

Revealing public attitudes toward congestion in Wellington City

Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

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Background



Traffic congestion is one of the **most pressing urban transport challenges**, influencing travel time, economic productivity, and environmental health.

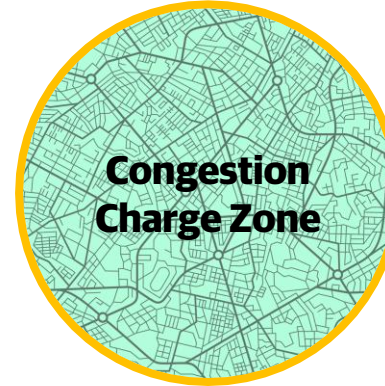
(Choudhary et al., 2022)



Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging)

- Amendment Bill – 16 December 2024
- Amendment Act – 18 November 2025

(New Zealand Parliament 2025)



Travel behaviour and **public attitudes** play a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of any congestion management strategy.

(Banister, 2008; Schuitema et al., 2010)



Understanding Wellingtonians' travel behaviours and attitudes toward **congestion** and the **concept of congestion charging** is important.

Pōneke Transport Survey



10-15 minute
online survey



Target group:

Adults (18+ years)
living in Wellington city

Survey components

Sociodemographic,
family and household
characteristics

Transport-related key
performance
indicators (KPIs)

Locations
(home, work, study)

