

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/states-urged-to-raise-the-driving-age/>

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States Urged To Raise The Driving Age

Taking aim at a longstanding rite of passage for 16-year-olds, an influential auto safety group is calling on states to raise the age for getting a driver's license to 17 or even 18.

Adrian Lund, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a research group funded by the auto insurance industry, acknowledged the idea is "a tough sell," but noted that car crashes are the leading cause of death among teenagers.

"The bottom line is that when we look at the research, raising the driving age saves lives," Lund said. He plans to present the proposal Tuesday at the annual conference of the Governors Highway Safety Association in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Not surprisingly, a lot of teens hate the idea.

"I would really be upset because I've waited so long to drive," said Diamante White, a 16-year-old in Reading, Pa., who got her permit in July. She said learning to drive is a "growing-up experience."

Many parents agree. They also like not having to chauffeur their teens to school, sporting events and any number of other places.

"Do we really want our kids dependent upon parents for virtually everything until they go to college, can vote and serve their country?" asked Margaret Menotti, a mother in Uxbridge, Mass.

She argued that keeping teens from driving would only make them less responsible. Some parents also find it ironic that this conversation is happening just as a group of college presidents have proposed lowering the drinking age to 18.

Among other things, institute researchers have compiled decades worth of data from New Jersey, the only state that issues licenses at 17. Various studies have shown that the overall rate of teens killed in crashes in New Jersey has been consistently lower than in some nearby states.

One study from the 1990s found that the rate of crash-related deaths among 16- and 17-year olds were 18 per 100,000 in New Jersey, compared with 26 per 100,000 in Connecticut. Those rates, researchers said, have dropped even further since both states instituted graduated driver's license programs.

Graduated licensing, which has become the standard across the country in the past 15 years, requires teens to spend more time driving with a parent or other responsible adult before they go solo. Though these rules are sometimes difficult to enforce, many states tie these more stringent standards to declining teen crash rates.

Illinois now has one of the toughest graduated licensing programs, reports **CBS News correspondent Cynthia Bowers**. Brent Johnson, who's been teaching kids to drive at suburban Chicago Hinsdale High School for 34 years, helped push through the restrictions, which require 100 hours of supervised driving and only one passenger for new drivers.

"We got tired of seeing our kids die on our highways," Johnson told **Bowers**. "Up through July, the end of this July this year, we've seen a 47 percent drop in fatal crashes>"

More than 5,000 U.S. teens die each year in car crashes. The rate of crashes, fatal and nonfatal, per mile driven for 16-year-old drivers is almost 10 times the rate for drivers ages 30 to 59, according to the National Highway Safety Administration. Many industrialized countries in Europe and elsewhere have a driving age of 17 or 18.

Barbara Harsha, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, said she welcomes a debate on raising the driving age - as do many who deal with public health.

"Getting the highest of the high-risk drivers away from the wheel probably isn't a bad idea," said Dr. Barbara Gaines, trauma director at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

But she and others - even the Insurance Institute officials who propose raising the driving age - agreed it is not the only option.

Gaines noted that teen drivers in the Pittsburgh area who have committed moving violations must attend a "reality education" program at her hospital. They tour the intensive care unit and talk with young drivers who have been in serious crashes.

Andrea Summers, coordinator of the teen driving program for the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, said her state and others have chosen to toughen laws without raising the driving age - by banning teens from using cell phones while driving, imposing stricter driving curfews and expanding supervised driving time. Even New Jersey is considering lengthening the time a young driver has a permit, from six months to 12.

Still others say we are worrying too much about teen drivers, and not enough about others who cause serious problems on the road.

Karen Sternheimer, a University of Southern California sociologist who studies accident statistics, cited federal data from 2007 showing that drivers ages 25 to 34, as well as those ages 45 to 64, were nearly twice as likely to be involved in alcohol-related fatalities as 16- to 20-year-old drivers.

"The intense focus on teens diverts our attention from the real threats to public safety: speeding and driving while intoxicated," she said.

<http://www2.readingeagle.com/article.aspx?id=157989>

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Idea of raising the driving age to 18 fires up fledgling drivers

By Dale Bond

Senior, Pennsylvania Virtual Charter

"I'd be outraged!" says Hamburg senior Hope Adam about the idea of raising the driving age in Pennsylvania to 18.

Well, Hope can rest easy. There were rumors circulating that Pennsylvania would be raising the driver's age from 16 to 18; however, right now nothing in the Youth Driver Law has changed, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Web site.

