

Adolescent Risk Research Unit

Rise, and shine.

A further exploration of sensation seeking propensity, reward sensitivity, depression, anxiety and the risky behaviour of young novice drivers in a structural equation model

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Why do this Research?

Based on past research conducted by the authors ([The influence of sensitivity to reward and punishment, propensity for sensation seeking, depression and anxiety on the risk behaviour of novice drivers: A path model](#)), which revealed that the risky behaviour of young drivers is influenced by their sensitivity to reward, their propensity for sensation seeking, depression and anxiety, we wanted to explore the relationship between these variables and self reported risky driving behaviour over time.

What did we do?

390 young drivers with their Provisional licence aged 17 to 25 years completed two surveys. Survey 1 was completed when they progressed from a learner to a Provisional 1 (P1) licence. Survey 2 was completed after they held their P1 licence for six months.

What did we find?

In general, anxiety, reward sensitivity, and sensation seeking predicted risky driving over time. Interestingly, the gender of the driver was important, with young male risky driving related only to sensitivity to reward.

What does it mean?

The findings give us insight into personal characteristics that are related to risky behaviour for young drivers. Interventions to improve mental health (such as anxiety) may have unintended benefits by reducing on-road risky driving behaviour. Furthermore, interventions which directly reduce the rewards experienced by young drivers for risky driving may be likely to reduce on-road risky driving behaviour.