

# Taking the lane

Q2 2021 Walking and cycling research

# Background

- We wanted to know how much the behaviour of taking the lane is known about, understood, and practiced.
- Stakeholders often suggest that most people, particularly car drivers, don't know about taking the lane, and don't know to wait until it is safe to pass, or don't support cyclists taking the lane.
- This survey helps us understand if, or to what extent this is an issue.

# About the survey

- The data used in this report is from the **Waka Kotahi Attitudes to Cycling and Walking** monitor
- These questions were included between April and June 2021
- There were n= 2595 respondents
- The survey is conducted online and respondents are representative of NZers in age, gender, ethnicity and region.
- To see the full report go to:  
<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/understanding-attitudes-and-perceptions-of-cycling-and-walking/Waka-Kotahi-Attitudes-to-cycling-and-walking-final-report-2020.pdf>





# About taking the lane

- Taking the lane' is when a cyclist moves toward the centre of the road to be more visible, to avoid doors opening in their path, or to reduce the risk of unsafe passing
- When driving behind someone who has 'taken the lane' in an urban area, drivers are encouraged to follow behind until it is safe to pass with a distance of 1 metre
- Taking the lane has been shown to provide a protective factor to people riding bikes in an urban setting (need link to page)



# Contents

## Taking the lane:

Awareness, support, frequency, importance

### People on bikes *taking the lane:*

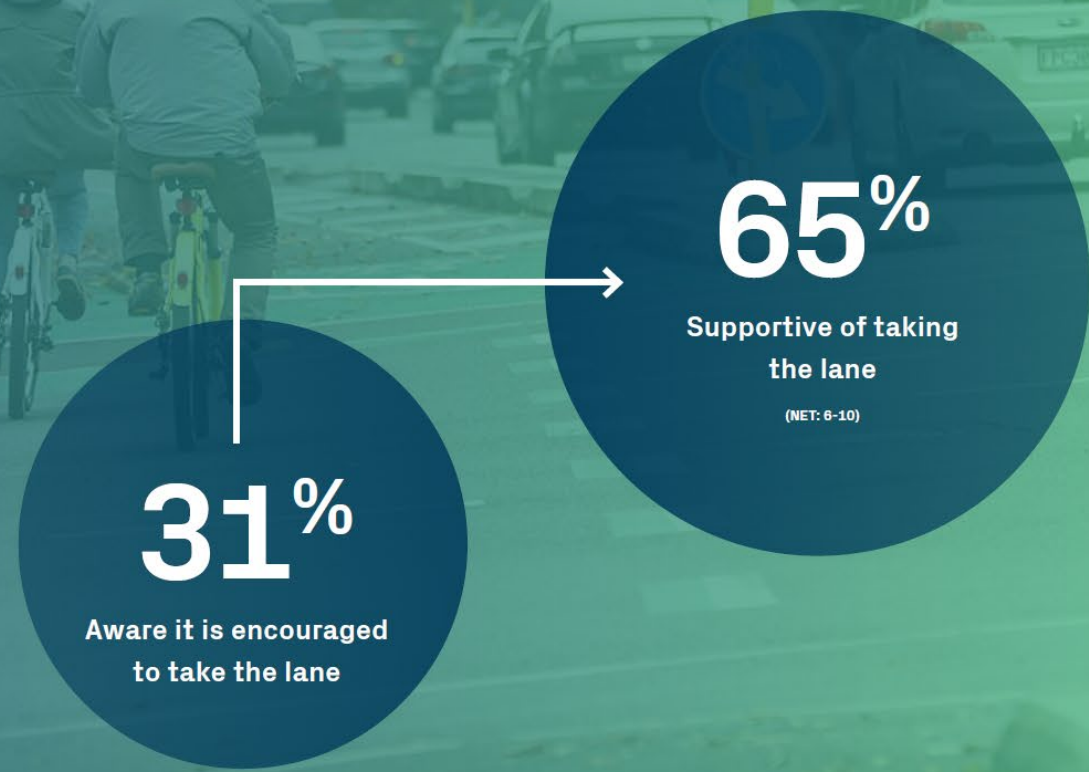
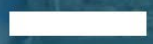
- Frequency done in different conditions

