

Bike Walk Tompkins (BWT) and the **Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC)** commissioned a survey from **Yasamin Miller Group (YMG)** to investigate current bicycling use, interest in bicycling more, and attitudes towards bicycling from people who lived within a five-mile radius of downtown Ithaca, NY. BWT, ITCTC, and City of Ithaca staff contributed to the writing of the survey questions, and YMG collected responses from a representative sample of 382 residents in February 2018, primarily through a randomized phone survey. This executive summary highlights several key findings. The full report from YMG and an index of all survey questions can be accessed online at bikewalktompkins.org/2018survey.

Current Bicycle Use In and Around Ithaca

The survey asked respondents what was their primary mode of transportation to work. **Of those who commute to work, 48% drove alone while 52% used sustainable modes of transportation**, including 29% who walk and 3% who bike to work (see Figure 1). These figures are in line with US Census Bureau data for the urbanized area of Ithaca – which estimates that 2.5% of people bike, 26.9% walk, and 43.3% drive alone to work¹ – and suggest that survey respondents are a representative sample of the population of Ithaca’s urbanized area.

The 3% that primarily bike to work locally is higher than the national (0.6%) and NY state averages (0.7%), but lower than Burlington, VT (5.1%) and State College, PA (7.0%).² While useful for cross-comparison, rates of bicycling as a primary mode of transportation to work represent only one specific use case of bicycling as transportation.

A more complete picture of bicycling in and around Ithaca emerges when respondents were asked about their bicycling use in the past year for various types of trips, particularly during warmer months (see Figure 2). **Among residents, 53% have biked for leisure and 35% have biked to run errands at least once in the past year.** Also, 20% of residents biked for errands and 17% biked to work on a weekly or daily basis.

Rates of bicycling are lower among students than residents.

Among students, 25% of have cycled for leisure and less than 15% cycled to school in and around Ithaca in the past year. While there may be multiple reasons for this, such as fewer students being present in Ithaca during the warm season, the survey found that **almost 9 in 10 students did not have regular access to a working bicycle**, which limits the number of students who could bike. This survey was conducted before a widely-available bikeshare system started in Ithaca.

Interest in Bicycling More Often In and Around Ithaca

A majority of survey respondents (55%) are definitely or potentially interested in biking more often in and around Ithaca (see Figure 3). Of the rest, 22% are happy with the amount they currently bike and 23% explicitly expressed disinterest in bicycling. In another question, survey respondents were asked what encourages them to bike among a list of possible motivators. **The majority selected health, fun, the environment, and transportation affordability as their motivators** in that order of preference. Also, respondents were asked what type of transportation would they use less if they rode bikes more often. **48% of respondents said that they would drive alone less often if they rode a bike more often.**

Figure 1 What type of transportation would you most likely use to get to work?

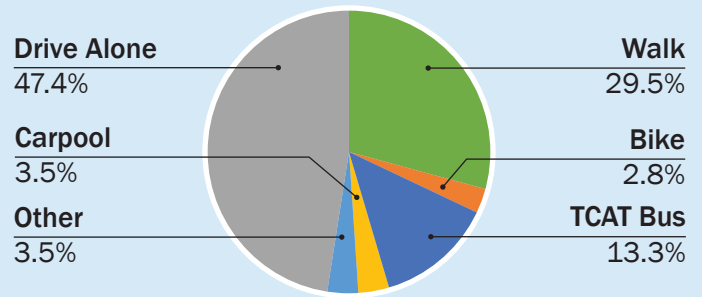


Figure 2 In warmer months, how often do you use a bicycle in and around Ithaca to get to...

