Traffic Safety Facts

2015 Data

February 2020 (Revised)

DOT HS 812 376

NHTSA

Key Findings

- In 2015, there were an estimated 6,296,000 police-reported traffic crashes, in which 35,092 people were killed and an estimated 2,443,000 people were injured.
- An average of 96 people died each day in motor vehicle crashes in 2015, one fatality every 15 minutes.
- Fatality rates per 100,000 population (10.92) and per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT, 1.12) in 2015 have both increased compared to 2014 (10.27 and 1.08, respectively).
- In 2015, there were 10,265 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities, representing an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality every 51 minutes.
- Thirty-three percent of all motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were speeding in 2015, the highest of any vehicle type.
- NHTSA estimates that 13,941 lives were saved on the roadways in 2015 by the use of seat belts.
- On average, a pedestrian is killed in a motor vehicle crash every 1.6 hours, and one is injured about every 7.5 minutes.
- In 2015 about 9 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were 15 to 20 years old. Young drivers accounted for 5.4 percent of the total number of licensed drivers in the United States in 2015.
- Of the 181 children, 14 and younger, who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes, 51 percent were occupants of vehicles where the drivers had a blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) of .08 g/dL or higher.
- In 2015 there were 6,165 people 65 and older killed and an estimated 240,000 injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Older people made up 18 percent of all traffic fatalities and 10 percent of all people injured in traffic crashes during the year.

U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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Summary of Motor Vehicle Crashes

(Final Edition)

In this fact sheet, the overview of 2015 data is presented as follows:

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This fact sheet contains information on motor vehicle fatalities and 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 U.S. totals). Crash and injury statistics are based on data from the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) General Estimates System (GES). The NASS GES is a probability-based sample of police-reported crashes, from 60 locations across the country, from which estimates of national totals for injury and property-damage-only crashes are derived.

Overview

Motor vehicle travel is a major means of transportation in the United States, providing an unparalleled degree of mobility. Yet for all its advantages, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of death for children age 10 and young people 16 to 23 in 2015.[1] The mission of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is to reduce deaths, injuries, and economic losses from motor vehicle crashes.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.a.) Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) database. (Web page). Atlanta: Author. Retrieved from the CDC web site at www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading_causes_death.html

Trends: 2006 to 2015

The number of police-reported motor vehicle crashes, by crash severity, is presented in Table 1 for the last 10 years. A downward trend is most pronounced with respect to crashes of the highest severity – fatal crashes declined by 16.8 percent over the past decade. However, the number of fatal crashes increased by 7 percent from 2014 to 2015. There was also a 4.1-percent increase in non-fatal injury crashes, a 3.7-percent increase in property-damage-only crashes, and a 3.8-percent overall increase in the total police-reported crashes. This was a statistically significant increase in the number of non-fatal crashes between 2014 and 2015.

Table 1
Police-Reported Crashes by Crash Severity and Year, 2006–2015

Year	Crash Severity							
	Fatal		Injury		Property Damage Only		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2006	38,648	0.6%	1,746,000	29.2%	4,189,000	70.1%	5,973,000	100.0%
2007	37,435	0.6%	1,711,000	28.4%	4,275,000	71.0%	6,024,000	100.0%
2008	34,172	0.6%	1,630,000	28.1%	4,146,000	71.4%	5,811,000	100.0%
2009	30,862	0.6%	1,517,000	27.6%	3,957,000	71.9%	5,505,000	100.0%
2010	30,296	0.6%	1,542,000	28.5%	3,847,000	71.0%	5,419,000	100.0%
2011	29,867	0.6%	1,530,000	28.7%	3,778,000	70.8%	5,338,000	100.0%
2012	31,006	0.6%	1,634,000	29.1%	3,950,000	70.3%	5,615,000	100.0%
2013	30,202	0.5%	1,591,000	28.0%	4,066,000	71.5%	5,687,000	100.0%
2014	30,056	0.5%	1,648,000	27.2%	4,387,000	72.3%	6,064,000	100.0%
2015	32,166	0.5%	1,715,000	27.2%	4,548,000	72.2%	6,296,000	100.0%

Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2006–2014 (Final File) and 2015 Annual Report File (ARF); National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) General Estimates System (GES) 2006–2015

While Table 1 presented data on crashes, Table 2 presents data on people killed and injured in motor vehicle crashes for the 10-year period for which the most recent data is available. Also presented are the fatality and injury rates based on population, licensed drivers, registered vehicles, and VMT.

