

# Understanding Young People and Active Travel

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## Executive Summary

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## **Background and Objectives**

This research was designed to provide understanding of the motivational needs concerning transportation choices in the youth market.

The goal for TfL for this research was to explore how youths might be encouraged toward more active travel (that is cycling or walking travel modes) – by understanding both the key barriers to use and potential leverage points to encourage travel.

## **Method**

The research was undertaken in September, 2008 and involved 20 paired in depth interviews with youths aged 12-13, 14-15 and 16-18. To provide a holistic view of how decisions are made by/for youths concerning travel 6 interviews with parents of children aged 12-18 were also undertaken.

## **Key findings**

For youths, travel acts as a key indicator of transition into adulthood – with each year of their lives, boundaries around personal travel decrease until youths become completely independent. Choice of travel therefore forms part of shaping identity– it indicates independence from parents, ability to fit in or to stand out from the pack. In an emotional sense travel is the **gateway to adulthood**.

Eight key motivational drivers were identified for youths and travel:

- *Fun Seeking* – views travel as play rather than function. It is fun and exciting and the more active the format the better (cycling suits this motivation well). Younger individuals were more likely to be motivated by fun (12 and under).
  - Fun Seekers have limited barriers to active travel – in particular cycling is appealing to this group.
- *Energy* - desire an active/energetic experience – the mode of travel in itself is sought to provide this experience – modes that offer exhilaration and speed suit this motivation (cycling for younger boys).
  - Adventurers have limited barriers to cycling as a mode of travel. Walking however, lacks the energy which appeals to this group.
- *Socialising* – travel provides the opportunity to have shared experiences and become closer to others. Modes that allow for connection between youths are more popular – such as walking. Motivation was more common in younger females seeking social connection.
  - Socialisers are more open to walking than cycling in terms of active travel, as it allows for social contact.
- *Pack Following* – travel choices are motivated by a desire to fit in with one's peer group. Choices therefore depend on what is considered 'acceptable by peers'. Common for younger individuals.
  - Followers will do as their peers. If cycling and walking is acceptable they will use the mode, if not their desire to follow will be a barrier in itself. Engaging Followers will mean engaging peer groups through clubs or group activities.
- *Protection seeking* – motivated by a desire to remain safe and protected. These have an increased awareness of dangers of travel, and therefore choices are those that are perceived safe. Cars, trains, tube or buses (during the day) are considered safe.
  - Protection seekers are engaged by travel modes that seem safe and currently walking and cycling are associated with risk due to exposure to traffic and neighbourhood dangers – therefore the desire for protection acts as a barrier to usage of active modes.
- *Pragmatic* - very functional approach to travel. Desire is simply to get from 'a to b' in the quickest/most effective way possible. Less likely to consider active travel.

- For pragmatists, walking and cycling are not the 'easiest' modes of travel which act as a barrier to their use.
- *Intelligence* – desire to demonstrate their knowledge and skill by their use of a particular mode. They want efficiency, but also to be noticed for their choices, they may look to the most eco-friendly choice and are likely to put substantial thought into their travel.
  - Intelligence seekers may consider active travel due to environmental benefits, and when there is a solid argument for cycling and walking as a 'smart' choice (for efficiency or speed compared with non-active modes)
- *Pack leader* - desire to show off to others, be ahead of the crowd and position self as the pack leader. Individuals want to be noticed for their travel choices as being superior to others. First time drivers and car owners fit within this group.
  - Pack leaders desire to stand out in a positive way. The fact that, currently, active modes of travel are not viewed as 'cool' acts as a barrier.

### **Impact of age**

Age is a key determinant of motivations for travel choice for youths. Motivations for travel evolve from younger ages where travel is primarily motivated by 'Fun Seeking', 'Socialising' (particularly for girls), 'Adventure' (particularly for boys) and 'Pack Following' to older ages where travel choices tend to be motivated more by 'Protecting Seeking' (as awareness of the dangers of travel grow), 'Intelligence', 'Pragmatism' and 'Pack Leaders' (particularly as the will to drive and show off to peers grows).

Barriers for active travel therefore, are stronger as individuals grow older- due to the underlying motivations for travel choices. Understanding these, however, gives insight into how TfL can encourage greater use of active modes, and at what age they should be targeted most effectively.

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