

# Traffic Safety Facts 1994

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



## Children



In 1994, there were more than 57 million children under 15 years old in the United States. This age group (0-14 years) made up 22 percent of the total U.S. resident population in 1994.

Motor vehicle crashes are the **leading cause of death** for children of every age from 5 to 14 years old (based on 1992 figures, which are the latest mortality data currently available from the National Center for Health Statistics).

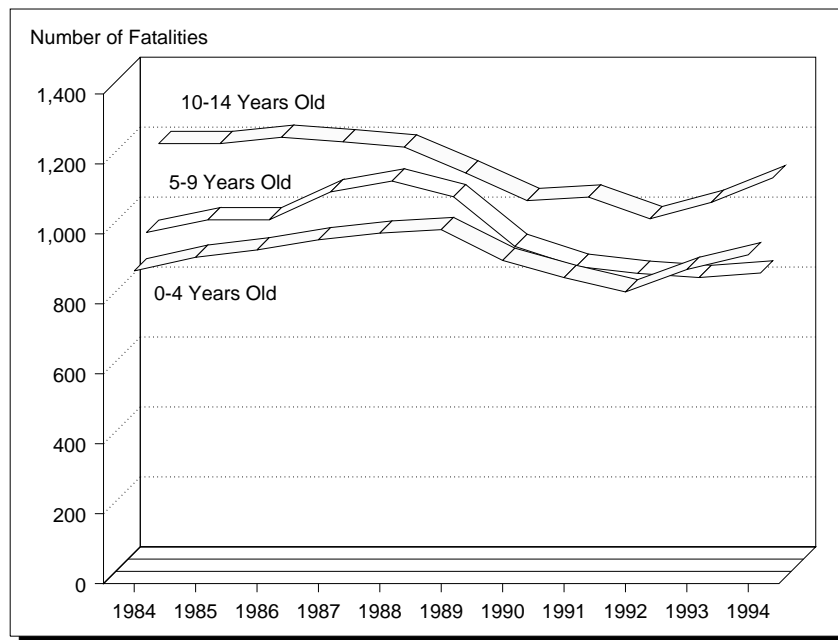
In 1994, there were a total of 40,676 traffic fatalities in the United States. The 0-14 age group accounted for 7 percent (2,883) of those traffic fatalities. In addition, children under 15 years old accounted for 5 percent (1,814) of all vehicle **occupant fatalities**, 10 percent (328,000) of all the **people injured** in motor vehicle crashes, and 9 percent (274,000) of all the vehicle occupants injured in crashes.

In the United States, an average of 8 children 0-14 years old were killed and 899 were injured every day in motor vehicle crashes during 1994.

In the 0-14 year age group, males accounted for 59 percent of the fatalities and 49 percent of those injured in motor vehicle crashes during 1994.

***“Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children from 5 to 14 years old.”***

**Figure 1. Total Traffic Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1984-1994**



### Child Endangerment

In 1994, 21 percent of the children under 15 years old who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were killed in alcohol-related crashes.

Of the children 0-14 years old who were killed in alcohol-related crashes during 1994, 255 were passengers in cars with drivers who had been drinking, with blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels of 0.01 gram per deciliter (g/dl) or higher.

An additional 177 children were killed as passengers in vehicles with drivers who had not been drinking.

Another 112 children under 15 years old who were killed in traffic crashes in 1994 were pedestrians or pedalcyclists who were struck by drinking drivers (BAC  $\geq$  0.01 g/dl).

