

RSA



# GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING SYSTEM

Consultation Paper 2008

An tÚdarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

# GET IT ON!



**NO SEATBELT NO EXCUSE**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to set out possible options to improve road safety in Ireland. It looks particularly at the way we can help learner drivers to become good safe drivers while gaining experience in different driving situations. The Road Safety Authority (RSA) is looking for your views as to how this can be brought about. The approach taken in the paper is to look at different measures that have been tried elsewhere, give some basic information about what the measure involves, detail some research findings and pose questions to help feedback.

It is important that any changes to the driver licensing laws should be seen as contributing to safety on our roads and not as an unfair imposition on drivers. One of the aims of the paper is to encourage debate about driving and road safety. In tandem with this consultation exercise the RSA is carrying out a study of the way people learn to drive in Ireland –this exercise will involve research and engagement with many stakeholders involved in the learning to drive process.

You are invited to submit your views as to whether the measures set out in this paper would make a positive contribution to road safety or if there are other options that should be considered. To help with feedback there are questions posed in relation to

each one of the measures; however, these questions are merely for guidance and shouldn't in any way limit your comments. The consultation phase will close on Friday 14 March 2009, you can email comments to [gdlconsultation@rsa.ie](mailto:gdlconsultation@rsa.ie) or write to Ms. Loretta Connolly, GDL Consultation, RSA, Primrose Hill, Ballina, Co. Mayo.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The task of the RSA is to reduce death and injury on Irish roads. This involves working with many partners who have roles in the areas of education, health, policing, engineering as well as those setting, managing and assessing driving standards and vehicle standards. Almost every person in the country is affected by the way we use our roads, this represents a diverse group with many different needs. All of these people have in common an expectation that they can use the roads safely; every road user has this right but with it comes an obligation not to harm other road users because of any act or omission.

Recent history suggests that our roads are becoming safer as measured by deaths on our roads as the Tables below show.

**Table 1 - Road Fatalities 2004 -2008**

| <b>2004</b> | <b>2005</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 374         | 396         | 365         | 338         | 279*        |

\*This figure is provisional and is 59 less than the equivalent period in 2007

**Table 2 - Road Fatalities Least/Most Deaths in each Decade**

| <b>Decade</b>       | <b>1961 -70</b> | <b>1971 -80</b> | <b>1981 -90</b> | <b>1991 -2000</b> | <b>2001 -2008</b> |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Least Deaths</b> | 332             | 525             | 387             | 404               | 279               |
| <b>Most Deaths</b>  | 540             | 640             | 572             | 472               | 411               |

Statistics do not reflect the depth of pain and suffering caused to families and communities by a death on our roads, nonetheless it is the commonly used way of measuring improvement in this area. It is against the yardstick of best performing EU countries that the RSA is setting its road safety targets. In the Road Safety Strategy 2007 – 12 the RSA is aiming to place Ireland among the best performing countries in the European Union by 2012. The Strategy sets out a range of actions to help bring this about. In practical terms, and allowing for population change achieving this target will mean that road deaths will fall to around 250 persons by 2012.

One of the actions in the Road Safety Strategy relates to the implementation of a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system. The purpose of this consultation paper is to look at the likely practical implications of introducing driver licensing changes and to look for views from the public about the impact of the changes.

### 3. GRADUATED LICENSING SYSTEMS

#### 3.1 What is a Graduated Driver Licensing System?

GDL systems generally cover a range of restrictions that apply to drivers, they apply to learner drivers while also applying for a period, usually two years after passing a driving test. Different countries have applied different restrictions so that there is not a fixed package of measures that make up a GDL system. Typically, the following measures form part of most GDL systems:

- Night – time curfews for learners
- Supervised driving
- Zero alcohol levels
- Restriction on number and/or age of passengers
- Accelerated penalty points for offence
- Lower powered cars

However, while the measures are seen as being effective, the available research shows some measures as being more effective than others. It must also be borne in mind that the basic licensing arrangement will differ across countries e.g. minimum driving age may differ. This can make it difficult to judge how a set of licensing rules that are successful in a particular country might work elsewhere.

GDL systems are directed at what are the most vulnerable drivers and these are learner drivers, generally in the age group 17 – 24 years of age. Section 3.2 below gives a more detailed description of a typical GDL system, in this case it looks at a GDL system in place in Canada.

#### 3.2 The Canadian Driver Licensing System

A number of Canadian states have adopted GDL systems and there is available research on the effectiveness of the measures. Some of the most detailed research is to hand on the GDL system in place in British Columbia in Canada.

There are two phases to the driver licensing regime in place in British Columbia, Figure 1 below sets out the main components in the case of car drivers.

