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# Young Driver Safety

A public attitude survey

Ben Marshall & Alpha Parish  
Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute  
June 2014



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# About the authors

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# About this report

This report summarises the findings from a survey undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the RAC Foundation, commissioned to explore public attitudes to road safety and the introduction of a GDL scheme.

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# 1. Summary of Findings

In March 2014, Ipsos MORI, commissioned by the RAC Foundation, carried out a public opinion survey for the purpose of exploring attitudes to young driver safety, and in particular the introduction of a graduated driver licensing (GDL) scheme.



The survey revealed that the British public do perceive a problem when it comes to young drivers and road safety, and are generally in favour of the introduction of a GDL scheme: 83% think that young drivers being involved in road accidents is a very big or fairly big problem, and over two thirds (68%) say they support the introduction of GDL for newly qualified young drivers.

In particular, the survey disclosed the following opinions, attitudes and concerns:

- Almost twice as many British adults (38%) believe that the involvement of young drivers in road accidents is a very big problem as think the same about road safety in Britain generally (20%).
- More than four in ten (45%) *strongly* agree that action needs to be taken to help ensure that young drivers (aged 24 or under) are less likely to be involved in road accidents, with a further 39% tending to agree.
- There is solid backing for the notion that politicians should give more attention to the issue of road safety: 71% were in agreement with this proposition and 30% strongly so.
- Support for a GDL scheme runs at 61% even among those who *do not* perceive road safety to be a problem; however, a relatively low 41% of those aged under 24 support such a scheme – and a third (32%) oppose the introduction of GDL.
- The two elements of a GDL scheme included in the survey – restrictions on passenger numbers and on driving after midnight – are each *strongly* supported by around a third of the public (33% and 31% respectively), and

supported to some degree by nearly two thirds (66% and 61%). A sizeable minority (41%) of young people, on the other hand, say they *oppose* the passenger numbers restriction, and a similar proportion (40%) oppose the restriction on driving after midnight.

- Unsurprisingly, the under-24 age group is also more likely than any other to have concerns about the limits on the freedom of movement for young people that GDL would impose – 35% pick this concern out in respect of restrictions on passenger numbers, and 28% on driving after midnight.
- A third (34%) of parents strongly support the introduction of GDL. Moreover, nearly two thirds (64%) of all parents (and 69% of mothers) are clear that they would personally ensure compliance on the part of their newly qualified children. Inclusion of the proportion who would “probably” do so pushes this figure up to 89%. Parents also show stronger support than the public in general for the imposition of a minimum learning period.
- The main concerns about the introduction of GDL centre around its enforceability, with 41% citing this as their main issue when considering restrictions on *passenger numbers*. Over a quarter (27%) also selected this as their chief concern about the introduction of restrictions on *driving hours*, second only to the issue of difficulties that young people might experience in getting to and from work at night or early in the morning: nearly a third (32%) highlighted this from the list of possible problems.



## 2. Background

This report summarises the findings from a survey undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the RAC Foundation, commissioned to explore public attitudes to road safety and the introduction of a GDL scheme.



The objective of the survey was to generate insights to inform future discussion and decisions about this potential policy. It was designed to supplement existing research undertaken by the RAC Foundation and others. For example, the RAC Foundation has previously looked in depth at the mobility and road safety needs of young people, and at policies that could be used to encourage safe driving.

In its report, *Young Driver Safety: Solutions to an age-old problem*<sup>1</sup>, the RAC Foundation considered a range of policies including: education interventions; improvements to the learning-to-drive and testing processes; changes to licensing rules; and providing appropriate post-test support. The report also set out the benefits of introducing GDL, including its potential contribution to a reduction in road deaths in Britain.

A typical GDL scheme involves three stages, during which varying degrees of restrictions are imposed on newly qualified drivers: a learner stage (lasting approximately 12 months), an intermediate stage (up to 12 months in length) and a full-licence stage (with the continuation of certain age-based limits, such as zero drink-drive limits).

<sup>1</sup> Box, E. & Wengraf, I. (2013). *Young Driver Safety: Solutions to an age-old problem*. Retrieved 6 May 2014 from [www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac\\_foundation/content/downloadables/young\\_driver\\_safety-box\\_wengraf-july2013.pdf](http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/young_driver_safety-box_wengraf-july2013.pdf)



## 2.1 Technical note

The Ipsos MORI survey for the RAC Foundation measured public attitudes in respect of road safety, two of the ‘intermediate’-stage GDL restrictions – namely, night-time driving and the number and age of passengers<sup>2</sup> – and also about a minimum period of learning to drive. It involved a representative sample of 2,010 British adults aged 16+, with fieldwork undertaken between 7 March and 10 March 2014.

