

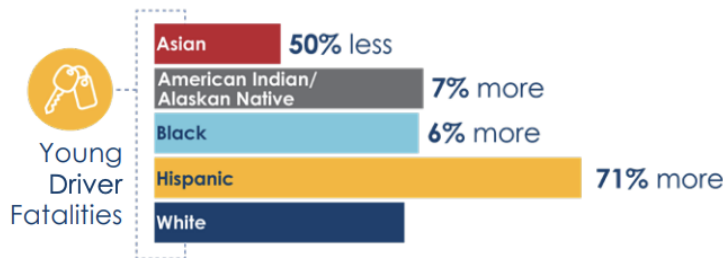
The Benefits of Hands-On Training for Newly Licensed and Teen Drivers, with a Focus on Disadvantaged Youth in Los Angeles County: The Ford Driving Skills for Life Program

Overview

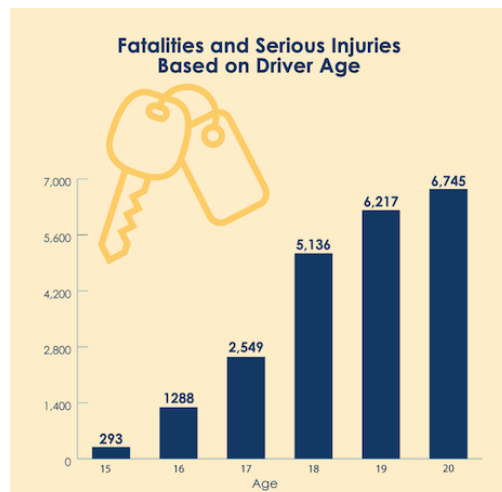
Car crashes remain the leading cause of death for young drivers (15-20 years old) in the United States. Approximately 3,000 young drivers die annually in such crashes, according to the most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In Los Angeles County, nearly 670 young drivers were killed or seriously injured in traffic crashes in 2021¹. Young driver safety is a critical concern in the county, especially among disadvantaged youth who face unique challenges. In households with an income of less than \$50,000, young driver fatality rates increased by 33%².

Disparities in Young Driver Crash Fatalities

Data reveal evident disparities in crash fatalities among young drivers from different racial groups. Young drivers from racial minority backgrounds, particularly Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black youth, are more likely to be involved in fatal crashes compared to their white counterparts³.



Age disparities in road safety also contribute to the overall picture of disproportionate impacts on young drivers. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), drivers aged 16-19 have the highest crash rates per mile driven. In California, fatalities and serious injuries increased significantly for drivers aged 18-20 in 2021⁴. This data highlights the need for targeted educational interventions that address the unique challenges faced by newly licensed and young drivers.



Disadvantaged Youth

Disadvantaged youth, often from lower-income communities, face unique challenges when it comes to driving safety. These challenges can include:

- **Access to Driver's Education:** Young drivers from disadvantaged backgrounds may have limited access to driver's education programs, which are essential for learning safe driving skills. Lack of access to quality education can lead to a higher likelihood of crashes.
- **Risky Behaviors:** Young drivers, particularly those without proper education, are more prone to risky driving behaviors such as texting while driving, speeding, and not wearing seat belts, increasing their crash risk.
- **Economic Factors:** The financial burden of car ownership, including insurance costs and maintenance, can be a barrier for disadvantaged youth. This may lead to delayed or inadequate maintenance, increasing the risk of crashes.

Crashes involving young drivers can have devastating consequences for families and communities already experiencing disparities.

Safe Driving Solution – Ford Driving Skills for Life Program

A signature program of the Ford Motor Company Fund, [Ford Driving Skills for Life](#) (DSFL) teaches newly licensed and young drivers the necessary skills for safe driving beyond what they learn in standard driver education programs. Now in its 19th year, Ford Driving Skills for Life has invested more than \$60 million to provide free, advanced driver education to more than 1.25 million people worldwide. Ford DSFL aims to reach a broad audience, including disadvantaged youth, to make driver education more accessible.

Ford Driving Skills for Life captures young driver interest with hands-on driver training clinics that pair newly licensed drivers with professional instructors, focusing on the issues and obstacles drivers face that cause crashes, including:

- Hazard Recognition
- Vehicle Handling
- Speed Management
- Space Management
- Distracted and Impaired Driving

Hands-on training for newly licensed and teen drivers offers a range of benefits that can significantly improve their driving skills and safety on the road, including improved confidence behind the wheel and better vehicle control which reduces the likelihood of crashes and injuries.



(Source: [Strategic Highway Safety Plan Fact Sheet](#))

Awards and Honors

- *Governors Highway Safety Association: Kathryn J.R. Swanson Public Service Award*
- *Governors Highway Safety Association Highway Safety Award*
- *Michigan Traffic Safety Summit: Outstanding Traffic Safety Achievement Award*

Conclusion

Hands-on training programs like Ford DSFL play a crucial role in enhancing the safety and skills of newly licensed and teen drivers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By equipping them with essential driving knowledge and experience, these programs help reduce the risks associated with inexperienced driving and promote safer roads for everyone.

¹ Source: *Strategic Highway Safety Plan Crash Data Dashboard*

^{2,3,4} Source: [Strategic Highway Safety Plan Fact Sheet](#)