



## Who I am and where am I going

# Demography, Lifestyles and Mobility



Gerard Tertoolen, Traffic Psychologist, XTNT at Utrecht, the Netherlands discusses how demographic and lifestyle changes can influence travel patterns. He says that by taking the wishes, motives and experiential values of mobile individuals into account as much as possible and by providing the right incentives at the right time, people can be induced to adjust their mobility patterns.

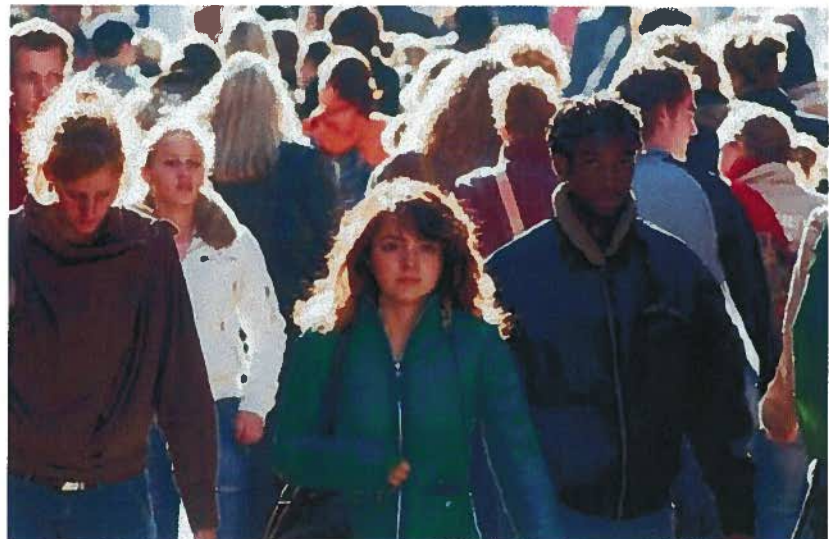
Psychologists have claimed that certain emotions are more basic than the others. These basic emotions – anger, fear, sadness, happiness and disgust – are predominantly biological and thus, universal. They are expressed and perceived in similar ways across all cultures. In a study in the Netherlands, these five basic emotions were linked to three different transportation modes: the car, the bicycle and public transport. The results are quite shocking. It seems that – unlike the car and the bicycle – public transport is not connected to positive primary feelings. Unfortunately, this is our starting point.

Then we take a look into modern society and the shifts in the size and composition of population and in lifestyles which will affect mobility. For instance, the 'baby boom' generation will retire – its people are considerably more mobile than their parents. We will also consider changes in the size and composition of population groups of immigrant origin. As the socio-economic position of these groups improves, their mobility behaviour will change as well. Furthermore, there is little doubt that technology will continue to drive change across the developing world and that it is beyond dispute that the lifestyles of the new generation differ from that of their modernist parents and their traditional grandparents. As a result, the requirements imposed on mobility in the future will not be the same. Over the coming years, a shift is expected whereby modern values such as 'possessing' and 'pampering' will become more important, while traditional values such as 'preserving' will be considered less relevant.

These changes in social segments and the accompanying value attitudes will affect people's mobility behaviour as well. It appears that the popularity of the car will increase in the future, while the popularity of public transport and cycling is in danger of declining. The elderly of the future will make more use of cars than those of today, and they will also continue to use cars for longer periods. The popularity of public transport will decrease among this group. People of immigrant origin who use public transport relatively frequently at the moment will transfer to car use once their prosperity increases. Moreover, it is expected that the use of bicycles by people of immigrant origin will move towards the level of the native population, but will continue to lag behind. Young people of today make heavy demands on information

and experiential value. Public transport in its current form seems to be poorly geared to meet their requirements. If we look at lifestyles, we see particularly an increase in the size and number of social groups that attach great value to factors such as status, convenience, speed, flexibility and independence. These are characteristics that are mainly attributed to the car.

The growing popularity of the car and the declining popularity of public transport and bicycle as a result of the autonomous development may have consequences. These consequences will be associated with the accessibility of urban areas in particular for reduction in the degree of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the accessibility of the countryside by public transport and the costs of mobility, and may endanger





landscape values due to the realisation of even more infrastructure. The outcome of these trends seems to be contrary to the current sustainability goals. Therefore, we see plenty of reasons why policy makers must take these trends into account.

