

Traffic Safety Facts 1995

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



Children



In 1995, there were almost 58 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 1995.

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).

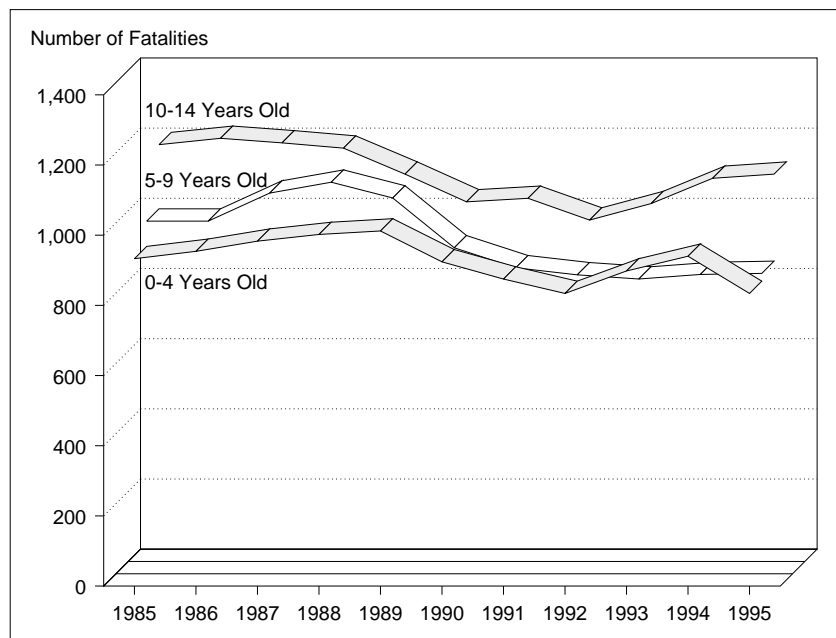
In 1995, there were a total of 41,798 traffic fatalities in the United States. The 0-14 age group accounted for 7 percent (2,794) of those traffic fatalities. In addition, children under 15 years old accounted for 5 percent (1,804) of all vehicle **occupant fatalities**, 10 percent (340,000) of all the **people injured** in motor vehicle crashes, and 9 percent (286,000) of all the vehicle occupants injured in crashes.

In the United States, an average of 8 children 0-14 years old were killed and 932 were injured every day in motor vehicle crashes during 1995.

In the 0-14 year age group, males accounted for 58 percent of the fatalities and 51 percent of those injured in motor vehicle crashes during 1995.

“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, 1985-1995



Child Endangerment

In 1995, nearly 22 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 1995, 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 157 children were killed as passengers in vehicles with drivers who had not been drinking.

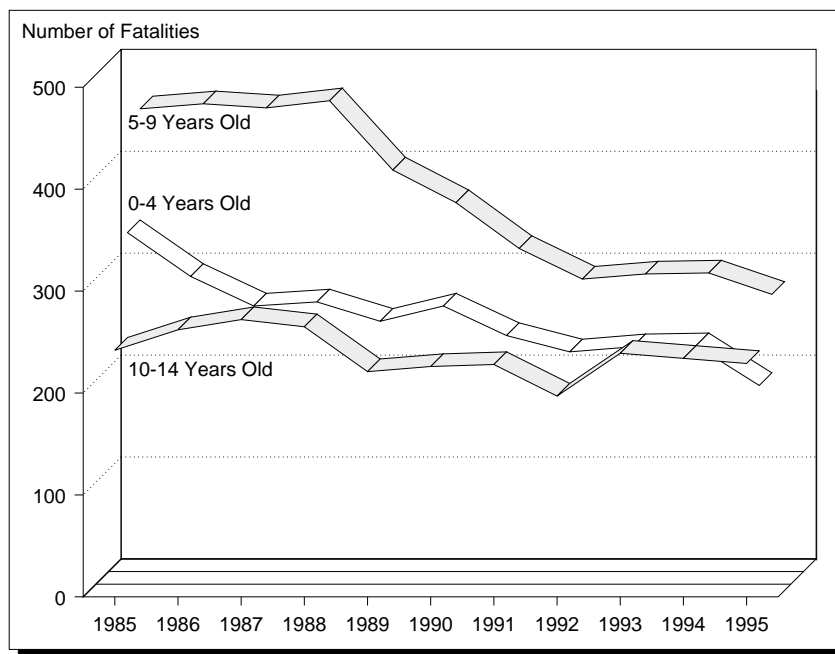
Another 124 children under 15 years old who were killed in traffic crashes in 1995 were pedestrians or pedalcyclists who were struck by drinking drivers (BAC \geq 0.01 g/dl).

