

**Absolutely Positively  
Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke

# Wellingtonians' opinions about road safety

Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey  
2023 and 2024

19 June 2024



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Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke

| Version | Date       | Author             | Approver              |
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# Executive summary

This report provides insights into Wellingtonians' perceptions about suitable speed limits in Wellington city, their perceptions of safety for people walking and riding bikes, perceived benefits of lowering speed limits, and perceptions about speeding penalties and road safety publicity in Wellington city.

Data was analysed for 3401 Wellington city residents who completed the Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey in 2023, and 885 residents who completed the survey in March-April 2024.

Overall, the results show Wellington city residents' support for prioritising road safety over shorter travel time, and for lower speed limits of 30 km/h or 40 km/h on residential streets, arterial streets and streets around schools. The majority of residents supported lower speed limits on streets outside schools both during school pick up and drop off time and at all other times. Most residents perceived that Wellington city streets were safe for people walking whereas riding a bike was perceived to be considerably less safe, including for commute to work and children's travel to school. The majority of residents perceived that lowering speed limits will help reduce death and serious injuries and believed that more road safety-related publicity and advertising is needed in Wellington city.

Key results are:

- Nearly half of survey respondents placed emphasis on prioritising road safety over shorter travel time when considering speed limits in Wellington city. Approximately one third of respondents placed greater emphasis on shorter travel time whereas one fifth preferred a neutral / balanced approach.
- Females and respondents who regularly walked for transport or used public transport placed greater emphasis on road safety than shorter travel time.
- Views of regular private vehicle users were evenly split between emphasis on road safety and emphasis on shorter travel time, with one quarter preferring a neutral / balanced approach.
- The majority of respondents supported slower speed limits of 40 km/h or 30 km/h for both residential streets, arterial streets<sup>1</sup> and streets outside of all schools.
- People walking, biking, and using public transport more frequently supported a lower speed limit, whereas frequent drivers supported the status quo of 50 km/h on residential and arterial streets.
- Approximately half of parents or guardians of primary or intermediate school children perceived that traffic was too fast along their child's walking or biking route to school.
- Three quarters of respondents supported 30 km/h speed limits on streets outside schools during school pick up and drop off times and more than half supported lower speed limits outside schools at all other times. Two thirds of respondents

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<sup>1</sup> In the survey, arterial streets were referred to as "city streets with lots of motor vehicles".

thought that school specific speed limits should cover an area of 200 metres or more around schools.

- Overall, respondents perceived higher levels of safety on Wellington city streets for people walking compared to people on bikes for all street types assessed in this survey. Similar results were observed for perceived traffic safety for travelling to work and for children's travel to school.
- Most respondents perceived that Wellington city streets were safe for people walking. Among those who regularly walk for transport, rural/open roads (44%) and arterial streets (58%) were perceived as the least safe whereas over two thirds perceived central city streets<sup>2</sup> (70%), town centres<sup>2</sup> (70%), streets around local schools (79%), and residential streets (80%) to be safe for people walking.
- For all types of urban streets, perceptions of safety for people riding a bike were 28% to 39% lower than for people walking. Among respondents who regularly rode a bike for transport, arterial streets (20%), rural/open roads (29%), central city streets (30%) and town centres (30%) were perceived as least safe. Residential streets (45%) and streets around local schools (51%) were perceived as the safest for people on bikes.
- The majority of respondents perceived that lowering speed limits will help reduce death and serious injuries, while perceiving lower speed limits will not encourage active transport. People using active transport modes and public transport more frequently perceived greater benefits of lowering speed limits compared to regular private vehicle users.
- Less than one third of respondents thought that the risk of being caught speeding was high and the penalties for speeding were severe.
- The majority of respondents agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety 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.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of this survey, most central city streets and town centres have a speed limit of 30 km/h.



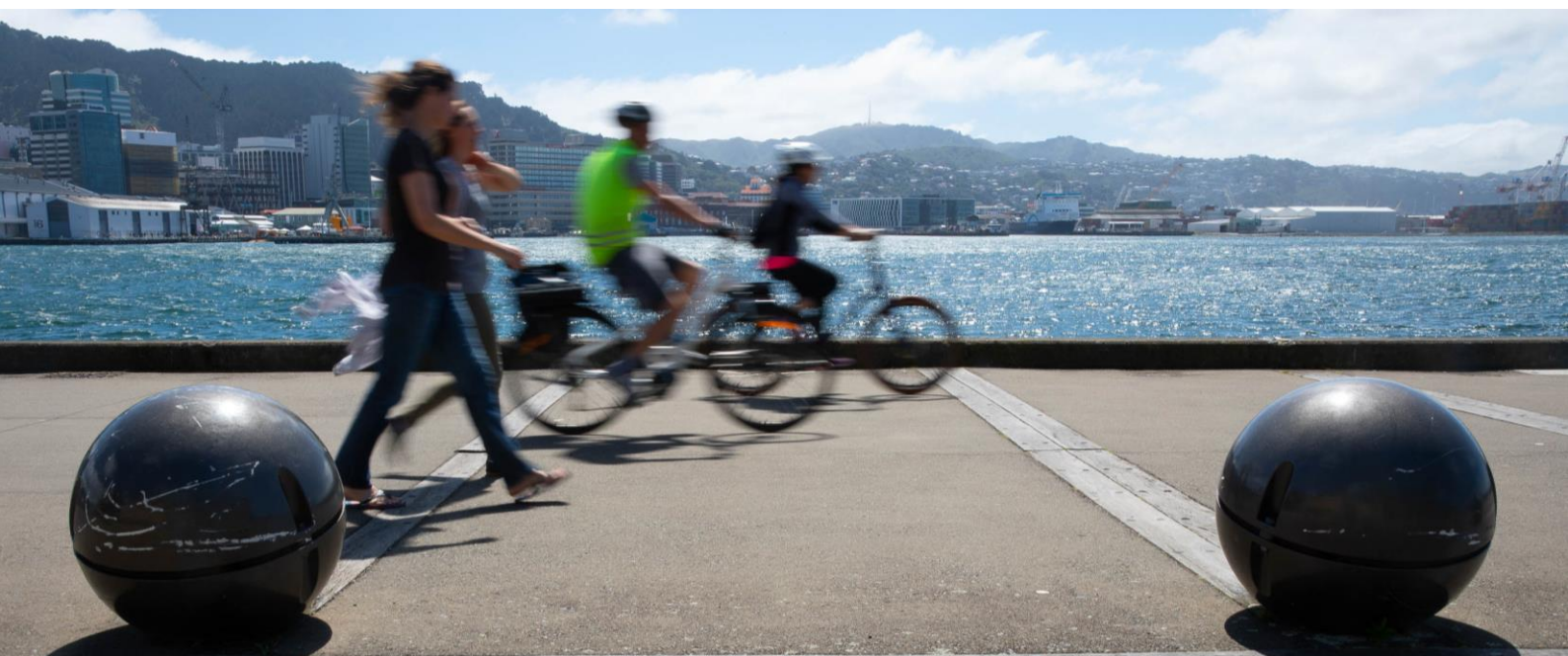
# Introduction

Transport is crucial for supporting the functioning of cities and enabling individuals to reach places to work, study, shop and play. Transport has an impact on the environment and public health and is at the core of efforts to mitigate and respond to the climate and ecological emergency<sup>3</sup>. A high-quality transport system can help make cities more liveable and improve wellbeing of residents.

In Wellington city, unsafe speed limits and high numbers of road crashes with injuries (including death and serious injuries) make city streets unsafe, have high social cost, present a barrier to active transport, and limit mode choice.

One of the six current priorities for Wellington city is a safe, resilient and reliable network of transport infrastructure that supports active and public transport choices, and an efficient, productive and environmentally sustainable economy. Aligned with the Road to Zero vision, the Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) target is to reduce the five-year rolling average of deaths and serious injuries from road crashes by 40% by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels) and to reduce speed limits to a safe and appropriate speed through Speed Management Plans.<sup>4</sup>

This report presents results related to residents' opinions about road safety in Wellington city, including their preferences along the continuum of prioritising road safety versus shorter travel time and opinions about optimal speed limits for city streets. The report also offers insights into residents' perceptions of traffic safety for walking and biking to work and children's travel to school, perceived safety for walking and biking on various types of city streets, anticipated benefits from lowering speed limits, speeding penalties and road safety publicity in Wellington city.



<sup>3</sup> [Te Atakura – First to Zero, Wellington's blueprint for a Zero Carbon Capital](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Wellington Regional Land Transport Plan 2021](#)

# Methodology overview

The Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey (PWTS) is a 10- to 15-minute online survey which has been initiated and managed by Wellington City Council since April 2023. Survey data was collected using the online survey software, Voxco. Target participants for this survey were adults (18 years of age or older) who lived in Wellington city. Individuals who were younger than 18 years of age, lived outside Wellington city or did not give consent to participate in this survey were excluded from this survey (Figure 1 and Figure 2). This research protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (Reference: AREC23\_03; April 2023).

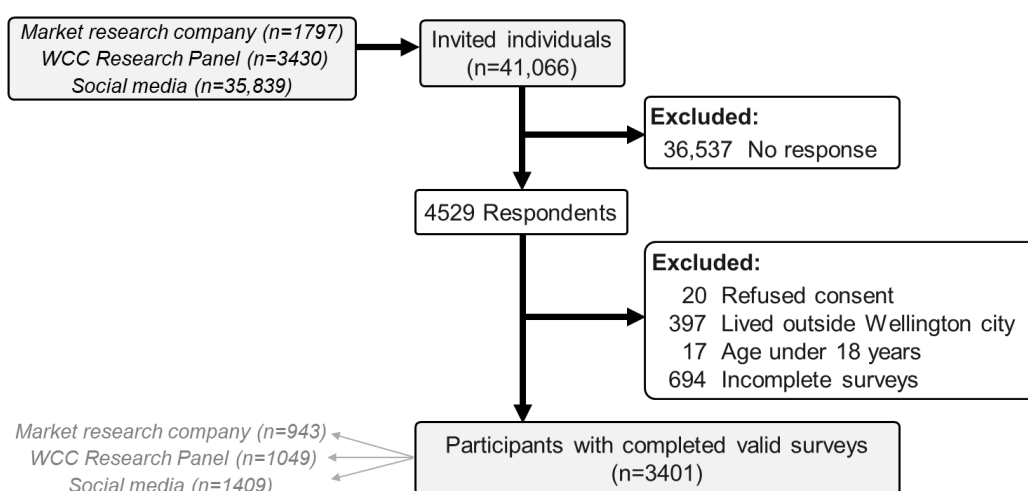


Figure 1. Participant selection flowchart for Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey (PWTS) 2023 data

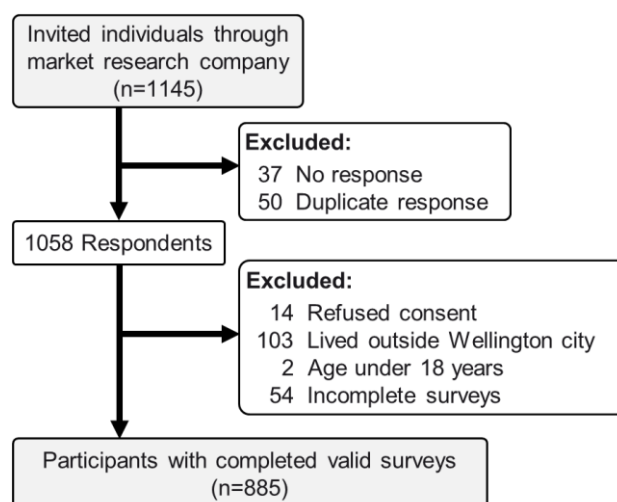


Figure 2. Participant selection flowchart for Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey (PWTS) 2024 data (wave 1 data only collected in March-April 2024)

The PWTS 2023 data presented in this report was collected through three waves of data collection, which occurred between April and November 2023. Participants were recruited through a commercial research panel provided by Dynata (April-May 2023), the Wellington City Council’s research panel (July-August 2023), and social media (September-November 2023). A total of 3401 respondents with completed valid surveys were included in the PWTS 2023 data analysis.

