

Calls for Scots to step up their New Year's resolutions

Five Scots walking for health as charity calls for more to join.



A new report has found that nearly one in five people are not walking enough as a leading walking charity has urged Scots to take the next steps in making walking part of their New Year's Resolutions

The 2023 National Survey of Attitudes to Walking and Wheeling in Scotland – commissioned by [Paths for All](#) – found that 85% of adults walk several times per week or daily, with more than half (59%) walking for leisure or exercise.

While 84% said they enjoy walking because it is good for their health, a significant increase from 78% in 2019, only just

under a quarter (24%) had heard or seen messages on the health benefits of walking.

Fiona Bull, Head of Physical Activity at the World Health Organisation, presented evidence at a recent lecture held by Paths for All on how walking can save lives, and how Scotland is leading the charge.

Dr Bull said: “Walking more regularly can contribute to saving lives and brings so many health benefits; but too often, walking is not being promoted enough.



“The work Paths for All has been doing to get more people active is incredible, bringing communities together and ensuring all have access to walking groups, as well as upgrading infrastructure, and educating the public.

“According to data released from Scotland, the country is bucking the trend, with collective action there has been a 7% increase in physical activity, and to see that nearly all Scots are walking for health benefits is commendable.”

Having led the development of the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030, the new Global guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviours 2020 and the recent 1st Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022, Dr Bull shared significant insight in making the health, social and economic case for all countries to do more to promote walking.

In particular, Dr Bull shared the alarming health impact of physical inactivity accounting for between 3.2 – 5.1 million deaths a year and this is a conservative estimate. She also highlighted new data providing a global “price tag” for not acting to promote more people being more active – estimated at US\$27 billion per year – totalling US\$300 billion by 2030.

Dr Bull reinforced to the audience that walking is the best way to get more people of all ages doing more physical activity both in Scotland and globally. Examples of how cities are making communities more walkable were shared including the example of Vienna which created a Year of Walking – Dr Bull suggested Scotland would be well placed to borrow this idea.

According to the National Survey of Attitudes to Walking and Wheeling in Scotland, People with a long term physical or mental health condition or illness were also significantly more likely to have encountered cars parked on the pavement, roads that were difficult to cross or poor maintained pavements (53%, 34% and 54% respectively).

Of those walking for short journeys, Paths for All found a desire to get fit, relax and unwind, and enjoyment to be the main motivations for people to get out and about.

Louise Bursle, Communications & Marketing Manager at Paths for All, said more Scots clearly recognise walking’s physical and mental benefits: “The fact that so many people walk for exercise and relaxation highlights this. We’re keen to eliminate barriers to make frequent walking possible for everyone in Scotland to reap wellbeing rewards.

“As we enter a new year, many people will be setting resolutions to be more active, but you don’t need to make big commitments to see the benefits. Just adding a short walk to your daily routine will have an impact.”

To boost regular walking, over 7 in 10 Scottish adults also voiced support for 20-minute neighbourhoods, ensuring services are nearby. Delivering these communities could help more than 30% of Scots who currently do not walk to places like shops and public transport stops because distances are too far.

Louise said the findings reveal clear priorities for Scotland’s health: “By making streets more welcoming through improved lighting, seating, better surfaces, and amenities within reach, we can help fulfil people’s desire to integrate walking into their days – ultimately getting Scots moving together.”

Paths for All facilitates over 850 Health Walks across Scotland, with more than 14,000 dedicated volunteers leading and assisting the groups.

Established in 1996, Paths for All work in partnership with 30 national organisations with a shared vision of a healthier, happier, greener Scotland, where everyone can be active every day.

To watch Fiona Bulls full lecture, visit: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/walking-saves-lives-who-expert-dr-fiona-bull-presents-our-expert-lecture>

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