

SAFER JOURNEYS FACT SHEET



RAISING THE DRIVING AGE

- Raising the driving age is part of a package of measures aimed at improving the safety of young drivers. These actions are designed to work in conjunction, to reduce the risks associated with young peoples' entry into the driving system.
- Currently we have one of the lowest driving ages in the OECD. Across the OECD, the age at which most countries allow someone to learn to drive is 17 years.
- It is estimated that raising the driving age to 16 will save at least 4 lives and prevent 25 serious injuries and 148 minor injuries each year. This equates to an annual social cost saving of around \$39 million.
- Cost benefit analysis indicates that raising the driving age to 16 has a potential benefit to cost ratio of 21:1.
- International research indicates that, particularly before the age of 18, the lower the age a person starts driving solo, the higher the crash risk. This risk is greatest at age 15.
- International best practice recommends an older minimum age to compensate for the late maturity of young driver cognitive abilities, particularly in terms of recognising hazards or risks and responding appropriately.
- In New Zealand the number of crashes per driver increases substantially from the learner to the restricted phase (ie when people start driving solo). For 15.5 to 16.5 year olds, the increase in crashes from the learner to the restricted phase is about 30 percent greater than the increase for 16.5 to 17.5 year olds, and about 90 percent greater than for 17.5 to 18.5 year olds.
- Research on the travel behaviour of young drivers has found that the benefits of raising the minimum driving age are likely to outweigh costs from decreased mobility. This is because very few essential trips appeared to rely on 15 year olds driving.
- Consultation on the Safer Journeys discussion document found strong support for raising the driver age. During consultation, the public had the option of ranking the initiatives they preferred. Combined together, raising the driving age to 16 and raising the driving age to 17 would be the highest ranked initiative.

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