2025

TRAFFIC CONTROLLER SAFETY SURVEY

Australia and New Zealand

TMAA
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

GO TEMPORARY TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY STEERING GROUP

TMAA Foreword

As CEO of the Traffic Management Association of Australia (TMAA), it is my privilege to present the **2025 Traffic Controller Safety Survey,** delivered in partnership with the New Zealand Temporary Traffic Management – Industry Steering Group (TTM-ISG). This report provides the most comprehensive snapshot to date of the safety challenges faced by traffic controllers across Australia and New Zealand.

The findings are sobering. While many traffic controllers report feeling reasonably safe at work, the overall mean safety perception in Australia has fallen slightly from **7.1 in 2024 to 7.0 in 2025.** Reports of drivers refusing to stop, verbal abuse, and even physical assault remain alarmingly common, and, in some cases, have increased since last year. Near misses with distracted and speeding drivers continue to occur on a weekly basis, and more than one in ten controllers reported being physically assaulted while at work this year.

These results underscore a troubling reality; despite growing awareness and investment, too many traffic controllers continue to face unacceptable risks while carrying out their essential duties. The voices captured in this survey make clear that signage and goodwill alone are not enough. Stronger enforcement, smarter use of technology, improved fatigue management, and sustained public education are critical if we are to reverse this trend.

Importantly, this survey also highlights areas of opportunity. Controllers have overwhelmingly endorsed innovation, such as the adoption of Portable Traffic Control Devices (PTCDs) and automated systems, which can remove them from live lanes. They also strongly support national campaigns to improve driver behaviour and respect for road workers. These insights provide a clear road map for the industry, governments, and the community to work together in building safer worksites.

On behalf of TMAA, I extend my sincere thanks to the more than 1,600 traffic controllers across both countries who contributed to this survey. Your lived experiences provide the evidence we need to drive change.

TMAA, alongside TTM-ISG, remains committed to ensuring that every traffic controller goes home safely at the end of each shift. This report is not just a record of challenges, but a call to action, for industry, government, and the public to treat traffic controller safety with the urgency it deserves.

Together, we must deliver the cultural, technological, and regulatory changes needed to make “every worker home safe, every day” a reality.

Matthew Bereni

Matthew Bereni
CEO, Traffic Management Association of Australia

TTM-ISG Foreword

The Temporary Traffic Management Industry Steering Group (TTM-ISG) is excited and thankful for the opportunity to partner with the Traffic Management Association of Australia on this important and comprehensive report, which reveals disturbing truth of the additional risks and abuse experienced by traffic controllers in Australia and New Zealand.

New Zealand is grappling with an infrastructure deficit and endeavouring to maintain high quality transport infrastructure that connects us to work, friends and family, and enables our economy. **Traffic controllers are an essential workforce for New Zealand to facilitate the maintenance and creation of our infrastructure needs.** Their work keeps road users safe and informed about disruption and hazards, and involves significant risk on a day-to-day basis.

With close to 700 respondents participating in the survey from across New Zealand, we now have insight of the extent of poor behaviour and additional risks that are encountered by our road workers on an alarmingly frequent basis.

The survey data exposes extremely concerning levels of physical and verbal abuse, infringements and near-miss incidents that require concerted action to address. Despite the vital role that these workers play contributing to safety of road users and infrastructure, it is clear there is work to be done to ensure greater safety and respect for them.

The New Zealand temporary traffic management sector is currently undergoing a once in a generational change with the adoption of a more risk-based approach to traffic management. It seeks to improve how traffic management is delivered in New Zealand by moving away from a prescriptive guide, providing for the flexibility to right size temporary traffic management for specific activities. To be successful in implementing the change, we must take note of the current environment and identify the full scope of barriers to improvement.

With this report, and supporting data on deaths and serious injuries at road works showing that road users make up the majority of these statistics, we can now express with certainty that there needs to be a change on both sides of the road cones.

Our sincere thank you to those who gave their time to participate in the survey, which gives us some solid data to support change. We look forward to engaging with the sector and all transport stakeholders to ensure changes in temporary traffic management result in better outcomes for those who both use and work on our roads.

Simon McManus

Simon McManus
CEO, Temporary Traffic Management Industry Steering Group

Darren Wu

Darren Wu
Chair, Temporary Traffic Management Industry Steering Group

1. Introduction

Australia & New Zealand

1.1. Key Findings

From May to June 2025, the Traffic Management Association of Australia (TMAA) in partnership with the New Zealand Temporary Traffic Management – Industry Steering Group (TMM-ISG) conducted a comprehensive safety survey to assess the experiences and perceptions of traffic controllers regarding their safety on the job. This report highlights key findings from **1,671 responses, including 1,004 from Australia and 667 from New Zealand**, shining a light on key safety concerns in the traffic management industry.

General Safety Perception

The 2025 survey revealed that the most common safety rating among traffic controllers was 8 out of 10, with a mean rating of 6.9 out of 10 across Australia and New Zealand, down from 7.1 in 2024*. This suggests that, while many traffic controllers feel relatively safe at work, there remains a significant minority that feel unsafe.

Vehicle Non-Compliance

The frequency of vehicles failing to comply with traffic controller directions remains a serious concern for the industry. Sixty-two per cent of survey respondents reported vehicles failing to stop at least once a week, with another 30 per cent reporting instances at least once a month.

Verbal Abuse and Physical Assault

Verbal abuse of traffic controllers continues to be a widespread issue, with 60 per cent of respondents reporting experiences of verbal abuse on a weekly basis, including 32 per cent who received verbal abuse multiple times a week or daily. Fourteen per cent of respondents reported some form of physical assault in 2025.

Incidents of Being Struck by Vehicles

Four per cent of respondents reported being struck by a vehicle in the past 12 months. Near misses continue to be a common experience for traffic controllers. Fifty-one per cent reported near misses from distracted drivers and 49 per cent reported near misses from speeding vehicles, again highlighting the importance of driver behaviour to road worker safety.

*Results from the 2024 survey were from Australian respondents only. New Zealand did not participate.

1.2. Purpose

The primary purpose of the 2025 Traffic Controller Safety Survey was to gather detailed insights into the safety experiences and perceptions of traffic controllers across Australia and New Zealand. This survey is the largest and only dedicated survey of its kind in Australia and New Zealand, providing unparalleled insight into the safety concerns and experiences of traffic controllers.

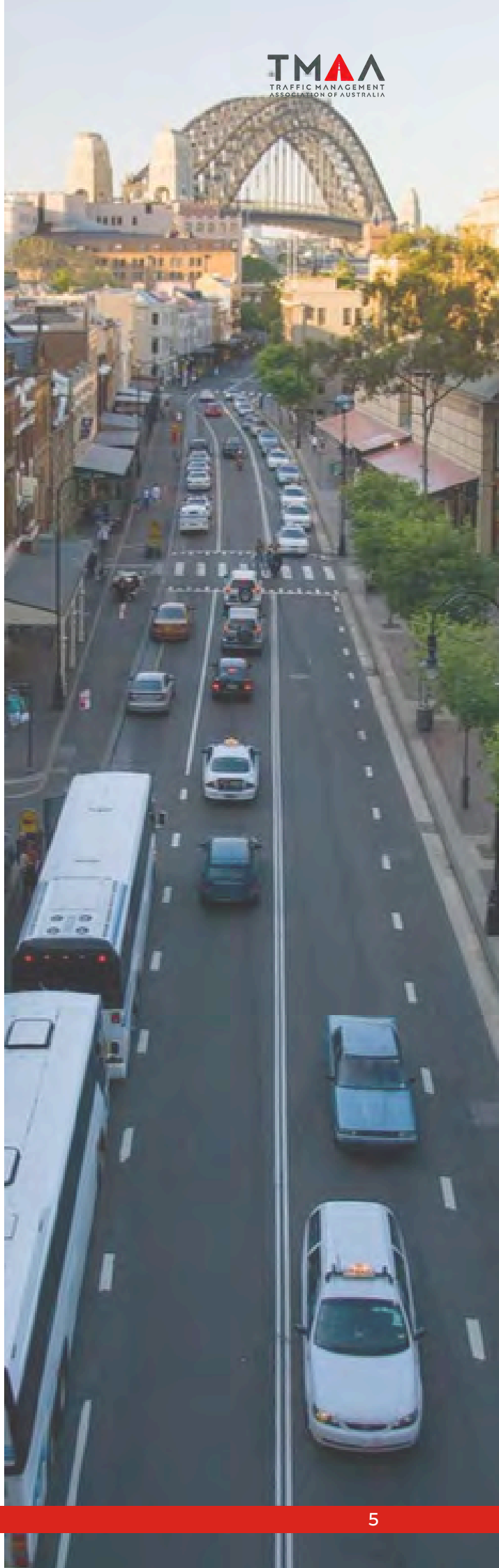
By collecting data directly from those on the frontline, TMAA and TTM-ISG seek to identify prevalent safety issues, understand the frequency and severity of various hazards, and assess the impact of these challenges on the well-being of traffic controllers.

The survey aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current safety landscape, informing targeted interventions and policy recommendations to enhance the safety protocols and working conditions of traffic controllers. This initiative underscores TMAA and TTM-ISG's commitment to promoting a safer, more secure environment for these essential workers, ultimately contributing to safer roads for all users.

1.3. Methodology

A note that not all percentages will add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. This survey was conducted online by TMAA and distributed to traffic controllers through TMAA and TTM-ISG members and social media channels.

Statistical tests were conducted on the dataset to find if any factors had statistically significant impacts on a respondent's safety perception score.



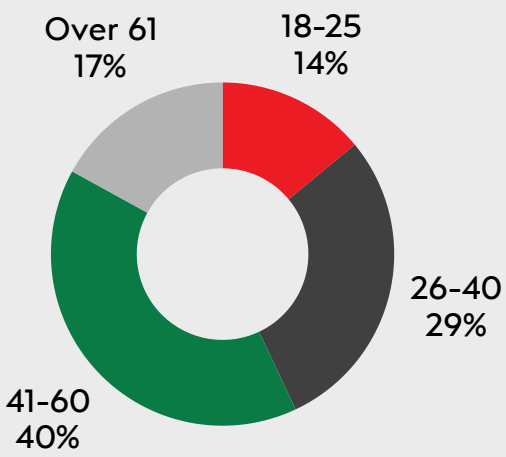
2. Survey Demographics

Australia & New Zealand

2.1. Respondent Information

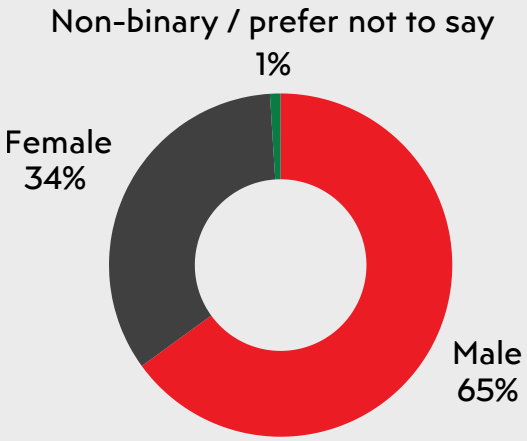
The breakdown of respondent demographics is as follows:

2.1.1. Age



An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that the age of a respondent did not significantly impact safety perception scores.

2.1.2. Gender



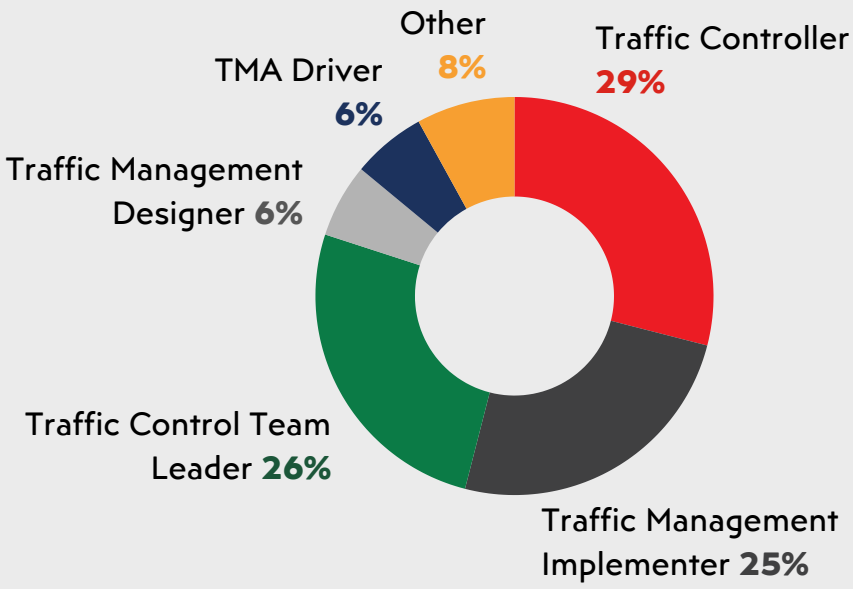
An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that the gender of a respondent did impact safety perception scores.

Male traffic controllers reported a mean safety score of 7.1 , while female traffic controllers reported a safety score of 6.8.

