

Cycle helmet use: Results of national survey, February/March 2009

The latest annual national survey of helmet use in New Zealand by cyclists of all ages was carried out in March and April, 2009. Over 5 000 cyclists were observed at 58 sites around the country. Each site was surveyed for two separate hours, typically between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., and between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., on normal school weekdays.

In 2009, the national cycle helmet wearing rate across all age groups was **92%**. This result is similar to the wearing rates observed over the past several years (see Table 1). As shown in Figure 1, primary and intermediate school children have a wearing rate (92%) equal to that of adults (92%), but higher than that of secondary school students (90%).

Table 1. Cycle helmet wearing rate by age group (%)

Age group	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Primary/ Intermediate	97	97	94	91	95	92	96	94	93	92
Secondary	91	93	84	88	91	90	92	89	90	90
Adult	91	92	88	88	90	90	94	93	93	92
All ages	93	95	89	89	92	91	94	92	92	92

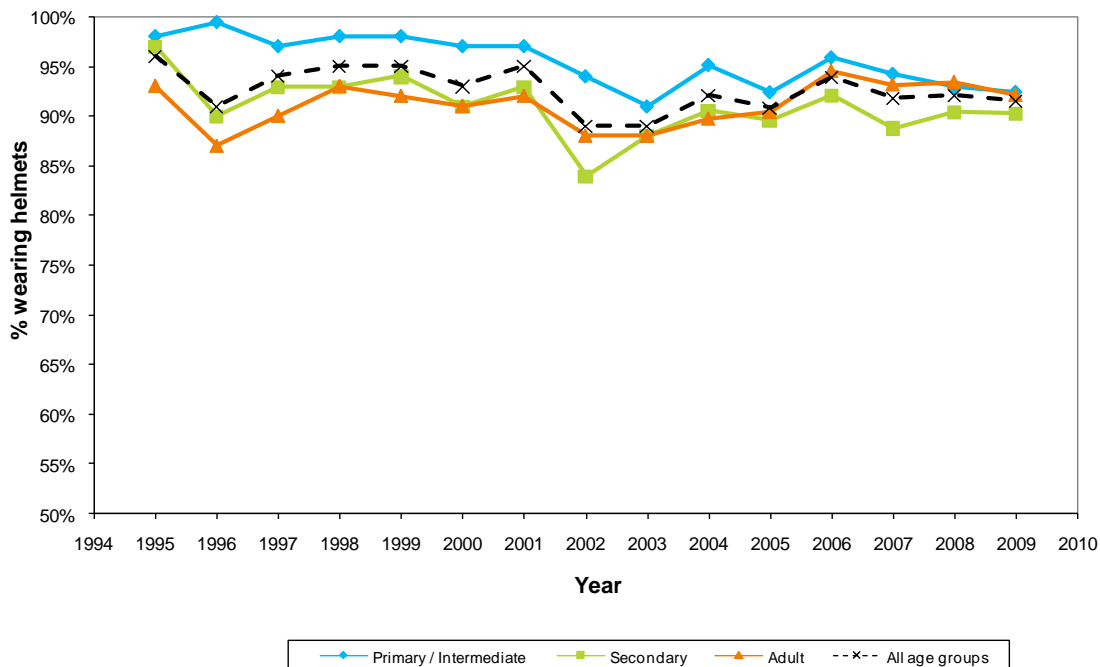


Figure 1. Cycle helmet wearing rate by age group, 1995 - 2009

Regional Wearing Rates

These national surveys are designed to provide a consistent measure of cycle helmet use over time, by surveying the same sites each year. We can use this data to consider the regional wearing rates. Table 2 below shows the observed cycle helmet wearing rates for each Local Government Region, over the last ten years. (This survey is not designed to provide results at sub-regional level).

Overall, the wearing rates are high, have not changed markedly and are being maintained in most of the regions. The cycle helmet wearing rates in Wellington (sample sizes of 330) appears to be down somewhat from 2008. Taranaki (sample size of 236) also appears down from a peak rate of 98% in 2007.

Note that the accuracy of the wearing rates is dependent on the sample sizes (the number of cyclists observed). If the sample size is small, the data may show large random fluctuations in the observed wearing rate. Northland region is the most affected, with typically fewer than 70 cyclists observed each year (53 this year). Small sample sizes (less than 140) have also been recorded in Gisborne, Southland and the West Coast region this year.

Table 2. Cycle helmet wearing rates by Local Government Region (%)

Local Government Region	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Northland	89	85	81	69	85	91	91	77	84	85
Auckland	91	86	79	76	85	76	89	89	85	88
Waikato	91	96	92	93	91	91	88	89	82	85
Bay of Plenty	91	93	87	87	84	87	93	93	92	90
Gisborne	96	96	92	96	92	93	93	79	96	96
Hawkes Bay	85	91	84	85	95	94	98	90	94	92
Taranaki	94	95	90	86	92	92	95	98	90	84
Manawatu-Wanganui	95	95	87	92	93	95	96	93	94	94
Wellington	96	96	92	91	94	93	95	88	95	86
Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman	96	97	96	95	95	92	94	93	93	93
West Coast	84	90	62	87	95	82	88	94	94	96
Canterbury	97	97	92	89	94	90	98	96	97	96
Otago	92	91	85	91	98	94	91	93	93	95
Southland	96	97	93	92	95	94	95	95	92	91
New Zealand	93	94	89	89	92	91	94	92	92	92

Police District Wearing Rates

Further, we can use the data to look at cycle helmet wearing rates in each Police District each year. Table 3 shows the cycle helmet wearing rates for each Police District over the last ten years. (This survey is not designed to provide Police Area results).

Overall, the cycle helmet wearing rates are being maintained in most of the police districts. Helmet wearing in Central (sample size 1005), Wellington (sample size 330), and Counties / Manukau (sample size 62) appears to have decreased.

The accuracy of the wearing rates depend on the sample sizes (the number of cyclists observed). If the sample size is small, the data may show large random fluctuations in the observed wearing rate. Northland Police District is the most affected, with typically fewer than 70 cyclists observed each year (53 this year). Small sample sizes (fewer than 100 cyclists) have also been recorded in Auckland and Counties/Manukau in some years.

Table 3. Cycle helmet wearing rates by Police District (%)

Police District	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Northland	89	85	81	69	85	91	91	77	84	85
Waitemata	94	91	84	79	92	86	89	89	89	93
Auckland	92	86	83	71	80	82	93	89	87	94
Counties / Manukau	86	79	65	72	82	55	84	88	75	68
Waikato	90	96	93	94	91	92	87	91	87	85
Bay of Plenty	91	93	88	87	85	86	92	91	85	89
Eastern	89	93	86	88	94	94	97	86	94	93
Central	95	95	87	91	93	94	96	94	94	91
Wellington	96	96	92	91	94	93	95	88	95	86
Tasman	93	95	90	94	95	91	93	93	93	94
Canterbury	97	97	92	89	94	90	98	96	97	96
Southern	94	94	90	92	97	94	93	94	92	94
New Zealand	93	94	89	89	92	91	94	92	92	92