

# Youth engagement in road safety



Youth and young adults are killed in road crashes at a higher rate than any other age group under 75 years old. With road crashes being the third-leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24 years old, this age demographic has the highest rate of involvement in fatal collisions per 100,000 licensed drivers.

National Teen Driver Safety Week (NTDSW) is a youth-led awareness week designed to build public awareness of teen driver safety issues and encourage young people to spearhead solutions that will improve road safety for all. Parachute will run NTDSW from October 15 to October 21, 2023, focusing on youth as changemakers.

Join the conversation on social media, using the hashtags **#OurFutureRoads** and **#NTDSW2023**.

## Youth engagement

Meaningful youth engagement leads to healthier, safer youth as young people are at an increased risk of injury and death on our roads. See our [key messages on why youth are at greater risk for road crashes](#) for more information. By engaging in road safety, young people can further develop skills such as leadership and decision-making, as well as learn how to positively impact their communities.

Here are some ways to engage young people in road safety issues:

- **Shifting the conversation:** Young people have the ability to be expert decision-makers when it comes to making road safety changes. Rather than labelling young people as victims or as troublemakers, shift the conversation to create empowered youth who can make real change in their communities.
- **Connecting in comfortable and familiar ways:** Road safety information and programming should be engaging, enjoyable and accessible in ways that young people are already comfortable and familiar with. This includes using popular formats such as videos, infographics and in-person presentations, as well as using social media platforms most popular with young people, including TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.

- **Involve youth in program development and advocacy:** Young people are significant stakeholders who have the power to influence road safety while also advocating for big changes in their communities to make roads safer for everyone. Youth can get involved by joining youth councils and ambassador programs, participating in youth safety town halls and directing youth-led safety events and program development.
- **Harm reduction lens:** Some young people use alcohol, cannabis or other drugs. By destigmatizing this use and focusing on providing strategies to reduce risk and harm while on the road, young people who choose to use alcohol and other substances can do so without putting their own lives or the lives of others at risk.
- **Consider equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility:** Young people are each uniquely affected by road safety issues and behaviours. They have differing priorities, abilities, experiences and levels of comfort with participating. Some youth face inequities due to the systemic disadvantages they experience due to race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion and more, with intersecting identities resulting in further discrimination or disadvantages on our road systems. These inequities result in young people having different needs when it comes to road safety. Having diverse young people become leaders in road safety can make sure that their needs are being met.

Learn more about the importance of youth engagement by visiting Parachute's [For Young Drivers, By Young Drivers program page](#).

## Youth advocacy

It's important that young people understand the power they hold to shape road safety. When youth advocate for young driver safety, it shifts the culture around driving behaviour, proving that being a responsible driver, and advocating for others to do so, is cool and empowering. Some road safety concerns that young people have, and can advocate for, include:

- **Infrastructure changes:** This can include advocating for better biking infrastructure, speed bumps or speed cameras, pedestrian-friendly crossings and more, depending on their neighbourhoods and specific needs.
- **Lack of law enforcement presence and surveillance:** The presence of law enforcement can motivate safe driving behaviour. Losing a licence or access to a vehicle requires young people to rely on other modes of transportation, which are often less accessible and convenient.
- **Inaccessibility of driver education:** Some young people may not know about the benefits of driver education and, even when they do, it is often inaccessible because of cost and limited access to registered driving instructors and schools.
- **The need for improved transportation options:** Young people have expressed

that there are not enough affordable and accessible transportation options. Lack of options can impact driving behaviour, including engaging in impaired driving or being passengers with drivers who are impaired. Possible areas of improvement include making existing options cheaper and improving services in suburban or rural areas, such as more frequent and convenient public transportation to these areas and more affordable taxi and rideshare options.

There are many ways for young people to get involved in advocating for safer roads:

- **Lead their own advocacy campaign:** By campaigning and developing their skills, young people have the power to have their own voices heard in spaces where they traditionally might not be, while also representing the voices of other young people in their communities. Examples of campaign opportunities include letter writing, meeting with local representatives and encouraging other young people to engage.
- **Get involved in spreading road safety information:** Youth can help spread road safety information through social media, attending and organizing youth-led safety events and town halls, building targeted campaign messages, talking with peers and much more.
- **Make organizations aware of youth's needs:** Organizations in charge of road safety and infrastructure should know what is important and what works for young people. Youth should share what they would like to improve about road safety in their communities, any questions they may have about road safety and driving behaviour, what resources young people need to create safer roads and their preferred channels for receiving road safety information.

## Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach

Vision Zero is the philosophy that road fatalities and serious injuries are unacceptable and can and should be eliminated while providing safe, healthy and equitable mobility for all road users. Vision Zero takes a Safe System Approach which is an integrated and comprehensive process to improve the safety performance of the transportation system that makes allowance for errors and eliminates predictable and preventable serious injuries and fatalities.

As we shift the conversation and begin to recognize youth as powerful stakeholders in road safety, youth are encouraged to advocate for Vision Zero and Safe Systems Approaches to create safer roads for them, their families and communities. To learn more about Vision Zero, visit: [parachute.ca/visionzero](https://parachute.ca/visionzero)

**For more information about NTDSW visit: [parachute.ca/ntdsw](https://parachute.ca/ntdsw)**

**#OurFutureRoads #NTDSW2023**

For sources of statistics used, see [parachute.ca/NTDSW-stats](https://parachute.ca/NTDSW-stats)