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# HAURAKI-COROMANDEL DRAFT BIKING STRATEGY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE

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SEPTEMBER 2023



## Background and overview

Our Council recently sought feedback on a draft Biking Strategy (the draft Strategy) that has been created to improve off-road cycling experiences and drive tourism to the Coromandel. The draft Strategy has been developed by our destination management organisation, Destination Hauraki-Coromandel, to understand how cycling experiences in the Coromandel could be developed.



## Intention of the draft Strategy

The draft Strategy has a vision of creating a regionally significant, collaborative, sustainable cycling destination. It provides a set of ideas and actions to increase the amount of off-road cycling opportunities in our region. It aims to drive collaboration to achieve the following vision:

*"The Coromandel is explored more sustainably by connecting communities and showcasing our environment to become a nationally significant mountain bike destination by 2032. Collaboratively, our goal is to create a world-class trail network and experience that preserves and enhances the environment for our residents, visitors and all who experience them."*

While the feedback was focused on the draft Strategy itself, we were also interested in understanding people's expectations and concerns around both our cycling and trail infrastructure as a whole. This feedback was sought ahead of our Long-Term Plan process, in order to inform planning and resourcing decisions around our region's track and trail network.

## Community survey – process and response.

Following feedback being gathered from our Community Boards, a survey was created to gather feedback from the public. This sought feedback on the Strategy's goals, in order to understand levels of support for its outcomes and projections of impact on particular local areas. It also gathered information of levels of activity by respondents, travel habits, reasons for cycling and estimated spend on cycling as an activity.

This was available to fill in online (through SurveyMonkey) or as a hardcopy, to collect from our District Libraries and Council offices. This was shared through our Council's print and radio advertising, email database, website, social media channels, and posters in our offices and libraries. It also garnered local media coverage in print and radio. Respondents were incentivised with the chance to win a cycling-related prize and given the option to stay updated on the project.

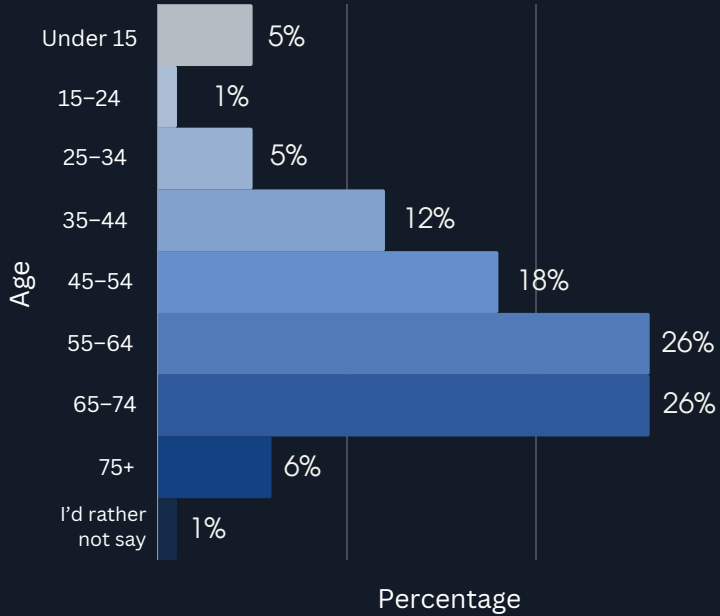
**564** complete responses were recorded – 563 online and one hardcopy. This represents a relatively high level of interest compared to previous Council surveys. The demographic breakdown of respondents are available on the following pages. The responses were thematically coded and analysed before being collated.

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## Demographics of survey respondents and cycling activities.

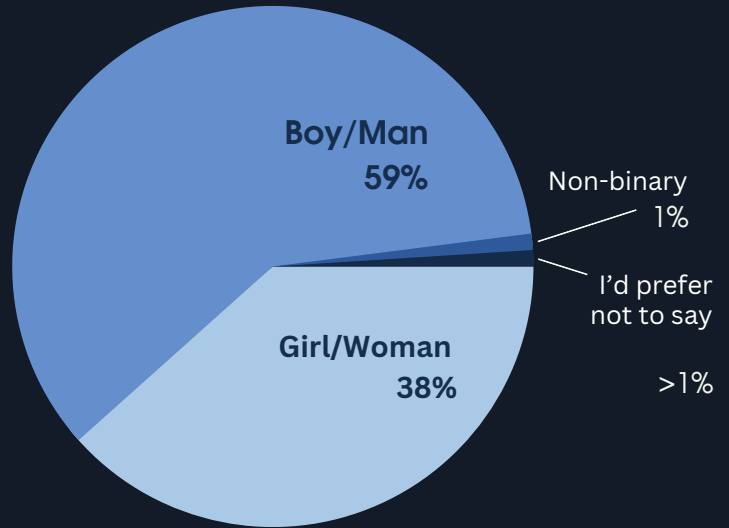
### Age

Those aged 55–74 made up over half of respondents, with the younger age groups being underrepresented. Further input from younger groups could be sought as the project develops.

