

Traffic Safety Facts 1995

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration



Overview



A Public Information Fact Sheet on Motor Vehicle and Traffic Safety Published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis

Introduction

Motor vehicle travel is the primary means of transportation in the United States, providing an unprecedented degree of mobility. Yet for all its advantages, deaths and injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for persons of every age from 5 to 27 years old (based on 1992 data). Traffic fatalities account for more than 90 percent of transportation-related fatalities. The mission of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is to reduce deaths, injuries, and economic losses from motor vehicle crashes.

REVISED:
Includes revised
1995
population
estimates.

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Fortunately, much progress is being made in reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on our nation's highways. In 1995, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel remained at 1.7, the same since 1993. The increase in safety belt use nationwide to 68 percent and a reduction in the rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes (to 41.3 percent in 1995 from 55.1 percent in 1985) were significant contributions to achieving this consistently low fatality rate. However, much remains to be done. The economic cost alone of motor vehicle crashes in 1994 was more than \$150.5 billion.

In 1995, 41,798 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 3,386,000 people were injured, and 4,409,000 crashes involved property damage only.

This overview fact sheet contains statistics on motor vehicle fatalities based on data from the Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS). FARS is a census of fatal crashes within the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (although Puerto Rico is not included in U.S. totals). Accident and injury statistics are based on data from the General Estimates System (GES). GES is a random sample of police-reported crashes, from which estimates of national totals for injury and property-damage-only crashes are derived.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Alcohol, Speed, Children, Young Drivers, Older Population, Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, Motorcycles, Large Trucks, School Buses, Occupant Protection, State Traffic Data, and State Alcohol Estimates*. Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatal Accident Reporting System and the General Estimates System*.

Summary

In 1995, 41,798 people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes—an increase of 2.7 percent from 1994.

The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 1995 was 1.7. The injury rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 1995 was 141. The fatality rate per 100,000 population was 15.91 in 1995, an increase of 1.7 percent over the 1994 rate of 15.64.

An average of 115 persons died each day in motor vehicle crashes in 1995—one every 13 minutes.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for every age from 5 through 27 years old.

Vehicle occupants accounted for almost 84 percent of traffic fatalities in 1995. The remaining 16 percent were pedestrians, pedalcyclists, and other nonoccupants.

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Table 1. Motor Vehicle Occupants and Nonoccupants Killed and Injured, 1985-1995

Year	Occupants							Nonoccupants				Total
	Passenger Cars	Light Trucks	Large Trucks	Motor-cycles	Buses	Other/Unknown	Total	Pedestrian	Pedalcyclist	Other	Total	
1985	23,212	6,689	977	4,564	57	544	36,043	6,808	890	84	7,782	43,825
1986	24,944	7,317	926	4,566	39	442	38,234	6,779	941	133	7,853	46,087
1987	25,132	8,058	852	4,036	51	436	38,565	6,745	948	132	7,825	46,390
1988	25,808	8,306	911	3,662	54	429	39,170	6,870	911	136	7,917	47,087
1989	25,063	8,551	858	3,141	50	424	38,087	6,556	832	107	7,495	45,582
1990	24,092	8,601	705	3,244	32	460	37,134	6,482	859	124	7,465	44,599
1991	22,385	8,391	661	2,806	31	466	34,740	5,801	843	124	6,768	41,508
1992	21,387	8,098	585	2,395	28	387	32,880	5,549	723	98	6,370	39,250
1993	21,566	8,511	605	2,449	18	425	33,574	5,649	816	111	6,576	40,150
1994	21,997	8,904	670	2,320	18	409	34,318	5,489	802	107	6,398	40,716
1995	22,358	9,539	644	2,221	32	480	35,274	5,585	830	109	6,524	41,798
1988	2,585,000	478,000	37,000	105,000	15,000	4,000	3,224,000	110,000	75,000	8,000	192,000	3,416,000
1989	2,431,000	511,000	43,000	83,000	15,000	5,000	3,088,000	112,000	73,000	11,000	196,000	3,284,000
1990	2,376,000	505,000	42,000	84,000	33,000	4,000	3,044,000	105,000	75,000	7,000	187,000	3,231,000
1991	2,235,000	563,000	28,000	80,000	21,000	4,000	2,931,000	88,000	67,000	11,000	166,000	3,097,000
1992	2,232,000	545,000	34,000	65,000	20,000	12,000	2,908,000	89,000	63,000	10,000	162,000	3,070,000
1993	2,257,000	590,000	32,000	58,000	17,000	4,000	2,958,000	93,000	65,000	9,000	166,000	3,125,000
1994	2,332,000	619,000	30,000	56,000	15,000	3,000	3,056,000	90,000	60,000	9,000	159,000	3,215,000
1995	2,416,000	709,000	30,000	55,000	18,000	4,000	3,232,000	84,000	61,000	9,000	154,000	3,386,000

