Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency

Independent driving: evaluation

Safety Standards Service

Contents

1. Abstract

In October 2010, the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) introduced one of the most significant changes to the practical driving test since testing began. A ten minute section is now dedicated to independent driving so that examiners can assess a candidate's competence to drive without constant instruction.

This report was commissioned to;
- o Assess candidates' experience of the driving test.
- o Understand how learners are preparing for the independent driving element of the test.
- o Understand the extent to which they consider that preparation helped the transition to solo driving.
- o Identify newly qualified drivers' post-test experiences of driving independently and their post-test safety record.
- o Understand if and how ADIs have amended their training programmes in response to the introduction of independent driving.

On-line survey methods were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from recently qualified drivers and Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs). Overall, recently qualified drivers were positive about independent driving, most reported that they found training for the new test a positive experience and they can relate the training/testing to driving once qualified.

Most respondents learnt to drive with a qualified driving instructor and took less than a year to pass their test. Hours of practice with friends and family was more sporadic, most reported not doing any before passing. Just over two thirds of respondents recalled doing specific training for independent driving, demonstrating that changes to the test can have a direct impact on what is taught to trainees.

The new drivers had a preference for the 'following road signs' task over 'verbal directions' while on test. Many reported that this was because following signs is more realistic and representative of driving post-test. Furthermore, just under three quarters of respondents stated that independent driving was beneficial to learners, going on to say that it helps them feel more relaxed and in control on test and that it gives them more confidence to drive alone once qualified.

Findings also show a reduction in reported collision involvement compared to results from the Cohort II study (Wells *et al*, 2008). No causal link between the changes to the practical test and collision rate can be established from this report; however this does not rule the possibility out.

Self-reported confidence in driving indicated that while candidates are still over estimating their abilities soon after passing their test, they are also reporting a need for improvement in some skills and are expressing caution in taking risks while driving. When asked what

might be included in the driving test (that isn't already) respondents referred to tasks like motorway driving, bad weather/night driving and extended independent driving. According to drivers, there are still improvements that can be made to the practical test.

ADIs were generally positive about independent driving, most identify specific training methods they use with learners and they were keen to share details of the tuition they deliver. 90% of ADIs felt that exposure to independent driving in training would have beneficial road safety impacts for learners once qualified. The main sources of criticism from instructors were around the use of schematic diagrams and that the current test does not go far enough to replicate real life driving. Many suggested that enhancing independent driving further could be a way of achieving a more relevant driving test.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

In 2008 the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) published the Learning to Drive Consultation (DSA, 2008) which contained an array of proposals aimed at improving the driver training and testing regime in Great Britain. One of the proposed changes was the inclusion of independent driving into the practical driving test[1]. Part of the reasoning behind this suggestion was that, generally, drivers of all ages are more vulnerable to the risk of being involved in an accident in the first few months after qualifying. The consultation document highlighted that contemporary reports show one in five of all car deaths in Britain involve newly qualified drivers and their passengers, and that this is unacceptable. Therefore changes to the practical test were considered as a way of improving driver safety in the months directly after qualifying.

The blue line in the graph below (figure 1) shows the average accident rate of people when they first qualify based on their age at the time; for example a driver who qualifies aged 27 is, on average, 30% safer than drivers starting aged 17. The contrasting red line describes the accident rate of an average driver qualifying at 17 and their continued improvement in safety over the ensuing years, however, when these lines are compared to each other the data demonstrates that regardless of age, it is experience that seems significantly instrumental in reducing accident risk.
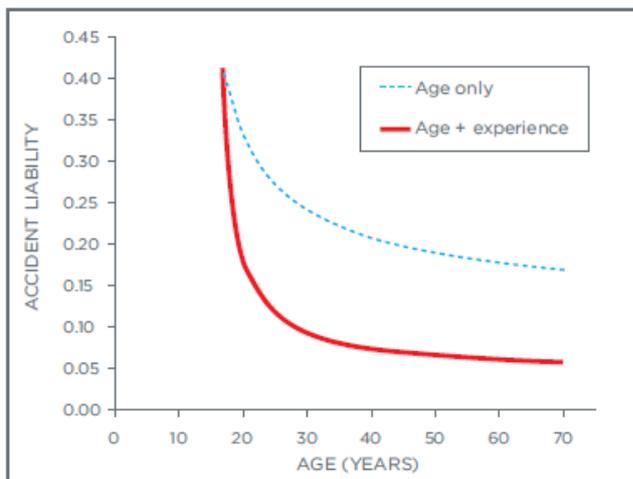
Figure 1
Source: Learning to drive consultation (DSA 2008, p. 15)

Previous research conducted with newly qualified drivers highlighted concerns that they often felt unprepared for driving alone without the security of their instructor or an examiner (Christmas 2007). Findings from that research also demonstrated that most young people do not want to drive dangerously; they wish to be safe drivers who are skilful at interacting with others on the roads. Unfortunately they often lack appropriate

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[1] Licence categories A, B, C & D were all changed for independent driving. Further details of driving licence categories can be found online; https://www.gov.uk/vehicles-you-can-drive

knowledge, understanding, skills, attitude or motivation for their first experiences on the roads unsupervised. The report went on to state that participants identified three core values for a 'good driver', defining mastery of driving as; a physical activity, a social activity and an emotional activity. It is reasonable to suggest that prior to October 2010 the practical driving test was overly focussed on only one of these three core values, driving as a physical activity. Independent driving was presented as a strategy that could improve the real life relevance of the driving test for learners and provide longer term road safety benefits.

Before any changes were made it was important DSA identified potential benefits and risks that could be associated with independent driving, this essentially began with the Learning to Drive consultation. Part of the consultation process included stakeholder conferences, those who attended were asked if they felt that introducing an assessment of candidates' ability to drive independently was a good idea, of all those who answered 1,217 (86%) agreed or strongly agreed (DSA, 2009, p.32). These same respondents went on to state that the main benefits were related to making the test more like real life and that it could make the driver think for themselves more. The only significant source of resistance came from focus groups with young people; many were concerned that the changes would make the test more difficult to pass and that it would create an unfair advantage to those taking their practical test in familiar locations. Interestingly some also stated that independent driving would be somewhat redundant due to increasing availability of GPS navigation devices (see chapter 4.3.4 for a wider discussion). However, these concerns relate specifically to the delivery of independent driving, when asked generally if they thought it was a good idea there was broader consent, with most agreeing that it was (DSA, 2009, p.32).

Results from the consultation seemed to show general agreement with the proposals; however, practical research was needed to assess the feasibility of introducing independent driving into the driving test. This amounted to the delivery of two trials (Helman *et al*, 2010a, b) where test ready learner drivers (i.e. experienced learners with proficiency in the physical elements of driving) were asked to sit a mock test which included proposed elements of independent driving. The main focus of this work was to understand how learner drivers coped with the new style test and reveal any possible discriminating effects, learners who identified physical or mental disability and those who didn't consider English their first language were looked at specifically to ensure equality standards. Results indicated that while there was a slight increase in fault rate during the independent drive, most of the candidates "recognised the importance and relevance of these new tasks to real driving" (Helman *et al*, 2010b, p. 33). Furthermore, there was no evidence that the new test would unfairly discriminate against the sociodemographic groups included in the analysis.

Therefore, based on feedback from young drivers, consultation responses and feasibility research, independent driving was proposed as a means of encouraging a learning to drive process that was not principally concentrated on manoeuvring a vehicle, but

expanded into more of the behavioural and attitudinal aspects of driving such as journey planning and driver awareness.

Under test conditions it was intended that independent driving would provide more relevant 'real world' situations for the assessment of a candidate's ability to manage the vehicle, route and traffic simultaneously. On 4th October 2010, the change was introduced, for all licence categories. Candidates are now asked to follow a series of verbal directions, road signs, or a combination of both for approximately ten minutes during the practical test. To accommodate this addition, the number of reverse manoeuvres was reduced from two to one to ensure test times were not affected. On test the examiner will now ask the candidate to do one of the following; reverse around a corner, turn in the road or reverse park but the candidate will not know in advance which manoeuvre will be selected.

Following the launch of the new test DSA wanted to understand; how the new tasks had been incorporated into the learning to drive process, what effects independent driving has had in the testing environment and if there were any suitable measures available to capture post-test effects. It was recommended by DSA's Research Unit that an internal evaluation be designed that would attempt to answer these questions. With this in mind a broad design was suggested focussing primarily on capturing the effects independent driving may have had, and second, to provide better understanding of the availability and suitability of practical test related data and data collection methods.

2.2.   Aims

The main aim of this research is to produce a broad scope evaluation into the introduction of independent driving by sourcing data from recently qualified drivers and approved driving instructors (ADIs).
To achieve this it was proposed that the project will;
  o   Assess candidates' experience of the driving test.
  o   Understand how learners are preparing for the independent driving element of the test.
  o   Understand the extent to which they consider that preparation helped the transition to solo driving.
  o   Identify newly qualified drivers' post-test experiences of driving independently and their post-test safety record.
  o   Understand if and how ADIs have amended their training programmes in response to the introduction of independent driving.

It is also intended that the research methods and resulting analysis can be used as a reference point for future research conducted by the DSA, helping to identify limitations and benefits of the approach used and learn from them.

3. Methodology

3.1.   Introduction

The research project aims were deliberately constructed to be wide reaching and therefore minimise the impact of researcher expectations from the beginning. It was not intended that this work would test hypotheses or provide statistical data that can be generalised to a specific wider population. Instead, research methods were selected to afford the respondents sufficient freedom to report their experiences and perceptions of driving and independent driving as they progressed through their early driving careers. No assumptions were made regarding 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of responses and a loosely emic approach to analysis was preferred, allowing the participants (drivers and driving instructors) to provide meaning rather than comments be 'interpreted' by the researcher. This allows the analysis to consider responses at face value to determine how changes to the driving test are being espoused by drivers and the driver training industry.

Evaluating the impacts of independent driving was inherently restricted as the scheme was launched as a national initiative; this meant that there was no option for obtaining a valid control to compare with a sample group. In order to understand if and/or how driver experiences are been affected a method is required that can capture trends and demographics while remaining sensitive to the subtleties and individual differences of the people involved. Therefore, to ensure as full an understanding as possible the research would need to make use of qualitative sources to compliment trend data. As a result, to ensure respondents had adequate opportunity to express their opinions a mixed method design was recommended.

It was, therefore, decided that first contact with the intended populations should be done via online self completion surveys containing both closed (tick box and Likert scale) and open ended questions (requiring a text based response). The tick box questions were designed to identify trends and record sample characteristics. Additionally, some were constructed to encourage more detailed responses in the text based questions. Previous research conducted by DSA has often resulted in missed opportunities when text based questions evoked only simple one word answers such as "good" or "rubbish", these limit DSA's ability to understand and respond to the needs and problems within its targeted population. To try and encourage a more detailed account of their experiences, simple 'yes', 'no' questions were used as primers to stimulate thinking about a particular subject These were paired with an open ended question on the same topic, the free text part of the coupling being the focus for analysis. Finally, at the end of each questionnaire was an open question inviting general feedback[2], the inclusion of this question allowed for an unprompted response based purely on the feelings of the respondent having completed the questionnaire.

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[2] Exact question text: "If you have any further comments about the issues covered in this questionnaire please use the space below"

The diagram below (figure 2) provides an overview of the method for collecting data from the intended sources.
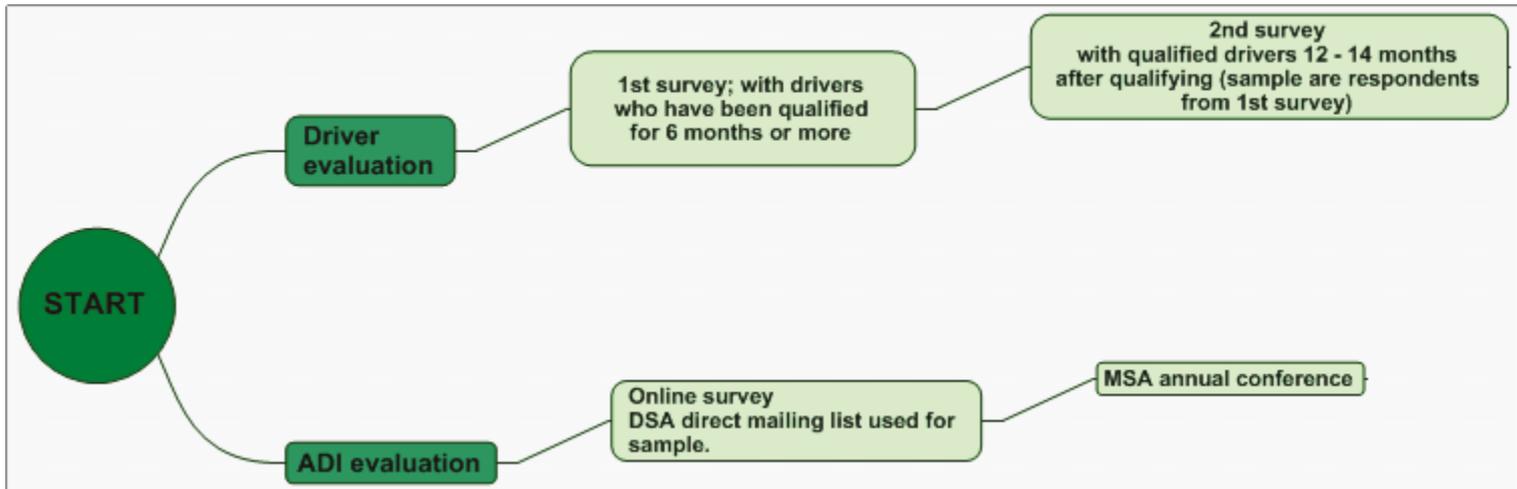
Figure 2

The content of the first survey sent to drivers was largely determined by the DSA Research Unit, assumptions had to be made regarding what aspects of learning, testing and driving may be impacted by the introduction of independent driving. The second questionnaire was deliberately designed to reflect the content of the first, in particular the demographic, attitudinal/behavioural and collision rate questions. This was done to help identify any common trends that may emerge and provide an estimate of the stability of responses over time. It was also intended that findings from the first questionnaire could be used to inform the content of the second if unexpected findings were to emerge, this would allow for the opportunity to explore them further.

While it has been acknowledged that a valid control group was not accessible other options were considered that may provide a baseline for comparison. This baseline data would not be statistically comparable; however, it could be useful for trend analysis and highlighting issues that warrant further investigation via qualitative means. The closest point of reference for comparison (containing data and analysis about the learning to drive process and post test experience) identified was The Department for Transport's Cohort II study of learner and new drivers (Wells *et al*, 2008).

The aims of the Cohort study were;

- o To investigate how people learn to drive, including the number of hours of tuition and practice, and to compare this to outcomes from the theory and practical driving tests;
- o To assess the impact of changes to the testing regime, specifically the hazard perception test which was introduced during the period of study;
- o To explore new drivers' experiences and attitudes to driving; and
- o To identify their level of accident involvement over time." (Wells *et al*, 2008, p. 11)

The aims, method and questionnaire led process of the Cohort II study are very similar to the expectations regarding the present study, as such it was decided that some of the questions used in the Cohort study should be built in (verbatim) to the independent driving research. These comparable measures would assist with data benchmarking and provide points of reference for comparison. It was also considered pertinent to mirror the timescales used for Cohort II, although instead of a 36 month research phase 12 months was considered sufficient to produce meaningful information regarding early experiences of drivers. This timescale would allow for two data collection points at months 6 and 12 post qualification.

The ADI research was designed to complement the driver survey. The ADI feedback is of particular interest regarding contemporary trends in training methods and how this translates to candidates. Furthermore, feedback regarding the launch of new testing regimes must involve the professionals who will be expected to teach and explain the higher order issues to learners as this should help DSA identify if any further lessons can be learnt.

3.2.   General Procedure

Results were collected and analysed by DSA's Research Unit, much of the quantitative data is presented as it was received, with little or no amendments made. The only questions that were amended were related to training times with an instructor or friends/family, these questions were free format text response meaning some respondents used numbers to respond while others wrote in text and some provided a range as their response (e.g. 40-45 hours). Where a range was reported a mid-point was used to provide an unbiased figure that could be included in analysis. Additionally, there were three removals for spurious responses (e.g. 5000 hours and a respondent who wrote 1234 and 5678 as their response). Some data has been merged and presented in one chart rather than multiples mainly to provide easier visual comparison where needed.

The qualitative data was transferred into NVivo©[3] and analysed using thematic analysis. This process was deemed the most suitable to condense the responses into a useable volume; capturing the most frequently occurring concepts while retaining the original message presented by the respondents. The data were amended as little as possible; specific names and places were removed to preserve the anonymity of the respondents (or the persons they were speaking of), any offensive language was edited out and some spelling errors were corrected (to ensure the NVivo© analysis software did not miss any comments). While assumptions were made by the researcher in naming the coded groups, every attempt was made to ensure they were logically derived from the comments themselves. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that some responses were quite detailed and as a result there are many instances where an answer from an individual could be coded into multiple themes. Therefore the themes identified are not always to be considered as mutually exclusive, this is also further reason to not attempt to quantify the

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[3] NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed method research.

qualitative data as this could be misleading and distract attention away from subtle, but important, findings.

For the driving instructor qualitative data, an opportunity arose to review and confirm analysis and conclusions. Once the qualitative data had been coded into themes, members of the Research Unit attended an annual event held by and intended for driver training professionals. At the event two focus groups were conducted with ADIs. In these focus groups the driving instructors were presented with some of the coded categories from the ADI and candidate surveys and were then asked to comment on these assessments from their own point of view and were asked if; they agree with conclusions? Did the conclusions sound familiar to them in the context of the questions asked? The findings from this activity are presented in chapter 7.2.

3.3.   Samples

As independent driving was designed to improve driver confidence and ability in the early months post qualification it is sensible to target new drivers and driving instructors (who taught the learners) for the evaluation. Driving examiners were considered as a possible third source of information, however, it was decided that the research focus should remain on learner experiences. If there were unanticipated findings that merited further analysis the option of including driving examiner opinions could be explored again.

Drivers

The candidate sample was sourced from an internal DSA database[4], all candidates who passed their practical test between the 15th January and 16th February 2011, and provided a contact email address were sent an email from DSA inviting them to take part in an online survey which was hosted on Survey Monkey®. This sample totalled approximately 102,000. Once the total numbers of incorrect or unreachable addresses were identified the final sample was 92,957. From this sample, 4,356 people responded fully or in part to the time point one (TP1) questionnaire (only the consent questions on the first page of the survey were compulsory, meaning some questionnaires did not have every question answered). Respondents to the TP1 questionnaire formed the sample for time point two (TP2), this second survey was sent out approximately 6 months after the first, 1,229 responses were received.

Driving Instructors

The ADI sample was taken from the DSA Direct mailing list which is a voluntary register interested parties can join to receive alerts and updates about DSA news. Driving

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[4] when learners register for their practical driving test they can voluntarily offer their email addresses The following fair processing notice is provided on the DSA website – "Personal information will be processed mainly to: register candidates, collect payment, confirm identity and entitlement, provide tests (including results), create management information, including analysis and research to improve road safety, customer service and satisfaction."

instructors who had registered for this service received an invitation to participate in the independent driving survey. The survey was live for approximately three weeks and 2,224 responses were collected.

3.4. Ethics

Development of the research method and analysis for this project was informed by ethical best practice advocated by The Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics (2012). The core principles focus around integrity, quality and transparency at all stages of the research process. With these principles in mind, the following steps were taken to ensure compliance with these standards: informed consent, the email sent to possible respondents contained a fair processing statement, this included a brief description of the aims of the research and who would be responsible for it. It also specified that participation was voluntary and ensured that participants knew they could withdraw their data if they chose to (Appendix 8.1). The first page of the survey also contained four tick box statements (Appendix 8.2) explaining the rights of participants; these questions were the only compulsory ones in the questionnaire (i.e. they required a response before the participant could proceed). This was not done to bind participants to a group of statements or to the research in general but to try and ensure participants were briefed as well as they could be without a researcher being present at the point of data collection. A contact email address for the DSA Research Unit was also provided should any issues have arisen. These measures aimed to ensure participants were informed about the research and responded of their own volition.

Previous survey-based research conducted by DSA has frequently resulted in small response rates from learner drivers (typically below 10%); therefore while the original sample may appear excessive at over 90,000 the final count of responses at TP2 demonstrates why this was necessary. This trend of low return rates was also part of the reasoning in offering inclusion into a prize draw as an incentive to participate in both surveys. Inclusion into the prize draw was available to all participants who started both surveys. Completeness of survey or type of feedback (supportive or critical) did not affect eligibility to be included therefore it was not considered a coercive act, the only required criteria on the part of the respondent was an attempt made on each survey and the provision of a contact email address. Again, this element of the survey was opt-in and if people did not wish to be involved then they did not have to. Once the TP2 survey had closed, the email addresses of those who had asked to be included were collected together and an online random number generator[5] was used to identify winning participants (see appendix 8.4 for terms and conditions).

All responses were anonymous. The only personal data collected were email addresses; in the TP1 survey, email addresses were required to ensure successful delivery of the TP2 questionnaire. For the TP2 questionnaire they were collected for the prize draw. Furthermore, the email addresses would serve as a means of removing and deleting an

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[5] http://www.random.org/

individual's responses should they have requested it. Once the addresses had served their intended purposes, they were deleted from the research database.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1.   Candidate surveys TP1 & 2 – Demographic data

The age and gender distribution data from both candidate surveys are presented in figures 3 - 6. The data were principally collected for validation purposes; to ensure findings and any generalisations made were not based on a sample that was dissimilar to the overall population.

**Candidate age distribution.
Surveys 1 & 2**

	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Timepoint 1	1354	799	1232	541	215	122	17
Timepoint 2	366	245	393	140	55	24	2
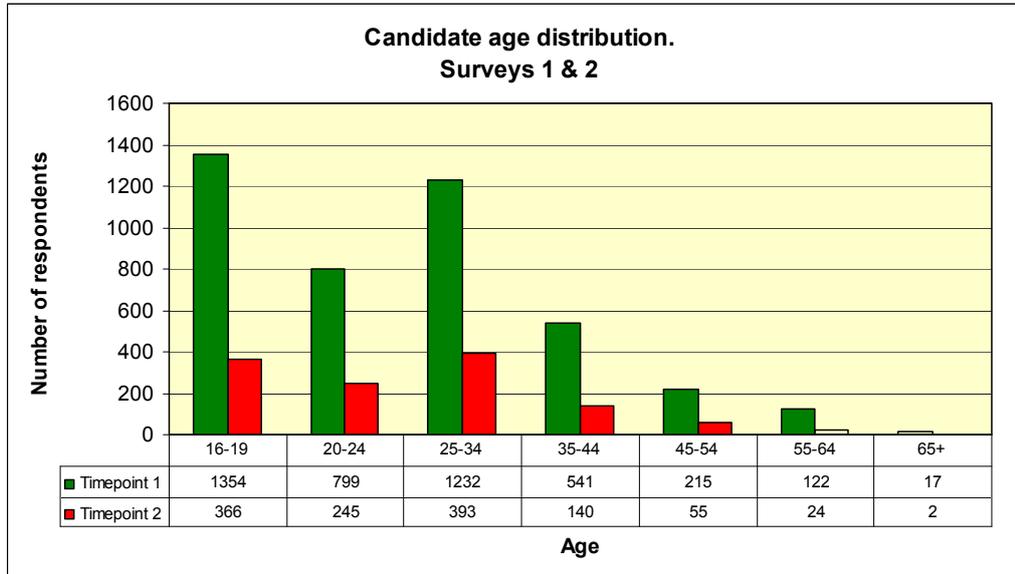
Figure 3

Figure 3, above, shows response volumes per age group, the TP1 distribution is based on 4,280 responses; only 76 participants skipped the question. TP2 data represent 1,225 responses, only 4 skipped the question. While there is a clear visual difference between time point one and two, this is merely reflective of the difference in response volumes and does not reflect any particular trends. Both time points demonstrate a skewed distribution towards the younger age groups, given the numbers of respondents it would be reasonable to assume that this distribution reflects the population; however more detail is needed to be sure. Figure 4 below describes the age distribution of all candidates who passed their test in 2011 (the same year the samples for this research were drawn from).