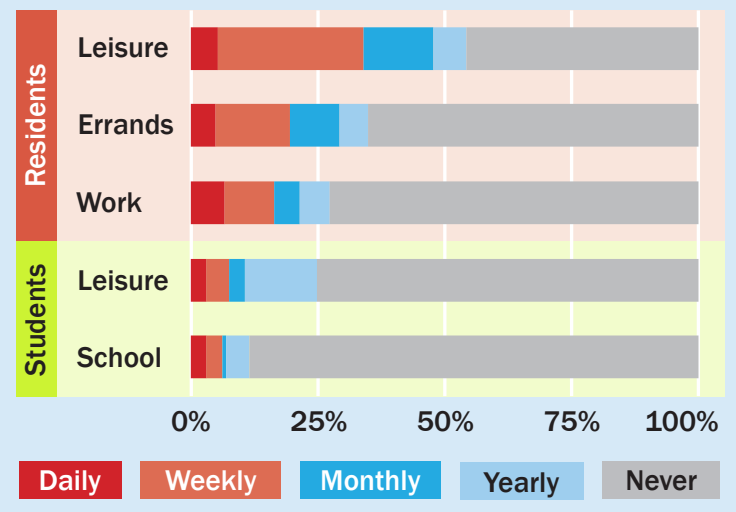
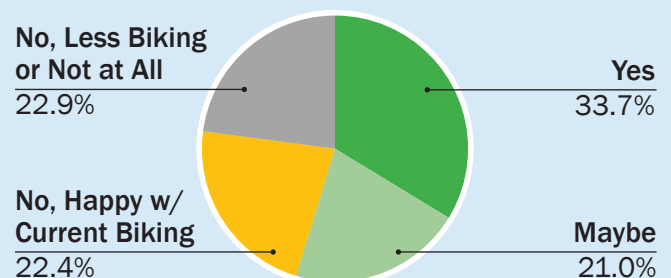


Figure 3 Are you interested in bicycling more often in and around Ithaca?



Barriers to Bicycling In and Around Ithaca

When survey respondents were asked what discourages them from bicycling in and around Ithaca, **the two barriers selected by a majority of respondents were features specific to Ithaca such as hills and weather, and feeling unsafe next to a moving vehicle** (see Figure 4). About 30% of respondents were impacted by concerns about their bicycling skills and their physical ability to bicycle, particularly women. Also, 2 in 5 students found the cost of owning or maintaining a bicycle to be a barrier. These statistically significant disparities should be kept in mind when developing bicycle programming targeted to these groups.

Bike Infrastructure Comfort and Support

The survey also measured respondents' perceived comfort levels on different types of bicycle infrastructure (see Figure 5). About 2 in 5 people found it "comfortable" or "very comfortable" bicycling on almost any street regardless of traffic levels, and 3 in 5 found major streets with painted bike lanes comfortable or very comfortable. **More than 4 in 5 respondents preferred biking facilities that are separate from vehicle traffic or shared with low and slow vehicular traffic.** Women reported being less comfortable on major streets and streets with no bike facilities at statistically significant rates.

In a separate question, the survey found that **77% of all respondents agree or strongly agree that there should be more bike infrastructure on the streets in and around Ithaca** (see Figure 6). Among residents, almost half strongly agree that there should be more bike infrastructure on the streets.

Conclusions

- A majority of residents (53%) have biked in the past year, and a significant portion (20%) bike weekly or daily during the warmer months for errands.
- 3% primarily use a bike to go to work, which is higher than the US and NYS rate but lower than peer cities.
- 55% of people are definitely or potentially interested in biking more often in and around Ithaca, and 48% of people would drive less often if they biked more often.
- A majority of people express that Ithaca's hills and weather and feeling unsafe next to moving vehicles discourage them from bicycling in and around Ithaca.
- Over 80% of respondents preferred bicycling facilities that are separate from vehicle traffic or shared with low and slow vehicular traffic.
- 77% of people agree or strongly agree that there should be more bike infrastructure on local streets.

This survey was commissioned as part of BWT's Blueprint for Better Bicycling project. Learn more about the project and find the full survey report at bikewalktompkins.org/2018survey.

