

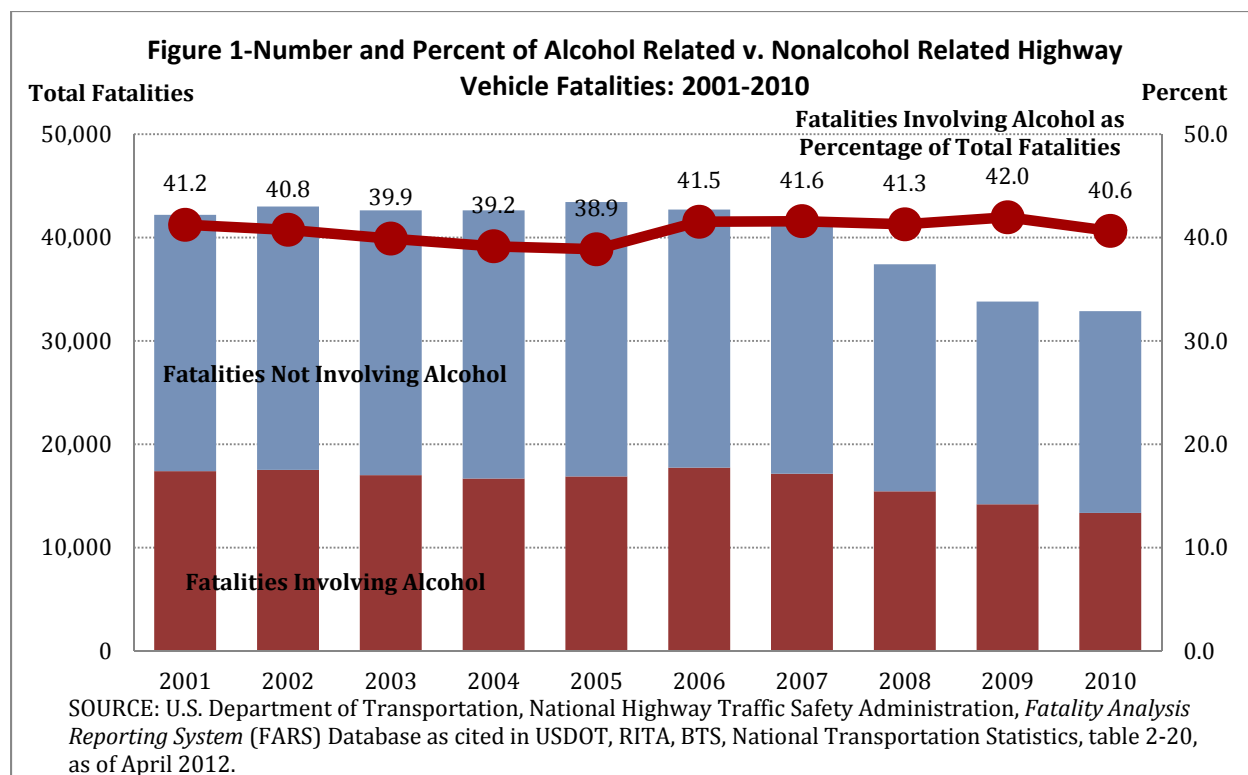
# Drunk Driving by the Numbers

By Matthew Chambers, Mindy Liu, and Chip Moore

Every 2-hours, three people are killed in alcohol-related highway crashes. The consequences of drinking and driving are arrests, property damage, injuries, and thousands of deaths each year. An estimated 4 million U.S. adults reported driving under the influence of alcohol at least once in 2010—yielding an estimated 112 million alcohol-impaired driving episodes. Men accounted for 81 percent of these incidents.<sup>1</sup>

Given the rate of driving under the influence of alcohol, it is remarkable that the fatality rate is not greater. Alcohol-related highway crashes accounted for 13,365 deaths in 2010 (as shown in figure 1). In addition, alcohol-related highway crashes annually cost Americans an estimated \$37 billion.<sup>2</sup>

However, drunk driving awareness and enforcement efforts such as Zero Tolerance Laws may be having a positive impact. The percentage of alcohol-related fatalities decreased from 50.6 percent in 1990 to 42 percent in 2009. And all 50 States, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, now have a 0.08 blood alcohol concentration limit for determining if drivers are driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI), up from just 2 in 1990.<sup>3</sup> Among major crimes, driving under the influence has one of the highest arrest rates with more than 1.4 million DUI arrests in 2010.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Vital Signs: Alcohol-Impaired Driving among Adults - United States, 2010*; available at <http://www.cdc.gov> as of April 2012.

