Direct Line & Brake Reports on Safe Driving 2009-2012 REPORT ONE

Are you ready to drive?

Produced by:

Brake
stopping the carnage
supporting the victims
www.brake.org.uk

Working in partnership with:

direct line
Mary Williams OBE, Brake’s chief executive, says:

“Brake is pleased to be publishing this report at a crucial moment for road safety policy in the UK, as the Government considers reforms to the system of learning to drive. We cannot continue the status quo, with young and newly-qualified drivers facing unacceptably high risks of crashing, killing and maiming themselves and others. These risks fall dramatically as drivers age and gain driving experience: the average 17-year-old who passes their driving test is two-thirds less likely to have a crash after just two years.

The Government’s challenge is to find a system that ensures learner drivers gain as much experience as possible under controlled conditions before they are ‘let loose’ on the roads with a full driving licence. It should learn from international experience of implementing Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) systems, which have saved many lives. The results of this survey show a growing majority of drivers support the introduction of key elements of GDL, including requirements for learner drivers to gain a minimum level of experience before taking their test and post-test restrictions on newly-qualified drivers.

Implementing GDL, along with a regular re-test for all drivers, would give the Government a shot at changing the culture of complacency which creates unnecessary danger on our roads. Other measures to improve safety that are supported by the majority of drivers, such as regular compulsory eyesight tests, should be introduced immediately. And the Government must make sure that vital messages – from the dangers of driving a defective vehicle to how to adjust a head restraint correctly – reach all drivers and passengers, empowering them to make a real difference to safety on our roads.”

Andy Goldby, Direct Line’s director of motor underwriting, says:

“Direct Line is committed to ensuring greater safety on our roads. As part of our ongoing work with Brake we are delighted to be publishing this report on safe driving.

We recognise that progress is being made by the Government. In 2007 road deaths fell to below 3000 for the first time in 80 years. But more needs to be done to maintain this trend and significantly reduce the number of serious injuries which leave the victims unable to lead a normal life. As such, we welcome the Government’s plans to reform the driver training regime and have been working with them to develop a robust alternative.

This report sets out a number of recommendations which we and Brake would like Ministers to take into account in reforming the driver training regime and developing the Government’s road safety strategy beyond 2010.

Once the driving test has been passed, post-test training should form an important part of lifelong learning. We want to see tougher Pass Plus and speed awareness courses, including some form of testing to ensure that people who qualify return as better drivers.

Vehicle safety and crash protection are also vital. It is important that all vehicle repair centres have quick and easy access to manufacturers’ up-to-date repair methods and specialist tools.

We think these recommendations will benefit all road users, create heightened awareness of road safety, better trained drivers, lower insurance premiums, and crucially, less deaths and severe injuries on the roads. Direct Line will continue to work with Brake and the Government to make our roads safer for everyone and reduce the tragic loss of lives.”

About this report

This is the first in a series of nine reports on safe driving by Brake and Direct Line. It examines the attitudes of 1,006 drivers and motorcycle riders towards driving/riding tuition and skills, vehicle maintenance, crash protection, and Government policies on road safety.

The report is based on a survey of drivers and riders carried out by Brake volunteers in 2008-09, at a range of locations across the UK. Every effort was made to ensure that a wide variety of people responded. Repeating some questions from a survey carried out in 2004 by Brake and Green Flag has enabled some analysis of how driver attitudes and behaviour have changed over the intervening five-year period.

Brake thanks all volunteers who helped conduct the survey and collate the results.

For copies of this and other reports by Brake visit www.brake.org.uk or call 01484 559909.
DRIVING TUITION AND TESTING

The high crash rate of young and newly-qualified drivers is a topic that has had much recent coverage in the media and is of concern to many people.

Q1: Do you think the current driving test is too easy?

There is significant public concern about the current driving test, with a quarter of drivers (25%) saying they think it is too easy.

- 25% said the driving test is too easy
- 68% said the driving test is not too easy
- 7% did not answer

Q2a: Do you think learner drivers should be required to gain a minimum level of experience before taking their driving test?

Despite only a quarter of drivers (25%) thinking the current driving test is too easy, the vast majority want to see requirements for learning to drive tightened up. Almost nine in ten drivers (87%) agreed that learner drivers should gain a minimum level of experience before taking their driving test. At present there is no such requirement.

