

Steady Support, Softer Demand: Ontarians on Cycling, Road Safety and Bike Lanes

A public opinion study for the
Share the Road Cycling Coalition
and the Ontario Traffic Council

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Executive summary

Abacus Data surveyed 2,000 Ontario adults from August 27 to September 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council. The study asked how Ontarians get around, how they feel about cycling and road safety, where they stand on public investment in active transportation, and what they make of the province's bike lane legislation. Many questions repeat a 2023 survey conducted for Share the Road, which allows the results to be read as a trend, and the sample was designed to report results for seven regions: Toronto, the rest of the GTA, Ottawa, Southwestern, Central, Eastern and Northern Ontario. Eight findings stand out.

- **Ontarians want municipalities, not the province, to decide on local bike lanes.** 64% say decisions about bike lanes on local roads should be made by municipalities; 22% say the province should have the final say. Municipal control is the majority view in every region, from 59% in Toronto to 71% in Southwestern Ontario.
- **The bike lane legislation itself divides the province.** 44% support the law restricting new bike lanes that remove a lane of car traffic, 40% oppose it and 16% are not sure.
- **Only a third think the province is doing enough for cyclists.** 33% agree the provincial government is doing enough to address the concerns of cyclists, up four points from 2023 but a minority view in every region, from 37% in Toronto to 24% in Northern Ontario.
- **Fewer Ontarians are cycling, and fewer want to cycle more.** 20% ride at least weekly, down two points from 2023, but the share who never cycle has risen from 32% to 41%. Interest in cycling more often has fallen from 51% to 41%.
- **Safety is the barrier that matters most.** 52% would feel safe cycling on the roads in their community and 43% would not. Among those who rarely or never ride, nervousness about safety on shared roads is the top reason (41%), and women are more likely than men to cite it.
- **Support for investing in cycling has held firm.** 65% agree the province should invest in cycling infrastructure because it makes roads safer for cyclists and motorists, unchanged from 2023. 72% agree that investing in proper infrastructure makes roads safer for everyone, also unchanged.
- **Specific measures draw broad support.** 88% back active travel plans to promote walking and cycling to school, 80% support more public education on road rules and the safe use of bikes and e-bikes, and 59% want a dedicated provincial active transportation fund.
- **Cycling tourism has a base and public backing.** 30% have taken a cycling trip within Ontario in the past three years, 52% are interested in doing so, and 66% say the province should develop a strategy to grow cycling tourism.

The picture is one of durable support and softer participation. Public backing for safer roads and better cycling infrastructure has not eroded through a contested public debate. What has slipped is the number of Ontarians actually riding, and the reason they give, safety, is the same reason they give for wanting infrastructure built.

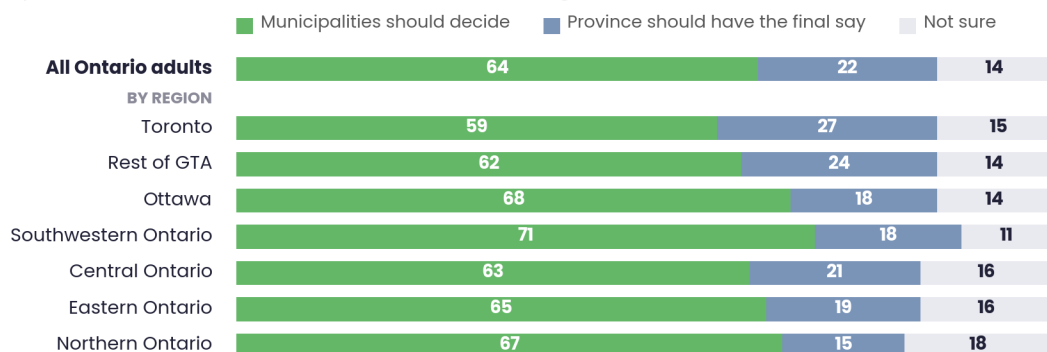
Ontarians want municipalities to decide on local bike lanes

Asked which of two views comes closer to their own, 64% of Ontarians say decisions about bike lanes on local roads should be made by municipalities, which know their communities best. 22% say the provincial government should have the final say because those roads affect traffic across the region, and 14% do not know.

The preference for local control holds in every region of the province. It is highest in Southwestern Ontario (71%) and Ottawa (68%), and above 60% in Central (63%), Eastern (65%) and Northern Ontario (67%) and the rest of the GTA (62%). Even in Toronto, where support for the provincial legislation is highest, 59% of residents prefer that the city make its own decisions and 27% would give the province the final say.

