

Walking Survey

2015



Walking can provide many benefits, including personal health and wellbeing improvements and reduced travel costs, as well as helping to tackle Perth's growing traffic congestion and reduce emissions. Understanding the needs and expectations of pedestrians will be of vital importance when identifying priority actions to make it safer, easier and more practical for Western Australians to walk.

Most people travel every day for one reason or another. While walking may not always be the main mode of travel, no matter how people choose to move around, the majority of trips will begin and end with walking.

Over 400,000 car trips of less than one kilometre are made in Perth each workday. Most people can walk this distance in approximately 10 minutes¹.

Short car trips of up to two kilometres are known to be the most fuel inefficient and create more pollution per kilometre².

When the trip purpose or distance is suitable for walking, the amount people choose to walk is usually dependant on how safe and convenient they perceive it to be. The availability and quality of infrastructure for pedestrians, the design of streets and places and the availability of local services and amenities can influence this.

Sadly, in 2014, 17 pedestrians were killed on WA's roads and many more were seriously injured.

It is therefore essential that the needs and expectations of pedestrians are not overlooked.

RAC's first ever walking survey was launched in October 2015 to understand

what it's like to be a pedestrian in Western Australia.

The survey provides an insight into the views and experiences of Western Australians who walk regularly for a variety of purposes, as well as incidental walkers, and the barriers deterring people from walking more often. Respondents also had an opportunity to voice their opinions on what they believe the Government's priorities should be to encourage people to walk more often.

A total of 597 responses were received from both RAC members and non-members, 92 per cent of which reside within the Perth metropolitan area and 8 per cent in regional WA.

¹<http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/activetransport/24025.asp> accessed 25 January 2016

²<http://healthierworkplace.wa.com.au/nine-2-five-health/walk-over-october-is-here/> accessed 25 January 2016



For the better

Existing walking behaviours

The RAC Walking Survey has revealed that respondents tend to walk most in their local area, particularly on weekends, and almost two in three find it at least moderately easy to do so. While a majority travel to work or study by car, for many respondents walking is an important part of their daily commute.

Almost half of respondents (47 per cent) walk for 30 minutes or more per day on an average weekday in their local area. This increases to 58 per cent on an average day during the weekend. The most common places / activities that respondents walk to / for within their local area are:

- > the shops / to run errands (with 45 per cent of those who make such trips doing so on foot two or more times a week),
- > recreational facilities / leisure activities (41 per cent), and
- > work / education (41 per cent).

“We are very lucky to live in such a beneficial climate and essentially very safe community. Walking has been proven to be one of the best forms of exercise for maintaining health and fitness into later life...”

Respondents tend to walk less in areas outside of their local area, with only 27

per cent walking for more than 30 minutes a day on weekdays, and 30 per cent on weekends.

Work / study was the most common place respondents walk to in areas outside of their local area (with 44 per cent of those who make such trips doing so on foot, two or more times a week), followed by public transport stations or stops (31 per cent).

It may not be all that surprising that respondents typically find their local area to be more walkable, with 63 per cent stating that it's moderately or extremely easy to walk locally compared to 49 per cent when thinking about their experiences of walking in other areas (refer to Figure 1).

When it comes to how people typically commute to work / attend study, one in two respondents do so by car, as a driver. However, a significant proportion walk and catch public transport (17 per cent) or walk for their entire journey (9 per cent).

Fitness and convenience were the most common reasons people walked all the way to their place of work / study.

One in four respondents who have children at school in their local area take them on foot at least once a week (with 64 per cent never doing so).

The top reasons deterring respondents from walking more often reflect the fact that walking is most attractive for short trips, with 18 per cent stating that walking is not practical due to distance and 11 per cent stating that it is too time consuming (refer to Figure 2). Common themes emerging from the comments provided by those who selected 'other' reasons include:

- > having a preference for cycling,
- > inadequate infrastructure, wayfinding and street furniture to make walking more convenient and comfortable, and
- > obstructions of footpaths caused by parked cars and road works.