Table 2. Persons Killed and Injured and Fatality and Injury Rates, 1985-1995

Killed									
Year	Fatalities	Resident Population (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Population	Licensed Drivers (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	Registered Motor Vehicles (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	Vehicle Miles Traveled (Billions)	Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT
1985	43,825	237,924	18.42	156,868	27.94	165,382	26.50	1,774	2.5
1986	46,087	240,133	19.19	159,487	28.90	168,137	27.41	1,835	2.5
1987	46,390	242,289	19.15	161,818	28.67	172,366	26.91	1,921	2.4
1988	47,087	244,499	19.26	162,853	28.91	176,752	26.64	2,026	2.3
1989	45,582	246,819	18.47	165,555	27.53	180,792	25.21	2,096	2.2
1990	44,599	249,403	17.88	167,015	26.70	183,934	24.25	2,144	2.1
1991	41,508	252,138	16.46	168,995	24.56	186,052	22.31	2,172	1.9
1992	39,250	255,039	15.39	173,125	22.67	184,864	21.23	2,240	1.8
1993	40,150	257,800	15.57	173,149	23.19	188,453	21.31	2,297	1.7
1994	40,716	260,350	15.64	175,403	23.21	192,174	21.19	2,360	1.7
1995	41,798	262,755	15.91	177,432	23.56	196,583	21.26	2,403	1.7

Injured									
Year	Injuries	Resident Population (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 Population	Licensed Drivers (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	Registered Motor Vehicles (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	Vehicle Miles Traveled (Billions)	Injury Rate per 100 Million VMT
1988	3,416,000	244,499	1,397	162,853	2,098	176,752	1,933	2,026	169
1989	3,284,000	246,819	1,331	165,555	1,984	180,792	1,816	2,096	157
1990	3,231,000	249,403	1,295	167,015	1,934	183,934	1,756	2,144	151
1991	3,097,000	252,138	1,228	168,995	1,833	186,052	1,665	2,172	143
1992	3,070,000	255,039	1,204	173,125	1,773	184,864	1,660	2,240	137
1993	3,125,000	257,800	1,212	173,149	1,805	188,453	1,658	2,297	136
1994	3,215,000	260,350	1,235	175,403	1,833	192,174	1,673	2,360	136
1995	3,386,000	262,755	1,289	177,432	1,908	196,583	1,722	2,403	141

Sources: Vehicle Miles of Travel and Licensed Drivers—Federal Highway Administration; Registered Vehicles—R.L. Polk & Co. and Federal Highway Administration; Population—U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Occupant Protection

In 1995, 49 states and the District of Columbia had safety belt use laws in effect. Use rates vary widely from state to state, reflecting factors such as differences in public attitudes, enforcement practices, legal provisions, and public information and education programs.

From 1982 through 1995, it is estimated that safety belts saved 75,087 lives, including 9,797 lives saved in 1995.

