

Traffic Safety Facts

2004 Data

Rural/Urban Comparison

Although 21 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas in 2004, rural fatal crashes accounted for 58 percent of all traffic fatalities. From 1993 to 2004, both rural and urban fatalities increased by approximately 6 percent.

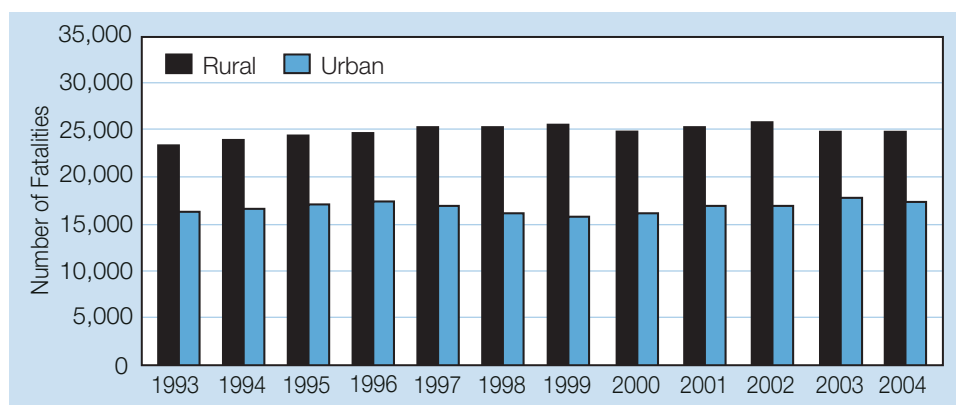
The rural fatality rate has declined from 2.6 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1993 to 2.3 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2004, a decrease of 12 percent. Similarly during the same time period the urban fatality rate has decreased from 1.2 per 100 million VMT to 1 per 100 million VMT a decrease of 17 percent.

Overview/Trends

The 2004 crash data shows there were 21,965 fatal crashes involving 33,083 vehicles and 56,664 individuals, resulting in 24,975 fatalities in rural areas. Urban areas accounted for 16,034 fatal crashes involving 24,968 vehicles and 42,931 individuals, resulting in 17,381 fatalities.

Figure 1

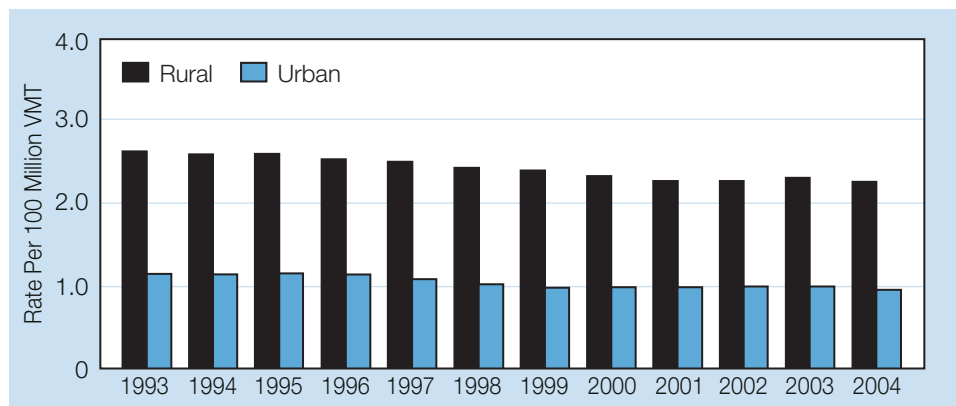
Number of Traffic Fatalities By Year and Location
1993-2004



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 1993-2004

Figure 2

Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled By Year and Location
1993-2004



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 1993-2004 and FHWA, VMT data

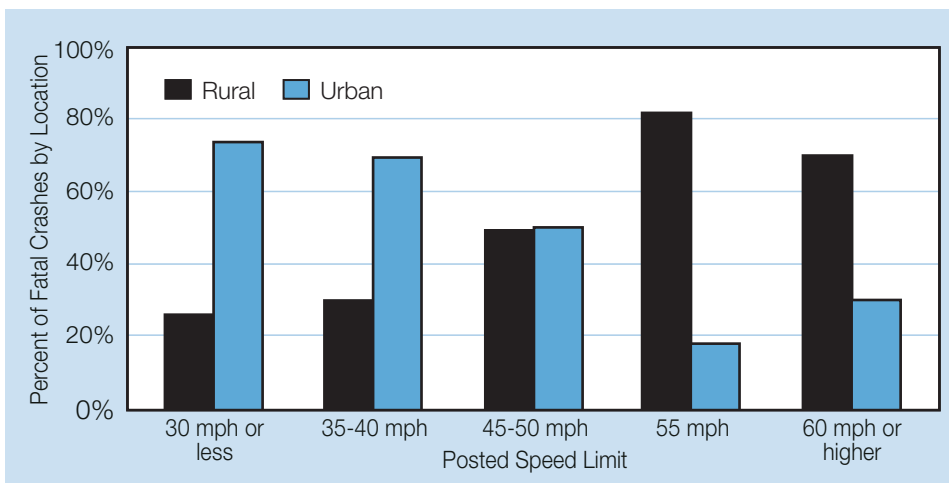
There has been a gradual increase in annual rural fatalities from 23,459 in 1993 to 24,975 in 2004. Likewise urban fatalities have increased from 16,429 in 1993 to 17,381 in 2004.

