



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# **PROLIFIC ILLEGAL DRIVING BEHAVIOUR: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The aim of the research was to provide insights into the attitudes and behaviours of a number of drivers who regularly engage in multiple non-compliant and illegal driving behaviours on Scotland's roads. These qualitative insights sought to complement existing quantitative data around drivers' attitudes and behaviours collected by Transport Scotland on an on-going basis.

The findings are based upon qualitative, in-depth interviews with 15 self-confessed multiple, illegal drivers recruited using a free-find or opportunistic approach. The participants were of mixed gender, age (ranging from 18 to 62 years), driving experience and employment status. The sample was drawn from both urban and rural locations.

The research seeks to inform future policy development and social marketing campaigns around road safety in Scotland.

## Key Findings

### The extent and patterns of illegal driving behaviours

Consistent with survey research, speeding was the most prevalent of all self-reported illegal driving behaviours and, for most, it was a regular, daily activity. This was especially true for people driving on main roads with designated speeds of 70 mph. This, it seems, was seen as a normative and socially acceptable behaviour and was not really considered as being illegal by any of those interviewed.

Driving above the prescribed limits on slower roads was also quite prevalent, principally roads with limits of 40, 50 or 60 mph and especially in rural areas and on roads between adjoining towns. This type of speeding was more discriminate, however, and drivers described traffic conditions, times of day, and familiarity with such roads as all influencing their decisions to speed (or not) in these areas.

The areas least likely to be exposed to knowingly speeding drivers, based on the sample interviewed here, were '20's plenty' zones and designated 30 mph zones in built up or residential areas. Whether real or presented purely as a socially desirable response, it seems that none of those interviewed would deliberately speed in such areas, suggesting that they can, when they perceive it as necessary, stick within the prescribed limits due to safety, or other, considerations.

In frequency terms, speeding was followed by use of mobile phones to make and receive telephone calls whilst driving. Many of the older, working males, in particular, reported using their mobile phones on a daily basis to keep abreast of work developments, as well as for maintaining contact with family members while away from home. Younger drivers reported using their phones more for recreational than work or family purposes, and it was the nature of the calls, rather than the frequency with which calls and texts were being made which seemed to be the main differential across the ages.

Very few people self-reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs or when over the legal alcohol limit. Only three drivers (all males under the age of 30) were prepared to engage in discussions about their own illegal driving of this nature. That said, all reported that this was common practice among their peers and some of the older and younger female drivers, especially those living in rural areas, also reported that it was not uncommon in their local communities. For those who did report driving while intoxicated, this appears to occur in tandem with driving over the speed limits, as well as use of mobile phones.

Few of the respondents reported seatbelt non-compliance as a driver. Interestingly, this was perhaps more widespread among older females for whom the main failure to wear a restraint was during short, regular, low speed local journeys where it was seen as unnecessary. The regular failure to use restraints for longer journeys among those interviewed was not evident from this work. Rear seatbelt non-compliance was far more widespread, and the law was not well understood.

Although they knew that they were breaking the law, few people considered themselves to be a 'prolific' driving offender, despite reporting a wide range and regular frequency of engaging in illegal driving practices. The notion that there was always someone who was a 'worse offender' than themselves was also evident across the sample.

While the recruitment approach used, and the availability of different respondents in different demographic circumstances will have influenced the research findings to some extent, there were no clear clusters of different 'types' of drivers for whom the 'prolific illegal driver' classification more readily seemed to apply.

#### Justifications for illegal driving behaviours

Confidence in one's own driving, bolstered by years of 'successful' driving, seems to result in high levels of self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control which dominate drivers' thinking and decision processes when engaging in the full range of behaviours studied here. Overwhelmingly, those interviewed also reported that their driving practices were largely habitual and done very much without thought. The most frequently cited reference to cognitions or emotions was the need for drivers to feel 'in control', which they all did.

Although being 'in control' was the greatest justification for illegal driving behaviours, respondents also expressed sentiments that there should be an element of 'shared blame' for some of their actions which were perhaps less socially desirable - for example, the person who initiates the phone call that they answer, or other drivers who 'force' them to speed above the prescribed limits to 'keep up'. It is difficult to say whether these pressures were real or perceived and also whether they were used in these interviews as defences, rather than truly influencing drivers' decisions when on the roads.

The perceived social acceptability of different behaviours was varied, with drink and drug driving being the least tolerated. Even where people perceived some illegal driving practices as non-socially acceptable, this did not deter them from engaging in those behaviours (especially use of mobile phones). Attitudes were expressed that

speeding and use of mobile phones while driving were normative (i.e. everyone does it), and this was used to justify behaviours.

Overall, feelings of guilt, remorse or the need for future self-reflection on their illegal driving activities were not observed.

### Drivers' experiences of being caught and penalised or being involved in accidents

Most in the sample had incurred previous penalties for illegal driving. The range of illegal activities for which drivers had been caught was also quite diverse. Female drivers overall reported fewer and a narrower range of previous penalties, and were perhaps also marginally more likely to say that they perceived the risks of being caught as being small. Overall, the previous penalties that had been received were not seen as a sufficient deterrent to future illegal driving and existing penalties were seen, on the whole, to be quite ineffectual, especially financial penalties.

In contrast, direct and vicarious road traffic accident experience was scarce, and many drivers put this down to their own skills as a driver, their general awareness of risks and never putting themselves into situations that they perceived to be 'risky'. In the few cases where participants were able to describe accidents that they or known others had been involved in, these seemed to have had little lasting effects on their own driving behaviours and were often described as 'unlucky' or being outwith the driver's control.

The research showed mixed experiences with regards to interactions with police. For some, the 'matter of fact' treatment that they were shown was reasonable and fair. For others, the fact that they perceived their offending behaviour to be 'low level' and that there was always a worse offender than themselves made them feel that harsh treatment by the police was unwarranted. Despite mixed feelings with regards to police interactions, the message seems to be that police encounters had no long lasting deterrent effects on drivers' behaviours but that discursive interactions were perhaps more impactful than 'blame' oriented encounters.

### Perceptions of risk

Despite reasonably high levels of previous convictions for illegal driving, there was a generally low perceived risk of being caught among the sample. The inevitability of being caught at some point in the future seemed to be something that drivers were prepared to accept as the number of times they would get caught, in comparison to the number of times they would perform their illegal behaviours, was considered disproportionately small.

Despite the pervasive involvement of road user behaviour in road traffic accidents, as shown by the official statistics, the perceived risks of harming either themselves or others also seem to be marginal among this sample. Again, this is because people perceived that their behaviours were not 'too' risky or dangerous and that they were always in control. While they did recognise that some things may happen to result in them being involved in an accident, the perception that these factors were likely to be external to themselves (i.e. another driver's error or unpredictable road conditions) meant that there was a preference not to 'overthink' these scenarios, since they were likely not to occur. Even when prompted on the various potential

negative outcomes that may occur as a result of their driving behaviours (including accident risks), some drivers remained firm that 'over-thinking' their actions may be more dangerous than driving habitually.

### Recall and impact of marketing campaigns

There was mixed but generally poor recall of various local or national road safety marketing campaigns. While most of those interviewed recalled adverts targeted at reducing speeds in 30 mph zones where children may be at risk, and there was some recall for various drink driving campaigns and rear seatbelt compliance, there was nothing with regards to mobile phone use and only recall of very dated campaigns targeted at front seat/driver seatbelt compliance.

Campaigns which demonstrate potential harm to self may not, it seems, be as effective as those that highlight risks to others.

Interestingly, from these interviews alone, there was no clear relationship evident between the types of driving behaviours that people were demonstrating, and their recall of different advertisements. People described needing 'constant' or 'regular' reminders of the potential risks that might occur as a result of their driving practices in order for them to become more present in their minds when driving.

### **Conclusions**

The work has shown that, rather than there being a 'hard core', the number of drivers' to whom the 'prolific illegal driver' label may be applied is perhaps much broader. It spans all ages and both genders, albeit the combinations and reasons for different types of illegal driving vary among different segments of the population. The views expressed suggest that social, cultural and peer factors all influence illegal driving, and people's perceptions of social norms appear to explain prolific illegal driving behaviour more than any individual driver characteristics. This suggests that holistic, population based approaches to changing behaviours may be needed rather than those directed at the individual.

Even among regular risky and illegal drivers, there is a lack of acknowledgement that driving as they do is really illegal, that they are 'real' criminals or that their 'crimes' have real social impacts. This has important implications both for how policies are tailored and marketing campaigns are directed, since the first step to reaching many of these drivers is to make them aware that the policies and campaigns are targeted at them, and not others.

The general complacency among those interviewed that they were 'in control' and that risky driving was more characteristic of other drivers suggests that there is a translation gap between what the law prescribes as illegal and risky and what people perceive to be acceptable for themselves. Given that previous penalties seem to have been relatively ineffectual in changing drivers' behaviour, and the low prevalence of previous accident involvement is seen as reinforcing the sense that these driving practices are safe, more perhaps needs to be done to challenge people's estimations and expectations that future risks may occur.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Background

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from a qualitative study of prolific illegal driving behaviour, based on a number of depth interviews carried out with a segment of current car drivers living in Scotland.
- 1.2 The work was intended to build on previous quantitative research evidence that has indicated that there is a 'hard core' of prolific non-compliant drivers on Scotland's roads, and across the UK more generally. Previous work has shown that, while there are quite high levels of reported risky and illegal driving behaviours in the driving community more generally, some behaviours are more common than others and it is only a small group who are prolific in engaging in many different types of illegal and dangerous driving. Most of the existing evidence has been derived from self-report surveys and the current work sought to add depth to current understanding of what characterises this group of offenders, what motivates their behaviour and how they may be persuaded to change their illegal driving practices in the future.
- 1.3 The research was commissioned on behalf of Road Safety Scotland, part of Transport Scotland.

## Research Aims

- 1.4 The main aim of the research was to better understand the attitudes and behaviour of the group of drivers who engage in multiple non-compliant and illegal driving behaviours.
- 1.5 Additionally, the research sought to gain insight into what triggers may reduce future illegal driving behaviour by considering what people perceived was the most likely, and the worst, potential outcome of their behaviours, as well as how complacency regarding illegal driving may be tackled.
- 1.6 The ultimate aim of the research was to produce data that might be used to inform future policy development and social marketing campaigns in the road safety arena.

## Policy Context

- 1.7 In 2009, the Scottish Government published Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020, *Go Safe on Scotland's Roads it's Everyone's Responsibility*<sup>1</sup>. The implementation and delivery of the Framework is overseen by Transport Scotland, working with a number of road safety partners throughout Scotland. The Framework included the first ever Scottish road safety targets set by Scottish Ministers for the next decade (based on a 2004-2008 average) which commenced on 1 January 2011. Table 1.1 shows the targets, as set out in the framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/286643/0087268.pdf>

**Table 1.1 Scottish road safety targets to 2020, with milestones at 2015**

<b>Scottish national road safety targets 2011-2020</b>		
<b>Target</b>	<b>2015 milestone % reduction</b>	<b>2020 target % reduction</b>
People killed	30	40
People seriously injured	43	55
Children (aged <16) killed	35	50
Children (aged <16) seriously injured	50	65

- 1.8 The specific priorities outlined in the Framework include drink driving, children, seatbelts, drivers aged 17-25, speed, rural roads, leadership and sharing intelligence and good practice. Priorities are based on evidence built up over a number of years on what needs to be tackled in order to achieve the Scottish road safety targets, and the current work sought to contribute to that evidence base to help further understand what can be done to directly influence the driving behaviours of those in the most dangerous groups.

## **Methodology**

- 1.9 A qualitative, face-to-face, depth interview approach was used for engaging with prolific illegal drivers.
- 1.10 This involved the recruitment of 15 independent participants from across Scotland using a free-find approach<sup>2</sup>. People were approached in their local communities and asked a number of screening questions, principally around whether or not they had engaged in a pre-determined list of illegal driving behaviours in the previous twelve months. Only those who were current car drivers, and who reported committing at least three different types of driving offence in the last 12 months were eligible for inclusion in the work. No age or gender quotas were imposed, although the research team sought to achieve as broad a mix as possible in demographic terms.
- 1.11 In order to try and maximise differences in driving experience as determined by geography, the recruitment had a wide geographic reach, and covered people recruited from Glasgow, Dundee and Paisley (urban) and Stonehaven, Eyemouth and Dunbar (rural) areas. All participants agreed to be interviewed at neutral venues, close to their homes, and interviews lasted around one hour.
- 1.12 In each of three case study areas, on-street recruitment was used to target drivers who would be prepared to take part in an interview. This involved a fieldworker approaching adults and carrying out a short screening exercise to

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<sup>2</sup> A 'free find' or convenience sampling approach was used which involved participants being drawn that were readily at hand in the selected communities and who were willing to self-disclose illegal behaviours. More structured approaches were explored with the police (to recruit people with known illegal driving histories), but were not viable. Chapter 3 provides details of the sample profile and Appendix D provides details of their self-reported illegal driving behaviours.

ascertain their self-reported illegal driving behaviours. The screening was based upon questions from the Road Safety Tracking Survey (RITS) survey.

- 1.13 An interview guide was developed which allowed for free recall of previous illegal driving incidents, along with more structured questioning around drivers' attitudes and behaviours, and recall and perceived impact of previous road safety marketing campaigns. A 'story-telling' approach was used in the first instance, in which participants were asked to recall and describe in a step-by-step way a recent journey in which they had committed illegal driving behaviours, either singly or combined. This was largely unprompted and was followed by more structured questioning of the reasoning and potential motivators for those behaviours.
- 1.14 The topic guide was piloted in October 2012, and interviews took place throughout November and December 2012. All were digitally recorded and later transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis that is presented here. A copy of the interview guide is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.15 Interview data was analysed manually to identify emergent themes. This involved extrapolating the main sentiments expressed by each respondent, including verbatim quotes, and subsequent assimilation of data with similar sentiments being clustered together for presentation and contrasting views extracted for separate presentation.

## **Research Ethics**

- 1.16 The methodology was underpinned by a keen awareness of the need to uphold confidentiality of any data collected, as well as to ensure that informed consent was received from all research participants with anonymity assured in all reporting. All participants were asked to provide verbal consent ahead of interviews, and were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Information about the purpose and nature of the research was given to participants ahead of the interview meetings, bolstered by information imparted by the researchers on the day.
- 1.17 The recruitment and sampling approach employed did not preclude anyone from taking part in the research on the grounds of their protected characteristics status, and the main stipulation was that participants were current drivers who were prepared to self-report multiple illegal driving. All meetings took place in mutually convenient public venues, with reasonable travel and expenses reimbursed. Participants were also offered an opportunity to nominate an approved charity to receive a cash donation as a means of incentivising them to take part and to thank them for their time. All fifteen participants accepted this offer.
- 1.18 All personal data was confidentially destroyed after the interviews and responses were anonymised using unique identifiers. All data was edited to ensure that it contained no material which would make respondents identifiable during reporting.

## Research Caveats

- 1.19 Although the research sought to add weight to, and complement, self-reported quantitative survey data, it must be recognised that the approach used here was again reliant on self-reported behaviours and so was still vulnerable to respondent bias. This may have included, for example, people under or over-exaggerating their involvement in illegal driving behaviours (to come across as socially compliant or rebellious, for example), and potentially some acquiescence among participants in terms of reporting behaviours or reasons for their behaviours that they perceived were expected.
- 1.20 Further, despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality for those taking part in the work, the nature of the research and the requirement to self-disclose illegal behaviours may have been a deterrent to participation for many otherwise eligible respondents. Self-selection bias is evident in the sample, insofar as only those who felt confident and comfortable discussing their illegal behaviours took part, and this may account, in some cases, for the apparent nonchalance with which some sentiments were delivered.
- 1.21 During the recruitment, more females than males agreed to take part in the work despite equal numbers of men and women who were approached being eligible. Some of this may, in part, be accounted for by the fact that more men than women were in full time employment and their availability for interview was more limited. Although flexible days and times were offered for interviews to take place, men (especially young men) were, overall, less willing to be interviewed. This is not uncommon for research that uses recruitment methods such as those used here, and overall, young men did make up 20% of the final sample which meant that their perspective was still covered in equal (if not proportionate) part.
- 1.22 More generally, it is worth stressing that, as a qualitative exercise, the work did not seek to be representative of the full driving community. Further, due to the sampling approach used, the findings presented here cannot be considered as representative and should not be generalised too widely.
- 1.23 Finally, it is worth noting that alternative recruitment strategies were considered, including recruitment of known offenders (with driving offences recorded by the police). This, however, was not possible for practical reasons and so the actual reported previous conviction information obtained from all those who took part was also based on self-disclosure. Again, this may be an under or over-representation of actual previous conviction histories and so any attempts to link findings that relate to being caught, with current reported driving behaviours and attitudes must be interpreted with care.

## 2 THE RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

### Defining and Estimating the Prevalence of Illegal Driving Behaviour

- 2.1 The Highway Code<sup>3</sup>, which covers England, Wales and Scotland, sets out the range of driving behaviours which are classified as illegal and which attract driver penalties, including court and non-court disposals. Appendix B provides a list of all such offences, ranging from causing death by dangerous driving to seat belt offences.
- 2.2 As part of the research, an analysis of driving offence and accident data was carried out, and is presented in Appendix C, along with a review of literature relating to illegal driving attitudes and behaviours. At a high level, this analysis shows that while there has been a decrease in the number of recorded speeding offences in Scotland over time, there has been an increase in recent years in the number of 'other' offences that are being recorded. Driving under the influence and dangerous and careless driving have remained fairly static over time. It is not possible from routinely published data to say how many of these offences were committed by the same offender (i.e. repeat or prolific driving offenders).
- 2.3 In addition to road traffic offence and criminal proceedings data, Transport Scotland collects data on injury road accidents that are reported to the police in Scotland. In 2011, the data show that speed (inappropriate speed or speeding) was recorded as a contributory factor in accidents resulting in 26% of fatalities and 6% of serious injuries. Drink driving accounted for 11% of fatalities and 6% of serious injuries and distraction was recorded as a contributory factor in accidents resulting in 3% of fatalities and 4% of serious injuries.
- 2.4 Overall, criminal justice and accident statistics together show that speeding is the most commonly reported and recorded illegal driving behaviour. Although numbers of people charged with speeding offences have dropped over time, it still contributes to a sizeable number of fatalities and serious injuries.
- 2.5 Driver survey data supports the recorded crime data in showing that illegal driving remains prevalent among reasonably large proportions of UK drivers. The self-report survey data shows that there is a greater engagement in speeding offences compared to mobile phone, seatbelt and drink/drug driving related offences, but this may, of course, be explained by differences in willingness to disclose these types of behaviours, rather than their actual occurrence.

### Segmenting Illegal Drivers

- 2.6 While there have been no notable segmentation studies that have specifically explored illegal driving, previous research does point towards some clustering of different types of behaviours among drivers.

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<sup>3</sup> Driving Standards Agency (2012) The Official Highway Code, Department for Transport, London.

- 2.7 The RITS survey reports some age and gender differences suggesting that men, and particularly younger male drivers (aged under 45) are more likely to engage in risky behaviours. These findings in many ways support the surveys, and official statistics such as those presented above provide some insight into who is most likely to engage in different types of illegal driving behaviours in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics.
- 2.8 Less is known about the association between previous convictions for driving offences, involvement in road traffic accidents and continued illegal driving behaviour. A comparison of official statistics and self-report surveys suggests that there is a large proportion of illegal driving behaviour that goes undetected, but it is not possible to say from the existing data whether those who have previously been charged with a road traffic offence are any more or less likely than their peers to drive illegally in the future.

### **Attitudes towards Road Safety and Illegal Driving**

- 2.9 While survey research shows varying attitudes towards different types of illegal driving behaviours, there seems to be a general consensus across the research that illegal driving is not currently sufficiently well-policed, or penalties enforced, with a general perception that the risks of being caught are low.
- 2.10 The latest RAC Report on Motoring<sup>4</sup> annual survey reports that people consider policing of road offences to be inadequate, with perceptions that this contributes to a 'hard core' of drivers repeatedly breaking the law. This is despite many of the same respondents reporting that they themselves engaged in illegal behaviours, and perhaps suggests a general perception that people will continue to carry out behaviours which they do not approve of in the absence of an increase in the chances of being caught and a likely penalty being received.

### **What Works?**

- 2.11 Road Safety Scotland, along with the Scottish Government, seeks to develop and co-ordinate Scotland-wide road safety initiatives and campaigns, including those aimed at improving driver behaviour and eliminating illegal driving. In recent years, the focus of these campaigns has included speeding, seatbelts, drink driving and country road driving, including campaigns highlighting the dangers of distractions whilst driving. Evaluation literature shows varied recall of campaign materials and also shows that few drivers report that they (or their driving) are directly influenced by it.
- 2.12 This, alongside the official statistics and self-report survey data that show that there remains significant illegal behaviour on the roads suggests that more work is needed to understand why people drive illegally and what may work to change that behaviour. The remainder of this report presents the findings from the qualitative research that was undertaken to try and address some of the gaps in existing evidence.