By taking the wishes, motives and experiential values of mobile individuals into account as much as possible and by providing the right incentives at the right time, people can be induced to adjust their mobility patterns. In other words, there is no need for desperation. However, extra efforts will need to be made to respond to trends and to turn them around if necessary.

The conclusions and recommendations are:

### *Gear modes of transport more specifically towards the wishes and requirements of the elderly*

For elderly people, independence, safety (both socially and in terms of traffic safety) and easy accessibility (both physically and in terms of complexity) are important reasons for opting for a specific mode of transport. It will be essential for public transport bodies to make buses, trains, etc. accessible to the elderly, and to organise timetables in such a way that the departure and transfer times are feasible for the elderly people. At the same time, we must prevent a shift in the image of public transport towards 'transport that is only meant for old people'.

### *Anticipate population shrinkage in regional traffic and transport policy*

The population is decreasing in some regions. Here we must take account of a decreasing demand for a finely meshed public transport network and of reduced means for investments. Close regional collaboration will be required to retain or strengthen the functions of regional centres and thus, provide a basis for a viable transport system. Focus will be needed more on customised solutions such as demand-oriented, on-call public transport and made-to-measure ICT applications. It is recommended that the regions to anticipate these developments are looked into rather than ignoring them.

### *Promote the use of bicycles among people of immigrant origin*

People of immigrant origin currently often

travel together, but this is likely to diminish as their socio-economic position improves and their car ownership and usage levels increase. The use of public transport among this group, which is currently still relatively extensive, will then probably decline. Measures to meet the wishes and requirements of (young) people of immigrant origin do not differ from those for other population segments. An exception is the attitude of people of immigrant origin to bicycles. It is recommended that groups of immigrant origin should be motivated more towards cycling.

### *When developing modes of transport, gear them towards the wishes and requirements of the new generation and ensure image improvement*

Thanks to digital media, young people have extensive social networks. The new generation is independent, wants to spend its time in a comfortable and useful way whenever possible, and does not like being subjected to power and authority. If public transport and cycling are to gain ground among young people, these modes of transport will need to develop in such a way that the aforementioned needs are met and their image is significantly improved. In order for these goals to be achieved, transport providers must invest in communication, convenience and a clear identity. Looking at the lifestyle aspects, an increasing focus on speed, convenience, flexibility and independence is noticed among the growing population segments. Mobility systems will need to adapt to this as well. Policy will need to focus even more on supporting 'transport chains', the application of new digital technologies to mobility, and the promotion of bicycle use. Promoting different ways of working (working from home) and enabling travellers to use their travel time in pleasant and useful ways are also in line with the lifestyles of potential travellers.

### *Support self-direction*

In view of the demographic developments and lifestyle changes outlined above, it can be concluded that the growing need for self-direction is a central development in mobility behaviour. Self-direction means taking personal responsibility. This requires that people know what is expected of them, that there

are sufficient options and frameworks within which self-direction can be realised, and that people receive feedback on their behaviour or insight into the consequences of their choices. Government bodies and public transport companies must support this trend through their policy if they want to stay in touch with the coming generations.

### *Ensure that people have a choice in terms of mobility*

In order to enable people to take personal responsibility and apply self-direction, it is necessary that people have sufficient options. The following is asked of government bodies, businesses and service providers: To offer freedom of choice rather than fixed arrangements, in combination with financial rewards for the choices which are (collectively) desirable. Government must facilitate various modalities, making the most desirable alternatives (from a collective point of view) most attractive. At the same time, businesses must stop offering uniform transport options such as only a company car, but must instead offer multimodal options such as a mobility card for car plus public transport.

### *Promoting convenience and making the choice easy*

People no longer have the patience to deal with unreadable manuals, bureaucratic procedures and inconvenient travel times. Preconditions for self-direction are therefore: Enabling people to choose, being transparent about the consequences of choices, and offering reliability, so that choices can be made with confidence. Customer-focused action and (where possible) a personal and up-to-date approach are central aspects.

### *Involve citizens in solutions*

It is advisable to regard mobility from the perspectives of the various social segments, particularly the new generation. We must look for opportunities for innovation. After all, young people have the future.

(Experts in Traffic and Transport - XTNT is a consultancy for traffic and transport solutions. They work for the national government, the provinces and for many municipalities all over The Netherlands).