

# Young people and walking

Victoria  
**walks**



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This report was prepared by Dr Jan Garrard, Active Transport Consultant, for Victoria Walks and Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic), October 2017. It is a condensed version of the full project report, which is available at [www.victoriawalks.org.au/young\\_people/](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/young_people/)

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Level 7, 225 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

P: 03 9662 3975

E: [info@victoriawalks.org.au](mailto:info@victoriawalks.org.au)

[www.victoriawalks.org.au](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au)

Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. Our vision is that young Victorians have their rights upheld and are valued as active participants in their communities. We are an independent, for-purpose organisation, driven by our members.

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# Contents

<b>Executive summary.....</b>	<b>2</b>		
The role of walking for young people.....	2		
Young people and driving.....	3		
Barriers to walking.....	3		
What kind of community do young people want to live in?.....	3		
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>		
1.1 Project aim.....	4		
1.2 Project components .....	4		
<b>2 Literature review.....</b>	<b>5</b>		
2.1 Young people and physical activity participation.....	5		
2.2 Young people and walking.....	6		
2.3 Walking as a mode of transport for young people .....	7		
2.4 Walking for recreation .....	9		
2.5 Supports for young people walking for recreation and transport.....	10		
2.6 Constraints on young people walking for recreation and transport.....	11		
2.6.1 Safety.....	11		
2.6.2 Other constraints on young people walking .....	12		
<b>3 Focus group discussions.....</b>	<b>14</b>		
3.1 Introduction and methods .....	14		
3.2 Results.....	14		
3.2.1 Participant characteristics.....	14		
3.2.2 Focus group discussion findings .....	14		
<b>4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria.....</b>	<b>19</b>		
4.1 Methods.....	19		
4.2 Demographic data .....	19		
4.3 Frequency of walking for recreation and transport .....	20		
4.4 Destinations for transport walking .....	20		
4.5 Time spent on recreational physical activity and active transport .....	21		
4.6 Frequency of use of travel modes.....	22		
4.7 Motivations for walking .....	23		
4.8 Attitudes to walking .....	24		
4.9 Attitudes to personal safety while walking .....	25		
4.10 Experiences and awareness of threats to safety while walking.....	26		
4.11 Attitudes to measures for increasing walking .....	29		
4.12 Young people's attitudes to driver- pedestrian interactions.....	31		
4.13 Young people's driver's license status and vehicle ownership .....	31		
4.14 Young people's preferences for where they would like to live in the future .....	34		
<b>5 Study conclusions.....</b>	<b>40</b>		
5.1 The role of walking for young people .....	40		
5.2 Personal safety .....	41		
5.3 Road safety .....	42		
5.4 Young people and driving.....	42		
5.5 What kind of programs and interventions would support more young people walking more often?.....	43		
5.6 What kind of community do young people want to live in?.....	44		
<b>6 Recommendations for increasing walking for young people.....</b>	<b>45</b>		
Walking promotion .....	45		
Urban planning and design .....	46		
Safety .....	46		
<b>References .....</b>	<b>48</b>		

# Executive Summary

## This research project involved:

- A desktop literature review.
- An online survey of 1089 people in Victoria aged 15 – 20 years. Three-quarters of young people who responded were female.
- Five focus group discussions, with a total of 24 young people.

## The role of walking for young people

Young people's attitudes to walking are generally very positive, with particularly high levels of agreement that walking is healthy (98%), environmentally friendly (97%), and enables independent mobility (78%).

The survey found the most common destinations for young people's utilitarian walking trips are to access public transport (81%), shops (71%), entertainment (53%) or to visit friends or relatives (48%).

Walking for transport plays a significant role in young people's physical activity. For 18-24 year-olds, walking for transport alone (excluding walking for fitness) comprises about half of the total time spent on physical activity (ABS, 2013). Walking for transport is largely functional (ie to get to places) for young people, and not necessarily viewed as a form of exercise or even recognised as 'walking'.

The survey found the most popular motivation for recreational walking was to relax and calm down when stressed, angry or anxious (84%). Reflecting these factors, 78% agreed they were more likely to go for a walk if there was a nice park nearby.

Overall, facilitating walking for transport is more likely to increase physical activity by young people than recreational walking programs. For a range of reasons however, recreational walking is likely to appeal to less active, 'non-sporty' young women as a form of exercise.

Walking, often combined with public transport, provides a critical opportunity for young people to lead independent lives. Suburban environments that are difficult to walk around or to use public transport leave many young people reliant on parents or others to drive them.



“ As a girl while walking by myself or in a group of girls particularly at night we get cat called very often and it’s disgusting and scares me personally. ”

## Young people and driving

There is evidence that young people around the world are moving away from driving. While 71% of 18-21 year-olds in Victoria held a driver’s license in 2001, this dropped to 59% in 2014 (Wundersitz et al., 2015).

Young people’s decisions in obtaining a driver’s license appeared to be shaped largely by circumstances such as where they live, travel needs, family support, and the time and costs associated with obtaining a driver’s license and operating a car, rather than an inherent desire to drive (or not drive) a car. In fact, many young people favour travel mode choice rather than being dependent on “driving everywhere”.

Most young people (92%) agreed that owning and driving a car is expensive and four-fifths agreed it was difficult to get the necessary 120 hours driving experience to attain a licence. For some, driving was perceived as being dangerous, unpleasant, or stressful.

The majority of young people are able to get a lift in a car from an adult in the household either some or most of the time, particularly young women. Young women also tended to view license-holding and driving a car more positively than young men. These differences are likely to reflect concerns about young women walking alone.

Most young people have a positive attitude to using public transport when it is available, and public transport access appears to support delayed license-holding. Improving walking conditions and public transport in outer suburban areas and regional Victoria is likely to lead to more young people delaying obtaining a driver’s license, driving less, and walking more.

The recent delay in license-holding offers the potential for increased walking for transport and perhaps reduced traffic congestion. However, high levels of lift-getting may limit the realisation of these opportunities, especially if viable alternatives to car travel are not available.

## Barriers to walking

Concerns around personal safety are the primary barrier to walking, for young women in particular.

While most young people feel safe walking around during the day (89%), this is not the case at night. Young men (54%) are much more likely than young women (15%) to feel safe walking at night.

The open-ended comments on the survey present a striking picture of many young women feeling unsafe to move around on foot after dark. The ‘safety measure’ of young women avoiding walking alone in public places at night restricts their independent mobility and participation in public life.

Concerns around traffic safety and walking infrastructure were also a barrier. Only about half of the young people surveyed agreed that they can depend on drivers to obey the road rules and give way to pedestrians when required.

More than half of those surveyed agreed that more footpaths are needed. In response to an open-ended question, the top suggestions for improving walking conditions were to provide footpaths and walking trails; improve street and park lighting; and improve road crossings for pedestrians.

## What kind of community do young people want to live in?

The vast majority of young people considered it important to be close to shops, services and entertainment (89%); work or study (88%); and public transport (84%) and live in a walking-friendly neighbourhood (85%). By comparison, only 57% thought it was important to be “able to drive everywhere I want to go.” Consistent with other findings, the desire for a safe community was also a very strong theme, along with access to quality open space.

Young people also expressed a strong desire to live in a community where people are friendly, trust-worthy and engaged in community life, and where the community is inclusive and respectful of diversity. These characteristics appear to contribute to feelings of safety when moving around local neighbourhoods by foot.

A range of recommendations in response to these findings is provided at the end of this report.

# 1 Introduction

A great deal of research has been conducted into factors that support and constrain walking for recreation and transport. However, most of this research has focussed on adults or children, with less research involving young people aged 15 to 20 years.

Young people aged 15-20 years are generally transitioning from relatively active children to less active adolescents (especially females), and from non-motorists to potential car drivers. In addition, there is emerging evidence of a generational shift in Australia and similar countries, with fewer young people obtaining a driver's license and purchasing a motor vehicle. It is therefore important to obtain a better understanding of young people's perspectives on what comprises a walkable community that supports young people's physical activity and mobility.

While this study includes both physically active and inactive young people, inactive young people are of particular note. Young people who are currently inactive may not seek out deliberative forms of physical activity such as sport, exercise, fitness training and active recreation, but may be more likely to engage in incidental physical activity such as walking for transport through the establishment of more supportive walking environments.

Comprehensive information and data on young people's perceptions of walkable communities will give voice to a relatively neglected population segment in walking research.

## 1.1 Project aim

The overall aim of the project is to gain an understanding of young people's (15-20 years) perceptions of walkable communities, independent mobility, and supports and barriers to young people walking for recreation and transport.

## 1.2 Project components

The three components of the project are summarised below.

Component	Format
1. Desktop literature review.	Review of international, Australian and Victorian research, including peer-reviewed research and relevant non-peer-reviewed research and data.
2. Focus group discussions with young people in Victoria.	Five focus group discussions, with a total of 24 participants recruited through YACVic.  Participants included males and females; living in inner, middle and outer suburban and regional areas.
3. Online survey of Victorian young people.	Online survey of young people in Victoria (aged 15 – 20 years).  Sample (N = 1089) included a range of young people recruited through YACVic and Facebook. Survey questions based on findings from previous two study components.



# 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Young people and physical activity participation

Physical activity is important for the health, growth and development of children and young people (Okely, 2012), but in Australia many children and young people fail to meet recommended levels of physical activity. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Health Survey data indicate a substantial decline in levels of physical activity as young people transition from late adolescence (15-17 years) to early adulthood (18-24 years) (Table 1) (ABS, 2015), further extending the decline that occurs during childhood (Figure 1).

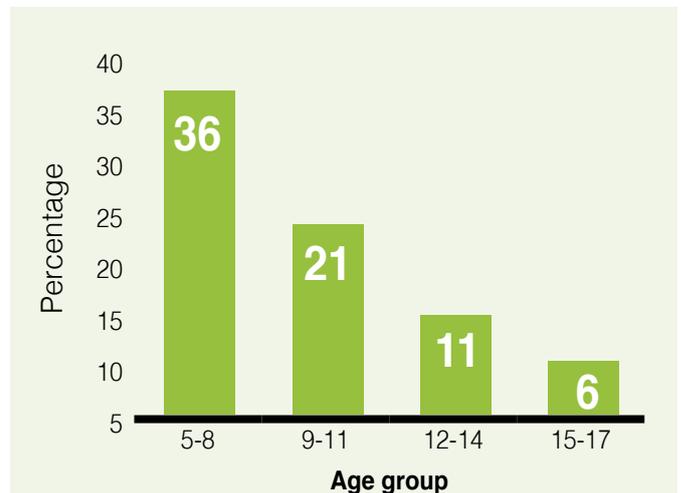
**Table 1: Level of exercise (for fitness, sport or recreation) (%)**

(Source: ABS, 2015)

	15-17 years		18-24 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No exercise	16	25	27	31
Low	22	31	26	36
Moderate	25	28	21	20
High	37	15	26	13

Young women are less likely to achieve recommended levels of physical activity than young men. For example, only 15% of 15-17 year-old females have high levels of exercise (compared to 37% of males), with a similar gender difference for 18-24 year-olds (ABS, 2015).

Notwithstanding these trends, young people typically achieve higher levels of physical activity than adults generally.



**Figure 1: Proportion of Australian young people meeting recommended levels of physical activity on all seven days (Source: ABS, 2013)**



## 2 Literature Review (cont.)

### 2.2 Young people and walking

Walking has some unique characteristics that hold considerable potential for addressing declining physical activity levels among young people, as well as the gender gap in physical activity. Walking can be a form of both planned and incidental physical activity, with walking for transport in particular providing the opportunity for young people to achieve adequate levels of physical activity (in terms of time and intensity) whilst also providing for personal mobility.

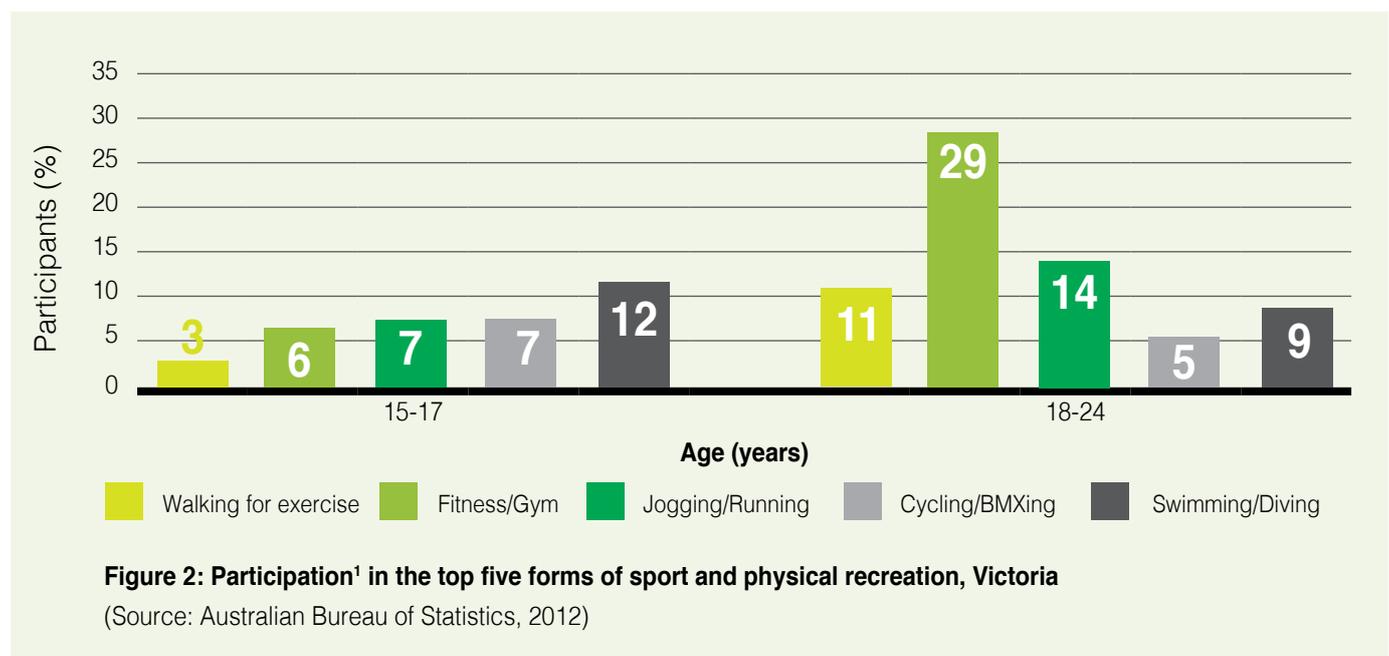
Walking for transport is also a more socially inclusive form of physical activity than many other forms of leisure-time physical activity, as walking for transport reaches population groups that, for a range of reasons, do not participate so much in leisure-time physical activity (Berrigan et al., 2006). These include women and disadvantaged population groups.

Compared to older population groups, recreational walking rates are relatively low for young people in Victoria. Nevertheless, walking represents the fifth (15-17 years) and fourth (18-24 years) most popular forms of leisure-related physical activity for Victorian young people (Figure 2).

Walking for transport is more prevalent than walking for recreation, with more than half of Australian children and young people participating in some form of active transport<sup>2</sup> in a seven-day period (ABS, 2013). In addition, in contrast to other forms of physical activity, participation in active transport increases steadily with age.

For 18-24 year-olds, walking for transport comprises nearly half (48%) of the total time per week spent on physical activity, with the remaining 52% spent on vigorous and moderate physical activity, and walking for fitness (ABS, 2013).

These data indicate that incidental physical activity in the form of active transport provides an opportunity for health-enhancing physical activity among a growing proportion of young people who drop out of organised and non-organised physical activity as they move from childhood into adolescence and young adulthood.



<sup>1</sup> At least once in the previous 12 months.

