

Reported¹ road accidents involving young car drivers: Great Britain 2009

Road Accident Statistics Factsheet No. 6 – 2009



Department for
Transport

Introduction

This factsheet presents some summary information relating to reported personal injury road accidents involving at least one young car driver. The young drivers involved in these accidents were not necessarily at fault. All figures were based on data in Great Britain for 2009 unless otherwise stated. Cars included three and four wheel cars, taxis, estate cars and minibuses. A driver is the person in control of the vehicle.

Overview – Casualties in accidents involving young car drivers

Numbers: In Great Britain (GB) there were a total of 163,554 reported personal injury road accidents in 2009. Of all accidents, 26 per cent (over 42 thousand) involved at least one young car driver aged 17 to 24.

Young drivers accounted for 12 per cent of all driving license holders. Therefore, young car drivers appear to be over represented in car accident statistics. In addition, they appear to be over represented for all casualty severities; within accidents involving at least one young driver:

- 564 people were killed (25% of total road fatalities)
- 6,329 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) (24% of total road KSI casualties)
- 59,094 people were slightly injured (30% of all slight injuries)
- 191 young car drivers were killed (27% of all car driver fatalities), and 2,026 young car drivers were killed or seriously injured (27% of all car driver KSI casualties)

Trends: Reported KSI casualties in accidents involving young car drivers have decreased at steady rate since 1994 (Chart 1). The reductions in the number of fatalities were less consistent (Chart 1).

The reduction in the number of fatalities as a result of young car driver accidents stalled from 2000, but started to decrease again from 2006. The fatality figures fell 22 per cent between 2007 and 2008, from 817 deaths in 2007. This fell a further 11 per cent to 564 deaths in 2009.

Chart 2: Trend in KSI casualties in reported accidents involving young car drivers by type of casualties, GB 1994-2009

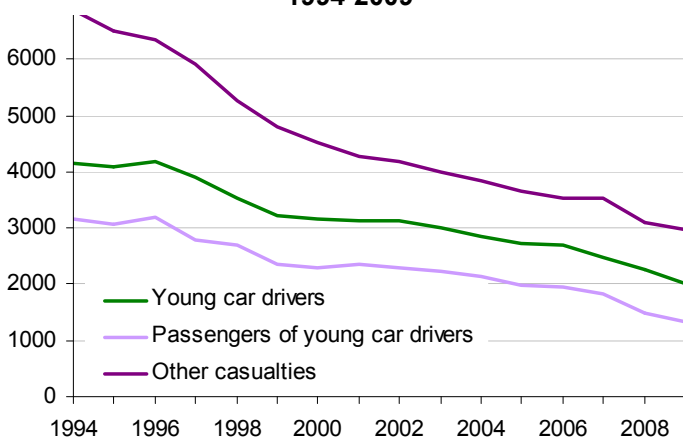
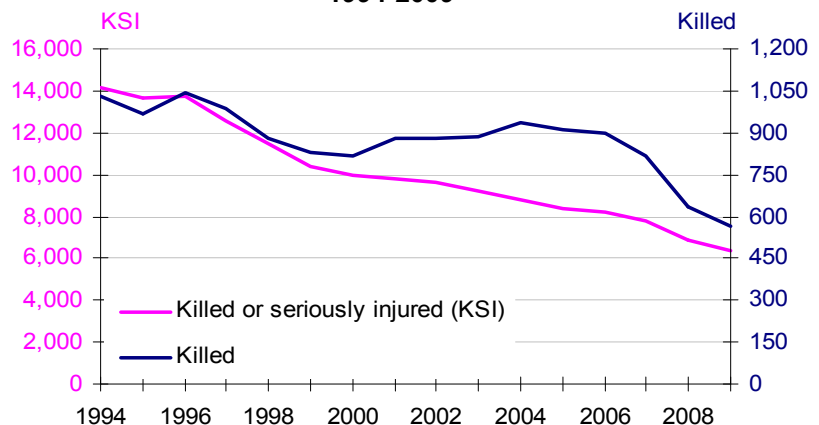


Chart 1: Trend in killed and serious injured casualties in reported accidents involving young car drivers, GB 1994-2009



Compared to 1994-1998 averages, the number of KSI casualties in young car driver accidents was 52 per cent lower in 2009, and the number of fatalities was 43 per cent lower.

