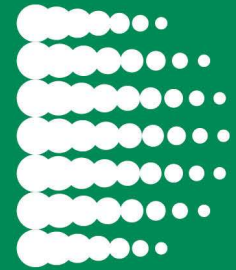


Decarbonising Transport

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Mobility & Road Safety Impacts of Covid-19

With nearly every country in the world battling to cope with outbreaks of the Covid-19 virus, the way of living and travel has changed dramatically in the last six months. The health pandemic has created significant implications on every aspect of our economy and lives. The impact on travel behaviour and mobility is no exception where various levels of lockdowns have forced change like we have never experienced in our recent history. Most of the effects have been negative, but some have been positive, not the least being the opportunity to consider the effects on travel behaviour due to various levels of restrictions

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has in the past appropriated the language of epidemiology to argue that road death and injury can be viewed as an epidemic on wheels. Ironically, there is literally a pandemic on our wheels at present. Long established routines such as commuting to workplaces and in-store shopping had to be replaced by telecommuting and online shopping. Many of these travel behaviour shifts had been partially implemented in small proportions of the community and in some countries in greater proportions with policies that either incentivised or penalised travel by travel demand management measures. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced travel change thereby accelerating the experimentation of various ways of accessing opportunities – i.e. digital mobility as opposed to physical mobility.

The change in travel behaviours and mobility has also had an impact on road safety in New Zealand in terms of crash rates, severity and types of crashes. This research investigated the impact on mobility and road safety during the Covid-19 pandemic and explored whether these changes were short term effects returning to pre-pandemic levels or whether fundamental change in behaviour will be more permanent. Travel and crash data before, during and after Covid-19 restrictions were collected during 2020 to assess the implications of Covid-19.

The learnings from this research will provide several insights for policymakers to be able to proactively plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector given the changes caused by the pandemic in daily travel routines. Understanding the effects on mobility and road safety outcomes also provide important learnings for the sector that can be applied to post Covid-19 transport infrastructure 'shovel ready' projects to help ensure long term positive changes are evaluated and realised