Figure 1 » Ease of walking

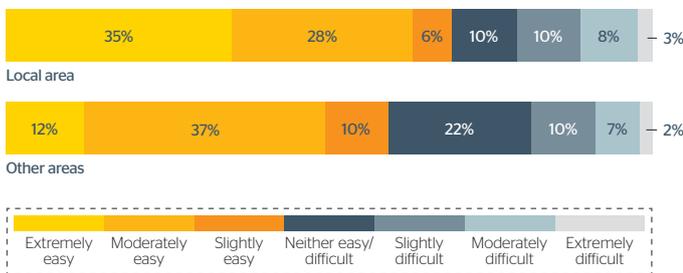
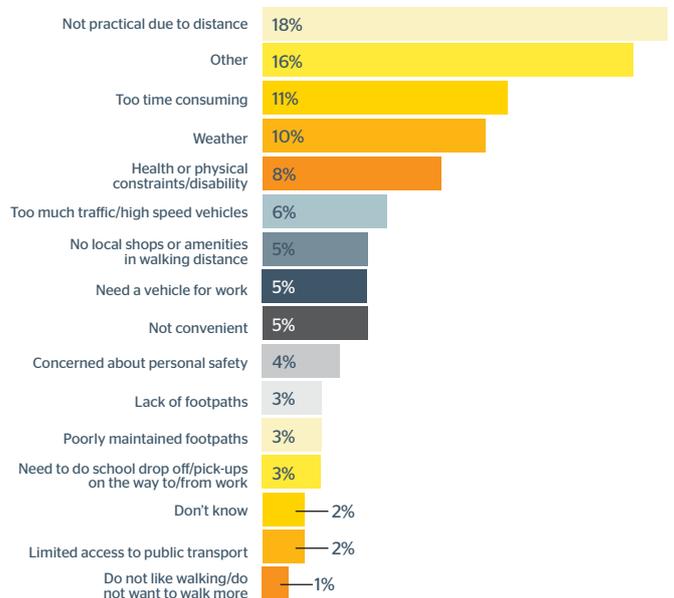


Figure 2 » Main barriers to walking more often



Existing infrastructure and safety

When it comes to satisfaction with existing infrastructure, respondents have mixed feelings about the availability and quality of provisions for pedestrians. They also tend to be more concerned about road safety than personal safety / security issues, particularly when walking in areas outside of their local area.

As shown in Figure 3, respondents were most satisfied with footpaths and controlled crossings (with one in two respondents being moderately or extremely satisfied with each) and least satisfied with shared paths (only 31 per cent were moderately or extremely satisfied, with a comparable proportion being moderately or extremely dissatisfied).

When it comes to perceptions of safety, respondents typically feel safer when walking in their local area (refer to Figure 4). Three in four respondents stated they feel moderately or extremely safe from a personal safety and security perspective and 63 per cent when thinking about

traffic volumes, speeds and other road safety issues in their local area. This was in comparison to 51 per cent and 44 per cent respectively when walking in other areas.

While perceptions of safety are generally high, 21 per cent of survey respondents did say they feel unsafe when walking in their local area and 24 per cent in other areas due to traffic volumes, speeds and other road safety concerns.

Interestingly, over a third of respondents (36 per cent) said they walk further to take advantage of safer routes half of the time or more when they are out walking. However, one in five respondents cross the road mid-block, within 20 metres of

a signalised crossing or crosswalk, half of the time or more.

Common issues encountered / observed by pedestrians include:

- > cyclists riding on (non-shared) footpaths (26 per cent come across this always or most of the time when out walking),
- > poor or dangerous driving behaviours (23 per cent),
- > maintenance issues (20 per cent), and
- > turning vehicles nudging forward at traffic lights while pedestrians are crossing on a green or flashing red pedestrian light (19 per cent).

