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

TRAFFIC SAFETY FACTS
2009 Data

NHTSA
www.nhtsa.gov

DOT HS 811 385

Alcohol-Impaired Driving

In 2009, there were 10,839 fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher – 32 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year.

Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatal crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 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 (FARS) and imputed BAC values when they are not reported. The term "alcohol-impaired" does not indicate that a crash or a fatality was caused by alcohol impairment.

In 2009, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes decreased by 7.4 percent from 11,711 in 2008 to 10,839 in 2009. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) decreased to 0.36 in 2009 from 0.39 in 2008.

An average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality occurred every 48 minutes in 2009.

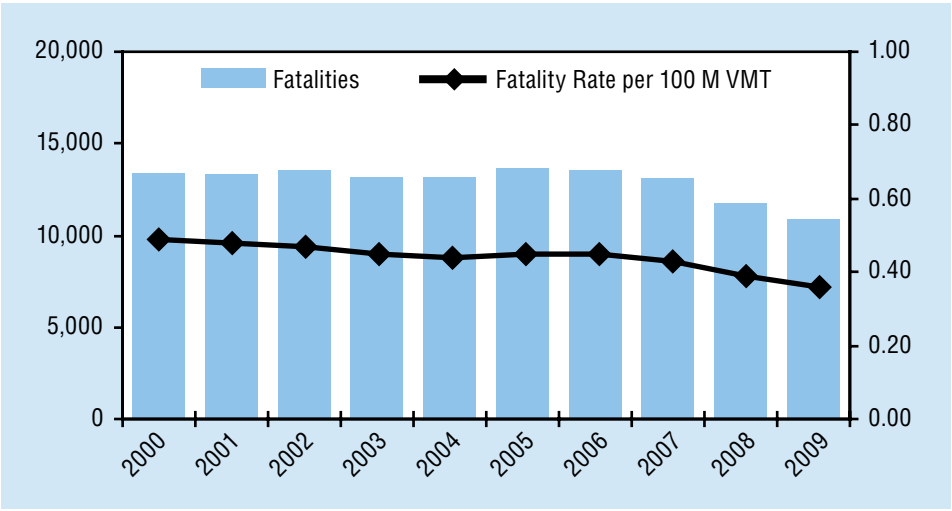
In 2009, all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had by law created a threshold making it illegal per se to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher. Of the 10,839 people who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2009, 7,281 (67%) were drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher. The remaining fatalities consisted of 2,891 (27%) motor vehicle occupants and 667 (6%) nonoccupants.

Table 1

Fatalities, by Role, in Crashes Involving at Least One Driver With a BAC of .08 Or Higher, 2009

Role	Number	Percent of Total
Driver With BAC=.08+	7,281	67%
Passenger Riding w/Driver With BAC=.08+	1,772	16%
Subtotal	***9,053***	***84%***
Occupants of Other Vehicles	1,119	10%
Nonoccupants	667	6%
Total Fatalities	**10,839**	**100%**

Figure 1
Fatalities and Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT in Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Crashes, 2000–2009



The national rate of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in 2009 was 0.36 per 100 million VMT. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate in the past 10 years has declined by 27 percent from 0.49 in 2000 to 0.36 in 2009.

In 2009, of the fatalities among children ages 14 and younger, 14 percent occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.

Children

In 2009, a total of 1,314 children age 14 and younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those 1,314 fatalities, 181 (14%) occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Out of those 181 deaths, 92 (51%) were occupants of a vehicle with a driver who had a BAC level of .08 or higher, and another 27 children (15%) were pedestrians or pedalcyclists struck by drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher.

For more information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), NVS-424, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted at 800-934-8517 or via the following e-mail address: ncsaweb@dot.gov. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users 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, Overview, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, 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.

Time of Day and Day of Week

The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2009 was four times higher at night than during the day (37% versus 9%).

In 2009, 16 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-impaired, compared to 31 percent on weekends.

