

Summary:

Evaluation of the ‘Girls take action’ campaign

Background

In 2007, The Norwegian Council for Road Safety (Trygg Trafikk) initiated a campaign aimed at young girls between 16 and 18 years old. Research has showed that young drivers with young passengers in the car have increased accident risk. The idea of the campaign was founded on research showing that having passengers in the car may have a protecting effect on accident risk – if the passengers speak out when they feel unsafe and the driver is behaving risky.

The campaign, called ‘Girls take action’, is aimed at young girls who are passengers with young drivers. The main aims of the campaign is to make these young girls more aware of various risk factors in traffic, as well as to teach them that it does make a difference if one lets a risky driver know that he or she is behaving recklessly.

The main aim of the present project was to evaluate the campaign, i.e., to investigate any effects of the campaign on self-reported behaviour and attitudes. In addition, we investigated the girls’ knowledge about traffic safety and risk factors, and also what the girls who have been a member of ‘Girls take action’ think about the campaign.

Methods

A pre-test post-test two-group design was used in order to investigate potential effects of the campaign. In 2007 the Institute of Transport Economics conducted a questionnaire survey among a group of girls born in 1991 who had accepted to participate in the campaign (intervention group), as well as a group of girls also born in 1991 not participating in the campaign (control group). The questionnaire survey was repeated in these two groups in 2010. Only girls who responded both times (i.e., both in 2007 and 2010) were included in the analyses presented in this report.

Being a passenger with young driver

The girls report to be passenger with a young driver more often in 2010 than in 2007, and this applies to both groups. This is probably due to the fact that many of the girls themselves and the girls' peers have gotten their driver's license since 2007. Moreover, a higher percentage of the girls in both groups report that they "most often" are passenger with female drivers in 2010 than in 2007.

There are few differences between the girls in the intervention group and the control group when it comes to experience with various risky situations in traffic. One exception is that a higher percentage of the girls in the intervention group in 2007 reported that they had been "close to experiencing a traffic accident" than in the control group. There is, however, a time effect indicating that all girls are more "safety oriented" in 2010 than in 2007, exemplified by use of seat belt.

There is a weak tendency showing that girls in the intervention group more often speak out when the driver is driving risky than the girls in the control group, whereas the opposite is true for "not saying anything to the driver". The differences between the groups are, however, weak. Moreover, these weak differences are present both in 2007 and in 2010, indicating that this is not an effect of the campaign, but rather a permanent difference between the groups.

The girls in the intervention group think to a higher degree than the girls in the control group that their presence in the car influence the driver to drive "more carefully". Again, this difference is present both in 2007 and 2010, indicating that the girls in the intervention group may be more safety oriented than the girls in the control group in the first place.

When it comes to the girls' opinion about how important it is that the car has a technically good standard, the results indicate that the campaign has had an effect. The girls in the intervention group has changed since 2007 and think this is more important in 2010, whereas the girls in the control group think this is less important than they did in 2007.

Speaking out as a passenger

Of all the girls who reported that they had been unsafe as a passenger at least one time the last year, 83 per cent of the girls in the intervention group said that they had spoken out to the driver, whereas the percentage in the control group was 71 per cent. Importantly though, this question was only asked in the 2010 survey, and consequently we do not have the data to conclude that this difference is due to the campaign. As indicated by other findings, this difference between the two groups may simply indicate that the girls in the intervention group may be more safety oriented in the first place. This hypothesis is supported by answers to the other questions regarding speaking out as a passengers; there is a tendency that a higher percentage in the intervention group than in the control group "often" speak out as a passenger, but these differences are present in both 2007 and 2010.

In addition, there is a time difference indicating that all girls are more safety oriented in 2010 than in 2007.

Knowledge

There is little evidence that the campaign has had any effect on the girls' knowledge level. The only difference we found showed that a higher percentage of the girls in the intervention group knew how fast one has to drive in order to lose your driver's licence at a road with speed limit 80 km/h.

The results revealed, however, various differences in knowledge between girls with and without driver licence.

About Girls take action

There is a tendency showing that girls in the intervention group more often speak with their friends about various traffic safety related themes than the girls in the control group.

72 per cent of the girls in the intervention group who responded to this survey reported that they read all letters from Trygg Trafikk carefully, whereas only 3 per cent reported that they stopped reading the letters. Moreover, 27 per cent of these girls check the web site after each letter from Trygg Trafikk.

According to the girls, the best about the campaign has been "to read the stories of others", that the web site is for girls only, and getting "answers from Trygg Trafikk". The themes that made the most impression on the girls, were "to speed down a friend", "speeding", and "seat belt", whereas the most interesting things they received in the letters from Trygg Trafikk were "the speeding ruler", "reflex", and "fact sheet about seat belt".

Conclusions

There is little evidence to support the hypothesis that the campaign has had any effect on the girls' attitudes or self-reported behaviour. There is, however, tendencies showing that there has been a change and that the girls in both groups are more "safety oriented" in 2010 than in 2007. Moreover, there is a stable, albeit weak, tendency showing that the girls in the intervention group is a bit more "safety oriented" than the girls in the control group. This is the case in both 2007 and 2010, indicating that the girls in the intervention group are different from the control group independent of the campaign.

Even though there is a lack of a clear effect, it is worth noting that we do find an effect of the campaign on how important it is for the girls that the cars they drive in as passengers are in a technically good condition.

Finally, most of the girls in the campaign who responded to these questionnaires are positive towards the campaign and the web site, and have read the letters from Trygg Trafikk carefully.