In every region of Ontario, most want municipalities to decide on local bike lanes

% of Ontario adults who say decisions about bike lanes on local roads should be made by municipalities, which know their communities best, or that the provincial government should have the final say because those roads affect traffic across the region



Northern Ontario results are based on roughly 120 respondents and carry a wider margin of error. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

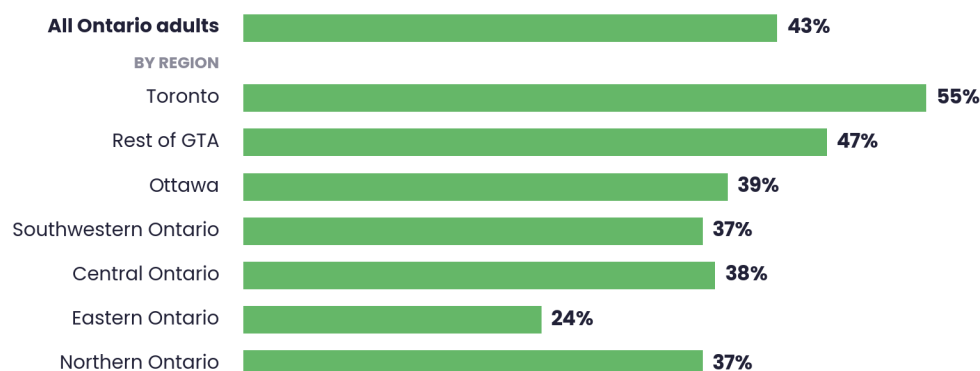
The legislation divides the province, and the divide has a geography

The bike lane debate has reached most Ontarians. 70% have seen, read or heard at least a little about it over the past year, including 13% who have heard a lot. Attention is highest in Toronto, where 55% have heard some or a lot, and the rest of the GTA (47%), and drops to 37% to 39% in Ottawa, Southwestern,

Central and Northern Ontario and 24% in Eastern Ontario, where 41% have heard nothing at all. Frequent cyclists (59%) and men (49%) are more tuned in than non-cyclists (35%) and women (38%).

The bike lane debate has been followed most closely in Toronto and least in Eastern Ontario

% of Ontario adults who have seen, read or heard a lot or some about debates over bike lanes in Ontario over the past year or so



A further 26% have heard a little and 30% nothing at all. Northern Ontario results are based on roughly 120 respondents. Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Respondents were told that the Ontario government has passed legislation that does not allow municipalities to build new bike lanes that would remove a lane of car traffic unless the province grants an exemption, and that also calls for the removal of sections of some existing bike lanes in Toronto. 44% support this approach (17% strongly), 40% oppose it (18% strongly) and 16% are not sure.

A belief that bike lanes add to congestion

Part of what sustains support for the legislation is a view that bike lanes make traffic worse. Asked what effect bike lanes have on congestion in cities and towns, 41% say they make it worse (24% somewhat, 16% much), 27% say they make little or no difference, 19% say they reduce it and 13% are not sure.

Most do not think the province is doing enough

Against this backdrop, only 33% of Ontarians agree the provincial government is doing enough to address the concerns of cyclists. That is four points higher than in 2023, but 30% disagree and 38% are neutral. No region reaches 40%: agreement runs from 37% in Toronto and 35% in the rest of the GTA to 28% in Eastern Ontario and 24% in Northern Ontario. On the province's broader record, Ontarians rate its performance on making roads safer for everyone as a coin toss: 46% say it is doing a good or

very good job and 43% a poor or very poor job. Ratings are weakest in Northern Ontario, where 50% say poor and 38% good, and in Eastern Ontario (44% poor, 38% good).

In no region do more than four-in-ten think the province is doing enough for cyclists

% of Ontario adults who agree the provincial government is doing enough to address the concerns of cyclists



30% of Ontarians disagree and 38% are neutral. Northern Ontario results are based on roughly 120 respondents.
Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

64% of Ontarians say decisions about local bike lanes belong to municipalities. The legislation splits the province; the question of who should decide does not.

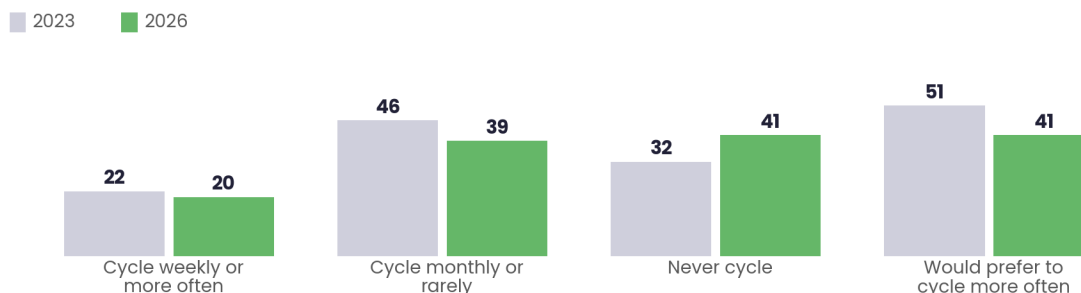
Fewer Ontarians are cycling, and fewer want to cycle more

Driving remains the default way of getting around. 72% of Ontarians drive a car, truck or SUV in a typical month, 55% walk to get to the places they need to go, 40% take public transit and 39% ride as a passenger. 16% ride a bicycle in a typical month. Riding an e-bike (4%) or an e-scooter (3%) remains uncommon, though both reach 6% to 7% among adults under 30. The mix varies by region: Toronto residents are far more likely to walk (66%) and take transit (65%) than residents of Eastern (47% and 15%) or Northern Ontario (44% and 21%), while monthly bicycle use ranges from 13% in Eastern Ontario to 22% in Ottawa.

