

Love your Heart, Love your Community

A Tasmanian Citizen Science Project



A Community Summary of
what we did, what we learned,
and what difference it made.

loveyourheart.com.au



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Why we did this project

Heart health in Tasmania is an important public health issue. Compared with the rest of Australia, Tasmanians are generally less active², have poorer diets³, and experience higher rates of heart disease⁴.

The environments where people live, learn, work, play and age are important influences on healthy eating and physical activity. More walkable environments support more active lifestyles and ready access to healthy foods.⁵ This can decrease the risk of developing conditions like heart disease⁶, type 2 diabetes⁷ and high blood pressure. Neighbourhoods that make it easy to be active, eat well and feel connected help people maintain healthy heart habits.

Local and State Governments have policies that support healthy, walkable neighbourhoods but they often lack clear information about what community members experience day-to-day. This project gave Tasmanians the opportunity to share their insights and expertise about the places they live and how they experience walkability in their neighbourhood.

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WHAT IS CITIZEN SCIENCE?

Citizen science involves community members working alongside researchers to collect and share data. In this project, Tasmanians became “citizen scientists” by using the **Heart Foundation Community Walkability Checklist** while walking in their own neighbourhood. They reported what helped or hindered walking – including footpaths, shade, safety, landmarks, public transport, places to socialise, and local food options.

What we aimed to find out



We wanted to understand:

- Whether the Heart Foundation Community Walkability Checklist works well in Tasmanian communities
- What people notice about walking, access to healthy food, and neighbourhood features
- Differences between urban, regional and rural areas
- What people learn through participating
- Whether the project motivates people to take action in their community



What did we do?



1. Recruited Tasmanians from across the state

Promotion of the research occurred through local councils, community organisations, newspapers, and social media between August and September 2025.



2. We implemented a simple three-step process for participants

Participants:

- 1 Completed a short survey about health, their health habits and demographics
- 2 Used the digital Community Walkability Checklist while walking in their local area and rated various elements that influence walkability
- 3 Completed a feedback survey about their experience



3. We analysed the data

Researchers combined checklist scores, written comments and survey responses to identify common themes and key neighbourhood factors that influence walkability.

What did participants tell us about themselves?

108 Tasmanians completed the three-step process.



Participants ranged in age from

18-70+

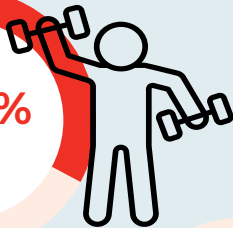


Two-thirds of participants were **women**

Many lived in Hobart and surrounds, but there was also **strong participation from the North and North-West.**



33%



A third of participants were **meeting physical activity and strength training guidelines.**

16% **met fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations.**

16%



Most rated their health as **“good” to “very good”**

Most participants were **motivated to participate in the research to give back to the community** and help collect data



What did we learn about Tasmanian neighbourhoods?

Participants walked in their local area and used the Heart Foundation Community Walkability Checklist to rate features that influence walkability. Across Tasmania, participants highlighted five major themes.



1 Footpaths are the biggest barrier to safe, enjoyable walking



The strongest and most consistent finding was that absent, poor quality, or unsafe footpaths were the biggest barrier to walking. People described:

- Missing footpaths
- Uneven, sloped or narrow paths
- Cars and bins blocking footpaths
- Overgrown vegetation
- Needing to walk on the road

"Most paths are too slim for two people and uneven"

"My neighbourhood needs a footpath... school children walk along the road verge."

"On bin day it is hard to get around, especially with a pram."

2 Traffic and infrastructure safety concerns shape people's confidence to walk



Concerns included:

- Fast-moving traffic
- Poor or inconsistent kerb ramps
- Difficult road crossings
- Sloped terrain that made areas feel inaccessible

"Some crossings don't feel safe due to vehicle speed."



3 Natural environments are a major asset



Beaches, parks, rivers and green spaces were repeatedly named as what people love about walking where they live.

"Living close to the beach adds to the enjoyment of walking."

"Devonport is beautiful along the waterfront."

