



Community safety on the Northern Beaches

A community insights paper



Northern
Beaches
Council

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Executive Summary

This Insights Paper brings together current information on community safety across the Northern Beaches with the experiences and views shared by our community. It has helped guide the development of the Community Safety Action Plan 2026 - 2031 and supports *Better Together 2040*¹ by providing an evidence base for decision making.

The paper recognises that community safety involves a wide range of issues and that people experience and feel safety in different ways. It also recognises that everyone has a role to play in creating a safe community.

We regularly engage with the community and key stakeholders about safety. To inform the Action Plan, we reviewed crime data from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), research into the factors that influence community safety and evidence on effective responses to safety concerns. This information was considered alongside feedback from stakeholder and community consultations, including the Community Safety Survey undertaken in September and October 2025.

Community safety is part of everyday life. How safe we feel can change depending on where we are, what we are doing, and the time of day. It's influenced by the people around us and what we see, hear and experience. Everyone perceives and experiences safety differently.

Overall, our community reports a strong sense of safety, with a large percentage of survey respondents indicating little to no concern about crime. This is supported by recorded crime data which shows that most major crime rates have stayed stable or declined over the past 10 years.

Most survey respondents also reported low levels of concern about safety in public places. Their primary concern in these spaces was transport, particularly related to footpaths and e-bikes. Alcohol-related behaviour and crime continue to affect how safe some people feel, highlighting the need for ongoing action in these areas.

The community told us that social issues are their primary safety concern. Antisocial behaviour, social isolation and discrimination were identified as having a significant impact on how safe people feel in their daily lives.

New challenges, including e-micromobility and advances in technology, are changing how people think about safety. This highlights the need for us to regularly review community needs and adapt our response to new and emerging issues.

Scope of this paper

This Insights Paper recognises that people experience safety in different ways. These experiences can be influenced by factors such as age, gender, culture, identity, where people live, disability, past experiences and personal circumstances. The paper focuses on understanding the key community safety issues and experiences affecting our community.

Its' purpose is to present a clear overview of the key issues identified in our research and community engagement and to provide a foundation for the Community Safety Action Plan 2026 - 2031.

What is community safety?

At its core, safety means being protected from harm and danger, both physical and emotional.

A safe community is a place where people can go about their daily lives with confidence and without unnecessary risk. It's a community where people feel supported, included and able to participate in community life.

Community safety is a shared responsibility. It relies on residents, police, government agencies and community organisations working together to create a safe environment where people can live, work and travel safely.

While preventing crime is an important part of community safety, it also includes reducing risks, addressing concerns and supporting community wellbeing. This can be achieved through partnerships, well-designed public spaces, community education and access to support services.

How safe people feel is just as important as how safe they are. When people feel safe, they are more likely to connect with others, access services and take part in community life.

Working together for a safer Northern Beaches

Community safety is a complex issue that requires a whole-of-community approach. Creating a safe Northern Beaches is a shared responsibility between the people who live, work and visit the area, and the organisations and agencies that provide services and support to the community.

Our stakeholders

Many organisations share responsibility for community safety and work together to deliver a safe and resilient community.

The **Federal Government** sets national policies and provides funding for safety and crime prevention programs in areas such as domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drugs, and road safety.

The **NSW Government** plays a major role in community safety, including:

- NSW Police Force who enforce the law, manages emergencies and runs crime prevention programs.
- Department of Communities and Justice who deliver services such as housing, child protection and domestic and family violence support.
- NSW Health who focus on public health, including mental health, alcohol and drug harm reduction and child safety.

- Transport for NSW who improve safety through road safety education and promotion of safe travel on roads and public transport for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.
- Emergency services providers such as the NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW State Emergency Service.

Local councils play a vital role in creating public places that support healthy, active lifestyles and enable people to participate in community life. We contribute to crime prevention and community safety by working to safeguard and improve the wellbeing of the community².

We act as an advocate, partner and coordinator by supporting research, building community capacity and working with other agencies to address local safety issues. We plan, design and manage public spaces, deliver community programs and events, provide recreational and support services and carry out local regulatory functions.

We also play an important role in implementing federal and state government initiatives, aligning local actions with broader policy directions and facilitating access to funding opportunities that support community safety outcomes.

Non-government organisations provide local specialised services and initiatives that respond to the needs of our community. These services are often government funded and focus on areas such as children, young people and families, homelessness and domestic and family violence.

Community-led initiatives also play an important role in community safety. These often involve residents, government agencies, councils and community organisations working together to create safer and stronger communities.

Community members play a key part in community safety by sharing their views, participating in local planning and initiatives and by building the knowledge and skills needed to actively support their own safety and the safety of others.

Strong partnerships help ensure that safety issues are addressed in a coordinated and locally responsive way. A key feature of a safe community is a strong network of organisations and community members working together to address local concerns and achieve lasting safety outcomes.

Our strategic framework

Northern Beaches Community Strategic Plan 2040

The Community Strategic Plan³ defines our community's vision for a safe, diverse, inclusive and connected Northern Beaches community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment. It guides Council's priorities, activities and funding decisions.

