

# Traffic Safety Facts

2014 Data

July 2016

DOT HS 812 301



## Key Findings

- Of the 32,675 motor vehicle traffic fatalities in 2014 there were 16,710 (51%) that occurred in rural areas, 15,487 (47%) that occurred in urban areas, and 478 (1%) that occurred in unknown areas.
- According to the 2014 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau an estimated 19 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. However, rural fatalities accounted for 51 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2014.
- Rural traffic fatalities decreased by 34 percent from 24,587 in 2005 to 16,710 in 2014. Urban traffic fatalities decreased by 17 percent from 18,627 in 2005 to 15,487 in 2014.
- In 2014, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 2.4 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (1.81 and 0.74, respectively).
- Of the 16,710 rural traffic fatalities in 2014, there were 4,906 people (29%) killed in speeding-related crashes. Of the 15,487 urban traffic fatalities in 2014, there were 4,283 people (28%) killed in speeding-related crashes.
- Rural alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 34 percent from 7,721 in 2005 to 5,134 in 2014. Urban alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 19 percent from 5,791 in 2005 to 4,701 in 2014.
- The 2014 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) observed that the seat belt use rate among front seat passenger vehicle occupants in urban areas was 86 percent, and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 83 percent.
- Based on known restraint use in 2014 fatal crashes, 51 percent of rural passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained as compared to 45 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed.



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**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

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## Rural/Urban Comparison

For the purpose of this fact sheet, rural and urban boundaries are determined by the State highway departments and approved by the Federal Highway Administration. The State highway departments use the U.S. Census Bureau's rural and urban boundaries.<sup>1</sup>

In this 2014 fact sheet, the rural and urban information is presented as follows:

- Overview
- Time of Day
- Speeding
- Alcohol
- Restraint Use
- Rollover Crashes
- Driver Characteristics
- Nonoccupants
- Fatalities by State

### Overview

In 2014:

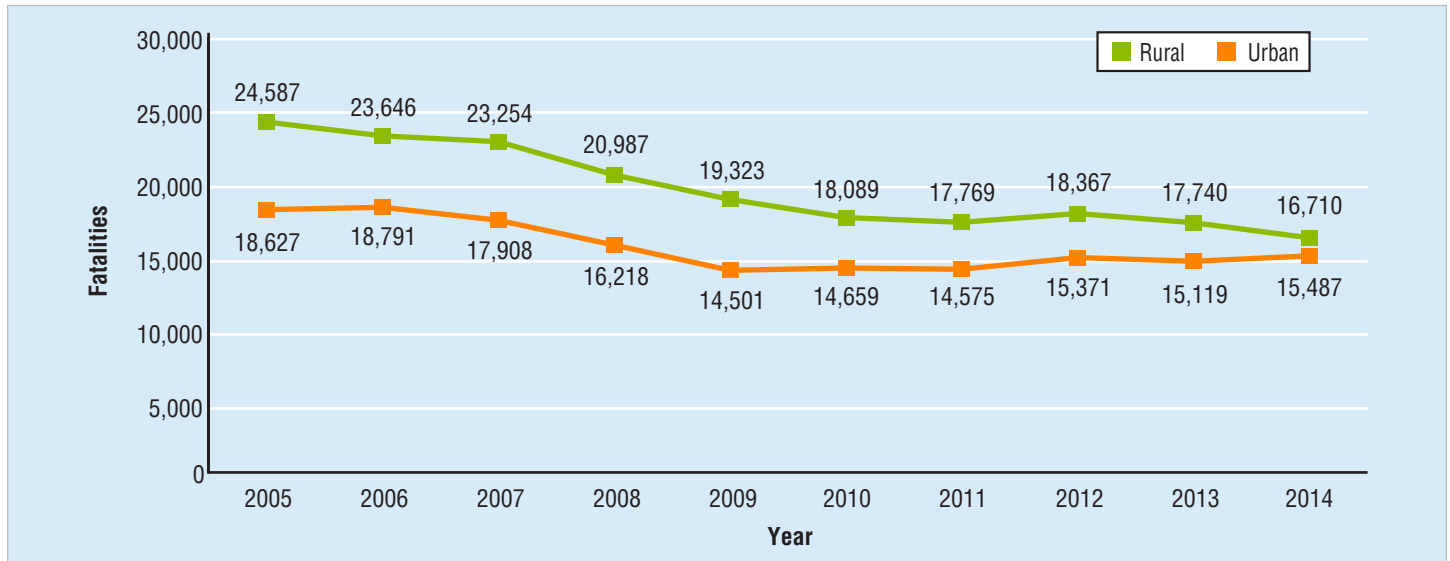
- There were 29,989 fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes resulting in 32,675 fatalities.
- Of these 29,989 fatal traffic crashes, there were 15,031 (50%) that occurred in rural areas, 14,509 (48%) that occurred in urban areas, and 449 (1%) that occurred in unknown areas.
- Of these 32,675 traffic fatalities, there were 16,710 (51%) that occurred in rural areas, 15,487 (47%) that occurred in urban areas, and 478 (1%) that occurred in unknown areas.
- According to the 2014 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 19 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. However, rural fatalities accounted for 51 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2014.