Figure 4 Reasons that "discourage" or "strongly discourage" respondents from bicycling in and around Ithaca

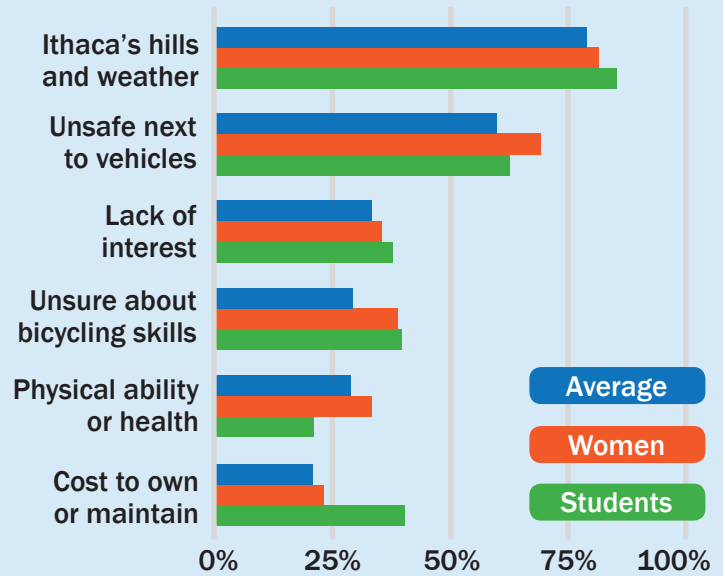


Figure 5 Respondents who feel "comfortable" or "very comfortable" biking in the following environments

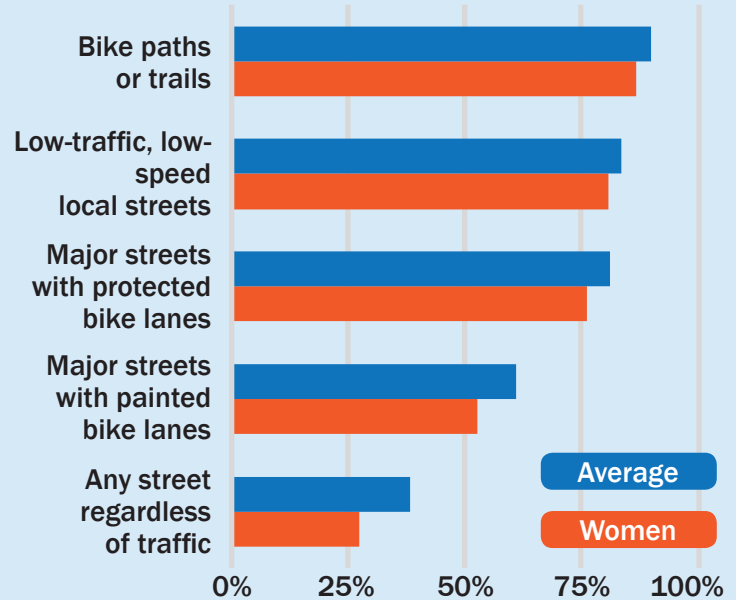
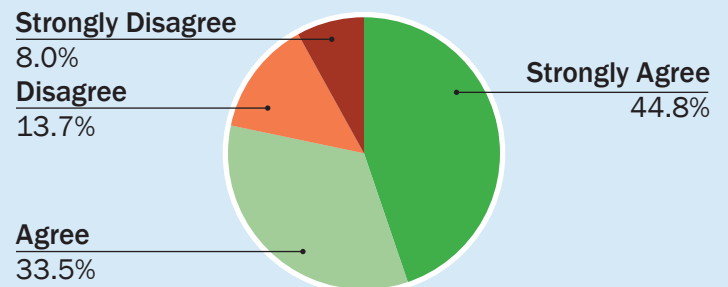


Figure 6 "There should be more bike infrastructure on the streets in and around Ithaca" (4-pt scale)



1. US Census Bureau. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801 for Ithaca, NY Urbanized Area. 2018. <https://factfinder.census.gov>.
2. US Census Bureau. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801 for United States, New York (state), Burlington, VT (place), and State College, PA (place). 2018. <https://factfinder.census.gov>.