Through delivery of the plan our community aspires to be resilient, ensuring that people feel safe, supported and included, and have diverse opportunities for a rich cultural and social life.

To achieve the outcome of community and belonging, we have committed to support our community to feel safe and supported (goal 8), by:

- a. building resilient communities where neighbours know and support each other
- b. improving health and wellbeing through fair access to information, health and support services
- c. working collaboratively to ensure everyone is safe from harm and danger in public and at home.

Better Together 2040 Social Sustainability Strategy

The Better Together Strategy⁴ supports the Community and Belonging outcome of the Community Strategic Plan. We review this strategy every 5 years, working in partnership with residents to ensure it continues to respond to local needs and supports a resilient, connected and inclusive community where everyone can participate in community life.

Safety is one of the 4 strategic directions of Better Together and focuses on 4 strategic priorities:

- Strengthening community safety and resilience across public spaces, transport, homes and online environments, so people are better equipped to support each other and navigate difficult circumstances.
- Supporting mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on early intervention and reducing barriers to accessing support.
- Preventing and responding to domestic and family violence.
- Keeping children and young people safe through best-practice child safeguarding.

The Community Safety Plan delivers the Safe direction of Better Together.

Current trends and drivers

Local crime trends

The Northern Beaches enjoys a high level of community safety.

Recorded crime statistics from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) for the Northern Beaches Local Government Area⁵ for the 12 months to December 2025, show that most major crime categories have remained stable or declined over the past 2 and 10 year periods.

The rates of sexual assault and other sexual offences have increased over the 10-year period but have been stable over the past 2 years, which is consistent with trends across NSW.

BOCSAR has identified several factors that may have contributed to this increase including:

- the digitisation of the online Sexual Assault Reporting Option tool in 2023 which has made anonymous reporting easier and more accessible⁶
- global movements such as #metoo which have inspired increased reporting since 2017⁷, including a large amount of historical reporting.

It's important to note that short-term changes in local crime trends can be affected by factors such as repeat offending by a small number of individuals, the arrest of offenders and targeted Police operations addressing specific issues.

It's also recognised that recorded crime statistics do not capture all crime. Some offences, including domestic and family violence, sexual assault and fraud are often underreported and may not be fully reflected in recorded crime data^{8 9 10 11}.

Table 1: Recorded crime data to December 2025 Northern Beaches and NSW/ Source: BOCSAR

	2-year trend	10-year trend
Property offences	Down 21.9% NSW: Stable	Down 6.5% NSW: Down 2.8%
Violent offences	Stable NSW: Stable	Stable NSW: Up 2.6%
Domestic Violence (DV) related assault	Stable NSW: Stable	Stable NSW: Up 2.9%
Non-DV related assault	Down 9.4% NSW: Down 4.0%	Stable NSW: Stable
Break and enter dwelling	Stable NSW: Down 6.6%	Down 9.7% NSW: Down 5.5%
Break and enter – non dwelling	Stable NSW: Down 4.3%	Down 7.0% NSW: Down 3.9%
Malicious damage	Down 11.8% NSW: Down 6.5%	Down 5.4% NSW: Down 3.3%

	2-year trend	10-year trend
Motor vehicle theft	Stable NSW: Stable	Down 1.3% NSW: Up 1.4%
Murder	nc NSW: Stable	nc NSW: Stable
Robbery	Stable NSW: Down 9.0%	Stable NSW: Down 3.0%
Sexual assault	Stable NSW: Stable	Up 9.9% NSW: Up 10.7%
Sexual offences - other	Stable NSW: Stable	Up 2.6 NSW: Up 2.6%
Steal from motor vehicle	Stable NSW: Down 7.0%	Down 9.5% NSW: Down 5.0%
Stealing offences - other	Down 18% NSW: Stable	Down 6.9% NSW: Down 4.1%

Key drivers of community safety

Community safety is influenced by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. These factors can affect actual levels of crime and how safe people feel in their daily lives. ¹²

Understanding the key local and broader influences on community safety helps us identify current and emerging issues affecting the Northern Beaches. This information helps ensure that important issues are considered in the Community Safety Action Plan and addressed through new actions or existing programs and initiatives where appropriate.

1. Our evolving community

Our community is becoming:

- **Larger** - between 2021 and 2046 the Northern Beaches LGA is forecast to grow by 38,719 people (14.64% growth) ¹³. This is a slightly higher growth rate than the NSW projection of 14.1% ¹⁴.

It's important to meet the needs of a growing population with increased housing, infrastructure and services.

- **Older** - NSW has a significantly ageing population and the Northern Beaches reflects this trend. Between 2021 and 2031, the population of people of retirement age is forecast to increase by 22.7% ¹⁵.

Supporting an ageing community requires accessible infrastructure, suitable health, wellbeing and housing options and access to aged care and disability services.

- More culturally diverse - with over 33% of residents born overseas¹⁶ and more than 50% having at least one parent born overseas¹⁷, the Northern Beaches reflects Australia's multicultural fabric.

This growing diversity enriches our community and highlights the importance of inclusive strategies that support community understanding, encourage participation and foster a strong sense of belonging for all.