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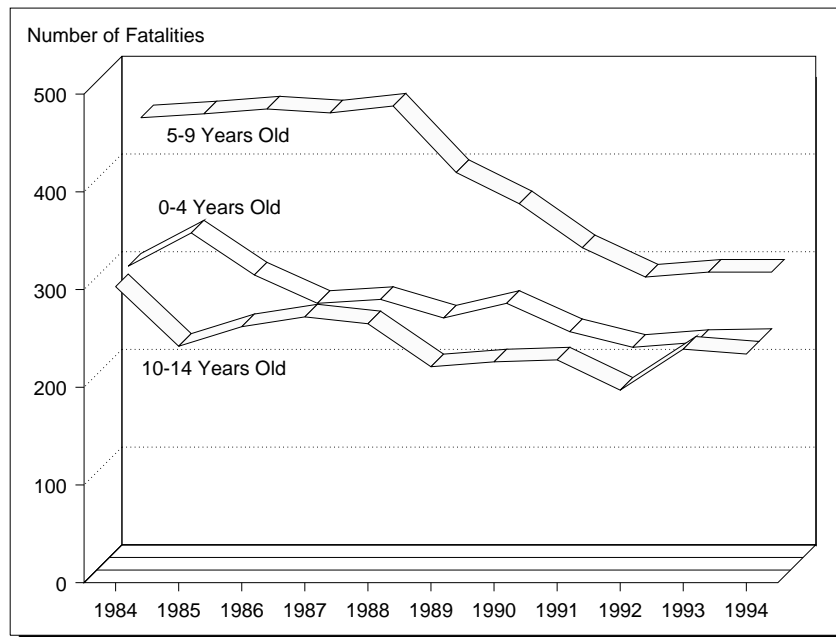


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### Pedestrians

In 1984, there were 1,064 pedestrian fatalities in the 0-14 year age group. From 1984 to 1994, the number of pedestrian fatalities in this age group decreased by 29 percent.

**Figure 2. Total Pedestrian Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1984-1994**



There were 5,472 pedestrian fatalities in 1994. The 0-14 age group accounted for 760 (14 percent) of those fatalities, and 65 percent of the pedestrian fatalities in this age group were males.

In addition to the pedestrians under 15 years old who died, 29,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. These young pedestrians accounted for 32 percent of the total pedestrians injured in motor vehicle crashes in 1994.

More than one-fourth (26 percent) of the traffic fatalities in the 0-14 year age group were pedestrians.

The contributing factor most often cited in 1994 for pedestrian fatalities among children under 15 years old was “darting into road,” followed by “improper crossing.” During 1994, 42 percent of the young pedestrian fatalities occurred between the hours of 4 pm and 8 pm, and 84 percent occurred at non-intersection locations.

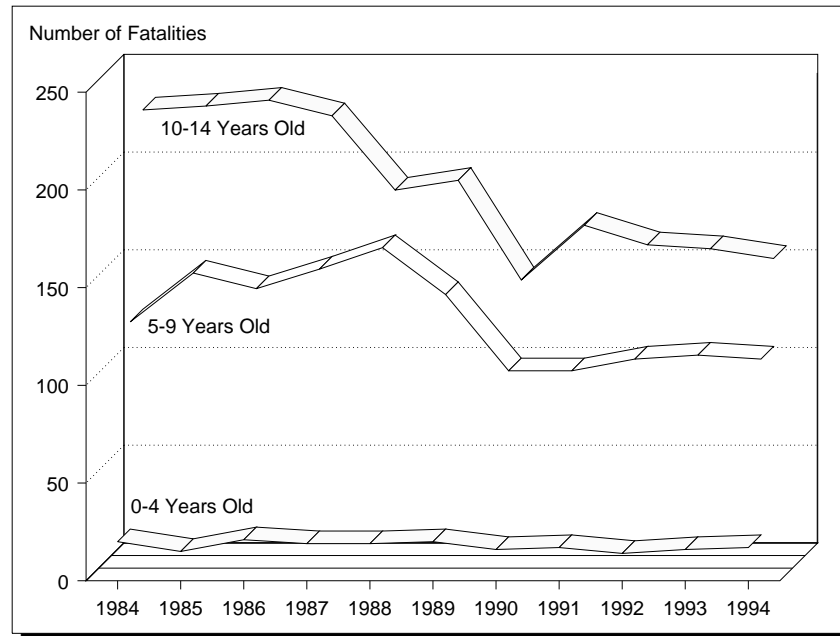
**Pedalcyclists**

A total of 802 pedalcyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 1994. Children 0-14 years old accounted for 276 (34 percent) of those fatalities.

