



Traffic Safety Facts 1999

Older Population



There are more than 25 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 1999, this age group made up 9 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8 percent in 1989. From 1989 to 1999, this older segment of the population grew twice as fast as the total population.

There were 18.5 million older licensed drivers in 1999 — a 39 percent increase from the number in 1989. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 13 percent from 1989 to 1999. Older drivers made up 10 percent of all licensed drivers in 1999, compared with 8 percent in 1989.

In 1999, 171,000 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 13 percent of all traffic fatalities, 13 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 1999 occurred during the daytime (82 percent), on weekdays (71 percent), and involved another vehicle (75 percent).

In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was more than 3 times as likely to be the one that was struck (58 percent and 19 percent, respectively). In 44 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 27 percent, the older driver was turning left — 7 times as often as the younger driver.

Older drivers involved in fatal crashes had the lowest proportion of intoxication — with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.10 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.

“In 1999, older people made up 9 percent of the resident population but accounted for 13 percent of all traffic fatalities and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”

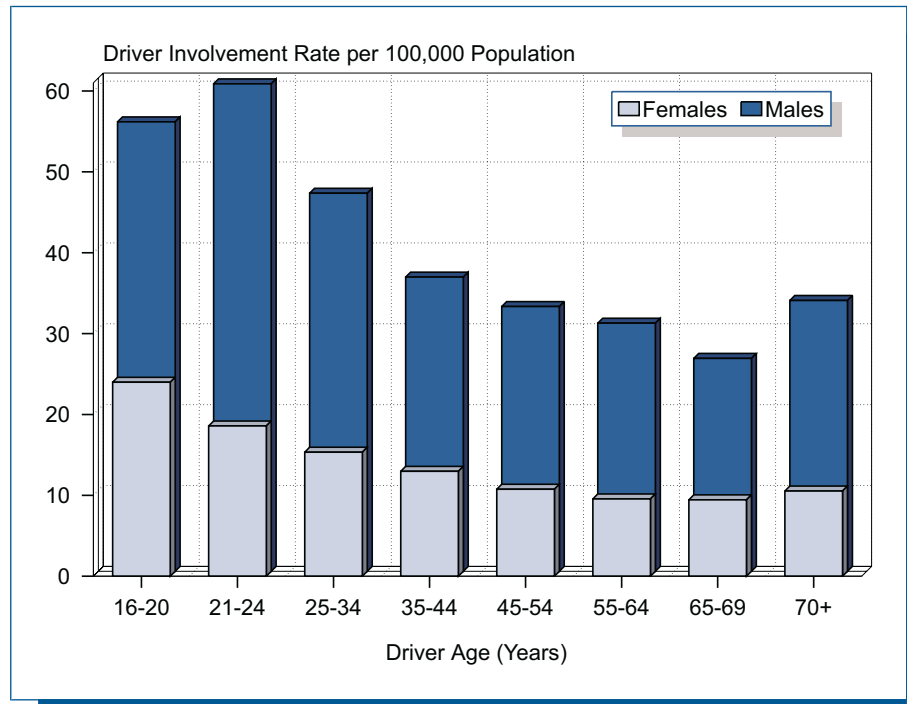
Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 1999

Age Group (years)	Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes			Pedestrian Fatalities		
	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated
<16	332	12	4	567	22	4
16–20	7,973	1,088	14	273	92	34
21–34	17,354	4,281	25	851	390	46
35–54	18,723	3,440	18	1,597	731	46
55–69	6,217	560	9	691	191	28
70+	4,934	181	4	876	74	8
Total	*56,352	9,818	17	**4,906	1,517	31

*Includes 819 drivers of unknown age.

**Includes 51 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.

Figure 1. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 1999

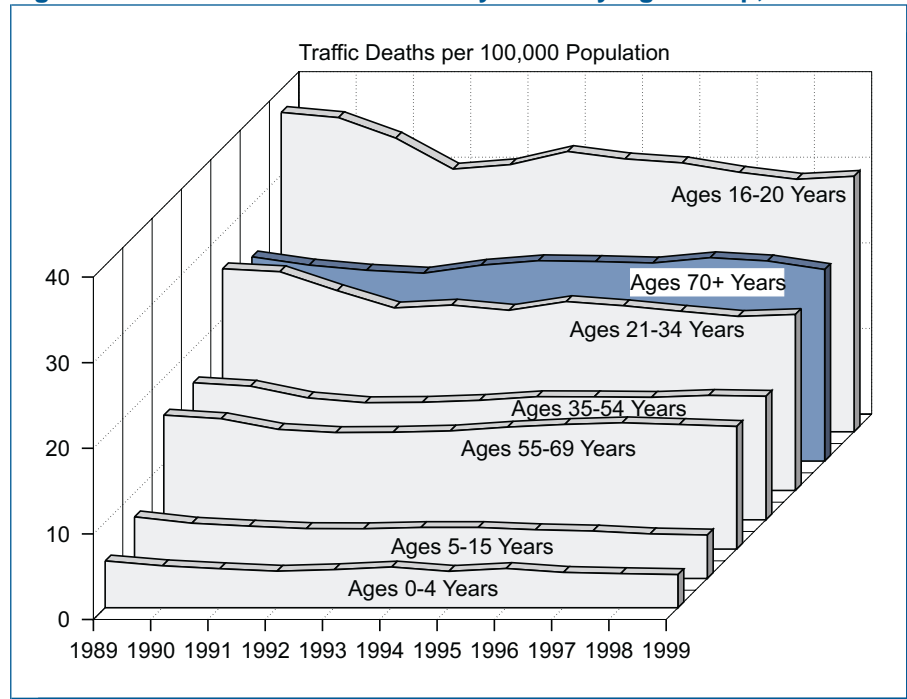


“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1999 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”

More than two-thirds (71 percent) of all older occupants of passenger cars involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 56 percent for other adult occupants (18 to 69 years old).