Crashes

In 2004, there were 21,965 fatal crashes (58%) in rural areas and 16,034 fatal crashes (42%) in urban areas.

In rural areas, 54 percent of the crashes occur during the day, while 46 percent occur at night. In urban areas the situation is reversed with 45

Figure 3
Fatal Crashes By Posted Speed Limit and Location, 2004



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2004

percent of the crashes occurring during the day and 55 percent of the crashes occurring at night.

Approximately 90 percent of nighttime rural fatal crashes occur on dark roadways and 10 percent occur on roads lighted by streetlights. In urban areas, 38 percent of fatal nighttime crashes occur on dark roadways and 62 percent occur on lighted roadways.

Less than 2 percent of fatal rural crashes are classified as hit-and-run, compared to 7 percent of urban fatal crashes.

Approximately 68 percent of fatal rural crashes occur on straight roads, whereas 81 percent of fatal urban crashes are on straight roads.

Head-on crashes are more prevalent in rural areas, making up 13 percent of all rural fatal crashes. In urban areas, head-on crashes are responsible for less than 7 percent of all fatal crashes.

Vehicles

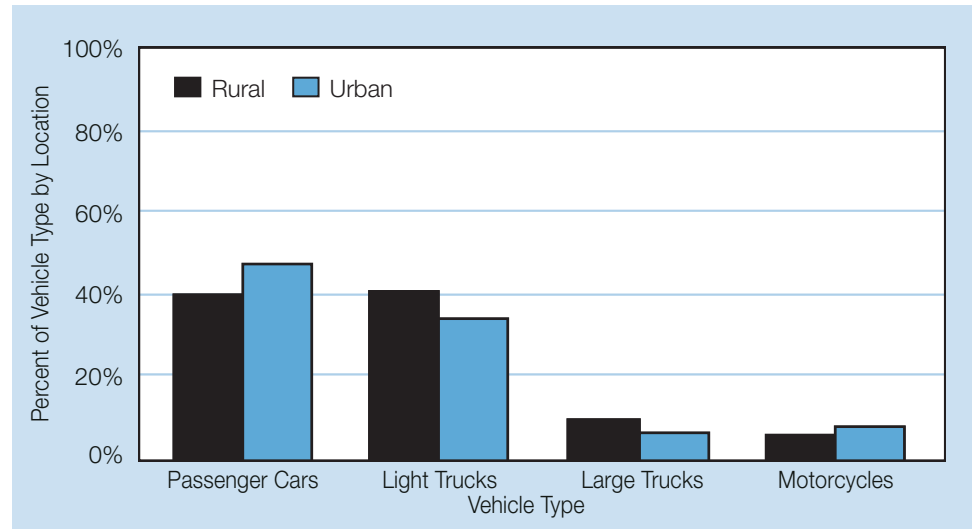
In 2004, 33,083 vehicles were involved in fatal rural crashes compared to 24,968 in fatal urban crashes.

Approximately 70 percent of all fatal crashes on roadways with speed limits of 40 mph or less are in urban areas. Fatal crashes occurring on roadways with speed limits between 45 and 50 mph are evenly split between rural and urban areas. Over 70 percent of the fatal crashes on roadways with speed limits of 55 mph or higher occur in rural areas.

Passenger cars accounted for 40 and 48 percent of the vehicles involved in rural and urban fatal crashes respectively. Light trucks (pickups, vans and SUVs) accounted for 41 percent of vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes and 35 percent in urban fatal crashes.

Approximately 24 percent of rural and urban drivers involved in fatal crashes had a positive blood alcohol concentration (BAC). However, the percentage of rural drivers with more severe BAC levels was generally higher than the corresponding percentage of urban drivers with similar BAC levels.

