

# YOUNG DRIVERS AT RISK



**MAKE ROADS SAFE**  
The Campaign for Global Road Safety







# FOREWORD

**I became a world champion by driving fast. I love cars and racing. But I know the place for speed is on a race track, not on the road.** Excessive or inappropriate speed is a contributory factor in many road crashes, and it is simple physics: the faster you are travelling, the more serious the impact is likely to be.

The report we publish today finds that nearly 40% of young British drivers have been involved in a road crash by the time they are 23. Those first few years of driving are a dangerous time when a lack of experience combined with a misplaced confidence can often result in a crash. Fortunately many young drivers only suffer hurt pride. But some do not survive their first years of driving, or have to live the rest of their lives with injuries or disabilities. Nearly one in three of those killed or seriously injured on UK roads is under the age of 25.

This report on young drivers by the AA and the Make Roads Safe campaign highlights the reasons these crashes occur, and the steps that can be taken to avoid them. Safe mobility should be a right for all, but that means we must all play our part in making the roads safe for others, not only at home in the UK but around the world.

Road crashes are now the leading cause of death worldwide for young people aged 10-24. Many of those killed and injured are pedestrians or cyclists. But motorcycles and cars are increasingly available to younger road users in the fast developing world. And a silent epidemic of traffic collisions is killing a thousand young people every day. Most of these deaths and injuries are unreported, or quickly forgotten except by the families involved. But two years ago one death of a young teenager did catch the world's attention. Zenani Mandela, the great-granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, was killed in a car crash on the eve of the 2010 World Cup. Now the Mandela Family is working with the Make Roads Safe campaign to highlight the need for better road safety for children and young people.

This report is part of the Zenani Mandela Campaign, and our combined efforts to protect young lives and allow everyone to enjoy driving, walking and cycling on our roads in safety.

**Nigel Mansell CBE**  
Member, Commission for Global Road Safety



**Commission for  
Global Road Safety**



# 1. ROAD INJURY IN THE UK

## Introduction

Research for this report clearly shows that new drivers are most at risk on the roads in the first year or so after passing their test.

As soon as the L plates come off, some new drivers choose to forget what they have learnt in order to pass their test. We have found that newly qualified drivers often need more training on speed control, risks on rural roads or driving at night.



The AA Charitable Trust for Road Safety and the Environment can help new and young drivers be safer by providing further training for them once they have passed their test. To coincide with the publication of this report the AA Charitable Trust has pledged to fund 1,000 FREE AA Driving School's Drive Smart courses for 'at risk' drivers. These are drivers who have passed their test within the last 12 months and who may already have points on their licence or been involved in an accident. The course teaches drivers safer techniques as well as tips on how to drive in a more eco-friendly or economical manner.

We are grateful to the FIA and its 'Action for Road Safety' initiative for a road safety grant (provided by the FIA Foundation) which will partially fund these free courses.

To apply for a free 2 x 1 hour course please go to [www.theaa.com/drive-smart](http://www.theaa.com/drive-smart) complete the on-line booking and enter "Mansell" under the reference. We can also offer free Drive Confident courses for new drivers who may be nervous or anxious about aspects of their driving.

This report also promotes more opportunities for children and young people to be involved in road safety and driving from a younger age; so that when they can start learning to drive they already have a solid foundation in responsible driver behaviour.

It is a sobering thought that the biggest threat of accidental death for our teenagers is a road crash. We must all work together to stop these young lives being wasted.

**Edmund King**  
President of the Automobile Association



**Road deaths and injuries in the UK highlight the work that still needs to be done to make our roads safer for everyone who uses them.** Every day 5 people die on Britain's roads and 67 people suffer a serious injury. Every one of those deaths and injuries causes pain and heartache for far more than the one person hurt or killed: road crashes affect all those involved from passengers, witnesses, friends, families and the emergency services who come to their aid. It is a sad fact that young people are disproportionately represented in road crash statistics as is evident from the following:

- In 2010 nearly 1 in 3 car occupants killed or seriously injured were under the age of 25
- 55 children under 16 died on the road in 2010.
- 30 per cent of young (17-24) drivers killed were over the legal drink drive limit, the second highest age group behind the 25-30s. Nearly 25 per cent of young drivers killed were over twice the legal limit - the highest age group for that figure.
- 4.8 per cent of 20-24 year old men involved in crashes fail a breath test administered after an accident - the highest group. Women in this age group fail in 1.6 per cent of cases, again the highest group.
- 3 per cent of men aged 17-to-19 fail breath tests after crashes, less often than those aged between 20 and 24.
- The AA estimates that some 200 road deaths may be due to drug driving or a combination of drugs and alcohol.
- Driver distraction from mobile phones is a growing problem. Surveys show that one quarter of young drivers admit to accessing email or social-networking sites from their phones while driving
- 26 per cent of car user deaths and 12 per cent of all road deaths are young people between 17 and 24 travelling in cars





## 2. WHAT DRIVERS SAY

**Young drivers are key to improving their own safety on the road so it is vital we listen to their opinions.** It is very telling that when we asked members of our AA/Populus panel what they thought about their peers' driving young drivers were the most disparaging. The AA Populus poll of 19,284 drivers took place between 22-30 May 2012.