In 2015, there were 35,092 people killed and an estimated 2,443,000 people injured in police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes. Compared to 2014, this is a 7.2-percent increase in the number of fatalities and a 4.5-percent increase in the number of people injured. The increase of an estimated 106,000 injured people between 2014 and 2015 represented a statistically significant increase in the numbers. Over the decade, there was a 17.8-percent decrease in the number of those killed in motor vehicle crashes, and a 5.1-percent decrease in the number of those injured. On average, 96 people died each day and one person was killed every 15 minutes in motor vehicle crashes in 2015.

Unfortunately, there was an across-the-board increase in the number of deaths and injuries on our Nation's highways in 2015: the fatality rate per 100 million VMT increased to 1.13. However, it is still a 20.4-percent decline from 2006 (based on unrounded rates), when the rate was 1.42 per 100 million VMT. The fatality rates based on population and VMT are the highest they have been in the last several years.

The injury rate per 100 million VMT was 79 in 2015, an increase from 77 in 2014. The injury rate increased from 733 per 100,000 population in 2014 to 760 in 2015 as did the injury rate based on licensed drivers. The injury rate based on registered vehicles also increased from 2014 to 2015.

Table 2

People Killed and Injured, and Fatality and Injury Rates, 2006–2015

Year	Killed	Resident Population (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Population	Licensed Drivers (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	Registered Motor Vehicles (Thousands)	Fatality Rate per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	Vehicle Miles Traveled (Billions)	Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT
					Killed				
2006	42,708	298,380	14.31	202,810	21.06	251,415	16.99	3,014	1.42
2007	41,259	301,231	13.70	205,742	20.05	257,472	16.02	3,031	1.36
2008	37,423	304,094	12.31	208,321	17.96	259,360	14.43	2,977	1.26
2009	33,883	306,772	11.05	209,618	16.16	258,958	13.08	2,957	1.15
2010	32,999	309,347	10.67	210,115	15.71	257,312	12.82	2,967	1.11
2011	32,479	311,719	10.42	211,875	15.33	265,043	12.25	2,950	1.10
2012	33,782	314,103	10.76	211,815	15.95	265,647	12.72	2,969	1.14
2013	32,893	316,427	10.40	212,160	15.50	269,294	12.21	2,988	1.10
2014	32,744	318,907	10.27	214,092	15.29	274,805	11.92	3,026	1.08
2015	35,092	321,419	10.92	218,084	16.09	281,312	12.47	3,095	1.13

Year	Injured	Resident Population (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 population	Licensed Drivers (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	Registered Motor Vehicles (Thousands)	Injury Rate per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	Vehicle Miles Traveled (Billions)	Injury Rate per 100 Million VMT
					Injured				
2006	2,575,000	298,380	863	202,810	1,269	251,415	1,024	3,014	85
2007	2,491,000	301,231	827	205,742	1,211	257,472	967	3,031	82
2008	2,346,000	304,094	771	208,321	1,126	259,360	904	2,977	79
2009	2,217,000	306,772	723	209,618	1,058	258,958	856	2,957	75
2010	2,239,000	309,347	724	210,115	1,066	257,312	870	2,967	75
2011	2,217,000	311,719	711	211,875	1,046	265,043	836	2,950	75
2012	2,362,000	314,103	752	211,815	1,115	265,647	889	2,969	80
2013	2,313,000	316,427	731	212,160	1,090	269,294	859	2,988	77
2014	2,338,000	318,907	733	214,092	1,092	274,805	851	3,026	77
2015	2,443,000	321,419	760	218,084	1,120	281,312	869	3,095	79

