

Motor Vehicle Crashes in Riverside County, 2006

Key Findings

- In 2006, there were 10,825 motor vehicle crashes which resulted in 316 on-the-scene fatalities. Of those fatalities, 71% occurred among motor vehicle occupants, 9% among motorcycle riders and the remaining 20% occurred among pedestrians and bicyclists.
- In 2006, there were over 12,000 reported injuries resulting from crashes involving motor vehicles.
- Annually, one motor vehicle crash-related fatality occurs in Riverside County each day.

Background

In Riverside County, there were 10,886 motor vehicle crashes in 2005, with 303 fatalities. In 2006, there were 10,825 crashes in Riverside County with 316 fatalities, resulting in a 4% increase in motor vehicle-related fatalities. The large number of commuters on Riverside County roadways may have contributed to the increase in fatalities experienced by the county.

As motor vehicle ownership has become easier to attain, motor vehicle travel is now considered the primary mode of transportation. With increased numbers of vehicles on the roadways, along with increased miles traveled, the risk for motor vehicle crash increases. However, many other risk factors exist, such as speeding, impaired and distracted driving.

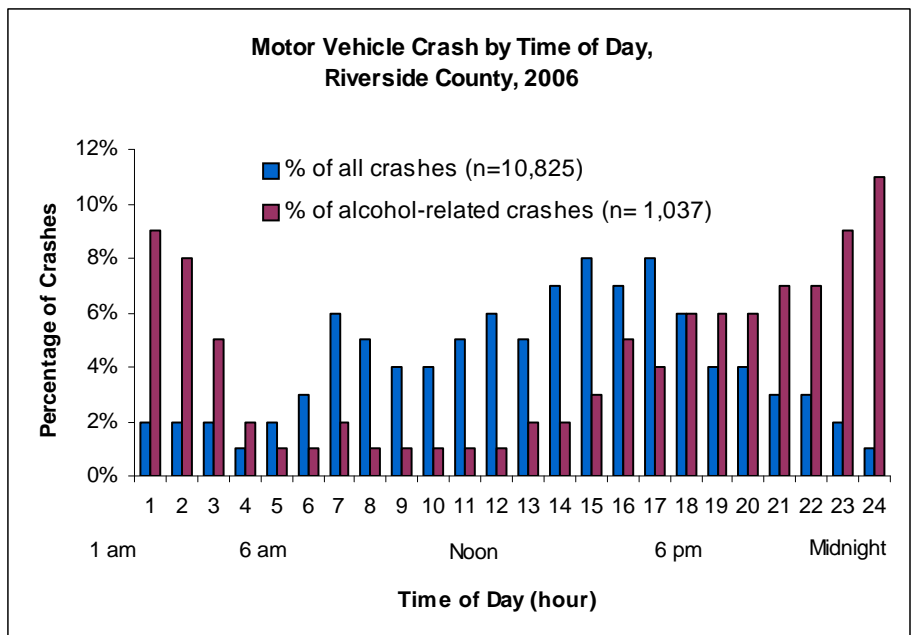
Introduction

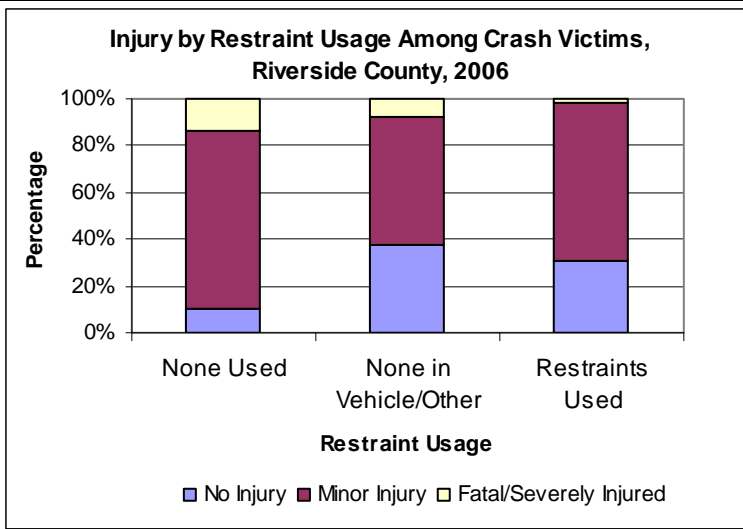
Injury remains one of the leading causes of death and disability across age groups, with motor vehicle crash as the leading cause of injury-related death. Between 2005 and 2006, the nation experienced a two percent decrease in motor vehicle fatalities, the lowest seen in five years as indicated by the 2006 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment prepared by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). This brief will examine the incidence of motor vehicle crash in Riverside County in 2006. It will also describe motor vehicle crash by time of day, restraint usage or seatbelt usage, motor vehicle crash-related fatalities and the most common causes of these collisions.

