



# Generation Y: An Investigation of Lifestyles and Mobility Choices of California's Millennials and the Motivations Behind Them

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## Abstract

How do Millennials make their mobility choices? What are their lifestyles and preferences towards transportation? What are their future aspirations to purchase a vehicle? What factors affect their mobility-related choices? These are some of the research questions we are exploring through this study. We will investigate the mobility patterns of young adults, age 18 through 34, in California.

Young adults ("Generation Y", or "Millennials") are a critical and dynamic subset of the population. They are often early adopters of new trends (in culture, as well as lifestyles) later adopted by other segments of society. Millennials include the future influential leaders of society. They are often in a pivotal stage of their life, in which they are establishing the footing for their future, family, and career. They will contribute to create new households and influence future travel patterns in many ways, e.g. they will have growing purchasing power in future years and might be potential buyers of private vehicles (influencing the car market with their choices).

In this first one-year project, we will collect data on millennials' lifestyles and mobility choices through an online survey distributed to a sample representative of the population of young adults in California. We will develop statistics on millennials' behavior and explore the factors affecting their mobility choices, as the first step of a multi-year project that we plan to extend to other U.S. regions, and internationally.

## Background and Key Concepts

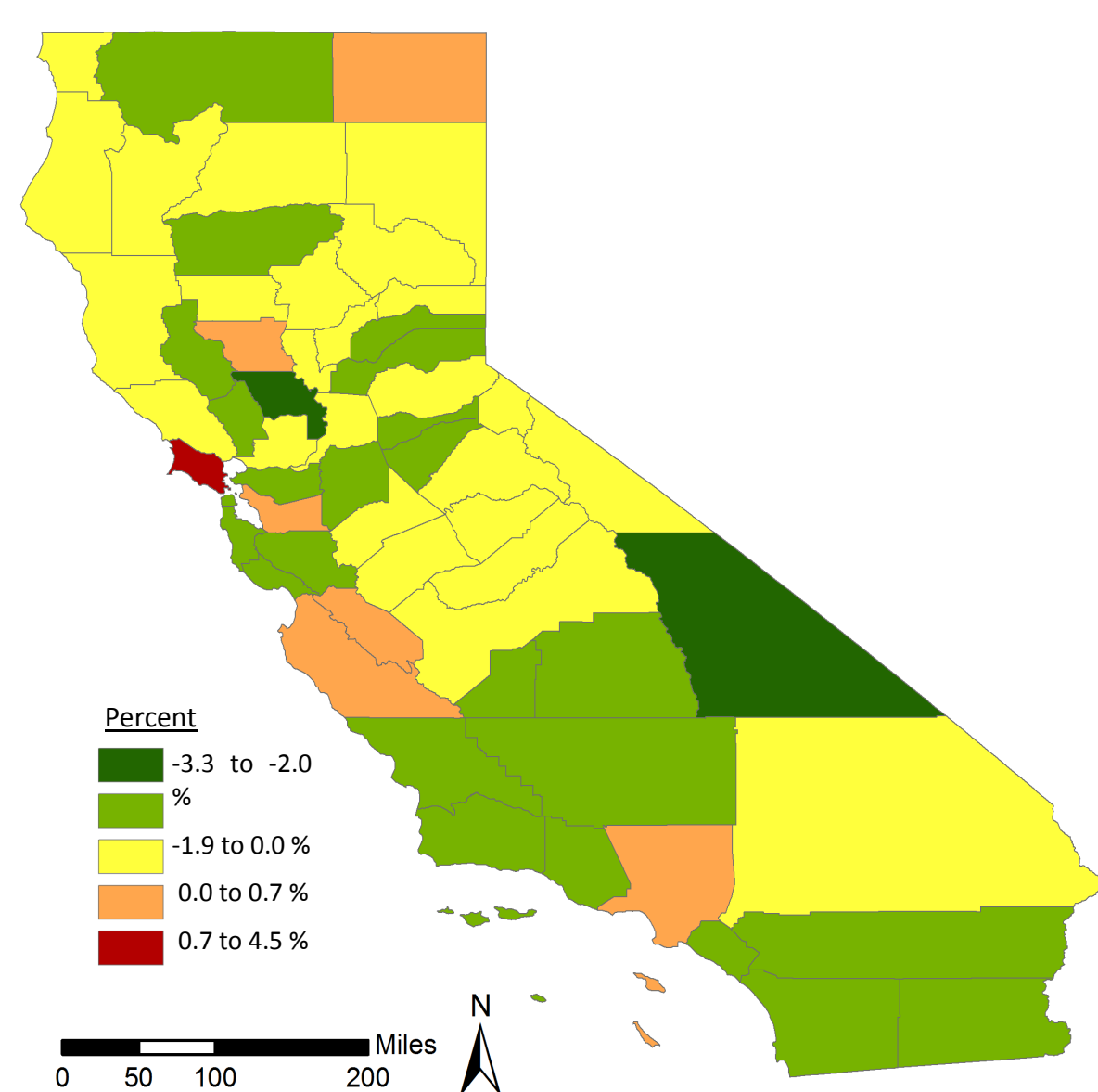
**Peak Drive:** Per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) have been declining in the United States and other developed countries in recent years, either as an effect of economic conditions, the saturation of car use and ownership, or distinct changes in travel behavior (Metz 2010 & 2012, Goodwin 2012, Puentes and Tomer 2008).

