

# Traffic Safety Facts 1994

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



## Alcohol



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines a fatal traffic crash as being alcohol-related if either a driver or a nonoccupant (e.g., pedestrian) had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.01 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater in a police-reported traffic crash. Persons with a BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater involved in fatal crashes are considered to be intoxicated. This is the legal limit of intoxication in most states.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-related crashes dropped by 5 percent from 1993 to 1994. The 16,589 alcohol-related fatalities in 1994 (40.8 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year) represent a 30 percent reduction from the 23,758 alcohol-related fatalities reported in 1984 (53.7 percent of the total).

NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 40.9 percent of fatal crashes and in 6 percent of all crashes in 1994.

The 16,589 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 1994 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 32 minutes.

About 297,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present—an average of one person injured approximately every 2 minutes.

More than 1.5 million drivers were arrested in 1993 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 117 licensed drivers in the United States (1994 data not yet available).

About 2 in every 5 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

In 1994, 32 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes in which at least one driver or nonoccupant had a BAC of 0.10 g/dl or higher. More than two-thirds of the 13,094 people killed in such crashes were themselves intoxicated. The remaining one-third were passengers, nonintoxicated drivers, or nonintoxicated nonoccupants.

**Table 1. Types of Fatalities in Fatal Crashes Involving at Least One Intoxicated Driver or Nonoccupant, 1994**

Type of Fatality	Number	Percent of Total
Intoxicated Drivers	7,281	56
Nonintoxicated Drivers	865	7
Passengers	2,634	20
Intoxicated Nonoccupants (Pedestrians and Pedalcyclists)	1,758	13
Nonintoxicated Nonoccupants	556	4
<b>Total Fatalities</b>	<b>13,094</b>	<b>100</b>

***“There were 16,589 alcohol-related fatalities in 1994—40.8 percent of the total traffic fatalities for the year.”***

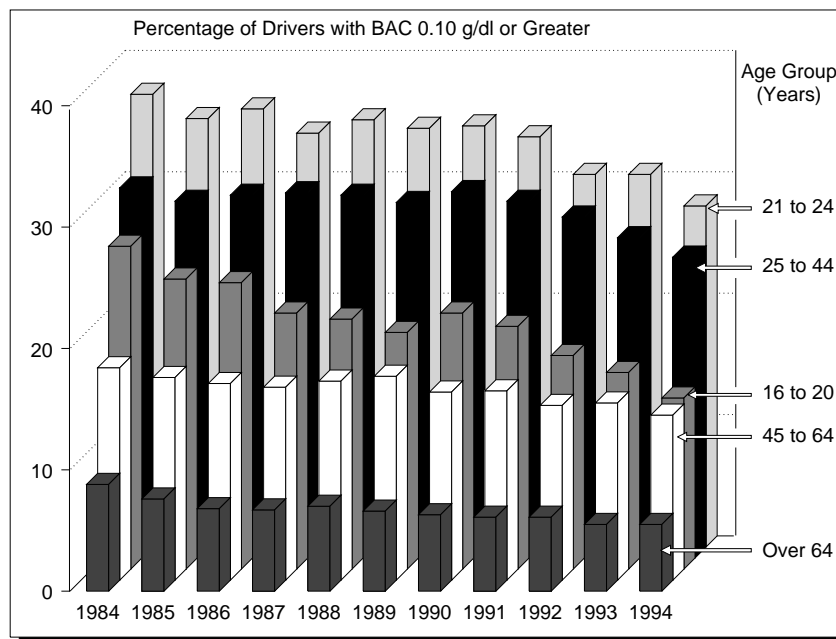
The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is three and one-half times as high at night as during the day (62.7 percent vs. 18.0 percent). For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate is 6 times as high at night (14.5 percent vs. 2.4 percent).

In 1994, 30.7 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 54.7 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 4.1 percent during the week and 11.1 percent during the weekend.

From 1984 to 1994, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes, with the youngest and oldest drivers experiencing the largest decreases. For drivers 65 and older, intoxication rates dropped from 8.8 percent in 1984 to 5.5 percent in 1994, a decline of 38 percent; for drivers 16 to 20 years of age, intoxication rates dropped by 47 percent, from 26.6 percent in 1984 to 14.1 percent in 1994.

