



Young Drivers

In 2011, 1,987 young (15- to 20-year-old) drivers died in motor vehicle crashes, an increase of 1 percent from 1,965 in 2010. Additionally 180,000 young drivers were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2011, a decrease of 4 percent from 187,000 in 2010.

The two-year comparison of total driver involvement in fatal crashes showed a 2-percent reduction from 44,599 in 2010 to 43,668 in 2011. During this same period, young driver involvement decreased 6 percent from 4,603 in 2010 to 4,347 in 2011.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all 15- to 20-year-olds, according to the most recent data available (2009) from the National Center for Health Statistics.

There were 211.9 million licensed drivers in the United States in 2011. Young drivers accounted for 6 percent (12.6 million) of the total, a .8-percent increase from the 12.5 million young drivers in 2002. Population for this age group increased from 2002 to 2011 – by 5.9 percent.

In the 15- to 20-year-old age group, driver fatalities declined by 48 percent between 2002 and 2011.

Figure 1
Driver Fatalities and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Among Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old, 2002–2011

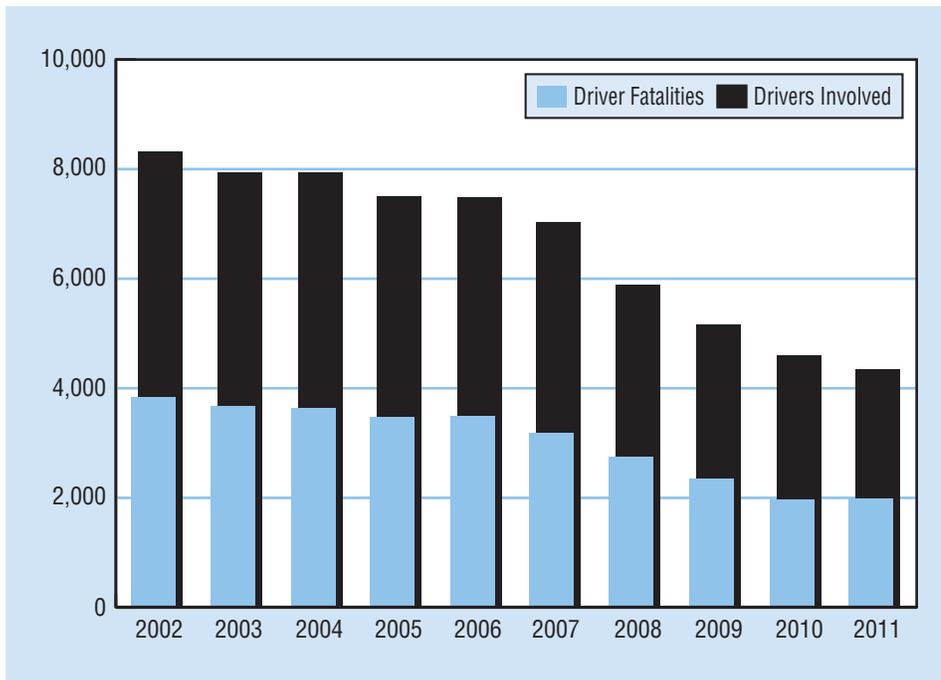


Table 1
Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, by Gender, 2002 and 2011

Gender	2002			2011			Percentage Change, 2002–2011	
	Total	Age 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15–20
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes								
Total	58,113	8,325	14.3	43,668	4,347	10.0	-25	-48
Male	42,377	5,860	13.8	31,809	3,032	9.5	-25	-48
Female	14,999	2,465	16.4	11,209	1,314	11.7	-25	-47
Driver Fatalities								
Total	26,659	3,838	14.4	20,753	1,987	9.6	-22	-48
Male	19,859	2,750	13.8	15,868	1,424	9.0	-20	-48
Female	6,799	1,088	16.0	4,881	563	11.5	-28	-48

Note: Total includes unknown gender.

In 2011, 10 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were between 15 and 20 years old.