There were reductions over time for all types of casualties involved in young driver accidents (Chart 2). Compared to 1994-1998 averages, there were between 49 to 56 per cent reductions in KSI casualties for different casualty types. The greatest reduction was observed for killed or seriously injured casualties who were occupants of other vehicles or pedestrians (other casualties).

¹ A considerable proportion of non-fatal accidents are not reported to the police. More information on this and estimates of total casualties can be found in articles in Reported Road Casualties GB 2008 and 2009.

Who is injured in accidents involving young car drivers?

On average, a higher number of casualties resulted from a reported accident involving at least one young car driver. Young car driver accidents result in 1.56 casualties on average compared to 1.36 casualties for all reported accidents.

Table 1: KSI casualties from reported accidents involving car drivers by casualty type, GB 2009

Type of casualty	Drivers aged 17-24		Drivers aged ≥25	
	KSI casualties number	% of KSI to all casualties	KSI casualties number	% of KSI to all casualties
Car driver themselves	2,026	8%	5,260	7%
Car passenger	1,324	9%	2,292	7%
Occupants of other vehicles and pedestrians	2,979	11%	9,232	16%
All KSI casualties	6,329	10%	16,784	10%

Occupants: Passenger casualties of young car drivers were more often killed or seriously injured in an accident compared to car passenger casualties of older car drivers (25 years or older) (Table 1). In addition, car passengers of young car drivers were more likely to be of the same age and sex as the young drivers.

Gender: Young male drivers accounted for a higher proportion of KSI young driver casualties compared to their older counterparts. Of the 2,026 young drivers involved in accidents, 71 per cent were male. In comparison, 64 per cent

of the 5,260 older drivers involved in accidents were male.

Men accounted for a higher proportion of all casualties resulting from young driver accidents, and they accounted for an increasing proportion as the injury severities increased.

55 per cent of casualties resulting from young drivers accidents were men. Specifically, males contributed to 66 per cent of KSI casualties and 74 per cent of fatalities. Similar patterns and percentages were observed for all accidents.

Age: Nearly a third of young car drivers involved in accidents were aged 18 or 19.

Passengers injured in accidents involving young car drivers were of similar age as the young car driver (Chart 3). Young people aged 17 to 24 year olds made up the majorities of casualties in young driver accidents (57% of all casualties). In accidents involving older drivers, the KSI casualty age distribution was more evenly distributed (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Age distribution of car passenger KSI casualties from reported accidents involving young and older car drivers, GB 2009

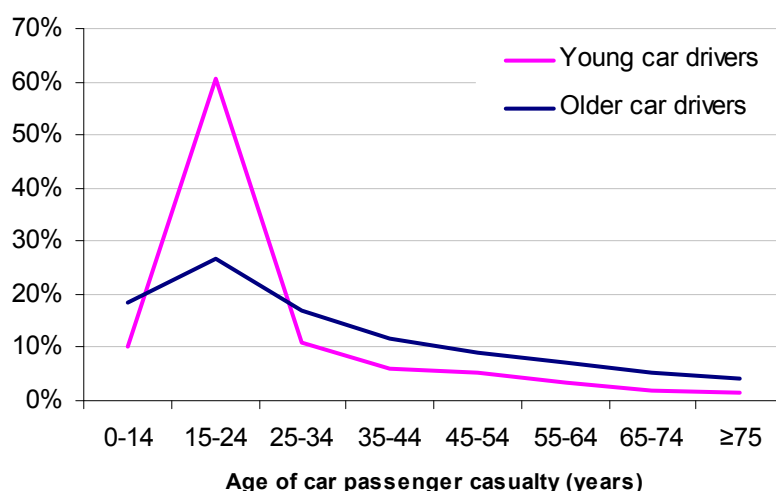
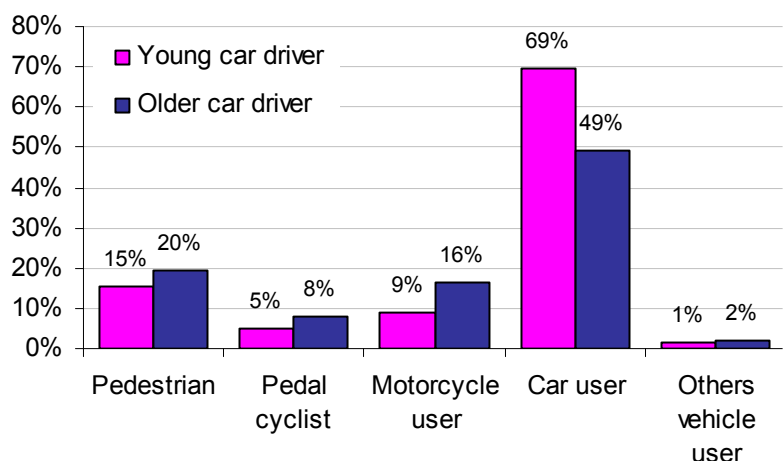