**“From 1984 to 1994, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes.”**

**Figure 1. Intoxicated Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1984-1994**



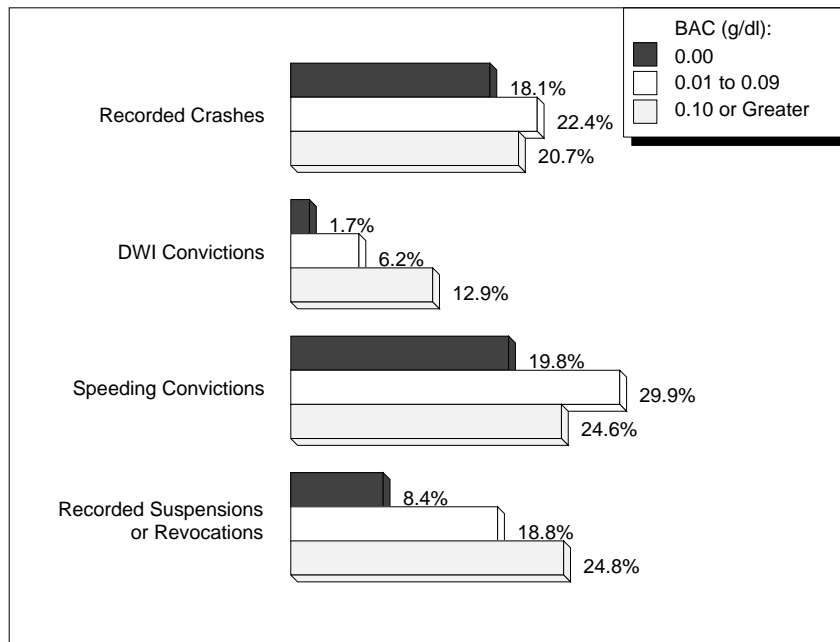
The highest intoxication rates in fatal crashes in 1994 were recorded for drivers 21 to 24 years old (28.1 percent), followed by ages 25 to 34 (26.8 percent) and 35 to 44 (22.3 percent). These three groups have also shown the smallest reductions since 1984 (24.7 percent, 18.8 percent, and 13.9 percent, respectively).

Intoxication rates for drivers in fatal crashes in 1994 were highest for motorcycle operators (28.9 percent) and lowest for drivers of large trucks (1.4 percent). The intoxication rate for drivers of light trucks was higher than that for passenger car drivers (22.9 percent and 19.4 percent, respectively).

Safety belts were used by only about 16.3 percent of the fatally injured *intoxicated* drivers (BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater), compared to 27.3 percent of fatally injured *impaired* drivers (BAC between 0.01 g/dl and 0.09 g/dl) and 43.4 percent of fatally injured sober drivers.

Fatally injured drivers with BAC levels of 0.10 g/dl or greater were about 7 times as likely to have a prior conviction for driving while intoxicated compared to fatally injured sober drivers (12.9 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively).

**Figure 2. Previous Driving Records of Drivers Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Blood Alcohol Concentration, 1994**



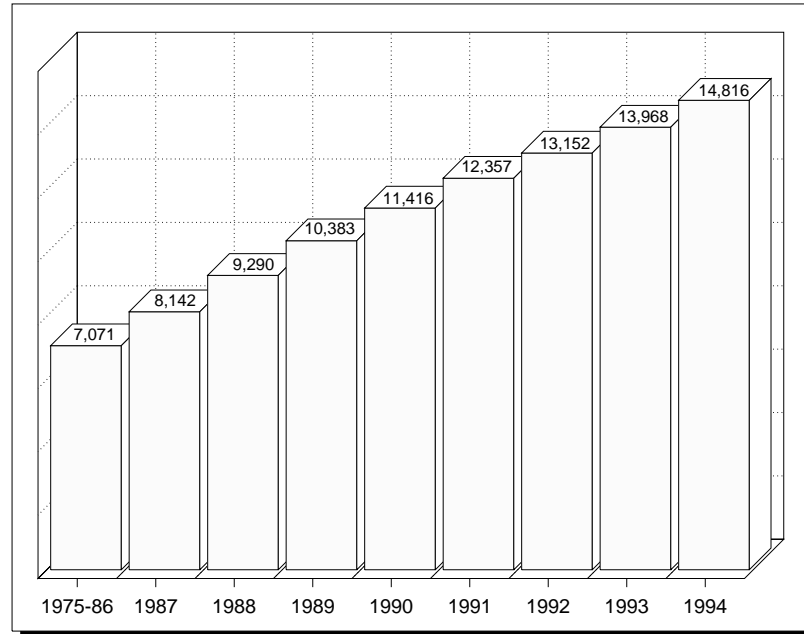
**“More than one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1994 were intoxicated.”**

More than one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1994 were intoxicated. By age group, the percentages ranged from a low of 9.6 for pedestrians 65 years and older to a high of 50.8 percent for those 25 to 34 years old years old.

The driver, pedestrian, or both were intoxicated in 37.4 percent of all fatal pedestrian crashes in 1994. In these crashes, the intoxication rate for pedestrians was more than twice the rate for drivers—30.1 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively. Both the pedestrian and the driver were intoxicated in 5.6 percent of the crashes that resulted in a pedestrian fatality.

