

Drunk Driving and Enforcement in New Mexico Counties, 2011 - 2015

From 2011 through 2015, the New Mexico Department of Transportation reported 10,620 alcohol-involved crashes, although the numbers vary widely among counties. For example, in 2015, Catron County had zero alcohol-involved crashes, and Bernalillo County had 672. But comparing raw numbers can be misleading. Because Bernalillo County has much more traffic, it is expected to have more crashes.

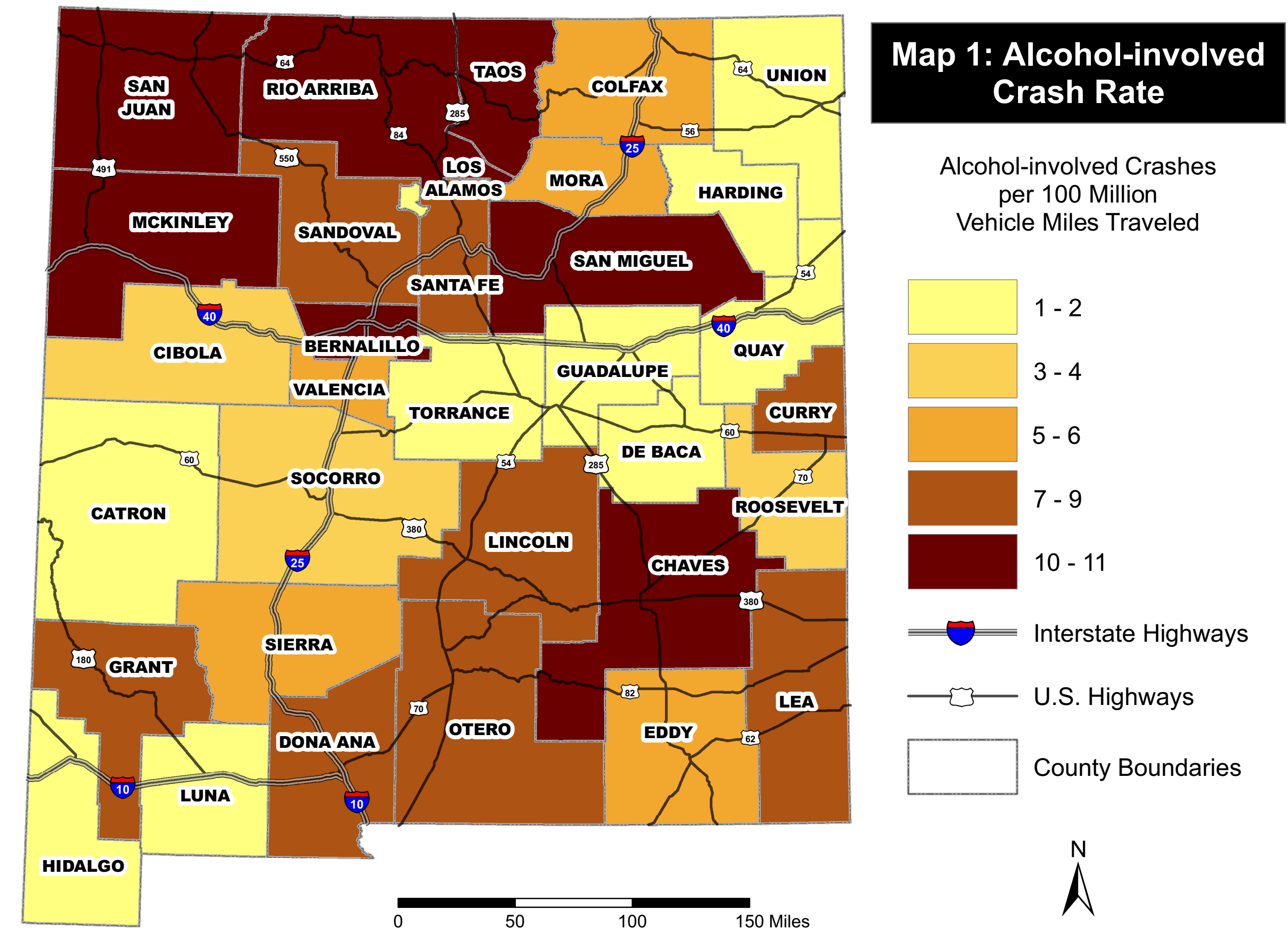
Map 1 compares alcohol-involved crashes to traffic volume in each county. The colors indicate the number of alcohol-involved crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in the county. Although Bernalillo County has the highest number of alcohol-involved crashes, its rate is similar to that of the other worst-ranking counties. The worst rates are clustered in the northwest part of the state.

Map 2 compares arrests for driving while intoxicated¹ to the driving-age population, specifically those 16 and older. A high arrest rate is not clearly negative or positive. It could indicate more drunk driving or better enforcement by the police. Again, the highest rates are concentrated in the northwest part of the state.

Map 3 shows the percent of DWI arrests resulting in convictions². Bernalillo and Rio Arriba counties have among the highest rates for alcohol-involved crashes and DWI arrests, but among the lowest rates for DWI convictions. High conviction rates may indicate more-effective prosecution. The best rates are clustered in the southeast area of the state.

San Juan is the only county with a high rate of alcohol-involved crashes, DWI arrests and DWI convictions.

Each map covers a five-year span, to balance out highs and lows in small counties, where small variations can seem more significant. For example, the change from 1 to 3 is only 2, but it is also 200 percent.



¹ DWI arrests are categorized by the county in which the arrest took place. ² DWI convictions are categorized by the county in which the arrest took place.
Sources: NMDOT Crash Files, 2011-2015; NMDOT DVMT, 2011-2015; U.S. Census 16+ Population Estimate, 2013; UNM TRU DWI Reports, 2011-2015.

Map by the University of New Mexico, Geospatial and Population Studies, Traffic Research Unit, July 2017.

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