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## Reducing Risks for Teen Drivers

May 2016



# Teen Drivers and Risky Behaviors

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

EVERY DAY, 6 TEENS ARE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.

In 2014, 2,138 teens ages 15 to 19 died in motor vehicle crashes.

2,138



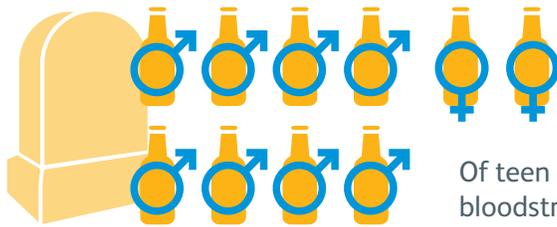
1 out of 3 were passengers.



2 out of 3 were drivers.



3 out of 4 were male.



Of teen drivers killed who had alcohol in their bloodstream when tested, 8 out of 10 were male.

The risk of a fatal crash by a teen driver is *almost 3 times higher* if their passengers are male.



Males



Females

DO FAMILY RULES HELP?

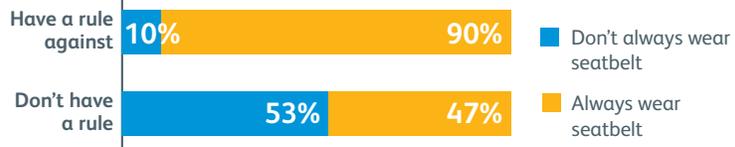


Make an agreement with your teen driver on family driving rules.

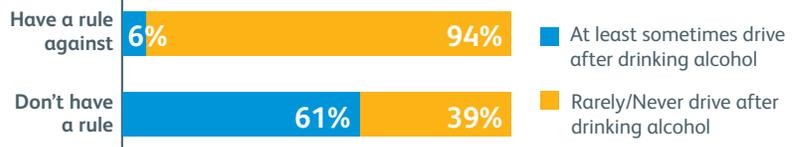
**DEFINITELY.** Teens report less risky behavior when there is a formal agreement with their families about what the new driver is expected to do while driving.



## SKIPPING SEATBELTS



## DRINKING AND DRIVING



## TEXTING WHILE DRIVING



## WHAT ABOUT PARENTAL DRIVING?

**THEY'RE WATCHING YOU.** Teens who have seen their parent drink and drive were *three times more likely* to report driving after drinking.



### DRINKING AND DRIVING



Be a role model for safe driving by following the rules yourself.



## WHAT ELSE MATTERS?

**EXPERIENCE.** 75% of teens indicated that the time they spent practicing with their parents was the most helpful when learning to drive.



Ensure your teen driver gets at least 50 hours of supervised experience under a variety of driving conditions.

**TIME OF DAY.** Per million miles driven, teens ages 16 to 19 are *three times more likely* than adults ages 30 to 59 years to crash while driving at night.



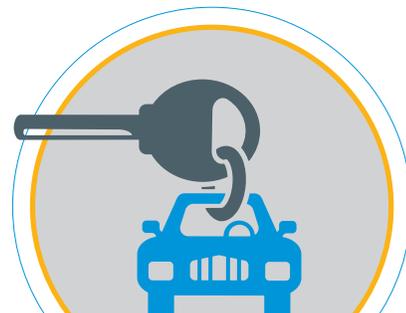
Teens



Adults

## 7 KEYS TO DRIVING SAFELY Make these a part of your family agreement.

1. Buckle up: every person, every time.
2. Don't drink and drive.
3. Limit the number of passengers in a car.
4. Don't text and drive.
5. Follow the speed limit.
6. Only drive in the dark after extra practice.
7. Speak up when any driver is driving unsafely.



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## Executive Summary

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in teens, ahead of all other types of injury, violence or disease.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, 2,138 teens ages 15 to 19 were killed in collisions as occupants of motor vehicles – 67 percent were drivers and 33 percent were passengers. Those 2,138 deaths represent nearly three-quarters of all motor vehicle deaths for kids.<sup>2</sup>

Up until 2014 the data showed decreasing numbers and the rate of teen drivers killed decreased by 61 percent between 1994 and 2013,<sup>2,3</sup> demonstrating the effectiveness of the prevention efforts of government, industry, the medical community and non-profits in establishing graduated licensing laws, engineering safer cars and raising public awareness about risky behaviors. But are we now seeing a reverse in that trend? The fatality rate for teen drivers began to increase again in 2014, and early estimates for 2015 suggest that the upsurge will continue.<sup>2-4</sup>

Research indicates that one of the leading causes of crashes among teen drivers is driver inexperience, meaning that with a lack of practice, teens underestimate things like the time needed to make a stop or fail to recognize hazardous situations. Other leading causes include driving with other teen passengers, driving after dark, failing to wear a seat belt, distracted driving, drowsy driving, reckless driving (e.g., speeding) and impaired driving.<sup>1</sup>

To explore how families are managing the risks new drivers face, Safe Kids Worldwide, with the support of a grant from the General Motors Foundation, surveyed 753 pairs consisting of a new teen driver and one of his or her parents.

We found that teens from families where there is a formal agreement about what the new teen driver is expected to do while driving reported less risky behavior. The formal agreement could be written or verbal, but established family rules around risky behaviors. Teens with a related rule were more likely to wear their seat belt every time and were less likely to speed, drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, drive distracted, drive with teen passengers and drive after dark. However, when we asked our parent-teen driver pairs about three scenarios that involved decision making around a family rule, it was clear that setting a rule is not enough. Parents need to explore specific scenarios with their teen driver so that expectations are clear and the teen driver is prepared with the necessary confidence and skills to manage challenging scenarios when they arise.

Teens who told us their parents modeled positive behavior also reported less risky behavior. This is an encouraging situation, given that teens told us their parents had the most influence on the teens' driving and that the time they spent practicing driving with their parents was the most helpful in learning to drive. Here are some strategies for parents and families to help ensure their teen driver stays safe:

- **Make a formal agreement with your teen driver and enforce it**
- **Be a role model for safe driving by following the rules yourself**
- **Ensure your new teen driver gets at least 50 hours of supervised experience under a variety of driving conditions**

By engaging with these strategies, we hope that new teen drivers and their parents can stay safe while riding in cars.





