



Living Streets 2020 Survey

Final Report & Key Findings

Thank you to the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, Vancouver Coastal Health, and TransLink, for financial support of Living Streets 2020 and this survey.

Special thanks to Two Wheel Gear for draw prize donations, and Modo for sharing.





Walking is an important general health indicator, both for individuals and communities.

British Columbia has become alive with people on our streets, sidewalks, paths and trails.

As part of BC's pandemic response, various levels of government and health authorities have collaborated on safety and accessibility improvements to support walking. Walking outdoors offers both physical and mental health benefits and is recognized as a low-risk activity in times of COVID-19.

- We wanted to know if there have been 'walking curves', or changes in walking trends in British Columbia during COVID-19.
- We also wanted to know if there may be 'walking factors' that discourage people from walking during the autumn and winter months.



The Survey

In the summer of 2020, the BEST Living Streets program conducted an online survey, asking British Columbians to tell us how their walking habits have changed since the beginning of the public health emergency in March.

The purpose of the survey was to reveal key trends in the first six months of the pandemic:

- How the pandemic has changed our walking habits
- How behavior is impacted by demographics or region of residence
- What we can do to support all-season, outdoor activity

Our goals for the survey was to provide useful information to lawmakers, planners, and health promotion and injury prevention professionals on:

- Suggested vulnerabilities for British Columbians by age, gender, or employment status
- The factors that discourage people from walking outdoors, and how these factors may differ by season
- Key differences by health authority

The Living Streets survey was administered on the BEST website, and was open to public submissions from June 3 to August 31, 2020. There was a total of 533 participants



Respondent Demographics

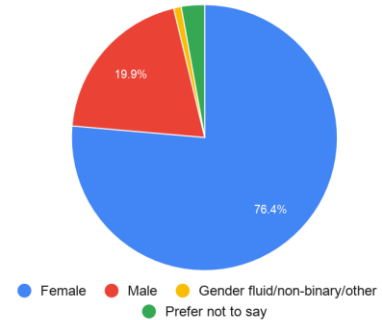
We were interested in how some demographic characteristics might play a role in walking habits and changes during COVID-19, as well as how people think about discouraging factors with walking.

We asked all 532 respondents to identify their gender identity, age range, employment status, and city, town, district municipality or First Nation.

Gender Identity

People who identify as female comprised the majority of respondents.

- Female: 76.3%
- Male: 19.9%
- Gender fluid/non-binary/other: 0.9%
- Prefer not to say: 2.8%



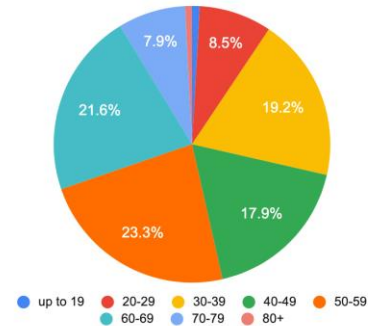
General population distribution tends to be evenly split between female and male; the Canadian Census and BC Stats has only recently begun to track non-binary gender identities, which impacts our ability to make a true comparison to the general population.

Age

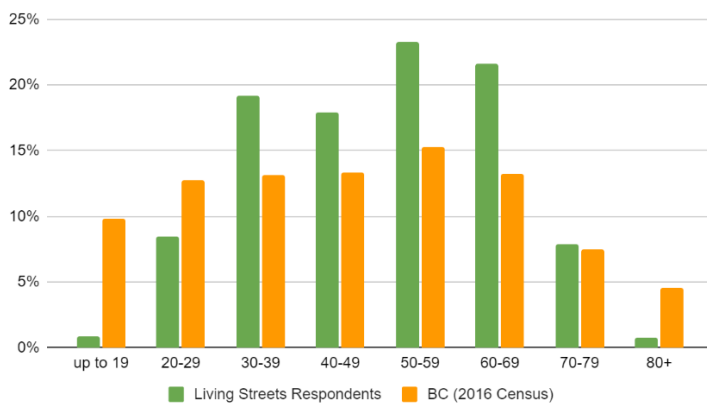
82% of survey respondents fell within 4 age bands, spanning from age 30 through to age 69.

Generally, when compared to the general population distribution in BC (according to the 2016 Census), the age distribution of Living Streets survey respondents skewed slightly older.

