

# INJURY AND VIOLENCE

## Overview

Injuries take a huge toll on individuals, families and communities. The price is paid on many levels: pain, loss of income, health care costs, grief, and death. The good news is that many injuries are preventable. In Denver, deaths from injury have decreased, but are still but do not meet the Healthy People 2020 goal (FIGURE 1).

Intentional injuries result from purposeful acts, including physical assault, sexual assault, homicide, and suicide. Deaths from homicide have decreased in Denver (FIGURE 2). However, suicide remains a major public health problem. During 2010, suicide was the eighth leading cause of death in Denver and accounted for one in three injury deaths. Suicide attempts account for one in ten hospitalizations for injury.<sup>23</sup> More people die from suicide than from motor vehicle accidents (see *Mental Health* section for additional information on suicide).<sup>2</sup> Denver is also affected by assaults, the rate of which varies by location (FIGURE 3). In Colorado, assaults and violent acts are the second leading cause of work-related deaths.<sup>82</sup> More than one in twenty injury hospitalizations in Denver are due to assaults. Sexual assault and bullying often go unreported. It is estimated that only one in six women in Colorado who are victims of a sexual assault reported it to law enforcement. Approximately two in three sexual assaults are committed by someone known by the victim.<sup>81</sup> Violence reduces productivity, decreases property values, and disrupts services.

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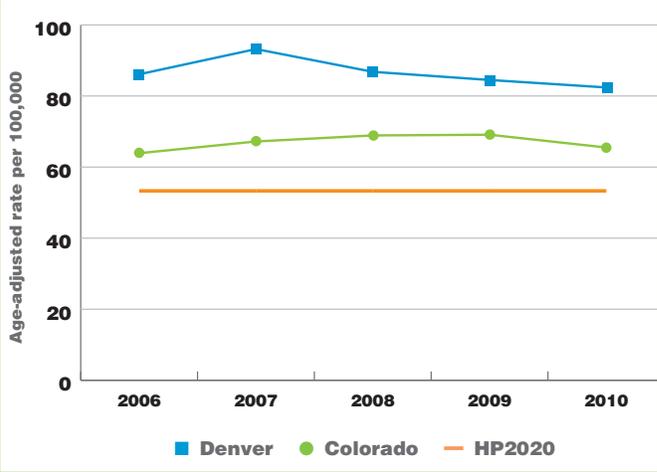


## Cost Facts

In 2010, 1,008 adults aged 65 and older were admitted to the hospital for falls in Denver. Accidental falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalizations in Colorado for older adults. The average length of a hospital stay was almost five days, with an average cost of \$25,976.<sup>86</sup> This was for hospital-related expenses only and did not include expenses such as doctor's fees, home health care, and rehabilitation. Prevention is important in reducing these costs. This includes vision checks, exercises to improve balance, and home safety.

**FIGURE 1**

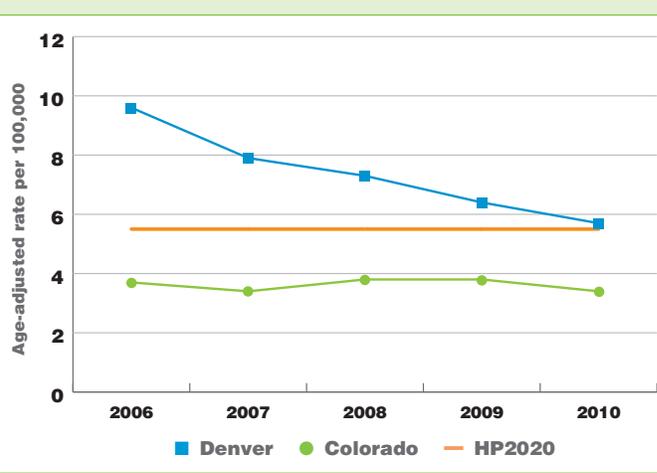
**Injury Deaths DENVER AND COLORADO, 2006 - 2010**



Injury deaths in Denver have decreased, but do not meet the Healthy People 2020 goal. The rate of injury deaths in Denver is higher than that of Colorado.  
 SOURCE: Vital Statistics

**FIGURE 2**

**Deaths Due to Homicide DENVER AND COLORADO, 2006 - 2009**



The rate of homicides in Denver has decreased substantially. In 2010, the rate was 5.7 per 100,000, close to the Healthy People 2020 goal of 5.5 per 100,000.  
 SOURCE: Vital Statistics

