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[Maria Robertson](#) / Wednesday, June 21, 2023

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TRIP report estimates \$1.9 trillion in societal harm from fatal and serious traffic crashes in 2022

TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, this morning released a [report](#) showing that the high number of traffic fatalities and serious-injury crashes over the past three years took a significant toll on the nation in both lives lost and economic costs.

Utilizing data from a 2023 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report, TRIP estimated that fatal and serious traffic crashes in the U.S. in 2022 caused a total of \$1.9 trillion in “societal harm,” including \$465 billion in economic costs and \$1.4 trillion in quality-of-life costs.

The NHTSA report showed the economic costs from traffic crashes include “medical care, lost productivity, legal and court costs, insurance administrative costs, workplace costs, congestion impacts (travel delay, excess fuel consumption and pollution), emergency services, and property damage,” according to TRIP’s analysis, “Addressing [America’s Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increasing U.S. Traffic Fatalities and Identifying Solutions to Improve Road User Safety](#).” NHTSA’s report also estimated “quality-of-life costs” from things such as loss of remaining lifespan, extended or lifelong physical impairment, or physical pain.

The TRIP report shows that traffic fatalities increased 19% from 2019 to 2022 even though vehicle miles traveled (VMT) decreased dramatically in 2020 as the country worked to slow the spread of COVID-19 (from 3,261,772 in 2019 to 2,903,622 in 2020). In 2022, VMT still had not reached the pre-pandemic level, the TRIP report noted.

Traffic fatalities rose from 36,096 in 2019, to 38,824 in 2020, to 42,939 in 2021, before declining to 42,795 in 2022, the report shows.

Today’s report notes that the “significant increase in traffic fatalities since the onset of the pandemic appears largely related to increased risks being taken by drivers.” It mentions several factors seen as contributing to the high number of traffic fatalities, including speeding, failing to wear seatbelts and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Driver distraction is also a factor, with NHTSA seeing a 13% increase in distracted-affected traffic crashes between 2019 and 2021.

“Saving lives on our nation’s roadways requires teamwork – from the drivers who travel our roads to the governments that fund road work to the manufacturers, contractors and innovators involved. We must all commit to doing our part to reduce the loss of life and serious injuries on American roadways that cost an estimated \$1.9 trillion last year and inflicted never-ending pain on families,” said Jeff Johnson, chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). “For our part, at ATSSA, we will not rest until we achieve the goal of zero deaths on U.S. roadways.”

According to TRIP, “safety at highway work zones can be improved by implementing a [comprehensive work zone safety strategy](#) that includes ensuring a proper work zone layout; prioritizing work zone safety training; ensuring the use of high visibility safety apparel and appropriate traffic control devices; creating an internal traffic control plan; and implementing strategies to reduce aggressive driving.”