

Wellingtonians' opinions about road safety

Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023 and 2024

June 2024

Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

Background

Transport is crucial to support the functioning of cities, enable individuals to reach places of work, study and play, and respond to climate change and ecological crises.

Wellington City Council aims to move more people with fewer vehicles. The Council adopted a sustainable transport hierarchy which prioritises pedestrians, people on bikes and public transport over private vehicles.

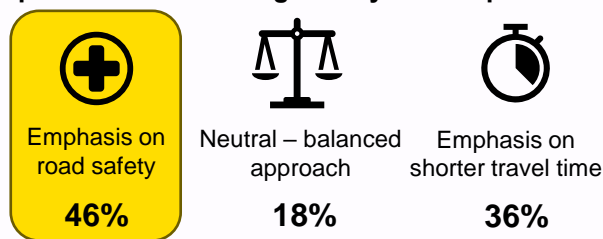
Road safety concerns and high numbers of injuries from road crashes make city streets unsafe, have high social costs, present a barrier to active transport, and limit mode choice for Wellingtonians.

Purpose of this report

To understand residents' opinions about road safety in Wellington city, including optimal speed limits for city streets, perceptions of traffic safety and safety for walking and biking, and perceived benefits of lowering speed limits.

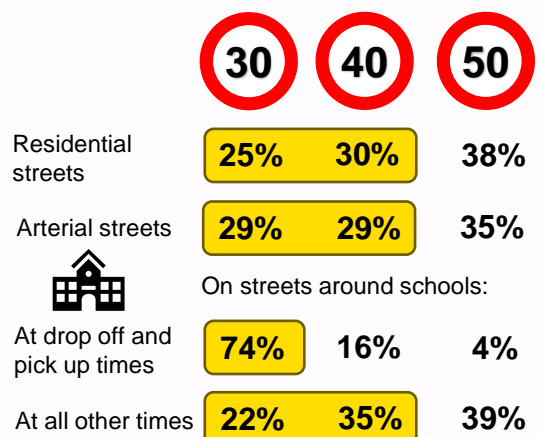
Summary of key findings

Speed limits in Wellington city should prioritise...

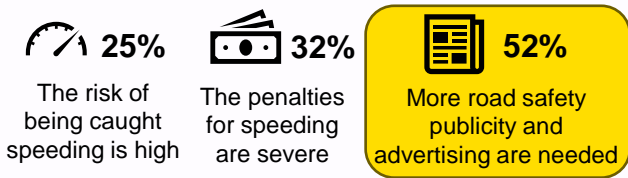


Residents who regularly walked for transport or used public transport placed more emphasis on road safety compared to regular private vehicle users

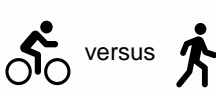
Speed limits should be...



Regular walkers, bike users and public transport users more frequently supported slower speed limits compared to regular private vehicle users



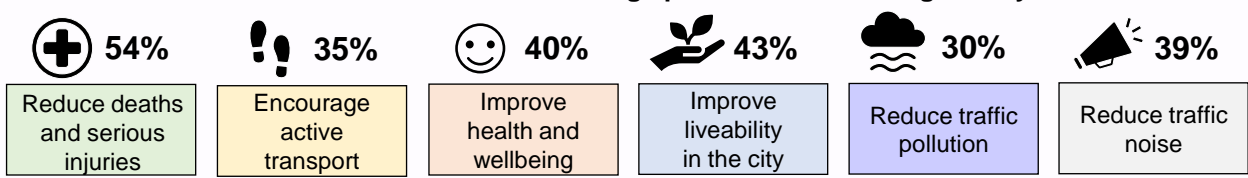
Perceived safety



For all types of urban streets, perceptions of safety for people riding a bike were 28% to 39% percentage points lower than for people walking

Frequent private vehicle users perceived higher levels of safety for people walking and riding a bike compared to frequent walkers, bike users and public transport users

Perceived benefits from lowering speed limits in Wellington city

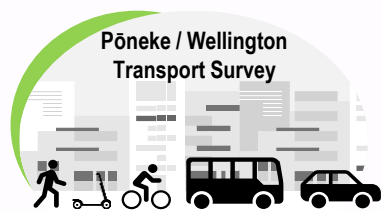


Frequent and occasional walkers, bike users and public transport users anticipated higher benefits of lowering speed limits compared to frequent private vehicle users

Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey Methodology

2023-2024

Survey design and components¹



Pōneke / Wellington
Transport Survey



10-15 minute
online survey

Demographic
characteristics

Transport
behaviours

Road safety

Core
sections

Transport
key
performance
indicators

Travel to work

Health and
wellbeing

Non-core
sections

Travel to other
destinations

Survey
feedback

Feedback

Locations
(home, work, study)