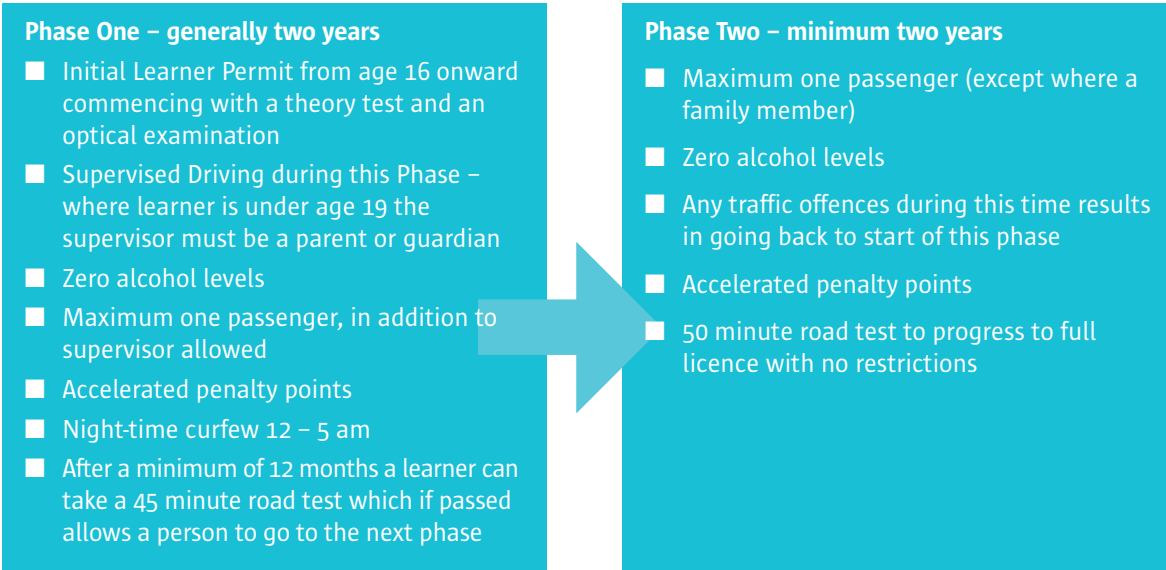


Figure 1: British Columbia Graduated Licensing System

### 3.3 Evaluation of GDL

The evaluation of GDL systems presents a number of challenges, not least is that in almost all cases there is no control group i.e. a group of drivers not affected by the restrictions; this is because the GDL rules will form part of the legal requirements of the country or state. Nonetheless there have been several studies of GDL systems. In her evaluation of the British Columbia GDL system, Wiggins (2005) made a number of interesting findings. Low crash rates were evident in the GDL group in phase one, considered to be mainly related to the supervision of the driver, crash rates were not any lower in phase two for the GDL group as against a group who hadn't gone through GDL.

The aspects of GDL that have generally been found to be effective as reported by Shinar (2007) in his review of GDL studies are an initial learning period, night-time restrictions and supervised driving. Shinar also quotes Engstrom et al (2003) as pointing to the positive effects of zero alcohol levels and passenger restrictions.

## 4. THE IRISH DRIVER LICENSING SYSTEM

### 4.1 Learning Phase

A person in Ireland who wants to get a full license for a car has a number of steps to follow.

**Stage 1** – Initially, s/he has to pass a driver theory test, this can be taken from age 15 onwards as a pass certificate lasts for two years. To pass this test 35 out of 40 multiple choice questions must be answered correctly. The questions cover a range of topics including road safety, rules of the road, identifying hazards, pedestrians, and basic technical aspects of the vehicle.

**Stage 2** – Having passed the theory test an application is made for a learner permit, the application must include a report on the applicant's vision and if the person suffers from certain medical conditions a report from a GP or Consultant about the impact of the illness on ability to drive. A learner permit holder can start to drive but has a number of restrictions:

- Must be accompanied by a person who has held a full licence for two years
- Cannot drive on a motorway
- Must display the letter L on the vehicle
- Cannot take a driving test until s/he holds the first learner permit for six months

A learner permit generally lasts for two years and can be renewed for a further two years following

which it generally lasts for one year unless the person has taken a driving test.

**Stage 3** – After a minimum of six months a learner can sit the driving test. The test examines the ability of the learner to carry out certain manoeuvres, manage the vehicle in different traffic and road conditions and where possible on dual carriageways. The test also assesses the ability of the learner driver to recognise hazards and to deal with them.

Having passed the driving test a person applies for a full driving licence and can then drive without restriction.

### 4.2 General Licensing Conditions

A full licence holder must comply with the rules of the road and the laws governing road usage in Ireland. There are a number of incentives or restrictions in place to manage behaviour. The major incentive is by way of cheaper car insurance where a person has a track record of crash free driving.

Restrictions and disincentives apply in a number of ways to licence holders. Road traffic law provides for a variety of punishments to drivers who break the law. Outright disqualification applies to a number of offences on conviction, these include drink driving and dangerous driving.

Aside from an outright driving disqualification there are a range of offences that attract penalty points such as speeding, using a mobile phone, dangerous overtaking and not wearing a seatbelt. In total there are 36 offences that attract penalty points. A total of 12 penalty points accumulated in a three year period results in disqualification from driving for six months. It is also the case that drivers with a record of crashes will face higher insurance premiums.

Full licence holders are obliged to advise their licensing authority if, during the period they hold the licence, they suffer from certain diseases or disabilities or become dependent on drugs. A full licence expires generally after ten years and can then be renewed on application; again certain medical reports may need to be submitted with the application. After age 67 a person will, on foot of medical certification, be allowed a one year or three year licence.