Figure 1 presents the motor vehicle traffic fatality trends in the most recent 10-year period for which data is available by location (rural and urban):

- Rural fatalities decreased by 34 percent from 24,587 in 2005 to 16,710 in 2014.
- Urban fatalities decreased by 17 percent from 18,627 in 2005 to 15,487 in 2014. However, urban fatalities in 2014 is the highest since 2008.

<sup>1</sup> See the U.S. Census Bureau link to define urban and rural areas: [www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html)

Figure 1  
**Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities, by Year and Location, 2005–2014**

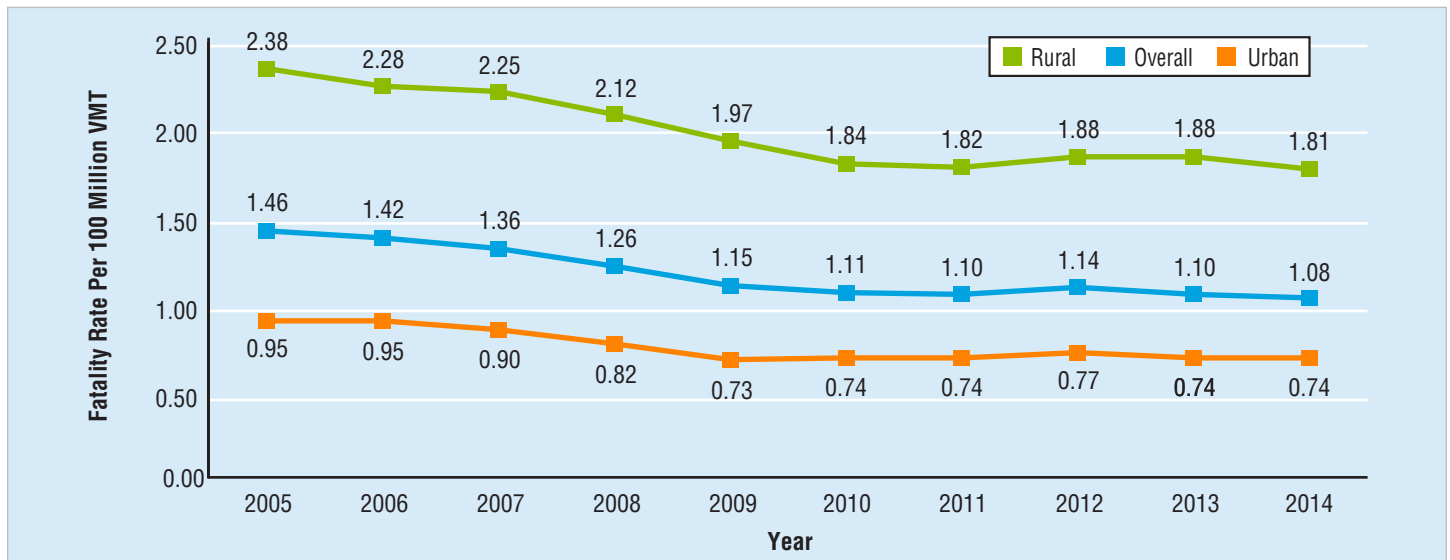


Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2005–2013 Final File, 2014 Annual Report File (ARF)