Transport
behaviours

Travel to work

Travel to other
destinations

Children's travel
to school

Traffic
congestion

Health and
wellbeing

Survey feedback



Core sections



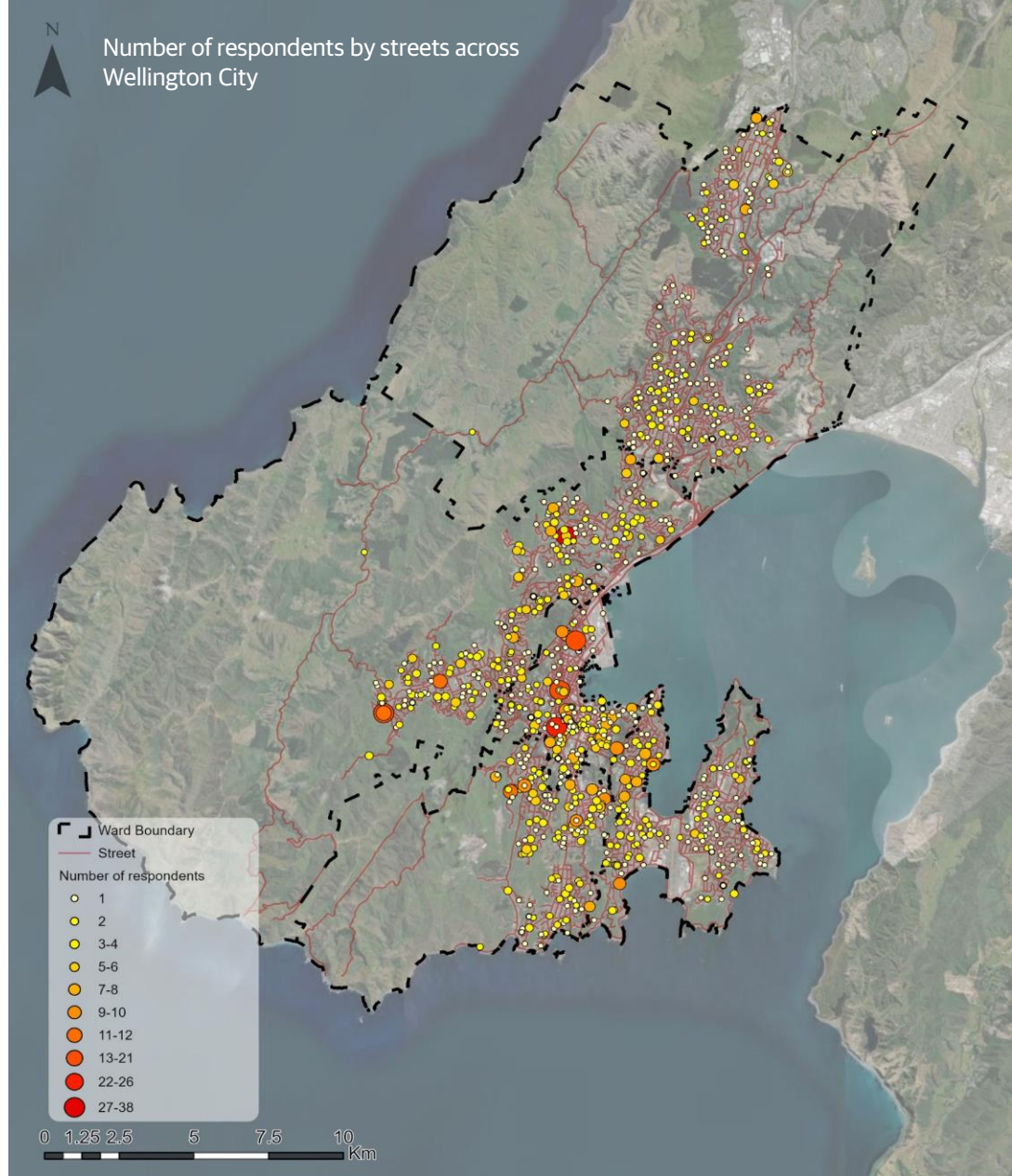
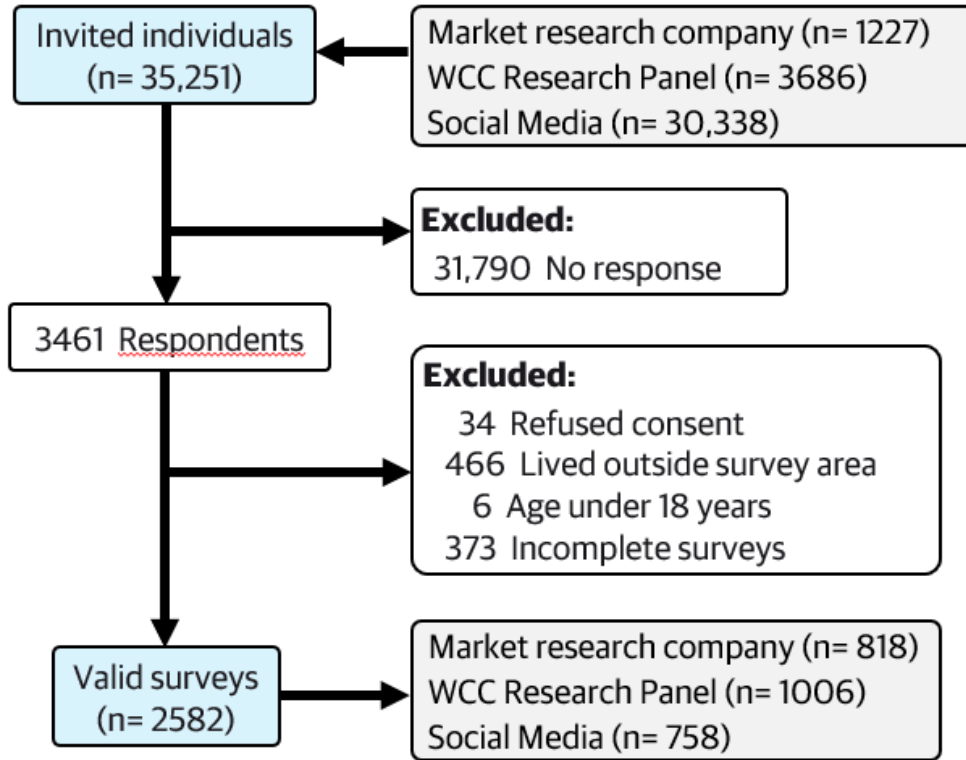
Non-core sections



Feedback

Project approved by Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee
(April 2023; Reference AREC23_03)

Survey sample



Traffic congestion

Sociodemographic characteristics

Total respondents
(n = 2582)

