

Qualitative research summary: Understanding community conditions that lead to safe choices



RESEARCH PURPOSE

To provide an in-depth understanding of peoples' attitudes to local road risk, hazard awareness and prioritisation, and potential safety solutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

Eight focus groups with local residents in: Invercargill, Gore, Dunedin and Ranfurly.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Believing road deaths are avoidable plays an important role in determining people's road safety outlook.

Better conversations about local road risk and their solutions can create greater community optimism and support for safer choices.

To do this the community impact of road trauma needs to be made visible.

The issue needs to be personable and communities need more local, objective and trusted information to develop a shared understanding of road risk.

Conversations taking place but are based on limited information

- People talk about road risk with family, friends and work colleagues.
- These informal conversations are seen to be unproductive (due to bias/incomplete information sources and few solutions).
- Better community conversations are needed to progress solutions, supported by good, local and objective information.

"We talk a lot about it, but I think that is where it stops. I don't see any change. It's just one of those things"

Conversation
Are people talking about road risk?

Knowledge of local risks varies

- Our knowledge of road risk is mixed, based on information seen as incomplete and biased (primarily safety messages, media, personal experiences/observations and conversations).
- The most concerning risks involve other drivers and rural roads (especially in combination). With most proposed solutions focusing on improving driver skills or knowledge.
- Road risks are local – the solution to a risk in one community may not be relevant in a neighbouring one.

"I don't know if we necessarily get a balanced view as to what are the triggers or the causes"

Confidence
How well are road risks and solutions understood?

Communities care. But are there solutions?

- Communities agree that risks are getting worse, road deaths are not acceptable and more needs to be done.
- Communities are divided on whether serious crashes are avoidable, and this has flow-on effects on the urgency, seriousness and acceptance of road risk.
- Those who believe serious crashes are avoidable are more aware of possible solutions and have had closer proximity to the consequences of road crashes.

"I think it's probably a defeatist attitude. But not because we are that type of person"

Care

Is road safety an important community issue?

Choices

Are safer choices being made or supported?

Safer choices not always supported – fatalism plays a part

- Those who believe serious crashes are unavoidable are less likely to support safety changes that affect them personally (e.g. speed limit reduction), are more likely to blame the driver and are more likely to feel driving over the limit is safe if they are careful.
- Conversely, those who believe crashes are avoidable are more likely to consider and support a wider range of safety solutions.

"My concern is that you can drive to the conditions on the road, but you can't drive for the idiot coming towards you"