

Summary

Street preferences in Oslo

A map-based survey of favorite streets, disliked streets and route choices

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In this study, we have investigated which streets in Oslo city center the city's inhabitants like and dislike, and what qualities make the inhabitants enjoy or not enjoy city streets. Data was collected using a web-based questionnaire in which respondents registered streets on an interactive map. The three most-liked streets were Torggata, Karl Johans gate and Markeveien. Street life, eateries and shops were often given as reasons that a street was well-liked. The three least-liked streets were Storgata, Karl Johans gate and Brugata. Insecurity, people who create social discomfort and dirtiness were often chosen as grounds for disliking a street.

There was greater dispersion in which streets the respondents liked than disliked. Karl Johans gate Oslo's main street with the royal palace in the western end and the main train station in the eastern end, was both liked and disliked by the respondents. Street life was most frequent justification for liking Karl Johans gate, and crowdedness was the most frequent justification for disliking the street; which reflects differences in peoples' perceptions and preferences.

Online survey

As part of the project "Hug the Streets", funded by the Research Council of Norway, an online survey was conducted in September 2018 to identify which streets Oslo's people like and dislike. The survey included an interactive map where respondents could mark streets and route choices, in combination with more traditional multi-choice questions.

Street preferences

Respondents were asked what they liked about their favorite street (if they had one) in the city centre. The factors that recurred frequently were street life (55 percent), eateries (44 percent), shops (43 percent), beautiful buildings (36 percent) and few cars (33 percent).

The most frequent reasons for disliking a city street were insecurity (50.4 percent), people causing social discomfort (49.6 percent), dirtiness (44 percent), noise (38 percent) and car traffic (33 per cent).

Factors related to the presence of other people, experienced as either positive or negative, was chosen by a large proportion of the respondents. A greater percentage answered this than the factors that related to the physical qualities of a street. A third of the respondents highlighted few cars as a quality of their favorite street and car traffic as a reason for disliking a street.

Gender differences in responses are mostly small. More men (65 percent) than women (54 percent) stated street life as reason for liking their favorite street. A higher proportion of women (58 percent) than men (44 percent) reported insecurity as the reason why they dislike a street. Similarly, a higher percentage of women (43 percent) than men (32 percent) reported noise as a reason for disliking a street.

Route choice

Respondents were asked to register their choice of route under different conditions: on foot during daytime with plenty of time, on foot during daytime in a hurry, on foot in the evening and riding a bicycle. The majority of the respondents chose the shortest route. During the day with plenty of time, some respondents chose a more pleasant but longer route. The respondents who would choose a different route in the evening than in the daytime seemingly preferred busier streets in the evening.

We asked respondents to explain what they liked with a route in one of the route selections and the word nice is repeated in many of the explanations. The words fastest/fast/simple and shops are also used frequently.