PennDOT's Youth Driver Law lets teens apply for a learner's permit once they are 16. After completing a six-month "skill building" period, young drivers are then allowed to take a road test to obtain a junior license.

In the Pennsylvania Legislature, House Bill 289, "An Act amending Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, further providing for junior driver's license, for learners' permits, for suspension of operating privilege and for restraint systems," is pending. However, the bill still provides for young drivers to begin the process of gaining the privilege to drive at 16. So as of now, there is no truth to the rumors of raising the minimum driving age to 18.

The subject of what age a person should begin driving is always controversial, as with any "coming-of-age" milestone. Generally, it seems like all teens want the driving age to be lowered, allowing them to do more things sooner, and gain independence.

Brenna O'Boyle, a junior at Hamburg, says, "I would personally feel unhappy. Kids have to learn eventually how to drive. Why start older?"

Blair Snyder, also a junior at Hamburg, agrees.

"I would hate that, because then you would go off to college with no driving experience," Blair says. Both have good points. As teens get older, they gain more responsibility, such as after-school jobs, and need to gain one other responsibility - driving - to get them to and from places. Driving is a big step in growing up; by taking this step, teens get closer to standing on their own.

Other teens, such as Rachael Halye, a junior at Schuylkill Haven High School, believe that teens can wait to drive.

"I wouldn't mind," she says, "because I don't think everybody is ready to drive at 16. I know I'm not."

While some teens may be ready for the responsibility of driving, others are not, and may appreciate the extra time to prepare to drive. What is the extra wait time going to hurt? It could prevent future crashes.

The debate over driving age continues.

Voices intern Matt Mulkeen contributed to this story.

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/10/teenagers-and-older-people-are-the-riskiest-drivers/index.htm>

Reasons Why Teenagers and Older People Are the Riskiest Drivers

More needs to be done to reduce accidents and deaths

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They stand at opposite ends of the demographic spectrum. And both groups include many good drivers. But statistics show that overall, teenagers and older drivers are involved in far more crashes and highway fatalities than any other age group.

Mile for mile, the crash rate for drivers ages 16 and 17, for example, is almost nine times as high as that for middle-aged drivers. People 80 and older are involved in 5.5 times as many fatal crashes per mile driven as middle-aged drivers.

Total deaths for teens and seniors have declined in recent years, as have all passenger-vehicle fatalities. But their risk level remains high and the challenge could become greater in coming years.

The Pew Research Center says that 10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 every day for the next 18 years. By 2030, they'll represent almost one in five drivers. In the population overall they'll outnumber 16- to 19-year-olds more than three to one. Some experts call that trend the silver tsunami.

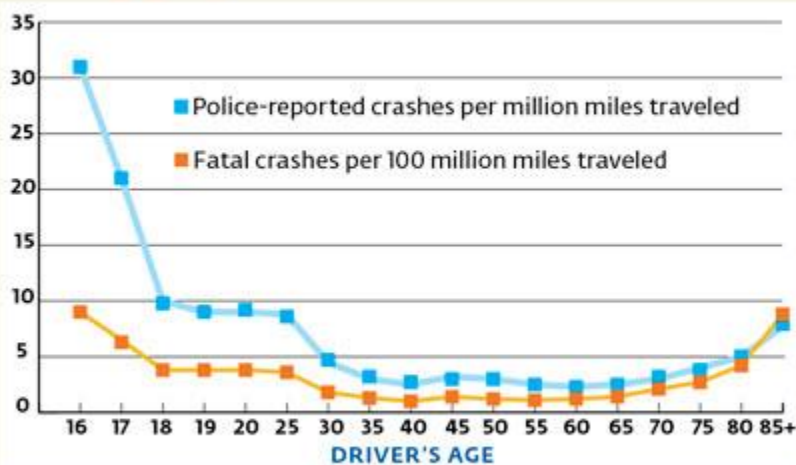
That could increase the safety risk as drivers begin to lose their abilities. "Unfortunately I think most states are woefully unprepared for the coming wave of baby boomers," says David W. Eby, Ph.D., research scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. For young and old drivers, the reasons behind the risk are as different as the people themselves. Teens struggle with inexperience behind the wheel and developing brains that might not accurately assess risks. Older drivers have plenty of experience and even tend to drive less. But age-related conditions can impede their driving ability. And when a crash happens, their fragility leads to more severe outcomes.

