

# Older People's Perceptions of Mobility in the Urban Environment:

Wellington as a case study



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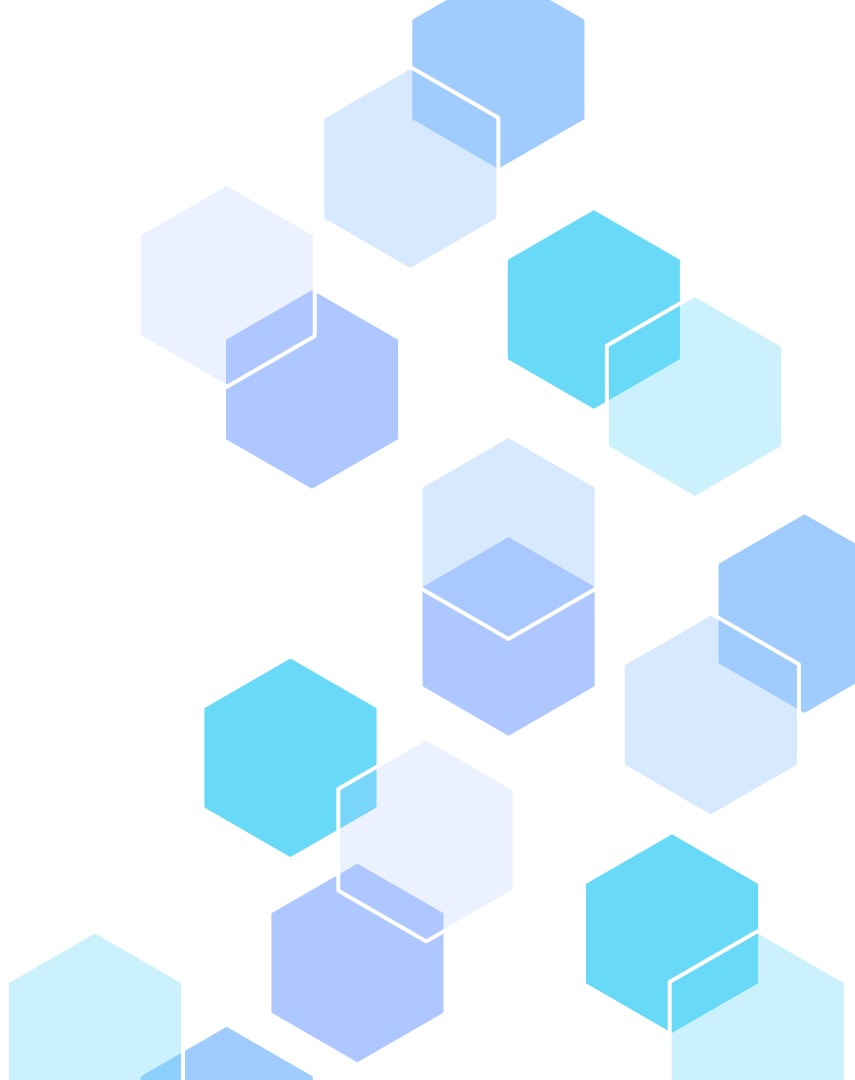
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# 01

# Introduction

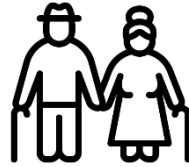
What is mobility?



# Introduction



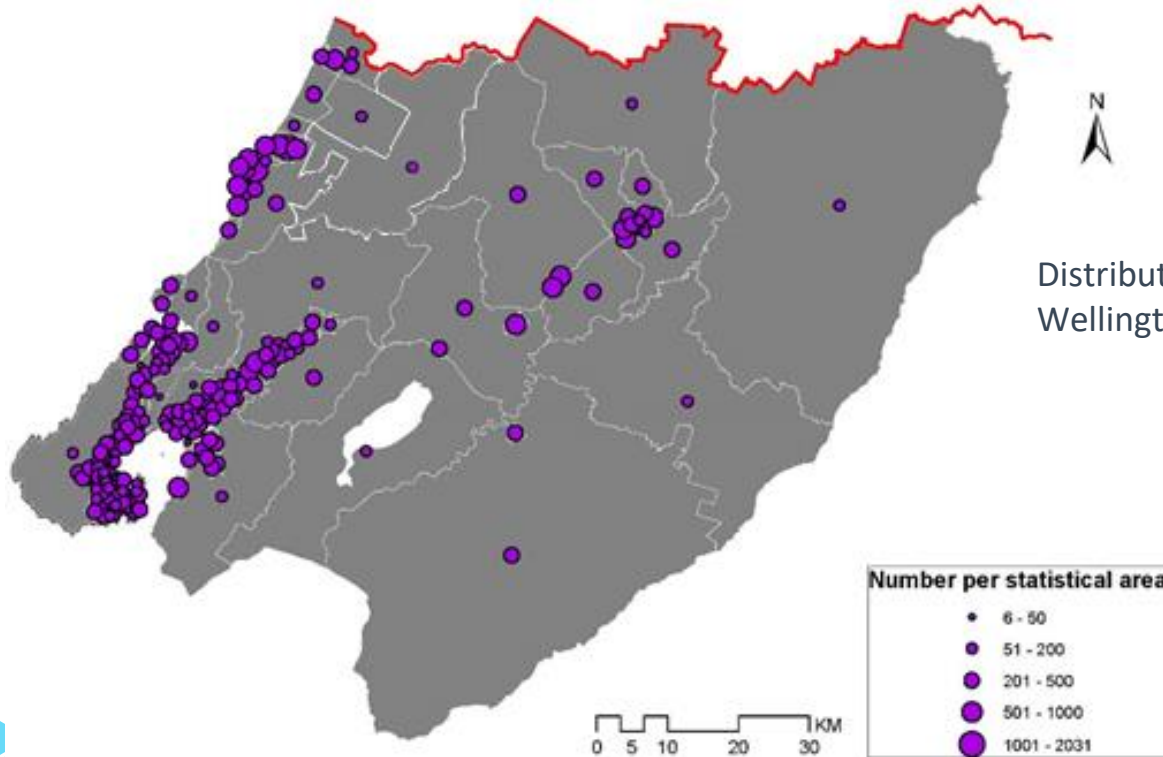
87% of New Zealanders reside in cities  
(The Department of Internal Affairs, n.d.)



