



# Traffic Safety Facts 2002

## Older Population



### *A Public Information Fact Sheet on Motor Vehicle and Traffic Safety Published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis*

There are 26 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 2002, this age group made up 9.0 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8.8 percent in 1992. From 1992 to 2002, the growth rate for this older segment of the population was 27 percent higher than the growth rate of the total population.

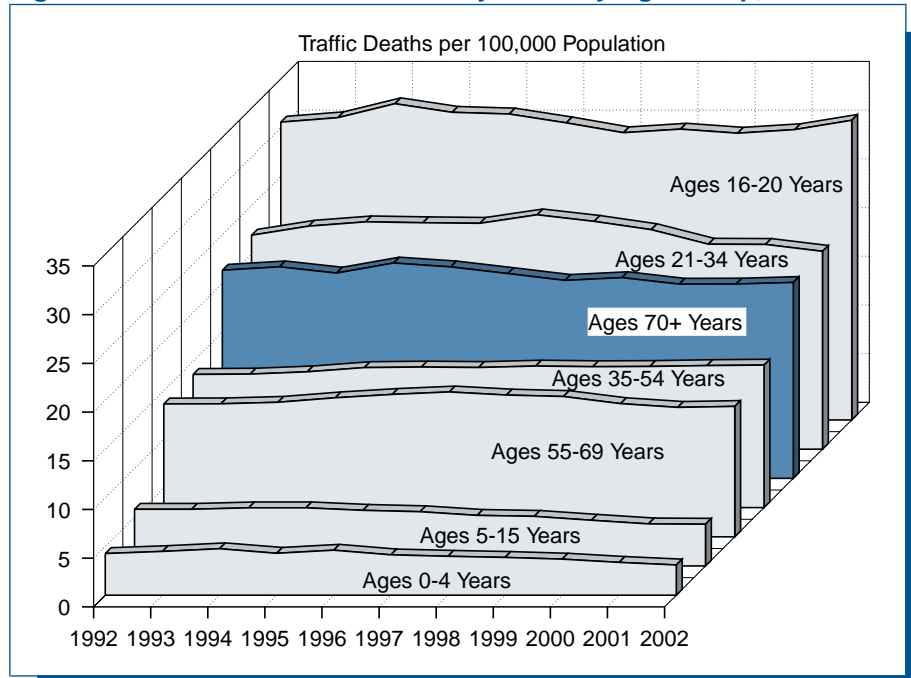
There were 19.1 million older licensed drivers in 2001 (2002 data not available) — a 32 percent increase from the number in 1991. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 13 percent from 1991 to 2001. Older drivers made up 10 percent of all licensed drivers in 2001, compared with 9 percent in 1991.

In 2002, 154,000 older individuals were injured in traffic crashes, accounting for 5 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. These older individuals made up 12 percent of all traffic fatalities, 12 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 2002 occurred during the daytime (81 percent), on weekdays (72 percent), and involved another vehicle (75 percent).

***“In 2002, older people accounted for 12 percent of all traffic fatalities and 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”***

**Figure 1. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1992-2002**



In 2001, NHTSA began using a revised method — **multiple imputation** — to estimate missing information about blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels for persons involved in fatal crashes. The alcohol estimates in this fact sheet are based on the new imputation method. More information on the new multiple imputation method, including detailed tabulations of alcohol involvement in various categories (age, sex, time of day, etc.), is available in NHTSA Technical Report DOT HS 809 403, *Transitioning to Multiple Imputation: A New Method to Estimate Missing Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Values in FARS*.

Older drivers involved in fatal crashes had the lowest proportion of intoxication — with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.08 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater — of all adult drivers. Fatally injured older pedestrians also had the lowest intoxication rate of all adult pedestrian fatalities.

**Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 2002**

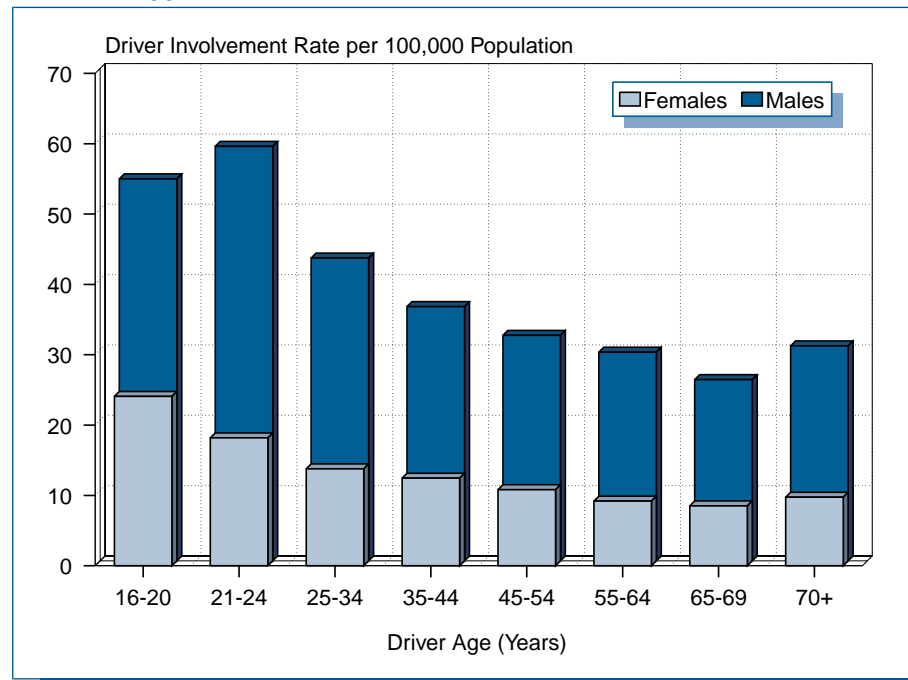
Age Group (years)	Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes			Pedestrian Fatalities		
	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated
<16	336	32	9	434	12	3
16–20	8,082	1,411	17	283	88	31
21–34	17,701	5,314	30	840	409	49
35–54	19,413	4,428	23	1,650	812	49
55–69	6,645	742	11	707	187	27
70+	4,689	220	5	836	66	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>*57,803</b>	<b>12,344</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4,808</b>	<b>**1,594</b>	<b>33</b>

\*Includes 937 drivers of unknown age.

\*\*Includes 58 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.

**“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2002 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”**

**Figure 2. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 2002**



**“In two-vehicle fatal crashes with an older and a younger driver, the older driver’s vehicle was more than twice as likely to be the one that was struck.”**

Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of all older occupants of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 58 percent for other adult occupants (18 to 69 years old).

For older people, 66 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2002 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 80 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations. In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was more than twice as likely to be the one that was struck (66 percent and 30 percent, respectively). In 44 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 26 percent, the older driver was turning left — 7 times as often as the younger driver.

**Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1992 and 2002**

	1992			2002			Percentage Change, 1992-2002		
	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Number		Percentage Age 70+
							Total	Age 70+	
<i>Population (thousands)</i>									
Total	255,030	22,321	8.8	288,369	26,021	9.0	+13%	+17%	+2%
Male	124,424	8,579	6.9	141,661	10,332	7.3	+14%	+20%	+6%
Female	130,606	13,742	10.5	146,708	15,689	10.7	+12%	+14%	+2%
<i>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</i>									
Total	51,901	3,933	7.6	57,803	4,689	8.1	+11%	+19%	+7%
Male	38,598	2,711	7.0	42,134	3,159	7.5	+9%	+17%	+7%
Female	12,596	1,222	9.7	14,911	1,529	10.3	+18%	+25%	+6%
<i>Driver Fatalities</i>									
Total	22,584	2,577	11.4	26,549	3,124	11.8	+18%	+21%	+4%
Male	16,946	1,770	10.4	19,773	2,096	10.6	+17%	+18%	+2%
Female	5,636	807	14.3	6,774	1,027	15.2	+20%	+27%	+6%
<i>Total Traffic Fatalities</i>									
Total	39,250	4,901	12.5	42,815	5,284	12.3	+9%	+8%	-2%
Male	26,772	2,714	10.1	29,327	2,974	10.1	+10%	+10%	0%
Female	12,444	2,182	17.5	13,474	2,308	17.1	+8%	+6%	-2%
<i>Occupant Fatalities</i>									
Total	32,880	3,873	11.8	37,232	4,396	11.8	+13%	+13%	+0%
Male	22,202	2,129	9.6	25,385	2,458	9.7	+14%	+15%	+1%
Female	10,647	1,739	16.3	11,835	1,937	16.4	+11%	+11%	+1%
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities</i>									
Total	5,549	997	18.0	4,808	836	17.4	-13%	-16%	-3%
Male	3,867	555	14.4	3,268	470	14.4	-15%	-15%	0%
Female	1,679	442	26.3	1,538	365	23.7	-8%	-17%	-10%

