

TRANSPORT

Lavelle, Rau, Heisserer & Hynes, 2012

The ConsEnSus (Consumption, Environment and Sustainability) Project is a four-year research project involving collaboration between TCD and NUI, Galway. The ConsEnSus Project is funded by the EPA under the STRIVE programme. This project focuses on four key areas of household consumption: transport, energy, water and food.

As part of the ConsEnSus Project, the Lifestyle Survey was conducted over a ten-month period between June 2010 and April 2011. The aim of this Lifestyle Survey was to gain an understanding of people's attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable household consumption and sustainable lifestyles. A total of 1,500 households (750 urban based/750 rural based) were surveyed in 30 EDs across Galway City and County Council areas, Derry City Council area, Limavady District Council area, Dublin City Council area and Fingal County Council area.

Further information is available at: www.consensus.ie



Transport

Transport represents a major challenge to sustainability. Car ownership on the island of Ireland has grown rapidly in the past decade and has increased people's reliance on the private car as their main mode of transport. Indeed, the island of Ireland is now one of the most car dependent societies in Europe. Bus and bike usage are decreasing and rail travel has only slightly increased in the past decade. The social, cultural, economic and environmental consequences of car-dependency for Irish society are complex and wide-ranging and disproportionately affect vulnerable groups such as car-less households and elderly people. The current recession is exacerbating further some of the transport-related risks to vulnerable households, including rising motoring costs.

Distance travelled to work, school or college

- 18% of the sample (n=185) stated that they travelled less than 2 miles.
- 47% of the respondents (n=485) reported travelling less than 5 miles.

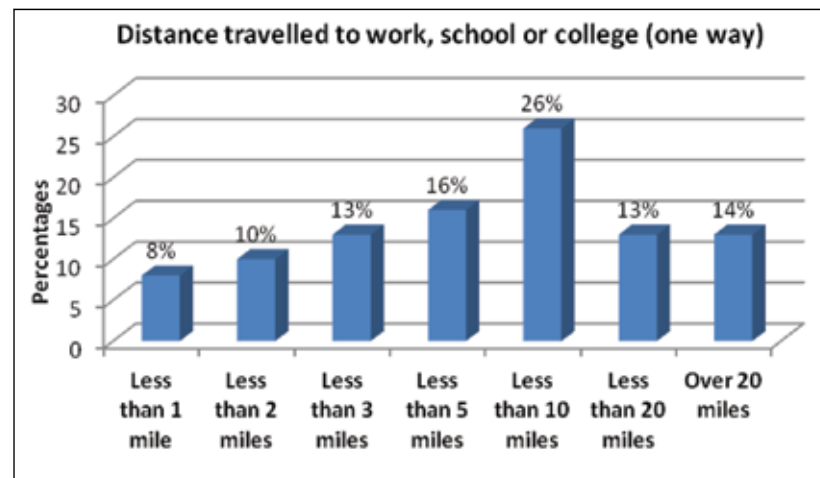


Figure 3.1: Distance travelled to work, school or college (one way)

(Note: 1 mile = 1.609344 kilometres)

Usual mode of transport

Of the 68% of respondents (n=1,026) who reported commuting to work, school or college:

- 71% stated that they usually drive a car (n=732).
- Driving was slightly more common among men (74%) than women (70%).
- More people residing in rural locations (82%, n=392) reported driving for this commute in comparison to those respondents living in urban areas (62%, n=340).

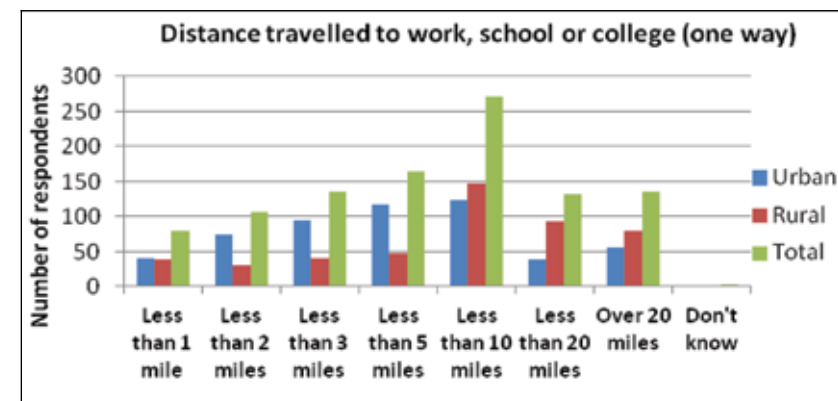


Figure 3.2: Distance travelled to work, school or college (one way) in the urban and rural locations.