Category B Passes by age group: 01/01/2011 to 31/12/2011

Age group	Volume
16-19	356835
20-24	156297
25-34	168043
35-44	55298
45-54	15120
55-64	3235
65+	595
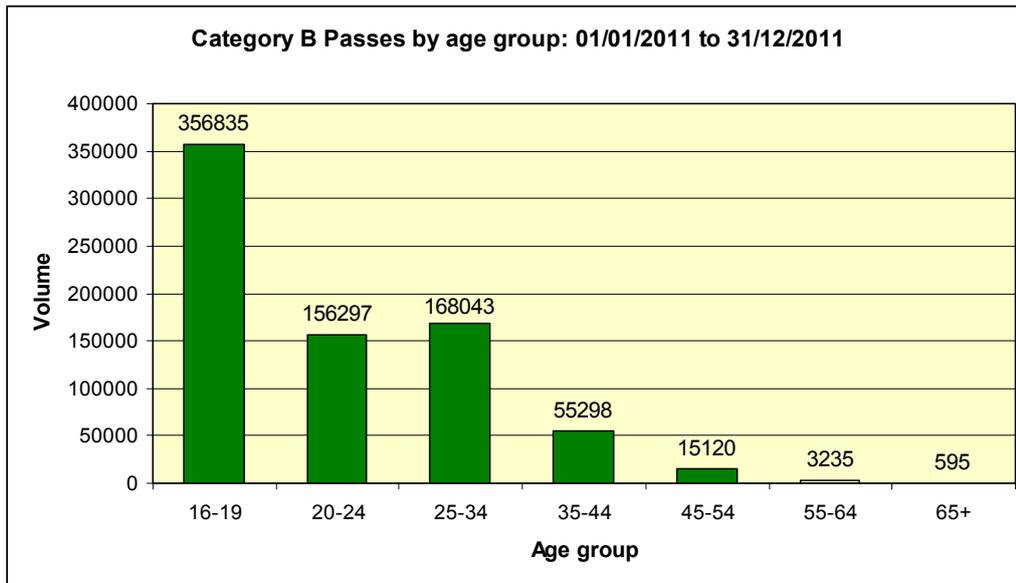
Figure 4

These data represent 755,423 individuals; the data here reflect the patterns found in the survey data, the age distributions in the research samples closely match the national distributions indicating that a representative sample responded to this study in terms of age groups.

Figure 5 describes TP1 and TP2 data[6] regarding the self reported gender of the sample, the distribution of the participants indicates a slight bias with more females responding than males (56.7% female at TP1 and 60.5% female at TP2).

Candidate gender distribution.
Surveys 1 & 2

	Female	Male	Transsexual	Perfer not to say
Timepoint 1	2429	1829	14	15
Timepoint 2	741	477	1	5
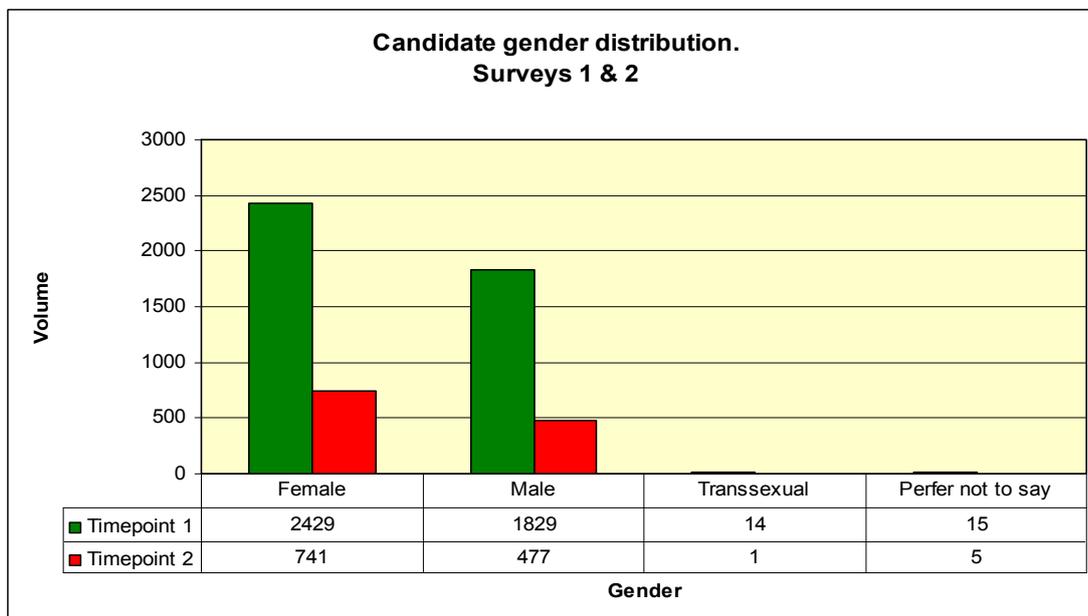
Gender

Figure 5

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[6] It was decided to include the option of transsexual in this research because gender reassignment is now a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It was recognised that response volumes for this group would probably be too low for any statistical comparisons but researchers felt this was no reason to exclude the option.

Figure 6 describes the gender split of people who passed their driving test in 2011. On a national level females account for 49% of recorded test passes and males account for 51%. Used comparatively, the national figures seem to confirm that there may be some response bias in the research sample, with a disproportionate number of females responding. However, the Cohort II research shows a 64% female 36% male split in responses indicating that a trend for higher response volumes from females is likely when conducting research that requires participants to opt-in. So, while it is reasonable to state that the research sample is not exactly representative of national figures, the rationale for using Cohort II as comparison data is strengthened.
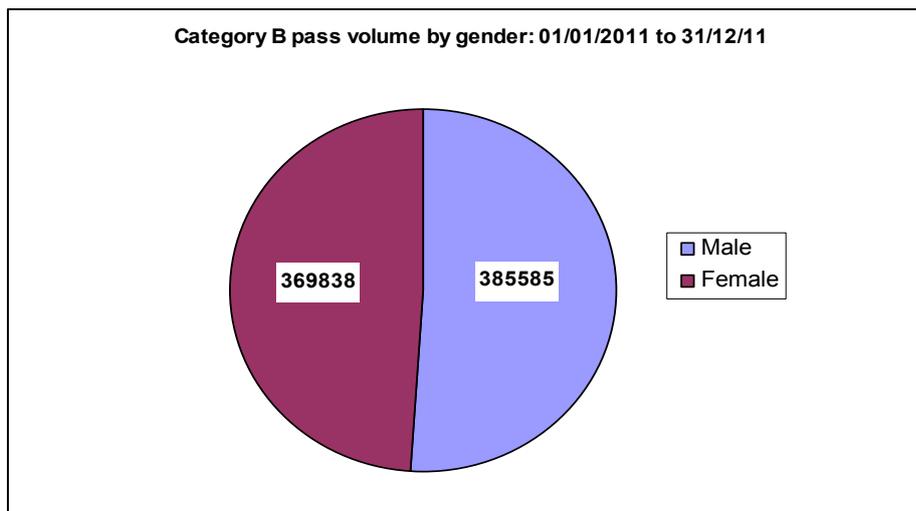
Figure 6

Data were also collected regarding the ethnicity of respondents and their reported first language. The ethnicity data show a broad mix of backgrounds are represented in the surveys, the group with the fewest respondents was 'any other black background' with 9 identifying as this group at TP1. Ethnicity statistics have proven difficult for DSA to capture due to high numbers using the "prefer not to say" box, for the current study, in the TP1 survey only 1.9% (80) ticked "prefer not to say" and at TP2 only 1.2% (15) did the same. This is a positive result for the survey as respondents have clearly felt confident to share their personal demographic information; however, one drawback is the self-selecting nature of the research. It is possible that drivers from some ethnic minorities may not have felt as able to respond to the survey due to language barriers meaning their opinions could be limited or missing.

Figure 7 presents the language distribution of the participants. TP1 survey responses show that English was the first language for 84.5% of people, 14.7% stated 'something else', 0.2% stated Welsh and 0.5% chose not to say.

Candidates' first language

Language category	English	Welsh	Something else	Perfer not to say
Timepoint 1	3579	8	624	23
Timepoint 2	1059	3	147	8
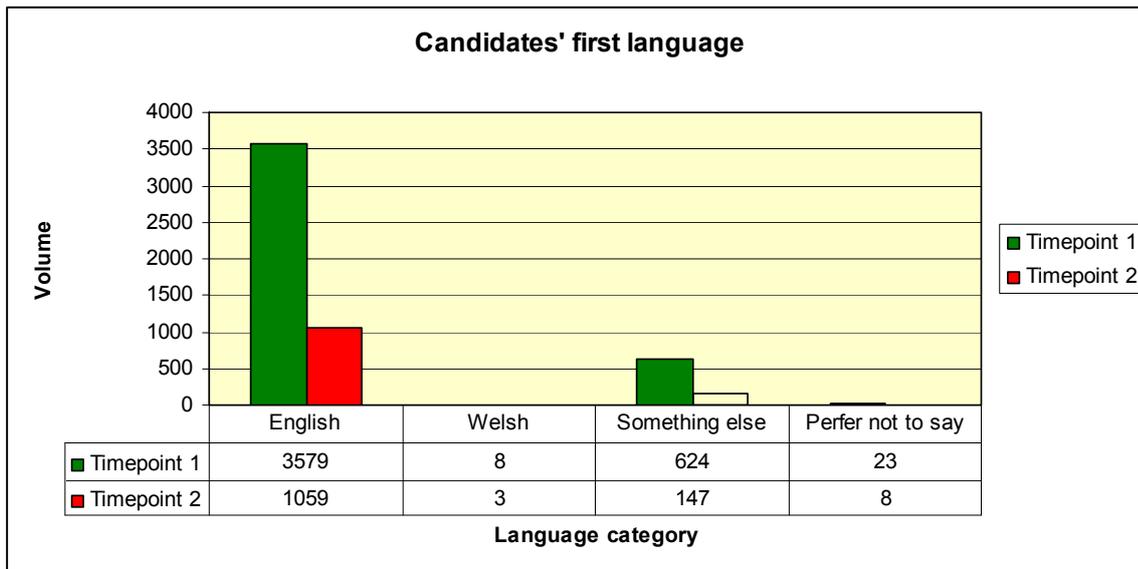
Figure 7

The data captured reasonably reflect contemporary national distributions, 2011 Census data show that 92.3% of people in England and Wales reported English (Welsh in Wales) was their first language, and 7.7% reported another main language. The figures for TP2 were very similar; English 87%, something else 12.1%, Welsh 0.2% and 0.7% preferred not to say. A further point to note is that having a first language which is not English or Welsh does not automatically mean an individual will not have a comprehensive grasp of the English language, it is important to bear this in mind when considering implications of the present findings.

Participants were also asked to indicate if they have a disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010[7]

Candidates' disability distribution

Statement of disability	Yes	No	Perfer not to say
Timepoint 1	86	4141	54
Timepoint 2	33	1173	16
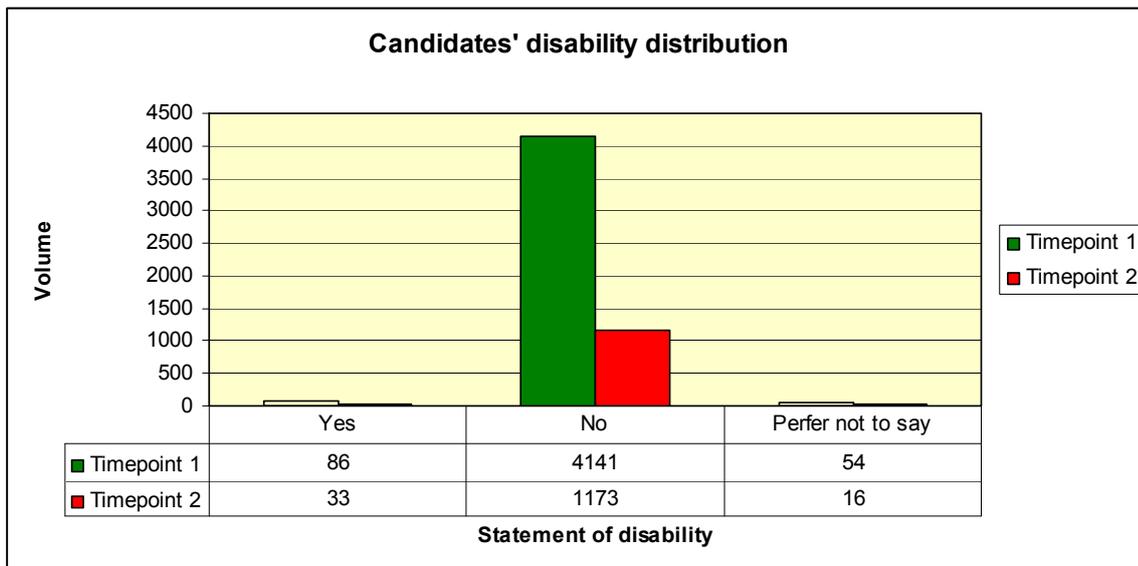
Figure 8

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[7] In the act, a person has a disability if: they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities.

The Department for Work and Pensions produced a report which suggests that 16% of working age adults have a disability (DWP, 2013), the TP1 data has a self-reported figure of 2.1% and TP2 is 2.8%, this is significantly lower than the population estimate of similarly aged adults. It is not understood why this group is so underrepresented in the research responses. This could merit further exploration to understand if the methods used in the present study have excluded some people from responding or if there is more an issue of self-selected non-response. This point also relates to the similar issues in the ethnicity data.

4.2.   Time point 1 survey results

This section of the report deals with the information respondents provided at TP1 about their memories of the learning to drive process, at the time the survey was distributed all participants would have been qualified drivers so there is likely to be some degree of estimation based on memory (from the respondent) in these findings.

4.2.1. Learning to drive

Respondents were first asked if they had previously held a driving licence before their last practical test, this was mainly to ensure most, if not all, respondents were new to driving by themselves. The intention being that any observations they report about their learning and independent driving experiences to date would not be influenced by previous experience and would therefore be a more accurate reflection of the learning to drive process now independent driving has been introduced. 4,099 responded to the question and only 125 stated they had held a previous licence (3%). Given the low figures, it was deemed sensible to proceed analysing the data set.

Next a measure was taken of how long respondents took to pass their driving test (figure 9), just over a third of respondents (34.5%) took between 6 and 12 months to qualify, 81% of respondents took no more than a year to pass their test.
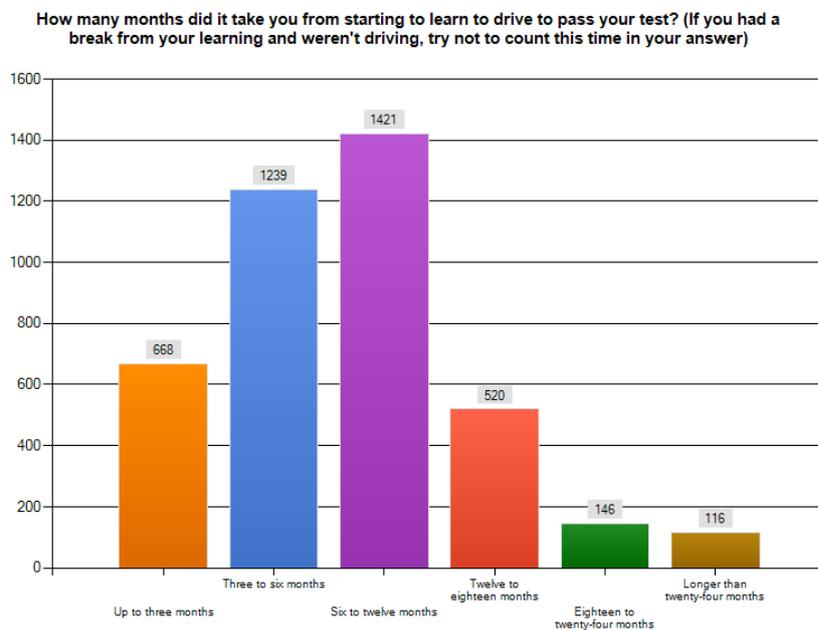
Figure 9

Participants were then asked to recall how many hours training they had taken before passing their practical test; this was defined as professional training with an approved driving instructor (ADI) and/or how much practice they had with friends and family. Table 1 below describes the findings from the current study, research that has captured similar data have been included for comparison.

In the present study the average (mean, unless otherwise stated) hours of training with a professional does not appear to be outside of a reasonable range. What does stand out is the relatively large standard deviation which indicates that there is a lot of variance in the data set. Given all respondents had passed their test at the point of data collection the large variance suggests that the learning to drive process shouldn't be considered as a one size fits all method, some candidates pass with just a few lessons while others may take many months of training. One conclusion that can be drawn, however, is that most respondents engage with some form of professional tuition, only 19 respondents stated they had no professional tuition before passing their test.

Source of data	Hours of professional training	Hours of practice with friends/family
Present study	42.6 hours (3,689 responses. SD, 42.6. Mode, 40)	15.7 hours (3,738 responses. SD, 63.4. Mode, 0)
Helman *et al* (2010*b*)	50.69 hours (459 responses. SD, 31.71)	
Cohort II	47 hours (approx. 10,000 respondents)	20 hours
McWhirter *et al*, (2013)	37 hours	13.6 hours

Table 1 (SD = Standard deviation)

As can be seen in the right hand column, hours of practice with friends and family was, on average, much lower than hours of practice with a qualified driving instructor. Almost half of all respondents to the present study (46.3% or 1,731) stated they had no practice with friends or family. It is not understood why practice is so low or what impact this is having on people as they learn to drive, so may be worthy of further exploration.

Candidates were also asked if they could remember doing specific training for the independent driving element of their practical test. 68.5% responded positively, stating that they had, 27% said they hadn't and only 4.5% didn't know (3952 total respondents). While it is encouraging to see that over two thirds of the sample remembers doing specific training, this section of the questionnaire was intended to improve understanding of the methods learners are using to develop their skills in independent driving. Respondents were asked if they remember doing any training (the intention being this would prompt many to recall what it was they did). With this detail fresh in their minds, those who answered yes were asked to describe what methods they used. 2706 participants responded that they had done some specific training and 2695 free text comments were received regarding what this training entailed, this equates to a 99.6% response rate from the 'yes' group. The data were checked for errors and only 3 comments came from participants that had answered 'no' to the closed question.
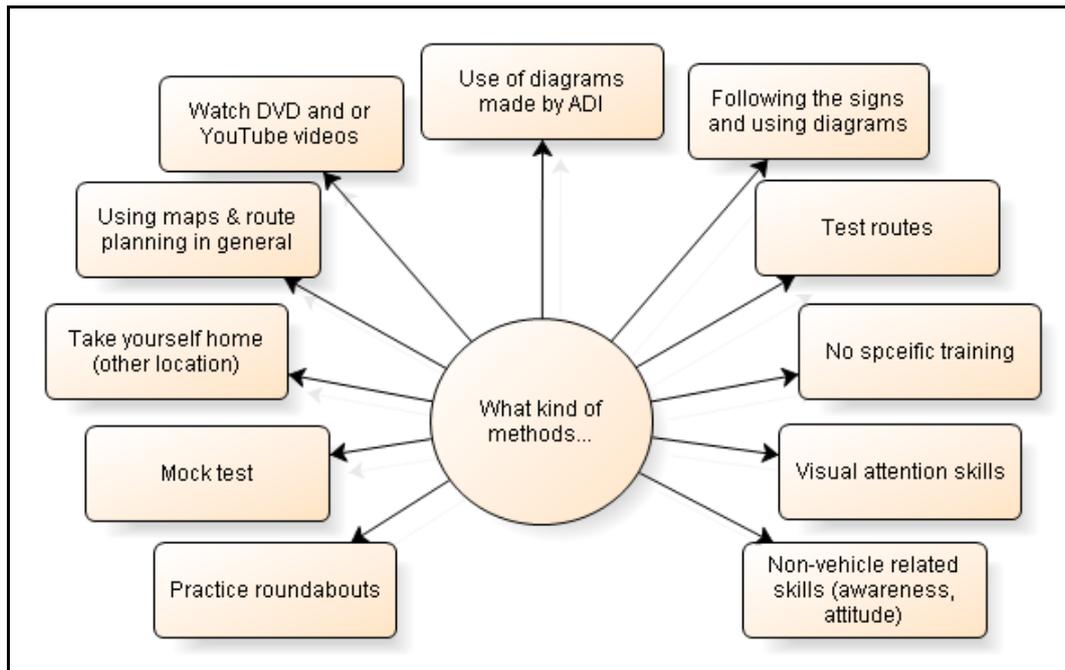
Figure 10

Figure 10 displays the coded responses to the free text question; they are in no particular order. The question generated 11 themes (which, compared to the other qualitative questions, is the highest code count of all the free text questions). Generally the responses could be described as falling into two broad categories; physical control skills and higher order 'thinking' skills. Most people responded with descriptions of the physical skills associated with independent driving;

"My instructor used to ask me to go to a particular destination by just following the road signs during my lessons. I think that was very useful in a way that it made look at the road signs as well while driving which is something I would not have done if I had just followed his instructions."

Some, however, coupled descriptions of the physical skills (reading maps, looking at road signs) with discussion of how these relate to other 'thinking' skills they will need as qualified drivers such as hazard awareness, observation and planning;

"My instructor taught me to plan ahead so I knew how to approach roundabouts in the correct lane etc."

When independent driving was introduced the DSA stopped releasing test routes to the public to minimise the likelihood of candidates using the information to complete the test from memory rather than demonstrating their skills driving independently in novel

surroundings (which is more reflective of driving once qualified). Interestingly in the free text responses some stated that they practised test routes as a method to prepare for their driving test. It is worth noting that it was not always clear respondents meant they were taken on DSA test routes, they may have practised following routes put together by their driving instructor in a mock exam scenario.

"30% of my class was dedicated for Independent driving. During my driving class I have driven in the (all possible) test route."

It is understandable that learners are keen to pass their test as soon as they can, for whatever reason, be it accomplishment, peer competition from friends or work/financial reasons. The concern to road safety professionals is that rote learning of actual test routes limits new driver's exposure to unfamiliar surroundings and/or navigating their car in stressful circumstances. This could expose newly qualified drivers to heightened risk as they increase their experience, often without the support and guidance from a more experienced driver should they encounter difficulty.

4.2.2. The practical test

As stated earlier in the report, the delivery of independent driving could come in one of three forms. When asked if they could recall which type of independent drive they had on the day of their practical test respondents generally seemed confident in stating which. There were 3,958 responses to this question and 50% stated that they had a test combining verbal directions and road signs, 30.5% were asked to follow road signs, the least likely test was verbal directions only (17.4%). 84 respondents indicated that they couldn't remember which they were asked to do.

When independent driving was introduced simple schematic diagrams were constructed as a visual stimulus to provide an alternative to the 'verbal directions'. The aim was to ensure the test didn't discriminate people based on their preferences/abilities for taking in information and processing it effectively. When asked if they remembered seeing a diagram, 55.6% candidates said yes, 38.5% said no and only 5.8% couldn't remember (3958 responses in total). At the time of data capture DSA guidance regarding the use of diagrams stated that examiners should routinely present the diagrams so as to ensure a consistent standard for the driving test. The data suggest this may not have always been happening, however this can only be speculative based on the data collected as the sample had taken their driving test 6 months previously and simply may have forgotten.

Evidence soon started mounting which indicated that the presentation of diagrams, as a matter of course, was actually putting off some drivers and causing confusion during the driving test. When asked what they thought about the diagram results from 2238 comments demonstrated that while some candidates could see the benefits of the diagram, particularly those with alternative learning needs, most felt it was a distraction

and not particularly suitable for their needs (figure 11). Many of the comments relating to an "unprofessional" look of the diagrams indicated that some people misinterpret the function of the diagram and consider it a low quality map (opposed to the 'verbal directions' alternative it was supposed to be).

