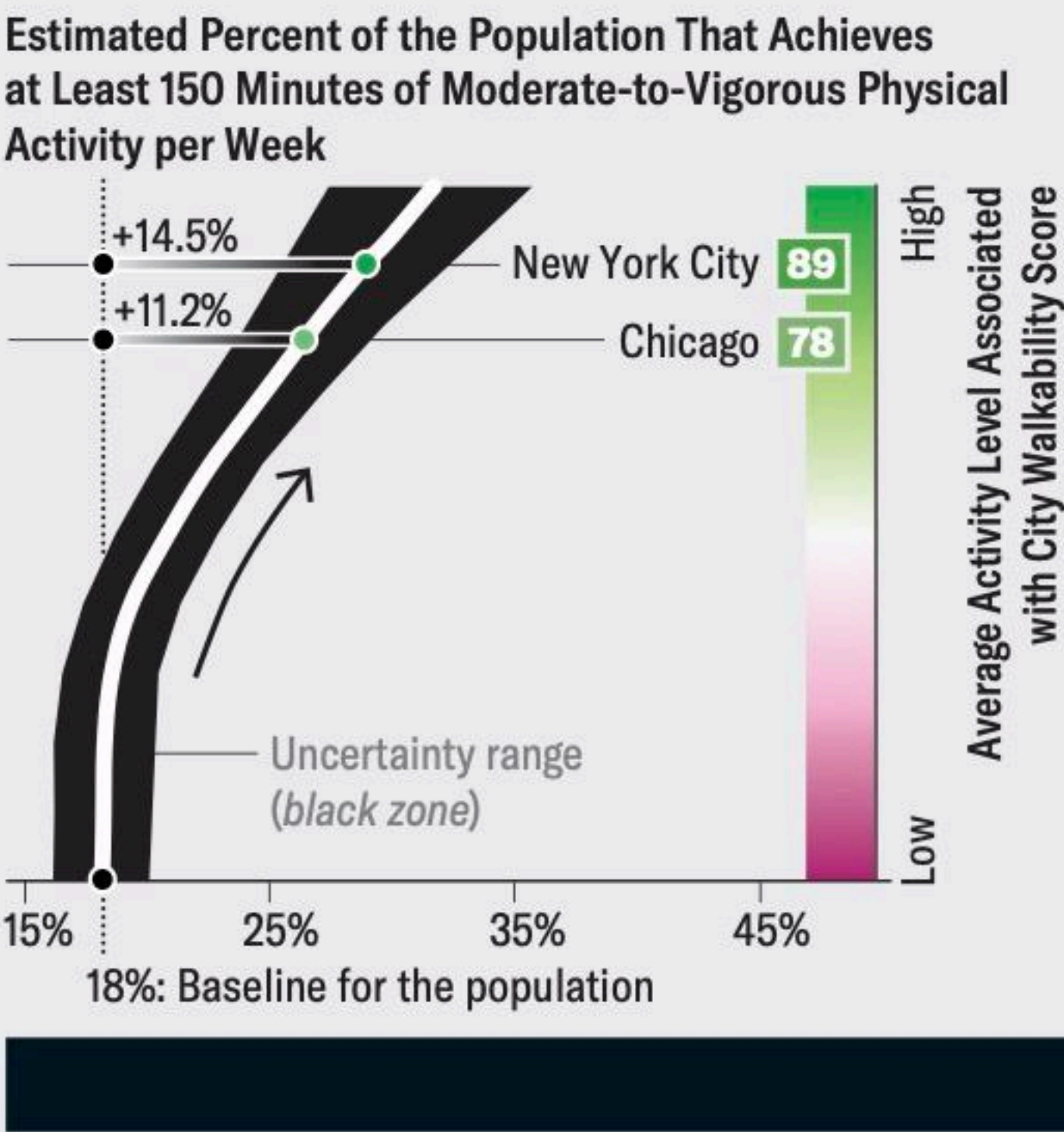


Does Your City Make You Healthier?

