

Lack of safe crossings tops list for walkers in Melbourne

New research finds that a lack of pedestrian crossings and safe places to cross the street are the top concerns for pedestrians in Melbourne.

Victoria Walks, CrowdSpot and government partners asked the people of Melbourne to record their walking safety concerns through an interactive online WalkSpot map. There was an overwhelming response to the project with over 1,650 people marking their perception of walking safety and generating close to 9,000 'engagements' overall.

Other issues of concern identified by walkers included drivers failing to give way when turning, traffic moving too fast, problems with footpaths, and traffic light issues like a long wait for the green man or lights not allowing enough time to cross.

"There was an amazing response – a record number for a CrowdSpot project" said Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer of Victoria Walks. "That people eagerly contributed and indicated their concerns indicates that we have quite a way to go to make Melbourne safer for walking."

"Interestingly, some of the top unsafe spots were very localised with no recorded official crashes which suggests that some people are campaigning to make their neighbourhoods even better for walking, which is great" said Dr Rossiter. "They are not satisfied with ordinary, they want to prioritise pedestrian safety on the road network."

"Our research compared the spots with the most concern against official crash statistics," says Anthony Aisenberg, Director of CrowdSpot the company that designed WalkSpot. "Some unsafe WalkSpot locations have a crash history, but most don't. This demonstrates that the places of concern to people aren't necessarily showing up in the crash statistics that government agencies tend to rely on."

"The top rated 'safe' spots were a ringing endorsement for places where pedestrians are given priority over cars," Dr Rossiter says. "The research found that walkers clearly want to see more intersections like Flinders and Elizabeth Street, where traffic lights stop all vehicles and people can cross in any direction, and places like the Bourke Street Mall."

VicRoads, the City of Melbourne and 13 other metropolitan councils supported the project. They have received the data relevant to their area, to help them decide on road safety improvements and prioritise investment.

WalkSpot is funded primarily by a Community Road Safety Grant from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). Victoria Walks is supported by VicHealth.

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The top five issues/concerns used to describe **unsafe spots** recorded on the map were:

1. No pedestrian crossing (20.6%)
2. Drivers failing to give way when turning (14.2%)
3. Traffic light issues eg. long wait for green man (12.2%)
4. Poor footpath eg. narrow, uneven or too crowded (11.8%)
5. Traffic moving too fast (9.0%).

These figures are for issues after responses under 'other' were re-categorised. Percentages represent the proportion of spots created.

The ten locations that attracted most concern were:

1. The narrow Arthurton Road bridge in Brunswick East, forcing walkers and cyclists close to vehicles*
2. Worries about anti-social behaviour on Main Street in Box Hill*
3. A missing footpath between a tram stop and shops at Newmarket Plaza in Flemington
4. Bikes going too fast in the shared space along Southbank Promenade
5. No footpath near the intersection of Police and Stud Roads in Rowville*
6. The pedestrian underpass at Bank and Station Streets in Box Hill*
7. Not enough time to cross at the traffic signals between Flinders Street Station and Fed Square in the city
8. Overcrowded and blocked crossings and footpaths outside Southern Cross Station at the intersection of Spencer and Collins Streets in the city.
9. Poor tram stop design and overcrowding at the intersection of Spencer and Bourke Streets in the city
10. Lack of crossing facilities on a popular walk to school route, Derby Street and Mitchell Street in Northcote.*

* = locations where there appears to have been community organising to encourage participation and highlight the issue

In addition to identifying particular spots, participants were also surveyed on their **general concerns** while walking in Melbourne. This survey produced similar but slightly different responses to the description of unsafe spots detailed at the top of this page. The highest rating responses were:

1. Lack of pedestrian crossings (16%)
2. Traffic moving too fast (15%).
3. Drivers failing to give way when turning (14%)
4. Too much traffic (12%)
5. Traffic light issues eg. long wait for green man (12%)

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