



Young driver safety

Around a fifth of all road deaths and serious injuries involve a young driver aged 17–24. Evidence from other countries supports a stronger licensing system to safeguard young, newly qualified drivers, helping them gain skills and experience gradually, while protecting against some of the biggest risks like driving at night or with same-age passengers. But what does stronger licensing mean, and is Britain ready for change?

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There are few areas of road safety where the evidence is as clear, consistent, and longstanding as it is for young, newly qualified drivers. For decades, we have known that risk is highest in the early period after licensing, not because young people are inherently reckless, but because they are still learning in a complex and unforgiving system.

We also know where that risk concentrates: driving at night and when carrying peer-aged passengers – situations where inexperience, social influence, and environmental complexity combine. These patterns are well established. Importantly, they are risks we can manage.

Graduated driver licensing (GDL) is one of the clearest examples of evidence translated into practice. By structuring early driving experience to reduce exposure to the highest-risk conditions, it manages the risk associated with being a new driver while allowing capability to develop. It aligns the licensing system with how people learn. Where implemented, it has consistently reduced collisions and casualties. The evidence base is established.

In Britain, the licensing system has evolved incrementally, but not in a way that fully reflects what we now understand about risk, behaviour, and learning. Progress has often been constrained by concerns about public acceptability.

This report addresses that directly, bringing together evidence, public attitudes, and practical considerations to show what a workable approach could look like.

What is particularly striking is the alignment between evidence and public perception. Road safety is often framed as a trade-off between freedom and protection. The findings here suggest something more nuanced: people recognise the risks, understand the rationale for intervention, and support measures that are proportionate and targeted. This is important because policy is most effective when it is grounded in evidence and has public legitimacy.

Road traffic collisions are not abstract events; they are moments that change families, communities, and futures in an instant. The consequences extend far beyond those directly involved, often affecting people who had no control over the situation.

The question is not whether we can prevent some of these outcomes – we know that we can. The question is whether we choose to act.

This report provides a basis for that decision. The opportunity now is to move from evidence to a political choice: to update the licensing system to one that better supports young, newly qualified drivers while protecting everyone who shares the road.

Dr Neale Kinnear

Chartered psychologist and behavioural scientist
Affective Mobility Ltd



Part 1: Context

Background on young drivers

Every year, thousands of lives are destroyed by collisions on UK roads. In 2024 alone, 1,602 people were killed and 27,865 were seriously injured in crashes in Britain.¹

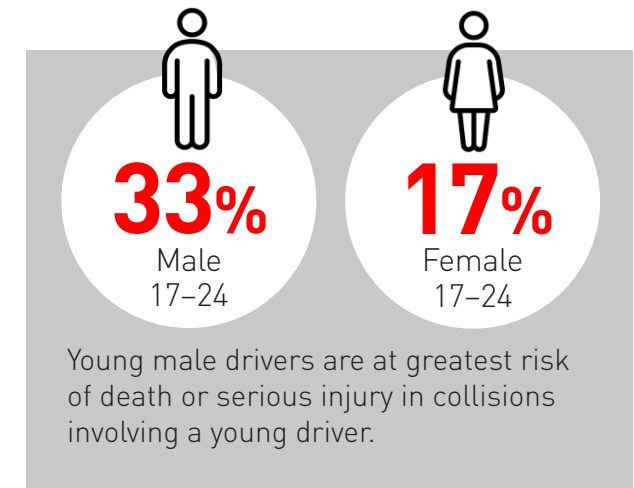
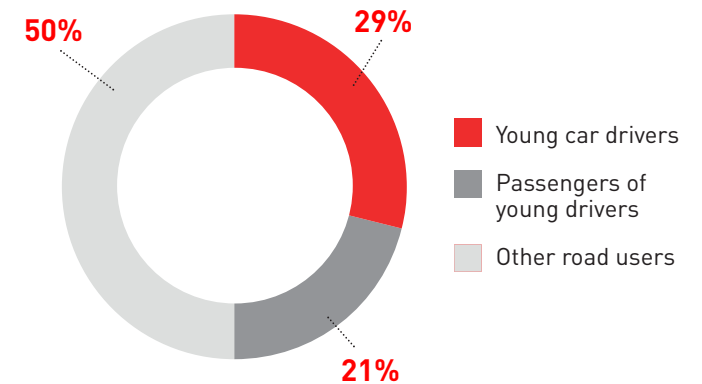
Young drivers are disproportionately represented in the statistics. In 2024, one-fifth (20%) of collisions on British roads that resulted in death or serious injury involved a driver aged between 17 and 24, yet they hold just 6% of driving licences.^{2,3} That's 4,740 people killed or seriously injured in crashes involving a young driver in Britain every year.

It's not just young drivers themselves who become road victims. Half (50%) of those killed or seriously injured in crashes involving a young driver are other road users, for example pedestrians, or drivers and passengers in other vehicles. A further 21% are passengers in vehicles driven by younger drivers.⁴

Young male drivers are at greatest risk and over-represented in road crash statistics. One-third (33%) of people killed or seriously injured from a collision involving a younger driver are male and aged 17 to 24. Nearly a fifth (17%) are female and aged 17 to 24.

The statistics make a strong case for change.

Who are the victims of crashes involving young drivers?



¹ Department for Transport (2025) Reported road casualties Great Britain, annual report: 2024 and supporting data sets
² DVLA (2026) GB Driving licence data. Table DRL0101. Provisional and Full driving licences held, by age and by gender, Great Britain
³ Department for Transport (2025) Reported road casualties in Great Britain: younger driver factsheet, 2024 - GOV.UK
⁴ Ibid

Why do young drivers crash?

A combination of inexperience and youth puts young drivers at greater risk of crashing. Lack of experience limits a driver's ability to spot hazards and control their vehicle when unexpected situations arise. Typical brain development means young drivers are often more likely to take risks – like speeding or dangerous overtaking – and less able to regulate their impulses or understand the consequences of their decisions.

Young, newly qualified drivers are at greater risk of being involved in a collision in their first few months of driving, when driving at night, and when they have passengers of a similar age in the vehicle.⁵ Other key risk factors for young, newly qualified drivers include drugs or alcohol, breaking speed limits or driving too fast for the road conditions, and not wearing a seatbelt. We explore some of these factors in more detail on page 26–29.

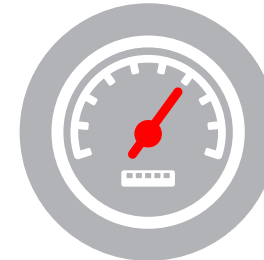
Key risk factors for young drivers



Age



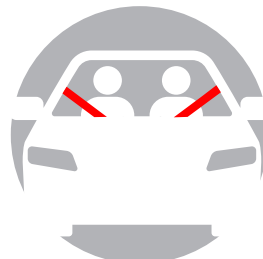
Inexperience



Speed



Driving at night



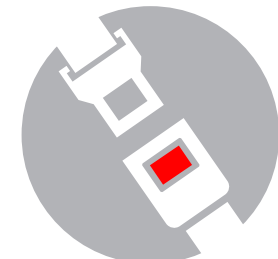
Same-age passengers



Alcohol



Drugs



Not wearing a seatbelt



1 in 5 drivers crash within a year of passing their test⁶

⁵ RAC Foundation (2024) Safe mobility for young people www.racfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Safe-Mobility-for-Young-People-RAC-Foundation-Proposal-Autumn-2024.pdf

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-looks-at-steps-to-make-new-drivers-safer>

Time for change? Strengthening the licensing system to protect young drivers and save lives

For more than 10 years, Brake has campaigned alongside road victims and the wider road safety community for changes to the licensing system to reduce the risk of crashes involving young, newly qualified drivers.

