

FACTS ABOUT: Drinking and Driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), U.S. Department of Transportation • FALL 2002

and.. Hispanics

In 2001, 275,000 persons were injured and 17,448 persons died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in the United States.¹ Moreover, drinking and driving pose an even greater danger for Hispanics in the United States, especially for newly arrived immigrants, who may be unaware of U.S. traffic safety laws.

Hispanics, whose median age is 26, now number 35.3 million residents and account for 12.5 percent of all 281 million U.S. residents, Census 2000 data show.² The Hispanic population has grown by nearly 60 percent since the 1990 Census and is expected to reach 59 million by 2030 and 81 million by 2050, making Hispanics the single largest minority group in the United States.²

Tragically, the Hispanic population growth is reflected in an increasing proportion of Hispanic deaths and serious injuries resulting from car crashes.

Risk to the Hispanic Population

- Every 30 minutes someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash.¹
- In 2001, 42,116 people lost their lives in police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes and more than 3.0 million persons were injured.
- Four of every ten persons killed in crashes in 2001, died in alcohol-related crashes.³
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Hispanics between the ages of 1 and 44.⁴
- Hispanic children ages 5 to 12, are at a higher risk and are 72 percent more likely to die in a motor vehicle crash than non-Hispanic children.⁵
- As the Hispanic population increases dramatically in the next few decades, younger Hispanics will enter the age groups most at risk for motor vehicle crash-related fatalities.⁶
- Hispanics in the United States, with more than a third (35 percent) under age 18, are a diverse population.^{2,7} Census 2000 counted: 20.6 million Mexicans, 10 million other Hispanics (of which 1.7 million were Central American, 1.4 million were South American, and 765,000 were Dominican), 6.1 million other Hispanics who did not specify a detailed Hispanic origin on the census form, 3.4 million Puerto Ricans, and 1.2 million Cubans.^{2,7}
- U.S. Hispanic residents do not include the estimated three to six million undocumented workers or the 3.8 million residents in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.^{2,7}

"I went to visit a friend and when I got there he told me that he was invited to a fiesta, so I just went along . . . We never say no to these opportunities since we love to party."

— Recently arrived Hispanic male immigrant, in his 20s.⁸



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**"Getting drunk . . .
it just happens
when you are out
having a good
time . . ."**

**— Central American
male immigrant, in his
late 20s.⁸**

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Alcohol-Related Crashes Threaten Hispanic Life

- A recent study that compares non-Hispanic white drivers with Hispanic drivers in Colorado found that Hispanics had a higher rate of alcohol involvement with a correspondingly higher crash fatality rate.⁹
- U.S.-born Hispanics are approximately three times more likely to drink and drive than Hispanics born in other countries but who live in the United States.¹⁰
- Mexican Americans have the second highest alcohol-related fatality rate (after Native Americans) among all four types of road users: drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and cyclists.⁶
- From 1990 to 1994, there were 91,248 alcohol-related traffic fatalities in the United States. Of those fatalities, 11,576 were Hispanics.⁶

Alcohol-Related Crashes and The Cost To Society

- Alcohol-related crashes in the United States cost society more than \$110 billion in 1998, including more than \$40 billion in monetary costs and nearly \$70 billion in quality of life losses.¹¹ Quality of life refers to the dollar value of the pain, suffering, and lost quality of life that victims and their families experience due to a death or an injury.
- Alcohol-related crashes are deadlier and more serious than other crashes. Persons, other than the drinking driver, paid \$51 billion of the costs for alcohol-related crashes (1998).¹¹
- In 1998, the cost of a single alcohol-related fatality in the United States was \$3.2 million and the estimated cost per injured survivor of an alcohol-related crash averaged \$79,000.¹¹
- Alcohol-related crashes accounted for an estimated 16 percent of the \$127 billion in U.S. auto insurance payments. Reducing alcohol-related crashes by 10 percent would save \$3 billion in claims payments and loss adjustment expenses (1998).¹¹

Behaviors and Beliefs

- Hispanics in the United States have consistently named drinking and driving as the greatest traffic safety problem in their communities.¹²



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- A recent national survey about driving while under the influence of alcohol included 1,585 Hispanics, 1,582 blacks, and 1,636 whites.¹⁰ The study revealed:
 - Hispanic men were found to have the highest rate of ever having been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI).¹⁰
 - One-fifth of Hispanic males who drove a car during the 12 months before the survey reported being drunk enough to be in trouble if stopped by police.¹⁰
 - Hispanics believed that the number of drinks needed to affect driving was generally higher (four to eight drinks) than what whites and blacks believed.¹⁰
- Hispanics (90 percent) see drinking and driving as a major threat to the personal safety of themselves and their family and 94 percent say it is “very important” that something should be done to reduce drinking and driving.¹³

Law Enforcement

- National focus groups conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in Hispanic communities reveal that community members favor additional law enforcement officers and support stricter enforcement of traffic laws.
- The Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA) is working with law enforcement agencies to identify the most effective methods of providing traffic safety information to Hispanics.
- HAPCOA is working with the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration to help promote traffic safety among immigrant populations.

Minority Organizations Mobilize To Show Strong Support For Hispanic Americans

- NHTSA continues to work closely with its community partners to conduct and promote U.S. traffic safety programs specifically tailored for Hispanics in impaired driving prevention. These partners include: the ASPIRA Association, Inc., the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN), the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA), the National Latino Children’s Institute (NLCI), the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), and the National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention (LCAT), and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

**“I can do anything
or handle anything
when I’m drunk.”**

**— Recently
arrived Hispanic male
immigrant in recovery,
in his 30s.⁸**

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"The designated driver is . . . the one who delivers the drunks . . ."

— Hispanic male who immigrated within last 10 years, in his early 30s.⁸

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