"it was useful, but it was not proportional to the real map of roads. The distances were confusing and tricky."
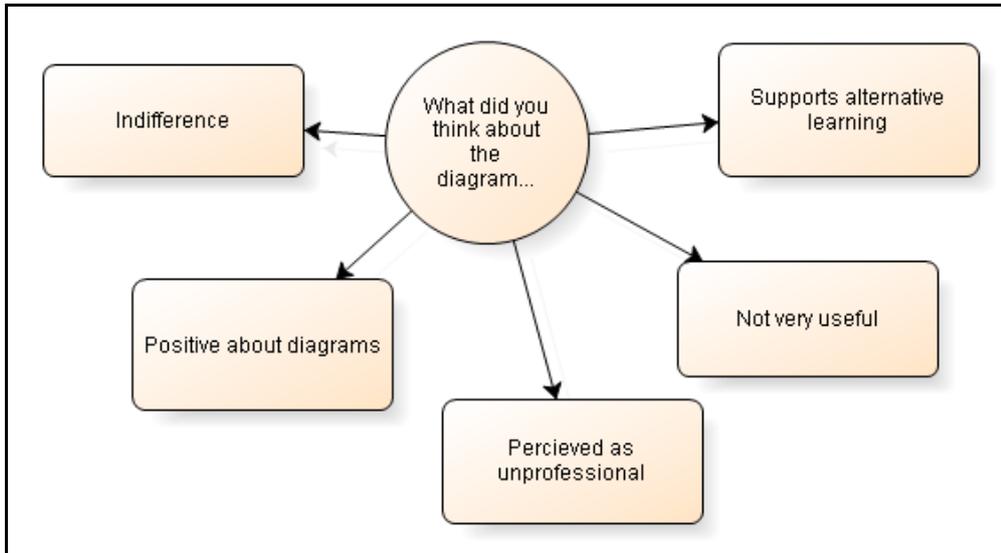
Figure 11

As a result of these findings and feedback from other sources involved in the delivery of the driving test, the DSA changed its official guidance regarding the presentation of diagrams so that the examiner now asks the driver if they would like to see a diagram.

4.2.3. After the driving test

The next section of the survey aimed to explore drivers' thoughts and feelings about having passed their driving test. When asked if they thought that introducing independent driving to the practical driving test has any benefits for learners, just under three quarters (73.5%) said they thought it did, leaving a quarter of respondents who said they didn't think it was beneficial (13.6%) or were still unsure (12.9%). In total 3,949 participants responded to this question. The fact that one in four felt that they couldn't identify a benefit for learners is interesting, from the available data it is not possible to explore the reasons behind this finding without making some assumptions. However, when the survey was being constructed it was considered unlikely respondents would view the introduction of independent driving as an initiative that would make their driving or the driving test worse because it was not considered to be introducing a new skill per se, therefore no specific attempt was made to ascertain the thoughts of those who may be neutral or undecided.

When asked to describe the benefits of independent driving in more detail 6 main themes emerged as described in figure 12 (below), again themes aren't presented in any particular order, they simply describe the most frequently referenced topics from 2,893 responses.
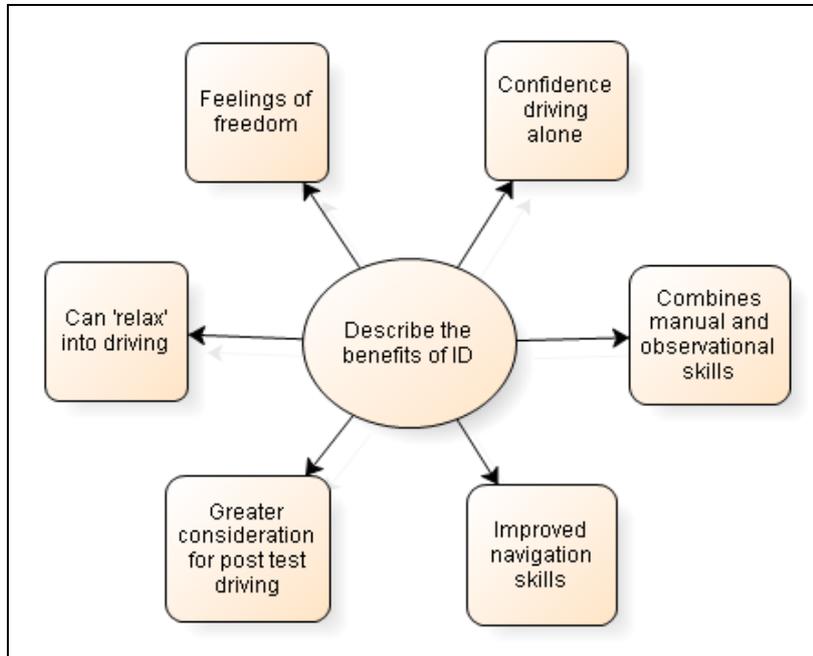
Figure 12

The general trends identified from the responses to this question seem to indicate that drivers prefer to describe the benefits of independent driving as either part of the practical driving test *or* post test driving, i.e. most chose to describe benefits in only one of these environments at a time. Respondents who chose to focus their descriptions of benefits in the practical test environment were more likely to use language that describes how they felt which was generally being more relaxed and under control when they were driving by themselves. Some mentioned that not being reminded they were on test (each time they are given a direction by the examiner) also helped them to relax;

"Creates more relaxed environment for driver as they aren't just being told when to turn".

"All the way through my lessons, I had instruction, turn left at the end of the road, 2nd exit on the roundabout etc...It's important I think to know that the learner can follow signs and is keeping an eye on where they're going, not just able to follow an instructor or sat nav."

Those who focussed on the post-test application of independent driving seemed generally more inclined to describe it as a successful method for bringing together the skills they have developed as a learner and how these can be applied now that they are a qualified driver.

"I do think it increases confidence. A lot of people pass their test and drive solo almost straight away, so having the ability to understand road signs and correct lane positioning definitely helps. Personally, I found it quite a liberating element of the test as it adds some freedom to an otherwise very rigid exam."

"it makes driving oneself in unfamiliar areas after passing the test much more simple as it is a skill that you have already gained"

As discussed previously, one of the aims of independent driving was to ease the transition from learner to qualified driver, a time identified in previous research as being potentially difficult for some who see the loss of their instructor as a negative event (Christmas 2007). In order to understand if this aim has been met respondents were asked to reflect on the content of their driving test, in particular how they view independent driving now that they are qualified drivers, and if they felt it had any particular relevance to the 'real' driving they now do post-test.

When asked if they thought they were prepared for driving independently before they took their practical test 88.7% of 3,820 responses stated they were, only 7% didn't feel prepared and 4.2% weren't sure. The respondents views on the relevance of independent driving to 'real driving' (driving once qualified) was a significant focus for this evaluation, 70% of respondents said the independent driving part of the practical test was relevant or very relevant to 'real driving'; roughly 10% of respondents thought it was irrelevant (figure 13) and 17% of respondents thought that the driving task was a mix of both. Overall these data provide a strong indication that independent driving is useful to most learners and that the learning process supports them post-test as qualified drivers.

Now that you have had a chance to experience driving after passing your test, how relevant do you think the independent driving part of the test was to 'real driving'?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very relevant		38.6%	1,472
Relevant		31.5%	1,202
Mix of both		17.3%	661
Irrelevant		6.8%	259
Very irrelevant		3.1%	119
I have no opinion		2.7%	104
		answered question	3,817
		skipped question	539
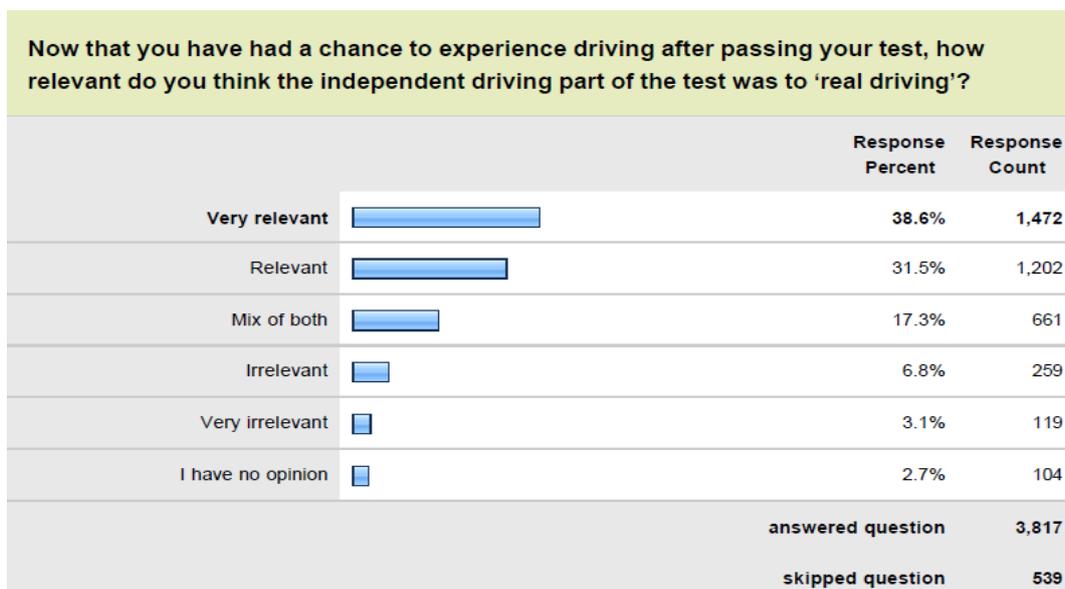
Figure 13

Drivers were asked to comment about how they felt driving unaccompanied after passing their practical test (figure 14), this question was designed to explore if there is evidence independent driving is helping to improve the transition phase (learner to driver) that has been identified as a difficult time for many novice drivers.
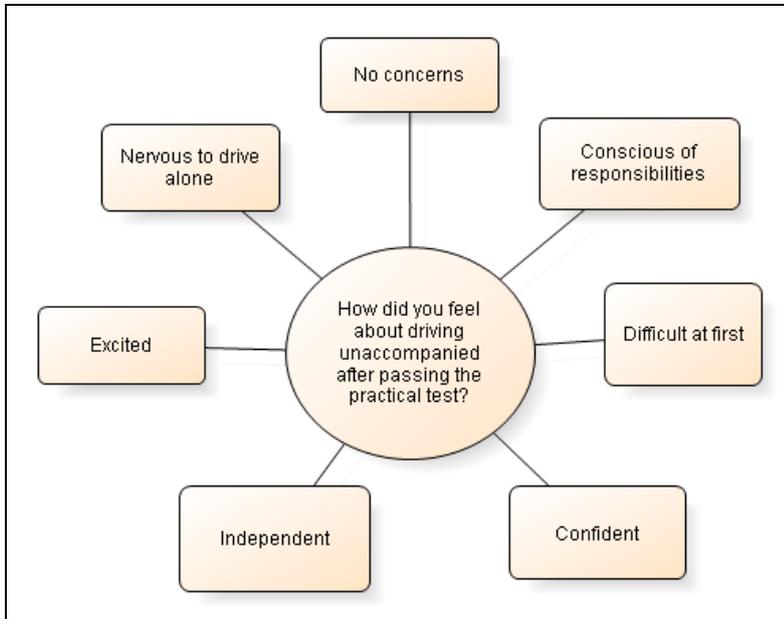
Figure 14

3711 responses were recorded, most responses seemed to follow a similar pattern; candidates stated they were a bit nervous the first few times they drove by themselves, and that they sometimes found it difficult coping with decision making without someone to defer to if they needed it.

"Quite nervous, but my dad sent me out straight away - just round the block - to get it over and done with. Started with short routes, then made them longer, and started driving somewhere and parking etc."

But once they had their first few solo drives many said they felt confident and they enjoyed the independence and freedom they had to drive whenever and wherever they wanted. Furthermore, some referenced independent driving specifically in their training or testing and how this has helped give them confidence that driving unaided is something they are capable of, even though they may need to take things slowly at first!

"I was very nervous, but I reassured myself by knowing that I managed to pass the test without instruction from my driving instructor or anyone, so I am capable of driving alone."

Finally, some were not concerned by the transition at all and just happy to report their excitement and sense of achievement having qualified as drivers;

"Wasn't to phased by it at all, found it easier making my own decisions rather than being instructed and therefore felt my driving was smoother"

"Proud that I have achieved something I always wanted"

On a related subject, candidates were asked to comment on how they think driving now compares to when they were a learner, 3614 answers were submitted and five themes were generated from the analysis (figure 15).
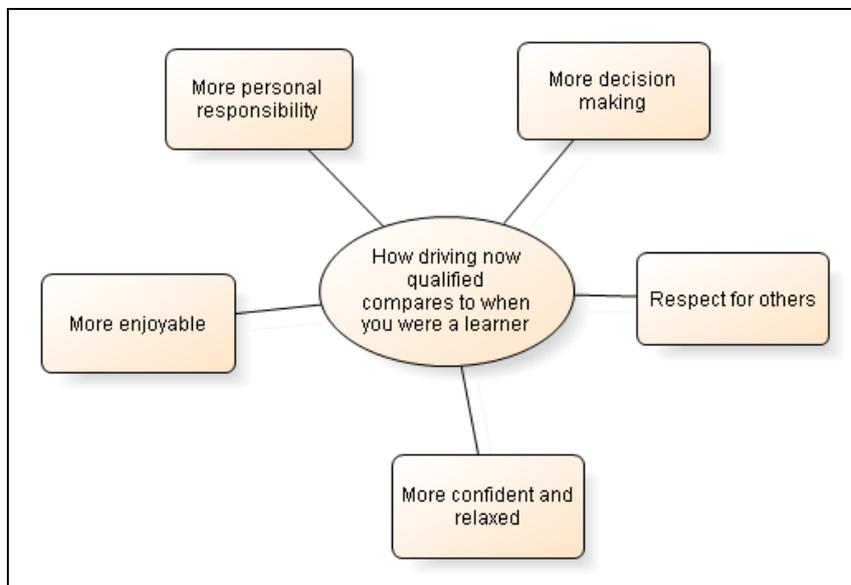
Figure 15

Most respondents, in some way, provided comments that indicated significant awareness of the new responsibilities they faced as independent drivers; these comments were typically coupled with remarks about the importance of accurate decision making.

"It is slightly different driving on your own after having so many lessons. You have to learn to make your own decisions and choices when driving without any risks. That is where the independent driving on the test helps. It gives the learner a chance to do these things and to show that they are competent to drive a vehicle safely."

Many respondents also mentioned their new appreciation for being an independent driver in a shared social environment and how this new found perspective enhanced their respect for other drivers. Additionally, some of the respondents stated they feel they are

treated differently by other drivers now they are no longer learners (no L plates or markings on the car). While this change has helped them feel less conspicuous on the roads, which seems to improve their confidence, a few described situations when they were struggling with a manoeuvre (or other driving event) and that their relative inexperience makes them slower than more experienced drivers, as a result they reported feeling a bit panicked and very aware of the frustrations of other road users;

"Greater responsibility for your own actions on the road but more enjoyable as you are in complete control."

"As a learner, you notice other drivers taking extra notice of you, taking more care around you and overtaking more often, but after passing you have to take much more care."

"The attitude of other drivers was probably more forgiving and tolerant when I was a learner. Parking is also more difficult than as a learner - in real life have to park in much tighter spaces than practiced (sic) during lessons and for the test"

This finding suggests the transition phase for new drivers is still marked by a lack in manual skill competence and/or confidence; as a result new drivers might be more liable to panic and make poor decisions which could have a negative effect on their road safety.

The final question in this section asked respondents to describe their interpretation of a 'safe newly qualified driver'. This question was designed to gain a measure of the sample's perspectives on driving and what they consider to be 'safe driving'. Responses were varied, ranging from single word answers to more developed descriptions encompassing a range of perspectives. Analysis resulted in nine themes being generated from 3615 responses (figure 16).
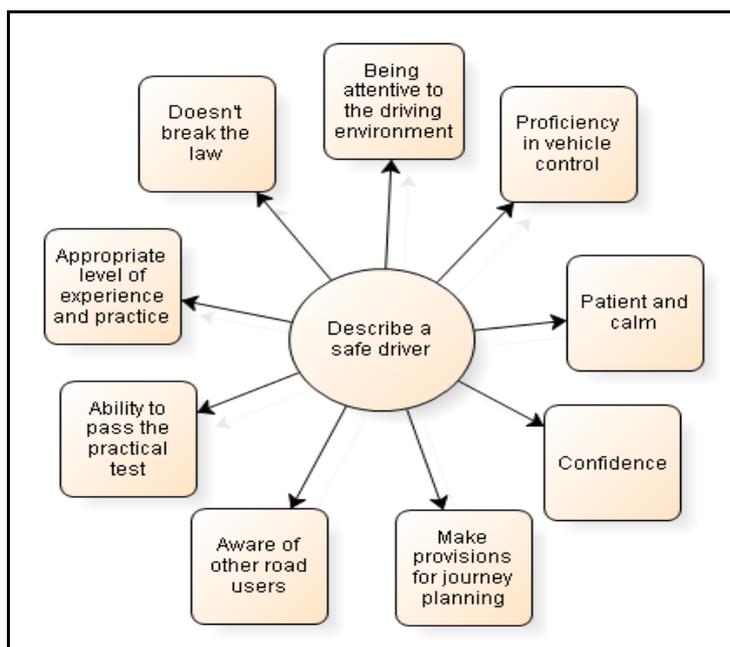
Figure 16

When considered as a whole, the range of responses to this question indicate that there is no normative/standard interpretation of a safe driver, at least from the perspective of the recently qualified drivers included in the present sample. While this finding might not be negative in a literal sense (e.g. directly related to poor driving etc.) it is interesting to consider what impact differing attitudes/opinions may have in a social environment like driving. So much of driving is reliant on making decisions and taking action based on the predicted behaviours of others, often referred to as 'the unwritten rules of the road'. The evidence of limited consistency between individuals about what a safe driver ought to be raises the question, what impact do these differing opinions have on road safety? This is an issue that should be explored further as it could help to harmonise pervasive attitudes to road safety; with broader consensus and understanding of the attributes required of safe drivers, there may be benefits that can be identified.

4.2.4. Driver experience and collision exposure

When asked about post-test training/practice almost 24% of respondents stated that they had engaged with it in some way (figure 17).

Have you had any additional training since passing your test (either with a professional or friends/family)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		23.8%	870
No		76.2%	2,788
	answered question		3,658
	skipped question		698
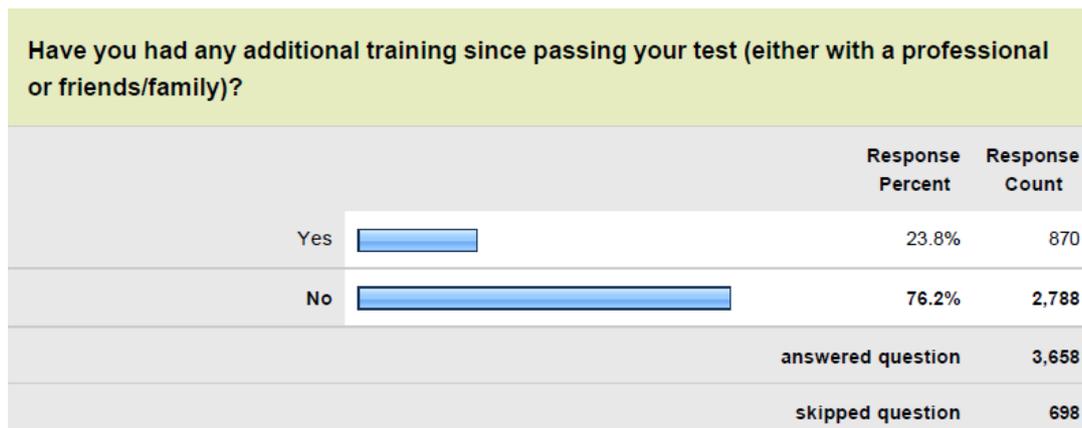
Figure 17

It is important to note that it was not just an issue of whether the respondent had completed formal practice (such as a Pass Plus course) that was of interest, but the specific *type* of practice participants felt they needed, which is captured in the responses to the next question in the survey that asked what kinds of training they did (figure 18).
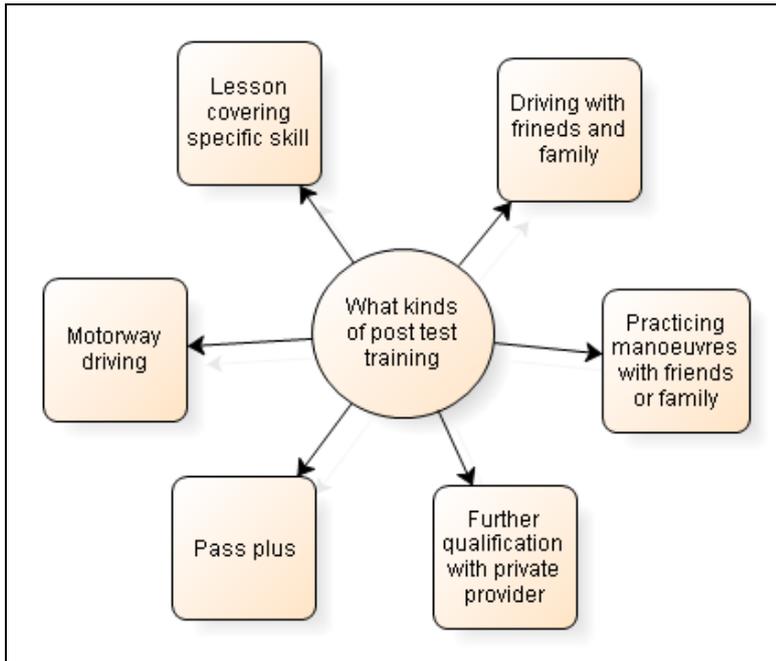
Figure 18

870 respondents indicated that they had completed additional training/practice, 884 respondents provided details, the most common responses were; 'having another qualified driver with them to begin with', 'practising on motorways' and 'pass plus'. It is interesting to note that just over 20% of survey respondents felt they needed specific practice or support after qualifying, it was intended that independent driving would help to minimise this need. At the time of data collection, however, the changes to the driving test were still relatively new, significant changes for drivers may take time to emerge as new training methods develop and, hopefully, learner behaviour adapts to a broader testing environment.

Post-test driving experience (not just formal training) is also integral to this report, it was considered relevant to collect data regarding participant's average driving frequency so that any assumptions made in this report about driver behaviour were not based on an overly skewed sample. Furthermore, comparisons could be made with findings from the Cohort II report which will help put current data into context. The data reported in figure 19 (below) show that most of the respondents who had been qualified drivers for approximately six months drive on a daily basis or at least four times a week. Just over 17% of respondents reported driving less than once a fortnight.

