

# 2009 National Foot Health Assessment

commissioned by



**“listening to the world’s feet”**



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*Behind Every Business Decision*

## Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<b>Methodology</b>	3
<b>Key Findings</b>	5
<b>Foot Health Insights</b>	9
Foot Ailments/Conditions Ever Experienced	
Foot Ailments/Conditions Currently Experienced	
Top 20 Most Persistent Foot Conditions	
Foot Pain Experienced over the Past Two Weeks	
Self-Reported Level of Foot Health	
Broken Bone Incidence	
Incidence of Foot Surgery	
“Fat Pad” Self Assessment	
Fat Pad Atrophy Awareness	
Time Spent on Feet vs. Sitting Down	
Average Time Spend Barefooted Each Day	
Foot-Related Opinions and Perceptions	
<b>Foot-Related Medical Care</b>	18
Health Care Specialists Consulted for Foot Issues	
Most Recent Foot-Related Consultation	
Foot-Impact Disease Incidence	
Diabetic Foot Health Insights	
Foot Care Products Ever Used	
<b>Impact of Foot Health on Exercise and Activity Participation</b>	23
Activities Impacted by Foot Conditions	
Active Sport Activities Limited by Foot Health Conditions	
Impact of Foot Health on Sport/Exercise Attitudes & Perceptions	
Number of Days per Month Participating in Exercise/Active Sports	
Impact of Foot Health on the Ability to Work	
<b>Shoe Purchasing Insights</b>	29
Walking Gate Analysis	
Incidence of Brannock Device Use	
Number of Shoes Tried on During Last Purchase Occasion	
<b>IPFH Concluding Remarks</b>	31

## Methodology & About The NPD Group, Inc.

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### **Methodology**

This study was conducted via the World Wide Web from November 19 – November 25, 2008. The survey was administered to a nationally representative sample of males and females age 21+ from the NPD Online Panel.

Based on experience with web surveys, NPD sent a somewhat disproportionately larger number of invitations to younger adults because of their traditionally lower response rates. Weighting factors were then applied to the returned surveys to bring the final data in line with the US Census demographic profile so the final results could be projected to the total US 21+ male and female population.

For example, the percentage of females between 30 and 39 years of age is 18.5% based on the US Census. The actual percentage of returned surveys in that age group was 19.6% . A weighting factor of .944 was applied to the data from this sub-group to bring their influence back down to 18.5%.

The completed surveys yielded a final analyzable base of 1,376 respondents.

### **About The NPD Group, Inc.**

**The NPD Group, Inc. (NPD)** is a global market information company that measures product movement and consumer attitudes and behavior. Since 1967 The NPD Group has provided reliable and comprehensive consumer and retail information for a wide range of industries. Today, more than 1,400 manufacturers and retailers rely on NPD to help them better understand their customers, product categories, distribution channels and competition in order to help guide their businesses. Information from The NPD Group is available for the following industry sectors: automotive, beauty, consumer technology, entertainment, fashion, food and beverage, foodservice, home, software, sports, technology distribution channel, toys and wireless. For more information, visit [www.npd.com](http://www.npd.com).

### **About The Institute for Preventive Foot Health**

The mission of the The Institute for Preventive Foot Health is to promote the awareness of, and the need for, Preventive Foot Health as a key to long-term quality of human life. The Institute also promotes research and education dedicated to preventive foot health practices, products and procedures that contribute to the general well being of the human foot. This study – the **2009 National Foot Health Assessment** – is the Institute's latest work in fulfilling this mission. For more information, visit [www.ipfh.org](http://www.ipfh.org).

## Key Findings

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### **Foot Health Insights**

•When asked about their overall level of foot health, two-thirds of US Citizens age 21+ assess their feet as being in “very good” or “good” health. While one in seven consider their level of foot health to be “excellent,” a larger number – one in five – report having a “fair” or “poor” level of foot health. These self-reported foot health levels tend to decline slightly as individuals get older.

•Overall, nearly nine in ten Americans age 21+ have experienced at least one foot-related ailment or condition at some point in their life. Individuals become more likely to suffer from foot ailments as they get older. The most commonly experienced foot conditions are ankle sprains, foot soreness/sore or achy feet, blisters, calluses, and athlete’s foot.

•While 88% of Americans age 21+ report ever suffering from a foot related condition, two-thirds (67%) say they currently experience a foot ailment. Women are slightly more likely than men to report experiencing a current foot ailment (70% vs. 65%).

•When asked about the highest level of foot pain they had experienced during the past two weeks, about two-thirds of Americans reported having some level of foot pain. Women are significantly more likely than men to experience foot pain, with 72% reporting foot pain over the past two weeks compared to 64% of men. Although the incidence of experiencing foot pain is relatively consistent across various age groups within each gender, the magnitude of foot pain tends to increase as individuals get older. Among members of each gender who report experiencing foot pain, those age 35+ report a higher level of pain on average than Americans age 21-34.

•About six in ten (59%) US citizens age 21+ report seeing signs of their foot’s fat pad wearing away, describing their fat pad as either “slightly thin” or “very thin.” Fewer than one in five respondents said they were aware that their fat pad would wear away over time. Older respondents age 50+ are less likely to be aware of the risk of fat pad atrophy, despite being significantly more likely to experience the condition.

•Although Americans have been criticized for becoming increasingly sedentary, they are actually more likely to be found on their feet – either standing or moving around - than sitting down. On average, from the time they get up in the morning until they go to bed at night, US citizens age 21+ spend 60% of the day on their feet.

•More than half of US citizens report spending an hour or more barefooted each day. Women spend significantly more time barefooted than men, with females nearly twice as likely to spend four or more hours a day wearing no footwear at all. Younger age groups also tend to spend significantly more time barefooted than their older counterparts. Nearly seven in ten respondents age 21-34 report spending an hour or more barefooted each day; less than half of respondents in the 50+ age group spent as much time wearing no shoes or socks.

### **Foot-Related Medical Care**

•Just over one half of Americans age 21+ have consulted a health care specialist specifically for a foot-related issue. The incidence of visiting a medical professional for a foot issue is significantly higher among older age groups. Family physicians, podiatric physicians, and orthopedic/sports surgeons are the professionals most commonly consulted for foot-related medical issues.

**Foot-Related Medical Care (cont.)**

- Among those who reported ever visiting any health care specialist for a foot issue, only 31% have consulted a health care specialist for their feet within the past year. The majority of respondents last consulted a medical professional for a foot issue two or more years ago. Family physicians and orthopedic/sports surgeons are the health care specialists most likely to have been visited in the past year.
- One in five Americans age 21+ suffer from a disease with known foot-related complications. Type II diabetes is the most common foot related disease in the U.S., with one in ten Americans age 21+ suffering from the condition.
- Members of the 50+ age group are more than twice as likely to suffer from diseases with known foot-related complications as those age 35-49, and are almost nine times more likely than those in the 21-34 age group to suffer from diseases with known foot-related complications. About one in six adults age 50+ reported suffering from Type II diabetes and about one in seven mentioned suffering from osteoarthritis.
- Although diabetes is the most common foot-related disease in the US, only about half of sufferers (48%) say they have regular screenings with their doctor to assess their foot health.
- Overall, three-quarters of US residents age 21+ have used some sort of product designed to treat or relieve symptoms of foot ailments/conditions. Foot creams, over-the-counter shoe inserts and foot powders are the most popular foot care products purchased by consumers.
- Men, who are more likely than women to suffer from athlete's foot and foot odor, are also significantly more likely to purchase foot powders. Females, on the other hand, being more likely to experience blisters and calluses than men, are also significantly more likely than men to report treating their foot ailments/conditions with band-aids and moleskin pads.

**Impact of Foot Health on Activity Participation**

- Although very few foot ailment sufferers say they are completely unable to participate in certain activities, a significant number mention participating in activities "less often" or with "less enjoyment" because of their foot conditions. Exercise/active sports participation is the activity most strongly impacted by foot conditions, with more than one in three sufferers saying their foot ailments limit or prevent their participation in this activity.
- Respondents who mentioned being limited in their ability to participate in exercise/active sports are most likely to say they would participate in fitness walking, dancing, and hiking if not hampered by their foot health.
- A very direct correlation is evident between an individual's level of foot health and their attitudes regarding sports and exercise. People who describe their level of foot health as "fair" or "poor" are significantly less likely to say they "exercise frequently to stay in shape", "really enjoy participating in sports", and that they are "active weekly in sports and fitness" compared to those with "good" or "excellent" foot health.
- Foot health also appears to have a direct impact on the number of days per month a person exercises or participates in active sports. Compared to those who describe their foot health as "good" or better, respondents who describe their foot health as "fair" or "poor" are twice as likely to say they never participate in exercise or active sports (17% vs. 28%).

***Impact of Foot Health on Activity Participation (cont.)***

•Nearly one in four Americans say their foot ailments have limited their ability to work or their effectiveness on the job. About one in seven respondents say they continue to work, but with less proficiency due to their foot ailments/conditions. Overall, nearly 8% of respondents say they have missed at least one day of work due to their foot ailments.

***Shoe Purchasing Insights***

•Overall, only one in twenty consumers say their walking gait was analyzed during their most recent shoe purchase occasion. This rate is relatively consistent across all age groups.

•One in five respondents indicated having their feet measured in a Brannock device during their most recent shoe purchase. The rate of usage is significantly higher among males than females (25% vs. 15%).

•Women reported trying on significantly more pairs of shoes during their last purchasing occasion than men. On average, women tried on 3.7 pairs of shoes to men's 2.8 pairs. More than half of men tried on just one or two pairs of shoes before making a purchase; only 38% of women made their last shoe purchase this quickly.