2. The economy

While the Northern Beaches overall experiences a high level of advantage¹⁸, it's important to recognise that many residents face financial vulnerability or hardship. Cost-of-living pressures continue to impact individuals, families and businesses, increasing financial stress across the community. Ongoing global economic uncertainty may add to these challenges.

Supporting financial wellbeing requires access to local employment opportunities, training pathways for young people, and services that help people experiencing financial hardship, housing stress or homelessness. Gambling can also have a significant impact on the financial security and wellbeing of individuals and their families. Ensuring people can get support when they need it is critical to individual and community wellbeing.

3. Physical environment

The physical environment plays a significant role in both actual safety and how safe people feel.

The number of homes in the Northern Beaches is expected to grow by 14% between 2021 and 2046, reaching approximately 119,717 dwellings¹⁹.

As the area grows and changes, it is important that planning and design continue to prioritise safety, accessibility and inclusion. Design features such as good visibility, connected and active public spaces, adequate lighting, and accessible and affordable infrastructure all contribute to safer, more welcoming environments for everyone.

The natural geography of the Northern Beaches also plays a part in community safety. Our large areas of coastline, community parks and bushland reserves all provide valuable recreational opportunities, but they can also present unique safety risks. These environments need ongoing attention around emergency preparedness, resilience planning and public safety.

4. Emerging technology

Technology continues to evolve rapidly and brings significant benefits to our lives. However, it also creates new challenges and risks that require us to adapt.

While it's not always possible to anticipate every technological change, it is important to identify and respond to potential impacts as early as possible. Monitoring emerging trends and addressing unintended consequences can help reduce risks and ensure the benefits of new technologies are realised safely and responsibly.

a) E-micromobility devices

The rapid uptake of e-micromobility devices such as e-bikes across the Northern Beaches, has created challenges for pedestrians and these types of transport to safely share spaces. The challenges relate to both infrastructure and the behaviour of road and footpath users and community members have raised concerns about e-bike safety.

In response, the NSW Government is developing strategies and reviewing regulations to address these concerns and support the safe use of e-micromobility devices.^{20 21}

b) Cybercrime

Advances in technology are being used by scammers to create convincing online content including fake websites, advertisements, social media profiles and mobile apps. These are now the most common ways people are being targeted for fraud.²²

Scams can affect anyone, but some groups are more impacted than others including people with disability, those who speak English as a second language and First Nations communities. Younger adults aged 18 to 34 have experienced the fastest increase in reported scams.

Across Australia, financial losses from scams have increased while reporting rates have decreased. In 2025, investment scams caused the highest total of losses.

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has further increased these risks. AI can be used to create realistic but misleading content, making scams more convincing and contributing to more sophisticated cybercrime, misinformation and the use of images made without a person's consent.

5. Global tensions

We live in an increasingly interconnected world, where diversity, the ease of global travel and instant communication mean that international events can have a direct impact on local communities. As conflicts and global challenges arise, their effects can be felt locally through impacts on social cohesion, community wellbeing and economic stability.

Periods of global tension and economic hardship can intensify social challenges within communities. During these times, trust in organisations and government may decrease, while intolerance towards those perceived as different can increase. The rapid growth of social media and generative AI has further increased these pressures, contributing to the spread of false or misleading information. This can make it more difficult for people to agree or trust each other, leading to greater division within the community.²³

In some cases, polarising or extremist views and behaviours can bring individuals together around shared grievances, reinforcing division and weakening social cohesion.

Engagement and evidence base

Understanding how people experience and perceive safety is important for improving quality of life across our community.

Over recent years, we've undertaken extensive engagement to better understand community experiences and attitudes relating to safety. This engagement provides valuable insights into the issues that most influence how safe people feel in their daily lives.

To support the development of the Community Safety Action Plan we sought a diverse range of safety related input during recent engagements, including:

- The 2026 Northern Beaches Community Views survey (1270)
- Disability and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) (66)
- High school engagement (351)
- Have Your Say Day 2025 (1925)
- Have Your Say Day 2026 (2368)
- Multicultural Inclusion Plan (134)

All safety-related input received in those engagements has been considered in the development of this document, alongside:

- BOCSAR recorded crime data and related reports
- research on current drivers of community safety and strategies for addressing issues of concern
- ongoing consultation with key internal and external stakeholders including the Community Safety Advisory Committee, LGBTQ+ Working Group, Youth Advisory Group²⁴ as well as staff who manage key assets, services and direct customer interactions.

We also undertook additional community engagement through a Community Safety Survey in September and October 2025 with over 480 submissions received.

The community engagement aimed to:

- hear directly from community members about their experiences and perception of safety across the Northern Beaches
- understand lived experience and priorities of the community
- build on the outcomes of the previous Community Safety Plan 2021-2026
- identify priority themes for future attention
- raise awareness of the purpose and responsibilities of the Action Plan
- provide evidence to shape a new 5-year Action Plan.

Overall, we heard that people value the Northern Beaches as a safe place to live, with a strong sense of community and connection. Concern about law-and-order

issues is relatively low, with safety and access to the natural environment remaining key contributors to wellbeing and lifestyle.