Table 2

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes With a BAC of .08 or Higher, by Crash Type, Time of Day and Day of Week, 2000 and 2009

Total Drivers							
	2000			2009			Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2000-2009
Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+ Number	BAC=.08+ Percent of Total	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+ Number	BAC=.08+ Percent of Total	
Total	57,280	12,261	21%	45,230	10,102	22%	+1
Drivers by Crash Type and Time of Day							
Single-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	21,026	7,806	37%	18,662	6,958	37%	0
Daytime	8,264	1,393	17%	7,288	1,321	18%	+1
Nighttime	12,442	6,220	50%	11,153	5,517	49%	-1
Multiple-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	36,254	4,455	12%	26,568	3,144	12%	0
Daytime	22,972	1,229	5%	16,337	801	5%	0
Nighttime	13,268	3,224	24%	10,160	2,337	23%	-1
Drivers by Time of Day							
Daytime	31,236	2,622	8%	23,625	2,122	9%	+1
Nighttime	25,710	9,444	37%	21,313	7,854	37%	0
Drivers by Day of Week and Time of Day							
Weekday*	34,788	5,054	15%	26,882	4,353	16%	+1
Daytime	22,987	1,467	6%	17,004	1,217	7%	+1
Nighttime	11,715	3,545	30%	9,764	3,089	32%	+2
Weekend*	22,392	7,156	32%	18,256	5,718	31%	-1
Daytime	8,249	1,155	14%	6,621	905	14%	0
Nighttime	13,995	5,899	42%	11,549	4,765	41%	-1

Daytime - 6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m. Weekday - Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 5:59 p.m.

Nighttime - 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m. Weekend - Friday 6 p.m. to Monday 5:59 a.m.

*Includes drivers involved in fatal crashes when time of day was unknown.

The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2009 was four times higher at night than during the day.

Drivers

In fatal crashes in 2009 the highest percentage of drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (35%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (32%) and 35 to 44 (26%).

The percentages of drivers involved in fatal crashes with a BAC level of .08 or higher in 2009 were 29 percent for motorcycle riders and 23 percent for both passenger cars and light trucks. The percentage of drivers with BAC levels of .08 or higher in fatal crashes was the lowest for large trucks (2%).

In 2009, the 21- to 24-year-old age group had the highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes with BAC levels of .08 or higher – 35 percent.

In 2009, the percentage of drivers with BAC of .08 or above in fatal crashes was highest for motorcycle riders (29%).

Table 3

Drivers With a BAC of .08 or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age, Gender, and Vehicle Type, 2000 and 2009

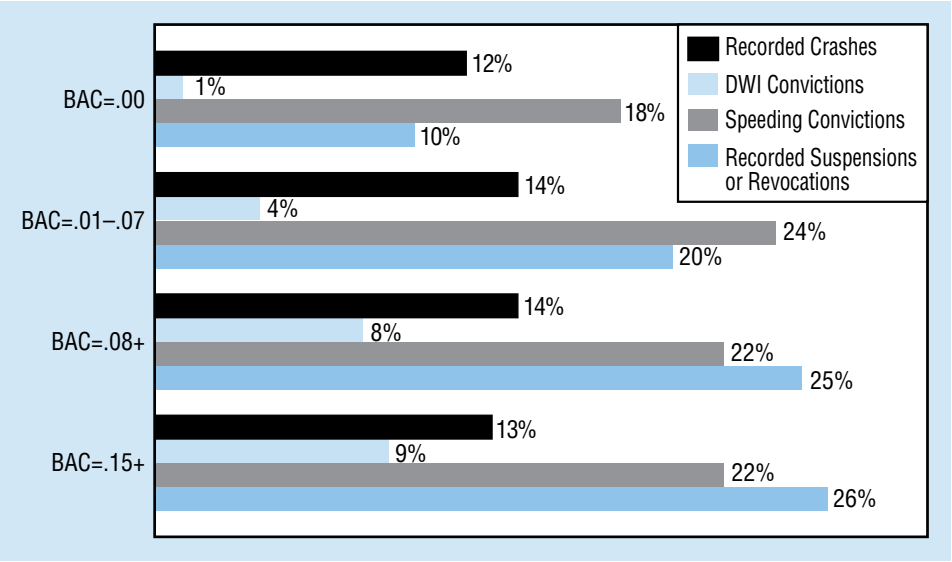
Total Drivers							
	2000			2009			Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2000-2009
Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+ Number	BAC=.08+ Percent of Total	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+ Number	BAC=.08+ Percent of Total	
Total	57,280	12,261	21%	45,230	10,102	22%	+1
Drivers by Age Group (Years)							
16-20	8,024	1,477	18%	5,051	951	19%	+1
21-24	5,950	1,894	32%	4,597	1,588	35%	+3
25-34	11,739	3,312	28%	8,610	2,722	32%	+4
35-44	11,132	2,899	26%	7,757	2,006	26%	0
45-54	8,234	1,493	18%	7,664	1,694	22%	+4
55-64	4,766	590	12%	5,276	669	13%	+1
65-74	3,134	257	8%	2,868	199	7%	-1
75+	3,147	132	4%	2,550	85	3%	-1
Drivers by Gender							
Male	41,795	10,132	24%	32,807	8,322	25%	+1
Female	14,790	1,989	13%	11,825	1,622	14%	+1
Drivers by Vehicle Type							
Passenger Cars	27,661	6,521	24%	18,279	4,242	23%	-1
Light Trucks	20,393	4,520	22%	17,822	4,134	23%	+1
Large Trucks	4,948	72	1%	3,187	54	2%	+1
Motorcycles	2,971	944	32%	4,593	1,314	29%	-3

