

## Pop Quiz on Dangerous Driving

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It is almost time for a new school year to begin, so I'm feeling in the mood for a pop quiz.

What driver behavior is associated with the **most vehicle crashes** in North Carolina?

1. Speeding
2. Driver Distraction
3. Alcohol Consumption

What driver behavior is associated with the most **injuries resulting from vehicle crashes** in North Carolina?

1. Speeding
2. Driver Distraction
3. Alcohol Consumption

What driver behavior is associated with the most **vehicle crash fatalities** in North Carolina?

1. Speeding
2. Driver Distraction
3. Alcohol Consumption

The answer to all three questions is 1. Speeding.

The NC DOT publishes traffic crash facts for the state every year. The latest report, based on 2014 data, is available [here](#).

And the dangers associated with speeding couldn't be more clear.

More than 33 percent of the more than 200,000 crashes in 2014 were related to vehicle speed. Thirty-six percent of the 1,181 fatal crashes were related to vehicle speed as were 57 percent of the more than 70,000 injury crashes.

By way of comparison, alcohol was involved in 5 percent of all crashes, 31 percent of fatal crashes, and 11 percent of injury crashes. Driver distraction was involved in 22 percent of all crashes, 13 percent of fatal crashes, and 38 percent of injury crashes. (NC DOT cautions that the driver distraction numbers may not reflect the severity of the issue since driver distraction is a "self-reporting contributing circumstance.")

The data related to crashes involving teenagers (regardless of the age of the driver) paints an even starker picture of the risks of speeding. Speed is a factor in 31 percent of crashes involving teenagers and 65 percent of teen fatalities. Alcohol, in contrast, is involved in 3 percent of such crashes and 20 percent of fatalities.

[National figures](#) on vehicle fatalities for the same time period are similar, though a higher percentage of traffic fatalities nationally (36 percent) resulted from crashes involving alcohol-impaired drivers than speeding (28 percent).

Policy makers understandably spend a lot of time thinking about ways to reduce impaired driving and driver distraction. Should [speeding](#) (an offense classified as an infraction or as a Class 3 misdemeanor if the person is driving more than 15 miles per hour over the limit or more than 80 miles per hour) receive similar attention?