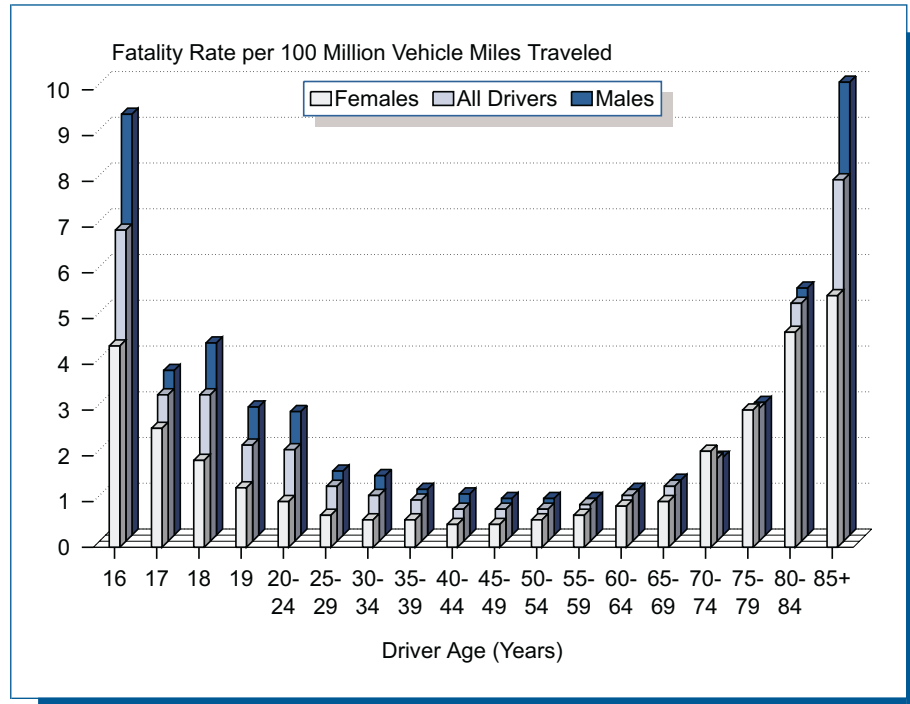
For older people, 66 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 1999 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 82 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations.

Figure 2. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1989-1999



When driver fatality rates are calculated on the basis of estimated annual travel, the highest rates are found among the youngest and oldest drivers. Compared with the fatality rate for drivers 25 through 69 years old, the rate for drivers in the oldest group is 9 times as high.

Figure 3. Driver Fatality Rates by Age and Sex, 1996



“On the basis of estimated annual travel, the fatality rate for drivers 85 and over is 9 times as high as the rate for drivers 25 through 69 years old.”

For more information:

Information on the older population is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NRD-31, 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.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1989 and 1999

	1989			1999			Percentage Change, 1989-1999		
	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Number		Percentage Age 70+
							Total	Age 70+	
<i>Population (thousands)</i>									
Total	246,819	20,719	8.4	272,691	25,093	9.2	+10%	+21%	+10%
Male	120,277	7,867	6.5	133,277	9,973	7.5	+11%	+27%	+14%
Female	126,542	12,853	10.2	139,414	15,120	10.8	+10%	+18%	+7%
<i>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</i>									
Total	60,435	3,719	6.2	56,352	4,934	8.8	-7%	+33%	+42%
Male	45,448	2,578	5.7	40,900	3,340	8.2	-10%	+30%	+44%
Female	14,054	1,141	8.1	14,792	1,594	10.8	+5%	+40%	+33%
<i>Driver Fatalities</i>									
Total	26,389	2,387	9.0	25,210	3,307	13.1	-4%	+39%	+46%
Male	20,012	1,637	8.2	18,449	2,220	12.0	-8%	+36%	+46%
Female	6,376	750	11.8	6,755	1,087	16.1	+6%	+45%	+36%
<i>Total Traffic Fatalities</i>									
Total	45,582	4,943	10.8	41,611	5,617	13.5	-9%	+14%	+25%
Male	31,338	2,728	8.7	27,973	3,169	11.3	-11%	+16%	+30%
Female	14,232	2,215	15.6	13,627	2,448	18.0	-4%	+11%	+15%
<i>Occupant Fatalities</i>									
Total	38,087	3,710	9.7	35,806	4,682	13.1	-6%	+26%	+35%
Male	25,963	2,003	7.7	23,773	2,611	11.0	-8%	+30%	+43%
Female	12,115	1,707	14.1	12,023	2,071	17.2	-1%	+21%	+22%
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities</i>									
Total	6,556	1,180	18.0	4,906	876	17.9	-25%	-26%	-1%
Male	4,594	675	14.7	3,447	508	14.7	-25%	-25%	0%
Female	1,959	505	25.8	1,458	368	25.2	-26%	-27%	-2%

Sources: Licensed drivers — Federal Highway Administration. Population — Bureau of the Census.