Ontarians are driving less often than they were in 2023. 73% say they drive weekly or more often, down from 81%, while 16% never drive, up from 11%. Cycling has not absorbed that change. 20% of Ontarians ride a bicycle at least weekly (5% every day or almost every day, 15% weekly), two points below 2023. The bigger movement is at the other end of the scale: 39% cycle once or twice a month or rarely, down from 46%, and 41% never cycle, up from 32%. The never-cycle share is highest in Eastern Ontario (49%) and lowest in Ottawa (37%) and Northern Ontario (38%).

Fewer Ontarians are cycling, and fewer want to cycle more, than in 2023

% of Ontario adults who ride a bicycle at each frequency, and % who say they would prefer to ride a bicycle more often



abacus
data

The share who never cycle is up nine points since 2023; interest in cycling more often is down ten.

Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council; 2023 figures from the April 2023 survey of Ontario adults conducted for Share the Road.

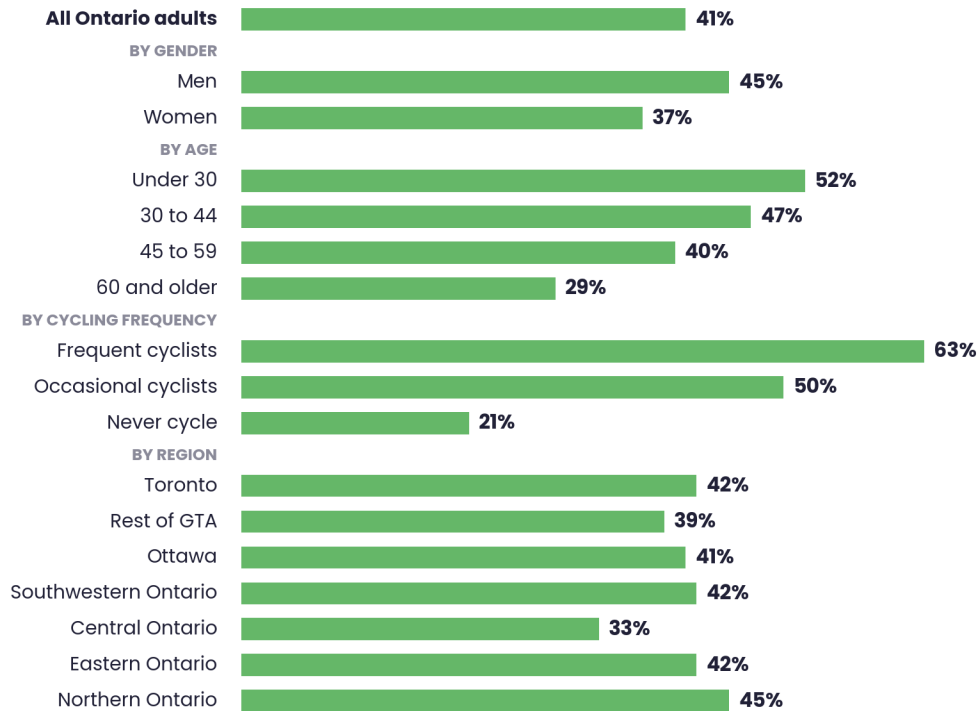
Interest in cycling more has softened

In 2023, a majority of Ontarians (51%) said they would prefer to ride a bicycle more often. In 2026, 41% do. The share who are happy with the amount of cycling they do has edged up from 35% to 38%, and the share who would prefer to cycle less has risen from 13% to 21%.

The appetite to cycle more is strongest among people who already ride: 63% of frequent cyclists and 50% of occasional cyclists would like to ride more, compared with 21% of those who never cycle. Men are more likely than women to want to cycle more (45% vs 37%), and the gap by age is wider still, from 52% of adults under 30 down to 29% of those 60 and older. Regionally, interest sits between 39% and 45% everywhere except Central Ontario, where 33% would like to cycle more and 28% would prefer to cycle less.

The appetite to cycle more is strongest among younger adults and people who already ride

% of Ontario adults who say they would prefer to ride a bicycle more often



Frequent cyclists ride weekly or more often; occasional cyclists ride monthly or rarely. Northern Ontario results are based on roughly 120 respondents.
Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Most cyclists ride for exercise and recreation

Among the Ontarians who ride at least rarely, exercise (67%) and recreation (59%) are by far the most common reasons to get on a bike. 20% use a bicycle for chores such as shopping or errands, 19% to visit friends, 10% to commute to work and 4% to commute to school. 12% use it for cycling trips, tours or vacations. Utilitarian uses have edged up since 2023, chores from 16% to 20% and commuting to work from 7% to 10%, while recreation is down from 72%.

