



Press Release

For Immediate Release: October 21, 2010

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The number of fatal crashes involving 16- and 17-year old drivers dropped by more than a third between 2004 and 2008, but this doesn't mean that parents and teens should be satisfied with the progress, according to a report by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(/\)](#).

Crashes still remain the leading cause of death for teens in the United States, though most are preventable, the report says. Graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs, which help new drivers gain skills under low-risk conditions, are widely credited with contributing to the drop in deadly crashes involving teens, it says.

The report shows wide variations from state to state, with teens in some states more likely than teens in others to be involved in fatal crashes.

Nationally, the number of 16- and 17-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased by 36 percent, from 2,230 in 2004 to 1,437 in 2008, said the study in CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(/mmwr/\)](#).

The overall decline in young drivers' fatal crash involvement is an extension of a longer-term downward trend. Rates of fatal crash involvement for 16- and 17-year-old drivers have fallen by more than 50 percent since 1996 (from 36 per 100,000 persons in 1996 to 16.7 per 100,000 in 2008). Despite this downward trend, young drivers' fatal crash rates are still high in some areas of the country.

This study, which examined national and state-based data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) also found that, from 2004 to 2008:

- Of 16- and 17-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes, 6,280 (65 percent) were male and 3,364 (35 percent) were female.
- Across all states, the rates of 16- and 17-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes varied widely, ranging from 9.7 per 100,000 (New York and New Jersey) to 59.6 per 100,000 (Wyoming).

Of the 11,019 persons who died in crashes involving 16- and 17-year-old drivers, 4,071 (37 percent) were the young drivers themselves, 3,428 (31 percent) were passengers of young drivers, 1,987 (18 percent) were drivers of other vehicles, and 805 (7 percent) were passengers of the other drivers. Another 728 (7 percent) were other road users such as bicyclists or pedestrians.

"These trends show both how much progress we have made—and how much more we can make—to reduce motor vehicle crashes, which remain the number one cause of death for teens in the United States," said CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. "This is a call to action to teen drivers, parents and communities. It's not right that teens would lose their lives on U.S. roads when there are proven methods for helping teens be safer drivers."

The study reports that [graduated driver licensing programs \(/MotorVehicleSafety/Teen_Drivers/Teens_Behind_Wheel.html\)](#) can be partially credited with the recent decline in fatal crashes involving these young drivers. GDL programs, which are used in 49 states and the District of Columbia, limit driving under conditions such as at night and while transporting other teen passengers. An earlier evaluation of GDL programs found that these systems can reduce crash risk by up to 40 percent among newly licensed drivers.

There is a wide variability in GDL programs among states, and the more comprehensive programs are associated with the higher reductions in crashes. No state has a GDL program which incorporates all the effective means of reducing risk to teens and others.

Parental involvement is also a key factor that can protect teen drivers. Parents should set and enforce their rules of road, restricting their teens' nighttime driving and the number of teen passengers they are allowed to drive with. They should also put these rules into writing with a parent-teen safe driving agreement.

CDC is launching a new campaign, ["Parents Are the Key \(/parentsarethekey/\)](#)," to inform parents across the nation about the key role they can play in keeping teen drivers safe.

"Teen drivers are nearly four times more likely than more experienced drivers to crash, largely due to teens' lack of driving experience," said Dr.

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Grant Baldwin, director of the CDC's Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. "Proven measures, including GDL and parental involvement, can reduce the toll of deaths and injuries among teen drivers and protect the lives of others who share the road with these new drivers".

CDC is also releasing "Policy Impact: Teen Driver Safety," the first in a series of briefs highlighting a key public health issue and important, science-based policy actions that can be taken to address it.

By making these new resources available, CDC hopes to provide parents, policymakers, and others with proven ways to keep teen drivers safe. CDC's Injury Center works to protect the safety of everyone on the roads, every day. For a complete copy of the study, please visit www.cdc.gov/mmwr (/mmwr/).

For more information about CDC's work in motor vehicle safety, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/index.html> (/motorvehiclesafety/). For details on state-specific GDL policies and a state-by-state policy comparison, visit <http://www.iihs.org/laws/graduatedLicenseIntro.aspx> (<http://www.iihs.org/laws/graduatedLicenseIntro.aspx>).

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (<http://www.hhs.gov/>)

- Historical Document: October 21, 2010
- Content source: Office of the Associate Director for Communication, Division of News and Electronic Media (<mailto:media@cdc.gov&subject=Newsroom:%20Website>)
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