This report examines the mobility behaviours and preferences of generation Y New Zealanders. It presents empirical material collected through 51 qualitative interviews with members of generation Y (people born from 1980 onwards). The interviews took place during 2014 with 18 – 35 year olds in Auckland, Dunedin and Balclutha, to represent both urban and rural geographic contexts. The interview participants included individuals without a driver’s licence (n=16), with a learner’s permit (n=14), with a restricted licence (n=5), and with a full licence (n=16).

The research was stimulated by the recognition that, in many parts of the industrialised world, generation Y are travelling in different ways to earlier generations, moving away from private car dependency norms, and using active, public and virtual mobilities to achieve their mobility needs. The outcomes of stabilising or declining licencing, car ownership rates and vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) has potentially major implications for industry and governments. So far these changes are evident in many, but not all, developed and developing countries, including New Zealand.

This research finds evidence of traditional learn to drive norms promoting learning to drive and car-based travel, as well as a emergent norms rejecting car-dependency and perceiving freedom and independence to arise from multi-modal transport systems. The motivations for learning to drive differ within generation Y. For younger generation Y, parental encouragement and financial support, social norms and a perceived need associated with social and sporting activities all encouraged learning to drive as early as possible. However for older generation Y, access to a vehicle, needing a licence for employment or employability, and social expectations were all dominant motivations.

Non-driving can be a permanent or temporary mobility status for generation Y. Motivations for permanent non-driving relate to environmental concern and negative perceptions of car-based travel (e.g. congestion and cost). Temporary non-driving is often linked to a specific purpose or time period, such as urban living, or alternative financial priorities (e.g. saving for overseas travel or a mortgage). These findings highlight the heterogeneity of mobility practices and the need for more in-depth studies of the generation Y mobility phenomenon.
Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the New Zealand Ministry of Transport, for partially funding this work and for helpful comments on previous versions of this report. Additionally, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment is acknowledged for their support of this work through the Energy Cultures research project, led by the University of Otago.

The authors would also like to thank Celia Neilson for the report’s design and illustration.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in research reports are the outcomes of the independent research, and should not be regarded as being the opinion or responsibility of the Ministry of Transport. The material contained in the reports should not be construed in any way as policy adopted by the Ministry of Transport or indeed any agency of the NZ Government. The reports may, however, be used by NZ Government agencies as a reference in the development of policy.

While research reports are believed to be correct at the time of their preparation, the Ministry of Transport and agents involved in their preparation and publication do not accept any liability for use of the research. People using the research, whether directly or indirectly, should apply and rely on their own skill and judgement. They should not rely on the contents of the research reports in isolation from other sources of advice and information. If necessary, they should seek appropriate legal or other expert advice.
Introduction

Generation Y, born from 1980 onwards, are travelling in different ways than earlier generations. In industrialised countries across North America, Europe, Asia and Australasia, there are reports of declining rates of licencing, car ownership and vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) amongst generation Y. These trends are also being experienced in New Zealand, with stabilising and/or declining VKT (Figure 1) and declining licencing (Figures 2&3).

Figure 1: Kilometers Traveled in Cars, Vans, Utes and SUVs per Driver per Day
(Source: NZ Household Travel Survey)
Despite the quantitative evidence of these changing mobility practices, little is known about the reasons for the so-called ‘generation Y mobility phenomenon’. This report provides a qualitative examination of generation Y’s mobility practices in the context of rural and urban Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand hereafter).
Participants

27 FEMALEs

51 PARTICIPANTS

24 MALES

HIGHEST COMPLETED EDUCATION
- 53% High School
- 29% Undergraduate degree
- 14% Postgraduate degree
- 14% College/Polytechnic

OCCUPATION
- 38% Full time student
- 33% Full time employed
- 13% Part time employed
- 9% Employed
- 7% Part time student

LIcENCING
- 31% No licence
- 31% Full licence
- 28% Learner’s licence
- 10% Restricted licence

HOME
- 27% Flattling
- 23% Living with parents and/or family
- 22% Residential college
- 10% Renting with partner
- 10% Owns own home
- 8% Renting on own

