



Responses of teenagers and their parents to California's graduated licensing system

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Abstract

In 1998, California adopted a strong graduated licensing system that lengthened the learner's permit stage from 1 month to a mandatory 6 months and introduced passenger and nighttime restrictions for initial license holders. The passenger restriction (no passengers younger than 20 for the first 6 months) is stronger than such restrictions in any other state; the nighttime ban is relatively weak, not beginning until midnight. Surveys were undertaken to learn what teenagers and their parents thought about the new requirements and how they responded to them. Two groups of beginning California license holders were surveyed three times during the first year of licensure; their parents were interviewed twice. One group ($n = 543$) was subject to the graduated licensing requirements, the other ($n = 814$) was not. Parents strongly endorsed the new system. The vast majority approved of the new permit requirements and the nighttime and passenger restrictions. Among parents whose children were subject to the new requirements, 79% were strongly in favor of the new system and only 4% were neutral or opposed. Teenagers were less favorable toward the new requirements. Most approved of the new learner's permit rules, and the majority of teenagers favored the night restriction, but only about one-third endorsed the passenger restriction. Compliance with the new rules was not close to universal, but the new licensing system resulted in young people holding their learner's permits longer, accumulating more practice driving prior to licensure and decreased the amount of reported driving after midnight and transportation of teenagers when initially licensed. Most teenagers subject to the new rules said they were able to do the activities they wanted despite the changes; almost three-quarters said they were not affected much by either the nighttime or passenger restriction. Overall the results indicate that the new licensing system is accepted favorably by teenagers and their parents and has substantially increased the types of behaviors that collectively should lead to crash and injury reductions. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

In a graduated licensing system, beginners are phased in to full-privilege driving in stages, allowing them to accumulate on-road driving experience under lower risk conditions. A typical system has a learner's permit stage of adult-supervised driving that lasts several months and an intermediate licensing stage with restrictions on unsupervised high-risk driving—late at night and/or with young passengers. This 'intermediate' stage also lasts for at least several months and culminates in graduation to full driving privileges.

Prior to the mid-1990s, a few states had elements of graduated licensing such as night driving restrictions, but in most states full driving privileges were available upon licensure, and precensure requirements were generally quite lax (Williams et al., 1996). The concept of graduated licensing was introduced in the early 1970s but did not catch on (Williams, 1997). It was not until 1996 that Florida adopted the first of the modern multiple-stage graduated systems. Since then 41 other states and the District of Columbia have upgraded their licensing systems, adding one or more elements of graduated licensing.

There is great variation in the licensing changes that have been introduced, with only some states having the much stronger provisions expected to have the greatest

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safety benefits (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2001). When graduated systems are introduced, they lengthen the licensing process and take away some types of travel previously available to young people, possibly inconveniencing them and their parents. This is more likely to be the case in the systems that lengthen the learner's permit stage to at least 6 months and have the strongest restrictions in the intermediate licensing stage that last until age 17 or 18. How families adapt to these new rules is important, as safety benefits will be limited if there is not widespread compliance.

California has one of the strongest graduated licensing systems and was the first state to introduce meaningful restrictions on transporting teenage passengers. No passengers younger than 20 are allowed for the first 6 months of licensure unless someone age 25 or older is present. There are no exemptions for transporting young family members. Exemptions are allowed for medical necessities, school activities, employment, and immediate family needs only if no other reasonable transportation is available and there is a note from the proper authority, e.g. a physician or principal, explaining the necessity and its end date. Fourteen states subsequently followed California's lead in limiting passengers, although California's restriction remains the strongest. California also has a mandatory 6-month minimum learner's permit period, a requirement that parents certify that their son or daughter has driven at least 50 h under supervision prior to licensure (including 10 h at night), and a midnight–05:00 h restriction in the intermediate license stage (unless an adult age 25 or older is present) that lasts for 12 months. The nighttime restriction has the same exemptions as the passenger restriction. The graduated licensing rules apply to people younger than 18. Beginners can enter the system at age 15, obtain their intermediate license at age 16, and their full-privilege license at 17. Previously, learner's permits could be obtained at age 15 and had to be held a minimum of 30 days, and a license with full driving privileges was available at age 16.

