

Exploring novice driver offences within Queensland: Pre and post the 2007 GDL changes

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Abstract

Existing research and evaluation of the current Queensland Graduated Driver Licensing system indicates the number of crashes and crash related injuries of novice drivers is reducing. However, to date there has been minimal research into the locations of specific novice driver non-compliance and the rates at which offences occur. This research fills the gap by highlighting areas of compliance and non-compliance across Queensland. Through applied analysis, focusing on offences recorded between 1997 - 2017, this study highlights different aspects of driver compliance and serves as a tool for future policy considerations.

Background

Novice drivers are at a higher risk for serious road crashes than experienced drivers (Bates, Davey, Watson, King, & Armstrong, 2014). During the first three years of driving, compliance with the road rules is important. However, a significant proportion of young drivers fail to comply with road rules (Chapman, Masten, & Browning, 2014; Scott-Parker, Watson, King, & Hyde, 2012). Within Queensland changes to the Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) process were implemented in mid 2007 in order to improve young driver safety. Analysis of these changes, by an external research organisation, indicates crash and crash related injuries for inexperienced drivers were reduced (Senserrick, Boufous, Olivier, & Hatfield, 2016). This paper builds upon this earlier work by exploring and mapping pre and post differences in the number of offences in both rural and urban areas of Queensland.

Method

Data on drivers who committed driving offences within Queensland between 1997 and 2017 was obtained from the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. Police district was used in order to identify rural and urban areas. Cases were excluded if no police station or district was recorded. A range of parametric analysis techniques were applied to explore provisional driver offences pre and post the changes to the GDL system in mid-2007.

Results

More than one million provisional driving offences were committed throughout Queensland during the examined time period. Of these offences, the majority were conducted by males aged between 17 to 25 years. The results indicate interesting differences between rural and urban areas. Additionally, the exploration of patterns within these areas such as, the time of day, day of week, and seasonal changes of recorded infringements provide a valuable tool for future policy decisions.

Conclusions

This study, with its focus on the offending behaviour of novice drivers, is an important addition to the literature regarding Graduated Driver Licensing. The rural and urban differences, while possibly reflective of police enforcement exposure, suggest some interesting policy implications. However, given the exploratory nature of this research, it is necessary to undertake further research in this area to identify the underlying reasons for these differences. One example of further research that could

occur is examining the behavioural factors that predict this behaviour in rural and urban samples. Stevenson and Palamara (2001) undertook a similar study when they examined the behavioural predictors of young driver crashes in rural and urban areas.

Additionally, given that inexperienced young drivers do not appear to be deterred by formal traffic policing (Allen, Murphy, & Bates, 2017; Bates, Darvell, & Watson, 2017), it may be necessary to explore alternative enforcement approaches in order to improve compliance. This could include partnership policing approaches (Bates & Anderson, Under review) where police form partnerships with members of the community in order to use respective capabilities and resources to more effectively solve problems (Makin & Marenin, 2017).

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