

FATALITY FACTS 2004: OLDER PEOPLE

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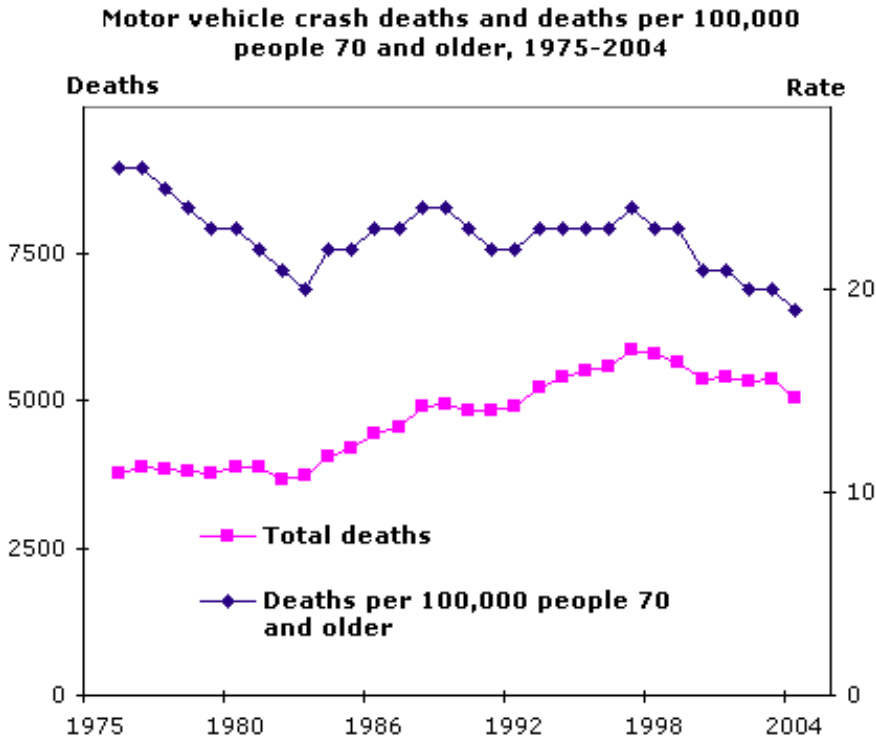
Motor vehicle crashes account for less than 1 percent of fatalities among people 70 and older; heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death.¹ Proportionally, fewer older people are licensed to drive compared with those ages 20-69, and they drive fewer miles per licensed driver. However, increasingly older drivers are keeping their licenses longer and driving more miles than ever before.

There's cause for concern when older people drive because they have higher rates of fatal crashes per mile driven than all but the youngest drivers. This is largely due to their increased susceptibility to injury, particularly chest injuries, and medical complications rather than an increased tendency to get into crashes.² Fragility begins to increase at ages 60-64. At age 75, older drivers begin to be markedly overinvolved in crashes, but fragility is the predominant factor explaining the elevated deaths per mile traveled among older drivers.²

The following facts are based on analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS):

OVERVIEW

- A total of 5,062 people ages 70 and older died in motor vehicle crashes in 2004. This is 14 percent fewer than in 1997 when deaths peaked, but a 34 percent increase since 1975. The rate of fatalities per capita among older people has decreased 26 percent since 1975 and is now at its lowest level.



Motor vehicle crash deaths and deaths per 100,000 people 70 and older, 1975-2004

Year	Population	Deaths	Rate
1975	14,563,945	3,775	26
1976	14,960,120	3,896	26
1977	15,401,249	3,859	25
1978	15,876,541	3,824	24
1979	16,388,617	3,772	23
1980	16,897,977	3,861	23
1981	17,322,714	3,871	22
1982	17,783,888	3,655	21
1983	18,233,751	3,733	20
1984	18,662,938	4,052	22
1985	19,072,785	4,206	22
1986	19,463,480	4,445	23
1987	19,890,817	4,555	23
1988	20,302,280	4,925	24
1989	20,719,397	4,943	24
1990	21,164,283	4,844	23
1991	21,751,897	4,843	22
1992	22,321,217	4,901	22
1993	22,800,673	5,221	23
1994	23,243,845	5,423	23
1995	23,693,757	5,509	23
1996	24,056,323	5,578	23
1997	24,408,817	5,871	24
1998	24,793,551	5,798	23
1999	25,092,805	5,657	23
2000	25,559,879	5,379	21
2001	25,797,467	5,425	21
2002	26,005,326	5,332	21
2003	26,200,946	5,363	20
2004	26,337,518	5,062	19

- Eighty-one percent of motor vehicle crash deaths in 2004 involving people 70 and older were passenger vehicle occupants, and 15 percent were pedestrians. Since 1975 deaths of older passenger vehicle occupants have increased 77 percent while deaths of older pedestrians have declined 44 percent. Although few older adults are killed while riding motorcycles, this number has been increasing. Eight times as many people 70 and older were killed on motorcycles in 2004 than in 1975.

