

Young drivers



SPEED

THE FACTS: RISK TAKING

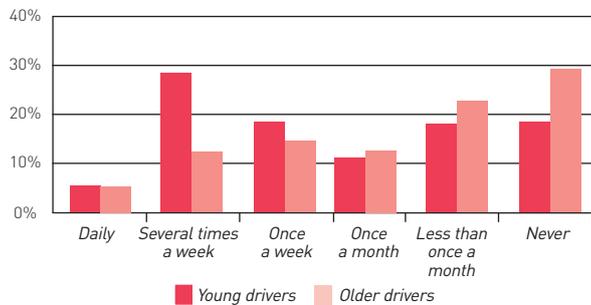
- Age and inexperience combine to dramatically increase young drivers' risk of crashing¹. Not only are young drivers more likely to take risks, such as speeding, because of their youth, they are less able to cope with those risks because of their inexperience².
- The tendency of many young people to take risks is linked to brain development. The part of the brain that controls impulses, the frontal lobe, is not fully developed until most people's mid-20s³.

Q1: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone?

Young drivers are more likely to break urban speed limits than older drivers, and are far more likely to do it regularly, suggesting risky driving is more ingrained in their day to day driving habits. Half of young drivers (52%) do this weekly or more, compared to a third (34%) of older drivers.

- 80% of young drivers have driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone in the past year, compared to 71% of older drivers
- 6% of young drivers do this daily, compared to 6% of older drivers
- 28% do this several times a week, compared to 13% of older drivers
- 18% do this about once a week, compared to 15% of older drivers
- 11% do this about once a month, compared to 13% of older drivers
- 17% do this less than once a month, compared to 24% of older drivers
- 18% of young drivers have not driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone in the past year, compared to 29% of older drivers

Figure 1: Frequency of speeding on 30mph roads



ADVICE: SPEED IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The speed limit around schools, shops and houses is usually 30mph (the default in urban areas), and it's vital to always ensure you're well within the legal limit. But even staying just under 30mph is too fast for the safety of people on foot and bicycles, particularly children and the elderly. That's because your stopping distance at 30mph is 23m, or six car lengths: nearly double that of driving at 20mph. Driving at 20mph or slower gives you time to react and stop in an emergency.

At 20mph, if a child steps into the road three car lengths ahead, you should just about be able to stop in time. But at 30mph, you'll barely have time to hit the brakes. You'll hit the child at about 27mph, with a significant chance of seriously maiming or killing them. Children make mistakes but they don't deserve the death penalty.

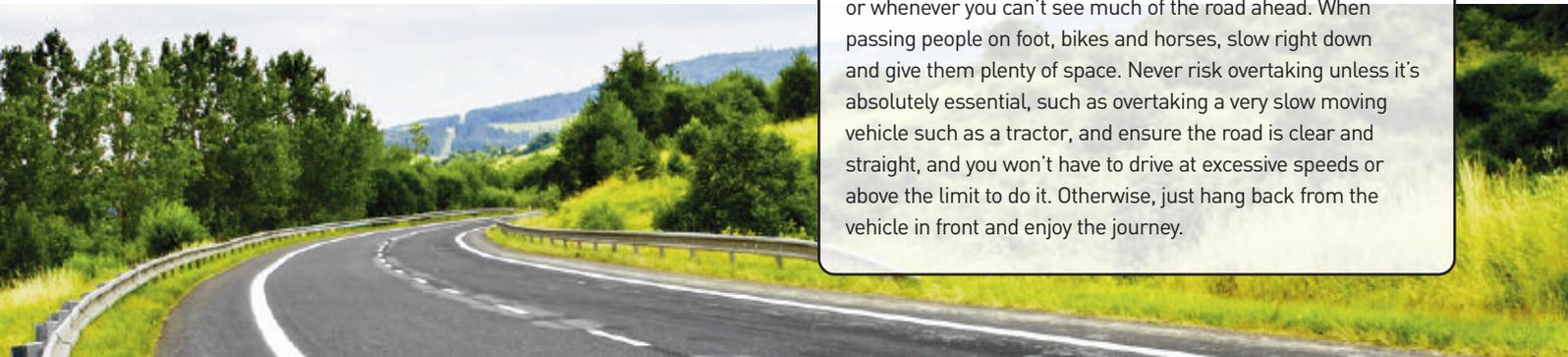
Q2: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven above 60mph on a rural road (not dual carriageway or motorway)?

