

June 2010 Hot Topic

Subject: Are Utah Drivers the Worst Drivers in the U.S.?

You have probably had the experience of talking about driving among a group of people and someone will make the comment that Utah drivers are the worst drivers they have ever seen. How do the drivers in Utah compare with the rest of the U.S.? Are Utah Drivers the worst in the country? This edition of the Highway Safety Hot Topic will compare how drivers in Utah compare with the rest of the country.

Data Limitations

Due to the fact that states have different reporting criteria for non-fatal crashes, only fatal crashes will be used for this comparison since all states use the same criteria under the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) for a fatal crash. Also, to compare states equally the rate of deaths per vehicle miles traveled will be used.

Overall

Over the last five years (2004-2008) of data, drivers in Montana were the worst in the U.S. Following Montana were several states from the South—Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Arkansas, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Several neighboring states to Utah also ranked high for bad drivers; Nevada was the 9th worst state, Arizona the 11th worst, Wyoming 12th worst, New Mexico 13th worst, and Idaho 15th worst. Utah ranked 39th worst (or 12th best).

Drivers in Massachusetts can lay claim to being the best drivers. Trailing Massachusetts as best drivers were mostly states in the East—Connecticut, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont. Washington was the best state in the West, 8th best overall. See page 3 for a complete ranking of states.

What makes the drivers in some states worse than others? Below are several highway safety topics and how Utah compares to other states (see page 4 for additional state rankings).

Drunk Driving

Montana lays claim to having the worst drivers in regards to drunk driving. States in the South and the West make up most of the worst ten states. Utah has the best drivers in regards to not drinking and driving. The rest of the best ten states is made up of states in the East and Midwest.

Motorcycles

Hawaii has the worst drivers in regards to motorcyclist deaths per miles traveled. Trailing Hawaii are Nevada, Montana, Florida, and South Dakota. The best state for motorcyclists was Nebraska. Utah was one of the better states for motorcyclist death rate ranking as the 9th best state (or 42nd worst).

Occupant Protection

Mississippi and Montana were the worst states by far for people dying while not using seat belts and child safety seats. New York and Connecticut were the best states for occupant protection. Utah ranked the 12th best state (or 39th worst).

Pedestrians

Pedestrians may want to avoid Hawaii, Nevada, Florida, Arizona, and Louisiana as they ranked the worst for pedestrian deaths per vehicle mile traveled. Vermont, Nebraska, Wyoming, and

Minnesota ranked as the best states for pedestrian death rate. Utah was the 20th best state (or 31st worst) for pedestrian death rate, Utah's worst ranking among the six topics discussed.

Speed

South Carolina, Montana, and Alabama had the highest rates of death by speeding vehicles. New Jersey and Iowa had the lowest rates of death by speeding vehicles. Utah was the 15th best state (or 36th worst) for speed death rate.

Young Drivers

This category includes drivers age 15-20 years involved in a fatal crash. States in the South had the worst young drivers. Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama had the highest rates. States in the East had the best young drivers. Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut had the lowest death rates for young drivers. Utah was the 14th best state (or 37th worst) for young driver death rate.

Conclusion

While some people may claim that drivers in Utah are the worst, the data shows that Utah drivers are better than most drivers in the U.S. Utah ranked the 12th best state for deaths per mile traveled. Utah gets especially high marks in regards to drunk driving where Utah had the lowest death rate per mile traveled in the country. Of the six highway safety topics examined, Utah drivers could improve the most in regards to pedestrian safety and speeding.

U.S. Fatalities (2004-2008)