Source: FARS 2006–2014 Final File and 2015 ARF; NASS GES 2006–2015; Vehicle Miles of Travel and Licensed Drivers — Federal Highway Administration; Registered Vehicles — R. L. Polk & Co. and Federal Highway Administration; Population — U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Fatalities by person type in 2006 and 2015 are shown in Figure 1. The most obvious shift is in the percentage of passenger car occupant fatalities – changing from 42 percent of the fatalities to 36 percent. This percentage change is the result of 5,297 fewer passenger car occupant fatalities in the 10-year period. A reduction of 2,948 light-truck occupant fatalities led to a slight decrease in that portion of the fatalities (30% to 28%). Motorcyclist fatalities now make up 14 percent of total fatalities compared to 11 percent 10 years earlier. Finally, the portion of nonoccupant (pedestrian, bicyclist, and other cyclist) fatalities increased from 13 percent to 18 percent over the 10-year period.

Figure 1
Fatalities by Person Type, 2006 and 2015

Source: FARS 2006 Final File and 2015 ARF.

Economic Cost for All Traffic Crashes

The estimated economic cost of all motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States in 2010 (the most recent year for which cost data is available) was $242 billion. Included in the economic costs are:

- lost productivity,
- workplace losses,
- legal and court expenses,
- medical costs,
- emergency medical services (EMS),
- insurance administration costs,
- congestion costs, and
- property damage costs.

These costs represent the tangible losses that result from motor vehicle crashes. However, in cases of serious injury or death, such costs fail to capture the rather intangible value of lost quality-of-life that results from these injuries. When quality-of-life valuations are considered, the total cost of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes in the United States in 2010 was an estimated $836 billion.

The costs related to specific types of crashes have also been estimated. Table 3 presents the economic and comprehensive costs of crash topics discussed in this fact sheet.

Table 3
Economic and Comprehensive Cost Estimates in Billions, 2010

Type of Crashes	Economic Cost	Comprehensive Cost
Total	$242.0	$835.8
Alcohol-Impaired	$44.0	$201.1
Speeding	$52.0	$203.2
Motorcycle Crashes	$12.9	$65.7
Helmet Nonuse	$1.2	$7.6
Seat Belt Nonuse	$10.4	$68.6
Pedestrian Crashes	$11.5	$65.0
Bicyclist and Other Cyclist Crashes	$4.4	$21.7

Source: Blincoe, L. J., Miller, T. R., Zaloshnja, E., & Lawrence, B. A. (2015, May). The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2010 (Revised) (Report No. DOT HS 812 013). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/812013.pdf.

Each fatality resulted in an average discounted lifetime economic cost of $1.4 million, and an average comprehensive cost of $9.1 million. For further information on cost estimates, see *The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised)* at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/812013.pdf.

Traffic Safety Fact Sheets

NCSA annually publishes a series of Traffic Safety Fact Sheets, brief publications on subjects of particular interest to the traffic safety community. Currently 16 fact sheets are produced. Some, such as those covering alcohol-impaired driving, occupant protection, and speeding, cover driver or occupant behavior. Others focus on populations of interest, such as children, bicyclists and other cyclists, older population, pedestrians, and young drivers. Specific vehicle types are the emphasis in fact sheets on large trucks, motorcycles, passenger vehicles, and school transportation. The Rural/Urban Comparison fact sheet focuses on the location of the crash. This Summary fact sheet, available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812376.pdf, provides a bit of information from each of these fact sheets, along with links and references for further information.

Most of these fact sheets contain tables with data by State. One additional fact sheet covers a variety of traffic safety subject areas, all at the State level. Some topics included are alcohol-involvement, speeding-related crashes, and crash type. For more detailed information, use this link to view the State Traffic Data fact sheet: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812412.pdf.

Behavior

Driver behavior, such as speeding and driving while impaired, as well as whether vehicle occupants are wearing seat belts, are important areas of interest. These behaviors are the subject of this set of traffic safety fact sheets.

Alcohol-Impaired Driving

In 2015 there were 10,265 people killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes, an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality every 51 minutes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 29 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.

Of the 10,265 people who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2015, there were 6,424 drivers (63%) with BACs of .08 g/dL or higher. The remaining fatalities consisted of 2,908 motor vehicle occupants (28%) and 933 nonoccupants (9%).

For more detailed information, use the links below to view the alcohol-impaired driving fact sheets:

Alcohol-Impaired Driving fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot. gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812350.pdf.

