

## **NHTSA: Traffic Crashes Cost America \$340 Billion in 2019**

Agency releases new study examining the cost of motor vehicle crashes, injuries and fatalities

Language: **English**

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Motor vehicle crashes cost American society \$340 billion in 2019, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced today. The agency's new report, "[The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019](#)," examines the costs of one year of crashes that killed an estimated 36,500 people, injured 4.5 million, and damaged 23 million vehicles.

"This report drives home just how devastating traffic crashes are for families and the economic burden they place on society," said Ann Carlson, NHTSA's Acting Administrator. "We need to use the safe system approach embraced in DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy to dramatically decrease the number and severity of crashes: safer roads, safer people, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and better post-crash care."

The report draws on data from a range of crashes, including ones that lead to property damage, serious injuries and fatalities. Data sources include NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, Crash Investigation Sampling System and the Crash Report Sampling System. The report also examines crashes not reported to the police, using consumer survey data, in-car observation techniques and a variety of other sources.

The \$340 billion cost of motor vehicle crashes represents the equivalent of \$1,035 for each of the 328 million people in the United States and 1.6% of the \$21.4 trillion real U.S. gross domestic product for 2019. The \$340 billion cost of motor vehicle crashes represents the equivalent of \$1,035 for each of the 328 million people in the United States and 1.6% of the \$21.4 trillion real U.S. gross domestic product for 2019.

Those not directly involved in crashes pay for roughly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes, congestion-related costs such as lost time, excess fuel consumption, and increased environmental impacts.

Traffic crashes cost taxpayers \$30 billion in 2019, roughly 9% of all motor vehicle crash costs. This is the equivalent of \$230 in added taxes for every household in the United States.

These losses include medical costs, lost productivity, legal and court costs, emergency service costs, insurance administration costs, congestion costs, property damage, and workplace losses. These figures include both police-reported and unreported crashes.

When quality-of-life valuations are considered, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes in 2019 was nearly \$1.4 trillion.

The report includes new data on the total value of seat belt use. From 1975 to 2019, seat belt use saved 404,000 lives and prevented \$17.8 trillion in societal harm.

The report also looks at the cost of risky driving behaviors that contributed to crashes that led to fatalities, serious injuries and property damage only, including:

## **Alcohol**

- Alcohol-involved crashes resulted in 14,219 fatalities, 497,000 injuries, and \$68.9 billion in economic costs in 2019, accounting for 20% of all crash costs.
- Crashes involving alcohol levels of .08 BAC or higher are responsible for more than 90% of the economic costs and societal harm from crashes attributable to alcohol use.

## **Distraction**

- Crashes where at least one driver was identified as being distracted resulted in 10,546 fatalities, 1.3 million nonfatal injuries, and \$98.2 billion in economic costs in 2019, accounting for about 29% of all crash costs.

## **Failure to Wear a Seat Belt**

- Failure to buckle up caused 2,400 avoidable fatalities, 46,000 serious injuries, and cost society \$11 billion in easily preventable injury-related costs, accounting for about 3% of all crash costs.
- Seat belts work. Seat belt use prevented more than 14,600 fatalities, 450,000 serious injuries, and \$93 billion in injury-related economic costs in 2019.

## **Speeding**

- Speed-related crashes are associated with 10,192 fatalities, 498,000 nonfatal injuries, and \$46 billion in economic costs in 2019, accounting for 14% of all economic costs.
- Speed-related crashes cost an average of \$141 for every person in the United States.

The report also includes data on the costs associated with motorcycle crashes, failure to wear motorcycle helmets, pedestrian crashes, bicyclist crashes, and numerous different roadway designation crashes.

Nearly 95% of people who die using our nation's transportation networks are killed on our streets, roads and highways. Roadway fatalities and the fatality rate declined consistently for 30 years, but progress has stalled over the last decade and went in the wrong direction in 2020 and 2021. The USDOT's [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) outlines what the Department is doing to address this crisis.

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