Traffic Safety Facts

2014 Data

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NHTSA

Key Findings

- In the 15- to 20-year-old age group, driver fatalities declined by 51 percent from 2005 to 2014.
- In 2014, there were 1,717 young drivers who died and an estimated 170,000 who were injured in motor vehicle crashes.
- In 2014, 9 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were 15 to 20 years old. Young drivers accounted for 6 percent of the total number of licensed drivers in the United States in 2014.
- The rate of drivers involved in fatal crashes per 100,000 licensed drivers for young female drivers was 19.85 per 100,000 licensed young female drivers in 2014. For young male drivers the involvement rate was 45.91, about 2.3 times that of young female drivers.
- During 2014, there were 225 motorcycle riders 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes, and an additional estimated 7,000 were injured.
- Of the young drivers with known restraint use, 54 percent of those who died in crashes in 2014 were restrained at the time of the crashes.
- In 2014, 26 percent of young drivers 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes had blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) of .01 g/dL or higher; 81 percent of those young drivers had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher.
- NHTSA estimates that minimum-drinking-age laws (21 years old) have saved an estimated 30,323 lives since 1975.

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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Young Drivers

For the purposes of this fact sheet, the term *young driver* refers to a person 15 to 20 years old operating a motor vehicle involved in a crash. People in this age group generally obtain their licenses for the first time and many are under a graduated driver licensing program as they learn driving skills. In all motorized jurisdictions around the world, young, inexperienced drivers have much higher crash rates than older, more experienced drivers.

In this 2014 fact sheet, the information on young drivers is presented as follows:

- Overview
- Fatalities
- Driver Involvement
- Motorcycles
- Restraint Use
- Alcohol
- Fatalities by State

Overview

In 2014, there were 1,717 young drivers 15 to 20 years old who died in motor vehicle crashes, an increase of 1 percent from 1,697 in 2013. Additionally, an estimated 170,000 young drivers were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2014, a decrease of 4 percent from 177,000 in 2013.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds, according to the most recent data available (2014) from the National Center for Health Statistics.[1]

There were 214.1 million licensed drivers in the United States in 2014. Young drivers accounted for 5.5 percent (11.7 million) of the total, a 7-percent decrease from the 12.6 million young drivers in 2005. Population for this age group decreased from 2005 to 2014 by 0.9 percent.[2]

Fatalities

Total fatalities in crashes with young drivers has decreased steadily over the 10-year period from 2005 to 2014, resulting in a 48-percent decrease in fatalities during that time, as seen in Table 1. Fatalities among young drivers, the passengers of young drivers, and occupants of other vehicles all declined by approximately half (51%, 54%, and 44%, respectively). However, nonoccupant fatalties in young-driver-related crashes decreased by only 28 percent during the same 10-year period.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, available at http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcaus10_us.html

[2] Licensed drivers – Federal Highway Administration, Population – Bureau of the Census.

Table 1
Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young Drivers, by Person Type and Year, 2005–2014

Year	Young Driver (15–20)	Passenger of Young Driver				Occupants of Other Vehicles	Nonoccupants	Total
		<15	15–20	21+	Unknown			
2005	3,474	229	1,429	533	6	1,946	624	8,241
2006	3,490	235	1,387	550	5	1,912	632	8,211
2007	3,190	223	1,371	443	7	1,829	631	7,694
2008	2,742	170	1,067	421	4	1,527	521	6,452
2009	2,343	145	958	351	2	1,381	469	5,649
2010	1,965	130	845	356	2	1,250	493	5,041
2011	1,993	118	777	298	1	1,122	473	4,782
2012	1,880	88	682	286	4	1,230	502	4,672
2013	1,697	120	633	313	3	1,133	469	4,368
2014	1,717	75	668	269	1	1,090	452	4,272

Source: Fatalilty Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2005–2013 Final File, 2014 Annual Report File (ARF).