Data for PWTS 2024 with updated set of questions about road safety was collected in March-April 2024 through a commercial research panel provided by Dynata. A total of 885 respondents with completed valid surveys were included in the PWTS 2024 data analysis.

## Survey sections

Components of PWTS 2023 and 2024 are presented in Figure 3.

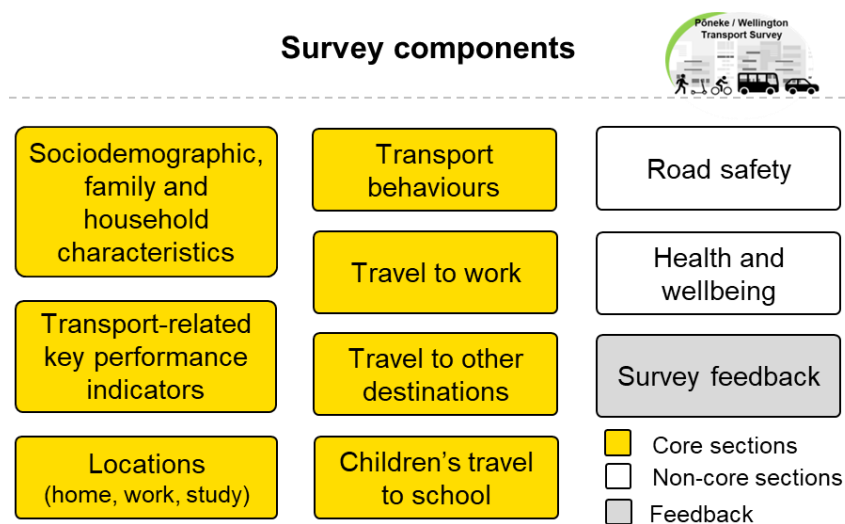


Figure 3. Components of the Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023 and 2024

The road safety section of the PWTS 2023 consisted of 23 questions which are presented in Table 1. These questions were largely based on the questions used in the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi’s ‘Public Attitudes to Road Safety’ report<sup>5</sup> (with permission from the New Zealand Transport Agency).

Questions included in the road safety section were revised for the PWTS 2024 to supplement data collected in 2023. Fourteen of the original questions were retained and four new questions were added. New questions were designed by Wellington City Council’s City Insights Team and are presented in Table 1.

<sup>5</sup> [Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency. \(2020\) Public Attitudes to Road Safety](#)



Table 1. PWTS 2023 and 2024 survey questions related to road safety and original response categories


| Survey questions   | Response categories   | Survey year        |
|--|---|--------------------|
| <p>Q. How safe or unsafe do you think streets in Wellington city are for pedestrians when they are walking...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On residential streets</li> <li>• On streets around local schools</li> <li>• On city streets with lots of motor vehicles</li> <li>• In the town centres</li> <li>• In the central city</li> <li>• On rural or open roads outside of city</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Very safe’</li> <li>– ‘Fairly safe’</li> <li>– ‘Neither safe nor unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘Fairly unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘Very unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul> | PWTS 2023 and 2024 |
| <p>Q. How safe or unsafe do you think streets in Wellington city are for people on bicycles when they are riding...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On residential streets</li> <li>• On streets around local schools</li> <li>• On city streets with lots of motor vehicles</li> <li>• In the town centres</li> <li>• In the central city</li> <li>• On rural or open roads outside of city</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Very safe’</li> <li>– ‘Safe’</li> <li>– ‘Neither safe nor unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘Unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘Very unsafe’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul>               | PWTS 2023 and 2024 |
| <p>Q. In your opinion, what should the speed limit on residential streets in your local suburb be?</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘30 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘40 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘50 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘Other. Please specify:’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul>                                       | PWTS 2023 and 2024 |
| <p>Q. In your opinion, what should the speed limit on city streets with lots of motor vehicles be?</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘30 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘40 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘50 km/h’</li> <li>– ‘Other. Please specify:’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul>                                       | PWTS 2023 and 2024 |
| <p>Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The risk of being caught speeding is small.</li> <li>• The penalties for speeding are not very severe even if you are caught.</li> <li>• Lowering speed limits will help reduce deaths and serious injuries from road crashes.</li> <li>• More publicity and advertising about road safety is needed.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Strongly agree’</li> <li>– ‘Agree’</li> <li>– ‘Neutral’</li> <li>– ‘Disagree’</li> <li>– ‘Strongly disagree’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul>                 | PWTS 2023          |
| <p>Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about lowering speed limits in Wellington city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowering speed limits will reduce traffic noise.</li> <li>• Lowering speed limits will reduce traffic pollution.</li> <li>• Lowering speed limits will encourage walking and cycling for transport.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘Strongly agree’</li> <li>– ‘Agree’</li> <li>– ‘Neutral’</li> <li>– ‘Disagree’</li> <li>– ‘Strongly disagree’</li> <li>– ‘I don’t know’</li> </ul>                 | PWTS 2023          |

- Lowering speed limits will improve health and wellbeing of the community.
- Lowering speed limits will improve liveability in the city.

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

Please slide the dot along the scale between 1 and 5, where 1 signifies that you think emphasis should be on road safety and 5 indicates emphasis on shorter travel time.

1  
Road safety



5  
Shorter travel time / faster speeds

PWTS 2024

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

- ‘30 km/h’
- ‘40 km/h’
- ‘50 km/h’
- ‘Other. Please specify:’
- ‘I don’t know’

PWTS 2024

Q. 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)?

- ‘30 km/h’
- ‘40 km/h’
- ‘50 km/h’
- ‘Other. Please specify:’
- ‘I don’t know’

PWTS 2024

Q. 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?

- ‘No area’
- ‘Up to 100 metres from school’
- ‘Up to 200 metres from school’
- ‘Up to 400 metres from school’
- ‘Up to 800 metres from school’
- ‘Up to 1 kilometre from school’
- ‘More than 1 km from school. Please specify:’
- ‘Other. Please specify:’
- ‘I don’t know’

PWTS 2024

## Data analysis

Data were analysed for the entire sample and for subgroups of respondents. Subgroup analyses were performed by age, gender, parental status, presence of difficulty walking and climbing stairs (or not), frequency of using individual transport modes, and transport user groups (see Table 2 for details).

Agreement and safety perceptions data were collected on a 5-point Likert scale ('strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' for agreement items and 'very safe' to 'very unsafe' for safety perceptions items), with an 'I don't know' response option. For some analyses, these data were recoded into 4-category variables ('agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'I don't know' for agreement items and 'safe', 'neutral', 'unsafe' and 'I don't know' for safety perceptions).

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for the overall sample. Differences between the subgroups were compared using Chi-square tests. P-value of less than 0.001 was used to indicate statistical significance. Data analysis was conducted in November 2023 and June 2024 using SPSS Version 29.0.

Table 2. Subgroup categories and definitions

| Subgroups   | Categories  |
|---|---|
| <b>Demographic characteristics</b>  |   |
| Age   | Young adults (18-39 years old)                          |
|   | Middle-aged adults (40-64 years old)                    |
|   | Older adults (≥65 years old)                            |
| Gender  | Female  |
|   | Male  |
| Parental status   | Parent/guardian of a school-aged child                  |
|   | Not parent/guardian of a school-aged child              |
| Difficulty walking and climbing stairs  | With at least some difficulty                           |
|   | Without difficulty                                      |
| <b>Transport modes</b>  |   |
| Frequency of using individual transport modes   | Non-users ('never')                                     |
|   | Occasional users ('1 to 4 days per week')               |
|   | Frequent users ('5 or more days per week')              |
|   |   |
| Transport user groups<br>(Defined as respondents who used a particular mode of transport on 5 or more days per week and reported using all other modes less frequently) | Regular walkers / Walkers                               |
|   | Regular bike users / Bike users                         |
|   | Regular public transport users / Public transport users |
|   | Regular private vehicle users / Private vehicle users   |

# Survey sample

## PWTS 2023 Sample

A total of 3401 individuals from Wellington city completed this survey in 2023 (Figure 4). Respondents lived in the following areas: Lambton General Ward (23%), Onslow-Western General Ward (22%), Eastern General Ward (19%), Northern General Ward (18%), and Southern General Ward (18%). Overall, 19% of respondents regularly<sup>6</sup> walked for transport, 3% rode a bike for transport, 5% used public transport and 22% relied on private vehicle transport.

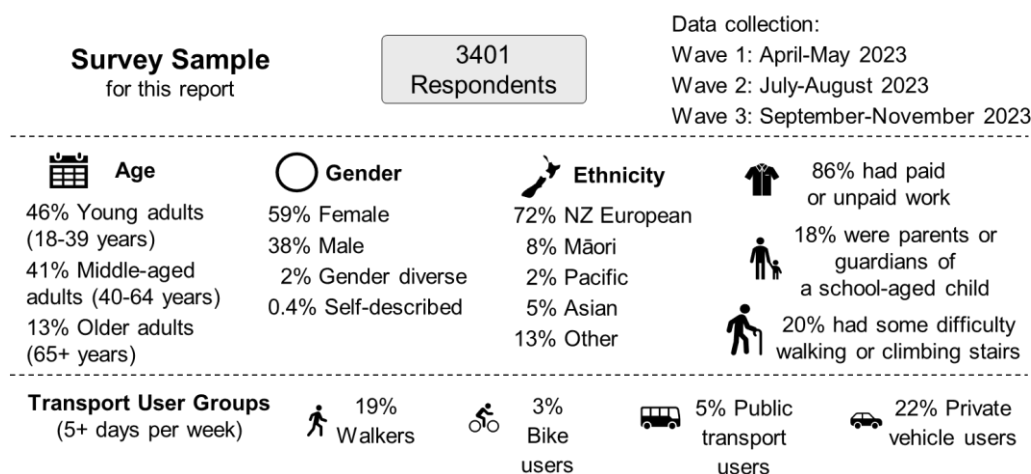


Figure 4. Characteristics of the PWTS 2023 survey respondents

## PWTS 2024 Sample

A total of 885 individuals from Wellington city completed this survey in March-April 2024 (Figure 5). Respondents lived in the following areas: Lambton General Ward (26%), Northern General Ward (25%), Onslow-Western General Ward (19%), Southern General Ward (15%), and Eastern General Ward (14%). Overall, 15% of respondents regularly walked for transport, 1% rode a bike for transport, 4% used public transport and 29% relied on private vehicle transport.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

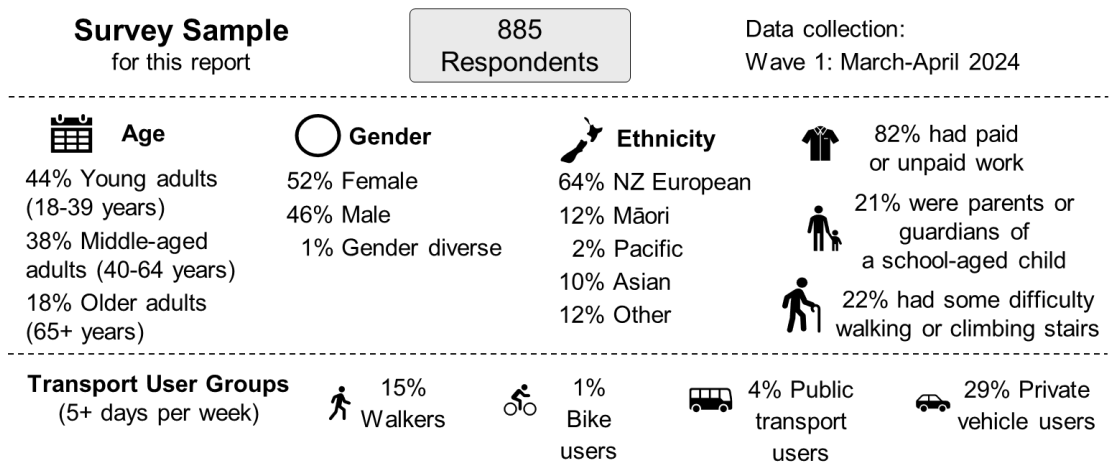


Figure 5. Characteristics of the PWTS 2024 survey respondents (wave 1 data only collected in March-April 2024)

## Comparison of PWTS 2023 with Census 2018 data

Demographic characteristics of PWTS 2023 survey participants were similar to 2018 Census data for adults (aged 18 years of older) living in Wellington city with respect to age, gender and ethnicity (Table 3).