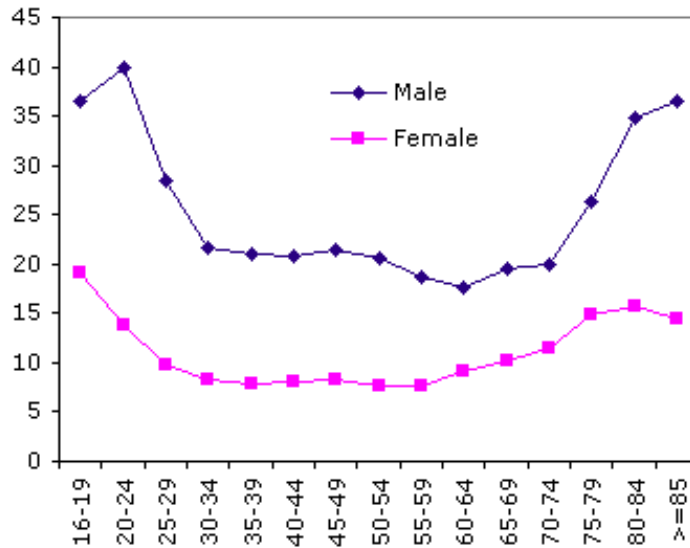
Motor vehicle crash deaths among people 70 and older, 1975-2004

Year	Passenger vehicle occupant deaths		Pedestrian deaths		Motorcyclist deaths		Other motor vehicle deaths		All motor vehicle deaths
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num
1975	2,302	61	1,348	36	5	<1	120	3	3,775
1976	2,490	64	1,291	33	7	<1	108	3	3,896
1977	2,370	61	1,383	36	11	<1	95	2	3,859
1978	2,515	66	1,214	32	9	<1	86	2	3,824
1979	2,391	63	1,277	34	10	<1	94	2	3,772
1980	2,399	62	1,344	35	14	<1	104	3	3,861
1981	2,495	64	1,278	33	11	<1	87	2	3,871
1982	2,430	66	1,124	31	9	<1	92	3	3,655
1983	2,546	68	1,081	29	13	<1	94	3	3,734
1984	2,764	68	1,164	29	20	<1	104	3	4,052
1985	2,933	70	1,170	28	10	<1	93	2	4,206
1986	3,166	71	1,157	26	9	<1	113	3	4,445
1987	3,276	72	1,160	25	18	<1	101	2	4,555
1988	3,540	72	1,271	26	17	<1	97	2	4,925
1989	3,658	74	1,180	24	9	<1	96	2	4,943
1990	3,525	73	1,195	25	22	<1	102	2	4,844
1991	3,690	76	1,044	22	11	<1	98	2	4,843
1992	3,801	78	997	20	13	<1	90	2	4,901
1993	4,076	78	1,012	19	17	<1	116	2	5,221
1994	4,289	79	1,021	19	15	<1	100	2	5,425
1995	4,368	79	1,008	18	11	<1	122	2	5,509
1996	4,492	81	951	17	17	<1	118	2	5,578
1997	4,747	81	931	16	21	<1	173	3	5,872
1998	4,683	81	965	17	18	<1	132	2	5,798
1999	4,587	81	885	16	23	<1	162	3	5,657
2000	4,406	82	807	15	34	1	132	2	5,379
2001	4,389	81	878	16	36	1	122	2	5,425
2002	4,287	80	845	16	36	1	164	3	5,332
2003	4,377	82	777	14	48	1	161	3	5,363
2004	4,079	81	753	15	40	1	190	4	5,062

POPULATION AND MILEAGE RATES

- The rate of motor vehicle crash deaths per capita among males in 2004 began to increase at ages 65-69 and increased markedly at ages 75-79 and ages 80-84. Among females, the death rate began to increase at ages 60-64 and increased gradually until ages 80-84. Across all age groups males had substantially higher death rates than females.

Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 people by age and gender, 2004

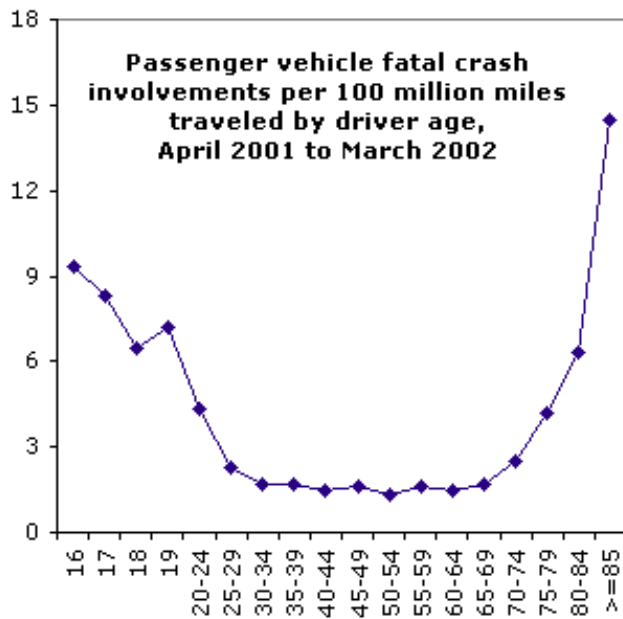


Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 people by age and gender, 2004

Age	Male			Female			Total		
	Population	Deaths	Rate	Population	Deaths	Rate	Population	Deaths*	Rate
<16	33,281,054	1,468	4.4	31,752,676	1,137	3.6	65,033,730	2,605	4.0
16-19	8,477,614	3,103	36.6	8,040,454	1,538	19.1	16,518,068	4,642	28.1
20-24	10,802,990	4,324	40.0	10,168,312	1,395	13.7	20,971,302	5,719	27.3
25-29	9,994,814	2,844	28.5	9,566,092	927	9.7	19,560,906	3,772	19.3
30-34	10,341,219	2,249	21.7	10,129,813	834	8.2	20,471,032	3,083	15.1
35-39	10,570,515	2,230	21.1	10,481,803	832	7.9	21,052,318	3,062	14.5
40-44	11,463,366	2,397	20.9	11,592,968	924	8.0	23,056,334	3,321	14.4
45-49	10,917,745	2,336	21.4	11,204,884	925	8.3	22,122,629	3,262	14.7
50-54	9,534,928	1,957	20.5	9,961,248	766	7.7	19,496,176	2,723	14.0
55-59	8,001,419	1,490	18.6	8,488,082	652	7.7	16,489,501	2,142	13.0
60-64	5,998,014	1,062	17.7	6,591,409	609	9.2	12,589,423	1,671	13.3
65-69	4,632,949	906	19.6	5,323,518	538	10.1	9,956,467	1,444	14.5
70-74	3,794,677	757	19.9	4,712,328	540	11.5	8,507,005	1,297	15.2
75-79	3,098,639	816	26.3	4,312,118	637	14.8	7,410,757	1,453	19.6
80-84	2,119,592	738	34.8	3,440,533	539	15.7	5,560,125	1,277	23.0
85-98	1,507,873	552	36.6	3,351,758	483	14.4	4,859,631	1,035	21.3

*Total includes other and/or unknowns

- Between April 2001 and March 2002 the rate of passenger vehicle fatal crash involvements per 100 million miles traveled was higher for drivers 80 and older than for drivers of any other age group except teenagers. Drivers 85 and older had the highest rate of fatal crash involvement.³



Passenger vehicle fatal crash involvements per 100 million miles traveled by driver age, April 2001 to March 2002

Age	Passenger vehicle fatal crash involvements	Miles traveled	Rate
16	1,021	10,991,775,116	9.3
17	1,410	17,007,229,957	8.3
18	1,790	27,575,876,114	6.5
19	1,885	26,116,988,928	7.2
20-24	7,184	167,139,739,780	4.3
25-29	4,873	215,143,526,035	2.3
30-34	4,438	258,141,237,337	1.7
35-39	4,492	269,147,680,452	1.7
40-44	4,255	288,295,560,019	1.5
45-49	3,530	226,862,752,042	1.6
50-54	2,878	215,764,866,751	1.3
55-59	2,238	138,646,175,519	1.6
60-64	1,678	112,124,892,364	1.5
65-69	1,416	81,468,138,271	1.7
70-74	1,453	59,206,606,813	2.5
75-79	1,477	35,214,532,480	4.2
80-84	1,046	16,566,473,047	6.3
≥85	740	5,097,372,229	14.5

CRASH TYPES

- Among passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2004, the proportion involved in multiple-vehicle crashes at intersections was higher among drivers 70 and older than among those younger than 70. Multiple-vehicle crashes accounted for about half of fatal crash involvements among drivers 85 and older.

