

## Alcohol-Impaired Driving

*“In 2008, there were 11,773 fatalities in crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher—32 percent of total traffic fatalities for the year.”*

### Fatal Crashes and Fatalities Involving Alcohol-Impaired Drivers

Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatality occurring in a crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired-driving fatality. The term “driver” refers to the operator of any motor vehicle, including a motorcycle.

In 2008, 11,773 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes decreased nearly 10 percent from 13,041 in 2007 to 11,773 in 2008. The alcohol-impaired-driving fatality rate per 100 million VMT decreased to 0.40 in 2008 from 0.43 in 2007.

Estimates of alcohol-impaired driving are generated using BAC values reported to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and imputed BAC values when they are not reported. The term “alcohol-impaired” does not indicate that a crash or a fatality was caused by alcohol impairment.

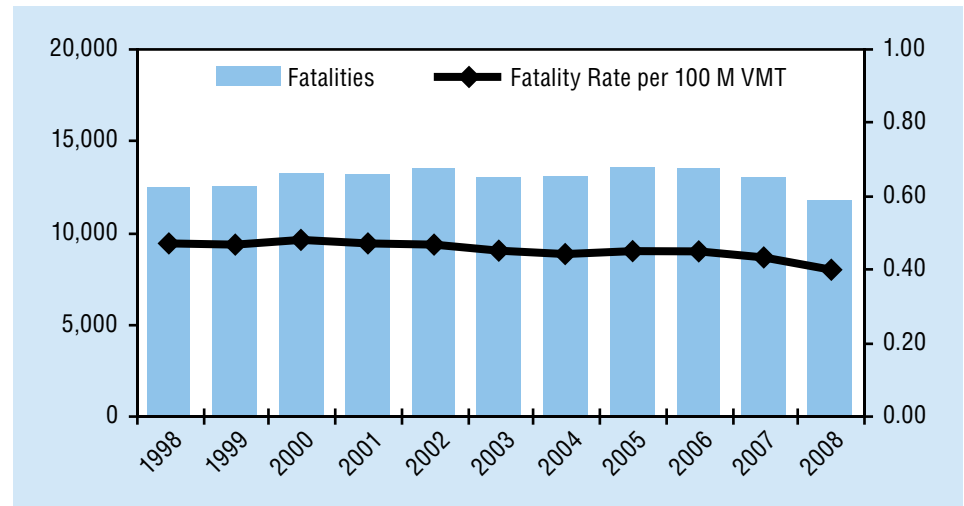
The 11,773 fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes during 2008 represent an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality every 45 minutes.

In 2008, all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had by law created a threshold making it illegal per se to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher. Of the 11,773 people who died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes in 2008, 8,027 (68%) were drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher. The remaining fatalities consisted of 3,054 (26%) motor vehicle occupants and 692 (6%) nonoccupants.

Table 1  
**Fatalities, by Role, in Crashes Involving at Least One Driver With a BAC of .08 Or Higher, 2008**

| Role                                    | Number        | Percent of Total |
|---|---------------|------------------|
| Driver With BAC=.08+                    | 8,027         | 68%              |
| Passenger Riding w/Driver With BAC=.08+ | 1,875         | 16%              |
| Subtotal                                | 9,902         | 84%              |
| Occupants of Other Vehicles             | 1,179         | 10%              |
| Nonoccupants                            | 692           | 6%               |
| <b>Total Fatalities</b>                 | <b>11,773</b> | <b>100%</b>      |

Figure 1  
**Fatalities and Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT in Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Crashes, 1998–2008**



The national rate of alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in 2008 was 0.40 per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

*“In 2008, 16 percent of child (age 14 and younger) traffic fatalities occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.”*

### Children

In 2008, a total of 1,347 children age 14 and younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those 1,347 fatalities, 216 (16%) occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Out of those 216 deaths, 99 (46%) were occupants of a vehicle with a driver who had a BAC level of .08 or higher.

Another 34 children age 14 and younger who were killed in traffic crashes in 2008 were pedestrians or pedalcyclists who were struck by drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher.