"If we're ever going to solve the aging mobility problem, we need to have better alternatives for people," Eby says. "It can't always fall to the personal vehicle."

Effective steps are being taken by the government, automakers, and families to reduce accidents and deaths among teens and seniors. But more needs to be done.

Dangerous curves: Plotting the problem

The youngest and oldest drivers have much higher rates of highway crashes and deaths than any other age group, according to 2008 government mileage data, the latest available. Drivers ages 16 and 17 are involved in more crashes, and fatality rates rise steeply for those older than 65, with drivers older than 80 being most vulnerable.



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Teens at the wheel



Katie Haskins (with her father, Arthur) attended a defensive-driving class.

“There is nothing worse than the first time you see your teenager drive away in a car by themselves,” says Arthur Haskins, whose 18-year-old daughter, Katie, is a recent high-school graduate from Hillsdale, N.J. Parents have reason to worry. Car crashes are the No. 1 killer of teens. And the youngest drivers are the riskiest.

“Teen brains are not fully matured,” says Orly Avitzur, M.D., a board-certified neurologist and Consumer Reports medical adviser. “They tend to be more impulsive and have poor judgment.” That could be one reason unbuckled safety belts and drunk and distracted driving are factors in many teen deaths. What can be done?

Graduated licensing. Teen traffic deaths have dropped 62 percent since 1975. A big reason is the graduated driver-licensing laws implemented by many states. “GDL hasn’t eliminated the problem with teens, but it has been a really effective countermeasure,” says Anne McCartt, vice president for research at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

Graduated licensing allows teens to gain driving experience in a controlled environment while working to get their full driver's license. Laws vary by state, but they generally mandate a minimum number of hours of supervised driving with parents and place restrictions on night driving and the number of passengers.

Studies show a clear link between such programs and lower crash rates. Among states with the strongest laws is New Jersey, where teens must be at least 17 to obtain a license. For most states the minimum age is 16, although some states allow 14- or 15-year-olds to get a license. Pennsylvania requires at least 65 supervised practice hours, compared with 50 or fewer for most other states. And South Carolina restricts intermediate drivers from being on the road after a relatively early 6 or 8 p.m., depending on the season; by contrast, night restrictions for some states don't begin until 1 a.m.

Noting the higher risk of younger drivers, most European countries will require teens to be at least 18 to get a full license once rules go into effect in January 2013.

To encourage states, the [IIHS website has a calculator](#) that estimates how many lives could be saved if they strengthened their graduated licensing laws. And the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers incentives such as added highway safety funds to states that improve their laws.

Of course, parents don't need to rely on their state. They can create a family contract that allows a teen to gain increasingly more experience and driving freedom.

"Research has shown that teens actually listen to their parents' opinions," says Erin Sauber-Schatz, Ph.D., M.P.H., epidemiologist at the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Talk with your teen about driving, and make an agreement that outlines the risk factors, rules, and penalties if they're broken. "Parents need to follow through and be willing to take those keys away," says David Strickland, NHTSA administrator.

New technology, such as Ford's MyKey, can also help. That feature allows parents to set limitations that are electronically stored in the vehicle's ignition key. They can set a top speed, limit the volume of the radio, and prevent the radio from coming on until the driver's safety belt is fastened. "In a manner, it puts Mom and Dad virtually in the passenger seat even when they're not there," says Andy Sarkisian, manager of global safety planning and strategy at Ford.

Driver education. Practice is the best way to make teens more comfortable behind the wheel, but a traditional driver-ed program is often not enough. A recent report jointly sponsored by the government, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, and Manitoba Public Insurance shows that not only is there no evidence that the programs reduce crashes, but the programs can also encourage teens to get licenses earlier.

Consumer Reports' auto experts say that advanced driver training can help. "Drivers need to learn what to do in an emergency before they're actually faced with one," says David Champion, director of Consumer Reports' Auto Test Center. "Being prepared can be the difference between an accident and a close call."

Free and paid car-control clinics, which teach skills in a safe, controlled environment, are sponsored by automakers such as BMW, Ford, and Toyota, as well as private organizations.

Last year, Consumer Reports partnered with the Tire Rack Street Survival School to host a defensive driving course and found that teens were able to improve their skills, gain confidence, and learn the limits of their cars.

“At first, I was angry at my dad for making me go,” Katie Haskins says about attending a defensive-driving course. “But I think everyone should do something like that, to be put in a situation in which they don’t necessarily know what to do.”