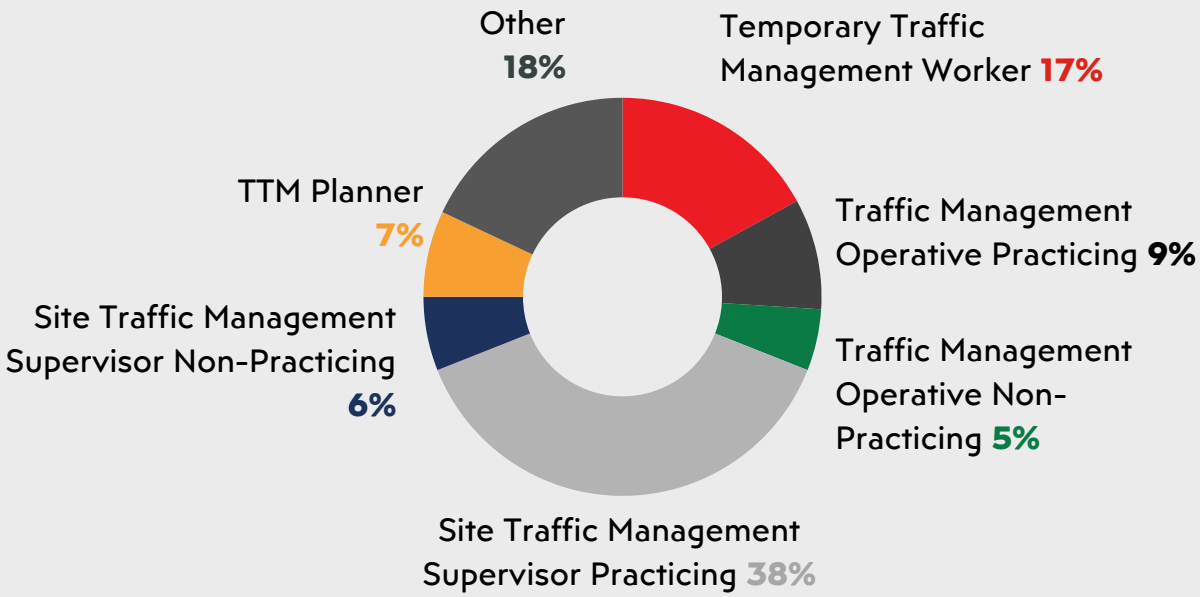
This shows that, on average, female traffic controllers feel less safe than their male counterparts in their workplace. This is true in both Australia and New Zealand, with a very similar 0.3-point gap in the safety score between men and women evident in both countries.

2.1.3. Occupation

Australia



New Zealand



2.1.4. Safety Score by Occupation

Australia

Occupation	Mean Safety Score
Traffic Controller	7.2
Traffic Management Implementer	6.8
Traffic Control Team Leader	7.0
Traffic Management Designer	6.9
TMA Driver	7.0
Other	6.9

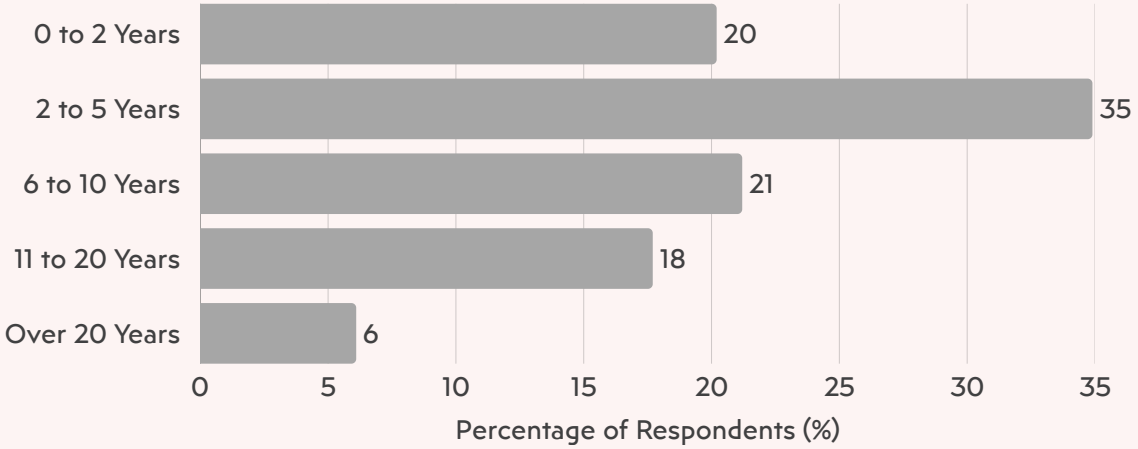
An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that the occupation of a respondent did not significantly impact safety perception scores.

New Zealand

Occupation	Mean Safety Score
Temporary Traffic Management Worker	6.5
Traffic Management Operative Practicing	7.0
Traffic Management Operative Non-Practicing	7.1
Site Traffic Management Supervisor Practicing	6.6
Site Traffic Management Supervisor Non-Practicing	6.2
TTM Planner	7.4
Other	6.8

An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that the occupation of a respondent did not significantly impact safety perception scores.

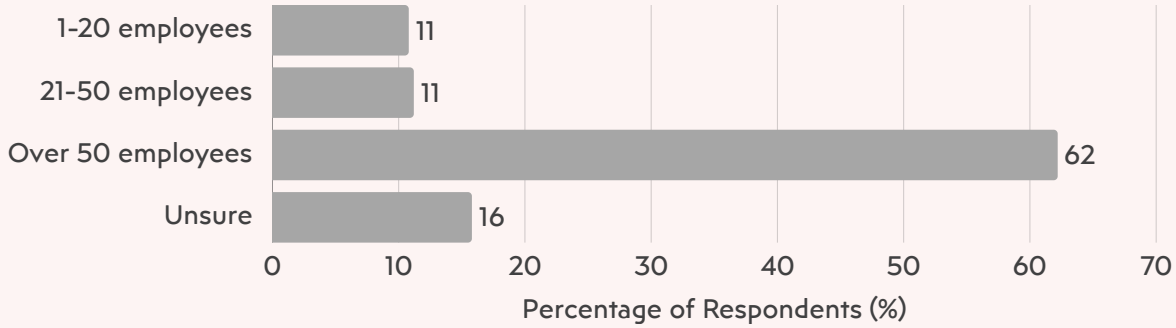
2.1.5. How long have you been in this occupation



Time in Occupation	Mean Safety Perception Score
0 to 2 years	7.1
2 to 5 years	6.9
6 to 10 years	6.8
11 to 20 years	7.0
Over 20 years	7.2

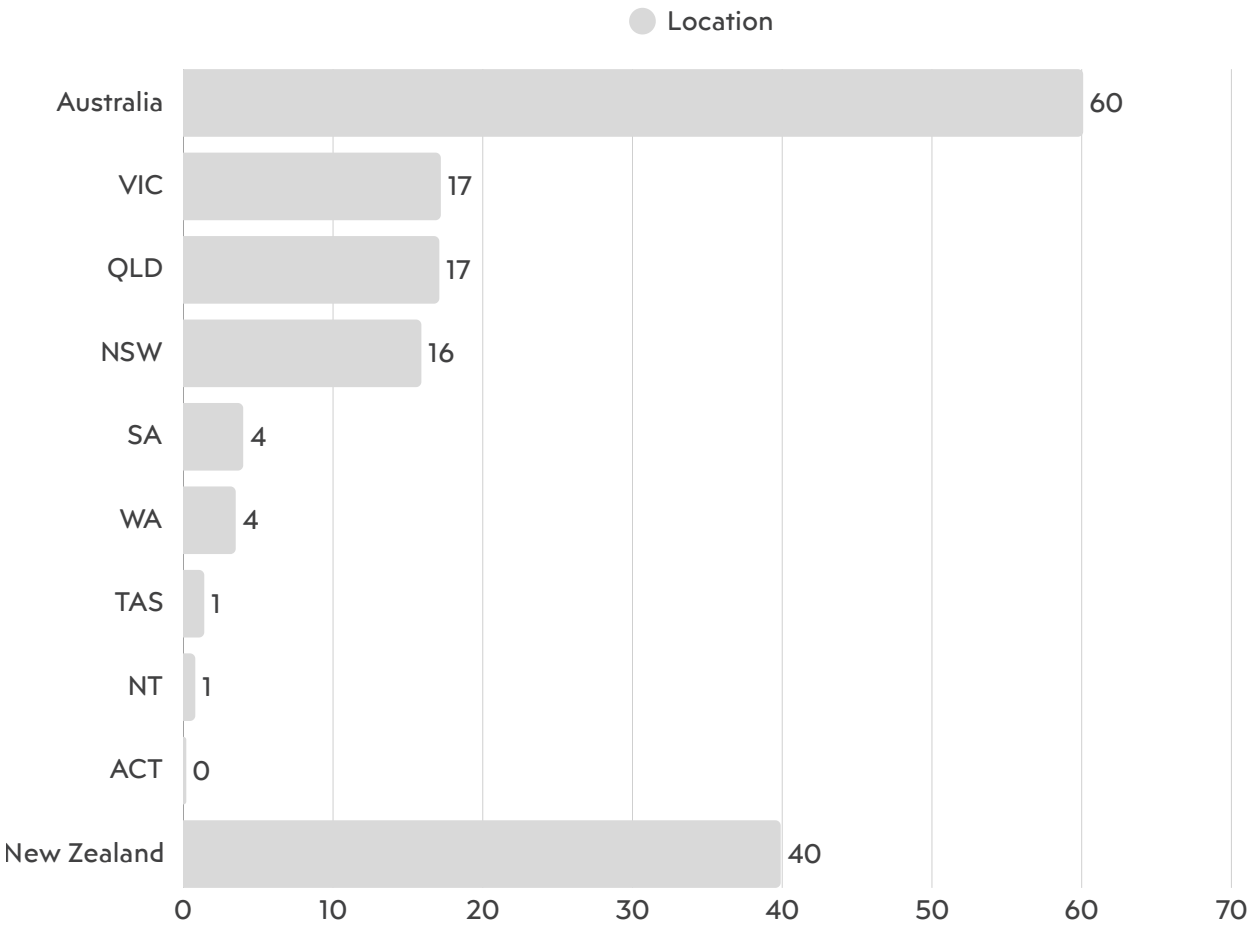
An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that length of time in a respondent's occupation did not significantly impact safety perception scores. However, similarly to 2024, the above results show that employees with 6-10 years' experience felt the least safe, while employees with 0-2 and 20+ years' experience felt the safest.

2.1.6. Company Size



An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that company size did not significantly impact safety perception scores.

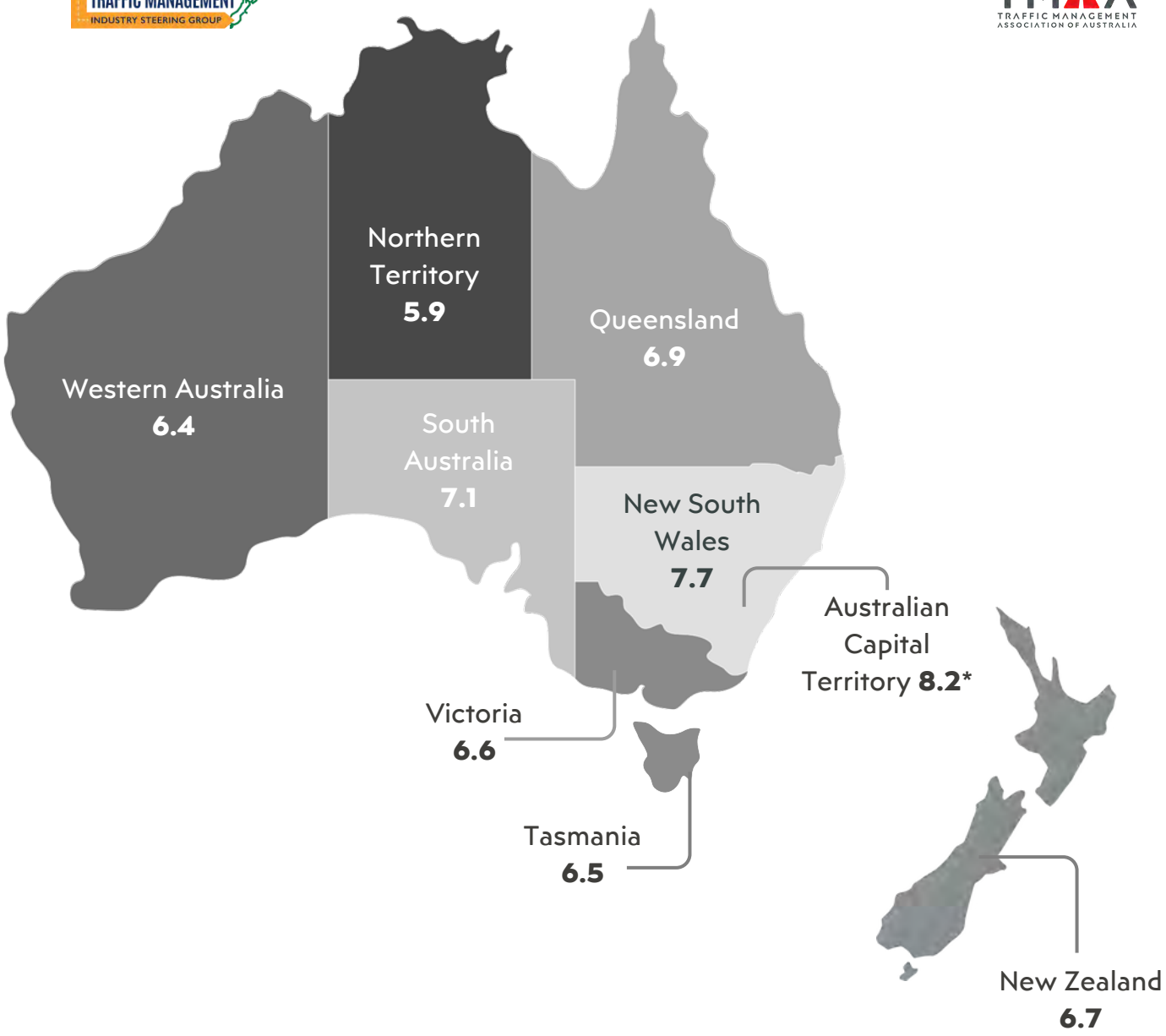
2.1.7. Location



Australia **60.1% (1,004)**

- Victoria: **17.2%**
- Queensland **17.1%**
- New South Wales: **15.9%**
- South Australia: **4%**
- Western Australia: **3.5%**
- Tasmania: **1.4%**
- Northern Territory: **0.8%**
- Australian Capital Territory: **0.2%**

New Zealand: **39.9% (667)**



Location	Mean Safety Perception Score
Northern Territory	5.9*
Western Australia	6.4
Tasmania	6.5
Victoria	6.6
New Zealand	**6.7**
Queensland	6.9
Australia	**7.0**
South Australia	7.1
New South Wales	7.7
Australian Capital Territory	8.2*

*Please note that the Mean Safety Perception Score in the ACT (4 respondents) and NT (13 respondents) may be affected by their small sample sizes.

