



Traffic deaths rise 24% in Massachusetts, 19% in the US: report

[TRAFFIC](#) / By [amolivia90](#) | July 1, 2022

A new report released this week found that Massachusetts saw a 24% increase in traffic deaths between 2019 and 2021, a “dramatic” number that outpaced national growth over that period.

The report by TRIP, a Washington, DC-based national transportation research nonprofit, shows that traffic deaths are starting to increase dramatically in the United States in 2020, even with fewer cars on the road due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deaths continued to increase in 2021, with car travel returning to levels close to pre-pandemic levels. From 2019 to 2021, the United States saw a 19% increase in traffic fatalities, according to the report, which attributes the significant increase since the start of the pandemic to an “increased risk to drivers.”

“In its October 2021 report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that after declaring a public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly,” the Tripp report said.

Among the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in more risky behaviour, including speeding, not wearing seat belts, and driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

A study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety for Drivers in the fall of 2020 found similar results.

“It is likely that many of the individuals who were willing to travel — and even increased their travel — despite the health risks associated with the pandemic, were actually more willing than average to take the risk,” the AAFTS survey report said.

There were 42,915 traffic deaths in the United States in 2021, the report said, compared to 36,096 and 38,824 in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Massachusetts accounted for 413 deaths in 2021 and 334 and 343 in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Only 15 countries saw a larger increase in traffic deaths between 2019 and 2021, according to the report.

Stacy Thompson, chief executive of Cambridge-based LivableStreets, said the report’s findings were disappointing, but “not terribly surprising”.

She said there should be more investment in walking and bicycle infrastructure, and noted the need for red light or speed cameras, which have been shown to reduce fatal accidents.

Thompson said the pandemic was a “perfect storm” for deaths, with more people walking and cycling outside to avoid indoor hazards and reducing congestion on the roads providing more opportunities for vehicles to speed up and kill someone.

The report proposes a multi-pronged strategy to reduce traffic fatalities, focusing on safer people, roads, vehicles and speeds, and enhancing post-collision care.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also released data on traffic fatalities Thursday, which showed that car crashes remain a leading cause of death in the United States and led to an average of 36,791 deaths annually, or 101 every day, from 2015 to 2019.

In 2019, the population-based car crash death rate in the United States – 11.1 per 100,000 residents – was the highest among the 29 high-income countries.