The survey was undertaken online and involved respondents drawn from the Ipsos Access Panel. Data has been weighted to be representative of the known population profile in terms of region, age, gender, working status, tenure, socioeconomic grade and car/van availability in household.

## 2.2 Further detail

Topline results of the survey are included in a marked-up version of the questionnaire, which are appended (see Appendix A). More detailed sample information can be found in Appendix B. The results have been statistically tested for significant differences at a 95% confidence level. That means that, for example, where there is a question to which 50% of the people in the sample of 2,010 responded with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary by more than 2.2 percentage points, plus or minus, if the entire British adult population had been surveyed using the same procedures.

Where smaller subgroups of the sample are analysed, sample tolerances typically increase (in other words, there is more uncertainty as to the true national percentage). For instance, the sample includes 170 working 16–24-year-olds, so if 50% of them give a particular answer then it would be expected in 95 out of 100 times that their answer would not vary by more than 7.5 percentage points from the proportion of the entire British population of working 16–24-year-olds that would reply in the same way.

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<sup>2</sup> See RAC Foundation report Kinnear, N., Lloyd, L., Scoons, J., & Helman, S. (2014) *Graduated Driver Licensing: A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain* for analysis on the impact of these measures on casualty figures.

# 3. Survey Findings

## 3.1 The problem of road safety

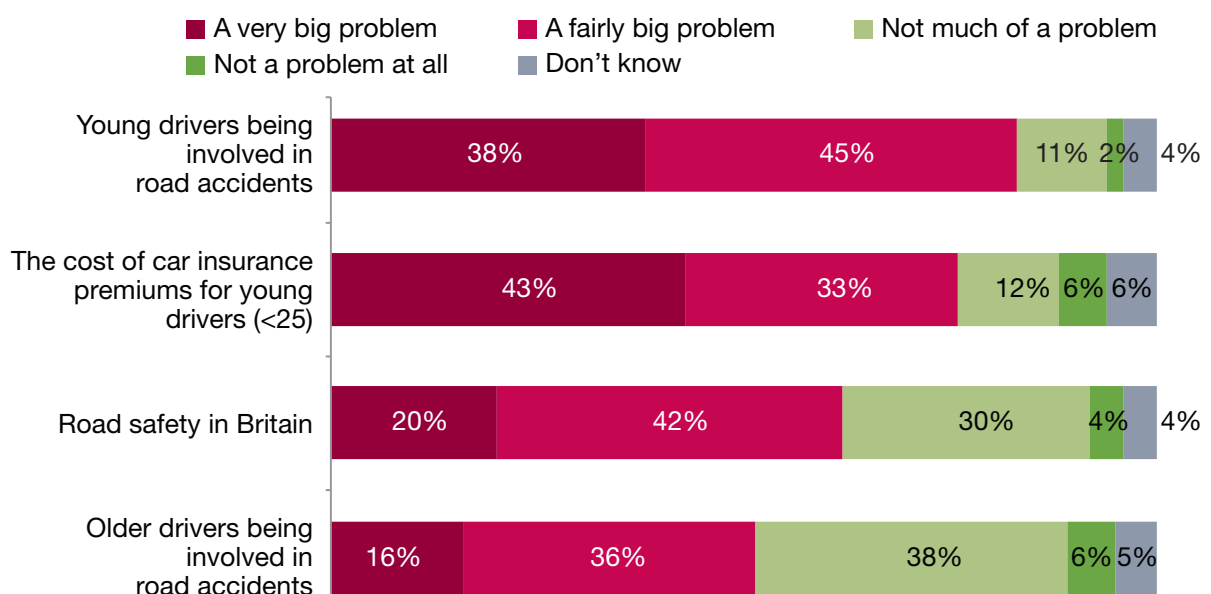
As Figure 3.1 shows, almost two thirds as many British adults think that young drivers being involved in road accidents is a problem – 83% think it is either a very or fairly big problem – than think the same about older drivers (52%).



The cost of car insurance premiums for young drivers (aged 24 or under) is seen as a problem by over three quarters (76%) of the British public, with six in ten (62%) considering road safety in general to be a problem.

**Figure 3.1: Perceived problems associated with driving in Britain today**

Q4. Thinking about each of the following, do you think it is a problem or not?



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

The importance to the public of young drivers' safety is underlined by the fact that it is even seen as a problem by those who think that road safety more broadly is *not* a problem (three quarters, 74%, of this group).