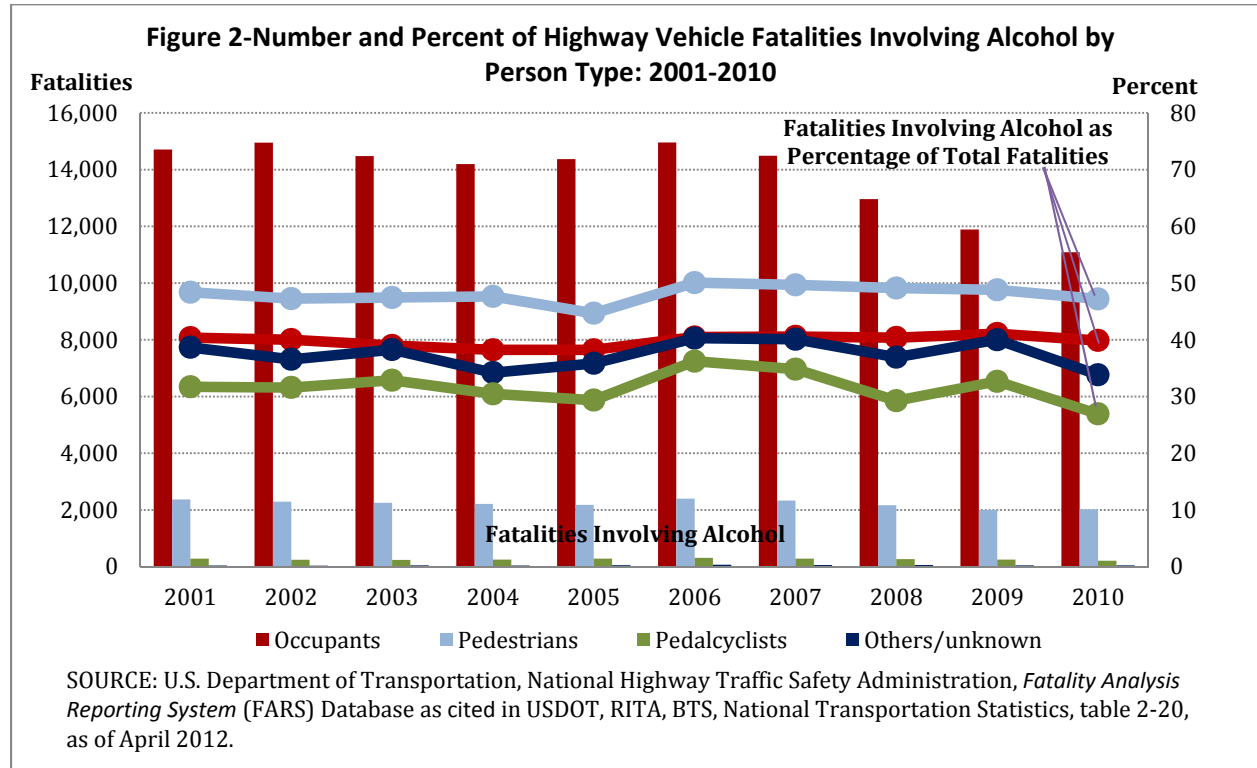
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, *Impaired Driving*, available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/> as of April 2012.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, National Transportation Statistics, *Table 2-27 - Number of States with Different Types of Anti-DUI / DWI Legislation in Effect as of January 1 of the Listed Year*, available at <http://www.bts.gov> as of April 2012.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Report*, available at <http://www.fbi.gov/> as of April 2012.

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In 2010, alcohol was involved in 2,020 (or 47.2 percent) of pedestrian fatalities, 11,087 (or 39.9 percent) of vehicle occupant fatalities, 209 (or 33.8 percent) of pedal cyclist fatalities (as shown in Figure 2). Pedestrians are more vulnerable than highway vehicle occupants are. In addition, drivers involved in traffic crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities had less than two-thirds the rate of alcohol involvement as did the pedestrians killed.<sup>5</sup>

