

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

- MORE TH>N reveals extent of peer pressure felt by teen drivers as more than one in ten let their friends “have a go” behind the wheel

After months of lessons, swotting up on the Highway Code and braving the test, there are few more liberating and relieving moments for a teen than becoming a fully-fledged driver. However, for the majority of 17-19 year olds (68%), no sooner has their responsible driving instructor stepped out of the car than they are replaced by the distractions from friends sitting in the passenger seat.

The finding that over two thirds (68%) of young new drivers experience intense in-car peer pressure comes from an in depth piece of research by MORE TH>N Insurance, released today to coincide with Road Safety Week 2016.

Alongside a national survey of 1,000 drivers aged 17-19, MORE TH>N also asked teenage students at Seevic College in Essex to interview young drivers. MORE TH>N believed that if teenagers conducted a series of focus group interviews¹ they would get more honest answers from other teenagers about how young motorists experience peer pressure and the impact it has on their driving behaviours.

The research revealed that almost two thirds of these young drivers (61%) said that driving is where they feel most susceptible to peer pressure, with a third (32%) claiming it has a direct negative influence on their driving behaviours. “I want to show my mates I am a fast driver” was not an uncommon response and the research also showed the more passengers in the car, the more likely drivers were to speed.

Indeed, whether in response to being ‘egged on’ by their friends or in attempt to impress their peers, 44% of young drivers admitted to speeding (31%) and driving aggressively (13%), increasing their speed by 17mph above the speed limit on average. What’s more, 16% say they have executed dangerous overtaking manoeuvres with their friends in the car, 13% have tailgated a car in front, while another 13% have run through red traffic lights.

Perhaps most shocking, however, was the finding that 16% of young drivers have been persuaded to let their friends drive their cars, despite not being insured and not having passed their driving test.

When it came to answering why their friends are so disruptive, half of teens (50%) believed their friends are simply immature. Over a third (37%), meanwhile, think their friends are trying to show off or are unaware of the dangers because they have not yet passed their driving test (36%).

While teen peer pressure behind the wheel may have existed in the past, it has arguably been exacerbated among today's generation z and millennial generation by virtue of popular culture that can negatively influence driving behaviours. Indeed, 42% of those surveyed said 'Carpool Karaoke' sketches featuring James Corden have influenced them and led them to believe it's safe to sing and dance in the car with their friends while driving.

Anecdotes from focus groups run by Seevic College also show that the use of social media is a common issue with young drivers. Ellis Pearce, a student who helped to facilitate the focus groups, said: 'The initial aim of the focus groups was to find out more about peer pressure facing young drivers, however it transpired that the majority of those we spoke to have either used social media on their phones at the wheel or been affected by their passengers doing so.'

'One driver even told of how using their phone whilst driving caused them to crash into a barrier.'

According to the survey by MORE THAN, 14% of young drivers confessed to having had an accident as a direct consequence of a disruptive passenger, leading to an average of £418 in damages. Of these peer pressure induced accidents, 77% have led to at least one person in the car being injured and 67% have resulted in legal action.

Further reinforcing the suggestion that peers are directly responsible for negatively affecting driving habits, nearly half (46%) of teen drivers said that they drive more sensibly when their parents are in the car than when their friends are passengers. Teens are even more likely to drive carefully (58%) if their fellow passengers are young children.

One way in which half (50%) young drivers believe they could circumvent or relieve peer pressure is by having a telematics box installed in their car (a black box that tracks and monitors driving behaviour).

Indeed, young people surveyed by Seevic College said that knowing someone was monitoring their driving would stop them driving recklessly and 59% said that a little black box in the car gave them a way to justify to their friends why they didn't want to break the rules.

Kenny Leitch, global connected insurance director from MORE TH>N Insurance commented, 'The Seevic students did a great job getting what we suspect are the most honest answers from this age group about what is going on behind the wheel of newly qualified drivers. The statistics bear their findings out as 1 in 10 fatalities and serious crashes happen when 17-19 year olds are behind the wheel², the need for young, inexperienced motorists to avoid all distractions and be as concentrated on the road ahead as possible is paramount. Passing your driving test gives drivers a newfound freedom, but it's important to stay safe on the roads. We would encourage new drivers (and their parents) to avoid taking passengers who are disruptive or those who may encourage dangerous driving – at the very least for those first one thousand miles.'

Phillip Stone, Level 2 Business Course Leader at Seevic College, who helped students carry out this national research added, 'It was really interesting to find out newly qualified drivers' views on peer pressure and what distracts them whilst at the wheel. From our focus groups it was revealed that actively being on social media whilst driving is very normal, which is worrying, and students need to be aware of the dangers associated with this driving behaviour to stop accidents from happening'.

Some 69% of drivers said they want to put the brakes on fellow passengers being disruptive by introducing a 'Passenger Awareness Test' to help avoid accidents and educate friends who have not taken driving lessons. Findings also show the introduction of a sticker in the window of a car to alert passengers and other motorists they have a black box, should be introduced. MORE TH>N will be launching a range of these stickers which will be sent to customers who take out its SM>RT WHEELS black box policy in the coming months.

- ENDS -

For more information please contact Cow PR: morethan@cowpr.com / 020 7234 9150

Notes to editors:

- Results based on a poll of 1,000 learner and qualified drivers aged 17-19, November 2016.
- ¹ 450 17-19 year olds were questioned by Seevic College, with 80 taking part in focus groups around peer pressure and driving.
- ² Stats provided by Brake the Road Safety charity - <http://www.brake.org.uk/>

About MORE TH>N

MORE TH>N is the direct financial services arm of RSA. Established in 2001, the company offers car, home, pet, business and travel insurance.