

Walking for physical activity

Walking is the most popular physical activity and is open to nearly everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Walking can be a form of exercise, transport or social activity. It can increase social interaction, enhance community wellbeing and assist in crime prevention in neighbourhoods.¹

Walking has an important role in increasing physical activity levels. Its importance is widely known and strategies are targeted at increasing walking in Western Australia.

PARTICIPATION IN WALKING

Participation of people aged 15 years and over²

In 2006, 436,000 (27.9%) Western Australians aged 15 years and over walked for exercise at least once in the past 12 months. The participation rate was higher for females (36.4%) than males (19.3%).

Participation in walking for exercise: Western Australians aged 15 years and over – 2006^{(a) (b)}

	Males	Females	Total
Number	149,300	286,700	436,000
Proportion of population (%)	19.3	36.4	27.9

(a) Proportion who participated in the 12 months to survey.

(b) The above figures exclude bushwalking, which had 38,500 participants in Western Australia (2.5%) in 2006. Note that people could report both walking and bushwalking.

Participation of adults aged 18 years and over

Walking is the most popular physical activity for Western Australian adults. In 2006, 76.5% of men and 81.0% of women aged 18 years and over walked in the week prior to survey.³

Participation in walking by age⁴

In 2006, participation in walking decreased with advancing age.

Participation in walking by age: Western Australia – 2006

Age	Proportion (%)
18–30 years	83.5
30–44 years	80.4
45–49 years	78.9
60 years or more	71.5

Walking for physical activity

Frequency and time spent walking⁵

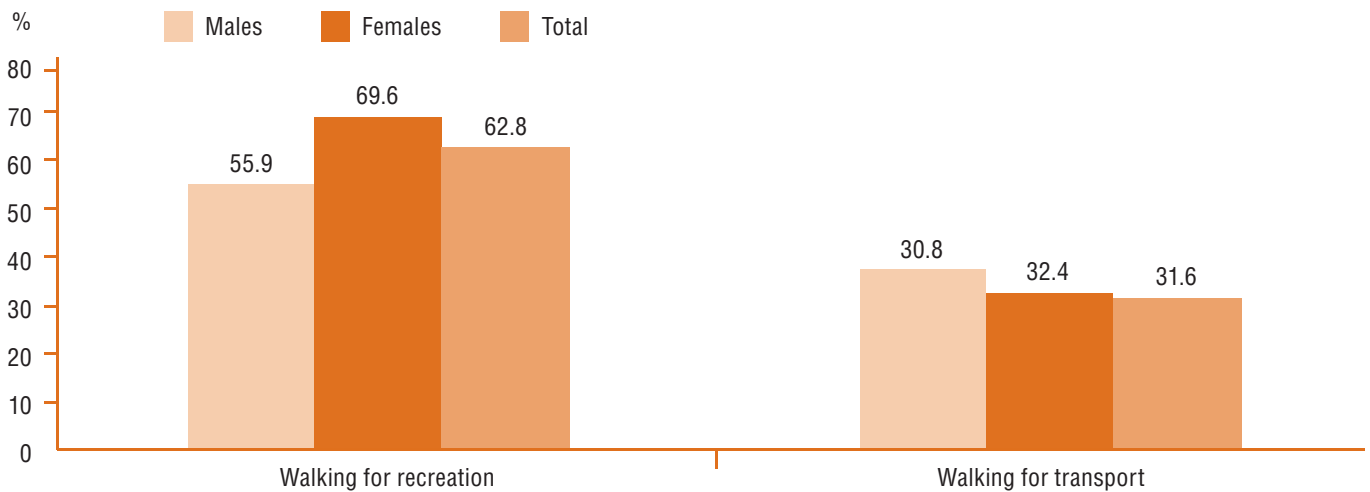
In the week prior to survey in 2006:

- The average time Western Australian adults spent walking was 199.3 minutes (3.3 hours);
- Walking was undertaken more frequently (6.2 times) than moderate intensity activity (2.6 times), vigorous intensity activity (3.5 times) or gardening activity (2.4 times).