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<sup>4</sup> For further information see: <http://www.rac.co.uk/advice/reports-on-motoring/>

### 3 DRIVER AND DRIVING CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 15 people were recruited to take part in the research, answering questions relating to their driving experience and the illegal driving behaviours they engaged in. This chapter outlines their responses and also reports on participants' understanding of what constitutes illegal driving.

#### Demographics

- 3.1 A total of 15 people took part in the research, seven males and eight females. While previous research has shown that males are more likely to self-report illegal driving behaviours, and official statistics show that males are more likely to be charged or convicted of road traffic offences, the small-scale qualitative nature of the work meant that the driving behaviours, rather than gender, were used as the main criteria for recruitment.
- 3.2 The average age of participants was 41, ranging from 18 to 62. Around half the participants had young children who regularly travelled as passengers in their vehicles and three participants reported caring responsibilities for older relatives.
- 3.3 All but one of the female respondents were in part-time employment, with only one female not working. Four of the male participants were in full-time employment and one was in part-time employment. Only one male participant was out of work and one was retired. All participants lived in their own accommodation and drove their own privately-owned vehicles. One male driver reported that he drove both a car and motorcycle.

#### Driving Experience

- 3.4 The average number of years driving experience was 24, ranging from less than one year to 45 years.
- 3.5 Most people reported driving between 8,000-12,000 miles a year on average, and for all this included a mix of local trips made on minor roads, as well as longer journeys using motorways and dual carriageways. Only one driver reported driving well in excess of this mileage per year (around 40,000 miles), and he was also the most prolific offender in terms of the range of illegal behaviours that he engaged in and the frequency with which they were adopted. For around two-thirds of respondents, trips were made outside Scotland to England and Wales but all drivers reported that most of their driving took place in Scotland.
- 3.6 All those who worked reported using their car for travel to/from work, as well as for social/recreational purposes. People tended to drive alone for work-related journeys throughout the week, and travelled mainly with friends and family at the weekends and in the evenings. There were no obvious relationships between the 'types' of trips people were making and the illegal behaviours reported.

## Reported Illegal Driving Behaviours

3.7 All participants were asked which, from a list of ten pre-defined illegal behaviours, they had engaged in over the previous 12 months, as part of the recruitment process. For each behaviour reported, they were also asked how frequently they engaged in this type of activity, in broad terms.

### Nature and Prevalence

3.8 Table 3.1 shows the number of respondents who reported that they had carried out each behaviour, at least once, in the previous 12 months, and those who said they did each behaviour regularly, for the whole sample. Appendix D provides a breakdown for individual respondents. Behaviours were reported either during recruitment or subsequently, during interviews, for all of those who took part. In five cases, participants disclosed more and different illegal behaviours once at the interviews, compared to those reported during recruitment.

**Table 3.1 Nature and prevalence of illegal behaviours reported**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>At least once</b>	<b>Regularly</b>	<b>All</b>
Driving at more than 75 mph on the motorway	2	12	<b>14</b>
Driving at more than 35 mph in a 30 mph speed limit area	4	4	<b>8</b>
Driving at more than 10% over the speed limit on any other kind of road (for example, more than 55 mph in a 50 mph speed limit area)	2	8	<b>10</b>
Used a mobile phone to text whilst driving	-	6	<b>6</b>
Used a hand-held mobile phone while driving	-	6	<b>6</b>
Not used a seatbelt while travelling in the front of a car	3	3	<b>6</b>
Not used a seatbelt when travelling in the back of a car or taxi when one was available	-	10	<b>10</b>
Driven when over the legal alcohol limit	2	1	<b>3</b>
Driven under the influence of drugs	1	2	<b>3</b>
Other illegal driving behaviour	2	-	<b>2</b>

3.9 The main offence reported by all drivers was speeding on a regular basis on at least one type of road. All but one participant reported driving at more than 75 mph on the motorway, and most said that this was a regular behaviour.

Ten people also reported driving at more than 10% over the speed limit on any other kind of road (excluding 30 mph areas) and, again, this behaviour was performed quite frequently among those who admitted to it.

- 3.10 Fewer respondents said that they would drive over the speed limit in designated 30 mph zones, but this was still reported by just over half of respondents. Half said that they would do it regularly, and half reported having done it less often.
- 3.11 Six participants reported that they had used mobile phones to make and receive telephone calls whilst driving. Six participants also said that they used their mobile phones for texting, and for checking emails when driving. Four of these respondents were the same (i.e. reported using their phone for both texting and calling). Whether used for talking or texting, those who reported these behaviours said that they did it regularly and were 'prolific' users of their devices both while driving and not.
- 3.12 None admitted to using their phones to access social networking sites while driving, although two males said that they used their phones to occasionally access emails when in the car. One participant explained that, on occasion, she used her phone for satellite navigation.
- 3.13 Six respondents reported not wearing a seatbelt in the front of the car, as either the driver or passenger. Ten people said that they often did not wear a seatbelt when travelling in the back of a car or taxi, even when one was available. All of those who reported non-use of rear seat restraints said this was their 'normal', regular behaviour.
- 3.14 Three respondents, all male, reported having driven when over the legal alcohol limit. Two said that this was 'rare' or infrequent behaviour, whilst one said that he did so more regularly. Two of these same males also reported regularly driving under the influence of illicit drugs and one female said that she had driven once in the last six months after taking drugs. While the number of people reporting these behaviours was small, it is important to note the potential under-reporting that may have been present either due to social desirability bias or fear of repercussions from disclosure (despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality being offered). Although, as a qualitative exercise, the work did not seek to be representative, it is also worth observing that the four people who did report these behaviours demonstrates a greater than proportionate representation of people admitting to such behaviour from large-scale surveys.
- 3.15 Frequent drink and drug driving were the only two behaviours reported solely by men (with one woman admitting using drugs only once). All other types of behaviours were reported with equal frequency by men and women.
- 3.16 One professional male who reported regular speeding on all types of roads, used his phone for texting and talking while driving, sometimes driving under the influence of alcohol and sometimes failing to wear restraints in either the front or rear of the car also said that he was sometimes guilty of traffic light offences.

- 3.17 Interestingly, when participants were asked to recall recent journeys during which they had carried out illegal driving, none had any difficulty and most could think of journeys within the last month, or more recently. Some even reported that they had had to break the speed limit in order to attend the research interview, because they were “running late”. Such flippancy may in itself be indicative of the lack of seriousness with which some participants considered their own illegal driving.

### **Combinations of Illegal Behaviours**

- 3.18 The focus of the research was on engaging with people who reported carrying out multiple illegal activities over time. Further, the work sought to explore which combinations of behaviours people engaged in.
- 3.19 All but two of those interviewed combined at least one kind of speeding behaviour with one or more other type of illegal behaviour, if not as part of the same journey, then over time<sup>5</sup>.
- 3.20 The most common combination of illegal behaviours reported during the same journeys were speeding (usually either on the motorway/dual carriageway) and use of mobile phones for receiving calls or texting. This was not unanimous, however, and some people reported they would deliberately not text or phone in busy traffic conditions.
- 3.21 Three participants reported that they would often drive without front seatbelts for local journeys and that this may coincide with times when they also used their telephones. Two other participants said that they would sometimes ‘forget’ to wear their seatbelts and may have driven over the speed limit whilst not being safely restrained.
- 3.22 Two participants reported driving while intoxicated and concurrently speeding or using their phone. Use of drugs and alcohol together whilst driving was reported by only one male driver.
- 3.23 One respondent reported that he would often combine more than two different illegal behaviours regularly whilst driving:

*“I have ‘multi-tasked’ with some of these things. Would you like examples? So, I have driven over the speed limit and used [my phone] to text or phone at the same time, possibly while under the influence of alcohol and drugs. So, yes, all four together in some instance. I have ‘mixed and matched.’” [Male, 29]*

- 3.24 One other driver reported that, although he did not engage in multiple illegal activities as part of the same journey very often, he had covered almost all of the listed behaviours at least once within the previous year. A different male ticked all but two different ‘illegal driving behaviour’ boxes.

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<sup>5</sup> The other two respondents reported speeding regularly on roads with different thresholds, i.e. three different ‘types’ of speeding behaviour. Appendix D provides details.

## Understanding What Constitutes Illegal Driving

- 3.25 While most people readily admitted they knew that what they were doing was wrong, there were some areas of confusion that seemed to be present among some of the participants. In particular, two people said that they were unaware that it was illegal to not wear rear seatbelts in private cars and, as a consequence, reported that they did this more often than not, as well as allowing their passengers to do the same:

*“I’ve never, ever thought about using a seatbelt in the back of a car and... I’ve never, ever told somebody to put a seatbelt on in the back of a car. I suppose I just think that it’s less likely that something is going to go wrong for the person in the back of the car, if they haven’t got a seatbelt on. I wouldn’t consider that as illegal. And, is it?” [Female, 62]*

- 3.26 Several respondents said they were unsure if wearing a seatbelt in the rear of a taxi was illegal and one respondent said they would not consider wearing a seatbelt in the front of a taxi, since they considered it akin to other forms of public transport, e.g. a bus:

*“I would never wear a seatbelt in a taxi. Not even in the front. I don’t know why... You notice taxi drivers sometimes don’t wear seatbelts. Are they supposed to wear seatbelts? I just wouldn’t get into a taxi and put a seatbelt on – I’d feel a bit of an idiot if I done that... You wouldn’t get on a bus like that and put a seatbelt on.” [Female, 29]*

- 3.27 Several respondents also expressed some confusion about what constituted illegal use of mobile phones while driving, for example, whether this included hands-free talking, hand-held talking and/or texting when stopped at traffic lights, in slow moving traffic or if pulled into the side of the road, etc.
- 3.28 Finally, some people also reported not really knowing what the drink drive limits were, or whether there were defined rules about types and levels of illicit drug use that were acceptable when driving, and so tended to use their own discretion (seemingly on perceived self-efficacy – i.e. how they felt - rather than legal levels) when making these decisions to drive under the influence. All three of the male participants who reported driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs also admitted they were not sure of what the legal limits were and if, in some cases, they would be legally over, or under, the limit (although the amounts of alcohol that were disclosed during interviews would suggest they were very often very much above the legal limits). The main justification for deciding to still drive among all three was the fact that they “felt fine”.

The only offence reported by all drivers was speeding on a regular basis. Other frequently cited illegal driving behaviours were using mobile phones whilst driving to make and receive telephone calls, for texting, and for checking emails, and not wearing a seatbelt in the front of the car, as either the driver or passenger. A less frequently cited behaviour was driving when over the legal alcohol limit or when under the influence of illicit drugs. Most participants combined at least one kind of speeding behaviour with one or more other type of illegal behaviour, if not as part of the same journey, then over time.

## 4 UNDERSTANDING ILLEGAL DRIVING BEHAVIOUR

This chapter explores the justifications that were given for illegal driving, the perceived social acceptability of different driving behaviours, and a discussion on 'worse offenders' leading to participants determining their own definition of the prolific illegal driver.

### Admissions and Acceptance of Guilt: Ambivalence versus Remorse

- 4.1 All participants were asked if they were aware, at the time they were engaging in these driving behaviours, that they were illegal. On the whole, respondents did report that they were fully aware that they were breaking the law either at the time when they were driving, or on reflection:

*"I suppose in the back of my head, I know I shouldn't be doing it, but I don't think I was actively thinking, "This is illegal." [Male 28]*

- 4.2 Whilst there was an almost unanimous acceptance that what they were doing was legally wrong, there was less acceptance that such behaviours should be considered illegal and no respondents demonstrated remorse for their actions. Indeed, the primary attitude that was expressed was one of ambivalence.

### Justifications for Illegal Driving

- 4.3 A number of different justifications were put forward by respondents in defence of their driving behaviours. The main justifications were that drivers considered they were 'always in control', that their behaviour was normative, that it was necessary to break driving laws in order to get things done (and done quickly), that behaviours were not dangerous or laws were not credible.

### Self as a Competent Driver

- 4.4 Overwhelmingly, the biggest justification for engaging in illegal driving behaviours was a perception among almost all drivers that they never did anything unless they felt they were 'in control'. Most people perceived they were accomplished, safe and competent drivers and that, even though their behaviour may be technically illegal, they would not do it if they didn't feel they were in control. This was true of speeders, phone users and drink/drug drivers alike. Interestingly, some participants equated years' driving experience and volume of car travel with being a 'good' driver.

- 4.5 Several respondents also spoke about their driving behaviour (both legal and illegal) in terms of it being habitual, automatic and done without thought:

*"I think you just get into a habit of saying, "Well, I was fine the last time that I did it, so I'll be fine this time." [Female, 28]*

- 4.6 Whilst automaticity and driver control were expressed in almost all cases, it is important to recognise that some drivers did, with the benefit of both hindsight and prompted examination with a third party, acknowledge that these were perhaps dangerous attitudes. There was also, among some, a recognition

that, although they engaged in behaviours at the time which they felt were 'safe', they had sometimes reflected on their actions and felt differently. As one drink driver explained:

*"I did think about it at the time....I remember thinking, um, I need to use the vehicle, I need to use this transport to get from place to place, but I am over the limit now, but I felt safe. I felt it was okay to drive up until the point that I did speed, but it was essential to use the car. In retrospect, maybe it wasn't, but at the time, I convinced myself it was okay to do it...If I felt that I was unsafe, I wouldn't have got into the car. But, I was almost home before I thought, "This isn't as comfortable as I had hoped"."* [Male, 29]

- 4.7 Others did also acknowledge that sometimes they may 'lose control', but this was never seen as something they would be responsible for. When asked what might be the worst thing that could happen whilst speeding, one participant explained:

*"I lose actual control of the vehicle, whether it be through a mechanical fault, weather conditions, or somebody hitting me. Then, I've no control and...I don't like that, 'cause I can't avoid it."* [Male, 62]

- 4.8 The lack of personal blame was very much evident from such statements with people unanimously perceiving that any scenario that might arise in which they would feel 'out of control' would not be their own doing – even if they were speeding at the time. Overall, the sample demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy or confidence in their own abilities to perform almost any kind of driving behaviour.

#### Behaviours not considered risky or dangerous

- 4.9 In addition to high levels of reported self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control, most drivers failed to consider that their behaviours were risky. All speeders demonstrated a general denial that the speeds they were driving at presented a real risk, either to themselves, or others, and suggested it was the rules, rather than their behaviour, that needed to change:

*"I just don't feel like I'm being unsafe. Yes, technically, you're breaking the rules, but you maybe feel that the rules need looking at."* [Male 28]

- 4.10 Phone users also used the rationale of 'feeling safe' to defend their behaviours. One female respondent who regularly used her phone to text while driving also commented that she would not do it unless she felt safe:

*"If I didn't feel confident or safe at the wheel.. then I wouldn't do it. Just 'cause it's what I've always done and I feel safe when I do it and I wouldn't put my kids at risk...if I didn't feel safe."* [Female, 29]

- 4.11 Others described how answering phone calls in the car was also safer than letting the phone ring which they perceived as a distraction in itself:

*“Cause it’s quite distracting. It can be quite distracting – the phone ringing and you’re thinking, “Well, what can it be about?”... So, in that respect, it can be almost worse than not answering it ‘cause you’re wondering “What can it be?” and not concentrating on what you’re actually doing. At least if you pick up the phone, and it’s only, “Can you pick up a bag of sugar?”, or something like that, you know it’s nothing life threatening.” [Male, 50]*

4.12 Similar statements were made by other drivers who described having to answer calls in case the nature of the call was ‘urgent’. For example, something may be wrong with their children, or an urgent situation may have arisen at work. It is interesting to note that none of those interviewed had ever received calls of such a nature yet the perceived chances of this being the reason for the call seemed to be higher than the perceived risks of being involved in an accident as a result of talking while driving. One participant spoke in terms of ‘life threatening’ nature of phone calls yet, when asked about the likely risks of being involved in an accident as a result of taking such a call did not recognise, as real, the ‘life threatening’ nature of his behaviour. This may suggest that some drivers are not thinking about the situation or environment in which they are currently placed when driving, and that the risks of things occurring elsewhere are seen as more real and more pressing.

4.13 Similarly, even drink and drug drivers felt that the behaviours they engaged in were not unsafe:

*“I didn’t feel it was unsafe... Sometimes with drugs, you don’t really think about it, ‘cause you still feel ‘normal’.” [Male, 29]*

*“It [taking drugs] doesn’t really affect you at all. It’s no worse than driving when you’re a bit tired, and you’ve woken up early...” [Male, 22]*

4.14 Indeed, one drink driver explained that he felt that his driving was improved and safer while intoxicated because it made him drive more conservatively:

*“It [the cannabis] did stop me speeding. I thought I was going really fast, and I looked down and I was only going 65 mph... I think I’m even more cautious in that state [when ‘stoned’]. I’ll anticipate more and give people more space... I’m more relaxed, basically.” [Male, 22]*

4.15 The perception of themselves as competent and low-risk drivers was supported, they perceived, by the low frequency with which they had been involved in road traffic accidents or had been caught by the police. Although most participants had received previous penalties for their driving, the frequency of being caught, compared to the frequency with which they engaged in reported illegal behaviours, was minimal. This too was used as justification for continuing to engage in illegal driving behaviours and is discussed in more detail below. Overall, the sentiments expressed suggest a strong relationship between low perceived risks and the behaviours displayed.

### “Everyone Does It”

- 4.16 Speeding, in particular, was justified in almost all cases by the perception that it was something that the majority of drivers did, i.e. it was a normative behaviour. This was especially true on motorways and dual carriageways with speed limits of 70 mph, where people perceived that it would be counter to the norm to stick to the designated thresholds:

*“You are well aware that you are in the inside lane and you’re going at 75 mph and the majority of cars are overtaking you...So, I think that gives you a sense of it’s okay, if you see what I mean.” [Female, 41]*

- 4.17 Similarly, people felt that use of mobile phones was also widespread and that they represented the ‘norm’ in engaging in this type of behaviour.
- 4.18 One driver, in discussions around his drug driving, also explained that, since it was common practice among his peers, he did not see that he was substantively different from the norm:

*“It just seems like normal, acceptable behaviour. It just doesn’t seem wrong to me.” [Male, 22]*

- 4.19 Use of positive moral norms to defend their behaviours was widespread despite people recognising that their behaviour was illegal. This suggests, therefore, that among those interviewed, there were feelings that ‘everyone breaks the law’ when it comes to driving. The difference, perhaps, is that for some drivers this illegal behaviour was isolated to just one or two different types of activity whereas, among the sample interviewed here, the range and prevalence of behaviours was more widespread.

### Laws as Non-credible

- 4.20 Feelings that their behaviours were socially widespread were backed-up by perceptions that the reason ‘most people drive illegally’ was because existing laws were too rigid, out-of-date or unrealistic. This was especially true for speed limits on major roads, which most respondents felt were too low:

*“Cars are able to go a lot faster now than they were when the speed limits were introduced...Speed limits are perhaps ‘over-cautious’.” [Male 28]*

- 4.21 As a result, many respondents explained that they used their own personal judgements in deciding how to drive and whether the laws should be applied to their particular journey:

*“I realise that it is illegal, but I try and gauge for myself to say, “Well, what do I think are the risks of getting caught? Are they high?” I guess that’s one thing that comes across my mind and also, “What is the actual risk to other road users, or pedestrians?”...So, even if it is illegal, I think, “Well, what’s the risk?” You know?” [Male, 44]*

- 4.22 Although such sentiments perhaps suggest some sense of consideration and judgement, rather than blanket illegality, people failed to grasp that, if everyone was making autonomous decisions, the roads would be chaotic.

### Pressures of Time

- 4.23 In addition to their own perceived competence, another of the most frequently cited reasons for driving illegally or dangerously was time pressure. One respondent explained how his speeding was almost always motivated by 'not wanting to be late':

*"I hate being late for things...I know it's not a very good excuse, but that's the reason why I do it [speed]. I don't do it for thrill seeking, or the fact that I'm breaking the law, I do it because I feel as if I've got to make up the extra minutes. Although, to be honest, it probably only gives me an extra 30 odd seconds at the end of the journey, probably. But, it's my perception that I'm getting there quicker." [Male, 50]*

- 4.24 Another participant, a busy working mother of four who admitted to regularly speeding and driving without her seatbelt (even though she had previous convictions for both), explained:

*"I think it's just the absolute, the huge time pressure that you're under. And, people say, 'make more time', but when you've got four children, there's no such thing as planning because... because anything can happen before you leave the house and normally, anything and everything does happen." [Female, 41]*

- 4.25 It is interesting to note that some people spoke about 'lateness' as being less socially acceptable than speeding. Such sentiments suggest that moral norms around lateness were seen as being more important and influential in their decision making process than moral norms around safety on the roads. They may also reflect, however, the fact that people perceived lateness as a more visible social faux pas than speeding, which could more easily go undetected or unseen. This again highlights the interaction between perceived social norms and the behaviours displayed.

