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Transport Committee

Road safety: young and novice drivers

Fourth Report of Session 2019–21

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

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Contents

Summary

In 2019, 88 young car drivers—defined as those aged 17 to 24 years old—tragically lost their lives on British roads. A further 1,234 young people behind the wheel were seriously injured. Others were also sadly involved in some of these crashes. In total, 287 people—including passengers and pedestrians—were killed in crashes involving a young car driver.

Over the longer-term, the safety rates for young drivers have been positively improving. Between 2005 and 2019 the number of young drivers killed and seriously injured on the roads reduced by 52%. However, this progress has now stalled. The reduction since 2005 partly reflects a general improvement in road safety, testing, and vehicle standards. Improvements in technology, such as the dramatic growth in the use of telematic technology by insurance companies to monitor driver behaviour, also help to incentivise safer driving. Fewer young people today also hold driving licenses. Nevertheless, young car drivers are over-represented in the statistics for involvement in fatal and serious road traffic crashes. In 2019 young drivers made up 7% of all licence holders but were involved in 16% of fatal and serious crashes.

Our evidence highlighted a number of factors that contribute to the higher proportional rates of young drivers in the casualty statistics, including physiological, behavioural, and environmental factors. We welcome the Department for Transport's Driver 2020 research project which is exploring several technological and educational based measures targeted at improving the safety rates for young drivers. We recommend that the Department provides an update to the Committee on progress with the Driver 2020 project by July 2021.

Research conducted by the insurance industry shows that a significant proportion of older novice drivers—that is, drivers aged above 25 who are relatively new to driving—are involved in crashes. However, this is difficult to verify because official statistics are not recorded for this particular demographic. This absence of data is particularly disappointing given that our predecessor Committee recommended in 2007 that the Department "collect the data necessary to understand the scale and nature of the crash involvement of novice drivers, independently of young drivers". The Department should commission a study of crash rates for older novice drivers and how the driver's experience level contributes to these crashes. This would allow the Department to understand better the risks around older novice drivers and whether to monitor and target more actively crash rates amongst this demographic.

We recognise the improvements that the Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency have made to the learning and testing process in recent years. However, we are concerned that the current learning process does not fully equip learner drivers with sufficient experience of driving a vehicle in a range of different situations. We therefore welcome the Department's commitment to pilot a system of "modular learning" with compulsory driver training in different conditions, due to start later in 2021 should restrictions in place for the coronavirus pandemic be eased. In its response to this Report, the Department should provide an outline of the criteria that will be used to judge the effectiveness of its modular learning pilot. The Department should update us by October 2021 on its assessment of the pilot against those criteria.

As well as the practical test, the theory test can play an important role in helping to develop learner drivers' understanding of driving in different situations. We recommend that the Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency develop the theory test to ensure it includes adequate questioning on driving at night and while carrying passengers.

Every individual's circumstances and natural skill, aptitude and experience, and level of competence to drive a car or vehicle is varied. However, we are concerned that intensive driving courses may not provide learner drivers with adequate driving experience prior to passing their test. We recommend that the Department conducts research to investigate whether drivers who pass their test after undertaking intensive driving lessons are at increased risk of being involved in a crash in their first two years of driving.

The merits of introducing Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) in Great Britain have been a key focus of our inquiry. Although there is evidence that GDL can be effective in reducing crash rates, there are also concerns over the impact such restrictions could have upon the social and economic opportunities available to young and novice drivers. The Department has made clear it does not currently support the introduction of a GDL system. There is also not a clear mandate for the introduction of GDL restrictions as opinion remains divided on its implementation among young people who would be most affected by its introduction. Of the 14 young people who participated directly with us at our engagement event, all but one opposed night-time and passenger restrictions for new drivers, which are often key components of a GDL system. Given there is some evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of GDL but significant concerns about its impact, particularly from young people themselves, the Department should resume the study into the social and economic consequences of GDL which it committed to in its 2019 Road Safety Statement. This would provide much needed evidence on the likely impacts.

The potential implementation of GDL in Northern Ireland presents the Department with an opportunity to monitor the impact of such a system within one part of the UK. By October 2021, we recommend that the Department liaise with the Northern Ireland Executive and provide us with interim findings and the Department's conclusions on the impact of GDL in Northern Ireland.

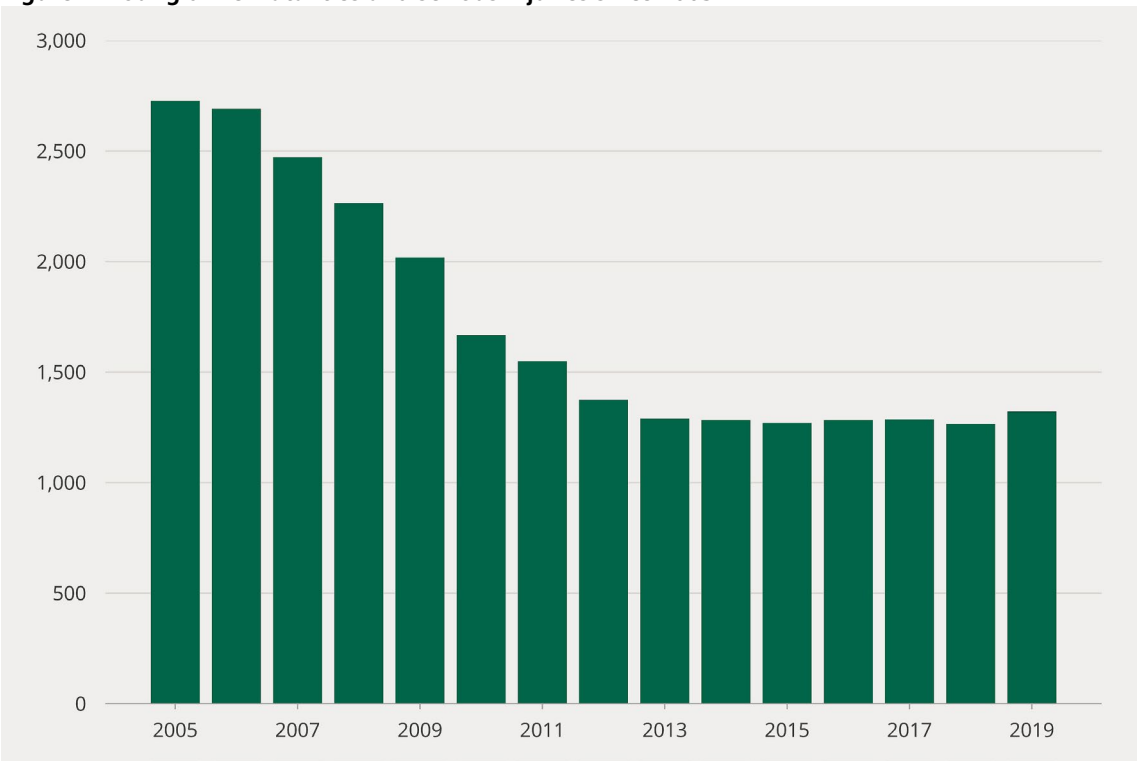
Telematic technology is an innovative way of allowing insurance companies to provide young and novice drivers and their families with data on their driving behaviour and performance. It ought to also help reduce insurance costs for young drivers. Telematic technology is still improving and could be an important method of improving driver safety, although there are some doubts about whether telematics in isolation can successfully change driver behaviour. We welcome the fact that the Department's Driver 2020 programme will explore the potential for telematic technology to improve driver safety. We are mindful, however, about the rights and freedoms of the individual, and the privacy of their data. As part of the progress update on Driver 2020 we have requested by July 2021, the Department should outline the progress and preliminary findings from its research into the effectiveness of telematic technology to improve road safety.

1 Introduction

1. In 2019, 88 young car drivers—defined as those aged 17 to 24 years old—tragically lost their lives on British roads.[1] A further 1,234 young people behind the wheel were seriously injured. Others were also sadly involved in some of these crashes. In total, 287 people—including passengers and pedestrians—were killed in crashes involving a young car driver.[2]

2. The longer-term trends regarding road safety and young drivers are positively improving. There has been a notable and much welcome decline in the numbers of young drivers killed and seriously injured on the roads over the past 15 years (Figure 1). In 2005, there were 2,727 young drivers killed and seriously injured. This had reduced to 1,322 by 2019, a reduction of 52%. However, since 2012 that progress has now stalled.[3]

Figure 1: Young driver fatalities and serious injuries since 2005



Note: Does not include 60,120 casualties which have a missing age

Source: DfT, Road Safety Accident Statistics

3. Various factors are likely to contribute to the reduction in fatalities and serious injuries amongst young drivers. It reflects a broader reduction in fatalities and serious injuries for drivers of all age groups—a 24% decline between 2005 and 2019.[4] The safety of road vehicles continues to improve (although this does not necessarily make roads safer for vulnerable road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians), and traffic management safety measures are increasingly targeted at dangerous "hot-spots" in the road network. Improvements in

1 Department for Transport, Reported road casualties in Great Britain: 2019 annual report, September 2020, p 19
2 Department for Transport, Reported road casualties in Great Britain: 2019 annual report, September 2020, p 17
3 In 2012 there were 1,375 young driver fatal and serious injuries; Department for Transport, Road accidents and safety statistics, RAS10, accessed 4 January 2021
4 Department for Transport, Reported personal injury road accidents, by severity, Great Britain, 1979–2019, RAS10013, accessed 19 January 2021

technology, such as the dramatic growth in the use of telematic technology by insurance companies to monitor driver behaviour (and which are increasingly popular amongst younger drivers), can help to incentivise safer driving (see paragraphs 70 to 74). The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has also introduced a number of changes to the driver learning and training process in recent years to make it more rigorous, such as training on motorways, the "independent driving section"[5] of the practical test and improvements to the theory test (see chapter 3).[6]

4. However, there are also fewer young drivers today than in the past. In 1994, 48% of 17 to 20 year olds, and 75% of 21 to 29 year olds, held a driving licence. By 2014 this had reduced to 29% and 63% respectively.[7] This reduction occurred despite the proportion of young people in Great Britain's population remaining consistent over the same time period.[8] It is important for the Government to understand whether the reduction in the number of young drivers killed or seriously injured reflects a real improvement in safety, rather than a reduction in the number of young drivers or the number of miles they drive.

