Active transport to and from school – 2016/17

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Active modes of transport to school are used much less now than in 1989/90. The percentage of 5–12-year-olds who walked to school dropped from 42% in 1989/90, to 29% in 2010–14, while cycling dropped from 12% in 1989/90 to 2% in 2010–14.**
- **In 2016/17, 44.5% of children aged 5–14 years usually used active transport (such as walking or cycling) to and from school. These were similar levels to 2006/07 (46%).**
- **Older children (10–14 years) were more likely to use active transport (49%) than younger children (5–9 years) (41%). There were no significant differences by sex, ethnic group or socioeconomic deprivation.**
- **Children living in Capital and Coast District Health Board (DHB) had the highest rate of using active transport to and from school (58.5%) in 2014–17, followed by Nelson Marlborough DHB (55.0%) and Canterbury DHB (51.1%). Children living in Northland (27.1%), Wairarapa (30.2%) and Tairawhiti (34.8%) DHBs had significantly lower rates than the national rate.**

Relevance of active transport to health

Active forms of transport, such as walking and cycling, have a range of benefits, including producing no air pollution, noise pollution or greenhouse gases. The health benefits of active transport also include increased physical activity (with subsequent benefits for obesity and reduced risk of a range of diseases), and improved mental health (British Medical Association, 2012). For children, using active transport (such as walking, cycling or scooters) to and from school is an important way for them to get some physical activity each day. With the high child obesity rate in New Zealand, this is a relatively easy way to increase physical activity in children.

Data for this factsheet

This factsheet includes two sources of data on active transport to school. Data are firstly presented on specific transport modes used by 5–12-year-olds to get to school, from the New Zealand Household Travel Survey. Data are then presented on active transport (walking, cycling and other non-motorised modes) for children aged 5–14 years, from the New Zealand Health Survey.

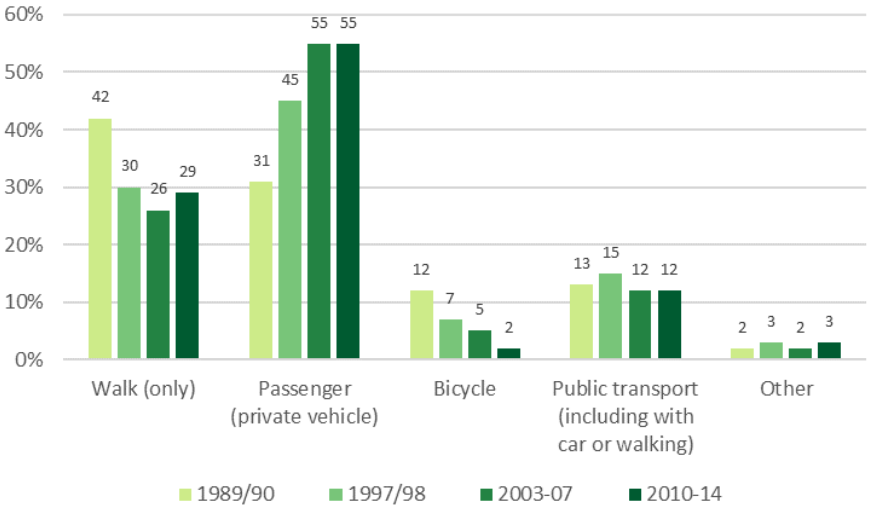
Dramatic change in transport mode since 1989/90

Children are much less likely to use active modes of transport to get to school now than during the late 1980s, according to the New Zealand Household Travel Survey.

The percentage of children walking to school dropped from 42% in 1989/90, to 29% in 2010–14 (Figure 1). For cycling, the percentage dropped from 12% in 1989/90, to 2% in 2010–14.

The percentage of children who were passengers in cars increased from 31% in 1989/90, to 55% in 2010–14.

Figure 1: Mode of transport used to get to school, children aged 5–12 years, 1989/90 – 2010–14 (unadjusted prevalence)



Source: New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport (2014)

Active transport to and from school – 2016/17

Almost half of 5–14-year-olds used active transport to and from school

The following data are about children aged 5–14 years using active transport to and from school, from the New Zealand Health Survey. *Active transport* is defined as usually using a physically active form of transport (such as walking, cycling or other non-motorised modes such as skates) to get to and from school (Ministry of Health 2014).

