

Inverclyde Bothy Health Walks Annual Snapshot Survey December 2023



Introduction

The Inverclyde Bothy is a collaborative partnership project run by Cycling UK, funded by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) and Paths for All. Opened in summer 2018, the project is a 'collaborative active travel forum' and works with a wide variety of local community groups. The Bothy delivers Health Walks and supports external Inverclyde organisations to set up and run their own walks. Together, these Health Walks form the Inverclyde Health Walk Network. This year, Health Walks were expanded to include Buggy Walks.



Buggy Walks were introduced in June 2023 and have proven very popular.

To ensure the Health Walks are meeting the needs of the local community, once a year, NHSGGC (the funding body), request we undertake an annual 'snapshot' survey of active walkers. This snapshot survey sought to gather feedback from participants who had engaged with the project between November 2022 – October 2023.

Data Collection

In November 2023, an online survey was conducted with participants who had attended at least one Health Walk since November 2022. It was sent via email to 150 participants and 47 individuals responded; 3 further individuals completed a paper copy, bringing the total responses to 50 (33%).

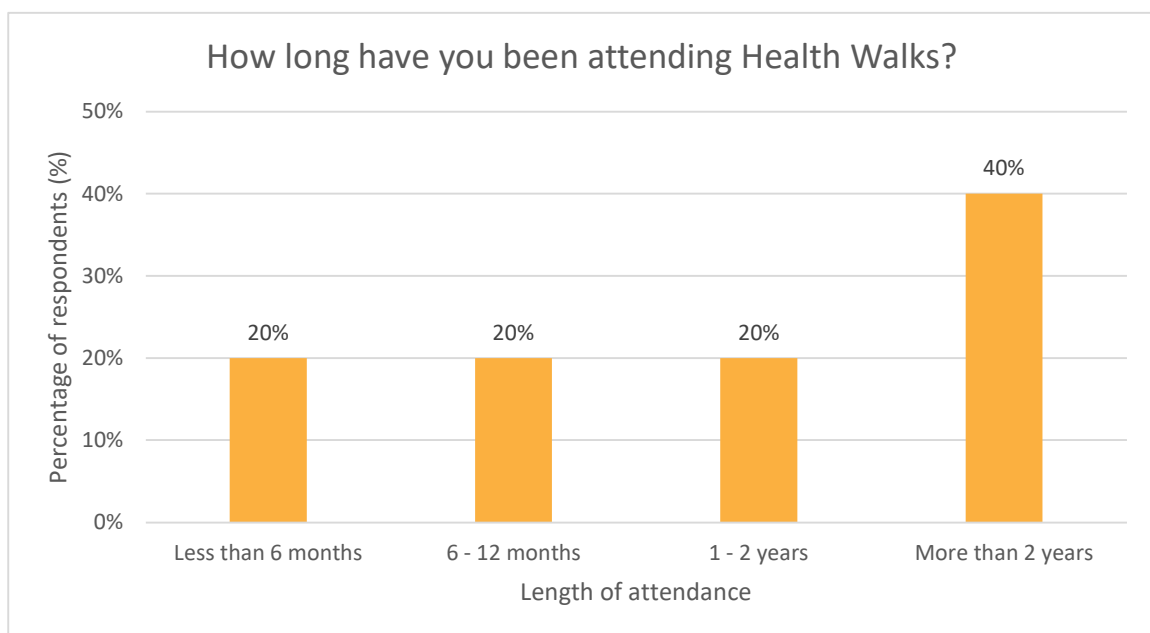
- 74% identified as female and 26% as male
- 64% were aged 65 or over
- 6% identified as disabled
- 84% were regular Health Walk attendees, 12% were Buggy Walk attendees, and 4% attended both
- 24% were volunteer Walk Leaders

