



Views of New Jersey teenagers about their state's policies for beginning drivers

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ABSTRACT

Background: Three New Jersey licensing policies are unique in the United States: (a) minimum licensing age of 17; (b) applying full graduated driver licensing (GDL) rules to beginners younger than 21; and (c) requiring license status decals on vehicle plates of drivers in GDL. **Methods:** New Jersey 17–19 year-olds were surveyed by telephone and online. **Results:** Eighty-four percent approved licensing at 17; 77% approved applying GDL to older novices; 23% approved the decal policy. Probationary licensees ages 18–19 were more likely than 17 year-olds to have multiple nighttime restriction violations in the past month. There were no age group differences in passenger restriction violations. **Discussion:** All three policies have been considered in other states. Views of teenagers directly affected by the policies can be taken into account in considering their implementation. **Practical applications:** Views of licensing policies by affected teenagers indicate potential support or obstacles to their adoption in other states.

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1. Introduction

New Jersey's licensing system has several unique features that distinguish it from the other 49 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. These features include a minimum licensing age of 17, applying full graduated driver licensing (GDL) rules to older novices, and requiring license plate decals for teenagers with learner's permits or probationary licenses.

1.1 Minimum licensing age of 17

Licensing ages were established early in the 20th century, and historical records documenting the rationale for different choices are scarce (Mayhew, Fields, & Simpson, 2000). In 1995, prior to the widespread introduction of GDL, 40 states and the District of Columbia licensed at 16, New Jersey at 17, Massachusetts allowed licensure at 16 years, 6 months, Indiana at 16 years, 1 month, six states at age 15, and one at 14 (Williams, Weinberg, Fields, & Ferguson, 1996). These initial licenses, available upon passing a driving test, allowed full driving privileges in most states. Learner permits were available at ages ranging from 14 to 16; the minimum permit age in New Jersey was 16. The benefits of New Jersey's higher licensing age, in terms of both fatal and non-fatal injury crash reductions, have been well established (Ferguson, Leaf, Williams, & Preusser, 1996; Williams, Karpf, & Zador, 1983).

When minimum learner holding periods were extended in many GDL systems, minimum licensing ages became higher than 16 in a few states, generally 16½. In other words, the combination of a minimum

learner age of 16 and a required 6-month holding period raised the licensing age from 16 to 16½, and the initial license generally included night and/or passenger restrictions for a period of time prior to full licensure. A national evaluation of GDL found that the longer the licensing age was delayed, the lower the fatal crash rate. For example, a 6-month delay (e.g., from 16 to 16½) was associated with a 7% lower fatal crash rate; a delay of 1 year (e.g., from 16 to 17) lowered it by 13% (McCartt, Teoh, Fields, Braitman, & Hellinga, 2010). A national analysis of insurance collision claims found that a 6-month delay in the licensing age was associated with a 5% reduction in the claim rate of 16-year-old drivers (Trempe, 2009).

1.2 Applying full GDL to older novices

When New Jersey adopted a GDL system in January 2001 (2001 NJ Laws, Chap. 420, amending NJ Stat. Ann., sec. 39:3–13.1 ff.), another unique feature was introduced. In almost all other U.S. jurisdictions, GDL does not apply to those who are 18 or older. If a person is still under GDL rules when they turn 18, they automatically graduate to full licensure. If they do not start until age 18 or later, they bypass their state's GDL requirements. Maine and Maryland apply partial GDL rules to some novices 18 or older. In Maryland, license applicants younger than 25 must hold a learner's permit for 9 months, and those 25 and older have to hold a permit for 45 days (MD Code [TRANS.], sec. 16–105). Night and passenger restrictions apply only to those younger than 18 (MD Code [TRANS.], sec. 16–113). In Maine, night and passenger restrictions also apply only to those younger than 18, but the 6-month learner period and a requirement of 35 h of practice driving during the permit period (Maine Revised Statutes sec. 1304 (1) (H)) extend to novices younger than 21. However, New Jersey