In 2011, 4,347 young drivers were involved in fatal crashes – a 48-percent decrease from the 8,325 involved in 2002. Driver fatalities for this age group declined by 48 percent between 2002 (3,838) and 2011 (1,987). For both 15- to 20-year-old young males and females, driver fatalities decreased by 48 percent (Table 1). Total drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased by 25 percent from 58,113 in 2002 to 43,668 in 2011.

In 2011, 10 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes and 13 percent of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes were young drivers. Total drivers involved in police-reported crashes decreased by 2 percent to 9,390,000 in 2011 from 9,543,000 in 2010. Young drivers involved in police reported crashes decreased 7 percent for the same period from 1,315,000 to 1,229,000.

Table 2
Population and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age Group, 2011

	Age Group (Years)							
	15–20	21–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–69	70+
Population (Percent)	8.4	5.6	13.4	13.0	14.4	12.2	4.1	9.2
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes (Percent)								
- All Fatal Crashes	10.1	10.4	19.8	16.4	17.4	12.9	3.9	8.9
- Single-Vehicle	12.2	12.4	21.3	16.0	16.1	11.5	3.5	6.9
- Multi-Vehicle	8.7	9.0	18.9	16.7	18.4	13.9	4.1	10.3

Among young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2011, 33 percent (213 out of 653) 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, 2011

Driving Record	License Compliance				Total (4,347)*	
	Valid (3,671)		Invalid (653)			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Previous Recorded Crashes	480	13.1	55	8.4	535	12.3
Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations	310	8.4	213	32.6	523	12.0
Previous DWI Convictions	37	1.0	32	4.9	69	1.6
Previous Speeding Convictions	707	19.3	101	15.5	808	18.6
Previous Other Harmful or Moving Conviction	648	17.7	133	20.4	781	18.0

*Includes 23 drivers with unknown license status.

Note: Excluding all drivers with unknown previous records.

During 2011, 205 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 2011, 205 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 1,617 motorcyclists of all ages in 2011, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 703 lives could have been saved.

During 2011, 34 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 2011, 38 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 2011, 32 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; 26 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, 2002 and 2011

Driver Status	Total Number of Drivers	BAC = .01–.07		BAC = .08 +		BAC = .01 +	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2002							
Survived	4,487	219	5	541	12	760	17
Fatally Injured	3,838	235	6	919	24	1,154	30
Total	8,325	454	5	1,460	18	1,913	23
2011							
Survived	2,360	90	4	329	14	419	18
Fatally Injured	1,987	118	6	523	26	640	32
Total	4,347	207	5	852	20	1,059	24

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

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

In 2011, 32 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 2011, 24 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, 536 drivers were killed at the age of 20 – highest among young drivers; 39 percent of these drivers were drinking (see Table 5).

Table 5

Young Drivers Fatally Injured, by Age and Percent With BAC=.01 or Higher, 2011

Age (Years)	Number of Drivers	Percentage With BAC = .01 +
15	23	18
16	191	22
17	270	25
18	439	32
19	528	34
20	536	39

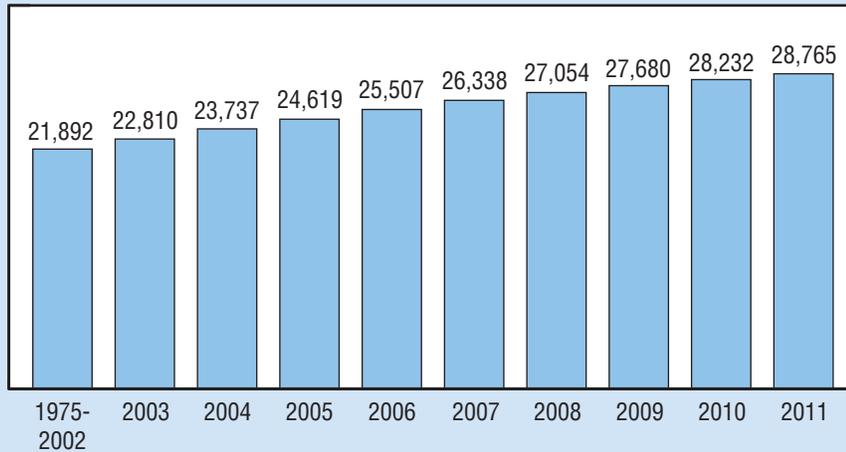
The number of young drivers involved in fatal crashes who had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher dropped by 45 percent, from 1,913 in 2002 to 1,059 in 2011.

