

A low-angle, close-up photograph of people's legs and feet as they walk on a paved surface. In the foreground, a person wears white trousers and bright orange sneakers. To their right, another person in dark trousers and brown loafers is captured mid-stride. A white metal railing is visible in the background, and shadows are cast on the ground.

The International Walking Data Standard



The Walking Data Standard

A response to the growing need for the promotion of walking as the most sustainable method of travel

This summary document sets out the case for an internationally recognized standard for the collection of data on walking, and promotes a detailed set of requirements for walking data that are consistent and comparable.

Survey agencies worldwide are invited to make contact for more information on how this can be achieved.

The Walking Data Standard is in response to the growing need for, and interest in, the promotion of walking as the most sustainable method of travel, which is also fundamentally important for increasing active travel as a component of healthy lifestyles and for increasing the use of transit, and reduces automobile dependence.

The aim of any travel survey is to provide as complete a picture as possible of movement patterns in the area concerned. To achieve this, all modes of travel must be included, whether they involve the use of vehicles or not. Walking is of critical importance because without the inclusion of data for trips on foot, the total of trips and travel will

be understated, thus the percentage share of all other reported modes will be artificially inflated.

This much is widely accepted, and the majority of travel surveys these days do include walking. The collection of walking data, however, is not straightforward, and in many ways poses more methodological problems than the measuring of vehicle modes. This results in a the collection of data on walking that varies considerably between countries and cities, and also over time. The result is walking data (and thus other travel data) that is rarely directly comparable from one place to another.

To address these problems of survey accuracy and comparability, a standard for defining and measuring walking has now been produced, and is summarized below. The purpose of this document is to promote the Walking Data Standard for use in travel surveys. It is aimed at organizations that are responsible for travel surveys at the national, regional, and municipal level throughout the world.

Ensuring that walking has a high profile in transport and urban planning throughout the world is an important objective of the international Walking Data Standard.



BEST or BETTER practice

The Walking Data Standard in a nutshell

International comparisons are important to establish “best” or “better” practice and to inspire and encourage better conditions for people wanting or having to walk. Similarly, comparisons between regions and cities are important for benchmarking and the identification of good practice.

Data can only be compared if the definitions and methods used in travel surveys are compatible and consistent. The proposed harmonization of walking data is designed to achieve:

- Clarity and accuracy in the collection and reporting of travel data;
- Comparability of data between different travel surveys;
- Manageability (and affordability) within travel surveys.

The Standard is concerned with the methodological issues involved with sampling, data collection, and reporting.

Existing surveys used by agencies may include more detail than required by the Standard, but the aim is to ensure commonality in the way data are presented. For example, a particular survey may include people of all ages, but to be compatible with the Standard, data would be reported for the age of five and older. This would not preclude the survey from also reporting travel of people under the age of five.

To be compatible with the Walking Data Standard, travel surveys need to incorporate the key indicators. Since data on all modes should be collected simultaneously, the indicators apply equally to all other modes.

Summary of the travel survey indicators required

	Key indicator	Comments
1	Proportion of people who have made at least one walking stage on the survey day	The Standard provides details of how an “average” day is to be arrived at, and ways of handling data on days of the week, month, and season. It specifies the minimum age of people surveyed.
2	Average number of daily walking trips and walking stages per person	The Standard defines “trips” and “stages” generally, as well as specifically on foot, including the issue of walking in public and private spaces.
3	Average daily time walked per person	The Standard specifies how total walking time is arrived at, and the issue of “waiting time” is dealt with.
4	Average daily distance walked per person	The Standard requires the total distance walked in publicly accessible spaces to be presented. It also describes why the arithmetic mean as well as the median distance need to be calculated (median distance is the distance that 50% of the people exceed and 50% fall below)
5	Mode share of walking based on: A. stages B. main mode C. time D. distance	The Standard requires walking data to be set alongside data for all other modes, and for all trip purposes to be included.

Data collection

The Standard also addresses various data collection issues and provides details of how they can be resolved to achieve the reporting of accurate and compatible data.

For example:

- Survey participation population and sampling;
- Data collection resources, and ways of managing them;
- Issues of boundaries, and cross-boundary travel;
- Survey respondents and implications of survey “fatigue”;
- Reporting period, days of week, and seasonal issues.

In the full document downloadable from the website (see back) three levels, are put forward to enable the widest degree of comparability between different countries, regions, and cities. In reviewing their survey methods and content in response to the Walking Data

Standard, data agencies can select the “highest” level that is feasible in their circumstances.

- **Minimal level:** not fulfilling the requirements of the standard level but overlapping with some of them to enable some basic comparability. This level is intended as an interim until further improvements can be made.
- **Standard level:** fulfilling the basic requirements to adequately determine the amount of walking, and to allow comparability between surveys.
- **Elaborate level:** desirable additions that bring extra insights about walking and that at some future date should become part of a new higher specification standard level.

A photograph of a person walking on a paved path in a park. The path is dark and leads into the distance. On the left, there are large, leafy green trees. On the right, there are tall grasses and smaller trees. In the background, a body of water and a building are visible. A person in a red shirt and dark shorts is walking away from the camera on the path, with a basketball on the ground near them.

How will the Standard be adopted?

By Travel Agencies. Following the ratification of the Walking Data Standard at the Walk21 international conference in Vienna in October 2015, the Measuring Walking team is promoting the adoption of the Standard. Agencies responsible for travel surveys are invited to make contact in order to discuss how this can be achieved in their respective country or city. The team also aims to work with international bodies that can help to promote adoption of the Standard.



Further Information

The full international Walking Data Standard, and details of how it has been developed and peer-reviewed can be found at: measuring-walking.org

To discuss any aspect of the Standard and how to adopt it, please contact one of the team through the website.

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United Kingdom: Tim Pharoah, Miles Tight, Martin Wedderburn

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