

TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

Road safety: young and novice drivers inquiry

Scope of the inquiry

Young drivers aged 17-24 account for seven percent of the UK's driving licence holders but are involved in 20% of fatal and serious collisions.

Concerned about these high collision and casualty rates, the Transport Select Committee is launching an inquiry to scrutinise what action the Government is taking to reduce the risks of young and novice drivers being involved in a road traffic collision.

The Committee invites evidence on: the reasons why young and novice drivers are at a higher risk of being involved in a road traffic collision, and what the Government can do to reduce these risks—this could include the use of telematic devices, proposals for a system of probation or Graduated Driver Licensing, or changes to training and testing for new drivers.

The Committee would like to receive written submissions no later than Friday 30 August. Evidence can be submitted through the web portal [here](#).

About the Institute of Alcohol Studies

The Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) is an independent institute bringing together evidence, policy and practice from home and abroad to promote an informed debate on alcohol's impact on society. Our purpose is to advance the use of the best available evidence in public policy decisions on alcohol. For more information, visit www.ias.org.uk.

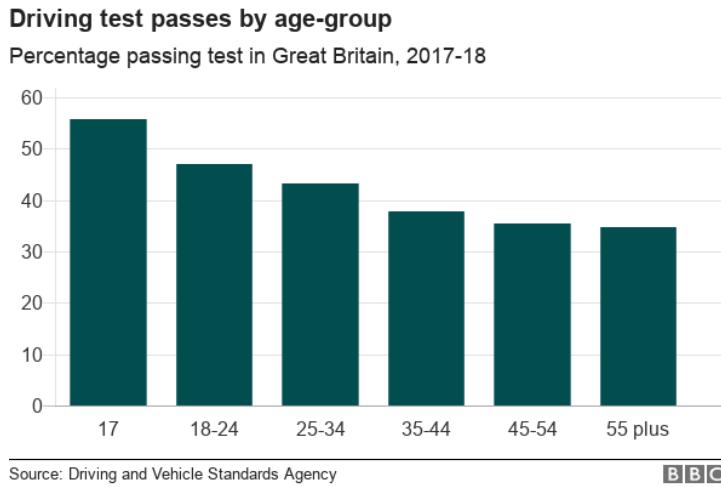
Our submission highlights the fact that alcohol is a prominent factor in the injuries and deaths of novice drivers on Great Britain's roads. IAS advise that the most effective ways to reduce the prevalence of drink-driving (ie a lower drink drive limit, mandatory alcohol interlocks) chime with the rationale of Graduated Driver Licensing, a system that will ultimately reduce the burden of road traffic accidents experienced by young and novice drivers.

For more information on our written evidence to this inquiry, please contact the **Research & Information Officer Habib Kadiri** (details below):

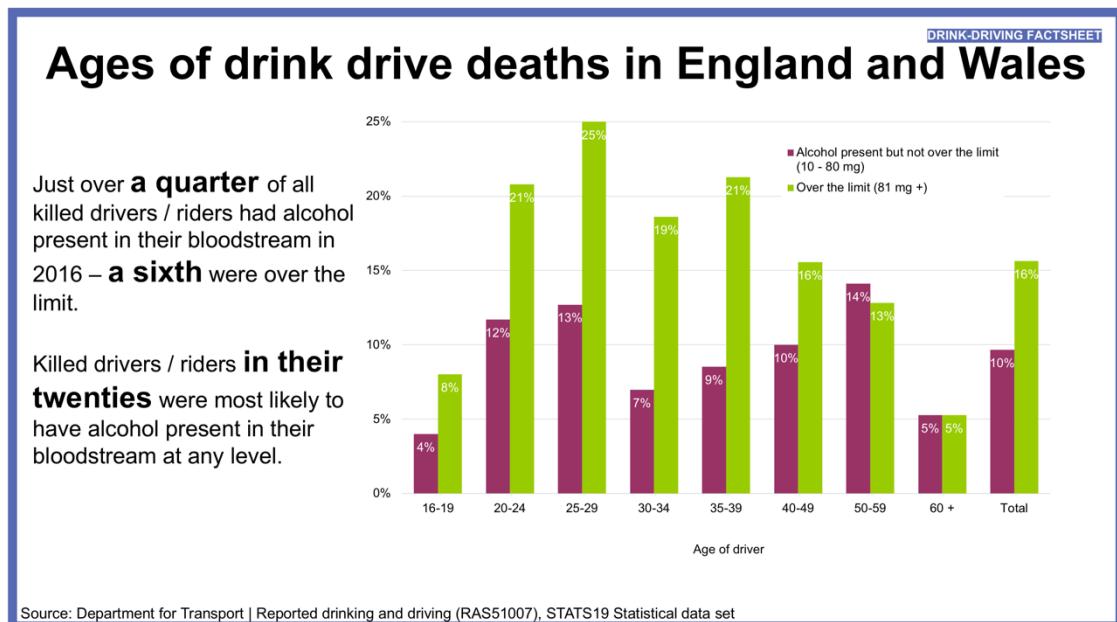
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The reasons why young and novice drivers are at a higher risk of being involved in a road traffic collision