In 2014, young drivers were involved in fatal crashes; they themselves made up 40 percent of the fatalities in those crashes. Of those passengers who died in crashes where young drivers were driving, 66 percent (668 of 1,013) were also 15 to 20 years old. In 2014, there were more fatalities of occupants in other vehicles during the crashes than there were fatalities of passengers of the young drivers. This is the third occurrence of that in the 10-year period; the first and second occurrences were in 2012 and 2013.

Driver Involvement

There were 3,885 young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014 – a 48-percent decrease from the 7,500 involved in 2005. This 48-percent decrease is larger than the 25-percent decrease for all drivers involved in the same time period. Table 2 shows both involvement of young drivers in fatal crashes as well as young driver fatalities in fatal crashes.

In 2014:

- Young drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased from 2005 for both young male drivers and female drivers (48% for both).
- The two-year comparison of total driver involvement in fatal crashes had almost no change from 44,804 in 2013 to 44,583 in 2014. During this same period, young-driver involvement decreased by 3 percent from 3,992 in 2013 to 3,885 in 2014.
- Total drivers involved in police-reported crashes increased by 7 percent to 10,773,000 from 10,043,000 in 2013. This compares to the number of young drivers involved in police-reported crashes, which increased by 4 percent to 1,318,000 from 1,273,000 in 2013.
- Nine percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes and 12 percent of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes were young drivers. However, young drivers were only 5.5 percent of all licensed drivers.

Table 2
Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, by Gender, 2005 and 2014

Gender	2005			2014			Percentage Change, 2005–2014	
	Total	Ages 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Ages 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Ages 15–20
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes								
Male	43,282	5,328	12.3%	32,572	2,749	8.4%	-25%	-48%
Female	15,059	2,172	14.4%	11,258	1,136	10.1%	-25%	-48%
Total	59,220	7,500	12.7%	44,583	3,885	8.7%	-25%	-48%
Driver Fatalities								
Male	20,865	2,577	12.4%	16,045	1,265	7.9%	-23%	-51%
Female	6,623	897	13.5%	4,714	452	9.6%	-29%	-50%
Total	27,491	3,474	12.6%	20,765	1,717	8.3%	-24%	-51%

Source: FARS 2005 Final File, 2014 ARF.
Note: Total includes unknown gender.

The rate of drivers involved in fatal crashes per 100,000 licensed drivers was higher for young male drivers compared to older male drivers. For young male drivers 15 to 20 years old, the driver involvement rate was 45.91 young male drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014 per 100,000 licensed young male drivers. For female drivers of all ages, the highest involvement rate was 19.85 young female drivers 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes in 2014 per 100,000 licensed young female drivers.

The 15- to 20-year-old age group accounted for 10.5 percent of all drivers involved in single-vehicle fatal crashes, compared to 7.8 percent in multiple-vehicle fatal crashes, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Percentage of Population and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age Group, 2014

	Age Group (Years)								
	<15	15–20	21–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–69	70+
Population (Percent)	19.2%	8.0%	5.8%	13.6%	12.7%	13.6%	12.6%	4.8%	9.7%
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes (Percent)									
- All Fatal Crashes	0.1%	8.9%	10.6%	20.5%	15.8%	16.8%	13.7%	4.4%	9.2%
- Single-Vehicle	0.2%	10.5%	12.4%	21.4%	15.2%	15.6%	13.0%	4.1%	7.7%
- Multi-Vehicle	0.1%	7.8%	9.5%	19.9%	16.1%	17.6%	14.2%	4.6%	10.2%
Licensed Drivers (Percent)	0%	5.5%	6.7%	17.5%	16.8%	18.4%	17.2%	6.5%	11.4%

Source: FARS 2014 ARF; Population – Bureau of the Census; Licensed Data – Federal Highway Administration.
Note: Percentages are based on known age groups only.

Among young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014, 25 percent (161 out of 647) of those who did not have valid operator licenses also had previous license suspensions or revocations at the time of the crashes (Table 4).