It is projected that 19-21% of New Zealanders will be 65 and up by 2030, which will increase to 21-26% by 2048.



# Introduction



Distribution of 65+ age group  
Wellington region (Stat NZ)

# Introduction

Mobility is:

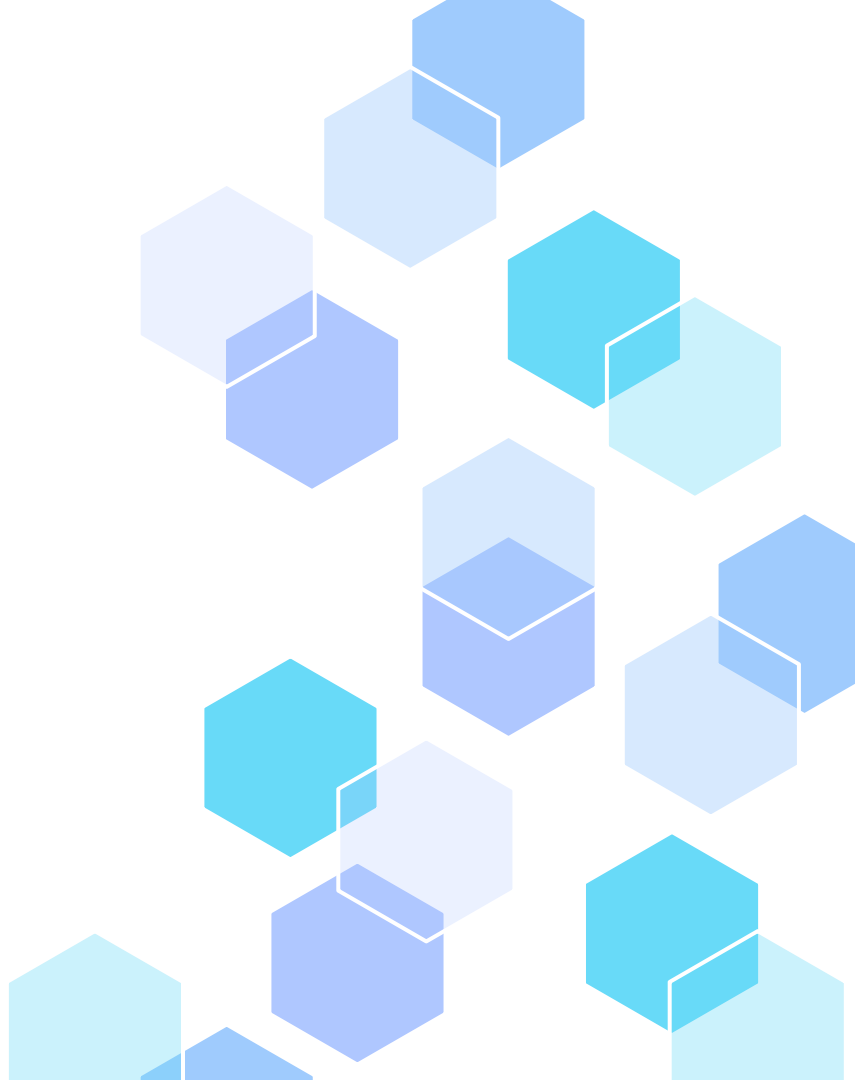
“The ability to move oneself (e.g., by walking, by using assistive devices, or by using transportation) within community environments that expand from one's home, to the neighborhood, and to regions beyond.” (Webber et al., 2010)

It is fundamental to **active ageing** and **quality of life**, with health status and **independence** implications. (Webber et al., 2010)

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02

# Aim & scope



# Aims

Explore how **older adults experience, interpret,** and **evaluate mobility** within urban spaces, with a focus on identifying the factors that **enable or hinder their movement** and participation in city life.