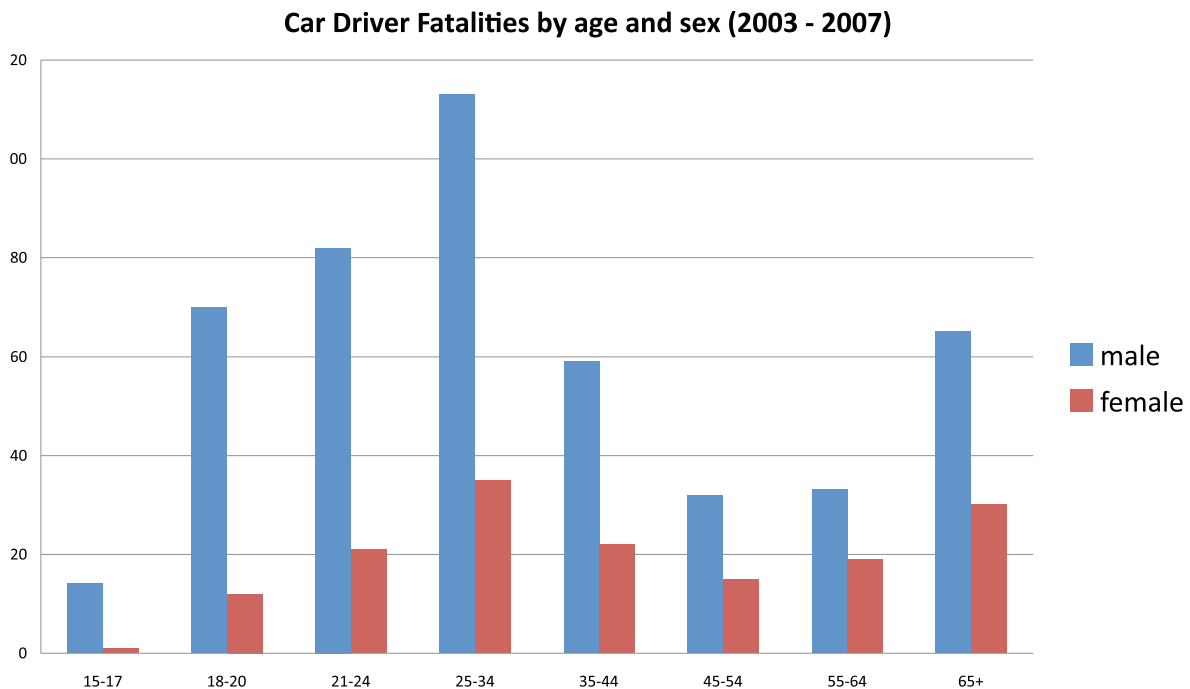
In July 2008 the RSA published a consultation paper *Fitness to Drive. Your Perspective; Your Views?* seeking feedback from the public about the way in which medical aspects of fitness to drive are applied. Following this review, recommendations for changes will be made to the Minister for Transport.

## 5. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF ROAD COLLISIONS IN IRELAND?

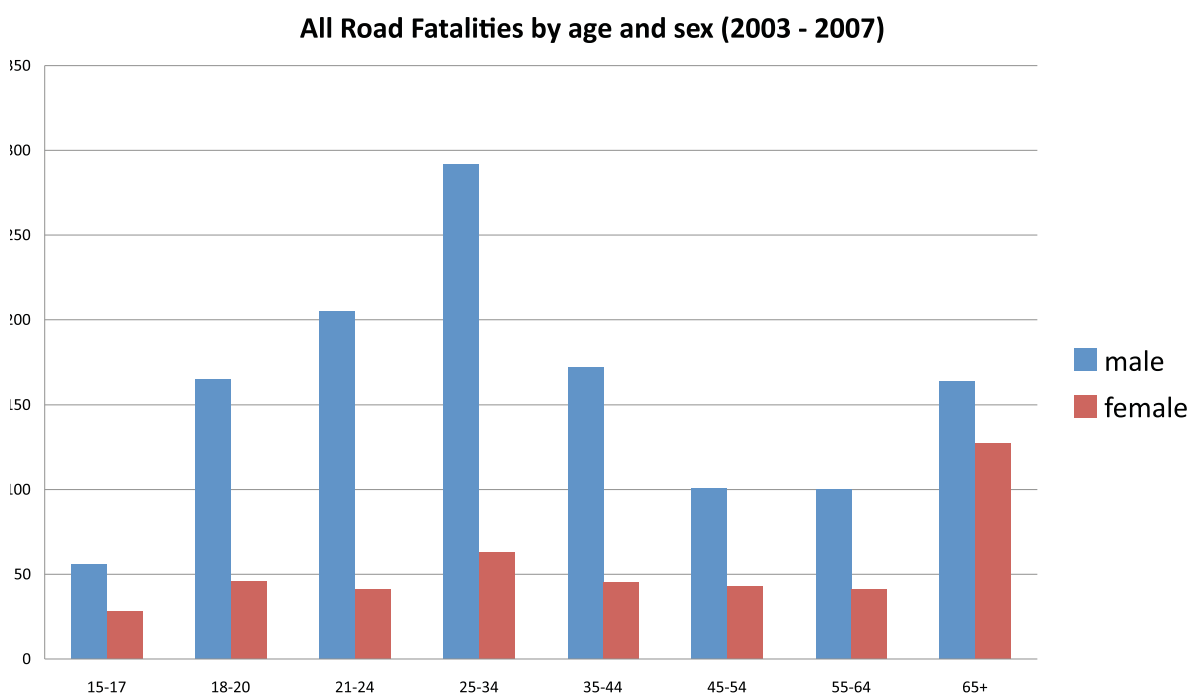
### 5.1 Profile of learner drivers

The Road Collision Facts booklet published by the RSA provides the most comprehensive data on road deaths in Ireland. Figure 2 below sets out information

on car driver deaths from 2003 - 2007. We can see from this that males are more vulnerable than females and particularly that persons in the age group 17 - 24 are most vulnerable. This coincides with the learning phase. Figures 4 and 5 below profiles learner drivers in Ireland. We can see that the majority of learner drivers are in this age group.

