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ABSTRACT

This document provides statistical information on U.S. traffic accidents involving young drivers. Data tables include: (1) driver fatalities and drivers involved in fatal crashes among drivers 15 to 20 years old, 1990-2000; (2) drivers involved in fatal crashes and driver involvement rates by age group, 2000; (3) drivers 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes, by previous driving record and license status, 2000; (4) driver fatality rates, by age and sex, 1996; (5) involvement of drivers 15 to 20 years old in fatal crashes, 1990 and 2000; (6) alcohol involvement among drivers 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes, 2000; and (7) cumulative estimated number of lives saved by minimum drinking age laws, 1975-2000. According to the data, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people 15 to 20 years old, although deaths dropped by 10 percent in 2000 from 1990 levels. (EV)

Young Drivers.
Traffic Safety Facts 2000.

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

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Young Drivers

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There were 187.2 million licensed drivers in the United States in 1999 (2000 data not available). Young drivers, between 15 and 20 years old, accounted for 6.8 percent (12.7 million) of the total, a 1.2 percent decrease from the 12.8 million young drivers in 1989.

In 2000, 8,155 15- to 20-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes — a 10 percent decrease from the 9,052 involved in 1990. Driver fatalities for this age group decreased by 11 percent between 1990 and 2000. For young males, driver fatalities dropped by 16 percent, compared with a 4 percent increase for young females (Table 3).

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15 to 20 year olds (based on 1998 figures, which are the latest mortality data currently available from the National Center for Health Statistics). In 2000, 3,594 drivers 15 to 20 years old were killed, and an additional 348,000 were injured, in motor vehicle crashes.

In 2000, 14 percent (8,155) of all the drivers involved in fatal crashes (57,090) were young drivers 15 to 20 years old, and 17 percent (1,885,000) of all the drivers involved in police-reported crashes (11,322,000) were young drivers.

"Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people from 15 to 20 years old."

Figure 1. Driver Fatalities and Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Among Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old, 1990-2000

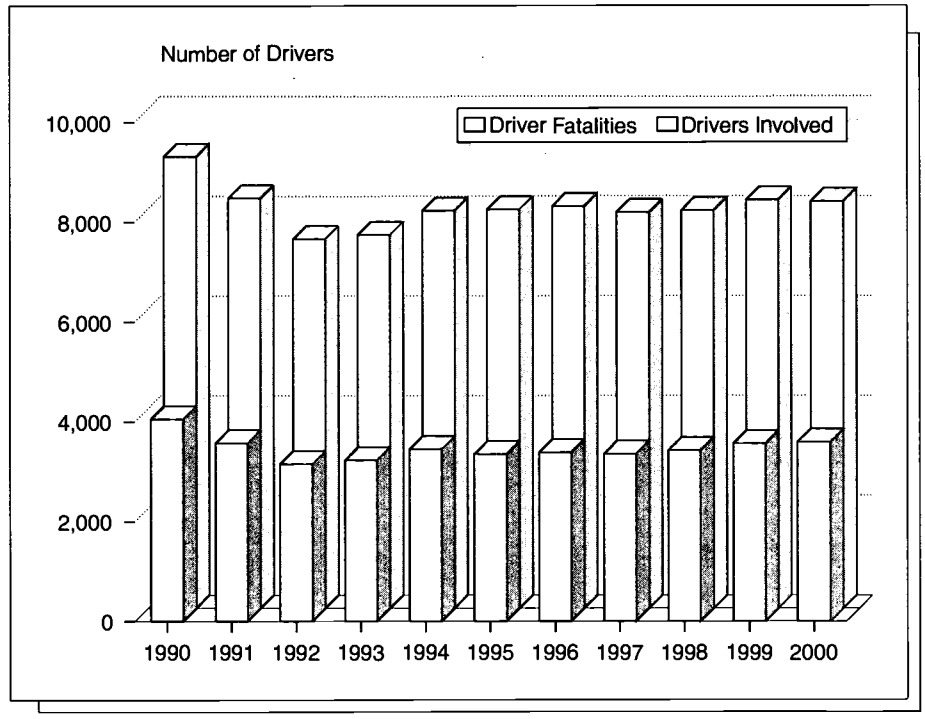


Table 1. Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes and Driver Involvement Rates by Age Group, 2000

	Age Group (Years)							
	15-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-69	70+
2000 Population (Percent)	8.7	5.2	13.6	16.3	13.5	8.7	3.4	9.2
Drivers Involved in 2000 Fatal Crashes (Percent)								
Single-Vehicle	18.5	12.8	21.5	18.9	12.6	7.1	2.2	5.9
Multi-Vehicle	12.3	9.2	20.4	20.2	15.6	9.2	3.0	9.8
All Fatal Crashes	14.6	10.5	20.8	19.7	14.6	8.4	2.7	8.4
1999 Licensed Drivers* (Percent)	6.8	6.7	19.6	22.3	18.6	11.8	4.5	9.9
Drivers Involved in 1999 Fatal Crashes per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	64.7	45.2	32.1	26.4	22.2	20.9	19.7	26.8

* 2000 data not available.