Age

18-39 years: 42%
40-64 years: 40%
65+ years: 18%

Gender

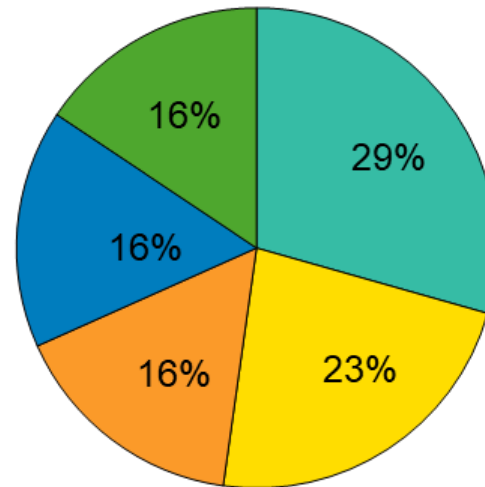
Female: 55%
Male: 41%
Gender diverse: 2%
Prefer not to say: 1%






Ethnicity

NZ European: 71%
Māori: 8%
Asian: 6%
Pacific: 2%
Other: 11%



Home location

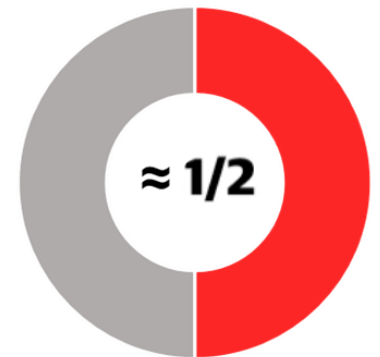
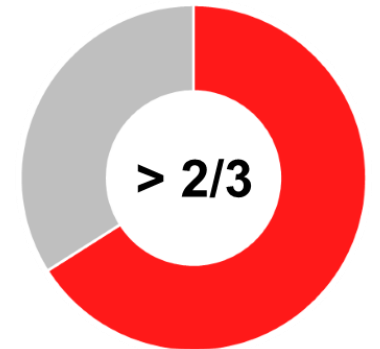
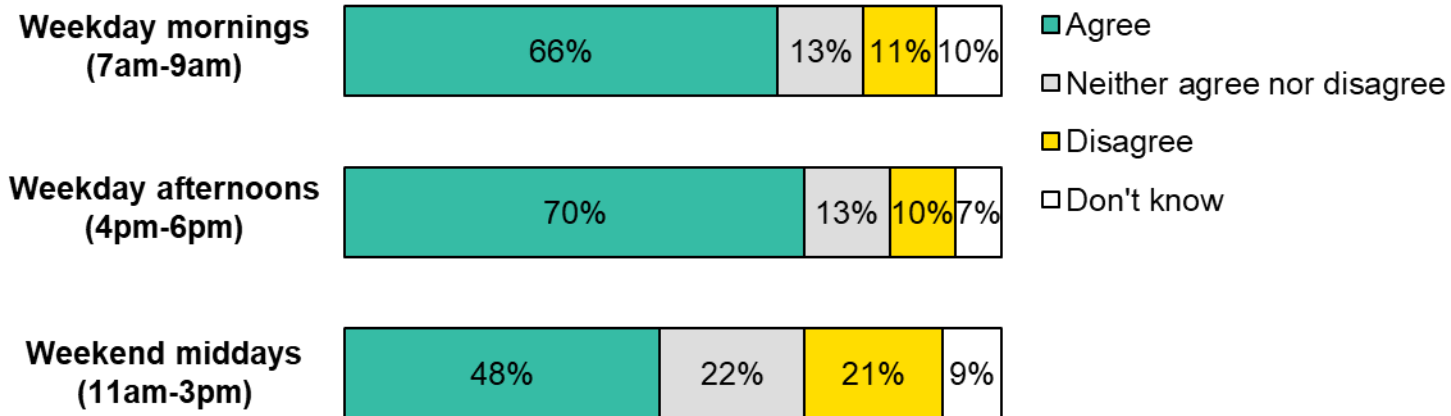


-  Lambton General Ward
-  Onslow-Western General Ward
-  Northern General Ward
-  Eastern General Ward
-  Southern General Ward

Is congestion a problem in Wellington City?