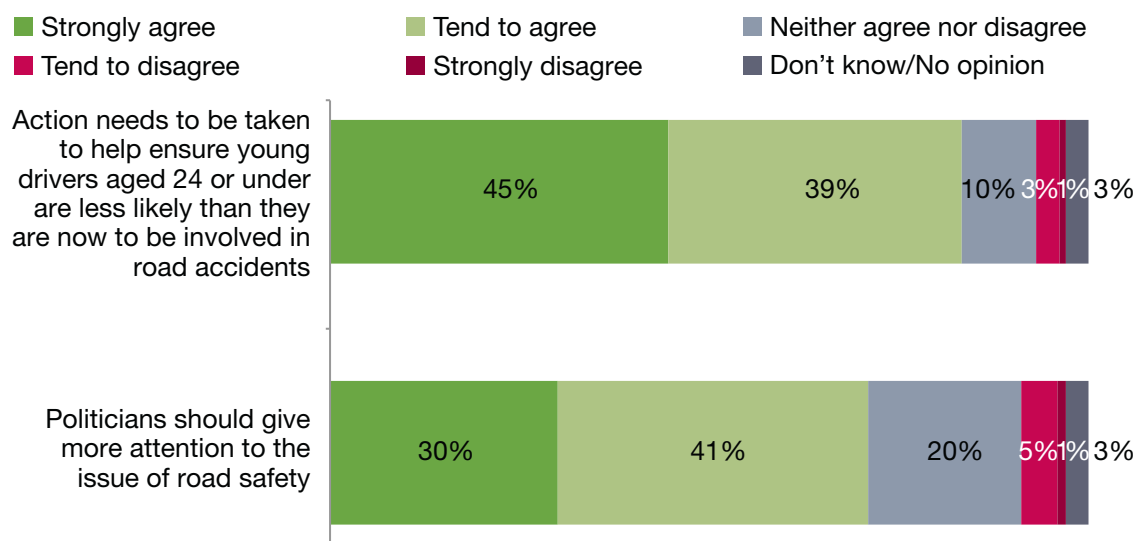
Young people aged 16–24 are the least likely to think that the safety of drivers their age is a problem, but even so a clear majority (73%) do. This applies also to road safety in general (51%) and, again, the concern of this group is lower than it is among older people. In fact, young people are more concerned about the cost of car insurance premiums than about road safety.

### 3.2 Political attention and action

There is an evident desire for political impetus on the issue of road safety, as shown by a clear majority of British adults agreeing that action needs to be taken to help ensure that young drivers (aged 24 or under) are less likely to be involved in road accidents (see Figure 3.2). In addition, by more than ten to one (71% against 6%), the public agree that politicians should give more attention to the issue of road safety.

**Figure 3.2: The need for action and the role of politicians**

Q5. *To what extent do you agree with each of the following...?*



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

The vast majority – 86% – of those who think that road safety is a problem agree that politicians should give it more attention; moreover, a large majority (91%) of this group think that young drivers being involved in road accidents is a problem.

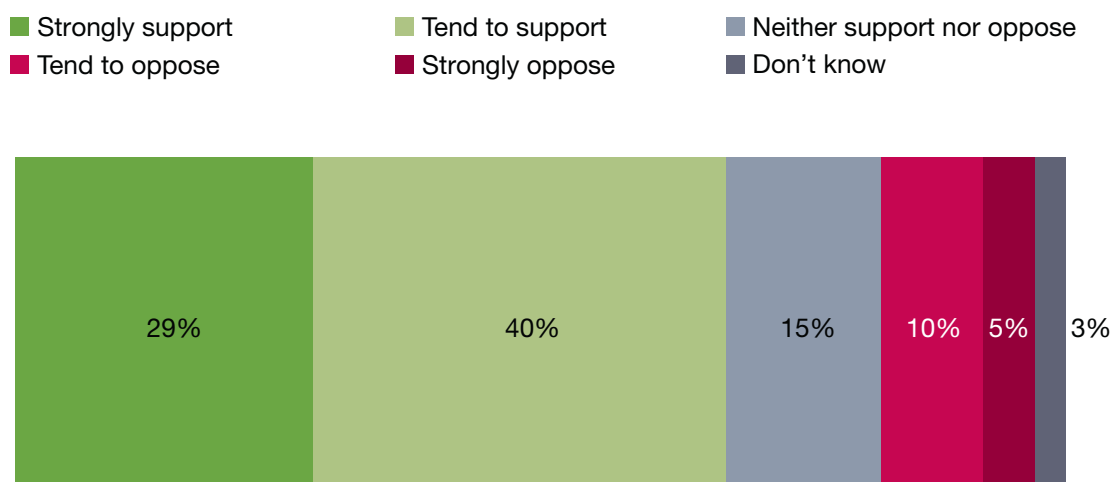
Young people are least likely to agree that something needs to be done, either by politicians giving more attention to road safety or action being taken to prevent young drivers being involved in accidents (62% and 73% respectively agree with these sentiments). Again, this smaller degree of support is only relative, and the clear majority of young people do want both attention and action.

