

## UK: Peer pressure putting unprepared young drivers at greater risk on UK roads

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Peer pressure, not wearing seatbelts and poor training are all major factors in the numbers of young drivers killed on the nation's roads.

A third of 17-21-year-olds admitted to driving differently when they have more than one friend in the car, according to extensive new research by insurer Aviva<sup>1</sup>.

The research took an in-depth look at young motorists' behaviour and their attitudes to driving in a bid to better understand why they drive the way they do.

And the findings help to explain why young driver deaths and accidents are declining more slowly than all other driver groups' year on year, according to The Department for Transport 2008 statistics<sup>2</sup>.

The results reveal that young drivers are dangerously influenced by peer pressure when driving with friends in the car, with:

- One in five (21%) paying less attention to the road
- A quarter (24%) taking their hands off the wheel
- 15% performing illegal driving manoeuvres.

The report also brings to light that some young drivers are unprepared for driving, with one in 10 (9%) admitting that they wouldn't have awarded themselves a licence when they passed their test.

According to the young drivers questioned, one in four (27%) only had paid driving lessons with no practice time and even more worrying is that the results indicate that some driving schools may be priming students to merely pass their test, with one in five (19%) young drivers having only practiced on the driving test route with their instructor.

Nigel Bartram, Aviva motoring expert, said: "Young drivers remain the age group with the highest proportion of insurance claims, accidents and fatalities on our roads. Aviva has carried out extensive research to better understand young motorists' attitudes towards driving so we can offer advice in an effort to try to reduce the number of insurance claims and more importantly, the number of fatalities and serious injury.

"A common misconception is that insurance is bought solely to cover the repair costs of the vehicle insured. The reality is that the premium covers the vehicle insured, as well as any potential injury or damage that the vehicle could cause. The largest proportion of Aviva claims costs for young drivers are for injuries rather than vehicle damage with 58%<sup>3</sup> of the cost of all young driver claims consisting of personal injury costs, mainly to friends of the young driver being carried as passengers. According to Aviva claims data, injuries increase exponentially in relation to the number of passengers being carried.

"In order to reduce these statistics young drivers and passengers alike need to take personal responsibility for their own actions – this means wearing a seatbelt at all times regardless of who is in the car, driving with fewer passengers and not conforming to peer pressure whilst behind the wheel.

"If young drivers take this advice on board and drive more responsibly we have every reason to expect the number of claims will reduce and claims costs will fall. If we see reduction in our claims costs for young drivers we expect that our premiums for younger drivers should fall in line with this. We want to do what we can to try and help young motorists, but in order to reduce premium we need to work together."

## Young drivers attitudes to driving

### Peer pressure

- Boys drive faster (16%) and pay less attention to the road (27%) when their friends are in the car, compared to girls (8% and 19%)
- The research also indicates that parents are unaware of their children's driving style when they are with their friends with almost half (44%) of the respondents altering their behaviour by driving slower and almost all (97%) more strictly following the road rules when in the car with a parent or grandparent.

Top 10: Young driver's dangerous behaviours when driving with friends:

1. Take your hands off the wheel - 24%
2. Shout at other drivers/cars - 24%
3. Turn around to talk to passengers - 21%
4. Perform an illegal driving manoeuvre - 14%
5. Whistle or call out to the opposite sex - 12%
6. Swerve the car to the music - 11%
7. Race other drivers - 10%
8. Jump the lights - 9%
9. Overload the car with passengers - 8%
- 10.

Not wear a seatbelt - 5%

Aviva carried out focus groups of young drivers to better understand the issues from their point of view. Excerpts from these discussions are below:

Alex Rodwell, 17 from Barnet said: "It's a lot more difficult driving when you have other people in the car. I know my friend's drive differently when they have friends in the car – you know, putting on the "jack the lad" act – you know, put the seat back and instead of holding the steering wheel, rest their hand on top of it. Show off to the lads, boys are like that."

Olivia Zane, 17 from Hertfordshire said: "Honestly yes, I drive different depending on who's in the car. Like I had a full car the other day and did like a 10 minute drive and there was more noise going on, more conversations and I just said to myself like I can't listen to anything, I've just got to keep on driving but everybody else is talking and shouting and gossiping and everything, and you want to listen."