Walking for recreation and transport⁶

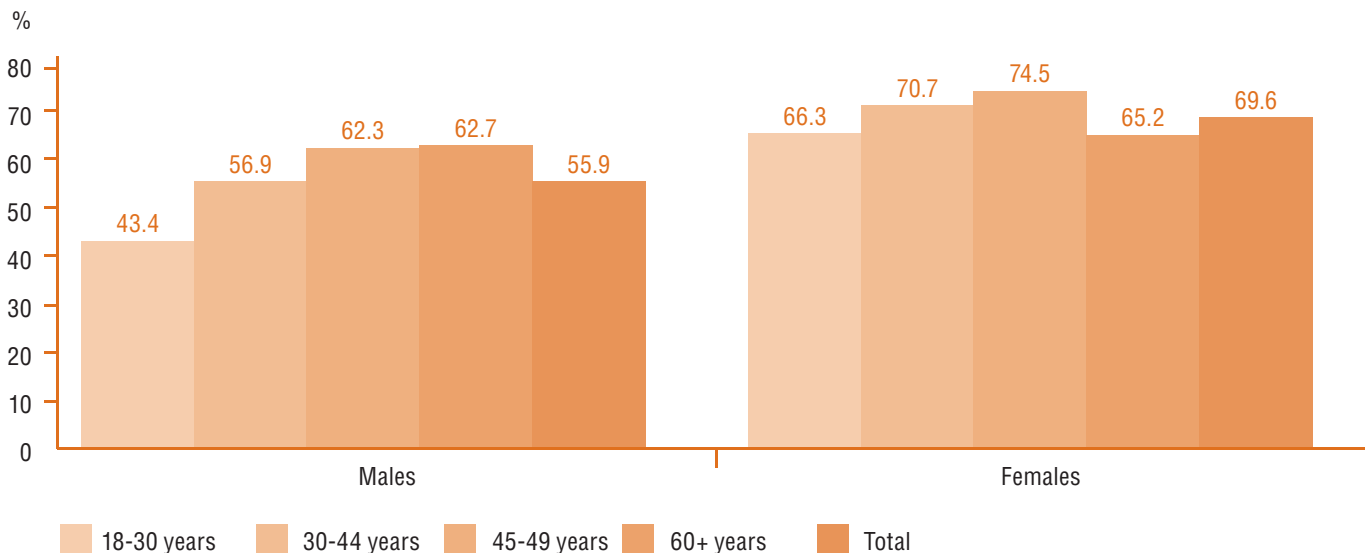
Walking for recreation (62.8%) and walking for transport (31.6%) were the two most popular physical activities for Western Australian adults. Participation rates were higher for females than males.

Participation in walking by sex: Western Australians aged 18 years and over – 2006



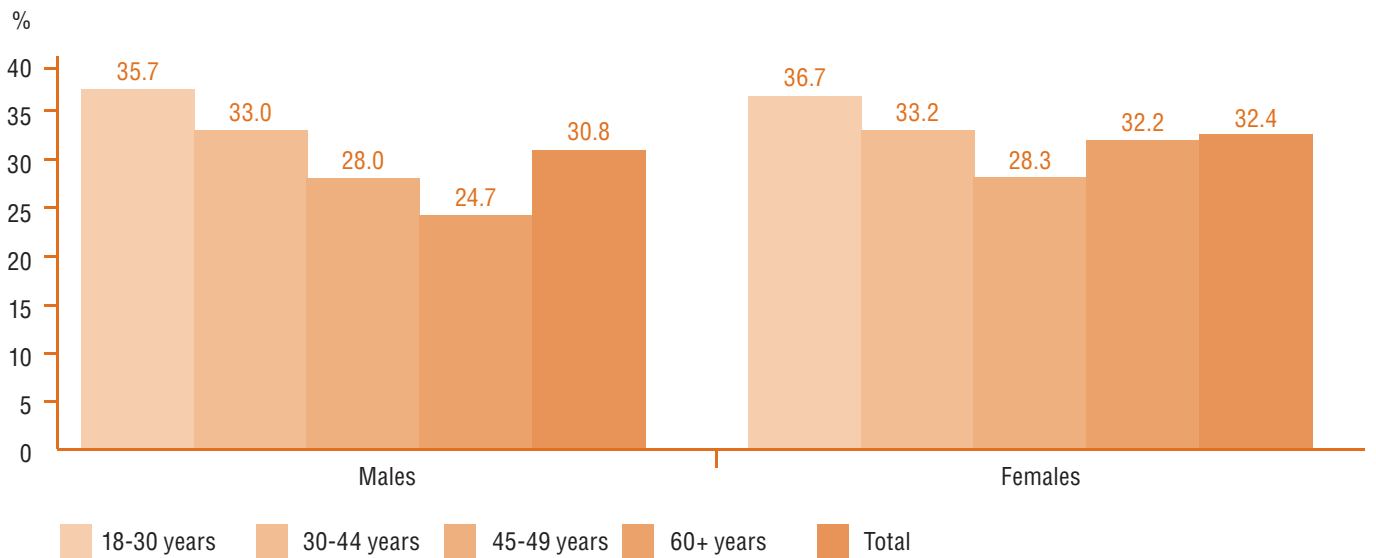
In 2006, rates of participation in walking for recreation generally increased with advancing age, with the exception of women aged 60 years and over. In contrast, participation in walking for transport generally decreased with advancing age.

