

## **Mobility and Everyday Life – the Social Context of Modern Childhood**

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Modern society is characterized by speed, a hectic pace of life and mobility. Travelling is an important part of it, and being on the move gives the impression of being both effective and active in everyday life. Mobility embedded in everyday life makes it necessary to have a good understanding of the social processes creating and maintaining the social context and especially the framework of the daily lives of children conditioning the choice of transport mode. This article deals with the characteristics, social processes and trends contributing to our understanding mobility in daily life, while concentrating on aspects of importance in the organization of everyday life in families with children. While there are several societal trends contributing to increased use of the car in the mobility of children, there is at the same time a decline in children's independent mobility, i.e. walking and cycling. Individualization and organized leisure activities for children, perception of time and time pressure, access to and habituation of car-use, interplay between transport and information and communication technology are all discussed and illustrated with empirical examples.

## Introduction

Significant characteristics of contemporary society are increased physical and virtual mobility (transport and travel) and different forms of information and communication technology (ICT). On average, people make more than three journeys every day and travel about 40 km (in Norway) (Denstadli et al., 2006). Simultaneously, the growth in use of ICT devices such as mobile telephones, the Internet and communication by e-mail goes on unabated ([http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/eeurope/i2010/infoso\\_today/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/infoso_today/index_en.htm), <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/40/34082594.xls>).

Our activities are spread over a large geographical area: workplace and school situated away from where we live, leisure activities often localized outside the neighbourhood and friends and relatives living in distant parts of the urban area or home town. At the same time, ICT is facilitating contact without physical presence and increasing flexibility in the organization of daily life (Townsend, 2000).

Mobile everyday life is typical not just among the adult population, but among children, too, whose lives seem to have developed in much the same direction. There are clear indications that everyday life for children has become more fragmented in space and time than it was just a few decades ago. In Norway, for example, the incidence of children being chauffeured to different activities increased by more than 60 percent in the 1990s (Hjorthol, 2002) and the penetration of the mobile telephone seems only to have enhanced this trend (Hjorthol, 2008).

It has been said that “this spatial development is a symptom of the rise of childhood as an adult-controlled societal structure in a differentiated modern society” (Jurzcyk et al., 2004: 753). Zeier (2001) claims that the various places children frequent during the course of a day, e.g. school, day care, music school, football training, etc., can be seen as islands in the landscape, with the children transported from island to island (very often by car). Part of this picture is reduced independent mobility, i.e. less walking and cycling.

Research from different countries points to the fact that an increasing number of children are taken to school by car. During the past 10-15 years there has been a significant increase in car-use in this respect. Studies from Great Britain, Scandinavia and Italy reflect the same tendency, and not just among the youngest children in the first and second grades, but among those in the upper grades too (Bradshaw, 2001; Fyhri, 2005; Mackett, 2002; Mackett et al., 2005; Jensen et al., 2004; Prezza et al., 2001). While, in 1985, 10 percent of children in the age group 11-16 years in the UK were being taken to school by car, by 2005 this proportion had increased to 21 percent (Department for Transport, 2006). A study from 2004 (Fyhri, 2005) showed that 25 percent of children in Norway were being taken to school by car, i.e. nearly 40 percent of the youngest children and 16 percent of those in the 6th grade. In the period 1992 to 2005, car-use increased from 4 to 11 percent for the 12-15 year age group.

While school trips have attracted a good deal of attention in the past, other trips made by children have been given much less consideration. Longitudinal studies in the UK indicate that car-use is growing faster in relation to children than in relation to the rest of the population (Mackett, 2001). Results from the UK show that children make fewer, but longer, trips than previously. Mackett points to the fact that school trips count for only one-fifth of the daily excursions of children. In other words, children's mobility is much more than just school trips, but we know little about the other journeys and activities in which they take part. In addition, we know relatively little about the trends and/or driving forces that contribute to this development or about the consequences these have on the everyday lives of children.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to arrive at a better understanding of the societal trends that enhance the development of children's everyday mobility and to illustrate the consequences of these trends for children's activity and mobility patterns. The last part of the paper is based on an empirical study carried out in Norway in 2005.

