



**Walking with the physiotherapist:  
an evaluation of a pilot program  
among ten physiotherapy practices**

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# Background

- Increasing evidence for effectiveness of ‘green exercise’.
- Most vulnerable groups difficult to reach, often do not follow prescriptions.
- Physician-guided walks can provide a first step towards a more active life-style





# Aims study

- Evaluate the feasibility of implementing guided nature walking groups in physiotherapy practices.
- Examine the preliminary effectiveness of the program for improving the physical and mental health of participants
- Identify opportunities for improving and up-scaling the intervention.



# Design



- **Pilot study supported by health insurance company**
- **10 physiotherapy practices**
- **1 group with 10 participants per practice**
- **12 weekly walks in 3 months**
- **2 training days for physiotherapists**
- **Pre- and post survey and tests participants**
- **Evaluation by practices**
- **Target group: *Inactive and socially isolated individuals who experience health problems because of their life-style***

# Participants

- 108 started - 93 finished
- 19% man – 81% woman
- Mean age 61 years – 35% 65+
- 46% lower education
- 51% low income
- 75% overweight– 47% obese
- 90% inactive
- Chronic diseases
  - Musculoskeletal : 67%
  - Heart: 35%
  - Respiratory: 22%
  - Mental: 19%
  - Diabetes: 16%
  - Cancer: 7%
  - None: 1%



# Pre-post measurement

## Negative indicators

- **Self-reported visits GP/physiotherapist**
- **Bodily pain (SF-36)**
- **Stress (Littman et al.)**
- **Physical symptoms (Groningen Event List)**
- **Self-reported physical inactivity**
- **Activity limitations (SF-36)**

## Positive indicators

- **General health (SF-36)**
- **Mood (SF-36)**
- **Life Satisfaction Index**
- **Cantril ladder**
- **Hope scale**
- **Self-reported visits to nature**
- **6-minute walk test**



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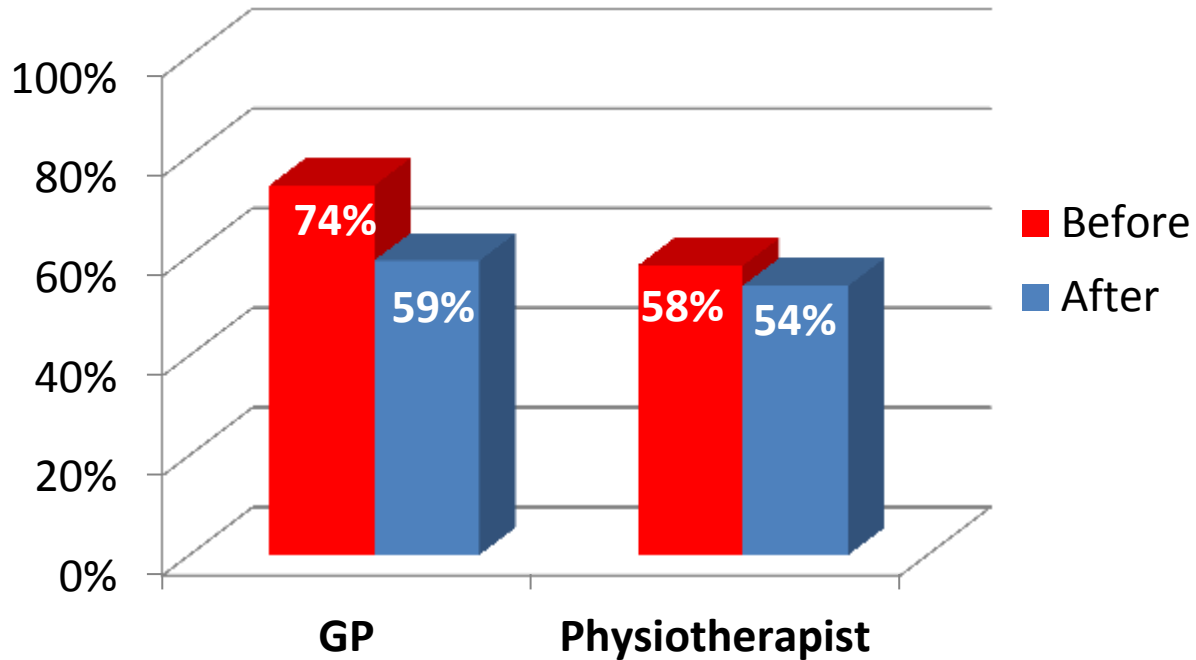
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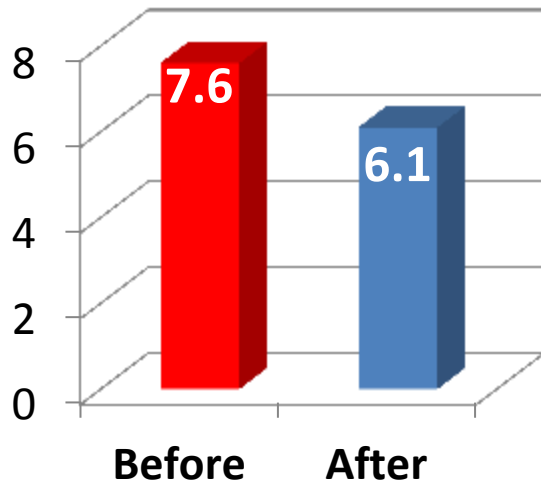
# Visits GP/physiotherapist

