

Meeting the Transport Needs of Older People: A Comparison of London and Seoul

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Purpose of study

To examine the transport needs of older people in London and Seoul:

- By examining differences in the perceptions of the transport systems
- By examining differences in the provision of facilities to meet their needs in the two cities

To see what lessons the cities can learn from each other

Methodology

- 100 interviews with older people in each city using identical questionnaires (apart from the language)
- Interviews conducted in day-care centres, nursing homes, some public places, supplemented by telephone and postal surveys
- Carried out as part of Jiin Gim's undergraduate final year project

Used and preferred modes of travel

Mode	Most commonly used mode		Preferred mode		Difference	
	Seoul	London	Seoul	London	Seoul	London
Bicycle	10	1	12	2	+2	+1
Bus	36	47	21	49	-15	+2
Car	21	35	25	16	+4	-19
Taxi	12	8	33	18	+21	+10
Metro	18	2	3	11	-15	+9
Other	3	7	6	4	+3	-3
Total	100	100	100	100	0	0
Absolute total					60	44

% of respondents content with transport in their city

Age	Seoul	London
60-65	84	85
66-70	79	93
71-75	62	80
76-80	30	77
>80	26	69
Overall	57	81

% of older people considering factors as very important in choosing a mode of transport

	Seoul	London	Difference
Convenience	100	100	0
Safety	92	86	+6
Distance from station	92	62	+30
Cost	84	37	+47
Frequency of service	65	51	+14
Reliability	44	28	+16
Time taken	23	26	-3

Differences in provision of transport for older people

	Seoul	London
Buses	Mostly high floored	All low floored
Metro	Modern with lifts etc	Very old – few lifts, many escalators
Designated seating on metros	Yes - in consistent places	Yes, but not in consistent places
Designated seating on metro platforms	No, but young people offer seats	Yes
Taxis	Ordinary cars	Specifically designed

Differences in provision of transport for older people

	Seoul	London
Car schemes	Silver Mark Scheme to indicate driver is older	Blue Badge Scheme to provide free parking
Special schemes	Dial-a-ride	Dial-a-ride Taxicard scheme Travel assistance
Travel passes	Senior Pass – free travel on metro for 65+	Freedom pass – free travel on metro, rail and buses for 60+

Implications of the differences

- Availability of Freedom Pass in London to use bus probably explains greater use of bus and preference for bus in London, and less use of metro
- Availability of comprehensive free public transport in London may explain greater satisfaction with the transport system in London
- Greater provision of specialised collective travel in London may explain greater satisfaction for older people

Lessons for London from Seoul

- London Underground should provide more lifts for people in wheelchairs
- Location of seating designated for less mobile people on metro trains should be standardised
- There should be greater education of the general public in London about making such seating available for those who need it

Lessons for Seoul from London

- All buses with steep steps should be replaced with low-floor buses.
- The Senior Pass in Seoul should be extended to include bus travel.
- A greater range of specialised transport services should be introduced to help those, particularly the very old, who cannot use conventional public transport.
- The design of taxis in Seoul should be reconsidered to make them accessible by wheelchair users.

Recommendations for both cities

- Walking distance for older people should be minimised in providing transport.
- Bus journeys should be made more pleasant and comfortable.
- More seating designated for those with mobility difficulties should be provided on metro trains and on platforms.
- Bus drivers should be trained to provide assistance whenever possible for those with mobility difficulties.
- Better awareness of the needs of less mobile members of society should be given to drivers, other staff and the public in general.