### 'Getting the job done'

- 4.26 In addition to avoiding lateness, some people justified speeding as a means of getting things done quickly and reaching their destination as soon as possible even when time pressures were not present:

*"I wasn't really time pressured, because I had time once I got to Edinburgh before I met her [my friend]. I just, in my own mind, I wanted to be there... at the end of my journey." [Female, 62]*

- 4.27 One respondent also described using his phone for sending emails while in the car if he perceived that it would take away from his workload at other times in the day, i.e. *"It's one less thing I need to do." [Male, 44]*

- 4.28 One female texter also explained that the ‘sender’ of the text, and the reason the text was being sent (including whether it needed urgent attention) would determine her likelihood of responding straight away whilst driving. Such explanations suggest that the types of illegal behaviours being discussed were not indiscriminate, and that there was some consideration as to whether the behaviour merited committing an illegal act on different occasions.
- 4.29 Discussions with one drink driver and one drug driver also revealed the same instrumental reasons for engaging in their illegal activities, e.g. a need to get home or take others home. When asked why he chose to drive after smoking cannabis at a recent party, one driver explained:

*“The fact that I had work the next day and I had to get home, basically.”  
[Male, 22]*

- 4.30 And, when asked why he chose to drive while significantly over the alcohol limit following a recent Halloween party, another driver explained:

*“There were things that we needed to do. There were passengers in the car and I didn’t want to let my passengers down.” [Male, 29]*

- 4.31 Both socially, and for work purposes, people break the law in order to achieve a sense of ‘getting things done’, it seems. The expressed sense of urgency was not dissimilar to the arguments presented around pressures of time, however, the motivation here seems more about achieving finality to tasks.

### **Intentionality**

- 4.32 Psychological research shows that one of the strongest determinants of behaviour is people’s overall desire to perform that behaviour, otherwise referred to as intentionality (see Appendix B). Interestingly, this research showed that while drivers offered an array of different justifications for their behaviour, many also defended their driving in terms of a lack of intentionality. Indeed, despite all reporting repeat and, in most cases, long-term illegal driving patterns, there seemed to be a general refusal among participants to consider that their illegal driving was intentional:

*“I don’t go out and say, “Right, I’m gonna go out and speed today”, it’s just, you actually don’t think about it. You actually do not think about it. You just get in the car.” [Female, 56]*

- 4.33 This lack of intentionality was used by many as a means of justifying their behaviours, especially speeding. The attitude that, if it is not intentional, it is okay, was a strong emergent theme and seemed to be one of the key things that participants used to differentiate themselves between being someone who didn’t always stick to the rules, as opposed to a ‘prolific illegal driver’ (discussed in more detail below).
- 4.34 Several female drivers who reported that they ‘forgot’ to use their seatbelts when driving (especially short journeys) also used this as justification:

*“Like this morning, I was thinking, “I’m gonna be late”, so I just started the car...I was in a hurry, and I didn’t really think about it [putting on her seatbelt], to be honest....It just happened. And then, I’m driving along and then I think, “I haven’t got me seatbelt on”...You just get distracted...We’ve all done it.” [Female, 41]*

- 4.35 In addition to perceiving her behaviour as unintentional, and therefore defensible, the above participant again implied an element of social prevalence which added weight to her defence. This lack of intentionality was also evident among those who said that they simply did not know what the alcohol limits were, or that it was illegal to drive without a rear restraint in the back of a car, almost such that, if they knew, they would not do it.
- 4.36 Despite these expressions of unintended action, when asked directly if they knew they were breaking the law, all participants said “Yes”, and when asked if they thought about not engaging in a particular activity at any point during their recall of a recent ‘illegal’ journey, most also said that they did not consider stopping or taking alternative actions.
- 4.37 The use of un-intentionality as a defence for illegal driving seems to contradict the other main theme to emerge from drivers that they perceived they were ‘always in control’, and perhaps suggests that a part of feeling ‘in control’ is not thinking too much about their behaviours, i.e. an inherent automaticity to driving that makes people feel safe.

## **Perceived Social Acceptability of Different Behaviours**

### Speeding

- 4.38 Most people perceived that the majority of drivers were speeders to some extent and, in particular, the prevalence with which they observed others breaking the speed limits on motorways and other major roads was seen as evidence that it was socially acceptable to do so:
- “I think that driving at 75 mph on a motorway must be [socially acceptable] because, literally, 50% of the cars on there do it. If you go at 70 mph on the motorway, you will be passed, frequently.” [Male, 50]*
- 4.39 Although all respondents reported that speeding on major roads was acceptable, there was some variation in the different thresholds or upper tolerance levels that people described. For most, driving at 80 or 90 mph on the motorway or dual carriageway was seen as acceptable for both themselves and others, subject to road conditions, but regular speeds much beyond this were not widely admitted.
- 4.40 People’s convictions were less firm with regards to speeding on other types of roads, and the general consensus was that drivers needed to use their discretion when deciding if it was safe to drive over the speed limits on roads designated as 30, 40, 50 or 60 mph zones. Overall, however, with the exception ‘20’s plenty’ zones and residential areas (discussed below) speeding was seen as a prevalent and non-serious form of law breaking.

## Mobile Phone Use

- 4.41 Generally speaking, people felt that use of mobile phones to take and make calls, to email and to send and receive texts was acceptable and many commented that this was evidenced in the prevalence with which it could be observed on the roads.

*“Nearly every second car you pass, somebody is on the phone.”  
[Female, 56]*

- 4.42 Although most people perceived that mobile phone usage probably should attract more social stigma, several comments were also made about where to ‘draw the line’ with hands-free driving. People compared it to driving while holding a cigarette which they saw as comparable but not illegal. People also queried whether there was any significant difference between speaking on the phone and speaking to passengers in the car, in terms of the level of distraction that it caused. That said, most drivers who did report using their mobile phones while driving recognised that there were some inherent (albeit low-likelihood) risks such that, if they were travelling with others, they may ask their passengers to take the calls/respond to emails or texts on their behalf.
- 4.43 Overall, use of mobile phones for either calling or texting was perceived as less socially acceptable than speeding on main roads - again, because people perceived that it took away from the ‘control’ over the vehicle that the driver would have. Interestingly, in two cases, participants explained that, despite being less socially acceptable, they would be more likely to text when driving than to speed, not for safety purposes, but due to the relative perceived risks of being caught attached to each type of behaviour:

*“If you’re speeding, the proof is there, whereas, if you’re texting, they’d have to prove you were texting. Although, I suppose they could actually prove you were texting, couldn’t they? It just seems more obvious that you’d be caught speeding, than texting.” [Female, 29]*

- 4.44 Indeed, the same female participant went on to explain that she knew the behaviour was inherently wrong, and illegal, but that she had developed strategies for disguising her texting when driving to minimise risks of detection. Another male driver, who said that he repeatedly sent and received texts whilst driving, shared this view and also described his strategies for avoiding detection:

*“I probably just had it [the phone], you know, not raised up, but sitting in my lap...I don’t see that anyone could catch me. You know, a policeman would literally have to be, probably beside me, like in the other lane...I can’t really see a way of getting caught texting, because it’s done so discretely.” [Male 28]*

- 4.45 Interestingly, the descriptions of phone use for texting while driving highlighted the clear dangers associated with diverted attention not only during the communication, but in keeping an eye out for police and taking actions to disguise the behaviour.

### Not using Restraints

- 4.46 Most people perceived that seatbelt use was common practice among the majority of drivers. Respondents felt that using a seatbelt in the front of the car was sensible, and required little effort and so they did not see it as something that was difficult to comply with. The main person at risk for non-compliance was seen as the driver and so there was little social stigma attached to non-compliance since it was considered 'drivers' choice'.
- 4.47 As described above, some people were unaware that rear seatbelt use was mandatory and, where people were aware, some suggested that this again was perhaps a passenger's prerogative since the only potential victim was the person themselves. This perhaps indicates a lack of awareness of the harm that can be done to others by non-compliance.

### Drink and Drug Driving

- 4.48 Perhaps the strongest sentiments with regards to social acceptability were made in relation to drink and drug driving. Almost unanimously, participants were critical and non-approving of drink and drug driving and perceived this as the worst of all illegal driving behaviours that were discussed.
- 4.49 This was true for all but three participants – two of whom admitted to engaging in such activities and another who felt that it was a driver's personal choice, although he himself had not ever driven under the influence. The reason for this was, he explained, that different people had different levels of tolerance towards alcohol and so some people could potentially still drive safely even when over the 'legal' limit, whilst recognising that others were dangerous after just one drink.
- 4.50 One participant commented that they felt the social stigma around drink driving was something that would be reflected across his generation but also observed that the importance of not driving under the influence had, perhaps, not been continued into younger or subsequent generations of drivers:

*"When I started to drive, there were a lot of people drink driving, but they were an older generation. Younger people didn't tend to do it. And, I don't know whether it's starting to change again, cause maybe people aren't paying attention to it so much. But the generation I came through, they don't tend to drink and drive." [Male, 44]*

- 4.51 In contrast, another participant reported that she felt that younger people nowadays were more cognisant of the dangers of drink driving than people of her own generation had been:

*"I mean, I know my son, if we go out for a drink, he'll have a coke. He doesn't drink when he's driving...his friends all seem to be like that." [Female, 62]*

- 4.52 Interestingly, the drivers who admitted to engaging in this type of behaviour were all in their 20s and the respondent who was ambivalent towards it was in

his 60s, i.e. at opposite ends of the age range who took part. This does perhaps suggest a generational element to the perceived acceptability, and likelihood, of engaging in drink driving.

- 4.53 As with speeding and phone use, even those who engaged in drink and drug driving displayed some notion of an upper tolerance or threshold beyond which they would not venture:

*“Yeah, I’d still drive and take drugs. It depends what drug. If you’re obviously tripping on acid, it’s different...and some of my friends drive when actually smoking a joint. I wouldn’t do that myself.” [Male, 22]*

- 4.54 This shows that everyone has a level at which behaviours are seen as not acceptable.

- 4.55 Overall, drink and drug driving were seen as ‘worse’ than all of the other behaviours listed, the main reasons being a perceived lack of control and a perception that, unlike all other illegal behaviours, it could not be done safely:

*“I know that texting when you’re driving, and speeding when you’re driving is illegal, but it just doesn’t seem as bad...I hate people who drink and drive. It’s just ‘cause you’re not in control, are you? You can’t have a drink and safely drive, whereas I feel when I’m texting, I can safely do it.” [Female, 29]*

- 4.56 As well as highlighting the general disdain that drink driving attracted, this response shows that two of the main factors people used for justifying their own illegal behaviours (being in control and feeling safe) were also used to criticise drink driving because it was considered that they could not be achieved while intoxicated. It is interesting that the drink drivers who were interviewed did, however, feel they were in control and safe when driving while intoxicated, again showing the subjective nature of justifications used.

### **The ‘Worse Offender’ and the ‘Worse Offence’**

- 4.57 Even though many drivers acknowledged they were guilty of regularly engaging in illegal, non-compliant and sometimes socially unacceptable behaviours, there was a shared view among participants that there was always someone who was a “worse offender” than themselves. This reasoning was particularly evident in conversations about motorway speeding (i.e. there is always someone driving faster).

- 4.58 It was also evident in discussions with mobile phone users. In particular, people described how they would only use the phone for short periods, while they knew that others spoke for longer periods or even entire journeys using a hand held phone, with apparent disregard of the dangers:

*“I see plenty of people, with the phone at their ear...I would never, ever contemplate doing that...I tend to be more subtle, and stick it under my chin, or under the wheel...I look at them and think, “I’m not as dangerous - they just don’t care.” [Male, 44]*

- 4.59 Others described how they would use their phone to ‘answer’ calls but not to initiate them, which they considered as being ‘worse’, and to respond to texts, but not initiate them. Sending ‘short’ text messages was also seen as reasonable, but not ‘long’ messages, which they perceived only a dangerous driver would do.
- 4.60 People also described how they carried out their illegal activities, not as a result of pleasure seeking or for its own sake, but because there was practical or functional reason (e.g. speeding to get to a work meeting, or texting friends/family to keep them abreast of their likely arrival times, etc.) Having instrumental reasons for engaging in illegal driving behaviour was seen as a possible defence of their actions. Indeed, the perception was very much that the ‘worse’ offender would engage in such unscrupulous behaviours, without regard for their purpose, and that this, in itself, made them ‘worse’.
- 4.61 Even among drug drivers, the upper tolerance and ‘worse offender’ scenario arose in discussions, and the worse offender was described as someone who *“regardless of their level of intoxication, might just get up and get in the car.”* [Male, 29]
- 4.62 Similarly, although people recognised that what they were doing was illegal, many people suggested that criminal driving was secondary to other more serious offences, such as theft, physical assault or criminal damage, and used this as a justification for their own actions. The perception that they were not “real criminals” seemed to be shared by a large number of drivers who considered that society accepted most people would drive illegally at some point. This concept of the ‘worse’ offence seemed to justify their own actions:
- “Sure, talking on the phone isn’t good, and it is against the law, but it’s not smashing some old lady in the face with a brick.”* [Male, 50]
- “I guess when I compare it [illegal driving] to [other] people breaking into people’s houses, and mugging people, I’m not the worst offender in society.”* [Male, 44]
- 4.63 People just did not consider their behaviours were ‘that’ illegal or that they could potentially even be seen that way or result in something punishable by a jail term. One person who took part in the pilot interviews likened illegal driving to ‘littering’.

### **Defining the Prolific Illegal Driver**

- 4.64 These factors combined might go some way to explaining why none of those who took part considered him/herself, on first asking, to be a prolific illegal driver. The idea that there were many other people who were ‘more criminal’ or regular abusers of the law meant that, only when prompted to consider the prevalence of their own self-reported behaviours, did people recognise that this label could potentially apply to them.

- 4.65 When asked to describe someone who they felt would fit this label, definitions included:

*“I am a repeat offender...But, I’d like to think that I’m not a prolific offender because I think, well...I’m in control when I do it, I would say that ‘prolific’ makes it sound so extreme.” [Male, 29]*

*“I suppose that prolific means that you’re doing huge amounts of illegalness and repeat is kind of that you have one behaviour that you do all the time. Prolific sounds a bit more dramatic, like you’re being drunk and speeding and on the phone and carrying lots of children in the back seat, which is pretty stupid.” [Male 28]*

- 4.66 Such descriptions clearly show the subjective nature of perceived prolific illegal driving and what is, and is not, considered safe or acceptable. Participants who had clearly reported engaging in multiple, repeat driving offences seemed to defend their own behaviours whilst at the same time describe the exact same behaviours by others as unacceptable. This was because, unlike themselves, they perceived the other driver was not ‘in control’ or was acting beyond their own tolerance level. The fact that participants’ own tolerance levels were already set above those prescribed by the law was not something they seemed to acknowledge as meaning that they too were already ‘too fast’, ‘too dangerous’ or ‘too risky’.

Drivers were aware that they were breaking the law and justifications included that they saw themselves as competent drivers; that they considered their behaviours not to be risky or dangerous; that “everyone does it”; that they considered the laws not to be credible or up-to-date; and that they were under pressures of time. While drivers offered an array of justifications for their behaviour, many also defended their driving in terms of a lack of intentionality. Other behaviours were simply not considered as being socially unacceptable and perceived social norms had an important role to play in the behaviours displayed. There was a shared view among participants that there was always someone who was a “worse offender” than themselves and none of those who took part considered themselves to be a prolific illegal driver.

## 5 EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DRIVING BEHAVIOURS

This chapter explores the perceived influence of other people on participants' illegal driving behaviour, including family, friends or colleagues as well as other drivers. The interaction between illegal driving and structural and situational factors (such as road type and traffic conditions) is also discussed.

### Influence of Other People

5.1 While most people defended their driving behaviours in terms of being experienced and 'in control', many did concede that their behaviours were, in some cases, influenced by factors external to themselves. Specifically, the mention of 'peer pressure' arose in two quite contrasting contexts. Firstly, it was referred to in the more conventional sense that 'known others' had encouraged drivers to change their behaviour in particular scenarios (e.g. family, friends or colleagues). Secondly, peer pressure was mentioned in relation to 'unknown others', principally other drivers.

#### 'Known others' - the influence of family, friends or colleagues

5.2 It was reported that the presence of children and spouses in the car made people drive more carefully. Notably, participants who had children explained that their children's presence as passengers meant that they consciously changed their driving behaviours, including driving more slowly and not using their phones whilst driving.

5.3 People who reported not wearing their own seatbelt were (in all but one case) insistent on passengers wearing their seatbelts, and this was especially the case for drivers who regularly transported children. When asked about letting their own or others' children ride in the car without a restraint, this was seen as simply unacceptable and something that drivers would not do. This was despite them saying that, on the same such journey, they themselves may be inclined to start the journey without using their own restraint. Excuses for this included 'distractions' by children and being 'in a hurry' and, therefore, the priority being given to others' safety over one's own.

5.4 The main negative context in which family members were cited as exerting an influence over decisions to drive illegally was where people said that they would almost always answer the telephone while driving, in response to partners or children. This was because they perceived the calls may relate to family emergencies or the need to convey an urgent message:

*"Normally, at weekends, my other half is with me ...and my kids are with me, so I know it's nothing to do with the kids. So, it's the fact that you might be missing some problem with them when you're on your way to work, whereas at weekends, we tend to all go out as a family so I know it's nothing." [Male, 50]*

5.5 While several respondents used this as a defence for their use of mobile phones while driving, it seems that the actual nature of most calls were non-urgent and yet drivers still tended to take the call "just in case".

- 5.6 Most people interviewed were in employment of some kind, and many referred to colleagues in discussions about what motivated them to drive in the ways that they did. Colleagues (often bosses) were mentioned as making people feel pressure to arrive on time (and thus speed) and to take telephone calls when driving, in order to deal with 'urgent' work-related matters:

*"People, you know, they try the office and if they can't get me there, they try the mobile. The phone goes all the time for me... You know, 15 minutes before I reach the office, er, you know, people are expecting you to be available for work even though you've not started and then, when it's past 5pm, they still think you're working when you're actually not. I have a Bluetooth wireless system in the car, and when that connects, I use the phone as hands free. Sometimes, for some reason, it doesn't connect and then [the call] can be work related and then I feel under pressure to use the phone."* [Male, 44]

- 5.7 In none of the interviews was it obvious that people felt under immediate peer pressure to engage in illegal activities from friends in the car or as a result of rejecting pro-social norms in favour of negative sub-cultural norms around driving. Indeed, overall, among those interviewed, it was colleagues rather than family or friends who emerged at the main reference points for discussions around peer pressure. While this will obviously be determined to some extent by the nature of the sample who engaged with the work (including five full-time working males), it does nonetheless suggest that stereotypical views of peer pressure from friends among young drivers to drive illegally are perhaps too narrow. The pool of social associates who influence older drivers' behaviour may go much wider and for many is more work-related than recreationally related.

#### 'Unknown others' - the influence of other drivers

- 5.8 Interviews revealed that most drivers perceived their own driving to be much safer, and themselves more competent than other drivers. People expressed annoyance at other drivers, particularly in relation to driving too slowly on motorways and dual carriageways, as well as people who 'tailgate' or follow too closely. Where other drivers were seen to exert the most influence over illegal driving, however, was 'forcing' participants to drive faster:

*"You're going with the flow. You don't want somebody behind you getting all 'ratty', going 'peep, peep'."* [Female, 56]

- 5.9 Indeed, some people even explained that not speeding, or keeping up with traffic flow, could potentially be dangerous and so this motivated them to follow others:

*"You've got to [speed] to keep up with other traffic, to be honest. If you don't, you're gonna cause problems... I think you actually end up as a risk to other users, so there's a pressure to drive at that speed."* [Male, 44]

- 5.10 While 'peer strangers' were not mentioned directly as having an influence over any kinds of driving behaviour other than speeding, it is worth noting that people's observations that most people engaged in illegal driving of some kind (as witnessed on the roads by them) was used as a defence for their driving (as discussed above). The influence of unknown others, therefore, seems to provide drivers with a sense of 'strength in numbers' as well as making them feel justified in driving too fast so as not to become a victim to other people's illegal driving, i.e. if you can't beat them, join them.
- 5.11 Overall, while 'known others' were more likely to play a part in contributing to drivers' commission of mobile phone offences, 'unknown others' were more likely to play a part in speeding offences.

### **Structural and Situational Factors**

- 5.12 All drivers demonstrated at least some level of regard for risk and potential dangers on the roads, and a number of key factors emerged as playing a part in people's decisions to break the law, including the 'type' of road, traffic conditions and the time of day people were driving. Familiarity with the roads being used also spanned these categories.