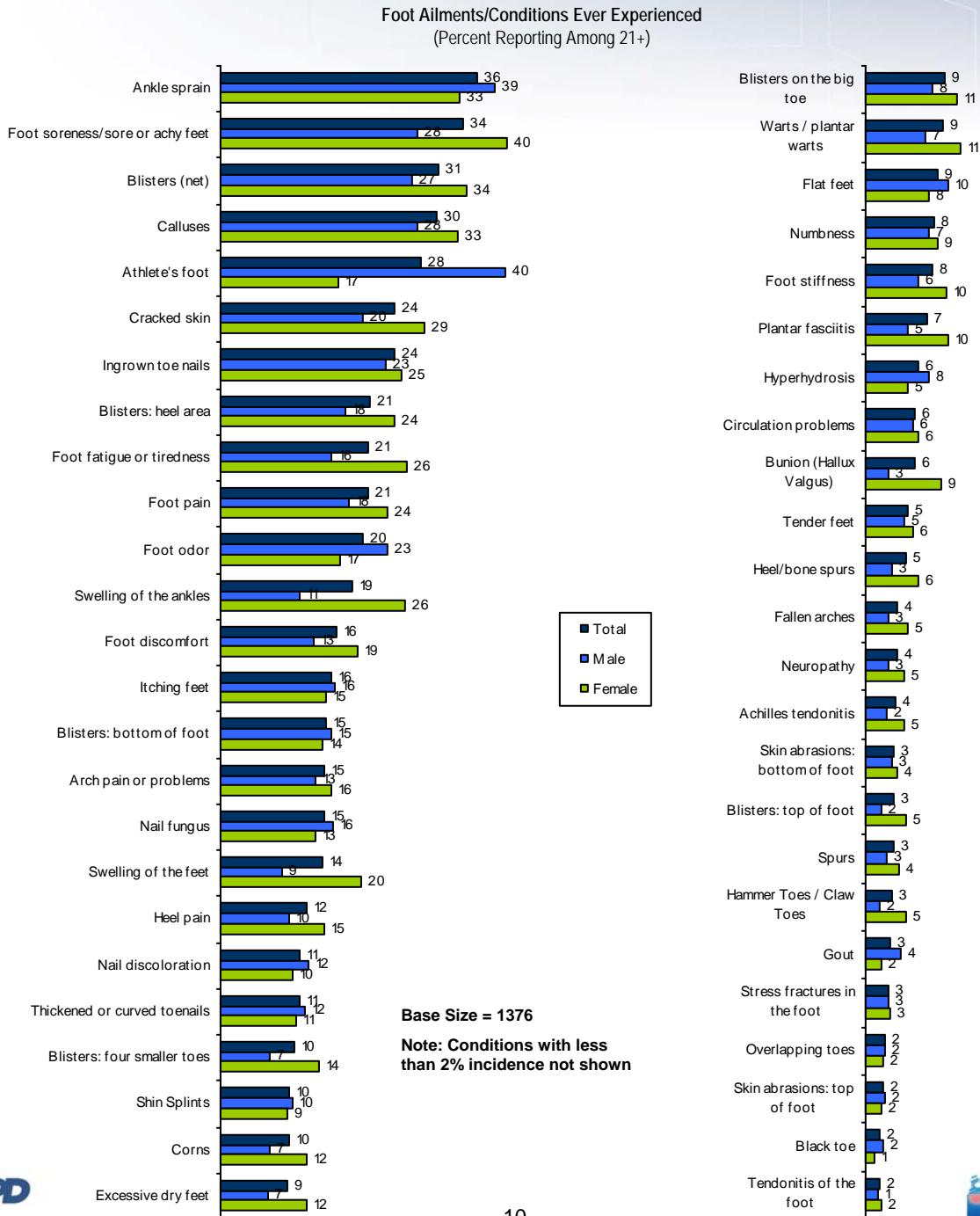
## Foot Health Insights

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**Foot Ailments/Conditions Ever Experienced**

Overall, 88% of US residents age 21+ have experienced at least one foot-related ailment or condition at some point in their lives. The survey data reveals that age is a stronger factor than gender when it comes to the likelihood of an individual to report suffering from foot ailments.

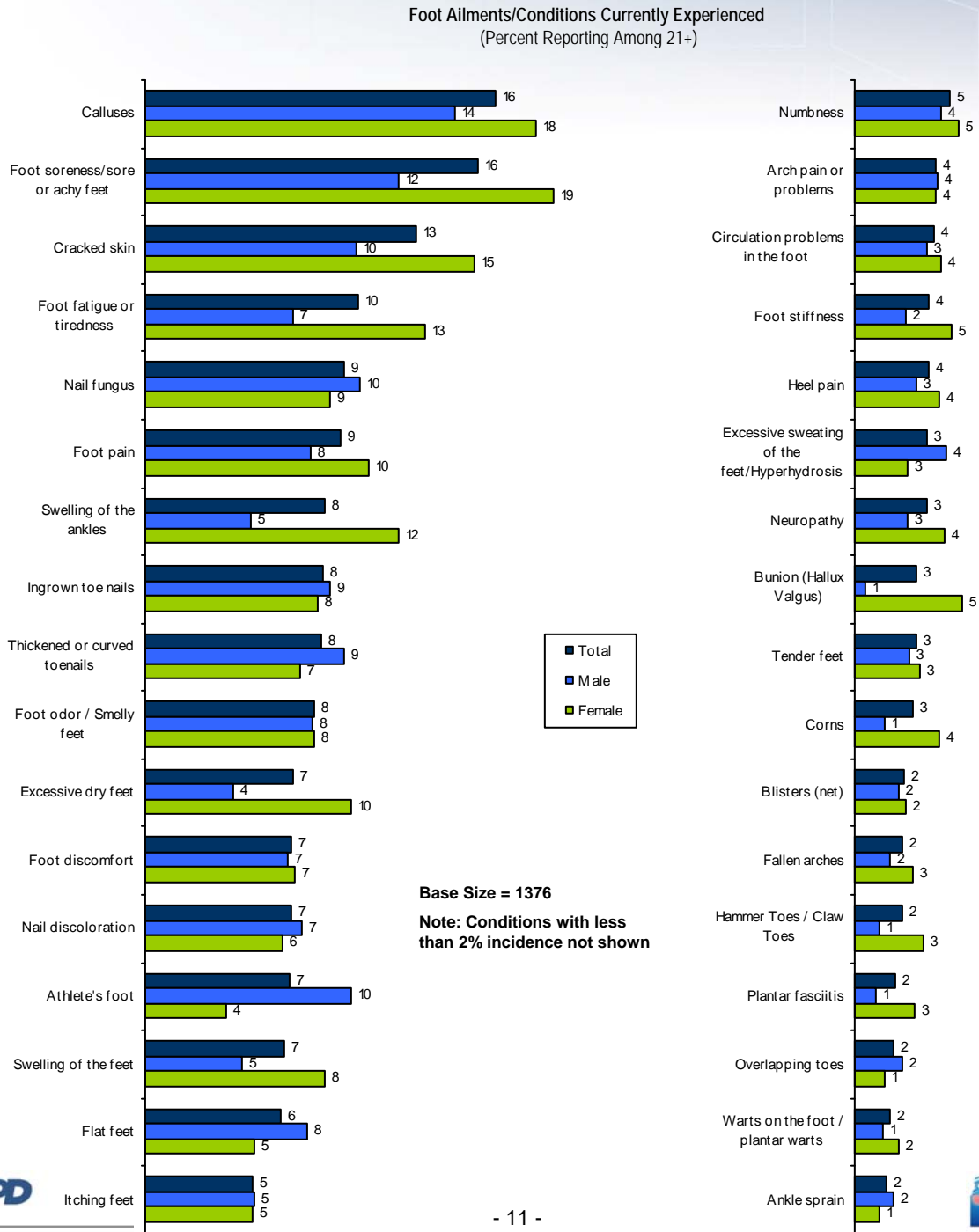
While the incidence of experiencing foot conditions is consistent across gender, men and women report suffering from a different litany of foot conditions. Ankle sprains, athlete's foot, and foot odor are strongly associated with men, while conditions such as foot soreness, blisters, calluses, cracked skin, foot fatigue, and swelling of the ankles or feet are all more likely to be experienced by women.



**Foot Ailments/Conditions Currently Experienced**

While nearly nine in ten (88%) US residents age 21+ report ever suffering from a foot-related condition, two-thirds (67%) say they currently experience a foot ailment. Women are slightly more likely to report experiencing a current foot ailment than men (70% vs. 65%).

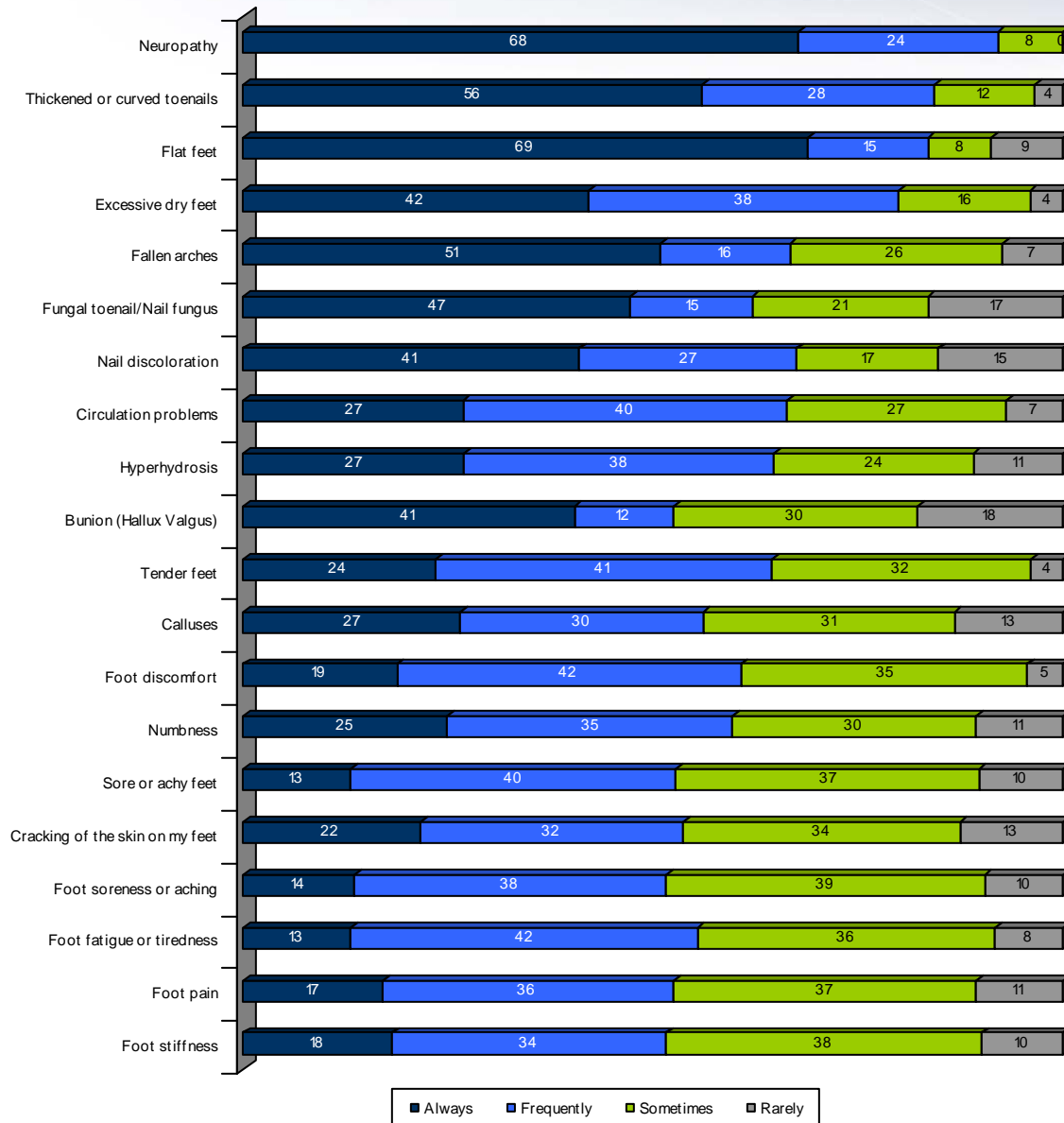
Calluses, foot soreness, cracked skin, and foot fatigue are the four most commonly reported current foot conditions, with all of these more likely to be experienced by females than men. Athlete's foot is the only condition significantly more likely to be currently experienced by males.