Table 4
Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, by Previous Driving Record and License Compliance, 2014

	License Compliance				Total	
	Valid		Invalid			
Driving Record	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Drivers Involved	3,214	—	647	—	3,885*	—
Previous Recorded Crashes	434	13.5%	56	8.7%	490	12.6%
Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations	191	5.9%	161	24.9%	352	9.1%
Previous DWI Convictions	23	0.7%	26	4.0%	49	1.3%
Previous Speeding Convictions	520	16.2%	77	11.9%	597	15.4%
Previous Other Harmful or Moving Convictions	477	14.8%	100	15.5%	577	14.9%

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.
*Total includes drivers with unknown previous records.

Motorcycles

The term motorcycle *rider* refers to the operator of the motorcycle only and the term *passenger* refers to any occupant not including the rider. The term *motorcyclist* refers to any occupant of a motorcycle, either the rider or the passenger.

During 2014, there were 225 young motorcycle riders 15 to 20 years old killed in crashes, a decrease of 4 percent from 235 young motorcycle riders killed in 2013. An additional estimated 7,000 young riders were injured in 2014, a 24-percent increase from an estimated 6,000 in 2013.

Helmets are estimated to be 37-percent effective in preventing fatalities among motorcycle riders and 41-percent effective among motorcycle passengers. NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,669 motorcyclists of all ages in 2014, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 660 lives could have been saved.

During 2014, 25 percent of the motorcycle riders 15 to 20 years old who were fatally injured in crashes were not wearing helmets (based on known helmet use) compared to 38 percent of all motorcycle riders who were fatally injured.

Of the young motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2014, 48 percent were either unlicensed or driving with invalid licenses compared to 28 percent of all motorcycle riders involved.

Restraint Use

Of the 3,885 young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014, the restraint use of those drivers is known for all but 291 drivers. For young drivers with known restraint use, 54 percent of those who died in the crash were restrained at the time of the crash compared to 53 percent of all drivers who died. For those young drivers who survived the fatal crash, 84 percent were restrained compared to 90 percent of all drivers who survived.

Alcohol

All States and the District of Columbia have 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws. Alcohol involvement includes a fatal crash in which a driver had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher. A driver is considered to be alcohol-impaired when the driver's BAC is .08 g/dL or higher. In 2014, 26 percent of the young drivers 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes had BACs of .01 g/dL or higher; 21 percent had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher, as shown in Table 5. Thus, of the 451 young drivers killed who had alcohol in their systems, 366 (81%) were at .08 g/dL or higher (past the legal driving limit for those *legally permitted* to consume alcohol).

Table 5

Alcohol Involvement Among 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Year and Driver Status, 2005 and 2014

Driver Status	Number of Drivers	BAC .00 g/dL		BAC .01+ g/dL		BAC .08+ g/dL	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2005							
Survived	4,026	3,378	84%	648	16%	488	12%
Killed	3,474	2,487	72%	987	28%	803	23%
Total	7,500	5,865	78%	1,635	22%	1,291	17%
2014							
Survived	2,168	1,775	82%	393	18%	302	14%
Killed	1,717	1,266	74%	451	26%	366	21%
Total	3,885	3,041	78%	844	22%	668	17%

Source: FARS 2005 Final File, 2014 ARF.

The number of young drivers involved in fatal crashes who had BACs of .01 g/dL or higher dropped by 48 percent, from 1,635 in 2005 to 844 in 2014. However, 22 percent of these drivers in both years had BACs of .01 or higher.

In 2014, 22 percent of the young drivers involved in fatal crashes had alcohol in their systems as reported through FARS. This compares to 2 percent of young drivers who were reported by police to have alcohol in their systems during injury crashes and 2 percent of young drivers during property-damage-only crashes, as reported through the General Estimates System (GES).

Among young drivers, 472 were killed at the age of 19 – highest among the young drivers; 29 percent of these drivers had alcohol in their systems at the time of the fatal crashes. Table 6 shows alcohol involvement for young drivers who were killed according to their age. The table clearly shows that of those young drivers killed, the percentage that involved alcohol increases as age increases.

