

## **Analysis of the Catch a Car service in Basel**

### **Summary**

#### **Background**

Catch a Car was launched in August 2014 as the first free-floating car sharing service in Switzerland. Since then, the Institute of Transport Planning and Systems at ETH Zurich has conducted an accompanying scientific study to investigate the effects of free-floating car-sharing on the traffic behaviour of its members and on the urban transport system. In an initial study carried out in 2014 and 2015, information was collected on the service's user groups, usage patterns and effects on traffic. However, only the early customers of Catch a Car were able to be included in the investigations of the first study. With the help of a third survey wave in 2018, the findings were validated in a longitudinal view. As in the first two survey waves, the survey consisted of two parts: a questionnaire on the socio-demographic background of the participant and a one-week travel route diary to provide an insight into individual attitudes towards transport. This ensured that the best possible comparison could be drawn between the results of this wave and those of the first study. 508 Catch a Car customers, 580 Mobility members and 354 people from a representative sample of the Basel population took part in the survey.

#### **Customer group**

Catch a Car continues to be geared towards a young audience, with half of the customers being younger than 38 years and the majority being men. They live in slightly larger households and the majority are employed. With more than 50% of the customers being university graduates, they are also educated to an above-average level. Within the population, Catch a Car has a brand recognition of some 60% and is therefore on a similar level to Uber.

#### **General attitude towards transport**

An above-average number of Catch a Car customers have an SBB General Abonnement (GA) travel card, but the percentage of holders of a TNW U-Abo season ticket is in line with the population average. A significant proportion of customers also use Uber regularly. Bike ownership is 50% above average. Private car ownership among customers who joined later is slightly higher than among early customers, but still well below the Basel average. Customers would rather use bicycles and public transport for their daily mobility needs. Only 25% of Catch a Car customers use their private car more often than once a week.

## **The use of Catch a Car**

Catch a Car is used in particular for short journeys in urban areas and for a wide range of types of journeys. These are mainly leisure and shopping journeys, commutes to and from work, and airport and railway station transfers. The main reason for using Catch a Car is that it is faster than other means of transport. Most customers use the service less frequently than once a week; half of the trips involve transporting larger or heavier items. The average occupancy rate is slightly higher than that of a private car. Catch a Car is generally used because it is the fastest alternative way of getting from A to B. A good half of all journeys are spontaneous. Around 50% of customers said they use Catch a Car because it is not worth buying their own (additional) car.

## **Effects on traffic**

33% of customers said that they use their private car less often because of Catch a Car. However, 28% of customers said that they likewise travel by bus and tram less frequently. In comparison to the first study, there was nevertheless a slight trend in favour of public transport (30% drove their cars less, while 36% used public transport less). However, the effect on the ownership of private vehicles is particularly important, as acquiring or getting rid of such vehicles usually entails significant behavioural changes. A good one-in-ten customers (11%) stated that they would buy a car if Catch a Car did not exist or closed down. This figure is slightly higher than the figure recorded in the first study (8%). The question regarding the actual change in vehicle ownership provided similar feedback. Here, 6% of customers stated that they have reduced the number of vehicles that they own due to Catch a Car, with a further 2% saying that they plan to do so. The reduction rate is thus 1.5% higher than at the start. The changes in private vehicle ownership are backed by empirical evidence among the survey participants. If you extrapolate this to the number of users, this would result in 500 fewer private vehicles in Basel, which is slightly more than in the first study. The travel route diaries also helped to establish the effect on traffic behaviour. The information provided by these show that a Catch a Car membership does not lead to a significant change in the number of miles travelled by car, but CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are reduced by approx. 175 tonnes per year due to the lower consumption of the Catch a Car fleet.

## **Conclusion**

The results are largely consistent with the findings of the first study. The socio-demographic profile and usage patterns have changed slightly in comparison with those of early customers, while the effects on traffic have become more entrenched. This also shows that Catch a Car is a useful addition to the transport system in the long term. The service provides a cost-effective way to travel short distances within urban areas in less time, where necessary, and makes it possible for some of its customers to do away with private cars.