



The Social Impact of Health Walks in Glasgow

“Not just a walk, they open the door to so much more”



welcome

A note from the Health Walk Manager

Hello Volunteers!

I'm Heather, I manage the Health Walks run by the Good Move Team at Glasgow Life. It is my privilege, together with Michelle and Barry in my team, to support all the Walk Leaders who volunteer their time to get people all across Glasgow walking.

We know that exercise is good for our physical and mental health and we now run 22 weekly Good Move Health Walks led by 76 volunteer walk leaders as well as support 27 other weekly walks led by various organisations and their volunteers across the city. This is for you, our Volunteer Walk Leaders, as we couldn't do it without you. We want to say thanks and show you just how much your time and care really makes a difference for the 700+ people that turn up every week. This is also for anyone considering becoming a Walk Leader – we know it's important for people who volunteer to see the impact of their efforts.

As well as the exercise – which we know is good for our health – the walks are so much more. This is what we have tried to capture in this social impact report: the values that we foster and cherish and the social outcomes they have for people. From friendships and emotional support to connecting people to more services and events, a simple get together once a week is having knock-on effects that truly benefit society.

This is so important at a time when social isolation and mental health are major concerns across Scotland. Ill health related to lack of exercise and nutrition are putting more pressure on the NHS. There is also an overall decline in adults participating in physical activity and sport according to the Scottish Household Survey 2022. So just getting out a walk can be a lifeline in more ways than one. The good news is that recreational walks are on the rise as the most common physical activity across Scotland and we are working to keep it that way!

Enjoy the read, know that you matter and keep walking.

All my best,

Heather



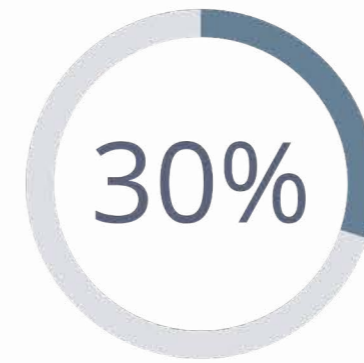
Heather out on a walk with one of the many Health Walks around Glasgow

connection

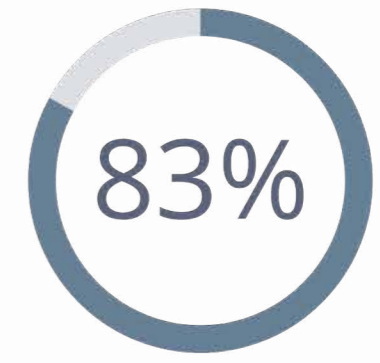
Health walks enhance people's social connections and involvement in society

- New friendships are made;
- People have access to more events, information and services;
- People can get help with their daily life challenges.

"As our society changes, there is increasing recognition of social isolation and loneliness as major public health issues that can have a significant impact on a person's physical and mental wellbeing" (A Connected Scotland: Strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness)



30% of walkers in 2024 said they walks made them feel more connected to their community



83% of walkers in 2024 said the walks helped them meet new people

"It's amazing just how much this park helped during COVID. I would come every morning at a set time with a friend and we ended up meeting many others. We still walk together once a week, even send each other Christmas gifts. We have created a community."

"We are called the walkie talkies. Walking is automatic, talking is conscious!"

"It opens the door to day trips, friendships!"

"I helped someone get information about other activities and now they are involved in the local writing group"

"I love the company."

"We now go on other walks together, it's great!"

"This is what keeps you coming back. The connection that everyone now has. It isn't just an hour's walk..."



Some walkers exchange books in the neighbourhood!



A rare sunny day with a health walk group posing for a group photo



Health walk leader enquires about what they can do to help pond conservation. Next step? Writing to their local councillor.



Walk leader checking out what events are on in their local park to let everyone know

inclusion

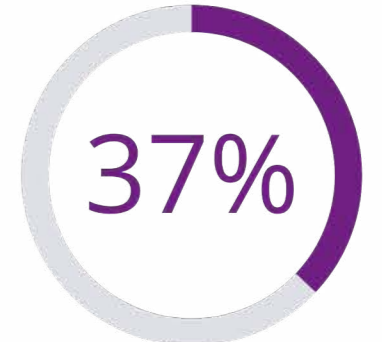
Health walks make people feel welcomed and part of a social group

- Health walks provide an inclusive space for people to meet socially;
- Walkers become part of a social group where people look out for them and everyone can go at their own pace.