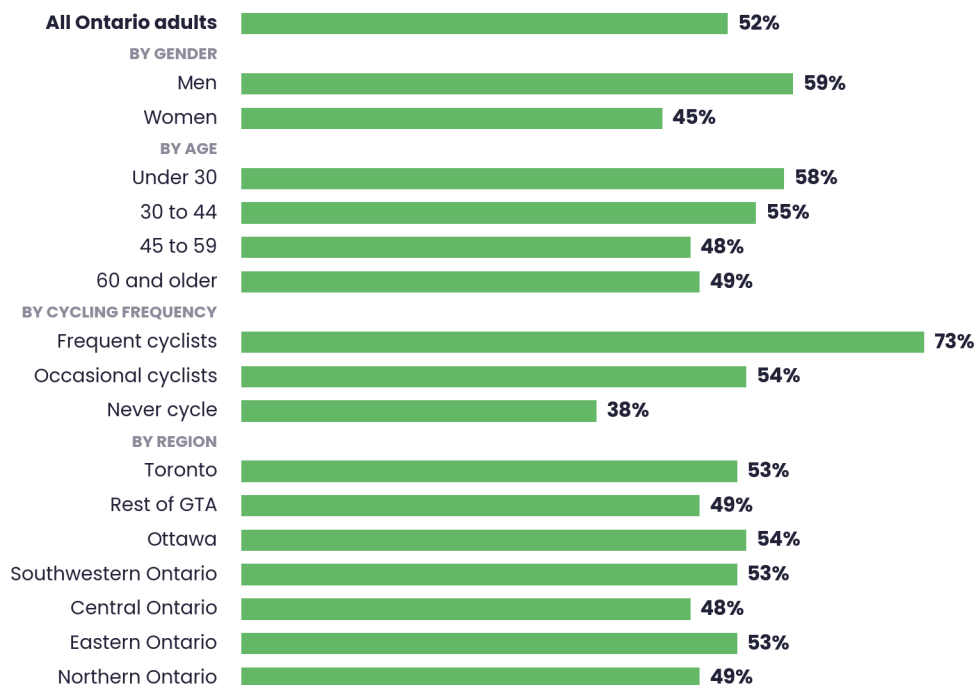
Access is not the main constraint. 80% of Ontarians say they can ride a bike, but only 49% own a bicycle they can use. 9% own or have access to an e-bike and 5% use a public bike-share system.

Safety is the biggest barrier to cycling

Asked how safe they would feel riding a bicycle on the roads in their community, 52% of Ontarians say very (10%) or somewhat (42%) safe, while 43% say somewhat (26%) or very (17%) unsafe. The balance tips the other way for women (45% safe, 49% unsafe) and for those who never cycle (38% safe, 51% unsafe). It varies little by region: between 48% and 54% feel safe in every part of the province, though Northern Ontario has the largest unsafe share (49%) and Central Ontario the smallest (38%).

Half of Ontarians would feel safe cycling on local roads; women and non-cyclists feel least safe

% of Ontario adults who say they would feel very or somewhat safe riding a bicycle on the roads in their community



43% of Ontarians say they would feel somewhat or very unsafe. Northern Ontario results are based on roughly 120 respondents.

Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

What keeps people off bikes

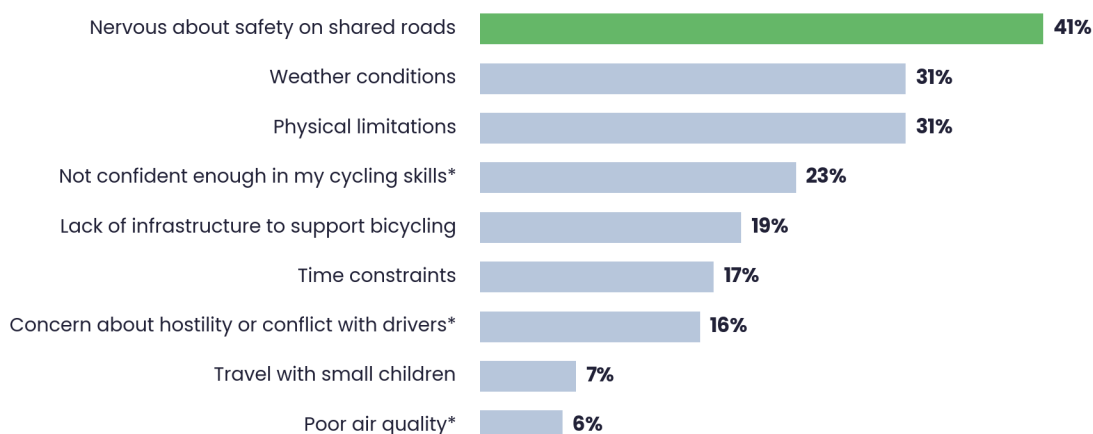
Among the Ontarians who ride rarely or never, the leading reason is being nervous about safety on shared roads (41%), followed by weather (31%) and physical limitations (31%). Two barriers measured for the first time this year rank next: 23% say they are not confident enough in their cycling skills and

16% cite concern about hostility or conflict with drivers. 19% point to a lack of infrastructure and 17% to time constraints.

