Traffic Safety Facts 1996

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

Alcohol

NHTSA
People Saving People
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines a fatal traffic crash as being alcohol-related if either a driver or a nonoccupant (e.g., pedestrian) had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.01 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater in a police-reported traffic crash. Persons with a BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater involved in fatal crashes are considered to be intoxicated. This is the legal limit of intoxication in most states.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-related crashes fell by 1 percent from 1995 to 1996. The 17,126 alcohol-related fatalities in 1996 (40.9 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year) represent a 29 percent reduction from the 24,045 alcohol-related fatalities reported in 1986 (52.2 percent of the total).

NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 41 percent of fatal crashes and in 7 percent of all crashes in 1996.

"There were 17,126 alcohol-related fatalities in 1996 — 40.9 percent of the total traffic fatalities for the year."

The 17,126 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 1996 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes.

More than 321,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present — an average of one person injured approximately every 2 minutes.

Approximately 1.4 million drivers were arrested in 1995 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 123 licensed drivers in the United States (1996 data not yet available).

About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

In 1996, 32 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes in which at least one driver or nonoccupant had a BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater. More than two-thirds of the 13,395 people killed in such crashes were themselves intoxicated. The remaining one-third were passengers, nonintoxicated drivers, or nonintoxicated nonoccupants.

Table 1. Types of Fatalities in Fatal Crashes Involving at Least One Intoxicated Driver or Nonoccupant, 1996

Type of Fatality	Number	Percent of Total
Intoxicated Drivers	7,348	55
Nonintoxicated Drivers	809	6
Passengers	2,835	21
Intoxicated Nonoccupants (Pedestrians and Pedalcyclists)	1,872	14
Nonintoxicated Nonoccupants	531	4
Total Fatalities	**13,395**	**100**

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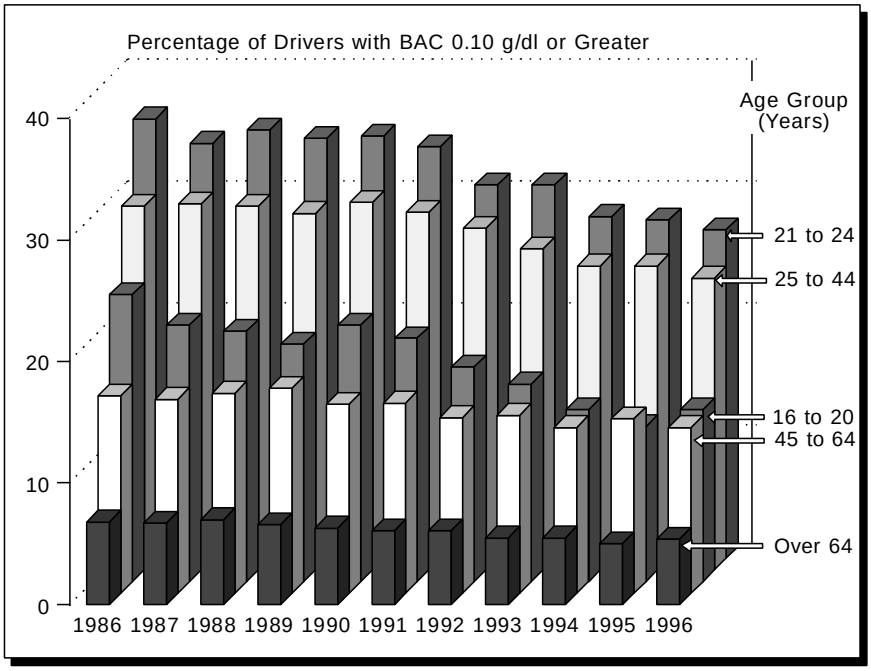
The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is nearly three and one-half times as high at night as during the day (62.4 percent vs. 18.1 percent). For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate is nearly five times as high at night (14.8 percent vs. 3.0 percent).

In 1996, 31 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 54 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.

From 1986 to 1996, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes. Drivers 16 to 20 years old experienced the largest decrease in intoxication rates (41 percent), followed by drivers 21 to 24 years old (25 percent).

"From 1986 to 1996, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes."