Age Distribution of Respondents



Age Distribution - Living Streets Respondents vs BC





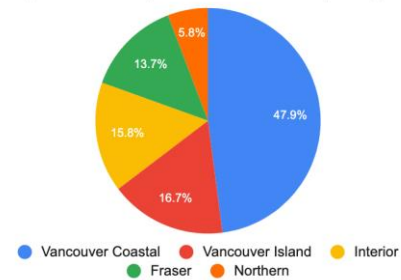
Location

Responses to the survey were submitted by residents of 76 different cities and towns across British Columbia.

Location-based analysis of survey responses was conducted on the basis of the province’s five health authority regions.

Almost half of all respondents reside in the Vancouver Coastal Health region.

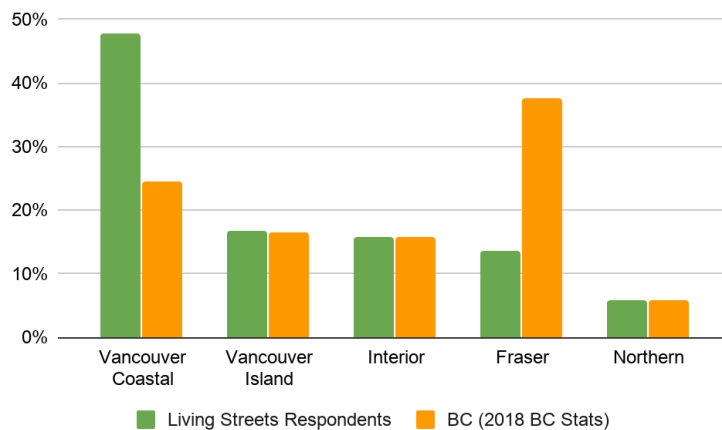
Respondents By Health Authority Region



Distribution by health authority region was fairly representative of the general population, compared to a 2018 BC Stats report. Two variances can be accounted for, in part, on the basis of focused survey promotion and distribution by BEST and VCH staff:

- A disproportionately high number of respondents reside in the Vancouver Coastal Health region
- A disproportionately low number of respondents reside in the Fraser Health region

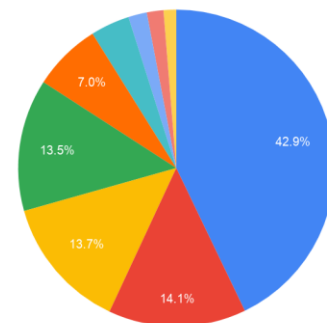
Health Authority Region - Living Streets Respondents vs BC



Employment Status

At the time of answering the survey, almost 60% of respondents have maintained full-time or part-time employment; 11% of respondents reported having lost their jobs or experienced a reduction in hours as a result of COVID-19.

- Employed full-time (35+ hours a week)
- Employed part-time (less than 35 hours a week)
- Retired
- Unemployed/Unable to work
- Unemployed or temporarily laid off due to COVID-19
- Employed with reduced hours due to
- Student
- Self employed/ Contract/Other
- Prefer not to say



