



Traffic Safety Facts 1998

Children



In 1998, there were more than 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 1998.

Motor vehicle crashes are the **leading cause of death** for children of every age from 5 to 14 years old (based on 1996 figures, which are the latest mortality data currently available from the National Center for Health Statistics).

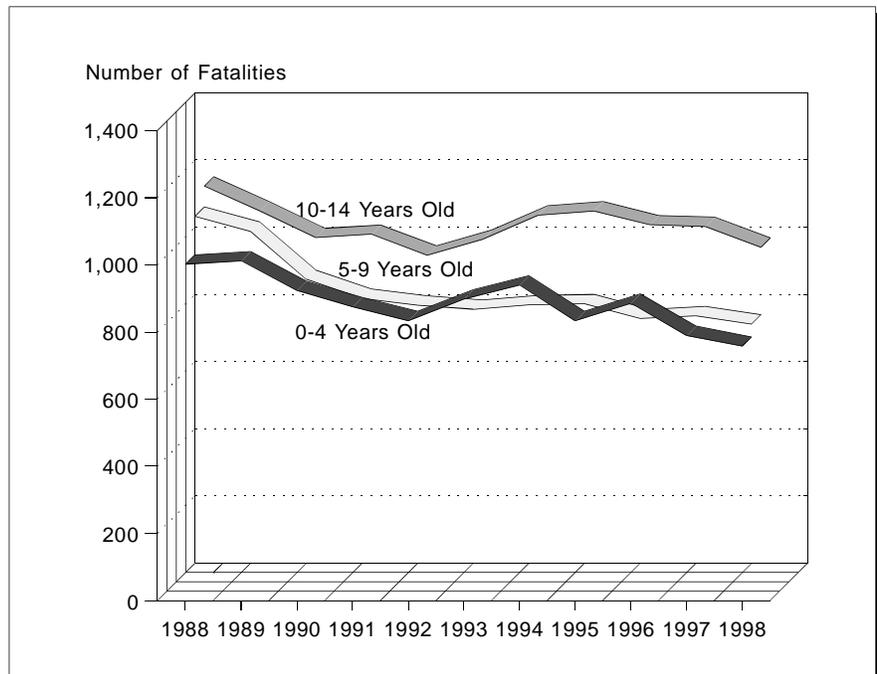
In 1998, there were a total of 41,471 traffic fatalities in the United States. The 0-14 age group accounted for 6 percent (2,549) of those traffic fatalities. In addition, children under 15 years old accounted for 5 percent (1,772) of all vehicle **occupant fatalities**, 10 percent (316,000) of all the **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 7 children 0-14 years old were killed and 866 were injured every day in motor vehicle crashes during 1998.

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 1998.

“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, 1988-1998



Child Endangerment

In 1998, 20 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 1998, almost half (241) were passengers in vehicles with drivers who had been drinking, with blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels of 0.01 gram per deciliter (g/dl) or higher. An additional 134 children were killed as passengers in vehicles with drivers who had not been drinking.

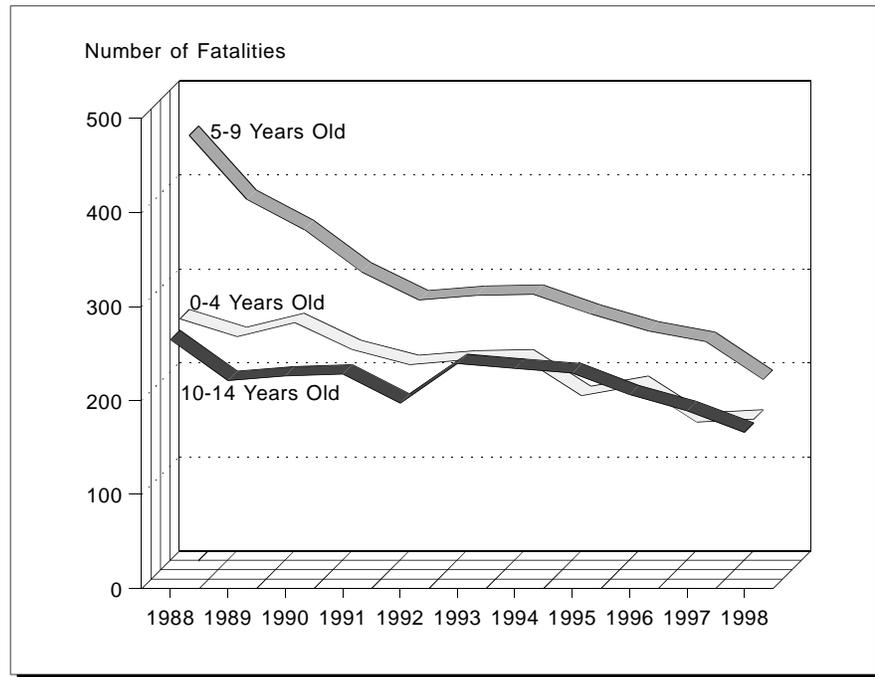
Another 95 children under 15 years old who were killed in traffic crashes in 1998 were pedestrians or pedalcyclists who were struck by drinking drivers (BAC ≥0.01 g/dl).

Pedestrians

In 1988, there were 1,004 pedestrian fatalities in the 0-14 year age group. From 1988 to 1998, the number of pedestrian fatalities in this age group decreased by 46 percent, with the 5-9 year age group showing the largest decrease.