Did you visit your GP or physiotherapist in the past 3 months?



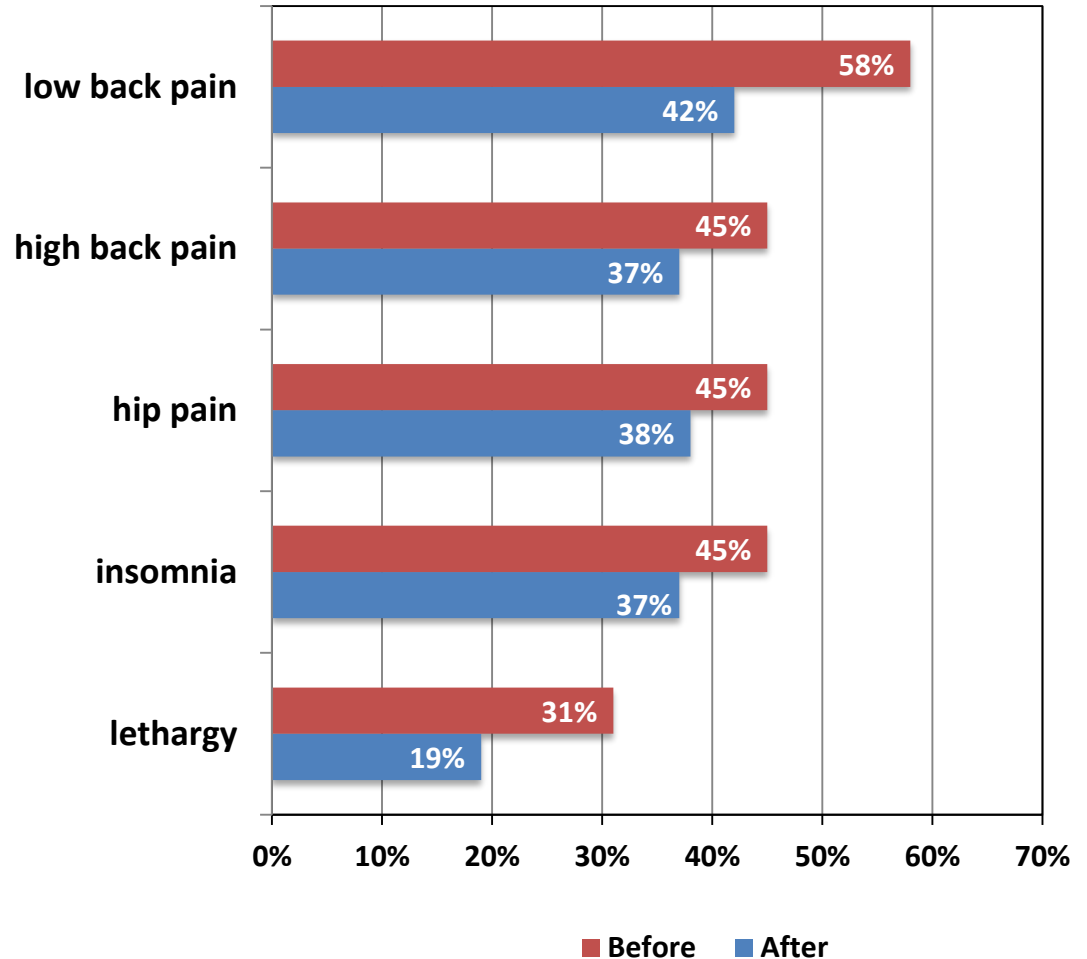


# Physical symptoms (list 37 complaints)

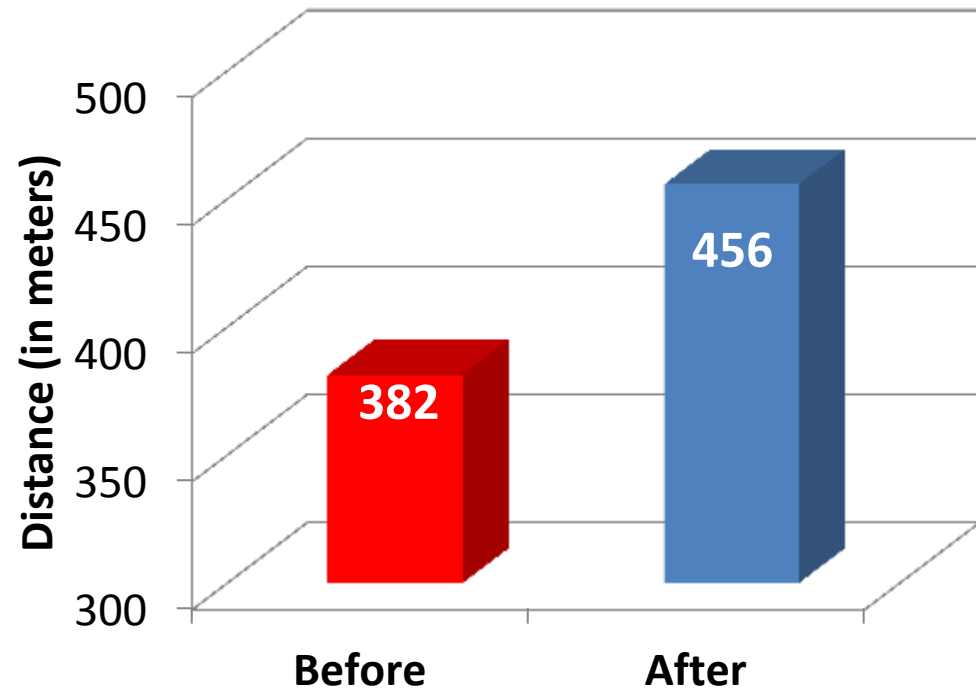


1.5 symptom less

## Top 5 greatest reduction



# 6-minute walk test



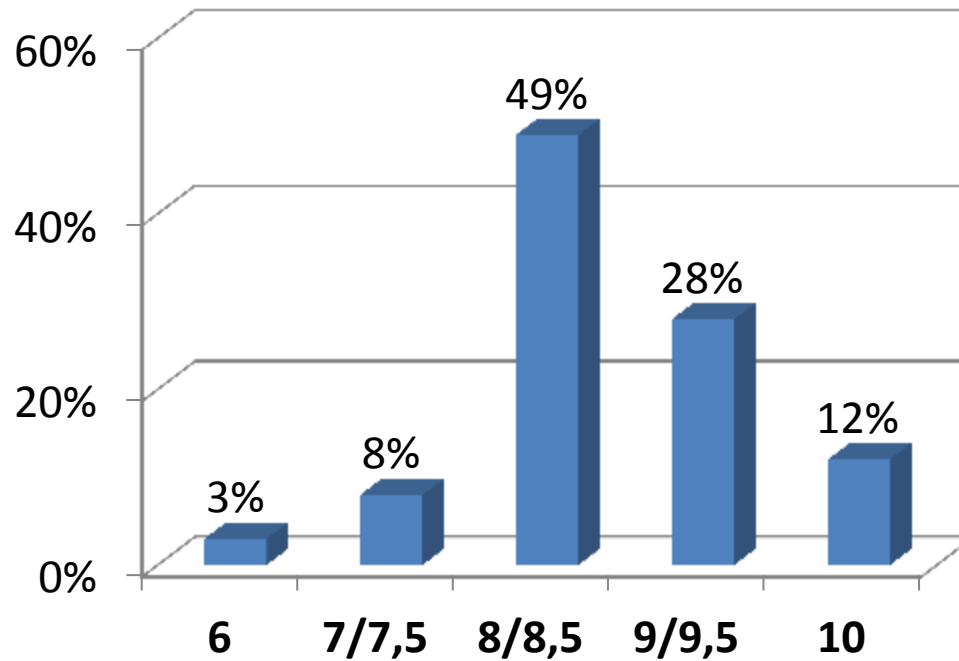