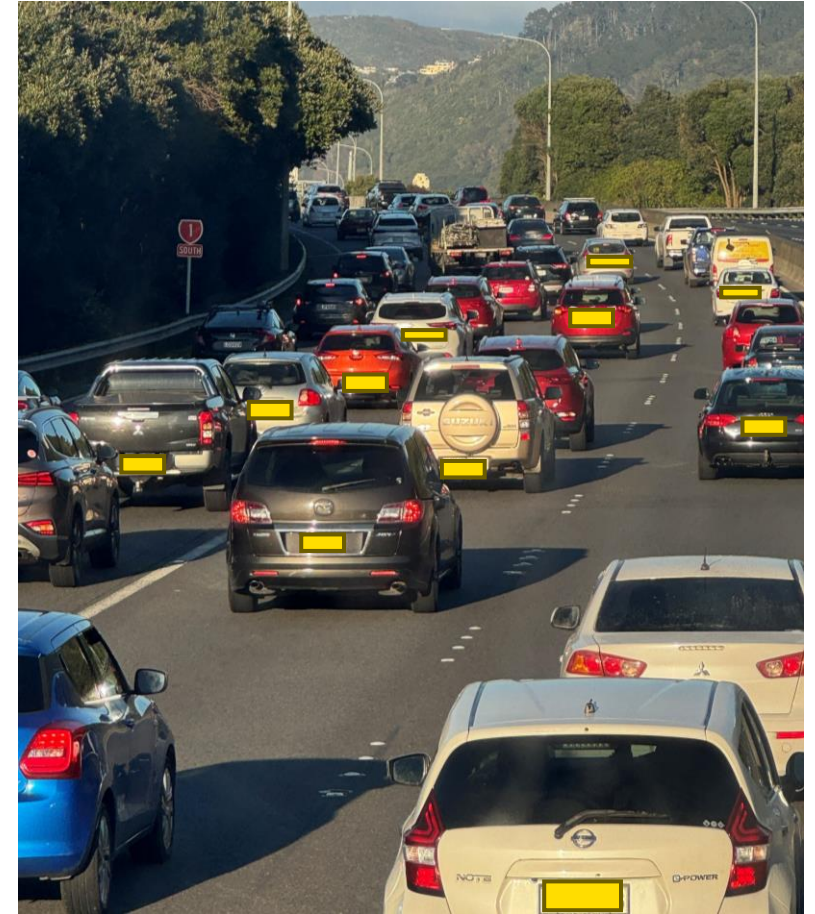
? To what extent do you agree or disagree that **traffic congestion is a problem in Wellington City** on:



Traffic congestion in Wellington City



Photograph: From Wellington City toward Hutt Road; Source: [The Spinoff](#) (Google)



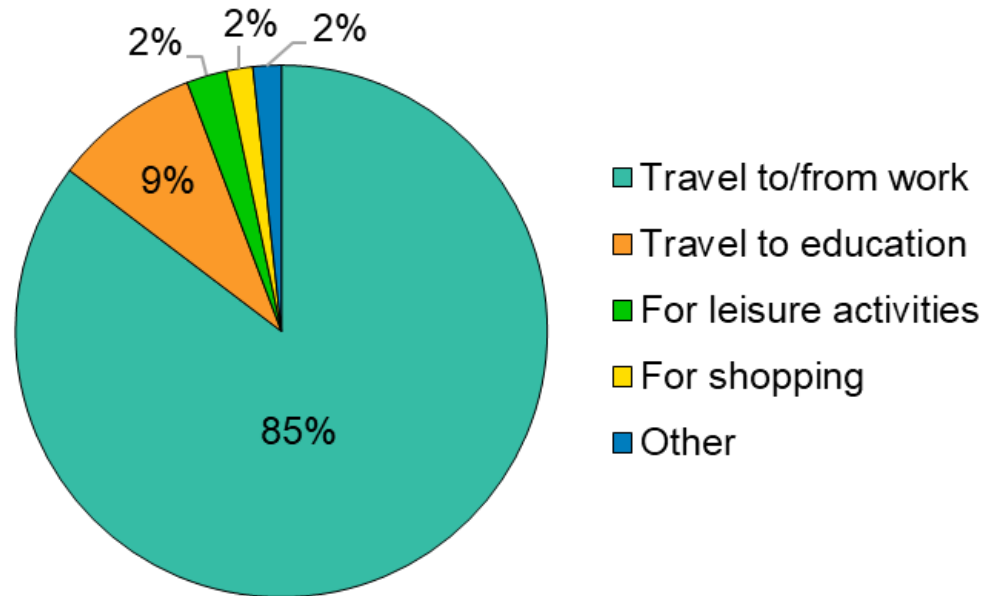
Photograph: Towards Wellington City from Hutt Road; Source: Captured by Rajan Ghosh