Many young drivers (29 per cent) said they have friends whose driving is so unsafe they either refuse or avoid being driven by them. In one sense, it is encouraging that young people are willing to avoid being in a car with someone they believe to be unsafe, thus reducing their chance of being involved in a crash. Conversely, it is concerning that so many young drivers think some of their friends are such bad drivers they cannot safely be driven by them.

Motorists on the AA/Populus panel who have had a crash have also shared with us the circumstances surrounding the first accident they had when they were driving:

- 37 per cent of drivers had had a crash by the time they are 23 years old
- 28 per cent had had a crash by the time they were 21 years of age
- Nearly one in four (26 per cent) had crashed within two years of passing their test
- 23 per cent of 18 -24 year olds had been involved in a crash whilst driving within 6 months of passing their test
- First crashes are most likely to happen in the day time, with only 13 per cent happening at night
- Most people have their first crash without any other passengers in the car (63 per cent)
- Bad weather was a factor in 15 per cent of drivers' first crashes
- 47 per cent had their first crash on a single carriageway or in a rural area
- One third of 18-24 year olds have been involved in an crash when driving
- 5 per cent of drivers had their first crash on a motorbike.

Drink driving is a serious area of concern for young drivers. It is not just an issue for them in terms of being a driver, but also as a passenger. AA/Populus research shows 18-to-24 year olds are more than twice (16 per cent) as likely to have travelled in a car with a drunk driver than any other age group (next highest was 25-35 at 7 per cent). Peer pressure also adds to the issues with almost a third (28 per cent) of 18-24 year olds saying their friends are likely to encourage them to drink 'one more for the road' when they are a designated driver.

Many young drivers are not aware of the potential risks driving poses to them. 37 per cent of 18-24 year olds think gun and knife crime is the greatest threat to them, compared to just 12 per cent who think the greatest threat is driving. The reality is that in 2007 138 teenage drivers were killed on the roads compared to 42 teenagers killed in knife crime incidents in 2008.





### 3. PROTECTING YOUNG DRIVERS

#### Learning about driving without driving

**Learning about road safety starts long before someone even thinks of getting a driving licence.** A child using a child restraint or car seat when small shows that being on the road is something that needs care and extra effort.

Going out with parents shows that there are codes and rules to be obeyed and that responsibility is needed. This may be on the pavement, stopping at the kerb, waiting for the green man. It may also be in the car where having Dad or Mum shouting at cars that are in their way or conspicuously breaking speed limits or other laws does not set a good example for the future.

At this time, help is at hand. The Children's Traffic Club helps parents and carers teach their children how to keep safe when out and about, in a fun and memorable way. There are two million club members, most funded by their local authority with thousands more using materials in playgroups and nurseries.

The Club works by building unique partnerships with parents, carers and road safety, health and education professionals. This approach means the material reaches children directly in their homes, and its vital road safety messages are reinforced by use in other educational and child care establishments.

It is a structured intervention scheme that has been proven to influence the long term behaviour of children involved. This approach works at an early age and is recommended in Government strategy.

### Schooldays

Once at school schemes are needed that prepare children to be safe pedestrians and cyclists. Primary school kids are eager to learn and at this age the value of on-road pedestrian and cycle training can be clearly seen.

Cycle proficiency or “Bikeability” courses are essential in many ways. The courses open children’s eyes to a different method of travel. It gives them the skills necessary to cycle and gives a good understanding of many issues they will face as drivers. There is a three phase approach – first stage away from the road, second stage on the road and the third stage taking youngsters up to a level where they will be able to safely carry out cycling on any roads, and to and from school.

This sort of training carries out another key role. It gives participants the correct attitude as well the correct skills for safe road use. Particularly when they move on to driving, attitude becomes more and more important. Using the road should be about getting from A to B, not about self expression or showing off.

As children become teenagers they begin to think about driving and may already be influenced in their attitudes to driving by interactive games or television and films. By early teens many – especially males – think they will be good drivers and that they will be able to impress their friends with their driving.

As 17 draws closer, the possibility of learning about driving in cars comes to the fore. Some consider motorcycling or the use of a motor scooter or moped which may be faster than a cycle but cheaper than a car.

### Two wheels and an engine

Some will stay on two wheels and opt for a motorcycle or moped – perhaps to allow them to get around where they live cheaply and efficiently. They will have to follow a legally defined course of compulsory training and test. But whenever motorcycling starts, motorcyclists will have to keep an eye on their attitudes and make sure they have the best skills.

When on two wheels it is also vital that the best possible protective equipment is used. This can make a huge difference to the injuries sustained in even the most minor collision.

### Under-17 driving opportunities

AA research shows 73 per cent of drivers think young drivers would be safer if they had more opportunities to have driving lessons in specially selected off-road situations (e.g. closed off playgrounds and car parks) before they were 17 years old. Although this figure was higher among older drivers (82 per cent of over-65’s) it was still high (63 per cent) among young drivers (those aged 18-to-24).

Providing early driver training would create an opportunity within a controlled environment to teach young people in a practical way about the dangers and risks associated with driving. We advocate combining practical lessons with classroom-style road safety lessons to try and instil a responsible attitude towards driving in young people, rather than just giving them the chance to drive a car before they were 17 years of age.

### Time for the driving instructor

At 17 teenagers can drive on the road. It tends to be a rite of passage. Some learn to drive at 17 but then may spend three years away at university not driving as they can’t afford or don’t need a car.

Learning to drive must be built on a sound theoretical and attitudinal basis. But it also needs expert instruction in the early days, and only an Approved Driving Instructor can provide this. But as a learner gets more experience parents can help. They can supervise. They can give experience. An instructor may not be able to take a pupil out on windy, rainy days in the summer. A parent often can help give experience of all weather conditions. Experience is gained. There is much work that suggests that around 100 hours instruction and practice are needed to become a decent driver – parents can give much help in getting their learners to this level. They can also take them out on all sorts of roads in different conditions.

### Further young driver education

Whether or not a new driver chooses to drive in the manner they were required to pass their test is, of course, ultimately their own choice. But driving schools can help new and young drivers be safer by providing further training and educational opportunities for them once they have passed their test. The AA Charitable Trust has pledged to fund 1,000 of the AA Driving School’s Drive Smart course for ‘at risk’ drivers. These are drivers who have passed their test within the last 12 months and who may already have points on their licence or been involved in an accident. The course teaches drivers safer techniques as well as tips on how to drive in a more eco-friendly or economical manner.

Clearly when it comes to drink driving education there is more that could be done to improve young people’s attitudes. The AA Charitable Trust would like to see more opportunities for children and young people to be involved in road safety and driving from a younger age; so that when they can start learning to drive the already have a solid foundation in responsible driver behaviour.



### A legislative framework for young drivers

In the UK teenagers can drive legally at 17. Many countries allow driving at 15 or 16 and impose restrictions on these drivers (like not allowing driving late at night, or with friends). There are debates about imposing similar restrictions here. Some of the countries with a driving age of 18 introduce incentives to let youngsters get practice earlier. Again there could be opportunities here.

It cannot be doubted that restricting young drivers would cut the number of crashes. Much evidence shows that young drivers don't drive badly because they don't know how to drive well. They drive badly because they think this is how their friends expect them to drive. Keeping them from driving their friends (or from driving at night when the worst incidents happen) could reduce these crashes.

In the UK there are restrictions on new drivers. Drivers in their first two years of gaining a licence, lose their licence if they acquire 6 penalty points rather than 12 points for more experienced drivers. This measure is designed to get the worst drivers out of the system quickly, and also aims to reduce the "friend effect". Young people should know that encouraging the driver to take risks may cost the driver their licence.

Over restrictive legislation regarding new drivers may have some unintended consequences. Many new drivers also work, perhaps part-time or at night, and need a car to get to work.

### Cops in cars

Enforcement or threat of being caught is essential in road safety.

All previous effective safety campaigns were followed up with visible enforcement. Effective drink drive legislation coincided with the introduction of the breathalyser.

The number of traffic police enforcing the law on UK roads has been cut by nearly 12 per cent over the past five years, according to data from Freedom of Information requests to 52 UK police forces.

Everyone in road safety is united in wanting more police but changing priorities in crime prevention, and lately government spending cuts, mean there is no sign of them being forthcoming.

It is questionable whether introducing new laws on young drivers would be effective if the laws are not enforced.

There is also strong evidence that cops in cars are also effective at deterring or resolving other crimes. Home Office research shows that the most serious motoring offenders are much more likely to be involved in other wider crimes. Hence if serious motoring offenders are targeted it is likely that other crimes will be resolved.