**Difference: 74 meter (20% more)**

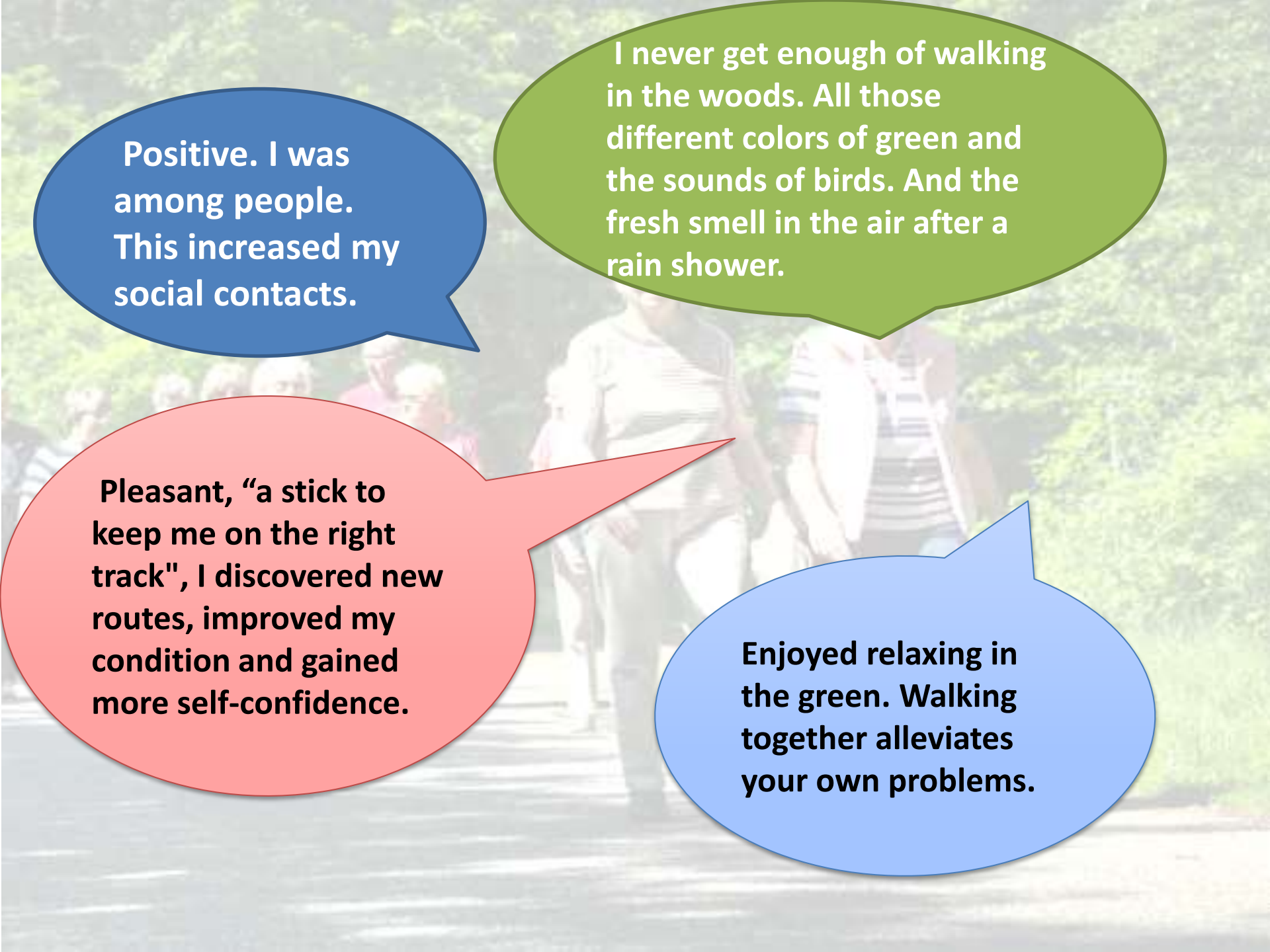
**49% >50 meter progress**

# Evaluation participants

Mean score: 8.4

Grade (1-10)



A group of people, including several older adults, are walking along a paved path in a park. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage. Overlaid on the image are four speech bubbles of different colors, each containing a testimonial about walking in the woods. The speech bubbles are: a blue one in the top left, a green one in the top right, a red one in the bottom left, and a light blue one in the bottom right.

**Positive. I was among people. This increased my social contacts.**

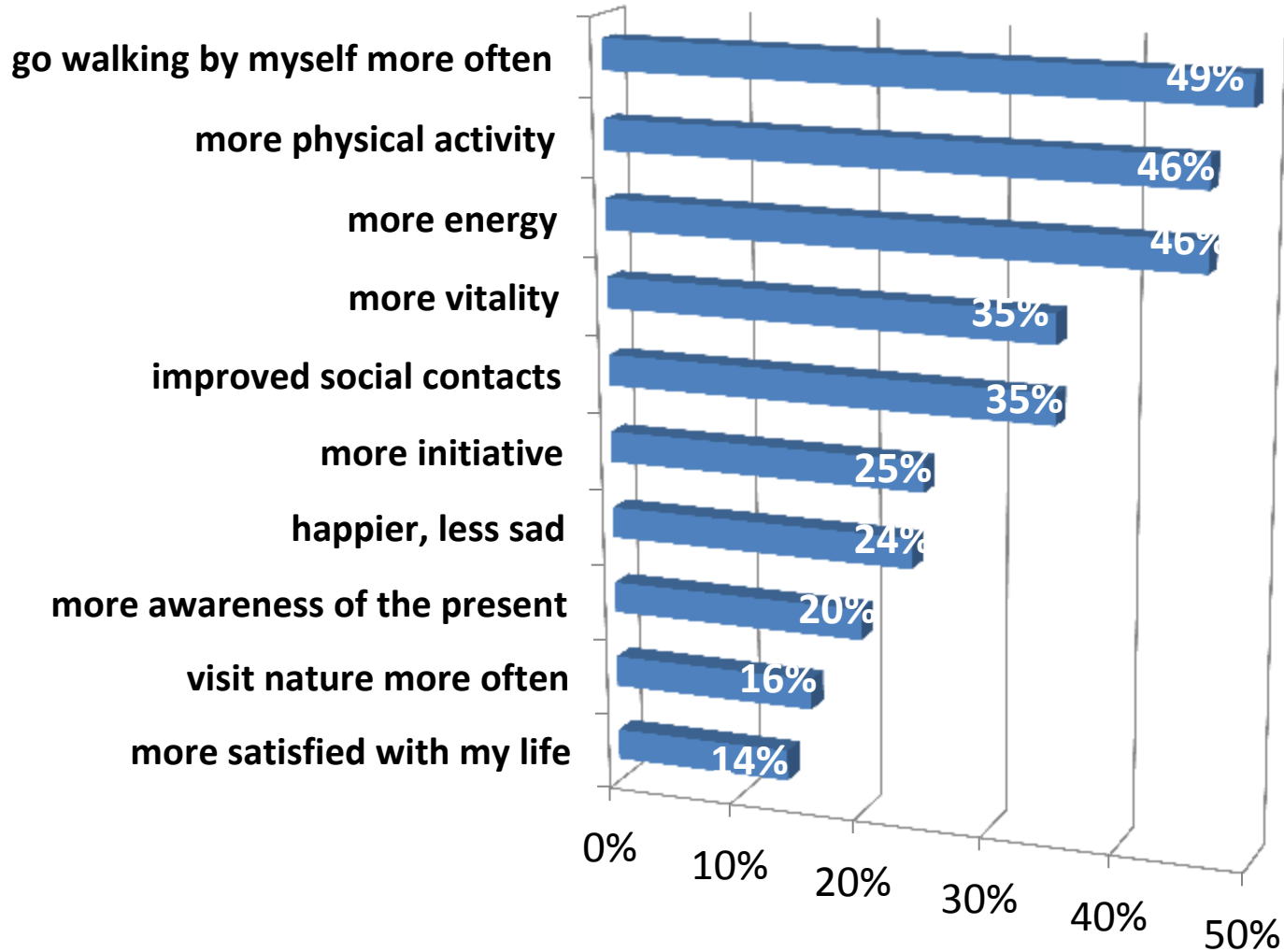
**I never get enough of walking in the woods. All those different colors of green and the sounds of birds. And the fresh smell in the air after a rain shower.**