### For more information:

Information on traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NVS-424, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. NCSA can be contacted on 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 [www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/nca](http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/nca). To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Overview, African American, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists, Children, Hispanic, Large Trucks, Motorcycles, Occupant Protection, Older Population, Pedestrians, Race and Ethnicity, Rural/Urban Comparisons, School Transportation-Related Crashes, Speeding, State Alcohol Estimates, State Traffic Data, and Young Drivers*. Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System*. The fact sheets and annual Traffic Safety Facts report can be accessed online at [www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx).

## Time of Day and Day of Week

The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes was four times higher at night than during the day (36% versus 9%).

In 2008, 15 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-impaired, compared to 32 percent on weekends.

Table 2

### Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes With a BAC of .08 or Higher, by Crash Type, Time of Day and Day of Week, 1998 and 2008

| Total Drivers                          |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
|--|-------------------------|----------|------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------------|--|
| Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes      | 1998                    |          |                  | 2008                    |          |                  | Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 1998-2008 |
|  | Total Number of Drivers | BAC=.08+ |                  | Total Number of Drivers | BAC=.08+ |                  |  |
|  |                         | Number   | Percent of Total |                         | Number   | Percent of Total |  |
| Total                                  | 56,604                  | 11,561   | 20%              | 50,186                  | 10,946   | 22%              | +10%   |
| Drivers by Crash Type and Time of Day  |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
| Single-Vehicle Crash                   |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
| Total                                  | 20,805                  | 7,495    | 36%              | 20,472                  | 7,625    | 37%              | +3%  |
| Daytime*                               | 8,117                   | 1,310    | 16%              | 7,960                   | 1,461    | 18%              | +13%   |
| Nighttime**                            | 12,386                  | 6,008    | 49%              | 12,281                  | 6,039    | 49%              | 0%   |
| Multiple-Vehicle Crash                 |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
| Total                                  | 35,799                  | 4,066    | 11%              | 29,714                  | 3,321    | 11%              | 0%   |
| Daytime*                               | 23,272                  | 1,168    | 5%               | 18,302                  | 856      | 5%               | 0%   |
| Nighttime**                            | 12,493                  | 2,895    | 23%              | 11,360                  | 2,460    | 22%              | -4%  |
| Drivers by Time of Day                 |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
| Daytime*                               | 31,389                  | 2,478    | 8%               | 26,262                  | 2,317    | 9%               | +13%   |
| Nighttime**                            | 24,879                  | 8,903    | 36%              | 23,641                  | 8,499    | 36%              | 0%   |
| Drivers by Day of Week and Time of Day |                         |          |                  |                         |          |                  |  |
| Weekday***                             | 34,796                  | 4,930    | 14%              | 30,148                  | 4,559    | 15%              | +7%  |
| Daytime*                               | 23,253                  | 1,436    | 6%               | 19,135                  | 1,290    | 7%               | +17%   |
| Nighttime**                            | 11,425                  | 3,440    | 30%              | 10,908                  | 3,230    | 30%              | 0%   |
| Weekend****                            | 21,727                  | 6,590    | 30%              | 19,958                  | 6,355    | 32%              | +7%  |
| Daytime*                               | 8,135                   | 1,043    | 13%              | 7,127                   | 1,028    | 14%              | +8%  |
| Nighttime**                            | 13,453                  | 5,462    | 41%              | 12,733                  | 5,269    | 41%              | 0%   |

\*6 a.m. to 6 p.m. \*\*6 p.m. to 6 a.m. \*\*\*Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 6 p.m.

\*\*\*\*Friday 6 p.m. to Monday 6 a.m.