Community feelings of safety

Using a representative sample of over 1,200 community respondents, the 2026 Northern Beaches Community Views survey identified that 67% of residents selected feeling safe as one of the top 5 most important attributes when considering what makes somewhere a good place to live. Residents rated their experience of feeling safe in their local area 7.9 out of 10, consistent with previous surveys (8.0 – 8.1), which is significantly higher than the average across Australia (6.2)²⁵.

The Community Safety Survey conducted in September and October 2025²⁶ found that most respondents felt safe at home and in areas close to where they live. Feelings of safety generally decreased at night and when people were in unfamiliar places or surrounded by people they didn't know.

The Australia's Welfare 2025 Report²⁷ noted that the national gender difference for feeling safe walking in the local area at night is 32% - the lowest rate over 38 countries – meaning women feel significantly less safe than men walking at night in Australia. Our survey also supported a gender difference with women feeling less safe walking in local area at night.

Community crime and safety priorities

Despite having a high level of safety, the Northern Beaches, like all communities, experiences crime and safety issues that can impact individual wellbeing and community cohesion.

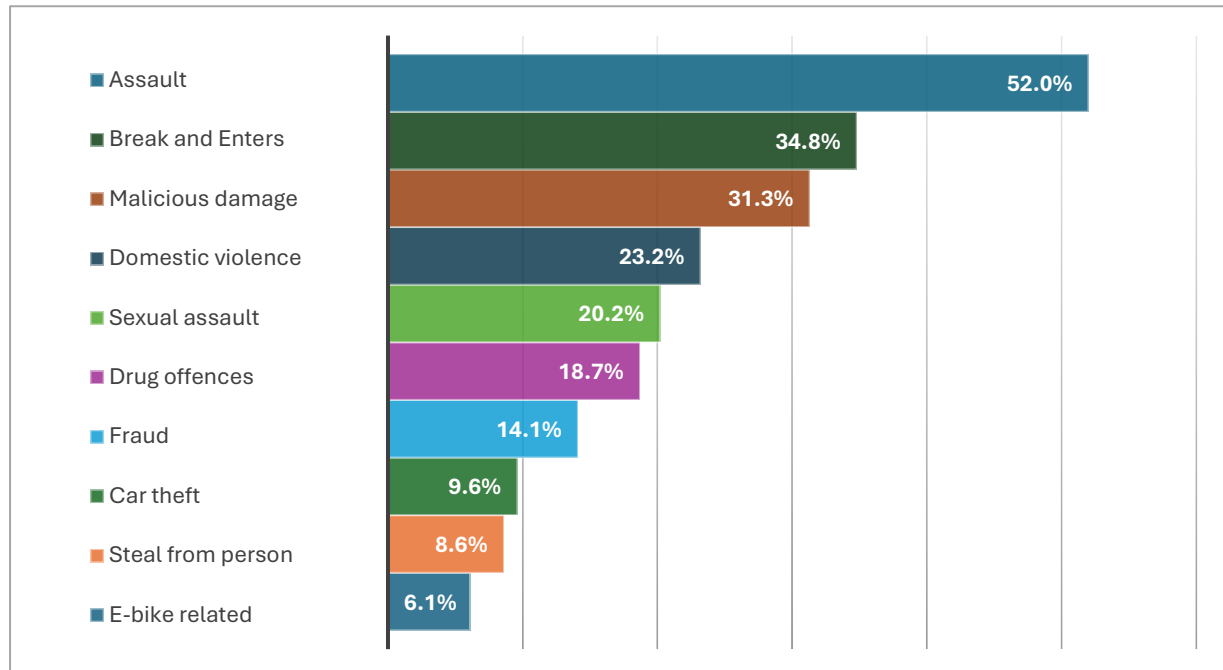
To better understand local concerns, we asked community members about issues that affect their sense of safety. 84% of survey respondents reported being concerned or very concerned about social safety matters, while only 39% of respondents reported feeling concern about crime or place-based safety issues.

It's important to note that the Community Safety Survey was based on voluntary participation. People with a particular interest in, or concern about, community safety may have been more likely to take part, which in turn may have influenced the results.

Crime

We asked the community to nominate their top 3 crime categories of concern. The following were the top survey responses identified:

Figure 1: Northern Beaches Community Safety Survey 2025



Note: total exceeds 100% as people nominated 3 concerns each and graph represents top 10 responses only.

The offences causing the highest levels of concern correlate with crime categories that have experienced recent spikes in occurrence or have received significant media attention.

We heard that concern about alcohol-related behaviour in public spaces can make people feel less safe and increase fears of harassment or assault.