### 3.3 Support for GDL in principle

Over two thirds of British adults say they support a graduated driving licence being introduced for newly qualified young drivers (see Figure 3.3); 68% either tend to or strongly support its introduction. For the remainder who express any opinion, it is split evenly between those who say they neither support nor oppose its introduction (15%) and those who tend to or strongly oppose it (15%).

**Figure 3.3: Support for GDL in principle**

Q6. *In principle, do you support or oppose the introduction of a graduated driver licence for young car or van drivers aged 24 or under in Britain?*



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

Note: see Appendix A, Q6 for the full preamble.

Regardless of whether or not people see road safety as a problem, the majority are supportive of GDL. Three quarters (74%) of those who think it *is* a problem support the introduction of a GDL scheme. Similarly, three quarters (74%) of people who think young drivers being involved in road accidents is a problem are supportive of GDL. However, even most (61%) of those who do *not* think road safety is a problem are supportive.

The proposal is least popular among young people themselves; almost a third (32%) oppose its introduction, split almost equally between those strongly opposed (15%) and those who tend to oppose it (17%). Still, they are more likely to support than oppose it, with 41% in support.

The question preamble referred to the potential impact of GDL on young drivers' ability to get to and from work, but it is interesting to note that young people who are in work are no more likely to oppose or support GDL than those who are not working.

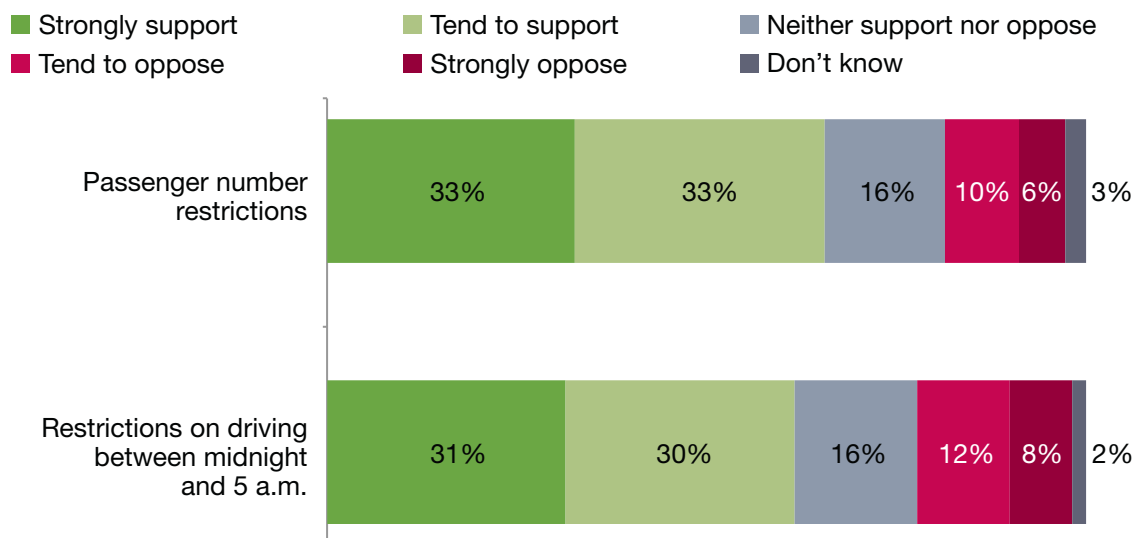
Parents are among those groups most concerned about young drivers being involved in road accidents, and are more likely than the British public in general to support the introduction of GDL. A third (34%) *strongly* support the proposal, compared with 23% of those who do not have children.

### 3.4 Support for restrictions on passenger numbers and driving hours

Restrictions on the hours when newly qualified drivers under the age of 25 would be able to drive are less popular than the restrictions on passenger numbers. The difference is only marginal, though, and both policies are strongly backed. Around a third strongly support each policy, and the ratio of supporters to opponents is a little more than three to one for both, as Figure 3.4 shows.