Participation in walking for recreation by age: Western Australia – 2006



Walking for physical activity

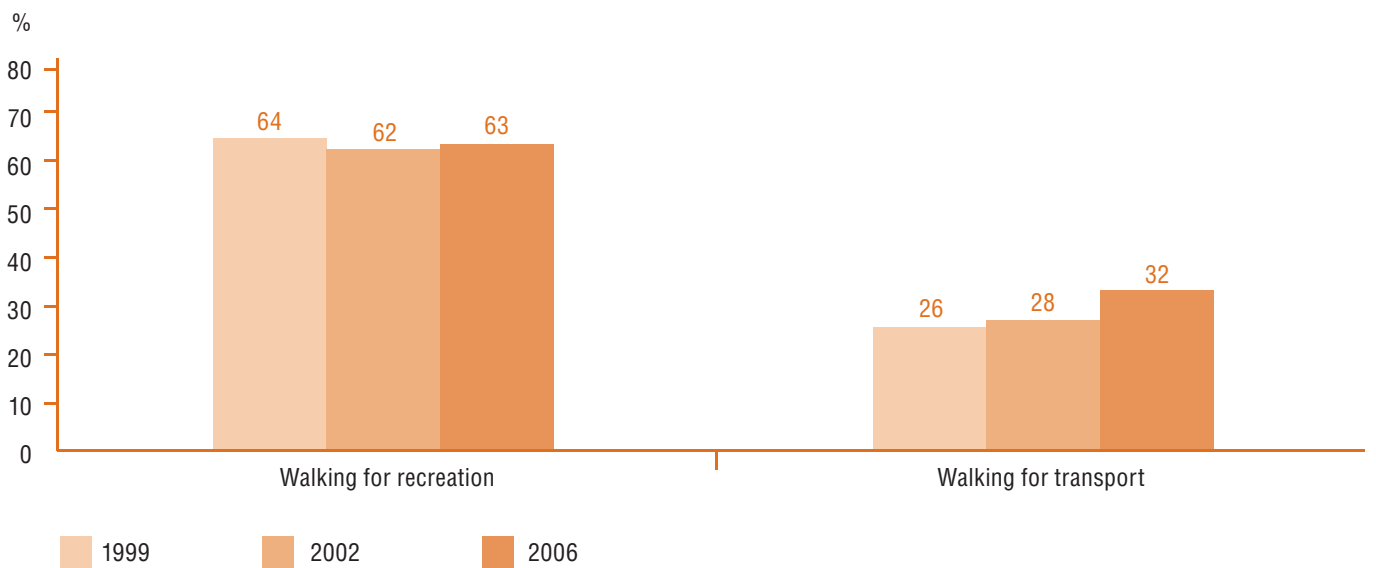
Participation in walking for transport by age: Western Australia – 2006



Changes over time⁷

In Western Australia, adult participation in walking for transport increased from 26% to 32% between 1999 and 2006. However, the proportion that walked for recreation has remained similar in that period.

Participation in walking over time: Western Australians aged 18 years and over



Walking for physical activity

Incidental physical activity⁸

Western Australians are encouraged to incorporate physical activity into their daily activities or chores as all activity is beneficial to health. Walking is a large component of incidental physical activity. In 2006, participation in all four incidental physical activity behaviours surveyed was higher for women than men.

Participation in Incidental Physical Activity: Western Australians aged 18 years and over – 2006

Type of activity	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Climb stairs	59.5	63.8	61.7
Take dog for a walk	52.3	63.9	58.2
Walk/cycle instead of 5 minute drive	53.8	61.0	57.4
Park vehicle further away	30.0	46.1	38.1

Every day, residents in metropolitan Perth make more than 250,000 private car trips that are less than one kilometre, and our dependence on the motor vehicle is increasing.⁹ Up to half of all car trips can be easily replaced by walking, cycling or public transport.¹⁰

Facilities used for physical activity¹¹

Walking can be undertaken anywhere. It is often undertaken on local streets, paths, at parks or the beach.