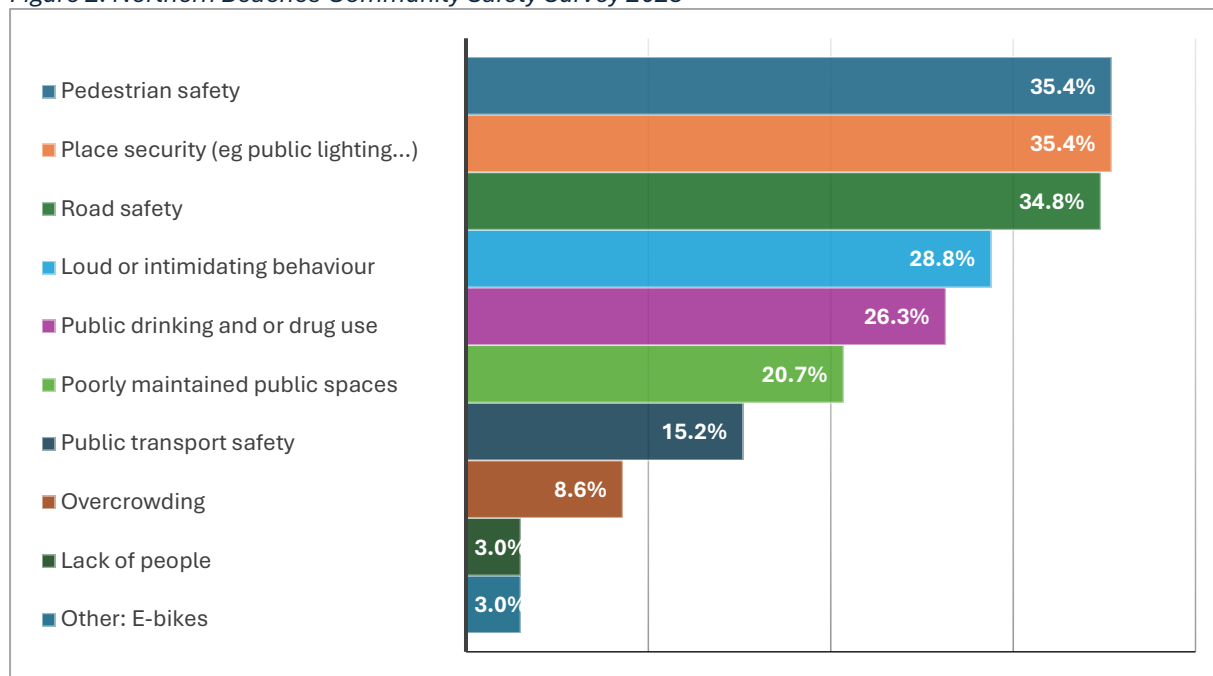
The language used in some feedback reflected the impact that social media and incomplete information can have on levels of concern. References to home invasions, gangs, the rise in youth offenders often included assumptions that aren't supported by available evidence, but they do reflect how people feel about safety in the community.

Many respondents called for stronger law and order measures, including increased Police presence, tougher penalties for repeat offenders and a justice system that better reflects the impact of crime on victims and the wider community. Concerns often focused on crimes against the person where victims are targeted at random, or crimes against personal property such as break-ins to cars or homes, where people feel they should be safest.

Safety in public spaces

When asked to nominate their top 3 place-based safety concerns, survey respondents identified the following:

Figure 2: Northern Beaches Community Safety Survey 2025



Note: total exceeds 100% as people nominated 3 concerns each and graph represents top 10 responses only.

The integration of e-bikes with pedestrians and other road users emerged as a key concern. Many people across different age groups and backgrounds reported feeling vulnerable, with some saying these devices impact their ability to move about safely in the community, whether they're walking, driving, cycling or using other mobility devices.

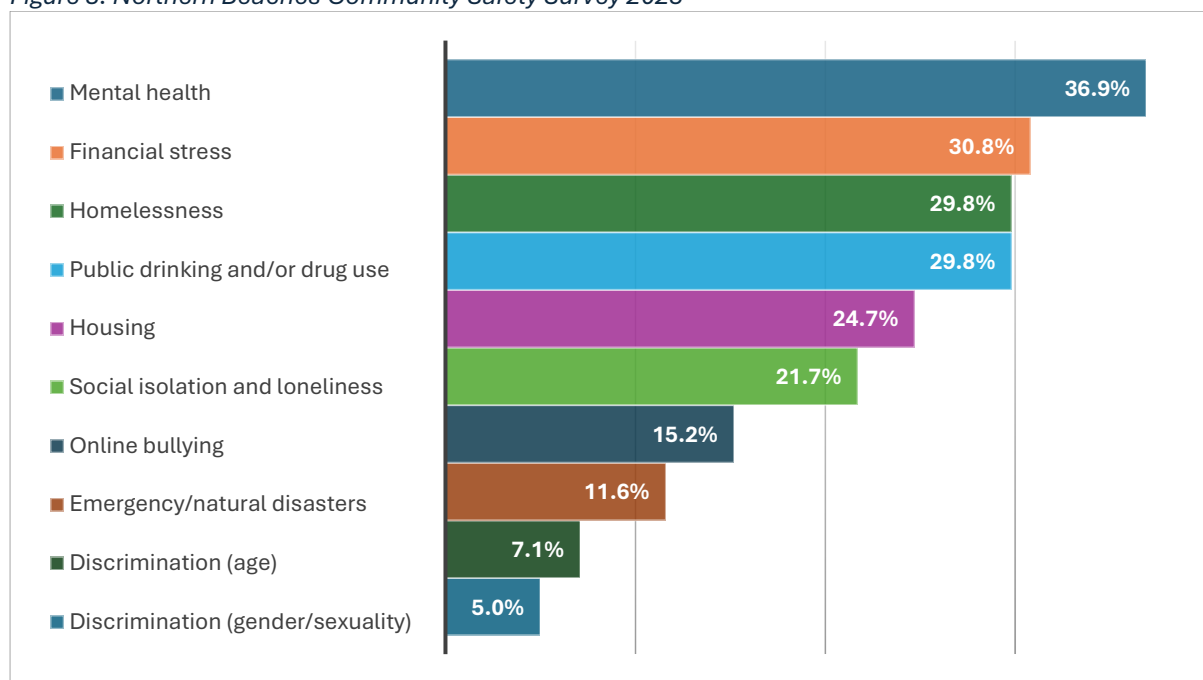
Transport-related concerns include footpath safety and access to public transport. Poor lighting in some areas affects how and when people use public spaces. Antisocial and alcohol-related behaviour in public places further reduces feelings of safety and can discourage people from participating in community life. These concerns are often stronger after dark.

