



NYC Vital Signs

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Physical Activity in New York City New Yorkers Can Easily Integrate Exercise into Their Daily Routine

Regular physical activity can help prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions. Unfortunately, less than half (42%) of New Yorkers meet the national guidelines for physical activity. However, people of all ages can integrate physical activity to their lives every day by walking, performing household chores like vacuuming and taking the stairs. Recent studies confirm that exercising for just ten minutes at a time can lead to future health benefits. Integrating physical activity is an opportunity for New Yorkers who feel that they do not have time or money to exercise.

One chance for New Yorkers to integrate physical activity is during their daily commutes. Active commuting, defined as any “self-propelled” mode of transportation to and from work, includes walking, jogging, cycling or inline skating. These methods of active commuting are also forms of transportation that reduce both air and noise pollution.

Living in New York City provides many opportunities to be active. This report describes how New Yorkers make physical activity part of their daily lives. Recommendations on how to integrate physical activity can be found on page four.

Walking or biking are part of most New Yorkers’ regular activities

- More than two thirds of adults walked or biked ten or more blocks during the past 30 days to get to routine destinations, such as work, school or running errands (68%). Sixteen percent of NYC working adults actively commute (walk or bike) to work and/or public transportation. Most active commuters walk.
- Adults ages 18–24 years are more likely to walk or bike ten or more blocks than adults older than 45 years.
- Active commuting is more common among white New Yorkers (20%) than black (11%), Asian (14%) and Hispanic (16%) New Yorkers.
- Women are more likely than men to report walking to work (17% vs. 15%), while men are more likely to bicycle to work (1.4% vs. 0.3%^).

	Any Walking or Biking Ten+ Blocks (%)	Active Commuting to Work (%) [†]
Total	68	16
Age (in years)*		
18–24	76	16
25–44	73	13
45–64	66	14
65+	54	28
Race/Ethnicity		
White	74	20
Black	65	11
Hispanic	59	16
Asian	68	14
Gender		
Male	69	15
Female	67	17
Household income (% of national poverty level)		
Low income (<200%)	63	19
Higher income (>200%)	73	15

[^]Due to small numbers, estimate should be interpreted with caution.

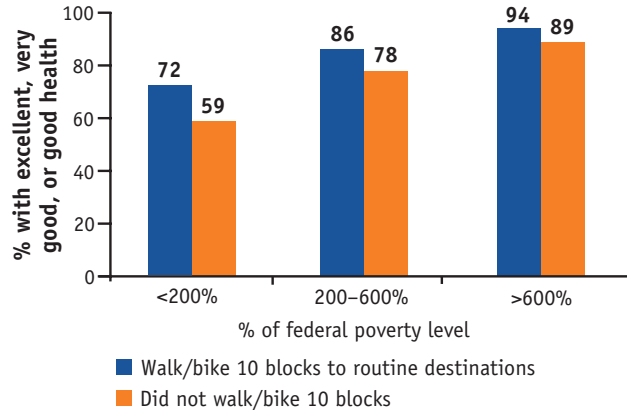
[†]Active commuting is among adults who work outside the home.
*Age-specific estimates are not age-adjusted.

Data presented in this report are from the New York City Community Health Survey (NYC CHS) and the NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). CHS is an annual telephone health survey of approximately 10,000 adults age 18 and older conducted annually by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Unless otherwise specified, CHS data presented are from survey years 2006 (active commute to work) and 2007 (walk or bike 10 blocks) and are age-adjusted to the US 2000 Standard Population. For full survey details, visit nyc.gov/health/survey. The YRBS is a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire conducted in NYC public high schools every other year by the NYC Department of Education and the Health Department. YRBS estimates presented here are from the 2007 survey. For full survey details, visit nyc.gov/html/doh/html/episrv/episrv-youthriskbehavior.shtml.

People who walk or bike report better overall health

- Adult New Yorkers who walk or bike to routine destinations are more likely to report excellent, very good or good health than those who do not (83% vs. 70%).
- The positive relationship between better health and regular integrated physical activity holds at all levels of income. For example, 72% of low-income New Yorkers who walk or bike report excellent, very good or good health, compared with 59% of those who do not.
- Regular walking and biking is also related to self-reported better health regardless of weight. Obese New Yorkers who integrate physical activity are more likely to report excellent, very good or good health than those who do not (75% vs. 64%).

Self-reported excellent, very good or good health is more common among New Yorkers who walk or bike in all income groups

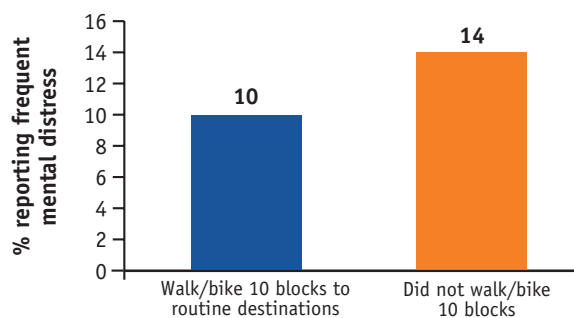


Better health and exercise are linked. Information collected using surveys provide a snapshot view of a person's health and habits. People who integrate physical activity into their daily routines feel healthier and experience less mental distress, as shown by the data presented. However, healthy people may find it easier and may be more likely to make physical activity part of their daily routine.

Emotional distress is less common among New Yorkers who walk or bike

- New Yorkers who incorporate walking and biking into their routine are less likely to report frequent mental distress than those who do not (10% vs. 14%).
- Among overweight adults, walking or biking regularly decreases the likelihood of having frequent mental distress. Overweight adults who walk or bike more than ten blocks to routine destinations report less frequent mental distress than overweight adults who do not (11% vs. 16%).
- Regular walking and biking is also related to lower rates of emotional distress among white and black New Yorkers and among those living on low-incomes (less than 200% of the federal poverty level).