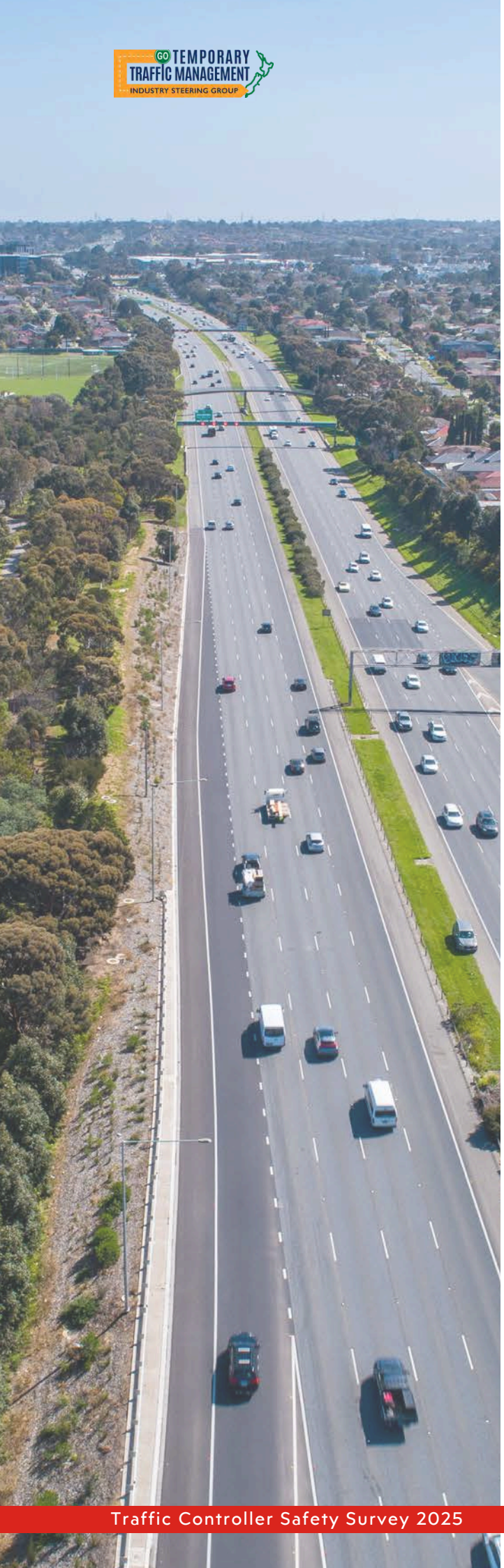
An analysis conducted of the dataset showed that location is the most statistically significant factor associated with differences among survey response.

This applies to both differences between Australian jurisdictions as well as comparing Australia and New Zealand.

With a mean safety perception score of **6.7**, New Zealand traffic controllers appear to feel less safe in their workplace than their Australian counterparts, who have a score of **7.0**.

2.2. Participation Rate

A total of **1,671** responses were included in this survey, including **911** complete and **760** partial responses. This is a slight increase from the **1,575** partial and full responses collected in **2024**, although the **2024** responses were from Australia only. As a result, there are now two data sets with at least **1,000** responses from Australia, which will enable more accurate trend analysis.



3. Data Analysis

Australia & New Zealand

In-Depth Analysis of Safety Risks and Conditions

TMAA in partnership with TTM-ISG conducted a comprehensive survey among traffic controllers to assess their experiences and perceptions of safety when managing traffic. With 1,671 responses collected across Australia and New Zealand, the survey reveals key safety issues faced by traffic controllers, including safety perception while working, prevalence of unsafe interactions with road users, and commonality of verbal and physical abuse.

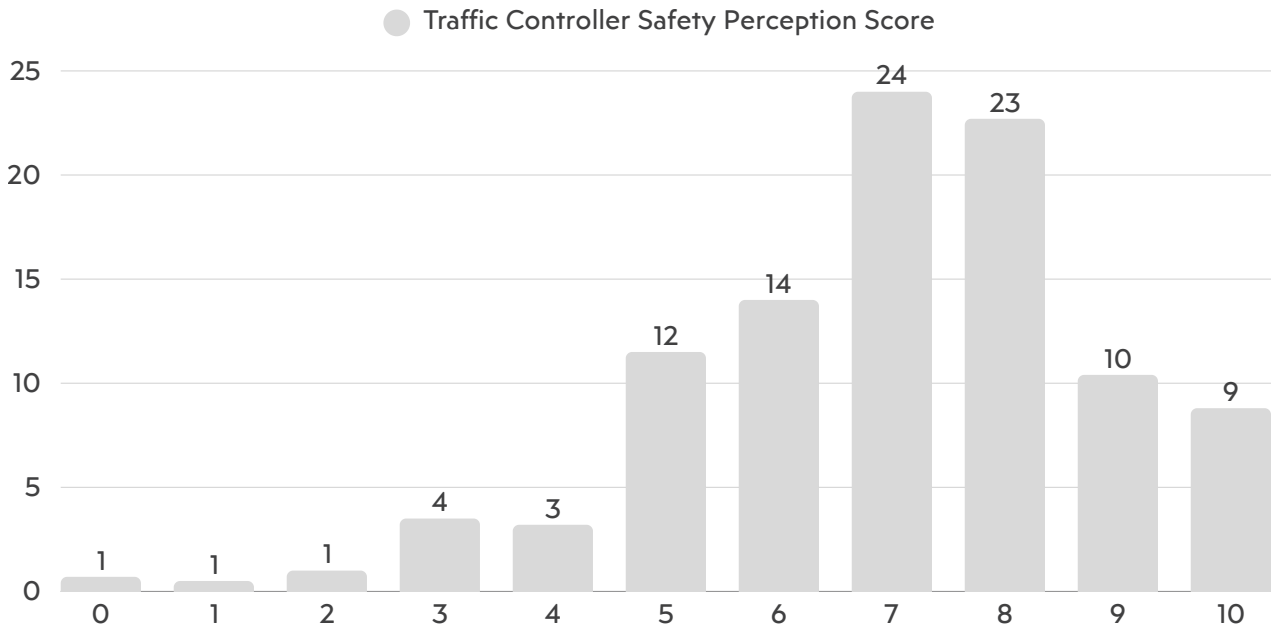
An analysis of the data revealed that the **occurrences of safety issues reported through this survey were roughly similar between Australia and New Zealand across all tracked categories, with no meaningful differences between Australian and New Zealand respondents,** aside from the traffic controller self-assessed risk rating.

A linear regression confirmed that location remained the most significant predictor of safety perception, even when controlling for gender, age, occupation, experience and company size.

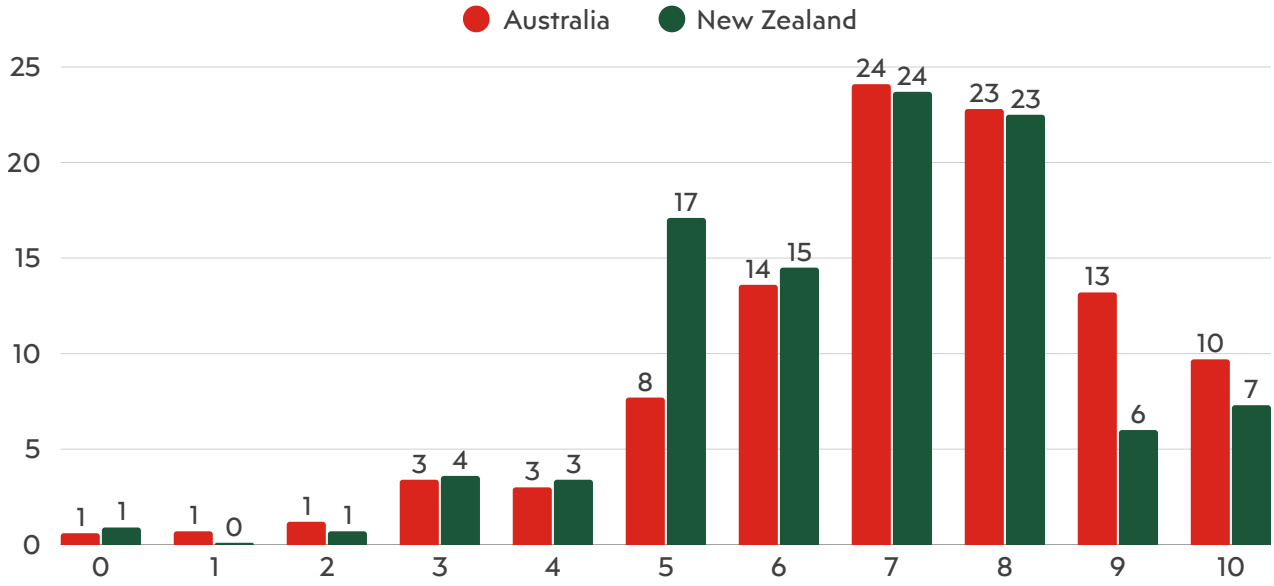
3.1. Traffic Controller Safety Perception Score

Traffic controllers were asked to rate how safe they felt when managing traffic on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being the least safe and 10 the safest. The mean score from all respondents was 6.9 out of 10, and the most common answer was 7 out of 10.

Safety Perception Score Australia & New Zealand (%)



Safety Perception Score Australia v New Zealand (%)



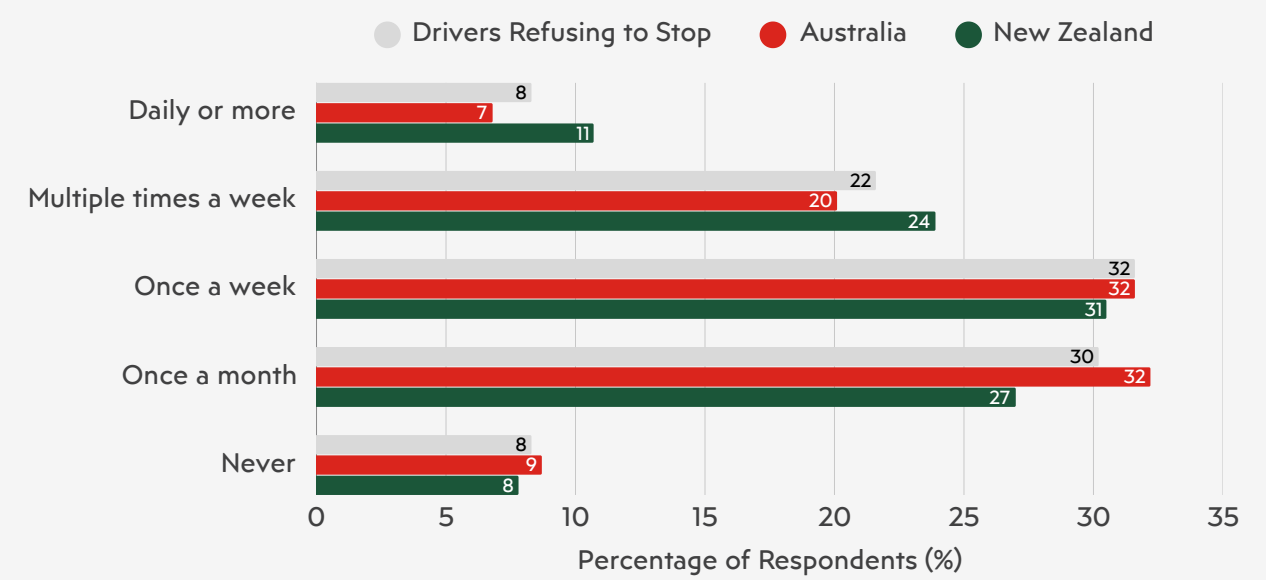
Comparing Australia and New Zealand, Australian respondents reported a mean safety score of 7.0, compared to 6.7 in New Zealand.