Children's travel
to school

Survey participants



Target group:

Adults (18+ years)
living in Wellington city

Participant recruitment 2023-2024

- Market research sample: 943 in 2023 and 885 in 2024
- Wellington City Council Research Panel sample: 1049 in 2023
- Social media sample: 1409 in 2023

Characteristics of survey participants for this report

Survey
respondents:

3401
(2023 sample)

+

885*
(2024 sample)

*2024 sample data
collected by May 2024



Age

45% Young adults
(18-39 years)
40% Middle-aged
adults (40-64 years)
15% Older adults
(65+ years)



Gender

57% Female
40% Male
2% Gender diverse
0.3% Self-described
1% Prefer not to say



Ethnicity

70% NZ European
9% Māori
2% Pacific
6% Asian
13% Other



85% had paid
or unpaid work



18% were parents or
guardians of
a school-aged child



20% had some difficulty
walking or climbing stairs

Transport user groups²
(5+ days per week)



18%
Walkers



3%
Bike users



5% Public
transport users



23% Private
vehicle

Data analysis³

Survey sections analysed:

- Road safety
- Travel to work
- Children's travel to school
- Results for the overall sample
- Subgroup analyses by age, gender, parental status, presence of difficulty walking and climbing stairs (or not)⁴, frequency of using individual transport modes⁵, and transport user groups²

¹ The survey methodology has been approved by Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (April 2023; Reference AREC23_03).

² These transport user groups included respondents who used a particular mode of transport 5 or more days per week and reported using all other modes less frequently.

³ Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests for comparison between subgroups.

⁴ Subgroup analysis for difficulty walking or climbing stairs: 'With difficulty' (some difficulty, a lot of difficulty or cannot do at all) or 'no difficulty'.

⁵ Frequency subgroups for each mode: 'frequent users' (5 or more days/week), 'occasional users' (1-4 days/week), and 'non-users' (do not use a particular mode of transport)

Wellingtonians' opinions about prioritising road safety versus shorter travel time

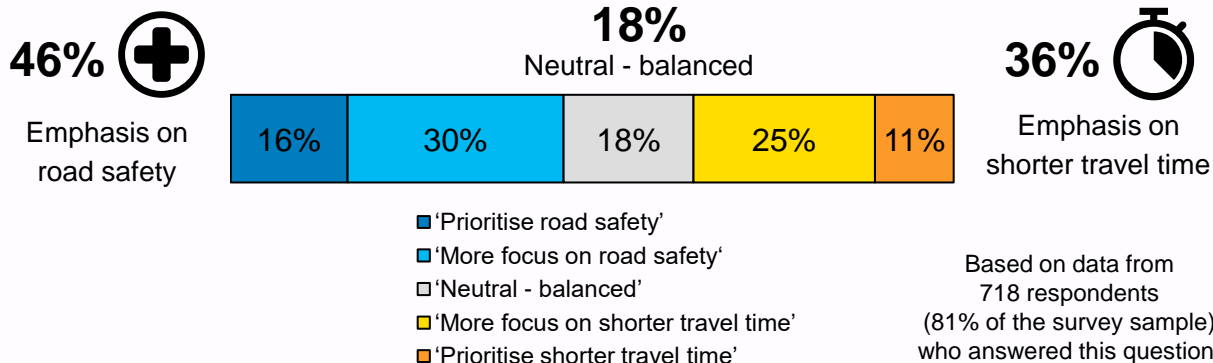
PWTS 2024 data

Nearly half of respondents placed emphasis on prioritising road safety over shorter travel time when considering speed limits in Wellington city

One fifth of residents preferred a neutral / balanced approach

Approximately one third of residents placed greater emphasis on shorter travel time

? Thinking about speed limits, should the Wellington city transport system prioritise road safety or shorter travel time?