- 3% of respondents reported travelling as a passenger in a car (n=31).
- Travelling as passenger in a car was more common among women and students.
- Walking represented the second most common mode of transport (9%, n=95).
- More than twice the number of respondents residing in urban areas (13%, n=69) reported walking, in comparison to those residing in rural locations (5%, n=26).
- Cycling was the third most popular mode of transport (8%, n=80).
- Cycling was slightly more popular amongst male respondents (8%) as opposed to female respondents (7%).
- Respondents living in urban locations (12%, n=65) were more likely to cycle than their rural counterparts (3%, n=15).
- More urban residents (9%, n=51) reported travelling by bus or train or Luas when compared to rural dwellers (5%, n=26) (see Figure 3.3).

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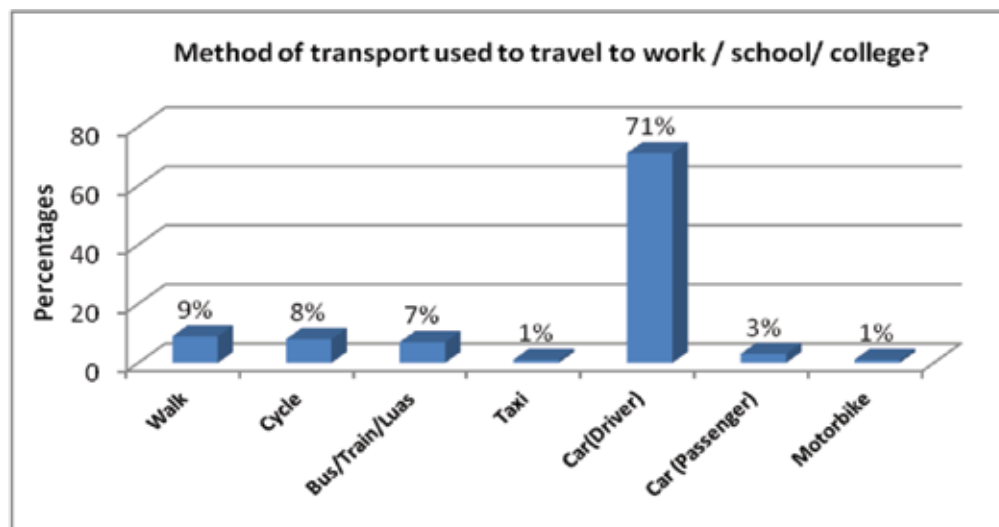


Figure 3.3: Method of transport used to travel to work, school or college.

Availability of public transport

- 35% of the respondents stated that there was no public transport available for their commute to work, school or college (n= 359).
- This gap in public transport provision was more pronounced in rural areas (44%, n=208) compared to urban areas (28%, n=151).

Reasons for not using public transport

Some of the reported reasons why respondents do not use public transport available for their commute to work, school or college are:

- Public transport is 'too restrictive' 42% (n=272)
- 'I need my car or van for my job' 17% (n=108)
- Public transport is 'too unreliable' 11% (n=70)

Reasons to reduce car use

When respondents were asked what would encourage people to reduce their car journeys:

- 53% of the sample stated 'improved, more affordable public transport' (n=792).

- 12.4% of the people reported 'financial incentives to encourage walking and cycling' (n=185).
- 12.1% cited 'improved bike lanes, footpaths and pedestrian crossings' (n=181).

Implications

These results reveal high levels of car dependence on the island of Ireland. The car was clearly the most common mode of transport. More sustainable modes such as cycling and walking offer realistic alternatives in urban areas where almost one fifth of respondents commute less than two miles to work, school and college. Alternatives such as public transport and carpooling could be promoted to those who face longer commuting distances. Virtual mobility options, such as teleworking and distance education, can play some role in reducing the number of trips to work, school or college.

There is a need for less restrictive, more reliable and affordable public transport. Respondents who failed to use available public transport viewed it as 'too restrictive' (42%), 'too unreliable' (11%) and 'too expensive' (7%). More importantly, 27% of urban dwellers who participated in the survey stated that there was no public transport available at all for their commute to work, school or college.

Rural Ireland is particularly affected by gaps in public transport provision. Almost half of all rural respondents (43%, n=208) reported that there is no public transport for their commute to work, school or college. As a result, rural dwellers are more likely to use their car as the main mode of transport compared to those in urban locations. This confirms previous research that identifies a lack of public transport, isolation and distances from facilities and services as key barriers for people in rural parts of Ireland.

References

- OECD Report (2010). *Reducing Transport Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Trends and data 2010*. International Transport Forum.
- Rau, H. and Hennessy, C. (2009) 'The Road to Sustainable Transport? Rural Transport Programmes and Policies in Ireland', in J. McDonagh, A. Varley and S. Shortall (eds) *A Living Countryside? The Politics of Sustainable Development in Rural Ireland*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 361-78.