Wellingtonians' travel behaviors



Primary purposes of the trips

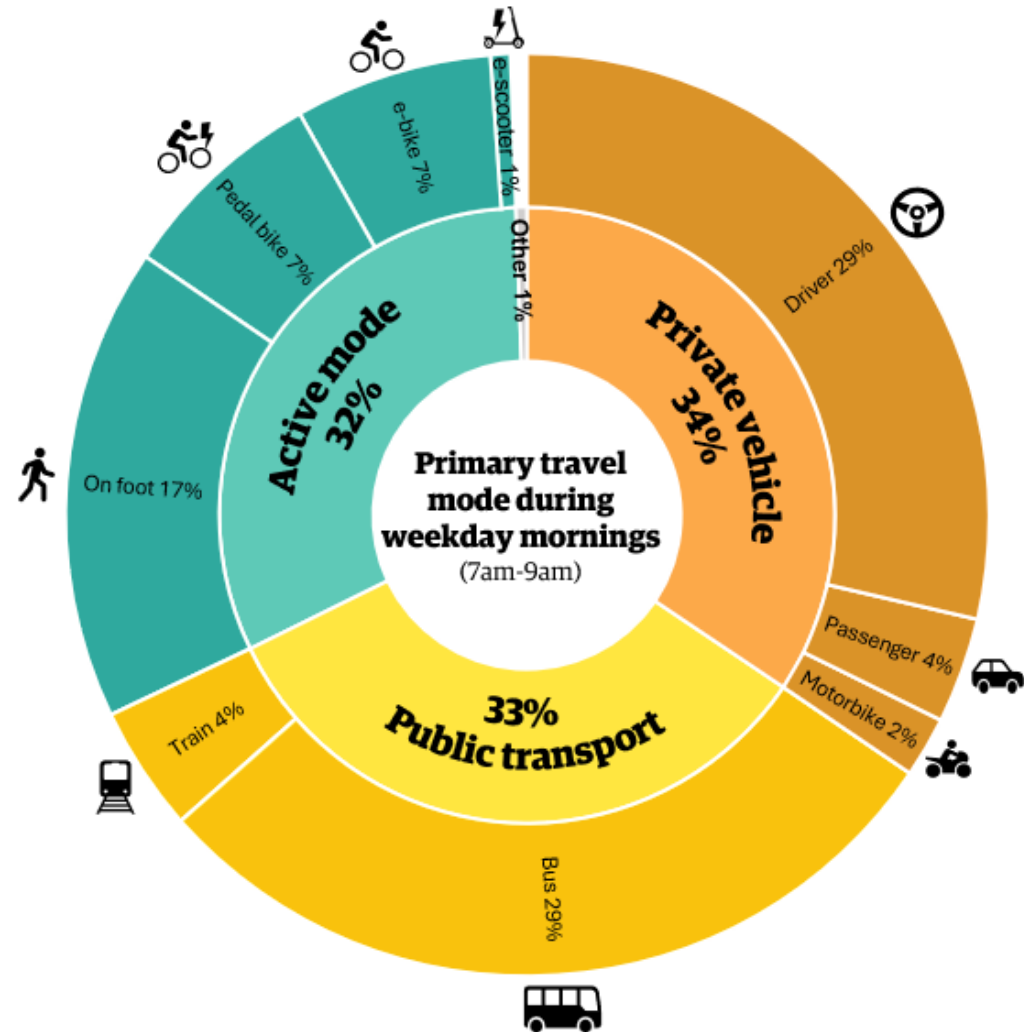
? What is the primary purpose of your trip during weekday mornings between 7am-9am?