Several barriers are lower than in 2023, when 48% cited safety, 38% weather, 27% infrastructure and 26% time. Because three new options were added to the list this year, some of that decline reflects respondents choosing the newer, more specific answers rather than a change in the underlying concern.

Safety on shared roads is the top reason Ontarians stay off their bikes

% of Ontario adults who ride a bicycle rarely or never who say each prevents them from using a bicycle



Asked of the 1,333 respondents who cycle rarely or never. Respondents could select more than one. *New in 2026. 'Other' (15%) not shown.

Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

The barriers differ by who is answering. Women who rarely or never cycle are more likely than men to cite safety on shared roads (45% vs 37%) and much more likely to say they lack confidence in their skills (29% vs 15%). Physical limitations dominate among older adults: 47% of those 60 and older cite them, compared with 18% of those under 30. Time constraints peak among 30 to 44 year olds (27%), and travel with small children is a factor for 17% of that group. By region, safety worries peak among non-cyclists in the rest of the GTA (46%), physical limitations in Northern (39%) and Southwestern Ontario (37%), and lack of confidence in Central Ontario (36%). Concern about hostility from drivers is twice as common in Toronto (21%) and Ottawa (20%) as in Central, Eastern or Northern Ontario (9% to 10%).

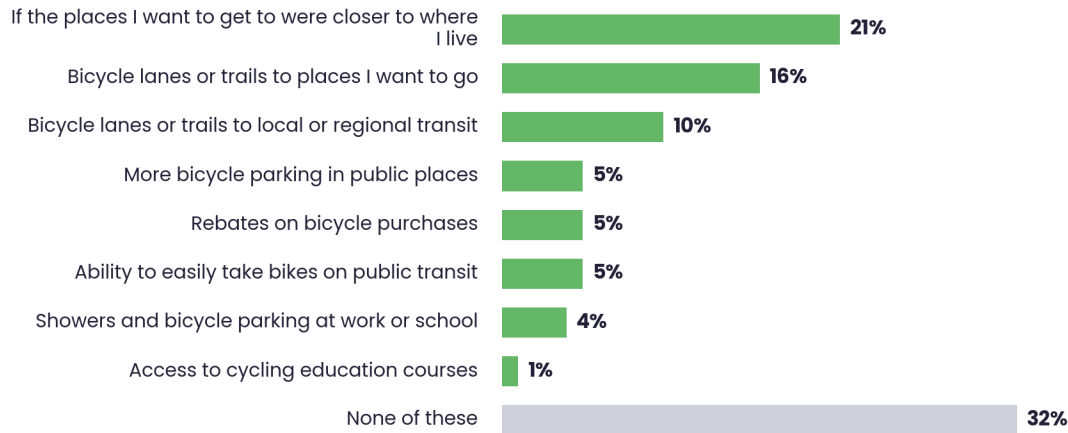
What would get more people riding

Asked which single measure would be most likely to encourage them to cycle more often, Ontarians most often choose having the places they want to get to closer to where they live (21%), followed by bike lanes or trails to the places they want to go (16%) and bike lanes or trails to local or regional transit

(10%). More bicycle parking, rebates on bicycle purchases and the ability to take bikes on transit each draw 5%. 32% say none of these would encourage them, a figure that rises to 54% among those 60 and older and 58% among those who never cycle and falls to 12% among adults under 30 and 7% among frequent cyclists. Central (40%), Eastern (38%) and Southwestern Ontario (38%) have the largest shares saying nothing would encourage them; Ottawa (25%) and Northern Ontario (27%) the smallest.

Closer destinations and connected bike lanes or trails would do most to encourage cycling

% of Ontario adults who say each would be most likely to encourage them to bicycle more often



Respondents selected one measure. 'None of these' rises to 54% among those 60 and older and 58% among those who never cycle, and to 40% in Central Ontario.
Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Safe travel options also matter when Ontarians think about where to live. 79% say that if they moved to a new home, it would be important to live in a neighbourhood where they can safely walk, cycle or take transit to the places they need to go, including 44% who say this is very important. That importance is highest in Toronto (83%) and lowest in Ottawa (73%) and Eastern Ontario (72%), but nowhere below seven-in-ten. The audience for safe, connected infrastructure is much broader than the population that currently cycles.

