

Traffic Safety Facts

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Graduated Driver Licensing in Georgia: The Impact of the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA)

Georgia's Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) was enacted in July 1997 and strengthened in 2001. In addition to introducing the concept of graduated driver licensing (GDL) for 16-year-old drivers, TADRA imposed additional restrictions on drivers up to age 18. These provisions included "zero tolerance" for Driving Under the Influence (DUI) involving underage drivers and automatic license revocation for excessive speeding and other dangerous driving behaviors.

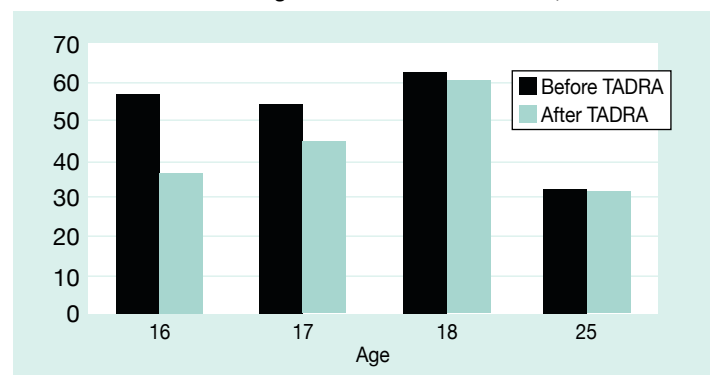
To evaluate TADRA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration established a cooperative agreement with Emory University. The evaluation compared fatal crash data during the five and a half years before the enactment of TADRA to fatal crash data during the five and a half years after enactment. To control for regional and historical effects, TADRA's impact in Georgia was compared to adjoining States that did not enact GDL laws during the same period.

Driver Fatal Crash Rates

During the 5½ years before Georgia enacted TADRA, 317 16-year-old drivers in Georgia were involved in fatal crashes, a rate of 57 fatal crashes per 100,000 16-year-old drivers. During the first 5½ years following enactment of TADRA, 230 16-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes, a rate of 36.1 per 100,000 16-year-old drivers. This represents a 36.8-percent decrease in the rate of fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers. Enactment of TADRA was also associated with a significant decrease in the rate of fatal crashes involving 17-year-old drivers. Following enactment, the driver fatal crash rate per 100,000 17-year-old drivers decreased 19.1 percent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Fatal Crash Rates in Georgia Before and After TADRA, 1992-2002

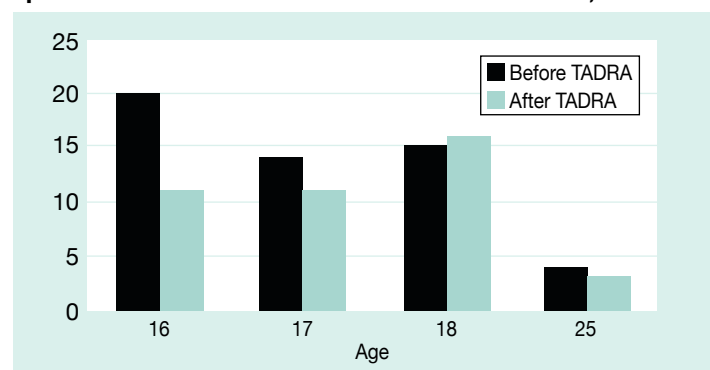


Speed-Related Fatal Crash Rates

The behavior most commonly implicated in fatal crashes of young Georgia drivers is driving at unsafe and/or illegal speeds. Following enactment of TADRA, the rate of speed-related fatal crashes among Georgia 16-year-old drivers declined by 49 percent (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

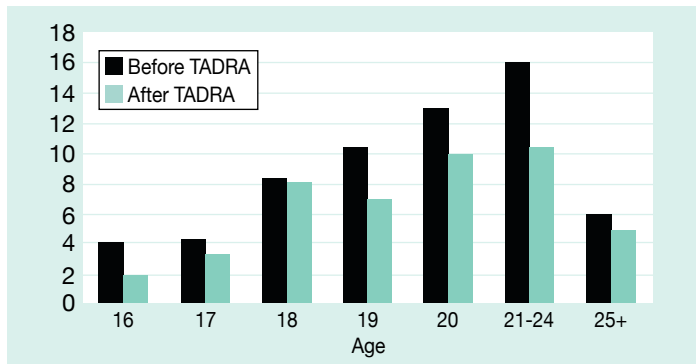
Speed-Related Fatal Crash Rates Before and After TADRA, 1992-2002



