



# Parents Teaching Teens to Drive: The Adolescent Perspective

A Center for Injury Research and Prevention at CHOP Research Brief by Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MSEd, J. Felipe García-España, PhD, Flaura K. Winston, MD, PhD, and Dennis R. Durbin, MD, MSCE

## INTRODUCTION

Motor vehicle crashes remain the No. 1 cause of death for adolescents. Teen drivers (age 16 to 19 years) are involved in fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers (age 25 to 69 years). To better understand why teens crash, researchers are working hard to analyze factors associated with teen crashes and to develop interventions to change behaviors that contribute to these crashes. This research brief describes – from the adolescent perspective – the important role parents play in teaching their teens to drive. By describing adult involvement in their learning, these teen drivers provide researchers with valuable information to improve the learning-to-drive process. This report provides immediate call-to-action recommendations for teen driver safety stakeholders.



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## CALL TO ACTION

- ✓ Support parents in performing their important role as driving teachers. Encourage them to provide their teens with at least 50 hours of varied and supervised practice while learning to drive and with careful monitoring for at least the first year after licensure.
- ✓ Make community advocates and parents aware of helpful resources for teaching teens to drive, such as those found on [teendriving.statefarm.com](https://teendriving.statefarm.com) and [teendriversource.org](https://teendriversource.org).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This research brief was compiled by the Young Driver Research team at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention (CIRP) at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, with generous support from State Farm Insurance Companies®. CIRP's interdisciplinary team is comprised of experts in the fields of injury prevention, traffic safety, adolescent health, behavioral science, epidemiology, biostatistics, demography, engineering, and public health.



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## OUR TEEN SAMPLE

The data source for this research brief was the National Young Driver Survey (NYDS), the most comprehensive current description of youth perceptions of teen driving. It was carried out among a nationally representative sample of 5,665 ninth through 11th graders in 2006. The data described are representative of all U.S. public school students in the ninth through 11th grades. For this research brief, the sample was limited to the 1,770 respondents who described themselves as licensed drivers. The survey protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and ORC Macro of Calverton, Md., the survey contractor.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
THE TEEN-CENTERED  
SURVEY METHOD AND  
THE STUDY DESIGN,  
READ THE ABSTRACT OF  
THE PUBLISHED PAPER.**

**TABLE I. ABOUT OUR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS**  
(N = 1,770<sup>a</sup>)

Characteristic	No. of responses <sup>b</sup>	% of total responses <sup>c</sup>
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	869	46.0
Male	901	54.0
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White	1,373	76.1
Black	162	10.3
Latino/Hispanic	112	9.2
Other	123	4.4
<b>Socioeconomic status of school</b>		
Above median	776	55.5
Below median	910	44.5
<b>Grade</b>		
Ninth	58	4.9
10th	632	30.1
11th	1,080	65.0
<b>Academic performance</b>		
Mostly As and Bs	1,329	78.5
Mostly Cs	265	17.4
Mostly Ds and Fs	60	4.1
<b>Urbanicity</b>		
Central city	57	6.0
Rural/town	1,165	58.2
Suburban	527	35.8

<sup>a</sup> Due to missing data, the totals for some characteristics do not sum to 1,770.

<sup>b</sup> Actual number of respondents.

<sup>c</sup> Percentage of respondents after adjusting for study design.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive analyses reported distributions of the type of driver education received and parent involvement in learning to drive. Associations between who taught teens to drive and parenting style were assessed using the chi-square test.

- ✓ Two-thirds of driving teens surveyed were in 11th grade, while nearly 5 percent were in ninth grade.
- ✓ More than half of teen respondents lived in rural regions or small towns.

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## RESULTS: ROLE OF PARENTS

**TABLE 2. TEEN-REPORTED ROLE OF PARENTS IN DRIVING EDUCATION<sup>a</sup>**

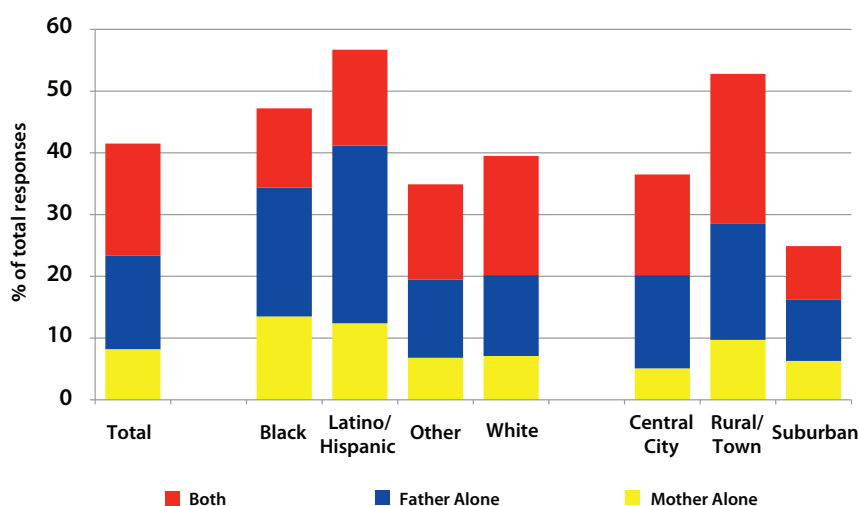
Driving Teachers	% of total responses
<b>Mother only (no father, no DEI)</b>	<b>8.2</b>
Father only (no mother, no DEI)	15.2
<b>Mother and father (no DEI)</b>	<b>18.1</b>
DEI only (no mother, no father)	8.1
<b>Mother and DEI (no father)</b>	<b>6.2</b>
Father and DEI (no mother)	9.4
<b>Mother, father, and DEI</b>	<b>29.7</b>
No father, no mother, no DEI	5.1

<sup>a</sup> Excludes the 6.7% of individuals who stated they taught themselves. Abbreviation: DEI, driver education instructor.

