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# Public attitudes to walking in Scotland

Ipsos MORI Summary Report for Paths for All, Living Streets Scotland and the Scottish Government

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**paths  
for all**

FOR A HAPPIER,  
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

**LIVING STREETS**

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST



**healthier  
scotland**  
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

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*Walking is man's best  
medicine*

Hippocrates

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Founded as a Scottish charity in 1996, Paths for All is a partnership of more than twenty national organisations committed to promoting walking for health and the development of multi-use path networks in Scotland. Paths for All's priorities are: to reduce the proportion of the population who are physically inactive through a national walking programme; and to promote an increase in the number, quality, and accessibility of paths for everyone.

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With their supporters Living Streets works to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

In order to explore public attitudes towards walking in Scotland, Paths for All, along with Living Streets Scotland and the Scottish Government, commissioned a module of questions on the February 2014 wave of the Ipsos MORI Scottish Public Opinion Monitor. The question module covered a range of issues relating to walking behaviour and attitudes, including:

- recent walking activities undertaken
- walking places
- walking distances between respondents' homes and amenities
- attitudes to walking
- barriers to walking
- factors that might encourage respondents to walk more often

## 1.2 Methodology

The Scottish Public Opinion Monitor is a multi-client survey carried out by telephone among a random sample of adults across Scotland every quarter. Respondents are selected using random digit dialling and, to ensure the achieved sample is broadly representative of the Scottish adult population (16+), sample quotas are set on age, sex, working status and region. All interviews are conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

For this wave, a total of 1,001 respondents across Scotland were interviewed between 20th and 25th February 2014.

The data are weighted to match the known profile of the Scottish population by age, sex and working status using census data; tenure using Scottish Household Survey data; and public-private sector employment using Scottish Government Quarterly public sector employment series data.

### 1.3 Reporting and interpretation

For the purposes of analysis, computer tables were prepared and responses to each survey question were analysed against a number of variables, namely:

- sex
- age (four groups: 16 to 24 years; 25 to 34 years; 35 to 54 years; and 55 years and over)
- employment status (four groups: working full time; working part-time; not working; and retired)
- employment sector
- tenure (three groups: owner occupier; rent from social landlord; and rent from private landlord)
- children aged under 16 living in the household (two groups: yes and no)
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintiles: five point scale ranging from 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland to 20% least deprived datazones in Scotland
- urban/rural indicator (two groups: urban and rural)

Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories or multiple answers. Throughout the report, an asterisk (\*) denotes any value of less than half of one per cent. Where appropriate, we have commented on statistically significant subgroup differences.





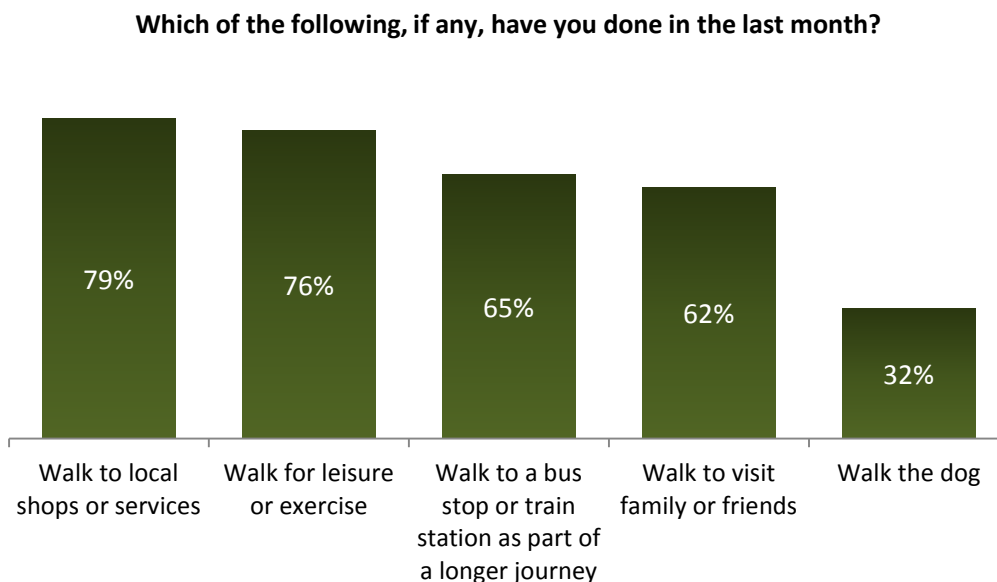
## 2 Findings

This section presents the key findings from the survey, including any relevant subgroup differences

### 2.1 Recent walking activity

In the last month, respondents were most likely to walk: to the local shops or services (79% of respondents); for leisure or exercise (76%); to a bus stop or train station as part of a longer journey (65%); and to visit family or friends (62%). One in three participants also reported walking the dog in the last month (32%).

