



## Young Drivers

In 2010, 1,963 young (15- to 20-year-old) drivers died in motor vehicle crashes, a decrease of 16 percent from 2,343 in 2009. Additionally 187,000 young drivers were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2010, a decrease of 5 percent from 196,000 in 2009.

The two-year comparison of total driver involvement in fatal crashes showed a 2-percent reduction from 45,337 in 2009 to 44,440 in 2010. During this same period, young driver involvement decreased 11 percent from 5,170 in 2009 to 4,585 in 2010.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all 15- to 20-year-olds, according to the most recent data available (2007) from the National Center for Health Statistics.

There were 210.1 million licensed drivers in the United States in 2010. Young drivers accounted for 6.4 percent (13 million) of the total, a 3.1-percent increase from the 12.6 million young drivers in 2001. Population for this age group also increased during this same time period – by 7.7 percent.

*In the 15- to 20-year-old age group, driver fatalities declined by 46 percent between 2001 and 2010.*

Figure 1  
**Driver Fatalities and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Among Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old, 2001–2010**

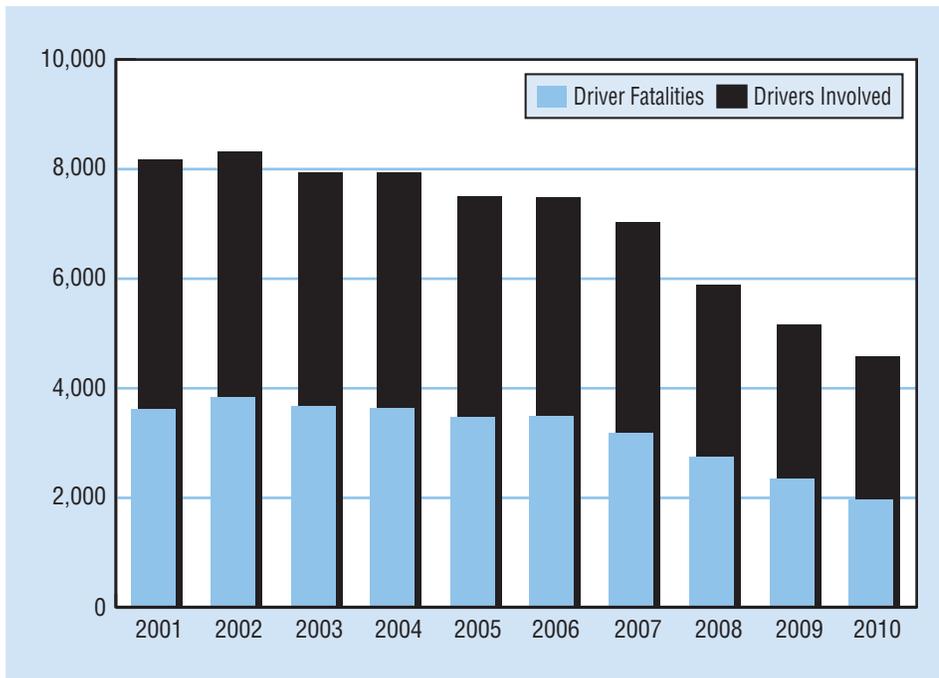


Table 1

### Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, by Gender, 2001 and 2010

| Gender                                   | 2001   |           |                     | 2010   |           |                     | Percentage Change, 2001–2010 |           |
|------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|---------------------|--------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
|                                          | Total  | Age 15–20 | Percentage of Total | Total  | Age 15–20 | Percentage of Total | Total                        | Age 15–20 |
| <b>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</b> |        |           |                     |        |           |                     |                              |           |
| Total                                    | 57,586 | 8,166     | 14.2                | 44,440 | 4,585     | 10.3                | -23                          | -44       |
| Male                                     | 41,901 | 5,790     | 13.8                | 31,965 | 3,185     | 10.0                | -24                          | -45       |
| Female                                   | 14,919 | 2,376     | 15.9                | 11,811 | 1,399     | 11.8                | -21                          | -41       |
| <b>Driver Fatalities</b>                 |        |           |                     |        |           |                     |                              |           |
| Total                                    | 25,869 | 3,617     | 14.0                | 21,016 | 1,963     | 9.3                 | -19                          | -46       |
| Male                                     | 19,244 | 2,616     | 13.6                | 15,877 | 1,425     | 9.0                 | -17                          | -46       |
| Female                                   | 6,624  | 1,001     | 15.1                | 5,136  | 538       | 10.5                | -22                          | -46       |

Note: Total includes unknown gender.