These issues were consistent across all engagement activities, including the community safety mapping activity, which identified specific locations of concern. Additional feedback also highlighted the importance of reliable and inclusive public transport access.

Social safety

When asked to nominate their top 3 social safety concerns, survey respondents identified the following:

Figure 3: Northern Beaches Community Safety Survey 2025



Note: total exceeds 100% as people nominated 3 concerns each and graph represents top 10 responses only.

Cost-of-living pressures are having a significant impact on individuals and business, with concerns raised about financial stress, housing insecurity and homelessness. Mental health remains a critical issue across all population groups, influencing people's ability to feel safe, connected and included. A consistent theme is that some individuals feel disconnected from the community, which can limit their participation in everyday activities.

It should be noted that the next most common form of concern was discrimination (race or religion) representing 15.6% of responses.

The impact of gambling on social safety is also noted, particularly for its impact on related issues including mental health, suicide prevention and domestic and family violence.^{28 29}

Last time felt unsafe

People told us about the last time they had felt unsafe. For respondents who reported feeling unsafe in the last 12 months, 73% said this occurred on a street, footpath or other open space.

Common reasons for feeling unsafe included being in public places where people were affected by alcohol, antisocial or loud behaviour, loitering, dangerous driving and aggressive or violent behaviour.

Community perspective on what improves feelings of safety

People told us that public spaces that are designed with safety in mind and are well-lit and well-maintained, feel safe. Activated spaces, reliable transport and visible security help to increase people's perceptions of safety.

Consistent across all community engagement was feedback that the following key factors support a higher perception of safety:

- improved lighting in public areas
- well-maintained spaces with clear visibility
- visible security
- activated spaces
- a good sense of community
- e-bike regulation and improved infrastructure to integrate with pedestrians and drivers.

Community perception of safety over time

Given that the content and format of surveys regarding community safety have changed over time, direct comparisons have limitations. However, it's reasonable to state that community sentiment around feeling unsafe has increased and shifted in recent years with transport emerging as a growing concern, particularly relating to the public transport and the emergence of e-bikes.

The data indicates that there is a disconnect between the level of concern about some crimes and the number of recorded crime incidents. For example, concern has risen considerably for assault and break-ins however the Northern Beaches has seen a significant decrease in recorded incidents.

Another disconnect is evident in the decreased levels of concern for fraud and domestic violence. Although concern may appear lower in some survey responses and recorded incidents may also fluctuate, these remain significant safety issues in the community, with well-recognised underreporting in these areas.

Key Insights

5 overarching themes bring together what we heard through our engagements and research to provide localised evidence and support development of actions.

Insight 1 – Perceived (feelings of) safety

Why this is important for community safety

It's important to recognise that people experience safety differently. A person may be physically safe but still feel unsafe.³⁰ Feeling safe goes beyond physical protection and includes emotional wellbeing, a sense of stability and trust in the people and environments around us.

Our past experiences and the information we receive about the safety of others, can shape how we respond to people and situations around us. When people feel unsafe, it's natural for the body and mind to go on high alert and scan the environment for potential threats. Whether the threat is physical, emotional or perceived, this response is similar. It puts the body in a state of stress and can lead people to withdraw, avoid certain places or situations and adopt protective behaviours.

Feeling safe, stable and secure is fundamental to health and wellbeing. It influences how people live their personal lives, move through their community and participate in social, work and education activities. It also affects a person's overall sense of confidence and freedom. When people feel safe, they are better able to relax, build relationships and engage fully in community life.

Key issues

1. Gender disparity

There is a gender difference in people's feelings of safety walking in their local area at night. While this is less than the national difference³¹, the gender difference is still significant.

2. Behaviour in public spaces

People feel unsafe in public spaces where they perceive others are loitering, engaging in public drinking or drug use, and behaving in a loud or intimidating manner. People who reported feeling unsafe in these environments were more likely than others to be concerned about assault.

Alcohol-related behaviour in public places is a key contributor to people feeling unsafe. Young people and seniors in particular indicated they want to participate in community activities and spaces that are alcohol free.