“In 1998, 20 percent of the children under 15 years old killed in crashes were killed in alcohol-related crashes.”

Figure 2. Total Pedestrian Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1988-1998



There were 5,220 pedestrian fatalities in 1998. The 0-14 age group accounted for 538 (10 percent) of those fatalities, and 62 percent of the pedestrian fatalities in this age group were males.

In addition to the pedestrians under 15 years old who died, 20,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. These young pedestrians accounted for 29 percent of the total pedestrians injured in motor vehicle crashes in 1998.

More than one-fifth (21 percent) of the traffic fatalities in the 0-14 year age group were pedestrians.

During 1998, 45 percent of the young pedestrian fatalities occurred between the hours of 4 pm and 8 pm, and 82 percent occurred at non-intersection locations.

Pedalcyclists

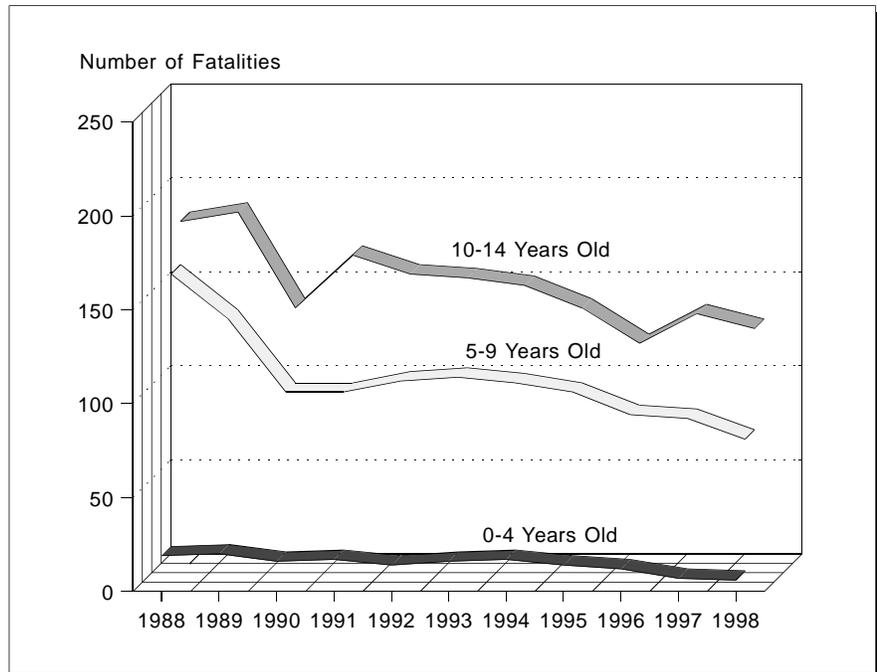
A total of 761 pedalcyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 1998. Children 0-14 years old accounted for 212 (28 percent) of those fatalities.

In 1998, 38 percent of the pedalcyclists injured in motor vehicle crashes were under 15 years old.

The 212 pedalcyclist fatalities in 1998 for the 0-14 year age group represent a decrease of 43 percent from the 370 killed in 1988.

“In 1998, 38 percent of the pedalcyclists injured in motor vehicle crashes were under 15 years old.”

Figure 3. Total Pedalcyclist Fatalities Among Children 0-14 Years Old by Age Group, 1988-1998



Bicycle helmets are 85 to 88 percent effective in mitigating head and brain injuries in all types of bicycle incidents, 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 1998, 9,095 motor vehicle occupants under 15 years old were involved in fatal crashes. For those children, where restraint use was known, 43 percent were unrestrained; among those who were fatally injured, 61 percent were unrestrained.

Table 1. Restraint Use by Motor Vehicle Occupants Involved in Fatal Crashes by Age Group, 1998

	Age Group (Years)					Total
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-20	All Other	
Percentage Unrestrained	31	43	54	56	41	44

“Child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and by 54 percent for toddlers in passenger cars.”

Research on the effectiveness of child safety seats has found them to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (less than 1 year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars. For infants and toddlers in light trucks, the corresponding reductions are 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively.

In 1998, there were 575 occupant fatalities among children under 5 years of age. Of those 575 fatalities, an estimated 293 (51 percent) were totally unrestrained.

Table 2. Children Under 5 Years Old Fatally Injured in Motor Vehicle Crashes by Age Group and Type of Restraint, 1998

Type of Restraint	Infants (Under Age 1)	Toddlers (Age 1-4)	Total
None Used	75	219	293
Child Seat	61	123	184
Adult Seat Belt	4	93	97
Total	140	435	575

Note: In this table, fatalities with unknown restraint use have been distributed proportionally across the known restraint use categories.

From 1975 through 1998, an estimated 4,193 lives were saved by the use of child restraints (child safety seats or adult belts). In 1998, an estimated 299 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 472 lives (that is, an additional 173) could have been saved in 1998.

In 1998, 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	91.7	Rush Hour	74.9
Infants (<1 Year)	97.2	Non-Rush Hour	95.1
Toddlers (1 to 4 Years)	91.0	Weekday	92.1
Passenger Cars	89.7	Weekend	89.1
Light Trucks	95.2	City	94.0
Front Seat	79.0	Suburban	85.3
Back Seat	97.1	Rural	93.6

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

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 vehicles 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. NHTSA also recommends that children 12 and under sit in the rear seat away from the force of a deploying air bag.

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. 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.