What different groups of residents think

52% Females placed emphasis on road safety

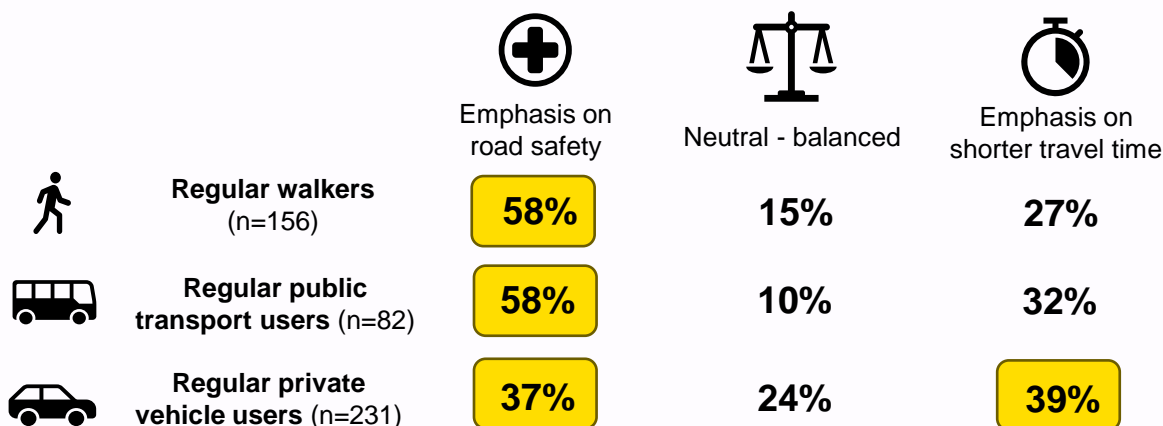
47% Males placed emphasis on shorter travel time

No significant difference by age between young adults, middle-aged adults and older adults

What different transport users think*

Majority of respondents who **regularly walked for transport or used public transport** (i.e., 5 or more days per week) placed emphasis on road safety

Views of **regular private vehicle users** were evenly split between emphasis on road safety and emphasis on shorter travel times, with one quarter preferring a balanced approach



* Respondents who used a particular mode of transport 5 or more days per week and reported using all other modes less frequently. Data for regular bike users are not presented due to small number of respondents who regularly rode a bicycle for transport (n=9).

Residents' perceptions of optimal speed limits and traffic safety for walking and cycling to work

PWTS 2023 data

The majority of respondents supported slower speed limits of 40 km/h or 30 km/h for both residential streets and arterial streets (city streets with lots of motor vehicles)

❓ In your opinion, what should the speed limit on...

- ... residential streets in your local suburb be?
- ... city streets with lots of motor vehicles be?



Residential streets

25%

30%

38%



Arterial streets

29%

29%

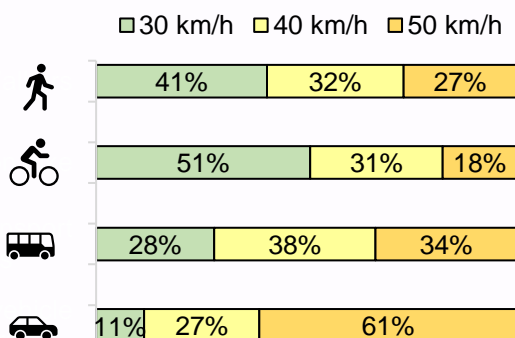
35%

A greater proportion of younger adults thought that lower speed limits would be more appropriate on residential streets, compared to middle-aged and older adults

A greater proportion of females thought that lower speed limits would be more appropriate on arterial streets, compared to males

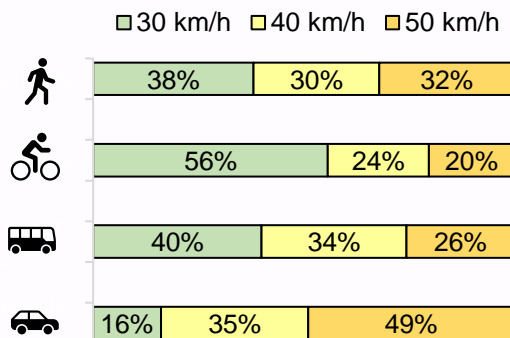
Residential streets

A greater proportion of respondents who regularly walked or rode a bike for transport thought that lower speed limits (such as 30 km/h or 40 km/h) would be appropriate for residential streets, compared to public transport users and private vehicle users.



Arterial streets

A greater proportion of respondents who regularly walked and rode a bike for transport and those who used public transport thought that lower speed limits (such as 30 km/h or 40 km/h) would be appropriate for arterial streets, compared to private vehicle users.

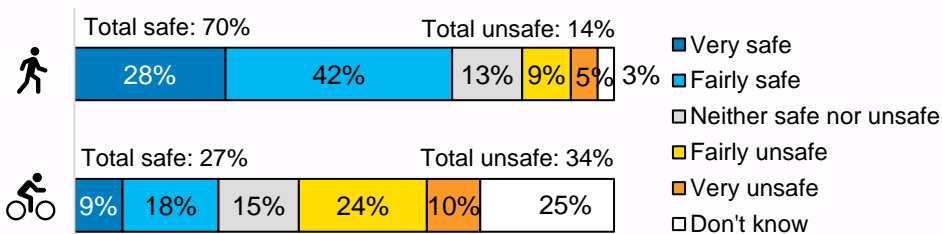


Perceptions of traffic safety for walking and biking to work*

Three quarters of residents perceived their route to work to be safe for walking

Only one quarter considered their route to work to be safe for riding a bike

❓ Thinking about safety in traffic, how safe or unsafe do you consider your route from home to work?