Loneliness and social isolation have a mortality risk similar to cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and obesity. (State of Loneliness and Social Isolation Research)



The Scottish Household Survey found that 44% of adults rarely or never met others socially



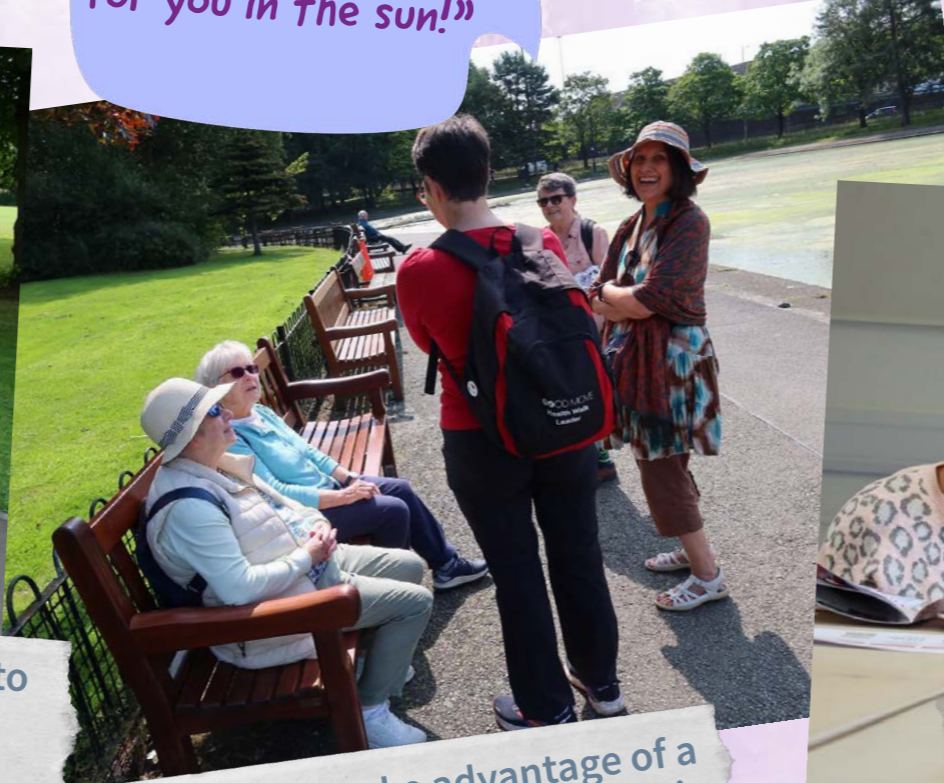
37% of health walkers in 2024 said the walks make them feel less isolated

Health Walks contribute to Scotland's goal to ensure 'We live in communities that are inclusive'.

"We took advantage to rest and wait for you in the sun!"



Walk Leader checking the park Facebook to show the walkers the recent photos of the baby herons the group have been following every week.



Faster walkers take advantage of a sunny seat to wait for others to join



Walkers having a chat and a laugh at the monthly lunch



Two walkers thinking about what values matter most to them

"To me the walks are welcoming and represent friendship and welcoming and niceness. It's what I found and continue to find."

"People will always join you if you are on your own and slower"

"You are made welcome"

"You are allowed to go as fast or as slow as you like"

health

Health walks help foster social support networks and contribute to improving physical and mental health

- Health walks help people walk more;
- Health walks improve people's well-being and happiness;
- Health walks provide important social support.

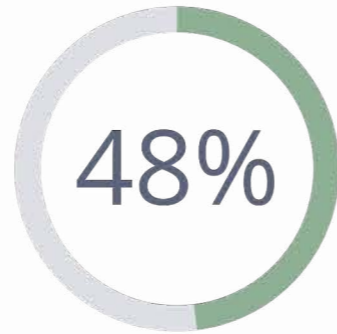
Adult population participating in physical activity and sport is in decline and has decreased to 51% of the population in 2022.

