

# Traffic Safety Facts 1996

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



## Older Population



There are approximately 24 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 1996, this age group made up 9 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8 percent in 1986. From 1986 to 1996, this older segment of the population grew 2.2 times as fast as the total population.

There were 16.5 million older licensed drivers in 1995 (1996 data not available) — a 47 percent increase from the number in 1985. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 13 percent from 1985 to 1995. Older drivers made up 9 percent of all licensed drivers in 1995, compared with 7 percent in 1985.

In 1996, 178,000 older individuals were injured in traffic crashes, accounting for 5 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. These older individuals made up 13 percent of all traffic fatalities, 13 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 1996 occurred during the daytime (82 percent), on weekdays (72 percent), and involved another vehicle (75 percent).

In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was more than 3 times as likely to be the one that was struck (58 percent and 18 percent, respectively). In 45 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 28 percent, the older driver was turning left — 9 times as often as the younger driver.

Older drivers involved in fatal crashes had the lowest proportion of intoxication — with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.10 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater — of all adult drivers. Fatally injured older pedestrians also had the lowest intoxication rate of all adult pedestrian fatalities.

**“In 1996, older people made up 9 percent of the resident population but accounted for 13 percent of all traffic fatalities and 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”**

**Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 1996**

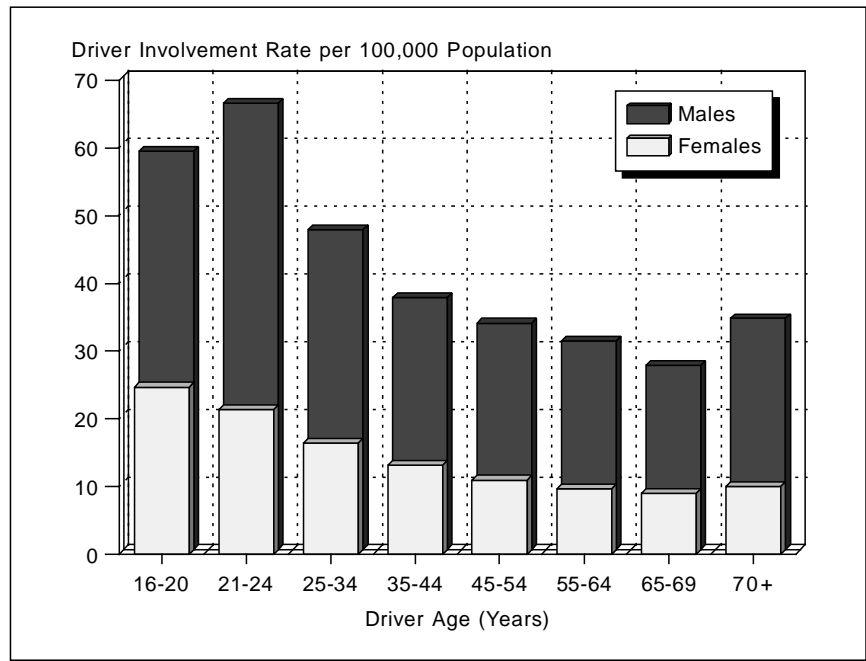
Age Group (years)	Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes			Pedestrian Fatalities		
	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated
<16	414	15	3.7	715	27	3.8
16-20	7,804	1,100	14.1	289	100	34.5
21-34	19,022	5,037	26.5	1,043	546	52.4
35-54	18,015	3,482	19.3	1,604	738	46.0
55-69	5,926	593	10.0	755	206	27.3
70+	4,654	195	4.2	940	78	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>* 56,793</b>	<b>10,651</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>** 5,412</b>	<b>1,726</b>	<b>31.9</b>

\* Includes 958 drivers of unknown age.

\*\* Includes 66 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.



Figure 1. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 1996

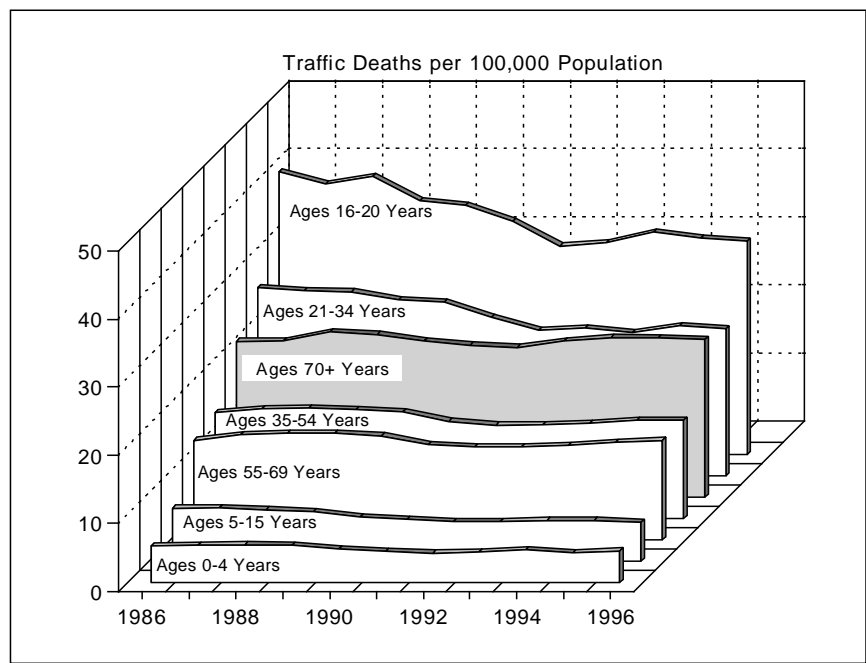


**“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1996 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”**

More than two-thirds (69 percent) of all older occupants of passenger cars involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 55 percent for other adult occupants.