Air bags, combined with lap/shoulder belts, offer the most effective safety protection available today for passenger vehicle occupants. It is estimated that 475 lives were saved by air bags in 1995, and that a total of 1,198 lives were saved from 1987 through 1995.

In 1995, it is estimated that 279 children under age 5 were saved as a result of child restraint use. An estimated 2,934 lives were saved by child restraints from 1982 through 1995.

Children in rear-facing child seats should not be placed in the front seat of cars equipped with passenger-side air bags. The impact of a deploying air bag striking a rear-facing child seat could result in injury to the child.

“NHTSA estimates that 9,797 lives were saved in 1995 by the use of safety belts.”

In 1995, 46 percent of passenger car occupants and 53 percent of light truck occupants involved in fatal crashes were unrestrained.

In fatal crashes, 74 percent of passenger car occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections: only 1 percent of the occupants reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected, compared with 21 percent of the unrestrained occupants.

Table 3. Restraint Use Rates for Passenger Car Occupants in Fatal Crashes, 1985 and 1995

Type of Occupant	Restraint Use Rate (Percent)	
	1985	1995
Drivers	19	58
Passengers		
Front Seat	18	56
Rear Seat	15	39
5 Years Old and Over	15	47
4 Years Old and Under	40	65
All Passengers	17	49
All Occupants	18	54

“Alcohol-related traffic fatalities rose to 17,274 in 1995— 41 percent of all traffic fatalities for the year.”

Alcohol

In 1995 there were 17,274 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes. This is a 4 percent increase compared to 1994, and it represents an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 30 minutes.

The 17,274 alcohol-related fatalities in 1995 (41 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year) represent a 24 percent reduction from the 22,715 alcohol-related fatalities reported in 1985 (52 percent of the total).

NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 41 percent of fatal crashes and in 7 percent of all crashes in 1995.

In 1995, 32 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes in which at least one driver or nonoccupant had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.10 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater.

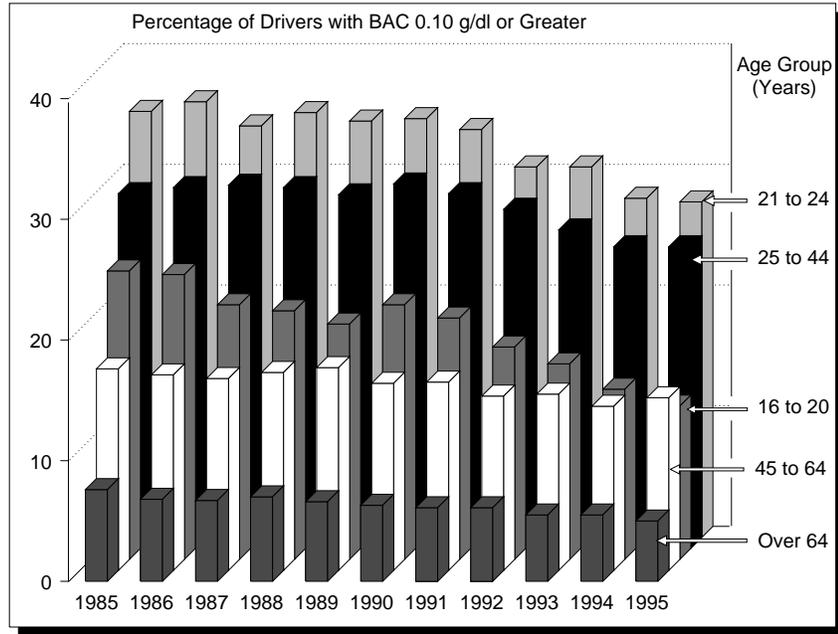
All states and the District of Columbia now have 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws. NHTSA estimates that these laws have reduced traffic fatalities involving drivers 18 to 20 years old by 13 percent and have saved an estimated 15,667 lives since 1975.