Numbers shown for groups of drivers do not add to the total number of drivers due to unknown or other data not included.

In 2009, 5,851 passenger vehicle drivers killed had a BAC of .08 or higher. Out of those driver fatalities for which restraint use was known, 72 percent were unrestrained.

Drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher involved in fatal crashes were eight times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired (DWI) than were drivers with no alcohol (8% and 1%, respectively). See Figure 2.

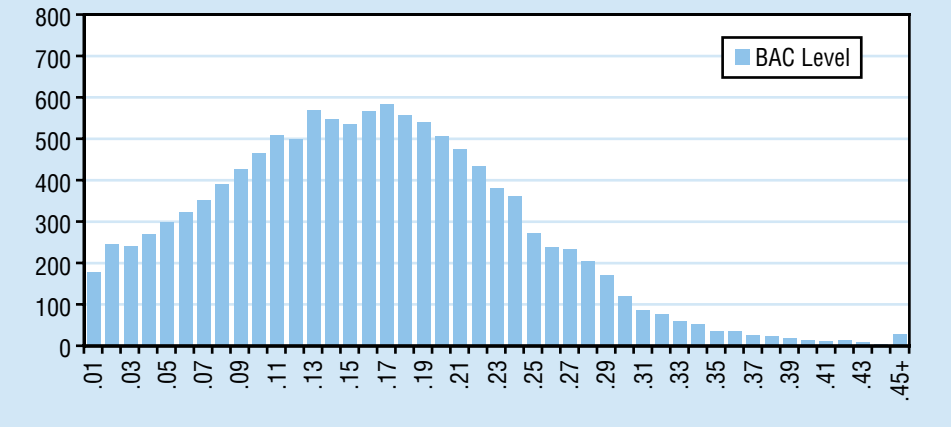
Figure 2
Previous Driving Records of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by BAC, 2009



Drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher in fatal crashes were eight times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired than were drivers with no alcohol.

In 2009, 84 percent (10,102) of the 12,012 drivers with a BAC of .01 or higher who were involved in fatal crashes had BAC levels at or above .08, and 56 percent (6,685) had BAC levels at or above .15. The most frequently recorded BAC level among drinking drivers in fatal crashes was .17.

Figure 3
Distribution of BAC Levels for Drivers With a BAC of .01 or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2009



In 2009, 6,685 (56%) of the drivers involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking had a BAC of .15 or greater.

