



# Traffic Safety Facts 1998

## 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 fell by 1 percent from 1997 to 1998. The 15,935 alcohol-related fatalities in 1998 (38 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year) represent a 33 percent reduction from the 23,626 alcohol-related fatalities reported in 1988 (50 percent of the total).

NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes and in 7 percent of all crashes in 1998.

The 15,935 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 1998 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 33 minutes.

More than 305,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present — an average of one person injured approximately every 2 minutes.

Approximately 1.5 million drivers were arrested in 1997 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 122 licensed drivers in the United States (1998 data not yet available).

About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

In 1998, 30 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 greater. Seventy percent of the 12,456 people killed in such crashes were themselves intoxicated. The remaining 30 percent were passengers, nonintoxicated drivers, or nonintoxicated nonoccupants.

**Table 1. Types of Fatalities in Fatal Crashes Involving at Least One Intoxicated Driver or Nonoccupant, 1998**

Type of Fatality	Number	Percent of Total
Intoxicated Drivers	7,010	56
Nonintoxicated Drivers	720	6
Passengers	2,525	20
Intoxicated Nonoccupants (Pedestrians and Pedalcyclists)	1,739	14
Nonintoxicated Nonoccupants	463	4
<b>Total Fatalities</b>	<b>12,456</b>	<b>100</b>

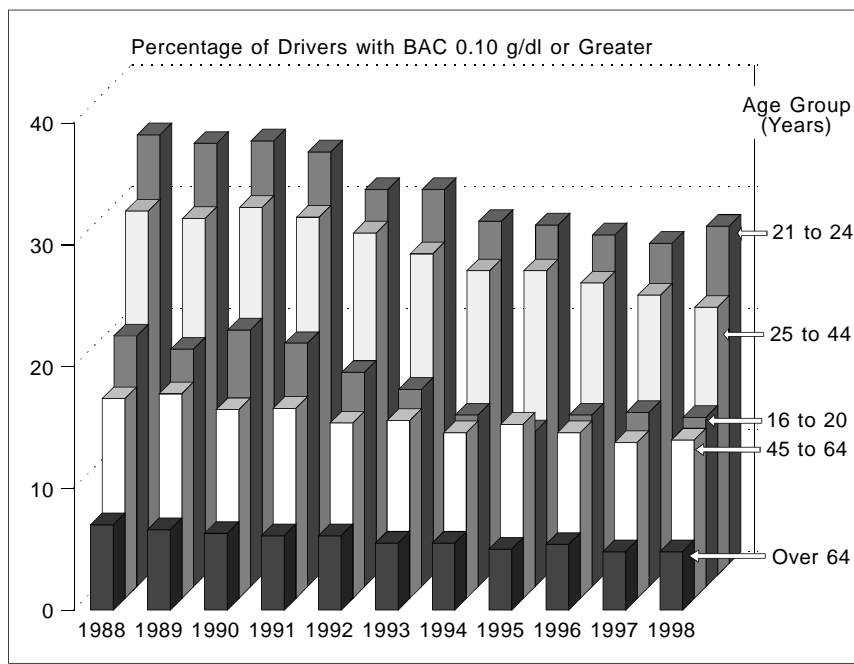
***“There were 15,935 alcohol-related fatalities in 1998 — 38 percent of the total traffic fatalities for the year.”***

The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is about 4 times as high at night as during the day (60 percent vs. 17 percent). For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate is 5 times as high at night (16 percent vs. 3 percent).

In 1998, 29 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 52 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.

From 1988 to 1998, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes. Drivers 16 to 20 years old experienced the largest decrease in intoxication rates (33 percent), followed by drivers over 64 years old (29 percent).

