

Georgia Traffic Safety Facts

2020 Data

May 2022

In this fact sheet, information is presented as follows.

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This fact sheet contains information from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) crash data modified by Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System (CODES) at the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Refer to the 'Data Considerations' section regarding the data and information presented at the end of this publication.



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RISKY DRIVING

Speeding, Alcohol Impairment, Drug Use, and Drowsy Driving

Risky driving refers to driver-related behaviors that contribute to the occurrence of traffic crashes or traffic-related injuries and fatalities. These behaviors include not using a proper restraint system when operating a motor vehicle (unrestrained), alcohol impairment, speeding, drug use, distracted driving, and drowsy driving. This fact sheet will primarily focus on three major behaviors – speeding, alcohol impairment and/or drug use, and drowsy driving. Seat belt use and distracted driving topics are covered in greater detail in the topic specific Georgia Traffic Safety Facts publications.

2020 Key Findings

- There were 1,552 fatal crashes that resulted in 1,664 traffic fatalities on Georgia roadways—the largest number of traffic fatalities since 2006. Forty percent of fatal crashes involved at least one driver that was engaged in a known risky driving behavior—a 28 percent increase compared to 2019.
- Drivers involved in fatal crashes with a positive blood alcohol concentration (BAC) were 2.3 times more likely to be speeding and 4.3 times more likely to be unrestrained compared to other tested drivers with no alcohol in their system. Nearly 40 percent of speeding drivers and unrestrained drivers with known BAC were impaired (.08+ g/dL).
- Across all speeding-related crashes, more serious injuries and fatalities were among occupants in the speeding vehicle (81 percent). Conversely, only 38 percent of fatalities that occurred in alcohol-impaired-related fatal crashes were occupants in the impaired driver's vehicle – most fatalities were among persons either in the vehicle with the unimpaired driver (54 percent) or non-motorists (9 percent).
- More than 3 out of 10 (31 percent) of speeding drivers had a speeding conviction and 10 percent of alcohol-impaired and/or drugged drivers had a DWI conviction (driving while intoxicated or impaired) previously recorded within five years prior to the fatal crash.
- While more speeding-related and alcohol/drug-related fatal crashes occurred in the Atlanta region and other urban counties, the rate of fatal crashes per 100M VMT was higher in rural counties.
- Approximately a quarter (23 percent) of reported drowsy-related crashes occurred in the early morning hours between 5:00 am and 7:59 am compared to the 11 percent that occurred between midnight and 2:59 am.
- Nearly half (47 percent) of all drivers involved in traffic crashes were confirmed or suspected of distracted driving.
- Forty-five percent of all fatal crashes involved at least one unrestrained motor vehicle occupant or un-helmeted motorcyclist.

Overview of Risky Driving

In 2020, there were 1,664 fatalities and 7,620 serious injuries¹ that occurred in motor vehicle traffic crashes on Georgia roadways – the largest number of traffic fatalities since 2006. The number of traffic-related fatalities increased by 12 percent from 1,492 fatalities in 2019. The main contributing factor to traffic crashes and injuries were drivers, passengers, and non-motorists engaging in risky behaviors. These behaviors include not using the appropriate restraint system (unrestrained), alcohol impairment², drug use³, speeding⁴, distracted⁵ driving, and drowsy⁶ driving.

Readers are encouraged to exercise caution when interpreting the risky driving behaviors presented in this fact sheet due to inherent limitations of the crash dataset. There are many records with missing blood alcohol test results. Therefore, some BAC values are imputed and the records used in these analyses are estimates. The underreporting of drowsy and distracted driving is likely due to lack of firm evidence during the post-crash investigations. Additionally, the increase of reported drugged drivers in the crash dataset can be attributed to both the increased use of certain drugs across the nation and changes in the drug test reporting process. Refer to the 'Data Considerations' section at the end of this publication for more information.

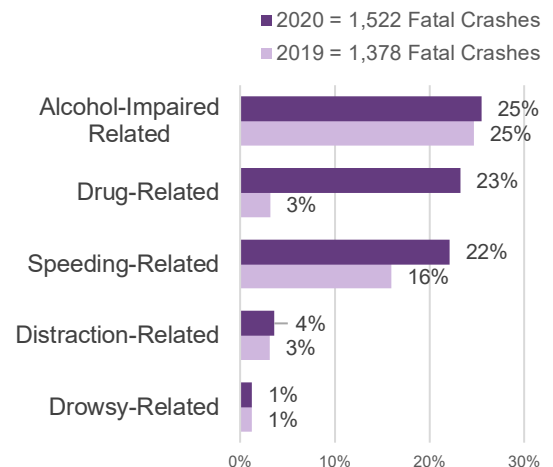
Figure 1 shows the percent of fatal crashes that involved at least one driver confirmed to be engaging in a risky behavior. This does not imply that a crash or a fatality was caused by the driver, only that a driver involved in the crash was engaging in risky driving behaviors.

Out of the 1,552 **fatal** crashes that occurred in 2020:

- 25 percent involved at least one alcohol-impaired driver;
- 23 percent involved at least one drugged driver;
- 22 percent involved at least one speeding driver;
- 4 percent involved at least one confirmed distracted driver (47 percent of **all traffic crashes** involved at least one suspected or confirmed distracted driver—not shown in Figure 1); and
- 1 percent involved at least one drowsy driver.

Additionally, 45 percent of all fatal crashes involved at least one unrestrained motor vehicle occupant or unhelmeted motorcyclist.

Figure 1. **Percent of Fatal Crashes that Involved at Least One Driver with a Risky Behavior, 2019 and 2020**



Note: Percentages are rounded
Source: FARS 2019-2020

See the **“Distracted Driving” Georgia Traffic Safety Facts** for more information regarding distracted-related crashes.

See Data Considerations for more information:

¹ Serious injuries are those suspected serious injuries reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred.

² Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) are .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatal crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired-driving crash.

³ Drivers are considered to have used drugs if they were tested for drugs and a specific type of drug (if any) was found. These drugs may include narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, cannabinoids, phencyclidines (PCP), anabolic steroids, and inhalants.

⁴ Drivers are considered to be speeding if they were charged with a speeding-related offense or if a police officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, exceeding the posted speed limit, or evading police was a contributing factor in the crash.

⁵ Drivers are considered to be distracted if the police officer indicated that the driver demonstrated distractions as a contributing factor in the crash. Distraction-related activities includes anything that takes a driver's eyes off the road (visual distraction), mind off the road (cognitive distraction), or hands off the wheel (manual distraction).

⁶ Drivers are considered to be drowsy if the police officer indicated that the driver condition was drowsy, fatigued, or sleepy in the crash report.

Table 1 presents the five-year trend of traffic-fatalities that involved drivers with a confirmed risky-driving behavior. *The risky-driving-related fatalities include all fatally injured persons in a crash involving a confirmed risky driver — this includes the risky driver, their passengers, occupants in other vehicles, and non-motorists.* Between 2019 and 2020, all traffic-fatalities involving risky behaviors increased.

- Unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities increased by 80 (21 percent).
- Alcohol-impaired-related fatalities increased by 47 (13 percent).
- Speeding-related fatalities increased by 120 (46 percent).
- Distracted-related fatalities increased by 18 (42 percent).
- Drowsy-related fatalities increased by 2 (11 percent).

Drug-related fatalities increased more than 7 times, from 43 fatalities in 2019 to 331 fatalities in 2020. This increase, however, may not indicate an exacerbated or growing problem compared to previous years. The increase of drugged-driving and related traffic-fatalities may be attributed to both the improvement of reporting drug test results in the crash reports and the increased use of certain drugs across the nation.

Table 1. **Risky-Driving-Related Fatalities* by Type, 2016-2020**

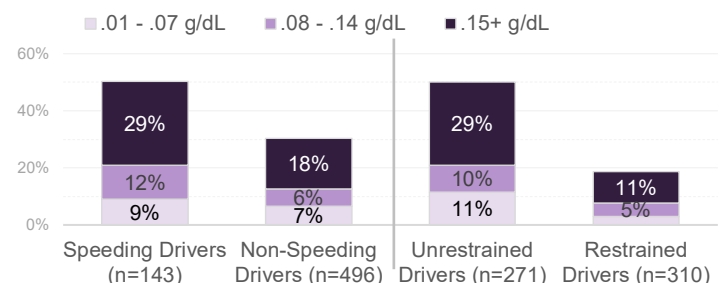
Measure Type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Unrestrained Fatalities in Passenger Vehicles	472	464	441	385	465
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 15%	▼ -2%	▼ -5%	▼ -13%	▲ 21%
Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities	378	357	379	355	402
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 6%	▼ -6%	▲ 6%	▼ -6%	▲ 13%
Speeding-Related Fatalities	266	248	268	260	380
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▼ -1%	▼ -7%	▲ 8%	▼ -3%	▲ 46%
Drug-Related Fatalities	93	90	81	43	331
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 4%	▼ -3%	▼ -10%	▼ -47%	***
Distraction-Related Fatalities	77	82	65	43	61
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 4%	▲ 6%	▼ -21%	▼ -34%	▲ 42%
Drowsy Driving Fatalities	13	22	24	18	20
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▼ -24%	▲ 69%	▲ 9%	▼ -25%	▲ 11%
All Traffic-Related Fatalities	1,556	1,540	1,505	1,492	1,664
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 9%	▼ -1%	▼ -2%	▼ -1%	▲ 12%

* Risking-driving-related fatalities include all persons involved in the fatal crash including risky drivers, passengers, occupants in other vehicles, and non-motorists. *** The increase of reported drug-impaired drivers in the crash dataset can be attributed to both the increased use of certain drugs across the nation and the changes in the drug test reporting process. Source: FARS 2016–2020

Alcohol is known to reduce brain functionality, muscle coordination, and other abilities needed for operating a vehicle safely. Even a small amount of alcohol can affect driving ability.

In 2020, drivers involved in fatal crashes with a positive BAC were 2.3 times more likely to be speeding and 4.3 times more likely to be unrestrained. Nearly 40 percent of speeding drivers and unrestrained drivers with known BAC were impaired (.08+ g/dL).

Figure 2. **Speeding Drivers and Unrestrained Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes by BAC Status*, 2020**



*Percent calculated across drivers with known BAC. In Georgia, drivers are considered alcohol-impaired when their BACs are .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Source: FARS 2020

Speeding

Drivers are considered to be speeding if they were charged with a speeding-related offense or if a police officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, exceeding the posted speed limit, or evading police was a contributing factor in the crash. A speeding-related fatality is any fatality that occurs in a speeding-related crash. See 'Data Considerations' for more information.

Speeding-Related Fatalities and Injuries

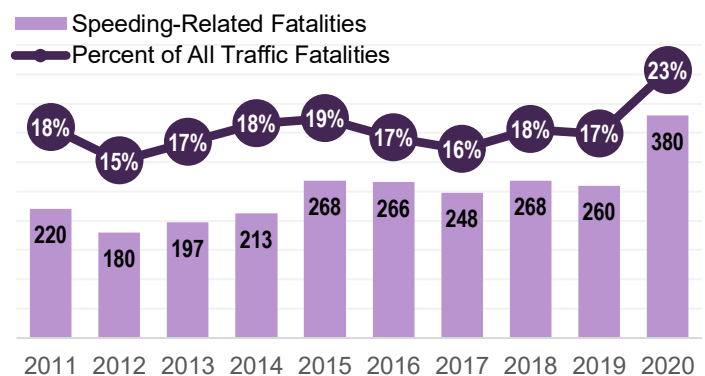
A ten-year trend shows that speeding-related fatalities increased by 73 percent, from 220 in 2011 to 380 in 2020.

Between 2019 and 2020, speeding-related fatalities increased by 46 percent, from 260 to 380 fatalities. Twenty-three percent of all traffic fatalities (380 out of 1,664) were speeding-related in 2020, compared to 17 percent (260 out of 1,492) in 2019.

In 2020, there were 1,127 persons with suspected serious injuries involved in speeding-related crashes — a 13 percent increase from the 976 speeding-related serious injuries in 2019. Figure 4 shows the percent of fatalities or serious injuries involving a least one confirmed speeding driver by person type in 2020.

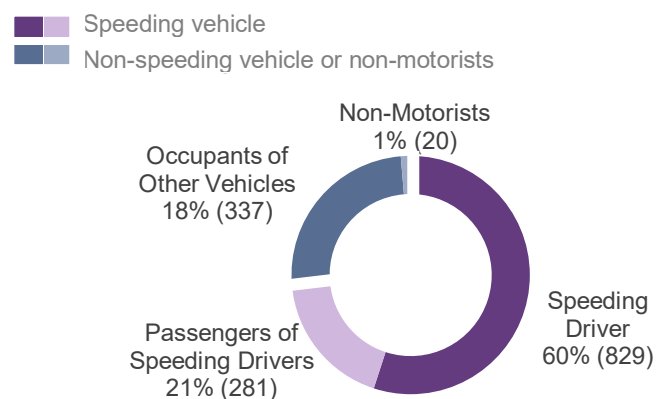
- 81 percent were in the speeding vehicle (represented by purple in Figure 4).
 - 60 percent were the speeding drivers themselves.
 - 21 percent were passengers of the speeding drivers.
- 19 percent were occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists (represented by blue in Figure 4).
 - 18 percent were occupants of other vehicles that were *not* operated by the speeding driver.
 - 1 percent were non-motorists (i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists).

