Car Accident Statistics From NHTSA Data

National crash data shows how many people are killed on American roads each year and which driver behaviors are involved. Every figure below comes from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and each is labeled with its year. An auto accident lawyer might use numbers like these for context, but statistics describe patterns across many crashes rather than what happened in any one of them.

How many people die in crashes

NHTSA reported that 39,254 people died in traffic crashes in 2024, for a rate of 1.19 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Its early estimate for 2025 was 36,640 deaths, a 6.7 percent decrease from 2024, and a rate of 1.10 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Early estimates are revised once the year's data is final, so the 2025 number may move.

Speeding and drunk driving

NHTSA reports that 11,288 people died in speeding-related crashes in 2024, and speeding was a contributing factor in 29 percent of all traffic fatalities that year. The agency also reports that 11,904 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2024, which the agency describes as one person every 44 minutes. Roughly 30 percent of all traffic fatalities involve drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher. Lower **Find more information** levels can matter too. In 2024, 2,028 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes in which a driver had a BAC of .01 to .07. Every state except Utah, which uses .05, sets the limit at a BAC of .08.

Distracted and drowsy driving

NHTSA states that 3,208 people were killed in crashes involving distracted drivers in 2024. It notes that sending or reading a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for 5 seconds, about the length of a football field at 55 mph. Drowsy driving is harder to measure. NHTSA estimates that in 2017, 91,000 police-reported crashes involved drowsy drivers, leading to about 50,000 injuries and nearly 800 deaths, and the agency says that figure is widely considered an underestimate.

Seat belts

NHTSA states that 22,713 passenger vehicle occupants were killed in 2024, and nearly half of them, 48 percent, were unrestrained, based on known seat belt use. Seat belt use nationally stood at 91.3 percent in 2025. By NHTSA's estimate, seat belts saved 14,955 lives in 2017. Some states allow the seat belt defense to reduce damages, and others limit or bar it. A car crash attorney will know the rule where the crash happened.

What statistics cannot show

These categories overlap. One crash can fall into the speeding and alcohol categories at once, so the figures should not be added together. NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) is a census of fatal crashes, while the Crash Report Sampling System (CRSS) is a sample of police-reported crashes. NHTSA's

National Center for Statistics and Analysis publishes FARS data and the annual Traffic Safety Facts reports, while many states also publish their own crash data. These databases describe crashes but do not assign fault. A car accident attorney relies on each claim's own evidence, starting with the crash report and photos. This article is general information and not legal advice.