**Figure 1. Intoxicated Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1988-1998**



**“From 1988 to 1998, intoxication rates decreased for drivers of all age groups involved in fatal crashes.”**

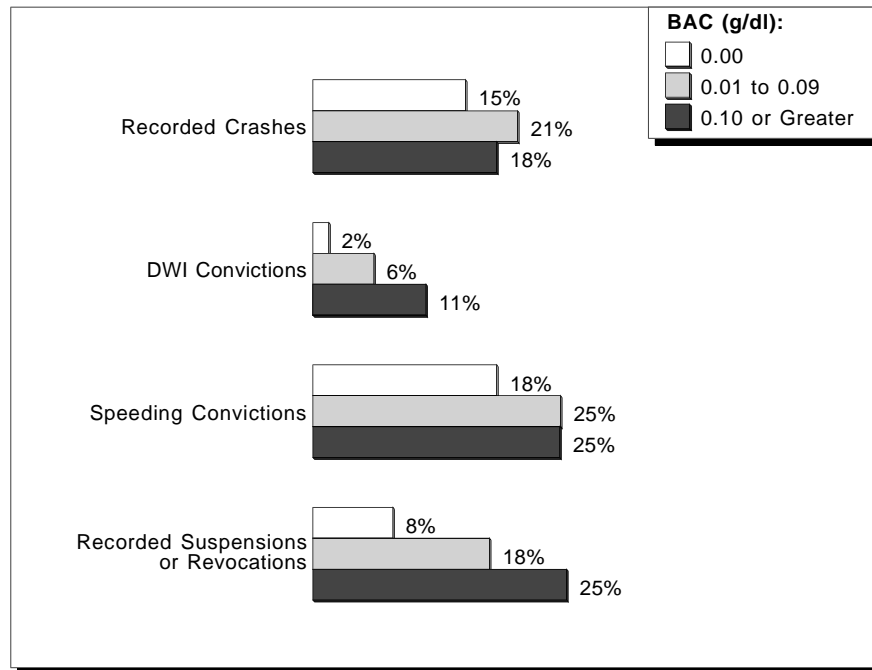
The highest intoxication rates in fatal crashes in 1998 were recorded for drivers 21-24 years old (28 percent), followed by ages 25-34 (24 percent) and 35-44 (21 percent).

Intoxication rates for drivers in fatal crashes in 1998 were highest for motorcycle operators (31 percent) and lowest for drivers of large trucks (1 percent). The intoxication rate for drivers of light trucks was higher than that for passenger car drivers (20 percent and 18 percent, respectively).

Safety belts were used by only 19 percent of the fatally injured *intoxicated* drivers (BAC of 0.10 g/dl or greater), compared to 32 percent of fatally injured *impaired* drivers (BAC between 0.01 g/dl and 0.09 g/dl) and 49 percent of fatally injured sober drivers.

Fatally injured drivers with BAC levels of 0.10 g/dl or greater were 6 times as likely to have a prior conviction for driving while intoxicated compared to fatally injured sober drivers (11 percent and 2 percent, respectively).

**Figure 2. Previous Driving Records of Drivers Killed in Traffic Crashes, by Blood Alcohol Concentration, 1998**



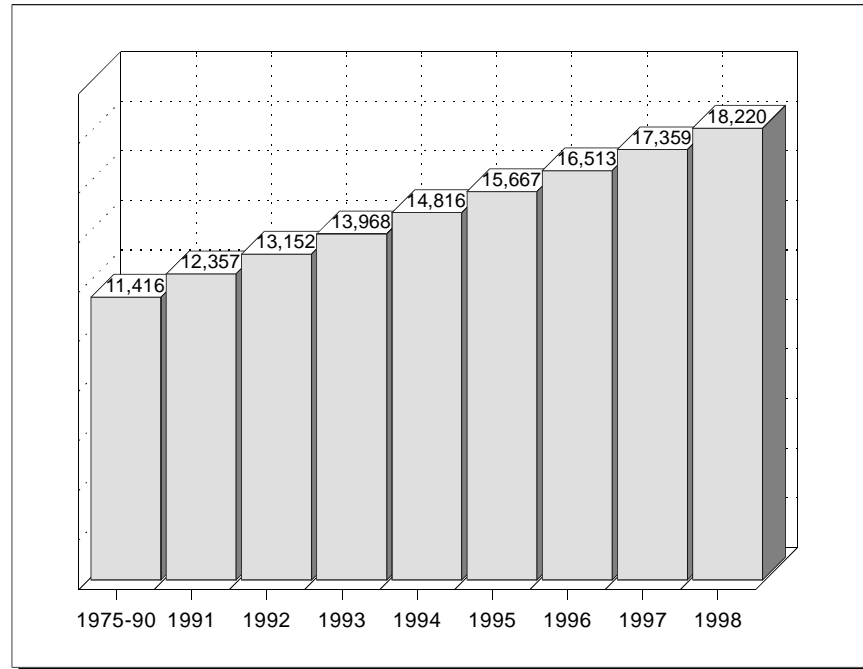
**“More than one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1998 were intoxicated.”**

More than one-third (34 percent) of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 1998 were intoxicated. By age group, the percentages ranged from a low of 10 percent for pedestrians 65 and over to a high of 48 percent for those 35 to 44 years old.

The driver, pedestrian, or both were intoxicated in 37 percent of all fatal pedestrian crashes in 1998. In these crashes, the intoxication rate for pedestrians was more than double the rate for drivers — 31 percent and 12 percent, respectively. Both the pedestrian and the driver were intoxicated in 5 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 18,220 lives since 1975. In 1998, an estimated 861 lives were saved by minimum drinking age laws.

**Figure 3. Cumulative Estimated Number of Lives Saved by Minimum Drinking Age Laws, 1975-1998**



***“NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 18,220 lives since 1975.”***

On the following pages, Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present summary data on alcohol involvement in fatal crashes in 1998, compared with 1988 data. Table 6 shows alcohol involvement in fatal traffic crashes by state.

**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. 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/nca>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

**Table 2. Alcohol Involvement in Fatal Crashes, 1988 and 1998**

	1988		1998		Change in Percentage, 1988-1998
	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	Number	Percentage with BAC 0.10 g/dl or Greater *	
Fatal Crashes	42,130	40	37,081	30	-25%
Total Fatalities	47,087	40	41,471	30	-25%

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

**Table 3. Alcohol Involvement for Drivers in Fatal Crashes, 1988 and 1998**

Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	1988		1998		Change in Percentage, 1988-1998
	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 *	62,253	25	56,543	18	-28%
<i>Drivers by Age Group (Years)</i>					
16-20	10,171	21	7,755	14	-33%
21-24	8,555	35	5,599	28	-20%
25-34	16,398	33	11,895	24	-27%
35-44	10,077	25	11,220	21	-16%
45-64	10,081	16	12,151	13	-19%
Over 64	5,376	7	6,680	5	-29%
<i>Drivers by Sex</i>					
Male	47,402	28	40,746	20	-29%
Female	13,951	15	15,061	10	-33%
<i>Drivers by Vehicle Type</i>					
Passenger Cars	36,769	25	28,857	18	-28%
Light Trucks	15,167	29	19,104	20	-31%
Large Trucks	5,141	3	4,883	1	-67%
Motorcycles	3,704	36	2,323	31	-14%

\* 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, 1988 and 1998

Driver Fatalities	1988		1998		Change in Percentage, 1988-1998
	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	27,253	38	24,729	28	-26%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Crash Type and Time of Day</i>					
Single-Vehicle	13,491	54	11,850	44	-19%
Daytime *	4,481	27	4,637	20	-26%
Nighttime **	8,741	68	6,959	59	-13%
Multiple-Vehicle	13,762	22	12,879	14	-36%
Daytime *	7,813	9	8,420	6	-33%
Nighttime **	5,942	39	4,446	29	-26%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Day of Week</i>					
Weekday ***	15,418	29	14,972	21	-28%
Weekend ****	11,760	49	9,694	40	-18%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Time of Day</i>					
Daytime *	12,294	16	13,057	11	-31%
Nighttime **	14,683	56	11,405	48	-14%
<i>Driver Fatalities by Day of Week and Time of Day</i>					
Weekday ***					
Daytime *	8,904	13	9,599	9	-31%
Nighttime **	6,430	52	5,282	42	-19%
Weekend ****					
Daytime *	3,390	24	3,458	17	-29%
Nighttime **	8,253	59	6,122	53	-10%