Rank	State	Vehicle Miles Traveled (millions)	Deaths	Rate per 100 Million VMT
1	Montana	55,717	1,249	2.24
2	Louisiana	225,470	4,738	2.10
3	Mississippi	210,163	4,409	2.10
4	South Carolina	249,890	5,162	2.07
5	Arkansas	162,961	3,267	2.00
6	West Virginia	103,048	2,006	1.95
7	Kentucky	238,127	4,552	1.91
8	South Dakota	44,340	839	1.89
9	Nevada	104,880	1,951	1.86
10	Alabama	299,823	5,569	1.86
11	Arizona	304,194	5,618	1.85
12	Wyoming	46,547	838	1.80
13	New Mexico	126,824	2,272	1.79
14	Tennessee	353,001	6,090	1.73
15	Idaho	75,826	1,286	1.70
16	Florida	1,006,453	16,353	1.62
17	Oklahoma	238,222	3,844	1.61
18	Missouri	344,006	5,435	1.58
19	Alaska	25,010	393	1.57
20	North Carolina	503,996	7,758	1.54
21	Texas	1,183,259	17,307	1.46
22	Georgia	561,259	8,190	1.46
23	Kansas	148,783	2,158	1.45
24	North Dakota	38,718	549	1.42
25	Pennsylvania	540,937	7,590	1.40
26	Delaware	46,710	654	1.40
27	Iowa	155,919	2,136	1.37
28	Hawaii	50,613	688	1.36
29	Oregon	174,581	2,292	1.31
30	Nebraska	96,486	1,263	1.31
31	Indiana	358,178	4,496	1.26
32	Wisconsin	296,769	3,692	1.24
33	California	1,641,260	20,093	1.22
34	Colorado	239,068	2,908	1.22
35	Maine	74,511	889	1.19
36	Illinois	537,272	6,263	1.17
37	Virginia	404,664	4,686	1.16
38	Ohio	552,325	6,294	1.14
	District of Columbia	18,298	206	1.13
39	Utah	128,624	1,440	1.12
40	Maryland	279,431	3,113	1.11
41	New Hampshire	66,758	732	1.10
42	Michigan	518,001	5,441	1.05
43	Washington	280,163	2,929	1.05
44	Vermont	38,406	397	1.03
45	New York	687,589	6,942	1.01
46	New Jersey	371,815	3,565	0.96
47	Rhode Island	41,896	385	0.92
48	Minnesota	285,220	2,580	0.90
49	Connecticut	158,816	1,407	0.89
50	Massachusetts	274,941	2,128	0.77
	Total	14,969,768	207,042	1.38

State Ranking by Topic (1st is the worst state, 50th is the best state)

Drunk Driving

1. Montana
2. South Carolina
3. Louisiana
4. Mississippi
5. South Dakota
6. Wyoming
7. Alabama
8. Nevada
9. West Virginia
10. Arkansas

41. Indiana
42. Iowa
43. Connecticut
44. Michigan
45. New York
46. Vermont
47. Minnesota
48. New Jersey
49. Massachusetts
- 50. Utah**

Motorcycles

1. Hawaii
2. Nevada
3. Montana
4. Florida
5. South Dakota
6. New Hampshire
7. South Carolina
8. Arizona
9. Arkansas
10. Kentucky

41. New York
- 42. Utah**
43. Michigan
44. Minnesota
45. Mississippi
46. New Jersey
47. Virginia
48. Massachusetts
49. North Dakota
50. Nebraska

Occupant Protection

1. Mississippi
2. Montana
3. South Carolina
4. South Dakota
5. Kentucky
6. Arkansas
7. Louisiana
8. Alabama
9. Wyoming
10. West Virginia

39. Utah

41. Hawaii
42. Washington
43. Maryland
44. Massachusetts
45. New Jersey
46. California
47. Michigan
48. Oregon
49. Connecticut
50. New York

Pedestrians

1. Hawaii
2. Nevada
3. Florida
4. Arizona
5. Louisiana
6. New York
7. New Mexico
8. California
9. South Carolina
10. New Jersey

31. Utah

41. Idaho
42. North Dakota
43. Iowa
44. Kansas
45. New Hampshire
46. Maine
47. Minnesota
48. Wyoming
49. Nebraska
50. Vermont

Speed

1. South Carolina
2. Montana
3. Alabama
4. Arizona
5. Mississippi
6. Missouri
7. Pennsylvania
8. Wyoming
9. Hawaii
10. Nevada

36. Utah

41. Connecticut
42. Florida
43. Arkansas
44. Massachusetts
45. Ohio
46. Nebraska
47. Minnesota
48. Michigan
49. Iowa
50. New Jersey

Young Drivers

1. Louisiana
2. Arkansas
3. Mississippi
4. Alabama
5. South Dakota
6. South Carolina
7. Kentucky
8. Montana
9. Nebraska
10. Missouri

37. Utah

41. Maryland
42. Washington
43. Vermont
44. Rhode Island
45. New Hampshire
46. Minnesota
47. Connecticut
48. New York
49. New Jersey
50. Massachusetts