### Driver behaviour when *taking the lane* is happening.

Awareness / support / likelihood of:

- Safe passing behaviour
- Using flush median

Only 1 in 3 people are aware that taking the lane is encouraged, but support for this behaviour is high

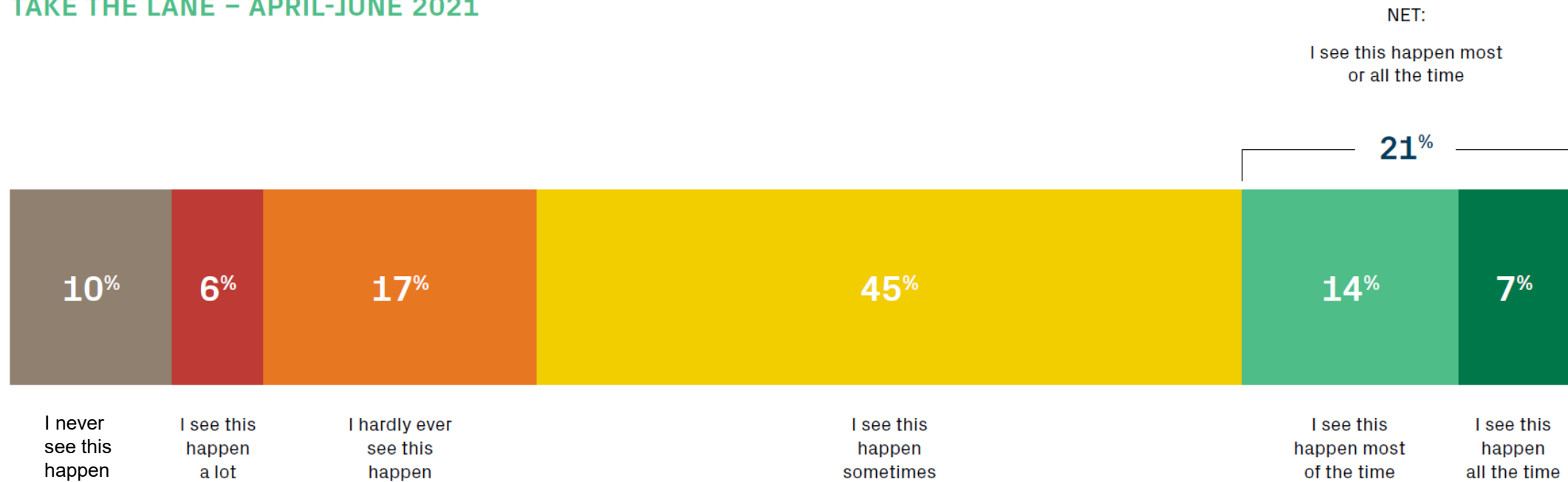


Question: Before today, were you aware that cyclists are encouraged to 'take the lane'?  
Base: 2021 April – June (including DIP) n=2595