Figure 2 presents the fatality rates per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by location (rural, urban, and overall) in the most recent 10-year period for which data is available:

- The fatality rate in rural areas decreased by 24 percent from 2.38 in 2005 to 1.81 in 2014.
- The fatality rate in urban areas decreased by 22 percent from 0.95 in 2005 to 0.74 in 2014.
- In 2014, the fatality rate was 2.4 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (1.81 and 0.74, respectively).

Figure 2  
**Fatality Rates per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled, by Year and Location, 2005–2014**



Sources: FARS 2005-2013 Final File, 2014 ARF; VMT – Federal Highway Administration

## Time of Day

Of the 15,031 rural fatal crashes in 2014, there were 7,982 (53%) that occurred during the day (6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.) and 6,891 (46%) that occurred during the night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.). Of the 14,509 urban fatal crashes in 2014, there were 6,300 (43%) that occurred during the day and 8,148 (56%) that occurred during the night. In short, more rural fatal crashes occurred during the day and more urban fatal crashes occurred during the night.

## Speeding

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration considers a crash to be speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related offense or if an officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was a contributing factor in the crash.

In 2014:

- Of the 32,675 traffic fatalities, there were 9,262 (28%) who were killed in speeding-related crashes.

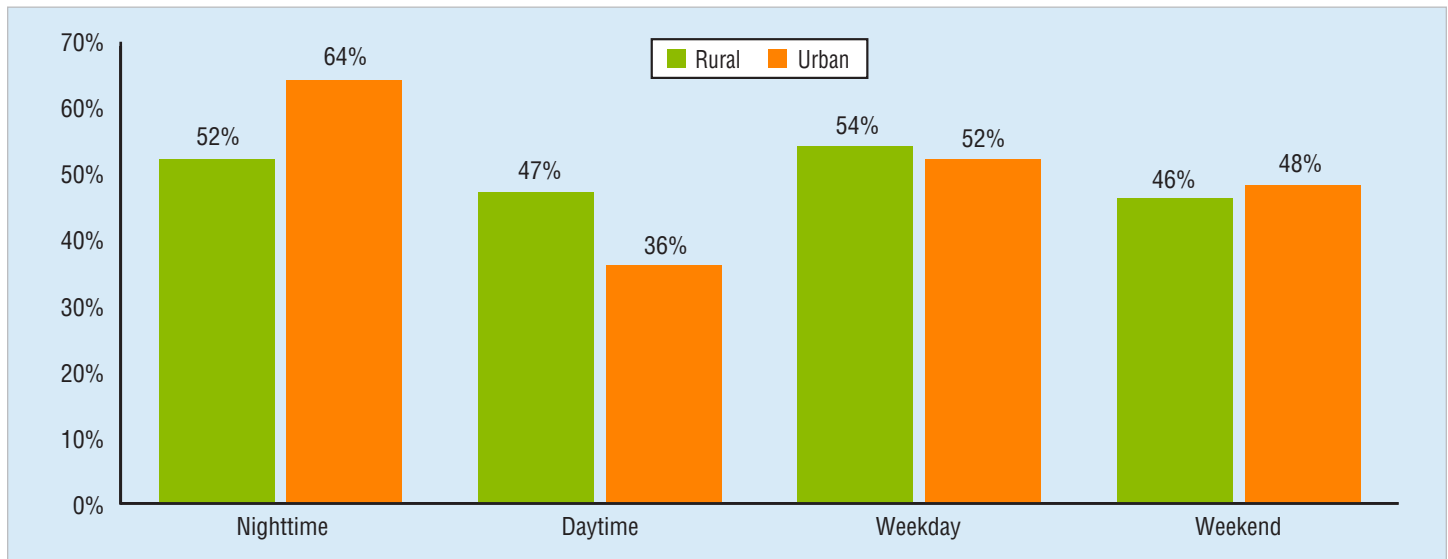
- Of the 16,710 rural traffic fatalities, there were 4,906 (29%) who were killed in speeding-related crashes.
- Of the 15,487 urban traffic fatalities, there were 4,283 (28%) who were killed in speeding-related crashes.