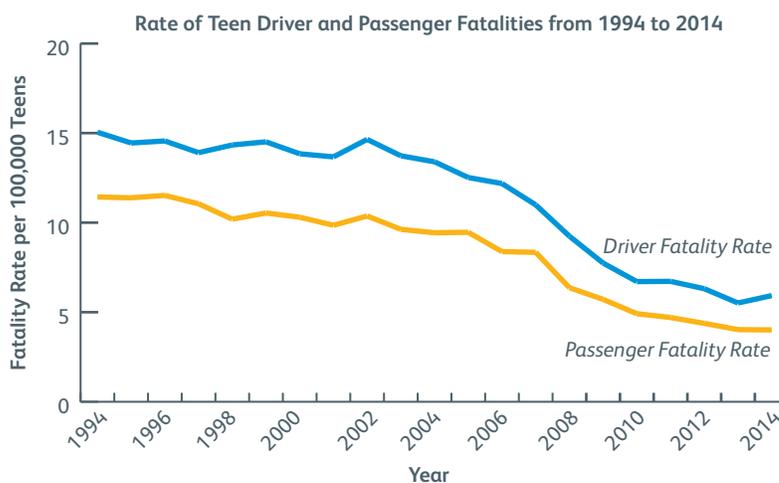
## Leading Killer of Teens

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in teens.<sup>1</sup> Six teens ages 15-19 are killed every day in a motor vehicle crash. Of the 2,138 teens killed in crashes in 2014, 67 percent were drivers and 33 percent were passengers. Those 2,138 deaths represent nearly three-quarters of all motor vehicle deaths for kids of all ages in that year.<sup>2,3</sup>

Males make up almost three-quarters of teen driver deaths and typically suffer more severe injuries than females.<sup>1,5</sup> These differences may be partially explained by the fact that teen males are more likely to drive, ride in a car without a seat belt and drive under the influence of alcohol.<sup>6</sup>

Up until 2014 the data showed decreasing numbers of deaths, and the rate of teen drivers killed decreased by 61 percent between 1994 and 2013.<sup>2,3</sup> This progress demonstrates the effectiveness of the prevention efforts of government, industry, the medical community and non-profits in passing graduated licensing laws, engineering safer cars and raising public awareness about risky behaviors. However, 2014 saw the death rate begin to increase again for all ages, and early estimates for 2015 suggest that initial upsurge may continue.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 – Teen driver fatalities on the rise again<sup>2,3</sup>



Not every teen killed in a motor vehicle crash is responsible for the incident. However, research has shown that the leading causes of crashes among teen drivers are driver inexperience, driving with other teen passengers, nighttime driving, not wearing seat belts, distracted driving, drowsy driving, reckless driving (e.g., speeding) and impaired driving.<sup>6</sup> Given this, what can families do to ensure their son or daughter doesn't end up a statistic?

## Addressing the Challenge

Experts agree that one of the most important things parents can do is to plan ahead and gradually introduce their teens to the driving environment. Practice driving under the supervision of experienced adults allows new drivers to develop the skills necessary to successfully manage the various risks and hazards of the road. This concept was the basis for graduated driver's license (GDL) laws introduced in the 1990s. The elements of such laws are common sense limits on an inexperienced driver's exposure to risky driving situations and, depending on the state, may include the requirement of driver's education, a certain number of hours of supervised driving with adult drivers, curfews on night driving and restrictions on how many non-familial passengers under age 21 can be in the car. Studies have shown that components of GDL laws are associated with significant decreases in the risk of fatal crashes.<sup>7</sup> In addition to increasing experience through supervised practice, avoidance of certain risky behaviors by teens can decrease their chances of becoming a statistic.





With this in mind, we looked into what families are doing to prepare new teen drivers and their thoughts on unsafe behaviors in this age of increasing technology. We surveyed 753 family pairs made up of a teen driver who had attained either an intermediate or full license within the past year and one of his or her parents. We asked about what they've done to build driver experience and keep their new teen driver safe, and explored how parents and teens are managing six major risks a new driver faces.

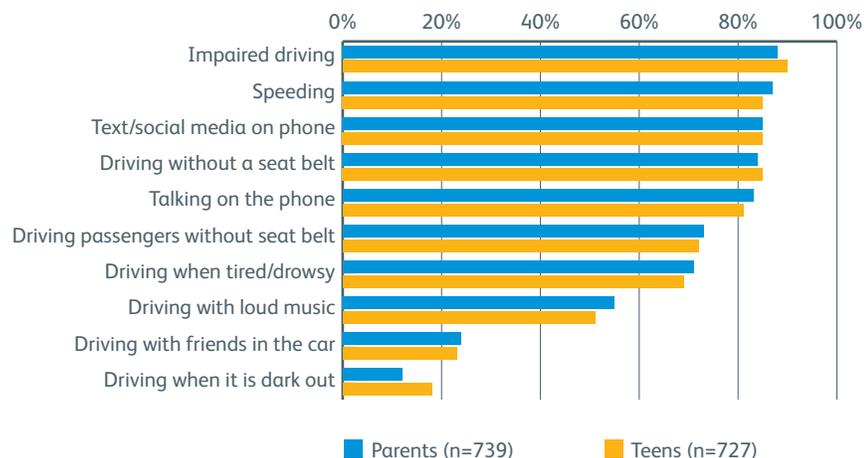
## Learning to Drive and Family Rules

The majority of families surveyed (84 percent of teens and 88 percent of parents) indicated that practice with parents made up the biggest part of learning to drive. Other aspects included classroom instruction, practicing through driver's education and practicing with a private instructor, other family members, friends or on one's own. Seventy-five percent of teens indicated that the time they spent practicing with their parents was the most helpful to their learning to drive.

Formal parent-teen agreements regarding driving restrictions, and particularly written agreements, are important. Research has shown that risky driving, traffic violations and crashes are lower among teens whose parents apply restrictions.<sup>8</sup> When asked about parent-teen driving agreements, nearly every parent (98 percent) and teen (96 percent) in our survey indicated that they had informal discussions about what the teen is and is not supposed to do when driving. However, only seven out of 10 families said they had a formal agreement in place, and fewer than two in 10 indicated the agreement was in writing (18 percent parent, 17 percent teen). Sons were more likely to report having a formal agreement than daughters (71 percent versus 64 percent).

When asked about specific rules (Figure 2), parent-teen pairs were quite consistent with each other, and family rules covered many of the high-risk behaviors consistent with common sense and graduated driver licensing laws. However, limitations on driving with friends in the car and driving in the dark were far less common than rules against impaired or distracted driving. Interestingly, fully-licensed drivers had specific rules more often than those with intermediate licenses, perhaps because part of the restrictions with intermediate licenses had ended.

**Figure 2. Not all risky driving behaviors are covered to the same degree by family agreements**



Both parents and teens reported high compliance with family agreements, and only 11 percent of teens indicated it was difficult to always follow the rules. When asked what makes it difficult to comply with the family agreement, the most frequent responses from both teens and their parents were peer pressure (34 percent and 26 percent, respectively) and technological distractions (23 percent and 20 percent, respectively). Additionally, 12 percent of teens mentioned that having to focus on other cars on the road made it difficult to always follow the family rules.

When it comes to punishment for breaking family rules, the most common forms were a lecture on responsibilities (61 percent of parents, 54 percent of teens) or a talk about the parents' anger and disappointment (51 percent of parents, 58 percent of teens). While other punishments such as limiting driving privileges, grounding or taking away the teen's cell phone were mentioned, they were far less common. This is consistent with research that suggests that while most parents do place some restrictions on their new teen driver, the limits tend not to be very strict.<sup>8</sup>

In order to examine compliance further, we gave parents and teens the same scenario in which a teen driver may be influenced to break a family driving rule. We asked teens how they would likely react, while parents were asked how they would want their teens to react.

## Teen Driving Scenarios

### Basketball Game and the Coach Scenario

A 16-year-old just earned his license. He's agreed on a set of rules with his parents, including a rule that says he cannot drive his friends or non-family members in the car without an adult driver present. At school one day, his basketball coach asks him to pick up a few of his teammates to bring to the game that evening so they can play.

### Drinking Friends Need a Ride Scenario

A 16-year-old just earned her license. She's agreed on a set of rules with her parents, including a rule that says no non-family passengers in her car at night. One evening on a weekend, she is at a party where several friends have been drinking and ask for a ride home.

