

Demographics and Driving Related Convictions

Drivers of differing ages and driving locations face differing challenges in the course of their activities. Drivers in crowded urban environments face choices and problems unlike those in more rural settings. Young drivers may lack experience in a variety of situations, while older drivers may be encountering medical conditions that impact their driving abilities. The Oregon driver record database maintained by the Motor Vehicle Services Division contains a 10-year history of driving infractions and license suspension actions. The record also contains demographic information for each driver - birth date, gender, county of residence and more. The Federal Highway Administration and ODOT recently funded a study to develop a profile of the impact of these demographic factors on driver performance.

Age and Convictions

The number of convictions appearing on the driver record drops with increasing age. The average driver in the 56 to 65 year-old bracket has only 45% of the number of convictions on his or her record compared to the average driver in the 16 to 25 year-old bracket. The relationship between age and number of convictions on the driver record is nearly perfectly linear, showing a decrease of about .021 convictions per year of driver age.

Gender and Convictions

Women average fewer convictions on their driver records than do men within the same age bracket. Women average about 69% as many convictions as men across all age brackets, with a range of 65% (age 66+) to 77% (age 46 to 55). Both men and women show the linear decrease in number of convictions with increasing age.

Locality and Convictions

The number of total convictions appearing in the driver records from rural versus urban counties show remarkable similarity. A paired two-sample t-test shows the population means to be statistically equal across all age brackets. This finding supports the assumption of equal enforcement levels in counties throughout the state (see Convictions by Gender/Locality/Age graph).

Most Common Conviction Types

The five most common conviction types account for more than 85% of all convictions and are consistent across gender and rural/urban counties, although their ranking within the top five does vary (see Table 1). These same conviction types are also the top five for all age brackets *except* 66+. Within the 66+ bracket:

- ◆ Urban and rural male drivers replace convictions for 'Infraction Driving While Suspended' with 'Out-of-state Speeding Violations';
- ◆ Urban and rural female drivers replace convictions for 'Infraction Driving While Suspended' with 'Dangerous Left Turn'; and
- ◆ Urban female drivers replace convictions for 'Violating the Maximum Speed Limit for Rural Interstate Highways' with 'Failure of Driver Entering Roadway to Yield Right-of-way'.

Greater knowledge of the impacts of demographics on driver behavior may assist DMV in better targeting education and intervention activities.

This issue of Policy Notes was written by Mark Joerger, Transportation Analyst, ODOT Policy Section. Author can be reached by email at Mark.D.Joerger@odot.state.or.us or call (503) 986-3464.

Oregon Department of Transportation, Policy Section

John Merriss, Policy Section Manager
555 13th Street NE, Suite 2, Salem, Oregon 97301-4178
(503) 986-3466

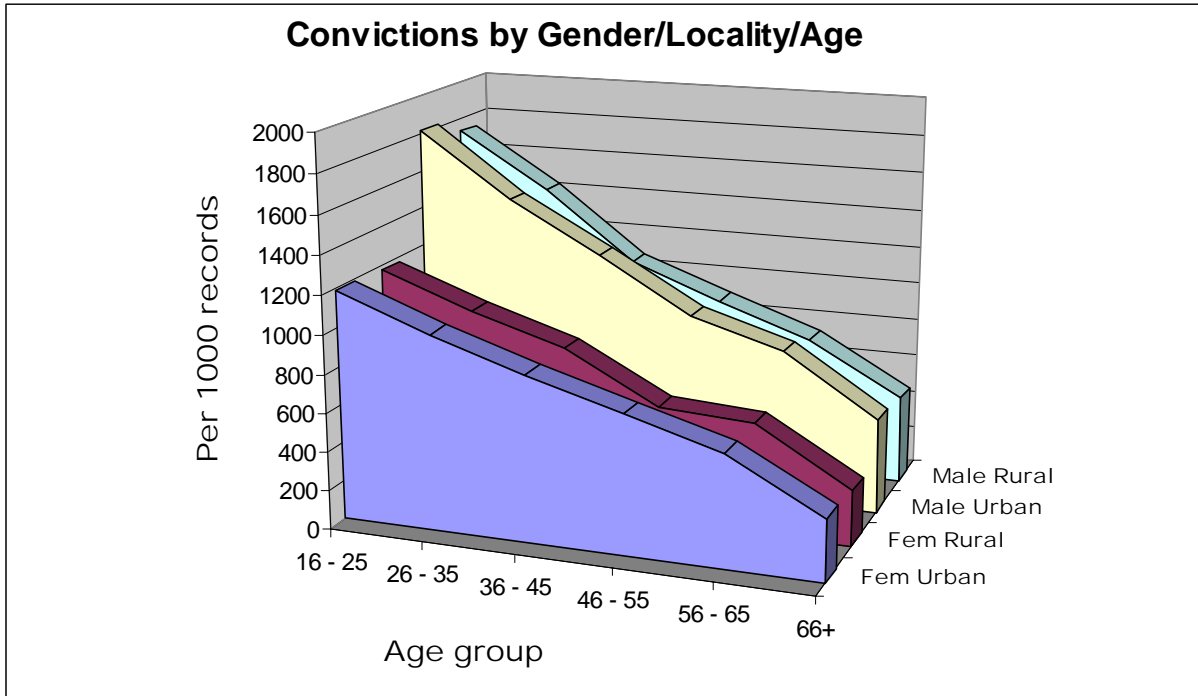


Table 1

Conviction Type	Convictions per 1000 records
Violating the basic speed rule	343.9
Violating the maximum speed for an urban area	157.3
Infraction driving while suspended	115.1
Failure to obey traffic control device	113.1
Violating the maximum speed limit for rural interstate highways	66.7