



Graduated Driving Licencing

What is the scale of the young driver crash problem?

Around one in five newly qualified drivers' crash within just six months of obtaining their licence

On average 7 young drivers and their passengers are killed or seriously injured every single day.

These are stark figures and our casualty rates for young drivers in the UK are higher than in any other European country according to a report by the Transport Select Committee (2007)

What are the risk factors for young driver crashes?

Young adults tend to be more impulsive and prone to taking risks, and they can be easily influenced by those around them.

They can also find it very difficult to assess the road ahead, anticipate hazards and judge the level of danger they could be in when confronted by unfamiliar driving situations.

The main risk factors are:

- ▶ Night time driving.

Driving at night can increase the likelihood of crashing by a factor of ten. Male drivers aged between 17-20 years are seven times more likely to be involved in a collision when driving at night than all other male drivers. This rises to 17 times more likely between the hours of 2am and 5am.

- ▶ Carrying too many passengers

Research has shown that the more passengers are carried = the greater the likelihood of being involved in a collision. Increased distractions, overloading of the car (which can make it harder to control) and the possibility of 'showing off' while driving can all contribute to increased risk.

- ▶ Alcohol

Even the smallest amount of alcohol can have a serious effect on driving ability - affecting judgement, co-ordination and reaction times. It can also lead to greater risk taking as it can increase confidence.

Research has shown that young drivers have more drink drive related crashes per mile travelled than any other age group. Zero intake of alcohol is always the safest choice.

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Who is at risk?

Everyone who is in the car. 40% of all those who've been killed or seriously injured in a car were being driven at night by a newly qualified young driver.

Research also shows that the most dangerous thing that any teenager can do is to travel in a car being driven by another teen.

What can be done to reduce young driver crash risks?

Graduated driver licencing (GDL) helps new young drivers to gain driving experience under conditions of reduced risk. It gives permission to new young drivers to drive unsupervised in lower risk conditions, but restricts access to the higher risk driving conditions.

It works by 'adding' an intermediate phase between the learner licence and the full driving licence.

In countries where GDL is in place, there tends to be a minimum learner period of 6 to 12 months, which is exited with the learner test. Learners who pass the test then enter the intermediate phase.

The learner phase is fully supervised, the intermediate phase is partially supervised.

As an intermediate driver, permission is given to drive without supervision, but not at night and not with passengers. The supervised intermediate (supervisor being a fully licensed driver, who is not permitted to consume alcohol) may carry passengers and drive at night.

The intermediate phase does not grant permission to drive after consuming any alcohol and may last up to two and a half years.

Does it work?

Graduated driver licencing has been shown in many countries to be effective in reducing young driver crashes by up to 60%. The system was first used in New Zealand and has been implemented to varying degrees in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe.

GDL has a significant impact on crash rates, injuries and deaths; it also empowers parents and teens. Parents feel able to place restrictions on their teenagers, and teenagers feel less pressured into driving in situations that they are not comfortable with.



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What about GDL in Great Britain?

Dr Sarah Jones, Honorary Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University, has analysed road traffic crash data to try to estimate the impact GDL could have if introduced.

Dr Jones found that GDL could save 236 lives a year in Great Britain and prevent 14,000 road traffic casualties. This would also save the UK economy £890M.

Dr Sarah Jones, one of our Good Egg Partners, says:

"Graduated driver licensing works in other countries and there's no good reason why it wouldn't work here."

Collisions would be reduced by limiting young drivers' exposure to high-risk situations.

Sarah believes that restriction on new drivers could be in force for as long as two years and should also include a total ban on alcohol.

She has said that a debate would be required to determine whether to limit the restrictions just to young drivers or for all new drivers.

Visit www.parentsofnewdrivers.com