“In 1995, nearly 22 percent of the children under 15 years old killed in crashes were killed in alcohol-related crashes.”

Pedestrians

In 1985, there were 1,041 pedestrian fatalities in the 0-14 year age group. From 1985 to 1995, the number of pedestrian fatalities in this age group decreased by 33 percent.

Figure 2. Total Pedestrian Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1985-1995



There were 5,585 pedestrian fatalities in 1995. The 0-14 age group accounted for 696 (12 percent) of those fatalities, and 63 percent of the pedestrian fatalities in this age group were males.

In addition to the pedestrians under 15 years old who died, 27,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. These young pedestrians accounted for 33 percent of the total pedestrians injured in motor vehicle crashes in 1995.

One-fourth (25 percent) of the traffic fatalities in the 0-14 year age group were pedestrians.

The contributing factor most often cited in 1995 for pedestrian fatalities among children under 15 years old was “darting into road,” followed by “improper crossing.” During 1995, 42 percent of the young pedestrian fatalities occurred between the hours of 4 pm and 8 pm, and 83 percent occurred at non-intersection locations.

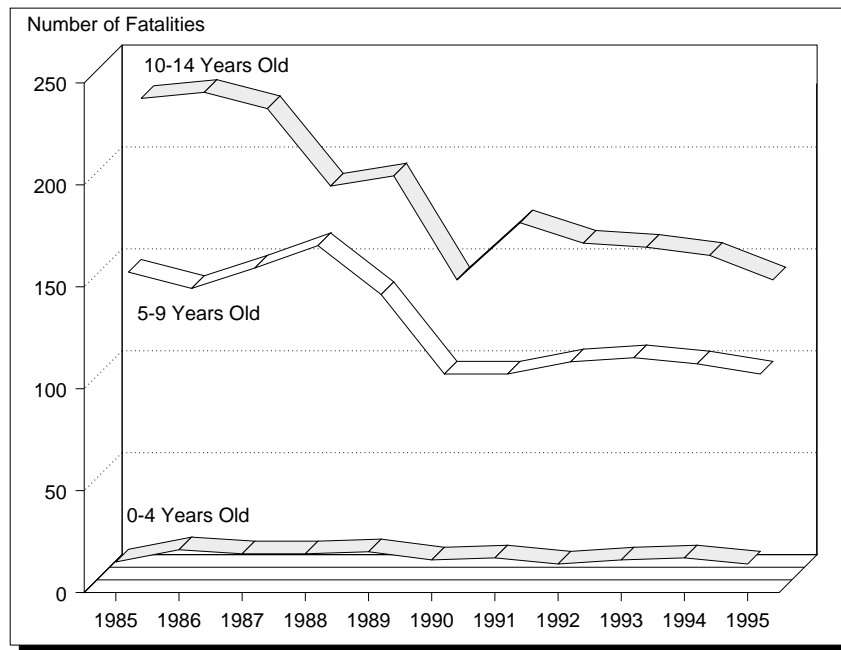
Pedalcyclists

A total of 830 pedalcyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 1995. Children 0-14 years old accounted for 256 (31 percent) of those fatalities.

In 1995, 41 percent of the pedalcyclists injured in motor vehicle crashes were under 15 years old.

The 256 pedalcyclist fatalities in 1995 for the 0-14 year age group represent a decrease of 35 percent from the 396 killed in 1985.

Figure 3. Total Pedalcyclist Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1985-1995



For 82 percent of the pedalcyclists under 15 years old killed during 1995, 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 1995, 41 percent of 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 1995, 9,082 motor vehicle occupants under 15 years old were involved in fatal crashes. For those children, where restraint use was known, 47 percent were unrestrained; among those who were fatally injured, 65 percent were unrestrained.

Table 1. Restraint Use by Motor Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1995

	Age Group (Years)					Total
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-20	All Other	
Percentage Unrestrained	37	48	56	59	45	48

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 1995, there were 616 occupant fatalities among children under 5 years of age. Of those 616 fatalities, an estimated 350 (57 percent) were totally unrestrained.

