

Active transport and health – Introduction

Amanda Sacker

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Abstract Introduction to the programme and data sets used in the four research papers presented.

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ICLS OCCASIONAL PAPERS, SERIES 11

ACTIVE TRANSPORT AND HEALTH

ICLS hosted a policy seminar on Active Transportation and Health at UCL on 7 January 2014. The seminar was chaired by Richard Bartholomew, (former) Chief Research Officer, Children, Young People and Families Directorate, Department for Education and the presentations co-ordinated by Professor Amanda Sacker, ICLS Director. Transcripts from this event, including this paper, have been made available via the ICLS Occasional Paper Series. This series allows all (those who were or were not able to attend) to read an account of the presentation.

Policy Seminar Abstract

There are benefits from using our cars less - to our health and for the environment. Most people are aware that physical activity is good for you but they may be less familiar with advantages from using public transport. This seminar starts with three presentations on active transport at different stages in the lifespan. The first examines mode of travel to school and obesity and how their relationship is complicated by how well-off families are. The second presentation follows up on this theme by reporting on commuting mode, including public transport, and adiposity during the working years, while the third shows the effect that free bus passes can have on transport decisions and the health of older adults. The seminar rounds off with a presentation on the attitudes and willingness of people to change their travelling behaviour and get out of their cars. Together the four presentations give valuable insights to guide policy decisions.

Presentations and Speakers

OP 11.1 Active travel to school and the risk of obesity

Yvonne Kelly, Professor of Epidemiology and ICLS Associate Director

OP 11.2 Does active commuting predict healthy weight and body composition?

Ellen Flint, Research Fellow in Social Epidemiology at the LSHTM and former ICLS PhD student.

OP 11.3 Bus passes, active travel and health

Elizabeth Webb, ICLS Research Associate

OP 11.4 Attitudes to transport and willingness to change behavior

Eleanor Taylor, NatCen Social Research, Senior Researcher.

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SLIDE 1

I'm very pleased to be able to introduce a programme of four presentations today by members of the ESRC funded International Centre for Lifecourse Studies in Society and Health (ICLS) and a member of NatCen Social Research.



UCL

Welcome and Introduction

Amanda Sacker

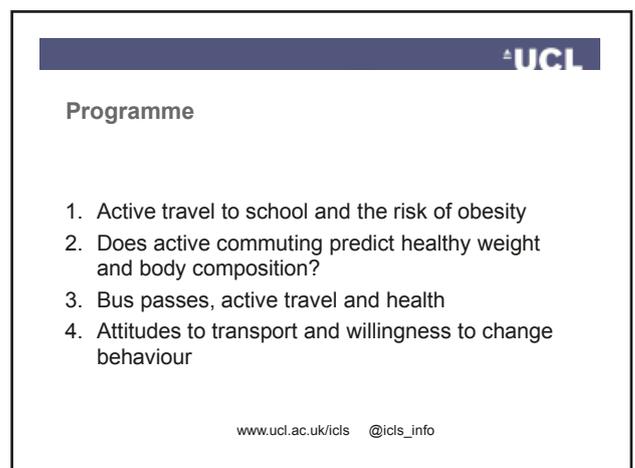
Active Transport and Health Policy Seminar
Tuesday 7th January 2014, UCL

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SLIDE 2

Three presentations cover different stages of the life course. The first presentation is on travel to school, the primary school years. The second presentation is on active commuting, so the working years. And the third presentation is on bus passes for the over-60s. And finally the fourth presentation is on attitudes to transport and some information about behaviour change and how we might encourage people to change and be more active.

So I've heard from several of you that you're looking forward to the programme and it's great that we've touched on a research area that is of interest to you all. ICLS Centre does secondary research. That means we do research on data that has already been collected. The UK is unique in having so many longitudinal and repeated cross-sectional surveys. And we use these national data that are readily available to the research community, and we do international comparative work as well.



UCL

Programme

1. Active travel to school and the risk of obesity
2. Does active commuting predict healthy weight and body composition?
3. Bus passes, active travel and health
4. Attitudes to transport and willingness to change behaviour

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SLIDE 3

The programme today is based on several data resources which exemplify the sort of data sets that we use. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) which is following up young children born around 2000 and 2001. Some 19,000 of them in total. And every so often interviewers go back to the families again and do test measurements on the children, surveys with the parents and so on. The most recent survey was when the children were 11 years old, that's about to become available to the research community very shortly.

The second study is the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). This has a slightly different design. Where the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a cohort study is following up people of roughly the same age and going back to them over time. In the Household Study all members of a household are considered part of the study and are all interviewed. So in the UK Household Study, it's the biggest household study of its kind with some 40,000 households and all the adult members of the household over sixteen are interviewed, and 10 to 15 year olds are given a self completion survey. So a wealth of data from those respondents. In addition to that there's been a nurse visit to some 20,000 members of the UKHLS, where measurements, physiological measurements and blood samples have been taken. And this is opening up new areas of research where social and biological measures are both available in the survey.

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) shares some of the features of both the previous surveys, except it's about people over fifty. So it's taking members of households over fifty and following them up regularly every two years. Understanding Society follows people up annually. The ELSA study follows people up every two years. And again this ageing study has a lot of biological information as well as social information presented in it.