#### Motorways and dual carriageways

- 5.13 As discussed above, speeding on motorways was largely accepted by participants with motorways being described as the "safest roads" due to lack of pedestrians, and the good visibility they afforded. More people (14 out of 15) said they regularly drove over the speed limits on these types of roads more than any other road type.
- 5.14 There was less uniformity either in actual behaviours or attitudes towards use of mobile phones whilst driving in 75 mph areas. For some, driving at speed meant that using their mobile phone was dangerous and for others, using a mobile phone in a built-up area or a more urban road was seen as higher risk:

*"If I was on the dual carriageway where you're going at a higher speed, I probably wouldn't take the call. I'd wait for a layby. If it was in town... it's a lower speed, I would consider that less risk." [Female, 62]*

*"I wouldn't text... if I was just doing wee short journeys, but I would if I was on my way to Edinburgh [on the dual carriageway]." [Female, 29]*

- 5.15 Reasons given for altering the likelihood of answering or not answering the phone on different roads included risks to others as well as risks of being caught:

*"I probably wouldn't answer my phone to my ear in any urban area, like Glasgow, or whatever because you're so much more likely to be caught, and I have been [caught]." [Male, 28]*

- 5.16 One of the drug drivers interviewed explained that he too perceived major roads as 'safer' roads on which to drive while intoxicated:

*“Basically, being on a dual carriageway as well, it’s a very safe type of road. So, basically, in my opinion, being a bit ‘stoned’ doesn’t make you any worse a driver. It might even make you a better driver, ‘cause I don’t speed when I do it [smoke cannabis].” [Male, 22]*

- 5.17 None of the participants commented on the impact of road type on their likelihood of wearing a seatbelt, or insisting that others did, but it does seem that most journeys made without seatbelts are local journeys.

#### Urban Areas and the ‘20’s Plenty’ Zone

- 5.18 Almost unanimously, respondents demonstrated a respect and understanding for the need for 20 mph zones in specific areas and the need for compliance with these restrictions:

*“If I’m near a school, the risks change. Or, if I’m driving down a road and there’s parked cars, then something else happens inside to change the awareness for caution, especially when you know you are distracted....When you go to one of these 20’s plenty areas, you do drive at 20 cause I guess that the risk has changed from a normal 30 limit. That does tend to work for me, the 20’s plenty.” [Male, 44]*

- 5.19 Indeed, the majority of drivers said that their speeding in 30 mph zones was restricted to country roads with these limits, and that they would not drive above 30 in residential or pedestrianized areas, again, due to the presence of vulnerable road users and pedestrians and associated risks of accidents:

*“I don’t drive fast in a 30 speed limit. Just because of kids and stuff, I’d be terrified that I’d knock somebody down in the streets.” [Female, 29]*

- 5.20 In only one case did the respondent express that he felt that such zones sent a wrong message to pedestrians – namely that the responsibility for road safety lay solely with the driver. Instead, he considered, it should be a shared responsibility between the driver and pedestrian:

*“I agree with 20 mph [zones] near schools, but when it’s a built up area, I disagree with the excuse that people give, “You’ve got to think of the children.” No – why don’t the children think of the traffic?” It’s always been a 30 and I think the reason they changed it was because of the young drivers speeding, so it’s an easy blanket cover. I just think it’s a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction.” [Male, 62]*

- 5.21 It should be stressed that this was a minority view and extreme in its presentation compared to all other drivers who were interviewed. There were also no differences either in terms of age or gender in whether respondents said that they would comply with 20 mph limits – all gave the same reasons, i.e. not wanting to endanger the life of children.

## Country roads

- 5.22 One of the main justifications given for driving above the speed limit on country roads was drivers' familiarity with such roads. Several respondents said that they would only drive well beyond the limit on country roads if the road was known to them.
- 5.23 One participant described his thought processes when making decisions whether or not to answer mobile phone calls while driving, which demonstrated that the nature of the call, followed by the familiarity of the road, were both paramount in his decision whether or not to engage in the activity:

*"The first thing I'm thinking is, I look to see who it is and then I try and make a quick decision about, would I hit the answer [button], or else just let it ring? While I'm looking at that, I've got a feeling of where I am, and, as I say, it's usually driving to and from the office, so it's a route I take regularly, and I know the route very well, so I'm quite complacent, I guess. I know where I am, I know what's coming, what the bends are, the hazards on the roads." [Male, 44]*

- 5.24 Indeed, a common theme among people who reported speeding on rural and minor roads was that familiarity with the roads made them feel confident they could predict any potential dangers (of accidents or being caught):

*"I know that my reactions aren't quick enough to 'hare' along country roads that I don't know, because, I mean, I'm very aware that you can have a sudden 90 degree turn with no sign in some of the smaller roads, and also, if someone is coming around at the same kind of speed it would be suicide really...It's only roads that I know." [Male, 50]*

- 5.25 Respondents who lived on the outskirts of a town and who used rural roads to make journeys between connecting towns/villages also said that they felt some 30 and 40 mph restrictions were not warranted, especially 'after dark' or during hours where there was likely to be little or no pedestrian traffic or other cars on the roads. If people were familiar with the country road, and knew they were likely to be one of the only users at any given time, they saw no problems with driving beyond the speed limit. When describing country roads that were regularly used, people also explained they felt that 'straight stretches' of such roads did not pose any dangers and so felt justified in speeding, so long as the visibility was good.
- 5.26 Views on use of mobile phones on country roads were mixed – some people would do it and others would not:

*"If it was a windy, country lane, I wouldn't because I couldn't take my hands off the wheel to pick up the phone and answer it." [Male, 50]*

*"But, when I'm in the 'sticks', and there's not even any other cars on the road, then I'm gonna answer my phone, especially as it is always work that phones me. That's the only time I hold the phone to my ear." [Male, 28]*

- 5.27 Only one driver (who self-reported regular drug driving) explained that they occasionally drove dangerously on country roads for the ‘thrill’ of it:

*“There’s a couple of times when, driving on the back roads, sometimes you do like to go round the corners quite fast. ‘Cause that is fun. But the last time I did that, I nearly took it too far, and I nearly hit the sign board.” [Male, 22]*

- 5.28 The fact that this type of behaviour had never previously resulted in an accident for this driver meant he did not perceive it to be overly dangerous. The same driver also felt that the chances of being caught for speeding on these types of roads were slim, but he did recognise that being charged with dangerous driving was a possibility:

*“The police aren’t likely to be on the country roads, ‘cause the limit there is 60 and you can’t really speed ‘cause they’re too windy anyway. You’d only get stopped for dangerous driving” [Male, 22]*

- 5.29 The low risk of being caught on country roads was also raised by a repeat texter who explained that:

*“Because of where I work, it’s quite remote, and so I do generally answer the phone because the likelihood of getting caught on country roads is slim to none. And it [the call]...could be important.” [Male, 28]*

- 5.30 When considering risks of accidents, the same respondent described how he would answer telephone calls whilst driving on country roads, rather than stopping because he perceived this was less dangerous:

*“People don’t really stop on country roads. That’s not what you do. And that could potentially cause more confusion and more accidents, if I randomly stopped on the side of the road [to take a call].” [Male, 28]*

- 5.31 Another young female driver living in a rural area described a general acceptance among her and her peers that there was also a low risk of being caught on rural roads:

*“Around here [rural borders], there’s never anybody out. The police are usually too busy drinking tea.” [Female, 18]*

- 5.32 One other male explained how, at night, he felt safer on country roads because of the improved forewarning of oncoming traffic:

*“I do travel through some of the smaller country roads to get to work and it depends if I’m running a bit late or not on whether I put the foot down. [And] because it’s been darker in the mornings and at night-times, I feel as if you can go faster because you can see the lights coming round corners – you can see the other cars. Whereas, when it’s lighter, you tend not to go quite as fast because you only see the car when it’s there, when you see it.” [Male, 50]*

- 5.33 Speeders on country roads also often used the absence of pedestrians as a reason for not needing to stick to speed limits on such roads:

*“If you’re in a 30, there’s gonna be pavements about and pedestrians, usually. If it’s anywhere else...in the country, back roads, nobody is really out and about walking. Whereas, near a school, there’s obviously children, and you really don’t want to hit a child.” [Male, 22]*

- 5.34 Such sentiments again were often accompanied by direct comparisons with the 20’s plenty zones or restrictions around schools, which people all respected. Such areas, it seems, tend to police themselves whereas country roads, where drivers were less visible to others (including the police), were generally seen as being open to discretionary driving.

### Traffic conditions

- 5.35 A number of respondents reported that they were more likely to break the law (especially in relation to speeding) at times when they perceived the roads were quieter and there was marginal risk to others as well as slim chances of being caught:

*“I probably made a judgement that, at this time of day, and because I was running so late, it was okay to push the speed limit...Because there were no other cars on the road at the time, I guess, the deterrent of being caught wasn’t really significant for me.” [Female, 41]*

- 5.36 This is interesting because other drivers described how, if the roads were quieter, they would feel less pressure to drive fast or keep up with others and so would be more inclined to stick to prescribed limits:

*“To be honest, if the road was clear in the morning, I would just drive at the speed limit. But the road isn’t clear. So, I guess, if I set out an hour earlier...I could do the speed limit, and there wouldn’t be any pressure.” [Male, 44]*

- 5.37 Road ‘quietness’ seems to be a reason for speeding for some participants, perhaps as a justification for their actions:

*“You don’t have an impression of the speed you’re doing when the road is quiet. And then, when you’re in with a lot of traffic, you ‘go with the flow’. I know that’s not really an excuse, but that’s my excuse and I’m sticking to it.” [Female, 56]*

- 5.38 Again, some respondents suggested that they felt it was safer to ‘drive to the traffic conditions’ than to stick within pre-specified legal limits and, as such, this was often voiced as an excuse for speeding:

*“I think the speed limits are more of a ‘guide’ really... You drive, basically, as fast as you think you should. You drive to road conditions.” [Male, 22]*

- 5.39 Again, such views do indicate that the sample of drivers who were interviewed here were not indiscriminate in their driving and the views of themselves as competent drivers were supported by articulations that they knew how to read, and respond to, various traffic conditions. The issue, perhaps, is that for some of these drivers, their own judgements over a number of years meant they felt they knew better than the law.

### **Material Influences**

- 5.40 For some, the costs of alternative, non-illegal driving activities were seen to be too great compared with the perceived low-risk option of engaging in illegal activities, if the latter meant that their personal objectives could be achieved more quickly and easily. When discussing whether he had considered taking alternative action, rather than driving under the influence of drink and drugs on a recent night out, one participant explained that:

*“Financially as well, to leave the car somewhere, possibly pay for parking over-night, get a taxi to our destinations. That’s a lot of money financially. ‘Cause public transport is quite expensive, especially at that time of night. And, buses, as well, can be awkward.” [Male, 29]*

- 5.41 The same participant went on to elaborate that:

*“It’s like cutting corners – it’s easier, it’s quicker, it’s cheaper. I know the penalties I suppose are higher than leaving the car and getting a taxi, or a bus, taking two or three buses somewhere. It’s just the easiest. The convenience of it.” [Male, 29]*

- 5.42 Such statements show that material considerations - and specifically a weighing up of the low chances of receiving a high penalty when set against the known and inevitable costs of taking alternative, safer actions - may be sufficient to direct some people’s choices to drive illegally.

- 5.43 Indeed, a number of drivers spoke about material or financial considerations affecting their driving choices, and this seemed to be something that, in the case of speeding, might make them slow down, e.g. to reduce fuel consumption. One female driver, when asked about her reaction to seeing a mobile police unit with a speed gun on a recent occasion explained:

*“The first thing I do is I lift my foot off the accelerator and I think, “I have to conserve fuel”. That was the first thing that came into my head, that “I have to conserve fuel. Not anything like a speeding ticket or that, but that I have to conserve fuel.” [Female, 56]*

- 5.44 Another male driver who reported speeding explained that, he did sometimes consider his speed in the context of what it meant for his vehicle, rather than his own or others’ safety:

*“But, it’s not good for the car either, this constant breaking and accelerating, breaking and accelerating. You know, it’s not good for the vehicle... And, with the prices of fuel these days. That is*

*something that I think has possibly helped me drive more sedately is that I'm aware of the fact that planking your foot on and off the accelerator all the time is very fuel thirsty.” [Male, 50]*

- 5.45 Also on material considerations, one unemployed respondent explained that the biggest thing that may make him change his behaviour was a need to find, and hold-down, a job:

*“I could see it happening again [drink and drug driving]. I mean, if I wasn't pursuing this [new career], I could see the situation happening again. I would continue driving in the same way at the moment which is, sometimes after a drink, sometimes after some drugs, sometimes texting...” [Male, 29]*

- 5.46 Together, such statements show that material influences, rather than just immediate risk of being caught or having an accident, may also work in changing people's behaviours.

### **Non-human Interventions**

- 5.47 Finally, a few participants, when asked what might make them keep within the law for all future driving, suggested that technological interventions may be effective in reminding them to comply with various rules (including in-car devices and external speed limit reminders). That said, it seems that, even when available, some existing in-car devices which are designed to do just that, are not used. For example, respondents reported using their mobile phones to talk whilst driving even when they had a Bluetooth system, either because they “forgot” or because it was considered too cumbersome to set up. Others failed to put on their seatbelts even when their internal seatbelt alarm was ringing.

- 5.48 Such comments reinforce the notion that, for many, their illegal driving is unintentional and could be altered by simple, regular reminders of restrictions, however, these comments also perhaps indicate a laziness or notion that there should be shared responsibility for drivers sticking to the laws, rather than people taking direct responsibility for their actions.

Participants expressed that their behaviours were, in some cases, influenced by factors external to themselves, including perceived pressure from others to drive in particular ways, the conditions or situations in which they were driving and their consideration of the material costs of taking alternative actions. Overall, while ‘known others’ were more likely to play a part in contributing to drivers’ commission of mobile phone offences, ‘unknown others’ were more likely to play a part in speeding offences. Whilst perceived self-efficacy and control perhaps outweighed these factors in determining driving behaviours overall, it seems that these variables do, nonetheless, play a part in explaining why people choose to drive illegally.

## 6 REDUCING ILLEGAL DRIVING BEHAVIOURS: WHAT WORKS?

This chapter considers participants' views on what may be effective in reducing illegal driving behaviours. Personal punishment experiences and the perceived risk, outcomes and impacts of being caught are discussed. Discussions on Road Traffic Accident (RTA) experiences, including the outcomes and impacts of accidents and perceptions of future accident likelihood are also presented. Participants' recall of marketing campaigns and their perceived impacts is also presented.

### Personal Punishment Experiences

6.1 Of the 15 people who took part, only four reported that they had never before been caught by the police for illegal driving (either directly or via a speed camera) or received any previous penalties for doing so. All others had received previous points on their licence, six reported previous fines for speeding, two had received fines for mobile phone offences, one had received a fine for not wearing their seatbelt and one had received a conviction for another (undisclosed) type of driving offence. One respondent reported that he had previously received a driving ban and was currently sitting with nine penalty points on his licence. The females who took part reported fewer previous personal punishment experiences overall, and a narrower range of previous penalties.

6.2 In most cases, people described their previous experience of being directly stopped by the police in terms of it being caused by a temporary absence of mind, rather than as a result of their prolific engagement in illegal driving behaviours. Interestingly, many such descriptions included inferences that drivers felt annoyed at themselves for being caught, rather than remorseful. Not paying attention, instead of not driving appropriately, was often their biggest regret and some even cited annoyance as their main emotional response to being caught:

*"I guess there's a lot of emotions going on. If you've done wrong, then you know you're annoyed at yourself." [Male, 44]*

6.3 On the whole, those who had been caught by the police reflected on the experience as one of 'bad luck' and most accepted that, on the occasions that they had been caught, their being caught was justified.

### Perceived risk of being caught

6.4 Despite most drivers reporting that they had previously been caught for illegal driving, most maintained that they considered the chances of being caught again as quite small and said that it was something that they generally did not think about when driving:

*"I think I must think that the chances of getting caught are fairly low, because otherwise I wouldn't do it." [Female, 41]*

- 6.5 Women were perhaps more likely to say that they perceived the risks of being caught as low compared to men, which may have been linked to the lower prevalence of actually being caught for women (albeit only marginal):

*“I’ve never been caught not wearing my seatbelt, or anything like that. I’m quite proud of the fact that I’ve had my licence for 20 years and I’ve not had any points on my licence.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.6 For some, the risks of being caught were described as being akin to the lottery or a ‘lightning strike’, insofar as they perceived it would only happen once and, thereafter, it gave them a clean slate to continue offending (since the ‘odds’ were now reduced back down). There was, it seems, an inevitability to getting caught at some point in one’s driving career, rather than it being something that was within the driver’s control:

*“I have had times where I have just thought, regardless of how confident or comfortable I feel in the car, sometimes, I just won’t bother using the car after any intoxication, not even texting. ‘Cause, if I have done it quite frequently, it kind of feels like it’s about time now...the odds are on that I’m gonna get caught this time...I’m just waiting to get caught for what I know I’m doing wrong.” [Male, 29]*

- 6.7 Others described the risks of being caught in terms of a ‘gamble’ or ‘hope’ as if it was not within their own control:

*“I think I probably just took the chance. I hoped.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.8 These views offer an interesting contrast to drivers’ defence of their illegal behaviours as being ‘within their control’. For some, it seems that, even though they have complete confidence in their driving (even illegal driving), there is an inevitability to being caught that even they cannot control.

- 6.9 Many respondents also commented that they perceived their risks of being caught in the future were low, not because they had any intention of changing their behaviours, but because they felt they were savvy with regards to the times and places where they were most likely to be caught and so either avoided or changed their behaviours temporarily in such areas. People also described how they ‘avoided’ being caught, not by deciding to not engage in illegal activities, but by reacting quickly to a police presence:

*“I think a few times I’ve been pretty close [to being caught]. You just catch them [the police] even driving by. Or, you see a police car and you think, you drop the phone, or you hang up, that kind of thing.” [Male, 44]*

- 6.10 Perceived unlikelihood of being caught was also linked in several cases to the perception that there was a low police presence on the roads (especially country roads, as discussed above).

- 6.11 Interestingly, and related back to notions of the ‘worse offender’, many people felt that they were less likely to be caught than others who they perceived as

driving faster, using their phone more often or carrying out such behaviours as drink or drug driving. This reasoning was somewhat flawed insofar as people did not necessarily equate frequency with which people did these behaviours and their risks of being caught but rather the perceived seriousness of what they were doing. For example, people described how there was always someone driving faster than them and that they perceived it would be that driver, not themselves, who would be pulled over the police (if at all), regardless of themselves perhaps driving less excessively over the speed limit, but doing so more often.

### Outcomes and impacts of being caught

- 6.12 Overwhelmingly, people described how being caught by the police had affected their own driving behaviour but all explained that the deterrent effects had only been short-term. One woman, who had been caught several times by the police for speeding explained that:

*“Today and tomorrow and next week, yes, but how long it will stay in my mind? I don’t know. Something else will replace it in my mind. I’ll be more aware of my speed, for a short time, but as it becomes a distant memory, I just go back to normal....Probably a month or two...then I just forget [again]”. [Female, 62]*

- 6.13 Similarly, when asked if they would continue to do the same things in the future, people admitted that they most probably would:

*“Probably...I’d be telling you a lie if I said that I would definitely stick to the speed limit because I know I wouldn’t.” [Female, 56]*

- 6.14 Again, the main reasons for this were that people didn’t perceive they were really doing anything wrong, and that, given that their driving was habitual, they would simply “slip back into old habits.”

- 6.15 Other respondents also explained that, while the experience of being caught and punished had made them change their behaviours in the short term, this change was not necessarily motivated by a sense of needing to drive more safely for their own and others’ benefit, but rather to avoid losing their licence or receiving another penalty/fine or simply losing face:

*“Often, when I’m speeding, I’ll slow down if I see a speed camera or a police car, you know, you obviously you don’t want to get caught. I’ve had a speeding fine before, and it was expensive and it puts your insurance up.” [Male, 22]*

- 6.16 Indeed, the deterrent effects of being caught, as well as being relatively short-lasting, were largely described in quite selfish or self-preservation terms, rather than anyone demonstrating that being caught had made them consider the dangerousness of their driving behaviour.

## Perceptions of penalties per se

- 6.17 Existing penalties for illegal driving were seen, on the whole, to be quite ineffectual, especially financial penalties. Indeed, people often spoke about previous financial penalties as being ‘annoying’ or ‘frustrating’, but none mentioned that the fine, in itself, worked as a deterrent to future offending:

*“I don’t think increasing it [penalties] would make much of a difference. It would just make you feel worse, but I don’t think it would actually stop you from doing it.” [Male, 50]*

- 6.18 Points on drivers’ licences were also often framed as an ‘annoyance’ during discussions, rather than being considered as a real punishment or deterrent.

- 6.19 It seems that, only if penalties were significantly increased would drivers really pay attention to them as a deterrent:

*“If the penalties were greater, that would make me reassess what I do...£50 wouldn’t bother me, but £500 would.” [Female, 29]*

*“If it was a case that, if you get caught speeding, you lose your licence, absolutely [that would work].” [Female, 56]*

- 6.20 It is important to note that none of the participants had ever received high tariff penalties, for example, a custodial sentence and only one had received a driving ban, and so their comments related mostly only to fines, and points on their licences.

