



# ANALYSIS BRIEF

## TRAVEL TO SCHOOL IN LA COUNTY



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Travel behavior of children merits special attention for safety planning, and more recently it has been seen as a way to encourage routine physical activity for school aged children. To learn more about children’s travel and parent’s attitudes and concerns, the 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) included a special module dedicated to the topic of travel to school. The State of California purchased additional samples (CA-NHTS) and the information is available for safety analysis, transportation planning, and policy development. This brief uses the 2009 NHTS with the California supplement to describe children’s travel to school in LA County.

In LA County there are about 1.5 million children aged 5-15. According to the CA-NHTS, over half of these children usually traveled to school in a private vehicle (see Figure 1) and almost one-third usually walked to school. In LA county 7.7 percent of school children usually rode in a school bus, 3.8 percent used some kind of transit, 1.1 percent reported riding a bike, and another 4 percent did not report how they usually traveled to school or were home-schooled.

Figure 1 – Usual Travel to School by Children (aged 5-15) in the US, California, and LA County

Usual Mode of Travel to School	National	Statewide	LA County
Private Vehicle	43.6%	53.7%	51.0%
School Bus	37.1%	13.1%	7.7%
Walk	10.7%	24.3%	32.3%
Any Transit	2.1%	2.7%	3.8%
Bike	1.0%	2.0%	1.1%
Travel Mode not Reported*	5.5%	4.2%	4.0%

\*Includes home-schooled and don’t know/refused

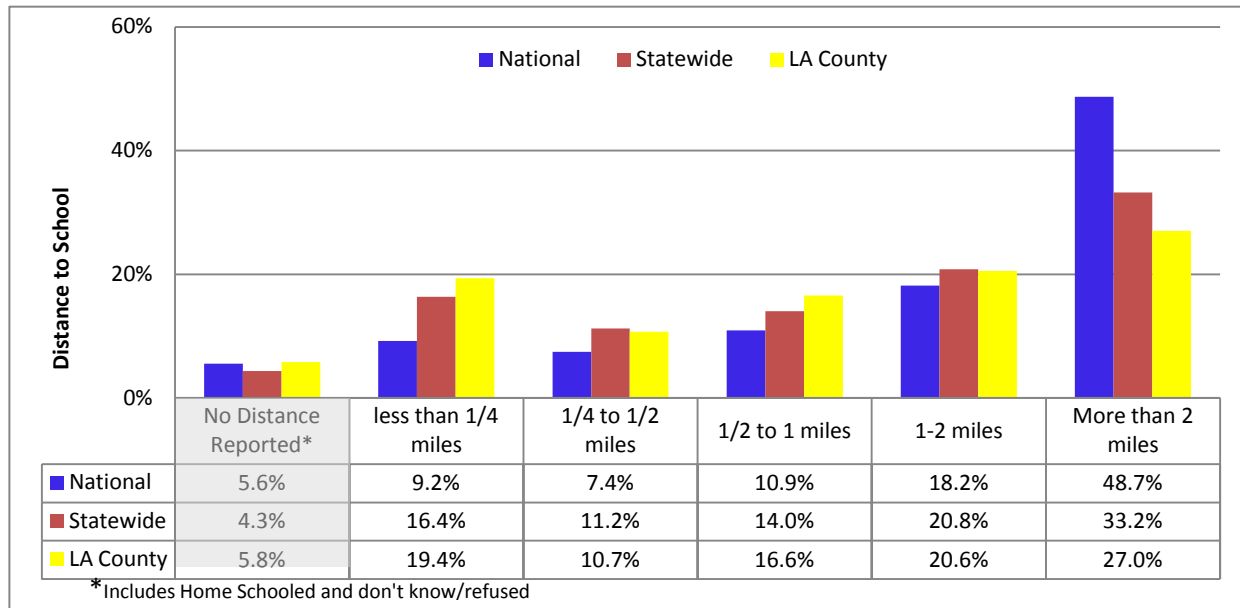
Note the sample sizes: 372 reported private vehicle, 139 reported walk, 37 reported school bus, 16 reported transit and only 5 children in the LA County sample reported biking to school.

‘Any Transit’ includes public and private buses, subway, Metrolink and Amtrak, shuttle bus, ferries, and dial-a-ride

Compared to the State of California and the nation as a whole, children in LA County were much more likely to walk to school because the county is urbanized and more children live within walking distance (see Figure 2). Over 30 percent of school children in LA County live within one-half mile of school (19.4 percent less than ¼ mile and another 10.7 percent between ¼ and ½ miles), compared to 16.6 percent for the nation as a whole and 27.6 percent for the State—both of which include rural areas where children often live far from school.