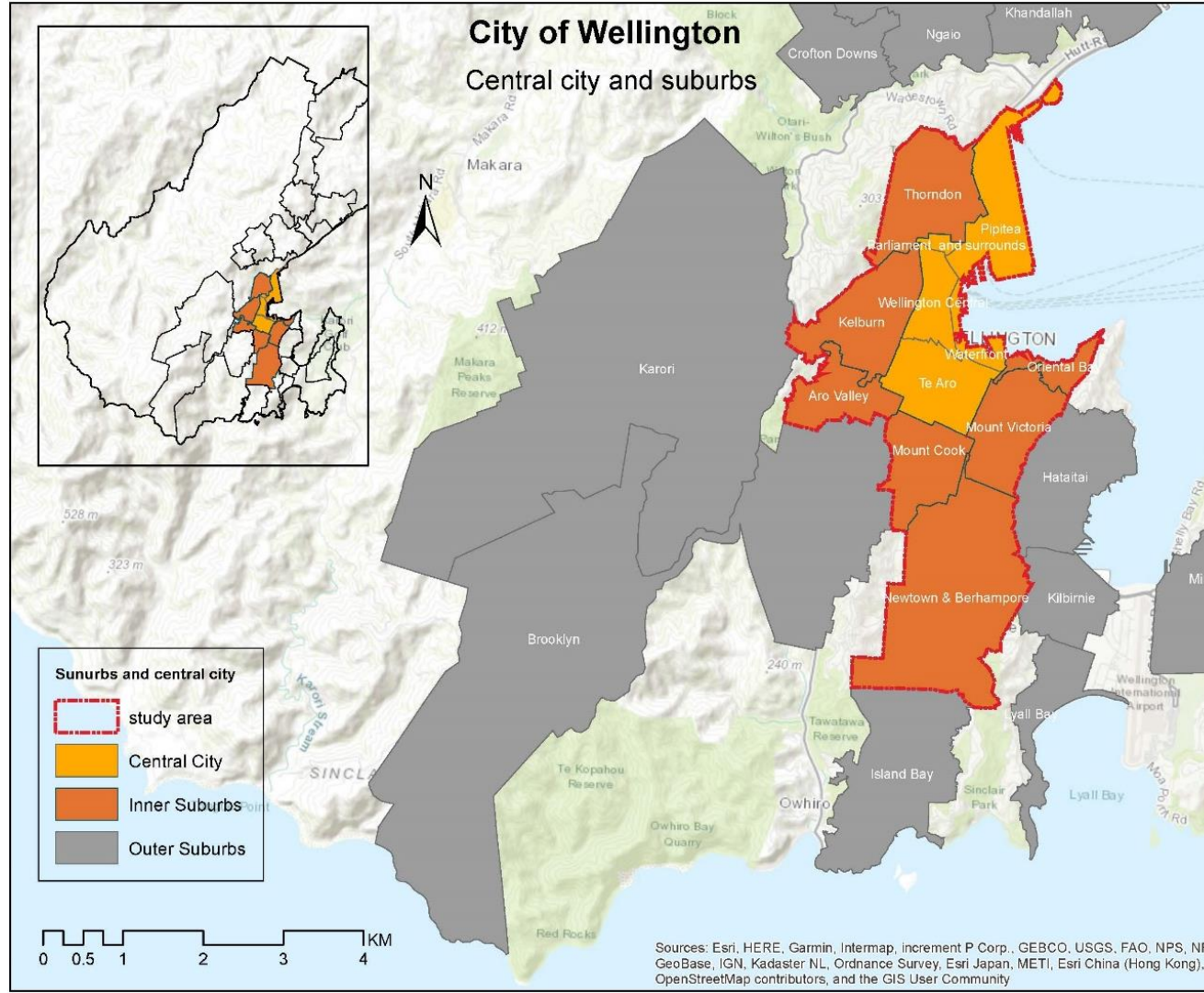




# Research Scope

Wellington centre and inner geographic suburbs

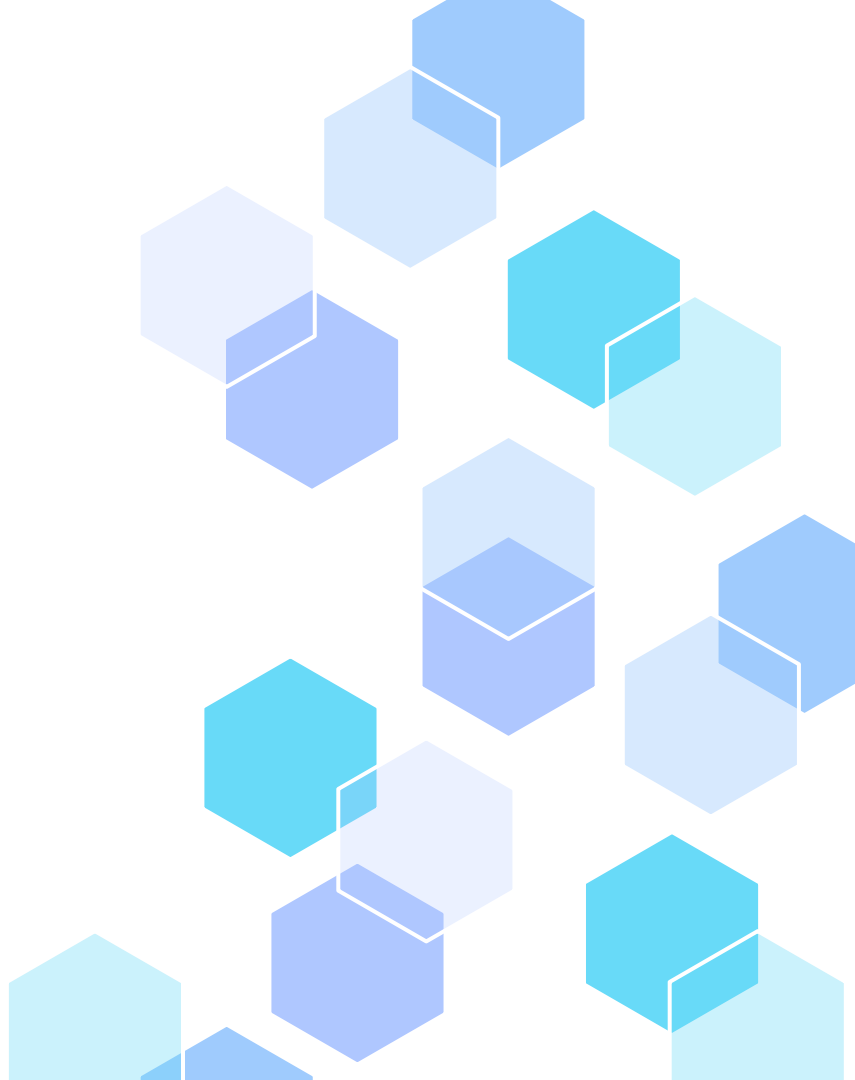
75+ older people



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03

Method



# Data collection and procedures



## Approach

Semi-structured interview



## Sample size

24



## Sampling strategy

non-probability with purposive,  
criterion-based selection

Criteria: older adults who lived in the  
study area which aged 75 and older  
and of both genders



## Recruitment strategy

Advertising, networking, and  
organisations that cater to the  
elderly population

# Demographic information

	Age			Gender		Ethnicity					Education					
	75-79	80-84	85+	M	F	Ma	Eu	Pa	As	Oth	High	Tech	Ba	Ma	PhD	Other
Participants	11	10	3	9	15	1	23	0	0	0	1	1	14	4	0	4
Total																
Percent	45	42	13	38	62	4	96				4	4	58	17	0	17

**M:** male **F:** Female **Ma:** Maori **Eu:** European **Pa:** Pasifika **As:** Asian **Oth:** Others **High:** High school **Tech:** Technical qualification