## Interactions with the Police

- 6.21 Most respondents reported that their experience with the police when previously having been caught for illegal driving had been cordial. Few reported that their experience had made them feel guilty:

*“Oh God, it was awful. I was worried that I was going to lose my licence ‘cause it was such a big breach as well, ‘cause I was going at 72 mph in that 30 mph limit.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.22 Although, on the whole, interactions with the police were described in positive terms, in some cases, people described confrontational and disappointing interactions which left them feeling that they had been treated unfairly. Where reported, harsh treatment by the police during one-to-one interactions was often considered as inappropriate because drivers felt that they were being treated as ‘worse’ offenders than they perceived themselves to be. As one male, who had been charged with using his phone while driving explained:

*“It is a serious offence, but I thought, “I’m not a bad person. I don’t do things normally.” And I just felt that it was a real kick in the teeth to be honest, and they were quite unpleasant and they treated me as if I’d just mowed somebody over rather than just picked up the phone...I could have been some kind of knife wielding maniac and they would*

*have treated me the same. I really objected to it... The way they treated you, you felt like a 'real' criminal." [Male, 50]*

- 6.23 This again links back to people's perceptions that driving offences are not as serious as other types of offences and should not, therefore, perhaps attract the same level of social and police scornfulness as other more serious crimes.
- 6.24 Some other respondents also discussed previous conviction experiences in the context of feeling that they were an 'easy catch' for the police:

*"I was fined for not wearing a seatbelt once. I was pulling out of a parking space, and I didn't know it was an unmarked police car, and they were behind me and I was reversing and then I went to pull the seatbelt on as I was just edging out onto the road, and the sirens went. So, they sat and watched me do it....and I wasn't particularly impressed with the police at that, to be honest with you. I felt that was almost entrapment." [Female, 41]*

- 6.25 This again perhaps shows some inclination on behalf of some respondents to never take full responsibility for their driving behaviour. In this case, the occurrence of being caught was attributed to 'sneaky' police rather than driver error.

### **Direct and Vicarious Road Traffic Accident Experiences**

- 6.26 Across participants, there were very few reported road traffic accidents (RTAs) and no serious road traffic accidents. Just under half said that they had ever been involved in a road traffic accident (almost all reportedly caused by someone else), and nine said that they had a 'near miss.' For some, as with being caught, the low prevalence of previous RTA experience was seen as reflecting the fact that they were safe drivers.

### Outcomes and impacts of accidents

- 6.27 Despite the absence of any direct, personal serious RTAs, many of the respondents were able to recall incidents that had happened to close family or friends. These do seem to have impacted on drivers, but only in the short term:

*"I don't have much personal experience but when I was 22 my girlfriend, two of her friends she went to school with both died in car crashes and at that time, that gave me a big, "Woawh". I don't think they were drunk, I think they were just driving fast. But that was really scary. That did 'buck up my ideas' for a bit...and it might pop up now and again if someone mentions it, and you think, "Oh, remember how I felt then", but generally, it's almost like mourning – it eventually goes away and you just carry on. Back to the 'same old', yeah." [Male, 29]*

- 6.28 Again, there seemed to be a lack of learning from the experiences of others and applying the lessons directly to one's own driving behaviours.

- 6.29 In the absence of any direct serious RTAs, participants were asked if they perceived direct personal involvement in a road traffic accident may deter them from driving illegally in the future. Respondents generally perceived that the effects would be relatively short term. As one prolific speeder explained:

*“But, it’s one of these things that, perhaps that would keep you safe for a bit, but then there’d be one other occasion when it’s imperative that you get somewhere on time, that you would do it again.” [Male, 50]*

- 6.30 Overall, the lack of accident experiences among the sample meant that they found it difficult to reflect on the likely impact that accidents would have.

#### Perceptions of future accident likelihood

- 6.31 Most drivers considered that the risks of them being involved in an accident in the future were slim. Most often this was because they considered that they were not dangerous drivers, that they were always ‘in control’ and that, lack of previous accidents was proof that they were safe. Where drivers did consider that they may be at risk was from other drivers:

*“I think it’s very unlikely [that I would have an accident]. Because, I have confidence in myself when I’m driving. But, there’s always a wee thought at the back of my mind about everybody else [other drivers]. You know what I mean?” [Female, 56]*

- 6.32 Indeed, people directly attributed others’ misfortune with accidents as being related to their own bad driving, in comparison to their own:

*“If you’re an aggressive driver, there’s more chance of you having an accident. I guess I must be quite lucky – there have been people [I know] who have had accidents, but maybe they’re just not anticipating as well, or don’t give people as much space.” [Male, 22]*

- 6.33 Interestingly, people’s perceptions of chances of accidents were not always seen as being correlated with ‘illegal’ driving, but were often talked about in terms of ‘irresponsible’ or ‘anti-social’ driving behaviours (such as tail-gating, driving too slowly, etc.)

- 6.34 As with perceived risks of being caught, many participants expressed feelings of ‘luck’ that they hadn’t or wouldn’t be involved in a serious road traffic accident:

*“I’ve never had a serious near miss crash. Actually, I think I have been very lucky when I have been driving.” [Male, 22]*

- 6.35 People seemed to justify this blazé attitude by suggesting that, to do otherwise, would mean restricting their everyday lives. To a certain extent, people accepted that driving was risky, dangerous and even lethal, but accepted this as part and parcel of having travel independence:

*“I don’t know. An accident could happen any time really, can’t it...It’s such a dangerous thing to drive. You’re in charge of a lethal weapon...I think you have to be blasé to drive in the first place and not really think about what you’re doing.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.36 Overall, given the lack of previous serious RTAs and of receiving high end punishments for their driving, drivers’ generally perceived that there was no incentive or good basis on which to change their current behaviours or to even spend time thinking about how or what they might change:

*“It was fine last time. I know that’s really not the greatest reason, but, nothing has changed to make me stop doing it before.” [Male, 22]*

### **The ‘Worst’ That Can Happen?**

- 6.37 In order to provide added value from the research, specific questions were introduced to ask respondents what they perceived would be the ‘worst thing’ that could happen to them whilst carrying out illegal driving activities. Such questioning was used primarily where people demonstrated complacency with regards to their illegal driving.

- 6.38 This question typically produced one of two responses: the worst thing being either that the driver would kill themselves or that they would kill another person. In only one case did the respondent report that having their licence removed would be the ‘worst thing’ and in another case, a respondent mentioned ‘writing off’ their car. In both cases, when prompted about how this would compare with the risk of death, both participants rescinded their initial response.

- 6.39 Overwhelmingly, people felt that killing or hurting someone else was more serious than killing or hurting themselves:

*“I think it’s worse than hurting myself because it’s my choice to do these things [illegal behaviours]. So, if I hurt myself, I’d like to think that I’ve weighed up the risks to myself against doing what I’m doing but these other people don’t have choices. Like I say, if it’s a pedestrian, it’s purely my fault, or another driver.” [Male, 29]*

- 6.40 Whilst this may be perceived as an indifference towards their own personal safety, it may also be linked to the perception that, as the driver was always in control and responsible for their driving, they had only themselves to blame for any such occurrence. ‘Others’, however, had no control of such scenarios.

- 6.41 Whilst there was consensus that fatalities represented the worst thing that could happen, for some the slim likelihood of this occurrence meant that they were still defiant in defending their illegal behaviours, which could potentially lead to such outcomes.

- 6.42 Overall, when challenged on their complacency, it seems that there would need to be a real ‘finality’ to the outcome of illegal driving in order to dissuade people from repeatedly doing it again in the future. At present, risks of being

caught, and the associated penalties, along with perceived low risk of hurting someone seem not to work. The enormity of the types of outcomes that would be necessary in order to get people to change their behaviours seems huge. However, if it could be demonstrable to prolific illegal drivers that their actions significantly increased the chance of a fatality or loss of licence – because of slower reaction times - then this might have an impact on future activity.

## **Recall and Impact of Marketing Campaigns**

- 6.43 In order to try and assess what might work in deterring future, repeat or prolific illegal driving in the sample, people were asked if they had previously seen any road safety adverts which may have impacted on their own driving, as well as for ideas around what might work in deterring them in the future.

### Recall of adverts and messages

- 6.44 Perhaps the most widely recalled television advert targeted at reducing speeding was the “It’s 30 for a Reason” advert, showing the different outcomes for a young girl hit by a speeding car at 30 mph and 40 mph. The only other speed related advert that was mentioned was a radio advert:

*“The one on the radio that sticks out in my mind was the one where they were saying “He was over the limit, he was over the limit” and it was over the speed limit, not the drink limit.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.45 In relation to drink driving, there was good recall among participants of the Think! – Moment of Doubt advert showing the interaction between a bar-man and customer and the possible outcomes of being caught over the drink drive limit.
- 6.46 The Drink Driving Pub Crash advertisement which simulated a car crash in a pub setting was also recalled by several participants, most of whom were male:

*“There’s one, I was going to call it the ‘Fosters’ advert, but it’s not. There’s two guys sitting in a pub and they’re sitting at a table and they both have a beer and the table slams against them like they’ve had a car crash. That was an anti-drinking one.” [Male, 22]*

- 6.47 Other participants mentioned adverts about ‘young people under the influence’ but could not remember anything more specific.
- 6.48 Many of the older drivers spontaneously also recalled the 40 year old ‘Clunk Click Every Trip’ slogan and advertisement aimed at encouraging drivers to wear a front seatbelt for all journeys, including short trips:

*“I suppose it was maybe, when I was brought up, there was that ‘Clunk-Click advert’ and it was very successful. It was quite a good campaign. And, it also makes sense because, even in small accidents,*

*you can travel quite a bit and give yourself a nasty injury, and its second nature now.” [Male, 50]*

6.49 The Think! - Always Wear a Seatbelt campaign showing three male youths in a car, and the different outcomes for the rear passenger when wearing and not wearing a rear seatbelt was also recalled by two respondents.

6.50 Two respondents also recalled the Think! – Always Wear a Seatbelt advert showing the mother crushed by her son:

*“When I was a kid, and not long before I started driving, there was big campaigns on about wearing seatbelts in cars. There was a horrible advert where the lady in the front has her seatbelt on but the guy in the back doesn’t and he hits her. That kind of upset me. I suppose I do tend to wear my seatbelts because of that. In the front, in the back, yeah. That did open my eyes at the time, yeah.” [Male, 29]*

6.51 Nobody could recall any advertisements targeted at use of mobile phones either for making or receiving calls, or for sending or receiving texts, while driving. The only other advert that was mentioned was the “Don’t be an Ambler Gambler” advertisement.

#### Perceptions of content

6.52 While many people could provide ‘sketchy’ details about the content and message of the various adverts, no-one had accurate recall and many could remember the graphic nature of the adverts, but not necessarily the messages that they sought to convey:

*“I remember something about a child, but I can’t remember the details of it. It was quite ‘gorey’.” [Female, 62]*

6.53 There was some disagreement between respondents in terms of the appropriateness and perceived impact of adverts that were ‘graphic’ in their design. For some, this was seen as necessary to ‘shock’ the viewer or make them pay attention, while for others, it potentially acted as a barrier to their effectiveness, since some people were inclined to purposefully look away from such scenes. Amongst this small sample, there were no gender or age differences in whether people perceived graphic content to be appropriate or effective.

#### Perceived and reported direct impacts on behaviour

6.54 As well as being the most widely recalled advert, the “It’s 30 for a Reason” advert was also the one which was described as having the most direct impact on people’s self-reported driving behaviours. Almost all respondents said that they were very cautious, especially around ‘20’s plenty’ areas and schools, or areas where they considered young children may be present. People often mentioned this advert in relation to their own sensibilities in such areas.

- 6.55 This aside, overall, as with personal experiences of being caught or having an accident, sentiments were also expressed that, regardless of how impactful the advertisements were at the time they were viewed, their direct and lasting influence over drivers personal behaviours was minimal:

*“At the time, they did make me think about the need to slow down, and the drink driving one especially was quite disturbing...But then, after not seeing it again, um, you kind of just forget the feelings that you had when you saw it and you don’t think back on it...” [Male, 29]*

- 6.56 One of the other themes to emerge from the interviews was that the television may not be the best medium through which to communicate such messages. People mentioned not paying attention to TV advertisements and purposefully forwarding through them, if they had the technology to do so. One other respondent expressed the view that some current television programmes (for example, Top Gear), may encourage dangerous driving since he perceived that they advocated ‘fast driving’ and driving for thrills.

- 6.57 Finally, people felt that some of the adverts they had previously seen were too ‘stereotypical’ in their nature, and suggested that adverts that captured a wider spread of more ‘realistic’ everyday scenarios were needed:

*“Every Christmas, it’s [TV campaigns] about somebody sitting in a pub and drinking, and it doesn’t always happen that way. It’s not just about people sitting in the pub. The amount of people that think, “I’ve had a couple of glasses but I fancy a takeaway”, and they jump in the car and...they’ve had two or three glasses, and they drive up the street. That’s more a common problem than any...It doesn’t have to be about someone sitting in the pub for 10 hours.” [Female, 41]*

- 6.58 This is interesting since one of the female drivers interviewed did report that she had driven once in the last six months under the influence of drugs, in order to collect her young son from his grandparents. The trip had not been planned, and the respondent said that she felt that the 10 mile journey required would be safe and, given the need to collect her son, felt that the risks warranted the activity. This shows that some illegal behaviours, even those which attract some of the most social disdain, can occur among drivers who perhaps do not fit the stereotype of risky or illegal drivers.

Most of those interviewed had been caught by the police for illegal driving yet considered the chances of being caught (again) as quite small. Deterrent effects had also only been short-term. Existing penalties for illegal driving were seen, on the whole, to be quite ineffectual, especially financial penalties. The lack of accident experiences among the sample meant that they found it difficult to reflect on the likely impact that accidents would have. For some, the lack of previous RTA experience was seen as reflecting the fact that they were safe drivers. Participants did recall a number of adverts they had seen in recent years, and while some reported they did have an impact, this again was short term.

## 7 DISCUSSION

### The Findings in Context

#### Reported behaviours - qualitative findings alongside survey findings

- 7.1 Previous self-report surveys have shown that the illegal driving activity that people are most likely to engage in is speeding. The results from this work support the surveys insofar as all respondents reported driving over the speed limit on at least one type of road, and all but one said that they regularly went above 75 mph on 70 mph roads. Interestingly, however, while previous RITS surveys have shown that speeding in 30 mph zones is more prevalent than speeding on faster designated roads, the interviews here suggest that speeding on motorways and dual carriageways is more prevalent.
- 7.2 Previous surveys have shown that levels of reported driving under the influence of drugs and over the legal alcohol limit are negligible. With a sample of just 15, this research captured three people who reported regularly engaging in these types of behaviours (i.e. 1 in 5 of those interviewed) and so this particular group of risk takers was perhaps over-represented in the sample. Given the qualitative nature of the work, however, and the fact that it did not seek to be representative, the over-inclusion of these respondents meant that valuable insight was gained into what motivated drink and drug driving as well as how such drivers justify their behaviours. Interestingly, while only three participants were prepared to admit to regularly engaging in these behaviours, interviews with some of the younger (under 30s) drivers and some of those living in rural areas suggested that drink driving, and to a lesser extent drug driving, may be more prevalent in some social circles than self-report surveys suggest. In rural areas this was seen as being linked to a perception that there were few risks of being caught for intoxicated driving (plus fewer travel options if one wanted to have a social drink), while among young people living in more urban areas, driving the morning after a heavy drinking session was mentioned as a common occurrence and some 'marginal' drink driving was reported insofar as people driving without really being sure if they were over or under the legal alcohol limits. The views expressed here also support previous research which has shown that some drink drivers rely upon their subjective judgements as to their fitness to drive when deciding to get behind the wheel when intoxicated<sup>6</sup>.
- 7.3 The latest sweep of the RITS survey showed that the vast majority of drivers knew it was important to wear a seatbelt at all times, however, people were less strong in their convictions around rear seatbelt compliance (in both private cars and taxis). The survey also showed that there was a hard core of drivers for whom the perceived low risks of not wearing a seatbelt meant that the principles of compliance might be ignored. The same has been shown here with many of the older female drivers in particular expressing that they knew the importance of seatbelt compliance, but often failed to use their restraints when making short, local journeys, simply because they did not

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<sup>6</sup> Clayton, et. al. (1980) The male drinking driver: Characteristics of the offender and his offence, Transport and Road Research Laboratory: Berkshire

consider it dangerous to do so. This was one area where the attitudes expressed (i.e. that driving without a restraint was dangerous) and the behaviours displayed (i.e. non-compliance) were not congruent.

- 7.4 Previous research has also suggested that risk taking is strongly related to age and gender. Data from the RITS surveys show that men and those aged under 45 are much more likely to adopt risky and illegal driving behaviours than women and older drivers. While it is difficult to say from a sample of 15 whether this research supports or refutes such evidence, what does seem clear is that the range and frequency of different behaviours reported by people across different genders and age ranges were not considerably different for this sample. Indeed, this absence of any strong gender or age differences in participants' perceptions or reported behaviours is quite striking. Given the size and relative limitations of the sample interviewed here, further research may be required to explore if age and gender similarities in drivers' qualifications and justifications are more widespread.
- 7.5 Overall, it is difficult to say conclusively from this piece of small scale qualitative work if there are any main clusters or 'types' of drivers, or also which kind of people are more or less likely to engage in different types of illegal behaviours. There is an inherent bias in this sample because it was, to a degree, self-selecting (i.e. many people who were eligible to take part declined to do so) and this means that the sample is not representative. This aside, however, the work has shown that there does not appear to be any 'type' of respondent (either in gender or age terms) who does **not** engage in illegal behaviours – it cannot be said that older drivers do not drive illegally, or that men or women are more or less likely to self-report such behaviours. Prolific illegal drivers interviewed here included the 'family man', the professional male, the working mother of four, the experienced older male driver, the young mother and the semi-retired grandmother - not solely the reckless, carefree, new or younger drivers.

#### Perceived risks - qualitative findings alongside survey findings

- 7.6 Results from the RITS survey suggest that there is a high risk taking group who also have a high level of received penalties, suggesting that penalties have not acted as a deterrent for them. This research supports this observation with 12 of the participants having received at least one previous penalty and eight receiving two or more different previous penalties. When asked about the impact of these penalties on their own behaviours, most reported that the effects were short-term.
- 7.7 The RITS survey has also previously shown that high risk takers are aware in comparable levels to lower risk taking groups of the potential for 'getting caught' and agree in similar levels to more mainstream drivers, that there is a good chance of being caught for actions like not wearing a seatbelt, using a mobile phone, etc. This work perhaps contradicts this message insofar as the risks of being caught were perceived to be quite slim, especially among those using their mobile phones for texting and those who reported taking illicit drugs before driving. In both cases, there was a perception that it would be

very difficult for the police or others to accurately detect and 'prove' that they have engaged in these behaviours.

- 7.8 Following the latest sweep of the RITS survey, its administrators recommended the assessment of the reasons behind complacency including lack of perceived risk and consequences for self and others, acceptance of any such risk (both in terms of accidents and being caught) and the failure to recognise risk and illegal behaviours as unacceptable, or otherwise. This work has shown that, in terms of risk, there may indeed be a failure on behalf of many drivers to recognise that they themselves could potentially be either the perpetrator or victim of accidents or of being caught. Both were described as being very unlikely to almost all those involved. This is not to say that drivers did not recognise that such incidents could occur as a result of irresponsible driving, nor that they did not recognise the potentially devastating and serious consequences of accidents, but that they just didn't perceive this as a credible outcome from their own behaviour which they thought was 'in control' and largely safe.

#### Social desirability - qualitative findings alongside survey findings

- 7.9 The research here has also shown that, even for drivers who engage in various different types of illegal behaviours, there are gradients of acceptability for each. People largely felt that there was always someone who was prepared to push the boundaries of the law further than themselves and that these people should be targeted ahead of themselves in the priority order for tackling non-compliant behaviour. The notion of the 'worse offender' also seems to perpetuate the notion of low risks of being caught or having an accident, since people perceive it will be these 'others' who are more at risk than themselves. Given the wide variation in the behaviours reported by the sample, and that some appeared prima facie to be more dangerous both in their actuality and potential, it seems that it is not possible to define the 'ultimate' measure of acceptability or upper limit against which people benchmark their own behaviours.
- 7.10 Attitudes towards illegal driving, when compared to survey findings, suggest that this group do not hold counter-cultural ideas. They are aware that their behaviours are illegal and that they may be frowned upon socially, however, they consider that the prevalence with which they observe others engaging in the same behaviours means that they are in no small minority. Overall, perceived social norms had an important role to play in the behaviours displayed.