Alcohol-Involved Fatal Crash Rates

In Georgia, fatal crashes involving alcohol-involved drivers under 18 are uncommon, although once drivers reach the age of 18, alcohol-involved fatal crash rates climb dramatically, peaking between 21 and 24 years old. However, during the first 5½ years after Georgia enacted TADRA, fatal alcohol-involved crashes declined by 62.1 percent for 16-year-old Georgia drivers, by 30 percent for 17-year-old drivers, and by 4.4 percent for 18-year-old drivers (see Figure 3).

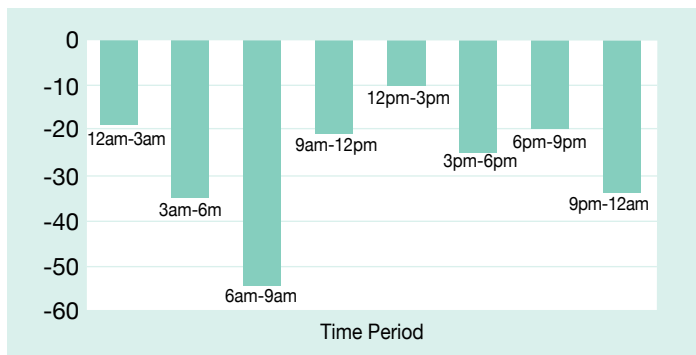
Figure 3
Alcohol-Involved Fatal Crash Rates in Georgia Before and After TADRA, 1992-2002



Fatal Crashes by Time of Day

TADRA also sharply restricted late-night driving by 16-year-old drivers. After enactment of TADRA, substantial decreases in 16-year-old driver fatal crash rates were noted in every time interval of the 24-hour cycle (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
Percent Change in Fatal Crash Rates in Georgia Among 16-Year-Old Drivers, 1992-2002



Georgia Compared to Surrounding States

To determine if reductions in driver fatal crash rates observed in Georgia after enactment of TADRA were due to regional or historical effects rather than the law itself, age-specific pre- and post-enactment rates of driver fatal crashes in Georgia were compared to those of three bordering States

(South Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama) that did not enact similar legislation during the same time period. Prior to the enactment of TADRA, the rate of driver fatal crashes among 16-year-old Georgia drivers was similar to that of 16-year-old drivers in the three comparison States. Following enactment of TADRA, the rate of fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers in Georgia was 34-percent lower than in Tennessee, 32-percent lower than in Alabama, and 18-percent lower than in South Carolina.

Conclusions

Before enactment of TADRA, the rate of fatal crashes involving 16-year-old Georgia drivers was very high. In the 5½ years following enactment of TADRA, the fatal crash rate among 16-year-old Georgia drivers declined significantly, but it was still 28.6-percent higher than the U.S. average for 16-year-old drivers. Nevertheless, TADRA appears to have had a substantial impact on highway safety in Georgia. The impact of TADRA on 16-year-old fatal crash rates was substantially greater than the effects of GDL enactment reported from other States where the impact of this law has been evaluated (i.e., Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Utah). TADRA's impact may have been greater because it included additional provisions aimed at deterring certain high-risk behaviors, most notably DUI and excessive speeding. TADRA also differs from most State GDL laws because it imposes a highly meaningful and inescapable sanction—automatic license revocation—on those who violate its provisions.

How to Order

To order *Evaluation of Georgia's Teenage and Adult Responsibility Act* (42 pages plus appendices), prepared by Emory University, write to the Office of Behavioral Safety Research, NHTSA, NTI-130, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590, fax 202-366-7096, or download from www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Paul J. Tremont, Ph.D., was the Project Officer for this Cooperative Agreement.



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