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

NHTSA
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TRAFFIC SAFETY FACTS
2010 Data

DOT HS 811 637

July 2012

Rural/Urban Comparison

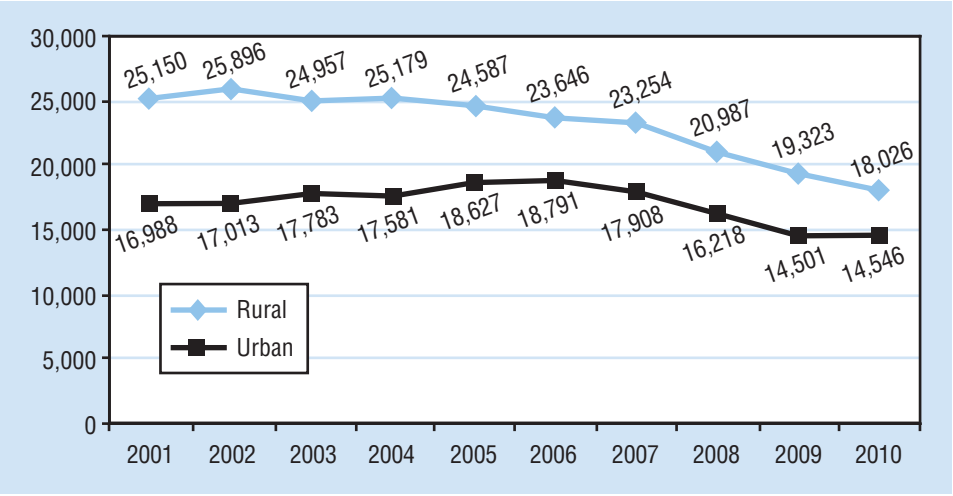
Overview

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, the 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 2010, there were 30,196 fatal crashes resulting in 32,885 fatalities. Rural areas accounted for 54 percent (16,292) of the fatal crashes and 55 percent (18,026) of the fatalities as compared to urban areas which accounted for 45 percent (13,608) of the fatal crashes and 44 percent (14,546) of the fatalities. Additionally, 296 fatal crashes resulting in 313 fatalities occurred in areas where land use was unknown.

Although 19 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas in 2010, rural fatalities accounted for 55 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2010. From 2001 to 2010, rural fatalities decreased 28 percent, whereas urban fatalities decreased by 14 percent.

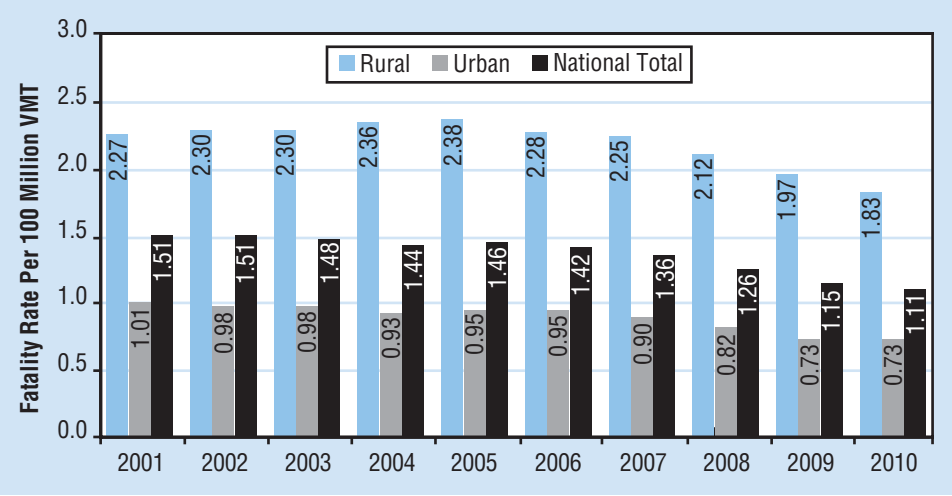
Figure 1
Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities by Year and Location, 2001–2010



According to the 2010 Census, 19 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas, however, rural fatalities accounted for 55 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2010. From 2001 to 2010, rural fatalities decreased 28 percent whereas urban fatalities decreased by 14 percent.