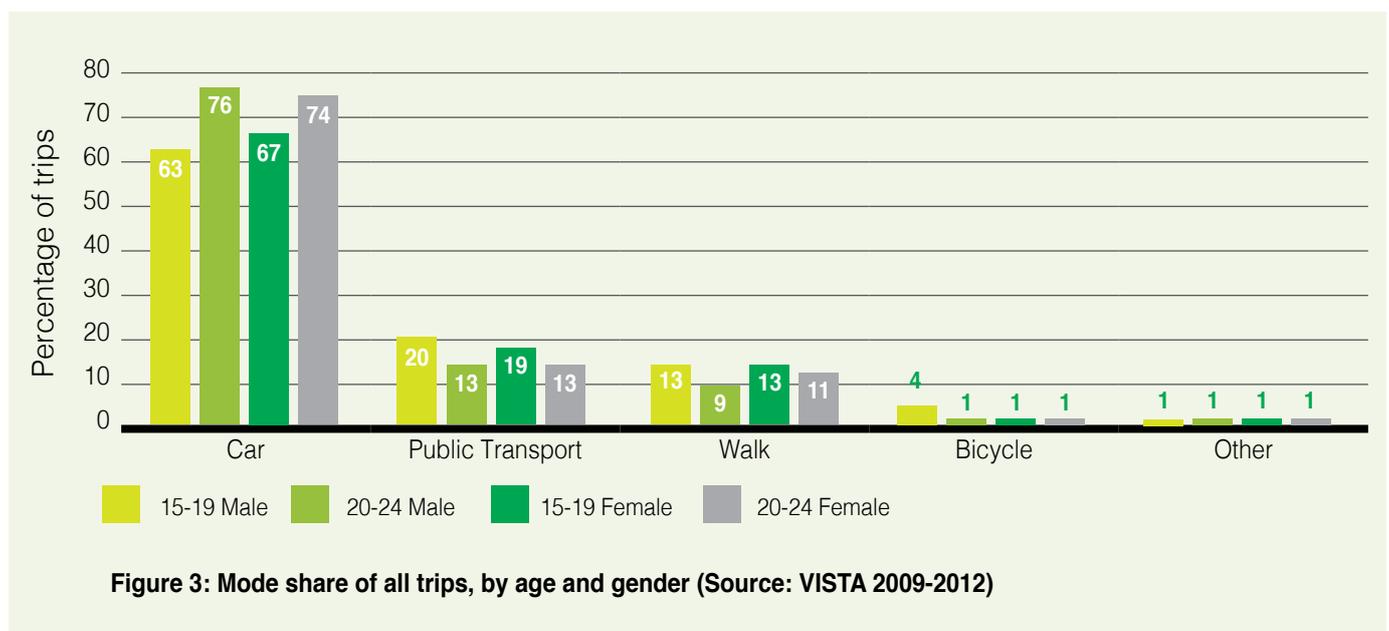
<sup>2</sup> Mainly walking.

“ Walk to school. Walk to the bus. Walk to here. Walk to shops – if it’s not too far. Walk to get takeaway food. ”

### 2.3 Walking as a mode of transport for young people

Young people who are the focus of this study (15-20 year-olds) are transitioning from adult-accompanied mobility as children to independent mobility (during early adolescence), to independent active travel or independent car travel as a driver (during later adolescence). Young people are also undergoing a number of life course transitions that impact on travel behaviour. These include: transitions from primary school to secondary school; secondary school to higher education; participation in paid employment; and in some cases a transition from the family home to independent living. The behaviour change literature identifies life course transitions such as these as opportunities to promote healthy behavioural choices (De Meester et al., 2014).

Victorian household travel survey data (Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel and Activity [VISTA]) indicate that most trips undertaken by young people aged 15-24 years are by car (as driver or passenger), with the proportion of car trips increasing with age for both males and females (Figure 3).



## 2 Literature Review (cont.)

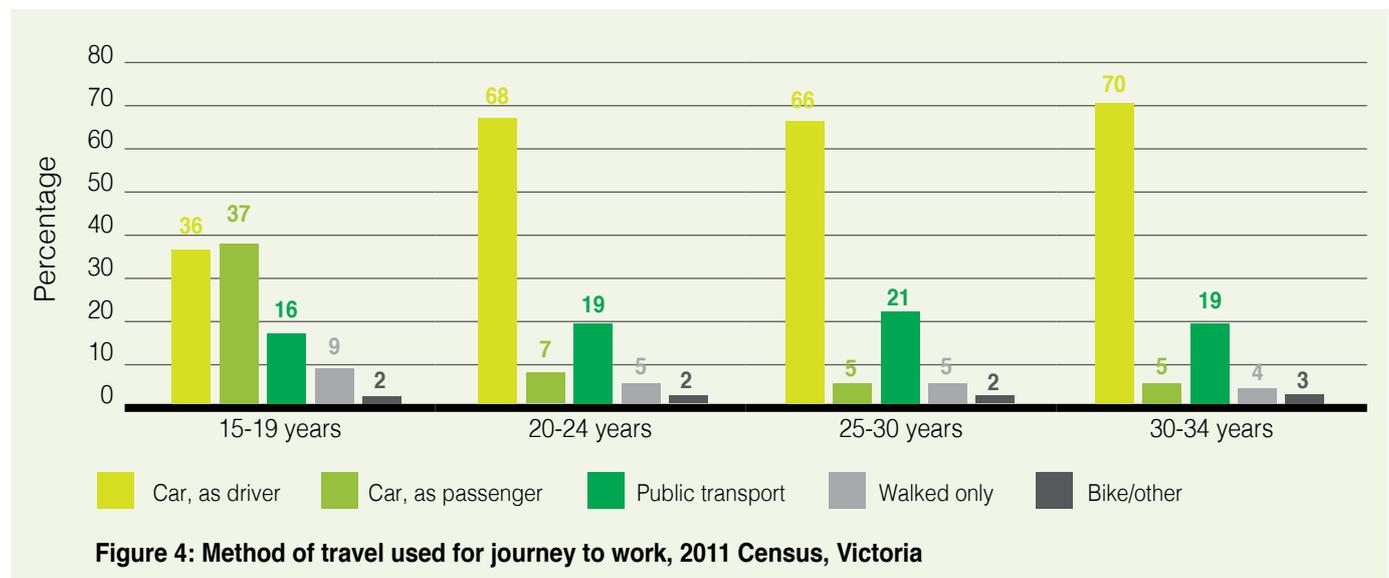
Walking only trips comprise 13% of trips<sup>3</sup> for males and females aged 15-19, declining to 9% and 11% respectively for 20-24 year-olds. Public transport use also declines with age, with similar rates for males and females. Consistent with other Australian and international research, these data suggest a shift from active to passive forms of travel as young people reach driving age (16 for a learner driver and 18 for a licensed driver in Victoria).

For the younger age group, walk to school rates in Australia and Victoria are low in comparison to most OECD countries, having declined markedly in recent decades. Based on VISTA 2007-2008 data, 22.2% of primary school students walk to school, dropping to 16.9% of secondary school students and 3.5% of TAFE/University students.

However, car trips also decline for secondary school and TAFE/University students, while public transport use increases.

In 1970 in Victoria, 16% of young people travelled to education (school, TAFE/University) by car, but by 1994 this had increased more than three-fold to 52%. In the same time period walking and cycling to education more than halved, with 48.9% of students walking to education in 1970, decreasing to 20.3% in 1994 (Garrard, 2011). In the same time period, many OECD countries were able to maintain relatively high rates of active travel to school (or experienced much smaller declines, from a higher base, than in Australia).

Travel to work data from the 2011 Australian Census for people aged 15-34 years in Victoria shows a similar pattern of predominantly car travel (Figure 4).



This data also illustrates the likely impact of young people transitioning from pre-driving age to driving age. While all age groups mainly travel to work by car, for young people aged 15-19 years about half of these car trips to work are as a passenger. In contrast, for people aged 20 years and over, most car trips to work are as a car driver. Walking to work<sup>4</sup> nearly halves between ages 15-19 years and 20 years and over. Changes in travel to work with age may also reflect changes in the nature of work as young people move from more localised part-time work to full-time 'career jobs,' which may be further from home.

A recent trend of lower license-holding rates among young people internationally, and in Australia and Victoria, has emerged that has the potential to counter the increase in sedentary behaviour associated with young people obtaining a driver's license. While 71% of 18-21 year-olds in Victoria held a driver's license in 2001, this declined to 59% in 2014. The biggest reduction was for 18 year-olds (from 53% in 2001 to 40% in 2014) (Wundersitz et al., 2015).

<sup>3</sup>Excludes walking associated with public transport use.

<sup>4</sup>These data are for "walking only". In addition, walking is frequently used to access public transport.

“ But if you have a community where the public transport system is well-connected... they’re less likely to need an L and P. ”

A range of lifestyle and affordability factors are considered to be contributing to this decline and there appear to be few stand-out impacts (Delbosc and Currie, 2013).

There is also little direct evidence that this trend is leading to increased active travel, including walking, with studies in Australia and internationally producing inconsistent findings.

Some studies have described positive attitudes to car ownership and use among young people, while others have reported a growing divide between young people who enjoy driving and those who find it a stressful activity (Line et al., 2010; Line et al., 2012). These differing attitudes may depend on whether young people live in more car-dependent rural or suburban areas (resulting in earlier driving and driving longer distances), or in higher-density urban environments. While the recent delay in license-holding offers the potential for increased walking for transport, high levels of lift-getting (primarily from parents) may limit the realisation of this opportunity. Young women’s concerns about safety while walking or using public transport are also likely to lead to lift-getting rather than walking (see Section 4.9).

An improved understanding of what supports and constrains young people walking will be important for converting this emerging opportunity into increased walking behaviour.

## 2.4 Walking for recreation

Few studies have investigated young people’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to walking for recreation, with most studies focusing instead on walking for transport. However, a number of (mainly qualitative) studies have reported that while young people recognise and value the health benefits of walking, it has little influence on them walking. Rather, health and fitness are seen to be a consequence of walking, rather than the main reason for walking (Kirby and Inchley, 2013).

The finding that young people engage in the healthy behaviour of walking for reasons other than to be healthy indicates that health-focussed walking promotion messages targeted at adults in general may not be effective for young people.

When young people do choose to walk for recreation, key motivations appear to be psychological wellbeing, social interaction (eg walking with friends), and ‘time-out’ for listening to music, etc.

Recreational walking is likely to appeal to less active girls as it meets several of the characteristics of physical activity that

adolescent girls find appealing, including being enjoyable, informal, unstructured in nature, and able to be undertaken with friends rather than alone (Whitehead and Biddle, 2008).

Research evidence on what actually makes physical activities enjoyable or not enjoyable to young people is not definitive, though one proposal is that motivation to participate in physical activity is maximised when the difficulty of the task is a good match with an individual’s abilities and skills. A mismatch can lead to either boredom when ability is high but challenge is low, or anxiety, where challenge is high but ability is low (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, cited in Whitehead and Biddle, 2008).

Much of the research into the reasons for young women’s decline in physical activity levels in the transition from childhood to adolescence has been conducted in relation to sporting activities rather than walking, but it can be noted that walking does not require high order skills, so is unlikely to elicit performance anxiety.

Young women also have a preference for physical activities that are perceived to be appropriately ‘feminine’, based on social and psycho-social influences (Whitehead and Biddle, 2008). Participating in more vigorous forms of sport and exercise might be seen by some young women as undermining their femininity. Some of the more vigorous forms of physical activity might also require ‘putting their bodies on show’ in ways that might facilitate unfavorable comparisons with social ideals of the ‘body beautiful’ (Whitehead and Biddle, 2008; Carlin et al., 2015).

While it is important to challenge these notions of female identity, appearance, and appropriate activities, they may help to explain why the ‘ordinariness’ of walking could be appealing to less active, ‘non-sporty’ young women. A qualitative study involving 11-13 year-olds in the UK found that walking with parents is one of the few forms of physical activity that young people transitioning from childhood to adolescence are prepared to be seen to be doing with their parents (at a time when being seen playing with parents becomes ‘uncool’) (Carlin et al., 2015).

While a number of qualitative studies have identified young people’s beliefs and attitudes towards walking, few studies have attempted to measure the prevalence of these beliefs and attitudes in larger samples of young people. This is one of the aims of the current study.

## 2 Literature Review (cont.)

### 2.5 Supports for young people walking for recreation and transport

Young people have different motivations and supports for walking for recreation and walking for transport. Both recreational and transport walking are largely functional for young people (ie used as a means to an end), though the 'functions' vary.

As noted above, walking for recreation is generally undertaken to relax, socialise, listen to music and take personal time out. Recreational walking is likely to be supported by having family and friends who encourage walking (often by accompanying young people on walks); good pedestrian infrastructure; and interesting, pleasant and safe environments in which to walk.

For transportation walking, the ability to get to places independently, conveniently and at low cost are key motivations.

In terms of environmental correlates of walking for young people, the limited research literature indicates that factors vary for children, young people and adults. For example, a study conducted in Toronto, Canada, compared correlates of children and adolescents walking to school (Mitra and Buliung, 2015). Analysis of school travel data from a large cross-sectional survey of household travel behaviour found that while mixed land use and dwelling density were associated with children (aged 11 years) walking to school, these built environment factors were not related to school travel mode for adolescents aged 14-15 years.

Studies have also reported that the factors that influence walking to school differ from factors that influence walking to other destinations (Steinbach et al., 2012); differences which were largely attributed to the 'discretionary' nature of non-school trips. That is, young people appear to walk under less desirable conditions when they have little choice (eg for the school trip). This raises the interesting issue of lack of choice possibly contributing to participation in healthy behaviours (ie walking to school).

Factors that support young people's use of public transport also provide opportunities for more walking (to and from public transport stops), though more so for intermediate or longer distance trips that are less suitable for walking, and might otherwise be undertaken by car rather than by public transport. Good access, speed, reliability, affordability, and safety are key factors that support young people's use of public transport (Simons et al., 2013).



“ As a girl, I feel unsafe and intimidated when walking alone at night, even in my own neighbourhood. ”

## 2.6 Constraints on young people walking for recreation and transport

### 2.6.1 Safety

Safety while walking is a concern for young people, though there is inconsistent evidence for its impact on levels of walking (Carver et al., 2008). Lack of consistent findings is likely due to the complex nature of the concept of ‘safety’, and differential impacts based on age, gender, accompaniment, walking location, and time of day/night. In addition, safety includes traffic safety and personal safety; and both have actual and perceived components.

One consistent finding from the research literature is of gender differences in safety concerns and consequent impacts on children’s and young people’s independent mobility. Parents of adolescent girls are more likely than parents of adolescent boys to restrict their child from going out alone due to concerns about their personal safety. Young women themselves also reflect these differing levels of concern, with more young women than young men expressing concerns about personal safety while walking (Carver et al., 2008).

A number of studies report that young women’s concerns about personal safety while walking are partially alleviated by young women having a sense of community belonging and engagement (Carver et al., 2005); walking with friends; walking in familiar surroundings (Valentine, 1997); and avoiding walking after dark and/or alone (Lake and Townshend, 2013).

Insight into reasons for young women’s concerns about safety when moving around in public places comes from recent Australian surveys outlining their experiences of street harassment (such as honking, wolf-whistling, leering/excessive staring, vulgar/lewd gestures, lewd comments, sexist comments, repeated unwelcome sexual advances) and physical street harassment (such as stalking and blocking someone’s path). In one survey, 83% of women aged 18-24 reported having experienced harassment in the last 12 months, with 54% reporting that they were aged 17 years or younger (school age) when they first experienced street harassment (Johnson and Bennett, 2015).

Forty percent of Australian women aged 18 years and older did not feel safe when walking alone at night in the area where they currently live, compared to 17% of men; and 87% of women have changed their behaviour in at least one way to ensure their own personal safety in the last 12 months (Johnson and Bennett, 2015). Actions taken to improve personal safety included avoiding walking alone at night (61% of women, 23% of men); not exercising alone after dark (43% of women, 16% of men); and catching a taxi rather than walking (23% of women, 12% of men) (Johnson and Bennett, 2015).

Similar findings from a survey conducted by Plan International and Our Watch (2016) led the authors to conclude that Australia has significant work to do to achieve a key target of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, to provide “universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces in particular for women and children”.

Young people appear to have fewer concerns about traffic safety while walking than about personal safety. This could be because they (and their parents) are confident they have the skills and ability to deal with potential traffic hazards. The difference might also reflect extensive media reporting of personal assaults compared to traffic crashes; or other factors. Nevertheless, the pleasant, interesting walking routes that support young people’s walking are also likely to have the good walking infrastructure and traffic conditions that make walking safer and feel safer.

## 2 Literature Review (cont.)

### 2.6.2 Other constraints on young people walking

Travel distance/time is a well-established influence on walking for transport, but there is some evidence that young people are prepared to walk further to get to places than children (Steinbach et al., 2012) and adults (Garrard, 2013). There is also a perceptual element to “too far to walk”, evidenced by young people (a) walking further to school in several European and Asian countries than in Australia; (b) walking further for ‘essential’ trips than discretionary trips; and (c) walking further and more frequently when they have limited alternative travel mode options (eg obtaining a lift from parents).

Other constraints on young people’s physical activity in general include increasing study and work commitments as young people transition from secondary education to further education and/or work; friendship groups changing; informal group activities (eg getting together at the local park) declining; and sports teams disbanding (Lake and Townshend, 2013).

However, these constraints on young people’s physical activity may not necessarily apply to walking, and particularly walking for transport. Recreational walking is less dependent on organised activities such as participating in sports teams; enables more flexible timing; and involves minimal costs. Walking for transport also provides busy young people with the time-saving option of combining exercise time with travel time. Young people themselves suggest that physical activities need to have flexible timing, and involve minimal cost (Lake and Townshend, 2013).

In conclusion, the findings described above are a reminder of the complexity of influences on walking for young people. Studies have reported differences for children, adolescents and young adults; young women and young men; recreational and transport walking; and for school and non-school trips. These differences point to the importance of gaining a better understanding of these influences as a means of developing strategies for increasing walking that take into account age, gender, walking purpose, and location.

This review of the research literature has identified some definitive findings, some tentative hypotheses, and some gaps in the research literature that require further investigation. Some of these are explored in the second and third phases of this study; namely, focus group discussions with young people, and an online survey of young people.



