

Report on

[www.centurycouncil.org](http://www.centurycouncil.org)

**Alcohol-Related Traffic  
Fatalities in the United States**

**2006**

**THE  
CENTURY  
COUNCIL**

*Distillers fighting  
drunk driving and  
underage drinking*



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## Overview

The Century Council is a leader in the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and promote responsible decision making regarding beverage alcohol. Founded in 1991, the Council is a national, not-for-profit organization funded by America's leading distillers – Bacardi U.S.A., Inc., Brown-Forman, Constellation Brands, Inc., DIAGEO, Future Brands LLC, Hood River Distillers, Inc., and Sidney Frank Importing Co., Inc. An independent Advisory Board of distinguished leaders in business, government, education, medicine, and other relevant disciplines assists the Council in continually developing and distributing innovative programs and initiatives.

For nearly a decade, The Century Council has taken a leadership role in identifying the hardcore drunk driving problem and has highlighted research, strategies, and programs for the swift identification, certain punishment, and effective treatment of these deadly offenders. Through the National Hardcore Drunk Driving Project, the Council works to involve all sectors of the community including law enforcement, judges, public officials, educators, insurers, health care professionals, government agencies, and advocacy organizations in this important fight. Believing in the concept that collective actions have a greater impact than individual efforts, over the years the Council has joined forces with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and the American Automobile Association (AAA) to advance policies to help eliminate hardcore drunk driving.

The most recent initiative teamed the Council and the National Drug Court Institute to survey DUI Court clients – hardcore drunk drivers. *Stopping Hardcore Drunk Driving – Offenders' Perspective on Deterrence* provides a revealing look at hardcore drunk drivers' attitudes toward being caught, convicted, and sanctioned, including what sanctions and interventions might motivate them the most to change their behavior and help eliminate hardcore drunk driving on our nation's roadways.

While much progress has been made our work remains unfinished. Between 1991 and 2006, the rate of alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population has decreased 26% nationally and 38% among youth under 21. These statistics and others are positive indicators of the gains being made to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, drunk driving, and while The Century Council cannot claim to be the sole influence in these reductions, it is likely the Council has played a significant role.

To find out more about The Century Council's programs and initiatives to fight drunk driving and underage drinking, please visit our website at [www.centurycouncil.org](http://www.centurycouncil.org). For your convenience, a downloadable version of this report is also available online and our latest available research on hardcore drunk drivers is available online at [www.dwidata.org](http://www.dwidata.org).



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## Terminology

### ALCOHOL-RELATED FATALITY

A fatality is considered alcohol-related if either the driver or anyone else involved in the police reported crash, other than a passenger (e.g., a pedestrian or bicyclist), has alcohol in their blood stream (a BAC level of .01 or more). For example, if a pedestrian with a BAC of .01 steps off the curb in front of a sober driver and is killed by that driver, this fatality is included in alcohol-related traffic statistics. If a driver who has been drinking hits a car with two sober people in it and kills both, those two fatalities are considered alcohol-related. In producing national and state statistics, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates the extent of alcohol involvement when alcohol test results are unknown.

### BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC)

BAC is measured in grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. A BAC of .01 indicates .01 grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. As of July 2004, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation establishing a driver with a BAC of .08 to be legally intoxicated. Additionally, 39 states and the District of Columbia have laws and penalties for those who drive with elevated or "high" BAC levels.

### DRUNK DRIVER FATALITY

A fatality is considered drunk driver-related if the crash involves at least one driver or motorcycle operator who had a positive blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level of .08 or above. As part of their focus on impaired driving, NHTSA estimates the number of people killed in traffic crashes that involve at least one driver or motorcycle operator who was legally intoxicated (BAC level of .08 or above).

### HARDCORE DRUNK DRIVERS

Hardcore drunk drivers, those who drive with a high BAC of .15 or above, do so repeatedly, as demonstrated by having more than one drunk driving arrest, and are highly resistant to changing their behavior despite previous sanctions, treatment, or education efforts.

### RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION

The rate of alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population is the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities for every 100,000 persons in the population being measured. For example, an alcohol-related traffic fatality rate of 5.9 per 100,000 population nationally means that for every 100,000 people in the nation, there were nearly six alcohol-related traffic fatalities.

## Foreword

The Century Council is pleased to present its annual *Report on Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities in the United States for 2006*. This report includes tables and graphs summarizing the latest information available on alcohol-related traffic fatality statistics by state and also contains the highlights of new research among hardcore drunk drivers. This first of its kind research project provided insights into “real-life” hardcore drunk drivers’ perceptions of drunk driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) the number of motorists and the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2006 increased, while the number of people who died on our nation’s roadways decreased two percent from 43,510 to 42,642 and the number of people injured declined for the eighth consecutive year. Overall alcohol-related traffic fatalities increased a diminutive 0.1 percent from 17,590 in 2005 to 17,602 in 2006, accounting for 41 percent of all traffic fatalities.

Since NHTSA began recording alcohol-related statistics in 1982, alcohol-related traffic fatalities have steadily decreased overall and among youth under 21. Alcohol-related traffic fatalities decreased 33 percent from 26,172 in 1982 to 17,602 in 2006. Among youth under 21, the number of youths killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes decreased 59% from the record high of 6,512 in 1982 to 2,642 in 2006 – a slight increase from 2,604 in 2005.

While alcohol-related traffic fatalities refer to those crashes that involve at least one driver, pedestrian, or pedalcyclist with a BAC of .01 or higher, it is important to also look at crashes where at least one driver involved in the fatal crash had a BAC level at or above the legal per se level (.08). In crashes involving those drunk drivers, 13,470 people were killed in 2006, representing a decrease of almost one percent in drunk driving fatalities from 13,582 in 2005.

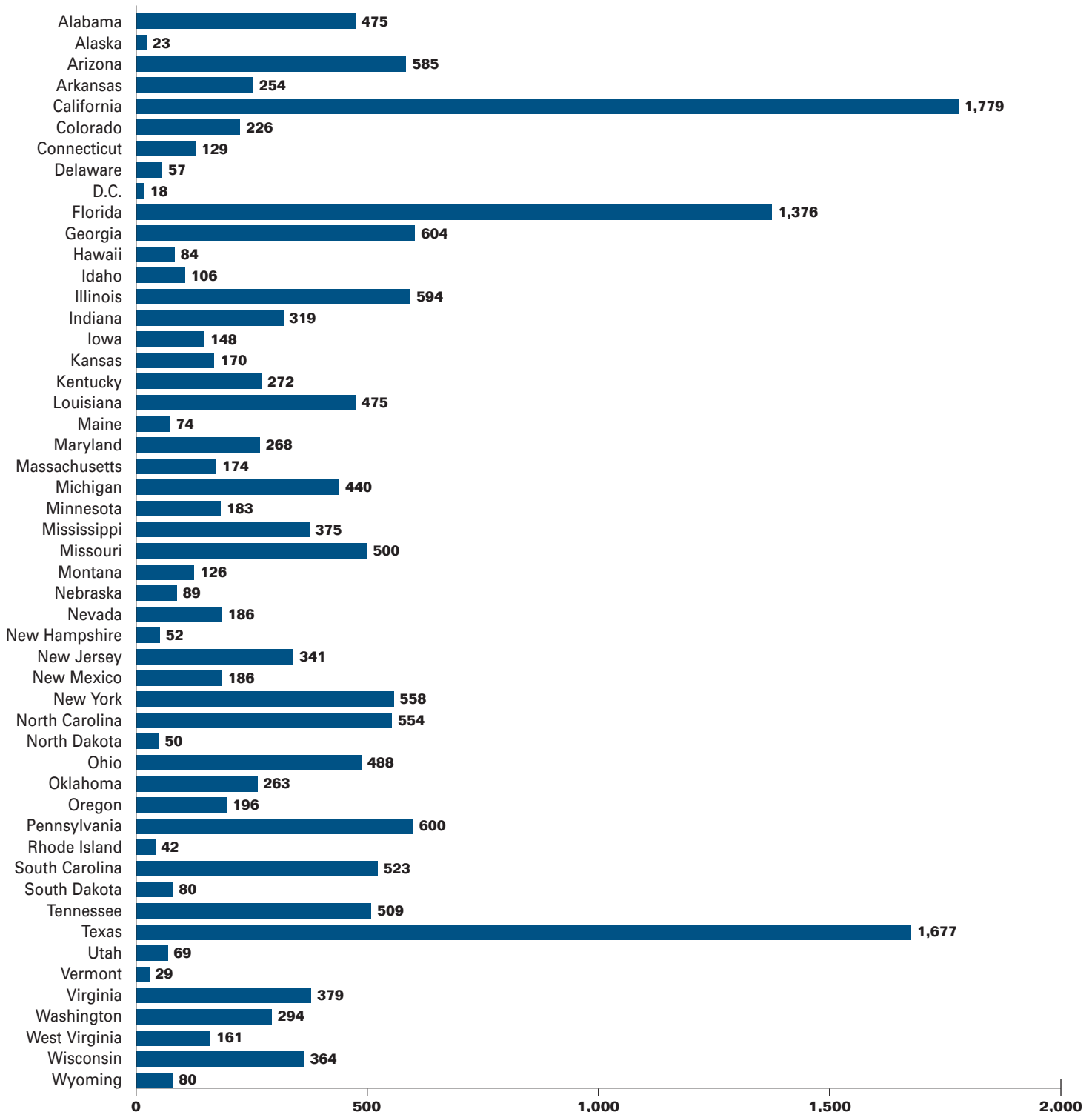
Hardcore drunk drivers, those who drive at high BACs (.15 or above), do so repeatedly as demonstrated by having more than one drunk driving arrest, and are highly resistant to changing their behavior despite previous sanctions, treatment, or education efforts, continue to account for a disproportionate share of alcohol-related traffic fatalities each year. Last year alone, 59% of drivers involved in alcohol-related traffic fatalities, where there is a known alcohol test result for the driver, involved a high BAC driver – a trend that has remained relatively unchanged for more than a decade. The median BAC level remains twice the legal limit at .16, and 73 percent of repeat offenders, drivers with a prior DWI conviction in the past three years, involved in a fatal vehicle crash had a BAC level of .15 or higher.