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of PWTS survey participants and 2018 Census data for Wellington city adult residents

| Demographic characteristics | PWTS 2023                        | 2018 Census data* |     |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Age                         | Young adults (18-39 years)       | 46%               | 49% |
|                             | Middle-aged adults (40-64 years) | 41%               | 38% |
|                             | Older adults (65+ years)         | 13%               | 13% |
| Gender                      | Female                           | 59%               | 52% |
|                             | Male                             | 38%               | 48% |
|                             | Gender diverse                   | 2%                | -   |
|                             | Self-described                   | 0.4%              | -   |
| Ethnicity                   | NZ European                      | 72%               | 70% |
|                             | Māori                            | 8%                | 7%  |
|                             | Pacific                          | 2%                | 4%  |
|                             | Asian                            | 5%                | 16% |
|                             | Other                            | 13%               | 3%  |
| Employment                  | Full-time                        | 74%               | 61% |
|                             | Part-time                        | 23%               | 13% |
|                             | Other                            | 3%                | -   |
|                             | Unemployed                       | n/a               | 4%  |
|                             | Not in the labour force          | n/a               | 22% |

\* In the 2018 Census data presented in this table, only data from Wellington city residents aged 18 years or older are included in the calculation of population proportions. Sample sizes varied for all 2018 Census demographic characteristics. Census 2018 ethnicity data included multiple responses. Census 2018 employment data did not include individuals aged 18-19 years.



# Results

## Opinions about prioritising road safety versus shorter travel time

- Nearly half of respondents placed emphasis on prioritising road safety over shorter travel time when considering speed limits in Wellington city (Figure 6).
- One fifth of respondents preferred a neutral / balanced approach.
- Approximately one third of respondents placed greater emphasis on shorter travel time.

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

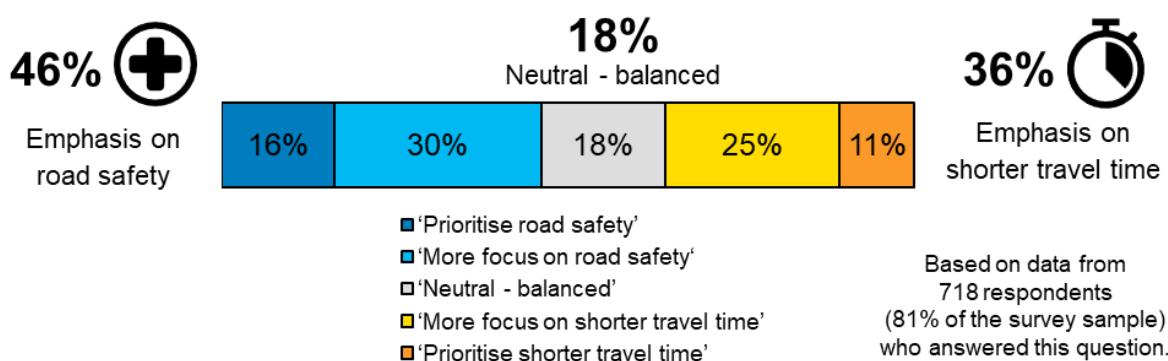


Figure 6. Residents' opinions about prioritising road safety versus shorter travel time

- Females placed greater emphasis on road safety (52%) compared to shorter travel time (26%).
- Males placed greater emphasis on shorter travel time (47%) compared to road safety (39%).
- Emphasis on road safety versus shorter travel time did not differ significantly by age between young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults.
- The majority of residents who regularly walked for transport or used public transport placed greater emphasis on road safety than on shorter travel time (Figure 7).
- 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 (Figure 7).

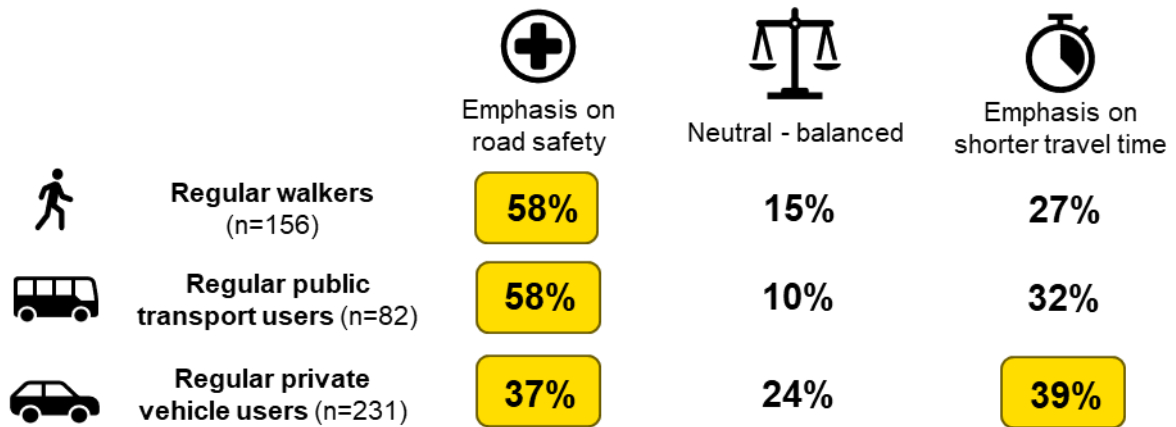


Figure 7. Opinions of different transport user groups about emphasis on road safety versus emphasis on shorter travel time



# Opinions about speed limits in Wellington city

## Residential streets

- The majority of respondents (55%) supported slower speed limits of 40 km/h or 30 km/h on residential streets compared to 38% who supported the status quo of 50 km/h (Figure 8).

**?** In your opinion, what should the speed limit on residential streets in your local suburbs be?

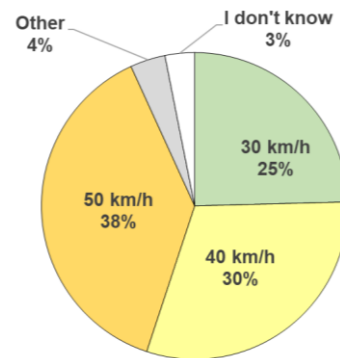


Figure 8. Opinions about appropriate speed limits for residential streets in the total sample

- Overall, a greater proportion of young adults thought that lower speed limits would be more appropriate on residential streets compared to middle-aged and older adults (Figure 9).

**?** In your opinion, what should the speed limit on residential streets in your local suburbs be?

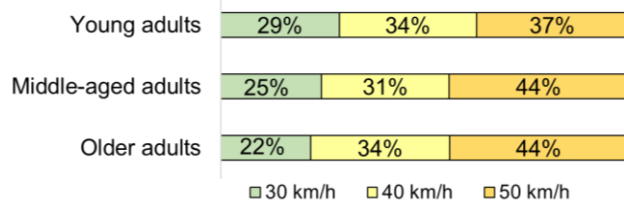


Figure 9. Opinions about appropriate speed limits for residential streets by age of respondents

- A greater proportion of frequent walkers, frequent bike users, and frequent public transport users, and a smaller proportion of frequent private vehicle users thought that lower speed limits (such as 30 km/h or 40 km/h) would be appropriate for residential streets, compared to their counterparts (Figure 10). Overall, 69% of frequent walkers supported lower speed limits compared to 60% of frequent private vehicle users who supported the status quo.

**?** In your opinion, what should the speed limit on residential streets in your local suburbs be?

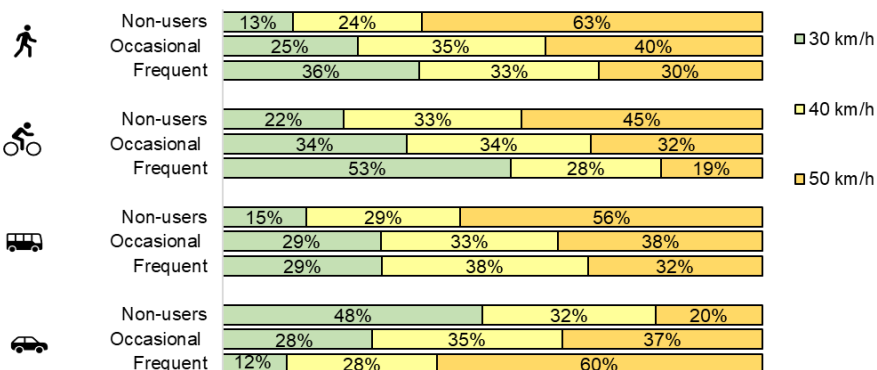


Figure 10. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on residential streets by frequency of using individual transport modes

- 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 regular public transport users and private vehicle users (Figure 11).

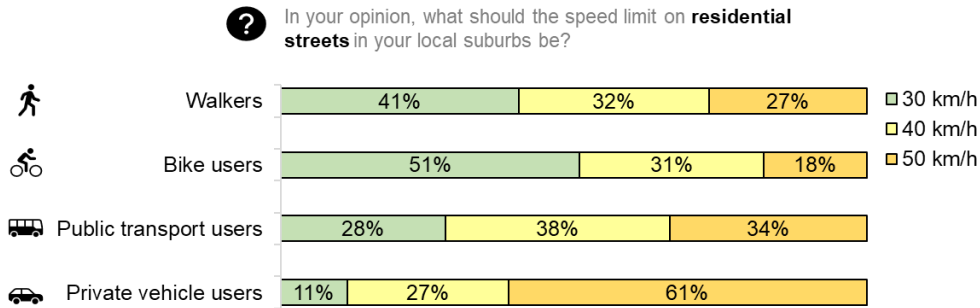


Figure 11. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on residential streets by transport user groups

### Arterial streets

- Overall, the majority of respondents (58%) supported slower speed limits, while 35% supported the status quo of 50 km/h on arterial streets<sup>7</sup> (described in the survey as “city streets with lots of motor vehicles”) (Figure 12).

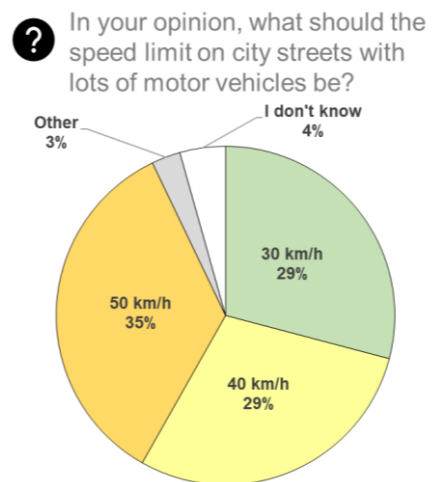


Figure 12. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on arterial streets

- Overall, a greater proportion of females thought that lower speed limits would be more appropriate on arterial streets, compared to males (Figure 13).

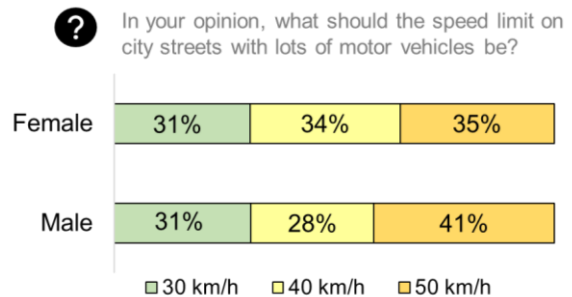


Figure 13. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on arterial streets by gender

<sup>7</sup> In the survey, arterial streets were referred to as “city streets with lots of motor vehicles”.