All states and the District of Columbia now have 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws. NHTSA estimates that these laws have reduced traffic fatalities involving drivers 18 to 20 years old by 13 percent and have saved an estimated 14,816 lives since 1975.

**Figure 3. Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975-1994**



***“NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 14,816 lives since 1975.”***

On the following pages, Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present summary data on alcohol involvement in fatal crashes in 1994, compared with 1984 data.

**For more information:**

Information on alcohol involvement in traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NRD-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone inquiries should be addressed to Ms. Louann Hall at (202) 366-4198. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

***“Serving the Highway Safety Community by the Numbers”***

**Table 2. Alcohol Involvement in Fatal Crashes, 1984 and 1994**

	1984		1994		Change in Percentage, 1984-1994
	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	
Fatal Crashes	39,631	42.7	36,223	32.5	-24%
Total Fatalities	44,257	42.9	40,676	32.2	-25%

\* For any person (occupant or nonoccupant) involved in the fatal crash.

**Table 3. Alcohol Involvement for Drivers in Fatal Crashes, 1984 and 1994**

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	1984		1994		Change in Percentage, 1984-1994
	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	
<i>Total Drivers</i>					
Total *	57,512	27.3	54,514	19.3	-29%
<i>Drivers by Age Group (Years)</i>					
16-20	9,804	26.6	7,711	14.1	-47%
21-24	8,963	37.3	6,280	28.1	-25%
25-34	15,233	33.0	12,882	26.8	-19%
35-44	8,563	25.9	9,935	22.3	-14%
45-64	9,143	17.7	10,312	13.6	-23%
Over 64	4,316	8.8	6,055	5.5	-38%
<i>Drivers by Sex</i>					
Male	44,723	29.6	40,195	21.9	-26%
Female	11,907	17.1	13,550	11.1	-35%
<i>Drivers by Vehicle Type</i>					
Passenger Cars	34,395	27.6	29,977	19.4	-30%
Light Trucks	11,866	30.6	16,174	22.9	-25%
Large Trucks	5,056	4.3	4,563	1.4	-67%
Motorcycles	4,650	40.2	2,317	28.9	-28%

\* Numbers shown for groups of drivers do not add to the total number of drivers due to unknown or other data not included.

Table 4. Alcohol Involvement for Drivers Killed in Fatal Crashes, 1984 and 1994

Driver Fatalities	1984		1994		Change in Percentage, 1984-1994
	Number of Driver Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Driver Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	
<i>Total Driver Fatalities</i>					
Total	25,589	40.2	23,695	30.7	-24%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Crash Type and Time of Day</i>					
Single-Vehicle	12,790	56.0	11,207	46.2	-17%
Daytime *	4,000	28.4	4,281	21.2	-25%
Nighttime **	8,533	68.8	6,695	61.9	-10%
Multiple-Vehicle	12,799	24.4	12,488	16.8	-31%
Daytime *	6,919	10.5	7,790	6.7	-36%
Nighttime **	5,876	40.7	4,689	33.6	-17%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Day of Week</i>					
Weekday ***	14,178	31.4	13,984	22.0	-30%
Weekend ****	11,405	51.1	9,711	43.4	-15%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Time of Day</i>					
Daytime *	10,919	17.0	12,071	11.9	-30%
Nighttime **	14,409	57.3	11,384	50.2	-12%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Day of Week and Time of Day</i>					
Weekday ***					
Daytime *	7,820	13.6	8,854	9.4	-31%
Nighttime **	6,247	53.0	5,027	43.5	-18%
Weekend ****					
Daytime *	3,099	25.6	3,217	18.6	-27%
Nighttime **	8,162	60.6	6,357	55.5	-8%

\* 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

\*\* 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM.

\*\*\* Monday 6:00 AM to Friday 6:00 PM.

\*\*\*\* Friday 6:00 PM to Monday 6:00 AM.

Table 5. Alcohol Involvement for Nonoccupants Killed in Fatal Crashes, 1984 and 1994

Nonoccupant Fatalities	1984		1994		Change in Percentage, 1984-1994
	Number of Nonoccupant Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	Number of Nonoccupant Fatalities	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater	
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities by Age Group (Years)</i>					
16-20	571	40.4	270	25.4	-37%
21-24	548	53.0	282	45.7	-14%
25-34	1,121	52.9	844	50.8	-4%
35-44	735	51.2	897	49.1	-4%
45-64	1,317	42.1	1,068	37.1	-12%
Over 64	1,463	11.8	1,249	9.6	-19%
<b>Total *</b>	<b>7,025</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>5,472</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>-10%</b>
<i>Pedalcyclist Fatalities</i>					
Total	849	12.6	802	16.1	28%

\* Includes pedestrians under 16 years old and pedestrians of unknown age.