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applies full GDL rules to novices ages 18, 19, and 20 (6-month learner period, followed by a probationary license with night and passenger restrictions). New Jersey's nighttime restriction for the probationary license is from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.; parents, dependents, and one additional person are allowed as passengers. The probationary license has to be held for 1 year, so 18 year-olds who did not get their license right away after turning 17 still will be subject to night and passenger restrictions at age 18, and an 18 year-old seeking licensure would be subject to the full GDL requirements. It is possible that some teenagers in other states turn 18 before fulfilling all GDL requirements, but younger licensing ages than in New Jersey make it easier to qualify for a full license prior to 18. An evaluation of New Jersey's GDL system found substantial crash reductions at age 17, and smaller reductions at age 18 (Williams, Chaudhary, Tefft, & Tison, 2010).

In the other countries with GDL systems — Australia, Canada, and New Zealand — older novices are subject to GDL policies, and this is the case in all jurisdictions within Australia and Canada. In Canada, full GDL policies apply to novices of all ages. In New Zealand and in some Australian states, policies are modified for older novices, generally at about age 25. New Jersey modifies its policies for novices 21 and older, with a minimum learner requirement of 3 months (rather than 6) and no nighttime or passenger requirements.

When Canadian provinces were setting GDL rules, licensing agencies were not allowed to discriminate on the basis of age, and it also was recognized that there was an increasing number of older people seeking licensure in Canada (Mayhew & Simpson, 1990). The scientific basis for the policy is that novices of all ages have elevated crash risk because of their inexperience, and GDL is designed to deal with driver inexperience, not age per se (Mayhew & Simpson, 1990). The crash risk of older novices is not as high as that of young novices, but it is higher than that of same-age experienced drivers (Maycock, Lockwood, & Lester, 1991; Mayhew & Simpson, 1990; McCartt, Mayhew, Braitman, Ferguson, & Simpson, 2009).

The issue of whether GDL requirements should be applied to novice drivers 18 and older in the United States is receiving increased attention currently. In a recent survey of state initiatives conducted by the Governors Highway Safety Association (2012), it was indicated that "many states are wrestling with whether it makes more sense to strengthen their existing GDL provisions which apply only to new drivers younger than 18 or try to increase GDL requirements so that they include older teens" (p. 16). Increased interest in applying GDL to older beginners has been spurred by the belief that the population of older novices is growing, in part because today's youth can connect electronically and thus have less interest in early licensing (Sivak & Schoettle, 2012). Some research has reported increases in per capita fatal crash rates at ages 18 and 19 associated with strong GDL programs (Males, 2007; Masten, Foss, & Marshall, 2011). Masten et al. (2011) speculated that the higher crash risk may be because teenagers are delaying licensure to avoid GDL restrictions.

However, these are not settled issues. Other research found that stronger GDL programs did not significantly affect the fatal crash rates for 18–19 year-olds (McCartt et al., 2010), but were associated with lower collision claim rates for older teenagers (Trempe, 2009). There also are studies reporting an association between GDL and reductions in fatal crashes at age 18 and older (Morrisey & Grabowski, 2010). Even prior to GDL, some teenagers waited to obtain a license (Williams, Lund, & Preusser, 1985), and national licensure data are inadequate for tracking changes in delay patterns (Foss, 2013; Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2006). Recent surveys have indicated that economic costs and other practical considerations, not avoidance of GDL or ability to connect with friends electronically, are the main reasons reported for delaying licensure (Williams, 2011; Williams & Tefft, 2013). Regardless of the reasons, there is considerable license delay in the United States currently. In a national probability survey of 18–20 year-olds conducted in June–July 2012, 28% had not obtained a learner's permit prior to their 18th birthday (Williams & Tefft, 2013).

