

**Pass Plus
evaluation**

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Research conducted by Synovate

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	2
2. Background to and objectives of the research.....	4
2.1 Introduction.....	4
2.2 Research objectives	4
3. Methodology and sample.....	5
3.1 Methodology and Sample	5
3.2 Timescales	5
4. Main findings.....	6
4.1 Reasons for applying for Pass Plus London scheme.....	6
4.2 Learner driver experience.....	7
4.3 Driving experience since passing test (distance driven)	8
4.4 Driving situations involved in (since passing test)	9
4.5 Collisions and injuries whilst driving	10
4.6 Confidence and enjoyment in driving	12
5. Conclusions and recommendations.....	13

1. Executive Summary

The biggest single reason for applying for the Pass Plus London scheme was to obtain cheaper insurance (mentioned by over a third), although a wide number of other substantiating reasons were given, particularly to gain experience of driving on motorways and other difficult road types, to gain driving experience and confidence in driving generally, and to improve driving skills and knowledge.

Over three quarters of applicants found themselves in at least one difficult driving situation since they passed their test, with driving in bad weather, overtaking situations and night time driving mentioned most often, but motorway driving situations and misjudging speed going around a bend were also mentioned by a significant proportion.

Just over one in twenty applicants (6%) had been involved in a collision since passing their test, mostly collisions not involving any other driver (e.g. when parking / manoeuvring) or where they had been hit by another car. Only a small number of these collisions resulted in injury, and whiplash was most commonly mentioned amongst the few that did.

2. Background to and objectives of the research

2.1 Introduction

In September 2005 Transport for London (TfL) announced the introduction of the Pass Plus London scheme, targeted at young motorists. This group is of particular interest as they are disproportionately involved in road traffic accidents and casualties. The scheme offers part funding of the Pass Plus course – originally instigated by the DSA – for newly qualified drivers aged 17-25 living in a London borough. Through extra driving tuition and experience of particular driving environments and situations, Pass Plus seeks to improve driving standards and increase driver confidence, and therefore reduce the risk of likelihood of collisions. The proven record of Pass Plus is such that completion of the course also provides the opportunity of reduced insurance premiums.

TfL are keeping track of Pass Plus London applicants, from initial application and reasons for doing so, and subsequent completion (or otherwise) of the course.

2.2 Research objectives

This first stage of research is required to meet the following objectives amongst applicants of the Pass Plus London scheme:

- Profile who had applied for the scheme.
- Understand the reasons for applying for the scheme.
- Gauge the level of driving confidence and experience of the applicants, including specific situations encountered.
- Measure the number of collisions - if any - applicants have been involved in.

This research provides a benchmark of applicants, against which the 'success' of the Pass Plus London scheme and its potential benefits can be measured.

3. Methodology and sample

3.1 Methodology and Sample

A self-completion questionnaire was sent to all eligible Pass Plus London scheme applicants. A total of 1,289 completed questionnaires were collected and processed.

3.2 Timescales

All completed questionnaires received by TfL up to 26th February 2007 were included in this first stage of research analysis.

4. Main findings

4.1 Reasons for applying for Pass Plus London scheme

A number of reasons are given for applying to the Pass Plus London scheme; indeed, two thirds of applicants (66%) give more than one reason. The biggest single reason is to get cheaper insurance.(38%).

Please give your reasons for wanting to take Pass Plus London.	
	(n=1,289)
Cheaper insurance / discount on insurance	38%
Experience of motorways / country roads / different road types	31%
More / better / extra experience	26%
More confidence / be more confident driver	14%
Improve / better driving skills / knowledge	21%
Safer driving / be safer driver	14%
Be a better driver	8%
Experience of difficult situations	7%
Extra practice / learning	5%
Someone with me / accompanied (e.g. first time on motorways)	3%
Experience of weather conditions / rain	2%
Experience of situations not covered in lessons / test	2%
Experience of London roads / to be ready for London roads	1%
Avoid / reduce likelihood of accidents / crashes/collisions	1%
Recommended / 'forced' to (e.g. by parents)	1%
To get confidence for driving on own	<1%
Other reasons	2%
Not stated	1%

4.2 Learner driver experience

On average, applicants had over 50 hours learner driver experience, with an average of 43 hours with a driving school and 10 hours with family / friends. The latter is a little under the national average: those who pass their driving test have had, on average, about 45 hours of professional training combined with 22 hours of private practice (source: www.direct.gov.uk).