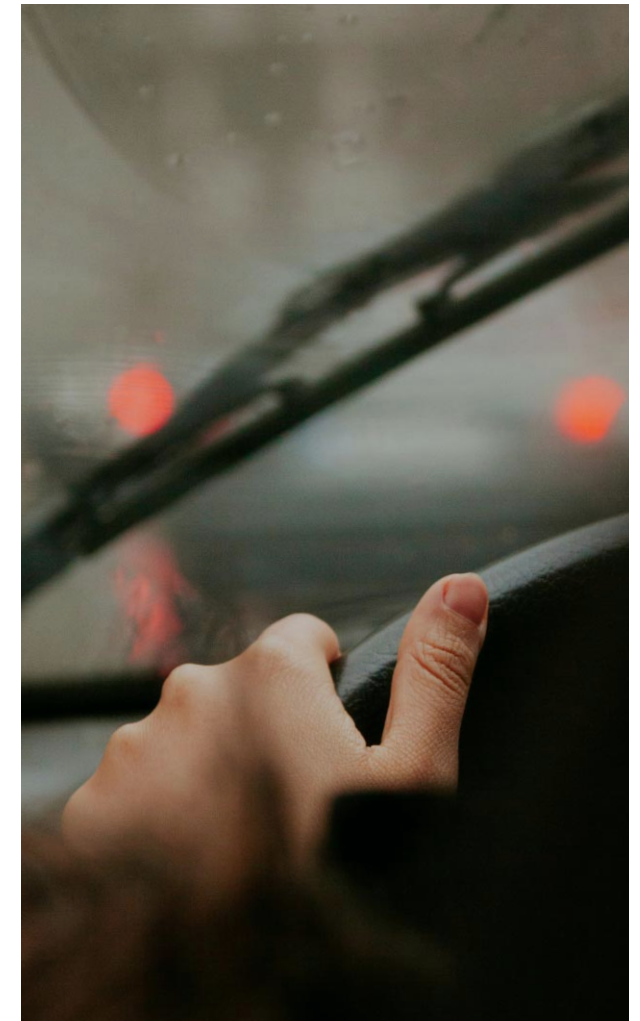
A progressive licensing system – commonly known as graduated driver licensing (GDL) – requires learner drivers to undergo enhanced training and testing over a minimum learning period.

After passing their driving test, newly qualified young drivers would have to wait longer until they can carry similar-age passengers, or drive at night, unless they are accompanied by an older adult. Some exemptions could apply, for example where a young parent is travelling with their child, or where a young person drives as part of their job.

In addition, newly qualified young drivers may be subject to lower drink-drive limits than other drivers for a defined period of time after passing their driving test.

Based on evidence from other countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA), it has been estimated that a stronger driver licensing system in Britain could prevent 4,471 road casualties and save £224 million each year.⁷

We take a look at the impact of stronger licensing across the world on page 34.



⁷ Kinnear, N., Lloyd, L., Helman, S., (2013) Novice drivers: Evidence review and evaluation. www.trl.co.uk/uploads/trl/documents/PPR673.pdf

Behind the numbers are real people, and real families mourning their loved ones

On 23 October 2021, 10 days before her 18th birthday, Phoebe Johnson died from injuries she sustained in a late-night collision. The car's driver and another passenger – both teenagers – walked away. According to Phoebe's mum, Nicky, the youngsters should never have been in the car together that night, and the crash would not have happened if stronger licensing had been in place.

"The driver was 19. She'd only been driving for eight weeks. She was driving at night on a rural road. She was speeding, she'd been drinking, and she was carrying peer passengers," Nicky explains. "If any parts of graduated driver licensing had been law, I believe they wouldn't have taken that journey, and Phoebe would still be here."

In January 2023, the driver pleaded guilty to causing death by careless driving while over the legal alcohol limit. She was sentenced to three years in prison, of which she served 18 months, and was given a six-year driving ban.

Read Nicky's story in full at
www.brake.org.uk/victims-voices

The judge remarked that, as well as the driver being drunk and speeding, "the loud music, the group mentality and the empty roads" all contributed to the crash. "The police also said her inexperience was a factor," Nicky adds. "So, when she lost control of the vehicle at speed, she couldn't bring it back under control."

Nicky is backing Brake's campaign for stronger licensing. She believes it's particularly important that young people are educated about the dangers.

"These kids – and they are only kids – they pass their test and are immediately given keys to a two-tonne machine that can travel at speed and cause devastation," she comments. "They don't understand that. They think it's just a bit of fun."

"The worst has already happened to us – nothing is going to change that. But seeing week after week more young people dying in this way, the pain physically hurts," she comments. "And for the most part, it could all be prevented."



Phoebe Johnson, who died 10 days before her 18th birthday in a collision involving a young driver.

“If any parts of graduated driver licensing had been law, I believe they wouldn't have taken that journey, and Phoebe would still be here.”



Part 2: The research

About the young driver safety research

Brake commissioned market research company OnePoll to conduct an online survey among 3,000 UK adults in July 2025. We wanted to find out what people think about young driver safety and different ways in which the driver licensing system could be strengthened.

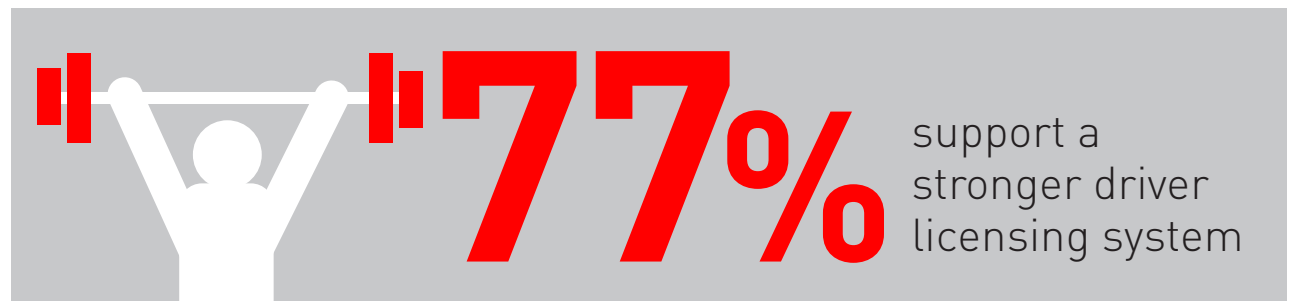
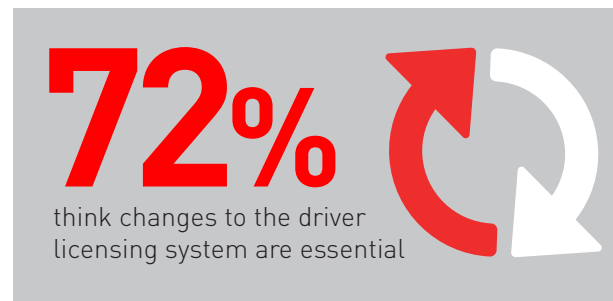
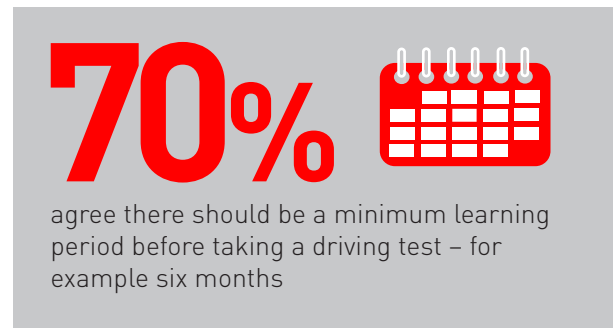
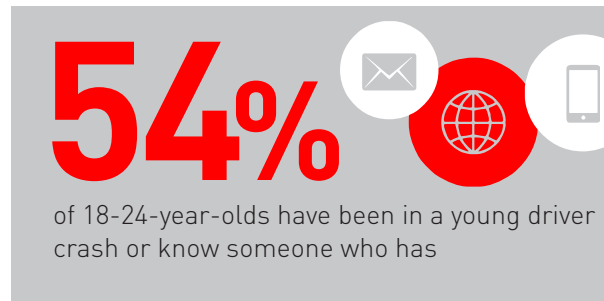
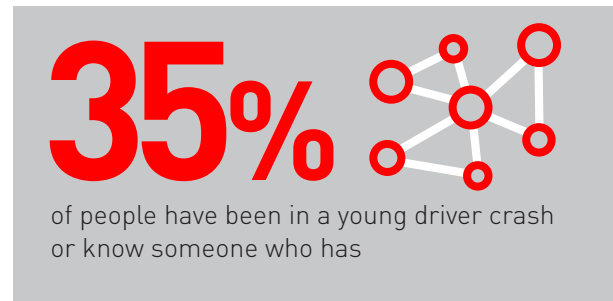
The respondents were nationally representative of the general population across age, gender and region. As well as those three factors, data were split based on whether respondents lived in rural or urban locations, their annual household income, highest level of education, driving licence status, and the length of time since passing their driving test.

