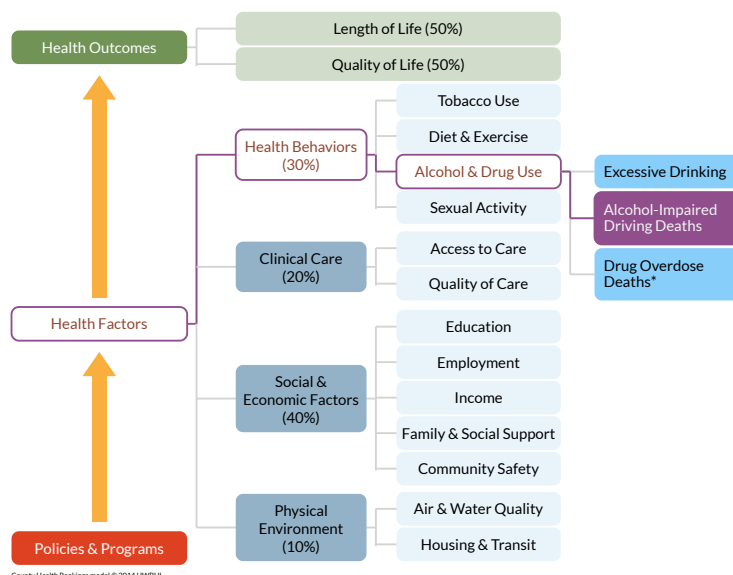




Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths

An Alcohol and Drug Use measure



Measures marked with an asterisk (*) are not included in summary calculations for Health Outcomes and Health Factors.

About

Percentage of driving deaths with alcohol involvement. The 2024 Annual Data Release used data from 2017-2021 for this measure.

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths directly measures the relationship between alcohol and motor vehicle crash deaths. Alcohol is a substance that reduces brain function, impairing thinking, reasoning, and muscle coordination, which are crucial to operating a vehicle safely.¹ In 2021, approximately 13,384 Americans were killed in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes.² Two age groups of young adults, 21-24 years and 25-34 years, had the highest percentages (27% each) of all alcohol-impaired deaths.² The annual cost of alcohol-related crashes totals more than \$58 billion.²

[Find strategies to address Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths](#)

Data and methods

Data

Methods

Search by county, state or ZIP code

Select year

2024



Data Source

Fatality Analysis Reporting System

FARS is a census of fatal motor vehicle crashes with a set of data files documenting all qualifying fatalities that occurred within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico since 1975. To qualify as a FARS case, the crash had to involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public, and must have resulted in the death of a motorist or a non-motorist within 30 days of the crash.

[Website to download data](#)

[For more detailed methodological information](#)

Key Measure Methods

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths is a percentage

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths is the percentage of motor vehicle crash deaths with alcohol involvement.

Deaths are counted in the county of occurrence

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths are reported in the county of occurrence. This is because it is more likely that the drinking behavior that led to the driving crash happened where the accident occurred rather than in the county where the people involved in the crash reside.

Measure limitations

This measure reflects the percentage of crash deaths involving alcohol, not the number of total crashes or the number of total crashes involving alcohol. Another limitation of this measure is that not all fatal motor vehicle traffic accidents have a valid blood alcohol test, so these data are likely to undercount actual alcohol involvement. A final limitation is that even though alcohol is involved in all cases of alcohol-impaired driving, there can be a large difference in the degree to which it was responsible for the crash (e.g. someone with a 0.01 BAC vs. 0.35 BAC).

Numerator

The numerator is the total number of alcohol-impaired motor vehicle crash deaths in the 5-year period. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration classifies a fatal crash as alcohol-related or alcohol-involved if either a driver or a non-motorist (usually a pedestrian or bicyclist) had a measured or estimated blood alcohol concentration of 0.01 grams per deciliter or above.

Denominator

The denominator is the total number of motor vehicle crash deaths in the 5-year period.

Can This Measure Be Used to Track Progress

This measure can be used to measure progress with some caveats. The estimate provided in the Health Snapshots is a 5-year average. However, in most counties, single-year estimates may be obtained from the resource below. In addition, Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths is a percentage whereas using a rate per capita might be better to measure progress.

Finding More Data

Disaggregation means breaking data down into smaller, meaningful subgroups. Disaggregated data are often broken down by characteristics of people or where they live. Disaggregated data can reveal inequalities that are otherwise hidden. These data can be disaggregated by:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Subcounty Area

We recommend starting with the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, which contains [information on crashes](#) by race, ethnicity, age, gender, and more for cities, counties, states, and the nation. In addition, most states produce [traffic statistics called “Crash Facts”](#).

References

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Drunk Driving. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving>. Accessed November 30, 2023.

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic safety facts: Alcohol-impaired driving: 2021 data (Report No. DOT HS 812 864). Washington, D.C.: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT); 2023. <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813450>. Accessed November 30, 2023.

Find strategies in What Works for Health

Strategic Goal

Support responsible marketing and provision of alcohol and other legal drugs

Strategic Goal

Raise the price of alcohol

Strategic Goal

Reduce availability of alcohol and other drugs

Strategic Goal

Implement broad initiatives to reduce alcohol and drug use

Strategic Goal

Reduce alcohol-impaired driving

Strategic Goal

Improve access to substance abuse counseling and treatment