How often do you drive?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Every day		46.0%	1,684
Four to six days a week		19.0%	695
One to three days a week		17.9%	654
About once a fortnight		4.1%	150
About once a month		2.3%	83
Less than once a month		2.1%	77
Hardly ever		8.7%	320
	answered question		3,663
	skipped question		693
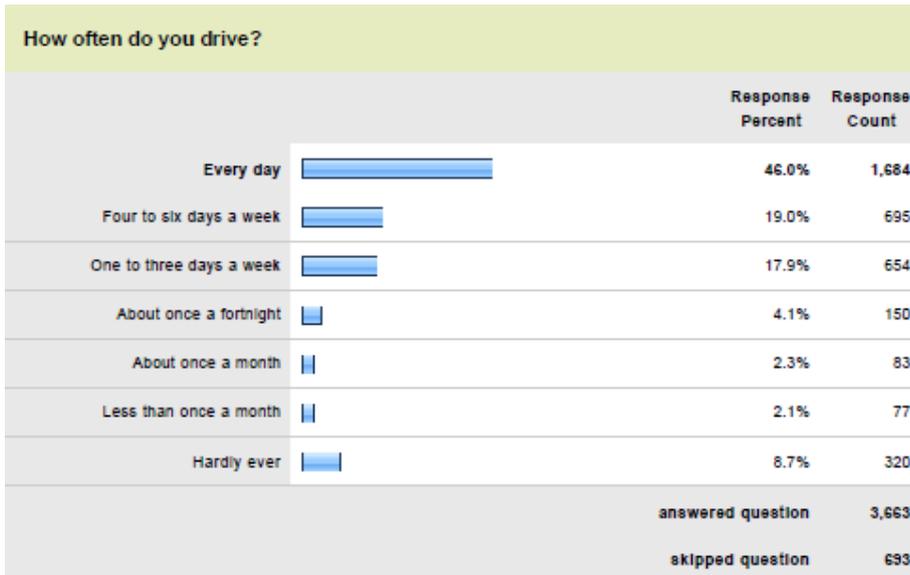
Figure 19

When current findings are compared to the data presented in Cohort II for candidates who also have six months driving experience (figure 20) it seems to indicate a general reduction in driving frequency. Fewer people now are reporting driving as a daily activity and overall responses are spread more evenly, with more people reporting low frequency driving patterns.

Table 6.2: Frequency of driving reported by respondents to follow-up questionnaires

Frequency of driving	Survey period			
	1–6 months	7–12 months	13–24 months	25–36 months
Every day	53%	54%	53%	52%
4–6 days a week	26%	25%	26%	26%
1–3 days a week	14%	12%	12%	12%
About once a fortnight	2%	3%	3%	3%
About once a month	1%	2%	2%	2%
Less than once a month	1%	2%	3%	3%
Never	3%	3%	2%	2%
BASE	10,046	7,428	4,178	2,753

Based on all four Driver Experience Questionnaires, at 6, 12, 24 and 36 months.
Note, percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding errors.

Figure 20
Source: (Wells. *et al*, 2008, p. 105)

According to Transport Statistics (DfT, a, 2011. p1) there has been a slight reduction in overall traffic volumes since 2007[8]. This may account for the difference in travel

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[8] 1.6% fall between 2009 and 2010.
1% fall between 2008 and 2009.
0.8% fall between 2007 and 2008.

frequencies between the Cohort II research and the current research, however, there are likely to be several factors playing a part in the reduction of traffic (e.g. economic downturn, poor weather). What is important to note is that a downturn in traffic volumes is often associated with a downturn in collisions and fatalities on roads (DfT,b, 2011, p 5). In the context of this report this trend is worth bearing in mind when considering collision statistics.

When the responses to the question about driving frequency are paired with responses detailing experience in different environmental/geographical environments (figure 21) it is clear most candidates report frequent driving with varying levels of exposure to driving in different conditions. The least frequently reported conditions are, unsurprisingly, ones reliant on poor weather (fog, snow) which are circumstantial, following this is work-related driving. The next lowest area of experience is motorway driving with approximately 34% of 3647 respondents stating they use motorways less than once a month or not at all. This could, in part, be due to candidates not feeling confident driving on motorways alone at an early stage of their driving life, or it could be due to respondents not having easy access to this kind of road.

In the last six months, how often did you drive....

	Never	Less than once a month	About once a fortnight	One to three days a week	Four to six days a week	Every day	Response Count
In a busy town or city centre	7.7% (283)	12.3% (450)	16.8% (617)	26.7% (980)	17.5% (640)	19.0% (695)	3,665
In quiet parts of towns or cities	6.1% (218)	8.7% (311)	10.8% (388)	28.0% (1,005)	20.8% (746)	25.7% (921)	3,589
On country roads	13.9% (504)	24.0% (870)	18.4% (668)	18.6% (674)	11.2% (407)	13.9% (504)	3,627
On fast dual carriageways	9.2% (333)	16.7% (607)	21.1% (764)	24.4% (885)	14.5% (526)	14.1% (510)	3,625
On motorways	22.6% (826)	31.6% (1,151)	19.7% (719)	14.2% (519)	6.5% (236)	5.4% (196)	3,647
In the dark	7.9% (287)	10.4% (381)	12.5% (456)	30.0% (1,095)	20.8% (760)	18.3% (669)	3,648
In the rain	7.4% (270)	11.9% (432)	24.6% (898)	36.1% (1,315)	13.7% (500)	6.3% (229)	3,644
In fog	35.3% (1,276)	39.2% (1,418)	13.1% (475)	7.1% (258)	2.4% (85)	2.8% (101)	3,613
In snow or ice	70.4% (2,556)	22.2% (807)	2.7% (99)	2.1% (78)	1.0% (36)	1.5% (54)	3,630
To and from your place of work or study	22.1% (805)	6.8% (249)	4.9% (177)	12.5% (455)	22.7% (826)	30.9% (1,124)	3,636
On your employers business	64.5% (2,341)	7.7% (278)	4.7% (170)	7.0% (256)	6.3% (228)	9.9% (359)	3,632
					answered question		3,672
					skipped question		684

Figure 21

Experiencing a near miss is arguably a probable event for any driver regardless of driving experience or skill level. Driving is a social activity which involves significant levels of interaction with others without the usual social cues to assist in interpreting the behaviour or intentions of others. This can result in misjudging a situation or overestimating personal skill, especially in the case of newly qualified drivers. Respondents were asked to comment on their experience of near misses. Most (52.44% of 3643) stated it had happened to them once or twice in the previous six months, 39% of respondents stated that they had not experienced any near misses. The last 8% of the sample stated they have had between three and 10 near misses, including 28 individuals who reported more than 10 near misses in six months.

When asked about their collision involvement generally rates were as expected. In terms of actual collision involvement (defined in the questionnaire as anything from a minor bump to a serious collision) 84% of those that answered the question stated that in six

months of qualified driving they had no incidents, 15.2% of respondents were involved in at least one. Only six individuals reported being involved in more than three incidents in six months.

Reported damage as a result of an 'accident'.
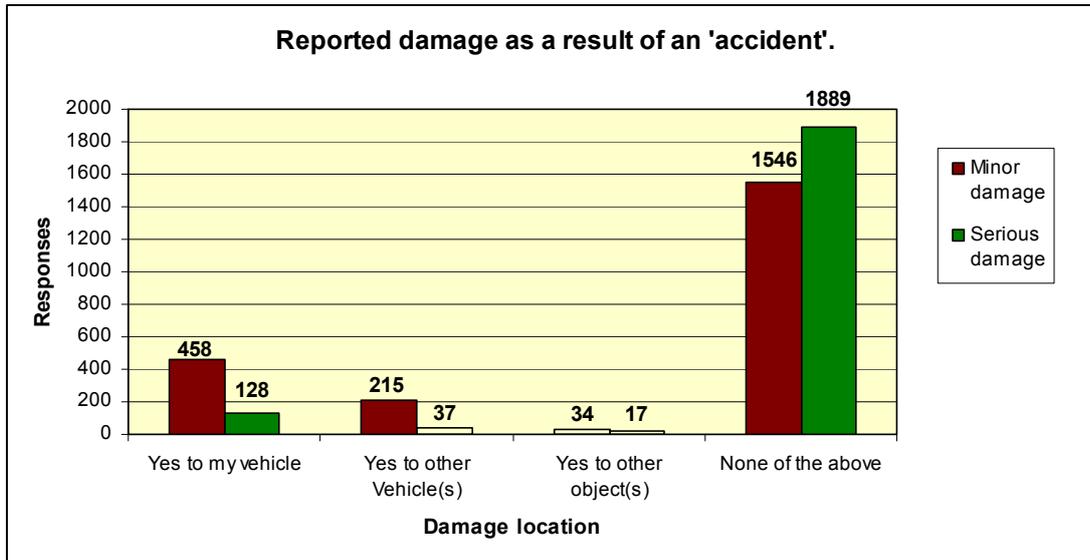
Figure 22

Those who had been in an incident were asked to provide details regarding severity of damage. It's clear from figure 22 that most of the incidents resulted in no damage, suggesting most of the reported incidents were of the 'minor bump' variety.

A measure was also taken of injury to person(s), of the few that did report bodily injury most incidents seem to only have caused injury to the driver (figure 23).

If you have been involved in an accident, can you say if there were any injuries to you or another person(s) involved? If you have been involved in more than one please use the most recent to answer this question. (Tick multiple answers if you need to).

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, to me		2.9%	60
Yes, to a passenger in the vehicle		1.5%	31
Yes, to another person		0.9%	18
None of the above		96.1%	1,974
		answered question	2,054
		skipped question	2,302

Figure 23

TP1 near-miss data cross tabulated with age

The table below (figure 24) shows near miss frequency by age group. Overall, higher frequencies seem to be skewed towards the younger age groups, particularly the 16-19 year olds. The 25 – 34 year old group are the most likely to say they have had no near misses in the last 6 months, however, for that age group, the highest response volume was for 'one or two times' suggesting that some caution is needed when viewing this data. It is also important to note that these data are self-reported, so there may be some influence from self-selection bias and participants providing, what they feel, is a more socially desirable response.

How old were you on your last birthday?	Many drivers have experienced a near miss while driving, which could have resulted in an accident. In the last six months have you felt this way?					
	Never	one or two times	three to five times	six to ten times	More than ten times	Response Totals
16 - 19	27.7% (390)	37.0% (703)	40.1% (101)	29.3% (12)	35.7% (10)	33.5% (1,216)
20 - 24	19.1% (269)	19.5% (371)	20.6% (52)	36.6% (15)	25.0% (7)	19.7% (714)
25 - 34	33.0% (465)	28.8% (547)	23.8% (60)	19.5% (8)	14.3% (4)	29.9% (1,084)
35 - 44	14.8% (209)	10.4% (197)	11.5% (29)	4.9% (2)	14.3% (4)	12.1% (441)
45 - 54	3.5% (49)	3.2% (60)	2.4% (6)	9.8% (4)	7.1% (2)	3.3% (121)
55 - 64	1.8% (25)	1.2% (23)	1.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.6% (1)	1.4% (52)
65 +	0.1% (1)	0.1% (1)	0.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.1% (3)
answered question	1,408	1,902	252	41	28	3,631
				skipped question		12

Figure 24

TP1 Near-miss data cross tabulated with gender

The near miss data when cross tabulated with gender (figure 25) show a relatively even split between the male and female groups (the 'transsexual' and 'prefer not to say' categories have too few responses to be included in the analysis at this time). For the female group 36.9% reported no near misses, while 63.1% reported at least one. For the males 41.4% reported no near misses, meaning 58.6% reported one or more near misses.

Can you please indicate your gender						
		Many drivers have experienced a near miss while driving, which could have resulted in an accident. In the last six months have you felt this way?				
		Never	one or two times	three to five times	six to ten times	More than ten times	Response Totals
Female		56.5% (797)	62.1% (1,182)	58.7% (148)	47.6% (20)	46.4% (13)	59.4% (2,160)
Male		42.8% (603)	37.4% (713)	41.3% (104)	52.4% (22)	50.0% (14)	40.0% (1,456)
Transsexual		0.4% (6)	0.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.6% (1)	0.2% (9)
Prefer not to say		0.3% (4)	0.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (11)
answered question		1,410	1,904	252	42	28	3,636
					skipped question	7

Figure 25

TP1 collision involvement cross tabulated with age

How old were you on your last birthday?	Have you been involved in any accidents (from minor bumps to serious collisions) in the last six months?					Response Totals
	None	One	Two	Three	More than three	
16 - 19	32.5% (995)	38.5% (194)	39.7% (23)	50.0% (2)	33.3% (2)	33.4% (1,216)
20 - 24	19.2% (588)	23.0% (116)	20.7% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	19.7% (716)
25 - 34	30.7% (942)	24.8% (125)	24.1% (14)	50.0% (2)	33.3% (2)	29.8% (1,085)
35 - 44	12.6% (387)	9.7% (49)	8.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (2)	12.2% (443)
45 - 54	3.4% (104)	2.8% (14)	5.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (121)
55 - 64	1.5% (45)	1.2% (6)	1.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.4% (52)
65 +	0.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.1% (3)
answered question	3,064	504	58	4	6	3,636
					skipped question	12

Figure 26

Figure 26 above shows that 18% of the 16-24 year olds who responded to this question have had one or more accidents in the six months after qualifying; the overall figures show 16% of all respondents report the same. The table (2) below presents the reported accident levels by age group, the figures are not actual totals but describe the reported exposure to accidents overall rather than a cumulative total (i.e. the 16-19 age group total is a sum of 194, 23, 2 and 2).

Age group	Volume reporting at least one incident in last 6 months	Total volume who responded to this question	Respondents involved in an accident
16-19	221	1216	18.17%
20-24	128	716	17.9%
25-34	43	1085	13.18%
35-44	56	443	12.64%
45-54	17	121	14.04%
55-64	7	52	13.46%
65+	0	3	0%

Table 2

Like the near miss data, it is apparent that accident involvement is skewed towards the younger age groups. While it could be argued this is the result of larger response volumes in the younger groups, the suggestion can't explain why the frequency of reported accident involvement per age group is different when driving experience should be relatively similar given the sample characteristics (all respondents have been qualified for 6-8 months). This would seem to reflect national statistics of an increased likelihood of accident involvement in younger newly qualified drivers compared to older newly qualified drivers, as described in figure 1.

TP1 collision involvement cross tabulated with gender
The accident involvement data seem to parallel the near miss data, females are reporting higher frequencies of involvement in the first 6-8 months after qualifying.

Can you please indicate your gender						
		Have you been involved in any accidents (from minor bumps to serious collisions) in the last six months?				
		None	One	Two	Three	More than three	Response Totals
Female		58.0% (1,779)	67.2% (340)	67.2% (39)	75.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	59.4% (2,163)
Male		41.4% (1,271)	32.2% (163)	32.8% (19)	25.0% (1)	50.0% (3)	40.0% (1,457)
Transsexual		0.2% (7)	0.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)	0.2% (9)
Prefer not to say		0.3% (10)	0.4% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (12)
answered question		3,067	506	58	4	6	3,641
					skipped question		7

Figure 27

Using the same cumulative approach as before the table below presents the reported accident levels by gender, the % of males reporting accident involvement is just 12.8, this seems unusually low compared to national accident statistics for recently qualified males. This is even more striking compared to the female data showing a figure which is more in common with national statistics.

Gender	Volume reporting at least one incident in last 6 months	Total volume who responded to this question	Respondents involved in an accident
Female	384	2163	17.8%
Male	186	1457	12.8%

Table 3

Interestingly the present data indicate collision frequency is higher for females than males. This difference is contradictory to national collision statistics (figure 26) which demonstrate higher incident involvement for males in all categories of collision collected from STATS 19 reports[9]. While there are about 3.5 million more male licence holders than females the national figures still show that males are disproportionately over represented in road collisions compared to females[10].
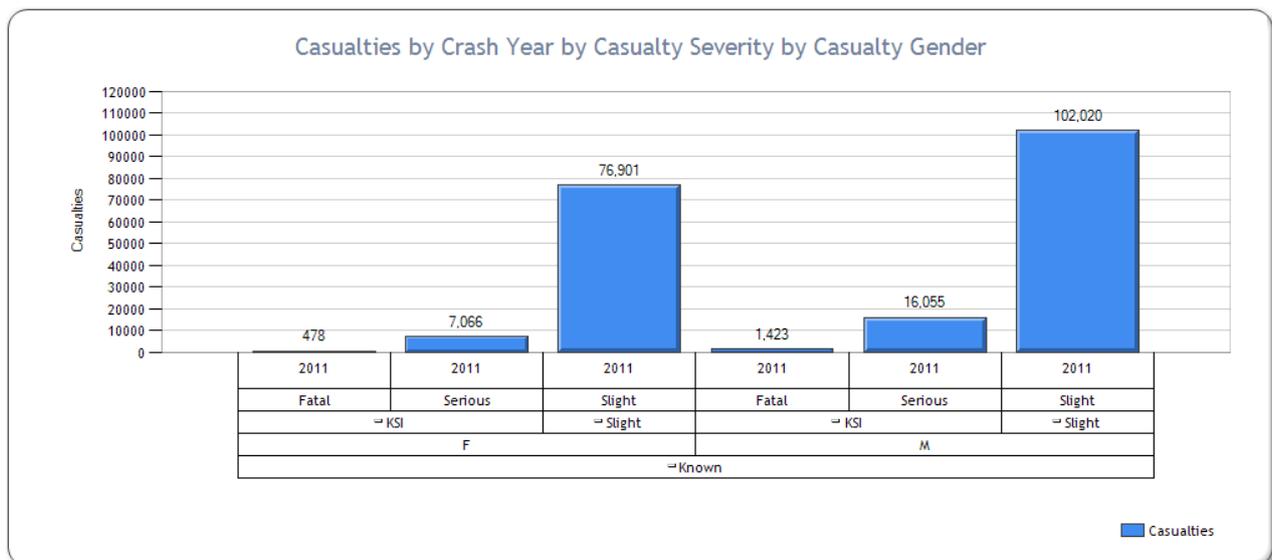
Figure 28 – Constructed and retrieved from **www.roadsafetyanalysis.org/mast-online/**

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[9] Road accidents on the public highway in Great Britain, reported to the police and which involve human injury or death, are recorded by police officers onto a STATS19 report form. The form collects a wide variety of information about the accident (such as time, date, location, road conditions) together with the vehicles and casualties involved and contributory factors to the accident (as interpreted by the police). The form is completed at either the scene of the accident, or when the accident is reported to the police. http://www.adls.ac.uk/department-for-transport/stats19-road-accident-dataset/?detail

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2011

As has been discussed previously, changes in expected patterns in the data could be interpreted as early indications independent driving has effected changes to learning practices and post-test collision likelihood for recently qualified drivers. However, the data do not rule out other possible explanations, the graph (figure 29) below shows response rates by age and gender. Looking specifically at the 35-44 age group and those after it, more males are responding (this is true for actual values, not just the percentages shown on the graph) than females which could account for the lower accident levels for males; it is generally accepted that older new drivers have a reduced accident risk. Furthermore, due to the sampling method available, some ADIs received the invitation to participate in the survey and there is evidence in the qualitative responses that some decided (for whatever reason) to complete the survey. Driving instructors tend to be males aged between 35 and 64 (as will be demonstrated later in this report), it is impossible to know how many may have responded to the learner driver survey. But this explanation could account for the unexpected volume of older drivers responding to the learner survey which, theoretically, may have artificially shifted the distribution of collision statistics.
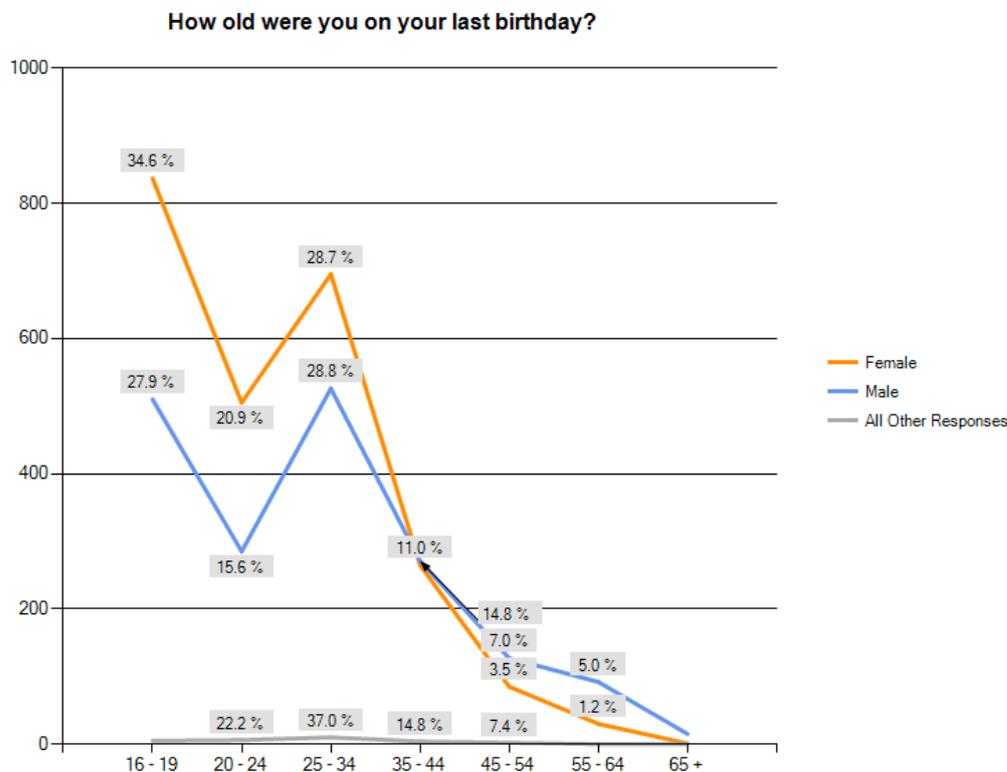
Figure 29

A final point for consideration is that because of the self-completion methods used for this research, the survey is unlikely to have captured data involving the most severe types of collision that result in serious injury or death. While it is statistically unlikely that the sample used for this research included individuals who were unable to respond due to these circumstances, it is possible.

4.2.5. Driver attitude and behaviour

The TP1 questionnaire also included a seven item measure of self-reported attitudes towards use of speed, the Attitudes to Driving Violations Scale (adapted from the Cohort II research (Wells *et al,* 2008. P93)). Overall results of the present study suggest that participants reported relatively safe attitudes towards driving, however there is the possibility that participants have provided answers based on social desirability (the desire to present views that will be looked on favourably by others regardless of whether they are the true opinions of the individual). While this kind of bias is possible, it is interesting to consider the implications of the responses of the first and last item on the scale (increase vs. decrease motorway speed limits). When asked about decreasing the speed limit the most frequent response was strongly disagree, if participants were consciously deciding to answer based on social desirability then a much lower score would be expected (see figure 30).

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I have no opinion	Rating Count
Decreasing the motorway speed limit is a good idea	3.4% (128)	6.1% (229)	19.0% (718)	**36.8% (1,391)**	33.2% (1,258)	1.6% (60)	3,784
Even at night-time on quiet roads it is important to keep within the speed limit	**55.9% (2,108)**	33.4% (1,260)	5.4% (203)	4.1% (156)	0.9% (35)	0.3% (11)	3,773
Drivers who cause accidents by reckless driving should be banned from driving for life	23.1% (873)	**27.4% (1,034)**	24.2% (912)	20.6% (776)	3.5% (134)	1.2% (47)	3,776
People should drive slower than the speed limit when it is raining	28.8% (1,084)	**46.1% (1,739)**	16.8% (634)	6.8% (255)	1.0% (37)	0.5% (20)	3,769
Cars should never overtake in the inside lane even if a slow driver is blocking the outside lane	29.0% (1,095)	**33.6% (1,266)**	18.6% (701)	13.8% (520)	3.2% (119)	1.9% (72)	3,773
In towns where there are a lot of pedestrians the speed limit should be 20mph	23.0% (867)	**36.4% (1,371)**	21.0% (791)	16.2% (610)	2.7% (100)	0.7% (28)	3,767
Increasing the motorway speed limit is a good idea	18.9% (712)	24.6% (930)	**26.4% (997)**	18.9% (713)	9.1% (344)	2.1% (81)	3,777
						answered question	3,788
						skipped question	568

Figure 30

Furthermore, the last question asks about increasing the speed limit, the option with the highest single response rate was 'neither agree nor disagree' which indicates that while participants are against lowering the speed limit, they are not necessarily in favour of

increasing it. These findings suggest that participants are providing considered answers, which helps to validate the overall findings. When results were grouped by age (16-24/25+) and gender the data reflected the findings from the Cohort II study, males reported slightly more risky attitudes to speed than females and the younger drivers were more risky than the older drivers.