Table 6

Young Drivers Killed, by Age and Percentage with BAC=.01 or Higher, 2014

Age (Years)	Total Number of Drivers Killed	Percentage of Drivers With BAC=.01+ g/dL	Percentage of Drivers With BAC=.08+ g/dL
15	39	8%	8%
16	142	13%	8%
17	239	22%	18%
18	383	24%	19%
19	472	29%	24%
20	442	33%	28%

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

For young drivers in fatal crashes, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2014, 24 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crashes (BACs of .01 g/dL or higher), compared with 16 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

In general, drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2014, 47 percent of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained (based on known restraint use). Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 64 percent were unrestrained (based on known restraint use). In comparison, of the non-drinking young drivers killed, 43 percent were unrestrained, as seen in Table 7.

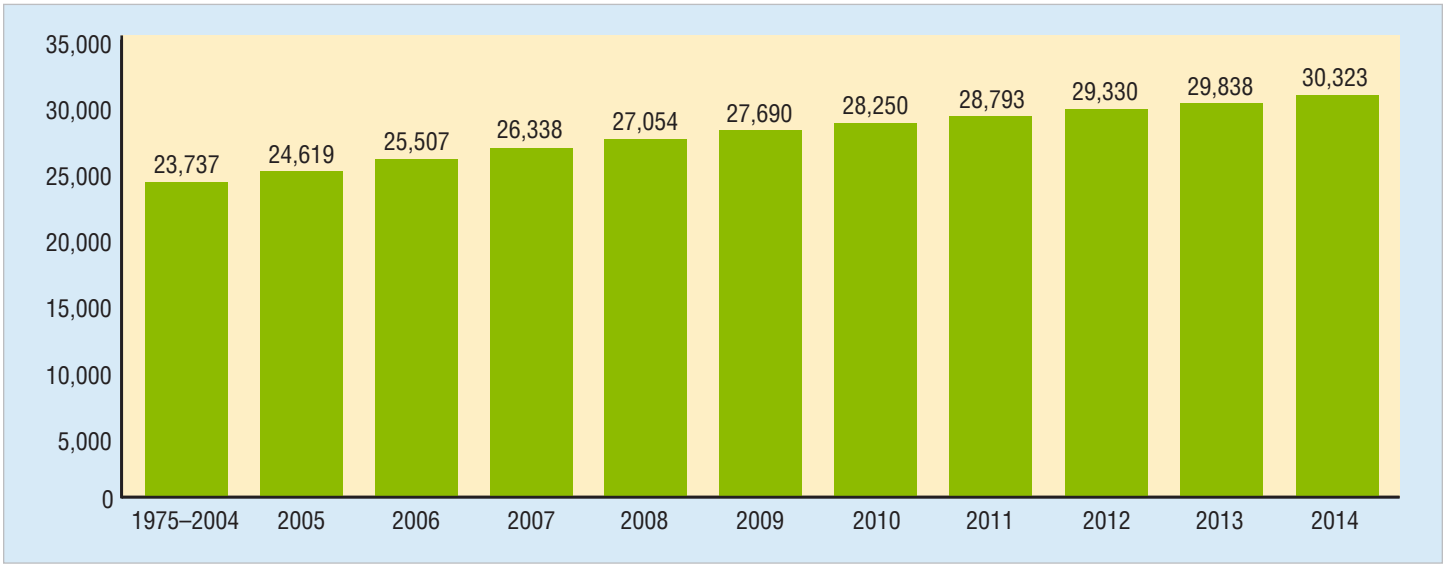
Table 7
Young Drivers of Passenger Vehicles in Fatal Crashes, by Restraint Use and Alcohol, 2014

Restraint Use	BAC=.00 g/dL		BAC=.01+ g/dL	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes				
Restraint Used	1,960	76%	377	53%
Restraint Not Used	610	24%	339	47%
Driver Fatalities				
Restraint Used	558	57%	133	36%
Restraint Not Used	419	43%	239	64%

Source: FARS 2014 ARF
Note: Based on known restraint use.

