

## What Do the Facts Say About Younger Drivers and Safety?

According to various scientific studies, the rational part of a teen's brain, the part that responds to situations with good judgment, has an awareness of long-term consequences, and is responsible for complex cognitive behavior, does not fully develop until age 25 or so. Instead, teens process information with the emotional part of the brain as the connections between emotion and decision-making are still developing. Thus, teens are not well equipped to recognize errors in decision-making, and are often unable to explain what they were thinking after a situation in which they experienced overwhelming emotional input. In other words, they were not thinking as much as they were feeling.<sup>1</sup>

### RESEARCH UNDERSCORES THE NEGATIVE SAFETY IMPLICATIONS OF YOUNGER CMV DRIVERS

It is important to note that the number of CMV drivers under the age of 21 are significantly less than those drivers who are over 21. Hence, the sample sizes included in the following research are so small that the differences are not likely to be statistically significant. Interpret these statistics with caution, as they merely highlight the safety issues of lowering the driving age for CMV drivers in interstate commerce.

- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), citing numerous studies, has stated that “age is a strong risk factor for truck crash involvement.” In fact, age is the most important factor in the high rate of involvement of younger CMV drivers in fatal crashes.<sup>2</sup>
- The general pattern of over-involvement in fatal crashes for younger CMV drivers dominates all other factors.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies of young CMV drivers show that as the age of the driver decreases large truck fatal crash involvement rates increase.<sup>4</sup>
- CMV drivers under the age of 19 are four times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes.<sup>5</sup>
- Younger CMV drivers are involved in a higher rate of fatal crashes until about the age of 27.<sup>6</sup>
- CMV drivers aged 19-20 are about 6 times more likely to be involved in police reported injury and fatality crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled compared to all other truck drivers age 21 and older.<sup>7</sup>
- Teens lack the ability to respond to hazards, struggle driving the appropriate speed for conditions, and have trouble driving at night.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3051>; Richard Monastersky, “Who’s Minding the Teenage Brain?” Chronicle of Higher Education (Jan 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Comments to the docket, FMCSA-2000-8410-0515; citing Christie, R. and Fabre, J. 1999. Potential for fast-tracking heavy vehicle drivers. Melbourne, Australia: National Road Transport Commission; Blower, D. 1996. The accident experience of younger truck drivers. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute; Frith, W.J. 1994. A case-control study of heavy vehicle drivers’ working time and safety. *Proceedings of the 17th Australian Road Research Board Conference*, 17-30. Queensland, Australia: Australian Road Research Board; Stein, H.S. and Jones, I.S. (1988).

<sup>3</sup> Campbell, K. L., *Fatal Accident Involvement Rates By Driver Age For Large Trucks*, *Accid. Anal. & Prev.* Vol 23, No. 4, pp. 287-295 (1991).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Blower, D.; Lyles, R.W.; Campbell, K.L.; and Stamatiadis, P. 1990. The Michigan heavy truck study. Lansing, MI: Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (Year).

<sup>8</sup> The Anatomy of Crashes Involving Teens, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK9672/>

**Table: Ages most likely to have a Conviction or Violation<sup>9</sup>**

| Convictions                        | Ages            | Violations                             | Ages            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| Improper Lane/Location             | 25-34           | Improper lane change                   | 75-79           |
| Reckless/careless/inattentive      | 20-29           | HOS Violations                         | 20-34           |
| Improper/Erratic lane changes      | 25-29 and 75-79 | False or no log book (pre ELD)         | 20-29           |
| Improper Turn convictions          | 25-34           | Speeding violations                    | 80-89           |
| Following too closely              | 20-34           | Disqualified Driver                    | 25-39           |
| Drivers with any convictions       | 20-34           | Any moving violation                   | 25-29 and 80-84 |
| Speeding 15 mph+ over speed limit  | 20-34           | Failure to obey traffic control device | 20-34           |
| Speeding 1-15 mph over speed limit | 20-29           | OOS                                    | 85-89           |
| Driving too fast for conditions    | 20-24           | Seat Belt                              | 20-24           |
| Failure to obey stop sign          | 25-39           | Size and weight                        | 20-29 and 80-84 |
| Failure to obey traffic signal     | 25-39 and 80-84 |  |                 |

## **Federal agencies have consistently rejected efforts to lower the age requirement to operate a commercial motor vehicle in interstate commerce**

- In 1975, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) examined the issue as “part of a comprehensive overhaul of the driver qualification requirements” and “found that most drivers under the age of 21 ‘lack the general maturity, skill and judgement that is necessary in handling commercial motor vehicles.’ ”<sup>10</sup> As such, FHWA concluded that there was no support to lower the age requirement.<sup>11</sup>
- In 2003, FMCSA declined to lower the minimum age for an unrestricted CDL to 18 as part of a pilot program because the agency could not conclude that the “safety performance of these younger drivers is sufficiently close to that of older drivers of CMVs[.]”<sup>12</sup>
- The public overwhelmingly opposed the idea with 96 percent of individuals who responded opposing the proposal along with 88 percent of the truck drivers and 86 percent of the motor carriers who responded.<sup>13</sup>
- A 2015 public opinion poll commissioned by Advocates showed that 73 percent of the public opposed allowing teen truck and bus drivers to operate a CMV in interstate commerce.<sup>14</sup>

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*“Age is the most important factor in the high rate of younger CMV drivers in fatal crashes.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Caroline Boris and Dan Murray, *Predicting Truck Crash Involvement 2018 Update*, ATRI (July 2018)

<sup>10</sup> 81 FR 56746 citing Minimum Age Requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, FHWA (April 1975).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Young Commercial Driver Pilot Training Program, Notice of denial of petition to initiate a pilot program, 68 FR 34467, 34470 (June 9, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> 68 FR 34469.

<sup>14</sup> ORC International, Road Safety Poll (2015).

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