



- Search NHTSA
- Back Traffic Safety
- Browse Topics
- Aggressive Driving
- Bicycles
- Child Passenger Safety
- Click It or Ticket
- Disabled Drivers & Passengers
- Drowsy & Distracted Driving
- Emergency Medical Services
- Enforcement and Justice Services
- Impaired Driving
- Motorcycles
- New Drivers
- Occupant Protection
- Older Drivers
- Pedestrians
- Programs/Grants
- Research & Evaluation
- Safe Communities
- Safety Materials Catalog
- School Buses
- Traffic Tech Publications
- Quick Clicks
- Child Safety Seats
- Locate a Child Seat Fitting Station
- Child Seat "Ease of Use" Ratings
- File a Complaint About Your Vehicle or Child Seat
- Press Room
- Newsroom Studies and Reports
- Fuel Economy
- Speed-Related Information
- Recalls, Defects and Complaints Databases
- Teen Drivers
- About NHTSA
- Contact NHTSA

Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts, 1997



U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590

YOUTH FATAL CRASH AND ALCOHOL FACTS, 1997

Each year, as the nation's fatalities are tallied, all of us are saddened to learn how many of our young people aged 15 to 20 died in motor vehicle

More than one out of every 3 deaths for people ages 15 to 20 result from motor vehicle crashes. In 1997, over one-third of these motor vehicle fatalities involved alcohol. Seven out of every 10 of young motor vehicle occupant fatalities died without using a seat belt or motorcycle helmet.

crashes. With an increasing youth population and continued increases in teenage binge drinking (over 30 percent of high school seniors reported binge drinking), it is reassuring that youth alcohol-related fatalities decreased in 1997 continuing a decade-long decline.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) prepared *Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts, 1997* as a series of charts, graphs, and bulleted information to describe the fatality trends in America since 1982. The information comes from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, the Bureau of the Census' current population surveys, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse's alcohol consumption information.

TRENDS



Motor vehicle fatalities decreased by over 26 percent, and alcohol-related fatalities decreased by almost 59 percent during this same time period for youth.

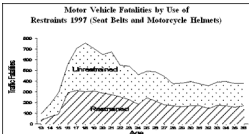
- The population of the United States, ages 15 through 20, has decreased from 24.3 million in 1982 to 22.8 million in 1997 -- a decrease of 6.2 percent.
- Since 1989, less than half of youth motor vehicle fatalities have been alcohol-related.
- Drinking and driving is no longer the leading cause of death for teenagers. Motor vehicle crashes remain so.

WHO

- The six years of age from 15 to 20 account for almost one-fourth of all passenger fatalities.
- Youth are still over-represented in fatal crashes -- both alcohol and non alcohol-related -- compared to the older population based on the total population, on the licensed driver population, and on miles driven.
- Three-quarters of the people who died in crashes where a young driver was drinking were young people themselves.
- Almost two-thirds of youth motor vehicle fatalities occurred in rural areas.

HOW

- In 1997, 6,258 youth died in crashes; 2,209 youth died in alcohol-related crashes -- 35.3 percent of their total fatality fatalities.



- There were fewer alcohol-related youth fatalities in 1997 for both low BAC (blood alcohol content between 0.01 and 0.09) and high BAC (over 0.10) crashes.
- More 18 and 19 year olds died in lower BAC alcohol-related crashes than any other ages.

WHEN

- Almost twice as many young people die in weekend crashes, per day, as on weekdays. Almost three times as many young people die in alcohol-related crashes, per day, on weekends than on weekdays.
- The greatest number of youth fatalities occur in May, June, July, and August.

DRIVERS

- The proportions of young fatally injured drivers and young drivers involved in fatal crashes who were intoxicated have decreased significantly since 1982. The reduction in the number of drivers who were intoxicated dropped by almost 65 percent in both categories.
- The number of young people who died in a crash where an intoxicated young driver was involved declined by over 62 percent since 1982.
- Per mile driven, 16 year old drivers have the highest rate of fatal crash involvement by a wide margin, followed by 17 year old drivers.

LAWS

- NHTSA estimates that minimum drinking age laws have saved 17,359 lives since 1975. In 1997 alone these laws saved 846 lives. All states and the District of Columbia now have 21 year old minimum drinking age laws.
- As of June, 1998, all states and the District of Columbia have set a BAC limit of .02 or lower for drivers under the age of 21 (Zero Tolerance Laws).
- In 1998, 8 states enacted comprehensive graduated driver licensing legislation that requires young novice drivers to pass through 3 phases of licensing. Some of the features of these systems are: night time driving restrictions, certified hours of parental instruction, zero tolerance for alcohol and drugs, passenger restrictions and crash and conviction fee requirements to "graduate" to the next licensing phase. Seventeen states currently have three stage driver licensing systems.

HOW TO ORDER

To order a copy of *Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts, 1997*, write to Media and Marketing Division, NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, or send a fax to (202) 493-2062. James Wright was the contract manager for this project, email: [jwright@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:jwright@nhtsa.dot.gov)

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people>

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