

How Do Baby Boomers Travel Differently from the Silent Generation?

BACKGROUND

The aging population in the U.S. are growing rapidly. The Baby boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) will dominate older adults in the United States in the next two to three decades.

Boomers are major contributors to vehicle travel in the U.S. history. Many boomers are life-long suburbanites and depend heavily on automobiles.

However, their personal vehicle travel characteristics have changed over time. National Household Travel Survey 2001 and 2017 shows the personal vehicle travel changes for different age groups:

- 75 and over: + 9.3%
- 65-74 (65-71 were boomers): +<1%
- 55-64 (all boomers):-

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- Generation effect or age effect?**
- Data collected in the 1990s and 2000s, when boomers were aged 35-55 ()
 - Not clear on whether boomers have more vehicle travel than the previous generations
- Temporal changes overlooked**
- Technology usage? Delayed retirement?
 - Gerontology: delayed retirement-more non-work travel and less travel in general after retirement (Berg et al., 2014)
- Suburbanites travel more over time? Unclear**
- Suburban living will induce more vehicle travel (Goulias et al., 2007, Coughlin and Proulx, 2012)
 - Gerontology: maybe suburbanites travel less by vehicle due to technology and ride-hailing (Golant, 2019).
- An equity issue?**
- Transport studies show: racial minorities, females, people who live alone, and low-income people travel less (Rosenbloom, 2009)

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Changes of boomers: Baby boomers...	Implications
...are healthier and wealthier	Experience driving cessation later +
...increasingly age in suburbs	+, but uncertain?+ technology
...embrace new technologies	Uncertain ?
...retire later	+ total travel, -non-work travel
...have more low-income, racial minorities, females	-
Overall effect	?

Selected references

1. Berg, J., Levin, L., Abramsson, M., & Hagberg, J.-E. (2014). Mobility in the transition to retirement—the intertwining of transportation and everyday projects. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 38, 48–54.
2. Coughlin, J., & Proulx, S. (2012). If demographics is destiny, are we preparing for it?. *Aging America and Transportation: Personal Choices and Public Policy*, 233–245.
3. Golant, S. M. (2019). Stop bashing the suburbs: Mobility limitations of older residents are less relevant as connectivity options expand. *Journal of aging studies*, 50, 100793.
4. Goulias, K. G., Blain, L., Kilgren, N., Michalowski, T., & Murakami, E. (2007). Catching the next big wave: Do observed behavioral dynamics of baby boomers force rethinking of regional travel demand models? *Transportation Research Record*, 2014(1), 67–75.
5. Newbold, K. B., & Scott, D. M. (2017). Driving over the life course: the automobility of Canada's millennial, generation X, baby boomer and greatest generations. *Travel Behaviour and Society*, 6, 57-63.
6. Rosenbloom, S. (2009). Meeting transportation needs in an aging-friendly community. *Generations*, 33(2), 33–43.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do Baby Boomers' vehicle travel differ from their older cohort-the silent generation?
- To what extent are these two generations' employment status, residential location, and demographic and socioeconomic attributes associated with their vehicle travel changes?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data sources

- National Household Travel Survey 2001, 2017
- People aged 56-71: all boomers in 2017, all silent generation in 2001
- Separate analysis for those aged 65-71: more relevant implications for older adults and retirees

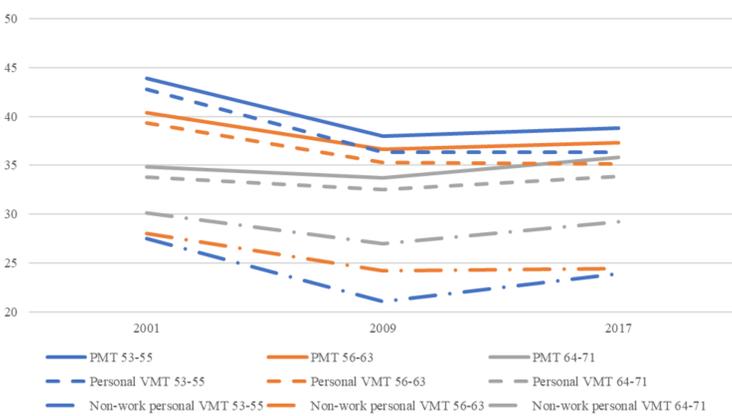
Measurements

- **Outcome variable:** Personal vehicle miles traveled, vehicle trips, and average vehicle trip distance for those who made vehicle travel
- **Independent variables:** Demographic (age, gender, race/ethnicity), socioeconomic attributes (income, education, employment status, living arrangement), built environment (urban/suburban/rural, density, metropolitan size)

Regression techniques

- Tobit for vehicle miles traveled, Negative binomial model for vehicle trips, OLS for travel distance
- Three sets: all trips for those aged 56-71, non-work for 56-71, non-work for 65-71
- Measuring generational differences: year dummy, the year dummy with other interactions, other independent variables as controls

KEY FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS



Variable	Descriptive	Regressions
Generation	56-64: slightly decrease; 65-71: increase, but mainly due to commuting	Boomers had less vehicle travel in 2017 than in 2001; 65+ boomers: more
Employment status	Unemployed people had less travel.	Unemployed boomers: less travel but more non-work travel
Place of living	Both suburban and urban boomers had fewer VMT.	People living in suburbs had less vehicle travel
Demographic factors	Females, racial minorities had more vehicle travel.	
Income and education	Low-income and low-educated boomers traveled less.	

- Promote sustainable travel and technology use among younger boomers
- Retrofit the neighborhoods and land uses to accommodate the people who have retired and who will retire soon.
- Ensure equitable access to transportation resources for low-income and low-educated boomers

PROJECT PROGRESS

Research content	Progress	Plan
STUDY 1. Description of demographic, residential, and travel profiles of people aged 55 and older and current aging-related transportation policies	Finished	
STUDY 2. A theory perspective to understand older adults' transportation needs: accessibility capability	In progress	To finish in Dec. 2021
STUDY 3. Generational travel differences between the baby boomer generation and the silent generation	Finished, presented at ACSP	
STUDY 4. Vehicle ownership over life course	Part I (cross-sectional analysis) finished and presented for October Brownbag, Part II (longitudinal) data collection and cleaning finished, modeling in progress	To finish in Jan. 2022
STUDY 5. Travel behavior and ICT among older adults	Data collection finished, analysis in progress. To present at TRB 2022.	To finish in Dec. 2021