

Study finds law dramatically curbing need for speed

April 18 2014, by Paul Mayne

Almost seven years have passed since Ontario's street-racing legislation hit the books and, according to one Western researcher, it has succeeded in putting the brakes on the number of convictions and, more importantly, injuries and deaths among young drivers.

In her study, Evelyn Vingilis, director of the Population and Community Health Unit in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, looked at the period from when the Ontario's Street Racers, Stunts and Aggressive Drivers Legislation was introduced (September 2007) through 2011.

In that span, 23,401 driver's licences were suspended for violating the new law – 50 km/h above the posted speed limit.

"It was hypothesized the new law would have more impact on reducing extreme speeding in males compared to females, because males are much more likely to engage in speeding, street racing and stunt driving," Vingilis said.

Her findings confirmed that belief.

In the given period, 1.21 per cent of males between 16-24 years old and .37 per cent of males between 25-64 had their licence suspended. In contrast, only .21 per cent of females between 16-24 and .07 per cent of females between 25-64 had their licence suspended.

"The people to whom it would most likely apply would be males,

because we know females are very low on the totem pole in these kinds of 'burning-rubber' incidents," added Vingilis, who herself owns a 1986 Mazda RX7.

A key factor in the success of the new [legislation](#), she said, is based around three themes – certainty, severity and swiftness.

"If you increase the certainty of penalty, severity of penalty and swiftness with which it is handed out, it should deter it," she said. "You need to have all three."

According to the legislation, if you are pulled over and charged, your licence is suspended and car taken away immediately for seven days. The minimum fine is \$2,000 and can go as high as \$10,000.

Add to that 6 demerit points, the cost of towing and storage, pending headaches with insurance rates and the possibility of jail time, Vingilis said young male drivers are beginning to get the point that reckless behaviour will not be tolerated.

The bulk of licence suspensions for street racing, 85.9 per cent, were for seven days, with 12.4 per cent between eight-30 days. The majority of the suspended drivers, 88.5 per cent did not repeat the offence.

When it comes to [convictions](#) under the legislation, Vingilis' research – again – points to young males being affected the most.

"There was a very dramatic reduction for males, but then if you look for females there is no difference," she said. "So, when you look at the numbers for males, there seems to be something going on. It seems to be working, so what we can say is it's consistent with deterrence theory."

Further research, yet to be published, shows a positive trend when it

comes to the injuries or causalities related to street racing. It's the same thing, Vingilis said, with a significant reduction for young males between 16-24 years old being "way off the chart," and a significant reduction, but not as much, for older [males](#).

Once again, there was no significant change for female drivers.

"This goes beyond just the convictions. You are seeing the consistency," Vingilis said. "Based on what we know about who speeds and what could occur, it also confirms a policy that seems to be consistent with deterrence theory.

"It's a good news story. For me, the issue is it is suggesting positive outcomes in terms of saving lives."

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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