- 87% said yes
- 10% said no
- 3% did not answer

Q2b: If yes, should a minimum number of hours, lessons, or a minimum learning period be required to enable learner drivers to gain the necessary experience?

The survey found fairly high levels of agreement with each of the suggested options, with one in five respondents (19%) agreeing that all three options should be required of learner drivers.

- 62% agreed that a minimum number of hours of supervised driving (e.g. 50 hours) should be required
- 59% agreed that a minimum number of lessons with a qualified driving instructor (e.g. 25) should be required
- 41% agreed that a minimum period of learning before they can take their test (e.g. 12 months) should be required
- 19% agreed that all three options should be required

Q3a: Do you think there should be any restrictions on young drivers for a period of time (e.g. a year) after passing their test?

There is growing support for post-test restrictions in the UK: almost as many drivers agreed that there should be restrictions on young drivers as thought learner drivers should have to gain a minimum level of experience before taking their driving test (81%, compared to 87%).

- 81% said yes
- 17% said no
- 2% did not answer

THE FACTS: YOUNG AND NEWLY-QUALIFIED DRIVERS

- One in eight UK car drivers is under 25, but one in three drivers who die on UK roads is under 25.
- Three-quarters of drivers passing their driving test each year are under 25.
- People who start driving aged 27 are about 30% safer than people who start driving aged 17.
- One in five new drivers has a crash within six months of passing their test.
- The average 17-year-old who passes their driving test is more than 50% safer after one year and after two years is two-thirds less likely to have a crash.
- Many newly-qualified drivers still identify areas where they need to improve their own performance.
- Employers do not feel that newly-qualified drivers are sufficiently trained to drive for work.

THE FACTS: GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL)

GDL aims to build up young drivers’ ability and experience in gradual stages. After a minimum learning period and test, drivers are given a period of time to gain experience on roads before gaining a full driving licence. During this time their exposure to the most risky driving situations is restricted, through measures such as curfews and bans on carrying young passengers. There is substantial international evidence that introducing GDL leads to significant casualty reductions among young and newly-qualified drivers.

- In New Zealand, car crash injuries fell by 23% for 15-19 year olds and by 12% for 20-24 year olds.
- In California, USA, at-fault fatal and injury crashes fell by 20% for 16-year-old drivers, with a 21% drop in the deaths and injuries of their teenage passengers.
- In Washington State, USA, fatal and serious crashes involving 16 and 17 year old drivers decreased by 59% in the two years after introducing GDL.

More information on GDL is available in the ‘Facts’ section of www.brake.org.uk.
Sam Sayer, aged 20, was killed in a crash on 7 September 2005, driving on the A31 in Ropley, Hampshire just six months after passing his driving test. Six people died in the crash: Sam, his four passengers and the driver of the other car involved in the crash.

**Q3b: Of the 81% who said yes...**
- 84% agreed there should be a zero drink-drive limit
- 79% agreed there should be a requirement to display ‘P’ plates, to show the driver is ‘on probation’
- 75% agreed there should be a ban on driving vehicles with engines over a certain size (e.g. 1.4l) unless driving under supervision
- 44% agreed there should be a curfew on driving late at night (e.g. between 11pm and 6am, the most risky time for fatigue-related crashes) unless driving under supervision
- 39% agreed there should be a restriction on driving on motorways unless driving under supervision
- 36% agreed there should be a limit of only one passenger (with the exception of family members) unless driving under supervision
- 32% agreed there should be a restriction on the top speed they are allowed to travel (e.g. 40mph) unless driving under supervision

**Q3c: How long should these restrictions remain in place?**
- 75% of the people who thought there should be restrictions said these should remain in place until the driver is at least 20 years old
- 18% thought they should remain in place until the age of 25

**THE FACTS: CHANGES TO LEARNING TO DRIVE IN THE UK?**
A public consultation was run in 2008 to consider possible changes to driver testing and education in the UK. Options proposed by the Government included:
- introducing independent driving and ‘situational’ judgement into the driving test
- a new syllabus and workbook, to encourage learners to gain practical experience of a wider range of driving conditions, including driving at night and in bad weather
- improving training for driving instructors
- creating incentives to undertake additional training and qualifications in safe driving
In the consultation, the UK Government also stated it is also willing to consider:
- stipulating a minimum number of lessons; a minimum learning period; or changing the age at which drivers are able to obtain a provisional or full licence
- introducing restrictions on some or all newly-qualified drivers, such as driving at night or carrying passengers
Brake would welcome all of these changes. Its response to the consultation is available in the ‘Campaigns’ section of www.brake.org.uk.