Figure 3 shows the rural and urban percentages of speeding-related fatalities in traffic crashes in 2014 by time of day (nighttime – 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m./daytime – 6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.) and day of week (weekday – Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 5:59 p.m./weekend – Friday 6 p.m. to Monday 5:59 a.m.):

- Over half (52%) of rural area speeding-related fatalities occurred at night and 46 percent occurred over the weekend.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of urban area speeding-related fatalities occurred at night and 48 percent occurred over the weekend.

Figure 3

### Rural and Urban Percentages of Speeding-Related Fatalities in Traffic Crashes, by Time of Day and Day of Week, 2014



Source: FARS 2014 ARF

Note: Nighttime – 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.; daytime – 6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.; weekday – Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 5:59 p.m.; weekend – Friday 6 p.m. to Monday 5:59 a.m.

In 2014, 65 percent of drivers involved in urban fatal crashes were on roadways where the posted speed limits were 50 miles per hour (mph) or less. In rural fatal crashes, 71 percent of drivers involved were on roadways where the posted speed limit was 55 mph or higher.

## Alcohol

Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) are .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatality occurring in a crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired-driving fatality.

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of traffic fatalities by location (rural/urban) and the highest driver BAC in the crash if one or more drivers were alcohol-impaired.

- In 2014, the proportions of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities were similar between rural and urban areas (31% and 30%, respectively).

- Of the 9,967 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in 2014, there were 5,134 (52%) that occurred in rural areas and 4,701 (47%) that occurred in urban areas.
- Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 27 percent from 13,582 in 2005 to 9,967 in 2014.
  - Rural alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 34 percent from 7,721 in 2005 to 5,134 in 2014.
  - Urban alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 19 percent from 5,791 in 2005 to 4,701 in 2014.

Table 1  
**Traffic Fatalities, by Location and the Highest Driver\* BAC in the Crash, 2005 and 2014**

Location	2005			2014		
	Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+		Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Rural	24,587	7,721	31%	16,710	5,134	31%
Urban	18,627	5,791	31%	15,487	4,701	30%
<b>Total**</b>	<b>43,510</b>	<b>13,582</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32,675</b>	<b>9,967</b>	<b>31%</b>

Source: FARS 2005 Final File, 2014 ARF

\*Includes motorcycle riders.

\*\*Includes fatalities where location was unknown.

Of the 44,583 drivers involved in fatal traffic crashes in 2014, there were 9,417 (21%) who were alcohol-impaired. Of these alcohol-impaired drivers, there were 4,778 (51%) who were driving in rural areas at the time of the crash and 4,519 (48%) who were driving in urban areas.