Figure 1. Intoxicated Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1986-1996



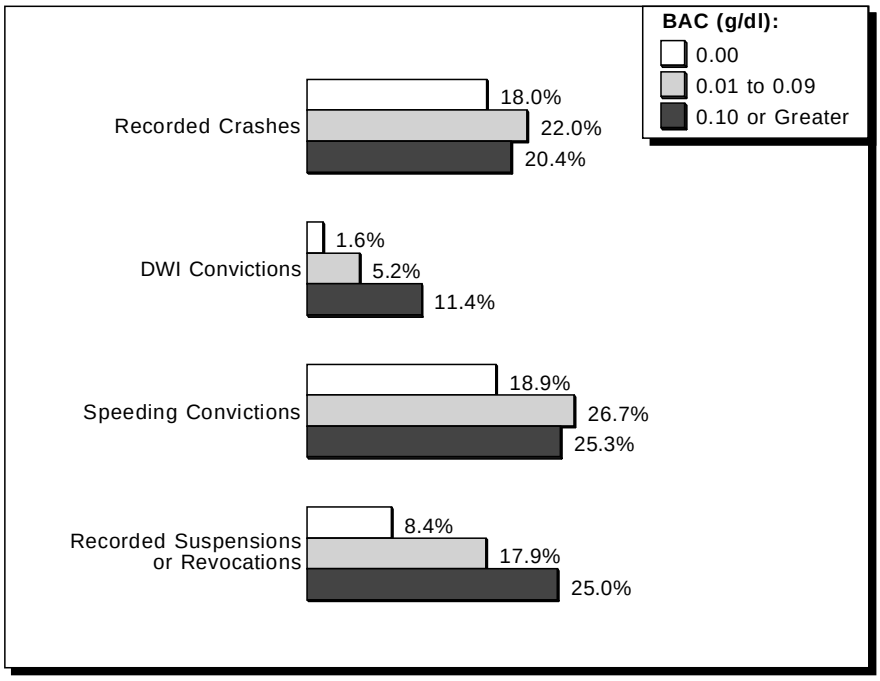
The highest intoxication rates in fatal crashes in 1996 were recorded for drivers 21-24 years old (27.0 percent), followed by ages 25-34 (26.2 percent) and 35-44 (21.9 percent).

Intoxication rates for drivers in fatal crashes in 1996 were highest for motorcycle operators (30.3 percent) and lowest for drivers of large trucks (1.4 percent). The intoxication rate for drivers of light trucks was higher than that for passenger car drivers (21.9 percent and 18.8 percent, respectively).

Safety belts were used by only 18.5 percent of the fatally injured *intoxicated* drivers (BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater), compared to 30.2 percent of fatally injured *impaired* drivers (BAC between 0.01 g/dl and 0.09 g/dl) and 46.3 percent of fatally injured sober drivers.

Fatally injured drivers with BAC levels of 0.10 g/dl or greater were seven times as likely to have a prior conviction for driving while intoxicated compared to fatally injured sober drivers (11.4 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively).

Figure 2. Previous Driving Records of Drivers Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Blood Alcohol Concentration, 1996



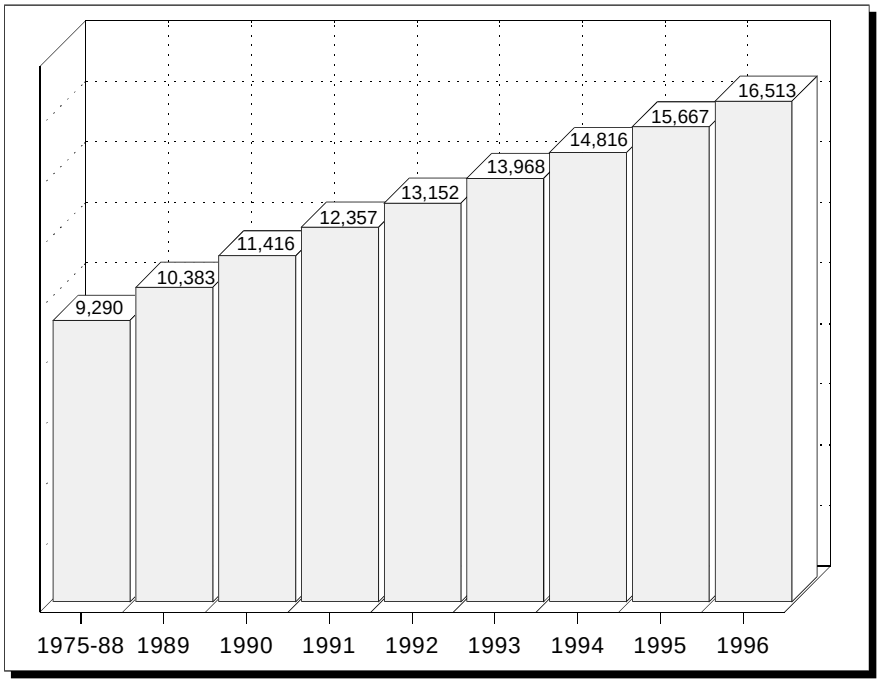
"More than one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1996 were intoxicated."

More than one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1996 were intoxicated. By age group, the percentages ranged from a low of 11.1 percent for pedestrians 65 and over to a high of 55.0 percent for those 25 to 34 years old.