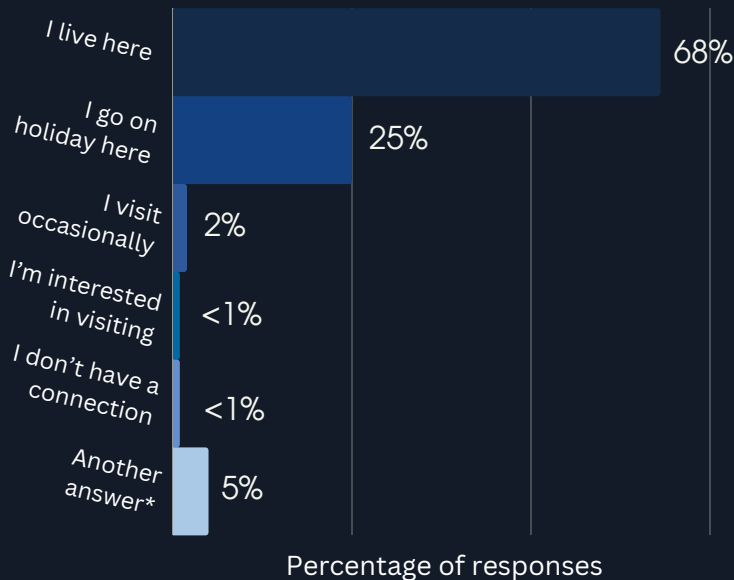


### Gender

In terms of gender, boys/men were most likely to respond to the survey, making up almost 60 percent of respondents. Future engagement should continue to ensure girls/women are well-represented in feedback opportunities.



### Connection to Hauraki-Coromandel region



The majority of respondents lived locally for all or part of the year. Only a small number of respondents did not currently have a connection.

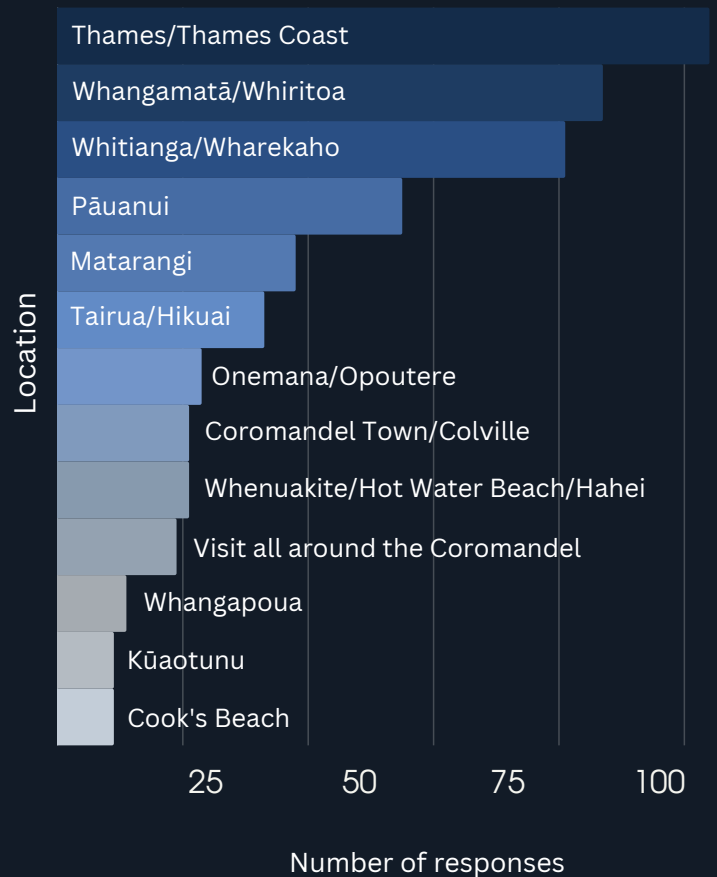
#### \*Another answer

These included:

- being Tangata Whenua
- my work/business is here
- I have family here
- I live in a nearby region