Together, graduated licensing programs, parental involvement, advanced driver training, and safer cars can have an impact on reducing teen accidents and fatalities. But more can be done. With the goal of cutting in half the number of road fatalities, for example, the European Union is targeting restrictions for young drivers that include zero alcohol tolerance and lower speed limits, as well as bans on passengers and nighttime driving.

Best cars for teens



Nissan Rogue

Buying a car for a new driver can be a balancing act between getting one you can afford and finding one that's safe and reliable. Look for a vehicle with advanced safety features such as electronic stability control (ESC) and side-curtain air bags, and one that performed well in independent crash tests. Avoid a large pickup or SUV; its high center of gravity makes it more prone to roll over. Large vehicles can also have unwieldy handling and poor fuel economy, and they allow teens to carry more passengers, which increases the crash risk. Sports cars beg to be driven too fast and have a higher rate of accidents than other cars. The models in this list provided balanced performance in our tests, have had average or better reliability, come with standard ESC, and did well in independent crash tests.

Acura TSX	Mazda 3i Touring (2009 or later), 3s Touring or Grand Touring (2007 or later), and 6i (4-cyl., 2009 or later)
Chevrolet Equinox (V6, 2010-2012) and Malibu (4-cyl., 2008 or later)	Mitsubishi Outlander (2007 or later, no third-row seat)
Ford Focus sedan (2009-2011) and Fusion (4-cyl. and hybrid, 2010 or later)	Nissan Altima (4-cyl., 2010 or later), Rogue, and Sentra (2010 or later)
Honda Accord (4-cyl., 2008 or later) and Fit (2011 or later)	Scion xB (2008 or later)
Hyundai Elantra (2011 or later), Elantra SE (2008-2010), Elantra Touring, Santa Fe (V6, 2007-2009, no third-row seat), Sonata (4-cyl., nonturbo, 2006 or later), and Tucson (2010 or later)	Subaru Forester (nonturbo, 2009 or later), Impreza Outback Sport (2008 or later), and Legacy 2.5i (2009 or later)
Infiniti G25	Toyota Camry (2010 or later), Corolla (2010 or later), Matrix (2010 or later), Prius (2010 or later), Prius V, and RAV4 (2004 or later, no third-row seat)
Kia Forte (2010 or later), Optima (nonturbo, 2010 or later), Soul, and Sportage (4-cyl., nonturbo, 2011 or later)	Volkswagen Jetta (2009-2010), Golf (2010 or later), and Rabbit (2009)

A sensitive subject: older drivers



Evelyn and Cliff Orman (shown with one of their drivers) use a car service for seniors. When Steven Gnepp and his wife, Paula, got a call from his 87-year-old mother, Claire, asking him what she was supposed to do with the license-renewal form she received in the mail, they were concerned. If she couldn't understand that, they thought, they couldn't trust her driving. So they signed her up for a driving assessment test at a local hospital. Claire failed the cognitive-abilities test. "It never even crossed her mind that she might not pass. It was a big shock to her," says Steven Gnepp, a retired NASA computer scientist.

Problems arise when seniors begin losing their cognitive or physical abilities. "The challenge is coming up with a system for identifying those drivers who are no longer safe," says Eby of the University of Michigan. "It's far too expensive and potentially biased to set an age limit and say everyone must get tested."

Currently, 28 states plus the District of Columbia have special provisions for renewing the licenses of older drivers. Provisions can include more frequent renewals, restricting online or mailed renewals, and vision or road tests. Adult driver education can be helpful in brushing up on skills.

Extending the driving years. Many seniors begin having problems long before they lose their driving ability. Some have basic challenges in simply getting in and out of their vehicles and being able to see out properly. CarFit, a program sponsored by AAA, AARP, and the American Occupational Therapy Association, holds events around the country to help older drivers assess such things as their seat position, mirrors, head restraints, and controls. "Many people buy a new car, just jump in it, and drive, and don't adjust all the safety features to their maximum effectiveness," says Julie Lee, vice president and national director of AARP Driver Safety.

Automakers have been somewhat hit or miss in designing cars that are friendlier for seniors. Some are designing controls with larger buttons and more readable labeling. For drivers who find it difficult to turn their heads, features such as rear-backup cameras, blind-spot-detection systems, small convex mirrors added to a car's regular side mirrors, and cross-traffic alerts that detect passing cars in the rear when backing up help increase visibility and awareness of surrounding cars.

