



► Evidence Library ► Systematic reviews ► Walking and cycling

Links

[Reviews Facility home](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Summary](#)

[Technical report \(pdf\)](#)

[Included studies](#)



A synthesis of research addressing children's, young people's and parents' views of walking and cycling for transport

What do we want to know?

There is widespread concern about the decrease in physical activity and the increase in obesity and chronic diseases in the UK, especially among children and young people. There is also considerable interest in the social and environmental benefits of a shift away from car travel to non-motorised forms of transport, such as walking and cycling. Walking and cycling provides people with the opportunity to build physical activity into their daily lives. This systematic review brings together the relevant research literature to examine children's, young people's and parent's views about what helps and hinders them in walking and cycling to school, and combines these with the results of a recent systematic review of the effectiveness of interventions to promote a shift from car travel to more active forms of transport.

Who wants to know?

Parents, children and young people, national and local government policy-makers, schools, health and community practitioners, researchers and those who fund research.

What did we find?

The views of children, young people and parents reflected:

- a culture of car use which reinforced perceptions of the benefits of travel by car and discouraged the use of alternative modes
- a fear and dislike of local environments, including concerns about safety, traffic, and inadequate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians
- that children had their own views about transport and saw themselves as responsible transport users in their own right
- that parents' perceptions of their own roles and responsibilities, and children's views of these, influenced transport choice at the level of the family
- that these themes differed in importance and content depending on the children's age, sex, socioeconomic status and location
- that most intervention evaluations only targeted the public's fear and dislike of local environments

What are the implications?

- Interventions will not work unless public views about the value, safety, benefits and costs of walking and cycling are taken into account
- Perceived safety is a key influence on walking and cycling, but environmental improvements and facilities can encourage a shift away from car culture
- Interventions operate not just at an individual level but often at a family, community and environmental level as well, indicating that interventions need to be tailored to fit more carefully with people's preferences and priorities
- Any interventions to increase walking and cycling need to be appropriate to the age, sex and location of the population
- The creation of tailored marketing messages combined with some infrastructure changes for subsets of children, young people and parents – specifically geared to appeal to different ages, socio-economic classes, sexes and locations – are appropriate and effective
- Interventions which included messages about the health benefits of walking and cycling were effective, thus indicating that this type of marketing could be appropriate for children
- The extension and improvement of cycle networks also appear to be effective and appropriate, although this is more likely with people who already cycle
- Further research is needed to understand people's views about car culture, about the family's influence on transport, safety concerns, and using positive messages expressed by children in developing interventions

How did we get these results?

The results of 16 studies of children's young people's and/or parents' views were synthesised and combined with the results of 15 intervention evaluations to yield the best evidence currently available about the effectiveness and appropriateness of interventions to promote a shift from car travel to more active forms of transport.

This report should be cited as: Brunton G, Oliver S, Oliver K, Lorenc T (2006) *A Synthesis of Research Addressing Children's, Young People's and Parents' Views of Walking and Cycling for Transport*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

