

Underage Drinking Facts

Under YOUR Influence



- Each year, thousands of teens are killed or injured in traffic crashes as a result of underage drinking.
- All States and the District of Columbia now have 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws.
- In 2008, 31% of the young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher; 25% had a BAC of .08 or higher.
- Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their BAC is .08 g/DL or higher. Thus, any fatality occurring in a crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired-driving fatality.
- The severity of a crash increases with alcohol involvement. In 2008, 2% of the 15-20-year-old drivers involved in property-damage-only crashes had been drinking, 4% of those involved in crashes resulting in injury had been drinking, and 22% of those involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.
- For young drivers, alcohol involvement is higher among males than among females. In 2008, 26% of the young male drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking at the time of the crash, compared with 13% of the young female drivers involved in fatal crashes.
- Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking. In 2008, 63% of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained.
- Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 73% were unrestrained.
- NHTSA estimates that the 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws have reduced traffic fatalities involving drivers 18 to 20 years old by 13% and have saved an estimated 27,052 lives since 1975.
- In 2008, an estimated 714 lives were saved by minimum-drinking-age laws.
- Teens and parents both need a strong reminder – underage drinking is illegal and can have disastrous consequences.
- Violators of underage drinking laws often face a trip to jail, the loss of their driver's license, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses, including attorney fees, court costs, and other fines. Plus, there is the added embarrassment, humiliation, and potential loss and consequence related to academic eligibility, college acceptance, scholarship awards, and more.
- Too many people still don't understand that alcohol and driving don't mix. Impaired driving is no accident; it is not a victimless crime.
- Most of those killed in alcohol-related crashes involving teen drivers are the young drivers themselves and their passengers.