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Letter: Driving licence makes it possible to check a young person's age

From Prof Andrew J Oswald and Prof Nattavudh Powdthavee, University of Warwick, UK

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6 HOURS AGO

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Several recent articles in the Financial Times have discussed [our suggestion](#) that the first step out of a Covid-19 lockdown might be to release a young cohort of UK citizens who do not live with parents.

The UK does not require people to carry identity cards in the way stipulated in some other European countries. We have been asked by some commentators, therefore, whether it would be possible to check people's ages in the UK.

There is a simple approximate answer: driving licences. Detailed information on the number of licences in each age group is given on the website of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority. These data suggest to us that nearly everyone between the ages of 20 and 30 in the UK has either a full driving licence or a provisional licence.

It is not easy from the DVLA website to calculate precisely how many of these licences are currently used by active drivers, partly because the data include people who may have migrated or in some cases died. However, in the case of the young between age 20 and 30, the data suggest to us that 95 per cent or more of citizens in that age bracket have such a licence. These conveniently small and official pieces of plastic state the person's date of birth and contain a photograph.

The tiny minority of young citizens without such a licence probably have the ingenuity to think of other ways to prove their age.

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Sheen 3 HOURS AGO (Edited)

The professors have looked at the DVLA data, and I haven't, but I find the assertion that nearly all citizens between 20 and 30 quite surprising. I'd guess no more than 50% in London. Perhaps more in rural areas?

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Sheen 2 HOURS AGO

In reply to **Sheen**

National Travel

Survey https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/823068/national-travel-survey-2018.pdf

suggests only 37% of 17-20 year olds hold a licence. For the population as a whole, 70% of women and 81% of men held a licence - both quite a long way short of "nearly all".

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Claudius Donnelly 4 HOURS AGO

Yet another example of the need for national identity cards.

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