- A greater proportion of frequent walkers, frequent bike users, and frequent public transport users, and a smaller proportion of frequent private vehicle users thought that lower speed limits (such as 30 km/h or 40 km/h) would be appropriate for arterial streets, compared to their counterparts (Figure 14).

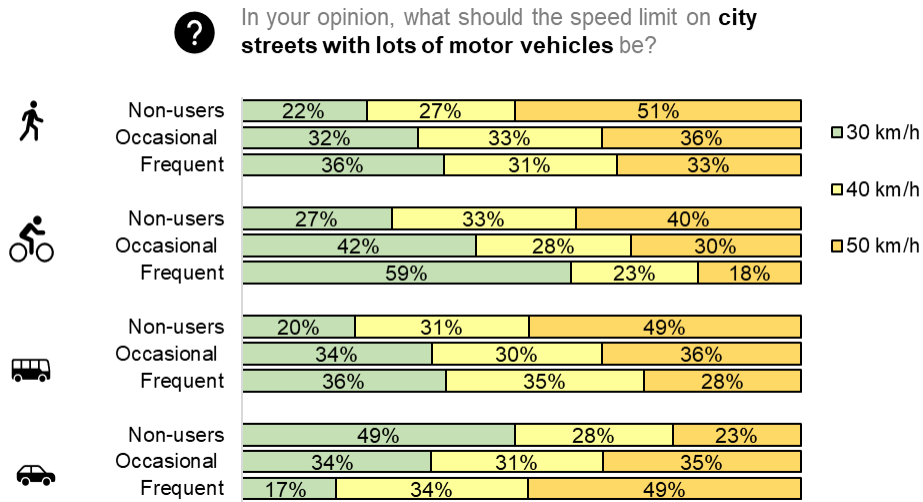


Figure 14. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on arterial streets by frequency of using individual transport modes

- 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 regular private vehicle users (Figure 15).

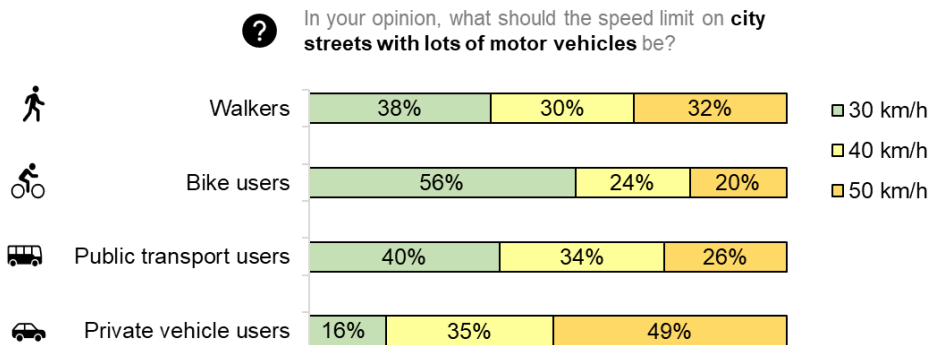


Figure 15. Opinions about appropriate speed limits on arterial streets by transport user groups



# Perceptions of traffic safety for walking and biking to work

The results presented in this section are based on PWTS 2023 data from 2596 adult residents who worked and travelled to work at least one day per week.

- Overall, 70% of respondents who commute to work perceived their route to work to be safe for walking and 14% perceived it to be unsafe (Figure 16).
- In contrast, only 27% of residents who commute to work considered their route to work to be safe for riding a bike, whereas 34% expressed traffic safety concerns and 25% selected the 'I don't know' category.
- Twice as many residents expressed traffic safety concerns for riding a bicycle to work (34%) compared to walking to work (14%).

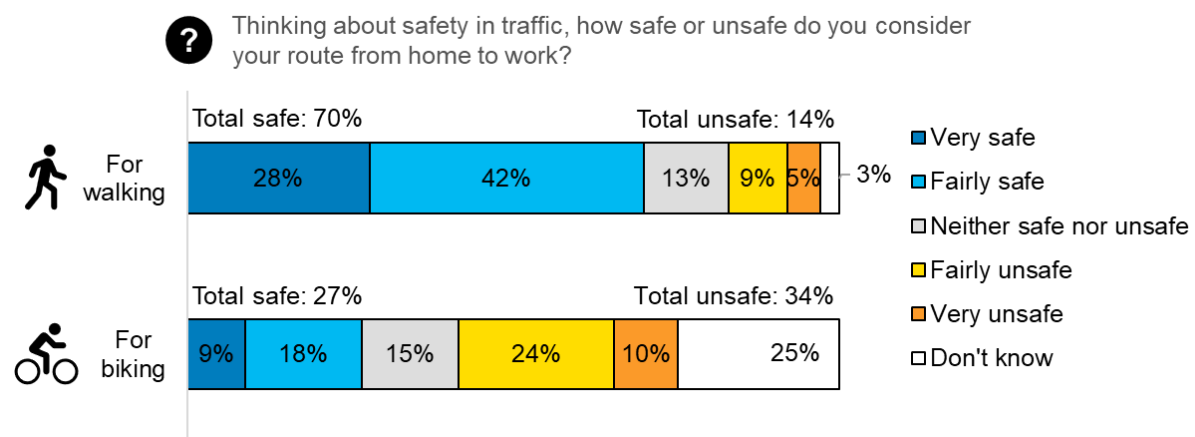


Figure 16. Perceptions of traffic safety for walking and biking from home to work among commuters

# Perceptions about optimal speed limits around schools

Questions about optimal speed limits on streets around schools were asked in PWTS 2024.

- In the total sample, 74% of respondents supported 30 km/h speed limits on streets around schools at school drop off and pick up times (Figure 17).
- More than half of respondents supported slower speed limits (30 km/h or 40 km/h) on streets around all schools at all other times (Figure 17).

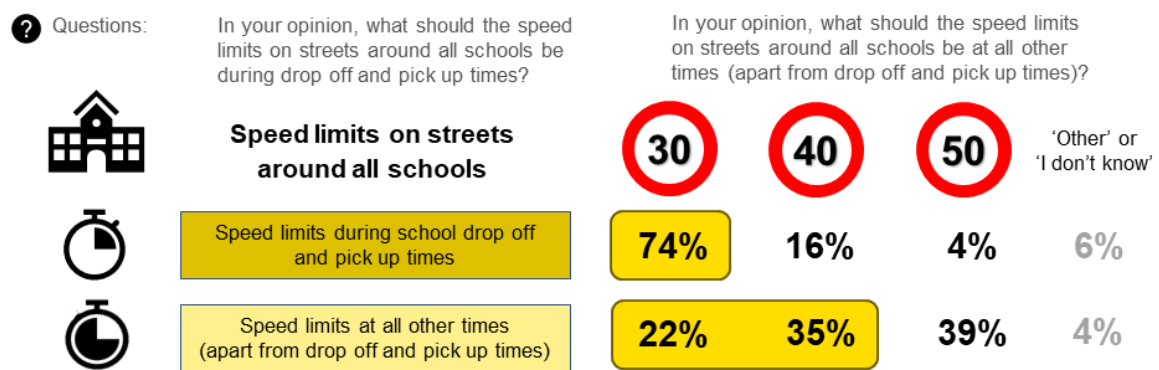


Figure 17. Residents' perceptions of optimal speed limits on streets outside schools

- Overall, two thirds of residents supported school specific speed limits to cover an area of 200 metres or more around schools (Figure 18).

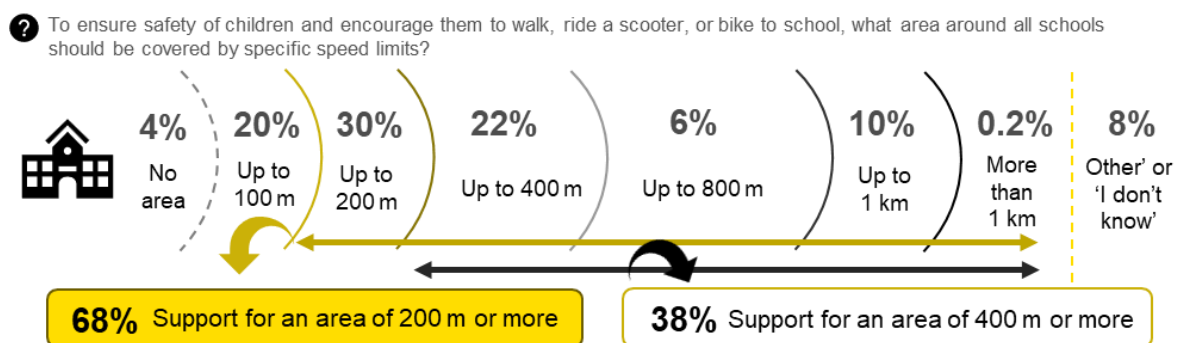


Figure 18. Residents' perceptions of the appropriate catchment area for setting speed limits around schools

# Parental perceptions of traffic safety and children's route to school

Data reported in this section are based on PWTS 2023 data from 315 parents or guardians with their eldest child in primary or intermediate school.

- Parents reported higher levels of safety for walking (56%) compared to biking (29%) and scootering (41%) to school (Figure 19).
- Half of parents considered biking to school to be unsafe and one third considered scootering to school to be unsafe for their child.
- Half of parents considered traffic along the route to school travelled too fast for walking (48%) and biking (53%).
- Two thirds of parents perceived that there are one or more dangerous crossings along their child's walking (68%) or biking route (67%).
- In addition, more than half of parents reported too much traffic along their child's walking (55%) or biking route (60%) to school.
- Overall, two thirds of parents reported their child having one or more safe routes for walking to school (65%) whereas one third of parents reported one or more safe routes for their child to bike to school (32%).

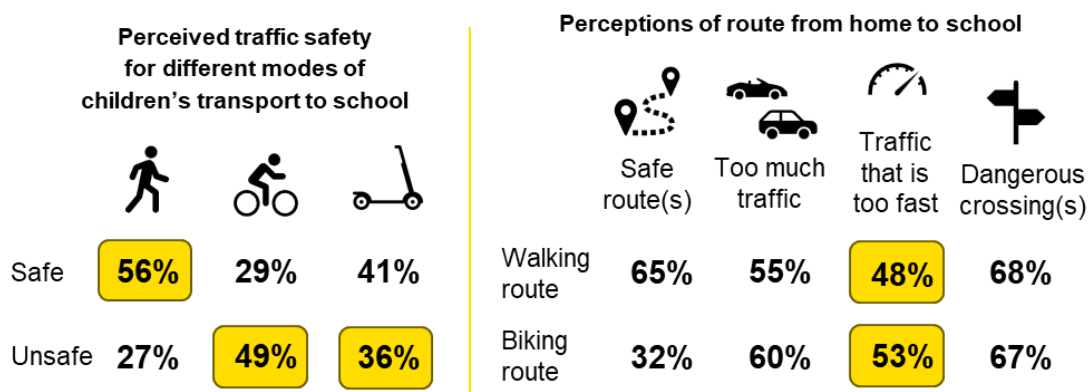


Figure 19. Parental perceptions of traffic safety and children's route to school

# Perceptions of safety for people walking versus people on bikes

- Overall, residents perceived higher levels of safety on Wellington city streets for people walking compared to people on bikes for all street types assessed in this survey (Figure 20).
- For all types of urban streets, perceptions of safety for people riding a bike were 28% to 39% lower than for people walking.