Chart 4: Percentage of KSI casualties in reported accidents involving at least one car driver by road user type, GB 2009



Road User Type: Compared to older drivers, a higher proportion of KSI casualties in young driver accidents were car users, but there were smaller proportions of pedestrians, pedal cyclists, motorcycle and other vehicle users (Chart 4).

Young driver accidents may involve more car users since a higher proportion were involved in single vehicle accidents compared to older driver accidents (18% for young driver accidents compared to 9% for older driver accidents).

When do accidents involving young car drivers happen?

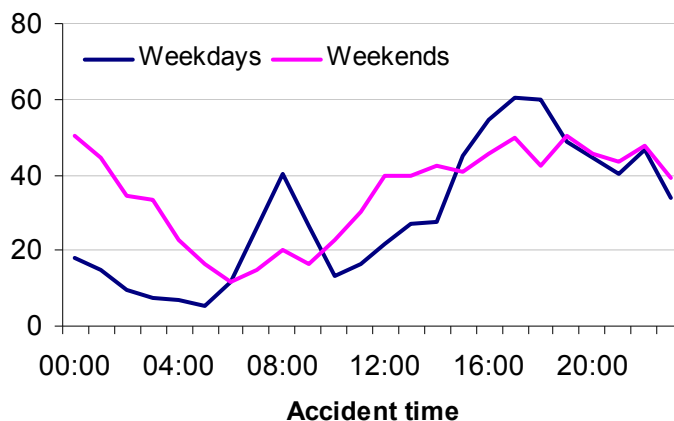
Day of Week: In 2009 most number of accidents involving young car drivers happened on Friday and the fewest accidents were reported on Sunday, mirroring the general pattern for all accidents. However, most of the fatal or serious accidents occurred on Saturday. Compared to 2008, the largest reductions in fatal accidents occurred during weekends, between 7pm and midnight.

Time of Day: On weekdays, most accidents involving young car drivers occurred during the morning and evening rush hours (Chart 5). On weekends, most young driver accidents occurred during the afternoon (Chart 5). These patterns follow the general patterns for all accidents.

A higher proportion of young driver accidents occurred between 8pm and 4am on Friday/Saturday and Saturday/Sunday (10%) compared to all accidents (7%). This accounted for a considerable number of young driver accidents even though the traffic flows during these periods were lower.

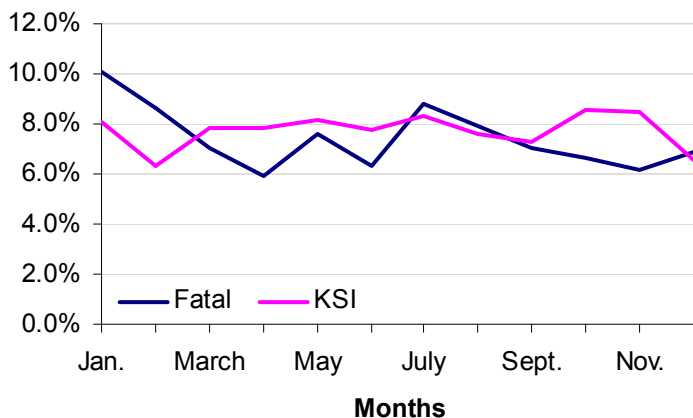
The increased proportion of accidents for young car drivers during dark hours could reflect that young people were more likely to be out at this time, or the finding alcohol was involved more often for young driver accidents (see section on why do accidents involving young car drivers happen?).