Incidence of motor vehicle crash

Motor vehicle crash incidence appears to increase during daytime hours when a greater percentage of drivers are on the road. Almost 75% of motor vehicle crashes took place between the hours of 6am and 6pm.

Conversely, the greatest percentage of alcohol-related crashes took place during the evening hours, between 7pm and 3am, decreasing dramatically during daytime hours. Of all alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, 72% took place between 7pm and 3am. The data illustrates the need for prevention and intervention efforts aimed at motor vehicle drivers, more specifically those who drive under the influence of alcohol.





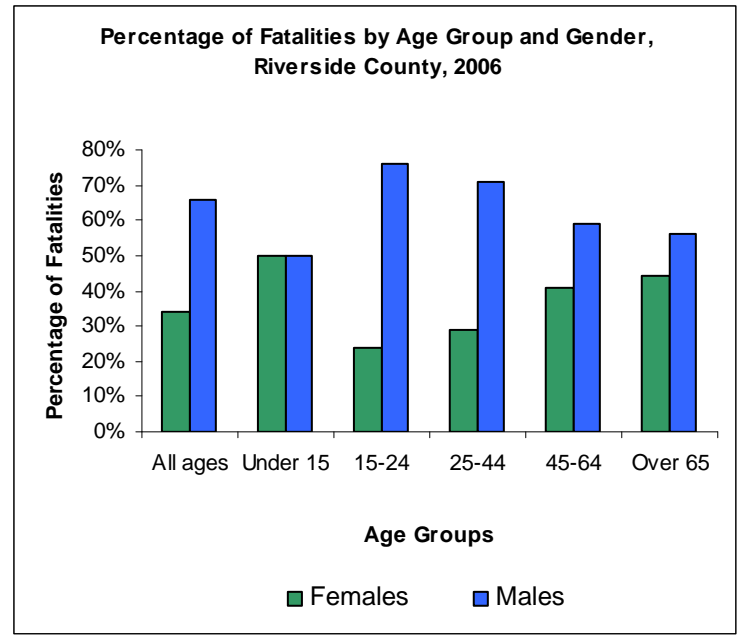
Source: Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS), 2006

Who is at greatest risk of motor vehicle-related fatality?

In 2006, males represented 66% of all motor vehicle-related fatalities in Riverside County. However, when we examine those ages 15-24, males represent 76% of these fatalities. When certain groups are examined, the percentage of males involved in fatal collisions increase. For example, those between 16 and 21 years of age have reached their driving debut. With limited experience behind the wheel, they are at an increased risk for motor vehicle crash. This group represented 15% of all motor vehicle fatalities and 78% of these fatalities were among males. As age increases, the disparity between males and females narrows, although males continue to be affected at a greater percentage than females. Regardless of gender, those 25-44 experience the greatest percentage of motor vehicle crash-related fatalities, followed closely by those in the 45-64 age group.

Does restraint usage reduce severe or fatal injury?

Restrained crash victims endure less injury and experience lower incidence of severe and fatal injuries compared to those who were not restrained. Minor injuries experienced among the restrained may be attributed to motor vehicle restraint devices which may cause bruising and is still reported as an injury. Of those who were unrestrained, 90% were killed or reported injuries from severe to minor complaints. The proportion of those who suffered severe or fatal injuries was seven times greater among those unrestrained compared to those who were restrained.



Source: Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS), 2006

What are the most common causes of crashes?

The most common cause of crashes in 2006 was unsafe speed. It is evident that the most frequent causes of motor vehicle crashes are those that are predictable and preventable events, linked to behaviors and choice making. The more common violations reported in 2006 included unsafe speed, improper turning, non-adherence to automobile right of way, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and disobeying traffic signs and signals. Sixty percent of all violators were male and about two and a half percent of all crashes had no known documented cause.

There is much discussion in peer-reviewed literature surrounding distracting behaviors, such as cell phone usage, and the possible increased risk of a motor vehicle collision. Data on cell phone utilization showed equal use among males and females. However, data on cell phone usage along with other distracting behaviors such as eating and smoking was gathered inconsistently and is, therefore, not reliable.

Suggested Citation

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Reference:

The 2006 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment—A Preview. National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) National Center for Statistics and Analysis, July 2007.



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