

# Using Physical Activity Challenges to Increase Sustainable Commuting

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November 8<sup>th</sup> 2018

# What are Physical Activity Challenges?

- ❖ Behavioural change initiatives - good practice in the areas of health promotion, community based social marketing and travel planning
- ❖ Aim to act as stimuli to encourage more active travel on the commute
- ❖ Directly support a Workplace Smarter Travel Plan
- ❖ Staff participation can support wider corporate objectives - team-building and employee wellbeing
- ❖ Can encourage longer term physical activity & modal shift

# The Essential Principles of Smarter Travel Challenges



**MAKE IT  
FUN**

- **Gamification**
- **Leaderboards**
- **Competitions**
- **Prizes**



**MAKE IT  
SOCIAL**

- **Team structure**
- **Events**
- **Company platform**
- **Story telling & social media**



**MAKE IT  
EASY**

- **The right 'connection moment' - e.g. Sept (back to school); May (start of Summer)**
- **Supportive structures**

# Step Challenge in Action An Overview



# Step Challenge Specifics

- Fun & free annual event to promote walking
- Teams of 3-6 people
- To get people walking for 4 weeks (habit-forming)
- Tracking steps on a step counter or app
- About encouraging longer term physical activity & modal shift



# Communication – Motivation – Support Key Resources

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- Posters
- Step Log
- APP and Step Counters
- Coordinator Guide
- Team Captain Guide
- [www.stepchallenge.ie](http://www.stepchallenge.ie)
- Weekly Competitions
- Weekly Leaderboards
- Weekly email reminders



# Key metrics from the 2017 Challenge

4,630 participants from 65 workplaces participated

## Before the Step Challenge:

- 52% arrived by car
- 11% arrived on foot
- 47% reported that almost no walking was involved in their commute (walked to car, nearby bus stop etc.)

## During the Step Challenge

- 39% reporting walking more than 5,000 extra steps per day
- 34% reported walking 2,000-5,000 extra steps per day
- 7% said the extra walking was part of their commute
- 58% said the extra walking was a combination of walking before work, on the commute, during work and after work.

## After the Step Challenge

- 52% reported they have maintained their increased walking on a regular basis
- 44% reported they have maintained their increased walking on an occasional basis
- 82% reported they intend to continue their extra walking

# Participants' Viewpoint

## Main benefits gained (from participants survey n1067)

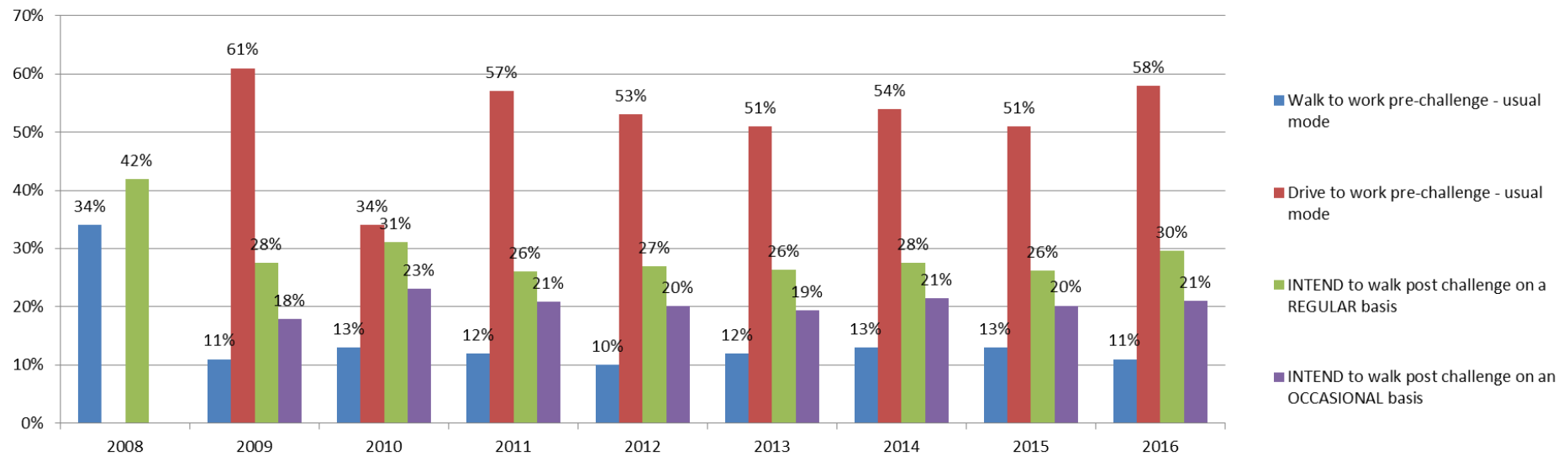
1. Felt better
2. Enjoyed being part of a team
3. Felt fitter
4. Lost weight
5. Made new friends at work