OVERSEAS TRAVEL
- 86% Yes

PARENTAL STATUS
- 2% Yes (N=1)

Pseudonyms are used in this report to protect the anonymity of the research participants
### Reducing or Replicating Car-Dependence for Generation Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLANATORY CATEGORY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF REDUCING CAR DEPENDENCY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF REPLICATING CAR DEPENDENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual factors</td>
<td>New conceptualisations of freedom which can be fulfilled through public and active transport modes.</td>
<td>Traditional conceptualisations of freedom reliant on private car travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>Social norms prioritising active transport modes as healthy and environmentally conscious choices, positive perceptions of public transport modes, consciousness of the relative financial costs of travel.</td>
<td>Learning to drive as a ‘rite of passage’ for teenagers, learning to drive as a necessary skill, cars as a status symbol, encouragement to learn to drive from friends, parents and partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built environment factors</td>
<td>Easily accessible transport alternatives, transport hubs and multi-modal transport options. Housing close to urban centres and/or transport links, frequent and low cost public transport options, high quality active transport infrastructure.</td>
<td>Lack of access to transport alternatives, lack of public transport provision, poor active transport infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental concern factors</td>
<td>Environmental consciousness and concern are used to prioritise low-carbon transport modes, and awareness of the environmental impact of transport mode choice.</td>
<td>Unaware or unable to consider the environmental impacts of transport mode choice, this could include ‘tragedy of the commons’ perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>Lack of disposable income to spend on car ownership or learning to drive, changing priorities related to discretionary spending (prioritising overseas travel etc), rising cost of home ownership and saving for mortgage deposits.</td>
<td>Financial support from family to learn to drive. Prioritisation of traditional choices, disinterest in overseas travel. Perceived need of private transport for employment or to increase employability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/ policy factors</td>
<td>Perceived difficulty, time commitment and hassle associated with learning to drive, illegal driving practices reducing the perceived need for licencing.</td>
<td>Perceived ease of learn to drive process, perceived low cost of licensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological factors</td>
<td>Use of the Internet for shopping, and reducing the need for private car travel to access shops or carry heavy goods. Use of social networking to communicate with friends but not to substitute travel, using ICT to arrange meet-ups and social events.</td>
<td>Preference for personal shopping and potentially out-of-town shopping centres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples:

**Reduce automobility** - Individual: New meanings of freedom and autonomy

> I think that there’s a lot of freedom in not needing to have to drive a car. Like there was an idea since the 50s that to be free and to be an individual you needed to drive a car. But for me, living in the 21st century, freedom is actually being able to catch public transport anywhere or being able to cycle anywhere and not being bound by one transport mode.

(Michael, 18, Auckland, Learner’s licence)

- Economy: Financial costs and new priorities

> Some of the reason I sold the car is because it meant that I could then afford to buy a house so that’s something I couldn’t have afforded with a car. Just even wiping out insurance and things like that from the car means I’ve got a lot more money than, well more than my friends with cars.

(Tipene, 30, Auckland, Full licence)

**Replicate automobility** - Built environment: Geographic contexts and transport infrastructure

> It was the only way that I could kind of get out and have my own social life and the freedom of that because being stuck in the countryside, I was reliant on my parents and picking me up and dropping me off places if I wanted without having my own car.

(Tipene, 30, Auckland, Full licence)

- Individual: Expressions of independence, enjoyment and necessity

> It’s just the freedom of being able to travel when I can and it’s the time as well because it takes about an hour from Takanini to Britomart which is about a 30k distance. It shouldn’t take that long by public transport and I know it doesn’t in other countries. So it’s a time and safety thing.

(Scarlett, 29, Auckland, Full licence)
WHAT MOTIVATES GENERATION Y TO LEARN TO DRIVE?

A wide range of motivations for learning to drive were identified by the research participants. The following themes represent the main reasons generation Y will learn to drive.

