



# Alcohol-Impaired Driving

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 2011, 9,878 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 31 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes decreased by 2.5 percent from 10,136 in 2010 to 9,878 in 2011. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) remained at 0.34 in 2011 (same as in 2010) (see Figure 1).

An average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality occurred every 53 minutes in 2011.

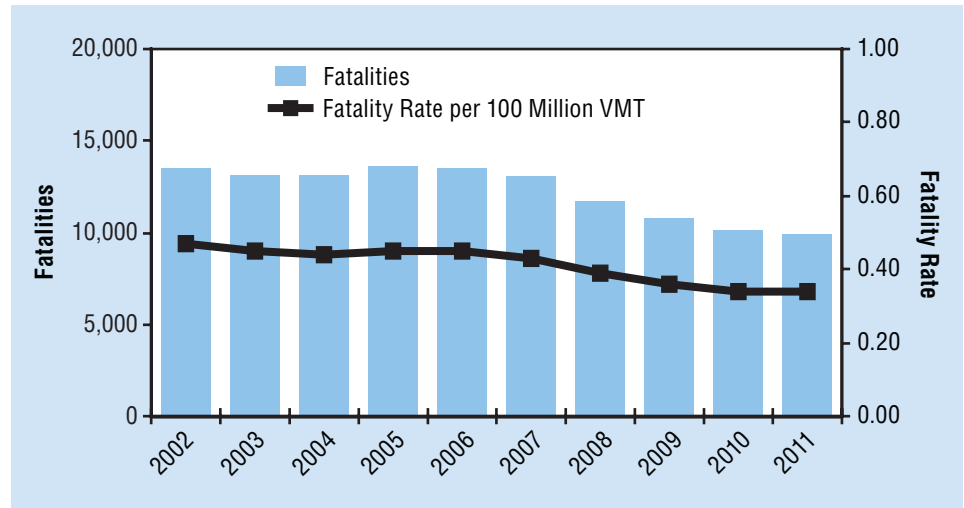
In 2011, all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had by law created a threshold making it illegal per se to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher. Of the 9,878 people who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2011, 6,507 (66%) were drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher. The remaining fatalities consisted of 2,661 (27%) motor vehicle occupants and 710 (7%) nonoccupants.

Table 1  
**Fatalities, by Role, in Crashes Involving at Least One Driver With a BAC of .08 Or Higher, 2011**

Role	Number	Percent of Total
Driver With BAC=.08+	6,507	66%
Passenger Riding w/Driver With BAC=.08+	1,612	16%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>8,119</b>	<b>82%</b>
Occupants of Other Vehicles	1,049	11%
Nonoccupants	710	7%
<b>Total Fatalities</b>	<b>9,878</b>	<b>100%</b>

*In 2011, there were 9,878 fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher – 31 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year.*

Figure 1  
**Fatalities and Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT in Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Crashes, 2002–2011**



*In 2011, of the fatalities among children ages 14 and younger, 16 percent occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.*

Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in the past 10 years have declined by 27 percent from 13,472 in 2002 to 9,878 in 2011. The national rate of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in 2011 was 0.34 per 100 million VMT. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate in the past 10 years has declined by 28 percent from 0.47 in 2002 to 0.34 in 2011.

### Children

In 2011, a total of 1,140 children age 14 and younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those 1,140 fatalities, 181 (16%) occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Out of those 181 deaths, 91 (50%) were occupants of a vehicle with a driver who had a BAC level of .08 or higher, and another 25 children (14%) 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](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 *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](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx).



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

## Time of Day and Day of Week

The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2011 was 4.5 times higher at night than during the day (36% versus 8%).

