Traffic Safety Facts
2015 Data

December 2016

DOT HS 812 350

NHTSA

Alcohol-Impaired Driving

Key Findings

- In 2015, there were 10,265 fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes involving drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher. This totaled 29 percent of all traffic fatalities for the year.
- An average of 1 alcohol-impaired-driving fatality occurred every 51 minutes in 2015.
- The estimated economic cost of all alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in the United States in 2010 (the most recent year for which cost data is available) was $44 billion.
- Of the traffic fatalities among children 14 and younger in 2015, 16 percent occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.
- In 2015, the 21- to 24-year-old age group had the highest percentage (28%) of drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher in fatal crashes compared to other age groups.
- The percentage of drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher in fatal crashes in 2015 was highest for fatalities involving motorcycle riders (27%), compared to passenger cars (21%), light trucks (20%), and large trucks (2%).
- The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2015 was 3.5 times higher when the fatal crashes occurred at night than during the day.
- Among the 10,265 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in 2015, 67 percent (6,865) were in crashes in which at least one driver in the crash had a BAC of .15 g/dL or higher.

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

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Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) are .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatal crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired-driving crash, and fatalities occurring in those crashes are considered to be alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities. The term "driver" refers to the operator of any motor vehicle, including a motorcycle.

Estimates of alcohol-impaired driving are generated using BAC values reported to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and BAC values imputed when they are not reported. The term "alcohol-impaired" does not indicate that a crash or a fatality was *caused* by alcohol impairment, only that an alcohol-impaired driver was involved in the crash.

In this fact sheet for 2015, the alcohol-impaired-driving information is presented as follows:

- Overview
- Economic Cost for All Traffic Crashes
- Children
- Time of Day and Day of Week
- Drivers
- Fatalities by State

This fact sheet contains information on fatal motor vehicle crashes and fatalities based on data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). FARS is a census of fatal crashes in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico is not included in U.S. totals).

Overview

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have by law set a threshold making it illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher. In 2015, there were 10,265 people killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes, an average of 1 alcohol-impaired-driving fatality every 51 minutes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 29 percent of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States in 2015.

Of the 10,265 people who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2015, there were 6,424 drivers (63%) who had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher. The remaining fatalities consisted of 2,908 motor vehicle occupants (28%) and 933 nonoccupants (9%). The distribution of fatalities in these crashes by role is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Fatalities, by Role, in Crashes Involving at Least One Driver With a BAC of .08 g/dL or Higher, 2015

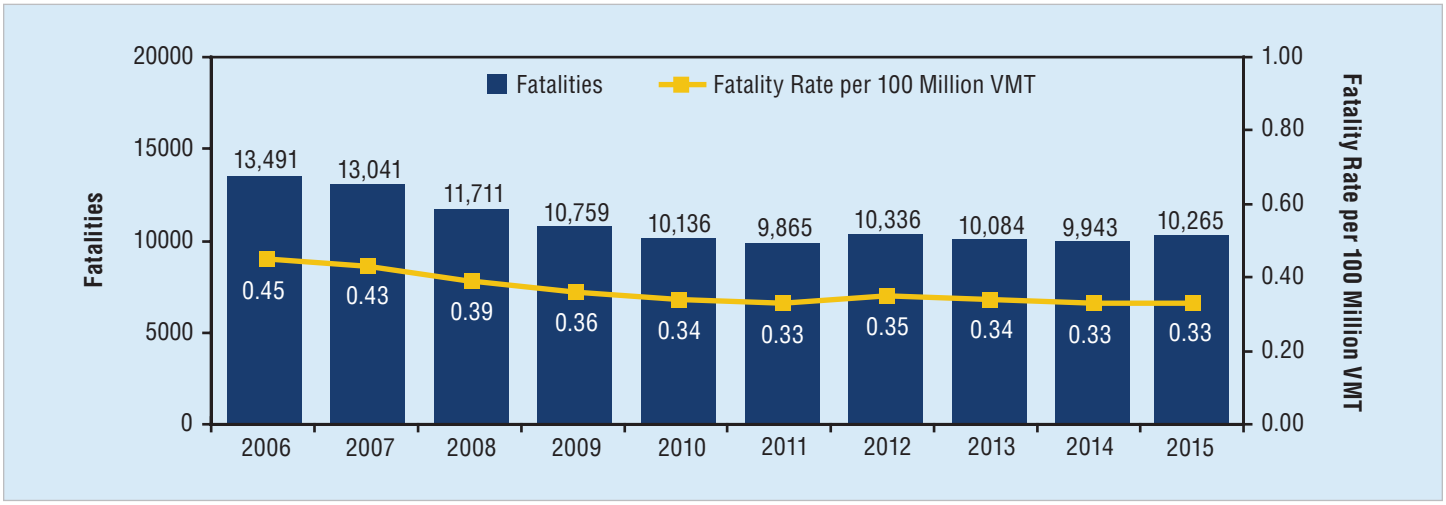
Role	Number	Percent of Total Fatalities
Driver With BAC=.08+	6,424	63%
Passenger Riding With Driver With BAC=.08+	1,502	15%
Subtotal	**7,926**	**77%**
Occupants of Other Vehicles	1,406	14%
Nonoccupants (pedestrians/pedalcyclists/other)	933	9%
Total Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities	**10,265**	**100%**

