

Reasons for Walking in New York State

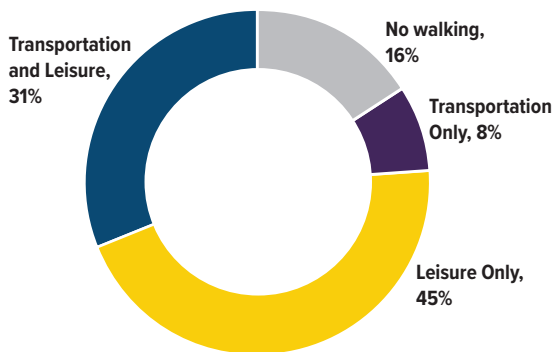


Physical activity helps prevent and treat a variety of chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, and depression.¹ Current guidelines recognize people benefit from even small amounts of physical activity.²

Walking is the most common form of physical activity.³ People walk for a variety of reasons. People with low incomes are most likely to walk for transportation, and people with high incomes are most likely to walk for leisure.⁴ Community design strategies that connect activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations help promote walking for transportation.⁵ Parks and recreation centers, shared-use agreements, and workplace interventions help promote walking for leisure.⁵ Promoting walking for both transportation and leisure can increase physical activity and advance health equity.⁶

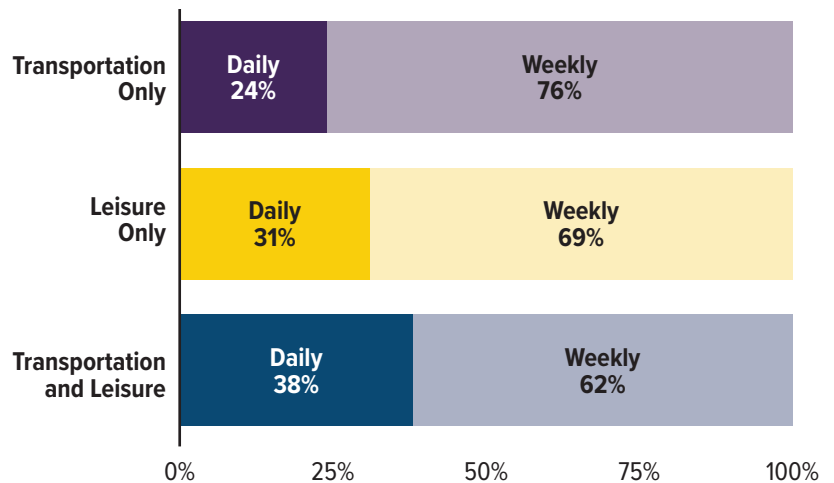
In New York State, 8% of adults walk for transportation only, 45% walk for leisure only, and 31% walk for both reasons (**Figure 1**). Disparities in reasons for walking (not displayed) align with national patterns: more Black and Hispanic adults and males walk for transportation, while more adults with higher incomes and educational attainment walk for leisure.⁴ Whether people report walking every day depends on their reasons for walking (**Figure 2**). People who walk only for transportation are less likely to walk every day (24%), people who walk only for leisure are more likely to walk every day (31%), and people who walk for both reasons are the most likely to walk every day (38%).

FIGURE 1. Reasons for Walking in the Past 7 Days, New York State Adults, 2023



Note: “Leisure only” means they walked for fun, relaxation, exercise, or to walk the dog – but not for transportation. “Transportation only” means they walked to travel to/from work, do errands, or get from place to place – but not leisure.

FIGURE 2. Frequency of Walking in the Past 7 Days Among New York State Adult Walkers, by Reason, 2023



Note: “Daily” includes people who reported walking all 7 days; “weekly” includes people who reported walking at least one day in the past week, but not daily.

Public Health Opportunity

- To increase the prevalence of walking in New York State, the Prevention Agenda 2025-2030 focuses on the social determinants of health, including “Neighborhood and Built Environment” strategies to increase opportunities for active transportation and physical activity.
- Local and regional public health, planning, transportation, and business partners can work with decision-makers, municipalities, and community coalitions to develop and implement Complete Streets policies, plans, and projects that create or enhance pedestrian infrastructure for safe and accessible walkable communities.
- Population-level estimates of physical activity can be used to identify priority areas, inform program planning, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies.
- Public health organizations and programs can also use this information to educate local decision-makers and increase community engagement with people of diverse lived experiences who may be impacted by potential neighborhood and built environment changes in their communities.

Wording of Survey Questions, New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023

- The next question is about walking for transportation. This is walking you might have done to travel to and from work, to do errands, or to get from place to place. In the past 7 days, how many days did you spend more than 10 minutes walking for transportation?
- Sometimes you may walk for fun, relaxation, exercise, or to walk the dog. In the past 7 days, how many days did you spend more than 10 minutes walking for any of these reasons?

For more information, please send an e-mail to BCDER@health.ny.gov with IFA #2025-13 in the subject line. To access other Information for Action reports, visit the New York State Department of Health website: health.ny.gov/statistics/prevention/injury_prevention/information_for_action.

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2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018.
3. Watson K, Frederick G, Harris C, Carlson S, Fulton J. U.S. Adults’ Participation in Specific Activities: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System—2011. Journal of Physical Activity and Health. Volume 12: Issue s1. doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2013-0521.
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5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Strategies for Physical Activity through Community Design and Strategies for Access to Places for Physical Activity](#). Accessed 1/21/25.
6. Guide to Community Preventive Services. Physical Activity: Creation of or Enhanced Access to Places for Physical Activity Combined with Informational Outreach Activities. thecommunityguide.org/findings/physical-activity-creation-or-enhanced-access-places-physical-activity-combined.html.



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