*Stopping Hardcore Drunk Driving – Offenders’ Perspective on Deterrence*, is the latest research project of the National Hardcore Drunk Driver Project. This recently released report not only highlights the perceptions of actual hardcore drunk drivers, but also provides insights into the sanctions and interventions needed to continue the fight to eliminate hardcore drunk drivers from our nation’s roadways. In an effort to better understand this population, The Century Council partnered with the National Drug Court Institute to survey DUI Court clients – hardcore drunk drivers – who provided a first hand point of view of being caught, convicted, and sanctioned for drunk driving. These findings and statistics are alarming and highlight the fact that there is no single law or simple solution that will solely be effective in stopping these most serious offenders. The Century Council remains committed to the initiative it started a decade ago – *Stopping Hardcore Drunk Driving* – and will continue to coordinate its efforts and build new partnerships in this important endeavor.

The information presented in this report is drawn from several databases maintained by government agencies, including the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) of NHTSA, which compiles crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), and the U.S. Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce. This report reflects data from 1982 to the present utilizing NHTSA’s revised *multiple imputation* method for estimating missing information about BAC levels for persons involved in fatal crashes, thus allowing for improved reporting of alcohol involvement statistics at any BAC level. The U.S. Census Bureau state resident population estimates for 1996, 2005 and 2006 were used for this report.

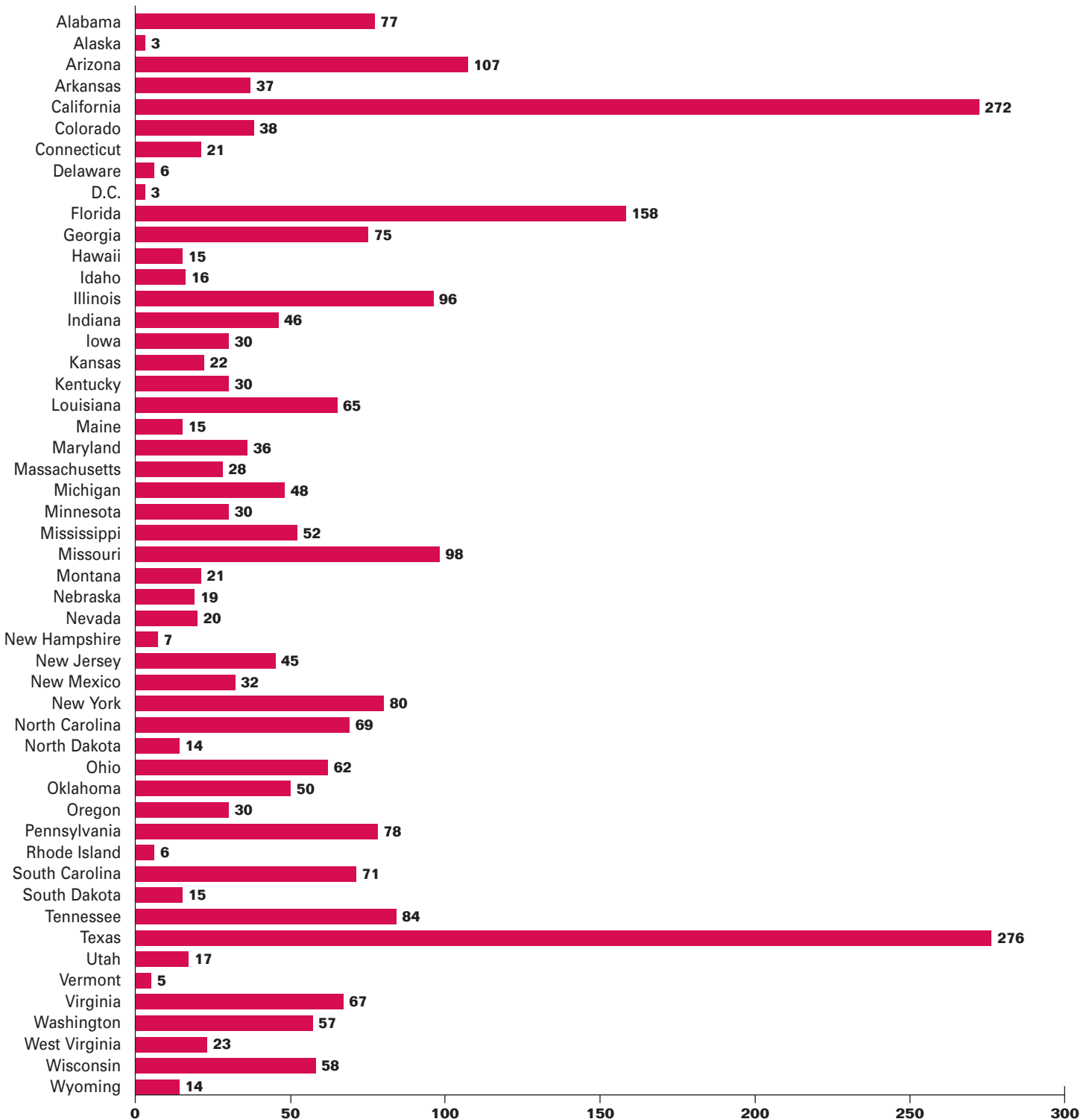
## 2006 Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities

U.S. TOTAL: 17,602



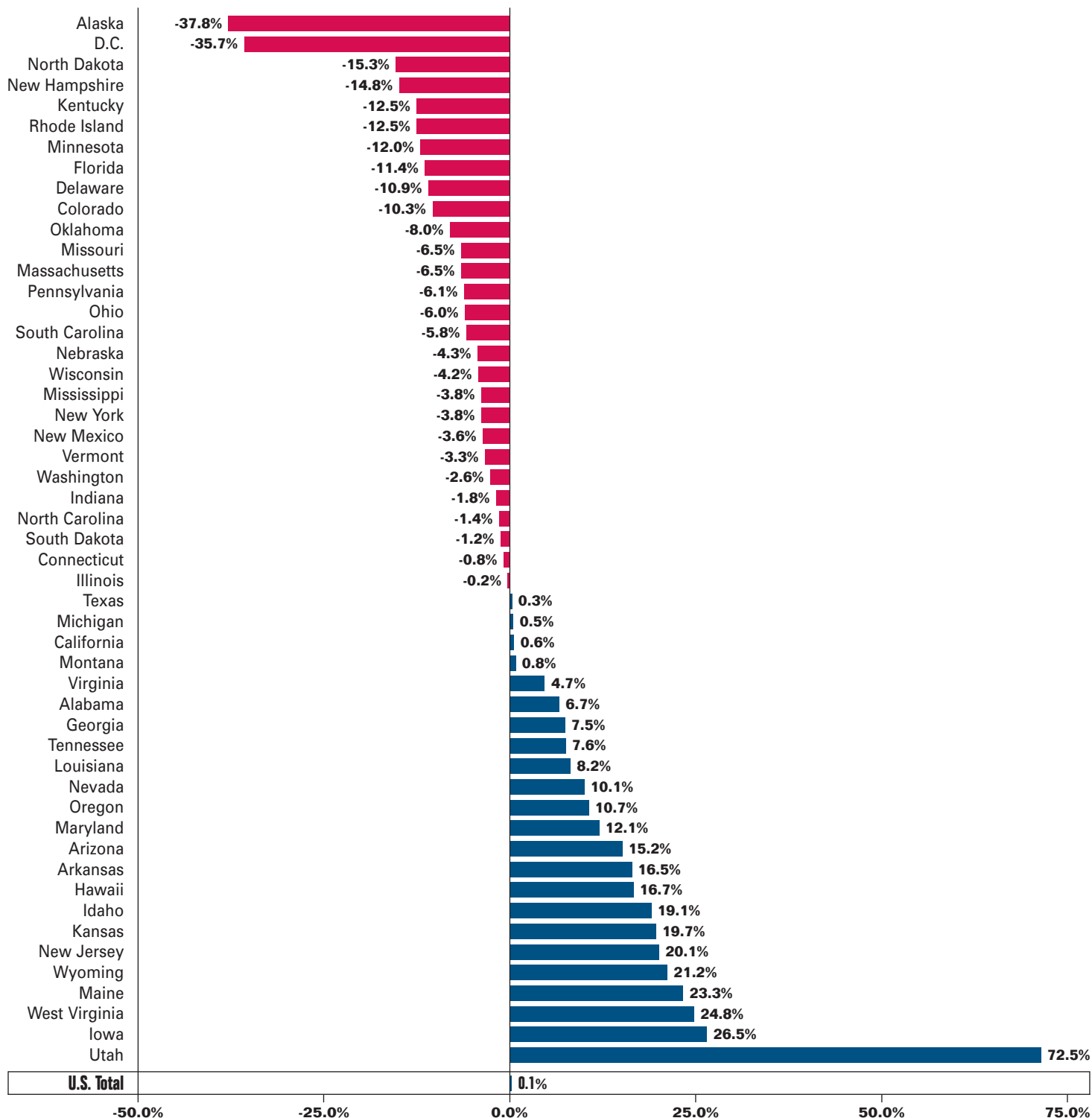
## 2006 Youth Under 21 Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities

U.S. TOTAL: 2,642



## Nationally alcohol-related traffic fatalities remained relatively unchanged, but declined in 27 states and D.C. between 2005 and 2006.

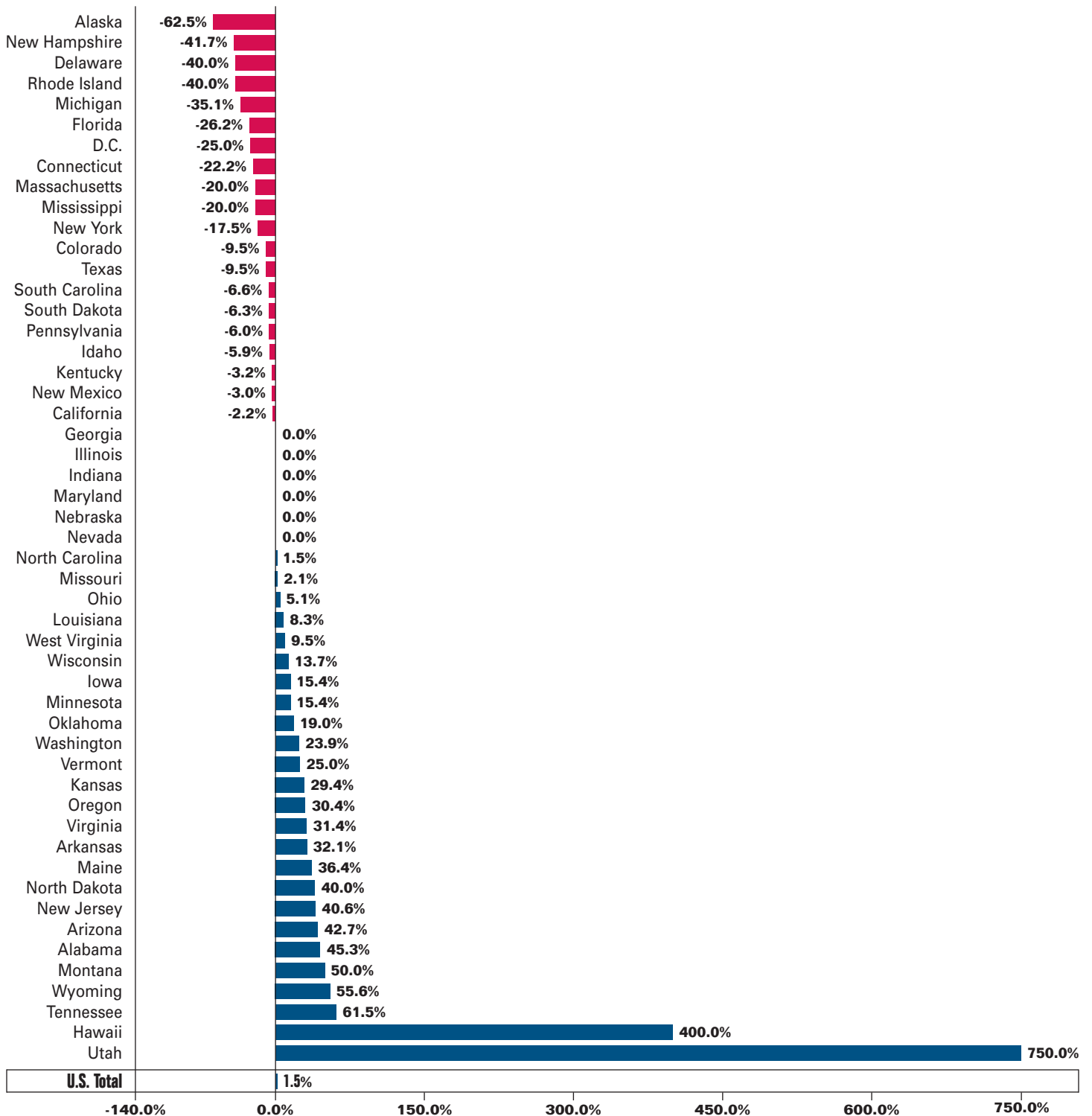
### PERCENT CHANGE IN ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES FROM 2005 TO 2006 BY STATE RANK





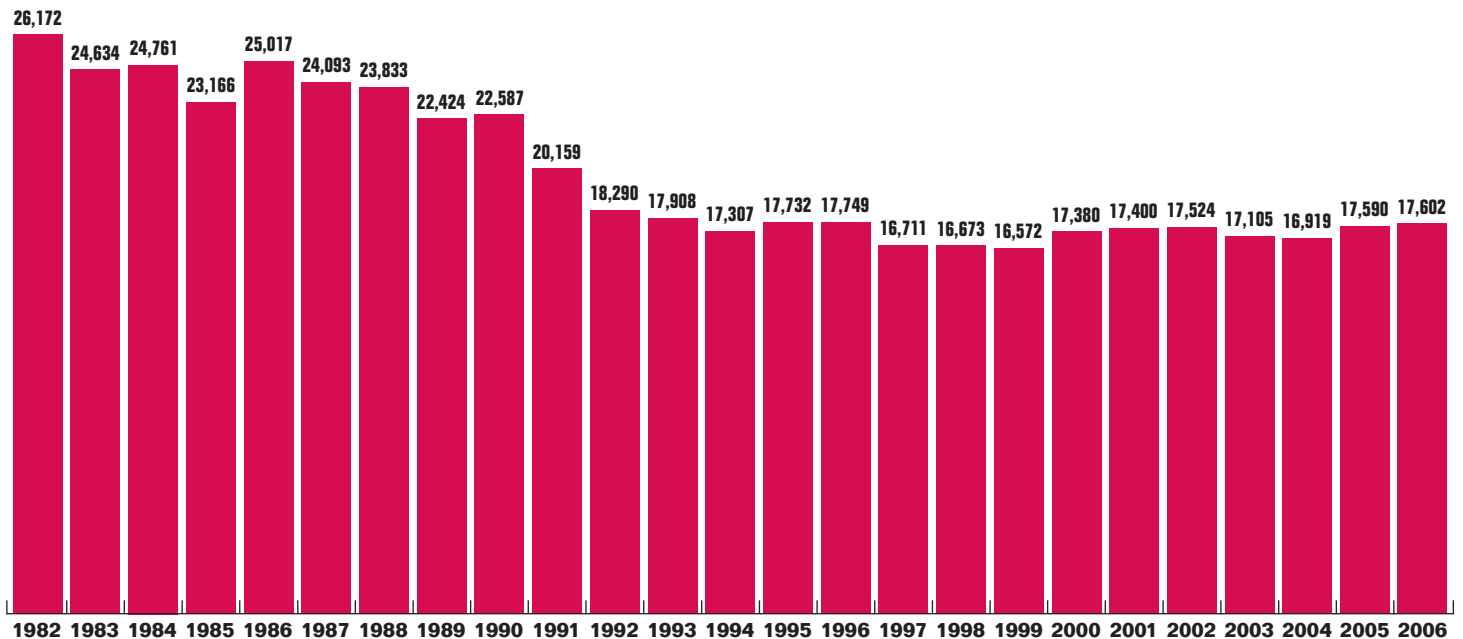
# Alcohol-related traffic fatalities among youth under 21 declined in 19 states and D.C., but increased nationally from 2005 to 2006.

