

Presented by

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School Runnings: Studying the lifeworlds of parents and children to inform the design of active school travel interventions

Introducing the OptiWaSP project

18/07/22

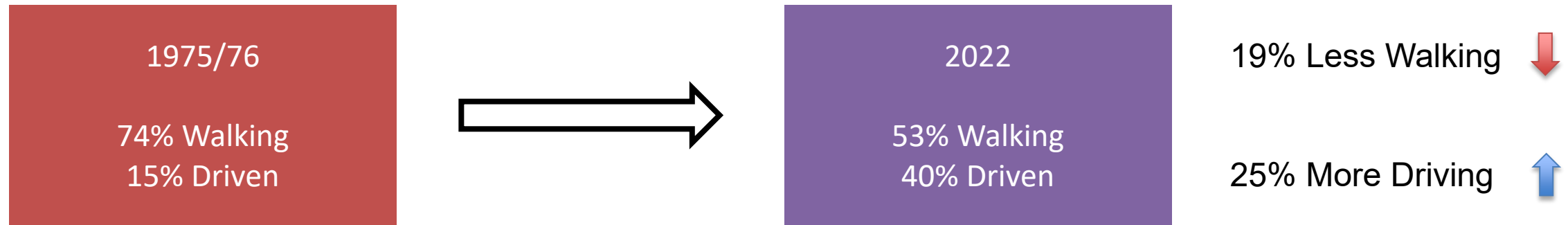
Outline

- What is a lifeworld?
- Trends in travel to school in England and thinking about lifeworlds helps us understand this.
- Survey of the existing literature – potential gaps.
- Introducing the OptiWaSP project.

What is a lifeworld?

- Comes from phenomenology – particularly originating with German Philosopher Husserl (1859 – 1938).
- Two main dimensions:
 - What we experience in our daily life as self-evident and familiar – life encountered “in the plain certainty of experience”
 - Constructed through the repeated encounters with people, places, things - the embodied knowledge that we build up in continual navigation these complexes. Crucially forms the shared ‘common ground’ (Muller-Salo 2023)
- Both a sense of the uniquely individual mundanity that we all develop – but also an acknowledgement of the socially embedded nature of this.
- As a daily practice travel to school is deeply integrated into the lifeworlds of parents.
- Lifeworld perspective helps connect school travel to wider contexts – open to non-intuitive impacts. Also centres the experience of travel.
- This lifeworld of parents has changed significantly over time.

Trends in travel to primary school in England



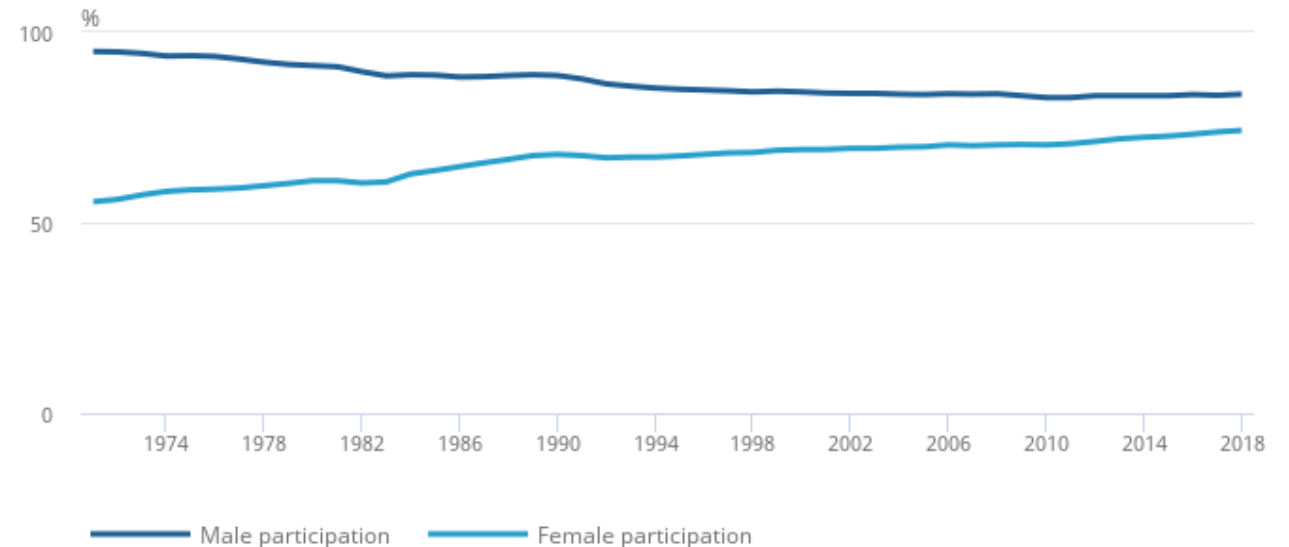
Source NTS

Policy problem:

- Significant contribution to congestion (25% morning peak in London).
- Localised air quality and road safety issues.
- Overall decline in environmental quality around the school
- Declines in physical activity.
- Opportunities for social connection between parents and personal development of children reduced by individualised transport.