Source: FARS 2015 Annual Report File (ARF).
Note: Percentages may not equal sum of components due to independent rounding.

From 2014 to 2015, fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes increased by 3.2 percent (9,943 to 10,265 fatalities). Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in the past 10 years have declined by 24 percent from 13,491 in 2006 to 10,265 in 2015. The national rate of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in 2015 was 0.33 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which is the same as in 2014. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate in the past 10 years has declined by 27 percent, from 0.45 in 2006 to 0.33 in 2015. Figure 1 presents the fatality numbers and rates for the past decade.

Figure 1

Fatalities and Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT in Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Crashes, 2006-2015



Sources: Fatalities – FARS 2006-2014 Final File, 2015 ARF; 2006-2014 VMT – Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Annual Highway Statistics; 2015 VMT – FHWA's Traffic Volume Trends (August 2016)

Economic Cost for All Traffic Crashes

The estimated economic cost of all motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States in 2010 (the most recent year for which cost data is available) was $242 billion, of which $44 billion resulted from alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Included in the economic costs are:

- Lost productivity,
- Workplace losses,
- Legal and court expenses,
- Medical costs,
- Emergency medical services (EMS),
- Insurance administration,
- Congestion, and
- Property damage

These costs represent the tangible losses that result from motor vehicle traffic crashes. However, in cases of serious injury or death, such costs fail to capture the relatively intangible value of lost quality-of-life that results from these injuries. When quality-of-life valuations are considered, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States in 2010 was an estimated $836 billion, of which $201.1 billion resulted from alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. For further information on cost estimates, see *The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised).*[1]

Children

In 2015, a total of 1,132 children 14 and younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of these 1,132 fatalities, 181 children (16%) died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Of these 181 child deaths:

- 92 (51%) were occupants of vehicles with drivers who had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher;
- 59 (33%) were occupants of other vehicles;
- 29 (16%) were nonoccupants (pedestrians, pedalcyclists, or other nonoccupants); and
- 1 (<1%) was a driver.

Time of Day and Day of Week

The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2015 was 3.5 times higher at night than during the day (32% versus 9%). In 2015, 15 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-impaired, compared to 28 percent on weekends. Table 2 presents information on drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2006 and 2015 by time of day and day of week, as well as single-vehicle and multiple-vehicle crash data.

[1] Blincoe, L. J., Miller, T. R., Zaloshnja, E., & Lawrence, B. A. (2014). *The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2010 (Revised)* (Report No. DOT HS 812 013). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/812013.pdf

Table 2

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes With BACs of .08 g/dL or Higher, by Crash Type, Time of Day and Day of Week, 2006 and 2015