Figure 3. **Speeding-Related Fatalities and Percent of Total Traffic-Related Fatalities, 2011-2020**



Source: FARS 2011–2020

Figure 4. **Percent of Persons Fatally or Seriously Injured in Speeding-Related Crashes by Person Type, 2020**



380 Fatal Injuries
1,127 Serious Injuries

Source: CODES 2020, FARS 2020

Speeding-Related Traffic Injuries During COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Response

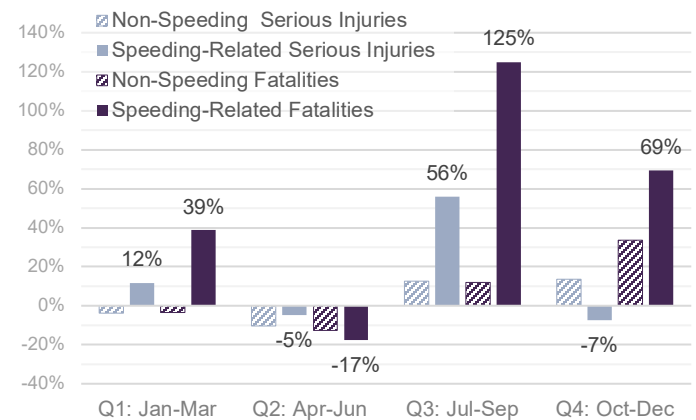
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic responses in 2020, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on Georgia roadways decreased by 13 percent compared to 2019 – from 133,333 million miles in 2019 to 115,884 million miles in 2020. Despite the decrease in VMT, Georgia experienced more speeding-related traffic crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities. Recent national studies observed higher speeds across all roadway classifications in urban settings in 2020 compared to 2019 (Center for Advanced Transportation Technology, 2020). Additionally, Elvik (2005) found that a 10% increase in the average speed of traffic was likely to have an adverse impact on traffic fatalities.

Figure 5 shows the percent change from 2019 in speeding-related and non-speeding serious injuries and fatalities by quarter for 2020. The number of speeding-related and non-speeding fatalities and serious injuries increased in the 3rd quarter 2020 in comparison to 2019.

- Speeding-related fatalities increased by 125 percent (more than doubling).
- Speeding-related serious injuries increased by 56 percent.
- Non-speeding fatalities and non-speeding serious injuries increased by 12 and 13 percent, respectively.

In the 2nd quarter of 2020, the number of speeding-related and non-speeding fatalities and serious injuries decreased in comparison to the previous year.

Figure 5. **Percentage Change from 2019 of Serious Injuries and Fatalities by Speeding Involvement and Quarter, 2020**



Source: CODES 2019-2020, FARS 2019-2020

See the “Traffic Safety During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency” issue brief for VMT and stay-at-home monthly trends in 2019 and 2020.

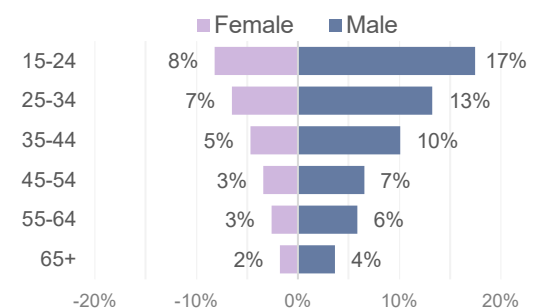
Driver Demographics

Age & Sex⁷

The proportion of speeding drivers involved in traffic crashes decreased with the increasing age of the driver. In 2020, drivers in the 15-to-24 age group represented the highest proportion of speeding drivers involved in traffic crashes (42 percent), serious injury crashes (36 percent), and fatal crashes (20 percent).

Among all age groups, young male drivers (15-to-24 years of age) were most likely to be speeding at the time of the serious injury or fatal crash. In 2020, 17 percent of young male drivers involved in serious injury or fatal crashes were also speeding at the time of the crash, highest among all age groups.

Figure 6. **Percent of Drivers Involved in Serious Injury and Fatal Crashes who were Speeding by Age Group and Sex, 2020**



Source: FARS 2020

⁷ Percents are calculated among drivers aged 15+ years with known age and sex

Previous Convictions and Citations

In 2020, 31 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had a previously recorded speeding conviction recorded within five years prior to the crash. Additionally, 22 percent had a previously recorded suspension or revocation of their driver's license.

Of all drivers issued one or more citations after a Georgia motor vehicle traffic crash in 2020, less than one percent received a speeding-related citation. However, the number of speeding-related citations issued increased by 12 percent from 395 in 2019 to 444 in 2020. From a law enforcement perspective, proving that speeding was a contributing factor in a crash is challenging.

Crash Characteristics

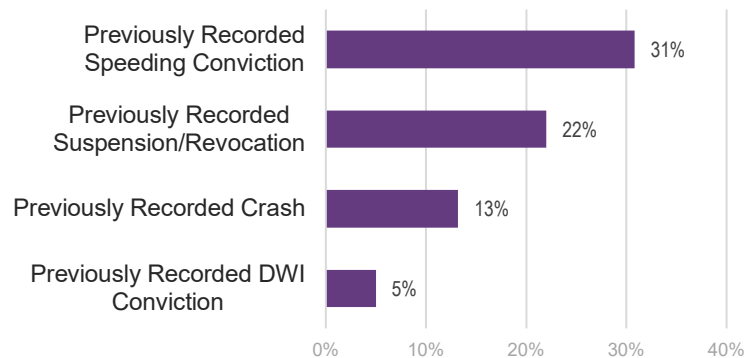
This section describes speeding-related crashes at the crash-level and not the driver-level or person-level. Speeding-related serious injury or fatal crashes are crashes that have at least one person (driver, passenger, or non-occupant) with a serious injury or fatality.

A three-year trend shows that speeding-related traffic crashes and serious injury crashes have steadily increased each year.

Between 2019 and 2020:

- Speeding-related fatal crashes increased by 53 percent;
- Speeding-related serious injury crashes increased by 16 percent; and
- Speeding-related traffic crashes increased by 15 percent.

Figure 7. **Previous 5-Year Driving Records of Speeding Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2020**



341 speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes
2,204 non-speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes

Note: Previously recorded convictions, suspensions, or revocations may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash.

Source: FARS 2020

The number of speeding-related convictions processed by the Department of Driver Services (DDS) decreased significantly in 2020 in comparison to the previous year, but this is likely due to the backlog experienced at many Georgia courts. The COVID-19 response caused many Georgia courts to temporarily postpone court hearings, including traffic court. Therefore, many convictions for speeding may not have been reported to DDS. The number of convictions reported with a citation date occurring in 2020 may be available in future reports as the judicial circuit reduces its backlogs.

Table 2. **Speeding-Related Crashes by Crash Type, 2018-2020**

Traffic Measure	2018	2019	2020
Speeding-related fatal crashes	248	220	337
Annual % Change	▲ 12%	▼ -11%	▲ 53%
Speeding-related serious injury crashes	521	799*	924
Annual % Change	▲ 32%	▲ 53%	▲ 16%
Speeding-related crashes	11,050	15,918	18,262
Annual % Change	▲ 9%	▲ 44%	▲ 15%

*DOT-523 Crash Report Manual Version 3.0 was revised January 2018 with a more detailed definition for serious injury.

