



Today just over half of U.S. teens get their driver's license by age 18.

First Drive Delayed

If Jack Kerouac were writing today, he might title his book *Off the Road*. After six decades of growth in driving, America's love affair with the automobile has hit a ditch. More teens and young adults are waiting to get their first driver's license—or opting not to get one at all. In 2009 people ages 16 to 34 drove 23 percent fewer miles than in 2001. Some say they're too busy to get a license. Others cite cars' cost and hassle or the benefits of biking, walking, and taking mass transit.

A 2013 study by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute found vehicle registration down 6 percent since 2008, when the recession hit. But the decline may be about more than economics. Online and mobile technologies—which fuel telework, e-commerce, and ride sharing—are also factors, says a study by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group. “In 21st-century America, cars aren't freedom machines anymore,” says Cotten Seiler, author of *Republic of Drivers*. “They're just a way to get around.” Of course, since younger drivers average more auto accidents, fewer of them could mean safer roads. —Jeremy Berlin

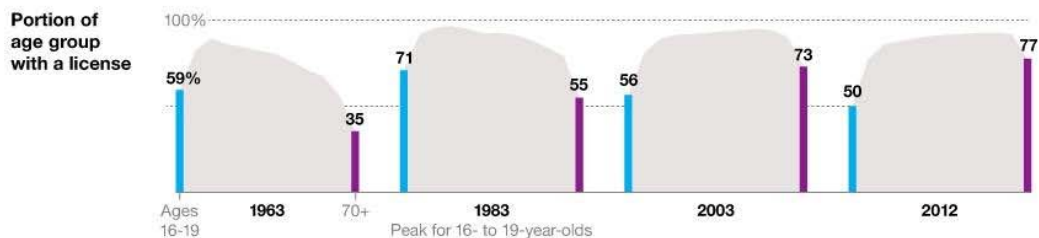


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