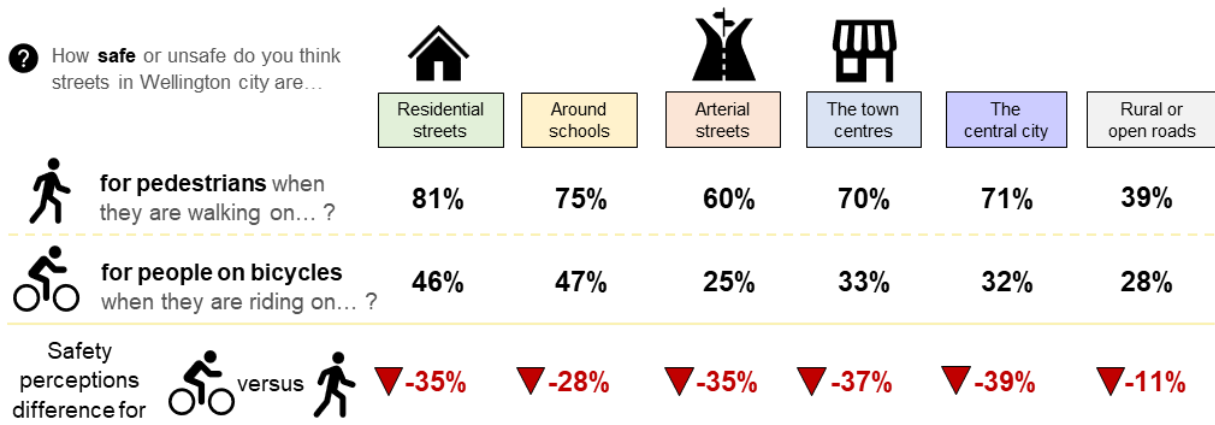


Figure 20. Comparison between perceptions of walking and biking on Wellington city streets



# Perceptions of safety for walking and biking

## Safety of walking

- Most respondents perceived that walking on Wellington city streets was safe (Figure 21):
  - 81% for residential streets and 75% for streets around local schools
  - 60% for arterial streets
  - 70% for town centres and 71% for the central city
  - 39% for rural or open roads.

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

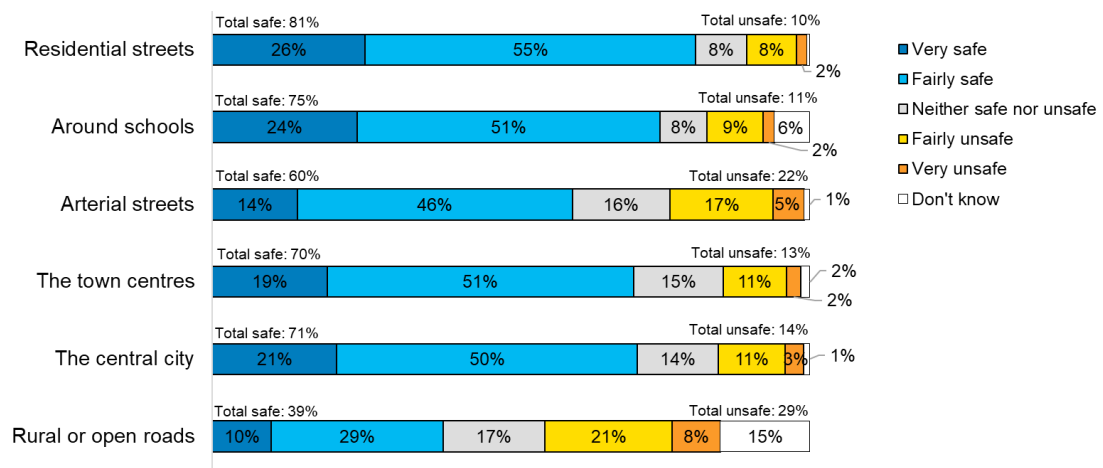


Figure 21. Perceptions of safety of walking

- A lesser proportion of young adults (57%) perceived that walking on arterial streets was safe, compared to middle-aged (64%) and older adults (65%).
- A lesser proportion of people with some difficulty walking or climbing stairs (66%) perceived that walking in the central city was safe, compared to those without difficulty (73%).
- Compared to respondents who were not a parent or guardian of school-aged children, a lesser proportion of parents or guardians perceived that walking on streets around local schools was safe (75% compared to 81%), while a greater proportion perceived walking on central city streets to be safe (78% compared to 71%).



- Fewer frequent walkers reported arterial streets and rural or open roads to be safe for walking compared to their counterparts (Figure 22).

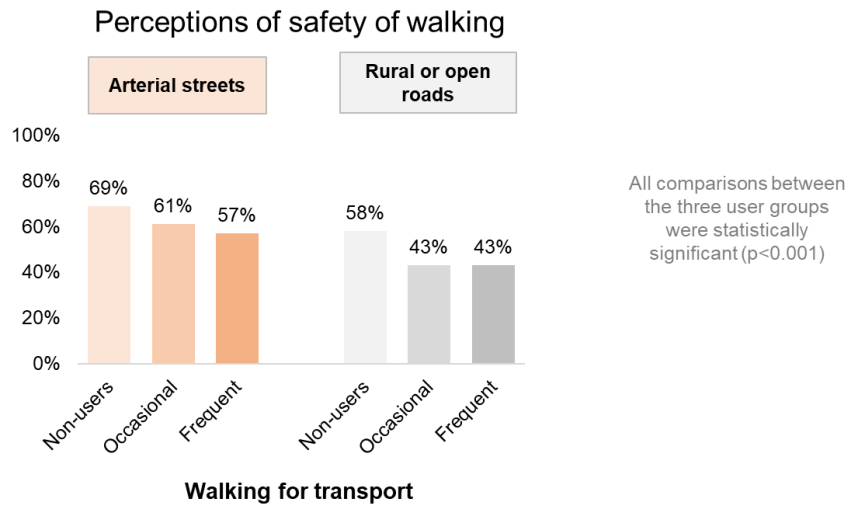


Figure 22. Perceptions of safety of walking by frequent walkers, occasional walkers and non-walkers.

- Among regular walkers, the level of perceived safety of walking differed across various street types. More than three-quarters of regular walkers perceived streets around schools and residential streets to be safe (Figure 23). However, only 58% of regular walkers perceived arterial streets to be safe for people walking.

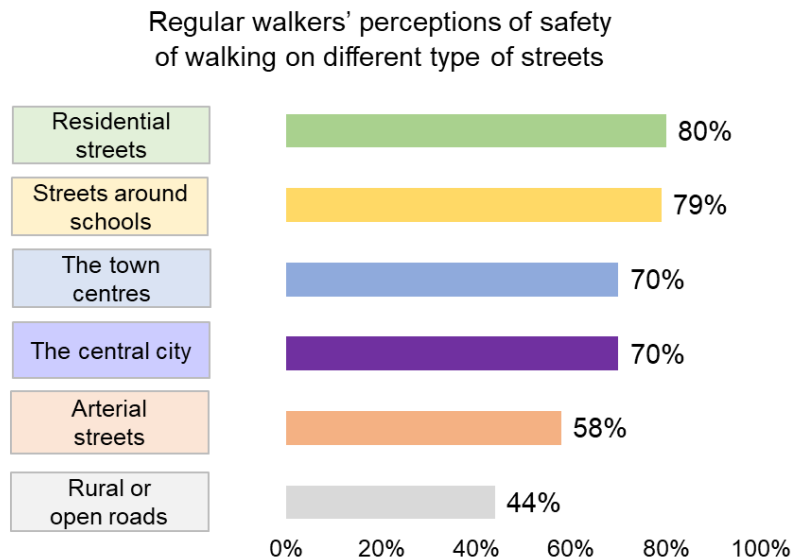


Figure 23. Perceptions of safety of walking by regular walkers

- Frequent bike users reported walking to be less safe compared to respondents who occasionally or never rode a bike for transport.
- Frequent private vehicle users reported walking to be safer compared to those who used private vehicles occasionally or did not rely on private vehicle transport at all (Figure 24).

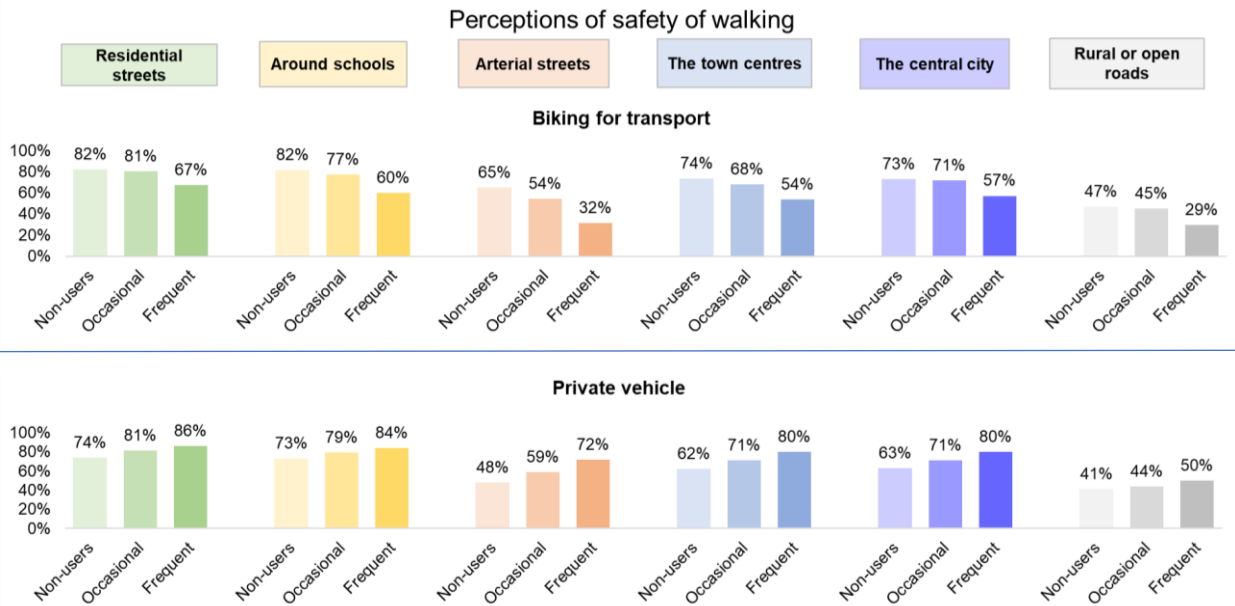


Figure 24. Perceptions of safety of walking by frequency of riding a bike for transport and travelling by private vehicle (frequent users, occasional users, and non-users).

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

- Fewer frequent public transport users perceived that walking on arterial streets and rural or open roads was safe, compared to occasional public transport users and non-users (Figure 25).

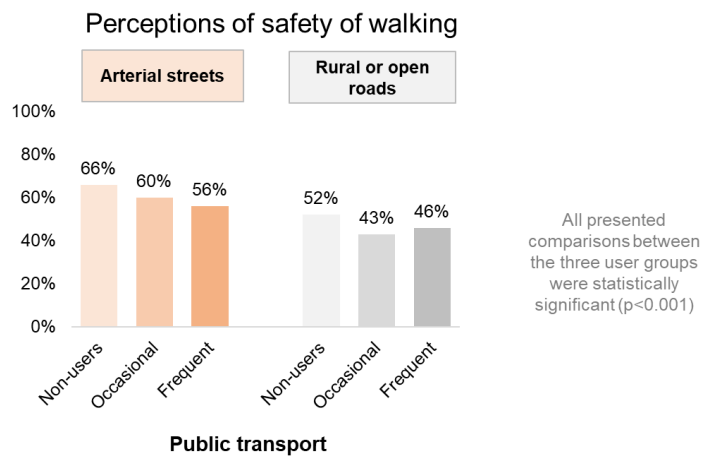


Figure 25. Perceptions of safety of walking by frequency of using public transport (frequent users, occasional users, and non-users).

