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# Investigating promoters and barriers of active travel in primary school children: a mixed methodological approach

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# Aims

To investigate the context of, and the promoters and barriers of active travel to primary school in the West of Ireland.

Using a mixed methodology approach; participative research coupled with quantitative research methods.

# Background

Physical activity levels are decreasing worldwide among children (WHO, 2009)

Rates of walking and cycling to school have decreased (Hume *et al.*, 2009; McMillan, 20007; WHO 2005; National Heart Alliance)

Active travel to school increases daily levels of physical activity (Cooper *et al.*, 2005; Schofield *et al.*, 2005; McDonald, 2008)

# Methodology

Cross-sectional study in the West of Ireland

Quota sample of 4 primary schools;

- 1 urban and 1 rural non-DEIS school
- 1 urban and 1 rural DEIS school

2 mixed schools, 1 all girls and 1 all boys school

Consent was gained from schools, parents and children

# Participatory Research

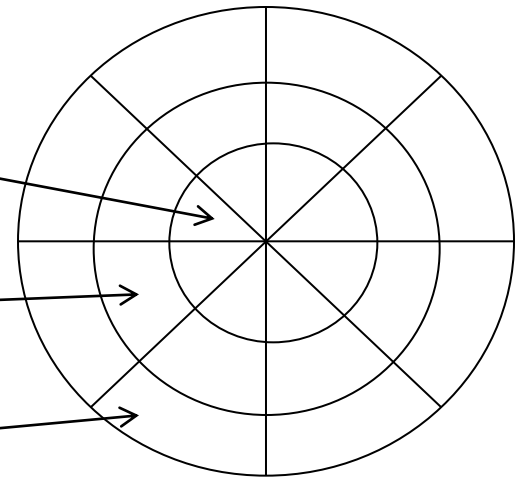
Stage 1: Brainstorm 2 questions

Stage2: Complete web illustrations


**Inner circle:** Factors influencing active travel to school

**Centre circle:** Action to be taken

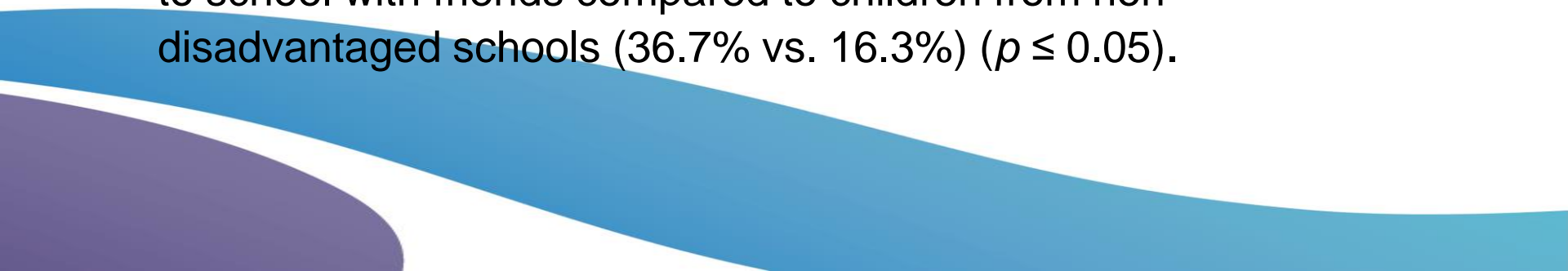
**Outer circle:** Who can help in this process



# Results: Quantitative Research

- Sample of 73 children (11 & 13 yrs)
  - Boys: 39.7% (n=29); Girls: 60.3% (n=44)
  - Non-active travel was the primary method of travel (69.9%)
  - Less than a third travelled actively (30.1%)
  - One quarter (25.5%) of non-active travellers, travel to school in less than 5 minutes
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# Results: Quantitative Research