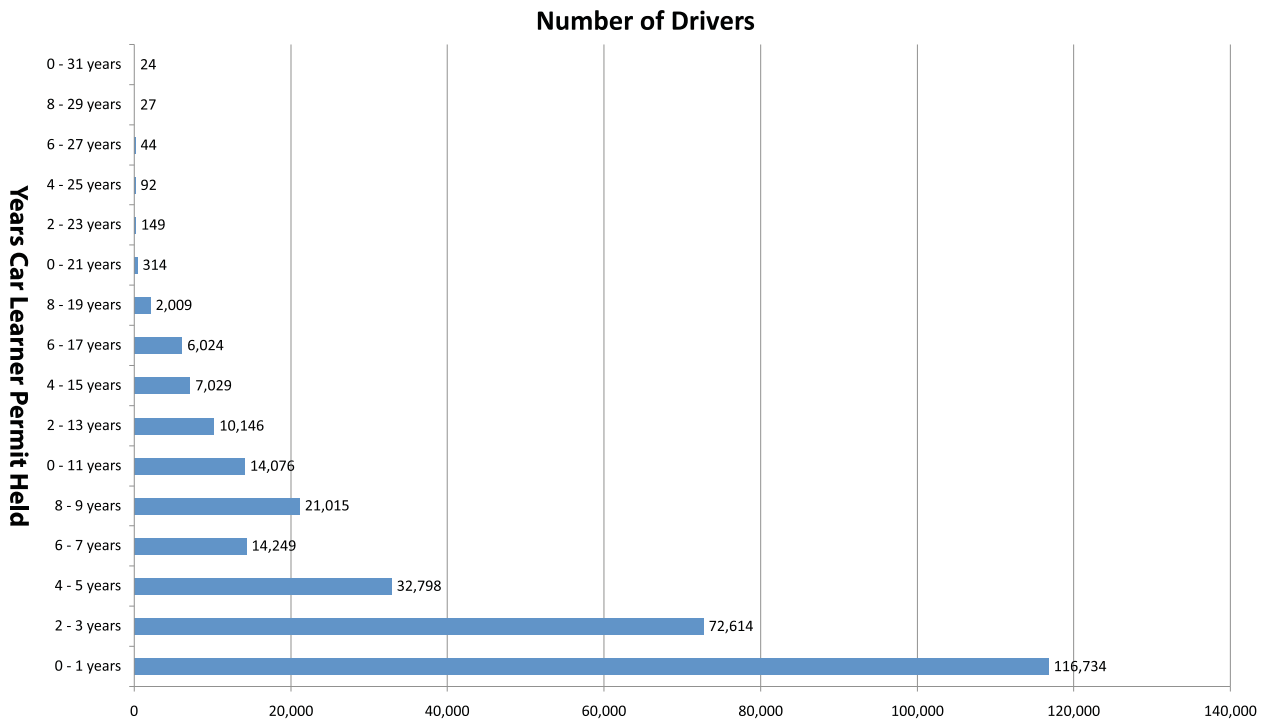


**Figure 2**

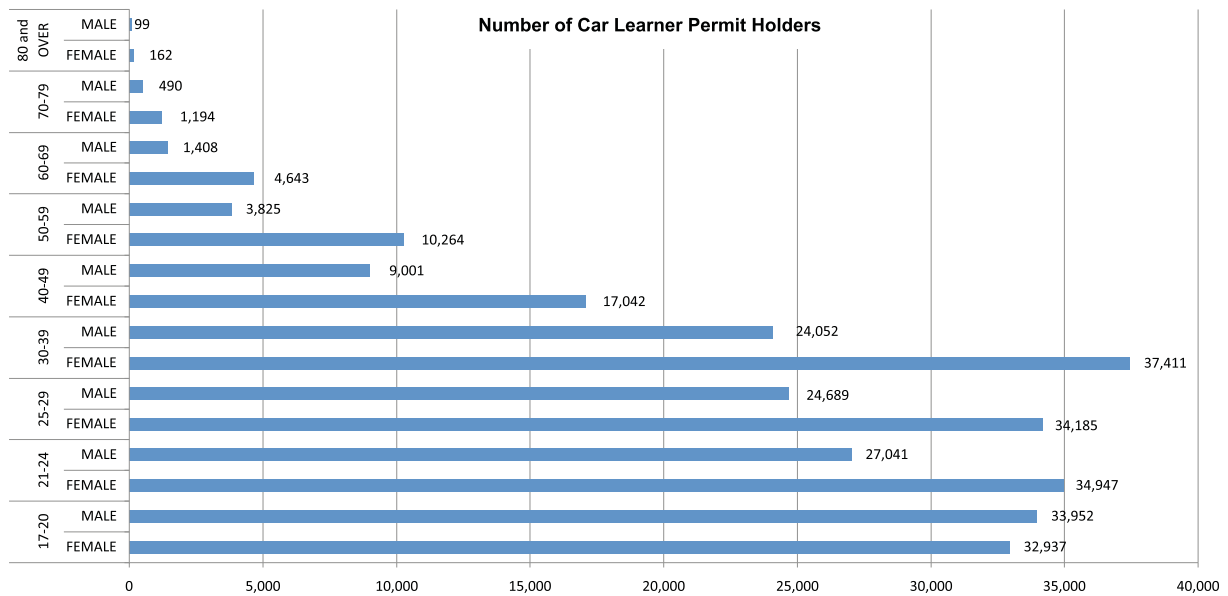


**Figure 3**





**Figure 4. Car Learner Permit Holders by Duration of Permit held at September 2008**



**Figure 5. Car Learner Permit Holders classified by age and gender at September 2008**



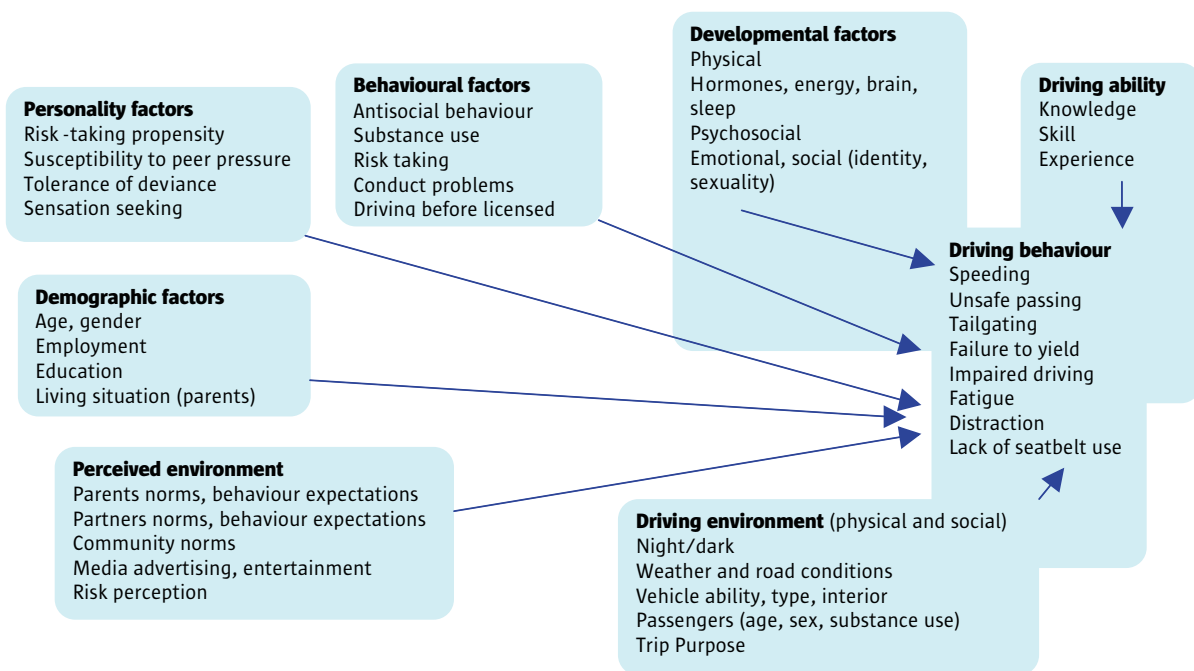
## 5.2 Causes of Collisions

The behaviours that cause collisions result mostly from the inexperience of the driver. This is a heightened risk in the case of young males who are more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour. The available evidence suggests that a driver is considered to be inexperienced until s/he has driven 100,000 kilometres. Having driven to this extent means that the person will have covered most road,

weather, pedestrian and traffic conditions and will have dealt with many hazards and challenging situations which will help to build driving competence.

In Ireland the evidence points to, speeding, drink/drug driving and fatigue as being the primary causes of collisions; when any of these factors are combined with inexperience the risk of a collision is increased. Figure 6 below lists many factors which affect driver behaviour. The challenge then is to find ways for learner drivers to learn safely by exposing them to different driving situations gradually, in a way that allows them to benefit from and build up experience while the learning process continues.

Section 6 looks at approaches to doing this while setting out advantages and disadvantages and seeking views on the implications for learner drivers of these changes if implemented here.



**Figure 6. Factors that affect teenage driving behaviour**

Source: American Journal of Preventative Medicine, Volume 35, Issue 3, Supplement 1, September 2008, Pages S261-S271. By Jean T. Shope, C. Raymond Bingham.



## 6. MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE DRIVER LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN IRELAND

Internationally, particular measures have been adopted to help learners drive in a way that reduces risk insofar as that is possible. We will see that some of these measures have been more or less effective. In thinking about the measures we should remember that each country has its own unique set of circumstances and that the outcomes achieved elsewhere may not always translate to another situation. Nonetheless the experience provides a good starting point.