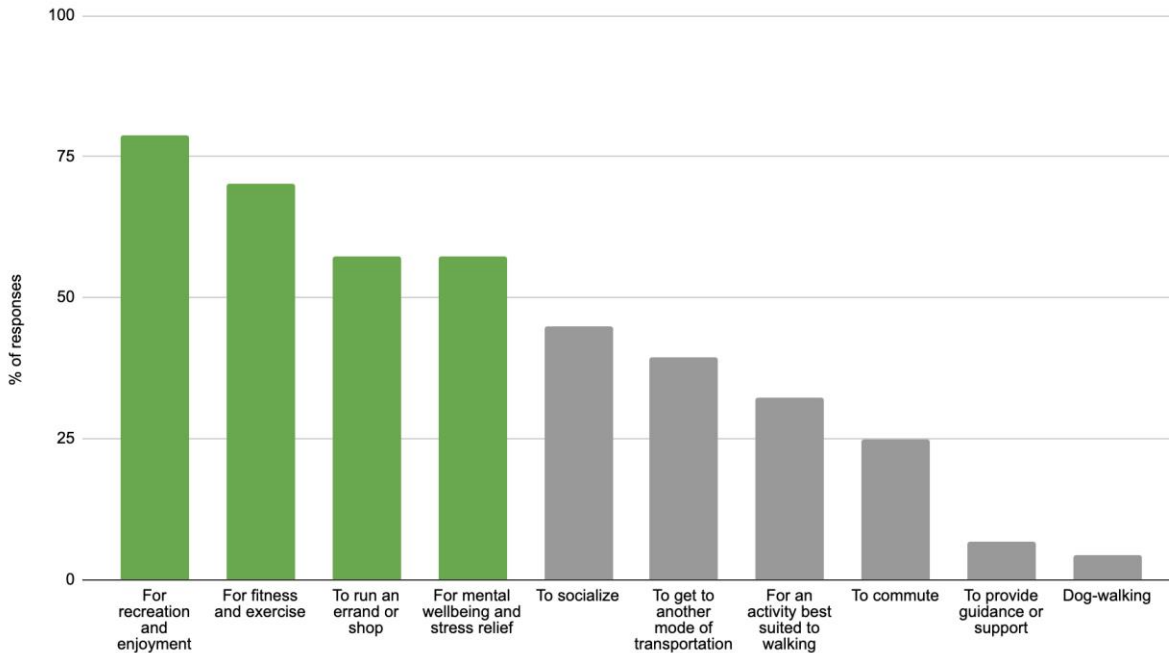


Survey Questions and Results

Prior to COVID-19, what was your reason for walking during a typical outing?

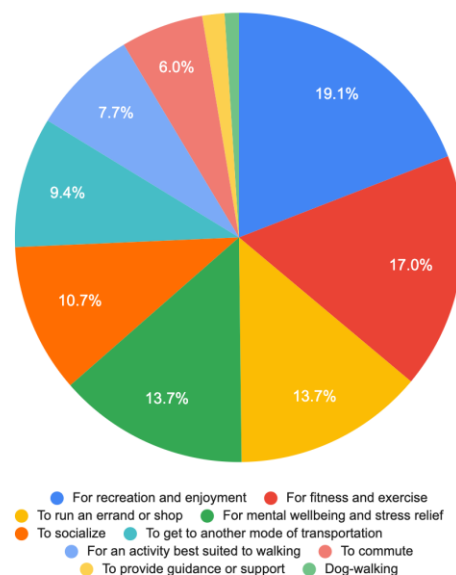
Survey respondents could select multiple answers to this question; the most popular reasons for walking appear to be tied to quality of life — in addition to walking for errands or shopping, at least half of all respondents said they walked for recreation, physical fitness, and/or mental health.

Typical reason for walking prior to COVID-19



The percentage share of any single answer, of the total of all answers given, is shown below:

- For recreation and enjoyment: 19.1%
- For fitness and exercise: 17.0%
- To run an errand or shop: 13.7%
- For mental wellbeing and stress relief: 13.7%
- To socialize: 10.7%
- To get to another mode of transportation: 9.4%
- For an activity best suited to walking: 7.7%
- To commute: 6.0%
- To provide guidance or support: 1.6%
- Dog-walking: 1.0%





Compared to the general distribution of survey responses, the reasons why some British Columbians walk differed depending on the following factors:

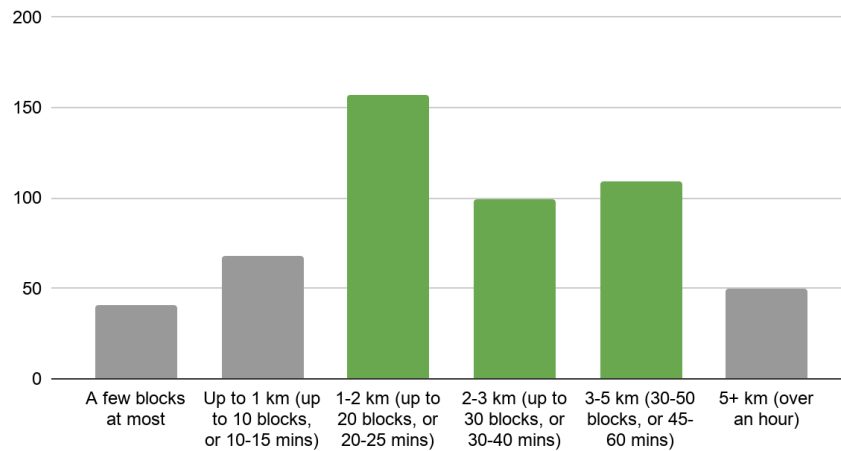
- **Gender:** Compared to people identifying with other gender identities, proportionately more people identifying as male indicated they walked for the following two reasons:
 - for recreation and enjoyment
 - to get to another mode of transportation
- **Employment status:** People who were in full-time or part-time employment at the time of completing the survey were more likely to walk for both recreation/enjoyment and commuting than others; retirees were least likely of all to walk for commuting purposes.
- **Location:** Residents of the Vancouver Coastal and Vancouver Island health regions were most likely to walk for the following utility- and transportation-related purposes:
 - Running errands or shopping
 - Commuting
 - Getting to another mode of transportation