**Top 20 Most Persistent Foot Conditions**

Neuropathy, thickened/curved toenails, and flat feet are among the most persistent foot-related conditions, with the majority of sufferers saying they “always” experience these ailments. Excessive dry feet are also a persistent condition, with four in five sufferers saying they experience this condition “always” or “frequently.” Foot-related soreness, tiredness, pain and stiffness rank significantly lower when it comes to the frequency of these conditions being experienced by sufferers.

Top 20 Most Persistent Foot Conditions  
(Among those experiencing each condition\*)

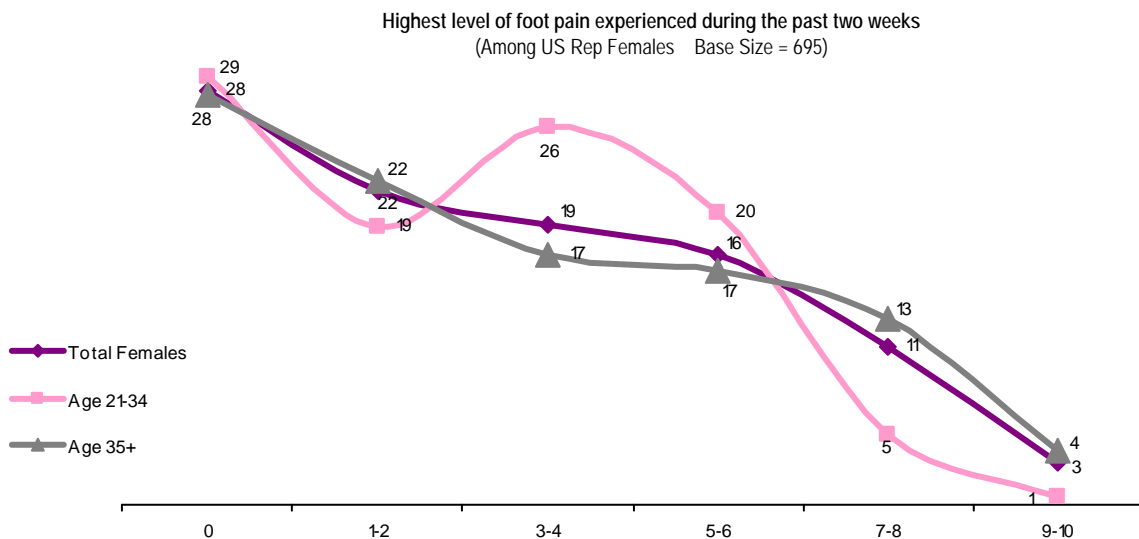
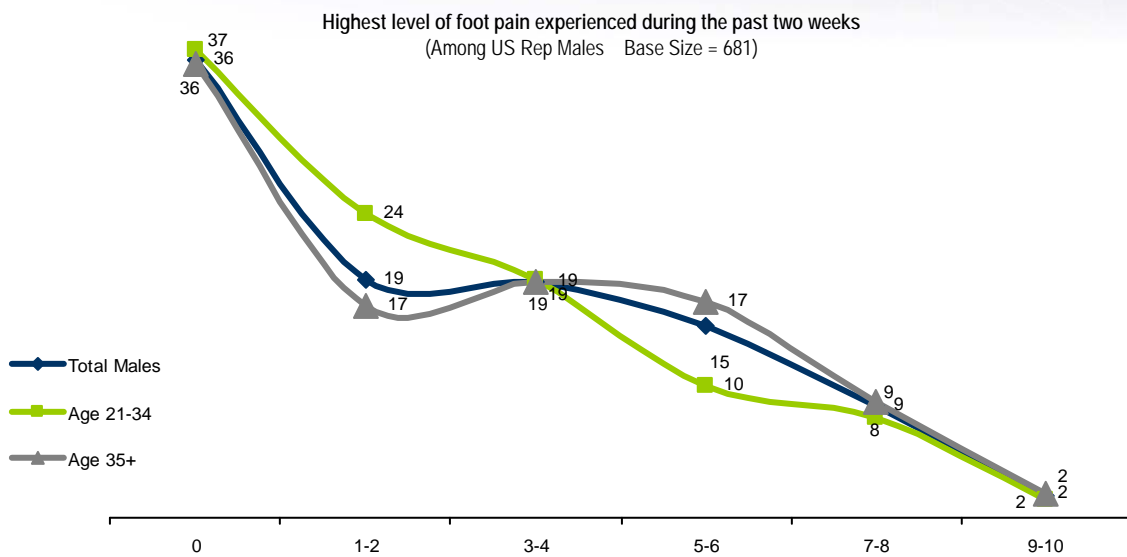


\*Base Sizes Vary

**Foot Pain by Age**

Women are significantly more likely than men to mention experiencing foot pain, with 72% of females and 64% of men saying they have felt some level of foot pain during the past two weeks. Among those who experience foot pain however, the average level of pain reported is consistent across both genders at about a 4 on a 10 point scale.

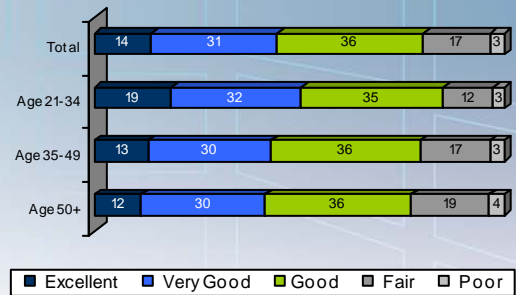
Although the incidence of foot pain is relatively consistent across various age groups within each gender, the magnitude of foot pain tends to increase as individuals get older.



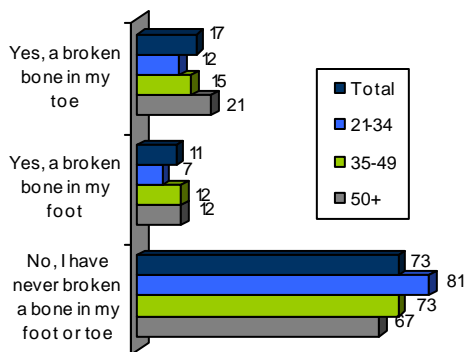
**Overall Foot Health by Age**

The majority of US citizens age 21+ report their personal level of foot health as “very good” or “good,” although a sizeable number - one in five - report having a “fair” or “poor” level of foot health. Reported foot health levels decline slightly as individuals get older, with the number of respondents reporting their personal level of foot health as “fair” or “poor” increasing from 15% among 21-34 year-olds to 23% among those age 50+.

Overall Level of Foot Health – Self Reported  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



Have you ever broken a bone in your foot or toes?  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)

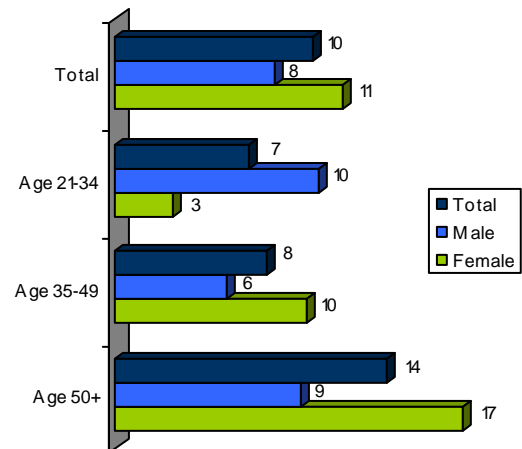


Broken toes are more common than broken foot bones. 17% of US residents age 21+ report suffering from a broken bone in their toe at some point in their life, while only 11% have ever broken a bone in their foot.

The incidence of experiencing broken foot and toe bones increases slightly as people grow older.