For a full breakdown of results from the public opinion survey, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Brake also sought the opinions of MPs and professionals with a shared interest in improving road safety through a stakeholder survey. Their views are represented in the quotes included throughout this report.



Our research found...





Part 2: The research -
Road danger and protection from risk

Many people know of and worry about crashes involving a young driver

We asked respondents about their experience of crashes involving young drivers. We presented a number of scenarios, and they could select all options that apply to them.

More than one-third [35%] said they have been in a crash with a young driver, know someone who has, or know a young driver who has been in a crash. Among younger drivers themselves, aged between 18 and 24, that number jumps to 54%.

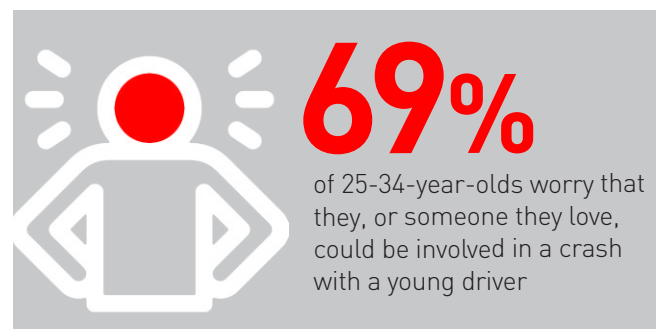
The prospect of being involved in a collision with a young driver weighs heavy too, with 59% of people saying they worry – 23% a lot – that this might happen to them or someone they love. It’s a particular concern for respondents aged 25 to 34, with 69% saying they are worried about it and 35% worrying a lot.

Do you know someone (including yourself) who has been involved in a crash with a young driver?

	All ages	18-24
Yes	35%	54%
Yes, I know someone who has been involved in a crash with a young driver	15%	21%
Yes, I know a young driver who has been involved in a crash	22%	34%
Yes, I have been involved in a crash with a young driver	5%	5%
No, I don't know anyone	64%	46%
Prefer not to say	2%	0%

How much, if at all, do you worry that you, or someone you love, could be involved in a crash with a young driver?

	All ages	25-34
I worry a lot	23%	35%
I worry a little	36%	34%
I don't worry that much	19%	15%
I don't worry at all	7%	5%
I've never thought about this before	15%	10%



For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Most people agree that everyone deserves to be protected from road danger – 78% agree that young drivers need greater protection

There was strong agreement that everyone, regardless of age, should be protected from factors that are known to increase danger on the roads.

Most people – 89% of respondents – agree that everyone who uses our roads deserves to be protected from known risks. More than half (54%) strongly agree, and one-third (36%) agree.*

More than three-quarters (78%) agree that young drivers need greater protection when they first get their driving licence because they are at a higher risk of being involved in a serious crash. Just 5% disagree.



*Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.



Part 2: The research -
Freedom vs. safety

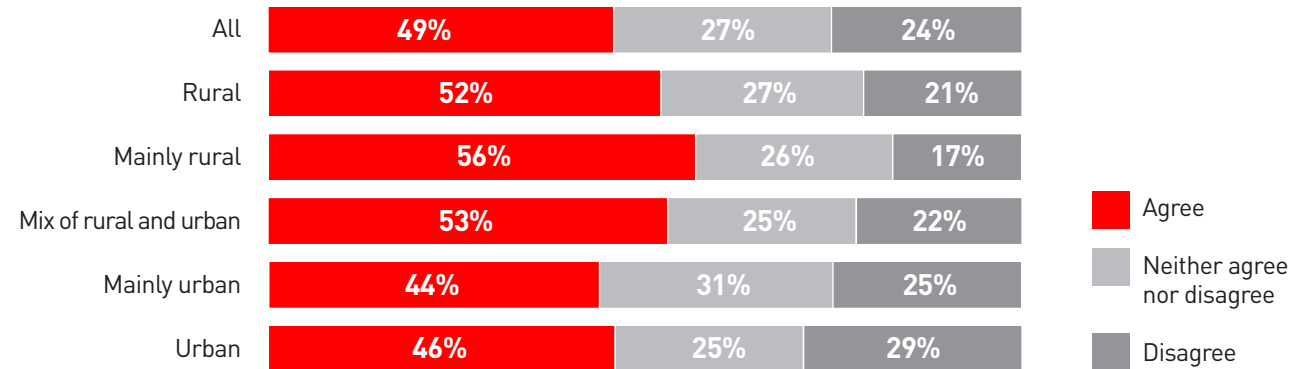
Inconvenient and expensive public transport means young people need to drive

We wanted to find out people's views on the balance between the safety of all road users, and the freedom of young and new drivers.

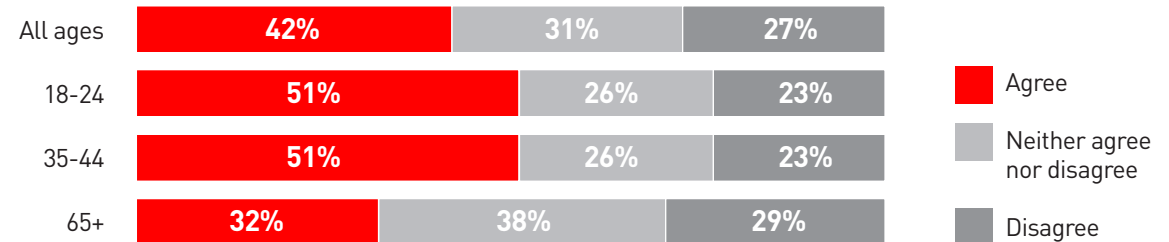
Nearly half (49%) of respondents believe young people need to drive because public transport is inconvenient. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was greater agreement among people who live in rural or mainly rural areas, where public transport tends to be less reliable and less accessible, compared with those who live in urban or mainly urban areas.


Along the same lines, 42% of respondents think young people need to drive because public transport is too expensive. While the number is significantly lower among the over-65s (32%), it is significantly higher among 18-24-year-olds (51%).


Young people need to drive because public transport is inconvenient



Young people need to drive because public transport is too expensive



49%  think young people need to drive because public transport is inconvenient

51% of 18-24-year-olds think young people need to drive because public transport is too expensive 

For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Young people should have freedom to drive but all road users need to be protected

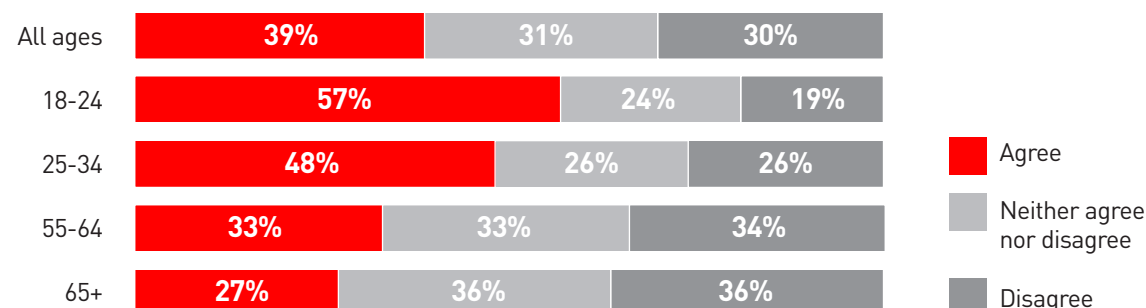
We asked the extent to which respondents agree or disagree that young drivers should have freedom to travel even though they are at greater risk of being involved in a serious crash.

Overall, opinion was fairly evenly split, with 39% of respondents agreeing, 30% disagreeing, and 31% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, although unsurprisingly the younger age groups favoured their freedom to travel.

More than half (57%) of 18–24-year-olds believe young drivers should have freedom to travel even though they are at greater risk of being involved in a serious crash.

