



Young Drivers

In 2012, there were 1,875 young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who died in motor vehicle crashes, a decrease of 6 percent from 1,993 in 2011 (Figure 1). Additionally 184,000 young drivers were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2012, an increase of 2 percent from 180,000 in 2011.

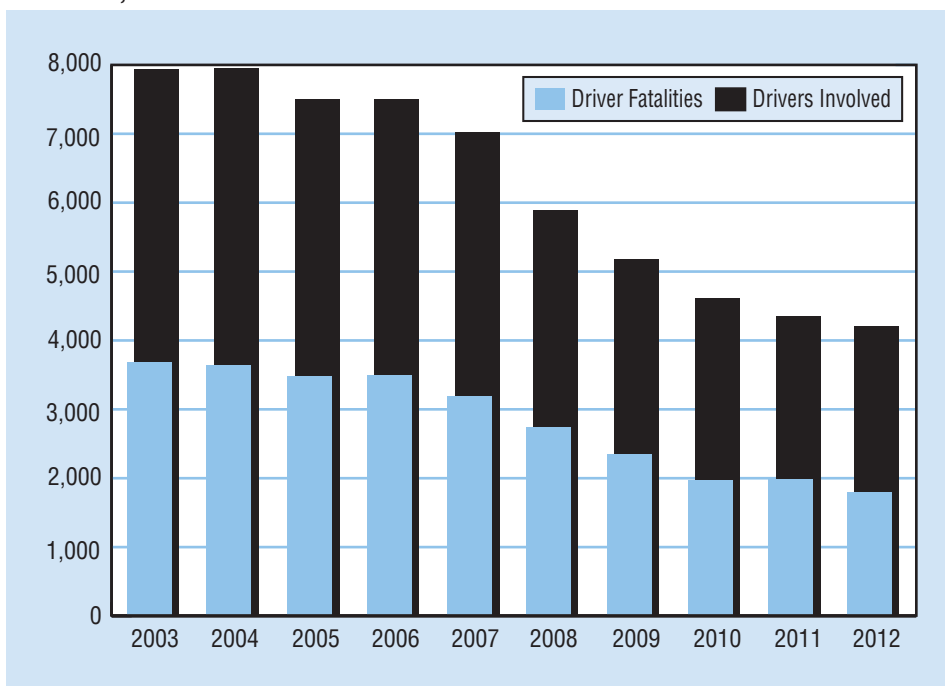
The two-year comparison of total driver involvement in fatal crashes showed a 3-percent increase from 43,840 in 2011 to 45,337 in 2012. During this same period, young driver involvement decreased 2 percent from 4,362 in 2011 to 4,283 in 2012 (Figure 1).

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 (2012 data not available). 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 2003 to 2012 – by 3.8 percent.

In the 15- to 20-year-old age group, driver fatalities declined by 49 percent between 2003 and 2012.

Figure 1
Driver Fatalities and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Among Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old, 2003–2012



In 2012, there were 4,283 young drivers involved in fatal crashes – a 46-percent decrease from the 7,937 involved in 2003. Driver fatalities for this age group declined by 49 percent between 2003 (3,675) and 2012 (1,875). For 15- to 20-year-old young males, driver fatalities decreased by 48 percent, compared with a 51-percent decrease for young females. Total drivers involved in fatal crashes decreased by 23 percent from 58,517 in 2003 to 45,337 in 2012 (Table 1).

In 2012, 9 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were 15 to 20 years old.

In 2012, 9 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes (Table 1) and 13 percent of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes were young drivers. Total drivers involved in police-reported crashes increased by 5 percent to 9,882,000 in 2012 from 9,390,000 in 2011. Young drivers involved in police-reported crashes increased 2 percent for the same period from 1,229,000 to 1,258,000.

Table 1

Involvement of 15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers in Fatal Crashes, by Gender, 2003 and 2012

Gender	2003			2012			Percentage Change, 2003–2012	
	Total	Age 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15–20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15–20
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes								
Total	58,517	7,937	13.6	45,337	4,283	9.4	-23	-46
Male	42,586	5,584	13.1	33,124	2,997	9.0	-22	-46
Female	15,211	2,353	15.5	11,509	1,285	11.2	-24	-45
Driver Fatalities								
Total	26,779	3,675	13.7	21,394	1,875	8.8	-20	-49
Male	19,955	2,657	13.3	16,525	1,372	8.3	-17	-48
Female	6,821	1,018	14.9	4,866	503	10.3	-29	-51

Note: Total includes unknown gender.