Young drivers are only slightly more likely than older drivers to drive above 60mph on rural roads, but the majority own up to this highly risky behaviour, and they are more likely than older drivers to do it frequently. 26% of young drivers do this weekly or more, compared to 19% of older drivers.

- 54% of young drivers have driven above 60mph on a rural road in the past year, compared to 51% of older drivers
- 4% of young drivers do this daily, compared to 3% of older drivers
- 9% of young drivers do this several times a week, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 13% of young drivers do this about once a week, compared to 9% of older drivers
- 11% of young drivers do this about once a month, compared to 11% of older drivers
- 16% do this less than once a month, compared to 20% of older drivers
- 46% of young drivers have not driven above 60mph on a rural road in the past year, compared to 48% of older drivers

ADVICE: RURAL ROADS

Country roads often have speed limits that are far too high, dangerous sharp bends, and unexpected hazards. However well you know the road, you never know when a cyclist, horse rider or jogger will be round the corner or over the next brow, so bear this in mind and slow right down for bends or in poor weather, or whenever you can't see much of the road ahead. When passing people on foot, bikes and horses, slow right down and give them plenty of space. Never risk overtaking unless it's absolutely essential, such as overtaking a very slow moving vehicle such as a tractor, and ensure the road is clear and straight, and you won't have to drive at excessive speeds or above the limit to do it. Otherwise, just hang back from the vehicle in front and enjoy the journey.



Young drivers

Q3: How often have you overtaken when there was a chance you could have hit something you couldn't see?

Overtaking is one of the most dangerous manoeuvres you can perform, and doing so when you can't see what's coming can be lethal. Yet a horrifying one in seven young drivers admit doing this, taking enormous risks with their lives, the lives of their passengers and other road users.

- 15% of young drivers have overtaken blind, compared to 11% of older drivers
- 5% of young drivers overtake blind monthly or more, compared to 5% of older drivers
- 11% of young drivers overtake blind less than once a month, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 84% of younger drivers never overtake blind, compared to 88% of older drivers

CASE STUDY

Nick Bennett, seriously injured age 18

Nick had recently passed his driving test when he tried to overtake two cars at once. He thought he could speed past them and get back in lane before the three ton truck coming the other way would reach him. He judged it wrong and suffered horrendous injuries in the crash. His brain stem was severely twisted, which affects his mobility, speech and nervous system. He has to use a wheelchair to get around and needs help with everyday tasks like getting dressed and preparing meals. Nick volunteers for Brake, warning other drivers about the dangers of taking risks behind the wheel.



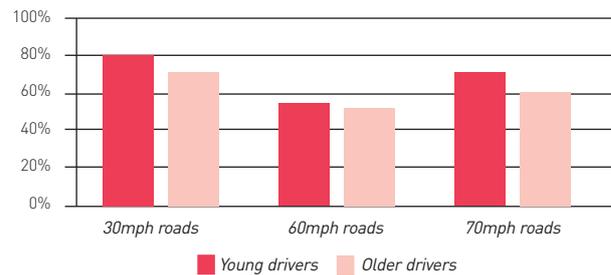
Q4: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway?

As with other types of roads, on motorways young drivers are more likely to speed than older drivers, and less equipped to handle this risk taking. A deeply worrying two-thirds take the risk of driving at 80mph or faster, and many do so weekly.