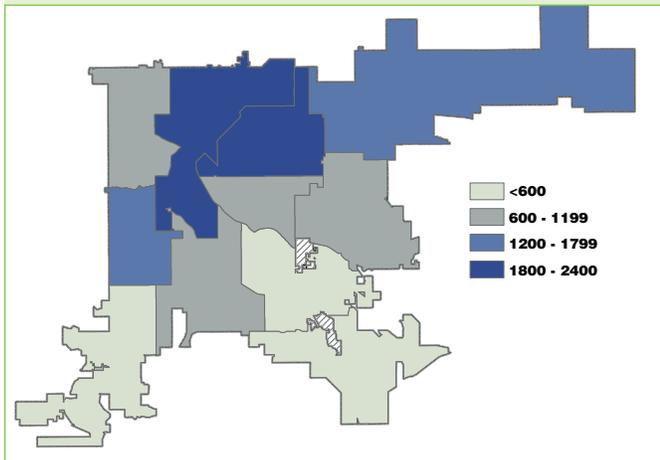
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Unintentional injuries include transportation accidents, drowning, poisoning, falls, burns, and bites. Unintentional injuries were the third leading cause of death in Denver in 2010. The risk of hospitalizations due to falls increases with age (FIGURE 4). Over the past decade, Colorado has made efforts to reduce unintentional injuries due to motor vehicle accidents (FIGURE 5). In 1999, Colorado started a graduated driver’s license process for teens. In 2005, teen driver laws were strengthened. These included limits for teen drivers on the number and age of passengers, night driving, and texting while driving. In 2002, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) began the “Click it or Ticket Campaign” to increase seatbelt usage. In 2004, the Colorado legislature lowered the blood alcohol level from 0.1 to 0.08 for driving under the influence (DUI). Penalties were raised for drunk drivers and these funds were used to increase surveillance. All of these efforts have paid off (FIGURE 6). Almost all adults (91.1%) in Denver reported wearing seatbelts, which is nearing the Healthy People 2020 goal of 92.4% usage.<sup>13</sup> The hospitalization rate due to motor vehicle accidents in Denver dropped with the biggest gains between 2006 and 2010 among those aged 15 to 19.<sup>23</sup>

Many injuries have risk factors. For example, sexual assaults are closely linked to alcohol use.<sup>83</sup> Alcohol is also a leading factor in motor-vehicle related injuries among all ages, races, and ethnicities.<sup>84</sup> Poverty is a risk factor for intentional injuries. Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community are often targets of bullying and violence.<sup>85</sup>

Denver can reduce injuries through education and policy changes. Social and family support are crucial, especially among youth.

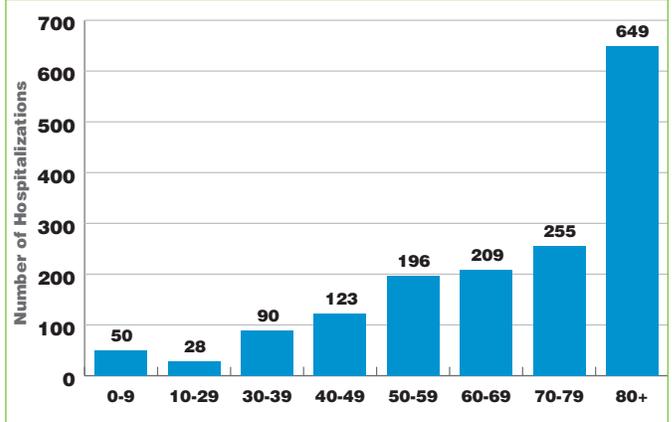
**FIGURE 3**  
Number of Assault Victims DENVER, 2006 - 2010



The number of assaults in Denver is higher in north Denver. The highest number of assaults occurred in Council Districts 8 and 9.

SOURCE: Denver Police Department

**FIGURE 4**  
Number of Hospitalizations Due to Falls by Age Group DENVER, 2010



Accidental falls increase with age, especially among those 80 years and older. Falls among the elderly often result in reduced quality of life, premature death, and increased medical costs.