5. Despite these positive developments in road safety in recent years, young car drivers are still over-represented in the statistics for involvement in fatal and serious road traffic crashes. As shown in Figure 2, in 2019 young drivers made up 7% of all licence holders but were involved in 16% of fatal and serious crashes.[9]

5 Where the candidate drives for 20 minutes without guidance from their examiner

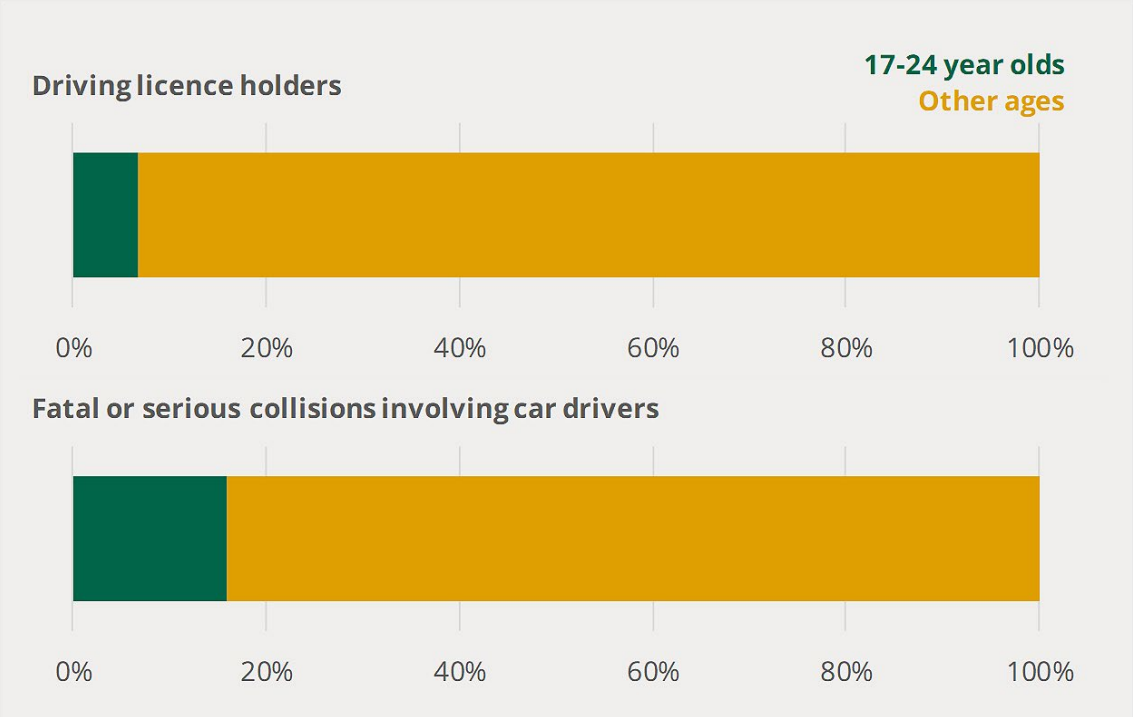
6 Department for Transport (YND003)

7 Kiron Chatterjee, Phil Goodwin, Tim Schwanen, Ben Clark, Juliet Jain, Steve Melia, Jennie Middleton, Anna Plyushteva, Mariam Ricci, Georgina Santos, Gordon Stokes, Young people's travel – What's changed and why? Review and analysis: Executive summary, (January 2018), p 2

8 Office for National Statistics, Population estimates: local authority based by a single year of age, accessed 3 February 2021

9 This figure is unchanged from 2018, Department for Transport (YND0003) para 7

Figure 2: Proportion of licence holders aged 17 to 24 compared to proportion of drivers aged 17 to 24 involved in fatal and serious crashes



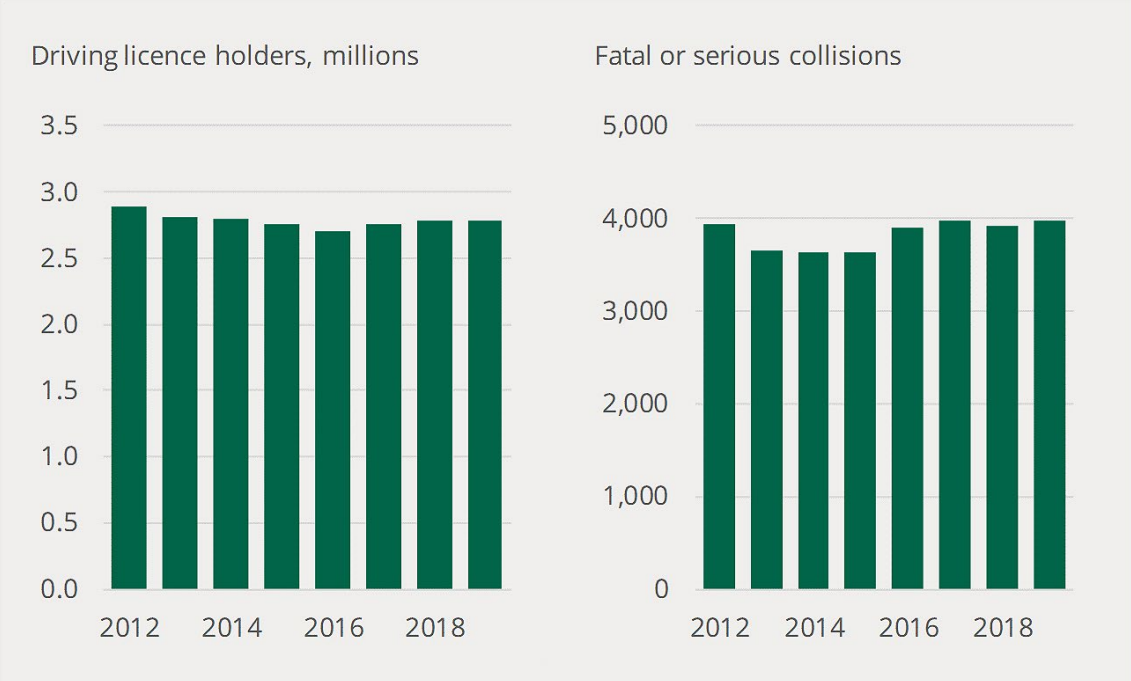
Note: Does not include 29,756 car drivers which have a missing age

Source: DfT, Road Safety Accident Statistics; DfT, Great Britain Driving Licence Data, December 2019

6. Figure 3 shows that since 2012 there has been little change to the number of young drivers who hold driving licences and the number of young drivers involved in fatal and serious road traffic crashes.[10]

10 Department for Transport, Road accidents and safety statistics, RAS10, accessed 29 January 2021

Figure 3: Driving licence holders aged 17–24 compared to car drivers aged 17–24 involved in fatal or serious road traffic crashes



Note: Does not include 29,756 car drivers which have a missing age

Source: DfT, Road Safety Accident Statistics; DfT, Great Britain Driving Licence Data

7. These deaths and serious injuries, many of which were entirely avoidable, have a devastating impact on the bereaved, their families and loved ones, and those who support the seriously injured, some of whom have life-changing injuries. In addition to the human cost, these serious crashes also have a significant economic cost.[11]

Our inquiry

8. Our inquiry was originally launched by our predecessor Committee in July 2019 as part of an overarching inquiry into road safety. The Committee invited written evidence on the reasons why young and novice drivers are at a higher risk of being involved in a road traffic crash, and what the Government can do to reduce these risks.[12] 89 submissions of written evidence were received although no oral evidence was taken before the dissolution of Parliament.

9. We relaunched the inquiry in the new Parliament in March 2020. We held three oral evidence session in September and October 2020 with road safety campaigners who had lost family members in road traffic crashes, road safety charities and academics, insurance industry representatives, motoring organisations, and Baroness Vere, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, and David Buttery OBE, Co-Director for Road Safety Standards and Services, Department for Transport. We also held a virtual engagement event with school and college students from Queen Elizabeth School, Devon, Barnsley College, South Yorkshire, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, Cheshire, and Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, Essex. We are grateful to all those who provided evidence to this inquiry and

11 Department for Transport, Total value of prevention of reported accidents by severity and cost element: Great Britain, RAS60003, accessed 25 February 2021

12 The full terms of reference are available on the Committee Website

to the students who participated in our engagement event. We are also grateful to the 252 respondents of our online survey which covered topics discussed in the inquiry and was aimed at increasing interest in the inquiry among 17 to 24 year olds.

2 Factors that increase young and novice driver crash risk

10. During our inquiry we explored the reasons why young drivers were over-represented in road traffic crash statistics. Witnesses believed that there were several contributing factors, including physiological, behavioural, and environmental factors.

Physiological factors

Brain development and maturity

11. Studies suggest that there are physiological reasons why young drivers may be particularly at risk on the roads.[13] The pre-frontal cortex of the human brain, which regulates impulsive behaviour, emotional arousal and the ability to anticipate the consequences of actions, is not thought to reach full maturity until adults are in their mid-twenties or later. In addition, the limbic region of the brain, which is associated with emotional responses, is particularly active between the ages of 15 and 24. The road safety charity Brake likened this to young drivers having "an over-active accelerator (limbic region) and under-active brakes (pre-frontal cortex)", resulting in young drivers being more likely to take risks and engage in dangerous behaviours when driving.[14] Some studies, such as research conducted by the YEARS project,[15] suggest that these biological changes to the brain generally occur later in males than females.[16]

Young male drivers

12. The proportion of young male drivers involved in road traffic crashes is striking. Young male drivers account for 80% of young driver fatalities.[17] Young male drivers are four times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the road than drivers aged 25 years or older.[18] Some witnesses believed that high crash rates for young men could be partly explained by the findings in studies about brain development, which could lead to a heightened tendency to act impulsively.[19] Witnesses told us that peer pressure and years of misrepresentation of young men as reckless drivers influenced some young males to drive recklessly.[20] This reckless behaviour could be a contributory factor behind the relatively high rates of crashes by young people on rural roads (see paragraphs 23 to 25), at night (see paragraph 26) and with passengers (see paragraph 59).

