NHTSA Car Crash Statistics on Speeding and Drunk Driving

National crash data shows how many people are killed on American roads each *car accident attorney* 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. A car accident attorney 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, a fatality 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 change once each year's data is finalized, so the 2025 number may move.

Speed and alcohol

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 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 reports that 3,208 people were killed in crashes involving distracted drivers in 2024. The agency notes that sending or reading a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for 5 seconds, roughly 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 it says that figure is widely viewed as an underestimate.

Seat belts

NHTSA reports 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. The national seat belt use rate was 91.3 percent in 2025. By NHTSA's estimate, seat belts saved 14,955 lives in 2017. In some states, not wearing a seat belt can be raised to reduce damages, while other states limit that defense. A car accident lawyer can explain the rule where the crash happened.

How to read crash data

These categories overlap. One crash can fall into the speeding and alcohol categories at once, so the totals cannot be added *car accident lawyer* 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. Such databases describe crashes but do not decide 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.