# WHAT MOTIVATES YOUNG PEOPLE TO WALK?

TO RELAX AND CALM DOWN WHEN I AM STRESSED, ANGRY OR ANXIOUS

84%



78%

IF THERE IS A NICE PARK OR RESERVE NEARBY



73%

TO GET TO PLACES SUCH AS SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY, TAFE, WORK, SHOPS ETC



71%

A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND ASKS ME TO WALK WITH THEM



71%

TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE FOR A WHILE



# 3 Focus Group Discussions

## 3.1 Introduction and methods

The aim of this component of the study was to explore barriers and enablers for walking among young people in Victoria in some depth, using focus group discussions.

Invitations to Victorian young people aged 15 to 20 years were distributed through YACVic. Five focus group discussions were conducted at different locations in Victoria: a regional city, an inner Melbourne suburb, two middle Melbourne suburbs and a regional town in a peri-urban area about 60km south east of the Melbourne CBD.

A semi-structured interview format was used to guide the discussions, which lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and key themes were developed as a basis for analysis of the data.

## 3.2 Results

### 3.2.1 Participant characteristics

A total of 24 Victorian young people (13 females, 8 males and 3 other) participated in the focus group discussions. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 23 years, with most aged between 16 and 19. Most participants lived at home with parents (19); with a small number living alone, in a share house or with a partner. The majority of participants attended secondary school, and seven young people had casual employment (as well as attending secondary school or post-secondary study).

Nearly all participants walked for fitness or leisure and to get to places (walking for transport) at least once or twice a month; but frequency of walking for transport tended to be higher than walking for fitness or leisure.

### 3.2.2 Focus group discussion findings

Seven key themes emerged from participants' responses to the focus group discussion questions and are discussed under the headings below.

#### **Young people's perceptions of walking and physical activity**

A key finding from the focus group discussions is that while many young people enjoy walking, they don't necessarily seek it out deliberately as a preferred form of physical activity, for example:

*"I like it, but I still need the motivation to do it. I like walking but I'd never think to do it, unless I needed to get somewhere. Like when I have to travel to places. When I do it I say, "Yeah, this isn't too bad".*

*"I just need a purpose to walk."*

This finding is consistent with the research literature (see Section 2.4). Walking is perceived by some young people to take too much time and to lack the intensity required to achieve desired levels of fitness. Other forms of exercise can also be undertaken indoors or in more controlled settings during or outside daylight hours, with many young people (particularly young women) very reluctant (or not permitted by parents) to walk outdoors after dark. Consequently, outdoor walking for exercise is restricted to daylight hours, when young people often have other commitments in the form of school work, university studies or paid employment. Examples of these comments are:

*"I don't walk, I jog – more effort."*

*"I like swimming, and do lots of swimming. There are a lot of young people who do walk for fun, but when you're busy and trying to fit exercise in you probably prefer to go to a gym, so they're less likely to take a long walk out to the park."*

*"The time it takes is a major constraint."*

Walking for transport was largely functional (ie to get to places), and sometimes not necessarily viewed as 'walking' or a form of exercise. Indicative of this perspective was that participants sometimes needed to be prompted to talk about any walking they did 'to get to places' because they didn't immediately think of this as a form of walking or exercise. For example, this participant initially said that she "didn't do much walking", but later said:

*"I walk to the school bus stop, like 10 or 15 minutes. I did walk from my school to here. And then walk to work."*

The following comment reflects the wide range of places that young people walk to:

*"Walk to school. Walk to the bus. Walk to here. Walk to shops – if it's not too far. Walk to get takeaway food."*

## Motivations and supports for walking

Walking is perceived by young people to be associated with improved social and emotional health and well-being, by providing a means of 'getting out of the house', reducing stress, 'chilling out' and improving mood. Examples of comments include:

*"To get out of home – a good escape from home."*

*"Sometimes when I'm angry I like to walk."*

*"Fresh air, healthy, and improves your mood."*

*"It's a nice way to see a place, if you're riding or running you just zone out, but when you're walking you can really take in your landscape."*

Having pleasant, interesting, safe, green places to walk support these forms of health-enhancing walking, for example:

*"We live in a nice area – with a park two streets down. Really well-maintained, and with roads and footpaths that are quite easy to walk on."*

*"It gets pretty fummy and stuff on that road so I go another route by the park that's really peaceful, quiet, and usually no-one there."*

Young people are also motivated to walk by having a reason or purpose for walking that is not directly health-related. For recreational walking, reasons/purposes include the challenge of bush-walking or fund-raising walking events; games that involve walking (Pokémon Go); accompanying their parents or other relatives who like to walk; spending time walking with friends; and walking the dog. Examples of comments include:

*"Walk for fun, with girlfriend, walk with friends."*

*"My grandmother has high cholesterol, so she tends to walk a lot, and that means she tries to drag me along with her. She likes the company."*

*"I walk with my Mum because it helps with her recovery after surgery and stuff – it boosts her mood. And I walk around the estate to take photos, I've got some really cool photos of birds and stuff."*

The number of young people reporting walking with their parents and other relatives was interesting, given research indicating that one of the reasons for reductions in physical activity in the transition from childhood to adolescence is that many adolescents do not wish to be seen playing sports and games with their parents (Carlin et al., 2015). It appears that walking with parents and relatives may be more acceptable than playing sports and games with them.

One of the main reasons/purposes for young people walking (particularly on a regular basis) is 'to get to places', that is, as a form of independent mobility. Examples of motivations for transport walking include:

*"Who's going to wait for a bus [walk instead]."*

*"I couldn't drive, so I relied mainly on public transport and walking."*

*"It's really annoying to spend a lot of money on public transport."*

*"I walk just about everywhere because my parents don't want to drive me."*

*"If it's cheaper to drive, we're all going to end up driving. If it keeps going up, like \$800 registration, we're all going to walk."*

**“It’s a nice way to see a place, if you’re riding or running you just zone out, but when you’re walking you can really take in your landscape.”**

## 3 Focus Group Discussions (cont.)

### Constraints on walking

Young people discussed several barriers to walking for transport, with personal safety and traffic safety the stand-out barriers. These varied by gender, location and time of day. In relation to personal safety, three broad approaches appear to be important; namely, improving neighbourhood safety, addressing young people's perceptions of neighbourhood safety, and assisting young people (particularly girls) to acquire the skills to deal with threats and perceived threats to their personal safety. Examples of comments about personal safety included:

*"Not the area where the shops are, but like [named] road. There's a lot of people who like to hang out there, and when I walk down that path to go home I always find things like smashed chairs, beer bottles, alcohol bottles. I just don't feel safe."*

*"Day time, pretty safe – night time, pretty unsafe."*

*"Usually I'm not allowed out on the streets after about 4.30 ....then it's dark."*

Traffic safety concerns included poor walking environments and infrastructure (mainly in outer suburban and peri-urban areas) and driver behaviour, for example:

*"The way people drive is scary – I don't want to die from a car, but also because there's no footpath – there's no way for a pedestrian to walk."*

*"I walk to school – 40 minutes each way. When you walk you have to take a different route to cars, 'cos you can't walk along the main roads. The footpaths don't exist in some places. Things like slip-lanes, they're only for cars. I've always been taught to use other routes, yes, it does make it a bit longer."*

*"At [named] station, there is no footpath and it's like a mud bank, after it's rained it's so slippery, it's really scary."*

Interestingly, young people's perceptions of the road safety risks associated with walking appeared to be shaped by their observations of unsafe driving in general as well as by observations and experiences of unsafe driver-pedestrian interactions, for example:

*"Not stopping at pedestrian crossings, not giving way. Sometimes they don't even look – they just go."*

*"I was walking with my friend, and I walked across this road, I looked both ways twice, and this idiot was turning into the street I was walking across and he hit me at about 20kmh, I still have a sore leg from that. That puts me off walking a bit."*

*"My father said 'Always assume that no-one else can drive'."*

“ The way people drive is scary – I don't want to die from a car, but also because there's no footpath – there's no way for a pedestrian to walk. ”

## “ Q: Has anything stopped you from walking? A: Getting my licence! ”

### Car use

Regular utilitarian walking appears to be less likely when young people have access to a car, either as passenger or driver, as the following comments illustrate:

*“I walk to school and back – about 4km to school, and it’s uphill on the way back, ‘cos my parents don’t want to drive me,.....so I walk just about anywhere because my parents don’t drive me.”*

*“During the week I’m usually the only one home, so if I want to go somewhere I either walk or catch the bus.”*

*“Q: Has anything stopped you from walking?  
A: Getting my licence!”*

Young people described mixed attitudes and behaviours about obtaining a driver’s license, driving, and being driven by others (usually parents). Obtaining a driver’s license appeared to be shaped largely by circumstances such as where they live, travel needs, family support, and the time and costs associated with obtaining a driver’s license and owning and operating a car, rather than an inherent desire to drive and/or own their own car. Examples of comments included:

*“It’s a good thing to have [ie a car], but it’s not necessary.”*

*“But if you have a community where the public transport system is well-connected.... they’re less likely to need an L and P. The needs [and access to public transport] vary even just in little pockets.”*

*“I was never really in a rush, it was never a priority for me. Some people get them straight away – like in high school. If you go to parties a lot, if you go out at night, they’re more likely to buy a car.”*

The above comment suggests that the need for travel at night favours car use, possibly linked to young women’s reluctance to walk or use public transport after dark.

Constraints on car use included cost, inconvenience, air pollution, congestion, unpleasant driving conditions and the availability of alternative modes of transport, for example:

*“It is better to live somewhere where you don’t need a car – you don’t have to pay so much for petrol and less pollution.”*

*“Walking to shops is easier, you have to start your car, go, find a park, pay for the parking...you just walk, get your stuff, come back home, it’s easy. You can get fines for doing something wrong.”*

*“Traffic might be bad and public transport’s easier.”*

Two participants talked about enjoying driving in the country, but not in Melbourne, due to congestion, other drivers’ behaviours, and general stresses associated with city driving.

There were also differences in the extent to which family members (usually parents) were willing and able to drive their children to destinations.

“ It is better to live somewhere where you don’t need a car – you don’t have to pay so much for petrol and less pollution. ”

# 3 Focus Group Discussions (cont.)

## Suggestions for increasing walking among young people

Suggestions for how to encourage more walking among young people largely fell under the broad theme of 'giving young people a reason or purpose for walking'. This over-arching motivation for walking was mentioned directly by some young people, for example:

*"I only walk when I have to, or when I'm in the mood, which is ratty."*

*"A purpose, you need a purpose."*

*"I like it, but I still need the motivation to do it. I like walking but I'd never think to do it, unless I needed to get somewhere."*

More specific suggestions included:

- Walking events and activities, which might include a challenge, fund-raising, walking group, social activities, rewards or incentives.
- 'Gamification' of walking (such as Pokémon Go).
- 'Competition' between friends, such as use of devices such as Fitbits to record and compare activity levels, or achieve personal or team activity goals, possibly involving incentives or rewards.
- Build walking into activities and events, including providing directions on how to walk or use public transport to get to events and other destinations.
- Promote the health and environmental benefits of walking.
- Improving walking infrastructure and safety.

The suggestions around events, gamification and competition need to be treated with caution, as the survey results suggest these are not strong motivations for walking compared to other factors.



# 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria

## 4.1 Methods

Based on findings from the literature review and focus group discussions, an online survey was developed to assess young people's perceptions of walkable communities, independent mobility, and supports and barriers to walking for recreation and transport.

The survey was administered using SurveyGizmo online survey development and administration software. A draft survey was pilot-tested with four young people, and some minor revisions were made. Young people were invited to participate in the online survey through:

1. Advertisements on Facebook, targeting Victorian young people aged 15 – 20 years (1043 responses); and
2. Notification via YACVic online communication channels (46 responses).

An incentive to complete the survey was provided in the form of the opportunity to win one of five \$100 gift vouchers.

The survey findings described below need to be interpreted in the light of this being a non-probability sample of Victorian young people (primarily those who responded to a Facebook advertisement inviting participation in the survey) rather than a representative sample. Survey participants were widely

dispersed across Victoria and Melbourne metropolitan areas, covering 290 Victorian postcodes. However, young women (76%) were notably over-represented in the study sample. It should also be noted that young people who responded to the survey may have a higher level of interest and participation in walking than Victorian young people in general.

## 4.2 Demographic data

Young people who responded to the survey were distributed across the six year levels of the study population (15 – 20 years), but with a higher proportion of younger people aged 15 – 17 years (60%).

The sample comprised 76% females, 22% males and 2% other, and the majority of young people (85%) lived with parent(s) or guardians.

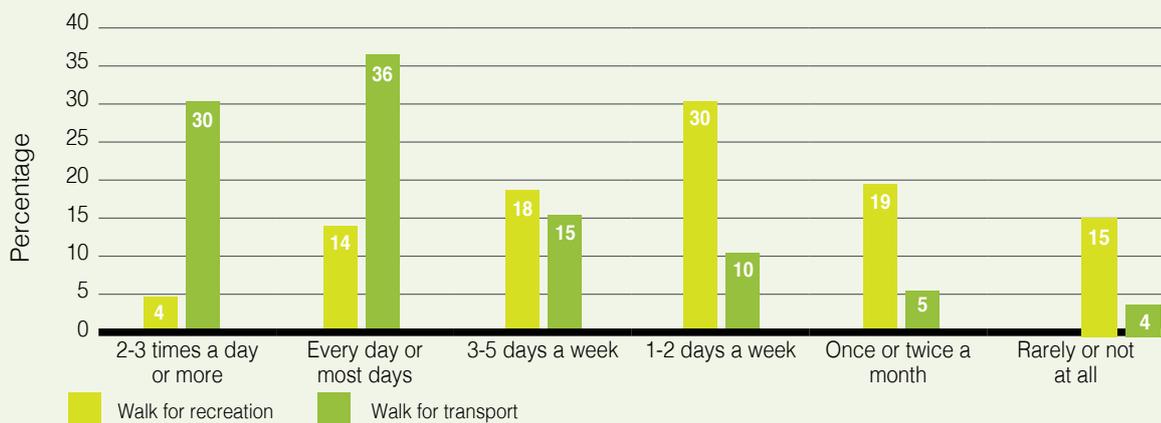
The majority of young people attended secondary school (59%) or post-secondary education (33%); with nearly half (49%) working casually or part-time, and only 4% working full-time.



## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

### 4.3 Frequency of walking for recreation and transport

Survey participants frequently walked for transport, with two-thirds walking for transport every day or most days, and four out of five walking for transport at least three to five days a week (Figure 5). Levels of recreational walking were lower, with the majority (64%) walking for recreation one or two days a week or less.

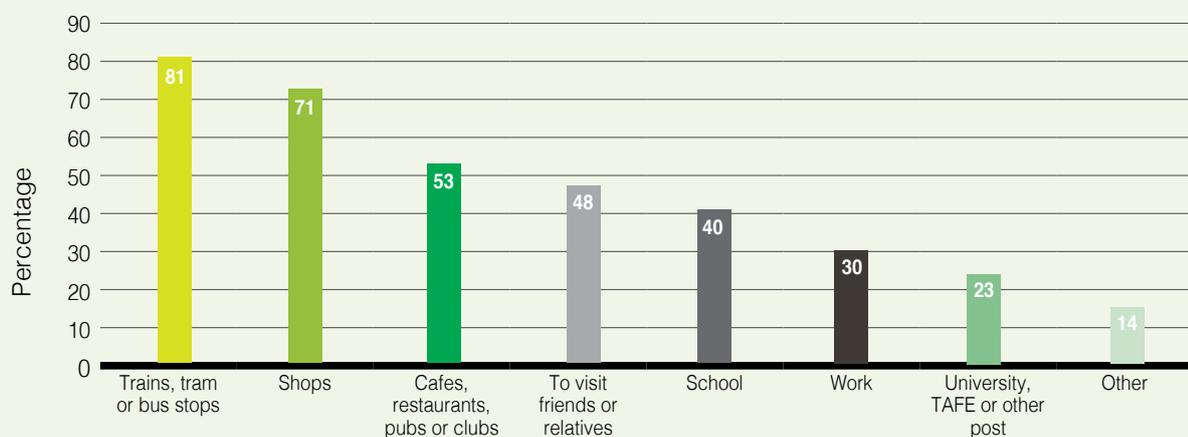


**Figure 5: Frequency of walking for recreation and transport**

These data indicate that walking to get to places is an important form of independent mobility for these young people, who are less likely to choose to participate in walking as a form of fitness, sport or recreation.

### 4.4 Destinations for transport walking

The most common destinations for young people's utilitarian walking trips are to access public transport (81%), shops (71%), entertainment (53%) or to visit friends or relatives (48%) (Figure 6). The lower proportions of young people walking to secondary school, university/TAFE or work are likely to be affected by not all young people in the sample participating in these activities. For example, 30% walked to work, but only 53% are employed (mostly part time), so it is likely that about half of survey respondents who are employed walk to work. It is also likely that many of the 81% of young people who walk to access public transport are in fact travelling to these possibly more distant destinations.



