

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Motor Vehicle Crashes, Injuries, and Deaths in Relation to Driver Age United States, 1995 - 2010

The Situation

The number of people killed annually in motor vehicle crashes in the United States remained consistently around 42,500 during the period of 1995 through 2007, reaching a low of 41,259 in 2007 and a high of 43,510 in 2005. In 2008, however, the number of people killed in crashes in the United States fell to its lowest level since 1961, to 37,261 (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], 2011). The annual number of fatalities continued to decline in subsequent years, to 33,883 in 2009, 32,885 in 2010, and an estimated 32,310 in 2011 (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA], 2012a).

The Study

A new study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, *Motor Vehicle Crashes, Injuries, and Deaths in Relation to Driver Age: United States, 1995-2010*, examined changes over time in the numbers and rates of driver involvements in police-reported crashes, injuries and deaths, as well as the relationship between driver age and the risks that drivers pose to themselves and to other people.

Key Findings

In general, drivers of all ages experienced decreases in all three crash rates – crashes per population, crashes per driver, and crashes per mile driven – over the study period.

- The overall number of drivers involved in police-reported crashes decreased by 21 percent;
- Population-based and driver-based crash involvement rates both decreased by 33 percent;
- Decreases in population-based and driver-based crash rates were the largest for teenage drivers;
- Crash involvements per 100 million miles driven decreased 28 percent;
- Reductions in mileage-based driver injury and death rates were largest for drivers aged 75 to 84;
- Population-based crash involvement rates were the highest for drivers ages 18 to 19 and decreased with increasing age;
- Driver-based crash rates were highest for drivers ages 16 to 17 and decreased until ages 60 to 69, at which point they leveled off.



Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.

Specifically:

- Mileage-based crash rates
 - Were highest for the youngest drivers, ages 16 to 17, and decreased with increasing age until ages 60 to 69;
 - Drivers in their 70's were involved in approximately the same number of crashes per mile driven as drivers in their 30's;
 - Drivers ages 80 to 84 have mileage-based crash rates similar to drivers ages 25 to 59;
 - Drivers ages 85 and older have mileage-based crash rates similar to those of drivers ages 20 to 24.
- Per-driver and per-mile crash rates decreased for drivers of all ages
 - Largest decreases in per-driver crash rates were experienced by the youngest drivers, decreasing by 46 percent for drivers ages 16 to 17, and by 43 percent for drivers ages 18 to 19;
 - Per-mile crash rates decreased by 42 percent for drivers 75 to 79, and by 40 percent for drivers ages 80 to 84.
- Additionally, total injuries in crashes decreased by 36 percent over the study period, the population- and driver-based injury rates both decreased by 46 percent, and the total rate of injuries per 100 million miles driven decreased by 42 percent.
- The total number of deaths in crashes decreased by 19 percent, the population- and driver-based rates decreased by 31 percent, and the total rate of deaths in crashes per 100 million miles driven decreased by 26 percent over the study period.

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.aaafoundation.org for more information on how you can support road safety.