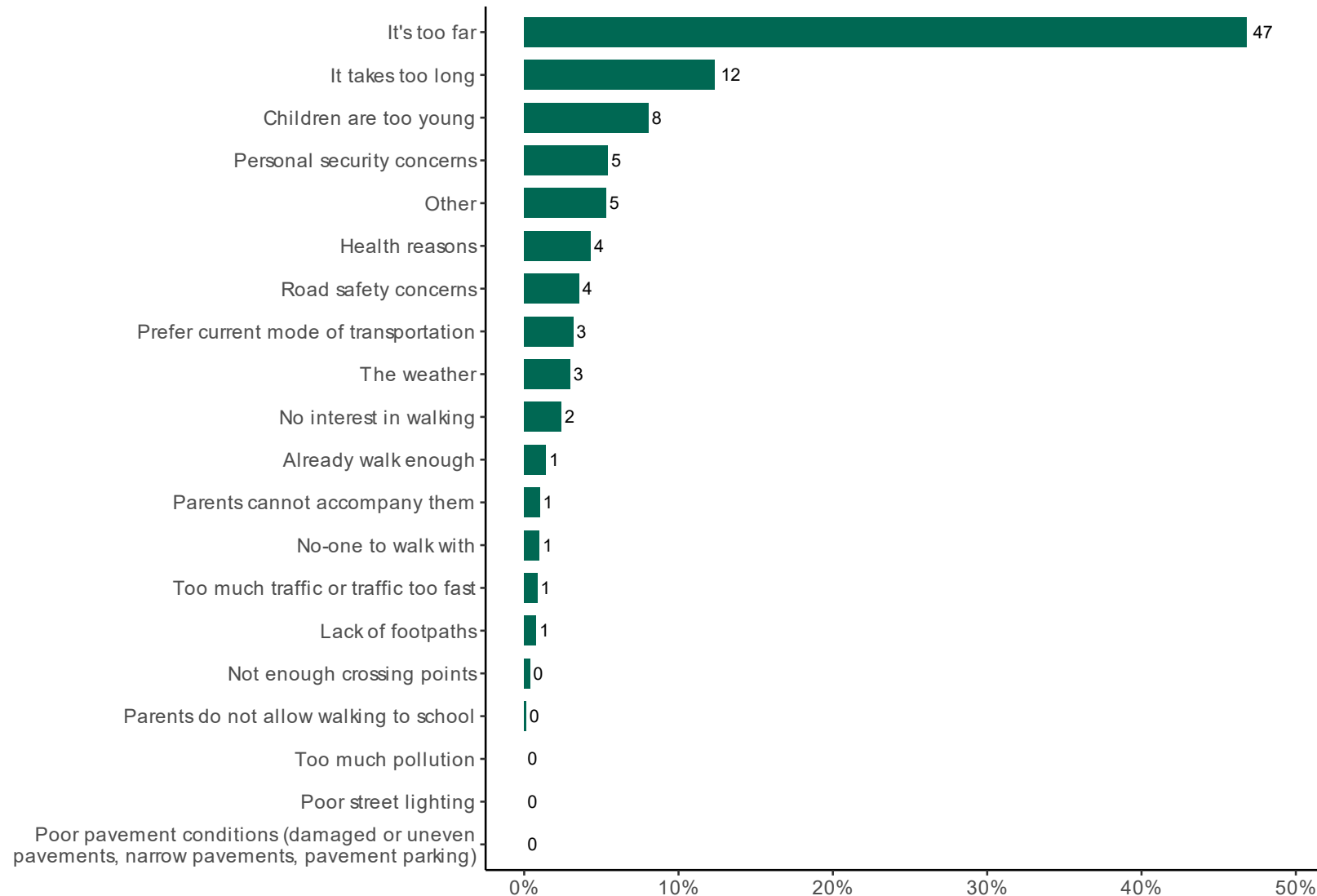
- More women in the work place. (ONS)
- More women working full time. (ONS)
- Increasing length of time commuting (+ 8 minutes between 2000s and 2010s).
- Gender gap between average commute time narrowing - women commuting for longer too (Giménez-Nadal et al. 2022)
- Distance between home and school is increasing. 1.2 miles average in 1995 – 1.7 miles average in 2014 (DfT 2014).
- Changing expectations of parenting around independent mobility fear of strangers – children increasingly escorted (Shaw et al. 2015)