State Alcohol-Impaired Driving fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812357.pdf.

Occupant Protection

According to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS)[2] for 2015, estimated seat belt use increased from 81.2 percent in 2006 to 88.5 percent in 2015.

In 2015 there were 22,441 occupants of passenger vehicles who died in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of these 22,441 occupants, 10,635 (52%) were known to be restrained. Looking at only occupants where the restraint status was known, 48 percent were unrestrained at the time of the crash.

The proportion of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupants killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes has decreased from 2006 to 2015. Among passenger vehicle occupants killed, when restraint use was known, the percentage of unrestrained deaths decreased by 7 percentage points from 55 percent in 2006 to 48 percent in 2015.

In 2015, seat belts saved an estimated 13,941 lives among passenger vehicle occupants age 5 and older.

[2] Pickrell, T. M., & Li, H. (2016, November). *Seat belt use in 2016—Overall results* (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 812 351). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available at https://crashstats. nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812351.pdf.

For more detailed information, use the link below to Occupant Protection fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812374.pdf.

Speeding

There were 35,092 traffic fatalities in 2015. Among them 9,557 (27%) were in crashes where at least one driver was speeding.

In 2015, 32 percent of 15- to 20-year-old and 21- to 24-year-old male drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding, the highest among all age groups.

In 2015, 45 percent of all speeding drivers in fatal crashes had been drinking, compared to 20 percent of non-speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes.

For more detailed information view the Speeding fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812409.pdf.

Crash Location

Data relating to crash location in this document pertains to whether a crash was in a rural location or an urban location, as defined by the Federal Highway Administration.

Rural/Urban Comparison of Traffic Fatalities

Of the 35,092 motor vehicle traffic fatalities in 2015 there were 17,114 (49%) that occurred in rural areas, 15,362 (44%) that occurred in urban areas, and 2,616 (7%) that occurred in unknown areas.

According to the 2015 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau an estimated 19 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. However, rural fatalities accounted for 49 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2015.

Rural traffic fatalities decreased by 28 percent from 23,646 in 2006 to 17,14 in 2015. Urban traffic fatalities decreased by 18 percent from 18,791 in 2006 to 15,362 in 2015.

For more detailed information view the Rural/Urban comparison fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812393.pdf.

People

Another interest area regarding crash data is the various populations involved. NHTSA publishes fact sheets on crash data specific to children, bicyclists, older population, pedestrians, and young drivers.

Bicyclists and Other Cyclists

There were 818 pedalcyclist deaths in 2015, which accounted for 2.3 percent of all traffic fatalities during the year.

Seventy percent of all pedalcyclists who died in motor vehicle crashes in 2015 died in crashes in urban areas.

Over the 10-year period from 2006 to 2015, the average age of pedalcyclists killed in motor vehicle crashes increased from 41 to 45.

For more detailed view the Bicyclists and Other Cyclists fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812382.pdf.

Children

Of the 35,092 motor vehicle traffic fatalities in 2015 in the United States, 1,132 (3%) were children 14 and younger. This was a 5-percent increase from 1,073 in 2014, and a 37-percent decrease from 1,798 in 2006.

On average, 3 children were killed and an estimated 487 children were injured every day in traffic crashes in 2015.

Based on known restraint use, when the drivers were unrestrained, 66 percent of the children were also unrestrained in 2015.

Of the 181 children, 14 and younger, who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2015, 51 percent were occupants of vehicles where the drivers had BACs of .08 g/dL or higher.

For more detailed information view the Children fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812383.pdf.

Older Population

In 2015 there were 6,165 people 65 and older killed and an estimated 240,000 injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Older people made up 18 percent of all traffic fatalities and 10 percent of all people injured in traffic crashes during the year.

Older drivers made up 18 percent of all licensed drivers in 2015, compared to 15 percent in 2006.

The population of people 65 and older increased by 29 percent from 2006 to 2015; however, driver fatalities in crashes involving older drivers increased by 3 percent over this period.

For more detailed information view the Older Population fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812372.pdf.

Pedestrians

In 2015 there were 5,376 pedestrians killed in traffic crashes—a 9.5-percent increase from 4,910 pedestrian fatalities in 2014. Pedestrian deaths accounted for 15 percent of all traffic fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes. This is the highest number of pedestrians killed annually since 1996.