"In 2000, 14 percent of all the drivers involved in fatal crashes were between 15 and 20 years old."

More than one-third (381) of the 15- to 20-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes who had an invalid operator's license at the time of the crash also had a previous license suspension or revocation. For the same age group, 30 percent of the drivers who were killed in motor vehicle crashes during 2000 had been drinking (Table 4).

Table 2. Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old Involved in Fatal Crashes by Previous Driving Record and License Status, 2000

	License Status					
	Valid (6,895)		Invalid (1,180)		Total (8,155)*	
Driving Record	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Previous Recorded Crashes	1,166	17.8	133	13.3	1,299	17.2
Previous Recorded Suspensions or Revocations	569	8.3	381	36.1	950	12.0
Previous DWI Convictions	79	1.1	82	7.8	161	2.0
Previous Speeding Convictions	1,718	25.0	188	17.8	1,906	24.0
Previous Other Harmful or Moving Conviction	1,357	19.7	239	22.7	1,596	20.1

*Includes 80 drivers with unknown license status.

In 2000, the estimated economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old was $32.8 billion.

Motorcycles

During 2000, 219 young motorcycle drivers (15-20 years old) were killed and an additional 5,000 were injured.

Helmets are estimated to be 29 percent effective in preventing fatalities among motorcyclists. NHTSA estimates that helmets saved the lives of 631 motorcyclists of all ages in 2000, and that if all motorcyclists had worn helmets, an additional 382 lives could have been saved.

During 2000, 49 percent of the motorcycle drivers between 15 and 20 years old who were fatally injured in crashes were not wearing helmets.

Of the young motorcycle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2000, more than one-fourth (28 percent) were either unlicensed or driving with an invalid license.

Alcohol

"In 2000, 21 percent of the young drivers who were killed in crashes were intoxicated."

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.

In 2000, 21 percent of the young drivers 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes were intoxicated.

Table 4. Alcohol Involvement Among Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2000

Driver Status	Number of Drivers	Percentage with BAC Levels		
		0.00 g/dl	0.01-0.09 g/dl	≥0.10 g/dl
Surviving	4,561	84	8	9
Fatally Injured	3,594	70	8	21
Total	**8,155**	**78**	**8**	**14**

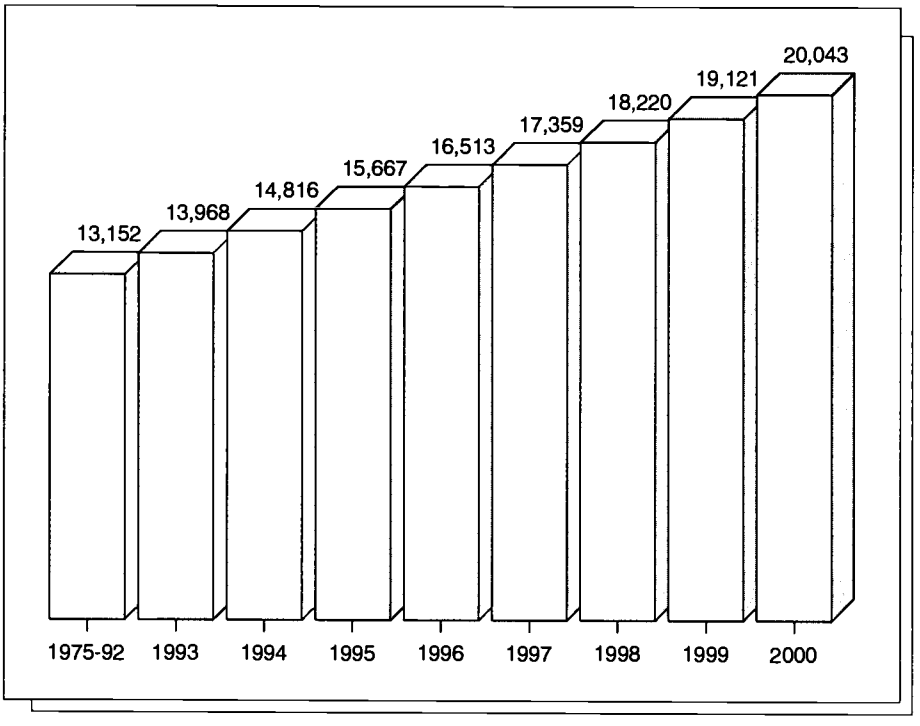
The severity of a crash increases with alcohol involvement. In 2000, 3 percent of the 15- to 20-year-old drivers involved in property-damage-only crashes had been drinking, 5 percent of those involved in crashes resulting in injury had been drinking, and 22 percent of those involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.