Moving to a walkable city boosts daily locomotion by an average of 1,100 steps BY EVE LU

N EIGHBORHOOD WALKABILITY is a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem: Does living in a walkable city make you walk more, or do active people choose to live where it's easier to walk? To investigate, researchers analyzed smartphone data from between 2013 and 2016 for two million people, including more than 5,000 people who moved among more than 1,600 U.S. cities. Tim Althoff, a computer scientist at the University of Washington, and his colleagues found that after relocating to more walkable cities, people took about 1,100 more steps a day, equivalent to 11 minutes of extra daily walking. What's more intriguing is that these additional steps were part of brisk walks—physical activity that improves health and could contribute to a lower risk of death all around. Meanwhile, the data showed, people who moved between similarly walkable cities didn't change their activity level. The findings suggest built environments, rather than personal choice alone, might affect not just the amount but the intensity of the exercise their inhabitants get.



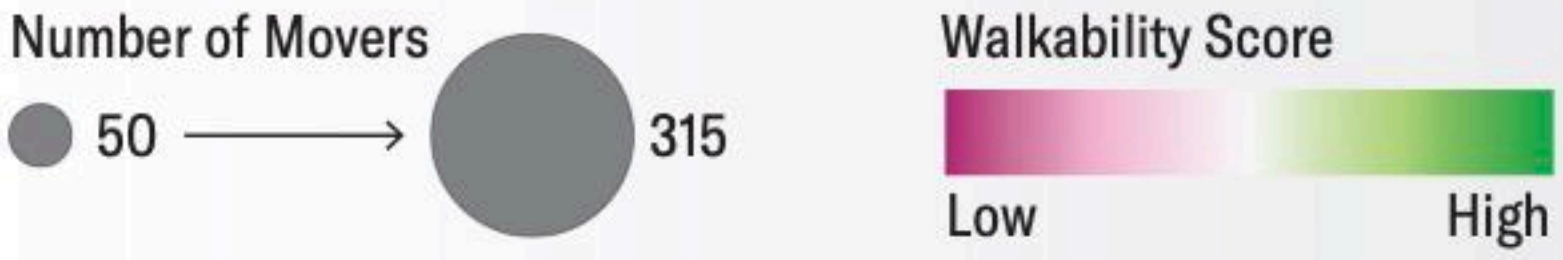
California holds one of the top 5 most walkable cities in the nation, West Hollywood.

WHAT IF EVERY U.S. CITY WALKED LIKE NEW YORK CITY AND CHICAGO?

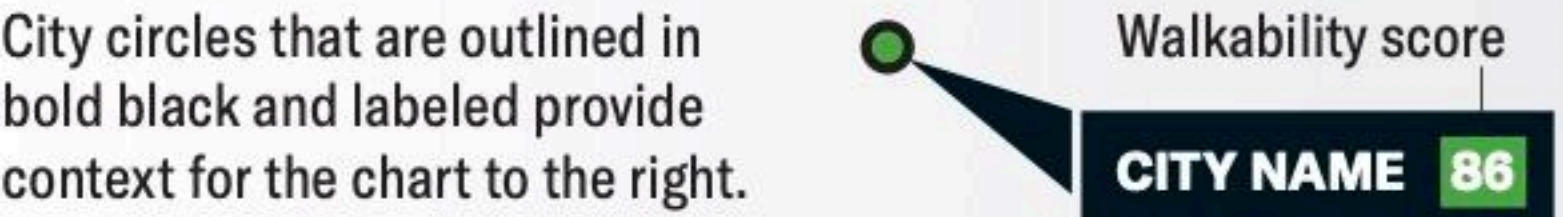
If all U.S. cities had Chicago's walkability score of 78, the average person would walk 443 more steps a day and gain an extra 24 minutes of weekly moderate to vigorous physical activity: enough for 11.2 percent of people, or 36 million more Americans, to meet targets in aerobic-activity guidelines. And if everyone walked like New Yorkers, an even larger share—14.5 percent, or about 47 million people—would meet those targets.

HOW TO READ THE MAP

Each circle represents one of 1,609 origin and/or destination cities included in the study. Circles are sized according to the number of people that entered or exited the city during the three-year observation period and are colored to represent the city's walkability score.