**Personal Attitudes and Preferences:** Previous studies have suggested that personal attitudes and preferences, e.g. related to status identification, can have an impact on car ownership, travel behavior, and mode choice (Delbosc and Currie 2014).

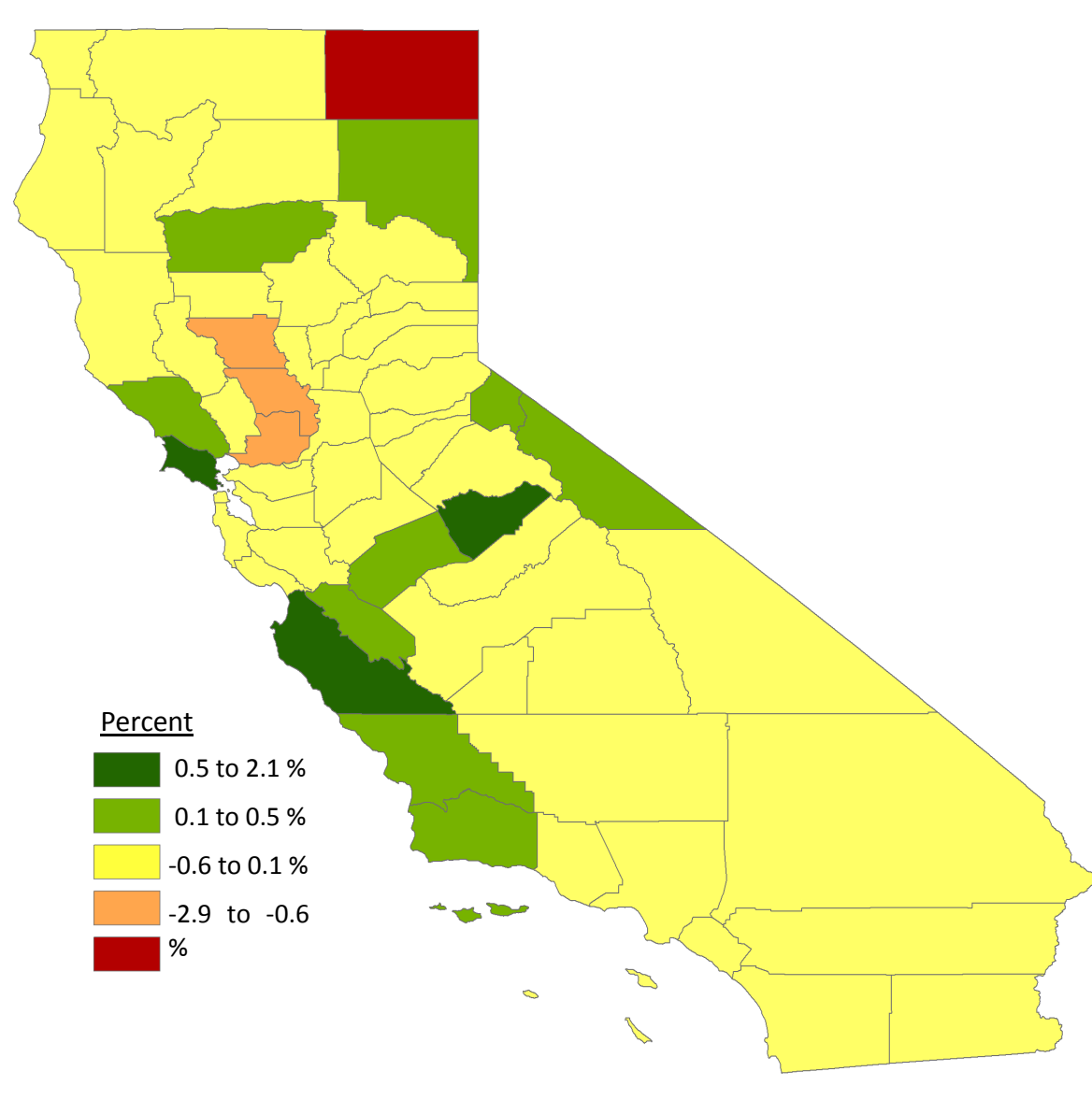
**Generation Y / Millennials:** Young individuals in the United States are increasingly choosing not to own a car. They drive less if they own one, and use other transportation modes more often (Blumenberg et al. 2012, Kuhnimhof et al. 2012, Frändberg et al. 2011). Still, the motivations behind these trends and the factors affecting these choices are not well studied yet.