Figure 4
Fatal Crashes By Vehicle Type and Location, 2004



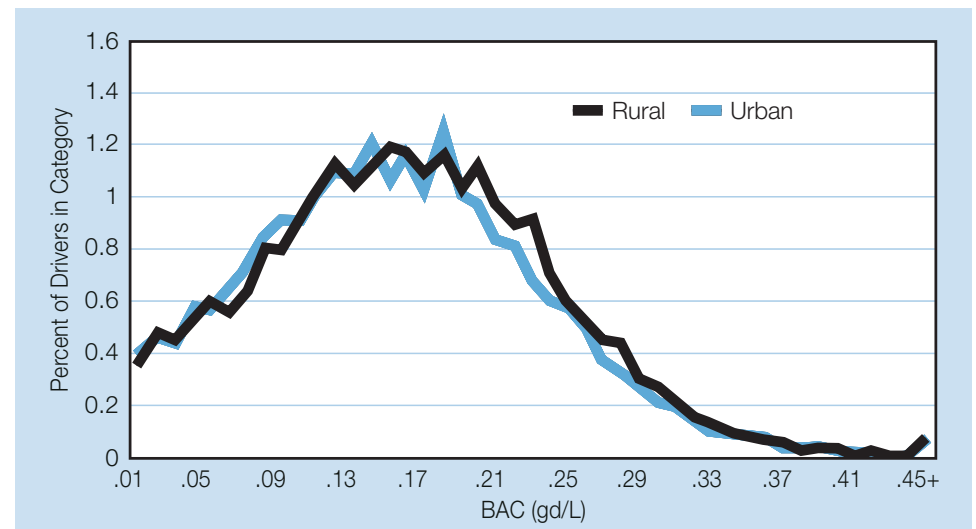
Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2004

The damage to vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes is more severe than the damage to vehicles involved in urban fatal crashes as measured by the percentage of disabling deformation. Almost 81 percent of vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes are disabled, whereas 67 percent of vehicles involved in urban fatal crashes are disabled.

Drivers

Rural drivers involved in fatal crashes are slightly more likely to have a valid driver license (86%), compared to urban drivers (82%).

Figure 5
Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Location, 2004



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2004

People

Vehicle occupants involved in rural fatal crashes are ejected 15 percent of the time, while 7 percent of urban vehicle occupants are ejected in fatal crashes.

Of all people involved in fatal rural crashes, 51 percent are transported to hospitals compared to 49 percent in fatal urban crashes.

Rural areas have a larger proportion of fatally injured individuals, 44 percent compared to 41 percent in urban fatal crashes.

Fatalities

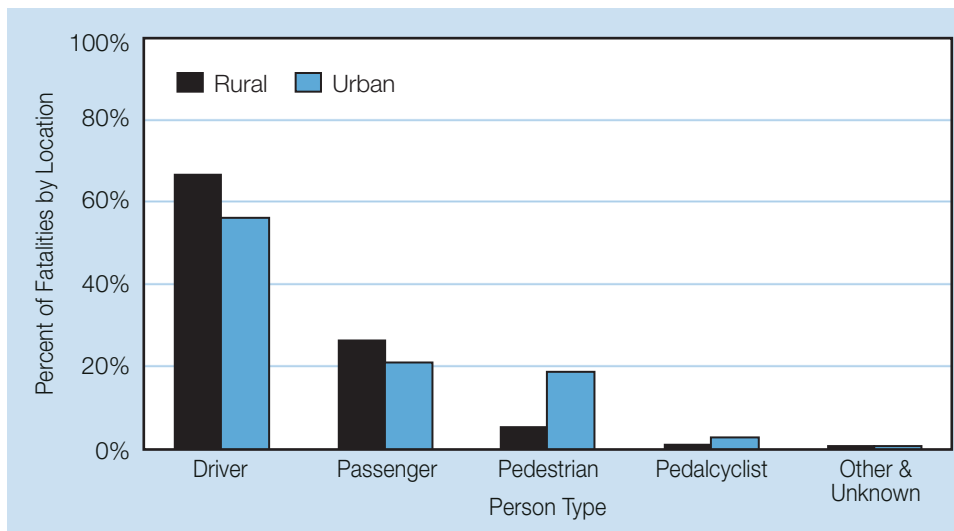
Vehicle occupants killed in rural fatal crashes are more likely to have been ejected (26%) compared to occupants killed in fatal urban crashes (14%).

Driver fatalities are the most common fatalities in both rural and urban fatal crashes, accounting for 67 percent and 57 percent of all crash fatalities in their respective areas. More pedestrian and pedalcyclist fatalities occur in urban areas than in rural areas.

Approximately 36 percent of rural fatalities are transported to a hospital. In urban areas, 53 percent of the fatalities are transported to a hospital.

“Driver fatalities are the most common fatalities in both rural and urban fatal crashes, accounting for 67 percent and 57 percent of all crash fatalities in their respective areas.”

Figure 6
Fatalities By Person Type and Location, 2004



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2004

For more information:

Information on rural and urban traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-121, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand at 800-934-8517. Fax messages should be sent to 202-366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236.