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	2006			2015			Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2006–2015
	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		
		Number	Percent of Total		Number	Percent of Total	
Total	57,846	12,551	22%	48,613	9,649	20%	-2
Drivers by Crash Type and Time of Day							
Single-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	22,620	8,318	37%	18,599	6,046	33%	-4
Daytime	8,790	1,532	17%	7,380	1,282	17%	0
Nighttime	13,543	6,628	49%	10,996	4,650	42%	-7
Multiple-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	35,226	4,233	12%	30,014	3,603	12%	0
Daytime	21,776	1,160	5%	18,276	1,047	6%	+1
Nighttime	13,406	3,067	23%	11,701	2,546	22%	-1
Drivers by Time of Day							
Daytime	30,566	2,692	9%	25,656	2,329	9%	0
Nighttime	26,949	9,694	36%	22,697	7,196	32%	-4
Drivers by Day of Week and Time of Day							
Weekday*	34,452	5,310	15%	29,789	4,321	15%	0
Daytime	22,081	1,536	7%	18,948	1,377	7%	0
Nighttime	12,264	3,727	30%	10,745	2,905	27%	-3
Weekend*	23,302	7,202	31%	18,763	5,304	28%	-3
Daytime	8,485	1,156	14%	6,708	952	14%	0
Nighttime	14,685	5,967	41%	11,952	4,292	36%	-5

Source: FARS 2006 Final File, 2015 ARF.
Daytime – 6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.
Nighttime – 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.
Weekday – Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 5:59 p.m.
Weekend – Friday 6 p.m. to Monday 5:59 a.m.
*Includes drivers involved in fatal crashes when time of day was unknown.

Drivers

Table 3 provides information on alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes by the age of the driver as well as gender and vehicle type. In fatal crashes in 2015, the highest percentage of drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher was for 21- to 24-year-old drivers (28%), followed by 25- to 34-year-old drivers (27%). The 10-year trend of alcohol-impaired drivers involved increased for older drivers when compared to younger drivers.

The percentages of drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher involved in fatal crashes in 2015 were 21 percent among males and 14 percent among females. In 2015, there were 4 male alcohol-impaired drivers involved for every female alcohol-impaired driver involved (7,595 versus 1,761).

The percentages of drivers involved in fatal crashes with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher in 2015 by vehicle type were 27 percent for motorcycles, 21 percent for passenger cars, and 20 percent for light trucks (22% for pickup trucks, 20% for SUVs, and 10% for vans). The percentage of drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher in fatal crashes was the lowest for drivers of large trucks (2%).

Table 3

Drivers With BACs of .08 g/dL or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age Group, Gender, and Vehicle Type, 2006 and 2015

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	2006			2015			Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2006 and 2015
	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		
		Number	Percent of Total		Number	Percent of Total	
Total	57,846	12,551	22%	48,613	9,649	20%	-2
Drivers by Age Group (Years)							
16–20	7,315	1,392	19%	4,214	659	16%	-3
21–24	6,480	2,143	33%	4,942	1,398	28%	-5
25–34	11,279	3,257	29%	9,860	2,623	27%	-2
35–44	10,379	2,597	25%	7,675	1,733	23%	-2
45–54	9,234	1,744	19%	7,852	1,501	19%	0
55–64	5,894	778	13%	6,453	905	14%	+1
65–74	3,029	245	8%	3,767	349	9%	+1
75+	2,967	148	5%	2,723	158	6%	+1
Drivers by Gender							
Male	42,223	10,154	24%	35,472	7,595	21%	-3
Female	14,753	2,208	15%	12,220	1,761	14%	-1
Drivers by Vehicle Type							
Passenger Cars	24,162	5,466	23%	19,413	4,085	21%	-2
Light Trucks*	22,307	5,358	24%	18,570	3,673	20%	-4
–Pickup Trucks	*10,523*	*2,873*	*27%*	*8,651*	*1,900*	*22%*	*-5*
–SUVs	*8,289*	*1,986*	*24%*	*7,597*	*1,529*	*20%*	*-4*
–Vans	*3,409*	*488*	*14%*	*2,157*	*214*	*10%*	*-4*
Large Trucks	4,729	54	1%	3,996	60	2%	+1
Motorcycles	4,961	1,299	26%	5,071	1,365	27%	+1

