

# Car crashes in Washington state increased 26% over 2 years, study finds

Although the number of people traveling decreased due to the pandemic, the number of traffic fatalities during the pandemic increased by 8% nationwide.

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WASHINGTON, USA — The number of traffic fatalities in the U.S. increased by 19% from 2019 to 2021. During the same time, traffic fatalities increased by 26% in Washington state.

Although the number of people using their cars to travel from 2019 to 2020 decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of nationwide traffic fatalities during the same time increased by 8% from 36,096 to 38,824, according to a report by the [National Transportation Research Profit \(TRIP\)](#).

According to the report, car crashes continued to increase in 2021 as people started using their cars to travel more regularly. From 2020 to 2021, the number of car collisions increased by approximately 11%, from 38,824 to 42,915, roughly on pace with the 10% increase in vehicle travel during the same time.

In 2021, the number of traffic collisions rose to 1.35 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, according to the report.

In Washington, traffic collisions increased by 26% from 2019 to 2021. The number of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled increased 31%, while the number of miles traveled dropped 4%.

In addition to the increase in car accidents, the number of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities also increased significantly over pre-pandemic levels. From 2019 to 2021, the number of U.S. pedestrians killed by vehicles increased by 18%, and the number of bicyclists killed increased by 16%.

Pedestrian and bicycle deaths accounted for 19% of all U.S. traffic fatalities in 2021. The increase in traffic collisions since the onset of the pandemic is related to increased risks being taken by drivers, according to the report.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found in a 2021 report that "after the declaration of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly."

Of the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in riskier behavior, including speeding, failure to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, according to the NHTSA report.

To combat the increase in fatalities, the U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) in 2022, a roadmap for addressing the nation's roadway safety crisis based on a [Safe System](#) approach. This strategy is also being adopted by state and local transportation agencies.

The [goal of the strategy](#) is to encourage safety for pedestrians, design a safer roadway environment, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and post-crash care.