13 European Transport Safety Council, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, Reducing casualties involving young drivers and riders in Europe, (December 2016), p13–15; Angela Griffin, "Adolescent Neurological Development and Implications for Health and Well-Being", Healthcare 5, 62, (2017), pp 2–4

14 Brake (RSY0038) para 11–13

15 The YEARS project is run by the European Transport Safety Council and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety in the UK. The project seeks to gain a better understanding of young people and the risks they face on the road.

16 European Transport Safety Council, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, Reducing casualties involving young drivers and riders in Europe, December 2016, p 13–14

17 Department for Transport, Young Car Drivers Road Safety Factsheet (2016), May 2018, chart 12

18 Department for Transport, 'Pivotal THINK! campaign calls on young men to step in and stop their mates from drink driving', accessed 11 September 2020

19 Q43–Q47; George Atkinson (RSY0043) para 4

20 Q43–Q47

13. We asked the Minister responsible for road safety—Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State—about the higher proportions of young male drivers involved in crashes. The Minister said that the Department's focus was on improving training and education to discourage dangerous behaviours.[21] In written evidence, the Department said that the THINK! campaign had been successful in targeting young male drivers.[22] The campaign conducts research which includes "attitude tracking" of young male drivers in relation to "risky road behaviours" in order to better understand the influence of social norms on their driving.[23]

Behavioural factors

Driver inexperience and risky behaviours

14. One in five drivers of all ages are involved in a crash within their first year of driving. The Department for Transport has stated that many young drivers who feel vulnerable on the road during their first year of driving may take risks to overcompensate for their inexperience.[24] Brake identified poor assessment of hazards and a high prevalence of risk-taking as two specific characteristics of young drivers which increases their crash risk.[25]

Speeding

15. Some young drivers' attitudes towards speeding could be a factor in their increased crash rates. According to police records in 2016, 18.8% of crashes involving young drivers were due to the driver being "careless, reckless or in a hurry", 10.7% were "travelling too fast for conditions" and 8.4% "exceeding the speed limit".[26] A survey conducted by Brake found that 57% of young drivers liked to drive at the highest speed at which they could maintain control of the vehicle—in contrast to 37% of all drivers.[27]

Drink driving

16. In Great Britain, young adults aged 16 to 24 years old are overrepresented in drink-drive casualties, accounting for 24% of them.[28] Despite this, the longer-term trends suggest that young people are drink driving less than in the past. In 2005 there were 430 reported cases of a young driver or rider killed or seriously injured while over the legal alcohol limit. In 2018 the equivalent figure was 160.[29] This could suggest an attitudinal change among young people to drink driving. Nicole Parker, representing the Under 17 Car Club

21 Q246–Q247
22 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 53
23 Department for Transport (YND0020) para 5
24 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 45
25 Brake, 'Young drivers', accessed 15 March 2020
26 Department for Transport, Young Car Drivers Road Safety Factsheet (2016), May 2018, p 17
27 Independent research commissioned by Brake into issues relating to speed, BRA1802-Tables, 2018, row 2017–217; Q49
28 Department for Transport, Reported road casualties in Great Britain: final estimates involving illegal alcohol levels: 2018, RAS51001, August 2020, p 8
29 Department for Transport, KSI casualties in reported accidents involving young drivers and riders (17–24 years old) over the legal alcohol limit, RAS51008, accessed 3 December 2020

Charitable Trust, told us that among her age group (she was 21 years old) it was considered "socially unacceptable" to drink and drive.[30] This view was also shared by the students we spoke to in our engagement event.[31]

17. The legal blood alcohol limit in the UK is 80mg per 100ml of blood, except for Scotland which has a lower limit of 50mg per 100ml.[32] Many witnesses believed that lowering the blood alcohol limit either for all drivers or young drivers could further reduce crash rates. The RAC, the AA and the Association of British Insurers have repeatedly called for the blood alcohol limit to be reduced to 20mg per 100ml, which would essentially be a zero limit.[33] Some, however, believe this could be an infringement on the rights of individuals and have a negative impact on pubs, restaurants and the leisure industry.[34] Of those who supported a lower limit, witnesses had different views as to whether there should be a lower blood alcohol limit specifically for young or newly qualified drivers or for all drivers.[35]

18. The Minister told us that the Government had no plans to lower the blood alcohol limit in England and Wales. She cited the work of the Department's THINK! campaign as an example of tackling drink driving among young drivers. She also said there may be technological interventions available in future such as "ignition alcohol interlocks".[36]

Mobile phone use while driving

19. Young drivers appear more prone to using mobile phones while driving, which is an obvious safety hazard. Our predecessor Committee said in 2019 that driving whilst using a mobile phone can have "catastrophic consequences".[37] In 2019 there were 18 fatalities and 147 serious injuries in road traffic crashes where a driver using a mobile phone was a contributory factor in the crash.[38] Using a handheld mobile phone to call, text or send an email while driving can result in six penalty points and a £200 fine. Young and novice drivers could also lose their licence if they passed their driving test in the last two years. In 2019, our predecessor Committee recommended that the Government broaden the offence of driving while using a mobile phone to cover all hand-held usage.[39]

20. Research by the comparison website, GoCompare, found that 58% of 18 to 24 year olds admitted to using their phone while driving, despite knowing it is illegal, compared to 34% of all drivers.[40] A recent study by the RAC found that 18% of young people admitted to video calling while driving compared to an average of 8% for drivers of all ages.[41]

30 Q171
31 Altrincham Grammar Girls School, Barnsley College, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, and Queen Elizabeth's School (YND0014)
32 Gov.uk, 'The drink drive limit', accessed 15 December 2020
33 Q136, Q170, Q173
34 "Rural pubs could close if drink drive limit is lowered", The Telegraph, 10 February 2016
35 Q136, Q172–Q173
36 Q245
37 House of Commons Transport Committee, Twelfth report of session 2017–19, Road safety: driving while using a mobile phone, HC2329, July 2019, para 1
38 Department for Transport, Contributory factors: Casualties in reported accidents by severity, Great Britain, RAS50007, row 57, columns EP and EV, accessed 11 January 2021
39 House of Commons Transport Committee, Twelfth report of session 2017–19, Road safety: driving while using a mobile phone, HC2329, July 2019, para 18
40 GoCompare, '58% of young drivers using mobile phones behind the wheel', accessed 2 September 2020
41 RAC, 'Nearly one-in-five young people admit to video calling while driving', accessed 29 October 2020

21. Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) and the RAC Foundation both told us that a ban on mobile phones in cars would be unenforceable but called for greater use of in-car technologies to block calls and text messages when somebody is driving the vehicle.[42] Nicole Parker told us that many people in her age group were "casual" about using mobile phones while driving and were not always aware of the damage it could cause.[43] The British Insurance Brokers Association told us that app-based telematics (see paragraph 71) were becoming increasingly accurate and could be used to establish if somebody was using their phone inappropriately while driving.[44]

22. The Minister was "very concerned" by apparent high rates of mobile phone use while driving among young drivers.[45] Following our predecessor Committee's recommendation, the Department was currently consulting on whether to expand the offence of using a hand-held mobile phone while driving to "standalone mode functions" that do not involve interactive communication, such as searching for music stored on the phone or recording video footage.[46] In supplementary evidence the Department told us that the THINK! campaign was also increasingly targeted at young people using mobile phones while driving. Recent publicity videos focussing on young driver distractions, including mobile phones, had received more than five million views among its target audience.[47]

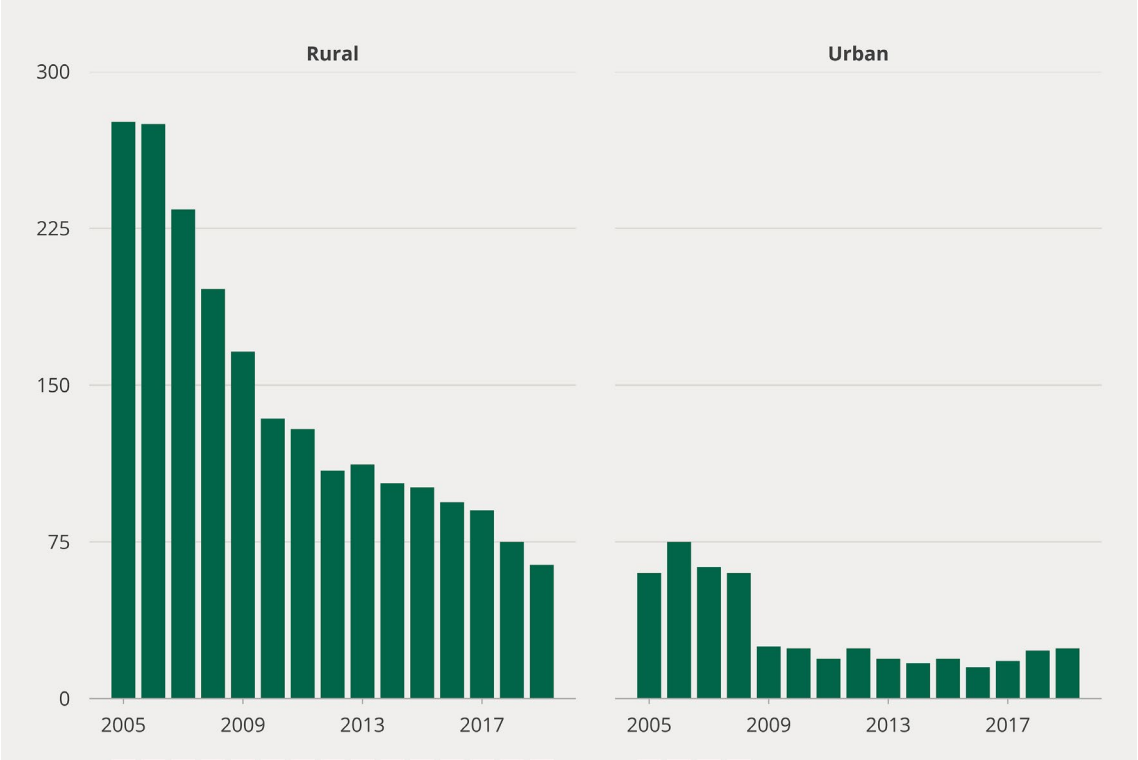
Environmental factors

Rural roads

23. The vast majority of car driver fatalities, including those of young drivers, occur on rural roads. Rural roads usually have higher average speeds than urban roads and are often more sinuous and narrower, with more blind bends and dips than urban roads.[48] They also have higher permissible speed limits, less congestion and less real-time monitoring. In 2019, 73% of young car driver fatalities occurred on rural roads, slightly lower than the 79% proportion for all car drivers. Figure 4 shows that since 2005 young driver fatalities and serious injuries on rural roads have remained consistently higher than on urban roads, although the numbers have in both cases decreased markedly over that period. In 2019, there were 64 young driver fatalities and 790 serious injuries on rural roads compared with 24 fatalities and 444 serious injuries on urban roads.[49]

