Science- In Brief: RESEARCH and FINDINGS

Environmental Supports for Physical Activity National Health Interview Survey, 2015

What was the purpose of this study?

This study was designed to find out how many US adults report having places to walk (walkable features) and places to walk to (walkable destinations) near their homes. Researchers also wanted to know if there were differences based on age, sex, race or ethnicity, education level, or where a person lived.

Why is this study important?

Having nearby walkable features, like sidewalks, and destinations, like stores, is a recommended public health practice. These environmental supports make walking safer and more convenient and help people be physically active. Little is known about how many communities have walkable features and destinations. This study provides information about this topic. State and local decision makers can use this information to identify areas that need improvements.

How did the CDC perform this study?

CDC analyzed data from adults aged 18 years or older from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey. Participants were asked, "Where you live..."
- "...are there roads, sidewalks, paths, or trails where you can walk?"
- "...do most streets have sidewalks?"
- "...are there shops, stores, or markets that you can walk to?"
- "...are there bus or transit stops that you can walk to?"
- "...are there places like movies, libraries, or churches that you can walk to?"
- "...are there places that you can walk to that help you relax, clear your mind, or reduce stress?"

What Did This Study Find?

Many US adults reported a variety of walkable features and destination types near their homes. The most common features were roads, sidewalks, paths, or trails. The most common destinations were places to relax, clear one's head, or reduce stress. About half of US adults reported being able to walk to 3 or 4 of the destination types.

Percentage of US Adults Reporting Nearby Features	Percentage of US Adults Reporting Nearby Destinations
85% - Roads, Sidewalks, Paths, or Trails **63%** - Sidewalks on Most Streets	**58%** - Shops, Stores, or Markets **53%** - Bus or Transit Stops **48%** - Movies, Libraries, or Churches **72%** - Places to Relax, Clear One's Mind, or Reduce Stress

Access to walkable features and destinations varied by several characteristics and across census regions. The most consistent findings were for age and region. For example, older adults and adults living in the South reported the fewest walkable features and destinations.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity

Public Health Implications
People need safe, convenient places to walk and be active.

Although walking is an easy and popular form of physical activity, barriers exist. Walking is especially difficult for older adults and for those living in the South, where chronic disease rates are high.

Creating or modifying environments to make it easier and safer for people to walk, and adding places to walk to, can help increase physical activity and make communities better places to live. Communities can use the 3D's to help.

The way a community is designed can support walking among its residents.

THE 3D's: DESIGN. DEVELOP. DELIVER.
A Prescription for Walkable Communities

DESIGN communities and streets that make walking safe and easy for all.

Design streets with more walkable features, such as sidewalks, or features that slow traffic, such as speed humps. Design communities so that people live within short walking distance of schools, worksites, public transportation, stores, and other places that people regularly visit.

DEVELOP or enhance access to places for walking.

Create new places for walking, such as trails, or improve the quality and connectivity of existing sidewalks, walking paths, and facilities.

DELIVER community programs that help adults walk.

Use evidence-based programs that help adults start and continue to walk, such as walking clubs or pedestrian education classes in community settings. Make sure programs meet the specific interests and abilities of each group.