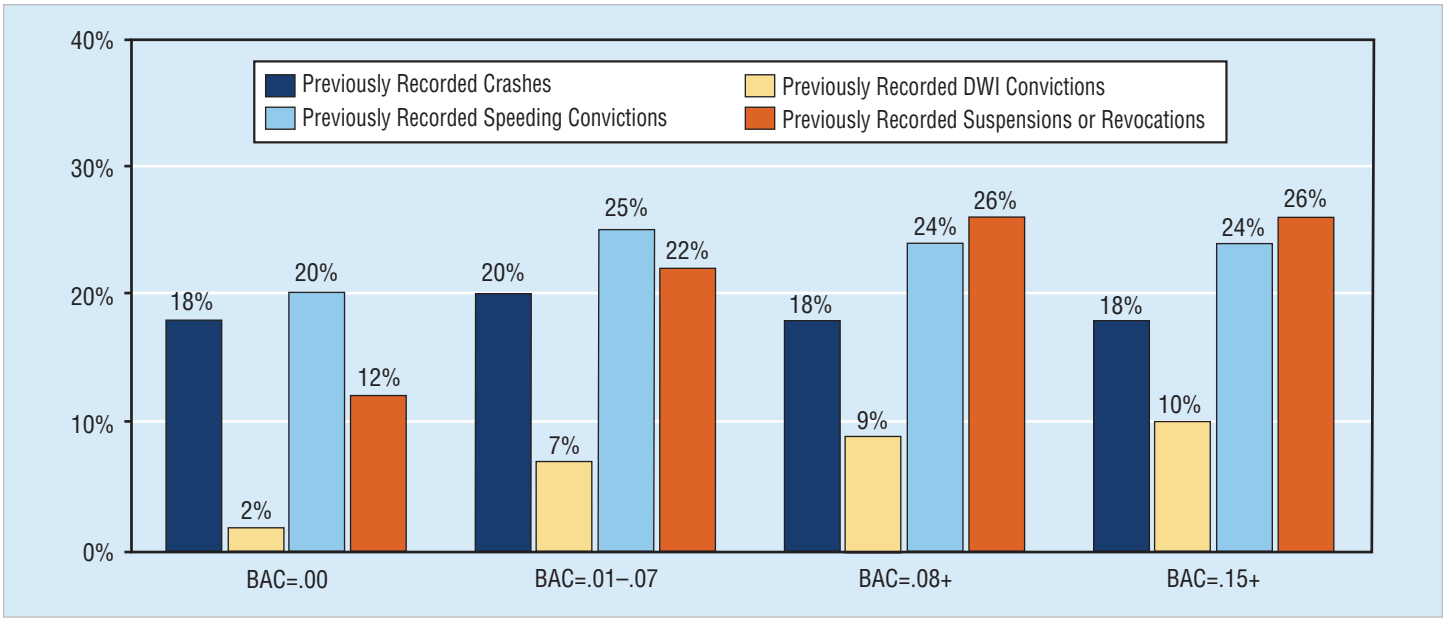
Source: FARS 2006 Final File, 2015 ARF.
Note: Numbers shown for groups of drivers do not add to the total number of drivers due to unknown/not reported or other data not included.
*Includes other/unknown light-truck vehicle types.

In 2015, there were 4,940 passenger vehicle drivers killed with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher ("passenger vehicles" include passenger cars as well as light trucks such as vans, SUVs, and pickup trucks). Of these driver fatalities for which restraint use was known, 66 percent were unrestrained. Based on known restraint use, 53 percent of passenger vehicle drivers killed who had BACs of .01 to .07 g/dL were unrestrained, and 39 percent of passenger vehicle drivers killed who had no alcohol (.00 g/dL) were unrestrained.

Figure 2 shows information on the driving record for drivers in fatal crashes in 2015, at different BAC levels. There was little difference by BAC level in the percentage of drivers with previously recorded crashes. Drivers with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher involved in fatal crashes were 4.5 times more likely to have prior convictions for driving while impaired (DWI) than were drivers with no alcohol (9% and 2%, respectively). Note that FARS records drivers' previous crashes, suspensions/revocations, and convictions that occurred up to 5 years prior to the date of the crash starting in 2015.

