

# Rangatahi Māori perspectives on and experiences with Graduated Driver Licensing in New Zealand

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# Background

- Transport Domain Plan 2016, Enduring Question 2.4:  
*“What is the relationship between Māori and transport, what impact does transport have on Māori traditions, aspirations and well-being, and how are these things changing over time?”* [Large information gap]

Some statistics (Ministry of Transport, 2017, 2018)

- 41% of high-risk drivers are Māori
- Under 25s comprise 40% of Māori at-fault drivers
- 23% of fatal crashes and 20% of serious injury crashes involve Māori

Research insights

- Young Māori are more likely to have driven pre-licenced (Begg et al., 2012) and less likely to progress through GDL stages (Langley et al., 2012)

# Research aim

- Indigenous transport issues are under-researched in most countries
- Previous qualitative research in Auckland with Māori adults (Raerino et al., 2013) explored transport issues: inefficient buses, reliance on *whānau* to provide transport, limited access to cultural places such as *marae*, stress relating to transport costs
- **Current study:** exploratory focus groups to better understand *rangatahi* Māori perspectives on driving and graduated driver licensing
  - Barriers & facilitators to obtaining licence / progressing through GDL stages
  - Reasons for violating traffic rules (e.g. unlicensed driving)



# Methods

- Five *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi* (face-to-face) focus groups ( $n = 4-6$ )
  - Total  $N = 23$  *rangatahi* aged 15-24 years (18 female, 5 male)
  - Four sessions at University of Otago Te Huka Mātauraka Māori Centre, Dunedin
  - One session at Cheviot Area School, North Canterbury
- Discussions in English but included *te reo* Māori words and concepts
- Incorporated *mihi* (greetings and introductions), *whakawhanaungatanga* (establishing relationships and connections), *karakia* (traditional prayer to ensure favourable outcomes) *kai* (food to demonstrate *manaakitanga* - hospitality); participants received a voucher *koha* (gift with connotations of reciprocity)
- Discussions transcribed verbatim and themes coded in NVivo 12

# Transport modes used

- **Walking**

- Only option: “I’ve never owned a car, always walking around”
- For convenience, depending on location:
  - “I usually walk everywhere but I have my car down here”
  - “I normally walk around uni but I’ve got my full for when I go back home”

- **Driving** – to work – own or other’s car:

- “I use my car for *mahi* and stuff”
- “I drive, I use her car to get to work”



# Barriers to licensure/progression

- **Money** (*pūtea*): paying test fees, driving lessons, gas/petrol
- **Access to resources**: having access to a car (roadworthy!), road code book
- **Rural location**: difficulty accessing testing centre, limited ability to practice driving in “big city” with busy traffic and pedestrians
- **Inadequate support**: parents work all the time, don’t view licensing as a priority
- **Confidence/psychological**: anxiety about driving or test taking, fear of failure
- **Lack of incentive**: “just gotten away with it”
- **Māori-specific**: language barriers, prejudiced assessors, cultural (“not a thing”)
- **Logistical issues**: difficulties booking test or preparing required paperwork

# Facilitators to licensure/progression

- **Money:** scholarships, *iwi* grants, subsidised tests
- **Resources:** hand-me-down road code book, free road code app, car access
- **Confidence:** courage, bravery to take test, especially after failing
- **Appropriate education and training:**
  - Encouraging, patient driving teacher – instruction consistent with road code!
  - Time to practice, more frequent driving
  - Education on traffic rules and safe driving (primarily at school)
- **Location:** easier to sit your test outside a big city
- **Police presence:** can motivate licensure if they are likely to pull you over

# Whānau influences

- **Negative experiences with parental supervision of driving:**
  - “grabbing the handle”
  - using “invisible brakes on their side”
  - “extending the telling off for like half an hour”
  - “she just goes, ‘awh no you’ve failed, that’s a fail’”
- **Picking up bad habits:** “go faster, go the speed limit”
- **Generational attitudes:** “[my parents had a] didn’t give a shit vibe about licences in general so I didn’t give that much regard”
  - Parents not meeting requirements to supervise learner drivers
  - Attitude that you drive when you reach a certain age
  - Depends on family composition



# Unlicenced driving

- **Rural location:** “you can just drive around without a licence and no one makes a big deal out of it”
- **Necessity:** “if you’ve gotta get somewhere, you gotta get somewhere”
- **Emergencies and family responsibility:**
  - “[children] shouldn’t be missing school just cos you don’t have a licence”
  - “even if you don’t have your licence you’ve still got to do the run around if your parents are working”
- **A license is a formality:**
  - “if you can drive but you just don’t have a licence then it’s like technically wouldn’t be that unsafe”
  - “if they’re experienced drivers then what’s the difference other than other people have paid 300 bucks”
- **Sober driving:** “better than a drunk driver”

# Thoughts and future directions

- Financial barriers most problematic to getting a licence
  - and not having a licence limits financial opportunities → cyclical effects
    - Subsidizing test fees may help, but many other costs exist
- Experience/driving ability considered important, distinct from having a licence (not important?) → need to address intergenerational attitudes
- Many participants had parents who were not licenced / did not meet legal learner driver supervision requirements → mentor systems?
  - Could address issues of resources, education and training, confidence
- *Whānau* responsibilities, emergencies as reasons for unlicenced driving
  - Some but not all issues can be addressed through better active/public transport opportunities

# References

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