- Novice drivers are most likely the youngest drivers on UK roads – this is reflected in driving test pass rates split by age.¹



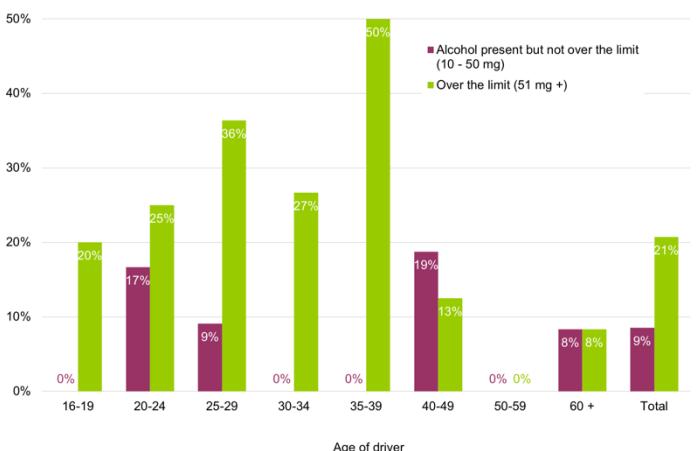
- But young and novice drivers are over-represented in road deaths. Drivers aged 17-19 only make up 1.5% of UK licence holders, but are involved in 9% of fatal and serious crashes where they are the drivers.²
- Road safety charity BRAKE posit three reasons based on research suggesting a combination of youth and inexperience puts younger drivers at high risk. These are: 1) Over-confidence; 2) Poor assessment of hazards; 3) Prevalent risk-taking.³
- These factors contribute to a raised risk of drink-driving among young drivers. In Great Britain, killed drivers / riders in their twenties and thirties are most likely to have been over the limit at the time of collision.⁴



Ages of drink drive deaths in Scotland

Three in ten killed drivers / riders had alcohol present in the bloodstream in 2016 – **a fifth** were over the limit.

Those in their **twenties** were most likely to have alcohol present at the time of death – those in their **thirties** were most likely to have exceeded the limit.



Source: Department for Transport | Reported drinking and driving (RAS51007), STATS19 Statistical data set

- For people aged 16 to 24 years, alcohol mortality is also closely related to driving – road and pedestrian traffic crashes are the leading cause of alcohol-related death.⁵