1.3 License plate decals

A third policy unique to New Jersey is the requirement that went into effect in May 2010 that drivers in the GDL system must affix red reflective decals identifying their license status to front and rear license plates (2009 NJ Laws, Ch. 37, amending NJ Stat. Ann., sec. 39:3–13). The primary purpose is to make it easier for police to enforce driving restrictions. Although the law doesn't specifically state that the decal applies only to provisional license holders younger than 21, that was the intent and that is how the New Jersey authorities are interpreting it. License plate identifier requirements exist in other jurisdictions, including Australia and some Canadian provinces. New Jersey is the only U.S. state to have this policy, although other states have considered it.

The policy has been highly controversial in New Jersey, and existing evidence for its effects is inconsistent. A survey undertaken soon after the law was enacted found that a large majority of teenagers and parents disapproved of it, and observations at schools indicated that compliance generally was low (McCartt, Oesch, Williams, & Powell, 2013). Disapproval was primarily related to concerns about the identification and potential targeting of teenage drivers. Teenagers' reported compliance with teenage driving restrictions was either lower or essentially unchanged after the decal requirement was implemented, compared with shortly before. However, another study found that a 9% reduction in crashes of teenagers with probationary licenses was associated with the law in its first year (Curry, Pfeiffer, Localio, & Durbin, 2013).

1.4 Objectives of the current study

In the present survey, views of 17–19 year-olds in New Jersey were obtained on all three of these policies. Because other states are examining the issue of applying GDL to older novices, the views of those subject to this policy are of interest and have not been obtained before. The survey also provided the opportunity to ask about compliance with New Jersey's night and passenger restrictions for probationary license holders. It has been speculated that older novices may be less likely than younger novices to comply with night and passenger restrictions, and the survey allowed a check on that possibility. Similarly, the views of New Jersey teenagers about the long-standing 17-year-old licensing age are unknown. The present survey also made it possible to see if views and practices regarding decals have changed now that the law has been in effect for a longer period of time.

2. Methods

Telephone interviews and online surveys with New Jersey residents ages 17–19 were conducted between mid-December 2012 and late-January 2013 by Opinion America Group, LLC (Cedar Knolls, NJ), a professional survey organization. This time of the year facilitated reaching college students who were at home for the semester break.

A total of 736 surveys were completed via telephone between December 17 and January 26. A random targeted sample of New Jersey households that had high probability of having a teenager was obtained from a provider of market research samples. The starting random pool of household telephone numbers was 27,642, and included both landline and cellphone numbers. From this initial sample, 8295 were reached. Quotas were used to ensure approximately equal samples of 17, 18, and 19 year-olds and approximately equal numbers of females and males within each age group. The cooperation rate (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011) was 8.9%, resulting in 736 respondents. Those not participating included 5103 who agreed to participate but did not meet the age or New Jersey residence criteria or were excluded because of the age and gender quotas, and 2456 who declined to participate or began but did not finish the survey. Once potential respondents who met all the study criteria were identified and began the survey, full surveys were completed by 97%.

Calls were placed at all times of the day and days of the week, with emphasis on late afternoons and early evenings. Numbers that were not answered initially were dialed up to 20 times, until the number was answered, before the numbers were abandoned.

In order to reach the sample size goal of 1000 and to obtain a more diverse sample of teenagers, an online survey was conducted January 14–24, 2013, yielding 277 completed online surveys of 17–19 year-olds residing in New Jersey. The panel, SurveySavvy, is a broad-based representative community panel of more than 3.5 million individuals nationwide, balanced to represent the online population. Email invitations were sent to 18,900 potentially eligible respondents thought to reside in New Jersey and to be ages 17, 18, or 19. There were 441 individuals who responded by logging in and visiting the web survey site. Of this group, 277 were eligible and completed the survey, 148 did not meet the age or New Jersey residence criteria, and 16 started the survey and were deemed eligible, but did not finish it. The estimated cooperation rate (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011) for the online sample was 1.5%. The online survey was halted once the overall target sample size of 1000 was reached, which depressed the cooperation rate.

The total sample size was 1013. Initial examination of the data indicated an imbalance in race/ethnicity groupings in the combined sample of respondents, compared with their representation in New Jersey's 17–19-year-old population in 2011, based on U.S. Census Bureau data. Therefore, the data were weighted to match the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) distributions on race/ethnicity. All analyses were based on the weighted sample.

