

# Utah Health Status Update: Unintentional Injuries in Utah

October 1997

Utah Department of Health

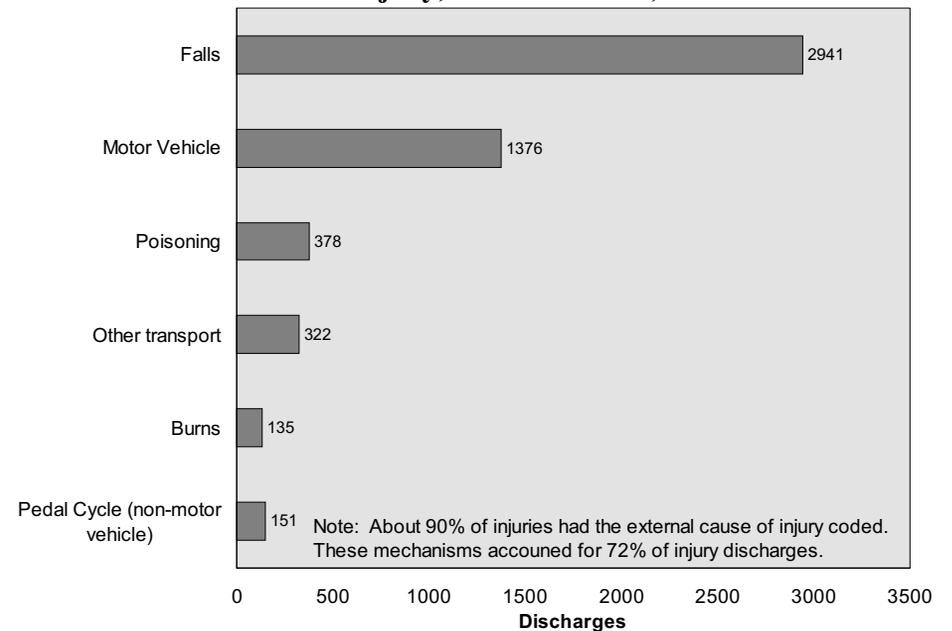
Unintentional injuries, formerly called "accidents", are the leading cause of death for Utahns from 1 to 45 years of age. Injuries also cause substantial disability, and health care expenditures. The name change, from accidents to unintentional injuries, was a conscious choice made to emphasize their preventability. A recent Department of Health report, *Unintentional Injury in Utah*, provides information on the most important unintentional injuries, their causes, and ways to prevent or reduce the adverse health effects of injuries. This Health Status Update summarizes the most important findings of that report.

## Important findings:

- Unintentional injuries caused about 570 deaths of Utahns each year, from 1993-95.
- Motor vehicle crashes were the most common cause of injury death.
- About 8,000 Utahns were hospitalized because of unintentional injuries in 1995 (excluding injuries from medical treatment). Falls and motor vehicle-related injuries were the most common injuries resulting in hospitalization.
- In 1995, those injury-related hospitalizations resulted in almost \$80 million in hospital charges alone.
- In 1996, an estimated 208,100 Utahns (10.5% of all Utahns) reported that they were injured (seriously enough to require medical care or miss at least one day of usual activities) during the previous year.
  - Nearly 60,000 Utahns reported a fall-related injury; 70% were under age 45.
  - Males and young persons were more likely to report an injury; 18% of males age 16-24 were injured within the past year.
  - Reported injuries were most likely to have occurred in the home, at work, or at a sports or recreation site.
- In 1996 observational surveys, Utahns used motor vehicle restraints at rates below the rest of the nation:
  - 85% of children age 2 or less;
  - 60% of Utah drivers and passengers;
  - Only 45% of children 2-8 years of age.
- 86% of Utah bicycle-related deaths (1991-1995) involved a motor vehicle;
- In 1995, falls caused deaths of 75 Utahns; two thirds were over 65 years of age.