### Answering Parent's Text Scenario

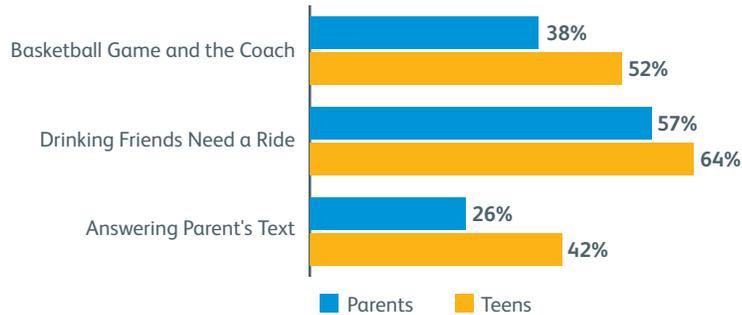
A 16-year-old just earned his license. He's agreed on a set of rules with his parents, including a rule that says absolutely no texting or talking on the phone while driving. One evening while driving to a friend's house, he receives several texts from his father asking him to check in right away.

In general, what teens reported they would likely do in each of the scenarios did not live up to parents' expectations. For example, in the "Basketball Game and the Coach Scenario," 39 percent of parents reported that they would expect their teen to explain the family rule to the coach, and yet only 19 percent of teens indicated it was likely they would do so. Similarly, in the "Drinking Friends Need a Ride Scenario," 54 percent of parents reported that they would expect their teen to contact them for advice or to arrange a ride for the friends, and yet only 33 percent of teens indicated they would call or text their parents. Finally, in the "Answering Parent's Text Scenario," 64 percent of parents would expect their teen to pull over to respond to the text, whereas only 53 percent of teens indicated they would do so. Nine percent of teens gave answers suggesting they would text back while driving.



Answers to the scenarios also suggested that both parents and teens thought it was okay to break the rules in certain situations. When delving further into this issue, we found that teens generally felt the rules could be bent or broken in all three scenarios, while for parents, only driving home friends who had been drinking was an acceptable reason for breaking the rules (Figure 3). The most significant difference involved the "Answering Parent's Text Scenario," where 42 percent of teens felt it appropriate to break the rules to respond compared to 26 percent of their parents.

**Figure 3. Teens more likely than parents to find bending the family rules acceptable**

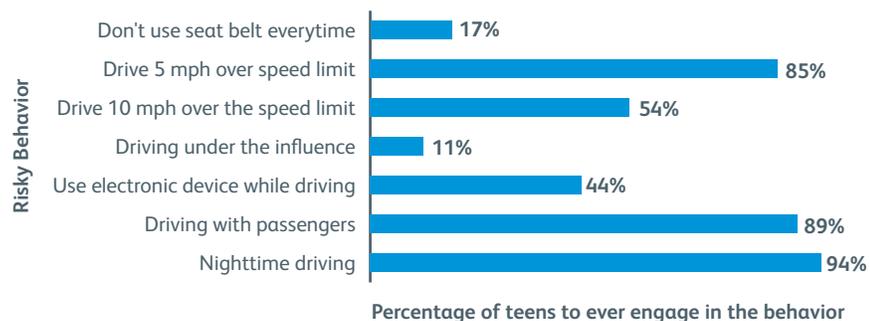


## High Risk Driving Behaviors

Given that rules are not seen as absolute, we looked further into six high risk behaviors for new drivers: not wearing a seat belt every time, speeding, driving under the influence, driving distracted, driving with teen passengers and nighttime driving (Figure 4). We examined the impact on teen driver behavior of having a rule or not and on modeling of risky behavior by a teen's parent or other teens. In general, family rules appear to curb risky behavior and promote safe behavior among teens. However, there are some exceptions.<sup>i</sup>

More than half of teens reported that they had done something they knew they shouldn't when driving, and roughly one in 10 had received a ticket (10 percent) or had been in a crash (12 percent). When asked why they engaged in risky behaviors when they knew better, the most common reason given related to being distracted while using electronic devices, such as a cell phone, or changing music while driving. A third of the teens listed this as the reason for their risky behavior and another ten percent said they were influenced by other people, such as their peers.

**Figure 4. Nighttime driving, driving with passengers and speeding are particularly common behaviors**



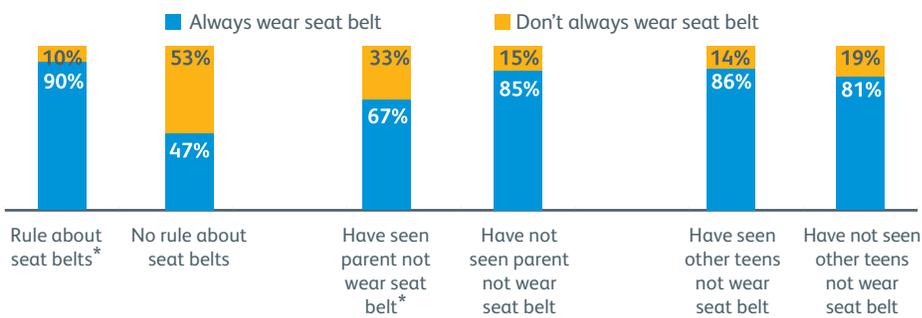
<sup>i</sup> Statistically significant associations ( $p < 0.05$ ) are indicated with an asterisk (\*)

## Seat Belt Use

Wearing a seat belt is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stay safe as a driver or passenger. When used correctly, seat belts reduce the risk of death for front seat passengers by 45 percent.<sup>9</sup> Yet four out of every 10 teen drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2014 were not wearing a seat belt, and three of the four killed were males.<sup>2</sup>

Most teens in our survey reported they always wear a seat belt – 78 percent of males and 88 percent of females. Those with an intermediate license were slightly less likely to report always wearing a seat belt than those with a full license (81 percent versus 86 percent). We also found that teens with a family rule requiring seat belt use were almost two times more likely to report always wearing their seat belt. Those whose parents model positive behavior (i.e. wear their seat belt) were also more likely to report always wearing their seat belt than those whose parents do not (85 percent versus 67 percent) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. A family rule and positive modeling by parents increases likelihood of seat belt use by teens**



\* Significant (p<0.05)