**Q4: Do you think Pass Plus (a course run by the Government which gives newly-qualified drivers extra training in difficult driving conditions such as at night, in bad weather and on motorways) should be compulsory?**
Pass Plus is not compulsory in the UK and only one in ten newly-qualified drivers (11%) takes it. Yet the public can see the common sense in requiring drivers to be trained in coping with difficult driving conditions as part of the process of learning to drive. Four out of five respondents (80%) thought the course should be compulsory.
- 80% said yes
- 18% said no
- 2% did not answer

**Q5: Do you think all drivers should have to pass an eyesight test?**
Almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) thought all drivers should have to pass an eyesight test at least every five years, with nine out of ten (91%) agreeing that drivers should have to pass an eyesight test every ten years.
- 29% said yes, every two years
- 45% said yes, every five years
- 17% said yes, every ten years
- 7% said no
- 2% did not answer

**THE FACTS: EYESIGHT AND DRIVING**
- Experts recommend everyone has an eyesight test every two years, but every year an estimated 12.5 million people in the UK who are due a test do not have one.  
- By law, drivers must be able to see an old style number plate from 20.5 metres or a new-style number plate from 20 metres. If drivers need glasses or lenses to do this, they must wear them when driving.  
- One in five drivers between 35 and 55 years old (20%) drive despite knowing their eyesight is not good enough.  
- Eyesight problems are common as you get older. Many people have to start wearing glasses between the ages of 40 and 50 because of failing eyesight, as the eye’s ability to focus deteriorates.  
- Older drivers are more likely to have crashes related to vision and judgement than young drivers.  

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Although older respondents were more likely to be in favour of restrictions on young drivers, a large proportion of young drivers themselves are in favour of restrictions. Even among the youngest age group (aged 17-24), more than half (54%) thought that restrictions should be imposed. Among older drivers (aged over 24), more than four out of five (85%) thought restrictions should be imposed.
Q6: Do you think all drivers should be required to re-take their driving test on a regular basis?

A significant minority of drivers think that a re-take of the driving test should be required. Four out of ten drivers (41%) support a requirement to re-take their driving test at every ten years or more often.

- 1% said yes, every two years
- 10% said yes, every five years
- 30% said yes, every ten years
- 56% said no
- 3% did not answer

Q7a: Have you received any practical driver training (driving with an advanced driving instructor sat next to you) since passing your driving test?

There is currently little incentive provided by Government or the insurance industry for drivers to undertake practical driver training after passing their test. Only one in five drivers (20%) has received any practical driver training since passing their driving test.

- 20% said yes
- 78% said no
- 2% did not answer

Figure 3: Have you received any practical driver training since passing your driving test?

Q7b: If no, do you think the standard of your driving would benefit from more training?

Half of drivers who had not received any practical driver training since passing their driving test (50%) thought their driving would benefit from it.

- 50% said yes
- 49% said no
- 1% did not answer

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS...

- Confidence has decreased in the rigours of the driving test. A quarter of drivers (25%) now think it is too easy, compared to just one in five drivers (20%) in 2004.
- There is growing support for post-test restrictions in the UK: eight in ten drivers (81%) now agree that there should be restrictions on young drivers, compared to seven in ten drivers (69%) in 2004.
- Support for post-test restrictions is also growing among the youngest age group of drivers (aged 17-24). More than half (54%) now think that restrictions should be imposed, compared to just more than four in ten (43%) in 2004.
- More drivers now think that regular eyesight tests should be compulsory, with three-quarters (74%) saying they should be every five years, compared to two-thirds (66%) in 2004.

Q8: Have you read the Highway Code since passing your test?

Despite the Highway Code being regularly updated by Government to provide official guidance to drivers on using roads, almost two-thirds of drivers (63%) admit not having read it since passing their driving test.

- 35% said yes
- 63% said no
- 2% did not answer

THE FACTS: THE HIGHWAY CODE

The UK Department for Transport’s Highway Code applies to England, Scotland and Wales. Many of the rules in the Code are legal requirements and failure to comply with others can be used in legal proceedings to establish liability. The Code forms part of the source material from which driving theory test questions are taken, but is essential reading for anyone using roads. It is regularly updated to reflect changes in law and road safety advice, with the latest version being published in 2007.

