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

NHTSA
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TRAFFIC SAFETY FACTS
2009 Data

DOT HS 811 395

Rural/Urban Comparison

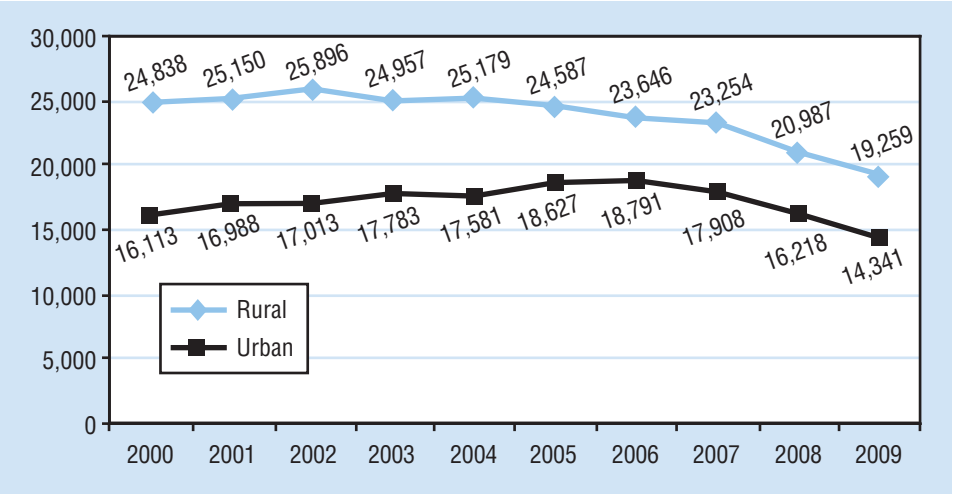
Overview

This fact sheet contains statistics on motor vehicle 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 the national totals). Rural and urban boundaries are determined by the State highway departments and approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

In 2009, there were 30,797 fatal crashes resulting in 33,808 fatalities. Rural areas accounted for 56 percent (17,245) of the fatal crashes and 57 percent (19,259) of the fatalities as compared to urban areas which accounted for 43 percent (13,350) of the fatal crashes and 42 percent (14,341) of the fatalities. Additionally, 202 fatal crashes resulting in 208 fatalities occurred in areas where land use was unknown.

Although 23 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas in 2009, rural fatalities accounted for 57 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2009. From 2000 to 2009, rural fatalities decreased 22 percent whereas urban fatalities decreased by 11 percent.

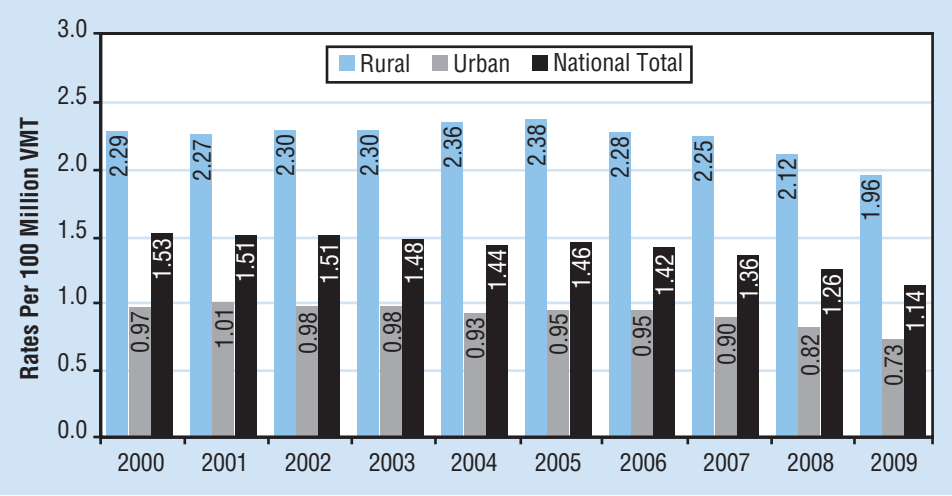
Figure 1
Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities by Year and Location, 2000–2009



According to the 2009 Census, 23 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas, however, rural fatalities accounted for 57 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2009. From 2000 to 2009, rural fatalities decreased 22 percent whereas urban fatalities decreased by 11 percent.

Figure 2

Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled by Year and Location, 2000–2009



Source: Vehicle Miles Traveled – Federal Highway Administration

In 2009, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 2.7 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (1.96 and 0.73 respectively).