Standard chi square tests were used to establish the statistical significance of any differences ($p < 0.05$).

3. Results

Characteristics of the unweighted and weighted survey samples are provided in Table 1. Based on the weighted sample, most survey respondents were in high school (41%) or in college (52%), and most were living with their parents (70%) or at college (28%) in medium (46%) or small (33%) towns. About half described themselves as white, and about three-quarters said at least one of their parents had education past high school. Forty-four percent of survey respondents had a full driver's license, 40% held a probationary license, 9% had a learner's permit, and 7% had not begun the licensing process.

License status in the three age groups is presented in Table 2. About one-quarter of 17 year-olds had a learner's permit or had not begun the licensing process; 74% were in the probationary stage. The majority of 18 and 19 year-olds had a full license, but there was noticeable representation of probationary license holders at these ages also.

3.1 Overview of findings

Responses of the 1013 teenagers to questions about New Jersey licensing policies are summarized in Table 3. It is apparent that the minimum licensing age of 17 and the application of GDL to novices younger than 21 have high approval ratings, and that the decal requirement is rated unfavorably. More detailed results for each of these policies will be discussed in turn.

3.2 Licensing age

Overall, 84% approved of New Jersey's probationary licensing age of 17, and 14% disapproved (Table 3). Those who disapproved were asked what they thought the age should be. The majority (59%) said 16, but 30 respondents said 17, 18, 19, or 20. Thus 87% approved of New Jersey's licensing age policy or disapproved but thought the age should be 17 or older. There were no statistically significant differences in support of licensing at 17 or older by age, license status, gender, rural/urban residence, school status, or parent education. However, there were

Table 1
Characteristics of survey sample of New Jersey residents ages 17–19.

	Unweighted sample N = 1013	Weighted sample N = 1013	Weighted percent
Age			
17	339	324	32
18	338	355	35
19	336	334	33
Gender			
Male	505	512	51
Female	508	501	49
School status			
High school	426	417	41
College	525	530	52
Not in school	59	62	6
No response	3	4	<1
Residence			
With parents	691	705	70
At college	304	285	28
Moved away	16	21	2
No response	2	2	<1
Urban/rural residence			
Country	47	49	5
Small town	350	331	33
Medium size town	482	470	46
Small city	92	116	11
Large city	38	43	4
No Response	4	4	<1
Race/ethnicity			
White	741	527	52
African-American	86	159	16
Asian	65	72	7
Hispanic/Latino	65	219	22
Other	41	22	2
No response	15	15	2
License status			
Not started	45	66	7
Learner	78	91	9
Probationary	403	409	40
Full	487	447	44
Highest education of either parent			
High school or less	165	205	20
Some college/college degree	478	474	47
Graduate work	343	311	31
No response	27	23	2

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

differences by residence and race/ethnicity, as displayed in Table 4. The small group of respondents who had moved away from home were much less approving of licensing at 17 or older than those who lived at home or were living at college. Asians, African Americans, and "other" groups were more approving than whites or Hispanics/Latinos.

3.3 GDL for older novices

Overall, 77% approved and 20% disapproved of New Jersey's policy of applying GDL requirements (learner's permit, night and passenger restrictions) to all beginners younger than 21 (Table 3). Those not approving were asked if they thought these rules should apply only to beginners ages 16 and 17, thought they should not apply to any beginners, or disapproved for some other reason. Sixty-eight percent said

Table 2
Percent license status among New Jersey teenagers by age.

License status	Age 17 (weighted N = 324)	Age 18 (weighted N = 355)	Age 19 (weighted N = 334)
Not started	8	7	5
Learner	18	6	3
Probationary	74	27	21
Full	0	60	70

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3
Views of New Jersey licensing policies among teenagers ages 17–19 (percent).

	Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Somewhat disapprove	Strongly disapprove	No opinion
In New Jersey you can get a learner's permit at age 16, a probationary license at 17 that has restrictions on high-risk driving, and a full license at 18. What is your view of New Jersey's age of 17 for obtaining a probationary license?	37	47	10	4	2
New Jersey requires beginners younger than 21 to hold a learner permit for 6 months, and a probationary license with night and passenger restrictions. What is your view of this policy?	29	48	15	6	2
New Jersey requires probationary license holders and those with learner's permits to display detachable red decals on the front and rear license plates of vehicles they drive. What is your view of this requirement for probationary license holders?	9	14	17	58	2

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

they thought the rules should apply only to 16- and 17-year-old beginners, 23% thought they should not apply to any beginners, 8% offered a different opinion, and 1% had no opinion. The “other” comments included themes of inconvenience, unfairness, annoyance, or concerns that the rules were too strict, represented too much government, or also should apply to seniors.

No statistically significant differences in approval rates for applying GDL to novices younger than 21 were found for license status, age, rural/urban residency, school status, type of residence, parent education, or race/ethnicity. Females were more likely to approve than males (80% vs. 75%, $\chi^2 = 3.8$, $p < 0.05$).

It was explained to all respondents that in some other countries, special licensing rules apply to beginning drivers of all ages. They then were asked which of the three statements they agreed with. Fifty-nine percent agreed that this policy should be considered in New Jersey, 15% said the policy should be considered but not in New Jersey, 24% thought the policy should not be considered anywhere, and 2% had no opinion.

To check on whether compliance with night and passenger restrictions differed by age, probationary license holders ages 17, 18, and 19, all subject to the restrictions, were asked if they had driven past 11 p.m. in the past month, and if so how many times, and if and how often they had driven with more than one passenger in the car other than a family member. To have sufficient numbers for analysis, 18 and 19 year-olds were combined. Probationary license holders ages 18 and 19 were slightly more likely to report any driving after 11 p.m. in the past month than were 17 year-olds (34% vs. 29%, $\chi^2 = 1.3$, $p = 0.25$). However, older probationary license holders who had violated the nighttime restriction were more likely than 17-year-old violators to say they had driven past 11 p.m. multiple times. For example, 79% of 18–19 year-olds said they had done so three times or more in the past month compared with 44% of 17-year-olds ($\chi^2 = 16.2$, $p < 0.001$); 49% of the older teenagers compared to 21% of the younger ones who said they had done so five times or more ($\chi^2 = 11.5$, $p < 0.001$). This pattern was not seen for passenger restrictions. There was no age difference in admission of driving with more than one passenger in the past month (46% for 18–19 year-olds, 43% for 17 year-olds); 17 year-olds who had violated the passenger restriction were slightly more likely than older

violators to say they did this 3 or more times (56% vs. 47%, $\chi^2 = 1.6$, $p = 0.20$).

Decals

The decal requirement was not well liked, with 75% of survey respondents against it and 6 in 10 strongly disapproving (Table 3). There was, however, considerable variation in opinions about the law by license status and demographics. There were no significant differences by gender, urban/rural residency, school status, or type of residence, but there were differences, often strong, by license status, age, parent education, and race/ethnicity.

As indicated in Table 5, approval rates for decals were highest among those who had not yet started licensing, followed by learners, and lowest for probationary and full license holders. Approval of the decal requirement was higher among 18 year-olds, higher among those whose parents had less formal education, and higher in all non-white race/ethnicity groups, particularly African Americans.

Forty-two percent of probationary license holders said they always used decals, 11% said they sometimes used them, 9% rarely did, and 38% did not have decals and thus never used them.

4. Discussion

In past surveys of teenagers or parents of teenagers, there has been a notable tendency for respondents to support policies that exist in their own state (Williams, 2011; Williams et al., 1996). In the present study, this was the case for licensing age and application of GDL to older novices, but not for decals.

Table 5
Percentage of teenagers ages 17–19 who approve of decals by license status and demographic characteristics.