3.2. Prevalence of Unsafe Interactions with Drivers

Respondents were asked to report how frequently they experienced specific high-risk interactions with members of the public over the past 12 months. These included drivers refusing to stop, verbal abuse, physical assault, and being struck by vehicles.

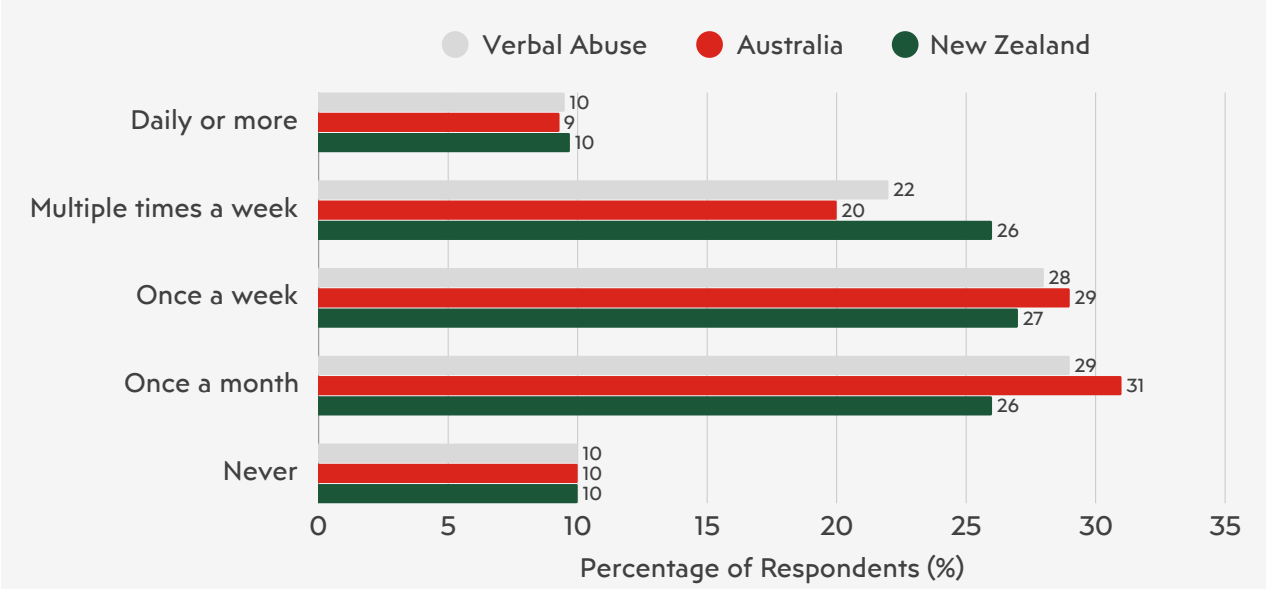
3.2.1. Drivers Refusing to Stop

One of the most commonly reported issues was drivers refusing to comply with traffic control instructions, with 62 per cent of respondents reporting drivers refusing to stop at least once a week, an increase from 53 per cent in 2024.



3.2.2. Verbal Abuse

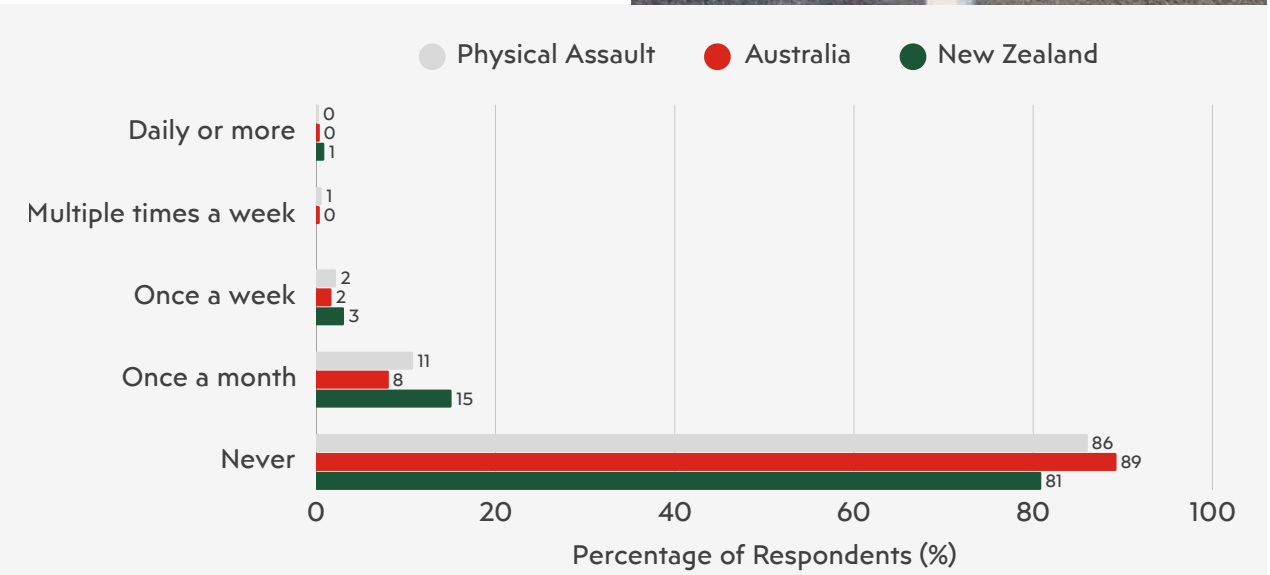
Experiences of verbal abuse from drivers were alarmingly common. Many respondents reported being yelled at, sworn at, or threatened while simply performing their duties. Reports of such abuse were more frequent in urban settings, where congestion or detours exacerbated driver frustration. This emotional strain is often overlooked in safety planning but contributes significantly to job dissatisfaction and burnout.



3.2.3. Physical Assault

While less frequent than verbal abuse, physical assaults were still disturbingly prevalent. Several respondents reported having been pushed, punched, or threatened with vehicles. These incidents were more likely to occur when a driver was asked to reroute, delayed by roadworks, or warned about non-compliance.

Disturbingly, the survey found that **nearly 20 per cent of New Zealand respondents had reported some form of physical assault in the past year,** compared to 11 per cent of Australians.



A troubling number of these assaults occurred without consequence, with several respondents expressing frustration at the lack of follow-up or accountability.

3.2.4. Being Struck by a Vehicle

Perhaps the most serious safety threat, being struck by a moving vehicle, was not an abstract concern but a lived experience for many workers. A measurable percentage of respondents indicated that they had been hit by a vehicle in the past year, most often at low speeds but occasionally with life-threatening force. Concerningly, **3.5 per cent of respondents**, or 54 out of 1,522 who answered the question, reporting being struck by a vehicle in the past 12 months (3.1 per cent of Australian respondents and 4.3 per cent of New Zealand respondents).

Such incidents were typically associated with:

- Night work with poor visibility.
- Work sites lacking protective barriers or Truck Mounted Attenuators (TMAs).
- Public drivers ignoring signage or cones.

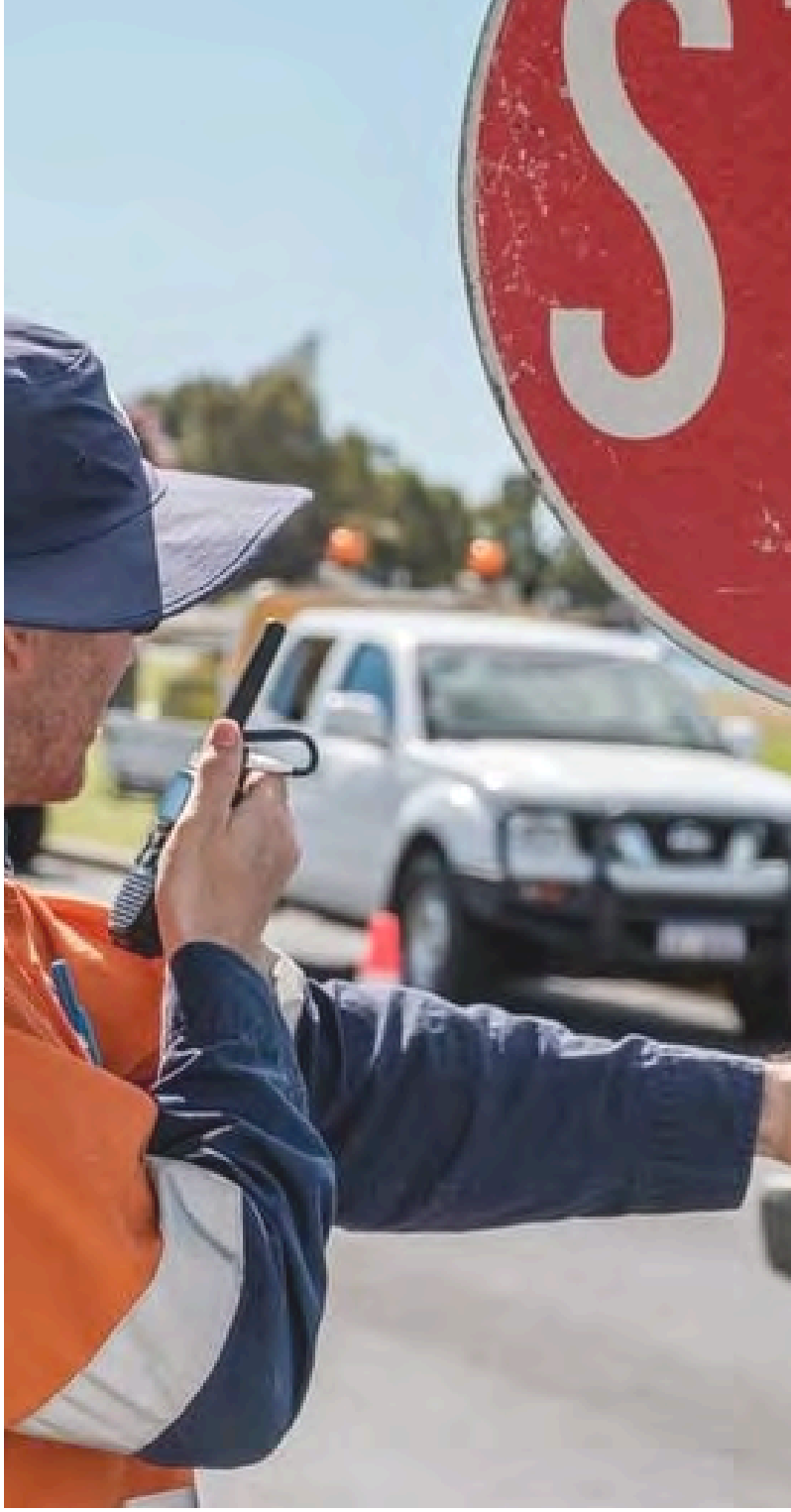
3.3. Near Misses and Situations Hazards

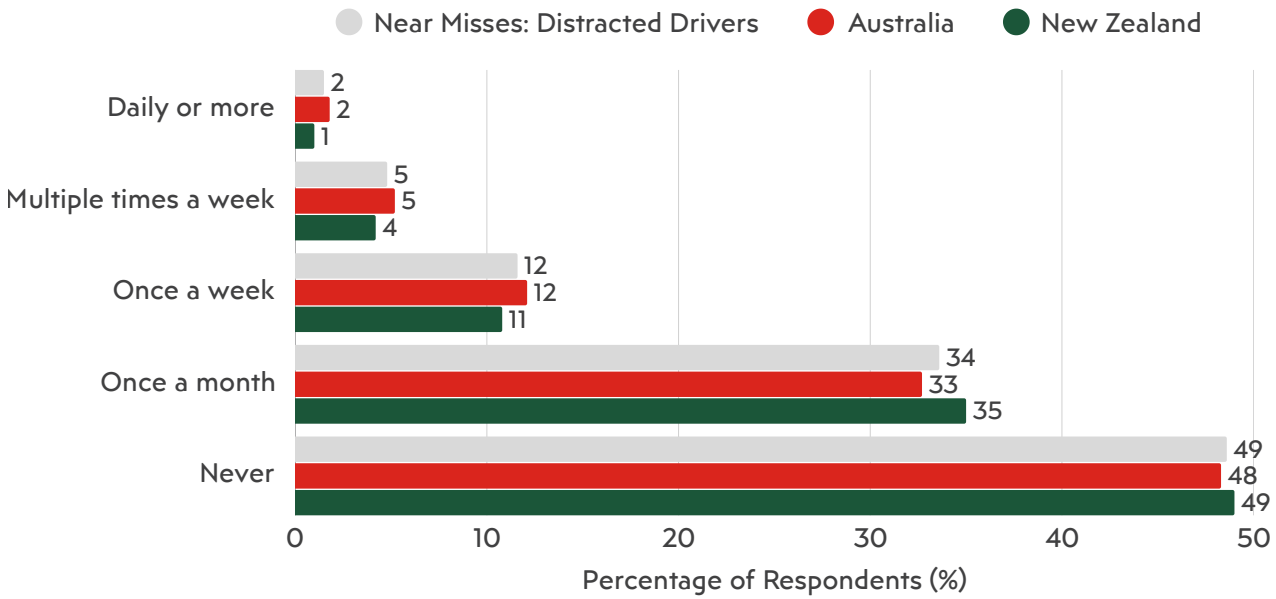
Respondents were also asked about how frequently they had experienced near-miss incidents, where a collision or injury was narrowly avoided. These incidents often revealed as much about site vulnerability as actual collisions.