**Aspirations Towards Vehicle Purchase:** We seek to explore how personal attitudes, environmental concerns and cultural backgrounds affect millennials' aspirations to purchase a new vehicle.

Change in Private Vehicle Use for Commuting Young Adults from 2010 to 2013 (excludes taxis, carpool)



Change in Commuting Young Adults who Walk as Part of Their Commute from 2010 to 2013



How young adult commuters are choosing to travel is changing quickly, as depicted above for private vehicle (left) and walking (right). Our research efforts will help to understand the underlying motivations for changes in the travel behavior of young adults in California.

## Methodology

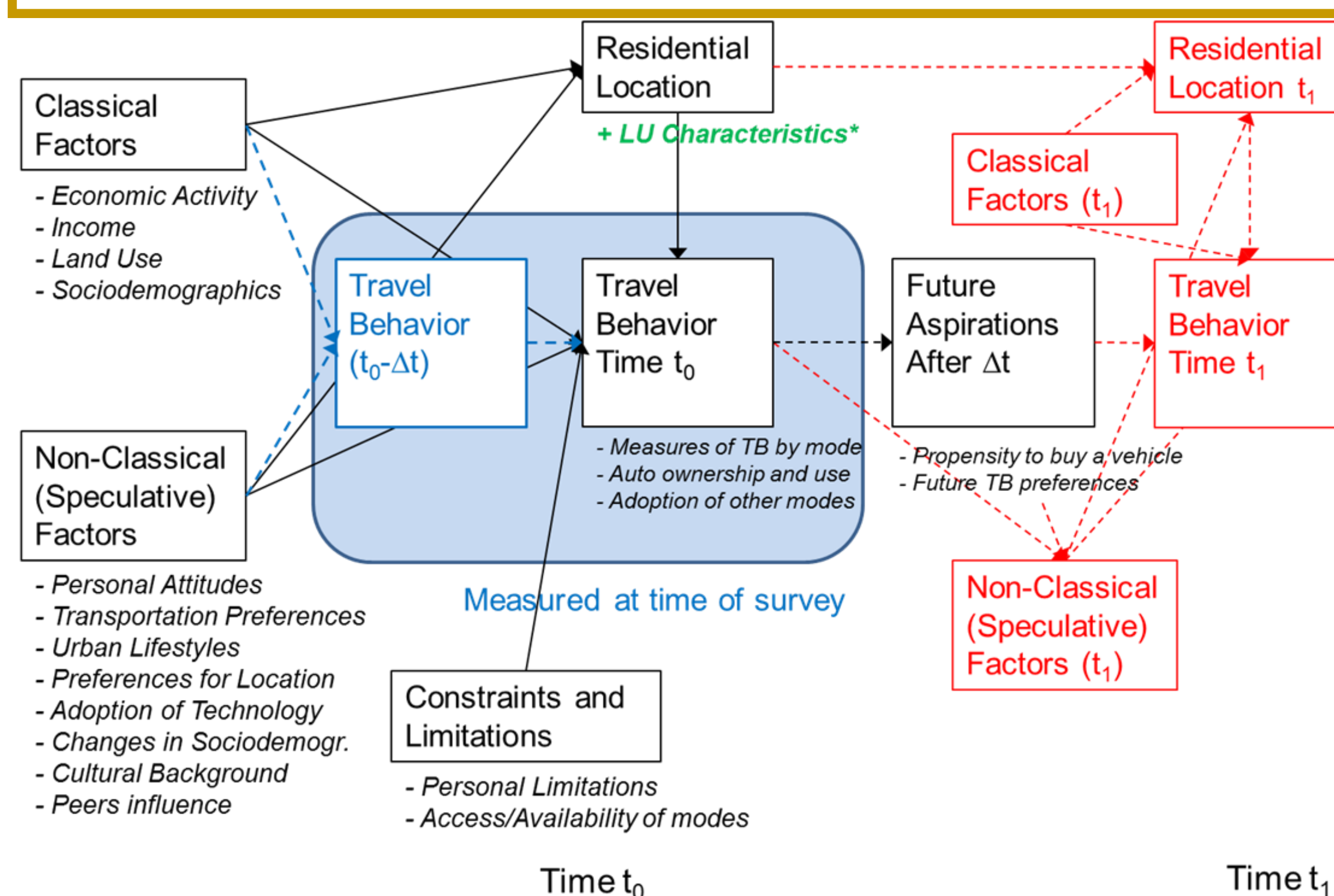
Development of a cross-sectional survey (with eventual option to contact respondents again in case of a follow-up survey) that collects information on the mobility of "millennials", and several factors that may affect it.