**Figure 3.4: Restrictions on passenger numbers and driving hours as elements of a GDL scheme**

*Q7. Still thinking about a graduated driver licence, to what extent would you support or oppose the following if they were introduced for newly qualified young drivers aged 24 or under in Britain for the first 12 months after they passed their test?*



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

Young people, regardless of working status, are most opposed to the idea of passenger restrictions on newly qualified drivers: a large minority (41%)

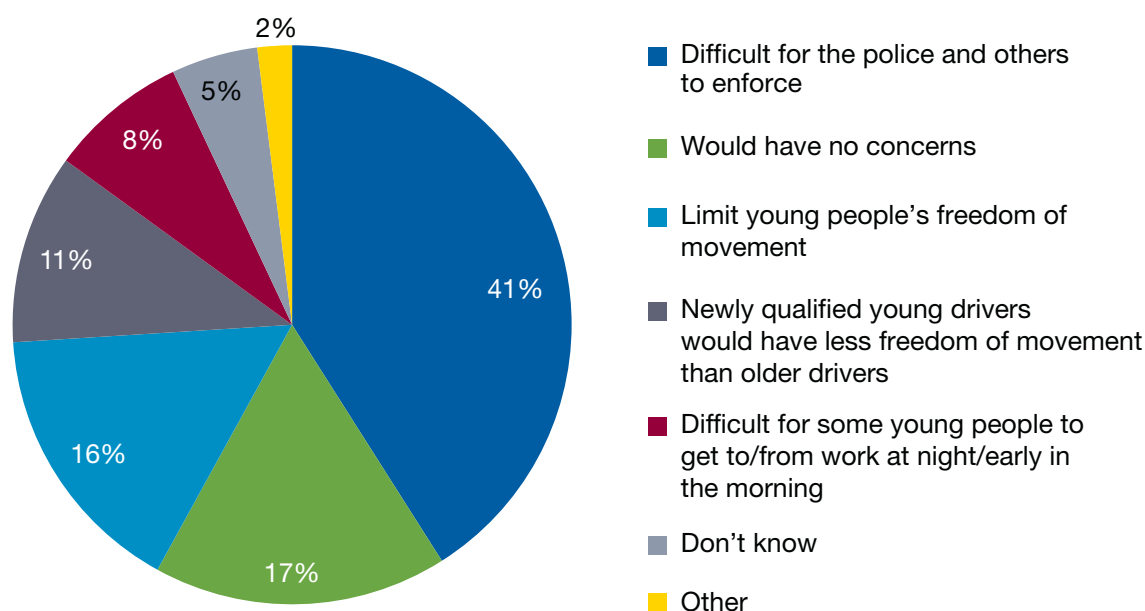
of 16–24-year-olds oppose the proposal, with 21% strongly opposing the proposed restrictions (compared to 6% on average).

### 3.5 Concerns about the introduction of GDL

When thinking about the restrictions on passenger numbers and what would be of most concern, the difficulty of enforcement is chosen from a list by 41%, making it far and away the most common response, as shown in Figure 3.5.

**Figure 3.5: Concerns about restrictions on passenger numbers**

*Q8a. Thinking again about these [restrictions on passenger numbers], which of these would concern you most about their introduction, or would you have no concerns?*



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

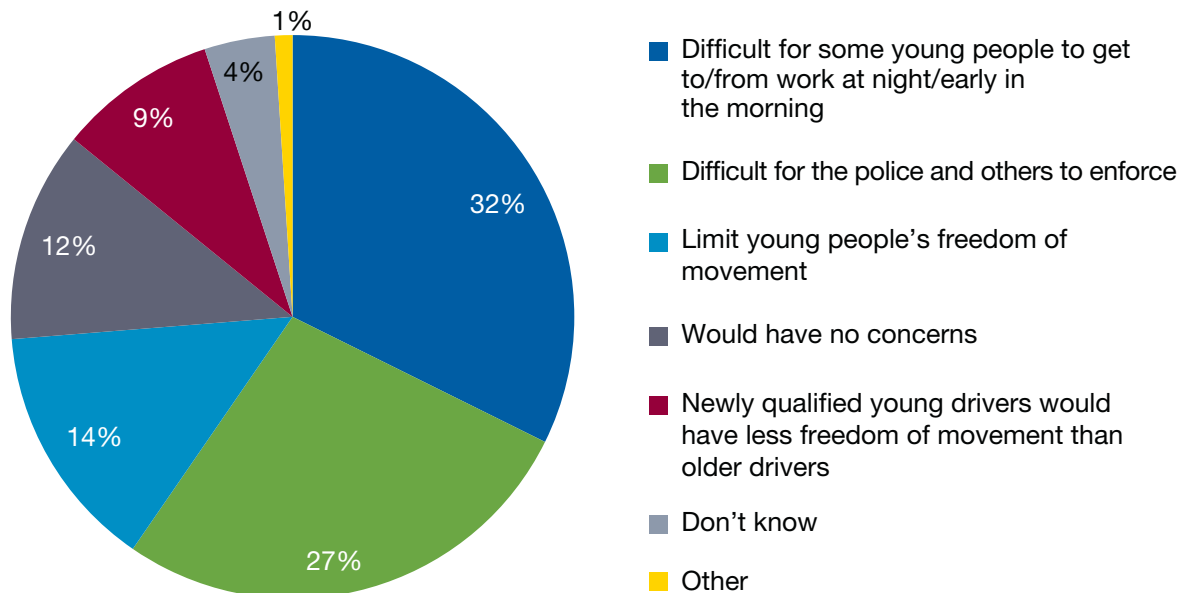
Restrictions on the freedom of movement for younger drivers is a more significant concern for those aged 16–24. Over a third of this age group, 35%, say it is a concern compared with 16% of the general population.