Chart 5: Average number of reported accidents involving young drivers by accident times, GB 2009



The patterns shown on Chart 5 for accidents involving young drivers were broadly similar for all fatal or serious accidents.

Chart 6: Percentage of reported accidents involving young car drivers by month of the year, GB 2009



Month of Year: The number of accidents involving young car drivers was fairly constant throughout the year. Fatal accidents involving young drivers occurred more often in the winter months of January and February. This increase was not observed for all accidents, perhaps reflecting poorer vehicle control and/or inexperience by young drivers exacerbated by adverse driving conditions during the winter months.

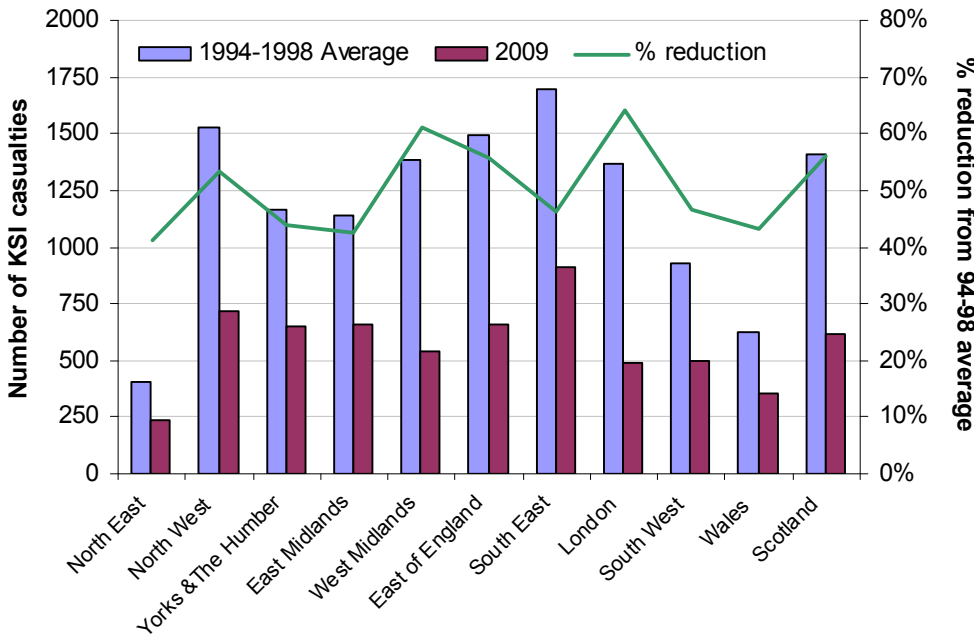
The fluctuations in the number of fatalities by months as a result of accidents involving young drivers may be due to small numbers.

Where do accidents involving young car drivers take place?

Urban/rural: The majority of reported accidents involving young car drivers happened in urban areas (57%); these accidents accounted for 55 per cent of casualties in young driver accidents. In comparison, for all reported accidents, under two thirds of accidents (64%) and casualties (61%) were in urban areas, reflecting heavier traffic flows on urban roads.

Young driver accidents in urban areas were on average less serious than those in rural areas; 8 per cent of casualties in urban areas were killed or seriously injured, compared to 12 per cent in rural areas. Slightly higher proportions were recorded for all accidents, but the patterns were similar.

Chart 7: KSI casualties from reported accidents involving young car drivers by Government Office Regions, GB, 1994-1998 average and 2009



Region: In 2009, most KSI casualties resulting from young driver accidents were in the South East (15%), reflecting the fact it was also the most populace region (15% of total population).

London had the lowest rate of accidents involving young car drivers per 100,000 people. This may be due to lower car ownership in London compared to other areas (NTS 2010).

Compared to 1994-1998 averages, there were at least 40 per cent reductions in the KSI casualties resulting from young driver accidents in all Government Office Regions (Chart 7). The greatest percentage reduction was 64 per cent, observed in London.