Q9: The Government is considering introducing a road safety qualification that can be taught in schools. Do you think road safety should be taught in schools?

Almost all respondents (95%) thought road safety should be taught in schools, with almost four in five (79%) saying it should be a compulsory subject.

- 79% said yes, it should be compulsory
- 16% said yes, but it should be voluntary
- 4% said no
- 1% did not answer

Figure 4: Should road safety be taught in schools?
Aled Wilson, aged 31
Aled Wilson, a motorcycle instructor, was killed on 22 November 2003 in Milton Keynes, aged 31. He was on his motorcycle when a 69-year-old driver turned right onto the road where Aled had right of way, and hit him. The driver, who had cataracts in both eyes, was not wearing the glasses he needed to drive. He was charged with careless driving and received a £1,000 fine and two-year driving ban.

VEHICLE SAFETY

Two-thirds of respondents (66%) drive every day, with a further one in five (19%) driving nearly every day. Almost all (94%) drive at least once or twice a week.

Q10: How often, on average, do you check that all your vehicle’s windows and mirrors are completely clean and clear before driving off?

Clean and clear windows and mirrors are essential for drivers to be able to spot hazards. Yet one in six drivers (16%) rarely or never checks their windows and mirrors are clean and clear. Less than half of drivers (44%) check every time they set off.

- 44% said they check every time
- 32% said they check most times
- 6% said they check about half the time
- 11% said they rarely check
- 5% said they never check
- 2% did not answer

Q11: How frequently do you check that all your vehicle’s tyres have legal tread depth, the right tyre pressure and there are no worrying cracks or bulges?

When accelerating, braking, steering and cornering, safety depends on your tyres being in good condition and having good contact with the road. They should be checked regularly, but less than a quarter of drivers (23%) check their tyres at least once a fortnight, while one in 20 drivers (5%) never checks at all.

- 3% said they check before every journey
- 9% said they check about once a week
- 11% said they check about once a fortnight
- 19% said they check about once a month
- 14% said they check about once every three months
- 6% said they check about once every six months
- 3% said they check about once a year
- 5% said they never check
- 25% said they rely on someone else to check
- 2% did not answer

Q12: How frequently do you check that your vehicle’s oil and water levels are correct?

Less than a fifth of drivers (19%) check their oil and water levels at least once a fortnight, while one in 25 (4%) never checks at all. Depleted oil and water levels puts a vehicle at risk of engine failure.

- 2% said they check before every journey
- 8% said they check about once a week
- 9% said they check about once a month
17% said they check about once every three months  
9% said they check about once every six months  
3% said they check about once a year  
4% said they never check  
27% said they rely on someone else to check  
3% did not answer

Figure 7: How frequently do you check that your vehicle’s oil and water levels?

Relying on someone else to check oil and water levels results in a lower proportion being checked frequently: only one in seven drivers’ (15%) oil and water levels are checked at least once a fortnight when they rely on someone else to check.

Q13: How frequently do you check that all your lights and indicators are working properly (e.g. by asking someone to stand outside your vehicle while you turn the lights on and off, or by reflecting your lights onto a surface you can see)?

Less than a quarter of drivers (23%) check their lights and indicators at least once a fortnight, while one in six (17%) never checks at all.

7% said they check before every journey  
9% said they check about once a week  
7% said they check about once a fortnight  
14% said they check about once a month  
12% said they check about once every three months  
9% said they check about once every six months  
5% said they check about once a year  
16% said they never check  
17% said they rely on someone else to check  
4% did not answer

Figure 8: How frequently do you check your lights and indicators are working properly?

Relying on someone else to check lights and indicators results in a lower proportion being checked frequently: only one in five drivers’ (19%) lights and indicators are checked at least once a fortnight when they rely on someone else to check.

Q14a: How often do you get your brakes checked by a qualified mechanic?

Having brakes in good working order is essential for vehicle safety. Worryingly, more than seven in ten (72%) of drivers rely on an annual service, or their annual MOT, to identify any problems with their brakes, despite the fact that brakes can deteriorate within a year.

2% said they get their brakes checked every month or two  
13% said they get their brakes checked every three to six months  
50% said they rely on an annual service prior to their MOT  
22% said they do not get their vehicle serviced and rely on the MOT to tell them if there is a problem  
11% said they, or someone else in their family, has mechanical knowledge and checks the brakes on a regular basis  
2% did not answer

Figure 9: How often do you get your brakes checked by a qualified mechanic?

