

Driving thrills combat boredom

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Boredom is provoking as many as a third of drivers to take unnecessary risks at the wheel, a new study has found.

Researchers at Newcastle University found that [drivers](#) who didn't find the highways taxing enough were more prone to speeding or overtaking as they sought excitement. As a result the researchers suggest that making roads more complicated by building in more obstacles could actually make them safer.

The study of 1,563 drivers published today in *Transportation Planning and Technology*, highlights to planners that efforts to make roads safer could unintentionally provoke more accidents as people may take risks to liven up their journey.

Edmund King, president of the AA and Visiting Professor of Transport at Newcastle University said: "As cars come fitted with more gadgets to make driving easier and planners remove more of the distractions it comes as no surprise to me that people are finding the pleasure of driving has become rather a chore. With that comes an increase in the risks drivers take as they mentally switch-off instead of focussing on the road."

In the study all drivers were put into four groups. The first category, made up of nearly a third of drivers (31%) included those who are "easily bored, nervous and dangerous" – those more likely to have an accident. While, perhaps unsurprisingly, more younger drivers came into this category, more women were also found to be in this group looking

for driving thrills.

The largest group, making up 35% of the driving population, are described as “enthusiastic”. The Newcastle University researchers found that they were less likely to have a crash because they find driving more challenging or intrinsically interesting. This kind of motorist enjoys driving, is calmer and is therefore less likely to have an accident.

More than one in five drivers (21%) were found to “drive slowly and dislike driving”. While unlikely to get fined for speeding they also drove the least. The smallest group - just 13% of motorists - were labelled as “safe and slow”. Admitting to driving slowly in cities, they were also most positive about life in general.

Lead researcher Dr. Joan Harvey said: “It would be nice to think that we could train people to be better drivers but we think that those people who would most benefit from training are the least likely to take part. So we’ve considered the other options and contrary to what you might expect when driving, hazards can actually increase our attention to the road so this may well be the way forward for planners.

"We may need to start considering some radical schemes such as putting bends back into roads or introducing the concept of shared space as it would force motorists to think about their driving and pedestrians to think about cars."

The Newcastle research team, including Dr. Neil Thorpe and Simon Heslop, asked 1,563 UK drivers aged 17-years-old upwards to complete a questionnaire about their [driving](#) style and personality. They were also asked to estimate the speed they would drive on four different road types. This information formed the basis for identifying clusters of people as drivers based on their [boredom](#) levels. These boredom-based clusters were then compared in terms of age, sex, personality, attitude,

emotions and accident and offence data.

More information: Academic paper: The categorisation of drivers in relation to boredom, J. Harvey, et al. Published in *Transportation Planning and Technology*. [www.informaworld.com/smpp/cont ...850139~frm=titlelink](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/cont...850139~frm=titlelink)

Provided by Newcastle University

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