

# Sandra Mandic, PhD, PMP

Location: Wellington, New Zealand

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## Profile

I am a confident, energetic, adaptable and results-oriented leader. I have over 20 years of research experience in the transport and health sectors, including over 15 years of experience in initiating, growing, leading and managing a comprehensive research portfolio with diverse programmes and projects. In my academic and government roles, I have initiated and managed a wide range of projects and programmes. Throughout my academic career, I published 101 scientific articles, 4 books, 5 book chapters, 247 conference abstracts and 76 technical reports, secured over NZD \$2.5 million in research funding, and designed and taught 9 university courses.

I am passionate about research, innovation, mentoring, project and programme management, and building bridges between people, sectors and cultures. Throughout my career, I have established and led several new successful programmes and initiatives, including a world-class, award-winning, interdisciplinary and cross-sector [BEATS Research Programme](#). I have a track record of building strong, meaningful professional relationships and bringing together professionals from different disciplines and sectors.

My professional training and experience span nine cities across five countries and three continents – including Europe, Canada, United States and New Zealand – and I speak four languages (English, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian and Russian). My recent concurrent professional activities in academia and government have been inspired by interdisciplinary and cross-sector approaches to encourage active living and active transport with links to public health, built environment and sustainability. My other professional endeavours in the private sector are focused on creating [Compass Guide Research Training Resources](#) which link research and project management.

Transformational leader

Experience working in academia, government and private sectors

Project and programme manager

Researcher with 20+ years of experience

Co-authored over 100 scientific journal articles

Secured NZD \$2.5+ million in research funding

Designed and taught 9 university courses and numerous workshops

Published 4 books linking research and project management

Professional experience spans 3 continents, 5 countries and 9 cities

4 Languages

## Qualifications

2002 - 2007	Doctorate (PhD) (Clinical Exercise Physiology), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
2000 - 2002	Master of Science (Exercise Physiology), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
1994 - 1998	Bachelor of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia

## Selected Work Experience

2021 - Present	Founder and Director, AGILE Research Ltd., Wellington, New Zealand
2023 - Present	Team Leader Transport Strategy, Wellington City Council, Wellington, New Zealand
2021 - 2023	Principal Advisor Transport Strategy, Wellington City Council, Wellington, New Zealand
2020 - Present	Adjunct Professor, School of Sport and Recreation, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand
2013 - 2023	Founder and Principal Investigator / Research Programme Manager, Built Environment and Active Transport to School (BEATS) Research Programme; New Zealand
2018 - 2020	Associate Professor, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
2009 - 2018	Senior Lecturer, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
2007 - 2008	Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Stanford University School of Medicine and VA Hospital Palo Alto, Palo Alto, California, United States

## Certifications

02/2022	Certified Project Management Professional (PMP), Project Management Institute, USA
09/2008	ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist, American College of Sports Medicine, USA
04/2007	Certified Exercise Physiologist, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP), Canada

## Selected Relevant Leadership Roles

2020	Director, Transport Research Network, University of Otago, New Zealand
2019	Convenor, Working Group for developing Key Policy Recommendations for Active Transport in New Zealand, New Zealand
2018 - 2019	Convenor, Transport Research Network, University of Otago, New Zealand
2016 - 2019	Steering Group member, Centre for Sustainability, University of Otago, New Zealand
2013 - 2017	Member of the Technical Advisory Group, Ministry of Health, New Zealand
2013 - 2017	Board member, Clinical Exercise Physiology Association of New Zealand, New Zealand

## Selected Honors, Prizes, Awards, Fellowships and Scholarships

2024	Finalist for 2024 New Zealand Project Management Award for Academic Achievement in Project Management, Project Management Institute of New Zealand
2022	National award: 1st place in XV Strategy Awards for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention [NAOS] for PACO & PACA Project Team; Associate Investigator (PI: Aznar); Spain
2021	National award: 3rd place in XIV Strategy Awards for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention [NAOS] for PACO Project Team; Associate Investigator (PI: Chillón); Spain
2019	University of Otago Research Group Award for the BEATS Research Team, New Zealand
2016	Community Engagement Award - Academic Staff, Division of Sciences, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
2010	International Research Fellowship, National Commission for Research, Science and Technology (CONICYT), Chile (Declined due to new parenting responsibilities)
2006 - 2007	Dissertation Fellowship, University of Alberta, Canada
2005	Student Research Award, Canadian Assoc. of Cardiac Rehabilitation
2004 - 2006	Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship, University of Alberta, Canada
2002 - 2004	Canadian Institutes for Health Research / Tomorrow's Research Cardiovascular Health Professionals Research Fellowship, Canada
1999	Award for an Outstanding Achievement during Studies, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1998	Award for a Full-Time Student for Success in 1997/98, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1997	Plaque to the Best Student of the Faculty, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1997 - 2000	Republic Foundation for the Development of Scientific Offspring Scholarship, Ministry of Education, Serbia
1997, 1998	Student President, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1996-1998	Fund for Talented Students Scholarship, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia
1996	Diploma to the Best Student of the Faculty, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1995, 1996, 1997, 1998	Dean's Honor Award (Student of the Year), Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1995 - 1996	Ministry of Education Scholarship, Ministry of Education, Serbia