42 Q38–Q39
43 Q146
44 Q93
45 Q244
46 House of Commons Transport Committee, Twelfth report of session 2017–19, Road safety: driving while using a mobile phone, HC2329, July 2019, para 18; A full list of activities which could be covered by the revised offence is given on page 12 of the following document: Department for Transport, Using a mobile phone while driving: Consultation on changing the law, October 2020, p 12
47 Department for Transport (YND0020) para 8
48 Department for Transport, Young Car Drivers Road Safety Factsheet (2016), May 2018, p 10
49 Department for Transport, Reported road accidents, RAS10, accessed 10 January 2021

Figure 4: Road traffic fatalities among car drivers aged 17–24 by road type



Note: Does not include 60,120 casualties which have a missing age

Source: DfT, Road Safety Accident Statistics

24. George Atkinson, a road safety campaigner who lost a family member in a crash involving a young driver, attributed this higher fatality rate to learner drivers not gaining enough experience driving on rural roads and often only driving on rural roads for the first time after passing their test.[50]

25. We asked the Minister about the high crash rates on rural roads. As part of the measures set out in the 2019 Road Safety Statement, the Department committed to setting up a 'Rural Road Users Advisory Panel'. The aim of this panel was for those "who are affected by rural road issues, including the young driving community, to openly discuss road safety matters directly with the Department".[51] Giving evidence in October 2020, the Minister told us that the Rural Roads Working Group had not yet met due to the coronavirus pandemic, but it intended to do so in 2021.[52]

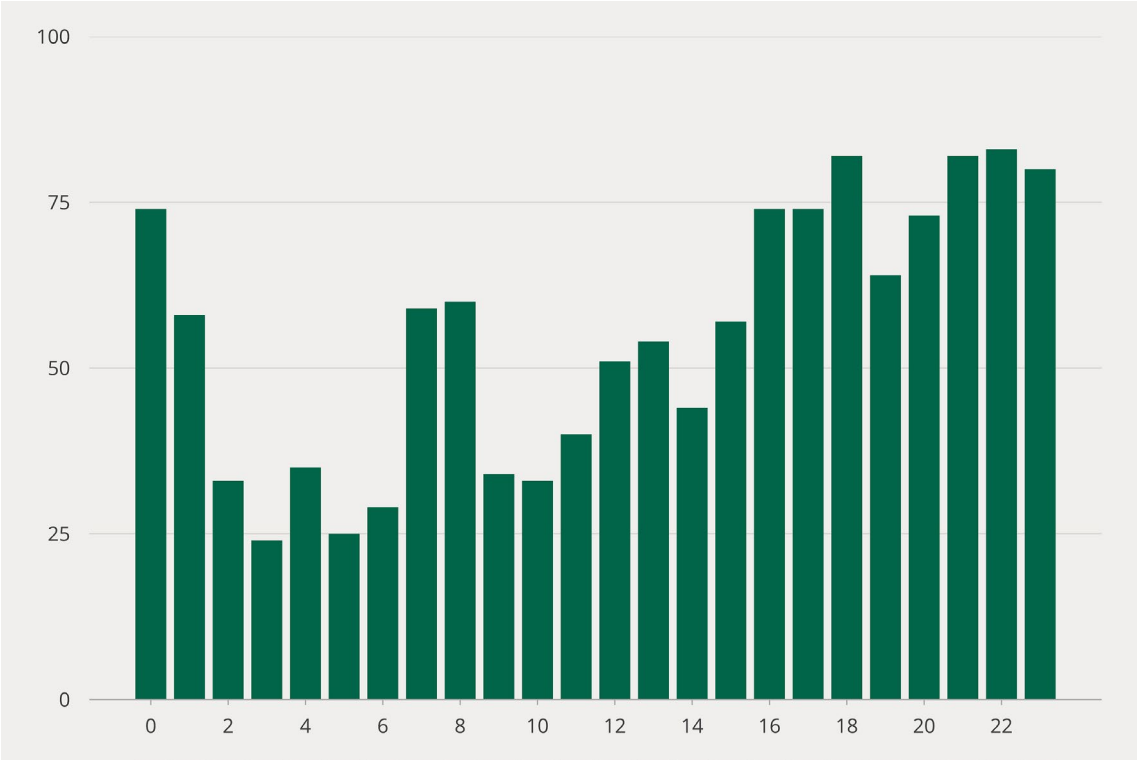
Night-time driving

26. In 2019, 37% of young driver fatalities and serious injuries occurred in a nine hour period between 9pm and 6am, despite roads being relatively quiet during this period (Figure 5).[53] This figure has remained consistent since 2010, with an average of 36% of young driver fatalities and serious injuries occurring between 9pm and 6am from 2010 to 2019. The RAC said that driving at night-time was particularly risky for all drivers, due to the lack of light and difficulty spotting hazards such as vulnerable road users and

50 Q4, Q6
51 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 57
52 Q250
53 Department for Transport, Reported road accidents, RAS10, accessed 10 January 2021; Department for Transport, Road traffic estimates: Great Britain 2019, September 2020, p 29

animals.[54] We received evidence that the risk posed by these factors is exacerbated for young drivers due to their inexperience and a suggested higher propensity to take risks (see paragraph 14).[55]

Figure 5: Fatalities and serious injuries among car drivers aged 17–24 by hour of day, 2019



Note: Does not include 60,120 casualties which have a missing age

Source: DfT, Road Safety Accident Statistics

The Department's approach to improving young driver road safety

27. We asked the Minister about the Department for Transport's focus on young driver safety. The Minister said that the Department recognised that young drivers were one of the four groups over-represented in crashes, alongside drivers of 65 years and older, motorcyclists and those who use rural roads. She said that the Department's key priorities were set out in its Road Safety Statement and two-year action plan, published in July 2019.[56] This included specific measures aimed at young people, such as researching the impacts of potential reforms to the driver training and licensing system (see Chapter 3), targeting communications to new drivers and their parents through the THINK! Campaign, and research on the use of telematics technology (see paragraph 78).[57]

28. The Department is also conducting a broader research project into young driver road safety called Driver 2020. The Minister described Driver 2020 as being a unique programme that was "huge in its intervention" and "has not been done anywhere in

54 RAC Motoring Services (RSY0014) para 16
55 Association of British Insurers (RSY0047) para 11
56 Q232
57 For full list of commitments see the following document: Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, p21–22

the world".[58] The project is being conducted by TRL with an overall cost of £2 million.[59] Driver 2020 will test five non-legislative, technological and educational based road safety measures, in a randomised controlled trial, that may improve the road safety of young and novice drivers. Three measures focus on the learning period (see paragraph 50). The other two measures focus on the post-driving test period (see paragraphs 77 and 78). The trials will involve some 25,000 volunteer participants aged between 17 and 24. It is scheduled to conclude and report back in 2022.[60]

Older novice drivers

29. Like young drivers, older novice drivers—that is, drivers of 25 years and over who have less than three years of driving experience—are likely to be at a higher risk on the roads, due to their relative inexperience. The Department does not record statistics for older novice drivers involved in crashes because the police do not collect information about a driver's experience level following a crash.[61] However, research by ALA Insurance Brokers in 2017 found that almost 28% of drivers aged 25 to 34 admitted to being involved in a crash in their first year of driving.[62]

30. TRL told us that more should be done to collect this data because "all novices, regardless of their age are at an increased crash risk due to their inexperience" and that driving experience reduces crash risk far more than age. Research shows that gaining 7,500 miles of driving experience over a year can reduce crash risk by 36%.[63]

31. The Department confirmed with us that neither it nor the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) collected data on crashes for older novice drivers. We were told that this information would only be available either through conducting an in-depth study of older novice drivers or by analysing driver records held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), such as penalty points and disqualifications.[64] The Minister told us, however, that the lack of these statistics did not necessarily hinder the Department's ability to develop road safety strategies that worked for older novice drivers.[65]

32. **Research conducted by the insurance industry shows that a significant proportion of older novice drivers—that is, drivers aged above 25 who are relatively new to driving—are involved in crashes. However, this is difficult to verify because official statistics are not recorded for this particular demographic. This absence of data is particularly disappointing given that our predecessor Committee recommended in 2007 that the Department, in collaboration with the police, "should collect the data necessary to understand the scale and nature of the crash involvement of novice drivers, independently of young drivers".**

58 Q261
59 Q242
60 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 19–26; Department for Transport, Review of interventions to increase the safety of young and novice drivers, August 2017
61 As part of STATS19 data.
62 ALA, Tackling Young Driver Accidents, accessed 15 March 2020
63 Q31; Road Safety Foundation, Graduated Driver Licensing: A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain, (May 2014), p 2
64 Department for Transport (YND0020) para 12–14
65 Q235, Q237

33. ***The Department should commission a study of crash rates for older novice drivers and how the driver's experience level contributes to these crashes. This would allow the Department to understand better the risks around older novice drivers and whether to monitor and target more actively crash rates amongst this demographic.***

3 Reforms to the learning and testing process

34. Many witnesses advocated for reforms to the learning and testing process as a key policy measure to improve the road safety of young and novice drivers. Some argued that the existing process of learning to drive encouraged people to seek to pass the test in the minimum time possible or merely to pass the test, rather than learn to drive safely.[66]