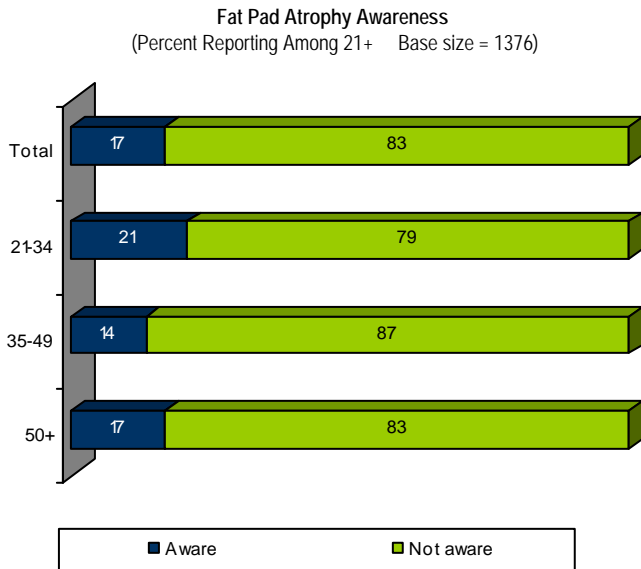
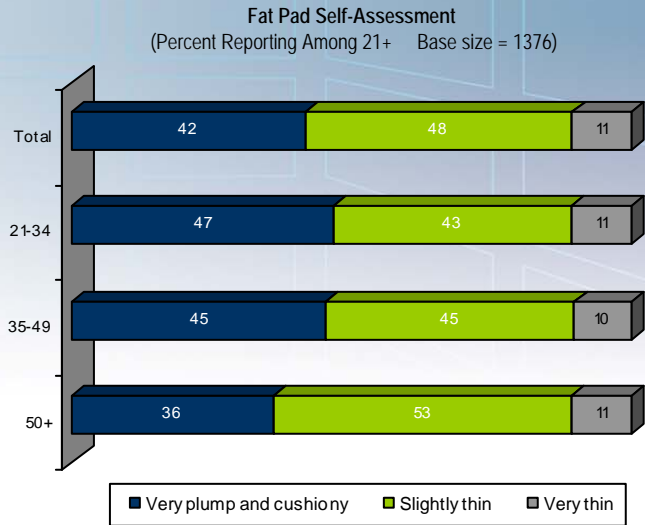
One in ten US citizens has had foot surgery at some point in their life. Overall, women are more likely to have had foot surgery than men, although there are significant differences in this incidence across the various age groups. Women in the 21-34 age range are three times less likely than men to have ever had foot surgery (3% vs. 10%); but by the time women reach age 35-49, they are nearly twice as likely as men to have ever had foot surgery (10% vs. 6%). As they move into the 50+ age segment, nearly one in six women have undergone a foot surgery.

Incidence of foot surgery  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



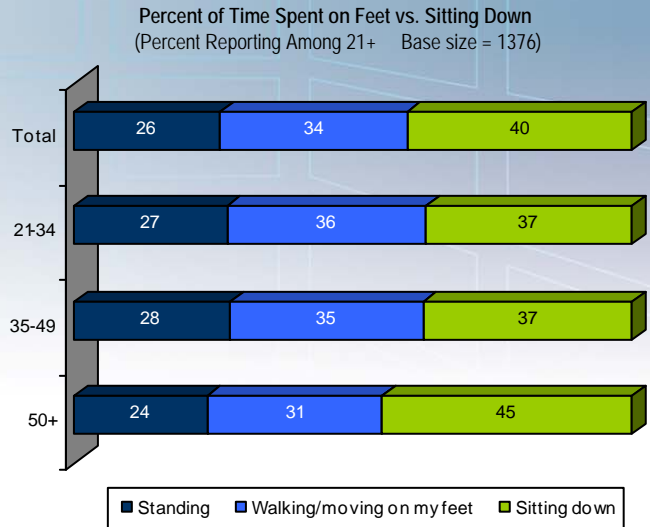
**Fat Pad**

About six in ten (59%) US citizens age 21+ indicate seeing signs of their fat pad wearing away, describing their fat pad as either “slightly thin” or “very thin.” Older respondents age 50+ are significantly more likely to describe their fat pad as thin compared to their younger counterparts, age 21-49.

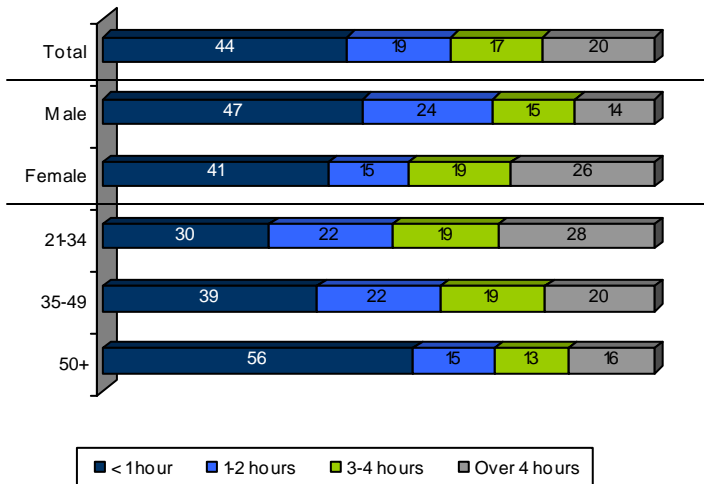


Fewer than one in five respondents (17%) reported being aware of the fat pad’s tendency to wear away over time. Older respondents age 50+ are less likely to be aware of the risk of fat pad atrophy, despite being significantly more likely to experience this condition.

Although the US is often criticized for becoming an increasingly sedentary nation, Americans are actually more likely to be found on their feet than sitting down. On average, respondents said they spend about 60% of their day on their feet, either standing or walking/moving around. Younger respondents age 21-49 spend a larger share of their day on their feet (about 63%) than older individuals (55%).



Average time spent barefooted each day  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



Overall, one in five US residents age 21+ indicate spending four or more hours barefoot each day. Women tend to spend significantly more time barefooted than men, with females nearly twice as likely as men to spend four or more hours a day wearing no footwear at all.

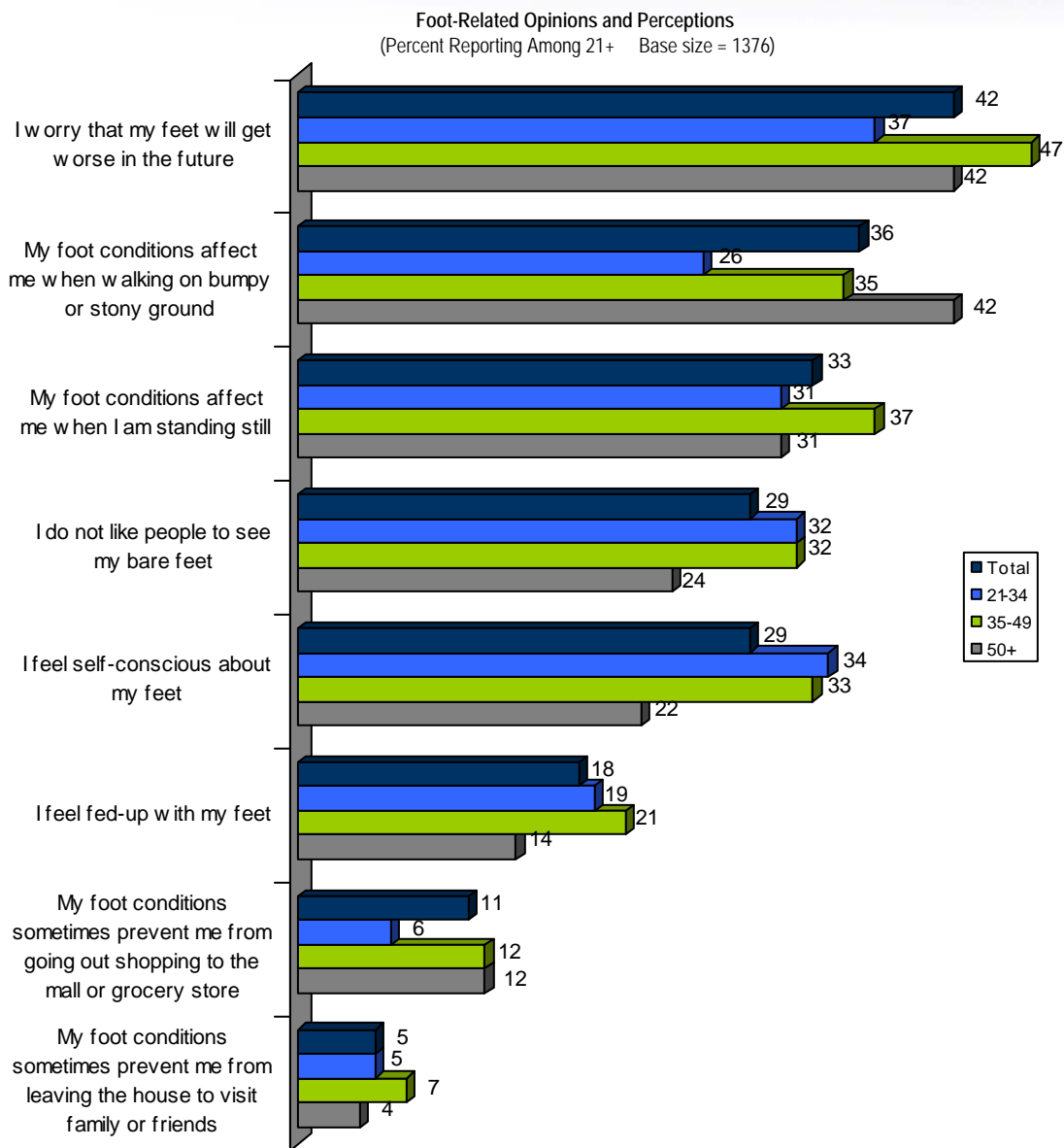
Younger age groups also tend to spend significantly more time barefooted than their older counterparts. Nearly seven in ten respondents age 21-34 spend an hour or more barefooted each day, compared to less than half of respondents in the 50+ age group.



**Foot-Related Opinions and Perceptions**

Although older Americans are more likely to suffer from foot-related ailments and conditions, respondents in the 50+ age group don't appear as likely to have negative opinions or perceptions regarding their feet. Those in this age group are less likely than younger respondents to say they "don't like people to see their bare feet", "feel self-conscious about their feet", or "feel fed up with their feet."

Respondents in the 35+ age group, however, are more likely to mention that they "worry that their feet will get worse in the future" and that their foot conditions "sometimes prevent them from going shopping at the mall or grocery store."



