



News Release

Media Contact:
Georjeane Blumling, Ph.D.
Vice President Public Affairs
757-233-3825
Gblum@tidewater.aaa.com

TEENS DELAYING LICENSURE – A CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

AAA Foundation Study Looks at Why Teens Are Delaying Rite of Passage

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA. (August 1, 2013) – The majority of American teens today delay getting a driver's license, according to new study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. Less than half (44 percent) of teens obtain a driver's license within 12 months of the minimum age for licensing in their state and just over half (54 percent) are licensed before their 18th birthday, causing concern among safety experts that young adult drivers are missing the benefits intended by graduated drivers licensing (GDL). These findings mark a significant drop from two decades ago when data showed more than two-thirds of teens were licensed by the time they turned 18. **In Virginia, statistics from the Virginia DMV found a 20% decrease from 2011 to 2012 in the number of teens under 18 that were licensed.**

"With one in three teens waiting to get their license until they turn 18, there's a segment of this generation missing opportunities to learn under the safeguards that GDL provides," said Peter Kissinger, President and CEO, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "For most, it's about not having a car or having alternatives for getting around that are the top reasons cited for delaying what has traditionally been considered to be a rite of passage."

Contrary to some expectations, survey results suggest that few teens wait until 18 simply to avoid graduated driver licensing. Instead, a number of other reasons for delaying licensure were cited, including:

- 44 percent – Did not have a car
- 39 percent – Could get around without driving
- 36 percent – Gas was too expensive
- 36 percent – Driving was too expensive
- 35 percent – "Just didn't get around to it"

Low-income and minority teens are the least likely to obtain a driver's license before age 18. Only 25 percent of teens living in households with incomes less than \$20,000 obtained their license before they turned 18, while 79 percent of teens were licensed by their 18th birthday in households with incomes of \$100,000 or more. The findings for licensure by age 18 differed significantly by race and ethnicity, with 67 percent for non-Hispanic white teens, 37 percent for non-Hispanic black teens, and 29 percent for Hispanic teens.

"For a range of reasons, young adults increasingly are getting licensed without the benefit of parental supervision, extensive practice and gaining experience under less risky conditions that

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are the hallmark of a safety-focused licensing system,” said Georjeane Blumling, spokesperson for AAA Tidewater Virginia. “Researchers and policymakers should examine whether existing state GDL systems – nearly all of which end once a teen turns 18 – can be modified to improve safety for these young adult novice drivers.”

AAA has worked for nearly two decades to recommend that all states adopt and enforce a comprehensive three-stage (learner’s permit, intermediate/probationary license, full/unrestricted license) graduated driver licensing (GDL) system for novice teen drivers. These programs require minimum holding periods and practice requirements for teens with learner’s permits, followed by restricted licenses that limit driving at night or with peer passengers. These requirements help novice drivers safely gain the skills and experience needed to become safe adult drivers.

Previous AAA Foundation research found that states with comprehensive GDL systems have experienced a 38 percent decrease in fatal crashes involving 16 year-olds and a 40 percent reduction in injury crashes.

The researchers surveyed a nationally-representative sample of 1,039 respondents ages 18-20. The full research report and survey results can be found on the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety [website](#).

Established by AAA in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Dedicated to saving lives and reducing injuries on our roads, the Foundation’s mission is to prevent crashes and save lives through research and education about traffic safety. The Foundation has funded over 200 research projects designed to discover the causes of traffic crashes, prevent them, and minimize injuries when they do occur. Visit www.aaafoundation.org for more information on this and other research.

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