**More likely:** committed or regular urban riders, younger, male.

# Two-thirds of people are seeing cyclists take the lane at least some of the time – for 1 in 5 this is most of the time

TAKE THE LANE – APRIL-JUNE 2021



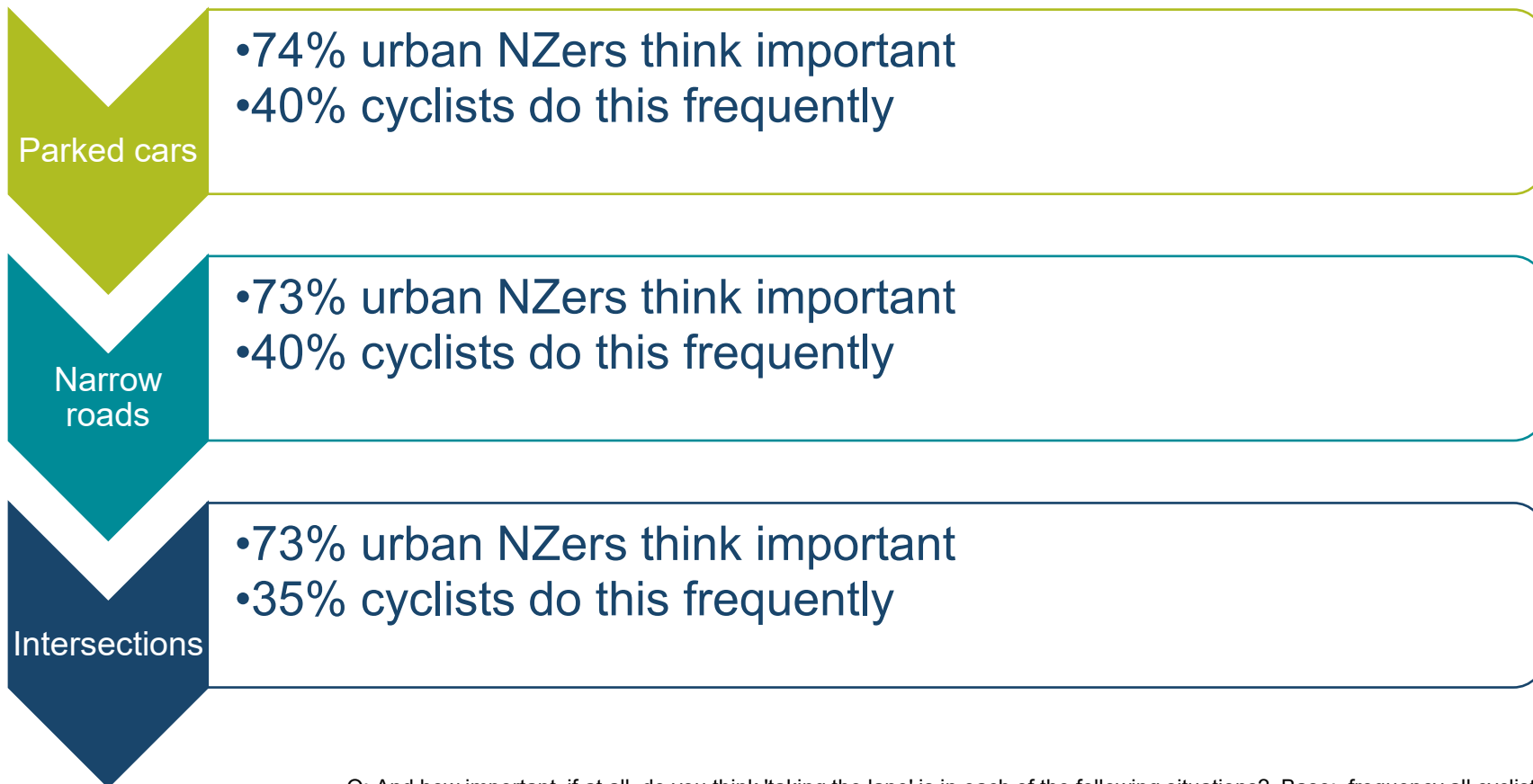


# Majority agree that is important to *take the lane* in hazardous situations, but it is often not done

Comparison overall perceptions of importance with cyclist taking lane behaviour.

Noting that respondents were told what taking the lane was, and that it is a safety behaviour prior to be asked how important it was.