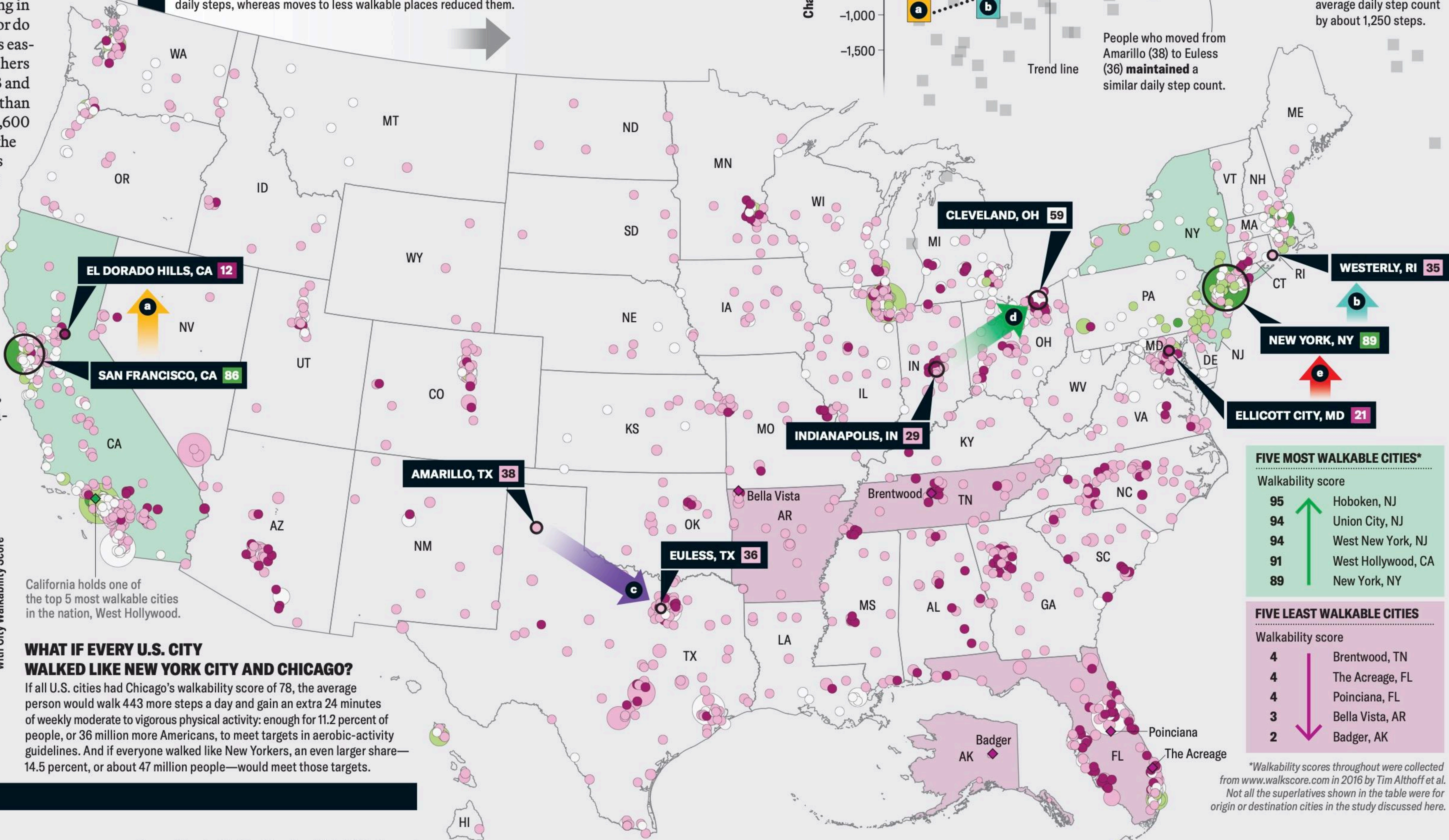
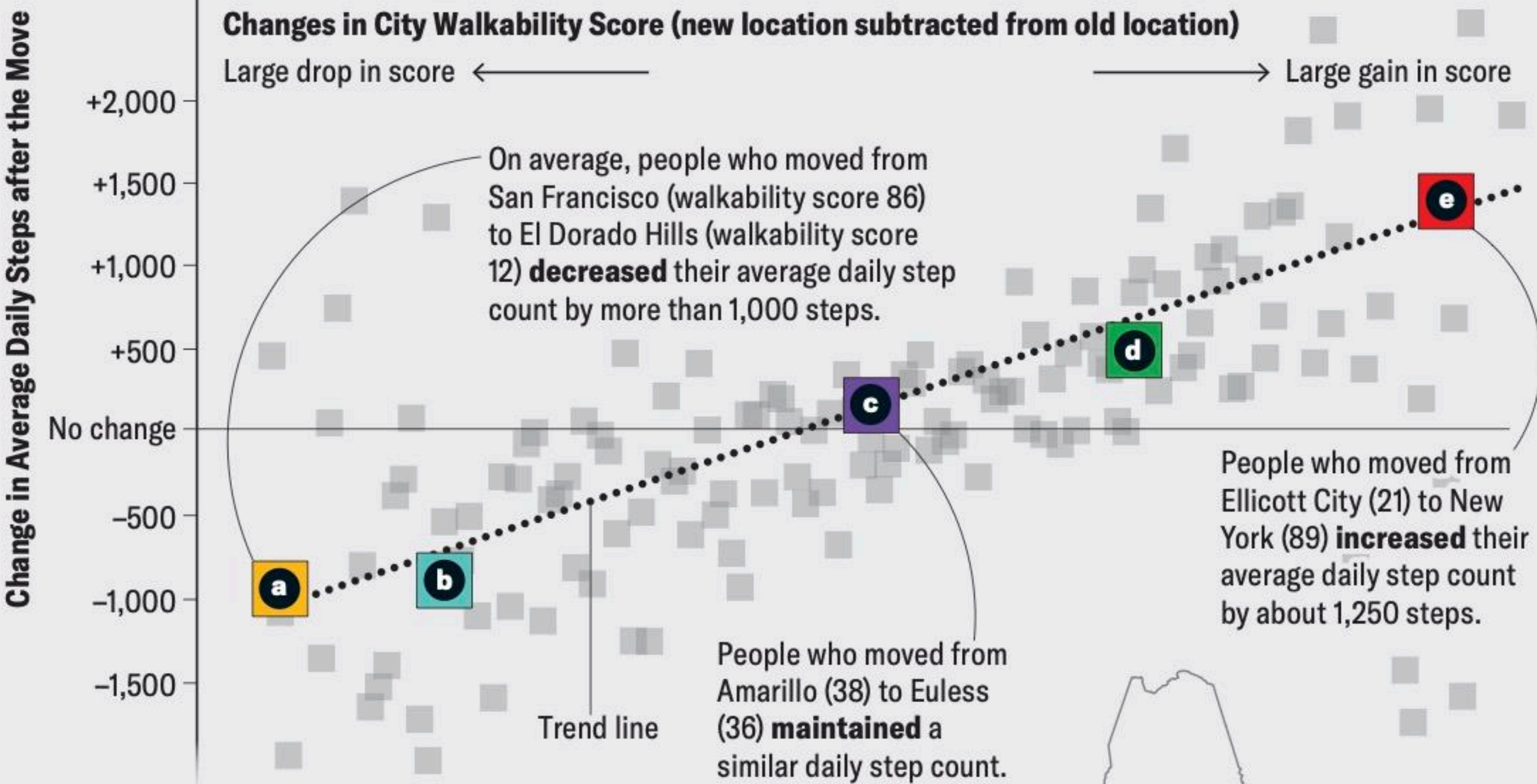
Tinted states contain the five most walkable and the five least walkable cities.



Arrows between cities show what happened when people moved from one to the other. These pairs—and the direction of movement between the two cities—are explored further in the chart to the right. The data demonstrate how moves to more walkable places increased daily steps, whereas moves to less walkable places reduced them.

MORE WALKABLE, MORE STEPS

Each square represents a relocation pair of cities. The x-axis shows the change in city walkability, and the y-axis shows the change in daily steps. Those who moved to more walkable cities added about 1,100 steps a day, and relocating to less walkable places cut activity by a similar amount.



FIVE MOST WALKABLE CITIES*

Walkability score	City
95	Hoboken, NJ
94	Union City, NJ
94	West New York, NJ
91	West Hollywood, CA
89	New York, NY

FIVE LEAST WALKABLE CITIES

Walkability score	City
4	Brentwood, TN
4	The Acreage, FL
4	Poinciana, FL
3	Bella Vista, AR
2	Badger, AK

*Walkability scores throughout were collected from www.walkscore.com in 2016 by Tim Althoff et al. Not all the superlatives shown in the table were for origin or destination cities in the study discussed here.