Figure 3: Participation rates of men and women (aged 16 to 64 years), UK, seasonally adjusted, 1971 to 2018



Source: Bank of England - A Millennium of Macroeconomic Data

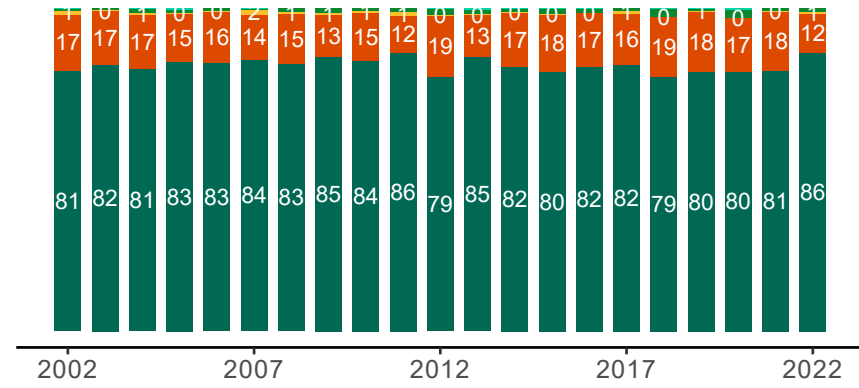
TIME-SPACE Crunch on the lifeworlds of some parents and their children



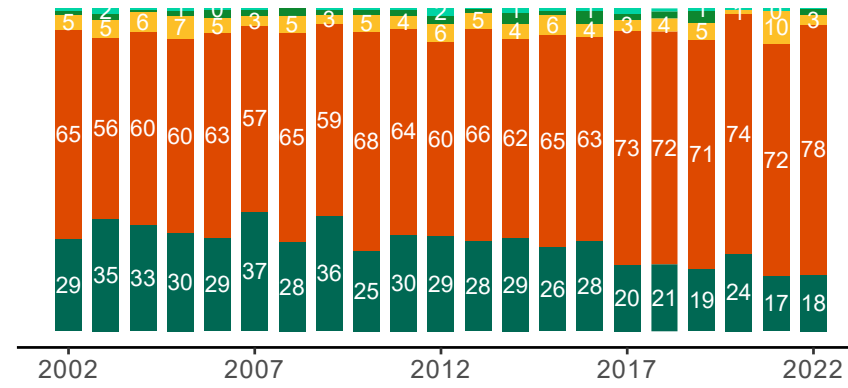
- **Main reason for not walking to school more often: England, 2021 – National Travel Survey**