- For all assessed street types, lowest levels of perceived safety for walking were reported by people who regularly rode a bike for transport whereas highest levels were reported by regular private vehicle users (Figure 26).

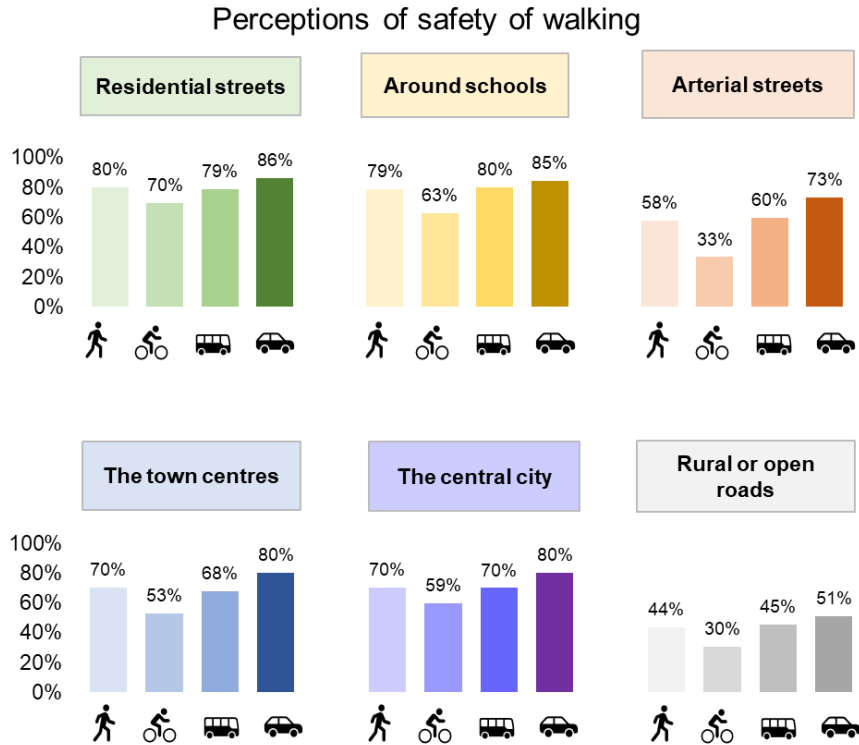


Figure 26. Perceptions of safety of walking by transport user groups.

Note: All comparisons among the four user groups were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ )

## Safety of biking

- Overall, 48% of respondents reported that riding a bike on arterial streets was unsafe.
- Perceptions of safety of riding a bike on Wellington city streets varied by street type (Figure 27). Proportions of residents perceiving different types of streets to be safe for people on bikes are as follows:
  - 47% for streets around local schools and 46% for residential streets
  - 33% for town centres and 32% for the central city
  - 28% for rural or open roads
  - 25% for arterial streets.
- In this survey, between 13% to 17% of respondents selected the 'I do not know' response to questions about perceived safety for people riding a bike on different types of urban streets and 23% for rural or open roads.

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

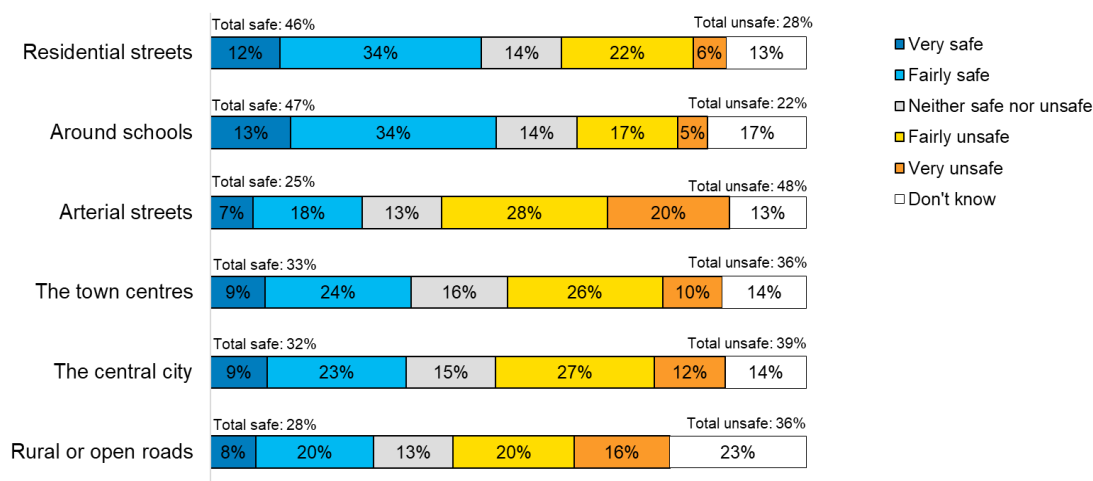


Figure 27. Perceptions of safety of biking

- Young 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 (Figure 28).
- In this survey, 19% to 29% of older adults selected the 'I do not know' category when reporting their perceptions of safety of biking on Wellington city streets, compared to 12% to 21% of middle-aged and 12% to 23% of young 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 (Figure 28).
- Parents or guardians of school-aged children reported higher levels of perceived safety for riding a bike on arterials streets and in the central city compared to non-parents or guardians (Figure 28).

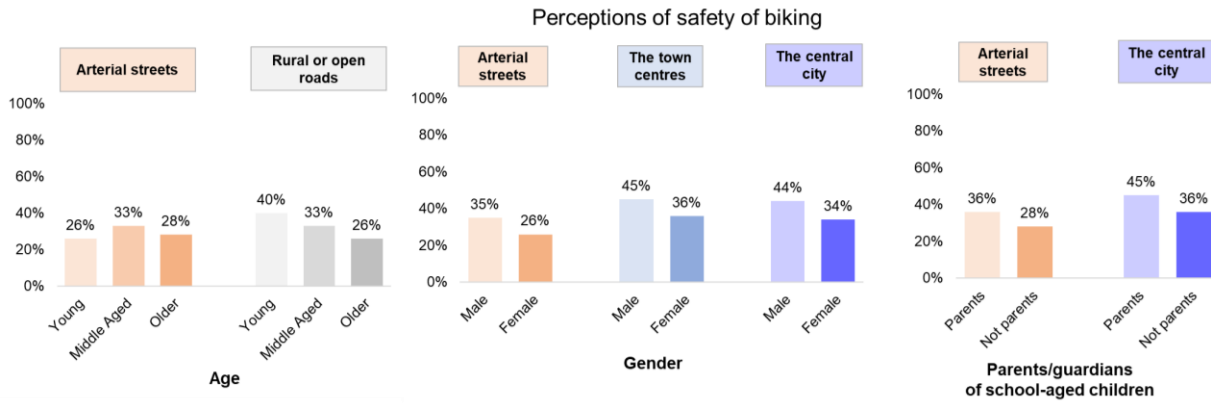


Figure 28. Perceptions of safety of biking by age, gender groups, and parental status

Note: All comparisons between the three user 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 (Figure 29). No significant differences were observed among residents who frequently, occasionally, or never bike for transport on other types of streets (data not presented).

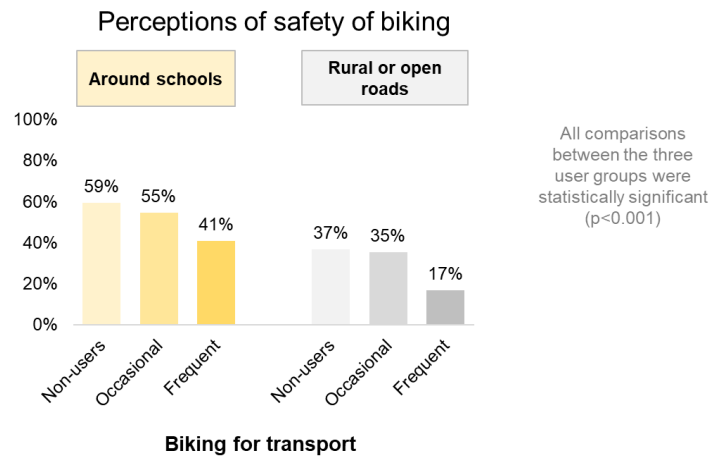


Figure 29. Perceptions of safety of biking by frequency of riding a bike for transport

- Among regular bike users, the level of perceived safety of riding a bicycle differed across various street types. Only 20% perceived arterial streets to be safe for people on bikes. Less than one third perceived central city streets and the town centres to be safe, and around half perceived streets around schools and residential streets to be safe for bike riding (Figure 30).

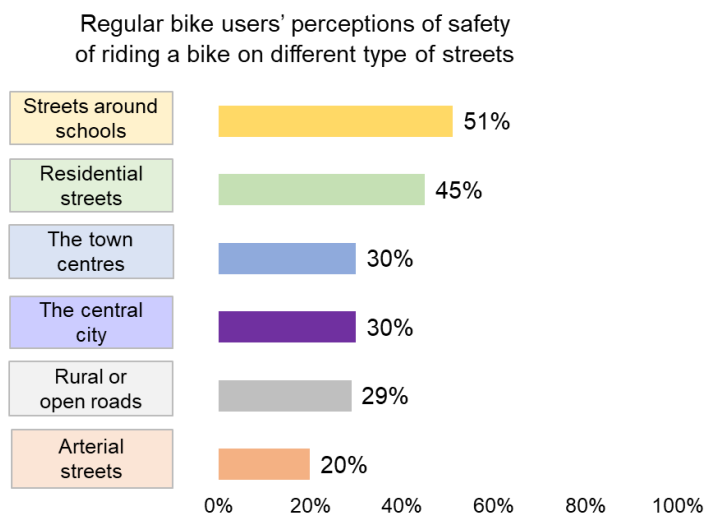


Figure 30. Perceptions of safety of biking by regular bike users



- Frequent walkers reported a lower level of perceived safety for biking on all types of city streets, compared to occasional walkers and non-walkers. Frequent private vehicle users reported a higher level of perceived safety for biking in all types of streets, compared to their counterparts. Frequent public transport users reported a lower level of perceived safety for biking on arterial streets, the town centres, the central city, and rural or open roads, compared to occasional users or non-users (Figure 31).

