Traffic Safety Facts

2007 Data

NHTSA
www.nhtsa.gov

DOT HS 810 996

Rural/Urban Comparison

"Although 23 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas in 2007, rural fatalities accounted for 57 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2007. From 1998 to 2007, rural fatalities decreased 9 percent whereas urban fatalities increased by 8 percent."

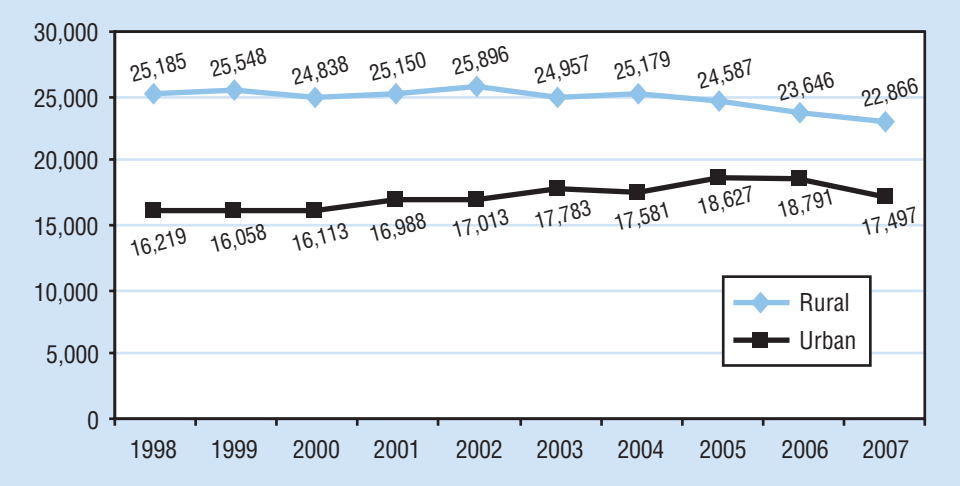
Overview

This fact sheet contains statistics on motor vehicle fatal crashes based on data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). FARS is a census of fatal crashes within the 50 States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (although Puerto Rico is not included in the national totals). Rural and urban boundaries are determined by the State highway departments and approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

In 2007, there were 37,248 fatal crashes resulting in 41,059 deaths. Where land use was known, rural areas accounted for 56 percent (20,347) of the fatal crashes and 57 percent (22,866) of the fatalities as compared to urban areas which accounted for 44 percent (16,251) of the fatal crashes and 43 percent (17,497) of the fatalities.

Figure 1

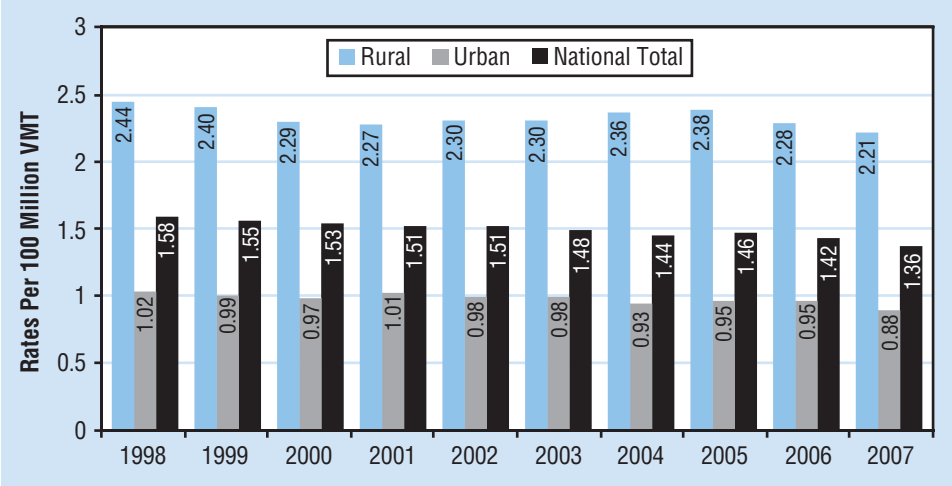
Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities by Year and Location, 1998 to 2007



According to the 2007 Census, 23 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas, however, rural fatalities accounted for 57 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2007. From 1998 to 2007, rural fatalities decreased 9 percent whereas urban fatalities increased by 8 percent.

Figure 2

Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicles Miles Traveled by Year and Location, 1998 to 2007



Source: Vehicle Miles Traveled - Federal Highway Administration.

"In 2007, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 2.5 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (2.21 and 0.88, respectively)."