The present study was undertaken to see how teenagers and their parents say they respond and adapt to these new requirements. From previous studies, it is known that parents are strong supporters of graduated licensing (Ferguson and Williams, 1996; Ferguson et al., 2001; Williams et al., 1998). In terms of specific restrictions, most approve of night driving curbs, especially in jurisdictions where they already exist, and somewhat fewer support passenger restrictions. For example, in a four-state survey of parents of students who were about to graduate from high school, 75–85% in three states without nighttime restrictions endorsed them. In New York, where a 21:00 h restriction has existed for many years, 94% of the parents supported it. In this same survey, 54–72% of parents said they were

in favor of passenger restrictions (Williams et al., 1998). There also is evidence that parents' support for restrictions is high both before and after actual experience with graduated systems. For example, in Florida, where the same parents were interviewed both before and after their children went through the graduated system, 90% before and 92% after said they were in favor of the night driving restriction (Ferguson et al., 2001).

In New Zealand, which has both nighttime and passenger restrictions, teenagers said they complied less often with the passenger restriction than with the night driving ban (Begg et al., 1995). There is little evidence from the United States as to how young people respond to passenger restrictions. In regard to night driving restrictions, young people are much less positive than parents, but the restriction receives some support and is accepted once it becomes the norm (Opinion Research Corporation, 1985).

Most of the survey data on graduated licensing has dealt with attitudes and opinions of people not subject to graduated licensing requirements. There is little information available about how families adapt to the restrictions and other requirements of strong graduated licensing systems, especially passenger restrictions. In the present study, two groups of beginning California license holders and their parents were interviewed twice during the first year of licensure, and teenagers also completed a written survey upon licensure. One of these groups was subject to the graduated licensing requirements; the other was not. Attitude and opinion data were obtained, as well as information on how California's graduated licensing law affected teenage lifestyles, the extent to which young people said they complied with the restrictions, and in general how families accommodated to the new rules.

2. Methods

In cooperation with the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), teenagers younger than 18 were recruited to participate in the study in DMV offices immediately after they passed the driving portion of their license exams and were waiting to receive their actual licenses. Recruitment was conducted in all eight DMV regions of the state, in one or more offices in each region selected by DMV officials primarily on the basis of size so that sufficient numbers of teenagers would be available to participate. Recruiters were selected by their office managers to participate. Most were employees who normally worked part-time for the offices or were recent retirees.

Teenagers who were recruited completed a short written survey that included the option of participating in subsequent telephone interviews. Their parents, usually present, were asked to give written consent. The

survey was available both in English and Spanish. Approximately 6 months later and again after 12 months, all families that had provided contact information were called by Telephone Market Research, Inc. of Parsippany, NJ. The interviews were timed to coincide with the end of the passenger restriction (6 months) and nighttime restriction (12 months). Teenagers were paid \$10 for each completed telephone interview.

Telephone interviews were conducted both with teenagers and parents. In cases where parent signatures had not been obtained at the DMV, parents were interviewed first and verbal permission to interview the teenager was requested. Teenager and parent interviews were sometimes conducted during the same phone call and sometimes in different calls. Parent and teenager interviews were conducted separately, and answers from one person were not revealed to the other. It is possible that there were some cases in which parents or teenagers listened in or overheard each other's interviews, but there is no way of confirming the extent to which this occurred.

Two groups of teenagers and their parents agreed to participate. The pregraduated licensing (pre-GDL) group was recruited during April–June 1998, just prior to the July 1, 1998, effective date of the new law. The second group was recruited the following year, May–July 1999. Recruitment was conducted at about the same time of the year to control for any seasonal patterns in first-year licensing activity. Recruitment was delayed slightly in 1999 to attempt to ensure that as many teenagers as possible were subject to the new requirements, recognizing that some teenagers encountered at that time would not be. Those applying for learner's permits July 1, 1998, or thereafter were subject to the new requirements.

Very few teenagers approached (3%) declined to fill out the written surveys in the 1998 and 1999 groups. In both groups, more than 90% of the teenagers who completed written surveys in the DMVs provided contact information. Retention rates over 12 months were reasonably high. For example, of the teenagers in the pre-GDL group, 81% were interviewed at 6 months and

71% at 12 months. In the 1999 group, 84% were interviewed at 6 months and 74% at 12 months. The sample analyzed for this paper consisted of teenagers who participated on all three occasions and their parents. In the pre-GDL group, there were 814 such teenagers. In the 1999 group, there were 906 teenagers. In each telephone survey, close to 90% of the parents also participated. It was not necessarily the same parent who was interviewed at 6 and 12 months—sometimes a father did one of the interviews and the mother did the other.