Approximately 1.4 million drivers were arrested in 1994 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 127 licensed drivers in the United States (1995 data not yet available).

About 2 in every 5 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

From 1985 to 1995, intoxication rates (BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater) decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes.

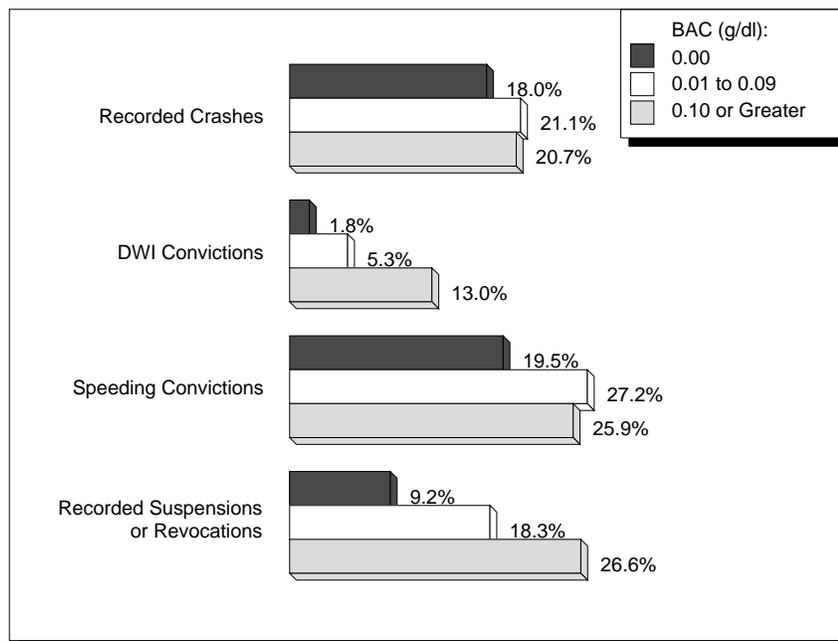
Figure 1. Intoxicated Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1985-1995



“From 1985 to 1995, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes.”

Intoxication rates for drivers in fatal crashes in 1995 were 29.1 percent for motorcycles, 22.4 percent for light trucks, 19.2 percent for passenger cars, and 1.3 percent for large trucks.

Figure 2. Previous Driving Records of Drivers Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Blood Alcohol Concentration, 1995



Motorcycles

The 2,221 motorcyclist fatalities in 1995 accounted for 5 percent of all traffic fatalities for the year. An additional 55,000 motorcycle occupants were injured.

Per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists were about 16 times as likely as passenger car occupants to die in a motor vehicle traffic crash and about 4 times as likely to be injured.

For 76 percent of the motorcycle operators involved in fatal crashes in 1995, police reported one or more errors or other factors related to the operator's behavior. The factor most often noted for motorcycle operators involved in fatal crashes was "driving too fast for conditions."

In 1995, 43 percent of fatally injured motorcycle operators and 56 percent of fatally injured passengers were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.

More than one out of five motorcycle operators (21 percent) involved in fatal crashes in 1995 were operating the vehicle with an invalid license at the time of the collision.

Motorcycle operators involved in fatal crashes in 1995 had higher intoxication rates (BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater) than any other type of motor vehicle driver. The intoxication rate for motorcycle operators involved in fatal crashes was 29.1 percent.

NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 506 motorcyclists in 1995. If all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 285 lives could have been saved.

Large Trucks

In 1995, 10.6 percent (4,439) of all the motor vehicle traffic fatalities reported involved heavy trucks (gross vehicle weight rating greater than 26,000 pounds), and 1.2 percent (506) involved medium trucks (gross vehicle weight rating 10,000 to 26,000 pounds).

Of the fatalities that resulted from crashes involving large trucks (gross vehicle weight rating greater than 10,000 pounds), 78 percent were occupants of another vehicle, 9 percent were nonoccupants, and 13 percent were occupants of a large truck.

