

Are Declines or Delays in Youth Driver Licensing Evident in New South Wales or Queensland?

Teresa Senserrick^a, Victor Siskind^a, Angela Watson^a

^a Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia

Abstract

Declining driver licensing rates or delays in licensure among youth have been reported in several countries in recent years, including in Europe and North America, as well as in Australia. It has been argued this could be due to tougher graduated licensing systems. The current research aims to explore whether such declines or delays are evident New South Wales and Queensland. The focus is on licensing trends pre and post July 2007 for those aged younger than 25 years versus older, given both states introduced significant licensing reforms at this time, with some exemptions applying from age 25.

Background

Declines or delays in driver licensing among youth have been reported in several countries in recent years. Across Europe and North America, this includes, for example, Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States (Sivak & Schoettle, 2012; van Dender & Clever, 2013).

In Australia, declines in licensure rates in Victoria (VIC) have also been reported at previous Australasian Road Safety Conferences (Wundersitz, Bailey, Rafferty, Baldock & Smith, 2015; Wundersitz, Bailey & Thompson, 2018) and also earlier for New South Wales (NSW; Raimond & Milthorpe, 2010). In Wundersitz et al (2018), it also was reported that, across 2014-2016 in VIC, females were less likely to be licensed, both in the youngest (18-24 years) and older age groups explored.

Opinions on this phenomena include beliefs there is less interest in licensing among millennials as they are now more interested in staying connected with peers via social media platforms. However, others argue that tougher graduated licensing systems make licensing less appealing or less accessible or, alternatively, that young people delay licensure until such time that onerous requirements (such as 100-120 logbook hours) or restrictions (such as passenger limits) no longer apply.

The current research aims to explore whether declines or delays in obtaining driver licenses are evident among young people in NSW and Queensland (QLD). Trends will be examined over several years, with particular attention to any notable changes at the time that significant graduated licensing reforms were introduced in both states; effective 1 July 2007. The age focus will be similar to the Victorian research, although commencing younger since the minimum age for provisional licensure is 17 years in both NSW and QLD (compared to 18 years in VIC). Analyses also will explore trends by gender.

Data sources and analyses

We plan to explore historical and recently obtained records on annual numbers of new NSW and QLD driver licences by age, gender and licence type (learner, provisional, open) from 2003 to 2017. Trends in licensing rates will be explored by age group based on Australia Bureau of Statistics

population statistics. The youngest age group of interest is 17-24 years, the age range that most graduated licensing requirements and restrictions apply (with some variations over time that will be documented in the full paper). Matching the number of years, the next age cohort will be 25-32 years; although age 25 will be of particular interest in relation to easing of licensing restrictions. We will also include older groupings to account for other potential system-wide influences on licensing trends over the study period.

Concluding comment

These analyses will explore potential trends in licensure rates among young males and females of eligible age in NSW and QLD and identify if any substantial changes appear to coincide with changes in the graduated licensing systems in these states. The results will have implications for understanding a potential wider role of graduated licensing system in reducing young driver road trauma, but might also have implications for other modes of travel.

References

- Eksler, V., Lasarre, S., Thomas, I., 2008. Regional analysis of road mortality in Europe. *Public Health* 122, 826–837.
- Raimond, T. & Milthorpe, F. (2010). Why are young people driving less? Trends in licence-holding and travel behaviour. In *Proceedings of Australasian Transport Research Forum*, 29 September – 1 October, Canberra.
- Sivak & Schoettle, 2012; Sivak, M. & Schoettle, B. (2012). Recent changes in the age composition of drivers in 15 countries. *Traffic Injury Prevention*, 13(2), 126-132.
- van Dender K., & Clever, M. (2013) Recent Trends in Car Usage in Advanced Economies—Slower Growth Ahead? *International Transport Forum Discussion Paper 2013-09*. Paris: OECD.
- Wundersitz, L., Bailey, T., Rafferty, S., Baldock, M., Smith, R. (2015). Are young adults' choice of travel mode changing? *Proceedings of the 2015 Australasian Road Safety Conference* 14 - 16 October, Gold Coast, Australia.
- Wundersitz, L., Bailey, T., Thompson, J. (2018). Are young adults' licensing rates still declining? *Proceedings of the 2018 Australasian Road Safety Conference* 3 – 5 October 2018, Sydney, Australia