The χ^2 -statistic was used to test for statistical significance. In this paper, the term 'white' refers to non-Hispanic whites. It was determined that 40% of the 1999 group actually were subject to the provisions of the old law, i.e. they got their learner's permits prior to July 1, 1998, and were grandfathered from all GDL requirements. In some ways this would be a good pre-GDL comparison group because they were about the same age as the post-GDL teenagers and went through the first licensing year at the same time. However, it is known that there was a surge in learner's permit acquisition just prior to July 1, 1998, so some got their learner's permits earlier than they normally would have in order to be grandfathered under the old rules. In addition, some in the grandfathered group may have thought they in fact were subject to some of the new rules, and they were associating with and may have been influenced by same-age peers who were licensed under the new rules. This makes comparisons uncertain. Thus results are based on the pre-GDL group and the teenagers and parents who were subject to California's graduated licensing law. That is, the grandfathered group is not included in the analysis, except for comparisons of demographic characteristics in Table 1.

Questions were asked of both pre-GDL and post-GDL teenagers and their parents concerning driving experiences in the learner and intermediate licensing stages, restrictions on driving at night and transporting passengers in the intermediate licensing stage (whether imposed by parents or by law), and opinions about the new rules. Opinions about specific requirements of the

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of participants

	Pre-GDL (<i>n</i> = 814)	Grandfathered (<i>n</i> = 363)	Post-GDL (<i>n</i> = 543)
<i>Teenagers</i>			
White	56%	55%	61%
Asian	13%	16%	15%
Other race	12%	13%	9%
Hispanic origin	20%	16%	15%
Male	52%	44%	49%
Average age at permit*	15 years, 10 months	15 years, 6 months	15 years, 7 months
Average age at licensure	16 years, 6 months	16 years, 6 months	16 years, 6 months

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$.

Table 2
Behavior and attitudes of teenagers and parents regarding the learner's permit stage

	Pre-GDL	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>		
Held learner's permits 6+ months*	77%	97%
Practiced with parents 50+ h*	42%	78%
Drove > 500 miles*	30%	52%
Median number of miles driven*	200	500
In favor of 6-month holding period*	70%	84%
In favor of 50-h requirement*	79%	88%
In favor of 10 h practice at night	91%	93%
<i>Parents</i>		
Parent supervised 50+ h*	48%	61%
Son/daughter practice drove at least 50 h*	67%	81%
Son/daughter drove after dark 10+ h*	69%	79%
In favor of 6-month holding period	93%	95%
In favor of 50-h requirement	96%	94%
In favor of 10 h practice at night**	96%	94%

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$.

** Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$.

new licensing system were asked during each interview. All responses in regard to the nighttime and passenger restrictions are presented. For requirements during the learner's permit stage, there was little variation in opinions over time, and responses are presented for the first time the questions were asked. Post-GDL teenagers and their parents were queried about the effects of the restrictions on their lifestyles, the inconveniences caused, their levels of compliance, and in general how they adapted.

3. Results

Table 1 presents demographic data on the pre-GDL, grandfathered, and post-GDL groups. There were no statistically significant differences between the pre-GDL and post-GDL groups or between the grandfathered and post-GDL groups, on the basis of gender and race/ethnicity. The post-GDL group tended to get their learner's permits at younger ages than pre-GDLs, but average licensing ages were about the same.

3.1. Learner's permit stage

Table 2 presents data on behavior and attitudes pertaining to the learner's permit stage. Compared with the pre-GDL group, post-GDL teenagers held their learner's permits longer, practiced more with parents, and drove more. Almost all said they held a learner's permit for at least the required 6 months, compared with 77% in the pre-GDL group. There was not full

compliance with the learner's permit stage rules. Eighty-one percent of parents said their son or daughter had driven at least the 50 h required, and 79% said they met the requirement for 10 h of practice at night. However, the new rules increased the amount of driving substantially; 52% of post-GDL teenagers said they drove more than 500 miles in the learner's permit stage compared with 30% of the pre-GDL group. The median number of reported practice driving miles was much greater among post-GDL teenagers (500) than pre-GDL teenagers (200).

