



# Traffic Safety Facts 2001

## Rural/Urban Comparison

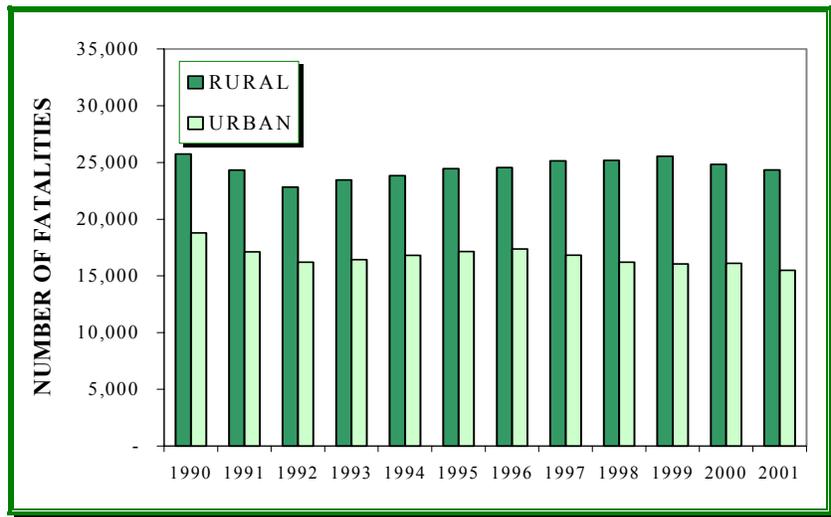


### OVERVIEW/TRENDS

The 2001 crash data show that there were 22,735 fatal crashes involving 34,165 vehicles and 59,359 individuals, resulting in 25,737 fatalities in rural areas. Urban areas accounted for 15,060 fatal crashes involving 22,290 vehicles and 41,609 individuals resulting in 16,379 fatalities.

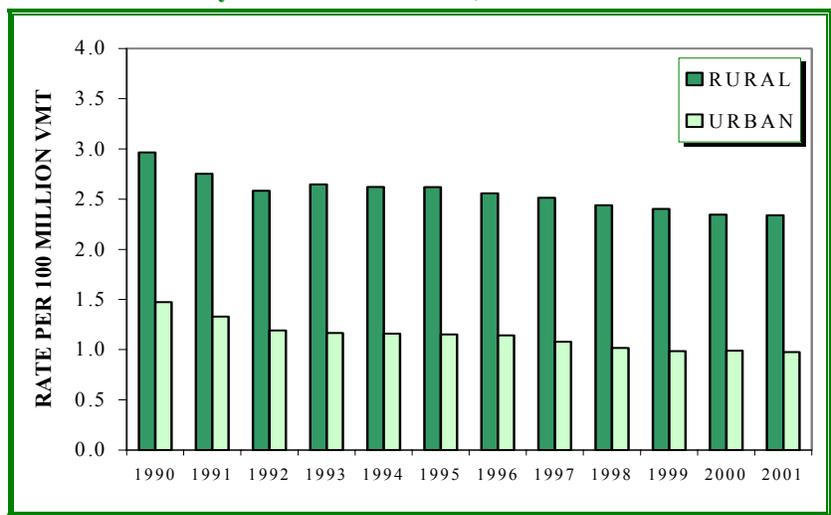
In 2001, rural fatal crashes accounted for 61 percent of all traffic fatalities, 39 percent of the vehicle miles traveled and 21 percent of the population. The difference between rural and urban fatalities has increased from 6,954 in 1990 to 8,853 in 2001.

**Figure 1. Number of Traffic Fatalities By Year and Location, 1990-2001**



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 1990-2001

**Figure 2. Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled By Year and Location, 1990-2001**



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 1990-2001 and FHWA, VMT data

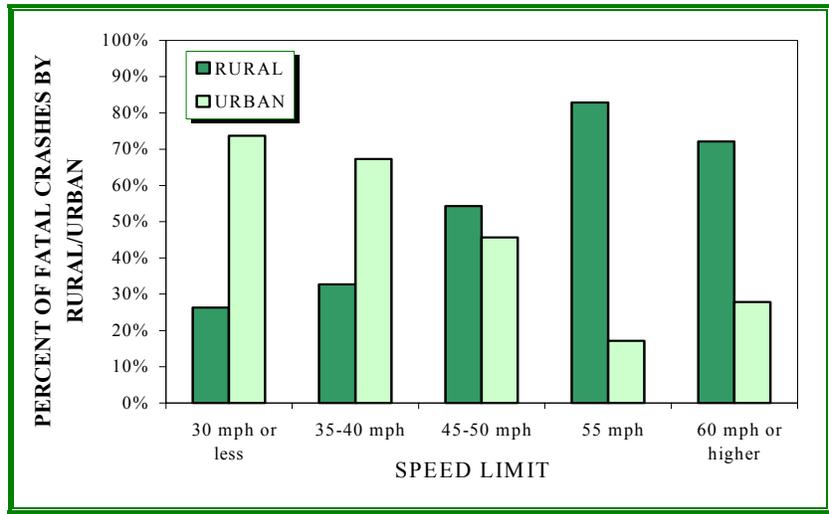
The rural (urban) fatality rate has declined from 3.0 (1.5) fatalities per 100 millions of Vehicle Miles Traveled (m VMT) in 1990 to 2.3 (1.0) fatalities per 100 (m VMT) in 2001, a decrease of 23 (33) percent.

From 1990 to 2001 there were approximately 25,000 rural fatalities per year. However, the number of urban fatalities has decreased from 18,807 in 1990 to 15,494 in 2001.

## CRASHES

In 2001, there were 22,735 fatal crashes (60 percent) in rural areas and 15,060 fatal crashes (40 percent) in urban areas.

**Figure 3. Fatal Crashes  
By Speed Limit and Location, 2001**



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2001

Approximately 70 percent of all fatal crashes on roadways with speed limits of 40 MPH or less are in urban areas. Fatal crashes occurring on roadways with speed limits between 45 MPH and 50 MPH are evenly split. Over 70 percent of the fatal crashes on roadways of 55 MPH or higher occur in rural areas.

In rural areas, 54 percent of the crashes occur in daylight, while 46 percent are at night. In urban areas the situation is reversed with 46 percent of the crashes occurring in daylight and 54 percent of the crashes at night.

Approximately 89 percent of rural fatal crashes at night occur on dark roadways without artificial light and 11 percent of rural night crashes occur on roadways with artificial light. In urban areas, 36 percent of fatal night crashes occur on dark roadways without artificial light and 64 percent occur on roadways with artificial light.

Less than 2 percent of fatal rural crashes are classified as hit-and-run, compared to 7 percent of urban fatal crashes.

Approximately 69 percent of fatal rural crashes occur on straight roads, whereas 83 percent of fatal urban crashes are on straight roads.

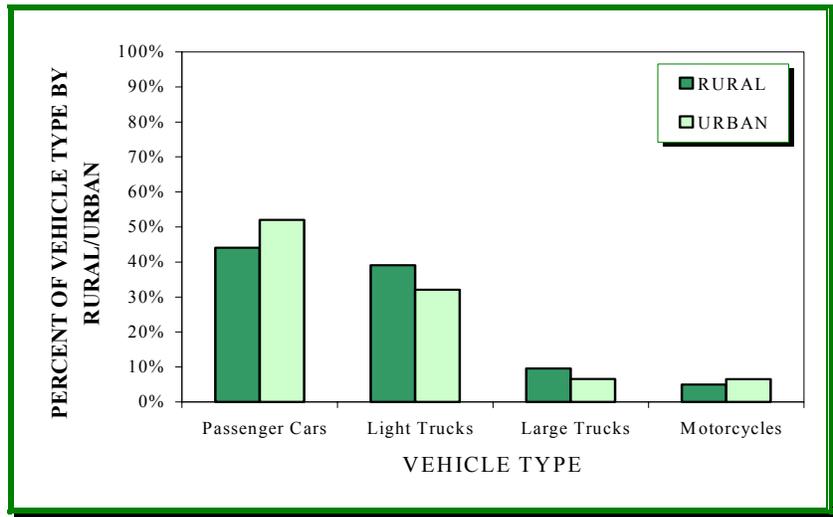
Head-on crashes are more prevalent in rural areas making up 17 percent of all rural fatal crashes. In urban areas, head-on crashes are responsible for less than 9 percent of all urban fatal crashes.

## VEHICLES

In 2001, 34,165 vehicles were involved in fatal rural crashes compared to 23,648 in fatal urban crashes.

Passenger cars had the highest involvement rate for both rural and urban fatal crashes (44 percent and 52 percent respectively). Light trucks (pickups, vans and utility vehicles) accounted for 39 percent of vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes and 32 percent in urban fatal crashes.