4 Connectivity matters



Participants wanted:

- More continuous walking networks
- Better links between local streets, parks and shops
- More off-road paths

"Lack of connecting paths is frustrating."

5 Access to healthy food varies



Where local shops provided fresh food options, about half of participants rated access positively. But some communities had fewer options and less variety, with fast food being more accessible than healthy options.

How did participants feel about using the Heart Foundation Community Walkability Checklist?

Most participants found the Checklist clear, easy to use and comprehensive.

People said it helped them:

- Notice issues they had never paid attention to before that impact walking in their area
- Think about the needs of others, such as older adults or people using wheelchairs or prams
- Appreciate the good things in their area

“The checklist highlighted why I enjoy my walks so much.”

“It made me notice details I hadn’t considered before.”



Where improvements were suggested for the Checklist:

Some participants thought the Checklist could be improved through:

- Refining for use on mobile phones
- Providing more “not applicable” options, particularly for rural residents where features may be absent
- Providing options to comment throughout
- Expanding rating choices to allow for more diverse responses

What difference did the project make?

For some participants the project changed how they thought about walkability, felt about their area, motivated them to contribute to improving their neighbourhoods, and expand their walking.

It encouraged people to think differently about their surroundings

Participants reported becoming more observant and more aware of:

- Footpath quality
- Safety issues
- Shade and greenery
- Public spaces
- Access to healthy food

“I saw dangerous spots I had overlooked before.”

It increased empathy and awareness of accessibility needs

Many came to understand the challenges faced by:

- People using prams
- Older adults
- People using mobility aids
- Children

“I hadn’t realised how impassable some paths would be for someone with less mobility.”



It motivated people to consider taking action

Many participants planned to:

- Contact their local council
- Share concerns in neighbourhood groups
- Encourage others to walk more
- Start or join walking groups
- Continue observing and reporting issues



"I plan to share findings with community groups and advocate for improvements."

"I am motivated to pay more attention so I can speak up for positive changes."

Some felt they were already strong advocates and/or didn't need to take further action.

Others said they wanted to act but felt unsure how or felt their influence was limited – especially in rural communities where infrastructure change is often slower. *See our 5 Tips for Walkability Advocacy for ideas.*⁸

It reinforced what people already knew – especially experienced walkers

Participants who regularly walk, advocate or care for young children often said the Checklist confirmed their existing knowledge.



"I was already aware of the issues because I walk with a pram."

"I appreciate my walking area already and no changes are needed."

It encouraged more walking and exploration

People discovered:

- New paths
- New viewpoints
- Parks and destinations they hadn't visited

"I walked different routes to see other areas in my community."

Several said their **enjoyment of walking** increased.



Overall Impact of the Project



Amplified community voice on walking, safety and local environments



Built knowledge and awareness about what makes neighbourhoods walkable and heart-healthy



Motivated advocacy for improving walkability



Highlighted inequities between neighbourhoods



Strengthened understanding of the connection between walkability and health



Provided valuable local data for councils, the Heart Foundation, and researchers

Endnotes

- 1 This project was approved by the UTAS Human Research Ethics Committee (ID 32263)
- 2 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey-state-and-territory-findings/latest-release>
- 3 Danielle Baird and Gilly Hendrie, 2023 CSIRO Healthy Diet Score 2015-2023 An analysis of diet quality comparing the diets of Australians with recommendations in the Australian Dietary Guidelines https://www.csiro.au/-/media/Health/Healthy-Diet-Score-2023/Diet-score-2023-Report_September.pdf
- 4 Department of Health, 2025 Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-05/attachment_1_-_tasmanian_cardiac_strategy_-_7_may_2025.pdf
- 5 American Heart Foundation, 2024 Neighborhoods and Cardiovascular Health: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association. Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes Volume 17, Issue 1 <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/HCQ.0000000000000124>
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Dendup T, Feng X, Clingan S, Astell-Burt T. Environmental Risk Factors for Developing Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: A Systematic Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2018 Jan 5;15(1):78
- 8 Cleland V et al. 'Love your Heart, Love Your Community 5 Tips to have your say on walkability'. February 2026. University of Tasmania.

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