3. Public spaces

Well-maintained and well-lit public spaces provide our community with a feeling of safety, giving the impression that spaces are activated and that negative behaviour will be seen and deterred.

4. Information and support

Community knowledge of where to access information and support was identified as an area for improvement.

What we're doing well

- Our community members report overall high levels of perceived safety in relation to crime and their use of public spaces.
- Results from the 2026 Northern Beaches Community Views survey showed residents rated their experience of feeling safe in their local area 7.9 out of 10, making it the second most positively experienced of the 16 liveability attributes. In comparison to Australia, residents of Northern Beaches Council reported better local area experiences for feeling safe.
- 59% of Community Safety Survey respondents report feeling safe or very safe walking alone in local neighbourhood at night which compares favourably to NSW (55%)³².

Insight 2 - Crime (actual safety)

Why this is important for community safety

Reduced crime rates are critical for safety because they directly lower the risk of victimisation, reduce fear, and improve quality of life.

Experiences with crime and antisocial behaviour have a direct impact on individual safety, fear and quality of life. Crime prevention strategies lower crime and foster healthier, more cohesive communities. They also encourage greater use of public spaces and can support local economic activity, while reducing financial, physical and emotional impacts on individuals and the wider community.³³

Key issues

1. Fraud

Fraud has been identified as a key crime of concern for the Northern Beaches. Victims across all population groups are being impacted by increasingly sophisticated forms of deception driven by advances in technology.

2. Domestic and family violence

Our community continues to be impacted by domestic and family violence. While recorded crime rates are stable, local services tell us that the demand for services continues to be significant.

3. Community awareness

Access to information about current and emerging crime helps people better understand local risks and take part in crime prevention efforts. It also supports individuals and the community to recognise and respond to vulnerabilities.

What we're doing well

- Northern Beaches crime rates across all major categories have been stable or declining over the 2 years to December 2025.
- We have a robust community safety framework in place which supports strong collaboration with Police and partner agencies to identify and respond to any operational safety concerns in a timely and efficient manner.
- Our collaborative Community Safety Advisory Committee has representatives from Council, local state and federal MPs, service networks and community, which advises us on a strategic level.
- We work with local services to support community actions to address key issues contributing to crime, including alcohol and other drug use.

- We work with service networks to address community issues related to crime and community safety, including work to raise community awareness of domestic and family violence and sharing information about available support services. This supports prevention and early intervention, helps shape social norms that reject violence, and encourages victims and survivors to seek help³⁴.
- We work with key stakeholders to address road safety.
- We collaborate with Police and other stakeholders to assess specific hot-spot sites of concern. As new issues emerge, safety audits identify strategies for improving site safety including enforcement, community engagement and physical improvements such as building, landscaping and lighting.

Insight 3 - Place design

Why this is important for community safety

Thoughtful urban design of public places can help create safe, welcoming and active environments.³⁵ Features such as good visibility, managed access and clearly defined spaces support natural surveillance and can help deter criminal behaviour, improving both actual safety and how safe people feel.

This also applies to the inclusive design of event and public activity spaces. As a community, it's important we recognise that people experience spaces differently. Creating inclusive public spaces means designing environments where everyone feels welcome, safe and free to be themselves. This includes providing flexible spaces that offer variety, predictability and choice, allowing people to participate in ways that suit their needs and comfort levels.^{36 37}

Ongoing attention to improving safety and accessibility in public spaces helps build confidence and supports greater participation in community life.

Key issues

1. Public space design

Community Safety Survey respondents told us they are aware of their surroundings when they are in public spaces and feel safer having a clear line of sight to people and activity around them.

2. The impact of negative experiences

We heard that people who have had negative social interactions, or who have felt unsafe or uncomfortable in public spaces, are more likely to withdraw and avoid returning to those places.

3. Place activation

People described wanting to join in on community activities and while they liked an area to be activated, they were not comfortable in large crowds. Many people from our priority population groups told us that they no longer access events and some public spaces due to event size, alcohol use or noise levels.

4. Accessibility

Broadening our understanding and facilitation of inclusive and accessible events to include neurodivergence is important to social cohesion.

5. Inclusion

Young people told us they want to feel included in community life but face obstacles such as public events which are alcohol based or community resistance to youth gatherings. They identified that they travel to other LGAs to access third spaces – not home or school - where they feel welcome and valued.

What we're doing well

- Public spaces across the Northern Beaches are designed with crime prevention and safety in mind. Where crime or antisocial behaviour is identified at specific locations, assessments are carried out to consider whether physical changes to the site could improve visibility, surveillance, access or communication of expected behaviour.
- We assess locations to identify places where improvements such as lighting, footpaths, landscaping and CCTV would improve community safety, and rectification programs are implemented at priority locations.
- We construct public spaces and hold Council managed events with safety and accessibility in mind.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design training helps staff to keep safety principles front of mind when planning, designing and upgrading public spaces.

Insight 4 - People movement

Why this is important for community safety

Being able to move safely between destinations, using well-lit footpaths and reliable and accessible transport that safely accommodates all users, is important to the community.