Source: CODES 2018-2020, FARS 2018-2020

Urban vs. Rural⁸

In 2020, 102 out of 159 Georgia counties experienced at least one speeding-related fatal crash. Fulton, Cobb, DeKalb, and Clayton counties had the highest number of speeding-related fatal crashes—23 percent of all speeding-related crashes in Georgia were in these counties. While most speeding-related fatal crashes occur in the Atlanta region⁹ and other urban counties, the rate of speeding-related fatal crashes per 100M VMT was higher in rural counties. In 2020, the speeding-related fatal crashes per 100M VMT for the regions were:

- 0.78 in the Atlanta region (74 percent increase from 2019);
- 1.25 in other urban regions (nearly doubling from 2019); and
- 1.29 in rural regions (69 percent increase from 2019).

Table 3. **Speeding-Related Fatal Crashes, Percent of Fatal Crashes that are Speeding-Related, and Speeding-Related Fatal Crash Rate (per 100M VMT) by Region, 2019 and 2020**

Region	2019			2020		
	Number	Percent	Rate	Number	Percent	Rate
Atlanta Region (10 counties)	77	17%	0.51	102	22%	0.78
Other Urban Counties (31 counties)	75	17%	0.63	129	25%	1.25
Rural Counties (118 counties)	68	14%	0.76	106	19%	1.29
Statewide	220	16%	0.61	337	22%	1.06

Source: FARS 2019-2020

See the Appendix for 2018-2020 speeding-related fatal crashes by roadway function class, regional traffic enforcement network, and county.

Table 4 below shows the percent of speeding-related fatal crashes by region type and roadway classification in 2020.

- 31 percent of all Atlanta region speeding-related fatal crashes occurred on principal arterial roadways.
- 26 percent of all other urban speeding-related fatal crashes occurred on minor arterial roadways.
- 38 percent of all rural speeding-related fatal crashes occurred on collector roadways.

Table 4. **Speeding-Related Fatal Crashes by Roadway Function Class and Region, 2020**

Roadway Function Class*	Atlanta Region (10 counties)		Other Urban Counties (31 counties)		Rural Counties (118 counties)		Statewide (Georgia)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Interstate	15	15%	15	12%	7	7%	37	11%
Principal Arterial	32	31%	27	21%	13	12%	72	21%
Minor Arterial	28	27%	33	26%	19	18%	80	24%
Collector	9	9%	24	19%	40	38%	73	22%
Local	18	18%	30	23%	27	25%	75	22%
Total	102	100%	129	100%	106	100%	337	100%

*Principal arterials include freeways, multilane highways (e.g., Buford Highway in DeKalb County and SR-520 & US-82 in Atkinson County). Minor arterials are other important multilane roadways that supplement the highways (e.g., Spring Street in Fulton County and SR-56 in Richmond County). Collector roads are roads that connect local roads and streets with arterials.

Source: FARS 2020

⁸ Rural counties are counties that have a residential population less than 50,000 persons. This is different than roadway classifications where urban road systems can be located in urban clusters (or metropolitan areas) of at least 2,500 persons within the rural counties.

⁹ The Atlanta Region includes the ten counties that are defined by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC): Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties.

Environmental Characteristics

Table 5 shows the percentages of speeding-related fatal crashes and speeding-related traffic crashes by environmental characteristics (lighting conditions, weather conditions, time of day, and number of vehicles involved). There are differences in the environmental characteristics of speeding-related *fatal* crashes and all speeding-related *traffic* crashes that may or may not have injured persons.

- 52 percent of speeding-related *fatal* crashes occurred in dark conditions, whereas 59 percent of speeding-related *traffic* crashes occurred in daylight conditions.
- 31 percent of speeding-related *fatal* crashes occurred in the nighttime hours during the weekend, whereas 46 percent of speeding-related *traffic* crashes occurred in daytime hours during the weekday.
 - The percent of speeding-related fatal crashes that occurred during the peak traffic hours of 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. increased from 15 percent in 2019 to 21 percent in 2020.
- More than half of speeding-related fatal crashes and traffic crashes involved only one vehicle—the speeding vehicle. More single-vehicle *fatal* crashes occurred during the nighttime hours between 6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m. (39 percent), and more single-vehicle *traffic* crashes occurred during the daytime hours between 6:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m. (31 percent).

Table 5. **Environmental Characteristics of Speeding-Related Crashes, 2020**

Environmental Characteristics	Speeding-Related Fatal Crashes		Speeding-Related Traffic Crashes	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Light Conditions				
Daylight	153	45%	10,856	59%
Dark	176	52%	6,710	37%
Dawn	6	2%	293	2%
Dusk	2	1%	309	2%
Not Reported / Unknown	-	0%	94	1%
Weather Conditions				
Clear	225	67%	6,918	38%
Cloudy	62	18%	3,470	19%
Rain	47	14%	7,392	40%
Other	3	1%	482	3%
Day of Week and Time of Day				
Weekday	181	54%	12,588	69%
Daytime	87	26%	8,352	46%
Nighttime	94	28%	4,236	23%
Weekend	156	46%	5,674	31%
Daytime	51	15%	2,086	11%
Nighttime	105	31%	3,588	20%
Vehicles Involved				
Single-Vehicle	198	59%	10,716	59%
Daytime	66	20%	5,555	30%
Nighttime	132	39%	5,161	28%
Multi-Vehicle	139	41%	7,546	41%
Daytime	72	21%	4,883	27%
Nighttime	67	20%	2,663	15%

Weekday – 6:00 a.m. Monday to 5:59 p.m. Friday

Weekend – 6:00 p.m. Friday to 5:59 a.m. Monday

Daytime – 6:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.

Nighttime – 6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.

Source: CODES 2020, FARS 2020

Alcohol Impairment and Drug Use

Due to inherent limitations of the crash dataset, some drivers involved in traffic crashes do not have blood alcohol test results reported in the crash record. Therefore, missing blood alcohol concentration (BAC) values were imputed ('filled in' with plausible values) for fatal crashes. For non-fatal crashes, drivers suspected of alcohol may have had an alcohol test administered; however, the BAC results or findings may not have been validated or included in the final police crash report. The alcohol-impaired fatalities are estimates and totals may change depending on the level of detail reported in the figures and tables. Additionally, the definitions applied for drivers suspected of alcohol- and/or drug-impairment may change as reporting and surveillance improves.

Similarly, data on drug use was underreported in the past. The increase of reported drug involvement among drivers in the crash dataset can be attributed to both the increased use of certain drugs across the nation and the changes in the drug test reporting process. Refer to the 'Data Considerations' section at the end of this publication for more information.