*In 2010, 10 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were between 15 and 20 years old.*

In 2010, 4,585 young drivers were involved in fatal crashes – a 44-percent decrease from the 8,166 involved in 2001. Driver fatalities for this age group declined by 46 percent between 2001 (3,617) and 2010 (1,963). For both 15- to 20-year-old young males and females, driver fatalities decreased by 46 percent (Table 1). Total drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased by 23 percent from 57,586 in 2001 to 44,440 in 2010.

In 2010, 10 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes and 14 percent of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes were young drivers. Total drivers involved in police-reported crashes decreased by 1 percent to 9,542,000 in 2010 from 9,614,000 in 2009. Young drivers involved in police reported crashes decreased 2 percent for the same period from 1,337,000 to 1,315,000.

Table 2

### Population and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age Group, 2010

|                                             | Age Group (Years) |       |       |       |       |       |       |      |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
|                                             | 15-20             | 21-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-69 | 70+  |
| <b>Population (Percent)</b>                 | 8.6               | 5.5   | 13.3  | 13.2  | 14.6  | 11.9  | 4.0   | 9.0  |
| Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes (Percent) |                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |      |
| - All Fatal Crashes                         | 10.5              | 10.5  | 19.6  | 16.7  | 17.1  | 12.7  | 3.9   | 8.8  |
| - Single-Vehicle                            | 12.4              | 12.4  | 20.8  | 16.1  | 16.4  | 11.3  | 3.5   | 7.0  |
| - Multi-Vehicle                             | 9.2               | 9.2   | 18.7  | 17.2  | 17.6  | 13.7  | 4.2   | 10.0 |

Among young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2010, 30 percent (198 out of 669) of those who did not have valid operator's licenses also had previous license suspensions or revocations at the time of the crash (Table 3).

Table 3

### 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Previous Driving Record and License Compliance, 2010

| Driving Record                               | License Compliance |         |               |         | Total (4,585)* |         |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                                              | Valid (3,890)      |         | Invalid (669) |         |                |         |
|                                              | Number             | Percent | Number        | Percent | Number         | Percent |
| Previous Recorded Crashes                    | 520                | 13.4    | 74            | 11.1    | 594            | 13.0    |
| Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations | 350                | 9.0     | 198           | 29.6    | 548            | 12.0    |
| Previous DWI Convictions                     | 43                 | 1.1     | 28            | 4.2     | 71             | 1.5     |
| Previous Speeding Convictions                | 754                | 19.4    | 110           | 16.4    | 864            | 18.8    |
| Previous Other Harmful or Moving Conviction  | 648                | 16.7    | 134           | 20.0    | 782            | 17.1    |

\*Includes 26 drivers with unknown license status.

Note: Excluding all drivers with unknown previous records.

*During 2010, 216 15- to 20-year-old motorcycle riders were killed, and an additional 5,000 were injured.*

## Motorcycles

NHTSA recently redefined their motorcycle terminology. The following terms will be used to define motorcycle occupants; rider is the operator only, a passenger is any passenger excluding the rider, and a motorcyclist is any occupant of a motorcycle (rider or passenger). Prior NHTSA publications may not reflect this terminology.

During 2010, 216 young motorcycle riders (15 to 20 years old) were killed, and 5,000 were injured.

Helmets are estimated to be 37-percent effective in preventing fatalities among motorcycle riders and 41-percent effective among motorcycle passengers. NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,550 motorcyclists of all ages in 2010, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 706 lives could have been saved.

During 2010, 30 percent of the motorcycle riders between 15 and 20 years old who were fatally injured in crashes were not wearing helmets.

Of the young motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2010, 40 percent were either unlicensed or driving with an invalid license.

## Alcohol

All States and the District of Columbia have 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws. In 2010, 30 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher; 25 percent had a BAC of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher (see Table 4).

Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their BAC is .08 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. Alcohol involvement or drinking crashes include fatal crashes in which a driver had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher.