3.2. Nighttime driving

Information on night driving restrictions is presented in Tables 3–5. Table 3 indicates that according to the responses of teenagers, parents restricted unsupervised postmidnight driving during the first year of licensure to a considerable extent both in the pre-GDL and post-GDL groups, though more so in the post-GDL group that was subject to a legal requirement not to drive unsupervised during these hours. Some parents permitted postmidnight driving right away, but most did not. According to teenagers, 40% in the pre-GDL group and 60% in the post-GDL group said their parents maintained a restriction on driving after midnight for at least 6 months. Parents were more likely than teenagers to say a nighttime driving restriction was maintained for the first 6 months of driving, 79 and 89% in the pre-GDL and post-GDL groups, respectively. When parents were asked about maintaining the night driving ban for the full year (required under the GDL law), 54% in the pre-GDL group and 59% in the post-GDL group said they had done so.

Table 3
Responses of teenagers and parents regarding postmidnight driving

	Pre-GDL	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>		
When parents first permitted*		
Right away or within 2 weeks	23%	13%
2 weeks–3 months	29%	14%
4–6 months	8%	13%
6 months or still don't 1 year after licensure	40%	60%
Number of times driven after midnight during first 6 months*		
Never	43%	58%
1–9 times	24%	27%
10+ times	32%	15%
<i>Parents</i>		
Did not permit first 6 months*	79%	89%
Did not permit for 1 year	54%	59%

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$.

Table 4
Teenage reaction and adaptation to the nighttime restrictions after graduated driver licensing

	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>	
Night restriction limited ability to:	
Get together with friends	29%
Go to parties	31%
Go on dates	22%
Participate/attend school activities	13%
Do family errands	9%
Percent able to participate in these activities despite the restriction	81%
Ways used to adapt to the restriction	
Drive earlier	58%
Get ride with parent or older adult	59%
Alternate transportation such as walking, biking, bus	31%
Violate the law	44%
Rearrange place of event	45%
Overall, how much did the night restriction prevent you from doing the things you wanted to do	
None	37%
Not much	40%
Some	19%
A lot	5%

The compliance information furnished by teenagers indicated that the law decreased postmidnight driving during the first 6 months of licensure. At the 6-month interview, 43% in the pre-GDL group and 58% in the post-GDL group said they had never driven after midnight. At the 12-month interview, compliance could not be adequately assessed. Some teenagers in the post-GDL group were no longer subject to the night restriction because they had turned 18 or because they had been licensed for slightly more than a year.

Table 4 displays responses of the post-GDL group in regard to how they adapted to the midnight driving restriction. According to teenagers, it did not affect them very much. To some extent they reported that it

Table 5
Teenage and parental agreement with a 1-year postmidnight driving restriction

	Pre-GDL	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>		
Asked when they were first licensed*	48%	62%
Asked 6 months after licensure	60%	63%
Asked 12 months after licensure*	61%	71%
<i>Parents</i>		
Asked 6 months after licensure	92%	94%
Asked 12 months after licensure*	86%	94%

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$

Table 6
Responses of teenagers and parents regarding transporting teenage passengers

	Pre-GDL	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>		
When parents first permitted*		
Right away or within 2 weeks	56%	20%
2 weeks–3 months	34%	20%
4–6 months	4%	20%
6 months or still don't 6 months after licensure	6%	39%
Number of times transported passengers during first 6 months*		
Never	4%	20%
1–9 times	9%	20%
10–29 times	20%	24%
30+ times	67%	36%
Median number of times during first 6 months*	50	15
<i>Parents</i>		
Did not permit unsupervised travel with teenagers during first 6 months*	14%	52%

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$.

limited their social activities, but only 20–31% said it affected their ability to get together with friends, go to parties, or go on dates, and 81% indicated they were able to participate in these activities anyway. The most popular ways of getting around the restriction were to drive earlier (58%) or get a ride with a parent or other adult (59%), although 44% said they violated the law in order to do what they wanted to do. The overall assessment was that for the vast majority, the nighttime restriction did not prevent them from doing what they wanted. Thirty-seven percent said it had no effect at all, 40% said not much, 19% said some, and 5% said 'a lot.'