Recreational walks are the most common physical activity for adults and this is on the rise.

Time spent connecting with nature can help tackle physical and mental health issues.



Walking around neighbourhoods to add extra steps for the energetic!



48% of walkers in 2024 said they now chose to walk more often



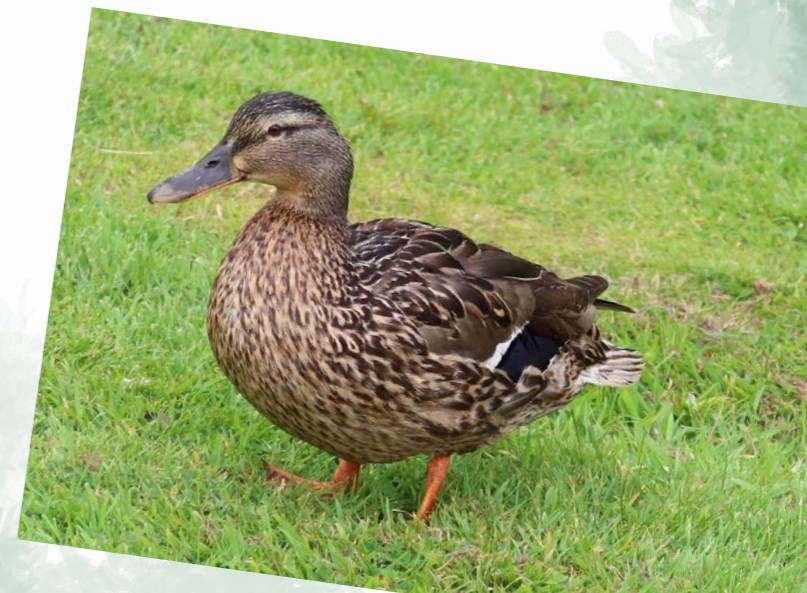
64% of walkers in 2024 said the walk made them feel more motivated to walk



70% of walkers in 2024 said the walks helped them feel better



94% of walkers in 2024 with health conditions say the health walks helped them manage mental or physical health conditions



Walkers visit the community centre garden where honeysuckles have been planted in memory of two walkers who passed away

"The walks have always been my life-line through very difficult times while my husband was ill prior to his death. They were 'me-time', 'chat-time' - time to gather my thoughts. I then became a walk leader and hope I support others."



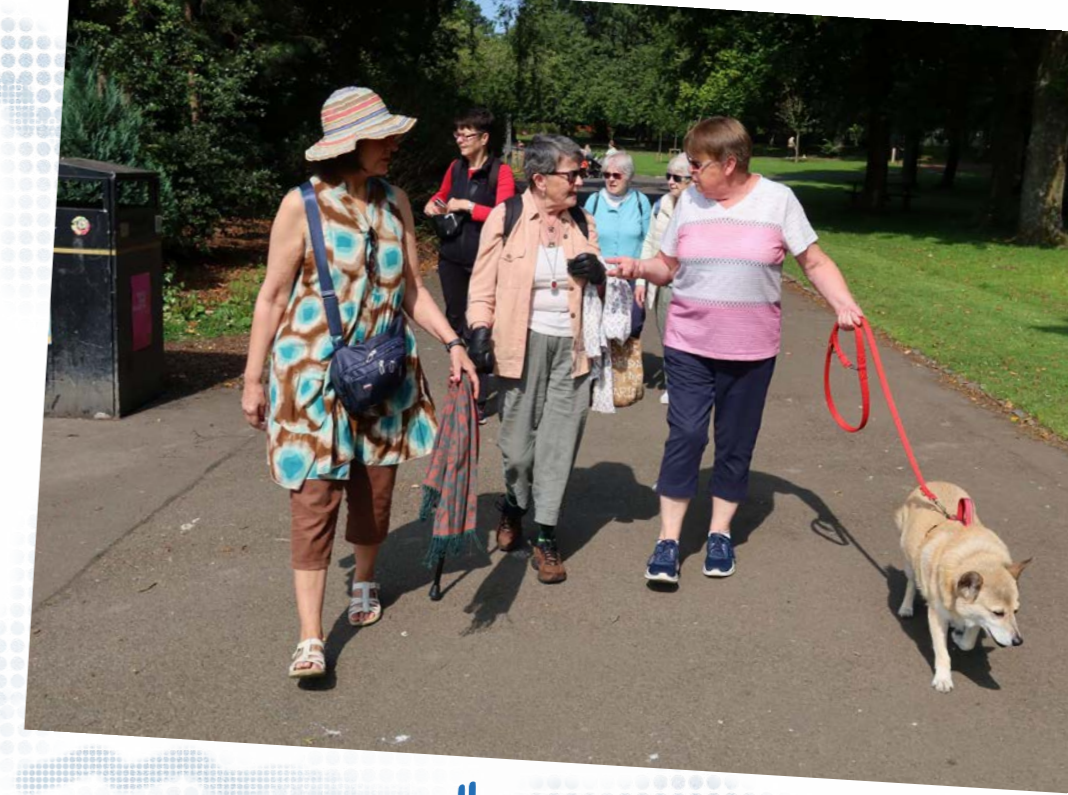
Every week can be a different walk - this is a nature trail