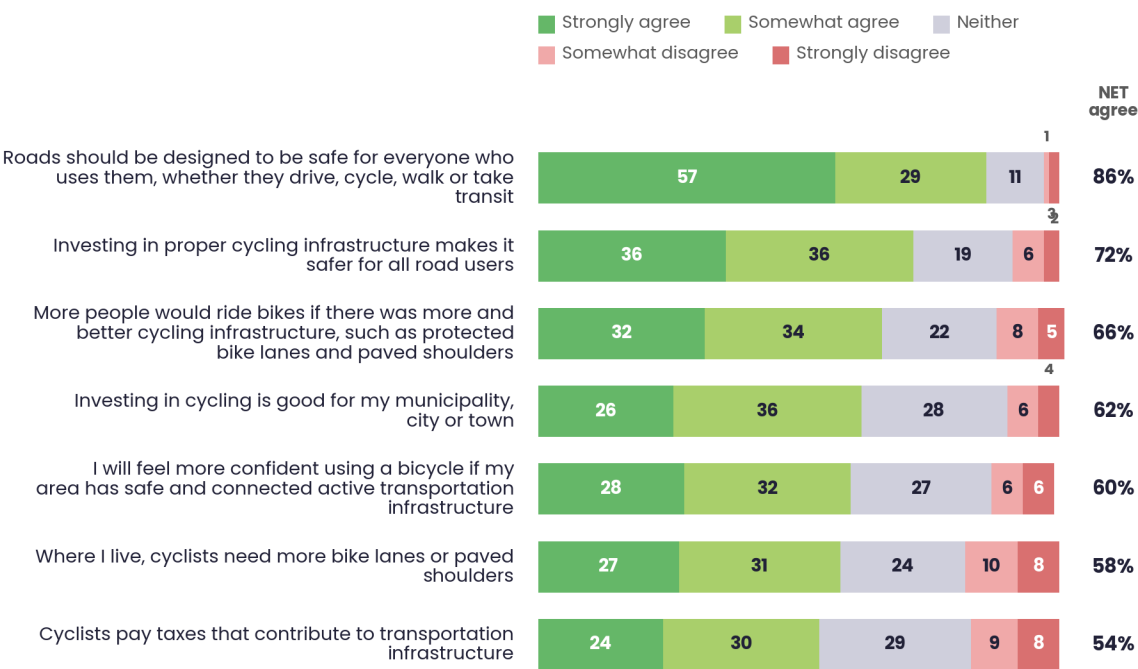
Support for investing in cycling has held steady

The most striking feature of the attitude data is how little has moved. 72% of Ontarians agree that investing in proper cycling infrastructure makes it safer for all road users, exactly the 2023 reading. 66% agree more people would ride bikes if there were more and better cycling infrastructure such as protected bike lanes and paved shoulders (65% in 2023). 62% agree investing in cycling is good for their municipality (65%), 60% say they would feel more confident cycling if their area had safe and connected infrastructure (61%), 58% agree cyclists where they live need more bike lanes or paved shoulders (56%), and 54% agree cyclists pay taxes that contribute to transportation infrastructure (54%).

A statement tested for the first time this year sits above all of them: 86% agree roads should be designed to be safe for everyone who uses them, whether they drive, cycle, walk or take transit, including 57% who strongly agree. It is the broadest point of consensus in the survey and sits between 84% and 86% in every region of the province.

Attitudes toward cycling infrastructure are essentially unchanged since 2023

% of Ontario adults who agree or disagree with each statement



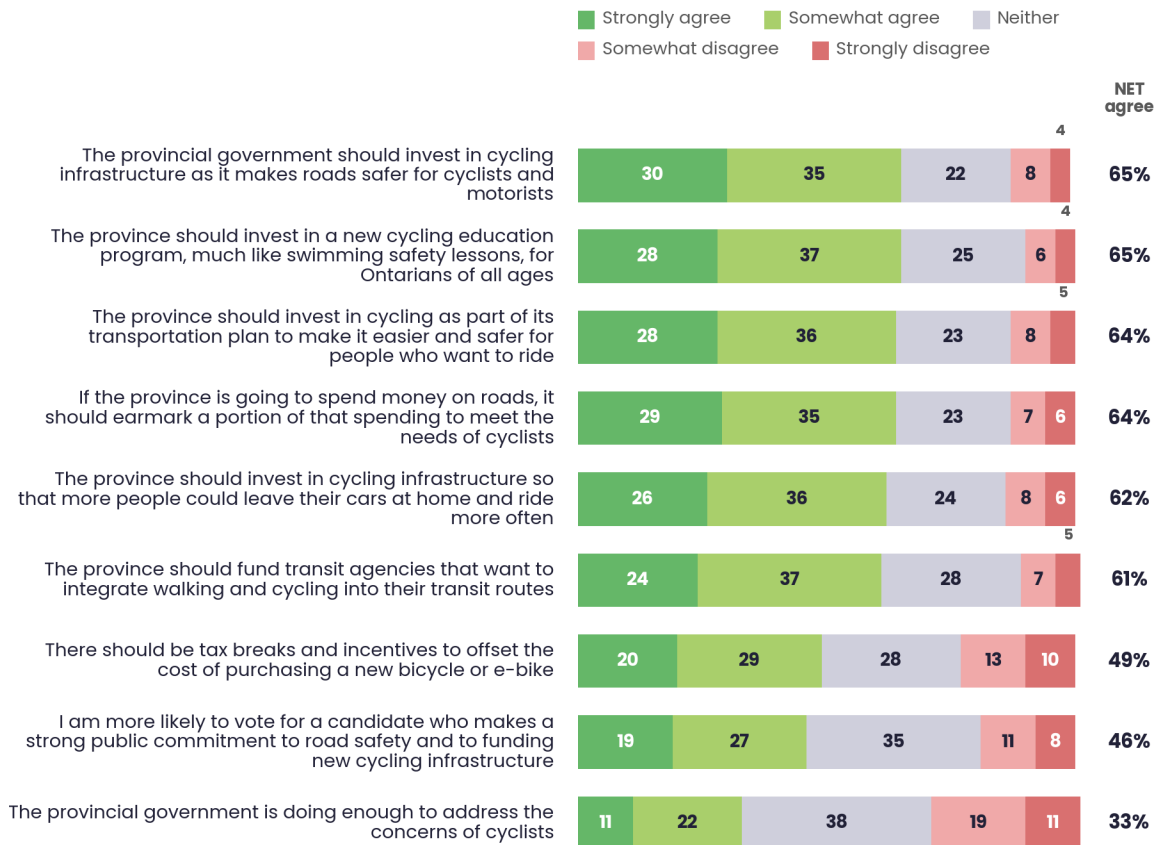
2023 NET agree, where asked: safer for all road users 72%; more people would ride 65%; good for my municipality 65%; more confident 61%; need more bike lanes 56%; cyclists pay taxes 54%. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Support for provincial investment, and doubts the province is doing enough

