

Number of child passenger deaths in crashes with alcohol-impaired driver from 2011–2020 remains stable

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The proportion of child passengers who died in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver has remained unchanged in the last decade, according to [research](#) published online Feb. 6 in *Pediatrics*.

Kyran Quinlan, M.D., M.P.H., from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, and colleagues provided an update on child passenger deaths that involve an alcohol-impaired driver using national crash data from the 2011 to 2019 Fatality Analysis Reporting System Final Files and the 2020 Annual Report Files from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The researchers found that 7,944 child passengers died in [motor vehicle traffic](#) crashes from 2011 through 2020 in the United States, 22 percent of whom died in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver.

Of those, 64 percent died while riding in the same vehicle as the alcohol-impaired driver. There was no meaningful change observed in the proportion who died in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver, but a modest increase was seen in the fatality rate of child passengers killed while riding with an impaired driver.

When they died, most of these child passengers were unrestrained. Restraint use generally decreased with increases in the driver's blood alcohol concentration and child age. Overall, 69 percent of impaired drivers survived the crash that killed their child passenger. Most of these [fatal crashes](#) involved a single vehicle and occurred at night (60 and 65 percent, respectively).

"Existing laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving need to be revised for effectiveness, and new measures specifically aimed at protecting child passengers endangered by their own impaired driver need to be developed and evaluated," the authors write.

More information: Kyran Quinlan et al, Child Passenger Deaths in Traffic Crashes Involving Alcohol-Impaired Drivers: 2011–2020, *Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2023-064159](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2023-064159)

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