## Hazards

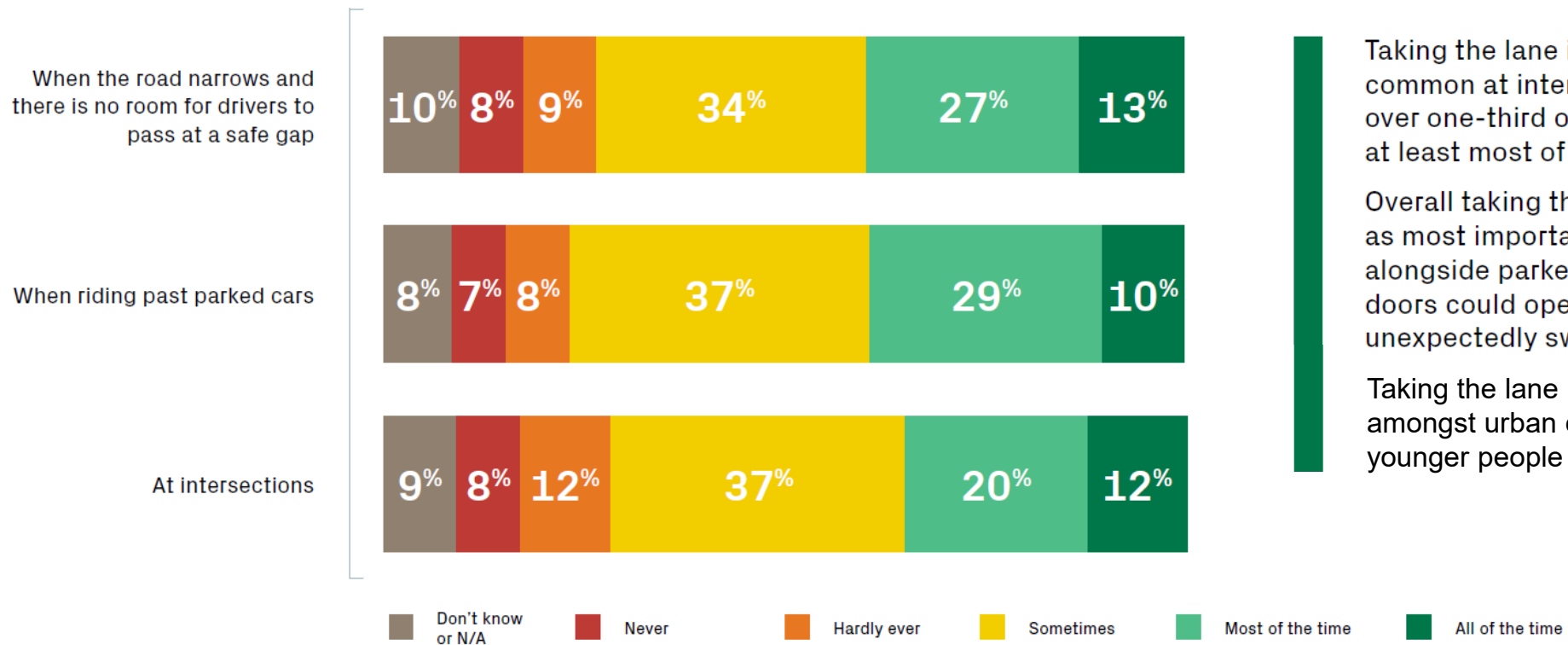


Q: And how important, if at all, do you think 'taking the lane' is in each of the following situations? Base: frequency all cyclists n=606 importance all respondents n=2595 Importance is net very important and quite important, Frequency is net all or most of the time



# Around 4 in 10 cyclists report taking the lane when roads are narrow or when they're passing parked cars most or all the time

## CYCLISTS- HOW OFTEN THEY TAKE THE LANE



Taking the lane is slightly less common at intersections, but still over one-third of cyclists do this at least most of the time.

Overall taking the lane is seen as most important when riding alongside parked cars where doors could open [e.g. to avoid unexpectedly swerving] (74%).

Taking the lane is more common amongst urban commuter and younger people on bikes

# When person on bike has *taken the lane*: Half of urban New Zealanders are aware of safe passing behaviour, majority support it

Awareness and support for to waiting until it is safe to pass with a distance of one meter

51%

Aware when someone has *taken the lane* that encouraged to wait until safe to pass with distance of 1m

- **More aware:** Younger people
- This, combined with high rates of people observing taking the lane and low awareness that we encourage taking the lane could result in frustration for both people cycling and driving

78%

Support that encouraged to follow someone who has *taken the lane* until safe to pass with distance of 1m

- **Least supportive:** Non riders who do not think cycling is a good way to get around (55%)

Q: When driving behind someone who has 'taken the lane' in an urban area, drivers are encouraged to follow behind until it is safe to pass with a distance of 1 metre. Before today, were you aware that drivers are encouraged to do this?