The driver, pedestrian, or both were intoxicated in 39 percent of all fatal pedestrian crashes in 1996. In these crashes, the intoxication rate for pedestrians was nearly three times the rate for drivers — 32.3 percent and 12.0 percent, respectively. Both the pedestrian and the driver were intoxicated in 5.3 percent of the crashes that resulted in a pedestrian fatality.

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 16,513 lives since 1975.

Figure 3. Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975-1996



"NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 16,513 lives since 1975."

On the following pages, Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present summary data on alcohol involvement in fatal crashes in 1996, compared with 1986 data. Table 6 shows alcohol involvement in fatal traffic crashes by state.

For more information:

Information on alcohol involvement in traffic fatalities 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 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at 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.

Table 2. Alcohol Involvement in Fatal Crashes, 1986 and 1996

	1986		1996		
	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	Change in Percentage, 1986-1996
Fatal Crashes	41,090	40.8	37,351	32.2	-21%
Total Fatalities	46,087	41.1	41,907	32.0	-22%

* For any person (occupant or nonoccupant) involved in the fatal crash.

Table 3. Alcohol Involvement for Drivers in Fatal Crashes, 1986 and 1996

	1986		1996		
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Change in Percentage, 1986-1996
Total Drivers					
Total *	60,335	25.8	56,793	18.8	-27%
Drivers by Age Group (Years)					
16–20	10,163	23.7	7,804	14.1	-41%
21–24	9,129	36.1	6,172	27.0	-25%
25–34	16,179	33.0	12,850	26.2	-21%
35–44	9,240	24.5	10,918	21.9	-11%
45–64	9,096	16.2	11,313	13.6	-16%
Over 64	4,881	6.8	6,364	5.4	-21%
Drivers by Sex					
Male	46,653	28.5	41,223	21.4	-25%
Female	12,744	14.8	14,798	11.1	-25%
Drivers by Vehicle Type					
Passenger Cars	35,959	25.8	30,466	18.8	-27%
Light Trucks	13,208	29.4	18,054	21.9	-26%
Large Trucks	5,015	2.9	4,688	1.4	-52%
Motorcycles	4,558	40.9	2,175	30.3	-26%

* Numbers shown for groups of drivers do not add to the total number of drivers due to unknown or other data not included.

Table 4. Alcohol Involvement for Drivers Killed in Fatal Crashes, 1986 and 1996

Driver Fatalities	1986		1996		Change in Percentage, 1986-1996
	Number of Driver Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Driver Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	
Total Driver Fatalities					
Total	26,630	38.7	24,456	30.0	-22%
Driver Fatalities by Crash Type and Time of Day					
Single-Vehicle	13,096	54.5	11,612	45.9	-16%
Daytime *	4,165	27.2	4,486	20.7	-24%
Nighttime **	8,643	67.5	6,864	61.8	-8%
Multiple-Vehicle	13,534	23.5	12,844	15.7	-33%
Daytime *	7,518	10.5	8,162	6.5	-38%
Nighttime **	6,011	39.8	4,670	31.9	-20%
Driver Fatalities by Day of Week					
Weekday ***	15,069	31.1	14,791	22.0	-29%
Weekend ****	11,556	48.7	9,654	42.3	-13%
Driver Fatalities by Time of Day					
Daytime *	11,683	16.5	12,648	11.5	-30%
Nighttime **	14,654	56.1	11,534	49.7	-11%
Driver Fatalities by Day of Week and Time of Day					
Weekday ***					
Daytime *	8,379	13.8	9,335	9.1	-34%
Nighttime **	6,573	52.7	5,327	44.0	-17%
Weekend ****					
Daytime *	3,304	23.3	3,313	18.3	-21%
Nighttime **	8,081	58.9	6,207	54.5	-7%

* 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.
** 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM.
*** Monday 6:00 AM to Friday 6:00 PM.
**** Friday 6:00 PM to Monday 6:00 AM.

Table 5. Alcohol Involvement for Nonoccupants Killed in Fatal Crashes, 1986 and 1996

Nonoccupant Fatalities	1986		1996		Change in Percentage, 1986-1996
	Number of Nonoccupant Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Nonoccupant Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	
Pedestrian Fatalities by Age Group (Years)					
16–20	507	35.6	289	34.5	-3%
21–24	519	50.8	281	45.4	-11%
25–34	1,110	53.0	762	55.0	+4%
35–44	763	49.4	927	50.7	+3%
45–64	1,218	39.4	1,175	35.7	-9%
Over 64	1,430	10.8	1,197	11.1	+3%
Total *	**6,779**	**31.5**	**5,412**	**31.9**	**+1%**
Pedalcyclist Fatalities					
Total	941	12.2	761	17.8	+46%

* Includes pedestrians under 16 years old and pedestrians of unknown age.

