Recent Changes in the Age Composition of Drivers in 15 Countries

The age distribution of drivers has major implications for vehicle demand, transportation safety, and environmental consequences of personal transportation. This study examined the recent changes in the percentage of persons with a driver’s license in 15 countries as a function of age. The countries included were Canada, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S.A. The results indicate two patterns of change over time. In one pattern (observed for eight countries), there was a decrease in the percentage of young people with a driver’s license, and an increase in the percentage of older people with a driver’s license. In the other pattern (observed for the other seven countries), there was an increase in the percentage of people with a driver’s license in all age categories.

A regression analysis was performed on the data for young drivers in the 15 countries to explore the relationship between licensing and a variety of societal parameters. Of particular note was the finding that a higher proportion of internet users was associated with a lower licensure rate. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that access to virtual contact reduces the need for actual contact among young people.