**Pleasant, "a stick to keep me on the right track", I discovered new routes, improved my condition and gained more self-confidence.**

**Enjoyed relaxing in the green. Walking together alleviates your own problems.**



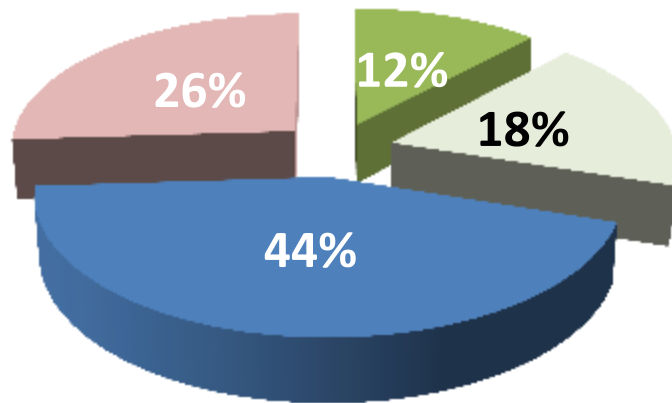
# Self-reported changes (on list of 19)



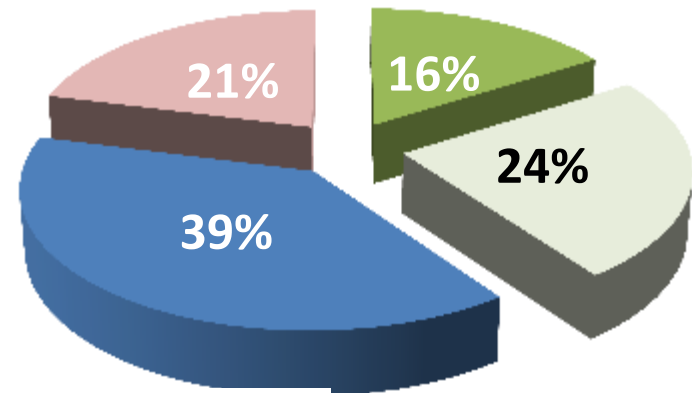
# Evaluation physiotherapists

Can you give an indication of the percentages of patients with chronic complaints in your practice that would benefit from participating in nature-based walks?

One-time participation



Structural participation



- full alternative
- less treatment
- complement to treatment
- no benefit

# Recommendations

Scale-up

Money: Structural  
payment

Evidence/monitoring

Ensure continuity  
and flow to less  
intensively guided  
programs



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