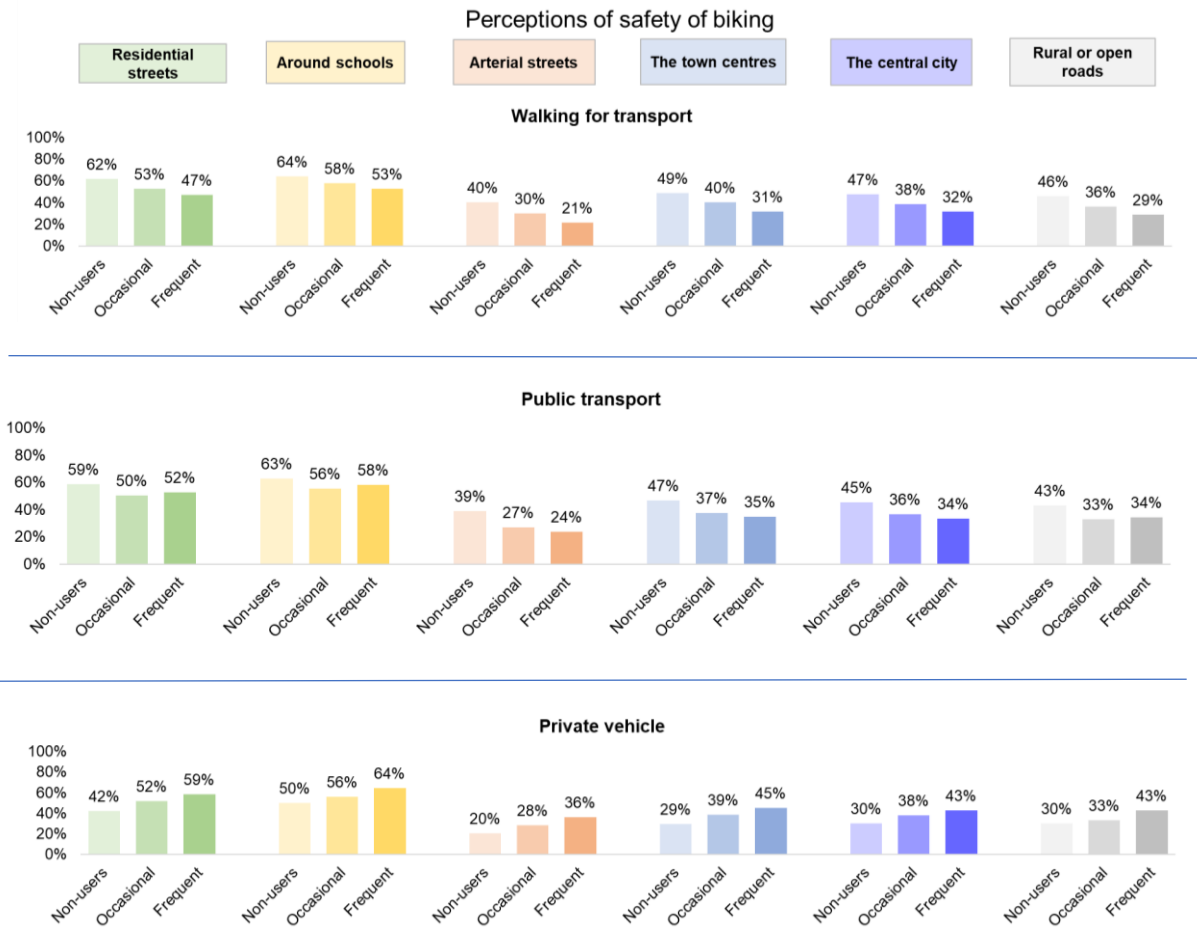


Figure 31. Perceptions of safety of biking by frequency of using walking, public transport, and private vehicle (frequent users, occasional users, and non-users)

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

- For all assessed street types, lowest levels of perceived safety for people on bikes were reported by people who regularly walk or bike for transport, whereas highest levels were reported by regular private vehicle users (Figure 32).

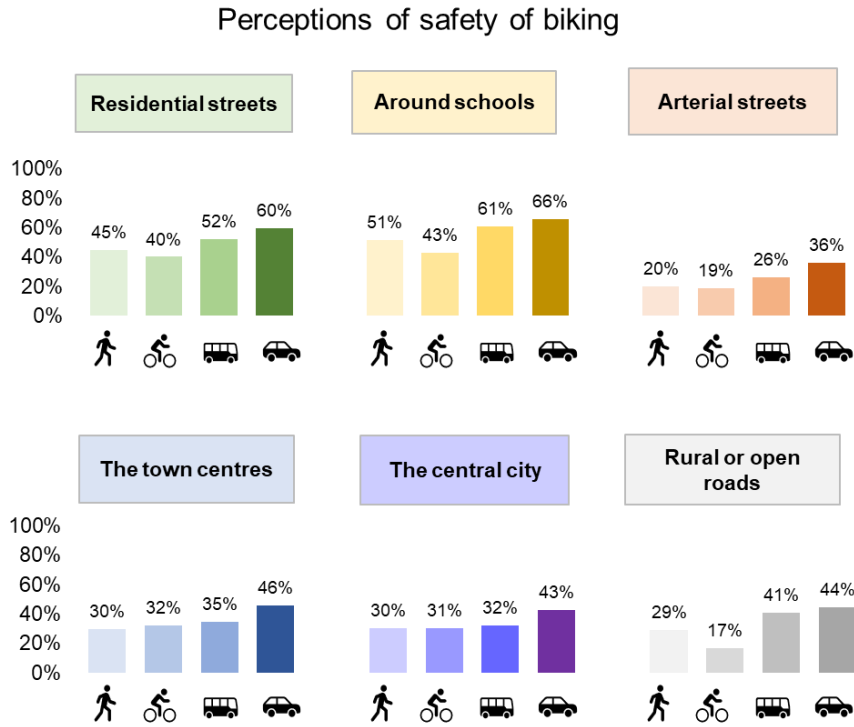


Figure 32. Perceptions of safety of biking by transport user groups

Note: All comparisons between the four user groups were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ )

# Perceived benefits from lowering speed limits

- Overall, half of respondents agreed that lowering speed limits will help reduce deaths and serious injuries (54%) (Figure 33).
- Nearly half of respondents (46%) disagreed that lowering speed limits would encourage active transport.
- Less than half agreed that lowering speed limits would improve liveability (43%) and health and wellbeing (40%).
- Approximately one third perceived that lowering speed limits would encourage active transport (35%), reduce traffic pollution (30%) and reduce traffic noise (39%).
- Approximately one fifth of respondents were neutral towards assessed benefits.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about lowering speed limits in Wellington city will...?

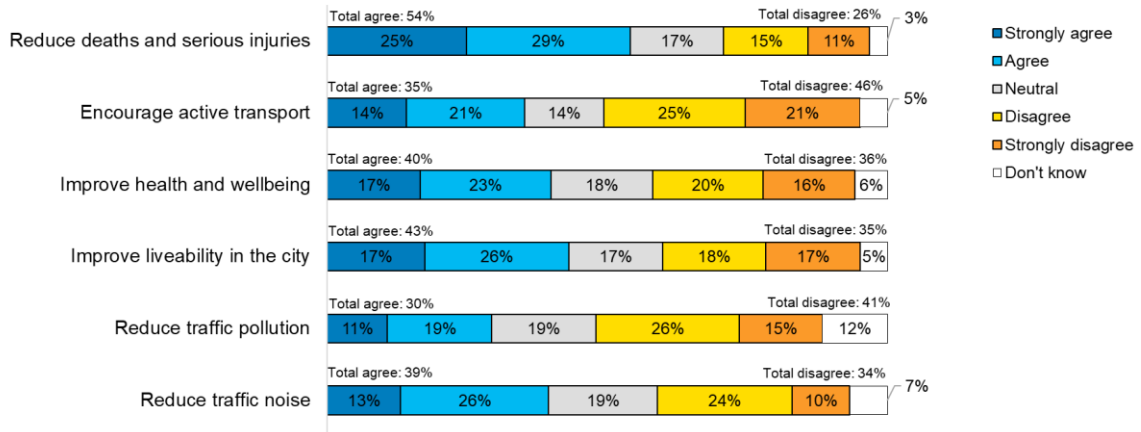


Figure 33. Perceptions of benefits from lowering speed limits

- Overall, young adults more frequently agreed that lowering speed limits would lead to beneficial outcomes, compared to middle-aged and older adults (Figure 34).

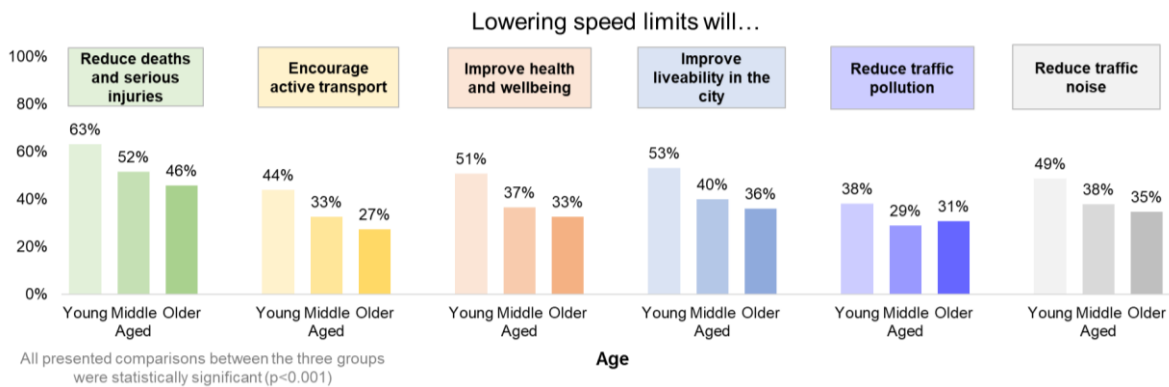


Figure 34. Perceptions of benefits from lowering speed limits by age groups.

- A greater proportion of people without difficulty walking or climbing stairs agreed that lowering speed limits would 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.
- A greater proportion of females (58%) agreed that lowering speed limits will help reduce deaths and serious injuries from road crashes compared to males (52%).
- Frequent and occasional users of active and public transport modes perceived higher benefits of lowering speed limits compared to frequent private vehicle users (Figure 35).



Figure 35. Perceptions of benefits from lowering speed limits by frequency of using individual transport modes

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

- Among the four transport user groups, people who regularly ride a bike for transport perceived highest benefits of lowering speed limits whereas the lowest perceived benefits were reported by regular private vehicle users (Figure 36).

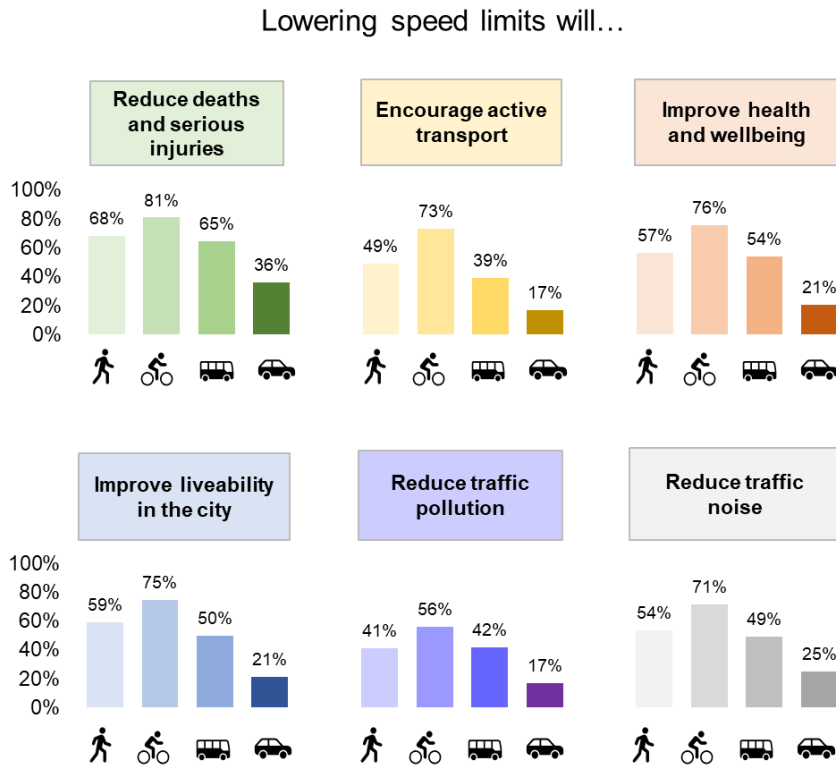


Figure 36. Perceptions of benefits from lowering speed limits by transport user groups

## Perceptions about speeding penalties

- One quarter of respondents thought the risk of being caught speeding was high, whereas nearly half thought the risk was small (Figure 37).
- One third of respondents thought the penalties for speeding were severe, and another third reported they were not severe (Figure 37).<sup>8</sup>

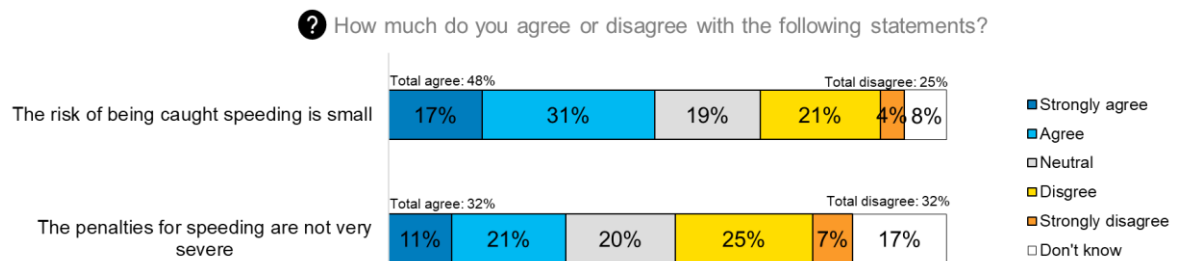


Figure 37. Perceptions of speeding penalties

- A greater proportion of males (58%) agreed that the risk of being caught speeding was small and the penalties for speeding were not very severe (44%), compared to females (risk: 48%; penalties: 34%).
- A greater proportion of those who frequently walked or rode a bike for transport agreed that the risk of being caught speeding was small, compared to non-users and occasional users of those modes (Figure 38).
- In contrast, a smaller proportion of frequent private vehicle users perceived the risk of being caught speeding was small, compared to occasional private vehicle users and non-users (Figure 38).