Figure 2

Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled by Year and Location, 2001–2010



Source: Vehicle Miles Traveled – Federal Highway Administration

In 2010, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 2.5 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (1.83 and 0.73, respectively).

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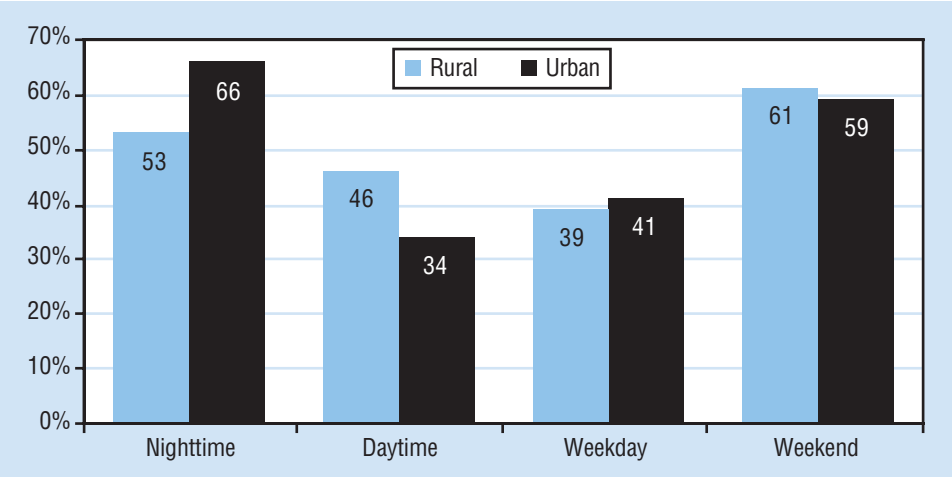
According to recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) data, people killed in speeding-related crashes represented almost one-third (10,395) of the fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes. NHTSA considers a crash to be speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related 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, 32 percent (5,777) of the fatalities occurred in speeding-related crashes as compared to 31 percent (4,507) 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, 2010



Data also showed that in 2010, over half (53%) of rural area speeding-related fatalities occurred at night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 61 percent occurred over the weekend, whereas in urban areas, two-thirds (66%) of speeding-related fatalities occurred at night and 59 percent took place over the weekend.

In rural areas, 53 percent of the fatal crashes occurred during the day, while 46 percent occurred at night. On the other hand, 56 percent of the urban crashes occurred at night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 44 percent occurred during the day (6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.).

In 2010, 68 percent of all urban fatal crashes occurred on roadways where the posted speed limit was 50 mph or less. On rural roadways, 68 percent of fatal crashes occurred when the posted speed limit was 55 mph or higher.

In 2010, 10,228 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Rural areas accounted for 55 percent (5,590) of these fatalities as compared to 44 percent (4,533) in urban areas. Data has also shown that over the 10 years from 2001 to 2010, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 23 percent nationwide. In rural areas alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 30 percent while urban areas showed a 14-percent decrease.

From 2001 to 2010, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in rural areas decreased by 30 percent, while urban areas showed a 14-percent decrease.

Table 1

Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Location and the Highest Driver* BAC in the Crash, 2001 and 2010

Location	2001			2010		
	Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+		Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Rural	25,150	7,994	32	18,026	5,590	31
Urban	16,988	5,278	31	14,546	4,533	31
Total**	**42,196**	**13,290**	**31**	**32,885**	**10,228**	**31**

* Includes motorcycle riders.
** Includes fatalities where location was unknown.

In 2010, 44,440 drivers were involved in fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those drivers, 22 percent (9,694) were found to be driving with a BAC of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Drivers in rural areas accounted for 54 percent of the alcohol-impaired drivers versus 45 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 (34%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (30%) and 35 to 44 (25%). Rural and urban drivers followed this trend with 21- to 24-year-olds (34% and 34%) having the highest percentage followed by 25- to 34-year-olds (31% and 29%) and 35- to 44-year-olds (27% and 22%).

In cases where drivers had one or more previous DWI convictions, data shows that in rural areas 58 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes were alcohol-impaired as compared to 51 percent in urban areas.

The 2010 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) shows that the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 81 percent, and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 83 percent (see NHTSA Research Note Seat Belt Use in 2010—Overall Results (NOPUS) DOT HS 811 378, September 2010).