Traditional learn to drive norms: A rite of passage

For some members of generation Y, learning to drive is still perceived to be a rite of passage social norm, which can be enforced by the behaviours of peers and family members.

“I am going to say the culture. It was just normal to get your licence when you were 15. I don’t know how to describe why; it is just that I did it because everyone else is doing it and my parents said that I should do it, that kind of thing”

(Cora, 24, Rural, Restricted licence)

Traditions of freedom, independence and autonomy

When freedom, independence and autonomy are linked to car-dependence mobility practices, learning to drive is a necessary competency to gain. These traditional conceptualisations can motivate learning to drive today, as they have done with previous generations.

Peer pressure

When learning to drive is a social norm, there can be peer pressure to conform and to drive for young people.

“I felt [I should have my licence] mainly just for social reasons, like your friends all have it so I should have it too... I felt like I wasn’t as good as them if I didn’t have it”

(Olivia, 21, Dunedin, Learner’s licence)

Identification

The need for identification at 18 years old can motivate learning to drive in order to gain a socially acceptable form of ID.

“There is a bit of peer pressure now though if they don’t have like a form of ID because we all want to go out clubbing together and if they don’t have one, or using a passport with a baby photo on is just kind of ‘Get your licence! Come on get your licence’”

(Dominic, 19, Rural, Learner’s licence)
The role of family

Family, parents and caregivers can motivate learning to drive through financial and moral encouragement. The encouragement can be for many different reasons including the perceived necessity for young people to drive, and to take on family responsibilities.

“I wasn’t too fussed on it [learning to drive] but it meant that they encouraged me, they therefore paid for a lot of the lessons because they wanted me to do these sort of driving chores.”

(Tipene, 30, Auckland, Full licence)

Practices, activities and employment

The necessity to drive in order to attend practices and activities, or to find employment can motivate learning to drive behaviours. In particular, employers requiring a driving licence as a requirement for employment can be a strong motivation.

“I found with applying for jobs and things because you know you have to apply for jobs online these days, and they normally had a requirement sheet about what you want, need, what they thought you might need to get this job. And a few of them said they require you to have at least a restricted licence. I was like ‘Oh ok, I’ve never noticed that before’, because I thought you just turned up to work and that was what you did.”

(Aiden, 19, Dunedin, No licence)

Commitments, responsibilities and life stages

Different responsibilities and life stages can enforce the perceived need to drive. Parenthood was perceived to be a particularly important event that would motivate learning to drive.

“I guess I still haven’t decided [whether to learn to drive], I mean there may come a point. I’ve got a few friends who are sort of in a similar situation to me, and then finding out they’re pregnant, has been kind of like ‘Oh I might need to drive my kids around.’ It might come in handy so yeah, it’s not a ‘never’, but it’s just ‘not for now’.”

(Lily, 31, Dunedin, No licence)

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING TO DRIVE FOR GENERATION Y?

There are a range of factors that act as barriers to learning to drive for generation Y. The themes presented here were identified by the research participants.

Friends and emergent social group norms

The social norms of friendship and social groups can motivate, delay or prevent learning to drive for generation Y. This can be the result of alternative priorities, or the perceived ability to achieve mobility requirements without driving.

Individual perceptions of learning to drive

A barrier to learning to drive is related to perceived safety and individual capabilities. This factor is specifically related to the physical act of driving a vehicle, particularly at a younger age.
Life stages: Delaying learning to drive

Barriers to learning to drive can also relate to life stages. Owning a car might not be a necessity or financial priority during particular periods of life, thus the perceived need to drive is temporarily reduced.

Changing needs

The perceived need to drive is not permanent. At any stage, a change in circumstances (e.g. employment, home location) or social norms (e.g. environmental concerns) might reject car-based transport. In this circumstance, progression through the graduate learner’s scheme might be less important.

"I just always I assumed I would get it, and then I would learn how to drive and then I would get my restricted and then I would get my full. But somewhere along the restricted to full part I stopped caring about driving"

(Cora, 24, Rural, Restricted licence)

Proximity and urban lifestyles

Proximity to key locations including work, school, friends and family, and social/leisure activities is a key determinant of the perceived need to drive. If these daily locations are accessible by active transport modes, there is less motivation to learn to drive as it isn’t a necessity for achieving daily mobility.