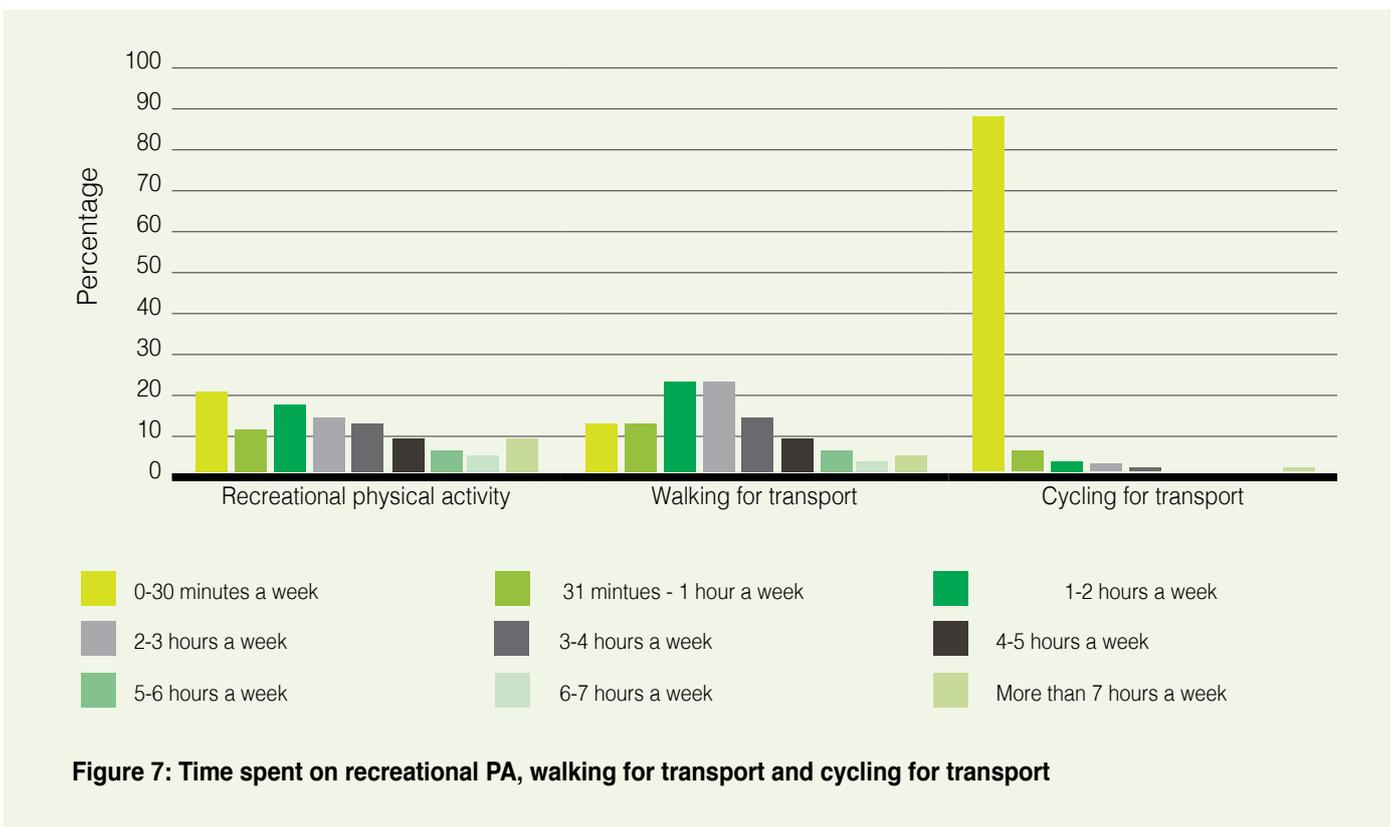
**Figure 6: Walking destinations, percentage of young people**

Many young people are also prepared to walk reasonable distances to get to these destinations, with 42% prepared to walk for approximately 1.1-2km (about 10 – 20 minutes) and a further 40% prepared to walk longer distances.

Young people’s apparent willingness to walk fairly long distances to reach destinations may reflect good physical health and/or a lack of alternative transport options, compared to adults generally.

## 4.5 Time spent on recreational physical activity and active transport

Young people’s time spent on recreational physical activity, walking for transport, and cycling for transport were used to estimate the contribution that walking for transport makes to young people’s overall levels of physical activity<sup>5</sup>. These data indicate that on average, as young people transition from late adolescence (15-17 years old) into young adulthood (18-20 years old), overall physical activity levels decline (from an average 6 hours and 7 minutes a week to 5 hours and 29 minutes a week), and walking for transport shows a small increase (from 2 hours and 27 minutes a week to 2 hours and 41 minutes a week).



**Figure 7: Time spent on recreational PA, walking for transport and cycling for transport**

The contribution of walking for transport to young people’s overall time spent in physical activity increased from 40% for 15-17 year-olds to nearly half (49%) for 18-20 year-olds, due mainly to a decrease in recreational physical activity with age. These findings are consistent with data from other studies of Australian young people, which show that recreational physical activity declines with age, while active transport remains relatively steady (see Section 2.2).

<sup>5</sup> Total time spent on physical activity per week was estimated using the mid-point of each time range category.

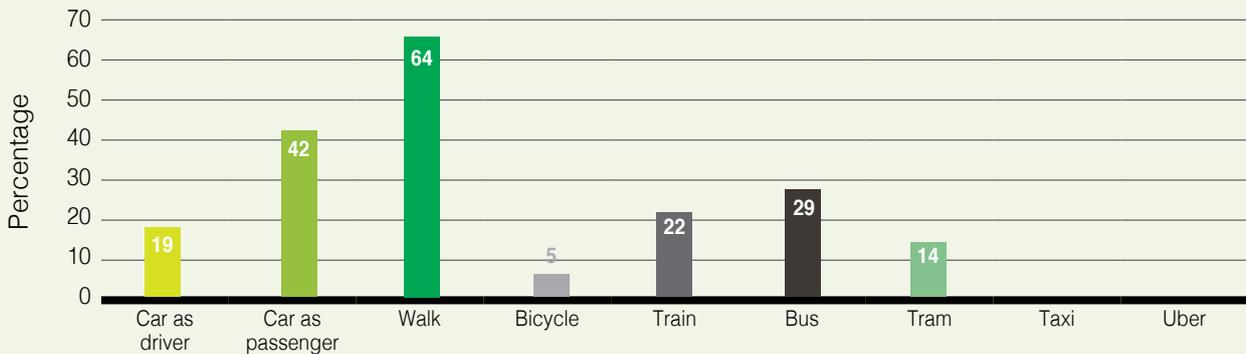
# 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

## 4.6 Frequency of use of travel modes

In order to gain a better understanding of opportunities to increase young people's use of walking for transport, the survey included questions about their use of all travel modes to get to destinations.

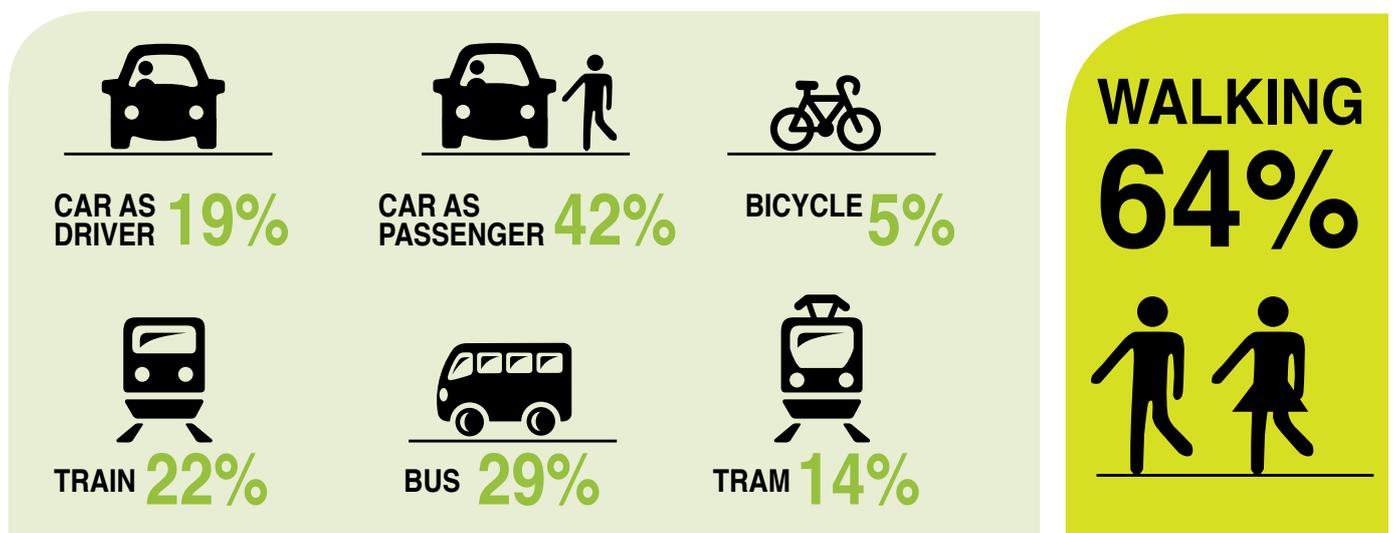
Walking is one of the main methods young people use to travel to places such as school, university, work and shops,<sup>6</sup> with 64% regularly walking to these destinations.

When private vehicle travel (car as passenger and car as driver) and all public transport modes (bus, train and tram) are combined, public transport is the most frequently used travel mode (65%), followed closely by walking (64%), and then private car (61%).



**Figure 8: Frequent use of travel modes (“2 or 3 times a day or more”, plus “Every day or most days”) (% of young people)**

## HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE GET AROUND ON MOST DAYS?



<sup>6</sup>Note that accessing public transport was not mentioned in this question (Q7), though it is possible that some young people included getting to public transport stops in their responses.

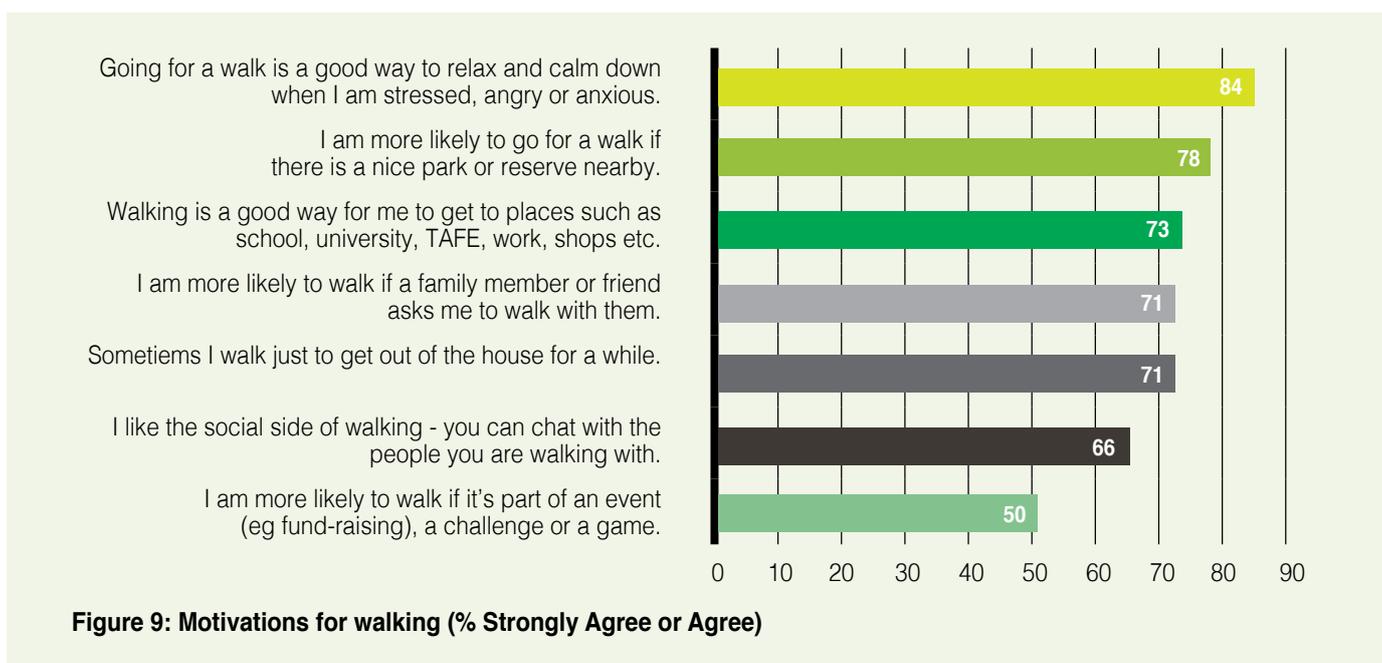
## 4.7 Motivations for walking

The proportions of young people who strongly agreed or agreed with seven potential reasons for walking are shown in Figure 9.

Most items had relatively high levels of agreement, apart from walking as part of an event such as fund-raising, a challenge, or a game (50%). Interestingly, the most popular motivation was to relax and calm down when stressed, angry or anxious (84% agreement). This suggests that walking may play an important role in supporting young people’s mental and emotional health.

The finding that a key motivation for walking is psychological wellbeing helps to explain why access to pleasant, natural, green and attractive public places such as parks and reserves is also an important motivation for walking.

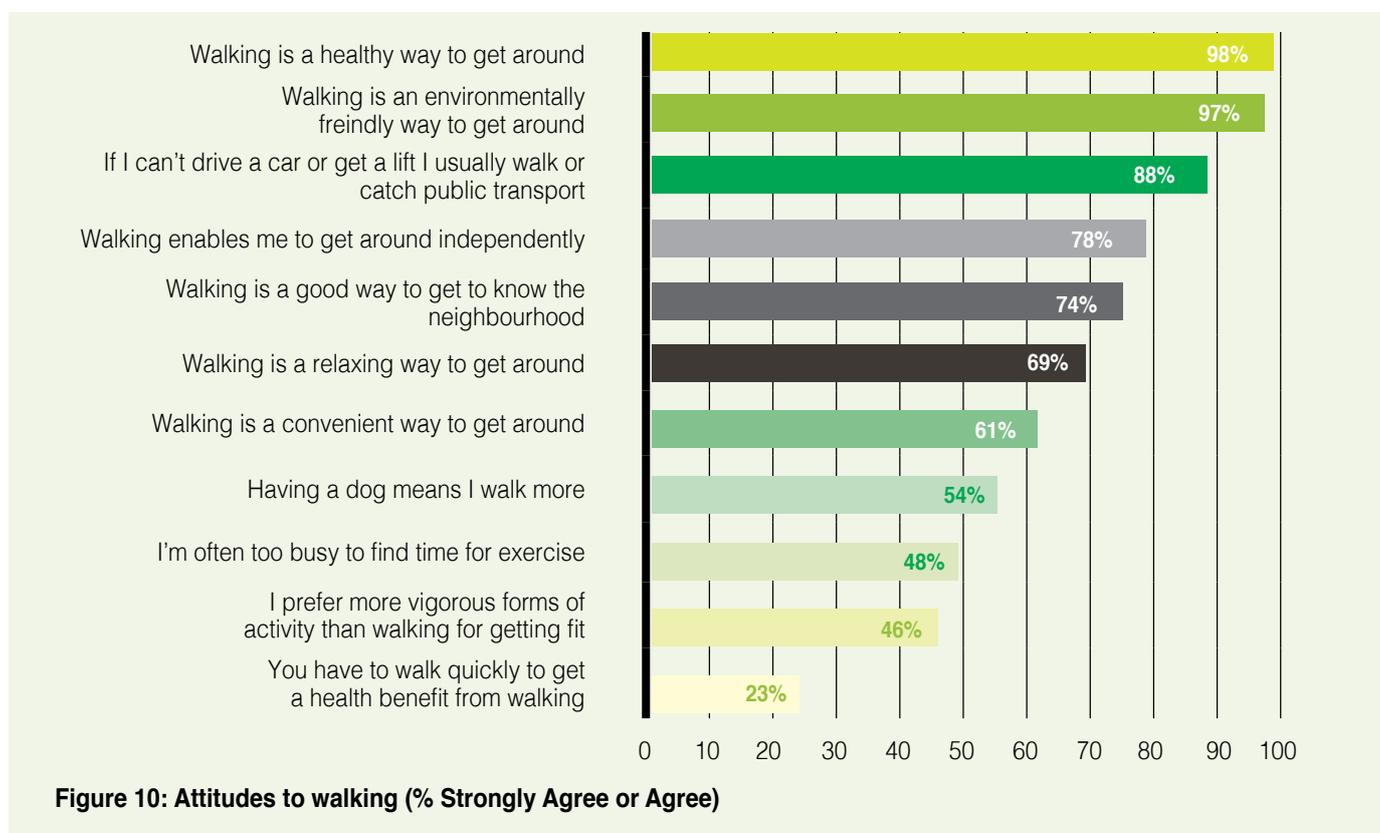
The findings confirm that the wellbeing, utilitarian (ie walking to places) and social aspects of walking are all important to young people, consistent with the research literature and results of the focus group discussions.



## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

### 4.8 Attitudes to walking

Young people's attitudes to walking are generally very positive, with high levels of agreement that walking is healthy, environmentally friendly, enables independent mobility, and represents a good way to get to know the neighbourhood and a relaxing way to get around.



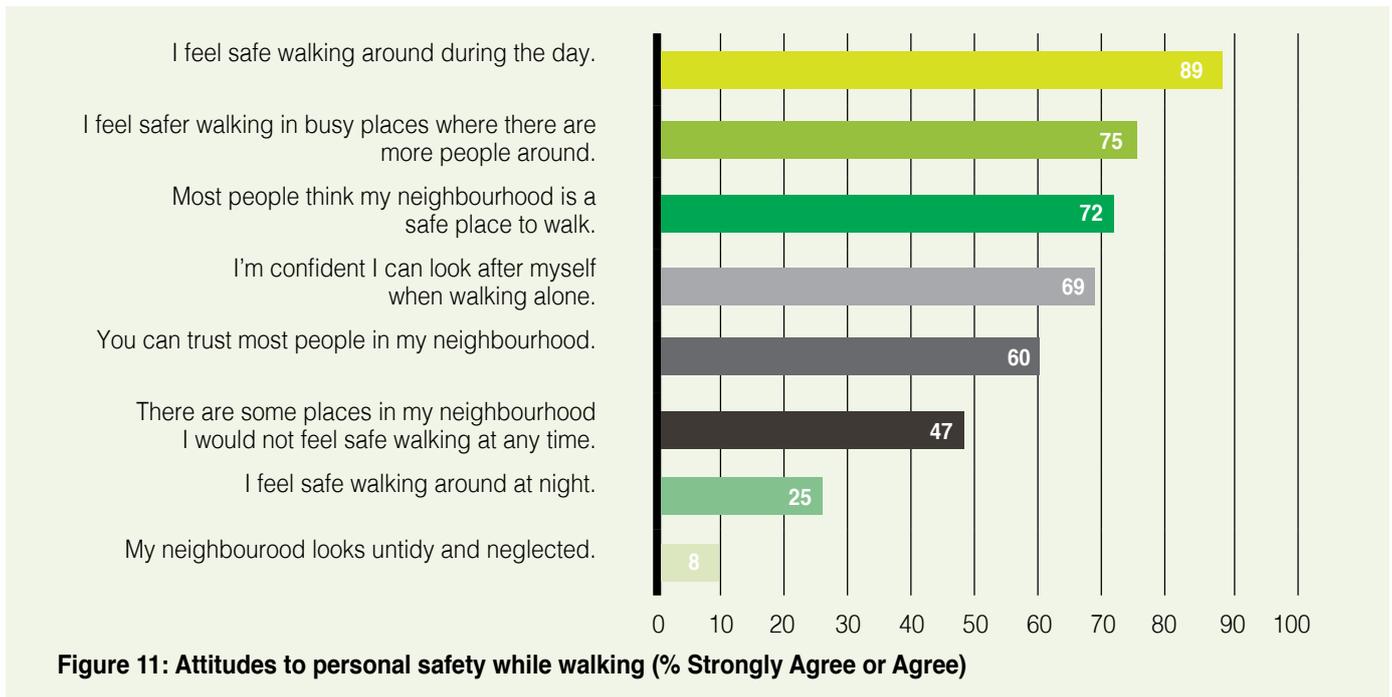
Virtually all respondents recognised the health benefits of walking (98%), and less than a quarter (23%) agreed with the suggestion that you have to walk quickly to get a health benefit from walking. These findings are not consistent with previous, mainly small qualitative studies, which reported that young people do not consider walking to be a sufficiently intense form of physical activity to confer a health benefit (see Section 2.4). However, 46% did state that they preferred more vigorous forms of activity than walking for getting fit.

There was not strong agreement with the statement that “walking is a convenient way to get around.” This may reflect the fact that many young people live in suburban environments designed for driving rather than walking.

“ I’m a girl, and school uniform or just casual dress, whenever I walk along the highway I am constantly honked at and sometimes disgusting men will yell something to me. It’s awful and that makes me feel unsafe and unhappy. ”

## 4.9 Attitudes to personal safety while walking

Concerns about personal safety while walking have been identified in previous research as a constraint on young people’s walking and this was also the case in this study.



While most young people feel safe walking around during the day (89%), only 25% of young people feel safe walking around at night. Young men (54%) are much more likely than young women (15%) to feel safe walking at night. Table 2 outlines the issues where there was a statistically significant difference in responses between genders.

**Table 2: Attitudes to personal safety while walking – results with significant gender difference (Strongly Agree or Agree) (%)**

	Total	Gender	
		Female	Male
I feel safe walking around at night	25	15	54
There are some places in my neighbourhood I would not feel safe walking at any time	47	51	35
I feel safer walking in busy places where there are more people around	75	79	65
I’m confident I can look after myself when walking alone	69	63	89

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

Concerns about walking at night, in unsafe places, and where there are few people around appear not to be alleviated by young people being reasonably confident of their ability to look after themselves when walking alone (63% of females, 89% of males). That is, it appears that many young people can be confident of their ability to look after themselves, whilst still feeling unsafe.

These findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between being safe and feeling safe, and recognising that both are important, and both need to be addressed.

The rather disappointing finding that 40% of young people did not agree that they can trust most people in their neighbourhood is also likely to contribute to safety concerns while walking. However, young people feel safer walking where there are other people around; young women (79%) more so than young men (65%).

### 4.10 Experiences and awareness of threats to safety while walking

There is potential for young people's concerns about personal safety while walking to be influenced by their experiences, observations and communications about threats to safety while walking. Most young people (91%) have heard about someone being threatened or attacked while walking via the media; slightly less through social media (85%); and less again through a friend or relative (61%).

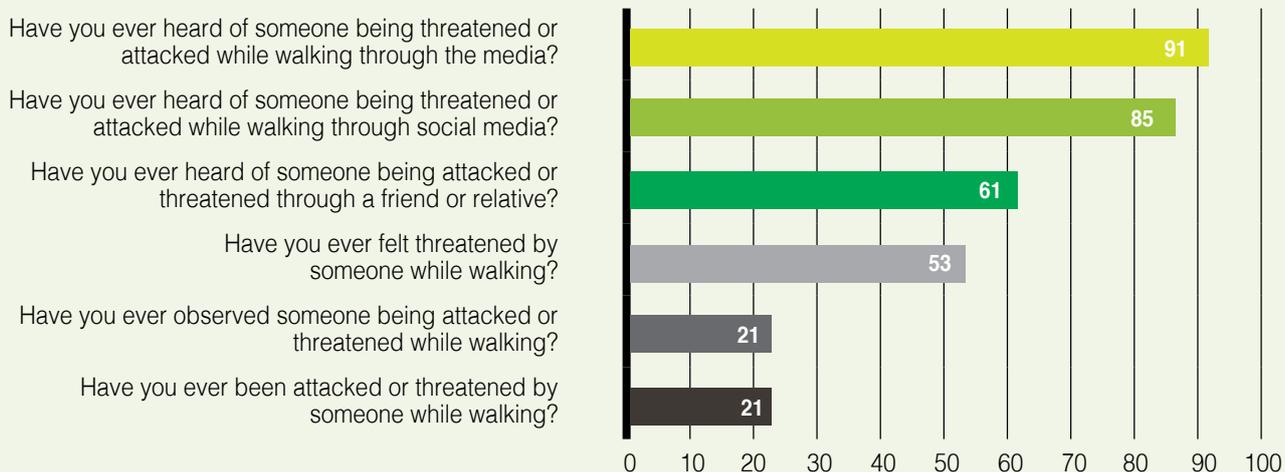


Figure 12: Young people's experiences and awareness of threats to safety while walking (% "Yes")

“ I’m a 15 year old girl and I feel terrified walking around by myself and I never do unless I absolutely have to. I always have to have a friend or family member with me but if no one is available I just don’t go out and I love walking. ”

About one in five young people have been attacked or threatened, or have observed someone being attacked or threatened, while walking. While there was no statistically significant gender difference in young people being attacked or threatened by someone while walking, there were gender differences in all other responses. Young men were significantly more likely than young women to “Have ever observed someone being attacked or threatened while walking”; but young women were significantly more likely than young men to reply “Yes” to the remaining items.

These findings suggest that young women (20%) and young men (22%) have a similar risk of being threatened or attacked while walking, while young men are somewhat more likely to have observed an attack or threat (26% compared to 20% of young women). However young women appear to have heightened awareness and concerns about being subjected to a threat or attack, with 55% having felt threatened by someone while walking, compared to 44% of young men. The risk perception literature identifies a complex array of factors that contribute to heightened risk perceptions, including perceived unpredictability, lack of personal control, vulnerability, and the likelihood of adverse consequences (Fischhoff et al., 2002).

Two hundred and fifty-six young people also responded to an open-ended question asking if they would like to add any comments about personal safety while walking. All responses were read and coded into three themes, two of which were broken down into several sub-themes. This resulted in a total of 506 coded responses, with an average of 2 coded responses for each survey participant who provided a response to this question. The number of times each theme was mentioned, and the percentage of coded responses for each theme and sub-theme are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Young people’s comments about personal safety while walking<sup>7</sup>**

	Theme	Count	Percentage <sup>8</sup>
<b>1</b>	<b>What makes young people feel unsafe while walking?</b>	<b>271<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>54</b>
1.1	General comments about feeling unsafe, anxious, fearful, etc.	77	15
1.2	Walking at night	52	10
1.3	Being female	42	8
1.4	Being harassed	29	6
1.5	Walking alone	27	5
1.6	Vulnerable due to age, appearance, circumstances (gender excluded)	14	3
1.7	Being threatened/assaulted	14	3
<b>2</b>	<b>What makes young people feel safe(er) while walking?</b>	<b>223<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>44</b>
2.1	Remaining alert, vigilant, cautious	36	7
2.2	Adopting safety measures	34	7
2.3	Walking with friends, parents, siblings	32	6
2.4	Safe neighbourhood	26	5
2.5	Good street lighting	24	5
2.6	Carry/use mobile phone	24	5
2.7	Cautious use of headphones	14	3
2.8	Being male	11	2
<b>3</b>	<b>Safety concerns preclude walking</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>7</sup>Sub-themes with a count less than 10 have been excluded to simplify reporting, so adding sub-themes illustrated will not necessarily equate with the total for each theme.

<sup>8</sup>Percentage of all comments about personal safety.

<sup>9</sup>Total of all Theme 1 comments.

<sup>10</sup>Total of all Theme 2 comments.

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

Findings from the analysis present a persuasive, striking picture of many young people (particularly young women) feeling unsafe to move around on foot freely and safely in public places, particularly after dark.

Typical comments included:

*“As a girl while walking by myself or in a group of girls particularly at night we get cat called very often and it’s disgusting and scares me personally.”*

*“As a girl, I feel unsafe and intimidated when walking alone at night, even in my own neighbourhood.”*

*“I think it sucks that women feel the need to be afraid of walking alone.”*

*“At night I feel on guard and that I constantly am looking around (behind me, around corners, etc).”*

*“I feel unsafe walking on my street, despite it being located in a relatively safe area, because there is a lack of street lamps and all I see is a shadow if someone is coming towards me.”*

*“I also get cat called sometimes when walking which is even more intimidating. I’m a 15 year old girl. Men should not be catcalling me but they do.”*

*“I’m a girl, and school uniform or just casual dress, whenever I walk along the highway I am constantly honked at and sometimes disgusting men will yell something to me. It’s awful and that makes me feel unsafe and unhappy.”*

*“Very common to have people call out to you from their cars. Makes you feel like shit and vulnerable.”*

*“My friends and I have often experienced cat-calling incidents and quite disgusting comments and hand gestures while simply trying to go for a walk, which sometimes, particularly at night or in a quiet neighbourhood, can feel quite threatening.”*

*“As a young girl it distresses me when I hear truckers honk their horns at me or yell something disgusting out their windows, ..., but it does ruin walking for me (it also ruins my day if it does happen).”*

*“CAT CALLING SUCKS!! It’s disgusting and makes me feel greatly violated.”*

*“Catcalling is not a compliment.”*

*“I’m a 15 year old girl and I feel terrified walking around by myself and I never do unless I absolutely have to. I always have to have a friend or family member with me but if no one is available I just don’t go out and I love walking.”*

These findings demonstrate the prevalence of intimidating male behaviour (and the implied or actual threat of violence) in public spaces, that can operate to confine young women to domestic and commercial spaces due to the “public” sphere feeling unsafe for them.

This is not only psychologically damaging, but also has implications for physical health and independent mobility as it leads to a reduction in walking (including to access public transport).

Interestingly, while young people would like other people to behave more respectfully and safely around them, many also appear to accept a high degree of personal responsibility for ensuring their safety while walking in public places (ie, remaining vigilant, avoiding walking alone, after dark, or in ‘unsafe’ places, and acquiring and using protective measures) (see Theme 2 in Table 3).

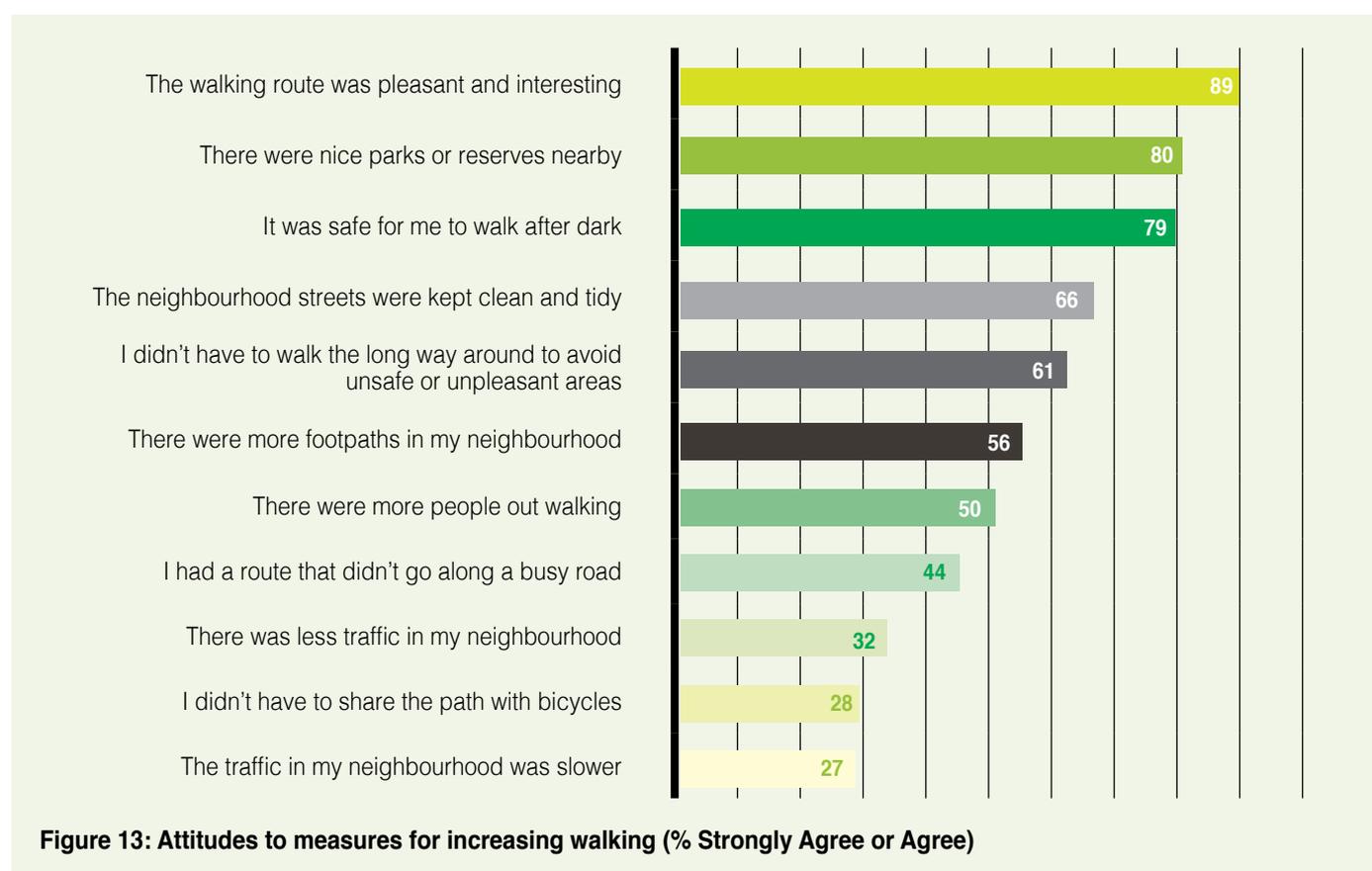
*“ At night I feel on guard and that I constantly am looking around (behind me, around corners, etc). ”*

## “ A footpath would come in handy. ”

### 4.11 Attitudes to measures for increasing walking

Young people's levels of agreement with eleven suggested measures for increasing walking were surveyed in response to the suggestion “I would be more likely to walk more if...”. The results are illustrated in Figure 13.