In 2006, local streets and footpaths were the most frequently used facilities used by Western Australian adults for physical activity. Females were more likely than males to have used cycle/ walk paths for physical activity.

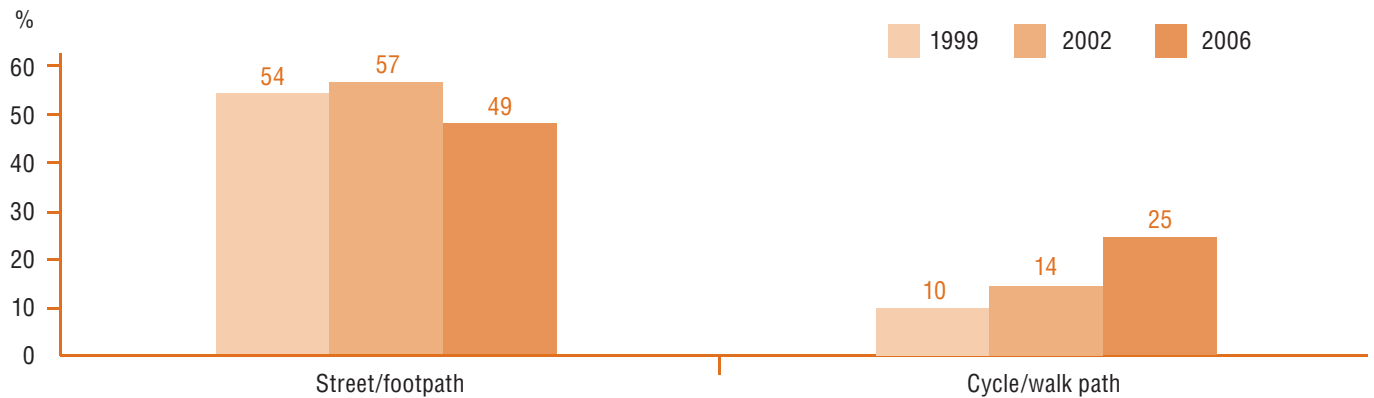
Facilities used for physical activity: Western Australians aged 18 years and over –2006

Facility	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Street/footpath	48.1	49.1	49
Home	45.1	50.2	48
Cycle/walk path	22.7	26.6	25
Gym	19.1	24.8	22
Public park	18.6	17.5	18
Beach	13.3	9.6	11

Walking for physical activity

The proportion of active adults using cycle/ walk paths increased from 10% in 1999 to 25% in 2006. This may reflect the increase in walking for transport. In contrast the use of streets/footpaths decreased in this time.

Facilities used for physical activity over time: Western Australians aged 18 years and over