We also asked whether people thought that strengthening the licensing system would restrict young drivers' freedom. Although 44% agreed that this would be a restriction, 25% disagreed, and 31% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Young drivers should have freedom to travel even though they are at greater risk of being involved in a serious crash



“ The Government must support measures to reduce the number of tragedies caused by road traffic [collisions], including investment in road safety, infrastructure and maintenance, better enforcement on speeding and law breaking, education programmes, and better safety technology in the modern industry.

“ [...] I admit that I do not have the solutions, but I have faith that we, as a Parliament, and more widely through a national conversation, can move the dial on the issue. We can find a way to protect our young people without blocking them from cars, which can provide a route to community for them. We owe it to our young people to do that, and to all those affected by road collisions. I know we can rise to the challenge that it poses.”

Rachel Gilmour MP, Liberal Democrats, Tiverton and Minehead
Westminster debate: Road safety: Young drivers. House of Commons, Tuesday 28 January 2025

For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Government must act to address young driver risk – 68% want their MP to do more

Around three-quarters (73%) said they believe the Government should prioritise the safety of all road users over young people's freedom to travel.

Moreover, most people – 79% of respondents – believe the Government has a responsibility to prevent future deaths and injuries resulting from crashes involving young drivers. And two-thirds (68%) said they would like their MP to do more to reduce the risk of crashes involving young drivers.

73% 

believe Government should prioritise the safety of all road users over young people's freedom to travel

79%

think the Government has a responsibility to prevent future deaths and injuries resulting from crashes involving young drivers

“Introducing a graduated driver licence system or a similar arrangement would be a common-sense step to protect young lives on our roads. Young drivers face the highest risk on our roads, and introducing sensible steps like phased driving privileges should be further explored by the UK Government.”

“Countries that have adopted graduated licensing have seen fewer tragedies among young drivers. A graduated licensing scheme is about giving young people the best possible start – safely, responsibly, and with the support they need.”

Liz Saville Roberts MP, Plaid Cymru, Dwyfor Meirionnydd





Part 2: The research -
General views on changes to the
driver licensing system

Survey results reveal widespread public support for a stronger licensing system

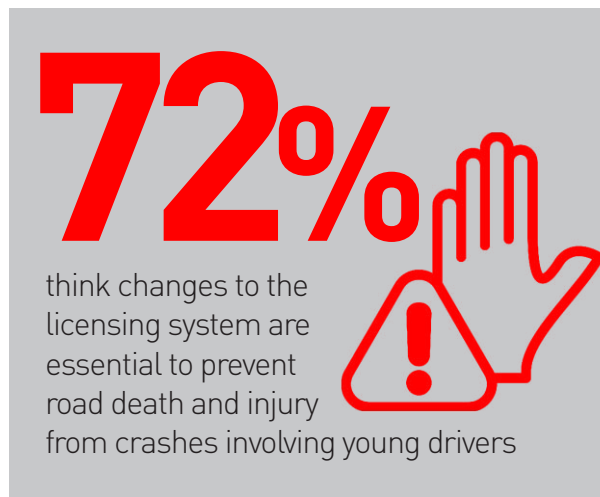
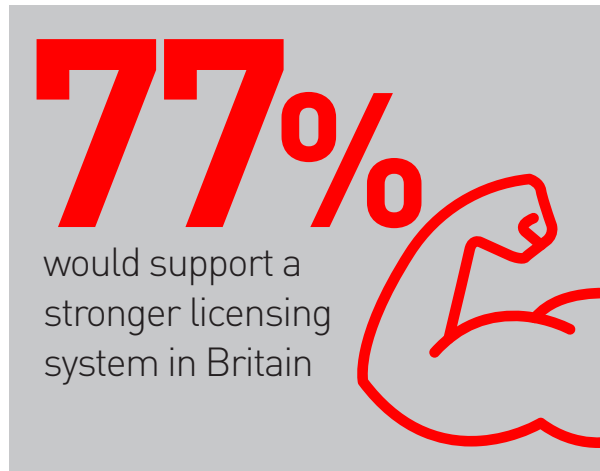
Asked whether the driver licensing system needs to be updated to protect all road users from crashes involving young drivers, three-quarters (75%) agree and just 5% disagree.

The same proportion (75%) agree that young drivers deserve to be protected by a stronger licensing system.

Meanwhile, there was strong consensus – 72% of all respondents agree – that changes to the licensing system are essential to prevent road death and injury from crashes involving young drivers.

Overall, the young driver safety survey revealed firm public support for change. Three-quarters (77%) said they would support a stronger licensing system in Britain, with just 4% opposing it. The remaining 19% were either neutral or unsure.

For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report



“ I remain convinced that graduated driving licences (GDLs) save lives – the lives of drivers, the lives of their passengers, and the lives of other road users. They have been shown to cut the number of fatalities and serious injuries in other countries. In New Zealand, for example, their GDL scheme has led to a 23% reduction in car collision injuries for 15–19-year-olds, and a 12% reduction for 20–24-year-olds.

“ It's not a question of penalising younger drivers. I believe GDLs are the right thing for new drivers of any age. It's about giving them the opportunity to build their experience and confidence during the first six months of driving after passing their test and allowing them to fully develop the skill and experience to enjoy many years behind the wheel safely. ”

Kim Leadbeater MP, Labour,
Spenn Valley

Cheaper insurance and evidence that it would prevent crashes and save lives would encourage more people to support a stronger licensing system

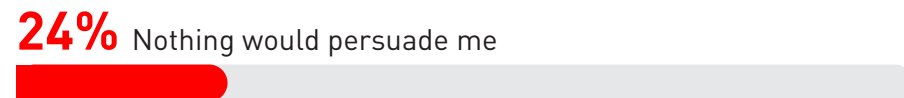
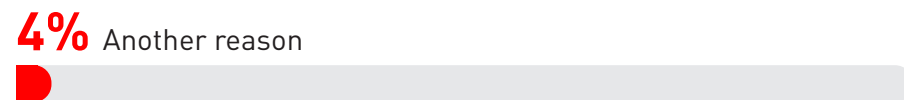
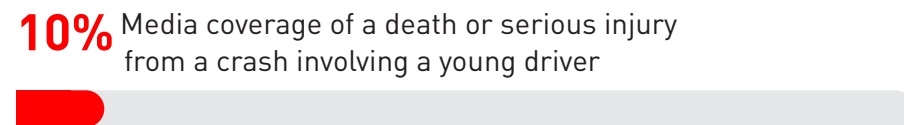
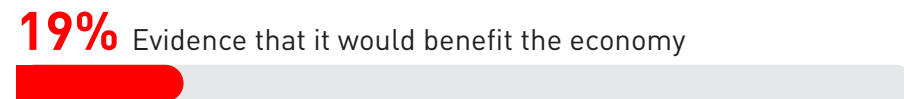
Of those who were not in favour of a stronger licensing system – including those who oppose it and those who were neutral or unsure – 76% said they could be persuaded to support it. The most convincing argument, according to our survey, would be evidence that a stronger licensing system would prevent crashes and save lives (48%).

This was followed by evidence that changing the system would reduce insurance premiums (31%); if a loved-one was killed or seriously injured in a crash involving a young driver (19%); or if stronger licensing was shown to benefit the economy (also 19%).

Interestingly, the demographic most open to changing their minds on stronger licensing is the age group that would bear the biggest impact – young people aged 18 to 24.

Of the 18–24-year-olds currently not in favour of changing the system, 88% said they might be convinced otherwise. Evidence that stronger licensing would lower the cost of their insurance would be the most persuasive argument (44%), with 41% saying they could be swayed by evidence that it would prevent crashes and save lives.

What, if anything, would most likely persuade you to support the introduction of a stronger licensing system in Britain? (Select up to three factors)



Results shown represent results for all age groups. For a full breakdown of results by age, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report




Part 2: The research -
Views on changes to licensing
for learner drivers

Our research reveals strong support overall for legislative changes to the licensing system that would ensure learner drivers gain more experience before taking a test

The vast majority of survey respondents (83%) agree that learner drivers should have a minimum number of hours of driving practice before taking their test, with just 10% disagreeing.

