



## Alcohol & Traffic Safety

In the 1980s, the United States saw a significant reduction in alcohol-involved crashes. This was due to strategies such as:

- Lowering the legal driving limit for all drivers to 0.08 alcohol concentration
  - 0.04 for commercial vehicle drivers
  - Zero tolerance (0.00 or 0.01) for drivers under age 21
- Increasing the minimum legal drinking age to 21
- Instituting behavior change campaigns about the dangers of drinking and driving, such as designated driver campaigns.

However, for the past 20 years, progress in reducing crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers has stalled. Since then, drivers with alcohol concentrations at or above 0.08 are involved in about one-third of traffic crash fatalities in the U.S. That's about 10,000 lives lost every year to something that is preventable.

### Impairment Begins with the First Drink

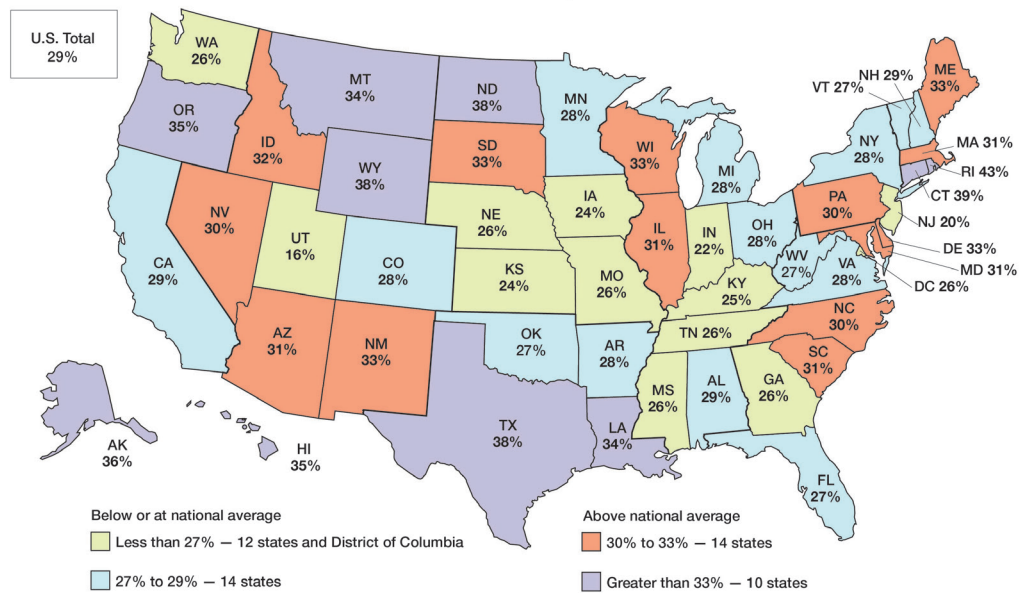
The total toll is even greater when the fatality count includes traffic crash deaths where drivers had alcohol concentrations below the legal limit, from 0.01 to 0.079; about 1,800 more people are killed in crashes involving low alcohol concentrations. Drivers can be dangerously impaired at these lower levels, because impairment begins with the first drink. Research shows that for the majority of drivers, performance has already deteriorated significantly by the time a person's alcohol concentration reaches 0.08.

Whether it's referred to as drunk driving, driving while intoxicated (DWI), or driving under the influence (DUI), impaired driving simply means a person's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle is compromised by alcohol or other drugs that change the function of the brain and body.

According to NSC Injury Facts, drivers with an alcohol concentration of 0.05 are approximately two times as likely to crash than drivers with no measurable alcohol in their system. Drivers with an alcohol concentration of 0.08 are four times as likely to crash than drivers with 0.00 alcohol concentration.

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Percent of fatalities involved in fatal crashes with BAC of 0.08+, by state, 2015



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Although all states have a high percentage of crash deaths that involve alcohol-impaired drivers, some states have a significantly higher percentage than others.

Certain groups are more at risk than others:

- 21-34 year-olds are overrepresented in fatal crashes involving alcohol
- 35-44 year-olds were also overrepresented, but less so than those age 21 to 34
- 79% of all drivers involved in alcohol-impaired fatal crashes were male
- People with substance use problems and alcohol addiction

This Safe Driving Kit provides strategies and materials to help you reduce risks of alcohol-impaired driving, both on and off the job. [nsc.org/safedrivingkit](http://nsc.org/safedrivingkit)



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