## Social trends

### ***Car-use and urban development***

Suburbanization and automobilization are self-reinforcing phenomena. Urban development of this type presupposes transport (the car), and the car increases opportunities for travel. The flexibility afforded by the car extends the distances people can travel and what they can do. One effect is less dependence on local services and social contacts in the immediate neighbourhood. The urban sprawl makes it difficult to provide a uniform, reasonably good, public transport supply over the entire urban area. Very often supply is based on the needs of commuters for radial lines serving central urban areas, while other travel purposes are given less priority. The fragmentation of activities in both time and space is partly a result of the accessibility of fast transport (the car) and suburbanization.

The necessity associated with use of the car is also often tied to issues associated with children. Without the car, it is claimed that there is not enough time to carry out daily activities (Freudendal-Pederseon, 2007; Hjorthol, 2006). Many families have adjusted their daily lives to the existence of the automobile. When the day care centre and one's job are in different parts of the city it is difficult to use public transport. The routinized nature of daily life is the basis of the more habitual use of the car. When always having access to a car – and a routinized travel pattern – it is more difficult to get over the threshold to using public transport, especially when there is a very strong temporal norm of saving time with a lot of activities going on. Accessibility renders the car more and more central in daily life and the use of alternatives increasingly difficult. Many of us feel that it would not be possible to do without the car, because either the habit is so strong or issues of access are so insurmountable that car-use is entrenched.

### ***Both parents working – more time pressure?***

The increase in the gainful employment of women has meant that in most families both parents are working. In Norway, more than 80 percent of mothers with children 5+ years are in paid work (Kitterød, 2005), which means that pre-school children need to be transported to day care centres or other types of care facility and children in lower classes need to be escorted to school. When both parents in a family are working, there are often periods of the day that are more hectic or chaotic than others. The most pressing time periods are (probably) in the morning when all the family members are leaving for work, school or day care, and in the afternoon when time has to be found for a meal before different leisure pursuits, for instance sports and music, begin. Shortage of time is a common excuse for car-use among parents when transporting their children to leisure activities (Hjorthol et al., 2005, 2006; Freudendal-Pedersen, 2007).

Gershuny (2000) claims that shortage of time, days filled with (meaningful) activity, is more a sign of success than is having plenty of leisure time (which can be related to unemployment). Not only is time pressure normal, it is also socially acceptable and to a certain degree status-giving, which means that the time pressure and the lack of time many families say they experience are legitimate reasons for their various actions in everyday life. Using the car for different purposes, regardless of travel distance and accessibility of other modes of transport, is a good example. The perception of time pressure becomes the ‘normal’ social framework of daily life.

Thrift (1996) argues that the subjective perception of time changes when speed in society increases. When most people in society have access to a car, the day “allows” for more activities to take place, and time “demands” more activity. When speed increases, not just time, but also the perception of space, might change and distance will be seen as shorter and less burdensome.

Speed, as represented by the car in daily life, changes our perception of both time and space. Pointing to the importance of speed as the basis for change in the perception of time, Nowotny (1994) claims that mobility is a central value in society as a result of the innovation of transport technology. Like time, speed can be seen as an aspect of status that differentiates between social groups. According to Nowotny: “The fast group are doing it right. They are, from a technological point of view, up to date, ahead of the competition. They are rewarded for it, in material terms as well. The slow group are far from being socially recognized in their slowness” (1994: 32).

### ***Organized leisure activities for children – aspects of individuality***

Another characteristic of contemporary society is the emphasizing of the individual, i.e. encouraging individual talent and developing independence in children, too. It seems to be a norm that to succeed you have to start early. Studies indicate that parents with higher education emphasize organized leisure activities for their children more than parents with lower education do (Mattson, 2002; Lidén, 1999). Awareness related to children and their needs and development is much more prevalent today than it was only a generation ago. Organized leisure activities are seen as being “superior” in the development of a child’s creativity than just playing in the streets, which in most areas is not possible because of traffic. It is also more common for children’s organized leisure activities to take place outside the immediate neighbourhood (e.g. Valentine and McKendrick, 1997, Hjorthol et al., 2006). Access to transport has an impact on the possible choices a child has and on participation in leisure activities (Fotel, 2007).

It has been claimed that the reason children’s organized leisure activities have increased is that neighbourhoods have become unsuitable for children’s play due to increased traffic, but this is probably only partly true. The participation in organized activities among children is not just an urban phenomenon; also children in rural areas take part in such activities. They very often have to travel even further to football training and music education and therefore become more dependent on the car than children in the bigger cities, where public transport can be an alternative (Mattson, 2002; Jensen et al., 2004).