## PERCENT CHANGE IN YOUTH UNDER 21 ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES FROM 2005 TO 2006 BY STATE RANK



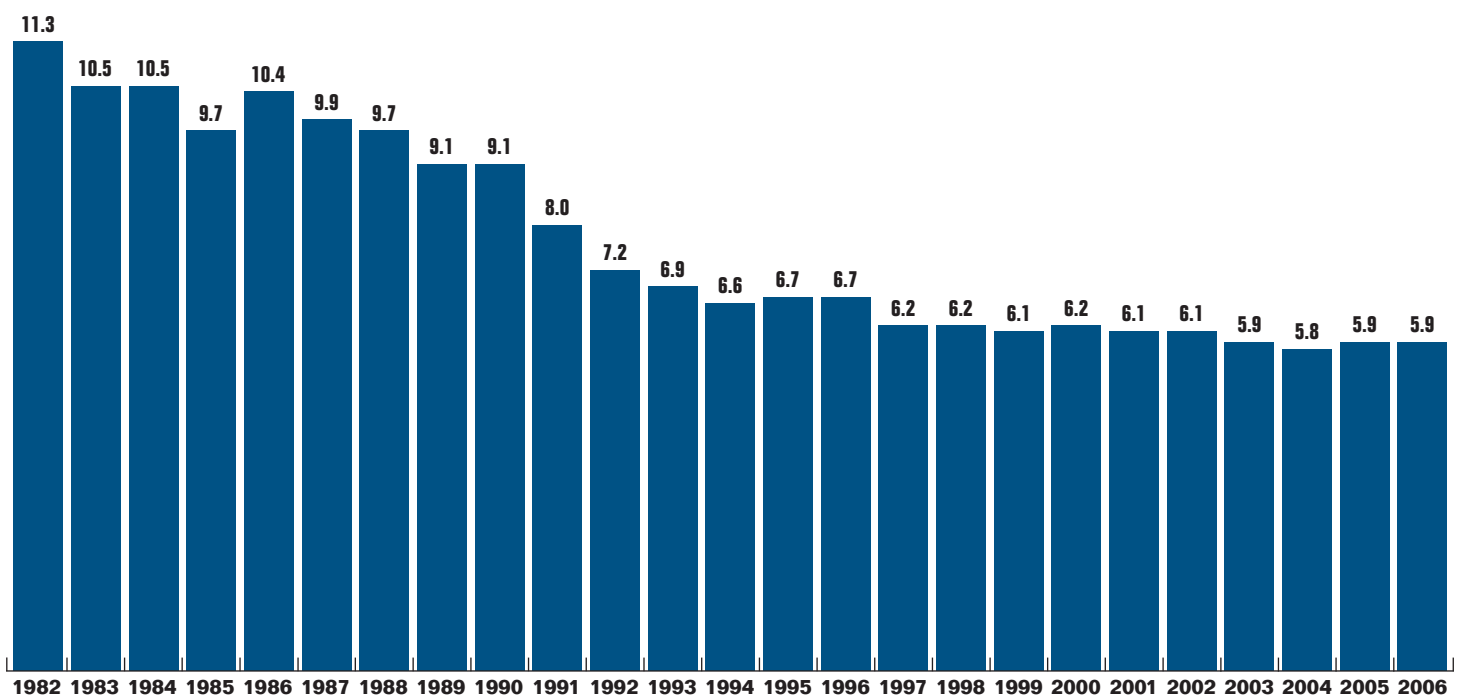
## Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities from 1982-2006

ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES  
DECLINED 33% FROM 1982 TO 2006.



Data Source: NHTSA/FARS

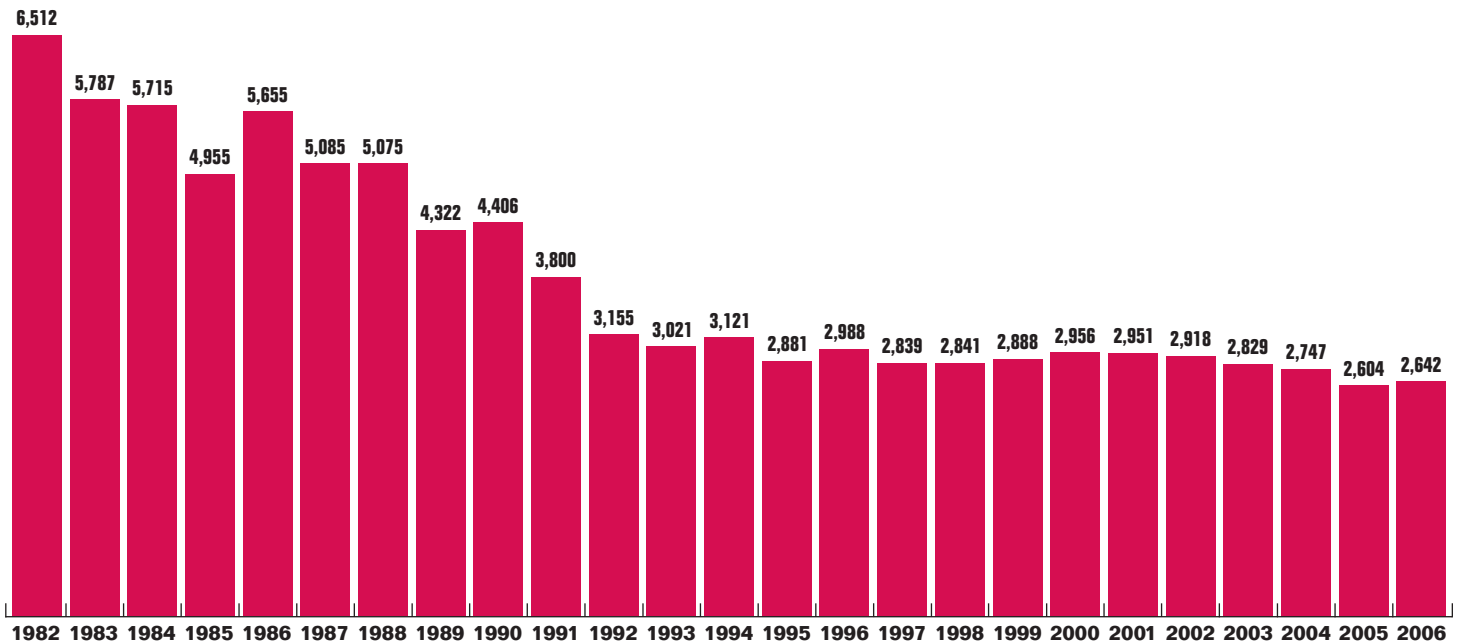
ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES PER 100,000  
POPULATION DECREASED 48% SINCE 1982.