PI = Principal investigator.

## Languages

English (fluent)	Spanish (proficient)	Serbo-Croatian (fluent)	Russian (basic)
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## Research Activities

<b>101</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>Extensive</b>
Scientific journal articles	Conference abstracts	Technical reports	Seminars / Workshops	Symposia organised	Media reports	research collaborations
Secured over <b>NZD \$1.9 million in research funding</b> as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator and <b>over NZD \$0.6 million in research funding</b> as Associate Investigator						
H-index: 27	2,224 citations	ORCID #: 0000-0003-4126-8874		Researcher ID: F-2689-2016		

### Research Programmes Established and Led

2013 - 2023	<a href="#">Built Environment and Active Transport to School (BEATS) Research Programme</a>
2015 - 2017	Cycle Skills Training Research Programme
2009 - 2012	Cardiac Rehabilitation Research Programme

### Selected Research Grants

#### Selected BEATS Research Programme-related research grants:

2019 - 2023	Health Research Council of New Zealand - Project Grant; PI; NZD \$1,197,487
2018 - 2019	University of Otago Research Grant; PI; NZD \$37,909
2014 - 2018	Health Research Council of New Zealand Emerging Researcher Grant; PI; NZD \$149,941
2014 - 2018	National Heart Foundation of New Zealand - Project Grant; PI; NZD \$23,102
2014 - 2016	Lottery Health Research Grant; PI; NZD \$30,000

#### Selected other significant research grants:

2023 - 2025	Green Space Equity and Youth Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: Lottery Health Research; Associate Investigator (PI: Melody Smith); NZD \$119,484
2020 - 2023	PACO & PACA Study: Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (Spain); Associate Investigator (PI: Susana Aznar Laín); €85,445
2016 - 2020	The PACO Project: Ministry of Economy & Competitiveness (Spain); Associate Investigator (PI: Palma Chillón); €70,000

\*PI = Principal Investigator.

## University Teaching Activities

### Selected University Teaching - as course coordinator and instructor

Courses for academic staff	Postgraduate courses	Undergraduate courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Superpowers to Optimize and Operationalize the Supervision of Bachelor's and Master's Thesis Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Methods in Exercise Sciences</li> <li>Advanced Topics in Physical Education, Activity and Health; Module: Active Living and Health</li> <li>Research Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical Activity / Active Living and Health</li> <li>Active Living and Environment</li> <li>Clinical Exercise Physiology</li> <li>Cardiac Rehabilitation</li> <li>Independent Study – Scientific Writing</li> </ul>

### Research Students Supervision (2009-2023)

<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>
Postdoctoral fellow	Doctoral students	Masters' students	Postgraduate diploma students	Honours students	Summer research students	Internship students
<b>12 Scholarships and awards won by supervised research students</b>						

## Selected Current and Recent Leadership Roles, Programmes and Projects

### Director, AGILE Research Ltd.

Wellington, New Zealand

(2021 - Present)

<https://agileresearch.nz/>



**AGILE  
Research**

At [AGILE Research Ltd.](#), our vision is to help organisations, teams and individuals navigate the research process, successfully plan and manage their research projects and deliver high-quality research reports and presentations. We publish [Compass Guide Research Training Resources](#) and currently provide our services in English and Spanish.

AGILE Research Ltd. is a member of the New Zealand's Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) All of Government Consultancy Services panel in a sub-category Policy, Research and Development (Tier-3).

I established this research consultancy to use my knowledge, expertise and professional collaborations to provide research training, research and evaluation advice, and research consultancy services to a wide range of organisations from various sectors.

