

ANALYSIS BRIEF

TRAVEL TO SCHOOL



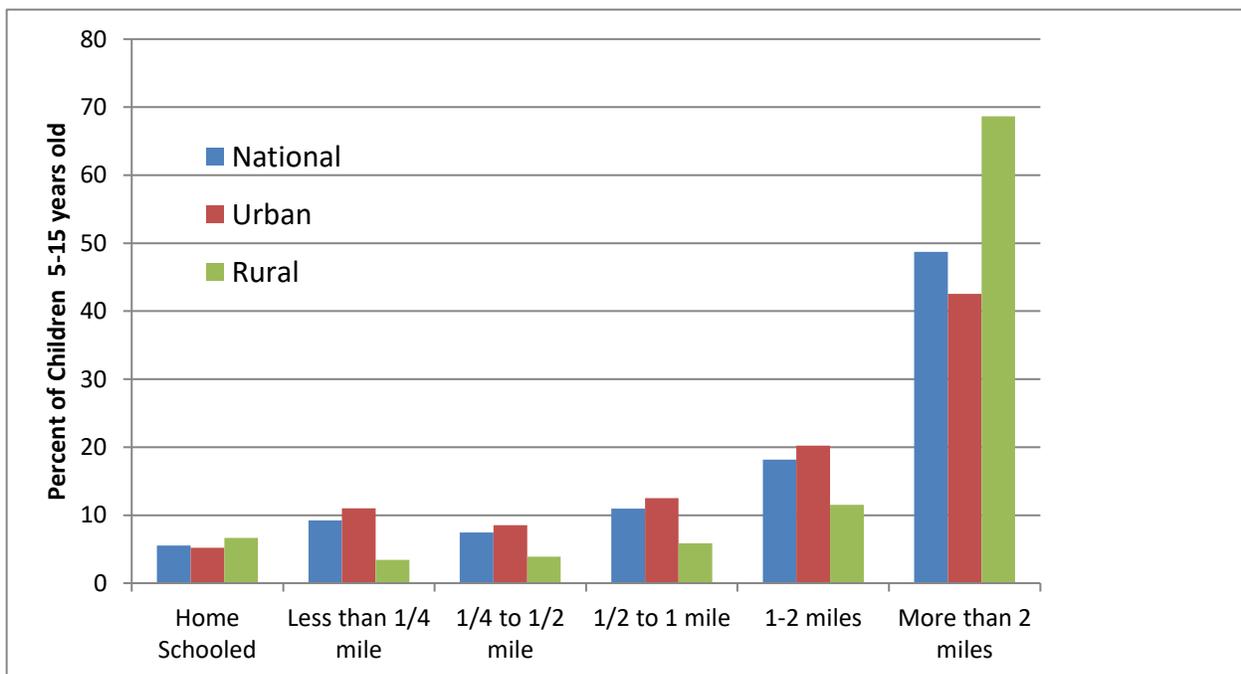
Nancy McGuckin
www.travelbehavior.us

School-aged children merit special attention for safety planning, and recently have been the focus of public health initiatives to increase their physical activity. As a result, many officials and policy makers are interested in information on children's travel to school. This brief describes some of the findings from the 2009 National Household Travel Survey special module on travel to school by children aged 5 to 15 years old.

National and local policies concentrate on encouraging children who live less than 2 miles from school to walk or bike to school. Figure 1 shows that--for the nation as a whole--about 46 percent of school aged children who travel to school live within 2 miles of the school they attend. Just about half (49 percent) live more than 2 miles away from their school, and about 5 percent of school-aged children are home-schooled.

Over 52 percent of children living in urban areas (about three-quarters of US school-aged children) live within 2 miles of their school, 43 percent live more than 2 miles away, and 5 percent are home schooled. In rural areas children are more likely to be home-schooled (almost 7 percent) and only a quarter live 2 miles or closer to their school, and nearly 7 out of ten (69 percent) live over 2 miles away from their school.

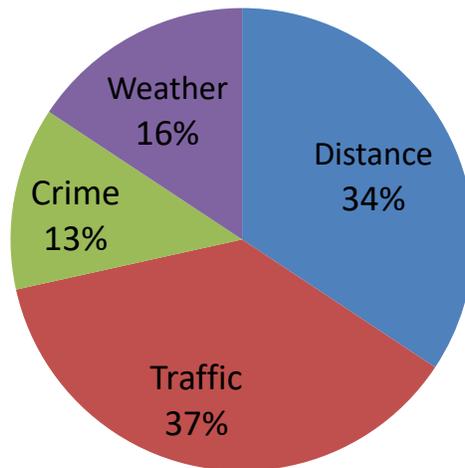
Figure 1 – Percent of Children (5-15 yrs) by Distance between Home and School



Source: 2009 National Household Travel Survey, Federal Highway Administration, McGuckin's analysis

For parents of school aged children between ages of 5 and 15 who lived within 2 miles of school were asked in detail about what concerned them about allowing their child to walk or bike to school. Exhibit XX shows the issues rated as ‘serious’ or ‘very serious’ problems in allowing children to walk to school. Even though the distance to school is less than 2 miles, over one-third of parents were concerned that it was too far to walk or bike. Concerns about traffic—which is the local focus of creating safe routes to school, were expressed by 37 percent of the parents.

Exhibit xx – Parental Concerns about Children Walking to School (2009 NHTS)



Understanding the number of children who live within walking distance of school, and listening to parent’s attitudes and concerns about letting their children walk, is instrumental in formulating guidance to the Safe Route to School initiatives, and for other policies related to this special population’s health and safety.

Nancy McGuckin

See other publications and analysis at:

www.travelbehavior.us