

Young drivers support more training before their test says IAM poll

Younger drivers agree that they would be safer and eventually better drivers if they had to wait until they are 18 before taking their L-test, according to a survey published today (6 May 2008) by the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists).

Currently, drivers can take their practical test and get on the road at 17.

The young people questioned in the IAM poll* also said that they would support moves to introduce a psychological profile test, as part of the theory test. The move could weed out the small percentage of potentially dangerous drivers – those people whose psychological make up makes them unfit to be on the road.

The IAM survey comes as the Department for Transport (DfT) launches a root-and-branch consultation into novice driver training. One in five new drivers aged between 17 and 19 crash within the first year of passing their test. The risk reduces by 43 per cent after their first year of driving.

Last month (14 May 2008) the IAM, the UK's largest independent road safety charity, hosted a London-based workshop for road safety experts considering the casualty rates for young drivers and what practical measures are possible.

The scale of the problem is still horrific. Young male drivers in particular are the most vulnerable group on our roads: those between 17 and 20 years old are ten times as likely to be killed or seriously injured as more experienced motorists. We know that young and newly qualified drivers don't want to crash, and don't set out with that in mind, said IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger.

So we asked young people, both newly qualified, and those who had failed their test, how they thought the safety of new drivers could be improved.

We are more convinced than ever at the IAM that the issue is complex and that there is no single 'magic wand' solution to young driver deaths. But the key thing is that the Department for Transport (DfT) considers more than just imposing additional restrictions on young drivers - there is also a massive role for enhanced driver education, said Mr Rodger.

The DfT needs to act quickly after this delayed consultation - there has been nothing done for younger drivers since the last consultation in 2002, said Mr Rodger.

Of the drivers questioned, 57 per cent of female, and 53 per cent of male drivers said that they would support moves to extend the training process before the L-test. There was more support for the idea from young drivers in Northern Ireland (80 per cent) and less in the North East of England (42 per cent). The younger respondees (17-18) were more opposed to the extended training (27 per cent yes, 63 per cent no and nine per cent undecided).

But young people resisted the suggestion that only professional driving instructors can teach them to drive. When asked: 'Do you think it would be a good idea to stop learner drivers from practicing with their parents, partners or friends – so that they only have lessons from qualified instructors?' only 22 per cent agreed.

By contrast, 61 per cent said that learners should be able to learn with their parents as long as they have some lessons with a qualified instructor.

Both male and female young drivers believed new drivers should have a no-alcohol ban during their first year of driving, a view shared by test successes (77 per cent) and test failures (72 per cent).

The IAM poll asked young drivers if they would have liked to have gained some experience of motorway driving before they took their L-test.

Fifty eight per cent said yes, but only with a qualified instructor. But fewer thought that experience of night driving was a good move before their test – 48 per cent. Yet IAM experts say that insurance figures point to half of serious accidents involving young drivers happening at night.

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Notes to editors:

1. * The survey was carried out for the IAM by Consumer Analysis Ltd. It was based on a sample of 1070 drivers who in November 2007 had recently passed or failed their driving test in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The sample had 79 per cent test passes and 21 per cent test failures; a higher than average pass rate than the DSA (Driving Standards

Agency) driving test (48 per cent).

2. Comments by sampled drivers are available in the full [survey report](#) and is available from the IAM press office - 020 8996 9625 or

3. Issued by the IAM Press Office, telephone 020 8996 9600. We have an ISDN line for interviews. News releases, and the weekly driving tips service are accessible at

4. The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) directly influences the driving and riding of more than 160,000 road users a year (full members, associates and commercial clients) in the UK and Ireland. Established in 1956, the IAM is today best known for the advanced driving test and the advanced driving course. The IAM has grown to become the UK's leading road safety charity, dedicated to raising driving standards, engaging with the road-using public and influencing road safety policy. IAM Fleet, the corporate arm of the IAM, has two subsidiary companies, Drive & Survive and Fleet Ireland.

5. A 2006 report by Brunel University, following an 18 month study, concluded that advanced driver training produces safer drivers and lower accident involvement, with measurable improvements in knowledge, skills and attitude.

6. In January 2007, the IAM Motoring Trust was established as the research and advocacy arm of the IAM. The IAM Motoring Trust will undertake research, promote practical policies, act as an advocate for safer roads, safer drivers and safer vehicles and encourage responsible motoring through education and training.

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