

# Tougher penalties credited for fewer casualties among young male drivers

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A new study out of Western University (London, Canada) has found a significant decline in speeding-related fatalities and injuries among young men in Ontario since the province's tough extreme speeding and aggressive driving laws were introduced in 2007. The study found a sustained reduction of about 58 speeding-related injuries and fatalities a month among males aged 16-24. That means about 700 fewer young men have been injured or killed in speeding-related crashes yearly since the law was passed.

The study led by Evelyn Vingilis, PhD, a professor in Family Medicine, and Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Western's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, evaluated the deterrent impact of Ontario's Street Racers, Stunt, and Aggressive Drivers Legislation (Bill 203) and found it is making a difference, not only in the number of convictions but also in reducing the number of collisions.

Under the law,\* drivers caught going 50 kph over the speed limit or engaging in improper actions that constitute a driving stunt, contest, or race can immediately have their licences suspended and their vehicles impounded for seven days. Upon conviction, they also face a fine of \$2,000-\$10,000, licence suspension for up to two years or six demerit points, and the possibility of up to six months in jail. The penalties get even more severe with a second conviction.

"First of all we looked at [males](#) and females, and then we looked at younger and older individuals because we know from my earlier

research, that street racing and extreme speeding is an activity that typically younger males are more likely to engage in," said Vingilis. "What we found was a substantial reduction in the number of convictions for extreme speeding for males, and no change for females because they were pretty low any way. And importantly, we found a significant decrease in the number of motor vehicle casualties of males 16 to 24 -quite a significant reduction."

Vingilis says the study's findings support deterrence theory to the effect that certain, swift and severe sanctions can deter risky driving behaviour.

The research, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO), looked at data from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2011. The law came into effect September 30, 2007, enabling the researchers to compare the data before and after implementation. From the time the new law came into force to the end of 2011, more than 24,000 drivers' licences were suspended for violating the new street racing legislation, nearly 8,500 of them in the first year alone.

For the 16 to 24 year old male drivers, 1.21% of licensed drivers had their licences suspended, along with .37 per cent of mature males (aged 25-64). That contrasted with .21 per cent for 16-24 year old female [drivers](#) and .07 per cent for 25-64 year old women.

**More information:** The research team which included Aizhan Meirambayeva, Guangyong Zou, Yoassry Elzohairy, Ian McLeod, Jinkun Xiao, Yuanhao Lai and Vingilis, has had findings published online in advance by two journals. The study on casualties is in *Accident Analysis & Prevention* and the study on convictions is in *Traffic Injury Prevention*.

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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