**Geographic Scale:** the data collection of this study will cover the entire state of California. The survey will be distributed to a sample representative of the population of young adults in California.

**Survey method:** Online survey to be distributed through multiple channels, including the support of MPOs and other organizations, and the use of a commercial vendor to reach segments of the population which are not easy to contact through other channels. Appropriate Weights will be used to compensate for any lack of representativeness on some key dimensions.

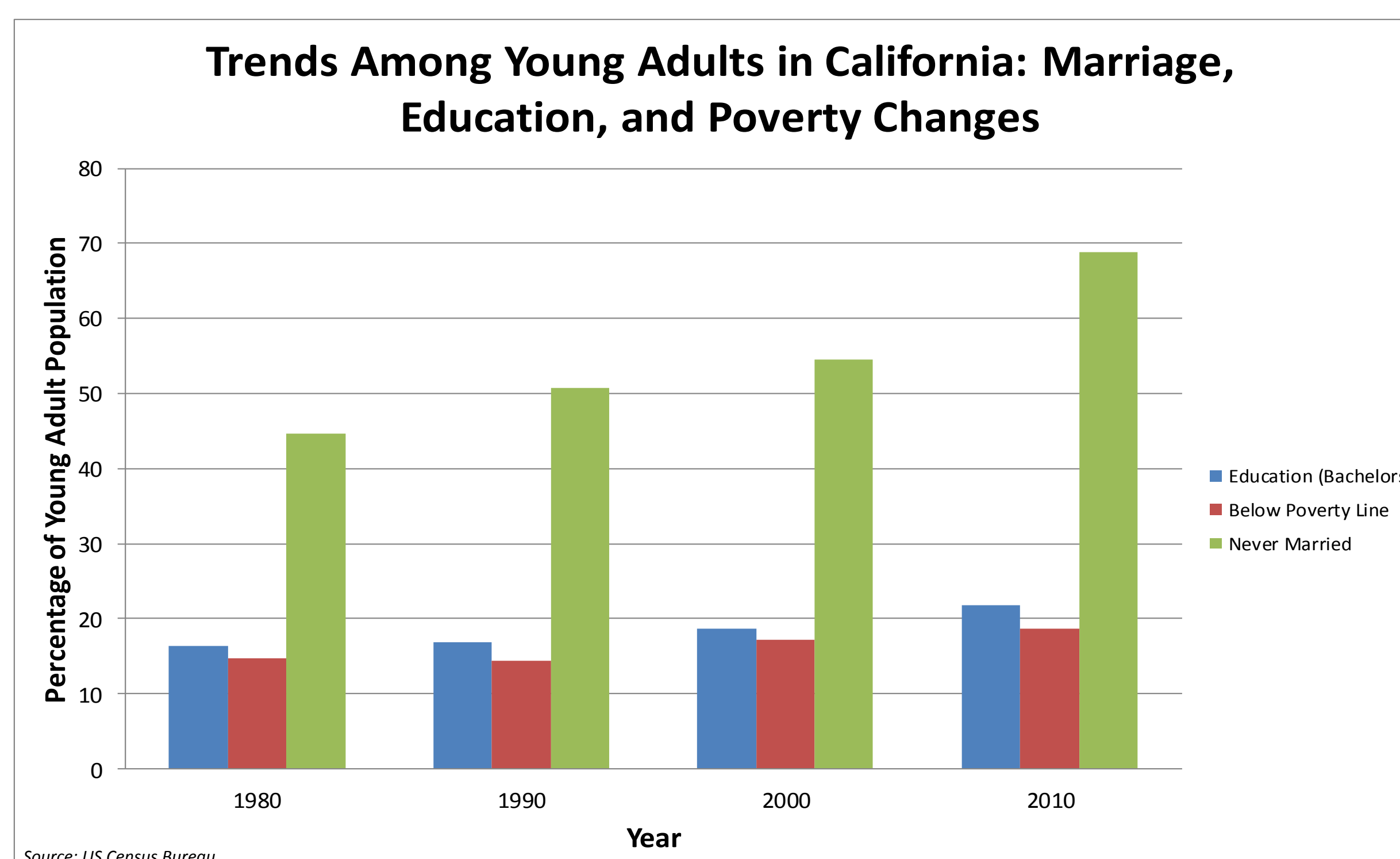
**Focus:** Interest in travel behavior, aspirations to purchase and use a vehicle (vs. use of other modes), and motivations behind them. The study explores both classical and speculative factors that have been suggested as potential explanatory factors behind millennials' travel behavior.