“I lived like more in the country so literally you had to drive. You couldn’t get anywhere… So I got my learner’s then and I did start learning to drive but then we moved to the big smoke… So I could like walk to school and like walk around and I just like didn’t have the motivation"

(Sophia, 24, Dunedin, Learner’s licence)

Further education, priorities and finances

Alternative priorities including education and saving for travel can disincentivise learning to drive. As well as reducing the need to drive through close proximity, financial constraints can prevent learning to drive.

Time constraints, new priorities and responsibilities

Finding the time to learn to drive in an increasingly busy world can present a barrier to learning to drive for generation Y. Activities including work, study, sporting practices, and social events can compete for priority and time allocation. This can result in less time to learn to drive.

“Fitting in a time to actually get it, well like go down and actually get it because it meant cutting out of school or cutting out of lunchtime activities because I was quite involved, there was like orchestra and other sort of stuff like that"

(Dominic, 19, Rural, Learner’s licence)

Family, parental support and vehicle access

The support of family members to provide driving lessons, vehicle access and an external source of motivation is important to learning to drive. Without these, a barrier to learning to drive can exist.

Illegal driving practices and sober driving

The practice of driving without a driver’s licence, or beyond the terms of a learner’s or restricted licence can provide a barrier to learning to drive as the functional competency of driving has been achieved, therefore the formal process of licensing is disincentivised. The requirement to be a sober driver for friends and family members can also work to prevent learning to drive for some generation Y.
Previous research on the phenomenon of changing generation Y mobilities has highlighted the potential role of ICT to substitute travel for this ‘digital native’ generation, as well as supporting public transport use. In this research, notions of ‘travel substitution’ and ‘virtual mobilities’ are used to explore how ICT might be used by generation Y with potential implications for physical mobility practices.

Generation Y place high importance and attach strong values to the Internet as a means to achieve social and work responsibilities.

“I think the Internet is really important, I rely on my laptop a lot yeah having that internet, I use it every single day, it’s a big part of education and socialising, accessing information as well, I think it’s really crucial to what I do and how I live my life.”

(Selina, 21, Auckland, No licence)

**Virtual mobilities and travel substitution**

While there is a very important place for ICT communication for generation Y, face-to-face communication is still preferred in many contexts. There are distinct roles for conversations via the Internet, and those conducted face to face. Virtual communications do not provide a complete emotional connection in the same way a physical communication can, and therefore it is perceived to be a less satisfactory way to communicate. Therefore virtual communication may only offer travel substitution in a discrete number of specific contexts, in particular during very busy periods, or to have simple and descriptive conversations. Moreover, particular personalities will prefer Online communications. Social networking via the Internet was seen to be an important facilitation tool. In particular, Facebook is perceived to be a useful way to organise social events.

“I could see seeing people physically less often but I couldn’t see giving it up altogether. It’s just nice, you give people hugs and group conversations are better in person. And relaxing together in front of a movie is a lot more fun to do in person than both on your separate laptops.”

(Nora, 32, Auckland, No licence)

“I ind that I talk to people over the Internet a lot more when I’m busy working or study just because I don’t really have that social time to meet them or spend time. My best friend works a lot and is quite busy at law school so I talk to her over Facebook and over the Internet a lot just because it’s like a really easy way to catch up.”

