

## Self-reported response to a licensing point system

Julie Hatfield<sup>a</sup>, Teresa Senserrick<sup>a</sup>, Soufiane Boufous<sup>a</sup>, Ann Williamson<sup>a</sup>, Lori Moore<sup>a</sup>, Chika Sakashita<sup>b</sup>, R.F. Soames Job<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Transport and Road Safety Research Centre, University of New South Wales

<sup>b</sup> Global Road Safety Solutions (GRSS) Pty Ltd

<sup>c</sup> World bank

### Abstract

An online survey of New Zealand car license holders was conducted to advance understanding of how individuals respond to licensing points. Results suggest that there are that the majority of drivers aim to drive in a manner that avoids demerit points. The smaller group of drivers who drive more carefully when they have a few points, are perhaps the primary target of licensing point systems, and may be responsive to system refinements such as increasing the number of points that apply to particular offenses and increasing the points lifetime). A small minority of drivers report that they are not influenced by demerit points, at least in part because they are prepared to drive with a suspended license.

### Background

Licensing point systems (LPSs) are used in many countries to reduce repeat offending. Population-level evaluations suggest a moderate (and possibly short-lived effect) of implementing an LPS.

### Objective

To extend the small body of research that has considered individuals' response to licensing points.

### Methods

Potential participants were randomly selected from a market research company survey panel to achieve a representative sample of New Zealand (NZ) car license holders aged 17 years and above. Of 9,193 invited panel members 999 responded to a 15-minute on-line questionnaire assessing knowledge of, attitudes toward, and experiences with the NZ LPS.

### Findings

Around 90% of respondents reported currently having no licensing points, while around 60% reported never having had any. Nearly 90% of respondents who have had licensing points received them for "exceeding the speed limit". Among 19 respondents who had ever had their license suspended due to licensing points, "driving over the legal blood alcohol limit" became a more prominent source of points. Almost half of these respondents reported driving while suspended.

Nearly all respondents indicated that license suspension would be a problem, and 80% of reported driving to avoid receiving licensing points. A further 18% reported changing their driving when they have "a few" points, and 2% reported not being influenced by license points.

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to to examine whether motorists who had ever had licensing points might differ from motorists who had not; both in terms of factors that may contribute to receiving licensing points or factors that may be influenced by having had licensing points (sex, age, ethnicity, rurality of residence, highest education, household income, motoring experience, license type, motoring for work, knowledge of the LPS, perceived likelihood of detection, perceived severity of suspension, attitude to points). Ever having points was more likely for respondents who held a motorcycle license, were male, were in the middle age bracket (compared to the highest age bracket), and who change their driving when they have a few points (compared to respondents who reported driving to avoid getting any).

### Conclusion and policy implications.

Notwithstanding issues associated with self-report, this survey suggests that most NZ drivers drive to avoid getting any license points, while about 20% drive more carefully when they have a few points. The latter may be most influenced by changes to increase the impact of speeding on their license point balance; such as increasing the number of points that apply particularly to low level speeding, and increasing the points lifetime. The most serious recidivist offenders may be beyond the reach of the licensing point system because their driving is influenced by issues beyond its scope (such as problem drinking) and because they are prepared to drive while suspended.