*Based on PWTS 2023 data from 2596 adult residents who worked and travelled to work at least one day per week.

Perceptions about optimal speed limits around schools and traffic safety for children's travel to school

PWTS 2023 and 2024 data

Three quarters of respondents supported 30 km/h speed limits on streets around schools at school drop off and pick up times

More than half of respondents supported slower speed limits on streets around all schools at all other times

Questions:

In your opinion, what should the speed limits on streets around all schools be during drop off and pick up times?

In your opinion, what should the speed limits on streets around all schools be at all other times (apart from drop off and pick up times)?



Speed limits on streets around all schools



'Other' or 'I don't know'



Speed limits during school drop off and pick up times

74%

16%

4%

6%



Speed limits at all other times (apart from drop off and pick up times)

22%

35%

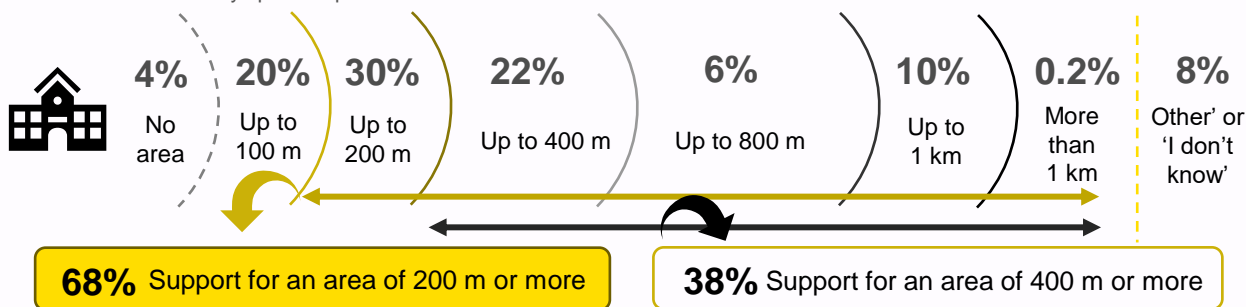
39%

4%

Catchment area for setting speed limits around schools

Two thirds of residents supported school specific speed limits to cover an area of 200 metres or more around schools

To ensure safety of children and encourage them to walk, ride a scooter, or bike to school, what area around all schools should be covered by specific speed limits?



Parental perceptions of traffic safety and route to school*

Perceived traffic safety for different modes of children's transport to school



Safe

56%

29%

41%

Unsafe

27%

49%

36%

Perceptions of route from home to school



Safe route(s)

Too much traffic

Traffic that is too fast

Dangerous crossing(s)

Walking route

65%

55%

48%

68%

Biking route

32%

60%

53%

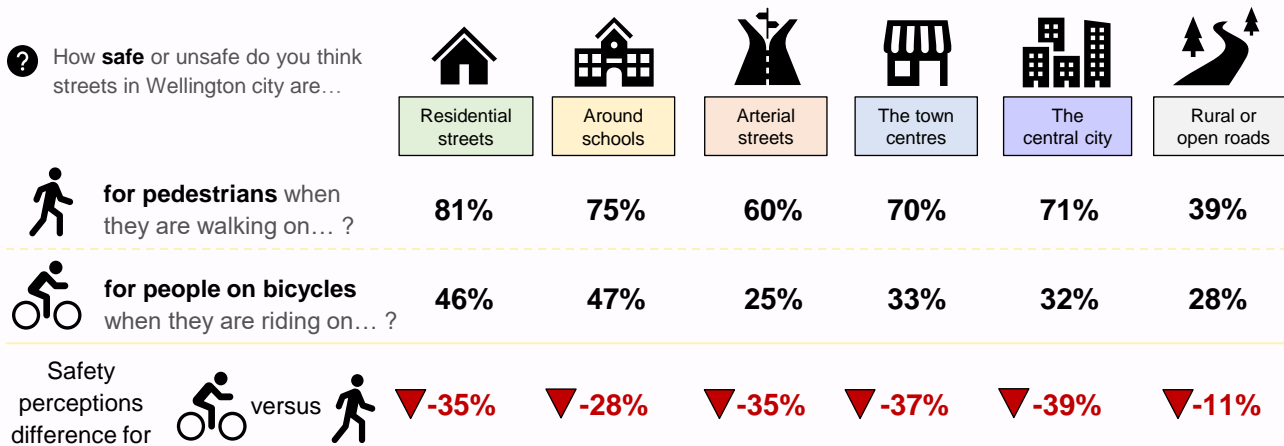
67%

*Based on PWTS 2023 data from parents or guardians with their eldest child in primary or intermediate school.