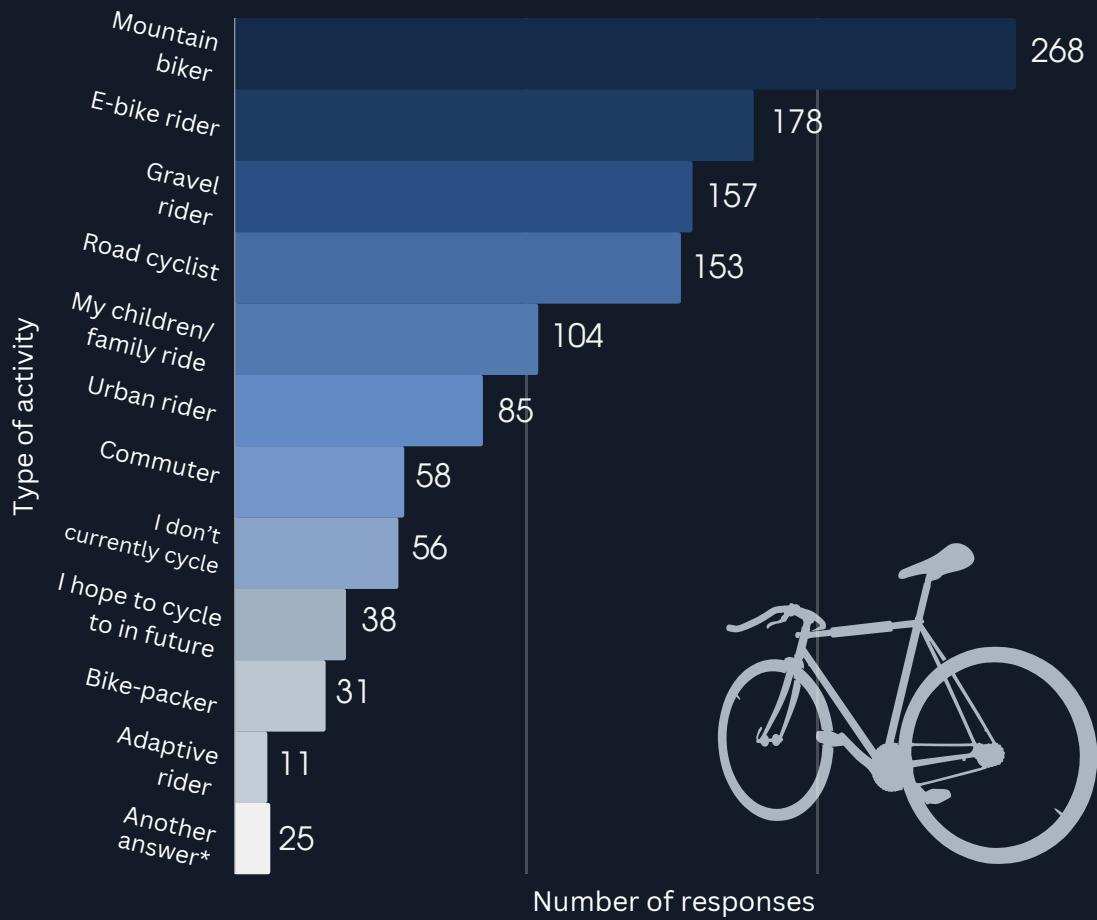
### Location

For those with a current connection to the Coromandel, where do you live work or holiday?



## Cycling activity type

Respondents could select more than one answer.



### Types of activities

Mountain biking was the most common activity, followed by e-bike and gravel and road cycling. Many people also noted their families ride, which was a prevalent theme throughout the survey.

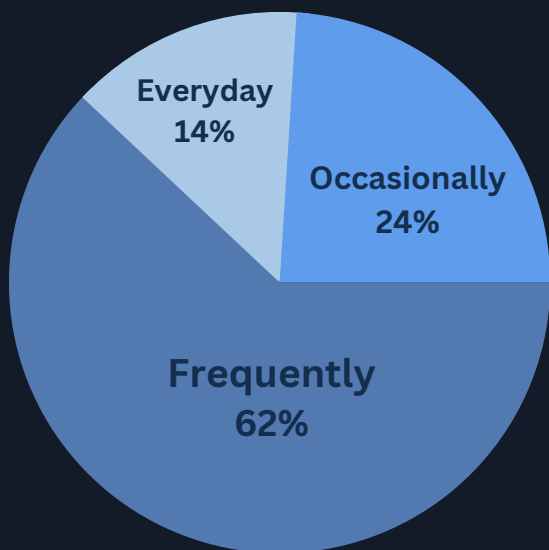
### \*Another answer

These included:

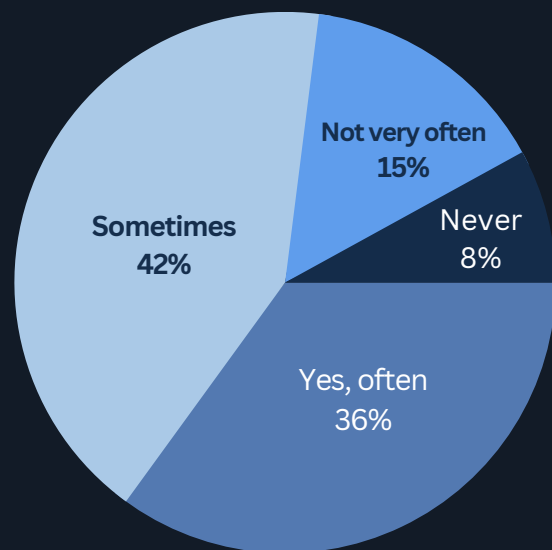
- own a bike shop
- bike tourist
- own a bike shop
- ride the Hauraki Rail Trail

## Level of activity

How often do you cycle?