When the “norm” is that children ought to take part in organized activities, mobility and access to a car are conditions for participation. Mobility is a necessary resource for “success” for children, too. Children in families without cars are dependent on public transport or of getting to a venue by bicycle or on foot if they are to have the same level of participation as children in families with cars. Urban development with increasing distances will often be barriers to children’s activities. Families without a car either have to spend more time planning their activities or they have to reduce their expectations about what their children can take part in.

### ***Diffusion of ICT – interplay between transport and ICT – shorter planning horizon***

In many ways, the proliferation of the mobile telephone has changed the way people organize their everyday lives. Before the advent of the mobile telephone, when family members had little opportunity of communicating during the day, when apart or on the move travelling to or from different activities, advance planning was necessary in the daily lives of families with children. Changing an appointment or arrangement was difficult if there was no access to a landline telephone (not to mention the person at the other end being unavailable) or no possibility of meeting in person. From previous studies of travel behaviour we know that there is a relation between pre-planned activities and mode of transport. Indications are that car-use is greater in the case of trips not planned in advance than on pre-planned trips (Handy et al., 2005; Jakobsson, 2004); in other words, that planning reduces car-use or that ready access to the car makes planning less necessary (Gärling et al., 2000; Garwill et al., 2003).

Townsend (2000) claims that we experience freedom from punctuality with the new communication technology, and that this will quickly become a habit, making it difficult, almost unthinkable, that we will ever be without these new tele-devices. He says: "Once one becomes accustomed to the flexibility of scheduling, the freedom from punctuality permitted by the ability to constantly updating other parties as to one's status, it is nearly inconceivable to go back" (2000: 94).

A nationwide survey in Norway on use of the mobile telephone in organizing daily life in families with children suggests that the instrument is important in everyday communication among family members organizing the practicalities of daily activities (Hjorthol, 2008). The way arrangements are made varies with planning horizon. Short planning time and use of the mobile telephone go together. The mobile telephone brings the possibility of "instant action". This survey found a significant correlation between the amount of time in advance the daily activity was planned for and the frequency of car-use. People who plan in advance generally have a lower level of car-use than others who have a short planning horizon or make arrangements (very often by mobile telephone) about activities on the day itself.

To some degree, one could say that the mobile telephone directs car-use in the sense that it may generate more trips, since its use means there is no need to plan daily activities. More activities are carried out spontaneously and daily life is ad hoc. For example, an often sent SMS from children to their parents is "come and pick me up" (Hjorthol et al., 2005). This study also found a significant relationship between the frequency of car-use of parents and use of the mobile telephone for making appointments with children about accompanying them to/from friends and activities (Hjorthol, 2008: 316). This indicates that easy access to both mobile communication and private transport resources increases car-use, because more arrangements can be made on impulse.

## Children's daily mobility – a Norwegian example

### ***A nationwide survey about children's daily activities and travel***

The trends discussed in the previous section are indicative of the social framework of the daily lives of children and their parents. In this section, we take a closer look at children's activities and mobility during leisure time. We study whether these trends can be mirrored in aspects of the everyday lives of children.

As stated in the Introduction, school trips are only a part of children's daily mobility. By comparison, there is much less information and empirical data about travelling related to different types of leisure activities, organized and non-organized. In this section, results from a nationwide survey in Norway in 2005 about children's (6-12 years) activities and daily travelling are presented. We emphasize activities outside school and focus on the role that the car plays in children's mobility in this context.

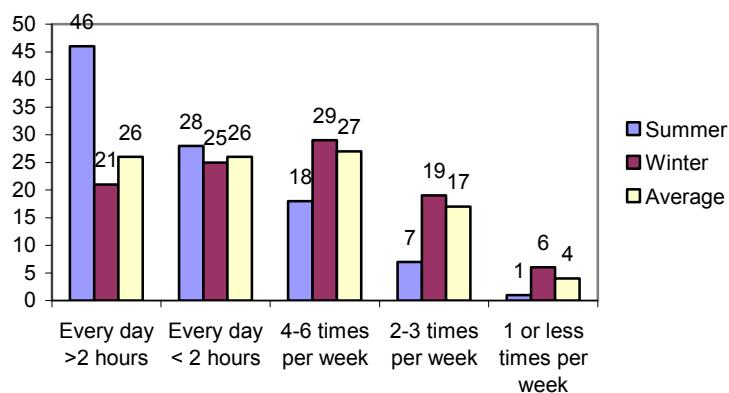
Respondents were recruited from the National Travel Survey (NTS) 2005 and are parents with children in the relevant age group (1282 respondents). During the NTS telephone interview, all parents with children in the target group were asked whether they would like to take part in a mail-back study about the physical environment of children, their activities and travel. The questionnaire included questions about gender, age, housing situation, possibilities for outdoor activities, traffic, parents' and child's judgement of the traffic situation, the trip to school in relation to the traffic, outdoor play and organized leisure activities, interaction with friends and travel to and from these activities. The response rate was 62 percent. The questionnaire was designed such that the parents were to answer the first part and the children (if necessary with the help of mother or father) the second part containing questions about their leisure activities, outdoor playing and social interaction with friends. To secure a good basis for the analyses, it was decided to carry out an additional survey of 500 extra