Figure 2.1 – Recent walking behaviour




Base: All respondents (1,001)

Over half of respondents with children under the age of 16 living in the household walked their children to school (57%).

Around two in five respondents in employment walked to work in the last month (39%), with those in part-time employment more likely than those in full-time employment to say they had walked to work in the last month (46% compared to 37%).

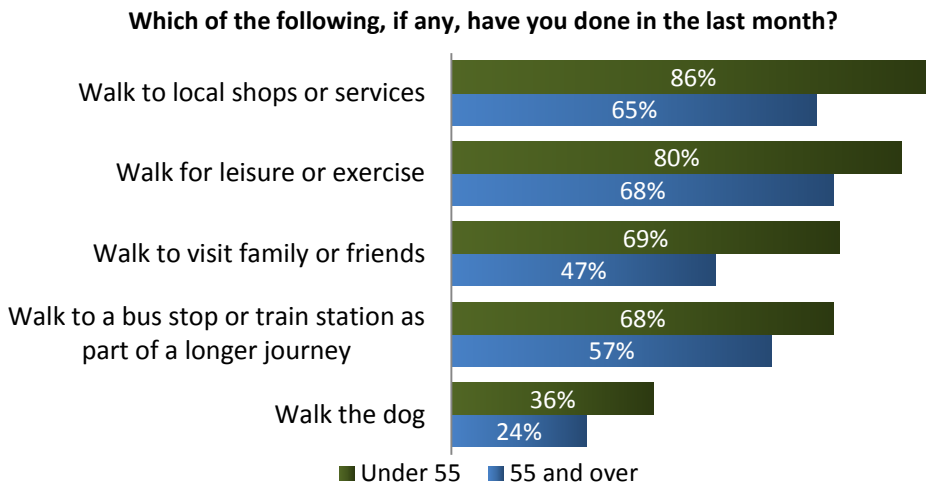
A small minority of respondents used a walking aid (2%) or were unable to walk at all (2%), while 3% had not done any of the walking activities listed.

Respondents aged 55 and over were less likely to undertake any of the walking activities (figure 2.2). For example, 86% of those aged under 55 walked to local shops or services in the last month compared with 65% of those aged 55 and over. Those aged 55 and over were the most likely to use a walking aid (3%) or be unable to walk (4%).

**57%** 

Of parents walked their children to school

Figure 2.2 – Walking activity by age



Base: All respondents (1,001)

## 2.2 Where people walk

The vast majority of respondents who are able to walk used street pavements for walking in the past month (88%). Just under two thirds walked in a local park or woodland area (63%), while just over half walked in the countryside or on a local path network (54% and 52% respectively).

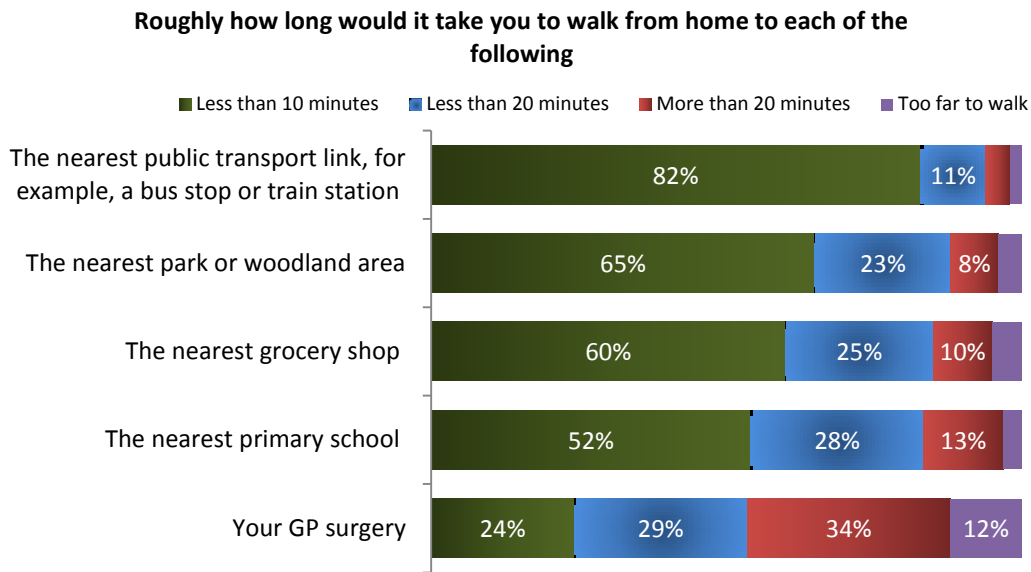
Local parks or woodland areas, the countryside and local path networks were more likely to be used by parents and those living in the least deprived areas. Among those with children under 16 living in the household, 76% used a local park or woodland area for walking (compared with 58% of those without children under 16 living in the household), 60% walked in the countryside (compared with 51%) and 60% used a local path network (compared with 50%).