A measure of confidence was also adapted from the Cohort II study and used in the present study to evaluate participants' self-reported levels of confidence before and after they had taken their driving test (Wells *et al,* 2008. P92). The main adaptation to the scale was to introduce a mid-point measure on what was a 4 point scale (ranging from very confident to not at all confident), so that it was now a 5 point scale. Furthermore for those who did not wish to respond an 'I have no opinion' option was included. It was assumed that not all learner drivers would have absolute polarised opinions about themselves, therefore potentially interesting to know how many reported mixed levels of confidence six months after passing their driving test. The results are presented in figure 31 below.

The following questions ask about your confidence in your own driving ability.							
	Very confident	Confident	Mixed confidence	Unconfident	Very unconfident	I have no opinion	Response Count
How confident were you in your driving ability when you were learning to drive?	11.1% (416)	29.8% (1,121)	42.1% (1,584)	11.9% (447)	5.0% (187)	0.1% (5)	3,760
In the week before you took your practical test, how confident were you that you would pass?	10.5% (394)	31.8% (1,193)	41.4% (1,555)	12.1% (456)	4.0% (152)	0.2% (6)	3,756
In the week before you took your practical test, how confident were you that you were a good enough driver to drive on the road unsupervised?	19.9% (745)	47.1% (1,761)	26.2% (982)	5.2% (195)	1.4% (51)	0.2% (7)	3,741
How confident are you in your driving ability now?	43.2% (1,621)	48.0% (1,802)	7.0% (264)	1.0% (36)	0.2% (9)	0.5% (20)	3,752
						answered question	3,762
						skipped question	594

Figure 31

Reported levels of confidence in driving ability as a learner (first row) were very mixed, just over 40% reported they were confident or very confident in their driving ability as they were learning to drive. This compares with 76.2% of participants in the Cohort II study who were confident/very confident in their ability (Wells *et* al., 2008. Vol 2. p 98). This seems to indicate a significant shift in confidence over time, however, the inclusion of a mid-point in the present study probably accounts for much of this change, 'mixed confidence' was the most popular answer. If the findings from both studies are taken together it suggests that most candidates feel they are reasonably good drivers but are aware that they do not have a fully developed skill set. This assumption seems to be supported by the other measures included in the scale, a reasonable proportion of respondents are choosing to report mixed confidence up to taking the driving test, it's only

the reported 'confidence in driving ability now' that shows the majority of participants as either confident or very confident (figure 31).

The final difference between the present data and the Cohort II findings is that a higher per cent of respondents to the present study reported that they were not at all confident in their driving ability.

	Present study	Cohort II
Confidence while learning to drive	5% (187)	3% (592)
Confidence about passing practical test	4% (152)	2.5% (493)
Confidence about driving unsupervised	1.4% (51)	0.7% (138)
Confidence now	0.2% (9)	0.1% (19)

Table 4 – percentages represent only those who stated they were not at all confident.

The samples in each study, as demonstrated previously, are relatively similar so it is possible these findings reflect a genuine change in attitudes that may or may not be related to the changes to the driving test.

Participants were also asked to state how much improvement they felt they needed in certain driving skills, figure 32 shows the results. Overall most (mode) of the respondents felt they needed no improvement in any of the skills, the only skill that most drivers felt they needed some improvement for is parking. While these results could be a very accurate reflection of the driving skill of participants, it is interesting to see such high levels of confidence in driving skill from a sample who have only been qualified for six months, a time frame frequently associated with increased collision involvement and lower overall driving skill compared to more experienced drivers.

How much do you think you need to improve your ability on each of the following driving skills?

	No improvement needed	Some improvement needed	A lot of improvement needed	Response Count
Use of car controls	77.4% (2,876)	22.2% (824)	0.4% (14)	3,714
Pulling out of junctions	82.7% (3,065)	16.6% (615)	0.7% (25)	3,705
Reversing	55.9% (2,073)	40.2% (1,490)	3.9% (146)	3,709
Parking	37.5% (1,386)	51.5% (1,905)	11.0% (407)	3,698
Judging the speed of other traffic	74.0% (2,743)	25.2% (933)	0.9% (32)	3,708
Judging what other drivers are going to do	59.8% (2,216)	38.4% (1,425)	1.8% (66)	3,707
Spotting hazards	77.7% (2,883)	21.8% (807)	0.5% (20)	3,710
Driving in heavy traffic	75.9% (2,810)	22.4% (831)	1.7% (62)	3,703
Driving in the dark	66.5% (2,472)	30.0% (1,116)	3.4% (127)	3,715
Overtaking	62.0% (2,296)	33.6% (1,242)	4.4% (163)	3,701
Using roundabouts	75.5% (2,791)	22.5% (833)	2.0% (74)	3,698
Joining with moving traffic on a motorway or fast dual carriageway	61.9% (2,294)	31.1% (1,150)	7.0% (259)	3,703
Changing lanes on a motorway or fast dual carriageway	67.4% (2,499)	26.7% (991)	5.9% (220)	3,710
Driving on high speed roads	74.4% (2,760)	22.4% (831)	3.2% (118)	3,709
Driving on country roads	67.6% (2,508)	28.9% (1,073)	3.4% (127)	3,708
			answered question	3,726
			skipped question	630

Figure 32

4.2.6. Opinions about the driving test

The penultimate question in the TP1 questionnaire[11] asked participants if they thought anything should have been included in the driving test that wasn't. The interesting aspect of posing this question to this sample was that they had all recently taken the practical

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[11] The last question was used to monitor for errors in the questionnaire or to capture unexpected findings and was only going to be included in the evaluation if needed; in this case, it was not.

driving test and all of them had at least 6 months on road experience giving them a relatively unique perspective to consider if changes to the test could have helped them.
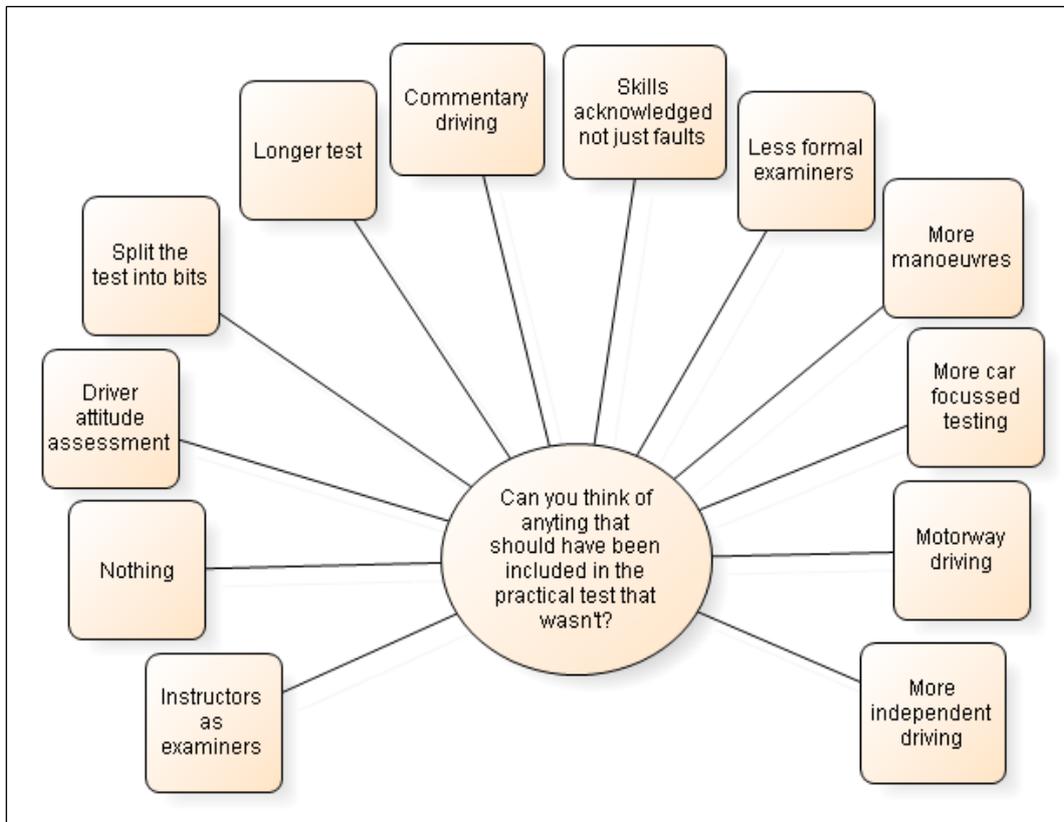
Figure 33

Figure 33 above shows the varied themes that emerged when the responses were coded. One of the most frequently cited topics was motorway driving, many recently qualified drivers suggest that they would have felt more confident attempting driving in this environment if they had had more practice on it and had confidence (from a test pass) that they were ready to try it out.

"I think it is important to try and include motorway driving in the test as many new drivers find it daunting driving on the motorway for the first time."

"I think that if possible a degree of motorway driving should be included as this was an area that I hadn't experienced and was very unsure of."

The motorway driving theme was also linked to comments about experiencing other unusual conditions on test, such as night time tests and poor weather. Many stated that in order to include these scenarios more than one test would be needed, or they seemed to imply multiple tests would be required by identifying conditions that would be difficult to achieve in the time available in the current test format;

"test should be done over multiple days; the test I had there was absolutely no traffic so it was very easy to pass. instead there should be a morning test then one at night too to practice both sorts of driving and rush-hour traffic"

"A night time test should be taken alongside a day time test"

While the comments about specific conditions (e.g. snow/ice, night time) weren't numerous enough by themselves to generate a specific theme, they were often paired with comments about motorway driving (above) or comments that generally asked for driving tests to not be delivered as a single event. This is an interesting finding given it is drivers who have only recently taken their own driving test suggesting doing more tests that cover a wider array of driving skills and environments could be beneficial. Quite what they would feel about these kinds of changes should they have had to take them as part of their practical driving assessment, can only be speculated on at this point. However, with other comments asking for a longer tests and tests that include more manoeuvres the evidence seems to indicate, for the sample involved with this research at least, that new drivers feel the driving test could be improved by being more extensive and more inclusive of the skills that they feel matter to them as new drivers.

"I think the test should be longer and cover different speeds and road types I understand this is difficult in some areas."

"I believe the test should be longer, half hour/40 minutes isn't long enough to judge as to whether people will be able to drive competently on the roads alone"

These topics also led to some asking for more every day scenarios being included on test, more vehicle focussed such as;

"What to do if you break down and how to fuel your car because it is confusing the first time."

"A little more on how to maintain a car and how it functions."

In terms of test delivery the messages seemed to be quite clear, some found the structure of the test to be too formal and the language used by participants often indicated that they find this an intimidating environment; some even highlighted a preference for having their driving instructor to be the one to assess their driving test. Obviously, changes such as these would be almost impossible to implement fairly and still maintain equal standards nationally. Some also mentioned that the test itself seems overly focussed on measuring test faults rather than capturing and feeding back on what skills the candidates demonstrated well.

Finally, there were also some respondents who said they would not change the current format. Most didn't elaborate beyond saying a simple "no" or "nothing". The very few that did elaborate seemed to be indicating that they thought the test was just a test and that people will drive how they want too after it, or referred to the 'you learn to really drive after the test' concept;

"I think the test is fine, it is peoples judgement and ability after they pass that causes problems, and short of taking a personality test before being allowed to drive nothing will change this!"

"No, I think it covers a wide range of driving skills and as my mother always says you never really learn to drive until after you've passed your test!"

Overall, the responses suggest that recently qualified drivers can see benefits in additional elements being included in the driving test, most of these seem to relate to more 'real world' experiences and the skills they will actually need and use every day. There also didn't seem to be too much concern regarding the impact these suggestions will have, extending the length of the test or having multiple tests, some simply stated that a single test was not fair and didn't give them a chance to fully demonstrate their skills.

4.3.   Time point 2 survey results

This section of the report deals with the information respondents provided at TP2 which covered their driving experiences 6-12 months after they had passed their driving test. While there is still reliance on memory for the completion of this questionnaire (like TP1) the impact is likely to be lessened as the questions are more focussed on their driving habits, collision involvement and general attitudes as drivers rather than specific events. The driving frequency and experience questions that were used in the TP1 questionnaire were repeated here, it was not expected that there would be any significant differences but it was still deemed important to have a sense of the driving experiences of those who responded.

4.3.1. Driver experience and self-evaluation

As expected, driving frequency hasn't changed much between data collection points, 40.2% of respondents (1,167 in total) report that they drive every day of the week and 23.9% drive between 4-6 days a week. What is more unusual is the number of people who state they 'hardly ever' drive, at TP1 the figure was 8.7% (320) and this figure has not changed much as a proportion of the sample. At the same time points in the cohort II study 3% of the sample reported that they never drive (Wells *et al,* 2008. P105), this seems to indicate that more people now are choosing, for whatever reason, to drive less frequently. In terms of driving experience in different environmental/geographical environments (figure 34) there has not been a great deal of change between TP1 and TP2. The only real shift was the number of participants who now had experience driving in poor weather conditions such as rain, fog and snow/ice; there has been a 37% drop in the numbers stating they have never driven in snow or ice. Finally there has been a slight drop in the number who report driving on a daily basis. At TP1 that was the most frequent response, by TP2 the most frequent response is 4-6 days a week. It is not clear if this is change has been driven by choice, changes in personal circumstances (e.g. not working, using alternative transport) or if it is an impact of economic factors, however, combined with the data about driving frequency it seems a small subsection of the driving population are driving less than would have previously been expected.

In the last six months, how often did you drive....							
	Never	Less than once a month	About once a fortnight	One to three days a week	Four to six days a week	Every day	Response Count
In a busy town or city centre	7.4% (88)	16.1% (191)	16.9% (201)	**24.8% (294)**	18.4% (219)	16.3% (194)	1,187
In quiet parts of towns or cities	5.6% (65)	9.8% (114)	11.0% (128)	**27.2% (316)**	24.1% (279)	22.2% (258)	1,160
On country roads	13.6% (160)	**24.6% (289)**	18.9% (222)	18.7% (220)	11.6% (136)	12.6% (148)	1,175
On fast dual carriageways	8.5% (100)	18.0% (211)	20.9% (245)	**24.3% (285)**	15.6% (183)	12.9% (151)	1,175
On motorways	21.8% (259)	**35.1% (416)**	20.3% (241)	12.0% (142)	6.4% (76)	4.4% (52)	1,186
In the dark	6.9% (81)	11.5% (136)	15.8% (187)	**33.2% (392)**	20.2% (238)	12.4% (146)	1,180
In the rain	6.0% (71)	10.4% (123)	21.1% (249)	**44.3% (522)**	12.9% (152)	5.2% (61)	1,178
In fog	20.4% (239)	**49.4% (578)**	16.6% (194)	9.1% (107)	1.9% (22)	2.6% (30)	1,170
In snow or ice	33.1% (390)	**52.2% (616)**	7.8% (92)	3.6% (42)	1.2% (14)	2.2% (26)	1,180
To and from your place of work or study	25.0% (295)	7.5% (88)	3.8% (45)	12.8% (151)	**26.0% (307)**	24.9% (294)	1,180
On your employers business	**66.0% (775)**	8.9% (105)	4.6% (54)	5.8% (68)	6.0% (71)	8.6% (101)	1,174
						answered question	1,188
						skipped question	41

Figure 34

4.3.2. Benefits of independent driving

Participants were also asked what they thought of independent driving, specifically if they thought independent driving could make a difference to the behaviour of newly qualified drivers. The question invited free text responses and 1,033 participants provided comments. Analysis of the comments resulted in eight themes being generated (see figure 35). Overall most comments seemed positive about independent driving and its potential to influence the behaviour of new drivers. The main source of resistance seemed to be from those who thought drivers will always adjust their driving (once qualified) to a style that suits them, regardless of what is included on test;

"I am not sure it would as I think people are likely to be inclined to drive one way or another regardless of whether they have had independent driving experience already."

Aside from the 'people will drive how they want' viewpoint, most of those who were not convinced of behavioural benefits of independent driving, or were unsure, were often less likely to describe specific reasons for their thinking. In contrast the positive comments were more likely to include specific examples, in particular the focus seemed to be around developing higher order skills such as planning, decision making and greater road awareness;

"I think it can make newly qualified drivers more confident and help learn important skills that will be needed once they have passed the test. It helps simulate driving without the presence of an instructor."
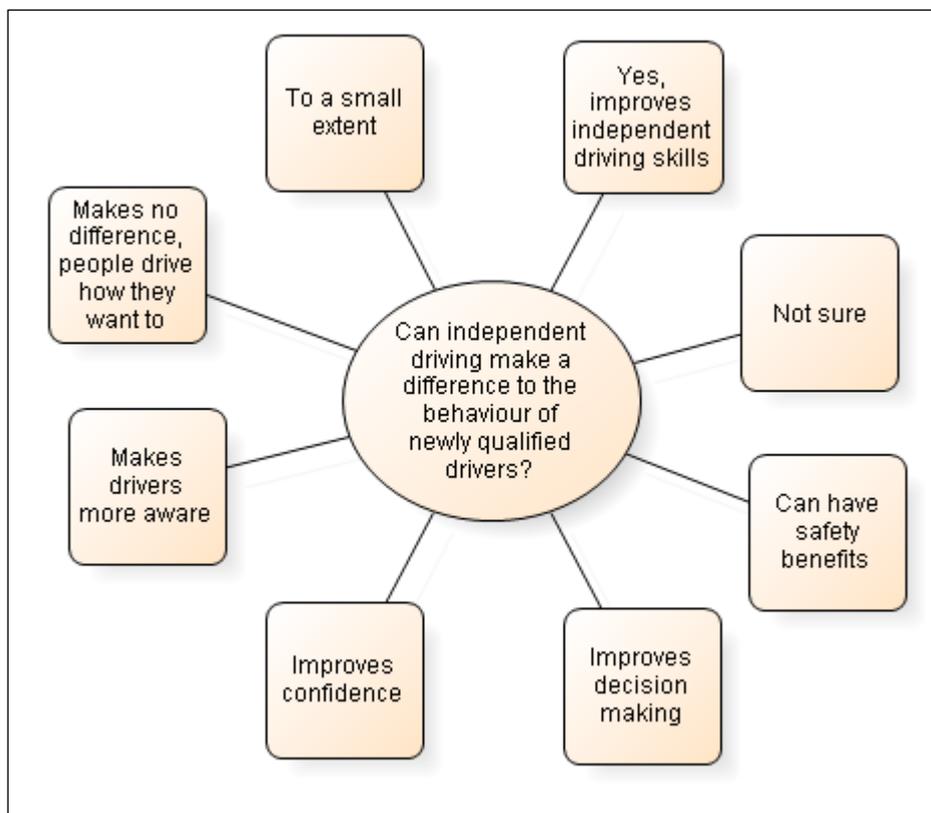
Figure 35

Given the discord in the way participants have responded, it indicates that it may be the question wording that has limited the way individuals responded. Asking for only behavioural impacts of independent driving seems to have focussed peoples thinking towards the physical aspect of driving.

"I don't think it will change the behaviour but it gives them skills in certain situations which will lower stress for the driver and other drivers."

"I must say that it sounded really daunting when I had to do this bit of test but I now realise the importance of it. It might have reduced the number of people who pass their test on average in the first attempt but it is probably their first time driving without any supervision. I myself made few minor mistakes during my independent driving without my instructor at the test which I have never repeated again. So, I think it just helps newly qualified drivers to learn to drive the right way and if there is any further requirement for improvement they most likely find out during the independent driving bit at the test."

4.3.3. Collision exposure

The TP2 survey again asked participants to report their near miss and collision involvement from the last six months (so they are referring to their experiences from six to 12 months as qualified drivers). The TP2 data seems to repeat the trends found at TP1, most of the 1,191 participants who responded stated that they had experienced one or two near miss incidents in the preceding six months (57.1%). From the same sample, 32.8% stated that they had no near misses. 9.2% of respondents indicated that they had between three and ten near misses. Only 10 (0.8%) seemed to have had more than ten incidents.

Have you been involved in any accidents (from minor bumps to serious collisions) in the last six months?

		Response Percent	Response Count
None		88.5%	1,050
One		9.4%	112
Two		1.8%	21
Three		0.1%	1
More than three		0.3%	3
		answered question	1,187
		skipped question	42
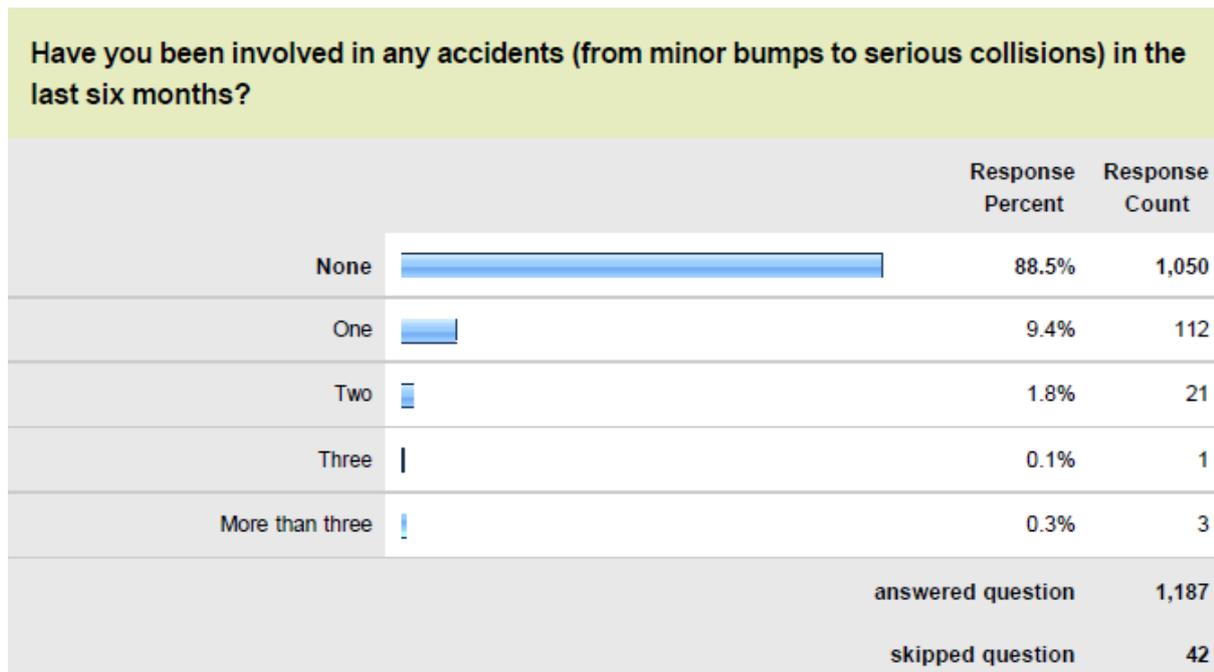
Figure 36

Figure 36 (above) shows the self-reported collision involvement from the TP2 survey, 11.6% of the sample reported being involved in one or more collision in the last six months, which is a reduction compared to 15.2% reported at TP1. While this trend fits in with national figures, it is important to note that the samples are not matched by time points (i.e. no attempt was made to connect an individual's responses from each time point) so it is impossible to know if those involved in incidents at TP2 are the same people who reported collisions at TP1.

The participants were also asked to state if any damage was done to vehicles or objects as a result of the collision. From 710 who responded most said no damage was done (79.9%), 18% of collisions resulted in damage to the participant's vehicle and 7% reported damage to another person's vehicle. Only nine individuals mentioned they caused damage to another object. Finally, participants were asked if any injuries occurred as a result of the collision they were in. Again, most of the 704 people who responded reported no injuries (96.6%). Where injuries were incurred, it was generally to the individual, 17 of the survey respondents had received an injury. Only 2.4% of those who responded stated there were injuries sustained by a passenger or other person (ten and seven people respectively).

TP2 collision data cross tabulated with age

When the collision data is separated by age it seems involvement is much more even across the groups, this is particularly apparent when compared to the TP1 data which showed higher and more variable rates per age group (see table 5). While there has been a reduction in each age group between these time points[12] the groups that have seen the most marked decline is those aged 16-19 and 20-24 (5.77% and 4.5% respectively). This is a reassuring, but not surprising, finding given what is understood about trends in collision involvement, age, and time since qualifying as discussed in the introduction section of this report.