Items with the highest levels of agreement were aesthetic factors; namely, having pleasant and interesting walking routes (89%) and nice parks or reserves nearby (80%). These environmental characteristics presumably assist young people to relax and calm down when stressed, angry or anxious, and to “get out of the house for a while”, which are key motivations for walking as described in Section 4.7. They can also be expected to make walking for transport more attractive.



Consistent with high levels of concern about walking at night, 78% of young people agreed that making walking safer after dark would encourage them to walk more. The majority of young people (61%) also agreed that it would be helpful if “I didn't have to walk the long way around to avoid unsafe or unpleasant areas”. The usual gender differences were found for issues relating to personal safety.

Fifty-six percent of young people agreed that more footpaths are needed, indicating that more than half of young people do not have consistent access to footpaths. This is more likely to affect young people living in outer suburban and regional areas, indicating unequal access to safe walking infrastructure. Neighbourhoods without universal, well-maintained footpaths, kerb ramps and safe crossings are also likely to be inaccessible for young people (and others) who depend on mobility aids.

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

In response to an open-ended question, 273 young people made a total of 351 suggestions for improving walking conditions in their community. These were categorised according to six themes and thirteen sub-themes. The number of times each theme was mentioned, and the percentage of coded responses for each theme and sub-theme are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Young people's suggestions for improving walking conditions in the community**

	Theme	Count <sup>11</sup>	Percentage of all responses
<b>1</b>	<b>Provide/improve walking infrastructure and facilities</b>	<b>253<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>72</b>
1.1	Provide footpaths and walking trails	62	18
1.2	Improve street/path/park lighting	57	16
1.3	Provide/improve road crossings for pedestrians	41	12
1.4	Provide/improve places to walk	27	8
1.5	Improve footpath maintenance	26	7
1.6	Make walking routes and destinations pleasant, attractive, green, interesting	20	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Improve traffic safety/driver behaviour</b>	<b>51<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>15</b>
2.1	Improve driver education/awareness of pedestrian safety	16	5
2.2	Increased policing of dangerous driver behaviours	16	5
2.3	Ensure drivers give way to pedestrians when required by law	11	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Improve personal safety</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Establish clean, tidy, well-maintained neighbourhoods</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>

The majority of responses centred on the provision of good walking infrastructure that is safe, pleasant and well-maintained. Well-lit footpaths, trails and walking spaces were particularly important, reflecting young people's concerns about walking after dark. Examples of comments include:

*"A footpath would come in handy."*

*"More pedestrian crossings, newer/wider footpaths."*

*"More stop signs at roundabouts so that drivers stop to allow pedestrians to cross."*

*"More zebra crossings with flashing lights to emphasise its existence to oblivious drivers."*

*"More streetlights, the areas in between lights are very dark and it's almost impossible to see anything ahead."*

*"As a person that walks a lot, it would be useful to have more alternate short cut routes dedicated to Bikes and pedestrians, so I and others can get places more efficiently."*

**“ More pedestrian crossings, newer/wider footpaths. ”**

<sup>11</sup> Sub-themes with a count less than 10 have been excluded to simplify reporting, so adding sub-themes illustrated will not necessarily equate with the total for each theme.

<sup>12</sup> Total of all Theme 1 comments.

<sup>13</sup> Total of all Theme 2 comments.

## “ Stricter policing of drivers when breaking pedestrian related road rules. ”

Improving traffic safety for pedestrians was also considered important, with many young people expressing frustration at risky driver behaviour. Examples of comments include:

*“Reduce the speed limits on roads and enforce stricter penalties on drivers who get stuck in an intersection trying to turn right and subsequently endanger my life when they don't give way to me.”*

*“Safe crossings. Cars allowed to go through a crossing when it is green for pedestrians is not right and I often have to jump out of the way of cars walking to school.”*

*“Slip lanes are very dangerous at my local highway intersection - not many cars slow down very well before a slip lane.”*

*“I'm tired of people breaking road rules and nearly hitting me when I'm walking out and about or speeding up so I have to run out of the way, 80% of the time this happens when I have my pram with me.”*

*“Maybe new road learning test where drivers learn more about pedestrians.”*

*“Red light cameras at ped crossings.”*

*“Stricter policing of drivers when breaking pedestrian-related road rules.”*

*“TAC style campaigns to raise awareness about pedestrians.”*

### 4.12 Young people's attitudes to driver-pedestrian interactions

Young people's attitudes to driver-pedestrian interactions were explored by asking for their level of agreement with three items related to driver-pedestrian interactions.

About half of the young people agreed that they can depend on drivers to obey the road rules (53%), give way to pedestrians when required (51%) and keep a careful eye out for pedestrians (45%). This indicates that many young people feel that they cannot rely on drivers to interact safely with pedestrians, which is consistent with open-ended suggestions in Section 4.11 above for improving walking conditions in the community by improving traffic safety/driver behaviour.

### 4.13 Young people's driver's license status and vehicle ownership

Forty-five percent of young people held a learner's permit; with 21% having P-plates and 1% a full license. Thirty-four percent had no form of driving license. There were no significant differences in license-holding for young women and young men. However, there was the expected difference in license-holding by age, with just over half of young people of driver's license age (18 – 20 years) having either a probationary (51%) or full license (2%). This is similar to the rate of license-holding among young people in Victoria aged 18-21 years (59%) (Wundersitz et al., 2015).

Twenty-three percent of survey participants owned a motor vehicle, with a non-significant difference between females (22%) and males (28%); but the expected difference between 15 – 17 year-olds (11%) and 18 – 20 year-olds (41%).

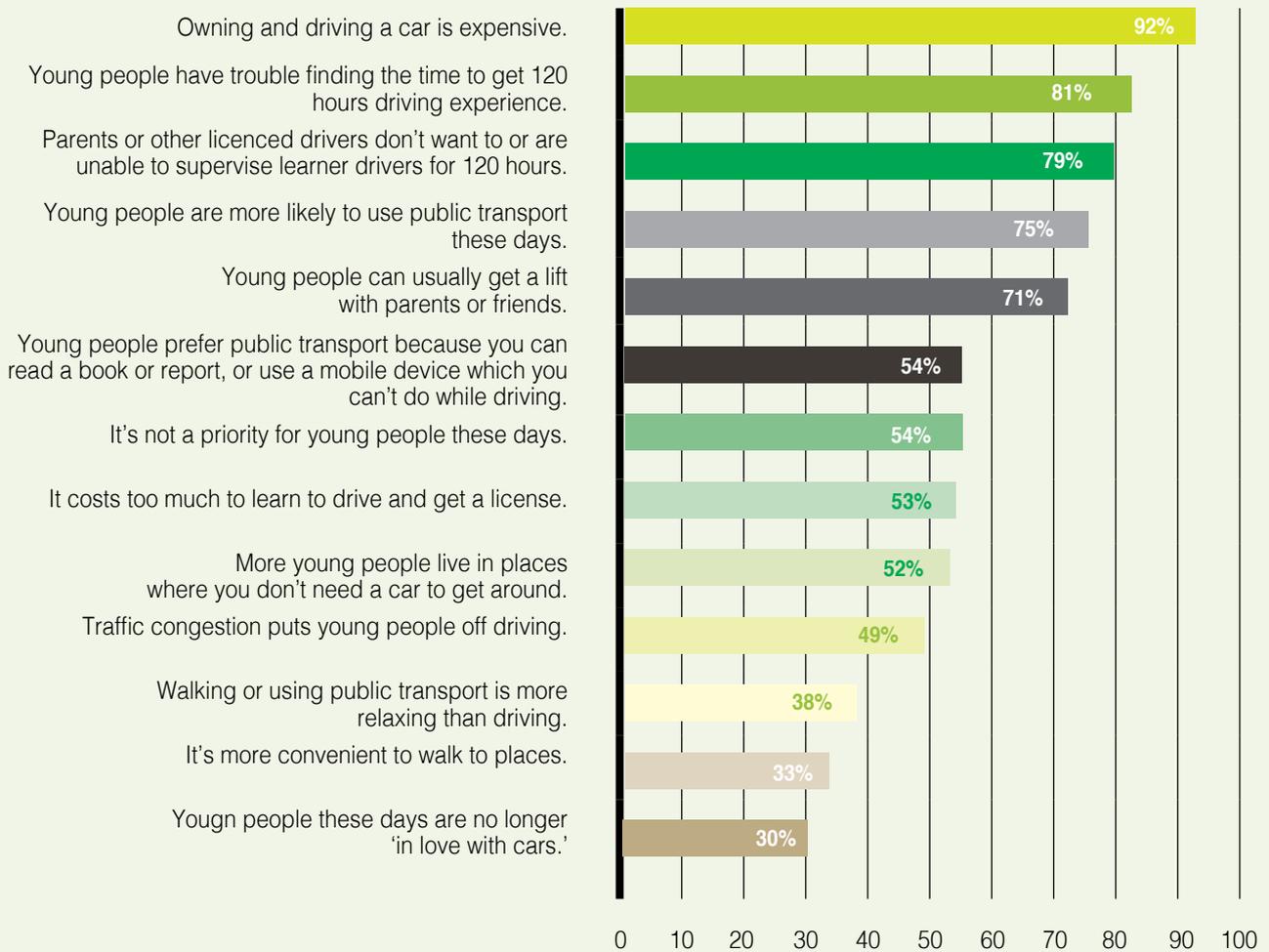
The survey also included questions exploring young people's attitudes to obtaining a driver's license and driving a motor vehicle. The first question was:

*“The number of 18-year-olds in Victoria who have a driver's license has been declining for several years. Do you think any of the following factors are contributing to this trend?”*

Figure 14 illustrates that most young people (92%) agreed that owning and driving a car is expensive; followed by young people having trouble finding the time to get 120 hours driving experience (81%); and parents or other licenced drivers not wishing to, or unable to supervise learner drivers for 120 hours (79%).

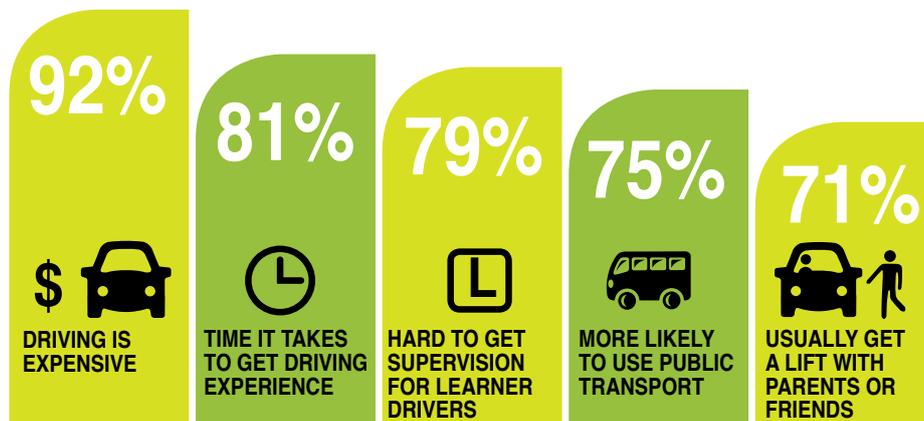
“ Safe crossings. Cars allowed to go through a crossing when it is green for pedestrians is not right and I often have to jump out of the way of cars walking to school. ”

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)



**Figure 14: Young people's attitudes to obtaining a driver's license (% Strongly agree or Agree)**

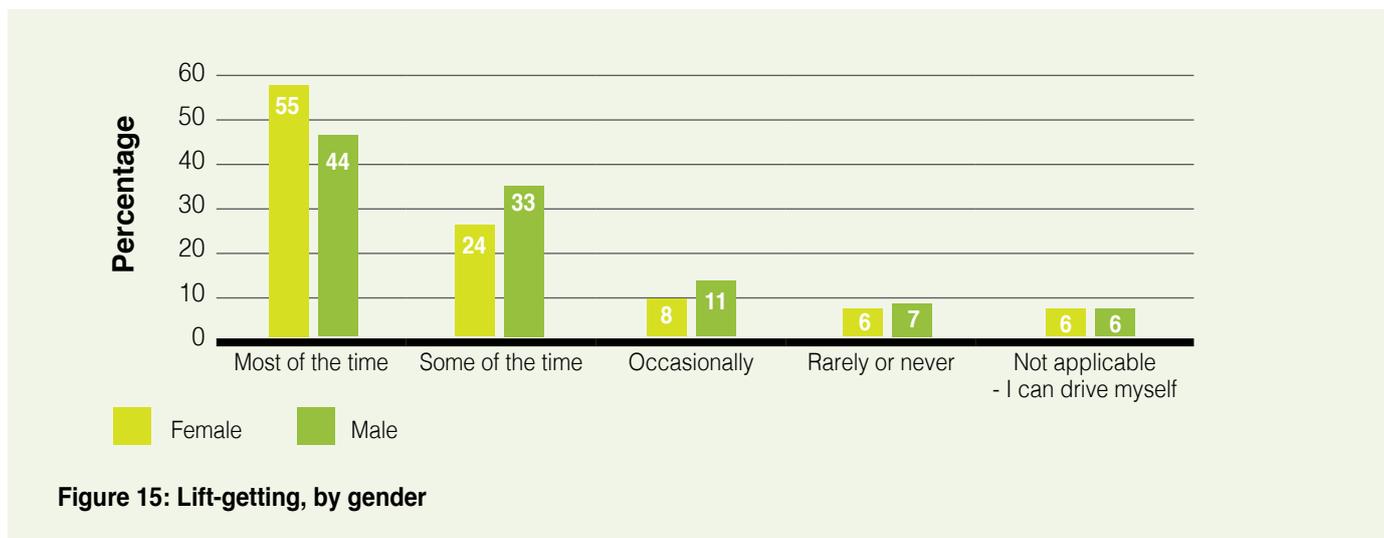
# WHY ARE FEWER YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING A DRIVERS LICENCE?



A number of other factors had lower levels of agreement, though collectively they are likely to contribute to the cost and effort of obtaining a license being seen as not worth the effort if alternatives to driving are available and in some ways more appealing.

Somewhat surprisingly, there was an overall pattern of young women tending to view license-holding and driving a car more positively than young men; perceiving more constraints on obtaining a driver's licence, and viewing alternatives to car travel more negatively than young men. These rather unexpected gender differences may reflect young women being more dependent on driving for their mobility due to their high levels of concerns about walking alone and after dark.

License-holding decisions occur within the context of many young people having access to alternative methods of travel in the form of public transport (including living in places where you don't need a car to get around), and/or obtaining a lift from parents or friends. The majority of young people are able to get a lift in a car from parents or another adult in the household either most of the time or some of the time (Figure 15), with significantly more young women than young men able to get a lift most of the time. This difference appears to reflect greater independent mobility among young men (ie walking or using public transport), probably due to higher levels of concern about young women walking at night.



**Figure 15: Lift-getting, by gender**

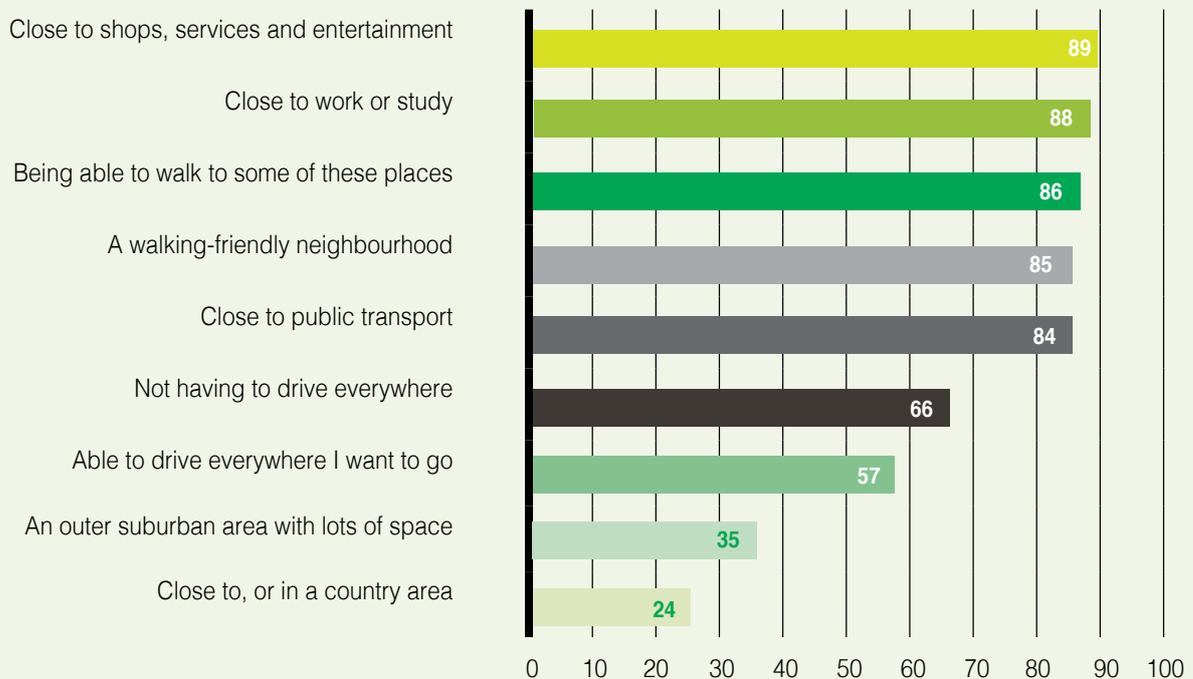
The fourth most frequently mentioned theme was that of driving (and learning to drive) perceived as being dangerous, unpleasant, or stressful. Young people commented that traffic conditions in urban areas created anxiety and insecurity, and engendered a lack of confidence in their ability to keep themselves and other road users safe while they are driving. These comments included difficult, stressful traffic conditions; observing dangerous driving while on the roads; L and P drivers experiencing harassment and impatience from licensed drivers; congestion; way-finding under pressure (eg navigating into the correct lane, poor directions, other drivers failing to give way); media reports of traffic casualties; and media and public attention on "dangerous young drivers".