NHTSA estimates that the 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws have helped reduce alcohol traffic fatalities and have saved an estimated 30,323 lives since 1975 as shown in Figure 1. In 2014, an estimated 485 lives were saved by minimum-drinking-age laws.

Figure 1
Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum-Drinking-Age Laws, 1975–2014



Fatalities by State

Table 8 presents the number of young drivers killed, as well as the numbers of passengers of young drivers, occupants of other vehicles, and nonoccupants killed in young-driver crashes for each State and the District of Columbia in 2014. Also included in Table 8 is Puerto Rico, which is not included in the overall U.S. total. Among all States in 2014:

- Traffic fatalities in crashes involving young drivers ranged from 3 in the District of Columbia to 485 in Texas.
- The number of young drivers who died in crashes ranged from 3 (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, and Vermont) to 200 (Texas).

Table 8

Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young (15- to 20-Year-Old) Drivers, by State and Person Type, 2014

State	Young Drivers	Passengers in Young Drivers' Vehicles	Occupants of Other Vehicles	Nonoccupants	Total
Alabama	41	31	25	9	106
Alaska	4	2	3	3	12
Arizona	28	18	31	15	92
Arkansas	23	17	16	3	59
California	146	99	99	67	411
Colorado	28	24	15	10	77
Connecticut	10	1	5	2	18
Delaware	3	3	2	4	12
District of Columbia	3	0	0	0	3
Florida	103	42	72	54	271
Georgia	62	31	49	14	156
Hawaii	6	0	1	1	8
Idaho	12	7	5	2	26
Illinois	41	35	38	20	134
Indiana	34	21	28	6	89
Iowa	27	11	12	2	52
Kansas	29	10	15	4	58
Kentucky	43	22	24	4	93
Louisiana	36	23	16	10	85
Maine	9	6	3	0	18
Maryland	12	9	13	4	38
Massachusetts	10	6	7	4	27
Michigan	48	36	27	18	129
Minnesota	16	14	12	1	43
Mississippi	40	28	18	6	92
Missouri	45	28	35	5	113
Montana	17	6	3	0	26
Nebraska	16	5	10	0	31
Nevada	19	11	6	3	39
New Hampshire	5	2	3	1	11
New Jersey	23	20	11	12	66
New Mexico	22	9	6	3	40
New York	43	26	26	21	116
North Carolina	82	39	41	16	178
North Dakota	10	7	8	0	25
Ohio	65	36	45	5	151
Oklahoma	41	23	21	4	89
Oregon	19	9	12	2	42
Pennsylvania	53	32	48	13	146
Rhode Island	3	0	0	1	4
South Carolina	55	30	42	11	138
South Dakota	8	6	6	2	22
Tennessee	42	32	37	12	123
Texas	200	110	127	48	485
Utah	20	8	12	1	41
Vermont	3	1	1	1	6
Virginia	38	19	11	7	75
Washington	28	20	11	10	69
West Virginia	11	10	10	6	37
Wisconsin	30	22	21	3	76
Wyoming	5	6	1	2	14
U.S. Total	**1,717**	**1,013**	**1,090**	**452**	**4,272**
Puerto Rico	18	7	7	9	41

Source: FARS 2014 ARF.

This fact sheet contains information on motor vehicle fatalities and fatal crashes, based on data from the Fatality Analysis 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). Crash and injury statistics are based on data from the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) General Estimates System (GES). The NASS GES is a probability-based sample of police-reported crashes, from 60 locations across the country, from which estimates of national totals for injury and property-damage-only crashes are derived.

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For More Information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), NSA-230, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted at 800-934-8517 or by e-mail at ncsaweb@dot.gov. General information on highway traffic safety can be found at www.nhtsa.gov/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 *Alcohol-Impaired Driving, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists, Children, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Occupant Protection, Older Population, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Rural/Urban Comparison, School-Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates, State Traffic Data,* and *Summary of Motor Vehicle Crashes.* 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 found at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx.

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