

Exploring the Use of Public Transportation Among Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A National Survey

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Introduction

Public transportation is an essential part of many older adults' lives, but the pandemic presented new challenges for the vulnerable population. Adults aged 65 years and older experienced additional challenges, such as limited mobility options, because of the pandemic, which may have resulted in more age-related declines in perceptual, cognitive, and physical functioning. This study explores how older adults living in major metropolitan cities in the United States used and perceived public transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Methods

The research team conducted an online survey through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing marketplace. 260 respondents completed the survey. Eligibility included: (1) residing in the United States,

(2) being aged 55 years or older (the oldest age that can be selected on MTurk), and (3) having an MTurk worker approval rating of 90% or above. i.e., a rating given to recruited survey participants based on the number of previously completed surveys that have been approved by the survey requesters. The ratings enable requesters to have increased confidence that survey participants are able to follow instructions and pay attention to tasks.

Findings

Overall, older adults reported that they had changed travel patterns since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced challenges in using public transportation, and expressed concerns about catching the SARS-CoV-2 virus while using public transportation. Mobile technology was perceived

as a good option for finding public transportation information, but needs improved user experience and accessibility.

This research may help transit agencies develop effective strategies for improving transportation services and increasing policymakers' awareness of older adults' need for accessible public transportation.

Policy/Practice Recommendations

The findings provide introductory guidance for engineers and designers to both increase the accessibility of public transportation and mobile technology for users more universally, and deliver empirical evidence for policymakers and the community to develop effective strategies for improving transportation service.

About the Authors

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To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2204



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