Perceived safety of Wellington city streets for people walking versus people on bikes

PWTS 2023 data

Residents perceived **higher levels of safety** on Wellington streets for people walking compared to people on bikes for all street types assessed in this survey. For all types of urban streets, perceptions of safety for people riding a bike were 28% to 39% percentage points lower than for people walking



Safety for people walking

Most respondents perceived that Wellington streets were **safe for people walking**

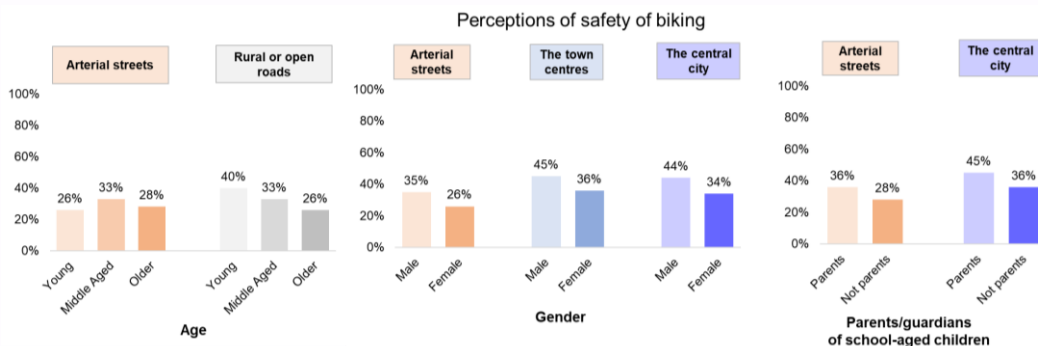
- A **greater** proportion of older adults (65%) perceived that walking on arterial streets was safe, compared to middle-aged (64%) and younger adults (57%)
- A **lesser** proportion of people with some difficulty walking or climbing stairs perceived that walking in the central city was safe, compared to those without difficulty
- A **lesser** proportion of parents or guardians of a school-aged child perceived that walking on streets around local schools was safe, while a **greater** proportion of parents or guardians perceived walking on central city streets was safe

Safety for people on bikes

One third to one half of respondents perceived that Wellington streets were **safe for people riding a bike**⁶

- Younger adults reported **lower** levels of perceived safety for riding a bike on arterial streets and **higher** levels of perceived safety on open roads, compared to middle-aged and older adults
- Females reported **lower** levels of perceived safety for riding a bike on arterial streets, in the town centres, and in the central city, compared to males
- Parents or guardians reported **higher** levels of perceived safety for riding a bike on arterials streets and in the central city compared to non-parents or guardians

How **safe** or unsafe do you think streets in Wellington city are **for people on bicycles** when they are riding on ... ?



All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant (p<0.001)

⁶ 13% to 17% of participants responded "I do not know" when asked about the safety of biking on Wellington city streets

What different transport users think about safety of Wellington city streets for pedestrians

PWTS 2023 data

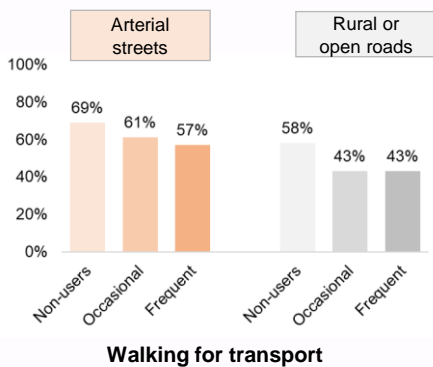
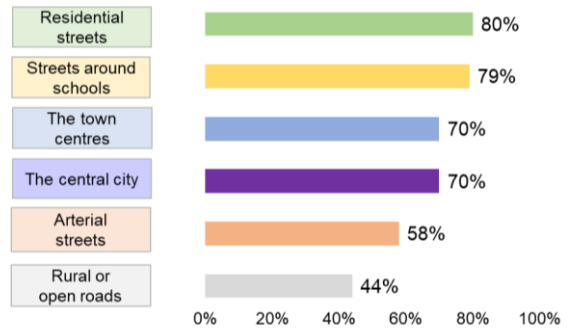
How do regular walkers perceive safety for pedestrians?

Among regular walkers, the level of perceived safety of walking differed across various street types

How **safe** or unsafe do you think streets in Wellington city are **for pedestrians** when they are walking on ... ?