3.3.1. Near Misses: Distracted Drivers

Many near-misses were attributed to driver distraction, especially involving mobile phones. Controllers frequently reported seeing drivers looking down or swerving while entering active work zones.

Respondents were asked how often they had nearly been struck by a driver who appeared distracted, such as using a mobile phone or not paying attention.

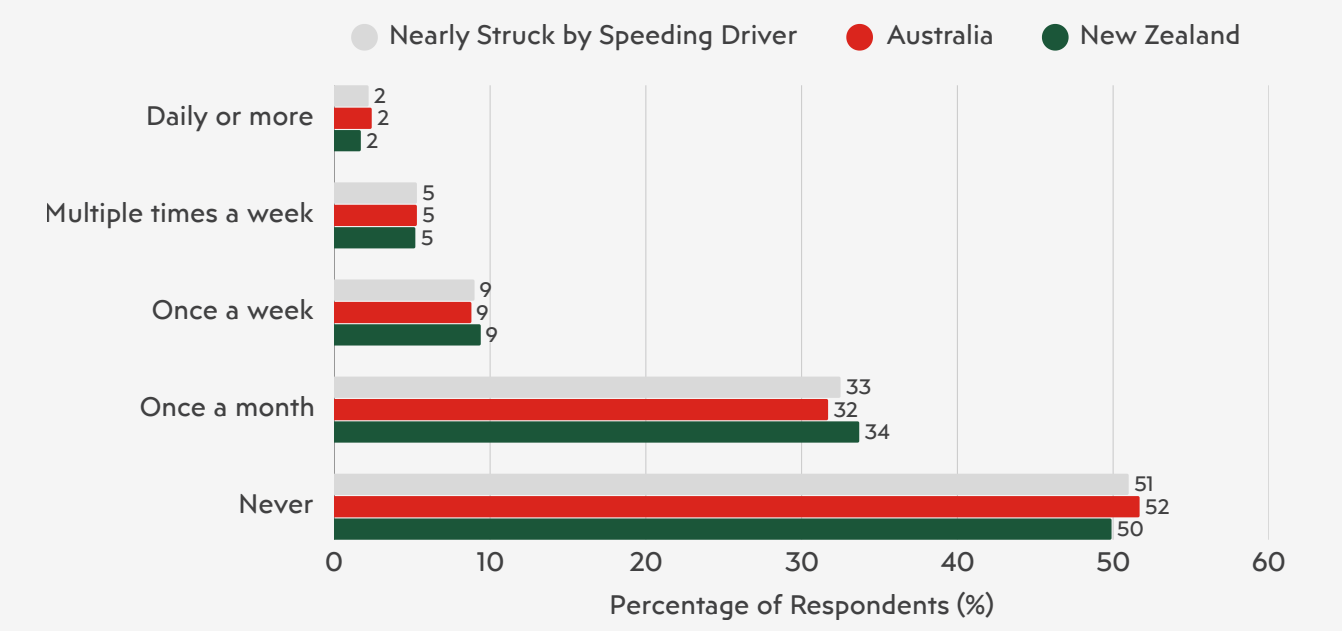




3.3.2. Near Misses: Speeding Vehicles

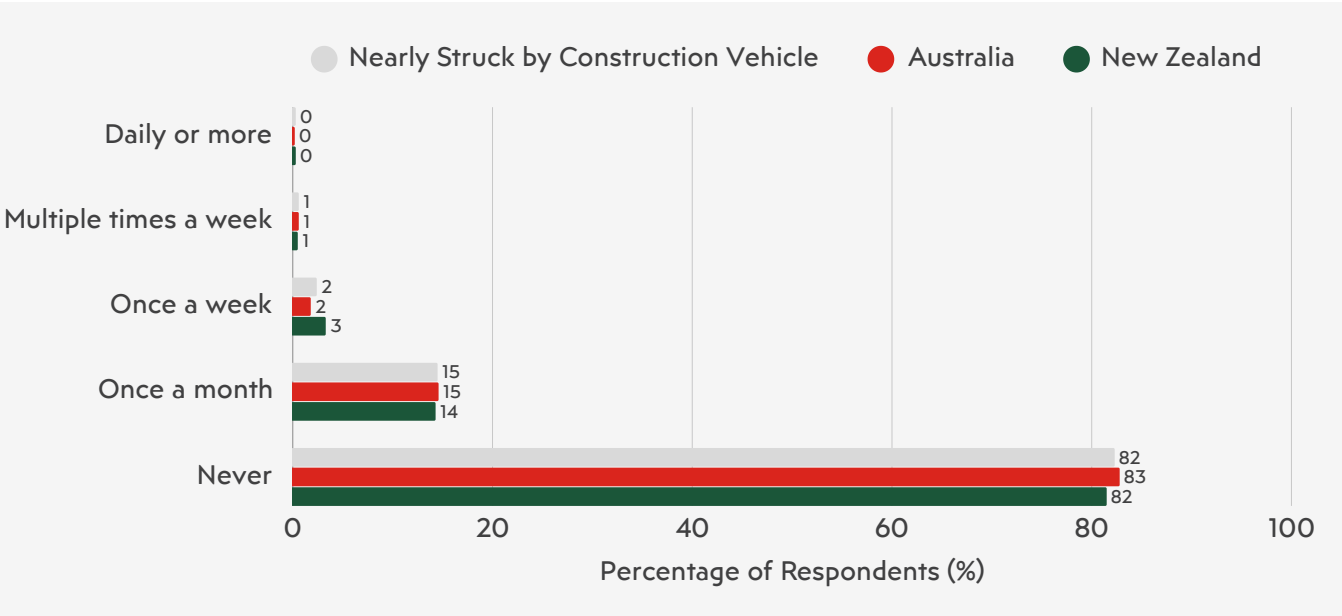
Speeding vehicles were another dominant threat. Despite reduced temporary speed limits (TSLs), many respondents observed drivers maintaining highway speeds through worksites, especially when enforcement was not visible.

- Near misses involving speeding were reported by nearly half of respondents.
- Rural and regional roads saw particularly high incidences of high-speed near misses.



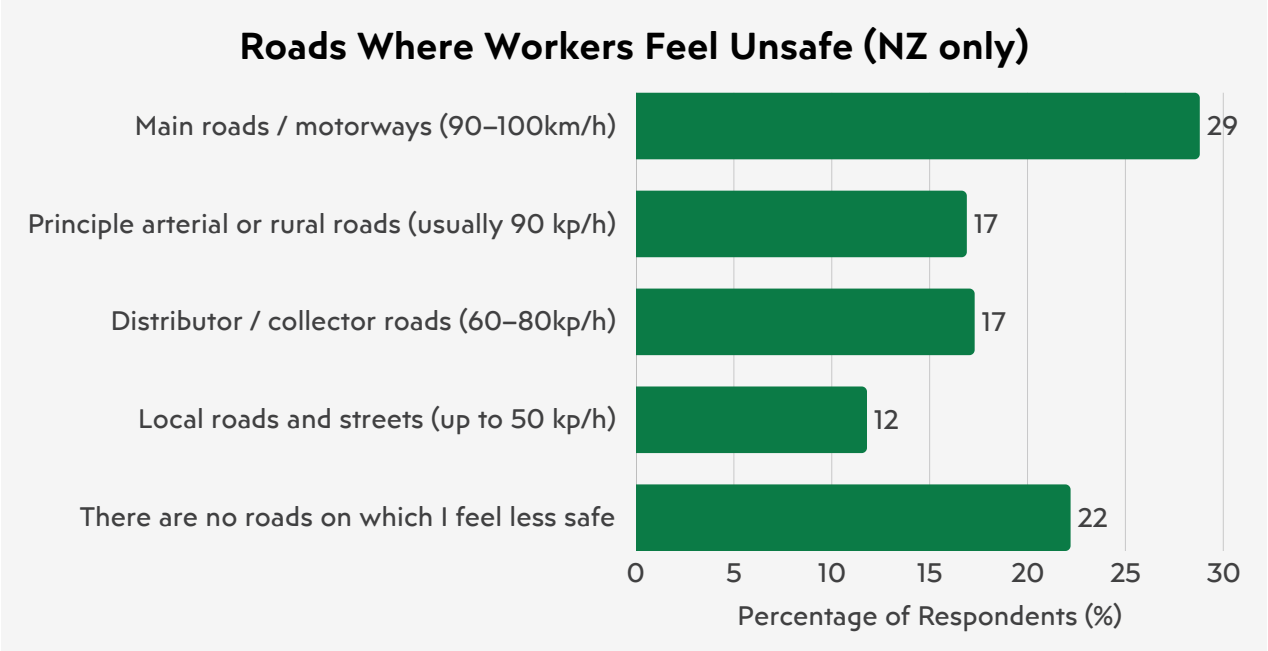
3.3.3. Near Misses: Construction Vehicles

Near misses caused by worksite vehicles, such as reversing trucks or repositioning machinery, were also reported. These near misses were often attributed to poor visibility, communication breakdowns or limited site space.



3.4. Roads Where Workers Feel Less Safe

New Zealand respondents were asked about which roads made them feel less safe when at work. Traffic controllers felt less safe in a variety of environments, especially high-speed roads, but also on arterial, collector, and even local streets. A substantial minority feel at risk everywhere, suggesting that interventions must address the universal factors affecting safety: driver behaviour, site setup, visibility, and enforcement, not just road classification.

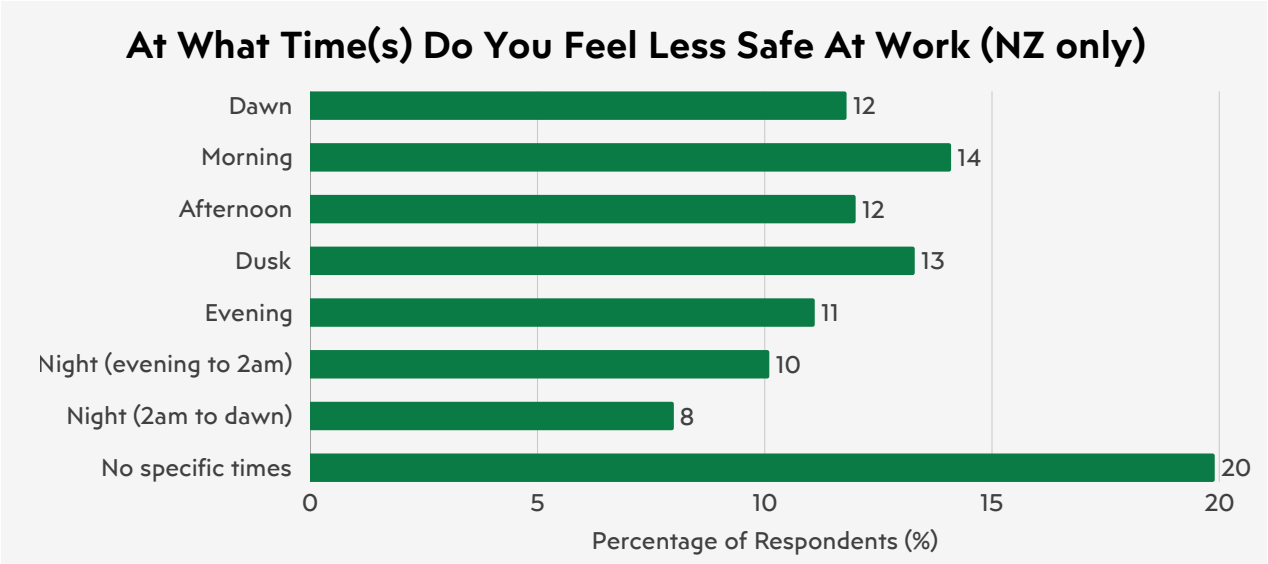


3.5. Time and Stage of Work When Workers Feel Less Safe

As with the question about roads where workers feel unsafe, these questions were asked only of New Zealand respondents.

