



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

6 July 2023

Study highlights how young adults perceive risky trips with ride-share services

A study by Jennifer Baufeldt and Professor Marianne Vanderschuren from the University of Cape (UCT) has found a high perception of crime regarding ride-share services.

The paper, which focuses on personal safety and COVID-19 concerns, will be published in the September issue of [Research in Transportation Economics](#) journal.

Using scenarios of engaging in ride-share services for trips 'alone', 'at night' or 'alone at night', the research investigated who would be willing to use ride-share services in Cape Town. This was investigated for the context or framing of 'before COVID-19', 'during COVID-19' and 'after COVID-19'.

Further aspects that were considered in the investigation were the individuals' gender and whether they had access to a private vehicle or not. While differences were seen in 'alone' and 'at night', the largest variation in perceptions was documented using ride-share services for trips 'alone at night'. Females with access to a private vehicle demonstrated the most drastic change in their perception.

"Understanding how we perceive ride-share services in Cape Town often depends on who we are and our frame of mind or current thoughts," said Baufeldt, a doctoral student at UCT's Centre for Transport Studies and lead author of the research.

From a crime perspective, the research found the main differences identified were between those who have access to a private vehicle and those who do not. Females and males with no access to private vehicles perceived crime in a surprisingly similar way compared to the different perspectives of females and males with access to private vehicles.

The findings are based on a response from 2857 (1890 females, 967 males) UCT students. The survey was conducted in May 2021, and just under half of the respondents (48.2%) had access to vehicles. The students were always allocated to one either 'before', 'during', or 'after' COVID-19.

The paper found a high perception of crime, with roughly half (or more) of the groups indicating that they consider crime to be high. Students who considered crime to be low ranged from a mere 1,9% (females with access to private vehicles after COVID-19) to

11,9% (males with access to private vehicles during COVID-19). "These low percentages of individuals, who considered crime to be low, indicated that crime is a major challenge to be overcome for all," said Baufeldt.

The difference between males and females with access to a private vehicle was astonishing, said Baufeldt. Male students with access to a private vehicle reported a reduction in the perception that crime was high during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the percentage of females with access to a private vehicle that perceived crime as high increased during and after COVID-19.

"The changes were not statistically significant," said Baufeldt. "So, while males were influenced by the framing of the question in 'before', 'during' or 'after' COVID-19, females were not significantly influenced in their perceptions of crime. Their higher uncertainty levels before COVID-19 may have influenced this."

The findings showed that the different perspectives of females and males without access to a private vehicle did not differ much for those who think crime is high. Females without access to private vehicles, who considered crime to be high, ranged between 52,1% and 56,6% for 'before', 'during', and 'after' COVID-19, while responses by their male counterparts for crime high ranged between 49,1% and 56,3%.

All groups, apart from females with access to a private vehicle, showed a reduction in willingness to use ride-share services 'alone at night' across 'before', 'during' and 'after' COVID-19. The results showed that only an average of 30% of the females with access to private vehicles are willing to use ride-share services alone at night. "This resistance to using ride-share services 'alone at night' can be seen in the contrasting results of females with no access to a private vehicle. Most females without access to a private vehicle were still willing to use ride-share services 'alone at night' in 'before', 'during' and 'after' COVID-19. However, the percentage of females with no access to a private vehicle who are no longer willing to use ride-share services increases to around 40%," said Baufeldt.

Professor Vanderschuren, a transport expert, commented: "It is also noteworthy that females with access to private vehicles have a significantly higher perception of crime than females without access to private vehicles, while for males, access to a private vehicle was not significant. This may imply two different insights: females with access to private vehicles use private vehicle trips as a measure to avoid crime, and females with access to private vehicles have a more critical perception of crime than females without access to a private vehicle."

From the open feedback text of the surveys, many female respondents without access to a private vehicle indicated that they see ride-share services as their only possible option for transport, even though, at times, they did not feel safe while doing so. They also indicated that, in such circumstances, they share their trip with friends or family, if possible, to manage their concerns. In the open feedback, male respondents also commented that they perceive fewer personal safety issues with making ride-share trips because they are male and not female and, therefore, less likely to be attacked.

"Our findings showed that ride-share services still have room for improvement before everyone can use them without concern or uncertainty about their personal safety. Measures to ensure and increase personal safety should be the next big thing on ride-share services' agenda to improve the accessibility of trips, for females, especially for when they are 'alone at night'," said Vanderschuren.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ridovhona Mbulaheni

Media Liaison Assistant
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 2333
Cell: (064) 905 3807
Email: ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za