- Only 58% of regular walkers perceived arterial streets to be safe for people walking
- More than three quarters of regular walkers perceived streets around schools and residential streets to be safe

Regular walkers' perceptions of safety of walking on different type of streets

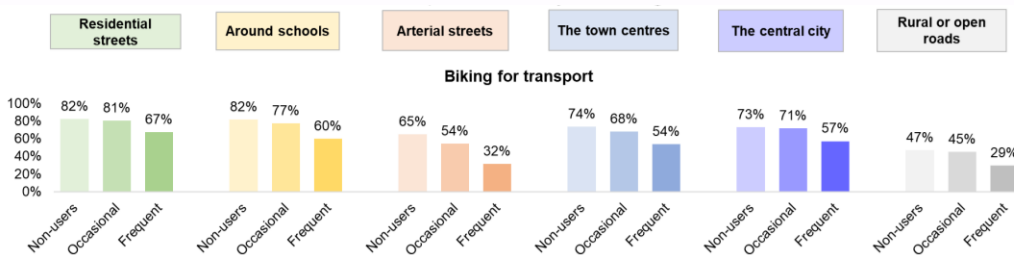


All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$)

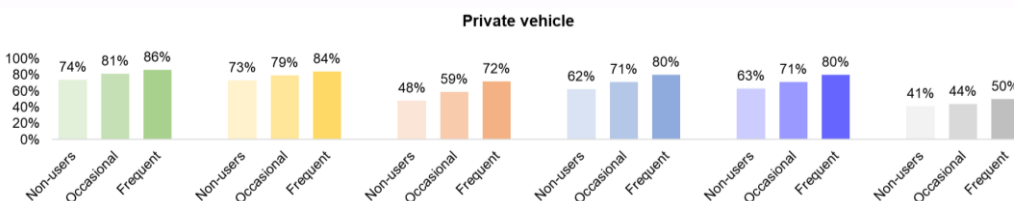
- People who never walk for transport (non-users) perceived **greater** safety of arterial streets and rural or open roads for pedestrians compared to occasional and frequent walkers

How do other transport users perceive safety for pedestrians?

- A **lesser** proportion of frequent bike users and a **greater** proportion of frequent private vehicle users perceived that walking on Wellington city streets is safe, compared to their counterparts



Biking for transport



Private vehicle users

All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$)

What different transport users think about safety of Wellington city streets for people on bikes

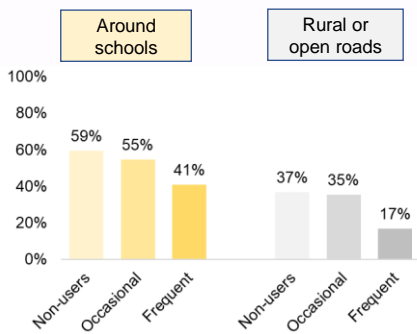
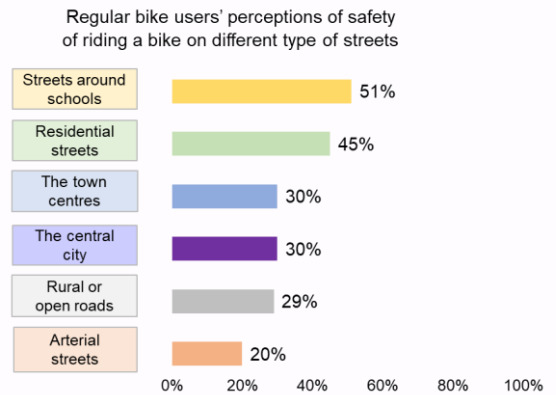
PWTS 2023 data

How do regular bike users perceive safety for people on bikes?

Among regular bike users, the level of perceived safety of riding a bike differed across various street types

How **safe** or unsafe do you think streets in Wellington city are **for people on bicycles** when they are riding on ... ?

- Less than one third of regular bike users perceived central city streets and the town centres to be safe for people on bikes
- Only 20% of regular bike users perceived arterial streets to be safe for people on bikes
- Around half of regular bike users perceived streets around schools and residential streets to be safe for bike riding



