



Key Findings from the Litter Behaviour Study

Commissioned by Keep New Zealand Beautiful

This Littering Behaviour Study (LBS) was undertaken to provide a baseline on littering behaviour, and to better understand attitudes towards litter in New Zealand.

The project involved 32 days of observing people disposing of items, to bins or as litter, and interviewing the public about litter, in the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury regions.

The results of this research show that New Zealand has a high score on the Disposal Behaviour Index (a score of 6 out of 7), indicating that binning greatly exceeds littering and appropriate bin use occurs most of the time. The highest score was in Wellington, a score of 7 - minimal littering with prominent and appropriate bin use. Auckland and Christchurch both had scores of 6.

The items that were observed being disposed of most frequently (to a bin or as litter) were 'Takeaway packaging/wrappers' (25% of items), followed by 'Cigarette and accessories' (cigarette butts) (23% of items).

The items most likely to be littered were cigarette butts. These account for 78% of all littered items nationally.

On average, a person walked 4.2 metres to use a bin, and the average distance between a litterer and a bin, when they littered, was 8.4 metres.

A survey was conducted with 765 people across the three regions. According to the survey, 66% of New Zealanders believe that people litter because they are lazy and don't care.

Respondents thought that the best way to stop people from littering would be by providing more bins (33%), or by providing more signage (21%).

Ninety-three per cent of survey respondents thought that it was very or extremely important that people did not litter, and 99% of respondents thought that it was very or extremely important that New Zealand maintain its Clean Green image. There was limited awareness of litter prevention campaigns, with 74% of respondents not aware of any campaigns.

When survey respondents were asked when they had last littered, 13% admitted to having littered within the past week. When asked why they had littered, they said that they had littered either because there were no bins (27%) or because they are lazy, don't care, or were too busy (27%).

Of the people who were observed littering and were subsequently interviewed, 53% admitted to having littered. Forty-two per cent of the people who had been observed littering claimed to have never littered – all of these people had littered cigarette butts.

Of the people observed littering, 53% were male. A quarter of the people observed littering were aged between 25 and 34. A further 23% were aged between 35 and 44. Sixty-six per cent of those who self-reported having littered in the past week were in full or part-time employment. Education levels appeared to have limited influence on the likelihood of a person littering. Compared to Australia in 2004,

New Zealand has a higher DBI - 6 in New Zealand and 5 in Australia.

In all cases the New Zealand results equal or exceed the Australian DBI levels in 2004 for comparison cities, and for most comparison site types, with the exception of Public buildings.



New Zealand has a litter rate of 16%, which means that of all observations of disposal acts, 16% were littering while 84% of people did the right thing when disposing of items.

Although this research provides us with useful insights around littering behaviour in public places during the day, it didn't take into consideration highways, rest areas, residential streets, beaches, rural locations, industrial places, car littering and evening behaviours. All of which we know from international research are triggers for litter, and we will take into account in our next phase of research.