**Adolescents’ School Travel, Walking to School and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Background:** Rates of active transport to school among adolescents in developed countries were declining in the years prior to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The impact of these restrictions on adolescents’ school travel patterns has not yet been systematically investigated. Using the BEATS Research data, we compared school travel modes and adolescents’ perceptions of walking to school 5-6 years prior to and again during the COVID-19 pandemic in Dunedin, New Zealand.

**Methods:** Adolescents from all 12 Dunedin secondary schools completed an online survey: 1,463 adolescents in 2014-2015 as part of the BEATS-1 Study and 1,421 adolescents in 2021-2022 as part of the BEATS-2 Study. Adolescents reported the mode(s) of travel to school and their perceptions of walking to school. Home-to-school distance was calculated using Geographic Information Systems.

**Results:** The proportion of adolescents walking to school was 30% before and 21% during the pandemic in the overall sample and 68% versus 54%, respectively, among those living within walking distance (up to 2.25 km) to their school. The proportion of adolescents living in households with two or more vehicles was 69% prior to the pandemic and 78% during the pandemic. Further, adolescents’ attitudes towards walking to school indicated significantly lower intentions and higher perceived barriers during the pandemic compared with pre-pandemic levels, although differences were smaller among those living within walking distance to school.

**Conclusions:** During the pandemic period, participating adolescents reported lower levels of active transport to school (mostly walking), lower intentions to walk to school and higher barriers to walking to school compared with their peers pre-pandemic. Differences were smaller among those who lived within walking distance from their school. These findings highlight the need for renewed collaborative efforts from cross-sectoral actors to encourage and support active school transport among New Zealand adolescents during the post COVID-19 pandemic period.