Table 6. Traffic Fatalities by State and Highest Blood Alcohol Concentration in the Crash, 1996

State	Total Traffic Fatalities	No Alcohol (BAC = 0.00 g/dl)		Low Alcohol (BAC = 0.01-0.09 g/dl)		High Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.10 g/dl)		Any Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.01 g/dl)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	1,143	656	57.4	98	8.6	389	34.1	487	42.6
Alaska	80	39	48.9	5	6.7	35	44.4	41	51.1
Arizona	993	557	56.1	91	9.2	345	34.8	436	43.9
Arkansas	615	401	65.3	48	7.8	165	26.9	214	34.7
California	3,989	2,383	59.8	404	10.1	1,202	30.1	1,606	40.2
Colorado	617	373	60.4	41	6.6	204	33.0	244	39.6
Connecticut	310	157	50.8	34	11.0	118	38.2	153	49.2
Delaware	116	68	59.0	14	12.5	33	28.5	48	41.0
District of Columbia	62	32	50.8	8	13.2	22	36.0	30	49.2
Florida	2,753	1,738	63.1	214	7.8	801	29.1	1,015	36.9
Georgia	1,574	1,007	64.0	132	8.4	434	27.6	567	36.0
Hawaii	148	82	55.6	19	12.9	47	31.5	66	44.4
Idaho	258	171	66.2	20	7.7	67	26.0	87	33.8
Illinois	1,477	813	55.0	132	8.9	533	36.1	664	45.0
Indiana	984	649	65.9	69	7.0	266	27.0	335	34.1
Iowa	465	267	57.5	44	9.4	154	33.0	198	42.5
Kansas	491	290	59.1	54	10.9	147	30.0	201	40.9
Kentucky	841	545	64.8	60	7.1	236	28.1	296	35.2
Louisiana	781	380	48.6	92	11.8	309	39.6	401	51.4
Maine	169	106	62.5	14	8.5	49	29.0	63	37.5
Maryland	608	407	67.0	55	9.0	146	24.0	201	33.0
Massachusetts	417	232	55.6	51	12.3	134	32.0	185	44.4
Michigan	1,505	892	59.3	138	9.1	476	31.6	613	40.7
Minnesota	576	358	62.1	45	7.9	173	30.0	218	37.9
Mississippi	811	473	58.4	69	8.5	269	33.1	338	41.6
Missouri	1,149	581	50.6	123	10.7	445	38.7	568	49.4
Montana	200	126	62.9	8	4.1	66	33.0	74	37.1
Nebraska	293	195	66.4	22	7.5	76	26.0	98	33.6
Nevada	348	174	49.9	44	12.8	130	37.3	174	50.1
New Hampshire	134	88	65.3	11	8.3	35	26.4	46	34.7
New Jersey	818	538	65.8	72	8.8	208	25.4	280	34.2
New Mexico	481	240	49.9	39	8.2	202	42.0	241	50.1
New York	1,564	1,041	66.6	147	9.4	376	24.0	523	33.4
North Carolina	1,493	969	64.9	109	7.3	415	27.8	524	35.1
North Dakota	85	40	46.6	7	8.5	38	44.9	45	53.4
Ohio	1,395	934	67.0	104	7.5	356	25.6	461	33.0
Oklahoma	772	492	63.7	63	8.1	217	28.2	280	36.3
Oregon	524	303	57.8	50	9.5	171	32.6	221	42.2
Pennsylvania	1,469	894	60.9	100	6.8	475	32.3	575	39.1
Rhode Island	69	36	51.6	8	12.1	25	36.2	33	48.4
South Carolina	930	536	57.6	82	8.8	312	33.6	394	42.4
South Dakota	175	105	60.1	15	8.8	54	31.1	70	39.9
Tennessee	1,239	740	59.8	92	7.4	407	32.8	499	40.2
Texas	3,741	1,750	46.8	410	11.0	1,581	42.3	1,991	53.2
Utah	321	245	76.3	16	5.0	60	18.7	76	23.7
Vermont	88	49	56.1	6	7.1	32	36.9	39	43.9
Virginia	875	537	61.4	74	8.4	265	30.2	338	38.6
Washington	712	356	50.0	70	9.9	285	40.1	356	50.0
West Virginia	345	214	62.0	22	6.4	109	31.6	131	38.0
Wisconsin	761	439	57.6	62	8.1	261	34.2	322	42.4
Wyoming	143	85	59.4	21	14.4	37	26.2	58	40.6
U.S. Total	**41,907**	**24,781**	**59.1**	**3,732**	**8.9**	**13,395**	**32.0**	**17,126**	**40.9**
Puerto Rico	601	281	46.8	71	11.8	250	41.6	320	53.2