Even though this measure was comparatively less popular among 18–24-year-old respondents, almost three-quarters (71%) still agree that learners should clock up a minimum number of hours of practice before taking their test. Among over-55s, 87% support a minimum number of hours of driving practice.

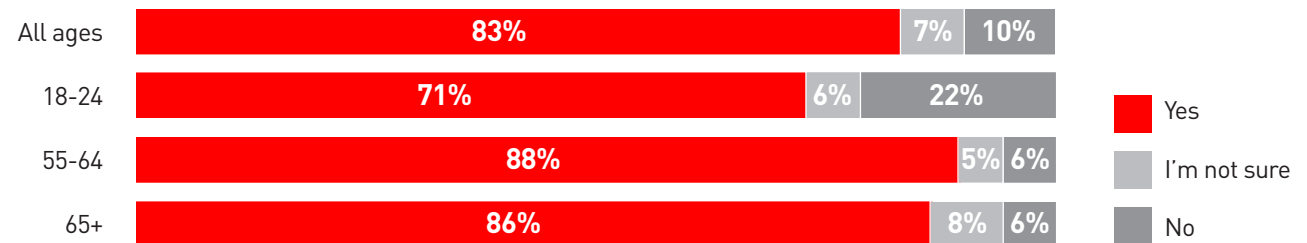


83% agree learner drivers should have a minimum number of hours of driving practice before taking their test

“ I think we all agree that experience on the roads can't be learnt... allowing anyone to potentially take a test a few weeks after having a few hours [of] lessons can be catastrophic. You can't experience many of the potential issues that you may come up against in a few hours of lessons so a minimum number of lessons should be beneficial. ”

Matt Bishop MP, Labour, Forest of Dean

Learner drivers should have a minimum number of hours of driving practice before taking their driving test



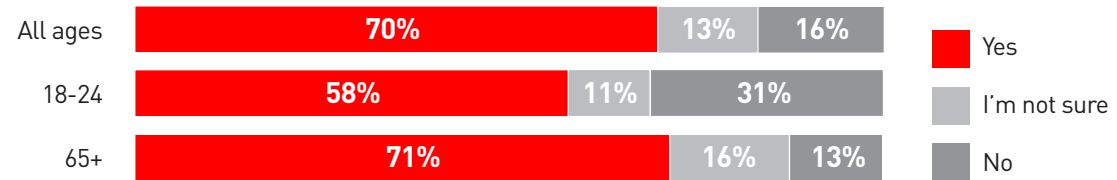
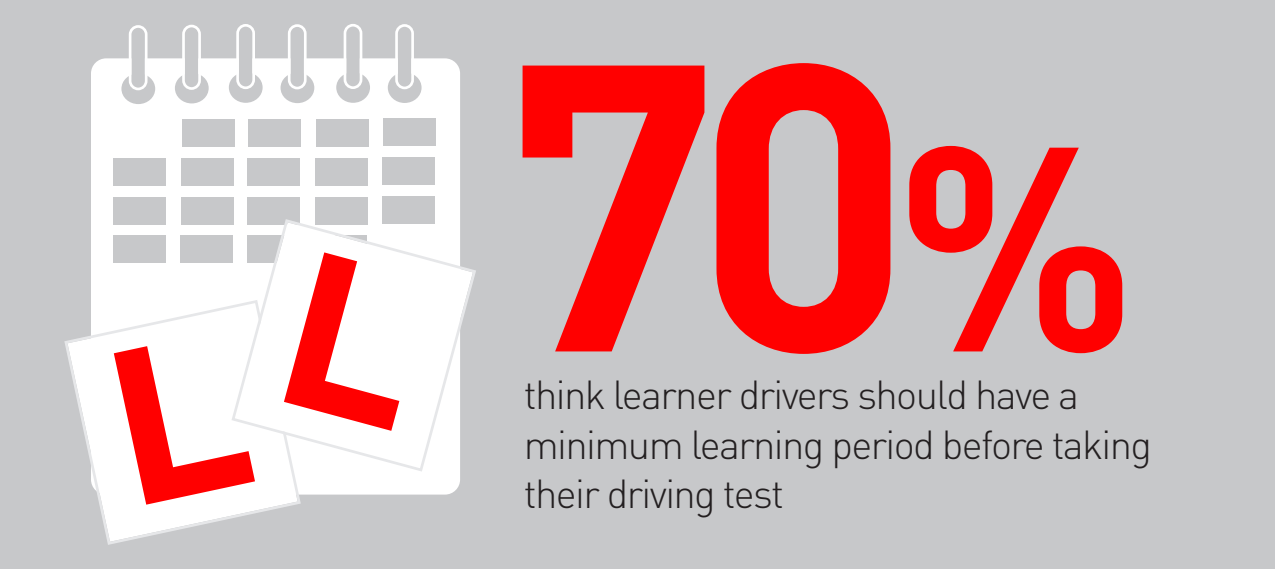
For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Similarly, 70% of all respondents said they think learner drivers should have a minimum learning period – for example six months – before taking their driving test.

Again, fewer younger people support a legal requirement for a minimum learning period. Just 58% of 18–24-year-olds said they think this should be required by law. Almost one-third (31%) of respondents in this age group do not agree with a minimum learning period, compared with 16% overall.

There was similarly strong support for laws requiring learners to have practice driving on motorways (79%) and to complete additional hazard perception training (78%) before taking their driving test. Evidence shows that hazard perception training is an effective way to improve driver safety.^{8,9}

Learner drivers should have a minimum learning period (e.g. 6 months) before taking their driving test

70%
think learner drivers should have a minimum learning period before taking their driving test

For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

⁸ McKenna and Crick (1997) TRL Report 297 – Developments in hazard perception.
⁹ Roberts et al. (2021) The effect of hazard awareness training on teen drivers of varying socioeconomic status. Traffic Injury Prevention. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15389588.2021.1940984>

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white sign. The sign features a large green letter 'P' on a red background, with the words 'NEW DRIVER' printed in green below it. The person holding the sign has a ring on their finger and is wearing a red sleeve. The background is dark and out of focus.

Part 2: The research -
Views on changes to licensing
for newly qualified drivers

We sought views on young people being granted driving privileges in stages. This would give them more practical experience before being in situations that place them at greater risk of crashing

Driving with similar-age passengers

Newly qualified young drivers are four times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision when they have passengers of a similar age in the car than they are when driving alone. If there is an older adult present, however, the risk of crashing reduces.¹⁰

Under a stronger licensing system, young, newly qualified drivers would wait for a set period of time after passing their test before being able to drive with passengers of a similar age in the vehicle, unless accompanied by an older adult. We asked people's views on this.

Three-quarters (73%) agree that it's OK for young drivers to have to wait a few months before being able to carry peer-age passengers.

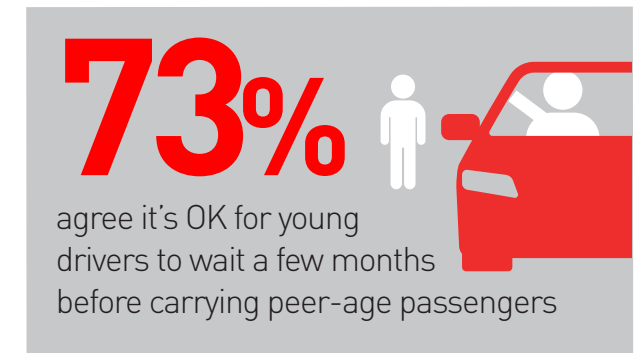
Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is disparity between the views of younger and older people. Among those aged 18 to 34, 59% said it's OK to delay being able to drive with younger passengers, compared with 84% of over-55s.

Just under a quarter (24%) of 18–24-year-old respondents don't think there should be restrictions on carrying peers, compared with only 5% of those aged 55 and over.

However, agreeing with the concept of delaying full driving privileges does not necessarily mean supporting legislation to enforce it.

So, we also asked whether there should be a law stopping young, newly qualified drivers from driving with passengers under the age of 25 for the first six months after passing a driving test, unless there is an older adult present. Some 61% would support this change in the law, with 22% opposing it, and 17% unsure.