Between 62% and 65% of Ontarians agree with each of five statements calling on the provincial government to invest in cycling. 65% agree the province should invest in cycling infrastructure because it makes roads safer for cyclists and motorists, 65% support a new cycling education program modelled on swimming safety lessons, 64% agree the province should invest in cycling as part of its transportation plan, 64% say a portion of road spending should be earmarked for cyclists, and 62% agree the province should invest so more people can leave their cars at home. Each is within four points of its 2023 level. 61% agree the province should fund transit agencies that want to integrate walking and cycling into their routes, unchanged from 2023, while support for tax breaks on bicycle and e-bike purchases has slipped from 55% to 49%.

Support for provincial investment in cycling holds; only a third say the province is doing enough

% of Ontario adults who agree or disagree with each statement



2023 NET agree: 65%, 61%, 66%, 65%, 63%, 61%, 55%, 42% and 29%, in the order shown. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Cycling also carries some electoral weight. 46% of Ontarians agree they would be more likely to vote for a local or provincial candidate who makes a strong public commitment to road safety and to funding new cycling infrastructure, up from 42% in 2023. 19% disagree and 35% are neutral. The statement resonates most with adults under 30 (60%), frequent cyclists (68%) and Toronto residents (53%); elsewhere agreement sits between 42% and 46%.

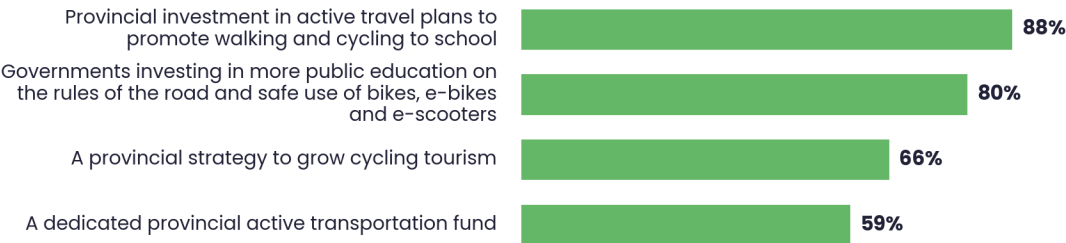
Specific measures draw broad support

Targeted measures perform well. 88% support the provincial government investing in active travel plans to promote walking and cycling to school, including 43% who strongly support it; about one-in-ten oppose. 80% support all levels of government investing in more public education about the rules of the road and the safe use of bicycles and micro-mobility devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters, with 10% opposed. And 59% think the provincial government should have a dedicated active transportation fund to support infrastructure and related programs, compared with 15% who say it should not and 26% who do not know. Support for the fund was 57% in 2023. Active travel plans draw 83% support or higher in every region, and backing for the active transportation fund ranges from 55% in Eastern Ontario to 63% in Toronto.

On road safety decisions more broadly, 75% support making provincial road safety funding for traffic calming and speed management available to all municipalities rather than only those that previously operated speed cameras, 67% support reinstating automated speed enforcement cameras in school and community safety zones, and 66% support raising the speed limit to 110 km/h on some 400-series highways. Speed cameras draw their strongest support in Toronto (74%) and Ottawa (73%) and their weakest in Northern Ontario (55%).