Adam Gilbert, 19 from Aylesford said: "I think my friends drive differently with friends in their car. They're a bit more ambitious and less sensible – a bit more just sort of enjoying the driving itself instead of just doing it as a way to get around. They might show off a little bit, show how fast their car can go, how much control they think they have over the car – when they wouldn't normally drive like that."

### Unprepared for the road

- One in 10 (9%) young drivers questioned claim that even though they got a licence they wouldn't have given themselves a pass when

they took their driving test

- Girls were not confident driving on the motorway (39%) or driving on their own (29%) compared to boys (26% and 12%)
- 23 per cent admitted to flirting or creating banter with the examiner to pass – interestingly boys are more likely to do this than girls (28% vs 22%)
- Unpreparedness for the road seems to stem from a lack of practice on the road with family and friends. One in four (27%) young drivers only had paid driving lessons and of these, half (50%) took more than four attempts to pass their driving test and nearly a quarter of them (24%) had an accident that required an insurance claim.

Micheal Pearson, 19, from Bramhall said: "I didn't do very well on my test but I still managed to pass. I messed up one of the manoeuvres and I went through when the light was on yellow and I was going 30mph in a 20mph but I still passed. I was probably just sucking up to them a bit too much."

Sophie Chappell, 18, Bedford said: "I still can't park. I can't do either reverse or parallel. So I crash frequently and park miles away so there's no cars either side of me. I also don't drive on motorways – I'm too scared. I take different routes, longer routes. My mum said she'd take me on it but she's quite scared of my driving."

### Pass to survive

- Results suggest that some driving schools are priming students to merely pass their test, with one in five (19%) young drivers having only practiced on the driving test route with their instructors.
- Nearly three out of five (58%) respondents were encouraged by their driving instructors to take their test, and of these, 57% had a car accident that required an insurance claim and half of them (50%) took more than four attempts to pass.

Olivia Zane, 17, from Hertfordshire said: "Once I found out where I was going to take my test, my instructor stuck to that place. So we stuck to Borehamwood for five months and didn't really go anywhere else. I think it would benefit people by going to places they haven't been before so when you actually pass your test you're not completely confused."

Luke Macklin, 17, from Bramhall said: "Some of my friends hadn't done a lot of driving before and then came and passed their test straight away with barely any lessons. Then after they passed quite a few of them crashed."

### Seatbelts

- 11% of boys don't wear their seatbelt when in the car with friends, compared to 6% of girls
- One in 10 boys think it's a sign of disrespect towards their driving if passengers wear seatbelts, and six per cent don't wear theirs to avoid offending the driver. This is compared to five per cent and one per cent of girls respectively.

Peter Doyle, 18 from St Albans: "I think seatbelts are vital. I have actually been asked: Is this a seatbelt car? I just looked at him in astonishment and said yes, it is."

Alex Rodwell, 17 from Barnet said: "I personally don't see the difference between putting it (your seatbelt) over your shoulder or putting it under your shoulder – like I know if it's under it can mess up your arm and stuff and over the shoulder is better for the impact – but it cuts into your neck and it's not comfortable. It depends on the impact cause like if it's a side on, it does nothing."

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For further information, please contact:

Adam Cracknell  
Aviva's UK Insurance press office  
Telephone: 01603 684916

Luke Baines  
Hill & Knowlton  
Telephone: 020 7973 4415

Notes to editors:

### About Aviva

Aviva, the international savings, investments and insurance group, is the world's fifth largest insurance group, serving 50 million customers across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific.

In the UK, Aviva is a leading provider of life, pensions, investment, general insurance and health products to more than 20 million customers. Aviva also provides roadside assistance through RAC. Products are distributed through a number of channels including IFAs, brokers, corporate partners and direct to customers via the internet.

Aviva's UK Insurance business has a market share of around 15%, making it the largest general insurer in the UK. The business is focused on insurance for individuals and small businesses.

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Aviva's news releases and a selection of images are available from the internet press centre at [www.aviva.com/media](http://www.aviva.com/media).

<sup>1</sup> The research of 17-21 year old drivers was completed across the UK in two stages. The participants were randomly selected, with a sample of male and female panellists. The first, conducted by Freshminds Research, involved face-to-face interviews with 14 youths and the second stage involved online interviews with 500 respondents carried out by Redshift Research. Both companies are members of the MRS.

<sup>2</sup> The Department for Transport's Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) statistics revealed that while the amount of KSI accidents continues to decline, young drivers are only improving at half the rate of all other driver's year-on-year (8.4% v 4.6%).

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