Data Source: NHTSA/FARS and U.S. Census Bureau

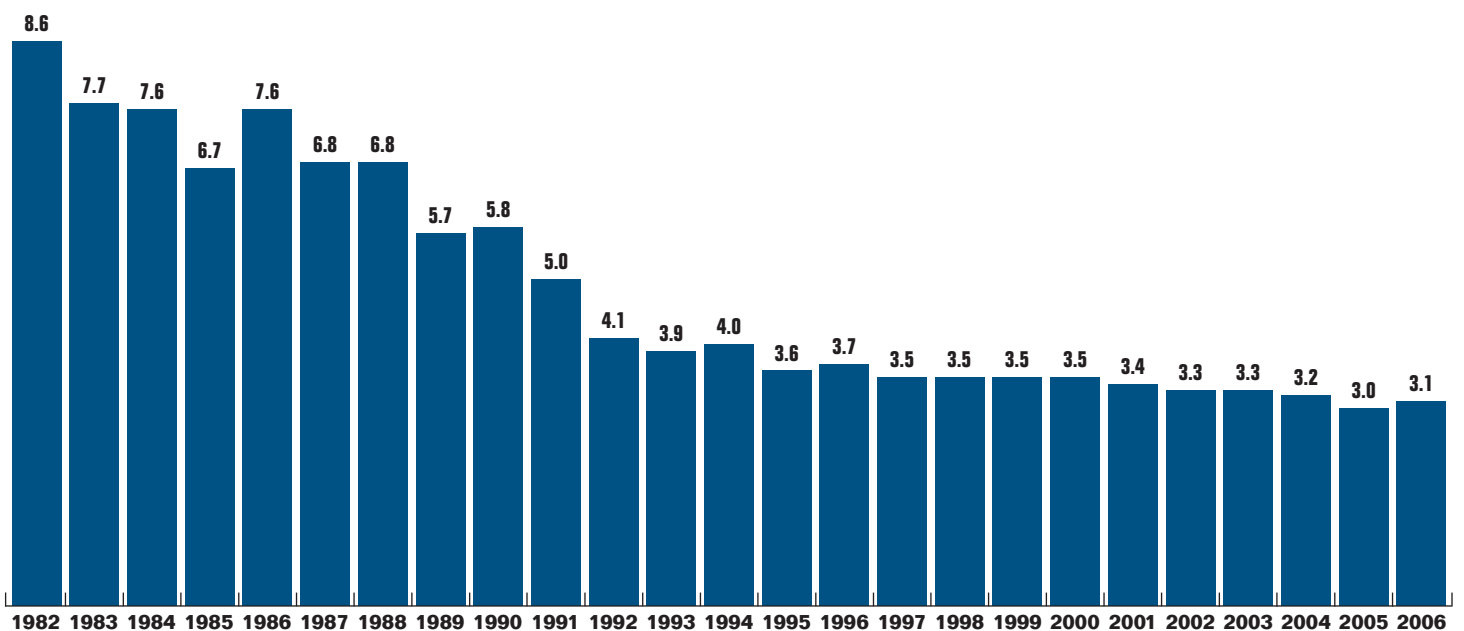
## Youth Under 21 Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities from 1982-2006

YOUTH UNDER 21 ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES DECLINED 59% FROM 1982 TO 2006.



Data Source: NHTSA/FARS

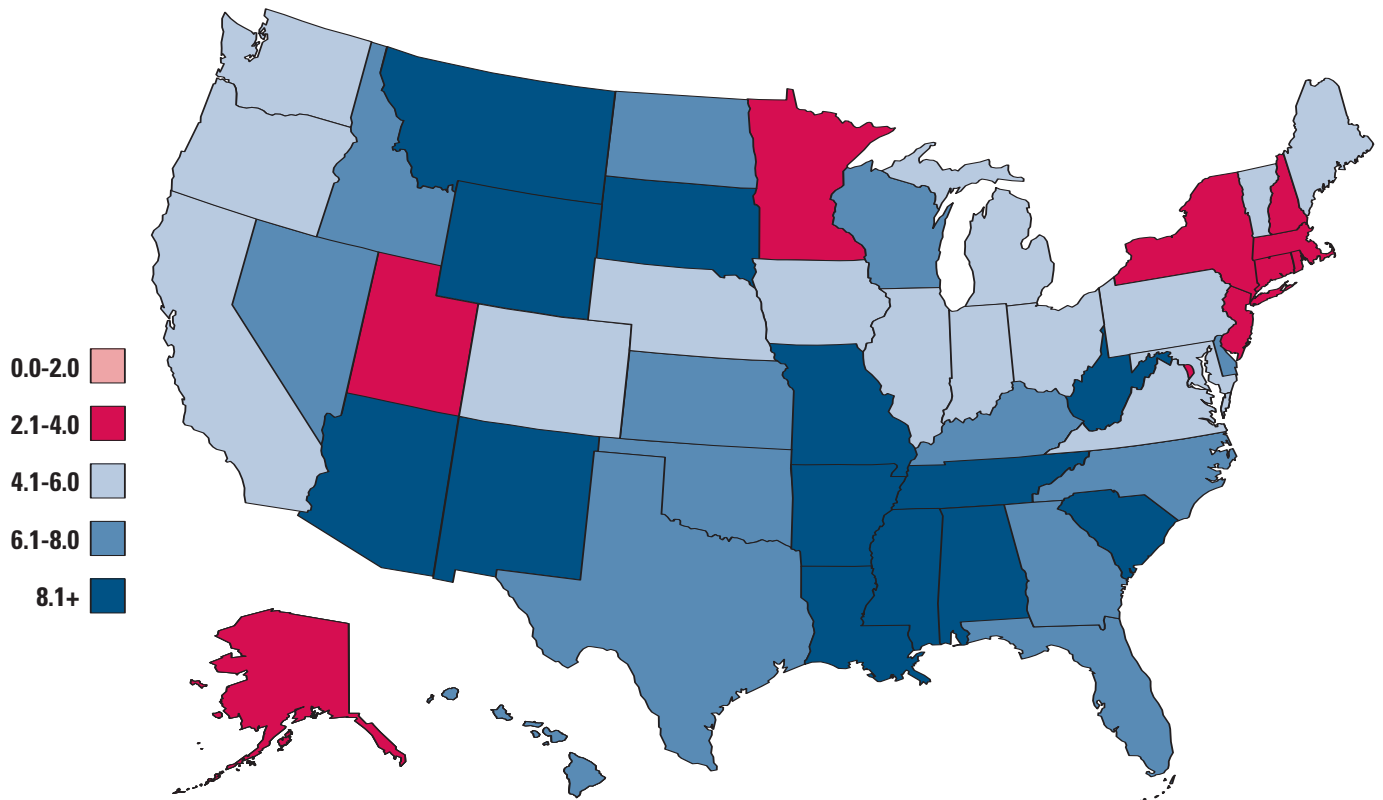
AMONG YOUTH UNDER 21, ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES PER 100,000 POPULATION DECREASED 64% SINCE 1982.



Data Source: NHTSA/FARS and U.S. Census Bureau

**In 24 states and D.C., alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population were below the national average of 5.9 deaths per 100,000 population.**

