



Traffic Safety Facts 1998

Older Population



There are nearly 25 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 1998, this age group made up 9 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8 percent in 1988. From 1988 to 1998, this older segment of the population grew 2.1 times as fast as the total population.

There were 17.7 million older licensed drivers in 1997 (1998 data not available) — a 45 percent increase from the number in 1987. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 13 percent from 1987 to 1997. Older drivers made up 10 percent of all licensed drivers in 1997, compared with 8 percent in 1987.

In 1998, 161,000 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 14 percent of all traffic fatalities, 13 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 1998 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 (59 percent and 17 percent, respectively). In 42 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 28 percent, the older driver was turning left — 8 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 1998, older people made up 9 percent of the resident population but accounted for 14 percent of all traffic fatalities and 18 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”

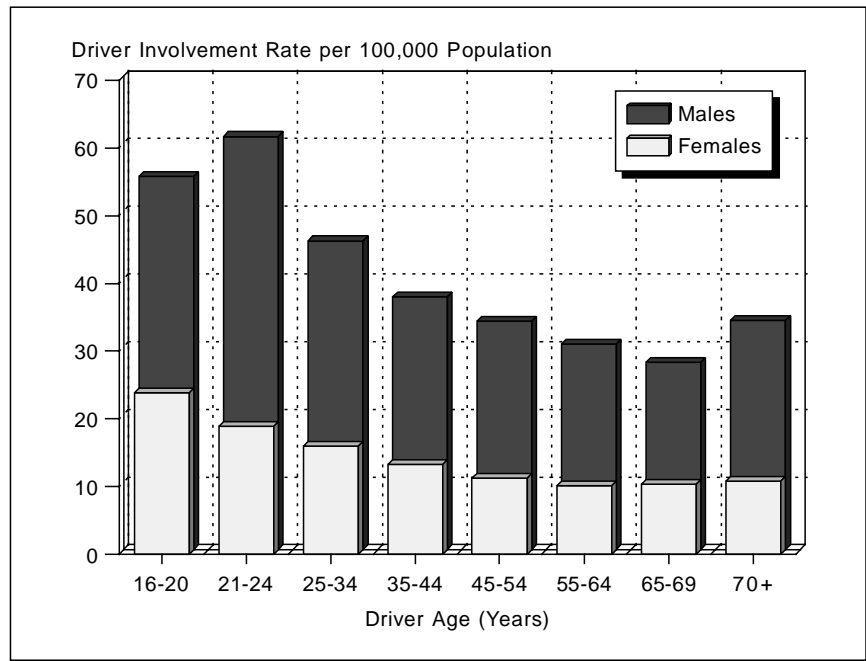
Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 1998

Age Group (years)	Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes			Pedestrian Fatalities		
	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated	Total	Intoxicated	Percentage Intoxicated
<16	361	16	5	580	26	4
16-20	7,755	1,077	14	301	102	34
21-34	17,494	4,388	25	933	432	46
35-54	18,900	3,521	19	1,662	744	45
55-69	6,217	543	9	731	178	24
70+	4,934	189	4	958	82	9
Total	*56,543	9,942	18	**5,220	1,585	30

* Includes 882 drivers of unknown age.

** Includes 55 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.

Figure 1. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 1998

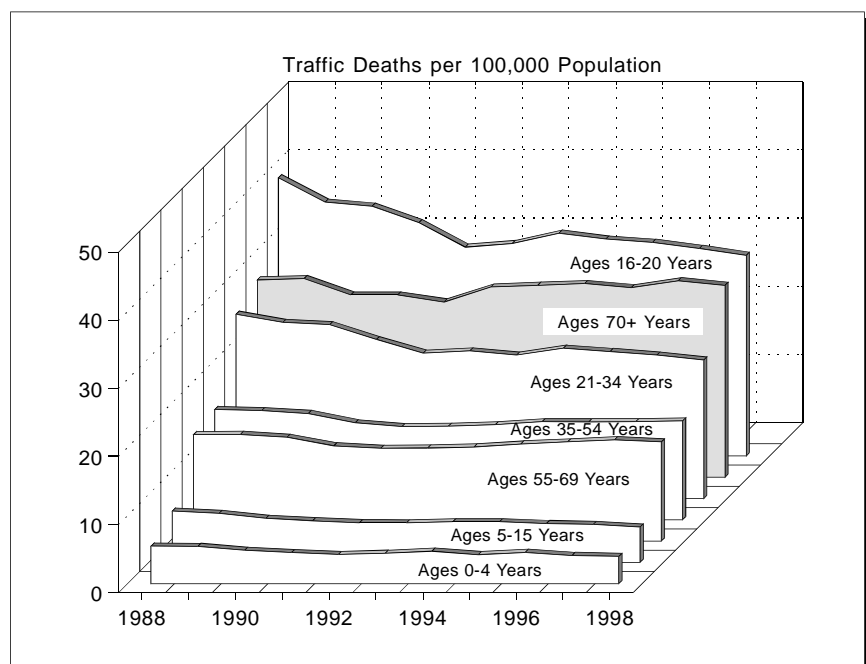


“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1998 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”

More than two-thirds (71 percent) of all older occupants of passenger cars involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 57 percent for other adult occupants (18 to 69 years old).

