



Traffic Safety Facts 2003

Older Population



There are 26 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 2003, this age group made up 9.0 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8.8 percent in 1993. From 1993 to 2003, the growth rate for this older segment of the population was 15 percent higher than the growth rate of the total population.

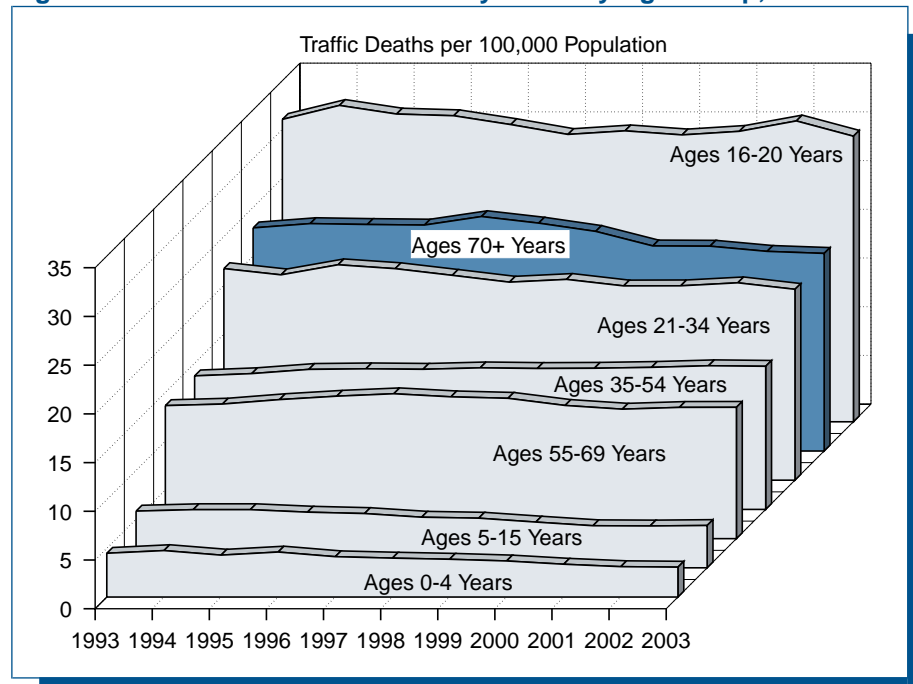
There were 19.9 million older licensed drivers in 2002 (2003 data not available) — a 29 percent increase from the number in 1992. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 12 percent from 1992 to 2002. Older drivers made up 10 percent of all licensed drivers in 2002, compared with 9 percent in 1992.

In 2003, 145,000 older individuals were injured in traffic crashes, accounting for 5 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. These older individuals made up 12 percent of all traffic fatalities, 12 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 16 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 2003 occurred during the daytime (82 percent), on weekdays (71 percent), and involved another vehicle (74 percent).

“In 2003, older people accounted for 12 percent of all traffic fatalities and 16 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”

Figure 1. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1993-2003



Older drivers involved in fatal crashes had the lowest proportion of total drivers involved with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.08 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or higher of all adult drivers. Fatally injured older pedestrians also had the lowest proportion with BAC 0.08 g/dl or higher of all adult pedestrian fatalities.

Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 2003

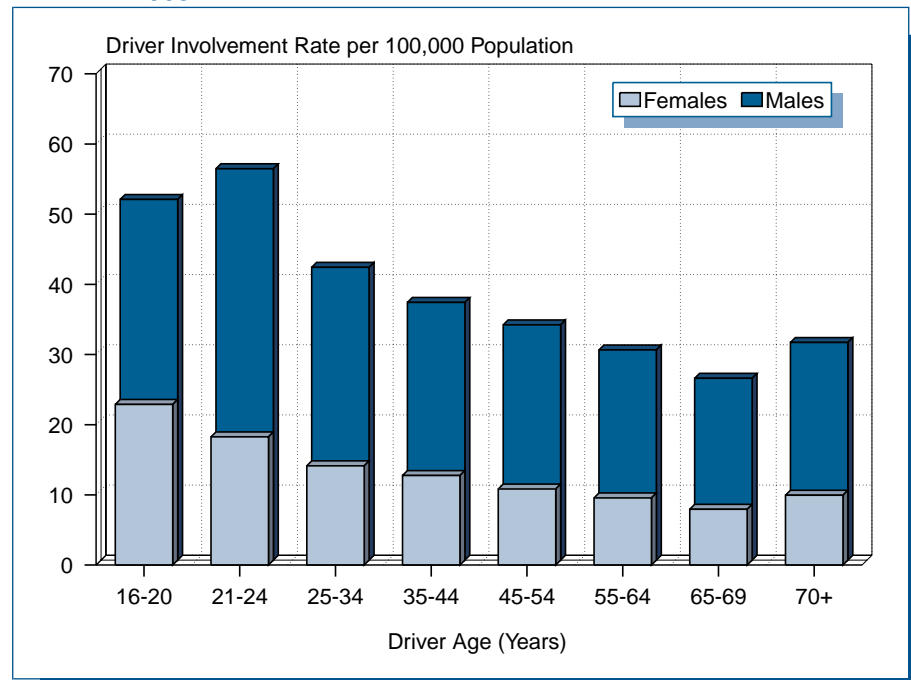
Age Group (years)	Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes			Pedestrian Fatalities		
	Total	BAC 0.08 or Higher		Total	BAC 0.08 or Higher	
		Number	Percent of Total		Number	Percent of Total
<16	342	35	10	443	13	3
16-20	7,693	1,446	19	298	86	29
21-34	17,452	4,993	29	828	412	50
35-54	19,939	4,307	22	1,621	795	49
55-69	6,995	769	11	743	198	27
70+	4,800	258	5	773	60	8
Total	*58,156	11,996	21	**4,749	1,579	33

*Includes 935 drivers of unknown age.