## Do you travel out of your region to cycle? If so, how often?

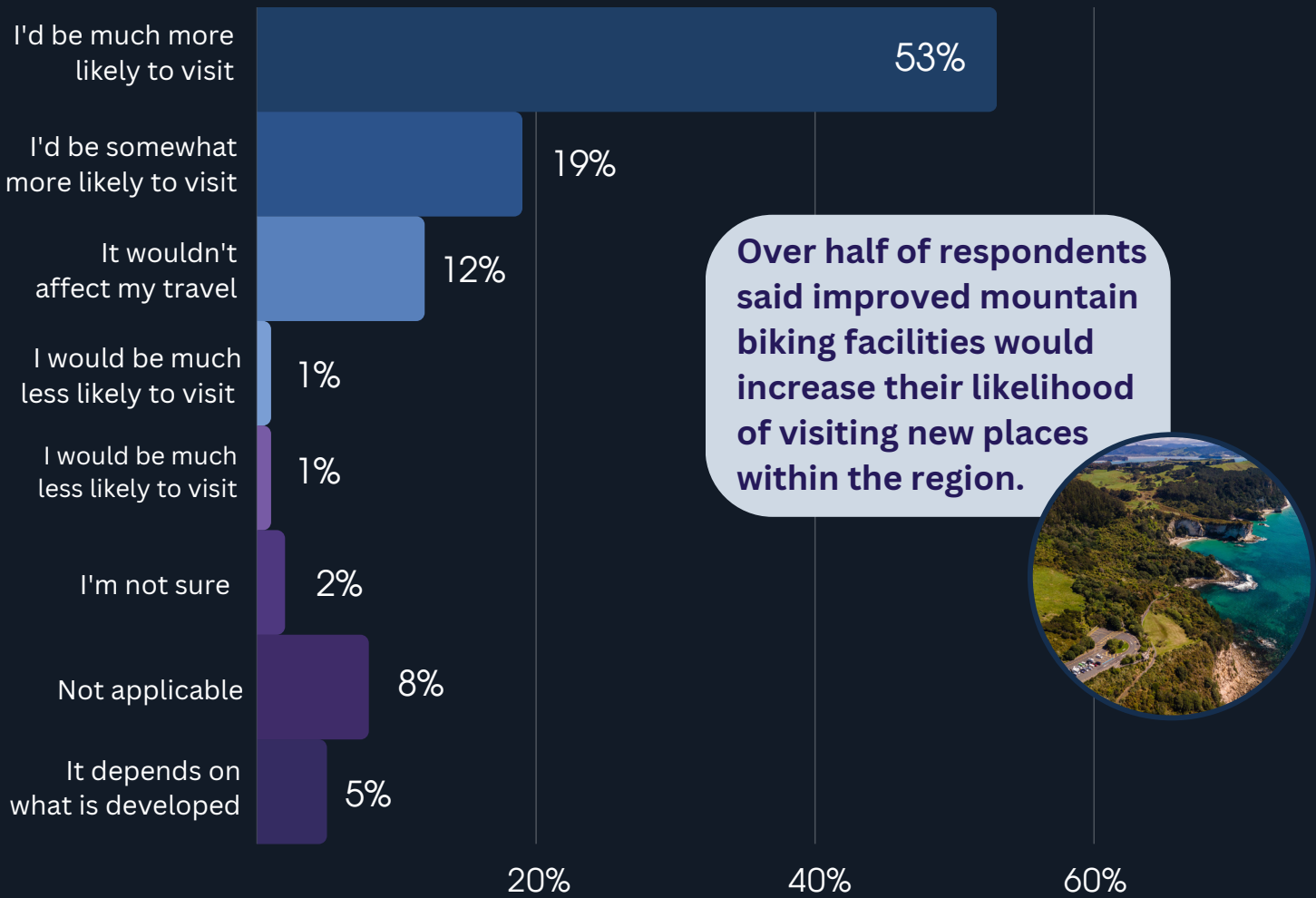


This was also only asked of those who said they currently cycled. A third of respondents often travelled out of their region to cycle, while over half did so 'sometimes' or 'not very often'. Less than 10 percent never travelled specifically to cycle.

