

How Many Public School Students in DC Could Walk to Their School?

More than one-third of public school students live within a comfortable walking distance to their school.

Over one-third (35%) or 30,405 students lived within a “comfortable walkable distance” to their public school in SY2018-19 (the school where they were enrolled at the time of the enrollment audit). This is an increase of 2,530 students (+9.1%) since SY2013-14, but a decrease of 1 percentage point (down from 36%) over that time.

With the caveat that perceptions of “comfortable walking distance” depend on personal factors such as age, ability, perceived safety, and more, we define a comfortable walking distance as 0.5 miles or less for PreK to 2nd grade students, one mile or less for 3rd to 8th graders, and 1.5 miles or less for 9th grade and older. We are using these distances to assume that students who do not meet these thresholds are more likely to require transportation via a bicycle, a motor vehicle, or public transportation to get to school.

Walking Distance Varies by Ward

The number and proportion of students who live within a walkable distance to their school varies by ward, ranging from the low-

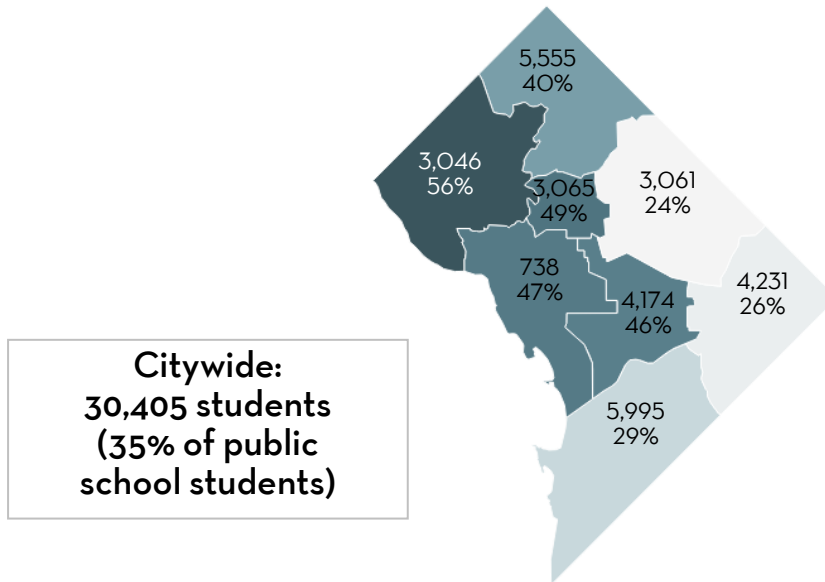
est share in Ward 5 (24% and 3,061 students) to the highest share in Ward 3 (56% and 3,046 students). (See map to view all wards.) These proportions reflect the students’ enrollment choices: [81% of all public school students in Ward 3 attend their DCPS in-boundary school](#) while [15% of all public school students in Ward 5 attend their DCPS in-boundary school](#).

Walking Distance Varies by Grade Level

The median distance between a student’s home and enrolled school as measured by the DC street grid varies by grade level. The youngest students (PreK to 2nd grade) travel a median distance of one mile to school, and 30% of these youngest students could comfortably walk to school. Despite living farther away from their school (a median distance of 2.5 miles), a similar share of high school students live within a comfortable distance to school (31%) because we assume high school students are able to walk farther than younger students. In contrast to the youngest and oldest students, 42% of students in grades 3 to 8 live within a comfortable walking distance of their school.

continued

Share of Public School Students Living within Walking Distance to School by Ward, SY2018-19



Notes: Data include both DCPS and public charter students. Students attending adult, special education schools, and students whose addresses could not be geocoded are excluded. n= 86,793 The denominator is the number of public school students living in the ward and the numerator is the number of students living in the ward who are within a "comfortable walking distance" to their school (as described in the brief).

How do students actually get to school?

Walking distance is a good starting point for understanding student commutes. However, as we know from other analyses, travel mode (or how students actually get to school) matters greatly for understanding commute times and reliability, as well as potential sources of transportation frustration.

[A 2017 survey](#) of roughly 400 parents or

guardians who lived in Washington, DC reported that 43% of students were driven to school, another quarter (23%) walked, and 22% took public transit. The remainder (12%) reported other modes. Travel modes may vary substantially given the variations in student distance to school across grade levels and areas of the city.

! The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) **need your help** spreading the word about a [new survey](#) collecting information about how DC students, families, and school staff travel to school, and what would make it easier. You can take the survey [here](#) on a phone, tablet, or computer. It takes five minutes to complete and is translated into five languages. Responses are confidential and the privacy of all respondents is protected. **Spread the word** by distributing the [survey links](#) to your networks or posting them to your social media feeds!

Sources: [EdScape Beta](#),

[Center on Reinventing Public Education](#)

Feedback: Email Edsight.DME@dc.gov