The 15- to 20-year-old age group accounted for 11 percent of all drivers involved in single-vehicle fatal crashes, compared to 8 percent in multi-vehicle fatal crashes (Table 2).

Table 2

Population and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Age Group, 2012

	Age Group (Years)							
	15–20	21–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–69	70+
Population (Percent)	8.3	5.7	13.5	12.9	14.1	12.3	4.5	9.3
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes (Percent)								
- All Fatal Crashes	9.6	10.6	20.1	16.4	17.1	13.2	4.1	8.8
- Single-Vehicle	11.3	12.5	21.2	15.9	15.8	12.0	3.7	7.5
- Multi-Vehicle	8.4	9.4	19.3	16.8	17.9	14.1	4.4	9.7

Note: Percentages are based on known age groups only

Among young drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2012, 29 percent (192 out of 652) of those who did not have valid operator's licenses also had previous license suspensions or revocations at the time of the crashes (Table 3).

Table 3

15- to 20-Year-Old Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Previous Driving Record and License Compliance, 2012

Driving Record	License Compliance				Total (4,283)*	
	Valid (3,611)		Invalid (652)			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Previous Recorded Crashes	506	14.0	64	9.8	570	13.3
Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations	306	8.5	192	29.4	499	11.7
Previous DWI Convictions	24	0.7	20	3.1	44	1.0
Previous Speeding Convictions	620	17.2	86	13.2	708	16.5
Previous Other Harmful or Moving Conviction	588	16.3	126	19.3	714	16.7

*Includes 20 drivers with unknown license status.

Note: Excluding all drivers with unknown previous records.

Motorcycles

NHTSA redefined its motorcycle terminology in 2007. 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 2012, there were 194 young motorcycle riders (15 to 20 years old) killed, and 6,000 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 1,699 motorcyclists of all ages in 2012, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 781 lives could have been saved.

During 2012, 32 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 2012, 37 percent were either unlicensed or driving with invalid licenses.

During 2012, there were 194 motorcycle riders 15 to 20 years old who were killed, and an additional 6,000 were injured.

In 2012, 28 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had BACs of .01 g/dL or higher.

Alcohol

All States and the District of Columbia have 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws. In 2012, 28 percent of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) of .01 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher; 24 percent had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher (see Table 4).

A driver is considered to be alcohol-impaired when the driver's 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 a drinking crash includes a fatal crash in which a driver had a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher.

Table 4

Alcohol Involvement Among Young Drivers (Age 15 to 20) Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Year and Driver Status, 2003 and 2012

Driver Status	Total Number of Drivers	BAC = .01-.07		BAC = .08 +		BAC = .01+	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2003							
Survived	4,262	178	4	543	13	721	17
Fatally Injured	3,675	219	6	917	25	1,136	31
Total	7,937	397	5	1,460	18	1,857	23
2012							
Survived	2,408	88	4	304	13	392	16
Fatally Injured	1,875	75	4	459	24	534	28
Total	4,283	163	4	763	18	926	22

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

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

The number of young drivers involved in fatal crashes who had BACs of .01 g/dL or higher dropped by 50 percent, from 1,857 in 2003 to 926 in 2012 (Table 4).

In 2012, 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, 530 drivers were killed at the age of 20—highest among young drivers; 38 percent of these drivers were drinking (see Table 5).

Table 5

Young Drivers Fatally Injured, by Age and Percentage With BAC=.01 or Higher, 2012

Age (Years)	Number of Drivers	Percentage With BAC = .01+
15	32	8
16	186	15
17	241	21
18	391	28
19	495	29
20	530	38

For young drivers, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2012, 25 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crashes, compared with 15 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2012, 55 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, 49 percent were unrestrained (Table 6).