respondents in November 2005 with a sample from the entire country. The same questionnaire was applied with some additional background information about the parents. The response rate was 60 percent. The data from these two surveys were merged.

### **Playing outside and visiting friends**

For children, being physically active is important for their physical and psychical health. Results from several studies indicate that reduced physical activity is a cause of increased weight and obesity among children (Cooper et al., 2003; Evenson et al., 2003; Fox, 2004; Salomon et al., 2005). Playing and being together with other children are also important for social development. These activities can be carried out within the framework of athletics clubs or organizations, or in non-organized settings. In this section, we present data from both settings.

On average, about half of the children in this survey play outdoors every day (Figure 1) -- the proportion is higher in summer (74 percent) than in winter (46 percent). Figure 1 gives the full picture of unorganized outdoor playing.



*Figure 1.* The frequency of outdoor playing in summer, winter and average. Percent.

The outdoor activity level varies with age. Children in the age group 10-12 spend significantly more time outdoors than do younger children.

An interesting aspect of this non-organized activity is that children with lower-educated parents are more active outdoors than are children with higher-educated parents (Table 1). This can be seen as an indication of differences in norms related to children's activities.

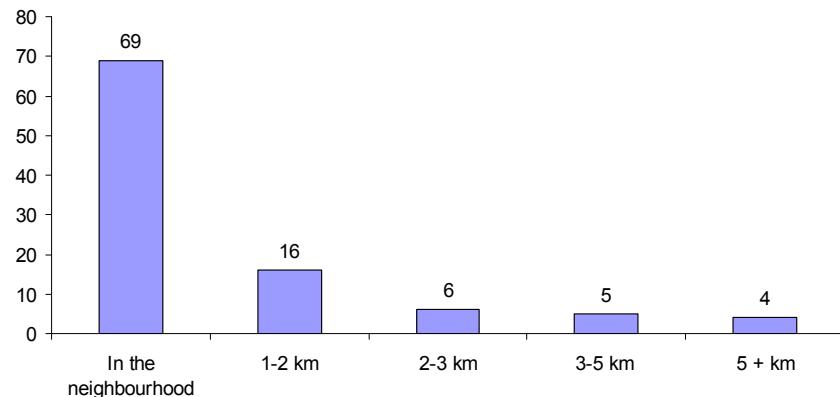
**Table 1.** The frequency of outdoor playing by parents' education. Percent\*\*\*.

Frequency of outdoor playing	Parents' education			All
	Low	Middle	High	
Every day > 2 hours	38	29	22	26
Every day < 2 hours	17	27	26	26
4-6 times per week	25	27	27	27
2-3 times per week	18	13	19	17
1 time or less per week	2	4	6	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Number	132	723	896	1751

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , chi-square.

Further on in this section we take a closer look at organized activities and whether parents' educational background plays a role in the propensity of participation. As discussed, previous studies have indicated that children of higher-educated parents more often take part in organized activities than children of lower-educated parents.

Most of the outdoor playing of these age groups takes place in the vicinity of the home and along with other children. About 70 percent of children have their closest friends in the neighbourhood (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2.* Distance to closest friends. Percent.

Both distance and age of the child are important variables in the frequency of social interaction with friends (Table 2). Frequency increases with age and decreases with distance. Distance to friends is crucial in how often social contact occurs.