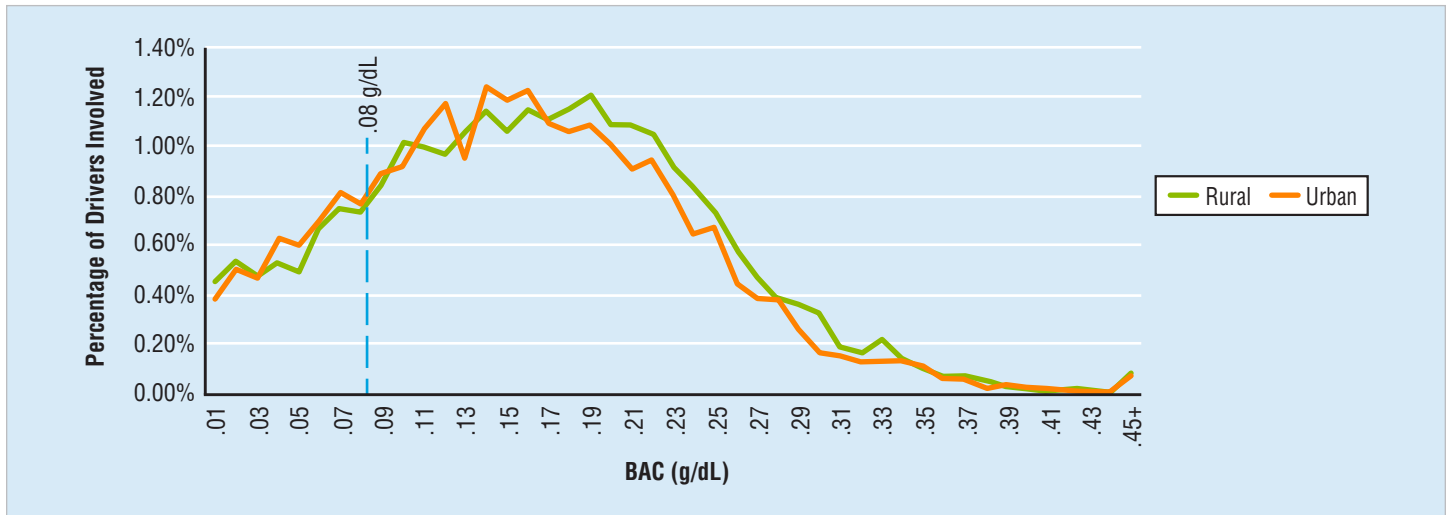
The highest percentages of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes among all age groups in 2014 were drivers 21 to 24 years old (30%), followed by drivers 25 to 34 years old (29%) and 35 to 44 years old (24%). Rural and urban alcohol-impaired drivers followed this trend with 21- to 24-year-olds (31% and 30%, respectively),

followed by 25-to 34-year-olds (30% and 28%, respectively) and 35-to 44-year-olds (26% and 22%, respectively).

In cases where drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014 had one or more previous convictions for driving while intoxicated (DWI), 58 percent of rural drivers were alcohol-impaired and 51 percent of urban drivers were alcohol-impaired.

As shown in Figure 4, the most frequently recorded BAC among drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes in rural areas was .19 g/dL. For urban areas, it was .14 g/dL.

Figure 4  
**Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Location, 2014**



Source: FARS 2014 ARF

### Restraint Use

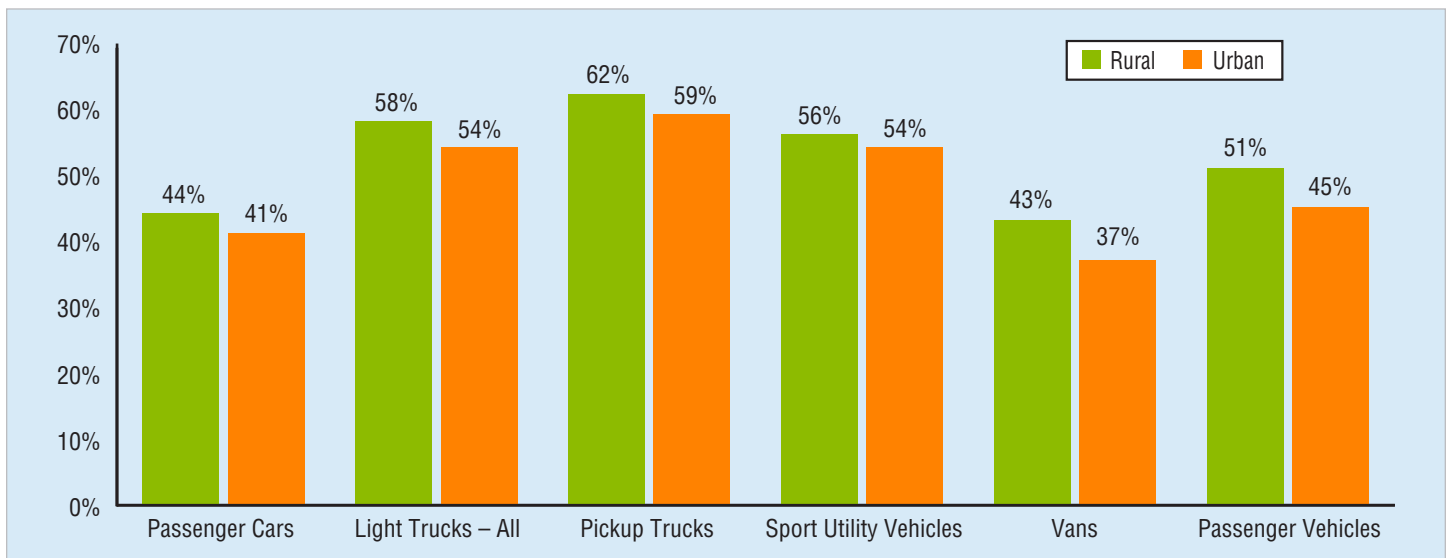
The 2014 NOPUS observed that the seat belt use rate among front seat passenger vehicle (defined as passenger cars and light trucks) occupants in urban areas was 86 percent, and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 83 percent (see NHTSA Research Note Seat Belt Use in 2014 – Overall Results, Report No. DOT HS 812 113).