Age group	Volume reporting at least one incident in last 6 months	Total volume who responded to this question	Respondents involved in an accident TP2	*Respondents involved in an accident TP1*
16-19	44	356	12.4%	*18.17%*
20-24	31	232	13.4%	*17.9%*
25-34	39	384	10.2%	*13.18%*
35-44	13	135	9.6%	*12.64%*
45-54	7	54	13.0%	*14.04%*
55-64	3	23	13.0%	*13.46%*
65+	0	2	0%	*0%*

Table 5

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[12] Except for the 25-34 year olds who have increased by 3.04%, it is not clear why this is as the volume of respondents per age group has not varied much between TP1 and TP2.

TP2 collision data cross tabulated with gender

Similarly, trends in collision involvement by gender have shown reductions for both groups from TP1 to TP2. Females have reported a 4.8% reduction and males a 3.6% reduction. Again, these trends by themselves are not surprising as experience is a factor often related to a reduction in collisions.

Gender	Volume reporting at least one incident in last 6 months	Total volume who responded to this question	Respondents involved in an accident TP2	*Respondents involved in an accident TP1*
Female	93	715	13.0%	*17.8%*
Male	43	465	9.2%	*12.8%*

Table 6

The data still indicates, however, that males are having fewer collisions than females, which contradicts expectations based on national trends; it was discussed previously in this report that this may be a result of driving instructors completing the survey in error. While this is still a possibility it would be surprising to have enough driving instructors complete a second questionnaire that is not intended for them to maintain this unusual trend. Another possibility might be that the self-selecting nature of samples for surveys has missed certain higher risk groups. This is a consideration that should be kept in mind for future research which attempts to explore similar themes/factors.

4.3.4. Technology and driving

Qualitative data collected from the TP1 survey revealed an unexpected topic of interest, namely the use of satellite navigation. There were several unprompted references from candidates who described independent driving as having limited benefits because they could rely on satellite navigation technology to guide them while driving;

"I think it is a pointless exercise it does not show driving ability and everyone has a sat nav and or knows where they are going, it is a waste of time."

"With the availability of SAT NAVs independent driving has no additional benefits"

These comments were randomly distributed throughout the qualitative questions and would vary between the upfront statements like the ones above to more passive versions that indicated some consider that reliance on sat-nav is indicative of limited driving skill;

"makes you think for yourself not relying being told by an instructor or sat nav"

"to be able to read road signs, instead of listening and looking at a sat nav, which can be distracting"

Findings from the young people's survey conducted as part of the Learning to Drive Consultation also indicated that some felt independent driving was not necessary in the driving test because of increasing use of GPS navigation devices (DSA, 2009). Given these trends it was decided that the inclusion of some specific questions in the TP2 survey that explored the use of in car technology would be beneficial to the evaluation. Figure (37 below) shows that most respondents use in car stereos (79%) and that 72% make use of satellite navigation systems (note that multiple responses were allowed therefore percentages do not add up to 100.)

Do you make use of any of the following in vehicle technology? (please tick all that apply)		Response Percent	Response Count
Satellite navigation system (inbuilt or portable)		71.8%	779
Parking sensors		10.3%	112
Hands free kit (for mobile phones)		19.8%	215
Stereo system		79.4%	861
Reversing cameras		1.5%	16
'Black box' system		1.0%	11
Speed regulator		4.1%	45
Other		1.8%	20
		answered question	1,085
		skipped question	144

Figure 37

Figure 37 also shows that recently qualified drivers are making use of other technologies such as hands free kits and parking sensors, indicating that it is not just more experienced drivers making use of support systems. They are being used by some from the beginning of their driving career and it is important these patterns are understood. Contemporary trends indicate that in-vehicle technology will only increase in the future, emergency breaking systems, lane divergence sensors and driver fatigue alarms that are able to detect drowsiness or fatigue in drivers, are very much in the present and are in a

position to take more responsibility of driving from the individual. With the prospect of fully automated vehicles still being a distant future there is a need to continually review the role of the driver in light of increasing technology use and furthermore, how to efficiently integrate new technology into the driving environment without disproportionately reducing the responsibility of the driver for road safety.
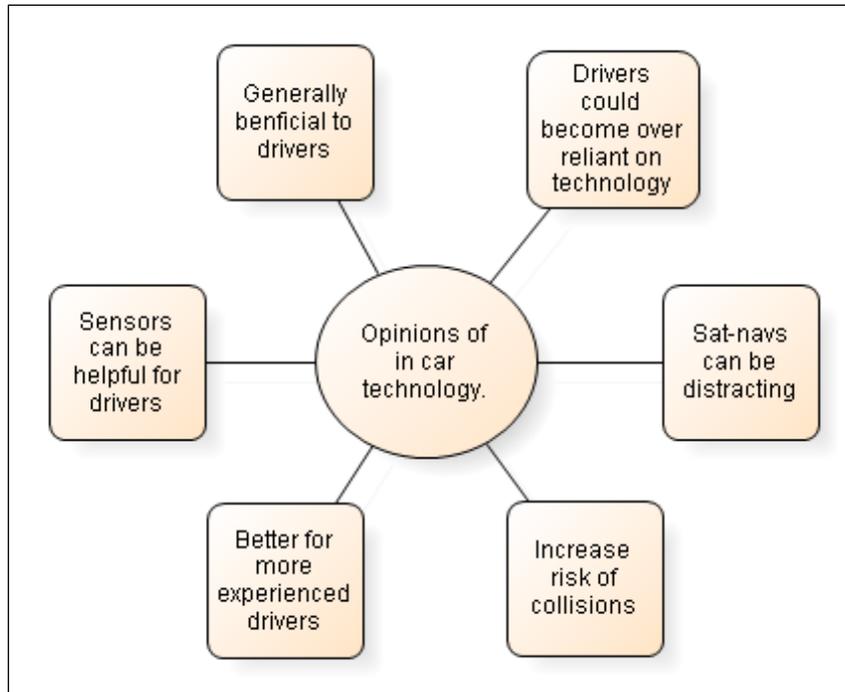
Figure 38

In order to understand how drivers felt about in car technology they were asked "Do you have any opinions on the increase of in car technology and how it may or may not affect the driver?" In total 818 responses were collected and the six themes generated are shown in figure 38 above. Interestingly the most frequently referenced problem was technologies' ability to distract drivers. Distractions were often associated with mobile phone use, stereo (and other entertainment) systems and sat-nav devices;

"Car technology can be helpful (satnav, hands free kit) but over reliance on technology may deskill and even distract a driver if used unwisely."

"As long as the technology is there to enhance or aid driving discreetly and not distracting then it's okay, but technology to cure boredom or to entertain is a big No."

Beyond the distraction possibilities most other negative comments about technology were focussed on technology deskilling drivers if they become overly reliant on them, which in turn was considered a potential road safety risk. Overall, the reported negative sentiment

from participants regarding technology was not wholly dismissive of it but more frequently formed as warnings about its misuse. The positive comments tended to be quite general, some participants simply stated that they liked technology and find it useful. Others said it was a good thing but qualified their statement by also suggesting that it should only really be used by more experienced drivers who have better developed driving skills;

"As a new driver, I want to be comfortable driving a car which doesn't have all the helpers because it's better to know how to park without sensors, for example, than be utterly dependent on them. As for SatNavs, maybe it's just me but I prefer to plan my route using Google maps and street view first - I navigate by landmarks mostly e.g 'I know I must turn left at the sorting office'."

Respondents were asked if they ever felt distracted from driving by in car technology. Just over half (50.2%) of the respondents stated that they had never been distracted, 39% felt that they had been distracted once or twice, only 1.7% suggested that they have often (more than six times) been distracted by technology (1,085 responses in total). This is an interesting finding considering that one of the main themes that emerged from the qualitative question discussed above was about the increase of in car technology and its ability to distract a driver. Where participants have discussed the possibility of distraction, the language they use seems to indicate they think it could be distracting for other people but not necessarily themselves;

"Excessive in car entertainment could potentially distract drivers…"
"Could be distractive for drivers."
"Drivers can become reliant on these technologies, and often find themselves at a loss when they are not available."

These findings suggest that drivers have an unclear relationship with in car technology, and satellite navigation in particular; some seem to rely on it as they would a human being in the car next to them, while others see them purely as a supporting role for navigation skills that are already well developed. Some think technology can be distracting but only to other people, and others avoid it as much as they can. What is clear however is, as technology takes over more of the tasks faced by every day drivers then the very definition of a driver may change, as a result so will the concept of a safe driver and this is likely to be an important focus of road safety research in the future.

4.4. Specific comparisons with Cohort II research

Throughout this report findings have been compared to the results of the Cohort II study (where viable) to provide a baseline in lieu of a valid control group, this next chapter will discuss some specific comparisons.

4.4.1. Collision frequency comparisons

One of the most obvious (and probably sought after) success criteria for any road safety initiative is a measurable post-test impact on behaviour or collision involvement. Table 7 below describes the self-reported collision involvement from the TP1 questionnaire in the present study and the equivalent time point measure from the Cohort II study (Wells *et* al., 2008. p131).

	Self-reported incident involvement in first 6 months post test	
	Independent driving	Cohort II
Total respondents to question	3,648	9,736
Total incidents reported	661	2,161
% involved in an incident	18.1%	22.2%

Table 7

Given the nature of statistics, it would be irresponsible to suggest that one finding by itself is definitive evidence of a real effect, however the reported number of collisions per reporting period of 6 months is lower (by 4.1%) in the present study than the Cohort II study. On face value this indicates that drivers are safer on road in their first six months as qualified drivers now than they were approximately a decade ago[13]. Whether this trend is directly related to the introduction of independent driving is not possible to ascertain as the samples involved are from different time frames meaning there could be other factors beyond those captured in the survey that have had an impact on driving behaviour. Additionally, the samples could be skewed due to the inherent self-selection bias associated with self-completion questionnaires. However, the present study used a similar design for sample recruitment and data collection to the Cohort II research (samples randomly selected from DSA databases and self-completion surveys used for data collection) which theoretically provides some level of confidence in basic comparisons. Furthermore both samples, as has been discussed previously, show similar demographic distributions (age, gender etc.) which also helps to increase confidence in summary conclusions from making direct comparisons.

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[13] The Cohort II report describes a sampling timeframe from November 2001 to August 2005 (Wells *et* al., 2008, p23)

The next two figures describe the near miss frequencies for the present study at TP1 and TP2 (figure 36) for the present study and the same measures captured in the Cohort II study (figure 37).

Reported near misses at time points 1 & 2

	Never	1-2 times	3-5 times	6-10 times	more than 10
TP1	38.80%	52.40%	6.90%	1.20%	0.80%
TP2	32.80%	57.10%	7.60%	1.60%	0.80%

Reported near misses
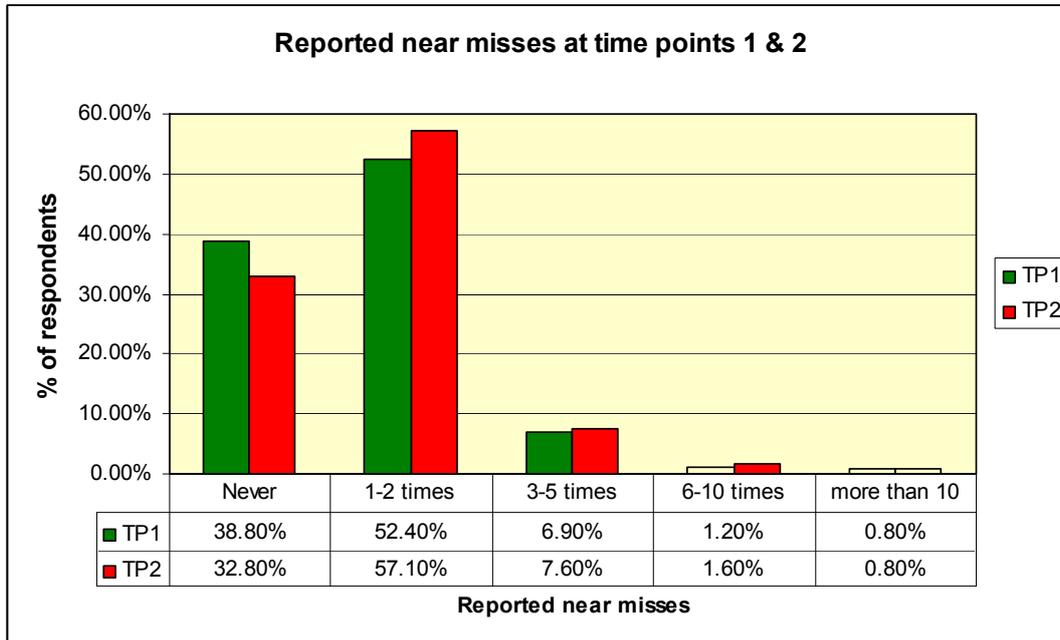
Figure 39 (Total actual responses from each time point: TP1 = 3,643, TP2 = 1,191)

The results show that for each time point measured, there are more people reporting that they have had no near misses in the present study compared to the Cohort II study, 40% compared to 30% respectively. Furthermore the per cent of respondents reporting between three and five near misses in the present study is roughly half that reported in Cohort II, the reports of six or more incidents are roughly the same for both studies.

Figure 8.1: Distribution of reported near-accidents by reporting period

Legend:
- 1–6 months, mean rate = 3.13 p.a.
- 7–12 months, mean rate = 3.05 p.a.
- 13–24 months, mean rate = 1.80 p.a.
- 25–36 months, mean rate = 1.80 p.a.

Number of reported near-accidents in period	1–6 months	7–12 months	13–24 months	25–36 months
None	30	30	24	24
1 or 2	54	56	57	58
3 to 5	12	11	15	13
6 or more	2	2	2	3
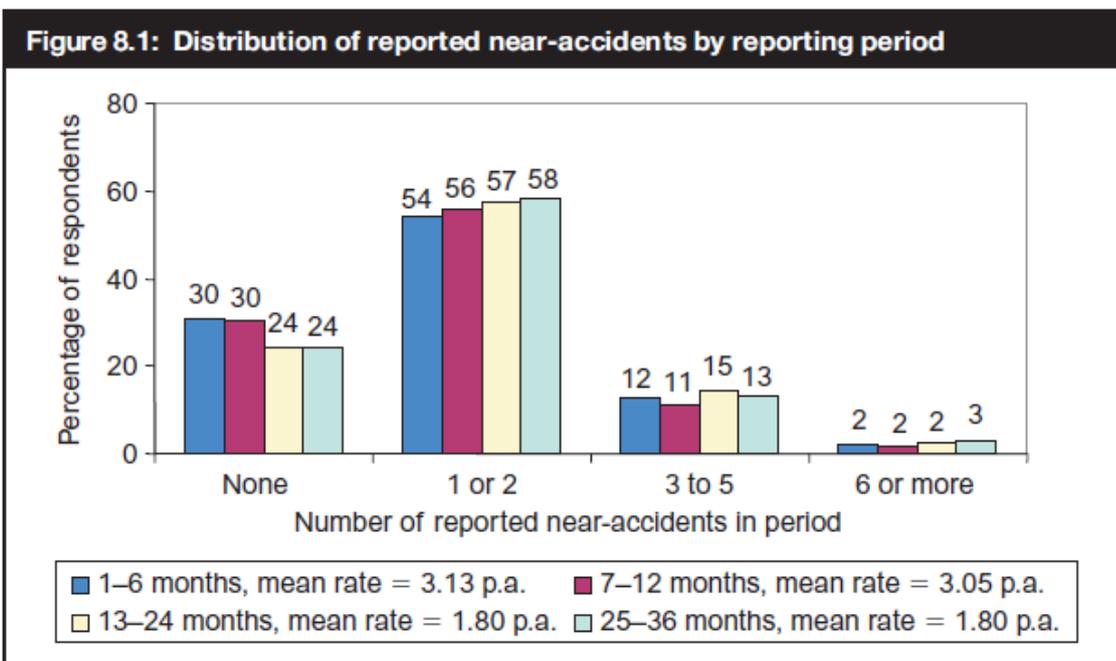
Figure 40 (the columns showing the data captured between 13 and 36 months are not included in the comparison)

These data suggest that drivers now are better at avoiding near misses and are reporting fewer of them, a pattern that seems to correlate well with the reported reduction in collision involvement discussed in 4.4.1. However, when interpreting these findings it is important to acknowledge that the data are based on the assumption that people have the same or similar interpretations of what a near miss is and that respondents have been aware of every near miss they may have encountered when they provide their response. Actions were taken to minimise the possible impact of individual interpretation, where comparisons were expected to be made questions in the present survey were worded similarly to the Cohort II study[14], which should reduce variance based on individual differences.

4.4.2. Driver attitude comparisons

Drivers were also asked to comment on their driving ability and attitudes compared to their peers. Generally it seems that the present sample are more certain of their driving ability than the Cohort II sample. Figure 41 shows that 13% of respondents now consider themselves much better than average drivers, compared to only 8% of the Cohort II sample. The data demonstrate that the Cohort II sample were more likely to state that they were about average or just a bit better than average compared to the present study respondents, although when it comes to stating worse than average ability, the two samples are much more closely matched.

How do you compare your driving to that of other drivers generally?

	Much better than average	A bit better than average	About average	A bit worse than average	Much worse than average
Present study	13.1%	37.8%	42.9%	5.6%	0.6%
Cohort II	8%	40%	49%	5.60%	0.50%
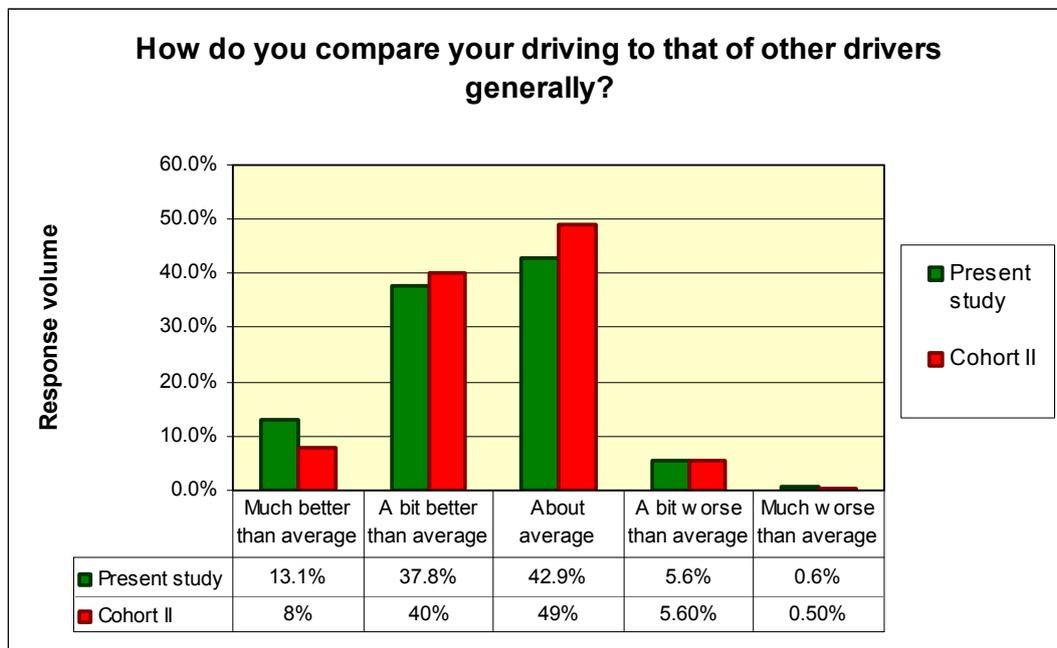
Figure 41

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[14] Present study question text: "Many drivers have experienced a near miss while driving, which could have resulted in an accident. In the last 6 months have you felt this way?"

Cohort II study question text: "Many drivers have had the impression of only just avoiding an accident. How many times has this happened to you in the last 6 months?"

When it comes to levels of confidence in their own ability, the present sample seem less sure of themselves (figure 42, below), the statements associated with being very confident or fairly confident demonstrate higher scores for the Cohort II sample, and the present study respondents were more likely to state that they were not confident.

In general how confident are you in your driving ability?

	Very confident	Failry confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident
Present study	30.8%	58.1%	9.7%	1.4%
Cohort II	31%	64%	5%	0.50%
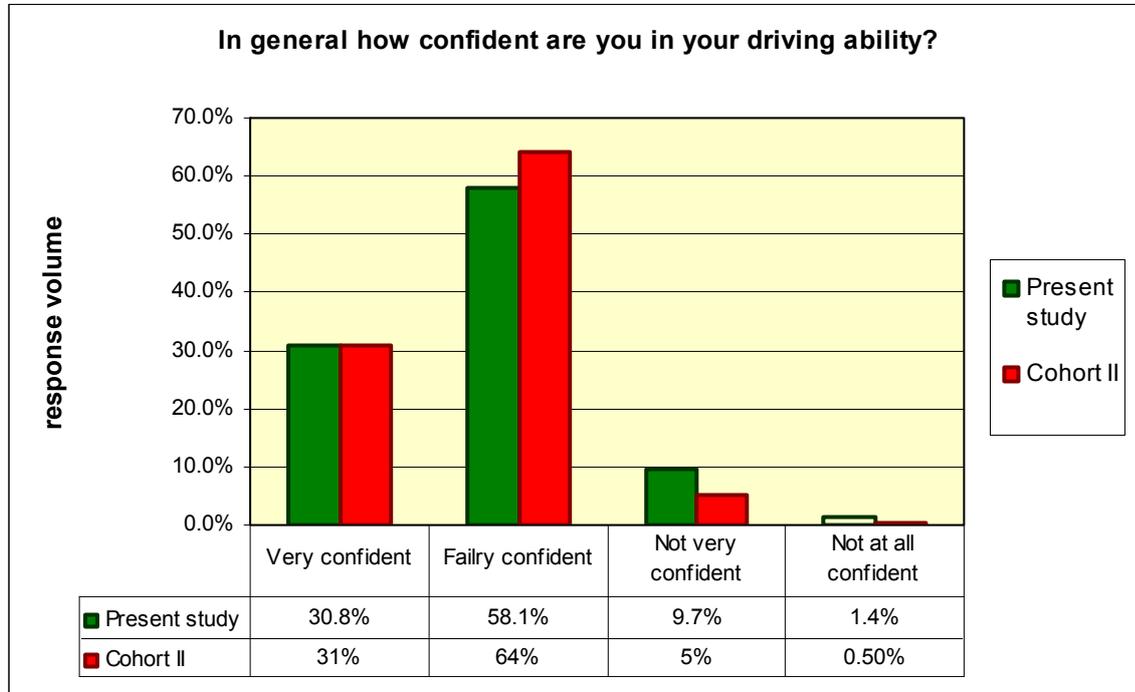
Figure 42

Participants from both studies were also asked to comment on their skill as a driver[15] 23% of the present study felt that they were more skilful than their peers, compared to 16% from Cohort II. The present study respondents were also more likely to state that they avoid risky driving situations than Cohort II respondents (57% to 41% respectively). New drivers involved in the present study were also more likely to say that they are more cautious drivers than their peers (56% compared to 41% in Cohort II sample) and more likely to state that they drive slower than their peers, 38% said 'slower' in the present study compared to 20% in the Cohort II sample.

Finally, these attitudes to driving are reflected in the respondents' self-reported likelihood of being involved in an accident. The present study participants were more likely to report that they were less likely than others (47%) or as likely as others (49%) to be involved in a collision, the cohort II sample reported 35% and 62% respectively for the same question. In both samples 3% stated that they felt they were more likely than others to be involved in a collision.

While these figures are all self-reported and could, therefore, be subject to social desirability bias, it is none the less interesting to recognise an apparent shift in attitudes

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[15] Graphs describing these results in full can be found in supplementary data

between the Cohort II sample and the present study. The findings from this study show that recently qualified drivers are more confident in their driving skills but seem to be tempering this confidence by avoiding risky activity on roads and being more cautious. This seems to correlate with the collision involvement data that shows a reduction in the number of reported collisions between the present study and Cohort II.