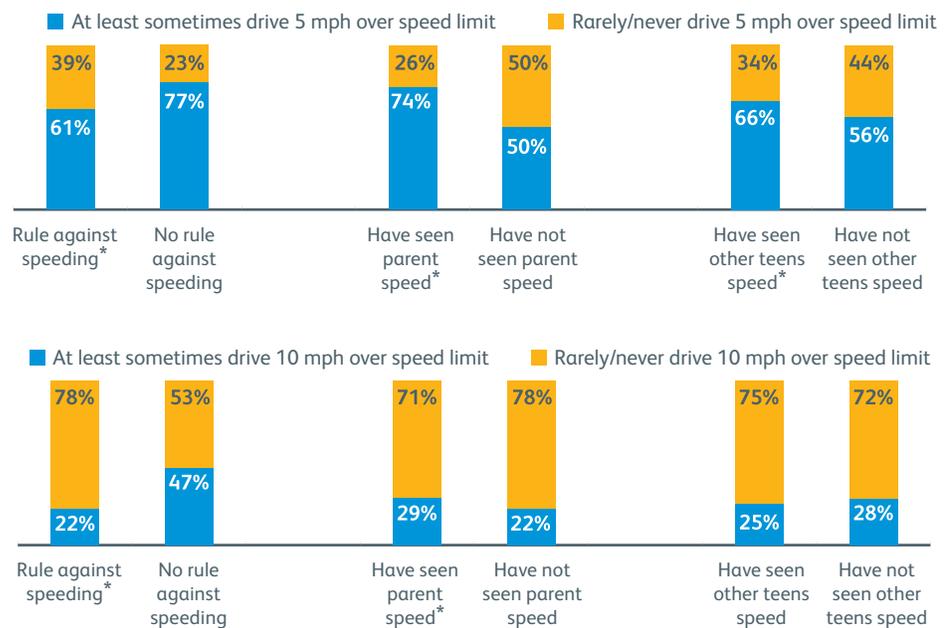


## Speeding

Speeding increases both the likelihood of a crash and the severity of injuries that result.<sup>14</sup> For the years 2007-2011, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 had the greatest frequency of fatal crashes involving excessive speed, with speed involved in about one-third of all teen crashes in 2011.<sup>10</sup> Speeding is more prevalent among males, when it is dark, in the presence of other teen passengers and more often leads to single vehicle and run-off-road crashes.<sup>10</sup>

Sixty-three percent of the teens in our survey reported at least sometimes driving five miles per hour over the speed limit, and 25 percent report at least sometimes driving 10 miles per hour over the speed limit. Again, teens with a family rule against speeding were slightly less likely to report at least sometimes driving five miles per hour over the speed limit and half as likely to report at least sometimes driving 10 miles per hour over the speed limit as those without a rule (Figure 6). Those whose parents model safe behavior were also less likely to speed, but the impact of other teens modeling safe behavior appeared to have less impact on teens' behavior.

**Figure 6. A family rule, positive modeling by parents and teens decreases likelihood of teen drivers speeding**



\* Significant (p<0.05)

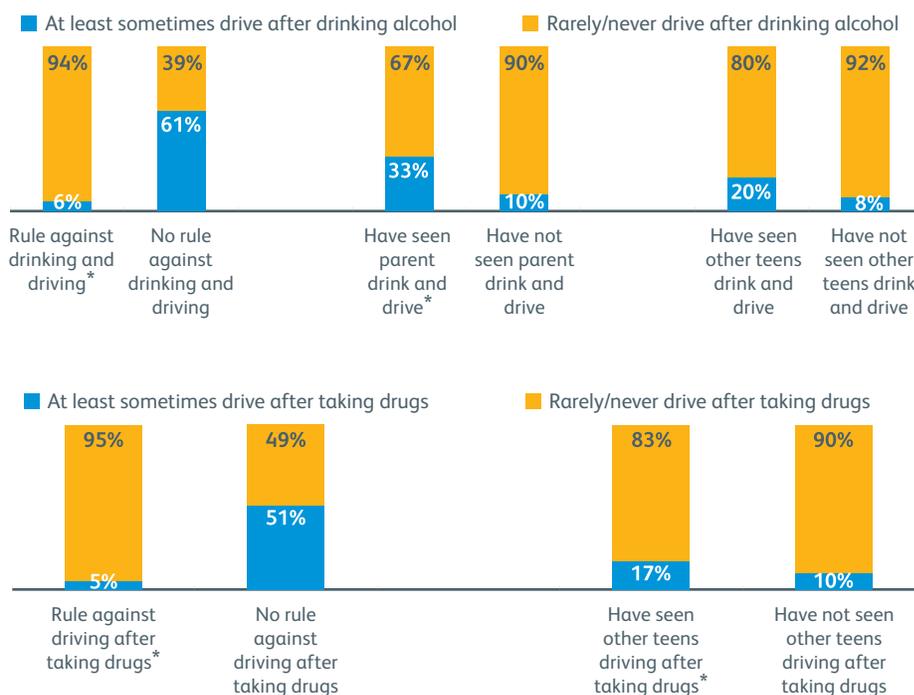
## Driving While Intoxicated

Driving while intoxicated, a state in which a person's normal capacity to act is inhibited by alcohol or drugs, increases the risk of a motor vehicle crash. Being intoxicated impacts judgment and driver behavior and also increases the likelihood of other unsafe behaviors, such as failing to wear a seat belt.<sup>11</sup> The proportion of teens who report driving while intoxicated varies. The 2013 National Youth Behavior Survey found that 10 percent of teen drivers had driven after drinking.<sup>12</sup> Another study in 2014 found that the prevalence of driving under the influence in 16-20 year olds had declined to seven percent for alcohol and three percent for marijuana.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, 17 percent of teen drivers killed in a motor vehicle crash had alcohol in their bloodstream when tested. Of those with positive blood alcohol tests, 81 percent were male and 19 percent were female.<sup>2</sup>

Eleven percent of teens in our survey reported that they drive when they have been drinking or taking drugs. Males were more likely to report driving while intoxicated than females (15 percent versus 7 percent).

Teens with a family rule against driving while intoxicated were 10 times less likely to report driving while intoxicated than those without a rule (six percent versus 61 percent, respectively) (Figure 7). Teens who had seen their parents drink and drive were three times more likely to report driving after drinking, and those who had seen other teens drink and drive were 2.5 times more likely to report driving after drinking. Teens who had seen other teens drive after taking drugs were also more likely to report driving after taking drugs.

**Figure 7. A family rule and positive modeling by parents and teens decreases likelihood of teens driving while intoxicated**



\* Significant (p<0.05)



## Distracted Driving

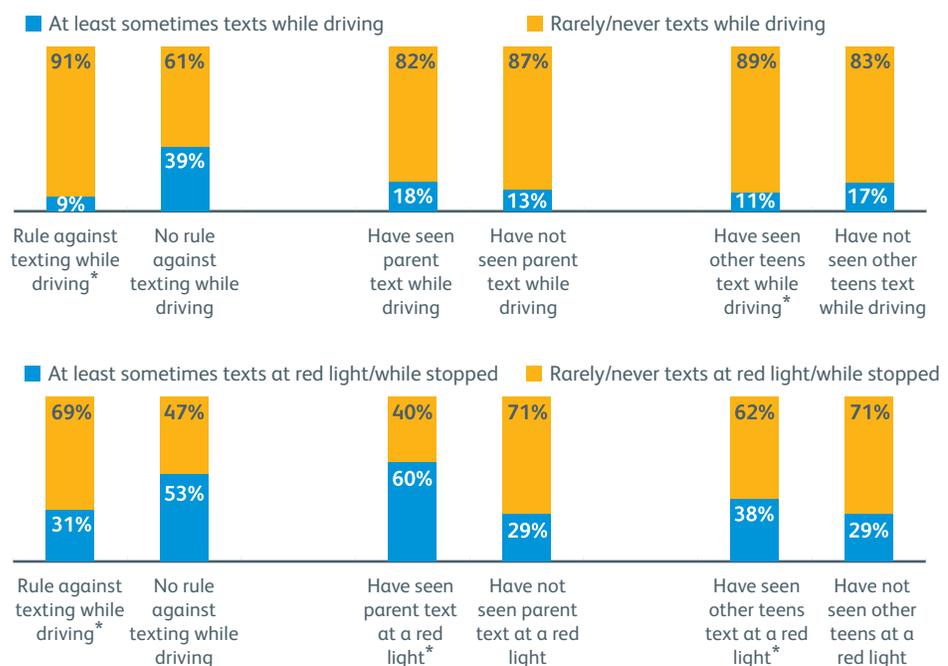
Driver distraction refers to any deviation of a driver's attention away from the forward roadway or tasks necessary to safely operate a motor vehicle. Such distractions involve tasks or actions that are not essential to operating a car in a safe manner, including the use of electronic devices, eating and drinking, applying make up, changing controls inside the vehicle (such as the radio) and reaching for objects inside the car.<sup>14,15</sup> Texting in particular is associated with dangerous lane changing, speeding, driving too close to the car in front and looking away from the road.<sup>14</sup>