Table 5 shows teenager and parent opinions about the nighttime restriction. Parents were highly supportive and teenagers indicated majority support, especially post-GDL teenagers subject to the restriction. Twelve months after licensure, teenagers in both pre- and post-GDL groups were more in favor of the nighttime restriction than when first licensed ($P < 0.01$)

3.3. Driving with passengers

Tables 6–8 present information on the passenger restriction. Before and after the graduated licensing law, parents were more likely to allow unsupervised driving with teenage passengers than to allow driving after midnight. Still, Table 6 indicates that the passenger restriction substantially decreased the extent to which teenagers transported passengers. For example, 56% of teenagers in the pre-GDL group but only 20% in the post-GDL group said their parents permitted

Table 7
Teenage reaction and adaptation to the passenger restrictions after graduated driver licensing

	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>	
Passenger restriction limited ability to:	
See friends	59%
Go on dates	45%
Go to parties	44%
Participate/attend school activities	29%
Go to school	18%
Do family errands	16%
Hold a job	5%
Percent able to participate in these activities despite the restriction	89%
Ways used to get around the restriction	
Drive alone	49%
Ride with older teenager	57%
Ride with parent or other adult	44%
Alternate transportation such as walking, biking, bus, etc.	18%
Violate the law	31%
Rearrange place of event	21%
Overall, how much did the passenger restriction prevent you from doing the things you wanted to do	
None	17%
Not much	56%
A lot	26%

them to transport teenagers right away or within 2 weeks; 6% of the pre-GDL group and 39% of the post-GDL group said that transporting passengers was not permitted for 6 months or longer. From the parent perspective, 14% of the pre-GDL group and 52% of the post-GDL group said they imposed a teenage passenger restriction for at least 6 months.

In terms of compliance, only 20% of the post-GDL group said they never transported teenage passengers during the first 6 months of licensure, but this compares with 4% of the pre-GDL group. Similarly, 36% of the post-GDL group said they transported teenage passengers 30 or more times, far less than in the pre-GDL

Table 8
Teenage and parental agreement with a 6-month ban on transporting teenage passengers

	Pre-GDL	Post-GDL
<i>Teenagers</i>		
Asked when they were first licensed	32%	32%
Asked 6 months after licensure	38%	43%
Asked 12 months after licensure*	29%	43%
<i>Parents</i>		
Asked 6 months after licensure*	69%	82%
Asked 12 months after licensure*	73%	86%

* Statistically significant at $P < 0.01$

Table 9
Post-GDL parents' overall assessment of the graduated licensing system

	Post-GDL
<i>Parents</i>	
Overall, how much inconvenience was caused to your family by the night and passenger restrictions?	
None	55%
Occasional	36%
Frequent	5%
Major	3%
Overall, how do you feel about California's new GDL system?	
Strongly favor	79%
Somewhat favor	18%
Neutral	1%
Opposed	3%

group (67%). The median number of times post-GDL teenagers reported transporting other teenagers without an adult present was 15, compared with 50 for pre-GDL teenagers.

Table 7 addresses lifestyle effects of the passenger restriction. The most frequently reported activities said to be affected were seeing friends (59%), going on dates (45%), and going to parties (44%), but there also were some reported effects on participating in school activities (29%), getting to school (18%), and doing family errands (16%). Only 5% said that the passenger restriction affected their ability to hold a job. Nevertheless, 89% reported that they were able to participate in these various activities despite the restriction, with the most frequent modes of adapting to it legally being riding with older teenagers (57%), driving alone (49%) and riding with a parent or other adult (44%). Thirty-one percent said they violated the law in order to do what they wanted to do. Overall, 17% said the passenger restriction did not keep them from doing what they wanted to do at all, 56% said not much, and 26% said it affected them 'a lot.'

3.4. Overall ratings

Table 8 indicates that approval of the passenger restriction was high among parents yet the majority of teenagers did not favor the restriction. When first licensed, 32% of post-GDL teenagers favored the passenger restriction, and this increased to 43% at 6 months and 12 months ($P < 0.01$), when they were no longer subject to this restriction. In the pre-GDL group, approval ratings ranged from 29 to 38% on the three occasions asked. As indicated in Table 9, only 8% said the graduated licensing system produced frequent or major inconveniences, and 55% said it caused no inconvenience. Seventy-nine percent were strongly in favor of

the new licensing system, 18% were somewhat in favor, and 4% were neutral or opposed.