In 2010, the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 81 percent and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 83 percent (2010 NOPUS).

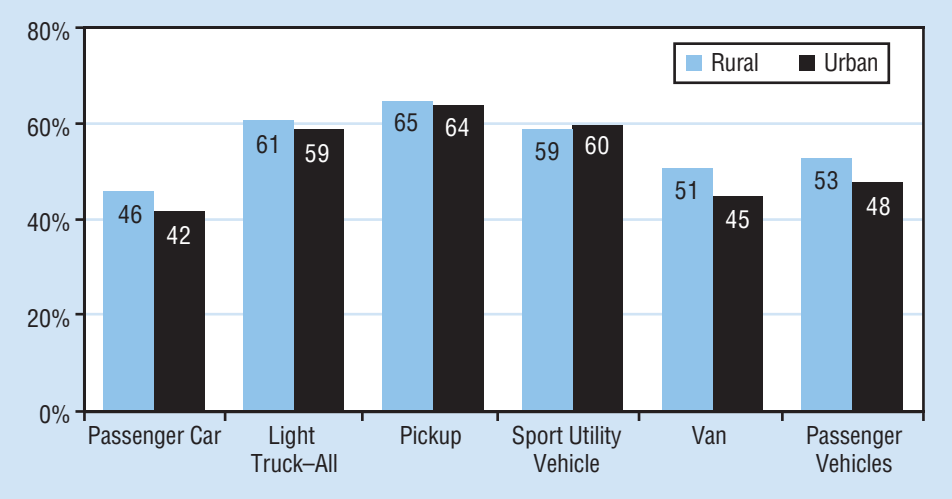
In 2010, 53 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas were unrestrained compared to 48 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed.

In fatal crashes in 2010, 22,187 passenger vehicle occupants were killed. Rural areas accounted for 61 percent of these deaths. As shown in Figure 4, 53 percent of rural passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained as compared to 48 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed. Nearly two-thirds (65%) 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 passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas, 40 percent were in vehicles that rolled over versus 26 percent in urban areas. Data further shows that 69 percent of rural and 67 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained in rollover vehicles (based on known restraint use).

Figure 4

Percentages of Unrestrained Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities by Vehicle Type and Location, 2010



Restraint use percentages based on known use.

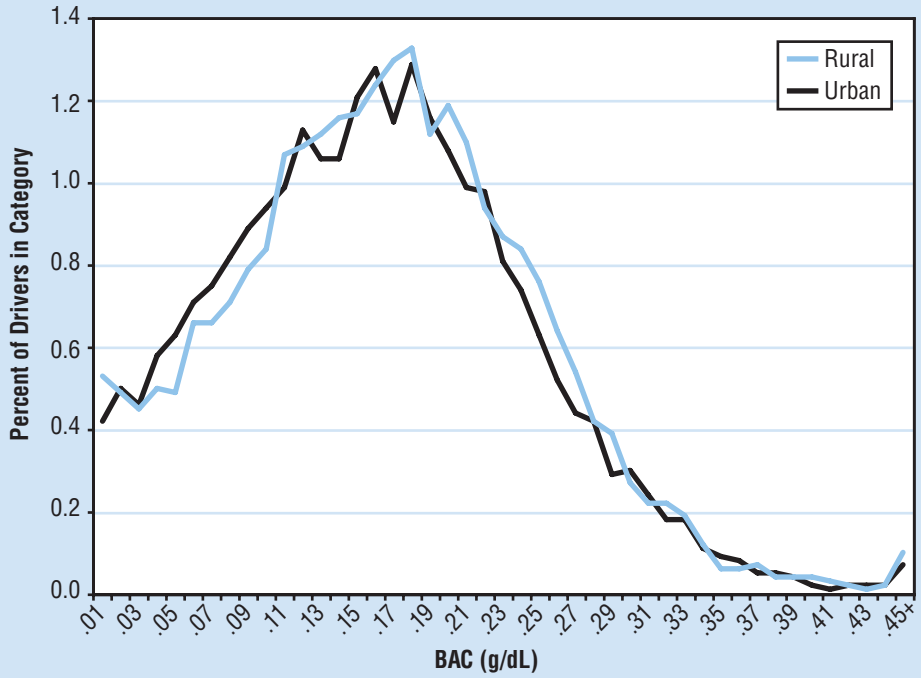
In 2010, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) involved in rural fatal crashes experienced the highest rollover percentage at 42 percent. Other vehicle rollover percentages included: 33 percent for pickups, 22 percent for vans, 22 percent for passenger cars, and 16 percent for large trucks. In urban areas, vehicles experienced a much lower percentage which included: 22 percent for SUVs, 17 percent for pickups, 10 percent for vans, 9 percent for passenger cars, and 7 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% versus 85%, respectively).