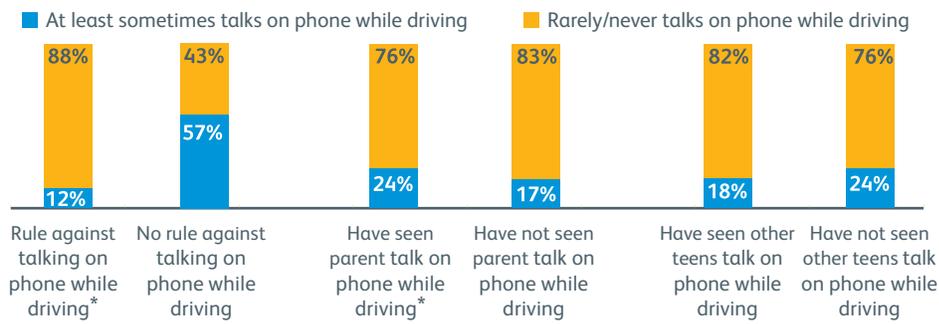
Research indicates that for teen drivers, a single glance off the road of two or more seconds increases the risk of a crash or near crash by almost four times, and as the length of the off-the-road glance increases, so does the risk of a crash.<sup>14</sup> Sending or reading a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded.<sup>16</sup>

In our survey, more teens reported at least sometimes texting while the car was stopped (e.g., at a red light) than while driving (34 percent versus 14 percent, respectively). Twenty percent reported at least sometimes talking on the phone while driving. Males were slightly more likely to text while driving than females (16 percent versus 11 percent, respectively). Those with intermediate licenses were more likely than those with full licenses to drive distracted. The proportion of teens who texted while driving was almost twice as high for teens with intermediate versus full licenses (17 percent versus 9 percent).

Teens with a family rule against texting while driving were four times less likely to text while driving themselves, and talking on the phone while driving was almost five times less likely among teens who had a rule (Figure 8). However, teens who had seen their parents or other teens drive distracted were more likely to drive distracted themselves. More than half of the teens surveyed who had seen their parents text and drive admitted to texting while stopped at a red light, and 18 percent reported they had texted while actually driving. This is supported by previous research which found that the likelihood of a teen engaging in distracting behaviors was higher among those who perceived that his or her parents did so as well than among those who did not have this perception.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 8. A family rule decreases distracted driving behavior among teen drivers, but negative parental modeling increases it**





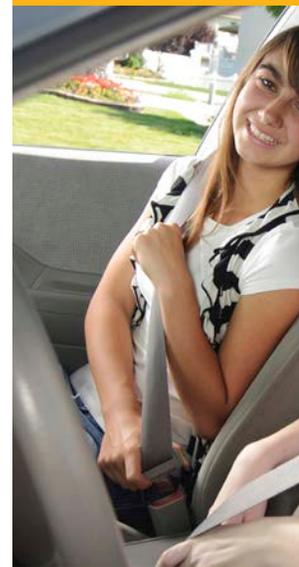
\* Significant (p<0.05)

## Driving with Teen Passengers

The presence of passengers increases a teen driver's risk of a fatal crash because it provides another source of distraction in addition to possibly introducing peer pressure.<sup>18</sup> Research on the effect of passengers on teen drivers indicates that the risk for a fatal crash increases as the number of passengers increases. Estimates suggest that compared to driving alone, teens are 1.5-2.0 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash with one passenger, 2.0-3.0 times more likely with two passengers and more than 4.0 times with three or more passengers.<sup>19, 20</sup> The risk of crash by a teen driver also varies by passenger gender (2.7 times higher for male compared to female passengers) and age (3.1 times higher for younger compared to older passengers).<sup>19</sup> In addition, the proportion of teens engaging in risky driving behavior when they crashed (such as speeding, drinking and driving, late night driving, being responsible for the crash and driving without a license) also tends to be higher when passengers are present than when driving alone.<sup>18, 21, 22</sup>

We did not directly ask teens about number of passengers, but rather scenarios such as driving to go out with friends, driving teammates to practices or games and driving friends who had been drinking. Three-quarters of the teens surveyed reported at least sometimes being in one or more of these scenarios, although only 29 percent reported at least sometimes driving friends who had been drinking. Males were more likely than females to report driving teammates (43 percent versus 34 percent), but no other differences were found for gender, race or license status for these scenarios.

Our survey found that only 23 percent of teens had a family rule against driving with other teen passengers. Teens with a family rule against friends in the car were less likely to report at least sometimes driving with other teens in the car than those without a rule (Figure 9). Teens without a family rule against driving friends who had been drinking were four times more likely to drive friends who had been drinking than those with such a rule.



**Figure 9. A family rule decreases teen drivers driving teen passengers, particularly driving friends who have been drinking**

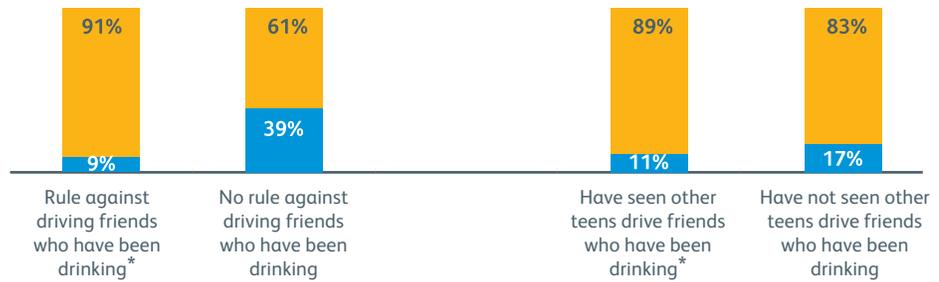
■ At least sometimes drive teammates to games and practices   ■ Rarely/never drive teammates to games and practices



■ At least sometimes drive to go out with friends   ■ Rarely/never drive to go out with friends



■ At least sometimes drive friends who have been drinking   ■ Rarely/never drive drive friends who have been drinking



\* Significant (p<0.05)