Figure 2

Previous 5-Year* Driving Records of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by BAC, 2015

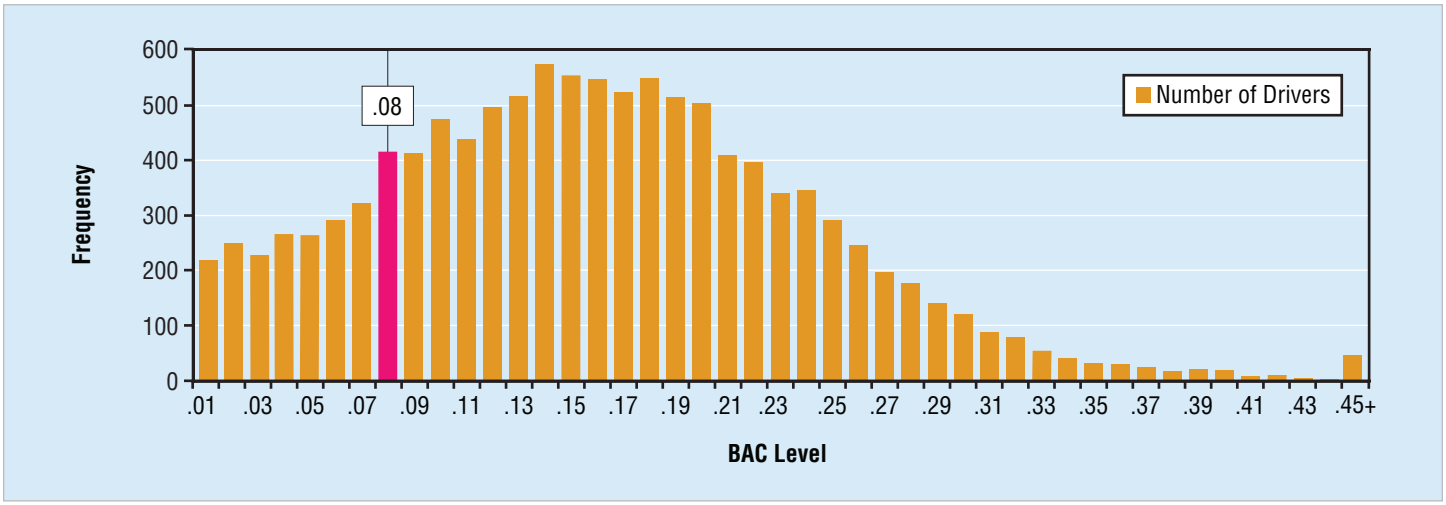


Source: FARS 2015 ARF.
* FARS recorded previous driving records up to 3 years prior to the date of the crash in FARS 2014 and earlier.

While a BAC of .08 g/dL is considered to be impaired in all States, the large majority of drivers in fatal crashes with any measurable alcohol had levels far higher. In 2015, 84 percent (9,649) of the 11,482 drivers with BACs of .01 g/dL or higher who were involved in fatal crashes also had BAC levels at or above .08 g/dL, and 55 percent (6,343) also had BAC levels at or above .15 g/dL. Among the 10,265 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in 2015, 67 percent (6,865) were in crashes in which at least one driver in the crash had a BAC of .15 g/dL or higher. Figure 3 presents the distribution of BACs for those drivers with any alcohol in their systems. The most frequently recorded BACs among drinking drivers in fatal crashes was at .14 g/dL.

Figure 3

Distribution of BACs for Drivers With BACs of .01 g/dL or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2015



Source: FARS 2015 ARF.

Fatalities by State

Table 4 shows motor vehicle traffic fatalities by State and the highest driver BAC in the crashes in 2015.

- Among all States, the number of fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes ranged from 23 (District of Columbia) to 3,516 (Texas), depending on the size and population of the State.
- Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities were highest in Texas (1,323), followed by California (914) and Florida (797), and lowest in the District of Columbia (6).
- The percentage of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities among total traffic fatalities in States ranged from a high of 43 percent (Rhode Island) to a low of 16 percent (Utah), compared to the national average of 29 percent.
- The percentage of fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .15 g/dL or higher ranged from a high of 32 percent (Rhode Island) to a low of 12 percent (the District of Columbia, Utah, and Vermont), compared to the national average of 20 percent.

Additional State/county-level data is available at NHTSA's State Traffic Safety Information website: https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/stsi.htm.

