



# 2012 National Survey on Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior

In 2012, NHTSA conducted a national telephone survey to obtain a status report on attitudes, knowledge, and behavior related to outdoor walking and bicycling. This study updates national telephone survey data collected by NHTSA in 2002. The survey addressed safety and mobility issues; obtained trip information; and explored perceptions and use of public facilities such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and bicycle paths.

The survey was administered to a probability-based sample of randomly selected people 16 and older. The field interviewing began July 12, 2012, and concluded November 18, 2012. A total of 7,509 respondents completed the interview, 5,297 using a landline telephone when responding and 2,212 using a cell phone. The data were weighted to produce national estimates.

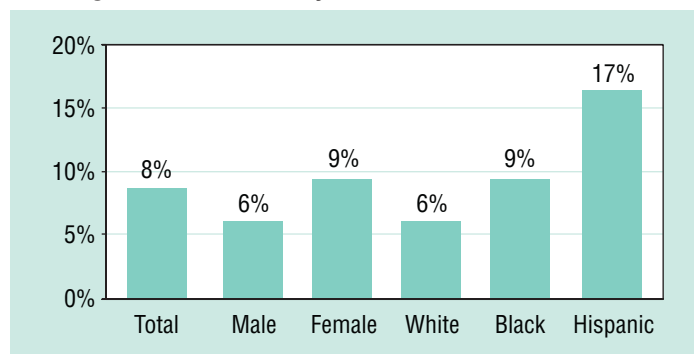
## Outdoor Walking Activity

All respondents were asked how long it had been since they last walked, jogged, or ran outside for 5 minutes or more (the remainder of this Traffic Tech shortens this to walking). Seventy percent had done so in the past week, 11 percent had done so in the past month but not past week, and 7 percent had done so in the past year but not past month. Respondents who had walked outside for 5 minutes or more at a time in the past year were asked how often they walk on average during the summer months. The predominant response (81%) was at least once a week. They also were asked if their frequency of walking had changed from a year ago. Fifty-two percent indicated it hadn't changed, while 29 percent were now walking more often, and 19 percent were walking less often.

Those who had walked outside in the past 30 days for 5 minutes or more at a time were asked how many days they walked outside during that time period. Forty-four percent had done so 20 or more days, 26 percent did so between 8 and 19 days, and 30 percent did so 7 or fewer days. The survey collected information regarding the last day that the respondent walked outside for 5 minutes or more during that 30-day period. Two-thirds (69%) took one trip, with most others (21%) having taken two trips. A trip was defined as going from a starting point to a destination for a specific

purpose. The purpose of the day's first walking trip most often was exercise (39%), personal errands (17%), or recreation (15%). The majority (63%) walked alone that day. Eight percent felt threatened for their personal safety while walking, with motorists being the most commonly identified threat (by 67% of those who felt threatened). The most common complaints about the motorists were that they drove too fast and/or too close.

**Figure 1: Felt Threatened for Personal Safety While Walking on Last Travel Day**



Forty-two percent of those who had walked outside in the past year had done at least some walking in the dark or near dark. Less than half of these walkers (43%) took measures to make themselves more visible to motorists.

Most people had sidewalks along most (16%) or almost all (36%) streets in their neighborhood, but about one-third (32%) did not have sidewalks along their neighborhood streets. If sidewalks are available, about three-quarters of people use the sidewalks most of the time (41%) or every time (34%).

More than one-quarter of walkers use an electronic device (cell phone, mp3 player, etc.) during more than half (5% of walkers) or nearly all (22% of walkers) of their walking trips. Use of electronic devices while walking is more frequent among younger persons, with 9 percent of those ages 16 to 24 using them during more than half of their walking trips and 43 percent using electronic devices during nearly all walking trips.

Most people (71%) were very or somewhat satisfied with how well their local community is designed for safe walking. The most frequent improvement desired was for more sidewalks (23%). Most people (68%) said they would like to walk more than they currently are walking, but didn't do so because they were too busy (40%) or in poor health (18%).