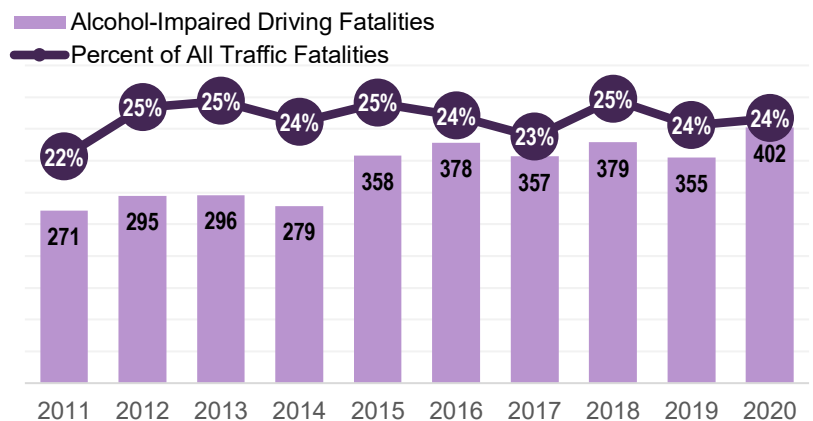
Alcohol-Impaired and Drug-Related Fatalities and Serious Injuries

Drivers are considered alcohol-impaired when their BACs are .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. In 2020, there were 402 traffic fatalities that involved at least one alcohol-impaired driver—a 13 percent increase from the 355 alcohol-impaired fatalities in 2019. These alcohol-impaired fatalities represented 24 percent of all traffic fatalities that occurred on Georgia roadways in 2020.

Reported drug-related fatalities increased more than 7 times—from 43 fatalities in 2019 to 331 fatalities in 2020. The increase of *confirmed* drugged driving and related traffic fatalities may be attributed to both the improvement of reporting drug test results in the crash reports and the increased use of certain drugs across the nation.

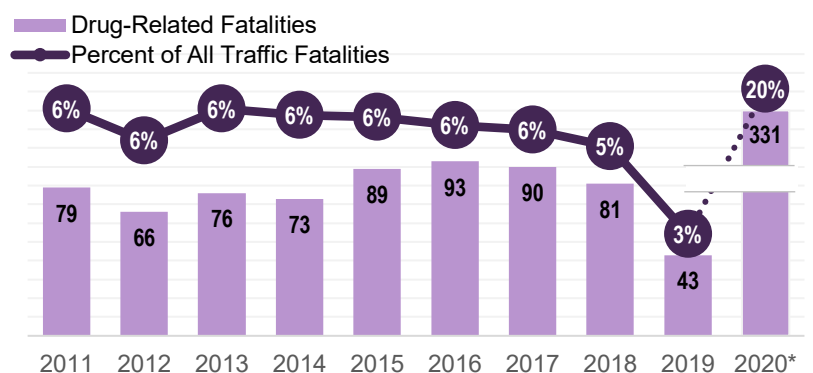
For more information on alcohol and drug testing among drivers involved in fatal crashes, see section “Alcohol and Drug Reporting” in this publication.

Figure 8. **Alcohol-Impaired Related Fatalities and Percent of Total Traffic-Related Fatalities, 2011-2020**



Source: NHTSA Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting, 2011–2020

Figure 9. **Drug-Related Fatalities and Percent of Total Traffic-Related Fatalities, 2011-2020***



The increase of confirmed drugged driving and related traffic fatalities in 2020 may be attributed to both the improvement of reporting drug test results in the crash reports and the increased use of certain drugs across the nation.

Source: FARS 2011-2020

Police officers can document the condition of drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes on the Georgia crash report. Through administration of tests and observations, law enforcement can confirm if alcohol and/or drugs were involved or if the driver is suspected of driving under the influence. In 2020, the number of serious injuries that involved confirmed and suspected alcohol impaired and/or drugged drivers increased by 5 percent— from 812 serious injuries in 2019 to 855 serious injuries in 2020.

Figure 10 shows the percent of fatalities involving at least one alcohol-impaired driver by person type in 2020.

- 38 percent were in the impaired driver’s vehicle (represented by purple in Figure 10).
 - 34 percent were the impaired drivers themselves.
 - 4 percent were passengers of the impaired driver.
- 63 percent were occupants of other vehicles or non-motorists (represented by blue in Figure 10).
 - 54 percent were occupants of other vehicles that were *not* operated by the impaired driver.
 - 9 percent were non-motorists (i.e., pedestrians or bicyclists).

In 2020, 43 percent of all alcohol-related fatal crashes involved more than one vehicle. When an alcohol-impaired driver was involved in a multi-vehicle crash, most of the fatalities were among occupants of the other vehicle or non-motorists.

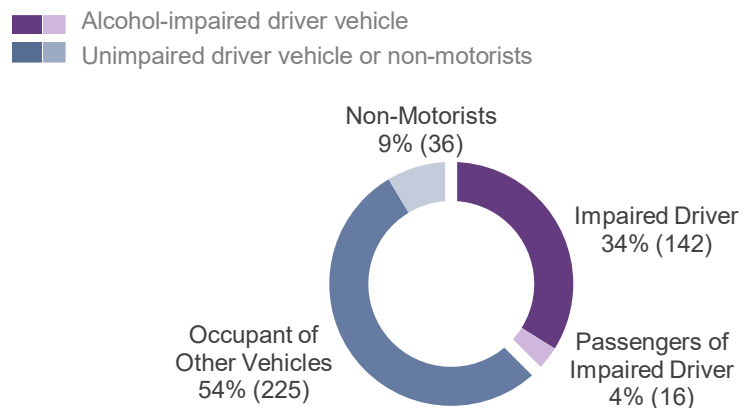
Table 6. **Suspected Serious Injuries* Involving Alcohol Impaired and/or Drugged Drivers by Police Reported Driver Condition, 2018-2020**

Driver Condition**	2018	2019	2020	2019-2020 Percent Change	
Confirmed alcohol impairment and/or drug use	459	378	401	▲	6.0%
Suspected alcohol impairment and/or drug use	259	434	454	▲	5.0%
Confirmed and suspected alcohol impairment and/or drug use	718	812	855	▲	5.3%

*DOT-523 Crash Report Manual Version 3.0 was revised January 2018 with a more specified definition for serious injury. **Confirmed cases can include drivers that used alcohol only, drugs only, or both alcohol and drugs. See data considerations for what is included under suspected.

Source: CODES 2018-2020

Figure 10. **Percent of Persons Fatally Injured in Crashes Involving Alcohol-Impaired Drivers by Person Type, 2020**



419 Alcohol-Impaired Fatalities

Percent totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Source: CODES 2020, FARS 2020

According to the 2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 13 percent of Georgia high school students rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times during the 30 days before the survey.

Driver Demographics

Alcohol and Drug Reporting

Accurate and complete reporting for alcohol and or drug involvement in motor vehicle traffic crashes is essential to monitoring alcohol-impaired and/or drug-related crashes in Georgia. Over the years, alcohol test results were reported for more drivers that were fatally injured than those that survived. In 2020, BACs were reported for 50 percent of all fatally injured drivers and 19 percent of all surviving drivers who were involved in fatal crashes.

- 33 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were tested for alcohol — a slight decrease from the proportions tested for alcohol in 2019.
- The number and proportions of drivers with unknown alcohol test status increased from only 2 drivers in 2019 to 257 drivers in 2020.

Unlike BAC testing, there is no measure of the amount of drugs present in the driver's system. Drivers who receive drug tests are screened for the presence of narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, cannabinoids, phencyclidines (PCP), anabolic steroids, and inhalants. Currently, drug-specific concentration levels are not equated with a degree of drug impairment, therefore it is challenging to distinguish between the presence of drugs and impairment by drugs. Additionally, drug involvement may not imply that the drivers were impaired at the time of the crash.