Safe movement is a critical foundation for daily participation in community life. Feeling confident to safely travel between destinations such as home, school, work, shopping centres and activities is fundamental to connection and wellbeing.³⁸

Safe and reliable transport links also support people's confidence to move around the area. Negative experiences while travelling across the Northern Beaches can cause immediate safety risks and may discourage people from making similar trips in future.

Key issues

1. Footpaths

Pedestrians walk on roadways alongside cars, e-bikes and heavy vehicles to avoid uneven surfaces and in areas where there are no footpaths.

2. E-bikes

E-bikes were identified as a key issue causing concern for road users. Pedestrians across all population groups can feel very vulnerable near e-bikes and the fear of being hit impacts their willingness to walk in the community. Drivers, including learner drivers, told us that they feel vulnerable driving where e-bikes are moving unpredictably and without regard for road rules, including moving unexpectedly between footpaths and roads.

3. Road safety

Areas where dangerous driving is occurring and locations where it's difficult to cross busy roads or ride bikes safely, were identified by the community.

4. Transport connections

Good transport connections are valued and contribute to feelings of safety. Accessibility of bus stops and reliable and safe public transport services were raised by all population groups.

5. Lighting

Locations were identified where lighting would be appreciated to support safe walking after dark, for example when people are exercising early in the morning or returning to their car after using the bus. Lighting plays an important role in how safe people feel in public spaces and was identified as a key factor influencing perceptions of safety.

What we're doing well

- We're working to provide a safe travel environment to improve access, connectivity and safety for our community.³⁹
- We maintain and repair Council-managed roads and consult with Transport for NSW and other stakeholders on requests for changes to roads and crossings.
- We're building a network of footpaths and shared paths for pedestrians, bicycle riders and anyone on wheels.
- We work with stakeholders to improve road safety by promoting, educating and raising community awareness on road safety issues in our community. An example is the Know the E-bike Code Campaign⁴⁰ which was delivered to support community safety when e-bikes became a sudden and rapidly increasing form of transport across the Northern Beaches, ahead of many other areas in the state.

Insight 5 - Attitudes and behaviours

Why this is important for community safety

Safe, respectful behaviours and attitudes towards others provide a sound foundation for community safety. Living in a community where diverse identities and experiences are respected and where public places and community life are inclusive, is important to connection and wellbeing. Inclusion values the perspectives, experiences and contributions of others, supporting people to be themselves and to feel confident engaging with others and participating in community life.^{41 42}

The Northern Beaches is a diverse community, enriched by people with a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, genders, ages, experiences and lifestyles. This diversity includes people from multicultural backgrounds, neurodivergent individuals, LGBTQ+ communities and those living with disability or experiencing mental ill-health. Recognising and valuing this diversity is essential to building a safe and inclusive community.

Divisive or antisocial behaviour can negatively impact perceptions of safety and reduce quality of life. In contrast, strong community connections and social support networks help people feel safer and more confident, while encouraging people to look out for and support one another.

Key issues

1. Community attitudes and behaviours

Negative community attitudes, criminal and antisocial behaviours have a significant impact on people's sense of safety and belonging.

2. Discrimination

Discrimination based on factors such as age, gender identity, disability, cultural background or sexual orientation have been reported by our community. We heard that negative experiences create barriers to feeling valued, making some people feel separate from the community and impacting their ability and willingness to participate in community life.

3. Inclusion

Building community awareness of the strengths and benefits of diversity and embedding inclusive approaches in the design of places, programs, events and services would help people to create a stronger sense of belonging and social cohesion.⁴³

What we're doing well

- We undertake a significant amount of work to understand our community and to grow cohesion and inclusion within it.
- Collaboration and co-design of programs to strengthen inclusion are key to place planning and to developing programs and services that meet the needs of all community members. We've worked extensively with the community to identify issues impacting priority groups and ensure that safety-related concerns are addressed in engagements and actions.
- Our Multicultural Inclusion Plan⁴⁴ champions multicultural diversity to deliver a safe, diverse, inclusive and connected Northern Beaches.
- The Youth Voices Action Plan⁴⁵ outlines 5 years of actions for youth development to support and engage young people to participate in community life and achieve positive outcomes.
- The Northern Beaches Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)⁴⁶ sets out actions that support fair access, participation and inclusion for people with disability.
- Our strong partnerships are central to effective community safety outcomes. Advocating for community access to specialist and inclusive services for priority populations is important in addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability and exclusion.

Insights to action

The key insights identified in this paper inform the focus areas and actions for the Community Safety Action Plan 2026-2031. This ensures a clear line of sight from what we heard and what the data shows, to how we will prioritise and target our resources to improve community safety outcomes.

4 focus areas have been developed with actions to address the issues that most influence both perceived and actual safety:

1. Safe to be me
2. Safe at home
3. Safe to travel
4. Safe to connect

The Community Safety Action Plan sets out the actions and delivery approach in detail.

Table 2: Summary of insights to action

INSIGHTS TO ACTION		FOCUS AREAS FOR ACTION			
		Safe to be me	Safe at home	Safe to travel	Safe to connect
INSIGHTS	Perceived safety	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Actual safety	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Place design			✓	✓
	People movement	✓		✓	✓
	Attitudes and behaviours	✓	✓	✓	✓

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