- ✓ Excluding those teens who say no one taught them to drive, 87 percent report having a parent involved.
- ✓ Nearly two-thirds of teens say at least two adults were involved in teaching them to drive.
- ✓ More than half of teens report using a driver education instructor.
- ✓ Nearly 30 percent of teens report using a driver education instructor, as well as being taught by both their mother and father.

**OVER 63 PERCENT OF TEENS SAY MORE THAN ONE PERSON TAUGHT THEM TO DRIVE.**

**FIGURE 1: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AMONG TEENS WHO WERE TAUGHT TO DRIVE ONLY BY THEIR PARENTS<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> This figure excludes youth who had driver education instructors or any person other than their parents also involved in teaching them to drive.

- ✓ This graph shows the percentage of teens who report being taught only by their parents, broken out by racial/ethnic subgroups, as well as the type of area where they live.
- ✓ 4 in 10 teens report being taught only by their parents.
- ✓ Latino/Hispanic and Black teens were more likely than other teens to have only their parents involved in teaching them to drive. In this group of teens, fathers were more involved than mothers.
- ✓ Teens living in rural areas were more likely than those living in suburban or central city locations to have only their parents as driving teachers.

## **NEARLY 7 PERCENT OF TEENS SAY THEY TAUGHT THEMSELVES TO DRIVE.**

- ✓ Nearly one-third of teens consider themselves at least somewhat self-taught, but only 6.7 percent report teaching themselves to drive with no adult instruction.
- ✓ Ten percent of males reported being self-taught compared to 3 percent of females.
- ✓ Minority youth are more likely than other teens to be self-taught.

# PARENTS TEACHING TEENS TO DRIVE: THE ADOLESCENT PERSPECTIVE

## RESULTS: PARENTING STYLE

Teens who say their parents set rules and monitor their driving in a helpful, supportive way (known as an *authoritative* parenting style) are more likely than teens with less involved parents to have been taught to drive by both parents and to have been taught by a driver education instructor.

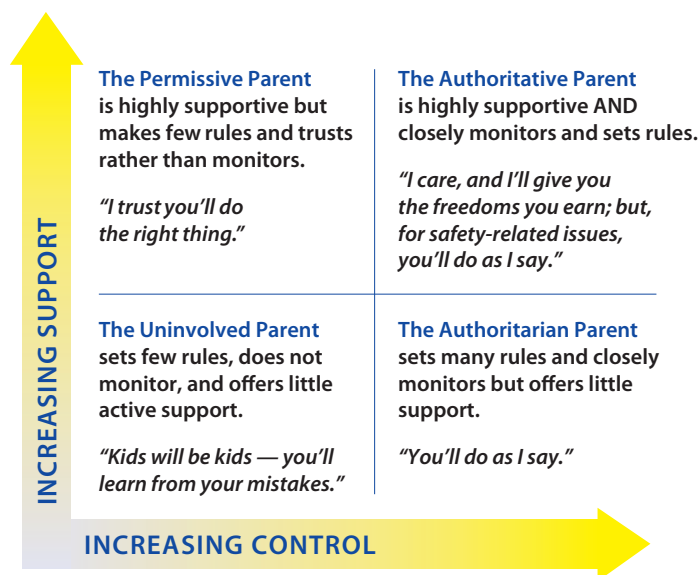
TABLE 3. PARENTING STYLES REPORTED BY TEENS (N = 1,770)

Parental Style	No. of responses <sup>a</sup>	% of total responses <sup>b</sup>
Authoritarian	119	7.0
Authoritative	897	50.4
Permissive	436	25.0
Uninvolved	281	17.6

<sup>a</sup> Actual number of respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Percentage of respondents after adjusting for study design.

FIGURE 2. PARENTING STYLES: THE BALANCE BETWEEN SUPPORT AND CONTROL



**THIS FINDING SUGGESTS FAMILIES WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING STYLE MAY BE MORE LIKELY THAN FAMILIES WITH OTHER PARENTING STYLES TO CONTROL THE QUALITY OF THEIR TEENS' SUPERVISED DRIVING.**

For more information on the protective effect of authoritative parents on teen drivers, download [Driving Through the Eyes of Teens, A Closer Look](#) and [read the scientific paper](#).

TABLE 4. DRIVING TEACHERS BY PARENTING STYLES

Who taught you how to drive? <sup>a</sup>	Total N = 1,770	Parenting Style			
		Authoritarian n = 119	Authoritative <sup>b</sup> n = 897	Permissive n = 436	Uninvolved n = 281
I taught myself	32.3	42.7	24.9 <sup>c</sup>	36.1	41.4
Driver education instructor(s)	49.8	51.1	54.4 <sup>d</sup>	46.6	43.5
Mother or stepmother	58.0	50.7	65.3 <sup>c</sup>	54.5	46.5
Father or stepfather	67.6	64.8	72.6 <sup>e</sup>	64.9	57.6
Grandmother or grandfather	11.1	11.5	11.9	9.9	8.6
Guardian	4.9	6.7	4.7	5.1	5.1
Sibling	16.8	18.6	15.8	18.8	17.8
Friend	8.5	11.9	7.3	7.4	11.8

<sup>a</sup> Participants could select all options that apply to them.

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .001$  for the difference between authoritative parenting style and other styles.

<sup>c</sup>  $p < .001$ .

<sup>d</sup>  $p < .05$ .

<sup>e</sup>  $p < .01$ .



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