Q: To what degree do you support drivers being encouraged to follow a cyclist who has 'taken the lane', until it is safe to pass with a distance of 1 metre?

# Half of people are aware that drivers can use the Flush Median to pass cyclists and around 6 in 10 say they/re likely to do so

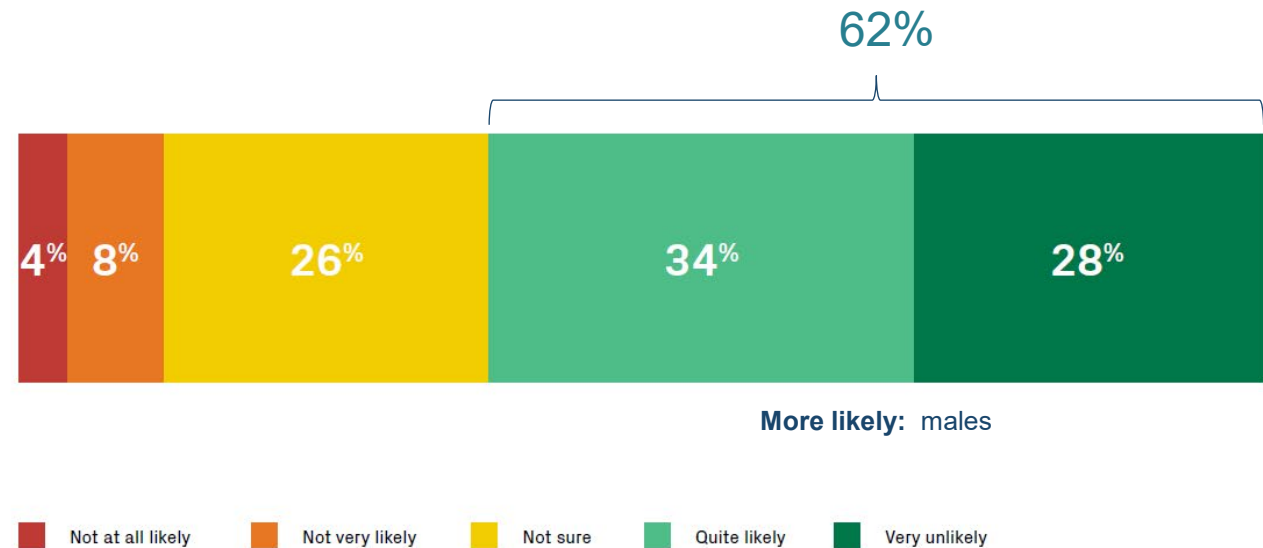
## AWARENESS OF USE OF FLUSH MEDIAN TO PASS BIKES



**More aware:** males

Knowledge of passing on a normal centre line or yellow lines is unknown, but we believe that this may be another gap in knowledge.

## LIKELIHOOD OF USING FLUSH MEDIAN TO PASS BIKES



# Conclusion

- There is a disconnect between drivers and cyclists when it comes to knowledge of taking the lane, and cyclists are not taking the lane as frequently as they perhaps should.
- The spectrum of knowledge follows the amount of cycling on the roads people do – committed commuters are much more knowledgeable.
- People support practicing safe behaviours around taking the lane, but are often unaware that they are encouraged to do this and unaware of the rules for safe passing.
- We haven't effectively taught drivers how to behave around cyclists or why cyclists do the behaviours they do.



# Actions required to encourage taking the lane

1. Drivers first need to know the safe behaviours for driving around people taking the lane, otherwise it may not be the best option for cyclists.
  - We should target drivers (general public) to encourage them about safe behaviours, including why cyclists are taking the lane, and laws around passing and crossing medians or yellow lines.
2. Focus on changing urban riders from *sometimes* taking the lane to *most of the time*, particularly at intersections and on narrow streets. We should not aim to get them to *always* take the lane as there are circumstances where this is not useful or is an unsafe option.