PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION IN SWEDEN

Result from SIKA's communication studies

Summary in English

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Patterns of communication in Sweden

The assignment

The Government has commissioned the Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (SIKA) to carry out analyses of trends in individual patterns of communication. SIKA is to provide a picture of how access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT) has developed and how this communication interacts and affect the individual's need for transport.

This document presents a summary of the results of SIKA's analysis of communication habits in Sweden. The work has mainly been based on data from SIKA's Communications Study (KOM). This report has been produced by Anna Johansson.

Results from SIKA's communication studies (summary)

The need for computers seems to be satiated – Internet continues to grow

In Sweden, a large proportion of the population has access to information and communication technology (ICT) in households, workplaces and schools as a result of the rapid spread of ICT in the past decade, in particular the last five years.

Access to computers now shows signs of stabilising at a level where almost seven of ten Swedes aged between 15 and 84 have access to a computer at home. Access to computers at the workplace has been stable for some years at around 75–80 per cent of all employed persons. However, Internet is continuing to grow. Just over half of the population have access to Internet at home, while almost seven of ten employed persons have access to Internet at work.

Although access to ICT is generally high, there are groups that do not use the new technology as much. One such group is pensioners. Unemployed persons and persons without upper secondary education are other groups who have access to computers and Internet at home to a lesser extent. Pensioners and the unemployed furthermore lack alternative access through their work or school.

At the household level, household income is the single variable that to a greatest extent explains differences in access to ICT between different households. The higher the income of the household, the higher access to computers and Internet. Household characteristics such as the number of those in paid employment and

the number of children in the household explain some differences in access between different households.

On an individual basis, age is a variable that explains differences between different people in their access to ICT at home. Access is considerably lower among persons aged over 65 than among young people between 15 and 24. Access to ICT at home differs also between people with a different educational level and employment. Those in paid employment, students and persons with higher education have access to a computer and Internet at home to a higher extent than other groups.

At workplaces, the individual's income is the single variable which most clearly explains the differences in access to ICT. To some extent, educational level also explains differences in access to ICT at work for those in paid employment. As regards access to mobile telephones at work, there is also a difference between men and women, since men have access to a mobile telephone paid for by their employer to a considerably greater extent.

More contacts than journeys per individual and day

On average, each person carries out over two errands a day by moving between different places where they are carried out and moreover takes between four and five contacts on different errands with the aid of, for instance, telephones, letters or e-mail. In all, each person makes almost four journeys per day if return journeys are also included. Regardless of how journeys are counted, more contacts are taken then than journeys are made during a day.

Men both make more journeys and take more contacts than women. People in paid employment communicate correspondingly more, i.e. they travel more and take more contacts than people without work. Of all communication that takes place during a day, a large part relates to work or studies. Approximately, a third of all journeys and approximately half of all contacts are related to work or study. The majority of other contacts are related to relatives and friends. Many journeys also occur for this purpose although trips to buy things or for service are also included here. In general, the most used method of contact is by ordinary telephone and the car is used for most journeys.

The more journeys a person makes in a day, the more likely it is that he or she will take a lot of contacts in the same day. The number of journeys a day undertaken by a person varies between groups of individuals and is partly explained by the number of contacts the same person takes, but also by, for instance, whether the person has a driving licence and employment. People with driving licences make more journeys than those without a licence and persons who work or study make more journeys than those otherwise occupied. The variation in the number of contacts per person is partly explained by the number of journeys made by the same person, although to a higher extent by, for instance, individual income and age. The frequency of contact declines with age but increases with income.

Journeys and contacts are complements not substitutes

Thus, there does not seem to be any general substitution relationship between journeys and contacts but the two forms of communication rather seem to complement one another. However, it is still conceivable that substition exists for certain activities. SIKA has made a special study of telework, teleconferences and e-commerce, although it has found that these are still not widespread and it has not yet been possible to measure any effect on the development of travel. The group that engages in telework has different patterns of travel and communication than other employees, however. This is also the case for those who participate to a greater extent in teleconferences or videoconferences.

However, there are many who believe that new forms of communication such as teleconferences can experience a breakthrough as a consequence of recent terrorist attacks and an increased concern about flying. However, too short a time has elapsed to be able to detect any such changes in patterns of communication. SIKA makes the assessment that telework, teleconferences and e-commerce will be used to a relatively small extent in the near future and that the opportunities to specify how these forms of communication affect daily travel will therefore continue to be small. However, the number of journeys and contacts will probably increase in number, since there is nothing to indicate that the trend will be reversed other than temporarily.

Even if is considered that transport requirements will not change drastically in the near future, the long-term trends are more uncertain. An increased use of Internet, increased e-commerce and new forms of work could all contribute to reshaping the patterns that exist today for how we travel and communicate. It is therefore important to continue to monitor the development of travel patterns and other patterns of communication.

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS ANALYSIS

The Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis, SIKA, is an agency that is responsible to the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. SIKA was established in 1995 and has three main areas of responsibility in the transport and communications sector:

- To carry out studies for the Government
- To develop forecasts and planning methods
- To be the responsible authority for official statistics

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