#### **New Learning from the Research**

- 7.11 Whilst the research has provided both support for some of the previous wider survey based findings, and has offered some alternative insights into some forms of behaviours, it has also provided added value in two particular areas.
- 7.12 Firstly, previous survey work was not able to show which combinations of risky/illegal behaviours prolific illegal drivers engage in. This work suggests that speeding is combined with almost all other types of risky or illegal driving

behaviours, especially use of mobile phones and, in some cases, drink and drug driving. Few people reported 'only' speeding and so it may be concluded that willingness to break the law in one area is indicative of willingness to do so in another, for most. That said, the fact that most of those interviewed did not consider themselves to be 'real criminals' or even the 'worst offenders' on the roads suggests that this law breaking, for some, is isolated to driving. The observations that people perceive there is always someone worse than them, and that, although they engage in multiple repeat driving offences, much of this is due to pressure from known and unknown peers, perhaps leads many to assume that they represent the 'norm'. If so, this would mean that people are inadvertently accepting that prolific illegal driving is also the 'norm'.

- 7.13 Even where people accepted that what they did was wrong, most drivers considered themselves to be 'repeat' rather than 'prolific' offenders. Indeed, most drivers were 'high-volume' law breakers on the roads, but most showed some discrimination or sensitivity to different behaviours and were not just 'bad' across the board. This was also indicated in their expressions of upper thresholds for some types of illegal behaviours. The main message seems to be that people equated prolific illegal driving with **severity**, rather than **frequency** of risky or illegal driving behaviours and, on this basis, felt that their own behaviours were justified. Although a small and subtle difference, this perhaps provides insight into what attitudes need to be tackled in order to reduce this high volume illegal driving behaviour. Demonstrating to drivers that high frequency, lower level offending can be as dangerous as single incident reckless driving is something that emerges as a key finding from the work.
- 7.14 Secondly, while previous quantitative surveys have been useful in understanding the scale of the engagement in risky and illegal behaviours overall, they have not given insight into why these behaviours are carried out and what individuals' reasons are for the behaviours that they report and the attitudes that they hold. This research has shown that some of the main motivators include a strong sense of self-control or confidence in one's driving skills, perceptions that behaviours are not unsafe, perceptions that illegal driving is normative (and should not be considered as illegal) and low perceived risks of being caught or having an accident. While none of these findings are unique to this work, what does seem evident from interviewing these repeat illegal drivers is that there exists a strong element of 'trust in trust', or what Luhman (1979)<sup>7</sup> refers to as confidence in one's expectations in both people and social systems, such that people perceive driving situations will be relatively familiar from one day to the next. The drivers interviewed here demonstrated a clear belief that 'other' people would adhere to tacit rules of driving (even illegal driving) which made it possible for them to interact confidently with other road users. People openly described the perceived dangers of 'overthinking' their driving, or the feelings of impediment they would encounter if they did drive in anything other than their 'normal' or 'familiar' way. What the drivers interviewed here did not explain, however, was why they failed to perceive that situations may realistically arise where it

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<sup>7</sup> Luhman, N., (1979) *Trust and power*, New York: John Wiley and Sons

would not be possible to draw on their experience or skills, either because of the novelty of the situation or because time might not permit them to react in a safe way. The perceived remoteness of negative events ever happening to them remains the biggest attitude to be challenged among these drivers.

## **Implications for Policy and Future Social Marketing Campaigns**

### For Policy

- 7.15 The main implications from the research for policy seem to relate to the existing levels of speed limits on motorways and dual-carriageways and the existing levels of penalties handed out for various types of illegal behaviours.
- 7.16 Speeding was the main behaviour that people reported and was also the legal requirement that people offered most cynicism towards. This was especially true for roads with current 70 mph limits which, in many cases, people generally perceived as being too low and somewhat outdated. Several respondents commented that they felt the speed limits on motorway and dual-carriageways were too low given modern advances in vehicle technology and the improved capabilities of vehicles (under their control) to respond to unforeseen events on fast moving roads. As with previous work, however, it seems that an increase of speed limits to 80 mph on motorways would inevitably lead to most people driving above the new limit, most probably to the same proportions as at present i.e. people would drive at 90 mph, perceiving it to be within the upper margins of acceptability for such roads.
- 7.17 The second main observation for policy is that the existing levels of penalties are perceived as being too low tariff so as to offer a real deterrent to illegal driving. Even the one participant who had received a previous driving ban reported that this had not deterred him from continuing to drive illegally, in different situations, and in different ways. The low level impact of financial penalties suggests that more direct action to immobilise drivers (for example, suspension of licences even for short periods) may have greater impact. This is supported by comments that some of the main reasons for driving illegally are a perceived need to get things done (and done quickly) and to do things more conveniently (e.g. without using public transport). These practical or instrumental defences for illegal driving suggest that more functional (rather than financial) penalties are needed in order for people to take more considered action.
- 7.18 Related to this, perhaps, is the notion of greater police presence required on country roads. There seems to be an element of 'self-policing' in 30 mph areas in residential and urban areas and in 20 mph zones, where there was almost unanimous agreement that the risks posed to vulnerable road users (especially young children) made speeding both socially and personally unacceptable to drivers. People did not apply the same 'self-policing' principles to country roads which share 30 mph limits since they perceived that the risks to others were low and chance of being caught were also low. While some participants did recognise that speed cameras and warning signals on these roads may assist in deterring speeding on the outskirts of towns and when driving on rural roads between settlements, it seems that

these roads were the ones that most people viewed as allowing the greatest amount of discretion among drivers to drive how they best saw fit.

### For Social Marketing Campaigns

- 7.19 Recall of previous marketing campaigns was sketchy which suggests that alternative modes of communicating with drivers' may be necessary in order to improve recall. It is interesting, perhaps, that during many of the interviews, respondents reported that they had never spent so much time considering their driving behaviours as they did during the interview. Many said that their research participation alone was likely to make them 'think' and drive differently, albeit in the short term. This shows that traditional mass media campaigns may not be the only way to communicate with 'hard core' prolific illegal drivers and that more one-to-one or personalised highlighting and questioning of individual drivers' behaviours may be sufficient to make them reflect on and consider changing their behaviours. This type of model is, of course, characteristic of speed awareness courses which have been offered to drivers in the UK in recent years, and which have shown varying levels of success in actually modifying drivers' behaviours. The key, perhaps, is that making drivers take time to stop and consider their driving in a one-to-one context may work, and the interactions that some people described with the police, in which their behaviours were discussed rather than simply being penalised, seems a good way forward for encouraging self-reflection.
- 7.20 Reported direct impact of previous media campaigns on their own behaviours were also negligible, the exception perhaps being the 'Clunk-Click' and 'It's 30 for a reason' advertisements, both of which seem to have been effective in encouraging seatbelt compliance (for some older drivers) and reduced speeds in residential and built up areas. The latter campaign in particular appears to have been hard-hitting and almost all respondents expressed that they were especially mindful of the risks to children from their driving in built up areas. Indeed, harming or killing a child was cited by many as the 'worst' thing that could happen from irresponsible driving, suggesting that demonstrating to drivers that children can be harmed from other types of behaviours in addition to speeding (including not concentrating when texting/talking) or in different environments (e.g. on rural roads) may also work.
- 7.21 The significant self-report presence of mobile phone use for texting and calling, alongside zero recall for advertising or media campaigns targeted at this behaviour suggest that this is a definite priority for future campaigns. A number of interesting observations were made during interviews which may suggest that people's perceptions of likelihood of risks occurring in different scenarios was misguided or skewed. For example, many people who described using their phones on a regular basis defended this because they felt that the calls they were receiving may be linked to family emergencies or emergencies at work. This was despite none of the drivers reporting that this had ever been the case, and that most calls were in fact routine, non-urgent social or recreational in nature. Campaigns that demonstrate to people that the risks of taking a phone call, however important it is perceived to be, are more dangerous than the likelihood of the nature of the call being urgent may work (i.e. demonstrating the irony of a non-emergency call or text in

contributing to a potentially real family emergency, in the form of a serious road traffic accident).

- 7.22 Given the sense of pressure from colleagues that was expressed, to use mobile phones while driving for work purposes, there may be value in specifically exploring how to better engage with business communities to encourage safer road safety cultures in workplaces. Previous research has shown that, by improving safety culture, companies can improve the safety attitudes of drivers remote from the fixed workplace and that this, in turn, is likely to influence road accident involvement<sup>8</sup>.
- 7.23 Common to discussions around previous experiences of being caught, previous direct and vicarious road traffic accidents and recall of road safety adverts and messages, there was a gap in people's applicability of 'lessons learned' to their own driving behaviours. The main reasons seem to be that, even where situations have been real (previous convictions, previous accidents of others, realistic adverts), people just do not consider that the risks or likelihood of the same thing happening to them (again) are that great. The perceived likelihood that 'x' would ever happen to them was minimal, despite all logic to explain how it may well apply. Adverts that explicitly ask the question, "Why can't it happen to you?" and show people admitting, "I was wrong" may reach this audience.
- 7.24 Although human factors play the most significant role in road traffic accidents, it seems that there may also be some important lessons from the research in terms of maximising people's use of technological advances to help reduce risky and illegal driving behaviours. Many people interviewed here reported that they had in-car technology to assist them with safer driving (including Bluetooth technology and seatbelt warning signs) and but don't use it. The ownership of such things as hands free technology supports observations that people were not completely risk unaware, or unaware of the illegality of using their phones to talk while driving one handed, and may suggest that, for some, efforts are made to try and comply with the law, albeit in a tokenistic fashion. Such ownership may be a sign that people are trying to make themselves 'feel' better, safer and more compliant even if, in reality their non-use of such devices means that they are no more safe or compliant in what they do. Adverts which highlight to drivers' the futility of owning such devices unless they are used may be quite impactful, since the change in behaviour required (e.g. to turn on hands free technology, or plug in seatbelts when warned at the start of the journey) is perhaps a smaller change than trying to influence driving once journeys have commenced.
- 7.25 Finally, it seems that there may be a need to present campaigns that challenge some of the stereotypes around who is responsible for illegal driving and the situations in which it occurs. Albeit without realising, some of the parents interviewed here were putting their children's lives at risk by such actions as texting when driving, and some of the older female drivers were quite aggressive and nonchalant about their excessive speeding behaviours.

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<sup>8</sup> BOMEL (2004) Safety culture and work-related road accidents, Road Safety Research Report No.51, Department for Transport: London

While surveys therefore suggest that younger, male drivers may demonstrate the most risky types of behaviours, the prevalence and frequency of some lower level, yet still risky and illegal activities among older and especially female drivers also needs to be addressed. Tackling the complacent perception of 'still being in control' among established drivers seems to lie at the heart of the problem and we need to find a way of challenging this misconception (perhaps by demonstrating their slower response times when texting/speeding) and remind them that their behaviours are still illegal (and that for some they represent the '*worse offender*') may work.

## Conclusions

- 7.26 In conclusion, the work has shown that, rather than there being a 'hard core', the number of drivers to whom the 'prolific illegal driver' label may be applied is perhaps much broader. It spans all ages and both genders, albeit the combinations and reasons for different types of illegal driving vary among different segments of the population. The views expressed suggest that social, cultural and peer factors all influence illegal driving, and people's perceptions of social norms appear to explain prolific illegal driving behaviour more than any individual driver characteristics. This suggests that holistic, population based approaches to changing behaviours may be needed rather than those directed at the individual.
- 7.27 While the research provides a rich insight into the attitudes and behaviour of the group of drivers who engage in multiple non-compliant and illegal driving behaviours, it has perhaps been less useful at providing understanding of what triggers may reduce future illegal driving behaviour, since, even among regular risky and illegal drivers, there is a lack of acknowledgement that these types of driving are really illegal, that these drivers are 'real' criminals or that the 'crimes' have real social impacts. This has important implications both for how policies are tailored and marketing campaigns are directed, since the first step to reaching many of these drivers is to make them aware that the policies and campaigns are targeted at them, and not others.
- 7.28 The general complacency among those interviewed that they were 'in control' and that risky driving was more characteristic of other drivers suggests that there is a translation gap between what the law prescribes as illegal and risky and what people perceive to be acceptable for themselves. Given that previous penalties seem to have been relatively ineffectual in changing drivers' behaviour, and the low prevalence of previous accident involvement is seen as reinforcing the sense that these driving practices are safe, more perhaps needs to be done to challenge people's estimations and expectations that future risks may occur. That is not to suggest a scaremongering approach, but rather to present wider messages to drivers about the fact that a single incident is all it takes for devastating and lifelong negative impacts to occur.

## **Glossary of Key Terms**

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)

Formal Adult Warnings (FAWs)

National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)

Procurator Fiscal (PF)

Road Safety Tracking Survey (RITS)

Road Traffic Accident (RTA)

Royal Automobile Club (RAC)

Traffic Accident Database (STATS 19)

## Appendix A – Interview Schedule

### CONTEXT

Q1. For context, please can you begin by telling me roughly how many miles you drive in a year, and what are the main types of journeys that you make?

### PART A: Last Incident Narratives – Free Recall

Q2a. Looking at this list, which of these types of driving behaviours would you say you do quite often? And, which have you done in the last 6 months? **SHOW CARD A.**

Q2b. Do you ever do more than one of these things at the same time? For example, using a mobile phone at the same time as speeding?  
**[INTERVIEWER TO DECIDE WHICH BEHAVIOUR(S) TO FOCUS ON FOR REMAINDER OF PART A]**

Q3. Can you tell me the last time that you made a journey where you did **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]** when driving? In your own words, can you say exactly what you did?

Q4. And, roughly when was that journey? For example, last week, last month, earlier in the year.

Q5. Thinking back to that occasion, can I ask you to talk me through the journey you were making when you **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]**, from beginning to end? Prompt if necessary:

- where did you start? (prompt: home, work, other)
- where were you going?
- who else was with you, if anyone?
- what was the purpose of your trip? (prompt: business, personal, other)
- what time of day or night was it?
- roughly how long did the journey last?

Q6. Can you remember, at the time, were you aware that you were doing something that might be illegal, or did you only realise it/think about it later?

Q7a. Can you talk me through what you were thinking when **(interviewer to modify as appropriate based on earlier responses)**:

- you first realised you were well over the speed limit? [if speeding]
- you were driving and the phone rang/you dialled the phone? [if using mobile phone]
- you got into the car and started it running [if seatbelt offence]
- you started the engine knowing that you could be 'over the limit' [if drink driving]

- you started the engine knowing that you had taken drugs [if using drugs]

Q7b. And, at the time, what did you think about:

- the risks to you
- the risks to others
- the risk of being caught

Q7c. Did you think about not doing **[INSERT BEHAVIOUR]**? For example:

- sticking to the speed limit?
- not answering the phone?
- asking someone else to drive?
- not making the journey?
- stopping the journey, etc.?

Q8a. Thinking back, what would you say was the main reason that you drove that way?

Q8b. And, which of the following best sums up why you drove that way? **SHOW INDIVIDUAL STATEMENT CARDS WITH DIFFERENT STATEMENTS**

- I am a good driver who is always in control
- I didn't feel it was unsafe
- I was still able to concentrate just fine
- I had no choice
- I was in a hurry
- I had to take the call
- It seemed like a good idea at the time
- I was just having fun
- I felt under pressure from others
- I didn't think I would get caught or have an accident
- I didn't really think about it
- It just happened

Q9a. Thinking about the journey we have just discussed, did anything happen as a result of your driving? If so, how did that make you feel? Prompt:

- caught by police/caught by speed camera
- accident
- near miss (i.e. came close to having an accident but avoided doing so)
- other
- nothing

Q9b. If not, have any of these things happened to you on another, previous occasion that you drove in this way? If so, how did that make you feel?

Q10a. Thinking back, do you think you would do the same thing again, in the same situation? Can you tell me a little more about your reasons for this?

Q10b. And, if a similar situation occurred in the future, do you think you would drive in this way again or differently? Can you tell me a little more about your reasons for this?

**ASK Q10c ONLY IF RESPONDENT SHOWS NO INCLINATION TO CHANGE AND IS WILLING TO DISCUSS; OTHERWISE ASK Q10d**

Q10c. Imagine next time, how do you think you would you feel if ... **[INTERVIEWER TO CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE EXAMPLE FOR DRIVING BEHAVIOUR DISCUSSED AND MODIFY IF NECESSARY. IDEALLY USE ONE OF THE 3 IMPROVISED SCENARIOS DEPENDENT UPON RESPONDENT ATTITUDE]**

- [If respondent gives impression of confidence about their driving control] ... a child ran out in front of the car when it was too late for you to stop in time?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about risk to them] ... delayed reactions by you contributed to a near fatal crash involving you, and you woke up with your worried family at your hospital bed-side?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about risk to others] ... bad driving by another driver led to a near-fatal crash involving you, with the police on the scene blaming you because there were signs that you were [INSERT BEHAVIOURS]?

**OTHERS CONCERNED WITH BEHAVIOUR:**

- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about speeding] ... a child ran out in front of the car when it was too late for you to stop in time?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about wearing a seat belt]... you had to break suddenly because someone pulled out in front of you when you weren't wearing a seatbelt?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about being on a phone when driving] ... you hit someone stepping out from behind a car because you didn't spot them because you were on the phone?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about drink & driving] ... a learner driver took the wrong lane at the roundabout but your reactions were delayed because of the drink and you couldn't avoid their path?
- [If respondent gives impression of complacency about drugs & driving] ... a motorcyclist was overtaking you when you chose to move out to overtake a cyclist, and you didn't spot them because you were slightly 'foggy' as a result of the drugs you had taken?

Q10d. In your view, what would be the worst thing that could go wrong when you are [INSERT BEHAVIOURS]?

Q10e. Would you say that the thoughts and feelings you have described in relation to the journey we have just discussed are 'typical' of what you think and feel when you do [INSERT BEHAVIOURS]?

Q10f. You have said that you do these things quite often. Would you consider yourself to be a repeat or prolific illegal driver? Why do you say that? If not, how would you describe a prolific illegal driver?

### **PART B: General Driving Attitudes and Behaviours – Semi-structured Interview**

Okay, thank you. I would now like to ask you some very specific questions about the types of things you may think and do when you drive in general. These questions don't relate to any specific incident, but you can use examples of your previous behaviour if it helps you to describe what you did or thought.

#### **The emotional side of risk taking**

Q11. Generally speaking, when you [INSERT BEHAVIOUR TYPE], how does it make you feel? Prompt after free recall for an emotional response:

- guilty
- excited
- rebellious
- in control
- no real emotion

Q12. And, generally speaking, what would you say motivates you to drive this way? Prompt if necessary:

- need to get things done on time
- pressure from others
- anger/frustration
- enjoyment of risks
- perceived lack of serious risks to self or others
- perceived lack of risks of being caught
- lack of concentration
- don't agree with the rules
- just don't think
- perceived lack of alternative

#### **Perceptions of Risk: Drivers' experiences of getting caught/ being penalised**

Q13a. When you are in the car doing [INSERT BEHAVIOURS], do you think about the risks of getting stopped by the police? If so, how likely do you think it is that you will get caught? Prompt: Why do you say that?

Q13b. And, would you say that your attitude changes at all when you are behind the wheel?

Q14a. Have you ever been stopped and spoken to by the police for **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]**? Prompt: If so, please can you explain briefly how many times, what it was for, and what was the penalty?

Q14b. How do you feel you were been treated by the police on those occasions?

Q14c. When you have been stopped and spoken to by the police in the past, has it changed the way you drove, if only for a short time? If so:

- What things did you change?
- In what ways did you change exactly?
- How long did that change/those changes last for?
- (if not long, what changed this? What made you go back to driving the old way?)

**Perceptions of Risk: Drivers' experiences of being in an accident etc.**

Q15. Have you or any of your close family/friends ever been involved in a Road Traffic Accident(s) as a result of the behaviours we have been discussing today? For example, because you, they or someone else was doing **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]**? If so, and if you feel comfortable, please can you tell me more about that?

- Were you hurt?
- Was anyone else hurt?
- Was there any damage to your car?
- Damage to anyone else's car?
- Any other kind of damage/injury?

Q16. After you/they had been involved in that accident, did it change the way you drove? If so:

- What things did you change?
- In what ways did you change exactly?
- How long did that change/those changes last for?
- (if not long, what changed this? What made you go back to driving the old way?)

Q17. And, when you are in the car doing **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]** nowadays, how likely do you think it is that you will have an accident or cause harm to yourself or others? Prompt: Why do you say that? And, would you say you feel the same when you are not actually in the car?

## Behaviour Change

Q18a. When you [**INSERT BEHAVIOURS**], what do you think is the most likely outcome/possible consequence of:

- Speeding?
- Using a mobile phone when driving?
- Not using your seatbelt?
- Drink driving?
- Drug driving?

Q18b. And, for each of those, what is the worst thing that you think could happen?