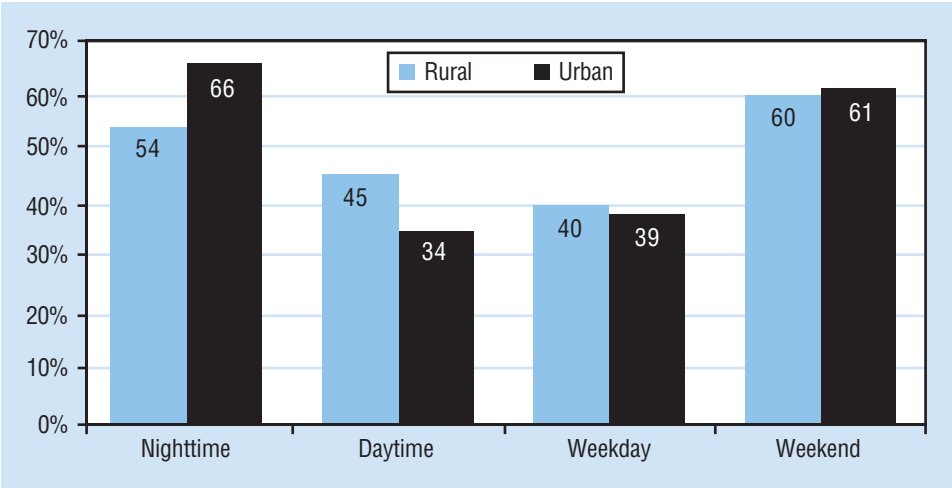
In 2007, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 2.5 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (2.21 and 0.88, respectively).

According to recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, people killed in speeding-related crashes represented almost one-third (13,040) of the fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes. NHTSA considers a crash to be speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speed-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 rural areas, 33 percent (7,509) of the fatalities occurred in speeding-related crashes as compared to 31 percent (5,372) in urban areas.

Figure 3

Percentages of Speeding-Related Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Time of Day, Day of the Week, and Location, 2007



Data also showed that in 2007, over half (54%) of rural area speeding-related fatalities occurred at night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 60 percent occurred over the weekend, whereas in urban areas, two-thirds of speeding-related fatalities occurred at night and 61 percent took place over the weekend.

In rural areas, 52 percent of the fatal crashes occurred during the day, while 47 percent occurred at night. On the other hand, 43 percent of the urban crashes occurred during the night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 56 percent occurred during the daytime (6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.).

In 2007, 68 percent of all urban fatal crashes occurred on roadways where the posted speed limit was 50 mph or less. On rural roadways, 67 percent of fatal crashes occurred when the posted speed limit was 55 mph or higher.

In 2007, 12,998 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Rural areas accounted for 57 percent (7,285) of these fatalities as compared to 43 percent (5,505) in urban areas (percentages are based on known land use). Data has also shown that over the past 10 years, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities increased by 4 percent nationwide. In rural areas alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 7 percent whereas urban areas showed a 17-percent increase.

"From 1998 to 2007, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in rural areas decreased by 7 percent whereas urban areas showed a 17-percent increase."

Table 1

Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Location and the Highest Driver or Motorcycle Rider (Operator) BAC in the Crash, 1998 and 2007

Location	1998			2007		
	Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired -Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+		Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Rural	25,185	7,820	31	22,866	7,285	32
Urban	16,219	4,704	29	17,497	5,505	31
Total	**41,501**	**12,546**	**30**	**41,059**	**12,998**	**32**

Total includes fatalities in crashes in which there was no driver or motorcycle rider (operator) present.

In 2007, 55,681 drivers were involved in fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those drivers 22 percent (12,068) were found to be driving with a BAC of .08 or higher. Drivers in rural areas accounted for 55 percent of the alcohol-impaired drivers versus 43 percent in urban areas.

In fatal crashes, the highest percentages of drivers with BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher were recorded for drivers 21 to 24 years old (35%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (29%) and 35 to 44 (25%). Rural and urban drivers followed this trend with 21- to 24-year-olds (35% and 33%) having the highest percentage followed by 25- to 34-year-olds (30% and 29%) and 35- to 44-year-olds (26% and 23%).

In cases where drivers had one or more previous DWI convictions, data shows in rural areas 62 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes were discovered to be alcohol-impaired as compared to 55 percent in urban areas.

The 2007 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) shows that the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 84 percent and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 78 percent (see NOPUS in 2007, NHTSA Research Note, DOT HS 810 841 September 2007.

"In 2007, the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 84 percent and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 78 percent (2007 NOPUS)."

