

# Traffic Safety Facts

2005 Data

## Young Drivers

There were 198.9 million licensed drivers in the United States in 2004 (2005 data not available). Young drivers, between 15 and 20 years old, accounted for 6.3 percent (12.5 million) of the total, a 6.2-percent increase from the 11.8 million young drivers in 1994.

In 2005, 7,460 15- to 20-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes – a 7-percent decrease from the 7,979 involved in 1995. Driver fatalities for this age group increased by 4 percent between 1995 and 2005. For young males, driver fatalities rose by 5 percent, compared with a 1-percent decrease for young females (Table 1).

*“Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds.”*

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds (based on 2003 figures, which are the latest mortality data currently available from the National Center for Health Statistics). In 2005, 3,467 15- to 20-year-old drivers were killed and an additional 281,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes.

Figure 1  
**Driver Fatalities and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Among 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers, 1995-2005**

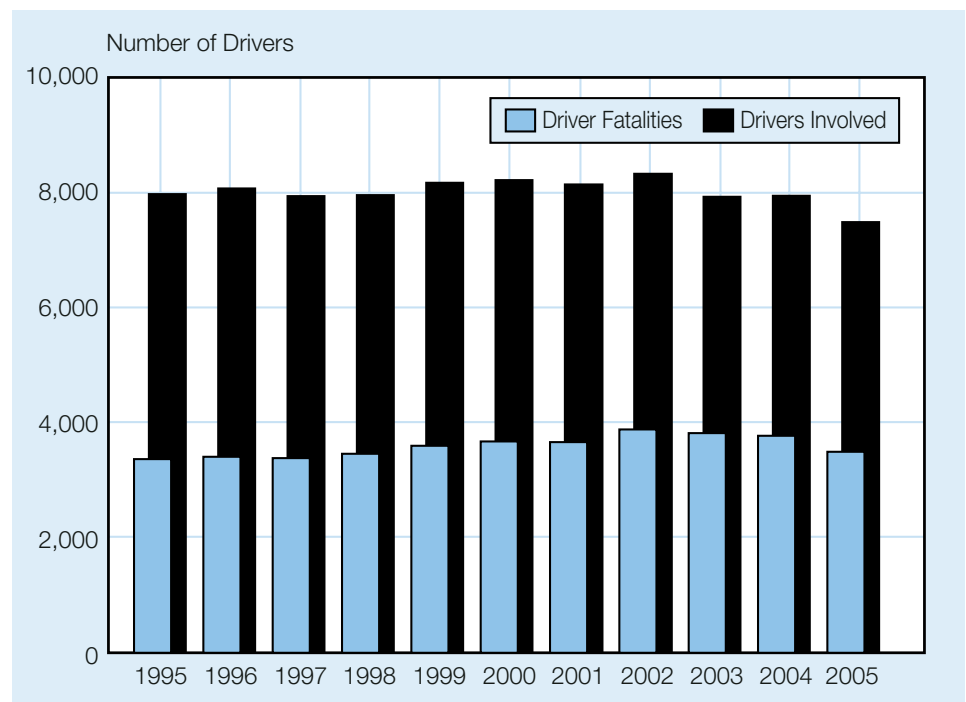


Table 1  
**Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, 1995 and 2005**

	1995			2005			Percentage Change, 1995-2005		
	Total	Age 15-20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15-20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15-20	Percentage of Total
<b>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</b>									
Total	56,164	7,979	14.2	59,104	7,460	12.6	5	-7	-11.2
Male	41,235	5,789	14.0	43,060	5,300	12.3	4	-8	-12.3
Female	14,184	2,190	15.4	14,974	2,160	14.4	6	-1	-6.6
<b>Driver Fatalities</b>									
Total	24,390	3,348	13.7	27,472	3,467	12.6	13	4	-8.1
Male	17,997	2,445	13.6	20,795	2,575	12.4	16	5	-8.9
Female	6,393	903	14.1	6,598	892	13.5	3	-1	-4.3

*“In 2005, 12.6 percent of all the drivers involved in fatal crashes were between 15 and 20 years old.”*

In 2005, 12.6 percent (7,460) of all the drivers involved in fatal crashes (59,104) were young drivers age 15 to 20 years old, and 16 percent (1,699,000) of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes (10,832,000) were young drivers.