**Ba:** Bachelor **Ma:** Masters

# Data collection & preparation



**Ethics**



**Transcribed**



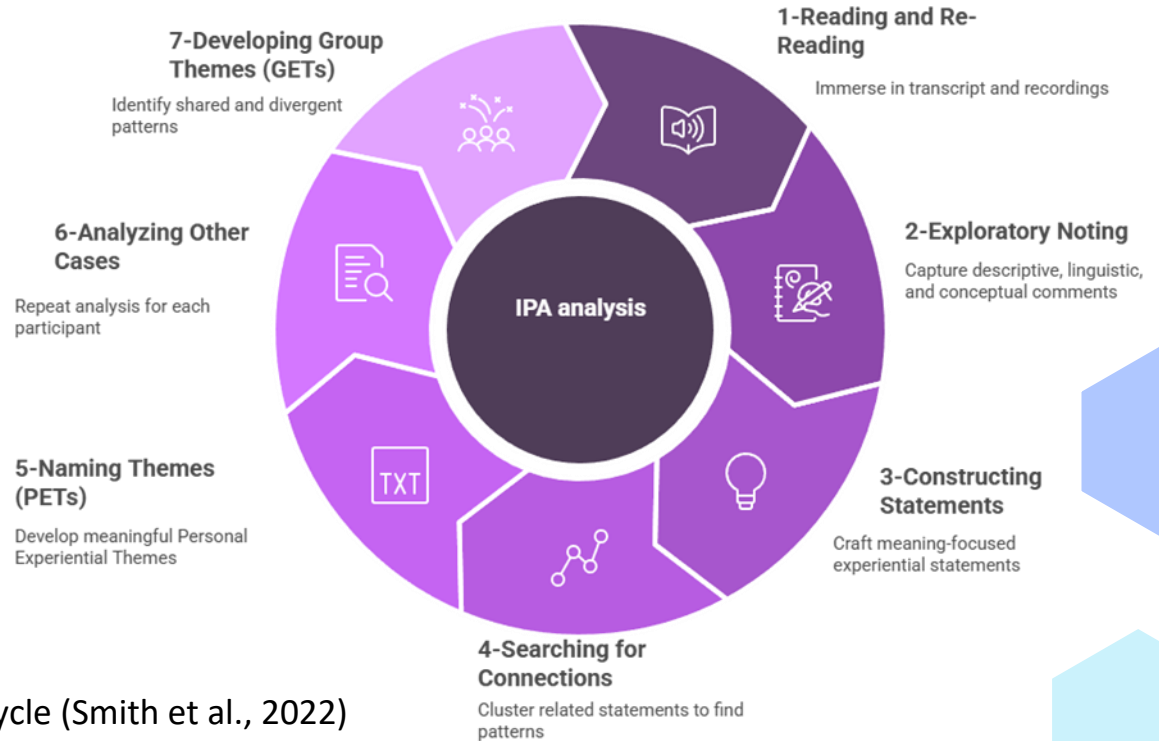
**Deidentified**



**Pseudonym**

# Data analysis

Interpretative  
phenomenological analysis  
(IPA) was used for analysis.

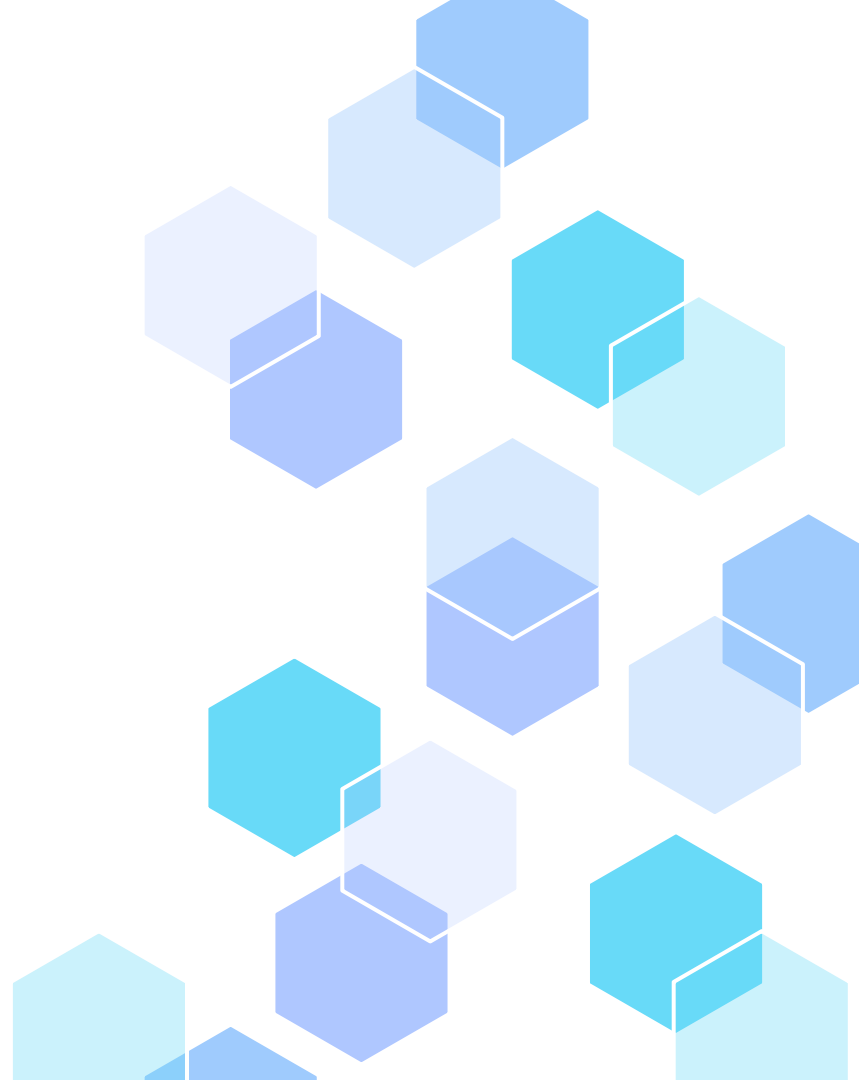


IPA cycle (Smith et al., 2022)

