Parental Perceptions Favour Walking Compared to Cycling to School in Adolescents: Preliminary Findings

Garrick Hately, Debbie Hopkins, Enrique García Bengoechea, John Williams, Charlotte Flaherty, John C. Spence, Sandra Mandic.

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Relationship Between Parents and Their Child's Active Transport Habits

Parental perceptions of the neighborhood environment influences children's active transport rates.
Purpose of the BEATS Parental Survey

1) To explore the parental social and cultural environment in relationship to ATS habits of their children

2) To compare parental and adolescents' perceptions of the built environment, and especially safety for ATS

3) To compare parental and adolescents' physical activity habits, and motivations for and barriers to ATS (in conjunction with the BEATS Student Survey).

Mandic S et al. BMJ Open. 2016; 6:e011196
About you and your child

Child transport habits/methods

Safety of child's route to school

Parental perceptions of neighborhood environment

Parental barriers to active transport

B.E.A.T.S Parental Survey

Mandic S et al. BMJ Open. 2016; 6:e011196
**Study Population Characteristics**

**Recruitment of Dunedin parents through schools and workplaces**

Parents completed specifically developed parental questionnaire  
$n=133$  
(as of June 2016)

Surveyed parents living within 4 km from child’s school  
$n=64**$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection continues until 2017</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total $n=64$</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years)</strong></td>
<td>48.5 ± 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender [n(%)]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 (20.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50 (79.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity [n(%)]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand European</td>
<td>49 (76.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>3 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest level of education [n(%)]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>9 (14.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polytechnic degree</td>
<td>7 (11.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>32 (50.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15 (23.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children [n(%)]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>12 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>32 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>20 (31.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(69 surveyed parents excluded: living >4 km from school)
Most Common Transport Modalities in Adolescents and Their Parents

Adolescents’ transport habits
(as reported by parents)

- By cycling to school: 8%
- By Car (driven by others): 29%
- Walking to school: 63%

Parental transport habits
when they were in school

- By cycling to school: 10.8%
- By Car (driven by others): 2.7%
- Walking to School: 43.2%

n=64
(parents living ≤4km from child’s school)
Transport to School: Who is Responsible for Making the Decision?

Three quarters of parents believed that decisions about their child’s walking or cycling to school should be made by parents (with or without child’s input) (parents living ≤4km from child’s school)
Parental Perceptions of Route to School for Walking or Cycling

- **Too much traffic**: 64.1%
- **Too many hills**: 39.1%
- **No bike lanes**: 68.3%
- **Dangerous crossing(s)**: 68.8%
- **No footpaths along child’s route to school**: 4.7%

*n=64 (parents living ≤4km from child’s school)*
Walking vs Cycling to School: Social Support

- **Parental support**: 83% vs 32.1%
- **Parental discouragement**: 7.8% vs 57.8%
- **Unsafe for child to walk/cycle to school**: 9.6% vs 61.5%

Less parental, peer and school support for cycling

*\textit{p}<0.05 walking vs cycling for n=64 (parents living ≤4km from child’s school)
Study Limitations

• Preliminary findings
  – Final results may differ

• Single city location

• Small sample size
Conclusions

• Walking is perceived by parents to be the safer option of transport to school

• Multiple aspects influence parents perceptions towards certain transport habits
  – These aspects could be influencing the low rates of cycling with the Dunedin area

• Future city planning should involve improvements in cycle route safety
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