Figure 3 » Satisfaction with the quality and availability of infrastructure

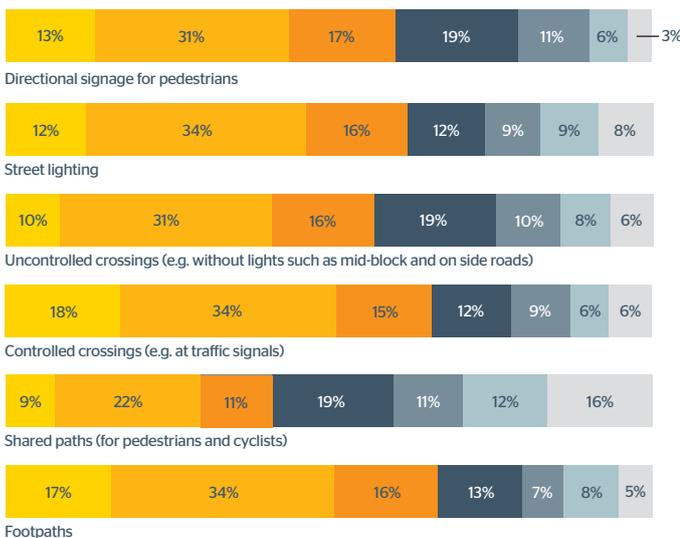
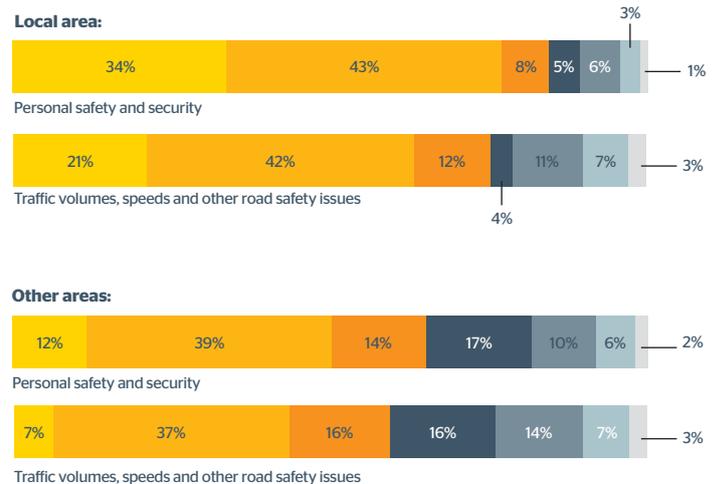


Figure 4 » Feelings of safety



Looking forward

RAC's first walking survey highlights there are opportunities for better planning and greater investment in infrastructure to create streets, places and communities which make it safer, easier and more enjoyable for people to walk.

Respondents were asked to provide their views on the areas they believe the Government should place priority on to encourage people to walk more often.

Better planning of communities to provide more destinations, amenities and transport services within walking distance of where people live and work emerged as the top priority, with just over half of respondents believing this was of vital importance.

"In many areas, the distances between destinations are often too great to make walking viable and enjoyable."

"It should be possible to maintain the pleasant, quiet, suburban streets while creating a neighbourhood that has amenities within walking distances."

Business activity need not be congregated in the city centre..."

This was closely followed by respondents wanting to see the Government invest in improved public transport services, providing more travel options and thus opportunities for people to walk for at least part of their journeys.

Infrastructure improvements were also viewed as being a priority, with 37 per cent wanting to see improvements to the networks of shared paths and 36 per cent footpaths.

"Shops, parks, schools, etc. need to be in a walkable distance from home and good paths are needed for both cycling and walking."

Respondents that chose 'other' as an option provided a range of suggestions to encourage more people to walk, including:

- > improved pedestrian amenities e.g. seating / rest areas, drinking fountains and street trees to provide natural shade,
- > improved cycling infrastructure to separate pedestrians and cyclists,
- > promotion of shared path etiquette / responsible cycling, and
- > better street lighting to improve personal safety.

"WA is far too car dependent. We need to build up, not out. Both for the mental health of the community (e.g. social isolation) and for physical health..."

Table 1 » Priority areas to encourage more people to walk³

Better planning of communities to provide more destinations / amenities / transport services within walking distance	52%
Invest in improved public transport services	46%
Build on / improve the network of shared paths	37%
Provide more priority for pedestrians at intersections and streets in areas with high levels of activity	36%
Build on / improve the network of footpaths	36%
Speed limit reductions in urban areas with high pedestrian activity / roads with a known safety problem	26%
Activities to promote and market walking as both a viable and safe mode of transport and recreational activity	21%
Fund and deliver comprehensive pedestrian safety training programs for schools	10%
Other	7%
Don't know	1%

³Based on the number of respondents nominating the area as one of their top three priorities.