In 1994, almost half (41 percent) of the pedalcyclists injured in motor vehicle crashes were under 15 years old.

The 276 pedalcyclist fatalities in 1994 for the 0-14 year age group represent a decrease of 26 percent from the 374 killed in 1984.

**Figure 3. Total Pedalcyclist Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1984-1994**



For 82 percent of the pedalcyclists under 15 years old killed during 1994, police reported one or more factors related to the pedalcyclist's behavior. The factors most often noted were “failure to yield right of way,” followed by “walking/riding with or against traffic.”

***“In 1994, almost half the pedalcyclists injured in motor vehicle crashes were under 15 years old.”***

Bicycle helmets are 85 to 88 percent effective in mitigating head and brain injuries, making the use of helmets the **single most effective countermeasure** available to reduce head injuries and fatalities resulting from bicycle crashes. (Source: Robert Thompson, *A Case Control Study of the Effectiveness of Bicycle Safety Helmets*. Centers for Disease Control.)

### Restraints

Research has shown that lap/shoulder safety belts, when used, **reduce the risk of fatal injury** to front seat occupants (age 5 years and older) of passenger cars by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent.

During 1994, 8,712 motor vehicle occupants under 15 years old were involved in fatal crashes. For those children, where restraint use was known, 50 percent were unrestrained; among those who were fatally injured, 69 percent were unrestrained.

**Table 1. Restraint Use by Motor Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1994**

	Age Group (Years)					Total
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-20	All Other	
Percentage Unrestrained	40	48	61	61	46	49

Research on the effectiveness of child safety seats has found that they reduce the risk of fatal injury by 69 percent for infants (less than 1 year old) and by 47 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old).

In 1994, there were 681 occupant fatalities among children under 5 years of age. Of those 681 fatalities, an estimated 393 (58 percent) were totally unrestrained.

**Table 2. Children Under 5 Years Old Fatally Injured in Motor Vehicle Crashes by Age Group and Type of Restraint, 1994**

Type of Restraint	Infants (Under Age 1)	Toddlers (Age 1-4)	Total
None Used	93	299	393
Child Seat	64	121	185
Adult Seat Belt	5	99	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>681</b>

**“Child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 69 percent for infants and by 47 percent for toddlers.”**

From 1982 through 1994, an estimated 2,655 lives were saved by the use of child restraints (child safety seats or adult belts). In 1994, an estimated 308 children under age 5 were saved as a result of child restraint use.

If 100 percent of motor vehicle occupants under 5 years old were protected by child safety seats, an estimated 532 lives (that is, an additional 282) could have been saved in 1994.

In 1994, NHTSA conducted the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS). One of the studies in the survey was the Controlled Intersection Study, which provided more detailed information about child restraint use for children under 5 years old.

**Table 3. Restraint Use by Children Under 5 Years Old**

Grouping	Restraint Use (Percent)	Grouping	Restraint Use (Percent)
Overall	66.1	Rush Hour	55.7
Infants (<1 Year)	87.7	Non-Rush Hour	68.9
Toddlers (1 to 4 Years)	60.7	Weekday	66.1
Passenger Cars	68.4	Weekend	66.2
Light Trucks	60.6	City	69.1
Front Seat	61.1	Suburb	68.1
Back Seat	70.0	Rural	59.8

Failure to read the child safety seat instructions, in addition to vehicle owner manual instructions regarding safety belts, could result in serious injury or death as a result of a failure of the child safety seat to be securely and/or properly restrained.

Children in rear-facing child seats **should not** be placed in the front seat of cars equipped with passenger-side air bags. The impact of a deploying air bag striking a rear-facing child seat could result in injury to the child.

**All front seat passengers should wear safety belts.** This is especially true for young children, who could be injured by a deploying air bag if they are in close proximity during the deployment.

***“Children in rear-facing child seats should not be placed in the front seat of cars with passenger air bags. The impact of a deploying air bag on a rear-facing child seat could injure the child.”***

**For more information:**

Information on youth safety 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”***