Table 4

**Alcohol Involvement Among Young Drivers (Ages 15–20) Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Year and Driver Status, 2001 and 2010**

| Driver Status   | Total Number of Drivers | BAC = .01–.07 |          | BAC = .08 +  |           | BAC = .01 +  |           |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
|                 |                         | Number        | Percent  | Number       | Percent   | Number       | Percent   |
| <b>2001</b>     |                         |               |          |              |           |              |           |
| Survived        | 4,549                   | 218           | 5        | 561          | 12        | 780          | 17        |
| Fatally Injured | 3,617                   | 223           | 6        | 883          | 24        | 1,106        | 31        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>8,166</b>            | <b>441</b>    | <b>5</b> | <b>1,444</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>1,885</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>2010</b>     |                         |               |          |              |           |              |           |
| Survived        | 2,622                   | 92            | 3        | 347          | 13        | 439          | 17        |
| Fatally Injured | 1,963                   | 97            | 5        | 490          | 25        | 587          | 30        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>4,585</b>            | <b>189</b>    | <b>4</b> | <b>837</b>   | <b>18</b> | <b>1,025</b> | <b>22</b> |

\*Total number of drivers include driver with BAC=.00.

Note: The numbers in the table are rounded to nearest integer.

*In 2010, 30 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher.*

In 2010, 22 percent of the young drivers involved in fatal crashes were drinking, compared to 3 percent in injury crashes and 2 percent in property-damage-only crashes.

Among young drivers, 495 drivers were killed at the age of 19 – highest among young drivers; 36 percent of these drivers were drinking (see Table 5).

Table 5

**Young Drivers Fatally Injured, by Age and Percent With BAC=.01 or Higher, 2010**

| Age (Years) | Number of Drivers | Percentage With BAC = .01 + |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>15</b>   | 48                | 15                          |
| <b>16</b>   | 172               | 15                          |
| <b>17</b>   | 283               | 21                          |
| <b>18</b>   | 480               | 26                          |
| <b>19</b>   | 495               | 36                          |
| <b>20</b>   | 485               | 40                          |

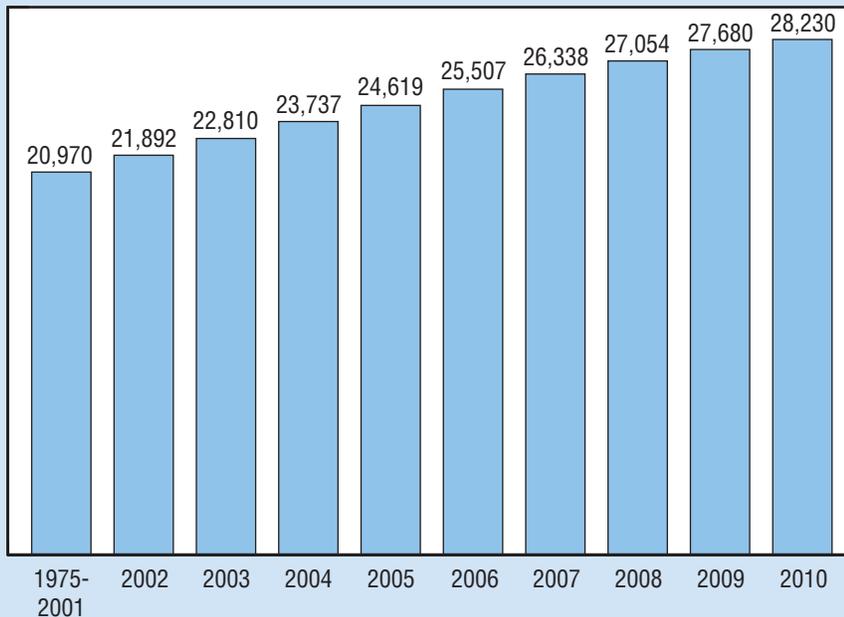
The number of young drivers involved in fatal crashes who had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher dropped by 46 percent, from 1,885 in 2001 to 1,025 in 2010.

For young drivers, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2010, 25 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crash, compared with 17 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2010, 56 percent of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained. Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 71 percent were unrestrained. In comparison, of the non-drinking young drivers killed, 47 percent were unrestrained.

NHTSA estimates that the 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws have reduced alcohol traffic fatalities by 13 percent and have saved an estimated 28,230 lives since 1975. In 2010, an estimated 550 lives were saved by minimum-drinking-age laws.

Figure 2  
**Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved, by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975–2010**



*NHTSA estimates that minimum-drinking-age laws have saved 28,230 lives since 1975.*

### 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](mailto:ncsaweb@dot.gov). General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users 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*, *Overview*, *Passenger Vehicles*, *Pedestrians*, *Race and Ethnicity*, *Rural/Urban Comparisons*, *School Transportation-Related Crashes*, *Speeding*, *State Alcohol Estimates*, and *State Traffic Data*. 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](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx).