In 2011, 15 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, 2002 and 2011

Total Drivers							
Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes	2002			2011			Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2002–2011
	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		
		Number	Percent of Total		Number	Percent of Total	
Total	58,113	12,405	21%	43,668	9,296	21%	0
Drivers by Crash Type and Time of Day							
Single-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	22,057	8,058	37%	17,901	6,316	35%	-2
Daytime	8,447	1,391	16%	7,179	1,198	17%	+1
Nighttime	13,301	6,487	49%	10,537	5,030	48%	-1
Multiple-Vehicle Crash							
Total*	36,056	4,347	12%	25,767	2,980	12%	0
Daytime	22,688	1,189	5%	16,198	782	5%	0
Nighttime	13,352	3,153	24%	9,546	2,193	23%	-1
Drivers by Time of Day							
Daytime	31,135	2,580	8%	23,377	1,979	8%	0
Nighttime	26,653	9,640	36%	20,083	7,224	36%	0
Drivers by Day of Week and Time of Day							
Weekday*	35,101	5,286	15%	26,478	3,962	15%	0
Daytime	22,758	1,471	6%	17,106	1,148	7%	+1
Nighttime	12,250	3,770	31%	9,308	2,793	30%	-1
Weekend*	22,939	7,081	31%	17,132	5,307	31%	0
Daytime	8,377	1,110	13%	6,271	831	13%	0
Nighttime	14,403	5,870	41%	10,775	4,431	41%	0

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 2011 was 4.5 times higher at night than during the day.”*

## Drivers

In fatal crashes in 2011 the highest percentage of drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (32%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (30%) and 35 to 44 (24%).

The proportion of drivers involved in fatal crashes with BAC levels of .08 or higher was 24 percent among males and 14 percent among females.

The percentages of drivers involved in fatal crashes with a BAC level of .08 or higher in 2011 were 29 percent for motorcycles, 24 percent for passenger cars, and 21 percent for light trucks. The percentage of drivers with BAC levels of .08 or higher in fatal crashes was the lowest for large trucks (1%).

Table 3

### Drivers With a BAC of .08 or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age, Gender, And Vehicle Type, 2002 and 2011

Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes	Total Drivers						Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 2002–2011
	2002			2011			
	Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		Total Number of Drivers	BAC=.08+		
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Total	58,113	12,405	21%	43,668	9,296	21%	0
<b>Drivers by Age Group (Years)</b>							
16–20	8,128	1,442	18%	4,292	846	20%	+2
21–24	6,316	2,080	33%	4,465	1,450	32%	-1
25–34	11,483	3,274	29%	8,517	2,549	30%	+1
35–44	10,973	2,808	26%	7,058	1,694	24%	-2
45–54	8,558	1,639	19%	7,493	1,568	21%	+2
55–64	5,093	614	12%	5,542	767	14%	+2
65–74	3,100	207	7%	2,947	228	8%	+1
75+	3,223	133	4%	2,522	120	5%	+1
<b>Drivers by Gender</b>							
Male	42,377	10,455	25%	31,809	7,678	24%	-1
Female	14,999	1,817	12%	11,209	1,567	14%	+2
<b>Drivers by Vehicle Type</b>							
Passenger Cars	27,236	6,097	22%	17,335	4,114	24%	+2
Light Trucks	21,562	4,973	23%	16,643	3,551	21%	-2
Large Trucks	4,550	78	2%	3,568	43	1%	-1
Motorcycles	3,363	1,038	31%	4,741	1,390	29%	-2

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

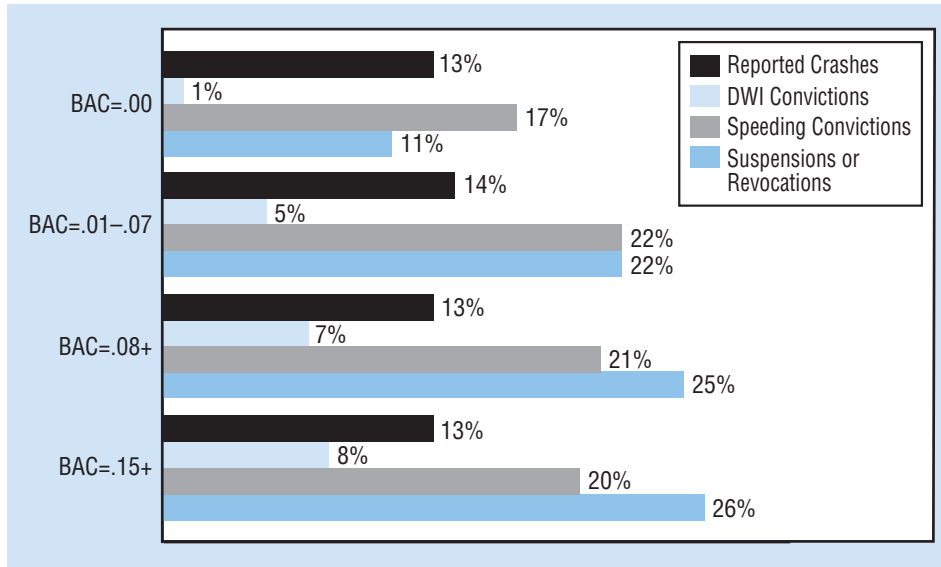
In 2011, 5,034 passenger vehicle (includes passenger cars and light trucks [vans, SUVs, pickups, and other light trucks]) drivers killed had a BAC of .08 or higher. Out of those driver fatalities for which restraint use was known, 70 percent were unrestrained. Among passenger vehicle drivers killed who had a BAC of .01 to .07 g/dL the percent of unrestrained was 58 percent and for passenger vehicle drivers killed who had no alcohol (BAC=.00) the percent of unrestrained was 41 percent.

Drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher involved in fatal crashes were seven times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired (DWI) than were drivers with no alcohol (7% and 1%, respectively) (see Figure 2). Note: FARS records previous DWI convictions of drivers, which occurred up to three years prior to the date of the crash.

*In 2011, the 21- to 24-year-old age group had the highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes with BAC levels of .08 or higher – 32 percent.*

*In 2011, the percentage of drivers with BAC of .08 or above in fatal crashes was highest for motorcycles (29%).*

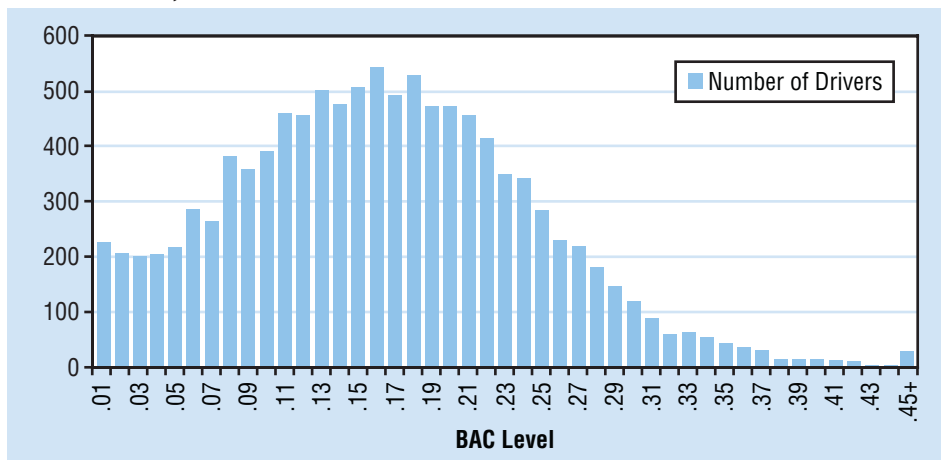
Figure 2  
**Previous Driving Records of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by BAC, 2011**



*Drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher in fatal crashes in 2011 were seven times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired than were drivers with no alcohol.*

In 2011, 85 percent (9,296) of the 10,910 drivers with a BAC of .01 or higher who were involved in fatal crashes had BAC levels at or above .08, and 57 percent (6,266) had BAC levels at or above .15. The most frequently recorded BAC level among drinking drivers in fatal crashes was .16.

Figure 3  
**Distribution of BAC Levels for Drivers With a BAC of .01 or Higher Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2011**



*In 2011, 6,266 (57%) of the drivers involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking had a BAC of .15 or greater.*

Table 4 shows traffic fatalities by State and the highest driver BAC in the crash in 2011. Among all alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities (9,878) in 2011, 68 percent (6,753) were in crashes in which at least one driver in the crash had a BAC of .15 g/dL or higher. Among all States, fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2011 ranged from 3,016 (highest) to 27 (lowest) depending on the size and population of the State. Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities were highest in Texas (1,213), followed by California (774), and Florida (716), and lowest in the District of Columbia (8). The proportion of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities among total fatalities in States ranged from a high of 44 percent (Hawaii) to a low of 17 percent (Maine). The proportion of fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .15 g/dL or higher, ranged from a high of 36 percent (North Dakota) to a low of 12 percent (Maine).