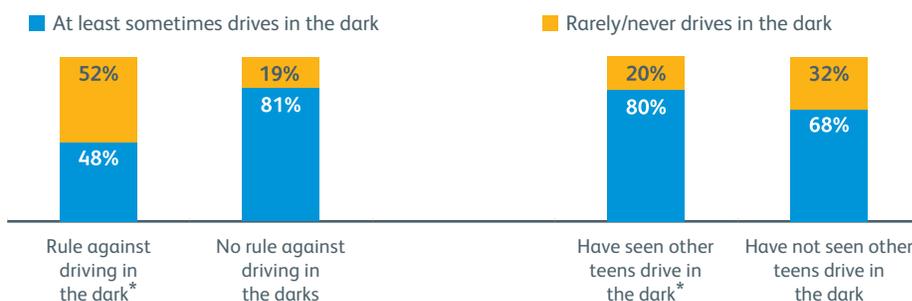
## Nighttime Driving

Per million miles driven, teens ages 16 to 19 are three times more likely than adults ages 30 to 59 to crash while driving at night.<sup>23</sup> There is also a notable difference in nighttime crashes between male and female teen drivers, with males almost twice as likely to crash at night as females (15.4 versus 8.3 crashes per million miles).<sup>23</sup> In 2014, 41 percent of the fatal collisions among teen drivers occurred between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., and about three-quarters of the time the driver was male.<sup>2</sup> Notably, most states that require a certain number of supervised driving hours earmark a portion at night.<sup>24</sup>

Three-quarters of the teens surveyed reported at least sometimes driving after dark. More teens with intermediate licenses reported nighttime driving than those with full licenses (39 percent versus 24 percent), which may reflect parents encouraging supervised practice with driving after dark (81 percent of parents reported that their teen's driving practice while learning to drive included driving at night).

Teens with a family rule against driving after dark were less likely to do so than those without a rule (Figure 10). Teens who had seen other teens drive after dark were also more likely to report this behavior.

**Figure 10. A family rule and positive teen modeling decreases teen driving after dark**



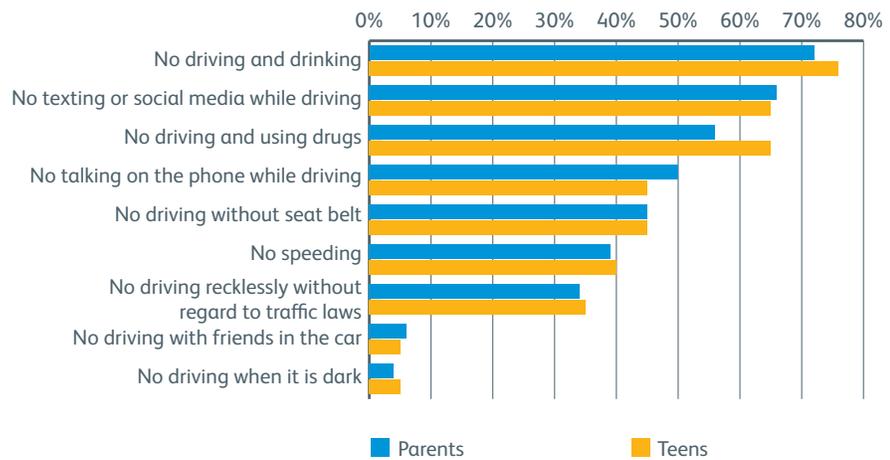
\* Significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

The results for the six risk behaviors discussed above clearly show that family rules positively impact teen driver behavior. They also suggest that teens are watching their parents' behavior and are often doing what they have seen their parents do, possibly many times. This finding is supported by previous research which reported that teens mirror parents' bad behaviors.<sup>25</sup>

## What Families Think Are the Most Important Things Teen Drivers Can Do

When asked to pick the five most important things teen drivers can do to stay safe on the road, parents and teens were quite consistent with each other and tended to pick items that reflected the family rules. While the 10 most frequent answers to this question covered four of the six areas examined in this report, they did not include driving with friends in the car and driving at night (Figure 11). It may be that both parents and teens just see these issues as part of the driving experience. However, given that research has demonstrated the increased risk for young inexperienced drivers under these two conditions, they deserve more attention and should be addressed in family discussions and added to teen driver agreements.

**Figure 11. Parents and teens don't see the issues of teen passengers and nighttime driving as serious risks for teen drivers**



## Graduated Driver's Licenses – Public Policies Saving Teen Lives

Smart laws governing how teen drivers obtain driver's licenses can help save lives. “Graduated driver's license” (GDL) laws are based on the idea that more experience will lead to safer teen drivers. They provide teen drivers with more privileges as experience is gained, most often in three phases: the learner's permit stage, intermediate licenses and full privileges.<sup>24</sup> The laws, which are consistent with the family rules discussed throughout this report, regulate the hours of supervised driving, driver's education, limits on night driving and non-familial passengers and other restrictions. They also set limits on activities such as distracted driving, speeding and impaired driving, and violations of these infractions can delay new drivers from reaching their full privilege driver's license.

GDL programs are associated with a 38 percent reduction in the rate of fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers.<sup>26</sup> The Insurance Institute of Highway Safety (IIHS) estimates that if all 50 states had the strictest possible GDL law, it could save about 500 lives a year and prevent 9,500 crashes by 15- to 17-year-old drivers.<sup>27</sup>

To bring this down to the state level—where these decisions are made—consider the experience in Connecticut. The Connecticut GDL law was passed in 2004 and enhanced in 2008 to include an automatic 48-hour suspension of a 16- or 17-year-old's license for violations of serious motoring laws, such as speeding or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.<sup>28</sup> In 2014 Connecticut reported that only one driver ages 16-17 died in a motor vehicle crash, and zero passengers ages 16-17 driven by a 16-17 year old driver had been killed.<sup>29</sup>

New Jersey has a tough GDL law,<sup>30</sup> allowing full driver's privileges at age 17 and requiring a decal on the car license plate indicating that a teen driver is behind the wheel. After the state implemented its GDL law, the fatal crash rate of 17-year-olds fell by 25 percent compared to drivers ages 25-29. The same was true for 18-year-olds, where there was a 10 percent reduction in all crashes.<sup>31</sup>

We also looked at the laws in states with overall high rates of preventable injury fatalities, and saw that real change on drivers' licensing could result in saved lives. One example is Arkansas, where 36 teens died in crashes in 2014. The state could achieve a 26 percent reduction in fatal crashes if it raised its permit age from 14 to 16 and moved the night curfew to 10 p.m. That means that at least nine lives a year could be saved. Another example is Alabama, which made progress on its teen driving laws in 2015 by passing a law increasing the number of supervised practice hours to 50. Given 59 Alabama teen drivers died in 2014, this change is important, but further enhancements can save more lives. Based on the IIHS calculator, Alabama could attain a 24 percent reduction if it raised its learner's permit and full license ages and set a 10 p.m. curfew on night driving. That's at least 14 further lives saved each year.<sup>24</sup>

Would parents and their kids support such laws? In our survey, we asked about a set of restrictions less rigorous than the IIHS model. While a majority of parents said they support all of the new policies, only three of the policies were also supported by the majority of teens: immediate suspension if caught drinking or using drugs, 50 hours supervised driving and a ban on wireless devices (Figure 12). Teens were not in favor of nighttime restrictions (31 percent support) nor limits on teen passengers (32 percent support). Parents were more supportive of the nighttime and passenger restrictions than their kids, but neither group was very supportive—this may be because both of these conditions would make their lives less convenient. Opposition to the night driving restriction is especially high in rural areas where kids are expected to take a role in the family business and where distances are far.<sup>32,33</sup>