Large trucks account for 8 percent of all vehicles involved in fatal crashes and 3 percent of all vehicles involved in injury and property-damage-only crashes in 1995.

More than three-quarters (78 percent) of the large trucks involved in fatal crashes in 1995 collided with another motor vehicle in transport.

"Per vehicle mile, motorcyclists were about 16 times as likely as passenger car occupants to die in a traffic crash."

"One out of nine traffic fatalities in 1995 resulted from a collision involving a large truck."

Only 1.3 percent of the drivers of large trucks involved in fatal crashes in 1995 were intoxicated, compared with 19.2 percent for passenger cars, 22.4 percent for light trucks, and 29.1 percent for motorcycles.

Table 4. Fatalities and Injuries in Crashes Involving Large Trucks, 1995

Type of Fatality	Number	Percentage of Total
Occupants of Large Trucks	644	13
<i>Single-Vehicle Crashes</i>	421	9
<i>Multiple-Vehicle Crashes</i>	223	5
Occupants of Other Vehicles in Crashes Involving Large Trucks	3,835	78
Nonoccupants (Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, etc.)	424	9
Total	4,903	100

Type of Injury	Number	Percentage of Total
Occupants of Large Trucks	30,000	26
<i>Single-Vehicle Crashes</i>	15,000	13
<i>Multiple-Vehicle Crashes</i>	15,000	13
Occupants of Other Vehicles in Crashes Involving Large Trucks	83,000	72
Nonoccupants (Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, etc.)	2,000	2
Total	116,000	100

“Ejection from the vehicle accounted for 28 percent of all passenger vehicle occupant fatalities.”

Cars, Light Trucks, and Vans

In 1995, 31,897 occupants of passenger vehicles were killed in traffic crashes and an additional 3,125,000 were injured, accounting for 90 percent of all occupant fatalities (passenger cars 63 percent, light trucks and vans 27 percent) and 97 percent of all occupants injured (passenger cars 75 percent, light trucks and vans 22 percent).

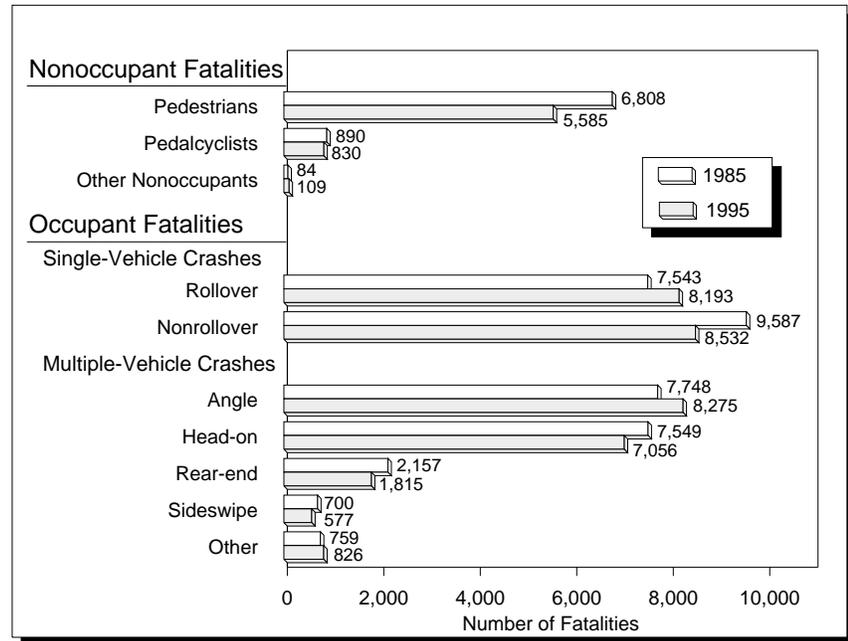
Occupant fatalities in single-vehicle crashes accounted for 40 percent of all motor vehicle fatalities in 1995. Occupant fatalities in multiple-vehicle crashes accounted for 44 percent of all fatalities, and the remaining 16 percent were nonoccupant fatalities (pedestrians, pedalcyclists, etc.).