In 2020, the drugs testing reporting process in Georgia improved and more positive drug results were reported among drivers involved in fatal crashes that were tested.

- 38 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes (904 out of 2,365) were tested for drugs—a 28 percent increase from the 701 drivers tested for drugs in 2019.
- 25 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes tested positive for drugs.
- 36 percent of drugged drivers involved in fatal crashes tested positive for cannabinoids in their system (e.g., marijuana or tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)) and 28 percent had stimulants (e.g., cocaine or amphetamine) in their system.

Table 7. Alcohol Test Status for Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2019-2020

Alcohol Test Status	2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not tested	1,405	64%	1,329	56%
Tested	777	36%	779	33%
<i>No Alcohol (0 g/dL)</i>	529	24%	416	18%
<i>Less than .08 g/dL</i>	39	2%	46	2%
<i>.08 - 0.14 g/dL</i>	53	2%	46	2%
<i>More than .15 g/dL</i>	101	5%	131	6%
<i>Results unknown</i>	55	3%	140	6%
Not reported / Unknown	2	0%	257	11%
Total Drivers	2,184	100%	2,365	100%

Source: FARS 2019-2020

The Georgia **Implied Consent Notice** (§ 40-5-67.1 enacted on April 29, 2019) prohibits law enforcement officers from informing drivers that refusal to take breath tests may be used against them in court; however, officers can still mandate blood or urine tests. As a result, officers frequently used more blood and urine tests to confirm driver chemical impairment (alcohol and/or drugs)—a reporting process that takes longer than breath tests. The delayed confirmation of test results led to fewer confirmed cases of impairment and more suspected cases of impairment in the police crash report.

Table 8. Drug Test Status for Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2019-2020

Drug Test Status	2019		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not tested	1,482	68%	1,367	58%
Tested	701	32%	900	38%
<i>No drugs reported</i>	398	18%	186	8%
<i>Drugs found</i>	234	11%	595	25%
<i>Results unknown</i>	69	3%	119	5%
Not reported / Unknown	1	0%	98	4%
Total Drivers	2,184	100%	2,365	100%

Source: FARS 2019-2020

Age & Sex

The proportion of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in traffic crashes decreased with the increasing age of the driver after the age of 25 years. Additionally, people under 21 years of age are legally prohibited from drinking alcohol.

- Young adult drivers (age 21-to-24 years) represented 17 percent of all alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes (21 out of 176).
- Among all age groups, male drivers 25-to-34 years of age were most likely to be impaired at the time of the fatal crash. In 2020, 40 percent of male drivers within this age group were alcohol impaired at the time of a fatal crash—the highest proportion among all other age groups.

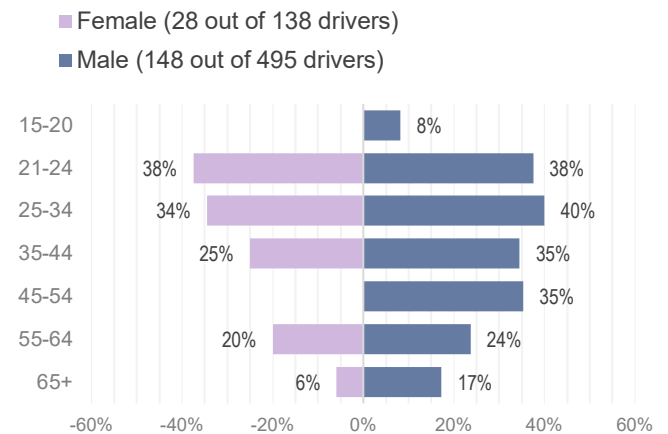
In 2020, the highest proportions of drugged drivers involved in fatal crashes were among male drivers in the 15-to-24 age group (19 percent) and female drivers in the 35-to-44 age group (18 percent). The most commonly reported drug types among young adult male drivers were cannabinoids and stimulants. The most commonly reported drug types among female drivers aged 35-to-44 years were stimulants and depressants.

Previous Convictions and Citations

In 2020, 10 percent of alcohol-impaired and/or drugged drivers involved in fatal crashes had a previously recorded DWI conviction (driving while intoxicated or impaired) within five years prior to the crash. These drivers were also 5 times more likely to have a previously recorded DWI conviction compared to unimpaired drivers involved in a fatal crash.

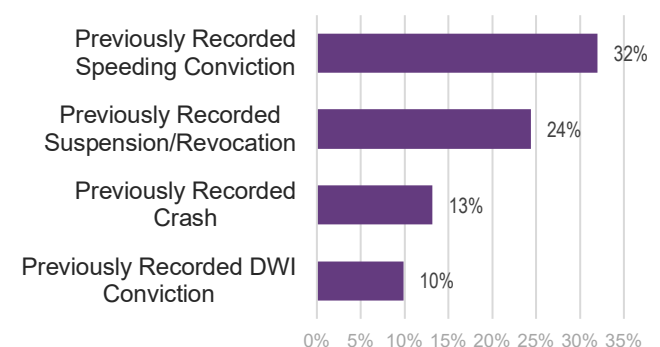
Of all drivers issued one or more citations after a Georgia motor vehicle traffic crash in 2020, 4 percent received an alcohol- and/or drug-related citation.¹⁰ The number of alcohol- and/or drug-related citations issued increased by 8 percent from 8,305 in 2019 to 8,981 in 2020.

Figure 11. **Percent of Drivers with Known BAC Involved in Fatal Crashes that were Alcohol-Impaired by Age Group and Sex, 2020**



Source: FARS 2020

Figure 12. **Previous 5-Year Driving Records of Alcohol-Impaired and/or Drugged Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2020**



447 alcohol-impaired and/or drugged drivers

Note: Previously recorded convictions, suspensions, or revocations may or may not have resulted in a motor vehicle traffic crash.
Source: FARS 2020

¹⁰ Alcohol-related legal codes: O.C.G.A. 40-6-391, 40-6-391(a), 40-6-391(a)(1), 40-6-391(a)(2), 40-6-391(a)(3), 40-6-391(a)(4), 40-6-391(a)(5), 40-6-391(a)(6), 40-6-391(c)(4), 40-6-391(l), 40-6-391(k)(1), 40-6-391(l)

Crash Characteristics

This section describes alcohol- and/or drug-related crashes at the crash-level and not the driver-level or person-level. Additionally, an alcohol- and/or drug-related crash is any crash that involves a driver confirmed or suspected of alcohol impairment and/or drug use. If any crash results in a suspected serious injury or fatality, it is considered a serious injury or fatal crash. See “Data Considerations” for more information regarding definitions.

While the number of alcohol- and/or drug-related crashes stayed nearly the same between 2019 and 2020, the number of serious and fatal injuries associated with these crashes increased. Between 2019 and 2020:

- Alcohol-impaired-related fatal crashes increased by 15 percent, and
- Alcohol- and/or drug-related serious injury crashes increased by 5 percent.