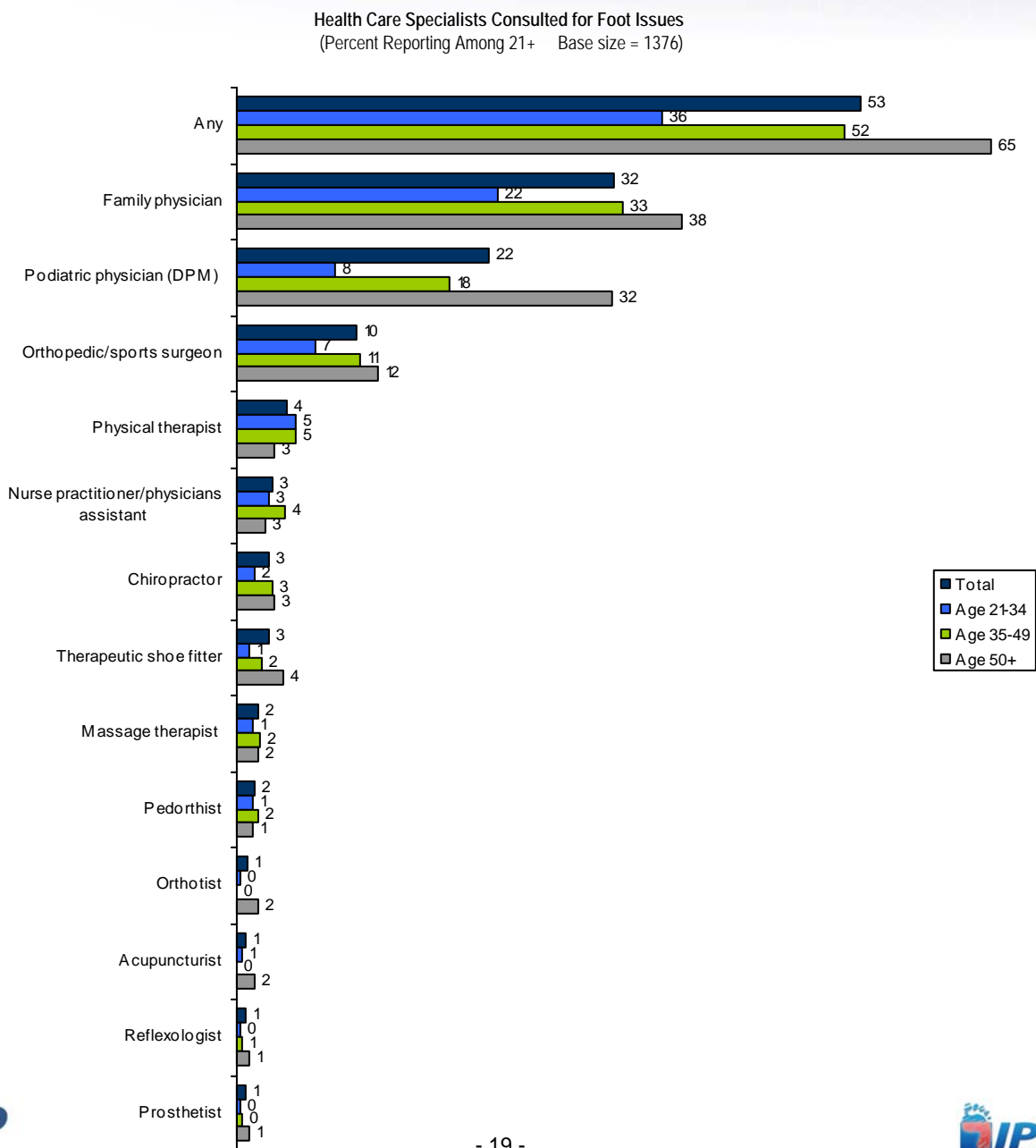
## Foot-Related Medical Care

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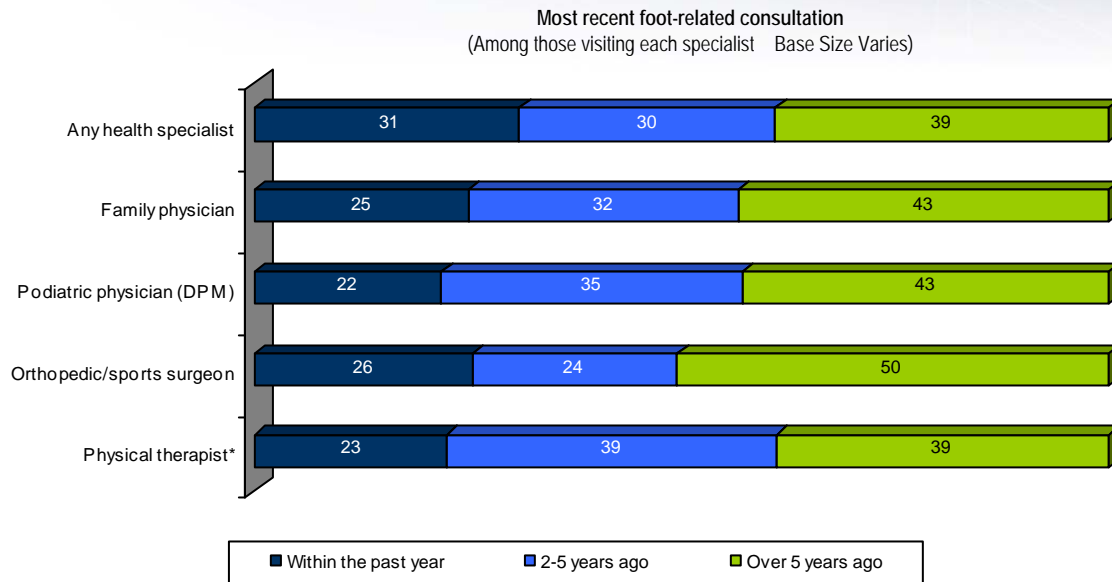
### Health Care Specialists Consulted for Foot Issues

More than half (53%) of US citizens age 21+ have consulted a health care specialist specifically for a foot-related issue. The number of individuals visiting a medical professional for a foot issue is significantly higher among the older age groups.

Family physicians, podiatric physicians, and orthopedic/sports surgeons are the professionals most commonly consulted for foot-related medical issues, with relatively few individuals visiting less traditional health practitioners for their foot conditions. Less than one in twenty respondents mentioned ever visiting a chiropractor, therapeutic shoe fitter, pedorthist, orthotist or prosthetist for foot-related advice or treatment.



Among those who reported ever visiting any health care specialist for a foot issue, about three in ten (31%) have consulted a health care specialist for their feet within the past year. The majority (69%) last consulted a medical professional for a foot issue two or more years ago. Family physicians and orthopedic/sports surgeons are the health care specialists most likely to have been visited in the past year.

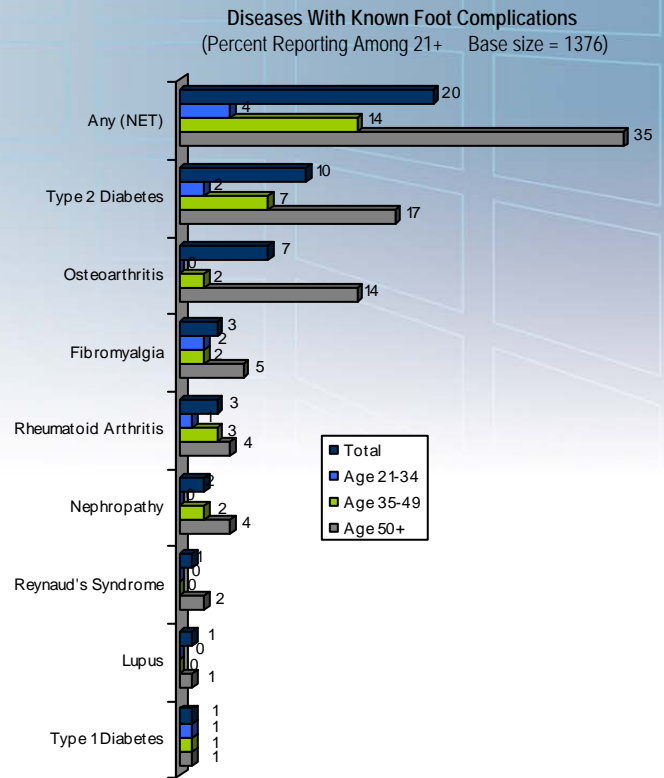


\*Base size < 100

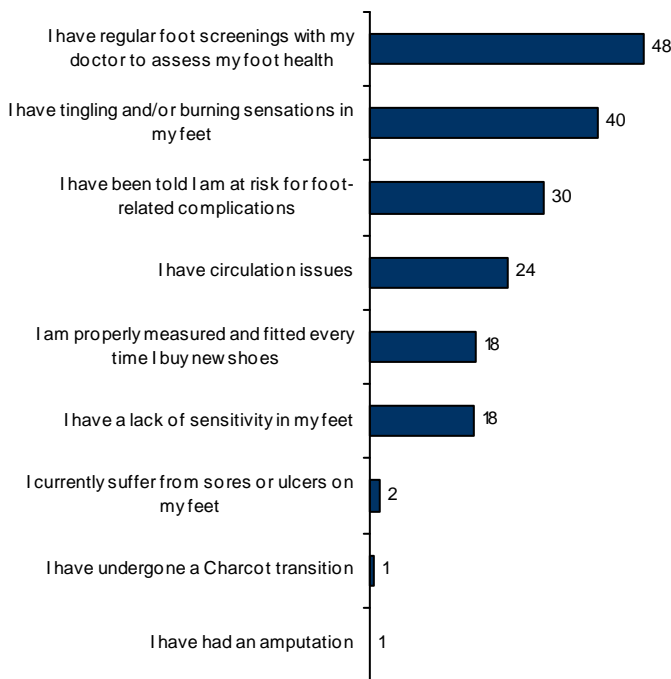
Note: Specialists with base sizes less than 50 not shown

One in five US citizens age 21+ suffer from a disease with known foot-related complications. Type II diabetes is the most common foot-related disease in the US, followed by osteoarthritis.