Age	Multiple-vehicle intersection crashes		Single-vehicle crashes		Other multiple-vehicle crashes		All crashes
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%	Num
16-19	1,213	21	2,630	46	1,839	32	5,682
20-24	1,453	20	3,269	45	2,470	34	7,192
25-29	1,098	22	1,974	40	1,898	38	4,970
30-34	952	23	1,583	38	1,598	39	4,133
35-39	962	24	1,461	36	1,605	40	4,028
40-44	968	24	1,442	36	1,582	40	3,992
45-49	884	24	1,313	35	1,530	41	3,727
50-54	728	25	926	32	1,236	43	2,890
55-59	612	26	792	33	991	41	2,395
60-64	520	28	593	31	771	41	1,884
65-69	444	31	420	29	577	40	1,441
70-74	447	35	358	28	465	37	1,270
75-79	562	42	315	24	448	34	1,325
80-84	467	45	254	25	309	30	1,030
≥85	360	52	156	22	183	26	699

- The rate of pedestrian deaths per 100,000 people in 2004 was higher for people 70 and older than for those younger than 70. Males 80 and older had a pedestrian fatality rate 2.5 times higher than that for males 79 and younger. For all age groups, the rate of pedestrian deaths per capita was higher for males than females.

Age	Male			Female			Total		
	Population	Deaths	Rate	Population	Deaths	Rate	Population	Deaths*	Rate
<13	26,680,274	189	0.7	25,471,132	100	0.4	52,151,406	289	0.6
13-15	6,600,780	58	0.9	6,281,544	46	0.7	12,882,324	104	0.8
16-19	8,477,614	140	1.7	8,040,454	56	0.7	16,518,068	197	1.2
20-24	10,802,990	264	2.4	10,168,312	81	0.8	20,971,302	345	1.6
25-29	9,994,814	226	2.3	9,566,092	72	0.8	19,560,906	298	1.5
30-34	10,341,219	224	2.2	10,129,813	76	0.8	20,471,032	300	1.5
35-39	10,570,515	239	2.3	10,481,803	109	1.0	21,052,318	348	1.7
40-44	11,463,366	313	2.7	11,592,968	115	1.0	23,056,334	428	1.9
45-49	10,917,745	335	3.1	11,204,884	107	1.0	22,122,629	442	2.0
50-54	9,534,928	310	3.3	9,961,248	94	0.9	19,496,176	404	2.1
55-59	8,001,419	183	2.3	8,488,082	84	1.0	16,489,501	267	1.6
60-64	5,998,014	153	2.6	6,591,409	81	1.2	12,589,423	234	1.9
65-69	4,632,949	126	2.7	5,323,518	60	1.1	9,956,467	186	1.9
70-74	3,794,677	121	3.2	4,712,328	76	1.6	8,507,005	197	2.3
75-79	3,098,639	118	3.8	4,312,118	93	2.2	7,410,757	211	2.8
80-84	2,119,592	107	5.0	3,440,533	92	2.7	5,560,125	199	3.6
≥85	1,507,873	80	5.3	3,351,758	66	2.0	4,859,631	146	3.0

*Total includes other and/or unknowns

ALCOHOL

- Six percent of fatally injured passenger vehicle drivers 70 and older in 2004 had blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) at or above 0.08 percent, compared with 16 percent for drivers ages 60-69 and 38 percent for drivers ages 16-59.

Age	Drivers killed	Estimated drivers killed with BAC≥0.08	
	Num	Num	%
16-59	17,103	6,557	38
60-69	1,749	282	16
≥70	2,869	175	6

REFERENCES

¹National Safety Council. 2004. Injury facts, 2004 edition. Itasca, IL: National Safety Council.

²Li, G.; Braver, E.R.; and Chen, L.H. 2003. Fragility versus excessive crash involvement as determinants of high death rates per vehicle-mile of travel among older drivers. *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 35:227-35.

³Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Unpublished study. Analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the National Household Travel Survey. Arlington, VA.