Table 6

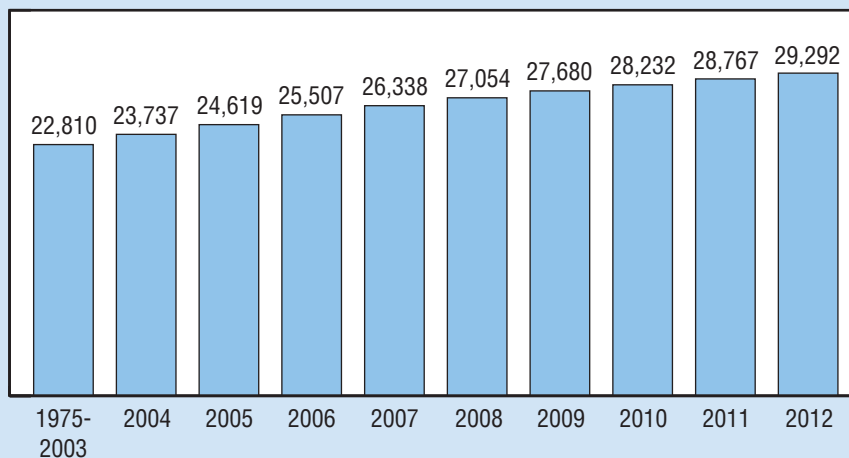
Young Drivers of Passenger Vehicles in Fatal Crashes by Restraint Use and Alcohol, 2012

Restraint Use	BAC = .00		BAC = .01+	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes				
Restraint Used	2,142	74	354	45
Restraint Not Used	740	26	437	55
Driver Fatalities				
Restraint Used	545	51	133	29
Restraint Not Used	518	49	325	71

NHTSA estimates that the 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws have reduced alcohol traffic fatalities by 13 percent and have saved an estimated 29,292 lives since 1975. In 2012, an estimated 525 lives were saved by minimum-drinking-age laws (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975–2012



NHTSA estimates that minimum-drinking-age laws have saved 29,292 lives since 1975.

Table 7 shows traffic fatalities by State and person type in crashes involving young drivers (age 15 to 20) in 2012. Among 4,640 fatalities in crashes involving young drivers in 2012, 63 percent (2,927) were young drivers or passengers in young drivers' vehicles. Eleven percent (497) were nonoccupants and 26 percent (1,216) were occupants of other vehicles. Among all States, traffic fatalities in crashes involving young drivers ranged from 0 (lowest) to 483 (highest) depending on the size and population of the State. The number of young drivers who died in crashes was highest in Texas (182), followed by California (127), and Florida (120), and lowest in the District of Columbia (0).

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 7

Fatalities in Crashes Involving Young Drivers (Ages 15 to 20), by State and Person Type, 2012

State	Young Drivers	Passengers in Young Drivers' Vehicles	Occupants of Other Vehicles	Nonoccupants	Total
Alabama	61	26	43	11	141
Alaska	4	0	4	0	8
Arizona	40	28	26	12	106
Arkansas	31	16	23	0	70
California	127	98	73	54	352
Colorado	26	17	25	5	73
Connecticut	8	2	7	5	22
Delaware	3	4	9	1	17
Dist of Columbia	0	0	0	0	0
Florida	120	46	95	56	317
Georgia	59	32	46	22	159
Hawaii	4	5	0	2	11
Idaho	12	4	4	0	20
Illinois	50	40	27	12	129
Indiana	54	28	33	12	127
Iowa	22	9	17	3	51
Kansas	29	21	19	5	74
Kentucky	47	13	26	5	91
Louisiana	41	24	25	19	109
Maine	13	6	3	0	22
Maryland	32	14	13	6	65
Massachusetts	19	6	13	7	45
Michigan	56	28	47	13	144
Minnesota	22	13	17	4	56
Mississippi	34	21	15	4	74
Missouri	55	22	45	13	135
Montana	16	2	4	3	25
Nebraska	23	4	10	2	39
Nevada	9	6	21	5	41
New Hampshire	9	2	3	1	15
New Jersey	25	21	19	7	72
New Mexico	16	15	10	5	46
New York	50	42	28	25	145
North Carolina	57	52	43	28	180
North Dakota	16	8	2	1	27
Ohio	63	42	50	14	169
Oklahoma	38	19	21	5	83
Oregon	12	9	15	7	43
Pennsylvania	105	35	53	15	208
Rhode Island	3	0	1	0	4
South Carolina	59	30	31	14	134
South Dakota	11	4	3	1	19
Tennessee	71	26	47	6	150
Texas	182	124	120	57	483
Utah	11	7	13	4	35
Vermont	2	2	1	2	7
Virginia	49	23	25	11	108
Washington	22	14	8	5	49
West Virginia	13	8	10	3	34
Wisconsin	39	32	19	4	94
Wyoming	5	2	4	1	12
U.S. Total	1,875	1,052	1,216	497	4,640
Puerto Rico	19	8	6	9	42