Prior to COVID-19, what was the average distance you would walk during a typical outing?

Seven in ten respondents indicated that the average distance walked during a typical outing is between 1km and 5km (between 20 and 60 minutes in duration).

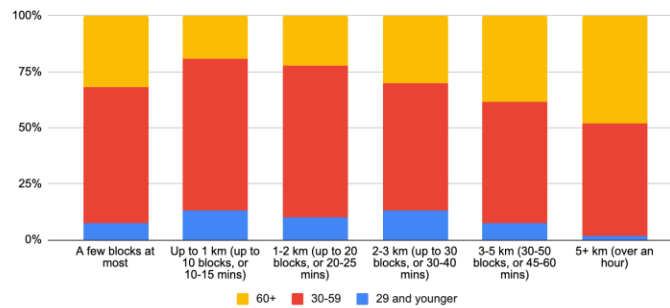
Average walking distance pre-COVID-19



When analyzing responses **by consolidated age groupings**, people aged 60 and older were more likely to either walk very little ('a few blocks at most'), or walk 3km or more in a typical outing, than a mid-range distance.

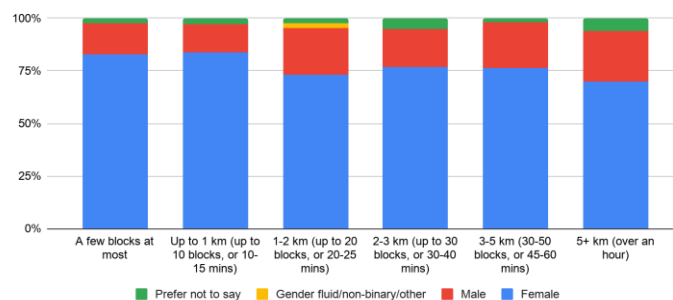
Young people (those aged 29 or younger) were least likely to walk 5km or more, compared to other age groups, and compared to the distance options provided in the survey.

Avg Walking Distance, by Age Grouping



When analyzing responses **by gender identity**, females were proportionately most likely to walk shorter distances, 1km or less (up to 15 minutes in duration). Of all the distance ranges, males were more likely to walk at least 1 kilometre or more; of all gender identities, males and those who 'prefer not to say' were most likely to walk 5km or more (over an hour in duration).

Avg Walking Distance, by Gender Identity





Prior to COVID-19, how often would you typically walk?

And, how often did you walk, during Phase 1 and 2 of BC's COVID-19 Restart Plan?

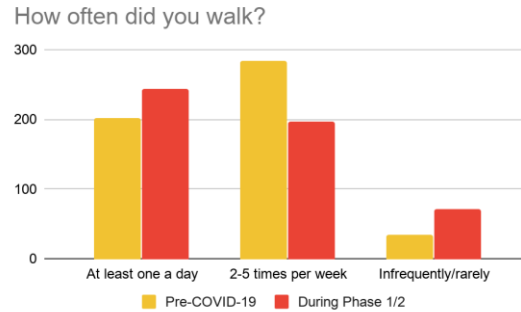
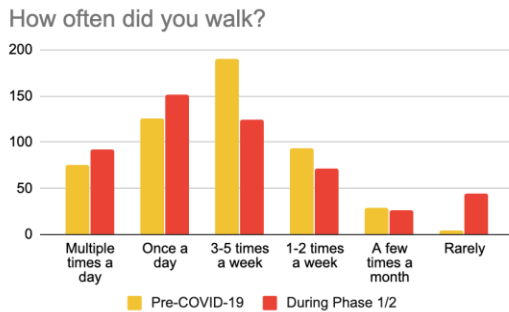
The survey asked respondents about frequency of their typical walking habits, both pre-COVID-19 (question 3), and during phases 1 and 2 of BC's Restart Plan (question 5).