*“The rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes was four times higher at night than during the day.”*

Table 3

### Drivers in Fatal Crashes With a BAC of .08 or Higher, by Age, Gender, and Vehicle Type, 1998 and 2008

| Drivers Involved In Fatal Crashes   | Total Drivers           |                  |        |                         |          |     | Change in Percentage With BAC=.08+ 1998-2008 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------|-------------------------|----------|-----|--|
|                                     | 1998                    |                  |        | 2008                    |          |     |  |
|                                     | Total Number of Drivers | BAC=.08+         |        | Total Number of Drivers | BAC=.08+ |     |  |
|                                     | Number                  | Percent of Total | Number | Percent of Total        |          |     |  |
| Total                               | 56,604                  | 11,561           | 20%    | 50,186                  | 10,946   | 22% | +10%   |
| <b>Drivers by Age Group (Years)</b> |                         |                  |        |                         |          |     |  |
| 16-20                               | 7,767                   | 1,295            | 17%    | 5,729                   | 996      | 17% | 0%   |
| 21-24                               | 5,613                   | 1,776            | 32%    | 5,312                   | 1,829    | 34% | +6%  |
| 25-34                               | 11,925                  | 3,285            | 28%    | 9,745                   | 2,997    | 31% | +11%   |
| 35-44                               | 11,241                  | 2,717            | 24%    | 8,762                   | 2,221    | 25% | +4%  |
| 45-54                               | 7,690                   | 1,355            | 18%    | 8,313                   | 1,724    | 21% | +17%   |
| 55-64                               | 4,478                   | 494              | 11%    | 5,695                   | 708      | 12% | +9%  |
| 65-74                               | 3,399                   | 236              | 7%     | 2,913                   | 198      | 7%  | 0%   |
| 75+                                 | 3,291                   | 132              | 4%     | 2,656                   | 106      | 4%  | 0%   |
| <b>Drivers by Gender</b>            |                         |                  |        |                         |          |     |  |
| Male                                | 40,816                  | 9,548            | 23%    | 36,881                  | 9,175    | 25% | +2%  |
| Female                              | 15,089                  | 1,822            | 12%    | 12,568                  | 1,650    | 13% | +1%  |
| <b>Drivers by Vehicle Type</b>      |                         |                  |        |                         |          |     |  |
| Passenger Cars                      | 28,907                  | 6,155            | 21%    | 20,284                  | 4,692    | 23% | +2%  |
| Light Trucks                        | 19,247                  | 4,271            | 22%    | 18,989                  | 4,307    | 23% | +1%  |
| Large Trucks                        | 4,905                   | 72               | 1%     | 4,017                   | 68       | 2%  | +1%  |
| Motorcycles                         | 2,333                   | 803              | 34%    | 5,383                   | 1,564    | 29% | -5%  |

Numbers shown for groups of drivers do not add to the total number of drivers due to unknown or other data not included.

#### Drivers

In fatal crashes in 2008 the highest percentage of drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (34%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (31%) and 35 to 44 (25%).

The percentages of drivers involved in fatal crashes with a BAC level of .08 or higher in 2008 were 29 percent for motorcycle riders and 23 percent for both passenger cars and light trucks. The percentage of drivers with BAC levels of .08 or higher in fatal crashes was the lowest for large trucks (2%).

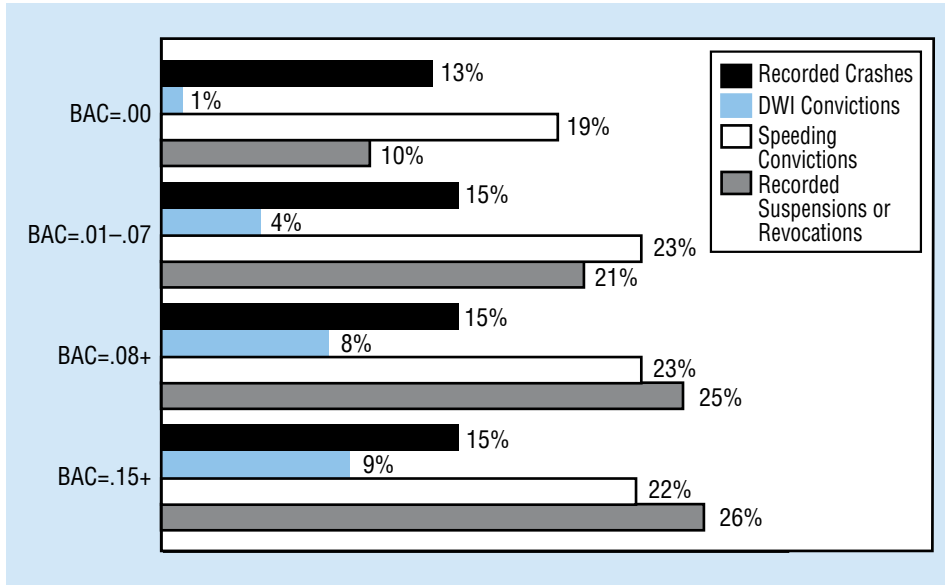
In 2008, 6,316 passenger vehicle drivers killed had a BAC of .08 or higher. Out of those 6,316 driver fatalities, for which restraint use was known, 73 percent were unrestrained.

Drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher involved in fatal crashes were eight times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired (DWI) than were drivers with no alcohol (8% and 1%, respectively).

*“The highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes who had BAC levels of .08 or higher was for drivers ages 21 to 24.”*

*“The percentage of drivers with BAC of .08 or above in fatal crashes was highest for motorcycle riders.”*

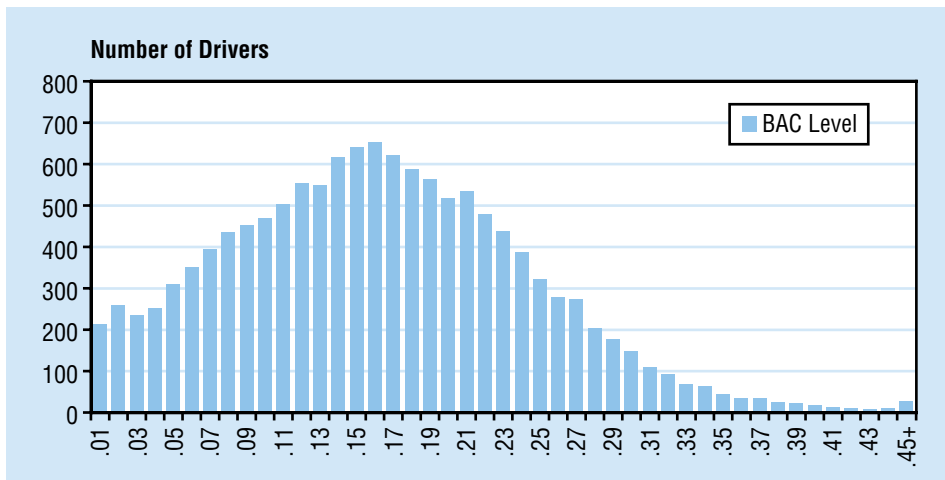
Figure 2  
**Previous Driving Records of Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, by BAC, 2008**



*“Drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher in fatal crashes were eight times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while impaired than were drivers with no alcohol.”*

In 2008, 84 percent (10,946) of the 13,029 drivers with a BAC of .01 or higher who were involved in fatal crashes had BAC levels at or above .08, and 57 percent (7,378) had BAC levels at or above .15. The most frequently recorded BAC level among drinking drivers in fatal crashes was .16.

Figure 3  
**Distribution of BAC Levels for Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes With a BAC of .01 or Higher, 2008**



*“In 2008, 7,378 (57%) of the drivers involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking had a BAC of .15 or greater.”*