Almost all (98%) of applicants have had at least some driving school experience, and of these, just over a third of those having 40 hours or more instruction.

Just over half (55%) had at least some hours driving experience with family or friends, and of these, just over a quarter have had over 20 hours or more private practice.

Please give details of your learner driver experience.			
	driving school	No . hours with ... family / friends	in total
All giving answer	95% (n=1,267)	88% (n=1,143)	86% (n=1,165)
0 hours	<1%	45%	0%
1 to 10 hours	4%	30%	2%
11 to 20 hours	10%	13%	4%
21 to 30 hours	22%	5%	15%
31 to 40 hours	29%	2%	25%
41 to 50 hours	16%	3%	22%
51 to 75 hours	11%	1%	19%
76 to 100 hours	5%	1%	7%
More than 100 hours	2%	1%	5%
Average no. hours	43	10	53
Other answer (e.g. 1 / week)	1%	<1%	0%

Only a very small proportion claim to have had little learner driver experience – 2% claim to have had less than 10 hours in total. Those that said they had less than 10 hours driving school experience did have an average of 23 hours of private practice, higher than the average for all applicants overall. Those that said that they had no practice with family or friends had an average of 49 hours driving school experience, again, higher than the total applicants average.

4.3 Driving experience since passing test (distance driven)

The great majority of applicants had driven less than 250 miles for any type of driving since passing their test. Indeed, amongst all the applicants providing an answer to every type of driving, 76% claimed to have driven less than 250 miles for each type.

The greatest amount of driving appears to be for leisure purposes, with more applicants doing this type of driving overall, and more miles also being driven for this type of driving overall.

Since passing your test, how many miles have you driven unaccompanied for the following activities?			
	Miles driven since passing test...		
	to work/ education	for work	for leisure
All giving answer	85% (n=1,105)	77% (n=988)	94% (n=1,207)
0 – 250	87%	94%	75%
251 – 500	7%	3%	11%
501 – 750	3%	1%	7%
751 – 1,000	1%	1%	3%
1,000+	2%	1%	4%
Other answer (e.g. 1 / week)	2%	1%	4%

4.4 Driving situations involved in (since passing test)

Over three quarters of applicants (78%) mention that they have found themselves in at least one difficult driving situation since passing their test. The situations most encountered by applicants are those which most closely match the key situations covered by the Pass Plus course, specifically driving in bad weather (encountered by 44% of applicants), being surprised by an oncoming vehicle (39%), night time driving (39%), overtaking (37%) and driving on a motorway (34%).

Not being able to stop at a red light (11%) and doing an emergency stop for a pedestrian (14%) are the situations least likely to be encountered by the applicants, although more than one in ten mention having encountered these situations overall.

Since passing your test, have you found yourself in any difficult situations whilst you were driving? For example:				
All giving answer	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Ever
Driving in bad weather	56%	38%	5%	44%
Surprised by overtaking vehicle	61%	36%	4%	39%
Night time driving	61%	27%	12%	39%
Overtaking	63%	34%	2%	37%
Driving on a motorway	66%	31%	3%	34%
Too fast on entering bend	70%	28%	2%	23%
Not being sure of which lane to take on the motorway	77%	21%	2%	23%
Not sure when to use your lights	84%	15%	1%	16%
Emergency stop for a pedestrian	86%	14%	1%	14%
Not being able to stop at red light	89%	11%	0%	11%

Night time driving is the one situation that is more frequently encountered by applicants: one in eight (12%) frequently drive at night time.