Wellingtonians' travel behaviors

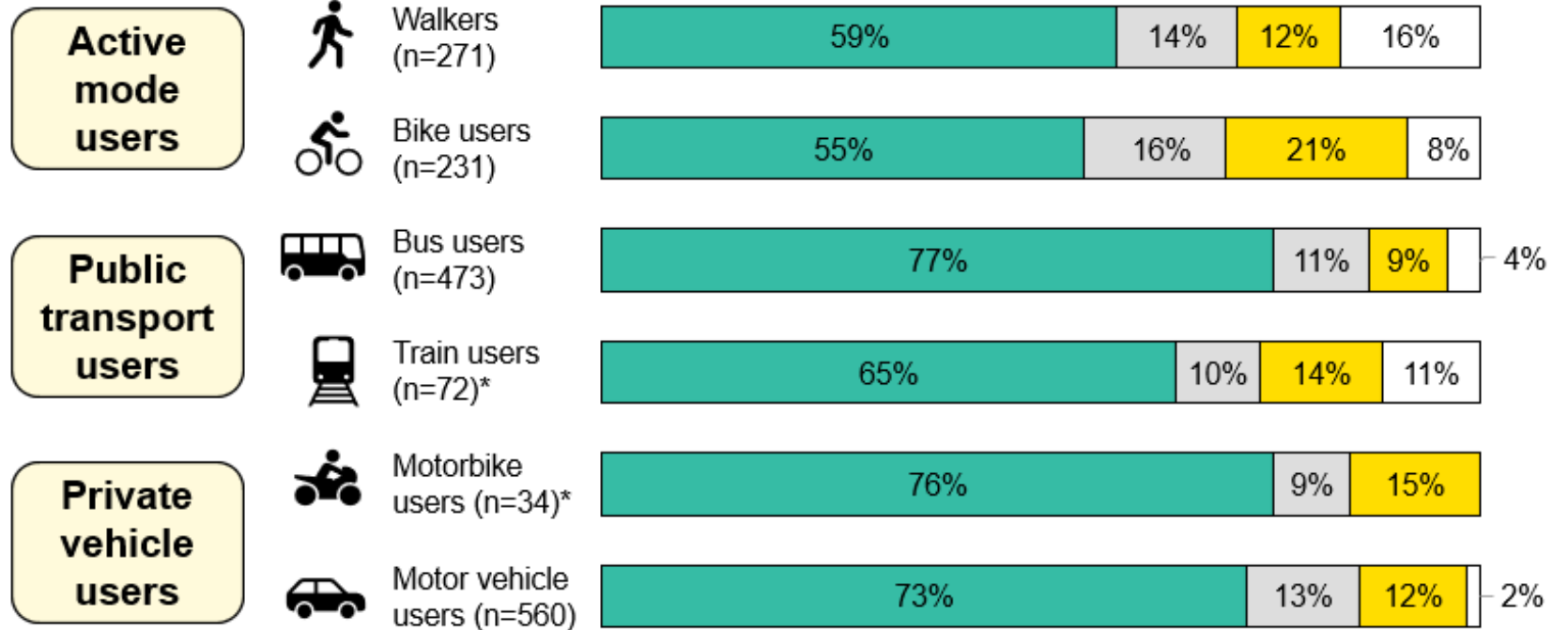
Primary modes of travel

? What is your **primary travel mode** during weekday mornings between 7am-9am?



Wellingtonians' travel behaviors

Perceptions of congestion among weekday morning peak travellers by modes



* The sample sizes for motorbike and train users are low- interpret with caution.

Agree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree
 Don't know

Attitudes towards congestion charge

? Would you **support a congestion charge** (e.g., paying to drive along your usual route during busy times) if it would **shorten your travel time**?

