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Walking for life

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Walking for Life

“Walking for life” is the slogan for the National Walking Strategy that is now being formulated in Norway. The main idea is to get more people to leave their cars at home, and instead use their feet to reach their destination.

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) was commissioned by the Norwegian Government through the previous National Transport Plan to produce a National Walking Strategy. All the regions of the NPRA have been involved in this work, along with representatives from the Directorate of Health and some selected towns and county authorities.

The strategy has two main objectives:

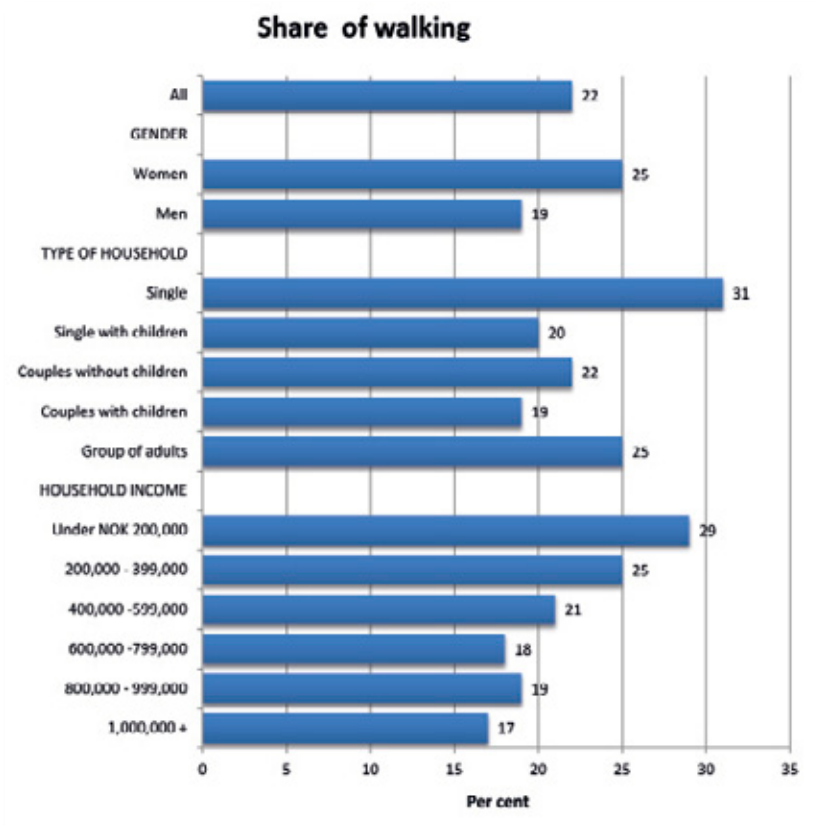
- Walking should appeal to everyone. This objective implies that all population groups should find walking appealing, and that it is made easier for them to walk more on a daily basis.
- More people should walk more. This objective implies that more of the total journeys made by the inhabitants should be made on foot, and that all population groups should walk more on a daily basis.

Arguments for the strategy

There are many arguments in favour of making it appealing to walk, and for getting more people to walk more. For example, it is good for the climate that more people leave their cars at home in favour of walking or using public transport. In terms of air quality and noise, this is also good for the local community. Where there are more walkers, there is also more social control, and this in turn contributes to creating safe and attractive local communities where more people want to live and spend time. The presence of many people in an area also makes it attractive for businesses to set up there. We as consumers want safe and visually appealing shopping areas, preferably within walking distance of our homes. If we are able to provide such areas with workplaces as well as residential housing, there will be people there both in the daytime and evening.

Design of physical surroundings

The objective is to develop the structures of urban and built-up areas to make them more suitable for walking, to build attractive surroundings based upon the requirements and needs of pedestrians, and to develop coherent and closely interwoven pedestrian networks with an emphasis on accessibility, safety, attractiveness and universal design. In order to



Illustration/Tabular picture: Guro Berge

Percentage of traveling on foot from the start point to end point in different population groups. Source: 2009 Norwegian Travel Survey, Brechan and Vågane et al (2011).

achieve this, public authorities must ensure that pedestrians are given adequate priority in national guidelines for land and transport planning and in the design of infrastructure and traffic installations.

An active walking culture

There is a need to acquire more knowledge about pedestrians and develop better tools and methods to make provision for them. And even if these provisions are made, it is not self-evident that more people will walk. We must influence people directly to walk more. The aim is to raise the status of walking as a form of transport and physical activity. The NPRA will draw up a national communication strategy for a more active walking culture and encourage the implementation of local actions and measures to influence different population groups.

Local walking strategies

In order to succeed, the public authorities are dependent on the implementation of local walking strategies or other types of comprehensive efforts on behalf of pedestrians locally. In addition to working to influence local walking culture, the framework conditions for pedestrians must be addressed: land development, the infrastructure, the surrounding environment, operation and maintenance, and the interplay between pedestrians and other road users.

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