For young drivers, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2011, 28 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crash, compared with 16 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2011, 57 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, 70 percent were unrestrained. In comparison, of the non-drinking young drivers killed, 49 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 28,765 lives since 1975. In 2011, an estimated 533 lives were saved by minimum-drinking-age laws.

Figure 2
Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975–2011



NHTSA estimates that minimum-drinking-age laws have saved 28,765 lives since 1975.

Table 6 shows traffic fatalities by State and person type in crashes involving young drivers (ages 15-20) in 2011. Among 4,767 fatalities in crashes involving young drivers in 2011, 67 percent (3,178) were young drivers or passengers in young drivers' vehicles. Ten percent (469) were nonoccupants and only 23 percent (1,120) were occupants of other vehicles. Among all States, traffic fatalities in crashes involving young drivers ranged from 5 (lowest) to 477 (highest) depending on the size and population of the State. The number of young drivers who died in crashes were highest in Texas (189), followed by California (121), and Florida (117), and lowest in the District of Columbia (2).

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 *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.



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**National Highway
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Table 6

Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young Drivers (Ages 15–20), by State and Person Type, 2011

State	Young Drivers	Passengers in Young Drivers' Vehicles	Occupants of Other Vehicles	Nonoccupants	Total
Alabama	64	41	37	10	152
Alaska	3	2	4	1	10
Arizona	41	26	30	24	121
Arkansas	32	19	12	3	66
California	121	80	79	60	340
Colorado	30	14	15	7	66
Connecticut	12	5	6	2	25
Delaware	5	3	3	2	13
Dist of Columbia	2	1	2	0	5
Florida	117	62	97	51	327
Georgia	67	46	37	17	167
Hawaii	5	2	2	2	11
Idaho	22	11	5	2	40
Illinois	56	36	33	15	140
Indiana	54	22	27	9	112
Iowa	30	16	9	3	58
Kansas	31	10	22	3	66
Kentucky	39	20	29	4	92
Louisiana	51	16	19	11	97
Maine	14	6	6	1	27
Maryland	34	15	14	4	67
Massachusetts	23	9	10	5	47
Michigan	63	40	44	11	158
Minnesota	27	16	15	2	60
Mississippi	42	26	17	7	92
Missouri	69	45	31	7	152
Montana	15	5	5	2	27
Nebraska	15	10	4	1	30
Nevada	7	8	8	3	26
New Hampshire	6	3	1	0	10
New Jersey	30	23	22	16	91
New Mexico	16	14	3	7	40
New York	40	40	28	20	128
North Carolina	80	51	40	15	186
North Dakota	10	6	5	1	22
Ohio	73	44	48	15	180
Oklahoma	42	39	26	8	115
Oregon	16	13	5	4	38
Pennsylvania	98	69	42	20	229
Rhode Island	2	1	3	0	6
South Carolina	56	22	16	13	107
South Dakota	7	8	0	2	17
Tennessee	66	32	40	11	149
Texas	189	124	127	37	477
Utah	12	15	8	5	40
Vermont	6	3	1	0	10
Virginia	47	25	23	6	101
Washington	25	19	19	7	70
West Virginia	32	9	9	1	51
Wisconsin	33	12	26	12	83
Wyoming	10	7	6	0	23
U.S. Total	1,987	1,191	1,120	469	4,767
Puerto Rico	26	7	6	8	47