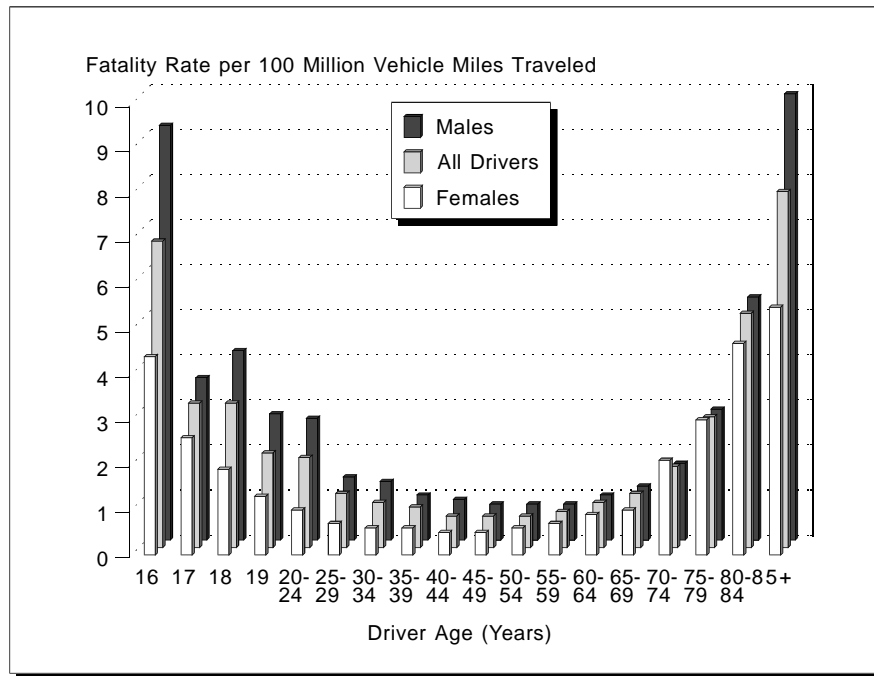
For older people, 65 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 1998 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 81 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations.

Figure 2. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1988-1998



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 through 69 years old, the rate for drivers in the oldest group is 9 times as high.

Figure 3. Driver Fatality Rates by Age and Sex, 1996



“On the basis of estimated annual travel, the fatality rate for drivers 85 and over is 9 times as high as the rate for drivers 25 through 69 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. 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.

Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1988 and 1998

	1988			1998			Percentage Change, 1988-1998		
	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Total	Age 70+	Percentage of Total	Number		Percentage Age 70+
							Total	Age 70+	
<i>Population (thousands)</i>									
Total	244,499	20,302	8.3	270,299	24,808	9.2	+11%	+22%	+11%
Male	119,086	7,692	6.5	132,046	9,806	7.4	+11%	+27%	+14%
Female	125,413	12,611	10.1	138,252	15,002	10.9	+10%	+19%	+8%
<i>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</i>									
Total	62,253	3,716	6.0	56,543	4,934	8.7	-9%	+33%	+45%
Male	47,402	2,625	5.5	40,746	3,316	8.1	-14%	+26%	+47%
Female	13,951	1,091	7.8	15,061	1,617	10.7	+8%	+48%	+37%
<i>Driver Fatalities</i>									
Total	27,253	2,334	8.6	24,729	3,266	13.2	-9%	+40%	+53%
Male	21,013	1,649	7.8	17,980	2,156	12.0	-14%	+31%	+54%
Female	6,240	685	11.0	6,745	1,110	16.5	+8%	+62%	+50%
<i>Total Traffic Fatalities</i>									
Total	47,087	4,925	10.5	41,471	5,778	13.9	-12%	+17%	+32%
Male	32,947	2,783	8.4	27,584	3,136	11.4	-16%	+13%	+36%
Female	14,123	2,141	15.2	13,873	2,642	19.0	-2%	+23%	+25%
<i>Occupant Fatalities</i>									
Total	39,170	3,608	9.2	35,359	4,766	13.5	-10%	+32%	+47%
Male	27,310	2,031	7.4	23,282	2,550	11.0	-15%	+26%	+49%
Female	11,846	1,576	13.3	12,065	2,216	18.4	+2%	+41%	+38%
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities</i>									
Total	6,870	1,271	18.5	5,220	958	18.4	-24%	-25%	-1%
Male	4,756	711	14.9	3,553	543	15.3	-25%	-24%	+3%
Female	2,111	560	26.5	1,665	415	24.9	-21%	-26%	-6%

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