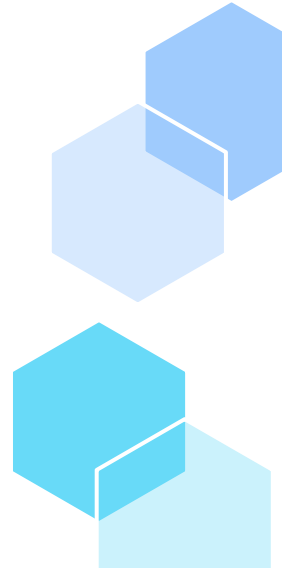
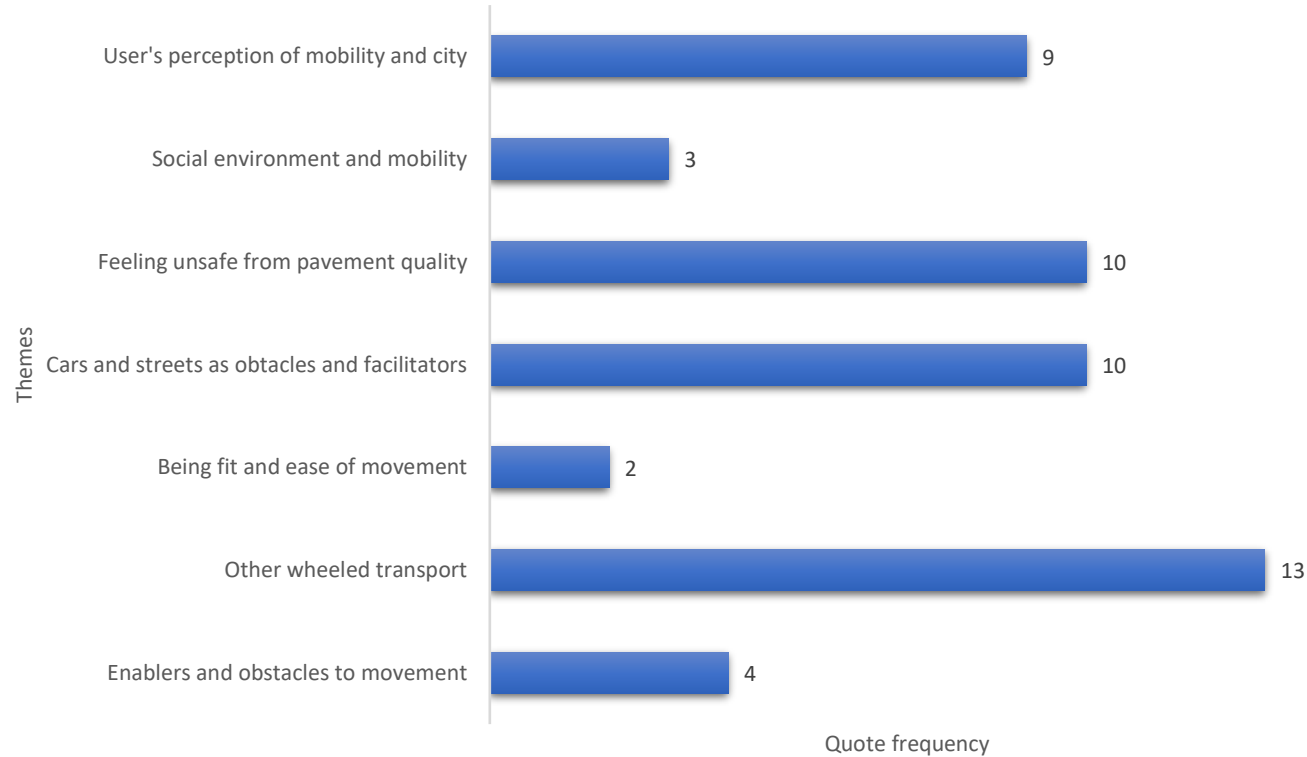
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# 04

## findings



# Themes overview





## Theme: User's perception of mobility and city

- Several participants described Wellington as an **accessible**, **walkable**, and **safe** city.
- **Good public transport** was seen as a positive feature

"Walking and the buses, buses are great here...  
This is the best city in New Zealand." (MLP01-76 yrs)

"From my point of view, which is wonderful because it takes me ... I can walk down there in 20-25 minutes and if I want to I can get a bus back so the city centre for me because of where I live. Yeah, it's great. When I lived in Auckland, I lived in the suburbs. It was not good because not good public transport and I couldn't Well, I lived 30 kilometres from centre, so this is different."  
(MLP04-81 yrs)



## Theme: Other wheeled transport

- Concerns **bicycles, scooters, and electric vehicles.**
- **Older participants who cycled themselves** had different perspectives.