**The measures we will look at are:**

- Zero alcohol levels
- Night-time curfew
- Increased penalty points
- Hazard perception testing
- Age restriction for passengers
- Mandatory tuition
- Restricted car power
- Extended supervised driving
- Upgraded driving test

### 6.1 Zero Alcohol/Drugs Level for Learners

At present the legally allowed blood alcohol level (BAC) for all drivers in Ireland is 80mg/100ml. Among EU countries Ireland is only one of three countries at this high level. Evidence shows that any alcohol level impairs driving. When this is linked with the inexperience of learner drivers this poses a particular problem. Moskowitz (2001) concluded that –“There is no BAC at which [driver] impairment does not occur”. This was also borne out in an Irish context following a study by the Health Services Executive into fatal crashes in Ireland in 2003, Bedford et al (2006).

The practical effect of the measure is that the new level for learner drivers would be set at 20mg/100ml – this is effectively zero alcohol level and avoids complications presented by the fact that alcohol is present in small concentrations in some everyday products such as mouthwash. Studies of zero tolerance alcohol laws show that they reduce crashes among drivers younger than 21. A study of 12 states that passed zero tolerance laws reported a 20 percent reduction in the proportion of fatal crashes that were single – vehicle night-time events (crashes likely to involve alcohol impairment) among drivers ages 15–20 (Hindson et al. 1994).

It is probable that an information campaign advising existing drivers of the new alcohol limits would accompany the introduction of this measure. Aside from the clear benefits in terms of the ability of a driver to concentrate on driving, this measure would reduce any uncertainty that may now exist about exactly how much any learner driver can drink and legally drive.

According to the 2006 OECD report, “Young Drivers: The Road to Safety”, drugs present a source of risk for young, novice drivers and young drivers are more likely to be over represented in this category. Studies by Matijssen and Houwing in 2005 concluded that drivers using illegal drugs or with a combination of drugs are 25 times more at risk of serious injury and the combination of drugs and alcohol leads to a 35 times greater risk of injury. The RSA strongly supports the introduction of zero balance alcohol and drugs for learner drivers and believes that this would save lives and prevent injuries.