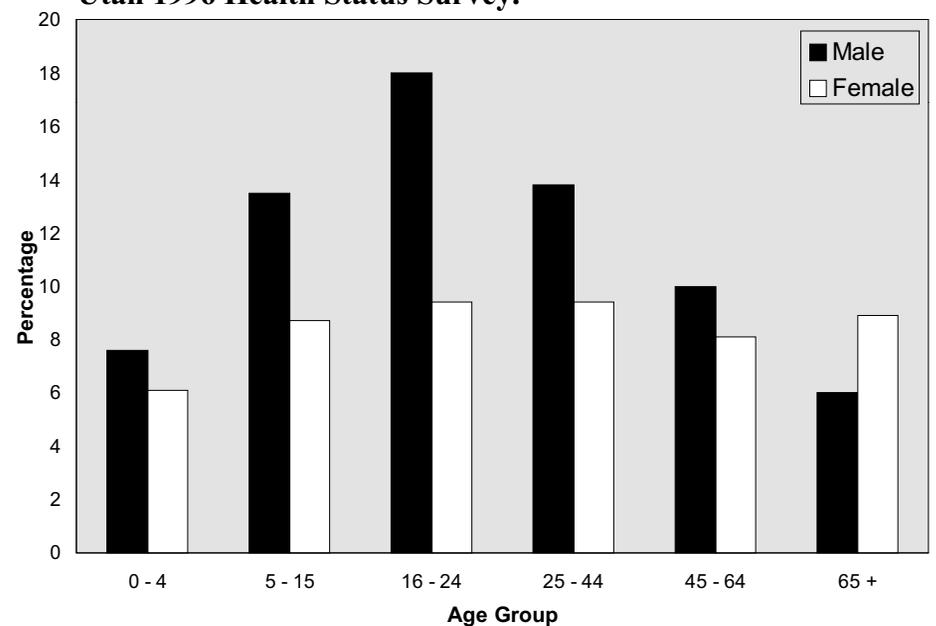
## Hospitalizations for Injuries

Hospital discharges for unintentional injuries by cause of injury, Utah residents, 1995.



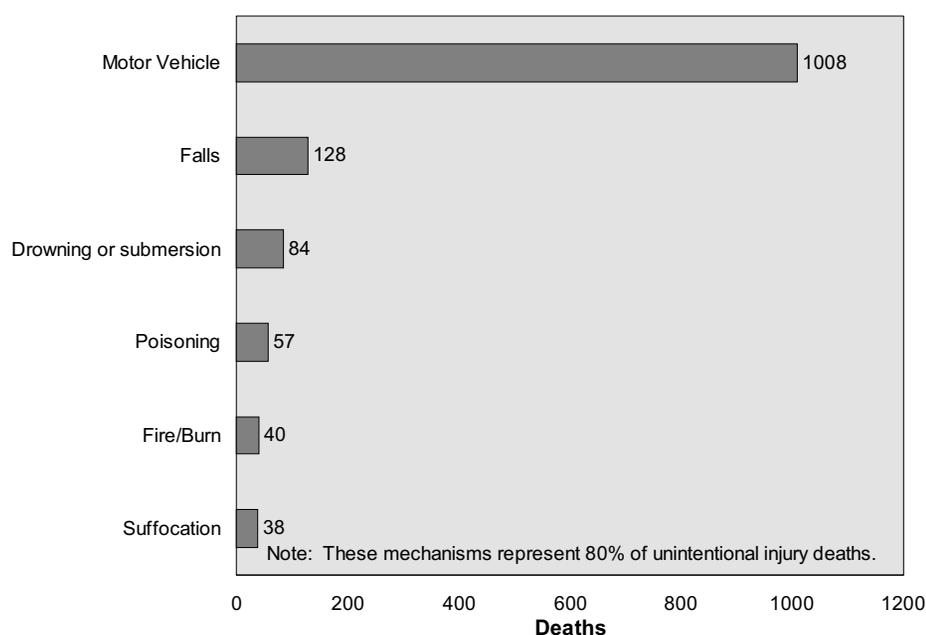
## Reported Injuries

Percentage of Utahns reporting an injury, by age and sex, Utah 1996 Health Status Survey.