4. Discussion

This study investigated how families accommodated to California's new graduated licensing system—what they thought of it, how it affected them, and the extent to which they reported complying with the new rules. The bottom line effects of California's graduated licensing system will ultimately be known through assessment of changes in crashes and injuries, but such changes are contingent on the amount of compliance.

The present study included a group subject to the previous licensing laws, which made it possible to assess how much the desired behaviors changed. In the absence of legal requirements, some parents indicated they have their own rules and requirements in regard to how long learner's permits are held, amounts of practice driving, and restrictions on late night driving and passenger presence. Overall, the results indicated that although compliance is not close to universal for most of the new regulations, and although pre-GDL teenagers were already performing the newly required behaviors to some extent, the new licensing system is substantially increasing the types of behaviors that collectively should lead to crash and injury reductions. The new learner's permit rules resulted in young people holding their permits longer, increased parent participation, and more on-road driving experience being accumulated. In the intermediate stage, the new rules resulted in less reported driving after midnight and less transporting of other teenagers, which should reduce crash risk.

There was less compliance with the passenger restriction than with the night restriction during the first 6 months of licensure. Prior to graduated licensing, few parents were restricting whom their children transported, but there was a substantial increase in restricting teenage passengers when the graduated system was introduced. Many parents were not allowing postmidnight travel under the old licensing system, but this practice also substantially increased with graduated licensing.

In regard to the opinions of teenagers and their parents about the new rules, families liked the learner's permit rules best, the night restriction next best, and the passenger restriction least. Parents gave strong support to the passenger restriction, but the majority of teenagers disliked it. Parents liked the new regulations more than their sons and daughters. Parents and teenagers who were under the new restrictions were more favorable toward them than parents and teenagers in the pre-GDL group, probably

reflecting a tendency for families to be more likely to favor the licensing laws that apply to them. There was some indication that when post-GDL teenagers were at the point that the night and passenger restrictions were lifted, they became more likely to endorse them.

The endorsement of night restrictions by most parents and the clear majority of teenagers and the lesser approval of the passenger restriction partly reflect the fact that the passenger restriction is strong, whereas the nighttime restriction starts beyond the time that many 16- and 17-year-olds ordinarily travel and does not require major lifestyle adjustments. Nighttime restrictions that start at 21:00 h might be reacted to differently. There is evidence from North Carolina, however, that after a 21:00 h restriction was instituted, both teenagers subject to this restriction and their parents reacted to it about as favorably as California teenagers and parents rated their midnight restriction (Foss, 2001).

The new California rules do affect teenage lifestyles, particularly the passenger restriction. Upon licensure teenagers want to drive and ride with their friends, and adjustments need to be made in order to comply with the limits on teenage passengers. Teenagers do say that both the night and passenger restrictions affect their social activities, but most said they could find ways to do their activities anyway, and almost three-quarters of the teenagers claimed not to be affected very much by either restriction. Parents reported very little inconvenience to themselves and overwhelmingly supported the new rules. Based on these responses, the new graduated system—including the very strong passenger restriction—appears to be accepted by families. Notably, the post-GDL group surveyed is the first group to go through the graduated system, which is necessarily introduced in the context of taking away some mobility previously available to young people. In succeeding years, when the 'new rules' have become the norm, they are likely to become even more acceptable and compliance may increase.

Some limitations of the survey should be noted for their possible effects on the results. The survey was necessarily based on self-reported data and involved recall of past events. Both factors can produce inaccurate reporting, including the possibility that teenagers and parents may have overstated compliance with the new rules. Secondly, although every DMV region in California was included, the samples were not necessarily representative of teenagers getting licensed during these periods.

One other issue concerns the group grandfathered in under the old license rules that was encountered in the 1999 sample. Although the average permit age of the grandfathered group is only slightly lower than

that of the post-GDL group, and there were no differences found on demographic variables, some of this group would ordinarily have been in the post-GDL group except that they got their learner's permits early to beat the July 1, 1998, date. The primary question is whether they would have been less likely to favor the new rules and comply with them. This question cannot be answered definitively, although the available evidence does not support lesser acceptance. For example, respondents in the grandfathered group were slightly more likely than post-GDL respondents to say they favored the nighttime and passenger restrictions. In any case, the differences between pre- and post-GDL groups are generally strikingly large, which suggests that any bias in the samples had minor consequences.

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