U.S. Department  
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**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

Table 6  
**Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young Drivers (Ages 15–20), by State and Person Type, 2010**

| State             | Young Drivers | Passengers in Young Drivers' Vehicles | Occupants of Other Vehicles | Nonoccupants | Total        |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Alabama           | 61            | 45                                    | 46                          | 10           | 162          |
| Alaska            | 5             | 3                                     | 0                           | 0            | 8            |
| Arizona           | 26            | 29                                    | 12                          | 19           | 86           |
| Arkansas          | 38            | 17                                    | 11                          | 2            | 68           |
| California        | 112           | 100                                   | 89                          | 65           | 366          |
| Colorado          | 26            | 25                                    | 10                          | 6            | 67           |
| Connecticut       | 15            | 12                                    | 8                           | 0            | 35           |
| Delaware          | 6             | 1                                     | 4                           | 5            | 16           |
| Florida           | 113           | 78                                    | 111                         | 54           | 356          |
| Georgia           | 66            | 52                                    | 61                          | 18           | 197          |
| Hawaii            | 7             | 6                                     | 2                           | 1            | 16           |
| Idaho             | 15            | 9                                     | 6                           | 5            | 35           |
| Illinois          | 63            | 38                                    | 35                          | 12           | 148          |
| Indiana           | 56            | 35                                    | 34                          | 3            | 128          |
| Iowa              | 32            | 17                                    | 14                          | 2            | 65           |
| Kansas            | 36            | 19                                    | 21                          | 1            | 77           |
| Kentucky          | 48            | 25                                    | 31                          | 10           | 114          |
| Louisiana         | 48            | 40                                    | 20                          | 12           | 120          |
| Maine             | 16            | 5                                     | 6                           | 0            | 27           |
| Maryland          | 28            | 15                                    | 11                          | 7            | 61           |
| Massachusetts     | 21            | 11                                    | 11                          | 9            | 52           |
| Michigan          | 55            | 39                                    | 49                          | 22           | 165          |
| Minnesota         | 21            | 21                                    | 26                          | 5            | 73           |
| Mississippi       | 41            | 25                                    | 23                          | 6            | 95           |
| Missouri          | 51            | 28                                    | 36                          | 5            | 120          |
| Montana           | 16            | 11                                    | 11                          | 2            | 40           |
| Nebraska          | 18            | 7                                     | 7                           | 2            | 34           |
| Nevada            | 9             | 2                                     | 9                           | 3            | 23           |
| New Hampshire     | 9             | 7                                     | 1                           | 0            | 17           |
| New Jersey        | 20            | 22                                    | 18                          | 13           | 73           |
| New Mexico        | 28            | 13                                    | 9                           | 4            | 54           |
| New York          | 69            | 37                                    | 29                          | 21           | 156          |
| North Carolina    | 78            | 64                                    | 61                          | 15           | 218          |
| North Dakota      | 7             | 3                                     | 4                           | 4            | 18           |
| Ohio              | 71            | 42                                    | 50                          | 14           | 177          |
| Oklahoma          | 43            | 29                                    | 21                          | 8            | 101          |
| Oregon            | 15            | 9                                     | 9                           | 5            | 38           |
| Pennsylvania      | 98            | 58                                    | 47                          | 20           | 223          |
| Rhode Island      | 4             | 3                                     | 0                           | 0            | 7            |
| South Carolina    | 59            | 38                                    | 17                          | 8            | 122          |
| South Dakota      | 6             | 9                                     | 4                           | 3            | 22           |
| Tennessee         | 67            | 34                                    | 43                          | 8            | 152          |
| Texas             | 187           | 125                                   | 141                         | 43           | 496          |
| Utah              | 12            | 13                                    | 10                          | 8            | 43           |
| Vermont           | 4             | 3                                     | 0                           | 0            | 7            |
| Virginia          | 44            | 35                                    | 21                          | 7            | 107          |
| Washington        | 26            | 25                                    | 16                          | 9            | 76           |
| West Virginia     | 26            | 7                                     | 12                          | 1            | 46           |
| Wisconsin         | 37            | 27                                    | 25                          | 9            | 98           |
| Wyoming           | 4             | 8                                     | 3                           | 1            | 16           |
| <b>U.S. Total</b> | <b>1,963</b>  | <b>1,326</b>                          | <b>1,245</b>                | <b>487</b>   | <b>5,021</b> |
| Puerto Rico       | 22            | 13                                    | 11                          | 4            | 50           |