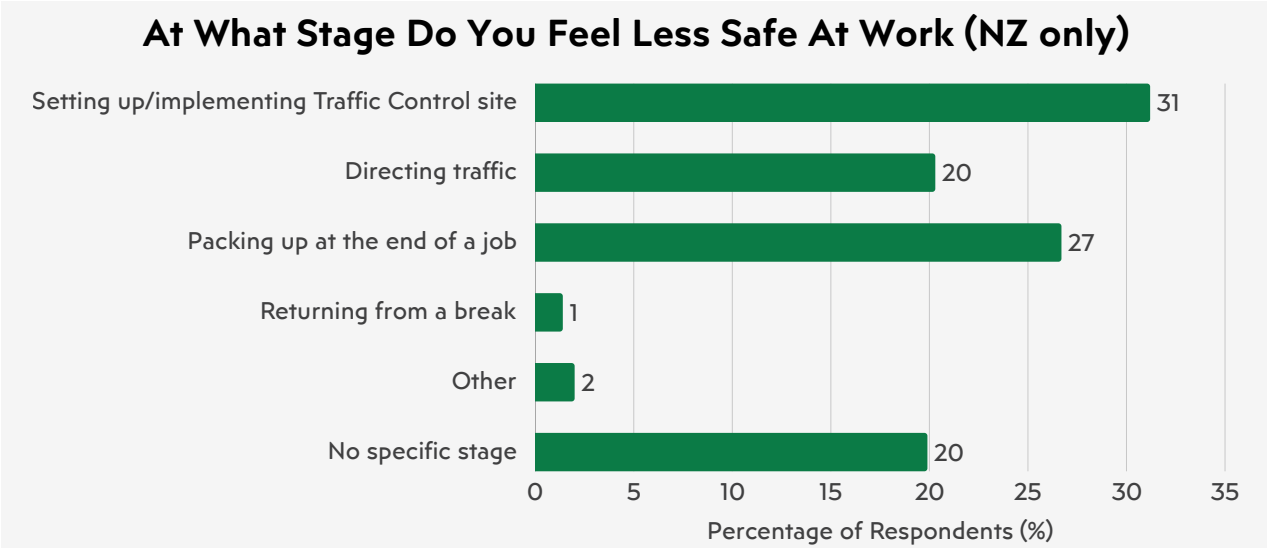
3.5.1. Time of Day

New Zealand traffic controllers reported feeling less safe at work across all times of day, with only slight increases in perceived risk during the morning, dusk, and nighttime hours. The data suggests that safety concerns are not tied to one particular shift, but are instead persistent throughout the day, likely reflecting factors such as visibility, traffic density, and driver behaviour rather than the clock. About one in five respondents indicated that there is no specific time they feel less safe, reinforcing the idea that risk is present at any hour when working on or near roads.



3.5.2. Stage of Job

When asked about the stage of the job where they felt less safe, most traffic controllers identified the setup and pack down periods as the riskiest moments, followed by the actual act of directing traffic. These transitional phases, when safety measures may not be fully in place, leave workers especially vulnerable to inattentive or non-compliant drivers. The findings highlight the need for strict protocols and additional protections during these critical stages, as well as the importance of maintaining vigilance and strong safety measures throughout the entire workday.

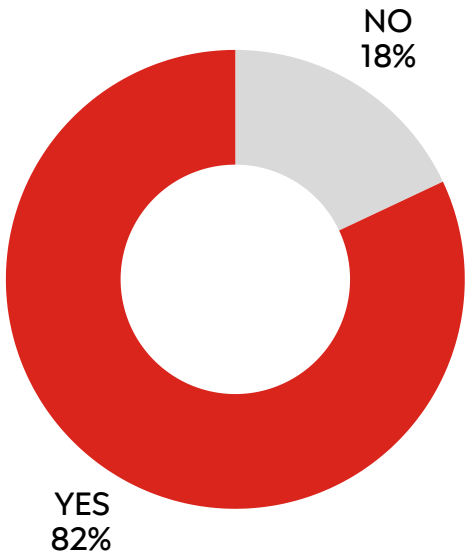


3.6. Attitudes Towards Safety Policy and Technology

As part of the 2025 survey, respondents were asked for their views on a number of initiatives and policy proposals put forward by TMAA that would help to improve traffic controller safety and education.

Firstly, Australian respondents were asked if they supported the ambitious goal to remove all traffic controllers out of live lanes as much as practically possible by 1 January 2027 through the use of Portable Traffic Control Devices (PTCD) and other automated traffic control devices. 82 per cent of traffic controllers surveyed supported this aspiration goal, while 18 per cent were opposed.

Support for Removing Traffic Controllers from Live Lanes by Jan 1 2027 (Aus only)



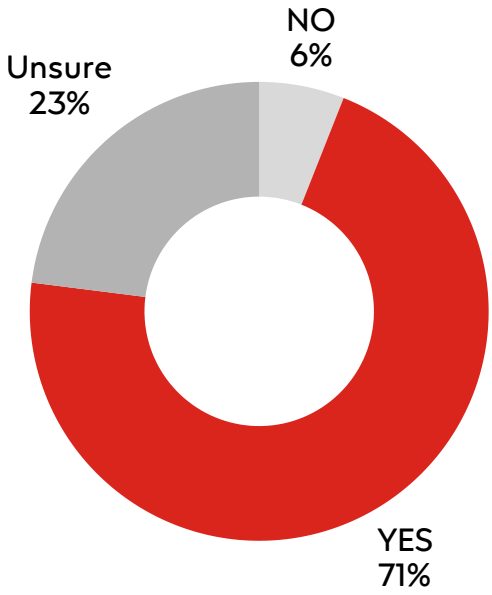
> This will be so much safer for all controllers, as we all should go home every day" – **Christine, VIC.**

> I think it's a really great idea and it'll cause less issues and injuries on the main roads" – **Hayley, VIC**.

Next, Australian respondents were asked for their views on the development of a quick reference guide (similar to the Ready Reckoner-type quick reference guide provided by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads) adapted from the Austroads Guide to Temporary Training Management (AGTTM) for students undergoing training.

71 per cent believe this would be a useful resource to have at work, while only five per cent did not believe that it would be helpful and 21 per cent were undecided, dependent on the content produced.

Support Development of AGTTM Ready Reckoner (Aus only)



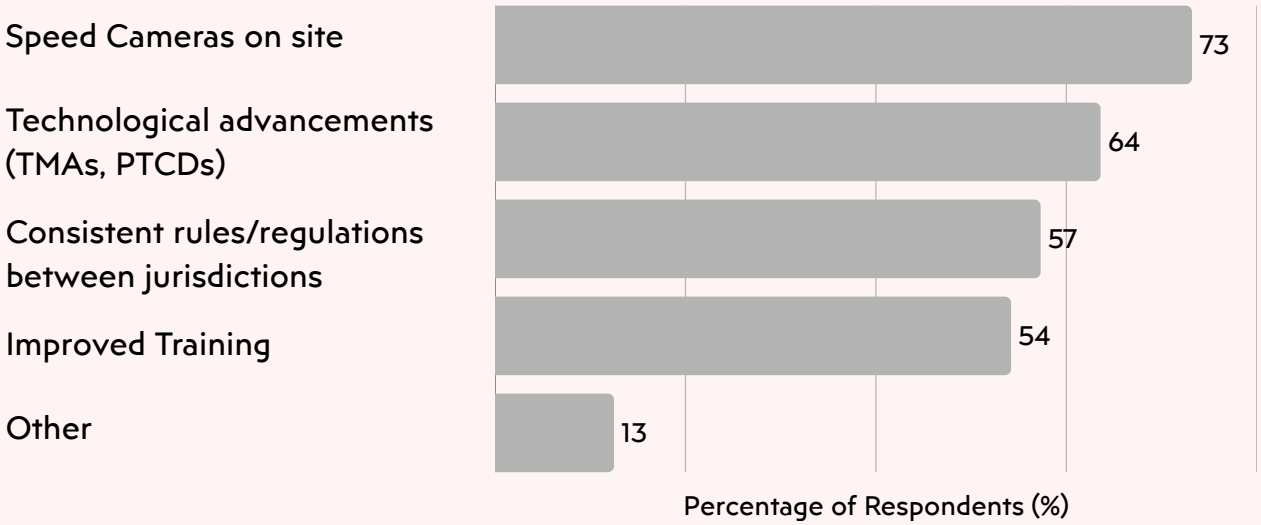
Survey participants from both Australia and New Zealand were asked if they were aware of a petition campaign by TMAA and supported by TTM-ISG asking Apple, Google, and Waze to include 'Slow Down for Road Workers' in their navigation apps. The aim of this campaign is to provide a more human-focused alert for motorists approaching road work zones, rather than impersonal warnings like 'Road Works Ahead'.

Support Slow Down for Road Workers Campaign

39 per cent were aware of the campaign and believe it was useful, while 55 per cent were not aware but supported the initiative. Only seven per cent were not supportive of the campaign to petition Apple and Google.

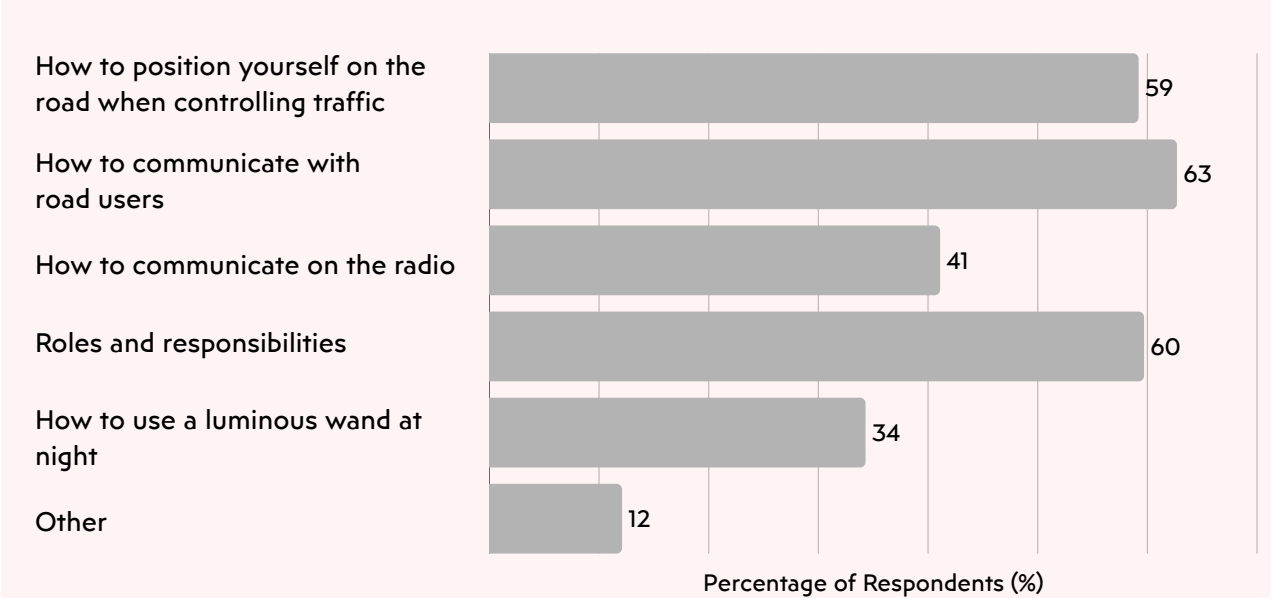
Respondents were asked to identify what they believed would make traffic management safer in the future.

What Do You Think Will Make Traffic Management Safer In the Future



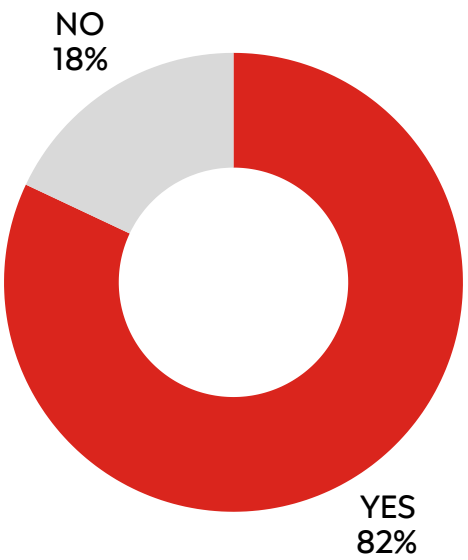
New Zealand respondents were asked about what short training or toolbox video topics would help them safely operate as a traffic controller. These were the responses:

What Short Training / Toolbox Video Topics Would Help You Safely Operate as a Traffic Controller (%)



Finally, traffic controllers were asked if they believe that there should be standardised uniforms for traffic controllers, with 82 per cent agreeing and 18 per cent disagreeing.

Support Standards Uniform For Traffic Controllers



3.7. Qualitative Insights

The 2025 Traffic Controller Safety Survey included several open-ended questions, giving traffic controllers across Australia and New Zealand a platform to describe their personal experiences, safety concerns, and recommendations. These responses offer valuable context to the quantitative data, revealing the lived reality behind the numbers.

The qualitative analysis that follows is based on thousands of unique comments submitted across more than ten open-response fields.

3.7.1. Daily Exposure to Dangerous Behaviours

The daily reality for traffic controllers across Australia and New Zealand is defined by unpredictability and risk. Respondents consistently describe a work environment in which aggressive or inattentive driver behaviour is not just possible but expected. In Australia, several workers recount incidents where drivers run red lights, speed through closed sites, or become physically abusive if delayed even briefly.

This constant threat requires controllers to remain hyper-vigilant, resulting in ongoing stress and anxiety. These near misses and daily brushes with danger aren't restricted to major highways—many report that suburban, rural, and regional roads are equally, if not more, dangerous due to high-speed limits, less lighting, and minimal policing.

> "While I was controlling traffic at a busy intersection, a speeding car refused to stop when I signalled it. It almost hit me and some pedestrians trying to cross the road **– Tony, ACT**."

> “When setting up or packing down people don’t see any signs telling them to slow down and give us space and they come ripping past us while we are getting it set up or packing down”
> **– Mitchell, NZ.**

New Zealand respondents echo these experiences, with a particular emphasis on drivers ignoring or not understanding temporary speed limits. For many, every shift brings a new story of “close calls” that only luck, quick reflexes, or proper training prevented from becoming tragedy. The recurring nature of these experiences highlights a crucial gap in driver respect for road workers and points to the need for sustained education, enforcement, and cultural change across both countries.

3.7.2. The Limits of Signage Alone

Despite extensive use of signage, cones, and other temporary controls, both Australian and New Zealand traffic controllers repeatedly assert that signage alone is not enough to keep them safe. In Australia, many note that drivers simply ignore even the most prominent signs, particularly at night or when distracted by mobile devices.