For those who oppose the introduction of GDL, the limitation of young people's freedom of movement is also the biggest concern (at 34%), featuring just above enforcement (29%).

Concerns about the difficulty of getting to and from work in the early hours dominate in respect of restrictions on driving hours (see Figure 3.6): 32% say it would concern them the most.

### Figure 3.6: Concerns about restrictions on driving hours

Q8b. Thinking again about these [restrictions on driving hours], which of these would concern you most about their introduction, or would you have no concerns?



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

Enforcement issues are also a concern (at 27%), with a smaller minority of people (14%) saying that they have concerns over limiting young people's freedom of movement. Just under one in ten people (9%) select a concern about newly qualified young drivers' freedom of movement relative to older drivers.

People between the ages of 35 and 44 are most concerned about the time restriction making it difficult for some young people to get to/from work at night/early in the morning (39%). This could reflect the higher proportion of people with children aged 16 or younger in the 35–44 age group, who may be thinking about future impact.

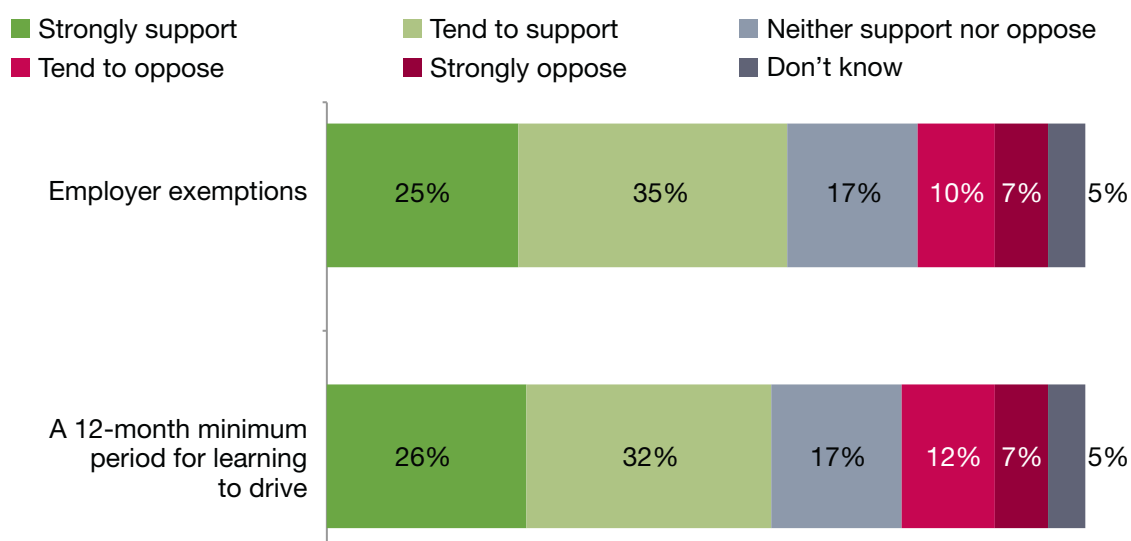
Concerns about limits on the freedom of movement of young drivers are more salient among younger age groups than older ones; over a quarter of those aged 16–24 say this is a concern as regards restrictions on time (28%) and more than a third (35%) say it is a concern as regards passenger restrictions. On the other hand, older groups are most concerned about enforcement: 37% of 55–75-year-olds pick this from the list, higher than the 27% average and 13% of 16–24-year-olds.

### 3.6 Employer exemptions and a minimum learning period

Figure 3.7 shows that overall support for GDL remains strong regardless of whether an employer exemption or a minimum learning period are applied; 60% and 59% respectively say they would support the introduction of the GDL (described previously at Q6) if these were to happen.

**Figure 3.7: Employer exemptions and a minimum learning period**

Q9. To what extent would you support or oppose the introduction of such a graduated driving licence if the following were introduced...



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

Parents, especially those who have children under the age of 25, are strongly supportive of GDL where there is an exemption system in place: 29% strongly support GDL, with the majority giving it support more generally.

Young people remain the most likely to oppose GDL even where exemptions are available; almost a quarter (23%) say that they tend to or strongly oppose it even were exemptions to be provided. However, there is no difference in support or opposition between 16–24-year-olds in work and those who are not.

