



– EXECUTIVE SUMMARY –

Youth and Road Crashes: Magnitude, Characteristics and Trends

OVERVIEW

- This report examines the involvement of young people (15-24) in serious road crashes in Canada. It confirms that they are overrepresented in such crashes; the magnitude of the problem underscores the need for effective solutions.
- The need is further emphasized by the fact that since the beginning of the new millennium, progress, so evident during the 1980s and 1990s, came to a halt, and in some instances, the positive trends were even reversed.

BACKGROUND

- Road crashes involving young people have long been recognized as a major health and safety problem in Canada and around the world.
- The overrepresentation of youth in serious collisions has led to numerous initiatives aimed at reducing their deaths and injuries on the highways.
- This report examines the current magnitude and characteristics of the problem in Canada and trends in it over the past several decades.

TRENDS

- There were significant and important declines in the magnitude of the problem during the 1980s and 1990s.
- However, these improvements halted and even reversed somewhat at the beginning of the new millennium; at a minimum, there has been no progress in the past 7 years, underscoring the need for new and improved prevention efforts.
- Despite the initial gains witnessed over several decades, the problem of youth and road crashes remains a significant one as attested to by the statistics reported below.



EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

- One-third of the deaths as well as 1/3 of the injuries that occur to young people each year is the result of road crashes.
- Over 700 young people (15-24) are killed each year in road crashes in Canada and a further 50,000 are injured, many seriously. These totals include some 350 teens (aged 15-19) killed and 24,000 injured, as well as 350 20-24 year olds killed and 26,000 injured.
- These numbers make road crashes the leading cause of death among young people, outstripping suicide and other accidents.
- Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of hospital admissions among youth and the second leading cause of emergency room visits.
- Young people have the highest death and injury rates (number of deaths/injuries per 100,000 population) of any age group.
- Not surprisingly, young people contribute substantially to the total number of deaths and injuries on the roads each year in Canada; they account for ¼ of all the deaths and injuries.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROBLEM

- The statistics cited above include deaths and injuries to young people as drivers, passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- However, the vast majority (some 80%) of the deaths and injuries occur when they are drivers or passengers.
- But these vary as a function of the age and gender of the young people: young males are more likely to be killed or injured as a driver; young females are more likely to be killed or injured as a passenger.

THE YOUNG DRIVER

- As described above, the vast majority of deaths and injuries occur to young people when they are drivers or passengers. And, research has consistently shown that when they are passengers, they are much more likely to be in a vehicle driven by another young person.
- The involvement of young drivers in serious road crashes vastly outweighs their representation in the driving population; they account for nearly 25% of the motor vehicle deaths and injuries but only 13% of the licensed driving population
- Young drivers have a death rate (number killed per 100,000 licensed drivers) that is 3 times the rate among 35-44 year olds; their injury rate is double that of the comparison group of 35-44 year olds.

CONCLUSIONS

- Recent trends are not promising; there has been no improvement in the problem of youth and road crashes for several years and, in fact, what were promising trends have, in some cases, been reversed.
- Regardless of the trends, the problem persists at unacceptable levels.
- The challenge is to find new measures to deal with the problem and to enhance the effectiveness of more traditional ones like graduated driver licensing and driver education/training, measures that are described in more detail in this website.