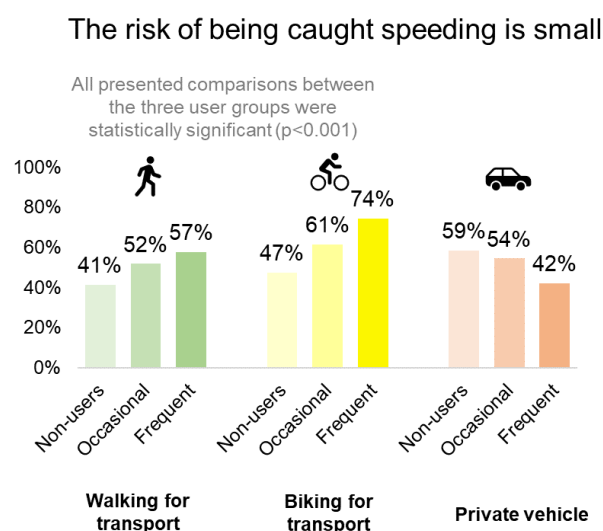


Figure 38. Perceptions of speeding risk by frequency of using individual transport modes

<sup>8</sup> The questions about speeding penalties were modelled based on questions used in the [New Zealand Transport Agency's Public Attitudes to Road Safety survey 2020](#)

- A greater proportion of frequent walkers, bike users and public transport users agreed that the penalties for speeding were not very severe, compared to their counterparts.
- In contrast, a smaller proportion of frequent private vehicle users agreed that penalties were not very severe, compared to occasional private vehicle users and non-users (Figure 39).

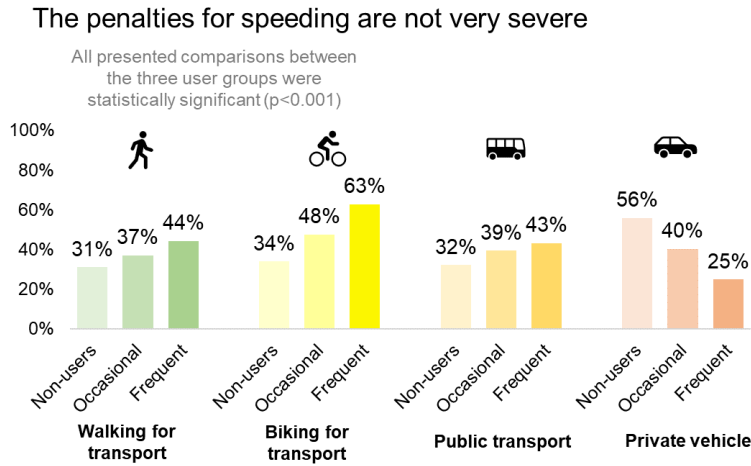


Figure 39. Perceptions of speeding penalty severity by frequency of using individual transport modes

- Among the four transport user groups, people who regularly rode a bike for transport most frequently agreed that the risk of being caught speeding was small, and the penalties for speeding were not very severe whereas private vehicle users were least likely to agree with those statements (Figure 40).

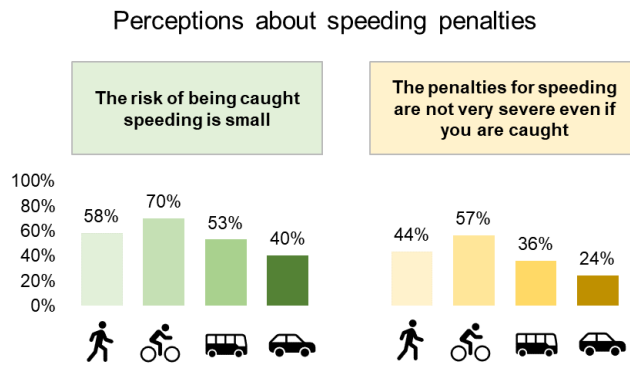


Figure 40. Perceptions of speeding penalties by transport user groups



# Perceptions about road safety publicity and advertising

- Overall, half of respondents agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed in Wellington city.<sup>9</sup>

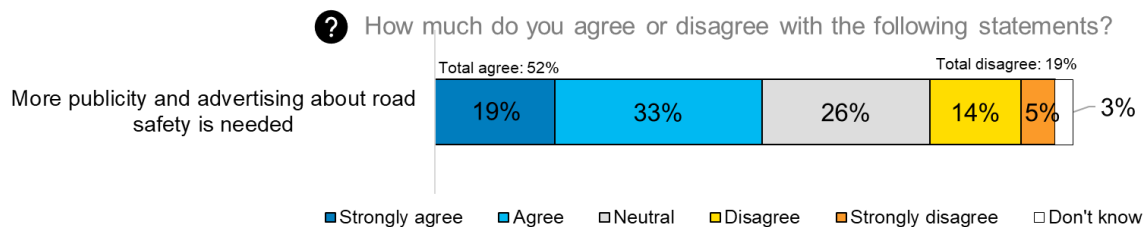


Figure 41. Perceptions about road safety publicity and advertising

- A greater proportion of young adults (59%) agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed, compared to middle-aged adults (48%) and older adults (46%).
- Respondents who frequently or occasionally walked or biked for transport, or used public transport perceived a greater need for publicity and advertising about road safety, compared to their counterparts who did not use those modes (Figure 42).
- In contrast, a smaller proportion of frequent vehicle users perceived that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed, compared to their counterparts (Figure 42).

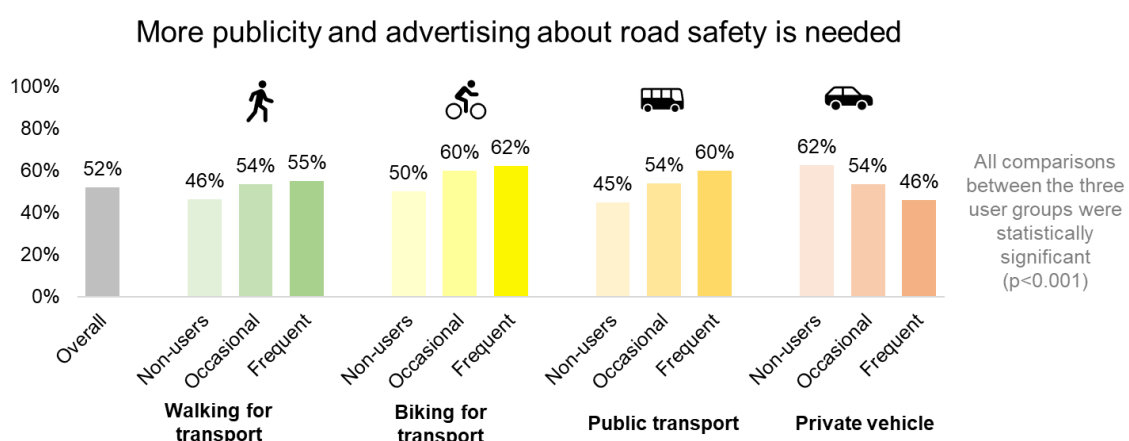


Figure 42. Perceptions about road safety publicity and advertising by frequency of using individual transport modes

<sup>9</sup> The question about residents' perceptions of road safety-related publicity and advertising was modelled based on the question used in the [New Zealand Transport Agency's Public Attitudes to Road Safety survey 2020](#)

- Among the four transport user groups, people who regularly rode a bike for transport or used public transport most frequently agreed with the statement that more publicity and advertising was needed, whereas the lowest agreement with this statement was reported by private vehicle users (Figure 43).

Perceptions about road safety publicity and advertising

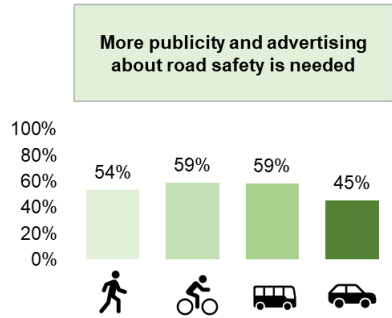


Figure 43. Perceptions about road safety publicity and advertising by transport user groups



# Strengths

The analysis and results presented in this report are based on the recently collected data from a large and diverse adult population living in Wellington city.

In addition to presenting data for the overall sample, the report also presents results of subgroup analyses by age, gender, parental status, individuals' physical mobility status, frequency of using individual transport modes as part of one's lifestyle, and transport user groups (based on the predominant mode of transport). Subgroup analyses provide comprehensive insights into perceptions of diverse groups of residents which are not apparent when results are reported for the overall sample. These insights can be valuable for informing strategic decision-making about transport in Wellington city.

# Limitations

Limitations of this research and findings presented in this report need to be acknowledged.

Limitations include the potential risk of bias due to participants' self-selection to complete this survey based on their interests, non-participation of residents who are not native English speakers due to a language barrier, and inability of people with visual impairments to contribute their views to this online survey. In addition, this survey targeted adults and therefore the views of children and young people are not represented in the survey results.

# Summary

Overall, results of the Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023 and 2024 showed that the majority of residents prioritised road safety over shorter travel time (particularly females and regular users of active and public transport) and supported lower speed limits of 40 km/h or 30 km/h on city streets. Residents who frequently walked, rode a bike for transport or used public transport more frequently supported a lower speed limit on residential streets and arterial streets, whereas respondents who frequently travelled by private vehicles supported the status quo of 50 km/h.

The majority of residents supported lower speed limits on streets outside schools both during school pick up and drop off time and at all other times, and two thirds believed that school specific speed limits should cover an area of 200 metres or more around schools. Approximately half of parents or guardians of primary or intermediate school children perceived that traffic was too fast along their child's walking or biking route to school.

Most residents perceived that Wellington city streets were safe for people walking whereas riding a bike was perceived to be considerably less safe (particularly on the

central city streets, the town centres, arterial streets and rural/open roads). Similar findings were observed for perceived traffic safety for walking and riding a bike to work and for children's travel to school. Approximately one to two out of ten residents could not rate the safety of Wellington city streets for people on bikes.

The majority of residents perceived that lowering speed limits could reduce death and serious injuries, while perceiving lower speed limits would not encourage active transport. People using active transport modes and public transport more frequently perceived greater benefits of lowering speed limits compared to frequent private vehicle users. Less than one third of respondents thought that the risk of being caught speeding was high and the penalties for speeding were severe. The majority of residents agreed that more publicity and advertising about road safety was needed in Wellington city.

Overall, 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.

Road safety remains a concern for Wellington city residents. Future efforts, policies, investments and interventions should aim to minimise road safety concerns of all road users.

## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the members of the City Insights Team at Wellington City Council. Data collection was completed in collaboration with Wellington City Council's Research and Evaluation Team. Wellington City Council would like to thank all survey participants for their time and contributions to this research.

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# **Absolutely Positively Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke

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Report available from:

[wellington.govt.nz/parking-roads-and-transport/transport/transport-insights](https://www.wellington.govt.nz/parking-roads-and-transport/transport/transport-insights)