

ENG

These are the most and least favorable low-car measures in Amsterdam, according to locals / What do Amsterdammers really think about low-car policies?

As Amsterdam aims to become a low-car city, research by the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS Institute) and Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) has explored the views of 400 residents on different low-car urban interventions.

Amsterdam wants to reduce private car use, shifting towards more sustainable transport options like biking, public transit, and shared mobility. Research has shown that cities with fewer cars benefit from lower air pollution, less congestion, and quieter streets. However, introducing low-car measures can be controversial, often sparking heated debates between residents and authorities.

While the Netherlands is known for its cycling culture, cars still make up 42% of trips (CBS, 2022)! As part of its low-car vision, the City of Amsterdam has introduced the *Amsterdam Agenda Autoluw*. This approach doesn't aim to eliminate all cars but to reduce car traffic gradually while ensuring accessibility for everyone.

The success of such policies hinges on public support and involvement in the planning process. That's why the researchers decided to explore what Amsterdammers really think about different low-car interventions. To do so, they identified 28 low-car measures and analyzed which ones gained the most and least support.

'Mostly positive'

Overall, Amsterdammers are generally positive about low-car measures. Of the 28 measures studied, 16 had majority support, showing that many people are open to changes that reduce car use. However, there are some sharp divisions in opinions about specific interventions. The three most polarizing measures were:

- Restrictions on vehicle weight
- Reducing parking spaces and park-and-ride fees
- Restricting residents' access to their cars

Lead author Anastasia Roukouni emphasized that "the diversity in answers suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to promoting low-car environments might not be effective."

Despite these divides, the majority of respondents (39%) supported low-car policies, 35% had mixed views, and 27% were skeptical.

Despite support, lots of polarization

Polarization refers to the strong support or opposition to a specific measure. For instance, if half of respondents support a policy and half oppose it, that's a highly polarized measure. The top three most polarizing measures included those that limit access to cars or change parking policies.

This polarization shows that while many residents are in favor of certain measures, others have strong reservations, which can make implementation challenging.

What does this mean for Amsterdam?

Cities around the world recognize the benefits of reducing car traffic for both people and the environment. This research highlights that, while there is broad support for low-car policies in Amsterdam, measures can spark intense debate.

For Amsterdam and other cities looking to implement similar policies, the research gives some key takeaways:

- **Communication is key:** Transparency is crucial. City officials should clearly explain the goals and benefits of low-car measures, such as better air quality, improved health, and safer streets.
- **Messages should be tailored:** Different groups of people may have different concerns. Personalized communication strategies can help address the worries of both supporters and skeptics.
- **Be gradual with change:** A gradual approach may help ease residents into low-car changes. Incremental steps allow for public feedback and adjustment before making larger changes.
- **Get people involved:** Policymakers should listen to residents and stakeholders to understand their views and adapt policies accordingly. This could involve surveys, community meetings, or pilot projects.
- **Monitor and adapt:** Studying how policies impact the city and residents over time can help adjust strategies and improve public perception.

By adopting these strategies, cities can increase support for low-car measures, address public concerns, and ensure smoother implementation, ultimately making urban spaces more livable and sustainable.