

Background

Millennials, those born between 1982 and 2000, are the largest and most diverse generation in American history, currently representing more than a quarter of the U.S. population (Census, 2015). For many of this cohort, the demographic shifts, economic downturn and technological progress characteristic of the new millennium have had a formative influence (Polzin, Chu & Godfrey, 2014). Accordingly, observers have noted this generation's lifecycle characteristics, behavioral patterns and outlooks differ significantly from those of previous generations.

The new millennium has also seen geographic shifts in residential location. After decades of decline, urban residency in the U.S. grew by nearly ten percent between 1995 and 2009 (McDonald, 2015). This trend has been even more pronounced in the country's ten most populous downtowns, where population within a one-mile radius increased by 17 percent during the 2000s, growing at nearly double the rate of the U.S. population as a whole (Dutzik, Inglis & Baxandall, 2015). Many contend millennials are compelling these trends in transportation and residential location. However, others argue the underlying assumptions of this viewpoint are flawed, and that millennial preference for alternative transportation and city living can largely be attributed to the effects of the Great Recession and accompanying lifecycle delays.



Objective

This research was conducted in collaboration with The Agency at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications on behalf of the Florida Department of Transportation, and was designed to inform a cohort-based consumer preference survey. This poster explores significant findings on millennial transportation and residential location outlooks from an in-depth analysis of peer-reviewed scholarly articles, research in progress and grey literature sources. The objective is to present generally accepted findings, acknowledge contested viewpoints and highlight ongoing research in order to better understand millennial influence on Florida's future transportation needs.

Framework

The conceptual framework for this analysis follows Oakil, Ettema, Arentze and Timmermans' (2011) Longitudinal Model of Longer-Term Mobility Decisions (Figure 1) in its consideration of interrelated factors affecting millennials' travel and residential location outlooks. However, this review also considers cohort effects stemming from the severe and prolonged recession and rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies with regard to their effect on millennial lifecycle events, household factors, desires and travel needs.

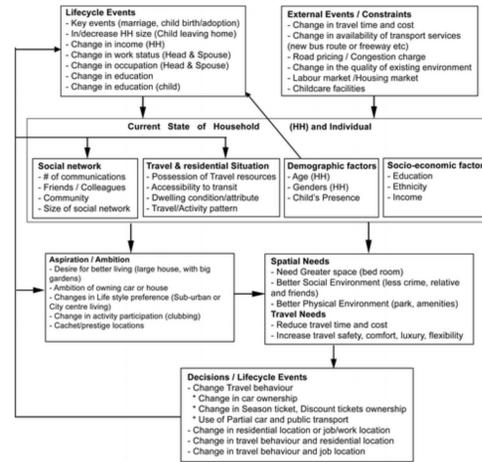


Figure 1. Longitudinal Model of Longer-Term Mobility Decisions.

Significant Findings

Lifecycle Characteristics

- In 2016, for the first time in a century, individuals aged 18 – 34 were slightly more likely to live with their parents than with a spouse or partner (this is especially true for men, those without college degrees, and blacks and Hispanics) (Pew Research Center, 2016).
- From 1998 – 2014, marriage rates for those aged 18 – 33 fell by 10%; mean age of women at first birth grew by 20+% from 1970 – 2012 (Circella et al., 2016; Polzin et al., 2014)
- College degree obtainment increased by 4% from 1995 – 2009 (Garikapati et al., 2016)

Time Use & Activity Patterns

- 18 – 29 year olds own smartphones at a 30% higher rate than the rate among all adults and engage in higher rates of complex activity patterns (i.e., multitasking) (Circella et al., 2016)
- Compared to Generation Xers at their same age, millennials born in the '80s spend 20 min. more at home daily; those born in the '90s spend an hour more at home (Garikapati, 2016)

Residential Location Choice

- In 2010, four million more young adults lived in urban neighborhoods than in 2000; the youngest cohort live in dense areas at rates exceeding all predecessors (Blumenberg, 2016)
- During the same time period, the number of suburban/exurban youth grew by 14 million

Transportation

- In 2009, millennials took 4% more transit trips, 16% more walking trips and 27% more bike trips per capita when compared to an equivalent age group in 2001 (Dutzik et al., 2016)
- Millennials drive 2 – 8 minutes fewer each day, even when controlling for age and income; in fact, for 19 – 30 year olds VMT peaked in 1995 (Garikapati et al., 2016; McDonald, 2015)
- While millennials express a greater preference for transit than older cohorts, it is not greater than would be expected by age, location or lifecycle (Brown & Ralph, 2016)

Discussion

While a eulogy for cars and suburbs seems premature, millennials nonetheless exhibit some remarkable differences in disposition when compared to previous cohorts (Blumenberg et al., 2015; Polzin et al., 2014). Despite record numbers of suburban upbringings, millennials have embraced urban amenities in unexpected ways, expressing widespread preference for walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods capable of supporting multimodal travel (Circella et al., 2016). With a rapidly evolving transportation landscape, millennials' unique behaviors and values and could lead them down decidedly different roads than those preceding cohorts have taken. Conversely, the great many millennials already living in far-flung suburbs and commuting by themselves in cars may represent the future to come (Blumenberg et al., 2015). Ultimately, the extent to which these changes are intertwined with the long recession and slow recovery, and the extent to which they represent lasting shifts in behavior and attitude, is not clear. Further, it is worth noting that recent years have witnessed record annual VMT (Mislinski, 2017). Even when adjusting for population, the influence of economic factors on travel demand calls into question previous assumptions about attitudinal change (Figure 2). The extent to which millennials are driving (or not driving) this change merits further study.

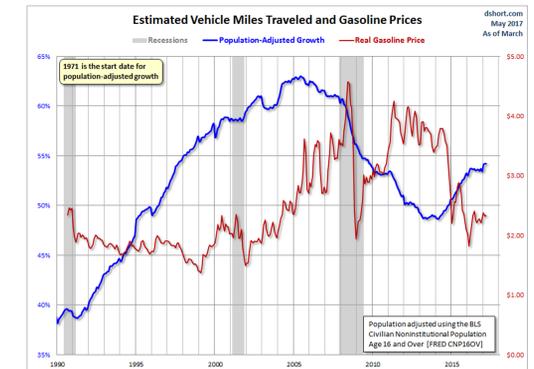


Figure 2. Population-adjusted VMT growth and related economic influences.

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