And finally we have two repeated cross-sectional surveys which again are very useful for

Data resources

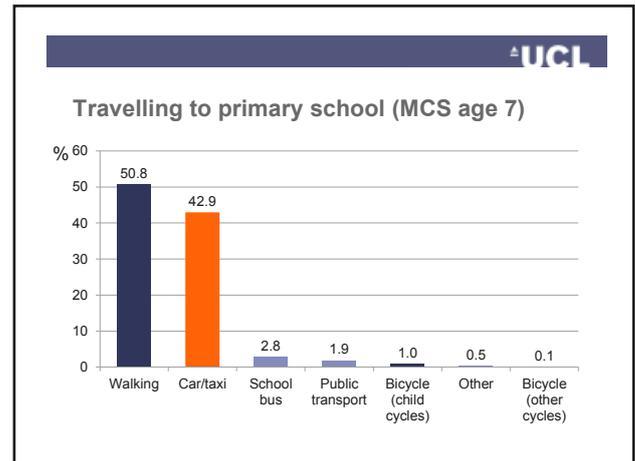
- Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)
- UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), *Understanding Society*
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)
- National Travel Survey (NTS)
- British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA)

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understanding trends over time so the National Travel Survey, again a very large survey of households, some 15,000 households in Britain and it was started in 2002 and is carried out annually. And finally the British Social Attitudes Survey which you might have heard mentioned on the Today programme this morning is again repeated annually and surveys some 3,000-odd individuals about all sorts of attitudinal things to do with society today. The reports this morning weren't about transport, they were about attitudes to migration, so you can see the breadth of what the survey covers.

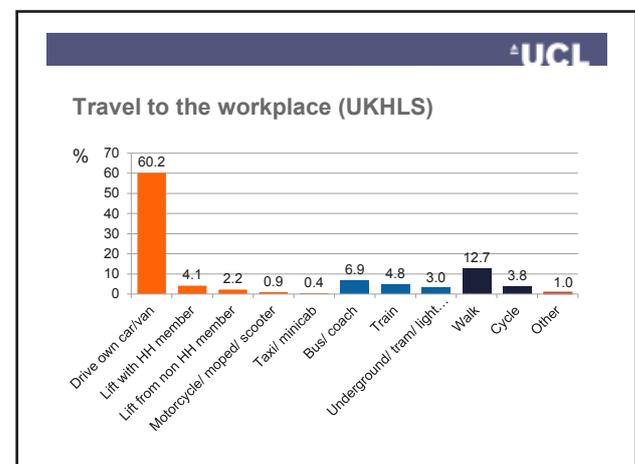
SLIDE 4

[So to just give you some background information about travel and the data that we get from these large surveys, this is the Millennium Cohort Study at age seven. So this is how children get to school at age seven. And you can see that over half of them are actually walking to school. So you know, in these primary school years they're not doing too badly. Except when you look at the next most frequent way of getting to school and that's going by car or taxi, so that's really completely sedentary - just moving outside the front door and into the car. All other types of transport to school, using a school bus, public transport, cycling, very few members of the study are participating in that form of getting to school. And some are actually being cycled by their parents, presumably, I cannot believe this that they're still sitting on a seat on the bike but not participating in the actual cycling themselves but there we go, a small percentage are doing that. So most are walking or going by car.]



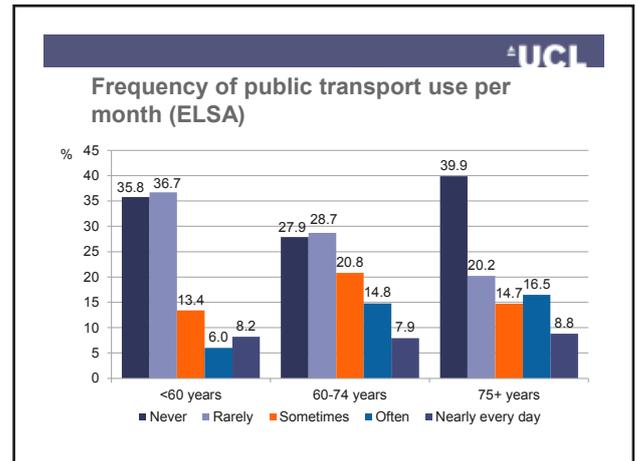
SLIDE 5

By contrast when you look at how people get to work the vast majority, 60%, are going in their own car. So very little walking going on. Well, in fact 13% of people are walking to work, so perhaps not too bad. Otherwise there are all sorts of other ways that people are getting to work. The orange bars represent the ones, the types of travelling that are completely passive, the blue bars represent those that are public transport, buses, trains, there's a bit of activity involved because people are walking to the bus or to the train station, and finally the sort of more active modes of walking and cycling where roughly sort of 15-16% of the population are really actively getting to work.]



SLIDE 6

And finally if we look at public transport by the older members of society you can see that people who are still of working age below 60 years of age, the vast majority of them are rarely using public transport, around 70% either never or rarely use public transport. By the time people have got to the retirement years between 60 and 74 years there's this increased use of public transport. Now whether that's because of our free bus passes or not, or whether because of greater leisure time, I'll await for the presentations to tell you more. And then when you get on to the older years of people 75+, again there's a shift in the distribution towards not using public transport and I would



hypothesise that's to do with people's health and their mobility in the later years of their lives that makes public transport more difficult to access.

SLIDE 7

So that just gives you a little flavour of the sort of data that we have in these surveys on transport and active transport use. We'll hand over to our Chairperson, Richard Bartholomew, (former) Chief Research Officer, Children, Young People and Families Directorate, Department for Education to introduce the following speakers and papers:

OP11.1 Active travel to school and the risk of obesity. Yvonne Kelly, Professor of Epidemiology and ICLS Associate Director

OP11.2 Does active commuting predict healthy weight and body composition? Ellen Flint, Research Fellow in Social Epidemiology at the LSHTM and former ICLS PhD student.

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