Of the 21,022 passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2014, there were 12,444 (59%) who were killed in rural areas and 8,332 (40%) who were killed in urban areas.

Figure 5 presents the 2014 rural and urban percentages (based on known restraint use) of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities by vehicle type (passenger cars and light trucks including pickup trucks, SUVs, and vans). In 2014 (based on known restraint use):

- Fifty-one percent of rural passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained as compared to 45 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed.
- Nearly two-thirds (62%) of rural pickup truck occupants killed were unrestrained – the highest percentage of any passenger vehicle occupants killed among both rural and urban areas.

Figure 5  
**Rural and Urban Percentages of Unrestrained\* Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities, by Vehicle Type, 2014**



Source: FARS 2014 ARF

\*Based on known restraint use.

## Rollover Crashes

Of the 12,444 rural passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2014, there were 4,729 (38%) who were in vehicles that rolled over; of the 8,332 urban passenger vehicles occupants killed, there were 2,063 (25%) who were in vehicles that rolled over. Data further shows that 68 percent of rural and 63 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained in rollover vehicles (based on known restraint use).

In 2014, SUVs involved in rural fatal crashes experienced the highest rollover percentage at 39 percent. Other rural rollover percentages were 32 percent for pickup trucks, 20 percent for passenger cars, 21 percent for vans, and 17 percent for large trucks. In urban areas, vehicles experienced lower rollover percentages: 18 percent for SUVs, 15 percent for pickup trucks, 9 percent for vans, 9 percent for passenger cars, and 9 percent for large trucks.

## Driver Characteristics

In 2014, rural drivers involved in fatal crashes were found to have a higher percentage of valid driver's licenses than urban drivers (87% and 83%, respectively).

There were 20,765 drivers killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2014. Sixty-three percent of rural drivers died at the scenes of the crashes, compared to 35 percent of urban drivers. Data also shows that 40 percent of all drivers killed were transported to hospitals and 3 percent of these drivers died en route. Rural drivers represented 63 percent of drivers who died en route to hospitals compared to 38 percent for urban drivers.

## Nonoccupants

Nonoccupants are defined as pedestrians, pedalcyclists, or other nonoccupants. In 2014:

- Of the 4,884 pedestrians killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 1,073 (22%) were rural pedestrians, 3,703 (76%) were urban pedestrians, and 108 (2%) were unknowns.
- Of the 726 pedalcyclists killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 202 (28%) were rural pedalcyclists, 494 (68%) were urban pedalcyclists, and 30 (4%) were unknowns.

## Fatalities by State

For each State and the District of Columbia in 2014, Table 2 presents the number and percentage of rural and urban traffic fatalities. Puerto Rico is included in this table, but not included in the overall U.S. total. In 2014, the total number of unknowns was unusually higher compared to previous years because of two States: Florida (362) and Delaware (54).