Characteristics of teenagers	Percent
License status	
Not started	45
Learner	33
Probationary	22
Full	19
	$\chi^2 = 30.9$, $p < 0.001$
Age	
17	20
18	28
19	20
	$\chi^2 = 6.7$, $p < 0.05$
Parent education	
High school	35
College	23
Graduate school	16
	$\chi^2 = 27.0$, $p < 0.001$
Race/ethnicity	
White	13
African American	49
Asian	26
Hispanic/Latino	28
Other	37
	$\chi^2 = 98.6$, $p < 0.001$

Table 4
Percentage of teenagers ages 17–19 who support license at 17 or older by license status and demographic characteristics.

Characteristics of teenagers	Percent
Residence	
With parents	88
At college	87
Moved away	67
	$\chi^2 = 7.89$, $p < .05$
Race/ethnicity	
White	85
African American	93
Asian	92
Hispanic/Latino	86
Other	91
	$\chi^2 = 9.67$, $p < 0.05$

New Jersey's licensing age of 17, which has been in place for many decades, received high endorsement. The lowest approval rating (67%) came from the very small group of teenagers who had moved away from home. Note that respondents were asked for their views about New Jersey's policy, not what they thought the licensing age should be, which likely would have produced more choosing 16. The results are properly interpreted as providing support for New Jersey's licensing age policy, and are not necessarily indicative of the preferred licensing age of respondents.

The safety benefits of higher licensing ages are well documented, but there have been few changes since minimum license ages originally were established. In 2006–07, several U.S. states (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, and Illinois) introduced legislation to increase the age to 17 or 18, but these efforts failed. The most probable path for increasing the minimum age is extending the minimum holding period for the learner's permit, which currently is 6 months in most states. Extending the learner period to 1 year without changing the minimum age for obtaining a learner's permit would increase the minimum licensing age in 23 states and would make it to 17 in eight.

New Jersey's policy of applying GDL to all novices younger than 21 also was well received. As in the case of licensing age, the results reflect support for what New Jersey requires, which would not necessarily be the respondent's personal preference. The majority of respondents also thought New Jersey should consider GDL for beginners of all ages.

Consideration of applying GDL to all novices younger than 21 in other states can be informed by the size of the population of older novices, their likely compliance with GDL rules, and the effects on crashes. New Jersey may not be typical of other states in this regard. In the current survey of New Jersey teenagers, few 18 and 19 year-olds had not started the licensing process. However, national surveys indicate that older novices are not a small group. In a survey of 15–18 year-olds, 22% of 18 year-olds had not started licensing yet (Williams, 2011), and in a survey of 18–20 year-olds, 28% had not obtained a learner's permit by age 18 (Williams & Tefft, 2013). It is unknown to what extent applying GDL to all novices younger than 21 has resulted in the current licensure patterns in New Jersey. If there is any credence to the hypothesis that teenagers in other states are delaying licensure until age 18 or older to avoid GDL, it is possible that extending GDL to older teenagers in these states may result in teenagers getting their licenses earlier than they would have, with unknown safety consequences.

In terms of older drivers complying with GDL restrictions, the self-reported data from the present study did not find an issue with passenger restrictions, as older probationary teenagers were slightly less likely than younger teenagers to be carrying more passengers than the law allows. As teenagers grow older, they may be less likely to travel in groups, particularly as more of their friends become licensed. Living at college, more typical of older teenagers, also likely affects the amount and type of driving in ways that may relate to law compliance. The data were too sparse or otherwise unfit to explore these possible influences.

There did appear to be a higher violation rate of the nighttime restriction among 18–19-year-old drivers compared with 17 year-olds, although there is a nighttime exemption for employment, and the extent to which this affected driving beyond 11 p.m. for drivers of different ages could not be adequately checked. It is notable however, that an evaluation of New Jersey's GDL system found positive effects among 18 year-olds for all crashes, and for driving during restricted hours and with passengers, although the passenger effect was not statistically significant (Williams et al., 2010). The inference is that there had to be sufficient compliance with the restrictions for these positive effects to have occurred.

