

Young vs old drivers



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When pulling out of the driveway, one enters the most dangerous place in the world, the American Highway. Who is going to be the unsafe driver; will it be the 16 or 17-year-old or the 75-year-old. The young believe that they have enough experience to handle anything and the old cannot react fast enough. There is also the issue of drugs and alcohol or medications impairing the driver's, young or old, abilities to drive in a safe manner. Statistics show that an elderly driver is more likely to receive fatal injuries in an accident because of age.

Those same statistics show the young die because of excessive speed and lack of experience. The driving laws in the United States are not well defined in regard to teenage and elderly driving requirements; however, statistics clearly present an imperative need for these laws to be reviewed. The young driver, who has only had his or her license a short time, does not possess the experience of the older driver. The older driver does not have the reflexes that are required to react quickly. One assumes they are immortal and one believes they are infallible.

Statistics reported from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) say that 15 % of all fatal accidents involving teen drivers are due to excessive speed, while only 5 % account for the elderly. The young drivers believe that they can handle the speed on a straight or winding stretch of road and have no fear of crashing. The lack of fear and experience make it hard to convince the young that they are not being safe. Meanwhile, the senior drivers believe that since they have had ample driving experience, they must be driving properly and/or safely.

The elderly also believe that even though they have had a few fender benders, or minor mishaps, they are still safe to drive. Most seniors have age related issues; such as impaired vision, slow reflexes or reaction times, and impaired judgment. It is hard to convince an elderly driver to give up their driving privileges, thus their independence. The young drivers are also looking for their independence. However, according to the NHTSA young drivers between the ages of 16 and 25 make up 59% of America's fatalities. This is primarily due to their lack of judgment and excessive risk taking.

Males make up a major part of this percentage with their daredevil driving, aggressive driving, as well as driving too fast after an argument. In 2008, Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) did a study on fatalities in crashes involving young drivers between the ages of 15 to 20-year-olds. They divide the report by; state, person type and include occupants of the same vehicle, as well as innocent victims in another vehicle. The statistics are staggering with California, Pennsylvania, and Florida reporting some of the highest fatalities in single occupant vehicles.

Rhode Island is reporting the lowest numbers over all. When statistics show that more than 2700 young drivers die in a single calendar year, one must ask the question why? While older drivers tend to believe that they have driven through virtually every situation possible, and this may be the case. They still do not know all the laws and rules of the road. Because of this experience they tend to believe that they are the safer driver. However, statistics from the NHTSA report that 53 % of drivers 70 and older are involved in a fatal vehicle accident involving speed.

The same statistics show that 16 % of the elderly drivers, ages 65 to 74-years-old account for crashes involving a left hand turn. Drivers 75-years-old or older account for 21 %. Young drivers in comparison account for 11% as reported by the NHTSA. A decline in the elderly's physical abilities such as; vision, hearing and judgment can account for most of the statistical information in this category. While young drivers are typically healthier than the older drivers, it is still possible that they are impaired in some way. In today's world young drivers still think they can test their abilities, while at the controls of a moving vehicle.

With doctors prescribing medications, the use of illegal drugs and alcohol one can obtain, it is likely that more young are driving impaired than reported. This applies to the elderly as well. A doctor can prescribe a medication that may impair the elderly's driving and then they may add alcohol to the medication. Perhaps one medication reacts with another; one's side effect is drowsiness, another impairs them in another way. Most of the time, the elderly will start to slow down themselves; use less traveled roads, perhaps not drive at night, or not travel as far.

But there are very few laws to take them off the road. Some of the things that can be done, are contact their physician or pharmacist. Check to see if any medications are impairing them. Having a delicate conversation with them in regard to their safety and that of others can be beneficial. While lawmakers are working on laws for the young, they also need to address the laws pertaining to the elderly. According to smartmotorist.com lawmakers do not want to address the issue for the elderly for fear of removing their independence.

Lawmakers have implemented a system called the graduated driver licensing (GDL). This system will allow for the young drivers to take steps in learning too drive. Some such steps are; increasing the numbers of hours a young adult or teen driver must drive prior to receiving a license. Another such law or rule is not allowing the young drivers to have more people in the car than the car has seat belts. While the laws are different in every state this system will help reduce the number of fatalities among the young. Are the driving laws in the United States weak when it pertains to the young and/or the old?

Are our lawmakers working to change the teen driving requirements? Are they also working to define the law for the elderly? As the population increases each year, so does the amount of traffic on the American Highway System. According to Smartmotorist. com it is predicted that in the next 20 years the number of elderly drivers (70 and older) will triple. With the staggering number of deaths both young and old the time to change the laws is upon us. How many people have to die before lawmakers make the necessary changes to protect the innocent victims?