In 2010, 21,016 drivers were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those, 64 percent of rural and 49 percent of urban drivers died at the scene of the crash. Data also shows that 41 percent of all drivers killed were transported to the hospital and 3 percent of these drivers died en route. Rural drivers represented 71 percent of drivers who died en route to the hospital compared to only 29 percent for urban drivers.

Figure 5

Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Location, 2010



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 on 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 *Alcohol-Impaired Driving, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists, Children, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Older Population, Occupant Protection, Overview, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Race and Ethnicity, 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.

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Table 2

Total Fatalities by State and Location, 2010

State	Location						Total	
	Rural		Urban		Unknown			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	527	61	327	38	8	1	862	100
Alaska	33	59	23	41	0	0	56	100
Arizona	354	46	408	54	0	0	762	100
Arkansas	444	79	119	21	0	0	563	100
California	1,159	43	1,556	57	0	0	2,715	100
Colorado	245	55	203	45	0	0	448	100
Connecticut	62	19	257	81	0	0	319	100
Delaware	60	59	32	32	9	9	101	100
Dist of Columbia	0	0	24	100	0	0	24	100
Florida	946	39	1,480	61	19	1	2,445	100
Georgia	654	53	590	47	0	0	1,244	100
Hawaii	42	37	71	63	0	0	113	100
Idaho	165	79	44	21	0	0	209	100
Illinois	375	40	552	60	0	0	927	100
Indiana	474	63	280	37	0	0	754	100
Iowa	303	78	87	22	0	0	390	100
Kansas	345	80	86	20	0	0	431	100
Kentucky	551	73	208	27	1	0	760	100
Louisiana	389	55	321	45	0	0	710	100
Maine	155	96	4	2	2	1	161	100
Maryland	182	37	310	63	1	0	493	100
Massachusetts	20	6	277	88	17	5	314	100
Michigan	427	45	515	55	0	0	942	100
Minnesota	287	70	124	30	0	0	411	100
Mississippi	505	79	136	21	0	0	641	100
Missouri	492	60	327	40	0	0	819	100
Montana	177	94	12	6	0	0	189	100
Nebraska	159	84	31	16	0	0	190	100
Nevada	104	40	153	60	0	0	257	100
New Hampshire	86	67	42	33	0	0	128	100
New Jersey	78	14	475	85	3	1	556	100
New Mexico	263	76	83	24	0	0	346	100
New York	571	48	629	52	0	0	1,200	100
North Carolina	945	72	374	28	0	0	1,319	100
North Dakota	93	89	12	11	0	0	105	100
Ohio	713	66	366	34	1	0	1,080	100
Oklahoma	465	70	203	30	0	0	668	100
Oregon	216	68	101	32	0	0	317	100
Pennsylvania	693	52	631	48	0	0	1,324	100
Rhode Island	14	21	52	79	0	0	66	100
South Carolina	613	76	197	24	0	0	810	100
South Dakota	127	91	13	9	0	0	140	100
Tennessee	606	59	425	41	0	0	1,031	100
Texas	1,461	49	1,523	51	14	0	2,998	100
Utah	124	53	112	47	0	0	236	100
Vermont	54	76	17	24	0	0	71	100
Virginia	289	39	226	31	225	30	740	100
Washington	252	55	193	42	13	3	458	100
West Virginia	228	72	87	28	0	0	315	100
Wisconsin	366	64	206	36	0	0	572	100
Wyoming	133	86	22	14	0	0	155	100
National	18,026	55	14,546	44	313	1	32,885	100
Puerto Rico	164	48	176	52	0	0	340	100