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CTS Winter
Conference
(14/12/16)

Decline in Driving of Young Adults: Researching for Explanations



A curious phenomenon

- Young adults in Great Britain, men in particular, are driving less now than they did twenty years ago.
- It is important to understand why younger people born in the 1980s and 1990s, often referred to as Millennials, have not taken up car use as much as predecessors.
- Various explanations have been put forward with some commentators suggesting economic factors are mainly responsible, while others have suggested changes to lifestyle and attitudes are more important.

Study aims

DfT commissioned CTS along with TSU (Oxford University) and Phil Goodwin to conduct a systematic review of literature and secondary analysis of existing data sets with main aims of:

1. Identifying how changes in young people's lifestyles have impacted on their travel behaviour.
2. Assessing how those drivers, or other expected changes, can be expected to impact the future travel demand of young people.

Presentation outline

1. Young people's travel trends
2. Evolution of interest in young people
3. Research approach
4. Explanation of travel trends
5. Conclusions

1. Young people's travel trends

(To be published in DfT report)

Key requirement

Need to distinguish between three types of time-related variation (Yang, 2007):

- Age effects: variation associated with age groups
- Period effects: variation over time that affects everyone simultaneously
- Cohort effects: changes across groups of individuals who experience an initial event together, such as birth year

2. Evolution of interest in young people

- a) Era of increasing car use
- b) Early observations of a turning point
- c) Peak car research
- d) International comparative studies and reviews
- e) Dedicated research interest

(e) Dedicated research interest

- Studies explicitly focused on explaining young people's travel behaviour (mostly since 2013)
- Global interest with large number of American papers
- Mixture of study methodologies
 - Trend analysis
 - Qualitative research (interviews mainly)
 - Cross-sectional analysis
 - Cohort analysis

3. Research approach

- Review of literature
 - Societal trends from mainly non-transport literature
 - Empirical findings from transport literature
- Secondary data analysis (3 strands below)

1. Changes in time spent at home and at journey Destinations

NTS data for 1995-2014



2. Changing spatial distribution of young adults

Census data for 2001 and 2011



3. Life trajectories and their influence on mobility

UKHLS data for 2009/10 to 2013/14



4. Explanation of travel trends

(To be published in DfT report)

5. Conclusions – interpretation of others

- SRA (2015) conclude for UK that the current generation of young people are not likely to have the same car ownership as previous generations as they get older ...they have become accustomed to using alternatives and are generally satisfied with these and there are increasing options of using cars without owning them. The authors suggest past policies have supported these changes and there is 'enormous potential for future opportunities to move towards more strategic approaches to transport provision'.

....in contrast

- Klein and Smart (2016) conclude for USA that age and economic factors (and not ethnicity and spatial factors) largely explain lower cars per adult of millennial households and that policy makers need to be concerned about "further hurting (of) those who are, unfortunately, already hurting".

5. Conclusions – our interpretation

(To be published in DfT report)

- Thanks for listening!
- Thanks to rest of study team
 - Ben Clark, Juliet Jain, Steve Melia, Miriam Ricci (CTS)
 - Anna Plyushteva, Tim Schwanen, Gordon Stokes (TSU)
 - Phil Goodwin
- Your questions...