In countries that apply GDL to older novices, there also have been reports of positive effects on crashes at older ages. Evaluations in five Canadian provinces found that crash reductions associated with GDL programs extended to novices of all ages (Mayhew, Simpson, & Singhai, 2005). A recent study in Victoria, Australia, where a

probationary license cannot be obtained until age 18, found substantial reductions in injury crashes in the first year of probationary driving among 18–20 year-olds after the rules were toughened (Healy, Catchpole, & Harrison, 2012).

There are several options for applying GDL to older novices: full requirements for all beginners (extended learner phase and restrictions on high-risk driving when first licensed; full requirements for older beginners with an age cutoff; and partial requirements (e.g., learner stage only) for older beginners). GDL programs also can require beginners who start the licensing process prior to age 18 to complete all the stages, rather than automatically graduating to full licensure upon turning 18. There is some movement in these directions. Connecticut recently adopted a 3-month required learner holding period for beginners 18 or older, after more than 100 years in which no training period was necessary for adults to obtain a license, and the state expects this to apply to more than 30,000 people per year (Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles, 2012). In California, a bill has been introduced to extend the state's GDL system to new drivers up to age 20.

When surveyed about a year after the decal requirement was implemented in 2010, 90% of teenagers with probationary licenses disapproved of it (McCartt et al., 2013). The decal requirement still is disliked by a large majority of teenagers, particularly those who are now or have been under the requirement. In the present survey, 22% of those with probationary licenses approved of the requirement. Despite the overall dislike, there is a substantial range of opinion about decals, for example, 19% of full license holders approving of the requirement compared with 45% of those who had not started licensing; 35% of those with parents with high school education or less approving compared with 16% of parents with graduate school training; and 13% of whites in favor compared with at least double that in all of the non-white groups, including 49% among African Americans. These findings have not been noted previously, and their interpretation is unclear. Nevertheless, the majority of all the sample groups disapproved of the decals. In the first year the decal law was in effect, citations for GDL and other violations increased, suggesting that the law was having its intended effect of making it easier to enforce teenage driving laws. Separately, there were 1869 citations for not using decals (McCartt et al., 2013).

Compliance with the decal requirement is a continuing issue. In the prior study of the decal requirement, 73% of probationary license holders said they had decals and, of this group, 51% said they always used them (McCartt et al., 2013). In the present study, 62% of probationary license holders said they had decals and 67% of decal owners said they always used them. However, the requirement may have an effect on both users and non-users. Teenagers displaying decals can be expected to be more cautious about violating GDL requirements; teenagers not using decals also may drive more cautiously to avoid being stopped because there is a \$100 fine for nonuse. The amount of enforcement and the extent of publicity about the enforcement are likely to be key factors in determining the longer-term effect of the decal requirement on teenage driving behavior, and further study is warranted.

In terms of study limitations, it is a challenge to survey older teenage populations, including those who are in college or have moved away from home, and the sample may not be fully representative of New Jersey 17–19 year-olds. The survey was conducted during a period when many college students would be home on semester break. The timing of the survey, the combination of telephone and online responses, and correction of imbalances through weighting were meant to deal with sampling issues. The study also had a modest response rates typical of surveys targeting teens (e.g., McCartt et al., 2013), although a large proportion of those in the non-respondent groups agreed to participate but did not meet study criteria. Survey respondents differed from those in national surveys in that most 17–19 year-olds had started the licensing process, and whether this is associated with New Jersey's licensing age, lesser incentive to delay, or some other factors including sampling issues is not known.

In conclusion, the existence of three unique licensing policies in New Jersey provides an opportunity for other states to see how well these policies are accepted by those directly affected by them. The policies regarding licensing age and GDL for older drivers are well supported by teenagers. The dislike of decals evident in New Jersey and the low levels of compliance would be an obstacle to its adoption elsewhere. However, the requirement may be effective in the ultimate goal of reducing teenage crashes, and determining its crash effects beyond the first year of the law would be instructive to other states.

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