Lane-departure warning systems can alert a driver who begins drifting from his lane, and some can even make minor steering corrections to deter that. Ford has developed an inflatable rear safety belt for passengers vulnerable to breaking bones in crashes. And small SUVs usually make it easy to get in and out by providing big doors and chair-height access.

Unfortunately, some designs make driving more difficult. Thicker windshield and roof pillars and smaller windows in many vehicles limit outward visibility. Complicated control systems can be difficult to use and distracting. And some modern infotainment systems encourage drivers to take their eyes off of the road.

To make traffic signs more visible and easily understood, the Federal Highway Administration has developed guidelines for improvements. Changes include making signs more reflective, using upper- and lowercase letters for readability, and increasing the distance between signs and exits or interchanges to give drivers more time to react.

A lack of options. If their skills decline to the point where they can't drive safely, many seniors face a difficult situation because of limited alternatives. "Driving cessation is an ugly topic, and there is not a public transportation system in this country that can really support seniors as they age out of the car," says Bryan Reimer, a research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's AgeLab.

Sandra Rosenbloom, Ph.D., a director at the Urban Institute, an economic and social policy research organization, notes that about three-quarters of people 65 or older live in suburban or rural areas, where there are few alternatives to the car. "We know that nine out of 10 people want to stay in the homes where they raised their families," says Lee of the AARP, "but the communities aren't necessarily set up to help older people do that."

Some people are working on solutions. After her 3-year-old son was hit and injured by an 84-year-old driver, Katherine Freund of Portland, Maine, said she didn't blame the driver. Rather, she blamed the lack of a transportation system that could meet his needs. In 1995, she founded ITN America (Independent Transportation Network), which provides door-to-door driving services for seniors. The program has since expanded to 20 communities around the country.

Evelyn and Cliff Orman of Westbrook, Maine, who decided to stop driving in their mid-80s, are ITN America customers. "For us, giving up the car was sad. It was just another step in the aging process," Evelyn Orman says. Still, "We felt it was time."

Families will need to help out as much as possible. "Much like we plan for finances and health insurance, we need to do transportation planning as we age," Reimer says. He suggests figuring out specific ways that the senior can get around.

Introduce the concept gradually. "People need time to adjust because growing older is not for wimps," Freund says. Get information on public transportation and services for seniors. Then help plot ways to get to common destinations. Write down instructions if necessary.

Ann Dellinger, Ph.D., M.P.H., leader of the Transportation Safety Team at the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, adds, "It will end up that we will all play a part in maximizing mobility in the community."

Best cars for older drivers



Hyundai Genesis

This list includes new and used vehicles that scored well in Consumer Reports' tests for access, visibility, front-seat comfort, driving position, and controls. All vehicles have average or better reliability, and most have standard electronic stability control. (It's optional on the Ford Taurus, Mercury Sable, and Toyota Camry before 2010.)

Acura RDX (2013)	Mercury Sable (2008-2009)
Ford Taurus (2008-2009)	Nissan Altima (2010-2012)
Honda Accord V6 (2006-2007) and Accord (2008-2012)	Subaru Impreza (2012), Legacy (2010-2013), Outback (2010-2013), and Forester (2009-2012)
Hyundai Azera (2006-2011) and Genesis (2009-2012)	Toyota Avalon (2005-2012), Camry (2007-2012), Highlander (2004-2012), and RAV4 (2006-2012)
Infiniti M (2006-2010)	Volkswagen Tiguan (2009-2012)
Lexus RX (2006-2009)	

When to ask for the keys of older drivers

Many seniors reduce their driving voluntarily as their abilities decline. But at some point, they might become unsafe to themselves and other motorists.

They can use a self-rating tool on the [AAA website](#) to help assess their skills and get advice on how to maximize their safety on the road.

If you need to assess a senior's driving ability, watch for these red flags:

- Slow response times.
- Inability to fully turn to check blind spots.
- Running stop signs.
- Motorists honking at them frequently.
- A hesitation or reluctance to drive.
- Cognitive dysfunction, such as getting lost or calling for help.
- Repeat fender benders, dings, or paint scrapes on the car.

You can also get advice through a free online seminar on the [AARP website](#).

If you think the situation is serious, consult the person's doctor. Keep in mind that medications and physical conditions, such as reduced vision, a stroke, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease, can affect driving performance in dramatic or subtle ways.

Editor's Note:

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