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2016, December). *Alcohol-impaired driving: 2015 data*. (Traffic Safety Facts. DOT HS 812 350). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

For more information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 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 *Bicyclists and Other Cyclists, Children, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Occupant Protection, Older Population, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Rural/Urban Comparisons, 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 https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

Table 4

Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities, by State and Highest Driver BAC in the Crash, 2015

State	Total Fatalities*	No Alcohol (BAC=.00)		BAC=.01+		BAC=.08+		BAC=.15+	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	849	564	66%	286	34%	247	29%	163	19%
Alaska	65	41	62%	24	38%	23	36%	18	27%
Arizona	893	552	62%	322	36%	272	31%	192	22%
Arkansas	531	356	67%	175	33%	149	28%	105	20%
California	3,176	2,101	66%	1,070	34%	914	29%	579	18%
Colorado	546	368	67%	178	33%	151	28%	104	19%
Connecticut	266	147	55%	117	44%	103	39%	71	27%
Delaware	126	80	63%	45	36%	41	33%	22	17%
District of Columbia	23	14	61%	9	39%	6	26%	3	12%
Florida	2,939	1,984	67%	941	32%	797	27%	518	18%
Georgia	1,430	1,010	71%	419	29%	366	26%	222	16%
Hawaii	94	54	58%	39	41%	33	35%	23	25%
Idaho	216	136	63%	80	37%	70	32%	48	22%
Illinois	998	633	63%	363	36%	307	31%	214	21%
Indiana	821	609	74%	211	26%	178	22%	118	14%
Iowa	320	226	71%	94	29%	78	24%	63	20%
Kansas	355	257	73%	97	27%	84	24%	60	17%
Kentucky	761	535	70%	223	29%	192	25%	119	16%
Louisiana	726	439	61%	287	39%	245	34%	159	22%
Maine	156	88	56%	68	44%	52	33%	28	18%
Maryland	513	316	62%	196	38%	159	31%	101	20%
Massachusetts	306	187	61%	118	39%	96	31%	58	19%
Michigan	963	649	67%	314	33%	267	28%	177	18%
Minnesota	411	262	64%	144	35%	115	28%	86	21%
Mississippi	677	465	69%	212	31%	175	26%	118	17%
Missouri	869	604	69%	264	30%	224	26%	167	19%
Montana	224	130	58%	93	41%	75	34%	56	25%
Nebraska	246	160	65%	83	34%	65	26%	50	20%
Nevada	325	210	65%	114	35%	97	30%	72	22%
New Hampshire	114	72	63%	41	36%	33	29%	19	17%
New Jersey	562	423	75%	139	25%	111	20%	75	13%
New Mexico	298	190	64%	109	36%	98	33%	74	25%
New York	1,121	748	67%	370	33%	311	28%	185	17%
North Carolina	1,379	902	65%	476	35%	411	30%	258	19%
North Dakota	131	67	51%	61	46%	50	38%	38	29%
Ohio	1,110	744	67%	363	33%	313	28%	232	21%
Oklahoma	643	441	69%	201	31%	170	27%	115	18%
Oregon	447	262	59%	184	41%	155	35%	108	24%
Pennsylvania	1,200	784	65%	409	34%	364	30%	242	20%
Rhode Island	45	22	49%	23	51%	19	43%	14	32%
South Carolina	977	633	65%	343	35%	301	31%	198	20%
South Dakota	133	86	65%	46	35%	43	33%	34	25%
Tennessee	958	655	68%	300	31%	252	26%	162	17%
Texas	3,516	1,954	56%	1,552	44%	1,323	38%	895	25%
Utah	276	222	80%	53	19%	43	16%	32	12%
Vermont	57	40	71%	16	28%	15	27%	7	12%
Virginia	753	498	66%	254	34%	208	28%	136	18%
Washington	568	380	67%	187	33%	148	26%	105	19%
West Virginia	268	185	69%	83	31%	71	27%	51	19%
Wisconsin	566	345	61%	217	38%	189	33%	131	23%
Wyoming	145	85	58%	60	42%	56	38%	40	28%
U.S. Total	**35,092**	**22,912**	**65%**	**12,074**	**34%**	**10,265**	**29%**	**6,865**	**20%**
Puerto Rico	309	183	59%	126	41%	104	34%	71	23%

*Total includes fatalities in crashes in which there was no driver (includes motorcycle riders) present. Source: FARS 2015 ARF.