Members of the 50+ age group are *two and a half times* more likely to suffer from diseases with known foot complications than those age 35-49, and nearly *nine times* more likely than those age 21-34 to suffer from these diseases. Overall, about one in six adults age 50+ reported suffering from Type II diabetes and about one in seven mentioned suffering from osteoarthritis. While diabetes appears to affect both genders relatively equally, the incidence of osteoarthritis is strongly driven by females – about one in five women age 50+ mention being diagnosed with the disease.



Diabetic Foot Health Insights (Among those diagnosed with diabetes Base Size = 146)



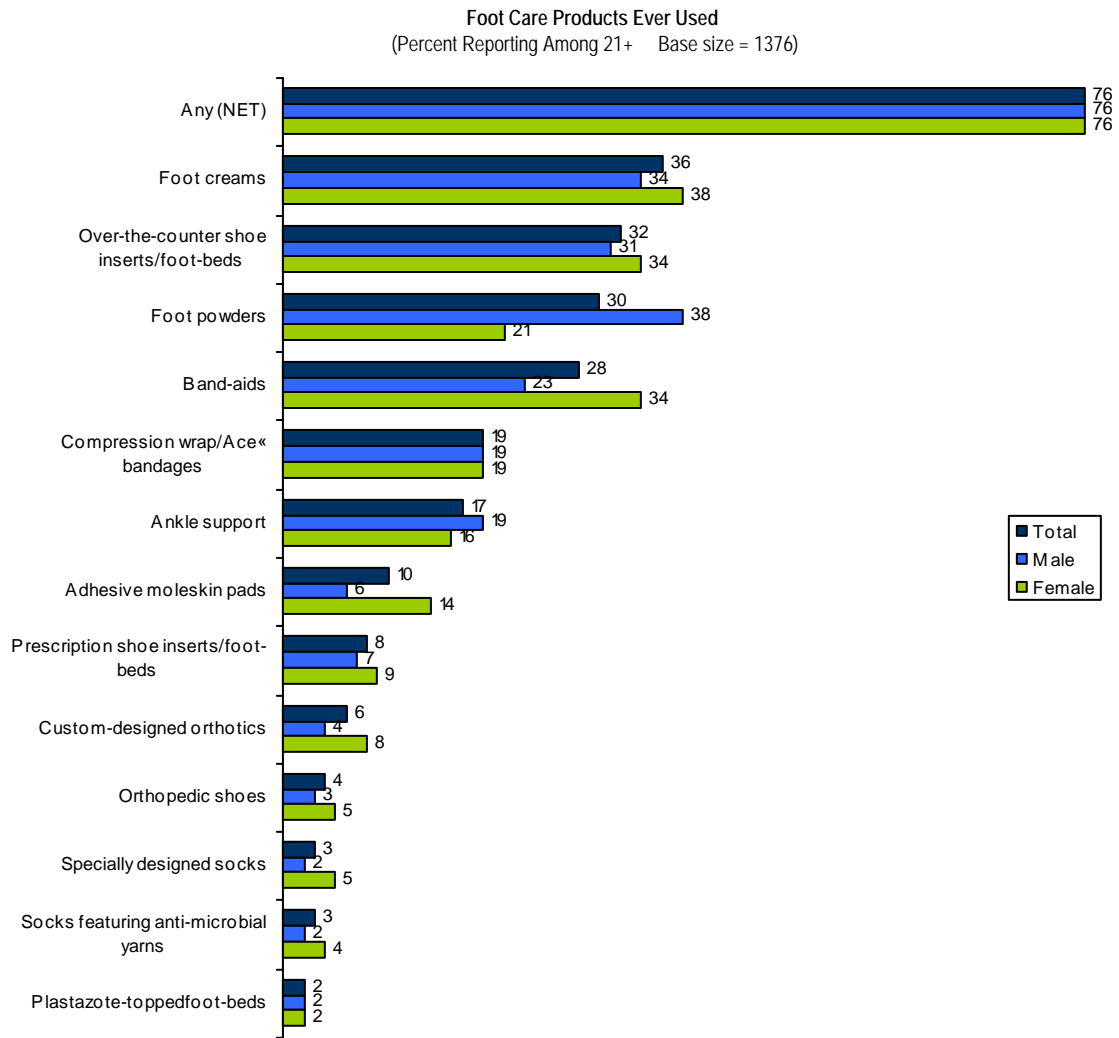
Although diabetes is the most common foot-related disease in the US, it appears only about half (48%) of sufferers have regular foot screenings with their doctor to assess their foot health.

When it comes to the symptoms experienced by diabetes sufferers, tingling/burning sensations appear to be the most common complication, experienced by two in five diabetes patients surveyed. About one-quarter mention experiencing circulation issues, while 18% say they have a lack of sensitivity in their feet.

**Foot Care Product Usage**

Overall, three in four US residents age 21+ have used some sort of product designed to treat or relieve symptoms of foot ailments/conditions. Foot creams, over-the-counter shoe inserts and foot powders are the most popular foot-care products purchased by consumers.

Considering that men and women tend to suffer from a different set of foot ailments, they tend to purchase different types of products to treat these ailments. Men, who are more likely than women to suffer from athlete's foot and foot odor, are also significantly more likely to purchase foot powders. Similarly, females are more likely to experience blisters and calluses than men, and are also significantly more likely than men to report treating their foot ailments/conditions with band-aids and moleskin pads.



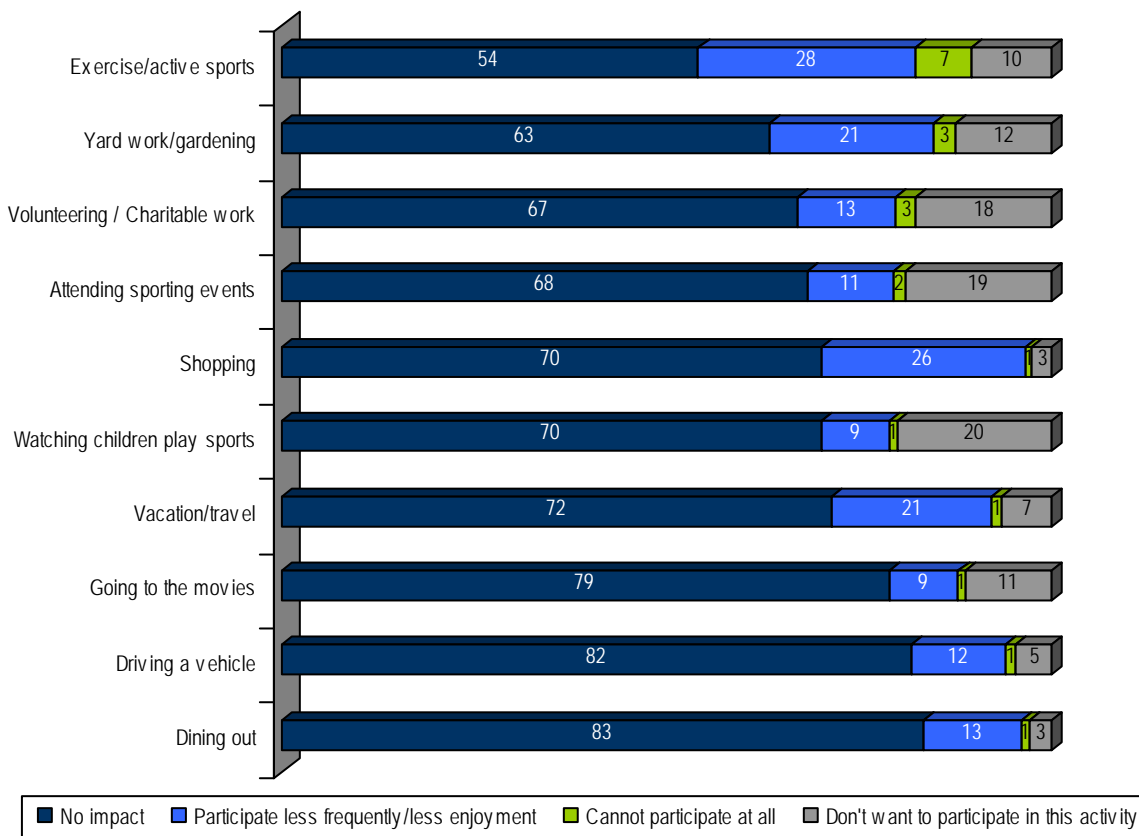
## Impact of Foot Health on Exercise/Activity Participation

**Impact of Foot Conditions on Activity Participation**

Although very few foot ailment sufferers say they are completely unable to participate in certain activities, a significant number mention participating in activities “less often” or with “less enjoyment” because of their foot conditions. Exercise/active sports is the activity most strongly impacted by foot ailments/conditions, followed by shopping, yard work/gardening, and vacation/travel.

Everyday activities, such as watching children play sports, going to the movies, driving a vehicle, and dining out are also difficult for a significant number of foot ailment sufferers, with around one in ten saying they aren’t able to participate in these activities as often or with as much enjoyment because of their foot conditions.