Among fatal crashes for which the point of impact of the vehicle is known, 62 percent of all passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in 1995 occurred in frontal impacts.

Ejection from the vehicle accounted for 28 percent of all passenger vehicle occupant fatalities. The ejection rate for occupants of light trucks in fatal crashes was almost twice the rate for passenger car occupants.

Utility vehicles had the highest rollover involvement rate of any vehicle type in fatal crashes—36 percent, as compared with 25 percent for pickups, 19 percent for vans, and 15 percent for passenger cars.

Figure 3. Fatalities in Traffic Crashes, 1985 and 1995



“Nearly two-thirds of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 1995 were unrestrained.”

Utility vehicles also had the highest rollover rate in injury crashes—9 percent, compared with 6 percent for pickups, 4 percent for vans, and 3 percent for passenger cars.

Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes in 1995 were unrestrained.

The intoxication rate for drivers of light trucks (22 percent) is higher than that for passenger car drivers (19 percent).

Driver Age

There are more than 23.6 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 1995, this age group made up 9 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8 percent in 1985. From 1985 to 1995, this older segment of the population grew 2.3 times as fast as the total population.

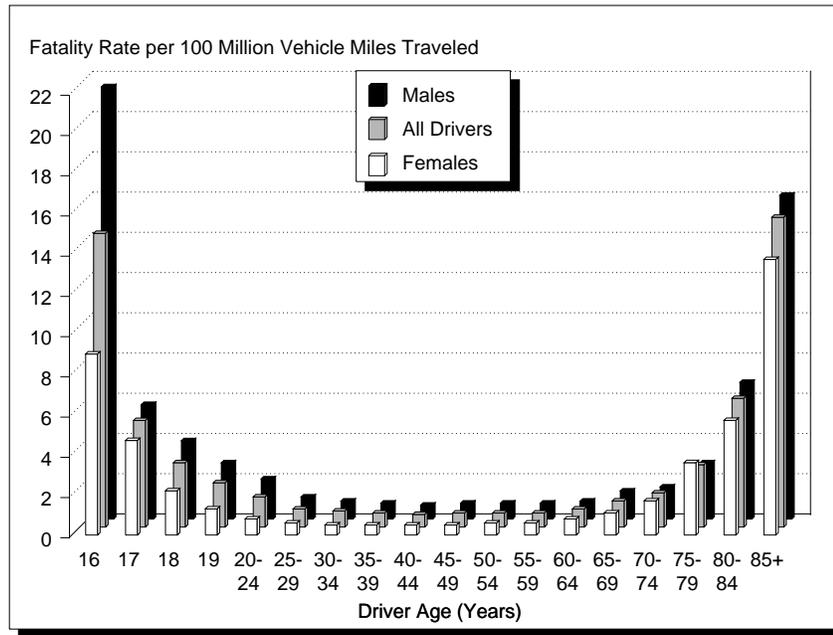
In 1995, 156,000 older individuals were injured in traffic crashes, accounting for 5 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. These older individuals made up 13 percent of all traffic fatalities, 13 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1995 had the lowest intoxication rate (4 percent) of all adult drivers.

In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was 3.1 times as likely to be the one that was struck (55 percent and 18 percent, respectively). In 46 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 27 percent, the older driver was turning left—8 times as often as the younger driver.

When driver fatality rates are calculated on the basis of estimated annual travel, the highest rates are found among the youngest and oldest drivers. Compared with the fatality rate for drivers 25 to 65 years old, the rate for teenage drivers is about 4 times as high, and the rate for drivers in the oldest group is 17 times as high.

