

# Traffic Safety Facts 1996

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



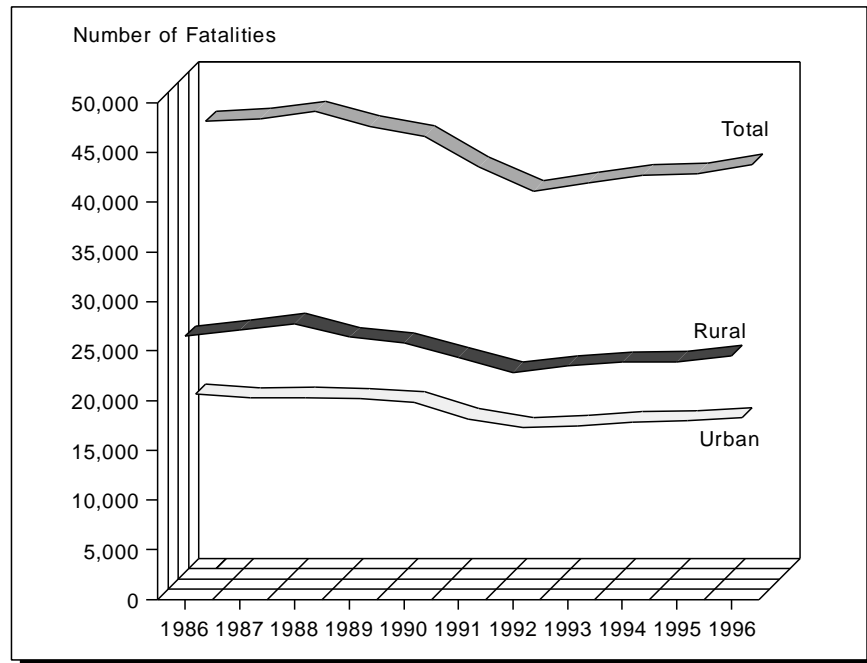
## Rural Areas



The Census Bureau provides rural and urban population breakdowns every 10 years. The latest figures available are for 1990, when rural areas made up 25 percent of the total U.S. population.

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) uses the variable "Roadway Function Class" to identify rural and urban areas, as determined by the state highway departments and approved by the Federal Highway Administration. In 1996, crashes in rural areas accounted for 59 percent of total motor vehicle fatalities.

**Figure 1. Number of Traffic Fatalities by Location, 1986-1996**



**"In 1996, crashes in rural areas accounted for 59 percent of all traffic fatalities."**

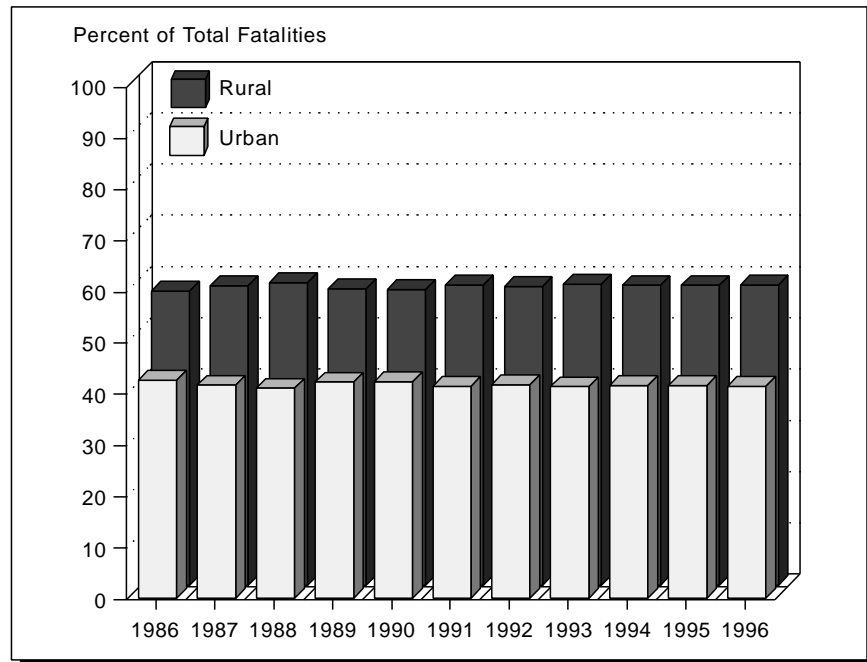
In 1996, 56 percent of all the vehicles involved in fatal crashes were involved in crashes that occurred in rural areas. Large trucks had the highest percentage of rural crashes at 66 percent, followed by light trucks (62 percent), passenger cars (52 percent), and motorcycles (48 percent).

Although rural areas accounted for only 38 percent of total vehicle miles of travel in 1995, the fatality rate in those areas was 2.6 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, compared with 1.1 in urban areas (1996 data for vehicle miles traveled not available).

The fatality rate on rural Interstate highways was 1.2 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 1995, compared with 0.6 on urban Interstates.



Figure 2. Percentage of Traffic Fatalities by Location, 1986-1996




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***“The 1995 fatality rate on rural Interstate highways was twice the rate on urban Interstates.”***

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In 1996, 22 percent of the drivers involved in fatal crashes in rural areas (31,892) were cited for speeding, compared with 18 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes in urban areas (24,677).

In 1996, 41 percent of the drivers involved in rural fatal crashes in which alcohol was involved were also speeding, compared with 37 percent of those involved in urban fatal crashes. In fatal crashes that did not involve alcohol, 16 percent of the drivers in rural crashes and 12 percent of those in urban crashes were speeding.

In fatal crashes during 1996 for which restraint use was known, 48 percent of the drivers of passenger vehicles in rural areas were unrestrained, compared with 36 percent of those in urban areas. In both areas, approximately one-third of the unrestrained drivers were also speeding.

In 1996, of the passenger vehicle drivers in fatal crashes that involved alcohol, 74 percent of those in rural crashes were unrestrained, compared with 63 percent of those in urban crashes. In fatal crashes that did not involve alcohol, 37 percent of the drivers in rural crashes were unrestrained, compared with 28 percent of those in urban crashes.

In 1996, 46 percent of the sport utility vehicles involved in fatal crashes in rural areas experienced rollover—more than any other type of vehicle. Rollover rates for other vehicle types involved in rural fatal crashes were 29 percent for pickups, 26 percent for vans, 21 percent for passenger cars, and 15 percent for large trucks. The rollover rates for vehicles in fatal crashes in urban areas were lower: 25 percent for sport utility vehicles, 15 percent for pickups, 11 percent for vans, 9 percent for passenger cars, and 8 percent for large trucks.

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***“In 1996, 64 percent of all passenger vehicle occupant fatalities occurred in rural areas. Of those, 35 percent involved rollover.”***

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In 1996, 64 percent of total passenger vehicle occupant fatalities occurred in rural areas. Of those, 35 percent involved rollover. In urban areas, where 36 percent of the occupant fatalities occurred, 20 percent involved rollover.

In 1996, 30 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in rural areas were ejected from the vehicle, compared with 21 percent in urban areas.

Of the motor vehicle fatalities that occurred at railroad grade crossings in 1996, 64 percent occurred in rural areas.

During 1996, 86 percent of drivers involved in rural fatal crashes were driving within their state of residency at the time of the crash.

**For more information:**

Information on rural and urban 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 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/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.