\* 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, 1988 and 1998

Nonoccupant Fatalities	1988		1998		Change in Percentage, 1988-1998
	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	432	38	301	34	-11%
21-24	453	51	253	48	-6%
25-34	1,140	53	680	46	-13%
35-44	860	47	934	48	+2%
45-64	1,220	39	1,249	35	-10%
Over 64	1,596	9	1,168	10	+11%
<b>Total *</b>	<b>6,870</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5,220</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0%</b>
<i>Pedalcyclist Fatalities</i>					
Total	911	14	761	18	+29%

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

Table 6. Traffic Fatalities by State and Highest Blood Alcohol Concentration in the Crash, 1998

State	Total Traffic Fatalities	No Alcohol (BAC = 0.00 g/dl)		Low Alcohol (BAC = 0.01-0.09 g/dl)		High Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.10 g/dl)		Any Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.01 g/dl)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	1,071	665	62	77	7	329	31	406	38
Alaska	71	40	56	3	4	28	39	31	44
Arizona	980	557	57	89	9	334	34	423	43
Arkansas	625	432	69	48	8	146	23	193	31
California	3,494	2,170	62	315	9	1,009	29	1,324	38
Colorado	628	396	63	43	7	189	30	232	37
Connecticut	329	187	57	29	9	112	34	142	43
Delaware	115	70	61	7	6	37	33	45	39
District of Columbia	54	27	49	8	16	19	35	27	51
Florida	2,824	1,899	67	210	7	715	25	925	33
Georgia	1,569	1,060	68	130	8	380	24	509	32
Hawaii	120	64	53	14	12	42	35	56	47
Idaho	265	175	66	15	6	75	28	90	34
Illinois	1,393	794	57	122	9	477	34	599	43
Indiana	978	599	61	72	7	307	31	379	39
Iowa	449	285	64	43	9	121	27	164	36
Kansas	493	319	65	42	8	132	27	174	35
Kentucky	858	573	67	60	7	225	26	285	33
Louisiana	922	496	54	103	11	323	35	426	46
Maine	192	138	72	8	4	45	24	54	28
Maryland	606	403	66	59	10	144	24	203	34
Massachusetts	406	214	53	59	15	134	33	192	47
Michigan	1,367	831	61	120	9	416	30	536	39
Minnesota	650	370	57	64	10	216	33	280	43
Mississippi	948	597	63	57	6	294	31	351	37
Missouri	1,169	644	55	139	12	386	33	525	45
Montana	237	133	56	23	10	81	34	104	44
Nebraska	315	196	62	31	10	88	28	119	38
Nevada	361	184	51	49	14	127	35	177	49
New Hampshire	128	67	53	25	20	36	28	61	47
New Jersey	743	472	64	77	10	194	26	271	36
New Mexico	424	231	55	41	10	152	36	193	45
New York	1,498	1,133	76	115	8	250	17	365	24
North Carolina	1,596	1,083	68	91	6	422	26	513	32
North Dakota	92	48	53	4	4	40	43	44	47
Ohio	1,422	958	67	83	6	381	27	464	33
Oklahoma	755	503	67	44	6	208	28	252	33
Oregon	538	305	57	50	9	183	34	233	43
Pennsylvania	1,481	862	58	103	7	516	35	619	42
Rhode Island	74	39	52	9	13	26	35	35	48
South Carolina	1,002	698	70	50	5	254	25	304	30
South Dakota	165	98	59	13	8	54	33	67	41
Tennessee	1,216	717	59	105	9	394	32	499	41
Texas	3,577	1,785	50	383	11	1,408	39	1,792	50
Utah	350	300	86	12	3	39	11	50	14
Vermont	104	66	63	7	7	31	30	38	37
Virginia	935	592	63	76	8	267	29	343	37
Washington	660	353	54	62	9	244	37	307	46
West Virginia	354	209	59	17	5	128	36	145	41
Wisconsin	714	412	58	58	8	244	34	302	42
Wyoming	154	86	56	13	8	55	36	68	44
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>41,471</b>	<b>25,536</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12,456</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15,935</b>	<b>38</b>
Puerto Rico	558	271	49	78	14	209	37	287	51