Young drivers and their cars: Safe and Sound or the Perfect Storm?
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**Why do this research?**  
Young drivers around the world are at increased risk of being in a crash, not just due to driver characteristics such as a desire to engage in risky behavior while on the road and not just due to driver inexperience, for example they may have just started driving independently, the riskiest time for a young driver. Their on-road safety also relates to the nature of the vehicle they are driving.

**What did we do?**  
379 young drivers in Colombia completed an online survey. We wanted to know characteristics of the drivers, such as age and sex, and how much time they spent driving on the road each week. We also wanted information regarding the car they drove during this time. We compared the car safety ratings through systems such as the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), the Latin NCAP, and the US NCAP (United States).

**What did we find?**  
Consistent with young drivers around the world, the young Colombian drivers reported a number of risky driving behaviours out on the road. We found that young drivers tended to drive in risky situations, such as at night and while carrying passengers, and we found that young drivers commonly reported driving in excess of the posted speed limit. Ideally, we have young drivers in 4 and 5 star rated cars as these cars have the most crash avoidance features (such as traction control) and crash protection features (for example, air bags). However, we found that half of the cars driven by these young drivers had a star rating of 0 to 2. This is problematic because we know that these young people are driving in situations that are very risky, and the cars they currently are driving are not going to protect them as well as cars with better safety features could.

**What does it mean?**  
Being a safe young driver and minimising risks for all young drivers isn't as simple as gaining driving experience and overcoming age-related risks such as sensation seeking. We also need young drivers to be driving the safest car they possibly can. Interventions which help the young driver drive the safest car, such as Mum and Dad sharing their vehicle, or Government, industry and other organisations fostering programs in which young drivers are driving safe cars, are a great solution to a persistent problem.