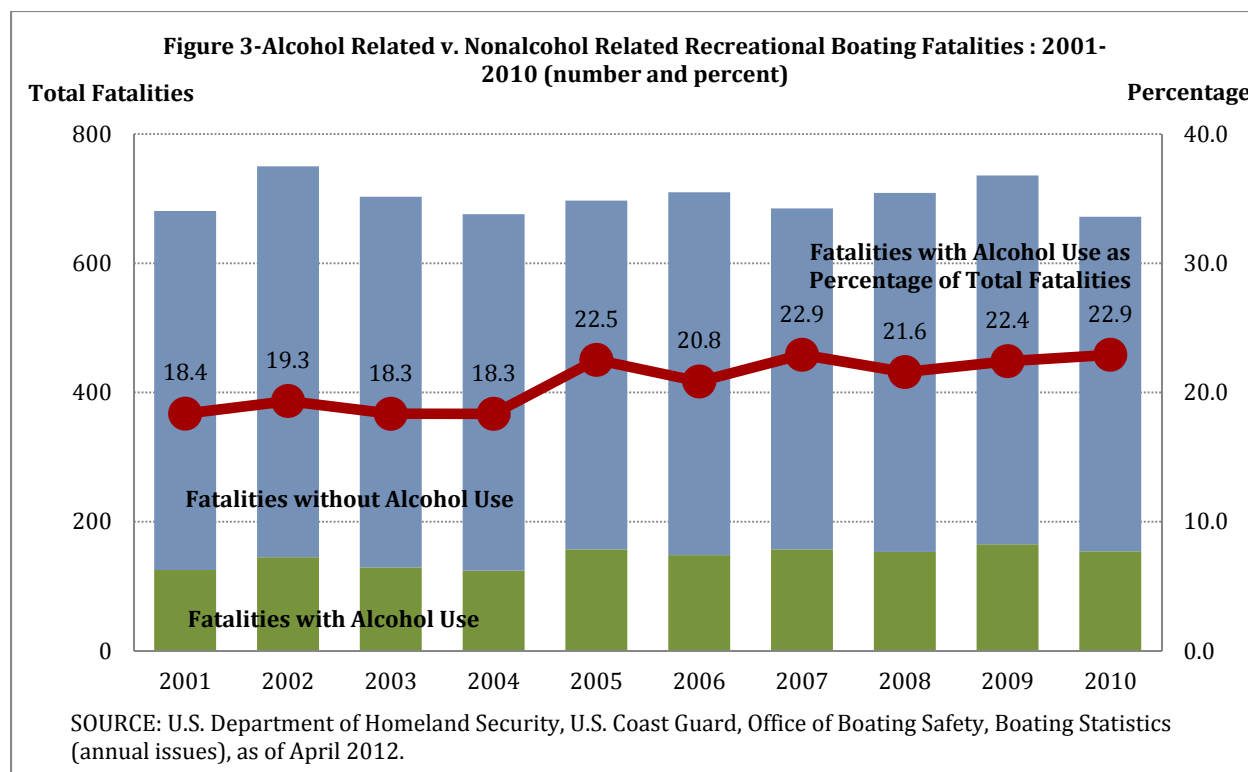


Similarly, alcohol can impair a boater’s judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard reported 154 recreational boating fatalities (or 22.9 percent) which involved alcohol use as a contributing factor in 2010 (as shown in Figure 3).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance, *Traffic Safety Facts, 2009: Pedestrian*, available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/> as of April 2012.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, *Risky Drinking Can Put a Chill on Your Summer Fun*, available at <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/> as of April 2012.

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## Alcohol Usage in the Transportation Workplace

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance (ODAPC) helps to ensure the safety of the traveling public. The ODAPC helps regulate alcohol enforcement and testing for the nearly 8-million transportation workers charged with safeguarding travelers, such as airline pilots, armed transit security personnel, ferryboat captains, maintenance workers and vehicle mechanics, and transit bus and subway operators.<sup>7</sup>

Alcohol enforcement and testing is particularly important because transportation accidents account for 1,795 fatal occupational injuries in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Every mode of transportation requires alcohol testing using National Highway Traffic Safety Administration screening and evidential testing devices.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the Federal Transit Administration reported 20 (or 0.15 percent) of safety-sensitive employees tested positive for alcohol during post-accident test in 2008. The random positive rate for alcohol declined from 0.25 percent in 1995 to 0.15 percent in 2008.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Federal Aviation Administration found 92 (or 7 percent) of total pilot fatalities in all categories between 2004 and 2008 had alcohol present in their systems.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance, *Fact Sheet*, available at <http://www.dot.gov> as of April 2012.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Table 1 Fatal occupational injuries*, available at <http://www.bls.gov> as of April 2012.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance, *Fact Sheet*, available at <http://www.dot.gov> as of April 2012.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Safety and Security, *Drug and Alcohol Testing Results 2008 Annual Report*, available at <http://transit-safety.fta.dot.gov/> as of April 2012.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, *Drugs and Alcohol in Civil Aviation Accident Pilot Fatalities, 2004-2008*, available at <http://www.faa.gov/> as of April 2012.