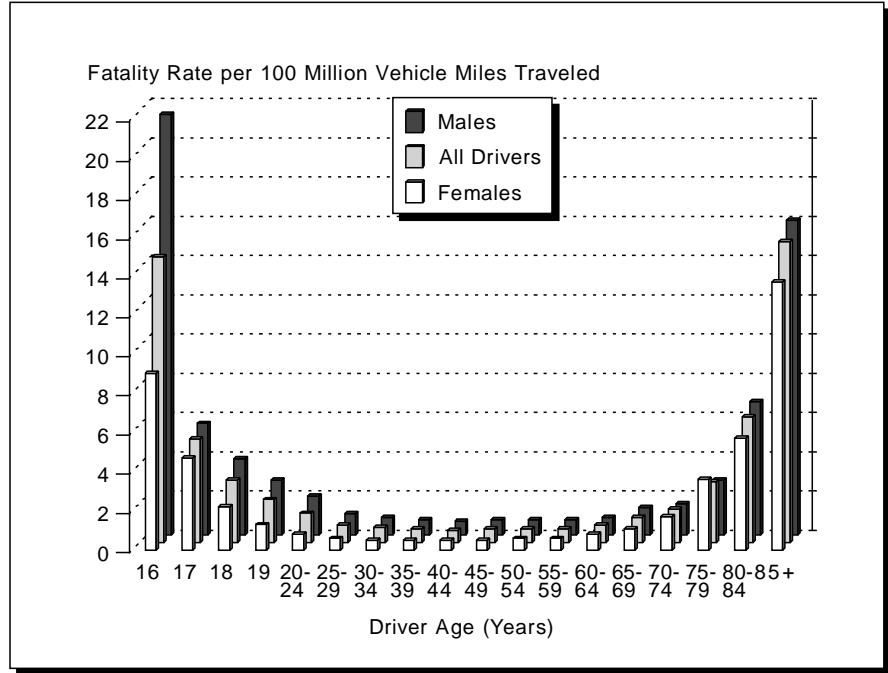
For older people, 63 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 1996 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 80 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations.

Figure 2. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1986-1996



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 to 65 years old, the rate for drivers in the oldest group is 17 times as high.

Figure 3. Driver Fatality Rates by Age and Sex, 1994



***“On the basis of estimated annual travel, the fatality rate for drivers over 65 is 17 times as high as the rate for drivers 25 to 65 years old.”***

**For more information:**

Information on the older population 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.

Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1986 and 1996

	1986			1996			Percentage Change, 1986-1996		
	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Number		Percentage Age 70+
							Total	Age 70+	
<i>Population (thousands)</i>									
Total	240,133	19,464	8.1	265,284	23,969	9.0	+10%	+23%	+11%
Male	116,865	7,358	6.3	129,810	9,374	7.2	+11%	+27%	+14%
Female	123,268	12,106	9.8	135,474	14,596	10.8	+10%	+21%	+10%
<i>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</i>									
Total	60,335	3,318	5.5	56,793	4,654	8.2	-6%	+40%	+49%
Male	46,653	2,377	5.1	41,223	3,196	7.8	-12%	+34%	+53%
Female	12,744	941	7.4	14,798	1,458	9.9	+16%	+55%	+34%
<i>Driver Fatalities</i>									
Total	26,630	2,128	8.0	24,456	3,097	12.7	-8%	+46%	+59%
Male	20,943	1,531	7.3	17,822	2,086	11.7	-15%	+36%	+60%
Female	5,683	597	10.5	6,632	1,011	15.2	+17%	+69%	+45%
<i>Total Traffic Fatalities</i>									
Total	46,087	4,445	9.6	41,907	5,546	13.2	-9%	+25%	+38%
Male	32,856	2,529	7.7	27,958	3,048	10.9	-15%	+21%	+42%
Female	13,191	1,915	14.5	13,936	2,497	17.9	+6%	+30%	+23%
<i>Occupant Fatalities</i>									
Total	38,234	3,247	8.5	35,579	4,559	12.8	-7%	+40%	+51%
Male	27,191	1,831	6.7	23,449	2,468	10.5	-14%	+35%	+57%
Female	11,007	1,415	12.9	12,119	2,090	17.2	+10%	+48%	+33%
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities</i>									
Total	6,779	1,157	17.1	5,412	940	17.4	-20%	-19%	+2%
Male	4,771	662	13.9	3,758	540	14.4	-21%	-18%	+4%
Female	2,004	495	24.7	1,652	400	24.2	-18%	-19%	-2%

Sources: Licensed drivers — Federal Highway Administration. Population — Bureau of the Census.