Health Walk Attendance

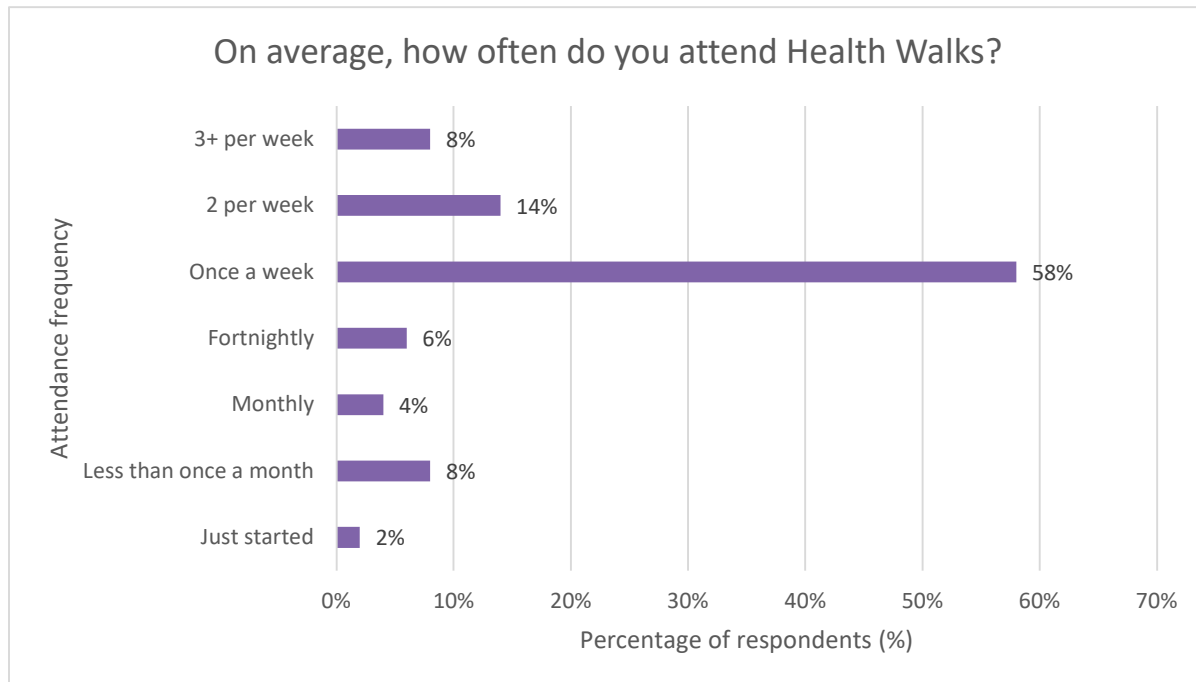
During this period, we:

- Delivered a total of 284 individual Health Walks
- Had 3671 instances of people participating in walks
- Welcomed 91 new walkers

The sample of walkers who responded to the survey were a mixture of new and longer-term walkers: 40% attended for more than two years and the other respondents were equally spread between less than 6 months, 6-12 months and 1-2 years of attendance – with each category accounting for 20% of respondents.



The majority of respondents (80%) attend Health Walks at least once a week. Four respondents (8%) attend less than once a month, but their experiences of the Health Walks are positive and two mentioned that they would attend more if they could (see Feedback and Future Considerations below).