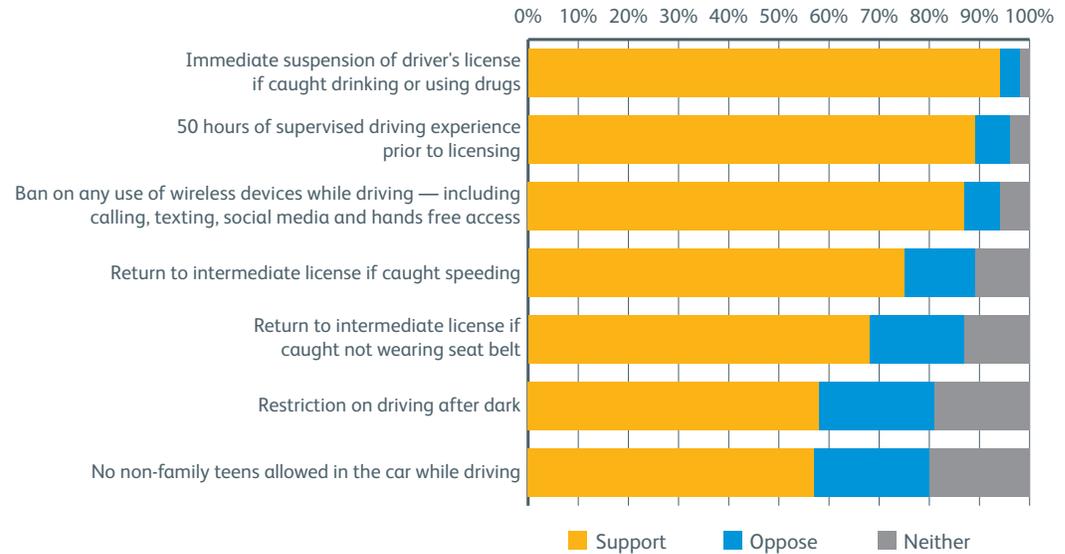


This is a call to action to Safe Kids public policy efforts and road safety policy makers that we need to do a better job educating the public on the value of these critical provisions of a stronger GDL law.

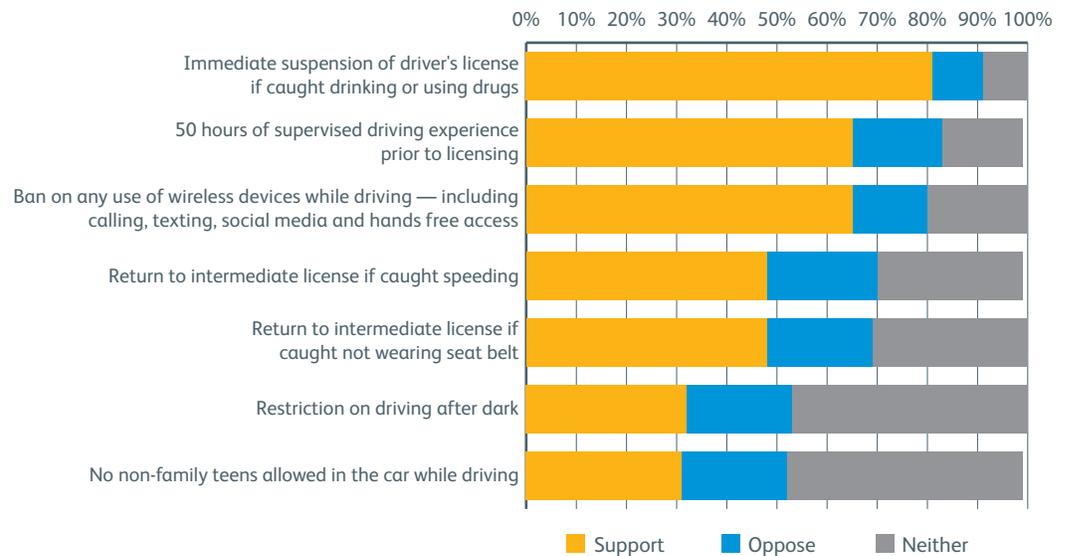
Legislatures have been resistant to these specific changes, which makes sense because they are listening to their constituents. However, the fact that citizens are in agreement with some of the modifications can be influential to legislators, in that they can pass these lifesaving laws without political repercussions.

**Figure 12. Parents and teens least likely to support restrictions that might inconvenience them**

**Parents' policy support and opposition**



**Teens' policy support and opposition**



## The Role of Industry

Maybe it's ironic that, while some forms of technology play a role in contributing to risky behaviors for teen drivers, industry is playing a valuable role in developing new technologies to make driving safer, including teen driving.

One example of smart technologies that can make a difference are programs and apps which can measure the safe and unsafe practices of teen drivers and provide that data back to parents – in essence a teen driving “report card.” For example, General Motors™ has embedded “Teen Driver” into its 2016 Chevrolet™ Malibu, a feature which creates a report card measuring distance traveled, maximum speed and how often the car had to engage certain safety features like stability control and anti-lock brakes. Technologies like forward collision alert or forward automatic braking features are automatically turned on when “Teen Driver” is programmed and activated by a parent. To make sure seat belts are being used, the radio will remain muted until the driver and front passengers are buckled up. In addition, parents can set a speed warning and the radio's maximum volume because that, too, can be a distraction. Ford™ has a tool with which parents can warn a teen driver moving too fast, remind him or her to buckle up and block smartphone calls. However, it does not have a “report card” feature. “Teen Driver” and other programs also monitor hard braking as a possible sign of poor driving habits.

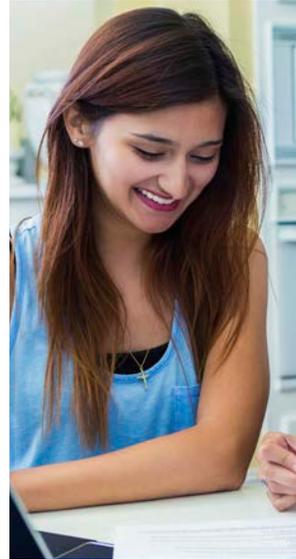
In addition to vehicle manufacturers, insurance companies have embraced safer driving with technology. For example, the Progressive Insurance™ “Snapshot” is designed to help all drivers evaluate their habits—hard brakes, distance and night driving—to help lower insurance costs. This technology can also be useful in getting reports on a teen driver's track record.

We asked parents which would be the most important factor they would take into account if they could purchase a car for their teen driver. The majority (54 percent) said that “safety” would be the most important factor, followed by cost and reliability.