Specific measures draw broad support, led by active travel plans for schools

% of Ontario adults who support each measure



Active travel plans: 90% in 2023. Active transportation fund: 57% in 2023. The other two measures are new in 2026.
Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Cycling tourism has a base and public backing

30% of Ontarians have taken a trip within the province in the past three years where cycling was one of the main activities, including 16% who took an overnight trip and 14% a day trip. 52% are very (17%) or somewhat (35%) interested in taking such a trip, riding a scenic trail or route or exploring a region by bike; 48% are not. Interest is steeply age-graded, at 73% among adults under 30 and 29% among those 60 and older, and it reaches 83% among frequent cyclists. Toronto (37%) and Ottawa (35%) residents lead on cycling trips taken; Northern Ontario residents (22%) trail.

Three-in-ten have taken a cycling trip in Ontario, half are interested, and two-thirds want a strategy

% of Ontario adults



Source: Abacus Data survey of 2,000 Ontario adults, conducted online Aug. 27 to Sept. 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council.

Respondents were told that Quebec recently launched a five-year strategy to grow cycling tourism, that cycling tourism there now generates more than \$700 million in visitor spending and 1.6 million overnight stays a year, and that Ontario has no comparable strategy. 66% say the Ontario government should develop one (23% definitely, 43% probably), 17% say it should not and 17% are not sure. Support is a majority in every region, from 61% in Northern Ontario to 71% in Central Ontario.

The Upshot

Three years after the last province-wide survey on cycling, and two years into a heated debate over bike lanes, four things stand out from the 2026 results.

- **Public support has proven durable.** Support for provincial investment in cycling infrastructure, education and planning is essentially where it was in 2023, and the broadest point of agreement in the survey, that roads should be designed to be safe for everyone who uses them, draws 86% agreement. Support has not grown, but it has not eroded either, and it holds in every region of the province at nearly the same level.
- **Ontarians separate the bike lane fight from the question of who should decide.** The legislation divides the province. Municipal authority over local bike lanes does not divide it: it is the majority view in every region, including Toronto. Most Ontarians also do not think the province is doing enough for cyclists, and no region comes close to a majority saying so.
- **Participation has drifted down, and safety is the reason.** Four-in-ten Ontarians never cycle, up nine points, and interest in cycling more is down ten. The reasons people give for staying off their bikes, safety first among them, are the same reasons they give for supporting infrastructure. Six-in-ten say safe, connected infrastructure would make them more confident riding, and the measures most likely to get people riding are closer destinations and routes that reach them.
- **The audience for safer roads is much wider than the cycling population.** 79% want to live in a neighbourhood where they can safely walk, cycle or take transit to daily destinations, most of whom do not cycle today. Two-thirds want a provincial cycling tourism strategy, and majorities in every region agree. Framed as road safety, connection and economic development, cycling reaches well beyond the people who currently ride.

The 2023 survey established a baseline. The 2026 survey shows a public whose views on investment have not budged and whose participation has slipped. Closing the gap between what Ontarians say they want built and how many of them get on a bike is the work ahead.

About this study

The survey was conducted online with 2,000 Ontario adults aged 18 and over from August 27 to September 1, 2026, for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Traffic Council. The data were weighted to census benchmarks for age, gender, education and region. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Questions about barriers to cycling were asked only of the 1,333 respondents who ride a bicycle rarely or never. Comparisons with 2023 refer to the province-wide survey of Ontario adults conducted for Share the Road in April 2023. Frequent cyclists ride weekly or more often and occasional cyclists ride monthly or rarely. Regional results are reported for Toronto, the rest of the GTA, Ottawa, Southwestern, Central, Eastern (outside Ottawa) and Northern Ontario; the Northern Ontario sample is roughly 120 respondents and its results carry a wider margin of error. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Share the Road Cycling Coalition

The Share the Road Cycling Coalition is Ontario's cycling advocacy and policy organization, created to unite cycling organizations from across the province, work with and on behalf of municipalities to enhance their ability to make their communities more bicycle-friendly, and advocate for investment and engagement by provincial and municipal governments. Safety, education and awareness campaigns are core to its mission and mandate. Through its Bicycle Friendly Communities program, Share the Road recognizes municipalities that are making cycling safer and more accessible. sharetheroad.ca

Ontario Traffic Council

The Ontario Traffic Council is a leading voice in multi-modal transportation in Ontario, offering expertise in traffic engineering, transportation planning, safety and traffic enforcement. Established in 1950, the OTC is supported by members across the province, including regions, cities, towns, counties, police services and industry, and provides leadership through education, guidance, best practices, research and data on transportation issues, including active transportation, cycling, micro-mobility and transit. The OTC promotes the adoption of Vision Zero by Ontario municipalities. otc.org

Abacus Data

Abacus Data is a Canadian public opinion and market research firm founded in 2010, with offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Halifax and Winnipeg. The firm advises corporate, association, government and non-profit clients on public opinion, reputation and strategy, and its research is regularly cited in national media and by decision-makers across the country. David Coletto, PhD, the firm's founder and chief executive, led this study. abacusdata.ca