

2004 TEEN DRIVING STUDY

KEY MESSAGES

August 10, 2004

- High school and middle school students overwhelmingly say their parents are or will be the biggest influence on their driving behaviors.
 - Nearly 60 percent of high school students and 69 percent of middle school students report parents as their biggest driving influence.
- Adult driving habits, as observed by their teens, suggest parents are modeling risky behaviors.
 - Almost two thirds of high school teens (62 percent) say their parents talk on a cell phone while driving, almost half (48 percent) say their parents speed, and a third (31 percent) say their parents don't wear a safety belt.
- Teens say they now, or expect to, follow similar driving practices as their parents do.
 - Sixty-two percent of high school drivers say they talk on a cell phone while driving, and approximately half of both high school teens who don't yet drive (52 percent) and middle school students (47 percent) say they will.
 - Sixty-seven percent of high school drivers say they speed. Interestingly, most high school teens who don't yet drive (65 percent) and middle school students (79 percent) say they won't.
 - Thirty-three percent of high school drivers say they don't wear their safety belts. High school teens who don't yet drive (28 percent) and middle school students (20 percent) are less likely to say they won't.
- Nine out of ten (89 percent) teens consider themselves "safe" drivers. Yet many teens don't consider risky behaviors dangerous.
 - Twenty-seven percent of all high school students and 33 percent of middle school students think speeding is safe.
 - Twenty-five percent of all high school students and 29 percent of middle school students think driving without a safety belt is safe.
 - Twenty-four percent of all high school students and 32 percent of middle school students think driving while talking on a cell phone is safe.

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→ **Why are these driving behaviors dangerous?**

- Speeding is a factor in 31 percent of all fatal crashes, killing an average of 1,000 Americans each month (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).
- Speeding is a factor in 37 percent of all young driver deaths (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).
- Nearly four in five drivers (79 percent) in the U.S. wore their safety belts in 2003, yet safety belt use was only 60 percent in vehicle crashes involving fatalities (NHTSA).
- Drivers in a self-reported study by NHTSA estimated nearly 300,000 crashes from 1998-2002 were the result of cell phone use.

→ Additional survey findings that support **Graduated Drivers Licensing**:

- According to NHTSA, young drivers make up less than 7 percent of the driving population yet account for nearly 15 percent of the drivers involved in fatal crashes. These statistics are traditionally attributed to the combination of young driver inexperience, adolescent impulsiveness, and great risk exposure (driving at night and with multiple passengers).
- Graduated licensing is a system designed to “phase in” young, beginning drivers to full driving privileges as they mature and develop their driving skills. Graduated licensing has been introduced in many U.S. states, yet the IIHS only rates 9 states as having “good” young driver licensing laws.
- Effective graduated licensing laws include a minimum six-month learner’s permit, followed by restrictions on the time of day teens can drive (no later than 10 p.m. and no earlier than 5 a.m.), and the number of passengers allowed when unsupervised.

⊗ **Piling In**

- Nearly two in three high school teen drivers (64 percent) say they drive with more than three people in the car, and 28 percent think this is “safe.”
- According to the IIHS’ most recent study (1999) on crash rates by the number of passengers across different age groups, the more people in a car the greater the likelihood of a crash, especially for the youngest, most inexperienced drivers (16- and 17-year-olds).

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Crashes per 10,000 trips

# of passengers:	0	1	2	3
16/17-year-olds	1.6	2.3	3.3	6.3
18/19-year-olds				2.1

⊞ **Driving at Night**

- Driving at night is common among nearly all high school drivers (93 percent), yet very few young people (5 percent of high school students and 10 percent of middle school students) consider night driving “unsafe.”
- According to the 2002 IIHS data, 41 percent of all teen-driving deaths ages 16-19 occur between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Studies show nighttime driving restrictions for teens are associated with crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours.

→ **Methodology**

- Data was compiled from results of nearly 3,600 self-administered surveys of middle and high school students in grades 6-12.
- Students represented 41 schools (21 middle schools, 20 high schools) countrywide.

→ **The Partners**

- Liberty Mutual and SADD have been partners in teen driving safety since the early 1990s with the inception of the “Avoiding Collisions” program – a video, brochure and teacher’s kit that focuses on four areas of safety: speeding, safety belt use, driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and night driving.
- The “Avoiding Collisions” video is available free by calling 1-800-4-LIBERTY.
- Other materials include SADD’s Contract for Life, available at www.sadd.org, and the SADD/Liberty Mutual “Guidelines for Good Family Communication” brochure, available at www.sadd.org and www.libertymutualinsurance.com.
- In 2000, Liberty Mutual and SADD published the first *Teens Today* report, an annual study of teen decision-making in the areas of driving, drug and alcohol

use, and sexual activity. We will be releasing the results of the fifth *Teens Today* study this fall.