Again, significantly fewer respondents aged 18 to 24 support a law change prohibiting driving with peer-age passengers for six months. While 43% would support such a law, the same proportion (43%) oppose it. Over-55s more strongly support this restriction on newly qualified young drivers – 72% said it should be implemented.



¹⁰ Tefft, B.C., Williams, A.F. and Grabowski, J.G. (2012) Teen driver risk in relation to age and number of passengers (Technical Report). Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Driving at night

Young drivers are more likely than other-aged drivers to crash at night and in the early hours of the morning.¹¹

A stronger licensing system could include laws that prevent newly qualified young drivers from driving at night for a set period after passing their test – unless they have an older adult in the vehicle. We asked survey respondents what they think about this.

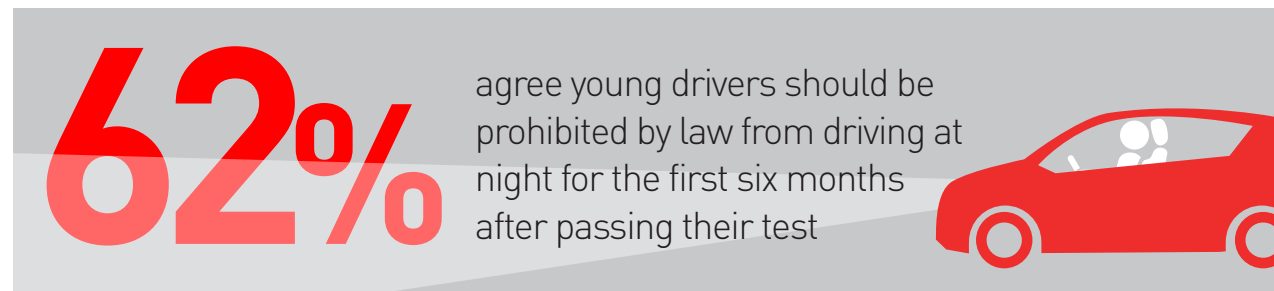
Three-quarters (74%) agree that it's OK for young drivers to wait a few months before being allowed to drive at night without an older adult in the car.

Again, younger respondents were less convinced, with just 56% of 18–24-year-olds agreeing, compared with 82% of over-55s.

While a fifth (21%) of people in the youngest age group don't think young drivers should have to wait before being allowed to drive at night unaccompanied by an older adult, just 6% of over-55s said the same.

Asked whether they think newly qualified young drivers should be prohibited by law from driving at night – for example, between 11pm and 6am – unless there is an older adult in the car for the first six months after passing their test, nearly two-thirds (62%) of all respondents said 'yes'.

Some 21% answered 'no', and 17% were not sure. Significantly fewer of our youngest respondents agree with this restriction (46% said 'yes', 39% 'no').



¹¹ Department for Transport (2025) Reported road casualties in Great Britain: younger driver factsheet, 2024 - GOV.UK

Telematics insurance

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents think newly qualified drivers should be required by law to have telematics insurance, compared with just over half (52%) of 18–24-year-olds. Telematics insurance policies (also known as 'black box insurance') use technology to monitor and record driving behaviours like speed, braking, cornering and other metrics, and some policies reward safer drivers with lower insurance premiums.

It is widely understood that these types of insurance policy can help reduce dangerous driving behaviours while the telematics system is in place. For young drivers, using telematics alongside other interventions can be a useful way to help them develop safer driving behaviours during the period they are most at risk (up to two years after passing their test).¹²



63%

agree young drivers should be required by law to have telematics insurance for six months after passing their test

¹² Curry, A.E., et al. (2015). Effectiveness of parent-focused interventions to increase teen driver safety: A critical review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 57(1), s6–s14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.01.003>

Drink-drive limits for young, newly qualified drivers

Stronger licensing could subject all young, newly qualified drivers to lower legal drink-drive limits for a set period of time, for example for six months after passing their test or for the duration of their probationary driving period (currently two years).

In our survey, we asked people's views on alcohol and young drivers. We found strong support for a zero-tolerance approach to drink-driving for the newest drivers on the roads.

The vast majority of people (88%) think newly qualified drivers should not be permitted to drink any alcohol when driving for the first six months after passing their test.

Even those aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 largely agree (average 80%).

88% 

think young drivers should not be allowed to drink any alcohol when driving for the first six months after passing their test

A zero-tolerance approach to drink driving

Every year, more than 250 people die in drink-driving incidents on Britain's roads and a further 1,900 are seriously injured.¹³

England, Wales and Northern Ireland* currently have the highest drink-driving limits in Europe (80mg alcohol per 100ml of blood), while in Scotland, the limit is 50mg alcohol per 100ml of blood.^{14, 15}

Even the smallest amount of alcohol affects driving ability, and a driver with 50–80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood is six times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a driver who has drunk no alcohol.¹⁶

Young and newly qualified drivers are at much greater risk of having a crash when under the influence of alcohol compared with older and more experienced drivers.¹⁷

Brake – alongside other organisations – is calling on the Government to reduce the legal blood alcohol limit for all drivers. A 'zero-tolerance' approach sets a limit of 10–20mg of alcohol per 100ml blood. This allows for minimal accidental alcohol consumption, for example through the use of mouthwash.¹⁸

*Northern Ireland has plans to bring limits in line with Scotland and further restrict new drivers and professional drivers to 20mg/100ml.

¹³ Department for Transport (2025) Reported road casualties Great Britain involving illegal alcohol levels: 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-involving-illegal-alcohol-levels-2023>

¹⁴ <https://etsc.eu/issues/drink-driving/blood-alcohol-content-bac-drink-driving-limits-across-europe/>

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/drink-drive-limit

¹⁶ Department for Transport (2010) Report of the review of drink- and drug-driving law

¹⁷ Department for Transport (2025) Reported road casualties in Great Britain: younger driver factsheet, 2024 - GOV.UK

¹⁸ <https://www.brake.org.uk/how-we-help/campaigning-for-change/the-change-we-want/zero-tolerance-on-drink-driving>



Part 3: Time for change -
Arguments to support
stronger licensing

Road death and injury are not inevitable. There is public support for change

Deaths and serious injuries from crashes are preventable tragedies, and we know the solutions that will make the biggest difference, including strengthening the driver licensing system to protect young drivers and all road users. It has been estimated that strengthening the licensing system in Britain could prevent thousands of casualties and save millions of pounds annually (based on analysis of 17-19-year-old drivers only).¹⁹

Our survey shows that there is strong public support for change. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents think changing the licensing system is essential to prevent deaths and injuries from collisions involving young drivers. Moreover, 79% think the Government has a responsibility to take action to save lives.

Research published by the RAC Foundation in September 2025 showed that people who are initially not in favour of stronger licensing tend to come around to the idea when they are presented with evidence of the risks associated with young drivers, and the positive impact that stronger licensing is having in other countries (see page 34).²⁰

“ I welcome the Government’s proposed mandated learning period for new drivers, but why not be more ambitious? There is good evidence from other countries. Why should young drivers in Northern Ireland get protections that young drivers in the rest of the UK will not? ”

“ I urge the Minister to remain open to look at other effective measures to support young and novice drivers, such as limits on the number of passengers and restrictions on night-time driving, which we know from evidence have the biggest impact on reducing death and serious injury. ”

Anna Dixon MP, Labour, Shipley

Westminster debate: Road safety. House of Commons, Thursday 5 February 2026

¹⁹ Kinnear, N., et al. (2013) Novice drivers: Evidence review and evaluation. www.trf.co.uk/publications

²⁰ <https://www.racfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Exploring-young-peoples-attitudes-to-graduated-driver-licensing-lpsos-September-2025.pdf>

Stronger licensing is not about restriction; it's a vital safety measure to safeguard young drivers and everyone who shares the road space



One of the perceived barriers to a stronger licensing system is that it restricts young drivers, affects their mobility and reduces their access to work and education.

It's crucial that we reframe this narrative, helping people understand that changes to licensing are vital to enable young drivers and everyone they share the road with to be safe. Stopping crashes involving young drivers not only prevents death and catastrophic injuries and the trauma they cause, but it also prolongs lives, reduces the burden on the NHS because people won't need treatment for collision injuries, and has many other societal and economic benefits.

