

Understanding Driving Challenges and Engagement Opportunities to Improve Local Driving Knowledge of Newly Arrived International Drivers and Migrants

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Abstract

There is strong public opinion regarding tourists and international drivers posing a high risk on South Australian (SA) roads. While there is little information and publicly available data about international drivers' involvement in SA crashes, there are experiences, stories and anecdotes that indicate road safety is an issue for them due to their limited local knowledge.

International drivers settling in SA were surveyed to understand their pain points, challenges and interests after driving on the state's roads. The study investigates how they prepared to face the roads in SA, what are their most stressful situations and their recommendations for others.

Background

Overseas migrants about to commence driving in SA often have to drive out of necessity due to limited public transport options and the need to seek and maintain a job (Knight et al 2010). International drivers setting in a new country face a number of challenges. Driving in a new environment is one of these, potentially imposing a risk to other road users.

There is strong public opinion regarding tourists and international drivers being a high risk on SA roads. While there is little information and publicly available data about international drivers and their involvement in SA crashes, there are experiences, stories and anecdotes that indicate road safety is an issue for a number of international drivers due to their limited local knowledge.

As roads are shared by residents and visitors, improving migrants' road safety conditions pose serious implications for the South Australian community.

South Australian population growth is being driven by overseas migrants, with the state having an influx of more than 10,000 overseas net migrants each year.

Method

The study gained information by engaging key stakeholders in personal meetings and the design and development of an online survey. The survey was distributed through a number of community organisations that work with international migrants and through personal networks.

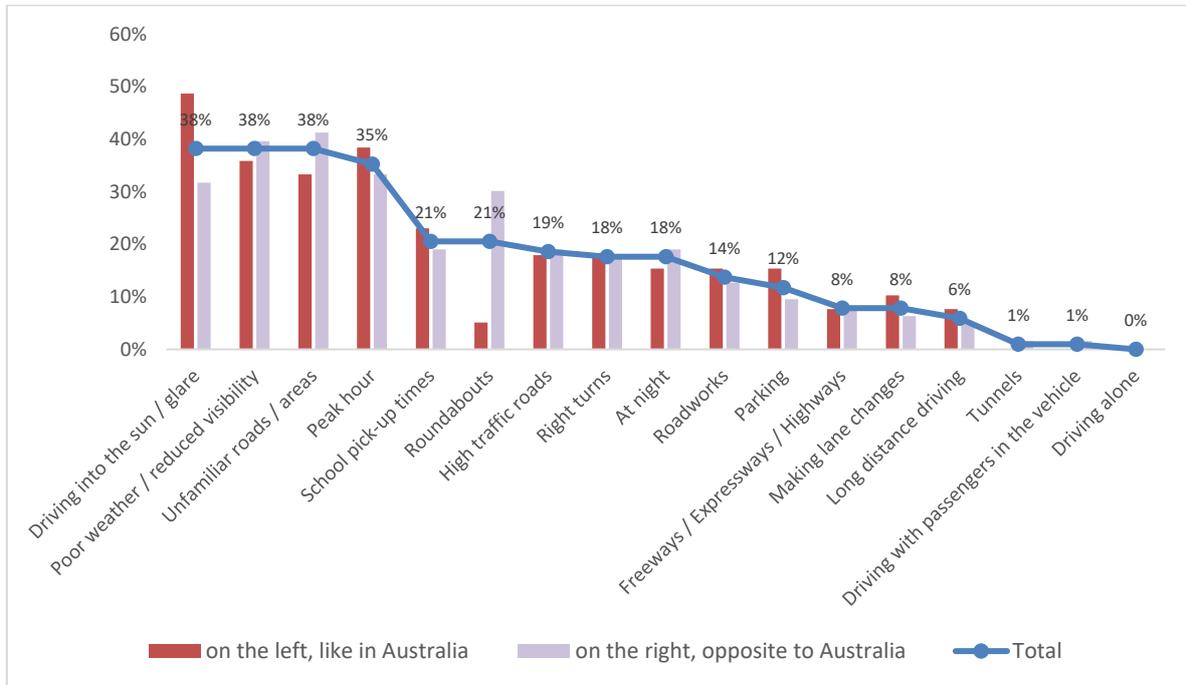
The sample included 122 responses which were analysed with Microsoft Excel through various descriptive techniques.

Results

The results highlighted that just over a third of international drivers find difficult or very difficult to understand SA road rules. Further analysis is based on the side in which vehicles travel in respondents' countries of origin showed that a higher proportion of people who come from countries where vehicles travel on the right side of the road presented difficulties understanding SA road rules (40%) compared to those coming from vehicles travelling on the left side of the road (26%). Main challenging situations for international drivers driving in SA included unfamiliar roads (38%), poor

weather (38%), driving into the sun or glare (38%), peak hours (35%), and roundabouts (21%). Before driving in the state, most respondents looked for information about licencing (69%) and road rules (65%) while fewer took practical lessons (37%). Despite this, when recommending others about what information to look for during the first two years of driving in the state most of the respondents recommended looking for vehicle insurance (89%) which was followed by looking information on SA road rules (85%) and driver’s licence (81%).

Figure 1. Most stressful driving situations



Conclusion

This study reviewed international drivers’ interest, experiences, pain points and recommendations that can inform future road safety programs directed to migrants. The study highlights the difficulties faced by those coming from overseas countries especially those who normally drive on the opposite side of the road. It also highlights that more work needs to be done on explaining how SA rules apply and the differences with other countries. The learnings can assist to develop programs targeting international drivers to support their settlement in SA and to achieve better road safety outcomes.

References

Knight E., Harris A., Shannon N., (2010). *Newly arrived migrants – what are the road safety issues?* Paper presented at the Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, Canberra, Australia.