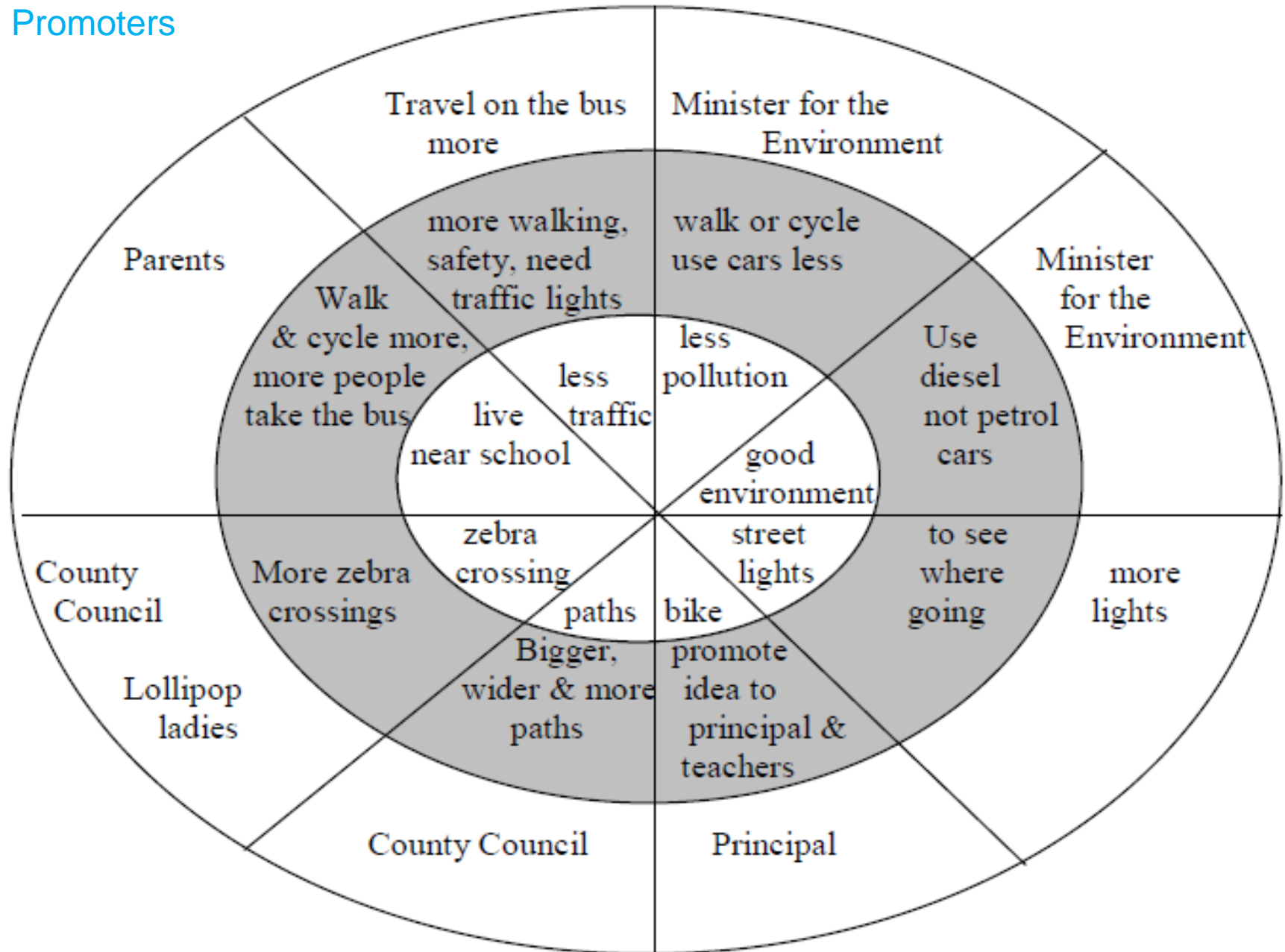
- None of the active travellers reported travelling to school with parents compared to children who do not travel actively (72.5%) ( $p \leq 0.01$ )
  - Active travellers were more likely to travel to school with friends compared to children who do not travel actively (59.1% vs. 9.8%) ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - Children from rural schools were more likely to travel to school with their parents compared to children from urban schools (62.8% vs. 33.3%) ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).
  - Children from disadvantaged schools were more likely to travel to school with friends compared to children from non-disadvantaged schools (36.7% vs. 16.3%) ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).
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# Results: Quantatitive Research

Respondents reported ...	Active %	non-active %	DEIS %	non-DEIS %	Urban %	Rural %
I decide how I travel to school	81.8	15.7*	53.3	23.8	53.3	23.3*
A continuous pavement as a promoter	65.0	69.6	63.0	71.8	50.0	80.0*
I live far away as a barrier	0.0	60.8*	33.3	48.8	13.3	62.8*
Busy roads as a barrier	4.5	43.1*	20.0	39.5	26.7	34.9

\*P<0.05 differences within groups.

Participative research:  
Promoters



# Results: Participative Research

Barrier categories = 11

Promoter categories = 8

Stakeholder categories = 8

BARRIERS	ACTIONS	STAKEHOLDERS
Distance	Car pooling Get up early in the morning Live closer/ Move house/ Change school	Community Parents
PROMOTERS	ACTIONS	STAKEHOLDERS
Company	Set up a group with friends Ask someone to walk with you Walk with people who live near We won't get kidnapped or bullied	Community Parents



## Some things to remember....

- Too few children travel actively to school
- Children who actively travel decide to do so themselves
- Distance to school is important
- Improvements in road infrastructure is key
- The participative research identified additional promoters and barriers to quantitative research:
  - equipment, encouragement, physical health, lifestyle and sickness.



- Mixed method approach identified many promoters and barriers
- Children perceive themselves as having little control over their travel to school
- Children were able to comprehensively identify the stakeholders that should be involved in the process



# Acknowledgements

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Thank you