In other countries with progressive licensing systems, there are exemptions for critical travel, such as when young people need to drive to access work or drive as part of their work, when they drive with family, or when they have caring responsibilities.

It's clear that young people also need to be able to access safe, reliable, affordable public transport, wherever they live, so they can travel independently. This is especially true in rural areas where public transport is less available.

“ Graduated driving licences (GDLs) are a practical and evidence-based approach to improving road safety and saving lives. Young and newly qualified drivers are statistically far more likely to be involved in serious collisions, and a GDL system would help new drivers build skills gradually in lower-risk conditions. ”

“ As a country we should look at the benefits of graduated driving licences, especially when other countries that have adopted GDL schemes have seen significant reductions in crashes involving young drivers. ”

Anna Sabine MP, Liberal Democrats,
Frome and East Somerset

Incentives alone are ineffective – legislation is essential

The Government has explored incentivising young drivers to adopt safer driving habits.

The Driver2020 trial, commissioned by the Department for Transport and conducted by TRL, evaluated the effectiveness of five voluntary interventions in reducing risks among young and newly qualified drivers, aged 17 to 24, in their first year of driving.

The 3,292 learners who completed the study were assigned to one of three interventions or to a control group. The interventions were: a logbook to encourage pre-test driving practice, with the incentive of reduced insurance; hazard perception training; and classes focusing on boosting skills and knowledge.

The 6,848 novice drivers who completed the study were assigned to one of two interventions, or to a control group, on passing their test. The interventions were: online materials to work through with a 'mentor' (e.g. a parent); and a telematics app to coach young people on their driving behaviour with weekly or monthly incentives for safe driving.

There was very low uptake of the interventions (3% to 16.5%), which highlights a problem inherent with voluntary measures – people aren't required to engage with them. Voluntary measures also risk creating inequality between young people who have engaged parents or mentors who are willing and able to help them, and those who do not.

Crucially, the Driver2020 project found that none of the five interventions reduced collisions, concluding that if they were rolled out across Britain in a voluntary context, they probably wouldn't lead to any measurable change in this outcome.

The message is clear: incentives alone are not effective. Mandatory measures must be implemented.



The impact of stronger licensing across the world

A number of countries and regions across the world have implemented strengthened licensing in various forms (described as graduated driver licensing (GDL) in North America and graduated licensing scheme (GLS) in Australasia). In all cases, it has successfully reduced the numbers of people killed or injured in road crashes involving young drivers.²¹

United States

GDL has been in place in all states and in the District of Columbia since 1996

14% fewer collisions
(New Jersey)

25% fewer fatal collisions
involving 17-year-old drivers
(New Jersey)

Canada

GDL has been in place in all provinces and territories since the 1990s

83% fewer deaths
among drivers aged 16 to 19

Australia

GLS has been in place in all states and territories since the early 2000s

55% fewer collisions
among probationary drivers
(New South Wales)

31% fewer crashes
involving drivers aged 18 to 20
(Victoria)

New Zealand

GLS has been in place since 1987

23% fewer collisions
resulting in injuries to
15–19-year-olds

12% fewer collisions
resulting in injuries to
20–24-year-olds

²¹ www.protectyoungdrivers.com/worldwideresponse



Part 4: Summary and recommendations

Summary

The results of the public opinion survey outlined in this report clearly demonstrate deep public concern about young driver risk. Sadly, this is also a very personal issue for many, with a third of survey respondents telling us they have direct or indirect experience of crashes involving young drivers. People are also concerned that they or their loved ones could be involved in such a crash.

It's clear that people understand the risks posed by young and inexperienced drivers and want things to change. We see strong consensus on the need to protect road users from known risks, and recognition that young drivers themselves are vulnerable on our roads. There is also widespread acknowledgement that strengthening the licensing system – to give young, newly qualified drivers more opportunities to gain skills and experience before driving unaccompanied – will go a long way to making our roads safer.

Our research also reveals majority support for some key measures that a strengthened driving licensing system would bring – including a minimum learning period, and driving privileges being granted in phases to address higher-risk situations, such as driving late at night or with similar-age passengers, unless an older, supervising adult is in the vehicle.

Many young people rightly want – and deserve – the freedom that holding a driving licence affords. It enables them to access education and work opportunities, enjoy leisure time and socialising, and actively contribute to society.

While the impact of licence reform on freedom is acknowledged, we find that most believe that safety should take precedence, and, moreover, that the licensing system should be fit for purpose to manage the high level of risk facing young drivers when they first start to drive unaccompanied.

To conclude, there is overwhelming support for stronger licensing, helping young drivers develop the skills and experience they need to make safe journeys, and protect themselves and other road users, whoever they are and however they choose to travel.

In brief

Public concern about young driver risk is widespread and personal – Many people have direct or indirect experience of crashes involving young drivers and are concerned about being affected themselves.

There is strong consensus on the need to protect road users from risks – People broadly agree that everyone on the roads should be protected from known risks, with recognition of the vulnerability of young drivers.

There is extensive support for strengthening the licensing system – Most respondents believe the current licensing system should be improved to better address young driver risk.

There is majority support for specific licensing measures to be granted in phases – People support practical measures, such as a minimum learning period, and protection from higher-risk situations, such as driving late at night or with similar-age passengers.

Safety is prioritised over young driver freedom despite recognised trade-offs – While impact on freedom is acknowledged, most people believe that reducing road risk should take precedence and expect the licensing system to manage that risk.

A new strategy for road safety in Britain

In January 2026, the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander MP, announced a new strategy for improving road safety in Britain, laying out the Government's plans for making roads safer and reducing road death and injury over the next 10 years. The strategy includes new national targets to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on roads in Britain – a 65% reduction by 2035. It also includes proposals for important new measures to reduce the risks associated with young drivers.

At the time of writing (April 2026), the Government was running consultations on two measures that would affect young and newly qualified drivers, and that comprise elements of a stronger licensing system: **a minimum learning period** and **lower drink-driving limits**.

Minimum learning period – The Department for Transport (DfT) defines a minimum learning period as any combination of the following policy measures that will mandate a minimum requirement for being able to take a driving test:

- a minimum time learning period, which outlines a minimum number of months that learners must be in the learner stage.
- a minimum number of supervised hours, which outlines a minimum number of required supervised practical driving hours.
- a logbook to record learning.
- a structured learning syllabus, which mandates requirements for learners to have practical experience learning to drive in a range of different circumstances.

Lower drink-driving limits – As part of a consultation on proposed changes to penalties for motoring offences, the DfT is seeking views on lowering the current drink-drive limit for all drivers, which could include an even lower limit for newly qualified drivers.

Northern Ireland commits to strengthened licensing

Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, new drivers and motorcyclists will be granted driving privileges in stages to reduce the risk of road crashes involving young, newly qualified drivers from 1 October 2026. The new system, announced in February 2026, will comprise a revised training, testing and post-test framework, including a minimum learning period of six months, enhanced training aimed at making drivers safer, and minimum periods of post-test driving experience before carrying similar-aged passengers and driving at night.

The road safety community has welcomed the progress being made in Northern Ireland to strengthen the training learner drivers undergo and give them more practical experience before being in the highest-risk situations. This demonstrates a real commitment to putting the safety of all road users first and protecting young, inexperienced drivers. The Government in Britain must now follow this example.

Recommendations

Every year, thousands of people are killed or seriously hurt in crashes involving a young driver. These deaths and injuries are preventable. Our message is clear: we must act now to save lives and prevent the devastation caused by road collisions.

There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating that stronger licensing has a significant role to play in achieving that goal.

We urge the Government to listen to this compelling evidence, which supports the implementation of safeguards for young drivers for a minimum period after passing their driving test.

We ask the Government to listen, too, to the voices of the individuals and families torn apart by crashes on our roads.

The road safety strategy is a welcome step in the right direction. We applaud the Government's commitment to seeking public feedback on several key elements. However, consultation must lead to evidence-based action to ensure its bold ambition is realised, with tangible outcomes that save lives and prevent more families from experiencing devastating loss.