### Feedback 6.1

- Q1** Do you believe that zero BAC should apply to learner drivers?
- Q2** Do you see disadvantages to applying this restriction on learner drivers?
- Q3** Should zero BAC also apply for a period after the learner gets his full licence?

### 6.2 Night-time Curfew

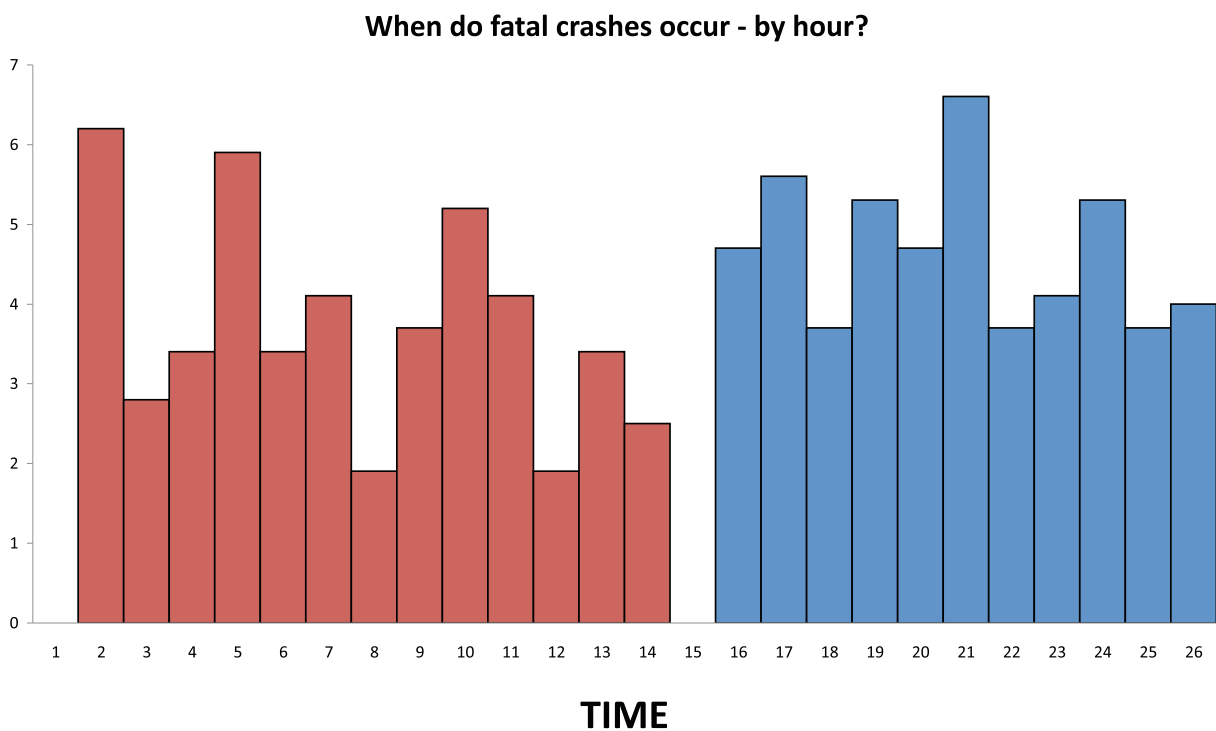
There is less traffic on Irish roads during the hours of darkness. However, in common with most countries there are relatively more crashes during the hours of darkness. The purpose of night-time restrictions on driving is to protect novice drivers by keeping them from driving unsupervised during the high risk night – time hours. Young drivers crash rates are particularly high at night. Williams and Preusser (1997) reported that 16 and 17 year – old drivers

accumulate only 14% of their miles driven between the hours of 9 pm and 6 am, yet they experience 39% of their fatal crash involvements during this time period.

Furthermore, studies carried out by Foss et al. (2001) suggest that 4 out of every 10 deaths of teens in motor vehicles occur between 9 pm and 6 am, studies have also shown that night-time driving restrictions typically are associated with crash reductions of 40 to 60

percent during the restricted hours (e.g. Shope and Molnar 2004; Mayhew et al. 2003).

Figure 7 below sets out data for road fatalities in Ireland in 2006 relating to the time of the crash. Poor visibility, fatigue and the possibility of drink/drug driving may be among factors that cause night-time driving to be more risky. For the inexperienced driver these factors add to the potential for a collision.



**Figure 7. Percentage of Fatal Collisions by Hour in 2006**



Some countries have approached this problem by not allowing learners to drive at night. The hours within which driving is not allowed varies from country to country. It must be recognised that learners must get experience of driving in night conditions, however, typically the hours of midnight to 6 am are covered. There are obvious social and economic implications of putting in place a measure like this. Some learners will be working in employment that requires them to drive during the curfew hours, where alternative transport arrangements may not be available. This measure would by its nature impact to a greater degree on rural learners where alternative transport will be more difficult to access. It is possible to have a system of exemptions for essential purposes, but there could be difficulties in enforcing the night – time curfews which could reduce its effectiveness.

### Feedback 6.2

- Q1** What is your view on the introduction of a night-time curfew?
- Q2** What do you see as the possible disadvantages of a night-time curfew?

### 6.3 Increased Penalty Points

Penalty points in Ireland apply to all drivers in the same way. One of the ways to encourage learners not to take unnecessary risks is for risk –taking activity to attract greater penalty points. Since risk taking behaviour for inexperienced drivers is likely to result in harmful consequences there is an argument to punish this behaviour more severely. Typically this would mean that where a driver now gets penalty points for an offence this would be doubled if the driver was a learner or for a two year period after passing the driving test. This change could also be coupled with a lower points threshold that would lead to the learner driver losing his/her learner permit e.g. six instead of twelve.