Figure 4. Driver Fatality Rates by Age and Sex, 1994



Young female drivers, under age 50, have a lower fatality rate than their male counterparts, on a per mile driven basis, while the rate is essentially the same for both male and female drivers over 50 years of age.

Youth

In 1995, 16- to 24-year-olds represented 24 percent of all traffic fatalities, compared with 8 percent for ages 1 to 15, 44 percent for ages 25 to 54, and 24 percent for ages 55 and over.

On a per population basis, drivers under the age of 25 had the highest rate of involvement in fatal crashes of any age group.

The intoxication rate for 16- to 20-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1995 was 12.7 percent. The highest intoxication rates were for drivers 21 to 24 and 25 to 34 years old (27.8 percent and 26.8 percent, respectively).

“In 1995, older people made up 9 percent of the resident population but accounted for 13 percent of all traffic fatalities and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”

Nearly one-third of all children between the ages of 5 and 9 years who were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes were pedestrians. Almost one-fourth of the traffic fatalities under age 16 were pedestrians.

Motor vehicle occupants 10 to 24 years old involved in fatal crashes had the lowest restraint use rate (42 percent), and those over age 65 had the highest rate (63 percent).

Male/Female Fatal Crash Involvement

In 1995, the fatal crash involvement rate per 100,000 population was 3 times as high for male drivers as for females. Female drivers continue to exhibit safer driving statistics than male drivers.

Males accounted for 67 percent of all traffic fatalities, 69 percent of all pedestrian fatalities, and 85 percent of all pedalcyclist fatalities in 1995.

The intoxication rate for male drivers involved in fatal crashes was 21.8 percent, compared with 11.2 percent for female drivers.

Among female drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1995, 34 percent were unrestrained at the time of the collision, compared with 46 percent of male drivers in fatal crashes.

Pedestrians

In 1995, 84,000 pedestrians were injured and 5,585 were killed in traffic crashes in the United States, representing 2 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes and 13 percent of all traffic fatalities.

On average, a pedestrian is killed in a motor vehicle crash every 94 minutes, and one is injured every 6 minutes.

Alcohol involvement—either for the driver or the pedestrian—was reported in 47 percent of the traffic crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities. Of the pedestrians involved, 31 percent were intoxicated. The intoxication rate for the drivers involved was 14 percent, less than half that for the pedestrians. In 6 percent of the crashes, both the driver and the pedestrian were intoxicated.

Pedalcyclists

In 1995, 61,000 pedalcyclists were injured and 830 were killed in traffic crashes. Pedalcyclists made up 2 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes and 2 percent of all traffic fatalities during the year.

Most of the pedalcyclists injured or killed in 1995 were males (80 percent and 85 percent, respectively), and most were between the ages of 5 and 44 years (91 percent and 77 percent).

Almost one-third (32 percent) of the pedalcyclists killed in traffic crashes in 1995 were between 5 and 15 years old.

“Males accounted for 67 percent of all traffic fatalities, 69 percent of all pedestrian fatalities, and 85 percent of all pedalcyclist fatalities in 1995.”

“Pedestrian fatalities in 1995 were 18 percent lower than in 1985.”

For 72 percent of the pedalcyclists killed in traffic crashes in 1995, police reported one or more errors or other factors related to the cyclist's behavior. The factor most often noted was "failure to yield right-of-way" (24 percent), followed by "walking with or against traffic, playing, working, sitting, lying, standing, etc., in roadway" (17 percent), and "improper crossing of the roadway or intersection" (14 percent). Fewer than half of the drivers involved were cited by police for driving errors or other factors related to driver behavior. The factors most often noted for drivers were "driving too fast for conditions or exceeding the speed limit" (12 percent), "inattentive (talking, eating, etc.)" (8 percent), and "failure to keep in proper lane or running off road" (8 percent).

For more information:

Information on traffic safety is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NRD-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone inquiries should be addressed to Ms. Louann Hall at (202) 366-4198. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.