**Table 2.** Frequency of visiting friends by age and distance to friends. Percent.

	The frequency of visiting friends					Total
	Every day	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	1 time a week	Less often than 1 a week	
<i>Age ***</i>						
6-7 år	7	30	36	21	6	100
8-9 år	15	31	35	15	4	100
10-12 år	13	34	39	12	2	100
<i>Distance to friends***</i>						
<i>In the neighbourhood</i>	16	38	35	10	1	100
1 - 2 km	4	25	44	22	5	100
2 - 3 km	1	23	41	25	10	100
3 - 5 km	4	8	38	40	10	100
5 + km	0	4	30	47	19	100
All	12	32	37	15	4	100
Number	215	571	664	274	65	1790

Visiting friends is mostly based on children's independent mobility; 70 percent of children say that the usual way is by walking, 55 percent cycle and 46 percent are taken by car by one of their parents (they could give multiple answers). Mode varies significantly with distance. While 85 percent of the children say that they walk to their friends if they live in the neighbourhood, the proportion is 29 percent when the distance is between two and three kilometres. Two out of three children say that they are taken by car over distances between one and two kilometres, while almost all are taken by car if their friends live more than three kilometres away.

There is a positive correlation between frequency of outdoor playing and distance to the closest friends (correlation significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed). Short distance correlates with high frequency of outdoor activities.

### *Organized activities*

A large majority of the children in these age groups take part in organized physical activity of different kinds. Nearly 80 percent say that they are members of a sports club (Table 3). Other, not so common, activities are member of a choir or band (23 percent), visiting a youth centre regularly (10 percent) and being a member of other organizations (about 20 percent). The results for children in the different groups are given in Table 3. Participation in organized activities increases with age in every type of activity. Girls take part in musical activities, such as a choir or band, more often than boys do. They also participate more than boys in what is labelled here ‘other organizations’. For both musical activities and sports there is a tendency of children living in the largest cities to participate more than children living in other places, which is probably explained by a wider choice in the urban areas.

**Table 3.** Proportion of children taking part in different types of organized activities by age, gender, place of living and parents’ education. Percent.

	<b>Choir/band</b>	<b>Sports</b>	<b>Youth centre</b>	<b>Other organizations</b>
All	23	77	10	19
Number	523	1379	174	337
<i>Age</i>	***	***	***	***
6-7 yrs	12	70	4	12
8-9 yrs	24	79	7	22
10-12 yrs	30	81	16	21
<i>Gender</i>	***			*
Female	30	77	9	21
Male	17	77	10	17
<i>Place of abode</i>	*	***		
Oslo/Bergen/Trondheim/Stavanger <sup>1)</sup>	36	85	21	29
Surrounding municipalities to Oslo/Bergen/Trondheim/Stavanger	33	87	22	27
Next 6 largest towns	23	73	16	24
Smaller towns	28	77	15	26
Rest of the country	32	79	21	27
<i>Mother’s/father’s education</i>	***	***	**	
Elementary school	15	68	16	13
High school/College	20	75	11	20
University	27	81	8	19
<i>Employment status of the parents</i>	**	**		
Both working full-time (more than 30 hours per week)	26	84	8	16
One full-time and one part-time	29	77	8	19
One full-time and one not employed	20	75	9	18
Part-time and not employed or both not employed	13	71	11	22

1) The four largest cities in Norway.

\* $p<0.05$ , chi-square, \*\* $p<0.01$ , chi-square, \*\*\* $p<0.001$ , chi-square.

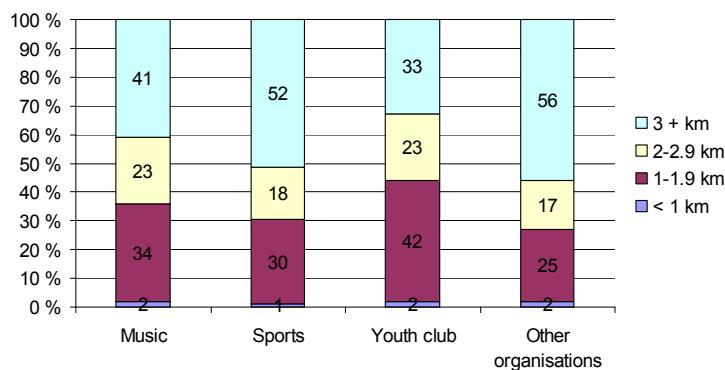
Children whose parents have been in higher education tend to participate more in sports and musical activities than those whose parents have been in lower education. The tendency seems to be that children of higher-educated parents participate in organized activities, while children of lower-educated parents are more active outside organizations (cf. Table 1). Corresponding differences related to parents’ status and education have been found in previous research (Lidén, 1999; Mattson, 2002).

