

Risky Behaviors in Teenage Motor Vehicle Occupants

Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP)

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Abstract
 Background: M^{ost} occupant injuries are the leading cause of teen death. Knowing the range of driving-related risky behaviors and concerns that teens themselves report will inform efforts to reduce crash risk. (Vermont law allows learner permit (LP) at age 15, Jr. license (JL) at 16, full license (FL) at 18. The seatbelt law is "secondary enforcement" after age 15.)
Objectives
 To explore the influence of gender, age, license status, and urban vs. rural driving location on risk-taking.

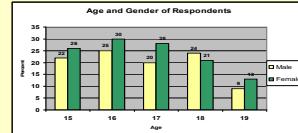
Background
 Motor vehicle (MV) occupant injuries are the leading cause of teen death in Vermont and the US. Knowing the range of driving-related risky behaviors and concerns that teens themselves report can inform efforts to reduce crash risk.
 Note: Vermont law allows learner permit (LP) at age 15, Jr. license (JL) at 16, full license (FL) at 18. The seatbelt law is "secondary enforcement" after age 15.

Objectives
 Ascertain teens' behaviors, perceptions, and concerns about driving and riding in MVs, as reported in primary care (PC) offices
 Explore the influence of gender, age, license status, and urban vs. rural driving location and on risk-taking.

Methods
 Anonymous questionnaire, self-administered by a convenience sample of 15-19 yr-olds in Vermont PC offices (14 pediatric & 2 family medicine sites). Questionnaire was pilot-tested and modified in 3 focus group meetings with 15-19 yr-olds

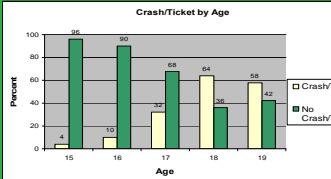
Analysis
 488 questionnaires were returned
 <1% of teens refused participation
 X² tests used to evaluate differences among subgroups; alpha = .01

Sample Characteristics
 46% male vs. 54% female
 48% younger teen (15-16 yo) vs.
 52% older teen (17-19 yo)
 93% white, 2% Asian, 2% African American, 1% Hispanic, 1% Native American
 21% no license, 28% Learner's Permit, 27% Jr. Operators, 23% Operators
 >54% urban vs. 46% rural drivers
 Respondents most often drive:
 68% cars, 16% SUVs, 8% minivans, 7% pickup trucks, 1% motorcycles



History of Crashes or Moving Violations (ticket)

Overall:
 •20% of drivers had been involved in a crash
 •21% had a moving violation (mostly speeding)
 •26% had either; 7% had both
 •(History of crash or violation (ticket) by age shown at right)



Worries and Speaking Up

Among Drivers (n=388):
 •61% Worried at least "sometimes" about their own safety
 •34% worried at least "sometimes" about the safety of their friends driving without them
 •Only 46% felt they would "very likely" speak up to an unsafe peer driver (35% "somewhat likely," 10% "somewhat unlikely," 4% "very unlikely")

RISKY BEHAVIORS: Summary and Subgroup Comparisons

	Total	Male	Female	Young (15-16)	Old (17-19)	Urban Drivers	Rural Drivers	LP/Jr Lic.	Full Lic.	Crash/Ticket	Neither
AS PASSENGERS:	n=488	n=222	n=265	n=233	n=255	n=211	n=173	n=270	n=114	n=128	n=257
"Ever ride . . ."											
* in front seat without seatbelt	23%	26%	21%	19%	29%	18%	23%	19%	21%	28%	19%
* in back without seatbelt	31%	32%	31%	28%	37%	29%	31%	28%	29%	41%	25%
* with driver who feels unsafe	64%	70%	61%	55%	75%	69%	72%	64%	85%	83%	64%
AS DRIVERS:	n=388	n=178	n=210	n=149	n=240	n=211	n=173	n=250	n=113	n=128	n=257
"Ever drive . . ."											
* without seatbelt	16%	19%	15%	7%	22%	14%	17%	12%	19%	26%	11%
* after alcohol or drug use	9%	16%	8%	4%	15%	12%	7%	5%	20%	20%	6%
"Sometimes or more often drive..."											
* over speed limit	60%	63%	59%	40%	74%	67%	55%	56%	73%	84%	50%
* with 2+ friend passengers	57%	54%	57%	25%	75%	58%	54%	45%	81%	83%	43%
* after midnight	48%	49%	47%	20%	65%	51%	46%	35%	79%	76%	34%
* using a cell phone	36%	37%	36%	13%	51%	40%	32%	28%	57%	67%	21%
* when feeling angry or upset	27%	23%	29%	19%	30%	29%	22%	24%	30%	38%	20%
* when feeling sleepy	20%	26%	13%	10%	25%	23%	14%	14%	31%	34%	12%

For all comparisons in BOLD, p<.01

All Respondents (n=488)

HOW OFTEN DO ...	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
you use a seatbelt for yourself when you are riding as a front seat passenger in a car or truck?	1%	1%	6%	15%	76%
you use a seatbelt for yourself when you are riding as a back seat passenger in a car or truck?	1%	4%	10%	16%	68%
your parents/guardians use seatbelts when driving or riding in a car or truck with you?	2%	2%	9%	18%	69%
your friends use seatbelts when riding or driving in a car or truck with you?	1%	4%	14%	31%	49%
you ride with a driver who you feel is driving unsafely?	34%	44%	12%	2%	6%

Drivers Only (n=388)

HOW OFTEN DO ...	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
you drive late at night (after midnight)?	28%	22%	37%	8%	3%
you drive with two or more friends as passengers?	30%	12%	45%	9%	3%
you use a cell phone when you are driving?	43%	20%	27%	6%	3%
you feel angry or upset when you drive?	32%	41%	23%	2%	2%
you drive when you are feeling sleepy?	39%	40%	18%	1%	1%
you drive over the speed limit?	14%	24%	41%	16%	3%
you drive after using alcohol or drugs?	89%	5%	3%	1%	0%

Summary

➤Despite worry about their own and friends' driving safety, many 15-19 yr-olds in Vermont PC offices self-report risky behaviors in MVs, and more than 60% of those ≥ 18 yrs have had a crash or moving violation

➤Risky behaviors are especially prevalent among older teen drivers and those who report having had a crash or ticket

➤While teen risky driving in Vermont differs little by urban/rural location or by gender, males drivers do report higher rates of driving after substance use or when sleepy

Implications

➤Efforts to reduce risk should go beyond advice to buckle up and avoid substance use; behavior as passengers should also be addressed

➤Intervention efforts should address the rise in risky driving seen as teens age and advance in license status

➤Teens with a history of crashes may require more intensive preventive interventions

➤Teens should be encouraged to speak up to peers who are driving unsafely

Next Steps

➤VCHIP is exploring ways to improve screening and counseling of teens in primary care practices around driving safety