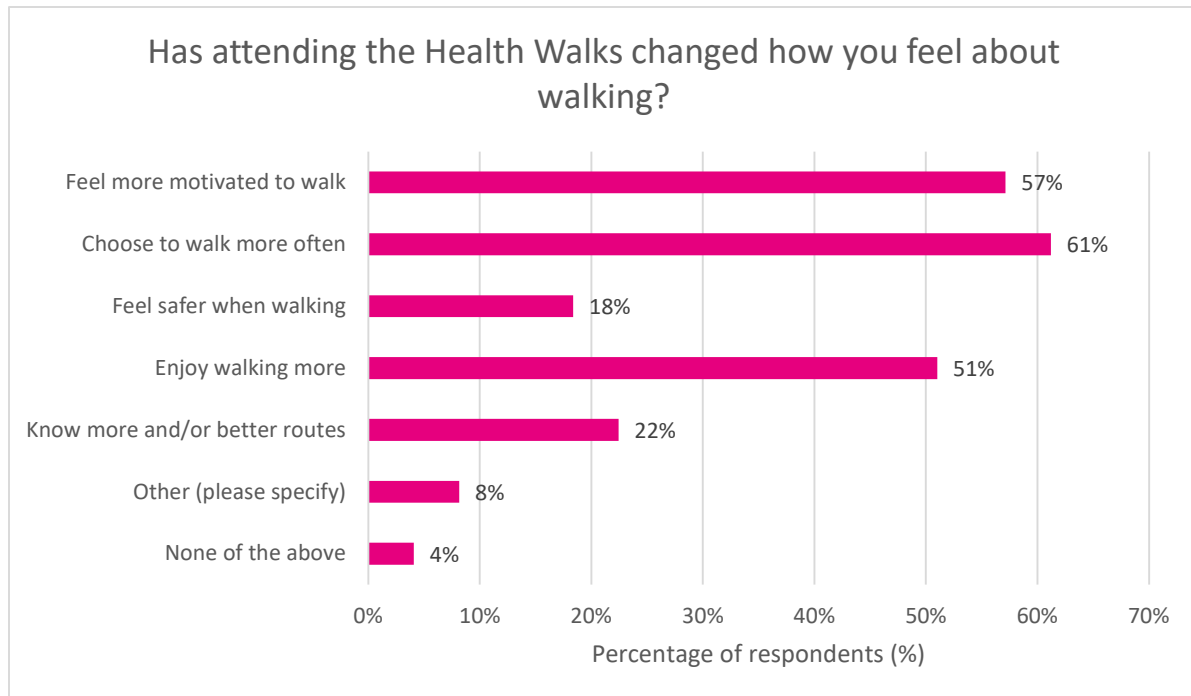


Impact of Health Walks

Impact on walking choices and confidence

The Inverclyde Health Walks continue to improve walking frequency, motivation and skills among participants.

- 61% choose to walk more often
- 57% feel more motivated to walk
- 51% enjoy walking more
- 22% know more and/or better routes



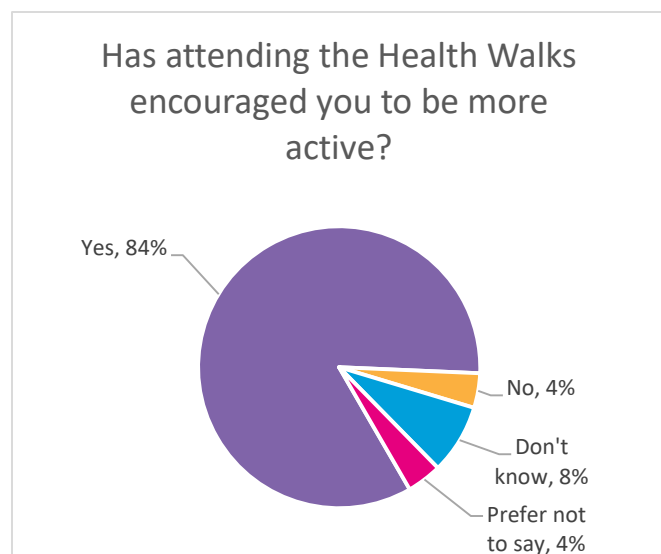
Impact on health and wellbeing

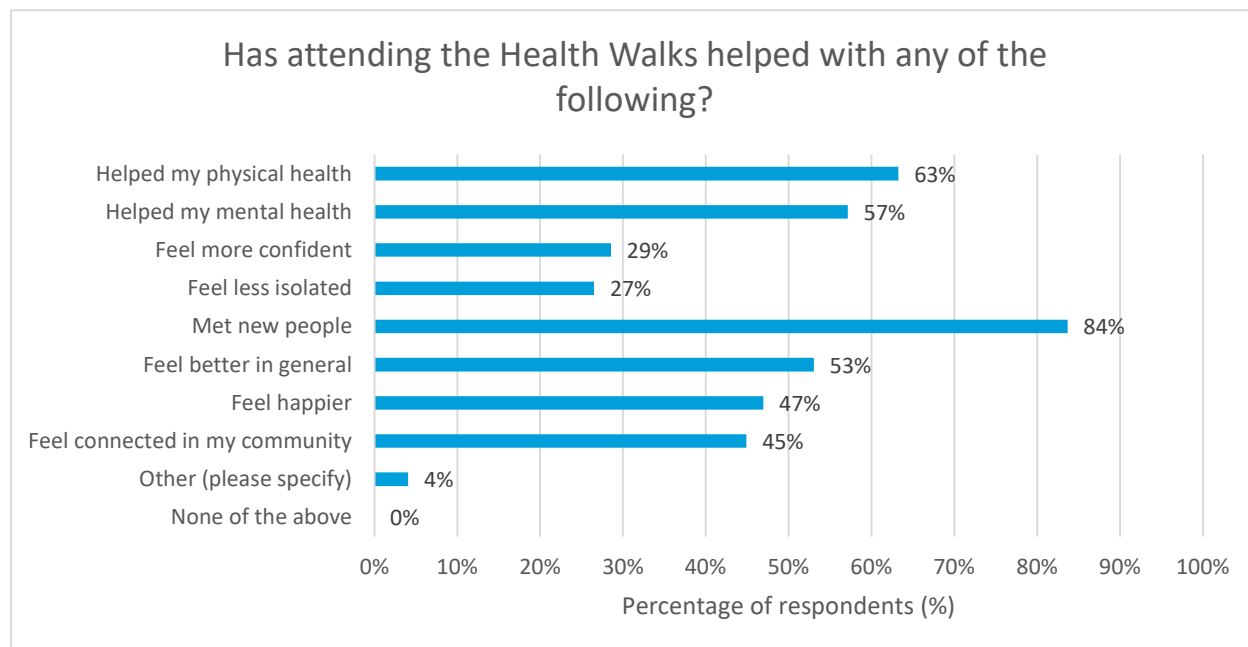
Over half of respondents (60%) had been physically active for 30 minutes or more on 5-7 days in the week prior to completing the survey and are therefore meeting the NHS recommended amount of physical activity per week. Of those who were physically active for 4 days or fewer (20 respondents), only four reported less than 150 minutes of physical activity over the past week and were not meeting the recommended levels of activity.