(Selina, 21, Auckland, No licence)
Perceptions of Transport Modes

Generation Y have a diverse and wide range of perceptions of different transport modes. These reported perceptions are often conflicting. The table below presents some of these perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAVEL BY...</th>
<th>+ PROS</th>
<th>- CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private car</td>
<td>Convenient, good for long trips, fast, cheap, easy, efficient</td>
<td>Expensive, overused, polluting, inconsiderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My perception on cars is mixed I’d say… I’m not positive about the way we use cars. I’m not positive about travelling to work with a car. I’m not positive about everyone going in one direction at nine o’clock in the morning in a little capsule that takes up all this space”</td>
<td>(Oliver, 22, Auckland, Full licence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>Convenient, safe, useful, car replacement for carless people</td>
<td>Expensive, unsafe, intimidating, waste of money, excessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I find them a really flexible tool that I can afford now... they’re my car replacement effectively”</td>
<td>(Tipene, 30, Auckland, Full licence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike</td>
<td>Fast, cheap, healthy, environmentally friendly</td>
<td>Unsafe, exposed to weather, poor driver behaviour, hassle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I like cycling but probably wouldn’t feel very safe cycling here on the road or even the half a metre wide cycle way because you don’t really see cars respecting that much so unless it was physically divided like I’ve seen down on Beach Road, I probably wouldn’t really cycle”</td>
<td>(Scarlett, 29, Auckland, Full licence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>Healthy, good exercise, relaxing, easy, good for mental health</td>
<td>Slow, exposed to weather, sweaty, tiring, air pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Walking is good fitness an if you’re having like a bad day, you could help yourself by breathing in just the fresh air and all that around you... like it makes my day better because I’ve burnt off heaps of steam or burnt off heaps of energy and it’s just like I’m relaxed again when I get home”</td>
<td>(Leo, 19, Rural, Restricted licence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>Economical, convenient, efficient, better than car</td>
<td>Slow, confusing, frustrating, expensive, patchy service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s hard to know where to get the information on how to catch buses. You do see buses around but it just doesn’t seem as convenient. You don’t exactly know where all the stops are and you don’t exactly know where it’s going unless you look it up prior”</td>
<td>(Scarlett, 29, Auckland, Full licence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>Efficient, fast, direct, good land use, quiet, reliable</td>
<td>Neglected infrastructure, slow, busy/ full, inconvenient station locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think trains are amazing... Things I don’t like about it is the availability of different stops, like there aren’t that many train stations around. When I catch the train, most people are getting picked up because it’s not really in a suburban area, it’s more of an industrial area and it’s not really a safe place to walk to and from at night as well”</td>
<td>(Selina, 21, Auckland, No licence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental motivations alone may not be sufficient to incentivise modal shift, however when coupled with additional conditions, including cost and convenience, it could present an important rationale.

Non-driving can be either a permanent and temporary status. For some people, non-driving suits a particular point in time in order to achieve a specific purpose, such as financial savings for overseas travel, or a mortgage deposit. For others, however, non-driving is perceived to be a permanent status, and this often relates to individuals with a driver’s licence who have rejected a car-reliant lifestyle, often for environmental or health reasons.

Geographic situation, proximity to daily locations and access to active and public transport infrastructure appear to be significant determinants of driving behaviours, particularly for peri-urban and rural participants.

Home locations may be determined by public transport routes, or the capacity to use active transport to access work, study or recreational locations. Thus some of generation Y will be more active in their desire to reduce car-dependency, whereas others will passively reject car-dependency due to a specific set of circumstances. Moving home could present an opportunity to address modal choice and transport options. Increasingly, generation Y will purchase or rent homes based on proximity to transport infrastructure, this could increase home values and desirability, and encourage more active and public transport modes to be used.

There appear to be relatively similar drivers and barriers at different stages of the graduated learner’s scheme, but these change with age. For younger participants, parental involvement through encouragement, financial assistance and vehicle access provided a key motivation to learn to drive, this was less important for older participants. Older participants tended to have greater autonomy in home locations and therefore felt less constrained by their home location. Therefore, home location was a more important motivation for learning to drive for younger participants, or those who learned to drive before leaving home.

The financial cost of car ownership dis-incentivised driving and learning to drive for many participants. For some participants who articulated needing a driver’s licence to find employment, there was less connection between having a driver’s licence (for the functional competency) and vehicle ownership.

While there are rural/urban norms, and these relate to specific cities and towns, there are also highly localised and specific norms. These more local scale norms appear to be important in determining learn to drive behaviours.