### Types of activities

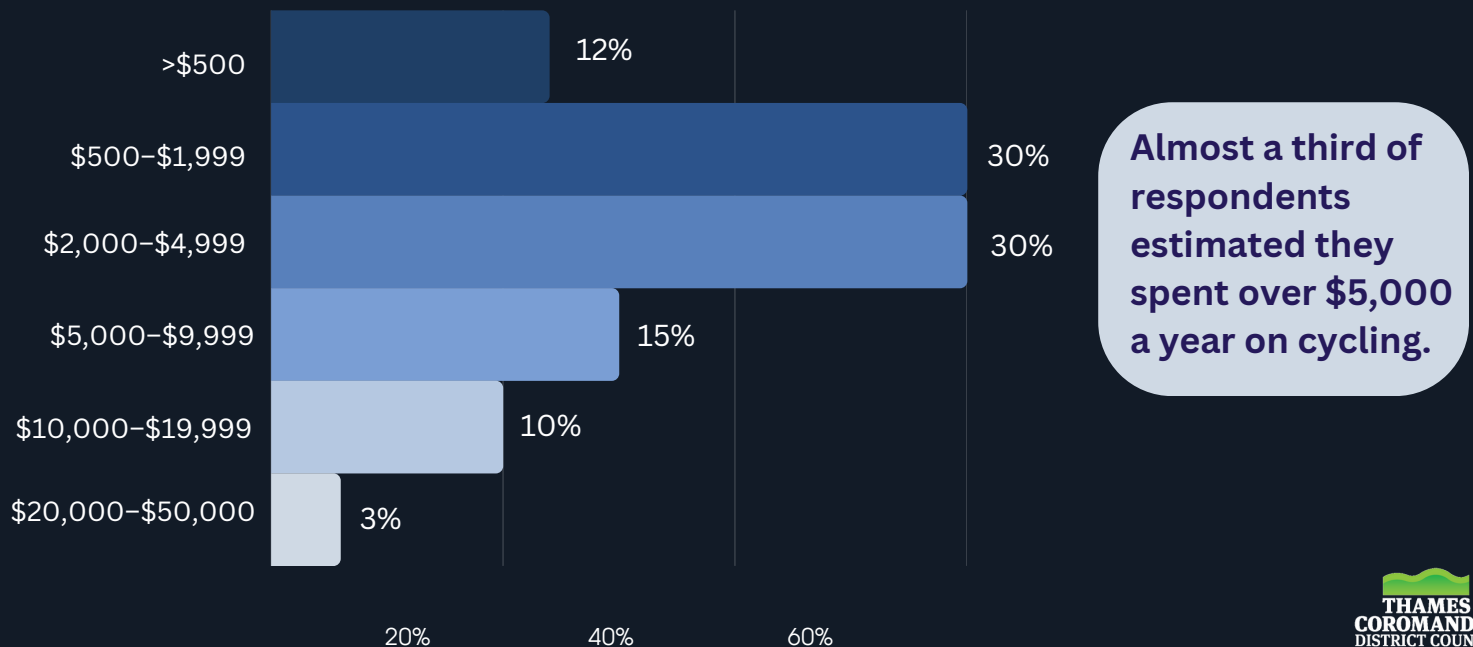
This was asked of those who said they currently cycled. Over half cycled 'frequently' while a quarter cycled 'occasionally'.

**How would improved mountain biking facilities affect your likelihood of visiting new places within the Hauraki-Coromandel region?**



**Annual estimated spend data per person on cycling**

How much do you estimate that you spend per year on this activity?



# HAURAKI-COROMANDEL DRAFT BIKING STRATEGY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE

## Sentiment towards the draft Strategy's overall vision

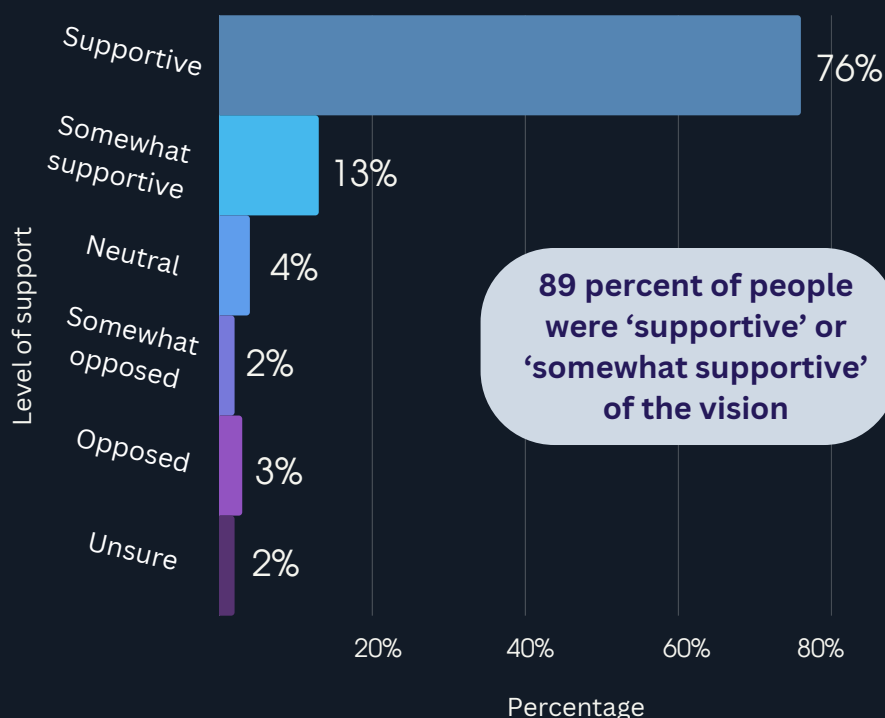
Almost 90 percent of survey respondents were 'supportive' or 'somewhat supportive' of the Strategy's overall vision. Key reasons for this were the potential to encourage more people and families into biking and nature, the success of network development seen in other regions, and the potential to boost the visitor economy. Many people believed the Coromandel's landscape had the potential to host a wider network of trails, using the success of trails that currently exist as an example. Safe on and off-road connections between trails was frequently mentioned as being important both to ensure areas were accessible and reduce vehicle traffic.