Parents’ employment status is used as an indication of the time pressure in families. One assumption could be that time pressure will be more prevalent in families where both parents are working full-time than in families where the total number of working hours per week is

lower (the results in Table 3 do not support this assumption, however). The participation of children in families with both parents working full-time is high where music and sports are concerned. Participation is lowest in families where a parent's connection with the working market is low, either because they work part-time or because they have no paid work at all. Measured in this way, shortage of time does not really explain children's level of participation in organized leisure activities. Parents' status in the labour market is connected with education. In families where both parents work full-time, 62 percent of the respondents were educated to university level, while only 35 percent from families with the poorest connection to the labour market were educated to the same level.

This supports the assumption that the norm, namely children should participate in organized activities, is more typical among parents with higher education than among those with lower education. Expectations of the proper way of bringing up children are perhaps more important than available time. A high activity level of children in the family might lead to time pressure in the next round.

As opposed to non-organized activities, most organized activities take place outside the immediate neighbourhood (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Distance to leisure activities in kilometres. Percent.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, more than half of all sports activities take place 3 km or more from the children's homes, although youth clubs are usually situated locally. Assuming that up to 2 km is within walking distance of at least the oldest of the children in these age groups, between 27 percent (other organizations) and 44 percent (sports) can walk to their activities. The cycle distance would be longer. These figures indicate that the majority of the children have leisure pursuits beyond walking and cycling distance. Children in the larger cities generally live closer to their activities than children in other areas. While 65 percent of the children in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger (the four largest cities in Norway) live less than 2 km from their music activities, the proportion in sparsely populated areas is 24 percent ( $p < 0.001$  chi-square). For sports, the percentages are 45 and 26, respectively ( $p < 0.001$  chi-square).

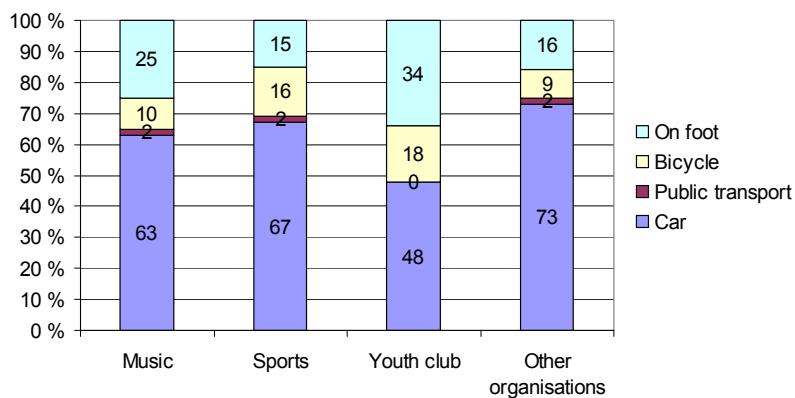


Figure 4. Transportation to and from leisure activities. Percent.

Even though there is relatively large potential for walking or cycling, the most typical mode of travel to leisure activities is by car. With the exception of going to the youth club, the majority of children are taken by car to their organized activities (Figure 4). Public transport is hardly ever used. Between 25 percent (other organizations) and 52 percent (youth club) of trips are on foot or by bicycle. This is a low percentage compared to the corresponding proportion on school trips, which is about 60 percent in the same age group (Fyhri and Hjorthol, 2006).

A closer look at the characteristics of children using the car for these purposes indicates that distance to the activity is the most important variable of all (Table 4). When distance is 2 km or longer, a large majority of the children are taken by car. The proportion taken by car to music and sports is lowest in the larger cities and highest in middle-sized and small-sized towns. If parents always have a car at their disposal, car-use is significantly higher on travel to music and sports. The tendency is the same for the other activities. For sports and music, car-use is higher in the case of children of parents who use the car for commuting, while for the other two activities there is no significant difference.

Table 4. Proportion of children taken to leisure activities by car. Percent.