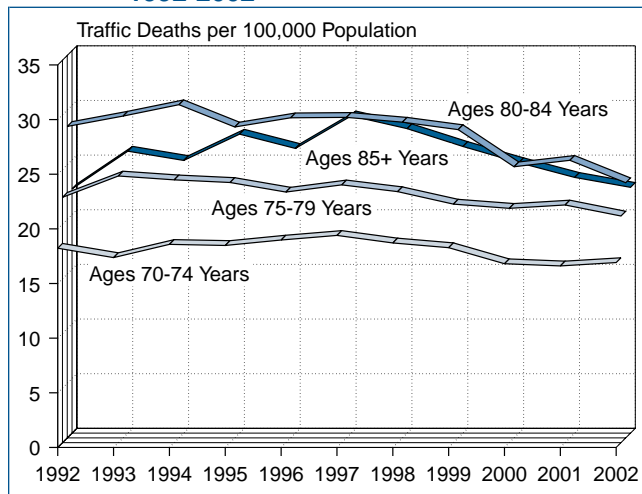
### Older Population Age Groups

The following table and graphs provide data for subgroups of the older population: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, and 85+ years.

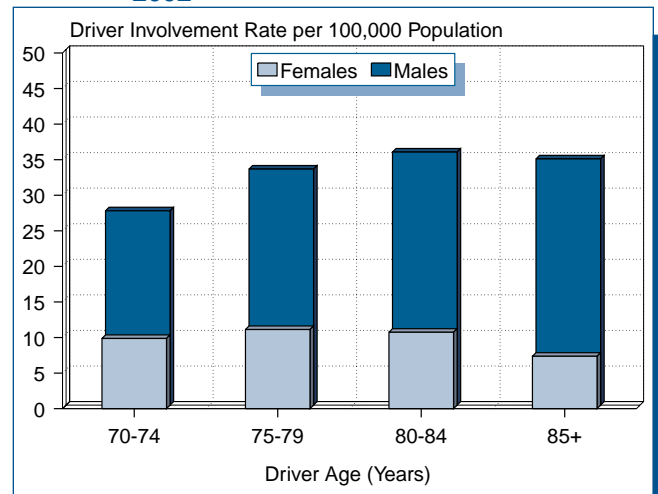
**Table 3. Driver Involvement in Fatal Crashes and Pedestrian Fatalities in the Older Population by Age Group, 2002**

	Age Group (years)				
	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	Total
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	1,494	1,424	1,004	767	<b>4,689</b>
Pedestrian Fatalities	248	229	195	164	<b>836</b>

**Figure 3. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates in the Older Population by Age Group, 1992-2002**



**Figure 4. Involvement Rates for Older Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group and Sex, 2002**



#### For more information:

Information on the older population is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-121, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand at 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/nrsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Overview, Alcohol, Occupant Protection, Speeding, Children, Young Drivers, Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, Motorcycles, Large Trucks, School Transportation-Related Crashes, State Traffic Data, and State Alcohol Estimates*. 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*.