

OLDER PEOPLE AND LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSIT; MOBILITY EFFECTS OF ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS IN SWEDEN

Sofi Fristedt¹, Torbjörn Falkmer^{2,3}, Anders Wretstrand⁴, Helena Svensson⁴

¹*School of Health Sciences, Jönköping University, Jönköping, Sweden,* ²*School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia,* ³*Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic, IKE, Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden,* ⁴*Department of Technology and Society, Lund University, Lund, Sweden*

Introduction: At present, several transportation factors concerning older and disabled people are under transition in Sweden. By the year 2010, the public transit system must be fully accessible for all passengers. **Objective:** The present survey studied older people (75+), in order to assess their perceived travel opportunities. **Methods:** A questionnaire was sent to 2,100 randomly selected 75+ subjects in three different municipalities with no reminders, providing a 46% response rate. **Results:** The results demonstrated what characterizes the effects of a human, physical decline: lowered outdoor mobility. As the age increased, all modes were less frequently used. However, significant groups within this aging population were still quite fit and active, both as pedestrians, car drivers and bus passengers. The general **conclusions** were that even though this specific population showed appreciation of the existing travel opportunities, there was evidence pointing at restricted mobility for some older subgroups, because of various perceived barriers, such as difficulties during boarding/alighting of buses, and fear of travelling alone. These groups have few optional transport modes, despite the fact that various accessibility measures have been taken against existing barriers and that special transport services continues to provide crucial mobility. There is indeed more to be done regarding accessibility and usability in public transit for older people. Further studies have to clarify reasons for bus cessation. Even larger efforts have to be put into accessibility improvements, in particular intermediate transit solutions, in order to meet the regulations and policies. The **implications for occupational therapists** are that occupational participation is of great importance for active ageing and, thus, health in old age. Mobility is a prerequisite for continuing participation in meaningful occupations at the age of 75+. Older people are, however, at risk of reduced mobility. It is therefore important that occupational therapists have a profound knowledge on factors impacting on older people's mobility, in order to be able to promote participation.