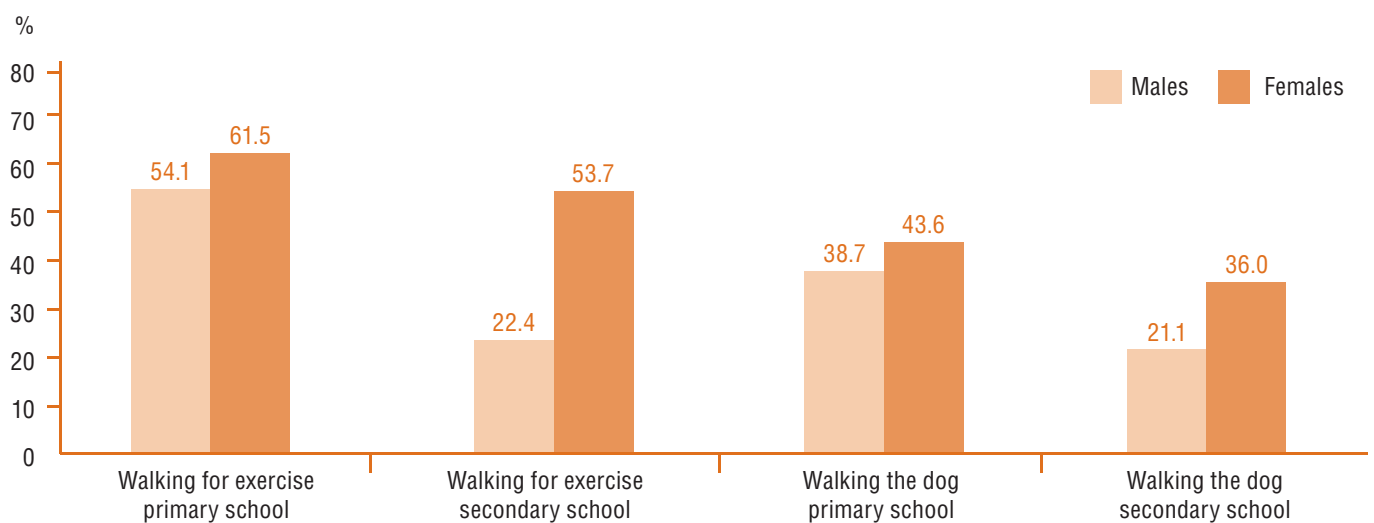
Walking by children and adolescents

In 2003 walking for exercise and walking the dog were among the top four activities for male and female students in primary and secondary school. Other popular activities included bike riding and playing with pets.¹²

Walking for exercise and walking the dog^{13,14}

In 2003, the proportions of students who walked for exercise or walked the dog were higher for females than males and higher for primary than secondary school students. In addition, walking for exercise was the most popular activity for secondary school females.

Walking: Western Australian children and adolescents – 2003



Walking for physical activity

Walking to or from school¹⁵

Walking to school has many benefits such as improved health and self-confidence.¹⁶

In 2003, the proportion of students who walked to or from school was higher for females than males.

Walking to or from school: Western Australian children and adolescents – 2003

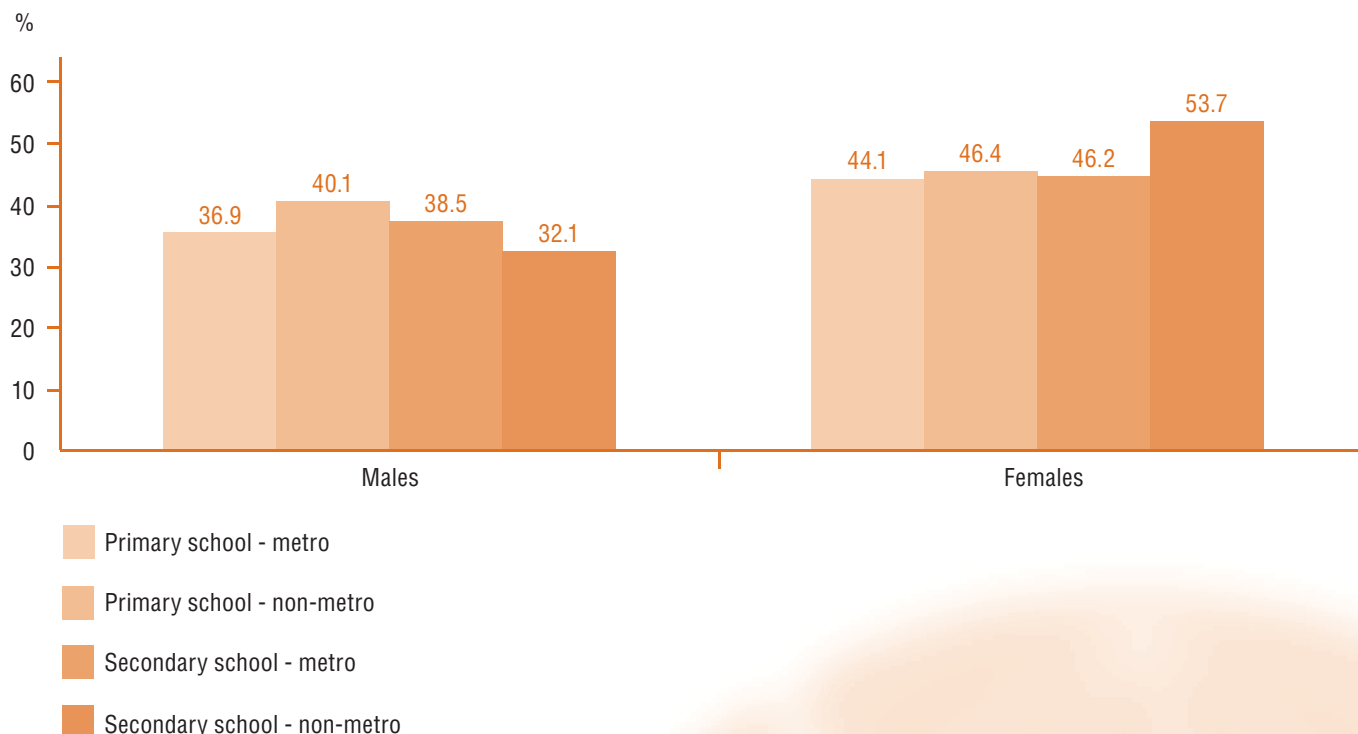
School	Males (%)	Females (%)
Primary	37.7	44.8
Secondary	36.7	48.2

