

Traffic Safety Facts

Crash • Stats

DOT HS 811 063

A Brief Statistical Summary

December 2008

Fatalities in Crashes Involving Alcohol-Impaired 21- to 24-Year-Old Drivers During the December Holidays

Fatal crash data has consistently shown drivers¹ 21 to 24 years old have the highest level of involvement in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, compared to drivers of all other ages (see Table 1). In 2007, more than one-third (35%) of 21- to 24-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes were alcohol-impaired (blood alcohol concentration [BAC] .08+ grams per deciliter). While drivers 21 to 24 constituted 11 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes² in 2007, they constituted 18 percent of all alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes, making them the most overinvolved age group for alcohol-impaired drivers.

While alcohol-impaired driving is always a major concern in motor vehicle crashes, there are certain times of

the year when the problem is more prevalent, such as holidays. The percentage of impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes during the last two weeks of December (the Christmas-New Years holiday period) by age group for the last five years of available data (data for January 1, 2008, is not yet available) is shown in Table 2. Note that in each year during this holiday period, the 21- to 24-year-olds again have the highest percentage of impaired drivers, just as they had in the Table 1 full year data. In addition, the percentage of impaired drivers is consistently higher for this age group during this time period than during the full year of data.

Looking at fatalities (rather than drivers involved) in crashes involving 21- to 24-year-old drivers during the

Table 1: Percentages of Alcohol-Impaired (BAC .08+) Drivers Involved in Fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Age Group

Year	15-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	44-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Unknown
2003	18	32	27	24	19	11	8	5	22
2004	18	33	27	23	19	12	8	5	18
2005	17	33	29	24	19	13	7	4	29
2006	19	33	29	25	19	13	8	5	22
2007	18	35	29	25	20	12	8	4	26

Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2003 to 2006 (Final) and 2007 (ARF)

Table 2: Selected Dates, Percentage of Alcohol-Impaired (BAC .08+) Drivers Involved in Fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes By Year and Age Group

Year	15-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	44-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Unk
Dec 15 to 31, 2002, and Jan 1, 2003	22	34	30	25	16	12	8	4	16
Dec 15 to 31, 2003, and Jan 1, 2004	22	37	27	21	17	10	7	5	23
Dec 15 to 31, 2004, and Jan 1, 2005	21	36	30	24	17	11	8	6	20
Dec 15 to 31, 2005, and Jan 1, 2006	19	38	31	25	21	12	8	4	28
Dec 15 to 31, 2006, and Jan 1, 2007	22	37	28	26	20	14	6	3	20

Source: FARS 2002 to 2006 (Final) and 2007 (ARF)

¹The term "driver" refers to motor vehicle drivers and motorcycle riders (operators).

²Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: 2007 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment – Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities, DOT HS 811 016; US DOT, NHTSA.

The data used in this Crash•Stats are estimates of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA's) Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). FARS annually collects data on fatal crashes from the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. FARS data is made available by the NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA).

last two weeks in December from 2002 to 2006, nearly 4 fatalities out of every 10 were in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.

Fatalities in crashes during the last two weeks in December, involving drivers in this age group by their

impairment status, are shown in Table 3 for the past five years of available data.

Data for 2007 by State, for fatalities in crashes involving an impaired driver 21 to 24, by the highest BAC for a driver in that age group, are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Selected Dates, Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes Involving 21- to 24-Year Old Drivers by Year and Their Highest BAC in the Crashes

Month, Day, and Year	Total No.	Not Impaired		Impaired	
		No.	%	No.	%
December 15 to 31, 2002, and January 1, 2003	324	213	66	111	34
December 15 to 31, 2003, and January 1, 2004	345	210	61	135	39
December 15 to 31, 2004, and January 1, 2005	343	212	62	131	38
December 15 to 31, 2005, and January 1, 2006	349	213	61	136	39
December 15 to 31, 2006, and January 1, 2007	349	213	61	136	39
Total	1,710	1,061	62	649	38

Source: FARS 2002 to 2006 (Final) and 2007 (ARF)

“Impaired driver” is defined as a driver having a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher, because it is illegal per se in every State and the District of Columbia to operate a vehicle at this BAC level. “Not-Impaired driver” is defined as a driver having a BAC of .00 to .07 g/dL.

Table 4: Fatalities in Crashes Involving an Alcohol-Impaired 21- to 24-Year-Old Driver, by State, 2007

State	Total Fatalities	Impaired		Not Impaired		State	Total Fatalities	Impaired		Not Impaired	
		No.	%	No.	%			No.	%	No.	%
Alabama	187	70	38	117	62	Montana	45	19	42	26	58
Alaska	17	9	54	8	46	Nebraska	41	16	38	25	62
Arizona	177	66	37	111	63	Nevada	40	15	36	26	64
Arkansas	96	27	28	69	72	New Hampshire	17	4	24	13	76
California	797	247	31	550	69	New Jersey	130	38	29	92	71
Colorado	79	33	42	46	58	New Mexico	63	23	36	40	64
Connecticut	44	24	55	20	45	New York	220	69	32	151	68
Delaware	22	6	28	16	72	North Carolina	264	81	31	183	69
Dist Columbia	1	1	60	0	40	North Dakota	20	11	55	9	45
Florida	558	165	30	393	70	Ohio	200	68	34	132	66
Georgia	263	72	27	191	73	Oklahoma	127	30	24	97	76
Hawaii	32	15	48	17	52	Oregon	59	24	41	35	59
Idaho	38	14	38	24	62	Pennsylvania	247	96	39	151	61
Illinois	214	92	43	122	57	Rhode Island	11	8	69	3	31
Indiana	109	40	36	70	64	South Carolina	168	77	46	92	54
Iowa	66	22	33	45	67	South Dakota	21	12	57	9	43
Kansas	74	21	28	53	72	Tennessee	179	70	39	109	61
Kentucky	116	25	21	91	79	Texas	629	244	39	385	61
Louisiana	171	61	36	110	64	Utah	53	7	14	46	86
Maine	25	13	52	12	48	Vermont	8	6	75	2	25
Maryland	108	50	46	58	54	Virginia	187	70	38	117	62
Massachusetts	70	33	46	38	54	Washington	104	37	35	68	65
Michigan	172	57	33	115	67	West Virginia	64	18	28	46	72
Minnesota	94	39	41	55	59	Wisconsin	135	70	52	65	48
Mississippi	140	48	34	92	66	Wyoming	14	6	42	8	58
Missouri	130	58	45	72	55	U.S.	6,846	2,425	35	4,421	65
						Puerto Rico	98	28	29	70	71

Source: FARS 2007 (ARF)

Estimates of alcohol-impaired driving are generated using BAC values reported to FARS and imputed BAC values when they are not reported.



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

For questions regarding the above reported data, contact Marie Walz, 202-366-5377, or Lorenzo Daniels, 202-366-5388. This issue of Crash•Stats and other general information on highway traffic safety may be accessed by Internet users at: www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx.