

Young drivers – the facts.

Young drivers (drivers aged 17 to 24) are one of Queensland's most at risk road user groups. Research suggests that young drivers and riders, aged 16 to 24 years, are 60% more likely to be involved in a serious crash than licensed mature adult drivers and riders, aged 25 to 59 years.

In Queensland each year:

- about 100 fatalities occur as a result of crashes involving young drivers (including drivers, pedestrians and passengers)
- more than 2,000 young drivers are involved in crashes where someone is taken to hospital
- about 80% of young drivers involved in fatal crashes are males

Key factors related to young driver crashes

The cause of crashes involving young drivers is complex, and involves direct and indirect factors. Direct factors include speeding, drink/drug driving, fatigue, distraction and failing to wear a seatbelt. Indirect factors (for example, an aggressive personality, over-confidence and peers who are risk-takers) can impact on the likelihood that a young driver may take risks on the road, such as choosing to drink and drive, which put them at greater risk of a serious crash.

Personality and attitudinal factors

Young people who engage in risks for the sake of the experience or the thrill may be more likely to be involved in a serious road crash. Such young people are also more likely to have difficulties with controlling their anger, be 'hot headed' or be quick to start an argument (often for no reason). Young novice drivers might also differ in the way in which they define safe driving, compared with experienced drivers. Young people report identifying greater benefits to risky behaviour (for example, impressing people) and are less likely to identify the costs of risk-taking behaviours.

Cognitive and perceptual factors

Young and inexperienced drivers have poorer skills relating to scanning their environment, evaluating the relative location of other road users and predicting the behaviour of other road users. They have greater difficulty in managing their attention and prioritising competing tasks. Young drivers also over-rate their skills and are less likely to moderate their driving according to their capabilities and the demands of the driving situation.

Social relationships

Young people are influenced by both their peers and parents/carers. Some young people are surrounded by people who are risk-takers, which increases the likelihood that they will be injured on the road by engaging in risky behaviour themselves. In contrast, some young people have parents or carers who monitor and supervise their activities, restrict their car use and model safe driving behaviours, and they are less likely to be killed or injured on the road.

Queensland's Graduated Licencing System

Queensland has a graduated licensing system to help reduce fatalities on the roads—particularly as a result of crashes involving young drivers. The graduated licensing system targets the risk factors described above. Its aim is to encourage safer, more proficient drivers, allowing novice drivers to gain more on-the-road experience and maturity and improve their skills before they are allowed to progress to a higher type or class of licence. Restrictions are gradually lifted as the new driver makes progress through the system, from a learner through to an open licence.

The following rules apply under the graduated licensing system:

- The minimum learner age is 16 years of age and the learner licence period is a minimum of one year.
- Learner drivers under 25 years of age must gain 100 hours of certified supervised driving experience recorded in a learner logbook before being eligible to apply for a provisional licence. Note: Learner drivers and their supervisors may choose to use the online electronic logbook* system that has been developed by RACQ to record the required 100 hours driving experience.
- Mobile phone use, including hands-free, Bluetooth accessories and loud-speaker functions, is restricted for learner and P1 licence holders under 25 years of age.
- Supervisors and passengers of learner and P1 licence holders under 25 years of age cannot use a phone that is on loudspeaker but can use a hand held or hands-free mobile phone where the conversation cannot distract the driver.
- To be eligible to apply for a motorcycle learner licence, you must have held a provisional or open licence of another class for at least one year in the last five years.
- A two-phased P1 and P2 licence system applies.
- L-plates (a black L on a yellow background) and P-plates (a red P-plate for P1 and green P-plate for P2) are compulsory.
- Peer passenger restrictions apply to young novice drivers—P1 provisional licence holders under 25 years of age can only carry one passenger aged under 21 years between 11pm and 5am. (Some exemptions may apply for family members.)
- High-powered vehicles are restricted for provisional drivers under 25 years of age.
- Drivers must pass a hazard perception test to progress from a P1 to a P2 or open licence (dependant on age).
- Restrictions, such as no late night driving, apply for disqualified and suspended young drivers.