# 9 Year Review

Respondents intending to walk to work post-challenge 2008-2016



# Cycle Challenge in Action

## An Overview



# Cycle Challenge Specifics

Fun & free annual event (three weeks in May)

Teams of 3-6 people

To get people cycling for three weeks (habit-forming)

About encouraging longer term physical activity & modal shift:

- Shift in thinking – sport to functional
- Recruiting new/lapsed cyclists

*Cycle into Summer*  
9<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> May

Starting from scratch?  
Already experienced?  
Getting back into cycling?

Then the 2018 Smarter Travel  
Cycle Challenge is for YOU!

This fun, team based event allows cyclists of all levels  
to get fit, get outdoors and cycle into summer!

Great prizes to be won every week  
Register and log trips at [www.activetravellogger.ie](http://www.activetravellogger.ie)

# How does it work?

- Team members track number of trips (emphasis on trip frequency NOT distance)
- Active Travel Logger used to regularly log trips
- Leaderboards
- Prizes – emphasis on fun and inclusivity (not a race):
  - Top of the leaderboard
  - Best Workplace (participation rate)
  - Best Coordinator
  - Best New Cyclists & Best New Cyclist Story & lots of prizes during challenge

# Smarter Travel Cycle Challenge 2018

- 47 workplaces and campus
- 617 participants across 149 teams
- Recorded over 16,400 trips by bike during the three week challenge in May 2018
- 14% of participants were 'new cyclists' (people who had not cycled before, or in the previous six months)
- 39% of participants were female and 60% were male

# Smarter Travel Cycle Challenge 2018

- 57% of participants said that the prior to the Challenge, the bike was their main mode of transport for the commute
- 78% of respondents to the post-Challenge survey intend to cycle to work on a regular basis. This represents a 21% change in favour of regular cycling on the commute
- A further 15% of survey respondents intend to cycle to work on an occasional basis

