

Crashes, Near Crashes, and Risky Driving Among Novice Teenagers: A Naturalistic Study

Objective. The high crash rates of novice teenage drivers are thought to be due to inexperience, distraction, and risky driving behavior. This research examined the crash/near crash rates of novice teenage drivers and their parents, and associations with rates of risky driving among novice teenagers. **Method.** Survey and driving data were collected from 42 newly-licensed teenage drivers and their parents during the first 18 months of teen licensure. Data recording systems installed in participants' vehicles provided information on driving performance and driver and passenger characteristics. Crash/near crash and elevated g-force event rates (i.e., risky driving) were analyzed using Poisson regression with random effects. **Results.** Overall crash/near crash rates were 3.1 times higher among teens than adults, despite a significant decline over time. Rates for most measures of teenage risky driving (1) were correlated with the crash/near crash rate; and (2) varied over time, with apparent increases in some measures and an apparent decline only for hard stops. The composite measure of risky driving was (1) 4.78 times higher for teens relative to adults for the entire period; (2) 20% lower at night than during the day; (3) 18% lower with teenage passengers compared to no passengers; (4) 67% lower with adult passengers compared to no passengers; (5) 121% higher among teens with relatively more risky friends. **Conclusion.** Novice teenagers got better over time at not crashing, not by reducing risky driving but possibly by getting better at risky driving.