SOURCE: Colorado Hospital Association

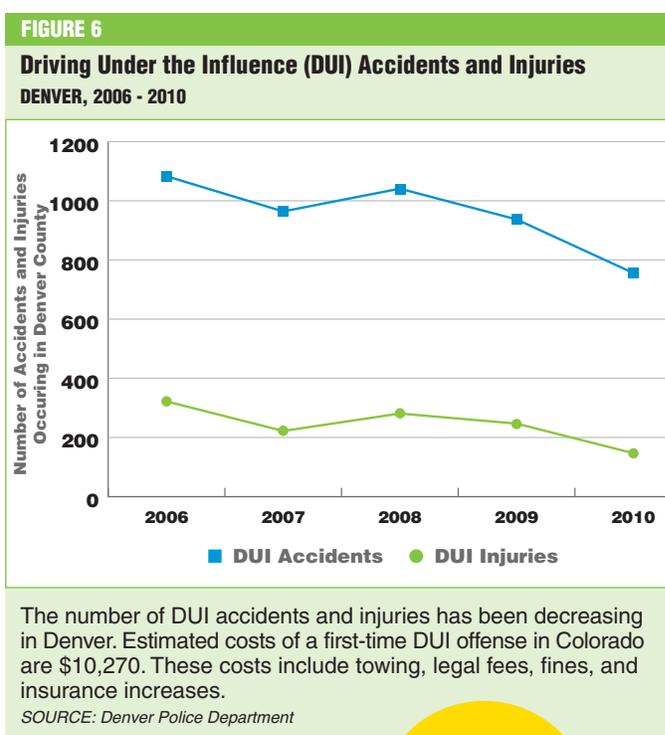
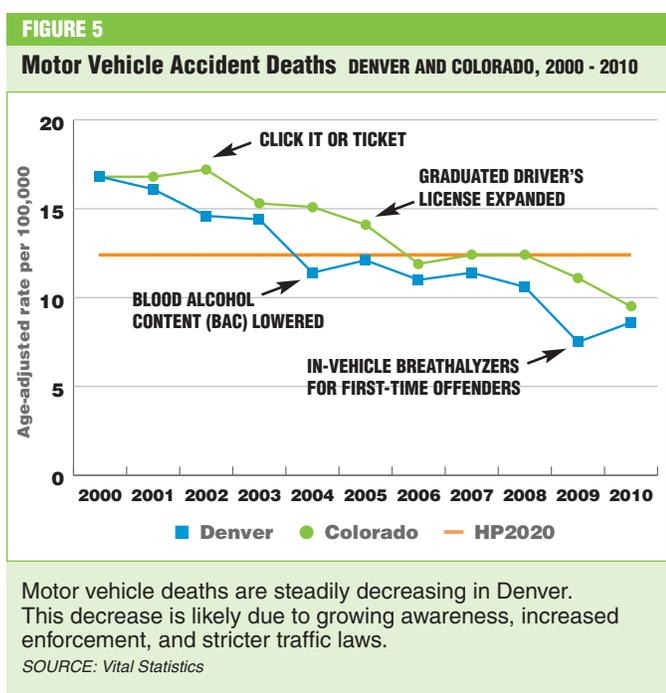
## Local Story

### Keeping Youth in School

Students can be expelled from school for acts of violence or intentional injury. However, completing high school can be insurance for good health. People with less education are more likely to smoke, be obese, be physically inactive, and are at a greater risk for an early death.<sup>87</sup> Denver Public Schools (DPS) is helping students to graduate—even if they misbehave, are suspended, or are expelled.<sup>88</sup> The DPS Mental Health and Assessment Team works with schools to support interventions for violence, behavior issues, bullying, poor attendance, conflict management, and learning problems. In addition, if students have behavior issues and are expelled, DPS offers the opportunity for them to still graduate. Students can continue their schooling at the PREP Academy or transfer to another school. By keeping our youth in school, Denver’s overall health will improve.



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## Comparison Story

### Motorcycle Helmets—Saving Lives and Money

In 2010, 21 states had a helmet law for all motorcyclists. Another 27 states had a partial law, and three had no law.<sup>89</sup> Colorado's partial law requires riders and passengers under 18 years old to wear a helmet. In 2010, 207 Denver adults were admitted to the hospital for a motorcycle accident. Of these, 88 (43%) had a traumatic brain injury and eight (4%) died. The risk of brain injury among motorcyclists not wearing a helmet is 67% greater than that of helmeted motorcyclists. Additionally, hospital costs for motorcyclists not wearing a helmet are about 30% higher.<sup>90</sup> In 1992, California passed a helmet law for everyone. The year after the law was enacted, California had a 38% decrease in motorcycle deaths. In addition, those likely to sustain brain injury decreased by 34%. California has a 99% compliance rate in helmet use.<sup>91-93</sup>

## Did You Know



- At least 107 Coloradans died as a result of domestic violence from 2008 to 2010. In 2010, more than 3,300 domestic violence cases were filed in the municipal and state divisions of Denver County Court.<sup>94</sup>
- In 2008, there were 4,597 lost-time worker's compensation claims in Denver, and an additional 12 fatal claims. Lost-time claims are claims for which an employee missed three or more work days or shifts due to illness or injury, or experienced permanent impairment.<sup>95</sup> It is estimated that there were an additional 15,000 claims with less than three lost workdays or shifts.
- In Colorado, transportation incidents are the leading cause of work-related fatalities. On average, about 15% of Colorado workers are employed in industries at an increased risk for mortality from all causes.<sup>96</sup>
- Using a cell phone while driving, whether it is hand-held or hands-free, delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent.<sup>97</sup>
- Did you know that you can get an \$82 ticket for not having a child in the proper car restraint? Tougher laws now require that children up to the age of eight be in a booster or car seat.<sup>98</sup>