

NHTS BRIEF

National Household Travel Survey

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

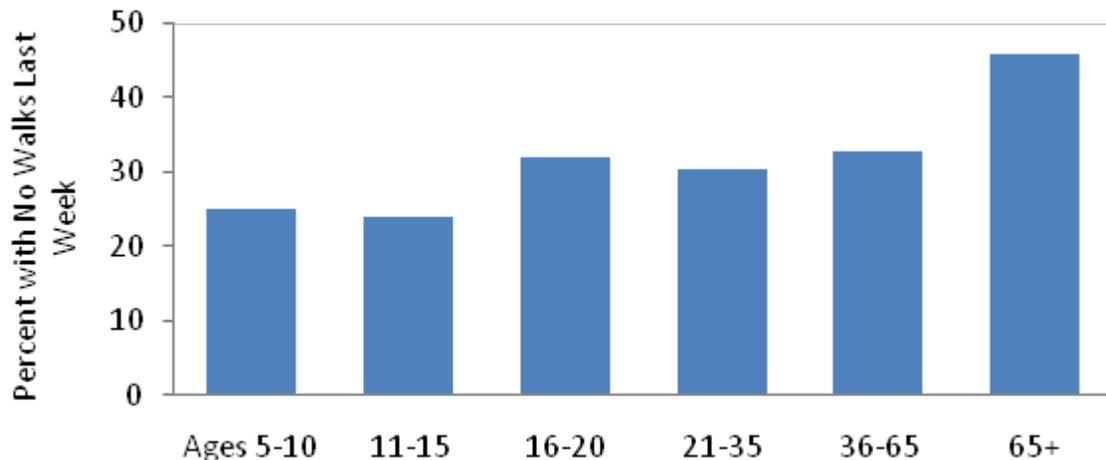


Good health is based on good nutrition and adequate physical activity. Policies aimed at improving American's health—including efforts to reduce childhood obesity—are focusing on the public infrastructure to ensure safe and convenient opportunities for physically active transport such as walking and biking.

Between April of 2008 thru April of 2009, the most recently released NHTS asked the US population "In the past week, how many times did you take a walk outside including walking the dog and walks for exercise?" Nearly 37 percent of Americans reported no walk trips at all in the previous week (Exhibit 1). This concerns transportation planners and policy makers because walking contributes to health, reduces emissions, and adds to the quality of life in a community.

About twenty-five percent of children (shown in two age groups--5-10 and 11-15) reported taking no walks or bike rides outside for any reason in the previous week, as shown in Exhibit 1. Nearly one-third of younger people (shown in three age groups 16-65), and almost half of older Americans (65 and older) report taking no walks outside for any purpose in the previous week.

Exhibit 1 – Percent of People by Age who Reported No Walks Last Week



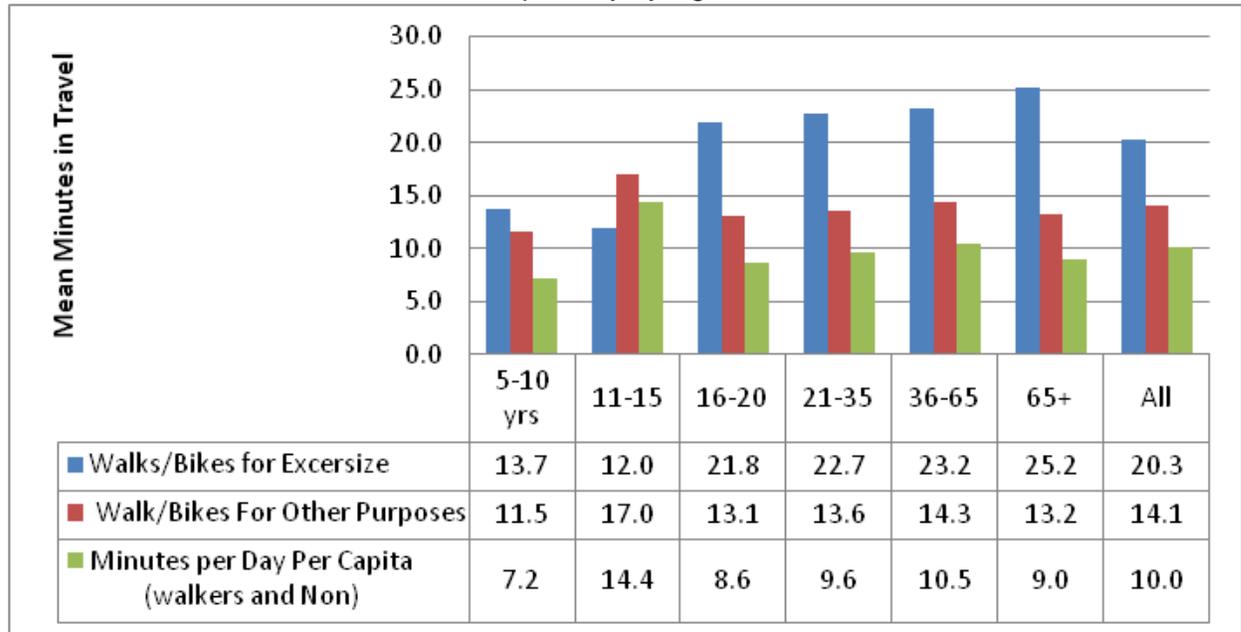
Younger children (ages 5-10) who do report walk trips spend more time walking for exercise than older children (11-15), while older children spend more time walking for purposes other than exercise, such as walking to school, as shown in Exhibit 2.

The amount of active travel per day for all people, including people who walk and bike and those that don't, is highest for children ages 11-15. Overall, as people get older

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they take longer walks for exercise, but the average minutes of active travel per day remains about the same because of the many people in each age group who do not walk at all. The average amount of time spent in active travel each day was just 10 minutes per capita (including people with no active travel)--well below the minimum 30 minutes per day of activity required for good health.

Exhibit 2 – Minutes of Walk and/or Bike per Day by Age



Children in middle income African-American families (with household incomes of \$40-\$80,000 per year) and higher income White families (over \$80,000 per year) were more likely to report taking any walks, while 30 percent of Asian children reported no walk trips last week regardless of income.

For children living close to their schools (within 2 miles), half of the parents thought the amount or speed of traffic was a serious issue in letting their kids walk to school, while less than a quarter thought crime or weather was a serious issue.

Clearly these data could be mined for further insights, both for ideas to improve the pedestrian environment to encourage more walking, especially by children, and for a targeted public education campaign to address parents concerns. In addition, policies could be aimed at encouraging children who don't walk to walk a little and encouraging children who walk a little to walk more.

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