As with exemptions, parents are most supportive of the minimum learning period: 30% strongly support this, compared with 23% of non-parents.

Despite the potential cost implications, there is little difference in levels of support for a 12-month minimum learning period across different income groups. For example, those in households earning £55,000 or more are



relatively *more* opposed to GDL; a quarter, 25%, say they either tend to or strongly oppose, compared with almost a fifth (19%) of the public as a whole.

### 3.7 Parental compliance with GDL

The majority of parents (of children/adults of any age) say that they would make sure their children complied with GDL, with only one in 20 (5%) saying that they would not (see Figure 3.8).

**Figure 3.8: Parental compliance**

Q11. Suppose *your* child(ren) or adult(s) aged 24 or under was a newly qualified young driver. To what extent do you think you would *personally* make sure they complied with the new graduated driving licence?

- Yes – definitely would
- Yes – probably would
- No – probably would not
- No – definitely would not
- Don't know



Base: 2,010 British adults aged 16–75 (7–10 March 2014)

Mothers are most likely to say that they definitely would ensure that their child complied with GDL, at 69%. By way of comparison, 58% of fathers say the same, and they are more likely than mothers to say that they would do the opposite.

Those parents who oppose GDL should passenger number restrictions be applied are most likely to say that they would probably or definitely *not* ensure that their children complied; almost a quarter of them (23%) say this, compared to the 5% overall figure. This is also the case among those who oppose the licence should time restrictions be imposed; 15% of this group say they would not encourage compliance.

# Appendix A

## Survey topline results

- This topline summary is based on an Ipsos MORI survey of 2,010 British adults aged between 16 and 75 years old.
- Interviews were conducted online during the period 7–11 March 2014.
- Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated (base sizes are in brackets).
- An asterisk (\*) represents a value of less than one half of one per cent, but above zero.
- Data is weighted to match the profile of the population by age, gender, work status, socioeconomic grade, region and car/van availability in household.
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.

Q1. Firstly, can I just check, do you or anyone in your household, own or have the use of a car or van?	
	%
Yes – 1	48
Yes – 2	27
Yes – 3 or more	7
No, none	18

Q2. Do you personally have a full driver's licence, or a provisional or learner driver's licence for driving a car or a van, or neither of these?	
	%
Full driver's licence	76
Provisional/learner driver's licence	9
Neither of these	15
Don't know	*

Q3. How often, if at all, do you personally drive a car or van these days?	
	% all who hold full driving licence (1,537)
At least once a week or more often	84
Less often than once a week but more often than once a month	4
Less often than once a month but more often than 1 or 2 times a year	3
1 or 2 times a year	2
Less often than once a year	3
Never	5
Don't know	*

Q4. Thinking about each of the following, do you think it is a problem or not?					
	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	Not much of a problem	Not a problem at all	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
A Road safety in Britain	20	42	30	4	4
B Young drivers being involved in road accidents	38	45	11	2	4
C Older drivers being involved in road accidents	16	36	38	6	5
D The cost of car insurance premiums for young drivers aged 24 or under	43	33	12	6	6

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following...?						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A Politicians should give more attention to the issue of road safety	30	41	20	5	1	3
B Action needs to be taken to help ensure young drivers aged 24 or under are less likely than they are now to be involved in road accidents	45	39	10	3	1	3

**Q6. According to government statistics:**

- deaths caused by road accidents in Britain account for 0.5% of all deaths,
- the number of accidents on our roads leading to injury or death is falling,
- Britain is fourth best for road safety among 27 European countries,
- young people aged 24 or under make up 8% of all licence holders but 25% of those killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads.

Government research shows that younger newly qualified drivers are more at risk of being in an accident than older newly qualified drivers and experienced drivers, particularly when driving late at night or in the early hours of the morning and/or when driving with passengers.

Some other countries use graduated driving licences. These place restrictions on newly qualified young car or van drivers – for example, not allowing them to drive late at night/early in the morning, or limiting the number of passengers they can have in their vehicle during the first 12 months after they have passed their test.

Some people say that graduated driving licences allow newly qualified young car or van drivers to gain driving experience more safely, and point to estimates from the Transport Research Laboratory that introducing graduated driving licences in Britain could reduce injuries and deaths on our roads among 17–19-year-olds by around 20%.

Other people say that such graduated driving licences would limit young drivers’ freedom of movement and might make it harder for young people whose work means they have to drive late at night or early in the morning.