confidence

Walkers and walk leaders experience a boost in confidence through the health walks

- Health walks help people open up, laugh and share;
- Health walks provide a safe space for people to get out and about in their neighbourhood;
- Walkers know more and better routes to get around on foot.

Participating in sport and physical activity can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities including raising individual self-esteem and confidence (A Connected Scotland: Strategy to combat social isolation and loneliness)



“A lady told me she didn’t think she could do the whole walk the first time but didn’t realise how far she had gone because I was chatting all the way to her. Hope I didn’t bore her!”



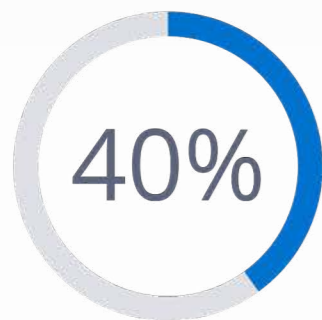
Anyone can be a health walk leader

“Someone told me that the walks gave them confidence and company to go for a walk which they would not do on their own.”

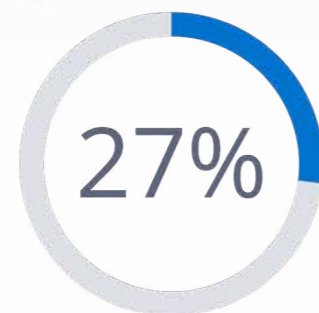
“I helped someone to overcome their fear of doing more walks and now they do three a week!”



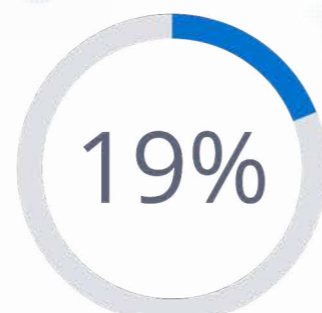
“Confidence is important. That’s why I joined the health walk”



40% of walkers in 2024 said they now know more or better walking routes



27% of walkers in 2024 said the walks helped them feel more confident

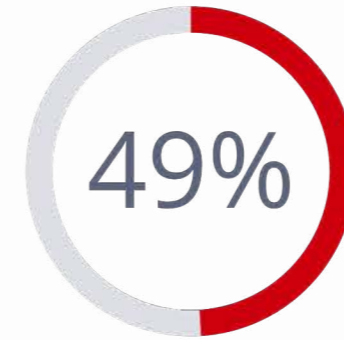


19% of walkers in 2024 felt safer when walking

joy

Health walks contribute to people's happiness

- Health walks provoke joy, laughter and positive energy;
- Walkers experience a fun atmosphere and social experience;
- Walkers report improvements in their happiness.



49% of walkers in 2024 said the health walks made them feel happier

"We want people to walk more everyday - to work, to school, for health and well-being, to enjoy being outdoors and just for fun!"

"Our vision is to increase the number of people who enjoy the outdoors and more people walk as part of their everyday journeys."