This constraint on young people obtaining their driver's license appears not to have been identified in previous research into delayed license-holding in Australia. It is interesting because it challenges current stereotypical perceptions of dangerous, reckless, risk-taking young drivers, instead raising questions about the impacts of poor driving behaviour in the wider community on new generations of young drivers.

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

### 4.14 Young people's preferences for where they would like to live in the future

In the context of current debates about planning for Melbourne's rapidly growing population, young people were asked for their views about the type of neighbourhood they would like to live in. The vast majority of young people considered it important to be close to shops, services and entertainment; work or study; and public transport. There were also high levels of support for being able to walk to these destinations and for a walking-friendly neighbourhood in general (Figure 16).



**Figure 16: "Where would you like to live?" (% Very Important or Important)**

Two-thirds of young people would like to live in a neighbourhood where they didn't have to "drive everywhere", though more than half (57%) still wanted to have the option of being able to drive everywhere they want to go.

At first glance, some of these preferences might appear to be inconsistent, but findings from a follow-up open-ended question exploring young people's views on what comprises a liveable community indicate that young people prefer to have access to travel mode choices (ie walking, public transport, driving) depending on the nature of specific trips (particularly distance, and time of day/night).

Fewer young people expressed a preference for living in an outer suburban (35%) or country area (24%).

There were few gender differences in neighbourhood preferences, with the exception of more young women considering it important to live in a walking-friendly neighbourhood.

In the final content-related question, young people were invited to respond to the open-ended, sentence-completion question "I think a liveable community is one where....". In response to this question, 713 young people shared their perceptions of a liveable community, generating a total of 1,287 coded responses.

“ It is safe and efficient and easy to get around by walking and public transport. ”

The 16 main emergent themes, the number of times each theme was mentioned, and the percentage of coded responses for each theme are summarised in Table 5 and discussed below. Many young people gave responses across more than one theme, with an average of 1.8 coded responses per survey participant who provided a response to this question.

**Table 5: Characteristics of a liveable community**

	Theme	Brief description	Count	Percentage of all responses <sup>14</sup>
1	A safe community	Is safe, feels safe, safe after dark, safe in all public places, safe to walk, safe to use public transport, safe for all (gender, age, ethnicity), low crime rate.	353	27
2	A community with good, accessible, affordable facilities and services	Good access to shops, restaurants, entertainment, medical facilities, recreational facilities, education, employment.	218	17
3	A friendly, connected community	People are friendly, kind, caring, helpful, considerate, welcoming, socially connected, engaged in community life, look out for one another.	190	15
4	A pleasant, green, natural environment	Access to parks, nature, open spaces, reserves, playgrounds, attractive scenery, places to roam (including in high density urban areas).	99	8
5	A clean, tidy, well-maintained community	A clean, tidy, well-maintained community.	72	6
6	Accessible and affordable public transport	Accessible and affordable public transport.	70	5
7	An inclusive community	A diverse, tolerant, inclusive, respectful community where all people live in peace and harmony.	48	4
8	Good active transport infrastructure and access to places	Safe, accessible walking (mainly) and cycling infrastructure.	44	3
9	A range of mobility options	Access to a range of mobility options, travel mode choice and opportunities, easy to get around.	37	3
10	A sustainable, environmentally friendly community	A sustainable, environmentally friendly community.	26	2
11	A vibrant, interesting community	Lots of things happening, interesting activities and places, entertainment, things to do.	26	2
12	A happy community	People are happy, comfortable, have a sense of wellbeing.	25	2
13	A trusting community	People are both trusting of others, and can be trusted themselves.	21	2
14	Freedom, independence, privacy	People can exercise their freedom, independence and privacy.	19	1
15	Access to education	Access to schools, education.	15	1
16	Affordable housing	Affordable housing, cost of living.	10	1

<sup>14</sup>Percentage of the total number of coded responses for this question (n = 1287).

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

The most frequently mentioned theme (n = 353, 27% of responses and 50% of young people who responded to this question) referred to being and feeling safe in the community. While most young people did not refer specifically to personal safety or traffic safety, the context of their comments indicates that most were referring to personal safety.

Many comments referred to “feeling safe”, indicating that it is likely that the perception that places, times or activities are safe may be as important as, or more important than actual rates of crime or threatening incidents (also see Section 4.10) Similar distinctions between being safe and feeling safe (with both being important influences on behaviour) were reported in focus group discussions with children and young people undertaken for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse (Moore et al., 2015).

“Safety” comments were also frequently linked to the three themes of: a friendly, connected community (Theme 3); an inclusive community (Theme 7); and a trusting community (Theme 13). This suggests that these three elements of a liveable community also make the community safe and perceived to be safe. Examples of Theme 1 comments on what makes a liveable community include:

*“People don’t feel afraid walking after dark.”*

*“Kids can go out by themselves and be safe.”*

*“You can feel safe to walk day and night, and if you were in trouble you feel safe enough in your own local community to go knock on a stranger’s door and they will help you.”*

*“You aren’t assaulted for simply being outdoors at the wrong time of the day.”*

*“People feel safe at any time of the day and can walk freely without fear of being attacked, abused or run over.”*

*“No one is afraid to go outside without the constant fear of being followed or threatened.”*

*“You don’t have to sort [of worry] about the safety of you or your kids if they want to play in your front yard or go for a walk or ride around the block.”*

*“I think a liveable community is one where an adolescent is safe to roam around without a parent constantly worrying and stopping them from doing things.”*

The second most frequently mentioned response (n = 218) referred to a liveable community being one where young people are able to access good facilities, services, shops, restaurants, entertainment, medical facilities, recreational facilities, education, and employment. However, many young people’s comments indicated that they didn’t necessarily wish to live in high-rise areas, but rather, to be able to access services from residential areas that were perceived to be pleasant, green, peaceful and private (see Theme 4).

Many young people indicated that a liveable community is one where these services, facilities and activities can be accessed by walking, cycling or public transport, rather than requiring car travel.

Examples of these comments include:

*“... neighbourhood with a nice range of parks, open/ bushland/park etc spaces, but can still commute to the city and locally have everything you need in terms of shops, restaurants etc.”*

*“Everything is accessible without having to drive, either within walking distance or lots of public transport.”*

*“... accessible to places I want to visit without relying on my parents to drive me there.”*

The third most frequently mentioned theme (n = 190) referred to a liveable community being one where people are friendly, kind, caring, helpful, considerate, welcoming, socially connected, engaged in community life, and look out for one another.

Accordingly, a liveable community is one where:

*“Everyone is friendly and looks out for each other.”*

*“There is a sense of community, people are out and about socialising, supporting local business, spending time with family and being outdoors.”*

*“Everybody knows everybody, and when the holidays come around the kiddos are all out having a good time with each other cos their parents know it’s safe.”*

*“People feel like the place they live is actually a community, where you know people as you walk down the street and feel good to say hello to them etc.”*

“ I think a liveable community is one where an adolescent is safe to roam around without a parent constantly worrying and stopping them from doing things.”

Many young people made the connection between friendly, caring community members and feeling safe. These attributes appear to act as 'cues' to young people that are used to assess whether or not public spaces are safe for them to move in and around.

The fourth most frequently mentioned theme (n = 99) referred to a liveable community being one with access to parks, nature, open spaces, reserves, playgrounds, attractive scenery and places to roam and relax. While many young people appeared to associate these characteristics with low-to-medium density suburban or rural living, a few young people commented that pleasant, green, natural environments can also be provided within higher density urban areas.

Examples of comments include:

*“The surrounding area maintains a good amount of greenery (trees, greens, parks, reserves, etc.) and creates a nice, relaxed environment that people feel they can come to to unwind, hangout, socialise, think, laze around, etc.”*

*“There is ample green space. With growing urban density and an increasing number of high-rise buildings, this has become vital. I believe it is the key to our positive wellbeing in this stress-stricken world.”*

*“There is lots of greenery and you can feel like you're out in the bush without being isolated.”*

Somewhat related to the above theme of a pleasant, green, natural environment is the perception of a liveable community being one that is clean, tidy and well-maintained (n = 72). These characteristics also appear to contribute to young people's feelings of safety in public places, as young people tended to link these themes in their responses.

A number of young people (n = 70) described a liveable community as one that has good access to public transport.

Examples of comments include:

*“It is safe and efficient and easy to get around by walking and public transport.”*

*“Shops, restaurants and conveniences are close, with options for public transport.”*

A number of young people stated that a liveable community is one that is inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of diversity, and where all people live in peace and harmony (n = 48). Examples include:

*“Where people don't hate each other for absolutely no reason.”*

*“All people in the community are included and feel safe and welcome.”*

*“People, especially women and people of color, feel consistently safe with all people, at all places and during all times of the day.”*

*“You can walk without being judged, people say hi back to you and don't look at you bad.”*

*“The less fortunate have access to the help they need.”*

*“There is a kind community of people with excellent accessibility for people with disabilities.”*

Forty-four young people stated that a liveable community is one that provides young people with independent mobility through good active transport infrastructure. Most references were to good walking infrastructure, with cycling infrastructure mentioned occasionally. Examples of comments include:

*“One where footpaths are in good condition so all ages can walk safely.”*

Thirty-seven young people stated that a liveable community is one that provides young people with access to a range of mobility options that make it easier for them to get around independently, especially for those who do not or cannot drive a car or get a lift from family or friends.

Examples of comments include:

*“There is a balance between different modes of transport, with emphasis on public transport and walking/cycling options.”*

*“People are able to travel freely and in ways in which they prefer without fear or scrutiny; you aren't seen as lesser for not having a licence or walking.”*

## 4 Online survey of young people (15-20 years old) in Victoria (cont.)

Twenty-six young people stated that a liveable community is one that is sustainable and where the environment is protected.

A number of young people (n = 26) stated that a liveable community is one that is vibrant and interesting, with lots of things happening, entertainment, and things to do. Examples of comments include:

*"It's crowded and has a street vibe to it. Urban with everything nearby."*

*"PARTY AND ENTERTAINMENT WOOOOOO."*

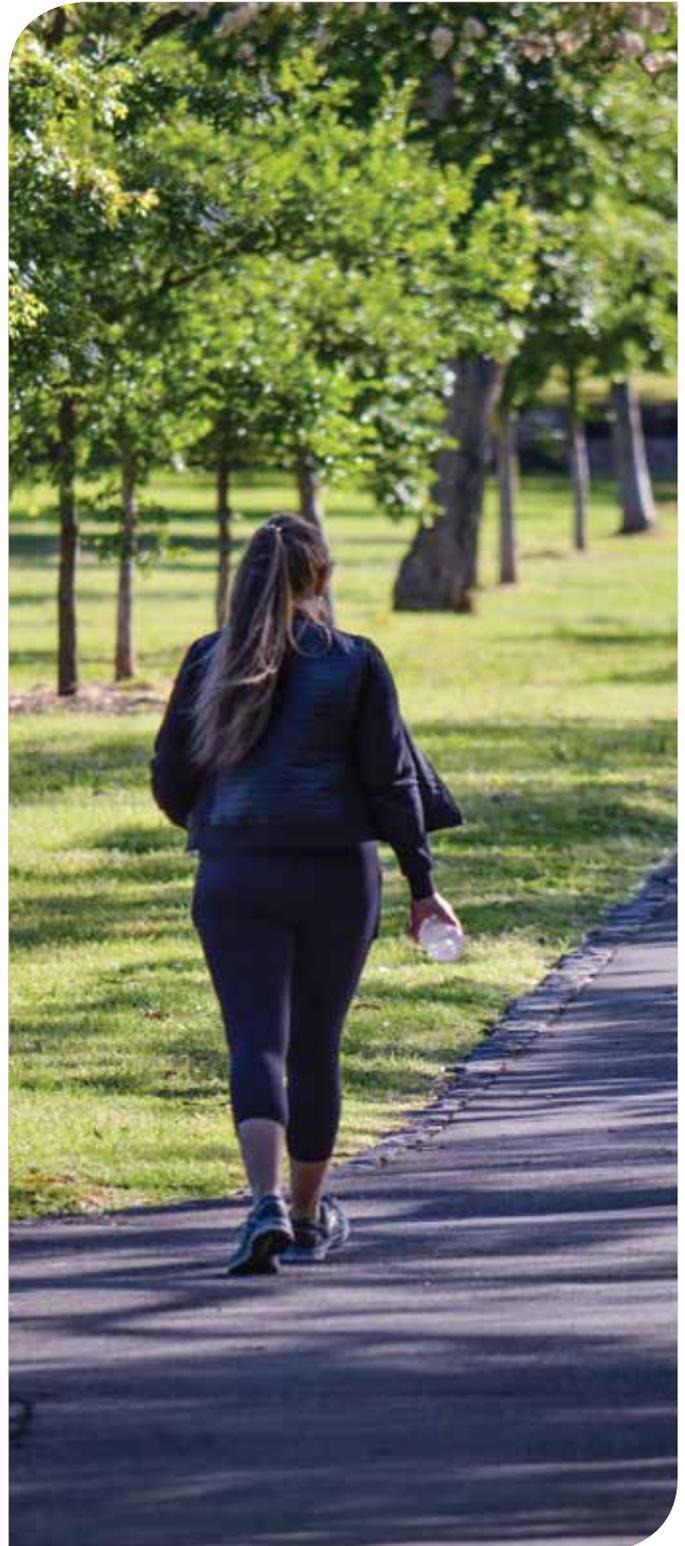
Twenty-five young people stated that a liveable community is one where people are happy, comfortable and have a sense of wellbeing.

*"People are happy, talking to each other, able to get outside and enjoy their neighbourhood."*

A number of young people (n = 21) stated that a liveable community is one where people are both trusting of others, and can be trusted themselves.

*"No one trusts anyone anymore and it's sad to see. We need to learn to establish more trust in our neighbours and local communities and learn to be kinder when out - even somewhere as simple as the local shops."*

**“ People are happy, talking to each other, able to get outside and enjoy their neighbourhood. ”**



# WHAT KIND OF PLACE DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE IN?



CLOSE TO SHOPS



CLOSE TO WORK



WALKING-FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD



CLOSE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT



ABLE TO DRIVE EVERYWHERE



OUTER SUBURBAN AREA WITH LOTS OF SPACE



# 5 Study conclusions

The following study conclusions are based on key findings from the three phases of the study.

## 5.1 The role of walking for young people

Independent mobility is important to young people as they transition from predominantly parent-supervised activities as children to more independent lifestyles as young adults. This transition is associated with young people participating in a wider range of activities in more diverse locations associated with education, work, socialising, and accessing shops and services. Walking, often combined with public transport, provides a critical opportunity for young people to lead independent lives. Suburban environments that are difficult to walk around or to use public transport leave many young people reliant on parents or others to drive them, or on obtaining a driver's license and motor vehicle themselves.

Survey respondents' attitudes to walking were generally very positive, with high levels of agreement that walking is healthy, environmentally friendly, enables independent mobility, and represents a good way to get to know the neighbourhood and a relaxing way to get around.

Findings from this study and related research suggest that both recreational and transport walking are largely functional for young people (ie used as a means to an end), though the 'functions' vary.

Walking for recreation is generally not undertaken specifically for health and fitness, though health is considered a by-product of walking. Rather, the objective is to relax, socialise, listen to music and take personal time out (most are still living with parents). This suggests that walking may be particularly important for young people's mental and emotional health.

The number of young people in the focus group discussions reporting walking with their parents and other relatives was interesting, given research indicating that many adolescents do not wish to be seen playing sports and games with their parents (Carlin et al., 2015). It appears that walking with parents and relatives may be more acceptable to young people. Walking may also be an opportunity for parents to remain connected with their increasingly independent children.

Walking for transport, on the other hand, provides access to destinations such as school, work, university, entertainment, shops and services, and friends' houses.

Many young people are prepared to walk reasonable distances to get to destinations, with 82% of young people prepared to walk for 10-20 minutes or more, and 40% prepared to walk 20-40 minutes or more.