Table 4

**Traffic Fatalities by State and the Highest Driver or Motorcycle Rider BAC in the Crash, 2008**

| State              | *Total Fatalities | BAC=.00       |            | BAC=.01-.07  |           | BAC=.08+      |            | BAC=.15+     |            | BAC=.01+      |            |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                    | Number            | Number        | Percent    | Number       | Percent   | Number        | Percent    | Number       | Percent    | Number        | Percent    |
| Alabama            | 966               | 596           | 62%        | 53           | 5%        | 315           | 33%        | 213          | 22%        | 367           | 38%        |
| Alaska             | 62                | 39            | 62%        | 3            | 5%        | 21            | 33%        | 11           | 17%        | 24            | 38%        |
| Arizona            | 937               | 594           | 63%        | 63           | 7%        | 266           | 28%        | 183          | 20%        | 329           | 35%        |
| Arkansas           | 600               | 392           | 65%        | 34           | 6%        | 171           | 28%        | 111          | 18%        | 205           | 34%        |
| California         | 3,434             | 2,227         | 65%        | 170          | 5%        | 1,029         | 30%        | 683          | 20%        | 1,198         | 35%        |
| Colorado           | 548               | 346           | 63%        | 29           | 5%        | 173           | 32%        | 110          | 20%        | 202           | 37%        |
| Connecticut        | 264               | 156           | 59%        | 19           | 7%        | 86            | 32%        | 62           | 23%        | 104           | 40%        |
| Delaware           | 121               | 72            | 60%        | 3            | 3%        | 45            | 37%        | 39           | 32%        | 49            | 40%        |
| Dist of Columbia   | 34                | 21            | 61%        | 4            | 13%       | 9             | 26%        | 5            | 13%        | 13            | 39%        |
| Florida            | 2,978             | 1,930         | 65%        | 165          | 6%        | 875           | 29%        | 581          | 20%        | 1,041         | 35%        |
| Georgia            | 1,493             | 997           | 67%        | 73           | 5%        | 416           | 28%        | 277          | 19%        | 489           | 33%        |
| Hawaii             | 107               | 56            | 53%        | 8            | 7%        | 42            | 39%        | 29           | 27%        | 50            | 46%        |
| Idaho              | 232               | 138           | 60%        | 14           | 6%        | 78            | 34%        | 56           | 24%        | 93            | 40%        |
| Illinois           | 1,043             | 608           | 58%        | 72           | 7%        | 362           | 35%        | 252          | 24%        | 434           | 42%        |
| Indiana            | 814               | 564           | 69%        | 42           | 5%        | 208           | 26%        | 138          | 17%        | 250           | 31%        |
| Iowa               | 412               | 299           | 73%        | 24           | 6%        | 89            | 22%        | 51           | 12%        | 113           | 27%        |
| Kansas             | 385               | 225           | 59%        | 12           | 3%        | 145           | 38%        | 99           | 26%        | 157           | 41%        |
| Kentucky           | 826               | 599           | 73%        | 26           | 3%        | 200           | 24%        | 146          | 18%        | 226           | 27%        |
| Louisiana          | 912               | 508           | 56%        | 66           | 7%        | 338           | 37%        | 219          | 24%        | 404           | 44%        |
| Maine              | 155               | 108           | 70%        | 4            | 3%        | 43            | 28%        | 30           | 19%        | 47            | 30%        |
| Maryland           | 591               | 405           | 69%        | 34           | 6%        | 152           | 26%        | 97           | 16%        | 186           | 31%        |
| Massachusetts      | 363               | 210           | 58%        | 27           | 8%        | 124           | 34%        | 81           | 22%        | 151           | 42%        |
| Michigan           | 980               | 647           | 66%        | 49           | 5%        | 282           | 29%        | 190          | 19%        | 331           | 34%        |
| Minnesota          | 456               | 294           | 64%        | 26           | 6%        | 135           | 30%        | 94           | 21%        | 161           | 35%        |
| Mississippi        | 783               | 486           | 62%        | 32           | 4%        | 266           | 34%        | 175          | 22%        | 297           | 38%        |