> Driver speeding while on the phone was too distracted to see the stop bat" **– Jayne, NSW.**

Several mentioned that standard signs are "just part of the landscape" for regular commuters who have become desensitised. Respondents recommend solutions like illuminated signs, more frequent use of speed bumps, or even police vehicles stationed at sites as more effective deterrents. New Zealand controllers raise unique concerns about tourists and older drivers, who may not understand TTM layouts or who miss critical instructions due to unfamiliarity or diminished attention.

> Patience from [the] public and having an understanding that we are only trying to keep [the] public and our people working safe" **– Erin, NZ.**

Both groups express frustration when drivers blame road workers for their own lack of attention or for perceived "inconvenience". In New Zealand, controllers advocate for not just clearer and larger signage, but for more innovative and physical interventions, such as digital speed displays, barriers, and variable message boards, to ensure that site safety is respected. Their testimony suggests that while signage is foundational, without real consequences or attention-grabbing improvements, it remains insufficient.

3.7.3. Enforcement and Consequences

A recurring response from both Australia and New Zealand is the call for stronger enforcement and meaningful consequences for dangerous driver behaviour at roadwork sites. Australian controllers emphasise that drivers are emboldened to ignore rules when they see little chance of being caught or penalised, with many suggesting that the mere presence of police deters the majority of dangerous conduct.

The absence of consequences, they argue, sends a message that threatening or endangering road workers is a low-risk action. Controllers advocate for running a stop bat to be treated legally on par with running a red light, and for hefty fines to apply automatically for offences near worksites. New Zealand workers echo these sentiments, with an added focus on the need for speed cameras and local council partnerships to enforce compliance.

> Nothing will change until the general public give some level of respect to the crews on site doing their job" **– Ethan, NZ**

> "There are so many new drivers on the roads each year. Fines for speeding through work sites... our signs should be part of their licence tests, so they understand what these signs mean" **– Anonymous, QLD.**

Many respondents believe that body cameras and dashcams should be standard, not only as deterrents but to ensure proper documentation of incidents for prosecution. Collectively, their voices reveal a shared frustration: that current law and practice place the onus of safety almost entirely on the controller, not the driver, and this must change if fatalities and injuries are to be reduced.

3.7.4. Fatigue and Resourcing

Fatigue, lack of resourcing, and the demands of night work are highlighted as growing safety threats in both countries. Australian respondents describe situations where understaffed night crews are expected to work extended shifts with insufficient breaks or support, sometimes in extreme weather conditions or dangerous locations. Many report that casual employment discourages proper rest, with some admitting to "pushing through" exhaustion because they feel their job security depends on it.

> "Incentives for the hard workers and reprimand the shockers. I work my ass off to be the best I can be and to keep my fellow workers and the client safe." **– Shelley, QLD**

New Zealand controllers face similar issues, particularly on rural projects where long travel times add to the fatigue burden. The combination of mental alertness required, and the physical risk presented by inattentive or aggressive drivers, makes fatigue even more dangerous for this workforce.

> "Training right from the start. Not just learning on the job from good and/or lazy STMS. To have proper training with radios. Less words, more action. Better wet weather gear. Lots of speed cameras on sites. Massive fines... Goes without saying really" **– Anonymous, NZ**

Respondents urge management to treat fatigue as a primary safety risk and call for legally mandated break schedules, higher pay for night work, and minimum crew sizes for certain operations. The consensus is clear: improved resourcing and better fatigue management are not just workforce issues, but crucial to site safety and public protection.

3.7.5. Public Education and Driver Training

Traffic controllers overwhelmingly agree that without cultural change, enforcement and engineering alone cannot solve the problem. Many Australian workers stress that drivers view roadworks as a nuisance, not a safety concern, and this leads to habitual non-compliance. Respondents call for comprehensive media campaigns, across television, radio, and social media, reminding the public that road workers are people with families, not obstacles.

> Driver awareness campaigns, more police involvement with speed monitoring, speed cameras, the mandatory implementation of light towers in low light conditions... mandated refresher training for TCs on a minimum annual basis" **– Thomas, NSW**.

In New Zealand, the unique issues presented by tourists and older drivers lead to suggestions such as distributing safety leaflets at car rental agencies and requiring refresher training for senior licence holders. Both Australian and New Zealand controllers want school curriculums and driver training to include how to safely navigate worksites, not just the road rules. Their hope is that, by instilling empathy and responsibility in the next generation of drivers, future road workers may finally experience respect and protection as the norm, not the exception.

> Ultimately, driver education is the missing link. Workers on site generally practice safety well, however drivers do not understand the impact their on-road behaviour has on our safety **– Anonymous, SA**

This qualitative analysis reveals that, across Australia and New Zealand, traffic controllers experience persistent risks from aggressive, inattentive, or poorly educated drivers. While signage and safety protocols are in place, their effectiveness is limited without robust enforcement, public education, and industry support. Fatigue and resourcing challenges further compound these dangers.

The voices in this survey underscore an urgent need for cultural change: drivers must recognise the humanity and vulnerability of those working to keep roads safe. Meaningful improvement depends on collective responsibility, stronger protections, and a renewed public respect for road workers everywhere.

Many respondents believe that body cameras and dashcams should be standard, not only as deterrents but to ensure proper documentation of incidents for prosecution. Collectively, their voices reveal a shared frustration: that current law and practice place the onus of safety almost entirely on the controller, not the driver, and this must change if fatalities and injuries are to be reduced.

4. Comparative Analysis

Australia

The 2025 National Traffic Controller Safety Survey paints a concerning picture of stagnation, and in some cases, deterioration, in the safety environment for traffic controllers across Australia.

The National Traffic Controller Safety Survey was first launched in 2023. However, the 2025 edition is only the second survey with over 1,000 respondents from Australia, which has allowed TMAA to conduct an in-depth comparative analysis. The mean safety perception score reported by traffic controllers dropped from 7.1 in 2024 to 7.0 in 2025, reflecting a subtle but meaningful decrease in workers' confidence about their on-the-job safety. This plateau in safety sentiment, despite increasing industry attention and ongoing campaigns, suggests that the most visible and pressing risks remain unaddressed at a practical level.

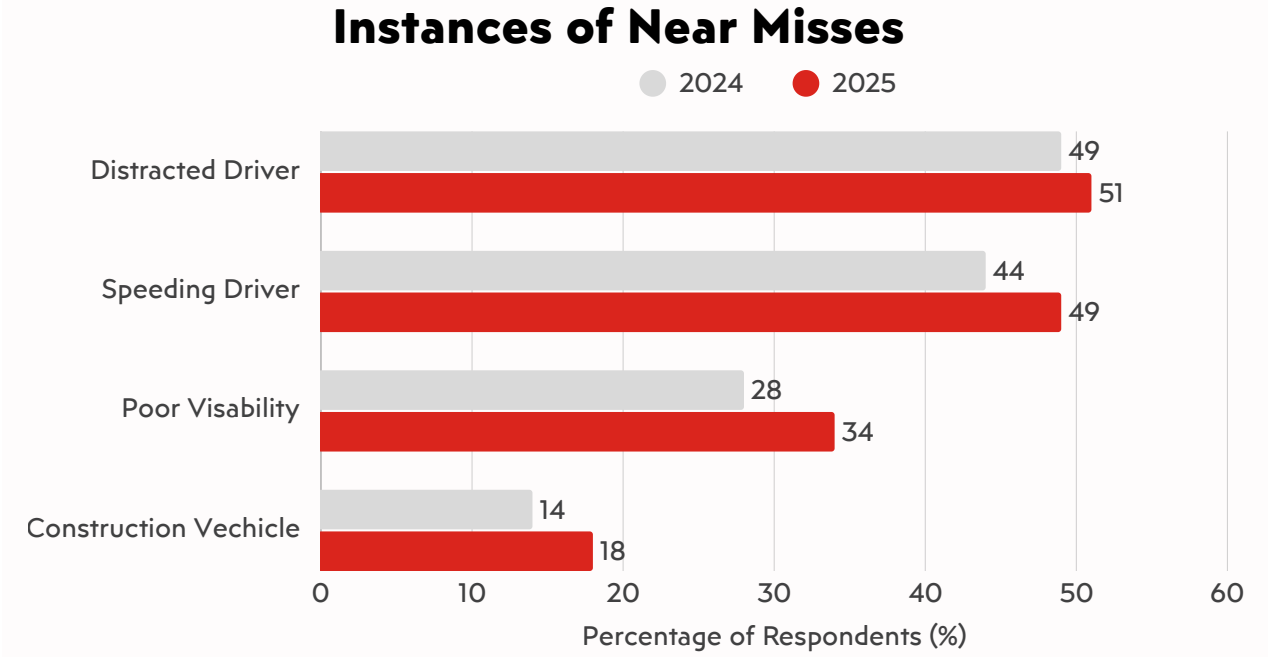
A more precise breakdown of changes in the traffic controller safety score is highlighted in the table below. Similarly to 2024, Western Australia (6.4) and Tasmania (6.5) have mean safety perception scores that are significantly below the national mean for Australia (7.0). The 2025 Survey shows a significant drop for the NT from 7.6 in 2024 to 5.9 in 2025, although the small sample size of respondents from the NT means that this change should be treated with caution. More worrying is the decline in the mean safety score for Victorian respondents, from 7.2 in 2024 to 6.6 in 2025.

Location	2024 Mean Safety Score	2025 Mean Safety Score	Change
NT*	7.6	5.9	-1.7
WA	6.3	6.4	+0.1
TAS	6.9	6.5	-0.4
VIC	7.2	6.6	-0.6
NZ	**-**	**6.7**	**-**
QLD	6.9	6.9	0
AUS	**7.1**	**7.0**	**-0.1**
SA	7.1	7.1	0
NSW	7.6	7.7	+0.1
ACT*	7.0	8.2	+1.2

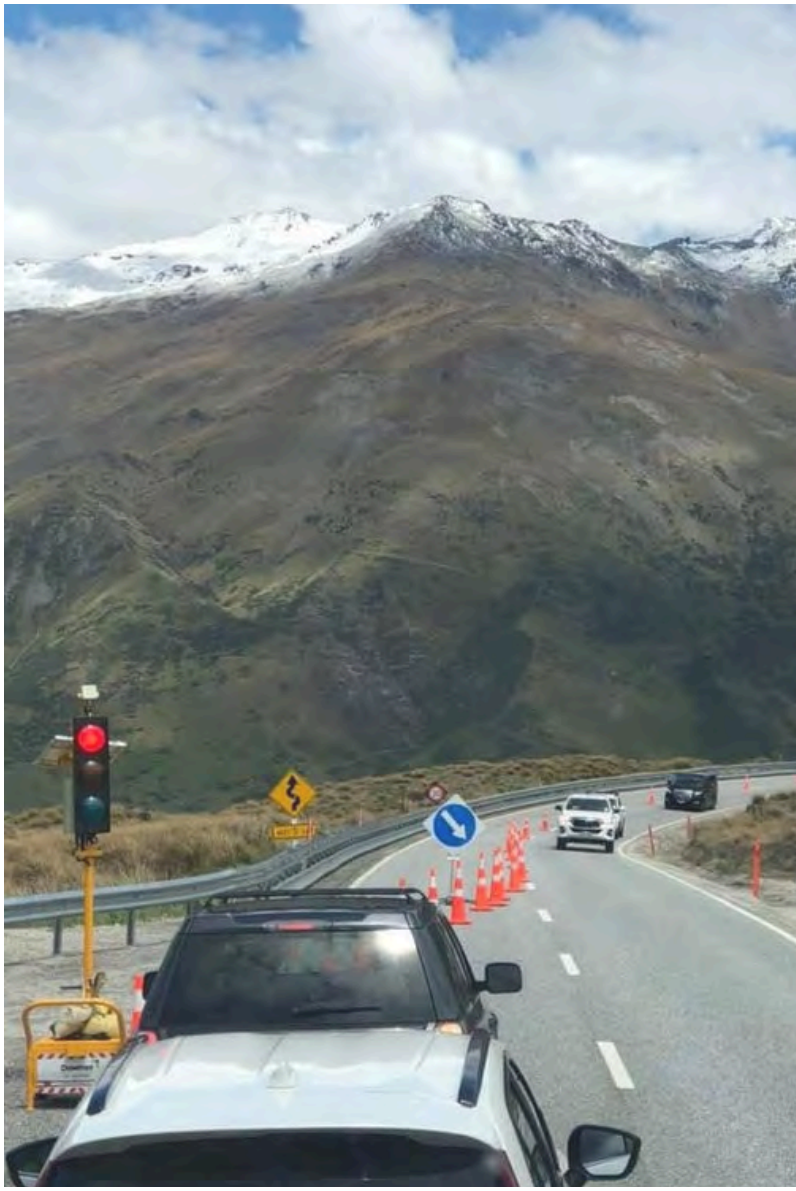
*Please note that changes in the ACT (4 respondents) and NT (13 respondents) scores may be affected by their small sample sizes.