The current learning and testing process

35. The current process of becoming a driver in Great Britain consists of undertaking lessons, usually over many months, once the learner has reached the age of 17 and obtained a provisional driving licence. These lessons can be provided by an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) or with someone over the age of 21 who has held a licence for over three years and is insured on the car being driven (in many cases a parent or guardian).[67] Since 2018, learner drivers in Great Britain have been able to take driving lessons on motorways, provided they are with an ADI in a car with dual controls.[68]

36. To become a fully qualified driver, learners need to pass a theory and practical test administered by the DVSA. The theory test involves 50 multiple-choice questions and a video hazard perception test.[69] The hazard perception test involves the playing of video clips made using computer generated imagery to test learner drivers on how they react to scenarios involving vulnerable road users, night-time or adverse weather conditions.[70]

37. The practical test can only be booked once the theory test is passed and involves the learner having to drive safely in different road and traffic conditions for around 40 minutes.[71] Learners must have no more than 15 driving faults in order to pass their test and cannot have any serious or dangerous driving faults. About half of all new drivers pass their driving test on the first attempt.[72] Since 2017 the practical test has included an "independent driving section", where the candidate drives for 20 minutes without guidance from their examiner. This allows the examiner to assess the candidate's ability to manage the vehicle, route, and traffic simultaneously. The Department told us that this meant that the learner driver spends a large proportion of their test focussing on driving in high risk areas, such as rural or higher speed roads, roundabouts, and junctions to test their observation and judgement in areas where crashes occur. The use of satellite navigation and demonstration of controls (such as windscreen wipers) on the move were also now included in the test and measured the candidates' ability to manage distractions.[73]

66 Q12, Q125, Q152
67 Gov.uk, 'Driving lessons and learning to drive: Practising with family or friends', accessed 18 March 2020
68 Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, 'Learner drivers on motorways from 4 June 2018', accessed 22 November 2020
69 Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, 'Theory test changes: 28 September 2020', accessed 4 October 2020
70 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 40
71 Gov.uk, 'Driving test: cars', accessed 11 January 2021
72 Department for Transport, Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2017 Annual Report, RAS41001, Line 2.3.1
73 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 39

Possible reforms to the learning process

Driving in different conditions

38. Although the practical driving test includes the ability to drive in different road and traffic conditions, many witnesses said that the learning process still did not give learners an extensive enough range of driving experiences suitable for the real world. Several witnesses said that the learning process should include driving in different weather conditions.[74] The AA said:

> You could wake up the day after you passed your driving test and it is pouring with rain, but you have never driven in rain before or had to navigate puddles or worry about whether the braking distance is the same.[75]

39. We also heard that learner drivers would particularly benefit from more experience driving on rural roads. As described in Chapter 2, 73% of fatalities for young car drivers occur on rural roads. The road safety charity IAM RoadSmart recommended that driving on rural roads should be a compulsory part of the practical driving test.[76]

Minimum learning period

40. There is currently no specified minimum learning period within Great Britain. Learners continue taking lessons, usually until the ADI believes they are ready to pass their test. Alternatively, some learners undertake intensive driving courses, which usually consist of learning over a one or two-week period with each day consisting of up to six hours on the road. Intensive driving courses can be cheaper than conventional lessons because learners are able to pay for them in a lump sum.[77] Some of our witness, such as the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and the AA, were critical of intensive driving courses. The ABI called for them to be banned stating that intensive driving courses place "little emphasis on accumulating road experience", meaning that young drivers were unlikely to have "gained sufficient driving experience to be safe road users after completing these courses".[78]

41. The Minister, however, told us that there were no plans to ban intensive driving courses. She said these courses may be suitable for certain people who need to pass their test quickly, for example for employment purposes. She questioned whether there was the evidence basis to suggest intensive driving courses were any less safe than the conventional method of learning to drive to justify banning them.[79]

42. ***Every individual's circumstances and natural skill, aptitude and experience and level of competence to drive a car or vehicle is varied. However, we are concerned that intensive driving courses may not provide learner drivers with adequate driving experience prior to passing their test. We recommend that the Department conducts***

74 Q11, Q160
75 Q160
76 IAM RoadSmart (RSY0029) para 3
77 Admiral, 'Intensive driving course – are they worth it?', accessed August 2020; Q160
78 Association of British Insurers (YND0004) para 20; Q160
79 Q266–Q268

research to investigate whether drivers who pass their test after undertaking intensive driving lessons are at increased risk of being involved in a crash in their first two years of driving.

43. A number of witnesses, including the ABI, the British Insurance Brokers Association, and TRL, believed that learner drivers should be subject to a minimum learning period—for instance, a mandatory 12 months or minimum number of hours.[80] A minimum learning period often forms a component of a Graduated Driver Licensing system (see Chapter 4) but could also be considered a standalone intervention.[81] Minimum learning periods can improve the likelihood that learners have adequate experience of driving in different traffic and weather conditions and types of road.[82] George Atkinson called for a minimum supervisory learning period to be introduced in Great Britain, with two hours of practice with a qualified driver or parent for every hour with an ADI.[83]

Logbooks

44. Some witnesses called for the Department to make it mandatory for ADIs to use "logbooks".[84] According to the AA, logbooks would show that a learner driver has experience of driving in certain specific situations (such as rural roads, night-driving and different weather conditions) prior to taking their practical test.[85] Logbooks are already used by AA-affiliated ADIs. The AA said that logbooks also provided learners with a record that they had covered not only the technical elements of driving (which will be covered in the test) but broader discussions on carrying passengers, drink driving and mobile phone use.[86]

Training on private land prior to obtaining a provisional licence

45. Some organisations offer extensive training on private land to children and young adults often before they have obtained a provisional licence. For example, the Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust (U17CC) offers pre-licence training whereby a student from the age of 11 onwards is taught to drive by volunteers (many of whom are former students of the club). The student learns alongside their parent or guardian. Teaching takes place over an extended period on private land using different vehicles and in different simulated driving conditions (including the use of a skidpan[87] and night-time driving). The U17CC also offers the "Pathfinder Initiative", a condensed five-day version of the teaching offered by full membership, available to 15 and 16 year olds.[88]

80 Q122 [Laura Hughes], Q129, Q160, Q50, Q67
81 For a summary of GDL restrictions around the world see the following document: Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, July 2019, p 59
82 Association of British Insurers (YND0004) para 20; RAC Motoring Services (RSY0014) para 20; Q130
83 Q12
84 Q160; Q12
85 The AA charitable Trust (RSY0062) para 23
86 Q160
87 A paved surface on which vehicles can be made to skid so that drivers can practice controlling them.
88 Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust (RSY0027) para 7–10; Q144

46. The U17CC estimated that a nationwide rollout of programmes similar to its own could reduce young and novice driver involvement in crashes by as much as 75%.[89] Nicole Parker, a former U17CC student, said that the scheme had provided her with "invaluable" confidence before driving on the road on her own.[90]

47. Other witnesses, however, were less persuaded by such schemes. Ian Greenwood, a road safety campaigner who lost a family member in a crash involving a young driver, did not feel that "off-road simulation" such as that offered by the U17CC was sufficient to improve young and novice driver safety or could match the benefits of a minimum learning period held on public roads.[91] TRL questioned the effectiveness of current measures to improve young and novice driver safety. In its written evidence, TRL stated: "driver education and training is not effective at reducing young and novice driver collisions. It is not just that there is an absence of evidence; there is evidence of an absence of effectiveness at the public health level." On off-road pre-licence training specifically, TRL said there was "no evidence" that it reduced young and novice driver risk and that some cases studies had found that where pre-licence off-road training was present, collisions among new drivers increased.[92]

The Department's approach

48. We asked the Minister what steps the Department was taking to reform the learner process, particularly to ensure that learners experienced driving in an extensive range of situations. She told us that the Department had provided £100,000 to the Driving Instructors Association, a professional membership body for driver and rider trainers in the UK, to develop a "modular learning project". Under the project, learners will be taught a series of modules including driving in adverse conditions, driving in the dark, driving at high speed, and driving while distracted. The pilot aims to provide "a very organised and well-evidenced way of going through the entire undertaking of learning to drive [that will] focus on those areas that people find the most difficult."[93] Giving evidence in October 2020, the Minister told us the pilot would begin in January 2021. This has been subsequently delayed due to the restrictions put in place for the coronavirus pandemic. The pilot is now expected to start later in 2021.

49. In written evidence, the Department told us that the DVSA are currently developing a "behavioural change campaign" with the objective of increasing the amount of practice learners have on rural roads, driving independently and driving in the dark before they take their test. In addition, in 2019 the DVSA published an updated version of its "Learning to Drive" publication which was accompanied by a digital "driver's record". The record is similar to a logbook and is intended to allow the learner and their ADI (or other supervising driver) to prepare lessons and monitor progress against national standards and their readiness to drive unsupervised on a range of roads and in different circumstances.[94]

89 Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust (RSY0027) para 12
90 Q156
91 Q13
92 TRL (RSY0049) para 10 and 16
93 Q239
94 Department for Transport (YND0003) paras 38 and 41

50. The Minister also told us that three of the technological and educational policy interventions being explored in the Department's Driver 2020 research programme specifically focussed on the learning period:

- a mobile phone application (acting as an electronic logbook) designed to increase the breadth of pre-test road experience;
- an e-learning programme to train hazard perception skill; and
- a classroom-based educational programme.[95]

51. We questioned the Minister about the case for a minimum learning period. She did not think that there should be a mandated minimum learning period, because "some people will take a much shorter period [while] some people take a very long time to be able to pass their test" and that the key factor was "whether the person is going to be a safe and competent driver" rather than the length of their learning period.[96]

95 Q242; Department for Transport (YND0003) para 19–26
96 Q252

4 Graduated Driver Licensing

52. Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) is a system which offers a phased approach to driving, often limiting the activities of newly qualified drivers for a specified period of time. This is intended to allow young and novice drivers to build driving experience and competence to help minimise risk.[97] There is no one system of GDL and various versions have been implemented around the world, including in parts of the USA, Canada, and Australia.[98]

53. Examples of typical GDL features include:

- a minimum learning period or minimum supervised learning hours required before the driving test can be taken—for example, 120 hours are required in Victoria, Australia—which can sometimes be accompanied by lowering the age at which people can start learning to drive;
- restricting the number of passengers that young and novice drivers are able to carry for a certain period—for instance, in New York only one passenger under the age of 21 is allowed until the driver turns 18 years old and in Ontario, Canada only one passenger under 19 years old at night is permitted for the first six months after passing the test;
- a night-time driving restriction (such as between 11pm and 4am) for a certain period; and
- a lowering of the blood alcohol limit for new drivers or drivers under a certain age.[99]

54. In Northern Ireland, the Driver and Vehicle Agency is seeking the agreement of the Northern Ireland Executive to make legislative changes needed for the full implementation of GDL. Its launch would be accompanied by a communications strategy including an advertising campaign and digital platform to target their core 17 to 24 year old demographic.[100] Box 1 sets out some of the key features of the proposed GDL system in Northern Ireland.