## 2006 ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITY RATES BY STATE

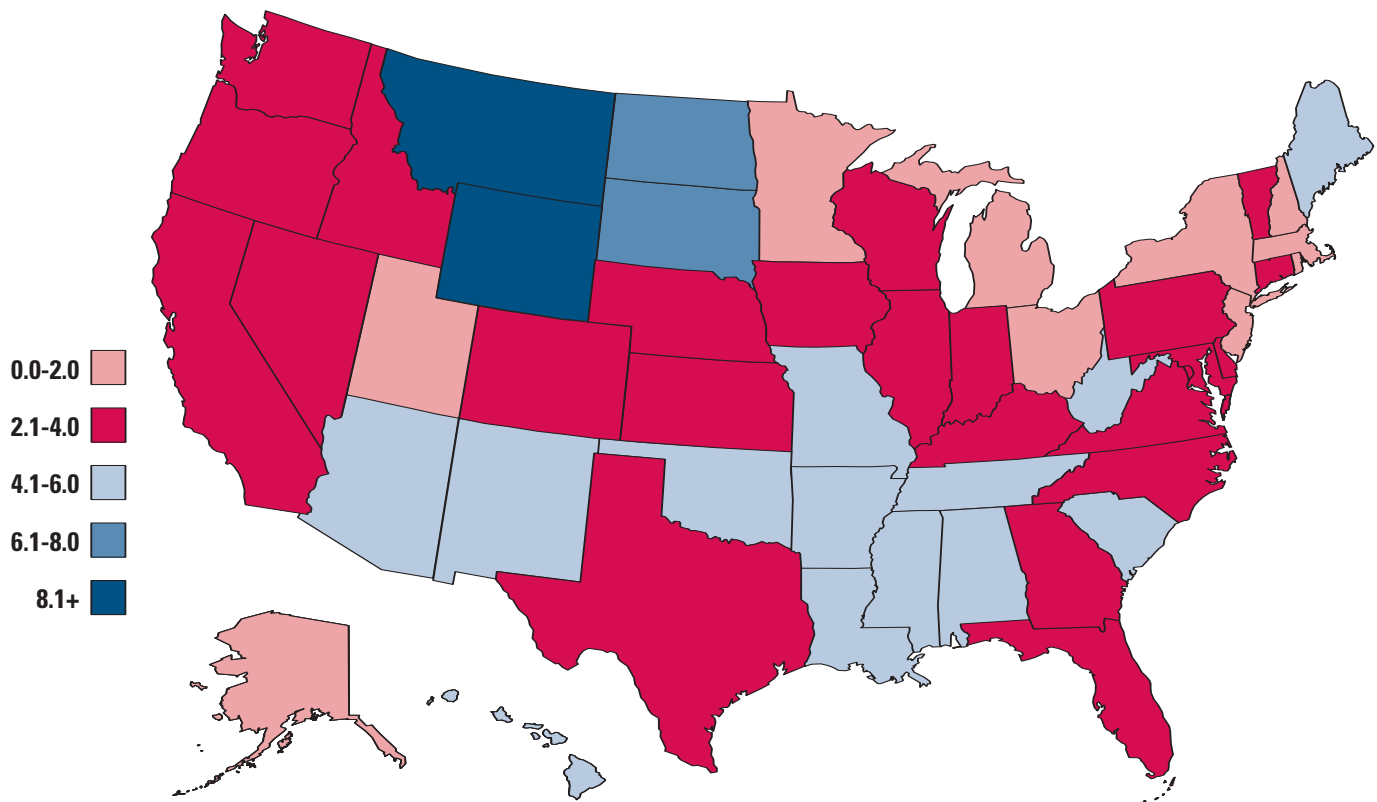


Alabama	10.3	Illinois	4.6	Montana	13.3	Rhode Island	3.9
Alaska	3.4	Indiana	5.1	Nebraska	5.0	South Carolina	12.1
Arizona	9.5	Iowa	5.0	Nevada	7.5	South Dakota	10.2
Arkansas	9.0	Kansas	6.2	New Hampshire	4.0	Tennessee	8.4
California	4.9	Kentucky	6.5	New Jersey	3.9	Texas	7.1
Colorado	4.8	Louisiana	11.1	New Mexico	9.5	Utah	2.7
Connecticut	3.7	Maine	5.6	New York	2.9	Vermont	4.6
Delaware	6.7	Maryland	4.8	North Carolina	6.3	Virginia	5.0
D.C.	3.1	Massachusetts	2.7	North Dakota	7.9	Washington	4.6
Florida	7.6	Michigan	4.4	Ohio	4.3	West Virginia	8.9
Georgia	6.5	Minnesota	3.5	Oklahoma	7.3	Wisconsin	6.6
Hawaii	6.5	Mississippi	12.9	Oregon	5.3	Wyoming	15.5
Idaho	7.2	Missouri	8.6	Pennsylvania	4.8	U.S. Total	5.9

Data Source: NHTSA/FARS and U.S. Census Bureau

**In 25 states and D.C., youth under 21 alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population were at or below the national average of 3.1 deaths per 100,000 population.**

## 2006 YOUTH UNDER 21 ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITY RATES BY STATE

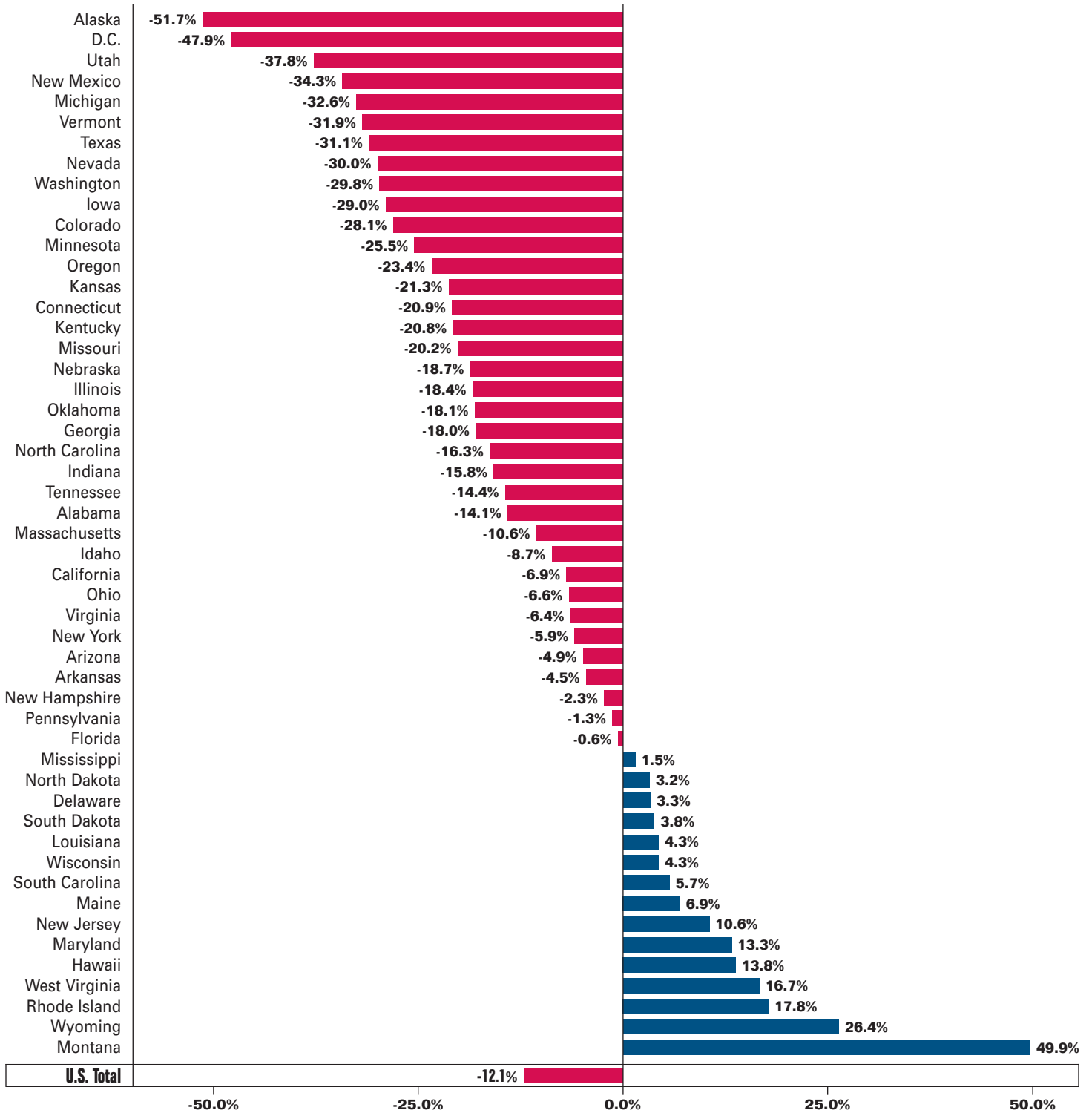


Alabama	5.9	Illinois	2.5	Montana	8.2	Rhode Island	2.0
Alaska	1.4	Indiana	2.5	Nebraska	3.6	South Carolina	5.8
Arizona	5.7	Iowa	3.5	Nevada	2.8	South Dakota	6.5
Arkansas	4.6	Kansas	2.7	New Hampshire	2.0	Tennessee	5.0
California	2.4	Kentucky	2.6	New Jersey	1.9	Texas	3.7
Colorado	2.8	Louisiana	5.1	New Mexico	5.4	Utah	1.9
Connecticut	2.2	Maine	4.5	New York	1.5	Vermont	3.1
Delaware	2.5	Maryland	2.3	North Carolina	2.7	Virginia	3.2
D.C.	2.1	Massachusetts	1.6	North Dakota	7.8	Washington	3.2
Florida	3.4	Michigan	1.7	Ohio	1.9	West Virginia	5.0
Georgia	2.6	Minnesota	2.0	Oklahoma	4.8	Wisconsin	3.7
Hawaii	4.3	Mississippi	5.8	Oregon	3.0	Wyoming	9.7
Idaho	3.5	Missouri	5.9	Pennsylvania	2.3	U.S. Total	3.1