Impact of Foot Conditions on Activity Participation  
(Among those currently experiencing a foot condition Base Size Varies)



Note: Conditions with base sizes less than 50 not shown

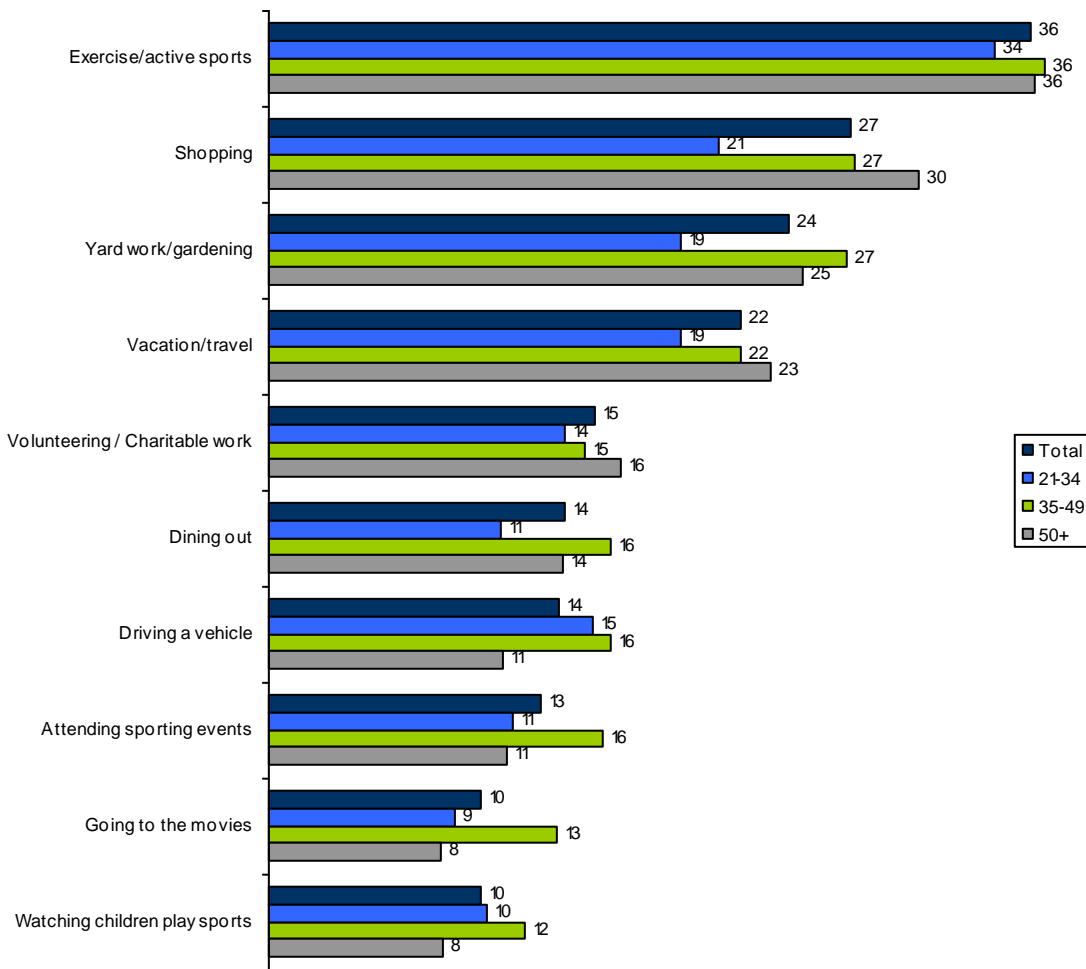


**Activities Affected by Foot Conditions**

The number of foot ailment sufferers saying that their conditions limit their enjoyment or participation in exercise/active sports is relatively consistent at just over one in three across the multiple age groups surveyed. On the other hand, activities such as shopping, yard work/gardening, and vacation/travel are more strongly affected by the foot ailments of the 35+ age groups.

Members of the 35-49 age group are significantly more likely to mention “attending sporting events” and “going to the movies” as activities impacted by their foot conditions compared to the other age groups. Younger foot ailment sufferers (21-34) are more likely to say they are unaffected by their conditions while participating in these activities, while older sufferers (50+) tend to say they don’t participate in these activities simply because they don’t want to.

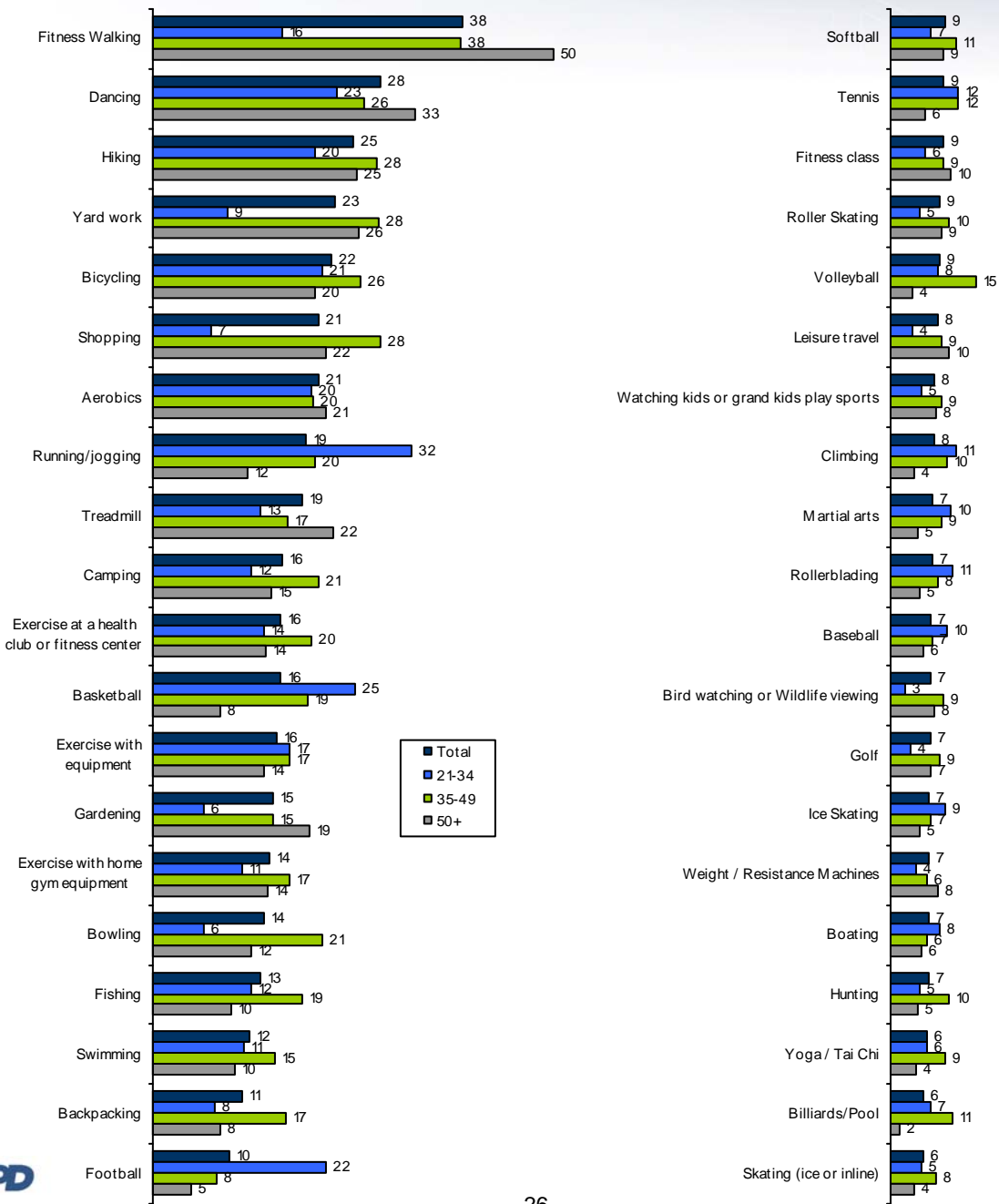
Activities Affected by Foot Conditions  
 (Net of “I participate less frequently or with less enjoyment” and  
 “prevent me from participating at all”)  
 (Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



**Top 40 Active Sport Activities Limited by Foot Health Conditions**

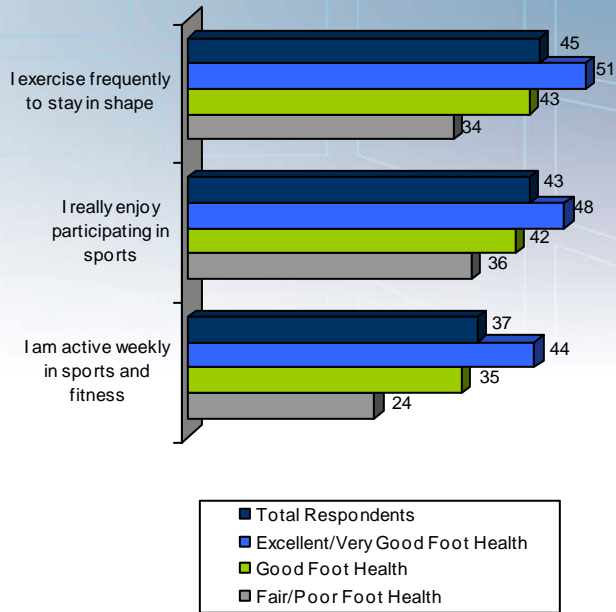
When respondents were asked which specific sport activities they would participate in more often if not affected by their foot ailments, fitness walking, dancing and hiking rose to the top of the list, with all of these activities driven by respondents age 35 and older. Younger foot ailment sufferers were most likely to indicate a desire to participate more often in running/jogging (32%), followed by basketball (25%).

Top 40 Active Sport Activities Limited by Foot Health Conditions  
(Among those with foot ailments impacting their ability to participate in exercise/active sports Base Size = 330)

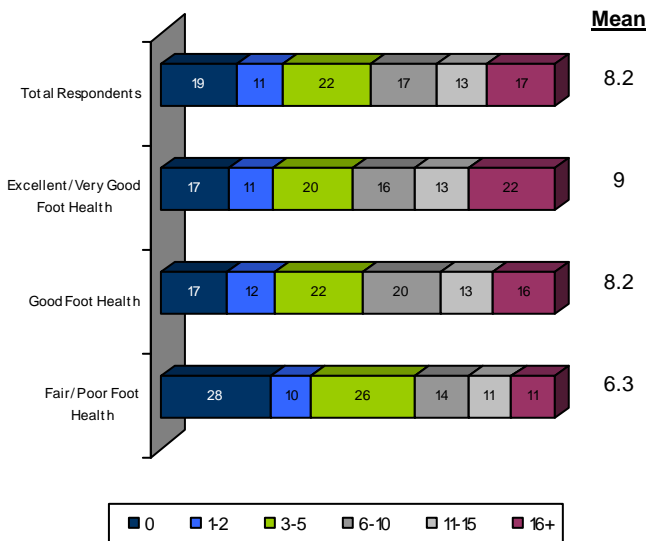


A very direct correlation is evident between an individual's level of foot health and their attitudes regarding sports and exercise. People who describe their level of foot health as "fair" or "poor" are significantly less likely to say they "*exercise frequently to stay in shape*", that they "*really enjoy participating in sports*" and that they are "*active weekly in sports and fitness*" compared to those with "good" or "excellent" foot health.

