Too young to drive?

Countries, United States

The summer before my junior year of high school was the greatest. Although too young to go " clubbing" I officially had my license. My parents were terrified and gave me the birds and the bees of driving speech every time I left the house. I've had my license now for three years and haven't been into any wrecks but have been hit before. Every person who hit me was new to driving. For teenagers in the United States, the number one killer is motor vehicle crashes. Brain and auto safety experts are worried that 16-year-olds are too young to handle today's cars and roadway risks. The part of the brain that weighs risks and controls impulsive behavior isn't fully developed until about the age of 25, according to the National Institutes of Health (USA Today 1) In North Carolina you are able to take a driver education class at the age of 15, although not able to get your license until you are 16. Many states have begun to rise the age by imposing restrictions on 16-year-old drivers. Some examples are limiting the number of passengers they can have in the car or no late-night driving. But the idea of completely forbidding 16-year-olds to drive without parental supervision has run into resistance from many lawmakers and parents around the country. Most states have focused their fixes on giving teens more driving experience before giving them unrestricted licenses. A new 17- or 18-year-old driver is considered safer than a new 16-year-old driver. Due to safety the NC driver's license age should be changed from sixteen to eighteen. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U. S. teens, accounting for 36% of all deaths in this age group (Baker 19). Another point that the statistics show is that 16 year olds are involved in more fatal accidents and are worse drivers than all other teen drivers. In fact, states like New Jersey that restrict 16 year olds

from driving have the lowest teen death rates in the entire country (Strong 3). There are a number of different reasons that make 16 year olds dangerous drivers and increase their chances of being involved in a fatal car crash. For instance, sixteen year olds are inexperienced drivers. Many parts of the country, such as the South have unsafe streets, even for the most experienced drivers. Teens don't have the skills to drive on these rural roads. They often drive vehicles that are prone to roll such as SUVs, pickup trucks, and small cars that top the list. Teens often drive after dark and with other teens in the car. This can cause serious distractions and make it difficult to use all of the senses needed to be a safe driver. Alcohol and speeding also plays a vital role in many fatalities. A study sponsored by State Farm Insurance Company and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that North Carolina's Graduated Drivers Licenses program reduced hospitalizations and hospital costs by more than one-third for the youngest drivers in the state. The study, conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, shows that in the 46 months after the state's GDL laws went into effect in 1997 hospitalizations of 16-year-old drivers fell by 37 percent and hospital costs for these drivers fell 31 percent, or $650, 000, per year. The lead author of the study suggests that the reductions result from 16-year olds driving less, rather than from improvements in their driving skills. A 2001 study, based on crash data, found that there had been a 57 percent drop in fatal accidents involving 16-year olds since the law went into effect. In conclusion, the North Carolina driver's license age should be changed from sixteen to eighteen due to younger drivers having far more crashes than older people, especially in the

first months after getting their licenses according to Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Based on a study of crashes involving 16-year olds, researchers found that not paying enough attention and not taking enough notice of surroundings are the major reasons for crashes.