Data Source: NHTSA/FARS and U.S. Census Bureau

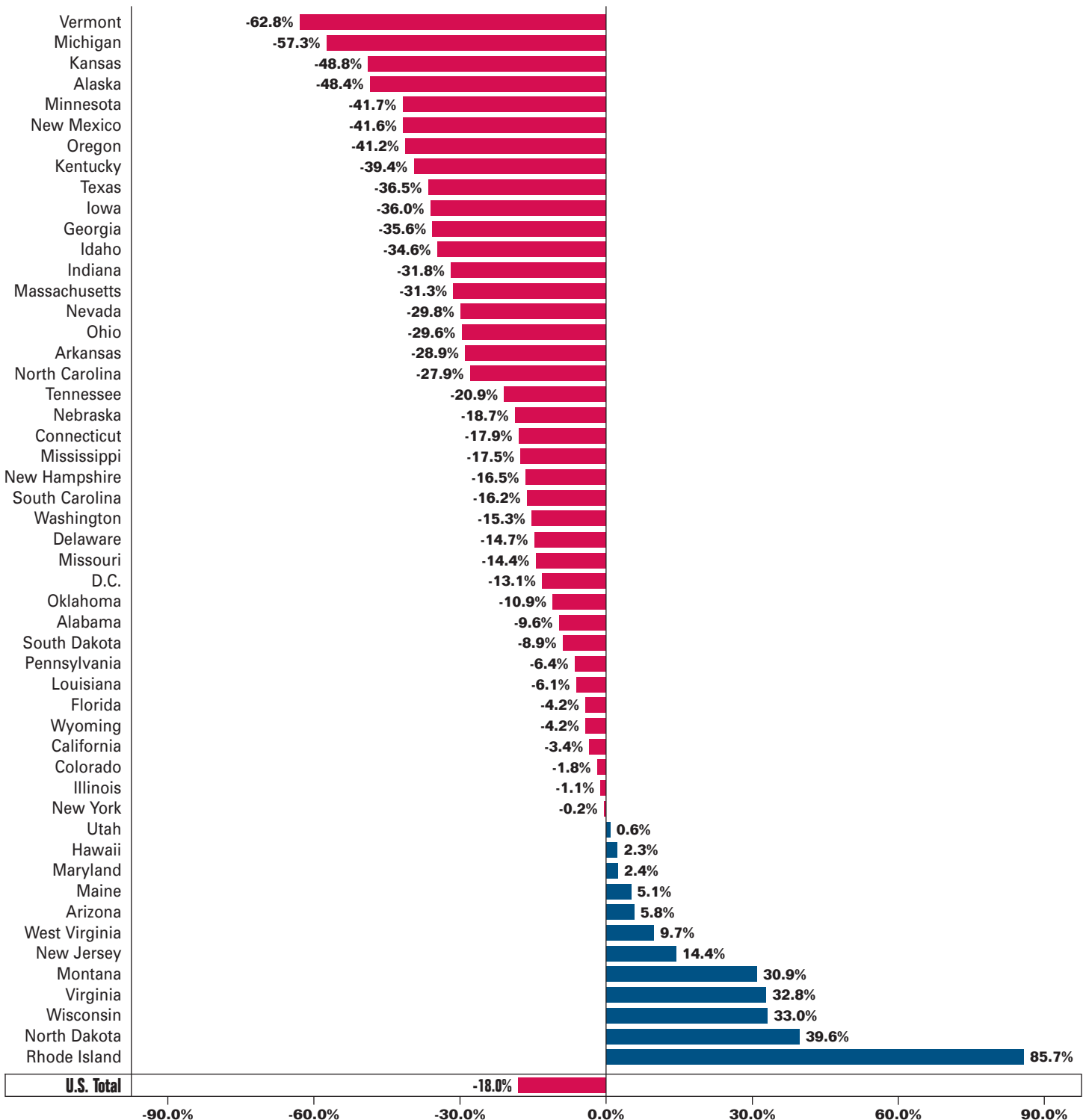
**Between 1996 and 2006 alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population decreased in all but 15 states.**

## PERCENT CHANGE IN ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITY RATES FROM 1996 TO 2006 BY STATE RANK



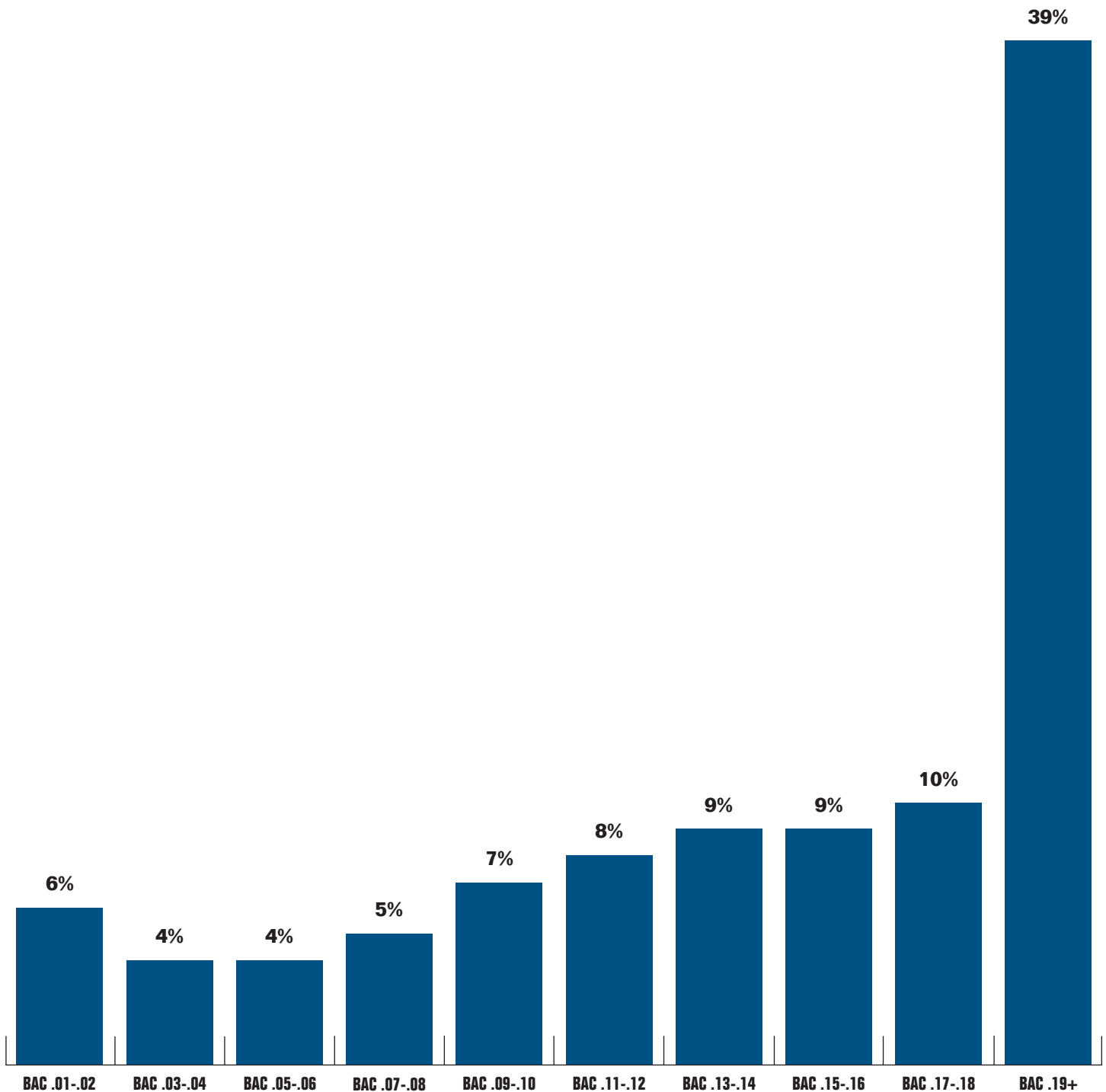
**From 1996 to 2006, youth under 21 alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 population decreased in all but 12 states.**

**PERCENT CHANGE IN YOUTH UNDER 21 ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITY RATES FROM 1996 TO 2006 BY STATE RANK**