On average, a pedestrian was killed every 1.6 hours and injured every 7.5 minutes in traffic crashes in 2015.

More than two-thirds (70%) of the pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2015 were males.

For more detailed information view the Pedestrians fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812375.pdf.

Young Drivers

In 2015 there were 1,886 young drivers who died and an estimated 195,000 who were injured in motor vehicle crashes.

In 2015 about 9 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were 15 to 20 years old. Young drivers accounted for 5.4 percent of the total number of licensed drivers in the United States in 2015.

The rate of drivers involved in fatal crashes per 100,000 licensed drivers for young female drivers was 22.78 in 2015. For young male drivers the involvement rate was 49.68, about 2.2 times that of young female drivers.

For more detailed information view the Young Driver fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812363.pdf.

Vehicles

In addition to different populations of crash fatalities, information regarding the vehicle used at the time of travel is of importance in research, program development, and rulemaking. Crashes related to large trucks, motorcycles, passenger vehicles, and vehicles used for school transportation are each discussed in separate NHTSA fact sheets.

Large Trucks

In 2015 there were 4,067 people killed and an estimated 116,000 people injured in crashes involving large trucks. In the United States an estimated 433,000 large trucks were involved in police-reported traffic crashes during 2015.

Fatalities in crashes involving large trucks increased by 4 percent, from 3,908 in 2014 to 4,067 in 2015. Of the fatalities in 2015, 74 percent were occupants of other vehicles, 16 percent were occupants of large trucks, and 10 percent were nonoccupants (pedestrians, pedalcyclist, etc.).

For more detailed information view the Large Trucks fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812373.pdf.

Motorcycles

In 2015 there were 4,976 motorcyclists killed—an 8-percent increase from the 4,594 motorcyclists killed in 2014. There were an estimated 88,000 motorcyclists injured during 2015, a 3-percent decrease from 92,000 motorcyclist injured in 2014.

Per vehicle mile traveled in 2015, motorcyclist fatalities occurred nearly 29 times more frequently than passenger car occupant fatalities in traffic crashes.

In 2015 motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were found to have the highest percentage of alcohol-impaired drivers than any other vehicle type.

Thirty-three percent of all motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were speeding in 2015, the highest of any vehicle type.

For more detailed information view the Motorcycles fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812353.pdf.

Passenger Vehicles

Passenger vehicles made up 93 percent of registered vehicles and accounted for nearly 90 percent of total vehicle miles traveled in 2015. There were 48,886 vehicles involved in fatal crashes in 2015, of which 78 percent (38,209) were passenger vehicles.

In 2015 there were 22,441 passenger vehicle occupants who lost their lives in motor vehicle traffic crashes and an estimated 2.18 million passenger vehicle occupants who were injured.

Fatality rates per 100,000 registered vehicles from 2014 to 2015 increased for both passenger cars and light trucks (4% for both). Among light-truck categories, occupant fatality rates increased for vans (11%), SUVs (4%), and pickup trucks (3%).

For more detailed information view the Passenger Vehicles fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812413.pdf.

School-Transportation-Related Crashes

From 2006 to 2015 there were 1,313 people of all ages killed in school-transportation-related crashes — an average of 131 fatalities per year.

From 2006 to 2015 there were 301 school-age children who died in school-transportation-related crashes: 54 were occupants of school transportation vehicles, 137 were occupants of other vehicles, 102 were pedestrians, and 8 were pedalcyclists.

More school-age pedestrians were killed from 6 to 6:59 a.m., 7 to 7:59 a.m. and from 3 to 3:59 p.m. than any other hours of the day.

For more detailed information view the School-Transportation-Related Crashes fact sheet at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812366.pdf.

The suggested APA format citation for this document is:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2020, February). *Summary of motor vehicle crashes (Final edition): 2015 data.* (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 376). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

For More Information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), NSA-230, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted at 800-934-8517 or by e-mail at ncsaweb@dot.gov. General information on highway traffic safety can be found 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, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Rural/Urban Comparison of Traffic Fatalities, 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 found at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/#/.

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