<b>Q6. In principle, to what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of a graduated driving licence for newly qualified young car or van drivers aged 24 or under in Britain</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Strongly support	29
Tend to support	40
Neither support nor oppose	15
Tend to oppose	10
Strongly oppose	5
Don't know	3

**Q7. Still thinking about a graduated driving licence, to what extent would you support or oppose the following if they were introduced for newly qualified young drivers aged 24 or under in Britain for the first 12 months after they have passed their test...?**

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A Not allowing them to have more than one passenger aged 15–19 in a car or van they are driving, unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over	33	33	16	10	6	3
B Not allowing them to drive between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over	31	30	16	12	8	2

**Q8a. Thinking again about these, which of these would concern you the most about their introduction, or would you have no concerns?**

a) Not allowing them to have more than one passenger aged 15–19 in a car or van they are driving, unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over

	%
That it would be difficult for the police and others to enforce	41
That it would limit young people's freedom of movement	16
That newly qualified young drivers would have less freedom of movement than older drivers	11
That it would be more difficult for some young people to get to/from work at night/early in the morning	8
Other	2
Would have no concerns	17
Don't know	5

**Q8b. Thinking again about these, which of these would concern you the most about their introduction, or would you have no concerns?**

b) Not allowing newly qualified young drivers aged 24 or under to drive between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over

	%
That it would be more difficult for some young people to get to/from work at night/early in the morning	32
That it would be difficult for the police and others to enforce	27
That it would limit young people's freedom of movement	14
That newly qualified young drivers would have less freedom of movement than older drivers	9
Other	1
Would have no concerns	12
Don't know	4

**Q9. Now thinking about a graduated driving licence for newly qualified young drivers aged 24 or under in Britain for the first 12 months after they have passed their test and which involved:**

- not allowing them to have more than one passenger aged 15–19 in a car or van they are driving, unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over; and
- not allowing them to drive between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over.

**To what extent would you support or oppose the introduction of such a graduated driving licence if...**

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A ...employers were allowed to provide written exemptions for newly qualified young drivers so that they could drive to and from work alone late at night/early in the morning?	25	35	17	10	7	5
B ...there was a minimum period of learning to drive of 12 months for young drivers aged 24 or under so that they could gain more experience before they take their test?	26	32	17	12	7	5

**Q10. Are you the parent or guardian of child(ren) or adult(s) of the following ages, or not? It does not matter whether or not they are living with you in this household at the moment. Please select as many as apply.**

	%
Yes – parent or guardian of child(ren) aged under 12	16
Yes – parent or guardian of child(ren) aged 12–16	6
Yes – parent or guardian of adult(s) aged 17–24	12
Yes – parent or guardian of adult(s) aged 25 or over	23
No – not parent or guardian	50
Don't know	1

**Q11. You said that you are the parent or guardian of child(ren) or adult(s) aged 24 or under. Suppose a graduated driving licence was introduced for newly qualified young drivers aged 24 or under in Britain for the first 12 months after they have passed their test and which involved:**

- not allowing them to have more than one passenger aged 15–19 in a car or van they are driving, unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over; and
- not allowing them to drive between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., unless they are accompanied by someone aged 25 or over.

**Suppose your child(ren) or adult(s) aged 24 or under was a newly qualified young driver. To what extent do you think you would personally make sure they complied with the new graduated driving licence?**

	% parents/guardians (611)
Yes – definitely would	64
Yes – probably would	25
No – probably would not	4
No – definitely would not	1
Don't know	6

# Appendix B

## Sample profile

Data has been weighted to be nationally representative of a number of key identifiers, including age, gender, region, socioeconomic grade, working status and car/van availability in household.

## Guide to statistical reliability

The sample tolerances that apply to the percentage results in this report are given in Table B.1. This table shows the possible variation that might be anticipated because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed. As indicated, sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results.

Strictly speaking the tolerances shown here apply only to random samples; in practice, good quality quota sampling has been found to be as accurate.

**Table B.1: Sampling tolerances applicable to percentages in answers, for various interview sample sizes**

Sample size	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	+/-	+/-	+/-
100 interviews	6	9	10
500 interviews	3	4	4
1,000 interviews	2	3	3
c.2,000 interviews	1.3	2	2.2

For example, in the case of a question to which 50% of the people in a sample of 2,010 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary by more than 2.2 percentage points, plus or minus, from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures.

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different parts of the sample. A difference, in other words, must be of at least a certain size to be considered statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons.



**Table B.2: Statistically significant differences applicable to comparisons between samples, for various sample sizes**

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	+/-	+/-	+/-
16-24 vs 55-75-year-olds (317 and 587)	5	7	7
Parents vs non parents (996 and 997)	3	5	5
Support vs oppose GDL (1,371 and 287)	5	7	7



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The Royal Automobile Club Foundation for Motoring Ltd is a transport policy and research organisation which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and their users. The Foundation publishes independent and authoritative research with which it promotes informed debate and advocates policy in the interest of the responsible motorist.

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