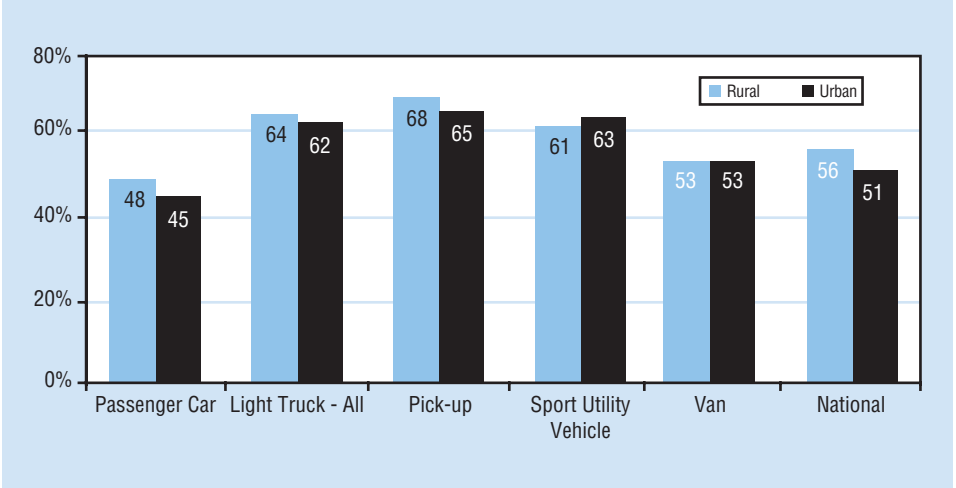
"In 2007, 56 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas were unrestrained compared to 51 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed."

In fatal crashes in 2007, 28,933 passenger vehicle occupants were killed. Rural areas accounted for 63 percent of these deaths where land use is known. As shown in Figure 4, 56 percent of rural passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained as compared to 51 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed. Over two-thirds of rural pickup truck occupants killed were unrestrained – the highest percentage of any passenger vehicle occupants killed among both rural and urban areas.

Of the 17,812 passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas, 40 percent were in a vehicle which rolled over versus 27 percent in urban areas. Data further shows that 67 percent of rural and 63 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained in rollover vehicles.

Figure 4

Percentages of Unrestrained Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities by Vehicle Type and Location, 2007



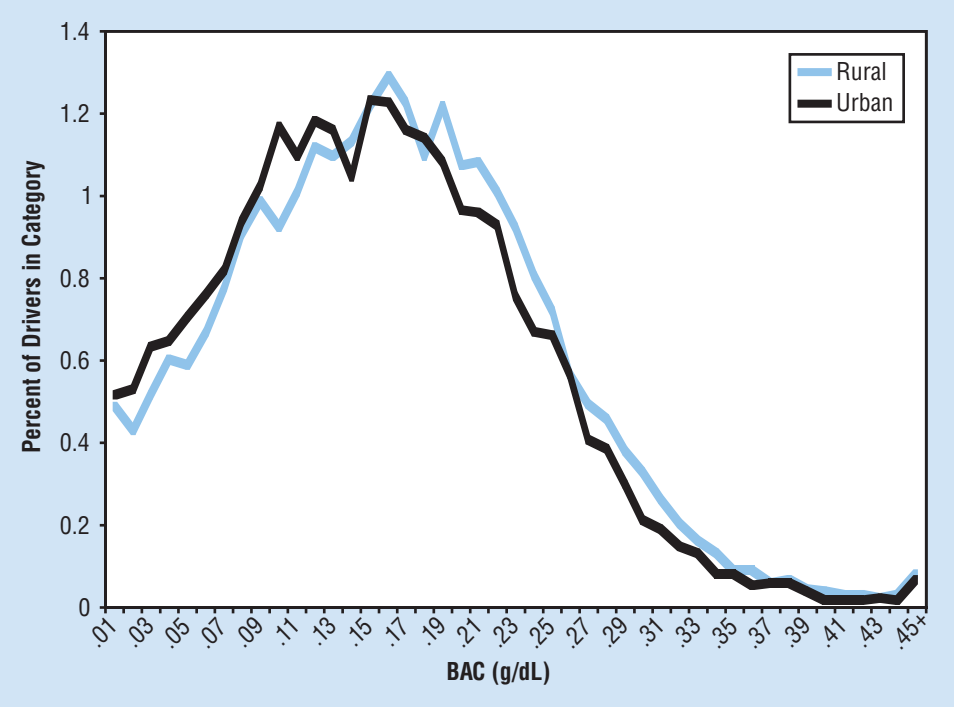
Restraint use percentages based on known use

In 2007, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) involved in rural fatal crashes experienced the highest rollover percentage of 43 percent. Other vehicle rollover percentages included: 33 percent for pickups, 23 percent for vans, 23 percent for passenger cars, and 17 percent for large trucks. In urban areas vehicles experienced a much lower percentage which included: 23 percent for SUVs, 18 percent for pickups, 10 percent for vans, 11 percent for passenger cars, and 9 percent for large trucks.