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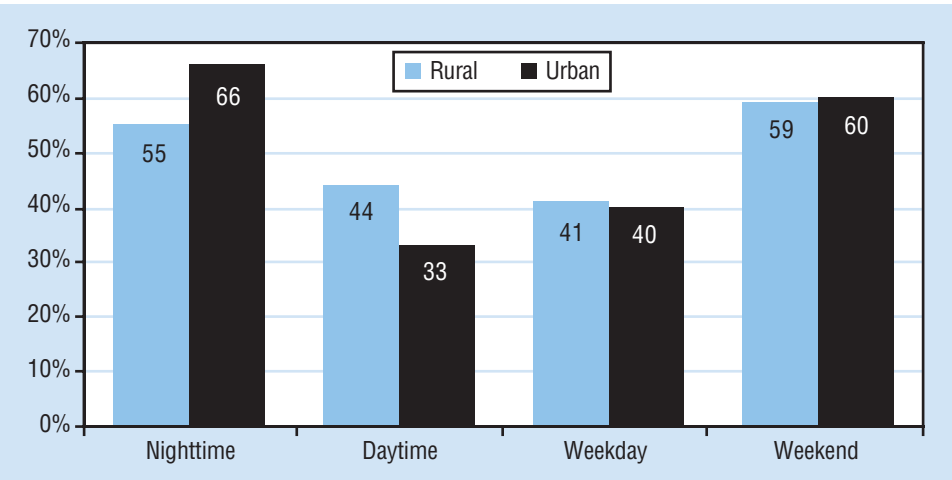
According to recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) data, people killed in speeding-related crashes represented almost one-third (10,591) of the fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes. NHTSA considers a crash to be speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speed-related offense or if an officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was a contributing factor in the crash.

In rural areas, 32 percent (6,161) of the fatalities occurred in speeding-related crashes as compared to 31 percent (4,386) in urban areas.

Figure 3

Percentages of Speeding-Related Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Time of Day, Day of the Week, and Location, 2009



Data also showed that in 2009, over half (55%) of rural area speeding-related fatalities occurred at night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 59 percent occurred over the weekend, whereas in urban areas, two-thirds (66%) of speeding-related fatalities occurred at night and 60 percent took place over the weekend.

In rural areas, 51 percent of the fatal crashes occurred during the day, while 48 percent occurred at night. On the other hand, 57 percent of the urban crashes occurred during the night (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) and 43 percent occurred during the daytime (6 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.).

In 2009, 69 percent of all urban fatal crashes occurred on roadways where the posted speed limit was 50 mph or less. On rural roadways, 65 percent of fatal crashes occurred when the posted speed limit was 55 mph or higher.

In 2009, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Rural areas accounted for 57 percent (6,215) of these fatalities as compared to 42 percent (4,577) in urban areas. Data has also shown that over the 10 years from 2000 to 2009, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 19 percent nationwide. In rural areas alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities decreased by 23 percent while urban areas showed a 7-percent decrease.

From 2000 to 2009, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in rural areas decreased by 23 percent, while urban areas showed a 7-percent decrease.

Table 1

Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by Location and the Highest Driver* BAC in the Crash, 2000 and 2009

Location	2000			2009		
	Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+		Total Fatalities	Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities BAC=.08+	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Rural	24,838	8,081	33	19,259	6,215	32
Urban	16,113	4,940	31	14,341	4,577	32
Total**	**41,945**	**13,324**	**32**	**33,808**	**10,839**	**32**

* Includes motorcycle riders.
** Includes fatalities where location was unknown.

In 2009, 45,230 drivers were involved in fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those drivers, 22 percent (10,102) were found to be driving with a BAC of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Drivers in rural areas accounted for 57 percent of the alcohol-impaired drivers versus 43 percent in urban areas.

In fatal crashes, the highest percentages of drivers with BAC levels of .08 g/dL or higher were recorded for drivers 21 to 24 years old (35%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (32%) and 35 to 44 (26%). Rural and urban drivers followed this trend with 21- to 24-year-olds (36% and 33%) having the highest percentage followed by 25- to 34-year-olds (32% and 31%) and 35- to 44-year-olds (28% and 24%).

In cases where drivers had one or more previous DWI convictions, data shows that in rural areas 61 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes were alcohol-impaired as compared to 58 percent in urban areas.

In 2009, the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 83 percent and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 81 percent (2009 NOPUS).