While 70 percent of the public believes it is safe to walk in their neighborhood, 6 percent believe it's dangerous and 23 percent feel it depends. Crime (22%) was the most frequently given reason why it was dangerous.

## Bicycling Activity

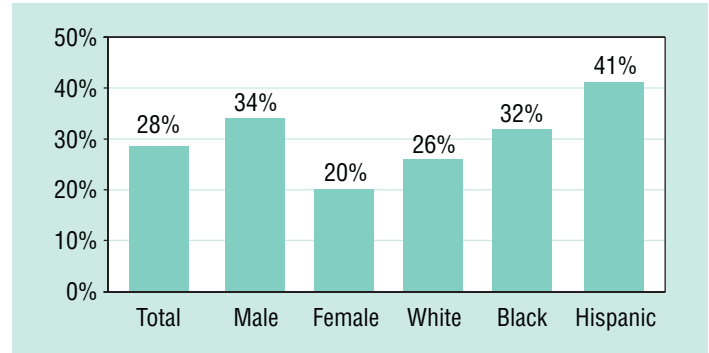
The questions in the bicycling section of the survey largely paralleled the walking section. More than one-fifth of the public 16 and older (22 percent) had ridden a bicycle in the past 30 days, and another 14 percent had ridden in the past year. Among those who had ridden in the past year, about half (51%) use a bicycle at least once a week during the summer months. While 28 percent were now riding more often than they did a year ago, 32 percent were riding less often. Forty-one percent were riding about the same amount.

Among those who had ridden in the past 30 days, almost two-thirds (65%) had ridden 7 or fewer days, 19 percent had ridden anywhere from 8 to 19 days, and 16 percent rode in excess of 19 days. During the last day they had ridden, 71 percent took one trip, with most of the remainder (20%) taking 2 trips. The first trip's purpose was usually recreation (33%) or exercise (28%). Most (62%) rode alone that day. Twelve percent felt threatened for their personal safety while bicycling, with motorists the most commonly identified threat (by 83% of those who felt threatened), usually because they drove too close or too fast.

Of those who had ridden a bicycle in the past year, most had done none (46%) or almost none (25%) of their riding in the dark. Those who had ridden in the dark tended to report doing something to make themselves more visible to motorists (72%), most often using a bike headlight and/or wearing fluorescent/reflective clothing.

One-third of respondents who had ridden a bicycle in the past year reported wearing a helmet for all (28%) or nearly all (6%) rides. Most bicyclists either never (46%) or rarely (8%) wore a helmet. Reasons for non-use included they don't wear a helmet for short trips (55%), they don't have a helmet (50%), and helmets are uncomfortable (43%).

**Figure 2: Did at Least Some Bicycling in the Dark or Near-Dark**



The public 16 and older largely favors laws requiring children to wear bicycle helmets while riding a bike (87%). A smaller majority (63%) favor similar laws for adults. Forty-three percent believe there is a law or ordinance in their locality that requires bicycle helmet use while riding; 32 percent were unsure.

All survey respondents were asked if there were bicycle paths or bicycle lanes within one-quarter mile of where they live. Forty-six percent said there were bicycle paths nearby, and 39 percent said there were bicycle lanes. Use of bicycle lanes and bicycle paths was related to proximity. Among people who had ridden a bicycle in the past year, 42 percent who lived near a bicycle path use bicycle paths most or all of the time, and 49 percent of those living near bicycle lanes ride on bicycle lanes most or all of the time. The comparable figures for riders not living within one-quarter mile of bicycle paths or bicycle lanes were 14 percent and 10 percent. The most frequent reason given for not using bicycle paths (37%) or bicycle lanes (29%) was that they don't go where the rider needs to go. For bicycle lanes, not feeling safe (25%) was another frequent reason.

## How to Order

For a copy of *2012 National Survey on Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior, Volume 1 Summary Report, Volume 2 Findings Report, Volume 3 Methodology Report* prepared by Abt SRBI, write to the Office of Behavioral Safety Research, NHTSA, NTI-130, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590, send a fax to 202-366-7394, or download from [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov). Alan Block was the project manager for this study.