Scotland's National Walking Strategy



Staff invite Walk Leaders to celebrate Volunteers Week and thanks them for their efforts.



Friends enjoying the walk together



Even Louey the dog joins the health walks and gets special treats from the group



Group photo of the walkers who like to lunch once a month after the walk

"I enjoy walking and I like to see all the flowers and all the things you get to see and all the new things every week"

"You get a good laugh!"

"Someone once told me the walks were the highlight of their week and they enjoyed the talking and the company"

"I helped someone who is partially sighted do a walk along the canal, describing the birds and the flowers. It brightened her day."

"It's people laughing, getting on with each other, enjoying themselves"

"It makes me happy"

Joan's story

Read Joan's story about her experience as part of a health walk

"I moved back to Glasgow in January 2018 after 40 years overseas. Even though I have my sons and their families here, I had very few friends of my own generation. Frankly, I was at risk of relying almost entirely on my children and grandchildren for social engagement, which was not ideal for them or me. I was feeling rather lethargic and flat, probably combined with a post-COVID feeling of isolation and decided that I really had to do something about it.

I found the Good Move walking group online and, with no real expectation of anything more than getting some fresh air and exercise, I enrolled and turned up one morning. I had expected a degree of cliqueness but I was immediately welcomed and, in no time, felt part of the group. We had two group leaders at the time, now we have three, and they guide us throughout our walks. We always have the option of a long or short walk so everyone is catered for and, before we set off, the route for the longer walk is discussed and agreed upon.

I have definitely benefited physically from the walks but the biggest benefit I have received from the walks has been the social aspect and, as a result of that, my mental wellbeing has vastly improved. Once a month, after our walk we have lunch at a local community centre and that's great fun. Additionally, we have a really festive Christmas lunch and in January, there was a joint walk of all the different groups to celebrate Burns night. I can honestly say that joining the Good Move Walk has been the best thing I could have done since I got back.

I've made some true friends that I know I'll keep forever. Once of them asked me to join her on her weekly swim at a local pool, which I now do regularly, and we have a group who also get together for away days when we have a walk and lunch. We have been to Ayr, Helensburgh and Balloch and we're off to the Panto in December!"



Joan (above left) and two friends walking along to the monthly lunch and enjoying each others' company

"I can honestly say that joining the walk has been the best thing I could have done"

"My mental health has vastly improved"

"I have definitely benefited physically from the walks but the biggest benefit I have received is the social aspect"

"I've made some true friends!"

Hope's story

Read about Hope, a health walk leader who volunteers her time every week

"I am 74 yrs old and have been happily retired for 11 years. I like travelling, reading, knitting, sewing and spending time with family and friends. I first volunteered when the Commonwealth Games were on in Glasgow in 2014, hoping in my own small way to give visitors a good impression of Glasgow. I volunteered to be a Walk Leader initially to help Dot so she wouldn't be on her own as a Walk Leader.

I was a little nervous about the training we had to do but there was absolutely no reason to be. Everyone was so friendly and explained things in non-technical terms. The training only took one day. They explained how Glasgow Life works and what the walk leaders would do each week like assisting in noting down the numbers of people who attended. It wasn't difficult and Glasgow Life are very good at giving us the opportunity to do additional training like first aid or dementia awareness which also comes in useful for everyday life.

Our walk is not just a walk, our group discusses all sorts of topics, we enjoy each others' company and help each other out wherever we can with various problems. As a walk leader, I enjoy seeing new people feel relaxed and happy to continue with their walk every week. They make new friends, help each other out and laugh and enjoy themselves.

I would assure anyone thinking of becoming a walk leader that it is not difficult or stressful. You really are just 'one of the group' and there because you enjoy it too!"