In addition, in LA County just 27 percent of children live more than two miles from school compared with one-third of children in the State and almost half of the children nation-wide.

Figure 2 – Distance to School for Children 5-15, National, State of CA, and LA County



Figures 3 and 4 present the relation of children’s usual travel mode to school and distance in two different ways.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of travel mode by the distance traveled. For children who lived less than ¼ mile from school, 73 percent usually walked and 24.2 percent rode in a private vehicle. For children whose schools were ¼-1/2 miles away, about half reported that they usually walked and the other half rode in a private vehicle. Children who live over one mile from usually rode in a private vehicle (63.4 percent) but a significant portion walked (19.6 percent) or took a school bus (9.1 percent).

Figure 3 – Distribution of Travel Mode by Distance to School for Children in LA County

Usual Mode of Travel to School	Distance Not Reported*	Less than 1/4 mile	1/4-1/2 mile	1/2 - 1 mile	1-2 mile	More than 2 mile	Percent of All by Mode
<b>Private Vehicle</b>	41.6%	24.2%	50.3%	46.8%	63.4%	70.1%	51.0%
<b>School Bus</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	9.1%	21.3%	7.7%
<b>Walk</b>	38.8%	73.0%	48.3%	45.3%	19.6%	1.4%	32.3%
<b>Any Transit</b>	5.6%	0.0%	1.4%	3.0%	5.6%	6.9%	3.8%
<b>Bike**</b>	11.6%	0.3%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
<b>Travel Mode not Reported*</b>	2.4%	2.5%	0.0%	0.3%	2.4%	0.3%	4.0%
<b>All</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\*Includes Home Schooled and Don't know/Refused

\*\*Note the sample sizes: 372 reported private vehicle, 139 reported walk, 37 reported school bus, 16 reported transit and only 5 children in the LA County sample reported biking to school.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of distance traveled for each travel mode. For example, Figure 4 shows that almost 60 percent of children who usually walked to school live less than ½ mile away (43.7 percent under a quarter mile and another 16 percent between ¼ and ½ mile). Another 23.2 percent of children who walked live ½ to 1 mile, and only 12.5 percent of children who walked live one to two miles.

Conversely, almost 20 percent of children who rode in a private vehicle lived less than ½ miles from school (9.2 percent under a quarter mile and 10.6 between ¼ and ½ mile).

Figure 4 – Distribution of Distance by Travel Mode for Children in LA County

Usual Mode of Travel to School	Distance Not Reported *	Less than 1/4 mile	1/4-1/2 mile	1/2 - 1 mile	1-2 mile	More than 2 mile	All
Private Vehicle	2.4%	9.2%	10.6%	15.2%	25.5%	37.1%	100%
School Bus	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	24.2%	74.5%	100%
Walk	3.5%	43.7%	16.0%	23.2%	12.5%	1.2%	100%
Any Transit	4.3%	0.0%	3.9%	13.1%	30.0%	48.8%	100%
Bike**	32.3%	5.3%	0.0%	62.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Travel Mode not Reported*	6.2%	42.4%	0.0%	3.7%	42.0%	5.7%	100%
Percent of All by Distance	0.0%	19.4%	10.7%	16.6%	20.6%	27.0%	100%

\*Includes Home Schooled and Don't know/Refused

Note the sample sizes: 372 reported private vehicle, 139 reported walk, 37 reported school bus, 16 reported transit and only 5 children in the LA County sample reported biking to school.

According to the most recent Census data the number of school-aged children in Los Angeles County has declined 10.0% from the level in 2000, and the largest losses (-21.0%) were for children aged 5 to 9<sup>1</sup>. These trends are important to note when looking at travel shifts and setting benchmarks for safety and policy initiatives.

As the data in this brief indicates, the CA add-on to the National Household Travel Survey is a rich source of data for safety analysis, travel demand estimation, and policy development.

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See other publications and analysis at:

[www.travelbehavior.us](http://www.travelbehavior.us)

1 Explaining 2010 Census Trends: Aging in California and Los Angeles County, Linda Lou and Dowell Myers at:

[http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/pdf/2011\\_Myers-Lou\\_Census-Brief\\_Aging.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/pdf/2011_Myers-Lou_Census-Brief_Aging.pdf)