Type of road: Most accidents involving young car drivers occurred on roads with speed limits of 40 miles per hour (mph) or below (Table 2). Only 4.5 per cent of young driver accidents happened on motorways.

30 per cent of all casualties and 40 per cent of killed or seriously injured casualties resulting from young driver accidents were on roads with speed limits of 40mph or above.

Comparing roads with different speed limits, a higher proportion of casualties were killed or seriously injured as a result of young driver accidents on roads with a speed limit of 40 mph or below compared to on roads with a speed limit between 41 and 70 mph. This reflects the general pattern observed for all accidents.

Table 2: Number of reported accidents and casualties involving young drivers by road type, GB 2009

Road Type	Accidents		Casualties	
	number	%	number	%
Speed limit: ≤ 40 mph	28,345	67%	42,443	65%
A Roads	11,679		17,809	
Other Roads	16,666		24,634	
Speed Limit: 41- 70 mph	11,828	28%	19,707	30%
A Roads	7,033		11,846	
Other Roads	4,795		7,861	
Motorway	1,876	4%	3,273	5%
Total	42,049	100%	65,423	100%

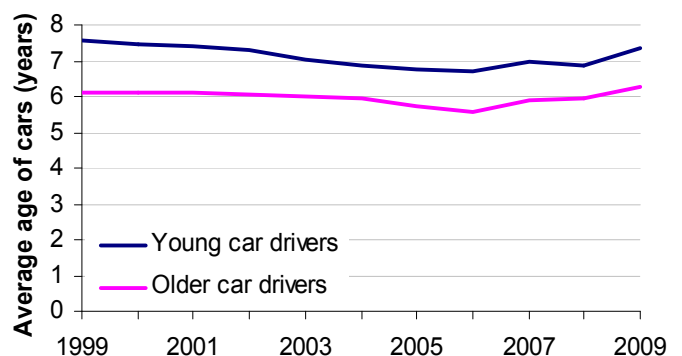
What are the accident circumstances?

Vehicle characteristics: Young car drivers were most often driving straight ahead immediately before the accident (46%); the corresponding percentage was slightly lower for older drivers (43%).

Negotiating a curve, bending left or right, accounted for twice the proportion of young car driver manoeuvres compared to older car drivers prior to an accident. The figures were 14 per cent for young car drivers versus 7 per cent for older car drivers.

Young drivers were most often not at a junction when they were involved in an accident (43%); the corresponding percentage was 38 per cent for older car drivers.

Chart 8: Average age of cars involved in reported accidents, in years since first registration and by age of driver, GB 1999-2009



From around 2003 onwards, of cars involved in accidents, those to young drivers were on average a year older than cars driven by older drivers (Chart 8). In 2009 the average age of cars involved in accidents driven by a young person was 7.3 years old, compared to an average age 6.3 years for cars driven by older drivers. The average age of a car in Great Britain in 2009 was 7.1 years old².

Hit and run: 3 per cent of all cars driven by young car drivers in a reported personal injury accidents was involved in a hit and run. Of these 1,185 young drivers, 79 per cent were young male drivers. The gender composition largely reflected old driver compositions, with men drivers accounting for a higher proportion (68%) of older drivers involved in a hit and run accident.

Why do accidents involving young car drivers happen?

Contributory factors³: Details of factors contributing to reported personal injury road accidents were recorded by the police if an officer attended the scene. Therefore, not all accidents have contributory factors recorded. The contributory factors are largely subjective, and some factors may be less likely to be reported. Whilst this information is valuable to help improve road safety, care should be taken in its interpretation.