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).

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2016, July). *Rural/urban comparison: 2014 data*. (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 301). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

## 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](mailto:ncsaweb@dot.gov). General information on highway traffic safety can be found at [www.nhtsa.gov/NCSA](http://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, School-Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates, State Traffic Data, Summary of Motor Vehicle Crashes*, and *Young Drivers*. 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](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx).



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Table 2  
Rural and Urban Traffic Fatalities, by State, 2014

State	Location						Total	
	Rural		Urban		Unknown			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	544	66%	274	33%	2	0%	820	100%
Alaska	42	58%	31	42%	0	0%	73	100%
Arizona	286	37%	482	63%	2	0%	770	100%
Arkansas	354	76%	112	24%	0	0%	466	100%
California	1,163	38%	1,910	62%	1	0%	3,074	100%
Colorado	228	47%	260	53%	0	0%	488	100%
Connecticut	60	24%	188	76%	0	0%	248	100%
Delaware	37	31%	30	25%	54	45%	121	100%
District of Columbia	0	0%	23	100%	0	0%	23	100%
Florida	506	20%	1,626	65%	362	15%	2,494	100%
Georgia	462	40%	702	60%	0	0%	1,164	100%
Hawaii	30	32%	65	68%	0	0%	95	100%
Idaho	151	81%	35	19%	0	0%	186	100%
Illinois	417	45%	506	55%	1	0%	924	100%
Indiana	474	64%	272	36%	0	0%	746	100%
Iowa	254	79%	67	21%	0	0%	321	100%
Kansas	298	77%	87	23%	0	0%	385	100%
Kentucky	517	77%	155	23%	0	0%	672	100%
Louisiana	375	51%	343	47%	19	3%	737	100%
Maine	116	89%	15	11%	0	0%	131	100%
Maryland	149	34%	293	66%	0	0%	442	100%
Massachusetts	33	10%	295	90%	0	0%	328	100%
Michigan	378	42%	522	58%	1	0%	901	100%
Minnesota	262	73%	99	27%	0	0%	361	100%
Mississippi	551	91%	56	9%	0	0%	607	100%
Missouri	471	61%	295	39%	0	0%	766	100%
Montana	178	93%	14	7%	0	0%	192	100%
Nebraska	177	79%	48	21%	0	0%	225	100%
Nevada	90	31%	200	69%	0	0%	290	100%
New Hampshire	48	51%	47	49%	0	0%	95	100%
New Jersey	78	14%	475	85%	3	1%	556	100%
New Mexico	246	64%	132	34%	5	1%	383	100%
New York	390	38%	649	62%	0	0%	1,039	100%
North Carolina	896	70%	388	30%	0	0%	1,284	100%
North Dakota	116	86%	19	14%	0	0%	135	100%
Ohio	496	49%	506	50%	4	0%	1,006	100%
Oklahoma	468	70%	201	30%	0	0%	669	100%
Oregon	237	66%	120	34%	0	0%	357	100%
Pennsylvania	606	51%	581	49%	8	1%	1,195	100%
Rhode Island	6	12%	46	88%	0	0%	52	100%
South Carolina	677	82%	147	18%	0	0%	824	100%
South Dakota	115	85%	21	15%	0	0%	136	100%
Tennessee	453	47%	509	53%	0	0%	962	100%
Texas	1,779	50%	1,753	50%	6	0%	3,538	100%
Utah	125	49%	131	51%	0	0%	256	100%
Vermont	37	84%	7	16%	0	0%	44	100%
Virginia	455	65%	241	34%	7	1%	703	100%
Washington	214	46%	246	53%	2	0%	462	100%
West Virginia	205	75%	67	25%	0	0%	272	100%
Wisconsin	339	67%	167	33%	1	0%	507	100%
Wyoming	121	81%	29	19%	0	0%	150	100%
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>16,710</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>15,487</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>32,675</b>	<b>100%</b>
Puerto Rico	194	64%	110	36%	0	0%	304	100%

Source: FARS 2014 ARF