"Our walk is not just a walk, our group discusses all sorts of topics, enjoy each others' company and help each other out wherever we can" (Hope, Walk Leader)

"The volunteers do a fabulous job, helping all walkers and keep us updated for upcoming events" (Walker)

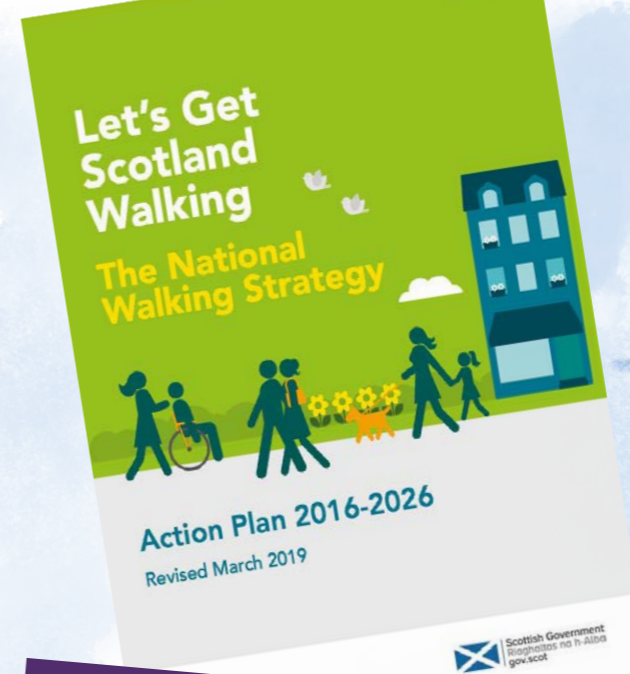


Walk Leader Hope stands next to the plants she had planted in memory of the passing of two walkers from her group

"It's great fun being a walk leader and heartwarming to know that it means so much to the walkers – very special indeed!" (Walker)

"The Walk Leaders are reliable and you can talk to them about your concerns. They are really good listeners" (Walker)

You help make Glasgow more connected inclusive healthier confident happier



Outcome 1.2: More people have the opportunity to walk more often.



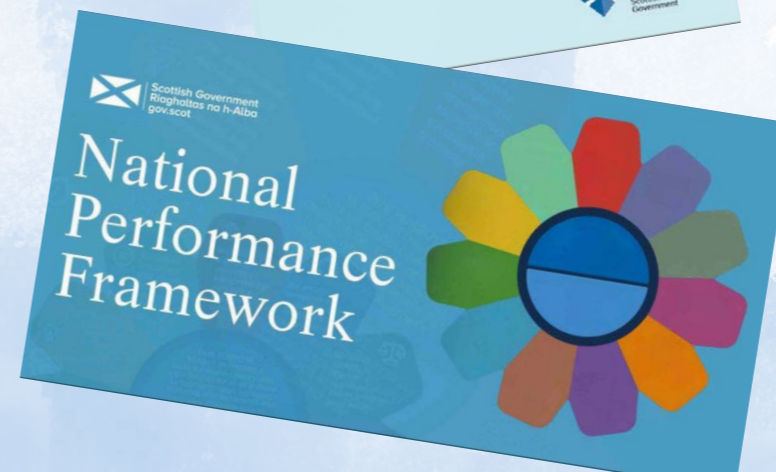
Recommendation 2: Health and connectedness are strongly interlinked. Greater investment and action on the physical and mental health of Glasgow's People is required.

Recommendation 10: Create more local and flexible volunteering opportunities that empower people, help them learn new skills and connect them to their communities.



Outcome 1: Improve overall mental well-being and reduced inequalities;

Outcome 4: [...] and provide opportunities to connect with others.



National Outcome 4: We are active and healthy

Our thanks

Read what walkers say about your efforts as health walk leaders

"The leaders make the walk so much fun, explaining birds, trees etc. as we go along. They are also very loving, caring, friends."

"I am grateful to the volunteers because they give up so much time and are always cheery and helpful. They go the extra mile every week!"

"I am grateful to the walk leaders because they ensure everyone feels welcome and that's vital. Thank you so much."

"Thank you so much for always being there every week!"

"The leaders are brilliant!"

"Volunteers give us confidence and company, meeting new friends, sharing new ideas. It improves the quality of our life."

"If it weren't for the walk, I wouldn't get out the house"

"From the start I was made to feel welcome. Having impaired mobility has not been a hinderance to the group and I'm always made to feel safe and included"



Connection

Confidence

Health

Inclusion

Joy

The Social Impact of Health Walks in Glasgow



Acknowledgements:

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