



**PARENTS AND YOUNG DRIVERS
A SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEYS**

NOVEMBER 2002

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS ON YOUNG, NOVICE DRIVERS' RISK

RoSPA received funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) to produce a resource giving advice and guidance for parents on the characteristics and accident risk of young, novice drivers to help them regulate the risks involved in their own children driving the family car.

A questionnaire was drawn up for young drivers to complete with a similar questionnaire for parents of young drivers. The views of motor insurers were sought as well as those of young people undertaking pre-driver education.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Young driver and parent questionnaires were sent to 200 RoADA members, 100 pass plus candidates via 7 ADIs offering the scheme. A questionnaire was sent to 50 of the top motor insurers (as identified by ABI). Both the young driver and parent questionnaires were posted on RoSPA's website for approximately 8 weeks and in addition the young driver questionnaire was also posted on the Norwich Union young workers website.

Approximately 3000 pre-driver questionnaires were circulated by 11 Road Safety Officers to pupils undertaking pre-driver education within their authorities.

YOUNG DRIVERS

40 questionnaires were fully completed. The age range of respondents was 17-24 years (although we asked for drivers 21 and under to complete it) with an average age of 20 years.

The driving experience of the sample totalled 969 months (80 years 9 months) post-test, the earliest pass date was October 1996 and the latest August 2002, with one respondent still holding a provisional licence. The average driving experience was 2 years 1 month.

85% of the respondents still lived at home, two-thirds of whom had their own car, with 50% having the use of the family car (some respondents used the family car as well as having their own vehicle).

68% of young drivers had received some sort of parental assistance when learning to drive. The vast majority had received extra practice with family members between lessons, some had received financial help and advice and 2 respondents had been taught entirely by their parents.

Restrictions

Only 25% of young drivers who responded are subject to parental restrictions, three-quarters are not. Of the 75% who are not subject to restrictions, 53% indicated that they would not object to negotiating restrictions with their parents.

Both those who were already subject to restrictions and those who said they would not object to some (65% of the total sample) were asked to say which restrictions they were subject to or which they would consider reasonable.

The table below sets out the results.

	Subject to Restrictions		Not object to restrictions	
	Number	%	Number	%
Driving restricted to certain times of day	2	20	1	6
Weekly mileage restricted	1	10	4	25
Confirm destinations in advance	7	70	12	75
Limit on young passengers	2	20	10	63
No alcohol or drugs	7	70	16	100
Seatbelt wearing	6	60	16	100
No lending the car	7	70	16	100
Agree to obey all traffic laws	5	50	14	88
Never use a mobile while driving	5	50	15	94
Avoid distractions	2	20	9	56
Telephone if going to be late	6	60	15	94
Other	4	40	2	13

Restrictions that were listed under 'other' included:-

- Don't get caught speeding (!)
- Ask before using the car
- Must take 'Pass Plus'
- No motorway driving alone
- Parents have first call on car use

Of the 10 young drivers already subject to restrictions, 4 had negotiated them, restrictions had been imposed on 3 young drivers, 1 said they were both negotiated and imposed and 2 respondents did not answer the question.

Those who indicated they would not object to restrictions thought they should last from 6-18 months although some indicated that some restrictions, like alcohol and drugs, should last forever. Many suggested that restrictions should last until the young driver had their own car or until their parents were happy with their behaviour and driving.

Crashes and Insurance

28% of the sample had crashed, 60% had not and 12% did not answer the question.

67% had not encountered difficulties with insurance although many of these still cited the high cost of insurance. Several young drivers confirmed that they were still on their parents insurance and one stated that it was cheaper to have his car in his parents name and for them to insure it on his behalf. A couple of young drivers had discovered that the insurance cost was higher than the price of the vehicle they first intended to buy.

PARENTS OF YOUNG DRIVERS

17 parents of young drivers completed the questionnaire. There were between 1 and 3 drivers under 22 years in the household (average 1.4).

65% of the young drivers in the household had their own car, whilst only 29% used the family car. Unlike in the young driver survey, none of the young drivers recorded here had their own car and still used the family car as well.

94% of parents helped their children to learn to drive, again in the main this was done by providing extra practice, with several contributing financially and one parent providing all of the instruction.

Restrictions

Of the 17 parents who responded 9 (53%) placed restrictions on their child's driving. Of the 8 who did not currently have restrictions in place there was an equal divide between those who would consider restrictions and those who would not.

Therefore in total 13 parents (76%) either already placed restrictions on their child's driving or would consider doing so. The restrictions used or those which would be considered are set out in the table below.

	Already place Restrictions		Consider restrictions	
	Number	%	Number	%
Driving restricted to certain times of day	3	33	2	50
Weekly mileage restricted	1	11	0	0
Confirm destinations in advance	6	67	1	25
Limit on young passengers	4	44	3	75
No alcohol or drugs	9	100	4	100
Seatbelt wearing	9	100	4	100
No lending the car	9	100	4	100
Agree to obey all traffic laws	9	100	4	100
Never use a mobile while driving	7	78	4	100
Avoid distractions	8	89	2	50
Telephone if going to be late	8	89	4	100
Other	5	56	1	25

The things that were mentioned in response to 'other' included:-

- Pass advance test within 2 years
- Hands free mobile only
- Limited motorway driving
- Car to be returned at a certain time
- Safe parking in well lit surroundings
- No motorway driving until taken Pass Plus

Out of the 9 respondents who placed restrictions, 2 had negotiated restrictions and 5 had imposed them, 1 had done both and 1 parent did not answer the question. The restrictions were fixed for between 2 years and indefinitely depending on a decision by the parent.

