

By: Stefano/2007, Science Editor

Women Are Safer Drivers than Men

The highest number of deadly accidents: young men on motorcycles

They say women are lousy drivers, but a new traffic analysis clearly revealed that men have a 77 % higher risk of dying in a car accident than women at the same driven distance. The research about road fatality statistics was made at Carnegie Mellon University for the American Automobile Association. The numbers are clear: one death toll for every 100 million passenger miles traveled and the research assessed the death risk on the road by age, gender, type of vehicle, time of day and geographic region. "We are finding comparisons that are surprising all the time," said co-author Paul Fischbeck, a Carnegie Mellon professor of social and decision sciences. For example, the highway death rate is higher for cautious 82-year-old women than for risk-taking 16-year-old boys. "For example, those dangerous 82-year-old women are 60 % more likely to die on the road than a 16-year-old boy because they are so frail", said Anne McCartt, a research official at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "The elderly are more likely to die when they are injured in an accident", she said. Even when not driving, elderly women have the highest road death risks, five times more than the average. But right behind the aged women, the higher risk belongs to young male drivers, ages 16-23, with a death toll four times bigger than the average, due to "inexperience and immaturity," McCartt said. The lowest risk belonged to drivers aged 40 and 50. The combination: male at 2 a.m. Saturday on a motorcycle in the South proved to be the most dangerous. The safest combination was: a 4-year-old girl in a van or school bus, stuck in a Wednesday morning rush hour in New England in February. "Of all the ages to be in a car, 4-year-olds have the lowest death risks - probably because they are in child car seats and their parents drive more carefully", Fischbeck said. "They are really protected, they're being driven around in times of day when it's very safe (and often in minivans)," said Fischbeck. Do men possess more chances than women of dying in a car accident? "Men take more risks, speed more, drink and drive more." "They do stupider things," said Fischbeck, a former military pilot. The research revealed that larger vans were the safest vehicles, with a death toll less than half the car average, and the drivers themselves are a main factor. "It's a combination: they're safe and the people who drive them are dull," Fischbeck said. School buses, massive vehicles during normally safe hours had a death rate of 1:50 (2 %) of the average for cars, while the death rate on motorcycles was about 32 times more increased than for cars. An extremely dangerous combination was men aged 21 and 24 on motorcycles between midnight and 4 a.m.: their death risk on the road was 45,000 times higher than normal. "The most deadly hour is at 2 a.m., which is often when bars close and many deaths are alcohol-related," Fischbeck said. "The fewest deaths per mile driven are at 8 a.m., mostly because the roads are so clogged with traffic - and teenage drivers are in school", McCartt said. "That explains New England's No. 1 ranking for lowest death risk on the road," she said. Heavy traffic "makes it much more difficult for people to speed," McCartt said.