

NHTSA Releases 2020 Traffic Crash Data

Showing highest number of fatalities and highest fatality rate since 2007

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The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released its [2020 annual traffic crash data](#), showing that 38,824 lives were lost in traffic crashes nationwide. That number marks the highest number of fatalities since 2007.

The estimated number of police-reported crashes in 2020 decreased by 22% as compared to 2019, and the estimated number of people injured declined by 17%.

While the number of crashes and traffic injuries declined overall, fatal crashes increased by 6.8%. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled increased to 1.34, a 21% increase from 2019 and the highest since 2007.

In 45% of fatal crashes, the drivers of passenger vehicles were engaged in at least one of the following risky behaviors: speeding, alcohol impairment, or not wearing a seat belt.

"The rising fatalities on our roadways are a national crisis; we cannot and must not accept these deaths as inevitable," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. "People should leave the house and know they're going to get to their destination safely, and with the resources from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, plus the policies in the National Roadway Safety Strategy we launched last month, we will do everything we can to save lives on America's roads."

"The tragic loss of life of people represented by these numbers confirms that we have a deadly crisis on our nation's roads. While overall traffic crashes and people injured were down in 2020, fatal crashes and fatalities increased. We cannot allow this to become the status quo," said Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA's Deputy Administrator.

In January, the U.S. DOT released the federal government's comprehensive [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#), a roadmap to address the national crisis in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. The strategy adopts the safe system approach and builds multiple layers of protection with safer roads, safer people, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and better post-crash care. It is complemented by unprecedented safety funding included in President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The 2020 crash data report also examines fatality data in key categories, as compared to 2019:

- Injured people, including occupants and nonoccupants, down significantly in most categories
- Estimated number of police-reported crashes in 2020 decreased by 22%
- Fatalities in speeding-related crashes up 17%
- Fatalities in alcohol-impaired driving crashes up 14%
- Unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities up 14%
- Motorcyclist fatalities up 11% (highest number since first data collection in 1975)
- Bicyclist fatalities up 9.2% (highest number since 1987)

- Passenger car occupant fatalities up 9%
- Fatalities in urban areas up 8.5%
- Pedestrian fatalities up 3.9% (highest number since 1989)
- Fatalities in hit-and-run crashes up 26%
- Fatalities in large-truck crashes down 1.3%

Total vehicle miles traveled decreased by 11% in 2020, from 3,261,772 million to 2,903,622 million.

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