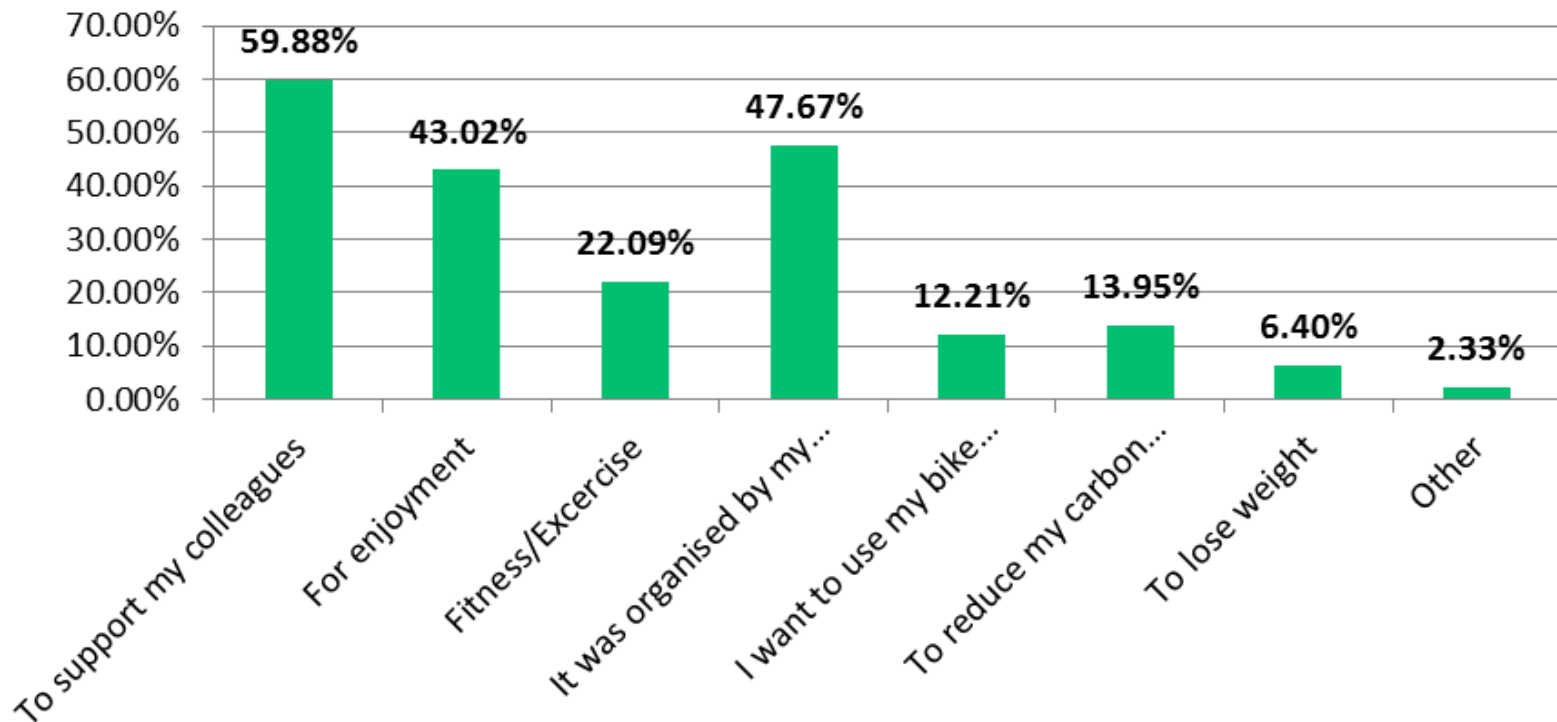
# Smarter Travel Cycle Challenge 2018

Physical activity levels increased over the course of the Cycle Challenge:

- 90% of respondents stated that they were active for at least 30 minutes 5 days per week during the challenge
- This compares to 76% of participants who were active prior to the Challenge

# Reasons for Participating 2018

What were your main reasons for participating in the Cycle Challenge?





## Main benefits of participating

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- Enjoyed being part of a team (60% of respondents)
- Feeling good about myself (47% of respondents)
- Increased fitness/ took more exercise (45% of respondents)
- Environmental benefits/ reduced carbon footprint (37%)

## Step Challenge vs. Cycle Challenge

Walking is something that many people can do every day:

- a low cost, easy default option, safe, requires little or no equipment or thought

Cycling - the bar in terms of *Ability* is raised:

- not as readily accessible; additional costs, time and effort (e.g. access to a bike, gear, more defined routes)
- real & perceived safety issues
- greater pre-planning and some know-how

## How can we do more to lower the *Ability* bar?

- To increase participation in Challenges (particularly by ‘newbies’) – make it SIMPLE!
- Identify associated psychological and physical barriers of challenge (incl. wider environment)
- The Smarter Travel Workplace & Coordinator can demonstrate support!
  - ✓ cycle training, showers, tax saver, secure cycle parking, provision of pumps, doctor bike, etc.

# Conclusions

- Positive feedback from participants and participating workplaces each year
- Demonstrates good practice in terms of behavioural change interventions
- Potential to expand or replicate the Challenges
- Step Challenge formed the basis for a walking challenge for students in Partner third level campuses

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