

Raising the driving age from 17 to 21

Hello, I'm Sarah and I'm a driving instructor.

Hello, I'm Jack and I'm a car salesman.

Hello, I'm Josh and I'm the government spokesperson.

Hello, I'm Zoe and I'm the mother of a teenage daughter who was seriously injured by a teenage

Hello, I'm Rebecca and I'm a police traffic officer.

Hello, I'm Damian and I'm a 17-year-old who is about to drive.

Okay, so welcome everyone. Today we are proposing to increase the legal driving age from 17 to 21. At the minute, it's just a proposal, nothing is set in stone. So, does anyone have an opinion on this point?

I disagree with it, I think it... I agree with it, I think it should be raised to 21. As my daughter was knocked down by a teenage driver and has been seriously injured and paralysed from her neck down which is going to affect her for the rest of her life.

Zoe, I agree with you that there needs to be changes, but I don't think that we should just completely raise it. At the start, I think we need to introduce more safe driving lessons as like maybe, during a lesson, bringing them out to a motorway. They will be in real life situations, so we could try that just to make it easier.

Yeah, I agree with Sarah with... do different elements to the driving test and stuff. And also, it's not always the person who's driving at fault. It could be like the person who's walking or running across the road or something. So, you can't always blame the driver or the age of the driver for what happened.

You see, as a car sales person, raising the driving age to 21 would be devastating for my business. We focus on cars for first drivers, young first drivers and I think Sarah, you say that as well. To raise the age to 21, as a driving instructor, that would mean less driving lessons. For me, that would mean less car sales and that's not what we want.

Well, I agree because I know that some of you have to earn money. And for me, I have to go to work as well and I think I need a car because I need to go to work as fast as possible.

Yes, I have a 17-year-old child, you know, who's recently just got a job and I can't take him, I'm already at work. I can't leave my job, just so he can have a job, he needs to do that himself. And being able to drive, that sorts it all out.

Yeah, I definitely agree, like it's not always... it's not always first drivers fault. Like it's not fair on the 17 year-olds who are really responsible and like trying to learn how to drive. I would agree because, some people at my age would make wise decisions. Although there are some people who are really stupid and have immature decisions. But, some of us can drive pretty well and we won't be as stupid as those who

can't drive.

Yeah, I agree because not all accidents although, most of them are in between the ages of 17 and 21, not all of them are because of that and you don't only have reckless drivers that are just starting to drive, you can have people who've been driving for ages. So, they think they know what they're doing and think that they can do it. So, maybe there just needs to be a really clear distinction on cars when there is a new driver. Not just what age you are when you're just learning to drive. There has to be something to show that you've just started going on the roads.

As a driving instructor, I have taught a lot of people and the majority of teenagers since they've been wanting to learn how to drive, they're really careful and compared to like adults who just because they think they're older doesn't mean they are as good as a driver. Like most teenagers are really careful and responsible.

Well, Sarah I can't agree with you on that because my daughter was knocked down by a teenage driver. She was a pedestrian and she was walking home. And his car was full and it had four people in the back. So, one, he shouldn't be driving with that many people in the car and he was speeding, so he wasn't very careful.

That is a really good point, but it could have been an adult who was drunk driving. It could have been an older adult, who was texting driving. Like, it can happen to anyone, not just teenagers. Yeah, you don't intend to crash, you don't wake up that morning and decide you're going to crash.

Exactly, you don't wake up,...

It's lack of experience, you know. With young drivers, I think it could be a lack of experience. That they don't understand fully what the consequences could be if they do.

Yeah, that's why agreed when Sarah brought it up earlier on, that maybe the driving test should have different elements to it. And that like, say normally it's in a controlled environment where you're just practicing your driving, maybe there needs to be a test on the motorway. And tests on country roads, or like different places where that drivers going to be.

We have... The Government has tried to do everything to prevent accidents. We've tried, you know, adverts to prevent drunk driving. And to prevent speeding but teenage drivers and in the majority of cases, drunk driving, it always seems to be teenage drivers who've just past their test.

But these accidents don't always happen because of a drunk driver. Like, you haven't done anything to educate the pedestrians or anything. What if it's them running across, they don't understand it's just as much their fault as it is the drivers fault if they are the ones who've put themselves in the situation.

I agree, sometimes when my mum was driving, there were sometimes, some pedestrians walk by and every time we just had to stop and let them pass first, it's just a bit annoying.

We've also considered other proposals as well. Such as, only allowing one or two... ..passengers under the influence joining a driver who, a designated driver on a night out to prevent crashes, but

I don't think that's... going to help anything; how can you restrict... five or you know, four others getting into the car? You can't just have police officers turning up outside the car, saying, "Only two allowed".

Yeah, I...

It's just not going to happen.

Yeah, I agree with Jack. What if, if you brought this new law in, what if the extra two people who were drunk and needed a designated driver but couldn't because it's against the law, so they went in with the drunk driver? That is like really dangerous, like that's something that could happen if you restrict it.

Yeah and I think it doesn't just take more than one drunk driver to distract them, one drunk passenger to distract the driver, It can just take one.

Damian, would you ever have anyone in your car under the influence.

I might, because sometimes I have to when I go to parties, maybe one or two people are drunk, I would drive them home. And personally, I don't really drink that much, I don't really like to drink.

And Rebecca would you say that the majority of cases of accidents are to do with drunk driving?

No, I would say it's more speeding and stuff. Drunk driving only would happen like more on a night time basis, so maybe you could make that law more like maybe when it goes dark or after a certain time. Because like Jack said, his kid needs to drive so he can get to work. But you don't need to drive to get to work at two or three in the morning.

