

<https://www.safewise.com/faq/auto-safety/raise-driving-age/>

Pros and Cons of Raising the Driving Age

Written by **SafeWise Team** | Updated **May 7, 2019**

An ongoing topic of debate in the safety world has been whether the driving age should be raised. Typically, drivers need to be 16 or 17 to drive alone. There are many people, including politicians and safety experts, that want to raise the age to 18.

Potential teen drivers aren't exactly thrilled with the idea, of course, but there are convincing arguments on both sides of the issue.

Arguments for Raising the Driving Age

There are some strong, data-based arguments to be made in favor of raising the minimum driving age.

- 1. It's Safer**

The rate of fatal crashes per mile driven is around half as high for teens aged 18 or 19 as for 16- and 17-year-olds.¹ It is thought that raising the driving age to 18 could help lower the overall rate of fatal crashes.

- 2. It Will Make Teens More Active**

It is thought that removing the option to drive will cause more teens to walk, ride bikes, or use other active options to get places. This could cut back on teenage obesity levels by providing more opportunities for exercise.

- 3. 18-Year-Olds Are More Emotionally Mature Than 16-Year-Olds**

Emotional maturity increases as we age, and it's thought that 18-year-olds are more likely to make smart decisions without giving in to peer pressure than 16-year-olds.

Arguments Against Raising the Driving Age

Though the camp for raising the minimum driving age makes strong points, there are additional arguments in favor of keeping things the same.

- 1. It Limits Transportation Options for Teens**

Teens these days are involved in more activities than ever. School, extracurricular activities, jobs, and social events usually require some form of transportation. If the teens can't drive themselves, the responsibility for transportation often falls to their parents—who may not have the time or ability—or public transportation, which may not be readily available. This can limit the options these kids have for personal growth at a critical age.

2. It Will Delay the Gaining of Valuable Experience

The best way to learn how to do something is to do it. The argument here is that the higher crash rates for 16- and 17-year-olds may just be because they are new to driving and lack experience. Delaying the start of driving may just delay that learning and shift the crash rates more toward the 18- and 19-year-olds.

Whichever side of the argument you fall on, we encourage you to stay invested in your child's safety as they learn to drive. To help keep them accountable, consider installing a dash cam so you can see how they drive—and have conversations about how to improve their safety behind the wheel.

1. Insurance Highway Institute for Highway Safety, "[Fatality Facts: Teenagers](#)"

<https://thenewswheel.com/should-the-legal-driving-age-be-raised-10-points-to-consider/>

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Should the Legal Driving Age Be Raised? 10 Points to Consider

Challenging issues to face in the debate on legal driving age

It's a controversial debate that has been receiving more discussion in recent years: should the legal driving age be raised from 16 to 17 or 18?

With numerous studies being done throughout the country and around the world to determine what the safest solution is, it seems that everyone has an opinion on what would solve the issue of high teen driving mortality rates. But, nevertheless, society has not come to a conclusion.

Factors to Consider When Raising/Lowering the Minimum Driving Age

There's no easy answer, unfortunately, for determining if the legal driving age should be raised. For every statistic, there's a caveat, and for every argument, there's a counterargument. To grasp the complexity of the situation, here are the most prominent issues to consider.

1. **Safety:** Without transcribing the results of every study made on the topic, the general consensus is that yes, 15- and 16-year-olds are more likely to be in, cause, and die in car accidents than drivers even a couple years older than them. Changing that, such as in New Jersey where the minimum age is 17, would likely save lives.
2. **Freedom:** Teenagers assert that the privilege of driving a car is a right that should not be taken away, and many adults agree. Turning 16 and getting a driver's license is a rite of passage that most teens have worked hard to earn. Should we penalize all teenagers for the mistakes of some?
3. **Development:** Science shows that the human brain is volatile and underdeveloped during teenage years, particularly in the areas of impulse control, consequence prediction, and emotional stability. Obviously, these skills are crucial to safe driving.
4. **Convenience:** If teenagers cannot obtain their licenses until later in life, it's up to parents to continue driving them around to social and extracurricular activities—and, most importantly, part-time jobs. Most parents don't want to sacrifice this time, and that inevitably leads to hindering their growing up and preparing for adult life.
5. **Diversity:** Not every person—teenage or otherwise—is identical. Some teenage drivers are cautious and wise, while some adult drivers are impulsive and reckless. Raising the driving age assumes that bad teen drivers will get better by simply being older.
6. **Teaching:** The majority of parents make terrible driving instructors, and the majority of driver's ed courses don't do much better. People can only learn properly when they've been adequately taught—not paid \$300 to be griped at by an 80-year-old fart.
7. **Profit:** Having more drivers at a younger age paying higher premiums is simply more profitable for insurance companies, and you can bet that plenty of lobbying is being done to make sure that doesn't change.

8. **Experience:** While statistics show that young drivers have a higher likelihood of being in collisions, they don't necessarily take into account that young drivers are also new, inexperienced drivers—which would happen at any age. Many of these studies only prove that “inexperienced drivers make more mistakes than experienced drivers.” No duh.
9. **Technology:** Instead of putting the burden of proper behavior on drivers, today's intuitive assistance technology in vehicles is being the ears, eyes, and brakes of people who are distracted behind the wheel. In fact, many cars now come with teen driver modes. If cars themselves can avoid accidents, why should we worry about the driving age?
10. **Distractions:** Making the in-cabin environment more conducive to focused driving could make a big difference. This includes limiting cell phone usage, number of passengers, radio volume, and the use of graduated licenses with stricter consequences for infringements.

What do you think? Do you believe that the minimum driving age should be raised?