The 2009 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) shows that the seat belt use rate among occupants of vehicles in urban areas was 83 percent, and rural occupants were observed to have a use rate of 81 percent (see NHTSA Research Note *Seat Belt Use in 2009—Overall Results (NOPUS)* DOT HS 811 200, September 2009).

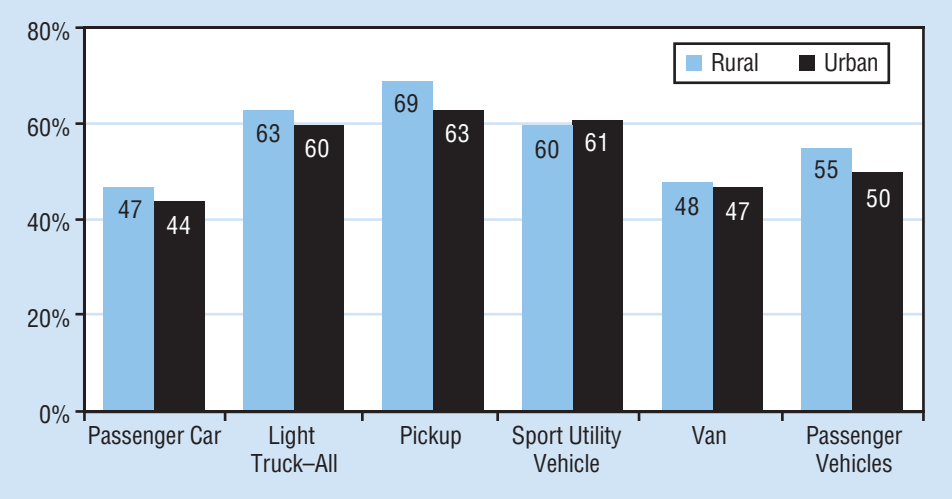
In 2009, 55 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas were unrestrained compared to 50 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed.

In fatal crashes in 2009, 23,382 passenger vehicle occupants were killed. Rural areas accounted for 63 percent of these deaths. As shown in Figure 4, 55 percent of rural passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained as compared to 50 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed. More than two-thirds (69%) of rural pickup truck occupants killed were unrestrained – the highest percentage of any passenger vehicle occupants killed among both rural and urban areas.

Of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas, 40 percent were in vehicles that rolled over versus 27 percent in urban areas. Data further shows that 71 percent of rural and 68 percent of urban passenger vehicle occupants killed were unrestrained in rollover vehicles (based on known restraint use).

Figure 4

Percentages of Unrestrained Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities by Vehicle Type and Location, 2009



Restraint use percentages based on known use.

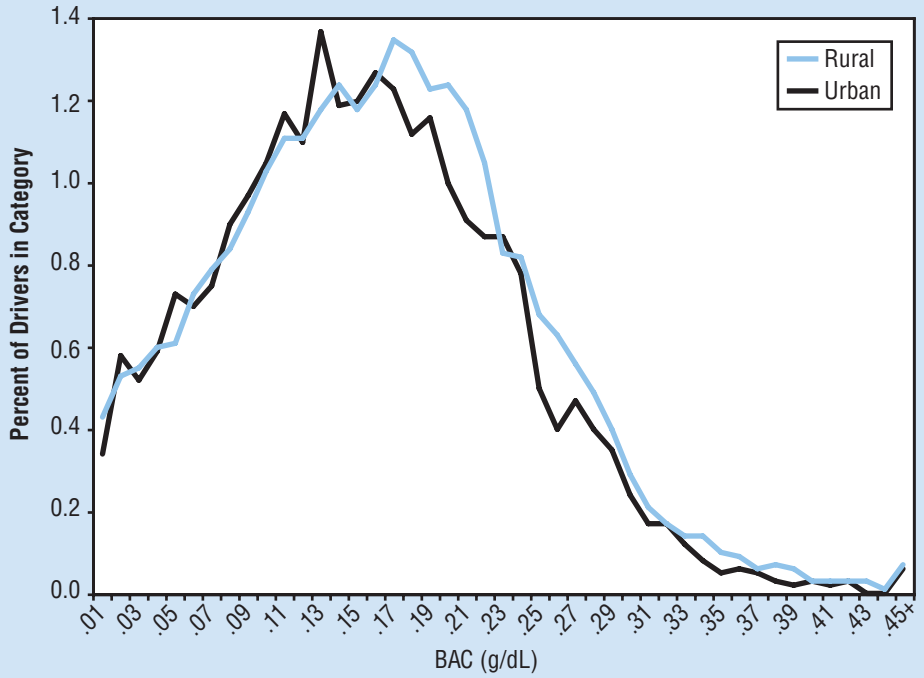
In 2009, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) involved in rural fatal crashes experienced the highest rollover percentage at 41 percent. Other vehicle rollover percentages included: 34 percent for pickups, 23 percent for vans, 23 percent for passenger cars, and 16 percent for large trucks. In urban areas, vehicles experienced a much lower percentage which included: 23 percent for SUVs, 17 percent for pickups, 10 percent for vans, 10 percent for passenger cars, and 7 percent for large trucks.