Aged 5 to 10

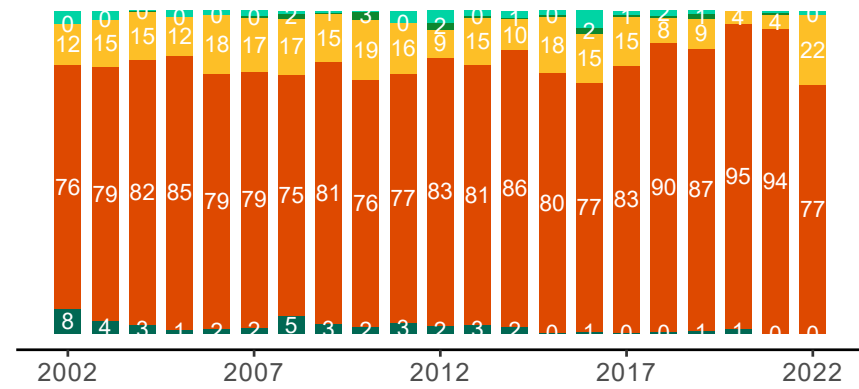
Trip length under 1 mile



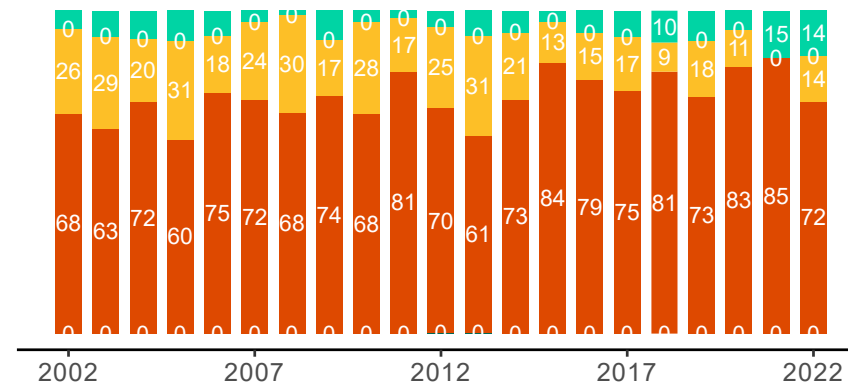
Trip length 1 to under 2 miles



Trip length 2 to under 5 miles



Trip length 5 miles and over



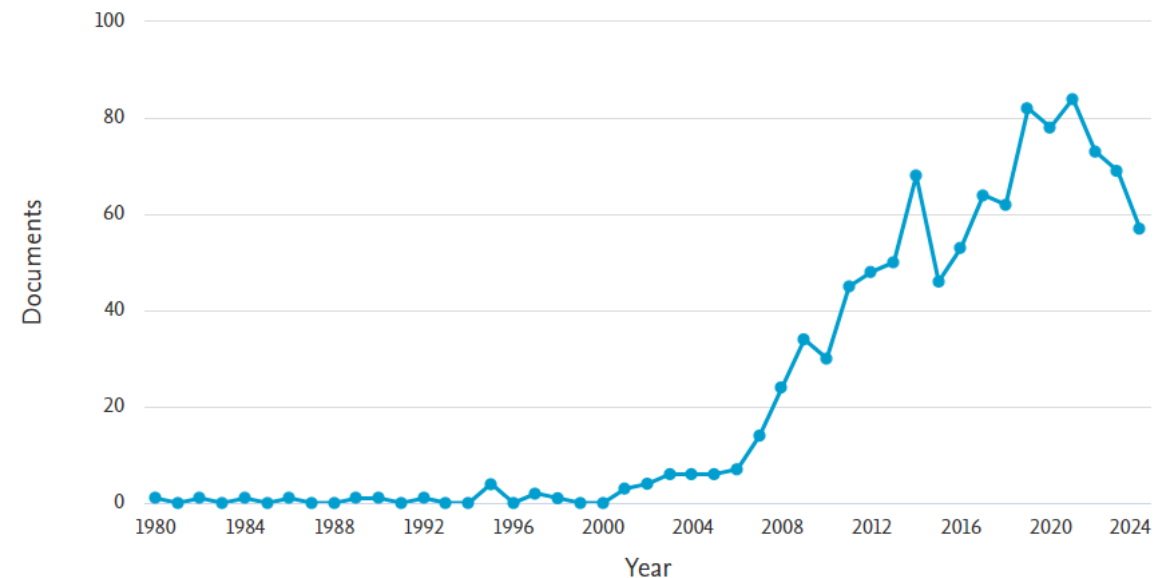
Mode ■ Other ■ Pedal cycle ■ Bus ■ Car or van ■ Walk

- Trips to and from school by main mode, trip length and age: England, 2002 to 2022

The existing literature

- Predominantly quantitative, cross sectional – what kind of environments and household attributes are associated with greater levels of active travel
 - Short distances
 - Safe walking routes (and crucially perceived as safe by parents)
 - Parental availability
- Contradictory findings across different contexts.
- Non-traditional family structures not often considered.
- Less longitudinal research to help us unpick some causal mechanisms – difficult for intervention design.

Documents by year



Papers published per year referring mentioning ACTIVE + SCHOOL + TRAVEL. Source: Scopus

The OptiWaSP project – Optimised Walking School Bus Planning

- Joint project across UWE, Glasgow, Leeds, and Lancaster Universities funded by the EPSRC.
- Focus on the potential applications of Walking School Buses to increase walking to school.
- Our work package – split between UWE and Glasgow is concerned with the social dimensions of travel to school and walking in particular.
- This is a mixed methods approach which broadly aims to capture the complexity of the school trip.
 - Variability in the school trip and its primary drivers.
 - The experience of the school trip and local area.
 - The social ecology of school travel.



In School Research

Methods:

- 6 schools in 3 different case study areas (Dundee, Blackpool, Bristol).
- Survey and focus groups with parents, walk along 'street audits' with children, secondary data analysis.

Initial hints:

- Newfound (for some) flexibility of working post-Covid changing travel patterns -> potentially more weekly variability.
- School travel not stable for some families – variability in mode choice, who escorts.
- Children's preferences do have some sway in decision making.
- Specificities of the school and the local geography (beyond just built environment) can have significant impacts on mode choice.



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