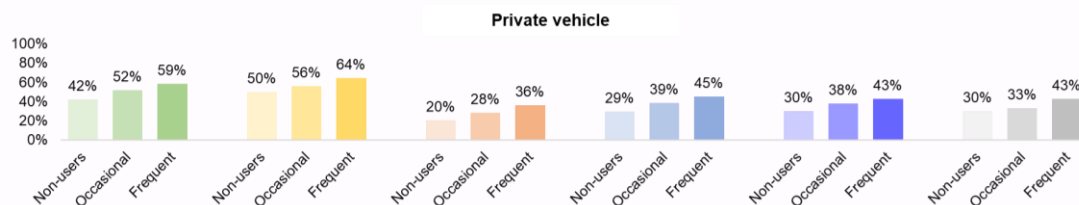
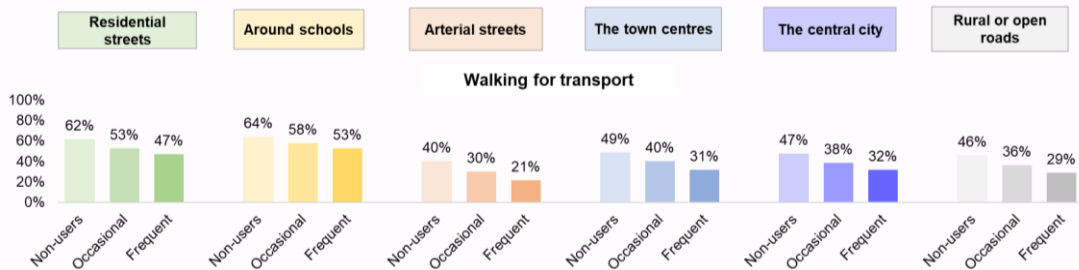
All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant (p<0.001)

- Frequent bike users perceived streets around schools and rural or open roads to be **less** safe for biking compared to occasional bike users and those who never rode a bike for transport

Biking for transport

How do other transport users perceive safety for people on bikes?

- Frequent walkers reported **lower** perceived safety for biking on all types of city streets, compared to occasional users or non-users
- Frequent vehicle users reported **higher** perceived safety for biking in all types of streets, compared to occasional users or non-users



All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant (p<0.001)

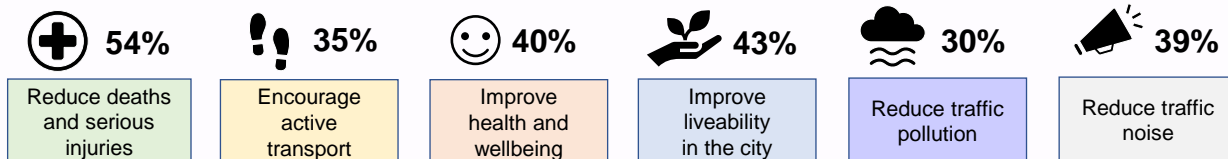
Residents' perceptions of benefits of speed limit reduction

PWTS 2023 data

The **majority** of respondents perceived that lowering speed limits could **reduce death and serious injuries**, while perceiving lower speed limits **would not encourage active transport**

Approximately **one-fifth** were **neutral** towards expected benefits

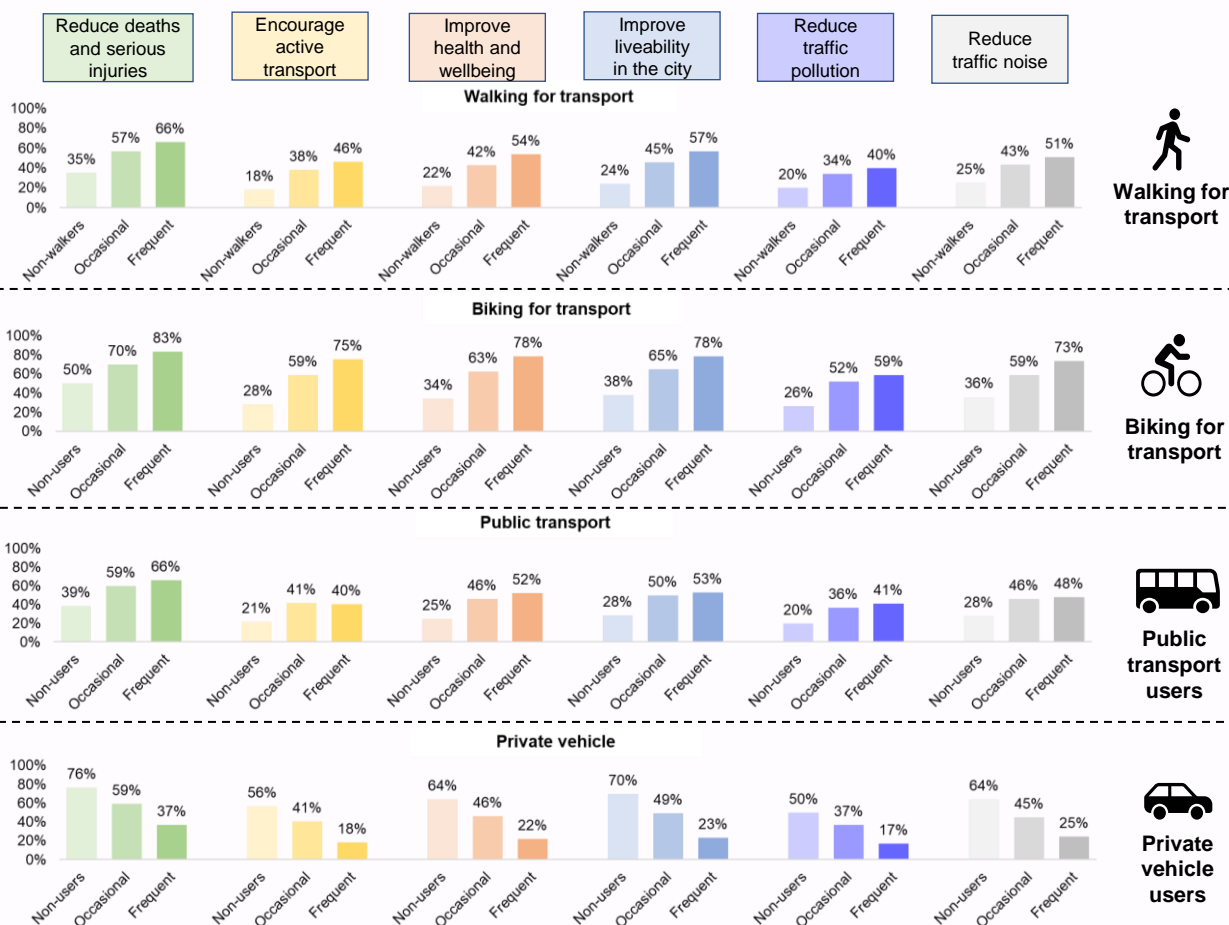
Proportion of respondents who agreed that lowering speed limits in Wellington city would achieve the following outcomes:



