

Summary:

Young people and their choice of transport – a review of results from Nordic travel surveys

The postwar period witnessed a substantial growth in mobility. Prosperity provided more opportunities for travelling in everyday life. Leisure and holiday trips increased. Car ownership became the norm. The mobility of society provides often an important public welfare indicator. At the same time car use exposes modern society to environmental challenges.

Car is the most important mode of daily travel in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The travel activity in general and by car will probably not diminish in the near future.

This report summarizes Nordic studies of young people's use of and attitudes to different modes of transport. The purpose of the work is to better understand the determinants of mode choice and which barriers young people encounter when making their choice. The project includes the following themes:

1. Factors influencing on young people's transport mode choice.
2. Young people's attitudes to car and public transport.
3. Possible explanations to the decrease in acquiring a driving license acquisition among Swedish and Norwegian eligible youths during the 1990's.

Understanding the behavioural determinants of young people provides a link to future travellers way of thinking. The young people's transport mode choice today can be regarded as having a formative influence on their travel behaviour as adults. The population for future transport and road policies is today's young.

Four analytical approaches

To attain a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing on young people's transport mode choice, four analytical approaches have been utilized. We make a distinction between structural and cultural explanations. Explanations at the level of the individual, seeks to explain each person's choices and actions. Explanations at the societal level seek to

explain the aggregate transport demands and the modal split in a given population.

	Structural explanations	Cultural explanations
Society	Socio-material situation	Normative situation
	Economic situation	Political situation
	Settlement structure and localization pattern	Social norms and expectations
	Public transport supply	
	Roads and bicycle lanes	
Individual	Transport opportunities	Transport preferences
	Transport resources	Experience /socialization
	Available time	Way of life (values, attitudes, actions)
	Localization of activities in time and space	Attitudes to car and public transport

Source: TØI report 760/2005

Figure S.1: Four different analytical approaches for analyzing mode choice.

Transport possibilities, preferences and transport mode choice

In table S.1, we have summarized the results from the literature review. We find that an increase in opportunities for transport influences mode choice:

- short distances – cycling and walking
- satisfactory public transport supply – use of public transport
- transport resources and afternoon / evening travels – use of car
- it is possible that use of car in the afternoon is influenced by lower public transport service levels.

Table S.1: Overview, differences between pedestrians bicyclists, public transport and car users.

	Transport possibilities and characteristics	Transport preferences
Walking / cycling	Living in large cities Transport resources below the average To work or typical afternoon transport activities	Emphasize negative consequences of car use
Public transport	Living in large cities To school/university Girls Transport resources below the average	Emphasize positive consequences of car use Act environmentally friendly in general
Car use	To work or typical afternoon / evening activities Boys Transport resources beyond the average	Do not emphasize negative consequences of car use Wish to be environmentally friendly Interested in make of cars

Source: TØI report 760/2005

Even if the transport opportunities is the main determinant of young people's mode choice, environmental attitudes also influences the choice. Several studies indicate that young people are ambivalent towards driving a car. They appreciate the positive qualities of the car, such as the increased mobility provided by this transport mode. At the same time, they acknowledge the problems created by car use. Most young people refuse to change behaviour as a means of improving the environment. They believe in technological solutions.

The importance placed on mobility by young people can be linked to their sense of lack of time. Lack of time, not money, is perceived by Nordic youths as the main barrier preventing them from accomplishing what they want to do.

Reductions in license holding among youths

Several studies in Sweden and Norway show a decrease in the proportion of young people holding a license and an increasing use of public transport.. The trend is most noticeable in the large cities, but also

outside the large cities the driving licence rates decreases.

The economic depressions in Sweden and Norway during the 90's has been offered as possible explanations. But the downward trend has also been maintained during times of economic improvements. Several possible explanations of decrease in driving licence rates are discussed in this paper:

- Urbanization and increased proportion of young people in higher education
- More available options as associated with life-style diversity.
- Increased consumption and higher demands on young people's time and resources.
- Prolonged adolescence provides an extended period of choice and independence.
- Improved public transport supply may have made this transport mode more competitive as compared to car use.

Options for change?

Young people are not a homogenous group, and several studies indicate that attitude towards car-use depend on life style choices. For some groups of young people, the car remains a central element in their choice of life style while other groups regard car as just another transport mode.

The indications from our study is that youngsters have a more pragmatic approach to car use than was the case only 10-15 years ago. This gives us reasons to be optimistic. Young people today are also the future transport planners. Maybe they will plan the future from a less biased perspective.

Car has traditionally been associated with independence, also independence from public transport. It is a possibility that public transport may prove more competitive with respect to the car for young people in a hectic everyday life. A public transport supply that increases young people's independence and freedom - from queues and other obstacles caused by cars - is therefore needed.

For or a deeper understanding of young people's transport choices the Nordic National Travel Survey's provides rich opportunities for further comparative analysis