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Research Note

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Motor Vehicle Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in 1994

NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) recently completed a study of data on the causes of death for all persons, by age and sex, which occurred in the U. S. in 1994. The purpose of the study is to highlight motor vehicle crashes as a leading cause of death. The data on causes of death for 1994, the latest year for which these data are available, were obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NCHS obtains these data from a census of death certificates furnished to NCHS by the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The NCHS data for 1994 were studied to determine where deaths related to motor vehicle crashes ranked as a cause of death for all ages, for males and females, and for various ethnic groups. The following statistics are based upon the NCHS data on causes of death for calendar year 1994. The number of deaths associated with motor vehicle crashes reported by NCHS are slightly greater than that reported by NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), due to differences in reporting definitions.

In 1994, motor vehicle traffic crashes ranked 9th as a cause of death, falling from ranking 8th as a cause of death in 1992. While the ranking of traffic crashes in 1994 declined from 8th to 9th, the number of deaths related to traffic crashes increased slightly, to 41,507, a 3.8 percent increase from the number of deaths reported in 1992 (39,985). Motor vehicle traffic crashes continued in 1994 to rank 8th as a cause of deaths for males and 9th as a cause of death for females. Traffic crashes were a *major* (i.e., ranked as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th) cause of death for all persons aged 1 to 41. Traffic crashes accounted for almost half (46%) of all unintentional deaths, a slight decline from 47% in 1992.

Motor vehicle traffic crashes were the ***leading*** cause of death in 1994 for persons of every age in the following:

- **all persons, ages 6 to 27**
- **males, ages 6 to 23 and age 26**
- **females, ages 4 to 6 and ages 8 to 28**

Half of all deaths related to motor vehicle traffic crashes were persons under the age of 34. The average age of death from all causes was 71.1 years, while the average age of death for those persons killed in motor vehicle crashes was 39.7 years. The average age for males killed in traffic crashes (38.2 years) was lower than the average age for females killed in traffic crashes (42.6 years).

The increase in deaths attributed to motor vehicle traffic crashes in 1994 compared to 1992 was greater for females than for males. Traffic crashes were the cause of death for 27,882 males in 1994, a 2.4% increase compared to 1992 (27,221 male deaths). For females, traffic crashes as the cause of death totaled 13,625, a 6.7% increase compared to 1992 (12,764 female deaths).

The ranking of motor vehicle traffic crashes as a cause appears to differ for the various ethnic groups. Traffic crashes ranked lower for African-American males and females (10th for males and 15th for females) in 1994 than for any other ethnic group. Traffic crashes ranked highest for Native Americans (3rd for males and 5th for females) in 1994. The ranking of traffic crashes by ethnic group and sex are shown in the following table.

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Table 1
Ranking of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes as a Cause of Death by Ethnic Group and Sex , 1994

Ethnic Group	Sex	Ranking of M/V Crashes
African-Americans	Male	10th
	Female	15th
Asian/Pacific-Islander	Males	5th
	Females	6th
Hispanic	Males	5th
	Females	6th
Native Americans	Males	3rd
	Females	4th
Whites	Males	7th
	Females	10th
All Persons	Males	8th
	Females	9th

Detailed information on motor vehicle traffic crashes as a cause of death may be found in the NHTSA technical report, *Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in the U. S., 1994*, DOT-HS-808-687, March 1998. Copies of the technical report and this research note may be requested by calling (202) 366-4198 or toll free, 1-800-934-8517. This research note and other traffic safety information is available to Internet users at http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa.

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