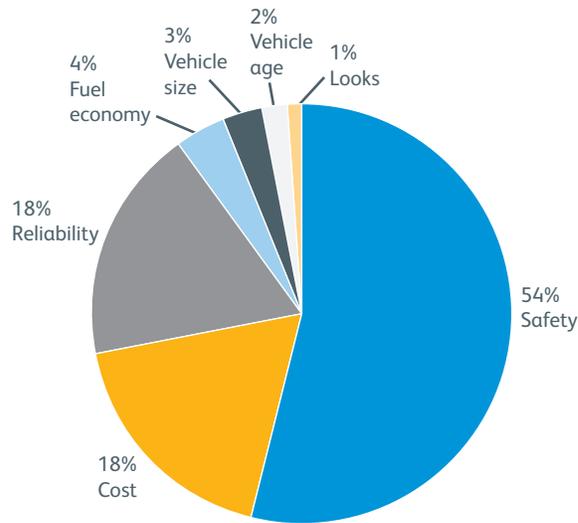
### 7 Ways to Stay Safe

1. Buckle up: every person, every time.
2. Don't drink and drive.
3. Limit the number of passengers in a car.
4. Don't text and drive.
5. Follow the speed limit.
6. Only drive in the dark after extra practice.
7. Speak up when any driver is driving unsafely.

Check out our interactive infographic at [www.safekids.org/teen-drivers-infographic](http://www.safekids.org/teen-drivers-infographic).

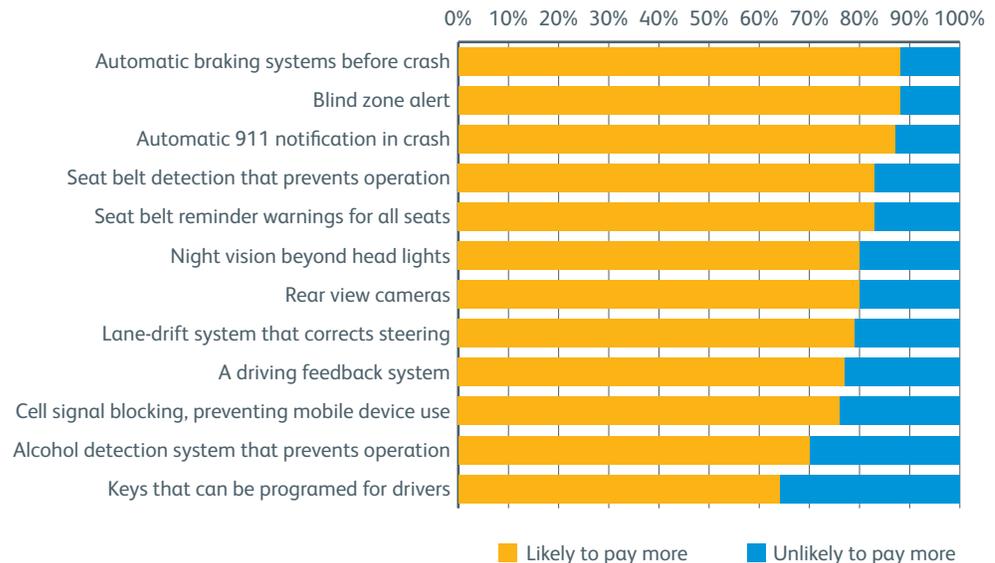


**Figure 13. Safety is most important for parents when purchasing a car for their teen driver**



We also asked how likely or unlikely parents would be to pay extra for current and emerging safety technologies for their teen’s vehicle. Parents were generally receptive to paying extra, particularly for automatic braking systems (88 percent), blind zone alerts (88 percent) and automatic 911 notifications (87 percent). Given parents’ interest in keeping their new drivers safe, we encourage them to look for these technologies as they become increasingly available, but to also remember that a formal agreement with their teen about safe and unsafe driving behaviors can also do a lot to reduce their risk of a crash, injury or death.

**Figure 14. Parents would be willing to pay extra for new technology to keep their teens safe**



## Strategies for Families

In order to prepare their teenager for driving, parents should:

### **Make a formal agreement on family driving rules and enforce it.**

Getting a license and driving is a major jump in responsibility for teens and it is a responsibility that needs to be taken seriously. Parents can support teens by discussing the responsibility with their teen and agreeing on what are acceptable behaviors. Make it a two-way conversation, though some points may be non-negotiable. For example, the rule should be that there is zero tolerance towards any drinking and driving. Ensure you agree on definitions of things like “driving distracted” – what is and is not acceptable?

While this can be done simply as a discussion, research suggests that a formal agreement between parents and teens, put down in writing, decreases risk taking behaviors.<sup>8</sup> Our research found that where there was a family rule, teen drivers were less likely to take risks. There are many programs available today from insurance companies and vehicle manufacturers to assist families in working out these agreements. Safe Kids has also developed a sample agreement that families can download and customize available at <https://www.safekids.org/content-item/teen-drivers-agreement-parents>.

Our research also suggests that even when there is an agreement, teens may not understand their parents’ expectations in certain scenarios. It is therefore important to talk to new teen drivers about specific situations that may challenge the family rules. Help your teen out by discussing “what if” scenarios where rules may need to be applied and decide together how they should respond. And explicitly talk about potential exceptions to the rules – encouraging practice of critical thinking and decision making will serve teens well and help ensure both teens and parents are on the same page. The scenarios we created for this survey may be a good start, but ask your teen about other possible scenarios they anticipate.

In addition, ensure the family driving rules are enforced. If a teenager knows that there is no real punishment for bad behavior, they may be less likely to comply. According to the teens we surveyed, consequences for breaking the rules were quite mild. Consider discussing and including the specific consequences for each bad behavior as part of the formal agreement and making them relevant to the behavior itself. For example, if a teen is caught texting while driving, consider limiting or suspending cell phone access for a certain period of time.

### **Be a role model for safe driving by following the rules yourself.**

It is clear from our research and previous studies that children, including teens, watch what parents say and do for years before teens are old enough to drive, and this influences their behavior when they begin driving. Be an example for your teen driver by always wearing your seat belt, observing speed limits, putting phones away while driving and following the same rules of the road you expect from him or her.

### **Ensure your new teen driver gets at least 50 hours of supervised experience under a variety of driving conditions.**

Our study suggests parents' role in getting that experience is important given that 92 percent of teens and 91 percent of parents surveyed reported that parents have the most influence on their teen's driving, and three-quarters of teens named their parents as the most helpful influence while they were learning to drive. Even if your state GDL law does not require it, consider ensuring your new teen driver gets at least 50 hours of supervised driving experience with a licensed adult in a variety of conditions. Consider situations such as driving when it is dark, driving in bad weather (e.g., rain, ice, snow, etc.) and driving with teen passengers. Many parents do not realize that driving in these conditions can be as risky for their teen as driving while tired, intoxicated or distracted. Help your teen slowly gain experience with these situations.

By engaging with these strategies, we hope that new teen drivers and their parents can stay safe while driving in cars.



## Survey Methodology

Safe Kids Worldwide commissioned a national online survey among 753 household pairs of newly-licensed teenagers (had attained either an intermediate or full license within the past year) and one of their parents. The survey was fielded from March 30 to April 8, 2016. The parent of the teen was initially recruited and after qualifying and completing their portion of the survey (40 questions), the newly-licensed teens completed their portion (37 questions). Many questions were written in a fashion to collect both parent and teen perspectives in order to compare results. The margin of error for the sample size of both populations included for this study (n=753 for both parents and teens) is 3.6 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. If recruited, managed and selected correctly, online samples can effectively reflect a known universe, however, most online samples are not generalizable because they are not true random samples of the population where every member has a known and non-zero probability of selection. Associations between teen behavior and 1) family rule, 2) parent modeling and 3) other teen modeling were tested using Chi Square statistic and significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) are indicated with an asterisk (\*).





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