“my challenge is with electric scooters that you can't hear coming behind you. Biggest problem for walking around the streets here is to be really careful.” (MLP10–85 yrs)

“the only thing wrong with the walking environment is the cyclists in the in the the wheel transport who are invading it more and more and more, that's becoming a real issue and I am concerned for my safety from that. Umm, because there's no separation between cyclists and pedestrians and the cyclists appear to have an attitude that they they're gonna go as fast as they can.” (TPP09–76 yrs)

“Yes but on a bicycle, I think people are dangerous.” (TPP10–81 yrs)



# Theme: Cars and streets as obstacles and facilitators

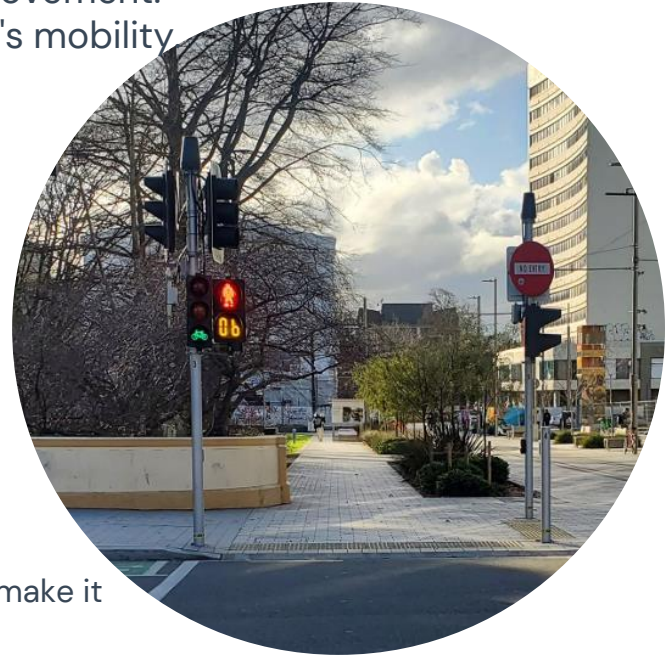
- **Cars** as a means of **transportation**
- **Lack of parking** was identified as a barrier to mobility.
- **Insufficient time to cross the road** was a common concern.
- **Lack of designated road crossings** limited safe pedestrian movement.
- **Busy streets** were seen as obstacles that hinder older people's mobility

"Sometimes I have to drive and it's very difficult to find a car parking space, particularly for the hospital. (RFS08-75yrs)"

"My thing that annoys me the most is because I need to be cautious of walking across when the crossings are green is that you get to one and you don't know when it's going to change next." (MLP10-85)

"We can't actually get to the road before it's...it's...it's gone from...from green to flashing red. So, um...people, I said, with walkers and that are really going to get caught badly." (RFS06-84)

"It's a very old part of Wellington Newtown and it it needs something to make it easier, perhaps fewer cars." (RFS08-75yrs)



## Theme: Feeling unsafe from pavement quality

- Some pavement types were described as **slippery**, **uneven**, and **dangerous**.
- These conditions made **walkways feel unsafe** for older pedestrians.

“There's been a lot of use of bricks in footpath lately, and although it's very attractive, to me it presents a danger because you inevitably get bricks, you know, rise above the ...” (TPPO5-83 yrs)

“When you're walking down the street, there's high bits and low bits. You've gotta be careful.” (RFS08-75)



## Theme: Enablers and obstacles to movement

- Despite being mobile, participants valued features like **benches** and **handrails** for added support.
- Wellington's **strong winds** was seen as key barriers to going outdoors.

"I haven't found any problems getting across I do notice now at 81 that it would be quite nice to have a public bench more often on the street." (MLP11, 81 yrs)

" I [...] like to know that there are handrails handy if I have steps. I would rather have a handrail close by. " (MLPO6-81 yrs)

"Yes, (laugh) the weather is an obstacle. The weather in Wellington. You have to really work to get yourself outside ..." (MLPO4-81)





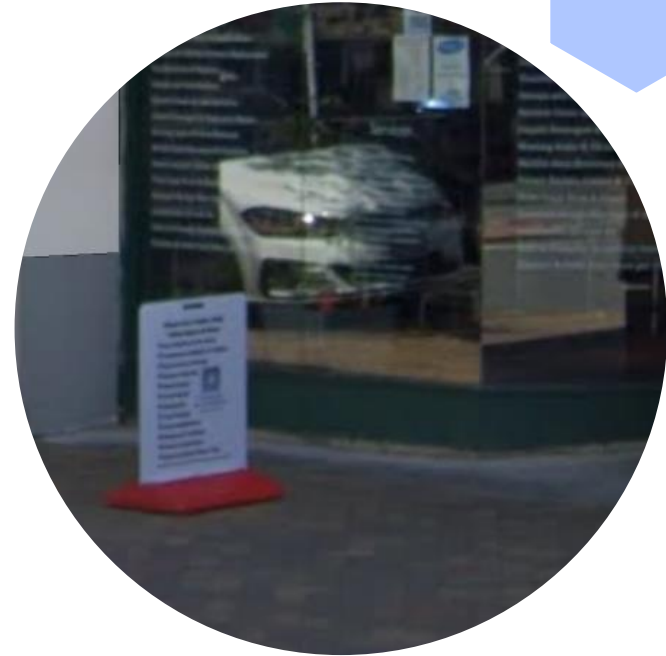
## Theme: Social environment and mobility