### Eyes in cars

Not all young drivers are bad drivers but insurance premiums reflect the higher general risk posed by young drivers. By using more sophisticated "black box" technology the driving styles and risks drivers take can be tracked and premiums adjusted accordingly.

For example, the AA has introduced Drivesafe which is an insurance product where the premiums are based on how the driver drives by measuring speeds, acceleration and braking. Such technology should ultimately bring down insurance costs for responsible new drivers but can also have wider safety benefits. The tracking system should encourage drivers to stick to speed limits and improve driver behaviour.

### Safer roads, safer cars, mean safer drivers

Improving driver training and behaviour can make roads safer. Safer cars also have a huge role to play. Improved crash protection, instigated by the Euro NCAP crash test programme, already means that drivers can avoid death in crashes that in the past would have resulted in deaths.

Technology such as ABS, ESC and e-call can bring wider benefits from crash avoidance to calling the emergency services automatically after an incident.

Road design also has a role to play in improving safety. The Euro-RAP programme shows that we can create an environment where the risks are reduced by erecting protective barriers, improving visibility, redesigning junctions, reducing speed limits or improving road surfaces.

A concerted effort to introduce all these measures in a 'Safe Systems' approach would help reduce the death toll of young drivers and indeed all road users. Efforts to improve driver training, behaviour and attitudes, coupled with better enforcement, safer roads and safer cars, can help us push road deaths closer and closer to zero.



# 4. A GLOBAL CRISIS

Road crashes are not only the leading cause of death and injury for young people in the UK, but also around the world.

Teenagers and young adults starting out on their independent lives - whether they are on foot, on bicycles, or behind the wheel - are most at risk on the roads. Safely navigating these early journeys, as children travelling unaccompanied to school or as novice drivers, must be a priority. Yet a thousand young people under the age of 25 die on the world's roads every single day. Many thousands more are injured.

This tragic toll of preventable road injury is set to increase unless action is taken. The World Health Organization has forecast that global road deaths could double over the next ten or fifteen years, and by 2015 road traffic injuries are expected to be the leading health burden for children over the age of five in developing countries. According to UNICEF, "averting injuries in the second decade of life must become a major international health objective".

The United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 has been launched with the goal of 'stabilising and reducing' global traffic injuries by 2020.

Governments, companies and organisations are being encouraged to make road safety a priority by improving road design, vehicle safety and police enforcement of inappropriate speed, drink driving and distracted driving. And all of us can play a part in achieving the goal of the Decade of Action by behaving safely on the road.



## For every life

**Zenani Mandela was 13 years old when she died in a car crash on the eve of the 2010 football World Cup.** Her tragic death united the world in grief, and for a brief time highlighted in the media the terrible global toll of child death and injury in road crashes.

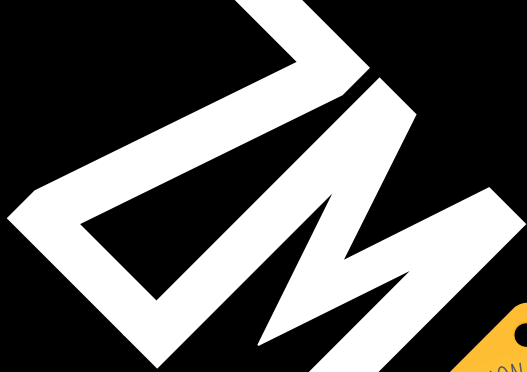


Now the Mandela Family is supporting the Zenani Mandela Campaign in her name, with the objective of raising awareness around the world of the scale of avoidable human suffering and encouraging road injury prevention so that other families do not lose their children on the roads.

Zindzi Mandela, Zenani's grandmother, has described the global campaign for road safety as "a vital cause for public health, sustainable development and human rights". Ahead of the 2nd UN Global Road Safety Week, in May 2013, we are campaigning to raise the profile of road safety and to ensure that governments, car manufacturers, road designers and the public all do more to make roads safe.







## Support the Zenani Mandela Campaign

You can become involved in the global Zenani Mandela campaign. Please visit [www.makeroadssafe.org](http://www.makeroadssafe.org) to see how you can join the Mandela Family in urging action to protect children and young people on the roads.



Zenani Mandela, great granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, was killed in a road crash 2 days after her 13th birthday.



Didier Drogba



Naomi Campbell



Lewis Hamilton



Zindzi Mandela

Other parents must not go through the pain that I am suffering and will continue to suffer. Now is the time for positive action. Every life we save will be a precious victory”.

**Zoleka Mandela**



For more information visit the **MAKE ROADS SAFE** website: [www.makeroadssafe.org](http://www.makeroadssafe.org)