Evidence in favour of Graduated Driver Licensing

55. Many witnesses supported the implementation of GDL in Great Britain. We heard about the success of GDL schemes in reducing crashes in other countries.[101] In Ontario, Canada, the introduction of a GDL scheme—which includes a 12 month minimum learning period, a lowered blood alcohol limit, and night-time restrictions—saw a 42% reduction in crashes among those aged 20 to 24. In New Zealand, a form of GDL—including a six month minimum learning period, a lower blood alcohol limit for drivers

97 Brake (RSY0038) para 26
98 For a summary of GDL restrictions around the world see the following document: Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, July 2019, p 59
99 For a summary of GDL restrictions around the world see the following document: Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, July 2019, p 59
100 Driver and Vehicle Agency, Northern Ireland (YND0016) para 2
101 For a summary of GDL restrictions around the world see the following document: Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, p59

under 20, night-time driving restrictions and a restriction on carrying any passengers for the first six months of driving—resulted in a 23% reduction in car crash injuries for 15 to 19 year olds and a 12% reduction for 20 to 24 year olds.[102]

Box 1: The proposed graduated driver licensing system in Northern Ireland

- Mandatory minimum learning period of six months;
- Programme of training and learner logbooks (the completion of which is a legal requirement before the practical test can be conducted);
- Passenger restrictions on newly qualified drivers under the age of 24 who will be restricted from carrying more than one passenger aged 14 to 20 between the hours of 11pm and 6am, with exemptions; and
- Two post-test plates to be displayed for the first two years of driving to alert other road users to the experience level of the driver.

56. Brake told us that "the various components of a phased licensing system have been well and truly tested and trialled across many different nations with inordinate success". In its view, it was "absolutely unacceptable and not comprehensible" that GDL had not yet been implemented in Great Britain.[103]

57. In 2013, TRL conducted a review for the Department on the potential impact GDL could have on road safety in Great Britain based upon the effectiveness of GDL in other countries. The review estimated that a GDL system—which could include night-time driving restrictions, passenger restrictions, a minimum learner period, minimum required practice and a lowered blood alcohol limit—could result in annual savings of 4,471 casualties and £224 million.[104]

58. A 2014 survey undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the RAC Foundation (who support GDL) found that 68% of the British public supported the introduction of GDL. It should be noted that this survey is now seven years old and would not take into account any subsequent technological improvements and changes to travel patterns.

59. Two GDL restrictions that are said to be most effective—and most controversial—relate to carrying passengers and night-time driving. Research by Brake found that newly qualified drivers are up to four times more likely to die in a crash when carrying passengers of the same age compared to driving alone, while young drivers could be up to 62% less likely to crash when carrying older adult passengers.[105] As described in Chapter 2, in 2019 37% of young driver fatalities and serious injuries occurred in a nine hour period between 9pm and 6am , despite roads becoming progressively quieter during this period.[106]

102 Association of British Insurers (ABI) and Thatcham Research (RSA0103) para 14; Brake (RSY0038) para 27

103 Q30 [Mary Williams]

104 These savings could vary from 2,236 to 8,942 casualties and £112million to £447 million depending on the GDL components included in the system and the strength of these restrictions; TRL (RSY0049) para 32; Transport Research Laboratory, Novice Drivers: evidence review and evaluation, 2013, p 40;

105 Brake, 'Young Drivers', accessed 13 March 2020; Accident Solicitors Direct, 'How safe are young drivers on the road?', accessed 7 January 2021

106 Department for Transport, Reported road accidents, RAS10, accessed 10 January 2021; Department for Transport, Road traffic estimates: Great Britain 2019, September 2020, p 29

60. The 2013 TRL review found that the introduction of night-time driving restrictions and passenger restrictions alone—without other additional GDL components—could have a significant impact upon improving road safety. TRL found that strong night-time restrictions[107] and passenger restrictions[108] could result in an annual reduction of 41 fatalities and 3,809 casualties, with cost savings of £191 million. The same study also found that weaker night-time driving and passenger restrictions[109] could result in 28 fewer fatalities, 2,035 fewer casualties and annual savings of £102 million.[110] It found "no evidence" of the implementation of GDL having a "significant impact on youth mobility or employment".[111] Research suggests that a driving restriction for young drivers from midnight to 5am would only have an impact on 2.6% of 17 to 19 year olds who reported carrying out work related journeys during these times.[112] This same restriction would save 75 fatalities and seriously injured casualties per year.[113] TRL called for a GDL "feasibility study" to be carried out in Great Britain that would "highlight those potentially affected by GDL restrictions and the need for exemptions [from restrictions]".[114]

61. The ABI believed that night-time driving and passenger restrictions would have the "biggest impact on reducing collisions for young people".[115] The ABI called for a restriction on the number of passengers that young drivers are able to carry for a period of six months. It also recommended a night-time driving restriction between 11pm and 4am during the first six months of driving—with exemptions available to young drivers who are driving to or from their place of employment or education or those who are young parents carrying their children.[116]

62. It should be noted that in England only 34% of 16 to 24 years olds have personal car access, although this proportion will vary between those who live in urban and rural areas.[117]

Evidence against Graduated Driver Licensing

63. We also received critical evidence about GDL systems and the possible impact of additional restrictions on young and novice drivers. These mainly focussed on the potential barriers to social and economic opportunities.

Impact on social and economic activities

64. We received evidence about the social and economic opportunities that car access and driving gave to young people. In a study commissioned by the Department, Dr Kiron

107 No driving between 9pm and 6am unless accompanied by a person of 25 years old or older.
108 Carrying no 15 to 24 year old passengers unless accompanied by a person of 25 years old or older.
109 No driving between 10pm and 5am and an allowance of only one passenger aged between 15 to 24 years old, unless accompanied by a driver aged 25 years old or older.
110 TRL (RSY0049) para 32; Transport Research Laboratory, Novice Drivers: evidence review and evaluation, 2013, p vi
111 Transport Research Laboratory, Novice Drivers: evidence review and evaluation, 2013, p 141
112 Road Safety Foundation, Graduated Driver Licensing: A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain, (May 2014), p xi
113 Q56 [Dr Kinnear]; Road Safety Foundation, Graduated Driver Licensing: A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain, (May 2014), p 29
114 TRL (RSY0049) para 32
115 Q126
116 Association of British Insurers (YND0004) para 11
117 Department for Transport, Access to transport and life opportunities, October 2019, p 9

Chatterjee, Associate Professor in Travel Behaviour at the University of West England, found that having personal car access makes it 3.8 times more likely that someone is employed rather than unemployed (compared to not having car access) and twice as likely that someone can access services. Access to services was particularly important for those with mobility impairments and living in rural areas.[118] Dr Chatterjee told us that 17 to 19 year olds in rural areas drive three times as many miles as those in urban areas. In his view, "additional barriers" to driving for young people who live in rural areas or peripheral urban areas would "not be welcome given the distances they need to travel to reach opportunities".[119]

65. Some witnesses, such as the AA, said that passenger restrictions could potentially disadvantage young people who have caring responsibilities and those whose younger siblings rely on them for transportation.[120] Nicole Parker, a former student and current volunteer with the Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust, highlighted the detrimental impact she felt passenger restrictions could have upon young people and spoke of her own personal experience just after passing her test:

> I was giving my younger cousins lifts. I was giving my parents lifts. I was giving school friends lifts. A lot of people from school were carpooling if they lived in more rural areas where you could not get a bus. When they had passed their test, they took each other to and from school. To enforce that you could not take passengers, or you could only take one other person, would be such a limiting experience to young people.[121]

66. There is little evidence that young people themselves strongly support the additional restrictions inherent in a GDL system. The 2014 survey conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf the RAC Foundation found that only 41% of 16 to 24 year olds supported its introduction. Within this same survey, only 39% of 16 to 24 year olds supported potential passenger restrictions and 42% of 16 to 24 year olds supported potential night-time driving restrictions.[122] As noted above, this survey is now seven years old and would not take into account any subsequent technological improvements and changes to travel patterns. In the engagement event we carried out with school and college students there was little support for the introduction of GDL.[123]

67. The British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) was critical of the impact that GDL passenger restrictions could have upon lift sharing, which helped to reduce traffic on the road and pollution. BIBA also said that night-time restrictions would "reduce employment opportunities", particularly for shift workers who have to work at night (such as nurses) and staff of the military forces, a considerable proportion of whom are under 21, and are often required to be available on call at night.[124] BIBA told us that any GDL scheme would need to achieve the "right balance between social mobility and road safety".[125]

118 Department for Transport, Access to transport and life opportunities, October 2019, p 7
119 Q194
120 National Rural Crime Network (RSY0015) para 13; The AA (YND0011) para 9
121 Q166
122 317 17 to 24 year olds included in survey; RAC Foundation and Ipsos MORI, Young Driver Safety: A public attitude survey, June 2014, p 2 and 7–10
123 Altrincham Grammar Girls School, Barnsley College, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, and Queen Elizabeth's School (YND0014)
124 British Insurance Brokers Association (RSY0051) para 6 and 14
125 Q122