Among those living in the most affluent areas of Scotland, 68% used a local park or woodland area for walking (compared to 56% of those living in the most deprived areas), 53% walked in the countryside (compared to 33% of those living in the most deprived areas) and 55% used a local path network (compared with 41% of those living in the most deprived areas).

## 2.3 Walking distance

The majority of respondents who are able to walk live within a 10 minute walk (roughly ½ mile) of many amenities, including: a public transport link (82%); a park or woodland area (65%); a grocery shop (60%); and a primary school (52%). Further, around a quarter live within a 10 minute walk of their GP surgery.

Figure 2.3 – Distance to amenities



Base: All respondents who are able to walk (986)

Among those in employment, 11% live within a 10 minute walk of their workplace, just under a third live within a 20 minute walk (30%), while around half live within a 30 minute walk (51%). Full-time employees were more likely than part-time employees to say that their place of work was too far to walk (45% compared with 37%).

## 2.4 Attitudes towards walking

The majority of respondents who are able to walk said that they enjoyed walking because of health and mental wellbeing benefits. Three in four respondents *strongly* agreed with the statement *I enjoy walking because it is good for my health* (76%), while three in five respondents strongly agreed with the statement *I enjoy walking because it helps me relax* (59%). Strong agreement with both statements was found across all groups of respondents.

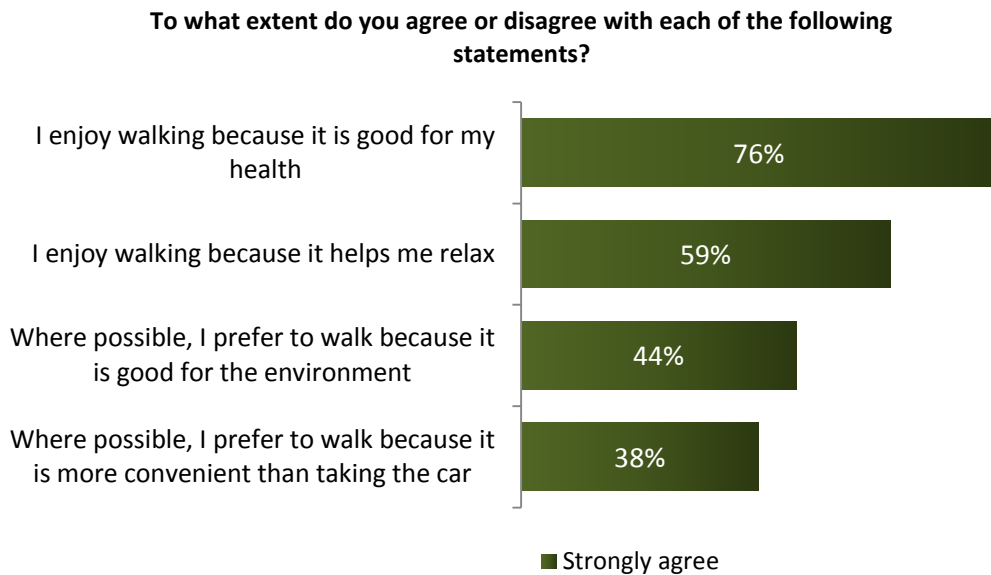
Respondents who are able to walk were less likely to cite the environment as a reason for walking. Although three quarters of respondents agreed with the statement *where possible, I prefer to walk because it is good for the environment* (76%), the strength of agreement was lower with 44% strongly agreeing and 32% tending to agree. Again, attitudes were similar across different groups.

Further, although a majority of respondents who are able to walk agreed with the statement *where possible, I prefer to walk because it is more convenient than taking the car*, 38% strongly agreed with the statement and 24% tended to agree. Those who were most likely to agree with the statement were younger people (73% of those aged 16-24 compared with 55% of those aged 55 and over) and those living in urban areas (66% compared to 52% of those living in rural areas).

76% 

Strongly agreed that they enjoyed walking because it was good for their health

Figure 2.4 – Attitudes towards walking



Base: All respondents who are able to walk (986)

## 2.5 Barriers to walking

Bad weather was cited as the main reason that discouraged respondents from walking more often, mentioned by almost half of respondents (48%). This may, in part, be attributed to the time of year in which the survey was conducted (February), which followed the stormiest period of weather experienced by the UK for at least 20 years<sup>1</sup>. Other barriers to walking reported were health problems or injury (mentioned by 18% of respondents), time constraints (15%) and distance (13%). Around one in ten respondents said that nothing prevents them from walking (9%).