The effect of this is that learners could much more easily lose their learner permit and would consequently engage in less risk – taking behaviours. It would also help to remove unsafe drivers from our roads and if coupled with the need for disqualified drivers to take special training courses lead to an improvement in driving on their return to the road.

There is evidence that points to the effectiveness of this measure when properly enforced. McKnight, 1996 proposed that licence sanctions “can reduce exposure for a subgroup of new drivers who are inclined towards unsafe driving, but can also encourage safer driving by acting as a deterrent”.

Harworth et al 1995 argue that novice drivers might be better motivated to drive carefully if driving behaviours were a condition of removing or maintaining restrictions.

A counter argument is that if it is too easy to lose your licence at learner stage a small number of errors may lead to loss of the licence and make the learning phase unnecessarily difficult.

### Feedback 6.3

- Q1** Do you think increased penalty points would help produce better learner drivers?
- Q2** Do you see disadvantages to this measure?

### 6.4 Hazard Perception Testing

Driving a vehicle means that the driver has to simultaneously carry out several physical tasks while scanning the horizon to adjust to the unfolding conditions. This demands complex physical and mental skills. The learner is attempting to take on board these skills in real live, changing conditions. A learner will not naturally have the necessary skill set to do this and little in his/her previous learning will have prepared the learner for this. It has long been recognized that young, novice drivers are poor at detecting and assessing hazards (e.g., Engström et al., 2003).

One way of measuring the ability of the learner to cope with these tasks is to assess his/her ability to see, judge and take action when faced by a potential threat. One of the problems is the difficulty of simulating a hazard situation in a way that forces the learner to react as s/he would in a real life situation. However, this is beginning to be overcome with advancing technology. A number of countries have developed computer based live and animated solutions that enable the testing of judgement and reaction. In the UK the Driving Standards Agency cites evidence pointing to the effectiveness of hazard perception as part of the driver theory test in developing skills for the learner in this area.

Fisher et al. (2006) found substantial improvements in scanning behaviour on the open road after young drivers had attended a computer –based training program focusing on recognizing potential risks. Sagberg and Bjornskau (2006) did not find that a hazard perception test resulted in important safety improvements in the first nine months after licensing. In Europe a great many hazard perception tests and training programs are still under development, and their outcomes are being studied.

The RSA, as part of a study in the way Irish drivers learn to drive, is looking at the effectiveness of hazard perception testing and its role in improving road safety.

In an Irish context a computer based hazard perception test could be introduced at the end of the initial six month learning period before any driving test could be taken. This would use state of the art technology to measure hazard awareness.

#### Feedback 6.4

- Q1** Do you feel a dedicated hazard perception test would improve road safety?
- Q2** Should this test be scheduled before taking a driving test after the six month waiting period?

#### 6.5 Restriction on Passengers

Where passenger restrictions form part of graduated licensing schemes it takes the form of a reduction of the number of passengers under a certain age that can be in the vehicle or the age of passengers that can be in the vehicle of a learner driver or in some cases a combination of both. The reasoning for this is based on strong evidence that where a number of drivers drive together peer pressure sometimes results in risk taking behavior as passengers influence the driver negatively.

Chen et al. (2000) found that crash risk for teenage driver increases incrementally with one, two, or three or more passengers. With three or more, fatal crash risk is about three times higher than when a beginner is driving alone.

Williams et al (2007) reviewed the research evidence concerning the effects of passengers on teenage driving and crash involvement. The findings indicate that the presence of passengers is a major contributor to teenage road deaths. Passenger presence increases crash risk for teenage drivers, especially when the passengers are other teenagers and especially when they are male. Female passengers do not have the same effects. The combination of passenger – induced distraction and driving inexperience can disrupt driving behaviour, and there is evidence that teenage driver risk-taking increases in vehicles with multiple teenagers. Legal restrictions on passengers with teenage drivers have been found to be effective in reducing the crash problem.

Studies carried out by Chaudhary et al. (2007) also show that about two – thirds of all crash deaths of teens that involve teenage drivers occur when the beginners were driving with teen passengers. Other studies show that passenger restrictions can reduce this problem (e.g. Copper et al. 2005; Begg and

Stephenson 2003; Masten and Hagge 2004).

Some countries with GDL systems do not apply this measure to older learner drivers, aged 25 or over as the evidence is weak as to peers influencing older drivers to take risks while driving. Equally, exemptions are given in the case of similar aged family members travelling with a learner.

In an Irish context there are implications with the enforcement of this measure, possibly resulting in passengers being required to carry a form of identification. This may be seen by some as an intrusion on personal privacy. For the purpose of feedback on the potential of this measure consider the possibility that no more than one passenger aged under 25, other than a family member, could be carried by a learner under age 25.

#### Feedback 6.5

- Q1** Do you consider this to be a reasonable measure to introduce?
- Q2** How would this measure impact on learner drivers?

#### 6.6 Compulsory Driving Lessons

A learner driver in Ireland does not have to take formal driving lessons as part of the learning phase. One argument against mandatory driving lessons has been that driving instructors were not regulated and that a consistent standard might not apply across the country. Since the middle of 2007 driving instructors are gradually being regulated and good quality tuition is available. This work will be completed shortly and will help to roll out compulsory lessons if it is felt that this is a valuable addition in helping learners to drive.

There is evidence that the best approach to learning to drive is a mix of compulsory lessons and supervised practice. Compulsory lessons would



involve learners, taking structured lessons set out in a programme specially designed to meet the needs of learners. The number of lessons would depend on the ability of the learner working through the programme but would be of the order of 20 hours. This is likely to give learner drivers a good base to build upon when linked with formal supervised practice.