**Includes 43 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.

“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2003 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”

Figure 2. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 2003



“In two-vehicle fatal crashes with an older and a younger driver, the older driver’s vehicle was twice as likely to be the one that was struck.”

Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of all older occupants of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 61 percent for other adult occupants (18 to 69 years old).

For older people, 65 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2003 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 81 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations. In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was twice as likely to be the one that was struck (63 percent and 31 percent, respectively). In 44 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 27 percent, the older driver was turning left — 7 times as often as the younger driver.

Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1993 and 2003

	1993			2003			Percentage Change, 1993-2003		
	Total	Age 70+	Percent of Total	Total	Age 70+	Percent of Total	Number		Percent Age 70+
							Total	Age 70+	
<i>Population (thousands)</i>									
Total	257,783	22,801	8.8	290,810	26,173	9.0	+13%	+15%	+2%
Male	125,788	8,801	7.0	143,037	10,423	7.3	+14%	+18%	+4%
Female	131,995	14,000	10.6	147,773	15,750	10.7	+12%	+13%	+1%
<i>Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes</i>									
Total	53,401	4,260	8.0	58,156	4,800	8.3	+9%	+13%	+4%
Male	39,556	2,949	7.5	42,314	3,233	7.6	+7%	+10%	+1%
Female	13,082	1,311	10.0	15,091	1,567	10.4	+15%	+20%	+4%
<i>Driver Fatalities</i>									
Total	23,142	2,784	12.0	26,640	3,205	12.0	+15%	+15%	0%
Male	17,302	1,913	11.1	19,855	2,105	10.6	+15%	+10%	-5%
Female	5,839	871	14.9	6,780	1,100	16.2	+16%	+26%	+9%
<i>Total Traffic Fatalities</i>									
Total	40,150	5,221	13.0	42,643	5,309	12.4	+6%	+2%	-5%
Male	27,322	2,889	10.6	29,188	2,929	10.0	+7%	+1%	-6%
Female	12,814	2,331	18.2	13,445	2,380	17.7	+5%	+2%	-3%
<i>Occupant Fatalities</i>									
Total	33,574	4,167	12.4	37,132	4,483	12.1	+11%	+8%	-2%
Male	22,606	2,285	10.1	25,293	2,458	9.7	+12%	+8%	-4%
Female	10,956	1,881	17.2	11,831	2,025	17.1	+8%	+8%	-1%
<i>Pedestrian Fatalities</i>									
Total	5,649	1,012	17.9	4,749	773	16.3	-16%	-24%	-9%
Male	3,936	565	14.4	3,254	427	13.1	-17%	-24%	-9%
Female	1,711	447	26.1	1,493	346	23.2	-13%	-23%	-11%

Older Population Age Groups

The following table and graphs provide data for subgroups of the older population: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, and 85+ years.

Table 3. Driver Involvement in Fatal Crashes and Pedestrian Fatalities in the Older Population by Age Group, 2003

	Age Group (years)				
	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	Total
Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes	1,506	1,351	1,117	826	4,800
Pedestrian Fatalities	189	219	201	164	773

Figure 3. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates in the Older Population by Age Group, 1993-2003

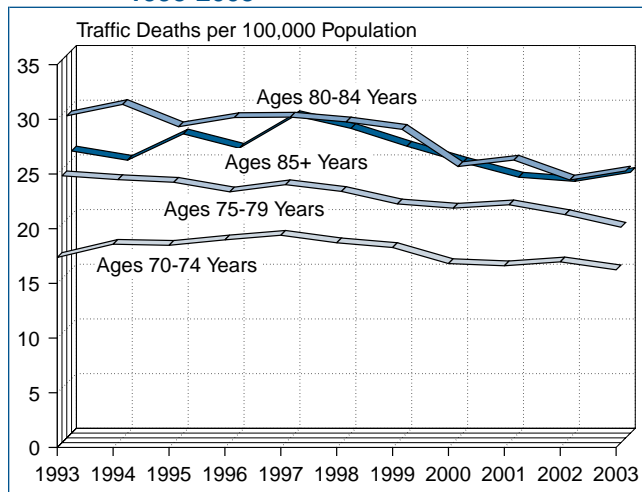
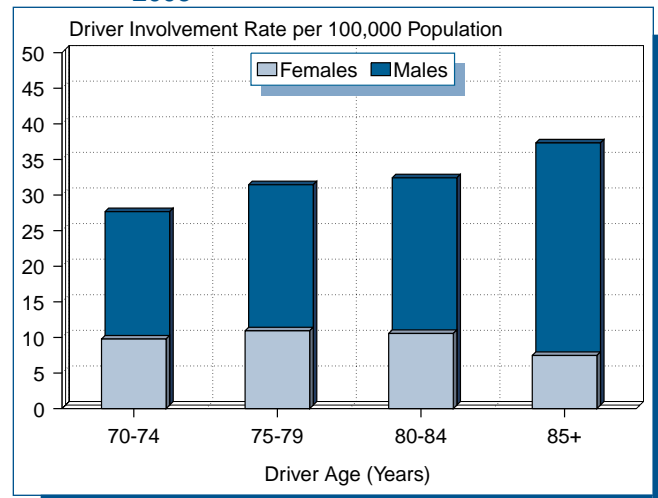


Figure 4. Involvement Rates for Older Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group and Sex, 2003



For more information:

Information on the older population is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-101, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand at 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/nhsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Overview, Alcohol, Occupant Protection, Speeding, Children, Young Drivers, Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, Motorcycles, Large Trucks, School Transportation-Related Crashes, State Traffic Data, and State Alcohol Estimates*. Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System*.