Q19. Thinking about all of the different types of behaviours we have discussed today, is there anything that might encourage you to change the way you drive? For example:

- Being caught by the police and given a fine
- Being caught by the police and having your licence taken away
- Having your car taken away
- Being sent to prison
- You seriously damaging your car in an accident
- You being seriously hurt in an accident
- You hurting someone else in a car accident
- A friend of yours being killed in a car accident
- A friend of yours killing another person in a car accident

Q20. Specifically, for each type of behaviour we have discussed today, are there things that might encourage you to:

- Drive to the speed limit?
- Stop using your mobile phone while driving?
- Always use your seatbelts?
- Not drink over the limit before driving?
- Not take drugs before driving?

## How you and others might feel about different types of driving behaviours

Q21. Going back to this list, [**SHOW CARD A**], how acceptable do you think each of these behaviours are? Prompt:

- Are some of these behaviours more acceptable than others?
- If so, which ones. And why do you say that?

Q22. Do you think that others think about **[INSERT BEHAVIOURS]** in the same way? That is, are they 'socially acceptable'?

### **Media Campaigns**

Q23. Can you remember any TV, cinema or radio advertisements that you have seen about safe driving? If so, please can you describe them? And, where did you see/hear them?

Q24. Did any of those advertisements make you change your own driving at all? If so:

- Which ones?
- Why do you think that made you change?

Q25. And finally, what kind of media advertisements do you think work best in reducing illegal behaviours? For example:

- Ones that try to scare you by showing you that you might hurt others?
- Ones that try to scare you by showing you that you might hurt yourself?
- Ones that threaten you? For example, with the prospect of prison?
- Ones that make you think about what you have to lose? For example, your car, job or family and friends.

Thank you.

## Appendix B – Driving Penalties and the Highway Code

Offence	Imprisonment	Fine	Disqualification	Penalty Points
*Causing death by dangerous driving	14 years	Unlimited	Obligatory - 2 years minimum	3-11 (if exceptionally not disqualified)
*Dangerous driving	2 years	Unlimited	Obligatory	3-11 (if exceptionally not disqualified)
*Causing death by careless driving under the influence of drink or drugs	14 years	Unlimited	Obligatory - 2 years minimum	3-11 (if exceptionally not disqualified)
Careless and inconsiderate driving	-	£5,000	Discretionary	3-9
Driving while unfit through drink or drugs or with excess alcohol: or failing to provide a specimen for analysis	6 months	£5,000	Obligatory	3-11 (if exceptionally not disqualified)
Failing to stop after an accident or failing to report an accident	6 months	£5,000	Discretionary	5-10
Driving while disqualified	6 months (12 months in Scotland)	£5,000	Discretionary	6
Driving after refusal or revocation of licence on medical grounds	6 months	£5,000	Discretionary	3-6
Driving without insurance	-	LGV £5,000 PCV £5,000 Other £2,500	Obligatory if offence committed within 3 years of a previous conviction for the same offence - 6 months min otherwise discretionary	3 in each case
Failure to have proper control of vehicle or full view of the road and traffic ahead, or using a hand held mobile phone when driving	-	£1,000 (£2,500 for PCV or goods vehicle)	Discretionary	3
Driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence	-	£1,000	Discretionary	3-6
Speeding	-	£1,000 (£2,500 for motorway offences)	Discretionary	3-6 or 3 (fixed penalty)
Traffic light offences	-	£1,000	Discretionary	3
No MOT certificate	-	£1,000	-	-
Seatbelt offences	-	£500	-	-
Failing to identify driver of vehicle	£1,000	Discretionary	6	

Source: The Official Highway Code (2012) Driving Standards Agency for the Department for Transport, London

## **Appendix C – Research Background and Literature Review**

### **Defining Illegal Driving Behaviour**

Roughly two-thirds of adults in Scotland hold a full driving licence, with in excess of 2 million licenced vehicles on Scotland's roads. The Highway Code<sup>9</sup>, which covers England, Wales and Scotland, sets out the range of driving behaviours which are classified as illegal and which attract driver penalties, including court and non-court disposals. Appendix B provides a list of all such offences, ranging from causing death by dangerous driving, punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment to seatbelt offences, punishable by a fine of up to £500.

In Scotland, separate national protocols are also in place which allow minor road traffic offences to be dealt with at jurisdictional level by different police forces and local authorities using a range of 'direct measures' or non-court disposals. These include fixed penalty notices (FPNs) which are different from fines or criminal convictions, and can be appealed through the courts, but which are backed with a power of criminal prosecution if the penalty is not paid. These are commonly used for speeding offences with typical endorsable offences attracting a £60 fine. Police can also issue Formal Adult Warnings (FAWs) for motoring offences, although their use is restricted mostly to unlawful vehicle use. Procurators Fiscal (PFs) in Scotland can also issue FPNs, as well as Fiscal Warnings and Fiscal Fines for motoring offences, but again these are usually only used for unlawful vehicle use with more serious motor vehicle offences being dealt with through the courts. While most illegal driving is therefore defined by, and punished in line with, the Highway Code, some local controls are also in place. Additional powers are also held by the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales including the recent transfer of power from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament to set the drink driving and speed limits. Public consultation on proposals to reduce the current legal alcohol limit from 80mg/h to 50mg/h in Scotland have just concluded and, at the time of writing, are being considered by Ministers.

### **Known Prevalence of Illegal Driving**

While UK laws clearly define which driving behaviours are 'illegal', it is difficult to derive a true measure of the prevalence of illegal driving since, while some illegal driving will be detected and recorded by the police, other behaviour will not. While official statistics present a picture of the numbers of people caught and charged with road traffic offences, they do not include those offences carried out which go undetected. While self-report surveys go some way to fill this gap, the subjective nature of such surveys and potential for response bias (in particular people under and/or over-reporting engaging in particular types of behaviour) means that these too cannot be considered as reliable. For these reasons, it is accepted that the two complementary sources of evidence need to be used together to provide a rounded picture of the true prevalence of illegal driving behaviours.

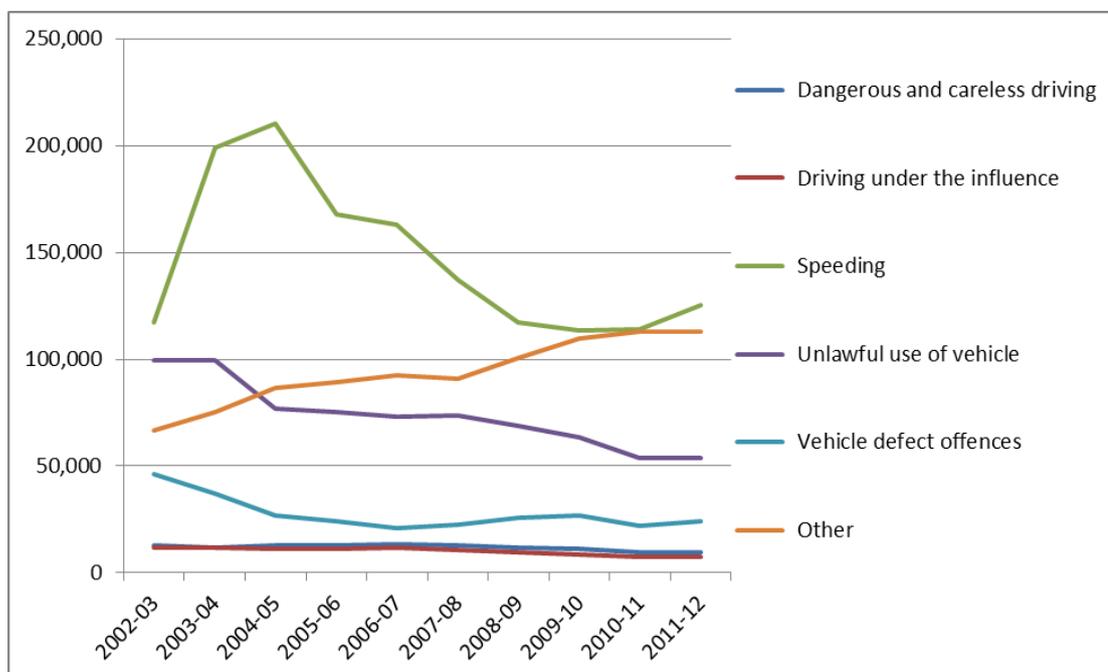
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<sup>9</sup> Driving Standards Agency (2012) The Official Highway Code, Department for Transport, London.

## Official Statistics – Criminal Justice Data

National recorded crime statistics for Scotland include a classification for ‘motor vehicle offences’ recorded by the police. This includes dangerous and careless driving<sup>10</sup>, driving under the influence<sup>11</sup>, speeding, unlawful use of a vehicle, vehicle defect offences and ‘other’ offences (including mobile phone offences, seatbelt offences, accident offences and parking offences)<sup>12</sup>. Figure C.1 below shows the number of motor vehicle offences recorded for the ten year period from 2002/03 to 2011/12. It shows that, while there has been a decrease in the number of recorded speeding offences in Scotland over time, as well as reductions in unlawful use of vehicles and vehicle defect offences, there has been an increase in recent years in the number of ‘other’ offences that are being recorded. Driving under the influence and dangerous and careless driving have remained fairly static over time.

**Figure C.1 Number of motor vehicle offences recorded by the police in Scotland, 2002/03 to 2011/12**



Source: Recorded Crime in Scotland 2011-12, Statistical Bulletin, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00396557.pdf>

It is not possible from routinely published data to say how many of these offences were committed by the same offender (i.e. repeat or prolific driving offenders).

In 2011/12, there were a total of 333,632 recorded motor vehicle offences overall. The majority of these (except the most serious offences) will have been dealt with by non-court disposals, primarily fixed penalty notices issued by the police and Fiscal fixed penalties. While police data is not readily available, Criminal Proceedings in

<sup>10</sup> Causing death by dangerous or careless driving and causing death by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs are classified separately under ‘homicide’.

<sup>11</sup> Prior to 2011-12 this was known as ‘drunk driving’.

<sup>12</sup> A full list of offences and their definitions that fall into this category can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00396557.pdf>

Scotland data is published that shows the number of motor vehicle offences which are referred to the Procurator Fiscal and which result in Fiscal fixed penalty notices (FPNs). Table C.1 shows that, in 2011/12, of all FPNs issued, most (37%) were for speeding and a further 27% were for 'other' offences.

**Table C.1 Persons given fiscal fixed penalties, by main crime/offence, 2011-12**

Main crime or offence	Total (n)	Total (%)
Serious Driving Offences	1	-
Speeding	7,886	37
Signal and Direction Offences	2,632	12
Lighting, Construction & Use Offences	1,135	5
Documentation Offences	3,686	18
Other Offences	5,702	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,057</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2011-12, Statistical Bulletin, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00410435.pdf>

Although not routinely published, an analysis of 'other' offences provided for this research showed that, overall, 49% of all 'other' offences were mobile phone offences and 48% were seatbelt offences. This means that 14% and 13% respectively of all FPNs issued are for mobile phone and seatbelt offences, putting them only marginally behind documentation offences overall.

Of those given FPNs for motor vehicle offences, 79% were male and 21% were female. Among females, the most common offence was speeding (40%), compared to 37% of males given FPNs for this offence. One fifth (20%) of females, compared to 29% of males were given FPNs for 'other' offences (including mobile phone use and seatbelt offences). While this data alone suggests that men are four times more likely than females to be charged with motor offences, it is important to remember that these figures only represent incidents that are captured by the police and reported to the Fiscal, and do not take into account incidents that go undetected or unreported.

Two thirds (66%) of people given FPNs for motor vehicle offences in 2011/12 were aged 30 or over, with 29% in the 21 to 29 age band and only 5% in the under 21s. While proportionately the number of current drivers on the roads aged over 30 will be greater than those aged under 30, the data does show that it is not primarily younger drivers who are responsible for motor vehicle offences. The data may instead reflect that those in the older age bands are more likely to be caught and charged for such offences than younger drivers.

Table C.2 shows that, when broken down by offence type, almost three quarters (72%) of FPNs given for speeding were for those aged 30+. This compares to 62% of all FPNs for 'other' driving offences (including mobile phone use and seatbelt offences) for people in this age band. People aged 21-29 are most likely to be given FPNs for these offences.

**Table C.2 Persons given fiscal fixed penalties, by main crime/offence and age, 2011-12**

Main Crime or Offence	Under 21 (%)	21-30 (%)	Over 30 (%)
Serious Driving Offences	-	100	-
Speeding	3	25	72
Signal and Direction Offences	6	26	68
Lighting, Construction & Use Offences	14	32	54
Documentation Offences	7	29	64
Other Motor Vehicle Offences	5	33	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>66</b>

Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2011-12, Statistical Bulletin, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00410435.pdf>

The number of people proceeded against in court for driving offences is also recorded and shows the nature and demographic characteristics of those charged with more serious illegal driving behaviour. In 2011/12, there were 40,909 people proceeded against in court for motor vehicle offences. Table C.3 shows the number and percentage of people proceeded against by offence type. It shows that, as with FPNs, the most common offence proceeded against in this way was speeding.

**Table C.3 People proceeded against in court by main crime/offence, 2011/12**

Main crime or offence	Total (n)	Total (%)
Dangerous and careless driving	3,199	8
Drink/drug driving	5,556	13
Speeding	12,598	31
Unlawful use of vehicle	9,901	24
Vehicle defect offences	1,622	4
Other vehicle crimes/offences	8,033	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,909</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2011-12, Statistical Bulletin, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00410435.pdf>

Again, data from 2011/12 and historically show that men are more likely to be proceeded against in court for motor vehicle offences than women, accounting for 85% of people disposed of in this way, compared to 15% of women. The nature and proportionate representation of each offence type was broadly the same for men and women in 2011/12, with speeding the most common offence for both genders.

Table C.4 again shows that people aged 30+ represent the majority of people proceeded against in court for all types of motor vehicle offences.

**Table C.4 People proceeded against in court by main crime/offence and age, 2011/12**

<b>Main Crime or Offence</b>	<b>Under 21 (%)</b>	<b>21-30 (%)</b>	<b>Over 30 (%)</b>
Dangerous and careless driving	17	32	51
Drink/drug driving	9	31	60
Speeding	5	29	67
Unlawful use of vehicle	9	37	54
Vehicle defect offences	10	34	56
Other vehicle	5	35	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2011-12, Statistical Bulletin, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00410435.pdf>

The majority of people proceeded against in court for motor vehicle offences receive a monetary penalty, accounting for 93% of offenders in 2011/12.

#### Official Statistics – Accident Data

In addition to road traffic offence and criminal proceedings data, Transport Scotland collects data on injury road accidents that are reported to the police in Scotland. This injury road accident data is part of a GB wide system is known as STATS 19 data collection. The publication Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2011<sup>13</sup> data shows that the number of reported road casualties in 2011 is at its lowest level since 1947.

Although this publication does not specifically include analysis of road casualties that result from illegal driving behaviour per se, estimates of the number of drink drive accidents are produced each year. In the ten-year period between 2000 and 2010 (the latest year for which data is available), the estimated number of drink drive accidents fell by around a third, from about 780 (in 2000) to roughly 530 (in 2010). Over the same period, it is estimated that the number of people killed in such accidents fell from about 40 to 20.

Breath test data published by Transport Scotland also shows that, in 2011, of the 59% of motorists involved in injury accidents who were asked to provide a breath test, fewer than 3.4% of those drivers either provided a positive test or refused to take the test. This represented 2% of the total number of all drivers involved in injury road accidents, including those who were not asked to take a test, and this percentage has remained fairly stable over recent years.

Included on the STATS 19 injury road accident data return is an indication of factors which may have contributed to the accident, including speed (inappropriate speed or

<sup>13</sup> Available at:

[http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/documents/analysis/statistics/Reported\\_Road\\_Casualties\\_Scotland\\_2011\\_web\\_version.pdf](http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/documents/analysis/statistics/Reported_Road_Casualties_Scotland_2011_web_version.pdf)

speeding), drink driving and 'distraction' (including such things as mobile phone usage)<sup>14</sup>.

In 2011, the data show that speed (inappropriate speed or speeding) was recorded as a contributory factor in accidents resulting in 26% of fatalities and 6% of serious injuries. Drink driving accounted for 11% of fatalities and 6% of serious injuries and distraction was recorded as a contributory factor in accidents resulting in 3% of fatalities and 4% of serious injuries.

Overall, criminal justice and accident statistics together show that speeding is the most commonly reported and recorded illegal driving behaviour. Although numbers of people charged with speeding offences have dropped over time, it still contributes to a sizeable number of fatalities and serious injuries on the roads.

Drink driving incidents are far less prevalent and the numbers of such recorded offences have remained steady over time, as has the percentage of drivers breathalysed and failing (or refusing) such tests. However, with an average of 30 fatalities and 150 serious injuries over the last five years for which estimates are available (2006-2010), drink remains a serious contributory factor to dangerous driving that needs to be tackled.

Trend data does show that 'other' offences, including mobile phone usage and seatbelt offences have increased in recent years, partly due to increasing popularity and functionality of mobile phone technology, perhaps. Distraction is recorded as a contributory factor in a relatively small number of serious and fatal accidents, however, use of phones for texting and talking is far less visible as a possible contributor and can, therefore, go undetected more easily perhaps than either speeding or drink driving.

Although men feature more in the official statistics as illegal drivers than women, it seems that illegal driving behaviours are present across all age groups. It is important to stress again that these figures do not capture the true incidence of illegal behaviours, but only those incidents that are captured by the authorities.

While these official statistics provide indicative insight into the prevalence and consequences of some illegal driving behaviours in Scotland, therefore, all of these data sources are biased by potential under-reporting. Not all illegal driving incidents will be captured by the police, and many non-fatal accidents and 'near misses' may also go unreported to the police. Further, none of these official data sources provide estimates of the number of repeat or 'prolific' illegal driving offenders. For these reasons, it is important to consider self-reported illegal and accident data reported by drivers alongside the official statistics in order to get a fuller picture of the nature and prevalence of illegal driving.

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<sup>14</sup> This data provides an indication of the number of accidents where a particular factor plays a part, however, in some cases the figures reflect the reporting officer's opinion at the time of reporting, and may not be the result of extensive investigation.

## Driver Surveys

The RAC Report on Motoring<sup>15</sup> annual publication, first launched in 1988, provides one of the longest standing insights into the attitudes and behaviours of Britain's motorists. The report presents findings from a survey of drivers across the UK, and covers a variety of topics including opinions on the vehicles that people own, the reasons they drive, transport policy and the behaviour of other drivers.

Although the 2012 survey showed that 92% of motorists considered themselves to be law abiding, 83% admitted to being regular speeders. While the survey showed support for a higher speed limit on motorways (62%), consistent with previous years, most people felt that an increase to 80 mph on motorways would lead to people driving at 90 mph rather than sticking to the new limit. Motorists were more agreeable with existing 50 mph and 60 mph limits on country roads, with 30 mph on urban ones and 20 mph in urban area zones such as those around schools. Well over 1 in 3 people still reported driving above these limits, albeit with greater frequency than motorway speeding. This included 46% of motorists admitting to speeding in a 30 mph limit, 37% in a 50/60 mph limit and 36% in a 20 mph zone. The report considers that such self-reported behaviours demonstrate the belief that speeding is acceptable and is somehow less serious than other motoring offences.

In 2012, the survey also revealed that one in five respondents (21%) admitted to holding a mobile phone while either driving or waiting at traffic lights, and the same (23%) admitted texting while either driving or being stationary at lights. Fewer drivers overall (11%) admitted accessing social media, websites or emails whilst driving.

While self-reported speeding behaviours were quite prevalent, the 2012 survey showed that only 7% of motorists admitted to knowing or believing that they had driven over the alcohol limit and 5% to have driven under the influence of drugs.

The Driver Behaviour Module of the 2010 NatCen Omnibus survey<sup>16</sup> offers a complementary source of survey data to the RAC Motoring Report on the prevalence of risky and illegal behaviours of drivers living in England and Wales. This report again showed that speeding was the most prevalent risky or illegal behaviour that drivers admitted, with 89% of respondents reporting having done this on one or more occasion in the last 12 months. Just over a third (34%) of drivers surveyed said that they had used a hand held mobile phone while driving to speak or text at least once in the previous 12 months. As with the RAC Report, far fewer respondents reported having driven whilst knowingly over the legal alcohol limit in the preceding 12 months (7%) or after taking illicit drugs (1%).

Unlike the RAC report, the NatCen survey also provides an insight into the prevalence of self-report non-usage of seatbelts. The 2010 data shows that 15% of respondents reported having driven without wearing a seatbelt, with 18% having not

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<sup>15</sup> For further information see: <http://www.rac.co.uk/advice/reports-on-motoring/>

<sup>16</sup> Lee, L. and Humphrey, A. (2011) Attitudes to Road Safety: Analysis of driver behaviour module, 2010 NatCen Omnibus Survey, Department for Transport, Road Safety Research Report No. 122, Department for Transport, London.

worn a seatbelt as a passenger. Drivers were most likely not to wear a seatbelt when travelling on roads that were familiar to them or when they were in a hurry.

