

Study finds young driver's gender linked to crash type, injury severity

26 August 2014

Gender is often related to what type of severe or fatal crash a young male or young female driver will be involved in, according to a Kansas State University study.

The university's Sunanda Dissanayake, professor of civil engineering, and Niranga Amarasingha, doctoral student in civil engineering, looked at the gender differences and similarities of young drivers involved in all motor vehicle [crashes](#) in Kansas across five years. Their findings may help reduce the number and severity of these crashes by improving educational material used in young driver education courses.

"Age is one of the most important factors of highway safety, and crash data shows that young drivers and older drivers are involved in more crashes than any other age group," Dissanayake said. "For young drivers, this is especially concerning because people in this age group have their whole lives ahead of them and these crashes are frequently severe or fatal."

Dissanayake and Amarasingha recently published their study, "Gender differences of young drivers on injury severity outcome of highway crashes," in the *Journal of Safety Research*. It is part of a larger Kansas Department of Transportation, or KDOT, study about improving highway safety of young drivers.

The researchers analyzed data collected and included in the state transportation department's crash database, which contains more than 150 variables about all police-reported [motor vehicle crashes](#) in Kansas. They looked at data from 2007-2011—the most recent year available at the beginning of the study—for accidents involving drivers 16-24 years old.

Researchers found several differences in the types of crashes between young men and women, including:

- Young females were 66 percent more likely to wear a seat belt than young males.
- Young females were 28 percent more likely to drive on a restricted license than young males.
- Young female drivers had more crashes at intersections and collisions with pedestrians.
- Young males had more crashes after sunset than young females.
- Young female drivers were more likely to be involved in crashes during weekdays, while young male drivers were more likely to be involved in crashes during the weekend.
- Young male drivers had more off-road crashes than young females.

"These findings show that [gender differences](#) do exist in young drivers when it comes to safety," Dissanayake said. "That makes sense because crashes are random events."

Dissanayake said she hopes the findings contribute to an improved understanding of crashes as well as help develop educational materials targeted more toward [young drivers](#) and each gender.

"There are often different risk factors for young male and young female drivers because their behavior and attitude are generally different," Dissanayake said. "This may help explain why one gender is more likely to be involved in a certain type of crash. For example, young males may have more off-road crashes because this crash type is more frequently involved with speeding on rural roads—a driving habit exhibited more by young males than young females."

Provided by Kansas State University

APA citation: Study finds young driver's gender linked to crash type, injury severity (2014, August 26) retrieved 26 October 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-young-driver-gender-linked-injury.html>

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