4.5.   ADI survey

Feedback from driving instructors was also considered to be a crucial part of this evaluation, as the professionals who deliver driver training they have a relatively unique opportunity to engage with learners and their learning to drive process.

4.5.1. Demographic data

First, it was important to know if the sample that responded to this survey was broadly representative of the population of driving instructors; an unrepresentative sample could limit the credibility of any conclusions reached.

Table 8 below describes the age distribution of respondents. 70% of respondents are aged between 45 and 64; this finding is not unexpected as the majority of driving instructors on the official register are in this age group. Positively there is representation from all age groups identified, the smallest group is the under 25s, again this is no surprise as applicants to the register must be 21 or over, have held a driving licence for more than 3 years and completed the required training to be a qualified driving instructor.

Can you please state how old you were on your last birthday		
Answer Options	**Response Per cent**	**Response Count**
Under 25	0.7%	15
25 - 34	4.7%	103
35 - 44	18.3%	398
45 - 54	39.2%	852
55 - 64	31.3%	680
65 and Over	5.0%	108
Prefer not to say	0.9%	19
answered question		**2175**
skipped question		**49**

Table 8

Similarly, the rest of the demographic questions seemed to reflect broad trends of the full ADI register. Most of the survey respondents are male (79.2% of 2,167), 20% are female, two stated they are transsexual and 15 preferred not to say. The ethnicity data show a mix of backgrounds are represented in the survey, while 87.6% of 2168 ADIs described themselves as white British, all other ethnic groups were represented at least once and only 56 stated they prefer not to say. 94.7% of 2146 ADIs consider English as their first language, 3 stated Welsh was their first language and 90 said it was something else. Only 21 people chose not to provide an answer. And 96.6% of 2171 respondents stated they do not consider themselves to have a disability, 41 respondents stated they did and 33 chose not to say.

Alongside understanding the demographic characteristics of the ADI sample it was deemed important to ensure that the sample was not skewed in terms of training, skill and experience as overly biased responses here could also limit the credibility of any conclusions reached.

Overall it appears that a broad range of instructors responded, 66.2% (of 2,073) have been teaching others to drive for between one and 10 years, around 15% of instructors have been teaching for 10 to 20 years. At the extremes, just 78 instructors had been teaching for less than a year and 269 had been for more than 20 years. The majority (48.4%) of the instructors who responded were grade 4 at their last check test[16]; only 26 respondents stated they were less than this grade at the time of data collection. 42.1% were a grade 5 and 8.2% were grade 6.

On average the instructors stated they had 17.8 learners currently in training with them. The chart below shows how many driving instructors are able to provide adaptive training methods to learners who may have disabilities or not have English as their first language. These questions were of particular importance as it was essential to understand if driving instructors might have been picking up on specific difficulties learners might have with independent driving if they were in these categories. The perspective an instructor has with regards to differing abilities and learning methods was important for monitoring any potential discriminating effects from introducing independent driving.

Training for learners

	English not first language	Dissability
■ Yes	861	741
■ No	1192	1304
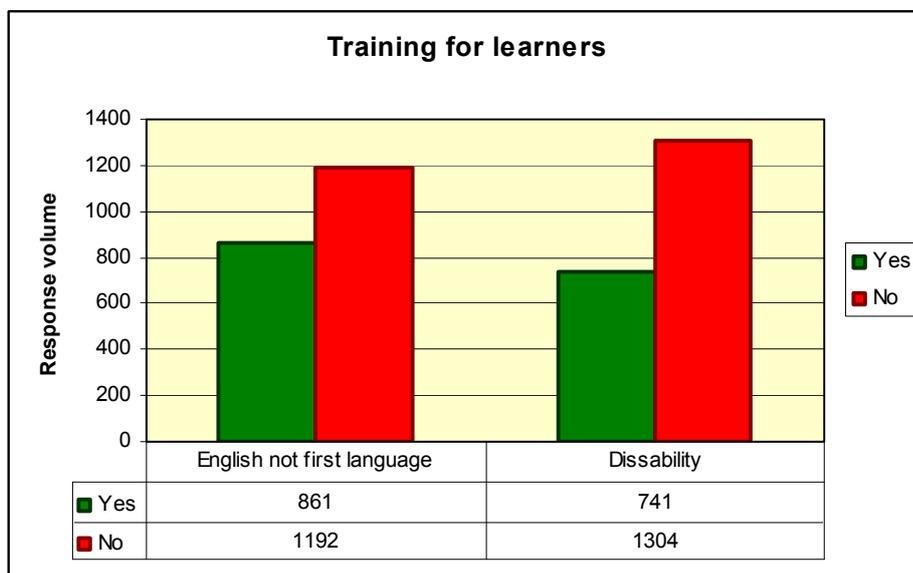
Figure 43

Overall the figures show that a significant proportion of instructors are able to take on pupils with alternative needs when learning to drive and as such, it is felt that conclusions should reflect a diverse and inclusive sample of driving instructors.

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[16] The purpose of a check test is to ensure that acceptable standards of instruction are being maintained, grades range from 1 (extremely poor) to 6 (Very high) for more information see https://www.gov.uk/adi-check-test-what-to-expect/overview

4.5.2. Observing driving tests

Currently an individual taking their practical driving test can request that their instructor sits in the car and observes their driving. In fact DSA actively encourages this practice where it is suitable. The advantage being that the instructor can watch the performance of their pupil and then provide informed feedback or remedial information depending on the driver's actual performance. While feedback is given by Driving Examiners at the end of the test it is generally accepted that not all of this detail is taken on board by the candidate.

The introduction of independent driving on test provides an additional dimension for feedback. The new test was designed to operationalize general driving behaviour in a test environment to enhance the assessment regime beyond a focus on manual vehicle control. But crucially it had to be done in a way that would still allow Driving Examiners to assess driving in an objective manner. Therefore, independent driving could encourage more instructors to observe as they will be seeing their pupil's driving from a different perspective, how they cope without the familiar security of their instructor guiding them. When asked if they observe tests, only 1.6% (of 2,034 responses) said that they never do, 67.1% of instructors said that they do some of the time or only at the request of the learner, the remainder said that they do it most or all of the time. Interestingly, when directly asked if they considered observing the driving test has potential benefits for learners 23% (of 2,022 responses) said that they didn't think there was, suggesting that some may be observing tests for their own benefit or purely because of a request from the learner.

In order to better understand the trends established in the numbers, respondents were invited to provide general comments regarding observing on test. In total 965 instructors provided feedback and the results were coded (see figure 44) into broad themes, the diagram also shows the key terms that were used to define each of these themes. The comments provided were generally positive, which isn't surprising given the distribution of opinions mentioned in the previous paragraph. Where negative or critical opinions were presented they were often descriptive and detailed providing a constructive information source for DSA.
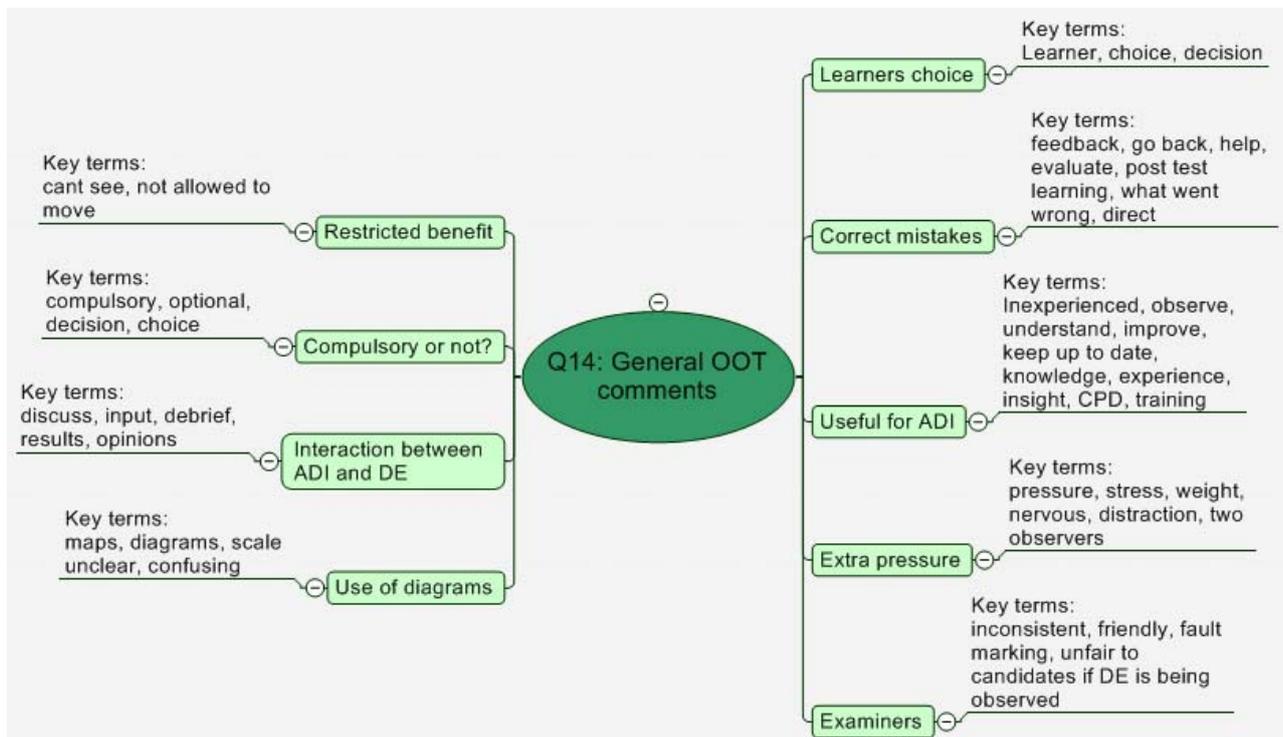
Figure 44

One of the themes to emerge was regarding who should make the decision regarding test observation ("compulsory or not?"). It is important to note that at the time of data collection, DSA was considering making observing tests compulsory (for whoever accompanied the candidate to their test) which is likely to have put the issue at the forefront of instructors' minds. Generally speaking the sentiment was clear, while some presented arguments at the extremes (either observing should be compulsory or should never happen), the vast majority of instructors were keen to keep the decision with the candidate, and often qualifying their opinion by stating that the driver is a customer to both the instructor and DSA and the decision to be observed should always remain with the individual.

Supportive comments about observing tests were coded into two broad themes; 'correct mistakes' and 'useful for ADI'. The opportunity to observe a candidate's driving on test can give the instructor insight into how candidates drive in conditions they are not used to and furthermore gives the instructor a better understanding of any mistakes made. Following the driving test, whether the test result is a pass or fail, there is usually still room for improvement and a detailed understanding of performance means the instructor can work proactively with the driver to improve their skills in a more focussed way. Many of the comments related to this theme highlighted that drivers can behave quite differently on test compared to in lessons and examiner feedback at the end of a test can only tell the instructor so much. This quote from an instructor succinctly summarises the theme of 'correct mistakes';

"It is really useful to monitor actual tests because learner drivers do actions that they don't usually do whilst with me, ie going into situations too quickly. Observing feedback is

exceptionally useful as the candidate is either in a state of euphoria or depression depending on the result and don't take in the information given by the Examiner as to locations/ mistakes made."

Beyond the opportunity to see how a candidate performs on test, many instructors indicated that observing practical tests can be useful to them professionally. These comments usually described observing tests as a good way of keeping up to date with testing procedures or, particularly for new driving instructors, developing ways of synchronising training and testing methods.

Any negative comments were mostly related to reasons for not observing tests rather than disagreeing with the concept of observing per se. There were three themes identified, namely; 'extra pressure', 'restricted benefit' and 'learners choice'. The first of these, extra pressure, describes the opinion of many ADIs who were concerned about overwhelming the learner in an already stressful environment stating that their presence could be a distraction or cause the driver to experience more stress (as a result of not wanting to fail in front of their instructor). Furthermore, instructors discussed the possibility of influencing test performance by being an additional physical weight in the car (i.e. three people) that learners are not used to.

"on some occasions when the examiner is being check tested there can be 4 people in the car which can put the candidate under more pressure as they don't normally drive with that number of people in the car and are not used to the extra weight in the car. As the instructor doesn't know until they are on the way to the car that there is going to be a check test it's too late to change anything."

This demonstrates an interesting opportunity for driver training. If a candidate can't confidently carry passengers while training or in a controlled test environment (e.g. presence of dual controls) then is it logical to assume that this experience is one drivers should encounter only once they are qualified. Could it be possible to incorporate this experience into the training regime? The impact of carrying more passengers not only affects the 'feel' of vehicle control but this issue could be of particular relevance to young drivers who can be more prone to influence from peer pressure, therefore confidence in this environment could be a positive influence on post-test safety and collision involvement.

The final themes to discuss relate specifically to the relationship between instructor and examiner; 'restricted benefit' and 'interaction between ADI and DE' (driving examiner). Some of the instructors felt that the insistence that any observer must remain as still as possible while on test was overly restrictive and meant that their ability to fully observe the test was hampered because of it.

"Not being able to move precludes proper observation and therefore renders my presence practically useless"

It is important to recognise (and many of the instructors do) that these rules are in place to prevent any misunderstandings/accusations of the instructor influencing the candidate to aid them on test. Finally, the relationship between instructor and examiner seems to be a varied one. Some instructors felt that they should have a say in the examiner's pass/fail decision and therefore see no benefit to observing tests if they aren't allowed this input.

"I personally believe that if the ADI had a meaningful input into the outcome of the Practical Test, there would be some value in witnessing the Test."

Others reported much more positive experiences and discussed the benefits that a combined effort can have for the learner driver. This professional relationship is one that perhaps needs reviewing in more detail, in particular, to identify where there are opportunities to improve the on road safety of new drivers.

4.5.3. Independent driving

To understand the impact of independent driving it was crucial to know how the test protocol had been embraced, if at all, in the training environment. 61% of instructors (1,984 responses in total) stated that they had made some amendments to incorporate independent driving into their training regime. Conversely, this means that almost a third of instructors didn't. It is noteworthy, however, that before the introduction of independent driving many instructors were sceptical that the concept would have road safety benefits because they already use similar methods in their training. This could account for some of those who said they made no changes because, to them, the methods they already used were very similar and therefore they didn't need to incorporate anything 'new'.

Next, instructors were asked to briefly detail what changes they made to their training methods (if they didn't need to make changes they were asked to state why), figure 45 describes the main themes found. From the 1,649 comments most were positive and instructors frequently referenced training methods that could be coded into several themes (i.e. the themes identified are not mutually exclusive, one instructors comment could have enough detail to be coded into multiple themes). The few negative comments in this section generally referred to the use of diagrams as guidance on test. Many said the learners found them confusing and not particularly useful. Once again, it is noteworthy that at the time of writing this report, the compulsory presentation of diagrams on test had been changed so that only the candidates who wanted to use them were given them which should alleviate the confusion.
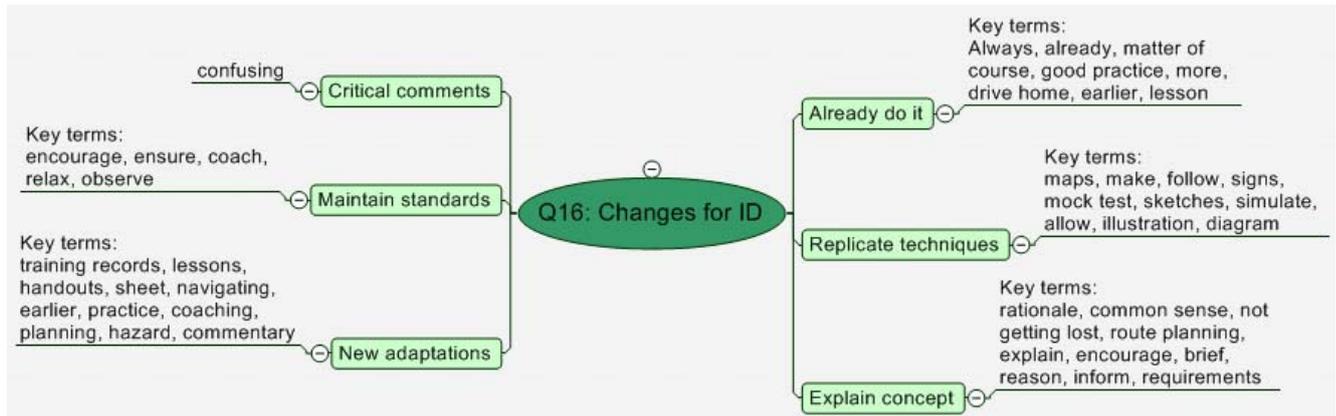
Figure 45

Positively, the range of training methods being used was diverse enough to generate 3 separate themes namely; 'replicate techniques', 'explain concept' and 'new adaptations'. The replicate techniques theme encompasses all comments that describe training methods that in part or fully replicate the test delivery of independent driving. This included making schematic diagrams similar to the ones used on test so that the candidate would be familiar with them, encouraging the use of road maps and other methods of following directions (e.g. following signs to a location or verbal directions). Furthermore, some instructors described using mock test techniques to fully prepare the candidate for what will happen when they take the test for real.

The theme 'new adaptations' is similar in content to 'replicate techniques' but is more focussed on comments where instructors have described adding new general methods to train their candidates in independent driving such as coaching and adapted training records. These methods are specifically aimed at developing more advanced driving skills such as anticipation, navigation and hazard awareness.

Finally the 'explain concept' theme represents comments that describe how instructors are explaining the rationale behind independent driving and that the driving skills practiced for it will be beneficial for new drivers. Many point out that the element of the test is something candidates should feel confident about because it is how they will be driving once they have passed (by themselves with no direction prompts). Furthermore, getting lost can happen to any driver at some time so being confident about correcting mistakes is an important skill, plus they won't fail on test if they go the wrong way.

The final two themes are 'maintain standards' and 'already do it' and are more representative of instructors who already used methods similar to the independent driving task. They would describe their current methods as; navigation practice, encouraging confident driving (i.e. minimal guidance from the instructor), following road signs. Those who said that they 'already do it' mainly described the specific manual methods they use (e.g. drive home with no guidance, follow road signs etc.) and that the only difference is that they now do more of it;

"Before the independent driving, I did talk about road signs and sometimes ask them to find their way, but they need a lot more preparation for the test now. This is a very good thing, as I find it uncovers many gaps in their knowledge, it also takes time for them to develop the skill of reading and understanding the directional sign while on the move, and then to act upon it in good time for the junction. Many find it hard to make sense of the sign and relate it to the junction. I therefore think it is very important to include this in driver training."

The comments about 'maintaining standards' generally described the methods used by the instructor but at a higher level, terms such as coaching, encouragement and observation were used to explain how they have harmonised the new testing protocol with their training. Furthermore, some instructors indicated that the introduction of independent driving on test meant it was easier explain to candidates why this type of practice is important and not just for passing the test;

"… Also took more time to explain to candidates about the reasons for Independent Driving & also to explain the form it will take during the test"

To understand how instructors are communicating and teaching independent driving they were asked to state how they would describe it to a learner driver. 1788 responses were generated, the highest count from any of the qualitative questions presented to instructors, and the responses were coded into five themes (figure 46).
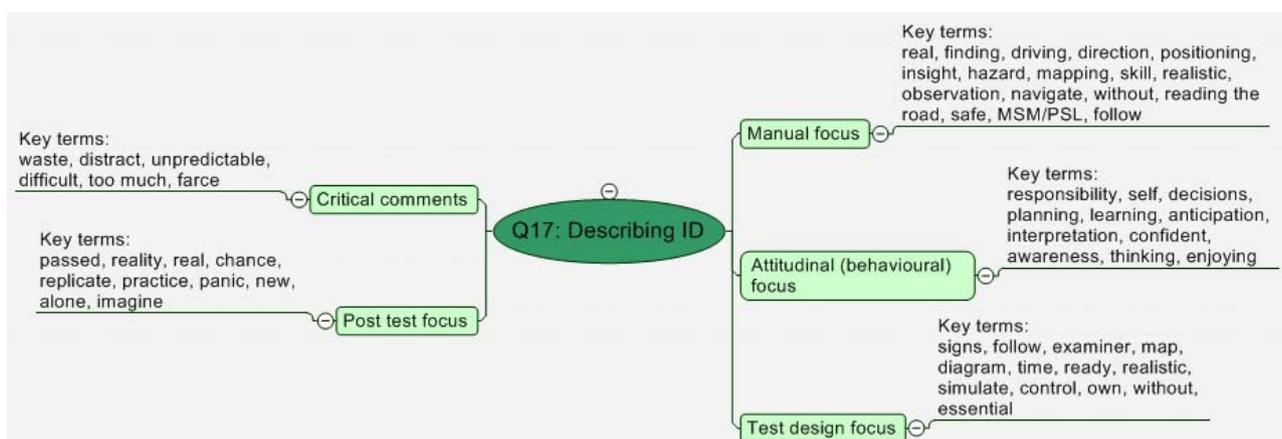
Figure 46

The responses provided by the instructors indicate that they identify and communicate how the overall concept of independent driving can relate to multiple stages of the learning to drive process. The themes identified reflect this and, while the coding process separates them out, the themes are not mutually exclusive, a significant proportion of the responses were so detailed they have contribute to two or more of the themes. Many of the responses include details about how the instructor would explain the delivery of

independent driving during the driving test, these comments contribute to the 'test design focus' theme. Within and around these driving test focussed comments are often further descriptions explaining the importance of learning the skill of driving without instruction, these comments mostly generated the themes of 'attitudinal focus', 'manual focus' and 'post test focus', the following comment is a typical example of this

"I would explain that they need to familiarise themselves with learning to observe and read road direction signs. So that they are able to drive from one point to another safely and without help. Building up a life skill rather than just learning to pass the practical driving test"

Crucially, many of the responses indicated instructors are keen to impress on their learners the importance of being able to drive unaccompanied, that once they pass their test they will be responsible for making decisions. This seems to be good evidence that the introduction of independent driving has not simply resulted in a new manual skill to be learnt in order to pass a test, but is being incorporated into the learners' image of themselves as drivers. While some instructors advocate that this kind of responsibility should be introduced as soon as possible, others suggest it is a skill to be developed towards the end of the learning process. What seems to be the consensus however is that this training should and will have an impact on learners once they are qualified drivers.

"I introduce Independent driving as something that will benefit them in their driving post test to enable them to drive safely on their own following their own directions rather than following instructions given by me or their examiner."

Finally, in response to the 'describe' question, there were some critical comments. These mainly seemed to be from instructors who were opposed to the introduction of independent driving all together. There didn't seem to be any specific comments that indicated the concept was too difficult to explain to learners. Independent driving was always intended to be an initiative that would have positive impacts on novice driving well beyond the driving test. When asked 93.1% of 1,876 instructors felt that exposure to independent driving could provide road safety benefits for learners once they are qualified. This is perhaps on of the most encouraging statistics in this report, immersed in the context of all other findings that have support and criticised independent driving, feedback from instructors that they can identify post-test benefits is very encouraging.