- Older participants expressed **discomfort in crowded areas**.
- They emphasised the **need for clear, uncluttered footpaths**.
- Street furniture and shop displays** were seen as **obstacles**.
- These obstacles were said to **make walking more difficult**
- and unsafe**

"It's I wouldn't like to go to places where there is a large crowd because they move [...] quickly, and they don't always realize that that an older people is slower and has less balance because balance is a problem for a lot of older people." (MLPO5-88 yrs)

"just don't want the footpaths too cluttered." (RFSO6-84 yrs)

"Not just the furniture and signage outside shops—some shops have bins of books, or, you know, they also have other things, products outside." (RFSO6-84 yrs)



## Theme: Being fit and ease of movement

- Some older participants expressed **confidence in their mobility**.
- They noted feeling **safe and free to walk at their own pace**.
- They reported having **no concerns about hazards in the environment**.

"I [...] can walk at my own pace. Yeah, and but I I don't feel worried about safety or hazards." (TPPO6-76 yrs)

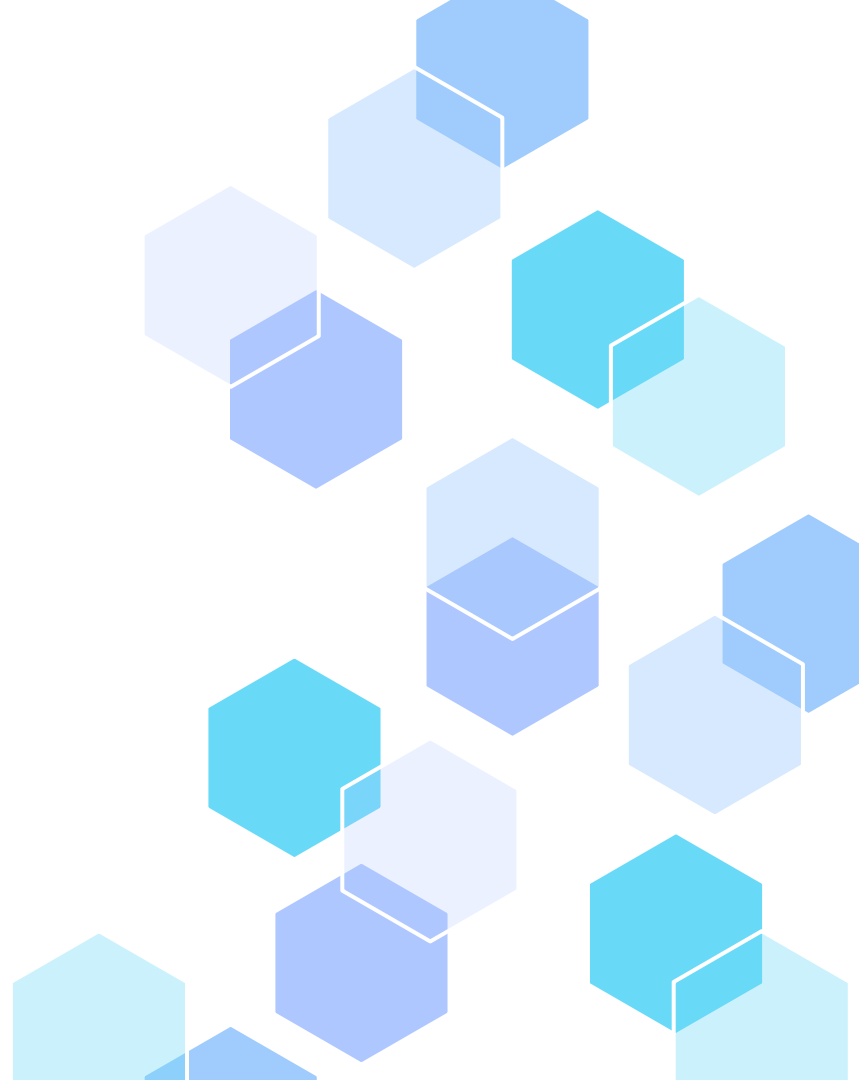
"I have. I have no no no problem with the access to any of them. Umm. So I'm not aware of. We're the ones that might have difficulties. So no, I don't have any problems. (TPPO7-81)



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# 05

## Summary





The findings of this study highlight the complex and varied experiences of older adults navigating urban environments.

- Positive Perceptions
- Mobility barriers
- Environmental discomfort
- Accessibility needs
- Diverse Experiences





**Thanks, any questions?**

# 06 References

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