If it's dry or freezing cold I don't mind, but if it's raining I don't like walking.

Respondent



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2014/winter>

Figure 2.5 – Barriers to walking more often



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Health problems and injury were most likely to be cited as barriers to walking more often by those who are retired (34%), and those living in the most deprived areas (28%), while time constraints were most likely to be cited by those in full- or part-time employment (23% and 21% respectively) and those with children under 16 living in the household (23%). Those living in rural areas were the most likely to cite distance as a barrier to walking more often (20%).

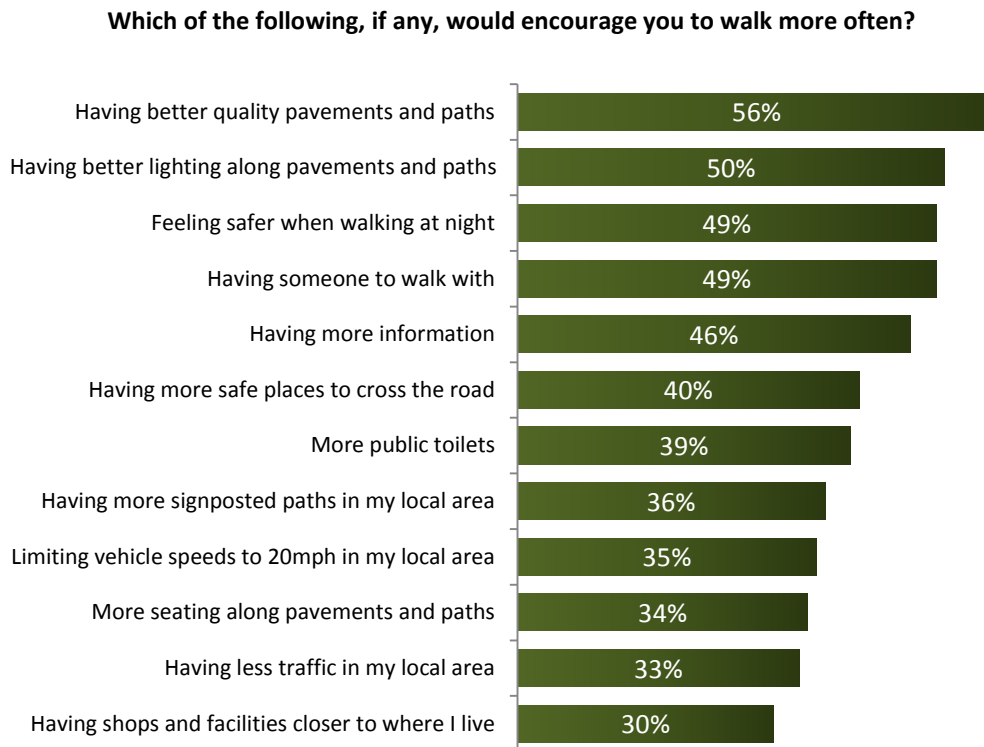
## 2.6 Encouraging people to walk more often

Respondents were presented with a list of aspects and asked which, if any, would encourage them to walk more often. *Having better quality pavements and paths in my local area* and *having better lighting along pavements and paths in my local area* were the most common factors that would encourage people to walk more often (56% and 50% of respondents respectively), closely followed by *having someone to walk with* (49%), *feeling safer when walking at night* (49%) and *having more information about places where I could walk* (46%).

Considerable minorities of respondents felt that they would be encouraged to walk more often by: *having more safe places to cross the road in my local area* (40%); *having more public toilets* (39%); *having more signposted paths in my local area* (36%); *limiting vehicle speeds to 20mph in my local area* (35%); *more seating along pavements and paths in my local area* (34%); *having less traffic in my local area* (33%); or *having shops and facilities closer to where I live* (30%).

Fewer than one in ten respondents said that none of these factors would encourage them to walk more often (8%).

Figure 2.6 – Factors that would encourage respondents to walk more often



Base: All respondents who are able to walk (986)

Younger people were more likely to feel that safety-related factors would encourage them to walk more often, namely: *feeling safer when walking at night* (69% of those aged 16-24 compared with 40% of those aged 55 and over); *having better lighting along pavements and paths in my local area* (66% compared with 42%); and *having someone to walk with* (63% compared to 48%).

Older people were more likely to feel that having *more public toilets* would encourage them to walk more often (43% of those aged 55 and over compared with 39% overall). Indeed, having more public toilets was the third most important factor for those aged 55 and over, behind better quality pavements and having someone to walk with.

Those living in more deprived areas were more likely than average to feel that all of these factors, with the exception of having someone to walk with, having more information about places to walk and having shops and facilities closer to where they live, would encourage them to walk more often.

