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TITLE: California Vehicle Registrations and Driver Licenses - 1946-1961

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PROTECT OBTECTIVE:

To produce an extension of the 1959 Department of Motor Vehicles report titled "California Vehicle Registrations and Drivers Licenses, 1946-1958" (Research Report No.1) for the years 1959, 1960, and 1961. The report should be useful as a basic set of historical statistical information regarding California vehicle registrations and drivers' licenses.

SUMMARY:

In some cases there have been revisions of some of the earlier figures, especially those involving a rate per 100 population, because of revisions in the base population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau for the years in question. Also, additional tables appear in this current report which were not included in the prior report, and some tables have been eliminated.

Since the end of World War II, California has experienced a tremendous growth in its population. Coupled with this population growth is an even greater growth in the workload of the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In 1946 the Department registered less than 3 ½ million vehicles including automobiles, commercials, trailers, and motorcycles. Since that time, the number of registrations has increased approximately 350,000 (or 10 percent) per year to a total of just under 8 million vehicles registered by the end of 1958.

Ten years ago (in 1951), with 7.4% of the nation's civilian driving age population (16 years and older), California's new auto and commercial vehicle registrations represented 6.9% of the nation's new autos and commercial vehicles. In 1961, with 9.0% of the nation's driving age population, California's new auto and commercial vehicle registrations represented 9.6% of the total United States sales for new autos and commercials. Thus, the demand for new vehicles in California has increased faster than has its population growth

In the three years after World War II (1946-1948) there was a tremendous shortage of vehicles for sale in California compared with the large demand. Because of this, many dealers imported vehicles previously registered in other states for sale in California at much higher prices. Thus, the figures for 1946-1948 are considerably inflated in relation to the actual migration, during those years. In 1949 non-resident registration returned to normal and then began to climb more-or-less concomitantly with population growth and migration. In 1961 non-resident vehicles registered in California during each working day averaged 1106 or 2.3 per working minute.

In 1961 California, while containing 9.0% of the total United States civilian driving age population, registered almost 11% of all vehicles. Based on vehicles per 100 driving age population, California registers approximately 11 more vehicles for every 100 persons than does the United States as a whole. This trend has remained fairly constant since 1947. Several states (16) ran ahead of California in vehicles per 100 population.

At the end of 1961, approximately three out of every four Californians of driving age (16 years and older) held a valid California driver's license. Table 6 also indicates that the rate for the United States as a whole is only slightly less than that of California. This, however, is somewhat misleading since the license-in-force data in Table 6 reflect figures at a given point in time (December 31) for California, while the figures for the United States reflect the total number of licenses in force throughout the entire 12 months of each year. Obviously, this results in an underestimation of the difference. Even though there has been only a gradual increase in the annual issuance of original operator's licenses during the period, there has been a much sharper rise in the number of renewals. However, it appears that the rest of the nation is increasing its relative number of drivers at a faster rate than is California.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

None.