

Two-thirds of Irish drivers lack confidence on roads despite passing test

Research shows younger drivers often experience panic and fear while driving
Ulster and Connacht drivers say roads more dangerous than 10 years ago

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Nearly two-thirds of Irish drivers still feel underprepared for driving after passing their test, while 70 per cent of drivers think Irish roads are more dangerous than 10 years ago, an insurance company has found.

Half of all drivers under 30 are not confident about driving despite the introduction of compulsory lessons in 2011, according to the latest research from

Liberty Insurance. The study, which was carried out among 475 people with car insurance aged 17-plus in the State, found many younger drivers lacked confidence when using multiple-exit roundabouts and reverse parallel parking.

Driving on motorways and parallel parking are not part of the Irish driving test curriculum.

The research shows younger drivers often experience panic

and fear on the road despite passing the Road Safety Authority's driving test. More than 80 per cent of female drivers and three-quarters of drivers aged 55-64 said Irish roads had become more dangerous in the past decade. Drivers from Connacht and Ulster were most likely to say they found roads increasingly hazardous.

Fully prepared

Only 38 per cent of those surveyed said they felt fully prepared to drive after completing their test, while overall women were less confident than men.

International research into confidence when driving shows a driver must travel 100,000km before they can be called an experienced driver, says Brian Farrell of the RSA.

He said graduated driver licensing for learners and newly qualified drivers could help build this confidence in a safe and responsible way. Under such licensing, those learning to drive must pay for 12 mandatory one-hour lessons, while a two-year restricted period as a

80%

Female drivers who said roads had become more dangerous in the last decade

"novice" driver applies after they pass the test.

"Learning to drive is not about the driving test any more," said Mr Farrell. "It's not about passing or failing – it's a

graduated process. It's about having restrictions like a lower penalty point threshold and being subject to a lower drink-driving limit.

"Novice drivers are still subject to a lower penalty point threshold and are only allowed to have six rather than the standard 12 points. If you subject new drivers to a greater prohibition on drink-driving for two years, there is a good likelihood they'll continue that behaviour in the future."

Deirdre Ashe of Liberty Insurance says distractions such as smartphones, loud music and passengers play a role in people's unease when driving.

Poor terrain and a lack of road infrastructure in Connacht and Ulster have also heightened drivers' nervous-

ness in recent years, according to respondents.

Uninsured vehicles

She added that uninsured vehicles represent a threat to Irish road safety, causing great concern among drivers. There are an estimated 151,000 uninsured private vehicles on Irish roads, up from 85,000 in 2011, according to the Motor Insurers Bureau of Ireland.

The penalties for driving without insurance include immediate seizure of the vehicle, an automatic court appearance, five penalty points and a significant fine.

Ms Ashe underlined the importance of road-safety education and recommended that nervous drivers consider taking advanced driver lessons.