Supporting a congestion charge for shortening travel time



Support

35%



Oppose

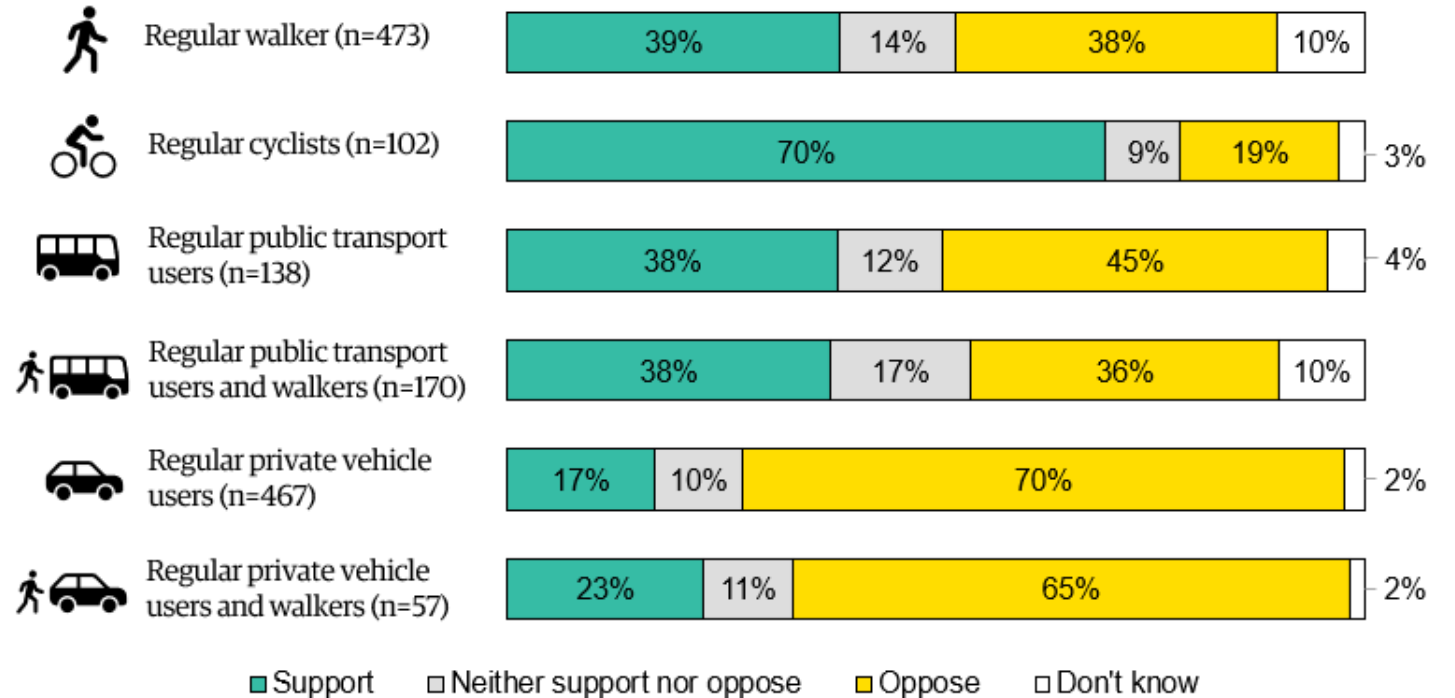
47%

Attitudes towards congestion charge

Supporting a congestion charge for shortening travel time



Would you **support a congestion charge** (e.g., paying to drive along your usual route during busy times) if it would **shorten your travel time**?



Attitudes towards congestion charge

? **If a congestion charge was implemented** along part of your usual route during weekday mornings between 7am-9am, **what would you most likely do?**

Likely responses to a congestion charge



Use a different route to avoid the charge

33%



Continue to drive and pay the charge

27%



Travel at a different time

13%



Switch to active modes or public transport

11%



Among those willing to pay, most were only comfortable to pay a very small charge per trip.

Conclusions

These findings highlight:

- strong public recognition of congestion as a problem during weekdays and weekend peak periods,
- limited willingness to support pricing mechanisms such as congestion charging, particularly among private vehicle users,
- low willingness to change travel modes, and
- the need of further investigation into behavioural incentives, and exploring demand-side interventions to inform policy development and any future congestion management in Wellington City.



Photograph: From Wellington City toward Hutt Road; Source: Captured by Rajan Ghosh

What's next?



More data collection



Further analysis



Generating insights



Sharing the story


Acknowledgements

- Wellington City residents
- Transport Strategy Team, Wellington City Council
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- Social media Team, Wellington City Council
- Transportation Conference
- Wellington City Council

Ngā mihi
Thank you!

Any questions?

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