Impact of Foot Health on Sport/Exercise Attitudes & Perceptions  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



Number of days per month participating in exercise/active sports  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)

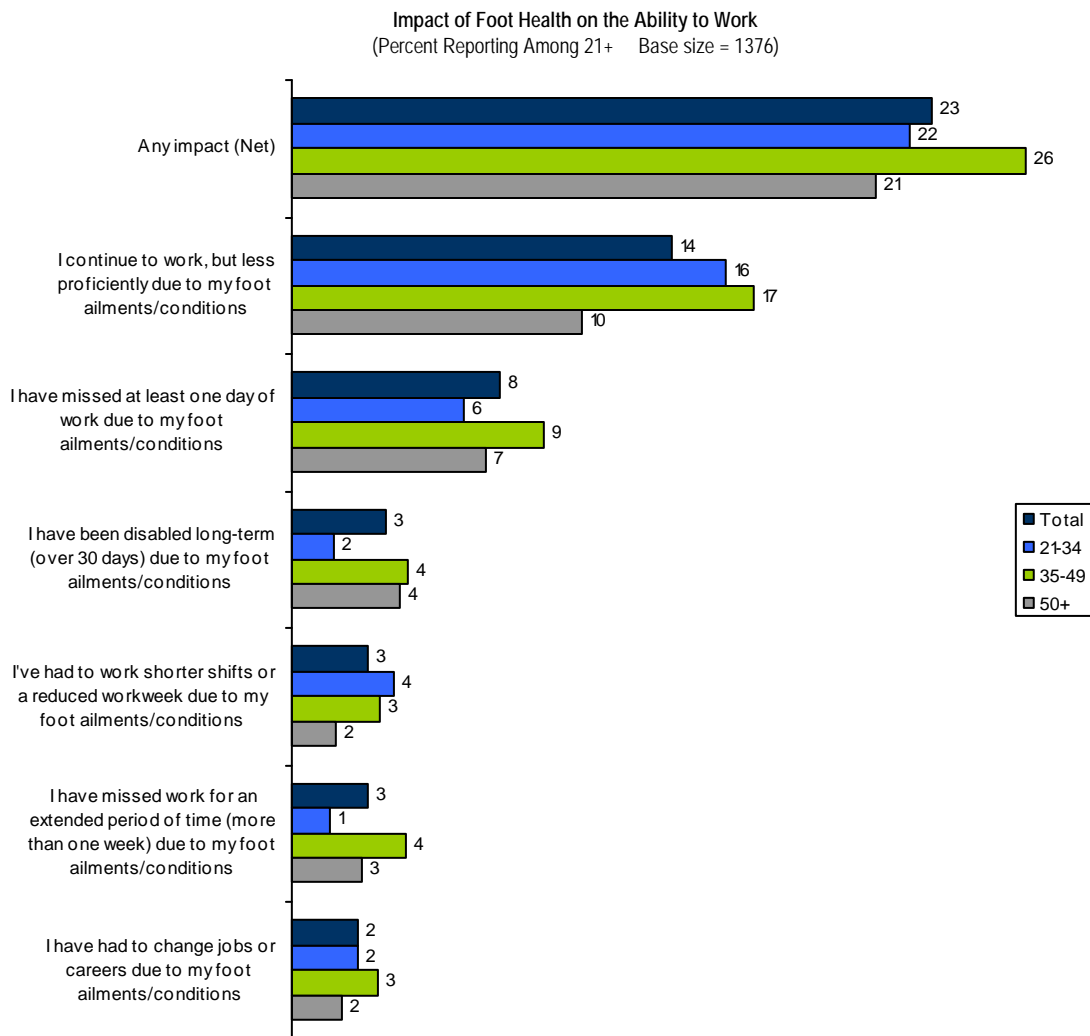


Foot health appears to have a direct impact on the number of days per month a person exercises or participates in active sports. Compared to those who describe their foot health as "good" or better, respondents who describe their foot health as "fair" or "poor" are *twice as likely* to say they never participate in exercise or active sports during an average month (28% vs. 17%). Furthermore, over half (51%) of respondents with "excellent" or "very good" foot health exercise 11 or more times per month. Only about one-third (36%) of individuals describing their foot health as "fair" or "poor" exercise as often.

**Impact of Foot Health on the Ability to Work**

The economic impact of poor foot health is evident in terms of lost productivity at the workplace, as nearly one in four respondents indicate their foot ailments have impaired their ability to work. About one in seven (14%) respondents say they continue to work, but with less proficiency due to their foot ailments/conditions. Overall, nearly one in ten (8%) of respondents say they have missed at least one day of work due to their foot ailments.

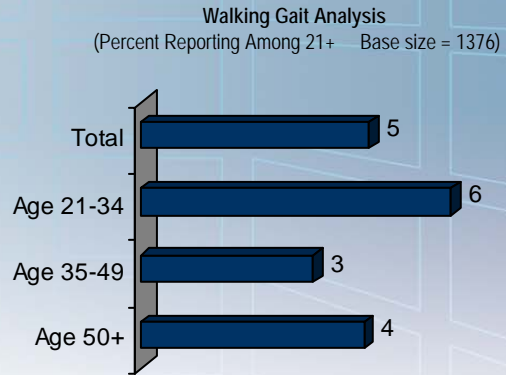
Younger respondents take fewer sick days or extended leaves of absence because of their foot complications, while older age groups are more likely to mention “missing at least one day of work”, “missing work for an extended period of time” or being “disabled long-term” due to their foot complications.



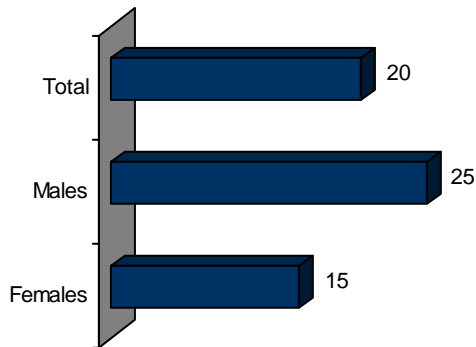
## Shoe Purchasing Insights

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Very few individuals report having their walking gait analyzed for such traits as pronation and supination during their last shoe purchase. Overall, only one in twenty consumers say their walking gait was analyzed during their most recent shoe purchase occasion. This rate is relatively consistent across all age groups.



**Incidence of Brannock Device Use**  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)

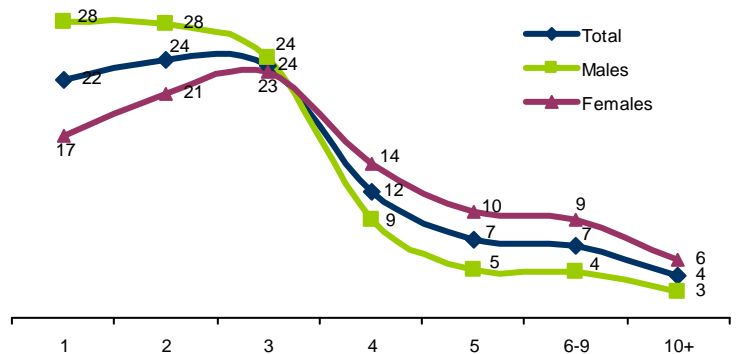


One in five respondents indicated having their feet measured in a Brannock device during their last shoe purchase. The rate of usage is significantly higher in males (25%) than females (15%).

Women reported trying on significantly more pairs of shoes during their last purchasing occasion than men. On average, women tried on 3.7 pairs of shoes while men reported trying on 2.8 pairs before making a purchase.

More than half of men (56%) and 38% of women tried on just one or two pairs of shoes before making a purchase. One in four women (versus one in eight men) reported trying on five or more pairs of shoes during their last purchase occasion.

**Pairs of shoes tried on during last purchasing occasion**  
(Percent Reporting Among 21+ Base size = 1376)



**IPFH Concluding Remarks:**

So what is the takeaway from this benchmark study? Has anybody really known about all this before now but just failed to let everyone else know? Did anyone ever even think about it? Who cares?

Our intent is to start a national dialogue to bring public awareness to this chronic issue by offering our protocol and self-assessment survey technology to any group or organization that is interested in knowing the cost of the loss of productivity, associated direct and indirect health care costs, quality of life, and morale, due to these foot issues in your group or organization.

The raw data has been an honest-to-goodness eye-opener. We are unaware of any other assessment that remotely approaches the topic of this investigation and the information that the data has revealed. It has provided a first glimpse into the self-assessment of the state of American feet that we will want to revisit and report upon again in the future. It clearly points out that America's feet are hurting and need attention!

In keeping with its mission, the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH) has "listened to America's feet" and is now committed to bringing this topic to the conscious awareness of America and the world. As an advocate for foot care and disease and injury prevention we feel that no matter whether you're a practicing medical professional, a manufacturer of footwear or sockwear products, a large or small corporation, an agency dedicated to helping the groups you represent achieve something they want or need, a health insurance organization, a caregiver, or even just a single, individual consumer all alone out there among almost 307 million Americans, you simply owe it to yourself to familiarize yourself with this self-assessment data and take the preventive action it so strongly suggests...for yourself, for those you represent, for those you love and for those who love you.

Preventive Foot health plays a critical and up to now unrecognized role in personal mobility across all age groups. Without preventive foot health, there is a loss of mobility, which compromises issues of not only exercise but also the quality of life generally. Incremental improvements in foot care and foot disease and injury prevention should lead to exponential improvements in a person's overall well being, resulting in healthier life and, quite definitely, a better quality of life. The simple, yet elegant and inexpensive steps of proper preventive foot health practices related to taking care of the soft tissues of the foot when choosing and fitting footwear will save millions of American people billions of dollars of health care expense and provide a higher quality of life.

We openly invite your comments concerning this study. We encourage you to share it with everyone you know. And we particularly solicit those who may have an interest in partnering with us in sharing this data and our message of preventive foot health, to contact us to discuss the strategic alliances we may be able to build by working together in the future. We hope you will respond to this call to action and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

If you would like our "America's Feet Are Hurting" DVD which presents this survey information in an informative and interesting way such for use at social group or civic organization meeting presentations, for sharing with your strategic business planning meeting colleagues and at corporate retreats, or simply for your more thorough understanding of the importance of the topic, please write to us at:

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Or call us toll free at (877) 777- IPFH (4734).



**"listening to the world's feet"**