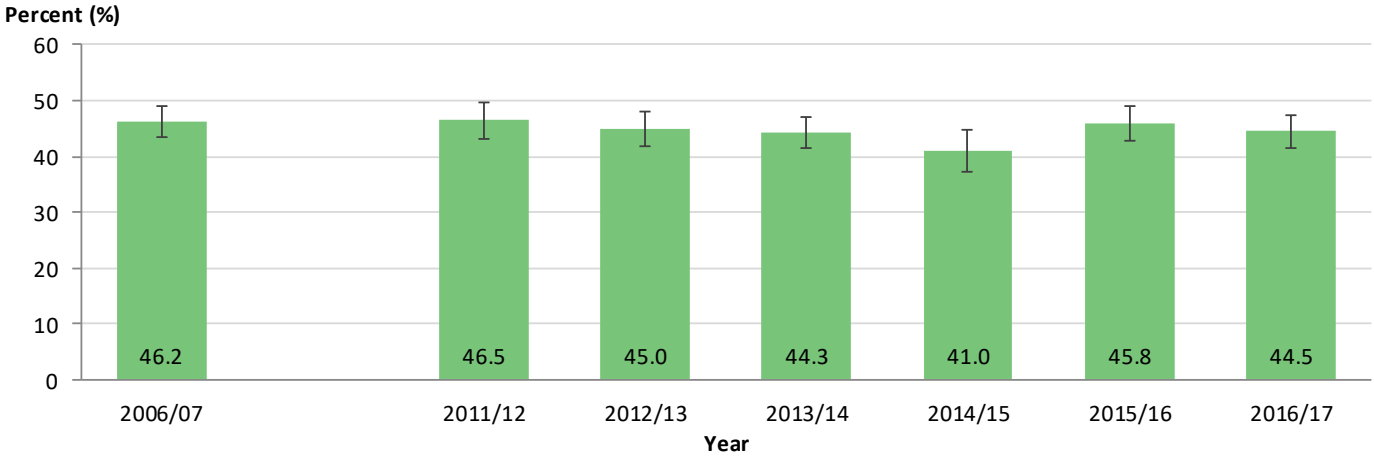
In 2016/17, 44.5% of children aged 5–14 years usually used a physically active form of transport to get to and from school (95% confidence interval 41.5–47.5). This is about 277,000 children who usually used active transport to get to and from school in 2016/17 (Table 1).

In 2016/17, 46.3% of boys usually used active transport to and from school (95% confidence interval: 42.6–50.0), compared with 42.6% of girls (39.1–46.2). Adjusting for age differences, there were no significant differences between boys and girls in using active transport to and from school.

No major change in the use of active transport since 2006/07

There has been no significant change in the use of active transport among 5–14-year-olds from 2006/07 (46.2%, 43.4–49.0) to 2016/17 (44.5%, 41.5–47.5) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Usually used physically active form of transport to get to and from school, children aged 5–14 years, 2006/07–2016/17



Source: Ministry of Health (2017)

Older children were more likely to usually use active transport to school

Older children were significantly more likely to usually use active transport to and from school than younger children, with the following percentages usually using active transport:

- 40.5% (36.8–44.3) of children aged 5–9 years
- 48.8% (44.9–52.7) of children aged 10–14 years.

Active transport to and from school – 2016/17

Use of active transport is relatively consistent across ethnic groups and neighbourhood deprivation

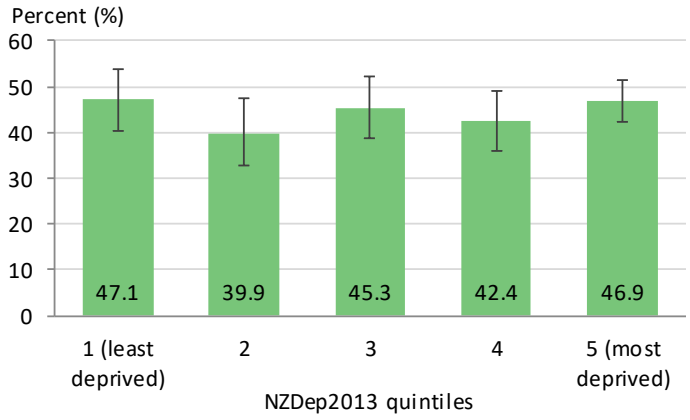
There were no significant differences by ethnic group or neighbourhood deprivation in the use of active transport to get to and from school, in 2016/17 (Table 1, Figure 3, and Table 2).

Table 1 : Uses physically active form of transport to get to and from school, children aged 5–14 years, by total response ethnic group and neighbourhood deprivation (NZDep2013 quintiles), 2016/17 (unadjusted prevalence and estimated number)

Population group	Usually uses active transport to get to and from school (%, 95% CI)	Estimated number of children
Total	44.5 (41.5–47.5)	277,000
Māori	44.1 (39.6–48.8)	69,000
Pacific	47.0 (40.9–53.2)	41,000
Asian	42.6 (35.6–50.0)	39,000
European/Other	43.2 (39.7–46.9)	189,000
NZDep2013 quintile 1 (least deprived)	47.1 (40.5–53.9)	63,000
Quintile 2	39.9 (32.7–47.6)	50,000
Quintile 3	45.3 (38.6–52.1)	52,000
Quintile 4	42.4 (35.8–49.2)	45,000
Quintile 5 (most deprived)	46.9 (42.3–51.5)	67,000

Notes: 95% confidence intervals are given in brackets. Estimated numbers will add to more than the total for ethnic groups , due to total response ethnicity being used (where everyone is included in every ethnic group they report).
Source: Ministry of Health (2017)

Figure 3 : Uses physically active form of transport to get to and from school, children aged 5–14 years, by neighbourhood deprivation (NZDep2013 quintiles), 2016/17 (unadjusted prevalence)