Table 9. **Alcohol- and/or Drug-Related Crashes by Crash Type, 2018-2020**

Traffic Measure	2018	2019	2020
Alcohol-impaired-related fatal crashes	351	325	373
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▲ 3%	▼ -7%	▲ 15%
Drug-related fatal crashes	74	39	300
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▼ -18%	▼ -47%	** **
Alcohol- and/or drug-related serious injury crashes	628	670	701
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▼ -52%*	▲ 7%	▲ 5%
Alcohol- and/or drug-related crashes	6,502	8,562	8,500
<i>Annual % Change</i>	▼ -22%	▲ 32%	▼ -1%

**Annual change is not computed due to changes in the drug test reporting process between 2019 and 2020. See ‘Data Considerations’ for more information on confirmed and suspected alcohol-impaired and/or drugged drivers involved in crashes.

Source: NHTSA Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting 2018-2020, CODES 2018-2020, FARS 2018-2020

Urban vs. Rural

In 2020, 127 out of 159 Georgia counties experienced at least one alcohol-impaired-related fatal crash. Twenty-seven percent of all alcohol-related crashes in Georgia were in five Metro-Atlanta counties—Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton counties

Rural regions (118 counties) experienced the highest number and rate of alcohol-related fatal crashes.

In 2020, the alcohol-impaired-related fatal crashes per 100M VMT for the regions were:

- 0.90 in the Atlanta region (15 percent increase from 2019);
- 1.19 in other urban regions (49 percent increase from 2019); and
- 1.68 in rural regions (35 percent increase from 2019).

Table 10. **Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes, Percent of Fatal Crashes that are Alcohol-Related, and Alcohol-Related Fatal Crash Rate (per 100M VMT) by Region, 2019 and 2020**

Region	2019			2020		
	Number	Percent	Rate	Number	Percent	Rate
Atlanta Region (10 counties)	119	26%	0.79	119	26%	0.90
Other Urban Counties (31 counties)	95	21%	0.80	123	24%	1.19
Rural Counties (118 counties)	111	23%	1.24	138	25%	1.68
Statewide	325	24%	0.91	373	25%	1.18

NHTSA estimates alcohol involvement when alcohol test results are unknown; therefore, the sum of crashes by individual region may not equal to the total number of alcohol-impaired crashes statewide.

Source: NHTSA Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting 2020

See the Appendix for 2018-2020 alcohol-related fatal crashes by regional traffic enforcement network and county.

Table 11 below shows the percent of alcohol-related fatal crashes by region type and roadway classification in 2020.

- 29 percent of all Atlanta region alcohol-related fatal crashes occurred on *principal arterial* roadways.
- 26 percent of all other urban alcohol-related fatal crashes occurred on *minor arterial* roadways.
- 29 percent of all rural alcohol-related fatal crashes occurred on *collector* roadways.

Table 11. **Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes by Roadway Function Class and Region, 2020**

Roadway Function Class*	Atlanta Region (10 counties)		Other Urban (31 counties)		Rural Counties (118 counties)		Statewide (Georgia)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Interstate	28	24%	10	8%	4	3%	42	11%
Principal Arterial	35	29%	29	24%	22	16%	88	24%
Minor Arterial	30	25%	32	26%	25	18%	90	24%
Collector	9	8%	20	16%	40	29%	73	20%
Local	17	14%	30	24%	32	23%	80	21%
Total**	119	100%	123	100%	138	100%	373	100%

* Principal arterials include freeways, multilane highways (e.g., Buford Highway in DeKalb County and SR-520 & US-82 in Atkinson County). Minor arterials are other important multilane roadways that supplement the highways (e.g., Spring Street in Fulton County and SR-56 in Richmond County). Collector roads are roads that connect local roads and streets with arterials. ** NHTSA estimates alcohol involvement when alcohol test results are unknown; therefore, the sum of crashes by individual region or roadway function class may not equal to the total number of alcohol-impaired crashes statewide.

Source: NHTSA Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting 2020

Environmental Characteristics

Table 12 shows the percentages of alcohol- and/or drug-related fatal crashes and traffic crashes by environmental characteristics (lighting conditions, time of day, and number of vehicles involved). In 2020, most alcohol and/or drug-related *fatal* crashes and *traffic* crashes occurred during weekends during the nighttime.

More than half of alcohol and/or drug-related fatal crashes and traffic crashes involved only one vehicle—the vehicle with the impaired driver. More single-vehicle fatal and traffic crashes occurred during the nighttime hours between 6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.

Table 12. **Environmental Characteristics of Alcohol- and/or Drug-Related Crashes, 2020**

Environmental Characteristics	Alcohol- and/or Drug-Related Fatal Crashes		Alcohol- and/or Drug-Related* Traffic Crashes	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Light Conditions				
Daylight	224	39%	3,019	36%
Dark	322	56%	5,257	62%
Dawn	10	2%	82	1%
Dusk	15	3%	139	2%
Day of Week and Time of Day**				
Weekday	306	53%	4,401	52%
Daytime	147	26%	1,843	22%
Nighttime	158	28%	2,558	30%
Weekend	265	46%	4,099	48%
Daytime	62	11%	747	9%
Nighttime	202	35%	3,352	39%
Vehicles Involved				
Single-Vehicle	299	52%	5,523	65%
Daytime	75	13%	1,500	18%
Nighttime	222	39%	4,023	47%
Multi-Vehicle	272	48%	2,977	35%
Daytime	134	23%	1,090	13%
Nighttime	138	24%	1,887	22%

* Includes crashes where drivers were confirmed or suspected of alcohol and/or drug impairment. See 'Data Considerations' for more information. ** Two fatal crashes with unknown time were not included.

Source: CODES 2020, FARS 2020

Drowsy Driving

A drowsy-driving crash is a crash in which the driver was reported as drowsy or sleepy based on the police accident report. Underreporting of the occurrence of drowsy driving is most likely due to lack of firm evidence of such involvement since investigation is done after the crash.

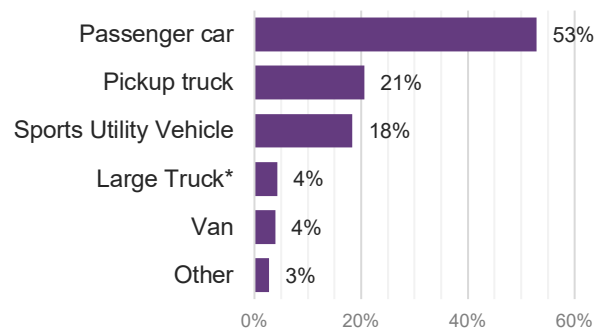
- In 2020, drowsy driving was reported to be involved in less than one percent of all traffic crashes and represented one percent of all serious injuries and one percent of all traffic fatalities.
- Twenty-three percent of reported drowsy-related crashes occurred in the early morning hours between 5:00 am and 7:59 am compared to the 11 percent that occurred between midnight and 2:59 am.
- Among the drivers reported to be drowsy in 2020, more than half were operating passenger cars and four percent were operating large trucks.