For all respondents, since attending Health Walks:

- 84% said they have been encouraged to be more active
- 84% said Health Walks helped them to meet new people and 27% felt less isolated
- 63% said the walks have helped their physical health
- 57% said the walks have helped their mental health
- 53% said they feel better in general

All respondents noted at least one benefit from the Health Walks.





Just under 60% of respondents reported having a physical or mental health condition. Of this group, 86% (n. 25) said that the Health Walks have helped them to manage their condition(s). There was an open text box in which walkers could comment about the impact of Health Walks for them. Several comments mentioned the importance of increased socialising and reduced isolation.

"I have anxiety and depression and the regular walks and talking with others during the walks as well as all the lovely views have really helped."

"Feeling less isolated has helped lift my spirits."

Others noted the value of Health Walks for their physical wellbeing.

"I have more energy and feel stronger thanks to the Health Walks."

"With Type 2 Diabetes, my sugar levels have been more stable [since joining the Health Walks]."

For those who reported that attending Health Walks encouraged them to be more active, there was the option to provide further details as to how this has happened. Several respondents stated that they were simply walking more often and for greater distances. Some also said that they had since taken up other forms of exercise (such as yoga and other exercise classes) or attended other sessions available at the Inverclyde Bothy (e.g., cycling lessons).



Walkers enjoying an Inverclyde Health Walk, regardless of the weather.

Everyday Journeys

We also wanted to measure what impact attending Health Walks had on participants' travel behaviour. This involved asking two questions:

- Since attending the Health Walks, have you started walking for more 'everyday journeys'? (e.g., walking for 20 minutes or less to local shops, services, appointments, etc.)
- Since attending the Health Walks, have you started walking for any journeys that you would have previously done by car or taxi?

Over half of respondents (61%) said they have started walking more for 'everyday journeys', and 78% of those who previously used a car/taxi have replaced some or all of these journeys with walking.

"I walk to my local shop now instead of driving."

"I now choose to walk rather than drive [...] several times a week and sometimes a day."

Buggy Walks

Buggy Walks were a new addition to Health Walks in 2023 and quickly proved popular with local parents and carers in Inverclyde. Between June and October (inclusive) there were 28 Buggy Walks with a total of 179 attendees. One attendee has already trained to become a Walk Leader and support the continuation of the Buggy Walks. These walks have been very well received by participants, with a notable impact on their wellbeing. The Inverclyde Bothy has also partnered with a local community café, Lyle Gateway, as a post-walk venue.



A good turn-out for the Christmas Buggy Walk followed by a lunch provided by Lyle Gateway community cafe.

“The buggy walk helped me get out and about after having a baby. I had post-partum anxiety and attending the walks really aided my confidence and the support was fantastic.”

“When I had my baby in September, I didn’t know any new mums. I met lots of lovely new mums during the buggy walk and we now attend other baby classes together. It has made me feel less isolated. Thank you, Jenni and all walk leaders .”

Volunteer feedback

Volunteers were asked for any feedback about their experience as Walk Leaders. Of the 12 volunteers that responded to the survey, all agreed that “volunteering as a walk leader is a positive experience”. There were only two suggestions for improvement: to have a team-building session for the volunteers and for more local publicity.

Future Considerations

All respondents were asked for any feedback as to how the Health Walks could be improved. Several did not have any suggestions for improvements but, of those who did, the most common theme was for more and/or different walking routes and on different days/times. The latter suggestion came from respondents who used to attend Health Walks more regularly but are no longer able to attend some of the existing sessions and would like to participate more frequently.

The feedback from volunteers and attendees will be considered in future planning for the Health Walks; however, the overwhelming majority of the feedback was positive and only minor suggestions for improvement were given.