What the Government can do to reduce these risks

- At the time of writing, the UK is the only EU Member State where the blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for novice drivers is above 0.5 milligrammes per millilitre (it is 0.8) **and** is equal to that of all standard drivers, regardless of experience.⁶
- The only other European countries where the BAC limit for novice drivers is the same as that for all drivers are Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Finland. The vast majority of the continent maintains a lower drink-driving limit for novice drivers, relative to standard ones (effectively zero tolerance). This is legislation that the UK could also implement at little cost.
- In addition, three of the aforementioned countries have another measure in place that could also help to limit the risk of drink-driving – alcohol interlocks (alcolocks).⁷
- There is already a good range of evidence from several countries that alcohol interlocks cut reoffending rates both during and after participation in a rehabilitation programme. European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) published a review of current approaches in a 2016 report in association with the Netherlands Institute for Road Safety Research (SWOV).⁸
- Durham Police Constabulary is currently running a trial of alcolocks for drink-driving offenders.⁹ The UK Government should consider extending this requirement to novice drivers, who – as previously established – are most likely to be the youngest drivers on our roads, and who in turn, are most likely to breach our current limits.
- A zero tolerance alcohol limit and mandatory alcolocks for young and novice drivers should become core requirements of a UK Graduated Driver Licensing system (GDL). In 2014, a survey by Brake and Direct Line found widespread support for

various common elements of GDL, which included 70% support for a zero tolerance alcohol limit for novice drivers.¹⁰

12. There is also evidence that GDL is effective in targeting young and novice drivers' driving behaviours in general. In 2017, it was reported that research from TRL found 16-year-old drivers in the United States who learnt to drive through GDL systems 15 years ago had 37% fewer crashes than those who followed other systems, in New Zealand, the introduction of GDL led to a reduction in injuries from road traffic collisions among 15- to 19-year-olds by almost a quarter.¹¹
13. If applied to Great Britain's youngest novice drivers (17- to 19-year-olds), modelling suggests the impact of GDL will lead to 4,478 fewer casualties (433 of these being killed or seriously injured) and deliver annual social and economic benefits to the tune of £200 million.¹²
14. In sum, we are confident that staging the aforementioned restrictions (a zero tolerance alcohol limit and alcolocks) on young and novice drivers as part of a UK-wide GDL system would reduce the burden of road traffic accidents experienced by young and novice drivers.

¹ BBC News (December 2018), 'Is the driving test getting more difficult?'

<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46374981>>

² Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (December 2015), 'Full and provisional driving licences by age and gender'

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-and-provisional-driving-licences-by-age-and-gender>>

³ BRAKE (last updated October 2014), 'Young drivers' <<https://tinyurl.com/y6ltwb6g>>

⁴ The Institute of Alcohol Studies (last updated October 2018), 'Drink-driving factsheet'

<<http://www.ias.org.uk/Alcohol-knowledge-centre/Drink-driving.aspx>>

⁵ Public Health England (December 2016), 'The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies: An evidence review', p. 155

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-public-health-burden-of-alcohol-evidence-review>>

⁶ European Transport Safety Council (last updated December 2018), 'Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) Drink Driving Limits across Europe' <<https://etsc.eu/blood-alcohol-content-bac-drink-driving-limits-across-europe/>>

⁷ European Transport Safety Council (no date), 'Alcohol Interlocks in the EU'

<<https://etsc.eu/alcohol-interlock-barometer/>>

⁸ European Transport Safety Council (December 2016), 'Alcohol interlocks and drink driving rehabilitation in the EU – Guidelines for Member States'

<<https://etsc.eu/alcohol-interlocks-and-drink-driving-rehabilitation-in-the-eu-guidelines-for-member-states/>>

⁹ Durham Constabulary (June 2019), 'Alcohol interlocks being offered by Durham Constabulary'

<<https://tinyurl.com/yvvoe838>>

¹⁰ Direct Line and Brake reports on Safe Driving 2013-2014 REPORT ONE (no date)

<http://www.brake.org.uk/assets/docs/dl_reports/DL_Are_you_ready_to_drive_2013.pdf>

¹¹ The Sun (March 2017), 'ROAD SAFETY Why 90 per cent of drivers want UK licensing tests changed'

<<https://www.thesun.co.uk/motors/3133468/why-90-per-cent-of-drivers-want-uk-licensing-tests-changed/>>

¹² Kinnear N, Lloyd L, Scoons J and Helman S (TRL), RAC Foundation (May 2014), Graduated Driver

Licensing: A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain, p. vii

<<https://trl.co.uk/sites/default/files/PPR696.pdf>>