When license status was known, rural drivers involved in fatal crashes were found to have a slightly higher percentage of drivers with valid driver's licenses than urban drivers, (88% versus 84%, respectively).

In 2009, 21,798 drivers were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those, 63 percent of rural and 50 percent of urban drivers died at the scene. Data also shows that 41 percent of all drivers killed were transported to the hospital and 6 percent of these drivers died en route. Unfortunately, rural drivers represented 58 percent of drivers who died en route to the hospital versus 41 percent for urban drivers.

Figure 5

Distribution of Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by Location, 2009



For more information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), NVS-424, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted on 800-934-8517 or via the following e-mail address: ncsaweb@dot.gov. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users 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, Older Population, Occupant Protection, Overview, Passenger Vehicles, Pedestrians, Race and Ethnicity, 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 accessed online at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx.

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Table 2

Total Fatalities by State and Location, 2009

State	Location						Total	
	Rural		Urban		Unknown			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	496	58	281	33	71	8	848	100
Alaska	38	59	26	41	0	0	64	100
Arizona	418	52	387	48	2	0	807	100
Arkansas	464	79	121	21	0	0	585	100
California	1,319	43	1,762	57	0	0	3,081	100
Colorado	252	54	213	46	0	0	465	100
Connecticut	36	16	187	84	0	0	223	100
Delaware	68	59	48	41	0	0	116	100
Dist of Columbia	0	0	29	100	0	0	29	100
Florida	1,005	39	1,474	58	79	3	2,558	100
Georgia	659	51	625	49	0	0	1,284	100
Hawaii	41	38	68	62	0	0	109	100
Idaho	176	78	50	22	0	0	226	100
Illinois	386	42	525	58	0	0	911	100
Indiana	418	60	275	40	0	0	693	100
Iowa	304	82	68	18	0	0	372	100
Kansas	315	82	71	18	0	0	386	100
Kentucky	645	82	146	18	0	0	791	100
Louisiana	440	54	381	46	0	0	821	100
Maine	147	92	12	8	0	0	159	100
Maryland	203	37	340	62	4	1	547	100
Massachusetts	35	10	299	90	0	0	334	100
Michigan	398	46	473	54	0	0	871	100
Minnesota	282	67	139	33	0	0	421	100
Mississippi	507	72	193	28	0	0	700	100
Missouri	562	64	316	36	0	0	878	100
Montana	203	92	18	8	0	0	221	100
Nebraska	185	83	38	17	0	0	223	100
Nevada	106	44	137	56	0	0	243	100
New Hampshire	109	99	1	1	0	0	110	100
New Jersey	71	12	512	88	0	0	583	100
New Mexico	258	71	103	29	0	0	361	100
New York	583	50	573	50	0	0	1,156	100
North Carolina	964	73	350	27	0	0	1,314	100
North Dakota	135	96	5	4	0	0	140	100
Ohio	659	65	361	35	1	0	1,021	100
Oklahoma	498	67	240	33	0	0	738	100
Oregon	292	77	85	23	0	0	377	100
Pennsylvania	649	52	607	48	0	0	1,256	100
Rhode Island	17	20	42	51	24	29	83	100
South Carolina	878	98	16	2	0	0	894	100
South Dakota	120	92	11	8	0	0	131	100
Tennessee	577	58	412	42	0	0	989	100
Texas	1,642	53	1,414	46	15	0	3,071	100
Utah	154	63	90	37	0	0	244	100
Vermont	67	91	6	8	1	1	74	100
Virginia	419	55	334	44	4	1	757	100
Washington	312	63	173	35	7	1	492	100
West Virginia	251	71	105	29	0	0	356	100
Wisconsin	381	68	180	32	0	0	561	100
Wyoming	115	86	19	14	0	0	134	100
National	19,259	57	14,341	42	208	1	33,808	100
Puerto Rico	199	55	166	45	0	0	365	100