Table 4

Traffic Fatalities by State and the Highest Driver BAC in the Crash, 2009

State	*Total Fatalities	BAC=.00		BAC=.01-.07		BAC=.08+		BAC=.15+		BAC=.01+	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	848	522	62%	46	5%	280	33%	179	21%	325	38%
Alaska	64	42	65%	3	4%	20	31%	15	24%	22	35%
Arizona	807	514	64%	42	5%	219	27%	137	17%	260	32%
Arkansas	585	372	64%	43	7%	168	29%	117	20%	211	36%
California	3,081	1,956	63%	168	5%	950	31%	655	21%	1,118	36%
Colorado	465	285	61%	20	4%	158	34%	110	24%	178	38%
Connecticut	223	109	49%	15	7%	99	44%	67	30%	114	51%
Delaware	116	68	58%	4	3%	45	38%	30	26%	48	42%
Dist of Columbia	29	17	59%	2	7%	10	35%	3	11%	12	41%
Florida	2,558	1,649	64%	134	5%	770	30%	527	21%	904	35%
Georgia	1,284	885	69%	63	5%	331	26%	217	17%	394	31%
Hawaii	109	51	46%	6	6%	52	48%	40	36%	59	54%
Idaho	226	160	71%	7	3%	58	26%	39	17%	65	29%
Illinois	911	530	58%	62	7%	319	35%	213	23%	381	42%
Indiana	693	443	64%	39	6%	210	30%	142	21%	249	36%
Iowa	372	254	68%	22	6%	96	26%	64	17%	118	32%
Kansas	386	208	54%	23	6%	154	40%	102	27%	177	46%
Kentucky	791	550	70%	45	6%	194	25%	124	16%	239	30%
Louisiana	821	455	55%	72	9%	295	36%	200	24%	366	45%
Maine	159	106	67%	6	4%	47	29%	28	17%	53	33%
Maryland	547	354	65%	32	6%	162	30%	100	18%	194	35%
Massachusetts	334	201	60%	23	7%	108	32%	69	21%	130	39%
Michigan	871	579	67%	45	5%	246	28%	172	20%	291	33%
Minnesota	421	289	69%	23	5%	108	26%	81	19%	131	31%
Mississippi	700	436	62%	30	4%	234	33%	145	21%	264	38%
Missouri	878	518	59%	58	7%	300	34%	205	23%	358	41%
Montana	221	129	58%	11	5%	81	36%	59	27%	92	42%
Nebraska	223	135	61%	22	10%	66	30%	42	19%	88	39%
Nevada	243	152	63%	22	9%	68	28%	47	19%	90	37%
New Hampshire	110	73	66%	7	6%	30	27%	17	15%	36	33%
New Jersey	583	397	68%	36	6%	149	25%	80	14%	185	32%
New Mexico	361	232	64%	15	4%	114	32%	80	22%	129	36%
New York	1,156	766	66%	68	6%	321	28%	196	17%	388	34%
North Carolina	1,314	879	67%	67	5%	363	28%	236	18%	430	33%
North Dakota	140	81	58%	6	4%	54	38%	41	29%	59	42%
Ohio	1,021	643	63%	54	5%	324	32%	215	21%	378	37%
Oklahoma	738	473	64%	30	4%	235	32%	157	21%	265	36%
Oregon	377	235	62%	26	7%	115	30%	80	21%	141	37%
Pennsylvania	1,256	783	62%	64	5%	406	32%	276	22%	470	37%
Rhode Island	83	43	52%	7	8%	34	40%	16	20%	40	48%
South Carolina	894	468	52%	47	5%	377	42%	266	30%	423	47%
South Dakota	131	69	53%	6	5%	53	40%	41	31%	59	45%
Tennessee	989	642	65%	42	4%	303	31%	198	20%	345	35%
Texas	3,071	1,628	53%	202	7%	1,235	40%	830	27%	1,437	47%
Utah	244	190	78%	14	6%	40	16%	26	11%	54	22%
Vermont	74	46	63%	4	6%	23	32%	11	15%	28	37%
Virginia	757	476	63%	34	5%	243	32%	170	22%	278	37%
Washington	492	259	53%	26	5%	206	42%	137	28%	232	47%
West Virginia	356	221	62%	19	5%	115	32%	82	23%	134	38%
Wisconsin	561	308	55%	38	7%	213	38%	158	28%	251	45%
Wyoming	134	81	60%	7	5%	47	35%	36	27%	54	40%
National	33,808	20,961	62%	1,905	6%	10,839	32%	7,277	22%	12,744	38%
Puerto Rico	365	224	61%	32	9%	109	30%	74	20%	141	39%

*Total includes fatalities in crashes in which there was no driver present.