### Team Leader Transport Strategy

(2023 - Present)

### Principal Advisor Transport Strategy

(2021 - 2023)

### Wellington City Council

Wellington, New Zealand

In these roles, I have been responsible for working with local, regional and central government partners to deliver and influence transport programme in the capital city of New Zealand, facilitate evidence-based (data and data analysis driven) decision making, and lead the transport strategy programme, planning and policy development for Wellington City.

I led the development of a strategic plan for an approach for the speed management programme, led the design and implementation of the [Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey](#) and worked on the Wellington City Transport Plan.

### Founder and Principal Investigator / Programme Manager, BEATS Research Programme

New Zealand

(2013 – 2023)



[Built Environment and Active Transport to School \(BEATS\)](#) was an interdisciplinary and multi-sector transport research programme founded as a partnership between academia, schools, local government and the wider community. The programme spanned disciplines of exercise sciences, public health, transport, environment and education, involved investigators and collaborators from around the world, had an advisory board from the local community and trained a number of research students, research staff and volunteers.

The programme grew into a world-class example of a successful community-academia research collaboration. Six years after the inception, the BEATS Research Team won the [University of Otago Research Group Award](#) for the best research team. The final project, BEATS Natural Experiment, was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (NZD \$1.2 million; 2019-2023). Both BEATS studies conducted in the Dunedin city achieved 100% school recruitment rate (12 secondary schools).

BEATS Research outputs included 47 published scientific journal articles, 162 conference abstracts, 57 technical reports, 1 book chapter, 117 research seminar presentations, 27 research talks, 6 BEATS Symposia, 2 international TALEs Symposia, 4 conference proceedings and 56 media reports.

As the founder and the principal investigator, I developed the vision for the BEATS Research Programme, established it in 2013 and then nurtured, grew, lead and managed it - from the first to the last day 10+ years later.

I was responsible for conceptualising, designing, implementing, managing and leading the programme, building the research team, securing funding, managing stakeholders, training research staff, managing risks, monitoring budget, preparing project reports and leading the delivery of research outputs.

Final report: [BEATS Research Programme 2013-2023: The Power of Vision, Teamwork, Perseverance and Project Management](#)

The programme achieved 10 times higher research productivity per NZD \$1 million in research funding compared to the New Zealand average.

**Convenor,  
Working Group for the  
Development of Active  
Transport Policy  
Recommendations**  
New Zealand  
(2019)

The [“Turning the Tide” report](#) considered the health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling and defined a clear set of actions to get us out of our cars and living healthier lives. The development of this report and policy recommendations was a multidisciplinary and cross-sector endeavour and one of the outcomes of The Active Living and Environment Symposium (TALES) 2019.

I initiated and led this project.

Full report:  
[”Turning the Tide - from Cars to Active Transport”](#)

Brief report:  
[”Key Policy Recommendations for Active Transport”](#)

**Founder and organiser  
of eight  
interdisciplinary and  
cross-sector symposia**  
New Zealand  
(2014 - 2023)



**The Active Living and Environment Symposia (TALES) 2017 and 2019** were designed to facilitate and grow an international, multidisciplinary and multi-sector dialogue related to active living and environment.

These symposia brought together researchers, policy makers, health promoters, urban designers, transport experts and members of the public to network and exchange ideas.

One of the outcomes of the TALES Symposium 2019 was the [development of key policy recommendations for increasing active transport in New Zealand](#) (see details above).

**BEATS Symposia** were used as one of many avenues to communicate the BEATS Research findings to the wider community and to engage with stakeholders. Shared findings were relevant to academia, government, public health, urban design, the transport and environment sectors.

I was the chair of the organizing committee for all six BEATS Symposia: 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023.

## Development and Publishing of Research Training Resources

### [Compass Guide Research Training Resources](#)

Created by Sandra Mandic



**Compass Guide  
Research Training**  
By AGILE Research Ltd.

Currently include [four Compass Guide books](#) and a series of short research training videos at the [AGILE Research YouTube Channel](#). I created these resources to help teams and individuals navigate the research process and to successfully plan and manage their research projects.

Through [the AGILE Research Ltd.](#), I offer customised research training and research consulting services in English and Spanish.