## In 2006, 58% of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities involved high BAC drivers.

### PERCENT OF 2006 DRIVERS INVOLVED IN ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES BY BAC



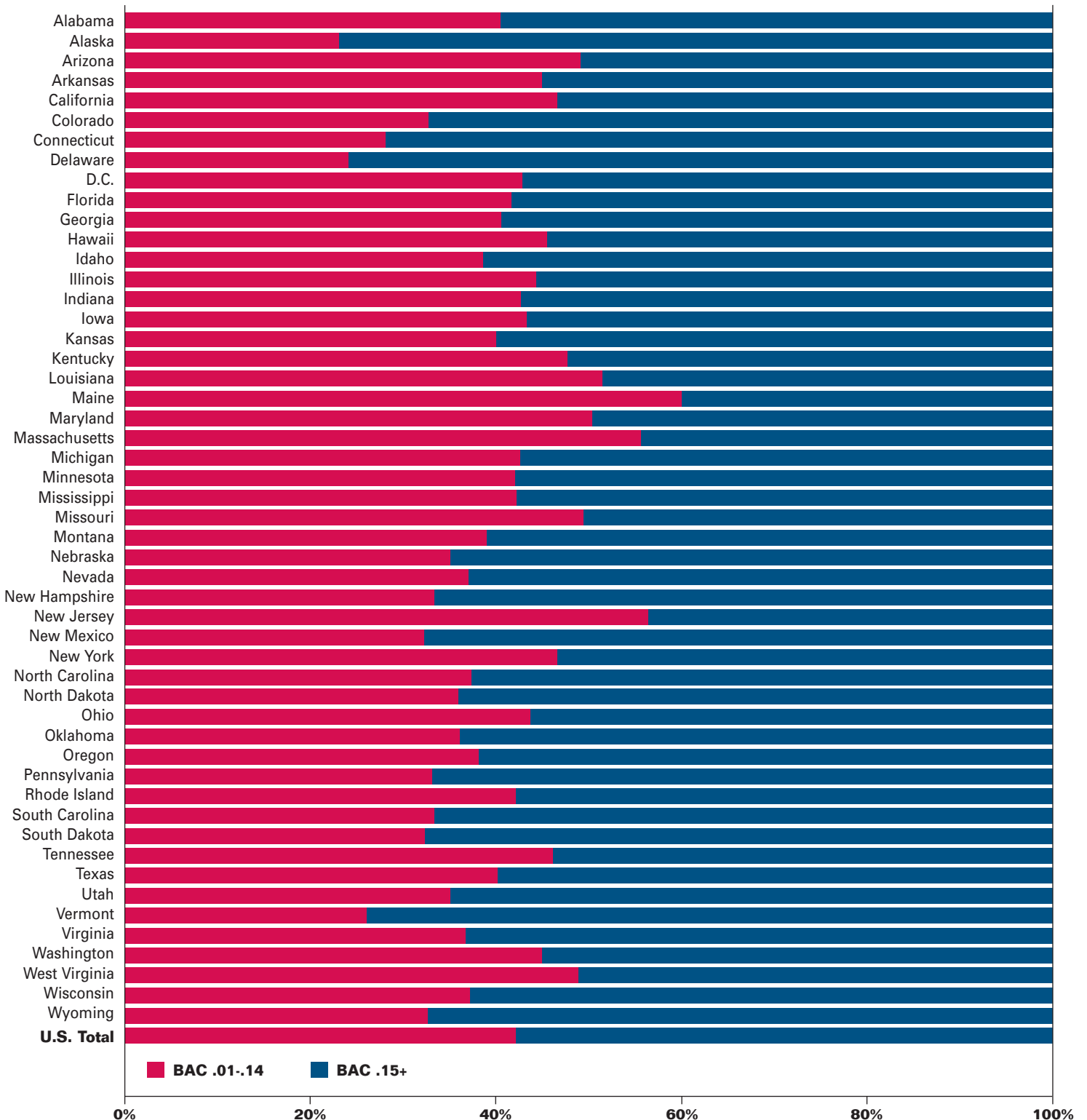
Known Alcohol Test Results of Drivers Involved in Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities

*Data Source: NHTSA/FARS ARF of Known Drivers  
Total may not equal sum of categories due to rounding.*



# Hardcore Drunk Drivers remain a disproportionately large segment of the drunk driving problem.

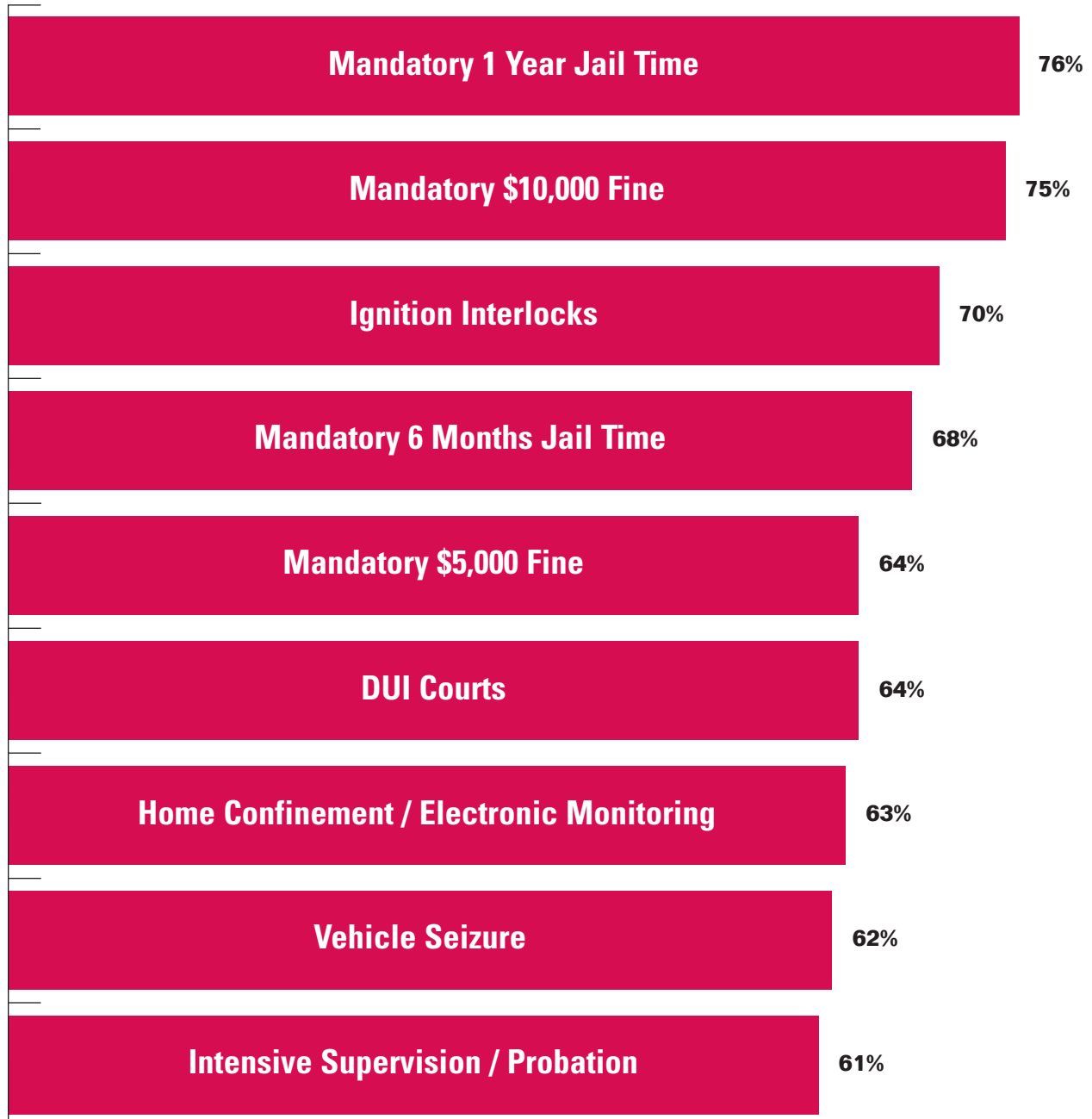
## PERCENT OF 2006 DRIVERS WITH KNOWN BACs INVOLVED IN ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES BY STATE AND BAC



Data Source: NHTSA/FARS ARF of Known Drivers

## Most Effective Interventions to Stop Hardcore Drunk Driving Offenders

SANCTIONS AND INITIATIVES THAT HARDCORE DRUNK DRIVERS REPORT DEFINITELY WOULD HAVE MADE THEM STOP DRINKING AND DRIVING PRIOR TO THEIR LAST DUI.







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