Table 13. **Traffic Crashes, Serious Injuries, and Fatalities Involving Drowsy Drivers, 2018-2020**

Year	Crashes	Serious Injuries	Fatalities
2018	2,062	177	24
2019	2,674	144	18
2020	1,985	101	20
3-Year Total	6,721	422	62
3-Year Average	2,240	141	21

Source: CODES 2018-2020, FARS 2018-2020

Figure 13. **Vehicle Types of Drowsy Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2020**



Source: FARS 2020

* Large trucks include commercial and non-commercial vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating greater than 10,000 pounds.

Other Risky Driving

Distracted Driving

In 2020, nearly half (47 percent) of motor vehicle traffic crashes fit the criteria of having at least one confirmed or suspected distracted driver.¹¹ Among the 600,000 drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 2 percent were confirmed to be distracted seconds before the crash, 26 percent were suspected of distraction, and 23 percent were undistracted drivers. All other drivers (53 percent) were not involved in distraction-related crashes.

There were 55 fatal crashes that involved at least one confirmed distraction (4 percent of all fatal crashes). In these confirmed distraction-related crashes, 61 fatalities occurred (4 percent of all traffic-related fatalities). The true number of distraction-related fatal crashes and fatalities is likely much higher.

See the **“Distracted Driving”** Georgia Traffic Safety Facts for more information regarding distracted-related crashes.

¹¹ Although it is challenging for law enforcement to determine whether distraction is a contributing factor in a fatal crash, the police crash report may be the only source available for this information. Therefore, the number of confirmed distraction-related fatal crashes is underreported.

Restraint Use

In 2020, there were 1,664 traffic fatalities in Georgia, of which 1,072 (64 percent) were occupants of passenger vehicles¹². Of the 1,072 passenger vehicle occupants fatally injured, 505 (47 percent) were restrained, and 465 (43 percent) were unrestrained at the time of the crash. Restraint use was not known for the remaining 102 (10 percent) occupants. For those passenger vehicle occupants who were fatally injured, 52 percent were restrained and 39 percent were unrestrained.

See the **“Occupant Protection”** Georgia Traffic Safety Facts for more information regarding restraint use and passenger safety.

Rural areas have a higher proportion of unrestrained seriously injured occupants compared to other regions. In 2020, 31 percent of seriously injured occupants (in all seating positions) in rural areas were unrestrained – compared to 24 percent in other urban regions and 13 percent in the Atlanta region.

Table 14: **Passenger Vehicle Occupants 13+ Years by Restraint Use, Injury Type, and Region Type, 2020**

Restraint Use by Injury Type		Atlanta Region (10 counties)		Other Urban (31 counties)		Rural Counties (118 counties)		Statewide	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Fatally Injured	Restrained	127	45%	167	48%	186	48%	499	52%
	Unrestrained	111	39%	146	42%	182	47%	376	39%
	Unknown	45	16%	32	9%	23	6%	89	9%
	Total	283	100%	345	100%	391	100%	964	100%
Suspected Serious Injuries	Restrained	1,455	63%	1,113	65%	825	58%	3,393	62%
	Unrestrained	300	13%	406	24%	448	31%	1,154	21%
	Unknown	537	23%	200	12%	157	11%	894	16%
	Total	2,292	100%	1,719	100%	1,430	100%	5,441	100%

Note: Passenger vehicles include passenger cars and light trucks (SUVs, pickups, vans, and other light trucks). The table does not include 'other' types of restraint used by passengers 13+ years. The table only considers shoulder and/or lap belt use restraint systems. Source: CODES 2020, FARS 2020

¹² The number of total passenger vehicle occupant fatalities may be different than the values reported by FARS due to the definitions and classifications of passenger vehicles. Passenger vehicles are defined as motor vehicles with gross vehicle weight ratings of 10,000 pounds or less and include passenger cars and light trucks (SUVs, pickups, vans, and other light trucks).

Data Definitions and Considerations:

A traffic crash is defined as an incident that involved one or more motor vehicles where at least one vehicle was in transport, and the crash originated on a public traffic way, such as a road or highway. Crashes that occurred on private property, including parking lots and driveways, are excluded. Fatal crashes are defined as crashes involving a motor vehicle traveling on a traffic way customarily open to the public and resulting in the death of a motorist or a non-motorist within 30 days of the crash.

DOT-523 Crash Report Manual Version 3.0 was revised January 2018 with a more detailed definition for serious injury that aligns with the MMUCC guidelines. Serious injuries are those suspected serious injuries reported by law enforcement and used when any injury, other than fatal injury, prevents the injured person from walking, driving, or normally continuing the activities the person was capable of before the injury occurred. A suspected serious injury may result in one or more of the following: • Severe laceration resulting in exposure of underlying tissues/muscle/organs or resulting in significant loss of blood • Broken or distorted extremity (arm or leg) • Crush injuries • Suspected skull, chest or abdominal injury other than bruises or minor lacerations • Significant burns (second and third-degree burns over ten percent or more of the body) • Unconsciousness when taken from the crash scene • Paralysis.

Drivers are considered to be speeding if they were charged with a speeding-related offense or if a police officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, exceeding the posted speed limit, or evading police was a contributing factor in the crash. Drivers operating the following vehicle types were excluded from the speeding analyses: pedalcycles/bicycles, all-terrain vehicles, golf carts/go carts, and farm/construction equipment.

For fatal crashes only, Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) values are imputed to address missing blood alcohol test results in FARS data system. A multiple imputation methodology is employed to generate specific values of BAC for persons involved in fatal crashes. "No alcohol" refers to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .00 grams per deciliter (g/dL). For motorists and non-motorists involved in a motor vehicle traffic crash that may or may not result in a fatal injury, many drivers confirmed or suspected of alcohol impairment will not have a BAC value reported in the police crash report. Drivers suspected of alcohol may have an alcohol test administered; however, the results or findings were not validated or included in the final police crash report.

Suspected and confirmed alcohol impairment and/or drug use is determined by the driver condition reported on the police crash reports. If the driver condition is unknown, and the police reported that an alcohol or drug test was administered with a positive or unknown result, then the driver is considered to be 'suspected' of alcohol impairment and/or drug use.

Rural counties have a population of less than 50,000 according to the United States decennial census of 2010 or any future such census (O.C.G.A. Section 31-6-2). This is different than roadway classifications, where urban road systems can be located in urban clusters (or metropolitan areas) of at least 2,500 persons within the rural counties.

Police crash reports are reviewed in a post hoc analysis by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Transportation using a jointly developed definition of suspected distracted driving based on multiple factors. The imputation of suspected distracted drivers includes drivers that indicate emotional distress and evidence of driver inattention and distraction. The imputation removes driver contributing factors that include drug/alcohol impairment, sleepiness/drowsiness, aggressive/reckless driving, and speeding.

Additional Information:

Other general information on motorcycle safety and traffic safety facts may be accessed at:

- [Appendix: Risky Driving Georgia Traffic Safety Facts](#)
- <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/highway-safety/shsp/>

Other traffic safety facts are available online at the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety and Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation Systems (CODES): Traffic Safety During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, Distracted Drivers, Occupant Protection, Non-Motorist (Pedestrians and Bicyclists), Motorcycle Safety, Young Adult Drivers, and Older Drivers.

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