New Yorkers who walk or bike are less likely to experience frequent mental distress*

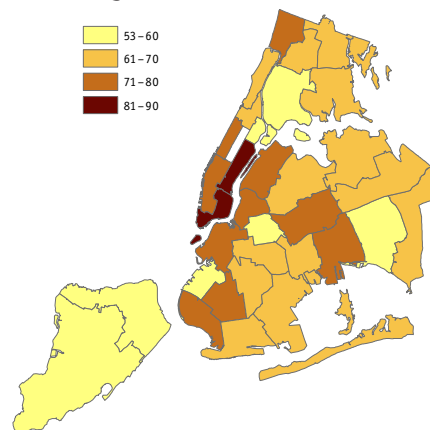


* Frequent mental distress is defined as self-report of 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past month.

Routine physical activity and active commuting vary by neighborhood

- The number of destinations (stores, work, school) in a neighborhood and available public transportation that people can walk to play an important role in encouraging people to actively commute, as well as to walk and bicycle as part of their daily routine.
- Compared with residents of other boroughs, adults who live in Manhattan are more likely to actively commute to work (31% vs. 12%) and walk or bicycle more than ten blocks to routine destinations (77% vs. 66%).
- Rates in Staten Island are particularly low, with only 5% of residents actively commuting and 54% walking or bicycling more than ten blocks in the past 30 days.

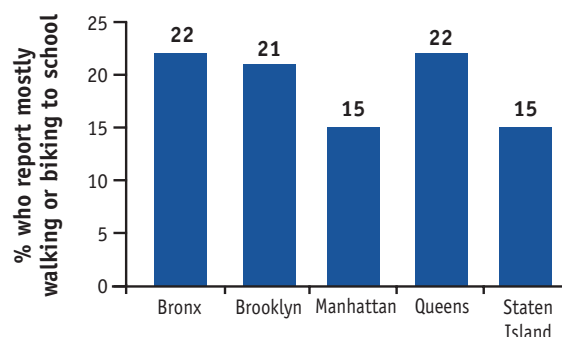
Proportion of New Yorkers who walk or bicycle at least 10 blocks to routine destinations by UHF neighborhood, CHS 2007



20% of NYC students walk or bike to school most of the time

- Overall, one in five students reports mostly walking or biking to school (20%). Among students who ever walk or bike to school, 62% live within a 20-minute walk or bike ride of their school, and they are more likely to mostly walk or bike to school than those who do not live as close (42% vs. 22%).
- Students attending schools in the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn are slightly more likely to mostly walk or bike to school than those attending schools in Manhattan and Staten Island.
- Black students are less likely to mostly walk or bike to school (15%) than students of other races and ethnicities (22%). More than one-fifth of white (21%), Hispanic (22%), and Asian (25%) students usually walk or bike to school.

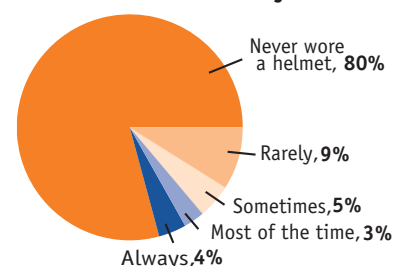
Walking or biking to school among New York City youth by borough of school, YRBS 2007



Encouraging bicycling as transportation requires increased attention to safety: More than half of NYC youth report bicycling, but most do not wear helmets

- Sixty percent (60%) of NYC youth report riding a bicycle in the past year, but 89% report that they rarely or never wear a helmet.
- Black and Asian students were less likely to report riding a bicycle in the past year (59% and 49%, respectively) than white students (64%). White students who rode a bicycle were less likely to report that they never wear a helmet than black students who rode (75% vs. 83%).

Among NYC youth who bicycle, helmets are not commonly worn



Recommendations

Be Active: ten minutes at a time is fine! Make physical activity part of your daily schedule.

- Take advantage of everyday opportunities to increase physical activity by taking the stairs, walking or bicycling to work or to run errands, or getting off the bus or subway one or two stops early and walking the rest of the way.
- Adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most or preferably all days (at least two and a half hours per week). You can spread your activity out over the course of the day.
- Be safe. Wear a helmet while bicycling and install proper lighting for nighttime riding.
- Call 311 for information and locations of free “Shape Up New York” exercise classes, or to learn more about your nearest Parks and Recreation Center.

Start early to build healthy habits.

- Children and adolescents should spend at least 60 minutes a day being physically active. Encourage children to play outside, join a sports team, or walk or bike to and from school. Consider working with other parents and your child’s school on programs that promote walking and bicycling to school.
- Teach children rules of the road, including proper hand signals and right of way. New York law requires children younger than 14 to wear a helmet when cycling.

Health care providers should encourage patients to integrate physical activity into their daily routines.

- Talk to patients about walking or biking to everyday destinations as a low-cost, easy exercise opportunity.
- Develop an appropriate physical activity plan with each patient. Most people can safely integrate walking into their daily commute or errands.

Property owners, employers, and policymakers should build infrastructure that encourages physical activity.

- Provide secure indoor parking for bicycles to encourage employees to bike to and from work.
- Good lighting, sidewalks, bike lanes and greenery can encourage walking and biking and improve safety.
- Make stairs more visible, available and pleasant. Call 311 to get a free NYC “Burn Calories Not Electricity” sign to post in entryways and elevator banks to encourage people to take the stairs.

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