	Music	Sports	Youth club	Other organizations
All	62	68	48	72
N	258	940	89	250
Age	**	***		
6-7 yrs	81	81	47	79
8-9 yrs	55	72	47	77
10-12 yrs	61	57	48	67
Distance to activity	***	***	***	***
< 1 km	14	0	0	0
1 - 1.9 km	27	27	14	28
2 – 2.9 km	66	72	51	89
3 + km	91	90	91	91
Gender		***		*
Female	61	73	47	68
Male	63	63	47	77
The parents' opinion of the way to school (traffic)	**	***	**	**
Unsafe	70	75	57	81
Safe	55	62	39	66
The children's opinion of the way to activities (traffic)	***		*	
Safe	46	59	41	69
Unsafe	88	69	75	75

	<b>Music</b>	<b>Sports</b>	<b>Youth club</b>	<b>Other organizations</b>
<i>Place of abode</i>	**	**		
Oslo/Bergen/Trondheim/ Stavanger	44	57	35	67
Surrounding municipalities of Oslo/Bergen/Trondheim/Stavanger	57	65	31	65
Next 6 largest towns	76	70	57	70
Smaller towns	66	75	56	78
Rest of the country	66	69	54	74
<i>Parents' access to car</i>	*	**		
Always	64	68	45	75
Not always	44	56	27	61
<i>Parents' commuting by</i>		*	***	
Car	57	67	49	70
Other means	67	56	24	71
<i>Employment status of the parents</i>				
Both working full-time (more than 30 hours per week)	58	69	44	67
Other working arrangements	62	65	44	77

\* $p < 0.05$ , chi-square, \*\* $p < 0.01$ , chi-square, \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , chi-square.

Parents' commuting mode has a bearing on children's transport on school trips, too; 26 percent of children are taken to school by car if one of the parents commutes by car and 18 percent if other modes are used ( $p < 0.001$ , chi-square). Even though distance and age seem to be the variables that have the greatest impact on car-use to children's leisure activities, the analysis also indicates that perception of the traffic situation and parents' access to and use of a car on commuting play a role in children's leisure mobility. Parents with ready access to a car, and who use the car for their own purposes, are more likely to take their children to leisure activities by car. However, our indicator on time pressure in families, i.e. parents' weekly working hours, does not suggest any relation to choice of transport mode in how children travel to leisure activities.

## Discussion

Children's everyday lives, like those of their parents, are characterized by a wide range of activities and, as a result, by travelling. It seems that increasing travel is dependent on motorized transport and that various social trends enhance this tendency. Ready access to a car in families with children (in Norway 98 percent of families with children have a car and 59 percent have two or more cars (Denstadli et al., 2006)) facilitates car-use for most purposes. In most families, both parents are in paid work, which indicates greater time pressure on the everyday lives of families, especially when a majority of children take part in organized activities. The widespread expansion of mobile telephones for both parents and children (70 percent of children at the age of 10 years in 2005 had their own mobile telephone) (Hjorthol et al., 2006) makes it easy to be in contact whenever wanted -- contact that is often about transportation to and from (especially from) different organized and non-organized leisure activities. Even if many children have friends in their neighbourhood (especially children in urban areas), the organized leisure activities which many of them take part in are very often localized further away. For these types of activities, e.g. sports and music, the majority of children are taken by car.

Children who are encouraged to participate in organized activities are rendered more or less dependent on parents (or other) transporting them and, as a result, of losing some of their own independence, i.e. independent of the possibility to walk or bicycle to their leisure activities. Children in families where both parents work more often take part in organized activities than children in families where the parents work fewer hours; there is also more

frequent organized participation among children with higher-educated parents. It seems that what can be termed objective time pressure, measured as parents' working hours, does not necessarily have an impact on the frequency of children's organized leisure activities. As discussed, it is commonly understood that time pressure is a normal social framework of daily life, while at the same time there is a strong social norm that children should take part in organized activities to encourage development of their individual talents, independence and social skills. Within this framework, parents (especially those with higher education) make an effort to fulfil what they perceive to be the norm of being a good parent despite a shortage of time. The social expectations of participation for children induce time pressure for the parents (a situation which is seen as normal).

On the other hand, we can see that children activate themselves. Many of them, more so those of parents with lower education, play outdoors without any supervision by parents or other adults. In a study from two areas in England, it was found that children use more calories in free play than in equivalent organized activities (Mackett, 2008). Mackett gives an example: “[B]oys kicking a football around in the park use more activity calories than they would in the same time in a football lesson, partly because much of the football lesson is being spent changing into and out of football kit and listening to the teacher explaining what to do.” Whether this is so in our study is hard to tell, but it is paradoxical if the effort parents go to in transporting their children to various organized activities perhaps reduces their own child's physical activity and perhaps also the initiative they have to organize their own actions and pursuits.

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