Table 4  
**Traffic Fatalities by State and Highest Driver BAC in the Crash, 2011**

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	894	586	65%	50	6%	259	29%	173	19%	309	35%
Alaska	72	47	66%	3	5%	21	28%	12	17%	24	33%
Arizona	825	536	65%	48	6%	215	26%	146	18%	263	32%
Arkansas	549	350	64%	39	7%	156	28%	113	21%	194	35%
California	2,791	1,896	68%	112	4%	774	28%	528	19%	886	32%
Colorado	447	274	61%	13	3%	161	36%	110	25%	173	39%
Connecticut	220	121	55%	7	3%	92	42%	63	29%	99	45%
Delaware	99	56	56%	3	3%	41	41%	31	31%	43	44%
Dist of Columbia	27	14	50%	5	20%	8	30%	4	15%	13	50%
Florida	2,398	1,532	64%	137	6%	716	30%	503	21%	854	36%
Georgia	1,223	900	74%	46	4%	277	23%	189	15%	323	26%
Hawaii	100	50	50%	6	6%	44	44%	24	24%	50	50%
Idaho	167	112	67%	5	3%	50	30%	30	18%	55	33%
Illinois	918	593	65%	44	5%	278	30%	175	19%	323	35%
Indiana	750	506	67%	36	5%	207	28%	141	19%	243	32%
Iowa	360	264	73%	14	4%	83	23%	56	16%	96	27%
Kansas	386	253	66%	23	6%	108	28%	69	18%	131	34%
Kentucky	721	517	72%	30	4%	171	24%	110	15%	201	28%
Louisiana	675	420	62%	30	4%	226	33%	146	22%	255	38%
Maine	136	97	71%	16	12%	23	17%	16	12%	39	29%
Maryland	485	293	60%	30	6%	162	33%	98	20%	192	40%
Massachusetts	337	204	61%	15	5%	114	34%	76	23%	130	39%
Michigan	889	593	67%	39	4%	255	29%	170	19%	294	33%
Minnesota	368	233	63%	22	6%	109	30%	77	21%	131	36%
Mississippi	630	467	74%	14	2%	149	24%	105	17%	163	26%
Missouri	784	479	61%	40	5%	258	33%	174	22%	299	38%
Montana	209	119	57%	8	4%	81	39%	59	28%	88	42%
Nebraska	181	127	70%	8	5%	45	25%	36	20%	54	30%
Nevada	246	155	63%	21	9%	70	28%	41	17%	91	37%
New Hampshire	90	61	68%	2	2%	27	30%	23	26%	29	32%
New Jersey	627	398	63%	34	5%	193	31%	121	19%	227	36%
New Mexico	353	233	66%	14	4%	105	30%	72	20%	119	34%
New York	1,169	781	67%	72	6%	315	27%	209	18%	387	33%
North Carolina	1,227	807	66%	52	4%	365	30%	252	21%	417	34%
North Dakota	148	81	55%	3	2%	64	43%	53	36%	67	45%
Ohio	1,016	654	64%	42	4%	316	31%	228	22%	358	35%
Oklahoma	696	448	64%	29	4%	220	32%	155	22%	249	36%
Oregon	331	215	65%	18	5%	97	29%	75	23%	116	35%
Pennsylvania	1,286	819	64%	58	4%	407	32%	301	23%	464	36%
Rhode Island	66	39	59%	3	4%	24	37%	16	24%	27	41%
South Carolina	828	448	54%	65	8%	315	38%	210	25%	379	46%
South Dakota	111	74	66%	5	4%	33	29%	26	24%	37	34%
Tennessee	946	639	68%	50	5%	257	27%	165	17%	307	32%
Texas	3,016	1,614	54%	184	6%	1,213	40%	831	28%	1,397	46%
Utah	240	177	74%	10	4%	53	22%	32	13%	63	26%
Vermont	55	31	56%	5	9%	18	33%	12	22%	23	42%
Virginia	764	488	64%	50	7%	224	29%	151	20%	274	36%
Washington	457	275	60%	26	6%	156	34%	114	25%	182	40%
West Virginia	337	229	68%	16	5%	90	27%	64	19%	106	32%
Wisconsin	582	354	61%	31	5%	196	34%	144	25%	227	39%
Wyoming	135	94	69%	3	2%	38	28%	25	18%	41	31%
<b>National</b>	<b>32,367</b>	<b>20,752</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>1,633</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>9,878</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>6,753</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>11,510</b>	<b>36%</b>
Puerto Rico	359	231	64%	27	8%	101	28%	62	17%	128	36%

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