a place for the following people to walk or wheel unaccompanied without worry.



A number of safety issues are a worry including walking after dark, traffic and dogs

Concerns relating to other outdoor users



Some time was spent in the qualitative interviews discussing the problems of encounters with/ or caused by other users when walking.

The most common issue was **dog dirt**. However, positively a number of respondents stated that they felt that issues with dog dirt were limited or not as bad as they used to be. Some suggested that the problems were caused by a very small minority of dog owners with other dog owners particularly annoyed when they saw it.

Some also referenced how they or their children's nervousness around dogs could create a barrier to visiting certain places for walks, especially if they expected to encounter **dogs off lead**.

A smaller number mentioned other users encountered including **cyclists on pavements, motorbikes/ quad bikes** or, in one case, **e-scooters**. Specific concerns included being surprised when a bike or scooter passed at speed and worries about collisions, especially if they had a dog or children.



"As a walker I'd say they're all going too fast but as a driver I'd say they're all going too fast!"

"I don't have a problem with 20mph zones in areas where there are schools and lots of kids running out their front doors but 20mph limit on dual carriageways is an absolute farce. I feel Edinburgh Council is very anti-car"

Safety concerns



Concerns over safety were also discussed in detail. The primary area mentioned related to worries, particularly amongst women when walking **after dark**. This problem was most notable in **winter months** when daylight hours were shorter and could be exacerbated by **poorly maintained streetlighting** or stretches of path which were **overgrown**.

Some older respondents also referred to their **general feeling** that 'the streets' were not as safe to walk on as they once were due to a rise in crime or anti-social behaviour.

Another safety related concern related to **traffic**. Some residents of urban areas with children referenced how it could feel dangerous crossing roads, particularly at busy times such as school drop off.

A rural resident spoken to also mentioned how walking to his nearby village was not a safe option due to a lack of a roadside pavement.



"If you go down to the greenspace there's no light in there so you can't go after about 5pm in winter."

"There's a lot of overgrown trees so it feels very dark and not very safe to walk. I don't know why, its just a sensation that I'm not so comfortable here."

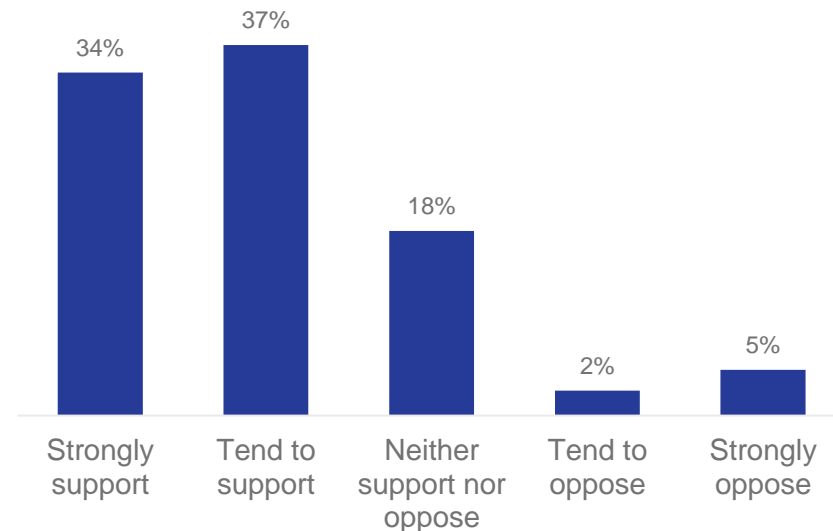
Around 7 in 10 Scots support the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods

FIGURE 26 – Support for concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods

Population groups most likely to strongly support the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods included women (36%) and people with children in their household (43%).

20 minute neighbourhoods are neighbourhoods where it is easy for people to meet most of their everyday needs in a short, convenient and pleasant 20 minute return walk. For example having local shops, schools, green space and public transport options within a 10 minute walk (or 20 minute round trip) of your home.

Given this description and anything else you know about the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods, to what extent do you support or oppose the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods?



The main reasons for supporting 20 minute neighbourhoods included increased convenience, reduced car usage and improved community cohesion. Those opposed have concerns over restrictions being imposed on being able to travel further afield

Why do you say that?

Support

"It is good to be able to walk to local amenities, cut down car usage."

"coz it's very convenient and feels like people would be able to get to know each other."

"Because it encourages people to walk rather than take a short trip by car."

"I live in a town which has exactly this, it's lovely as you see the same people, people stop and chat, it's very sociable and helps people on their own feel less lonely, it's also very friendly and handy to be able to walk."

- 17% Easy access to amenities
- 13% Sounds good/ like it
- 11% Convenient/ easier
- 5% Good for community
- 5% Encourages less car use

"Older people are limited to how far they can walk so 10 mins each way sounds about right."

"It reduces the need for individuals to own their own transport."

"Because I have mobility problems and having everything I need within 20 minutes would really help me,"

Oppose

"I do not want to be stopped from going outside the 20 minute city. This will end up with people being fined for leaving the area or need a licence to leave."