Rates of near misses have increased across all major categories, indicating that the risk landscape for traffic controllers is growing more severe. In the 2025 survey, over half of valid respondents (51.4 per cent) reported having been nearly struck by a distracted driver at least once in the past year, an uptick from the already high 49 per cent in 2024. Nearly half experienced a near miss with a speeding vehicle (49 per cent, compared to 44 per cent in 2024), and more than a third reported near misses due to poor visibility or adverse weather (34 per cent, up from 28 per cent in 2024). Near misses involving construction vehicles also rose to 18 per cent, compared to 14 per cent in 2024. These increases reinforce concerns that many hazards are not being effectively controlled and that workers are as exposed, or more exposed, than in previous years.

This analysis confirms that the risks faced by Australian traffic controllers are not isolated incidents but are widespread and systemic. The consistency in near miss rates across different states and sectors within Australia indicates that these are deep-seated challenges that persist regardless of local regulatory differences or worksite environments. The underlying problems therefore require coordinated solutions, national attention, and industry-wide leadership, rather than piecemeal local initiatives.

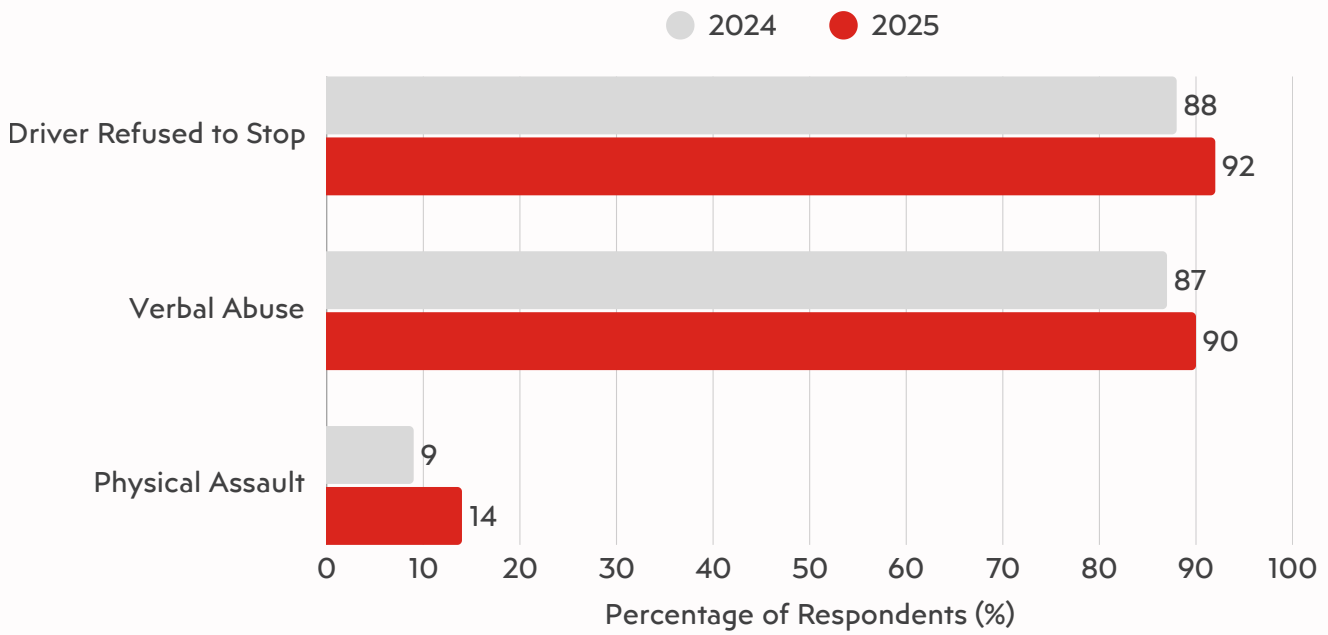


Equally alarming are the continued high rates of direct confrontations and aggression faced by traffic controllers. In the 2025 survey, 92 per cent of respondents reported experiencing drivers refusing to stop when instructed at least once, an increase from the already high proportion reporting such occurrences in 2024 (88 per cent). Verbal abuse remains nearly universal, with 90 per cent of respondents experiencing some form of abuse (compared to 87 per cent in 2024), and frequent weekly incidents still the norm.



Physical assaults, while less common, were experienced by 14 per cent of traffic controllers in 2025, up from nine per cent in 2024. These high levels of non-compliance, disrespect, and outright violence point to a persistent cultural problem on the roads, where traffic controllers are seen as obstacles rather than essential safety workers deserving of respect and protection.

Negative Interactions with Road Users



The persistence of these risks has a profound impact on workforce morale and may ultimately affect the sustainability of the industry. Repeated near misses, frequent abuse, and the ever-present threat of actual violence contribute to stress, burnout, and high turnover among traffic controllers.

The fact that the situation has not improved over the past year, despite ongoing safety campaigns, advocacy, and some investment in new equipment, suggests that current interventions are not sufficient. Worker feedback in both the 2024 and 2025 surveys consistently calls for stronger enforcement (such as more speed cameras, tougher penalties, and greater police presence), comprehensive public education, better site planning, and the implementation of technology to physically separate workers from live traffic whenever possible.

In summary, the 2025 survey reveals a safety environment that is at best static and, by some measures, worsening for traffic controllers in Australia. The routine nature of near misses, non-compliance, and aggression against workers underscores the need for a systemic, industry-wide approach to safety improvement. This will require not only stronger enforcement and smarter use of technology but also a sustained shift in public attitudes toward roadwork sites and those who manage them. Without these changes, traffic controllers will remain on the frontline of unacceptable risk, and efforts to professionalise and sustain the industry will continue to face significant challenges

5. Recommendations

Australia

5.1. Strengthen Enforcement and Legal Consequences

The 2025 survey shows a disturbing increase in driver non-compliance, with 59 per cent of controllers experiencing drivers refusing to stop weekly and nearly 11 per cent reporting physical assault. Worker feedback consistently highlights that the absence of visible enforcement emboldens dangerous behaviour.

Short-term goals:

- Deploy more mobile speed cameras (with enforcement capabilities) and police presence at active roadwork sites, especially high-risk locations (urban motorways, night works, rural high-speed zones).
- Introduce automatic fines for exceeding Temporary Speed Limits (TSLs) at worksites, with higher penalties than standard speeding offences to reflect the elevated risk.

Long-term goals:

- Each state and territory to develop consistent enforcement framework for roadwork zones, ensuring uniform penalties and deterrence across jurisdictions, similar to the enforcement rules and penalties used in School Zones.
- Continue to raise awareness through informing road safety campaigns showing that endangering traffic controllers carries serious, non-negotiable consequences.

5.2. Expand Technology and Physical Protections

Near misses have risen year-on-year across key categories (distracted drivers, speeding, poor visibility, and construction vehicles). In 2025, 82 per cent of Australian traffic controllers supported removing controllers from live lanes through Portable Traffic Control Devices (PTCDs) and automation.

Short-term goals:

- Accelerate the rollout of PTCDs and digital speed displays at high-risk sites.
- Continue to strongly encourage the use of truck-mounted attenuators or physical barriers where applicable and relevant.

Long-term goals:

- Set a national target of removing all traffic controllers from live lanes, through accelerated adoption of automation and remote-control systems.
- Invest in “smart site” technologies integrating speed detection, illuminated messaging, and automated enforcement, creating a proactive and adaptive safety environment.

5.3. Launch a Coordinated Public Education and Awareness Campaign

Verbal abuse remains nearly universal (90 per cent of respondents in 2025), and unsafe driver behaviour continues to be the root cause of many near misses and assaults. Both the 2024 and 2025 surveys show that without cultural change, enforcement and technology alone cannot solve the problem.

Short-term goals:

- Expand public awareness campaigns ("Slow Down for Road Workers") across radio, and social platforms, humanising traffic controllers and highlighting real stories of near misses and abuse.
- Introduce targeted driver alerts in navigation apps (e.g., Apple Maps, Google Maps, Waze) warning motorists to reduce speed at roadwork sites, building on TMAA's 2025 petition campaign.

Long-term goals:

- Embed roadwork safety into driver education, licence renewals, and testing regimes to normalise safe behaviours around traffic management sites.
- Establish an ongoing national program of safety campaigns, co-delivered by TMAA, the Office of Road Safety and State Road Authorities refreshed every two years, to reinforce respect for traffic controllers and adapt messaging to emerging risks (e.g. distracted driving from new technologies).

These recommendations blend immediate enforcement and technology measures with structural long-term reforms in culture, training, and regulation. By setting short-term tactical goals (visible enforcement, PTCD rollout, national campaign) alongside long-term strategic goals (consistent penalties, automation targets, public education), the industry can move from crisis management toward sustainable, systemic improvement.

6. Recommendations

New Zealand

New Zealand's temporary traffic management sector is moving to a more risk-based approach to TTM. Under the new guidance, TTM is planned and managed in response to identified hazards and associated risks. To be successful in implementing the change, we must address all barriers to improvement.

Poor driver behaviours and non-compliance mean higher risks and could result in more TTM tools and equipment be deployed to ensure the safety of road workers and road users themselves. If not addressed with urgency, the sector may normalise approaches to respond to widespread non-compliance.

To deliver the below recommendations, the TTM-ISG is forming a cross-sector working group made up of representatives from the TTM sector, road user groups, as well as governmental enforcement and health and safety entities.

6.1. Strengthen Enforcement and Legal Consequences

There is a concerning level of non-compliance at TTM sites, with over 66 percent of controllers experiencing drivers refusing to stop weekly, and almost 20 percent reporting physical assault. Workers highlight that the absence of visible enforcement encourages dangerous behaviour while signage, signals and TTM equipment are being ignored.

Short-term goals:

- Increase enforcement for exceeding temporary speed limits (TSLs) at worksites, recognising the elevated risk to workers and road users themselves.
- Use mobile fixed and average speed cameras (with enforcement capabilities) and/or increase police presence at busy, active roadwork sites, especially high-risk locations (urban motorways, night works, rural high-speed zones). Measure results.

Long-term goals:

- Set a national target of removing all traffic controllers from live lanes, through accelerated adoption of automation and remote-control systems.
- Invest in "smart site" technologies integrating speed detection, illuminated messaging, and automated enforcement, creating a proactive and adaptive safety environment.

6.2. Expand Technology and Physical Protections

Testing and deployment of new technology in works delivery and at sites will help workers to understand and respond to risks from distracted drivers, speeding, poor visibility, and construction vehicles. They can also enhance efficiency at work sites, reducing the exposure to risks.

Short-term goals:

- Reduce the commercial and legislative barriers to the use of Portable Traffic Control Devices (PTCDs) and digital speed and information signage and other emerging technology innovations at high-risk sites.
- Continue to use truck-mounted attenuators or physical barriers where applicable and relevant.
- Conduct an impact assessment of removing all traffic controllers from live lanes by 1 July 2026, to create evidence in support accelerated adoption of automation and remote-control systems.

Long-term goals:

- Invest in "smart site" technologies, integrating speed detection, illuminated messaging and automated enforcement, supporting a proactive and adaptive safety environment.
- Remove all traffic controllers from live lanes if supported by evidence (above).

6.3. Launch a Coordinated Public Education and Awareness Campaign

Unsafe driver behaviour and abuse is at concerning levels, reflected in the survey responses. Additionally, New Zealand's statistics show that the majority of deaths and serious injuries at temporary speed sites are road users. Both of these issues point to a lack of recognition of the role of road workers and importance of TTM.

Short-term goals:

- Refresh existing public awareness campaigns across traditional media and social media to humanise traffic controllers, restate the role of TTM and risks to road users.
- Communicate how the New Zealand Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (NZGTTM) is changing the way road works are planned and managed in New Zealand, e.g. road work sites may now rapidly change to adapt to the environment and risks.
- Further trial and measure the impact of localised driver alerts and digital signage using Cooperative ITS and navigation apps and sources such as Google Maps, Waze, and Here.

Long-term goals:

- Increase focus of roadwork safety in driver education and testing.
- Establish ongoing localised alerts technology solutions.
- Establish an ongoing seasonal program of safety campaigns and adapt messaging to emerging risks (e.g. distracted driving from new technologies).

The above recommendations are made with consideration for a risk-based approach to TTM. To achieve a successful transition and sustained improvements, it is essential to include enforcement, technology and education measures with both immediate and long-term reforms.

7. Conclusion

Australia & New Zealand

The 2025 Traffic Controller Safety Survey paints a sobering picture: the safety environment for traffic controllers in Australia and New Zealand has stagnated, and in some respects, deteriorated. Despite increased industry attention, **near misses, driver aggression, and physical assaults remain disturbingly common,** with many controllers experiencing abuse, threats, or dangerous driver behaviour on a weekly or even daily basis.

Key risks, such as speeding, distracted driving, lack of enforcement, and public hostility, are systemic and persistent, with little difference across states, jurisdictions, or between Australia and New Zealand. Controllers report that current interventions, primarily signage and standard training, are not enough. Many feel vulnerable during setup and pack-down phases, at night, and in rural areas with poor visibility or little police presence.
A clear and urgent need emerges for:

- **Stronger enforcement and meaningful consequences for dangerous drivers.**
- **Comprehensive public education to change attitudes and improve compliance.**
- **Investment in technology and physical site protections.**
- **Better workforce support, fatigue management, and active listening to frontline safety concerns.**

Without coordinated, industry-wide action, traffic controllers will continue to face unacceptable risks, impacting not only individual wellbeing but also the sustainability of the profession itself. Industry, government, and the public must work together to build a road safety culture where all road workers return home safely, every shift, every day.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