

Fit to Drive

4th International Traffic Expert Congress
Tallinn from June 4th - 5th 2009



Welcome



The Penalty Points (Demerit) System in the UK and Ireland

Dr. Claire Corbett
Brunel Law School
Brunel University, West London, UK

Terminology:

The United Kingdom = England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Ireland = Republic of Ireland.

Great Britain = England, Wales and Scotland.

A word of warning: Statistics on penalty point data, driver licencing, and motoring offences are not kept uniformly for the whole of the UK. Qualifications to the paper will be added as appropriate.



How the system operates in the UK

- > First introduced in 1972. Accumulation of 12 penalty points in 3 yrs makes a driver liable to disqualification for at least 6 months.
- > Points stay on a licence for 4 or 11 years (depending on seriousness), and are valid for 3 or 10 years.
- > Between 2 and 11 points are given for a single offence (or outright disqualification). 3 points for a standard speeding offence.
- > Points are given with a financial penalty (fine, fixed penalty, conditional offer of a fixed penalty) + other penalties for more serious offences. Acceptance of a fixed penalty avoids court.
- > A lower threshold of 6 points for new drivers within the first 2 years > revocation of licence + requirement to retake driving test.



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How the system operates in Ireland

- First introduced in 2002, largely based on UK system.
- Accumulation of 12 penalty points over 3 years makes a driver liable to disqualification for 6 months.
- > Points are valid for 3 years. Points apply to 36 offences.
- Either 1 or 2 offered for each offence initially if offence admitted and accompanying fixed charge paid within 28 days. Points rise to between 3 – 5 if paid in next 28 days.
- > 2 points for a standard speeding offence.
- > Acceptance of a fixed charge avoids court.



Table 1: Comparison of Penalty Points and Disqualifications awarded in 1996 and 2006 + Offences Detected by Camera - England and Wales

	<u>1996</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Endorsements without disqualifications - all offences	1,350,000	2,564,000	+190%
Endorsements without disqualifications - speeding + traffic signal offences	852,000	2,100,000	+246%
No. speeding + traffic signal offences prosecuted + detected by camera	312,900	1,863,800	+596%
Persons disqualified under points system (excluding those disqualified for current offence)	31,000	26,000	-19%



Table 2: The Irish Penalty Points System: Cumulative Figures Since 2002*

<u>Offences with points</u>	<u>Disqualifications</u>	<u>Licence Type</u>		
		<u>Full</u>	<u>Provisional</u>	<u>None</u>
		<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
617,444	195	64	5	31

* 36 offences now attract points.



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UK Penalty Points Research

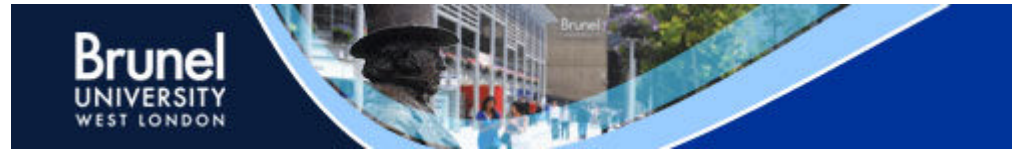
About 1 in 7-8 British drivers have points on their licence.

TRL and Brunel University completed an analysis and evaluation of the GB penalty points system in 2008.

- The overall objective was to explore whether the threat of disqualification - through accumulating penalty points - deters speeding behaviour. Quantitative and qualitative techniques used.

First stage: Broughton (2008). Comprised an analysis of two large databases of the DVLA Driver File and TRL Archive.

- Only 24% of 'totting disqualifications' from speeding convictions; 65% from insurance offences, between 2001-05.
- Only 0.3% of those with one speeding conviction got 3+ more in following 3 years.



UK Penalty Points Research (contd.)

Broughton (2008) contd.

- Those with speeding convictions have got older between 1997-99 and 2003-05. There has been:
 - A 540% increase in >60 year old male speeding offenders;
 - A 1200% increase in >60 year old female speeding offenders;
 - A 18% increase in <25 year old male speeding offenders.

- > Drivers do modify their behaviour as penalty points accumulate. There was a low proportion of reconvictions, especially among those with 6 or 9 penalty points.



UK Penalty Points Research (contd.)

Second stage: Corbett, DelMonte, Quimby & Grayson (2008)

- Comprised a postal survey of samples of drivers with different patterns of penalty points (n = 1115); depth interviews (n = 47); 2 focus groups of drivers.
- The threat of disqualification seemed a more effective deterrent than having been previously disqualified. Not only are drivers deterred from further offending by the threat of disqualification, but some avoid disqualification in other ways:
 - Some 'slowed down before a camera and accelerated away downstream';
 - Most had bought a radar detector device to avoid further prosecution;
 - More than $\frac{1}{2}$ interviewees thought passing on points to others was common.
 - The study identified a large number who claimed 12+ points currently, yet had never been disqualified.

Improvements needed for loopholes in UK licensing and penalty points systems

Not all drivers who should receive points do so:

- > About 1 in 20 drive unlicensed (Knox et al, 2003); many banned dangerous drivers may continue to drive unlicensed (Pearce et al, 2002); almost 1 in 5 driver records held by DVLA are inaccurate.
- > In some parts of E and W, less than half those detected end up paying fixed penalties + get points (Telegraph.co.uk, 2008);
- > In London, many drivers are registered abroad and have been rarely traced or prosecuted (BBC News, 2009). Since April 2009, non-UK driving offenders can receive fixed penalties and points on their DVLA driving record (NDS, 2009).



Broader context of traffic enforcement in the UK and Ireland

Alienation and Criminalisation: Around 1 in 7-8 in Britain have points, mostly for speeding offences detected by camera. Often their first brush with the law. This could produce such feelings.

Cameras as an ,easy' means of revenue generation: Majority support for cameras still. Yet regular concerns about ease of raising government revenue by cameras. Licensed drivers readily traceable; unlicensed drivers are not.

Cameras may actually undermine the road safety message: Many see revenue raising as the primary purpose of cameras. This can be used to deny the ,dangers of speed' and to justify continued speeding.

Concluding Remarks

- > The penalty points system in *UK* is working well judged by its success in lowering reconvictions in *GB*. The threat of disqualification does deter further offending, but some avoid disqualification in other ways.
- > Few drivers disqualified to date in *Ireland*, perhaps because of the newness of the points system that started in 2002.
- > Yet cameras account for most detected offences leading to penalty points in England and Wales, so care needed to maintain majority support for cameras and their consequent legitimacy.
- > There is a need to disentangle speed management and enforcement issues from educating drivers about the 'dangers of speed'.