How to Navigate the Research Process	How to Plan and Manage Research Projects
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><a href="#">Compass Guide for Beginners</a></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><a href="#">Compass Guide for Postgraduate Students (and Their Supervisors)</a></p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><a href="#">Compass Guide: How to Plan Your Research Project</a></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><a href="#">Compass Guide for Research Project Management</a></p> </div> </div>



## Selected Publications Co-Authored by Dr Sandra Mandic

### Selected Scientific Journal Articles in the Last Five Years

**Mandic S**, García Bengoechea E, Coppell K, Keall M, Smith M, Hopkins D, Sandretto S, Wilson G, Kidd G, Flaherty C, Mindell JS, Stephenson J, King K, Kentala K, Rolleston A, Spence JC. Travel to school patterns and perceptions of walking to school in New Zealand adolescents before versus during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Transport & Health* 2024; 36:101803. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2024.101803>

**Mandic S**, Khan A, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Coppell K, Smith M. Physical activity, screen time and dietary behaviours in New Zealand adolescents prior to and following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Public Health*. 2024; 24:188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17688-7>

**Mandic S**, Sandretto S, Hopkins D, Wilson G, Kidd G, García Bengoechea E. School choice, distance to school and travel to school patterns among adolescents. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2023; 33:101704. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2023.101704>

**Mandic S**, García Bengoechea E, Hopkins D, Coppell K, Smith M, Moore A, Keall M, Ergler C, Sandretto S, Wilson G, Kidd G, Flaherty C, Mindell JS, Stephenson J, King K, Spence JC. Examining the transport to school patterns of New Zealand adolescents by home-to-school distance and settlement types. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2023; 30:101585. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2023.101585>

**Mandic S**, Hewitt J, Dodge N, Sharma N. Approaches to speed management in New Zealand's capital. *Journal of Road Safety*. 2023, 34(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33492/JRS-D-22-00047>

**Mandic S**, García Bengoechea E, Hopkins D, Coppell K, Spence JC. Adolescents perceptions of walking and cycling to school differ based on how far they live from school. *Journal of Transport and Health*. 2022, 24, 101316. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2021.101316>

Khan A, **Mandic S**, Uddin R. Association of active school commuting with physical activity and sedentary behaviour among adolescents: a global perspective from 80 countries. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. 2021;24(6):567-572 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2020.12.002>

Mindell JS, Ergler C, Hopkins D, **Mandic S**. Taking the bus? Barriers and facilitators for adolescent use of public buses to school. *Travel Behaviour and Society*. 2021;22:48-58; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2020.08.006>

Sandretto S, Hopkins D, Wilson G, **Mandic S**. Competing Tensions: Active Transport to School, School Choice and Policy Making. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2020; 18:100908; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100908>

**Mandic S**, Hopkins D, García Bengoechea E, Flaherty C, Coppell K, Moore A, Williams J, Spence JC. Differences in Parental Perceptions of Walking and Cycling to High School According to Distance. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*. 2020; 71:238-249; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trf.2020.04.013>

**Mandic S**, Jackson A, Lieswyn J, Mindell JS, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Wooliscroft B, Wade-Brown C, Coppell K, Hinckson E. Development of key policy recommendations for active transport in New Zealand: Multi-sector and multidisciplinary endeavour. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2020; 18:100859 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100859>

**Mandic S**, Hopkins D, García Bengoechea E, Moore A, Sandretto S, Coppell K, Ergler C, Keall M, Rolleston A, Kidd G, Wilson G, Spence JC. Built environment changes and active transport to school among adolescents: BEATS Natural Experiment Study Protocol. *BMJ Open*. 2020;10:e034899 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-034899>

### Selected Technical Reports in the Last Six Years

**Mandic S**. BEATS Research Programme 2013-2023: The Power of Vision, Teamwork, Perseverance and Project Management. 2024. (20 pages) Available at: <https://agileresearch.nz/beats/>

Wellington City Council. Wellington City Council. Residents' perceptions about travel to work in Wellington city. Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023. July 2024. [Full report](#) (30 pages) | [Brief report](#) (6 pages)

Wellington City Council. Wellingtonians' opinions about road safety. Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023 and 2024. (Full report) June 2024. [Full report](#) (40 pages) | [Brief report](#) (10 pages)

**Mandic S**, Jackson A, Lieswyn J, Mindell JS, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Wooliscroft B, Wade-Brown C, Coppell K, Hinckson E. (2019) Turning the Tide - from Cars to Active Transport. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago (28 pages) Available at: <https://agileresearch.nz/active-living>

[Click here to access a complete list of publications co-authored by Dr Sandra Mandic](#)

[Click here to access Dr Sandra Mandic's academic curriculum vitae](#)