Source: Ministry of Health (2017)

Table 2 : Comparison of population groups for use of physically active form of transport to get to and from school, children aged 5 –14 years, by total response ethnic group and neighbourhood deprivation (NZDep2013), 2016/17 (adjusted rate ratios)

Comparison groups	Adjusted rate ratio	Adjustment variables
Māori vs non-Māori	0.99 (0.88–1.13)	Age, sex
Pacific vs non-Pacific	1.07 (0.94–1.23)	Age, sex
Asian vs non-Asian	0.95 (0.80–1.14)	Age, sex
High deprivation vs low deprivation	1.02 (0.79–1.31)	Age, sex, ethnic group

Notes: 95% confidence intervals are given in brackets. An asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant result.
Source: Ministry of Health (2017)

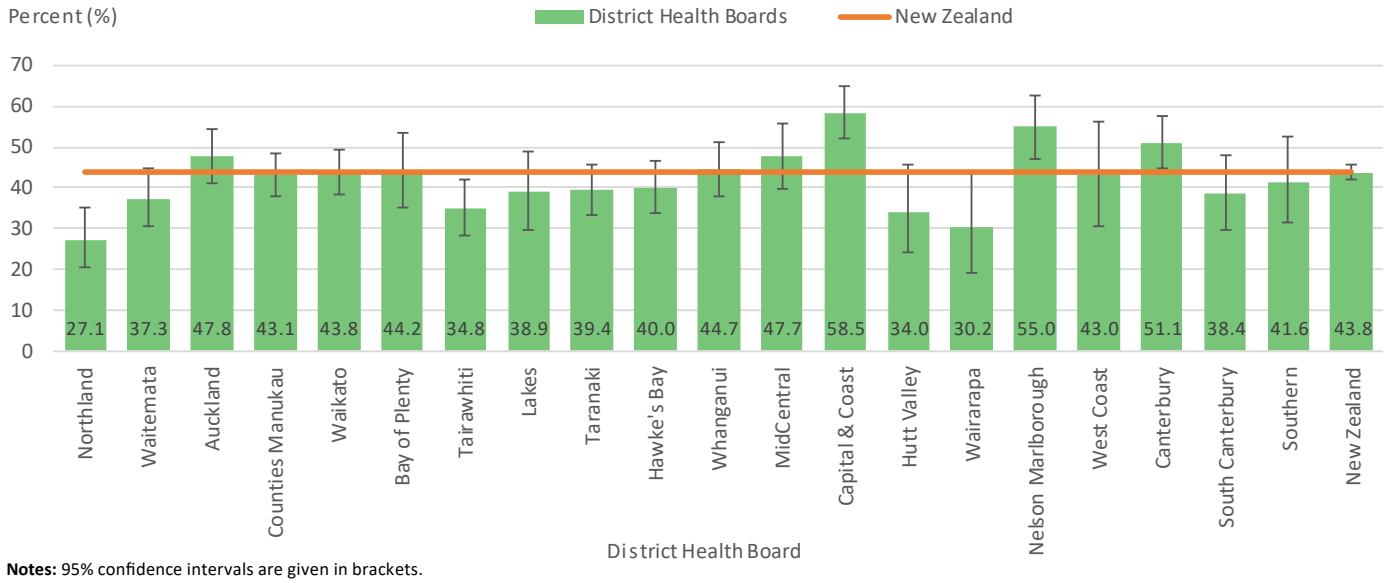
Active transport to and from school – 2016/17

Lower use of active transport for children living in Northland, Wairarapa and Tairawhiti DHBs

In 2014–17, the use of physically active transport to and from school varied by District Health Board (DHB).

The following DHBs had significantly higher rates of active transport use to and from school among children: Capital and Coast DHB (58.5%), Nelson-Malborough DHB (55.0%) and Canterbury DHB (51.1%) (Figure 4). Northland DHB (27.1%), Wairarapa DHB (30.2%) and Tairawhiti DHB (34.8%) had significantly lower rates than the New Zealand rate.

Figure 4 : Usually uses physically active form of transport to get to and from school, children aged 5–14 years, by District Health Board (DHB), 2014–17 (unadjusted prevalence)



Notes: 95% confidence intervals are given in brackets.
Source: Ministry of Health (2018)

DATA SOURCES

Data come from the 2016/17 New Zealand Health Survey data tables (Ministry of Health, 2017), and the 2014–17 New Zealand Health Survey regional results (Ministry of Health, 2018). For more information about this indicator, see the metadata sheet. Additional data come from the indicator '*TP007 Mode share of journeys to school*', using data from the New Zealand Household Travel Survey for 2010–14. More information is available on the Ministry of Transport website.

RELATED INDICATORS

Related environmental health indicators for transport, available from the EHINZ website (www.ehinz.ac.nz), include:

- Number of motor vehicles
- Main mode of transport to work on Census day
- Household travel time by mode of transport
- Unmet need for GP services due to lack of transport
- Transport injury hospitalisations and deaths
- About transport and health (information factsheet).

For more information, please contact Kylie Mason on ehnz@massey.ac.nz

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