Crashes and Insurance

From the sample obtained, 5 young drivers in the household had crashed (29%), 11 had not (65%) with one parent not answering the question. Parents were asked whether any difficulties had been encountered with insuring the family car for their child, 59% had not had difficulty although many indicated it was expensive, 12% had found it difficult, 12% did not drive the family car and 17% did not answer the question.

INSURERS

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) provided details of the top 50 motor insurers, questionnaires were sent out to these companies, 23 replied.

18 companies insure drivers aged less than 22 years (78%). 2 do not and 3 only insure them as additional named drivers on their parents policies. Also one noted that they do not insure young drivers aged under 21, one does not cover drivers under 25 in Northern Ireland, and 2 companies only cover young drivers who drive vehicles in lower insurance groups (lower engine capacity).

Only 7 of the insurers offer discounts on premiums to young drivers who have undertaken further training, 16 (70%) do not.

When asked if the companies thought there was any benefit to parents restricting or imposing conditions on the use of the family car by newly qualified children, an overwhelming majority thought there was, only one company disagreed.

Of the companies who responded, 61% impose conditions when insuring newly qualified drivers. Mostly this is a higher excess. One company excludes the driver from using the car to travel to and from their place of work or study and another excludes the driver from driving other vehicles. Often the higher excess applies for the first 12 months of driving.

Only one company out of the 23 who responded, offers any guidance to parents of young drivers or young drivers themselves at the time they seek insurance, although 2 companies pointed out that they are brokers and do not have direct contact with the public.

PRE-DRIVERS

Approximately 3000 questionnaires were sent out to students aged between 14 and 17 years, taking part in pre-driver education, these were distributed by the following organisations:-

Bedfordshire County Council	Durham Constabulary through the
Bexley Council	'Wisedrive' event
Derbyshire County Council	Essex County Council
Devon County Council	Isle of Man Government
Dumfries and Galloway	Isle of Wight Council
Constabulary	Reading Borough Council
	Redbridge Council

A total of 1,393 questionnaires were returned, approximately 46%.

97% of respondents indicated that they intend to learn to drive once aged 17 (or 16 in the Isle of Man). 64% confirmed that they would be allowed to use the family car whilst learning to drive, this figure increases to 75% once they pass their test.

66% of students expect their parents to place some restrictions on their driving in return for being allowed to use the family car or a car financed with help from their parents.

Students expect their parents to use the following restrictions, they are listed in order of popularity: -

Restriction	%
No alcohol or drugs	65
No lending the car or allowing others to drive	62
Agree to obey all traffic laws and regulations	59
Driver and passengers to wear seatbelts at all times	57
Never use a mobile phone whilst driving only when parked	49
Telephone if going to be later than expected	45
Confirm destinations in advance	35
Limit on number of young passengers allowed	28
Driving restricted at certain times	26
Avoid distractions	24
Weekly mileage restricted	11

The Road Safety Officer in the Isle of Wight also asked his respondents whether they would be willing to pay for all of the fuel they use and contribute towards the cost of road tax and insurance for the family car once they are driving. 83% said they will contribute.

Those who indicated that they were likely to be restricted to driving at certain times were also asked to indicate when they would be restricted. The majority indicated that they will not be allowed to drive after 11pm/midnight. Several respondents mentioned avoiding rush hour or poor weather conditions. Some said they will not be able to use the family car if it is required by their parents at the same time.

Although only 66% of students expect their parents to set restrictions on their driving once they have passed their test, 86% indicated that it is a reasonable thing for parents to do. The reasons given by the students who felt it was not reasonable for parents to place restrictions on their driving include:-

- They are restricting your life
- It is not fair, you should be trusted as an adult
- You should be given some responsibility
- You have to make your own mistakes
- You don't learn to drive to be told when and where to go
- Driving is for independence when young
- Families need to trust you, not bribe you
- You have passed your test and are qualified to drive without assistance

75% of respondents expect to be involved with the setting of any restrictions. In response to the question about how long restrictions should last there was a wide range of answers. Some students thought this should be as little as 1 month, others felt it should be between 6 to 12 months. Several students indicated that some of the restrictions, like no alcohol and drugs and wearing seatbelts, should be obeyed forever, thereby recognising the law on such issues.

For some students the answer to this question is linked with whether they will be driving their parents car, believing that restrictions should end once they have their own car. For others it is a question of age and whether they live at home, indicating that once they are 18 or have moved out of home, restrictions should no longer apply.

Several respondents feel that the ending of restrictions is a matter to be negotiated with parents, often indicating that parents need to decide when the young person is sufficiently experienced at driving and shows sufficient responsibility for the restrictions to be lifted.

CONCLUSIONS

It is interesting to note that whilst only 25% of young drivers who responded to the survey are subject to restrictions when they drive, of those who are not restricted, just over half of them think it is reasonable for parents to negotiate restrictions. Although in the sample of parents responding to the survey there was a higher number who used restrictions with their child (53%) than in the sample of young drivers, again half of those without restrictions would consider negotiating some.

It is clear from the results of the pre-driver survey that young people over-estimate the likelihood of them being subject to restrictions. A third of respondents expected parents to negotiate restrictions with them once they had passed their test, whereas the results above show that the figure is closer to a half and probably more likely to be a quarter.

National statistics show that 1 in 5 drivers (20%) crash within their first year of driving. From the survey results approximately 28% of respondents had crashed. However this was since starting to drive, which for most respondents was more than a year, which probably accounts for the slightly higher figure.

Although some respondents did have difficulty in obtaining insurance, most did not, but mentioned the high cost involved. Only 35% of the Insurers who responded offer a discount in premium to those drivers undertaking further training. Of the insurers who returned a questionnaire, nearly all fail to offer any guidance to young/novice drivers or their parents despite the majority indicating that parental restrictions are a benefit.

The results of the survey have helped to inform the contents of the resource that RoSPA is producing for young drivers and their parents, which includes a safer driving contract.