Some people explained they were supportive, as long as particular outcomes were met. These included making sure trails were managed and maintained adequately, did not impede on walking trails, did not take time and resource away from larger infrastructure projects, and sought the input of Tangata Whenua and locals as they were planned. It was also seen as important that they catered to a range of skill levels and families, rather than just the most skilled or adventurous riders. Some wished to see the development of all trails catering to a range of activities, rather than just biking trails.

Of those who were unsupportive of the vision, some saw trail development as impeding on other recreational activities such as walking and horse-riding, which they believed needed further investment. Others preferred to see such development prioritised after our roading infrastructure was repaired. Others were not sure if the vision was achievable, or saw it as being 'too conceptual' and would have preferred to have seen more tangible plans.

## How do you feel about the following vision:

*"The Coromandel is explored more sustainably by connecting communities and showcasing our environment to become a nationally significant mountain bike destination by 2032..."*



## Sentiment towards vision

- Holiday-makers were slightly more likely to be supportive of the vision, when compared to locals.
- 65 percent of those who live locally and do not currently cycle were 'supportive' or 'somewhat supportive' of the vision.
- Three percent of respondents who live locally were opposed to the vision. This increased to 18 percent for locals who do not currently cycle (and do not wish to in future).

# HAURAKI-COROMANDEL DRAFT BIKING STRATEGY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE

## Sentiment towards the Strategy's goals: Wellbeing of our people and environment

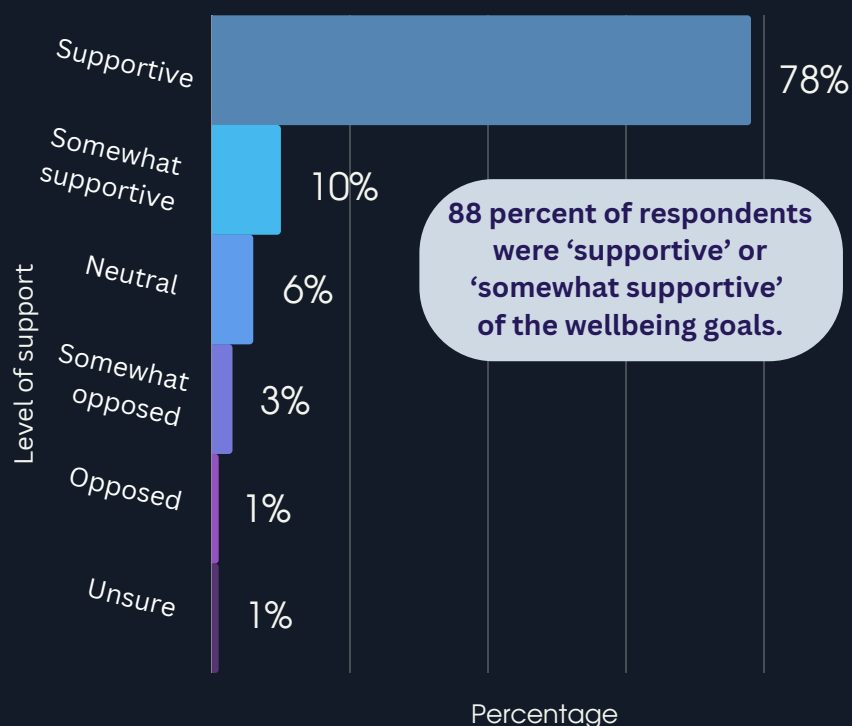
- The vast majority of people agreed that encouraging more people to experience nature in a sustainable way was a positive goal. They were enthusiastic about the health and wellbeing benefits they had experienced through cycling, including the social connections fostered. They hoped to see more people being able to access these outcomes by promoting cycling opportunities locally.
- People recognised the growing popularity of the sport and e-bikes, widening the number of people able to participate and experience the wellbeing benefits.
- People also noted cycling's potential reducing reliance on cars and, as some respondent described, the "isolating nature of car culture".



- Those who were not supportive of the goals were concerned there was not adequate resource to fund the necessary safe cycling connections. Some saw the project as coming at the expense of roading infrastructure, or were interested in knowing more before indicating their support.

### How do you feel about the following goals:

- ***"Improving the wellbeing of our communities and visitors by ensuring healthier lifestyle options and connecting people to the ngahere/forest."***
- ***"Creating inclusive, resilient and sustainable communities while protecting and enhancing our natural heritage, biodiversity and ecology."***



### Why did you choose this answer? Quotes from respondents.

"Biking is good for most people. We connect when we're not driving past each other... Our natural heritage needs investment to be sustained by bringing in volunteers and management programmes through this sort of initiative."

**"By achieving these goals we'll add value to the forest and trail network, creating a sustainable model for the growth, maintenance and longevity of the project."**

"Cycling provides many health benefits. It gets you outdoors and creates life-long friendships. Mountain biking has taken me to countless places I never would have seen, in countries around the world."