Table 3: Contributory factors: Vehicles in reported accidents involving car drivers by age of drivers

Contributory factor attributed to vehicles	Drivers aged 17- 24		Drivers aged ≥25	
	numbers	%	numbers	%
Failed to look properly	8,306	21%	31,678	21%
Loss of control	6,058	15%	9,047	6%
Failed to judge other person's path or speed	4,982	13%	17,530	12%
Careless, reckless or in a hurry	4,816	12%	9,630	6%
Slippery road (due to weather)	4,540	12%	8,612	6%
Learner or inexperienced driver/rider	4,035	10%	819	1%
Travelling too fast for conditions	4,005	10%	5,626	4%
Poor turn or manoeuvre	3,094	8%	10,762	7%
Exceeding speed limit	2,437	6%	2,846	2%
Sudden braking	2,255	6%	5,868	4%
No CF recorded	11,463	29%	68,558	46%
Total	39,468	100%	148,995	100%

a Includes the ten most frequent reported contributory factors for young drivers

b Columns do not add to 100% since accidents can have more than one contributory factor.

Failed to look properly was the most frequently recorded factor for all ages of car drivers involved in accidents with at least one reported contributory factor (Table 3).

Young car drivers were more frequently assigned a contributory factor compared to older car drivers for car accidents with at least one reported contributory factors (Table 3).

A much higher proportion of vehicles driven by young car drivers had *learner or inexperience* or *loss of control* as contributory factors attributed to it compared to older car drivers (Table 3).

Within young driver accidents, young men were more often assigned a contributory factor compared to young women drivers (Chart 9).

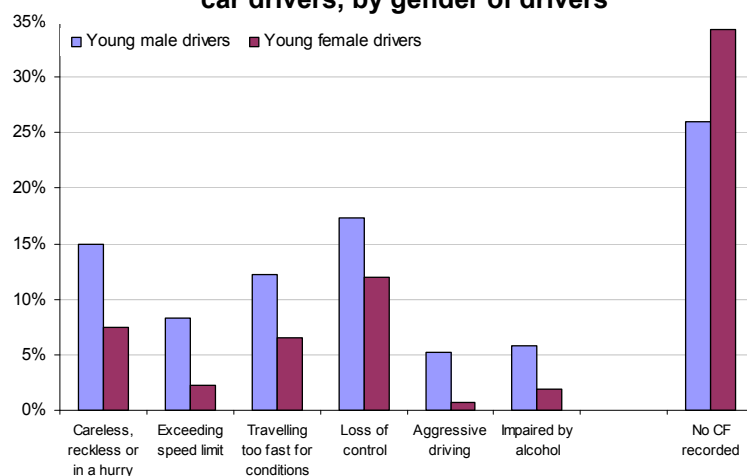
Factors such as *careless, reckless or in a hurry* and *exceeding speed limit* were more often attributed to young male drivers compared to young female drivers (Chart 9). Young female drivers were slightly more frequently assigned factors such as *nervous, uncertain or panic* or *failed to judge other person's path or speed*, but the percentage differences between males and females were small.

Similar proportions of male and female young drivers were assigned *failed to look properly*.

Alcohol: *Impaired by alcohol* was attributed to four per cent of young drivers, compared to two per cent of older drivers. Young car drivers had more drink drive accidents per 100 thousand licence holders and per 100 million miles travelled than any other age group in 2008⁴.

Of the young drivers who were assigned a contributory factor of *impaired by alcohol*, 66 per cent were male drivers.

Chart 9: Contributory factors: Vehicles driven by young car drivers, by gender of drivers



² Transport Statistics Bulletin 2009

³ This analysis only includes accidents where at least one contributory factor was recorded

⁴ Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2009

Further information

This factsheet presents summary information relating to accidents involving young drivers in road accidents in Great Britain. The following are sources of further information:

- **Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: Annual Reports:** This contains information on all road accidents in Great Britain, including more detailed figures and tables that break down accidents by age of drivers and type of vehicle. The publication can be accessed online at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/>
- **National Travel Survey:** The Department's National Travel Survey collects information about driving activities, and provides data on trends that can be used to calculate young driver casualty rates. More details can be found in the NTS annual report: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/personal/mainresults/>
- **Research studies:** The Department for Transport has commissioned a number of research studies into different aspects of young drivers. Details can be found on the Department's road safety webpage at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/research/rsrr/theme2/>

The Transport Research Laboratory also publishes research on a wide range of road safety topics: http://www.trl.co.uk/library/reports_publications/

Any enquiries relating to the figures in this factsheet or requests for further information on accidents involving young car drivers in Great Britain can be addressed to the Road Accident Statistics branch at the Department for Transport:

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