Q14b: If you answered above that you rely on an annual service, do you know the percentage of wear on your brake pads (sometimes called ‘linings’ on large vehicles) at the time of your last service?

20% said yes  
75% said no  
5% did not answer
Q15: If your brakes were checked today by a qualified mechanic, are you confident that they would be found to be in good working order?

With half of drivers relying on their annual service to check their brakes (50%) and four-fifths of those drivers (80%) being unable to confirm the percentage of wear on their brake pads, it is surprising that so many drivers – almost nine in ten (86%) – were confident of their brakes being in good working order.

- 86% said yes
- 5% said no
- 9% said they didn’t know

Q16: Within the past 12 months, have you driven, even once, when you knew that:

a) Your tyres were defective (with worn tread, the wrong pressure, or cracks or bulges)
   - 12% said yes
b) Your oil or water levels were wrong
   - 8% said yes
c) You had one or more broken lights and it was dark
   - 11% said yes
d) You had one or more broken indicators
   - 5% said yes
e) Your brakes were in poor working order
   - 4% said yes
f) Your windows or mirrors were not clean or clear
   - 21% said yes

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS...

Vehicle maintenance practices have not significantly improved, despite questions on vehicle safety topics such as checking oil, brakes and tyre tread depth being added to the theory test for cars, trucks and buses in 2003.

- Slightly more drivers now check windows and mirrors are clean and clear every time they set off on a journey (76%, compared to 70% in 2004). Drivers also now check tyres slightly more frequently (19% check at least once a fortnight, compared to 16% in 2004).
- Fewer drivers check oil and water levels at least once a fortnight (19%, compared to 27% in 2004).
- Slightly fewer drivers are now willing to drive with at least one of the potentially dangerous defects listed in the survey (41%, compared to 44% in 2004).

THE FACTS: VEHICLE SAFETY

- Head restraints should be positioned so the top is level with the top of a person’s head and as close to the head as possible, ideally touching it. If there is no head restraint, or it is positioned incorrectly, the person is much more likely to suffer whiplash in a crash.  
- More than 432,000 people make an insurance claim for whiplash every year in the UK. Whiplash can cause neck and back pain, nausea, permanent disability and even death.
- Research centre Thatcham crash-tests cars to analyse their ability to protect occupants from whiplash injuries. In 2008, it rated 35% of new models as having ‘good’ protection, 25% as ‘acceptable’, 24% as ‘marginal’ and 16% as ‘poor’.  
- ‘Active’ head restraints, triggered by sensors in a crash, move towards the head, providing extra support and ensuring the head cannot move backwards. US research shows active head restraints reduce serious neck injury by up to 75%.

Q17: What do you think is the minimum legal tyre tread depth for the vehicle that you drive most often?

Three-quarters of drivers (74%) failed to identify the correct minimum legal tyre tread depth for the vehicle that they drive most often.

- 26% got the answer correct
- 61% got the answer incorrect
- 13% did not answer

Q18a: How frequently do you check, before driving off, that your head restraint and those of any passengers are properly adjusted for safety?

Correctly-positioned head restraints can prevent severe whiplash injuries and even a broken neck in a crash. Yet only one in seven respondents (14%) said they check their restraint before every journey and more than a third (36%) never checks at all.

- 14% said they always check
- 12% said they check most times
- 5% said they check about half the time
- 27% said they rarely check
- 36% said they never check
- 3% said they did not have a head restraint
- 3% did not answer
CRASH PROTECTION

Q18b: What is the correct height for a head restraint?

Worryingly, two-thirds of respondents (66%) failed to identify the correct height for a head restraint: level with the top of their head.

- 34% thought a head restraint should be level with the top of their head
- 19% thought a head restraint should be level with the top of their ears
- 7% thought a head restraint should be level with their neck
- 35% said they did not know
- 5% did not answer

Even among the drivers who positioned their head restraint correctly, less than two in ten (18%) checked it before every journey. This means that only one in 17 drivers (6%) checked their head restraint before every journey and knew the correct position for it.