"Don't like the idea of big brother control. We had too much of that in lockdowns."

"It's an infringement of rights . People can go wherever they want. I could list the reasons."

"It feels like a backward step, being trapped in one small area. I enjoy being outside my local area."

Communicating the benefits

How to optimise marketing efforts



Over two fifths of Scottish adults have seen or heard communications regarding walking, wheeling or cycling, most often relating to health or environmental benefits. Similar results were obtained in 2019

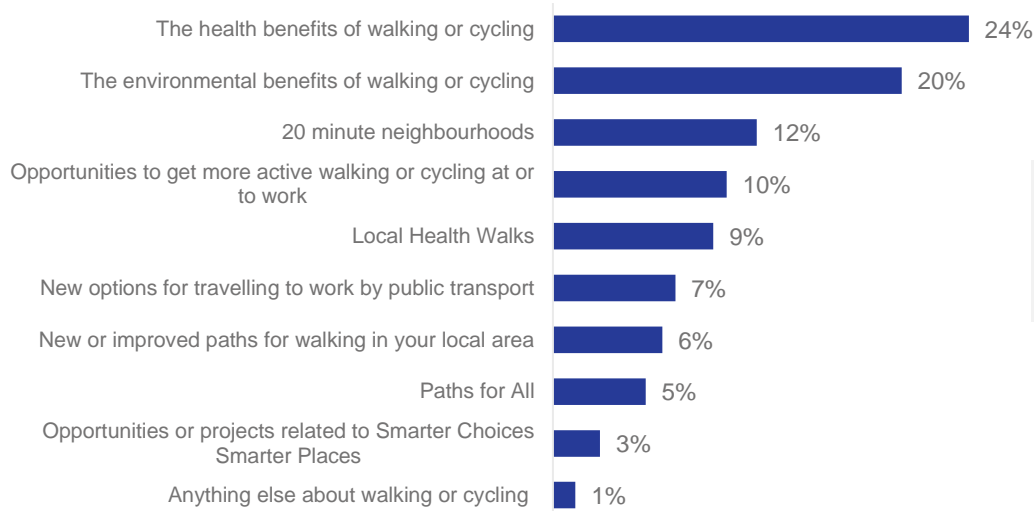
Population groups most likely to have seen or heard anything about walking or cycling included:

- People aged 16 to 34 (54%)
- People with good health (55%)
- Dog owners (49%)

Overall 5% had seen or heard anything about Paths for All. This percentage was fairly consistent across age and other population groups.

In the qualitative research nearly all respondents supported the idea of organisation promoting the benefits of walking and initiatives such as Health Walks which encouraged increased participation.

FIGURE 27 – Recall of advertising, news or other communications regarding walking, wheeling or cycling on paths and routes by demographic group



Overall 45% saw or heard something relating to walking or cycling (43% in 2019)



Overall summary



High levels of participation and recognition of the benefits but inequalities exist

The majority of the population already walk on a regular basis but there are significant differences in participation between population groups.

In particular, lower levels are seen amongst those with physical limitations, especially in older age groups and amongst people with poor health but also amongst people whose participation is limited by factors such as a lack of time or concerns over the safety of walking in their local area.

Positively, walking and wheeling participation has increased across much of the population during recent years with many stating that their participation is higher now than pre-pandemic. However, changes in participation are varied across population groups with younger age groups, people who are working and those in more affluent groups more likely to have increased participation than those in the oldest age groups or people with poor health or a disability.

The benefits of walking are widely recognised by both those who participate frequently and those who walk and wheel less often. The physical health and wellbeing benefits resonate most for much of the population but for many walking is also appealing as it represents a cheaper option than driving and in some cases the only viable choice for routine journeys. The environmental benefits of walking rather than driving are also recognised but less likely to be a factor motivating the decision to walk.

High demand to walk or wheel more and support for changes which make this easier

Most Scots would like to walk or wheel more often than they currently do (69% for leisure and 60% for routine purposes) but a number of barriers make it harder.

Some of these barriers relate to personal circumstances, most significantly physical health limitations which are most common amongst older age groups but also practical issues such as busy lifestyles restricting the amount of time available to walk or use public transport instead of driving.

Other barriers relate more to attitudes towards walking and wheeling and include concerns over safety, the suitability of pavements, knowledge of walking routes and other factors which can impact upon an individual's confidence.

The survey has also identified a number of specific local factors which can make walking and wheeling a less positive experience or even create a barrier to walking at all. These include a lack of local amenities within a distance felt to be accessible, a lack of suitable or appealing places to take part in walking or wheeling and problems such as pavement parking or poorly maintained pavements which make it harder for some groups.

There are high levels of support for addressing these issues as illustrated by the high approval levels for the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods. Also, while less than half of the population have recently seen or heard any promotion of walking or cycling, levels of support for the promotion of participation and the development of amenities and groups such as Health Walks is very high.