# The value of footpath improvements: New research

Around four million years after early hominids began to walk upright, walking remains one of the most common means of transport. Walking accounts for 10% of the total time that New Zealanders spend travelling. In spite of this, there is relatively little hard evidence about what makes a good walking environment, and what factors affect people’s willingness to walk.

This paper attempts to fill this gap.

First, we undertake a meta-analysis of international research to identify features of footpaths and pedestrian environments that may lead to increased or decreased quality of experience for users. These features relate to four aspects of the pedestrian environment: the quality of footpath links, intersections, the adjacent traffic environment, and adjacent buildings and parks. Meta-analysis highlights the attributes that are most likely to be valued by pedestrians, the relative value of different attributes, and areas of uncertainty.

Second, we design and deliver an original stated choice survey to value selected footpath attributes in the New Zealand context, and analyse the results of this survey in a discrete choice framework. For the most part, stated choice results are quantitatively similar to findings from meta-analysis.

This analysis suggests that attributes such as street trees and verandahs are highly valued by most New Zealanders, but that there is significant disagreement about the value of some other attributes, such as paving surfaces and speed limits. A further finding is that added walk time is not necessarily viewed as a disamenity, at least up to a certain point.