



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Teen Drivers: Fact Sheet

Overview

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, accounting for 36% of all deaths in this age group (CDC 2006). However, research suggests that the most strict and comprehensive graduated drivers licensing programs are associated with reductions of 38% and 40% in fatal and injury crashes, respectively, of 16-year-old drivers (Baker et al. 2007).

Occurrence and Consequences

- In the U.S. during 2004, 4,767 teens ages 16 to 19 died of injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes. During 2005, nearly 400,000 motor vehicle occupants in this age group sustained nonfatal injuries severe enough to require treatment in an emergency department (CDC 2006).
- The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16- to 19-year-olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash (IIHS 2006).
- In 2005, teenagers accounted for 10 percent of the U.S. population and 12 percent of motor vehicle crash deaths (IIHS 2006).
- The presence of teen passengers increases the crash risk of unsupervised teen drivers; the risk increases with the number of teen passengers (Chen 2000).

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Cost

Persons aged 15 to 24, who represent only 14% of the U.S. population, account for 30% (\$19 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among males and 28% (\$7 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among females (Finkelstein et al. 2006).

Groups at Risk

- In 2004, the motor vehicle death rate for male drivers and passengers age 16 to 19 was more than one and a half times that of their female counterparts (19.4 per

100,000 compared with 11.1 per 100,000) (CDC 2006).

- Crash risk is particularly high during the first year that teenagers are eligible to drive (IIHS 2006).

Risk Factors

- Teens are more likely than older drivers to underestimate hazardous situations or dangerous situations or not be able to recognize hazardous situations (Jonah 1987).
- Teens are more likely than older drivers to speed and allow shorter headways (the distance from the front of one vehicle to the front of the next). The presence of male teenage passengers increases the likelihood of these risky driving behaviors among teen male drivers. (Simons-Morton 2005).
- Among male drivers between 15 and 20 years of age who were involved in fatal crashes in 2005, 38% were speeding at the time of the crash and 24% had been drinking (NHTSA 2006a, NHTSA 2006b).
- Compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rate of seat belt use. In 2005, 10% of high school students reported they rarely or never wear seat belts when riding with someone else (CDC 2006b).
 - Male high school students (12.5%) were more likely than female students (7.8%) to rarely or never wear seat belts (CDC 2006b).
 - African-American students (13.4%) and Hispanic students (10.6%) were more likely than white students (9.4%) to rarely or never wear seat belts (CDC 2006b).
- At all levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC), the risk of involvement in a motor vehicle crash is greater for teens than for older drivers (IIHS 2006).
 - In 2005, 23% of drivers ages 15 to 20 who died in motor vehicle crashes had a BAC of 0.08 g/dl or higher (NHTSA 2006b).
 - In a national survey conducted in 2005, nearly 30% of teens reported that within the previous month, they had ridden with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. One in ten reported having driven after drinking alcohol within the same one-month period (CDC 2006b).
 - In 2005, among teen drivers who were killed in motor vehicle crashes after drinking and driving, 74% were unrestrained (NHTSA 2006b).
- In 2005, half of teen deaths from motor vehicle crashes occurred between 3 p.m. and midnight and 54% occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday (IIHS 2006).

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Resource

[The Guide to Community Preventive Services*](#)

Offers recommendations about motor vehicle injury prevention issued by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services.

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