THE FACTS: BELTING UP

- Seat belts and child restraints (baby seats, child seats, booster seats and booster cushions) save many lives in road crashes. You are twice as likely to die in a crash if you don’t wear a seat belt.
- By law, all occupants of cars, vans, trucks, buses and coaches must wear seat belts when fitted. There are a small number of exceptions, such as truck or van drivers making journeys of less than 50 metres for deliveries.
- In Britain, 63% of van drivers and 58% of front seat van passengers belt up, compared to 93% of car drivers and 95% of front car seat passengers. If as many van occupants wore seat belts as car occupants, 20 lives, 240 serious injuries and 1,000 slight injuries could be prevented annually.
- UK law says all children under 12, who are under 135cm tall, must use a child restraint that is correct for their height and weight. The few exceptions include short journeys where there is an unexpected necessity and where two occupied child seats prevent the fitment of a third seat. The EU recommends that all children under 150cm tall use a child restraint.

Q19a: Within the past 12 months, have you always belted up?

Wearing a seat belt is one of the most effective ways that people in vehicles can protect themselves in the event of a crash. Nine in ten (90%) of drivers said they always belted up, but one in 12 (8%) admitted not belting up on every journey.

- 90% said yes, they always belted up
- 6% said they belted up most of the time
- 1% said they only belted up occasionally
- 1% said they never belt up
- 2% did not answer

Q19b: If you don’t belt up, why not?

Almost half (48%) of the drivers who admitted not always belting up said they did not belt up on short journeys. Some gave more than one reason for not always belting up.

- 48% said they did not belt up on short journeys
- 19% said it is because seat belts are uncomfortable
- 9% said it is because they think you shouldn’t have to
- 7% said it is because they are a careful driver
- 4% said it is because seat belts crease your clothes
- 24% said it is because of another reason

Q20: When you drive with adult passengers, do you ensure they belt up?

In the event of a crash, an unrestrained passenger risks killing both themselves and anyone they hit in the vehicle. One in five drivers (19%) allows their passengers to put themselves and others in the vehicle at risk by not insisting that they belt up before setting off.

- 78% said they always check before setting off, and will not set off before everyone is belted up
- 16% said they sometimes check and sometimes ask adult passengers to belt up, but not always
- 3% said they know that adult passengers don’t belt up in their vehicle and they don’t ask them to
- 3% did not answer
IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS...

- There has been no improvement in drivers’ poor knowledge about the correct height for head restraints or low levels of checking they are positioned correctly. Only one in 17 drivers (6%) know the correct height and check their head restraints before every journey, exactly the same proportion as in 2004.
- The proportion of drivers who belt up on every journey has slightly increased (90%, compared to 85% in 2004). Drivers are now slightly more likely to refuse to drive off if all of their passengers have not belted up (78%, compared to 71% in 2004).
- Drivers’ confidence that children they have carried have been appropriately restrained has remained high, increasing from 95% in 2004 to 97%.

Q21a: Within the past 12 months, have you carried children as passengers?

More than six in ten drivers (63%) have carried children as passengers within the past 12 months, with more than half of this number (38%) doing this on a frequent basis.
- 38% said yes, frequently
- 25% said yes, occasionally
- 35% said no
- 2% did not answer

Q21b: Have the children you have carried as passengers always worn a seat belt, or been buckled up in a child seat appropriate for their weight and height?

Almost all drivers who carried children (97%) were confident that they had always been restrained appropriately.
- 97% said yes
- 1% said no
- 1% said they didn’t know
- 1% did not answer

Q21c: If you carry children as passengers, have you bought a new child seat due to the law on child seats changing in 2006?

Despite drivers’ confidence that children had been restrained appropriately, this question produced a high number of non-responses, with three in ten drivers who said they carried children as passengers (31%) failing to answer the question. This might suggest more people did not know that the law had changed than were prepared to admit it, or that they knew the law had changed but had not bought any extra child seats needed.
- 41% said no, they already had enough child seats
- 3% said no, they did not know the law had changed
- 12% said yes, they had needed to buy an extra child seat due to the change in the law
- 13% said yes, they had needed to buy an extra child seat, but it was nothing to do with the change in the law
- 31% did not answer
GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON ROAD SAFETY

Q23: Which of the following would persuade you personally to take more care on the road?

More than half of drivers (53%) said that more visible traffic police would persuade them to take more care, while almost half (47%) said they would be swayed by tougher penalties for traffic offences.