When license status was known, rural drivers involved in fatal crashes were found to have a slightly higher percentage of drivers with valid driver's licenses than urban drivers, (88 percent versus 86 percent, respectively.)

In 2007, 26,480 drivers were killed in fatal crashes. Of those, 65 percent of rural and 51 percent of urban drivers died at the scene. Data also shows that 40 percent of all drivers killed were transported to the hospital and 4 percent of these drivers died en route. Unfortunately, rural drivers represented 60 percent of drivers who died en route to the hospital versus 37 percent of urban drivers.

Figure 5
Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Location, 2007



For more information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NVS-421, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted at 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 www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/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 *Overview, Alcohol, African American, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists* (formerly titled *Pedalcyclists*), *Children, Hispanic, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Occupant Protection, Older Population, Race and Ethnicity, Rural/Urban Comparisons, School Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates, State Traffic Data,* 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 accessed online at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/cats/index.aspx.

Table 2

Total Fatalities by State and Location, 2007

State	Location						Total	
	Rural		Urban		Unknown			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	718	65	362	33	30	3	1,110	100
Alaska	32	38	52	62	-	-	84	100
Arizona	510	48	556	52	-	-	1,066	100
Arkansas	497	76	152	23	1	0	650	100
California	1,493	38	2,481	62	-	-	3,974	100
Colorado	316	57	238	43	-	-	554	100
Connecticut	45	16	231	83	1	0	277	100
Delaware	71	61	46	39	-	-	117	100
Dist of Columbia	-	-	44	100	-	-	44	100
Florida	1,220	38	1,885	59	109	3	3,214	100
Georgia	805	49	703	43	133	8	1,641	100
Hawaii	64	46	74	54	-	-	138	100
Idaho	202	80	50	20	-	-	252	100
Illinois	501	40	748	60	-	-	1,249	100
Indiana	569	63	329	37	-	-	898	100
Iowa	356	80	89	20	-	-	445	100
Kansas	326	78	90	22	-	-	416	100
Kentucky	677	78	187	22	-	-	864	100
Louisiana	519	53	462	47	4	0	985	100
Maine	164	90	19	10	-	-	183	100
Maryland	245	40	369	60	-	-	614	100
Massachusetts	32	8	385	92	-	-	417	100
Michigan	642	59	446	41	-	-	1,088	100
Minnesota	104	21	44	9	356	71	504	100
Mississippi	629	71	255	29	-	-	884	100
Missouri	685	69	306	31	1	0	992	100
Montana	263	95	14	5	-	-	277	100
Nebraska	205	80	51	20	-	-	256	100
Nevada	122	33	248	66	3	1	373	100
New Hampshire	105	81	24	19	-	-	129	100
New Jersey	119	16	605	84	-	-	724	100
New Mexico	302	73	111	27	-	-	413	100
New York	673	50	660	50	-	-	1,333	100
North Carolina	1,226	73	442	26	7	0	1,675	100
North Dakota	103	93	8	7	-	-	111	100
Ohio	814	65	442	35	1	0	1,257	100
Oklahoma	533	71	221	29	-	-	754	100
Oregon	342	75	113	25	-	-	455	100
Pennsylvania	765	51	726	49	-	-	1,491	100
Rhode Island	6	9	19	28	44	64	69	100
South Carolina	957	90	109	10	-	-	1,066	100
South Dakota	127	87	19	13	-	-	146	100
Tennessee	717	59	493	41	-	-	1,210	100
Texas	1,870	56	1,491	44	2	0	3,363	100
Utah	189	63	110	37	-	-	299	100
Vermont	63	95	3	5	-	-	66	100
Virginia	607	59	417	41	3	0	1,027	100
Washington	348	61	219	39	1	0	568	100
West Virginia	362	84	69	16	-	-	431	100
Wisconsin	502	66	254	34	-	-	756	100
Wyoming	124	83	26	17	-	-	150	100
National	22,866	56	17,497	43	696	2	41,059	100
Puerto Rico	218	48	234	52	-	-	452	100