Table 2. Children Under 5 Years Old Fatally Injured in Motor Vehicle Crashes by Age Group and Type of Restraint, 1995

Type of Restraint	Infants (Under Age 1)	Toddlers (Age 1-4)	Total
None Used	98	252	350
Child Seat	52	131	183
Adult Seat Belt	2	81	83
Total	152	464	616

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

From 1982 through 1995, an estimated 2,934 lives were saved by the use of child restraints (child safety seats or adult belts). In 1995, an estimated 279 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 253) could have been saved in 1995.

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. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www.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.

Child Injury Prevention**Pickup Trucks**

- Every year, more than 200 people riding in pickup cargo beds are killed, and more than half the deaths are children and teenagers. Children in covered cargo beds are exposed to the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning from exhaust fumes.
- Parents should be aware that the rear seats in extended cabs may not serve their children well. Child restraints are designed for use on forward-facing seats and are not suitable for jumpseats. Jumpseats are too small to support the bases of most child restraints. The bench seat may not be wide enough to support a child restraint, and there may not be enough room between the front and back seats to allow for the expected forward movement of a child's head in a crash.

Pedalcycles

- Buy your child an approved bike helmet. Purchase one that has a sticker inside certifying that the helmet meets standards of the Snell Memorial Foundation and/or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI Z90.4).
- The chin strap is also very important. In the event of a crash, it must keep the helmet on your child's head so that the head remains protected. It must be strong, comfortable to wear, and well-fitting. It should be buckled securely and snugly at all times.
- The helmet should be replaced at least every 5 years, or after it has been damaged.
- Let your child help pick out the helmet, because it must be worn every time he/she rides. If you are a rider, buy one for yourself too, and set a good example by wearing it. Also encourage your child's friends to wear helmets.
- Make certain your child's bike is the correct size, safely maintained, and has reflectors. Children under age 9 should not ride their bikes in the street. They are not able to identify and adjust to the many dangerous traffic situations.
- Teach your child always to stop and look left-right-left before entering the road. This is a good pedestrian safety practice too, for crossing the street.
- If a bicyclist rides in the road, the cyclist must obey traffic laws that apply to motor vehicle operators. Instruct your child on the bicycle rules of the road. Driver licensing agencies and highway departments are good sources for booklets that explain bicycle safety rules. Enroll your child in a bike safety education program if one is available in your community.
- Never allow your child to ride at night or with audio headphones. Stress the need to be alert while riding, since most drivers do not see riders. Bicyclists should ride single file on the right side and signal their intentions to other road users.
- Children should never carry anything on their handlebars that could block their view or interfere with their riding ability—especially another child.
- Teach children to ride with, not against, the flow of traffic. Bicyclists should ride on the right side of the road in a straight, single file, obeying all traffic signs. Also, encourage them to wear bright clothing so that they will be more visible to drivers.

Child Injury Prevention (Continued)**Pedestrians**

- As children get older they become much less dependent on their parents, especially for transportation. Instead of riding with an adult, many already prefer to walk. Parents should know these important traffic safety tips:
 - Make sure children understand and obey all traffic signs and signals when crossing a street or road. Teach them always to STOP and LOOK left, right, left for traffic.
 - Teach children to walk on the sidewalk if one is available. If they must walk on the roadway, have them walk facing the traffic and as far away from it as possible.
 - Make sure children can recognize when a parked car is about to move. The signs include engine noise, backup lights, and the presence of a driver in the vehicle.

Restraints

- Failure to read the child safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual regarding child safety seat installation could result in serious injury or death due to the failure of the child safety seat to be securely and/or properly restrained.
- Never hold a child on your lap. You could crush him/her in a collision. Even if you are using a safety belt, the child would be torn from your arms in a crash.
- Never put a belt around you and a child on your lap.

School Buses

- To prevent school bus pedestrian injuries and fatalities, children should:
 - STOP and LOOK left, right, left before crossing any street on the way to the bus stop.
 - If it is necessary to cross the street in front of the bus, walk along the side of the road to a point at least 10 feet ahead of the bus.
 - Line up away from the street as the bus approaches and wait until the bus has stopped, the door has opened, and the driver has signaled before stepping onto the roadway.
 - Use the handrails to avoid falls.
 - Be careful of clothing, book bags, and drawstring jackets—items that can get caught in the door or handrails while exiting the bus.
 - Walk three giant steps away from the bus immediately after getting off the bus.