

Why the driving age should be raised essay sample

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The national driving age should be raised from 16 to 18 because it threatens not only our children but also other innocent people on the road. Statistics show that teenagers, especially sixteen year olds have more car accidents than drivers of any other age. Teenagers do not have the same risk assessment skills that adults have. I know from bitter experience that 16 and 17 year olds lack the experience and the maturity to recognize what could be a potentially dangerous situation on the roadways. Due either to lack of experience or the so-called God complex, that has been widely theorized about teenagers. Teenagers believe that nothing could hurt them or that the thrill is worth the risks that they take, not fully comprehending what all the risk variables are. I remember when I was 16 and just received my license. I knew at that moment that I was a man. For many of us getting our driver's license is a rite of passage. I know now that I was not a man; I was just a teenager with a license. I took a bunch of crazy chances and showed off in front of my friends by drag racing or going super-fast down the expressways. How I never killed myself or others with my recklessness, I still do not know to this day.

I have had a bunch of my friends who did the same things I did not be so fortunate. That gift of freedom which a driver's license gives a teenager is a two edged sword. A sword which most teenagers do not care or they are unable to understand how to wield. According to my research into this subject I have come across some very disturbing statistics. During the years 2004-2008, a total of 9, 644 passenger vehicles driven by drivers aged 16-17 years old were involved in fatal crashes. (Drivers Aged 16 Or 17 Years Involved in Fatal Crashes—United States, 2004-2008, CDC MMWR weekly

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10/22/2010) That number might not seem that high to you, but let's look at it in another light. Did you know that 16 year old drivers have the highest crash rates, more than drivers of any other age group? In addition, 16 year olds are 3 times more likely to die in a car crash than the average of every other age group? I have also heard the arguments about the elderly and that they cause a lot of accidents. Why are they still able to have their driving privileges? I would have to disagree with that argument also. As this graph from The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety clearly shows, younger drivers also have more fatalities than the elderly.

Motor vehicle crash deaths and deaths per 100, 000 people 70 and older, 1975-2007

(http://www.iihs.org/research/fatality_facts_2007/olderpeople.html#cite2, ©1996-2011, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Loss Data

Institute, 501(c)(3) organizations) Here are a few more facts for your consideration. Unsupervised teens increase the chance of a teenager wrecking. Teens underestimate or do not recognize at all, many hazardous driving conditions. Teens also have the lowest seat belt usage over any other age group. There is also a correlation between the number of a teenage driver's friends in the vehicle with them to the rate of increase that a wreck will occur and involve fatalities. On average for every driver age 15-17 years old killed in a crash, there is two other people also killed in the accident.

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11335735> U. S. National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health) These do not necessarily involve passengers in the teen's vehicle.

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They include passengers in another's vehicle and also pedestrians on the roadway, such as cyclists or people just walking. These are just some of the facts and reasons to raise the age for obtaining full driving privileges. Some researchers have also found that teenagers do not necessarily have the so called God Complex, but that their brains just are not fully developed at this age. They have found that "humans don't really develop the ability to handle multiple pieces of information at once until about the ages of 16 or 17." (Live Science, Article: Brains of Young Adults Not Fully Mature, Ker Than, Date: 06 February 2006) This could be a reason for some of the statistics on the amount of accidents that 16 year old drivers have. There is another study that suggests that it is not the so called God-Complex that teenagers feel either. "A Cornell University study published in the September, 2006 issue of Psychological Science in the Public Interest found that teens actually took a tiny bit longer to mull over risks than adults.

The problem is, despite their overestimation of risk, teenage brains often conclude that enjoyment outweighs danger" The study goes on to say that "While the odds of any person dying in a transportation accident are 1 in 6, 279, the odds a teenager will die from a transportation accident in a year are nearly twice as large: 1 in 3, 821."(Accidents & Death, Teens Overestimate Risks—and Decide they're Worth Taking, Katharine Gammon) I strongly feel that we need to increase the age for full driving privileges until a teenager is 18. I do understand that some teenagers have to drive to work or school. These things have not changed since I was a teenager. I say to let them drive to work or school, but with limitations. With most teenage accidents

occurring at night, there is a certain act of legislation that I would endorse. It is called The Safe Teen and Novice Driver Uniform Protection (STAND UP) Act. Basically what it does is implement a Graduated Driver's License (GDL).

" The legislation would call on states to establish GDL systems with minimum requirements: * A 3-stage licensing process, from learner's permit to intermediate state to full, non-restricted drivers licensing; * Prohibited night driving during intermediate stage;

* Passenger restrictions during learner's permit and intermediate stage. No more than one non-family member under the age of 21 may travel with a learning teenage driver, unless a licensed driver over the age of 21 is in the vehicle; * Prohibited non-emergency use of cell phones and other communication devices, including text messaging during the learner's permit and intermediate stages; * Learner's permits to be issued at age 16 and non-restricted drivers licenses to be issued at age 18; * Any other requirement set by the Secretary of Transportation, including: learner's permit holding period of at least six months; intermediate stage of at least six months; at least 30 hours of driving supervised by a licensed driver 21 years old or older; automatic delay of full licensure if permit holder commits an offense, such as a DWI, misrepresentation of age, reckless driving, driving without a seatbelt, speeding, or other violations determined by the Transportation secretary." (Copyright © 2009-2015 The Office of Kirsten Gillibrand, Gillibrand-Bishop Plan: America Should Follow New York's Lead, Require Strong Minimum Standards for Teenage Licenses, March 8, 2011)

I have a teenage son who is eligible in my state to receive a restricted license right now. I also know how reckless and irresponsible he can be at times. This is the main reason I have not let him get his license at this point. In short, teenagers just do not have the maturity or the experience to be able to drive a vehicle 100% responsibly. It is proven in the statistics and even with science. I want my teenager to be a good responsible driver. I also would like to keep him alive and with me. Not in a graveyard or in prison for accidentally killing someone. I believe that the legislation that I mentioned above is a very good compromise on this issue. Let's keep our children alive and well. Let's help raise the limit for full driving privileges to 18.

References

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