## Conceptual Framework



\*Measured with external data (e.g. US EPA Smart Location data), after geocoding of residence (X, Y)

Note: all components in red are not part of the current data collection plan, but represent future directions of research for this study, if/when the additional follow-up data collection is carried out.



## Content of the Survey

The online survey will have 11 sections and collect information on:

- A. Personal Attitudes and Preferences, e.g. about social habits, lifestyles, physical activity, adoption of technology, environmental concerns, health concerns
- B. Transportation-Specific Preferences: preferences for the use of several modes of transportation for local (urban/very short distance), short-distance (up to 50 miles) and long-distance (longer than 50 miles) trips
- C. Transportation-Specific Perceptions: mode perception, status symbol, time flexibility, comfort, cost/price sensitivity, ability to carry things/perform activities during travel, ability to coordinate trips with others, waiting for various transportation modes
- D. Use of Online Social Media and Adoption of Technology: adoption of modern IT solutions, use of online social media, adoption of modern transportation solutions (including ride-sharing services), and motivations behind them
- E. Residential Location and Living Arrangements
- F. Employment and Participation in Activities
- G. Current Travel Behavior: use of private vehicles, public transit and active transportation, travel time and motivations for the choices of modes
- H. Driver's License and Car Ownership
- I. Previous Travel Behavior: travel behavior patterns in the past, before they moved to the current place of residential location
- J. Aspirations for/Opinions about Future Mobility
- K. Socio-demographic Traits

## Timeline

Pre-test of the survey: starts in May 2015

Final draft survey available for review: **May-June 2015**

Selection of the commercial vendor to assist with data collection: May 2015

Data collection expected to begin in **June 2015** (pending IRB approval)

Preliminary results presented at IATBR conference in London in Summer 2015

Report to Caltrans in **September 2015**

In-depth analysis of the **California Millennials Dataset** during Year 2 of the study

Potential follow-up survey 2-3 years after the initial data collection, contacting again the respondents that agreed to provide contact information, and turning the project into panel study

## Expected Outcomes

The project results will improve our understanding of young adults' mobility in California, and the factors affecting these choices, and will be of interest for researchers, planners and policy-makers.

We will generate descriptive statistics for the California dataset, and set up the basis for future comparisons with different geographic areas.

The study will provide:

- Information about the impact of environmental attitudes and personal preferences on travel behavior and aspiration to purchase vehicles of young adults
- Exploration of current travel patterns and travel-related attitudes of millennials in California, and insights into the potential impact on future car ownership and adoption of new technologies (e.g. adoption of alternative fuel vehicles)
- Insights into the potential response of millennials to future policies that promote sustainability in transportation

## Acknowledgements

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