And are they teenage drivers, such as, you know, 17 and 18? Well, you've got 17 to 21, like there would be a vast majority of them would be that age but then you always have the older people. And then you have, like say you're 26, you think you've been driving for six, seven years, so you think even though you've might of had one or two drinks, you still know what you're doing. But you don't know what could happen in the situation.

At the minute it is only a proposal but...

Zoe, was the person that knocked down your daughter, was she speeding?

Yeah, speeding and had people under the influence in the car.

Okay. Sarah, as a driving instructor what effect would this law have on you?

Well, it would have quite a big effect because as I've said, there's quite, little people, like ages 40, 30 and up trying to drive, which is... younger people and that would have such an effect on my business. I like have to support my family as well. S, it would have quite a big effect on my life.

Well, if it's drunk driving that causes concerns, instead of raising the driving age to 21, why not raise the drinking age to 21?

Fair enough, but it isn't always younger drivers that cause accidents, you know. Pensioners, maybe over the age of 70. They maybe start to lose their eyesight and are just dangerous on the roads. So, do you think they should be re-tested?

Really, you know, it depends I think, maybe that would be quite a good idea. But, at the same time... they may not want to, the same way we don't want the age up to 21, well, I don't personally as a car salesman.

Yeah, I agree, if they're pensioners, they've retired work, they're just enjoying life. And they don't, they shouldn't have to worry about retaking a driving test that they did, that like they passed.

I think that older people should be tested again because it could stop future accidents, and stop this happening again. and could get all the dangerous drivers off the road.

I agree with Zoe, I think it would be a good idea because even the way the roads are, the traffic lights. Things have changed since they've taken their test as well. So, maybe they need like to be familiarised with how the stuff is now. And how things have changed since they took their test.

I think retesting would be a very good idea. Because it's not just our fault that some accidents happen. It should be considered that generally people from all ages have some problems in their driving.

I disagree with that because if they need retesting, wouldn't anyone else who has been driving a long time need retesting?

Because, driving lessons are changing like every, they are changing a bit. So, it's not just for pensioners, so you would need to retest loads of people who are older and driving?

Well, you'd set it for a certain age and when that person turns that age. So, they have to do it, it would just be for this one, anyone over the age has to be tested. But anyone once when you've reached, say 75, you have to be retested to drive again.

Do you all think though that 17 is too young to drive a car?

No.

I don't think so, because again, as I've said, that if 17 you're... You can legally get a job at 16 and if you're 17 and you got a job at 16, you're relying on your parents to lead you to work every day. Now, that you're 17, you're more independent, you have a car, you can drive yourself. You can worry about your own things. I don't think raising it to 21 would be beneficial.

I agree, as Jack said before his son is 17, and he can't drive him to work because, he himself is already away at work. So, I think it's important for a 17-year-old to get a car, so he can go to work more efficiently.

Zoe, as a mother of a child who was injured, do you think that 17 is too young?

Yes, I do think that 17 is too young. Because I don't think that all 17 year olds can handle the responsibility of being responsible for others around them and in the car, and for themselves. So, I think by raising the age to 21, people will be more mature by this age and can handle that responsibility.

Well, I disagree with you Zoe, because as I said earlier, when I'm teaching, you know, they're trying to get their license to go to work, so they are really responsible and as Jack said, like they're becoming more independent. If they're legal to have a job at 16, then why can't they have a car at 17?

Rebecca, do you think that the... crime rate of crashes, like accidents due to speeding or drunk driving would decrease if we increased the age to 21?

I don't think it would necessarily decrease because when you're doing speeding tests, it's not only people who are 17 or 18 that you stop. You're stopping people and excuses can be like, "Oh, I'm rushing to work," but like it's not 17 year olds just rushing to work; it can be a 25 year old rushing into work or 28, rushing to a hospital appointment or something. Everyone speeding is not going to be 17 and everyone says they have their reasons but maybe it's just like speeding that needs to completely stop.

Okay. JOSH: Jack, as the father of a 17 year-old and a car salesman, do you think you'd see a decrease in business if we increase the age?

I do think I'd see a decrease in business. As the car salesman, we sort of try and focus on car for new drivers. You know, that's what we try and focus on. And to raise it to 21 would almost wipe us out, you know, that's where our main business comes from. And Sarah as well, young drivers learning to drive. - That's where her main business comes from.

Yeah, exactly.

Well, Jack, I say, I disagree with you. Because to me, you're only seeing it from a financial side, and a money side about you getting money, you losing money if the age is raised. But for me it's more personal, it's about the safety of children and the safety of anyone and their lives at risks.

Well, I understand, but I'm sorry to hear about that. That's just my point of view in this case.

At the same time though, not as many 17 year olds will be able to work if they can't drive because realistically, your parents are also going to be working. And unless you get a job where you can either walk or get a bus, you could work somewhere where you can get a bus to that town. But maybe it could be a bus to that town and then a 25 minute walk because the bus isn't going to leave you to where you need to go, it's going to leave you to the closest bus stop. So, then like, not as many people like 17 year olds, 18 year olds would be able to work, and maybe that family would need the money as well. And that's why they haven't continued to go to school or anything because they need to go out and get a job.

Okay, so, shall we take a vote then as whether we should increase the driving age? So, Sarah do you think we should increase it?

I do not think we should increase it.

Jack, should we increase it? No, from my point of view I don't think we should be increasing the driving age to 21.

Well, I think that we should increase the driving age. Zoe, do you think we should?

Yeah, I think it should increase.

Rebecca?

I don't think that it should be increase.

And Damian, do you think the age should be increase?

I don't think it should be.

Okay, thank you. The majority has voted to keep the driving age the same. So, there will be no further action taken to increase it to 21.