Table 2  
**Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes and Driver Involvement Rates by Age Group, 2005**

	Age Group (Years)							
	15-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-69	70+
<b>2005 Population (Percent)</b>	8.5	5.7	13.5	14.8	14.3	10.2	3.4	9.0
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes (Percent)	15.9	13.7	20.8	17.7	14.7	8.8	2.6	5.6
- Single-Vehicle								
- Multi-Vehicle	11.1	9.9	18.9	19.1	17.1	11.4	3.3	9.0
- All Fatal Crashes	12.9	11.3	19.6	18.5	16.2	10.4	3.1	7.7
<b>2004 Licensed Drivers (Percent)</b>	6.3	6.9	18.1	20.5	19.7	13.9	4.5	10.0
<b>2004 Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes per 100,000 Licensed Drivers*</b>	63.5	46.7	31.2	26.4	23.3	20.3	18.6	22.8

\*2005 license driver data not available.

Note: Excluding unknown ages.

Among 15- to 20-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2005, 30 percent (365) of those who did not have valid operator's licenses at the time of the crash also had previous license suspensions or revocations (Table 3). For the same age group, 28 percent of the drivers who were killed in motor vehicle crashes during 2005 had been drinking (Table 4).

Table 3  
**Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Previous Driving Record and License Status, 2005**

Driving Record	License Status				Total (7,460)*	
	Valid (6,153)		Invalid (1,229)			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Previous Recorded Crashes	916	14.9	135	11.0	1,051	14.1
Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations	469	7.6	365	29.7	834	11.2
Previous DWI Convictions	57	0.9	49	4.0	106	1.4
Previous Speeding Convictions	1,331	21.6	204	16.6	1,535	20.6
Previous Other Harmful or Moving Conviction	1,123	18.3	228	18.6	1,351	18.1

\*Includes 78 drivers with unknown license status.  
 Note: Excluding all drivers with unknown previous records.

## Motorcycles

During 2005, 326 young motorcycle operators (15-20 years old) were killed and an additional 9,000 were injured.

Helmets are estimated to be 37-percent effective in preventing fatalities among motorcyclists. NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,546 motorcyclists of all ages in 2005, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 728 lives could have been saved.

During 2005, 32 percent of the motorcycle drivers between 15 and 20 years old who were fatally injured in crashes were not wearing helmets.

Of the young motorcycle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2005, more than one-third (40%) were either unlicensed or driving with an invalid license.

## Alcohol

A motor vehicle crash is considered to be alcohol-related if at least one driver or nonoccupant (such as a pedestrian or pedalcyclist) involved in the crash is determined to have had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 gram per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatality that occurs in an alcohol-related crash is considered an alcohol-related fatality. The term "alcohol-related" does not indicate that a crash or fatality was caused by the presence of alcohol.

*"During 2005, 326 15- to 20-year-old motorcycle operators were killed and an additional 9,000 were injured."*

In 2005, 23 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher.

Table 4  
**Alcohol Involvement Among 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2005**

Driving Status	Percentage with BAC			
	Number of Drivers	.00 g/dL	.01 to .07 g/dL	.08 g/dL or Higher
<b>1995</b>				
Surviving	4,631	86	5	10
Fatally Injured	3,348	70	6	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,979</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2005</b>				
Surviving	3,993	86	4	10
Fatally Injured	3,467	71	5	23
Total	7,460	79	4	16

*“In 2005, 23 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher.”*

Table 5  
**Intoxication Rates Among Young Drivers Fatally Injured in Traffic Crashes by Age, 2005**

Age	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC .08 g/dL or Higher
15	93	16
16	393	11
17	565	18
18	793	24
19	842	25
20	781	32

The severity of a crash increases with alcohol involvement. In 2005, 2 percent of the 15- to 20-year-old drivers involved in property-damage-only crashes had been drinking, 4 percent of those involved in crashes resulting in injury had been drinking, and 21 percent of those involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.

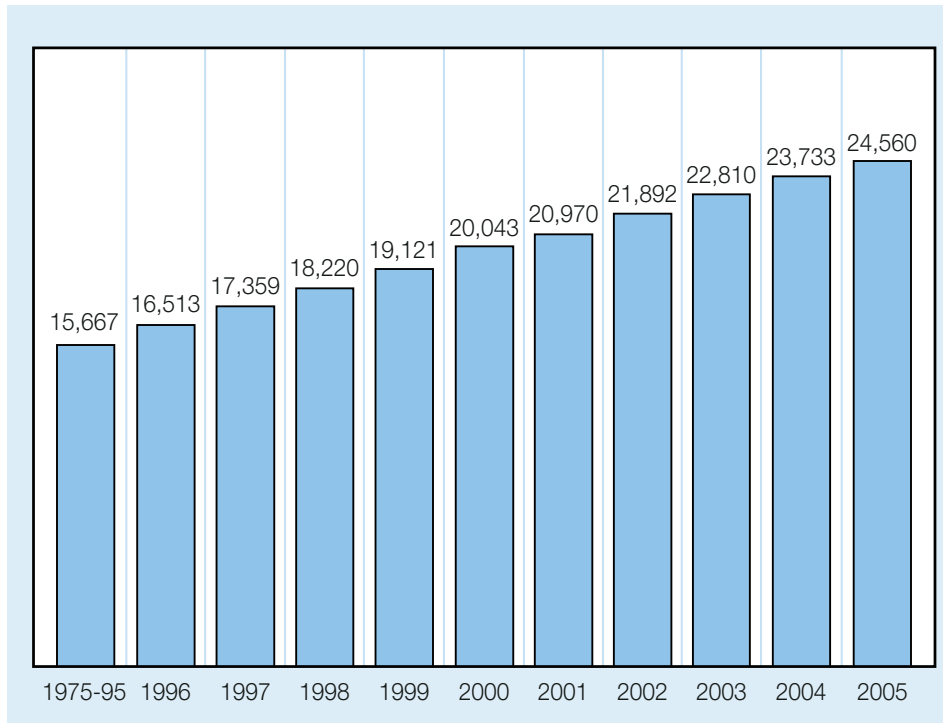
The percentage of 15- to 20-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes who had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher dropped by 7 percent between 1995 and 2005.

For young drivers (15 to 20 years old), alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2005, 24 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crash, compared with 12 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2005, 64 percent of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained. Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 74 percent were unrestrained.

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 24,560 lives since 1975. In 2005, an estimated 823 lives were saved by minimum drinking age laws.

Figure 2  
**Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975-2005**



*“NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 24,560 lives since 1975.”*

#### **For more information:**

Information on young drivers is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-120, 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](http://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.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Overview, Alcohol, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists* (formerly titled *Pedalcyclists*), *Children, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Occupant Protection, Older Population, Pedestrians, School Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates*, and *State Traffic Data*. Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System*. The fact sheets and annual Traffic Safety Facts report can be accessed online at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa).

Table 6  
**Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young Drivers (Ages 15-20) by State and Fatality Type, 2005**

State	Young Drivers	Passengers in Young Drivers' Vehicles	Occupants of Other Vehicles	Nonoccupants	Total
Alabama	107	64	55	10	236
Alaska	4	1	5	2	12
Arizona	76	45	61	24	206
Arkansas	65	31	24	2	122
California	303	269	172	107	851
Colorado	45	42	26	9	122
Connecticut	23	14	8	2	47
Delaware	11	10	11	2	34
District of Columbia	2	1	2	3	8
Florida	257	175	164	86	682
Georgia	136	90	89	14	329
Hawaii	7	3	8	3	21
Idaho	21	18	6	2	47
Illinois	108	56	75	21	260
Indiana	82	48	52	6	188
Iowa	49	24	16	7	96
Kansas	44	20	22	3	89
Kentucky	80	46	45	11	182
Louisiana	71	33	48	13	165
Maine	16	14	7	2	39
Maryland	44	25	36	11	116
Massachusetts	42	24	15	12	93
Michigan	90	49	67	16	222
Minnesota	52	25	35	4	116
Mississippi	85	50	35	14	184
Missouri	129	66	56	15	266
Montana	15	12	4	2	33
Nebraska	27	13	11	2	53
Nevada	28	15	21	5	69
New Hampshire	10	10	7	0	27
New Jersey	46	32	25	10	113
New Mexico	42	15	15	6	78
New York	93	72	36	21	222
North Carolina	135	83	63	23	304
North Dakota	12	5	6	1	24
Ohio	120	62	66	14	262
Oklahoma	71	33	41	8	153
Oregon	37	20	26	8	91
Pennsylvania	131	75	59	21	286
Rhode Island	7	7	7	2	23
South Carolina	79	50	36	11	176
South Dakota	15	12	10	1	38
Tennessee	103	53	76	11	243
Texas	283	194	165	43	685
Utah	21	18	14	2	55
Vermont	11	3	3	0	17
Virginia	82	38	21	14	155
Washington	42	31	27	9	109
West Virginia	28	15	11	0	54
Wisconsin	66	54	39	6	165
Wyoming	14	6	4	1	25
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>3,467</b>	<b>2,171</b>	<b>1,933</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>8,193</b>
Puerto Rico	30	24	16	12	82