- 65% of young drivers have driven at 80mph or faster on a motorway or dual carriageway, compared to 61% of older drivers
- 1% of young drivers do this daily or more, compared to 5% of older drivers
- 15% of young drivers do this several times a week, compared to 10% of older drivers
- 11% of young drivers do this about once a week, compared to 8% of older drivers
- 16% of young drivers do this about once a month, compared to 15% of older drivers
- 22% of young drivers do this less than once a month, compared to 24% of older drivers
- 35% of young drivers have not driven at 80mph or faster on a motorway or dual carriageway in the past year, compared to 37% of older drivers



Figure 2: Drivers who have broken speed limits



THE FACTS: RISKS ON DIFFERENT ROADS

- About four in 10 fatal crashes in the UK happen on roads with a 20, 30 or 40mph limit. Many of the victims are vulnerable road users: crashes on urban roads are more than twice as likely to involve pedestrians as crashes on rural roads. Slower speeds on urban roads help protect vulnerable road users by giving drivers a far greater chance of stopping in time in an emergency, such as if a child suddenly steps out⁴.
- 44% of fatal crashes happen on roads with a 50 or 60mph limit. Drivers are far more likely to die on rural roads than any other type of road. Many of these crashes are linked to speed, involving taking corners too fast, losing control in bad weather, or overtaking. 16% of fatal crashes happen on motorways or dual carriageways with a 70mph limit. While there are fewer crashes on these roads, they are more likely to involve deaths and serious injuries because of the high speeds involved. Crashes on motorways are also more likely to involve three or more vehicles, resulting in more people being hurt⁵.

Q5: Within the past 12 months, on motorways, how often have you left less than a two-second gap between your vehicle and the one vehicle in front?

The gap drivers leave behind the vehicle in front is their braking space in a crisis. Yet most young drivers are failing to follow the critical two second rule. Young drivers are slightly more likely to drive too close to the vehicle in front, and are likely to do this more frequently. 30% admit tailgating on motorways weekly or more compared to 21% of older drivers.

- 56% of young drivers have not left a two-second gap on motorways sometime in the past year, compared to 53% of older drivers
- 4% of young drivers did this daily or more, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 13% of young drivers did this several times a week, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 13% of young drivers did this about once a week, compared to 7% of older drivers
- 9% of young drivers did this about once a month, compared to 12% of older drivers
- 17% of young drivers did this less than once a month, compared to 20% of older drivers
- 39% of young drivers always left a two-second gap on motorways in the past year, compared to 45% of older drivers

Young drivers



ADVICE: MOTORWAY DRIVING

Always keep at least two seconds from the vehicle in front, four in wet weather and ten or more in icy conditions. This is your braking space in a crisis, and vital if you come across an unexpected hazard like queuing traffic. Change lanes only when necessary and as little as possible, checking around you carefully to ensure you have space. Never undertake except in slow-moving queues.

Always stay well within the limit – including temporary limits in bad weather, congestion and around road works – and slow right down if visibility is poor. Don't underestimate the difference speed makes to your safety on motorways: at 80mph, your stopping distance is 27% more than at 70mph, meaning you need six car lengths more to come a complete stop, which could easily be the difference between life and death.

IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS...

Young drivers are taking fewer risks on the road by speeding or overtaking blind than five years ago, suggesting the message is getting through to many young people about the consequences of these behaviours:

- In 2012, 52% of young drivers admit to driving 35mph or more in a 30mph zone weekly or more, compared to 60% in 2007.
- In 2012, 26% of young drivers admit driving above 60mph on rural roads compared to 40% in 2007.
- In 2012, 15% of young drivers admitted to overtaking blind compared to 33% in 2007.

End notes

1. *The accident liability of car drivers*, Maycock, Lockwood & Lester, 1991
2. *Young novice drivers: Do they fail to feel the fear?*, Stradling, S. and Kinnear, N., 2007
3. *Immaturity is an important factor in risk taking by young drivers due to gradual development of the frontal lobe in adolescence*, SWOV, 2009 at Cranfield University's Driver Behaviour and Training, Amsterdam Conference, 2009, Amsterdam.
4. *Reported road casualties 2010 annual report*, Department for Transport, 2011
5. *Reported road casualties 2010 annual report*, Department for Transport, 2011