68. Research by the RAC Foundation found that the introduction of a GDL system in 2018 could have less of an impact on young driver fatal and serious crash rates compared to if it had been introduced four years earlier in 2014. This could be due to the increasing safety of vehicles, lower mileage rates among young drivers, and safer driving caused by the greater use of telematic technology.[126]

Enforcement

69. Some witnesses criticised how well a GDL system could be enforced, due to an already short supply of road traffic officers, the difficulties of establishing the age of a particular driver on the road, and if the driver was complying with any exemptions permitted under a GDL system (for example, whether they were driving to and from a place of employment or with passengers they may be legally entitled to carry).[127]

The impact of telematic technology

70. We investigated the role that "telematics" could play in improving safety as an alternative to introducing further restrictions on young drivers. Telematic technology is used by insurance companies to monitor driver behaviour to promote safe driving and reduce insurance premiums.[128] According to BIBA, there were almost one million live telematics motor policies in operation in Great Britain in 2017—a huge increase from 12,000 such policies in 2009.[129] Nicole Taylor, a former student and volunteer of the Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust, told us that without a black box policy her insurance costs would have been £2,500 for her first year, but with one her insurance costs were just over £1,000.[130]

71. The most common form of telematic technology is a black box installed in a vehicle. Insure the Box, a telematics insurance provider, told us that it uses black box telematics to collect data on the time of day or night the customer is travelling, the speed driven on different types of road, whether they are braking or accelerating sharply, whether they take breaks on long journeys, and the number of miles travelled on motorways. This information is communicated to customers who can use this data to monitor their own driving behaviour and can also be used to calculate each drivers' crash risk. Insure the box are also able to assist customers or directly contact the emergency services when they are involved in a crash. The company estimates that it has assisted 80,000 drivers to reduce instances of speeding per mile by 21%, resulting in 700 fewer crashes and 22 fewer serious injuries.[131] In recent years there has also been increased development of app-based technologies used on smartphones that perform similar functions to black boxes. App-based telematics are not hard-wired into the car.[132]

126 RAC Foundation (RSY0042); RAC Foundation, The modelled impact of a range of GDL schemes: An update of the 2014 TRL report, May 2018
127 National Rural Crime Network (RSY0015) para 16; Q175
128 Insure the Box Limited (RSY0040) para 2–25
129 British Insurance Brokers Association, 'BIBA research reveals telematics based policies almost reaches one million mark', accessed 10 January 2021
130 Q183 [Nicole Parker]
131 Insure the Box Limited (RSY0040) para 2–25
132 Q93

72. Many witnesses highlighted the positive safety benefits of telematics being installed as part of an insurance policy. BIBA highlighted statistical evidence from insurance firms which demonstrated the benefits of telematics in moderating driving behaviour:

> Firms such as Marmalade […] show that the average young driver accident rate is one in five, but when you have a telematics device it improves to one in 18, so it is more than three times safer. […] Carrot sees a 42% reduction in accidents with a telematics device, compared with a normal driver, and Ingenie sees a 46% reduction. We see genuine evidence of people moderating their driving behaviour. […] They can check in using an electronic dashboard on their phone or on a website to see their driving score and whether their driving has been good that week.[133]

73. BIBA also said that telematics could be an educational tool due to their ability to communicate issues with the way a person is driving: "It can even send you a message if you are cornering too quickly on rural country roads; it will send you a message saying your grip is reduced by 25%, so it serves as an educational piece of information for a driver as well."[134] The RAC and the AA were also both supportive of the increased use of telematic technology to improve young and novice driver safety.[135]

74. Some witnesses were critical of the effectiveness of telematics as a means to improve road safety. The ABI was critical of the use of telematics without further reform to Great Britain's learning and licensing system, stating that "young drivers who are unwilling to change their unsafe behaviours are unlikely to take out telematics insurance".[136] This view was echoed by other witnesses such as TRL and Brake who told us that telematics were "very much complementary and not instead of" further reform, such as the introduction of a GDL system.[137] The RAC Foundation referred to black boxes as a good "risk management approach" because they identified risky behaviours to young drivers and were particularly effective in the first two years of driving when drivers were most at risk of crashes.[138] It questioned, however, the longer-term impact citing an Insurance Research Council study which found that 80% of drivers changed their behaviour when they had telematics in place, but 42% of these reverted to their previous driving behaviour after the technology was removed.[139]

The Department's approach

75. In its July 2019 Road Safety Statement, published under the previous administration, the Department committed to "commission research to explore the social and economic consequences of implementing Graduated Driver Licence (GDL)".[140] Giving evidence in October 2020, however, the Minister told us that the Department would not be progressing this piece of work "in particular because of the coronavirus pandemic and the impact on

133 Q83
134 Q84
135 RAC Motoring Services (RSY0014) para 12–13; The AA (YND0011) para 6
136 Association of British Insurers (YND0004) para 14
137 Q22, Q72, Q76
138 Q71
139 Insurance Research Council, 'Telematics Programs Prompt Changes in Driving Behavior, But Not All Changes are Permanent', accessed 23 December 2020; Q71
140 Department for Transport, The Road Safety Statement 2019: a lifetime of road safety, July 2019, p 21; Q245

young people's employment". The Minister was clear that GDL was not the "silver bullet" for reducing road deaths among young people and said the Department had "taken the decision to try other routes", such as the modular learning pilot and Driver 2020.[141]

76. When challenged about the success of GDL in other countries, the Minister said that the USA, where GDL is present in many states, had a road crash fatality rate "four times" higher than in Great Britain. She questioned whether GDL would be equally effective in a domestic context where the casualty rate was already much lower.[142] Gareth Llewellyn, Chief Executive of the DVSA (the agency which oversees driver testing) told us he was "totally against" GDL and believed that improving driver training would be a more effective policy solution.[143]

77. The Department told us that the Driver 2020 project will include an educational and technology-based measure aimed at engaging parents or mentors in "managing post-test driving in specific risky situations (such as driving after dark, and while carrying peer-age passengers) using web-based materials".[144] This will be offered on a voluntary basis to participant learner drivers, and is similar to the kind of content which may be offered as part of a GDL scheme.

78. We questioned the Minister on the potential of telematic technology to improve young driver safety. The Minister said she was a "big fan" of black boxes and other forms of telematics.[145] The Department's Driver 2020 research project will test the effectiveness of a 'telematics' approach using a mobile phone application which is used to provide feedback to drivers on their driving style, without any 'black box' or similar infrastructure being fitted in the vehicle.[146] The results of Driver 2020 are expected in 2022.[147]

141 Q256–Q258
142 Q259
143 Oral evidence taken on 25 November 2020, HC 1002, Q51 [Gareth Llewelyn]
144 Department for Transport (YND0003) para 29
145 Q270–Q271
146 Q73; Department for Transport, Review of interventions to increase the safety of young and novice drivers, August 2017
147 Q73, Q242

5 Conclusion

79. **There have been welcome reductions in the overall numbers of young and novice drivers killed and seriously injured in road traffic crashes over the past 15 years. However, this progress has now stalled. We believe that improvements to the safety of vehicles and the learning and testing process, as well as the increasing use of telematic technology by young drivers, have helped improve safety rates. However, young drivers are still sadly over-represented in the statistics. It is a tragic fact that in 2019 88 young drivers lost their lives on the roads of Great Britain.**

80. **There are a number of factors that contribute to the higher proportional rates of young drivers in the casualty statistics. We welcome the Department for Transport's Driver 2020 research project which is exploring several technological and educational based measures targeted at improving the safety rates for young drivers.**

81. ***We recommend that the Department for Transport provides an update to the Committee on progress with the Driver 2020 project by July 2021.***

82. **As with other age groups, rural roads pose a particular risk for young drivers, with three quarters of young driver fatalities taking place on those roads. We welcome the Department's 2019 commitment to establish a Rural Roads Working Group although it is unsatisfactory that, by October 2020, that group had still not met.**

83. ***In its Response to this Report, the Department should provide further information about the Rural Roads Working Group, including its membership, scope, objectives, and when and how often it plans to meet.***

84. **We recognise the improvements that the Department and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency have made to the learning and testing process in recent years. However, we are concerned that the current learning process does not fully equip learner drivers with sufficient experience of driving a vehicle in a range of different situations. We therefore welcome the Department's commitment to pilot a system of "modular learning" with compulsory driver training in different conditions, due to start later in 2021 should restrictions in place for the coronavirus pandemic be eased.**

85. ***In its response to this Report, the Department should provide an outline of the criteria that will be used to judge the effectiveness of its modular learning pilot. The Department should update us by October 2021 on its assessment of the pilot against those criteria.***

86. ***As well as the practical test, the theory test can play an important role in helping to develop learner drivers' understanding of driving in different situations. We recommend that the Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency develop the theory test to ensure it includes adequate questioning on driving at night and while carrying passengers.***

87. The merits of introducing Graduated Driver Licensing in Great Britain have been a key focus of our inquiry. Although there is evidence that GDL can be effective in reducing crash rates, as seen in Canada and New Zealand and in the research of the Transport Research Laboratory, there are also concerns about the impact such restrictions could have upon the social and economic opportunities available to young and novice drivers.

The Department has made clear it does not currently support the introduction of a GDL system. There is also not a clear mandate for the introduction of GDL restrictions as opinion remains divided on its implementation among young people who would be most affected by its introduction.