It is also important to note that young people's walking frequently involves walking to access public transport and in many instances walking after dark, often in suburban residential areas with poor lighting. Safety concerns associated with these conditions are a major barrier to walking, as described below.

The contribution of walking for transport to young people's overall levels of physical activity is substantial, increasing from 40% of exercise time for 15-17 year-olds to 49% for 18-20 year-olds, due mainly to a decrease in other forms of physical activity with age. Walking for transport as a part of daily life therefore provides an opportunity for young people to remain active into adulthood, as a counter to the decline in recreational physical activity that occurs with age (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

The incidental nature of physical activity in the form of walking for transport can assist in "nudging" (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) otherwise relatively inactive population groups such as young women, "non-sporty" young people, and disadvantaged young people into becoming more physically active by creating supportive environments that "make the healthy choice the easy choice" (Ewles and Simnett, 2005). Walking for transport therefore improves the health of young people, and contributes to reducing inequalities in physical activity participation, and consequently, inequalities in health (Turrell et al., 2006).

“ As a young girl it distresses me when I hear truckers honk their horns at me or yell something disgusting out their windows... but it does ruin walking for me (it also ruins my day if it does happen). ”

## 5.2 Personal safety

One of the key obstacles to young people walking is concern about personal safety when moving around in public places. This concern is substantially greater for young women than young men, and is of particular concern to young women when walking alone, after dark, and in some locations. Young people's concerns about personal safety appear to be influenced by mass media, social media, parents and friends. However concerns are also informed by their personal experience and observation, which for many young women includes anti-social behaviour and unkempt neighbourhoods or places.

Behaviours that some men may perceive to be relatively harmless (eg catcalling, verbal harassment) are in fact harmful to young women. They are commonly distressing incidents of sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and threatening behaviour that create fear and anxiety, and restrict young women's independent mobility. These forms of harassment of young women are not permitted in organisational and institutional settings, and neither should they be tolerated when directed at young women moving around in public places.

The rather disappointing finding that 40% of young people did not agree they can trust most people in their neighbourhood is also likely to contribute to safety concerns while walking.

It appears that some young people's preferences for walking or using public transport over car travel are often overridden by concerns about personal safety, particularly after dark and for young women. For these young people, car use may be seen as the only safe travel option. This might help to explain the rather surprising survey findings that, on some measures, young women appeared to have more positive attitudes to cars and driving than young men.

Concerns about walking at night appear not to be substantially alleviated by most young people being confident of their ability to look after themselves when walking alone. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between being safe and feeling safe, and recognising that both are important. These findings also highlight the limitations of expecting (and educating) young people to ensure their personal safety through their own agency, when environments and other people play a major role in actual and perceived safety.

The 'safety measure' of young women avoiding walking alone in public places after dark restricts young women's independent mobility and participation in public life; is detrimental to their physical and mental health; is discriminatory in that it is less likely to be required of young men; and can lead to victim-blaming of young women who are perceived to "choose to expose themselves to danger".

Young people moving around by foot should not have to restrict their movements or be constantly vigilant to possible threats.

In the words of one young woman:

*"It's wrong how we cannot feel safe."*

“ No one trusts anyone anymore and it's sad to see. We need to learn to establish more trust in our neighbours and local communities and learn to be kinder when out – even somewhere as simple as the local shops. ”

# 5 Study conclusions (cont.)

## 5.3 Road safety

While less of a concern and constraint on walking than personal safety, young people's responses to an open-ended question about improving walking conditions in their community indicated that improving traffic safety for pedestrians was also considered important. Many young people expressed frustration at risky driver behaviour, which is often perceived to receive low priority in terms of road infrastructure (eg slip-lanes and roundabouts that are designed to improve vehicle flow, but can be dangerous for pedestrians), driver education and policing of driver behaviour.

About half of young people expressed concerns about not being able to depend on drivers to obey the road rules, including not giving way at pedestrian crossings, and when turning left or right at intersections.

The issue of personal skills and personal responsibility for safety is also relevant here, as most young people have been taught by parents, in schools and in the wider community that they must walk carefully, safely and defensively; anticipating driver errors (including failure to give way to pedestrians when required); and avoiding making "one false move" (Hillman, 1993).

Australia's National Road Safety Strategy is based on establishing a Safe System framework of safe roads, safe road users, safe speeds, and safe vehicles that are 'forgiving' of the occasional mistakes made by road users. However, currently Australia's road safety strategy is more forgiving of driver mistakes than pedestrian mistakes, with a recent review of the strategy recommending a greater focus on the safety of vulnerable road users including pedestrians (Lydon et al., 2015; Bailey and Woolley, 2017).

## 5.4 Young people and driving

Creating opportunities for walking for transport requires an understanding of young people's access to car travel as an alternative to walking. The 88% of young people who agree that they usually walk or catch public transport if they can't drive a car or get a lift confirms the well-established inverse relationship between access to a motor vehicle and use of active transport, including for young people (Steinbach et al., 2012).

Evidence suggests that driving is being delayed – while 71% of 18-21 year-old Victorians held a driver's license in 2001, this declined to 59% in 2014.

The survey results indicate that delayed license-holding, car ownership and use are primarily influenced by the high costs associated with owning and driving a car, and the requirement for 120 hours of supervised driving for learner drivers, which was reportedly difficult for both young people and parents.

Some young people also delay obtaining a driver's license because driving (and learning to drive) is perceived as being dangerous, unpleasant, or stressful.

Delayed license-holding and car ownership may not fully translate into increased use of non-motorised transport modes, because it is common for young people to get a lift in a car from family or friends. About half of survey respondents said they were able to get a lift most of the time. Poor access to public transport and good walking infrastructure, particularly in outer suburban and regional areas, also appears to favour license-holding and lift-getting.

Despite their delayed license-holding, most young people are not 'anti-car'; with a number of comments referring to situations where cars are considered to be essential, particularly in country areas and for cross-suburban trips that are too far to walk and too slow to use public transport. However, young people favour travel mode choice (ie based on trip purpose, distance, time and place) rather than being dependent on "driving everywhere".

The study findings also indicate that young people are highly sensitive to price in transport decision making, which is to be expected given their typically low incomes. This confirms the importance of providing subsidised or free public transport for students.

From a transport management perspective, deferred licensing and vehicle ownership has potential for reducing traffic, with 'congestion-busting' impacts. However this potential may not be realised if viable alternatives to car travel are not available.

“ I like it, but I still need the motivation to do it. I like walking but I’d never think to do it, unless I needed to get somewhere. Like when I have to travel to places. When I do it I say, ‘Yeah, this isn’t too bad.’ ”

## 5.5 What kind of programs and interventions would support more young people walking more often?

The findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between young people’s motivations for, and attitudes to, planned forms of physical activity (ie for health and fitness) and physical activity (such as walking) undertaken principally for other purposes such as to improve mood, enjoy time in the outdoor environment or to get to places. Creating the conditions that enable more young people to get to more places by foot more often is likely to be more effective than promoting walking for health and fitness. Nonetheless, some lessons can be drawn for programs that seek to encourage young people to walk.

Increases in recreational walking are likely to be achieved through messages that focus on the emotional and social wellbeing benefits of walking, and the provision of pleasant, interesting and safe places to walk.

There are also opportunities to increase walking by encouraging and supporting the social aspects of walking (ie walking with parents or friends), though less so through walking events (eg fund-raising), a challenge or a game, especially for the older age group (18 – 20 years). The social aspects of everyday walking appear to be more important than specific walking events.

The opportunity to combine exercise time with travel time is also likely to be appealing to young people, as about half of young people (48%) agree that they are often too busy to find time for exercise.

For a variety of reasons, otherwise inactive young women who are not involved in sport are one particular group that are more likely to respond to campaigns that encourage walking for physical activity.

Increases in walking for transport are likely to be achieved by creating environments that enable more young people to get to more places by foot more often. We need to create the walkable communities that young people want to live in, as discussed further below.



## 5 Study conclusions (cont.)

### 5.6 What kind of community do young people want to live in?

The majority of young people would prefer to live in a walking-friendly neighbourhood (85%). They see this as one where they are close to shops, services, entertainment (89%), work or study (88%) and public transport (84%), with the option of walking to many of these destinations (86%) and “not having to drive everywhere” (66%).

Good access to public transport for trips that are too far to walk also promotes higher levels of walking. Most young people have a positive attitude to using public transport when it is available, and public transport access appears to support delayed license-holding among young people. Improving public transport in outer suburban areas, rural and regional Victoria, and for trips between suburbs (which are often possible, but very indirect and time-consuming) is likely to lead to more young people delaying obtaining a driver's license, driving less, and walking more.

Young people emphasised the importance of having pleasant and interesting walking routes (89%) and nice parks or reserves nearby (80%). These environmental characteristics presumably assist young people to relax and calm down when stressed, angry or anxious, and to “get out of the house for a while”, which are key motivations for walking.

Consistent with high levels of concern about walking at night, 78% of young people agreed that making walking safer after dark would encourage them to walk more. The majority of young people also agreed that a clean and tidy neighbourhood (66%), having a direct route (61%), more footpaths (56%), and more people out walking (50%) would encourage more walking. Non-existing, poorly lit, or poorly maintained footpaths are constraints on young people walking. As is the case for public transport, poor walking infrastructure (apart from poor street lighting, which appears to be fairly widespread) is perceived to be more of a problem in outer suburban and rural areas.

These responses indicate that most young people prefer to live in places that have good access to education, work and services, whilst also providing access to natural, green open spaces. For the majority of young people this precludes living in “an outer suburban area with lots of space”.

In response to the final open-ended question 713 young people shared their perceptions of a liveable community. Overwhelmingly, for these young people, a liveable community is a community that is safe, and perceived to be safe so that community members can do the things they wish to do without fear of being threatened or harmed.

Young people also express a strong desire to live in a community where people are friendly, kind, caring, helpful, considerate, welcoming, socially connected, engaged in community life, and look out for one another; where the community is inclusive and respectful of diversity; and where people are both trusting and trust-worthy. For young people, these characteristics are not only valued in their own right, but also appear to be important in contributing to young people's perceptions of a community that is safe for them to move about in.

As described above, many elements of young people's perceptions of a liveable community reflect the interconnectedness of planning, transport, the environment, community safety, social life, education and employment. The voices of these young people are expressing a desire for the walkable communities that are well-established in a number of OECD countries (particularly in Western Europe and developed Asian countries such as Japan), and talked about and recommended in countries like Australia, but rarely implemented. Hopefully the voices of young people will assist in the establishment of liveable communities for the current generation of young Victorians as they move into adult life.

# 6 Recommendations For Increasing Walking For Young People

**Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed.**

## Walking promotion

1. Health promotion messages aimed at increasing recreational walking for young people should focus on:
  - a. The psychological and social wellbeing benefits of walking.
  - b. The flexibility, convenience and low cost of walking.
2. Health promotion messages aimed at increasing walking for transport for young people should:
  - a. Highlight the cost, convenience, health, environmental and community benefits of walking for transport.
  - b. Recognise the different influences on walking for:
    - i. Children, adolescents and young adults.
    - ii. Young women and young men.
    - iii. Recreational and transport walking.
    - iv. Different trip purposes, times and locations.
  - c. Be based on an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of walking, driving and using public transport (including buses, trains and trams) in order to maximise the advantages of walking (and public transport use) and minimise the barriers to walking (and public transport use).
  - d. Be well informed of the systemic and structural pressures and social context that impact upon young people's decisions to walk for transport.
3. Develop a program to encourage and support young women, particularly those who are not involved in sport, to walk in their neighbourhood and engage in their local community, that can be implemented in local settings.
4. Work with education providers and/or youth mentoring programs to develop active travel programs to help maintain or establish a 'habit' of walking during periods of transition for young people, such as from primary school to secondary school; secondary school to higher education; and participation in paid employment. This could be complementary to programs seeking to increase social connection during times of transition (eg "walking buddies" programs).



# 6 Recommendations For Increasing Walking For Young People (cont.)

## Urban planning and design

5. Provide safe, realistic and appealing alternatives to car travel in the form of high level of service walking, bicycle paths and public transport networks between suburban hubs, as well as in and out of city centres, to provide opportunities for independent travel and support delayed license-holding among young people.
6. Establish walking-friendly communities that provide safe access by walking to education, work, shops, services, entertainment, public transport, and interesting, pleasant and relaxing parks and green open spaces by ensuring that:
  - a. These places are within walking distance of homes (up to about 1.5km)
  - b. Footpaths are constructed, safe, well-lit and well-maintained.
  - c. Regular safe street crossing opportunities are provided, particularly on arterial roads.
  - d. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is prioritised in urban planning and the management of streets and public space.
7. Provide substantial investment in walking infrastructure and pedestrian oriented design, beginning with implementation of recommendations 4.1.2, 4.1.3 and 4.2.1 of *Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy*.
8. Establish liveable communities that are safe, inclusive, friendly, caring and neighbourly by:
  - a. Maintaining and expanding existing investment that supports community participation and engagement.
  - b. Exploring the potential to link government programs that focus on young people's community engagement, such as the Engage and Advance grants, with wider community planning.
  - c. Ensuring local government youth services are involved in wider community building and wellbeing programs.

9. Develop a Walking Strategy for Victoria to provide a co-ordinated, whole of government approach to guide policy and investment, including actions to address significant barriers to walking identified in this report.

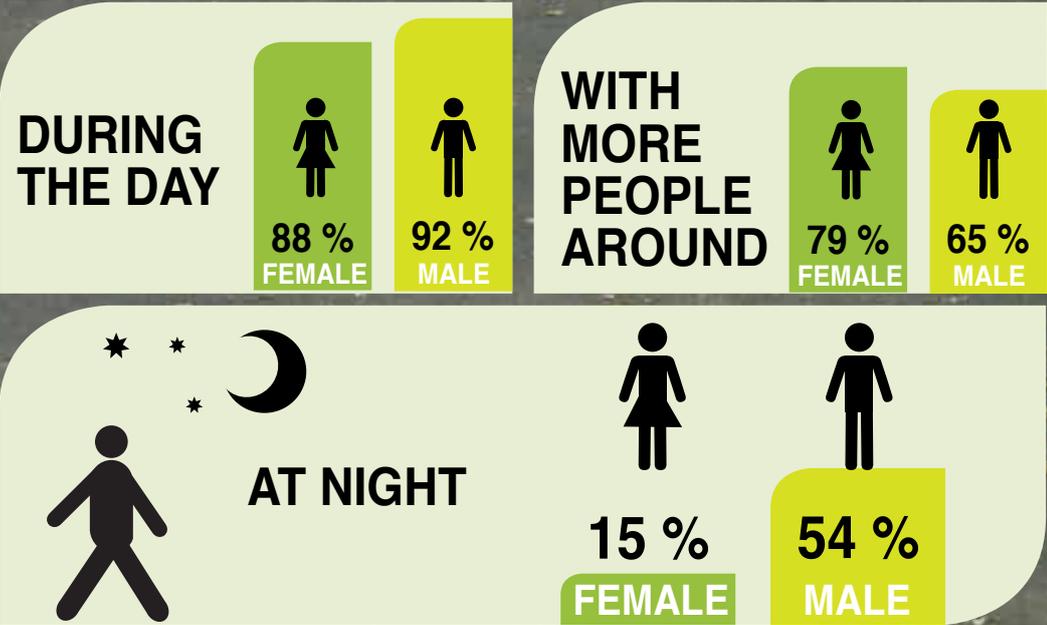
## Safety

10. Improve the personal safety of young women moving around in public places, including at night, by implementing recommendations from the study "A right to the night" (Plan International Australia and Our Watch, 2016) which include the following<sup>15</sup>:
  - a. Provide training for the media, law enforcement, and community leaders on the importance of avoiding victim-blaming when responding to or reporting on incidents of violence against women in public (and private) spaces.
  - b. Promote and fund whole school approaches to Respectful Relationships Education in schools, which include issues of personal safety and the effects of 'catcalling', or integrate this content into existing programs.
  - c. Involve girls and young women in developing the solutions for safer and more inclusive public places.
11. Develop and implement public campaigns which allow men and women to learn about and discuss issues relating to gender equality and respect.
12. Address barriers to personal and road safety, in the implementation of Plan Melbourne, particularly in refining the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods.
13. Improve traffic safety for pedestrians by developing and adopting a Safe System road safety strategy for vulnerable road users, particularly pedestrians, in order to address the current imbalanced focus on motor vehicle occupants. Actions should include:
  - a. Undertake a road safety campaign to encourage motorists to give way to pedestrians as required by law.
  - b. Increase policing of illegal driving behaviours that increase the risk of pedestrian injury.

<sup>15</sup> Some of these recommendations are already being implemented in association with *Victoria's Free From Violence Strategy and Rolling Action Plan*.



## DO YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL SAFE WALKING?



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Victoria  
**walks**

**Victoria Walks:** Level 7, 225 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

P: 03 9662 3975 E: [info@victoriawalks.org.au](mailto:info@victoriawalks.org.au) W: [www.victoriawalks.org.au](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au)