Figure 47 shows the coded themes that were generated when ADIs were asked to provide any further feedback about independent driving (that they felt hadn't been captured elsewhere is the survey). 1,035 responses were collected and 8 themes generated from the analysis, overall the feedback seems to reflect attitudes already captured in this report, no new topics stood out as new or unexpected. This is a positive finding in terms of the design of the overall survey as it indicates that the previous questions have been sufficient in allowing respondents the freedom to report their opinions.
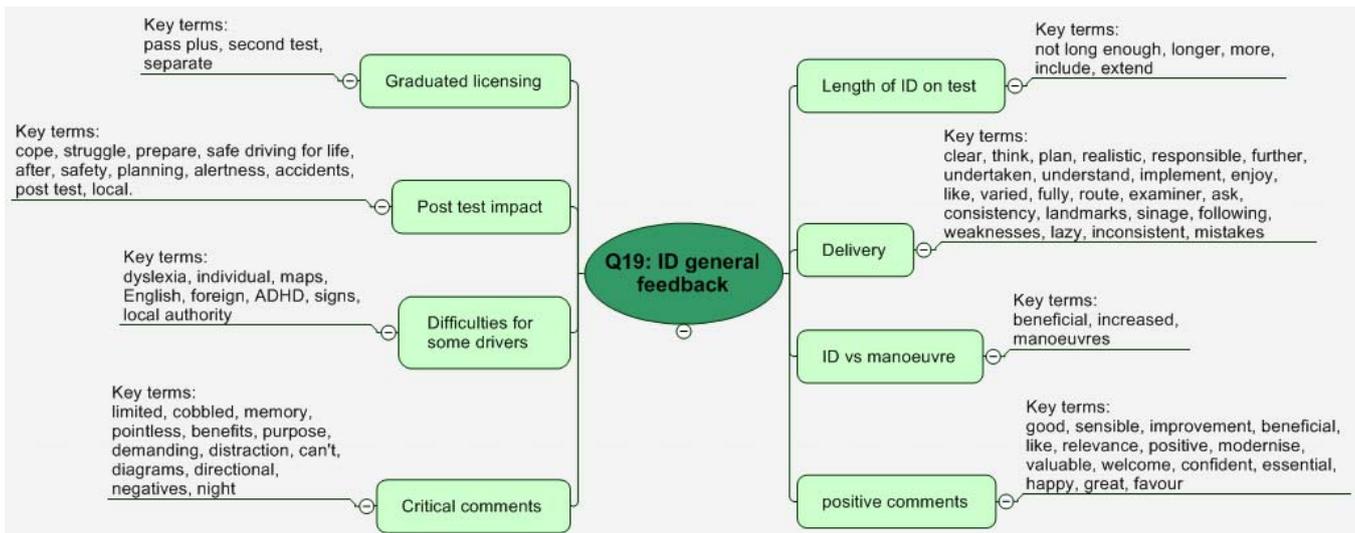
Figure 47

Most of the themes that were generated were supportive of independent driving, specifically the comments around 'delivery' and 'post-test impact' indicated that driving instructors clearly relate the skills involved for independent driving to learners and, furthermore, why this is important for encouraging alert, forward-thinking new drivers who are confident on the roads.

"I believe it has improved the driving test and provides an opportunity for candidates to show their driving skills in a more realistic situation."

"Independent driving gives the learner a taste of real or normal driving and allows them to adjust a lot sooner after passing the test."

Many also stated that this change to the practical test should have been introduced sooner; this opinion is closely related to the themes generated around 'length of ID on test' and 'graduated licensing'. Some instructors felt the changes were too subtle to allow the full potential of independent driving to be realised and suggested that a longer section of the test should be allocated to it. Or that there should be more than one test to assess a learner's competence to drive given the diversity of environments they are likely to encounter once qualified.

"A great addition to the syllabus. Should have been brought in many years ago. As should a post test course, maybe as part of pass plus, giving basic instruction on the use of maps for navigation. Over reliance on Sat Nav, I think, is going to become a big problem in the years to come."

"As part of the existing practical test there is a marginal benefit. As a wide issue ID (and indeed Pass Plus) is in a time warp -- it needs to be taken into a second test following the main test from which there is a benefit to incentivise the driver to reach a higher level of driver skill."

Interestingly, there were many comments discussing independent driving compared to doing two reverse manoeuvres (candidates are now asked to do one of three reverse manoeuvres but they will not know which one prior to their driving test). Some instructors felt that only doing one manoeuvre was not as good as doing two as these are skills new drivers definitely need. Some felt that independent driving, as a skill, is more useful on test to assess a candidates performance therefore reducing the number of manoeuvres was a good thing. And, some felt that only having one manoeuvre helped reduce anxiety on test which often leads to some candidates 'choking' and failing at something they are competent doing outside of the stressful test conditions.

"It has taken away a manoeuvre! I believe that candidates should be able to do ALL the manoeuvres, and should be tested on them."

"In my opinion this is a very significant improvement to the driving test, less manoeuvres and more about real driving"

"I believe it is one of the best improvements on the driving test as it relates to the realities of driving independently, it also reduces down on the reversing manoeuvres which the learners have always felt more pressure from."

This is one topic that demonstrably divides opinion; more manoeuvres or fewer? How changes to the driving test play out in road safety statistics will probably only be realised over time, but clearly, the design and delivery of the practical driving test should remain a topic for discussion to ensure that perspectives on best practice are captured from all stakeholders.

Where the feedback was more critical it was often associated with the diagrams and possibility for independent driving to distract or confuse learners, while valid, these concerns raise issues about how some driving instructors view test ready candidates.

"From the feedback I get from my learners, they say that following road signs take their concentration away from what's in from of them as they are that focused on looking for a sign."

Independent Driving was always intended to be a method of introducing more realistic circumstances into the driving test. If a candidate is unable to successfully observe road signs and markings while driving then questions should be raised about the candidates' readiness for test and subsequent road safety record if they were to pass their practical test. However, these kinds of comments seemed to be from a minority and it is likely that some of these attitudes have changed as the 'new' test becomes the norm.

There were also some concerns for drivers with specific needs being let down by a test that may put them at a disadvantage, most often it was the following verbal directions task that was criticised for being over reliant on memory recall. These concerns are valid ones and were given significant consideration by the DSA before independent driving was introduced, every effort was made to ensure alternatives were available (i.e. the use of schematic diagrams instead of verbally directing candidates). Evidence so far (pass rates, feedback included in this research, customer satisfaction surveys, etc.) indicates that these concerns have not been realised, while there may have been individual incidents where confusion has occurred it is unlikely this is the norm.

4.5.4. Follow up focus groups

An opportunity arose to host focus groups with driving instructors at a driving association event. As headline results had been generated from the driving instructor data it was decided to use this opportunity to gain respondent validation (Bryman 2008, p377) of some of the preliminary conclusions reached, particularly around the qualitative analysis. Furthermore, discussing some of the specific findings in a face to face environment allowed for a more developed understanding of the instructor perspective. Four specific topics were chosen for discussion;
- Can observing tests help correct learner mistakes?
- Use of diagrams on test.
- Independent driving is it manual, behavioural or both?
- Sat-nav, don't need independent driving because of it.

The resulting discussions were captured in summary (see chapter 7.3) and provided some reassuring evidence that early conclusions formed about the Driving Instructor survey were well founded.

5. Conclusions

This report aimed to evaluate the impact of independent driving in the training and testing environments and to assess if the new test protocol has had any demonstrable effects for newly qualified drivers. The evaluation has succeeded in providing a broad overview which explores the experiences, attitudes and opinions of drivers and driving instructors. In total 4,356 new drivers and 2,224 driving instructors responded to the surveys.

Overall, the evidence indicates that introducing independent driving into the practical test was a change for the better; the new tasks have been widely accepted by learners and driving instructors alike. Furthermore, comments from both samples have indicated that beyond acceptance, individuals are able to identify real benefits associated with the independent driving.

Driving instructors, if they weren't already using similar methods, have described how they incorporated the practical tasks into their training regimen and many also referred to having more in depth discussions with their learner drivers about the importance of being an independent driver, referring to the skills that are needed to improve safety, responsibility and decision making. In turn new drivers have been able to describe how this training encouraged them to think beyond the vehicle while training, making associations between the skills they acquired while learning and what they mean to them now as qualified drivers.

There is some evidence that independent driving is helping to bridge the gap between learner driver and qualified driver. Some of the more nervous drivers said that just after they qualified they would make a few short journeys to help them adjust to driving by themselves. Most others indicated that, while a little nervous, they felt ready and were keen to get on with being a driver. A few suggested that having passed the independent driving section on test gave them added confidence that they were ready to drive alone because they had proven they could do it to a required test standard. This suggests that recently qualified drivers are confident in their driving skills but are aware of their limitations, they are minimising their exposure to risk by avoiding hazardous activity (e.g. speeding) on roads and being more cautious. This seems to correlate with the collision involvement data that shows a reduction in the number of reported collisions between the present study and Cohort II.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that some caution that should be taken with these findings, it would be inappropriate to fully generalise these findings to the wider(learner) driver population given the self-selecting method of data collection and the issue of having no direct control group to make comparisons with. This limitation, however, shouldn't distract from the fact that this data is still valid from the perspective of the samples that were involved, used as a benchmark the findings in this report should help with the development of more detailed research in the future.

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7. Supplementary data

7.1. TP2 driver attitude compared to Cohort II

How likely are you to avoid risky driving situatuons?

	More likely than others	As lilely as others	Less likely than others
Present study	57%	37%	6%
Cohort II	41%	53%	6%

How fast do you drive

	A little faster than others	About the same speed as others	A little slower than others	Much slower than others
Present study	9%	54%	36%	2%
Cohort II	14%	66%	19%	1%

How skilled a driver are you?

	More skillful than others	As skillful as others	Less skillful than others
■ Present study	23%	63%	14%
■ Cohort II	16%	75%	9%

How cautious a driver are you?

	More cautious than others	As cautious as others	Less cautious than others
■ Present study	56%	42%	3%
■ Cohort II	41%	56%	3%

7.2. Communications questions for driving instructors

DSA utilises several different methods of communication, can you rank the following in order of which you found was most informative about independent driving? ('first' being most informative, 'fifth' being the least.) Please make sure you only have ONE tick in each column.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Response Count
DSA Direct Email	64.6% (1,175)	17.9% (325)	8.7% (158)	6.3% (114)	2.5% (46)	1,818
DSA via social networking (Facebook/Twitter)	4.3% (70)	10.0% (162)	11.1% (180)	11.6% (188)	63.1% (1,024)	1,624
Industry magazine/paper	18.8% (334)	38.2% (679)	23.7% (421)	13.2% (234)	6.2% (110)	1,778
Test Centre information	11.4% (193)	16.6% (280)	28.0% (473)	30.0% (506)	14.0% (236)	1,688
Discussions with colleague(s)	16.6% (296)	23.0% (410)	25.8% (459)	23.1% (412)	11.5% (205)	1,782
					answered question	1,841
					skipped question	383

How useful did you find DSA communications regarding the introduction of independent driving?

56.5 % (1046)
9.8 % (182)
5.5 % (102)
1.7 % (31)
2.8 % (51)
23.7 % (438)

- Very useful
- Useful
- Barely useful
- Not very useful
- Not at all useful
- I have no opinion
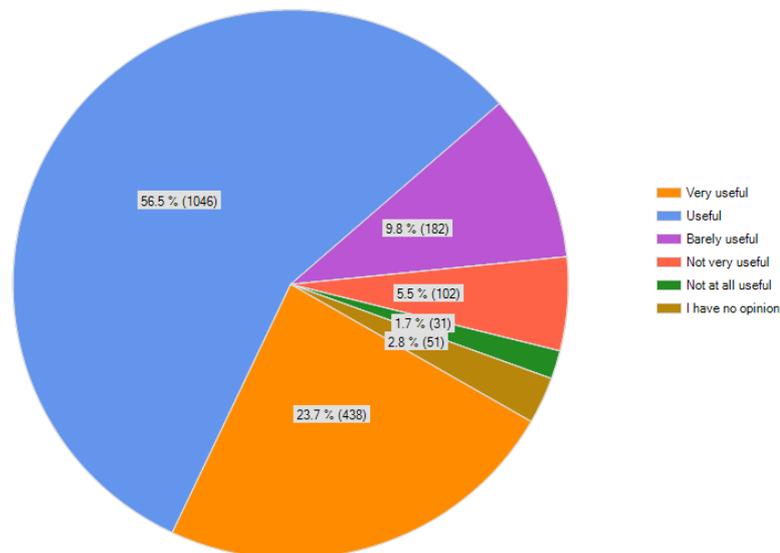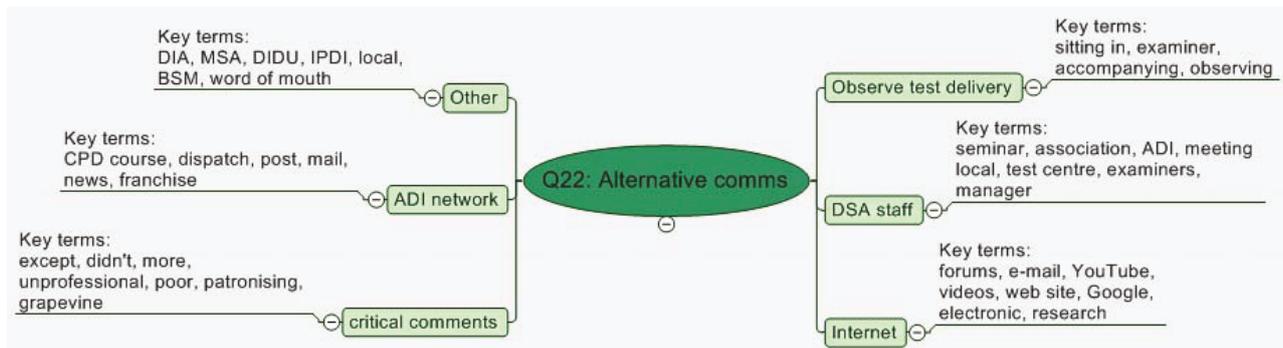
7.3.   ADI follow up focus groups

Workshop 1

Topic 1 - *Can observing tests help correct learner mistakes*?

- o Issues with test fails, ADIs can observe but are not considered a credible observer if an appeal is raised regarding the test result.
- o There is little point observing when ADIs are unable to move or interact.
- o It is not the place of ADIs to influence the decision of the learner regarding having an observer.
- o ADI and examiner relationship; encouraging observers but not addressing conflicts of opinion between ADI and DE.
- o ADIs presence could affect the examiners marking behaviour (both more and less strict outcomes mentioned).
- o Provides opportunity for constructive feedback for learners. May also be the 'last chance' for ADIs to influence candidates before they go it alone.

Note – some comments regarding test consistency, with DSA promoting ADI observations the ADIs are asking what role they play and whether its right test delivery varies so much (some DEs very strict to rules, some are seemingly more lenient).

Topic 2 - *Use of diagrams on test*.

- o Diagrams not to scale, no directions for larger roundabouts or junctions.
- o Following signs vs. verbal directions, signs preferred.
- o Questions raised about the benefits of offering a diagram compared to reading road signs, 'is this any different'?
- o ADIs commented that independent driving needs to better reflect learning style of the candidate. I.e. those with learning difficulties tend to prefer the use of schematic diagrams.
- o Give candidates the choice e.g. "would you like to see a diagram or just verbal directions".
- o Accuracy of diagrams causing confusion for candidates, side roads omitted from diagrams, not all exits at roundabouts identified etc.

Topic 3 - *Independent driving is it manual, behavioural or both*?
- o NA – focus group began late and there wasn't time to complete this topic.

Topic 4 - *Sat-nav, don't need independent driving because of it*?
- o Sat-nav is an aid to navigation and should not be considered a guide (as in a passenger telling directions).

o Before independent driving many candidates expressed they could rely on sat-nav for navigation.
o It should be the role of ADIs to encourage a varied approach to journey planning and navigation, map reading, following road signs and sat-nav all included in discussions about this.
o Difficulty with road signs, poorly maintained and 'can be there one week and gone the next'. ADIs acknowledged this is the responsibility of local councils but ignoring the issue isn't really a suitable option.
o Using sat-nav keeps the novice driver's attention inside the vehicle.
o Advances in technology in a general sense, and more specifically in vehicles, is influencing learner behaviour e.g. parking sensors, lane departure warnings, sat-nav. Many basic skills being ignored because technology will do it for them.
o Many ADIs also mentioned that sat-nav clearly causes issues for experienced and novice drivers alike, however experienced drivers may be less likely to panic in the event of a wrong turn. Also many are not swift on updating sat-nav databases which can also cause problems.

Workshop 2

Topic 1 - *Can observing tests help correct learner mistakes*?
o It is the ADIs responsibility to explain potential benefits of OOT to candidates.
o Candidates don't always clearly remember debrief comments so the ADI being there can help review comments.
o OOT should be the candidates choice (strong general consensus)
o New ADIs can also benefit from OOT, understand structure of practical test etc.
o ADI and driving examiner relationship, does the presence of an observer change DE decision making?
o Questions were raised about test consistency and examiner consistency.
o If observing a test the ADI is better prepared to explain fault marking to candidates afterwards.
o OOT can be considered practice with a person (like carrying passengers) in the back of the car.
o Is a consistent test standard fair in 'real life'? → *All test experiences are unique, e.g. road conditions, weather, unexpected circumstances.*
o OOT is important to put context to debrief comments.

Topic 2 – *Use of diagrams on test*.
o Language difficulties can cause problems
o A lack of scale on the diagrams means candidates can become confused as to which 'event' they are supposed to be looking out for.
o Doesn't show all the road features (e.g. all exits of a roundabout or minor roads between turnings) – makes it "useless"
o No key reference points (buildings/landmarks) that drivers would usually use as part of route planning.
o Diagram use is not consistent (ADI described tests when one DE would offer repeated prompts and on another test this was not given)
o When comparing verbal directions and signs general consensus was that they are not testing the same skills.

Topic 3 – *Independent driving is it manual, behavioural or both*?
o Concept of ID does seem to be getting through to learners (beyond being a task to complete on test).
o ID is an opportunity to practice real life driving.

- o Candidates are individuals and perceptions/learning styles can differ so it is important for the ADI to adapt to this (the next comment was that DEs should have a similar approach to testing).
- o Parents influence. ADI mentioned that a lot of candidates lack even basic directional knowledge of UK (e.g. what city is east of another city etc.). Some of this could be influenced by parents taking more time to explore this with their children.

Topic 4 – *Sat-nav, don't need independent driving because of it*?
- o Sat-nav isn't always accurate.
- o Navigation training needs to start at the basic core principals of map reading and journey planning.
- o Use of sat-nav should be taught in lessons.
- o Can be a distraction, diverts new drivers attention (likened to computer game scenario)
- o How do newly qualified drivers cope if sat-nav fails, many suggested they may be more likely to panic?
- o Using different types of sat-nav can also take some getting used to and different models have slightly different features. May be more problematic to newly qualified drivers.
- o Unless the database is regularly renewed the sat-nav can easily become out of date and not recognise changes to roads.
- o Knowing where to position the visual display, incorrect positioning on dashboard or windscreen can obstruct view.

8. Appendices

8.1.   Invitation to participate

Dear Driver,

Independent driving of the driving test
The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) wants to know what you think about the independent driving part of the driving test.

This is the part of the test where you had to drive independently by following traffic signs, a series of directions or both. It was added to the driving test in   October 2010.

DSA wants to understand:

- how you prepared for your practical driving test
- how independent driving relates to your experiences as a qualified driver

Data protection
Your responses will be kept confidential. Information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). The data you give DSA:

- will only be used for the purposes of this research
- will not be shared with any third parties

How it works
This survey is one of two that you'll be sent.

If you are happy to do this survey, you'll be asked to give an email address. This is so that the second survey can be sent to you in six months time. If you don't do this survey, you won't get an email about the second one.

Win a £50 Amazon voucher
If you do both surveys, your name will be entered into a prize draw with a chance of winning one of five £50 Amazon vouchers.

What you need to know
Your email address will only be used for this research and will not be used for anything else.

Taking part in this survey is voluntary. If you want to have your data removed from the research you can do without needing to give a reason.

If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please email DSA at research2@dsa.gsi.gov.uk.

Tell DSA what you think about independent driving

The survey will close on Friday 31 October 2011.

Version 1.2
4 March 2014

8.2.   Consent questions

Independent Driving – Candidate

Consent

Please carefully read and answer all questions on this page before proceeding with the rest of the survey. Thank you.

*1. Please read the details below and mark each box to show that you understand the terms set out for this research and your rights as a participant.
(You must answer all of the questions on this page to proceed with the survey.)

☐ I have read and understood the information included in the email. I am aware that I can contact the DSA Research Unit should I have any questions.

☐ I understand that all data collected for this survey is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this survey.

*2. Can you please provide your preferred email address
(this email address will only be used so that we can send you a second questionnaire in 6 months time, once that is done all email addresses will be deleted from our database)

[   ]

8.3.   Second invitation to participate

Dear Driver,

Us again!
You may remember filling out a survey for DSA around mid October last year. This email is invitation to complete a second survey regarding your driving experiences a year after passing your practical test.
This survey is part of an on-going evaluation looking at the introduction of independent driving into the practical driving test and, any possible long term effects on driver behaviour and attitudes,
DSA wants to understand:
- How people think about independent driving, and;
- How independent driving relates to your experiences as a qualified driver.

Data protection
Your responses will be kept confidential. Information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). The data you give DSA:
- will only be used for the purposes of this research
- will not be shared with any third parties

How it works
Simply fill out this survey. You will need to answer a few questions on the very first page to confirm that you understand your rights as a research participant. After that it's up to you.

Win a £50 Amazon voucher
Completing and returning this survey and providing us with a valid contact email address will enter you into a prize draw to win a £50 Amazon.co.uk voucher. There are 5 vouchers to be won and 4,356 people are being sent this survey. Please refer to the attached terms and conditions for further details.

What you need to know
Your email address will only be used for this research and will not be used for anything else.

Taking part in this survey and prize draw is voluntary, if you wish to have your data removed from either you can do so without needing to give a reason, just email the DSA research Unit at; research2@dsa.gsi.gov.uk.

Similarly, if you have any questions or comments about the survey, please email us at that address.

If you are an ADI or anyone other than a recently qualified driver please do not fill in this survey, some instructors/others who book tests on behalf of their learner drivers may have been sent this email in error.

Follow this link to **tell DSA what you think about independent driving**
(The survey is hosted by Survey Monkey and will open in a separate window)
The survey will close at noon on Thursday 10th May 2012.

8.4.   Prize draw terms and conditions

No purchase necessary to enter the prize draw.

This prize draw is open to all who complete and return this survey and submit a valid contact email address. Driving Standards Agency (DSA) employees, their families, agents and anyone else connected with this research are excluded from this prize draw.

This survey will close at noon Thursday 10th May 2012. Once the survey has closed no more entries will be accepted. The DSA accepts no responsibility for any entries that fail to reach the Research Unit by the relevant closing date. Proof of posting or sending is not proof of receipt. Entries become the intellectual property of the DSA and are not returnable. They can, however, be deleted at the request of the sender in accordance with the participant's right to withdrawal from the research.

Only one entry per person is allowed. No entrant may win more than one prize.

To enter, return the survey before the stated closing date and include a contact email address. Eligibility for the prize draw is not conditional on full completion of the survey (meaning, if you wish to leave any questions blank you will still be included in the draw).

All completed entries will be entered into a prize draw which will take place between the 14th and 18th May 2012. The first five entries drawn at random will be the winners.

The prize is a £50 voucher for Amazon.co.uk, cash alternatives are not available. The vouchers are in email format and contain an individual code to be used by the individual at the point of purchase. For more information refer to the terms and conditions of use on Amazon's website; https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/gc/order-email?ie=UTF8&ref_=gc_lp_eb1_b

DSA can accept no responsibility for the vouchers once they have been received by the individual.

The winner will be notified via email by 31st May 2012. The winners must claim their prize within 14 working days of the DSA sending notification. If any of the prizes are unclaimed after this date, DSA reserves the right to offer the unclaimed prize to a substitute winner selected at random in accordance with these rules.

The DSA will only use the email address submitted by entrants for the purposes of the prize draw. As such the email address data is considered separate from the data collected from the survey. If participants wish to have all their data removed from the research project this must be stated.

The DSA cannot be held responsible for the email delivery failure of vouchers if the address is incorrect or has changed. Postal communication is available at the request of the individual.

The winners may be asked to take part in publicity following the prize draw but retain the right to decline if they wish. Receipt of the gift voucher is not conditional on participating in possible publicity.

If you require any further assistance email research2@dsa.gsi.gov.uk

8.5. SurveyMonkey® information

SurveyMonkey® is a leading provider of web-based survey solutions.