4.5 Collisions and injuries whilst driving

6% of applicants have experienced a collision since passing their driving test, and 1% have experienced more than one collision.

How many collisions have you been involved in whilst driving, since passing your test (even if they were not reported to the police or insurance company)?	
All giving answer	95% (n=1,230)
None / no collisions	94%
1	5%
2	<1%
3	<1%
Any collision(s)	6%

Of those that have been involved in any collisions, 7% involved injuries either to themselves or another party, with whiplash being the injury most mentioned.

How many of these [collisions] involved injuries to you or someone else involved in the collision? Please give details of injuries received.	
All involved in any collision(s) since passing test	(n=69)
None / No injuries	88%
Any injury	7%
Whiplash	6^
Other serious personal injuries	1%
Had collision(s) but not stating injury details	4%

The majority of the collisions did not involve any injuries, with the most common type of collision not involving any other driver – collisions whilst parking or manoeuvring the vehicle (28% of all people involved in collisions). The next most common collision involved applicants being hit by other drivers (22%).

Please give details of these collisions.

All involved in any collision(s) since passing test	(n=69)
Hit / scrape / bump when parking / reversing	28%
Was driven into by other vehicle	22%
Drove into back / side of other vehicle	13%
Scrape / collision when turning / emerging from junction	10%
Scrape / collision due to being cut up / others switching lanes	7%
Swerve / hit curb and swerve	6%
Roundabout situation	4%
Clipping wing mirror	3%
Driving too fast / taking action too late	3%
Motorway situation	2%
Rolling back and hitting car behind	3%
Collision with cyclist	1%
Collision with pedestrian	1%
Collision with parked car	1%
Collision with parked car	1%
Poor visibility (windscreen)	1%
Sneezing and losing control of car	1%
Taking avoiding action	1%
Wet conditions	1%

4.6 Confidence and enjoyment in driving

The great majority of applicants enjoy driving, with just over half of the applicants (53%) stating that they enjoy driving 'very much'. Only 2% indicate that they do not enjoy driving, and these are also more likely to be less confident drivers (mean 2.7 – see below for reference) and are slightly more likely to have had a collision (9%).

Using the following scale, please indicate how much you enjoy driving.	
All giving answer	>99% (n=1,283)
Not at all (1)	<1%
(2)	2%
(3)	11%
(4)	34%
Very much (5)	53%
Mean score	4.4

Driving confidence amongst applicants is also high, with the majority indicating that they feel confident when driving, and just over a fifth (22%) feel 'very confident'.

Using the following scale, please indicate how confident you feel when you are driving.	
All giving answer	>99% (n=1,282)
Not at all confident (1)	1%
(2)	3%
(3)	24%
(4)	50%
Very confident (5)	22%
Mean score	3.9

5. Conclusions and recommendations

As getting cheaper insurance is the biggest single motivation to take the Pass Plus course, this should be emphasised as strongly as the additional driving skills and safer driving benefits. The key is to ensure as many people take the Pass Plus course, whatever their motivations.

Whilst 'gaining experience of driving on motorways' is a main reason for taking the Pass Plus course, more have actually had experience of driving at night time and in bad weather, and experienced difficult situations relating to overtaking (or being overtaken). The importance of driving skills in these situations should be emphasised to broaden the relevance of the Pass Plus course as much as possible.

Interestingly, the great majority of the scheme applicants already see themselves as confident drivers – many more than mention wanting to take Pass Plus to 'increase their confidence'. Reinforcing increased confidence for particular driving situations, especially motorways, should be more effective in encouraging younger newly qualified drivers to take Pass Plus.

The great majority also enjoy driving, and whilst messages 'promoting' enjoyment are not appropriate, a supporting tone of the Pass Plus scheme recruitment literature that supports enjoying driving should be more motivating than one that is overly 'instructive' or 'authoritarian'.