Specifically, we are calling for additional measures to address young driver risk and protect all road users, with a firm pledge from the Government to:

1. Implement a minimum learning period of 6 to 12 months, to include at least 60 learning practice hours in different driving conditions and training types, to be recorded in a logbook, before being eligible to sit a practical driving test.
2. Grant driving privileges in phases to safeguard against the risk of carrying peer-age passengers and driving late at night.
 - Introduce new legislation to stop young, newly qualified drivers from carrying peer-age passengers for 6 to 12 months after passing their practical driving test, unless an older adult is in the vehicle (with some exemptions*).
 - Legislate to prevent young, newly qualified drivers from driving at night (11pm to 5am) for 6 to 12 months after passing their practical test (with some exemptions*).
3. Promote meaningful collaboration across the insurance sector to provide clear evidence about how telematics-based ('black box') insurance policies for young, newly qualified drivers can reduce risk and lower insurance costs.

4. Publish regular updates, against which progress towards the Government's casualty reduction target will be measured, with a plan for action if progress falls behind.



*Exemptions include critical travel, such as when young people need to drive to access work or drive as part of their work, when driving with their own dependents, or when driving while carrying out caring responsibilities.



Survey methodology



Survey methodology

Brake sought the opinion of members of the general public about young driver safety and different measures that could be introduced as part of a stronger licensing system.

The research was carried out by independent market research company OnePoll, which conducted an online survey among 3,000 UK adults.

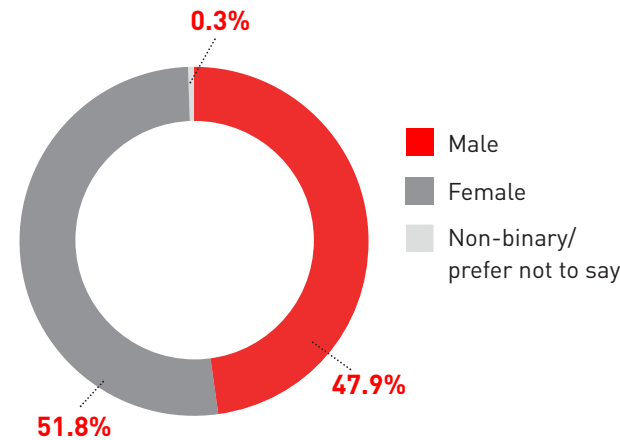
Data splits were provided based on age, gender, region, the type of area they lived in (rural/urban), household annual income, highest level of education, driving licence status and time since passing a driving test.

The sample of adults was randomly selected from a survey panel and weighted to be representative of the UK population for age, gender and region. OnePoll's weighting data is from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates.

Where data were collected from respondents who identify as neither male nor female, their data is weighted to reflect the proportion of these individuals in the raw sample, with the male/female groups reduced evenly to compensate.

Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The research was conducted in July 2025.

Gender

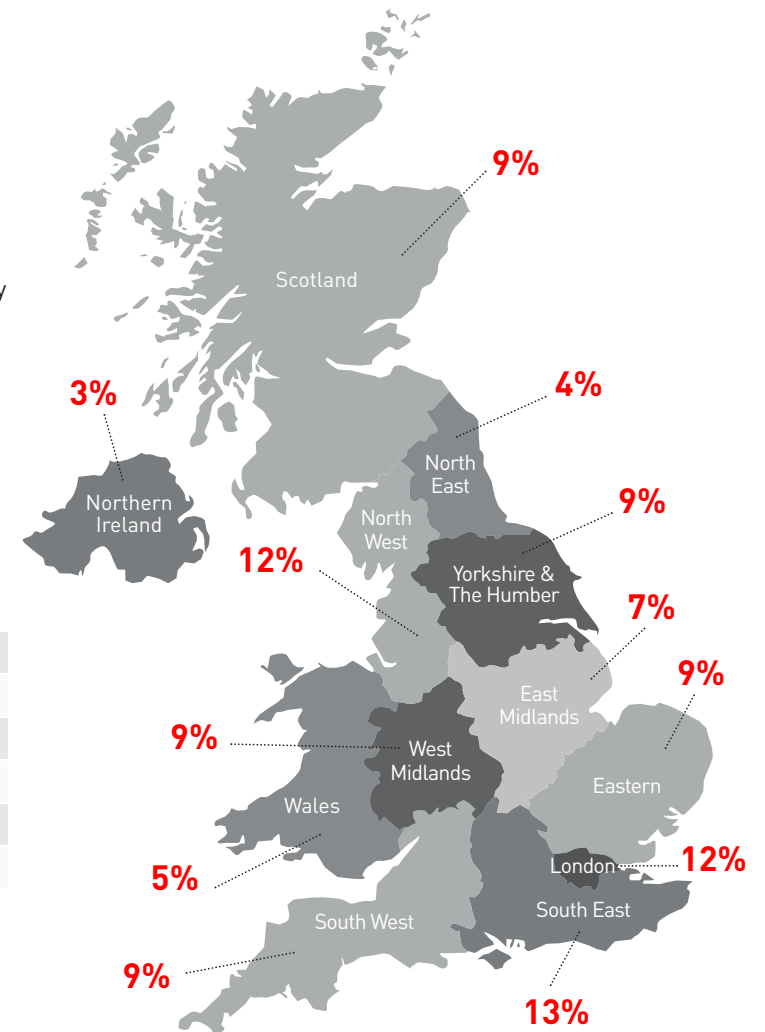


Age

18-24	10%
25-34	17%
35-44	17%
45-54	16%
55-64	16%
65 or older	24%

For a full breakdown of results, go to www.brake.org.uk/young-driver-safety-report

Region



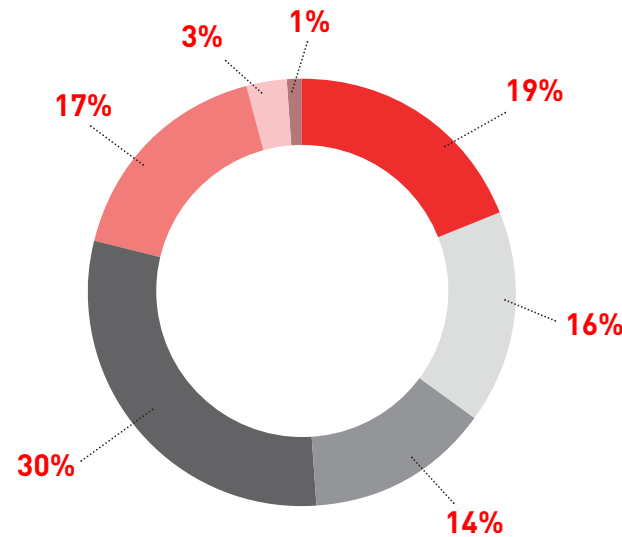
Area where respondent lives

Rural	10%
Mainly rural	11%
A mix of urban and rural	29%
Mainly urban	28%
Urban	23%

Household income

Below £10,000	4%
£10,001 to £15,000	6%
£15,001 to £20,000	6%
£20,001 to £25,000	7%
£25,001 to £30,000	8%
£30,001 to £35,000	7%
£35,001 to £40,000	7%
£40,001 to £50,000	11%
£50,001 to £60,000	8%
£60,001 to £70,000	7%
£70,001 to £80,000	4%
£80,001 to £90,000	4%
£90,001 to £100,000	4%
£100,001 to £110,000	3%
£110,001 to £120,000	2%
£120,001 or more	5%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to say	7%

Education level



- Secondary education (GCSE/O-levels)
- Post-secondary education (college, A-levels, NVQ3 or below, or similar)
- Vocational qualification (Diploma, Certificate, BTEC, NVQ 4 and above, or similar)
- Undergraduate degree (BA, BSc etc.)
- Postgraduate degree (MA, MSc etc.)
- Doctorate (PhD)
- None of the above

Licence status

I have a provisional driving licence, and I am learning to drive	3%
I have a provisional driving licence, and I intend to learn to drive	4%
I have a provisional driving licence, but I don't intend to learn to drive	2%
I have a full driving licence, and I drive a car or other vehicle	74%
I have a full driving licence, but I do not drive	7%
I don't have a driving licence, and I do not drive	11%
None of the above	0%

Time since passing driving test

Less than one year	1%
1-2 years	5%
3-5 years	10%
6-10 years	10%
11-20 years	12%
20+ years	61%



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