The Scottish equivalent of the Driver Behaviour Module is the RITS survey<sup>17</sup>, established in 2010, which monitors driver behaviour and attitudes in Scotland in relation to a number of key road safety issues. The initial sweeps of the survey in September 2010 and February 2011 showed that 72% of drivers had adopted any risk behaviours in the last 12 months, with just under 60% self-reporting any illegal behaviours<sup>18</sup>. Data from the second year of the survey, carried out in September 2011 and February 2012, were consistent with these findings, having increased only marginally to 74% for risk behaviours and 61% for any kind of illegal driving behaviour.

Speeding was again consistently the most common behaviour reported by just over half of respondents in each survey year (52% in 2010/11 and 54% in 2011/12), and was most likely to be reported in lower speed limit areas (i.e. driving at 35 mph in a 30 mph area). Around half of respondents said that they had driven over 35 mph in such areas, compared to less than 15% driving at 90 mph on the motorway in each survey sweep.

Hand-held mobile phone use and using a mobile phone to text whilst driving was reported by around 10% of respondents in each survey year<sup>19</sup>, a figure which is considerably lower than those reported as either part of the RAC or NatCen reports. This is surprising since recorded crime statistics show that this type of behaviour has increased over recent years in Scotland. This perhaps reflects a social stigma and unwillingness to disclose this type of behaviour among those surveyed, rather than actual prevalence. It may, of course, also reflect the general mobile phone usage levels of those surveyed i.e. the sample may not have included people who regularly use their phones whether driving or not.

The numbers of people self-reporting driving over the legal alcohol limit or driving after taking illicit drugs were also consistently low in the RITS survey, and no more than 2% in all sweeps. The percentage of those reporting driving when 'unsure' if they were over the legal limit was slightly higher, at 3% or 4% in each sweep.

Consistently, around 1 in 5 respondents reported not wearing a seatbelt when travelling in the back of a car or taxi when one was available and less than 10% in each survey sweep reported not using a seatbelt when travelling in the front of a car.

The percentage of respondents who reported 'prolific' risky or illegal behaviours, i.e. more than **three** different types of behaviour in the previous 12 months, has been around one third for each survey sweep.

Overall, the survey data supports the recorded crime data in showing that illegal driving remains prevalent among reasonably large proportions of UK drivers. The self-report survey data shows that there is a greater engagement in speeding

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<sup>17</sup> Enyon, C. (2011) So that's how they drive! Tracking driver behaviour and attitudes in Scotland, Road Safety Scotland Seminar, October 2011, TNS-BMRB

<sup>18</sup> A copy of the RITS questionnaire is available, on request, from Transport Scotland

<sup>19</sup> A peak of 14% was noted for hand held mobile phone use in the February/March 2011 survey

offences compared to mobile phone, seatbelt and drink/drug driving related offences, but this may, of course, be explained by differences in willingness to disclose these types of behaviours, rather than their actual occurrence.

## **Segmenting Illegal Drivers**

While there have been no notable segmentation studies that have specifically explored illegal driving, previous research does point towards some clustering of different types of behaviours among drivers.

### Socio-demographic characteristics

The RITS survey reports some age and gender differences with more men than women reporting that they adopted risk behaviours. In particular, the RITS survey suggests that men, and particularly younger male drivers (aged under 45) are more likely to engage in risky behaviours overall.

The NatCen survey also showed that men were more likely than women to engage in risky behaviours, as were younger drivers compared with older drivers. Men and younger drivers were more likely to engage in speeding and younger drivers were also less likely to wear a seatbelt when driving. Women were more likely to abstain from drinking when driving, compared to men.

Specifically in relation to speeding, research in England carried out by Step Beyond in 2006<sup>20</sup> showed that young people aged 17-24 tend to speed more excessively than any other age group. The RAC Report on Motoring also shows that young people aged 17-24 are among those most likely to use mobile phones for any purpose, especially for accessing social media, websites or emails whilst driving.

The Step Beyond research also showed that, among 35-50 year olds, more professional drivers (of those driving mostly for work-related purposes) had been caught speeding by a speed camera than people who drove mostly for leisure or social reasons, or for the daily commute, and a greater proportion of this age group had also been involved in an accident compared to their peers. This may suggest an element of work-related pressures contributing to driving over the speed limit.

These findings in many ways support the surveys, and official statistics such as those presented above provide some insight into who is most likely to engage in different types of illegal driving behaviours in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics.

### Detection and accident history characteristics

Less is known about the association between previous convictions for driving offences, involvement in road traffic accidents and continued illegal driving behaviour. A comparison of official statistics and self-report surveys suggests that there is a large proportion of illegal driving behaviour that goes undetected, but it is not possible to say from the existing data whether those who have previously been

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<sup>20</sup> Step Beyond: Midlands Partnership Group (2006) Drivers' Attitude Study, Step Beyond, Staffordshire

charged with a road traffic offence are any more or less likely than their peers to drive illegally in the future.

Similarly, little is known about the links between previous accident experiences and continued engagement in prolific illegal driving. While accident statistics show that a large proportion of accidents arise as a result of driver error, and many as a result of illegal driving behaviours, it is not possible from existing data to say whether involvement in such accidents has any impact on drivers likelihood to engage in safer driving practices.

The RITS survey suggests that just under half of drivers in Scotland have ever received a penalty for their driving, and that prolific illegal or risky drivers are more likely to have been previously penalised for driving behaviour. This is perhaps not surprising since the frequency with which people engage in illegal driving activities may be expected to be positively correlated with an increased chance of being caught. The RITS surveys have also shown that the perceived risks of being caught are not a significant factor in influencing behaviour. That is, the majority of people recognise that they may be caught for illegal driving yet still engage in it. Those adopting the most risky behaviours do not do so on account of a lower perceived risk of getting caught, perhaps highlighting a general dismissal of the need for compliance.

That said, the fact that the RITS survey also shows that, consistently, only just over half of people who report adopting **any** illegal behaviours in the last 12 months had previously been penalised indicates that there is a large proportion of people carrying out illegal driving activities that are not detected or recorded by the police or other authorities. This, again shows the importance of considering official statistics alongside self-reported behaviours.

### Psychological characteristics

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that people's psychological characteristics also play a large part in determining likely participation in risky or illegal driving behaviours. Whilst the volume and coverage of such research is too vast to cover here, some key social cognition variables that influence drivers' behaviour are, perhaps, worth highlighting for context.

Perhaps the single biggest factor considered across the research is **intentionality**, or people's overall desire to perform a given behaviour. Previous work has shown that, specifically in relation to speeding, there is a strong correlation between people's intention to engage in this behaviour and their actual performance<sup>21</sup>. Intentions to speed are often accompanied by positive instrumental and affective attitudes towards speeding such that peoples' perceptions that speeding will be instrumental in helping them to achieve their goals, and will not cause any negative emotional response, are more likely to indulge.

Drivers' **perceived behavioural control** (over their own behaviour) and the **perceived controllability** of factors external to their own behaviour have also been

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<sup>21</sup> Webb, T. L. and Sheeran, P. (2006) Does changing behavioural intentions engender behaviour change? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132, 249–268.

shown to predict intentions to drive in particular ways, and the resulting behaviour<sup>22</sup>. People with a greater sense of control over both factors are more likely to undertake behaviours that may be risky, since the perceived risks of 'losing' control are slim. The Step Beyond research showed that, while the majority of drivers felt they were always in control, even when driving fast, this self-belief was greatest among the younger drivers.

Related to this, **self-efficacy** or confidence in one's own ability to perform specific behaviours have also been shown to strongly predict engagement. Again, the Step Beyond speeding research suggested that the main feelings experienced by drivers when driving fast were confidence, being in control, being alert and focussed.

Other influencing factors include the perceived likelihood of negative outcomes in terms of **anticipated regret**, or whether people will feel guilt associated with their behaviour, as well as whether people perceive that their actions will attract negative social attention (i.e. do they reflect the **moral norm**). These combine with people's perceptions of **subjective norms**, or the extent to which they feel social pressure to engage in particular behaviours, and all act as predictors of likely behaviour.

Finally, in the context of driving, **optimism bias** has been shown to be strongly correlated with actual behaviours, such that people who perceive that they are less likely than others to experience any negative consequences from their behaviours (e.g. being caught or being involved in a road traffic accident) are more likely to engage in risk behaviours. This optimism is often unwarranted and unrealistic.

Overall, psychological research has also shown dangerous drivers are more likely to underestimate the probability of specific risks caused by traffic situations, to overestimate their own driving skills and abilities and perceive themselves to be invulnerable to negative outcomes. Together, such factors can contribute to a sense of invincibility when driving on the roads and a propensity, therefore, to engage in risky behaviours based on the perception that there will be no negative consequences.

It is worth noting that, while there is a considerable evidence to support the influence of these factors in determining driver behaviour, self-report survey research, including the Step Beyond research, has also shown that many people who report driving dangerously say that they do so without realising it.

## **Attitudes towards Road Safety and Illegal Driving**

### Other Drivers

Despite quite high levels of self-reported illegal driving behaviours, especially speeding, research has also shown that many drivers feel unsafe on the roads, not as a result of their own driving behaviours, but because of others.

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<sup>22</sup> Conner, M. et al. Lawton, R., Parker, D., Chorlton, K., Manstead, A. S. R. and Stradling, S. (2007) Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to the prediction of objectively assessed breaking of posted speed limits. *British Journal of Psychology*, 98, 429–453.

Findings from the 2012 RAC Report on Motoring showed that people generally felt less safe on the roads than ever before, and had particular concerns about road safety and the behaviour of other drivers. The main concerns were the costs of motoring (60%), worry about other people driving without tax and insurance (58%), worry about other people driving whilst using phones without a hands free kit (53%) and worry about other people driving whilst under the influence of alcohol. The latter issue was of greatest concern among drivers aged 17-24 for whom 1 in 5 rated it as the most important concern they had about other's behaviour (suggesting perhaps that they considered it to be quite prevalent).

The NatCen report also shows that nearly four-fifths of drivers felt themselves to be safer drivers than most (77%) and a significant number of those involved in the Step Beyond research (around three quarters) also considered themselves to be better drivers than most. This perhaps suggests that most people consider their own safety or exposure to risk on the roads is likely to be influenced by others' rather than their own behaviour. This idea is further supported by the finding that many in the 35-50 year-old age group who took part in the Step Beyond research were complacent, bordering on the arrogant, about their own driving skills.

### Specific Behaviours

Research has also shown varying levels of social acceptability and widely different attitudes expressed in relation to the range of different illegal driving behaviours seen on the roads.

The RITS survey showed that **drink driving** is perhaps the least accepted risk behaviour, while **speeding** is the most accepted (especially in towns or on motorways compared to country road driving). It has also shown that, whilst most drivers recognise the importance of (and support) wearing **seatbelts** in the front of the car at all times, less strong sentiments are expressed with regards to rear seatbelt use. Over the two years that the survey has been running, there has, however, been a weakening in attitudes of the extent to which drink driving, country road driving and seatbelt wearing are perceived to be a 'big problem' on the roads.

Specifically in relation to **speeding**, several other studies have reported a general cynicism towards speed cameras, with perceptions that they are a means of generating revenue for local authorities rather than acting as a road safety measure. The Step Beyond research also suggested the main thing that would slow drivers down was killing or seriously injuring someone else. The thing that would have least impact on reducing their speed was being flashed by a speed camera.

Specifically in relation to **drink and drug driving**, the RAC Report on Motoring also showed that attitudes to driving under the influence were less tolerant than those for speeding, with 55% of respondents supporting a lifetime ban for driving regularly, or while excessively, under the influence of drink or drugs, and 95% supporting a ban of a shorter duration for the same. Support for a ban fell to 61% for drink and 73% for drugs for one-off or just-over-the-limit offenders. This provides a strong contrast to the views of those who engage in this type of behaviour with previous research to investigate the prevalence and social context of drug driving<sup>23</sup> showing that drug

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<sup>23</sup> Myant, K. et al (2006) Illicit drugs and driving, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh

drivers considered there to be a low risk of being caught by the police, and also reported they felt that taking drugs had no adverse effects on their driving performance. These, along with the perceived benefit of being able to use their own transport for convenience purposes, were given as the main reasons why people continued to engage in drug driving. Other research<sup>24</sup> with drink drivers has also shown that, despite a general perception that drink driving is socially unacceptable, those who do engage in this type of activity consider it to be a low-risk activity both in terms of being caught and of having an accident.

Specifically in relation to **mobile phone** use, the RAC Report on Motoring showed that many people do not consider using hand-held mobile phones to be an offence, and fewer than half (43%) support a ban for people convicted of mobile phone related offences. Just over half (53%) support fines and three or six points on a licence for such offences. The report again links a reduction in road safety education to an increase in the number of phone related offences across the UK.

Evidence on public attitudes towards **use of restraints**, apart from the RITS survey, is more limited. The 2010 NatCen survey showed the majority (87%) of adults disagreed that, if you drive carefully, seatbelts are not necessary and the majority (91%) also felt that it was the driver's responsibility to ensure all passengers complied with seatbelt laws. That said, the survey also showed that 43% of respondents reported knowing others who would not always wear their restraints while driving.

Earlier research by the Transport Research Laboratory in 2008<sup>25</sup> also showed that, while the majority of people in the UK are seatbelt wearers, a significant minority (estimated to be around 14%) of the adult population were inconsistent in their use. The main reasons given for not wearing seatbelts, even when the safety advantages were known, included inconvenience and physical and emotional discomfort (feeling trapped/constrained). Setting a good example to children was one of the main social pressures expressed for wearing restraints in the front of the car, but the report also showed that attitudes towards rear seatbelt compliance were lax overall.

### Attitudes towards Enforcement

While survey research shows varying attitudes towards different types of illegal driving behaviours, there seems to be a general consensus across the research that illegal driving is not currently sufficiently well-policed, or penalties enforced, with a general perception that the risks of being caught are low. The RAC survey reports that people consider policing of road offences to be inadequate, with perceptions that this contributes to a 'hard core' of drivers repeatedly breaking the law. This is despite many of the same respondents reporting that they themselves engaged in illegal behaviours, and perhaps suggests a general perception that people will continue to carry out behaviours which they do not approve of in the absence of an increase in the chances of being caught and a likely penalty being received.

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<sup>24</sup> TNS System Three (2008) Drinking and Driving 2007: Prevalence, decision making and attitudes.

<sup>25</sup> Christmas, et al (2008) Strapping Yarns: Why people do and do not wear seatbelts, Department for Transport, London

## Campaigns to Tackle Non-Compliant Driving Attitudes and Behaviours

Both official statistics, self-report survey data and wider research in the road safety field suggests that there remains a considerable proportion of drivers who fail to comply with the law in terms of their driving behaviours. Road Safety Scotland, along with the Scottish Government, seeks to develop and co-ordinate Scotland-wide road safety initiatives and campaigns, including those aimed at improving driver behaviour and eliminating illegal driving. Each year in Scotland, there are at least two social media campaigns on road safety, supported by lower level activity in local areas.

In recent years, the focus of these campaigns has included speeding, seatbelts, drink driving and country road driving, including campaigns highlighting the dangers of distractions whilst driving. A variety of different media have been developed and used to communicate with various driver populations, including TV advertisements, radio, on-line and cinema advertisements, field marketing and printed materials<sup>26</sup>.

These campaigns are independently evaluated with their intended audience and previous evaluations have shown mixed findings. The literature generally shows varied recall of campaign materials, titles and logos and, even where people do recall specific adverts, the main messages are often lost or are not seen as persuasive, particularly among male drivers. The literature also shows that, while there is a general tendency, particularly amongst males, to favour hard-hitting advertising employing graphic imagery, and that such adverts are among the most memorable, few drivers report that they (or their driving) are directly influenced by it.

Findings from the RITS survey also show that only around half of drivers surveyed recalled having recently seen or heard any advertising or publicity on topics relating to driving or road safety. The topics that had the greatest recall were adverts for drink driving, followed by those targeted at speeding. Consistently, less than one in four drivers recalled seeing or hearing recent advertisements relating to drug driving, use of seatbelts or use of mobile phones while driving.

The 2006 Step Beyond research in England also showed that participants across a range of age bands had either no or limited awareness of any anti-speeding advertisements, yet plenty for drink driving and seatbelts. The research showed this, combined with perceptions that the penalties for speeding were quite low, made some respondents feel that speeding simply was not really dangerous or indeed regarded as a serious offence by society as a whole.

The Step Beyond research also showed that different age groups reacted differently to road safety messages around speeding. It showed that young people, aged 17-24 were most likely to be influenced by campaigns that demonstrated the risks of speeding insofar as the potential to hurt or kill someone of their own age and whom they love, while 25-34 year olds demonstrated the greatest resistance to any advertising messages. That said, the main messages that did seem to work for this group were potential harm or killing of children as a result of dangerous driving, followed by hurting or killing others and loss of job, reduced employment potential or

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<sup>26</sup> A full range of previous campaign materials and other resources can be found at: <http://www.road-safety.org.uk/resources/roadusers/driver/resourcetypes/campaign-material/page/1/>

loss of driving licence. The most receptive to anti-speeding campaigns were those aged 35 to 50. The Step Beyond research concludes that effective anti-speed advertising needs to be targeted, impactful, realistic, relevant (to the age group targeted), demonstrate clear culpability, have credible action, characters and credible scenarios, and be memorable and sympathetic. Conversely, the research shows that anti-speeding campaigns should avoid use of statistics, patronising approaches, use of the 'voice of authority', mention of speed cameras and depicting teenagers as victims (unless targeted specifically at teenagers). It also encourages mixed methods for reaching young people, including TV, radio, cinema and recreational venues as advertising locations.

The 2012 RAC Report on Motoring concludes that education and training for motorists are key concerns for those involved in upholding road safety, and that "life-long opportunities" (from early education through to late adulthood) are required. This supports earlier conclusions from the Step Beyond research which also concludes that different age groups need different campaigns, with tailored messages and media, and that, within ages, sub-groups of users exist that also need to be targeted separately.

### **Learning from Existing Evidence and Gaps to be Filled**

Examination of official statistics alongside self-report survey data suggests that only a small proportion of all illegal driving is detected and recorded by the police, and there is, therefore, a large amount of illegal behaviour that goes unpunished. The prevalence of self-reported illegal behaviour from surveys shows not only that people are willing to disclose they are not complying with the law, but that they may do so in various different ways and on numerous different occasions. Such drivers, therefore, might be seen as having complacent attitudes towards their illegal driving behaviours.

Survey findings in relation to attitudes towards the social acceptability of different types of illegal driving behaviours are mixed, and show a greater acceptance for some types of behaviour over others. Interestingly, those who report illegal driving behaviours are also among those who report that it is unacceptable, which begs the question as to why they continue to drive illegally knowing that it is both legally wrong and socially deviant. Some of this may be explained by a perceived low risk of being penalised, but this does not explain why people would continue to put themselves and others at risk, knowing the dangers.

While existing research tells us much about the characteristics of those who get caught for different types of behaviours, and who are prepared to self-report the same, there remain some gaps in the evidence around what motivates some segments of drivers to behave differently from others. Psychological literature explains the links between attitudes and behaviours, and also offers insight into what motivates certain types of behaviour and behaviour change, but perhaps more detailed insight into what factors play a part in drivers' decisions to engage in different activities is needed.

Finally, evaluations of previous road safety campaigns show that there is variable recall for different campaigns and among different groups of drivers. Overwhelmingly, however, it seems that the impact of these campaigns is not as

widespread and enduring as might be hoped, and that persistent driver offending remains despite some of the campaign successes. More, therefore, needs to be done to understand what could increase their impact further.



## Appendix D – Self Reported Illegal Driving Behaviours, Previous Penalties and Accidents (continued)

	P9 Female Age 29	P10 Female Age 41	P11 Male Age 28	P12 Female Age 28	P13 Male Age 57	P14 Female Age 44	P15 Female Age 18	Total
<b>Behaviours in Last 12 months</b>								
Driving at more than 75 mph on the motorway	X	X	X	X	X	X		14
Driving at more than 35 mph in a 30 mph speed limit area		X	X			X		8
Driving at more than 10% over the speed limit on any other kind of road (for example, more than 55 mph in a 50 mph speed limit area)			X		X	X	X	10
Used a mobile phone to text whilst driving	X		X	X			X	6
Used a hand held mobile phone while driving			X	X				6
Not used a seatbelt while travelling in the front of a car		X	X					6
Not used a seatbelt when travelling in the back of a car or taxi when one was available	X		X		X		X	10
Driven when over the legal alcohol limit			X					3
Driven under the influence of drugs				X				3
Other illegal driving behaviour (please specify)			X					2
<b>Penalties /Accidents Ever</b>								
Driving ban			X					1
Points on your licence			X		X	X		11
Fine for speeding			X			X		6
Fine for using a mobile phone while driving			X					2
Fine for not wearing a seatbelt								1
Fine for no MOT/insurance								-
A conviction for any other type of driving offence								1
A road traffic accident (whether caused by you or someone else)								7
A 'near miss'						X	X	9
None of these	X	X		X				3

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