• 53% said more visible traffic police
• 47% said tougher penalties for traffic offences
• 33% said more Government advertising on road safety
• 19% said more enforcement cameras
• 9% did not answer

Q24: Thinking theoretically, if you had to decide how the legal system should punish a driver whose vehicle was so badly maintained that they had killed someone, what penalty would you give them?

Six in ten drivers (60%) would give a driver whose vehicle was so badly maintained that they had killed someone more than five years in jail, with almost a quarter (23%) saying the penalty should be more than 15 years.

• 2% said no jail term - just a fine
• 5% said up to six months in jail
• 11% said six months to two years in jail
• 16% said two to five years in jail
• 19% said five to 10 years in jail
• 18% said 10 to 15 years in jail
• 23% said more than 15 years in jail
• 5% did not answer

The overwhelming majority of respondents were united in agreeing that a driver whose vehicle was so badly maintained that they had killed someone should go to jail. Yet even among the respondents who thought such a driver should go to jail, more than four in ten (42%) admitted putting lives at risk themselves by driving when they knew something was wrong with their vehicle.

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS...

Drivers’ attitudes towards Government policies on road safety have remained remarkably consistent over the last five years. In line with previous Brake surveys, more drivers said that additional traffic police would persuade them to take more care on the road than any of the other options given. However, more drivers than in previous surveys said that tougher penalties for traffic offences would persuade them to take more care on the road, perhaps reflecting recent media campaigns by a number of tabloid and regional newspapers highlighting the leniency of many penalties for serious traffic offences.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Driving tuition and testing

To tackle the high levels of young driver and passenger casualties and the numbers of fatal and serious injury crashes involving younger, more inexperienced drivers, the Government should:

• set challenging targets to cut the numbers of young drivers and passengers being killed and seriously injured on our roads and the number of fatal and serious injury crashes involving young drivers
• introduce a Graduated Driver Licensing system, involving:
  → a minimum learner driver period of at least 12 months, encouraging learner drivers to gain supervised experience in all seasons and types of weather
  → a minimum number of hours professional tuition that must be undertaken by learners, with a requirement for a qualified driving instructor to confirm they are ready before they can sit their practical driving test
  → compulsory probationary ‘P’ plates for newly-qualified drivers with restrictions on the most risky driving situations, including driving at night; driving with young passengers; and driving high-powered vehicles
• revamp Pass Plus, introducing an element of speed awareness education and assessment or testing that ensures people taking the course are better drivers at the end of it
• score and publish driving instructors’ pass rates, to discourage them for putting candidates forward for driving tests until they are sure they reach the required standard
• work towards introducing regular re-tests for all drivers (e.g. every five or ten years) and regular eye tests for all drivers (e.g. every two years)
• work towards making road safety education a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for all ages, to encourage safe behaviour and responsible attitudes on roads from an early age

Vehicle safety and crash protection

To encourage drivers to take the maintenance of safety-critical components seriously, and to use available crash protection, the Government should:

• fund year-round media campaigns, including TV and radio advertising, on the importance of vehicle maintenance, adjusting head restraints, belting up and ensuring children are safely restrained in vehicles
• introduce statutory qualifications for mechanics and a requirement for any work carried out on safety-critical components by someone who is not qualified to be approved by a qualified mechanic (similar to requirements for domestic electrical work)
• ensure that all vehicle repair centres have quick and easy access to the most up-to-date repair methods and specialist tools recommended by all manufacturers
• make roads policing a national priority, which should include ensuring that there are adequate numbers of roads policing officers and setting requirements for random vehicle safety enforcement campaigns
• increase penalties for defective vehicles and non-compliance with seat belt and child restraint regulations
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For advice on safe driving, general information on road safety and details of road safety campaigns and events, including Road Safety Week, call Brake on 01484 559909, e-mail brake@brake.org.uk, or visit www.brake.org.uk or www.roadsafetyweek.org

For more information on Government campaigns on safe driving, visit the Department for Transport’s Think! website, www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

End Notes

1 Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency press office (2008)
3 Learning to Drive: a consultation paper, Driving Standards Agency (2008)
4 Graduated Driver Licensing: a review of some of the current systems, TRL (2001)
5 Royal National Institute for the Blind
6 The Highway Code, Department for Transport (2007)
7 College of Optometrists (2009)
8 bbc.co.uk/health (reviewed 2007)
11 thatcham.org (2008)
14 think.gov.uk

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