- Young adults reported **higher** levels of perceived benefits from lowering speed limits in Wellington city, compared to middle-aged and older adults
- A **greater** proportion of people without difficulty walking or climbing stairs agreed that lowering speed limits will encourage walking and biking for transport, improve liveability in the city, and reduce death and serious injuries, compared to people with difficulty walking or climbing stairs

Frequent and occasional users of active and public transport modes perceived **higher benefits** of lowering speed limits compared to frequent private vehicle users

Proportion of respondents who agreed lowering speed limits in Wellington city would have specific benefits:



All presented comparisons between the groups were statistically significant (p<0.001)

Residents' perceptions of speeding penalties and road safety publicity and advertising

PWTS 2023 data

Perceived risk of being caught speeding

Perceptions of penalties for speeding

Less than one third of respondents thought that the risk of being caught speeding was high and the penalties for speeding were severe



25% The risk of being caught speeding is high



32% The penalties for speeding are severe

- The risk of being caught speeding was **more frequently** perceived as high by regular private vehicle users, compared to those who relied less on private vehicle travel

- The penalties for speeding were **more frequently** perceived as severe by regular private vehicle users compared to occasional private vehicle users and non-users

Road safety publicity and advertising



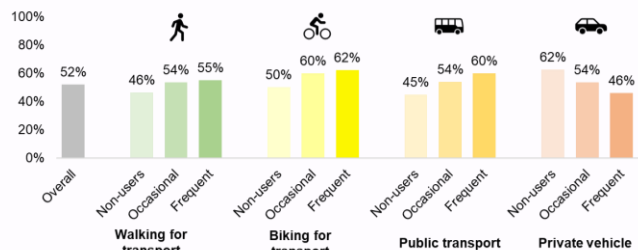
52%

More publicity and advertising are needed

The **majority** of respondents agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety is needed in Wellington city

Approximately **one quarter** were **neutral** towards the need for more road safety publicity and advertising

- A **greater** proportion of young adults agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed, compared to middle aged and older adults
- Respondents who frequently or occasionally walked, rode a bike or used public transport perceived **greater** need for publicity and advertising about road safety, compared to their counterparts
- A **lesser** proportion of frequent private vehicle users perceived that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed, compared to their counterparts



All presented comparisons between the three user groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$)

Conclusions

The majority of Wellington city residents supported lower speed limits on residential and arterial streets and in areas around schools and expressed preference to emphasise road safety over shorter travel time when setting speed limits.

Most residents thought that city streets were safe for people walking whereas riding a bike was perceived to be considerably less safe.

The majority of residents believed that more road safety-related publicity and advertising is needed in Wellington city.

Residents who frequently walked or rode a bike for transport or used public transport placed a greater emphasis on road safety (compared to shorter travel time), supported lower speed limits, perceived greater safety concerns for people walking and people on bikes and anticipated greater benefits from lowering speed limits compared to residents who frequently travelled by private vehicle.

Future efforts, policies, investments and interventions should aim to minimise road safety concerns of all road users in Wellington city.