| Missouri           | 960               | 595           | 62%        | 53           | 6%        | 310           | 32%        | 213          | 22%        | 364           | 38%        |
| Montana            | 229               | 124           | 54%        | 12           | 5%        | 91            | 40%        | 64           | 28%        | 103           | 45%        |
| Nebraska           | 208               | 132           | 63%        | 20           | 10%       | 55            | 27%        | 39           | 19%        | 75            | 36%        |
| Nevada             | 324               | 203           | 63%        | 14           | 4%        | 107           | 33%        | 79           | 24%        | 121           | 37%        |
| New Hampshire      | 139               | 87            | 62%        | 8            | 6%        | 45            | 32%        | 33           | 24%        | 53            | 38%        |
| New Jersey         | 590               | 392           | 66%        | 43           | 7%        | 154           | 26%        | 106          | 18%        | 197           | 33%        |
| New Mexico         | 366               | 248           | 68%        | 13           | 4%        | 105           | 29%        | 80           | 22%        | 118           | 32%        |
| New York           | 1,231             | 821           | 67%        | 68           | 5%        | 341           | 28%        | 202          | 16%        | 409           | 33%        |
| North Carolina     | 1,433             | 932           | 65%        | 77           | 5%        | 423           | 30%        | 297          | 21%        | 500           | 35%        |
| North Dakota       | 104               | 52            | 50%        | 5            | 4%        | 47            | 46%        | 37           | 35%        | 52            | 50%        |
| Ohio               | 1,190             | 774           | 65%        | 60           | 5%        | 356           | 30%        | 243          | 20%        | 415           | 35%        |
| Oklahoma           | 749               | 475           | 63%        | 29           | 4%        | 244           | 33%        | 169          | 23%        | 274           | 37%        |
| Oregon             | 416               | 256           | 61%        | 23           | 6%        | 136           | 33%        | 88           | 21%        | 159           | 38%        |
| Pennsylvania       | 1,468             | 886           | 60%        | 81           | 6%        | 496           | 34%        | 361          | 25%        | 578           | 39%        |
| Rhode Island       | 65                | 36            | 55%        | 5            | 7%        | 25            | 38%        | 18           | 28%        | 29            | 45%        |
| South Carolina     | 920               | 454           | 49%        | 60           | 6%        | 403           | 44%        | 286          | 31%        | 463           | 50%        |
| South Dakota       | 119               | 74            | 62%        | 7            | 6%        | 34            | 29%        | 26           | 22%        | 41            | 34%        |
| Tennessee          | 1,035             | 648           | 63%        | 59           | 6%        | 327           | 32%        | 217          | 21%        | 386           | 37%        |
| Texas              | 3,382             | 1,909         | 56%        | 195          | 6%        | 1,269         | 38%        | 882          | 26%        | 1,463         | 43%        |
| Utah               | 275               | 220           | 80%        | 9            | 3%        | 46            | 17%        | 21           | 8%         | 55            | 20%        |
| Vermont            | 73                | 58            | 79%        | 3            | 5%        | 12            | 16%        | 8            | 11%        | 15            | 21%        |
| Virginia           | 824               | 457           | 55%        | 71           | 9%        | 294           | 36%        | 207          | 25%        | 365           | 44%        |
| Washington         | 521               | 295           | 57%        | 43           | 8%        | 182           | 35%        | 143          | 27%        | 225           | 43%        |
| West Virginia      | 380               | 236           | 62%        | 15           | 4%        | 128           | 34%        | 92           | 24%        | 142           | 37%        |
| Wisconsin          | 605               | 355           | 59%        | 42           | 7%        | 208           | 34%        | 159          | 26%        | 250           | 41%        |
| Wyoming            | 159               | 84            | 53%        | 8            | 5%        | 67            | 42%        | 50           | 31%        | 75            | 47%        |
| <b>National</b>    | <b>37,261</b>     | <b>23,317</b> | <b>63%</b> | <b>2,072</b> | <b>6%</b> | <b>11,773</b> | <b>32%</b> | <b>8,048</b> | <b>22%</b> | <b>13,846</b> | <b>37%</b> |
| <b>Puerto Rico</b> | <b>399</b>        | <b>236</b>    | <b>59%</b> | <b>30</b>    | <b>7%</b> | <b>132</b>    | <b>33%</b> | <b>83</b>    | <b>21%</b> | <b>162</b>    | <b>41%</b> |

\* Total includes fatalities in crashes in which there was no driver or motorcycle rider present.