In 2003, females in non-metropolitan secondary schools were the most likely group of students to have walked to school.

The proportion of students that walked to and from school generally increased from primary to secondary school. However, the reverse was true for secondary school males.

Generally, the proportions were higher for students in non-metropolitan schools with the exception of male secondary school students.

Walking to or from school: Western Australian children and adolescents – 2003



Walking for physical activity

Benefits of walking¹⁷

- Healthier lifestyles;
- Improved economy;
- Better environment;
- Social inclusion; and
- Greater use of public transport encouraged.

If 10% of people in Perth walked, rather than drove 1 km once a week, \$4.02 million a year could be saved in health care costs.¹⁸

Barriers to walking¹⁹

The following barriers to walking in Western Australia have been identified:

- Governance issues;
- Walking environment;
- Pedestrian safety;
- Security;
- Individual barriers;
- Mobility and access; and
- Availability of the 'walking for transport' option.

Western Australia has implemented a strategy for 'liveable neighbourhoods', which calls for walkable, mixed use towns and neighbourhoods and specifically aims to increase walking and cycling in the neighbourhood.²⁰

Endnotes

- ¹ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. Walk WA: A Walking Strategy for Western Australia 2007 – 2020. Department of Sport and Recreation, Government of Western Australia: 2007. p2.
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation. (Cat. no. 4177.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. p28.
- ³ Milligan, R., McCormack, G. R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006. Results from the Adult Physical Activity Survey. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p28.
- ⁴ Ibid. p29.
- ⁵ Ibid. p31.
- ⁶ Ibid. p32-33.
- ⁷ Ibid. p33.
- ⁸ Ibid. p41.
- ⁹ Premier's Physical Activity Task Force. (2007). Walk WA: A walking strategy for Western Australia 2007 – 2020. Department of Sport and Recreation, Government of Western Australia. p2.
- ¹⁰ Premier's Physical Activity Task Force. Physical activity, the good, the bad the urgency. Viewed 07/05/2008. <http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au/docs/Physical%20Activity%20-%20The%20good%20the%20bad%20the%20urgency.pdf>
- ¹¹ Milligan, R., McCormack, G. R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006. Results from the Adult Physical Activity Survey. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p34-35.
- ¹² Hands, B., Parker, H., Glasson, C., Brinkman, S. & Read, H. (2004). Physical Activity and Nutrition Levels in Western Australian Children and Adolescents: Report. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p40.
- ¹³ Hands, B., Parker, H., Glasson, C., Brinkman, S. & Read, H. (2004). Results of Western Australian Child and Adolescent Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey 2003 (CAPANS). Physical Activity Technical Report. p48-49.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p52-53.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. p55-56.
- ¹⁶ Department for Planning and Infrastructure. Better ways to get to school. Viewed 24/04/2008. <http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au/docs/TravelSmart%20-%20Better%20ways%20to%20school.pdf>
- ¹⁷ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. Walk WA: A Walking Strategy for Western Australia 2007 – 2020, appendices. Department of Sport and Recreation, Government of Western Australia: 2007. p6-10.
- ¹⁸ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. Physical activity – the good, the bad, the urgency. Viewed 07/05/2008. <http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au/docs/Physical%20Activity%20-%20The%20good%20the%20bad%20the%20urgency.pdf>
- ¹⁹ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. Walk WA: A Walking Strategy for Western Australia 2007 – 2020, appendices. Department of Sport and Recreation, Government of Western Australia: 2007. p11-16.
- ²⁰ Western Australian Planning Commission and Department for Planning and Infrastructure. (2007). Liveable neighbourhoods: a Western Australian government sustainable cities initiative. Perth: Western Australia, State of Western Australia. Viewed 02/05/2008. <http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/Publications/1594.aspx>