

Fatal Crashes Involving Young Drivers in Washington, 2004-2008

How Significant is the Problem?

On Washington roadways, there were 1,003 fatal crashes between 2004 and 2008 involving a driver age 16-25. These crashes resulted in a total of 1,142 deaths, which is an average of 228 deaths per year. This accounts for approximately 39% (1,142 of 2,942) of all traffic deaths during the five year period.

Who Dies in Crashes Involving Young Drivers?

Over 90% of young driver involved deaths were vehicle drivers and passengers. Pedestrians accounted for 6.2% of deaths involving a young driver.

Person Type	Deaths	Percentage
Driver	697	61.0%
Passenger	357	31.3%
Pedestrian	71	6.2%
Pedalcyclist	15	1.3%
Other Non-motorist	2	0.2%
Total	1,142	100.0%

Males, age 16-25 accounted for more than half of all deaths involving young drivers (597 of 1,142; 52.3%).

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
< 16	3.3%	1.7%	5.0%
16-20	23.9%	9.0%	32.9%
21-25	28.4%	5.4%	33.8%
26-30	3.3%	1.1%	4.4%
31-35	1.4%	0.7%	2.1%
36-40	1.3%	0.5%	1.8%
41-45	1.8%	0.9%	2.6%
46-50	2.5%	1.1%	3.6%
51-55	1.9%	1.2%	3.2%
56-60	1.8%	0.5%	2.4%
61-70	2.1%	1.1%	3.2%
71+	2.6%	2.0%	4.6%
Age unknown	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%
Total	74.7%	25.3%	100.0%

What are the Contributing Factors?

Road and Area Type

Over half of deaths involving a young driver were in rural areas (648 of 1,142; 56.7%). Combining rural and urban roadways, county roads accounted for 37.3% (426 of 1,142) of all young driver involved deaths.

Road Classification	Rural	Urban	Total
Interstates	4.7%	3.9%	8.6%
US/State Highways	22.2%	9.8%	32.0%
County Roads	27.0%	10.0%	37.3%
City Streets	1.0%	19.3%	20.2%
Other/Unknown	1.8%	0%	1.8%
Total by Area Type	56.7%	42.9%	100%

Location

The Top 5 counties represent half (581 of 1,142; 50.9%) of all deaths involving a young driver in Washington.

Top 5 Counties	Deaths	% of State Total
King	241	21.1%
Pierce	114	10.0%
Snohomish	91	8.0%
Yakima	80	7.0%
Spokane	55	4.8%

Time

The greatest number of deaths involving young drivers occurred between midnight and 2:59 AM followed by 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

Time of Day	Deaths	Percentage
6:00 AM to 8:59 AM	87	7.6%
9:00 AM to 11:59 AM	60	5.3%
Noon to 2:59 PM	96	8.4%
3:00 PM to 5:59 PM	209	18.3%
6:00 PM to 8:59 PM	163	14.3%
9:00 PM to 11:59 PM	176	15.4%
Midnight to 2:59 AM	234	20.5%
3:00 AM to 5:59 AM	114	10.0%
Time unknown	3	0.3%

What are the Contributing Factors?

Two out of five (463 of 1,142, 40.5%) deaths involving young drivers occurred on Saturday or Sunday. An additional 14.8% were on Friday.

Day of Week	Deaths	Percentage
Sunday	237	20.8%
Monday	136	11.9%
Tuesday	125	10.9%
Wednesday	122	10.7%
Thursday	127	11.1%
Friday	169	14.8%
Saturday	226	19.8%

Half (563 of 1,142; 49.3%) of all deaths involving young drivers occurred during the weekend, between 6:00 PM Friday and 5:59 AM Monday.

Over 20% of all deaths involving young drivers occurred in July or August. The fewest deaths occurred during the winter months, between November and February.

Month of Year	Deaths	Percentage
January	74	6.5%
February	75	6.6%
March	103	9.0%
April	91	8.0%
May	97	8.5%
June	95	8.3%
July	127	11.1%
August	121	10.6%
September	102	8.9%
October	102	8.9%
November	77	6.7%
December	78	6.8%

Crash Type

Two out of five (492 of 1,142; 43.3%) deaths involving a young driver were single vehicle crashes.

The Driver

There were 1,075 young drivers involved in fatal crashes between 2004 and 2008. Over three-quarters of these drivers were male.

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
< 21	34.4%	11.2%	45.6%
21-25	43.3%	11.1%	54.4%
Total	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%

Each driver may have up to four factors contributing to the crash reported by investigators. Young drivers involved in fatal crashes were often speeding, impaired by alcohol and/or other drugs, or distracted.

Common Driver Errors	Drivers	Percentage
Speeding	470	43.7%
Alcohol/Drug Impairment	437	40.7%
Distracted/Inattentive	225	20.9%

The majority (71.6%) of young drivers involved in fatal crashes were operating a passenger auto, SUV, or van. Light trucks were the second most common (16.9%) vehicle type operated by young drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Vehicle Type Operated	Drivers	Percentage
Passenger auto, SUV, or van	770	71.6%
Pickup or light truck	182	16.9%
Motorcycle	87	8.1%
Bus, motor home, or heavy truck	21	2.0%
ATV	12	1.1%
Other/Unknown	3	0.3%
Total	1,075	100.0%

Over half (579 of 1,075; 53.9%) of young drivers involved in fatal crashes were alone in the vehicle. About one-third (386 of 1,075; 35.9%) of young drivers carried one or two passengers during the crash.

Seat Belt Use

More than one-third (35.2%) of young male passenger vehicle drivers involved in a fatal crash were not using a seat belt compared to one-sixth (15.9%) of young female drivers.

There were 889 passenger vehicle occupant deaths involving young drivers. About 43.9% were not using seat belts. Statewide, 43.0% of all passenger vehicle occupant deaths were not using seat belts.

Data source for all figures is Washington Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) year 2004 through 2008. Data for 2008 is preliminary and subject to change as more information becomes available.