**"Has to be good for everyone!  
Especially the next generation!"**

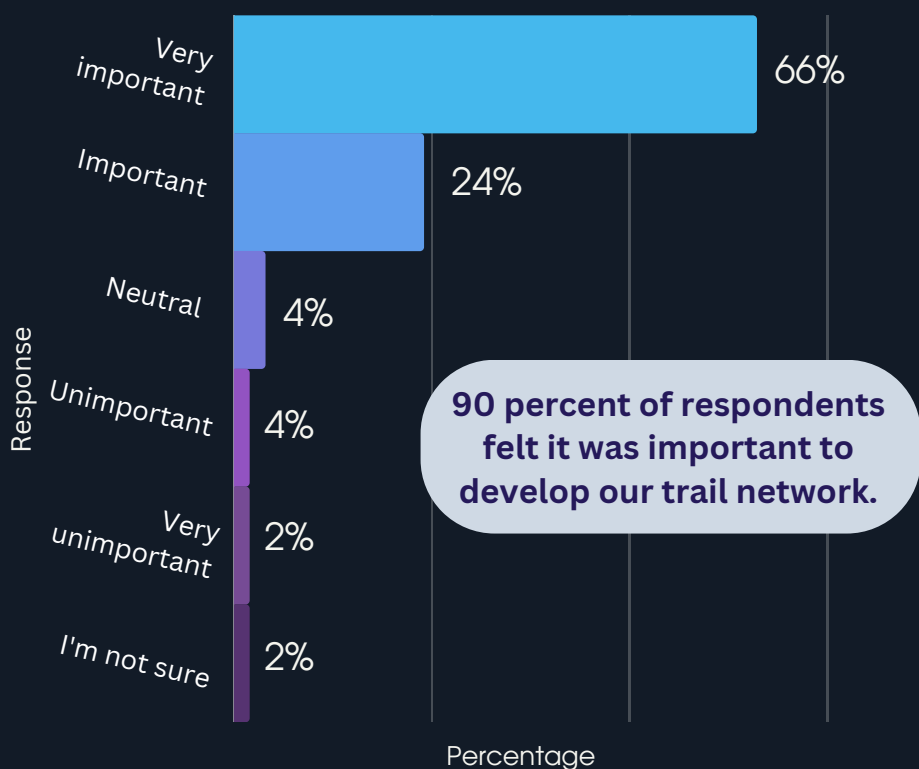
# HAURAKI-COROMANDEL DRAFT BIKING STRATEGY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE



## Support for Strategy's goals: Trail stewardship and development

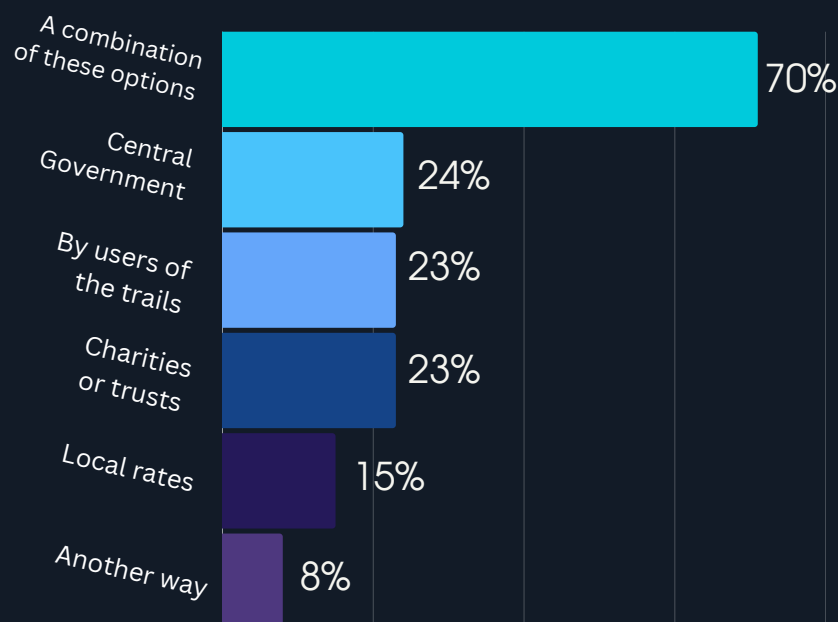
A goal of the Draft Strategy includes: Aiming to "increase the stewardship and value of trails and sustainably plan, deliver and resource the trail network..."

### How important do you feel it is to continue developing our trail network?



- Respondents felt it was important to develop our network in order to compete with other regions.
- Well-maintained, fit-for-purpose trails were seen as key to growing visitor numbers and experiencing the flow-on benefits of increased tourism.
- People saw the potential for increased connections between trails, to ensure people were drawn to multiple locations while in the region.
- Having increased options for different riders was seen as advantageous.

### For those supportive of development: If further development were to go ahead, how do you think trail development should be funded? (Multiple choice)



#### Examples of answers from 'Another way':

- "Combination of non-rates sources."
- "Not user pays as we need to encourage people to use it."
- "I think a combination of the above, but I'd go easy on the Local Rates. Mountain Biking isn't everyone's cup of tea..."
- Seed funding from Govt, philanthropy and private sector/bike companies.
- "By those that want the bike trails. Not taxpayer or rates."
- "It has to be a combination in order to get high quality trails."
- "Fundraisers and corporate sponsorship."
- "Iconic international events."
- "Case-by-case by location."
- "If developments put walkers at risk I'd rather they didn't get funded."