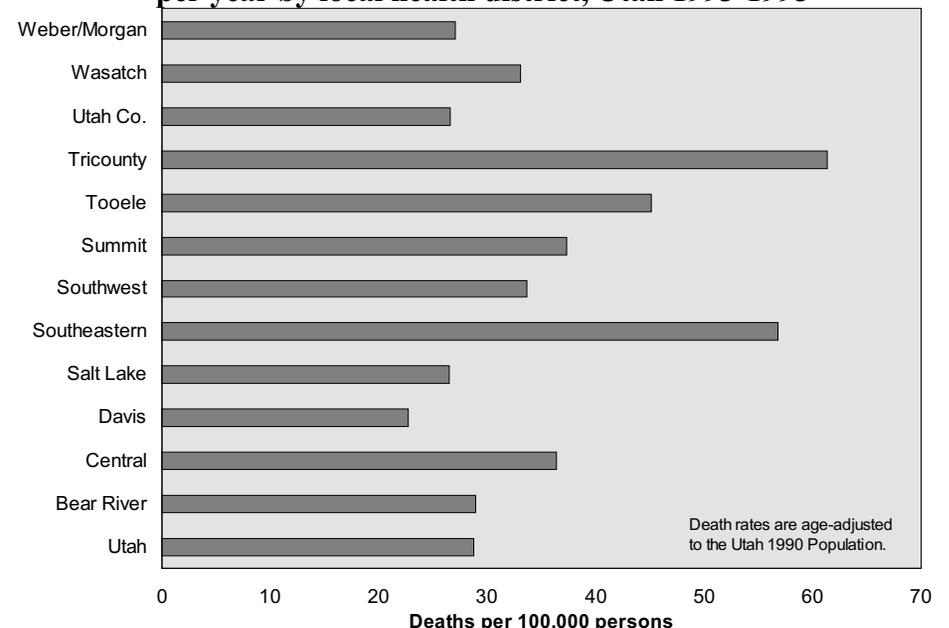
## Injury Deaths

Deaths (three year total) from unintentional injuries by cause of injury, Utah residents, 1993-1995.



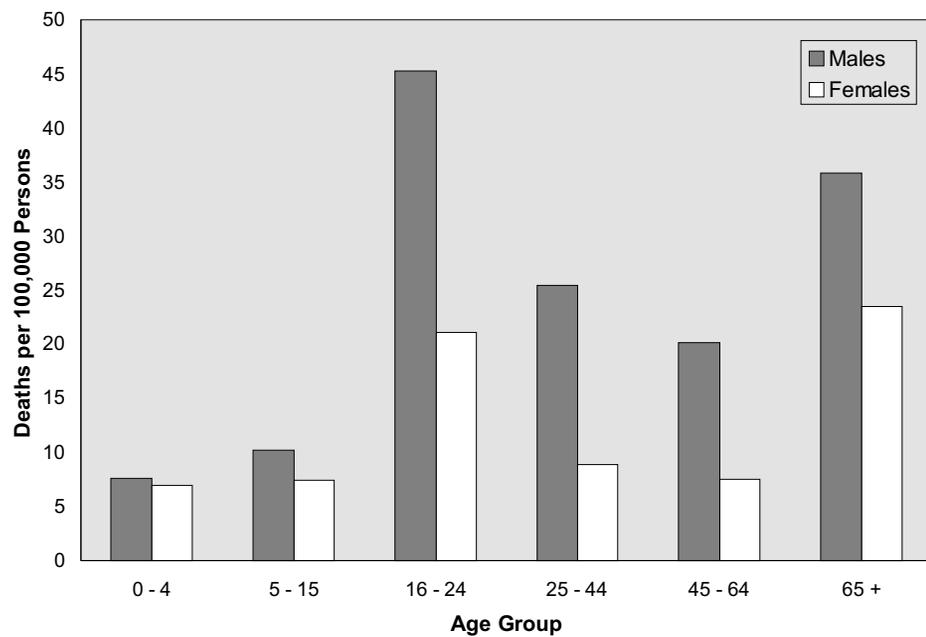
## Injury Deaths by Local Health District

Deaths from unintentional injuries per 100,000 persons per year by local health district, Utah 1993-1995



## Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths by Age

Deaths from motor vehicle crashes per 100,000 persons per year, by age and sex, Utah 1993-1995.



Proven methods to prevent or reduce the severity of injuries are available, but not used widely enough. Safety belts can reduce motor vehicle deaths by 40-50%, and child safety seats can reduce deaths by 70%. If all occupants of Utah motor vehicles properly used safety restraints, an estimated 1,900 emergency room visits, 706 hospitalizations, and 150 deaths from motor vehicle crashes could be prevented each year. Bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of brain injury by 90%. An estimated 135 brain injuries in Utah children could be prevented each year if all children wore helmets.

## October Utah Health Status Update

The data for this update came from the recently released report *Injury in Utah: Motor Vehicle, Falls, Bicycle, Drowning, and Poisoning*. The report was produced jointly by the Office of Public Health Data and the Division of Community and Family Health Services. The complete report is available on the Internet at <http://hlunix.hl.state.ut.us/action2000/reports.html> and copies can be obtained from the Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health, 288 North 1460 West, P O Box 144240, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4240, (801) 538-6864, FAX (801) 538-6629, or email: [hlcfhscb.tkeller@state.ut.us](mailto:hlcfhscb.tkeller@state.ut.us).



Office of Public Health Data  
Utah Department of Health  
288 North 1460 West  
Box 142875  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2875