When consolidating survey responses into three collapsed categories — 'at least once a day', '2-5 times per week', or 'infrequently/rarely' — there appears to be the following changes in walking habits over time:

- An increase in daily walking
- A dip in occasional walking
- A noticeable rise in the number of people who rarely walk

Original Survey Answer Options

Consolidated Survey Answer Options



Compared to the general distribution of survey responses, changes in the frequency of walking by some British Columbians appeared to vary by gender and location:

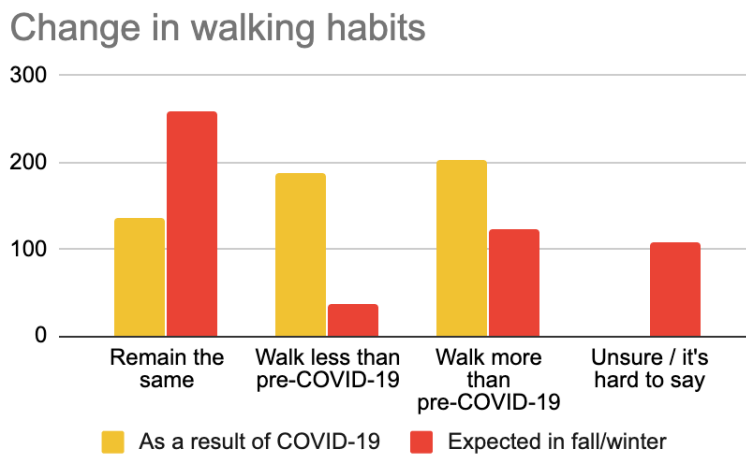
- Women were most likely to sustain or begin daily walking habits from pre-COVID into phase 1 and 2.
- Women were most likely to reduce weekly or occasional walking habits, and also to become infrequent walkers than men, as the pandemic emerged
- Residents of the Vancouver Coastal Health region with weekly walking habits were most likely to change their walking frequency once COVID-19 hit.



**Did your walking habits change as a result of the onset of COVID-19 and related restrictions?
And, do you expect your present walking habits to change in the fall and winter months?**

The survey asked respondents about changes in their typical walking habits, as a result of the onset of COVID-19 (question 4), and what they might expect in the fall and winter months to come (question 7).

- **As a result of COVID-19:** Despite the emergence of the pandemic and issuance of provincial health guidance, there seemed to be an even split between those who would walk more, the same, or less, than they did prior to COVID-19.
- **Expected in fall/winter:** when faced with the prospect of an ongoing pandemic during the fall and winter months — and despite positive sentiments expressed to an increase in or continuation of walking — one-fifth of all respondents remain unsure as to how their walking habits may change. This undecided segment is suggestive of the importance of definitive steps and clear communication required for walking to appear safe and accessible for all.



Compared to the general distribution of survey responses, predicted changes in walking habits by some British Columbians appeared to vary by gender and location:

- Walking habits of women remained disproportionately similar with the onset of COVID-19 than other gender identities, and women appear disproportionately more confident than men that their walking habits will remain the same in the fall and winter.
- Residents of the Vancouver Coastal Health region appear to be less confident than residents of other regions that their walking habits will increase in the fall and winter.
- Women and residents of the Vancouver Coastal Health region have the most uncertainty about how their walking habits may change in the fall and winter



What factors discouraged you from walking during Phase 1 and 2 of BC's COVID-19 Restart Plan?

And, what factors could discourage you from walking during the fall & winter months?

The survey asked respondents about factors that discouraged them from walking during phase 1 and 2 of BC's COVID-19 Restart Plan (question 6), and what factors they believe may discourage them from walking during the fall and winter months to come (question 8).

- Early in the pandemic, the discouraging factors for walking most closely associated with 'other people' — and the potential for viral spread — dominated the responses; 50% of all answers selected in responses to this survey question were made up of just 3 answers:
 - **Crowded spaces and facilities**
 - **Contracting or giving COVID-19**
 - **Closed workplaces and stores**
- In the fall and winter months, **weather** and **darkness** become the two most significant, discouraging factors to walking, and show the greatest increase in 'popularity' as anticipated discouraging factors compared to all other answer possibilities

Discouraging factors for walking