### Feedback 6.6

- Q1** Does your experience lead you to believe that compulsory lessons would help learners improve their skill level?
- Q2** Which skills are driving instructors best placed to deliver?

### 6.7 Restricted Car Power

Some GDL systems apply restrictions to the power of the vehicle and/or to the maximum speed at which a learner may drive. A power restriction applies presently to motorcycle learners in Ireland, they are not allowed to drive high powered motorcycles to start with. Experience must be gained on lower powered vehicles and the driving test must be passed before progressing gradually to high powered motorcycles.

A study of insurance statistics (Elvick and Skaansar 1989, OECD 1990) showed that high speed cars with powerful engines and high acceleration are involved in collisions more often than lower powered vehicles. According to the 2006 OECD report “Young Drivers, the Road to Safety” speed related crashes account for 20-30% of collisions and young drivers are over represented in speeding behaviour crashes and fatalities in most countries.

Applying this approach to cars would mean that a learner might for example not be allowed to drive a vehicle with a power greater than 1600cc (in the case of a petrol car) or 2000cc (in the case of a diesel car). As either a separate or linked measure the learner could have a speed restriction of for example 80kph applied to cars s/he drives.

There are some practical difficulties with this measure in that a learner may on occasion only have access to a vehicle above the power threshold and this could slow down the learning process. It might also in some cases deny access by the learner to advanced safety features such as Electronic Stability Programme which are more likely to be found on higher powered cars. However, emerging technology has the capability to adapt both the engine power and the maximum speed of a vehicle and this will help to make either or both of these measures a

practical reality if it is considered that they can deliver a road safety benefit.

### Feedback 6.7

- Q1** Would you support the introduction of (a) engine power restriction, (b) speed restriction or (c) both measures in Ireland?
- Q2** What impact do you think these measures would have on those learning to drive?

### 6.8 Supervised Driving

There is agreement that supervised driving is one of the most powerful ways to help a learner driver gain the necessary skills to drive safely. At present in Ireland a holder of a learner permit cannot take a driving test for a car until the learner has held the permit for at least six months. This makes it more likely that the learner will be practising during this time. Unfortunately, this is sometimes seen as an imposition on an accompanying driver. Because of the effectiveness of supervised practice it is important that the role of the accompanying driver is strengthened. This means that better information must be made available to the accompanying driver about the value of accompanying a learner and also about how s/he can best mentor the learner.

There have been some developments of note in how other countries are handling the learner period. In Australian states, learner periods have generally been six months with 50 hours of certified driving. There is now movement to increase these requirements. In recent consultative papers, Victoria and Queensland propose increasing the six month period to one year, and to require 120 hours of supervised driving (Queensland Transport Queensland Government, 2005; Victoria Ministry of Transport, 2005). In Europe there are different mandatory training requirements. For example in the Czech Republic, there is a mandatory minimum of 36 hours for theory and 28 hours for practice, in Denmark, there is a mandatory minimum of 22 hours for theory and 18 hours for practice, and in Norway, there is a mandatory minimum of 21 hours for theory and 15 hours for practice (Divera and Colin 2007).

A feature of accompanied driving is that it allows learners to be coached in different driving conditions with relatively little cost. It would help to strengthen this measure if a learner had to complete a driving log setting out details of different driving experience gained before taking a driving test.

## Feedback 6.8

- Q1** Should the period before a learner takes a driving test be increased to one year?
- Q2** Should the learner have to log a minimum number of supervised hours in different driving conditions?
- Q3** Do you have views on how the role of supervising driver can be strengthened?

## 6.9 Upgraded Driving Test

The driving test is the means by which a driver's skills are examined to find out if a person has reached a standard of driving that allows him/her to be given a full licence. The manoeuvres examined on test are based on the requirements of an EU Directive and mainly test the ability of the learner to control the vehicle. As getting a full licence allows the learner to drive solo it is critical that the learner is able to drive safely in all conditions that s/he encounters. The question then is to what degree the driving test prepares a learner to drive safely. If we take the view that a person preparing for the driving test will prepare by learning those manoeuvres that form part of the test is it possible to set the test in a way that better examines the skills that are needed to be a safe driver. The driving test should be used as a tool to direct the content of driver training.

To become a competent driver a learner needs to master certain skills, both physical and mental. The EU GADGET project developed a set of skills that a good driver education programme should aim to deliver to a learner. In particular it proposed Goals for Driver Education (GDE) describing skills, behaviours and attributes. A particular challenge is to devise ways that will encourage learners to take on board these abilities and create assessment methods to examine the degree to which the learner has these abilities.

## Feedback 6.9

- Q1** Do you feel the driving test is a useful tool in helping to produce good safe drivers?
- Q2** Do you feel that the driving test could be changed to improve road safety?

## 7. NEXT STEPS

Thank you for taking the time to read through this paper, we would now appreciate your comments on what you have read. For those who would like to read further on the issues outlined in this paper or on other possible measures to support learner drivers the bibliography provides references to supporting material.

The consultation phase will close on Friday 14 March 2009, you can email comments to [gdlconsultation@rsa.ie](mailto:gdlconsultation@rsa.ie) or write to Ms. Loretta Connolly, GDL Consultation, RSA, Primrose Hill, Ballina, Co. Mayo.



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# **DRUNK WITH TIREDNESSZZZZ?**

**Fighting sleep at the wheel  
is as dangerous as driving  
over the legal alcohol limit**

***TO KEEP DRIVING  
FOR ANOTHER HOUR:***

- 1. Find a safe place to park***
- 2. Take 2 cups of strong coffee***
- 3. Take a nap for no more than  
15 mins - then stretch your legs***



**DRIVER FATIGUE**  
**WAKE UP TO IT!**

# Working To Save Lives

## Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre Road Safety Authority

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