## Summary of key themes

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### Local demand and economic benefits

Many respondents expressed their desire for improved biking infrastructure. They emphasised that enhancing biking opportunities would contribute positively to both public health and the local economy. Respondents pointed to other regions in New Zealand, such as Rotorua and Otago as examples of how cycling trails and initiatives can boost tourism and local economies. Creating bike-friendly businesses, a calendar of events, and promoting a green ethos were suggested to complement trail development.



### Inclusive design

The Council was encouraged to support recreational cyclists, who form the largest participant group. The inclusion of longer, less challenging routes was suggested to attract a broader audience. Respondents stressed that biking initiatives should include options for riders of all abilities, including leisurely riders and families. Respondents also mentioned that biking projects could enhance the region's appeal for tourism and retirees. Respondents were also clear not to exclude or impede access for walkers/trampers and other user groups such as horse riders.



### Connecting the Coromandel

A recurring theme in the feedback was the need to create a comprehensive biking network that connects the entire Coromandel Peninsula over time. Respondents envisioned the Coromandel as a potential hub for mountain biking. Connectivity between towns were seen as key for respondents.



### Safe Access to Trails

Safety is a paramount concern. Several respondents expressed the need for safe cycling paths and access to the trails, especially for younger riders. Creating safe routes from towns to trailheads, such as from Whangamatā to their MTB park, was highlighted as a priority. They emphasised the need for dedicated cycle ways to make biking a family-friendly activity and encourage local riders to stay local rather than travel out of the region for riding. Safety concerns were raised regarding road cycling.



### **Respect for Existing Trails**

Striking a balance between accommodating different users and preserving natural environments was seen as essential. This was also seen to help collaboration between different groups in order to progress positively.

### **Maintaining momentum**

Many respondents urged authorities to prioritise the planning and execution of biking projects. Delays in paperwork were seen as a hindrance to progress. Some respondents were not sure that the vision could be achieved, due to a perception that similar projects had moved at a slow pace. While it was understood that there were other infrastructure projects being worked on following this year's storms, this was seen as a project that could assist in the region's recovery. Some respondents felt that the timeline of the strategy was too long. They emphasised the importance of setting annual goals to continually expand the trail network. A focused approach to trail development and promotion was encouraged to capitalise on the benefits of visitation that could provide.



### **Integration of Cycle Skills**

Several respondents highlighted the importance of offering cycle skills training for all age groups as part of the biking initiatives. This integration has been shown to encourage more people to take up biking and ensure safety. These initiatives can also help to widen opportunities for people to get involved in biking, if they do not have a current social connection to people who bike, or want to try biking.



# HAURAKI-COROMANDEL

## DRAFT BIKING STRATEGY

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSE

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#### **For those with a current connection to the Coromandel:**

The Draft Strategy outlines the current situation for bike riders in a variety of specific locations. How do you see the goals and outcomes of the Strategy impacting the town or area you are connected to?

Respondents see several potential benefits associated with this strategy, including economic growth, increased tourism, improved access to outdoor activities, and enhanced well-being for residents.

**Positive Sentiment:** Many respondents express positive sentiments regarding the Draft Strategy's impact on their town or area. They believe it will lead to improved access to safe biking, connect communities, boost economic growth, promote tourism, create business opportunities, and enhance the overall quality of life.

**Negative Sentiment:** A few respondents expressed concerns about various aspects, including the allocation of funds, the safety of sharing tracks, and the prioritisation of biking infrastructure over other needs. However, these negative comments are relatively rare compared to the overall positive sentiment.

- **Community Wellbeing:** The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of both residents and visitors, offering opportunities for outdoor activities and exercise.
- **Transportation Alternatives:** Respondents emphasised the importance of enabling cycle transport between towns, reducing car use during the summer season, and improving connectivity within the region.

**Collaboration:** Many respondents stressed the importance of collaboration between councils and communities to facilitate the development and maintenance of biking trails.



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## Summary

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**The Hauraki-Coromandel Draft Cycling Strategy has garnered substantial support and enthusiasm through its initial community engagement.**

By addressing safety concerns, diversifying trail types, and focusing on economic development, the strategy can successfully position the Coromandel Peninsula as a premier cycling destination, attracting a diverse range of visitors and benefiting the local economy.

Collaboration with stakeholders and a commitment to short-term goals are key to achieving these objectives. The successful implementation of the Coromandel Cycling Strategy relies on ongoing collaboration, efficient governance, continued community engagement and communication, and strategic planning.

### **The suggested next steps are to establish the Governance Group:**

To facilitate the efficient implementation of the Hauraki Coromandel Draft Cycling Strategy, it is advisable to form a dedicated Governance Board / Advisory Group.

This group will oversee and guide the strategic tasks outlined in the strategic plan, ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective project management throughout the strategy's execution.

These actions aim to enhance the Coromandel region's cycling infrastructure, align it with community needs, secure council support, engage with wider stakeholders and establish a structured approach for successful implementation including a funding implementation plan and adequate resourcing.

***Thank you to everyone who participated in this feedback process.***