**Figure 4. Fatal Crashes By Vehicle Type and Location, 2001**



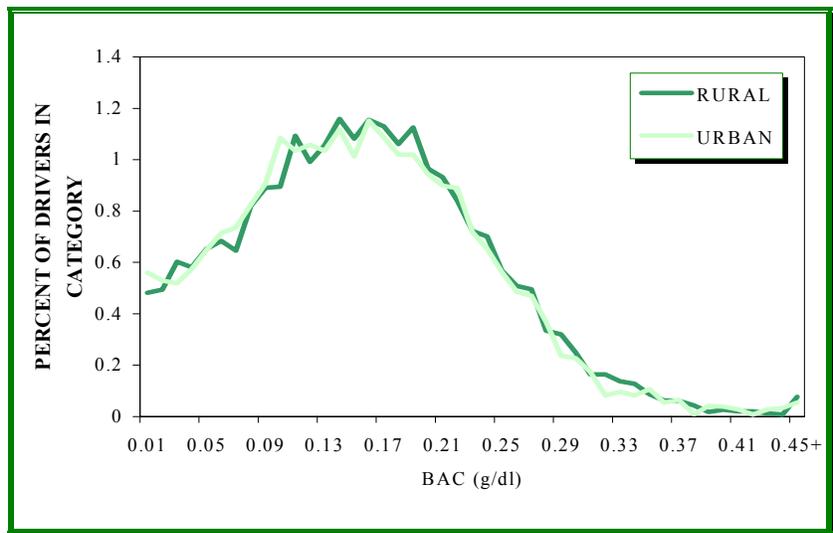
Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2001

The damage to vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes is more severe than the damage to vehicles involved in urban fatal crashes as measured by the percent of disabling deformation. Almost 80 percent of vehicles involved in rural fatal crashes are disabled, whereas 65 percent of vehicles involved in urban fatal crashes are disabled.

**DRIVERS**

Rural drivers involved in fatal crashes are slightly more likely to have a valid drivers license 87 percent, compared to urban drivers, 82 percent.

**Figure 5. Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes by Location, 2001**



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2001

There is very little difference between the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of rural and urban drivers involved in fatal crashes.

## PERSONS

Vehicle occupants involved in rural fatal crashes are ejected 16 percent of the time, while 7 percent of urban vehicle occupants are ejected.

Of all persons involved in fatal rural crashes, 25 percent are transported to a hospital compared to 16 percent in fatal urban crashes.

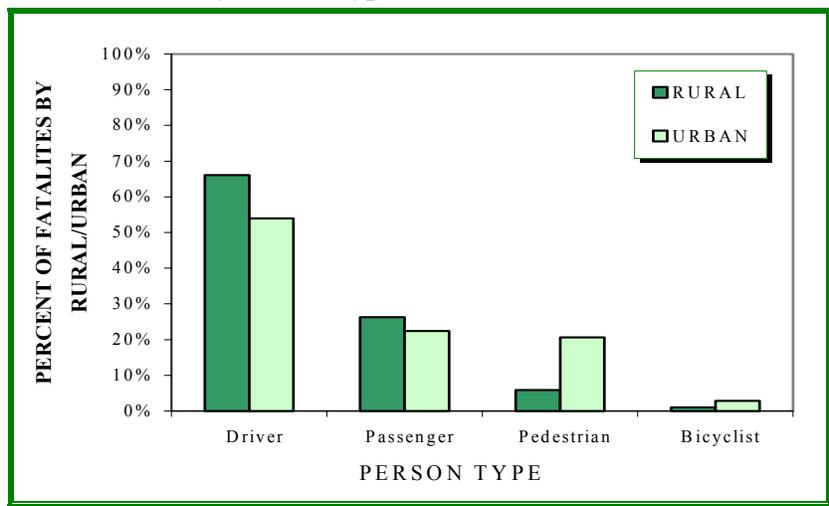
Rural areas have a larger portion of fatally injured individuals, 43 percent compared to 39 percent in urban fatal crashes.

## FATALITIES

Vehicle occupant fatalities occurring in rural fatal crashes are more likely to have been ejected (27 percent) compared to occupant fatalities occurring in fatal urban crashes (15 percent).

Driver fatalities are the most common fatalities in both rural and urban fatal crashes accounting for 66 percent and 54 percent of all crash fatalities in their respective areas. Most of the pedestrian and pedalcyclist fatalities occur in urban areas.

**Figure 6. Fatalities  
By Person Type and Location, 2001**



Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 2001

Approximately 36 percent of rural fatalities are transported to a hospital. In urban areas, 56 percent of the fatalities are transported to a hospital.

**“Driver fatalities are the most common fatalities in both rural and urban fatal crashes areas accounting for 66 percent and 54 percent of all crash fatalities in their respective areas.”**

### For more information:

Information on rural and urban traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-121, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand 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.