

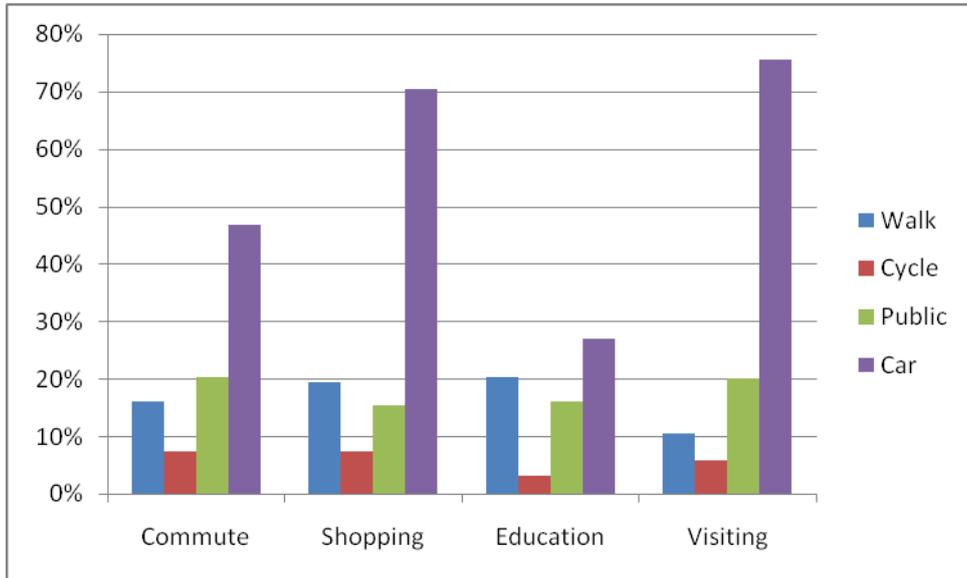
Personal Transport Choices

The transport sector is one of the major contributors to climate change. Personal transport also significantly contributes to local and regional air pollution with emission of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. This publication looks at the effects of different types of public policies influencing transport demand ranging from pricing measures, such as fuel taxes or financial incentives to buy “cleaner” vehicles, to car labelling or the provision of transport infrastructure. The main factors affecting car ownership, car use and car choice are analysed, as well as factors which encourage the use of public transport. The impact of the relative price of different means of transport on mode choice receives particular attention. The role of environmental “norms” on personal transport decisions is also considered, improving our understanding of how raising public awareness about the environmental effects of private car use can complement other policies.

Drawing upon observations from over 10 000 households in ten OECD countries, the main conclusions of the analysis can be summarised as follows:

- It is clear that demographic (e.g. age, gender, household composition) economic (e.g. income, employment status) and structural factors (e.g. location of residence) affect the choice between personal car use and public transport. An understanding of their role is important in assessing the likely impacts of different policies on personal transport choices.
- The results confirm that changing the relative cost of the two modes will influence personal transport choices. For instance, 35% of respondents indicated that they would drive their cars less if public transport was cheaper. Similarly, respondents indicated that on average a 20% increase in fuel prices would reduce their consumption by approximately 7%-8%.
- While prices matter they may not suffice. The results indicate clearly that improving the accessibility of public transport will reduce car ownership and use, and encourage the use of public transport. While rapidity and convenience are cited as being important additional factors in all countries, the factors which will encourage people to use public transport vary by country (e.g. personal security in Mexico, comfort in the Czech Republic) and this is instructive for policy design.
- Above and beyond the effects of factors such as price and infrastructure, it is clear that the attitude of respondents toward environmental issues has an effect on personal transport decisions. These results indicate that a soft policy effectively influencing people’s beliefs and attitudes to the environment would have a positive impact on substituting their car for an alternative mode.

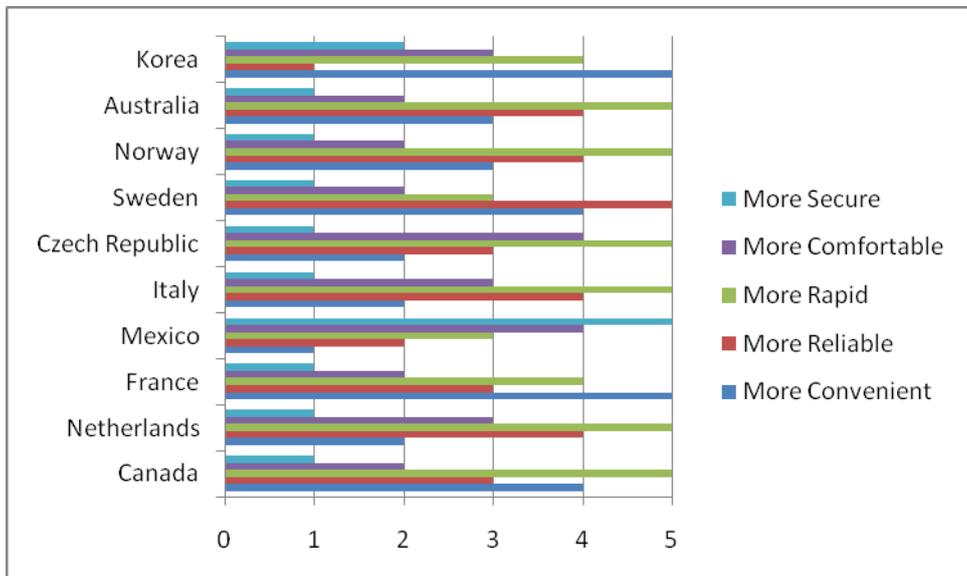
Mode choice by travel purpose



Source: OECD Project on Household Behaviour and Environmental Policy

Influence of improvements in public transport on increasing use

(1 = least important and 5 = most important)



Source: OECD Project on Household Behaviour and Environmental Policy