

Adolescent Risk Research Unit

Rise, and shine.

The psychological distress of the young driver: A brief report

Scott-Parker, B., Watson, B., King, M.J. & Hyde, M.K. (2011)

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Why do this research?

Psychological distress (which includes both depression and anxiety) exerts a considerable negative influence across the whole of the adolescent's life. Road safety-related research seems to suggest, however, that there is no impact upon driving behaviours, which seems counter intuitive based on what we know about psychological distress. Therefore, we wanted to explore the relationship between anxiety and depression and self-reported driving behaviours.

What did we do?

761 young drivers with a provisional (intermediate) driver's licence, aged 17 to 25 years, from across Queensland, completed an online survey.

What did we find?

23% of participants experienced moderate psychological distress with nearly 8% of participants experiencing considerable psychological distress. Overall, psychological distress explained risky driving behaviour, such that participants who reported more depression and more anxiety reported more risky driving behaviours.

What does it mean?

To intervene effectively and to improve young driver road safety, we need to consider the young driver as a whole. Young drivers experiencing psychological distress, such as anxiety and depression, report more risky road behaviours, therefore interventions which target their mental health are likely to improve their road safety as well.