The numbers of drivers 15 to 20 years old involved in fatal crashes who were intoxicated dropped by 38 percent between 1990 and 2000.

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 20,043 lives since 1975. In 2000, an estimated 922 lives were saved by minimum drinking age laws. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia have set 0.08 g/dl as the legal intoxication limit, and all states plus the District of Columbia have zero tolerance laws for drivers under the age of 21 (it is illegal for drivers under 21 to drive with BAC levels of 0.02 g/dl or greater).

"NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 20,043 lives since 1975."

Figure 3. Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975-2000



For young drivers 15 to 20 years old, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2000, 26 percent of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crash, compared with 13 percent of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2000, 69 percent of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained. Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 80 percent were unrestrained.

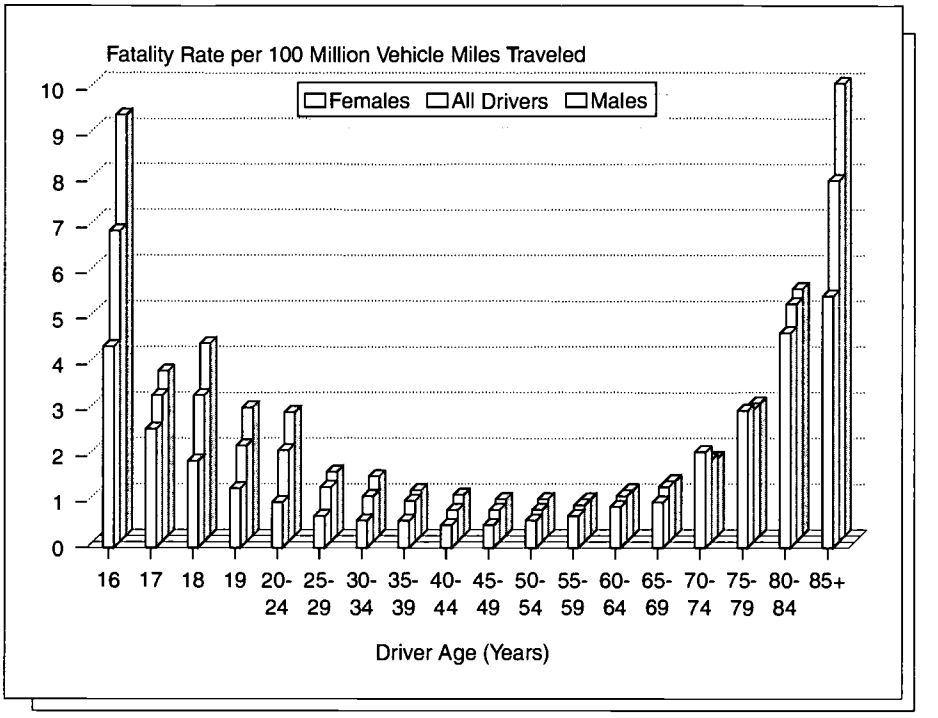
For more information:

Information on young drivers is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NRD-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand 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/ncsa. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

When driver fatality rates are calculated on the basis of estimated annual travel, the highest rates are found among the youngest and oldest drivers. Compared with the fatality rate for drivers 25 through 69 years old, the rate for teenage drivers (16 to 19 years old) is about 4 times as high, and the rate for drivers in the oldest group is 9 times as high.

"The fatality rate for teenage drivers, based on estimated annual travel, is about 4 times as high as the rate for drivers 25 through 69 years old."

Figure 2. Driver Fatality Rates by Age and Sex, 1996



Female drivers under age 50 have a lower fatality rate than their male counterparts, on a per mile driven basis, while the rate is essentially the same for both male and female drivers over 50 years of age, with the exception of the oldest group (Figure 2).

Table 3. Involvement of Drivers 15 to 20 Years Old in Fatal Crashes, 1990 and 2000

	1990			2000			Percentage Change, 1990-2000		
							Number		Percentage
	Total	Age 15-20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15-20	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 15-20	Age 15-20
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes									
Total	58,893	9,050	15.4	57,090	8,155	14.3	-3%	-10%	-7%
Male	44,281	6,831	15.4	41,407	5,822	14.1	-6%	-15%	-8%
Female	13,726	2,219	16.2	14,654	2,333	15.9	+7%	+5%	-2%
Driver Fatalities									
Total	25,750	4,052	15.7	25,492	3,594	14.1	-1%	-11%	-10%
Male	19,610	3,111	15.9	18,762	2,620	14.0	-4%	-16%	-12%
Female	6,137	941	15.3	6,566	974	14.8	+7%	+4%	-3%

U.S. Department
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**National Highway
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