88. ***Given there is some evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of GDL but significant concerns about its impact, particularly from young people themselves, the Department should resume the study into the social and economic consequences of GDL which it committed to in its 2019 Road Safety Statement. This would provide much needed evidence on the likely impacts.***

89. ***The potential implementation of GDL in Northern Ireland presents the Department with an opportunity to monitor the impact of such a system within one part of the UK. By October 2021, we recommend that the Department liaise with the Northern Ireland Executive and provide us with interim findings and the Department's conclusions on the impact of GDL in Northern Ireland.***

90. Telematic technology is an innovative way of allowing insurance companies to provide young and novice drivers and their families with data on their driving behaviour and performance. It ought to also help reduce insurance costs for young drivers. Telematic technology is still improving and could be an important method of improving driver safety, although there are some doubts about whether telematics in isolation can successfully change driver behaviour. **We welcome the fact that the Department's Driver 2020 programme will explore the potential for telematic technology to improve driver safety. We are mindful, however, about the rights and freedoms of the individual and the privacy of their data.**

91. ***As part of the progress update on Driver 2020 we have requested by July 2021, the Department should outline the progress and preliminary findings from its research into the effectiveness of telematic technology to improve road safety.***

Conclusions and recommendations

Factors that increase young and novice driver crash risk

1. Research conducted by the insurance industry shows that a significant proportion of older novice drivers—that is, drivers aged above 25 who are relatively new to driving—are involved in crashes. However, this is difficult to verify because official statistics are not recorded for this particular demographic. This absence of data is particularly disappointing given that our predecessor Committee recommended in 2007 that the Department, in collaboration with the police, "should collect the data necessary to understand the scale and nature of the crash involvement of novice drivers, independently of young drivers". (Paragraph 32)

2. *The Department should commission a study of crash rates for older novice drivers and how the driver's experience level contributes to these crashes. This would allow the Department to understand better the risks around older novice drivers and whether to monitor and target more actively crash rates amongst this demographic.* (paragraph 33)

Reforms to the learning and testing process

3. *Every individual's circumstances and natural skill, aptitude and experience and level of competence to drive a car or vehicle is varied. However, we are concerned that intensive driving courses may not provide learner drivers with adequate driving experience prior to passing their test. We recommend that the Department conducts research to investigate whether drivers who pass their test after undertaking intensive driving lessons are at increased risk of being involved in a crash in their first two years of driving.* (Paragraph 42)

Conclusion

4. There have been welcome reductions in the overall numbers of young and novice drivers killed and seriously injured in road traffic crashes over the past 15 years. However, this progress has now stalled. We believe that improvements to the safety of vehicles and the learning and testing process, as well as the increasing use of telematic technology by young drivers, have helped improve safety rates. However, young drivers are still sadly over-represented in the statistics. It is a tragic fact that in 2019 88 young drivers lost their lives on the roads of Great Britain. (Paragraph 79)

5. There are a number of factors that contribute to the higher proportional rates of young drivers in the casualty statistics. We welcome the Department for Transport's Driver 2020 research project which is exploring several technological and educational based measures targeted at improving the safety rates for young drivers. (Paragraph 80)

6. *We recommend that the Department for Transport provides an update to the Committee on progress with the Driver 2020 project by July 2021.* (Paragraph 81)

7. As with other age groups, rural roads pose a particular risk for young drivers, with three quarters of young driver fatalities taking place on those roads. We welcome the Department's 2019 commitment to establish a Rural Roads Working Group although it is unsatisfactory that, by October 2020, that group had still not met. (Paragraph 82)

8. *In its Response to this Report, the Department should provide further information about the Rural Roads Working Group, including its membership, scope, objectives, and when and how often it plans to meet.* (Paragraph 83)

9. We recognise the improvements that the Department and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency have made to the learning and testing process in recent years. However, we are concerned that the current learning process does not fully equip learner drivers with sufficient experience of driving a vehicle in a range of different situations. We therefore welcome the Department's commitment to pilot a system of "modular learning" with compulsory driver training in different conditions, due to start later in 2021 should restrictions in place for the coronavirus pandemic be eased. (Paragraph 84)

10. *In its response to this Report, the Department should provide an outline of the criteria that will be used to judge the effectiveness of its modular learning pilot. The Department should update us by October 2021 on its assessment of the pilot against those criteria.* (Paragraph 85)

11. *As well as the practical test, the theory test can play an important role in helping to develop learner drivers' understanding of driving in different situations. We recommend that the Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency develop the theory test to ensure it includes adequate questioning on driving at night and while carrying passengers.* (Paragraph 86)

12. *Given there is some evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of GDL but significant concerns about its impact, particularly from young people themselves, the Department should resume the study into the social and economic consequences of GDL which it committed to in its 2019 Road Safety Statement. This would provide much needed evidence on the likely impacts.* (Paragraph 88)

13. *The potential implementation of GDL in Northern Ireland presents the Department with an opportunity to monitor the impact of such a system within one part of the UK. By October 2021, we recommend that the Department liaise with the Northern Ireland Executive and provide us with interim findings and the Department's conclusions on the impact of GDL in Northern Ireland.* (Paragraph 89)

14. We welcome the fact that the Department's Driver 2020 programme will explore the potential for telematic technology to improve driver safety. We are mindful, however, about the rights and freedoms of the individual and the privacy of their data. (Paragraph 90)

15. *As part of the progress update on Driver 2020 we have requested by July 2021, the Department should outline the progress and preliminary findings from its research into the effectiveness of telematic technology to improve road safety.* (Paragraph 91)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 24 February 2021

Members present:

Huw Merriman, in the Chair

Ben Bradshaw	Chris Loder
Ruth Cadbury	Karl McCartney
Lilian Greenwood	Grahame Morris
Simon Jupp	Greg Smith
Robert Largan	

Draft Report (*Road safety: young and novice drivers*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 91 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 2 March at 3.00pm]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 2 September 2020

Ian Greenwood; **George Atkinson** Q1–28

Elizabeth Box, Head of Research, RAC Foundation; **Dr Neale Kinnear**, Head of Behavioural Science, Transport Research Laboratory; **Mary Williams OBE**, Chief Executive, Brake Q29–77

Wednesday 7 October 2020

Graeme Trudgill, Executive Director, British Insurance Brokers' Association; **Laura Hughes**, General Insurance Policy Manager, Association of British Insurers; **Nika Lee**, Group Head of Actuarial, Insure the Box Q78–140

Paul Silverwood, Chair of Trustees, The Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust; **Nicole Parker**, Volunteer, The Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust; **Mr Nicholas Lyes**, Head of Roads Policy & Public Affairs Manager, RAC Motoring Services; **Lorna Lee**, Campaigns Manager, Automobile Association Q141–187

Wednesday 21 October 2020

Malcolm Heymer, Member, Alliance of British Drivers (ABD); **Dr Kiron Chatterjee**, Associate Professor in Travel Behaviour, University of the West of England, Bristol Q188–230

The Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Transport; **David Buttery**, Director for Road Safety, Standards and Services, Department for Transport Q231–277

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2019

RSY numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1 Alliance of British Drivers (RSY0021)
2 Angelica Solutions (RSY0035)
3 Association of British Insurers (RSY0047)
4 British Insurance Brokers' Association (RSY0051)
5 Cave-Wood, Geoffrey (RSY0002)
6 Cozens, Mr Derek (RSY0023)
7 CSW Online Limited (RSY0020)
8 Cycling UK (RSY0059)
9 Stewart MSP, David (Highlands & Islands, Labour) (RSY0044)
10 Department for Transport (RSY0063)
11 Dorset Police (RSY0057)
12 Fraser, Andrew (RSY0007)
13 Galli-Atkinson, George (Road Safety Campaigner) (RSY0043)
14 Greenwood, Ian (RSY0003)
15 Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University (RSY0022)
16 Harrington, Mr David (RSY0001)
17 Harrison, Mrs Vanessa (RSY0054)
18 Hedley, Susan (RSY0034)
19 Hudson, Mr Terry (RSY0017)
20 IAM RoadSmart (RSY0029)
21 Insure The Box Limited (RSY0040)
22 Jones, Callum; Olivia Draycott and Luke Kirby (RSY0006)
23 Jones, Dr Sarah (RSY0004)
24 Keoghs LLP (RSY0024)
25 Marmalade Insurance (RSY0045)
26 Marshall, John (RSY0065)
27 MCIA (RSY0032)
28 Motor Accident Solicitors Society (RSY0048)
29 National Rural Crime Network (RSY0015)
30 Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside (RSY0019)
31 Office of the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner (RSY0030)
32 Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (RSY0067)

33 Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire (RSY0068)

34 PACTS (RSY0058)

35 Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (RSY0064)

36 RAC Foundation (RSY0042)

37 RAC Motoring Services (RSY0014)

38 Road Haulage Association (RSY0046)

39 RoadPeace (RSY0028)

40 Roadwise Driver Training (RSY0050)

41 RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) (RSY0053)

42 Safe Roads Greater Manchester Partnership (RSY0061)

43 Safer Essex Roads Partnership (RSY0066)

44 South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership (RSY0041)

45 Taylor, Nicole and Christopher (RSY0033)

46 The AA Charitable Trust (RSY0062)

47 The Driving Doctor (RSY0025)

48 The Institute of Alcohol Studies (RSY0016)

49 The Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research (RSY0039)

50 The Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust (RSY0027)

51 Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police Service (RSY0060)

52 Transport for West Midlands (part of the West Midlands Combined Authority) (RSY0031)

53 TRL (RSY0049)

54 Warwickshire PCC (RSY0037)

55 West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (RSY0036)

Session 2019–21

YND numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

56 Altrincham Grammar Girls School; Barnsley College; Harris Academy Chafford Hundred; and Queen Elizabeth's School (YND0014)

57 Association of British Insurers (YND0004)

58 Carrot Insurance (YND0009)

59 Department for Transport (YND0003, YND0020)

60 DriveTech (UK) Limited, a subsidiary of the AA (YND0010)

61 Driver and Vehicle Agency, Northern Ireland (YND0016)

62 Greenwood, Ian (YND0013)

63 Huddleston, Mrs Sharron (YND0018)

64 Insure the Box (YND0021)

65 Jones, F (YND0015)

66 Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) (YND0002)

67 Pupils 2 Parliament (YND0007)

68 Roadpeace (YND0019)

69 Taylor, Mr Christopher and Mrs Nicole Taylor (YND0008, YND0017)

70 The AA (YND0011)

71 The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain (YND0006)

72 The Under 17 Car Club Charitable Trust (YND0012)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Appointment of the Chair of the Civil Aviation Authority	HC 354
2nd	The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation sector	HC 268
3rd	E-scooters: pavement nuisance or transport innovation?	HC 255
1st Special	Pavement parking: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 158
2nd Special	The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation sector: Government and Civil Aviation Authority Responses to the Committee's Second Report	HC 745
3rd Special	E-scooters: pavement nuisance or transport innovation?: Government Response to Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21	HC 1085